

Undocumented students

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



Undocumented immigrants are foreign nationals who enter the United States without authorization or enter legally but remain in the United States without authorization. Undocumented youth and students usually have no role in the decision to come to this country; they are usually brought to this country by their parents or relatives. Brought by their parents to the U. S. as minors, many before they had reached their teens, they account for about one sixth of the total undocumented population. The United States Census Bureau estimates that in the year 2000, approximately 2. million undocumented youth under the age of eighteen were living in the United States. Some 65, 000 undocumented students graduate from U. S. high schools each year. Illegal through no fault of their own, many undocumented students are honor students, athletes, student leaders, and potential professionals. As a result of their immigration status, these young people face more struggles than documented students, when looking to continue their education after high school. Struggles include not being eligible for federal money and not being legally able to obtain employment upon graduation.

There is a conflict between Federal and State law regarding the eligibility of undocumented students for in-state tuition rates. Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 prohibits illegal aliens from receiving in-state tuition rates at public institutions of higher education. State and federal grants are awarded only to U. S. citizens or eligible non-citizens. To apply for a federal or state grant, one must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which requires the student's social security number. Federal student loans are also not available to undocumented students.

Most high school seniors rely on federal money as most of their financial aid for college. Students see their peers receiving federal financial aid and do not know how they are supposed to go about looking for money. Then is the struggle of finding private money because some scholarships require that students have a social security number. Ultimately, the search of every senior student for college money is even harder for undocumented students because they do not have a social security number. Of the few illegal immigrants who overcome financial hurdles and graduate from American colleges, few can obtain jobs, creating a small pool of unemployed illegal immigrants with college degrees, a minority within a minority. Applying for a job without legal status requires asking potential employers to sponsor them in obtaining American citizenship, something most employers are unlikely to do for job candidates. Most undocumented college graduates are ineligible for many professional careers. Undocumented college graduates grow up in America, where they are taught to dream high and work hard to succeed in this nation but at the end of the day, those doors stop opening.

Opportunity for advancement ends on graduation day, as undocumented college graduates try to find their way into a job market from which they are legally excluded. " When you're in school you have a place in society, you're a university student," Jorge Garcia, DREAM Act supporter, said during an interview. " When you graduate, you're just an immigrant again. " An immediate consequence, as a result of the extra work that undocumented students must put into their college application process, is that some students drop out of high school. These students find it easier to leave school and enter the working world.

They are knowledgeable of the fact that, even with a college degree, they most likely will not find employment after graduation. Most undocumented students feel that beginning to work early in life is the only way they may become successful. It is estimated that only between 5 and 10 percent of undocumented high school graduates go to college. There is little incentive for them to finish high school, leading to high dropout rates. Thus, another consequence arises, the potential for them to become involved in gangs and illegal activities. Long term consequences include mental side effects.

Cases of depression and suicide have resulted from a feeling of hopelessness for success. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in 15 to 24 year old Latinos, who make up the largest portion of undocumented students. A 2007 Center for Disease Control survey found that Latinos make up the largest portion of American high school students who tried to take their lives. It showed that 10.2 percent of Latino high school student had tried to kill themselves, compared to 5.6 percent of whites. Many undocumented immigrants are terrified of speaking to officials.

There is a fear of deportation that makes many undocumented immigrant youth unwilling to seek depression treatment. Congress has not ignored undocumented students' need for help in attending college and succeeding after college graduation. In 2001, Senators Orrin Hatch and Richard Durbin in the Senate, and Representatives Howard Berman and Chris Cannon in the House introduced the DREAM Act. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act) addresses youth who were illegally brought to the United States but who have since grown up here, stayed in school, and kept out of trouble.

To qualify for immigration relief under the DREAM Act, a student must have been continuously present in the United States for at least five years prior to enactment of the legislation or under fifteen years of age at the time of entry into the United States, and demonstrate good moral character. Once a qualifying student graduates from a U. S. high school, he or she is allowed to apply for conditional status that would authorize up to six years of legal residence.

During this period, the student is required to graduate from a two year college, complete at least two years toward a four year degree, or serve in the United States military for at least two years. Permanent residence is granted at the end of the six year period if the student has met these requirements and has continued to maintain good moral character. Originally introduced in the Senate in 2001, the DREAM Act has fallen short of votes in Congress several times since. In its reintroduction, in 2007, it fell short by eight votes. More recently, the DREAM Act was reintroduced in the House and Senate in December 2010.

With bipartisan support and President Barack Obama supporting the act, many undocumented students believe they are getting closer to their dreams of seeing the act pass. The number of undocumented students at the university level is low. Attending college, and even doing splendidly, does nothing to alter these students' illegal status. The DREAM Act would offer a pathway to citizenship for many college students and members of the military. Supporters last year were unable to secure enough votes to prevent a filibuster of the bill. Supporters say it is inhumane and counterproductive to shun students who have come so far with so little.

DREAM Act opponents of both houses of Congress say that undocumented students are looting limited educational resources that should go to citizens and legal residents. Republican Dana Rohrabacher, representative of Huntington Beach said, " I hope you return to your home country right away, and I hope you repay what you have spent of other people's money. It's a horrible crime. " Most American high school graduates get the opportunity to test their dreams and live their American story. However, a group of approximately 65, 000 youth do not get this opportunity.

They are a group of young people stained with the inherited title " illegal immigrant. " These young people have lived in the United States for most of their lives and want nothing more than to be recognized for what they are, Americans. Illegal students are not eligible to receive any type of federal or state financial aid or grant money. They are unable to access higher education and even if they do, they are not legally able to obtain employment upon graduation. The United States is missing out on talented workers, and is losing vital tax revenues and other economic contributions.