

Undocumented and Immigrant Students

Referred to as the 1.5 generation, immigrant and undocumented youth were often brought to the United States at an early age. They straddle the cultural border between their homeland and the US. They are not US citizens, but they grew up here, went to school here, and identify with the culture. These students face incredible economic and legal, social and emotional, and educational barriers. Despite these barriers, they have continually shown themselves to be an extremely determined, inspirational and resilient group; evidenced by their ability to succeed despite the legal limitations continuously thrown in their path. In *Plyer v. Doe*, 1982, the US Supreme Court ruled that no child should be denied a K-12 public education based on their immigration status:

“Whatever savings might be achieved by denying these children an education, they are wholly insubstantial in light of the costs involved to these children, the State, and the Nation.”

U.S. Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, writing the opinion of the court, *Plyer v. Doe*, 1982.

Despite this ruling, immigrant and undocumented youth still struggle to access paths to higher education. Contrary to popular belief, many undocumented immigrants pay into the federal and state tax system, and yet we still deny their children funding to higher education. Research shows that allowing this determined group of young people to join their peers in higher education and the work force would not displace US born citizens, but would in fact, be a great benefit and aid to our economy.

Statistics

These statistics are designed to help you understand the financial and educational position of undocumented immigrants in this country

- In the United States there are 3.2 million undocumented children and young adults under the age of 24 (www.migrationpolicy.org, 2012).
- An estimated 1.49 million youths and young adults (or 13 percent of the 11.4 million undocumented immigrants) are eligible to apply for the expanded DACA program (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) (www.migrationpolicy.org, 2012).
- In 2010 undocumented immigrants paid an estimated \$13 billion into the social security system, but only received \$1 billion in benefits contributing to \$12 billion in cash flow (www.ssa.gov, 2013)
- Undocumented immigrants pay approximately 11.6 billion in federal and state taxes annually, paying a higher portion of their income into the system than the top 1% (www.cbsnews.com, 2016).
- Among undocumented youths ages 18-24, 40% have less than a high school education compared to 8% for U.S.-born counterparts (US Dept. of Education, 2015).
- Approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools every year, 25,000 of those students graduate from California high schools (US Dept. of Education, 2015).
- About 5 to 10% of undocumented students pursue higher education, and far fewer successfully graduate with a degree (US Dept. of Education, 2015).
- Case studies of California, Texas and Massachusetts revealed that, even with access to in-state tuition, undocumented students represent only a miniscule proportion of the total enrollment at public institutions (College Board, 2009).
- Given the opportunity to receive additional education and move into better-paying jobs, undocumented students would pay more in taxes and have more money to spend and invest in the U.S. economy (College Board, 2009).
- By 2020, 65% of jobs will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school (Georgetown Public Policy Institute: cew.georgetown.edu, 2014).
- By 2020, the United States will fall short by 5 million workers with postsecondary education—at the current production rate (Georgetown Public Policy Institute: cew.georgetown.edu, 2014).