



**Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) & ACPA: College Student Educators International Joint Response to the Supreme Court of the United States Decision on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program and Position Statement on Undocumented College Students**

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*Approved by the ASHE Position Taking Committee, ASHE Board of Directors, and ACPA External Relations Advisory Board*

On June 18, 2020, the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) issued a decision on a grouping of cases<sup>1</sup> that affect the future of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program,<sup>2</sup> and the lives of an estimated 649,070 DACA beneficiaries and their families (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS], 2020).

The SCOTUS majority opinion ruled that the Trump Administration's termination of DACA was "arbitrary and capricious" (*Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California*, 2020, p. 3). As a result, USCIS will maintain the DACA program. However, DACA could still be terminated in the future.

While the SCOTUS decision is one for which undocumented immigrant rights groups have been steadfastly advocating, undocumented students (with and without DACA), as well as their families, will continue to encounter myriad barriers in their plight for greater higher education access and success. In this statement, we provide background and

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<sup>1</sup> On November 12, 2019, the SCOTUS held a hearing on the legality of the Trump administration's termination of DACA. These three cases included: *Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California* (No. 18-587), *Donald J. Trump, President of the United States v. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (No. 18-588), and *Kevin K. McAleenan, Acting Secretary of Homeland Security v. Martin Jonathan Batalla Vidal* (No. 18-589). For a transcript of the oral hearing, see: [https://www.supremecourt.gov/oral\\_arguments/argument\\_transcripts/2019/18-587\\_1bn2.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/2019/18-587_1bn2.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> DACA is an executive action that provides two main benefits to eligible undocumented immigrants who meet specific criteria: (a) a renewable two-year work permit, and (b) temporary protection from deportation (USCIS, 2018).

analysis of the issue and make a call to action for governmental and institutional leaders.

### **Executive Summary**

There are an estimated 10.5 million undocumented immigrants residing in the United States. Data suggest that 98,000 undocumented youth graduate from high school each year and 454,000 undocumented students are currently enrolled in higher education. Since 2012, DACA has provided its beneficiaries with some access to benefits, yet it is coupled with numerous barriers, including in relation to higher education access and success. Indeed, the higher education public policy landscape is riddled with federal and state public policies that severely restrict the higher education access and success of undocumented and DACA recipient students in the United States. Further, on college and university campuses, supports and resources available to undocumented college students are inconsistent, adding to the barriers that undocumented college students must navigate in higher education. As a group of higher education scholars and practitioners, who have a commitment to inclusion and equity for minoritized students in higher education, we express deep concern over the exclusionary policies and practices that have prevented higher education access and success of undocumented immigrants (with and without DACA). In this statement, we provide a synthesis of existing research focused on undocumented college students (with and without DACA), and offer a call to action to promote equitable policies and practices for this student group.

### **Background on Issue**

The Pew Research Center estimated that in 2017 nearly 10.5 million undocumented immigrants<sup>3</sup> resided in the United States (Krogstad et al., 2019), with a recent increase in migrant arrivals from Central America and Asia (Kim & Yellow Horse, 2018). There are undocumented students in all 50 states from around the world (New American Economy and Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, 2020). Undocumented students<sup>4</sup> (with and without DACA) constitute a subset of this population and their educational journeys are uniquely molded by the sociopolitical climate.

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<sup>3</sup> The nomenclature of "undocumented immigrant" refers to individuals who are not U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, holders of valid visas and those who have not been granted admission into the United States under immigration regulations for employment authorization or longer-term residence. The population of undocumented immigrants in the United States peaked in 2007 at an estimated 12.2 million individuals and has since been in decline, reaching approximately 10.5 million individuals in 2017 (Krogstad et al., 2019).

<sup>4</sup> The term "undocumented students" refers to undocumented immigrants who have enrolled in some K-12 education or are enrolled in an institution of postsecondary education in the United States. In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court Ruling *Plyler v. Doe* extended the privilege of compulsory education to

## Detentions and Deportations

Detentions and deportations are two principal social jurisprudence threats undocumented immigrants face in the United States (Castrellón et al., 2019). For decades, the United States has implemented policies<sup>5</sup> that assist immigration enforcement and removal operations of undocumented immigrants (Wong, 2012). The effects of deportation on undocumented immigrants and their families are traumatic and can lead to dangerous mental health outcomes for those who experience it first-hand, as well as for their K-12 and college-age children (Cadenas et al., 2019; Rojas-Flores et al., 2017). For children of undocumented immigrants, including undocumented students (with and without DACA), family separation and post deportation stressors (e.g., cognitive, emotional, social) have detrimental consequences on their college-seeking and college-going behaviors (Macias & Collet, 2016).

## Role of the Executive Branch

As microcosms of society, college campuses mirror national sociopolitical happenings. Consequently, the executive branch also influences how undocumented students (with and without DACA) experience higher education and sense of belonging (Muñoz et al., 2018; Pérez Huber et al., 2008; Salazar, 2020). Although the Obama administration introduced the DACA program, during 2009 and 2017 it deported 3.3 million people (Chishti et al., 2017). The heightened deportation rates alarmed undocumented students; however, the 2016 presidential campaign escalated overt incidents of racist nativism on college campuses (Gomez & Pérez Huber, 2019; Muñoz et al., 2018). Recent research has found that President Trump's anti-immigrant and xenophobic sentiments and speeches, such as "Build the Wall," which entered college environments and classrooms, have negatively affected the well-being and experiences of undocumented college students (Castrellón et al., 2019; Muñoz et al., 2018; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2019; Salazar, 2020).

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undocumented students (López & López, 2009). In recent years, new data suggest that each year estimated 98,000 undocumented students (with and without DACA) graduate from high school (Zong & Batalova, 2019). Despite the large number of undocumented students enrolled in institutions of education, up to present date, no national policy directly extends nor restricts access to higher education for undocumented students. Even with the national negligence to address access to higher education for this student population, undocumented college students (with and without DACA) account for approximately 2% of all students enrolled in U.S. colleges or universities, or roughly 454,000 students (New American Economy and Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> In 1996, for example, Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, a policy that was passed into law as part of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act, allowed the collaboration between state and local police agencies to assist in immigration law enforcement functions (Dee & Murphy, 2020; Wong, 2012). The 287(g) Program, however, has proven to be costly and harmful to the relations between state and local police officers and communities fearing the threat of deportation (American Immigration Council, 2019).

### **DACA and its (Im)Possibilities**

On June 15, 2012, President Barack Obama announced DACA, an executive order that has granted some undocumented immigrants the opportunity to apply for deferred removal action and employment authorization. The educational requirement to be eligible for DACA was for the applicant to be “currently in school, have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, [or] have obtained a general education development (GED) certificate” (USCIS, n.d.a, para. 6). On September 5, 2017, DACA was terminated by the Trump administration and DACA recipients gradually began to lose their protections. During the five years that DACA was in effect without challenges, about 800,000 people became beneficiaries of the executive action (USCIS, 2017).<sup>6</sup> Although DACA provides its beneficiaries with some access to possibilities (e.g., economic, educational, and social mobility), it is coupled with numerous impossibilities (Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020), including being a temporary solution to a broken immigration system that requires comprehensive immigration reform to address (Gonzales, 2016).

**Possibilities.** As of 2019, an estimated 649,070 individuals currently benefit from DACA (USCIS, 2020). The most recent survey results from 2019 show that DACA recipients were more likely to enroll and persist in college—an opportunity that was more difficult to accomplish before the program (Wong et al., 2019a). Overall, 14.6% of respondents held an associate’s degree and 46% had already completed a bachelor’s degree or higher (Wong et al., 2019b). Additionally, 40% of all respondents indicated they were currently in school, of which 12% were pursuing an associate’s and 82% a bachelor’s degree or higher, including 18% master’s and 7% doctoral degrees (Wong et al., 2019b).

**Impossibilities.** Despite the possibilities of DACA (e.g., legal employment and higher education access and completion), DACA continues to maintain limitations or impossibilities (Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020). For example, the impossibilities of DACA include the precarity of the program, the absence of a pathway to permanent residency or citizenship, and the high cost of renewal (i.e., \$495 biennial renewal cost; Yoshikawa et al., 2017). Also, DACA only protects one segment of the undocumented immigrant population due to restrictive age requirements and restrictions around recipients’ date of arrival to the United States, among others (Yoshikawa et al., 2017).

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<sup>6</sup> People who have received DACA are often referred to as “undocumented immigrants with DACA,” “DACA beneficiaries (or recipients)”, or “DACAmended.”

## Higher Education Public Policy Context

The higher education public policy landscape is riddled with federal and state public policies that severely restrict the postsecondary education access and success of undocumented and DACA recipient students in the United States. (Bjorklund Jr, 2018; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019; Nguyen & Martinez Hoy, 2014; Nienhusser, 2018b; Peña, 2019).

### Federal Level

Although the 1982 landmark Supreme Court decision in *Plyler v. Doe* guarantees free public K-12 education to all students, regardless of immigration status, that decision does not afford undocumented students (with or without DACA) any postsecondary education rights (Nguyen & Martinez Hoy, 2014; Olivas, 2012). Undocumented students and DACA recipients are not eligible for any federal financial aid (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a), which includes programs such as Work-Study, Pell Grants, Perkins Loans, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), subsidized loans, unsubsidized loans, and Direct PLUS Loans. As a further example, undocumented college students (with and without DACA) are ineligible for Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds associated with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act enacted to support students with federal financial assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.b). This is problematic given that past research has found evidence that participation in federal financial aid programs increases students' postsecondary education enrollment (Dynarski, 2002), persistence (Bettinger, 2004), and graduation (Woo & Lew, 2020).

### State Level

**Higher Education Policies.** State higher education public policies affecting undocumented and DACAmented students' college access and success have focused on in-state resident tuition (ISRT) and state aid eligibility (National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, n.d.; Nienhusser, 2018b; Serna, Cohen, & Nguyen, 2017; UndocuScholars Project, 2015). Nienhusser (2018b) classified state higher education public policy environments into four categories: accessible, restrictionist, ambivalent, and incongruous.<sup>7</sup> At least 10 states are accessible (e.g., California, New Mexico, New York, Texas, Washington). Currently, at least five states are restrictionist

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<sup>7</sup> Accessible is defined as public or system(s)-level policies that grant certain undocumented and DACAmented students' ISRT and state aid eligibility; restrictionist is defined as public or system(s)-level policies that deny undocumented and DACAmented students' ISRT and state aid eligibility; ambivalent is defined as an absence of public or system(s)-level policies that grant or deny undocumented and DACAmented students' ISRT and state aid eligibility; incongruous is defined as combinations of public and/or system(s)-level policies that grant, deny, or are absent in relation to undocumented and/or DACAmented students' ISRT and state aid eligibility (Nienhusser, 2018b).

(e.g., Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina) where they have enacted even more severe policies that prohibit undocumented students from enrolling in some or all of its public postsecondary education institutions. At least 10 states (e.g., Montana, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont) are classified as ambivalent. Incongruous states, which include about 20 states, are primarily states that provide ISRT eligibility but not state aid (e.g., Florida, Maine, Nebraska, Utah). Some states (e.g., Massachusetts) and higher education systems (e.g., Ohio Board of Regents) have even used DACA as a requirement to be eligible for ISRT<sup>8</sup> (National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, n.d.).

State higher education policies that expand access to ISRT and state aid to undocumented students (with and without DACA) can significantly relieve the financial burdens associated with the cost of college and promote their ability to continue postsecondary education (Raza et al., 2019). Contrarily, the presence of exclusionary public higher education policies limits undocumented students' college aspirations (Sahay et al., 2016) and enrollment (Conger & Turner, 2017). Furthermore, such discriminatory state policies lead undocumented students (with and without DACA) to have feelings of societal exclusion (Sahay et al., 2016).

**Related Policies.** Many College Promise Programs (or “free college” programs), unfortunately, further discriminate against undocumented students (with and without DACA) since they use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as a way to collect data to decide program eligibility (Perna & Smith, 2020; Smith, 2019; Taylor & del Pilar, 2018).

While only about 15 states offer driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019), states overwhelmingly permit DACA recipients to receive driver's licenses (National Immigration Law Center, 2015). This is key as obtaining a driver's license is vital to undocumented students' access to and success in higher education (Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Roth, 2019).

Yet other state policies (e.g., in Utah) have targeted undocumented immigrants by requiring all public educational institutions to issue ID cards that include language that they are only valid for use on the educational institution's campus (Reyna Rivarola, 2017).

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<sup>8</sup> Both policy environments would be classified as incongruous given the presence of both accessible and restrictionist policies.

Undocumented immigrants and many DACA recipients encounter challenges receiving state occupational licensing and certifications due to their immigration status (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017; Olivas, 2017). Some states restrict licenses to some professions (e.g., law, teaching) or only grant them under certain scenarios (e.g., profession shortages) for undocumented immigrants (with and/or without DACA; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2017).

### **Institutional Context**

The institutional support and resources available to undocumented college students are inconsistent and vary by institutional context, which is primarily affected by the institution's geographic location and associated state policies (Gonzales, 2016; Nienhusser, 2014; Reyna Rivarola, 2017). For example, numerous public universities in California, an accessible state, have established supports for undocumented students (with and without DACA) that provide personalized programs and services, such as immigration law workshops (Canedo Sanchez & So, 2015; Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018, 2020; Pérez Huber, 2015; Southern, 2016). On the other hand, in restrictive states where hostile climates for undocumented immigrants are predominant, undocumented students often have to seek on-campus resources with caution and find staff members who can help them while protecting their identities (Cisneros & Lopez, 2016; Muñoz, 2015). In addition to geographic location, institution-type (e.g., community college, 4-year public university) also shapes the extent of support available to undocumented students, further contributing to the unpredictability they face in higher education (Contreras, 2009; Negrón-Gonzales, 2017).

The lack of robust institutional support across colleges and universities in the United States is detrimental to undocumented students' educational success and creates inequitable college experiences and outcomes (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012; Salazar 2020). Even though some institutions may have undocufriendly<sup>9</sup> (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011) campus climates, undocumented students on those campuses still perceive the support available as limited and insufficient to meet their unique needs; particularly in relation to institutional financial aid and socioemotional supports (Salazar, 2020). Declaring campuses as "sanctuary spaces" also falls short since there is no legal definition attached or legal protections that colleges and universities can provide to students (Newman, 2017); therefore, these declarations may be perceived merely as symbolic acts at undocufriendly institutions. These unsatisfactory and disappointing experiences affect undocumented students' college persistence, showing the limitations of undocufriendly campuses and illuminating the need for colleges and universities to

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<sup>9</sup> Undocufriendly refers to institutions, spaces, or other contexts that support undocumented immigrants in the form of resources, practices, and/or policies.

become “undocuserving institutions” that assume the responsibility of retaining and promoting the success of this student group (Salazar, 2020, p. 293).

In addition to feeling unsupported by their institutions, undocumented college students often encounter unwelcoming and exclusionary campus environments (Nienhusser et al., 2016; Pérez Huber, 2010). It is common for them to be subject to microaggressions as early as their college admission process and be deemed “invisible” on college campuses (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018; Nienhusser et al., 2016). For undocumented students, experiencing overt racism and hostility as they navigate higher education is not unusual either (Pérez Huber, 2010). Many times, they encounter faculty, staff, and peers who make dehumanizing and racist comments, such as calling them “illegal” (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018; Shelton, 2019). The presence of state and federal enforcement agents (e.g., police, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Patrol) at career fairs and other recruitment events also contributes to hostile campus environments, reinforcing messages of exclusion, invisibility, and lack of care among undocumented college students (Jandu, 2019; Mendez & Tovar, 2019).

### **Institutional Agents**

Additionally, the experiences of undocumented students depend greatly on the competency and training that institutional agents<sup>10</sup> have to understand and meet their unique needs (Gonzales, 2016; Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012; Nienhusser & Espino, 2016; Southern, 2016; Tapia-Fuselier, 2019). Some students without documentation have positive experiences and find administrators who help them navigate complex higher education systems, but many others do not (Contreras, 2009; Gámez et al., 2017; Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012; Nienhusser, 2018a). Often times, higher education administrators lack critical information about the policies affecting undocumented students’ access and success in higher education (Nienhusser, 2018a; Nienhusser & Espino, 2016; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020). This has damaging consequences for students without documentation, resulting in additional stressors they must navigate, such as being mistakenly classified as an out-of-state student and paying higher tuition amounts (García & Tierney, 2011; Salazar, 2020). To confront these issues, many times, students resolve to serve as educators on their campuses, teaching institutional agents about the undocumented student experience with the hopes that future undocumented students have more positive experiences than them (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018; Salazar, 2020; Southern, 2016).

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<sup>10</sup> Institutional agents are those who provide economically disenfranchised students of color with social support and the social capital needed to successfully navigate educational settings (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). In higher education, this phrase is often used to refer generally to faculty, staff, and/or administrators who work for colleges or universities and serve as critical support to students (Nienhusser & Espino, 2016).

### **Undocumented Student Resource Centers (USRCs)**

Although undocumented students continue to encounter significant barriers on college campuses, the growing number of undocumented students' resource centers (USRCs) has proven to make a difference in students' higher education pathways (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020). It is estimated that there are only 59 USRCs across the United States and most of these centers were created as a direct result of student advocacy efforts (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018, 2020). USRCs are overwhelmingly located at 4-year public institutions in California; only a few community colleges offer this kind of institutionalized support to undocumented students (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018). The majority of USRCs are staffed by just one full-time administrator responsible for not only offering direct support services to students, but also their colleagues on campus. Typically, institutional agents working at USRC offer counseling, advising, and mentorship to undocumented students, helping them problem-solve as they navigate institutional challenges and reach graduation (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018, 2020). As content experts, administrators at USRCs often provide campus-wide training that aims to build the cultural competence of faculty and staff at their institutions (Canedo Sanchez & So, 2015). These combined services and efforts have the potential to enhance the experiences of undocumented college students across college campuses.

### **Undocumented Students' Experiences**

The individual experiences of undocumented college students within and outside of college campuses vary greatly based on their multiple and distinct social identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexuality, among others. For example, undocuqueer<sup>11</sup> individuals often navigate multiple power structures as a result of their intersectional identities, and may sometimes be forced to privilege their immigrant or queer identity in spaces that are oppressive and not inclusive (Cisneros, 2018). Undocumented Black immigrants also navigate interlocking systems of oppression and are disproportionately held in immigration detention as a result of anti-Black racial profiling that is initially unrelated to immigration status, but ends up surfacing immigration issues (Palmer, 2017).

Additionally, the individual experiences of undocumented college students are distinct based on their age of arrival to the United States and the various interconnected ecological systems (e.g., micro, exo, macro) that influence their socioemotional and collegiate experiences (Salazar, 2020; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Typically, when undocumented students arrive as young children, they are less likely to fully understand

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<sup>11</sup> Undocuqueer is a term used to refer to undocumented immigrants who self-identify as queer or members of the LGBT community (Cisneros, 2018).

what it means to be undocumented until it is time for them to go through certain “rites of passage,” such as obtaining a driver’s license at age 16 (Gonzales, 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Differences may also exist among undocumented students who are beneficiaries of DACA and those who are not because generally, DACA recipients have some protections and access to educational and social opportunities unavailable to others (Nienhusser & Oshio, 2020; Salazar, 2020; UndocuScholars Project, 2015).

### **Socioemotional Experiences**

As a result of their immigration status, undocumented students experience significant stressors that impact their mental health (O’Neal et al., 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Often, undocumented youth are more susceptible to internalizing media messages and dominant narratives that portray undocumented communities as a burden to U.S. society (Gonzales et al., 2013). The internalization of these pervasive messages leads to feelings of isolation and distress, which can result in depression and even suicidal attempts (Pérez et al., 2010; Stacciarini et al., 2015). Among undocumented youth, these feelings may begin when they reach critical moments in their lives, such as applying for college (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Chang et al., 2017; Gonzales, 2016). Even when undocumented youth are able to enter college, the concerns associated with their immigration status do not disappear (Gonzales, 2016).

The results of the 2016 U.S. presidential elections exacerbated feelings of isolation, fear, and distress among undocumented students (Nienhusser & Oshio, 2019; Salazar 2020). For many undocumented students (with and without DACA), the anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric promoted by the Trump administration have resulted in constant feelings of uncertainty, forcing them to live day-to-day without planning for the future (Nienhusser & Oshio, 2019, 2020). Among DACA beneficiaries, the liminal standing of the executive action causes them to worry about their ability to persist and graduate from college, and also makes them feel anxious about their career prospects since they may not be able to practice their professions without work authorization (Menjívar, 2017; Nienhusser & Oshio, 2019, 2020; Salazar, 2020). Some students even have recurring nightmares and admit that they may need to take anxiety medication because they cannot stop thinking and worrying about what will happen to them if DACA is fully rescinded by the SCOTUS (Salazar, 2020).

Undocumented students frequently deal with mental health stressors without the guidance of mental health professionals (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012; O’Neal et al., 2016; Pérez et al., 2010; Salazar, 2020). They often cope with the stress associated with their immigration status by containing their emotions or by denying the stress levels they are experiencing (O’Neal et al., 2016). Lack of trust within the campus community,

as well as fear and shame, also play a role on whether undocumented students disclose their immigration status and seek the help of therapists or other confidential counselors at their institution (Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012). Furthermore, even when undocumented students would like to obtain professional help, they are often unable to afford the costs of therapy and medication, and on-campus counseling services are often insufficient to address their needs due to limitations on the number of free sessions and counselors' competence (Salazar, 2020). For students having access to culturally relevant therapists on campus, who understand their experiences from the onset without requiring them to explain the challenges associated with their immigration status, could begin to address their socioemotional needs and promote their college success (Salazar, 2020).

### **College Experiences**

To cope with the challenges associated with their immigration status, undocumented college students tend to rely on their peer networks for support (Muñoz, 2015; Salazar, 2020). They may join student organizations that are not centered on their immigration status (e.g., students of color organizations, first-generation college students' mentoring groups), but that still allow them to obtain valuable resources and information and form friendships on campus (Contreras, 2009; Pérez et al., 2010; Pérez Huber & Malagón, 2007). However, for many undocumented students, it is difficult to develop relationships with peers because they believe that others will not be able to relate to their experiences and feel like outsiders even among immigrant student groups due to their immigration status (Salazar, 2020). Also, lacking access to a driver's license, encountering financial limitations, and assuming family responsibilities can often prevent undocumented students from socializing with their peers outside of campus (Shelton, 2019).

Through their college years, many undocumented students begin engaging in acts of resistance and develop an activist identity (Muñoz, 2015; Negrón-Gonzales, 2015). For some students, activism serves as a form of education and empowerment to speak up in the face of injustice, as well as a tool to advocate for systemic changes that will broaden the participation of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. society (Muñoz, 2015; Southern, 2016). This form of engagement contributes to the development of social networks on campus, which they can rely on as they navigate higher education, but many undocumented students do not feel ready to publicly disclose their status and choose not to disclose instead (Chang et al., 2017; Salazar, 2020). The sociopolitical climate following the 2016 U.S. presidential elections has also forced many undocumented students (with and without DACA) to reconsider the risks they take and the extent to which they engage in student activism (Salazar, 2020).

### **Experiences with Family**

For undocumented students, their families serve as a strong support system helping them to cope with some of the stressors associated with their immigration status as they navigate higher education (Gámez et al., 2017; Salazar, 2020). When families are able to make financial sacrifices and cover some college costs, undocumented students are more likely to attend college (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011). Receiving financial support from their families also fosters undocumented students' college persistence because they are not solely responsible to finance their higher education through earned wages and/or scholarships (Salazar, 2020). On the other hand, when undocumented students are responsible to support their families financially, they sometimes leave college or decrease their enrollment to part-time status (Negrón-Gonzales, 2017).

The emotional support that undocumented students receive from their families also serves as motivation to pursue and persist in higher education (Gámez et al., 2017; Salazar, 2020). Undocumented students often hear their parents' migration stories and remembering their families' sacrifices pushes them to strive in college (Gámez et al., 2017; Salazar, 2020). But, for undocumented students, receiving financial and emotional support from their parents is not always enough to ensure their college success because structural issues continue to affect them and their families (Nienhusser & Oshio, 2019; Salazar, 2020). Particularly, living under the Trump administration has presented significant challenges for mixed-status families, where members of the household hold different immigration statuses (e.g., DACA recipient, undocumented, legal permanent resident), causing them to feel uncertain about their futures and forcing them to adjust their routines due to heightened fears (Nienhusser & Oshio, 2019).

### **A Call to Action**

The SCOTUS ruling on DACA is positive for some undocumented college students, but much more is needed to address the college access and success of undocumented students (with and without DACA). As a group of higher education scholars and practitioners—totaling nearly 2,200 members—who have a commitment to inclusion and equity for minoritized students in higher education, we express deep concern over the exclusionary policies and practices that have prevented higher education access and success of undocumented immigrants (with and without DACA). We make a call to action for federal and state governments and higher education institutions based on the aforementioned empirical research.

## **Federal and State Governments**

Advocacy for and enactment of comprehensive immigration reform that provides a pathway to citizenship to undocumented immigrants that honors their humanity and provides access to opportunities across all sectors. Specifically in the higher education context, we encourage:

- a. Enactment and defense of public policies that are more inclusive of college opportunities for undocumented students (with or without DACA; e.g., federal DREAM Act, federal financial aid eligibility, ISRT eligibility, state financial aid eligibility).
- b. Repeal of exclusionary public policies that restrict undocumented college students (with or without DACA) from accessing and succeeding in higher education.

## **Higher Education Institutions**

- a. Public acknowledgement of the impact of the SCOTUS decision on undocumented college students (with and without DACA) that also includes campus, city, and state resources for this community, and concrete action items institutions will take to support these students.
- b. Assess, develop, and enact institutional policies and practices that address undocumented college students' (with or without DACA) needs (e.g., eliminate the use of FAFSA filing for institutional financial aid decisions, remove Social Security number requests on forms).
- c. Allocation of more financial assistance (e.g., scholarships, emergency funds) to undocumented college students (with or without DACA).
- d. Establishment of and adequate resources for USRCs to best support the needs of undocumented college students.
- e. Development of training programs for college and university faculty and staff to better meet undocumented students' needs (e.g., knowledge of federal, state, and institutional policies that impact these groups; culturally sensitive practices toward this population).
- f. Establishment of or adequate funding for culturally sensitive counseling services on campuses to meet the needs of undocumented college students.
- g. Creation of more legal advice clinics on college campuses (e.g., CUNY's Citizenship Now!) that provide free legal services to undocumented immigrants in the community.

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