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“Let’s Do Something About It”:

Building and Sustaining Institutional Support
for Undocumented Community College Students

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Jennifer Patricia Galvez

2021

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“Let’s Do Something About It”:

Building and Sustaining Institutional Support
for Undocumented Community College Students

by

Jennifer Patricia Galvez

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2021

Professor Robert T. Teranishi, Chair

Community colleges are home to more immigrant and undocumented students than any other sector in higher education. Many California community colleges have established Undocumented Student Resource Centers (USRCs) to centralize student support efforts for immigrant students. They serve as a hub of services and information for undocumented students and the general campus community—although often with limited resources. The focus of this study was to explore the sensemaking process of institutional agents (e.g., coordinators, deans, vice presidents, and district administrators) at the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) when building and working toward the sustainability of the Undocumented Student Resource Centers, given the limited resources available to California community colleges and the limitations of immigration policies. Interviews of institutional agents revealed how the campuses and district made decisions about the centers, how colleges prioritized services in

addressing undocumented students' needs, how the centers differed on each campus, and cross-district collaboration efforts. The institutional agents described how the immigrant rights movement, students, and advocates have long pressured the colleges to address the needs of undocumented students and indicated the role of the USRC institutional agent is to address institutional barriers and identify resources. According to the institutional agents, the primary feature of the USRC is increasingly identified by the role of the coordinator. To build the sustainability of the USRC, the campus must prioritize the center by becoming "undocufriendly" campus-wide and allocating resources by aligning to new state funding initiatives. Additionally, the institutional agents indicated that the creation and building of sustainability for Undocumented Student Resource Centers involves college organizational change practices, illustrating that developing institutional change is labor intensive and more resources are needed to sustain such change.

The dissertation of Jennifer Patricia Galvez is approved.

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2021

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Luz Marina Galvez, the smartest person I know.
Mami, gracias por su esfuerzo y apoyo.

To my sister's, Edlin and Dayana, you are the best cheerleaders. Jaelynn, Angie, Jeraldine, Jeralyn, Jerald, Jontae, and Esmeralda, this is for you. Tambien se lo dedico a mis viejitos Mami Pita, Papi Nando, y Papi Juan. I love you all.

Lastly, I also dedicate this to all immigrants and children of immigrants...and our families both here and there.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION	ii
DEDICATION	v
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xii
VITA.....	xiii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem Statement.....	2
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Design	5
Site and Data Source	6
Significance of Study	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
Undocumented Students.....	9
Diversity in Identity.....	10
Age of Arrival and Legal Liminality.....	11
Political Context	13
National Policies	13
California Policies	15
Higher Education: Institutional Support for Undocumented Students	16
Institutional Support and Best Practices	16
California Community Colleges	19
Public Higher Education.....	19
Theoretical Framework	20

Conclusion	22
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	24
Research Questions	24
Methods	25
Site Selection.....	26
Data Sources	28
Data Collection Procedure	29
Data Analysis Methods.....	31
Ethical Issues.....	32
Management of Role	33
Credibility.....	34
Study Limitations.....	35
Summary	36
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS.....	37
Immigrant Rights Advocates.....	37
Countering the Trump Effect.....	38
The Legacy of Activism and More Than 30 Years of Political Pressure.....	40
Student Pressure	41
Institutional Allies	43
Advocates and Organizational Change.....	45
USRC Institutional Agents.....	45
Role as USRC Institutional Agents.....	46
Making Sense of a Districtwide Effort.....	47
Pressure From the Top: Leadership Support	49
District Leadership and Political Power	50

Campus Leadership	52
Addressing Implementation Challenges: Resources and Institutional Barriers	54
Center Location.....	56
Privacy and Safety.....	57
COVID and Remote Learning	58
Staffing the Centers	59
Counseling Coordinator as a Resource and Advocate	62
Collaborative Resources	63
Making the USRC a Campus Priority.....	67
Building Allies and Campus Capacity	68
Student Development: Making Meaning of Student Needs	70
Train Staff.....	71
Allocating Resources.....	72
Aligning to State Initiatives	74
Summary	80
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION	82
Context Matters: Developing Support for Undocumented Students Is Political.....	83
USRC Institutional Agents Drive Organizational Change.....	84
Trainings	85
Collaboration.....	86
Institutional Agents	88
USRC Key Features	91
Building Safe Campuses.....	92
Resources Matter for Meeting Equity Goals	93
Recommendations.....	95

Institutional Agents	96
Institutional Agents’ Sensemaking.....	97
Campus Sensemaking.....	99
Recommendations for Policymakers	99
Adequately Fund Community Colleges to Meet Student and Workforce Needs	100
Comprehensive Immigration Reform.....	101
Future Research	101
Conclusion.....	102
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (CAMPUS)	103
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (DISTRICT).....	105
REFERENCES.....	107

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: <i>Student-Centered Funding Formula Allocations</i>	77
Figure 2: <i>Building and Sustaining Institutional Support for Undocumented Community College Students</i>	97

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: <i>Undocumented Student Population, 2019</i>	64
Table 2: <i>USRC Institutional Agents</i>	89

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Public discourse on immigration, especially in the news media cycles, is framed as abrupt and crisis related (Akdenizli et al., 2016). This framing ignores the complex discourse on immigration and the United States' long history of exclusionary and discriminatory immigration policies stretching back to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Akdenizli et al., 2016; Muñoz, 2018; Venegas et al., 2017). A recent report by the Brookings Institute highlighted that the crisis-related conversation around immigration increases during presidential election seasons (Akdenizli et al., 2016). The 2016 presidential race's intensified rhetoric and the elected administration's continuous challenges to established immigration policies increased mental stress on undocumented individuals (Muñoz, 2018; Santellano, 2019). In an attempt to address the heightened visibility and attacks on immigrant students, there was a range of efforts across different states, higher education systems, and individual institutions to find ways to better support and promote greater success among undocumented students. One community college district in California, which was the focus of this study, responded with the establishment of Undocumented Student Resource Centers (USRCs) at each of its campuses to serve as a hub of information and services for undocumented students and the campus community (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018).

The Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) is one of the country's largest districts and home to one of the state's largest undocumented student populations (Los Angeles Community College District, 2019). According to the LACCD Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the district saw a 10.3% decrease in the number of enrolled undocumented students in the fall of 2017—the academic year immediately following the 2016 election. The decline in the number of undocumented students prompted the LACCD Board of Trustees (BOT)

and chancellor to convene an Immigration Taskforce and ask the nine campuses to establish Undocumented Student Resource Centers.

This study examined the development of Undocumented Student Resource Centers in the Los Angeles Community College District, as the district's efforts to address undocumented students' needs on their campuses. The study looked at how higher education professionals of the college and district administer the creation and sustainability of Undocumented Student Resource Centers to best meet students' needs. Specifically, I documented the efforts taking place in the USRCs, explored how colleges and the district made decisions regarding the centers, and identified how support and resources have changed over time.

Problem Statement

Undocumented Student Resource Centers are vital in identifying and retaining undocumented students on college campuses (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). The growing body of scholarship on undocumented students in higher education has shown that undocumented students' unique experiences, needs, and challenges make specific campus support necessary (Teranishi et al., 2019). Studies have demonstrated that undocumented students' experiences and needs are directly affected by their legal status and the ambiguity of immigration policies (Gildersleeve & Ranero, 2010; Greenman & Hall, 2013; Menjívar, 2006; Terriquez, 2015). For instance, Gonzales (2011) highlighted the experiences of undocumented youth as they discovered their legal status in their transition from high school to college and the limitations it had on their academic and employment opportunities (Greenman & Hall, 2013; Negrón-Gonzales, 2017; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). In her qualitative study, Muñoz (2016) elevated the stories of students who negotiated the need to disclose their legal status to identify support and resources in a 4-year college.

The research on undocumented students' experiences has primarily focused on students coming to terms with their legal status as they prepare to apply to and attend 4-year colleges and universities (Negrón-Gonzales, 2017). Unfortunately, this focus ignores the majority of undocumented students who attend community colleges, including the many who attend school part time, work, and are much more diverse in age and identity (Negrón-Gonzales, 2017; Teranishi et al., 2019; Valenzuela et al., 2015). Including research on working undocumented students is vital as more students work while attending college to support themselves or their families, affecting their academics (Terriquez, 2015). Therefore, more research is needed to understand the legal liminality in undocumented community college students' decision-making process and community colleges' and districts' responses to support the students through this process (Negrón-Gonzales, 2017; Ngo & Astudillo, 2018).

The limited research on supports for undocumented students in community colleges has focused on the role of institutional agents—defined as college administrators and staff who hold key positions on campuses—and the need for building institutional capacity to establish “undocufriendly” campuses (Kim & Chambers, 2015; Nienhusser, 2018; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Valenzuela et al., 2015). Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015 define “undocufriendly” campuses as institutional practices that help build an inclusive campus that is supportive of undocumented students' needs. Institutional agents assist students in learning about and how to tactfully navigate their educational journey while also navigating a web of policies, resources, and student needs (Cisneros & Cadenas, 2017; Nienhusser, 2018). Over the past decade, colleges and universities have begun to establish more institutional support for undocumented students, including the establishment and development of Undocumented Student Resource Centers (Cisneros & Rivarola, 2020; Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020). Scholars have identified USRCs as

necessary for enhancing the learning and development of undocumented students because they validate the students' experiences and produce a sense of belonging (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020). The centers serve to attract students to the college and enhance student outcomes—benefiting the institutions by increasing recruitment, retention, and graduation rates (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020). The limited studies on the role and growth of the USRCs have focused on 4-year colleges and universities. One example is UC Berkeley, the first campus to establish a student support center for undocumented students (Manalo-Pedro, 2018). Additional research is needed on developing and maintaining USRCs in institutions with less financial support and fewer resources, such as community colleges (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020).

Community colleges continue to be home to more immigrant and undocumented students than any other higher education sector (Teranishi et al., 2011). Yet, academic discussions tend to focus on students who attend prestigious universities and fit the narrative of the high-achieving immigrant student (Negrón-Gonzales, 2017). There is a need for more research on institutional support for undocumented students at the community college, the institutional response by community college districts, and the efficacy of the response in meeting undocumented student needs. Therefore, my study looked at a community college district and its support of undocumented students by establishing Undocumented Student Resource Centers. Notably, my study reviewed the actions of institutional agents in establishing and maintaining Undocumented Student Resource Centers in the community colleges. My study was designed to examine institutional agents' role in developing and sustaining Undocumented Student Resource Centers in a multi-campus district.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn about the institutional agents' understanding and navigation of the evolving state and national policies, student needs, and district mandates to establish Undocumented Student Resource Centers. The research on USRCs has provided an overview of the work carried out by students, staff, faculty, and administrators in establishing the center. Still, there is little information on how decisions are made to enact these practices and sustain the centers. Across the community college district, there are several institutional agents responsible for the development and establishment of the USRCs and the services provided to undocumented students. By interviewing institutional agents, I sought to understand how the campuses and district made decisions about the centers, how colleges prioritized services in addressing undocumented students' needs, how the centers differed on each campus, and any cross-district collaboration efforts. As a result, the following research question and subquestions framed my study:

How do community college institutional agents navigate the creation and sustainability of Undocumented Student Resource Centers to meet undocumented students' needs?

- a. What are the key features of the USRCs across the district?
- b. If there are differences between campus USRCs, what are the factors that contribute to these differences?

Research Design

The research was a case study analysis of three campuses in a California community college district, as an effort to develop a holistic, in-depth analysis and understanding of how the USRCs are created and sustained (Tellis, 1997). I studied the Undocumented Student Resource

Centers via interviews and document analysis, highlighting how campus and district leaders made decisions about the USRCs and how they serviced undocumented students on the campus.

Site and Data Source

This study's targeted population was USRC staff and campus administrators who coordinate the centers, the Board of Trustee member who chairs the district Immigration Taskforce, and the district chancellor. The Los Angeles Community College District is home to nine community colleges. The campuses for the study were identified based on having a full-time coordinator and then narrowed down to the three centers that have a tenure-track full-time counselor faculty coordinating and directing the center. The focus on a multi-college district accounted for some of the unique struggles that affect these campuses, such as balancing campus, state, and district policies, budgets, and procedures. The multi-college district perspective was particularly essential because base funding allocation goes from the state to the district, and then the district decides how funds are distributed to the campuses.

After I identified the campuses via document analysis, I conducted interviews with the USRC coordinators. The coordinators were particularly crucial because student services staff are key institutional agents who must interpret and implement policies affecting undocumented students (Nienhusser, 2014). They helped identify the primary administrator who manages and allocate resources to the USRCs. The administrators interviewed are essential because leaders on each campus make decisions regarding their center based on their local campus policies. The lack of uniformity across the district USRCs leaves a lot to interpretation. Interviews helped to determine how campuses balance the students' needs, the campus needs, and the district mandate, and they captured the story of how campuses developed and continue to support the USRC.

Significance of Study

This study facilitated open conversations about Undocumented Student Resource Centers as a response by community colleges to support undocumented students. It adds to the limited research on undocumented students, undocumented students in community colleges, and Undocumented Student Resource Centers at community colleges. This study shines light on how mandates supporting undocumented students trickle down across the district, to individual campuses and students. Additional research on undocumented students is needed, particularly research that focuses on students' experiences in community colleges. The study's focus is essential because most of the prior research has focused on 4-year institutions, even though more undocumented students attend community colleges (Nienhusser, 2014).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

California community colleges are home to a growing number of undocumented and immigrant-origin students who are increasingly entering the state workforce (Batalova & Zong, 2019; Passel, 2011; Teranishi et al., 2011; Terriquez, 2015). Undocumented immigrants are individuals who are not U.S. citizens, do not hold permanent resident visas, or are not protected under other policies that allow for a long-term stay or work permits (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Federal and state policies determine the types of resources undocumented students can access as they navigate higher education institutions (Bjorklund, 2018). Many California community colleges have established Undocumented Student Resource Centers (USRCs) to centralize student support efforts for immigrant students (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018). They serve as a hub of services and information for undocumented students and the general campus community—although often with limited resources (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020). To further understand the establishment and development of USRCs as an intentional intervention by community colleges and districts (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020), this chapter highlights current research on undocumented students and institutional support by colleges and universities. It begins with a discussion of the growth and diversity of the undocumented student population in higher education, followed by a general overview of federal and state policies that affect undocumented students and the role of higher education in the development of institutional support for immigrant students. The second part of the chapter provides an overview of California community colleges and their role in serving undocumented students. Last, political theory and sensemaking provide a lens in order to view and understand the terrain on which campus and district leaders bargain and negotiate resources to develop support for undocumented students.

Undocumented Students

Undocumented students' legal status shapes many aspects of their lives, including restricting the students' social mobility and life opportunities (Terriquez, 2015). According to recent reports, 200,000–225,000 undocumented individuals are enrolled in colleges, accounting for 2% of all college students and 10% of all undocumented immigrants (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018). Scholars have speculated that the growing number of undocumented young arrivals is an inadvertent consequence of stricter policies at the U.S.–Mexican border, making migration more permanent (Gonzales, 2011). The increased difficulty of moving across borders pushes parents to migrate with their families to avoid separation (Allard, 2015). As a result, colleges are seeing a growing number of undocumented students on their campuses (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Colleges continue to see an increasing number of undocumented students and students of immigrant-origin backgrounds, including foreign-born and children of foreign-born parents (Teranishi et al., 2019). Studies have demonstrated that undocumented students attending postsecondary education are much more likely to enroll in community colleges and that almost a third of students in community colleges are of foreign-born background (Suarez-Orozco, Osei-Twumasi, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2019; Teranishi et al., 2011; Terriquez, 2015; Osei-Twumasi & Lopez Hernandez, 2019). It is estimated that 65,000 undocumented students graduate high school each year—but only 5%–10% enroll in higher learning institutions (Bjorklund, 2018). The increased fears around detention and deportation during the Trump administration have increased uncertainties for undocumented students and placed many aspects of their lives in limbo—including their higher education aspirations (Santellano, 2019). Consequently, colleges must critically analyze the immigrant experience to better serve and

retain their undocumented student population, especially in their role as public and social institutions during a highly xenophobic presidential administration (Santellano, 2019).

Diversity in Identity

In discussing undocumented students, institutional agents must know about the diversity of experience, identity, and needs of students to build trust and support (Suárez-Orozco, 2015; Teranishi et al., 2019). In his review of literature on undocumented students in higher education, Bjorklund (2018) found six significant themes:

1. Undocumented students face financial burdens that documented students do not
2. Undocumented students have unique psychological and social burdens and are not provided with tools to address them
3. Undocumented students are not given access to vital social capital
4. Undocumented students bring a host of assets to colleges, but these are undervalued or underutilized
5. Non-Latina/o undocumented students and immigrant students from different geographic areas have different experiences
6. Colleges and universities are taking steps to support undocumented students, but they are not enough (p. 638)

These six themes outline the sensitivity required in working with and advising undocumented students. The sections later in this chapter provide further details on these topics, but this section will first review the diversity of the undocumented student identity.

Although most of the research and the majority of the undocumented population in the United States is Latinx (Bjorklund, 2018; Passel, 2011), there is no monolithic undocumented student experience (Teranishi et al., 2019). The difference in ethnic and racial identity will produce a difference in the immigrant experience; therefore, institutional agents must know about this diversity and not make an invisible identity even more invisible (Bjorklund, 2018). Three quarters of all immigrants come from Latin American and Asia (Teranishi et al., 2011), with 12% of the undocumented population being Asian immigrants, 60% Mexican, and 20% representing other parts of Latin America (Bjorklund, 2018; Passel, 2011). Since 1980, the Black

immigrant population has increased fivefold, and as of 2015, 619,000 unauthorized Black immigrants were living in the United States (Anderson & Lopez, 2018). Similarly, scholars have highlighted the significant differences in the rural and urban experiences of undocumented students. In rural areas, exposure to agricultural work and immigration enforcement at a younger age leads immigrant students to an earlier awareness of their immigration status and the barriers it might have for their academic aspirations (Allard, 2015; Bjorklund, 2018). Additionally, the age of exposure to immigration enforcement and arrival affects undocumented students' experience.

Age of Arrival and Legal Liminality

The experiences of undocumented students in the United States are influenced by their legal status and arrival age (Allard, 2015; Menjívar, 2006). Undocumented children who arrive at a young age grow up integrated into American society and categorized as part of the 1.5 immigrant generation (Gonzales, 2011). They discover their undocumented status as they begin to develop as young adults and eventually have to come to terms with the limitations their immigration status will have on their professional or academic goals (Gonzales, 2011). Even with an advanced degree, most undocumented immigrants will have access to only a narrow sector of the labor economy, yet they feel compelled to provide financial support to their families (Allard, 2015; Gonzales, 2011; Terriquez, 2015). In *Undocumented Status and Schooling for Newcomer Teens* (2015), Allard estimated that 2.4 million undocumented youth under the age of 30 arrived after the age of 15. Individuals who migrated as children go to high school in the United States, learn English, and work in professional jobs at a much higher rate than those who arrive as teenagers (Allard, 2015). Children who come as teenagers have a recent migration experience and maintain connections to their countries of origin (Allard, 2015; Basu, 2018).

Teenage migrants, categorized as the 1.25 generation, typically migrated without their parents and have greater agency in deciding to migrate, forcing them into adulthood by being responsible for working and paying their bills (Allard, 2015). As a result, teenage arrivals are workforce oriented, making it difficult for students to prioritize schooling and make financially savvy decisions (Allard, 2015). Although more than half of college immigrants are over the age of 24, there is limited research on teenage and adult arrivals' navigation of their status while integrating into postsecondary life (Negrón-Gonzales, 2017; Teranishi et al., 2011).

As young immigrants enter adulthood, they must confront the legal limitations they have and reorient their lives to adjust and cope with these parameters (Gonzales, 2011; Menjivar, 2006). Dealing with these obstacles can be overwhelming; along with the fears of deportation, immigrant youth can push themselves into the shadows and hide their status (Allard, 2015; Gonzales, 2011; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). The ambiguous stage of liminality changes undocumented youths' development as they adjust and learn to be undocumented, interfering with their higher education trajectory (Suárez-Orozco, 2011; Terriquez, 2015). Menjivar (2006) defined "liminal legality" as the gray area immigrants navigate between protected and unprotected status. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2011) added that "interminable liminality" is the range of current immigration policies that do not specify a clear pathway to citizenship or limit undocumented immigrants' integration into life in the United States. Although the diversity of experience and identity affects undocumented students in different ways, in general, key federal and state policies have an uncontrollable effect on undocumented students' experience (Terriquez, 2015).

Political Context

The conversation around undocumented students is contextualized by national and state laws and policies (Bjorklund, 2018). National policies determine individuals' immigration status, but a state can extend rights to its immigrant communities (Nienhusser, 2014). As with the diversity in identity, undocumented students fall within a wide range of protected and unprotected statuses. Some students do not fall under any of the legal protections and therefore have limited access to resources (Santellano, 2019). The complexity of national policies versus California policies and laws adds to the bureaucracy undocumented students and colleges must navigate (Suárez-Orozco, 2011). Students are left to make sense of these policies, and higher education institutional agents—defined as college administrators and staff who hold key positions on campuses—must interpret and implement these on their own (Nienhusser & Espino, 2017). One set of policies institutions of higher learning must interpret and navigate are federal immigration policies and their impact on undocumented students.

National Policies

Legislatively, undocumented students' educational support differs at the K–12 and postsecondary levels (Negrón-Gonzales, 2017; Terriquez, 2015; Venegas et al., 2017). The 1982 Supreme Court decision in *Plyer v. DOE* extended undocumented students' rights to attend K–12 in the United States, but the same privileges were not applicable for higher education (Bjorklund, 2018; Teranishi et al., 2011; Terriquez, 2015; Venegas et al., 2017). In 1996, Congress passed two key pieces of legislation that excluded undocumented immigrants from accessing federal programs and resources (Bjorklund, 2018; Venegas et al., 2017). The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act barred undocumented immigrants from accessing federal loans and financial aid (Bjorklund, 2018). The Illegal Immigration Reform and

Immigrant Responsibility Act (IRIRA) made undocumented immigrants ineligible for in-state tuition when attending higher education institutions (Bjorklund, 2018; Teranishi et al., 2011). Although undocumented students are federally protected under *Plyer vs. DOE*, the 1996 policies focused on limiting access to federal resources for immigrants and undocumented students in postsecondary education (Venegas et al., 2017).

Since 2001, different variations of the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) have been introduced to Congress (Venegas et al., 2017). Still, the act has yet to gain enough congressional support (Venegas et al., 2017). The DREAM Act attempted to articulate a clear path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants (Bjorklund, 2018). In 2012, President Obama enacted an executive order to establish the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (Venegas et al., 2017). DACA recipients are individuals who applied to the national program and acquired a work authorization and social security number (Ngo & Astudillo, 2018). To qualify for DACA, individuals were required to have arrived in the United States by the age of 16; be under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012; have continuously lived in the United States; have been present in the United States on June 15, 2012; have attained a high school degree or been honorably discharged from the military; and have no significant criminal record (Venegas et al., 2017). In 2017, the Trump administration rescinded DACA, but it is still in place with some limitations and held in litigation (NILC, 2019). The uncertainty of federal policies directly affects undocumented students' employment prospects, and the doubt as to labor market returns is a significant part of a student's decision to pursue higher education (Ngo & Astudillo, 2018). As the federal government moved toward restricting resources and was unable to develop a pathway to citizenship, states responded by enacting policies to support their undocumented populations, such as in California, with Assembly Bill (AB) 540 in 2001.

California Policies

AB 540 extended in-state tuition to undocumented students who attended 3 years of K–12 schooling in California, having attained a high school diploma or its equivalent, and attending a California community college, California State University, or University of California (Ngo & Astudillo, 2018). Undocumented students who qualified for AB 540 no longer had to pay out-of-state fees, which can be up to three times the amount of what state residents pay (California Dream Act Application, 2019). Over the past decade, AB 540 has expanded, and the 3 years of schooling can now include and be a combination of K–12, adult school, and community college education (California Senate Bill 68, 2017). A decade later, in 2011, California passed Assembly Bills 130 and 131, known as the California Dream Act (California Assembly Bill 130, 2011; California Assembly Bill 131, 2011). This legislation amplified financial resources and support for undocumented students who met the AB 540 requirements and filled out the California Dream Action Application (CADAA). Through the California Dream Act, students now have access to state grant programs such as the Cal Grant, the California College Promise Grant, and university-funded programs such as the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) and institutional scholarships (California Dream Act Application, 2019). In California, AB 540 made college more affordable, and the California Dream Act provided financial assistance to undocumented students, eligible citizens, and permanent residents. These policies aided undocumented students in accessing higher education in California, but maintaining and applying for financial aid continues to be unclear and confusing for students (Teranishi et al., 2019). Such confusion further demonstrates that immigrant students' unique experiences, needs, and challenges make specific campus support necessary (Teranishi et al., 2019).

Higher Education: Institutional Support for Undocumented Students

Undocumented students are five times more likely than other students to interrupt their academic trajectory and drop out of school (Terriquez, 2015). As with other vulnerable populations, a positive campus climate is an important factor in immigrant students' persistence (Bjorklund, 2018). Community colleges are home to more immigrant students than any other higher education sector (Teranishi et al., 2011). Their affordability, convenient location to home, and open admission policy appeal to undocumented students (Muñoz, 2018; Teranishi et al., 2011). Research has shown that adults with some college or an associate's degree experience unemployment at half the rate and had median incomes twice that of those who did not complete high school (Teranishi et al., 2011). Therefore, community colleges are an integral part of American higher education and key to students' social mobility (Teranishi et al., 2019). Even though community colleges continue to serve as a stepping stone to economic and education opportunities, they are tangled by institutional barriers such as lack of resources, complicated structures, and inadequate counseling that prolong or detour a student's trajectory (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2019; Terriquez, 2015). Immigrant students must navigate both the barriers faced by all community college students and additional barriers, including fear of deportation; limited economic, employment, and financial options; and increased stress and anxiety (Suárez-Orozco, 2015).

Institutional Support and Best Practices

The growing literature on institutional support for undocumented students has highlighted some important practices colleges can implement to make their campuses "undocufriendly"—campuses supportive of students with immigrant-origin backgrounds (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Teranishi et al., 2019). As undocumented students transition into higher education,

colleges can establish needed resources and practices to support students (Valenzuela et al., 2015). Colleges can support students by providing scholarships and additional financial assistance via stipends, books, and school material (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015; Valenzuela et al., 2015). Institutional agents on college campuses can learn about the undocumented experience via official graduate school programs or through professional development, and informally by building trust and relationships with undocumented students (Nienhusser & Espino, 2017). The need to learn of undocumented students' unique experiences and needs makes faculty and staff training a high priority for colleges (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). Colleges can also support students by providing mental health support and developing a curriculum that speaks to the immigration experience and teaches students of their rights (Allard, 2015). Counselors and on-campus psychologists should be trained to address the needs of undocumented students, including but not limited to developing workshops focused on stress management, anxiety, and dealing with posttraumatic stress disorder (Valenzuela et al., 2015). In their study of developing undocufriendly campuses, Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) highlighted five major themes shared by students as advice for institutions to serve undocumented students: “(1) listen and learn; (2) [have] empathy; (3) train staff; (4) [provide] equitable treatment; and (5) respect privacy” (p. 449). Institutional agents across key college offices have led much of the institutional support for undocumented students. Recently, one way in which colleges have centralized some of these student support efforts is through the development of Undocumented Student Resource Centers on their campuses (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020; Nienhusser & Espino, 2017).

As home to one of the largest undocumented immigrant populations in the nation, California is an instrumental player in the development of Undocumented Student Resource Centers (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018). It is home to 46 of the 56 identified USRCs across the

country, and about half are located in California community colleges (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018). USRCs are centralized hubs on college campuses that provide support services to undocumented students and the greater campus community (Cisneros & Rivarola, 2020; Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018). Recent studies on USRCs as institutional support for undocumented students (Cisneros & Rivarola, 2020; Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018, 2020) listed vital services that can typically be found in USRCs:

- academic and general advising
- mental health services
- financial aid services
- career counseling
- transfer services
- legal services
- book vouchers and lending programs
- meal vouchers and food pantries
- parking permits and bus passes
- student employment and internships
- learning and development opportunities for the campus community
- mentorship programs

These services are pertinent in the enrollment, retention, and degree/certificate completion of students. The higher education institutional agents in the USRC are vital in providing and setting up the outlined services and resources and helping students navigate the institutions (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018). Institutional agents are an important element in undocumented students' access to and success in their postsecondary education (Nienhusser, 2018). Equally crucial in discussing the USRCs is the integral part students have played in their own development and the advocacy role they continue to play (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018). Granted that the centers vary based on institutional contexts such as capacity, organizational structures, and population size, through the USRCs, students together with faculty and staff advocates work to develop and address institutional procedures that affect undocumented students (Cisneros & Rivarola, 2020; Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018).

California Community Colleges

Public Higher Education

Like other colleges and universities across the country, California community colleges are experiencing a shift in their support and expectations (Teranishi et al., 2019). Unlike K–12 education, there is no legal mandate that higher education must be adequately funded (Melguizo et al., 2017). Historically, public institutions of higher education are funded by “input” and “process” measures such as the number of students enrolled and instructional costs (Dougherty et al., 2014). Over the past few decades, the increasing cost of postsecondary education has shifted from federal and state governments’ responsibility onto the shoulders of students and their families (Alshehri, 2016; Dougherty et al., 2014; McLendon et al., 2009), resulting in confusion about the actual cost for students to attend community colleges (Teranishi et al., 2019). Yet, an increasing number of individuals view earning a college degree as necessary to be successful and as having a significant impact on the workforce (Doyle & Kirst, 2015). The increase in cost and continued value of attending a college or university has led to greater scrutiny and a call for accountability and efficiency by the general public (Alshehri, 2016; McLendon et al., 2009).

As open-access spaces, community colleges face many challenges, including enrolling less-prepared students because they come from underfunded and under-resourced schools (Dougherty et al., 2014; Teranishi et al., 2019). The student population is diverse and often commutes, with many students working full time and only attending school part time (Teranishi et al., 2019). Community colleges are also being asked to do it all, including providing academic and workforce pathways for students, and often have limited resources to encourage student engagement (Teranishi et al., 2019). Some studies have proposed that increasing funds alone does not directly lead to improved student outcomes, but supporting equity-focused activities can

help institutions be more productive and efficient (Melguizo et al., 2017). Equity efforts can focus on the needs of underrepresented community college students, which include assistance navigating the complex processes for financial aid, developing inclusive learning environments, and establishing relationships with key institutional agents that can help students succeed academically and support their career goals (Teranishi et al., 2019). Administrative leaders should support and provide resources to help colleges establish new academic and student support efforts to improve colleges' performance (Dougherty et al., 2014). The growing number of immigrants will make up a significant component of the changing workforce in the United States (Teranishi et al., 2011), making community colleges fundamental in immigrant-origin students' social mobility.

Consequently, community colleges' role is vital for the increasing immigrant population in the United States academic and labor pathways (Teranishi et al., 2019). The large number of undocumented students at community colleges, the diversity of their experience, and the complication of navigating bureaucratic structures and policies can be overwhelming for students—making the need for institutional support imperative. In the next section, I review political theory to understand institutional agents' decision-making process in the creation and sustainability of Undocumented Student Resource Centers in a community college district.

Theoretical Framework

Institutions of higher education are characteristically political organizations (Kezar, 2008). Political theory has suggested that organizations combine different interest groups, and these enter into conflict to either defend resources and power or obtain them (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Kezar, 2008). The politics of these conflicts increase as resources are limited (Kezar, 2008). Conflict does not have to be problematic, but it often arises from scarce resources, making

power the most valuable asset (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Scholars have posited that political theory can provide political strategies to lead institutions to change because goals, structure, and policies arise from the continuous bargaining and negotiation between groups (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Kezar, 2008). Bolman and Deal (2017) identified four strategies political leaders can implement to negotiate conflict: mapping the political terrain, networking and building coalitions, persuasion, and bargaining and negotiation (Kezar, 2008). In viewing organizations as arenas for internal conflict and agents in larger arenas, political theory accounts for internal politics and the organizations' political role within larger ecosystems (Bolman & Deal, 2017). In her research on college presidents and their institutions of diversity initiatives, Kezar (2008) described higher education as a political organization and diversity initiatives as a political position. Faculty, staff, students, and administrators on college campuses are part of separate subcultures with "different value systems and often different institutional goals and purposes" (Kezar, 2008, p. 409). Similar to Bolman and Deal (2017), Kezar (2008) identified six traits institutions of higher education can use to implement diversity initiatives such as support for undocumented students: develop coalition and advocates, take the political pulse regularly, anticipate resistance as essential strategies, use data to neutralize politics and rationalize the process, create a public relations campaign and showcase success, and capitalize on controversy for learning. The institutionalization of support for undocumented students plays out within the colleges' internal and external political arenas. This is the terrain on which the district institutional agents make decisions and strategize to develop and sustain the USRCs.

While political theory helps establish the context within which the USRC institutional agents at the community college developed the center, sensemaking contextualizes the implementation efforts. Sensemaking is the process of making meaning of the various social

structures and individuals who create an organization (Kezar, 2013). Weber and Glynn (2006) described an organization's sensemaking process as being shaped by "three main moves: communication perceptions, interpretations and actions" (p. 1641). Higher education institutional agents serve as policy implementors, making sense of policies and shaping the organizational practices (Nienhusser, 2018). Nienhusser's (2018) research on policy implementors demonstrated that institutional agents balance their personal beliefs and professional values in their implementation, often negotiating between their role in compliance and advocating for students. Kezar (2013), in a discussion of organizational change through sensemaking, identified leadership as a key tool in the transformation of organizations and creation of environments where sensemaking can occur. Sensemaking aids in understanding the systemwide mobilization in the district efforts to create USRCs across the district.

Conclusion

Immigrant students' unique experiences, needs, and challenges make specific campus support necessary for immigrant-origin students (Teranishi et al., 2019). Like the Undocumented Student Resource Centers, student support services are critical in the college transition and academic success for all students, especially for immigrant students (Teranishi et al., 2019). Adequate support for USRCs is crucial because they are a robust tool in identifying and retaining undocumented students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). In this study, I sought to understand how campuses leverage state, community, and campus mandates to develop undocumented students' support. Previous research has focused on building support for undocumented students but has not examined the decision-making process by college and district institutional agents that guides resource allocation to USRCs. Additionally, there is limited research on community colleges and immigrant students in community colleges. This study documented the development and

sustainability of the Undocumented Student Resource Centers in a community college district and the efficacy of the centers.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

California community colleges are home to a growing number of undocumented and immigrant-origin students (Batalova & Zong, 2019; Teranishi et al., 2011). Federal and state policies determine the types of resources undocumented students can access as they navigate higher education institutions (Bjorklund, 2018). To centralize student support efforts for immigrant students, California community colleges have established Undocumented Student Resource Centers (USRCs) (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018). The USRC serves as a hub of services and information for undocumented students and the general campus community (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2018). Institutional agents lead the daily function of the USRC and assist students in learning about and how to tactfully navigate their educational journey (Cisneros & Cadenas, 2017). Higher education institutional agents are college administrators and staff who hold key positions in campus offices such as the USRCs and have a role in shaping undocumented students' higher education experience (Nienhusser & Espino, 2017; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). For this study, I wanted to understand how institutional agents across a community college district made decisions about the USRCs to address students' needs, including cross-district collaboration and differences in processes. I conducted a multi-case study to investigate the various methods used by the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) campuses to establish and maintain Undocumented Student Resource Centers.

Research Questions

How do community college institutional agents navigate the creation and sustainability of Undocumented Student Resource Centers to meet undocumented students' needs?

- a. What are the key features of the USRCs across the district?

b. If there are differences between campus USRCs, what are the factors that contribute to these differences?

Methods

I conducted a qualitative case study analysis of the Los Angeles Community College District Undocumented Student Resource Centers. It was a qualitative study because I wanted to develop a holistic, in-depth analysis and understanding of the development and support of USRCs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Tellis, 1997). I learned about USRC creation and sustainability via qualitative interviews and document analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A case study was appropriate because it allows the researcher to study complex issues, particularly in situations where human behavior and interactions are essential in understanding how something works (Harrison et al., 2017). I wanted to study human interactions and decisions that affect the function of the USRCs. This multi-site case study highlighted how institutional agents established and maintained Undocumented Student Resource Centers in a large multi-campus district, especially in response to a district mandate to establish the centers. Community colleges are underfunded and understaffed (Teranishi et al., 2019), yet students, faculty, and staff extend themselves to adequately serve undocumented students (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020). The interaction between institutional agents and students drives the decisions to operate the center and meet the district's undocumented student population's needs. Through this study, I documented some of the district efforts so that other community colleges can develop similar spaces and support. Quantitative research would not have been appropriate because a survey analysis does not allow for discussion of program development and practices carried out by institutional agents to maintain and run the centers.

Site Selection

I selected the Los Angeles Community College District for my study because it is one of the country's largest community college districts and home to one of the largest numbers of undocumented students attending college in California (Los Angeles Community College District, 2019). Also, each campus has a USRC and center coordinator (Los Angeles Community College, 2019). According to a report 2017 by the LACCD Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the district saw a 10.3% decrease in the number of enrolled AB 540 students in the fall semester of 2017. AB 540 is a California policy that allows high school graduates—including undocumented students—to apply for in-state tuition (Ngo & Astudillo, 2018). The decrease in the number of AB 540 students prompted the District's Board of Trustees (BOT) and chancellor to convene an Immigration Taskforce and pass a resolution supporting undocumented students. The resolution led the district to develop a web page that outlines undocumented students' rights, resources for undocumented students, and how to respond to immigration officials' potential presence on campus. Additionally, the district asked all its campuses to establish Undocumented Student Resource Centers. Through the actions and advocacy of students and institutional agents, all nine LACCD campuses now have a USRC and continue developing on-campus support for undocumented students.

The study's focus on a multi-college district accounted for some of the unique struggles that affect these campuses, such as balancing campus, state, and district policies and procedures. I identified patterns across campuses that may serve as a model for other multi-campus districts. I selected three campuses for the study based on the coordinator's role and responsibility in managing the center's daily function. The USRC coordinators fall into two employment categories: counseling faculty or classified staff. The distinction is imperative because these

classifications function under different employment contracts; thus, the positions differ in employment protection, disciplinary procedures, and supervisory structure. The employment status of an institutional agent can affect how the agent advocates for student and center needs. Another important characteristic of how the USRCs function is having a full-time or part-time coordinator. Some campuses explicitly hired full-time USRC coordinators, whose primary responsibility is to focus on building support for undocumented students on campus. In contrast, part-time coordinators work in the center and on the campus for a limited number of hours. The difference between full-time and part-time coordination can affect the center's hours of operation and services offered. In an effort to identify best practices to establish and sustain a robust USRC, the study focused on the campuses with a full-time tenure-track counseling faculty coordinator. As faculty, the coordinators had the greatest contractual protection, allowing for greater advocacy without the fear of losing employment. Additionally, the faculty role is more expensive for the college than hiring part-time or classified staff to manage the center. Out of the nine colleges, the three campuses selected were the only campuses in the district that had hired a tenure-track counseling coordinator for the center.

Over the last 4 years, the campuses and district have evolved their efforts. The three campuses in this study were identified because they have mobilized to develop a physical space for the center and a full-time counseling coordinator to manage the day-to-day operations. Campuses B and C transitioned from part-time faculty coordinators to hiring full-time positions whose primary responsibility was to develop the center and support efforts for the campus undocumented student population. The Campus A counseling coordinator slowly transitioned from part-time to full-time availability in managing the USRC efforts. At each of the campuses, the USRC was under direct supervision of the dean or assistant dean of equity or student services

and the vice president of student services, although one of the campus coordinators reported to two of the three vice presidents. The campuses represent the northern, central, and southern regions of the district. Additionally, Campus A had the largest number of undocumented students in the district, Campus B the fourth, and Campus C the ninth. Although the primary criterion for the study was the full-time coordination by a tenure-track counseling coordinator, the other campus characteristics represent the diversity of the district and campus needs. Additionally, the district chancellor and trustee were interviewed to understand the establishment of this district-wide effort.

Data Sources

There were two primary data sources in this study: interviews (see Appendixes A and B) and document analysis. I interviewed the Undocumented Student Resource Center coordinators because they manage the centers' daily operations and are responsible for leading undocumented student support efforts at their respective campuses. As coordinators, they spearhead the USRC daily efforts and implement the center's prioritizations. They have a unique understanding of student needs, center resources, and campus response. Additionally, I interviewed the campus dean who serves as the administrative supervisor for the USRC and vice president of student services because they are critical players in the centers, campus budgets, and general decision-making process. I also interviewed the district chancellor and the Board of Trustees member who serves as the Immigration Taskforce chairperson. The district leadership provides a policy and financial perspective that helped me understand how resources are identified and how policies affect the district's efforts. They offered a unique perspective as they lead one of the largest community college systems in the state and the one with the largest number of undocumented students.

I conducted a document analysis to develop a better understanding of the USRC planning, funding, goals, and measurable outcomes. I reviewed the district's yearly data report on undocumented students' characteristics, based on students' self-reported data through the admission application or admission offices, to identify the three campuses for this study. Although international students have an independent application, the district admission application does not request information on students' immigration status. Rather, the district uses several variables to develop data on the number of undocumented students on campus. The new state funding formula allocates a percentage of the district and campus funding based on the number of students who receive aid through the California Dream Act (CADA). Although it does not account for the total number of undocumented students in the district, it captures undocumented students who apply for and receive state financial aid under CADA. I also reviewed grant applications and the USRC program reviews and unit plans submitted to the college leaders, which include funding committees.

Data Collection Procedure

The principal data collection involved semi-structured interviews of the USRC coordinators, campus administrators, and district leadership. To set up these interviews, I tapped into my already-established relationship with the coordinators, district chancellor, and Board of Trustee member as participants of the district-wide Immigration Taskforce. I am the faculty director for one of only two district-wide programs, the Dolores Huerta Labor Institute. As the director, I work with the nine campuses to develop and imbed labor and social justice programming and curricula across the district. Since 2017, I have worked with the district and campuses to develop their USRCs by facilitating Know Your Rights workshops and Immigrant and Labor History lectures and connecting with community resources. In this capacity, I have

worked with the USRC institutional agents through the Immigration Taskforce and supporting their individual campus efforts. The established relationship with the study participants facilitated my access to them. For the most part, all participants were asked the same questions, except for the coordinators, who responded to questions about the centers' daily services and operations (see Appendix A). To identify the study sites, over 2019–2020 I tracked all the USRC coordinators' titles and whether they were coordinating on a part-time or full-time basis. During the February 2020 district taskforce meeting, I spoke with all the coordinators to verify their positions, identifying Campuses A, B, and C as the only USRCs with a full-time tenured or tenure-track counseling coordinator. After the campus sites were identified, I asked the interviewees to share or direct me to documents such as campus reports and program reviews.

To initiate contact, I sent out emails and set up the interviews. I started the campus interviews with the USRC coordinators. I conducted the three coordinator interviews in 2 weeks. After interviewing the coordinators, I interviewed the dean and vice presidents, the campus administrators who directly supervise the USRCs. Then I interviewed the trustee who chairs the Immigration Taskforce that convenes the district USRC institutional agents. The chancellor was the last interviewed to help develop a district-wide perspective of the efforts. Due to the current pandemic, I did not physically visit the sites but managed the interviews online. I conducted 45- to 90-minute interviews over Zoom. I used the “record meeting” feature as the primary recording method and an audio recorder as a backup. Within a day or two of conducting the interview, I wrote my initial reflections or used voice notes. I sent the interview to rev.com for transcription. After they were transcribed, I reviewed the interviews to ensure the transcription was complete and began the data analysis. Collectively, the study involved 11 interviews: the chancellor and

trustee as the district administrators, three vice presidents of student services, two deans and one associate dean as the campus administrators, and the three coordinators.

Data Analysis Methods

I wanted to learn about the district's process in creating and sustaining the Undocumented Student Resource Centers. I studied each campus individually and developed an analysis of each one, followed by a cross-case analysis to identify themes and patterns across the district, such as collaborative efforts and differences in the centers. I began the study with a document analysis to identify the district's undocumented student population's general characteristics. Using the district report on undocumented students, I learned about the number of students on each campus, the undocumented student population's percentage compared with the total student population, and metrics such as persistence and success rates. I also reviewed documents shared by interviewees regarding the establishment and sustaining of the USRCs, such as campus reports and program reviews. The document analysis shed light on the campuses' and the district's undocumented student demographics, support efforts, and key features of the USRCs.

The interview data analysis identified information related to the USRCs' creation, sustainability, and efficacy in meeting the district's mandate to establish a center on every campus. First, a list of codes was developed from the growing research on USRCs on college campuses and the theoretical framework literature. The list of codes includes USRC features such as services and resources; sensemaking characteristics such as organizing through communication, action, systemwide efforts, and ambiguity; and political theory features such as collaboration, taking the political pulse, and capitalizing on controversy for learning. Once I identified the first list of codes, I entered them into MAXQDA. After each interview, I uploaded

the audio files to Otter.ai for transcription and then cleaned the transcription while listening to the interviews. After the transcripts were completed, I began to code into MAXQDA under the first set of codes. Once I finished all the interviews, I conducted a second round of coding to develop a better understanding of each campus. From the document analysis and interviews with the USRC coordinators and campus administrators, I identified campus-specific themes such as how the centers operate and provide resources such as staff, workspaces, and budgets. Finally, I printed all of the transcripts and organized categories for cross-district analysis to identify similarities and differences between the centers, such as support, resources, and center needs. I reviewed the data first across all the coordinators, then by the deans and vice presidents, to understand the role of their organizational position in the USRC efforts. The district administrators' interviews described the district's role in accessing, advocating for, and distributing resources to the campuses. Finally, I triangulated the participants' interviews representing various roles across the district in my data analysis and developed a greater set of claims that highlight institutional agents' role and actions in building the USRC on the three campuses, such as prioritizing the establishment of the center and building support for the USRC. To manage the last phase of the data analysis, I created a claims document to keep track of greater themes with the quotations that supported the claims. I continuously reviewed the claims document as I developed the findings.

Ethical Issues

My data collection was a low-risk study for the participants. The most significant ethical issue I perceived was maintaining an adequate level of confidentiality. The study participants were honest and at times critical of the campus efforts. To minimize risk and provide some confidentiality, I provided each campus and interview participant with a generic pseudonym. I

developed the aliases early on to keep track of information and used them in my data collection and analysis process. Although I identify the district, I changed the campuses' names while minimizing the description to only information relevant to the study, including gender-neutral terms for the participants. To gain participants' trust, I emphasized that the interview responses were anonymous. I protected the interviews and transcripts by storing them in a password-protected cloud and personal laptop under their pseudonyms. I recorded the interview using the record feature on the online portal and a personal recorder. I quickly downloaded the recordings and uploaded them to the cloud and my laptop. I kept my audio recorder safely at home; after transferring the file to the cloud, I erased the interview from the recorder. Overarching my ethical issues is my privilege as a U.S. citizen. I am first generation and of an immigrant family; I have privilege blind spots and engaged in continuous reflection to ensure I centered all participants' experiences and safety.

Management of Role

To address some of the outlined ethical issues, I primarily positioned myself as a UCLA graduate student and colleague who has a history of working with undocumented students within the community college district. Through my work with undocumented students and the district Immigration Taskforce, I have formed rapport and trust with the study participants. I built on this rapport and centered my role as a graduate researcher from UCLA. I mainly relied on my positionality as a researcher when accessing the campus administrators. I ensured that the study participants were clear on my study's purpose and formalized my role as a researcher through our various interactions. I used a similar model in an action research project when I interviewed a few coordinators and positioned myself as a researcher. The action research project for my education doctorate program focused on the coordinators of the USRC; as a result, I already had

established the researcher relationship with some of the participating coordinators. I believe the campuses and district welcomed my research because it presented data on better serving undocumented students. The data will help all participants, especially because the new state efforts ask community colleges to implement more data-driven services. As an appreciation for participating in my study, I provided thank-you cards and \$20 gift cards to the interview participants.

Credibility

The most serious threat to my study's credibility was reactivity. Participants could have shared information that they thought their supervisor or I might want to hear. The participants varied in protected employee status and may have wanted to protect themselves or the institution's image. The concern of reactivity was also present with the college and district administrators, who were more susceptible to presenting a positive image of their campuses and district. The triangulation of sources and methods made my study more credible and addressed the reactivity threat. Using a multi-campus case analysis and interviewing individuals at various campus and district levels triangulated my sources. I practiced interviewing and listening to some of the coordinators who previously participated in my action research project. Their participation in my action research helped me establish my role as a researcher and further address the reactivity threat. An additional threat was my own bias. I am an advocate of institutional change with a social justice perspective. A manner in which I addressed this bias was using political theory as a framework to understand institutional barriers when instituting organizational change. More importantly, the triangulation of data through document analysis and interviews increased my bias credibility.

Study Limitations

Several limitations affected the study. A major one was the current COVID-19 global pandemic. Like many other organizations around the world, the district transferred its activities online. The colleges moved all their classes, programs, and most staff to virtual learning. Before the pandemic, I intended to visit the participants' offices to introduce myself and explain the research project in person. Instead, I primarily relied on email communication. The workloads of the participants dramatically changed as they had to re-envision how to produce services for the college, resulting in constrained schedules. I tried to be cognizant of their time and responsibilities and flexible with availability.

Another limitation of the study was that most of the history of the USRCs in the district is not documented. The centers are only a few years old, and they have gone through various transitions. Two of the coordinators had been in their position for a only few years, while another campus was dealing with a continuous change of campus leadership. Therefore, the information shared may be limited to what has been shared with them. Additionally, the USRCs are still in the early phase of development, making it difficult to identify processes that can lead to the sustainability of the centers. Also, this study focused on student support centers that usually have a physical location on campus. I relied on the study participants for descriptors and connected them to my recollection of the centers from my previous visits. Last, the study focused on USRCs with a full-time USRC coordinator; as a result, the study findings might not be as transferrable to campuses with less support in the center or that have different organizational structures.

An additional limitation was my data collection method. Interviews allowed me to gather information related to the function of the USRCs, but a survey could have minimized possible

interpretation biases that I might have in relation to the study. Another limitation was my management of interviews. The first two interviews with the coordinators went well beyond the intended 60 minutes. The coordinators had a lot to share, and I was worried about missing information. I let the coordinators share as much as they felt comfortable as I adjusted to better time management. My relationship with the coordinators might have led to the extended conversations, especially because it was the early phase of COVID lockdown and the participants were processing the impact of it on their work and personal life. Another limitation may be my interpretation of the information shared and coding. It is possible I may have missed themes and data that other researchers could interpret differently.

Summary

To understand the decision-making process in the creation and sustainability of Undocumented Student Resource Centers, I conducted a multi-campus case study of three campuses in the Los Angeles Community College District. The study included document analysis and interviews. After the campus sites were selected, I contacted the USRC coordinators and interviewed them first followed by the campus administrators. I also interviewed the chancellor and Board of Trustee member, who serves as the district Immigration Taskforce's chair, to get a district-wide perspective on efforts supporting undocumented students. The document analysis helped develop a wider perspective of the campus efforts. I centered my role as a researcher and UCLA graduate student to manage my part and possible biases. I further addressed ethics and credibility issues by triangulating the data analysis process by including diverse sources and data collection methods. My research study relied on rapport and trust with the study participants because the research topic is susceptible, and the priority is always to protect the participants' identities.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This qualitative study aimed to understand how institutional agents of the Los Angeles Community College District established and developed Undocumented Student Resource Centers. I begin this chapter by providing context regarding what led to the district's request to create a USRC on every campus. Next, I highlight students and institutional agents who have a long legacy of advocating for undocumented student needs at the colleges. Then, I discuss how USRC institutional agents made sense of their role and identify some of the centers' key features and differences. Last, I examine the sustainability efforts by the USRC institutional agents as they incorporated the USRCs into the college student support and equity efforts.

Immigrant Rights Advocates

The Undocumented Student Resource Centers in the Los Angeles Community College District are rooted in the greater immigrant rights movement and the consistent support from advocates at the colleges. The creation of the USRCs occurred as an amalgamation of advocates navigating their role to build and grow support for undocumented students. As reviewed in Chapter 2, higher education institutional agents serve as policy implementors, making sense of policies and shaping the organizational practices (Nienhusser, 2018). In addition, federal immigration laws restrict immigrant life and resources for undocumented students (Valdivia, 2020). The policies translate to exclusionary practices and policies in higher education. Thus, developing support for undocumented students challenges restrictive institutional practices and pushes for organizational change. At the LACCD, institutional agents have extended services to undocumented students for many years, but the Board of Trustees' request to establish the USRC is the first collective organizational effort. The institutional agents participating in the study were those directly engaged in the administrative tasks to build the USRCs. They included the

district's chancellor, a Board of Trustee member, the 3 vice president of student services, the 2 deans and 1 associate dean over the USRC, and the 3 USRC counseling coordinators of Campus A, Campus B, and Campus C.

According to Kezar (2008), instituting diversity initiatives such as support for undocumented students requires navigating the politics of the college and its various constituent groups. Furthermore, as Bolman and Deal (2017) have postulated, organizations function within internal and external ecosystems, and institutional agents negotiate and bargain for change within these confines. As a result, building support for undocumented students means pushing an agenda inclusive of immigrants within the political landscape of the college, state, and nation. The following section discusses how the development of the USRC became an institutional priority as a result of a long history of external and internal advocates pressuring higher education to develop support for undocumented students.

Countering the Trump Effect

According to interviews, the Trump administration's increasing attack on immigrant communities was a significant catalyst for the district leadership's push to build support for undocumented students. In 2017, the LACCD Board of Trustees (BOT) passed a resolution that requested all of the district campuses to establish a USRC. The resolution served to initiate a districtwide effort and show the district's support of its immigrant communities, especially after the increased anti-immigrant rhetoric during the 2016 elections. The immigration policies and increased focus on enforcement during the Trump administration created a different terrain for immigrant communities, resulting in unprecedented experiences (Muñoz, 2018; Valdivia, 2020). The district chancellor said, "When the [Trump] administration came in, it was horrific, it was cold, it was mean-spirited." The Trump administration emboldened the Department of Homeland

Security with policies such as the 2017 memo that put any undocumented immigrant who came into contact with them in danger of deportation, increasing fear in the community, including at the colleges (Valdivia, 2020).

The administration challenged, limited, or terminated many federal programs that provided undocumented immigrants with extended protections. A prime target was the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. California is home to the largest number of DACA recipients, and since 2012, recipients have integrated into the state's education and labor sectors. At LACCD, that meant the years of uncertainty around DACA affected students, staff, and faculty. Most notable was the decrease in enrollment of returning and new undocumented students. Dean C explained, "I think we probably have lost some students in this pandemic because this also, not just the pandemic, but in the prior administration and the fear that they could even come and get you at school." The Trump administration's intensified anti-immigrant policies and the heightened level of vulnerability experienced by immigrants moved the campus institutional agents into visible action to support the district's undocumented and immigrant communities. At Campus B, the activities of the Trump administration ignited staff and faculty to come together and form its founding committee:

When the Trump administration tried to recall DACA, there was a lot of hostility aimed at immigrant communities. And so, what ends up happening was a group of staff and faculty came together to really identify what are some of the ways that we can support our undocumented students on campus, and so a committee was formed. (Coordinator B)

Dean A further explained how the hostility by the Trump administration pushed institutional agents to build an organized effort on campuses and at the district level:

We launched, a week after the Trump administration had announced greater restrictions on undocumented students, on all the undocumented population, because at the time, we really wanted to stand with them, and also start increasing the level of services that we could offer to them and tell them that there was a place for them.

Through these efforts, the colleges hoped to communicate to students that they have support on campus and make resources much more accessible. The increased targeting by the Trump administration created a sense of urgency for allies and institutional agents to move beyond compliance. The chancellor explained,

I felt that it was part of our district, as well as our board and our responsibility to be very forthright. It really came out of an outcry and a political circumstance, where we knew we had to be much more vigilant and much more vocal and much more intentional in our support for students who were undocumented.

The leaders felt it essential to demonstrate their support for the district's immigrant communities in a more visible way, which became the establishment of the Undocumented Student Resource Centers. After decades of political pressure, the heightened vulnerability of immigrant communities during the 2016 election was the catalyst that pushed the district to build the USRCs.

The Legacy of Activism and More Than 30 Years of Political Pressure

Students and campus advocates have a long history of supporting and urging higher education to address undocumented students' institutional barriers. For more than 30 years, these social movements have organized and mobilized immigrant communities and allies. According to Bolman and Deal (2013), there are "two major sources of political initiatives: bottom-up, relying on the mobilization of groups to assert their interests; and top-down, relying on authorities' capacity to influence subordinates" (p. 228). In this study, the district trustee, chancellor, college presidents, vice presidents, and deans were identified as leaders at the top. They were the management teams requesting or responding to the request to establish the USRC. The bottom-up pressure at the college came from the organizing of students, the community, and the college faculty and staff advocates. The passage of the resolution provided top-down support from the district leadership, but ultimately, to institute deep change, bottom-up sensemaking

needs to occur (Kezar, 2013). Sensemaking is the process of making meaning of the various social structures and individuals who create an organization (Kezar, 2013). In developing support for undocumented students, students and allies continued the bottom-up sensemaking efforts and pressure that fueled implementation efforts addressing the needs of undocumented students.

Student Pressure

In California, the immigrant rights movement and the immigrant youth movement have transformed the state's political landscape (Valdivia, 2020). Student activists have challenged and fought against the increasing restrictions on immigrant life (Valdivia, 2020). As more undocumented students entered higher education, they began developing student groups on campus and pushed for more inclusive practices (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). In addition, undocumented students have challenged the policies that continuously deny them equal access to education (Monico, 2020). The students of the Los Angeles Community College District were no different: "We've always had [undocumented] students on our campus, going back to [2006] . . . when we first had a group of students, and they formed the first club. . . . They were very motivated, [engaged,] and politically active" (Dean C). Students organized and challenged federal and state policies and institutional policies and practices that denied them access to resources.

The immigrant rights and immigrant youth movements have helped shape many current immigration policies (Monico, 2020). Students played an integral role in pushing the campuses and district to address institutional barriers. The constant change in immigration policies at the state and federal levels and the lack of infrastructure supporting undocumented students meant that many students had to guide the campus on how to advise them adequately. One of the coordinators shared their experience as a student in advocating for California Assembly Bill 540,

the 2001 policy that expanded in-state tuition for California high school graduates who met specific requirements:

I told my story to Marco Antonio Firebaugh [author of AB540]. They were collecting the data [for Assembly Bill 540]. They used it to write it. So, it was a club called Students Against Social Injustice. It wasn't an undocumented student club because we weren't undocumented, not during [Proposition] 187. . . . And we're like, look, it sucks that we have to do this. I have to prove my residency even though I just told them that I had been here for 4 years at a high school. Why do I have to go to a community college and then still prove my worth, at the community college?

The coordinator highlighted how the visit by assembly members Firebaugh pushed his Southern California community college to finally meet with its undocumented student population and address some of their needs. By sharing their experience, the coordinator identified a significant barrier that excluded many students from pursuing higher education. During the organizing efforts for AB 540, more students began sharing their stories as part of the more prominent advocates of being “Undocumented and Unafraid” or undocumented students “coming out of the shadows.” Sharing their narratives, students humanize the immigrant experience and push higher education to provide more equitable treatment of undocumented students, but at a high emotional cost for the students.

Undocumented students have played an integral role in helping the campuses understand and implement policy, expanding the understanding of the immigrant experience and pushing the campuses to institutionalize support. The same legacy of activism continues in the district as students actively advocate for access to the same resources as their peers: “The history of this is when the students are the biggest advocates to fight for their physical space, and when that physical space is so important, they go to battle for this” (Coordinator B). The move toward developing support for undocumented students has been ongoing, with students continuously applying political pressure on the district employees and leaders. Undocumented students and student allies have carried much of the burden in moving the colleges toward inclusive practices

for undocumented students. Still, in the trajectory of the last 30 years, the growing number of institutional agents on college campuses has shifted some of the responsibility back onto the colleges.

Institutional Allies

Similar to the long trajectory of student activists, institutional agents in the classroom and critical offices such as admissions and financial aid have long existed and provided support for undocumented students. According to the vice president at Campus B,

There was a group of employees in the financial aid office that saw the frustration of not being able to give them help. So, they created the fund to develop a scholarship for undocumented students and call the campus community to donate or get on the payroll deduction to do that. So, the genesis of all of this was our own employees, classified employees from the financial aid office.

Nienhusser (2018), in research on policy implementors, speculated that undocumented immigrants bring up institutional agents' personal beliefs and professional values, often negotiating between their role in compliance and advocating for students. Before the district request, the financial aid officers navigated the conflict between compliance and advocacy by initiating the scholarship, which eventually became one of the most significant resources offered by the college.

The study participants have different titles and responsibilities. Still, they all have a personal experience as being undocumented, an immigrant, or a child of immigrants or having someone close to them being undocumented, serving as a foundation for working with students. As shared by one of the vice presidents, "A lot of my family are undocumented, and so I've seen them struggling." Through their familial experience, the vice president empathizes with the students' immigrant experience and struggles. Significant in this study is that 2 out of the 3 USRC coordinators were undocumented students in college, and 55% of the total participants attended community colleges. Additionally, 75% of the deans interviewed were born in another

country, and 90% of all participants, either personally or through someone in their immediate family, had interacted with this country's immigration system. The study participants shared similar backgrounds and experiences with the students they serve, which has guided their advocacy:

I think there's a lot of us that went through the system. And now we understand the importance of, I didn't have this when I was in college, we had XYZ. So then now we're in positions of authority, honestly authority, because now we could make an impact and make certain changes. (Vice President C)

Professionally, all participants had extensive experience providing direct services to undocumented students during their careers as advisors in public institutions across the state. Collectively, the experience of the study participants covers the 30 years of the immigrant rights movement in California and the building of access for undocumented students to the state's public higher education systems. Additionally, all of the vice presidents, the chancellor, and one of the deans have more than 20 years of experience working in California community colleges and have had to continuously navigate the changing landscape of the immigration policies and the state's evolving priorities. For example, Vice President B's experience includes the limiting policies of the 1980s,

when the whole concept of, you now need to have a status in order to be able to go to college and get the aid that you need, became more evident that there was some work that needed to be done.

The continuous policy changes led to the institutional agents' ongoing conversation between compliance and challenging institutional barriers. As a result, the USRC institutional agents' empathy toward the students' immigrant experience and their professional expertise in serving undocumented students became the district's greatest asset in building support for its immigrant student population, combining care and skills in the districtwide implementation efforts.

Advocates and Organizational Change

The USRCs are a product of the long trajectory of activists who have pushed the campus to provide adequate services to undocumented students. When the district and campus leadership finally identified building support for undocumented students as an institutional priority, the legacy of campus advocates helped the colleges meet the district's request. The increasing xenophobia and racism against immigrant communities during the Trump administration further politicized developing support for undocumented students. Comparably, students and institutional allies have a long history of advocating and urging higher education to address institutional barriers affecting undocumented and immigrant students. Over the 30-year trajectory of advocacy for immigrant rights in California, students, faculty, and staff in the LACCD built the bottom-up political pressure in the district. As a result, when the district and campus leadership identified developing Undocumented Student Resource Centers as an institutional priority, they capitalized and built on the previous efforts carried out by institutional advocates. The district leadership signaled their support of the USRCs through the passage of the Board of Trustee resolution and immortalized the request to establish a USRC on every LACCD campus. The support from leadership empowered the campus institutional agents to push and guide the colleges through the organizational changes needed to develop campuses that meet student needs and prioritize developing support for undocumented students.

USRC Institutional Agents

The Board of Trustee resolution called for a system-wide effort to establish an Undocumented Student Resource Center on each campus, but the implementation efforts were left to the individual campuses. The institutional agents of the colleges were vital in providing and setting up the services and identifying resources to create the center. This study defined the

USRC institutional agents as district leadership, campus leadership, and counseling faculty who helped establish and build support for undocumented students. Past research on institutional agents has focused on how they interpret and implement policies affecting undocumented students. Still, this study looked at how institutional agents make sense of building support for undocumented students when identified as an institutional priority. The following section outlines how institutional agents make sense of the system-wide effort and define the role of their position in reference to the USRC.

Role as USRC Institutional Agents

The participants in this study represented different positions of power in the organizational hierarchy; as a result, they represented various factions of the college. But all the participants start from the same understanding: that undocumented students have more barriers to navigate in college because of their immigration status (Bjorklund, 2018). Vice President C described the responsibility of their role to be “to assist in breaking down barriers and not putting them on. So that’s our goal, to break down those barriers.” The deans saw their role in a similar light: “We want to be able to like soften the blow a little bit; if we can help them a little bit with some of these institutional barriers, we need to do that” (Dean B). Dean C summarized the campus leadership role to be “to serve as an ally and an advocate, and to identify funding resources.” Similarly, the coordinators described a significant component of the counselor-coordinator position as helping students navigate the college’s bureaucracy and connecting them to resources. One of the coordinators described their role to include “the institutional aspect of it, and that’s the policies and practices and procedures that exist on campus that students run into.” The counseling coordinators help the students navigate the college by identifying students’ needs and barriers and implementing services to address them. Collectively, they indicated that the role

of a USRC institutional agent is to serve as an advocate, identify and address institutional barriers, and identify resources. However, how USRC institutional agents navigate the role is dependent on their position or title in the college or district.

Making Sense of a Districtwide Effort

Kezar (2013), in a discussion of organizational change through sensemaking, posited that collaborative leadership is a key tool in the transformation of organizations. For these changes to occur, senior administrators play a crucial role in creating an environment where sensemaking can occur (Kezar, 2002). Included in the BOT resolution to establish the centers was the request to form a districtwide taskforce. Led by the chancellor and a trustee, the taskforce became an integral space where institutional agents attempt to make sense of the evolving immigration policies and determine what steps to take in support of the district's undocumented student population. In addition, the taskforce convenes the campus advocates and gives the campuses, specifically the USRC coordinators, direct access to the district leadership. The direct access to leadership is important for the coordinators' advocacy efforts because, ultimately, the responsibility of implementing the efforts is put on the shoulders of the USRC faculty and staff. Coordinator C, the first full-time counselor coordinator of the USRC at their campus, expressed the value of the taskforce in their advocacy:

The DACA taskforce meetings that we hold on a monthly basis, that literally is us having our chancellor's ear for 2 hours. To be able to say, these are the challenges that we're experiencing. These are some of the issues that we're having, this is what our students are telling us.

The coordinators are able to advocate for the center and student needs directly to the chancellor, trustee, and other district leaders. Political theory has indicated that colleges must develop coalitions and advocates as well as regularly take the political pulse as they develop diversity initiatives (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Through the taskforce, the chancellor intentionally convenes

a diverse group of advocates and allies, becoming the districtwide tool that serves to take the external and internal political pulse on issues affecting undocumented students. By hosting elected officials and legal experts from the community, the taskforce created a significant political space that bridged the district's policy efforts at the national and state levels with the efforts of the campus. Coordinator B was also hired as the first full-time counseling coordinator at their campus but has extensive experience working with undocumented students, including building a USRC at another local community college district. They described the significance of the taskforce as a resource in their implementation efforts:

[At my first taskforce meeting] the lawyer came out and gave us a stack of laws. These laws are going to be passed. I used to sit in my office until like 9:00 p.m. finding the laws [online]. I used to find what laws are coming down and I start to read every single one of them . . . and they read the whole thing. I have a lawyer sitting here explaining to me exactly what it is, how it affects us. I was like, mind blown.

The taskforce connected the advocates across the district and other community organizations with legislative updates, resources, and a space to share the needs of the center and students. Besides counseling, one of the major services of the USRC was providing free legal services on campus, built from the relationship with community organizations and the financial resources from the California Community College Foundation. The continued relationship between community immigrant organizations and the district has allowed for the centers to expand their services.

The chancellor's leadership in the taskforce also gave agency for institutional agents to advocate on their campuses. Coordinator A is the only full-time counseling coordinator who has gradually moved into the position. They were originally hired for another counseling program and had been servicing undocumented students there. As the district began to push for the establishment of the USRC, they had to tap into various spaces and resources to gain the support of the campus leadership, but "because of my involvement in the district, and the fact that 'Oh,

the meeting is with the chancellor,' you know, it holds a lot for the administrators, especially at the beginning, [for] our president [who] was an interim president.” Attending the taskforce meetings gave the coordinator more credibility as they advocated to their campus leadership. The chancellor described the efforts as cultivating “a pretty significant body after 4 years that we’ve been able to nurture, and I want [the coordinators] to feel connected and empowered,” highlighting the importance of cultivating an environment where sensemaking can occur, particularly for advocates of diversity initiatives.

Pressure From the Top: Leadership Support

According to Kezar (2008), organizational change and diversity initiatives cannot be initiated without the support from leadership, especially because they have the authority or leverage important in the institutionalizing of these efforts. The chancellor intentionally elevates building support for undocumented students as part of the district’s political agenda because they “don’t have nine different agendas, it’s one agenda. One legislative agenda for the district, one political agenda for the district, one resource budget agenda for the district.” The district’s advocacy established the top-down momentum for campuses to build institutional support for undocumented students. Vice President B said, “It provides leadership and commitment on behalf of the chancellor and our Board, that creates the framework to Yes, you have to have this. In order to help students, I think that’s really critical and important.” The top-down pressure meets the long-established bottom-up pressure from allies and advocates on the campuses. Some colleges had an early infrastructure when the BOT resolution was passed, but, as Dean B explained,

it gave me more legitimacy to have the district now say every college is going to have a [USRC], and every college is going to have resources dedicated to it, every college is going to intentionally focus on this group.

The taskforce allowed the district institutional agents to identify each other, build cross-district momentum and support, and gain legitimacy for their efforts on the campuses.

District Leadership and Political Power

The taskforce is chaired by a district Board of Trustee member—who is in an elected position. Like the rest of the USRC institutional agents in this study, the trustee had a personal commitment to the advocacy of immigrant rights. The trustee described Marxist and social justice movements in Los Angeles and Mexico as the catalyst for their activism and being an advocate of public education. In relation to their background and the USRC, they saw their role as trustee as needing “to do everything humanly possible to support undocumented students in every possible manner, and be unashamed and unabashedly aggressive and doing everything.” They saw the work of the USRC as an essential part of the district efforts to serve the city of Los Angeles, home to the largest undocumented student population. The commitment from the trustee translated into increasing the political power of the taskforce. Dean B said,

Having the board members be involved, I think is great on the political end, because I think it helps us also get a sense that this battle is being fought not just on the local level in our campuses, in our district, at the state level and the federal level. And it takes us doing the advocacy on all of those levels to move the agenda forward.

Dean C said further,

We have the trifecta, if you will, you’ve got campus allies, you’ve got district allies, got political, board allies, we’ve made a lot of inroads in community allies. And that’s really what you want to see. And that’s also another level of consistency.

The support of the trustee and board help align the district leadership with the work being done on the campuses in support of undocumented students.

The chancellor’s presence is instrumental, especially as the district’s most senior administrator and advocate of the USRC: “Basically [the] chancellor wants this. So, the presidents want it and so it trickles down” (Dean C). The chancellor is the only person directly

hired by the Board of Trustees and the only district employee who reports directly to them. The chancellor has been consistent in their support of the USRCs and undocumented students. They did some of the early work in galvanizing support from the board and working with the college presidents to push for the focus on undocumented students at the individual campuses. The chancellor's efforts included

getting support from the board, talking to the presidents because now my work is through the president and the vice chancellors. I don't work directly with the deans or the vice president. That's the president's job. So, there is a hierarchy that's here. So, it's not just no one conversation.

In addition to the taskforce, the BOT resolution called for the establishment of a USRC at each of the district's nine campuses:

It was signaling to [those] in the field, that we expected to have safe places, safe havens, on each of our colleges, and we didn't prescribe what that exactly had to look like, but that we had to have it. We said, we're going to stand nine [Undocumented Student] Resource Centers. (Chancellor)

The passage of the resolution motioned to the campuses the expectation of developing a USRC at each campus. Many interpreted it as a mandate, but the chancellor stated, "Was it a mandate? No, but was it a directive? You know, a consultative directive? Absolutely." Once again, the value of the district leadership putting their weight into developing support for its undocumented students' population was apparent. One of the coordinators shared, "I don't think it was the direction of the district. I just think it was the power that it can throw around wherever it decides to like a death star." The chancellor and BOT resolution set the expectation of developing the center, but how the centers were developed was left to the discretion of each campus, including decisions on what type of services they want to offer, how to staff the center, and how to identify the financial resources. This discrepancy leads to the uneven establishment and development of the USRCs at each of the nine campuses. The support and prioritization from the district leadership is important, but in order for the programs to be developed and supported with

resources, the campus leadership must also support the efforts because “the presidents operationalize the interest [of the district]” (Chancellor).

Campus Leadership

Political theory has suggested that organizations combine different interest groups, and these enter into conflict to either defend resources and power or obtain them (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Kezar, 2008). The advocacy for the USRCs from leadership was particularly important because these leaders manage budgets and are key participants in campus committees, where decisions are made regarding the creation of new positions, hiring prioritization, or distribution of resources. After the request by the chancellor and BOT, the operationalization of the USRCs on the campuses became the responsibility of the president and their campus leadership team. The leadership team consists of the president and the three vice presidents of academic affairs, student services, and administrative affairs. The campus leadership identify a dean, staff, or faculty to operationalize the establishment of the USRC. One of the deans shared their experience in the early phases of implementation: “My president called and said, ‘Hey, we need to make this happen.’ I took my existing resources and made it happen.” Currently, the nine LACCD campuses have identified someone to operationalize the services in the USRC. The difference in how, when, and where the center is established and sustained is greatly affected by the campus administrative leadership, as expressed by one of the coordinators:

The only point that I’ll emphasize is just how important it is to have support at an administrative level. You know, because we’ve got champions on the ground. And I got to imagine that on other campuses where they don’t have a strong [USRC] presence, that there’s champions on the ground as well. But not having that administrative support makes it a tremendous challenge.

The campus administrative support, or lack thereof, facilitated or hindered the development of the center. A coordinator echoed this sentiment: “Some of the goals that some of these administrators have, it can become, you know, a big part of how that translates into the work.”

The campus leadership must identify developing the USRC as a campus priority or be convinced that it should be a priority. The vice president at Campus C reflected on their role in the advocacy of the USRC:

The president, of course, had his ideas as well in regards to his agenda or his vision for the campus. And so, I had to work within that vision for the president and also pretty much letting them know that the [Undocumented Student] Counselor Coordinator was part of his vision. And then finding the right funding for it.

Similarly, the deans also have an advocacy role in helping build the USRC. Dean C explained it to be to “serve as an ally and an advocate, and to identify funding resources.” Identifying resources meant finding revenue streams, as well as galvanizing support for the centers.

Although the creation of the USRC was a district request, if a president or vice president did not see value in the centers, they could restrict the usage of funds and resources:

I was very fortunate that my VP was very supportive of all of these things. So, without that support, it would have not happened. I have to make that very clear without the support of my VP and my president, because I would come to them and I’d say, we need to do this. And they say, make sure you have evidence to support it, put it through, we’re gonna sign off on it as long as it gets, you know, you have to work your magic with the constituency groups. But we’ll support it, we won’t get in your way. (Dean B)

The dean described how leadership can be an obstacle and become an institutional barrier in the development of services for undocumented students. When asked what a successful USRC would look like, Dean A responded,

Success also looks like, not getting pushed back from the administration, when I’m asking for more resources for the center. . . . When people are not wanting to be involved in or lackadaisical about that, I think we have a problem. Because if senior leadership isn’t doing it, I’m sorry. Nobody else will.

Even with the district request and it being identified as a district priority, without the support of the campus leadership, the establishment and development of the center becomes more difficult. As a result, presidents and vice presidents must prioritize and include the establishment of the USRC as a part of their vision and agenda for the campus or be convinced that it aligns to them.

As the institutional agents built support and services for undocumented students, they negotiated and bargained within the established parameters of limited staff and funding to establish and grow the USRC. The support from leadership to develop the Undocumented Student Resource Centers increased the political power of the campus advocates, but identifying and moving the resources to create the centers continued to be a major obstacle for campus advocates.

Addressing Implementation Challenges: Resources and Institutional Barriers

Cisneros and Rivarola (2020) defined Undocumented Student Resource Centers as centralized hubs on college campuses that provide a varied number of support services to undocumented students and the greater campus community. Coordinator A said, “The center really serves as, this is your hub, this is your place where you can find support; the main goal at the end is for [undocumented students] to thrive in every aspect of their lives.” The USRCs help students focus on their academic journey by addressing some of their specific needs. The literature has shown that, compared with their peers, undocumented students have additional barriers that affect their academic experience (Bjorklund, 2018). Undocumented students juggle many responsibilities with limited resources and barriers that restrict their options. As a student support and resource center, the USRC helps undocumented students process their academic and professional options and make decisions about their future goals. Coordinator A elaborated on the mission of the USRC:

It’s to support our undocumented students, so that their immigration status isn’t preventing them from being a student. You know, it’s like, taking that out of their constant worry, it’s helping them navigate the college as an undocumented student, and helping them feel a little bit more like a student, like every other student with the student worries.

The primary goal of the center was to provide services that support and address the needs of undocumented students—which included academic advisement, connecting students to resources, and being up to date on policies. Most importantly, the counseling coordinator

encourages and helps undocumented students navigate their academic journey as community college students.

Although the LACCD attempts to build a districtwide effort, the institutional context of each college determines how the centers are developed across the district. The goals of the USRC are malleable by the campus mission, vision, goals, and decision-making structure. The chancellor described the difference in implementation:

Some [centers] have counseling coordinators, and events and a space, larger space, smaller space, combined space. I mean, that, we'll leave that to the college level. Because, it's not generally speaking, the district's sort of formula to say, here's the A through Z, what you have to do, that's not how we've done it, but we say, you are going to put a center and you are going to support students.

Beyond the request to establish a USRC, the district provided the colleges minimal guidance or financial support, pushing the institutional responsibility onto the college campuses. For the campus leadership, "This is still an unfunded mandate from the chancellor's office as are many of our equity group projects" (Dean C). The lack of directive and resources further taxed the labor at the campuses, but it provided institutional agents with flexibility to build a center reflective of their undocumented students and college needs.

Community colleges have finite resources, and the study participants identified them as being underfunded, understaffed, and under resourced. The chancellor elaborated:

Community colleges are underfunded chronically. So then that trickles down to every part of the organization. And there's only so much private support that community colleges get, so that trickles down. So, you know, we're under resourced, to be blunt. But that doesn't tarnish our interest in our ability.

The lack of funding in the district request meant that campus leaders had to be resourceful and initially piece together the creation of the center. Dean A reflected on their experience in establishing a USRC at their previous campus, also part of the LACCD:

I said, there's a room here that I know I have access to that, it's underutilized, that is going to become my USRC. We do need a point person, for my undocumented students, I

took one of a Student Support Services Rep from the Welcome Center and made them 50% Resource Center and 50% Welcome Center.

The dean mobilized resources they had direct access to in their efforts to meet the district request. Since the initial district resolution in favor of the centers, the USRCs across the district have grown at different paces and into different structures. The three campuses in this study mobilized their resources and responded by identifying and implementing two key features of the USRC: a physical space on campus to serve as the center, and a counseling faculty member to operationalize the center and provide services to students. This section correlates to Part A of my research questions and reviews key features of the USRC.

Center Location

Office and meeting spaces are limited resources on the campuses. The physical restriction of space directly affected the establishment of the Undocumented Student Resource Centers.

Institutional agents at the campuses had to advocate for an adequate area. Dean C revealed,

We open the center, and then I had to fight for that. It's discouraging, because we had to fight for the little space that we've got, and what are we getting? We got a closet . . . the closet is beautiful. It looks great. But we need more.

Campus A was able to secure a larger location to develop the center:

There are three computers there that students can sit and use. There is a big table where students can do homework, there is a fridge, a microwave. There are very key, like nice setup, where it's supportive images and pictures and info about the center and things like that.

But, as Coordinator A continued, the setup did not meet the needs of students on campus:

The center is located in [another] building, the physical space. It's a room away from student services, I don't have an office there, it is just the space, it is not accessible very easily with a computer, our students can't usually get internet there.

As the campuses made sense of how they want to support undocumented students, they adjusted the structure and changed the location of the center. The newest change will be the physical growth of the colleges as a result of recent building bonds. The LACCD 2019–2020 budget was

\$5.6 billion with \$4.0 billion earmarked as building funds established by the passage of state and local bonds and measures. The bond funds are used to build new buildings or update older facilities at campuses across the district. Campuses B and C are establishing equity villages where support services for specialized interest groups are centralized in one building: “Now we’re going to go into a building. So, I’m really excited about that” (Dean C).

Privacy and Safety

Suárez-Orozco et al.’s (2015) research on creating college campuses that address the needs of undocumented students identified privacy as a top priority. The heightened vulnerability of immigrants during the Trump administration and the increased fear of exposure made safety and privacy major factors in the establishment of the USRCs. The physical location of the center was based not only on the availability of space but also with privacy and safety in mind. Vice President C shared how they determined the location of the center: “One of the reasons why we didn’t bring the [USRC] within eyesight is because we also wanted to make sure that it was in a location that they felt safe.” Developing a sense of safety is important not only for the location of the center but also for the services offered such as outreach, dissemination of information and resources, and most importantly during students’ counseling sessions. The focus of counseling is particularly important because it is the primary resource offered by the USRCs in this study. The counselors assessed their attempts to create a sense of security for students during their counseling sessions, which include having a safe location for the session to take place. Counselor C described how they prioritize creating safety and privacy for USRC students:

These are the things that sometimes when you’re thinking of space, you don’t necessarily think of but they still play a significant influence in your counseling and the counseling space, if students feel safe, not just with you in their presence, but in this space. So, it’s a balancing act.

In many instances, to gain access to resources, students had to disclose their legal status to various individuals and offices across campus (Muñoz, 2016). According to Coordinator B,

They have to come out of the shadows. They have to tell their story to five different other people. Then one person has to be brave enough to bring them to the center. Like, there's a lot of wrong there.

Coordinator B highlighted the institutional barriers that force students to voluntarily or involuntarily share their immigration status. Without a trained or empathetic staff, this can be a great risk for students that can generate a lot of anxiety (Muñoz, 2016; Nienhusser, 2018; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). As the USRC institutional agents figure out where and how to develop the USRC, they engage in conversations that attempt to balance easy access for students and privacy, both in efforts to minimize unnecessary exposure of students' immigration status.

COVID and Remote Learning

This study was focused on the USRC and understanding how the campuses negotiated the development of a physical center along with the services it offers. But the interviews for this study took place in 2020, as campuses entered the second school year of the COVID-19 global pandemic lockdown. The lockdown forced the majority of colleges and universities to move their services online. According to the Los Angeles Community College District's website, the LACCD is the largest community college district in the nation, home to nine out of the 116 colleges of the greater California Community College System (California Community Colleges, 2020). The LACCD had the enormous task of moving 229,793 students, 7,016 employees, nine campuses, thousands of classes, and hundreds of support programs online. Since March 2020, the USRC services have all been conducted virtually. The move to remote learning highlights the value of staff support in the centers. The center had to adjust to the online space and be visible to students in a new way: "We really amped up our communication with students, especially during COVID with email and with Instagram" (Coordinator A). The changes to the centers during the

pandemic further demonstrated the role of the coordinators as the primary representative of the USRC. As Coordinator A shared, “In a very fast period of time and a short period of time, I became the center.” The USRC is primarily identified to be the coordinator, and although the physical space is important, to carry out the center’s efforts, the staff are a priority to help aid students in navigating the college.

Staffing the Centers

The three campuses in the study were selected because they now have a full-time, tenure-track counseling faculty to coordinate the Undocumented Student Resource Center. In a system with limited resources, hiring a tenure-track position represents a greater institutional commitment. The campuses started the USRCs by providing services to students on a part-time basis. Campuses B and C identified adjunct counselors to lead the early efforts of the centers, in partnership with the dean or assistant dean assigned to the USRC. As adjuncts, the counselors worked up to 20 hours a week; those hours were dedicated to the coordination of the USRC and individual counseling appointments with students, limiting their access to students to a few hours a week. Campus A did not hire an adjunct counselor but rather relied on its established resources, reassigning campus staff:

Initially, we just had student workers in that space, and I wasn’t the coordinator at that time; I was working with someone who was doing the coordination. But that person couldn’t really be in the space, so student workers were not always supervised. So, they would always be calling me and I was a counselor with about 7 hours assigned to the [USRC]. So, it was very difficult for me to answer their questions while I’m in a counseling appointment. So, it wasn’t very well thought out, I would say at the beginning, when it was launched. (Coordinator A)

Campus A did not hire a new counselor to focus solely on supporting undocumented students, but it was the only campus with two full-time staff members assigned to the center on a partial basis: a classified staff for coordination support and a full-time counselor assigned a number of hours to counsel USRC students. In the early establishment of the center at Campus A, the

administration was going through transitions and the majority of the institutional efforts were carried out by campus faculty and staff. When the USRC was started, the campus had an interim president and interim VP, and no assigned dean. Coordinator A continued, “I always had these questions for my administrators, but there was never a dean assigned to doing this work. It was very difficult to even, who do I even ask?” As a result of the lack of guidance and support from campus leadership, the counselor became the primary campus advocate. The counselor was consistent in their advocacy as the campus transitioned through leadership, and students continued to apply pressure.

The hiring of the counseling coordinator position was intentional. The campus leadership had the option to hire a classified staff or faculty member to manage the center on a part-time or full-time basis, temporarily or permanently. Each position has its own labor contract and is at a different pay scale, with faculty requiring the greater institutional commitment. The position identified to manage the program was based on the advocacy from campus advocates and the leadership’s goals. Vice President C highlighted why their campus hired a counseling coordinator:

We had an adjunct counselor in the USRC, was doing very good as well. It’s just that adjunct counselors are here today might get a full-time position somewhere else. So, to stabilize and institutionalize our program, full-time tenure-track counselor would be the best and ideal for us.

Counselors in the California Community College system are faculty and must meet state minimum qualifications, which include a master’s degree in counseling.

Hiring a full-time counseling coordinator increased the presence of a counselor in the USRC, and it expanded the expectation of the role. Dean B elaborated on their push for the position:

I knew early on that I wanted a counselor who could coordinate things like workshops with parents, to help even parents understand before they get to college, what it means to be undocumented in college, and what it doesn't mean more importantly.

The campus leadership helped envision the role of the coordinator to build an infrastructure that supported undocumented students at every step of their academic journey. But, once the initial location and hiring of staff occurred, the implementation and development of the USRC was primarily left to the coordinators: "I'm very grateful that we were able to find our counselor-coordinator. But [they're] a one [person] show and [their] ally/advocate dean, me. We don't have clerical staff" (Dean C). The coordinator managed the majority of the USRC efforts, and a dean was assigned to support the coordinators and the center.

The support of the dean was important because they helped foster the efforts and address some of the challenges and obstacles in establishing the center. For example, Campus A now has a permanent dean and college president but still has an interim vice president. Since the new dean was brought in, they reassigned the counseling coordinator to the USRC full time with a full-time classified member for operational support. The change in dean support allowed for the center to grow from having two part-time staff to two full-time staff with graduate student assistants and student worker support. Coordinator A described how the access to their dean allows them to communicate about the needs of students and the center, facilitating their advocacy for resources:

My direct access to my dean has been amazing. And I've been able to say, we just lost the CGCA [College Graduate Counseling Assistant] or we're losing the CGCA, what can we do to hire? You know, it's the direct conversation. And that part has been super, super helpful and mitigating those challenges that I sometimes encounter.

The push of the campus advocacy directed resources to the USRC, and one visible resource is the growth in staff and development of permanent positions.

Counseling Coordinator as a Resource and Advocate

The role of the counseling coordinator is important as a resource and in engaging the campus to develop support for undocumented students. The majority of the efforts in the USRC are carried out by the counseling coordinator. The services offered by the center are similar to those found in most USRCs, which include access to scholarships, legal services, and information on AB 540 and the CA Dream Act, but counseling is the primary service. The focus on counseling was particularly important because it addressed institutional barriers at the community colleges such as complicated structures and inadequate counseling prolonging a student's trajectory (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2019; Terriquez, 2015). Although the coordinators were responsible for the outlined services, the coordinators viewed their role as described by Coordinator B: "I help them be students. That's me. That's me, because they don't sign up to [the college], they don't sign up to their business or engineering degrees to be undocumented, right. So, they sign up to finish." Additionally, the coordinator efforts are focused not only on the direct service to the students but also in furthering the efforts of the center. Vice President C reflected on the work of the campus coordinator:

My human capital is [Coordinator C]. The great work that they're doing . . . As they came on board, they took the USRC. And took it to the next level. They've been taking the college, the program to the next level, to levels I didn't even imagine we could get to. So that's why it was important for me not to piecemeal the position and actually invest in the human capital. And I mean, investing in [Coordinator] as a counselor coordinator.

The USRC coordinators worked to change the culture and practices across the district while navigating the always-evolving immigration policies. They engaged the various decision-making spaces to continuously highlight the needs and value of providing direct services to undocumented students, as well as facilitate trainings to address institutional barriers. But the uncertainty of immigration policies required the coordinators to be flexible with their efforts, increasing their workload. Coordinator A said, "With immigration policies, those are things I just

have no control over, and I just have to be open and aware that this might happen and that's okay." The Trump administration's constant changes and spontaneous communication of the changes meant that the coordinators' schedules could quickly be affected, forcing them to shut down services or pivot them for the day. The ambiguity also made it difficult to plan the future growth of the center and support for students:

When DACA is no longer the primary thing but TPS is? And you know, asylum is, how do you serve? Right? Oh, the Dream Act. Well, guess what they can get, without warning, they can get rid of it when residency is a big determining factor, but the campus doesn't have that. Those are weird, like the new. The new is weird. (Coordinator B)

The liminality of immigration policies and the limited guidance made it difficult for the coordinators to navigate their role and implement the support efforts.

The coordinators became the primary representative of the USRC and were left with limited support and guidance to develop the centers. Coordinator B shared the mixed messages they received from leadership:

If we talk to [the dean, my role is] to grow the services supporting undocumented students. And then you talk to [the vice president, the role is] to get more undocumented students to graduate, to get more undocumented students to complete. So, I think depending on what level you get them, I want to grow services.

While Coordinator B is able to develop their own vision for the position, in the early establishment of the center, Coordinator A was "always proving what I'm doing" to justify their efforts and the need to expand support. Trying to convince the college of the value of the USRC efforts added more work and barriers for the coordinator.

Collaborative Resources

The coordinators worked with limited resources in their effort to increase the services offered by the USRCs and push the colleges to adjust practices that negatively affect undocumented students. The Undocumented Student Resource Centers continued to grow, as did the workload for the center staff:

From semester to semester, we went from 800 students or 1,000 students to 1,500 students, that's great. We're serving more, but I would rather quality over quantity. And also, if you're serving more, but the resources allocated to those students hasn't changed, you're still the one person that's helping all 1,500 students, then the quality of care for each student to me is diminished. (Dean A)

The centers' limited staff automatically sets up uneven student-to-staff ratios across the district.

According to LACCD's Education Programs and Institutional Effectiveness 2019 report, *Overview of LACCD Dreamer Students*, undocumented students accounted for 7% of total district enrollment in 2019. The student population is generally divided into credit vs. non-credit students. Credit-bearing are courses that lead to degrees or certificates, while non-credit include English as a Second Language and citizenship courses. The same report identifies the characteristics of the LACCD undocumented students as they tend to be older, are overwhelmingly Latino, and have higher persistence but lower completion rates. Additionally, the district is home to many mixed-status families and students who must learn about and navigate family members' immigration statuses. Table 1 summarizes the total undocumented student population, which includes credit and non-credit students of the three campuses in the study.

Table 1

Undocumented Student Population, 2019

Campus	Number of Undocumented Students	Percent of All Students	Number of USRC Staff (Full-Time Equivalent)	Student-to-Staff Ratio
A	2,948	15%	1	1:2,948
B	959	5.2%	1	1:959
C	343	3.6%	1	1:343

Note. Chart developed from Overview of LACCD Dreamer Students, 2019, and interviews.

The coordinators had to balance the expectation from their campus leadership to provide services that address the needs of the undocumented student campus population and grow the USRC, all with limited support. In order to do so, the coordinators worked in close partnership with other campus and community agencies. The USRCs cultivated relationships with advocates across the various campus offices through collaborations and partnerships. At Campus A, Coordinator A said, “We’ve worked really closely with one financial aid person that I just had a good relationship with, and then she became the liaison for the center.” The partnerships allowed for the coordinators to cover more topics and gain additional support in the execution of services. The three coordinators shared the value in building direct relationships with the admissions and financial aid offices, as key offices that manage residency and financial aid paperwork.

Another key partnership was the one formed among the district USRC coordinators. Outside of the chancellor-led taskforce, the USRC coordinators meet on a regular basis and describe themselves as a coalition. The meeting of the coordinators has developed into another imperative sensemaking space where they share obstacles the students and they encounter, as well as strategize on how to tackle the barriers. The three coordinators identified the relationship they have developed with each other as one of the most important partnerships. The monthly meetings have become integral in supporting each other and collaborating. Coordinator C shared how the coalition meetings have influenced their work:

I can’t even say how important and how valuable and how helpful it’s been. You know, to hear what some of the other campuses are doing . . . for me, that’s my Think Tank, that’s my space where I can learn, where I can be vulnerable, where I can express successes, where I can express challenges.

The coordinators share resources such as marketing and training material to alleviate some of the workload and expectations set on them. Their monthly gatherings also have become a space of encouragement to push boundaries and challenge many of the institutionalized practices that

negatively affect undocumented students: “It has given me encouragement to keep pushing, because I see other people accomplishing, or I accomplish” (Coordinator A). The support among the coordinators also has helped alleviate the responsibility of leading the direct services on their campuses, Coordinator C shared:

I connected with Coordinator A, and I said, how do you do this? I connected with Coordinator B, said, you know, how do you facilitate? Like, how are you facilitating it now that you’re remote. And they let me borrow a lot of the promotion materials. So, I didn’t have to recreate the wheel. In essence, it was, this is what we have adapted, so it fits your campus and your students. But, you know, you don’t have to recreate what is already out there.

The coordinators look to each other for support in building out the USRC, navigating the various policies, and shaping the center.

The creation of the USRC required the advocacy of institutional agents at the various levels of influence they hold, and they identified developing support for undocumented students as a priority. Specifically, the campus leadership had to identify the staff who would lead the efforts and the space to centralize the services in support of undocumented students. The development of the USRC involved the entire college, from students providing the continuous political pressure, to institutional advocates who provided support for undocumented students. The founding of the USRC was a response by the colleges to the district request, but in order to stabilize the USRC, advocates had to navigate the traditional decision-making spaces of the college. As the official campus representatives of the USRC, the deans and coordinators helped steer the college conversations as constituents processed the needs of the center and undocumented students, the allocation of resources to the USRC, and the ambiguity of immigration policies. The USRC institutional agents engaged various college interest groups to help make meaning of the various policies affecting undocumented students and build the USRC.

Making the USRC a Campus Priority

Institutional agents foster the sustainability of the Undocumented Student Resource Center by building allies to advocate for resources and to make the USRC a campus funding priority. Bolman and Deal (2017) described organizations as a space where resources and power are continuously negotiated and bargained. The lack of funding behind the district request required the movement and allocation of resources such as space, staff, and funds for programming at the campuses. The decision to move resources necessitated the support of key campus leaders and advocacy from allies. As a result, to meet the resource gap, the USRC focused on building allies who can serve as an additional resource to undocumented students and advocate for student needs. Dean A explained their focus on increasing campus capacity:

If you ask me now, what does the successful USRC look like? It's one that is thoroughly ingrained in the college fiber . . . so that it feels like an "undocufriendly" campus, you know, that environment doesn't rely only on Student Services, it doesn't rely only on a center.

To galvanize support for undocumented students while expanding services, institutional agents in the LACCD focused their efforts on developing more "undocufriendly" campuses, meaning they partook in efforts to change the culture and practices of the college to better serve undocumented students and make it a more welcoming environment. At Campus B, the efforts are spoken about in their conversation on expanding support outside the "four walls" of the USRC. Coordinator B shared, "I'm not doing a good job if the entire campus doesn't become a center for undocumented students, and then I still am not doing a good job unless the district becomes a support center for undocumented students." As demonstrated previously, the USRC institutional agents' empathy came from their personal experiences with immigration and extensive professional experience working with undocumented students. They thought about student privacy as they set up the centers, and the primary goal of the USRCs was to promote the

equitable treatment of undocumented students. But immigration policies are exclusionary, and institutional agents' personal beliefs affect how they implement policies (Nienhusser, 2018). The USRC institutional agents had empathy toward the immigrant experience and believed undocumented students deserved access to the same resources as the rest of the student population. Unfortunately, the same cannot be supposed of other college institutional agents, resulting in hostile environments that deny undocumented students resources (Muñoz, 2016; Nienhusser, 2018).

As outlined in Chapter 2, Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) identified five “undocufriendly” institutional practices that can help build an inclusive campus that is supportive of undocumented students' needs: listen and learn from students, train staff, have empathy, provide undocumented students with equitable treatment, and respect the students' privacy. The USRC institutional agents navigated the “undocufriendly” themes as they made sense of the implementation efforts of the center, their role, and the role of the college in supporting undocumented students. In their progress from creation to developing sustainability, the USRC institutional agents continued to build an “undocufriendly” college and engage more sectors of the campus community. The campuses in the study partook in two major steps in the development of their USRC: They focused on educating the campus to build allies and address institutional barriers, and advocated for resources in decision-making spaces to support the efforts of the center. The following sections review the colleges' efforts to build the sustainability of the Undocumented Student Resource Centers.

Building Allies and Campus Capacity

Similar to other diversity initiatives, the USRC focused on developing an understanding of the experiences of undocumented students, highlighting the barriers directly affecting

students' attainment gaps and instituting efforts to create greater equity in the experiences and outcomes of undocumented students (Kezar, 2008). Although there has been a continuous presence of advocates on the campuses, the majority of the colleges were not clear on the support and services available to undocumented students and at times provided inaccurate information. One of the counseling coordinators, who was a community college student in the early implementation of Assembly Bill 540, shared their experience:

I went to [a Southern California] community college as an AB 540 student. [It] was the first time that I went, we were applying in person. I was told that I couldn't apply, because the person in admissions didn't know about AB 540. So, they pretty much kind of shamed me in front of other students, telling me you know, where's your green card? Like, you can't do that, without it, where's your social? So, I went home, I cried. Obviously, I went back with my dad. And then we encountered an amazing individual who later became a colleague of mine.

The coordinator experienced an institutional agent who served as a barrier and was insensitive to their needs. The staff member was not knowledgeable of the policies and mistreated them in the process. Although the coordinator returned and finally got adequate support, their experience demonstrates the discrepancy in practice and lack of support by the college. As a primary goal, the USRC sought to make the entire campus a more welcoming and supportive environment for undocumented students. The building of support for the USRC required buy-in from key leaders across the entire campus community. The USRCs' growth from their official inception in 2017 is attributed to the increased advocacy across the campus and the allocation of resources. The identified themes of an "undocufriendly" campus helped institutional agents process the establishment and growth of the USRC, navigate the college sensemaking process, and increase the number of advocates in decision-making spaces in support of the allocation of resources to support undocumented students.

Student Development: Making Meaning of Student Needs

One of the challenges the USRCs in community colleges face is maintaining the student voice in the development of the center. The campuses are still working on how to incorporate student voices in the decision-making process of the USRC, because “that’s the other piece, ensuring that students have some sort of voice within the USRC. So that it becomes what they need it to become, not what we think they need it to become” (Coordinator C). The counseling coordinators developed a greater perspective on students’ needs from their counseling sessions and engagement with students through USRC programming. The services carried out by Coordinator C are “a result of what students are going through, what they were telling me they needed. So, a lot is just what I see in individual counseling appointments, and what students tell me that they’re needing most.” One way that the USRCs try to incorporate the student voice is by hiring student workers. However, student worker positions are available only to students who qualify for work-study, which limits the opportunity to students who are protected under DACA or another status that allows them to work. The campuses have also worked with and in relation to the campuses’ undocumented student groups in their efforts to incorporate the student voice: “The [student club], like I said earlier, is my ears to the ground. And it’s completely student run” (Coordinator C). The undocumented student clubs are autonomous student organizations and have their own decision-making process. Although the student groups have come in and out of existence, they have all played a major advocacy role in the establishment of the centers on their respective campuses. The three USRCs continue to be engaged with their student clubs and incorporate their voice at different levels, such as advisory board members, student workers, or advocates.

Train Staff

Trainings helped bridge the gap between changes in policy and implementation at the colleges. Immigration and state policies in support of undocumented students are continuously evolving, and the offices affected by them have not always been quick to update their practices.

Coordinator C elaborated:

The ally trainings, that's looking at campus policies that, you know, for example, the AB 540, affidavits. That's a big challenge for us right now and that not all campuses accepted it as self-certifying, I see that as another role of the USRC.

The disconnect from the changes in policy and the delayed implementation at the college negatively affect the services provided to students. The coordinators stay up to date on policies through their own research, analyzing information with each other, or attending trainings facilitated by community immigrant organizations. The district taskforce also supported the efforts to stay up to date by providing federal policy updates through guest presentations from lawyers or elected officials. The USRC institutional agents identified trainings as integral in pushing the campuses to address institutional barriers, "to move the agenda and to make [the campus] an even more favorable environment" (Dean A). The trainings helped address barriers in key offices such as admissions, financial aid, and counseling. Coordinator C said,

The campus side of it is making sure that other counselors are aware of any changes that they need to know of in regard to laws or policies that affect undocumented students, making sure counselors understand what's happening with DACA. So that way, if they have a DACA student, they can connect them to legal services. I make sure that we have trainings, I do a training pretty much every flex day. You know, we just had that large district training, which was exciting.

In this capacity, the coordinator takes on a professional development role and leads the skill capacity building of their peers to ensure adequate support of undocumented students. Through the trainings, the coordinators guide the campus as they process the policies and direct resources in their implementation. The trainings also become a major collaborative effort by all of the

USRC coordinators. The coordinators share training resources with each other, such as presentation templates, and work together for districtwide trainings.

The trainings help build more partnerships between advocates across the district and campuses and promote and develop uniform practices that address institutional barriers, including college employees who provide inaccurate information. The trainings' aim is not only to address institutional barriers but also to help the campus understand the experience of their undocumented students. As shared in the research and first finding, the increased fears around detention and deportation during the Trump administration increased uncertainties for undocumented students and placed many aspects of their lives in limbo—including their college aspirations (Santellano, 2019). Subsequently, to better serve and retain undocumented students, colleges must critically analyze the immigrant experience, especially in their role as public institutions (Santellano, 2019). In essence, the message of the trainings “goes back to the heart, you know, the heart of, helping this population is like kind of tapping into the empathy of other people too” (Coordinator A). The trainings aimed to increase the empathy of other institutional agents by elevating the experience of undocumented students and reviewing key institutional equity data. Reviewing undocumented student equity gaps in the colleges helped paint a greater picture of the students' experiences, and it helped identify a new funding resource.

Allocating Resources

The USRC institutional agents focused on growing support by elevating different aspects of the immigrant experience and discussing barriers faced by undocumented students, including institutional practices. The increase of allies signified that there were more advocates engaged in the conversations regarding the distribution of resources. Additionally, the allies had a greater understanding of the undocumented college student experience. The trainings helped build allies

across the campuses who worked with a greater understanding of the barriers experienced by undocumented students: “We’re educating enough people about, hey, by the way, this is what’s going on. And this is how we could be helping our students” (Dean A). The increase in awareness translated to more individuals in decision-making spaces thinking about the experience of undocumented students and advocating to make the USRC a campus priority. Making the USRC a campus priority was particularly valuable as the California Community Colleges (CCC) were experiencing a shift in their funding.

The chancellor and Board of Trustee request in 2017 to establish a USRC occurred alongside the most recent shift in the funding of California Community Colleges (CCC). Specifically, three state initiatives were consolidated into the Student Equity and Achievement Grant, providing the colleges with funds to develop programs that help close some of the equity gaps experienced by special populations. The CCC are part of the growing trend by states to implement performance-based funding for allocation of funds to their colleges (Dougherty & Natow, 2019). Performance-based funding (PBF) is the process by which the performance of institutions of higher education is connected to a set of indicators and state funding (Alshehri, 2016). The California legislature has introduced a number of initiatives over the past few years that attached funding to state desired outcomes. In 2018, the chancellor’s Community College Office consolidated the Basic Skills Initiative (BSI), Student Equity (SE), and the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) to support the CCCO focus on Guided Pathways and eliminate achievement gaps (California Community Colleges, 2018). The new initiatives established conditions in order for the district to receive funding if it meets the outlined expectations, which include the following: Campuses must maintain an equity plan, provide specified matriculation services to incoming students, adopt specified placement policies, and

provide all students with an educational plan (California Community Colleges, 2018). When the campuses were asked to develop the USRCs, they were not provided with additional financial support. As a result, the three campuses looked to the new state initiatives to request funding for the centers.

Aligning to State Initiatives

As leaders of the Student Services areas at their campuses, all of the campus leadership in the study have been involved in the implementation of the new state initiatives. Dean A summarized some of the process of the past few years:

If you are an administrator like me that has seen all three eras, I went from having focus on onboarding only to, no, I need to be more specific about the equity areas and equity programs and basic skills. And then now I'm back to I need to still focus on those things, but you still get only one pot of money. So now you need to prioritize what's the important thing, you're going to focus on basic skills? Are you going to focus on equity?

The systemwide changes provided an opportunity for USRC advocates to make a case for the establishment of the USRC and make it a campus priority in the allocation of funds. Two out of the three campuses hired their counseling coordinator solely on Student Equity and Achievement Program funds; the other campus included SEAP funding but also “braided” in various funding pools in the campus budget. Although Campus A tapped into other revenue for the USRC, SEAP funds were still an integral part of the financial support of the center. Ultimately, the state's Student Equity and Achievement Program provides the majority of the operating funds for the centers across the district.

A key requirement of the SEAP funds was for the campuses to create an equity plan.

Dean A explained the state's request to the colleges soliciting funds:

Look at your data and tell me which student populations are achieving at a disproportionally different rate than the rest, which ones are disproportionately impacted than the rest based on where they start in math, where they start in English, how long it takes them to get to degree completion, etc. You tell us what the category is. And then we'll give you money to focus on those people to bring them to the average.

Each of the campuses developed their individual equity plans with specified populations. The three campuses in the study identified Latinx students as an equity group that needed additional support to close achievement gaps. The campus advocates then requested from the campus SEAP funds to build the USRC, justifying the request as a way to address the Latinx achievement gap. Leaders from both Campus A and Campus B shared that although they have a large Latinx student population, they did not have a Latino-focused student support program. Dean B elaborated:

The way I was able to make a case for a center was that a huge majority of our undocumented students are Latinos. And we didn't have any targeted programming for our Latinos. So, let's start with this program to target some of our Latinos.

There was an understanding that not all undocumented students are Latinx, but the Latinx-specific data points were used to justify the use of SEAP money for the center.

The deans played key roles in presenting the data and galvanizing support to establish the centers. All three campus deans have partaken in the launching of an Undocumented Student Resource Center. Dean A helped found a USRC at another LACCD campus prior to arriving to Campus A; the other two deans have actively participated in the creation of the center they currently oversee. As participants on various campus committees, the deans help identify the data needed to justify the movement of resources to the USRC. Dean B reflected, "It was always important to start small, collect data, and then make the case for growth, and for permanence and for institutionalization." Once again, Campus A highlighted the value of a supportive dean. During the early bringing about of the USRC, the campus did not have a direct dean to support their efforts. The USRC on Campus A was established without any SEAP funds, resulting in a counselor and a classified staff from different programs assigned a limited number of hours to support the center. They were both full-time staff in another position and shared their time with the USRC. Once Dean A was hired as the administrator over the USRC, the center had an

administrator who paid individualized attention and studied why the USRC was not receiving funds to grow:

It's not that what we were doing wasn't working; it's that we weren't measuring what we were doing, asking the right questions. Well, of course, we're not gonna get the resources that we need. So yeah, we never got funding from SEA, what are we asking for? How are you proving that you needed that? How are you proving that it was a gap? (Dean A)

The USRC received SEAP funds because they outlined an equity plan that will help more Latinx and undocumented students meet new markers of success. The markers of success are those outlined in the Student-Centered Funding Formula—the current formula used to allocate the base funding for the district and colleges.

In 2018, California adopted its first iteration of an outcomes-based funding program for community colleges, called the Student-Centered Funding Formula (SCFF). Prior to the change, the California community colleges' funding system was based primarily on Proposition 13 and Proposition 98 (Melguizo et al., 2017; Taylor, 2018). Proposition 13 limited the ability to increase annual property taxes, moving the responsibility to fund community colleges from local government to the state; Proposition 98 established that a required percentage of the state's education funding go to community colleges (Melguizo et al., 2017). Under the old funding system, California community colleges received apportionment funding mainly allocated based on the number of full-time enrolled (FTE) students. Since its introduction, the outcome measures for the SCFF continue to evolve. Figure 1 outlines the initial formula allocation and the latest version as of spring 2020 (Galucki, 2018).

Figure 1

Student-Centered Funding Formula Allocations

	Initial SCFF allocation	2019–2020 allocation
Base grant Based on full-time enrollment head counts	60%	70%
Supplemental grant Based on number of Pell Grant, AB 540, and College Promise Grant (previously Board of Governor waiver) recipients and identified as student equity metrics	20%	20%
Student success initiative grant Based on number of: • Associate Degree for Transfer • Associate Degree • Baccalaureate Degree • Credit Certificate • Completion of Transfer-Level Math and English • Successful Transfer to a Four-Year University • Nine or More Career Technical Education (CTE) Units • Attainment of Regional Living Wage	20%	10%

Note. Chart developed from CCCCO SCFF Metrics Definition, 2019; Legislative Analyst’s Office *The 2018-19 Budget: Higher Education Analysis*, 2019; LACCD Educational Programs & Institutional Effectiveness, 2018; Galucki, 2018.

The SCFF measures are tied to various other state initiatives, including the Student Equity and Achievement Programs. Coordinator C shared,

The institutional ways that the college asks you, you have to have that data. You have to be able to say, these are the number of students who are coming across the USRC, these are the number of students who are transferring. This is the number of students passing those transfer-level classes.

The new formula ties equity to student success. Coordinator B recalled how they have adjusted their practices to help students meet some of the metrics: “I’m working on associate degrees and transfer awarding, more degrees awarding, more financial aid, having more because I know what

they're measuring.” The impact of SEAP and the SCFF is most visible in the USRC program review and funding request documents.

The colleges are “a part of a participatory governance structure in [the] community college system” (Dean B). The colleges’ decision-making structure comprises various campus committees, which typically include faculty, classified, administrative, and student representatives. The committees are integral spaces where advocates can support the USRC efforts. At Campus B, the Faculty Guild helped push for the creation of a tenure-track position for the USRC. Similarly, at Campus C, the counseling faculty advocated for the general establishment of the center. The advocacy in the committees helped establish and grow the centers, but once the centers were created, the deans and coordinators were expected to justify the centers’ existence using specified success metrics. The USRC became part of the participatory governance structure and had to present program review or unit planning documents to their corresponding committees. The documents outline how the USRC efforts meet or will meet the funding measures. The goals and objectives of the three Undocumented Student Resource Centers are summarized here:

1. Increase the number of students that apply to the California Dream Act Application (CADAA)
2. Help undocumented students navigate academic and career goals using a number of the student success initiative grant metrics of the SCFF
3. Develop education plan with students
4. Identify and share resources with students
5. Provide trainings to campus

The documents indicate that the purpose of the USRC was to support students, build institutional support for students, and help the college meet SCFF-specific goals. The SCFF metrics aim to increase degree attainment for students but focus on degree completion in 2 years, which

excludes sectors of the community college population such as students working full time and only attending school part time (Teranishi et al., 2019).

Although the SEA funds attempt to close the undocumented student equity gap, the state success metrics miss some of the undocumented student population. The SCFF focus on decreasing students' time to degree completion is moving too quick for some students.

Coordinator C shared the experience of some of those students:

It's also looking at students that, maybe they're not full time, maybe they're not enrolled in 15 units. Maybe they're only taking like one to two classes, but they're also working, they're also parents, they're also caretakers . . . maybe they're not going to transfer the next year or 2 years. But how do we still capture it so that we highlight those successes, because that to me counts just as much as maybe the student who finished all the requirements and transferred in 2 years.

For these reasons, coordinators need to continue their advocacy in their efforts to build colleges that adequately meet the needs of undocumented students. Coordinator C explained that their role is "to also make sure that [student success] is not just defined through the numbers, but that's also defined through the stories themselves." Another challenge identified by Coordinator B "is the Latinidad aspect of it. That's the challenge." The focus on immigration as a Latinx issue has become a barrier for the center's efforts with non-Latino students. Coordinator B said, "My Armenian population, Middle Eastern population, my Nigerian population, they're being left in the dark completely, because the Latinidad of 'dreamer' is pulling way too hard." The USRC funding connection to Latinx students encourages the association of the population with immigration, while it ignores that the larger Latinx population does not have specified services on campus. Dean A spoke on how identifying the USRC as a support program for Latino students is a disservice to the college's general Latinx student population:

We don't have any specific service for our Latino students. Our Latinx students are supposedly being served by our USRC. But I was like, that's not the place for them. We actually have a lot more dreamers at [the college] that are of Korean descent, that of Armenian descent, than Latinx. So that's not the answer.

Using SEAP metrics and the campus focus on viewing immigration as a Latino issue alienates many students. Additionally, it ignores the growing research on the diversity of undocumented students and the diversity of their needs (Bjorklund, 2018; Teranishi et al., 2019).

The Student Equity and Achievement funding is helpful in the establishment of the USRC, but it does not make it sustainable. Coordinator B clarified, “This isn’t institutional funding, it’s still specialized program funding. So, the institution once I’m tenure track, they would have to allocate some funding for it.” The trepidation in relying solely on SEAP comes from the recent “initiatives fatigue” experienced due to the number of changes in the recent state initiatives. Dean C shared their experience with past grant-based initiatives, exemplifying their frustration:

We get all these beautiful grants and wonderful grants and then money goes away. And, I can give you tons of examples, we don’t continue the investment. We invest in the moment, but not into the future. And that’s been to me shortsighted.

As previously shared by the chancellor, the community colleges are underfunded, “but that doesn’t tarnish our interest in our ability.” The colleges have grown in their efforts to support undocumented students, but they are not enough. The campus and district leaders acknowledge that “there’s still more to do,” and they describe the continued need for advocacy of resources and support.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the study participants as institutional agents who navigated the building of the USRC and support for undocumented students. The results indicated that institutional agents built the USRCs by making sense of the external and internal policies, structures, and resources that affect undocumented students and govern the community colleges. Institutional agents have been and continue to be advocates of undocumented students’ needs and equitable treatment. The Board of Trustee resolution requesting every campus to

establish a USRC met the bottom-up pressure from students and campus advocates. The context of national and state policies, district request, history of advocacy, and resources at the college were all factors in the creation of the USRCs. The USRC institutional agents make meaning of these factors by building partnerships and increasing the campus capacity to better serve undocumented students. The USRC institutional agents navigated the limited resources available by focusing on collaborating with key offices, creating space to make meaning such as trainings, and building the campus capacity by creating a more “undocufriendly” campus. Although the political pressure from students and campus advocates has long existed, the support from campus leadership ignited the creation of the USRCs across the district. The campus institutional agents navigated the implementation request as they made sense of the needs of the students, the available resources, and the many institutional barriers affecting undocumented students. This study provided the context in which institutional agents built the USRCs in the Los Angeles Community College District. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings in the context of the literature and implications for practice.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The focus of this study was to explore the sensemaking process of institutional agents at the Los Angeles Community College District when building and working toward the sustainability of the Undocumented Student Resource Centers, given the limited resources available to California community colleges and the limitations of immigration policies. Ultimately, this case study maps out how institutional agents of the district navigated the campus and district political terrains by building “undocufriendly” campuses and the political power to allocate resources supporting undocumented students. First, I reviewed the need to develop USRCs in community colleges in the previous chapters, especially as they are home to the largest number of undocumented students in higher education. I continued by reviewing literature and research pertinent to the study, on subjects such as student needs and the evolving support for undocumented students on college campuses. Then, I outlined the methodology of the research and how I selected and accessed the participants. Last, I will discuss the findings from the 11 interviews conducted with USRC coordinators, campus supervisors, and district leadership. The results outline how institutional agents help make the USRC a campus priority through advocacy and driving organizational change.

The study’s findings add to the growing research on institutional agents’ role in developing support for undocumented students, building “undocufriendly” campuses, and organizational change through the implementation of diversity initiatives. First, the findings support previous research on the role of institutional agents as being integral in building and instituting support for undocumented students on college campuses as policy interpreters and implementors (Muñoz, 2016; Nienhusser, 2014). Second, it substantiates the discussion on federal and immigration policies as institutional barriers for undocumented students (Bjorklund,

2018; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015) and under-resourced community colleges (Dougherty & Townsend, 2006; Teranishi et al., 2019). Third, the research demonstrates that instituting diversity initiatives such as building support for undocumented students pushes for organizational change by shifting the campus culture to include the equitable treatment of students and implementing practices that address their needs. Further, the study adds to the research on the role of advocacy, coalition building in organizational change, and creating a safe space for sensemaking in the implementation efforts of the USRC.

In this chapter, I begin by reviewing the findings identified in Chapter 4. Then, I examine the themes within the context of the findings and previous research. Additionally, I provide recommendations for practice for institutional agents and policymakers engaged in developing support for undocumented students. Finally, I conclude by summarizing the study, its significant findings, and implications.

Context Matters: Developing Support for Undocumented Students Is Political

Historically, immigration policies are shaped around who is included in society—or, in the case of higher education, who is excluded (Akdenizli et al., 2016; Monico, 2020; Muñoz, 2018; Venegas et al., 2017). As a result, developing support for undocumented students required organizational change efforts that challenged the national discourse on immigration and centered efforts on the rights of undocumented students' access to equitable services and resources. The growing research on the institutional support for undocumented students has focused on contextualizing efforts around compliance with federal and state immigration policies—leaving out the history of activism attached to them (Muñoz, 2016; Nienhusser, 2014, 2018). Immigrant rights activists elevated the humane treatment of immigrants to the forefront of national discourse, countering the increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric and challenging the societal

constructs of what it means to be undocumented (Monico, 2020; Valdivia, 2020). Specifically, the immigrant youth movement advocacy focused on education as a right for all. The centering of students' rights is demonstrated in the USRC institutional agents identifying a primary goal of the center being to "help them feel a little bit more like every other student" (Coordinator A). Although the goal is not in the USRC documents, the study participants acknowledged the additional barrier undocumented students must navigate because of their status (Bjorklund, 2018) and attempted to address them by establishing the USRC.

The first finding that emerged from the study was the integral part of advocacy in instituting the USRC and developing support for undocumented students. The fight for undocumented students' equal access to education has been long and hard. Public discourse has framed immigration as crisis related, and the 2016 presidential campaign intensified anti-immigrant rhetoric (Akdenizli et al., 2016; Muñoz, 2018; Santellano, 2019). The decrease in the number of enrolled undocumented students in the district following the Trump inauguration prompted the leadership to push for the development of the USRC, but the response at the campuses was possible because of the history of institutional agents advocating for undocumented students. In other words, the moving parts were already present at the three campuses, allowing the campuses to increase their efforts once the district requested to establish the centers. As demonstrated by the data, national policies continue to change and affect undocumented students' access to resources. Still, activists continue to push institutions to develop equitable processes in the treatment of immigrants.

USRC Institutional Agents Drive Organizational Change

The exclusionary foundation of immigration policies embeds discriminatory practices at the colleges. Dean C described their experience with this in the early advocacy and the "negative

connotation” toward undocumented students they heard from the student government: “They just had such a negative response,” demonstrating the hostility in some areas of the campuses toward the extension of support and resources to undocumented students. As a result, one major finding identified from the data was that the creation and sustainability of Undocumented Student Resource Centers involved the college in organizational change practices that centered undocumented students’ right to equitable treatment. The finding supports Kezar’s (2008) research on implementing diversity initiatives in higher education and the gambit of politics that campus leaders and staff face when moving a diversity agenda. The ambiguity of immigration and state policies further complicates the colleges’ implementation of support services for undocumented students, resulting in institutional agents making sense of the policies in relation to the various social structures and individuals that create an organization (Kezar, 2013).

Trainings

One finding supporting organization change efforts included the role of USRC institutional agents in elevating the experiences and needs of undocumented students to challenge preconceived notions of the staff. Dean A explained their focus on educating the campus staff:

The folks that we work with come from every background on every age, and may or may not have had a positive experience or been exposed to a positive experience about undocumented individuals. So, it’s about educating them to understand that the student that you’re seeing is a 45-year-old that moved here, because of the policies that the U.S. enacted in Paraguay that are now affecting us today. Or an 18-year-old who’s brought here when they were 3, and by educating them, then you shift the conversation. So, it’s no more personal. Okay, I see you as an individual, how do I help you in financial aid and admissions and records, wherever else maybe.

The conversations in support of undocumented students occurred in the various spaces of the college but in particular through trainings. The coordinator-led campus trainings helped bridge the gap between policy and implementation. The trainings facilitated by the coordinator are a

professional development tool that challenged the national messaging of immigrants, centering education as a right for all. The coordinators reviewed state and national policies but, most importantly, also shared student experiences by inviting students to participate in panels, reviewing scenarios that addressed institutional barriers, or highlighting data on undocumented students' equity gaps. The trainings helped the colleges critically analyze the immigrant experience to better serve and retain their undocumented student population (Valdivia, 2020). They served to counter the national political messaging that dehumanized immigrant communities by sharing information that developed a better understanding of the experiences of undocumented students and built more empathy. They also helped the colleges process and make sense of their role as public and social institutions during a highly xenophobic presidential administration (Santellano, 2019). The USRC institutional agents helped the campus make sense of its role as an open-access public institution and its mission to serve all students by discussing institutional barriers.

Collaboration

Another finding on how institutional agents navigated the creation and sustainability of the USRC was the collaboration between the USRC and other campus entities. Political theory has positioned the function of organizations to be a negotiation between various interest groups over power and resources (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Kezar, 2008). As public entities, community colleges have a finite set of resources and staff, and a series of federal and state laws regulate them. Additionally, the community colleges are part of participatory governance with strong hierarchical practices and different power factions. Collaboration occurred among the campus leadership when they shared staff and resources to support the USRC. Like the deans, the coordinators also balanced meeting the USRC and student needs by collaborating. The

coordinators worked with integral offices such as admissions, financial aid, or the campus foundations. One example occurred at Campus C:

By partnering with the foundation, they've been able to partner with other outside partners. And so, this year, we were able to get \$4,500 towards our scholarship. So, we're giving out 9–10 different scholarships this year, as a result of that relationship with our foundation. (Coordinator C)

Through collaboration, the USRC institutional agents worked with various offices across the campus and focused on building power through building campus capacity. In addition, the trainings were a crucial tool in increasing the skills of professional staff and advancing and elevating discussions of the immigrant experience.

One surprising finding in this study was the coalition developed between the USRC coordinators across the district. Kezar (2008) argued that instituting a diversity initiative involves the politics attached to the initiative and the college structure, while sensemaking is necessary for implementation (Nienhusser, 2018). Sensemaking spaces are essential, but the political presence in the space alters the feeling of safety. The coordinator coalition was also identified as a significant space for organizing, strategizing, and collaborating in building power, efforts that require more investment from the coordinators. It was a safe space for the coordinators to process, plan, and make sense of all political contexts affecting their efforts. Like the district-led taskforce, the coalition meetings were critical political spaces that convened key institutional and community members. But the taskforce being led by the chancellor and trustee made it a very visible and political space, and at times it was perceived to be a space to “pat ourselves on the back” (Coordinator B). Coordinator B shared their frustration:

I'm gonna be the one that keeps saying this, the show that is run, I am annoyed at the show that it runs. It's like, you're asking me to fluff up and tell you that you're doing a good job.

The politicization of the space made it difficult for the campus advocates to process the many moving pieces required to create and institutionalize the center. The taskforce helped USRC agents connect and contribute to the district's political agenda. Still, the anxieties of organizational hierarchy and the push to implement support with limited resources and showcase the victories made the taskforce a very political space to navigate. As the primary implementors of services and support for undocumented students, the coordinators created the coalition space outside the taskforce to have honest discussions about implementation challenges, build their power as coordinators, strategize efforts to address institutional barriers, and advocate for needed resources. The two districtwide spaces are integral spaces that combine political power and advocacy for change: the taskforce from the top down and the coalition from the bottom up.

Institutional Agents

The study findings demonstrated the various efforts carried out by institutional agents to develop the center, supporting previous research on institutional agents as central in instituting support for undocumented students because they implement policies and shape institutional practices (Nienhusser, 2018). The institutional agents' interpretation and implementation processes derive from their personal beliefs and professional skills; as a result, they can serve as an institutional barrier or advocate in their work with students (Nienhusser, 2018). In this study, the USRC institutional agents were defined as the district leadership, campus leadership, and faculty directly developing the USRC. Although the participants had access to different areas of the district and college, they all identified several themes pertinent to developing institutional support for undocumented students. In order to create a better understanding of how the participants understood their role concerning the USRC, I asked, "How do you view your role as a USRC institutional agent?" Several themes arose. They identified their role to include making

supporting undocumented students a priority, identifying resources, identifying barriers and addressing them, and building a campus where undocumented students feel safe.

Table 2

USRC Institutional Agents

Role	Position/title	Role as USRC institutional agent
District leadership	Chancellor	Advocate
	Board of Trustee member, Immigration Taskforce chair	Identify USRC as an institutional priority
Campus leadership	Vice presidents of student services	Identify and address institutional barriers
	Dean or assistant dean over the USRC	Identify resources
Faculty	Counseling coordinator	Galvanize and build support

District Leadership Role

The visible support from the district leadership was a significant catalyst in creating the USRC because they verbalized the responsibility of the college to develop support for undocumented students and identified the Undocumented Student Resource Center as a district priority. Weber and Glynn (2006) described the organizational sensemaking process as being shaped by interpretation and communication. In the case of the LACCD, communication was an essential tool in their efforts. Although the resources allocated were minimal, the district's primary role was communicating to the campus and neighboring communities that undocumented students were expected to receive support at the colleges. They communicated the message via the passage of the Board of Trustee resolution, a media campaign, and the creation

of the Immigration Taskforce. Additionally, the chancellor had various conversations with the college presidents signaling the USRC as a district priority. The efforts by the district leadership empowered the advocates to pressure their campus leadership and community to prioritize the USRC.

Campus Leadership Role

One of the major factors that determine the differences in features and speed of development of the centers was the support of campus leadership. As USRC administrators, the chancellor, vice presidents, and deans helped other campus leadership figures develop a sense of urgency and the need to establish the USRC. At the three campuses, the support of the deans as the midlevel administrators was integral. They supported the coordinators' efforts and helped convince the vice president, president, or college that the USRC should be a campus priority. Campus A was the most visible example of the value of having a dean who advocates for and identifies the USRC as a priority. Previously, the center did not have a direct dean to report to or ask for support, leaving the coordinator with minimal access to resources. Once Dean A arrived, they identified the gap in services and support by meeting with the USRC staff and reviewing past reports. For example, they realized that the center was increasing the number of students it served but was not collecting the relevant data needed for funds and allocation of resources. As a result, the center shifted its data collection efforts, allowing the dean to use it as they negotiated with other deans for additional USRC staff. Similarly, the senior campus administrator helped the USRC become a priority by communicating their support and including the USRC as part of their campus agenda. Most importantly, the vice presidents helped convince other senior administrators to support or, at minimum, not block the center's efforts by describing how the USRC aligns with the campus vision and agenda.

USRC Key Features

The coordinators were a significant resource for the students and in engaging the campus in institutional efforts. Although all sectors of the community colleges are underfunded, the implementation efforts are pushed down the organizational chain, and the labor of providing direct service to a large number of students falls onto the coordinators. The coordinators assist students in learning how to tactfully navigate their educational journey while also navigating a web of policies, resources, and student needs (Cisneros & Cadenas, 2017; Nienhusser, 2018). As shared by Coordinator C, a large part of the counseling coordinator position was navigating the bureaucracy of the college to help students navigate and connect them to resources:

Earlier this year, when students were selected for financial aid verification, they were sent to a website and then when students clicked on the website, it would ask them for a social security number. Students didn't know that they can use their DREAM Act ID because it serves as a pseudo social security number. So, we had to work with our financial aid office to get that language clarified. So again, those are kind of system changes that happen in the background. And that's a small example. But that's an example that affects hundreds of students, when they get selected for financial aid verification.

The institutional responsibility to develop and implement the USRC was passed down the organizational ladder to the campus leadership and eventually to the coordinators. The lack of resources attached to the request frustrated the coordinators, further aggravating the coordinators' labor loads and leaving the coordinators with political support but limited tools to implement the services. Building the political power and capacity of the college to create cultural change is labor intensive, and the institutional efforts fell heavily on the coordinators, making them one of the greatest resources for organizational change. This study supports previous research on higher education institutional agents' increasing responsibilities (Nienhusser, 2018). The labor carried out by the coordinators went beyond their professional responsibility and exponentially increased their workload. Additionally, a major feature of the USRC was its

physical location because office and meeting spaces are limited resources on the campuses. The location of the centers are continuously negotiated by campus leadership, but the recent move to virtual learning during COVID identified the counseling coordinator as the key feature of the USRC.

Building Safe Campuses

As shared by Dean A, the greatest effort in establishing and sustaining the USRC was moving the campuses toward being “undocufriendly.” The USRC is a vital resource for students and colleges. The five tenets of building “undocufriendly” campuses help the colleges acknowledge and address the impact of the exclusionary policy in their institutional practices. The themes center on the students’ experience, empathy, and safety and training staff to move the colleges toward the equitable treatment of undocumented students (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). But addressing issues of access and retention requires the engagement of the rest of the campus community. Undocumented students have to navigate self-disclosure in various college spaces as they process the hostile national political context (Santellano, 2019). The harsh immigration policies make the campuses a hostile environment for students. Additionally, the increasing focus on outcomes and tracking increases the number of times students have to share private information.

As a result, the USRC institutional agents prioritized building support for undocumented students in all areas of the campuses, especially in integral offices such as admissions and financial aid. The efforts toward building “undocufriendly” campuses were most notable in the training and education efforts at the campuses. Political theory has indicated that individuals in organizations negotiate and bargain for resources and power (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In social movements, like the immigrant rights movements, people’s power becomes the principal

resource when financial resources are limited (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Focusing on building “undocufriendly” campuses helped increase the number of allies and institutional agents across the campus to support undocumented and immigrant students. The increase of individuals advocating for undocumented students was particularly important when advocating for the allocation of resources.

Resources Matter for Meeting Equity Goals

The increasing focus on outcomes by the state legislature has added to the stretching of resources at the campuses. Yet, community colleges continue to be “at the lower levels of per-student funding” (Melguizo et al., 2017, p. 195). As open-access spaces, community colleges face many challenges, including enrolling less-prepared students and being under-resourced (Dougherty et al., 2014; Teranishi et al., 2019). The increase in cost and continued value of attending a college has led to greater scrutiny and a call for accountability and efficiency by policymakers (Alshehri, 2016; McLendon et al., 2009). Community colleges are also being asked to do it all and often have limited resources for student engagement (Dougherty et al., 2014; Melguizo et al., 2017; Teranishi et al., 2019). Past studies on the outcomes of performance-based funding have identified some of the most significant obstacles for successful implementation, including inadequate institutional capacity, insufficient financial support by the state for program innovation, and resistance by the colleges (Dougherty et al., 2014). Melguizo et al. (2017), in research on equity funding in California community colleges, found that outcomes-based funding can exacerbate equity issues, but funding equity-focused activities can help institutions be more productive and efficient. Specifically, the funding can subsidize student support efforts to improve the college’s performance on state metrics (Dougherty et al., 2014).

The goals of the USRC are similar to those of other diversity initiatives, which include developing an understanding of the experiences of undocumented students, highlighting the barriers affecting students' attainment gaps, and instituting efforts to create greater equity in the experiences and outcomes of undocumented students (Kezar, 2008). Initiatives such as the Student Equity and Achievement Program (SEAP), the primary funding source of the USRCs, attempt to help allocate funds to address student equity gaps directly. Coordinator C explained the expectation of the USRC concerning outcome metrics:

The mission of those equity programs is to close equity gaps, is it happening, and how we're doing it, and whether it's been effective. So, the data that I mentioned earlier on transfer-level math and English rates is something that came out of those committees, so essentially, you're answering the question is your work as an equity program being effective?

Although SEAP funds are separate from the college's base funding, meeting Student Center Funding Formula outcomes allows the colleges to increase revenue, resulting in equity programs also using outcome measures as their goals. Coordinator B described their efforts in meeting efficiency: "I'm making [the vice president] ecstatic because degrees give us money, associate degrees and transfers give us more resources that are needed." Aligning to SCFF outcomes is one of the ways the USRC institutional agents convinced the colleges to allocate resources. But relying on SEAP is not enough, especially when it runs the risk of adding to the capacity load and not providing adequate services and support to students.

The expectations in implementing the USRC on campus are high, especially because, as Coordinator C explained, "There are responsibilities that lie on the outside of that, and significant responsibilities that you kind of have to manage, a balance along with the roles and responsibilities of the USRC." The USRC institutional agents are part of the greater college community and are expected to participate in other initiatives prioritized by the college, but doing more is not sustainable for the coordinator and the USRC. One of the study interview

questions asked the participants to describe the ideal USRC if resources were not an issue. The participants' responses centered on furthering resources to build a safe campus that is responsive to the needs of undocumented students and the greater immigrant community. Coordinator C said,

It would be having a dedicated counselor. And then on top of that, it would be having a designated coordinator as well. And those roles ideally would be separate. You know, because the work is so different between the counselor and the coordinator. And, as I mentioned earlier, that takes up a significant amount of time. So, if resources weren't an issue, it would be a full-time counselor and full-time coordinator.

Similarly, Coordinator A's ideal USRC included additional support and room for self-care:

"Having a full-time coordinator, having a full-time counselor, maybe even an adjunct as well, in case that person gets ill, especially now during COVID." Coordinator B looked at other campuses for an ideal model: "I think the ideal program to look at would be [other Southern California Community College]. Because they have a coordinator, counselor, and a director, three positions." Ultimately, all the coordinators expressed the need for more staff support in the center to help balance the roles and responsibilities they are expected to fulfill. The USRC needs more staff to meet its commitment of providing direct support to undocumented students, help build a more supportive campus, and institutionalize the efforts. The flexibility of the SEAP helped create the centers, but the current model is not sustainable for the USRC or the college.

Recommendations

This case study mapped out how institutional agents of the district navigated the campus and district political terrains in building the USRC. Over the past few years, the California legislature allocated funds to community colleges to develop support for undocumented students. The equity funds have provided a way for colleges to create a USRC and allocate resources, although more is needed to sustain the efforts. Institutional agents in California community colleges can look to the efforts of the Los Angeles Community College District to navigate their

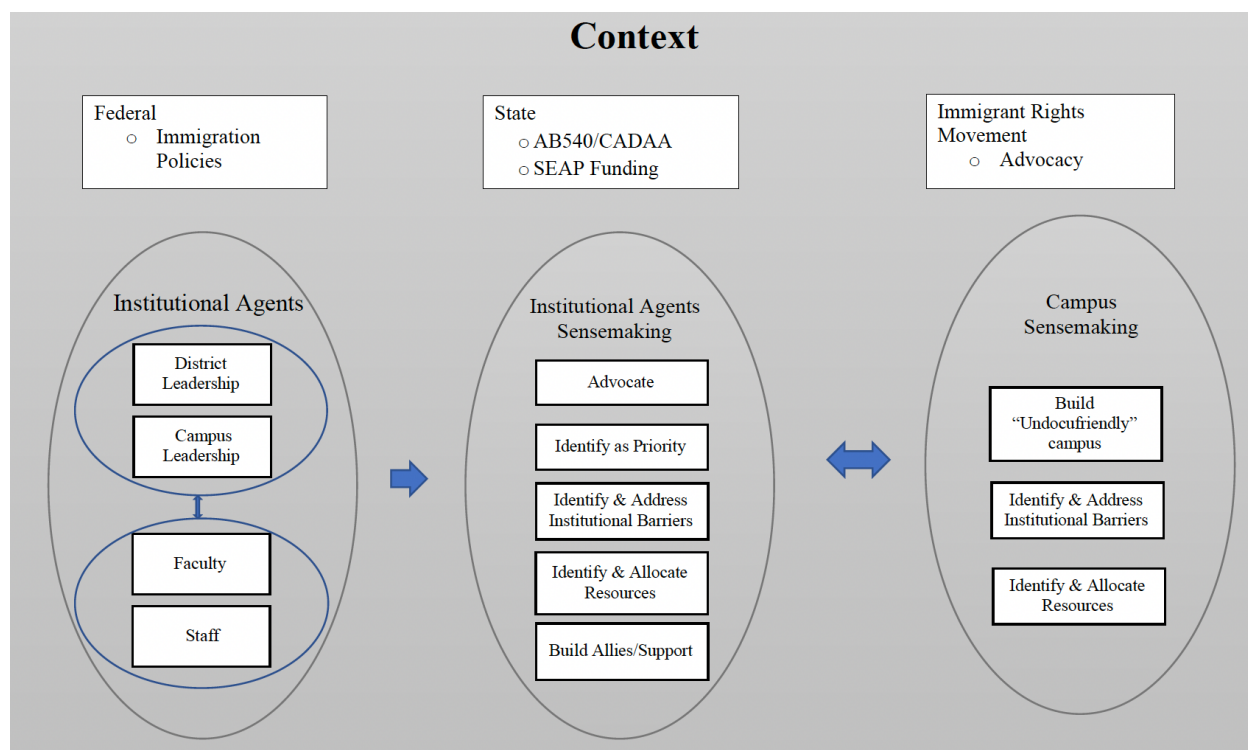
campus implementation efforts. First, it is essential to acknowledge that building and instituting support for undocumented students is political, and community colleges are political organizations. A trained college staff is instrumental for the organizational efforts because institutional agents can serve as institutional barriers or advocates. Support for undocumented students should be based on empathy and understanding of the hostile immigrant policies. Trainings help the colleges address institutional barriers. Based on the study, I outlined recommendations that community colleges, districts, and institutional agents should consider in their implementation efforts of Undocumented Student Resource Centers. Figure 2 summarizes how USRC institutional agents were involved in organizational change practices by navigating the political structure of the district and engaging the campus in making sense of support efforts for undocumented students.

Institutional Agents

The systemwide efforts of the LACCD were a result of the history of institutional agents and students advocating for undocumented student needs. Community college institutional agents looking to establish support for undocumented students can begin by identifying and gathering colleagues who want to support undocumented students. Campuses B and C started their efforts long before the district requested to establish the USRC. Employees from various offices across each campus gathered and established a scholarship for undocumented students. At Campus B, fundraising included deductions from employees' paychecks and hosting an annual dinner at Campus C. The campuses' efforts demonstrate that any employee of a college campus can begin efforts to support undocumented students, and they do not have to rely on or wait for support from leadership.

Figure 2

Building and Sustaining Institutional Support for Undocumented Community College Students



Institutional Agents' Sensemaking

Colleges that already have a group of advocates working together can be more intentional in their efforts and focus on building campus capacity. When resources are limited, social justice organizations build people's power (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The study findings demonstrated that the greatest resource in the district-wide efforts was the institutional agents and the building of allies. The increase of allies meant that more advocates were engaged in the conversations regarding the distribution of resources. To increase the number of allies supporting undocumented students, institutional agents can focus on developing sensemaking spaces such as training and coalitions to strategize on efforts and build campus capacity. For example, Campus C relied on training to expand undocumented students' support, address institutional barriers, and

update the campus on policy changes. Coordinator C explained, “The trainings, that’s looking at campus policies. For example, the AB 540 affidavits. That’s a big challenge for us right now and that not all campuses accept it as self-certifying.” State policies continue to change, and as discussed, the implementation of changes is often delayed. The initial iteration of AB 540 expanded in-state tuition to undocumented students but required a certified student affidavit. The campus used the trainings to help the campus make sense of the changes and adjust their practices by removing barriers to better serve students, such as updating their practice to accept self-certifying affidavits.

Campuses that cannot facilitate trainings can rely on collaborations across college offices. Institutional agents can work with other campus offices to connect students to their resources, such as the first-year experience office, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), and college foundations. The collaborations can help bridge resources, connect advocates, and strategize to push the agenda for institutional change forward. The coordinator at Campus A did not have a dean to support their efforts for the first few years of the USRC. As a result, they relied on their relationships with key offices to identify resources and help build the center. The coordinator developed a relationship with one of the financial aid officers to address some of the student needs. Through their relationship, the coordinator directed students to an identified ally in financial aid, decreasing the unnecessary exposure of students’ statuses. Once the dean was hired to support the USRC, they expanded the relationship and institutionalized the collaboration between the USRC and the financial aid office. They formalized their role as a financial aid liaison, and the financial aid officer hosted office hours in the center.

Campus Sensemaking

Allocating resources to the USRC requires the engagement of many sectors of the college. The majority of discussions on resources and funds are carried out in the participatory governance of the community colleges. As a result, to allocate resources to the USRC, institutional agents need to advocate in the various decision-making spaces of the college. For example, faculty and staff can advocate for the USRC needs in the greater campus structures such as hiring committees and hiring prioritization lists and in discussions on the allocation of resources. At Campus B, the various departments have to submit a hiring request when they need new faculty. The proposal is then reviewed by the committee and ranked. Once the allocation of funds for full-time faculty is defined, the campus leadership follows the hiring prioritization list. The allies in the prioritization committee included the faculty union leadership, and they helped push the hiring of a full-time coordinator to the top of the list.

The support of district and campus leadership is critical because it can expedite or delay the development of support for undocumented students. Therefore, leaders can use their role to encourage engagement from others and negotiate for resources. The support from leadership helps elevate the needs of undocumented students to the top of the institutional priorities. At the LACCD, the district request mobilized the campuses to develop institutional support for undocumented students, highlighting the district leadership's important role. Other district leadership figures can follow the examples of the LACCD by communicating their support of undocumented students via board resolutions and identifying it as an institutional priority.

Recommendations for Policymakers

The California community colleges have gone through several changes in the past few years. California has joined many other states across the country and attached the funding of

community colleges to outcome measures. A significant finding in the study was using Student Equity and Achievement Program funds to develop the USRC. Although SEAP funds attempt to bridge equity gaps, the coordinators shared they already see sectors of student populations being negatively affected, such as students who cannot attend school full time. The state legislature needs to evaluate if the changes meet the needs or are increasing institutional barriers. The focus on outcomes helps identify equity gaps, but attaching funding to these outcomes ignores structural inequalities. Community colleges do a lot, including workforce development, and are a crucial resource for local communities. They also enroll students who are greatest hit by the state's rise in poverty and housing costs and lack of quality work, health care, and child care. Performance-based funding does not address the root of the issue, which is the need for additional funds in community colleges. Instead, the responsibility has shifted onto an overburdened system furthering educational inequality. State legislatures can advocate for expanding resources for undocumented students with policies that include free college for everyone, removing the many paper barriers from long applications, and increasing financial aid. The legislature can increase federal funding support for colleges and advocate for immigration reform at the national level.

Adequately Fund Community Colleges to Meet Student and Workforce Needs

The community colleges are being asked to do a lot. They serve the largest higher education sector, are open to everyone, and are pillars in the local community. They are also home to many students of color, first-generation students, and working-class students. As previously mentioned, they are open-access schools and have students with a wide range of skills, goals, and ages. The community colleges can do a lot, but they need help. The organizational feat of providing services with limited staff is impressive, but it is not sustainable.

Performance-based funding does not alleviate the burden; rather, it adds to the workload at the community colleges. The state legislature should reevaluate the impact of SEAP and the other legislation attached to the new Student Center Funding Formula.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Ultimately, exclusionary immigration policies have closed resources to undocumented students. They continue to harm students, families, and communities. Comprehensive immigration reform enhances undocumented individuals' and society's livelihood by centering on the humane treatment of immigrants.

Future Research

California community colleges are home to the largest number of undocumented students in the nation. Unfortunately, the growing research on undocumented students continues to focus on 4-year institutions, ignoring the majority of undocumented students in the state's higher education system. Recently, the state legislature allocated funds in the state budget to support the efforts of the USRCs across the state. A recommendation for future research is to study the institutional development of support for undocumented students in the state's rural areas. The City of Los Angeles is diverse, home to a large number of immigrants and access to local immigrant rights organizations. Therefore, the research could look at the efforts of institutional agents in more conservative regions. A future study could build on my research and identify similarities or differences in institutional efforts.

Another research recommendation is a study on the sustainability of the Undocumented Student Resource Centers using Student Equity and Achievement Program funds. The study could compare the desired versus the actual outcomes of SEAP-funded programs. The coordinators showed concern about students who do not meet identified success markers such as

full-time enrollment. The USRCs have yet to prove their success in outcomes such as increasing degree attainment of undocumented students. But they have demonstrated that they have expanded the conversations about equitable access to support for undocumented students. The pressure to meet success markers might steer institutional agents to neglect students who are not meeting the success measures. The research on SEAP could look at how institutional agents navigate meeting outcomes for funding and the needs of the students. The study would expand on my research regarding the sustainability of the USRC.

Conclusion

Community colleges are addressing the needs of undocumented students by instituting a centralized location in the USRC. This qualitative study sought to understand how institutional agents in the Los Angeles Community College District navigated the implementation and sustainability efforts of the USRC. The interviews captured USRC institutional agents' perspectives, including district and campus leadership and counseling faculty who coordinate the centers. I identified the three campuses to participate in the study because a tenure-track, full-time counseling faculty managed their USRC. Through interviews, the participants shared about the creation of the USRC, how they navigated the political spaces of the college, and their role as USRC institutional agents.

This study supported past research on implementing diversity initiatives leading to organizational change. Additionally, it adds to the understanding that those providing the direct services need to have the ability and space to make sense of the process to make deep institutional changes (Kezar, 2013). The study also showed that developing institutional change is labor intensive, and more resources are needed for its sustainability.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (CAMPUS)

Name of Interviewee:

Campus:

Date:

Time:

Place/Location:

Hello.

Thank you so much for taking the time to interview with me today. The data that is gathered will help me better understand how the Undocumented Student Resource Center functions on your campus and how it is addressing the needs of undocumented students.

The interview should take about 60 minutes. I will be recording and taking notes but your name will not be used. The interview is for my doctoral program dissertation on Undocumented Student Resource Centers. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or do not want to be recorded, please let me know and I will turn off the recorder.

Do you have any questions before we get started? Let's begin!

Warm-up: *I will begin with questions about you and your role on campus.*

1. What is your current position in relation to the USRC?
 - a. Please explain your history with the USRC and supporting undocumented students.
2. In your perspective, what is the goal of the USRC on your campus/in the district?
3. What do you think is the role of your position in helping the USRC meet this goal?

Services & Operation [For campus coordinators only]: *The questions in this section will help me develop a better understanding of how the USRC functions and some of its key features. We are going to start by talking about the center before COVID.*

4. Please describe the physical space of the USRC on campus.
 - a. Tell me how was the center's location decided.
5. What did a typical day look like for the center?
6. Since COVID, what does a typical day look like for the center?
 - a. What are the key services offered during COVID?
7. Sounds like you have a lot going on (contextualize question), how do you prioritize the services the center offers?

Services & Operation [For campus administrators only]: *The questions in this section will help me develop a better understanding of how the USRC functions and some of its key features. We are going to start by talking about the center before COVID.*

1. Tell me the story of how the center was established.
2. Please describe the physical space of the USRC on campus.
 - a. Tell me how was the center's location decided.
3. Since COVID, how have the center services changed?
 - a. As an administrator, how has your role changed?
4. Sounds like you have a lot going on, how do you prioritize what you have to do between all your campus responsibilities?

Organizational Structure: *This section will help me learn about strategies colleges have taken in the creation and sustaining of the USRC.*

1. Tell me the story of how the center was established.
2. What do you think are important actions taken by your campus and/or district that aided in the establishment of the USRC?
3. What were some of the challenges faced in the establishment of the USRC? Please provide examples.
 - a. How did the Center (you) work through those challenges?
4. What are some of the challenges you *currently* experience in the sustainability of the center?
5. Tell me about some of the partnerships that aides the creation of the center.
 - a. Partnership that support the current work
 - b. How do you work together?
 - c. For additional probe:
 1. Describe the campus specific partnerships (including students).
 2. Describe the district specific partnerships.
 3. Describe the community/government partnerships.
6. How does the center measure success, if at all?
 - a. What conversation have you had on what is a successful USRC?
7. Does the USRC have an established budget? If so, how is it established?
 - a. What are other resources allocated to the center?
8. Three campus committees that are often related to the USRC are equity, budget, and student services, what is your connection to these committees?
 - a. How did it come about? Who initiated that involvement? (history)
 - b. How has being involved in that committee affected the USRC?
9. Are there any other committees that you are connected to?

Closing:

10. If resources and money were no issues, what would an ideal USRC look like?

11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

I truly appreciate you taking the time for this interview. Thank you.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (DISTRICT)

Name of Interviewee:

Campus:

Date:

Time:

Place/Location:

Hello.

Thank you so much for taking the time to interview with me today. The data that is gathered will help me better understand how the Undocumented Student Resource Center functions on your campus and how it is addressing the needs of undocumented students.

The interview should take about 60 minutes. I will be recording and taking notes but your name will not be used. The interview is for my doctoral program dissertation on Undocumented Student Resource Centers. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or do not want to be recorded, please let me know and I will turn off the recorder.

Do you have any questions before we get started? Let's begin!

Warm-up: *I will begin with questions about you and your role on campus.*

1. Can you tell me about your current position in relation to the USRC?
 - a. Please explain your history with the USRC and supporting undocumented students.

Organizational Structure: *This section will help me learn about strategies colleges have taken in the creation and sustaining of the USRC.*

2. Tell me the story of how the taskforce was established.
 - a. Can you share some of the steps you took to create it?
3. In your perspective, what is the goal of the USRCs in the district?
4. What do you think are important actions taken by the district that aided in the establishment of the USRC?
 - a. Can you tell me about the district mandate? How was it developed? Why did the leadership think it was important?
 - b. Steps taken by the colleges?
5. What are some of the challenges faced in the establishing of support for undocumented students and the USRCs in the district?
 - a. How do you (district) work through those challenges?

- b. Are there additional challenges faced in the sustainability of the centers?
- 6. How does the district measure success of the centers, if at all?
 - a. What conversation have you had on what is a successful USRC?
- 7. Tell me about some of the partnerships that aides the creation of the center.
 - a. Partnership that support the current work
 - b. How do you work together?
 - c. For additional probe:
 - 1. Describe the campus specific partnerships (including students).
 - 2. Describe the district specific partnerships.
 - 3. Describe the community/government partnerships.
- 8. Since COVID, how has the services and role of the district changed?
 - a. Can you speak about the district lawsuit regarding HERF? Why did it decided to push through with the lawsuit?
- 9. Sounds like you have a lot going on, how do you prioritize what you have to do between all your campus responsibilities?
- 10. What do you think is the role of your position in helping the USRC meet this goal?
 - a. How do you help institutionalize the programs?

Closing:

- 11. If resources and money were no issues, what would an ideal USRC look like?
- 12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

I truly appreciate you taking the time for this interview. Thank you.

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