

DEVELOPING TALENT: STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING COMMUNITY COLLEGE HIGH-ACHIEVING UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

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Undocumented Students

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- 1.3 million undocumented students were enrolled in grades K-12 in 2002.
- 65,000 high school graduates a year (The Urban Institute, 2003)
- 13,000 undocumented high school graduates enroll in public colleges and universities a year (The Urban Institute, 2003)

Uncertain Outlook

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- After they finish high school undocumented youth are met with extreme challenges despite having lived most of their lives in the U.S.:
 - Undocumented students do not qualify for any type of federal financial aid regardless of their academic accomplishments.
 - They can not legally work.
 - In most states they must pay international student tuition fees.
 - They may be deported at any time.

Historical & Legal context

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- In Plyer v. Doe (1982) the Supreme Court held that, while undocumented children are present in the United States they should not forfeit their education because of their parents' decision to immigrate illegally.
 - ▣ Denying education to these children, who can affect neither their parents conduct nor their own status, would impose a lifetime hardship on a discrete class of children not accountable for their disabling status.
- Instead, the Court decided that educating children, regardless of their immigration status, is essential for creating individuals who can function in society and contribute to the development of the United States.

Developing Talent Study

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- Participants
 - 182 participants completed an online questionnaire
 - 66% female
 - 93% Latinas/os
 - 102 of the 182 also participated in an in-depth, one-hour interview

The Gateway to Higher Education

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- Historically, community colleges have served as the educational gateway for millions of immigrants.
- Community colleges are euphemistically known as the “people’s college” as a result of their long history of educating traditionally excluded working-class and racial minority groups (see McGrath & Van Buskirk, 1999).
- Due to its affordability, accessible locations, and flexible open door admission policies, Latino immigrants have made the community college system the most viable option to pursue their educational endeavors (Dozier, 1995).

Student profiles

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	Community	Four Year University
Age at time of study	20.7	20.9
Age at time of immigration to U.S.	6.8	7.6
High School GPA	3.2	3.7
College GPA	3.1	3.1
Number of AP/Honors courses	2.1	5.3
High School Hours worked/week	20.7	21.1
College Hours worked/week	33.1	26.7
Mother's Level of Education	8.2	8.5
Father's Level of Education	9.3	10.0
Number of Siblings	3.1	2.8

Student profiles

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	Community	Four Year University
Volunteered more than 41 hrs/year in HS	39%	49%
High School Extra-curricular activity participation	79%	84%
High School Leadership role	47%	54%
High School Volunteer/Community Service	66%	74%
High School Academic Awards	71%	93%
Volunteered more than 41 hrs/year in College	24%	35%
College Leadership role	40%	44%
College volunteer/community service	61%	65%
College Academic Awards	45%	58%

Qualitative Analysis Themes

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- Difficulty balancing work with school
- Institutional Challenges
- Good relationship with professors
- Academic outreach program
- Honors programs
- Diversity
- Campus Climate

Academic Outreach Programs

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- My English instructor introduced me to the PUENTE Program which helps minority students who want to transfer to a four-year university. We visited universities like UC Santa Barbara, Berkeley, and private schools. I got myself a \$1000 scholarship, which paid my tuition and then I just have to buy my books (Linda).

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Honors Program

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- You said that you applied to the honors program? Who encouraged you to apply?
 - ▣ I felt like junior college was high school part two. I wasn't being challenged. And then a friend of mine whom I had met in one of my classes told me about the honor's track. And I said, what is so good about it? And he's like, it's just more rigorous work. It's not just one piece of paper and then you're done. And I was like, really? So I went and I checked it out. And it was work, work, work, and I applied for it (Paulina).

Balancing Work & School

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- (You're in your second year of college, what's has it been like so far?)
 - It's been rough. I have been having to pay everything on my own. I have had to take off a couple of quarters because of no money. It's a lot harder than high school. You have to study on your own. You have to find the time and the place (Nailea).
- When I was in high school I had applied to a private school. But being in the situation that I am in, and it's so expensive, I couldn't get scholarships or financial aid. So I decided to go to a community college and this is where I am. And it has been a long 4 years because stuff happens. Like with money, or you have to go to work...somehow it delays itself, but I am going to finish hopefully in one year (Beatriz).

Institutional Support

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- that's why I chose to go over there and it's kind of far for me to go to the college that I'm going to right now, but I think I have made a good choice just because they have a lot of resources. They're the college that I know is more informed about people in my situation. Scholarship-wise, they have scholarships that I'm eligible for. I was actually given a scholarship, so that actually kind of helped me a lot. But yeah, I think that's one of the best colleges I know (Daniela).

Administrative Challenges

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- I don't think they do as much as they probably could do because, I mean, the only thing that they do is you just put your application, "OK, so you can go to school now," and that's pretty much it, you're on your own. So I mean, if there was a way of getting maybe the word out or getting some more help, that would be great because pretty much you're on your own (Isabel).
- I went back to my community college to request a transcript and she asked for an I.D. and I said, "Oh, OK," and I showed her my school I.D. and she said, "No, you need a California I.D.," and I'm like, "No, I don't need a California I.D. I'm showing you an I.D. This serves the same purpose," and she's like, "Well, we need a valid I.D.," so I showed her my passport and she said, "OK, well where's your social security number?" And like, "I don't have to have a social security number!" (Dulce).

Discussion

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- Our study shows that Community Colleges are an important gateway to higher education for undocumented students
 - 46% of college students interviewed are either currently community college students or began their higher education studies at the community college level.
 - In our survey data 45% of participants also began their higher education studies at the community college.
- Data reveal that undocumented students experience additional layers of social, emotional, and academic challenges.
- Respondents report very high levels of achievement

Intervention Opportunities

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1. High School outreach and coordination
2. Financial Aid from non-government sources
3. Institutional funding for AB540 student organizations
4. Examine and modify administrative procedures that may inadvertently stigmatize undocumented students
5. Dissemination of information on resources for Undocumented Students
6. Educating faculty, staff, administrators
7. Provision of social and psychological support services for undocumented students
8. Provision of Honor's program and other academic development programs to support higher transfer rates to 4-year universities

Outreach

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- Supporting AB540 students should be done in partnership with high school, community college and 4-year university personnel.
- College outreach personnel should discuss AB540 student issues with high school counselors to ensure that AB540 students receive information about college enrollment, navigating college as an AB540 student, the transfer process, study skills, and availability of student support groups/clubs for undocumented students.
 - In particular, high achieving undocumented students should be informed about academic programs like the Honors program and PUENTE.

Financial Aid

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- Financial challenges are the most frequently cited obstacles by AB540 students.
- Community colleges should engage in more fundraising to increase scholarships and book grant opportunities.
 - an AB540 faculty committee/task force can be established at the community college as a "think tank" for fundraising ideas and social support networks.
- Establish connections with private companies to raise funds for scholarships that AB540 students are able to access.

Reducing financial burden

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- Outreach advisors/counselors can encourage AB540 students to take as many AP tests that they can qualify and/or have time for in order to save money and fulfill GE requirements, simultaneously.
- Community college outreach representatives can promote dual enrollment programs. Undocumented students can benefit from this tuition-free program.
- Outreach and recruitment counselors/staff can inform incoming students about Book Voucher programs and other student support resources on campus.
- AB540 students should be encouraged to take Student Development/Personal Development/Counseling classes during their first semester.
 - Students can learn about degree, transfer, and major requirements to avoid taking unnecessary classes since cost is a major concern.

Funding for student organizations

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- Our data suggest that AB540 clubs play a critical role for students.
 - ▣ Helps students develop connections with other AB540 clubs at 4-year universities
 - Access to peer role models who have successfully transferred
 - Students are able to share information with each other and with clubs from other colleges
 - ▣ Clubs do extensive fundraising for scholarships
 - ▣ Provides a sense of empowerment and official recognition from the institution
 - ▣ Vehicle for student activism and advocacy

Examine & Modify Administrative Procedures

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- Update online application to help facilitate AB540 student enrollment process
 - Allow to submit application without SS#
- Modify procedures that may inadvertently stigmatize undocumented students.

Dissemination of Information to Students

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- Dissemination of information (print/online)
- Strategic placement of print information resources
 - ▣ Counseling office
 - ▣ Admissions office
 - ▣ Financial aid office
 - ▣ Student affairs
 - ▣ Scholarship office
 - ▣ Library

Educating Personnel

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- Administrators, faculty, and counselors need to be informed about undocumented students and the educational challenges they face.
- Develop a mini-workshop for staff, faculty, and administrators to educate them about undocumented students
 - ▣ Provide historical and legal context
 - ▣ Provide current information on recent/pending legislation at the state and federal level
 - ▣ Provide concrete procedures on how to better serve undocumented students

Provision of social and psychological services

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- Train counselors on basic immigration law guidance.
- Students should be encouraged to take a Personal Development class their first semester to learn how to navigate college and manage well their time and money.
 - ▣ PD instructors should discuss specific concerns of AB540 students.
 - ▣ Invite AB540 guest speakers
- Personal Development classes could be used to also establish connections with different clubs/organizations/other AB540 students to create social support.
- Counselors and faculty can serve as club advisors for AB540 support clubs.

Facilitate University Transfer

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- Transfer and Academic Counselors should become familiar with the UC and CSU application process for AB540 students.
- Encourage students to complete Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG) agreements.
- Explain to students about the differences in Quarter and Semester sessions.
 - Transferring to quarter-based schools will often pose hardships to AB540 students since they have to raise/save money in a shorter time span.
- Encourage AB 540 students to go on campus tours to learn more about the campus climate and availability of resources for AB540 students.
- Transfer counselors can ask 4-year college representatives about resources and special support for AB540 students.

Existing models

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- Texas is the only state that provides state funding in addition to in-state tuition to undocumented students
 - In Texas, a number of community colleges, which are governed by local boards, offered in-state tuition to undocumented students long before it became a state law.
- A handful of private colleges and universities provide full scholarships for undocumented students derived from private donations and

Existing models

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- Northern Virginia Community College has created community and privately funded scholarships for undocumented students, recognizing that access without financial aid is too high a barrier for many undocumented immigrants.
- In California, Santa Ana Community College has created scholarships that do not exclude students who lack documentation.

Santa Monica College

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- This district funds a Latino support program called the Adelante program which provides academic counseling, reserved/blocked GE classes, and scholarships.
- The General Scholarship program also does not require students to report immigration status, so AB 540 students are welcome to qualify.
- SMC also provides book voucher programs and reserves textbooks in the library.
- Various Associated Students Latino club sponsored programs exist at SMC. Each club qualifies for \$1000 for education and personal growth.

Glendale City College

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- Faculty have the option of a monthly deduction from their paycheck for the AB540 scholarship fund.
- An AB540 task force has been established through the efforts of faculty advocates. Task force is currently working on ideas to raise more funds.
- Voces de Manana club (AB 540 Latino club) has been formed with approximately 45 members. They just had a burrito sale that raised \$750

Final Thoughts

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- Community Colleges are the gateway to higher education for undocumented students
 - High-Achieving undocumented students desperately need support and assistance to fulfill their potential
 - Community colleges should play an active role in further developing talented undocumented students
 - Concrete institutional policies should be put in place and implemented at the district level whenever possible

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