

PRESIDENTS' ALLIANCE | ON HIGHER EDUCATION
AND IMMIGRATION

UCLA College
Social Sciences

Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration:

Undocumented Graduate Student Survey 2023 Research Analysis

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Introduction

This study is the first attempt to survey undocumented graduate students at a national level. The survey was undertaken by The President's Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration to query undocumented graduate students on their challenges in graduate school, to assess their motivations when choosing a college, and to determine how they fund their education and obtain additional resources they need to succeed. The data in this survey is statistically insignificant¹, and the survey falls short of a sample size sufficient to engage in robust statistical analysis at a national level. The observed results could be due to chance rather than being a finding reflective of the nation. However, the survey did capture qualitative responses that yielded interesting findings. The report focuses on comparing and analyzing the qualitative responses of undocumented graduate students with DACA versus undocumented graduate students without DACA and students attending schools outside of California (CA) versus those attending schools in CA, as well as students at private schools versus public schools, among other factors. The aim is to gain insights into the unique experiences and challenges faced by these student groups in various contexts.

Data and Methods

In total, 219 total individuals responded to the survey. Of those 219 total survey respondents, 149 met the criteria of the Presidents Alliance's study². After further analysis, we removed (1) any survey respondent that did not include both their state and school and (2) any survey respondent that did not select "Undocumented with DACA, Undocumented without DACA, Undocumented but not-DACA eligible, Undocumented without DACA but DACA eligible." The reason for this is we cannot compare data between California and other states OR compare data between public and private universities if there is no state and university data for a survey respondent. After data cleaning, our final sample was 113.

¹ Statistical insignificance indicates that the observed results are likely due to chance or random variation, rather than being reflective of a meaningful or significant relationship or finding.

² The President's Alliance filtered responses by immigration status, student status, among other factors they deemed important.

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As a result of our small response size, any analysis would have to focus on the free response and qualitative data points which could provide a powerful narrative. For this reason, any individual who left the entire qualitative questions or sections of the survey unanswered would be excluded from the analysis. The final number of survey respondents for this report is 84.

Given the minimal sample size, it is important to acknowledge that the findings should be interpreted with caution due to their statistical insignificance. The small sample size impacts the generalizability and reliability of the results, and thus it is crucial to consider this context when analyzing the findings. However, there are several trends that we believe are interesting. We hope these discoveries will be validated in a future survey and study that can draw on various statistical methods. Until then, we caution against generalizing the outcomes we have highlighted throughout our analysis. However, for most outcomes, we have no confidence in their validity.

Executive Summary

The following provides an analysis of key findings regarding the challenges undocumented graduate students face. Undocumented graduate students with DACA overwhelmingly identify "lack of financial funding/aid/loans" as the primary obstacle in their education, and state challenges relating to funding their education, "difficulty finding scholarships" and "difficulty working while in school/availability." When comparing students attending schools in California (CA) to those outside of California (Non-CA), both groups encounter similar challenges related to "lack of financial funding/aid/loans." Furthermore, they face comparable struggles concerning the "lack of job/graduate assistant/fellowship opportunities and getting paid without SSN" and "difficulty working while in school/availability." However, non-CA students struggle more with finding scholarships, while CA students report greater challenges in "difficulty finding community/support groups."

Undocumented graduate students, regardless of institution type (private or public), highlight the primary challenge of "lack of financial funding/aid/loans." The top five struggles for both groups include the same factors: lack of financial funding, job opportunities,

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community/support groups, scholarships, and difficulties working while in school. Overall, the challenges faced by undocumented graduate students in graduate school are not strongly influenced by the type of institution (private or public).

Undocumented graduate students with DACA in CA and Non-CA share similar difficulties regarding finding scholarships and managing work while in school. The greatest challenge remains the lack of financial funding/aid/loans. However, undocumented graduate students with DACA in CA find it harder to develop community/support groups.

Understanding the factors that influence the college choices of undocumented graduate students can inform initiatives aimed at enhancing access. When undocumented graduate students with DACA choose their college or university, "Affordability/Funding/Aid," "Curriculum/Mission/Programs," and "Location/Convenience" are their main factors. Still, many undocumented graduate students with DACA prioritize their college or university choice based on "Career Advancement/Goals," but this factor was not mentioned by undocumented graduate students without DACA as a reason for their decision.

When comparing students attending schools in California (CA) to those outside of California (Non-CA), both groups prioritize "Affordability/Funding/Aid," "Curriculum/Mission/Programs," and "Location/Convenience." Notably, CA students more frequently cite "Prestige/Reputation/Ranking" and "Career Advancement/Goals" as reasons for their college choice compared to non-CA students. This difference may be attributed to CA being more undocumented-friendly, providing fewer daily life pressures, and offering more financial resources for undocumented graduate students, allowing them to consider factors such as "Prestige/Reputation/Ranking" and "Career Advancement/Goals."

When comparing students at private colleges and universities to students at public colleges and universities, both groups emphasize the importance of "Affordability/Funding/Aid" and "Location/Convenience" in their college selection. However, students more frequently choose public colleges/universities based on the institution's "Curriculum/Mission/Programs." However, when comparing how undocumented graduate students with DACA at private colleges/universities and undocumented graduate students with DACA at public colleges/universities chose their graduate school, there is no notable difference.

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Also, undocumented graduate students with DACA attending schools in CA and those attending schools outside of CA prioritize the same factors when choosing a college: "Affordability/Funding/Aid," "Curriculum/Mission/Programs," and "Location/Convenience." Yet, undocumented graduate students with DACA in CA place greater importance on "Career Advancement/Goals" and "Prestige/Reputation/Ranking" compared to their counterparts outside of CA, who barely mention these factors.

Furthermore, the main ways in which undocumented graduate students fund their education are through "Work/Employment," "Grants/Scholarships," "Personal/Family Savings," and "Fellowship Funding." However, undocumented graduate students with DACA rely on "Loans" more than undocumented graduate students without DACA. Consistently, regardless of state and type of school (public or private), undocumented graduate students with DACA and undocumented graduate students without DACA primarily rely on "Work/Employment" and "Grants/Scholarships" to finance their education. Moreover, CA students more frequently utilize "Loans" to pay for college, while non-CA students rely more on "Personal/Family Savings." Also, public university students rely more on "Loans" and "Fellowship Funding" compared to private university students, who rely more on "Personal/Family Savings" on average. One notable difference is that undocumented graduate students with DACA attending schools in CA rely more on "Loans" compared to their counterparts attending schools outside of CA.

Lastly, based on our analysis, the recommended prioritization of additional resources and services is as follows: (1) "Greater access to funding/grants/scholarships," (2) "Greater access to financial aid for undocumented graduate students," (3) "Develop undocumented community/support groups," (4) "Greater access to paid job/internship/fellowship opportunities," and (5) "Better student mentorship resources." These findings highlight the critical need for colleges and universities to focus on providing enhanced financial support options and resources for undocumented graduate students. Addressing this priority will help alleviate the financial burdens they face and increase their access to higher education.

Challenges in Graduate Education (Q13)

Higher education poses challenges for individuals who obtain an undergraduate degree, but it presents even greater difficulties for undocumented graduate students. These students not only face the daily hardships resulting from their lack of legal status as citizens in the United States, but they also encounter obstacles in accessing financial aid, loans, scholarships, and other forms of funding for their education.

We asked undocumented graduate students to shed light on the challenges they have experienced in graduate or professional school due to their immigration status. The results reveal that their primary concern revolves around insufficient financial aid to support their education. This limitation significantly impacts their educational pursuits since the inability to afford tuition fees hinders their ability to continue their studies. Consequently, these students endure unnecessary mental, emotional, and financial stress.

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA vs. without DACA

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA (n=64)

Lack of financial funding/aid/loans	47
Difficulty finding community/support group	14
Difficulty finding scholarships	10
Difficulty working while in school/availability	12

ANALYSIS: Undocumented graduate students with DACA have the most difficulty funding their education since they overwhelmingly cite the following: **“lack of financial funding/aid/loans”** and **“difficulty finding scholarships.”** They also have **“difficulty working while in school/availability”** which relates to their ability to fund their education since the majority of undocumented graduate students use **“Work/Employment”** to pay for their education, as shown in Q18. Lastly, as undocumented graduate students with DACA struggle to find time to schedule school and work, their second greatest challenge is **“Difficulty finding community/support group.”**

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Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA

ANALYSIS: Due to the number of responses and low-frequency rate for undocumented graduate students without DACA, no analysis is possible.

Students Attending Graduate Schools Outside of California vs. in California

Students Attending Graduate Schools Outside of California (Non-CA Students) (n=30)

Lack of financial funding/aid/loans	18
Lack of job/graduate assistant/fellowship opportunities and getting paid without SSN	4
Difficulty finding community/support group	3
Difficulty finding scholarships	8
Difficulty working while in school/availability	6

Students Attending Graduate Schools in California (CA Students) (n=46)

Lack of financial funding/aid/loans	34
Lack of job/graduate assistant/fellowship opportunities and getting paid without SSN	8
Difficulty finding community/support group	11
Difficulty finding scholarships	3
Difficulty working while in school/availability	8

ANALYSIS: When comparing students who go to schools in California (CA students) to students who go to schools outside of California (Non-CA students), there is consistency between the two groups that "**lack of financial funding/aid/loans**" is the biggest obstacle.

Also, both CA and Non-CA students struggle similarly with "**Lack of job/graduate assistant/fellowship opportunities and getting paid without SSN**" and "**Difficulty working while in school/availability.**"

There are only two small differences between the responses of non-CA and CA students. Non-CA students have more "**Difficulty finding scholarships**" than CA students, and CA students have greater "**Difficulty finding community/support groups**" than Non-CA students.

Students at Private College/University vs. Public College/University

Students at Private College/University (n=28)

Lack of financial funding/aid/loans	19
Lack of job/graduate assistant/fellowship opportunities and getting paid without SSN	4
Difficulty finding community/support group	7
Difficulty finding scholarships	6
Difficulty working while in school/availability	4

Students at Public College/University (n=48)

Lack of financial funding/aid/loans	33
Lack of job/graduate assistant/fellowship opportunities and getting paid without SSN	8
Difficulty finding community/support group	7
Difficulty finding scholarships	5
Difficulty working while in school/availability	10

ANALYSIS: When comparing students at private colleges and universities to students at public colleges and universities, the challenges undocumented graduate students have in graduate school are not connected to whether they go to a private or public college or university.

Overwhelmingly both student bodies stated the biggest challenge was the **“lack of financial funding/aid/loans.”** Additionally, they had the same top five struggles: **“Lack of financial funding/aid/loans”**; **“lack of job/graduate assistant/fellowship opportunities and getting paid without SSN”**; **“difficulty finding community/support group”**; **“difficulty finding scholarships”**; and **“difficulty working while in school/availability.”**

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Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA at Private Colleges and Universities vs. at Public Colleges and Universities

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA at Private Colleges and Universities (n=26)

Lack of financial funding/aid/loans	19
Difficulty finding community/support group	7
Difficulty finding scholarships	6
Difficulty working while in school/availability	4
Difficulty with legal status	1
Mental Health	1

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA at Public Colleges and Universities (n=38)

Lack of financial funding/aid/loans	28
Difficulty finding community/support group	7
Difficulty finding scholarships	4
Difficulty working while in school/availability	8
Difficulty with legal status	3
Mental Health	5

ANALYSIS: When comparing students at private colleges and universities to students at public colleges and universities, the challenges undocumented graduate students have in graduate school are not strongly connected to whether they go to a private or public college or university since the findings show that both groups struggle with the main issue of **“lack of financial funding/aid/loans.”**

Furthermore, why share a similar response rate for the following: **“Difficulty finding scholarships,” “difficulty working while in school/availability,” “difficulty with legal status,”** and **“mental health.”**

There is only a slight difference in the rate at which students at private colleges and universities and students at public colleges and universities have **“Difficulty with legal status”** and **“Mental Health”** challenges.

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA at Private Colleges and Universities vs. at Public Colleges and Universities

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA at Private Colleges and Universities

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA at Public Colleges and Universities

ANALYSIS: Due to the number of responses and low-frequency rate for undocumented graduate students without DACA at private colleges and universities and public colleges and universities, no analysis is possible.

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA Attending Schools in CA vs. Outside of CA

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA Attending Schools in CA (n=39)

Lack of financial funding/aid/loans	30
Difficulty finding community/support group	11
Difficulty finding scholarships	3
Difficulty working while in school/availability	7

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA Attending Schools Outside of CA (n=25)

Lack of financial funding/aid/loans	17
Difficulty finding community/support group	3
Difficulty finding scholarships	7
Difficulty working while in school/availability	5

ANALYSIS: Undocumented graduate students with DACA in CA and undocumented graduate students with DACA in Non-CA shared similar struggles regarding **“difficulty finding scholarships”** and **“difficulty working while in school/availability.”** Also, the biggest challenge for the two groups was **“lack of financial funding/aid/loans.”**

The only slight difference between the two undocumented graduate students with DACA in CA and Non-CA was undocumented graduate students with DACA attending schools in CA had greater **“Difficulty finding community/support group.”**

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Undocumented graduate students without DACA in CA vs. Outside of CA

Undocumented graduate Students without DACA in CA

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA Outside of CA

ANALYSIS: Due to the number of responses and low-frequency rate for undocumented graduate students without DACA in CA and non-CA, no analysis is possible.

Choosing a Graduate School (Q17)

Every year students around the country decide which graduate school they want to attend. Many students choose to attend the most prestigious or highest-ranked university they can or base their decision on affordability. Other deciding factors are certain programs within a university or the location and state in which the school is located. All these factors are common pros and cons when deciding where to attend graduate school. However, undocumented graduate students face unique challenges in life and education that cause them to choose their graduate schools based on certain factors such as the location of their graduate school and whether they can afford the tuition.

We asked undocumented graduate students to tell us why they chose their graduate or professional school, and the results constantly revolve around three primary factors regardless of state or type of graduate school (private or public): **“Affordability/Funding/Aid,” “Curriculum/Mission/Programs,”** and **“Location/Convenience.”**

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA vs. without DACA

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA (n=68)

Affordability/Funding/Aid	14
Curriculum/Mission/Programs	21
Location/Convenience	22
Career Advancement/Goals	10

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA (n=13)

Affordability/Funding/Aid	6
Curriculum/Mission/Programs	5
Location/Convenience	4
Career Advancement/Goals	0

ANALYSIS: When comparing the reasons why undocumented graduate students with DACA and those without DACA choose their college or university, the main reasons seem to be **“Affordability/Funding/Aid,” Curriculum/Mission/Programs,”** and **“Location/Convenience.”** Although there is an extreme response and low frequency rate for undocumented graduate students without DACA which makes analysis difficult and not possible. One interesting

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observation is that many undocumented graduate students with DACA choose their college or university based on their **“Career Advancement/Goals,”** however this was not mentioned once as a reason for undocumented graduate students without DACA.

Students Attending Graduate Schools Outside of California vs. in California

Students Attending Graduate Schools Outside of California (Non-CA Students) (n=33)

Affordability/Funding/Aid	11
Curriculum/Mission/Programs	10
Location/Convenience	12
Prestige/Reputation/Ranking	0
Career Advancement/Goals	1

Students Attending Graduate Schools in California (CA Students) (n=48)

Affordability/Funding/Aid	9
Curriculum/Mission/Programs	16
Location/Convenience	13
Prestige/Reputation/Ranking	7
Career Advancement/Goals	9

ANALYSIS: When comparing students who go to schools in California (CA) to students who go to schools outside of California (Non-CA), there is consistency between the two groups that **“Affordability/Funding/Aid,” “Curriculum/Mission/Programs,”** and **“Location/Convenience”** are their top priorities.

Interestingly, CA students cite **“Prestige/Reputation/Ranking”** and **“Career Advancement/Goals”** as reasons for choosing their college more than non-CA students. This could be because CA is more undocumented-friendly which contributes to less pressure in daily life and CA has more financial resources for undocumented students compared to other states which allows students to factor in **“Prestige/Reputation/Ranking”** and **“Career Advancement/Goals.”**

Students at Private College/University vs. Public College/University

Students at Private College/University (n=30)

Affordability/Funding/Aid	8
Curriculum/Mission/Programs	3
Location/Convenience	11

Students at Public College/University (n=51)

Affordability/Funding/Aid	12
Curriculum/Mission/Programs	15
Location/Convenience	15

ANALYSIS: When comparing students at private colleges/universities and students at public colleges/universities, both groups state **“Affordability/Funding/Aid”** and **“Location/Convenience”** as the main reasons for choosing their college/university. One difference is that undocumented graduate students more often choose public colleges/universities because of the **“Curriculum/Mission/Programs”** at the public college/university.

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA at Private Colleges and Universities vs. at Public Colleges and Universities

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA at Private Colleges and Universities (n=28)

Affordability/Funding/Aid	6
Curriculum/Mission/Programs	11
Location/Convenience	11
Career Advancement/Goals	3
Campus Resources/Support	3

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA at Public Colleges and Universities (n=40)

Affordability/Funding/Aid	8
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Curriculum/Mission/Programs	10
Location/Convenience	11
Career Advancement/Goals	7
Campus Resources/Support	5

ANALYSIS: Factoring in the number of responses and frequency rate, there is no notable difference in how undocumented graduate students with DACA at private colleges/universities and undocumented graduate students with DACA at public colleges/universities chose their graduate school.

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA at Private Colleges and Universities vs. at Public Colleges and Universities

**Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA at Private Colleges and Universities
Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA at Public Colleges and Universities**

ANALYSIS: Due to the number of responses and low-frequency rate for undocumented graduate students without DACA at private colleges and universities and at public colleges and universities, no analysis is possible.

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA Attending Schools in CA vs. Outside of CA

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA Attending Schools in CA (CA) (n=41)

Affordability/Funding/Aid	7
Curriculum/Mission/Programs	9
Location/Convenience	12
Prestige/Reputation/Ranking	6
Career Advancement/Goals	9

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA Attending Schools Outside of CA (Non-CA) (n=27)

Affordability/Funding/Aid	7
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Curriculum/Mission/Programs	8
Location/Convenience	10
Prestige/Reputation/Ranking	0
Career Advancement/Goals	1

ANALYSIS: When comparing undocumented graduate students with DACA attending schools in CA with those attending schools outside of CA, both groups have the same top factors when choosing a college: **“Affordability/Funding/Aid,” “Curriculum/Mission/Programs,”** and **“Location/Convenience.”** However, undocumented graduate students with DACA in CA stated **“Career Advancement/Goals”** and **“Prestige/Reputation/Ranking”** as top factors as well, while undocumented graduate students with DACA outside of CA barely cited **“Career Advancement/Goals”** and **“Prestige/Reputation/Ranking”** as reasons.

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA in CA vs. Outside of CA

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA in CA

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA in Non-CA

ANALYSIS: Due to the number of responses and low-frequency rate for undocumented graduate students without DACA in CA and non-CA, no analysis is possible.

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Funding Graduate School (Q18)

Paying for college and graduate school is often one of the most stressful aspects of higher education. Undocumented graduate students face even greater obstacles when it comes to funding their education since they often do not qualify for certain types of financial aid, loans, and scholarship opportunities.

Knowing most undocumented graduate students are confronted by this challenge, we asked them about how they funded their graduate or professional studies. The results proved that undocumented graduate students use many different ways to pay for graduate school, but they most often use “Work/Employment,” “Grants/Scholarships,” “Personal/Family Savings,” “Loans,” and “Fellowship Funding.”

Most commonly, undocumented graduate students work to finance their education, and the struggle to afford tuition often affects their academic performance and overall graduate school experience. Additionally, the time they dedicate to applying for grants or scholarships outside of class has a significant impact on their ability to fully engage in their education.

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA vs. without DACA

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA (n=69)

Work/Employment	38
Grants/Scholarships	35
Personal/Family Savings	18
Loans	17
Fellowship Funding	14

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA (n=12)

Work/Employment	5
Grants/Scholarships	8
Personal/Family Savings	3
Loans	1
Fellowship Funding	5

ANALYSIS: When comparing undocumented graduate students with DACA and without DACA, both groups cite **“Work/Employment,” “Grants/Scholarships,” “Personal/Family Savings,”** and **“Fellowship Funding”** as top ways they fund their education. One notable and expected difference is that undocumented graduate students with DACA overwhelmingly use **“Loans”** more than undocumented graduate students without DACA.

Students Attending Graduate Schools Outside of California vs. in California

Students Attending Graduate Schools Outside of California (Non-CA Students) (n=33)

Work/Employment	18
Grants/Scholarships	18
Personal/Family Savings	12
Loans	4
Fellowship Funding	7

Students Attending Graduate Schools in California (CA Students) (n=48)

Work/Employment	25
Grants/Scholarships	23
Personal/Family Savings	9
Loans	14
Fellowship Funding	12

ANALYSIS: When comparing students that go to schools in California (CA) to students going to schools outside of California (Non-CA), there is consistency between the two groups that **“Work/Employment”** and **“Grants/Scholarships”** are their main ways to pay for college. However, there are several differences between them. CA students more often use **“Loans”** to pay for college while Non-CA students use **“Personal/Family Savings”** more.

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Students at Private College/University vs. Public College/University

Students at Private college/university (n=31)

Work/Employment	16
Grants/Scholarships	15
Personal/Family Savings	10
Loans	6
Fellowship Funding	3

Students at Public college/university (n=50)

Work/Employment	27
Grants/Scholarships	28
Personal/Family Savings	11
Loans	12
Fellowship Funding	16

ANALYSIS: When comparing private university students to public university students, there is consistency between the two groups that **“Work/Employment”** and **“Grants/Scholarships”** are their main ways to pay for college. However, public university students more often use **“Loans”** and **“Fellowship Funding”** to pay for college while private university students use **“Personal/Family Savings”** more on average based on response rate and frequency.

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA at Private Colleges and Universities vs. at Public Colleges and Universities

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA at Private Colleges and Universities (n=29)

Work/Employment	15
Grants/Scholarships	13

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA at Public Colleges and Universities (n=40)

Work/Employment	23
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Grants/Scholarships	22
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ANALYSIS: When comparing undocumented graduate students with DACA at private colleges and universities with undocumented graduate students with DACA at public colleges and universities, both groups predominantly fund their education with **“Work/Employment”** and **“Grants/Scholarships.”**

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA at Private Colleges and Universities vs. at Public Colleges and Universities

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA at Private Colleges and Universities
Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA at Public Colleges and Universities

ANALYSIS: Due to the number of responses and low-frequency rate for undocumented graduate students without DACA at private and public colleges and universities, no analysis is possible.

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA Attending Schools in CA vs. Outside of CA

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA Attending Schools in CA (n=41)

Work/Employment	22
Grants/Scholarships	21
Loans	14

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA Attending Schools Outside of CA (n=38)

Work/Employment	16
Grants/Scholarships	14
Loans	3

ANALYSIS: When comparing undocumented graduate students with DACA in CA with undocumented graduate students with DACA in Non-CA, both groups predominantly use **“Work/Employment”** and **“Grants/Scholarships”** to fund their education. One notable difference is that undocumented graduate students with DACA attending schools in CA use **“Loans”** more than undocumented graduate students with DACA attending schools outside of CA.

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Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA in CA vs. Outside of CA

Undocumented graduate students without DACA in CA

Undocumented graduate students without DACA in Non-CA

ANALYSIS: Due to the number of responses and low-frequency rate for undocumented graduate students without DACA in CA and non-CA, no analysis is possible.

Additional Resources for Graduate Students (Q19)

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, colleges and universities continually strive to enhance the student experience and provide comprehensive support. As students face various challenges during their academic journey, the need for additional resources and services becomes increasingly crucial. However, undocumented graduate students forget about when faculty and staff create programs and new opportunities even though they often need the most support.

We asked students if they had suggestions on additional resources and services that colleges and universities could provide. Our goal is to proactively identify and address these needs, so educational institutions can foster a more inclusive and empowering environment. Our results showed the most mentioned additional resources were "Greater access to funding/grants/scholarships" followed by "Greater access to financial aid for undocumented graduate students." Ultimately, undocumented graduate students are in critical need of support to overcome financial barriers that make college education viable for them.

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA vs. without DACA

Undocumented Graduate Students with DACA (n=59)

Greater access to financial aid for undocumented graduate students	12
Greater access to funding/grants/scholarships	27
Greater access to paid job/internship/fellowship opportunities	12
Better student mentorship resources	9
Develop undergraduate community/support groups	11

Undocumented Graduate Students without DACA (n=11)

Greater access to financial aid for undocumented graduate students	5
Greater access to funding/grants/scholarships	6
Develop undocumented graduate community/support groups	5

ANALYSIS: When asked what additional resources and services colleges and universities could provide, undocumented graduate students with DACA and without DACA are most interested in additional resources and services that will help them fund their education. Shown in the high

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response rate for the following services: **“Greater access to funding/grants/scholarships”** and **“Greater access to financial aid for undocumented graduate students.”** Additionally, both groups would suggest to their graduate schools that they **“Develop undocumented graduate community/support groups.”**

Furthermore, undocumented graduate students with DACA stated they would also prioritize **“Better student mentorship resources”** and **“Greater access to paid job/internship/fellowship opportunities.”**

Our assessment shows that the following additional resources and services should be prioritized in the following order: **(1) “Greater access to funding/grants/scholarships,” (2) “Greater access to financial aid for undocumented graduate students,” (3) “Develop undocumented graduate community/support groups,” (4) “Greater access to paid job/internship/fellowship opportunities,”** and **(5) “Better student mentorship resources.”**

Conclusion

This undocumented graduate student survey presents an overview of the challenges faced by undocumented graduate students, particularly those without DACA status. The primary obstacle consistently identified across different immigration status, locations, and institution types is the lack of financial funding, aid, and loans available to undocumented graduate students. Whether in California or outside, undocumented graduate students encounter similar struggles related to funding, job opportunities, and the difficulty of working while studying. However, non-CA students face more significant hurdles in finding scholarships while CA students experience challenges in building community and support groups.

Factors influencing college choices among undocumented graduate students include affordability, curriculum offerings, and location. Notable differences emerge, especially in California, where considerations like prestige, reputation, and career advancement weigh more heavily, likely due to the state's more supportive environment for undocumented individuals. In regards to financing education, work/employment and grants/scholarships are the primary sources for both DACA and non-DACA undocumented graduate students. However, DACA students tend to rely more on loans, especially those attending schools in California, indicating potential differences in financial resources available across regions.

There is an urgent need for colleges and universities to better support undocumented graduate students. Recommendations include the critical need for improved financial support, such as increased access to funding, grants, and scholarships; the development of a graduate community and support groups; greater access to paid job, internship, and fellowship options; and better mentorship resources. Addressing these priorities is crucial to alleviate the financial, educational, and personal burdens and enhance educational access and success for undocumented graduate students. Colleges and universities must implement targeted initiatives and allocate resources to support undocumented graduate students effectively, acknowledging their unique challenges and needs in succeeding in higher education.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

The following were questions used in the Undocumented Graduate Student Survey created by the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration:

1. Do you consent to participate in this survey?
2. What is your CURRENT immigration status (select all that apply)
3. How old are you? (Please select the option that best describes your age range)
4. What is your current gender identity? (Please check all that apply)
5. What is your country of origin/citizenship?
6. What best describes your race/ethnicity (Please check all that apply)
7. Have you completed at least one term/semester/quarter/trimester in your graduate/professional program?
8. What is your current graduate/professional school enrollment status?
9. What type of graduate/professional degree did you obtain OR are currently working towards?
10. What U.S. state is your graduate/professional school located in?
11. Name of the graduate/professional school you are currently enrolled in OR graduated from?
12. What challenges have you faced in graduate/professional school as it relates to your immigration status (Please select all that apply)
13. Please identify and expand on TWO challenges you have faced in graduate/professional school as they relate to your immigration status (Please select all that apply):
14. Does your campus offer any of these resources or services for undocumented graduate students (Please select all that apply):
15. Does your campus offer paid or funded opportunities for undocumented graduate students without work authorization? (Please select all that apply)
16. Are undocumented graduate students at your campus considered in-state, out-of-state, or international students (for tuition or other purposes) during their graduate/professional studies?

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17. Why did you choose your graduate/professional school?
18. Please share some of the ways you funded your graduate/professional education (Please include both traditional and non-traditional examples)
19. Do you have suggestions on additional resources/services that colleges/universities could provide?
20. If you have completed/graduated from your graduate/professional degree, please share any opportunities that have emerged as a result of your graduate/professional degree.
21. If you have completed/graduated from your graduate/professional degree, please share any challenges that have emerged after obtaining your graduate/professional degree.
22. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not asked yet as it pertains to your graduate school experience?
23. If you are interested in receiving updates and resources from the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration please share your contact information below so we can include your email address in our graduate school initiative correspondence.

As mentioned previously due to the limited number of responses, analysis occurred only for the qualitative responses of Questions 13, 17, 18, and 19. The qualitative responses were believed to showcase an interesting narrative that could be explored further in future surveys.