



# California Community Colleges

## SYSTEM WEBINAR SUMMARY (OCT. 2022): UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT SUCCESS

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This webinar focused on healing and rebuilding trust as levers to increase success among undocumented students. Guest presenters included Rafael Agustin, CEO of Latino Film Institute, Dr. Gerson Palacios, Resident Anthropologist at UndocuScholars, Governor Newsom's Senior Policy Advisor for Immigration Gina de Silva, Josefina Rivera, a student at Madera Community College, and Sherifa Momo, a former Long Beach City College student who transferred to UCLA.

### **“Dreams Should Not Have Borders”: What Should Colleges Understand about Undocumented Students?**

- Misinformation contributes to the persecution of undocumented persons, with a resulting culture of distrust of social institutions, including schools and colleges.
- Having been hit hard by the pandemic and its disruptions, this population has seen significant enrollment decline and skepticism about enrolling in college.
- Students often discover that they are undocumented as teens, when issues like applying for a driver's license or financial aid brings up family status. They may prioritize family safety and well-being over unclear benefits of college education.
- Due to distrust, students often hide their undocumented status, increasing the challenge of ensuring their access to available resources and support. Many successful undocumented students cite a specific instructor, counselor, or other supportive person on campus as critical to their success.
- It is essential that colleges ensure their staff are well trained on laws, processes, and resources for undocumented students. They must develop synergy across their Dream Resource Center/Liaison, admissions office, and financial aid office, with significant collaboration needed to streamline complex systems and processes for undocumented students and families.

### **What Policy Changes are Affecting Undocumented Students?**

- California has recently enacted several policy changes and investments that benefit undocumented students, including:
  - A [package](#) of targeted legislation to provide support for undocumented Californians, including access to a [driver's license or ID card](#), exemption from payment of [nonresident tuition](#) at public postsecondary institutions (lifting the cap of 2-years of full-time enrollment beginning 1/1/2023), access to [legal assistance](#), and other services.

- [MediCal eligibility](#) has been expanded to include undocumented children, young adults (ages 19-25), and low-income adults over age 50. The 2022-23 budget outlined a plan for expansion to those ages 26 to 49 in 2024.
- Despite these changes, state and federal policy often lags behind the pace of change needed to best support undocumented students. The policy landscape can vary across states and education systems, making it a complex environment. This places a premium on colleges working hard to ensure the success of these students despite varying and shifting policy structures, while being unapologetic advocates and champions for needed policy changes.
- The [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\)](#) program is under legal review, and is widely expected to go back to the Supreme Court. As court decisions are announced, it is critical that we ensure our undocumented students and colleagues know they can trust us, and that we are here to support them. It is also critical to remember that most current students are not covered by DACA, as they were too young to apply and never qualified.

## Where Can Colleges Access Resources to Help Prioritize Undocumented Student Success?

- The CCCCO [website](#) provides access to policy updates, legal services, webinars, and other resources for colleges to help colleges support undocumented students. An updated AB540 form and guidance should be available soon.
- The CCCCO also lists [resources](#) for undocumented students themselves.
- A 2019 [report](#) summarized a landscape analysis that identified institutional practices that can support undocumented student success.
- [Undocumented Student Action Week \(USAW\)](#) is an annual event, celebrated this year during the week of October 17-21; the event website includes a toolkit of resources to publicize and celebrate the week, and a Find your Ally toolkit that includes graphics, sample social media posts, and other templates to promote free immigration legal services to students.
- The Vision Resource Center includes a [training](#) on undocumented students (log-in required to access).
- Some community colleges have Dream Resource Centers that help students navigate the college journey and access specific resources, while offering a place of support for undocumented students.
- [UndocuLiaison Regional Representatives](#) identify trends, elevate concerns, and share best practices.
- [UndocuScholars](#) provides research, convenings, and other resources to help colleges support undocumented students.
- Rafael Agustin's memoir, [Illegally Yours](#), includes his experiences as an undocumented student at Mount San Antonio College.