

Equity in Access: Special Populations



Undocumented and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

ISSUE

Approximately 75,000 undocumented students, including those who are protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, are enrolled in California Community Colleges. Assembly Bill 540 allows students who have attended a high school in California for three years and have earned a high school diploma or equivalent to receive in-state tuition helping this population gain access to the education and training necessary to enter the workforce; provide for their families; and contribute to the local, regional and state economy. Riverside Community College District

(RCCD) serves roughly 2,400 students through its Dreamer and AB 540 programs per year. A major concern is the unfunded mandate from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office to establish a Dreamer Center at each college. The District agrees that this is a crucial step to supporting students, but without dedicated funding, it is still ill-equipped to address the needs and concerns of AB 540 students, Dreamers, and other undocumented students.

REQUESTS

Support federal legislation that codifies DACA to establish a pathway to citizenship, expand DACA student eligibility for Pell Grants and SNAP, and protect student visas. We seek state support to continue and increase funding for Dreamer Centers and resource

staff liaisons at community colleges; request expansion of Cal-FRESH eligibility to include DACA students; develop bridge programming to support undocumented students from high school to transfer/graduation; and support the establishment of learning communities for undocumented students equipped with a dedicated academic counselor.

Education for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Program

ISSUE

Over the past seven years, California Community Colleges have worked to meet voter mandates to restore justice-involved individuals into their communities through rehabilitative

programming. Since the passage of SB 1391 (2014), thousands of justice-involved students have matriculated to face-to-face Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) programs offered within state prisons. In October 2021, the Governor signed AB 417, which formally established the Rising Scholars Network as a categorical program for up to fifty community colleges, providing support services for justice-involved students. Although this program is successful, it exposed institutional gaps in support for this student population. To better serve incarcerated students, RCCD will continue to push to remove limited access to technology and bring support programs inside institutions.

REQUESTS

RCCD requests \$410,000 in yearly funding to hire more faculty and staff support for the Rising Scholars program at California Rehabilitation Center, Norco. RCCD needs one full-time counselor at \$170,000 per year, one part-time counselor at \$75,000 per year, one full-time admissions specialist at \$130,000 per year, one part-time tutorial support at \$25,000 per year, and one faculty coordinator at \$10,000 per year. Support AB 2425: Community Colleges: HIRE UP: From Corrections to Career Pilot Program. Support continuous funding and expansion of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) technology infrastructure plan for each prison. RCCD requests funding to hire personnel who will work collaboratively with the Riverside County Probation Department at the Youth Treatment Educational Center to create a program for youth. Author legislation to create Community College-Juvenile Hall Partnerships to work collaboratively with the Riverside County Probation Department at the

Youth Treatment Educational Center. Author legislation to establish a process for issuing state identification for incarcerated students.

LGBTQIA2+ Student Programs

ISSUE

According to student success data provided by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQIA2+) students are not achieving their degree and career goals at the same rate as their peers. LGBTQIA2+ students are experiencing a disproportionate impact in the following areas: retention, completion of college level math and English in the first year, completion of a degree or certificate, and transfer to a four-year university. National data shows about 70% of community college LGBTQIA2+ students are students of color who face additional barriers. LGBTQIA2+ individuals encounter familial, social, economic and educational instability, which inhibits their ability to succeed academically and holistically. LGBTQIA2+ students experience higher rates of mental illness and food and housing insecurity; they feel campuses are less welcoming and safe, and report a lower sense of belonging than their heterosexual and cisgender peers.

REQUESTS

Develop legislation that creates and funds LGBTQIA2+ resource centers on each campus for students to seek refuge, access resources, and network with each other. Support funding to hire at least one permanent, full-time, qualified professional staff member at each college to work to meet LGBTQIA2+

students' needs and improve educational outcomes. Support funding to provide LGBTQIA2+-specific mental health services and basic needs support. Develop legislation to increase the number of all-gender restrooms and locker rooms, as well as requiring all new buildings to have at least one gender inclusive restroom per floor.

Foster Youth Support Services

ISSUE

Foster youth face a disproportionate number of barriers to accessing and persisting toward a degree, resulting in challenges for this vulnerable population. Foster youth encounter familial, social, economic and educational instability which inhibits their ability to transition successfully from the foster care system to adulthood. Such disruptions delay the youth's academic progress, leading them to fall significantly behind their peers. RCCD is committed to successfully transition these students from foster care to independence through education.

REQUESTS

Support continuous and increased funding for the Foster Youth Support Network (FYSN) program. Support legislation that will expand dual enrollment opportunities for foster youth in all California high schools. Support transitional and rapid rehousing opportunities for foster youth, including college-focused rapid rehousing. Funding support for non-Next Up foster youth who are ineligible for Next Up grants, meal vouchers, and/or direct aid. Colleges rely on limited one-time private donor grants to support those students.