Supporting the Dreamers: The Lives of Undocumented Students on Campus
Presenters

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• **Daishi Tanaka**, Harvard College student and Advocacy Chair of the Act on a Dream Organization at Harvard College
Background situation at Harvard

- Ten years ago, no coherent program or plan to help undocumented students at Harvard
- Individual students helped by staff on an ad hoc basis
- Informal help provided student to student – tips on how to travel and find cash jobs while at school
- Resident advisors dismayed at having little knowledge on how to help
- Undocumented students discouraged – even with a Harvard degree they were not allowed to work and had no path forward
We listened and responded

- Individual students’ difficult stories prompted Dean of the College to form a group to investigate and report back
- Point people in key offices identified; list given to students
- Consultations with student group, advisors and other colleges about problems and potential solutions
- Report to Dean of the College with recommendations
- Many changes implemented; oversight given to Dean in Office of Student Life
- Initially a bit under the radar; now more open
- Some pro bono support from Harvard Law School Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program
Current policies and practices

- **Pre-admission:** info on website and knowledgeable admissions and financial aid officers
- **Admissions:**
  - Fully need-blind admissions process, even for international
  - No quotas of any kind for any group
  - Welcome email from Admissions to new undocumented students
  - Summer welcome email from Freshman Dean’s Office
- **Financial Aid:**
  - All aid based on need; meet full need
  - Prior to DACA, students took loans to replace job; now can work
  - Addl aid available to help with cost of applying for DACA
Challenges elsewhere

- State colleges/universities operate under local mandates and laws
- Most colleges are not need-blind and do not have enough financial aid to meet full need
- Many colleges have limited aid for international students, and may have different admissions policies
- Most colleges do not have institutional loans and jobs
- Some colleges have hundreds, rather than dozens, of undocumented students
For more information

- Immigrant Youth-led organization United We Dream: http://unitedwedream.org/
For more information

- University of Texas at Austin International Office website. Longhorn Dreamers Project: [https://world.utexas.edu/isss/students/dreamers](https://world.utexas.edu/isss/students/dreamers)
- University of Texas at Austin student group University Leadership Initiative: [http://universityleadershipinitiative.org/](http://universityleadershipinitiative.org/)
Act on a Dream

at Harvard College
Act on a Dream has two main focuses:

- We foster a community within Harvard that welcomes all students and immigrants.
- We advocate beyond the campus for pro-immigrant legislation and culture.
DOCUMENTING THE PATHWAY TO COLLEGE
A HANDBOOK FOR UNDOCUMENTED

External Affairs
Community Building
What does it mean to be an "undocumented student"?

- Foreign-born people without legal authorization to live in the US
- No American Citizenship, Permanent Residency ("Green Card"), or visa

One cannot:
- Work
- Travel outside the US
- Receive federal assistance (like financial aid, loans, food stamps, etc.)
- Drive (in most states)

One can:
- Attend public primary/secondary schools
- Pay taxes
- Attend some college/universities
DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)

- Policy that defers deportation proceedings and offers work authorization to young immigrants receiving an education.
- Makes thousands of undocumented students eligible for work, scholarships, financial assistance (in some states), driving (in some states), travel outside of U.S. (via Advance Parole)
- Does not provide lawful status and does not guarantee a pathway to citizenship.

Criteria:
- Must have come to the US before turning 16 and continuously resided in the US from June 15, 2007 to present
- Must be physically present in the US and under 31 years of age as of June 15, 2012
- Must be currently in school, graduated from high school (or GED), or been honorably discharged from armed forces
Resources at Harvard

• In FAQ section of Admissions site, Harvard declares its admission of students regardless of legal status.

• Yearly letter welcoming students to the school and pointing them to our organization

• Financial Aid Office provides funding for DACA renewals, which allow students to work on campus

• Office of Career Services also provides funding for Advance Parole applications, which allow students to travel for study/work abroad programs
Goals for the Semester

• Restart the Committee for Undocumented Students:
  • -Comprised of faculty members across all Harvard departments/offices that can serve as point people for undocumented students
  • -Trained by Act on a Dream’s Board, which can provide resources and advice on handling sensitive issues or questions
• Build a directory of departmental point-people for undocumented students on Act on a Dream’s and/or Harvard’s website.
• Update the Undocumented Student Handbook with current financial aid policies and advice on applying for Advanced Parole
Contact us!

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SERVING UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

LOC V. TRUONG

Director for Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
Basic Information & Data
Undocumented Students

- Students who immigrated recently with parents and all are undocumented
- Students who immigrated recently without parents
- Students who immigrated at a very early age with parents and all are undocumented

Note….

- Students born in the U.S. to undocumented parents are citizens, but with similar as well as unique concerns.
Sustaining and tailoring current resources and practices to support the unique college experience of undocumented students.
Touch Points

- Financial Aid
- Legal Services
- Academic Advising
- Study Abroad
- Career Services
- Housing/House Life
- Mental Health Services
What to be aware of

- Continuous education on legal and support services
- Professional and student development
- Students constantly battle feelings of shame, trepidation, anger, despair, marginalization, and uncertainty
  \(^1\)
- “Triple minority status” : ethnic origin, lack of documentation, and economic disadvantages
  \(^2\)
- Socioemotional development
  \(^3\)


\(^2\) 

\(^3\)
ACADEMIC ADVISING

- Some may fit aspects of the first-generation college student experience

- Possibly the only College professional to ever be in contact with the student
Housing/House Life

- Campus becomes a safe haven for undocumented students
- Most essential services are located on or near campus
- On-campus living reduces the need for transportation
- Primary source of support for undocumented students
FINANCIAL SERVICES

- Trained/informed financial aid counselors
- Publicize alternative funding resources
- Encourage students to seek out private funding opportunities
STUDY ABROAD

- Usually disregarded as an option for these students
- Alternate opportunities can exist through programs that explore the rich cultures of the U.S.
- Must be flexible and innovative in their program offerings (e.g., Wintersession)
- For DACA students, if USCIS has decided to defer action in your case and you want to travel outside the United States, you must apply for advance parole and pay the applicable fee ($360). USCIS will determine whether your purpose for international travel is justifiable based on the circumstances you describe in your request.
LEGAL SERVICES

- Make students aware of their rights and legal responsibilities
- Resources available concerning barriers and options for their legal status
- Immigration attorney referrals

Counseling & Mental Health

- Professional, trained staff members can offer support for the unseen struggles facing undocumented students
- Impact of their immigration status: fear of deportation, uncertainty, and frustration
- Confidentiality of services
- Affordability of counseling sessions

Career Services

- Career development process constrained by legal restraints
- Career decisions-making process
- Many aspects of typical career counseling and planning conflict or are not relevant
- Effective networking
- Importance of internships
- Broad range of career exploration activities

Off Campus Resources

- Educators for Fair Consideration--E4FC (www.e4fc.org)
  - Founded in 2006
  - Scholarships
  - Legal services
  - Professional and personal development workshops, educator’s toolkit

- We Own the Dream Website (www.weownthedream.org)
  - Online self-screening tool for DACA applicants throughout the country so they can determine their eligibility
  - Searchable directory of listings for free or low-cost nonprofit immigration legal services providers in all 50 states
  - Calendar of community events, such as information sessions and application workshops, as well as news about the Deferred Action program and frequently asked questions.

Thank you!