

DOCUMENTING THE PATHWAY TO COLLEGE

A HANDBOOK FOR UNDOCUMENTED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



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01 | INTRODUCTION

A RESOURCE FOR UNDOCUMENTED HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

This handbook is designed for undocumented high school students who are thinking about applying to colleges and universities in the United States. First off, we hope the resources and information in this book are helpful as you pursue higher education. Much of this information comes from suggestions of undocumented students who went through the same process you will now embark on. Although we fully understand that an undocumented status affects many parts of your life--your ability to get a job, apply for scholarships, apply for federal programs, etc, our hope is that it will not prevent you from attending college. We believe that with the help of the resources and methods described in this handbook, many undocumented students can consider college an option.

COLLEGE ACCESS PROGRAM

The College Access Program (CAP) is comprised of a small group of dedicated Harvard College students that are passionate about immigration and the plight of undocumented immigrants. This handbook is a collaboration between CAP and Act on a Dream, an officially recognized Harvard group. We have also worked with the Student Immigrant Movement (SIM) but we do not have official ties with them. Our activities are supported by the generous donations of the Cambridge community and the countless hours that our volunteers have donated to mentoring students, planning workshops, and creating original reference materials to inform undocumented students of the pathways to college.

MENTORSHIP

In collaboration with Act on a Dream, CAP aims to support undocumented students through mentorship and guidance provided by current college students. Through the CAP mentorship program, high school students participate in workshops to understand that they are more than their legal status and that they too can apply to college, though they face more obstacles than documented high school students. Furthermore, high school students are paired with a mentor that will help them research colleges and financial policies and guide them through the college application process. Ultimately, the goal of the program is to inform undocumented students of their opportunities for higher education in the United States. This handbook contains information pertaining to that issue.

A FEW WORDS FROM CAP'S FOUNDER:

In August 2011, I was given the challenge and the opportunity of dedicating one of my four classes at Harvard to organizing a project through which I could make a difference, wherever my heart felt it should be, not for but rather with others. During the first week of school, I learned about the Student Immigrant Movement in Boston, and became excited about the possibility of working on an issue that was so close to home. Although I had not directly experienced being an undocumented immigrant in America, I grew up an empathetic spectator of the struggles of family members who came to this country for a better future. As a foreign student in America, I knew was privileged, not because I deserved being here more than anyone in my family did, but because I was fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time. I was also certain that education should not be left to chance. Like his father before him in the police, my father joined the Navy because it was the only accessible means of reaching higher education. College access changed their lives, and I was ready to help others change their own.

I soon began to recruit volunteers on campus, spreading the word through friends and classmates, who quickly reached out to their networks. After meeting individually with prospective members, sixteen of them joined us on the first of many Sunday team meetings. Our initial challenge was to find you, get to know you and work with you to blaze a trail of hope amidst uncertainty. In pairs, we contacted guidance counselors to ask whether we could present our project to their students. As we outlined the presentations, we also brainstormed long-term plans for CAP. After much discussion, we arrived at a mission: to help students develop self-agency in their pursuit of higher education, regardless of their immigration status in the United States. We established core values that continue to guide our work: Education, Opportunity, Hope, Determination and Equality.

On December 3, 2011 we held our first workshop, with 10 students. Though our numbers are small, CAP is committed to quality mentorship. Since then, CAP has mentored 17 students from countries such as Peru, El Salvador, Argentina, Brazil and Haiti. Above all, we have created and mobilized a community around a common purpose, to enable students like you to achieve your goals, to help you find hope where others see defeat, to show you that you are not alone and that despite the long – and not always clear – road, your initiative, courage and hard work will create opportunities for you and for those to come.

We truly believe in you. We always have and always will.

--Nicole, Harvard College Class of 2013

02 | COLLEGE? BUT I AM UNDOCUMENTED

Higher education prepares us to contribute and participate in our communities and larger society. When any individual, regardless of immigration status, graduates from college, they are better equipped to serve in their communities, in their families, and in capacities they find meaningful. Growing up undocumented may sometimes make you feel like you don't belong a college classroom, or like you don't deserve the luxury of higher education, but these feelings are spawned by only unfair treatment or ignorance. If we want the best for ourselves, we must consider higher education because it is designed to best equip us with the skills and preparation we need to contribute to those around us.

IS COLLEGE WORTH IT?

Education equips us with a greater capacity for service in our communities and in families and people we love. A college experience will also help you better define your interests, making us more informed about the world around us and more effective at the things we devote ourselves to. However, your college experience and education will continue to depend on your work and sacrifice.

A HARVARD UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT REFLECTS ON APPLYING TO COLLEGE

I felt anxious and scared to graduate from high school. Knowing that I was undocumented, it was very easy for me to focus on my disadvantages and compare myself to others who were not in the same situation I was in. For four years, I had really invested into my high school education: I had taken the most challenging classes available and managed to stay at the top of my class. I felt like all of my efforts would have been all for nothing if I was not able to go to college. As the end of high school drew nearer, I became more anxious about my future as I continued to focus on the closed doors and college opportunities I was ineligible for because of my status.

However, I was fortunate enough to have a few teachers who acknowledged the unfairness of my situation and inspired me to move beyond this mindset and focus on the opportunities I did have. With their help, I was able to make the most of the resources available to me and make meaningful post-high school plans, some that involved college and others that did not. Although I had this change in focus, the disadvantages of being undocumented are evident to me and still discourage me today. Sometimes it is incredibly difficult to move past this mindset, and looking back, this is understandable. During high school, it was not easy to swallow the fact that the only country I knew and loved was fundamentally unfair to me, especially at this pivotal moment my life. I was only able to find hope as I made both realistic and detailed goals, ones that allowed me to focus on the options that I did have.

Today there are more resources, online and offline, for undocumented high school students than ever before. The forthcoming of DACA has transformed the prospective paths that undocumented students can take following high school, especially with college. Given the amount of material and resources, we must find what is most useful to us. Sometimes the most useful sources can be found in places we do not expect. For example, I met my college mentor at a college information session I had found on Google. Had I depended solely on the resources my high school guidance counselor provided, I would have never heard of this specific college information session and probably would have never had the help I needed to get into Harvard.

So remember, don't listen to people (including yourself) who focus on what you can't do as opposed to what you can do and always be on the look-out for opportunity!

03 | FRESHMAN & SOPHOMORE YEAR

Section highlights:

- ▶ Keep your grades up
- ▶ Build relationships with your teachers (these relationships will be crucial when thinking about recommendation letter requests)
- ▶ Apply for DACA status
- ▶ Explore activities that peak your interest, get involved!

GRADES:

Your high school GPA is a very important factor when applying to college. While many people believe the first two years of high school are not as important, it is in your best interest to have a good start and put your best foot forward from the very start. All classes- from the first one you take in freshman year to the last one you take in senior year- will be factored into your GPA, so you should strive to keep your grades up all throughout high school. Moreover, all colleges will ask you to submit a transcript along with your application. This means they will be able to see what classes you took as well as the level of classes they were (AP, IB, honors, Accelerated). In these first two years, you should strive to take the most rigorous courses that you can take. In this way, you can demonstrate not only that you're doing well in school, but that you're doing well in the most rigorous classes that your school offers; you are challenging yourself and striving to be the best you can be. Building these good habits early on will pave a road to academic success.

TEACHERS:

This is also the time to begin building strong relationships with your teachers and other faculty. Almost all college applications require you to submit multiple letters of recommendation and a particularly insightful and personal one could really distinguish your application from others. Taking the time to build strong and meaningful relationships early on will give the teacher a sense of who you are as both a student and a person, which they can later convey to the colleges you apply to. A personal letter is always better than a generic one! Ideally, these teachers could also serve as mentors and give you guidance throughout your high school career. Having faculty there to advise you and point you in the right direction is critical during your high school career.

DACA:

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is a policy designed to suspend the deportation of young people who meet certain criteria for two years and is renewable every two years. Those eligible for DACA receive a work permit in addition to a temporary social security number. This means that a student is eligible for paid internships and student employment during high school and college. While this number does not allow you to apply to federally administered grants or scholarships, you will have access to many more scholarships with the DACA status and possibly even be eligible for in-state tuition in many states. However, DACA is not a complete solution. For one, it is not a lawful status and does not guarantee a pathway to citizenship. Moreover, the application fee to apply for DACA is a total of \$465. Furthermore, some people are afraid to apply because it reveals their undocumented status and they fear their families will be deported. Still, if you are planning to go to college or work while you're there, it is a good idea to think about this option and weigh the pros and cons. If you decide to do it, it is best to apply as early as possible and get it out of the way so that you may focus on other parts of your application later on. To review, the criteria to be eligible for DACA is the following:

- ▶ Must be under 31 years as of June 15, 2012
- ▶ Must have come to the US while under the age of 16
- ▶ Have continuously resided in US from June 15, 2007 to present
- ▶ Must have entered the U.S. without inspection before June 15, 2012,

- ▶ Must have been physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012
- ▶ Must be currently in school, have graduated from high school, have obtained a GED, or have been honorably discharged from the Coast Guard or armed forces;
- ▶ Must have not been convicted of a felony offense, a significant misdemeanor, or more than three misdemeanors and do not pose a threat to national security or public safety.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/COMMUNITY SERVICE:

Colleges are interested in more than GPA and test scores; they want to get to know you as a person. The activities you participate in outside of school say a lot about who you are as a person, shedding light on your interests, talents, and personality. In order to discover your talents and passions, it is important to become involved in extra-curricular activities early on. The first few years are a time to explore different clubs and sports to determine what you really enjoy and want to dedicate your time to. Whatever you determine your interests, it is important you start early and show commitment, perseverance, and leadership in the later years of your high school career. Schools want to foster not only intellectual growth, but also growth in the passions you pursue outside of school. In addition to extra-curricular activities, you should also start looking at community service activities outside of your school to give back to the community on your own. Schools like to see such commitment, passion, and leadership- both in school and in your community.

SELF-HANDICAPPING

As this guide has shown you, you are never alone as an undocumented student. There are undocumented students that successfully graduate every year from colleges all over the world, including Harvard University. It is important to recognize that you're not alone and that you can reach your academic and life goals. The most important tool to have, then, is information. Get informed! You, too, have a voice in this country. Moreover, don't be afraid to reach out to your school counselor and teachers. They are there to help you grow as well as to give you helpful advice. They are there when you need to talk or when you have questions. Don't be afraid to reach out and use the network of support provided to you.

04 | JUNIOR YEAR

Section Highlights

- ▶ High grades are especially important this year (even if your grades during previous years weren't the best)
- ▶ Take your SAT/ACT at least once during your junior year, ideally during the spring
- ▶ If applicable, take at least 1 SAT subject test (SAT II) during your junior spring
- ▶ Start thinking about possible teachers to write your recommendation letters

THE SAT AND ACT

The SAT and the ACT are standardized tests used for college admissions. If you are thinking of applying to competitive colleges that offer financial aid to undocumented students, there is a very high chance they will require the ACT or SAT and SAT IIs as part of their application. You should begin to think about your SAT or ACT strategy in your junior year. These important tests will be different than tests you have taken in high school, so you have to prepare carefully before taking them!

You can choose whether you want to take the SAT or ACT. If you are applying to highly competitive colleges, chances are you will probably be required to take two additional tests called SAT IIs. These are subject tests that span over 20 different subjects. For more information about these tests see the following sections or find more information by researching The College Board.

The SAT

The SAT tests three categories: critical reading, math, and writing. The test itself lasts three hours and forty-five minutes and includes ten sections. The critical reading sections will test your vocabulary, understanding of different sentence structures and organizations and your ability to answer questions on different passages. The math section will test your knowledge of geometry, algebra, probability, and other applications of math. You will be allowed to use a calculator. The writing section will test your knowledge of grammar and will also require you to write an essay on a given topic. Each section will be scored out of 800 points.

The ACT

The ACT tests English, math, reading, and science. All of its sections are multiple choice questions except for the essay prompt. The ACT lasts two hours and fifty-five minutes and thirty additional minutes for the essay (which colleges usually require). The English section tests punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, and consists of five prose passages with accompanying questions. The Math section tests various levels of algebra, geometry, and some trigonometry, and permits use of a calculator. The Reading section tests reading comprehension. The Science section covers background knowledge in biology, chemistry, physics and earth/space sciences. The Writing test (only available with the ACT plus Writing test) consists of one writing prompt, where the student is asked to present a point of view on an issue. Each section is scored out of a possible 36; the score report also includes a composite score out of 36.

Deciding to take the ACT or SAT

Selecting which exam to take depends on what colleges require for college admissions, and which test is better suited for you. Most colleges accept either the SAT or the ACT, so it may simply be a matter of preference. Colleges and universities consider either test equally in their admissions process. To figure out which test is better suited for you, take practice tests and see how you do. You might think you are at a great disadvantage if you can't afford an expensive prep course, but with hard work and discipline, you can study on your own with practice books at your local library or school. And the more you practice, the more comfortable you will feel on test day.

In your junior year, you should plan on taking the ACT or SAT at least once by the spring. You should also plan to take SAT Subject Tests in May or June, ideally in subjects you just completed during your junior year. You should plan to take at least two Subject tests, and some schools will require certain tests for certain programs.

Test Dates and Waivers

Various test dates for the SAT, ACT, and SAT Subject Tests are available throughout the school year, between September and June. However, not all tests are available every month, so planning ahead will ease your stress as you approach your senior year and the college admissions process. Bookmark these websites for planning and registering for standardized tests:

- ▶ SAT test dates - <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-dates>
- ▶ SAT fee waivers- <http://sat.collegeboard.org/register/sat-fee-waivers>
- ▶ ACT test dates - <http://www.actstudent.org/regist/dates.html>
- ▶ ACT fee waivers - <http://www.actstudent.org/faq/answers/feewaiver.html>

While you are not penalized for taking the exam multiple times — colleges will generally consider your highest score in each section rather than in one sitting — it probably doesn't help you to take each test more than 3 times.

Registration is usually at least one month in advance. If you register on time, qualifying students can obtain a fee waiver with help from your counselor. (There is a maximum of 2 waivers per exam.)

SAT Subject Tests (SAT IIs)

The SAT subject tests require additional planning, as some subject tests are offered only at specific times throughout the year. For specific course-related exams, such as United States History or Biology, we recommend you take the SAT subject tests near the end of your academic year, typically in May or June, as you will then be able to use knowledge gained throughout your year in class towards the exam. Plus, you won't want to worry about taking these exams in the fall of your senior year, when you are also applying to college. You may also wish to reserve those test dates for re-taking the SAT or ACT if you need to improve your score.

PREPARING FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS

- ▶ Take a practice test. Before you crack a book and begin learning the techniques of taking this exam, take a diagnostic practice test from a test prep book to see where you stand. This is a way of pinpointing your strengths and weaknesses. We would recommend the CollegeBoard SAT prep book as it gives a correct representation of the test.
- ▶ If you can, take an SAT/ACT prep class. The materials and arrangement of the techniques taught in an SAT/ACT prep course often serve as an accurate and effective guiding light as you begin your preparation for this exam. Well-established providers of test preparation material and classes include Princeton Review and Kaplan. The publishers of the tests also produce prep materials: College Board / ACT. See if you can find them at your local or school library!
- ▶ Practice your vocabulary. This not only involves memorization, but also demands your tenacity and discipline. You should learn and review your vocabulary words every day.
- ▶ Research and plan for the essay beforehand. Prepare in depth beforehand as much as possible so that you go into the essay with a vague idea of what and how you will write, even before you receive the prompt.
- ▶ Find additional practice problem sets and books. There is a vast quantity of practice sets that are available—make use of these and consistently challenge yourself with new material. Utilize free online resources:
 - ▶ Number2.com
 - ▶ Test Prep Review
 - ▶ College PowerPrep
 - ▶ College board
 - ▶ Ineedapencil.com
- ▶ Practice, practice, practice! After all is said and done, in the end there is no way around the tedious and time-proven method of practice, practice, and even more practice.

THINKING ABOUT RECOMMENDATION LETTERS

It is important to begin considering which teachers you would like to write a letter of recommendation for you. You will need recommendation letters for many college and scholarship applications. Chances are that you have developed closer relationships with certain teachers. It is important that the teacher knows you and can write a strong letter of recommendation by including personal stories about you. High school teachers have countless students, so it can be helpful if you can provide your recommenders with a list of anecdotes, experiences, or commendable things you have done with them to help them remember and write a strong statement specific to you. It's also never a bad idea to discuss your letters with your recommenders.

ACADEMICS

It is important that you keep your grades as high as possible during your high school. However, high grades during your junior year can help you demonstrate improvement if your grades have been lower previous years. Your junior year will be the last year on your transcript when most colleges consider you, so keep that in mind!

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Continue to be involved with your high school community through service groups, musical groups, and/or athletic groups. Be sure to pursue activities that spark your interest. It is necessary to note that undocumented students oftentimes need to take care of siblings or work a part-time job in order to be better able to contribute to their families. Not to worry! These are extracurricular activities as well that should be noted in your resume and in your college application. Running a household, taking care of siblings, or working a part-time job are all activities to be showcased. They demonstrate commitment, dedication to family, and responsibility among other qualities. Do not be shy to include this as a part of your application; in fact, it will make you stand out and contribute greatly to your college application.

JUNIOR YEAR TIMELINE

Your junior year of high school is a crucial time for your college application. It is important to remember that as an undocumented student, you can still apply to college, but it is necessary to constantly think ahead. Ideally, by your junior year you will have already applied and been approved for DACA, so you can solely focus on academic matters. To make your college application tasks during your junior year easier to understand, we have created a brief timeline for you.

SEPTEMBER-APRIL	
Earn high grades and take challenging classes	Participate in extracurricular activities
Decide whether to take the SAT, ACT, or both	Study for the SAT/ACT by taking practice tests
Start to brainstorm or think about what type of college you want to go to	If necessary, apply for DACA
Never get confrontational (and always behave professionally!)	Know what your deal-making and deal-breaking factors are ahead of time
APRIL-MAY	
Take the SAT or ACT one time	If necessary, take one or two SAT II
Create college list	Think about possible recommenders
Find a summer job/activity	
MAY-AUGUST	
Create an Academic and Personal growth portfolio	Finalize college list
Start the Common Application	Request recommendation letters
Continue to study for SAT/ACT	Participate in part-time job or internship

05 | SENIOR YEAR

Section Highlights

- ▶ Retake SAT/ACT if necessary
 - ▶ Undocumented students do qualify for test fee waivers
- ▶ Complete the Common Application
- ▶ Ask for recommendation letters at least 2 weeks in advance of your application deadline

INTRODUCTION

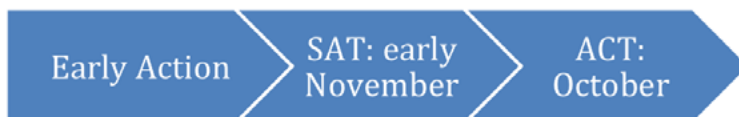
It's senior year, and although the end of high school is in sight, there are many steps you still can – and should – take to help reach that dream school. Try not to look back at what you should have or could have done over the past three years and instead appreciate all that you *have* done and focus on the opportunities you still have to show those schools that *you mean business*.

RETAKE SATS/ACTS

If you're applying early action, the last possible time to take the SATs is **early November**. If applying regular decision, you can take the SATs up until late **January**.

Take **SAT Subject Tests**. Some schools require that you take SAT Subject Tests, and some even require that they be certain subjects, such as one of the two levels of math and biology.

- ▶ If you're applying early action, the last possible time to take the ACTs is **October**. If applying regular decision, you can take the ACTs up until mid-**February**.
 - ▶ These are *general* guides for final dates to take college placement tests. Definitely look up the exact deadlines to take the SAT and ACT and send scores for each individual school.
 - ▶ Try not to leave retaking the SAT until last minute, but definitely know that it's an option!



- ▶ Make a schedule based on the schools you are applying to. When are their deadlines for receiving test scores? You can forward your scores. Get it out of the way early!
- ▶ Do undocumented students qualify for SAT/ACT and college application **fee waivers**?
 - ▶ Yes! As long as you live and take the SAT/ACT in the U.S. and one of the following is true then you're eligible:
 - ▶ You're enrolled in the Federal Free or Reduced Price Lunch program.
 - ▶ Your household income is less than a certain amount determined by the size of your household. You should talk to your guidance counselor to see if you qualify in case benchmarks change.
 - ▶ Your family receives some form of public assistance, like from a federally subsidized housing

project for example.

- ▶ You're enrolled in a program for the economically disadvantaged.
- ▶ You can get up to **four** SAT fee waivers, two for the SAT Reasoning Test and Two for SAT Subject Tests, throughout your junior and senior years. You can get up to **two** ACT fee waivers.
- ▶ Talk to your guidance counselor to get in touch with the admissions office of the school you're applying to or do so yourself. Explain your financial situation and ask for fee waivers. You can get up to four college application fee waivers. Use the **four application fee waivers** on the most expensive college applications – different schools charge different amounts - to save money.
- ▶ You have to request test fee waivers through your guidance counselor.

DIVERSITY WEEKEND EXPERIENCES

Many highly selective colleges are interested in making their student body more “diverse.” This means bringing together students from completely different class and ethnic backgrounds. In order to fulfill this mission, colleges host programs that are explicitly focused on bringing high school students from diverse backgrounds (working class, underrepresented minorities) to their campus for a weekend. First, check with your prospective colleges if they are hosting one of these diversity experiences. Next, make sure to apply to these programs if you are interested. It is important to note that documentation is not an issue and will not exclude you from participating. Usually it is necessary to write a short essay and send a record of your transcripts. These programs occur during October and November. It is worth applying to these programs because transportation to the college is fully paid for, you get to know more about your prospective college, and the admissions offices of these highly selective colleges become familiarized with your application.

THE COMMON APPLICATION

Many schools ask students to apply through the Common Application. The Common App, for short, is an application that is, for the most part, standardized across schools, meaning you can send the same single application to multiple schools. It removes the hassle of having to maneuver through different applications for each school. You can either apply online or mail out a hard copy. Although it may be difficult to navigate the multiple sections of the Common App at first, you'll have every part conquered in no time. Do take some time to scan the entire application and perhaps make a quick outline of the things you'll need to complete. Start looking through it during the summer after junior year.

THE COMMON APP PERSONAL ESSAY

This is your time to shine. Although it seems quite daunting, think of the Common App essay as a space on your application where you – yes you! – can really paint a picture of who you are, beyond your GPA and beyond your résumé. The College App essay is very open-ended – you can write about most anything – which has its pros and cons. It gives you freedom to write about something you truly care about and present yourself in your own light. However, the broad topic possibilities may make it easier to write an unfocused or unorganized essay. Here are some tips:

- ▶ Like all essays, this one is a **process**. You should give yourself a lot of time for reflecting, jotting down ideas that pop into your head, more formally outlining, sitting down to write, revising, and asking teachers or a guidance counselor to review it. Have confidence that the longer you give yourself to turn ideas over in your head, the more you will be able to decide which ones are best and how to most effectively communicate them.
- ▶ Try to come up with and write down ideas for your essay before looking at sample essays you may find online. While these can be helpful in seeing what has been done before, be careful you do not limit yourself – in content or in style -- to the essays you encounter. Of course, you want this one to be about YOU.
- ▶ Outlining your essay before starting to write allows you to plan ahead what you will touch on, which helps you write a more focused essay.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to **showcase your quirks**. They are likely what make you stand out, which should be a good thing. Remember, admissions officers are humans and they'd love to hear your voice. Be creative if you like, but don't force anything.
- ▶ Stick to the **word limit**. For many, this can be the most difficult part. This is important not only for the sake of letting the college know you can follow directions but also because your admissions officer reads many essays at

a time – an essay within the word limit would be much appreciated.

An example Common App Essay:

Here is Enrique's Common App personal essay. He is currently at Harvard. This essay is showcased as an example because Enrique discusses his hardships without portraying himself as a victim. Rather, Enrique tells his audience that his experience with hardship has allowed him to grow, to become a responsible adult, and has taught him the importance of family.

Many people say that Houston, Texas does not experience seasons. But having to carry water from the stove to the tub during the winters, and having to spend my summers outside, assures me that it does. As I went through these types of financial hardships, I was incapable of discerning the effect that they would have on my character, aspirations and trajectory.

On particularly hot summer days, my parents would take me to the public library, where in addition to acquiring some relief from the scorching heat, I developed my passion for intellectual exploration and inquiry. It was in that refuge of knowledge, through the readings of Octavio Paz, Juan Rulfo and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, that I was able to reconnect with the culture I had left behind when I migrated from my impoverished village in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, to Houston, Texas. The love of learning I was able to foster as a child has carried me through my academic accomplishments, including ranking at the top of my class while taking the most challenging courses available.

Listening to my parents' late night conversations while I cuddled closely with my siblings in our trailer's living room provided me with a firsthand account of their worry about not being able to meet the rent and provide for their children's education. In addition to teaching me the value of money at an early age, I learned the meaning of love and the value of sacrifice through my parents' example. A sense of gratefulness and indebtedness permeated through my parents' bedroom wall, seeping into my ethos, and strongly influencing my actions and attitude. The realization that every opportunity is not only a gift, but also an obligation, is what has prompted me to do my best not only academically, but in all the spheres of my life. Whether it is training relentlessly to make it to the top of my school's varsity tennis team, or working alongside my father in construction, I am driven by the same mindset regarding gratitude and responsibility.

There is a gaping hole on the side of my home through which you can see the insulation. However, it was here, amid trailers damaged by hurricane Ike, and among immigrant families struggling to survive, that I learned the importance of reaching out to others and of forging strong communities. I have seen most of my neighborhood childhood friends lose hope and fall through the cracks; but I have also seen inspiring acts of intense kindness and selflessness. This dichotomy assures me of mankind's intrinsic good and reminds me of the importance of humility. Receiving Eagle Scout recognition, leading my school's Honor Society through service projects, founding a peer-mentoring program for at risk students at my school – all of these things reflect my belief in society and my desire to live a life of perpetual servitude.

At the cusp of completing my high school career, I reflect on my life and believe that I have become who I am because of my challenges and circumstances, not in spite of them. It is my deepest hope that I will be able to attend Harvard to continue working towards becoming a greater person; someone wiser, greater and better equipped to serve others.

Perhaps this way, too, I'll get to reside in Cambridge and experience what real seasons are like.

COMMON APP ACTIVITIES SHEET

The Common App Activities Sheet may seem daunting at first, especially because it gives you so much room to fill out all of the supposed extracurricular activities you've done. This section is kind of like a resume in table format. Don't worry about filling every single box with an activity. Colleges are looking more at depth than breadth. They'd rather see applicants who have deeply engaged in a smaller number of activities than applicants who have been involved superficially in a ton of activities. Be candid, and the process should run smoothly.

Example Activities Sheet: Here is Karolina's activities sheet. She's also a Harvard student. Though Karolina's activity sheet is not perfectly formatted, we have used her as an example because she includes activities such as Sunday family lunch, coffee farming, and helping her father with secretarial work. Karolina included these non-conventional activities because they took a lot of time and they were all activities that were important to her.

EXAMPLE COMMON ESSAY: KAROLINA

Activities Sheet

I. Extracurricular Activities	School Years	Hrs. Per Wk./Wks. Per Yr.	Positions/Honors
Spanish Club	9,10,11, 12	1/30	Freshman Representative (9), organized fundraiser events (9,10)
HOSA	9,10,11,12	1/30	Treasurer (10). 3 rd place at regionals in Extemporaneous Writing (9), 2 nd place at regionals in Parliamentary Procedure (10), 3 rd place at regionals Parliamentary Procedure (11).
Spanish Honor Society	11, 12 ¹	2/30	Vice President (12) and member
National Honor Society	11,12 ²	2/30	Member
Escola Portuguesa de Clark	9 th	4/40	Student
Escola Luis de Camoes	10,11,12	8/40	Student.
AP Spanish	11	6/30	Self taught AP Spanish course and prepared for exam.
Help father with secretarial work	9,10,11,12	4/52	Translate, write estimates, and organize documents

II. Honors and Awards Presented By:	School Years	Honors/Title
Escola Luis de Camoes	10, 11 ³	"Student of the Year" Award (10, 11). Full scholarship for one year (11).
National Hispanic Recognition Program (NHRP)	11	Recognized for being an outstanding Hispanic student on PSAT.
The National Spanish Exam	10	Gold Medal winner.
Academy for Allied Health Sciences	9,10,11	Honor Roll (11) High Honor Roll (9, 10, 11). Student of the Month (9)

III. Community Service	School Years	Hrs. Per Wk./Wks. Per Yr.	Positions/Duties
Kay's Christian Place	12	3/12	Created literacy program to help kids love reading (12). Other high school seniors and I pick a children's book and read to whole daycare, special activities planned according to reading.
Trinitas Hospital	11,12	3/20	Volunteer. Talk to patients, distribute gloves and icewater, translate, and help with desk work.
New Jersey Women's and AIDS Network (NJWAN)	11,12	2/20	Volunteer. Write articles for the SISTA and NJWAN newsletter. Research new contacts to establish relationships with NJWAN.
Rapid Response Network	11,12	4/25	Volunteer as hotline operator for immigrants being detained by ICE. Also organize meetings and posterings to make hotline and immigrant's rights more well-known.
Creche Irma Maria das Dorcs	11	3/30	Fundraised throughout school year for daycare (11). Raised \$500 for toys for this government run daycare in my rural Brazilian hometown.

IV Summer/Winter Experiences	Summer/Winter	Hrs. Per Wk./Wks. Per Summer	Descriptions
Kay's Christian Place Newark, NJ	2007,2008,2009	20/5	Volunteer as teacher's assistant during summer vacation. Help develop kids' language skills, arts&crafts, and social skills.
Creche Irma Maria das Dorcs Bandeira do Sul, Minas Gerais Brazil	Winter 2006-2007 Summer 2009	15/3	Volunteered as teacher's assistant at daycare during summer and winter vacation (9, 11). Organized arts&crafts, storytime, helped in create language and social skills.

Junior Statesmen of America (Princeton)	2008	60/3	Took AP US Government, Honors Speech Communication, and congressional debate.
Jardín de Niños Timilpan, Mexico	Winter 2007-2008	14/3	Volunteered as teacher's assistant in inner city Mexican preschool
V Hobbies/Interests	School Years	Hrs. Per Wk./Wks Per Yr.	Descriptions
Independent Reading	9,10,11,12	5/52	Lawrence, Garcia Marquez, Coelho, Austen, Dostoevsky, Allende
Farming and Agriculture	9,11 ⁴	12/3	Being on the farm is own personal form of paradise. Help to plant/harvest coffee, yucca, and bananas on grandfather's rural Brazilian farm. Can milk and feed cows.
Family Dinner on Weekends	9,10,11,12	8/40	Weekends always spent at family lunch/dinner which last anywhere from 6-8 hours. Even though none of us are blood relatives, we consider each other family because we all come from the same Brazilian village and have known each other for decades.

COMMON APP SUPPLEMENTS

- ▶ What is a supplement?
- ▶ A supplement is an essay or (collection of) short statement(s) specific to the colleges you apply to. This is separate from the main College App essay, which is sent to all your schools. This is the place where a college may give you a prompt or ask you more specific questions and possibly questions more personalized toward the school.
- ▶ What kinds of schools require this?
 - ▶ Not all schools require a supplement.
- ▶ Should I write a supplement even if it's optional?
 - ▶ Yes! If you would like some extra space to give colleges a better picture of you, please do! Additionally, writing a supplement for the colleges that do not require them is a way to show your investment in those schools.

Example of a Supplement Essay:

We have chosen this example of a supplement essay because it has a strong introduction that draws the reader in, it gives the reader a window into this student's life (the influence of storytelling in his life), and it shows how this student perceives himself and the role Mexican culture and Latin American literature has played in his life.

On the way to the market to purchase maize in a small town in Mexico, my mother stopped to rest. While taking off her shoes, a donkey, mistaking the green hue of the bill my mother had laid on a bench for a leaf, ate the bill. Frantically, she and my grandmother shoved their hands down the donkey's throat trying to retrieve the only money they had - or so this is the story that I have been told, as it took place years before I was born. Regardless of its veracity, however, stories like this one have shaped who I am. There are certain narratives, in particular, that have played a salient role in my life.

Oral narratives passed down through my family, such as the unfortunate one involving my mother and the donkey, have allowed me to regain the sense of the loss I felt after having left my home country and culture. Through at times seemingly frivolous and mundane, through these anecdotes I feel that I can recapture my past and forge my sense of identity. Hearing stories about family members in Mexico I have not met or seen in years brings me closer to them, reaffirming my place in and ties to this world.

Some of the most significant narratives in my life have been transmitted through the form of novels and literature. Every time I read "No Oyes Ladrar Los Perros" by Juan Rulfo, I revisit my childhood. Or perhaps I am really constructing my childhood, for I often suspect that fiction and my memories mesh while reading books portraying rural life in Latin America. I am not sure whether I came to the United States on an animal's back or whether it is my own form of magical realism. Somewhere between reality and fiction, I come to terms with who I am and where I come from.

Another book that has had a major bearing on my life is the Book of Mormon. My faith, transmitted through the narratives found in the Standard Works of the Mormon tradition, has had a resounding impact on me. Values that I hold, such as hope, diligence, perseverance, temperance and charity, are ones that have undeniably been informed and strengthened by the scriptures I have read and studied.

While these various narratives have each played a significant role in my life, the one with the greatest impact is the one that I have carried internally. Although inextricably tied to the others, I firmly believe that the story that I have consciously created for myself has taken me where I am. Envisioning myself, at an early age, as an overcomer of obstacles, a leader in my community, a provider for my family and a graduate from a top-tier university has profoundly shaped the trajectory I have taken. Centered at the crux of many narratives, my own story is one that I deeply hope will continue at Harvard.

LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation letters are extremely important. Teachers' experiences with and descriptions of you are really informative to colleges. They offer different perspectives on you, some of which you may not even know yourself, which is great.

- ▶ Choosing your recommender(s)
 - ▶ Check to see how many recommendations each college requires. Many colleges require recommendations from both a guidance counselor and two teachers, usually in different academic subjects.
 - ▶ You can also include supplemental recommendation letters/evaluations. These can be from someone besides a teacher: employers, mentors, coaches, or research advisors. Most students don't submit these, but if you feel someone other than a teacher can enrich your application by describing a new perspective of you, go for it!
- ▶ Start cultivating deep relationships with teachers early. Beginning your junior year, ask yourself, "Which teachers am I closest to," and "Which teachers do I feel confident can write me a good recommendation letter?"
- ▶ When asking a teacher for a recommendation letter, ask them AT LEAST two weeks in advance. Aim for giving them more time so they can write you a really thoughtful letter.

SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS

- ▶ Submitting Common App
 - ▶ Don't have a Social Security number? Then you do not need to enter anything in that field!
- ▶ Do not be afraid to call college's admissions offices with any questions; that is precisely what they are there for.
- ▶ Fee waivers: Applying to college is expensive! On average, application costs range from \$50 to \$75 per application. These expensive fees can put a strain on the family budget. Some colleges grant fee waivers to students who experience financial difficulty when submitting applications. Talk to your guidance counselor

ahead of time to explain your family's financial situation and email the admissions offices of the colleges you are applying to in order to ask for fee waivers. Don't be embarrassed to ask for fee waivers. This is a request that admissions offices get every year and it will not deter in any way from your application.

AFTER HITTING "SUBMIT."

- ▶ Interviews: How should you approach interviews? Think of each interview like a conversation rather than an interrogation. It should be a two-sided exchange rather than a cold Q&A session.
- ▶ Questions to anticipate:
 - ▶ Tell me about yourself.
 - ▶ Why do you want to go to X college?
 - ▶ What extracurricular activities do you participate in?
 - ▶ What is your favorite class/subject?
 - ▶ What will you contribute to our community?
 - ▶ Tell me about a challenge you overcame.
 - ▶ Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
 - ▶ What do you do for fun?
 - ▶ Do you have any questions about X college?
- ▶ If at first you do not know how to answer a question, take a pause to think about it. It might seem awkward, but your interviewer would likely be impressed that you are giving a thoughtful answer. It also makes your response seem less formulaic and rehearsed.
- ▶ Keep in mind that interviewers *want* to help you get in. They're on your side!
- ▶ Come with questions *for* the interviewer. This helps demonstrate your curiosity and interest in the school. It also conveys your level of preparation for the interview. Try not to ask questions with answers you could easily find on the school's website. Dig deep and be specific – show him/her you're invested in this school.
- ▶ Research background information on your interviewer if it is available. What is his/her line of work? This might help in coming up with appropriate questions. Many interviewers are alumni.
- ▶ Some questions may be:
 - ▶ What extracurricular activities did you do in college?
 - ▶ What is your most memorable moment from college?
 - ▶ What was the most challenging part about college for you?
 - ▶ How would you describe the community of X college? Does it tend to be collaborative or competitive?
- ▶ Arrive at the place where the interview will take place **early**. Get comfortable in the atmosphere you will be in. Look around for the best spots, possibly a corner with less noise and an empty table.
- ▶ Dress
 - ▶ Your interviewer may give you guidelines about how to dress for the interview when she contacts you.
 - ▶ Even if she insists to dress casual, you do want to look nice and probably make it business casual. Do take into account the setting in which the interview will take place.
 - ▶ Women: dress pants and skirt and nice blouse or dress
 - ▶ Men: dress pants and long-sleeve or collared shirt; most likely no need for a tie

- ▶ Practice in mirror or with a mentor/teacher
- ▶ If an interview is optional, do it. Most likely, it can only help you, and you can think about your interviewer as an ally for getting in!
- ▶ If your interview is over the phone, make sure you have a working telephone number and that no one will call that number who isn't your interviewer. Make sure you're in a quiet room and ask people to not disturb you.
- ▶ **Keep those grades up!** After you hit "Submit" you should continue to try your absolute best in school. Many schools ask for Mid-Year School reports.

06 | FINANCIAL AID

INTRODUCTION

Getting into the school of your dreams is half the battle. Paying for your education is the other half. For undocumented students or students on Temporary Protected Status (TPS), navigating the financial aid process is particularly difficult because they are ineligible for federal loans or grants through FAFSA. Furthermore, the inability to apply for loans also makes it difficult to find the necessary funds to pay for their education. Though the path is strewn with a few more obstacles, it is not impossible to find funds. The key to this process is to research and to give yourself plenty of time to deal with financial aid offices and apply to scholarships. The purpose of this manual is to detail the various types of aid available to undocumented students and to create a step-by-step process of applying to financial aid to help undocumented students think ahead about their fund options. Though this manual does not cover all the many questions and topics related to financial aid CAP hopes that this will help to break down the intimidating process of applying to financial aid as an undocumented student into a series of steps that can be easily followed and replicated by other students.

Figure 1.1: Topics to be covered in this article

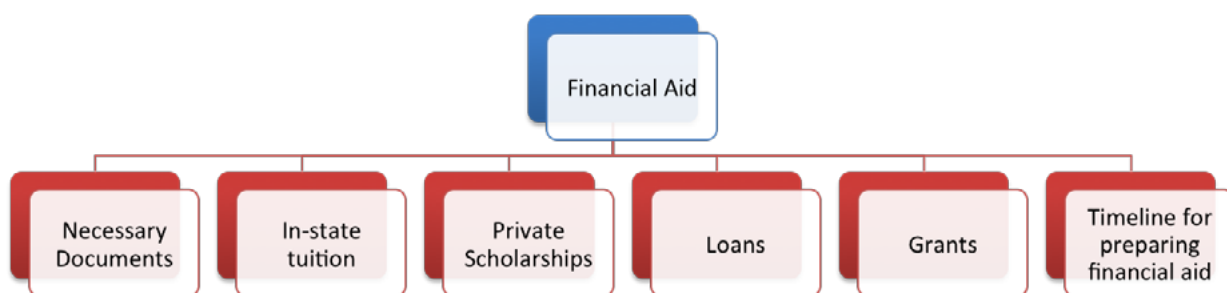


Figure 1.2. Financial Eligibility for Undocumented Students

TYPES OF FINANCIAL AID	UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT ELIGIBILITY FOR THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS
Federal Aid	No
State Aid	No
Federal Pell & Other Government Grants	No
In-state Tuition Rate	Yes, if awarded DACA status
Government Loans	No
Institutional Aid	Depends on the school
Work-study	No
Private Scholarships	Yes, see scholarship databases

NECESSARY DOCUMENTS TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL AID

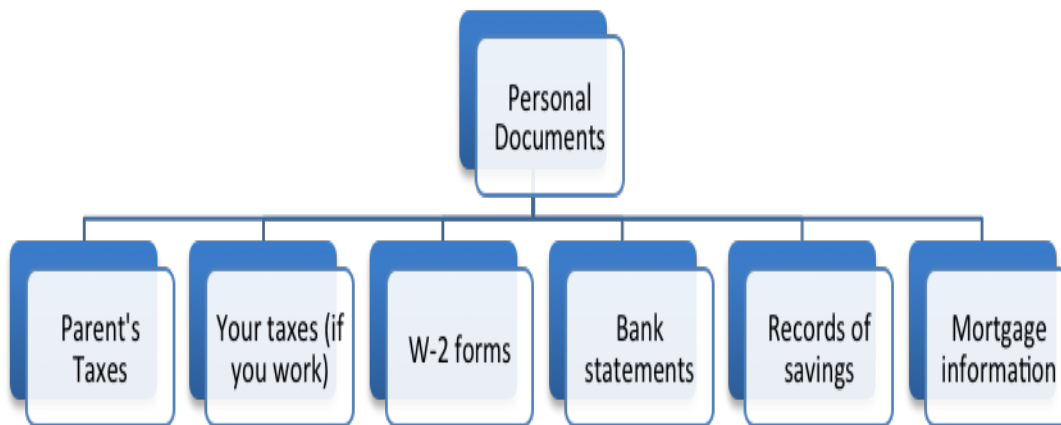
Though undocumented students are not eligible for state or federal financial aid, in-state tuition is helpful because it significantly reduces tuition fees. Thus, undocumented students are not required to fill out a FAFSA form because they are not eligible for the state or the federal financial aid. However, undocumented students should complete the CSS Profile (if required by their school) because this document will help the school ascertain how much to award the student in private grants and loans. If you have very specific circumstances or feel like you need to explain your financial situation, the CSS profile provides a space at the end of the application where you can write more details about your family’s specific financial situation. Finally, depending on your university’s policy you may have to fill out additional forms such as a monthly income form in order for the university to get a better picture of your financial situation. It is important to note that the financial information shared with your school is private and cannot get you or your family into any legal trouble.

Furthermore, it is absolutely crucial that your parents fill out their tax documents because universities ask for copies of your parent's taxes in order to complete their financial aid award decisions. The key to working with your university on financial aid is to remain in close contact with the financial aid office and really getting to know the opportunities and resources your school provides to its undocumented students. Before applying, make sure that your colleges are undocumented-friendly and they have both the finances and the student support necessary to support you throughout your college journey.

Figure 1.3: Financial Aid Forms to be Completed Yearly



Figure 1.4: Documents **YOU AND YOUR FAMILY** Need in Order to Apply for Financial Aid



IN-STATE TUITION FOR MASSACHUSETTS

In the state of Massachusetts, students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) status are eligible for in-state tuition. DACA status was a policy implemented by President Obama in 2012 for youth who meet a number of requirements. Youth who are granted DACA status are protected from deportation for two years. In order to maintain this status, they must renew their DACA every two years. DACA not only grants them protection from deportation but a work permit and the possibility of requesting a social security number and therefore a state I.D. and even a driver's license.¹ In 2012, Governor Deval Patrick approved in-state tuition for students who have DACA status.² Thus, students who have obtained their DACA status are eligible for in-state tuition for state universities, ultimately cutting their tuition payments in half. In fact, Massachusetts is one of only 14 states to approve in-state financial aid for undocumented students. Once you have DACA status and meet the other eligibility requirements, you are eligible for in-state tuition at Massachusetts colleges.

The eligibility requirements for in-state tuition are:

- ▶ Must be a U.S. citizen, lawful immigrant or permanent resident; or have DACA status
- ▶ You or your parent must have lived in Massachusetts for the 12 months before enrolling in a state university or

1 To learn more about DACA status, how to apply for it, and how teachers can help you apply please visit: http://e4fc.org/images/E4FC_DACAEducatorToolkit.pdf

2 Jorge Rivas, "Mass. Becomes 13th State to Allow Some Undocumented Students to Pay In-State Tuition," *Colorlines*, November 20, 2012, accessed April 5, 2014, http://colorlines.com/archives/2012/11/mass_becomes_13th_state_to_allow_some_undocumented_students_to_pay_in-state_tuition.html.

for 6 months before enrolling in a community college

- ▶ Show proof of your intent to **stay** in Massachusetts (Massachusetts' driver's license, rent and utility bills, or income tax returns)³

On the following page, please observe the in-state tuition payments for Massachusetts state college

Figure 1.5: In-state tuition payments (per year) for the state of Massachusetts, 2012-2013

COMMUNITY COLLEGES	PAYMENT	STATE COLLEGES	PAYMENT	UMASS COLLEGES	PAYMENT
Berkshire Community College	\$5,030	Bridgewater State University	\$7,144	University of Massachusetts Amherst	\$11,518
Bristol Community College	\$4,484	Fitchburg State University	\$7,740	University of Massachusetts Boston	\$10,254
Bunker Hill Community College	\$3,510	Framingham State University	\$7,114	University of Massachusetts Dartmouth	\$10,268
Cape Cod Community College	\$4,280	Massachusetts College of Art and Design	\$9,370	University of Massachusetts Lowell	\$10,394
Greenfield Community College	\$5,238	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts	\$7,496	University of Massachusetts Average*	\$10,867
Holyoke Community College	\$3,700	Massachusetts Maritime Academy	\$5,740		Depends on the school
Mass Bay Community College	\$4,580	Salem State University	\$7,200		No
Massasoit Community College	\$4,650	Westfield State University	\$7,328		Yes, see scholarship databases
Middlesex Community College	\$4,610	Worcester State University	\$7,188		
Mount Wachusett Community College	\$4,990	State Universities Average*	\$7,313		
North Shore Community College	\$4,320				
Northern Essex Community College	\$3,960				

3 "Financial Assistance for Massachusetts College Students," MassResources.org, 2014, accessed April 5, 2014, <http://www.massresources.org/public-colleges.html>.

In-State Tuition for Massachusetts

It is very important for DACA students in Massachusetts to be aware that these community colleges and state schools are not quite prepared to offer many resources to undocumented students on DACA status because the acceptance of in-state tuition has only occurred within the past two years. Thus, be aware that when you are applying to any of the UMass schools and any community colleges you will most likely *not be eligible for financial aid or grants*. Many of these college's scholarships require students to fill out FAFSA or have a social security number. Ultimately, as a DACA student you will be eligible for in-state tuition but you will be required to pay the full in-state tuition. However, if you would like to attend a state school in Massachusetts, make sure to keep in close contact with their financial aid office. Call the financial aid office and ask the following questions:

- ▶ “As a DACA student, am I eligible for any institutional loans?”
 - ▶ Institutional loans are loans offered by the university and some universities do not require students to have a social security number in order to apply for them
- ▶ “As a DACA student, what are the scholarships that I am eligible for?”
- ▶ “Am I expected to make the tuition payment in full at the beginning of the semester? Do you have any payment plans where I can split up the payments throughout the semester?”

PRIVATE SCHOLARSHIPS

Applying to scholarships is one of the options for acquiring funding to pay for your higher education. A few years ago, even private scholarship options were limited for undocumented students because many of them required a valid social security number in order to apply. Nowadays, many private scholarships are removing the social security number component of their application, thus allowing undocumented students to apply. For example, the Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF) awards over 150 scholarships and has recently opened up its doors to allow Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students apply to their scholarship opportunities.⁴ There are several databases online that allow students to research scholarships that do not require social security numbers as part of the application process. Though these are all excellent resources, we suggest using the Act on a Dream Scholarship Database because it was created during 2013 and features hundreds of scholarships for *all* undocumented students, without solely focusing on scholarships for the children of Latin American immigrants. It should be noted that many scholarship funds for undocumented students distribute their funds across cultural lines or ethnicity—specifically, they are focused on supporting the children of Latinx communities.

However, the Act on a Dream database has found scholarships that span all nationalities, ethnicities, and cultural groups. The databases focused on finding scholarship for undocumented students are:

- ▶ FastWeb Scholarship Search⁵
- ▶ Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) Scholarship Resource Guide⁶
- ▶ ASPIRA Scholarship Lists⁷
- ▶ Act on a Dream Scholarship Database⁸

These databases are only a jumping off point to allow you to start thinking about big, national fellowships that you can apply for. However, it is crucial for you to also think about small, local scholarships. Reach out to your local

4 “For Dreamers,” Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF), accessed April 5, 2014, <http://hsf.net/en/resources/for-dreamers>.

5 “Scholarships,” FastWeb Scholarship Search, 2014, accessed April 5, 2014, <http://www.fastweb.com/college-scholarships>.

6 “Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) Scholarship Resource Guide,” Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), 2014, accessed April 5, 2014, http://www.maldef.org/assets/pdf/1415_MALDEF_Scholarship.pdf.

7 “Scholarships,” ASPIRA, 2013, accessed April 6, 2014, <http://www.aspira.org/book/scholarships>.

8 “Search for Scholarships,” Act on a Dream at Harvard College, 2013, accessed April 5, 2014, <http://www.actonadream.org/resources/scholarships/>.

churches, community centers, and schools. Oftentimes, these community organizations offer small scholarships in sums of 500 to 1,000 dollars. It is necessary to research and apply for these scholarships because they are smaller in scale, feature less competition, and there is a greater chance of getting these scholarships.

Loans

Student loans are an option that needs to be treaded with caution due to the potential of being entrapped in a loan with a high interest rate. Unfortunately, undocumented students are not eligible for work-study jobs, government loans, or grants. The best loan option for undocumented students is to ask if their college offers *institutional loans*. In some undocumented-friendly colleges, the administration allows all students to apply for loans and do not require a social security number. It is best to apply for a loan through your college because it will feature a more stable interest rate, when it is time to pay the loan back after graduation.

Grants

Undocumented students are not eligible for Federal Pell Grants or other federal grants. Depending on your university, it is possible to receive grants that will help you pay for your tuition and that you don't have to pay back. For example, Wheelock College offers the Passion for Action scholarship that is a \$20,000 yearly award that is not dependent upon documentation status.⁹ Furthermore, Hampshire College in Amherst specifically sets aside a portion of its budget to offer about \$25,000 in financial aid assistance to undocumented students.¹⁰ Thus, it is crucial to apply to a college that is undocumented-friendly and opens its grant and loan opportunities to students without a social security number.

TIMELINE FOR PREPARING FINANCIAL AID

Overview

The purpose of this “Timeline for Preparing Financial Aid” is to have you think that the financial aid application process, particularly for undocumented students, is long and very complex. In this article, we want to split up the application into a step-by-step process that will break up a seemingly impossible bureaucratic obstacle into tiny, bite size pieces. The most important document you will need in the financial aid process are your parents’ or guardian’s tax documents. Your parents or guardians may be hesitant to file taxes or share them with your colleges because they may be afraid of the legal consequences. However, it is crucial that you explain to your parents that *their tax information will stay confidential—to be shared only between them and the financial aid administrator*. If your parents or guardians do not consent to filing taxes, have them get in touch with a CAP member and we will explain the pros and cons of filing taxes and their necessity for the college application process. If they still do not consent to filing taxes, no fear. In this case, it will be necessary to call your potential colleges individually and discuss their individual policies for applying to financial aid without the necessary tax documents.

It is necessary to start thinking about financial aid as early as freshman and sophomore year because undocumented students have several important decisions to make regarding how they plan to go about funding their higher education. Among the things they need to think about are whether they will apply for Deferred Action status for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), how they will go about obtaining tax records, as well as which schools they are interested in so that they can begin calling them individually to have an idea of what grants, scholarships, and loans are available to them. The step of individually contacting schools is *especially* important for schools in Massachusetts because in-state tuition is recent (it was only approved in 2012) and many schools are still scrambling to figure out what opportunities to make available for undocumented students. Thus, undocumented students need to do a bit more research to get a sense of what financial opportunities are available to them when they are looking at what colleges to apply to. Do not be afraid to call your college’s financial aid office or the CSS Profile company. You do not have to give your name when you call, just present your question and the representatives will provide you with the information you need. For more information on how to call these financial aid offices or other financial aid resources (see the “Phone Templates” section of this manual).

9 "Passion for Action Scholarship," Wheelock College, 2014, accessed April 5, 2014, <http://www.wheelock.edu/admissions/financial-aid-undergraduate/scholarships-and-grants/passion-for-action-scholarship-program>.

10 "New Endowment Funds Undocumented Students," Hampshire College, July 2012, accessed April 5, 2014, <http://www.hampshire.edu/news/new-endowment-funds-undocumented-students-24356.htm>.

Freshman and Sophomore Year of High School

Section Highlights:

- ▶ Apply for DACA status
- ▶ Convince parents to file taxes

As previously discussed, freshman year is a time to get used to high school and to make sure you are working hard to keep high grades. However, it is also important to take advantage of this time when expectations are not soaring through the roof yet. It is crucial to use freshman year to become involved with a local community organization such as Act on a Dream, Student Immigrant Movement (SIM), or the College Access Program to start gathering information about what you should expect the college application process to look like.

More importantly, it is necessary to use this time to apply for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. If you do this freshman or sophomore year, you do not have to go through the bureaucratic obstacles of applying for the status *while simultaneously* dealing with the college application process. Even though the DACA status only lasts two years and you will have to renew your status by senior year, if you have your application approved, the renewal process will be much simpler and consequently less stressful.

Last but not least, find out whether your parents are filing for taxes. If they are not filing for taxes, make sure to convince them to start applying for taxes. This is important for a variety of reasons. First, to receive in-state tuition benefits the state schools of Massachusetts need evidence that you have been living in the state before applying to college. Second, tax records will be crucial pieces of information when filling out the CSS profile and other scholarships during your senior year of high school. CAP has seen many high school seniors panic during their senior year because they realized that their parents did *not* file taxes and they had an incredibly stressful time trying to apply for financial aid during their senior year which is why encourage you to find out *now* in order to avoid the stress later.

Junior Year of High School

Section Highlights

- ▶ File for taxes if you make over \$8,000 per year
- ▶ Call your potential colleges individually to ask about the financial aid application process for undocumented students

Ideally, by this point you will have convinced your parents to file their taxes and you will have already obtained your DACA status. Now, 16 years old is the legal age limit to work. At this point, you may be making your own money. If this is the case, make sure to file your own taxes (1040 EZ form) if you make over 8,000 dollars per year. Otherwise, at least have an idea of how much you earn and your spending habits because these are both questions that will appear on the CSS profile.

Most important, junior year is the time where you start thinking about what colleges you might be interested in. At this point, it is crucial to research what the financial options available to undocumented students are at the colleges that you are interested in. Each school has a “Tuition and Fees” tab on their school website and they also have the contact information for their financial aid office. Call or email the financial aid office and ask about:

- ▶ What scholarships are available to undocumented students, TPS status, or DACA students?
- ▶ Does the school offer loans or alternative loan options that students without a social security number can apply for?
- ▶ Are there on-campus, part-time jobs available for students without a social security number?
- ▶ Does the financial aid office have experience working with undocumented students?
- ▶ Are there any grants available for undocumented students?
- ▶ **Most important question: What is the financial aid application process for an undocumented student for your particular university?**

For more information about contacting financial aid offices, check out the “Phone Template” Sections of this manual.

07 | DECISION-MAKING

Congratulations! You've made it through the college application process! You've already survived the biggest step! As admission letters start to flow in, you should start to consider which school would be the best fit for you. This is one of the most important decisions you will make in your young life, and a lot will influence your ultimate choice of school! Below is a list of things you should be considering during your decision-making process.

- ▶ Programs at each school
- ▶ Does this school offer the majors you're interested in?
- ▶ Money (Which school is offering the best financial aid/grants?)
- ▶ Does the school offer institutional loans that undocumented students can apply for?
- ▶ Do they offer a job on campus?
- ▶ How much are you getting in grants?
- ▶ Is there any support for undocumented students? If so, is it financial aid related? Is the financial office polite and cooperative with you?
- ▶ Distance
- ▶ Do you want to go far from home? Do you want to live in a dorm or to commute?
- ▶ Culture
- ▶ What social scene are you looking for? Do you prefer a small or large campus? What class size do you prefer? Are you looking for close relationship with your professors?

As you answer these questions, hopefully one of the amazing schools to which you have been admitted emerges as the one with the best combination of your desired factors. You really want to choose a place that will help you thrive and grow as a person, student, and professional.

If money is an issue, explore the work, scholarship, and loan opportunities that you can receive from your dream school. If in the end you decide it would be more convenient to attend a different school, that's okay – just don't throw your dream college out the window solely because of the finances. Please refer to our financial aid and scholarship sections as a guide. Remember that while this decision might be difficult, this is a truly fortunate position to be in!

Section Highlights

- ▶ Undocumented students are allowed to take domestic flights, as long as they have some form of I.D. (this can be a state I.D. or a passport from their country of origin)
- ▶ Learn how to contact your admissions and financial aid office via phone and e-mail
- ▶ Inform yourself about the legal resources available in your area

MAIL TEMPLATES

As an undocumented student, you will need to be in constant contact with your financial aid advisor and the admissions office representatives of your college(s). As each school has its own policy regarding grants, employment, and application procedures for undocumented students, it's vital to contact the admissions or financial aid offices with any questions you might have regarding your application. It can be nerve-racking to speak to official representatives, but it gets easier with time. To get you started, here are a few templates to use when contacting your college(s) by phone or e-mail.

Whom to call: Before thinking about how to contact college offices, first you have to be sure whom to call. Depending on your question, you will need to contact a specific office. See below to get an idea of whom to call:

Financial Aid > Grants/Tuition Payment > Call: Financial Aid Office

Application Process > Fee Waivers > Call: College Admissions Office

E-mail templates

E-mail is a great way to reach your financial aid advisor or admissions officer because you can spend more time crafting your letter and making sure that you're asking all your questions. Most financial aid and admissions offices take 3 to 5 days to respond, however, due to the amount of e-mails they receive. If your matter is urgent or time sensitive, it's best to call the college directly.

Some questions you may want to ask are:

- ▶ What is your financial aid policy regarding undocumented students?
- ▶ Are undocumented students eligible for part-time work at school to help meet costs?
- ▶ Does your college offer loans to undocumented students?
- ▶ What is the application process for undocumented students? Are there any additional forms or essays I need to complete?
- ▶ Are undocumented students eligible to participate in your visiting program?
- ▶ My family is experiencing financial difficulties; how do I apply for a fee waiver to your college?

E-mail structure

When contacting an office, make sure to include the following in your e-mail:

- ▶ Address: E.g. "Dear Financial Aid Office Representative," (Most colleges have a general e-mail address for their entire financial aid or admissions office, so you might not know the name of the person you are contacting.)
- ▶ Introduction: Make sure to introduce yourself. You don't have to include your name if you prefer to remain anonymous. You can simply say, "I am a high school senior preparing to apply to your college and I have a few questions regarding your application/financial aid policy for undocumented students."

- ▶ Question: If you have several questions, the most efficient way to ask them is in list form. This way, it is easier for the person answering your e-mails to read all of your questions and address them separately.
- ▶ Appreciation: Make sure to thank the person for taking the time to answer your questions. Feel free to include something to the effect of: “I would really appreciate any information you may have regarding these issues,” at the end of you message.
- ▶ Signature: End your letter with, “Thank you, [your name]” or “Sincerely, A high school senior”

Additional notes:

- ▶ Professional e-mail address: Since you are contacting colleges, you will want to make sure that your e-mail address is professional. You will want to contact schools with an e-mail such that includes your name and not, for example, your favorite band from middle school. If you don't already have a simple and professional e-mail, consider creating one now.
- ▶ Proofread: Remember to read over your e-mails to make sure your message is clear and you don't have any spelling or grammar errors.
- ▶ Example E-mail Template: This is an actual e-mail a high school senior sent to Middlebury College regarding fee waivers for the colleges she planned on applying to. This is a good example because she addresses the college representative, introduces herself, and asks for the fee waiver procedure.

Good afternoon Financial Aid Office Representative,

My name is “Jessie” and I am a rising senior at “Burlington High School,” in “Burlington, Massachusetts.” I am proud to say that I’m a first-generation, Latina high school student with an unshakeable devotion to learning culture and despite the difficulties involved, a resilient interest in applying to Middlebury College. Passionate about public service and languages, my major of interest is Spanish with a Linguistic minor. In my college research, I immediately recalled the name Middlebury College as a proclaimed liberal-arts college. Your disciplined academics, plethora of classes, and passionate student are exactly what I am looking for to satiate my natural curiosity and love of learning. I have worked diligently throughout high school to showcase my love for spreading Spanish culture: Spanish Club, Spanish Honor Society establishment, Spanish movie nights, Dia de Los Muertos Masks for local children, and Spanish lessons to the Special Needs program at the school that is not normally exposed to foreign languages. I would be a good fit for Middlebury College because I know how to make the most of my opportunities, use my resources effectively and how to put my skills to use to achieve tangible, social benefits. With your extensive curriculum, many activities such as the Center for Social Entrepreneurship, and commitment to language instruction, I firmly believe I would flourish at Middlebury if given the opportunity.

I received a flyer for the Middlebury-Monterey Language Academy, but it was too expensive for a summer program for my family. With the financial need my family has, the application process is difficult. Do you know of any options or opportunities available for fee waiver at Middlebury College? Also, are there any upcoming diversity weekends or special opportunities to visit the college campus? I appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

“Jessie Ramirez”

- ▶ Phone Templates
 - ▶ Contacting a college admissions or financial aid office on the phone is useful because it allows you to get your question answered immediately. However, this requires you to think on your feet and to have your questions at hand. We understand that calling a college representative can cause students to feel a bit nervous, so we created a template that we hope will help make your call go more smoothly.
- ▶ Structure
 - ▶ Step One: Write your question(s) down on a piece of paper, just in case you forget it or you get nervous Make sure you are calling the correct office (admissions office/financial aid office)
 - ▶ Step Two: Make sure you are calling the correct office (admissions office/financial aid office)
 - ▶ Step Three: Call the office

- ▶ Step Four: If the office representatives can't answer your question, make sure to have them direct you to someone who can answer your question.
- ▶ Template: Hello, I just had a general question about your (admission/tuition/financial aid) policies concerning undocumented students....
 - ▶ ...if you can help me, that would great!
 - ▶ ...if not, can you direct me to someone who can?
- ▶ Notes:
 - ▶ Leaving contact information: If the college representative is not available to answer your question, make sure to leave your contact information for them to get back to you, or you can tell them that you can call back at a later time.
 - ▶ Tone: We understand that in some situations, you may get frustrated or feel very nervous. Remember to always keep a relaxed, steady, professional tone. Keeping calm will help you get your questions answered more quickly.
 - ▶ Appreciation: Regardless of whether the representative is helpful or not, remember to thank them for their time.
 - ▶ Name: If you feel uncomfortable giving your name, not a problem! Just say, "I'm a high school senior interested in applying to your college and I have a question about..."

TRAVEL INFORMATION

Overview

There are many misconceptions regarding travel and airport security for undocumented students. The process may be unfamiliar and seem confusing, however it is actually very simple and convenient. TSA screenings for domestic flights prioritize passenger safety, not migratory regulations. TSA is not out to deport you.

Accepted Forms of ID

With DACA, undocumented students can apply for state-issued photo I.D.s, such as a basic photo I.D. or Driver's License, which can be used to board domestic flights. If you don't have a state I.D., you can also use a Government Photo I.D. (like a passport) from your country of citizenship. To obtain a passport, contact your country's embassy.

Make sure your I.D.s are current. State-issued I.D.s or Licenses can only be used within one year of their expiration as a form of I.D. at airports. When purchasing an airline ticket, make sure your name matches the name on your state-issued ID, including maiden names and hyphens. If you are over 18, you may not use your high school I.D. to board a plane. Do not under any circumstances show your consulate card at the airport or any expired or altered forms of ID should people ever use expired or altered ID?. If you have any questions about whether your I.D. or your parent's I.D. will be accepted at the airport security check, call the TSA or consult a CAP member. You can find their contact information online, or you can call the airport that you will fly through.

Law Resources

- ▶ Legal Resources for Dreamers: A project of Curran & Berger LLP and E4FC
- ▶ http://www.curranberger.com/dreamact/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1:legal-resource-page-for-undocumented-students&catid=2:uncategorised&Itemid=101
- ▶ Look for Immigration "legal aid," "clinic," "pro bono," or "free services" in your area; more prevalent in some areas (universities, areas with higher immigrant populations)

Other Established Resources

- ▶ College Board Repository for Undocumented Students (by state): http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/Repository-Resources-Undocumented-Students_2012.pdf
- ▶ Educators for Fair Consideration: How to Support College-Bound Undocumented Students: Advice for Parents; http://e4fc.org/images/E4FC_ParentGuide.pdf
- ▶ National Immigration Law Center: <http://www.nilc.org/basic-facts-instate.html>

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