

Accessing College as an Undocumented Student

In Virginia

According to the Migration Policy Institute, approximately 37,000 undocumented students (ages 18-24) reside in Virginia, of which approximately 15,000 are enrolled in school.

ECMC is committed to the success of all students, regardless of their immigration status. In this changing economy, skills and qualifications that are obtained through education beyond high school are becoming more important to earning a family-wage job. We've gathered some resources to help guide you through the process of accessing and succeeding in college as an undocumented student in Virginia.

In-State Tuition Equity (Virginia Dream Act)

The Virginia Dream Act requires students to meet the following criteria to be eligible to pay in-state tuition at Virginia public universities:

- Attended high school in Virginia for at least two years
- Graduated from a Virginia high school (or received an equivalent certification) since July 1, 2008
- Filed income tax returns by student (or their parents if the student is a dependent) for at least two years prior to date of college enrollment

Contact your college admissions office for additional information.

Virginia Alternative State Aid (VASA) Application

Virginia students who are nonimmigrants, undocumented, have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status or are otherwise ineligible to file the FAFSA should complete the Virginia Alternative State Aid (VASA) Application to be considered for state financial aid and

some institutional financial aid programs. Students must meet domicile or Tuition Equity provision requirements in order to file the VASA Application.

By filing a VASA Application:

- You will be taking the important step of being financially prepared when entering college
- You will be considered for state need-based financial aid, including the Virginia Commonwealth Award, Virginia Guaranteed Assistance Program and Two-Year College Transfer Grant Program
- You may be considered for some public institutional financial aid reserved for Virginia residents

For more information and to complete the application, visit www.VASAapp.org.

Institutional Aid and Support

In addition to access to state aid, several colleges offer institutional aid and/or other means of support for undocumented students. View the colleges' websites to find information on how they support undocumented students.

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Scholarships

There are many scholarship providers who are interested in helping students, regardless of their immigration status. The following resources have scholarships, both nationally and Virginia-based, that undocumented students may be eligible for:

- <https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/list-of-scholarships-and-fellowships>
- www.thedream.us/scholarships
- www.maldef.org/resources/scholarship-resources
- <https://scholarshipsaz.org/scholarships>
- <https://getschooled.com/article/1320-scholarships-for-undocumented-daca-mented-students-get-that-money>
- www.edvisors.com/plan-for-college/scholarships/college-scholarships/undocumented-student-scholarships

You may also do your own online scholarship search using terms such as “non-need based,” “merit-based” or “no FAFSA required.”

Help Yourself

Dual enrollment is an opportunity to take college courses while in high school. Some high schools have partnership agreements with local schools in the Virginia Community College System to provide dual enrollment programs free of charge. It's important that students and their parents/guardians understand that the amount of work necessary to succeed in dual enrollment courses is greater than what is necessary to succeed in high school courses. In addition, dual enrollment courses become part of a student's permanent college transcripts, so it's essential that students do well in these courses to realize all the benefits of dual enrollment, which include:

- A quality, affordable education close to home
- Enhanced opportunities, both in academic coursework and career and technical education, for outstanding high school students

- Entering college with credits applicable to a student's degree program
- Gaining an understanding of the rigor of college work as well as college faculty expectations
- Access to college resources, facilities and services, such as advising and career counseling

Interested students must first speak with their school counselor about the dual enrollment program options available and contact their local college to register and take the college placement exam. Students must also meet the following criteria:

- High school juniors or seniors attending a public or private school (exceptional freshman and sophomores may be eligible with approval from both high school principal and college president)
- Meet or exceed college placement requirements
- Receive a recommendation from a high school official
- Have parent/guardian provide written consent prior to student enrollment

Homeschooled students are also eligible for the program. Contact your local community college to discuss the options available to you.

Keep Your Grades Up

Make yourself a competitive candidate for college admissions and scholarship applications by keeping your grades up, taking challenging classes and participating in extracurricular activities. Some highly selective private colleges and universities offer very generous financial aid packages to outstanding high school students, regardless of immigration status. The more comprehensive your application is, the more options you will have for your education beyond high school.

Need More Information?

The College Place is here to help you with free college-planning resources and personal advice. Visit our website at www.ecmc.org/TCP.