

PRE-HEALTH DREAMERS

Financial Strategies 101 for Professional Programs



Undocumented students face barriers when funding their graduate and professional school education. This guide informs institutions and students about funding strategies that catalyze research, conversations, and goal-setting with decision-makers to establish financial support for this population.

UNDERSTANDING THE FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE

Understanding the number of undocumented students enrolled in your program, their financial needs, and the financial support already available to them is critical in building and strengthening efforts that support this population.

As your campus engages in this work, ask:

1. How many undocumented students are enrolled in the program?
 - a. How many are anticipated to enroll in the next year?
2. What is the cost of attendance per student?
3. How much financial support can the program commit to each student?
4. How much is a student responsible for?
5. What additional on and off-campus funding can students access?

GETTING STARTED

This document provides general guidance to identify funding sources for undocumented students. We highly encourage in-depth research based on your state, institution, program, and immigration status.



Graduate and
Professional
Programs



Undocumented
Students



Funding
Sources

GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

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EXPAND INSTITUTIONAL AID

Assess if an SSN or US citizenship is required by on-campus funding sources such as scholarships, grants, endowment funding, fellowships, or stipends. Most resources can be made accessible, especially if not federally funded. Assess if the SSN/US Citizenship requirement can be removed to make financial resources accessible and equitable for all students.

1. Through PHD's work, we found that:
 - a. Federal funding sources are restricted to US Citizens and/or Legal Permanent Residents.
 - b. Some institutional aid can be made accessible to undocumented students at the discretion of the college, program, and/or institution.

STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

Collaborate with the Advancement Office:

1. Is there a grant manager that can lead fundraising efforts for this cause?
 - a. Connect with them;
 - b. Assess the financial landscape; and
 - c. Strategize and inquire about direct donations and/or identify private funders.
2. Inquire if private funding is unrestricted.
3. Establish an annual fundraising goal.
 - i. Ex. \$X,000 per year per student

EXPLORING AND ESTABLISHING FINANCIAL PARTNERSHIPS

Engage in conversation with local credit union(s)

1. Be prepared to present the program's financial landscape.
2. Ask on-campus decision makers to seek partnership with financial institutions
3. Examples of Institutional Loan Programs
 - a. Self-Help Credit Union: Dreamer Graduate Student Loan
 - b. Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine
 - i. *"In years past, some loans were available through two partner organizations, the Illinois Finance Authority (IFA), the infrastructure bank of the State of Illinois and Trinity Health in partnership with The Resurrection Project. In recent years, Stritch has made a commitment to a half-tuition scholarship for each admitted DACA recipient. Self-Help Credit Union makes available a loan program to these applicants as a supplemental financing option. Of course, applicants should consider all available financial options and select that which is best for them."*

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IDENTIFY SUPPORT AT EACH PROGRAM

1. Connect with currently enrolled DACA/undocumented students at that program
2. Educate yourself on the on-campus resources and seek an ally that can help you navigate conversations around financial aid.
3. Inquire with the financial aid director and the dean of the program about the financial aid available for undocumented students.

INQUIRE AND APPLY FOR FUNDING SOURCES

1. Residency for In-State Tuition Purposes
 - a. Programs will enroll you as an in-state, out-of-state, or as an international student. Your tuition fees and aid eligibility is determined by how your state residency is categorized and coded into the system.
 - b. Establishing residency for tuition purposes can vary based on the state you live in and the institution you attend.
 - c. Higher education policies per state can be found by visiting:
 - i. [Higher Ed Immigration Portal: Tuition and Financial Aid Equity for Undocumented Students](#)
2. Institutional Aid Opportunities
 - a. Inquire if your program or campus has opportunities such as:
 - i. Grants
 - ii. Teaching assistant positions
 - iii. Scholarships (need and merit-based)
 - iv. Research-based funding
 - v. Emergency funding
3. Institutional Loans - ***Not all programs have an established loan product***
 - a. Inquire if your program or campus has established an institutional loan product where the:
 - i. School can serve as a co-signer
 - ii. Interest rates are similar to federal student loans
4. Scholarships
 - a. An early start on applications may help secure more funding.
 - i. Research opportunities based on region, career, identities, hobbies, etc.
5. Crowdfunding campaigns (Go-Fund Me)
6. Private Loans (see page 5)
 - a. Loan Repayment/ Forgiveness Programs (see page 5)

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NEGOTIATING YOUR FINANCIAL AID PACKAGE

1. Negotiating your financial aid package is a useful advocacy skill.
 - a. Emphasize your commitment to the program and their commitment to you by virtue of your acceptance;
 - b. Highlight how financial aid support will make you a successful student; and
 - c. Inform them if you have been provided a financial aid award from a different school
2. Request to meet with the Financial Aid Director and campus stakeholders
 - a. Find administrators that are knowledgeable with the need of undocumented students and who are advocates.
 - b. Search on the campus website under DACA, DREAMers, and Undocumented to see if a resource website has been developed.
 - i. Look for the contact information for the advisor or department who is responsible for supporting undocumented students.
 - ii. The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion may be able to help you find on-campus support.
3. [Sallie Mae - How to Negotiate Financial Aid](#)

FUNDING: PRIVATE LOANS

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Loans for Immigrants:

- [Mpowr Financing](#)
 - [Discover Student Loans](#)
 - [Ascent Funding](#)
 - [Self-Help Credit Union: Dreamer Graduate Student Loan](#)
 - [Social Finance: Dreamers Graduate Loan Program](#)
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CO-SIGNER INFORMATION AND REQUIREMENTS

1. Co-Signer Requirements

- a. U.S. citizen or permanent resident with minimum credit score and income requirements

2. Responsibilities

- a. Leverage their financial profile and credit to qualify for and/or obtain better rates on the loan
- b. Legally responsible for the loan amount that was borrowed
- c. Impacts their credit profile, debt to income ratio, credit score, etc.

LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAMS

1. If you need to take out loans to pay for your education, loan repayment programs may be an option once you have completed your program. For health professionals some options include:

- a. Uncommon Good: [Loan Repayment for Health Professionals](#)
- b. [CalHealthCares](#)
- c. [California State Loan Repayment Program](#)

REFINANCING

1. By refinancing your loan, you may be eligible for lower interest rates and/ or a shorter term. You are not bound by the initial loan that was offered and may have the opportunity to receive a better rate by refinancing.

- a. [Guide to Refinancing a Loan- STILT](#)