

Why these Students?

by **Katharine Gin** (biography on page 20)

College counselors have more students and responsibilities than they can handle. Because of their financial and legal obstacles, undocumented students require additional time and assistance than other students. When budgets are tight, resources are limited, and students are more in need than ever, why should college counselors put the extra effort into helping undocumented students?

Undocumented students have proven their ability to succeed.

College-bound undocumented students constitute a small group of extremely talented and motivated students who have already overcome multiple obstacles. They've had to leave their homelands and everything they knew as children. They've had to learn English and assimilate to a new culture. They've excelled in school despite having few (or no) family members to guide them. Their desire and readiness to go to college shows their tremendous perseverance and potential for future success.

It's a waste of our already-spent resources if undocumented students don't go to college.

Since most college-bound undocumented students were brought to the United States when they were young, we've already invested considerable resources in their primary and secondary educations. In order to realize this investment, we should help undocumented students pursue higher education so they can work and participate meaningfully to our society. With college degrees, they'll be able to contribute substantially more in taxes, support their families, and be less likely to receive government assistance.

Undocumented students affirm our belief in the value of hard work.

College-bound undocumented students are not asking to be given anything. They just want the same consideration as other students who've also studied hard and are now ready to apply to college. Helping them pursue their dreams of higher education proves that the United States is still a country that values hard work and rewards that hard work with increased opportunities.

Undocumented students are powerful role models.

College-bound undocumented students are role models for younger family members, friends and neighbors, many of whom are legal permanent residents and US citizens. Through their success and determination, undocumented students in-

spire a whole generation of students to do well in school, think positively about their communities and neighborhoods, and become engaged, informed members of society.

Undocumented students desperately want to contribute meaningfully to this country.

Most college-bound undocumented students consider themselves American, and desperately want to become US citizens or permanent residents. Unfortunately, even though most came to the United States when they were very young, they are still unable to legalize their immigration status. The application process for residency is often long, unpredictable, and inequitable. Many students tell us they expect to wait more than 15 years. Despite the obstacles they've faced, college-bound undocumented students still believe in the American dream. They appreciate the many opportunities this country has given them, and want to give back by becoming productive, contributing members of society.

When the DREAM Act passes, undocumented youth who have gone to college will have a path towards legal residency and work.

Strong bipartisan support in Congress and support from President Obama suggest that the DREAM Act is likely to pass in the near future. The DREAM Act will give certain undocumented students who have graduated from high school and gone to college in the United States a path towards legal residency. Getting a college education will enable these students to live and work legally here in the future.

We want the best and brightest students to attend our colleges.

Making it difficult for undocumented students to attend college in the United States encourages them to consider college options elsewhere. With US colleges and universities competing to attract talented international students from all over the world, why should we encourage our brightest American students to study elsewhere? We should hold onto undocumented students – some of our best and brightest homegrown talents.

We need undocumented students to take care of us when we get old.

The coming decades will see a significant shortage of highly skilled workers in the labor force. We need undocumented students to graduate from college, get well-paying jobs and pay taxes, and take care of us when we get old.