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# UC for all: Unlocking opportunities for undocumented students

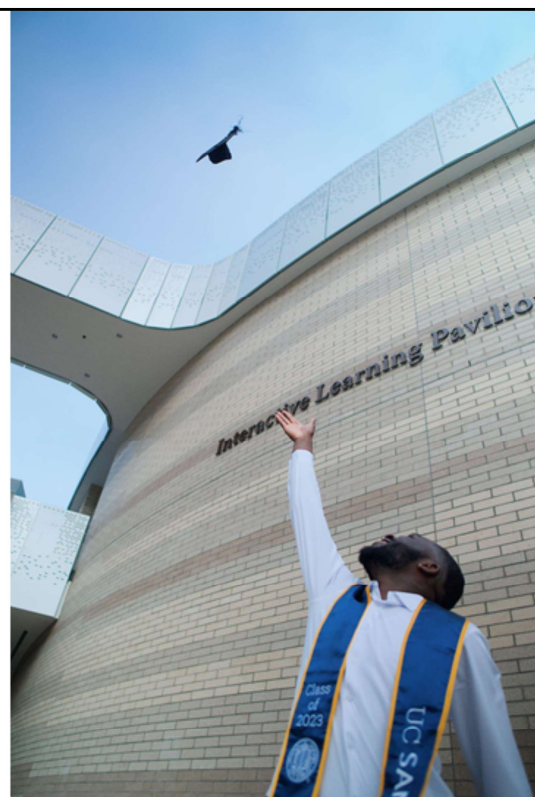
September 2025

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
**COUNSELOR**  
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## Agenda

- Terms & definitions
- Policy
- Financial aid & scholarships
- Support programs & services
- Resources

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# “The University of California welcomes and supports students without regard to their immigration status.”

– UC Statement of Principles in Support of Undocumented Members (*reaffirmed 01.22.25*)



University of California is committed to supporting all students, especially those who may be undocumented. In January, 2025 UC reaffirmed its [Statement of Principles in Support of Undocumented Members of the UC Community](#). UC has made it very clear in this statement that we, *‘The University of California welcomes and supports students without regard to their immigration status.’*

The University of California welcomes and supports students without regard to their immigration status. UC will continue to admit students without regard to a student’s race, color, national origin, religion, citizenship or other protected characteristic. In other words, undocumented applicants with or without DACA status will be considered for admission on the same basis as any U.S. citizen or other applicant. The University is committed to creating an environment in which all admitted students can successfully matriculate and graduate.

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# Terms & definitions

## Terms & definitions

### UNDOCUMENTED

- Unauthorized alien (federally recognized term)
- Self-identifying terms vary
  - Dreamer, undocumented, DACA, AB 540, etc.

UC considers students who fit these definitions to be undocumented



When University of California uses the term *undocumented*, we are talking about a large umbrella definition. Undocumented refers to a person who does not have legal status in the United States — meaning they are not a U.S. citizen, permanent resident, and they do not hold a valid visa.

Federally recognized term - Unauthorized alien (Department of Homeland Security definition): all foreign-born aliens who are not legal residents, including naturalized citizens, [nor] persons granted lawful permanent residence, [nor] persons granted asylum, [nor] persons admitted as refugees, and [nor] persons admitted as resident nonimmigrants (i.e., students and temporary workers, as opposed to tourists) who have unexpired authorized periods of admission.

UC acknowledges that within the undocumented community, individuals may use different terms (Dreamer, DACA, AB 540, etc.) to self-identify. Respecting those personal choices is an important part of UC supporting its students.

# Tuition policy

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## CA tuition policy

### CALIFORNIA NON-RESIDENT TUITION EXEMPTION

- California law AB 540 (expanded by SB 68 & SB 1141)
- Must meet all three of following requirements to be eligible
  1. Length of time & coursework completed per school
  2. Degree completion, unit requirements, GED, or other
  3. Signed non-resident tuition exemption request



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**In 2001**, California state law created an opportunity for undocumented students to have access to affordable higher education in California at public colleges and universities through CA Assembly Bill 540 also known as AB 540.

While undocumented students cannot establish legal residency in California, they may be eligible under state law — specifically, AB540 and its expansions, SB 68 and SB 1141 – which qualifies students for an [exemption from non-resident supplemental tuition](#) if they meet certain criteria

## AB 540 eligibility, part 1

### 1. Time & coursework

Total full-time attendance of, or attainment of credits earned while in California, equivalent to three or more years at any of the following:

- California high school
- California adult school
- California community college

Three years of California high school coursework completed while in California and three years of total attendance at a California elementary school, secondary school or any combination of the two.



The first requirement to meet the AB 540 nonresident tuition exemption is about time and coursework completed in California schools.

To qualify, a student must have at least three years of full-time attendance, OR the equivalent at any *combination* of schools between:

- a California high school,
- a California adult school,
- or a California community college (*\*There is no limit on community college credit-bearing courses for terms beginning after January 1, 2023.\**)

There's also another pathway: if a student completes three years of California high school coursework, they can combine that with

- three years of total attendance at a California elementary school,
- a California secondary school, or
- a mix of the two.

The rule is designed to recognize students who have spent significant time in California's education system, even if their schooling was spread across different types of schools

UC tuition and financial aid, AB-540: <https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/tuition-financial-aid/tuition-cost-of-attendance/ab-540-nonresident-tuition-exemption.html>

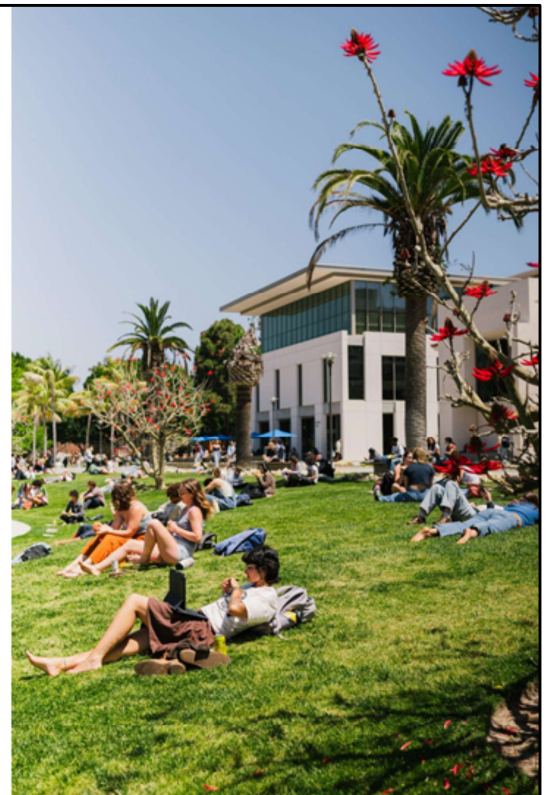


## AB 540 eligibility, part 2

### 2. Degree or units

Meet one of the following requirements:

- Graduation from a CA high school or equivalent
- Attainment of an associate degree from a CA community college (CCC)
- Fulfillment of minimum transfer requirements from a CCC to a UC or CSU campus



The second requirement for the AB 540 tuition exemption is about unit completion or degree attainment.

Students need to meet **one** of the following:

- graduate from a California high school or earn the equivalent,
- complete an associate degree from a California community college, or
- meet the minimum transfer requirements from a community college to a UC or CSU campus.

For this requirement, the CA state law is wanting to show that students have reached a key educational milestone here in California.



## AB 540 eligibility, part 3

### 3. Signed nonresident tuition exemption

- In the UC application, students must complete an AB 540 affidavit (Statement of Legal Residency)
- Undocumented students should follow the SLR instructions for undocumented students

#### Who's not AB 540 eligible:

- Students in possession of a nonimmigrant visa
- DACA students who do not meet the AB 540 tuition requirements



The third consideration for AB 540 eligibility is the completion of the UC application and the completing Statement of Legal Residence (SLR) questionnaire.

Students should indicate that they would like to be evaluated for CA residency for tuition purposes and complete the Statement of Legal Residence questionnaire to be considered for in-state tuition under the AB 540 tuition exemption. UC has crafted a SLR guidance sheet for undocumented students needing additional support with completing the nonresident tuition exemption questions.

[https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/\\_files/documents/slr-instructions-for-undocumented-students.pdf](https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/_files/documents/slr-instructions-for-undocumented-students.pdf)

It is important to acknowledge who is **not eligible** for the AB 540. And that includes:

- Students who currently hold nonimmigrant visas—like tourist, student, or work visas—do not qualify. *There are some exceptions – T T and U visa holders may be able to establish California residency for tuition purposes after a limited period.*
- Students with DACA who don't meet the AB 540 requirements are also not eligible.

Tuition exemption eligibility depends not just on status, but also on meeting those three specific AB 540 requirements we just reviewed

# Financial aid & scholarships

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### CALIFORNIA DREAM ACT APPLICATION (CADAA)

- California's state financial aid application operated by California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) allows undocumented and other eligible students to qualify for state and institutional financial aid.
- Eligibility:
  - Undocumented
  - Have a U-Visa or TPS
  - Meet CA non-resident exemption requirements
- CSAC has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting student data



The California Dream Act Application (CADAA) is California's state financial aid application is designed to give undocumented and other eligible students access to state and institutional financial aid—support they cannot get through the federal FAFSA. Through CADAA, thousands of students every year are able to access Cal Grants, UC and CSU institutional aid, and other state financial resources that make higher education more affordable and achievable

The CADAA is open to:

- undocumented students,
- students with a U-Visa or Temporary Protected Status, and
- students who meet the AB540 tuition exemption requirements

California Student Aid Commission has reaffirmed its strong commitment to protecting student data, so students can apply without fear that their information will be shared for immigration enforcement.

Students from mixed-status families may choose to complete a FAFSA to be evaluated for all federal, state, and UC-funded aid or for reasons of security and privacy for both the student and their family members, students from mixed-status families have the OPTION to choose to complete a CADAA versus the FAFSA. If a student opts to choose this aid application, they will be evaluated for all state and UC-funded aid.

## UC tuition aid

### UC BLUE AND GOLD OPPORTUNITY

**Blue and Gold** is how we award all types of financial aid at UC and is our strategy to make a UC education accessible and affordable for California students:

1. **Most** California students with families that earn up to **\$100,000** pay **\$0** in UC Tuition
2. Many California students graduate **debt free** with the help of part-time work or internship.
3. Provides tuition cost **predictability** for all undergraduates

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Our financial aid program is one of the best out there. UC's Blue and Gold benefits many California undergrads and their families by making a UC education accessible and affordable. Most California students from families earning up to \$100,000 receive enough grants and scholarships to cover their UC tuition, often allowing them to graduate debt-free with the help of part-time work or internship. Students with greater financial need can qualify for even more grant support to help pay other educational expenses (like books, housing, transportation, etc.). UC also offers predictable tuition, locking in rates for up to six years.

## State grants

### EXAMPLES OF AVAILABLE AID

- Cal Grant or Middle Class Scholarship (State)
- Dream Service Incentive Grant (State)
- Dream Loan (State)
- California Community College Grant (CCC)
- Student Success Completion Grant (CCC)
- Institutional aid for the cost of attendance



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COMMISSION



When students complete the CADAA application, they open the door to several types of state aid opportunities that can make college much more affordable.

Types of Aid Available through CADAA: <https://www.csac.ca.gov/apply#section-one>

- Cal Grant: <https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/what-cal-grant-award> - Gift aid to help pay for tuition and fees at a four-year college, two-year college, or technical or career education
- Middle Class Scholarship: <https://www.csac.ca.gov/middle-class-scholarship> - Gift aid for middle-income undergraduate students, including students pursuing a teaching credential, with a scholarship to attend a University of California (UC), California State University (CSU) or California Community College Bachelor's degree program.
- Dream Service Incentive Grant: <https://www.csac.ca.gov/dsig> - Gift aid to eligible California Dream Act Application (CADAA) students who complete community or volunteer service.
- Dream Loan: <https://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/tuition-financial-aid/types-of-aid/dream-loan-program.html> - (Borrowed Money) Maximum amount of a loan is capped at \$4,000 each year. You can borrow every year you're an eligible student at UC or until students receive a maximum of \$20,000 in DREAM loans.
- California Community College Grant: <https://www.cccapply.org/en/money/california-college-promise-grant> - Gift aid that permits CCC enrollment fees to be waived. (Assistance for the purchase of books and supplies must be applied for separately.)
- Student Success Completion Grant: <https://icangotocollege.com/financial-aid/student-success-completion-grant> - Gift aid for full-time students.

## Employment opportunities

### INSTITUTIONAL WORK-STUDY OR INTERNSHIPS

- Paid employment for students who do have legal employment authorization (DACA)
- Internships providing scholarships and/or stipends for students who do not have legal employment authorization (no DACA)



UC campuses provide institutional work-study opportunities to support students financially and professionally. For students who have legal employment authorization, like those with DACA, this can mean traditional paid campus jobs that help cover expenses and build work experience.

For students who don't have work authorization, UC has created alternatives such as internships that provide scholarships or stipends instead of wages. This way, students can still gain valuable experience and receive financial support without needing federal work eligibility. At UCSB, for example, there's the **Monarch Opportunity Scholarship**, which awards scholarships to undocumented students with or without DACA and is designed to support students in pursuing their academic and professional goals while reducing financial barriers.

Overall, institutional work-study ensures that all students, regardless of immigration status, have pathways to both financial assistance and meaningful career-building opportunities.



## Scholarships

### PRIVATE SCHOLARSHIPS

- Immigrants Rising Scholarship and Fellowship Lists
  - 10,000 Degrees undergraduate scholarships
  - Golden Door Scholars Program
  - East Bay College Fund Scholarship
  - Chicana/Latina Foundation
  - Hispanic Scholarship Fund
  - Latino College Dollars
  - The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
  - United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
- and many more!



In addition to state and institutional aid, undocumented students also have access to a wide range of private scholarships. Some of the most widely used resources include:

- [Immigrants Rising Scholarship and Fellowship Lists](#)
- [10,000 Degrees undergraduate scholarships](#)
- [Golden Door Scholars Program](#)
- [East Bay College Fund Scholarship](#)
- [Chicana/Latina Foundation](#)
- [Hispanic Scholarship Fund](#)
- [Latino College Dollars](#)
- [The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund \(MALDEF\)](#)
- [United States Hispanic Leadership Institute](#).

While UC is not affiliated with these organizations the key takeaway is that there are *many* private scholarships out there—local, regional, and national—that undocumented students can apply for, and counselors can play a big role in helping students find and apply for them.

Private Scholarships: <https://undoc.universityofcalifornia.edu/financial-aid.html>

# Support programs & services

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## Support services

### Undocumented student services are available at each UC campus

Services include:

- Academic / general counseling
- Basic needs support
- Celebrations & graduations
- Internships and fellowships
- Mentorship
- Physical spaces



Each UC campus has undocumented student services to ensure students feel supported both academically and personally. These services go far beyond the classroom.

Students can access **academic and general counseling** to help navigate classes and career planning, as well as **basic needs support** for essentials like food, housing, and emergency resources. UC campuses also create community through **celebrations and graduations** that honor undocumented students' achievements.

There are opportunities for professional growth through **internships, fellowships, and mentorship programs** that connect students with peers, staff, and alumni who understand their unique experiences.

Many campuses also provide **physical spaces**—resource centers and community hubs—where students can find a safe, welcoming environment.

Overall UC's commitment is to ensure that undocumented students are not only able to access higher education, but also to thrive, belong, and graduate with a strong network of support.

Support Services at each UC campus: <https://undoc.universityofcalifornia.edu/campus-support.html>

## Legal services

### **UC IMMIGRANT LEGAL SERVICES CENTER (UC IMM)**

Services include:

- Legal advice and representation for undocumented students and their immediate families
- In-depth consultations and direct representation in immigration court or before immigration agencies

### **TYPES OF CASES IMM HANDLES**

- Adjustment of status (i.e., green card applications)
- Advance parole
- Consular processing
- DACA
- Family-based petitions
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests
- Naturalization
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS)
- U visa and/or T visa
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)



The [UC Immigrant Legal Services Center](#), or UC IMM, is an invaluable resource available to undocumented UC students and their immediate families. Based at UC Davis School of Law, UC IMM provides free immigration legal advice, in-depth consultations, and direct representation—including appearances in immigration court or before federal agencies.

They handle a wide range of cases, such as adjustment of status or green card applications, advance parole, consular processing, DACA renewals, family-based petitions, and Freedom of Information Act requests. They also support students with naturalization, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, U and T visas, and Violence Against Women Act cases.

For counselors, this means that if you're working with an undocumented student with immigration questions or concerns, you can point them to UC IMM with confidence. They'll receive expert, confidential, and compassionate legal support to help them and their families navigate complex immigration pathways while pursuing their education.

# Campus-specific resources

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## **Resource centers**

### **Undocumented Student Program (USP)**

**UC Berkeley**  
**UCLA**  
**UC Riverside**

### **Undocumented Student Services (USS)**

**UC San Diego**  
**UC Santa Barbara**  
**UC Santa Cruz**

**DREAM Center**  
**UC Irvine**

**Service for  
Undocumented Students  
+ The Monarch Center**  
**UC Merced**

**Undocumented Student  
Resource Center (USRC)**  
**UC Davis**

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Each UC offers resources for undocumented students and might have a different name. No matter the name, each center provides tailored professional support from academics to personal support to help our undocumented students find community and thrive at UC.

Support Services at each UC campus: <https://undoc.universityofcalifornia.edu/campus-support.html>

- **Undocumented Student Program (USP)**
  - UC Berkeley
  - UC Los Angeles
  - UC Riverside
- **Undocumented Student Services (USS)**
  - UC San Diego
  - UC Santa Barbara
  - UC Santa Cruz
- **DREAM Center**
  - UC Irvine
- **Service for Undocumented Students + The Monarch Center**
  - UC Merced
- **Undocumented Student Resource Center (USRC)**
  - UC Davis

## Student organizations

### UC Berkeley

RISE (Rising Immigrant Scholars through Education)

### UC Davis

SPEAK (Scholars Promoting Education, Awareness and Knowledge)

### UC Irvine

DREAMS @ UCI

### UCLA

IDEAS (Improving Dreams, Equality, Access and Success)

### UC Merced

SALE (Students Advocating Law and Education)

### UC Riverside

PODER (Providing Opportunities, Dreams and Education in Riverside)

### UC San Diego

Migrant Rights Awareness

### UC Santa Barbara

IDEAS (Improving Dreams, Equality, Access and Success)

### UC Santa Cruz

SIN (Students Informing Now)



Undocumented student organizations are a great way for students to get connected with their peers and build community. Here are some examples of undocumented student organizations across the UC system

### Regional/national organizations:

- [ASPIRE \(Asian Students Promoting Immigrant Rights through Education\)](#) has both UCLA and Bay Area chapters
- [Pre-Health Dreamers](#) was founded in the Bay Area
- IDEAS (Improving Dreams, Equality, Access and Success) exists on many campuses across California, including [UCLA](#) and [UC Santa Barbara](#)
- [GRADD \(Graduates Reaching a Dream Deferred\)](#), founded at UCLA, supports undocumented graduate students

### Campus-specific organizations:

Many of these organizations use Facebook or other social networking tools to connect online, and welcome questions from prospective students.

- Associated Students of UC Irvine – Get DREAMS
- Dreams @ UCI
- Dream Bar Association (UC Riverside)
- Migrant Rights Awareness (UC San Diego)
- PODER (Providing Opportunities, Dreams, and Education in Riverside)
- RISE (Rising Immigrant Scholars through Education) (UC Berkeley)
- SALE (Students Advocating Law and Education) (UC Merced)
- SED (Students Empowering Dreams) (UC Merced)
- SPEAK (Scholars Promoting Education, Awareness and Knowledge) (UC Davis)
- SIN (Students Informing Now) (UC Santa Cruz)

## Fellowships

### CAMPUS SPECIFIC FELLOWSHIPS OR SCHOLARSHIPS

- UC Berkeley - [Transcending Beyond Berkeley \(TBB\) Fellowship](#)
- UC Davis - [Immigrants Rising Fellowships & Scholarships](#)
- UC Irvine - [DREAM Project Fellowship](#)
- UCLA - [UndocuBruins Fellowship](#)
- UC Merced - [Opportunities Fellowship Program \(OFP\)](#)
- UC Riverside - [Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute \(CHCI\) Fellowship Programs](#)
- UC San Diego - [PACE Fellowship](#)
- UC Santa Barbara - [USS Programs Scholarships \(7 eligible programs\)](#)
- UC Santa Cruz - [President's Fellowship](#)



Each UC campus offers its own fellowships or scholarships for undocumented students. These programs provide financial support and professional development opportunities tailored to undocumented students.

### CAMPUS SPECIFIC FELLOWSHIPS OR SCHOLARSHIPS

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- UC Santa Cruz - [President's Fellowship](#)

## Important links

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Undocumented  
Student  
Resources

### UC undocumented student resources



### UC campus supports



### Private scholarships



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#### Important Links:

- UC - Undocumented Students: <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/student-success/undocumented-students>
- UC undocumented student resources: <https://undoc.universityofcalifornia.edu/>
- UC Campus Supports: <https://undoc.universityofcalifornia.edu/campus-support.html>
  - Provides the contact information for support at each UC campus (staff, and program link)
- Private Scholarships: <https://undoc.universityofcalifornia.edu/financial-aid.html>

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# Thank you

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