

Undocumented students face barriers to higher education

April 21 2009

(PhysOrg.com) -- New research released by the College Board shows that because of financial barriers and exclusion from the legal workforce, only a fraction of undocumented high school graduates go on to college. The board advocates passage of a Congressional act that would provide more people the means to a college degree -- without harming U.S. citizens.

"Given the opportunity to receive additional education and move into better-paying jobs, undocumented students would pay more taxes and have more money to invest in the U.S.," said Roberto G. Gonzales, an acting assistant professor of social work at the University of Washington. He is author of "Young Lives on Hold: The [College](#) Dreams of Undocumented Students," which was released today by the College Board at a Washington, D.C. briefing.

Since 2001, 10 states have passed laws allowing undocumented students who graduate from in-state high schools to qualify for in-state college tuition. Washington state is among the 10 but does not permit undocumented students to apply for financial aid.

The research contends that immigration and educational policies should not be one size fits all. Children account for 1.8 million, or 15 percent of the undocumented immigrants in the U.S. They have had no say in their parents' decision to enter and remain in the U.S. illegally but are nevertheless paying the consequences, Gonzales said. They may work hard in primary and secondary school only to find the door to [higher](#)

[education](#) closed to them.

The report also contends that K-12 education mandated by the Supreme Court in 1982 is wasted if the U.S. continues making it difficult for undocumented students to attend college.

Congress should pass the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, says the report. The DREAM Act was first introduced in Congress in 2001 and reintroduced this session. The act would allow undocumented students who have lived in the U.S. since childhood to apply for legal permanent resident status if they graduate from high school and go on to college or military service. The DREAM Act also would offer incentives for 715,000 students between the ages of 5 and 17 to attend college after high school.

Studies indicate that while bringing tuition to colleges and universities, undocumented students have not seriously displaced U.S. citizens. In Texas, the Higher Education Coordinating Board found that in 2004, three years after the Legislature enacted in-state tuition for undocumented students, 3,792 attended Texas colleges and universities, a 10-fold increase. Nevertheless, such students amounted to only 0.36 percent of the 1 million students attending public colleges and universities in Texas.

According to the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, 542 presumed undocumented students attended public colleges and universities during the 2007-2008 academic year. By comparison, there were about 430,000 students attending public colleges and universities in the state.

Contributions of DREAM Act students, Gonzales writes in his report, "would dwarf the small additional investment in their education beyond high school."

Provided by University of Washington ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Undocumented students face barriers to higher education (2009, April 21) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-04-undocumented-students-barriers-higher.html>

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