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Building Institutional Support for Undocumented and DACA-eligible College Students in Michigan

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Building Institutional Support for Undocumented and DACA-eligible College Students in Michigan

Cover Page Footnote

John A. Vasquez <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8450-5337> John Vasquez graduated with his doctorate in May 2020 from Michigan State University but was a visiting scholar at the National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good from 2017-2018 when this project was conducted. Alejandra Acosta graduated with a Master of Arts in Higher Education in 2018 and is now a Policy Analyst at New America in Washington, D.C. Rosario Torres graduated with a Master of Arts in Higher Education in 2017 and is Program Officer at the ECMC Foundation in Los Angeles, CA. Melissa Hernandez is an undergraduate senior at the University of Michigan. Additional undergraduate undocumented and DACA-eligible students contributed to this study. Data collection and preliminary analysis was sponsored by the Kresge Foundation. Funding for the interactive website was funded by the Michigan College Access Network. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Vasquez, Email: johnav@umich.edu.

Building Institutional Support for Undocumented and DACA-eligible College Students in Michigan



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ABSTRACT

In 2017, the state of Michigan operated, and continues to operate, in an unstipulated policy environment related to undocumented students. There is no higher education commission or policy coordinating body in Michigan nor has the state legislature passed any legislation related to undocumented students or students who are DACA-eligible. Under this unstipulated policy environment, postsecondary institutions have the discretion to establish their own admissions policies and practices, including tuition and financial aid guidelines for undocumented students. Some institutions have stated their public support of these students through what they identify as inclusive and supportive institutional practices via their websites. However, these policies have created a nebulous environment which has created additional barriers for undocumented and DACA-eligible students trying to access postsecondary education. The lack of clear and consistent financial aid and admission policies across the state has resulted in a convoluted environment for undocumented and DACA-eligible students in applying to institutions. In this paper, we highlight how a group of undergraduate and graduate University of Michigan student researchers, both documented and undocumented, developed an instrument to analyze institutional policies related to in-state resident tuition, admission, financial aid, as well as the availability of dedicated student support services for undocumented and DACA-eligible students in the state of Michigan during the Fall of 2017. The data for this project has been turned into a website with updated (as of 2020) and available at <https://uleadnet.org/mi-undocu-map>.

Keywords: undocumented, DACA, college access, admissions policies

Since 1982, when the Supreme Court issued its landmark decision in *Plyler v. Doe*, stating that the States cannot constitutionally deny students a free public K-12 education on account of their immigration status, almost all states have faced a growing number of undocumented students graduating from their high schools (Biswas, 2005). However, the law did not extend any such guarantee for postsecondary education, and as a result, many of these students are left without the opportunity to access postsecondary education (Biswas, 2005). In addition, numerous studies have shown that the cost of education is a key reason why many undocumented students do not go to college or fail to finish once they have started (Contreras, 2009; Garcia & Tierney, 2011; Muñoz, 2013; Nienhuser, 2013; Perez, 2010).

While federal law does not bar colleges and universities from enrolling undocumented students, a clause in the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) leaves it up to the states to determine policies on admission, in-state tuition, and state-based financial aid. Currently the majority of states, including



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Michigan, have unstipulated higher education policy environments related to undocumented students and therefore a majority lack any type of state-wide policies regarding admission and financial aid processes for these students (National Forum on Higher Education for the Public Good, 2017). Michigan does not have a higher education coordinating board; therefore, colleges and universities have to establish their own policies, practices and procedures for admitting undocumented students. As a result, Michigan law allows educational institutions to develop and establish tuition and financial aid guidelines, specific only to their institution.

Adding to the confusion for both students and families, some institutional practices do not always align with state policies, even when those policies are formally adopted. Furthermore, even when institutions do adopt undocumented-friendly policies or practices, many institutions do not publicize them for a host of reasons, including fearing retaliation from federal and state legislators (Green, 2019; Pratt, 2016).

While an institution might have publicly announced their support for these students (Michigan Association of State Universities, 2017; Yan, 2017), should an undocumented student be interested in applying to a Michigan college or university, they will encounter a perplexing variety of admission, tuition, and financial aid policies. Already concerned about college affordability, this set

of circumstances poses a significant barrier for affected students, further complicated if they are reluctant to share their identities and legal status with those who might support them (Abrego, 2006; 2011).

Educators and institutions within the state of Michigan have recognized the need to have a clearer understanding of how they are serving not only the growing U.S.-born Latinx population, but also the number of immigrants, undocumented, and students from mixed-status families (e.g., students who are U.S. citizens but whose parents are undocumented) who are finding their way into higher education institutions in their state. It's important to note that these groups are not homogeneous, their backgrounds differ, and their needs can particularly differ, but the conflation between U.S.-born Latinx populations and Latinx populations who are immigrants, undocumented and from mixed-status families is often made in public discourse, occasionally by mistake, and sometimes on purpose (Stewart, Pitts, & Osborne, 2011) and is often mirrored in the levels of educational participation and success in postsecondary attainment.

It is also the case that different racial, ethnic, and citizenship-status individuals are a part of the larger Latinx community, which often share similar circumstances and many similar barriers. Improving opportunities for any of these groups requires that we pay attention to individuals, regardless of status. To highlight the importance of individual populations and,

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for the purposes of this study, we focus primarily on one group that is particularly vulnerable and may face even greater challenges from recently proposed policy initiatives.

Significance of the Problem

According to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI), increased numbers of undocumented students are graduating from high schools nationally, from 65,000 to 98,000 in 2019 (Zong & Batalova, 2019). As a result of insistent undocumented student activism throughout the country, more and more institutions have taken it upon themselves to implement policies inclusive of undocumented students. States have also joined in the effort to increase access to higher education for undocumented students by implementing in-state tuition policies or financial aid sources for undocumented students. With the passage of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) through Executive Order under President Obama in 2012, many undocumented young people received temporary relief from deportation and were granted legal permission to work in the U.S. DACA served as a vetting tool for many states and institutions who chose to extend higher education benefits to undocumented students who qualified for or had DACA. While DACA has afforded a chance for these young people to pursue their dreams, public and institutional support for these students has differed across the continuum resulting in additional barriers to

entry and continuous support for these students.

During President Trump's presidency, the administration attempted to dismantle the DACA program, even after the Supreme Court ruling allowed DACA to continue (Rose, 2020). The unpredictability of the DACA program and anti-immigrant rhetoric of this administration have created a hostile environment for undocumented students, especially those enrolled in postsecondary education (Kleyn, Alulema, Khalifa, & Romero, 2018; Uwemedimo, Monterrey, & Linton, 2017). What little security undocumented students had regarding access to in-state tuition or financial aid was tossed about with every legal decision of federal courts and undocumented students no longer knew with certainty whether their access to higher education would remain (Gonzales, Terriquez, & Rusczyk, 2014). Such policies at the federal level deliberately exclude undocumented students from receiving public assistance and send strong messages of normalizing discriminatory policies and practices (Nienhusser, 2018; Rodriguez, & Monreal, 2017). Such policies impact public behavior which translates into exclusionary institutional practices that intentionally make it even more challenging for undocumented students to thrive (Kleyn, Alulema, Khalifa, & Romero, 2018; Uwemedimo, Monterrey, & Linton, 2017).

We believe postsecondary institutions are microcosms of the larger political arena and

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institutional websites hold a lot of agency when it comes to undocumented and DACA-eligible students decision-making. Many undocumented and DACA-eligible students are also first-generation college students, and, in our experience as former admissions professionals, we know institutional websites are typically students' first trusted source of information, especially in the absence of culturally competent and dedicated counselors or networks who understand and can empathize with the complexity of undocumented students' lives. The way institutional policies are communicated and presented in a publicly available, trusted source matters to undocumented and DACA-eligible students who rely heavily on this information to evaluate whether an institution will be an inclusive and supportive environment and ultimately, influences their decision to attend or persist in higher education. In terms of cost, undocumented students are barred from receiving any federal student aid such as Pell grants, SEOG grants and loans. Unlike other states, Michigan does not have a state-wide grant available for undocumented or DACA-eligible students. Additionally, information about wraparound services for undocumented students such as access to dedicated counselors, mental health and legal resources, and student groups can signal an institution's commitment to the success of undocumented students.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine which Michigan public colleges and universities have inclusive policies and procedures for admitting, funding, and supporting undocumented and DACA-eligible students. Also, of interest was how these policies and procedures developed and the role that institutional leaders, administrators or staff, and students played, if any, in their development.

- Which Michigan public colleges and universities have policies and procedures for admitting, funding, and supporting undocumented and DACA-eligible students?
- How accessible are Michigan public colleges and universities of undocumented and DACA-eligible students with regards to admission, tuition, and financial aid policies?
- Which Michigan colleges and universities have published communications in support of DACA-eligible and/or undocumented students?
- What are some of the practices of institutions who most strongly support undocumented and/or DACA-eligible students?
- How do supportive institutions implement their policies, practices and resources in support of undocumented and/or DACA-eligible students?

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Methodology

This policy analysis focuses on the forty-six public institutions of higher education in the state of Michigan using data from 2017 and 2018. These institutions' policies were selected for this study based on their mission, including advocating for higher education as a public good and promoting its collective value in serving the public interest and the state of Michigan. Moreover, public institutions of higher education are affected by state policy whereas private institutions are not. Both two and four-year public institutions were selected for this study but a special importance is placed on two-year community colleges because they are a common entry point to higher education for undocumented students (Perez, 2010) and underrepresented students more broadly. All four-year institutions were included in the study due to public support of DACA-eligible students (Michigan Association of State Universities (2017)).

Data Collection

We collected publicly available information on admission, tuition and residency, and financial aid policies for Michigan's forty-six public colleges and universities between September and December 2017. A total of 28 public two-year institutions and 18 four-year institutions were included in this study. Because the publicly available data was collected directly from institutional websites in 2017, the analysis in this study is based on

the information available as of that date.

We assigned 11 institutions to each of four team members to review, and one team member reviewed 13 institutions. Each team member searched and benchmarked each institution's admission, tuition and residency, and financial aid policy. Team members specifically searched for information regarding undocumented students on flyers, documents, infographics, and required forms on websites, and specifically for keywords like "undocumented" and "international." We took notes on what we found, collected screenshots of the institutions' websites at the time, and saved documents and websites for each institution in a shared database on Mendeley.

Then, each team member reviewed their data and rated each institution assigned to them using the rubric we developed, detailed below. This information was collected in a spreadsheet separate from the shared database where data was collected and stored. Team members included notes in this spreadsheet that explained why they gave each institution's policies a certain score.

Instrumentation

We created a rubric to assess institutional policies at Michigan's public colleges and universities with regards to information and resources related to admitting and supporting undocumented and DACA-eligible students (see Appendix A). We agree with other

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higher education scholars that simply admitting and having a seat in a university classroom is not equivalent to inclusion (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012; Gilson, et al., 2020). Therefore, we have chosen to define inclusion as “a comprehensive approach to inclusion with the goal of fully integrating [undocumented and DACA-eligible students] into academic and social life on campus” (Haft, Moffatt, & Kisa, 2011, pg. 19) by trying to measure how clearly policies and practices were presented on the institutions' public-facing websites and interpreted by prospective students.

This rubric was informed by literature on undocumented students in higher education and other inclusion indices for other student populations. Specifically, we used the California UndocuCollege Guide & Equity Tool (Jodaitis, Arreola, Canedo, & Southern, n.d.) and The Campus Pride Index (n.d.) as guides for developing our own rubric. We used these rubrics as guides for our own because they provided a framework to operationalize institutional support of marginalized communities, both within the context of these communities and the state or national policy environments. This rubric was also informed by the authors' professional experiences working with undocumented students and DACA-eligible students. One author has over 20 years of experience working in higher education, including 5 years working with admissions and recruiting units, 10 years working specifically on policy issues at the

institutional level regarding undocumented students; two of the authors were admissions counselors for several years working directly with undocumented students, and one author is a current undergraduate student who went through the admissions application process recently, with undocumented and DACA-eligible peers. Finally, additional undergraduate undocumented and DACA-eligible students participated in this study by providing insight into both the design of the project, but also by sharing their experiences looking for and applying to colleges with the research team. This rubric was then contextualized to reflect the state of affairs and existing institutional support for undocumented students in Michigan's public higher education institutions in 2017-2018.

Categories

The rubric as shown in Table 1 is categorized into three institutional policy areas: admissions policies, tuition and residency policies, and financial aid policies. Another category, general support, includes resources such as a designated support person, legal resources, or a student group.

The admission and tuition and residency policy categories, together, highlight how the institution defines an undocumented student's residency status and therefore how much tuition they would be charged. For example, an institution could classify undocumented students as international students, and charge them international student tuition. On the other hand, an

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Table 1.
Description of Categories for Rubric.

Category	Description
Admissions Policy	Does the institution admit undocumented students? How accessible is this policy?
Tuition and Residency Policy	How does the institution classify undocumented students for tuition and residency purposes? Does the institution grant in-state tuition to undocumented students? How accessible is this policy?
Financial Aid Policy	In the absence of MI state grants available for undocumented students, does the institution award institutional aid to undocumented students? How do students access the aid?
General Support	What additional support services and resources are available to undocumented students at this institution?

institution can classify an undocumented student who meets certain residency requirements as a Michigan resident and charge them in-state tuition. The financial aid policy category addresses whether an institution makes institutional financial aid available to undocumented students. As stated previously, undocumented students are barred from receiving any federal student aid and unlike states like California, Michigan does not have a state-wide grant available for undocumented or DACA-eligible students. In Michigan, we found that thirty-nine institutions do not offer any institutional aid to undocumented students.

The general support category describes what resources an institution has for undocumented students. This could include a student group, online resources such as mental health services or scholarship databases, an undocumented student program, a dedicated staff member, or other

supports. While the general support category does not necessarily represent institutional policies, it is an important topic to study and measure in the effort to increase institutional support for undocumented students. The general support category looks at the resources an institution provides, such as non-academic support services targeted to undocumented or DACA-eligible students. As such, general support is an embodiment of policy at an institution and reflects how inclusive or supportive an institution is.

Measurement

Our rubric has four levels that describe how inclusionary and clear an institution's various policies and practices are, ranging from "Most Accessible", "Accessible", "Somewhat Accessible", and "Least Accessible." These levels were constructed to reflect the current range of policies across the forty-six public higher education institutions studied. Each

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institutional policy area for an institution can fall within this range and had to meet certain criteria to achieve their score.

A "Least Accessible" rating represents the least inclusive, clear or transparent policies and practices on an institutional website relative to all other Michigan public colleges and universities. A "Most Accessible" rating represents the most inclusive policies and practices relative to other public institutions in Michigan. These policies are also easy to understand, easy to find, and clearly presented on an institution's website.

Importantly, in 2017, this rubric allowed us to note that no institution in the state of Michigan had a truly clear and inclusive policies regarding undocumented students or provided sufficient resources and services to properly support undocumented students.

Admission

The admission category identifies whether undocumented students are allowed to apply at an institution and how easy or difficult this process is. A school received the highest score in of "Most Accessible" if it explicitly stated that undocumented students with or without DACA-eligibility are allowed to apply for and gain admission if they met the institution's admission and residency requirements. These institutions also had an admissions page specifically for undocumented students on their website that provided clear instructions on how to fill out an application as an undocumented student and included links to

other resources, such as a student support group or additional information. The page also included the contact information for a point person to help undocumented students with their admissions questions. Finally, an institution that scored "Most Accessible" in the admission category did not require students to have a Social Security Number (SSN) to apply or have a box asking for SSN in their application. Often, alternatives to filling out an application with an SSN were available and easy to find.

Tuition and Residency

The Tuition and Residency category looks at how an institution classifies undocumented students' residency status and what tuition rate they are charged as a result. Tuition cost is a big factor into whether and where an undocumented student pursues higher education (Perez, 2010).

A school scored "Most Accessible" in Tuition and Residency if they grant in-state tuition for undocumented students who meet the institution's residency requirements. This residency policy is published online and explicitly states that undocumented students qualify. These institutions have a residency webpage just for undocumented students and have a point person's contact information on this page.

Financial Aid

The financial aid category looks at whether institutions offer some sort of institutional aid to undocumented students. It also covers how

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easy or challenging it is for an undocumented student to access said aid. A school scored “Most Accessible” in the Financial Aid Policy category if they had a financial aid web page specifically for undocumented students and had clear, separate instructions for undocumented students to apply for institutional aid. These institutions also had institutional need- and merit-based scholarships available just for undocumented students. In addition, institutions that scored “Most Accessible” published the contact information for a point person for undocumented students and had links to other internal or external financial aid resources. Often, additional financial resources for undocumented students were also published on this website, including emergency loans, textbook rentals, and more.

General Support

This category measured an institution's general support of undocumented students. General support for undocumented students includes resources outside of the policy areas in this rubric. These resources could be a designated support person or program for undocumented students, supportive communications from leadership, a webpage specifically for undocumented students, and links to additional resources. A school scored “Most Accessible” in general support if they “Have a resource center or program for undocumented students on campus” and “Have a point person for undocumented student issues/support” among other criteria. A school that scored “Most Accessible” in

general support was The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. They received “Most Accessible” because their webpage for undocumented students informed students of the point person to contact for undocumented student questions.

Results

The data for this project was turned into an interactive tool which students and parents could use for themselves to determine the inclusivity and level of support for undocumented students in admission, tuition/residency, and financial aid policies at Michigan's two and four-year public higher education institutions. The rubric used to develop this website is available in Appendix A and Table 2 with all the schools and ratings is on the next few pages.

The majority of institutions analyzed in this study in 2017, scored low across all policy categories. In general, no more than five institutions scored a four or “Most Accessible” in any category and the majority of institutions scored a two, “Somewhat Accessible,” or a three, “Accessible,” across all categories.

In the admissions category, three institutions scored “Most Accessible”, all of which were public four-year institutions (Figure 1). Similarly, only four institutions scored “Accessible” in admissions: three four-year institutions and one two-year institution (Figure 2). This means that only seven

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Table 2a.

Michigan listing of accessible public campuses for undocumented and DACA-eligible students.

Rating System		Least Accessible = 1	Somewhat Accessible = 2	Accessible = 3	Most Accessible = 4
Institution	City	Admissions	Tuition	Financial Aid	General Support
Alpena Community College	Alpena	2	2	1	1
Bay de Noc Community College (Bay College)	Escanaba	1	1	1	1
Bay Mills Community College	Brimley	1	1	1	1
Central Michigan University	Mount Pleasant	3	4	3	2
Delta College	University Center	2	2	2	1
Eastern Michigan University	Ypsilanti	1	1	1	1
Ferris State University	Big Rapids	1	1	1	1
Glen Oaks Community College	Centreville	2	2	1	1
Gogebic Community College	Ironwood	3	3	1	3
Grand Rapids Community College	Grand Rapids	2	2	4	2
Grand Valley State University	Allendale	4	4	4	4
Henry Ford College	Dearborn	2	2	3	1
Jackson College	Jackson	1	2	1	1
Kalamazoo Valley Community College	Kalamazoo	2	2	2	1
Kellogg Community College	Battle Creek	1	2	2	1
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College	Baraga	2	2	2	1
Kirtland Community College	Roscommon	2	2	2	1
Lake Michigan College	Benton Harbor	1	3	2	2
Lake Superior State University	Sault Ste Marie	2	2	2	2
Lansing Community College	Lansing	1	1	1	1
Macomb Community College	Warren	1	2	1	1
Michigan State University	East Lansing	1	2	1	1

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Table 2b.

Michigan listing of accessible public campuses for Undocumented and DACA-eligible students.

Rating System		Least Accessible = 1	Somewhat Accessible = 2	Accessible = 3	Most Accessible = 4
Institution	City	Admissions	Tuition	Financial Aid	General Support
Michigan Technological University	Houghton	1	2	1	1
Mid-Michigan Community College	Harrison	2	2	2	1
Monroe County Community College	Monroe	2	2	2	1
Montcalm Community College	Sidney	1	2	1	1
Mott Community College	Flint	2	2	2	1
Muskegon Community College	Muskegon	1	1	1	1
North Central Michigan College	Petoskey	1	1	1	2
Northern Michigan University	Marquette	1	2	2	2
Northwestern Michigan College	Traverse City	1	1	1	1
Oakland Community College	Bloomfield Hills	1	3	1	2
Oakland University	Rochester Hills	4	4	4	4
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College	Mount Pleasant	1	1	1	1
Saginaw Valley State University	University Center	1	2	1	1
Schoolcraft College	Livonia	1	1	1	1
Southwestern Michigan College	Dowagiac	1	1	1	1
St Clair County Community College	Port Huron	1	1	1	2
University of Michigan-Ann Arbor	Ann Arbor	4	4	4	4
University of Michigan-Dearborn	Dearborn	2	3	2	2

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Table 2c.

Michigan listing of accessible public campuses for Undocumented and DACA-eligible students.

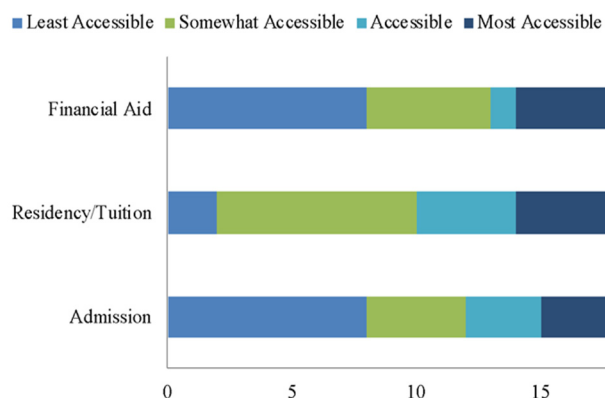
Rating System		Least Accessible = 1	Somewhat Accessible = 2	Accessible = 3	Most Accessible = 4
Institution	City	Admissions	Tuition	Financial Aid	General Support
University of Michigan-Flint	Flint	3	3	1	2
Washtenaw Community College	Ann Arbor	2	4	1	3
Wayne County Community College District	Detroit	1	1	1	2
Wayne State University	Detroit	2	3	1	1
West Shore Community College	Scottville	1	2	1	1
Western Michigan University	Kalamazoo	2	2	4	3

institutions in our data set had admissions policies that were inclusive to undocumented students and made this clear on their websites. Sixteen institutions scored “Somewhat Accessible” in the admissions policy category, meaning that their admissions policies could be interpreted to be inclusive to undocumented students, but it was challenging to interpret that. Finally, twenty-three institutions scored “Least Accessible” in the admissions policy category. This means that the majority (82%) of institutions in the state of Michigan have publicly available admissions policies that are or appear exclusive of undocumented students.

In the tuition and residency policy category, only four institutions scored “Most Accessible”, and all are four-year institutions.

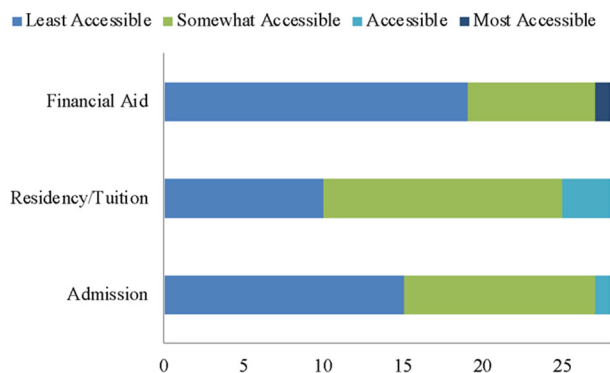
More institutions scored “Accessible” in the tuition and residency policy category than in the admissions policy category.

Figure 1.
Number of Four-Year Colleges in Each Category by Score.



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Figure 2.
Number of Two-Year Colleges in Each
Category by Score.



Seven institutions scored “Accessible” in this category: four of these were four-year institutions and three were two-year institutions. Most institutions scored “Somewhat Accessible” in the tuition and residency policy category. A total of twenty-three institutions, mostly community colleges, scored “Somewhat Accessible” in this category. Twelve institutions scored “Least Accessible” in this category: two four-year institutions and ten community colleges. This means that the majority of public institutions in Michigan have tuition and residency policies that are not inclusive of undocumented students or do not publish it as so on their website.

In the financial aid policy category, more institutions scored “Most Accessible” than any other category. Five institutions, including one two-year institution, scored “Most Accessible” in this category. Only one institution scored “Accessible” in the financial

aid policy category, and it was a four-year institution. While more institutions received a “Most Accessible” than in other categories, this means that even fewer institutions than any other category have a financial aid policy that is inclusive of undocumented students or make it hard to understand that institutional financial aid is available to them. Thirteen institutions scored “Somewhat Accessible” in the financial aid policy category. Five of these were four-year institutions and eight were two-year institutions. Finally, the majority of institutions scored “Least Accessible” in this category, eight four-year institutions and nineteen two-year institutions, for a total of twenty-seven institutions.

In the general support category, two four-year institutions scored “Most Accessible”. No two-year institutions scored “Most Accessible” in this category. Four institutions scored “Accessible” in the general support category: two four-year institutions and two two-year institutions. Seven four-year institutions and five two-year institutions scored “Somewhat Accessible” in this category, for a total of twelve institutions. The remaining twenty-eight institutions scored “Least Accessible” in the general support category, seven of these were four-year institutions, and twenty-one were two-year institutions.

Discussion

Although this project originally launched in 2017, the implications of this work are even more relevant in the wake of both political volatility and the COVID-19 global health

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crisis. As part of the broader immigrant population, undocumented students are a growing and important part of the student population in the state of Michigan and nationwide. In 2018 alone, immigrants paid \$3.3 billion in federal taxes and \$1.4 billion in state and local taxes; as a whole, immigrants in Michigan comprise more than 11.7% of all healthcare workers 16.9% pharmacy workers, 13.5% of all grocery workers, and 13.2% of all restaurant and food service workers (New American Economy, 2020). By revising policies, public institutions in Michigan can ensure that they make higher education accessible to undocumented students and that the institution meets their mission of serving the public in the state. While Michigan public colleges and universities have come a long way in supporting undocumented students, long strides to achieve equitable access and postsecondary attainment for this group await.

Our findings show that admission, tuition and residency, and financial aid policies at Michigan's public colleges and universities are made inaccessible to undocumented students. We found that few institutions had policies that were inclusive of undocumented students and even fewer made that clear. Most Michigan institutions' published

policies were vague in their inclusion and support of undocumented students, and while some of these policies may actually be inclusive of undocumented students, their wording was unclear. Additionally, public institutions in Michigan have room to grow when it comes to providing general support to undocumented students.

Navigating the college admissions process is complicated for any student. For

undocumented students, this process is even more challenging and stressful because of their immigration status. Undocumented students cannot assume that they can gain admission, pay in-state tuition, or receive institutional aid at Michigan public colleges and universities because of the unstipulated environment regarding undocumented student access to higher education. As a result, they have to search for these

policies at each institution they apply to in the state. When institutions do not make this clear, regardless of how inclusive they are of undocumented students, they add another barrier and point of stress for the student.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, undocumented and DACA-eligible students were already struggling to pay for the cost of attending college, DACA application and renewal fees, and affording basic living



“Our findings show that admission, tuition and residency, and financial aid policies at Michigan's public colleges and universities are made inaccessible to undocumented students.”

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expenses. Unfortunately, the pandemic has further exacerbated these inequities and heightened students' anxieties and fears about their safety and future in this country (Anguiano and Bombardieri, 2020). Although Congress passed the \$6.3 billion Corona Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to provide direct relief aid to help students, Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos enacted an emergency rule to deliberately bar undocumented, DACA-eligible and international students from receiving this aid (Whistle, 2020). Although the administration's deliberate attempt to dismantle the DACA program was ruled unconstitutional, additional barriers and restrictions for DACA-eligible recipients remain. The Trump Administration, until December 2020, rejected new, first-time applications – which left approximately 300,000 immigrant students in a state of limbo without any clear direction for their future in this country (Rose, 2020).

Undocumented immigrants are performing jobs that are considered essential. An estimated 389,000 have worked as farmworkers and food processors securing the nation's food supply, even as food processing plants have become epicenters of the coronavirus outbreak (Jawetz, 2020). We cannot turn away from this stark reality that this population is deemed essential yet forgotten. Recent figures point to the reality that undocumented individuals continue to be on the margins of conversations about educational opportunity and upward social mobility. Economic recovery post COVID-19

will require broadened opportunity to postsecondary education and upskilling. Nearly 40% of this population lives at or above the 200% poverty line with only 15 % obtaining a Bachelor's, Graduate or Professional Degree (MPI, 2020). Today's economy requires higher levels of education to ensure stable job growth and continued economic stability; previous research has shown that providing residency or a permanent solution in particular to the DACA-eligible population would move about a million workers out of low-skill, low-paying job markets into higher skill job-markets where they are estimated to earn about \$380 billion from 2020 to 2029, and pay approximately \$102 billion in federal taxes during that same period (Brannon, & McGee, 2019). Providing DACA and undocumented students, the ability to attain higher education by removing barriers is in our country's economic benefit.

Higher education institutions in Michigan can do two things to make their policies more inclusive of undocumented students. First, institutions can work with their students, leadership, faculty, and staff to change policies to include undocumented students. For example, an institution whose tuition and residency policy categorizes undocumented students as international students can revise their policy to classify undocumented students as state residents. Second, institutions can also revise the language in their policies to ensure they are clear about where undocumented students fall within

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their policies. An institution that was vague as to whether undocumented students could gain admission could revise the language to be more explicit and include a statement or section specifically addressing undocumented students. By doing this, an undocumented student could not be clear about how a policy affects them, they could also gain admission to an institution that used to be unavailable to them. 

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Appendix.

Project Rubric (2017 version)

(Updated Results available at <https://uleadnet.org/mi-undocu-map>)

	Least Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Accessible	Most Accessible
Admission	<p>Explicitly does not allow undocumented students to apply and enroll in institution.</p> <p>Admission requirements include SSN (unless international)</p> <p>Application requires SSN, with no way around it (unless international)</p> <p>Does not have any resources or point people on website to contact with undoc-specific questions (?)</p> <p>Unclear that undocumented students are different from international students, or admission policy itself mixes/confuses the two.</p>	<p>Does not explicitly state that undocumented students are allowed to apply and enroll in institution, but can be interpreted that they ARE allowed to with a lot of effort.</p> <p>SSN not required for admission, but still unclear or confusing that you can apply.</p> <p>Application has alternatives to SSN or option to not include it.</p> <p>Clearer that undocumented students do not apply as international students, but still confusing.</p>	<p>Explicit statement that undocumented students are allowed to apply and enroll.</p> <p>Does not require SSN for admission or on application and/or has alternatives.</p> <p>Has an admissions page specifically for undocumented students but does not lead to other resources (financial aid, student support, etc.)</p> <p>Admissions page has published contact information for admissions point person.</p>	<p>Explicit statement that undocumented students are allowed to apply and enroll.</p> <p>Clarifies and is explicit about admission of BOTH undocumented and DACAmented students who meet admission (/ residency) requirements.</p> <p>Does not require SSN for admission or on application and/or has alternatives.</p> <p>Has an admissions page specifically for undocumented students that leads to other resources (financial aid, student support, etc.)</p> <p>Admissions page has published contact information for admissions point person.</p> <p>Published explicit instructions on how to complete application as an undocumented/ DACAmented student.</p>

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Appendix.

Project Rubric (2017 version)

(Updated Results available at <https://uleadnet.org/mi-undocu-map>)

	Least Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Accessible	Most Accessible
Tuition/ Residency	<p>Explicitly or implicitly does not grant in state tuition for undocumented students.</p> <p>No or very hard to find residency requirements for undocumented students (unclear under which status they fit).</p> <p>Confuses undocumented students' residency with international students on website.</p>	<p>Does grant in state tuition for undocumented students who meet residency requirements, but it is unclear, implicit, and/or stated in a very roundabout way. May be stated/implied on international student page.</p> <p>Residency requirements do not state that it is required that students be LPR or US Citizen. Term "resident" is not explained or defined further (important because resident is unrelated to legal residency, but undocumented students often think it is)</p> <p>If a separate form or procedure is required for undocumented students, it is unclear and implicit online.</p>	<p>Does grant in state tuition for undocumented students who meet residency requirements.</p> <p>Residency policy as pertains to undocumented students is published online, but could be more explicit in stating that it applies to undocumented students.</p> <p>Point person published on website to which questions can be directed to.</p>	<p>Does grant in state tuition for undocumented students who meet residency requirements.</p> <p>Residency policy as pertains to undocumented students is published online and is explicit in stating that it applies to undocumented students.</p> <p>Policy is accessible.</p> <p>Point person published on website to which questions can be directed to.</p> <p>Webpage specifically for undocumented student residency policy is published.</p>

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Appendix.

Project Rubric (2017 version)

(Updated Results available at <https://uleadnet.org/mi-undocu-map>)

	Least Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Accessible	Most Accessible
Financial Aid	<p>No statements or resources on website for financial aid for undocumented students. Institutional scholarship resources are explicitly inaccessible for undocumented students (i.e. SSN required)</p> <p>No financial aid point person published on website.</p>	<p>Published statements on financial aid for undocumented students, but are unclear or vague.</p> <p>Unclear or vague whether institutional scholarship resources are open to undocumented students.</p> <p>No financial aid point person published on website.</p> <p>Provides links to financial resources but doesn't provide resources or support themselves. Limited published links to external financial aid resources.</p>	<p>Published financial aid website tabs/sections specifically for undocumented students.</p> <p>Institutional need and/or merit-based scholarships open to undocumented students available</p> <p>Financial aid point person published on website.</p> <p>Published links to external financial aid resources but little to no links to own financial resources (emergency loans, textbook rental, etc.)</p>	<p>Published financial aid website pages specifically for undocumented students.</p> <p>Clear instructions and/or separate application for undocumented students to apply for institutional aid.</p> <p>Institutional need and merit-based scholarships exclusively (?) for undocumented students available.</p> <p>Financial aid point person published on website.</p> <p>Published links to external financial aid resources and provides own financial resources (emergency loans, textbook rental, etc.)</p>

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Appendix.

Project Rubric (2017 version)

(Updated Results available at <https://uleadnet.org/mi-undocu-map>)

	Least Accessible	Somewhat Accessible	Accessible	Most Accessible
General Support	No information about undocumented student resources or policies at institution at all			<p>Has a resource center or program for undocumented students on campus.</p> <p>Has a point person for undocumented student issues/support.</p> <p>Staff that works with undocumented students is knowledgeable (financial aid, admission, health, etc.)</p> <p>Ally trainings have been institutionalized on campus.</p> <p>Communications from university leadership in support of undocumented students/ DACA published on website.</p> <p>Undocumented student group on campus.</p> <p>Specific webpage with all information for undocumented students (ex. Undocumented.school.edu)</p> <p>Links/resources for undocumented students on website.</p>