

HELPING DACA STUDENTS GET A COLLEGE EDUCATION

Rafaela Bayas

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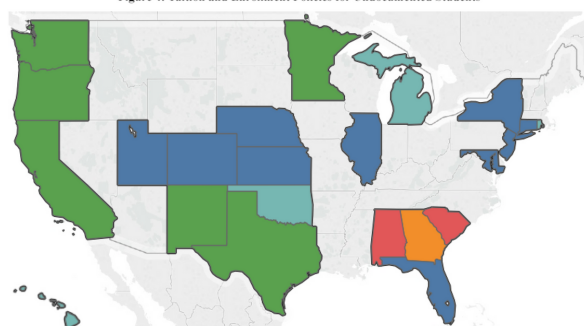
WHAT DOES THE DACA PROGRAM PROVIDE?

The DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival) program was first introduced by Obama in 2012 and provides a temporary relief from deportation and a work permit for the eligible population that arrived to the United States when they were children. Even though the program does provide a legal status in the country and the possibility to work, it does not provide a path to citizenship. A legal work permit allows recipients to help their families alleviate financial hardships imposed by their disability to find decent paying jobs due to their illegal status (Amuedo-Dorantes, C., Antman, F., 2016).

SO, WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Given the possibilities that the legal work permit grants to these previously undocumented individuals, they have now less motivation to pursue higher education but to immediately join the work force after high school. In high school, undocumented immigrants have the right to enroll in free public institutions, but higher education becomes more complicated (Terriquez, V., 2014). As DACA individuals are usually considered out-of-state students, they are charged the higher tuition, so the incentive to attend college is even lower due to higher costs. Currently, **only around sixteen state legislatures allow for in-state tuition for DACA students** as demonstrated in Figure 4 (Soria Mendoza, R., Shaikh, N., 2019). Due to this lack of economic motivation, the DACA population is not pursuing higher education, and therefore miss out of the chance of potentially getting higher earnings in the long-run and contributing more to the economy (Buenaventura, M., 2016, p. 426).

Figure 4: Tuition and Enrollment Policies for Undocumented Students



- Laws providing in-state tuition and state financial aid
- Laws providing in-state tuition
- Offers in-state benefits via university systems
- Some college systems bar enrollment
- Bars enrollment to undocumented students

Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, Undocumented Student Tuition: Overview, October 2015.

DACA BY NUMBERS

11.7%

Drop in school and higher education enrollment (Amuedo-Dorantes, C., Antman, F., 2016)

62%

Of those who are not in the labor force are in school (Capps, R., Fix, M., Zong, J., 2017, p. 4)

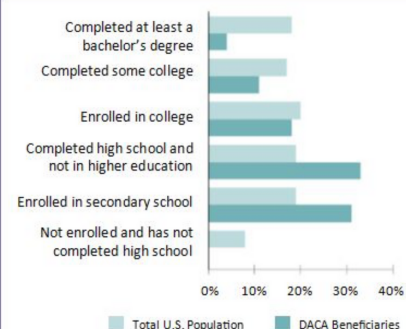
55%

full-time employed (Capps, R., Fix, M., Zong, J., 2017, p. 4)

5%

Hold a bachelor's degree, compared to 18% of the overall U.S. population (Capps, R., Fix, M., Zong, J., 2017, p. 4)

Education and Enrollment Status of DACA Beneficiaries in U.S. (ages 15 to 32)



Note: Source excluded data on DACA-eligible individuals "not enrolled in and have not completed high school" because most had already completed high school; consistent with the program's education requirement.
Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau 2014 ACS and 2008 SIPP

MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

DACA IS THE DREAM ACT

The DREAM acts' purpose is to not only provide access to education and employment but a path to citizenship. DACA only provides a temporary relief from deportation and a work permit, not a path to citizenship (Patler, C., 2013).

DACA HAS TAKEN JOBS FROM AMERICANS

The amount of jobs in the United States is not fixed. If it is assumed that an increase in the labor force creates unemployment then this should be a constant case. For example, from 1970 to 2017, the U.S. labor force doubled, and instead of seeing a 50% increase in the unemployment rate, employment doubled, demonstrating that increasing the labor force does not increase unemployment. A greater work force creates growth, not unemployment (Bier, D., 2017).

THERE IS NO SOCIETAL BENEFIT TO DACA INDIVIDUALS PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION

Out of the 11.5 million jobs added since 2010, only 80,000 were filled by high school diploma holders. Also, nearly 2 million jobs go unfilled due to skills mismatch, showing the need for more prepared individuals (Patel, P., 2017). Furthermore, a cost-benefit analysis made on the proposed Georgia DREAM act, demonstrated the net benefits of providing in-state tuition to DACA students turned to be around \$400 thousand. This demonstrates that incentivizing a college education is beneficial for the U.S. (Buenaventura, M., 2016, p. 426)

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Currently around 21 states have initiatives for DACA and undocumented students to be eligible for in-state tuition (Adams, A., Boyne, K., 2015, p. 10). States such as Virginia have determined the lawfulness of providing in-state tuition to DACA individuals. Attorney General Mark Herring issued a memorandum asserting that DACA recipients are eligible to pay the resident tuition rate under the existing state law that states that legal aliens have the right to pay in-state tuition. This bill is still pending. DACA individuals are already legal under law, so there is no reason why they should not be granted in-state tuition (Adams, A., Boyne, K., 2015, p. 10). In other states, different bills have been proposed but banned. In Indiana there was a proposal for providing in-state tuition and financial aid for DACA individuals, but it was repealed (Ali, D., 2017). Given the benefits that these students could grant to the state and also to themselves, it is imperative that the Federal Government helps these individuals obtain the education they deserve. Furthermore, giving in-state tuition could motivate DACA individuals to pursue higher education as the financial burden would not be as much (Gámez, R., et.al., 2017, p. 158). This would provide economic benefits for the state in the long-run including increase in tax revenue and a more skillful population (Buenaventura, M., 2016). These benefits make this piece of legislature necessary.

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