

Supporting Undocumented Students Through Best Practices and Coalition Building

UNT Equity and Diversity Conference 2019

Dr. Mariela Nuñez-Janes, Rebecca Perfecto, & Nick Tapia-Fuselier

Higher Education Policy Context

Higher Education Act of 1965 - requires that applicants for federal financial aid be U.S. citizens

Plyer v. Doe (1982) - Supreme Court case that established free, guaranteed K-12 education for undocumented students

- This did not extend to colleges and universities

Varying in-state resident tuition policies across the country

- Only 20 states currently have tuition equity policies for undocumented students

Overview of DACA

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

- Executive order signed by President Obama in 2012
 - Signed after years of immigration activism

Provides eligible undocumented immigrants an opportunity to study or work in the U.S. with protection from deportation; DACA protection renewable every two years

- Nearly 790,000 undocumented immigrants protected by DACA
- In September of 2017, the current administration ordered a wind down of DACA
- Currently being debated in the courts

State Legislation

TX SB 1528 (TX Dream Act or in-state tuition bill)

TX SB4 (anti-sanctuary bill)

Who are undocumented students?

Unauthorized students: 65,000 yearly high school graduates

Other relevant populations

- International students
- Veterans
- Students in mixed-status families: 5.1 million children under 18 live with at least one unauthorized parent, 79% of the children are U.S. citizens

What is it like to be an undocumented student?

Incredible fear

- Threat of deportation
- Massive incarceration: 209 immigrant detention facilities, 62% operated by private companies, 34,000 minimum bed requirement
- Living in the shadows

Resilience and resistance

How can you help undocumented students work through fear?

- Acompañar: creating spaces that work for and with rather than against undocumented youth (Sepúlveda 2011), pluridimensional pedagogy (Planella 2008)
- Organic activism: process of strategically unlearning and transforming stigmatized versions of illegality (Nuñez-Janes and Ovalle 2016)
- Craft/oficio: popular, grassroots endeavors that create from the experiences of people and relies on local knowledge

Provide Resources

In reference to the recommendations from Amanda Foltz's research paper "DACA and Undocumented Student Experience at the University of North Texas" the Outreach Recruitment Team saw the opportunity to create what originally was a toolkit to better assist undocumented students. Throughout this process we saw the need to help increase awareness regarding DACA and SB 1528 in the UNT Community. The toolkit quickly evolved into a resource guide that is meant to inform the UNT community on how to best assist students who are undocumented and also to empower undocumented and DACA recipients with information to help them through the admissions and financial aid processes.

Provide Mentorship Opportunities

The mission of the Eagle Dreamers Program is to provide mentorship and support to undocumented students at UNT while educating the campus community.

- Overview of history, laws and policies affecting undocumented youth
- Review of statistics on the undocumented population at UNT
- Overview of on-campus resources
- Reveal experiences from undocumented students on campus
- Learn how to be an advocate to our undocumented and DACA students

EAGLE  DREAMERS

U n i v e r s i t y o f N o r t h T e x a s

Est. 1890

What can you do to support undocumented students and build resilience?

- Recognize the unique needs of undocumented and immigrant students
- Consider undocumented youth's needs as related to other programs and initiatives
- Create an undocumented student program and/or resource center
- Create a working group focusing on undocumented student issues
- Provide training
- Provide access to specialized legal services
- Provide resource for college transitions
- Stay connected with immigrant rights organizations, youth-led groups, and legal providers

Be intentional in your recruitment

- Calling Campaigns Targeting Bill 1528 students
- Email campaigns sending the Brochure, Affidavit and TASFA to undocumented prospective students
- Presentations explaining how to apply for admissions and scholarships to Bill 1528 students
- TASFA nights
- Train your staff

Be intentional in your recruitment

- College Week Live Chat Advising sessions for DACA and bill 1528 students
- Community Partnerships (Region 11, Region 10 Denton Isd, Boys and Girls clubs)
- Spanish Face Cards and materials
- Bilingual counselors
- Crea fama y acuestate a dormir
- Presentations at the Mexican consulate

Ready to take action?

- North Texas Student Support Coalition
- North Texas Dream Team
- Eagle Dreamers Training at UNT April 18