



# California Community Colleges Undocumented Student Action Week



OCTOBER 19-23, 2020



## *Financial Aid Advocacy Talking Points*

### **Background on California Community Colleges**

California Community Colleges (CCC) is the largest system of public higher education in the United States, serving 2.1 million students in 116 colleges across urban, suburban and rural communities.

The California Community Colleges are the backbone of higher education. One in four community college students in the nation is enrolled at a California community college. The CCC's are the state's leading providers of career and workforce training and the starting point for the majority of students who transfer to a four-year institution. Two thirds of all California higher education undergraduates are enrolled in a community college. Community colleges also serve the diverse needs of mid-career professionals looking to boost their skills as they move up the career ladder, immigrants striving to improve their English language skills, entrepreneurs looking to start a small business, and retirees looking to take up a new interest to maintain their cognitive skills.

State and federal leadership is more important than ever to support colleges in assisting students to achieve their educational goals.

### **Support our Undocumented and Immigrant Students**

Faculty and campus leaders support continuing protections for undocumented and immigrant students, coupled with legislation establishing a pathway to citizenship. In addition to the social and humanitarian imperatives, supporting our undocumented and immigrant students has significant economic benefits for California and the United States. There are an estimated 4,000 undocumented students enrolled in the 10-campus UC system, about 9,5000 at CSU's 23 campuses and 70,000 in the community colleges. Nearly half of those students are estimated to have DACA status. Nationally, it's estimated that more than 450,000 undocumented students are enrolled in college. This is a significantly large population of students poised to contribute to the economic recovery of our nation.

President Trump and the current Administration's continued attacks on undocumented individuals as well as Congress' failure to take action on numerous egregious proposals against this population has created deeper fear and uncertainty among our undocumented students. Earlier this year, the Trump Administration issued guidance restricting colleges and universities from utilizing their CARES Act funding for purposes of providing emergency aid to undocumented and immigrant students. While the Chancellor's Office filed a successful lawsuit against this effort, that ruling was appealed by the

Department of Education. The Administration's guidance and efforts to defend it in court has resulted in undocumented students not being able to access this critical financial support as they seek to continue their education throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Barring undocumented students from accessing emergency aid available to their peers only compounds the inequity in resources available to these students.

### **Our Ask to Members of Congress**

We urge Congress to:

1. Support legislation that would create a pathway to citizenship for undocumented students who were brought into this country as children and permit them to be eligible for Title IV financial aid programs like Pell Grants and Work-Study.

### **Our Ask to California State Legislators**

We urge California's state elected leaders to:

1. Streamline state financial aid programs (e.g. the Cal Grant) so they focus on the neediest students, regardless of their citizenship status, and remove barriers to eligibility that often exclude community college students.
2. Preserve California's leadership on college affordability for undocumented and immigrant students by ensuring funding is maintained for programs like the Dreamer Service Incentive Grant and campus-based legal support services.

### **Talking Points**

- A [recent estimate](#) projected that there are 92,000 undocumented students enrolled in California's public colleges and universities, with approximately 50,000 to 70,000 at California Community Colleges. Of all these students, fewer than 20,000 receive any state-based aid and none are eligible for federal aid.
- COVID-19 has exacerbated a basic needs crisis that already existed at California colleges and universities. A [survey](#) from the California Student Aid Commission found that 7 of every 10 student respondents lost some or all of their income due to COVID-19. Undocumented students face these challenges without the same forms of financial support available as their peers.
- The Trump Administration's efforts to restrict undocumented or immigrant students from accessing emergency financial aid under the CARES Act has only made these financial challenges more acute and difficult to address for campuses.
- Both Congress and the State of California can help address these issues: Congress, by making undocumented students and DACA recipients eligible for federal aid; California by modernizing our state financial aid programs to better address non-tuition costs and serve more low-income students.