Sharing the Dream
Addressing the Needs of Undocumented Immigrant Students

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Time

• Central element in studies of immigrant incorporation and adaptation

• Policy change is slow and incremental
  – DREAM Act first introduced in 2001
DREAM Act
Framing Deservingness
State policies for undocumented individuals

- In-state tuition
- In-state tuition + financial aid
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
Policy Frames Obscure Everyday Realities
Everyday Life Goes On
Between Belonging & Illegality
The Plyler Dilemma
Lack of Continuity

K-12 Experiences

Late Adolescence
Awakening to a Nightmare
Isolation
Mental Health Challenges
The Transition to “Illegality”

**Protected Status**
- K-12 education is free and legal
- Most institutions in childhood do not require legal status

**Transition to Adulthood**
- Late adolescence triggers legal limitations:
  - Working
  - Driving
  - Financial Aid
  - Socializing

**Awake to a Nightmare**
- Succession of blocked opportunities
- Fear, stigma, changed social patterns
- Forced decisions—reveal or conceal
- Physical/ emotional manifestations
Diverging Trajectories

Transition to Adulthood

**MECHANISMS**
- Supportive learning environments
- Trusting relationships with adults
- Peer networks
- Access to resources

**OUTCOMES**
- Form positive networks
- Develop sense of belonging
- Acquire the tools needed to succeed

**MECHANISMS**
- Negative school experiences
- Resource-poor families
- Falling through the cracks
- Exiting school early
- Entering “illegal” adult world

**OUTCOMES**
- Little trust in adults and institutions
- Left to fend for themselves
- Daily contact with legal limitations
- Forced underground
Completing the Transition
DACA’s Mixed Results
Postsecondary Barriers

- DACA does not address exclusion from federal financial aid and most state aid
- Many undocumented students make multiple stop-outs
Human Capital Needs
Implications for Policy

Legalization and Access

- Professional Licenses
- In-State Tuition & Financial Aid
- Expand DACA & DAPA
- The Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act
- Pathway to legalization for all undocumented immigrants
Staff Education-Training-Support

- Training programs on campus (K-12 & College) for staff and faculty
  - Awareness and sensitivity training
  - Acceptance should = prepared to support all undocumented students
- Identification of allies
- Resource centers and/or staff liaison
- Establish and encourage student support groups
- Centralize Information
- Create visible network of faculty, counselors, staff, and community partners
Mentorship

• Engage parents in the process
• Connect students with professionals to increase their awareness of opportunities and options
• Outreach programs: graduate school, higher education, K-12
• Peer to peer mentoring
• Network and directory of students and their career interests
Professional Development

• Raise awareness and create opportunities for life after high school and college

• Develop partnerships with employers and non-profit orgs to provide internship and work opportunities for students while in school

• On-campus work opportunities not tied to federal work study

• Develop opportunities for students interested in health careers/helping professions
Improve the Pipeline

• Need to create a viable pipeline
• Scholarship programs and increased aid
• Establish and make available research programs open to undocumented undergrads
• Improve campus climate to encourage students to persist and graduate
• Build better bridges from college to graduate programs on campus
Health/Mental Health Services

- Increase awareness on campus and in the community
- Develop guides that are informative and accessible
- Train counselors and student services staff
- Commit resources to hire mental health professionals who are sensitive to the unique circumstances and needs of undocumented students
Thank You!

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