

Accessing college as an undocumented student

In the United States

ECMC is committed to the success of all students, regardless of their immigration status. In this changing economy, skills and qualifications that are obtained through education beyond high school are becoming more important to earning a family-wage job. We've gathered some resources to help guide you through the process of accessing and succeeding in college as an undocumented student in the United States.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, approximately 733,000 undocumented students (ages 3-17) reside in the United States.

Access to financial aid

Undocumented students, including DACA students, do not qualify to receive any financial aid from the United States government to assist with the cost of postsecondary education. However, some states and colleges use information collected on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or have their own financial aid application to determine aid eligibility. Students are encouraged to check with their state or college to determine what types of aid they may qualify for and whether or not completing a FAFSA is the way to apply for that aid.

A Social Security number (SSN) is necessary to complete the FAFSA. Most undocumented students are not eligible for an SSN. However, DACA students with SSNs can complete the FAFSA. If a parent does not have an SSN, they must enter 000-00-0000 (all zeros) as their SSN on their student's FAFSA.

The FAFSA opens on October 1 of each year for financial aid applied to the following academic year beginning in the fall. Students with SSNs can apply online at <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa> and sign electronically with their FSA ID. If the parent does not have an SSN, the dependent student must print a parent signature page for their parent to sign and mail it to the address on the form.

Students without SSNs who need to submit the FAFSA may download and print it at <https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa> filling-out under "FAFSA Filing Options." The mailing address is on the form.

It is important to note that a student's parents' citizenship status does not impact the student's eligibility for federal student aid.

To learn more about financial aid and undocumented students, visit <https://studentaid.gov/sites/default/files/financial-aid-and-undocumented-students.pdf>.

To learn more about accessing college as an undocumented student residing in one of the following states, download the ECMC resource guide (English and Spanish versions available) at www.ecmc.org/students/resource-guides.html.

- California
- Colorado
- Connecticut
- Minnesota
- Oregon
- Virginia

Other ECMC resource guides to assist in planning and paying for college are available online at www.ecmc.org/students/resource-guides.html.

To learn more about the FSA ID, visit <https://studentaid.gov/fsa-id/create-account/launch>.

For FAFSA assistance, please contact your local college access advisor at The College Place. Visit www.ecmc.org/TCP for more information.

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Access to state financial aid

As of March 2021, at least 13 states—California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Virginia and Washington—and the District of Columbia provide or will provide access to state financial aid to students who meet certain criteria, regardless of their immigration status. California, Connecticut, Minnesota and Utah offer access to institutional aid or scholarships for such students.

Contact your school counselor or state's department of higher education for more information.

In-state tuition equity

As of March 2021, at least 21 states and the District of Columbia have laws or policies allowing students who meet specific requirements, regardless of their immigration status, to pay in-state tuition rates at public postsecondary institutions: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Washington. The University of Michigan's Board of Regents adopted a similar policy for its campuses.

Contact your college admissions office for additional information.

Public colleges and universities

Some states allow public universities to offer private institutional aid or scholarships to undocumented students who pay in-state rates or graduate from their high schools. Utah established the Access Utah Promise Scholarship, which consolidates various scholarship programs. The University of Hawaii also offers financial assistance to eligible students, regardless of their immigration status.

Contact your college financial aid office for additional information.

Private colleges and universities

Private colleges and universities across the country offer a variety of merit- and need-based funding options to help students pay for tuition, regardless of immigration status. Research the private colleges you are interested in to find their financial aid policies regarding undocumented students..

Scholarships

There are many scholarship providers who are interested in helping students, regardless of their immigration status. The following resources have scholarships that undocumented students may be eligible:

- www.goldendoorscholars.org
- <https://immigrantsrising.org/resources>
- www.thedream.us/scholarships
- <https://www.maldef.org/resources/scholarship-resources>
- <http://scholarshipsaz.org/scholarships>
- www.edvisors.com/scholarships/college-scholarships/undocumented-student-scholarships
- <https://getschooled.com/article/1320-scholarships-for-undocumented-documented-students-get-that-money>

You may also do your own online scholarship search using terms such as “non-need based,” “merit-based” or “no FAFSA required.”

Help yourself

Dual enrollment is an opportunity to take college courses while in high school. It's important that students and their parents/ legal guardians understand that the amount of work necessary to succeed in dual enrollment courses is greater than what is necessary to succeed in high school courses. In addition, dual enrollment courses become part of a student's permanent college transcripts, so it's essential that students do well in these courses to realize all the benefits of dual enrollment, which include:

- A quality, affordable education close to home
- Enhanced opportunities, both in academic coursework and career and technical education, for outstanding high school students

- Entering college with credits applicable to a student's degree program
- Gaining an understanding of the rigor of college work as well as college faculty expectations
- Access to college resources, facilities and services, such as advising and career counseling

Interested students should speak with their school counselor about the dual enrollment program options available and contact their local college to register and take the college placement exam.

Homeschooled students may also be eligible for the program. Contact your local community college to discuss the options available to you.

Keep your grades up

Make yourself a competitive candidate for college admissions and scholarship applications by keeping your grades up, taking challenging classes and participating in extracurricular activities. Some highly selective private colleges and universities offer very generous financial aid packages to outstanding high school students, regardless of immigration status. The more comprehensive your application is, the more options you will have for your education beyond high school.

Need more information?

The College Place is here to help you with free college-planning resources and personal advice. Visit our website at www.ecmc.org/TCP.