



Contact: Jill Casner-Lotto, Director, CCCIE; 914-606-5644; jill.casnerlotto@sunywcc.edu
Teresita Wisell, Executive Director, CCCIE; tere.wisell@sunywcc.edu

PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS OF UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS IS A SMART INVESTMENT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND THE COUNTRY

Community Colleges Nationwide Use Release of New CCCIE Report to Increase Awareness of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

October 23, 2012, Valhalla, New York—Community colleges' support of undocumented immigrant students not only enhances the personal success of these young people, it is also a wise investment for colleges, communities, and the country, according to a new report, *DREAMING BIG: What Community Colleges Can Do to Help Undocumented Immigrant Youth Achieve Their Potential*. The report by the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education (CCCIE) offers community colleges recommendations and promising practices to improve services for undocumented students, particularly those who may be encouraged to enroll under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program announced by the Obama administration this past June.

The DACA program, which provides young undocumented immigrants temporary relief from deportation and the potential ability to work legally in this country, includes educational requirements that could prompt many students to further their education at community colleges. While the report notes that many community colleges already serve significant numbers of undocumented students, the deferred action initiative could encourage many more undocumented youth to access and enroll in community colleges with less anxiety and increased optimism for their future.

Multi-Campus DREAMING BIG Outreach Events

CCCIE is planning a series of ***Multi-Campus DREAMING BIG Community and Media Outreach Events*** the week of October 22nd to feature the initiatives of colleges cited in the report and invite undocumented students—including those who may benefit under DACA—to share their stories. For example, Dr. Jose Vicente, president of Miami Dade College, North Campus is releasing the report at a campus-wide Human Rights tribute event, recognizing the college's leadership and advocacy in support of undocumented students. Students Working for Equal Rights, an immigrant student-led advocacy group that has played a key role in organizing DACA information sessions and legal clinics, is also participating and sharing testimonies from students. In Lexington, Kentucky, Bluegrass Community and Technical College is launching the report at a jointly sponsored event with the Central Kentucky Council for Peace and Justice and the Kentucky Dream Coalition, which is affiliated with United We Dream, a network of youth-led immigrant organizations around the country.

Educational Success of Undocumented Students Is Vital to College Completion Goals

The report links the educational success of undocumented students to achieving national college completion goals and economic and social prosperity. "The Obama administration has set a national goal for increasing the proportion of college graduates by 50 percent over the next decade. Clearly, this will only be achieved if *all* students are given the opportunity to enroll and the support to succeed in college—

including the tens of thousands of undocumented students nationwide who aspire to a college education,” according to the report. “The report draws attention to some of the exemplary practices of community colleges that are improving the educational prospects of undocumented students. But, with the college completion agenda as a national imperative, there is more work to be done,” said Teresita B. Wisell, CCCIE Executive Director and Associate Dean of The Gateway Center at Westchester Community College in Valhalla, New York, where CCCIE is located.

Key Recommendations and Examples Cited in Five Critical Areas

Community colleges need to be prepared, both for increased inquiries related to the DACA program which requires submission of students’ school transcripts and other relevant records, as well as increased enrollment in certificate and associate degree programs, vocational and career training, and English as a Second Language courses—all of which could satisfy DACA’s educational enrollment criteria. “At this critical juncture, community colleges must better understand the challenges of this growing student population, and college staff need to be trained and prepared to assist them as they learn about college, enroll, and pursue their education,” according to the report’s author Jill Casner-Lotto.

Based on the practices and experiences of 10 CCCIE member colleges located in various parts of the country, the report outlines recommendations in five critical areas: increasing college access, making college affordable, supporting college readiness and success, offering alternatives for adult learners, and improving college retention and completion. The colleges cited in the report partner actively with local school districts, four-year colleges, immigrant youth-led organizations and immigrant advocacy coalitions, and other community organizations to increase educational access and attainment for immigrant students regardless of their status. Among the report’s key recommendations:

- Develop a coordinated outreach plan with community partners to help undocumented students learn about accessing and navigating the community college system
- Recruit undocumented students as community ambassadors and student role models
- Promote dual enrollment programs that allow high school students to take college courses for free or at discounted prices
- Increase college and private fundraising for scholarship opportunities, including internships that promote students’ civic engagement in the community
- Designate and train staff responsible for advising undocumented students
- Promote campus safe zones and empower immigrant students as leaders

Challenges and Opportunities

The report cites the numerous challenges community colleges face today in their support of undocumented students, including budgetary pressures and a shifting legal landscape. In the absence of federal DREAM Act legislation, a handful of states have allowed undocumented students to qualify for in-state tuition. Only four—California, Texas, New Mexico, and Illinois—offer access to state financial aid. The report cites studies showing that in-state tuition policies have decreased high school drop-out rates and increased college enrollments among undocumented youth, and increased schools’ revenues due to tuition payments by students who would otherwise not be in college. When community colleges provide a supportive and welcoming environment, “undocumented students have emerged as effective role models, mentors, and advocates for change on college campuses and in their communities.”

The report cites promising practices at the following community colleges:

Bluegrass Community College, KY	Renton Technical College, WA
City College of San Francisco, CA	Rio Hondo College, CA
Johnson County Community College, KS	South Texas College, TX
Miami Dade College, FL	Westchester Community College, NY
Palm Beach State College, FL	Wilbur Wright College, IL

CCCIE (www.cccie.org) is a national network of 23 community colleges, professional groups, and research organizations committed to expanding and strengthening programs and services for immigrant students at community colleges nationwide. National in scope, CCCIE receives major financial support from the J.M. Kaplan Fund and is hosted by Westchester Community College in Valhalla, NY.