**Issue**: Providing access to state financial aid to students who are undocumented

**Author(s)/Sponsor(s):** Oscar Aguirre (Student at Large for LAC)

**Endorsements**:

Carly Roberts (ASWWU President), Mayra Guizar (ASWWU VP for Diversity), Kaylee Galloway (ASWWU VP for Governmental Affairs)

**Proposed Action Agenda Item Title**: DREAM Act

1) Describe the Issue (what is the problem & what is the solution).

 The current problem is that students who are undocumented do not have access to state financial aid, more specifically the State Need Grant. "Only undocumented students with a valid Social Security Number can fill out a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) form. As stated above, even DACA-mented students with an SSN cannot use FAFSA to obtain federal money."1 The state has been investing in these same students from the cradle to high school; it is illogical to withdraw support right when their skills and talents can be put to the most good. Restricting access to state financial aid places a barrier to higher education for many students and prevents them from pursuing their dreams of higher education. By targeting a particular group the state is creating a permanent underclass, one that is incredibly difficult to break out of. Financial aid can help more students pursue college degrees, which can in turn benefit the state with more qualified candidates for high demand occupations.

The solution to this problem/missed opportunity is to pass the Washington State DREAM Act, which will grant access to financial aid for students who are currently excluded. Furthermore, state financial aid is funded through sales taxes and other sources that all people living in Washington State pay regardless of whether they are documented. “Unauthorized immigrants in Washington paid $327.7 million in state and local taxes in [2010](http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/unauthorized-immigrants-pay-taxes-too), according to data from the Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy, which includes: $22.7 million in property taxes [and] $305 million in sales taxes.” 2. According to OneAmerica, “Immigrants contributed $1.5 billion in tax revenue to the Washington state economy in [2007](http://www.weareoneamerica.org/sites/default/files/Immigrant_Contributions_to_Our_State_Economy.pdf#page=29), accounting for 13.2% of all taxes paid in the state”.3 It is clear then that undocumented immigrants do in fact contribute to funding state financial aid; therefore their eligibility for said financial aid should not be prohibited just because of their documentation status.

 Summary:
1. It is fundamentally important that all Washington State students, regardless of documentation, have equal opportunities to attend higher education; passing [HB 1817 - 2013-14](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1817) bring us closer to that goal.
2. Undocumented immigrants in Washington State contribute their fair share in tax revenue to the financial aid funds and thus have equal entitlement to the assistance.
3. Withholding financial aid from undocumented students limits the potential of highly educated workforce in Washington State.
4. Higher education as whole will benefit from a more diverse campus that truly represents students from all different backgrounds.
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1http://www.visanow.com/scholarships-financial-aid-for-undocumented-students-daca-students-and-dreamers/
2 http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/new-americans-washington
3 http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/new-americans-washington

2) Please fill out a Strategy Chart.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Goals** | **Organizational Considerations** | **Constituents, Allies, & Opponents** | **Targets** | **Tactics** |
| **Long term**Equal opportunity for all eligible students, including undocumented ones, to register for and receive state financial aid.**Intermediate**Getting the Washington State DREAM Act passed by the state legislature **Short Term**Reach out to the Senate Majority Coalition and work with them to frame the bill in a way that will not split their coalition, but will allow it to receive a hearing in the Senate Higher Ed Committee. | WSA has lobbying and organizing power from students across the stateWSA Staff capacity and training ability (Lobbyist Training)WSA has strong reputation in this issue from last year  ASWWU has many resources and passionate offices, groups, committees, and students. For example, the Ethnic Student Center, the WSA Chapter (Western Votes) and Legislative Affairs Council can help organize around the issue and get the issue on the AS Legislative Agenda Washington State University has the Cougar Lobby Team that can help in the organizing and sending over ‘Legislative Hit Teams’ at critical times in the hearing process.The fastest growing student population at WSU is their Chicano & Latino students. There are also a number of student groups who have members that are 1079 students who would be willing to give personal anecdotes and testimony.It can also help us to reach out to students who have been traditionally underrepresented and marginalized, which can strengthen our organization and build leadership | **Constituents**Students who are undocumented (1079 Students)**Allies**Some students Some parents Administration, community members, and organizations including: -[LEAP](http://www.leapwa.org/ep/dream.asp)- [OneAmerica](http://weareoneamerica.org/)-[WDAC](http://www.wdac.info/)-[Washington State Educational Access Coalition for HB 1079 Students](http://coalition.wsu.edu/) ([HB 1079](http://www.leg.wa.gov/pub/billinfo/2003-04/Pdf/Bills/House%20Bills/1079.pdf) and [SB 5655](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=5655) info)Some businesses and professionals who would benefit from a larger and more diverse educated workforce. **Opponents** Sen. BaileySen. SchoeslerThose who believe that we need to focus on the already qualified students not receiving state financial aid | **Primary****Opposition**: Sen. Bailey Sen. SchoeslerSen. FainSen. HillSen. HoneyfordSen. KingSen. Tom**Support**: Representatives [Hudgins](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Hudgins.aspx), [Chandler](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Chandler.aspx), [Pettigrew](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Pettigrew.aspx), [Ross](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Ross.aspx), [Appleton](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Appleton.aspx), [Moscoso](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Moscoso.aspx), [Santos](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Santos.aspx), [Goodman](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Goodman.aspx), [McCoy](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/McCoy.aspx), [Hunt](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Hunt.aspx), [Springer](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Springer.aspx), [Pollet](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Pollet.aspx), [Freeman](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Freeman.aspx), [Habib](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Habib.aspx),[Reykdal](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Reykdal.aspx), [Tarleton](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Tarleton.aspx), [Liias](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Liias.aspx), [Sawyer](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Sawyer.aspx), [Wylie](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Wylie.aspx), [Sells](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Sells.aspx), [Fitzgibbon](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Fitzgibbon.aspx), [Pedersen](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Pedersen.aspx), [Ryu](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Ryu.aspx), [Riccelli](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Riccelli.aspx), [Farrell](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Farrell.aspx), [Cody](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Cody.aspx), [Dunshee](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Dunshee.aspx), [Bergquist](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Bergquist.aspx), [Roberts](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Roberts.aspx), [Maxwell](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Maxwell.aspx), [Fey](http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/representatives/pages/Fey.aspx)**Secondary**Voting Constituents  | **Campus Collaborations:** 1) Days of Action 2) Utilizing Media Outlets 3) Constant Messaging 4) Setting up meetings with our local legislators and talking about the importance of the DREAM Act on our individual institutions 1)Phonebanking, Letter Writing (Letters to the Editors, Letters to elected officials, Emails, Petition Signing, Visual Campaign (Photos, electronic scrap book) 2)Social Media Campaign (FB, Twitter, Instagram, tumblr), Campus Newspapers (Campus leaders Letters to the Editor, Editorials, Columns, Legislative Updates), Coordinated articles and press releases. 3) Ensuring that all persons involved in the campaign are using the same messaging and language when talking to legislators, campaigning, and using social media. 4) Encouraging students to vote by providing students with information regarding the DREAM Act and key elected officials and their role/influence  in the process |

**Opposition Arguments:**

One argument that is seen in most opposition to the bill is that it increases the already large group of students that qualify for financial aid, but do not receive any. This argument is important to the discussion as it brings up the point that the State Need Grant is heavily underfunded. Besides this though it does not carry much weight; the issue of fund distribution is much different than eligibility requirements. The DREAM act is not attempting to give preferential treatment to some students over others; on the contrary, it is merely trying to create an even playing field for all Washington State students. Having universal requirements for financial aid and in-state tuition costs nothing. Currently there are about 32,000 students that are qualified for but not receiving state financial aid, the DREAM act would extend the number of eligible students by a comparatively very small number. The number of 1079 students in 2013 is slightly under 1,000, so those eligible for the DREAM Act would be a reflection of that number4. The Dream act is important in both practice and principle; we must support our students, regardless of documentation status. A DACA only bill would not be a suitable alternative as it only causes further division and sends a message that certain students are worthy of attending college and others not. Furthermore, DACA is a temporary policy meaning it can be repealed at any moment; building further legislation on top of temporary programs is unstable.

Claims have been made by Senator Bailey and others that the legislation is motivated by purely political intentions, attempting to harm the reputation of the Republican Party5. Since, the bill was not passed when the Democrats controlled both chambers the argument has been made that interest in the bill is not genuine and merely a ploy. This argument is irrelevant to the discussion as it asserts the importance of the bill can be attributed to the genuineness of the Democratic Party’s interest instead of the individuals that the bill would be helping. Besides this though, her claim is not properly supported. The bill passed the House with strong bi-partisan support 77-20, meaning over half of the Republican caucus voted in favor the DREAM act6.

3) Please explain briefly how/if this issue meets the following qualifications:

i. Is it winnable?

Yes, we believe it is definitely winnable. The last legislative session showed that there is much support for the bill in both chambers of the State Legislature. The bill passed in the House with the support of 22 Republicans, demonstrating very strong bi-partisan support, more so than any other bill of its type. The bill was not put to a vote in the Senate, a decision made by Sen. Barbara Bailey, Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee. One of the largest obstacles in getting this bill to pass is that some members of Senate Coalition and the Republican Party do not want any fragmentation in their caucuses and thus would much rather not put it to vote. In addition to the support seen in the State Legislature, there are also many organizations (including student run groups) campaigning heavily for the DREAM Act (many of them listed in the strategy chart). OneAmerica, in particular is one that we have developed a very strong partnership with and are capable of providing very relevant useful resources relating to this issue.

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4 <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/who-and-where-dreamers-are> 5http://blog.seattlepi.com/seattlepolitics/2013/04/23/republicans-on-dream-act-its-to-make-us-look-racist/
6http://blogs.seattletimes.com/politicsnorthwest/2013/03/13/state-house-passes-washington-dream-act/

ii. Does it directly impact and improve students’ lives?

The DREAM Act would definitely impact and improve not just undocumented students, but all students in Washington State. By removing the restriction placed on registering for financial aid we are making higher education a much more reachable goal for undocumented students as tuition costs are without a doubt one of the biggest obstacle students must overcome in order to receive their degree of choice. Those that view undocumented immigrants as a strain on society should be in favor of this legislation as well. Education is a way for people to develop the skills and connections they need in order to pursue future careers; careers where they have the potential to contribute to society as a whole. Allowing all students the opportunity to join in higher education promotes diversity on our campuses. Students do not just learn in the classroom, but also from the interactions they have with other students. Diversification leads to greater tolerance and understanding. Beyond those other factors, the passing of this legislation sends a very important message to our students. That message is that the government places education as a priority in their policy decisions and that all peoples should be given the same equal opportunity through the law.

iii. Does it have a clear target?

Yes, very clearly the target is the Senate Majority Coalition and the Senate Higher Ed Committee Chair, Senator Barbara Bailey. Her Coalition was the largest road block last year despite the fact that most of the coalition supports in-state tuition for students who are undocumented (HB 1079 which was passed in 2003). Secondary targets are other Senate Republicans who can influence Senator Bailey. Other secondary targets include Bailey’s constituents, whom she is very loyal to.

iv. Does it build a measurable amount of power?

We saw that a lot of students, both students who are undocumented and allies, rallied around this issue. It is very clear that this is an issue about accessibility and affordability of higher education, which is a universal, fundamental, and guiding principle for most students.

v. Does it have a clear and realistic time frame?

As a result of the progress that was made last year, this bill could very well be passed within the next couple legislative sessions. However, we are going to need to help make this a priority in a session that looks like it might be dominated by transportation centric issues.

vi. Does it have a local/state/federal organizing and lobbying angle?

The lobbying angle is mostly at a state level, but can also incorporate federal efforts too. This is a Washington State specific piece of legislation, but other states have considered State DREAM Acts, and states such as California have been successful in passing them. I believe that it would be in the best interest of all students to mobilize on this issue at both a state and national level. Access to financial aid is an issue that all students who are undocumented face despite what state they reside in.

vii. Could students build a diverse campus coalition around this issue?

This issue goes hand in hand with building diversity. Support for the DREAM Act is support for equal opportunities regardless of factors like documentation status. The Ethnic Student Center at WWU is in charge of about 16 different student clubs relating to promoting multi-culturalism. There is definite potential for building campus coalition around this issue.

viii. Is it likely to be debated and acted upon by the Legislature in the next year?

Since there are a lot of people organizing and lobbying around this issue, it is almost guaranteed that the state legislature will debate this issue once again. Hopefully because of the power this issue has with students across Washington, we will foster enough support to get the bill passed through the Senate and Senate Higher Education Committee.

ix. Will it strengthen and expand efforts within WSA?

Adopting this issue will help us foster relationships with ally organizations and groups both on and off campus. It will continue to help us emphasize our shared goals and interests in providing all students access to state financial aid to increase access and affordability of higher education. It will help to empower students who have been traditionally marginalized. Furthermore, pursuing this issue is in accordance with the WSA guiding principle that states “WSA supports improved comprehensive efforts to recruit, retain, and support underrepresented students, faculty, and staff. Diversity within curricula, advising programs and extracurricular programs must support such efforts.” It is the responsibility of WSA to fight for an accessible, affordable and quality higher education for all students regardless of their documentation status. Additionally, if the DREAM Act is successful in passage we believe that it could be a hallmark achievement for the WSA that would rank with the Student Regent and the more recent textbook bundling bills.

x. Can you provide background information and the current context of the issue?

The Washington State DREAM Act  [HB 1817 - 2013-14](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=1817) was not passed through the State Legislature, but there was a lot of progress made. The DREAM Act passed out of the house with very strong bipartisan support (77-20), and had the votes to pass out of the Senate, but unfortunately was not brought up for a vote in the Senate Higher Education Committee. Student turnout, organization, and enthusiasm around this issue was excellent. OneAmerica is a great partner organization to work with and dedicated a lot of time and resources. They also helped in drafting this [information sheet](https://www.weareoneamerica.org/sites/weareoneamerica.org/files/2013_ONEPAGER-WAdreamact.pdf)7. Students need to continue to speak to the importance of this issue with legislators.  Students who are undocumented do have access to in-state tuition (due to HB 1079), but the rising of tuition over the last several years has been pricing students and families out of college, and has dramatically increased the need for access to state financial aid.

xi. What creative and/or innovative tactics could we employ to engage the media and excite new students around this issue?

See strategy chart.

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7https://www.weareoneamerica.org/sites/weareoneamerica.org/files/2013\_ONEPAGER-WAdreamact.pdf

Additionally, we can have student groups on campus do smaller DREAM Act specific lobby trips. We can plan events such as rallies in collaboration between VP for Governmental Affairs/WSA Chapter (campus equivalent) with VP for Diversity/Ethnic Student Center (campus equivalent).