



Association of American Universities

Statement

on

Creating Higher Education Opportunities for Undocumented Students

Throughout our nation, thousands of young people who have come with their families to the United States from other countries, most as children, are growing up and attending school here. This is the only country that most of these undocumented students have known. Upon graduation from high school, many of them wish to continue their education so that they can achieve their full potential as participants in the American workforce and contributors to society.

The Association of American Universities, a national association that represents leading public and private research universities in the United States, strongly supports action by the states to give thousands of young people who have come to this country as children the opportunity to receive a college education and to make their full contribution to American society. At least a dozen states have enacted laws that enable students, if they have attended school in the state, graduated from a high school in the state, and met other requirements, to qualify, regardless of their immigration status, for in-state tuition at public colleges and universities, and to be eligible for state-funded scholarships and student financial aid.

These state laws take many forms, but at their heart, they send a simple message to young people who, though undocumented through no fault of their own, have effectively grown up American: we want and expect them to pursue their aspirations, and we want and expect them to contribute to our society. Moreover, these laws help to achieve the goal our nation has set of having the world's highest proportion of college graduates by 2020. Meeting this challenge is important to our nation's global competitiveness; these laws ensure that we do not effectively disqualify thousands of students from helping us to do so.

The drive to pass such state laws has accelerated, and AAU encourages states to build on this momentum. AAU applauds the enactment of state laws that allow undocumented students who meet state requirements to pay in-state tuition and state laws that support the ability of autonomous public institutions to achieve comparable goals through their own tuition residency guidelines. We also applaud state laws, such as the DREAM Act recently enacted in California, which allow students, regardless of immigration status, also to participate in state-funded financial aid programs and to be eligible to receive state-funded scholarships. To promote opportunity and to strengthen our economy and society, we urge other states to pass legislation which will provide higher education opportunities to these students.

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