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Education Equity for Undocumented Graduate Students and the Key Role of My Undocumented Life

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Education Equity for Undocumented Graduate Students and the Key Role of My Undocumented Life

Cover Page Footnote

We thank everyone at My Undocumented Life for fostering a sense of community and support for undocumented students in graduate school. We particularly thank The UndocuScholars Project and The Ford Foundation for their support in developing some of our programming for undocumented graduate school students. We also thank the co-editors Dr. Diana Camilo and Dr. Marisol Clark-Ibáñez for making this special edition possible.

Education Equity for Undocumented Graduate Students and the Key Role of My Undocumented Life



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ABSTRACT

An estimated 454,000 undocumented students are enrolled in higher education, with ten percent of these students (45,400 students) studying in graduate school. While the field of higher education has worked to develop equitable policy and practice for undocumented students at the undergraduate level, a focus on graduate school is imperative. In this article, we reflect on what we have learned working with undocumented students in graduate school through our work with My Undocumented Life (MUL), a website with almost two million views that provides up to date information and resources for undocumented immigrants. We discuss the challenges that undocumented students face in pursuing graduate school, such as charting pathways to graduate school in isolation, seeking information specific to undocumented students, decisions around whether to disclose one's immigration status, and lack of financial aid opportunities. We also provide recommendations for universities to build programs specifically for undocumented students in graduate school.

Keywords: undocumented, graduate school, education equity, immigrants

There are 454,000 undocumented students in U.S. higher education institutions today with ten percent of these students (45,400) currently enrolled in graduate school (Feldblum, Hubbard, Lim, Penichet-Paul, & Siegel 2020). While there has been momentum across the field of higher education to improve undocumented students' pursuit of college, the next step of the graduate level has been

largely unaddressed. A focus on graduate school is important because the educational landscape for access and support in graduate school has distinct differences from the undergraduate level. For example, while undergraduate level financial aid strives to be uniform across the admitted student population, the process in PhD programs is in part determined by individual professors' sources of funding for students.

To date, few research studies have studied the educational landscape for undocumented students at the graduate level (for exceptions, see Escudero, Freeman, Park & Pereira, 2019; Lara & Nava, 2018). To address this gap in the research literature and lack of programs in graduate school, we describe the impact of My Undocumented Life – one of the largest online platforms with almost two million views providing up-to-date information and resources to undocumented students, families, and the school personnel who work with them. Founded in 2011 by Carolina Valdivia, My Undocumented Life (MUL) provides a sense of community to undocumented students, and extensive programming and resources on numerous topics including health care, access to college, and graduate school. Since 2015, an author of this article, Rachel E. Freeman, has been the



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largest contributor to the blog.

To contribute to the literature on undocumented students' pursuit of graduate school, we discuss what we have learned working with undocumented students through My Undocumented Life. In particular, we draw from the unique perspectives of undocumented students whose stories were featured on MUL in two series about graduate school, as well as from our work facilitating dozens of UndocuGrads Workshops and identifying scholarship opportunities open to undocumented graduate school students. We also draw from our experiences creating and facilitating an UndocuGrads National Network (with close to 1,000 members) and providing mentorship to prospective and current undocumented grad students across various institutions. By paying particular attention to the challenges and resources that undocumented students highlighted through their own writing and active participation in UndocuGrads Workshops, key steps that universities can take to better support undocumented students during this key transitional period in their educational journeys were identified.

Educational Landscape for Undocumented Graduate Students

While the 1982 U.S. Supreme Court case *Plyler v. Doe* ensured undocumented children access to free K-12 public education, the issue of access to higher education at the undergraduate and graduate levels remained an open question (Olivas, 2012). Federal and state policies affect admission and financial

aid access in higher education. At the federal level, undocumented students are banned from receiving financial aid. However, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA) has improved access to higher education by providing students with more opportunities to work and drive to school (Gonzales, Roth, Brant, Lee, & Valdivia 2016). At the state level, some states allow undocumented students to pay the more affordable in-state tuition rates and receive state financial aid, whereas other states require students to pay the more expensive out of state tuition and ban students from enrolling (Dougherty, Nienhusser, & Vega, 2010; ULeadnet.org, 2020).

Access to graduate school often becomes distinct from the undergraduate level in terms of institutional policies and licensure laws (Escudero, Freeman, Park & Pereira, 2019; Qu, 2013). At the institutional level, admissions, financial aid, and support systems differ for undergraduate and graduate students. At the undergraduate level, the same institutional policies for admissions and financial aid often apply to undergraduate applicants. However, at the graduate level, individual departments can determine their own admissions and financial aid policies. Even within these departments, particular professors may offer differing amounts of financial aid to their

¹ DACA is an executive order announced by the Obama administration in 2012 that allows undocumented young adults who meet specific eligibility criteria to receive work authorization and a driver's license, and to have temporary relief from the threat of deportation. While the Trump administration continually threatened to end DACA, the program remains in place as of 2021 under President Biden's administration.

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students. Funding structures are also complex because funding from private donors and foundations can have eligibility requirements on citizenship status. It is not uncommon for undocumented students to be admitted to graduate school, only to find out they are not eligible for the financial aid they thought they would receive.

Beyond issues of access, institutional support for both prospective and current graduate students is also critical. Support systems for undocumented students are often organized by the students themselves, with minimal support from the university (Sanchez & So, 2015). As a result of undocumented activists' ongoing efforts, several universities have established support programs for graduate students. For example, some universities have established a full-time staff position dedicated to working with the university's undocumented student population (Cisneros & Valdivia 2020), including graduate students.

Compounding these issues, state laws also restrict access to professions that require a license such as law, medicine, dentistry, teaching, and cosmetology. These licensure laws are important because they can impact graduate school students' trajectories into the profession, and they may influence graduate school programs' decisions to admit undocumented students (Escudero, Freeman, Park, & Pereira 2019; Qu, 2013). For example, some graduate schools may be concerned about admitting undocumented students if their state has not passed a licensure law for

that profession.

Moreover, these licensure laws vary by state, and very few states have passed laws allowing access to professional licensure. Only two states, California and Nebraska, allow access to almost all professional licensures. A few states have passed licensure laws in regard to particular professions. For example, Florida, New York, and Wyoming currently offer access to the state's bar so undocumented law graduates can become licensed lawyers (Escudero, Freeman, Park, & Pereira 2019).

Review of the Research on Undocumented Students in Graduate School

Even though the landscape for access and institutional support for graduate school has important distinctions from the undergraduate level, the research literature has largely focused on undergrads. While this research has discussed the barriers that undocumented students face in college (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2016; Negrón-Gonzales, 2017; Suárez-Orozco, M. Teranishi, R., & Suárez-Orozco, C.), a focus on graduate school is important to uncover the unique barriers experienced by undocumented graduate school students. Recent studies find that undocumented graduate students are particularly concerned about funding and finding a support network (Escudero, 2020; Perez, 2009). In a study with undocumented students considering graduate school in STEM fields, education, social sciences, humanities, and the law, Lara and Nava

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(2018) found that undocumented students relied on their peers and mentors for guidance and support in the graduate school process, and were motivated by social activism to promote equity for undocumented immigrants. Through the Immigrant Student Research Project, Escudero et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive study of undocumented graduate school studies. Drawing from 158 survey responses among immigrant and undocumented students in medical and law schools, the study revealed that undocumented students often draw on family savings to fund graduate school and often do not have the support of academic mentors.

Scholars in the medical field have discussed the importance of equity in medical school programs for undocumented students (Anaya, Del Rosario, & Hayes-Bautista, 2014; Kuczewski & Brubaker, 2014; Nakae, Marquez, Di Bartolo, & Rodriguez, 2017). Anaya et al. (2014), discuss barriers to medical school including receiving conflicting messages from the same institution whether undocumented students are eligible to apply. They also discuss the barrier of being ineligible for assistance with application fees from associations such as the Association of American Medical Colleges Fees Assistance Program. They suggest best practices such as providing accurate information about students' eligibility for admission and training staff to be sensitive to students' mental health needs. Kuczewski and Brubaker (2014) relatedly discuss the ethical imperative for medical schools to offer

admission and financial aid to undocumented students. Moreover, Nakae, et al. (2017) discuss the positive impact of DACA on undocumented medical students' trajectories including the ability to work while in school. Researchers have also discussed access to law school and the profession. For example, Qu (2013) discusses the legal implications of passing equitable laws that allow undocumented immigrants access to the bar. Moreover, in a study with 33 DACA eligible law school students Muñiz, et al. (2018) found that students were uneasy about Trump's rescission of DACA but were still determined to pursue careers in the legal field. Moreover, participants discussed the important role of their families in supporting their studies, and how they tried to give back to their families by providing information they had learned in law school. These studies in the education, medical, and legal fields provide insight into the experiences of undocumented students in their pursuit of graduate school.

Challenges Pursuing Graduate School

Through our work with undocumented graduate school students, several challenges that undocumented students confront in their pursuit of a graduate degree were identified. In this section, three of these challenges will be explored. Lastly, the role of My Undocumented Life in supporting students' navigation of barriers applying and transitioning to graduate school will be discussed.

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At My Undocumented Life, we have worked with hundreds of undocumented students in their pursuit of graduate school for almost ten years. We conducted content analysis of undocumented students' experiences with graduate school from five sources of information.

First, we gathered information from students' testimonials and reflections in a series of posts over the years titled "UndocuGrads," that focuses on the experiences of about 20 undocumented graduate students and their advice to prospective students. Contributors to the series enrolled in graduate programs in multiple states including Connecticut, Texas, and California; and in diverse fields such as nursing, medicine, sociology, education, political science, and engineering.

Second, we reflect on our experiences maintaining the UndocuGrads National Network (co-created in 2015 by Carolina and Diana Valdivia), which provides a support community, networking opportunities, and resources to more than 1,000 undocumented graduate students across the country.

Third, we draw from UndocuGrads Workshops Carolina Valdivia co-facilitated with fellow undocumented graduate students since 2014. The workshops offered specific advice to undocumented students applying to graduate school, as well as information about the graduate school application process, fellowship/scholarship opportunities, and more. The workshops, whether held virtually or in-person, provided great opportunities for

former, current, and prospective undocumented graduate students to connect and share information, advice, and key resources. Different campuses have hosted these workshops including California State University Northridge, San Diego State University, and University of California San Diego. Workshop attendees were also encouraged to maintain contact with workshop facilitators who provide ongoing mentorship, encouragement, and support to undocumented students as they work on their graduate school applications.

Fourth, we reflect on information gathered by our MUL team on funding opportunities available to undocumented graduate students. Finally, our discussion stems from our experiences providing one-on-one mentorship to dozens of prospective and current undocumented graduate students across various institutions.

From our analysis of the data through our work at MUL, we find that undocumented students often chart pathways to graduate school in isolation and identify support for undocumented students from graduate schools on their own. While research finds that undocumented students' families are often supportive in their pursuit of higher education (Cuevas, 2019; Nienhuser & Oshio, 2020), the experience of being a first-generation student can make it challenging to navigate graduate school. This process is further complicated by having to secure financial help and making important decisions around disclosure.

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Charting Pathways to Graduate School in Isolation

As undocumented students advance in their higher education trajectory, we find they are often the only ones within their immediate network of family and friends applying to and attending graduate school. The experience of being a first-generation graduate student is further complicated for undocumented young adults who must navigate a complicated labyrinth of immigration-related policies and practices at the federal, state, local, and institutional level. For example, many students we work with encounter barriers to entrance exams such as the GRE. To take the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE), undocumented students are required to have a passport. In some cases, undocumented students may miss this requirement under the assumption that other forms of government identification (e.g., state-issued driver's license) may be acceptable. Some students may not be able to receive a passport on time for the test or at all (e.g., in the event a student is in deportation proceedings or does not have access to their birth certificate which is required to obtain a passport).

Without personally knowing an undocumented student in graduate school who can provide guidance and support, it can be difficult for undocumented students to know what to expect during the application process, including information about the GRE and its identification requirements for undocumented students.

Once enrolled, undocumented graduate students may continue to struggle with the reality of “being the only one” in their graduate degree program. Karla, who shared her advice about pursuing a law degree on MUL, explained:

My first semester of law school created a period of deep regret, loneliness, and restlessness like I had never experienced. Many people had prepared me for law school; giving me practical advice on outlines, exam preparation, and time management. Although much of this advice kept me afloat throughout the semester, no one discussed seeking counseling to cope with stress or anxiety. My second piece of advice for future undocumented law students: know that mental health resources, including counseling sessions, are available for free or at a nominal cost at most universities. A legal career is a stressful one, and it's wise to start good mental health habits as soon as you can. It wasn't so much law school reading assignments that created stressors for me but sadly, the shock of being in a space that isn't particularly welcoming for students of color. I have owned my status as an undocumented person since receiving DACA in 2012 and have been organizing for immigrant rights since then, sharing inclusive spaces with queer immigrants and undocumented people of color. But in law school, I was the only person of color in one of my classes and I overheard conversations defending symbols of white supremacy and the “religious freedom” to deny same-sex couples the right to marry who they love. All the while, I saw my friends being spit on and assaulted in the news as they organized rallies against Donald Trump and his bigotry. (Karla, 2016).

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Karla described the stressors of being the only student of color in her classes, a reality exacerbated by the school and national climate particularly at the time of the 2016 U.S. presidential elections. These circumstances can negatively affect students' emotional well-being and their participation at school. As Karla noted, "I went from being an outspoken advocate for myself and others to feeling disempowered as I sat in my classes (Karla, 2016)." Karla describes how the climate of law school can feel oppressive and exclusionary for students of color.

Challenges Seeking Information Specific to Undocumented Students

When undocumented students decide to apply to graduate school, we find they are also confronted with the task of determining which programs are "undocu-friendly" – a term commonly used to refer to the level of information, resources, and support that are available for undocumented students. At this stage, we find students often ask: Does the school or program provide application fee waivers for undocumented students? What type of financial assistance is available for undocumented graduate students once enrolled? Are undocumented graduate

students (with or without DACA) able to obtain teaching and research assistantships? Have any undocumented graduate students successfully completed the program before? Are faculty and staff members aware of the unique challenges that confront undocumented students?

Because few graduate programs make information about admissions and financial aid specific to undocumented students readily accessible on their websites, students largely have to make individual inquiries to each program of interest. When inquiries are made, students are often provided misinformation. This underscores the important role of campus staff and faculty who focus on building a sense of trust with undocumented students and their families (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020).

Juan describes the importance of continuing to look for the right person he can trust who can provide information and resources specific to undocumented students. He states:

Call the school you wish to apply to. I don't mean call once, get a generic answer, and move along. Call as many times as you can, ask for different people, ask them all the questions you need to ask.



"When undocumented students decide to apply to graduate school, we find they are also confronted with the task of determining which programs are "undocu-friendly" – a term commonly used to refer to the level of information, resources, and support that are available for undocumented students."

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Tweet and Facebook the school. Oftentimes, I see students who get discouraged because they face roadblocks by school personnel who do not have the proper knowledge on immigration related issues, hence, why they default on shutting down your inquiries. Someone in the Admissions office for the department you are applying to has the answers, it is just a matter of knocking on the right door.

Decisions to Disclose or Conceal One's Immigration Status

During the application process, we find that prospective undocumented graduate students are also making decisions about whether to disclose their immigration status. The issue of disclosure is key as deciding to disclose one's status can open opportunities for undocumented students that would have not otherwise been accessible (Patler, 2018). For example, although common for graduate schools to limit application fee waivers to those with legal immigration status, exemptions are granted. This in turn not only helps students financially, but also communicates to them the program may have a culture of support for undocumented students. At the same time, disclosure can expose students to school personnel who are discriminatory, misinformed, and/or discouraging—a theme that is widely documented in the literature with respect to undocumented college students (Gonzales, 2015, Negrón-Gonzales, 2017), but which we know much less about with respect to graduate school. Since undocumented students often confront discriminatory school personnel, research speaks to the importance of trainings (often called UndocuAlly

trainings) to prepare staff to work with undocumented students (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020).

Within the UndocuGrads National Network, prospective undocumented graduate students frequently ask for advice regarding whether to disclose or conceal their immigration status in their applications. Some students, for example, wondered how their immigration status may affect their ability to receive institutional funding opportunities and thus felt compelled to disclose their status. However, the fear the receiving person such as a recruitment/admissions officer or faculty member, may respond negatively, was of great concern for students.

Financial Challenges

Across the UndocuGrads Workshops, facilitated over the years, the main concern for students is the lack of financial aid opportunities for undocumented graduate school students. While students, regardless of their immigration status, may be encouraged to apply to multiple programs, undocumented students cannot afford the high application costs. As previously mentioned, graduate school application fee waivers are largely limited to students who have legal immigration status—leaving undocumented students who are from predominantly low-income families to find other means of paying for their applications. Undocumented students may in turn rely on a wide range of fundraising efforts, but not all students have access to a support network who can help spread the word about a

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fundraiser and contribute, help to organize fundraising campaigns (online or offline), nor the ability to publicly share their story to garner support because of privacy and safety concerns. The lack of financial assistance available during the application process can limit the number of programs students apply to.

Once enrolled, we find that undocumented graduate students continue to experience significant financial challenges. Unlike their documented peers, undocumented graduate students may not be able to work as teaching, graduate, or research assistants without a work permit. DACA has undoubtedly expanded undocumented young adults' work and education-related opportunities (Gonzales et al., 2016; Patler & Cabrera, 2015; Wong & Valdivia, 2014). DACAmented graduate students, for example, may now be able to accept funding packages that include teaching assistantships. And yet, financial barriers remain for undocumented graduate students with or without DACA.

Furthermore, students describe how state policy contexts impact access to affordable tuition rates and opportunities for financial aid. While some state policies, for example in California, expanded access to in-state tuition and financial aid, students in other states, such as Georgia, describe the challenges of navigating state policies that require them to pay the more expensive out-of-state tuition.

First and foremost, undocumented graduate students without DACA are still largely unable to take on paid opportunities to fund

their graduate studies. While there are exceptions, such as when graduate programs may allow students to serve as research assistants without formal wages, and instead receive an honorarium or scholarship, these approaches are not the standard and often depended on how supportive and understanding the faculty, graduate program, and institution were of the challenges confronting undocumented students. Indeed, during one-on-one conversations with prospective undocumented graduate students, they discussed difficulties for unDACAmented students to secure financial assistance, especially outside of private institutions. Second, even among students who have access to DACA, growing uncertainty about the future of the program is a source of constant anxiety and stress (Patler & Pirtle, 2019; Valdivia, 2020). During our most recent UndocuGrads Workshops, attendees have expressed growing concerns about pursuing graduate school because DACA may come to an end. They have shared they may need to work instead while they have access to DACA or a work permit in order to save money in case the program is terminated. Third, while at MUL we identified several unique funding opportunities available to undocumented graduate students.

However, it is a fraction of fellowship and scholarship opportunities available for U.S. citizen graduate students. Fourth, a few of the most prominent fellowship opportunities open to undocumented graduate students are limited to only those who have access to

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DACA, placing graduate students who do not have DACA at a further disadvantage.

The Role of My Undocumented Life

To address these barriers, My Undocumented Life focuses on building a sense of community for undocumented students interested in and currently enrolled in graduate school. Indeed, since its founding in 2011, the goal of MUL has been to share key pieces of advice and resources with fellow undocumented students so that they do not have to confront similar challenges on their own. MUL has expanded its work by facilitating UndocuGrads workshops to provide an opportunity to connect offline, in-person, with undocumented students interested in learning about graduate school. The workshops begin with a 30-45 minute presentation on the application process, fee waivers, tuition costs, and financial resources. The second part of the workshop features a Q&A segment. Over the years, we have found the Q & A portion of the workshops allows participants to share their concerns and fears about graduate school, and fosters a sense of community. Attendees are encouraged to follow up with panelists if any other questions or concerns arise. The goal of the workshops is to remind undocumented students that they are not alone in this journey and that there are fellow undocumented students who have successfully navigated graduate school and are here to help.

Relatedly, the goal of the UndocuGrads National Network (UGNN) has been to provide a constant and accessible source of support and a sense of community for undocumented students navigating graduate school. As of November 2020, UGNN has over 1,000 network members. The network exists as a private Facebook group and members can connect with others, share their experience or advice, pose questions, or share resources. We find that the network helps to build connections among prospective, current, and former undocumented graduate students as it invites members to share what field(s) they are interested in or what institution they are studying in or applying to. Given that few programs exist for undocumented students specifically pursuing graduate school, My Undocumented Life has been an important community and resource for undocumented students in their pursuit of graduate school.

Institutional Recommendations

Universities can take numerous steps to build institutional support for undocumented students pursuing graduate programs. In this section, we discuss recommendations for universities including supporting the development of community for undocumented students, building funding structures, and making the application process more undocu-friendly.

Connect Students With Each Other

As evidenced in available literature (Muñiz, et al., 2018) and our experiences working with

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students at MUL, peer networks have been essential to supporting students in their pursuit of graduate school. To help foster these peer networks, universities can support the development of workshops, panels, and information sessions specific to undocumented students in graduate school. For example, UC San Diego, UC Merced and the UndocuScholars Project at UCLA have hosted conferences specifically for undocumented students interested in graduate school.

Support Student-Led Organizations

In addition to fostering the development of peer networks, universities can also support a sense of community by providing resources to undocumented student-led organizations in graduate school. Student organizations are key to developing a sense of community as students provide peer mentorship and guidance for each other. For example, UndocuNurses at UCLA is a student organization where students at UCLA's nursing school provide community and guidance to undocumented undergraduate students interested in nursing school. Universities can support student organizations by providing a robust budget to run their programs, space for students to meet, and faculty and staff advisers.

Develop Task Forces

Universities can also facilitate community by building task forces of administrators, faculty, and students to build institutional support for undocumented graduate students. Many colleges and universities across the country

have been working with these task forces to build institutional support, such as California State University Dominguez Hills in California and Salt Lake Community College in Utah². The taskforces have also played a key role in developing campus wide trainings (often known as UndocuAlly trainings) that help equip staff and faculty to be ready to support undocumented students.

Establish Staff Positions and Undocumented Student Resource Centers

Examples of best practices that task forces can prioritize are institutionalizing a full-time staff solely with undocumented students and establishing an Undocumented Student Resource Center (USRC). USRCs are physical spaces on campus that provide a sense of community and resources specific to undocumented students. Studies find that USRCs build support for undocumented students because staff have expertise in working with undocumented students and they are seen as safe places (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020). Furthermore, research speaks to the important role of staff in building trust with their undocumented students and their families (Nienhuser & Espino, 2017). With respect to graduate school support, Diana Valdivia (former Director of the USRC at the University of California, Santa Barbara), for example, created the UndocuGrad Prep Program. This cohort model program provides support with application materials for graduate school and opportunities to learn

² Immigrants Rising is a non-profit organization that provides brochures and recorded webinars with more specific information about how to develop a task force.

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from undocumented students currently in graduate school. While many USRCs provide programming to undergrads, universities can provide additional funding to USRCs so these centers can build their programs for graduate students.

Build Partnerships with Nonprofit Organizations

Universities can also strengthen institutional support by building partnerships with community-based and non-profit organizations. Numerous organizations work with undocumented students in their pursuit of graduate school and professional careers. For example, Pre-Health Dreamers works with undocumented students as they pursue careers in the medical fields. Another example is the Undocumented Filmmakers Collective, an organization led by undocumented immigrants in the filmmaking industry. Partnering with non-profit organizations can help build equity for undocumented students in graduate school (Chen & Rhoads, 2016).

Strengthen Funding Structures

Lack of access to funding for graduate school is often a restrictive barrier that prevents undocumented students from enrolling in graduate school (Escudero et al., 2019). To ameliorate this barrier, universities can allocate funds to provide fellowships and scholarships to undocumented students. The Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration has published guides regarding building funding for undocumented students in graduate school (Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, 2020).

Furthermore, universities can collaborate with foundations that provide funding to graduate students to ensure fellowships are open to undocumented students with or without DACA. Even though many foundations require applicants to be U.S. citizens or permanent residents, some foundations such as the Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship have made their fellowships open to undocumented students. Universities can also provide work opportunities for undocumented students such as teaching assistant positions and graduate student researcher positions.


Demystifying the Application Process

Universities can also build equity by providing more guidance with the application process. We recommend universities create and enhance webpages on their university's website with information specific to undocumented students applying to their programs. For example, the University of Washington and the Stritch School of Medicine at Loyola University Chicago have created websites with helpful information specific to applying to their graduate programs as an undocumented student.

Conclusion

This article's focus on education equity for undocumented students in graduate school seeks to address a critical gap in the research literature. Through our discussion of our work with My Undocumented Life, we note the key barriers in the graduate school landscape and important best practices higher

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education institutions can seek to build. As the field of education continues to broaden access and equity in college for undocumented students at the undergraduate level, it is imperative that colleges and universities look to the next phase of building equitable programs at the graduate and professional degree levels. 

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