

# Equity in Access



## Undocumented and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

### ISSUE

Approximately 75,000 undocumented students, including those who are protected by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy, are enrolled in the California Community Colleges system. 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.

The Riverside Community College District, which serves roughly 2,400 students through its Dreamer

and Assembly Bill 540 programs, receives annual allocations from the state in support of undocumented students, yet a management information reporting system for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals is not in place. Therefore, it limits districts when it comes to potential funding growth, based on the number of students served. A concern of the Riverside Community College District is the unfunded mandate from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office to establish a Dreamer Center at each college.

### BACKGROUND

In 2017, the Riverside Community College District initiated a study at the local, regional and state levels to gain an understanding of the challenges undocumented students face in earning certificates, associate degrees or transferring to a four-year institution. The Dreamers Project Report served as the basis for legislation approved by the California State Legislature and signed by Governor Gavin Newsom on October 12, 2019, to promote undocumented student success.

On October 15, 2019, the Riverside Community College District Board of Trustees approved a resolution supporting Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. Each of the three colleges identified a Dreamer Resource Liaison, established a Dreamers Taskforce, and partnered with community agencies to provide legal support and services. However, the creation of a Dream Resource Center at each of the colleges has remained elusive.



## REQUESTS

Therefore, to eliminate barriers to academic success and improvement in retention and completion rates for undocumented and Dreamer students, the Riverside Community College District requests the following support from state leaders:

- Support federal legislation that codifies Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals; establish a pathway to citizenship;
- Expand student eligibility for Pell Grants and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program;

- Protect student visas;
- Continued solicitation of state support to increase funding for Dreamer Centers and resource staff liaisons at community colleges;
- Request expansion of Cal-FRESH eligibility to include Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals 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.

The District agrees that supporting Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals students is critical, but without dedicated funding, the colleges are ill equipped to address the needs of AB 540 students, Dreamers and other mixed status students.