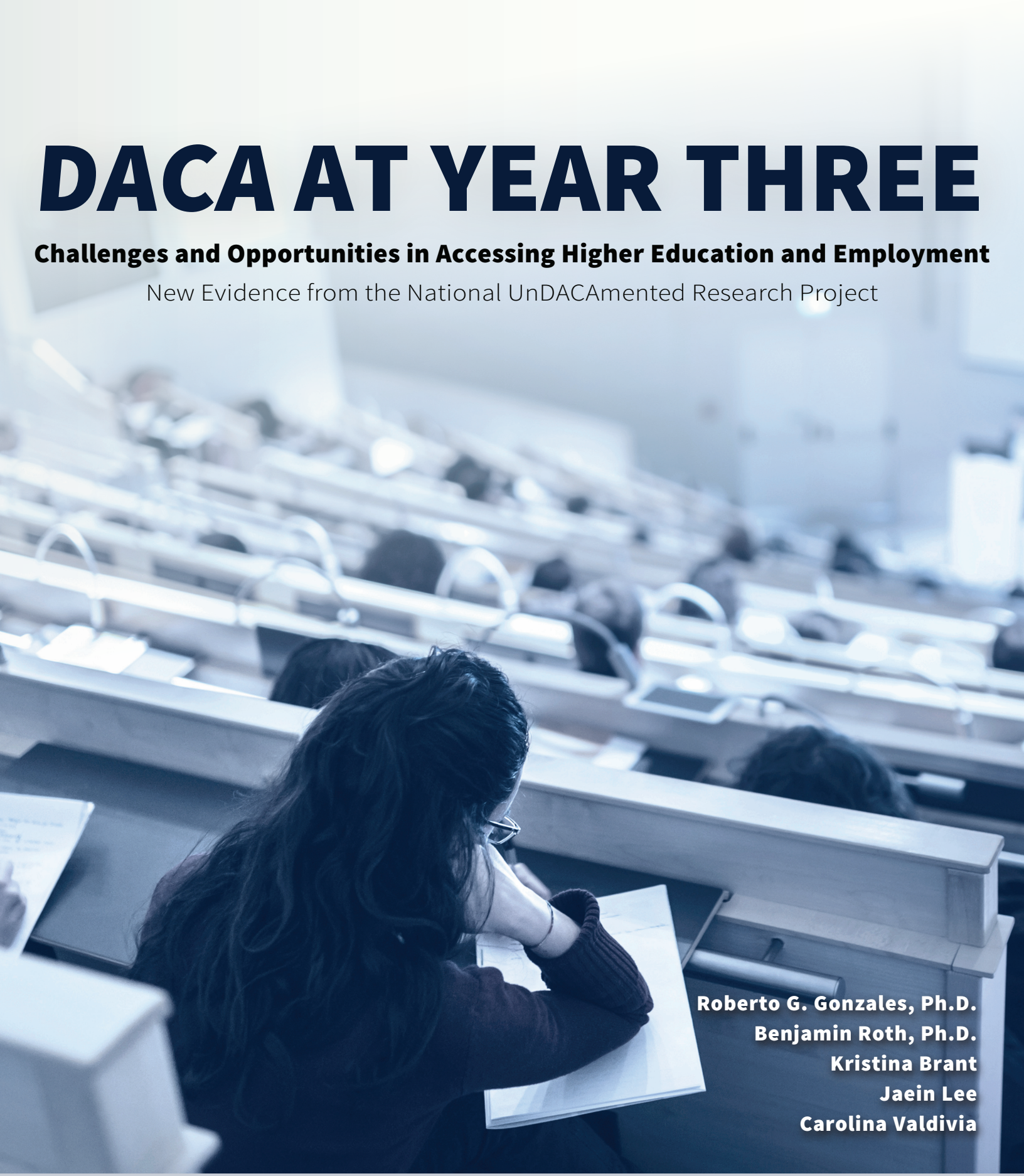
DACA AT YEAR THREE

Challenges and Opportunities in Accessing Higher Education and Employment

New Evidence from the National UnDACAmented Research Project



Roberto G. Gonzales, Ph.D.
Benjamin Roth, Ph.D.
Kristina Brant
Jaein Lee
Carolina Valdivia

American Immigration Council

NURP
NATIONAL UNDACAMENTED RESEARCH PROJECT

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Roberto G. Gonzales, Ph.D., is the Principal Investigator of the National UnDACAmented Research Project (NURP) and Assistant Professor of Education at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. His research focuses on the factors that promote and impede the educational progress of immigrant and Latino students. Professor Gonzales is also the author of the new book *Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America*, based on a twelve-year study examining the adolescent and adult transitions of undocumented immigrant youth.

Benjamin Roth, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor at the University of South Carolina College of Social Work. He earned a Ph.D. in social welfare policy at the University of Chicago. His research focuses on how processes of immigrant integration are shaped by structural factors such as legal status and local policies. His current projects include a study of immigrant-serving organizations in the South and the integration of unaccompanied minors in the United States.

Kristina Brant is a Sociology Ph.D. candidate, Presidential Scholar, and Doctoral Fellow in the Multidisciplinary Program in Inequality and Social Policy at Harvard University. Her research explores persistent, concentrated poverty in the Deep South and rural Appalachia. In this work, she hopes to combine in-depth ethnographic fieldwork and quantitative analysis.

Jaein Lee is a doctoral student at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Her research focuses on the structural and cultural factors conditioning immigrant youths' identities, and more specifically, the impact of policies on immigrant youths' academic performance and their access to higher education. Prior to Harvard, she worked as a research analyst at Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

Carolina Valdivia is a doctoral student and Ford Foundation Pre-Doctoral Fellow at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Her work explores the ways through which immigrant illegality impacts the lives of immigrant youth and their families, including their educational trajectories and their civic and political participation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Undocumented immigrant youth represent a largely untapped source of talent. They have gone through the U.S. public school system but, until recently, many have been stymied in their quest for higher education and relevant careers because they have not been eligible for in-state tuition at public colleges and universities, putting higher education out of reach financially. Even for those who could obtain a degree, work in their chosen field was not available to them due to their current status.

The situation of many of these young people changed in June 15, 2012, when President Obama introduced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program—an enforcement policy that temporarily defers deportations from the United States for an estimated 1.9 million eligible undocumented youth and young adults, in addition to providing temporary Social Security numbers and two-year work permits. More than three years into the program, by September 30, 2015, nearly 700,000 undocumented youth and young adults had obtained DACA status.

Shortly after the implementation of DACA, the National UnDACAmented Research Project (NURP) was launched in an effort to better understand how a range of young immigrants within the DACA-eligible population are accessing the program and how DACAmented young adults are experiencing their new status. Our interviews with DACA beneficiaries (the "DACAmented") provide important insight into how DACA has broadened the educational and work opportunities for undocumented young people. DACA improved their access to public universities, trade schools, and additional scholarship opportunities. With work authorization, college-going DACA beneficiaries were better able to meet their tuition needs while also balancing work and school responsibilities. In the workforce, they experienced a newfound access to more stable jobs with higher pay, better benefits, and less stressful working conditions. Among a range of DACA beneficiaries, many expressed a sense of new hope in their abilities to achieve those goals.

DACA has helped its beneficiaries find employment and increase their earnings. But, even with better jobs, not all DACA beneficiaries in our study were able to afford tuition at four-year institutions. Instead, many found job-training programs in the trades at community colleges and even at local community-based organizations.

In addition to lower tuition costs, many of the short-term certificate programs they enrolled in offered flexible class schedules that allowed students to work while pursuing their degrees. Participating in these non-residential programs also allowed them to live at home and to save money for tuition that would otherwise go towards dormitories or other independent living expenses. Some DACA beneficiaries view these programs as stepping stones to a four-year program. Others pursue them as gateways to a specialized career in a secure industry. Their work permits provide them the assurance that they will be competitive for employment in many of these industries after completion of the program.

Those receiving DACA while still in high school described an immediate change in their motivation; attending college and working in their dream fields had become a real option for them. Those who received DACA while in college also reported increased motivation, realizing that they would be able to pursue jobs in their desired fields after graduation. For these young people, the opportunities DACA has afforded them have resulted in a renewed hope, more concrete goals, and better performance at school and at work.

Despite these promising opportunities, a number of barriers still stand in the way of DACAmented young adults' dreams. In particular, where one resides within the United States dramatically shapes a multitude of experiences based on local impediments and opportunities. Lack of access to financial aid and in-state tuition in many states continues to block many DACA beneficiaries from enrolling in college and completing their degrees. Without financial aid, DACA beneficiaries must work long hours, taking away from the time they can spend on schoolwork. Not only do these barriers decrease their ability to attend school continuously or full-time, they also affect their ability to perform well in school, especially compared to their documented peers who do not face this added financial hardship.

Many DACA beneficiaries have utilized their increased opportunities for post-secondary education and work authorization to obtain training for specialized vocations. Nevertheless, many of these specialized vocations require a professional license in order to gain employment. Today, nearly 30 percent of all jobs require a license. License requirements vary from state to state. At least 190 occupations require

state licenses in some states, and 93 occupations are licensed in all states. In some states, state-issued licenses are restricted to citizens and legal permanent residents. Additionally, in some, a federal law has been interpreted to prevent a state from providing licenses to a number of categories of non-citizens including DACA. In these states, many DACA beneficiaries are prevented from working in the occupations for which they are educated. Some are even precluded from education programs that require clinical training, such as nursing. Because these laws vary across states, and even across professions within a state, it is extremely difficult for DACA beneficiaries to know which paths are available to them and which are not.

Many respondents told us that their teachers and counselors were very supportive and encouraged them to pursue post-secondary education. But many did not fully understand the legal landscape their students were required to navigate, nor were they fully equipped to provide guidance and assistance for these students. There were even a few instances where school personnel discouraged respondents from pursuing higher education or provided them with incorrect information.

Importantly, then, DACAmented young people face different combinations of opportunities and barriers depending on the state where they live and on local community and school contexts. In one state they might have access to in-state tuition, state scholarships, and the ability to obtain a license to get a job in the profession for which they have been educated. The same DACA beneficiary in another state may not have access to any of these resources or opportunities due to state laws. This state-level variation makes it extremely important that school counselors, teachers, and other academic advisors are aware of the opportunities and restrictions available to DACAmented youth in their state.

INTRODUCTION

Owing to long-term structural trends in the U.S. economy, having a post-secondary degree is no longer a luxury, but a must for anyone who wishes to successfully compete in today's labor market and command a living wage. Beyond higher salaries, college graduates are also more likely than others to enjoy better health and employment-related benefits, such as employer-provided health insurance and pension benefits. Between 2012 and 2022, total employment in the United States is projected to increase by 10.8 percent, or 15.6 million. Occupations that require post-secondary education for entry are expected to grow faster than those requiring a high school diploma or less. In particular, the health care and social assistance sector is projected to account for one-third of the total increase in jobs.[1]

There is a pool of immigrant talent residing in the United States that could fill more jobs at high skill and educational levels. Immigrants represent a growing segment of the U.S. labor force. But their participation is bifurcated. Many immigrants are clustered in construction, food service, agriculture, private households, and the accommodation sector, where they make up between one-fifth and one-half of the total workforce. On the other hand, many immigrants also fill jobs at high skill and educational levels.[2]

Undocumented immigrant youth represent a largely untapped source of talent. They have gone through the U.S. public school system but, until recently, many have been stymied in their quest for higher education and relevant careers because they have not been eligible for in-state tuition at public colleges and universities, putting higher education out of reach financially. Even for those who could obtain a degree, work in their chosen field was not available to them due to their undocumented status.

The situation of many of these young people changed on June 15, 2012, when President Obama introduced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program—an enforcement policy that temporarily defers deportations from the United States for an estimated 1.9 million eligible undocumented youth and young adults, in addition to providing temporary Social Security numbers and two-year work permits.[3] More than three years into the program, by September 30, 2015, nearly 700,000 undocumented youth and young adults had obtained DACA status.[4]

Shortly after the implementation of DACA, the National UnDACAmented Research Project (NURP) was launched in an effort to better understand how a range of young immigrants within the DACA-eligible population are accessing the program and how DACAmented young adults are experiencing their new status.[5] This multi-site longitudinal study led by Professor Roberto G. Gonzales at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education is supported by a diverse group of community stakeholders across the United States.

In 2013, NURP carried out a national survey, reaching nearly 2,700 DACA-eligible young adults. Survey findings demonstrated that DACA beneficiaries have experienced a pronounced increase in economic opportunities. Many have obtained new jobs and internships and have increased their earnings.[6] Some have also opened bank accounts and obtained credit cards. All states now permit DACA beneficiaries to obtain driver's licenses, and many beneficiaries have done so.[7] Although the federal government has not interpreted the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to allow DACA beneficiaries to obtain health insurance through ACA exchanges, a significant share have reported obtaining health care since receiving DACA.

In 2015, two years after our survey, NURP initiated its first wave of in-depth interviews of young adult immigrants aged 18-34. To date, 467 interviews have been completed in Arizona, California, Illinois, New York, Georgia, and South Carolina across a range of educational experiences (see Appendix). This carefully drawn sample provides a unique opportunity to understand how DACA is affecting the educational trajectories of a wide range of young adult immigrants. The extensive interview covers several key areas: childhood and early years in the United States; migration history; the impact of DACA; household and neighborhood characteristics; social networks; elementary and secondary education; post-secondary education; work history and finances; civic engagement; health and emotional well-being; interactions with the justice system; and aspirations for the future. In this report, we present our interview findings. We focus on the post-secondary experiences of DACA beneficiaries, describing their demographic characteristics, experiences with DACA, and the local and national contexts that shape their experiences of DACA.

Our DACAmented respondents told us of positive changes to their lives as a result of DACA. The program has increased their access to state colleges and universities. Their earnings have improved as a result of having work permits, and this has helped

beneficiaries finance higher education. There have also been new opportunities for attending trade schools. Overall, DACA is lifting hopes.

Nevertheless, significant barriers to upward mobility remain. These include a lack of access to financial aid and in-state tuition; exclusion from many professional licenses; and lack of understanding among school counselors and teachers as to the rules governing DACA at the federal and state levels.

The Experience of DACA Beneficiaries Varies According to State and Local Context

Perhaps the most important benefit that DACA confers is the work permit. Having the ability to legally work means that DACA beneficiaries can compete for jobs that match their education and experience. As such, DACA gives undocumented immigrant youth a reason to pursue a post-secondary education. DACA also allows beneficiaries the chance to fill entry-level jobs that are stepping stones towards productive careers.

However, access to post-secondary educational opportunities and jobs is not distributed equally across the United States. While congressional inaction has stalled the overhaul of immigration policy at the federal level, several states have taken steps to respond to questions of immigration. This has resulted in a mixed landscape of state policies and practices pertaining to immigrants, thereby making geographic location and local context increasingly important variables in the treatment of immigrants and the opportunities available to them.

While undocumented immigrant young people receive a K-12 education by federal law, they experience varying contexts of incorporation depending on where they live.[8] Some states have opened up access to broader participation—offering undocumented immigrants the ability to apply for driver's licenses and in-state tuition at public universities. Others have adopted a more restrictive stance—for example, by attempting to criminalize unauthorized presence and exclude undocumented immigrants from public universities. This uneven geography of local enforcement and educational access demonstrates that today, perhaps more so than ever before, where one resides within the United States dramatically shapes a multitude of experiences based on local impediments and opportunities.

REALIZED BENEFITS

Our interviews provide important insight into how DACA has broadened the educational and work opportunities for undocumented young people. DACA improved their access to public universities, trade schools, and additional scholarship opportunities. With work authorization, college-going DACA beneficiaries were better able to meet their tuition needs while also balancing work and school responsibilities. In the workforce, they experienced a newfound access to more stable jobs with higher pay, better benefits, and less stressful working conditions. Among a range of DACA beneficiaries, many expressed a sense of new hope in their abilities to achieve those goals.

DACA beneficiaries have increased access to in-state higher education programs

For many of its beneficiaries, DACA has significantly lowered structural barriers that have impeded undocumented students' access to a college education. However, in some states, governments have enacted policies that exclude undocumented immigrants from full access to higher education. For example, for DACAmented students in South Carolina, the road to higher education has been bumpy. Before the implementation of DACA, state policy severely hindered the chances for undocumented high school students in the state to matriculate to institutions of higher education. In 2007, the state legislature passed HB3620, excluding undocumented immigrants from receiving any form of student aid for higher education in South Carolina, including tuition assistance and scholarships. While some students managed to secure scholarships to private institutions, for most students, obtaining a scholarship did not make up for the considerably higher tuition of private colleges and universities.

One year later, HB4400 was signed into law, making South Carolina the first state where undocumented students were altogether prohibited from enrolling in public colleges and universities in the state. However, the state's Commission on Higher Education has since announced that the restrictions of HB4400 would not apply to DACA beneficiaries. But they are still charged non-resident tuition rates to attend South Carolina's public colleges and universities.

This change in state policy had a profound effect on Luis, who moved to South Carolina when he was nine years old. Making ends meet was always a struggle for his mother, who cleaned the houses of more affluent South Carolina families. But she worked very hard so that Luis could have a better life. In school, Luis had many supportive friends and teachers, and he was involved in clubs and extracurricular activities. During senior year, when Luis realized he would not be able to attend college in his home state of South Carolina because of the ban, he was crushed. Although he was accepted to a handful of colleges out-of-state, he was not able to attend because of the cost. Luis recalled:

> When that whole college process started, it definitely hit me hard. It was just really frustrating. I felt like I had put so much work into school, into studying, into making good grades. I went into depression... I started thinking I'm never going to go anywhere and it's all because of some paper I don't have. It was really rough. I was angry all the time.

Instead of pursuing college, Luis worked in restaurants after graduating from high school. He felt as though he was wasting his time. Two years later, his life completely changed when he was approved for DACA. Due to the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education's decision exempting DACA beneficiaries from bans on college enrollment, he could finally attend a local community college. Since then, he has earned 42 credits toward an Associate's degree in Nursing. Luis hopes to continue on to a four-year university once he graduates. As Luis explained, "[DACA] instilled a new hope in me. It's what's driving me forward to do the best I can again and to focus and be responsible."

Improved earnings are helping DACA beneficiaries to access higher education

Household financial struggles invariably impact available resources for college. While parents are generally supportive of their children's post-secondary dreams, they often do not have the financial means to assist. A large majority of DACA beneficiaries live

in low-income households. Our 2013 survey found that 78.1 percent of respondents were eligible for free and reduced lunch during high school, meaning their families made below 180 percent of the federal poverty line. Furthermore, 54.3 percent of our respondents reported that their household was unable to pay utilities at some point during the past year.

DACA has helped its beneficiaries find employment and increase their earnings. Our interviews offer an important window into *how* this has helped DACA beneficiaries gain access to higher education and why access matters in the first place.

Once Layla, a 20-year-old DACA beneficiary from Illinois, received her work permit, she was able to find a job as a sales associate in a department store. The opportunity to earn money lifted the burden from her parents and provided Layla a concrete means for paying for her tuition and books. As a result, she was able to take classes full-time, finishing her Associate's degree in two years. She continues to work, and is saving money to pay for tuition at a four-year university. She hopes to pursue a Bachelor's degree, and even a Master's degree, in Psychology.

When reflecting on these last few years and the importance of DACA in her life, Layla told us:

> "I know what it felt like as being undocumented. I know how it felt being DACAmented. There [are] a lot of benefits to it. I got to enroll in a college. I may not have gotten a FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid], but I did get a job."

Layla's story illustrates the benefits of DACA on the post-secondary pursuits of its beneficiaries. Although DACA beneficiaries are excluded from federal financial aid, many have been able to find higher-paying work opportunities as a result of DACA. This has made it more possible for them to meet many of the expenses associated with post-secondary tuition and related costs.

DACA beneficiaries have better access to trade schools and specialized vocations

DACA has helped its beneficiaries find employment and increase their earnings. But, even with better jobs, not all DACA beneficiaries in our study were able to afford tuition at four-year institutions. Instead, many found job-training programs in the trades at community colleges and even at local community-based organizations. In addition to lower tuition costs, many of the short-term certificate programs they enrolled in offered flexible class schedules that allowed students to work while pursuing their degrees. Participating in these non-residential programs also allowed them to live at home and to save money for tuition that would otherwise go towards dormitories or other independent living expenses. Some DACA beneficiaries view these programs as stepping stones to a four-year program. Others pursue them as gateways to a specialized career in a secure industry. Their work permits provide them the assurance that they will be competitive for employment in many of these industries after completion of the program.

Take Tonya, who moved from Mexico with her family at age three. Tonya had been living on her own in Arizona since her family moved out of state during her freshman year in high school due to an immigration raid at her father's job that left him feeling vulnerable. The family decided to move back to Mexico, leaving Tonya with her aunt so she could finish school. The experience left Tonya feeling discouraged. She left school during her junior year of high school. When DACA was announced in 2012, she felt as though she had been given a second chance. She enrolled in a GED program to qualify for DACA and successfully passed the exam. Bolstered by her success, and with the financial support of a local organization, Tonya enrolled in a medical assistant program. As Tonya explained:

> "Being so restricted, you put yourself down a lot, and you think negative… I don't know where I would be right now, without DACA. I don't know if I would be going to school. I don't know if I would've done my medical assisting. In some ways, I feel like it saved my life."

Tonya successfully completed the program, and is now earning more and loving her job.

In some states, certain licensing boards have begun to consider applicants regardless of immigration status. And in other states, many licensing boards do not request information regarding citizenship status.

Manny's family moved to New York from Mexico when he was three years old. Challenged by the city's high cost of living, Manny's family struggled to make ends meet. Manny started working during his early high school years to help out his parents. Although he had lived in the United States since he was a child, his immigration status limited him to day jobs in sanitation, landscaping, and other low-wage work. After DACA was announced, Manny decided to invest in a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program, which would provide him training to secure a steady job and save for college.

Manny currently works the night shift at a hospital and is enrolled at a four-year university, where he takes classes during the day. The CNA job provides him better pay, working conditions, and benefits, and since his ultimate goal is to work in the medical field, he is gaining invaluable experience at the same time.

As Manny explained:

> "When I didn't have DACA, I was just a day laborer, doing landscaping, a little bit of construction, jobs that would be off the books. Now, with DACA, I was able to return to a trade school and was able to graduate and receive a certification to be a nursing assistant. I'm legally working as that. If it wasn't for DACA, that would not be possible."

Tonya and Manny took advantage of opportunities to pursue medical fields in their respective states. While licensing requirements vary from state to state, many of our respondents have accessed these important opportunities for specialized vocations.

DACA is lifting hopes

As is evident in the above examples, DACA has expanded access to both post-secondary education and job opportunities. As a result, DACA beneficiaries expressed a renewed hope in their abilities to realize their future educational and career goals. These young men and women not only believe college to be an attainable goal, but also see graduate and professional degrees in their future.

This level of optimism was particularly evident among our younger respondents. Those receiving DACA while still in high school described an immediate change in their motivation; attending college and working in their dream fields had become a real option for them. Those who received DACA while in college also reported increased motivation, realizing that they would be able to pursue jobs in their desired fields after graduation. For these young people, the opportunities DACA has afforded them have resulted in a renewed hope, more concrete goals, and better performance at school and at work.

After high school, Jessica enrolled at a private college in South Carolina, made possible by the part-time job and scholarships she was able to receive as a DACA beneficiary. DACA also enabled her to obtain a paid internship at a top medical school. As a college senior applying for medical school, Jessica can see her dreams of being a doctor finally becoming a reality. As Jessica noted:

> “DACA has definitely made it possible. Before DACA, I could not even take the MCAT because I didn’t have a valid ID. Before DACA, I really couldn’t volunteer anywhere so I couldn’t get experience. Since I got DACA, the first thing I started doing was volunteering. I was able to get an internship at the first medical school in the country to announce that they are DACA-friendly… DACA definitely has expanded my opportunities. It has given me hope that my future is not up in the air anymore. I can actually work on something and not be afraid—oh what if this doesn’t happen? I’m not completely undocumented anymore.”

Ultimately, Jessica plans to work as a pediatrician in underserved communities. Harnessing the opportunities DACA has opened up for her, Jessica has forged a path for herself toward a medical degree—a goal that she never thought would be possible for her.

REMAINING BARRIERS

Despite these promising opportunities, a number of barriers still stand in the way of DACAmented young adults' dreams. Lack of access to financial aid and in-state tuition in many states continues to block many DACA beneficiaries from enrolling in college and completing their degrees. In addition, exclusion from certain professional licenses in some states has disappointed DACA beneficiaries who finish vocational programs but still cannot practice in their chosen career industries. Finally, while some DACA beneficiaries cited significant support from teachers and other school staff in forming their post-high school plans, others had difficulty obtaining full and correct information about their post-secondary options and felt under-supported in the process.

Lack of access to financial aid and in-state tuition

Although opportunities to enroll in and finance post-secondary programs have certainly improved, DACAmented students continue to face significant barriers relative to their documented peers. Despite the fact that they spend most of their childhood and adolescence in the United States, graduate from U.S. high schools, and are accepted to U.S. colleges and universities, in most states they are required to pay out-of-state tuition at public colleges and universities (at more than 150 percent of resident tuition).[9] They also cannot receive federal financial aid for their education, which prohibits them from receiving Pell Grants and participating in federally funded work-study programs.

Year after year, tuition rates continue to rise, and even in-state tuition remains a huge financial expense for low-income families. Without financial aid, DACA beneficiaries must work long hours, taking away from the time they can spend on schoolwork. Not only do these barriers decrease their ability to attend school continuously or full-time, they also affect their ability to perform well in school, especially compared to their documented peers who do not face this added financial hardship.

Findings from our interviews provide additional evidence that these barriers are prohibitive for some. At the time of her interview, Pavi, who had immigrated to New York City from Bangladesh as a child, was a high school senior. A straight-A student engaged in numerous extracurricular activities, Pavi was accepted to several competitive universities. However because she was not eligible for financial aid, she faced difficulty trying to raise the funds needed to cover expenses for the first year. As a result, she did not enroll in college this past fall.

While DACA certainly brought Pavi some important benefits, the financial barriers she faces to obtaining a college education discourage her.

> “I’m still undocumented. [DACA] is just allowing me to work at the mall, like normal teenagers, or get a driver’s license, but it still doesn’t mean I will get to go to the college of my choice because I’m not financially able to pay…If I were to get financial aid and get scholarships, then I would be able to go, but DACA doesn’t provide that for me. The main thing that I need right now is a benefit for my education, and DACA doesn’t provide that.”

DACA beneficiaries pay in-state tuition rates in 21 states. They must pay non-resident tuition in states that do not offer in-state rates—as in three of our six study states—making it more difficult to find ways to finance college.

Eric, who grew up in Georgia, was distraught when he realized that, despite meeting the GPA requirement, he was not eligible to apply for a private scholarship that would have covered 90 percent of residency tuition. Even with DACA, Eric faced many barriers to higher education, including a University of Georgia Board of Regents ban that restricts undocumented students from the five most competitive research universities in the state. At all other Georgia public colleges and universities, DACA students are required to pay out-of-state tuition.

With his options severely restricted, Eric chose a university near home. He took a part-time job to earn money for his tuition and, instead of living in the dorms, stayed with

his parents to save money. Still, paying for out-of-state tuition has placed a significant burden on Eric. As he described:

> Paying out-of-state tuition—it's a toll—when peers that graduated when I did are eligible to pay $500 for a class and I have to pay [$1,000].

Eric has high aspirations. He is currently studying physics and hopes to one day work for NASA. Nevertheless, pursuing post-secondary education is a struggle every step of the way. Eric works at night, beginning his shift at 10 p.m. This leaves him little time for rest. He has also taken time off from school to save for tuition and books for the next semester.

Exclusion from occupational and professional licenses

As we discussed earlier, many DACA beneficiaries have utilized their increased opportunities for post-secondary education and work authorization to obtain training for specialized vocations. Nevertheless, many of these specialized vocations require a license in order to gain employment. Today, nearly 30 percent of all jobs require a license. The growing list of licensed occupations includes many jobs in growth areas like medicine, law, and engineering, in addition to entry-level jobs such as dental assistant, land surveyor, hair dresser, cosmetologist, auctioneer, locksmith, and interior designer.

License requirements vary from state to state. At least 190 occupations require state licenses in some states, and 93 occupations are licensed in all states. In some states, state-issued licenses are restricted to citizens and legal permanent residents.[10] Additionally, under one interpretation of a federal law, states are prohibited from providing licenses to certain categories of non-citizens without specific state legislation. Under this interpretation, qualified DACA beneficiaries can be barred from licenses otherwise available under state law. As a result, many DACA beneficiaries are prevented from working in the occupations for which they are educated. Some are even precluded from education programs that require clinical training, such as nursing. Because laws and interpretations vary across states, and even across

professions within a state, it is extremely difficult for DACA beneficiaries to know which paths are available to them and which are not.

While some of our respondents were aware of the restrictions in their state and made career decisions in light of them—choosing specific vocations that did not require licensure—other respondents did not find out about their ineligibility until after they started or finished their programs. Despite investing time, energy, and money into these programs, they were, nevertheless, barred from realizing the benefits of their investments.

After graduating from high school in South Carolina, Martha enrolled in a six-month program in cosmetology at a local community college. Since the school was close to her home and the program was short, she saw this as a financially feasible option to set herself up for a career. Upon finishing the program, however, she was surprised to find out that she could not obtain a license to become a practicing cosmetologist; none of the program staff had told her or her DACAmented peers that they were ineligible for the license. As Martha told us, "…even though I have DACA, I went to school, I got my certificate, but I still didn't get my license. I can't work in that field and I still have DACA."

Across the country in Arizona, Claudia, a 27-year old Mexican, faced an obstacle similar to the one experienced by Martha. Since high school, she loved anatomy, and with a scholarship, she was able to enroll in a 4-year college in a kinesiology and physical therapy program. However, her scholarship was discontinued at the end of her first year, leaving her unable to afford the tuition. Claudia had to leave the program. Seeking an alternative route to her dreams, she enrolled in a massage therapy program.

> "I think it just fed off of the wanting to do the whole physical therapy thing. Since I couldn't get the bachelor's degree in that, I figured a short trade school would do. Closest thing to that would be massage therapy."

However, despite her efforts, Claudia's dream could not be realized because of state licensing laws. Claudia explained:

> I finished my degree fine. The only obstacle that I did have was actually getting a license for it. Even though I have the education and I excelled at it, I never applied to get my license because of my legal status.

Without the license, Claudia was unable to practice, so she had to leave her job as a massage therapist and pursue a new career.

Distinct from medical assistant jobs that do not require licensure, massage therapy is one of the occupations that requires a state license to practice in Arizona.[11] While some states like California have passed laws lifting barriers to professional licenses for DACA beneficiaries,[12] other states like Arizona have not yet addressed this growing problem. For many DACA beneficiaries who view DACA as an opportunity to improve work and life conditions through the work permits the program provides, the experience of being excluded from professional licensure is a great disappointment.

School staff lacks knowledge to empower their students

Under the best of circumstances, DACA beneficiaries have relationships of trust with adults in their school, and these trusted mentors, whether teachers, counselors, or other staff, are knowledgeable about how to advise their DACAmented students on issues related to college and career transitions. Indeed, for some of our respondents, teachers and counselors provided invaluable support in helping them apply to college and identify scholarships for which they were eligible. However, for many others, at least one of these elements was missing. Most of our respondents told us that their teachers and counselors were very supportive and encouraged them to pursue post-secondary education. But more than half felt as though staff at their schools did not fully understand the legal landscape their students were required to navigate, nor were they fully equipped to provide guidance and assistance for these students. There were even a few instances where school personnel discouraged respondents from pursuing higher education or provided them with incorrect information.

While Alex's teachers and counselors at his high school in Georgia encouraged him to pursue college, they were unaware of the obstacles he faced and how to navigate them.

> They were lost. They were like, "Oh, you wanna go to school? Okay, yeah, just apply. Apply for [a local private scholarship]." "You know I don't qualify, right?" Then, they'd be like, "Oh," and then, they'll be lost. They didn't know what to do or what to say to [me]. I guess they don't know that we don't qualify for a lot of stuff… If you're DACA…you don't receive the [information] you need [to pursue] post-secondary school.

Alex attributes the low rate of his DACAmented peers pursuing higher education to his school staff's lack of knowledge of the process.

> That's why a lot of students don't go to post-secondary school 'cause [school personnel] don't inform them well. They don't really have a future 'cause they don't know anything else.

Alex suggested that schools identify and train a special counselor who knows how to help DACAmented students.

Even in California, where DACA beneficiaries are eligible for in-state tuition and state financial aid, many of the respondents voiced frustration with the knowledge vacuum among high school teachers and counselors.

Monica, a college junior in Southern California, felt that her high school severely lacked the resources to help her navigate the college application process. When her counselors could not answer her questions, she resorted to visiting colleges to speak with the administrators directly.

> I feel like [they] could've prepared me better, in terms of dealing with my status and how that would affect my class experience and my adult life. I think just starting there would've been a really great help.

CONCLUSION

DACA has created new opportunities to work and study for hundreds of thousands of undocumented young people who came to the United States as children. Its effects on their lives can be measured by new jobs, higher earnings, and more education—access to real opportunities that they would not have without DACA. This theme was prevalent across our interviews with DACA beneficiaries, along with enormous hope and enthusiasm for the future. Even with great progress, however, DACA beneficiaries continue to confront significant barriers. Barriers such as out-of-state tuition discourage some DACA beneficiaries from higher education, but for others it may simply slow their time to degree. Other barriers, such as the maze of professional licensing requirements and exclusions, can be less forgiving. Depending on the profession and the state, licensing laws may prohibit DACA beneficiaries from practicing in their trained field at all.

Importantly, then, DACAmented young people face different combinations of opportunities and barriers depending on the state where they live and on local community and school contexts. In one state they might have access to in-state tuition, state scholarships, and the ability to obtain a license to get a job in the profession for which they have trained. The same DACA beneficiary in another state may not have access to any of these resources or opportunities due to state laws. This state-level variation makes it extremely important that school counselors, teachers, and other academic advisors are aware of the opportunities and restrictions available to DACAmented youth in their state. In many cases, the DACA beneficiaries in our study found people they trusted who provided them with accurate information that shaped their college and career choices. Many others, however, were fearful to seek help or were frustrated because the information they received was incomplete, inaccurate, or both.

APPENDIX

The NURP Survey

The 2013 NURP survey elicited a total of 2,684 responses, coming from 46 states and the District of Columbia. Respondents generally reflect the demographics of the U.S. undocumented immigrant population: 67.4 percent were born in Mexico, 8.8 percent were born in Central America and the Caribbean, 9.4 percent were born in South America, 10.7 percent were born in Asia and the Pacific Islands, and the remaining 3.8 percent were born in countries outside of these specified regions. Additionally, 82.7 percent of respondents identify as Latino, 9.7 percent as Asian or Pacific Islander, 2.7 percent as Black, and 4.9 percent as some other race/ethnicity (including white). Respondents' median age was 22.7 (at the time of survey completion), and 39.8 percent are male while 59.8 percent are female. More than three-fourths of respondents (76.0 percent) grew up in a two-parent household, and nearly three-fourths of respondents (72.4 percent) come from low-income households. [13]

At the time of the survey, 29.0 percent of our respondents had a high school degree or less; 34.6 percent of respondents had attended some college but had not yet obtained a degree; 15.4 percent of respondents had earned an Associate's degree; and 21.0 percent of respondents had earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. Of those respondents who had some post-secondary educational experience, 42.3 percent had "stopped out" of college at least once during their trajectory. At the time they left, these "college stop outs" had the intention of returning, whether or not they did end up having the opportunity to do so.

The NURP Interview

To date, our interview sample includes 467 young adult immigrants, 87.5 percent of whom are DACA beneficiaries.[14] Of the remaining 12.5 percent, some have applied and are awaiting their approval, some are eligible for DACA, but have not applied (typically due to financial reasons or distrust of government authorities), and some are ineligible as they do not meet the education requirement. At the time of interview, 36.4 percent of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 21, meaning they were 18 or younger at the time of DACA's announcement in 2012; 63.6 percent were aged 22 and above, meaning they were above age 18 when DACA was announced. 38.8 percent are male, while 61.2 percent are female.

Currently, our sample includes 100 respondents from Arizona, 95 respondents from California, 54 respondents from Georgia, 98 respondents from Illinois, 79 respondents from New York, and 41 respondents from South Carolina.

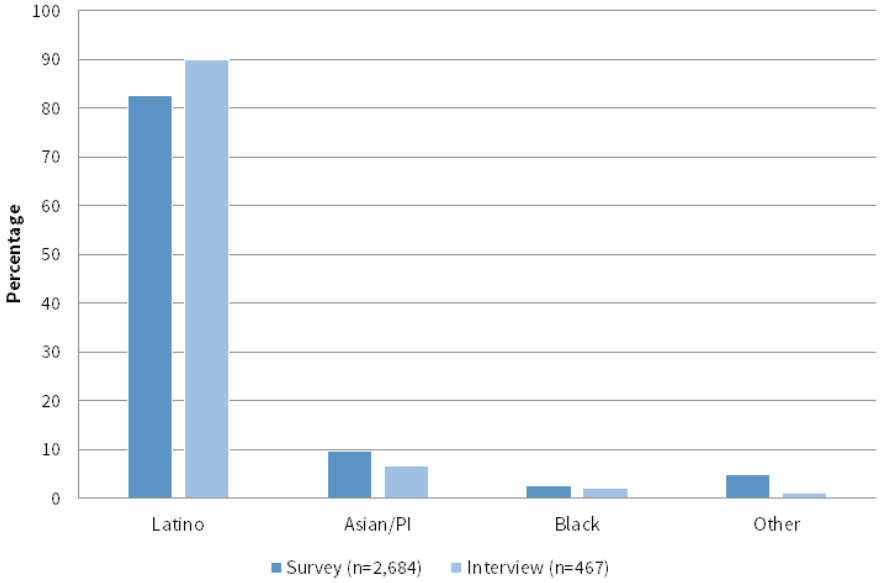
The distributions of both race/ethnicity and country of origin in the interview sample appear quite similar to the distributions in the survey sample. In the interview sample, 79.5 percent were born in Mexico, 6.5 percent were born in Central America and the Caribbean, 5.8 percent were born in South America, 5.8 percent were born in Asia and the Pacific Islands, and the remaining 2.5 percent were born in countries outside of these specified regions. In total, 35 different countries are represented in our interview sample. Additionally, 90.0 percent identify as Latino, 6.7 percent as Asian or Pacific Islander, 2.2 percent as Black, and 1.1 percent as some other race/ethnicity (including white).

Our sampling methodology was purposefully designed to reach respondents with a wide variety of educational backgrounds. In our current sample, 3.4 percent of respondents have never participated in K-12 schooling in the United States; 17.6 percent dropped out or were pushed out at some point during their K-12 experience (whether they returned to high school to earn a diploma, earned a GED, or did not complete either), and did not continue on to a two- or four-year college; 18.4 percent graduated high school without ever dropping out, but did not continue on to a two- or four-year college; 31.0 percent enrolled in a two- or four-year college but stopped out at some point while enrolled (and may or may not have returned to finish their degree); and 29.6 percent graduated from or are currently enrolled in two- or four-year colleges and have never stopped out during their post-secondary schooling.

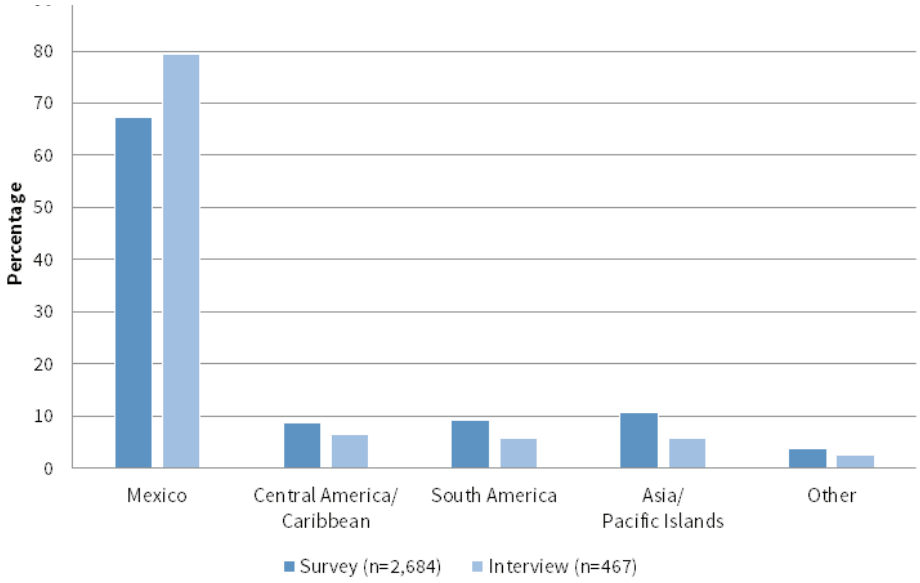
Because our respondents have such diverse educational experiences, they did not all meet the educational requirement included in DACA's provisions at the time of the President's announcement in June 2012. At the time of announcement, 83.7 percent of respondents were immediately eligible for DACA through educational qualifications, meaning they were either enrolled in high school or had previously earned either a high school diploma or GED; 4.3 percent of respondents were immediately eligible for DACA through alternate paths, meaning they had completed or were currently enrolled in a DACA-qualifying education program (i.e. a language or literacy program, vocational/career training program, or GED-prep program); finally, 11.3 percent met all eligibility criteria except the educational requirement, meaning they were not enrolled in high

school or a DACA-qualifying education program, had not graduated from high school, did not have a GED, and had not completed a DACA-qualifying education program. An additional 0.64 percent were ineligible for DACA due to other requirements, such as being above the 34-year-old age limit or traveling outside of the United States in the last five years.

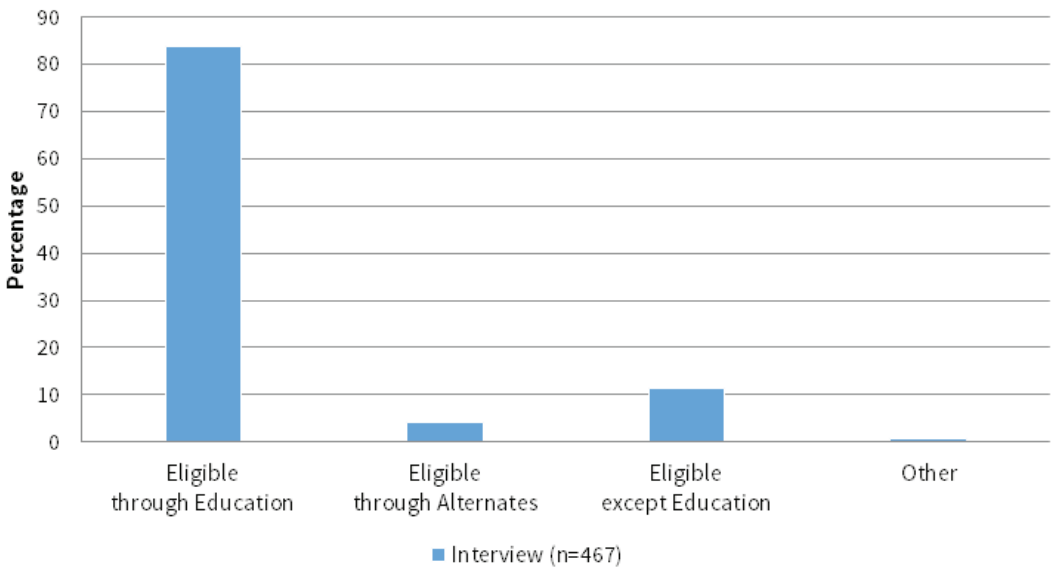
Race/Ethnicity Distribution



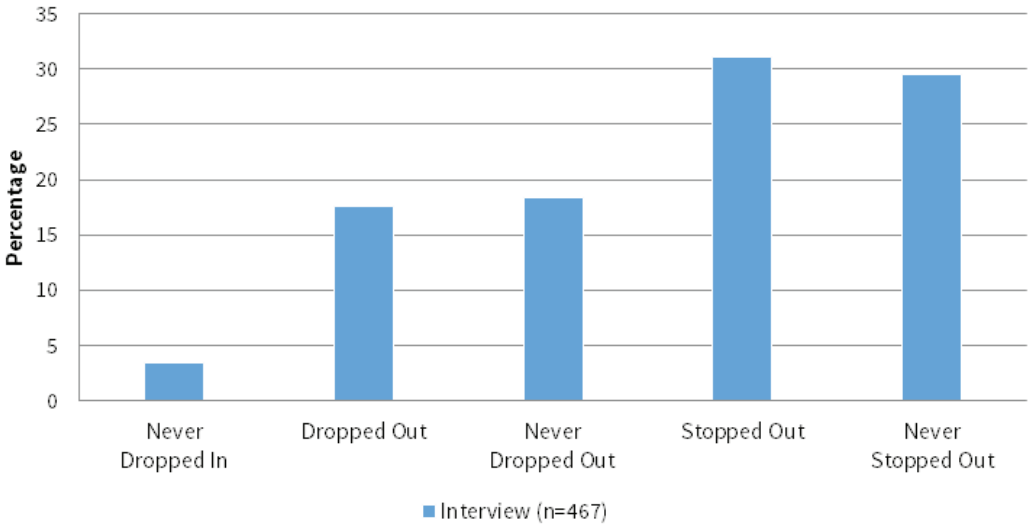
Country of Origin Distribution



DACA Eligibility at DACA Announcement



Educational Trajectory at Time of Interview



The National UnDACAmented Research Project Team

- Roberto G. Gonzales, Principal Investigator
- Kristina Brant, Project Coordinator
- Melanie Reyes, Outreach Coordinator
- Felipe Vargas, Field Coordinator
- Javier Barrera, Media Strategist
- Jaein Lee, Research Associate
- Carolina Valdivia, Research Associate
- Deepa Vasudevan, Research Associate
- Martha Franco, Research Associate
- Sungmin Oh, Research Associate
- Lily McKeage, Research Associate
- Rachel Freeman, Research Associate
- Sarah Rendon Garcia, Research Associate
- Victoria Villalba, Arizona Site Coordinator
- Cindy Quintero, Arizona Team Member
- Elizabeth Villalba-Barrera, Arizona Team Member
- Ricardo Reyes, Arizona Team Member
- Cinthya Villegas, Arizona Team Member
- Yareli Lopez, Arizona Team Member
- Candelaria Montes de Oca, Arizona Team Member
- Anna Luisa Castro, Arizona Team Member
- Patricia Asuncion, Arizona Team Member
- Erick Ruiz, Arizona Team Member
- Edwin Elias, California Site Coordinator
- Jenny Seon, California Team Member
- Ju Hong, California Team Member
- Italia Garcia, California Team Member
- Irlanda Martinez, California Team Member
- Sergio Dominguez, California Team Member
- Crisitina Echeveria, California Team Member
- Sayil Camacho, California Team Member
- Reyna Sanchez, California Team Member
- Asbeidy Solano, California Team Member
- Paula Venegas, California Team Member
- Rybyd Olvera, California Team Member
- Mafalda Gueta, California Team Member
- Martha Morales, California Team Member
- Wanda Pathomrit, California Team Member
- Kathleen Sexsmith, California Team Member
- Emiko Soltis, Georgia Site Coordinator
- Sergio Delgadillo, Georgia Team Member
- Jacqueline Delgadillo, Georgia Team Member
- Alejandro Galeana, Georgia Team Member
- Erik Velazquez, Georgia Team Member
- Luis San Roman, Georgia Team Member
- Susana Ramirez, Georgia Team Member
- Daniel Castillo, Georgia Team Member
- Melissa Rivas-Triana, Georgia Team Member
- Ireri Rivas, Illinois Site Coordinator
- Daysi Diaz-Strong, Illinois Team Member
- Cindy Augustin, Illinois Team Member
- Maria Luna-Duarte, Illinois Team Member
- Sylvia Rusin, Illinois Team Member
- Rigo Padilla, Illinois Team Member
- Daniel Garcia, Illinois Team Member
- María T. Fregoso, Illinois Team Member
- Alejandro Monroy, Illinois Team Member
- Dylan Farrell, Illinois Team Member
- Mubashar Ahmed, New York Site Coordinator
- Naflan Doole, New York Team Member
- Yoliswa Cele, Imbizo New York Team Member
- Francis Madi, New York Team Member
- Bodiyabaduge A. Perera, New York Team Member
- Maria Caba, Atlas, New York Team Member
- Claudia Zamora, New York Team Member
- Yenny Quispe, New York Team Member
- Monica Sibri, New York Team Member
- Guadalupe Muller, New York Team Member
- Alondra Ramos, New York Team Member
- Daniel Negrete, South Carolina Team Member
- Ilsia Muñiz, South Carolina Team Member

Partner Organizations

- National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
- Embassy of Mexico in the United States - Washington DC
- United We Dream
- Promise Arizona
- Friendly House, Workforce Development, Adult Education and Youth Education Services Programs
- Neighborhood Ministries
- Chicanos Por La Causa - Phoenix and Yuma
- Phoenix Council Member Kate Gallego's Office
- Living United for Change in Arizona (LUCHA)
- Center for Neighborhood Leadership
- Mi Familia Vota
- Alma Montes de Oca
- Puente Human Rights Movement
- Unlimited Potential AZ
- Arizona Community Foundation
- Isaac Amaya Foundation
- General Consulate of Mexico - Phoenix
- Arizona Dream Act Coalition
- AZ Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project
- General Consulate of Mexico in Los Angeles
- General Consulate of Mexico in Riverside
- General Consulate of Mexico in San Bernardino
- General Consulate of Mexico in Fresno
- Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas en Norteamerica (COFEM)
- Immigration Law Offices of Hadley Bajramovic
- Educational and Leadership Foundation
- California Community Foundation
- DACA 100 Taskforce
- Korean Resource Center, Immigrant Rights Program
- Thai Community Development Center
- Pilipino Workers Center of Southern California
- Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
- Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
- CARECEN - Central American Resource Center
- Providing Opportunities Dreams and Education in Riverside (PODER)
- UCLA Labor Center
- Freedom University
- Latin American Association
- General Consulate of Mexico in Atlanta
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice
- Centro Hispano Marista
- Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, City of Atlanta
- Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
- Erie Neighborhood House
- Logan Square Neighborhood Association
- Enlace Chicago
- National Latino Education Institute
- Chicago Public School District
- National Immigrant Justice Center
- Joliet Junior College
- Korean American Resource and Cultural Center, Immigrant Rights Program
- Asian American and Arab American Collaboration on Deferred Action
- General Consulate of Mexico in Chicago
- Instituto del Progreso Latino
- Latinos Progresando
- PODER Chicago
- PASO
- Communities United
- Northeastern Illinois University, Enlace Program
- Centro Romero
- The New York Immigration Coalition
- Desis Rising Up and Moving
- Project Hospitality
- African Services Committee
- CUNY Dreamers
- LSA Family Health Service, Advocacy program
- General Consulate of Mexico in New York
- New York State Youth Leadership Council
- Make the Road New York
- Atlas: DIY
- Arab American Association of New York
- Haitians Americans United for Progress
- Cabrini Immigrant Services of NYC, Inc.
- DREAM.US
- Cornell Farmworker Program

ENDNOTES

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Employment Projections – 2012-2022," *Press Release* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, December 19, 2013), http://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/ecopro_12192013.pdf.
2. Audrey Singer, *Immigrant Workers in the U.S. Labor Force* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, March 15, 2012), http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/03/15-immigrant-workers-singer.
3. Jeanne Batalova, Sarah Hooker, and Randy Capps with James Bachmeier and Erin Cox, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals at the One-Year Mark: A Profile of Currently Eligible Youth and Applicants* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-one-year-mark-profile-currently-eligible-youth-and.
4. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Number of I-821D, Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Intake, Biometrics and Case Status: 2012-2015 (September 30)" (Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, December 4, 2015), http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Reports%20and%20Studies/Immigration%20Forms%20Data/All%20Form%20Types/DACA/I821d_performancedata_fy2015_qtr3.pdf.
5. NURP is a five-year study funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, comprised of a national online survey and follow-up interviews with DACA-eligible adults living across the United States.
6. Roberto G. Gonzales and Angie Bautista-Chavez, *Two Years and Counting: Assessing the Growing Power of DACA* (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, June 2014), http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/special-reports/two-years-and-counting-assessing-growing-power-daca; Roberto G. Gonzales, Veronica Terriquez, and Stephen Ruszczyk, "Becoming DACAmented: Assessing the Short-term Benefits of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)," *American Behavioral Scientist* 58, no. 14 (2014): 1852-1872.
7. According to the National Immigration Law Center, "(b)ecause the rules governing eligibility for driver's licenses vary by state, a grant of DACA does not provide access to a state driver's license automatically. But otherwise-eligible DACA beneficiaries who obtain an employment authorization document and a Social Security number are now able to obtain a license in every state. The rules in most states either list deferred action specially as meeting a lawful presence requirement or provide that an employment authorization document is acceptable to establish eligibility for a license. Although a few states initially announced that they would ignore or alter their own rules in order to deny licenses to these youth, only two states, Arizona and Nebraska, ultimately implemented policies that excluded DACA grantees from driver's license eligibility. As a result of litigation or legislative action, however, both of these states now issue driver's licenses to otherwise-eligible DACA grantees." See https://www.nilc.org/dacadriverslicenses2.html.
8. Michael A. Olivas, "Dreams deferred: Deferred action, prosecutorial discretion, and the vexing case (s) of DREAM Act students," *William & Mary Bill of Rights Journal* 21, no. 2 (2012): 463-547.
9. Only twenty states offer in-state tuition to undocumented immigrant students, 16 by state legislative action (California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington) and 4 by state university systems (the University of Hawaii Board of Regents, University of Michigan Board of Regents, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and Rhode Island's Board of Governors for Higher Education established policies to offer instate tuition rates to undocumented immigrants). In addition, five states (California, New Mexico, Minnesota, Texas, and Washington) offer state financial assistance to undocumented students. Six states (Alabama, Arizona, Gerogia, Indiana, Missouri, and South Carolina) bar undocumented students from in-state tuition benefits.
10. For more information on this complex issue, see Jennesa Calvo-Friedman, "The Uncertain Terrain of State Occupational Licensing Laws for Noncitizens: A Preemption Analysis," *The Georgetown Law Journal* 102, no. 5 (2014): 1597-1645, http://georgetownlawjournal.org/files/2014/06/CalvoFriedman-Uncertain1.pdf; Michael A. Olivas, "Compendium of State and Federal Immigrationrelated Litigation and Legislation Concerning Higher Education, 2004-2015," http://www.law.uh.edu/ihelg/documents/StateandFederalImmigrationLitigationandLegislation.asp; Janet M. Calvo, Shirley Lung, and Alizabeth Newman, "DACA and NY Bar Eligibility," *CUNY Law Review*, November 13, 2013, http://www.cunylawreview.org/daca-and-ny-bar-eligibility; A New York State court recently directed the bar admission of a DACA recipient, Matter of Vargas, 131 A.D.

3d 4 (2015), and the New York Board of Regents will be proposing an amended rule that will allow DACAs and other non-citizens who are not unlawfully present to apply for professional licenses (http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/216heppcd1.pdf).

11. According to the Institute for Justice's national report on occupational licensing, Arizona was ranked as one of the states with the most challenging licensing requirement in the U.S. See Dick Carpenter, Lisa Knepper, Angela C. Erickson, and John K. Ross, *License to Work: A National Study of Burdens from Occupational Licensing* (Arlington, VA: Institute for Justice, May 2012), https://ij.org/report/license-to-work/.
12. The California Senate Bill 1159 was introduced in 2014 and it requires all state licensing boards to consider applicants regardless of immigration status. For more information, see http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB1159.
13. We define "low-income" as those individuals who were eligible for free/reduced lunches while enrolled in K-12 schools. At the time of the survey in 2013, students were eligible for free/reduced lunches if their family income fell below 185% of the national poverty line.
14. For 19 of our 467 respondents, we do not yet have data on DACA status, race/ethnicity, or country of origin, as interviews are still being transferred from state teams to our research team. For now, percentages for these three demographic variables are calculated out of the 448 respondents for which we have data.