



CollegeGuide



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The Adelante team is also committed to helping project the voices of participants. Members help us provide feedback to colleges who wish to be undocumented-friendly and create new policy suggestions. Members become involved in local, state, and federal campaigns on immigration reform and education that affect their lives.

About the Guide:

The following information is some advice gathered from various organizations and resources and the first-hand experience of fellow immigrant youth from all over,

Use these tips to navigate looking at different colleges successfully. All resources are listed in the package and also available on our website.



HISTORY:

Adelante Student Voices began in 2015 with the dream to provide a safe space for undocumented youth to gather to share resources and build resources. A small volunteer staff was able to raise funds thanks to tremendous grassroots support from donors and sponsors. In June 2016, we held a one-week program in Poughkeepsie for students from high schools in the Hudson Valley, and from 2017- 2019 we were able to expand to ten days for new cohorts of students. In summer 2020, we pivoted to a virtual program and stood with families experiencing hardship due to COVID-19. The summer programs include workshops on self-advocacy, art for justice, college choice, and legal options. Now, a total of 82 program graduates are part of the Adelante network and continue to meet at least three times per year at quarterly reunions.

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EMPOWERMENT & COMMUNITY:

Adelante is a safe space for undocumented students and families to discuss barriers and share stories. Building community and strong support networks are at the center of the work. Adelante is committed to stay in touch with each participant for at least five years and continue to mentor each member to guide the path through higher education. We offer regional meetings all around Upstate New York State, sponsor College Visits, and hold events. In addition, once a member, you can apply for our annual College scholarship, as well as emergency support.



SCHOLARSHIPS:

Undocumented students do not have the same access to funds as many U.S citizens. While through the organizing efforts of various groups, the NY Dream Act was able to pass, which provides some aid to Undocumented Students attending a NY college. Not all students are eligible. In 2018 through grassroots fundraising, Adelante raised the first \$5,000.00. Since then, we have raised over \$25,000.00 and awarded 32 students in our network scholarships from \$500-\$1500.00.

“The scholarship means so much more than just the money, it gives me hope, it allows me to keep taking steps towards my college education which will lead to opportunities for my community...Thank you for believing in us, thank you for fighting for us.”

- Camila, Westchester Community College

What Undocumented High School Students Should Know

You Have the Right to go to School Regardless of Your Immigration Status.

Plyer v Doe states that students, regardless of immigration status, have the right to free public k-12 education.

No One Can Ask/Require You to Share Immigration Status To Enroll in School

You do not have to share your immigration status unless you feel safe and wish to disclose it to a counselor.

When Visiting Schools, You Can Show Any ID

If you or your parents wish to visit a school, you can show any ID type, including Passport or consular registration.

Your immigration status does not define you.

You Have the Power to Advocate for Yourself as a Student

Navigating life while being undocumented can be challenging. Know that there is support for you and your family.

Be Your Biggest Advocate!

Never take **NO** for an answer. Do your research, ask questions, and advocate for yourself.



FOUR THINGS UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT COLLEGE

1.

YOU CAN GO TO COLLEGE

The first thing you should know is that no federal law prevents U.S. colleges from admitting undocumented students. And only a few states — including Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama — have placed restrictions on undocumented students attending public colleges and universities. New York state law allows undocumented people to attend public colleges. In general, private colleges set their own rules on admitting undocumented students, so you should research the policies of colleges you are interested in attending.

You should also know that undocumented students cannot receive federal financial aid for college — the type of aid that many college students rely on. However, undocumented students can get financial aid or scholarships for college in other ways.

Your undocumented status might limit your choices — but a college is still an option if you have a plan. Your best strategy is to start planning early, do research, and ask many questions.



2.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Start with your family. Make sure they know you want to go to college. Talk with them about your options for choosing a college and paying for your education.

You can also seek advice from trusted teachers and counselors at your high school. Along with guiding you, they might be able to put you in touch with other undocumented students who have successfully enrolled in college or with college admission counselors who can help you.

If you're worried about telling teachers and counselors that you're undocumented, be aware that, by law, school officials cannot disclose personal information about students — including their immigration status.

3.

YOU CAN FIND A COLLEGE THAT FITS YOU

As you look for colleges that match your wants and needs, you might want to find out if the colleges you're interested in have programs, student organizations, or centers that support first-generation immigrant students. Checking out college websites and publications is a good place to start.

Here are some things to remember when looking at colleges:

- Different colleges have different policies on admitting undocumented students.
- Different colleges have different policies on awarding nonfederal financial aid to undocumented students.
- Public colleges must follow their state's laws. In New York, that's SUNY and CUNY. If you attend NYS high school for two years and graduate or receive your GED/TASC in NYS, you can pay in-state tuition and receive state aid so long as you apply within five years of graduation.

4.

YOU'LL APPLY LIKE ANY OTHER STUDENT

The college application process is usually the same for all students. You'll need to find out colleges' admission requirements regarding testing, grades, and the high school classes you need to take. You will likely need to disclose on the application that you are not a U.S. citizen. If the college then asks you for international student application materials, be sure to check with them since you may be misclassified in their system. There are different admissions requirements for students seeking F1 visas and undocumented students already in the country seeking domestic admission.

The best way for any student to prepare for college is to work hard in high school. Colleges look at your grades and the kinds of classes you take, so it's a great idea to take college-level courses such as Advanced Placement® classes.

PLANNING FOR COLLEGE - TIPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL

- Participate in extracurricular activities like sports, clubs, and the arts.
- Establish strong relationships with your teachers and counselors so that each can write you letters of recommendation later on.
- Find out if your high school offers opportunities to take college-level courses for college credit through programs like Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB). These can significantly reduce the time and cost of earning a postsecondary, industry-recognized credential, certificate, or degree from a career and technical post-secondary institution or two- or four-year college program.
- No senior slide! Take as many classes as possible in high school, even if you have technically met minimum graduation requirements. Classes won't be free in college.
- Work or volunteer in fields that reflect your career interests. Find out whether your school has partnerships with area employers and/or has access to programs that allow you to participate in job shadowing, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities.
- Participate in college preparatory programs to gain an additional support system that will help you keep your grades up and stay on the right track to college.
- Investigate whether specific licenses or special certifications are needed for entry-level jobs in your fields of interest, and determine if you can begin earning credentials while in high school through technical courses.

PLANNING FOR COLLEGE - TIPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL

- Seek advice from counselors. Counselors have access to information and resources to help students map out college and career pathways and next steps. Make sure they know you are serious about college, so they place you in rigorous classes.
- Prepare to take the PSAT, ACT, and/or SAT in your junior year of high school. Ask your counselor if you qualify for the ACT and/or SAT fee waivers.
- Check out colleges in person or remotely—this will help you decide where to apply.
- Write your college essays early. Most colleges require a personal essay, along with the application, on topics designed to help admission officers learn more about the students' goals, achievements, experiences, influences, and values—the things that make you unique.
- Research funding opportunities like scholarships, making a note of deadlines.



FINDING & NAVIGATING SCHOOLS FOR YOU

The College Visit

Research before you show up on college campus

1. Locate colleges in your area that allow undocumented students to attend
2. Identify a few degrees that you are interested in pursuing
3. Research how much it would cost to attend, between tuition, books, etc.
4. See what Private Scholarships or Institutional Funds are available
5. Make a list of questions you have before going
6. Know whom to talk to:

Admissions Office: They generally focus on getting you admitted into the college and making sure you have all the paperwork to do so. They can help you decide between degrees, and understand how to complete admission requirements.

Registration Office/ Academic Advising: They generally assist you with registering for classes and solve issues with getting into the class you want. Try talking to the Department director, they would be aware of resources and help for undocumented students

Financial Aid Office: They generally assist the student that has been admitted to the college by assessing their financial need and offering grants and scholarships. Try talking to the Department director, they would be aware of the needed applications (like CSS Profile or NYS DREAM Act) to get grants and Institutional Funds.

Student Dean's Office: Help solve more complicated student issues with classes, grades, or other students and professors. Think of them as the assistant principals of the school or campus.

FINDING & NAVIGATING SCHOOLS FOR YOU

After your first college visit

You have a lot of questions and new information. Now it's time to sort through everything and develop a final game plan to get admitted into college finally.

- Do some fact-checking on the new information that they told you at the college.
- Understand how the admissions process at the college works, so you can anticipate what will happen next time you go.
- Determine if you spoke with an expert that knows what they are talking about. (They usually are the ones that explain the process of what you need to do next)
- Determine who are the decision-makers that can help
- Narrow down whom you need to talk to get into college and realize the process
- Go again and get as close as possible to realize the process. (This might take you several trips, and this is normal for every student)

Commonly Asked Questions Undocumented Students Tend to Have

As an undocumented student, am I eligible for federal financial aid?

No. Federal Pell Grants, direct student loans, and work-study are all off-limits to undocumented students -- even if you have an SSN from a work permit.

Is it safe to tell a financial aid counselor my immigration status?

This depends on your personal level of comfort. School counselors in high school are not legally permitted to ask about students' status, but officials at colleges may do so. They are not required to report undocumented students to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and in fact, privacy rules block college officials from sharing personal information from students without a court order. In many cases, sharing your status can actually be helpful, as a financial aid counselor's job is to help students get through college. The more they know about an individual's circumstances, the more they can design a strategy that fits that student's needs, such as by pointing out workarounds to the FAFSA dilemma. The Office of Federal Student Aid recommends this approach.

For example, let's say a college's scholarship website says the FAFSA is required to determine financial need. Check with the college, as they may provide an exception to undocumented students.

What Is The Application Process?

Anyone seeking to attend a two- or four-year college or university is required to meet the school's admission requirements. While these can differ from school to school, the application process typically consists of submitting:

- an online application form;
- a letter of intent or personal statement;
- at least one supplemental essay (the school typically provides the topic);
- two or more letters of recommendation from previous teachers;
- high school transcripts;
- standardized test scores (SAT/ACT)
- application fees (ask for fee waivers)
- Volunteer experience*[is essential for any student as it can set a student apart from their competition]

*For some schools, reporting volunteer work and extracurricular activities is part of the online application form. Other schools may require students to submit resumes that outline their non-academic experiences. Typically, personal essays are used to explain why students want to go to college and how they plan to put their education to use after graduation

Am I considered an international student who has to pay international tuition?

Usually, no! Private schools are allowed to decide if you need to complete international student requirements, but they usually don't have a separate tuition rate for international students. For SUNY and CUNY, the state of New York has provided in-state tuition to eligible undocumented students since 2002.

New York in-State Tuition Eligibility Requirements:

- Graduated from a public or private high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma in New York (such as through the TASC/GED)
- Must have graduated within five years prior to applying to College to qualify for in-state tuition
- Provide an affidavit stating that the individual will legalize their status as soon as they are able to do so. This affidavit must be notarized, which requires a form of government issued photo ID - this can be from your home country.

What is the NYS DREAM Act?

The Jose Peralta New York State DREAM Act (A.782, De La Rosa) allows undocumented students the opportunity to apply for New York State financial aid programs like TAP, EOP, and Excelsior, without doing the FAFSA first. Under the bill, these students can access New York State-administered grants and scholarships that support their higher education costs.

Apply by going to <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/dream/>

You can apply as early as October 1, your senior year, or the year before you plan to attend. You will receive an estimated TAP award. Once you know where you wish to attend college, you must confirm your college and Student ID number on the NYS Dream Act application for the funds to go to your account.

What are the three most important attributes or characteristics an undocumented student should consider when selecting a university experience and why?

Location - Finding a state where there aren't too many anti-immigrant laws. Public institutions in New York have lower tuition and can be close to home, but remember you can go to private colleges in any state so long as they provide good financial aid. Depending on how far away from home you are, it is important to remember that travel isn't always cheap and can become very time-consuming.

Cost - If you don't have financial support from your family, it would be challenging to pay for college, and even more so if you are traveling to a different state. Some private colleges have enough money to offer full scholarships even if they look expensive, so learn more about their average scholarships and whether they meet "full need." If they meet full need, it means they provide as much money in scholarships as needed for you to attend -- including attending for free.

Diversity - Finding somewhere where you feel like you belong is significant, especially if you don't get the opportunity to travel home and see family. Not seeing parts of your culture or traditions can be difficult sometimes, but being at school where there are clubs, people, and events creates that sense of belonging.

Financial Q&A

What is an ITIN? Should I get one?

An ITIN is an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number. It's for people, including undocumented immigrants, who don't qualify for social security numbers but still pay federal taxes. The National Immigration Law Center explains why undocumented immigrants, in general, would want to do this. Students with ITINs may see specific advantages. For example, some states accept ITIN numbers for college savings accounts that earn interest and/or prepaid tuition plans that insulate students from future price increases. Filing taxes can also be helpful when proving income to colleges. It may also be helpful in the future if there is an opportunity to apply for legal status.

What do I need to open a bank account?

At a minimum, a bank is required by law to obtain the following information from you when you apply for an account:

NAME AND DATE OF BIRTH - To confirm an immigrant's name and birthday, banks typically require one of the following documents:

- Unexpired passport
- Government-issued driver's license (including foreign licenses)
- Consular ID
- Birth certificate

ADDRESS - Banks and credit unions often require proof of a street address to open an account. A utility bill, lease, or current driver's license or municipal ID can satisfy this requirement.

IDENTIFICATION NUMBER - An identification number means one of the following

- Social Security number (SSN)
- ITIN (individual taxpayer identification number)
- Alien identification card number
- Any other government-issued document that proves your nationality or residence, such as a passport or foreign driver's license

Resources

Local Organizations

Catholic Charities

<http://www.catholiccharities-dutchesscounty.org/>

Areas of immigration legal assistance:

Adjustment of Status, Asylum applications, Consular Processing, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA), Employment authorization, Family-based petitions, Naturalization/Citizenship, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, Temporary Protected Status (TPS), U visas, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) petitions

The New York Immigration Coalition

<https://www.nyic.org/>

New York State Youth Leadership Council

<http://www.nysylc.org/>

Families For Freedom

Different resources on deportation, budgeting, laws.

<http://familiesforfreedom.org/resources>

Scholarships

National Scholarships

The Dream.US

Golden Door Scholarship

Mana Scholarship

Hispanic Scholarship Fund

The HACU Scholarship

MALDEF

Que Llueva Cafe

New York Scholarships

Mexican Studies Scholarship Fund

NYSYLC Scholarship Awards Program

Support Creativity Scholarships

Levin-Goffe Scholarship Fund for LGBTQI students in New York

Milton Fisher Scholarship for Innovation and Creativity

The Dream.US (Different than the NYS DREAM Act)