



Policy Brief:
**Extending Eligibility of the
ACA to DACA Recipients
Attending College**

Anna Rios, University of California, Berkeley

Priscila Largo, CUNY Lehman College

Who We Are

Anna Rios (she, her), 2020-2021 Líderes Avanzando Fellow, UnidosUS

- Anna is an undergraduate student at UC Berkeley studying Molecular and Cell Biology. She is the co-president of the American Red Cross at Cal and a founder of Faces in STEM, and she has been involved in clinical, neuroscience, and COVID-19-related research projects. Anna also provides mentorship to high school students in Oakland who are pursuing post-secondary education.

Priscila Largo (she, her), 2020-2021 Líderes Avanzando Fellow, UnidosUS

- Priscila is a first-generation college student at the City University of New York (CUNY) Lehman College. Currently, in her senior year, Priscila is pursuing a degree in Health Education and Promotion with a Concentration in Community Health and Nutrition. Though originally from Ecuador, Priscila has been residing in the U.S for 14 years. As an immigrant herself, she has experienced the challenges and limitations that come with being an immigrant in this country. Her experiences have driven her passion for advocating for the rights of undocumented immigrants and their access to health care, higher education for young immigrants, and a change in Immigration Laws. At her Institution, she's been a volunteer at the Herbert H. Lehman Food Bank and was a fellow of the CUNY Food Justice Leadership Fellowship. Priscila has been an advocate and participant in rallies and peaceful protests related to the DREAM Act and Green Light New York Bill. She has also held roles in the Student-Led Programming Events Board and was President of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society Chapter at her community college. Priscila saw the Lideres Avanzado Fellowship as an opportunity to share her personal experience as an undocumented immigrant and use the platform to voice the urgent needs of the undocumented community and their access to quality affordable health care. Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, Priscila plans to pursue her Master's in Public Health.

Background

The Affordable Care Act (ACA)¹, enacted on March 23, 2010, currently provides health coverage to more than 20 million people.² In order to qualify for health coverage under the ACA, individuals must be U.S. citizens or lawfully present, and they cannot be incarcerated or have income that is more than 400% of the federal poverty level.³ Under Title 1-Subtitle A of the Affordable Care Act, unmarried children below the age of 26 are ensured dependent health coverage.⁴ Many college students benefit from this act; however, such benefits are not extended to recipients of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) because of their non-permanent status.⁵ Today, approximately 454,000 undocumented students attend a college/university in the United States.⁶

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “seven out of ten U.S. deaths are caused by chronic illness;”⁷ such diseases can be prevented and monitored by health screenings and primary care consultations. Providing affordable health coverage to undocumented students can reduce the risks of preventable health problems.

The Need

“Research confirms that students do better in school when they are emotionally and physically healthy. They miss fewer classes, are less likely to engage in risky or antisocial behavior, concentrate more, and achieve higher test scores. Unfortunately, too many students go to class in less-than-optimal health.”- ASCD Whole Child Initiative⁸

In the Latino community, health coverage is not a guaranteed privilege. Latinos are three times more likely to be uninsured than non-Hispanic Whites; overall, a quarter of Latinos are uninsured.⁹ Simultaneously, the number of Latinos who enroll in but do not graduate from college is a persistent problem. Latino students graduate from four-year and two-year colleges at rates of 54% and 19% respectively.¹⁰ This sharply contrasts with the 63% of White students who graduate from four-year colleges and the 25% who graduate from two-year colleges.¹¹ The idea that these two phenomena—lack of access to health care and lower-than-average graduation rates—are correlated poses the question of whether guaranteeing health coverage to Latino college students, especially those who are undocumented, could improve college graduation rates.

The need for the Latino community to have access to preventative health care and mental health resources has amplified with the COVID-19 pandemic. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Latino community is 2.8 times more likely than White, non-Hispanic people to contract COVID-19 and 4.6 times more likely to be hospitalized.¹² Access to health care is critical for Latinos and should be immediately provided to undocumented college students who lack it.

Our Ask

We request that Congress extend eligibility of the Affordable Care Act to DACA recipients attending college. An estimated 216,000 college students are DACA-eligible;¹³ the average monthly cost of health insurance for a 21-year-old is \$200,¹⁴ totaling \$2,400 per year. The cost of health insurance coverage for all DACA-eligible college students adds up to approximately \$519 million, significantly lower than the \$6.2 billion that the DACA-eligible population contributes to the national economy.¹⁵

Impact

In 2019, about 28.9 million people continued to lack health insurance coverage.¹⁶ Uninsured individuals have cited that the main reason for not seeking health coverage is the high cost of health insurance. Undocumented immigrants continue to be part of this group, as they are ineligible to apply for Medicaid or marketplace health coverage under the current ACA.

Undocumented students pursuing post-secondary education are assets who will play significant roles in the future of this country. However, they face hardship when attempting to access quality health care, amid financial insecurity that cannot be ameliorated due to ineligibility for federal financial aid or certain scholarships.

A simple wellness visit can have a dramatic impact on long-term health, preventing many chronic diseases.¹⁷ Students should be able to focus on their academic progress without the worry of not being able to afford the cost of a simple checkup. Health care is a human right and should not be defined by an individual's immigration status.

Endnotes

- 1 "Affordable Care Act (ACA) - HealthCare.gov Glossary," HealthCare.gov, accessed February 28, 2021, <https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/affordable-care-act/>.
- 2 "ObamaCare Enrollment Numbers," ObamaCare Facts, November 4, 2020. <https://obamacarefacts.com/sign-ups/obamacare-enrollment-numbers/>.
- 3 "Everything to Know About Obamacare (ACA) Subsidies," eHealthinsurance, November 23, 2020, <https://www.ehealthinsurance.com/resources/affordable-care-act/aca-obamacare-subsidies>.
- 4 "Affordable Care Act (ACA) - HealthCare.gov Glossary."
- 5 "Key Facts on Individuals Eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program," Kaiser Family Foundation, February 1, 2018, <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/fact-sheet/key-facts-on-individuals-eligible-for-the-deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals-daca-program/>.
- 6 Elizabeth Redden, "Report Finds Growth in Undocumented Student Population," Inside Higher Ed, April 17, 2020, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/17/report-estimates-more-450000-undocumented-immigrants-are-enrolled-higher-ed>.
- 7 "Preventive Care," PublicHealth.org, Health Guides, February 17, 2021, <https://www.publichealth.org/public-awareness/preventive-care-schedule/>.
- 8 "Healthy," The Whole Child, accessed February 28, 2021, <http://www.wholechildeducation.org/about/healthy/>.
- 9 Ariel Gelrud Shiro and Richard V. Reeves, "Latinos Often Lack Access to Healthcare and Have Poor Health Outcomes. Here's How We Can Change That," Brookings Institute, September 25, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2020/09/25/latinos-often-lack-access-to-healthcare-and-have-poor-health-outcomes-heres-how-we-can-change-that/>.
- 10 "National Higher Education," Fact Sheet, UnidosUS, September 2020, http://publications.unidosus.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/2085/unidosus_nationalhighereducation_factsheet.pdf.
- 11 "Latino College Completion: United States," Excelencia in Education, accessed February 28, 2021. <https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/latino-college-completion>.
- 12 "Risk for COVID-19 Infection, Hospitalization, and Death by Race/Ethnicity," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last updated March 12, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>.
- 13 "Undocumented Students in Higher Education. How Many Students Are in U.S. Colleges and Universities, and Who Are They?" New American Economy, The Presidents' Alliance for Higher Education and Immigration, April 2020, <https://www.presidentsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Undocumented-Students-in-Higher-Education-April-2020.pdf>.
- 14 Steve Fiorillo, "Average Health Insurance Cost by Age and State," *TheStreet*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.thestreet.com/personal-finance/average-health-insurance-cost-14878894>.
- 15 "Immigrants and the Economy in: United States of America," New American Economy, accessed February 28, 2021, <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/national/>.
- 16 Kendal Orgera, Jennifer Tolbert, and Anthony Damico, "Key Facts about the Uninsured Population," Kaiser Family Foundation, November 6, 2020, <https://www.kff.org/uninsured/issue-brief/key-facts-about-the-uninsured-population/>.
- 17 "Preventive Care," Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, accessed February 28, 2021, <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/preventive-care#cit1>.



Policy Brief:
**Increasing Federal
Funding for TRIO Student
Support Services (SSS)**

Henry Rosas Ibarra, Yale University

Citlaly Gomez Ibarra, Arizona State University

Luz F Velazquez, Binghamton University

Who We Are

Henry Rosas Ibarra, Yale University

- Henry Rosas Ibarra is a graduating senior from Yale University with a Bachelor of Arts in Ethnicity, Race, and Migration. Born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona as the son of Mexican immigrants, his policy and direct service work centers on ensuring equitable policy outcomes and increased political representation for Latino communities. As a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow and a Director's Fellow for Yale's Institution for Social and Policy Studies, he conducted independent research projects focusing on histories of Latino community organizing and Arizona immigration policy. At Yale, he has created and led programming that provided social and academic mentorship for fellow First-Generation, Low-Income (FGLI) students. He also worked to strengthen Yale's vibrant Latino community as Social Chair for Ballet Folklorico Mexicano de Yale and as Co-President of De Colores, the Latino LGBTQ affinity group.

Citlaly Gomez Ibarra, Arizona State University

- Citlaly Gomez Ibarra is a first generation Mexican-American born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona. She is currently an incoming Senior at Arizona State University pursuing a concurrent degree in Political Science and History with a Minor in Transborder Studies. On campus, Citlaly is a part of the Association of Chicanos Por La Causa Scholars, a participating member of the Hispanic Business Student Association and a sister of Pi Lambda Chi Latina Sorority, Incorporated. Citlaly's roles in constituent services, and community outreach has strengthened her desire to gain more insight into public policy. Upon completion of her undergraduate degree, Citlaly plans to get her masters in Public Administration.

Luz F Velazquez, Binghamton University

- Luz Velazquez is a first-generation, low-income college student from Queens, NY and a proud daughter of Paraguayan immigrant parents. She is currently a graduating senior at Binghamton University pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with minors in Latin American and Caribbean area studies and Immigration Studies. At her institution, Luz serves as the Student Director of Programming and Diversity Initiatives for the career center, is a Resident Assistant, and an active member of TRIO Student Support Services. Her additional roles as an immigration researcher, JFEW SUNY Global Affairs Scholar, NASPA Undergraduate Fellow, and *Líderes Avanzando* Fellow inform her desire to work in the field of public policy advocating for the immigrant and Latinx community through education equity and migrant justice.

SUMMARY

American colleges and universities are facing a crisis of college retention and completion rates for working-class Latino students. Nationwide, 70% of Latino college students identify as either first-generation or low-income (FGLI).¹ Among FGLI undergraduates, more than 4 in 10 fail to complete a four-year degree program on-time—the completion rate drops drastically to just 6% among FGLI community college students. For undocumented college students, about half of whom identify as Latinx, the figure rises to just 6.6%.²

The COVID-19 pandemic further aggravates these figures for FGLI Latino students. According to a survey done by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 40% of Latinos currently at four-year universities and 44% of current Latino community college students surveyed said the pandemic was likely or very likely to impact their ability to complete their respective degrees.³ Additionally, decades-long gains made in college enrollment for Latinos evaporated when nationwide fall 2020 college enrollment figures dropped by nearly 5.5%.⁴

These alarming figures are a call for policymakers to address a crisis of degree completion among Latino FGLI students—especially among undocumented undergraduates that fall into this category. The federal TRIO program's Student Support Services (SSS) is one step in inspiring scholars to complete their respective degrees. SSS provides comprehensive support to FGLI students through dedicated professional mentorship, counseling services, and grant assistance to improve college retention rates. In this memo, we call for a budget increase of \$1.2 billion allocated for TRIO programs and amending the Higher Education Act (HEA) to allow undocumented students access to federal education funds.

BACKGROUND

TRIO SSS consists of eight federal programs assisting low-income or underrepresented minorities to finish high school, enroll in post-secondary education, and attain a degree. Established by the Higher Education Act in 1965, the host of programs was allocated nearly \$1 billion in fiscal year (FY) 2018, and in FY 2019, SSS received more than \$500 million.⁵ Also in FY 2019, the average cost per participant in the program was approximately \$1,667, and the average award granted to applicants was approximately \$316,000.⁶ Further, SSS has consistently serviced over 200,000 students since FY 2010.⁷

The principal mission of the TRIO SSS program is to provide:

- opportunities for academic development through regular programming
- assistance on college requirements and motivate students toward the successful completion of their post-secondary education
- grant aid to current SSS participants who are receiving Federal Pell Grants

Combined, these services work to construct a more inclusive college campus for FGLI college students and “help students make the transition from one level of higher education to the next.”⁸

THE ASK

- Congress should increase investment in federal TRIO programs by \$1.2 billion to increase college retention rates amongst FGLI students.
- Congress should also amend Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to allow Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and other undocumented students to be eligible for federal TRIO funds and services.

THE NEED

- Attaining a post-secondary degree has long been the golden ticket for social and economic mobility in the United States. However, there is an urgency to address the socioeconomic and racial disparities in retention rates. For cohorts entering 4-year public institutions in 2011, only about 54% of Latino students finished their degrees within six years, compared to 63% of White students.⁹ Moreover, FGLI college students complete their degrees at half the rate of their non-FGLI peers.¹⁰ With its core mission being to correct these disparities, SSS is an essential path forward to bolster student achievement.
- TRIO SSS has demonstrated a significant positive effect on FGLI student retention and success. Students enrolled in TRIO SSS programs are more likely to remain enrolled in higher education, obtain more college credits, and earn higher GPAs compared to similarly qualified students who were not enrolled in the program.¹¹ The Pell Institute (2009) found that SSS students were 12% more likely to be retained in the second year and 23% more likely to be retained in the third year¹²—again demonstrating the effectiveness of SSS programs.

THE IMPACT

Expanding the reach of Student Support Services to more students at community colleges and universities is key to fostering a new generation of Americans equipped to meet our nation’s growing challenges. Inspiring and supporting students who are the first in their families to step foot on a college campus fulfills the promise of economic and social mobility for millions of working-class students. The hundreds of thousands of students already benefiting from SSS have provided their stories and data, revealing a renewed confidence in their academic potential and feelings of belonging.¹³ We call for a dramatic increase in SSS funding to meet the striking racial and economic inequities associated with degree attainment. Additionally, the inclusion of undocumented students further unlocks the academic and economic potential necessary for our communities to thrive.

A lack of action on the issue of degree attainment has severe ramifications for our post-COVID economic rebuilding efforts. Students from Latinx working families have put their

education on hold to serve our community as essential workers. Many more feel the social and economic factors induced by the pandemic make them unlikely to finish their degree. Without active mentorship and financial support, we face an entire class of FGLI Latinx students failing to be adequately equipped to attain well-paying jobs. Student Support Services and their accompanying resources can catch these students before they are completely out of reach. As Congress considers economic relief plans, we ask that they allot additional funding for SSS programs to ensure that low-income students are receiving the support they need, including expanding the TRIO program funding, to complete their higher education.

Endnotes

- 1 UnidosUS, "A Path Forward for Latinos: Laying the Groundwork for Equity in Higher Education," February 18, 2020 , <http://publications.nclr.org/handle/123456789/2110>.
- 2 Esther Yu Hsi Lee, "Why So Few Undocumented Immigrants Make It Through College," ThinkProgress, March 31, 2015, <https://archive.thinkprogress.org/why-so-few-undocumented-immigrants-make-it-through-college-d07d30136e5/>.
- 3 Abigail Johnson, "Roughly Half of College Students Say Covid Will Likely Impact Their Ability to Graduate," CNBC.com, December 31, 2020, <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/12/31/half-of-college-students-say-covid-may-impact-ability-to-graduate-.html>.
- 4 Michael T. Neitzel, "College Enrollment Update: Undergraduate Numbers Now Down 4% Nationwide," Forbes.com, October 15, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaeltneitzel/2020/10/15/college-enrollment-update-undergraduate-numbers-now-down-4-nationwide/?sh=2b2d68b9389d>.
- 5 Council for Opportunity in Education, "Resources: TRIO," (accessed February 12, 2021, <https://coenet.org/trio.shtml>).
- 6 "Student Support Services Program: Funding Status," U.S. Department of Education, accessed February 11, 2021, <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/funding.html>.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 U.S. Department of Education, "Federal TRIO Programs 50th Anniversary Fact Sheet," 2014, page 5, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/trio50anniv-factsheet.pdf>.
- 9 National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics," U.S. Department of Education, 2019, Table 326.10, accessed February 12, 2021 https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_326.10.asp.
- 10 Margaret W. Cahalan, Laura W. Perna, Marisha Addison, Chelsea Murray, Pooja R. Patel, and Nathan Jiang, "Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States: 2020 Historical Trend Report," The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, Council for Opportunity in Education, and Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy of the University of Pennsylvania, 2020, <http://pellinstitute.org/indicators/>.
- 11 Bradford W. Chaney, "National Evaluation of Student Support Services: Examination of Student Outcomes After Six Years," U.S. Department of Education, 2010, <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/highered/student-support/final-report.pdf>.
- 12 The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, "National Studies Find TRIO Programs Effective at Increasing College Enrollment and Graduation," ERIC Institute of Education Sciences, May 2009), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED508928>.
- 13 TRIO Student Support Services/Center for Learning and Student Success, "Testimonials from TRIO SSS Graduates," Rutgers University, 2016, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://trio.camden.rutgers.edu/testimonials-trio-sss-graduates>.



Policy Brief:
**Expanding TRIO to Be Inclusive
of All Students Regardless
of Immigrant Statuses and
Providing Federal Financial Aid
Funding for Undocumented,
TPS, and DACA Students**

Kat Trejo, George Mason University

Amy Patricia Morales, Florida State University

Who We Are

Katherine Trejo, George Mason University

Katherine Trejo is a senior majoring in Conflict Analysis and Resolution with an individualized concentration in Community Engagement with Displaced Populations, which includes an emphasis on youth in conflict at George Mason University. On campus, she's President of the Mariposas Mentoring Program, Co-Public Relations Chair of F1rst Gen Mason, and a Student Transition Empowerment Program scholar, as of 2018. Off campus, Katherine is an advocate and organizer in the Virginia, D.C., area with the Black Lives Matter movement and the immigration movement. She also works with first-generation high school students as a college academic success coach, helping students prepare for their FAFSA and other college-related applications. Finally, she is an *Avanzando* Fellow for UnidosUS, the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization.

Amy Patricia Morales, Florida State University

Amy Patricia Morales grew up in Miami, Florida, by way of Honduras and Cuba. Amy has been involved in Student Senate and also Global Scholars, an undergraduate research-abroad opportunity program that led her to Tijuana, Mexico. Amy also currently serves as the co-vice president of the Central American United Student Association on campus. Amy is also involved in Dream Defenders and Engage Miami in the local community. Ending family detention and supporting low-income and mixed-status families is what drives Amy and is what inspired her to join the *Avanzando* Fellowship.

Background

Undocumented students in the United States struggle to pay higher education costs, which prevents them from accessing higher-paying jobs. Federal financial aid such as loans, scholarships, grants, or work-study funding is inaccessible to undocumented students. Forty percent of 18- to 24-year-old undocumented students do not graduate due to cost constraints, increasing the likelihood that they will experience poverty.¹ Further, undocumented students already experience poverty at twice the rate of students with U.S.-born parents.² Access to federal assistance such as loans, grants, and scholarships will help undocumented students alleviate some cost constraints. Reducing some of the financial stress associated with pursuing higher education may help undocumented students graduate at the same rate as their U.S.-born peers and prepare them to make beneficial social and economic contributions in the United States.

Our Ask

- Amend the Higher Education Act (HEA) to authorize Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and other undocumented students to be eligible for federal student aid provided through the HEA.
- Ensure state-funded college-readiness programs such as TRIO are inclusive and supportive of all undocumented students. Programs like TRIO work to provide first-generation, low-income, and economically disadvantaged students the opportunity to prepare for achieving higher education by providing a constant support system that follows them from middle school through college.

The Need

COVID-19 has brought to light the disparities faced by undocumented students, TPS, and DACA recipients in the United States. On February 4, 2020, the public charge rule went into effect, stating that “aliens are inadmissible to the United States if they are unable to care for themselves without becoming public charges.”³ An undocumented student's inability to access healthcare assistance due to the public charge rule has instilled fear of being detained by ICE when seeking out medical attention. This is further exacerbated by the need to be seen by a medical professional for testing during the pandemic. Along with this issue, immigrant families and students across the nation disenrolled from the public benefit programs for which they were eligible. An estimated one-in-seven (13.7%) adults in immigrant families, and more than one in five (20.7%) adults in low-income households, reported avoiding public benefit programs for fear of risking future green card status.⁴ Disenrolling from public benefit programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) means losing access to food security, which negatively impacts the functionality of students in a school setting.⁵

Undocumented students must be given federal financial assistance to reduce the number of labor hours they must expend to help support their families and pay for tuition. One survey showed that 57% of students who worked lost their job due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶ Further, it is likely that the students who are still employed are working in high-risk jobs. One study revealed that 69% of undocumented workers hold “essential” or “frontline” positions.⁷ The number of multi-status students working in high-risk roles during the pandemic shows a high level of commitment to both their education and their families.

As of 2019, close to 100,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools every year.⁸ A 2020 report revealed that approximately 2% of college students are

undocumented immigrants.⁹ By 2060, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that Latinos will comprise 30% of our workforce.¹⁰ Most jobs require a college degree for a viable salary, so pursuing higher education is necessary for most individuals. Without a job and a degree, undocumented students and their families may face financial insecurity and housing instability. College affordability means investing in Latino students regardless of citizenship status to ensure they have an equitable chance of attaining their degree.

Programs such as TRIO are an extension to education that goes beyond the classroom in ways that seek to elevate and encourage students to pursue post-secondary education by providing academic tutoring, assistance with college applications, and mentoring. Ensuring and expanding state funding for such college-readiness programs also provides a sense of community among the students within the program who face similar obstacles and share similar anxious sentiments about their ability to succeed in higher education.

Impact

Undocumented immigrants pose a higher risk of developing depression and anxiety.¹¹ Immigration-related stressors, including fear of deportation, social marginalization, and employment problems, mean that undocumented students are likely struggling with mental health issues and might be susceptible to other psychosocial disorders.¹² The inability to provide supportive spaces and resources to undocumented students prevents them from succeeding in educational institutions and society.

In 2015, an estimated 24.5% of the undocumented population lived below the poverty threshold.¹³ Financial instability coupled with limited access to higher education makes it close to impossible to realize a future where one can live beyond paycheck to paycheck. One 2013 study projected that by 2020, 65% of jobs would require some type of college degree.¹⁴ Currently, undocumented, TPS, and DACA recipient students struggle to complete college due to tuition costs. These students will be denied social mobility and financial freedom if no action is taken. In Virginia, Senate Bill 1387, which calls for federal financial assistance to be made available to undocumented, TPS, and DACA recipient students, passed this 2021 legislative session. Virginia joins states such as Connecticut and Washington, among others, who realize the urgency in providing federal aid to undocumented, TPS, and DACA recipient students, further proving that this is an attainable goal.

Denying access to federal financial assistance programs such as FAFSA and federal student emergency aid like the CARES Act will continue to attack the economic stability of undocumented scholars. The added stresses of events from earlier in 2020, the SCOTUS decision on DACA, the current status of TPS and its recipients, the COVID-19 pandemic itself, the threat of unemployment, and the fear of being tested for COVID-19 due to the previous administration's harsh immigration policies all take financial tolls on undocumented scholars and their families.

Endnotes

- 1 Antoinette Flores, "Undocumented Students Deserve Greater Access to Higher Education," Center for American Progress, 2015, 5, accessed February 11, 2021, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/immigration/news/2015/03/31/110122/undocumented-students-deserve-greater-access-to-higher-education/>.
- 2 Ibid., 4.
- 3 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Public Charge," Department of Homeland Security, accessed February 11, 2021, <https://www.uscis.gov/green-card/green-card-processes-and-procedures/public-charge>.

- 4 Hamutal Bernstein, Dulce Gonzalez, Michael Karpman, and Stephen Zuckerman, "One in Seven Adults in Immigrant Families Reported Avoiding Public Benefit Programs in 2018," Urban Institute, 2019, <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/one-seven-adults-immigrant-families-reported-avoiding-public-benefit-programs-2018>.
- 5 Jennie Day-Burget, "The Impact of Changing SNAP and School Meals During COVID-19," Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *Culture of Health Blog*, April 3, 2020, <https://www.rwjf.org/en/blog/2020/04/the-impact-of-changing-snap-and-school-meals-during-covid-19.html>.
- 6 Sadhana Singh, "New Survey of TheDream.us Scholars Details How COVID-19 is Affecting DREAMers," TheDream.us, April 3, 2020, <https://www.thedream.us/news/new-survey-of-the-dream-us-scholars-details-how-covid-19-is-affecting-dreamers/>.
- 7 Raymond G. Lahoud, "Study says 69% of Undocumented Immigrant Workers Hold Essential Jobs to Fight COVID," *The National Law Review* XI, no 71 (January 14, 2021), <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/study-says-69-undocumented-immigrant-workers-hold-essential-jobs-to-fight-covid>.
- 8 Marnette Federis, "A New Generation of 'un-DACA-mented' High School Graduates Fights Hurdles to Higher Ed," *The World*, June 10, 2019, <https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-06-10/new-generation-un-dacammented-high-school-graduates-fights-hurdles-higher-ed>.
- 9 Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, "Report: Undocumented Students in Higher Education: How Many Students Are in U.S. Colleges and Universities, and Who Are They?" September 1, 2020, <https://www.presidentsalliance.org/report-undocumented-students-in-higher-education-how-many-students-are-in-u-s-colleges-and-universities-and-who-are-they/>.
- 10 Mitra Toossi, "A Look at the Future of the U.S. Labor Force to 2060," U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Spotlight on Statistics, September 2016, <https://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2016/a-look-at-the-future-of-the-us-labor-force-to-2060/pdf/a-look-at-the-future-of-the-us-labor-force-to-2060.pdf>.
- 11 Luz Maria Garcini, Kevin E. Murray, A. Zhou, Elizabeth A. Klonoff, M.G. Myers, and John P. Elder, "Mental Health of Undocumented Immigrant Adults in the United States: A Systematic Review of Methodology and Findings," *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 14, no 1 (2016).
- 12 Heide Castañeda, Seth M. Holmes, Daniel S. Madrigal, Maria-Elena DeTrinidad Young, Naomi Beyeler, and James Quesada, "Immigration as a Social Determinant of Health," *Annual Review of Public Health* 36, (2015): 375-392.
- 13 Annie Laurie Hines, "Poverty Facts: Undocumented Students in Higher Education," The Center for Poverty Research, 2018, https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/file-attachments/undocumented_students_and_higher_education_0.pdf?1538690803.
- 14 Anthony P. Carnevale, Nicole Smith, Jeff Strohl, "Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020," Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Center on Education and the Workforce, June 2013, https://1gyhoq479ufd3yna29x7ubjn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.FR_Web_.pdf.



Policy Brief: Equity Data in Higher Education

Luis León Medina, Yale University

Andrew Mendoza, University of California, Berkeley

Who We Are

Andrew Mendoza (he/him/his) is a junior at the University of California, Berkeley. Originally from Los Angeles, California, Andrew’s interest in pursuing a Political Science and Legal Studies degree is emboldened by his experiences as a first-generation, low-income community-college transfer student. Andrew elevates the voices of the underrepresented populations he comes from and serves. He is currently president of La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc. at UC Berkeley, and he leads UC Berkeley’s Navigating Cal (NavCal) Program, teaching social and cultural capital to his beloved communities. Andrew seeks to pursue a joint JD/MPP degree and has cultivated this interest from his experiences as a Public Policy and Leadership Conference Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and as a legal intern for the Phillips Black Project.

Luis León Medina (he/him/his) is a junior at Yale University studying sociology and data science. Originally from El Salvador, Luis currently resides in Houston, Texas. On campus, he is heavily involved in the Latinx community, serving as a student consultant for the cultural center, co-president of the Latinx pre-professional student group, and president of Ballet Folklorico. Professionally, Luis has worked in philanthropy, non-profit, and tech, always with the goal of amplifying the voices of underrepresented communities. Luis has a deep passion for data-driven policy and is an UnidosUS *Avanzando Líderes* Fellow.

Background

Undergraduate enrollment rates for Hispanic students have increased from 1.4 million students in 2000 to 3.4 million in 2018.¹ As of 2012, Latinos are the fastest-growing population enrolled in higher education.² However, Latinx students face significant barriers to college success. At four-year institutions, the Latinx graduation rate hovers around 54%, compared to 64% for White students.³ By 2045, America-at-large will exist as a minority-majority entity with Latinos at the helm.⁴ Therefore, we must take the foundational, proactive steps to ensure that student success is more equal across ethnic and racial lines. Many Latino students are first-generation college students from households that often contain low-income and mixed-status families.⁵ For those students, education is the

golden ticket toward socioeconomic mobility. However, there is no federal mechanism to acquire the “equity” data needed to equalize student outcomes given the disparity in success. The Department of Education’s federal mechanism to acquire demographic data is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form (FAFSA), but it only captures surface-level details. This means that many marginalized identities and their unique struggles fall between the gaps of data metrics. Better acquisition and understanding of data are instrumental to determine the needs of current students and help them succeed in higher education. This work will impact future generations.

The Ask

Providing further avenues to understanding where existing gaps hinder Latinx student success is necessary for bridging those gaps uniformly and at a federal level. A holistic understanding of student experiences is important to equalize the educational outcomes for Latinx students. Currently, we stand at the precipice of possibility. In taking action, we have the opportunity to provide a foundational jumping-off point toward student equity. Without action, though, we teeter dangerously close to the precipice of perpetuating systemic wounds that time has yet to heal. Therefore:

The Department of Education should:

- Create a uniform federal standard to acquire “equity data” that will be directly used to gauge student outcomes. Some factors may include college enrollment data, retention rates, need of support services in the institution, the number of institutionalized ethnic/racial support centers and clubs on campus, and average earnings following degree attainment. The data should, at least, be disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income, and household/student status.

Congress should:

- Require the Department of Education to improve performance standards and accountability by having a uniform criterion with which to measure equity data and increase public oversight, by establishing clear publicly available ways to utilize this data moving forward.
- Disseminate and disaggregate newly acquired data from higher education through cross-sectional metrics, including but not limited to Pell-grant eligibility, sex, and immigration status.
- Require Title IV institutions to provide equity data on the following: enrollment change from the previous semester by type (first-time, full-time, transfer, and part-time), completion rates, withdrawal rates, job placement rates, alumni earnings, and underrepresented minority (URM) status, including and not limited to student-parents, formerly incarcerated, and disabled.

The Need

Currently, we are not able to cross-tabulate data to understand the needs of the marginalized populations who are inevitably inhabiting the spaces of higher education. As such, the status quo will be seen as a relic of antiquity, ill-equipped to handle the changes of a modern world. It is time for the ongoing socioeconomic and racial disparities in higher education to be rectified. By changing the way we acquire, curate, and subsequently use higher education data, we can begin to bridge the equity gap that bars marginalized student populations from full participation on campus and prepare them for the coming

future. Furthermore, by being transparent and equity-focused in using holistic data, we can hope to close the gaps in Latino graduation and success rates.

Impact

We must act now. The next generation of college students needs us! The hope is that this accessibility and cross-tabulated data will not only help us achieve the next Latinx frontier, but will also help us with serving Black, Indigenous, Asian, first-generation White, and rural students, as well as many other populations. This data will only make us better. This data will enable students, researchers, policy analysts, think tanks, and local and federal politicians to understand the gaps, the successes, and the failures in higher education both at the local and federal level. It will help us all!

The vision is for a Census-style Application Programming Interface (API) of higher education data that anyone can easily query and search. The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education has the Performance Measurement Reporting System, where community colleges and state universities report data on access and affordability, student success and completion, workforce alignment and outcomes, and fiscal stewardship. Their mission is “to modernize data and analytics systems, improve analytic capabilities, and place data at the center of all policy discussions in public higher education.”⁶ Through this tool, anyone can understand the landscape of Massachusetts’ higher education environment. We don’t have to imagine the potential; we already have working examples. It is time to act now and see this data nationally.

Endnotes

- 1 National Center for Education Statistics, “The Condition of Education: Undergraduate Enrollment,” U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC, 2020, accessed February 11, 2021, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cha.asp.
- 2 Rachel Dinkes, “Bar Chart Race: Changing Demographics in Postsecondary Enrollment,” National Center for Education Statistics Blog, June 30, 2020, <https://nces.ed.gov/blogs/nces/2020/06/30/default>.
- 3 National Center for Education Statistics, “Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups: Indicator 23: Postsecondary Graduation Rates,” U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC, 2019, accessed February 11, 2021, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator_red.asp.
- 4 William H. Frey, “The US Will Become ‘Minority White’ in 2045, Census Projects: Youthful Minorities Are the Engine of Future Growth,” Brookings Institution, March 14, 2018, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/14/the-us-will-become-minority-white-in-2045-census-projects/>.
- 5 Nicole Alia Salis Reyes and Amaury Nora, “Lost Among the Data: A Review of Latino First Generation College Students,” Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2012, accessed February 11, 2021, https://www.hacu.net/images/hacu/OPAI/H3ERC/2012_papers/Reyes%20nora%20-%20rev%20of%201st%20gen%20latino%20college%20students%20-%202012.pdf.
- 6 Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, “Performance Measurement Reporting System,” Department of Higher Education Data Center, May 2019, <https://www.mass.edu/datacenter/PMRS/home.asp>.