

Undocumented Students' Challenges

Undocumented students face many challenges in their pursuit of a higher education.

- **Students are uninformed and misinformed.**
 - Develop or obtain an AB 540 fact sheet that can be easily disseminated to students during individual counseling sessions, parents, and school-based adults.
- **Students lack mentors, guidance and encouragement.**
 - Invite undocumented college students to speak to your students. It makes a difference to hear words of encouragement from students who share the same challenges
- **Students' parents lack college knowledge and experience.**
 - Provide specialized workshops for parents of undocumented students. Parents can be a great source of support. Parents, particularly immigrant parents, need to be informed about the K-12 and postsecondary educational systems as well as the college admissions process.
- **Students' college choices are largely influenced by finances.**
 - Inform your students about the cost of a college education, but make sure to also assist them in identifying available scholarship opportunities. Counselors can write letters of recommendation, proofread essays, and provide morale and fundraising support to undocumented students.
- **Students need assistance when completing college admission applications.**
 - Local colleges and universities will often assign a representative to your school. Identify these representatives and inform yourself about the application process. Undocumented students will need help with completing residency questions.
- **Students need assistance fundraising for college.**
 - Above all, undocumented students will require support with fundraising for college. In addition to writing letters of recommendation, counselors can develop a school scholarship fund for their students by requesting support from other school-based personnel and colleagues. Portfolios are a great way students can request support from individuals in their community.

Building a Support Network

Counselors and other school-based personnel can help build a support network for undocumented students. The benefits can help offset the many challenges these students encounter.

Counselor Tips:

- ❑ **Inform all school-based personnel about the issue** through faculty/department meetings, school newspaper, and other professional development activities. You may not know who is an undocumented student, but if you are informed you can support them when you encounter an undocumented student.
- ❑ **Identify school-based adults who are supportive** and create a support group that can help develop a scholarship for students, serve as advisors for a student support group/club, and keep the school community informed of updates in state and federal legislation.
- ❑ **Develop relationships with community-based organizations** that advocate on behalf of immigrant friendly legislation (e.g, DREAM Act) and undocumented students. These networks can help bring resources to your school and students. In addition, you can build a list of professionals and experts from which to draw upon should you need a guest speaker for a College/Financial Aid Night and/or other school events.
- ❑ **Facilitate the development of a student support group** on your campus. There may be an existing group that can serve this role or perhaps development of a new student group is necessary. Students can receive support, mentoring, and leadership development through involvement in student clubs. Counselors can serve as advisors for student support groups.
- ❑ **Connect your undocumented students with college student support groups.** There are many college student support groups already in existence at many of the California Community Colleges, as well as the California State University and University of California campuses. Check with your local college/university and develop partnerships with these groups. Undocumented college students can provide pertinent information about resources at their college and serve as role models/mentors to undocumented high school students.

Fundraising for College

Undocumented students are ineligible for state and federal sponsored aid; therefore, they are not to complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Thus, students have resolved to utilize creative grassroots fundraising ideas and private scholarships in order to finance their college education.

Counselor Tips:

- ❑ **Scholarship Lists.** There are existing scholarships lists provided by organizations like MALDEF (see resources handout) that can be provided to students. Be aware that scholarship lists can become outdated and may require annual review. Counselors can assign a service worker the project of updating scholarship information. These lists should be readily available in both the counseling office and college center. Also, you may consider facilitating a scholarship workshop to increase your student's competitiveness.
- ❑ **Portfolios.** Portfolios are a great way for student to present themselves to potential donors. Portfolios should contain at a minimum the following items: 1) letter of request, 2) biography, 3) resume, 4) transcripts, 5) letters of recommendation, and 6) noteworthy items that demonstrate the potential of the student (e.g. awards and certificates). Portfolios can be distributed among potential sponsors such as parents' employers, local business owners, teachers, and others who may be interested in supporting your students' education.
- ❑ **Start a Scholarship.** Counselors can come together with other school based adults to develop a scholarship for students at their school site. Scholarship donations can be solicited from the entire school staff in support of its students. Scholarship applications and a selection process can be determined by a committee or advisory group that can include counselors, teachers, administrators, and alumni. After developing a scholarship, local businesses can be solicited for support.
- ❑ **House Parties.** House parties are a great way to fundraise monies for scholarships. House parties can be hosted by an individual or a group (host committee) and take place at a student's home or a local community center.

Parent Involvement

Immigrant parents may lack the college knowledge and experience to help their child with college preparation and the application process. As first generation college goers, undocumented students are often left to navigate the educational pipeline on their own. Parental involvement is vital to student academic success. Fostering a collaborative relationship with parents can help undocumented students confront the many challenges they face in pursuing a college education.

Counselors Tips:

- ❑ **Develop parent support groups.** Parents can benefit from each other and can help alleviate concerns and provide inspiration. Invite parents of current undocumented college students to share their experiences with other parents via weekly, monthly, or quarterly meetings
- ❑ **Provide information in parents' native languages.** College information can be complex and overwhelming for immigrant parents. Providing information in their native language will ensure they receive accurate information that can help them support their child. Look to your school district and within your school for assistance with translation services.
- ❑ **Connect parents with community resources.** Undocumented students have to contend with other immediate needs including shelter, food and safety concerns that affect the entire family. Schools can help connect parents to community resources that can assist them with these concerns. By having knowledge of your community's resources, counselors can support parents and students with issues that are outside of the counselor's expertise and role.
- ❑ **Involve parents in the college preparation and application process.** Because immigrant parents may not have college experience and knowledge it is vital to involve them in their child's college preparation and application process. Counselors can accomplish this by providing college information workshops, providing one-on-one and group sessions to address parent's concerns (i.e. dealing with fears and concerns, differences between 2 and 4 year college). Various methods of delivering college information should be considered.

Resources

Immigration Information/Advocacy & Legal Services

The National Immigration Law Center
www.nilc.org

The Pew Hispanic Center
www.pewhispanic.com

Coalition for Humane Immigrants Rights- Los Angeles
www.chirla.org

Immigrant Legal Resource Center
<http://www.ilrc.org/>

Scholarships & College Preparation

Futuros Educational Services. Inc.
www.futuros-california.org

Salvadoran American Leadership and Educational Fund
www.salef.org

Mexican American Legal Defense & Education Fund
www.maldef.org

Latino College Dollars –TRPI
www.latinocollegedollars.org

Counselors Resources

College Board
<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/guidance/financial-aid/undocumented-students>

AB540 Information & Resources for Undocumented Students

Dream Activist
<http://www.dreamactivist.org/>

AB540 Online Student Resources
<http://www.decolonizing.com/ab540.htm>