



Supporting All Students: Strategies for States to Address FAFSA and Aid Gaps for Undocumented Students and Students from Mixed-Status Families

Roxanne Garza, Director of Higher Education Policy, *EdTrust*

Sayda Martinez-Alvarado, Senior Policy Analyst, *EdTrust*



Supporting All Students:

Strategies for States to Address FAFSA and Aid Gaps for Undocumented Students and Students from Mixed-Status Families

May 20, 2025 | SHEEO Financial Aid Learning Community Convening

- 1 Who Are They? Undocumented Students and Students from Mixed-Status Families

- 2 Understanding the Current Moment and Implications

- 3 Recommendations

- 4 Q&A

Today's Speakers



Roxanne Garza

Director of Higher Education Policy, EdTrust



Sayda Martinez-Alvarado

Senior Policy Analyst, EdTrust

Undocumented Students



In the United States

- Understanding DACA status vs. no status
- Most undocumented students have lived in the U.S. for most of their lives, and lack a way to become legal residents
- Nearly 98,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools annually

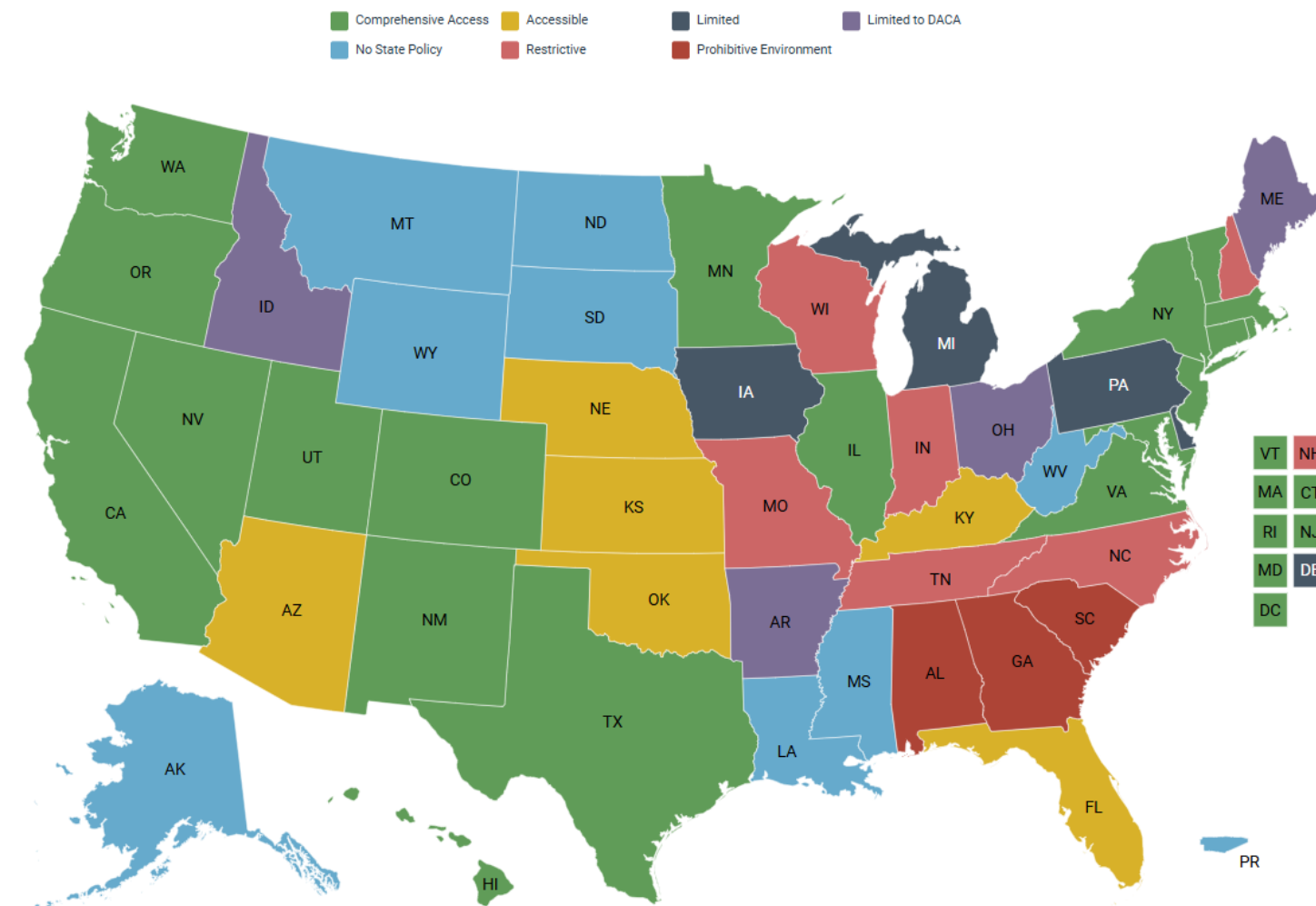
In Higher Education

- Nearly 408,000 higher education students are undocumented
- California, Texas, Florida, New York, and New Jersey IHEs enroll the most undocumented students

Undocumented Students

Face Significant Barriers to Financing Higher Education:

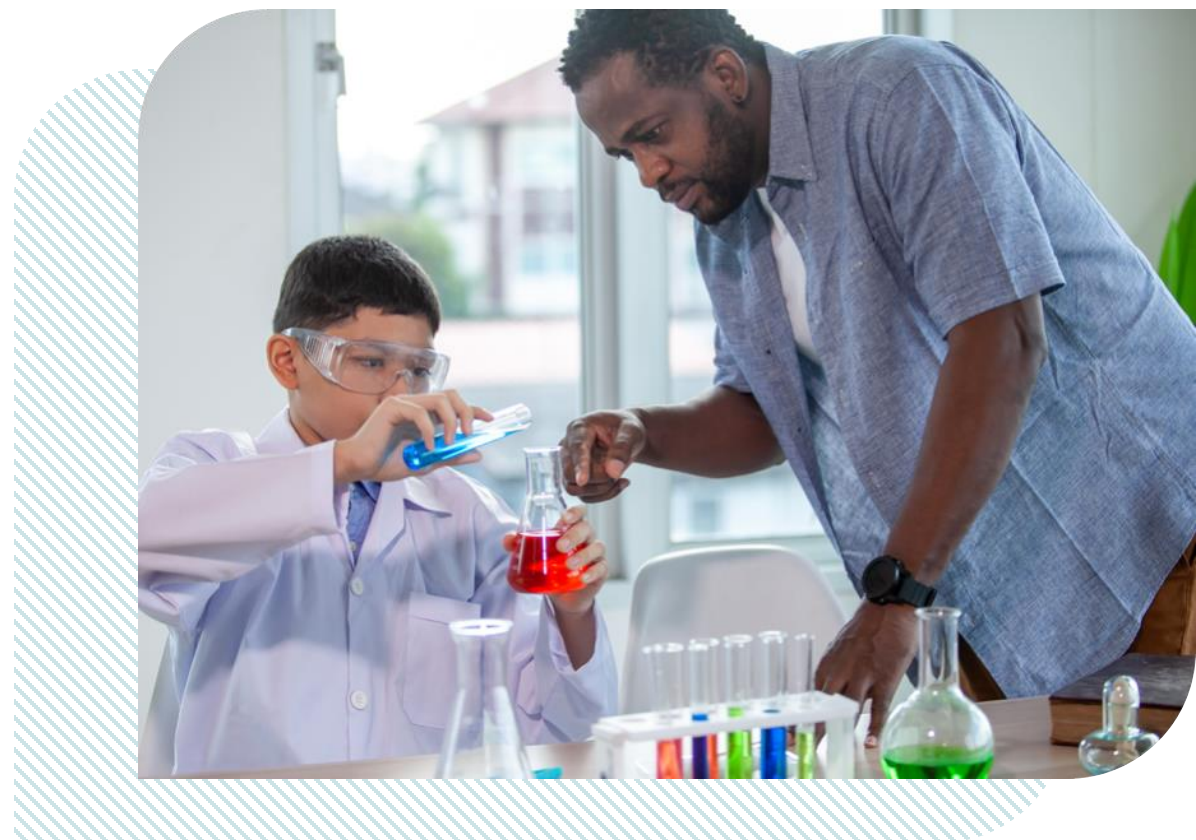
- No access to federal student aid
- Limited access to state financial aid
- Limited access to in-state tuition
- Access can be limited to DACA recipients



Students from Mixed-Status Families

What to know:

- U.S citizen student with one or more undocumented family members (parent, spouse, etc.)
- An estimated 3.9 million K-12 students live with an undocumented parent
- Status of family member(s) may threaten a student's comfort with pursuing higher education
- The "Better FAFSA" rollout posed many barriers for students from mixed-status families





It feels like I'm being persecuted even though I haven't done anything. I feel more anxious... everyone was scared. People cried. Everyone feels it's unfair.

- An undocumented student at Florida International University after a cooperation agreement was signed with ICE



The Current Moment

Heightened Fear of Deportation

- Reversal of DHS 'safe zones' guidance and ICE visiting schools
- Executive Orders:
 - Protecting American Communities from Criminal Aliens
 - Stopping Waste, Fraud, and Abuse by Eliminating Information Silos
- Cooperation between DHS and IRS
- Increase in lack of due process in immigration proceedings

Increase in Attacks on Access

- Legislative proposals to:
 - Revoke in-state tuition for undocumented students
 - Prohibit the enrollment of undocumented students in public institutions of higher education
- Federal and state efforts to bar diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in higher education
 - Executive Order – Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing
 - Executive Order – Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity
 - ED Dear Colleague Letter – Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

Implications for Students

1 Undocumented Students Facing Barriers in Financing their Education

Poses enrollment challenges, potentially preventing students from committing to higher education and barring current students from completing.

3 Students Losing On-Campus Resources and Support Systems

The rapidly changing landscape around diversity, equity, inclusion, and the broad nature of legislative and executive language has resulted in undocumented student centers closing.

2 Students from Mixed-Status Families Not Completing FAFSA

Concerns over data privacy protections and who can access the information of non-SSN contributors has made many students unwilling to complete the FAFSA.

4 Students experiencing a culture of fear and confusion

Immigration enforcement and reversal of 'Safe Zones' creates a sense of fear for students impacts whether students feel safe showing up on campus.

Lessons from States

FAFSA Alternatives

California's Dream Act Application (CADAA) opened to students from Mixed Status Families after the new FAFSA rollout.

New York's Alternate Eligibility Path is an alternate process for citizens and eligible non-citizens to apply for New York State financial aid without having to complete the FAFSA.

Staying the Course on Undocumented Student Aid

California issues an Executive Memo clarifying CA in-state tuition for undocumented students is in compliance with federal law.

Colorado keeps in-state tuition for undocumented students despite suit filed by the Trump Administration.

Recommendations

Develop guidance on how to exercise professional judgement in this current moment

Work with trusted community-based organizations to promote FAFSA and college completion

Provide rapid-response breakdowns of federal and state actions and what it means for your institutions

Empower students and families to make informed decisions with comprehensive resources



Questions?

Thank you! Reach out at:

✉ rgarza@edtrust.org

✉ smartinezalvarado@edtrust.org

🖱 edtrust.org