



# Undocumented Students and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

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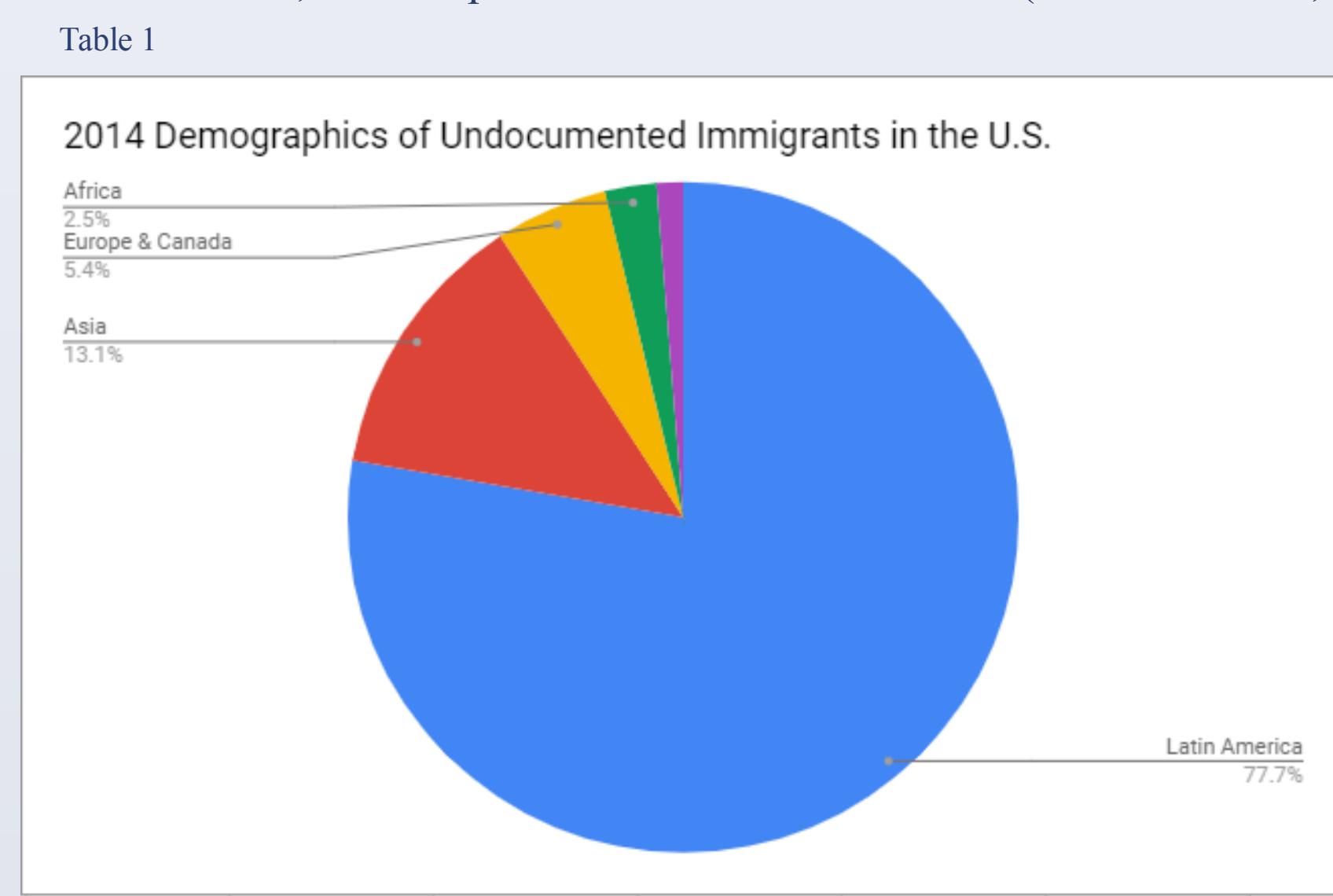
Indiana University – Higher Education & Student Affairs

## Relevant Terms and Definitions

- DACA - Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
- DREAM Act - Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act
- Latin America - Central America, South America, and the Caribbean
- USCIS – United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Status Ownership- Intersection of conflicting identities undocumented college students face (Gonzales, 2007).

## United States and Student Population

As of 2014, the total undocumented immigrant population in the United States is estimated to be at about 11.1 million (Passel & Cohn, 2016). Of this, 77.7 percent come from Latin America, 13.1 percent from Asia, 5.4 percent from Europe & Canada, 2.5 percent from Africa, and 1.3 percent from the Middle East (Passel & Cohn, 2016).



Of the 11.1 million, approximately 65,000 undocumented students graduate from high school each year while 26 percent of those students matriculate into higher education each year (Fortuny, Capps, & Passel, 2007). In a survey of undocumented college students 90 percent report participating in volunteer activity, 95 percent report extracurricular involvement, and 78 percent report holding leadership positions (Perez, 2010). While the number of undocumented students entering college is low, those who have been surveyed report high levels of involvement despite not being eligible for assistance to attend college.

## Historical Background

Before DACA was implemented many undocumented immigrants were unable to seek higher education due to ineligibility for in-state tuition creating a large financial burden (Gonzales, Roth, Brant, Lee, & Valdivia, 2016). Those that managed to obtain a degree, were still unable to work in their desired field due to their undocumented status (Gonzales et al., 2016). DACA was enacted by the Obama Administration in June 2012 to protect young, undocumented immigrants from deportation. For these young immigrants the United States is the only country where they have a home, and with DACA they not only had safety from deportation, but the ability to naturalize as citizens (Stottlemeyer, 2015).

The DREAM Act was first introduced by Republican Senator Orrin Hatch in 2001 and has gone through Congress multiple times, failing to pass each time. The act would provide an estimated 360,000 undocumented high school graduates with the legal ability to work and provide an estimated 715,000 children between the ages of 5 and 17 with the in-state benefits of their state of residency to pursue higher education (Gonzales, 2007). These financial benefits would provide undocumented students with greater access to colleges and universities and enable them to pursue job opportunities that would be inaccessible without a college degree.

## Current Issues

In September 2017, the Trump Administration rescinded DACA with a six month delay to allow Congress time to pass legislation that impacts the undocumented immigrants protected by DACA.

DACA beneficiaries expressed little to no support from teachers and other staff members pertaining to information related to postsecondary education and post- high school plans (Gonzales, et al., 2016).

Due to the mixed landscape of the United states, each state has different policies in regards to post- secondary educational opportunities and jobs, which are not equal and plays a huge, often negative impact on immigrants (Gonzales, et al., 2016). Many DACA beneficiaries are not able to work in the occupations that they are educated for due to license requirements that vary state by state (Gonzales, et al., 2016).

Table 2

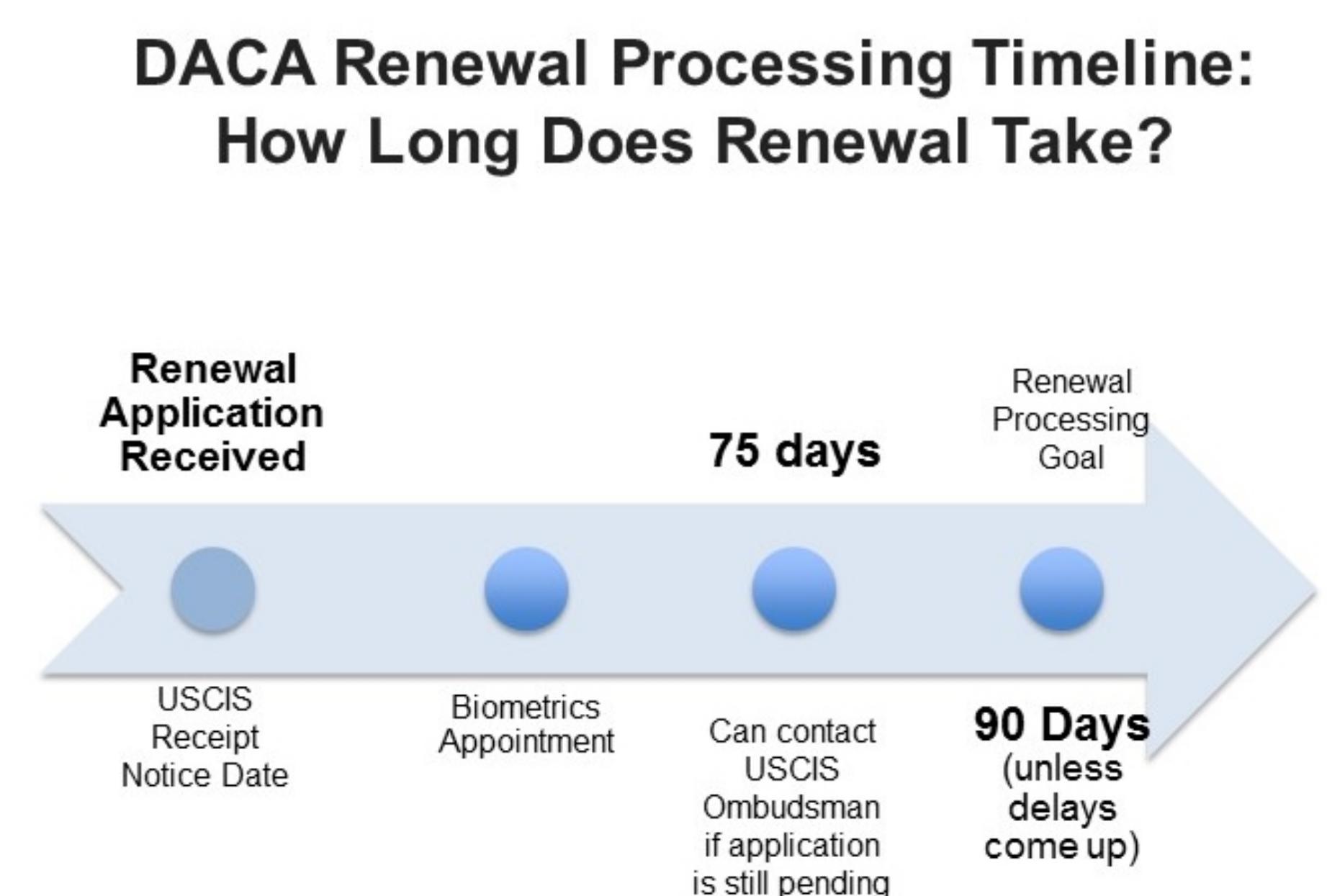
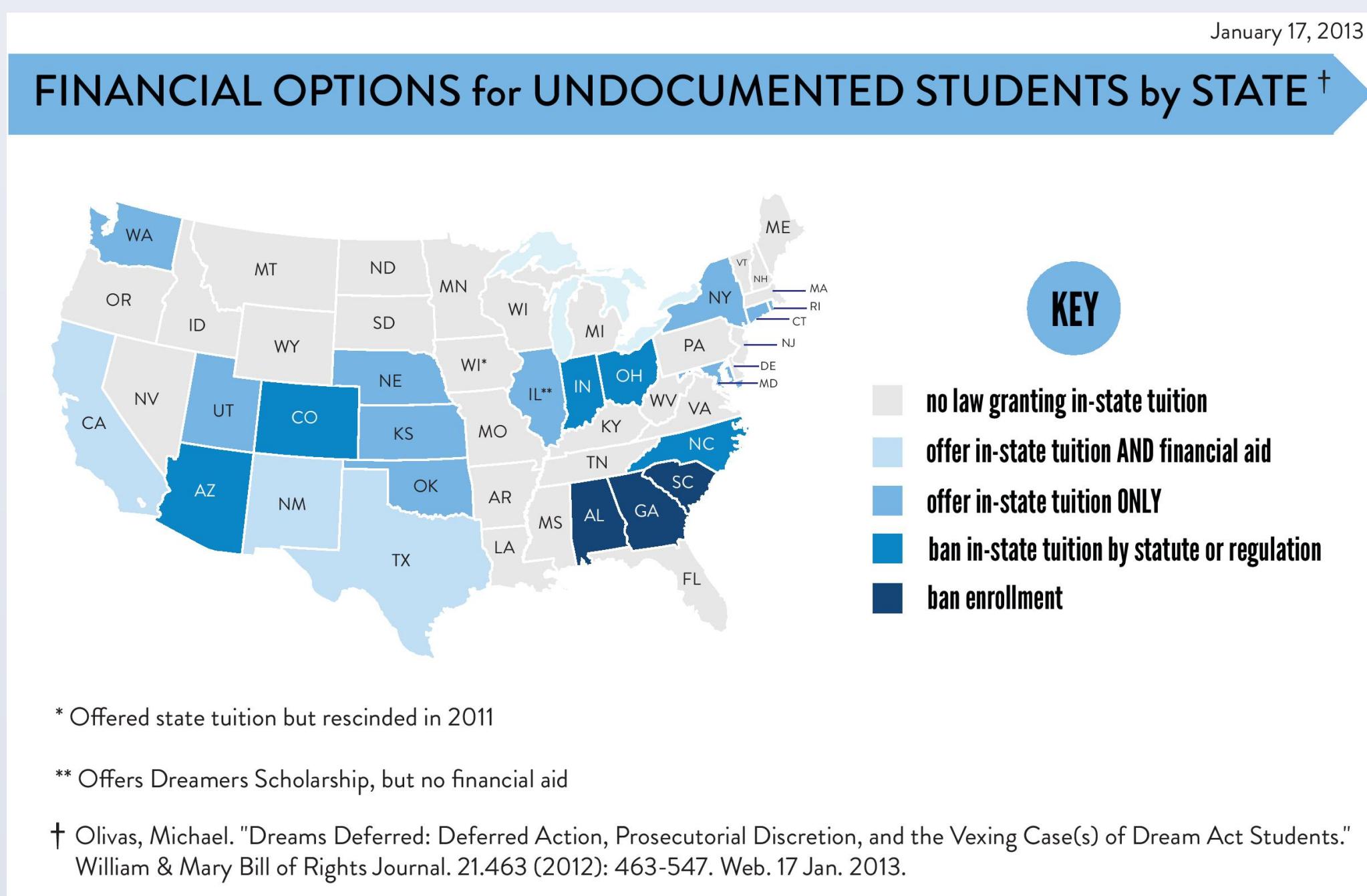


Table 3



## Students' Collegiate Experience

Tuition rates are constantly increasing and undocumented students are not eligible to receive federal financial aid. Undocumented students face financial hardship and must work long hours that takes away from their school time, which causes a negative impact on their academics (Gonzales, et al., 2016).

Undocumented students spend a majority of their college experience finding a balance between their identities of being college students and undocumented (Muñoz & Alleman, 2016).

Societal and environmental aspects of college impact the experiences of undocumented students when it comes to balancing their identities with one being status ownership, which is the intersection of conflicting identities (Muñoz & Alleman, 2016).

Undocumented students face various challenges throughout their college experiences due to their legal status and go through three main stages of identity development (Muñoz & Alleman, 2016).

- First stage of identity development is becoming aware of the social, professional, and educational opportunities that undocumented students cannot obtain and feeling frustrated and/ or confused (Muñoz & Alleman, 2016).
- Second stage of identity development is finding a means to voice their experience and counteracting the victimization of their legal status (Muñoz & Alleman, 2016).
- Third stage of identity development is to process what it means to be an undocumented student and working to attain the "American Dream" (Muñoz & Alleman, 2016).

Many undocumented college students deal with anxiety due to their legal status, which tends to play a negative impact on their college experience (Chen and Rhoads, 2016).

## Implications and Strategies for Higher Education

### Implications

- American institutions have condemned the president's move to end DACA, offering support for undocumented students (e.g pro bono legal services at Columbia University (Adams & Hoisington, 2017).
- Mexican institutions of higher education are preparing for large numbers of Dreamers to enter into the Mexican higher education system (Fischer, 2017).
- Only 5-10 percent of undocumented high school students receive a postsecondary education, so more intentional partnerships must be formed with K-12 partners.

### Strategies

- Faculty and staff members should receive culturally sensitive training that allows them to understand the complex nature of supporting and working with undocumented students (Gonzalez, 2007).
- Counselors and practitioners should utilize culturally sensitive theories when working with undocumented students and realizing their vocational aspirations (Kantamneni et al., 2016).
- Undocumented students should be educated on the legal and systemic barriers that will impact their job search, as many are not aware of HR hurdles that they will have to face (e.g background checks) (Kantamneni et al., 2016).

## Resources & References

**Resources**  
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## Acknowledgements and Contacts

The authors would like to thank Dr. Danielle DeSawal and the Indiana University HESA program for their support in this project. For more information about the topic or to request copies of the poster, contact:  
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