



## UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Each year, several thousand undocumented students graduate high school, many of whom have lived in the United States since childhood. Following the 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Plyer v. Doe*, it has been the law of the land that public elementary and secondary schools must provide a free and appropriate education to all children, regardless of their legal status.

NACAC believes that making higher education accessible to these individuals is the right thing to do -- from both humanitarian and economic perspectives. Higher education has been linked to healthier, happier lives and increased civic participation. From a fiscal outlook, investing in higher education results in strong economic returns, for individuals and also for society. Median earnings for bachelor's degree holders are 64% higher than those for high school graduates, and college graduates typically pay 134% more in federal income taxes than non-degree holders.

Tuition equity policies adopted by some states allow certain undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates at the state's public colleges and universities. Generally, these students must have lived in the state for a certain amount of time and have graduated from an in-state high school. Because undocumented students are ineligible to receive federal student aid, and because they frequently come from low-income backgrounds, out-of-state tuition rates can put higher education firmly out of reach for undocumented students. Thus, tuition equity is an important step in helping these students afford college. Some states have gone one step further by granting undocumented students access to state financial aid. Unfortunately, some states have taken the opposite route by severely limiting undocumented students' abilities to enroll in public higher education, or have introduced proposals to roll back existing tuition equity policies.

On June 15, 2012, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced that it would not deport certain undocumented youth who came to the United States as children. Under a directive from the DHS secretary, these youth may be granted a type of temporary permission to stay in the U.S. called "deferred action." The Obama administration called this program Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA.

On September 5, 2017, the Trump Administration announced that it would rescind the memo establishing DACA. The program was slated to end in March 2018; however, while litigation regarding this announcement is ongoing, individuals who have previously received DACA may still reapply to renew their status. NACAC opposes the Administration's decision to rescind the program.

### Policy Recommendations

NACAC supports the following policies to make higher education more affordable for undocumented students:

- Enactment of a federal DREAM Act;
- Tuition equity policies that allow undocumented students to pay resident tuition rates at public colleges and universities;
- State and federal policies to make need-based financial aid available to undocumented students.