

**A DREAM Deferred:
An Uncertain Future for Undocumented Students in California**

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Executive Summary

Undocumented immigration is one of the most divisive and controversial issues in our current political debate. The economy is suffering, unemployment has hit a record high, and Americans have a heightened sensitivity to competition for resources. However, public opinion is becoming increasingly unified in the acceptance of one particular subgroup of undocumented immigrants – undocumented youth. Though there are still plenty of opponents to the provision of resources and benefits to undocumented youth, the American public is increasingly sympathetic to undocumented children whose parents brought them to the United States at a young age. Most of these undocumented youth have grown up and gone to school in the United States and identify primarily as American.

California has been a leader in progressive immigration policy for years. In 2001, California passed Assembly Bill 540, which allows qualifying undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities in the state. AB 540 has allowed many ambitious, intelligent undocumented high school graduates to continue their education and earn college degrees. However, upon graduation, these students still lack a nine digit Social Security number that is required in a majority of jobs sectors in the United States. Thus, there exists a group of college-educated undocumented youth who are unable to utilize their degrees in the same way as their U.S. citizen counterparts.

Both components of the California Dream Act (AB 130 and AB 131) passed in 2011, granting access to privately and publically funded scholarships to undocumented students who qualify for AB 540. The California Dream Act will allow more and more undocumented students in the state to access higher education. However, in the absence of any federal

immigration reform, all of these students will still lack legal status to work in the United States after graduation.

This paper will begin by addressing relevant background information, including the complexity of the U.S. immigration system and why so many people immigrate illegally, as well as the political and legislative context of undocumented students in California higher education. Next, the following questions will be explored: How do various state and federal policies intersect in the lives of undocumented immigrant students? What are the biggest challenges and obstacles that undocumented students and college graduates currently face? What conditions and actions are necessary in addressing these challenges? What factors influence the public debate about undocumented students' access to higher education?

The answers to these questions fall into several categories of research findings. First, the prevailing ideologies and narratives used in each side of the immigration debate are evaluated. The next section describes the disconnection that exists between undocumented students' perceived post-graduation options and their actual options. Though there are many opportunities that undocumented immigrants are unable to access, viable and reasonable options do exist for undocumented students and college graduates. Next is an evaluation of American public opinion and perceptions towards undocumented immigrants and students, followed by a discussion of the options that individual states have to advance opportunities for undocumented students even in the absence of federal action. The final section of research findings details the actions that immigrant rights groups are currently taking to advance the undocumented students' fight for justice. The paper concludes with short-term, intermediate, and long-term recommendations, as well as a list of resources for undocumented students and the public.

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About the Author

My interest in the topic of undocumented students arose during my internship with the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) during fall semester of 2011. I participated in this internship as part of a class in the Urban and Environmental Policy department at Occidental College, and I selected CHIRLA from a list of community organizations in the Los Angeles area. My prior knowledge of the issues surrounding undocumented immigration was little to none. I thought of undocumented immigrants as a mysterious and secretive population, running from the police and living in the shadows of American society. During my first week as an intern, I remember my internship supervisor gently telling me that the term “illegal immigrants,” which I had been throwing around freely, is actually an unacceptable term and the widely accepted term in immigrant rights circles is “undocumented.” I was shocked to learn that several CHIRLA staff members are actually undocumented themselves.

I gradually learned that the lives that undocumented immigrants lead are in most regards just like everyone else’s. They go to school, they work, they go to the grocery store, and they own homes. The difference is that they lack a nine digit Social Security number. Unauthorized immigration is undoubtedly one of the most controversial and divisive issues in today’s political debate. The economy is suffering, unemployment has hit a record high, and Americans have a heightened sensitivity to competition for resources. The perception that a group of outsiders has come into the country to compete with Americans for jobs and resources has caused many, especially on the political right, to shun undocumented immigrants and blame them for a variety of societal ills. However, public opinion is becoming increasingly unified in the acceptance of one particular subgroup of undocumented immigrants – undocumented youth. Though there are

still plenty of opponents to the provision of resources and benefits to undocumented youth, the American public is increasingly sympathetic to undocumented children whose parents brought them to the United States at a young age. So, I decided to focus my senior comprehensive research on undocumented youth living in the United States – specifically on the fact that undocumented students are allowed to pay resident tuition at public colleges and universities in California. I was interested to learn that my own college provides full-ride scholarships to two undocumented students each year. I wanted to further explore how undocumented students navigate the job market as college graduates without Social Security numbers. I originally wanted to research the intersection of the California Dream Act (which provides financial aid to undocumented youth), and the increasing use of the E-Verify system (which allows employers to electronically verify the legal status of potential employees.) However, throughout my research I decided to shift my focus away from E-Verify because there are many problems with the accuracy of the system that would take my research in a completely different direction. For example, legal citizens are often flagged as potentially undocumented because they share the same name as a person who is known to be in the country illegally.

I then shifted my focus. What truly inspires me about this topic is the human face of these policies – the ways in which policies affecting undocumented college students and graduates manifest themselves in the stories and struggles of real people. I settled on the following questions to focus my research: How do various state and federal policies intersect in the lives of undocumented immigrant students? What are the biggest challenges and obstacles that undocumented students and college graduates currently face? What conditions and actions are necessary in addressing these challenges? In order to address these questions, I started by conducted background research on the political and legal landscape of access to higher education

for undocumented immigrant students. I then conducted formal, semi-structured interviews with immigrant rights advocates, organizers, policy analysts, and most importantly, undocumented college students and graduates. I was struck by the honesty and openness that students showed during interviews, and their genuine eagerness to share their stories and help me with my project. I would like to sincerely thank each student who shared their personal story with me, and I hope that the publication of my research paper will be a step towards the advancement of justice and equality for undocumented students. During the course of my research, I also had many conversations with friends, peers, family, and acquaintances about my research topic. These conversations revealed something very telling – that the people in my life have a very serious lack of knowledge about issues related to undocumented immigration. This is a theme that I believe needs to be further explored and addressed.

While conducting my research and writing this paper, I was constantly juggling the breadth and scope that was appropriate and feasible for my time frame and capacities. I constantly found new related topics and questions that I wanted to explore. The issue of educational access for undocumented students does not exist in a vacuum and is influenced by many other factors in the larger context of immigration in the United States. For example, the root political, social and economic causes of undocumented immigration are certainly applicable and important in this context; however, I had to keep the focus of my research narrow enough to adequately answer my research questions, so chose to exclude such information.

I want my research to have practical application beyond just my own personal growth and knowledge. By no means do I think I can solve the many issues and controversies surrounding the unauthorized immigration debate, however I hope that my research will be a positive step in

expanding the discussion and perspectives on the fight for undocumented students' rights in California.

Harlem

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over –
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

-Langston Hughes, 1951, Harlem

In 1951, Langston Hughes asked the nation: what happens to a dream deferred?

Hughes's vivid imagery of the frustrations of African Americans in Harlem in the mid-1900s gripped the nation. *Harlem* is regarded as a snapshot of the long and arduous struggle for civil rights for African Americans. Hughes illustrates a time period in which the dreams of African Americans dry up, rot, and burden American society. This repression led to one of the biggest social movements in our nation's history. Since then, another group has emerged in modern America whose dreams are repressed, inaccessible, and unattainable – undocumented immigrants. In May of 2006, millions of protesters took to the streets in disapproval of oppressive laws against immigrants in America. The May Day immigration reform protest represents a landmark in what is arguably the biggest civil rights struggle of our time – equality for immigrants. Perhaps one day our nation will reflect back on the struggle for equality for immigrants in the same way that we shamefully reflect on the historic oppression of African Americans in the United States.

Introduction

Illegal immigrants. Unauthorized workers. Undocumented immigrants. Illegal aliens. These are all terms used in reference to a growing demographic of people in the United States who lack documentation of legal status. Undocumented immigrants remain a misunderstood population to many Americans, as statistics and media representations are often the only source of information. We have a problematic situation in the United States where misconceptions and misguided prejudices about immigrants have infiltrated the political debate and public opinion. The anti-immigrant movement has painted a vivid picture of undocumented immigrants as lazy border-crossers who come to United States to take our jobs and live off of the American taxpayer's dime. Our nation is at a critical crossroads as policy towards undocumented immigration has been thrust into the forefront of the current political debate and public awareness.

Individual states vary in terms of policies and attitudes towards undocumented immigration. On one end of the spectrum, Alabama and Arizona have each passed bills making it a crime to not carry proof of legal residency at all times. Other states, on the other hand, have adopted more compassionate, progressive policies towards undocumented immigrants. Thirteen U.S. states, for example, currently offer in-state tuition at public colleges and universities for undocumented immigrant students. Among them is California. California has been a leader in progressive immigration policy for years, most recently with the passage of two Assembly Bills that grant undocumented students access to public and private financial aid. According to an old saying, "as California goes, so goes the nation," and accordingly, California is at the forefront of the national immigration debate. Thus, my research will focus mainly on the experience of undocumented immigrants in California.

There are many facets of California's political landscape surrounding undocumented immigration. Arguably the most important is the accessibility of educational opportunities for undocumented students, as higher education is the most fundamental factor in upward mobility. Specifically, this research explores the factors that will influence the future of undocumented college student and college graduates in California. What are the key factors influencing the public debate, public opinion, and political outcomes for undocumented students? In the absence of immigration reform at the federal level, what are the implications of California's provision of in-state tuition and scholarships for undocumented students? What are the implications for California's work force? Economically, what are the effects of educating this demographic when their legal status drastically limits the types of employment they can seek post-graduation? Is the passage of the Federal Dream Act politically feasible in the near future? What will it take to make the Dream Act a reality? How can we make this happen? In order to address these questions, relevant background information will follow.

BACKGROUND

The Immigration System: Complexity and Bureaucracy

When evaluating the provision of services for undocumented immigrants, it is first necessary to understand how the United States' immigration system works and why so many choose to immigrate illegally. According to the Immigration Policy Center, immigration policy in the United States is based upon three principles, "the reunification of families, admitting immigrants with skills that are valuable to the U.S. economy, and protecting refugees." (Immigration Policy Center 2010)

The first category under which a person can apply to immigrate to the United States is family-based immigration. The applicant must have a "U.S. sponsor" who is either a U.S. citizen or a lawful permanent resident. This person must meet a minimum income requirement and sign an affidavit of support saying they will be financially responsible for the family member upon arrival to the United States. Family-based applications are prioritized according to the relationship of the applicant to the U.S. sponsor. The first priority is immediate relatives of U.S. adult citizens over the age of 21 – spouses, unmarried minor children, or parents. This is the only category for which there is no numerical limit. The next priority relationship is for a U.S. citizen to petition for their unmarried adult children, followed by legal permanent residents or citizens petitioning for their spouse, minor children, or unmarried adult children. Lastly, U.S. citizens can petition for their married adult children or siblings. This adds up to an annual quota of 480,000 family-based Visas. (Immigration Policy Center 2010) For categorical breakdown see appendix A.

Employment-based immigration is the second category for legitimate grounds on which a person can immigrate. There are over twenty types of work Visas, including R-Visas for

religious workers, P-Visas for athletes, entertainers, and skilled performers, and L-Visas for intracompany transfers. The current annual quota for employment-based Visas is 140,000. Employment-based Visas are also categorized and prioritized, with the top priority of “persons of extraordinary ability” in the arts, sciences, education, business, athletics, professors and researchers, and multinational executives. (Immigration Policy Center 2010) For a complete list of priorities and quotas see appendix B.

The final category under which a person can apply to immigrate is political refuge. Refugees are admitted to the United States based upon an inability to stay in their home country because of a “well-rounded fear of persecution due to race, membership in a social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin,” according to the American Immigration Council. These Visas are also granted based on a priority system of the degree of risk faced by the individual, and membership to a group that is of special concern to the United States. Quotas are established and reevaluated annually by the President and Congress of the United States. For example, after the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, the number of political refugees admitted to the United States dropped drastically as national security became an increasing concern and a general atmosphere of skepticism towards foreigners took hold in America. Since 2001, quotas have been increased. (Immigration Policy Center 2010) For a list of the numerical quotas for political refugees by country in the 2010 fiscal year, see appendix C.

In addition to the limits placed on the number of immigrants admitted under each of the three grounds for legal immigration, there are also restrictions on how many immigrants can be admitted from any one country. Currently, new immigrants from one single country cannot exceed 7% of the total immigrant population admitted in a fiscal year. However, there are exceptions to the 7% rule as top-priority family-based immigration Visas are exempt from the

per-country quotas. Mexico and the Philippines, for example, generally have the longest waits because of the large numbers of people who have applied and are continuing to apply for U.S. residency from those countries. An average sibling-to-sibling petition from Mexico or the Philippines takes between 14 and 22 years to be processed. (Personal Interview, Maria)

The United States immigration system, especially in Los Angeles, is notorious for its long delays when processing legal residency petitions and naturalization applications. A significant proportion of the people who are considered undocumented actually have pending petitions that are stuck in the bureaucratic backlog of the immigration system. (Personal Interview, Maria) Though there is a common misconception that immigrating legally to the United States is an easy process, this is clearly not the case. From this misconception arises the problematic belief that immigrants who come to the United States illegally have simply chosen not to make the effort to file a petition for residency. In reality, crossing the border and immigrating illegally is the most viable, immediate option that many immigrants have for economic survival.

Undocumented Immigrant Statistics and Demographic Information

Collecting data about numbers and demographics of the undocumented immigrant population is difficult for obvious reasons. People are reluctant to admit their lack of legal status to data gatherers or any official research institution. The U.S. Census Bureau does not ask respondents about their citizenship status for that very reason. Many institutions, most famously the Pew Research Center, indirectly tabulate estimates of the undocumented population. They use the “residual method,” which takes the official government data on the legal foreign born population (naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents and refugees) and subtracts that

number from the total foreign born population. The residual is the estimate of the undocumented immigrant population in a given year. The Pew Hispanic Center uses data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) – a monthly survey conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau. The Pew Hispanic Center adjusts the CPS data to account for the undercounting of certain groups. The most recent data was published in *Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends*, published in February of 2011 by Jeffrey Passel and D’Vera Cohn. The report includes population data and estimates up through 2010.

As of 2010, an estimated 11.2 million unauthorized immigrants were living in the United States. This number is almost unchanged from the previous year (11.1 million), and down from a 12.0 million peak in 2007. Annual fluctuations in the unauthorized population are a result of migrants voluntarily leaving the country, deportations, conversions to legal status, or deaths.

(Passel & Cohn)

6.5 million undocumented immigrants (58%) were born in Mexico. Other Latin American nations account for 23%, or 2.6 million unauthorized immigrants. Asian nations account for 11%, or 1.3 million unauthorized immigrants, and Europe and Canada account for 3%, or half a million unauthorized immigrants. African nations account for another 3%, of 400,000 unauthorized immigrants. (Passel & Cohn)

Legislative history

Before addressing what the future may hold for undocumented immigrants and students, it is necessary to evaluate the current legal and political landscape of undocumented immigrants in California higher education institutions, as well as the history of how we got here. A chronological summary of relevant legislations and litigations will follow. Note that the

summary includes both California policies and relevant federal policies, but will distinguish between them.

Between the years of 1974 and 1980, the California Uniform Residency Law was in effect. This law allowed long-term undocumented California residents to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities in the state. The law was sunsetted in 1980, at which point undocumented students were charged out-of-state tuition once again. (Connolly 2005) The Uniform Residency Law failed to be renewed, in part because of growing xenophobia in the United States. The beginning of the Iran hostage crisis in 1980 spurred hostility towards Iranian and other foreign students in California colleges and universities.

Two years later, the immigrant rights movement experienced a victory with the 1982 Plyler v. Doe Supreme Court case. In 1975, Texas passed section 21.031 of the Texas Education Code, effectively barring undocumented students from public grade school education. After years of controversy, the case was brought to the Supreme Court in a class action law suit in 1982. James Plyler, Superintendent of the Tyler Independent School District, sought to uphold section 21.031, while plaintiffs J. and R. Doe maintained that denying undocumented students the right to free public education violates the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment. In a 5-4 vote, the Supreme Court sided with Doe, declaring Texas's section 21.031 unconstitutional. Chief Justice Warren E. Burger stated, "Whatever his status under the immigration laws, an alien is surely a 'person' in any ordinary sense of the term" and that the denial of education for undocumented youth creates "a lifetime hardship on a discrete class of children not accountable for their disabling status." (Oliverez 2006) The Plyler v. Doe decision was a key moment in the trajectory of educational rights for undocumented students and is the basis upon which the debate about higher education access for undocumented students is built. Had the Supreme Court not

ruled that undocumented youth cannot be denied access to public primary and secondary education, many undocumented students would not even be able to complete grade school, much less go to college. (Yates 2004)

In 1985, a woman known as “Leticia A” sued the UC Regents and CSU Board of Trustees for precluding her as an undocumented long-term California resident from paying in-state tuition at public universities. The Leticia A. v. UC Regents and CSU Board of Trustees case went to the Alameda County Superior Court, where the jury “held that the Education Code precluding undocumented students from establishing residency is unconstitutional and that students could establish state residency for tuition purposes for both the University of California and California State University systems.” (Drachman 2006) Thus, after this 1985 decision, undocumented students were once again able to qualify to pay in-state tuition at public higher education institutions in California. The Leticia A. ruling also granted undocumented students access to state financial aid. This decision lasted for 6 years until 1991 when it was overturned by the Bradford decision, which once again precluded undocumented students from paying resident tuition.

In 1986, a year after the Leticia A. decision in California, the federal Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was passed as an attempt to solve the illegal immigration problem by 1) providing amnesty for long-term undocumented residents by granting legal status to undocumented persons who entered the U.S. before January 1, 1982, and 2) making employment of an undocumented worker a criminal offense for employers, and 3) increasing border control.(Madera et al. 2008) Employers could be sanctioned for knowingly hiring an undocumented worker, for not firing an employee when undocumented status becomes known, or for hiring an employee without first verifying their legal status. The act also mandated a 50%

increase in border patrol agents. IRCA yielded both positive and negative results, and received both praise and criticism. The act granted amnesty (legal status) to over 2.7 million undocumented immigrants. The U.S. Department of Labor found that the IRCA benefitted the U.S. labor market, citing that “the wages of those immigrants who received legal status under IRCA had increased roughly 15% five years later.” (Cooper 2003) The IRCA also received criticism for being inconsistent and not following through with sanctions against employers. We can also see with the IRCA that this “comprehensive” immigration reform was perhaps not as comprehensive and far-reaching as hoped. While amnesty was granted to millions of undocumented immigrants, we only need to look at the number of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. today to realize that IRCA was not a long-term solution. Citizenship status was normalized for undocumented immigrants already in the United States, but IRCA did nothing to address future undocumented immigration.

The 1990 Bradford v UC Regents decision in the Los Angeles County Superior Court was a major setback in the undocumented students’ movement in California. David Paul Bradford, an administrator at UCLA, refused to comply with the Leticia A. resident tuition ruling, and claimed he was fired because of it. He filed a lawsuit against the UC Regents and won. Beginning in 1991, undocumented students were once again classified as non-California residents for tuition purposes. Access to state financial aid for undocumented students was revoked as well. This lasted for a decade until AB 540 was passed in California. (Drachman 2006)

The 1994 passage of California Proposition 187 by the California public illuminates the harsh and hostile environment and attitudes towards undocumented immigrants in the 1990s. Proposition 187 was a ballot initiative commonly known as the “Save Our State” initiative.

Proposition 187 effectively barred undocumented immigrants from access to all social services, including welfare, healthcare, and public K-12 education. Luckily, the U.S. District Court quickly deemed Prop 187 unconstitutional, thus it was never enacted. The demographic profile of support for Prop 187 was clearly divided among race lines, as 2/3 of white voters voted in favor of it, while a majority of Latino, African American, and Asian American voters voted against it. (Lee, Ottati, and Hussain 2001) Had Proposition 187 been enacted, it would have been one of the nation's harshest anti-immigrant laws. Given California's influence and leadership in the immigration policy arena, Proposition 187 would have likely had dire consequences for the rest of the nation as well.

In 1996, the federal Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) was passed, a law that still remains influential today. Section 505 of IIRIRA states:

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible on the basis of residence within a State (or a political subdivision) for any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen or national of the United States is eligible for such a benefit (in no less an amount, duration, or scope) without regard to whether the citizen or national is such a resident. (IIRIRA 104th Congress)

IIRIRA essentially prohibits states from offering higher education benefits to undocumented immigrants unless the same benefits are offered to all U.S. citizens, regardless of their state of residency. In California, this means that because AB 540 allows in-state tuition rates for undocumented students, the same rates must also apply to U.S. citizens residing in other states. (Madera et al. 2008) If the Federal Dream Act passes, section 505 of IRRIRA will likely be revoked, giving states more autonomy on which group are permitted to pay in-state tuition.

California Assembly Bill 540 was authored by former Assemblyman Marco A. Firebaugh. Though the original bill, which would have granted access to financial aid for

undocumented students, was vetoed by Governor Gray Davis in 2000, a second version of the bill passed in the State Assembly and Senate and was signed into law on October 11, 2001 by Governor Davis. This bill grants qualifying undocumented immigrant students exemption from paying non-resident tuition in the three public higher education systems in California - California Community Colleges, California State Universities, and Universities of California. Qualifying students must meet the following stipulations:

- 1) Attendance of a CA high school for three years or more
- 2) Have graduated from a CA high school, or hold a GED
- 3) Registration to enroll in an accredited California public college or university
- 4) Sign an affidavit stating intent to apply for legal status as soon as eligible

AB 540 applies exclusively to provision of in-state tuition; it does not give students access to state financial aid, nor does it provide an avenue through which undocumented students can regularize their immigration status. As a result of the 1996 IIRIRA decision, benefits cannot be offered to undocumented immigrants that are not also offered to all U.S. citizens. Thus, AB 540 also applies to all U.S. citizens, allowing qualifying students who grew up in other states to pay in-state tuition. (Firebaugh and Maldonado 2001). Twelve other states have adopted similar policies – Texas, Utah, New York, Washington, Oklahoma, Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico, Nebraska, Connecticut, Maryland, and Wisconsin. Several other states have similar legislations pending. Though AB 540 has been in place for a decade, a fair amount of contention still surrounds it. The bill faces criticism that it is unfair for students whose parents may not have paid California taxes to access tax dollar-funded services. There are also concerns that undocumented students are taking the spots of U.S.-born students in California colleges and universities. (Cedillo 2011)

The California Dream Act was first authored and introduced by State Senator Gilbert Cedillo in 2005. It was vetoed by former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger despite popular support. Schwarzenegger issued the following statement when he vetoed the bill:

At a time when segments of California public higher education, the University of California and the California State University, are raising fees on all students attending college in order to maintain the quality of education provided, it would not be prudent to place additional strain on the general fund to accord the new benefit of providing state subsidized financial aid to students without lawful immigration status. (Library of Congress 2005)

Another version of the bill was reintroduced and vetoed again in 2007. Finally in 2011, the California State Senate and Assembly approved the bill and it was signed in to law by Governor Jerry Brown. The California Dream Act has two components: AB 130, which allows access to private scholarships, and AB 131, which grants access to public financial aid, such as Cal Grants. AB 130 and AB 131 are available to any student who has qualified for in-state tuition under AB 540. AB 130 took effect on January 1, 2012. While AB 131 is not set to take effect until 2013, registry and applications are open on the FAFSA website as of April 2012. This will allow financial aid to be given out on the first day of 2013, rather than beginning the application process in 2013. The California Dream Act will allow thousands more undocumented immigrant students to attend college, as affording even in-state tuition is out of reach of many low-income immigrant families.(Cedillo 2011)

The Federal Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act has passed the tenth anniversary of its first introduction into the 107th Congress. Several versions of the bill have been introduced in the House of Representatives and the Senate over the past decade, yet all have failed to pass. The most recent version of the Dream Act (H.R. 2914) was introduced in April of 2011 by California Representative Howard L. Berman and had the support of 80 cosponsors.

The DREAM Act of 2011 – Authorized the Secretary of Homeland Security to cancel the removal of, and adjust the status of an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence on a conditional basis, an alien who: (1) entered the United States on or before his or her 15th birthday and has been present in the United States for at least five years immediately preceding this Act’s enactment, (2) is a person of good moral character, (3) is not inadmissible under specified grounds of the Immigration and Nationality Act, (4) has been admitted to an institution of higher education in the United States or has earned a high school diploma or general education development certificate in the United States, and (5) was age 32 or younger on the date of this act’s enactment (Library of Congress 2011)

The Federal Dream Act would provide a path to legalization for undocumented students who were brought to the United States at a young age, completed secondary school in the U.S., and either graduated from an accredited 2- or 4- year degree program or served for 2 years in the U.S. military. Qualifying students would be allowed to apply for Conditional Permanent Residency, a legal status similar to lawful permanent residency, which would be valid for six years. The “conditional” part of the status would be removed after six years if the individual fulfills the aforementioned conditions, converting the individual’s citizenship status to Legal Permanent Resident.

The second component of the Federal Dream Act is the repeal of section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), which currently holds that any higher education benefit granted to undocumented immigrants must also be granted to U.S. citizens in the same situation, regardless of the state of residence. In California, current federal law holds that U.S. citizens from other states must also be able to qualify for AB 540 and pay resident tuition if they meet the requirements. The Federal Dream Act would not necessarily change this, but California would be able to decide for itself whether non-California resident U.S. citizens are permitted to qualify for AB 540. Contrary to what is often said, the Federal Dream Act would not require all states to offer in-state tuition for undocumented students; the

bill does not make any mention of in-state tuition policy in individual states. (Library of Congress, H.R.1842)

The first version of the DREAM Act, Senate Bill 1291, was introduced into the Senate by Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT) on May 11, 2011, but failed to gain momentum in Congress. In 2003, the DREAM Act was reintroduced into the 108th Congress as Senate Bill 1545, again sponsored by Durbin and Hatch. Though the bill passed the Senate Judiciary committee with a 16-3 vote of approval, it failed to garner enough support to come up for a vote in the Senate. The next version of the DREAM Act, Senate Bill 2075, was introduced in November of 2005 and failed yet again. In 2007, the DREAM Act finally came up for a vote under Senate Bill 2205. This version was amended to include provisions such as (1) in order to be affected by this bill an individual must be under the age of 30 on the date of enactment, and (2) during the conditional legal residency period, an individual cannot leave the United States for over 365 days. Though SB 2205 came closer to passing than any previous version of the DREAM Act, it failed to win the 60 votes required to move to the House. The bill received 52 supporting votes (38 Democrat, 12 Republic, 2 Independent) and 44 dissenting votes (8 Democrat, 36 Republican). Though SB 2205 received more support than dissent among Senators, the bill also received some criticism from immigrant rights groups who said that the bill was so “watered-down” that it would not adequately accomplish the original goal of the DREAM Act, to provide status relief for undocumented students. (whitehouse.gov)

Next, a version of the DREAM Act was introduced in March of 2009 during the 111th Congress that included a provision that would allow undocumented students to apply for student loans and work study (but not federal Pell grants). After the failure of the 2009 version of the DREAM Act, it was introduced yet again in 2011 as H.R. 1842 – the most recent version of the

DREAM Act to be introduced. H.R. 1842 was similar to previous versions of the DREAM Act; it contained a cut-off age of 32, a 6 year conditional permanent residency period, and did not grant access to federal financial aid. In 2011 the DREAM Act was closer to passing than ever and failed by just 5 votes. (whitehouse.gov)

Despite strong support from many legislators, the Federal DREAM Act has failed to pass time and time again. Supporting Senator Diane Feinstein says:

The Dream Act offers bright and highly motivated students a real incentive to become responsible and valued members of our society. Every year 50,000 undocumented children graduate from our nation's high schools or receive the equivalent of a secondary degree. From there they can take one of two paths: they can look at the hopelessness of their situation and get involved in crime, even join street gangs; or they can continue their education, find a good job, and give back something to the United States.(Madera et al. 2008).

Senator Harry Reid issued a similar statement when the Dream Act failed to pass in Congress in 2007: "What a waste it is to make it more difficult for children to go to college or get jobs, when they could be making meaningful contributions to their communities and to our country."(Madera et al. 2008). Despite these calls to action of several important Congressmen and women, the Federal DREAM Act is still not a reality and the opportunities and future prospects for undocumented college student and college graduates in California are direly stunted.(Salsbury 2003)

In our increasingly technological society, electronic databases and verification systems of U.S. citizenship are making it even more difficult for undocumented immigrants to keep their lack of legal status a secret. E-Verify, for example, is an internet-based program operated by the United States government that allows employers to screen the legal status of their potential employees. Government audits can result in significant fines and jail time for employers who hire undocumented workers, thus an increasing number of businesses are adopting the use of E-

Verify. On October 9, 2011, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law Assembly Bill 1236 – the Employment Acceleration Act authored by Assemblyman Paul Fong. This California state law prohibits city or county governments from mandating the use of E-Verify, solidifying that the use of E-Verify by employers is completely voluntary. However, as the Obama administration continues to audit and punish employers of undocumented labor, an increasing number of employers are voluntarily using E-Verify. The main criticism of this system is that it is a “job killer.” (Mo Brooks et al. 2011). The California economy, and the economy of the entire United States for that matter, depends on undocumented labor. As almost 12 million undocumented immigrants live in the United States, a majority of whom are employed, the economy and job market would undoubtedly take a hit if undocumented workers were laid off. Thus, it is only logical that if the U.S. government continues to target employers of all undocumented immigrants, immigration reform that includes a path to legalization for workers must accompany. The federal government’s current set of immigration policies – enforcement against undocumented immigration in the absence of comprehensive immigration reform – is inherently punitive.

In the ever-changing political landscape of policy towards undocumented students, the current situation is always subject to change. The history of in-state tuition and financial aid for undocumented students in California has been a rollercoaster of ups and downs. For the time being, however, undocumented students can pay in-state tuition and will soon be able to access both public and private financial aid in California.

California has demonstrated commitment to investing in the education and future accomplishments of undocumented youth. However, while California controls its own education

policies, the state has no power over adjustment of legal status. Thus, undocumented immigrant students in California are increasingly able to finance and attend higher education institutions, yet still lack legal status upon graduation. A majority of these undocumented youth crossed the border with a parent at a very young age and are guilty of no transgression other than obedience to a parent. No matter what a person's stance on illegal immigration policy, it is undeniable that our current patchwork of state and federal immigration policies is illogical. America has yet to accept that our population demographic is changing as we increasingly become a nation of immigrants. Numerous efforts to curb immigration to the United States have been unsuccessful and it is time that we accept and utilize the potential of this group of people instead of continuing to resist our changing population demographic.

HUMAN IMPACT OF POLICIES

The following accounts summarize the experiences of a few undocumented immigrant interview subjects, each of which illustrate an important facet of the issues facing undocumented high school students, college students, and college graduates in California. Though these people and their stories are real, the names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the interview subjects because they are undocumented.

Maria

Maria* came to the United States from Mexico with her mother, father, and older sister in 1993. They all obtained temporary Visas and planned to apply for Legal Permanent Resident Status before their Visas expired. They were able to file an application for residency because Maria's aunt – an immediate family member – was a legal United States citizen. Maria's aunt filed a residency petition for her brother (Maria's father), and the rest of Maria's family in 1997. Today, over fourteen years later, Maria's family's petitions are still "pending." Her family's Visas have since expired, meaning that everyone in her family has been branded with the daunting status of "undocumented." During our interview she reflected, "I think I can remember three times we've gotten a letter saying that the process is moving. That's all they say. They don't give us a date, they don't give us an appointment, they don't tell us yes or no. Just that the process is moving. Then a few years later it happens again."

Lucky for Maria's family, they are protected from deportation under a law called 245(i). Under this law, any undocumented immigrant who filed a petition for residency before April 30, 2001 is protected from deportation. However, undocumented immigrants with pending

residency petitions that were filed after April of 2001 are not protected and can be deported if they are detained for any reason.

Maria attended Fairfax High School in Los Angeles, where she got involved with CHIRLA's Wise-Up program for undocumented high school students. She applied and was accepted into University of California Los Angeles. At this time, however, undocumented students in California were ineligible for any type of college financial aid or in-state tuition. Maria had no choice but to drop out of college after her first semester because her college savings had run out and she lacked the means to finance the rest of her education. She was unable to apply for student loans because neither she nor her parents had a Social Security number. Had AB 540 or the California Dream Act been in place, Maria would have had a viable option to earn her college degree. Through her involvement in CHIRLA's Wise-Up program, Maria was able to get an internship with CHIRLA after she dropped out of college. That internship led to a job through CHIRLA as an organizer for undocumented college students. Maria considers herself lucky that she was able to secure a stable job after college despite her lack of Social Security number.

Maria's family's experience with applying for legal residency illustrates the nightmarish experiences of families who get stuck in the backlog of immigration petitions in our infamously slow federal immigration system. (Personal Interview, Maria)

Carolina

Though Carolina* was born in Mexico, Los Angeles is the only home she remembers. As an undocumented high school student in 2001, Carolina became highly involved in campaigning for the passage of Assembly Bill 540 to exempt undocumented immigrant students from paying out-of-state tuition at public colleges and universities. AB 540 passed, allowing Carolina to pay in-state tuition at University of California Berkeley, to which she had been accepted. “Assembly Bill 540 gave me an opportunity that my family has not had,” Carolina reflected on her ability to pay in-state tuition at UC Berkeley. While in college, Carolina remembers a feeling of confusion and uncertainty among her undocumented peers about what exactly they were and were not able to do or apply for. They formed a support network of undocumented college students in order to share information and learn from one another. From this support network of friends, the California Dream Network was founded in 2003. The group was formed in order to actively address needs of undocumented students and expand access to higher education.

After getting her BA in psychology, Carolina still lacked legal residency, thus limiting her post-college options. She return to Los Angeles and got a job at CHIRLA as their academic coordinator. In this position, she began to advise other undocumented high school students and college students about their college and post-graduation options.

A huge question mark looms in Carolina’s future about whether she will ever be able to call herself a legal resident of the United States. *If* the Federal Dream Act passes in the next couple years, it will most likely include an age cut-off of 30. That means that recent college graduates under the age of 30 would be able to legalize their citizenship status under the Federal

Dream Act. Those over 30, however, are out of luck. Carolina is 27, turning 28 this year. She was one of the original members of the California Dream Network and has worked for years pushing for the passage of the Federal Dream Act, yet may never be able to reap the benefits of her hard work. (Personal Interview, Carolina)

Joseph

At the age of nine, Joseph* left Mexico for the United States on what he thought was a vacation. With the help of a *coyote* (a person who facilitates the illegal transport of immigrants over the United States border) he and his brother boarded a U.S.-bound bus to go meet their mother, who was already staying in the United States. Joseph and his family left behind a respectable life in Mexico – they owned a house and some land, and Joseph attended private school. However, his mother believed the quality of education and access to universities in the United States to be far superior to the education that one could obtain in Mexico. Joseph describes his first impressions of the United States as a letdown. His family immediately settled in Lancaster, where they spend the first couple months in a trailer home.

The first obstacle in Joseph’s education was learning English. He describes his English as a Second Language (ESL) classes as “a great way to fall behind.” Because his mother brought him to the United States to get a quality education, failing to keep up with his peers was not an option. Throughout elementary and middle school, Joseph struggled to prove his competency in English so he would not be placed in remedial ESL class. Joseph remembers the confusion of trying to sift through the college application process as an undocumented student. “In high school, I just really worked hard and hoped for the best, knowing that it could have been all for

nothing.” It did not turn out to be “all for nothing,” and his hard work paid off when he was offered a nearly full-ride scholarship to Occidental College.

Joseph’s mother’s desire for her sons to receive a quality education was certainly fulfilled, as Joseph and his brother are on their way to graduating from Occidental College and the University of California Riverside, respectively. However, what will happen after their graduations remains uncertain. Joseph’s perception of the undocumented workforce is bleak; “most of the undocumented people that I know work in really low-paying jobs like washing dishes or busing tables, mostly because people in those areas don’t care about your status. They just want you to clean up trash.” Therefore Joseph is not optimistic about his post-graduation options in the United States. “If I stay and there is no immigration reform, I really don’t have very many options of pursuing a professional career, and I surely don’t want to stay and work washing dishes. I put myself through four years of school and I don’t want it to be in vain. I would most likely return to Mexico if [the Federal Dream Act] doesn’t pass once I graduate.”

Joseph’s situation illustrates a profound disconnection between state and federal policy. California policies have invested in this student and allowed him to receive a quality education, yet federal policy (or lack thereof) makes him unable to fully utilize his education in this country. (Personal Interview, Joseph)

Sofia

Sofia* remembers bits about pieces about crossing the United States border with her mother and sister at the age of twelve. After leaving their home in Jalisco and arriving in Tijuana, Sophia was separated from her family and told she would see them on the “other side.”

She recalls, “I had to go in a car with a complete stranger who was an older lady. The lady told me to pretend my name was Jessica and that she was my older sister. After we safely crossed the border we drove off to her house where I had to spend the night not knowing what was in store for me. The next morning we drove off to a city where I was going to be handed over to my “grandfather” who at the time was also a complete stranger to me. Since my grandparents had been living in the U.S. their entire lives I never had the chance to meet them. In my eyes I was being handed over from one stranger to the next.” Sofia’s mother decided to take her daughters and cross the border in the midst of a heart-wrenching situation. Sofia’s father was an alcoholic and a drug addict, and would continually abuse her mother and take whatever small amount of money she had earned that week. Sofia remembers, “My mom had tried running away to other parts of Jalisco but my dad would always somehow find her... that was when she got tired of the life she had with my father and decided to run away from it all looking for the American Dream.” Sofia’s mother decided to take her chances immigrating illegally, rather than waiting for years in an abusive situation to apply to immigrate legally.

Once she was in the United States, Sofia recalls the struggle of entering middle school not knowing a word of English. This made it “difficult to compete with other students who have the advantage” in the education system. Against all odds, Sofia overcame the many obstacles in her education and is now a student at the University of California Los Angeles. AB 540 allowed her to qualify to pay in-state tuition and afford a college education. Throughout college, she has worked at a swap meet (like a flea market) selling video games and CDs. Her daily job was “to set up the stand and arrange the [video games and CDs] and at the end of the day put everything back into boxes.” Though not the most rewarding task, it was a job she was able to get despite her lack of legal status.

Because of the personal situation of Sofia's family, they are able to apply for U-Visas, which grant temporary legal status to immigrants who have been victims of crimes. Because Sofia qualified for in-state tuition under AB 540 because of her undocumented status, she will not be able to apply for a U-Visa until after she graduates from college. For Sofia, this is a bittersweet opportunity: "I feel blessed for being able to obtain this, but I would rather be undocumented my entire life than go through [the abuse from my father] that allowed me to get a visa." Once Sofia receives her U-Visa, she will be granted temporary legal status and work eligibility, which will hopefully allow her to utilize her skills and college degree. "Although I am not sure of what I want to do, I know that no matter what I decide to major in I want to live the "American Dream." I want to have a stable job and a home and have a happy family – achieve this dream that everyone talks about." (Personal Interview, Sofia)

*(*Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the interview subjects)*

FINDINGS

This section will detail the key findings from my research. Some of my findings are similar to the findings of other research publications about undocumented students and undocumented immigration, while other findings are more pioneering and have not yet been evaluated in other research. This section will start with a discussion of the ideologies and narratives that are used in pro- and anti-immigrant arguments. In the course of my research I have synthesized that the impacts of the ideologies that pervade the immigration debate have not been adequately addressed. The narratives used in arguments against the provision of services for undocumented immigrants are often problematic and based in myth. Undocumented students are affected by ideologies in all areas of the immigration debate, not just in the arguments for and against educational benefits for undocumented immigrants. After they graduate college, undocumented students will then have to confront sentiments that they are “stealing” jobs, draining public resources, and not paying taxes. In addition, these ideologies affect the general atmosphere and sentiment towards undocumented immigrants in the United States. Specific areas of debate about undocumented immigration, like higher education benefits, must be evaluated in the larger context of this atmosphere of negative sentiment towards undocumented immigration. Thus, the impact of various ideologies will be addressed, not just those directly for or against higher education benefits for undocumented students. Next, during the course of my research I observed that there is a disconnection between undocumented students’ perceptions of their post-graduation options, and what options are actually available to them. Continuing with the theme of lack of understanding and accurate knowledge, the next section will discuss public opinion and (mis)perceptions of undocumented students and undocumented immigrants in general. Next, state policy options given the lack of federal

immigration reform will be evaluated, with California as a case study of a state that has successfully implemented progressive policies towards undocumented immigrants. Finally, current efforts being taken to advance the rights of undocumented students in California will be laid out. The general finding that underlies this whole paper, and the concept that I would like readers to take away from my research, is that before any meaningful change in the undocumented immigrant situation in the United States can happen, we must address the problematic judgments, opinions, and general sentiment towards undocumented immigrants that exists in the U.S.

Prevalent Ideologies and Narratives Used in Pro- and Anti-Immigration Arguments

A subtle yet crucial distinction has emerged between the narratives and framing strategies used in arguments for and against the provision of benefits and amnesty for undocumented immigrants. The arguments used in both sides of the immigration debate fall into distinct frameworks that are key to the future of the immigration policy. Changing problematic ideologies used in anti-immigrant arguments is an important step in any meaningful change in the way immigration is treated in the United States.

Narratives Used in Anti-Immigration Arguments

1. Immigration (especially unauthorized) takes jobs away from law-abiding Americans.

One of the four guiding principles of the Immigration Reform Caucus is stated as follows: “Illegal employment is one of the driving forces of illegal immigration. In harsh economic times, it is important to make sure illegal aliens are not in the workforce. Employers who knowingly hire illegals must be prosecuted and held accountable.” (Bilbray) Especially in the current economic climate, many people are hyper-sensitive to the factors that affect job

availability. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate in the United States was at 8.3% as of February 2012. In California, the figure jumps to 11%, down from a peak of 12.4% unemployment in October of 2011. (Google Data: Unemployment) The argument then follows that if the United States does not have a sufficient supply of jobs for its own citizens, then introducing more workers into the workforce will take away from the already inadequate number of jobs. A large body of research suggests, however, that the jobs that are currently occupied by undocumented workers are not jobs that U.S. citizens are willing to take. In fact, most of the areas with the highest numbers of undocumented workers are not the areas that have high unemployment rates.

We can also see the disconnect between undocumented immigrant labor and unemployment statistics by the recent high-profile anti-undocumented immigration legislation passed in Alabama. The Hammon-Beason Alabama Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act (HB 56), passed in June 2011, is commonly regarded as the strictest anti-undocumented immigrant law in the nation. The law effectively bars undocumented immigrants from accessing public services and allows for the detention of a person based on “reasonable suspicion” that that person may be unlawfully present in the United States. HB 56 was passed based on the idea that if undocumented workers are forced out of the state, employment opportunities for lawful citizens will increase. Since the passage of the bill last year, a crisis in the agricultural industry has already begun to emerge. Alabama farmers are reporting a labor crisis caused by a mass exodus of their workforce. Farmer Chad Smith tells Forbes Magazine, “The tomatoes are rotting in the vine, and there is very little we can do. We will be lucky to be in business next year.” (Forbes: Alabama Immigration Law) He reported that after the usual crew of migrant laborers fled the state, only eleven citizens applied for harvesting jobs on his Alabama farm. Only one of those

eleven stayed after learning what the job would entail, and that man quit after the first day of work. Though Alabama's unemployment rate has decreased since the passage of HB 56 in June 2011, it has done so at the same rate as the national average, negating the role of HB 56 in the unemployment drop. It is clear that HB 56 has not had the effects that its creators intended. Though it *has* opened up job opportunities, it has become evident that these are not jobs that citizens are willing to take. Regardless of whether it is just for undocumented immigrants to be exploited in these low-wage back-breaking jobs, many policy makers have an unrealistic view of our country's labor needs and the demographics of the United States labor force.

While unemployment is undoubtedly a problem that requires national attention, we can see that the attribution of high unemployment rates to undocumented workers infiltrating the American workforce is problematic and often inaccurate and misleading.

2. Granting benefits or amnesty to undocumented immigrants will affirm illegal practices and encourage more people to immigrate illegally.

Brian P. Bilbray, Chairman of the Immigration Reform Caucus states the following guiding principle for United States immigration policy: "To pardon lawbreakers and reward them with the objective of their offence is inappropriate and will accelerate the flow of illegal immigrants." (Bilbray) Similarly, many opponents of the provision of college education for undocumented students argue that this will encourage future unauthorized immigration.

Despite the frequency with which this argument is used, there is little evidence that suggests the provision of in-state tuition will encourage more illegal immigration, especially in light of the fact that the bill has a minimum US residency requirement, as well requiring graduation from a US high school.

3. The state should not subsidize the education of students who will not be able to enter the educated workforce after graduation.

Policy blogger Tony Hake writes, “It makes no sense for taxpayers to fund the education of someone who cannot contribute to society. Let these students (and their parents) return to their nation of origin, re-enter the national legally, and then apply for college. Once they are here and are abiding by our laws they can be part of an educated workforce.” (Hake)

This argument commonly appears when making the case against the provision of subsidized college education for students who lack legal status. Why “waste” tax dollars educating students whose undocumented status will prevent them holding any meaningful job in the future? Or why invest in educating students who will take their college education back to their home country after graduation in order to be able to work legally?

Though overly simplistic, this argument does have an element of validity. It does not make economic sense to invest in the education of a student if that student will not be able to legally work and create returns on the investment. Given the fact that several states have already codified their investment in the future of undocumented youth with in-state tuition laws, it indeed makes more sense for these youth to be able to legally use their skills in the job market. However, the debate (in the state of California at least) is not whether in-state tuition should be granted to undocumented immigrants – we have already decide that it should. The big question is whether after graduation these students should have an opportunity to obtain citizenship. In addition, to say that undocumented college graduates “do not contribute to society” is misguided and misinformed. Many undocumented college graduates are able to work though internships and fellowships, independent contracting, and self-employment.

Given this policy conundrum of tax expenditure on subsidizing the education of undocumented students despite limitations in employment options, there are two directions that a resolution can take. One route would be to end the spending of tax dollars on the provision of in-state tuition for undocumented students. The other would be to grant these undocumented college graduates legal status and release this enormous pool of un-utilized potential and skills.

4. Undocumented immigrants place a burden on tax-funded government services and systems, including the education system.

Arguably the most credible argument against providing education subsidies and aid for undocumented immigrant students is that it takes resources and spots in colleges and universities away from legal residents. Based on the assumption that colleges and universities have the capacity to accommodate a finite number of students, accepting one student means that another will be rejected. Thus a theoretical debate is introduced. Does a US-born student deserve more than a student who was brought across the border by a parent before they can even remember? Should children be “punished” for the actions of their parents?

No matter what one believes to be the answer of these questions, it is incorrect to say that undocumented students should not be granted access to in-state tuition because their parents do not pay taxes. The Internal Revenue Service issues Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (I-TIN) regardless of the legal status of the individual. Another common anti-undocumented immigration argument is that undocumented immigrants put a strain on social services that are funded from a tax pool into which they do not pay. In reality, the exact opposite is often the case. A 2005 estimate showed that undocumented immigrant workers in the United States contribute about \$7 billion each year towards social security and Medicare through pay roll taxes. Yet, unlike citizen workers who will be able to access social security benefits and Medicare upon

turning 65, undocumented immigrants will not be entitled to these benefits. Even legal permanent residents (LPRs) are restricted in which government benefits they can receive. In most cases, an LPR must pay in to the Social Security and Medicare systems for ten years before they are eligible to receive these benefits. (Porter) In addition to income taxes, undocumented immigrants pay sales tax and property tax (either directly or indirectly, depending on whether they rent or own a home).

It is also incorrect (although it is often said) that undocumented immigrants are afforded more educational benefits than legal United States residents. In 1996, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) was passed stating that states cannot offer higher education benefits to undocumented immigrants unless the same benefits are offered to all United States citizens as well. Thus state bills granting in-state tuition for undocumented students, like California's AB 540, must also apply to legal residents of other states as well.

5. Undocumented immigrants bring crime and drugs into American society and schools.

This argument states that undocumented immigrants disproportionately commit crimes and pose a threat to the safety of the United States. Statistics are thrown around like "30% of the inmate population are identified as being illegal aliens" and "illegal aliens are about five times as likely to commit a felony as are U.S. citizens and resident aliens." (Fact Check: Beyond Borders) These are some of the most misguided and misleading statistics used in the immigration debate. The absurdity of these statistics lies in the fact that being in the United States without documentation, in and of itself, is a crime. Many undocumented inmates are incarcerated for minor offenses like being stopped at a traffic checkpoint, or being reported for

“suspicious activity.” When evaluating the rates of violent crime and theft, the undocumented population actually has lower crime rates than the general population.

Narratives Used in Pro-Immigration Arguments

1. It is morally correct to allow undocumented students to attend college because they have done nothing wrong.

In arguments to secure rights for undocumented students, the student is often painted as “hardworking, gifted, and overcoming insurmountable odds only to be disqualified from higher education and from their dream by an unjust law.” (Jefferies) As opposed to the objective, dehumanizing narratives used in the anti-undocumented student arguments, this strategy connects a human face to debate about undocumented students. It is much more difficult to argue that a particular student should be denied access to higher education when the student’s story, struggles, and accomplishments are known. This narrative sometimes takes on a different form – that the innocent child did not know any better when they were brought over the border by their parents, who are the real criminals. (See public perceptions section)

2. By educating these students, they will have more to contribute to society.

Daniel Hurley, director of state relations and policy analysis at the American Association of State Colleges and Universities says “we should do all we can to facilitate their economic contributions to society by getting them to, and through, post-secondary education so they can obtain more rewarding jobs and become tax-paying citizens.” (Public Radio International) Some of the most intelligent and hardworking youth of today are undocumented, and it would behoove us as a society to develop the potential of these youth.

Another argument is that in California, we have already made an investment in the education of undocumented youth. Our country has invested by providing free public primary and secondary education to all undocumented youth, and in some cases this investment has been increased by subsidizing public college or university education as well. By not allowing them legal work status, we are not optimizing the benefits of this investment. In order to maximize the dividends of the investment, we must evaluate the circumstances under which individuals will contribute more to the economy that they take. (See appendix E) According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a 30 year-old Mexican immigrant with a college degree will pay \$5300 more in taxes and require \$3900 less in government expenses each year than someone with similar characteristics who dropped out of high school. (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012)

Post-Graduation Options for Undocumented Students: Perceptions v. Reality

This research illuminates a profound uncertainty and a disconnection between undocumented students' perceptions of their post-collegiate options, and the options actually available to them. The confusing political and legal landscape surrounding undocumented immigrants paves way for a lack of understanding of which options are and are not accessible to them. This uncertainty begins when students are considering their options for undergraduate education. Carolina*, an advisor for undocumented youth in Los Angeles, speaks of the ambiguity that many students perceive about whether a college education is even worth it: "It's a question that often comes up with students, 'why am I going to college if it's not even going to help me get a job?' It's a question that always stumps me. I don't want to provide a false illusion that everything's going to be ok." However, Carolina advocates for all of her advisees to apply to college anyway. "Of all my [undocumented] friends, despite everything, they've never

regretted getting an education. Education gives you more than a paper; you are learning skills, analyzing, researching, writing.” (Personal Interview, Carolina)

Maria*, who works with undocumented college students around California, stresses the importance of educating students about the AB 540 and the California Dream Act. “Even though we have [AB 540], there are a lot of students that aren’t going to college because they don’t know they can. That’s one of the main things [CHIRLA] focuses on – giving information to students and community members that there is a way to go to college. Now with the California Dream Act, we are trying to re-educate everybody, that now you can get financial aid as well.” (Personal Interview, Maria)

The next source of confusion for undocumented students is about their employment and graduate school options after they complete an undergraduate education. This research intends to further the debate about undocumented students’ rights, but also to serve as a resource and a useful compilation of data for undocumented students and college graduates. A discussion of the post-undergraduate options for undocumented students follows.

1. Graduate Schools and Professional Schools

Graduate and professional schools are good options for students who want to expand their knowledge about a particular subject or improve their future employability. According to CHIRLA youth coordinator Maria*, some undocumented immigrant students choose to stay in school as long as possible in order to “wait it out” until some sort of federal reform passes that allows them to obtain legal working status. The biggest limitation of this option is obviously the cost. Graduate schools and professional schools come with a hefty price tag, and after financing an undergraduate education, the financial burden of graduate school is simply too much for many

undocumented students. In addition, scholarships are more competitive and difficult to obtain for masters programs and professional programs. In California, AB 131 (access to public financial aid) does not apply to funding for graduate schools. AB 130 (access to private scholarships in public schools), however, does provide scholarship opportunities for undocumented students in graduate programs. Another option for interested students to consider is that “a lot of private schools lately have been opening up more scholarships for some graduate programs specifically for undocumented students.” (Personal Interview, Maria) Despite the more expensive tuition of private (rather than public) graduate schools, the higher number of scholarship opportunities sometimes makes private graduate schools more accessible to undocumented students than public schools. However, private graduate schools vary in their policies towards undocumented students, and some require accepted students to have a valid Social Security number, thus barring undocumented student altogether.

Another way some students are able to finance graduate school is by obtaining indirect student loans. Banks require a Social Security number, which undocumented students, and in almost all cases their parents, do not have. However, some students have relied on a relative, like a citizen uncle or aunt, to sign for the loan, thus allowing them access to student funding.

Most graduate and professional programs also require a standardized test, such as the GRE, LSAT, GMAT, or MCAT. All of these tests require an official government-issued identification. Though not all states have similar laws, testing sites in California are required to accept alternatives forms of identification (like a passport from another country), thus allowing undocumented students to take these tests.

2. Internships and fellowships

Probably the most common route that undocumented students take after college graduation is to apply for an internship or fellowship. Non-profit organizations have the autonomy to employ undocumented students and graduates as they wish. However, many undocumented applicants are uncertain whether or not to disclose their immigration status on applications. “Disclosing your status when looking for an internship has many of the same risks and benefits as in other areas of life. In some cases, if the sponsoring organization knows that you are undocumented, it may be legally bound, or bound by policy, to turn down your application. On the other hand, if you lie about your status, you could set yourself up for extremely negative consequences if the untruth is ever discovered. Lying on an application could even cost you the ability to adjust to legal status in the future if the law or your situation changes.” (E4FC, Life After College 2011) Some organizations may be willing to negotiate the possibility of paying an undocumented intern or fellow under the table or through other means as a way to avoid the disclosure of undocumented status to government agencies. Both Maria* and Carolina* were accepted into internships at CHIRLA, which in both cases led to long-term employment opportunities.

3. Independent Contractor

“Federal and state laws often do not require proof of immigration status for an individual to go into business for him or herself and receive payment for goods or services. Individuals who perform services, but are not employees, are sometimes categorized as independent contractors.” Maria* spoke of an acquaintance of hers who graduated from college and became a successful self-contractor, providing financial services and guidance to low-income families. The advantage of this option is that the individual is not limited by available opportunities and can tailor their services around whatever set of skills and knowledge they possess. An

independent contractor must pay income tax and self-employment tax, and can use a Taxpayer Identification Number (I-TIN) in place of a Social Security number to file and pay taxes.

Another similar option is to start a Limited Liability Company (LLC) as a Worker Cooperative. “A worker cooperative is a business comprised of members who are both workers and owners of the business. Members can control the structure and practices of the work environment. Businesses who hire a worker cooperative are hiring the cooperative and not a single member. Therefore, they are not required to prove that the work being done by the worker cooperative qualifies as independent contract work.” (E4FC, Life After College 2011)

Public Opinion and Perceptions

Why does it matter?

Throughout the course of this research, some interesting findings about public opinion and public perceptions have been unveiled. It has become apparent that many members of the public hold some extremely incorrect and disconcerting misconceptions about immigration issues. There are many public opinion polls that ask Americans about their views on the immigration debate and what they believe should be the top priorities in addressing immigration in America. But how much weight should these opinion polls be given? Does it even matter if the public is misinformed about immigration? The following section will make the case that public opinion on immigration truly does matter, and changing public opinion and misconceptions towards immigration must be a significant part of any meaningful change in the way undocumented immigrants are treated in the United States. The first argument is political, and the second is social.

We live in a democratic society and in theory, at least, the actions of our government will reflect what Americans think and want. A study by Page and Shapiro from the *National Opinion Research Center* at the University of Chicago concluded that “By examining public opinion and policy data for the United States from 1935 to 1979, we find a considerable congruence between changes in preferences and in policies, especially for large, stable opinion changes on salient issues. We present evidence that public opinion is often a proximate cause of policy, affecting policy more than policy influences opinion.” (Page & Shapiro)

Though there is not an extensive pool of research on the relationship between public opinion and policy on immigration, several scholarly publications have sought to address the issue. In 2002, the Center for Immigration Studies published a report entitled *Elite vs. Public Opinion: An examination of divergent views on immigration*. In this study, Steven Camarota and Roy Becker analyze the findings of a survey based on responses from 2,800 members of the public and 400 opinion leaders, including “members of Congress, leaders of church groups, business executives, union leaders, journalists, academics, and leaders of major interest groups.” The study revealed a gap between the opinions of the general public and opinion leaders. 70% of the public said that combating undocumented immigration should be a “very important” policy goal, compared to just 22% of opinion leaders. Camarota and Becker assert that “the very large difference between elite and public opinion explains the current political stalemate on immigration.” (Camarota & Becker) Further, MIT political scientist Jens Hainmueller and Harvard professor Michael Hiscox conducted a study in 2010 on the causes of anti-immigration sentiment. They report, “Policy-makers need to better understand what causes anti-immigrant sentiments because resistant public opinion is the key roadblock for immigration reform in the U.S. and many other countries [...] the results also suggest that a fair amount of the anti-

immigration sentiment is driven by deep-seated cultural factors that are difficult to change with policy tools.” (Dizikes)

While not all studies have come to the same conclusion that negative public opinion towards immigration is a roadblock to progressive immigration reform, enough evidence shows the influential relationship between public opinion and policy that it is necessary to evaluate public views on immigration. However, it is also necessary to critically and subjectively evaluate the significance and validity of public opinion polls on immigration. While many opinion polls have been conducted about immigration issues, significantly less is known about the accuracy of the information on which Americans are basing their views on undocumented immigration, and about the prejudices they may hold. For example, many public opinion polls have been conducted on such topics as which strategies the U.S. should use to confront undocumented immigration, and what people think about various immigration policies (like the controversial immigration laws in Arizona and Alabama). However, it is unclear to what extent these views are based on fact. For example, opinion polls do not ask questions like “do undocumented immigrants pay taxes?” or “do undocumented immigrants receive Medicaid benefits?” Common misconceptions about undocumented immigration are bound to impact the ways in which Americans think about these issues. Even so, the existent public opinion polls provide insight that is important to the future of undocumented immigration policies.

A second reason that it is important to evaluate the American public’s views on undocumented immigrants is that the social environment in which a child is raised has a profound impact on his or her personal, social, and academic development. In his book *Stigma*, Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman discusses the process by which a stigmatized individual internalizes the labels placed on him by society and accordingly adjusts his or her self-

perception, affecting self-esteem and academic achievement. People who have uncommon physical traits or belong to a particular race, religion, or belief system are labeled and linked to a particular stereotype, leading to a disjoint between a person's actual social identity and their perceived social identity. Growing up as an undocumented immigrant in America certainly is a stigmatized status that many children go through great lengths to hide from their peers. The negative social culture and stereotypes surrounding undocumented immigrants undoubtedly have the potential to damage the self-esteem of undocumented youth, especially in formative early years of development. (Goffman) Thus, public opinion matters because it affects how people act towards undocumented immigrants. Social atmosphere and others' opinions *do* have psychological effects on individuals, whether it is conscious or subconscious.

Opinion on Policy Priorities

The Pew Research Center published a public opinion report on illegal immigration in 2011. The report showed that a majority of Americans generally favor a crackdown on illegal immigration, yet also support the creation of a path to citizenship for certain groups of undocumented immigrants who are already in the United States. Trends are present in the demographic breakdown of support for tougher border control and normalizing that status of current undocumented immigrants. Men are more likely than women to advocate for more border control, while women are more likely than men to support a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently in the country. Younger Americans are more likely to support a path to citizenship, while the older age groups prefer stricter border control. Educational attainment also appears to correlate with views on immigrants. College graduates show more support for a path to citizenship, while those who have not attained a college degree are in greater support of toughening border control. (Pew Research Center 2011) Thus, the

typical supporter of creating a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants is a young, college-educated female, whereas the typical advocate of stricter border control is an older male without a college degree. These findings become extremely important when evaluating how to garner support for legislations like the Federal Dream Act, which would create a path to legal permanent residency for undocumented college students. Immigrant advocacy groups can use this information to tailor their advocacy strategies around which demographic groups are most likely to support their cause.

In addition, the Pew Research Center study reported that opinion on the necessity of dealing with undocumented immigration is divided along partisan lines; 61% of Republicans cited “dealing with illegal immigration” as a top policy priority, compared to 47% of respondents who identified as independents, and 33% of Democrat respondents. Partisan division was also apparent in views on birthright citizenship, the practice of granting citizenship to children born in the United States to undocumented parents. Half of Republicans support a Congressional proposal to end birthright citizenship, compared to 39% of Independents and 33% of Democrats. The trend emerges of Democrats having a more lenient and accepting stance on issues around undocumented immigration, whereas Republicans’ responses show less tolerance towards the undocumented population and prefer to “keep America America.” (Pew Research Center 2011)

As of February 2011, a majority of Americans (61%) support Arizona SB 1070 which allows police officers to demand that a person show proof of their legal status upon “reasonable suspicion” that the person may be in the country illegally, which has led to widespread racial profiling. Support for this law has remained fairly constant, though approval is down slightly (3%) from when the law was first enacted in 2010. Racial divisions are apparent in views on

Arizona SB1070. Of Caucasian poll respondents, 72% support Arizona SB 1070, compared to 42% of African Americans, and 27% of Hispanics.

Why are people concerned about illegal immigration?

Respondents were asked what they perceived as the biggest concern or threat about illegal immigration. The top answer at 40% was that undocumented immigrants place a “burden on government services,” followed by the concern that undocumented immigrants hurt American job opportunities, at 27%. Less popular answers were that undocumented immigration “contributes to crime” (9%) and “hurts the American way of life” (6%). (Pew Research Center 2011)

Public support of the Federal DREAM Act

The Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) conducted an opinion poll in June 2010 using random digit dialing to sample 1,008 adults across America. Respondents were asked “Would you favor or oppose the DREAM Act?” Among Republican respondents, 70% were in favor, and 36% said they opposed. Among Democrats, 80% favor the DREAM Act, while 15% opposed. Geographically, the most support for the DREAM Act came from the West and the Northeast, while respondents from the Midwest were more likely to oppose it. Overall, 70% of respondents were in favor of passing the Federal DREAM Act (either strongly or somewhat). (First Focus 2010) These data suggest that while the American public may support a crackdown on illegal immigration, there is considerable support for allowing undocumented youth to obtain legal citizenship upon graduation from college. See recommendations section for further discussion.

What do students think about their undocumented classmates?

The Daily Bruin, the University of California Los Angeles newspaper, conducted a poll of 613 UCLA students and asked the question, “Do undocumented students deserve to pay in-state fees at UCLA?” 31% of students chose the option “no, undocumented students should not even be able to attend public universities.” Another 19% answered “no, they should always have to pay out-of-state fees.” 32% of students responded “yes, as long as they have lived in California for three years.” 19% said that undocumented students “deserve a UCLA education just as much as any legal resident.” (Daily Bruin 2012) Based on this poll, there is far from a consensus among students on what policies should be in place regarding undocumented students’ access to higher education.

Public opinion in real lives

Interview subject Sofia* reflected, “I come across a lot of closed-minded individuals who believe all the uncomfortable stereotypes that unfortunately have been placed upon the immigrant community. She recalls being called “dirty” and “uneducated” by complete strangers. (Personal Interview, Sofia) Joseph* has experienced stigma from others because of his legal status: “People say go to the back of the line. It’s not that simple though, it entails giving up your whole life to go back and wait in a line, and you may never get that same life back.” He also reflected: “When people use the term ‘illegal’ I feel like they are dehumanizing people – people that are really just like you or like anyone else.” (Personal Interview, Joseph)

When asked about the ways to combat these harmful prejudices, Sofia replied, “The most effective way of combating such misconceptions of the immigrant community is through education [...] Information and education are always the best weapons, and if used in an

effective way we can make that change and completely change the image of the immigrant community.” Joseph speaks of the conundrum in trying to make people understand that undocumented immigrants are just like everyone else: “From the undocumented side, you’re afraid to reveal that you’re undocumented because you don’t want to be seen differently. And from the other side, people don’t know you’re undocumented and that you’re just like them so they still hang on to these stereotypes. It’s difficult.” (Personal Interview, Joseph)

State Action in the Absence of Federal Reform

Despite all the focus, both in this paper and the larger immigration debate, on the importance of federal action, there are also meaningful steps that individual states can take to improve the lives of undocumented students (and undocumented immigrants in general). Though the importance and necessity of federal reform should also be underscored, states do not “have their hands tied” entirely in the meantime. California is a great model for progressive state policies despite a lack of federal reform. In addition to the previously discussed AB 540 and California Dream Act, California passed several lesser-known measures in 2011 to improve access to education for documented and undocumented immigrant youth. Assembly Bill 124, introduced by Assembly member Felipe Fuentes, establishes English language development standards for students for whom English is a second language. The Bill established a 13-member English Language Development Standards Advisory Committee to ensure high-quality instruction for English language learners.

Last year California also passed Assembly Bill 844, authored by Assembly member Ricardo Lara. This Bill added a provision to the Donahoe Higher Education Act that guarantees certain rights for undocumented students who qualify as exempt from nonresident tuition under

AB 540. Undocumented students are granted the right to “serve in any capacity in student government at the California State University or the California Community Colleges and receive any grant, scholarship, fee waiver, or reimbursement for expenses that is connected with that service to the full extent consistent with federal law.” (Lara 2011) The University of California is requested to comply with this provision, though it is not compulsory.

California Assembly Bill 207, authored by Tom Ammiano, was also passed last year. This Bill requires school districts to accept a wide range of documents from the parent or legal guardian as reasonable evidence that the pupil meets the residency requirements. This Bill helps children of undocumented families because these families have often been unable to produce the necessary legal documents to fulfill the residency requirements to send their children to certain schools. (Ammiano 2011)

California passed several other bills last year that relate to workers’ right and immigrants’ civil rights. Among them are AB 469 (Swanson) - the Wage Theft Prevention Act, AB 1236 (Fong), insuring that cities or counties cannot mandate the use of E-Verify, and AB 353 (Cedillo), allowing unlicensed drivers to have someone else pick up their car at a checkpoint rather than it being impounded.

We can also see the power of individual states – individual people, in fact – to effect change in the fight for undocumented students’ rights in the state of Georgia. Near the University of Georgia in Athens, there is another university, the exact location of which is kept a secret. It is Freedom University, a school for undocumented students who are unable to afford out-of-state tuition at Georgia Universities, which is over three times the rate paid by legal Georgia residents. Undocumented students are effectively barred from any top Georgia

Universities because the stated priority of the Board of Regents is for each slot at Georgia Universities to go to legal residents. A group of professors from the University of Georgia founded Freedom University, and spend their Sundays teaching undocumented students without pay. Because the students are also not permitted to have driver's licenses, they are picked up and brought to school each Sunday by volunteers. (Tamura & Gutierrez) Even in the direst circumstances, individual actions can effect profound change for undocumented students. Freedom University is a great example of the fact that individuals and states do not have to simply wait around for Congress to pass immigration reform – there are extremely meaningful steps that can still be taken.

What is Already Being Done?

This research has thus far laid out a problematic situation surrounding undocumented students in higher education. An erratic, piecemeal combination of state and federal legislations creates a confusing landscape for undocumented students in which their post-college options are limited by their lack of legal status. There also exists a problematic lack of education about these issues – both on the part of undocumented students and the general public. The next section will lay out the landscape of the strategies that various immigrant rights groups are using to address the concerns of undocumented students. This section will focus on the organizational case study of CHIRLA (See Appendix G), but will also discuss several other immigrant advocacy organizations in order to create a more complete picture of current efforts.

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles

The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) is arguably the most central organization in the fight for equality for undocumented students in California.

While other organizations have effectively executed education and advocacy programs, CHIRLA has filled a crucial role that no other organization fills adequately – undocumented youth organizing. CHIRLA’s youth organizing began in 2001 with the creation of their Wise-Up program that sought to address the needs of undocumented high school students around Los Angeles County. The group was formed by immigrant students who began to organize themselves to fight for the passage of AB 540. Their activism paid off on October 12, 2001 when then-governor Gray Davis signed AB 540 into law. The Wise-Up founders were among the first students to benefit from AB 540 as they graduated high school and were able to pay resident tuition rates at public colleges and universities. Soon after, there arose a need for an organization similar to Wise-Up at the college level. A group of undocumented college students, including former Wise-Up members, organized themselves into a multi-campus support network. The network was formalized in 2003 and became known as the California Dream Network.

The California Dream Network is divided into four regional organizations – Northern Region, Central Region, LA Metro Region, and Southern Region. Each region delegates students to represent them in the Steering Committee, which is composed of 17 trained student leaders who are elected during statewide retreats which occur every six months. Today, the network involves 38 colleges and universities across California. Each campus group of AB 540 students delegates one or two students to be their Campus Representative. It is the responsibility of the Campus Representative to participate in monthly statewide conference calls, help organize local and statewide actions, and essentially be a liaison and disseminator of information to the rest of the members of their campus group. Since its inception, the California Dream Network has trained an estimated 2,000 undocumented student leaders.

Wise-Up and the California Dream Network have been invaluable organizations in the fight for equality for undocumented youth because they represent the constituencies whose lives are directly affected by these policies. While staff members, organizers, and professional immigrant advocates are necessary as well, the involvement of these youth has been and will continue to be absolutely essential to the progression of the undocumented students' cause. The youth organizing capacity that CHIRLA has established is indispensable and unparalleled by any other organization.

Though perhaps slightly overshadowed by the success of their youth organizing, CHIRLA has carried out many education campaigns as well. CHIRLA offers free group seminars, presentations, and workshops about various immigrant rights issues, including the issues around higher education for undocumented students. However, a limitation of the scope of CHIRLA's education efforts is that most presentations and workshops are given to groups that already have a base level of knowledge and interest on immigration issues. Thus CHIRLA's outreach does not generally reach the layperson who is unknowledgeable about the immigration debate. Another element of CHIRLA's education strategy is informing undocumented students about their college options, especially AB 540 and the recently passed California Dream Act.

A final category of CHIRLA's efforts to help undocumented students further their education is policy advocacy. CHIRLA took a leading role in campaign efforts for the California Dream Act in 2011. They organized student rallies and actions and encouraged members of the public to write letters to California Assemblymen, Senators, and Governor Jerry Brown in support of the California Dream Act. In addition, CHIRLA staff members worked with Assemblyman Gil Cedillo to draft the bill and talked to California legislators to help discern

what specific provisions would cause them to or not to vote for the bill. (CHILRA website, Personal Interviews, Carolina and Maria)

California Immigrant Policy Center

The California Immigrant Policy Center’s mission is to “advance inclusive policies that build a prosperous future for all Californians using policy analysis, advocacy and capacity building to unlock the power of immigrants in California.” (CIPC website) Efforts to advance the rights of undocumented students fall into three broad categories of education, advocacy, and organizing. Most of the California Immigrant Policy Center’s work generally falls into the “advocacy” category, as their main activity is promoting policies at the state and federal level that will benefit immigrants. While their work focuses more heavily on such issues as ending unjust detentions and deportations, granting health care coverage to undocumented immigrants, and advocating against the use of the E-Verify system, they have also done some work with laws concerning undocumented students as well. The current piece of legislation concerning undocumented students with which the CIPC is involved is Assembly Bill 1899. AB 1899, authored by Assemblywoman Holly Mitchell and co-sponsored by CIPC, National Immigration Law Center (NILC), and Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), would grant U-Visa holders (for victims of crime) access to the same educational benefits as undocumented students under AB 540. They were also involved in the California Dream Act campaign in 2011 through their work with coalitions with other immigrant rights organizations in the state.

Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) is another prominent immigrant rights organization that works towards increasing rights for undocumented students. It is a national organization so has a wider scope than the aforementioned California-specific organizations, but it should also be noted that MALDEF works exclusively with Mexican immigrants, thus limiting the breadth of the demographic they reach. In comparison with CIPC's policy-focused strategy and CHIRLA's youth organizing-focused strategy, MALDEF employs a more service and education-based approach to furthering the cause of undocumented students' rights. One of MALDEF's main activities is the provision of legal consultation to undocumented Mexican immigrants. Within the scope of this project, their legal consultation program extends to educating undocumented Mexican immigrant students about the confusing legal landscape surrounding their access to higher education. They distribute educational brochures and pamphlets on such things as AB 540 and deportability in everyday life. (See Resources section) However, due to their national scope they do not create informational materials that are specific to California or other states.

A particular strength of MALDEF's overall strategy is their partnership with other organizations and involvement in coalitions. Among the organizations with which they partner are the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the National Indian Education Association, the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center, the National Women's Law Center. This allows them to partner with and access the resources of other organizations that work on other related issues of women's rights, educational equality, and advancement of racial minorities. (MALDEF website) (See Recommendations section for further discussion of the importance of partnerships.)

UCLA Labor Center – Dream Resource Center

While the aforementioned organizations all deal with immigrant issues in general, either on a state or federal level, the Dream Resource Center component of the UCLA Labor Center is an excellent organization for undocumented students because they focus exclusively on access to education for undocumented immigrant students. While the UCLA Labor Center has been around for almost 50 years, the Dream Resource Center is a new fixture that was founded just last year in 2011. Already, the Dream Resource Center (DRC) has had tremendous success and embarked on some truly unique and innovative projects. The foundation from which this group emerged was a UCLA class taught in 2007 on immigrant rights and higher education. Several students in the class were inspired to embark on a research and interview project that culminated in the 2008 publication of *Underground Undergrads: UCLA Undocumented Immigrant Students Speak Out*. Their efforts became known as the Underground Undergrads project, which was formalized into the Dream Resource Center in 2011. Their main objective is to “promote equal access to education by developing educational resources, leadership tools, and support mechanisms for immigrant students, along with educating the public about local and national policies.” (UCLA Labor Center website) The Dream Resource Center has been organizing events across California to promote the Underground Undergrads book. They have had much success and over ten thousand copies of the book have been sold to date. Because this organization has only become formalized very recently, we have yet to see the full scope of what they will accomplish. Their narrow focus, ambitious group of student leaders, and the success of their book suggest that the UCLA Dream Resource Center will become an increasingly prominent, effective, and successful tool in the undocumented students’ rights movement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mobilize immigrant voters to elect candidates supportive of immigrant rights in November 2012

An immediate goal of the immigrant rights movement and the undocumented students' movement must be to mobilize immigrant voters and voters who are likely to choose candidates that support immigrant causes. Though legal permanent residents, and obviously undocumented immigrants, are unable to vote in federal and state elections, U.S.-born relatives as well as naturalized citizens are able to vote. According to the 2009 American Community Survey, there are 16.8 million naturalized United States citizens. (Migration Policy Institute 2010) An analysis by Rob Paral & Associates of 2006 Census data showed that 24.4% (or 13.2 million) of registered voters in California are "New Americans" – naturalized citizens or U.S.-born children of immigrants. In addition, the proportion of Latino and Asian voters in California has steadily increased since 1990 in each subsequent election. These groups make up a significant proportion of our voting pool. The electoral power of this group can be harnessed to make a real difference. Though no major immigration reforms are likely to be passed during an election year, this is still an extremely important year for the future of undocumented students because the candidates that are elected to office will determine the political climate for the next several years.

As discussed in the Findings section, certain demographic characteristics and affiliations correlate with a person's stance on immigration. Democrats for example tend to be more sympathetic towards the immigrant community and causes. Generally speaking, it would behoove the immigrant rights movement to elect as many democratic candidates as possible in the November 2012 elections. Along with the presidential race, 33 of the 100 seats in the U.S. Senate are being contested, and all 435 seats in the House of Representatives are up for grabs.

Of the 33 contested seats in the Senate, 7 seats are left by retiring Democrats or Independents, 3 are left by retiring Republicans, Democrats/Independents are seeking re-election in 16 seats, and Republicans are seeking reelection in 7 seats. States like California, New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and others are very likely to fill their seat with a Democratic candidate, while Texas, Arizona, Nebraska, etcetera, will almost certainly choose a Republican candidate. Races in other states remain more ambiguous and thus important campaigning locations. The outcomes of the Congressional elections in states like Maine, New Mexico, Florida, Massachusetts, Virginia, Nevada, Missouri, Montana, and Wisconsin will determine the composition of the U.S. Senate for at least the next two years. Races in states with high populations of undocumented immigrants are of high importance as well. (Federal Election Commission 2012)

It is necessary for states with similar goals to partner and collaborate in campaign efforts. After all, the candidate that one state elects to Congress affects each other state as well. As Californians who wish to expand the rights and opportunities of immigrants, our first election goal must be to support and reelect Diane Feinstein to represent us in the Senate. She has spoken out in strong support of the Federal DREAM Act. We next must advocate for candidates in other states that are more likely to be an ally in the undocumented students' rights movement. This may take the form of actions like letter writing or phone banking. Special attention should be given to states whose Senate elections have uncertain outcomes, where efforts have the most potential to effect actual change. Similarly, we must strive to elect a House of Representatives that will best advocate for the welfare of immigrants.

Educating undocumented students about their options

The research presented in this paper uncovered that many undocumented students are unclear on their options, in terms of applying, enrolling, and financing a college education, as well as their options for after graduation. The ambiguity of options for undocumented students is exacerbated by the ever-changing and disjointed political and legal landscape. Maria* speaks of CHIRLA having to “re-educate” undocumented students and families after the passage of the California Dream Act. Though CHIRLA’s education campaigns reached many undocumented students, (an estimated 3,000 since the passage of AB 130 and 131) there are still many more that likely do not have all the accurate information about their college options.

The passage of AB 540 and the California Dream Act were enormous successes in the undocumented students’ rights fight in California. However, these bills do no good when the students that they affect do not know about them. CHIRLA and the California Dream Network have already made tremendous progress in educating undocumented youth about their options, yet there is much more to be done. The distribution of resource guides for undocumented students in high schools and college campuses is a step in the right direction. *Life After College: A Guide for Undocumented Students* was published by Educators for Fair Consideration and provides a comprehensive overview of the options available to undocumented students after graduation. The guide discusses options and required documentation for graduate schools, internships and fellowships, self-contracting, and other types of employment. If an organization like CHIRLA were to print this booklet and distribute it across college campuses, it would be tremendously helpful to college students as they look towards their uncertain future. Student leaders in the extensive California Dream Network could help execute the distribution of these booklets and would be able to reach a majority of the undocumented college students in

California. Having a resource like this would also help undocumented students who perhaps have become discouraged and pessimistic about their futures keep in mind that they do have options after graduation.

Confusion also exists about the legal text of the bills themselves. For example, a box must be checked on the AB 540 form that says “I am not a non-immigrant alien.” This statement is meant to exclude legal permanent residents, but the bizarre wording and use of a double negative often confuses undocumented students on whether the non-resident tuition exemption actually applies to them. AB 540 also requires the student to sign an affidavit stating their intent to apply for legal status as soon as it he or she becomes eligible. “Obviously, anybody that is undocumented will do that [...] it’s more symbolic, saying that you plan to apply for status whenever you get a chance, whether it’s through your family or through the Dream Act.” (Personal Interview, Maria) Still, Carolina* reports that “students get stuck on that” and think that because they have no current legal course to citizenship that they cannot qualify for AB 540. Policy experts who work with undocumented youth at organizations like CHIRLA play an important role in clearing up these misunderstandings. Even so, better educating counselors and teachers in California high schools about AB 540 and the California Dream Act is another important step towards ensuring that all undocumented students know their options.

More public education targeted at different groups

Sophia* perceives education as the “best weapon” for combating negative stereotypes against undocumented immigrants. There is a need for increased education in many aspects of immigration issues. Extensive efforts are being made by many groups to educate the public about issues pertaining to undocumented immigrants and students. However, there is a large

subset of the population that these education efforts are failing to reach. A large portion of the population remains uneducated and misinformed about immigration issues, and whose perceptions are shaped by the media and sensationalized stories and statistics about “criminal aliens.” Throughout the research process, I came across several people who were shocked to learn that undocumented students are even allowed to go to college, or that a third of immigrants in the United States are actually undocumented. The problem lies in the fact that outreach efforts can only “reach” so far. For example, CHIRLA regularly organizes seminars, discussion panels, and presentations about immigration issues at conferences, fairs, college campuses, and other locations. However, the people who attend these events are mostly people who already have a certain level of interest and knowledge about these issues. Thus, there remains an unfilled gap in educating the general public about immigration issues. Filling this gap is important for several reasons. Misguided prejudices that many people hold about undocumented immigrants contribute a harmful dimension to the immigration debate. The American public buying into representations of undocumented immigrants as criminals and drug traffickers is precisely what allows these stereotypes to continue. We live in a democratic society and the opinion of each person matters. In the immigration debate, more attention must be paid to the fluid manner in which public opinion and policy influence one another. One will not change drastically without the other.

The first step in influencing public opinion and swaying the views of people who are not yet knowledgeable about immigration issues is dispelling the rampant and detrimental myths that exist around undocumented immigration. Sensationalized statistics are often cited about the percentage of “criminal illegal aliens” in prisons. People need to realize that a majority of these cases are not violent crimes or even theft. Undocumented immigrants are arrested because of

their status; for example thousands of undocumented immigrants are incarcerated each year after being stopped at traffic checkpoints (as they are ineligible for legal driver's licenses). Once these myths have been dispelled we can work towards creating a more accurate representation of undocumented immigration in the media and public perceptions. This creation of a new representation of the unauthorized immigrant must include a variety of strategies.

My first suggestion is for immigrant right organizations to hold more group dialogues, discussion panels, and focus groups in a variety of locations and settings in order to reach a wider audience. These locations may include various workplace settings, community meetings, college classrooms, churches, etcetera. Distribution of informational fliers or pamphlets in these locations would be another way to arouse curiosity and interest about immigration issues in new populations.

During my interviews, I found that reading an account of an undocumented student's story has a different impact than actually sitting down and having a personal, face-to-face conversation with someone. A solution to ending prejudice towards undocumented immigrants must recognize the value and utility of personal interaction between people of different backgrounds and different views. We are all human and that is the level on which we need to relate to one another. Several immigrant advocacy groups have organized events in which undocumented students go to the capital to voice their opinions to policy makers. Recent examples include the "Walking for a DREAM" march from the Golden Gate Bridge to DC and the "Trail of Dreams" march from Miami to DC. Most of these efforts, however, focus on drawing attention to the struggles faced by undocumented students and an aggressive and often combative stance is generally taken towards policy makers.

These marches have been extremely successful in drawing attention to the cause, and thousands of undocumented students showed remarkable courage and risked arrest by coming forward about their undocumented status. However, protests and charged interactions like these are no substitute for genuine personal dialogue between students and policy makers. An obvious obstacle to overcome will be the justified reluctance of undocumented students to admit their legal status high-up policy makers. In this way, we can start to move away from the dehumanization that plagues certain arguments in the immigration debate.

Sustaining and Prolonging Student Interest

Student interest and involvement in the undocumented students' rights movement in California greatly expanded during the California Dream Act campaign in 2011. The California Dream Network has a student retreat every six months; the last retreat in January had 240 students in attendance, compared to 120 at the previous retreat in August. This shows that the level of involvement of undocumented college students has doubled over the course of six months. It is extremely important to the future of the movement that this interest and activism be sustained. Students cannot fall into the mindset that the California Dream Act passed and the battle has been won. There is still much to be done. The California Dream Network should sustain interest and involvement by promoting excitement about the next goal for these undocumented students. For example, student interest and activism towards the California Dream Act can be transferred to the driver's license bill proposed by California Assemblyman Gil Cedillo. If it passes, this bill would allow these undocumented students (and all undocumented immigrants) to legally drive in the state of California. The bill would have far-reaching consequences; access to personal transportation would expand students' options for education, employment, living situation, and extracurricular activities.

Several obstacles accompany the task of organizing undocumented college students. Students are generally involved in the California Dream Network for a maximum of four years, or until they graduate. This makes for a high turn-over rate of student participants and student leaders. Thus, student recruiting and leader training must be ongoing processes. Organizing undocumented students, who are not necessarily public about their legal status, introduces another dimension of difficulty. It would be beneficial then for the California Dream Network to try to maintain connections with former student leaders even after they graduate. These graduates obviously have a vested interest in these issues and would be great sources of continuity and positive role models for the group.

Connecting the Undocumented Students Fight to Other Issues

As previously discussed, the undocumented students movement must be taken in the context of the larger immigration movement. In almost all cases, undocumented students have undocumented parents, so what happens in the larger immigration movement affects the entire family. A parent being deported, for example, will undoubtedly affect the well-being and academic performance of an undocumented student. Though it is certainly a positive phenomenon that public opinion is increasing sympathetic towards undocumented students, we must be careful to avoid the dangerous rhetoric that the parents are the real criminals for taking their child across the border.

The undocumented students' rights movement will also benefit from alignment with other movements and causes that are gaining support and momentum. For example, the movement for educational equality and access for all is a much more popularly supported and less divisive issue, making it a potential beneficial target for the undocumented students'

movement to ally itself with. Organizations that endorsed the Federal DREAM Act in 2011 are clear potential allies: the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Education Association, the National Council of La Raza, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, First Focus Campaign for Children, and South Asian Americans Leading Together. (Popvox 2011)

Specific Policies: In -State Tuition Laws

An exciting trend has emerged of more and more states adopting in-state tuition policies for undocumented students. Each additional state that adopts a similar law signifies doors being opened in thousands of lives and brings us one step closer to equality for undocumented students. However there is still a long way to go, as just 13 states currently have in-state tuition laws. Three states – Texas, New Mexico, and California – currently provide financial aid for undocumented students, and the New York Dream Act has recently been proposed. Many states are progressing in the right direction in terms of accessibility of higher education to undocumented immigrants, but there is still much work to be done. At the same time, there is a push in the opposite direction as well. For example, a group of Kansas lawmakers is trying to repeal Kansas’s in-state tuition for undocumented students, which passed in 2004. This is the second attempt in the past year that has been made to repeal the law.

Some states are firmly headed in a progressive direction, while others are just as firmly headed in the opposite direction. Other states are still in more of a deliberative position on policy towards undocumented immigrants. For these “undecided” states, the role of inter-state collaboration becomes especially important. If a state sees an example of successful outcomes from the implementation of in-state tuition and financial aid for undocumented students, that state is more likely to take the risk of implementing these policies as well. It is important to note

that while California is certainly not meeting all the needs of our undocumented immigrants, the political landscape in California is far more hospitable than in most other states

Specific Policies: Federal DREAM Act, Comprehensive Immigration Reform, and Beyond

Lastly, the need for the Federal DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform cannot be stressed enough. The investment has already been made. The United States has spent billions on the K-12 education of undocumented youth, and many states have spent millions more on the subsidization of higher education for undocumented immigrants. A reserve of talent, knowledge, skills, and intellectual capacity is among us, waiting to be set free by immigration reform at the federal level. It should also be noted that the DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform are not cure-all solutions that will “fix” the immigration system. A deeper solution must also evaluate the conditions in other countries that encourage undocumented immigration, and the ways in which U.S policies affect these conditions abroad.

CONCLUSION

In his State of the Union Address earlier this year, President Obama issued the following statement:

“Hundreds and thousands of talented, hardworking students in this country face another challenge – the fact that they aren’t yet American citizens. Many were brought here as small children, are American through and through, yet they live every day with the threat of deportation. Others came more recently to study business and science and engineering, but as soon as they get their degree, we send them home to invent new products and create new jobs somewhere else. That doesn’t make sense. I believe as strongly as ever that we should take on illegal immigration ... We should be working on comprehensive immigration reform right now. But, if election year politics keeps Congress from acting on a comprehensive plan, let’s at least agree to stop expelling responsible young people who want to staff our labs, start new businesses, and defend this country. Send me a law that gives them the chance to earn their citizenship; I will sign it right away. An economy built to last is one where we encourage the talent and ingenuity of every person in this country.” (State of the Union 2012)

We have the necessary ingredients to further the immigrant students’ rights movement. Our president supports it, and the group of courageous and ambitious students that have been at the forefront of this movement for years continue to fight relentlessly for their rights. The struggle for undocumented students’ rights is arguably the biggest civil rights struggle of our time. Though it may take years, if undocumented youth continue to fight and persevere as they have been, the Federal Dream Act *will* pass and these students *will* be granted the legal right to call America their home

RESOURCES FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Throughout my research I have compiled a list of resources for undocumented students:

*Dream Summer is a summer internship for undocumented Dream students put on by The UCLA Labor Center and the United We Dream Network. Selected participants receive a \$5,000 scholarship. The application deadline has passed for the summer of 2012, but interested students should consider applying for summer 2013.

For more information, visit: <http://www.dreamresourcecenter.org/2012.html>

*The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund produced this informational flier that addresses some of the more confusing aspects of AB 540:

http://www.maldef.org/education/public_policy/6.2.4_AB540_FAQ.pdf

*Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC) have very recently published some excellent resources for undocumented students.

-2011-2012 Guide to scholarships in the Bay Area that do not require social security numbers: http://e4fc.org/images/E4FC_Scholarships.pdf

-Life After College: A Guide for Undocumented Students:
http://www.e4fc.org/images/E4FC_LifeAfterCollegeGuide.pdf

-2011-2012 Financial aid guide for college-bound undocumented students:
http://www.e4fc.org/images/E4FC_FinAidGuide.pdf

-E4FC also offers internships and scholarships for undocumented students in the Bay Area. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.e4fc.org/internprogram.html> and <http://www.e4fc.org/scholarsprogram.html>

*Many private colleges and universities have scholarships specifically for undocumented that are not necessarily widely publicized or discussed on the college's website. If an undocumented student is interested in a particular private school, he/she should call the admissions office to ask if they have any specific policies on admission of undocumented students. Some schools are much more accommodating than others.

*More information on financial aid opportunities for undocumented students:

- <http://www.finaid.org/otheraid/undocumented.phtml>

-www.latinocollegedollars.org

-www.law.uh.edu/ihelg/undocumented/homepage

RESOURCES FOR THE PUBLIC

-If you are interested in learning more about higher education for undocumented students, check out these resources:

*Short video about Freedom University for Undocumented Students in Georgia:

<http://schoolsofthought.blogs.cnn.com/2011/12/01/freedom-university/>

**Underground Undergrads*, a book that documents the struggles and triumphs of several undocumented students in California, by Madera, et al.

*The documentary *Papers: the Plight of Undocumented Students*

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Family-based Immigration Quotas:

Family-Based Immigration System			
Preference	U.S. Sponsor	Relationship	Numerical Limit
“Immediate Relatives”	U.S. Citizen adults	Spouses, unmarried minor children, and parents	Unlimited
Total Family-Sponsored Visas Allocation (floor = 260,000)			480,000
1	U.S. Citizen	Unmarried adult children	23,400*
2A	LPR	Spouses and minor children	87,900
2B	LPR	Unmarried adult children	26,300
3	U.S. Citizen	Married adult children	23,400**
4	U.S. Citizen	Brothers and Sisters	65,000***
* Plus any unused visas from the 4 th preference. ** Plus any unused visas from 1 st and 2 nd preference ***Plus any unused visas from the all other family-based preferences			

(Source: <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/how-united-states-immigration-system-works-fact-sheet>)

Appendix B: Employment-Based Immigration Categories and Quotas

Permanent Employment-Based Preference System		
Preference Category	Eligibility	Yearly Numerical Limit
Total Employment-Based Immigrants		140,000 for principles and their dependents
1	“Persons of extraordinary ability” in the arts, science, education, business, or athletics; professors and researchers, some multinational executives.	40,000*
2	Members of the professions holding advanced degrees, or persons of	

	exceptional abilities in the arts, science, or business.	40,000**
3	Skilled shortage workers with at least two years of training or experience, professionals with college degrees, or “other” workers for unskilled labor that is not temporary or seasonal.	40,000*** “Other” unskilled laborers restricted to 5,000
4	Certain “special immigrants” including religious workers, employees of U.S. foreign service posts, former U.S. government employees and other classes of aliens.	10,000
5	Persons will invest \$500,000 to \$1 million in a job-creating enterprise that employs at least 10 full time U.S. workers.	10,000
<p>*Plus any unused visas from the 4th and 5th preferences **Plus any unused visas from the 1st preference ***Plus any unused visas the 1st and 2nd preference</p>		

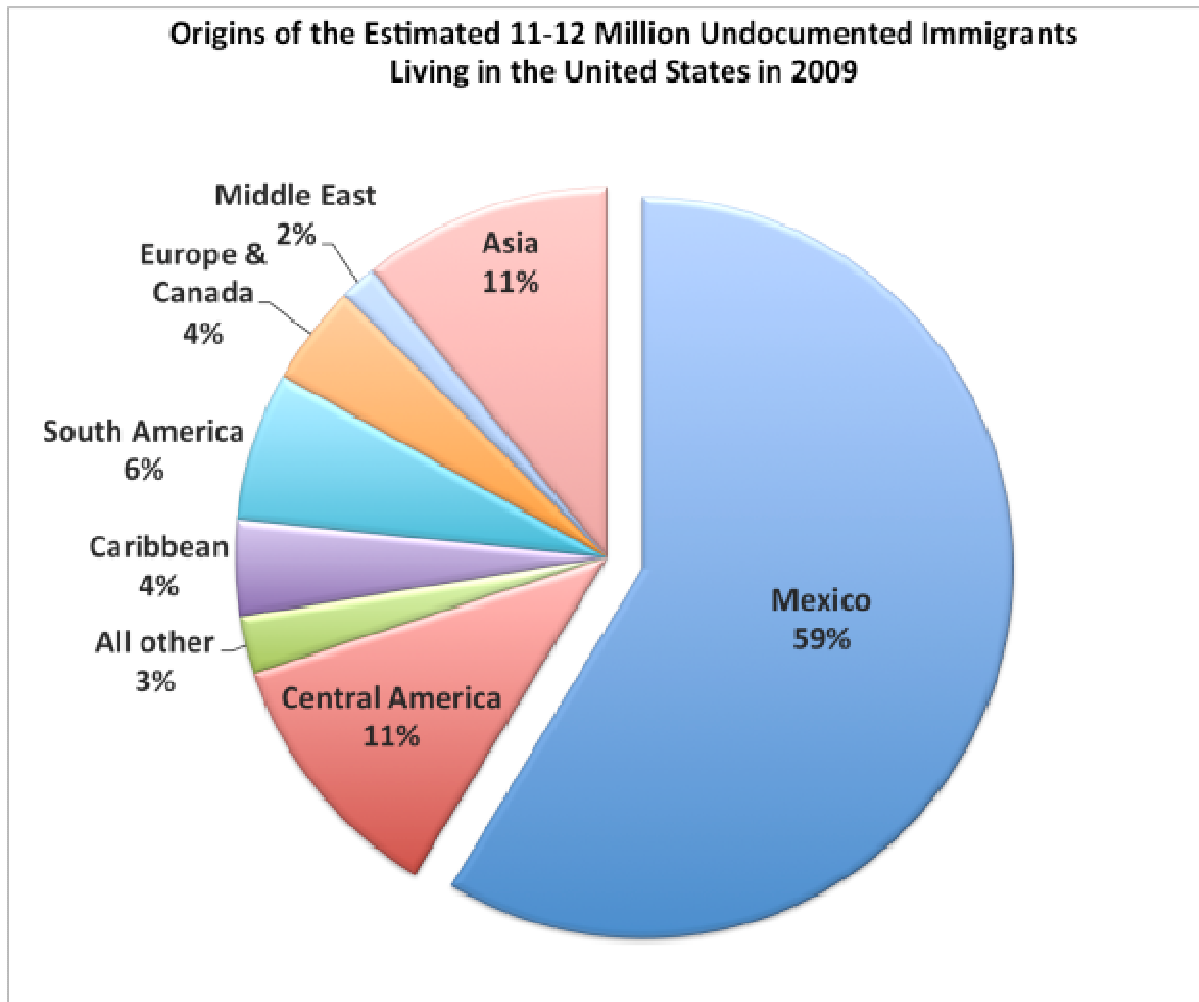
(Source: <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/how-united-states-immigration-system-works-fact-sheet>)

Appendix C: Regional Allocation of Admitted Political Refugees in 2010

Africa	15,500
East Asia	17,000
Europe and Central Asia	2,500
Latin America/Caribbean	5,000
Near East/South Asia	35,000
Unallocated Reserve	5,000
TOTAL	80,000

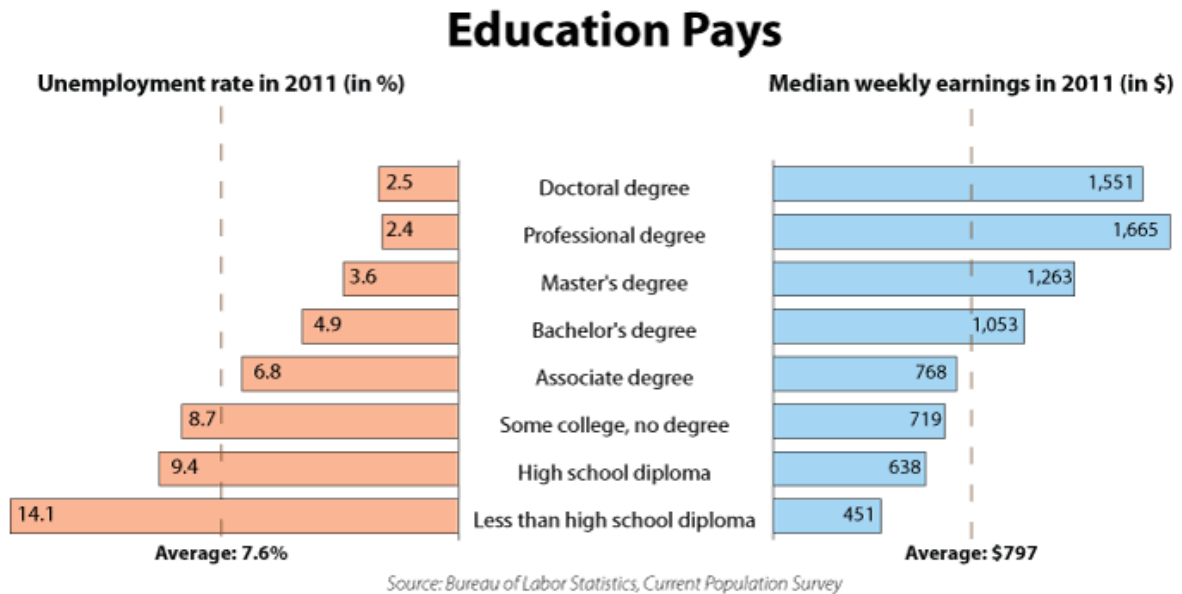
(Source: <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/how-united-states-immigration-system-works-fact-sheet>)

Appendix D: Undocumented Estimates from 2000-2010



(Source: <http://roygermano.wordpress.com/2011/03/18/how-many-illegal-immigrants-live-in-the-united-states-and-where-do-they-come-from/>)

Appendix E: Unemployment Rates and Income by Education Level



(Source: http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_chart_001.htm)

Appendix F: AB 540 Non-Resident Tuition Exemption Form

Can be viewed at http://www.csulb.edu/depts/enrollment/assets/pdf/cal_nonres_tuition_exempt.pdf

Appendix G: CHIRLA Profile and History

The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), one of the leading immigrant rights organizations in California, will frequently be referenced throughout this paper. Special attention is paid to CHIRLA because it is the principal organization that organizes undocumented youth. A brief explanation of CHIRLA's mission, scope, and programs will follow. CHIRLA was formed in 1986 to promote the rights of immigrants and refugees in Los Angeles. Los Angeles has historically been home to many different ethnic groups and immigrant populations. During the 1980s, civil wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua brought

many immigrants seeking asylum to the United States and Los Angeles. The Vietnam War had also created an influx of Southeast Asian immigrants into the United States. This boom in immigrant populations, along with the passage of the Immigrant Reform & Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, which granted amnesty to undocumented immigrants, created the conditions from which CHIRLA was formed. CHIRLA arose from the need for coordination between direct service providers and advocacy groups in order to help immigrants navigate the process of obtaining legal citizenship status. In 1986, a committee of representatives from the Central American Resource Center, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, the LA Center for Law & Justice, and the Dolores Mission convened to form CHIRLA from an initial funding grant from the United Way. The initial mission statement was to create a collaborative between advocacy groups, social service providers, policy makers, and legal service providers dedicated to advancing the rights of immigrants and refugees in Los Angeles.

CHIRLA gained non-profit status in 1993. In 1994, CHIRLA's faced a new set of challenges when California passed Prop 187, denying undocumented immigrants access to social services, health care, and public education. Before Prop 187 was eventually ruled to be unconstitutional, CHIRLA led public awareness and education campaigns, and created an Information Hotline to provide accurate, reliable information to the immigrant community about their rights. Initially CHIRLA operated exclusively on a local level, providing services to immigrants in Los Angeles and bridging the gap between service providers and immigrant advocates. CHIRLA has since expanded to involve statewide advocacy as well as national work. CHIRLA has taken a leading role in the immigrant rights movement in California and played a crucial role in many of California's progressive immigration laws, most recently the California Dream Act. Advocates at CHIRLA have participated in national campaigns and worked with

federal legislators to draft policy proposals. The expanding scope of CHIRLA's work has allowed the organization to take an active role in shaping state and federal immigration policy, instead of simply reacting to them.

Part of CHIRLA's overall strategy is to create a huge database of the names and contact information for every person that they have ever helped. Every immigrant for whom CHIRLA has filled out a Naturalization application, along with their adult citizen children, are all entered into a database. Come election time, staff and volunteers contact every person on the list to remind them to vote and urge them to vote a certain way on immigration-related propositions. CHIRLA has two organizing campaigns directly targeted towards undocumented youth – the California Dream Network for undocumented college students, and the Wise-Up program for undocumented high school students.

From establishing its first Day Labor centers in 1989, to training and mobilizing immigrant students in the Wise-Up program (2001), CHIRLA has used community activism and organizing as a strategy for addressing issues of equality and access for immigrants. While CHIRLA's strategies and campaigns have changed over the years, their core mission to represent and advocate for the rights of LA's immigrant community has not wavered.

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