

Power of Guidance: Mentorship Need and Viability for Undocumented Student Populations

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Background

- Two million undocumented immigrants live in California ¹
- Many undocumented youth must navigate challenges that citizens do not usually encounter when they explore their options for college.
- Undocumented adults attend college at lower rates (49%) than citizens (71%) and documented immigrants (76%). ²
- During the pandemic, California Dream Act applications dropped by 16%, in comparison to FAFSA applications, which dropped by 2-3%. ³
- **Problem:** Undocumented high school students' access to college was disproportionately impacted by pandemic
- **Aim 1:** Identify challenges faced by undocumented students in their journey to college
- **Aim 2:** Gather opinions on mentorship for undocumented high school students

Research Design

Participants: 3 participants ($N = 3$) that self-identified as undocumented students were recruited for this qualitative case study, 2 male ($n = 2$) and 1 female ($n = 1$).

Procedures: Data collection took place in July 2021. After the researcher went over the consent form, participants completed a 40 – 60-minute interview that was recorded on Zoom and then transcribed.

Measures: At each interview participants were asked questions about their experience as an undocumented student, the resources that were available to them, and their thoughts on mentorship services for undocumented high school students.

Findings

Aim 1: Identify Challenges: Participants spoke about lacking support during high school, receiving support in college, feeling uncertain about their future and lacking work opportunities because of their status. Participants all identified misinformation/lack of information as an obstacle in their educational journey and said that once they found a person that was knowledgeable about the undocumented experience, they were able to be successful in their road to college.

Aim 2: Gather Opinions: All participants agreed that having a high school mentor would have greatly benefitted them and would benefit undocumented high school students with the goal of college.

About being an undocumented, P3

“I’d say the biggest issue right now is the current state of DACA... you take three steps forward, one step forward, and then you end up taking three steps back.”

About mentorship services for HS students, P1

“I didn't have that. Anybody that was knowledgeable about everything, anything at all. So a college mentor would have changed everything I think. I think I would have been done with school by now.”

About the future, P2

“It’s my goal to be a veterinarian, but I am undocumented and don’t qualify for DACA, so it’s probably not going to happen... in reality, when you don’t have the resources, or when you don’t have the help or like the extra hand it is definitely hard.”

Discussion

- Our findings indicate that there is a gap in the resources and support available to undocumented high school students and undocumented college students, and that many undocumented students lack the support they need to accomplish their education goals..
- After speaking with the participants, the research team developed the Rooted in Education Mentorship, a mentorship program for undocumented youth from undocumented college students.
- A pilot run of the program in November-December 2021 had positive feedback from participants, and a second run of the program will begin in September 2022

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References

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