



EDUCATORS FOR FAIR CONSIDERATION

# SUPPORT FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS: STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR SCHOLARSHIP PROVIDERS

# INTRODUCTION

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This brief guide is designed for scholarship provider organizations that are seeking to launch or increase their support for undocumented students. It is intended for all scholarship providers but especially for community-based, non-profit organizations that award scholarships to students attending a variety of institutions. We hope it offers useful information and advice for organizations at all levels of experience, but our primary goal is to provide a helpful resource for organizations that are taking their first steps to support undocumented students.

The guide includes advice from partner organizations in the *Invest in the Dream* initiative and other organizations that effectively serve undocumented students. We wish to thank those organizations for their contributions and to acknowledge them for their great work.

We recognize that many of the topics covered in this guide are complicated and controversial, and this format allows us to address the issues only briefly. We encourage you to see this guide as just an introduction and, more importantly, as an invitation to a conversation with E4FC and other scholarship providers nationwide who are thinking about the most effective ways to serve and support undocumented students.

# BEST PRACTICES

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## 1. Changing Organizational Policies to Facilitate Support for Undocumented Students

### a. Move beyond “Don’t ask, don’t tell”

Some scholarship providers insist that they don’t know if they have awarded scholarships to undocumented students; they don’t require proof of citizenship and don’t collect any information that would identify a student’s immigration status. While this “don’t ask, don’t tell” approach makes some room for undocumented students, it misses an opportunity to welcome them, engage them and advocate on their behalf. We strongly encourage your organization to adopt and publish a policy statement that invites applications from undocumented students and makes your support for those students visible and explicit.

### b. Research legal issues and implications

The legal issues around scholarship support for undocumented students are somewhat vague and subject to interpretation. After conducting research, many organizations have concluded that there is little to no legal risk in offering scholarships to undocumented students and, to our knowledge, no scholarship provider has ever faced legal sanctions for doing so. However, we strongly encourage you to carefully examine the legal issues around this practice and understand its implications; ideally, you should consult legal counsel before adopting any policy.

### c. Educate organizational leaders, including board members and other decision makers

To become an effective supporter and ally for undocumented students, you will need the support of your organizational decision makers, including board members and senior staff leaders. We encourage you to capitalize on the opportunity that presents: engage your leadership in a discussion about the undocumented student experience and explain why you believe that support for undocumented students honors your organizational values and mission.

### d. Learn from the experience of other scholarship providers

In the past several years, many scholarship providers have taken the steps described above and have become visible and influential supporters of undocumented students. Those colleagues represent a valuable resource. E4FC can help you identify colleagues who can provide advice and support for your efforts.

## 2. Developing Cultural Competence/ Creating a Supportive Environment

### a. Work to create a safe space

For undocumented young people, it is often challenging to find safe spaces. Being undocumented means that youth and their families are constantly at risk of detention, deportation or exploitation because of their immigration status. A foundational way of creating a safe space at your organization is to make sure to inform all students that their information will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone else.

### b. Hire staff and interns who can serve as role models

A majority of undocumented students are also first generation college students, and one major challenge they face is a lack of role models coming from similar communities and backgrounds. We strongly encourage your organization to hire staff or interns who resemble the demographics and experiences of the students you primarily serve. This allows students to feel comfortable and understood, and brings a wide array of knowledge and experience to your organization.

### c. Hire undocumented staff/interns

As an extension of the above practice, we encourage your organization to bring on undocumented young people as staff, interns and mentors. The federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program has created an opening for organizations to hire undocumented young people, and those who have done so describe significant and positive impacts to their programs.

**d. Train all staff on laws, policies, and effective practices for supporting and advocating for undocumented young people**

Immigration law is complex, ambiguous and ever-changing. Because of this, undocumented students often receive inaccurate information regarding their status and the options available to them. At inopportune moments, this misinformation can have a profoundly negative effect on students' ability to move forward with their aspirations. By making an effort to understand the changing landscape of immigration, your organization can become a central hub for students as well as their families and peers.

**e. Always consult with undocumented students, undocumented alumni and trusted community partners before making policy decisions**

As an organization that is committed to supporting undocumented young people, trust is a major asset. One way to gain or enhance trust is to include undocumented young people in your decision-making process regarding organizational policies or strategies that may affect the undocumented students you currently serve or hope to serve in the future.

**f. Create written materials to preserve organizational knowledge**

Over time, individuals in your organization will begin to gain important knowledge and experience about effective ways to serve and support undocumented students. Unfortunately, many organizations miss an opportunity to share that knowledge. We encourage your organization to set up systems to document and disseminate knowledge widely to all members of your staff. Of course, you should exercise careful judgment to assess what information is safe to share widely and what information should be kept private.

**g. Attend webinars, conferences and convenings on immigration/undocumented youth issues**

Thanks in large part to the powerful and growing national movement of undocumented youth and dedicated allies, the experience of undocumented youth has gained substantial visibility and standing in the past few years. As a result, there are many

conferences, convenings, webinars, live feeds and websites that cover a wide range of topics related to immigration and undocumented youth. We strongly encourage your organization to participate in these gatherings and programs to gain knowledge and develop connections. As a starting point, here are some organizations that offer great webinars on immigration and undocumented young people/families: United We Dream, National Immigration Law Center, Migration Policy Institute, and the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

### **3. Effectively Serving Undocumented Students**

**a. Understand that each undocumented young person's situation is unique**

A wide variety of factors, including country of origin, age of arrival, family composition, profession, marital status and many other issues affect each individual's immigration status and options. These elements are further complicated by the provisions of the DACA program and various state policies. For those reasons, we encourage your organization to see each student as unique and to not assume that strategies that work for some students will work for others.

**b. Award scholarships to all undocumented students regardless of DACA eligibility**

Only a few years ago, most scholarships and financial aid excluded all undocumented students. In response to determined advocacy efforts, many scholarship providers, schools and states now offer financial aid to undocumented youth, but some limit their support to students who qualify for DACA. As a result, there is a growing and unjust disparity of opportunities for DACA-eligible youth and non-DACA eligible youth. To help address that disparity, we urge your organization to resist the limitations imposed by DACA and to support the many deserving and highly qualified students who are not DACA-eligible.

**c. Raise issues affecting undocumented students in all of your scholarship materials and outreach presentations**

Your outreach and promotional materials – both in print and online – are some of the first ways that people interact with your organization, and you

should use them to send a welcoming message to undocumented students. We encourage you to be explicit in your materials and presentations about your support for undocumented students and your awareness of the issue and challenges they face.

**d. Begin your outreach to undocumented students as early as possible**

For first generation students generally, it is important to reach out as early as possible to help them reach and succeed in college. Undocumented students face an even steeper uphill climb and need good advice and information early on to help them overcome the legal, academic, financial and cultural barriers that prevent many from considering college. We urge you to reach out to undocumented students and their families beginning in middle school to provide hope, encouragement and accurate information about college.

**e. Award substantial and renewable scholarships**

While any financial aid is valuable, we strongly encourage you to award undocumented student scholarships that are *substantial, renewable and sustainable*. Undocumented students cannot obtain federal grants or loans, and in most states they are also ineligible for state-funded financial aid. For that reason, they are particularly dependent on institutional aid and supplemental private scholarship awards. Modest, one-year scholarships can actually harm students by leaving them with unsustainable unmet need. We strongly encourage you to award reliable multi-year scholarships that help students reach the goal of college graduation.

**f. Involve parents in outreach and education efforts**

When a first generation student goes to college, the whole family goes to college. For many undocumented young people, parents serve as the primary motivation and inspiration to attend college. But parents are often confused and intimidated by the higher education system or fearful about their children's safety. To help address these challenges, we encourage you to engage parents as much as possible: meet with them, answer their questions, include them in presentations, hear their concerns, and recognize them as valuable resources.

**g. Validate and support all undocumented students, from high achievers to those marginalized by the education system**

The “DREAMer” narrative is a powerful one that helped to plant the seed for the entire undocumented youth political movement. It has proven effective to portray undocumented students as valedictorians and high achievers who are denied an opportunity to pursue their aspirations. However, this narrative also marginalizes those who do not fit the DREAMer image – and that includes the vast majority of undocumented youth. We urge you to consider and award scholarships to a diverse group of undocumented students – including those who may struggle, strive or achieve in unconventional ways. All of those students are important to our future and all have dreams that deserve your support.

**h. Compile and share lists of other available scholarships for undocumented students**

E4FC's lists of scholarship opportunities for undocumented students are still the most used and downloaded resources we have. This demonstrates how essential private scholarships are to the educational aspirations of undocumented young people, even for students who live in states that offer public financial aid. We urge you to develop and distribute materials to help students identify resources beyond your own scholarship program. The mere existence of such a resource can provide hope to students who may need it.

**4. Attracting Donors and Building Alliances**

**a. Explore different strategies and messages for different potential donors**

Scholarship providers have successfully appealed to a wide variety of donors to attract support for undocumented student scholarships. Some donors are influenced by the powerful personal stories of undocumented students; some hear echoes of their own family's immigrant experience; others believe that helping undocumented students is an economic development strategy that capitalizes on the skills those students offer. As you solicit support for scholarships, consider different strategies that allow you to tailor your message to donors with a variety of personal, social and political perspectives.

**b. Build connections with other organizations that advocate for immigrants and undocumented young people**

Undocumented students need more than just financial support to persist and succeed in higher education; in the same way, scholarship providers need to collaborate with other allies to maximize the support they offer students. We encourage you to identify and partner with local, statewide and national organizations that advise, serve and advocate for undocumented students and other immigrants.

**c. Build connections with supportive public officials**

Even in challenging political climates, there are elected and appointed officials and higher education leaders who understand the challenges facing undocumented students and are willing to advocate on their behalf. Often these officials and leaders have developed effective language, strategies and alliances to advance the cause of undocumented students. We encourage you to seek out and develop strong relationships with these officials and leaders.

**b. Advocate for political change and legal reform at the local, state and federal levels**

When prominent, visible organizations like scholarship providers take a stand in support of undocumented students, it brings credibility and momentum to the cause. For that reason, we strongly encourage you to capitalize on your organization's position by promoting immigration-friendly policy at the local, state and federal levels. You could support changes to local policy, such as developing city funds for undocumented students or proclamation of your city as a sanctuary city. You could advocate for in-state tuition policies and state-supported financial aid for undocumented young people in your state. You could express support for federal comprehensive immigration reform or incremental measures like DACA or Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA). While we recognize the constraints that may limit your role as a public policy advocate, we also see scholarship providers who have embraced that role and we urge you to join them.

## **5. Engaging in Institutional and Legislative Advocacy**

**a. Advocate for greater resources and supports for undocumented students at institutions of higher education**

As a scholarship provider, you play an important role in framing or influencing policies at institutions of higher education. If you work with one institution, you likely have relationships with colleagues in many different academic or administrative positions. If you are an independent, non-profit scholarship provider, you likely have substantial influence at the institutions where your scholarship recipients enroll. From admissions, to financial aid, to campus employment, to research and career opportunities, to the many facets of student life on campus, we encourage you to leverage your standing and your connections to make colleges more welcoming to undocumented students and to advocate for policies and programs that help undocumented students enroll, persist and graduate.

# ORGANIZATIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT

As an optional but valuable exercise, we strongly encourage your organization to use the following instrument to assess where you are in adopting the practices described in this guide. We have assigned points to each of the answers but your “total score” should not be the focus of this exercise. Most importantly, we hope this self-assessment will help you identify your important achievements and offer guidance for your ongoing development. Once you have completed the assessment, we would highly encourage you to submit your scores on online. The scores are confidential and this data will help E4FC develop a landscape view of support for undocumented students within scholarship providers across the country.

Submit here: [e4fc.org/scholarshipassessment.html](http://e4fc.org/scholarshipassessment.html)

## 1. Changing Organizational Policies to Allow Support for Undocumented Students

### a. Move beyond “Don’t ask, don’t tell”

My organization openly and explicitly invites applications from undocumented students either through promotional materials or on the application itself	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

### b. Research legal issues and implications

My organization has invited reputable and knowledgeable legal counsel to assess our policies and practices regarding undocumented student scholarships	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

### c. Educate organizational leaders, including board members or other decision makers

My organization has engaged board members and staff leadership to discuss the importance of undocumented student support	Yes (Staff & Board)	Yes (Staff OR Board)	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

### d. Learn from the experience of other scholarship providers

My organization has connected with and learned from other scholarship providers that actively and openly support undocumented students	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

## 2. Developing Cultural Competence/Creating a Supportive Environment

### a. Work to create a safe space

My organization informs ALL students that information about immigration status will be kept completely confidential	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

### b. Hire staff and interns as role models

My organization has hired or offered internships to first generation college graduates who serve as roles models for current scholarship recipients	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

### c. Hire undocumented staff/interns

My organization has hired or offered internships to young people who are currently/formerly undocumented	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

### d. Train all staff on laws, policies, and effective practices for supporting and advocating for undocumented young people

My organization's staff (including leadership staff) receives updated trainings at least once a year concerning undocumented immigrant issues	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

My organization provides services and support in addition to scholarship awards to undocumented students	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

### e. Always consult with undocumented students, undocumented alumni and trusted community partners before making policy decisions

My organization consults with undocumented students, undocumented alumni and/or trusted community partners before making important decisions that would affect current/future undocumented scholars	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

f. Create written materials to preserve organizational knowledge

My organization has an accessible and centralized archive where staff and leaders can input or retrieve learning on undocumented student issues	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

g. Attend conferences and convenings on immigration/undocumented youth issues

Representatives of my organization attend conferences/convenings about undocumented youth and/or immigrant issues at least once a year	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

### 3. Promoting Undocumented Student Scholarships/Serving Undocumented Students

a. Understand that each undocumented young person’s situation is unique

My organization’s staff and board understand the diversity and complexity of undocumented student cases	Yes (Staff & Board)	Yes (Staff OR Board)	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

b. Award scholarships to all undocumented students regardless of DACA eligibility

My organization awards scholarships to undocumented young people regardless of their eligibility for in-state tuition OR the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

c. Raise issues affecting undocumented students in all of your scholarship materials and outreach presentations

My organization’s promotional and educational materials contain welcoming and explicit messaging about undocumented students	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

d. Outreach to undocumented students explicitly

My organization’s outreach efforts explicitly target undocumented youth	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

**e. Outreach to undocumented students early**

My organization's outreach efforts to undocumented students begin in middle and elementary school	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

**f. Award substantial and renewable scholarships**

My organization awards renewable, multi-year scholarships that substantially reduce the cost of attendance for undocumented students	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

This year, my organization increased the number of scholarships awarded to undocumented students compared to last year	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

This year, my organization increased the size of scholarships awarded to undocumented students compared to last year	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

**g. Involve parents in outreach and education efforts**

My organization actively involves parents, respects their role and recognizes them as valuable resources	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

**h. Validate and support all undocumented students, from high achievers to those marginalized by the education system**

My organization does NOT solely focus on high-achieving undocumented youth in our programming or our scholarship selection	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

**i. Compile and share lists of other available scholarships for undocumented students**

My organization compiles and/or shares an updated list of scholarships open to undocumented students in my state or community	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

## 4. Attracting Donors and Building Alliances

### a. Explore different strategies and messages for different potential donors

My organization has a development strategy that uses different narratives to target donors with different personal, social or political perspectives	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

### b. Build connections with other organizations that advocate for immigrants and undocumented young people

My organization partners with local immigration advocacy organizations and/or undocumented youth advocacy organizations	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

### c. Build connections with supportive public officials

My organization has connected to and developed relationships with supportive elected leaders at the local, state and federal level	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

### d. Build connections with immigrant serving organizations in your region

My organization partners with local immigrant serving organizations	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

## 5. Engaging in Institutional and Legislative Advocacy

### a. Advocate for greater resources and supports for undocumented students at institutions of higher education

My organization has actively participated in or led efforts to increase resources and supports for undocumented students at institutions of higher education	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

**b. Advocate for political change and legal reform at the local, state and federal levels**

My organization has actively participated in or led efforts to transform immigration policy at the local, state or federal level	Yes	In Development	No
	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts

<b>TOTAL SECTION 1</b>	<b>TOTAL SECTION 2</b>	<b>TOTAL SECTION 3</b>	<b>TOTAL SECTION 4</b>	<b>TOTAL SECTION 5</b>	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>
<b>MAX: 8 POINTS</b>	<b>MAX: 16 POINTS</b>	<b>MAX: 22 POINTS</b>	<b>MAX: 8 POINTS</b>	<b>MAX: 4 POINTS</b>	<b>MAX: 58 POINTS</b>

# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## JAY SHERWIN

### Project Co-Director, *Invest in the Dream*

Jay Sherwin is an independent consultant who works with foundations and other non-profit organizations to develop strategic plans, design programs and initiatives, implement rigorous outcome evaluations and improve communications. Before launching his consulting practice, Jay spent twenty years as a grantmaker for five national, regional and community foundations, specializing in efforts to promote college access and completion for students from low-income and under-represented communities. From 2007 to 2010, he served as Vice President for Programs at College Access Foundation of California; during that time, the foundation awarded over \$50 million in grants, supporting more than 20,000 scholarships for low-income and first generation college students, including hundreds of undocumented immigrant students.

Jay is working with E4FC to design and launch its *Invest in the Dream* initiative, which offers matching grants to scholarship providers nationwide to encourage them to create or expand college scholarship opportunities for undocumented students.

## JOSE IVAN ARREOLA

### Training & Community Relations Manager

Jose was born in Durango, Mexico and came to the United States when he was four years old. With the unconditional love and support of his family and the guidance of many mentors along the way, Jose went on to study Political Science, History and Ethnic Studies at Santa Clara University – where he received a full scholarship. During his college career, Jose was an outspoken leader on campus around issues of racism, inequality, and oppression. Jose's work culminated as the Executive Director of the Multicultural Center of Santa Clara University. Upon graduation, Jose was trained as a community organizer for racial and economic justice by the Center for Third World Organizing in Oakland, CA. As an undocumented immigrant himself, Jose utilizes his experiences to help empower and support other undocumented immigrants across the country.

# ABOUT E4FC

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Founded in 2006, Educators for Fair Consideration (E4FC) empowers undocumented young people to pursue their dreams of college, career, and citizenship in the United States. We address the holistic needs of undocumented young people through direct support, leadership and career development, community outreach and education, and advocacy. Our programming is designed by and for undocumented young people with support from committed allies. We are a fiscally-sponsored project of Community Initiatives. For more information about E4FC, visit [www.e4fc.org](http://www.e4fc.org).

# ABOUT *INVEST IN THE DREAM*

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In 2014, E4FC launched the *Invest in the Dream* Fund, a matching grant program designed to encourage scholarship providers nationwide to expand educational opportunities for undocumented students. In the first two years of the initiative, E4FC awarded \$500,000 in grants to scholarship providers in thirteen states. Each of these grantees secured an equal amount of funds from other sources to match the E4FC grant. *Invest in the Dream* is supported by a generous grant from the Heising-Simons Foundation.