

Accessing College as an Undocumented Student

In California

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 California.

According to The Migration Policy Institute, approximately 146,000 undocumented students (ages 3-17) reside in California.

In-State Tuition Equity

The California Dream Act allows undocumented and nonresident students (U.S. citizens and eligible noncitizens) who qualify for a nonresident exemption under Assembly Bill 540 (AB 540) to receive certain types of financial aid, such as private scholarships funded through public universities, state-administered financial aid, university grants, community college fee waivers and Cal Grants.

In addition, the California Dream Act allows eligible students to pay in-state tuition at any public college in California. Students who live in California and meet the eligibility requirements for a nonresident exemption, as well as students who have a U Visa or TPS status, can use the California Dream Act Application (CADAA). Similarly, students without Social Security numbers or students who have lost DACA status (or never applied for DACA) may still be eligible. The full language of the law and eligibility requirements is stated in CA Education Code 68130.5 (<https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/education-code/edc-sect-68130-5>).

Students must meet all four requirements to be eligible:

1. Time and coursework requirements

- Attend high school in California for at least three years -OR-
- Earned credits in California from a high school equivalent of three years of full-time high school work and a minimum of three years in a California secondary or elementary school or combination -OR-
- Earned credits from a California school -OR-

- Earned credits at a California Community College -OR-

- A combination of the schools listed above

2. Degree or unit requirements (completion of any of the following)

- Graduation from a California high school or the equivalent (GED, HiSET, CHSPE, TASC)
- Associate degree from a California Community College
- Completion of minimum transfer requirements from a California Community College to a UC or CSU campus

3. Register or enroll in an accredited and qualifying California college or university

- Cal Grant-eligible schools (www.csac.ca.gov/post/cal-grant-eligible-school-list-o)

4. Submit a signed "Non-Resident Exemption" request

- Document—AB 540 affidavit
- States all requirements to qualify for non-resident exemption are met
- If undocumented, are in the process of legalizing immigration status, or will do so as soon as eligible
- Complete this form once an offer of admission is accepted to the college of your choice

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Cal Grant

A Cal Grant is money for college you don't have to pay back. To qualify, you must submit for the California Dream Act Application (CADAA) by the deadline and meet the eligibility and financial requirements as well as any minimum GPA requirements. Cal Grants can be used at any University of California, California State University or California Community College, as well as qualifying independent and career colleges or technical schools in California.

There are three kinds of Cal Grants (A, B and C), but you don't have to decide which one to apply for. Your eligibility will be based on your CADAA responses, your verified Cal Grant GPA, the type of California college(s) you list on your FAFSA and whether you're a recent high school graduate.

Cal Grants are for students who are pursuing an undergraduate degree or vocational or career education. In addition to meeting the financial criteria and Cal Grant requirements, you must:

- Submit the CADAA and your verified Cal Grant GPA by the deadline
- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen or meet AB 540 eligibility criteria
- Be a California resident for one year
- Attend a qualifying California college
- Not have a bachelor's or professional degree
- Have financial need at the college of your choice
- Have family income and assets below the minimum levels
- Be enrolled or plan to enroll in a program leading to an undergraduate degree or certificate
- Be enrolled or plan to enroll at least half time
- Have registered with the U.S. Selective Service (if required to do so)
- Not owe a refund on any state or federal grant or be in default on a student loan
- Not be incarcerated
- Maintain the Satisfactory Academic Progress standards as established by the school

Recipients who do not meet the standards are ineligible for a Cal Grant payment and will not use eligibility during the terms they are ineligible for payment.

California College Promise Grant

For eligible California residents, the California College Promise Grant permits enrollment fees to be waived. (Assistance for the purchase of books and supplies must be applied for separately.)

Many California Community Colleges offer online California College Promise Grant applications through www.cccapply.org. When you use these financial aid online applications, the data you've entered in CCCApply will be transferred automatically, making your financial aid application much easier and faster.

In addition, the form for applying for the California College Promise Grant is available via PDF at www.cccapply.org/en/money/california-college-promise-grant.

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 California-based, that undocumented students may be eligible for:

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

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

Help Yourself

Concurrent enrollment (also known as dual enrollment) is an opportunity to take college courses while in high school. Students can start earning four-year transferable credits, explore careers and adapt to college-level courses without having to pay tuition costs. Additionally, students enrolled in Early College High Schools (ECHS) and Middle College High Schools (MCHS) can earn college credit through dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment strategies. ECHS are innovative partnerships between public or charter secondary schools and local community colleges that allow high school students to earn both their high school diplomas and associate degrees with typically minor cost to the student. MCHS are secondary schools located on a college campus offering challenging academic programs and designed to serve high-potential, high-risk students. MCHS offer effective support services, small class sizes and the opportunity for students to concurrently take some college classes at typically minor cost to the student. For more information, contact your high school counselor.

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.