

Supporting Undocumented Students:

Community College Recommendations and Promising Practices

Increase College Access—High School and Community Outreach

Develop a coordinated outreach plan with immigrant-led youth groups, immigrant advocacy coalitions, and other community-based organizations to build trust and help undocumented students learn about and access the community colleges.

- ♦ **Westchester Community College** in Valhalla, New York is working closely with local and regional partners to raise awareness about the new Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy, both on campus and in the community. The college is partnering with immigrant youth and advocacy groups, legal justice centers, school districts and others to organize outreach sessions and legal assistance workshops for students and community members. The partners were able to mobilize quickly and initially collaborated on a dissemination plan and FAQ's to ensure that clear and consistent messages reach target audiences and alert them of notario fraud and immigration scams. The partners are jointly planning a calendar of outreach and legal assistance events at various venues, including libraries, churches, law centers, WCC's main and satellite campuses (coordinated with ESL classes), community centers, and ethnic festivals.



Strengthen the K-12 pipeline to reach undocumented students, parents, teachers, and counselors and facilitate community college transitions.

- ♦ **South Texas College**, located in the Rio Grande Valley on the Texas-Mexico border, organizes application drives in high schools where the outreach specialist helps the undocumented students fill out college application forms. The outreach staff also works with immigrant student advocacy groups by participating in high school seminars hosted by these advocacy groups. In order to effectively reach undocumented students, there is an emphasis on one-on-one interactions. These efforts have helped to channel many undocumented youth into STC's extensive dual enrollment program that gives high school students the opportunity to prepare for college and earn credits, free of charge.
- ♦ **Bluegrass Community and Technical College** conducts Dreamer Student Success outreach and training sessions, which include visits in the fall and spring to high schools, middle schools, churches, and libraries to help students with high school and community college transitions. While the sessions do not specifically target undocumented students, college counselors intentionally introduce topics of specific interest to undocumented youth and follow up with one-on-one advising.
- ♦ **Rio Hondo College** has developed an *Achieving the Dream* initiative, a broad-based effort to build coalitions, conduct high school and community outreach, and increase educational access and scholarship opportunities for undocumented students. Students Without Borders, a student-led club that assists the college's AB 540 population and is an active participant in the initiative, has organized campus-wide conferences for undocumented high school students and parents to help them launch educational plans and connect to community and educational resources. To help reach the targeted population and organize the conference, SWB enlists the help of numerous school, community, and four-year college partners, including high school counselors and teachers, student groups

from California State at Long Beach and the University of California at Los Angeles, and representatives from such advocacy organizations as Coalition for Humane Immigration Rights of Los Angeles and the Mexican-American Legal Defense Fund. Conferences have included workshops about the California DREAM Act, how to access and navigate community and state college systems, how to apply for scholarships, and increasing college readiness for transfer to a four-year college or university.

Recruit undocumented students in outreach as community ambassadors and student role models



- ♦ The Dr. Kathryn W. Davis Global Education Center at **Palm Beach State College** in Florida is a one-stop education and resource center for immigrant students that offers information sessions, scholarships, acculturation workshops, civics engagement and service learning experiences, and summer youth enrichment activities to promote postsecondary preparatory activities in a college environment. The center collaborates with the local chapter of Students Working for Equal Rights (SWER) to sponsor community awareness events that dispel myths about the lives of undocumented youth and teach citizens about the benefits of the DREAM act. SWER is a nationally chartered organization founded by undocumented immigrant youth to promote equal access to education.

In addition, the center's peer mentoring program, which pairs first-year students with sophomore students based on subject matter knowledge and other interests, has been a key factor in helping immigrant students succeed at college. The program has proven especially beneficial for undocumented students. Students are involved as tutors in English, reading or math as needed and also in support roles where the mentor guides the new student in "learning the ropes" of the many support systems and student activities offered at the college.

- ♦ **Bluegrass Community and Technical College** partners with the Kentucky Dream Coalition, a broad-based immigrant youth network created to help immigrant youth access higher education through mentoring, programming, and advocacy. The coalition, a United We Dream affiliate, is a lead partner with the college in organizing the Latino Leadership and College Experience Camp and Latino/Multicultural Student College Fair. In addition to the KDC's strong advocacy for the DREAM Act, the immigrant youth-led organization focuses on helping youth stay in school, plan for college, and serve the community through meaningful projects. The coalition runs workshops at the college fair featuring student testimonials. Students share how they overcame challenges and tapped into resources to find scholarships and raise funds.



Promote dual enrollment in high school and college courses as a cost-saving college preparation strategy

- ◆ The Achieve Early College High School Initiative at **South Texas College** is one of the many varied dual enrollment programs offered that introduces eligible high school students to the rigors of a college curriculum and encourages college completion. The program enables students, starting in their freshman year, to enroll in credit college-level courses at their local high schools. The program, which includes nine Early College High Schools, is open to all students, irrespective of status, and is free of charge. Students apply through their local school district. High school faculty are specially trained to teach the courses, while, in some cases, the STC faculty goes to these schools to teach. Students who participate in the program have access to the college's facilities and become familiar with the campus. One particularly notable program, cited as a statewide model, is the Hidalgo Early College High School, which prepares students for college or career and technology education, depending on the path they choose in their junior year. Preference is given to applicants who are from a low-income family, are the first member to attend college, or are English language learners. According to STC, its Early College High School programs introduce undocumented students to the rigors of a college curriculum while still in high school and also encourage college completion.
- ◆ Dual enrollment is robust at **Miami Dade College**, given the institution's articulation with Miami-Dade County Public School District as well as local charter schools. Academically eligible high school sophomores, juniors and seniors have the opportunity to earn transferable college credits in practically every core discipline area while fulfilling high school graduation requirements. Flexibility in delivery extends to cohorts of students from area high schools being transported to campus as well as courses being held on site at high schools. With Miami-Dade County Public Schools' large immigrant population mirroring that of the college, the dual enrollment population is also as such. The college is strategic in its promotion of dual enrollment to its area high schools, and recently began offering a freshman experience-type credit course, also transferable, as part of its dual enrollment offerings. College officials acknowledge the great benefit of dual enrollment for students, particularly those who are undocumented, given the opportunity to accelerate toward completion of a college credential, as well as being offered at no cost to students or their parents.

Make College Affordable—Financial Assistance and Scholarship Opportunities

Increase college and private fundraising for scholarship opportunities

- ◆ **Bluegrass Community and Technical College** partners with the Migrant Network Coalition, comprised up 10 public and private local organizations, which supports the Big Sky DREAM initiative in providing financial support to high school graduates and college students who may not qualify for financial aid from other sources (<http://www.mnclex.org/educationinitiatives.html>). In addition, high school students enrolled in BCTC's summer Latino Leadership and College Experience Program are introduced to local scholarship programs and invited to join the Kentucky Dream Coalition, a student/immigrant youth advocacy network that has established a scholarship fund; helps immigrant, refugee, and ESL youth access higher education; and advocates for the DREAM Act (<http://mykdc.wordpress.com/about>).
- ◆ **Wilbur Wright College** in Chicago provides scholarships for undocumented students through the City Colleges of Chicago Foundation. The Humboldt Park Vocational Education Center (HPVEC) also raises funds through scholarship events that are disbursed through the college foundation. Approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000 in scholarship funds are available to anyone taking credit courses regardless of status. In addition, undocumented students with individual taxpayer identification numbers can supplement this college scholarship money with other state-operated privately funded scholarships offered through the Illinois DREAM Fund Commission. High school

- ♦ students enrolled in the Wright/HPVEC dual credit/dual enrollment program with ASPIRA Inc. of Illinois can also take advantage of the HPVEC Scholarship Initiative that has assisted economically disadvantaged students including new immigrant students.

Offer Alternatives for Adult Learners—ABE-ESL Bridge Courses, Career Pathways, and Online Learning

Adopt ABE-ESL bridge courses, career pathways, and online learning to support adult students

- ♦ **Renton Technical College** partners with Neighborhood House and the Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County to offer an “on-ramp” for young adults to the highly successful I-BEST program (Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training). I-BEST integrates basic ABE and ESL and occupational skills needed for specific careers and compresses the time toward an occupational certificate. The pilot on-ramp project is funded by the Gates Foundation. The agencies also partner with Seattle Education Access (SEA), an organization that promotes college success for low-income students. These on-ramps or bridge programs provide students with GED preparation training, basic education, and college readiness skills that equip students for the more rigorous college-level I-BEST training. Comprehensive case management services are offered, including how to navigate the college system, become eligible for financial and scholarship assistance, and other social support services. While the program is not specifically targeted to undocumented students, if students disclose they are undocumented, SEA and RTC can work together to facilitate the college application, assessment, and enrollment process.



Improve College Retention and Completion—Supportive Institutional Cultures, Comprehensive Student Services, and Transition to Four-Year Colleges and the Workplace

Provide a continuum of support services to promote the academic, social, and emotional well being of undocumented students

- ♦ The Davis Global Education Center (GEC) at **Palm Beach State College** is well integrated with the college’s other student services and has facilitated the process of admissions, registration, testing, and advising for immigrant students. The total commitment from the top leadership—including the President, Provost, and Deans of Student Services and Academic Affairs—facilitates the coordination of services. GEC’s funding has allowed targeted services to a diverse immigrant student population, including undocumented students. The center maintains strong school and community partnerships that support holistic services and allow students to focus on completion, including guidance on healthcare, legal services, employment, transportation, childcare, family planning, and financial literacy. Most recently, in response to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, GEC has organized information sessions and legal clinics in cooperation with student-led organizations and local immigration lawyers.

Organize campus-wide events to build institutional awareness and support for undocumented students

- ♦ **Miami Dade College** publicly acknowledged the new DACA policy by hosting a major press conference on August 15th, to coincide with DHS’ issuance of the applications for DACA and work permits. Notwithstanding the presence of major television networks that covered the event, college officials addressed the audience and press about the contributions of immigrant students to the richness of the institution and community, as well as the importance of DACA as a means of social justice and upward mobility for the undocumented. Local immigrant



advocacy leaders urged in full favor of timely submission of applications for DACA, but also cautioned that petitioners should seek credible legal advice and assistance. Powerful testimony from DREAMers was shared about their experiences and accomplishments, and many pledged to be among the first to submit their applications for deferred action. The college announced its plans to hold awareness sessions and clinics on campus to assist students and their families better understand their rights and eligibility for DACA and employment authorization.

For additional information on these promising practices, contact:

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