

UNITED WE DREAM



United We Dream[®]

**UNITED WE
DREAM
COLLEGE
ADMINISTRATOR
GUIDEBOOK**

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01

OVERVIEW AND INTRO

INTRODUCTION

United We Dream is the largest immigrant youth-led network in the country that creates welcoming, supporting, engaging, and empowering spaces for young people—regardless of immigration status. The organization is a hub of resources on DACA, Deportation Defense, Immigrant Rights, and other topics pertinent to youth of diverse immigration statuses.

One of the main issues that undocumented or differently documented youth face is the issue of college access and college retention. While action *has* been taken in recent years to reduce barriers for undocumented and differently-documented students when going to college or attaining higher education, there is still a massive gap to fill. Nowadays, 62.8% of *all* recent high school graduates matriculate into college, but only 5-10% recent undocumented high school graduates matriculate to college.

Furthermore, undocumented students tend to face unique challenges while they are in college that make it more difficult for them to graduate. It is clear that massive improvement is needed to make sure that undocumented students receive the right to the same level of education as other students in the country.

Through a compilation of interviews with university administration and undocumented students as well as secondary research, our team found four main challenges that become main obstacles for undocumented students when navigating college: 1) lack of specialized support and organized communication about resources for undocumented students; 2) legal and financial barriers to receiving opportunities while enrolled; 3) challenges associated with being a first-gen, low-income and/or BIPOC student along with being undocumented; 4) the lack of consideration for the challenges faced by undocumented/differently-documented students from outside Latin America.

In response to this problem, our team has created this guide for college administrators to inform them of what they can be doing to further help their undocumented/differently-documented students receive a full education. We hope to make this guide as accessible as possible to encourage administrators to more intentionally support this student population. We imagine a world where students can access the fullness of college, regardless of citizenship status, in order to equip themselves with the tools, knowledge, and resources to achieve their goals.

CHALLENGES FACED BY UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

01

A lack of organized communication and specialized support that creates confusion for undocumented students about where to turn to in times of need. Oftentimes, there is conflicting information about who undocumented/differently-documented students should seek support from, and some administrations (i.e. financial aid offices) may not be informed of the relevant policies that affect undocumented students/immigrants. This limits students' access to and willingness to seek support on campus.

02

The effects of not having legal status in the US that limits opportunities while enrolled in school. Some of these effects include not having identification to apply for a job that could provide financial support or work experience, not being able to travel as easily with classes/extracurricular groups to have a well-rounded experience during college, and having less opportunities and chances of receiving a well-paying job out of undergraduate due to these roadblocks.

03

Undocumented/differently-documented students are more likely to be first-generation, low-income students and/or to identify as BIPOC, which can carry financial and social stressors. They may need to worry about providing for family or affording their basic needs while enrolled. These issues can worsen and compound the difficulty that undocumented students face in the U.S.

04

A lack of consideration for the challenges faced by undocumented/differently-documented students from outside Latin America. Because many of the resources are directed at undocumented students from Latin America, this may prevent undocumented students from Africa, Asia, or Europe from feeling like there is specialized support for them and reaching out for support even when they need it.

A BREAKDOWN OF RELEVANT TERMINOLOGY

1. **Undocumented:** [Undocumented](#) refers to anyone residing in a country without legal documentation.
2. **DREAMer:** [DREAMer](#) is an affirmative term for undocumented young people who arrived in the United States at a very young age.
3. **Permanent Residents:** [Permanent residents](#), or green card holders are granted legal permission to live and work permanently in the U.S.
4. **International Student:** [International students](#) hold specific visas which allow them to pursue higher education in the United States. Undocumented students are not considered international applicants because they don't qualify for a visa.
5. **Non-Citizen:** A [non-citizen](#) refers to a person who is not a U.S. citizen
6. **Mixed Status Family:** A [mixed status family](#) refers to a family in which some family members are US citizens and/or have legal status while others are undocumented.

RELEVANT TERMINOLOGY, CONTINUED

1. **Temporary Protected Status (TPS):** [TPS](#) may be granted to a person when a person's home country is experiencing conflicts rendering their return a threat to their well-being and safety.
2. **U Visa/U-Visa/U Non-immigrant Status:** The [U Visa](#) is set aside for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and are helpful to law enforcement or government officials in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity.
3. **Refugee Status:** [Refugee status](#) is a legal protection available to people who have left their home country for their own safety and are afraid to return to any place in their home country.
4. **Asylum Status:** [Asylum status](#) is a legal protection available to people who meet the definition of refugee who are already present in the U.S. or are seeking admission to at the port of entry to the U.S.
5. **Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN):** [ITIN](#) is a tax processing number issued by the IRS to ensure that people pay taxes, regardless of their immigration status.

02

CURRENT POLICIES

A Brief History of Policy Affecting Undocumented Students

1975	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of students in K-12 public schools.
1982	Plyler v Doe served as a crucial precedent to guarantee that all children, regardless of immigration status, in K-12 public schools should receive the same access and opportunity to education. Schools are not allowed to ask about documentation status nor are students obligated to disclose their status. A school cannot release a student's immigration status except in exceptional circumstances .
1996	The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act provides that undocumented students are not eligible to pay in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities unless US citizens are eligible under the same criteria regardless of whether they are state residents. Many states have passed tuition equity policies, which allows certain students regardless of immigration status to pay in-state tuition.*
2001	The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act was presented to Congress to provide pathways to legal status and eventual citizenship for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the US as minors. Although the DREAM Act never passed, it provided the framework, structure, and language (i.e. Dreamer) for future policies.
2012	The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) , an executive action by President Obama, provided temporary immigration relief and access to work authorization for certain undocumented youth. It improved access to higher education for students in some states. DACA does not provide a pathway to legal status or citizenship.
2018	Under the Trump Administration, the Department of Homeland Security announced that DACA would be coming to an end, and that new applications for DACA were no longer being accepted. But, in 2018, a federal judge ruled that the Trump administration to terminate DACA was unlawful , keeping protections in place.
2021	A Texas federal court ruled that DACA is unlawful effectively halting the government's ability to grant DACA to first-time applicants. Current DACA recipients may continue to file for renewal.
2022	Last year, in Texas, Governor Abbott publicly stated he'd like Plyler v Doe overturned , however, to date, that has not happened. On October 31, The Department of Homeland Security formally established regulations for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy. It does not reopen DACA to first time immigrants, change eligibility requirements, or protect DACA from challenges to its legitimacy.
2023	On September 13, 2023, a federal judge in the Southern District of Texas ruled DACA unlawful. Per the judge's order, first-time DACA applications continue to be blocked and cannot be processed. Individuals who have DACA (as of July 16, 2021), or whose DACA has lapsed for less than one year, can continue to apply for renewal of their DACA and work authorization and may apply for Advance Parole.

State-specific policies can be found [here](#).

This timeline was adapted from [here](#).

STATE-SPECIFIC POLICIES

Tuition and financial aid policies differ by state, with some offering in-state tuition and financial aid, some offering little support, and some in between

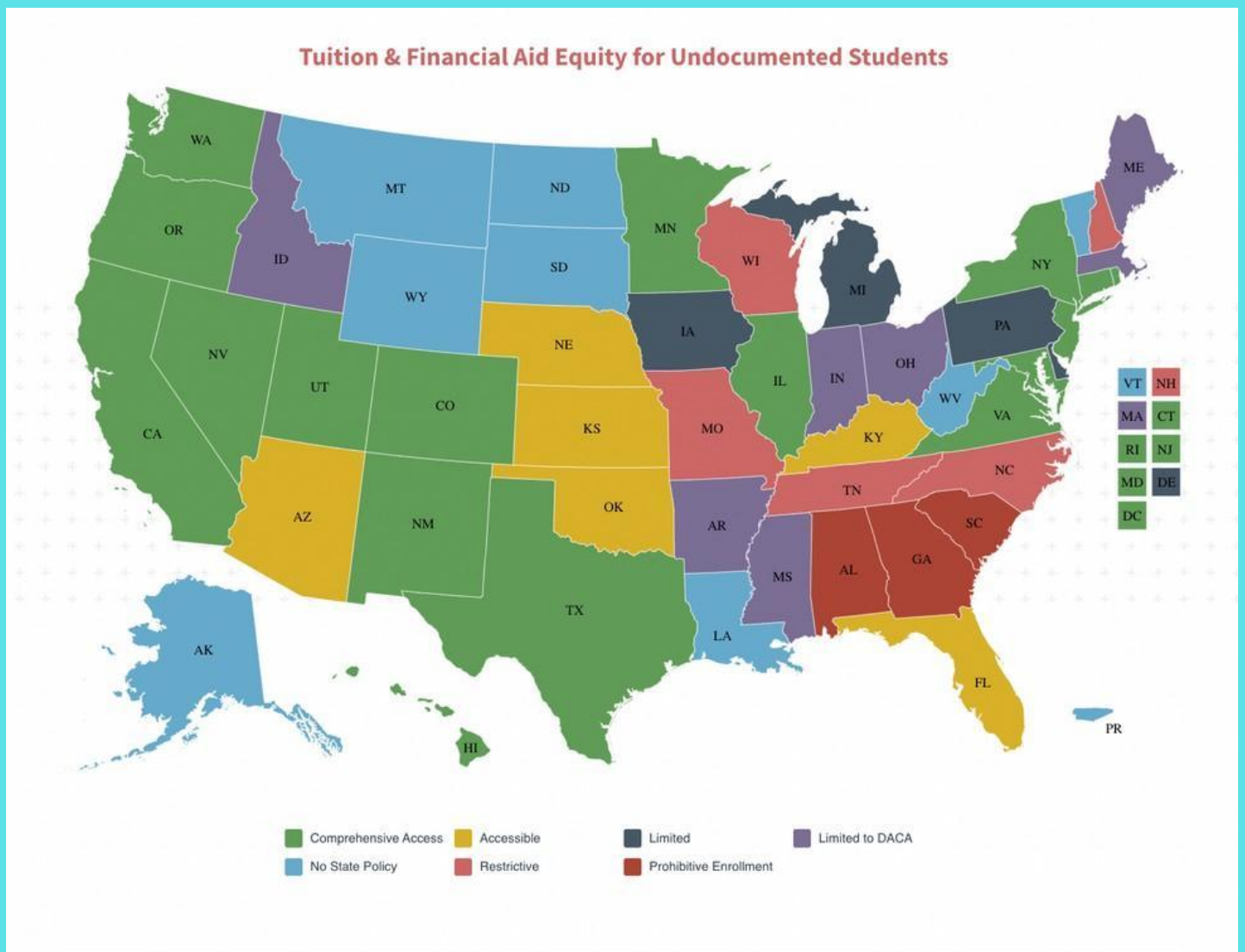


Image via Higher Ed Immigration Portal. For more detailed information and an interactive version of this map, [please visit their website.](#)

03

HISTORY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The history of undocumented student movements in the U.S. has been defined by students' passion for equal access to education and the rights of immigrants. This history can be broken down into two key movements: the Immigrant Youth Movement and the Sanctuary Campus Movement. In addition, social media activism has played a large role in undocumented student organizing over the years.

Understanding the history of these social movements can provide key insights to both students and administrators as they advocate for undocumented student rights.

IMMIGRANT YOUTH MOVEMENT

The Immigrant Youth Movement began in the early 2000s with the motivation of pushing for the acceptance of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act or DREAM Act. The first version of the act was originally introduced in 2001 and since then at least 11 versions of the DREAM Act have been introduced to congress. This act would have provided a legal pathway to citizenship for immigrants who came to the U.S. as children, either through college, work, or service in the armed forces ([American Immigration Council, 2021](#)). The most recent version of the DREAM Act, the Dream Act of 2023 (S.365), directs the Department of Homeland Security to grant lawful permanent resident status to certain undocumented or differently documented people who entered the United States as minors. This would apply to those who have been physically present in the U.S. for four years preceding the passing of this bill, who have temporary protected status, or who have been granted DACA status. Unfortunately, despite the many versions of this act and many years it has been introduced to Congress, it has yet to be passed.

Despite the DREAM Act failing to get passed, the Immigrant Youth Movement has still been successful in drawing attention to immigrant rights, especially the rights of undocumented and differently documented students. It encouraged undocumented youth to speak out about their experiences, and the protests, sit-ins, and testimonials these youth forefronted meant that their existence could no longer be ignored. It is likely thanks to this movement that the resources available to undocumented and differently documented students today exist. The Immigrant Youth Movement also encouraged the announcement of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which helped make college accessible to many undocumented youth from the time it was implemented in 2012 until today.



IMAGE BY GARY CORONADO FOR [L.A. TIMES](#)

Key moments in the Immigrant Youth Movement

<h2>2006</h2>	<p>The Orange County May Day Protests, 2006: Nearly 40,000 students took to the streets in Orange County to protest for immigrants’ rights as well as the right of immigrant children to attend school. This protest was one of the largest of its kind in Orange County and demanded national attention, drawing many people’s awareness to the immigrant rights movement.</p>
<h2>MARCH 2010</h2>	<p>Coming Out of the Shadows, 2010: Chicago's Immigrant Youth Justice League (IYJL) held the first official “Coming Out of the Shadows” event in which they marched with around 700 other students under the banner “Undocumented and Unafraid.” Undocumented workers also stepped forward during this march to share personal testimonials of their experience being undocumented and trying to attain post-secondary education. “National Coming Out of the Shadows” is now an annual week in Chicago where activists challenge current immigration laws and fight for the rights of undocumented students</p>
<h2>APRIL 2010</h2>	<p>Trail of Dreams, 2010: Four immigrant students gained national attention during a four day walk from Miami, Florida to Washington D.C. in an attempt to gain support in the passing of the DREAM Act.</p>
<h2>MAY 2010</h2>	<p>UC Berkeley Hunger Strike, 2010: A group of nearly 20 students participated in a 10 day hunger strike at UC Berkeley in order to gain a meeting with the University’s Chancellor about their demands for the University to declare itself a sanctuary campus. This came in lieu of recent immigration laws in Arizona requiring officers to stop any person who they suspect may have migrated to the country illegally. They also called upon the University to rehire laid off janitors and drop disciplinary charges against previous students who protested this law.</p> <p>Occupation of Senator McCain’s office by undocumented youth, 2010: A group of undocumented students in graduation caps occupied Senator John McCain’s office in May of 2010 to demand the Senator vote for the passage of the DREAM Act. This sit-in was an admiral act of bravery from these undocumented students, who were unsure if they would face legal retaliation and even possibly be deported for their protests, and their actions garnered national attention.</p>

SANCTUARY CAMPUS MOVEMENT

[The Sanctuary Campus Movement](#) was inspired by the sanctuary city movement, which encouraged cities in the U.S. to agree to protect undocumented people from deportation and prosecution. The sanctuary campus movement became popular in response to threats from the Trump administration and subsequent changes to DACA which further complicated the process of receiving DACA status and stalled out DACA applications. In order to be a sanctuary campus, Universities and colleges must agree to commit themselves to the following actions:

- Restricting ICE officers from campus unless they hold a valid warrant
- Instructing campus police to not enforce immigration law against students and members of the campus community
- Refusing to share information about faculty or student's immigration statuses with ICE unless they have a court order
- Implementing a “don't ask, don't tell” policy for the immigration statuses of faculty and students
- Making financial and legal services available to undocumented students on campus

Current universities who have committed to being sanctuary campuses include: Portland State University, Reed College, Wesleyan University, Pitzer College, Santa Fe Community College, University of Pennsylvania, Connecticut College, Drake University, and Swarthmore College.

RELEVANT SOURCES

- [Left Out But Not Shut Down: Political Activism and the Undocumented Student Movement](#) (Gonzales, 2008)
- [The Evolution of Undocustudent Resistance, Activism, & Empowerment](#) (Perez, 2019)
- [How Young, Undocumented Organizers Fought to Bring DACA into Existence](#) (Arteaga & Bercaw, 2020)



SOCIAL MEDIA MOVEMENTS

While social media played and is still playing an important role in spreading awareness and information about efforts regarding immigration, many of these movements have decreased in size and force, with a clear decline after around 2013. However, we will highlight the most influential campaigns to provide context on the successes of social media organization and the efforts of social media organizers. In 2010, March became National Coming Out of The Shadows Month, and 2011 saw the [National Coming Out of The Shadows Week Campaign](#), a youth-organized event in which undocumented youth and allies uploaded hundreds of video testimonials onto Youtube and Vimeo. Keeping into account the difficulty for undocumented students to engage politically with the risk of deportation, this ability to share one's story became a way for undocumented students to take action despite the risks, making their stories more trustworthy. This act of coming out also helped to establish identity. However, this movement fizzled out [after 2012](#), and many of these videos are deleted or inaccessible today. In addition, resources and websites regarding immigration issues that were once hubs for activists are now inactive. One of these websites they mention is [DreamActivist.Org](#), "a community of over 300,000 activists from around the country" passionate about the issues on deportation. The website is now inactive, despite the amount of resources that it had.

Another important movement was the "No More Closets" Campaign in 2013, led by the [Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project](#) (QUIP). The campaign called for undocumented LGBTQ Youth to come out as "UndocuQueers". This campaign fizzled out after its first year, highlighting how fluid the energy within the movement is, all depending on the legislation and action taken around the subject of immigration.

Recently, organizations like United We Dream, President's Alliance, E4FC no Immigrants Rising and FWD.us have led large social media movements on the issues undocumented communities face. Trending hashtags associated with this movement and with the fight for undocumented student/youth rights, have had a lasting impact on social media platforms throughout the years.

Students and college support centers can use these hashtags on social media.

Some of these hashtags include:

- #DREAMers
- #DACA (#withDACA & #DefendDACA) #HereToStay
- #WithDACA

In addition, United We Dream has also popularized the hashtags #WeAreHome to secure legislation and #HomelsHere to defend DACA in court.

#WithDACA
#HereToStay

#WeAreHome
#HomelsHere

04

BEST PRACTICES + RECOMMEN- DATIONS

To conclude this guide, we have put together a list of best practices highlighted by school officials and staff who support undocumented students across public and private universities and community colleges. We organize these practices into two tiers based on the resources needed to bring about the aim. Tier 1 includes actions that may be more accessible to a wider range of educational institutions, and Tier 2 includes actions that may require greater amounts of funding to bring into fruition.

TIER 1

01

Provide all faculty, staff, and administrators with culturally competent training about undocumented student experiences and challenges. Those working in administration and especially the financial aid office should receive training about legal and financial considerations. At minimum, there should be one staff member in each relevant office (e.g. financial aid, admissions, student affairs) who is well-versed in legal and financial considerations related to undocumented students.

See [Immigrants Rising](#) and [The Dream](#) for training materials.

02

Create a resource guide for undocumented students, distributed by an existing student support center. It should include state, local, and institutional resources. See Rutgers University's [Support for Undocumented Students webpage](#) for an example.

03

Designate an existing center and/or staff member(s) as points of contact for undocumented students seeking support, and ensure that this center/staff member has a working partnership with other relevant offices (e.g. financial aid). Encourage a feedback loop throughout, to hear and learn directly from students what they want.

04

Create an email list for undocumented/differently-documented students to join.

05

Fund and support existing undocumented student support and advocacy groups.



06

Ask faculty to include a statement of support for undocumented students and other marginalized students in their syllabi, as well as information about relevant campus resources. Here is an example syllabus statement used at William Patterson University:

William Paterson University supports undocumented students in their pursuit of higher education. On January 18, 2019, in his message commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President Richard Helldobler affirmed that "it is not only our professional obligation to educate our undocumented, Dreamer, and DACA students, it is our moral obligation." We strive to provide safe environments and necessary resources to enable undocumented students to achieve academic success at William Paterson University.

TIER 2

01

Hire a full-time administrator to provide support to undocumented students within an existing university office.

02

Hire culturally-competent counselors who can support undocumented students' mental health needs.

03

Hire a campus immigration attorney who can help undocumented students navigate legal issues or change their documentation status.

04

Provide scholarships specifically for undocumented students.

05

Provide funding for housing and food for undocumented students experiencing financial hardship (these funds are typically not covered by tuition scholarships).

06

Fund, support, and protect the creation of an undocumented student group if there is none.

07

Create semester and/or summer fellowship opportunities as alternatives to traditional jobs and internships so that undocumented students can gain work experience and earn income without having work authorization.

08

For community colleges especially, establish non-credit programs. These programs help students to take classes at a lower cost and establish their access to some funding streams (such as CA AB 540 in California).

09

Fund and support the creation of an undocumented student resource center if one does not already exist (more info on the next page).

Though this may be the most difficult system in this list to establish and fund, it offers the most comprehensive support to undocumented and differently-documented students.



CREATING AN UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER

Here are some practices recommended by established undocumented student centers around the nation:

01

Secure funding streams through the university.

02

Form partnerships with off-campus organizations supporting undocumented communities, such as specialized counseling services, workers' rights organizations, food banks, legal services, affordable housing, and community health clinics

03

Hire and train staff to have knowledge of different forms of documentation, such as DACA, Temporary Protected Status, asylum, refugee status.

04

Providing funding support for DACA and other fees.

05

Invite attorneys to offer workshops and legal support services to students

06

Facilitate field trips to universities and businesses to expose students to potential future pathways

07

Provide a secure physical space for students to gather comfortably and safely to socialize, work, and organize.

08

Be accessible to students by supporting them through in-person *and* virtual modes of communication

QUESTION: WILL CREATING AN UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER PUT UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS IN DANGER BY POINTING THE AUTHORITIES TO A SPECIFIC OFFICE WHEN SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION?

Though this may be a legitimate concern, the overwhelming response from college administration working with undocumented students is that such considerations should *not* preclude the creation of an undocumented student resource center.

Number one, staff and administration are not required to reveal information about students' documentation status to the authorities without a warrant. With proper training and considerations, staff tasked with supporting undocumented students can protect their identities, too.

Number two, the danger of a severe lack of support for undocumented students without resource centers may outweigh the danger of "putting a target on students' backs" with the creation of these centers. These centers provide important and accessible resources to help students stay enrolled in (and thrive in) college—even if the same resources exist within other university spaces, undocumented students may have a difficult time accessing them without a centralized office or designated staff member. They also serve as a crucial indicator to students that they are supported as undocumented students at their institution.

05

FURTHER RESOURCES & ACKNOWLEDGE- DAGEMENT

FURTHER RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL GUIDES FOR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A Guide to building on-campus undocumented student resource programs (Immigrants Rising)

How can your college or university protect & support undocumented students? (2021)



SCHOLARSHIP ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORTING UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS:

No Place to Belong: Contextualizing Concepts of Mental Health Among Undocumented Immigrant Youth in the United States (Gonzales, et al. 2013)

DREAMzone: Educating Counselors and Human Service Professionals Working with Undocumented Students (Cisneros & Lopez, 2016)

Building Critical Building Critical Bridges: The Role of University Presidents in Bridges: The Role of University Presidents in Collaborating with Undocumented Student Activists (Freeman, et al. 2021)

SCHOLARSHIP ON UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT RESOURCE CENTERS:

"We Are Legit Now": Establishing

Undocumented Student Resource Centers on Campus (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020)

Keep Fighting for Existence: Undocumented Student Resource Centers as Counter-Spaces Within Community Colleges (Freeman-Wong et al. 2022)

Physical Space and Expert Staffing: Undocumented Student Resource Centers at Community Colleges (Freeman-Wong, et al. 2022)

See other Undocuscholar research briefs here:

<http://www.undocuscholars.org/research-briefs>

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**UNITED
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