



# Sueños Sin Límites

DREAMS  
WITHOUT  
BORDERS  
#DACA  
STRONG

**Financial Aid and Resource  
Guide for Students with DACA  
and Immigration-Impacted Backgrounds**



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# Overview of Tuition Equity



Tuition equity allows students, regardless of immigration status, to pay in-state tuition if they meet residency and graduation requirements.

These policies were designed to expand access to higher education for students who have grown up and studied in the United States but face significant financial and legal barriers, including ineligibility for federal aid and higher out-of-state tuition rates.

Historically determined at the state level, these policies began emerging in the early 2000s as states extended in-state tuition to status impact students who graduated from local high schools.

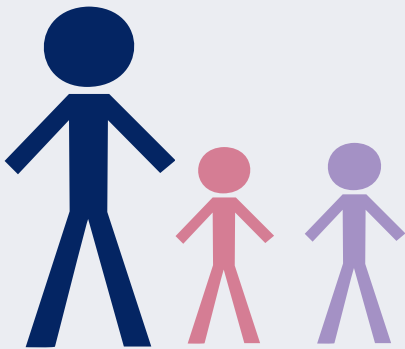
## States That Support Tuition Equity

\* States with ongoing DOJ challenges to tuition equity policies.

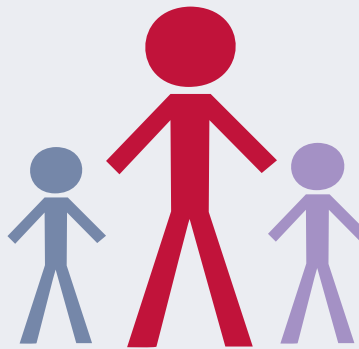
<b>Arizona</b>	<b>Kansas</b>	<b>Nevada</b>	<b>Utah</b>
<b>California*</b>	<b>Kentucky*</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>	<b>Vermont</b>
<b>Colorado</b>	<b>Maryland</b>	<b>New Mexico</b>	<b>Virginia*</b>
<b>Connecticut</b>	<b>Massachusetts</b>	<b>New York</b>	<b>The District of Columbia</b>
<b>Hawaii</b>	<b>Minnesota*</b>	<b>Oregon</b>	
<b>Illinois*</b>	<b>Nebraska</b>	<b>Rhode Island</b>	

# Populations Impacted by Changes in Tuition Equity

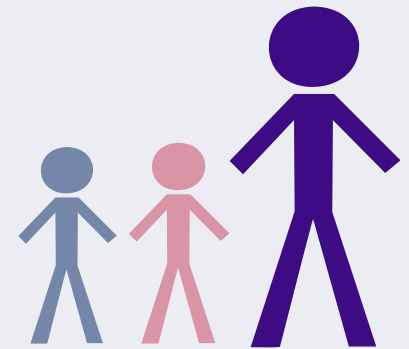
**STATUS IMPACTED STUDENTS WITHOUT ACCESS TO FEDERAL AID**



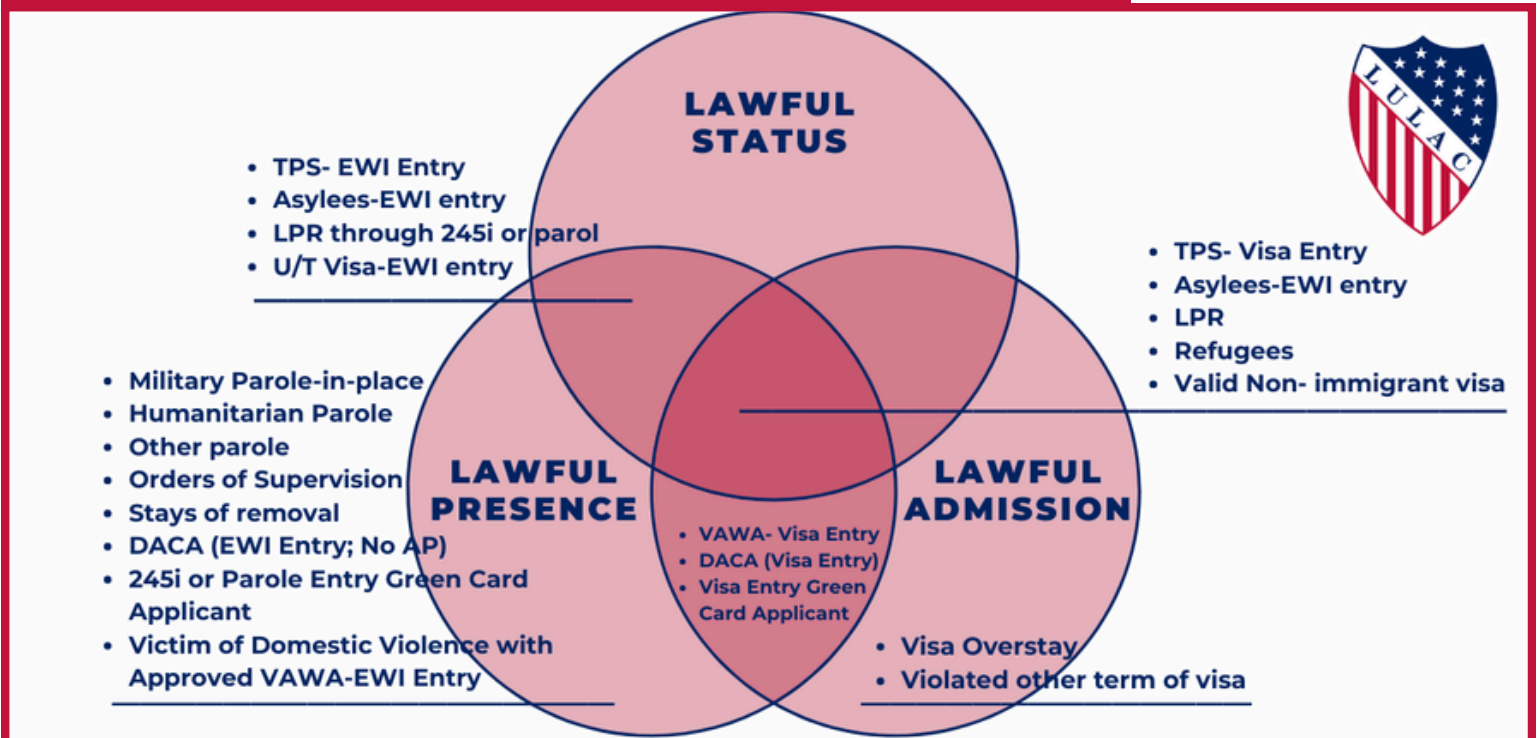
**DACA RECIPIENTS RELYING ON IN-STATE TUITION TO REMAIN ENROLLED**



**TPS HOLDERS WHOSE ELIGIBILITY VARIES BY INSTITUTION**



## Understanding Key Legal Terms: Status, Presence, Admission



With LPRs, there is a difference between being “lawfully admitted for permanent residence”, which means having permanent resident status and having a “lawful admission” at entry. A person can be lawfully admitted for permanent residence without having a lawful admission at entry

## Benefits of Tuition-Equity



- Tuition equity policies are associated with **lower high school dropout rates** and **higher college enrollment** among students.
- These policies contribute to **higher earnings and increased tax contributions**, generating broader economic and social benefits.
- The cost of implementation is generally minimal, and in-state tuition often **increases institutional revenue** rather than reducing it.
- Expanding access to higher education helps **strengthen the workforce** and address long-term demographic and economic challenges.

## By the Numbers: Tuition Equity and Immigrants

**22**  
**STATES**

have tuition equity laws or policies, covering 61% of the nation's foreign-born population.

Source: NILC

**98,000**

status impacted students graduate from U.S. high schools each year.

Source: MPI

**13.5**  
**MILLION**

immigrants in the U.S. hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

Source: PNPI

Status impacted students are **not** eligible for federal financial aid, these include Pell Grants and federal loans. **This makes tuition equity essential for access to higher education.** Without in-state tuition options, many students face unaffordable costs that can prevent enrollment, delay graduation, or force them to leave school altogether.

# LULAC's Stance on Tuition Equity

**LULAC stands with Dreamers.** They are already part of this country. They work, they study, they raise families here. This is their home.

**We will defend DACA** in the courts, but we know its limits. It keeps people waiting, year after year, for something more certain. No one should have to live like that.

Congress must act. The delay has gone on long enough. **Dreamers deserve permanence, dignity, and a place in the law that matches the lives they are already living.**



WE ARE ALL DREAMERS



# The Current Landscape



Under the current administration, the U.S. Department of Justice has increasingly challenged these policies, arguing they conflict with federal law. As a result, courts and state actions have overturned or rolled back tuition equity in several states, leading to sudden tuition increases and loss of financial support for many students.

In the past year, policies have **ended** in **Oklahoma** and **Texas** following court rulings, while **Kentucky** ended its program after a DOJ challenge and **Florida** eliminated its policy through legislation.

These changes primarily affect status impacted students without access to federal aid, DACA recipients who rely on in-state tuition to remain enrolled, and TPS holders whose eligibility may vary by institution.

## Where DACA Stands

- If you currently have DACA status, you may continue to renew your DACA protections while legal challenges to the program continue.
- Following a recent Fifth Circuit decision applying to **Texas**, DACA protections from deportation may continue, **but new or renewed work permits may no longer be issued.**
  - The court's mandate implementing this decision was issued on March 11, and individuals should closely monitor updates as further guidance becomes available.

# Jose's Story

## How tuition equity changes affected one student

Jose is a senior at a university in Texas. A status-impacted student who has lived in the United States since middle school, he depended on tuition equity to make college possible.

In summer 2024, while waiting for his financial aid package, everything changed. What he expected to be a refund suddenly became a bill, \$5,000 he needed to pay just to stay enrolled. The shift came after a district court decision ended tuition equity in Texas in June 2024.

Faced with a cost he could not afford, Jose scrambled to find a way forward, reaching out to family and outside support to remain in school. What had once been a stable path to graduation became uncertain overnight.

Jose's experience is the reality for many students who, without warning, must pay thousands out to continue their education.



# Ongoing Legal Challenges

As of April 14th, 2026

## States Actively Defending Tuition Equity Policies

### California



California is actively opposing U.S. Department of filed in November 2025 in the Eastern District of California. *Case is currently ongoing.*

### Minnesota



DOJ challenge filed June 2025; dismissed by court on March 27, 2026 (policy remains in effect). *DOJ has 60 days to appeal.*

### Virginia



DOJ lawsuit filed Dec. 2025. Virginia withdrew consent to proposed judgment Jan. 20, 2026 and is defending the policy. *Policy remains in effect while litigation continues.*

### Illinois



DOJ challenge filed Sept. 2025. and Illinois is defending the policy in court. *Litigation ongoing; briefing set to conclude on March 20 2026.*



## States Where Policies Have Been Ended or Not Defended



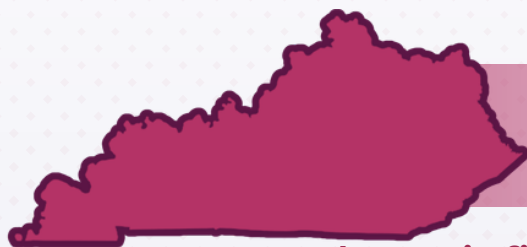
### Texas

DOJ lawsuit filed in June 2025 in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas led to a swift court ruling ending the policy.  
*Litigation remains ongoing in the appeals level.*



### Oklahoma

DOJ lawsuit filed Aug. 2025; court sided with federal government, limiting in-state tuition to students with “lawful presence”  
*Advocacy groups have intervened and are pursuing further legal challenges*



### Kentucky

DOJ lawsuit filed June 2025; policy ended via agreement.  
*District court proceedings ongoing with hearing on consent judgment set for Mar. 12, 2026*

**This information is accurate as of April 9, 2026. For weekly updates, refer to the Higher Ed Immigration Portal’s in-state tuition litigation updates page.**



## Choosing a Supportive College Environment

Despite the importance of tuition-equity laws, access and support for status impacted students remain inconsistent across institutions, making it important for prospective students to identify schools that are truly accessible and supportive.

**Institutions that are equipped to support status impacted students often share the following characteristics:**

### Privacy Protections

- Federal law protects all student records through the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), including information related to immigration status. Schools generally may not disclose personally identifiable information without consent or a valid court order. Students should check whether their **school provides guidance on how these protections apply in practice**, particularly for immigration-related information.
  - It's important to note that these privacy protections do not apply to certain immigration records for F-1 and J-1 visa holders, but they do apply to status impacted, DACA, TPS, and DED students.
- The **university demonstrates a commitment to protecting student privacy** by clearly communicating policies, and safeguarding sensitive information beyond what is legally required. Examples may include clear official statements, website guides, or campus offices that help students understand their privacy rights.

### Financial Accessibility

- **Institutions that are transparent about available financial options**, often provide a dedicated FAQ, resource page, or directory outlining scholarships, institutional aid, payment plans, and other basic

guidance to help students with precarious or uncertain immigration status navigate college costs.

- Even in states where tuition equity is limited, some **institutions offer dedicated scholarships, emergency aid, or in-state tuition exceptions to support status impacted and protected-status students**. Contact the financial aid office to learn more about the resources available and whether the school actively supports these students.

### Dedicated Support Services

- Certain **institutions have dedicated offices that provide guidance and resources** for DACA students or students with uncertain immigration status. These offices may offer legal referrals, financial counseling, mentorship, and help navigating admissions and campus resources. In states affected by restrictive policies, **these offices may not be labeled explicitly and could be connected to Hispanic-serving offices** or other student support programs, but similar services are typically available.

### Transparency and Communication

- The **school clearly communicates its policies affecting DACA and status impacted students**, including how it protects the rights of immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers.
- **Even when policies are not publicly posted, the institution shares information through other channels** such as orientations, student groups, targeted emails, and designated staff contacts.

**Institutions that lack adequate protections and support for status impacted students often share the following characteristics:**

### Restrictive Financial Practices

- **Institutions that rely on out-of-state rates** can make college unaffordable for status-impacted and protected-status students. They may **provide limited information about alternative financial options** beyond FAFSA, which is not available to these students.

### Barriers to clear and accessible information

- **Admissions and financial aid processes may be confusing or lack transparency**, and in some cases, state or **institutional policies restrict consideration to students with valid immigration status**.
- If the institution has been affected by changes to in-state tuition policies and **provides little to no guidance for status impacted or protected-status students** on its website, this may signal limited support and resources for navigating college affordability.

### Limited privacy safeguards

- Some institutions have minimal protections for student privacy, including **agreements with campus law enforcement that may allow cooperation with immigration authorities** beyond what is legally required. This can create a climate of fear for status impacted and protected-status students. This may also be impacted by state regulations.





## Choosing a Supportive College Environment

Despite the importance of tuition-equity laws, access and support for status impacted students remain inconsistent across institutions, making it important for prospective students to identify schools that are truly supportive.

**Institutions that are equipped to support status impacted students often share the following characteristics:**

### Privacy Protections

Student records are protected under FERPA, **including immigration-related information**, and generally cannot be shared without consent or a court order. These protections apply to most status-impacted students. Institutions should **clearly communicate how they protect and handle this information**.

- Examples of Institutional Communication
  - Official statements
  - Website guidance on rights
  - Campus-based student support offices

### Financial Accessibility

Institutions that are **transparent about available financial options**, often provide resources to help status impacted students navigate costs. **In states where tuition equity is limited, some institutions offer dedicated aid.**

- Ways Resources Are Shared
  - a dedicated FAQ
  - resource page
  - directory outlining scholarships, institutional aid, payment plans, and other basic guidance.

## Dedicated Support Services

Certain schools **have offices that support DACA and other status-impacted students. In states with restrictive policies, these services may be offered through broader student support** or cultural offices rather than explicitly named programs.

- Services These Offices May Offer
  - legal referrals
  - financial counseling
  - mentorship

## Communications

Schools should **clearly communicate policies affecting DACA and status-impacted students**, including how rights are protected. **When not publicly posted, this information should be shared through various avenues, such as:**

- orientations
- student groups
- emails
- designated staff

**Institutions that lack adequate protections and support for status impacted students often share the following characteristics:**

## Restrictive Financial Practices

- **Institutions that rely on out-of-state rates** can make college unaffordable for status-impacted and protected-status students.
- Institutions that **provide limited information about alternative financial options** and solely rely on FAFSA as the main funding source. FAFSA is not available to status impacted students.

## Barriers to Accessible Information

**Admissions and financial aid processes may be unclear or restricted based on immigration status.** If a school affected by tuition policy changes **provides little to no guidance for status-impacted students**, it may indicate limited support for navigating college affordability.

## Limited Privacy Safeguards

Some institutions have minimal student privacy protections, including **agreements with campus law enforcement that may allow cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement** beyond what is legally required. This can create a climate of fear for status-impacted. Students should review local enforcement policies, including whether the school's area or nearby jurisdictions participate in **287(g) programs**.

- **287(g) programs** allow local law enforcement to collaborate with federal immigration authorities.



# Next Steps and Resources for Affected Students

If tuition equity changes affect you, act quickly and explore your options. Schools and organizations may offer support to help you stay enrolled.



## Start with Your School

**Reach out to your university immediately, including offices such as Financial Aid, Student Affairs, or the Dean of Students.**

- Ask about institutional aid, including emergency micro-grants (\$300–\$1,000) through the Dean of Students or Student Affairs for books, fees, and transportation.
- Ask about 10–12 month interest-free payment plans, including waived setup fees and a 60-day late-fee grace period.

## Reach Out to Consulates

**Consulates can also serve as a useful, often overlooked source of financial support and guidance for students.**

- **Mexican Consulate**
  - Offers IME Becas scholarships for Mexican students living in the U.S. through consulates across the U.S.
  - Awards typically range around \$500–\$1,000+ and can support students already enrolled

- **El Salvador Consulate**

- Through a partnership with EducationUSA Opportunity Funds, provides small grants to cover upfront application costs (testing, fees, travel) and limited “gap” funding when financial aid packages fall short.

- **Guatemala, Honduras, South Korea, and Colombia Consulates**

- Consulates may provide referrals to external scholarships, advising services, or community resources, though availability varies by country.

## Apply to Private and Nonprofit Scholarships



**Even without access to federal aid, students may still qualify for private scholarships, institutional support, and nonprofit resources that do not require citizenship or immigration status. Some options include:**

- **[Immigrants Rising](#)**: lists scholarships that can be filtered by state and immigration status.
- **[MALDEF Resource](#)**: an extensive list of scholarships for students of various status.
- **[The Dream US Opportunity Scholarship](#)**: tailored for students who have been locked out of education by their states.
- **[The Dream US National Scholarship](#)**: available at Dream US partner colleges, including those in states recently impacted by tuition equity changes.
- **[Dreamers Road Map](#)**: provides a list of scholarships open to status impacted students.

- **My Undocumented Life:** page dedicated to sharing up to date resources and scholarships.
- **Golden Door Scholarship:** provides scholarships to students admitted to one of Golden Door's partner colleges or universities.
- **Hispanic Scholarship Fund:** offers scholarships open to DACA recipients.
- **Jack Kent Cooke Foundation:** for current community college students seeking to transfer to a four-year institution; U.S. citizenship is not required.

## Find Funding Close to Home

**Many local and community foundations provide scholarships and tend to be less competitive than national programs. These awards often consider financial need and may not require U.S. citizenship or residency.**

State-specific resources:

- **Texas**
  - **Texas Education Opportunity Grant (TEOG):** provides financial aid to eligible Texas residents attending two-year public colleges, based on financial need and enrollment, regardless of citizenship.
  - **San Antonio Area Foundation:** offers various scholarships for students in the San Antonio area; not all require U.S. citizenship or residency status.
  - **The Dallas Foundation:** has multiple scholarships for students in Dallas; not all require U.S. citizenship or residency status.
  - **Communities Foundation of Texas:** A database of various Texas scholarships, citizenship and residency status varies by scholarship.



## • Oklahoma

- **Oklahoma City Community Foundation:** Connects Oklahoma students with donors and scholarship opportunities; many awards do not request or consider citizenship or immigration status in the application process.
- **Oklahoma Rising Scholars Award:** A state merit scholarship, based on academic achievement and Oklahoma residency. Citizenship or lawful presence requirements may vary by institution. Applicants should confirm eligibility with their university.

## • Kentucky

- **Community Foundation of Louisville:** A scholarship portal that connects Kentucky students to various opportunities. Scholarships do not consider citizenship in its process.
- **Blue Grass Community Foundation:** A scholarship portal that connects Kentucky students to various opportunities. Scholarships do not consider citizenship status in the process.

## • Florida

- **Florida College Access:** A list of scholarship databases organized by Florida county. Citizenship requirements vary by individual scholarship.



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Prepared by LULAC Research & Policy April 14, 2026