



California Community Colleges Dreamers Report Reveals Undocumented Students Need Increased Financial Aid, Legal Services, Mental Health Supports

111 Colleges Inform Recommendations to Better Support Undocumented Students

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office has released the [Dreamer's Project Report](#), a landscape analysis of the current state of support that community colleges provide for the estimated 50,000-70,000 undocumented students in California. A collaborative effort between the Chancellor's Office, the Foundation for California Community Colleges and Immigrants Rising, the report reveals the most pressing needs for undocumented students are financial aid, legal services, and mental and emotional health supports.

The Dreamers Project Report is the result of an online survey taken by 111 colleges and four regional meetings attended by 87 representatives from 50 college campuses. Combined findings provide a better understanding of the challenges undocumented students face in earning certificates, associate degrees and/or transferring to a four-year college or university and identified where supports are inadequate in addressing these barriers.

Of the 111 surveyed, 40 colleges indicated they had zero full-time staff dedicated to undocumented student services and just 11 campuses indicated having a full-time staff member whose time was allocated to supporting this population. At the conclusion of the survey in November 2018, only 35 colleges had Dream Resource Centers with 16 of those not providing dedicated support staff, showing most of the primary contacts for undocumented students are supporting them informally and on top of competing job responsibilities.

“Though California leads the way in serving this vulnerable student population, survey results show there is still much to be done,” said California Community Colleges Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley. “It is vital that the California Community Colleges continue to support undocumented students and we are committed to implementing the recommendations and promising practices featured in the Dreamers Project Report.”

Six main categories of challenges related to serving undocumented students surfaced through the research, with each accompanied by a specific recommendation to address the barrier, including strengthening communication around resources and supports available for Dreamers, providing more sufficient institutional support and campus-wide trainings, expansion of student retention strategies and more. Challenges include:

1. Inadequate ability to outreach to undocumented students
2. Insufficient institutional support and campus-wide training
3. Need for dedicated stakeholders, staff and space at each campus

4. Need for better access to financial support
5. Need for increased student engagement and direct services to increase student retention
6. Need for definitive guidance from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

A 14-member advisory group was established to facilitate the project and analyze survey and regional meeting data, with the group including a college president, two community college student advocates, a Dream Resource Center consultant, two Dream Resource coordinators, an UndocuAlly trainer, members of the Chancellor's Office governmental relations team, an immigrant rights activist, an immigration legal expert and the Director of Higher Education from Immigrants Rising.

"In the spirit of the Vision for Success, our Dreamers Advisory Group aims to address equity and ensure our colleges support everyone we serve. In order to actualize that Vision, we need to be committed to understanding and supporting the success of undocumented students," said Tammeil Gilkerson, President of Laney College and a member of the Dreamers Advisory Group. "The data-driven recommendations and promising practices from the Dreamers Project Report provide concrete steps we can implement to become true allies with our undocumented students as they strive to achieve their educational and career goals."

Report findings are being disseminated across the system via list-servs, hosted webinars, conference presentations and through college presidents who have been encouraged to engage their Board of Trustees and campus stakeholders around implementation. The Dreamers Project also partnered to host four regional report-backs between April 29th and May 6th at San Diego Mesa College, East Los Angeles College, Chabot College and Sierra College. More than 100 representatives from community colleges in the region attended, including leadership, administration, front-line staff and student leaders that most often work directly with undocumented students. The report will be presented to the Board of Governors of California's Community Colleges on May 20, 2019.

These recommendations for implementation follow a preceding set of state commitments to Dreamers. Through the California Dream Act, undocumented community college students may be eligible for institutional scholarships and state-based financial aid at California colleges. As the nation transitioned to a new administration, the California Community Colleges also created a list of [resources for undocumented students](#) and colleges, helping them navigate the uncertainty surrounding immigration policies.

The report is a component of [the Dreamers Project](#), supported by a grant from The James Irvine Foundation beginning October 2017 to lay the groundwork for a longer-term program and initiatives to meet undocumented students' needs.

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The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation, composed of 73 districts and 115 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. California community colleges provide career education and workforce training; guaranteed transfer to four-year universities; degree and certificate pathways; and basic skills education in English and math. As the state's engine for social and economic mobility, the California Community Colleges supports the [Vision for Success](#) a

strategic plan designed to improve student success outcomes, increase transfer rates and eliminate achievement gaps. For more information, please visit the [California Community Colleges website](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).