

Tips for Donors Supporting DACA/Undocumented Student Scholarships

Funding DACA and undocumented students is an act of love that carries risks. DACA and undocumented students need our support more than ever. It is anticipated that if DACA goes away, many scholarship providers will no longer fund these students.

Remember: What is helpful to DACA/undocumented students can also be helpful to low-income, first generation students.

When donating funds in support of DACA/Undocumented Students, it is important to consider your audience. Students at risk due to lack of legal status include:

- DACA students
- Undocumented students
- Students whose parents are undocumented, even if the student is a U.S. Citizen or Permanent Resident

FAFSA issues: Students at risk need to be careful with FAFSA. The information goes to the IRS, Homeland Security and to a slew of other places where lack of legal status may flag the student/parents. In the past, this was less of an issue but students are being advised not to fill out the FAFSA if they can avoid it. DACA and undocumented students are not eligible for federal aid. Filling out the FAFSA is unnecessary. It means that student grants and loans, and parent loans are out of reach for these students. US citizens/permanent residents whose parents are undocumented may be exposing their families by filling out the FAFSA.

Income/Eligibility Policies: Requiring certain documents to determine student eligibility for scholarships may be a hardship. Items like tax information, proof of income, driver's licenses, birth certificates, rent receipts, and proof of legal guardianship may be difficult or impossible for students to procure. For e.g. some students may be living with relatives who are not their parents/legal guardians. Some may be working "under the table" and asking for a letter stating proof of income may put them at risk.

Restrictions on Scholarships: It is not helpful to restrict scholarship money to very specific eligibility requirements (e.g. Must pursue molecular biology with an emphasis in art). Try to keep your scholarship requirements open so DACA and undocumented students can benefit.

Community Service/Leadership/Extracurricular Activities/Academic Achievement: Asking DACA/undocumented students to perform community service, leadership activities or to have unrealistically high academic achievements puts them at a disadvantage when competing for scholarships. Many of these students work jobs and go to school then they take care of family. Unrealistic expectations make it more challenging to access much needed funding. While it is true that many DACA/undocumented students excel and are leaders, there are many

This document was put together by Dr. Nancy Hernandez, is a draft and is not meant to be legal advice. Contact Nancy for more info: nhndz4@gmail.com

more who are amazing precisely because they manage to get by despite tremendous odds.

Consider where your donation is going: If you are donating to an institution, check that the campus is friendly, supportive and protective of DACA/undocumented students. Not all are. Not all institutions are open and public about their support of DACA/undocumented students. Some examples of institutions that have been very public in their support of DACA and undocumented students include Metro State, Adams State, CCD, and CSU. Check to see if the campus has a person dedicated to assisting DACA/undocumented students. Find out if there is at least a critical mass of students on campus. If you are setting up a scholarship at an institution where the student may have no support and may not feel safe disclosing their status, it may be really difficult, even dangerous for that student to study there.

If you are donating to an organization, find out if they have experience in recruiting, selecting, and funding undocumented students. Organizations like the Latin American Educational Foundation, the Denver Scholarship Foundation and some public school foundations have always taken the risk to fund students and are familiar with the process. Typically, DACA and undocumented students must compete with other students for scholarships and so there is always a need for more scholarship money.

Scholarships for more than tuition: Stipends/scholarships for DACA fees, legal fees, books, internships, transportation, housing, food, fees and emergency use are very helpful.

Full Time Enrollment: Keep in mind that students usually have to work to sustain themselves and their families. Full time enrollment may not be an option. If possible, keep your scholarship open to part-time enrollment and try to be flexible so if a student needs to take a semester off, they won't lose the funding. Know that some undocumented students can only afford to take one or two classes at a time.

Community college is usually cheaper than four-year schools. In-state schools are cheaper than out of state schools unless the student gets a full ride and even then, the cost of transportation alone may prohibit a student from leaving the state. Many DACA/undocumented students stay in state and go to community colleges. Be open to recruiting from community colleges in addition to funding students who go straight into a four-year school.

Want to start your own scholarship? Why not pool your funding with others for greater impact? Want to fund highly motivated students? Try supporting high school students in concurrent enrollment (college-credit classes in high school). There are many ways to help and your help is needed!

Thank you for your continued support of DACA and undocumented students!

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