

# Accessing College as an Undocumented Student

## In California

ECMC is committed to the success of all students, regardless of their immigration status. In this changing economy, skills and qualifications that are obtained through education beyond high school are becoming more important to earning a family-wage job. We've gathered some resources to help guide you through the process of accessing and succeeding in college as an undocumented student in California.

According to The Migration Policy Institute, approximately 146,000 undocumented students (ages 3-17) reside in California.

### In-State Tuition Equity

The California Dream Act allows undocumented and nonresident students (U.S. citizens and eligible noncitizens) who qualify for a nonresident exemption under Assembly Bill 540 (AB 540) to receive certain types of financial aid, such as private scholarships funded through public universities, state-administered financial aid, university grants, community college fee waivers and Cal Grants.

In addition, the California Dream Act allows eligible students to pay in-state tuition at any public college in California. Students who live in California and meet the eligibility requirements for a nonresident exemption, as well as students who have a U Visa or TPS status, can use the California Dream Act Application (CADAA). Similarly, students without Social Security numbers or students who have lost DACA status (or never applied for DACA) may still be eligible. The full language of the law and eligibility requirements is stated in CA Education Code 68130.5 (<https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/education-code/edc-sect-68130-5>).

To be eligible, students must satisfy either requirement 1 or 2 AND satisfy any option from requirement 3:

1. Three or more years of full-time attendance or attainment of equivalent credits earned in California from the following schools (or any combination thereof):
  - High school
  - Adult school
  - Community college (credit or non-credit courses)

2. Three or more years of full-time high school coursework and attended a combination of elementary, middle and/or high school in California for a combined total of three or more years.
3. Graduation and/or transfer requirements:
  - Graduate from a California high school
  - Obtain a GED, HiSET or TASC in California
  - Attain an associate degree from a California Community College
  - Fulfilled the minimum transfer requirements to transfer from a California Community College to a University of California or California State University

In addition, the following requirements must be met to qualify for AB 540 status:

- Will register or enroll in an accredited and qualifying California college or university
- If applicable, complete an AB 540 affidavit stating that you will legalize your immigration status as soon as you are eligible—your college is responsible for verifying your AB 540 eligibility; check with your Admissions and Records Office early in the summer before the fall term starts to complete the required AB 540 affidavit
- Do not hold a valid non-immigrant visa (A, B, C, D, E, F, J, H, L, etc.), except persons granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or hold a U Visa

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## Cal Grant

A Cal Grant is money for college you don't have to pay back. To qualify, you must submit for the California Dream Act Application (CADAA) by the deadline and meet the eligibility and financial requirements as well as any minimum GPA requirements. Cal Grants can be used at any University of California, California State University or California Community College, as well as qualifying independent and career colleges or technical schools in California.

There are three kinds of Cal Grants (A, B and C), but you don't have to decide which one to apply for. Your eligibility will be based on your CADAA responses, your verified Cal Grant GPA, the type of California college(s) you list on your FAFSA and whether you're a recent high school graduate.

Cal Grants are for students who are pursuing an undergraduate degree or vocational or career education. In addition to meeting the financial criteria and Cal Grant requirements, you must:

- Submit the CADAA and your verified Cal Grant GPA by the deadline
- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen or meet AB 540 eligibility criteria
- Be a California resident for one year
- Attend a qualifying California college
- Not have a bachelor's or professional degree
- Have financial need at the college of your choice
- Have family income and assets below the minimum levels
- Be enrolled or plan to enroll in a program leading to an undergraduate degree or certificate
- Be enrolled or plan to enroll at least half time
- Have registered with the U.S. Selective Service (if required to do so)
- Not owe a refund on any state or federal grant or be in default on a student loan
- Not be incarcerated
- Maintain the Satisfactory Academic Progress standards as established by the school

Recipients who do not meet the standards are ineligible for a Cal Grant payment and will not use eligibility during the terms they are ineligible for payment.

## California College Promise Grant

For eligible California residents, the California College Promise Grant permits enrollment fees to be waived. (Assistance for the purchase of books and supplies must be applied for separately.)

Many California Community Colleges offer online California College Promise Grant applications through [www.cccapply.org](http://www.cccapply.org). When you use these financial aid online applications, the data you've entered in CCCApply will be transferred automatically, making your financial aid application much easier and faster.

In addition, the form for applying for the California College Promise Grant is available via PDF at [www.cccapply.org/en/money/california-college-promise-grant](http://www.cccapply.org/en/money/california-college-promise-grant).

## Scholarships

There are many scholarship providers who are interested in helping students, regardless of their immigration status. The following resources have scholarships, both nationally and California-based, that undocumented students may be eligible for:

- <https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/list-of-scholarships-and-fellowships>
- [www.maldef.org/resources/scholarship-resources](http://www.maldef.org/resources/scholarship-resources)
- <https://scholarshipsaz.org/scholarships>
- [www.edvisors.com/scholarships/college-scholarships/undocumented-student-scholarships](http://www.edvisors.com/scholarships/college-scholarships/undocumented-student-scholarships)
- <https://getschooled.com/article/1320-scholarships-for-undocumented-documented-students-get-that-money>

You may also do your own online scholarship search using terms such as "non-need based," "merit-based" or "no FAFSA required."

## Help Yourself

Concurrent enrollment (also known as dual enrollment) is an opportunity to take college courses while in high school. Students can start earning four-year transferable credits, explore careers and adapt to college-level courses without having to pay tuition costs. Additionally, students enrolled in Early College High Schools (ECHS) and Middle College High Schools (MCHS) can earn college credit through dual enrollment and concurrent enrollment strategies. ECHS are innovative partnerships between public or charter secondary schools and local community colleges that allow high school students to earn both their high school diplomas and associate degrees with typically minor cost to the student. MCHS are secondary schools located on a college campus offering challenging academic programs and designed to serve high-potential, high-risk students. MCHS offer effective support services, small class sizes and the opportunity for students to concurrently take some college classes at typically minor cost to the student. For more information, contact your high school counselor.

## Keep Your Grades Up

Make yourself a competitive candidate for college admissions and scholarship applications by keeping your grades up, taking challenging classes and participating in extracurricular activities. Some highly selective private colleges and universities offer very generous financial aid packages to outstanding high school students, regardless of immigration status. The more comprehensive your application is, the more options you will have for your education beyond high school.

## Need More Information?

The College Place is here to help you with free college-planning resources and personal advice. Visit our website at [www.ecmc.org/TCP](http://www.ecmc.org/TCP).