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.

In-state tuition equity

The California Dream Act allows undocumented and nonresident students (U.S. citizens and eligible non-citizens) who qualify for a non-resident 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 non-resident 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://tinyurl.com/EDC-68130-5).

California nonresident exemption requirements under AB540:

- Graduated with a California high school diploma or have the equivalent, and
- Attained high school credit equivalent to three or more years of full-time attendance, or three or more years of high school coursework and attended a combination of California elementary, secondary and high school for three years or more, or
- Attended a combination of California high school, adult school and community college for the equivalent of three years or more, or
- Completed an associate degree from a California community college, or
- Completed the minimum requirements at a California community college for transfer to the California State University or the University of California

Additional stipulations:

- Attendance at a campus of the California Community Colleges system shall not exceed a total of two years of full-time attendance
- Must register or be currently enrolled at an accredited institution of public higher education in California

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Must file or will file an affidavit as required by individual institutions stating that the filer will apply for legal residency as soon as possible

Must not hold a valid non-immigrant visa (non-immigrants, as defined by federal law, have been admitted to the United States temporarily and may have been granted one of the following visas: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, TN, TD, V, TROV, NATO)

Cal Grant

A Cal Grant is money for college you don't have to pay back. To qualify, you must apply 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 training and do not have to be repaid. 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 AB540 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 Community Colleges 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 Community Colleges Promise Grant (formerly known as the BOG Fee Waiver) 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 from the icanaffordcollege.com website.

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, which undocumented students may be eligible for:

• www.studentsunited.org/dreamers-1
• https://finder.hsf.net
• www.page-ed.org/scholar-applicants
• https://immigrantsrising.org/financialsupport/scholarship-fund
• www.thedream.us/scholarships
• www.maldef.org/leadership/scholarships/index.html
• www.scholarshipsaz.org/scholarships

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

Help yourself

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 selective, private, independent schools 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.