

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Students and Alumni

UC Irvine



Guillermo Paez was born in Veracruz, Mexico and moved to the United States when he was eight years old. His father, who resided in the United States, sent for him and the remainder of his family so that they could be united and the children could have better educational opportunities.

Guillermo's parents worked long hours in low-wage jobs while he and his siblings navigated the public education system. In high school, Guillermo's father was deported after being held in detention for over six months. With no access to free legal help, Guillermo's family poured their savings into helping their father. Meanwhile, their immigration status became a barrier to accessing public assistance for help with food, housing and health care. After his family was evicted from their apartment, Guillermo worked graveyard shifts to help pay rent for a small bedroom they shared with another immigrant family. Working, attending school and participating in multiple sports, Guillermo was admitted into the University of California, Irvine.

Guillermo is currently finishing his Bachelor of Arts in sociology at UC Irvine. He has been heavily involved in research on immigrants' rights in the United States, and uses his personal experience to understand the collateral consequences of immigrant detention and deportation. He is finishing his senior year by writing an honors thesis exploring how immigrant detainees navigate their immigration court proceedings. He hopes to spread awareness and bring attention to this critical issue.

Guillermo also uses his experiences in his work as an undocumented-student mentor at the UCI Dream Center. He provides guidance to undocumented students, informing them about the university's resources and research opportunities available to them. He aims to continue this work as a Ph.D. student and subsequently as a professor by developing courses that represent and speak to underserved populations.

While Guillermo completes his degree at UCI, he also contributes financially to his family. He helps in the care for his younger sister, who is also a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipient, while she recovers from leukemia. Guillermo has benefitted from the DACA program throughout his higher education journey. However, with the expiration of DACA and, thus, his work authorization on the horizon, he will face many obstacles in continuing his education into a Ph.D. program and helping his family.

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Leslie Martinez came to the U.S. when she was 2 years old, and discovered that she was undocumented in middle school while applying for a scholarship that required her social security number. She was devastated, and not sure what this meant for her future. Fortunately, the DACA program was established while Leslie was in high school. The creation of DACA opened up many more academic and career opportunities, such as an internship at the UC Irvine Medical Center. Leslie's internship experience allowed her to shadow medical professionals, which opened her eyes to the possibility of a career in the medical field.

The DACA program also made the process of applying to college a smooth process. Leslie is now a freshman at UC Irvine, majoring in chemistry. Someday, Leslie plans to attend medical school, and hopes to become a general surgeon or a pediatrician.

DACA has provided Leslie with opportunities that otherwise would not have been available to her. But with the rescission of the program, her future remains uncertain.

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UC Irvine



Nidia Bello was born in Puebla, Mexico and came to the U.S. when she was 2 years old. Her family chose to immigrate so that Nidia and her siblings would have a safer childhood, access to a high-quality education and greater opportunities for the future.

Nidia's parents have worked in the garment industry for 19 years to support their three children, and have never wavered in their support for their children's education. However, in high school, Nidia recognized that her immigration status could present a challenge to meeting her goals. She first told her high school counselor about her immigration status when discussing college, as she did not know if she would be able to apply. Her counselor assured her that

anyone could go to college and that there were people fighting to make school accessible to undocumented students. It was also during this time that Nidia started to get involved in the undocumented community, and since then has helped students like herself apply for college, internships and scholarships.

Nidia did not let the negative rhetoric about undocumented students stop her from striving toward higher education. She graduated from high school and enrolled at UC Irvine, something many told her she would not be able to do.

During her first year at UC Irvine, Nidia joined with her fellow students to put on the first Undocumented Student Graduation. For the past three years she has remained active in the immigrant community by organizing across California and advocating in Washington, D.C. Currently, she is interning with the UCI Immigrant Legal Services Center, and hopes to one day attend law school.

Nidia has benefited from the DACA program through her higher education journey, but with the future of the program in jeopardy, she will face many challenges. Nidia will graduate from UC Irvine this spring and intends to secure a job, but her future – like that of many others – relies on a solution to be able to live and thrive in the only country she has ever known home.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Students and Alumni

UC San Francisco Medical School



Jirayut "New" Latthivongskorn was born in Bangkok, Thailand, and moved to the United States when he was nine years old. His family moved to provide New and his siblings with the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and a successful future.

New's parents owned a Thai restaurant in California, where he worked throughout high school. As he was growing up, his family's immigration status was a barrier to high-quality health care, and his drive to become a doctor in an underserved community stems from this experience. In seeking out a career in medicine, he enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley and earned his Bachelor of Arts in molecular and cell biology:

physiology in 2012. During his time at UC Berkeley, New co-founded a national organization called Pre-Health Dreamers to help diversify the health professions and to provide advising, resources and advocacy for other undocumented youth. Pre-Health Dreamers now has 800 members across 42 states.

After obtaining his undergraduate degree, New enrolled in the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) School of Medicine's Program in Medical Education for the Urban Underserved (PRIME-US) in 2014 as a doctoral candidate. In 2017, he started his Master of Public Health degree at Harvard University, and is expected to obtain his M.P.H. degree by the end of the 2017-18 academic year. New plans to return for the 2018-19 academic term to complete his last year of his Ph.D. program at UCSF.

New benefitted from the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program throughout his higher education journey. However, with the expiration of DACA and thus his work authorization on the horizon, he will face many obstacles in applying to and starting a medical residency program, which would be devastating to an underserved community where he plans to practice medicine.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Students and Alumni

UC San Diego / UCLA



Marcela Zhou Huang was born in Mexicali, Baja California and brought to Calexico, California when she was 12 years old. Since arriving in the U.S., Marcela has excelled academically; she was valedictorian of her high school class, attended community college for two years and subsequently obtained her Bachelor of Science in human biology from UC San Diego in just one year after transferring, graduating well ahead of many of her peers.

In addition to her academic success, Marcela has volunteered extensively in her community. She has served as an interpreter at UC San Diego's Student-Run Free Clinic, which provides care to patients who would otherwise not have access to health care. She has also worked as a student leader for a monthly health fair in the Linda Vista community, which consists mostly of Asian and Latino populations. In this work, Marcela

found an opportunity to provide care to community members who would otherwise struggle to access high-quality medical care, and she has dedicated herself to continuing to serve this population in her postgraduate work.

After graduating from UC San Diego, Marcela was accepted to and enrolled in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, where she is currently earning her medical degree. In the spirit of continuing her community-oriented work, she chose to participate in UCLA's Program in Medical Education (PRIME) a concurrent five-year dual-degree program that focuses on developing leaders in policy, care and research in the health care of underserved populations.

Just as many of her peers in medical school, Marcela has excelled academically and contributed to the public good for as long as she has had the opportunity. In seeking out the underserved community to provide care as she studies medicine, Marcela is helping accommodate the growing need for high-quality, low-cost medical care in California. Though her work authorization is set to expire if Congress does not take action to resolve DACA's rescission, she hopes to continue being able to contribute to her home state through her medical expertise and experience.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Students and Alumni

UC Berkeley



Denisse Rojas Marquez was born in Mexico and brought to Fremont, California when she was 10 months old. Her family moved to the U.S. to seek out the economic and educational opportunities afforded to those who are born and live here.

Denisse's parents committed themselves to her family's wellbeing—both of her parents attained their GEDs, and her mother subsequently achieved a nursing degree, while her father worked in a number of trades to provide care and sustenance for Denisse and her family. Due to their undocumented status, however, high-quality health care was impossible to obtain, and a family member's early death ultimately propelled Denisse toward pursuing a career in medicine.

After graduating high school, Denisse was accepted to and enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley, more than an hour's commute from her home in Fremont. She worked part-time as a waitress to continue taking classes, and after graduating, spent time volunteering at San Francisco General Hospital.

Today, Denisse attends New York's Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai, where she expects to earn her M.D. in 2019. She hopes to focus on emergency medicine in underserved communities, where she would work with individuals who otherwise would not receive necessary care.

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program provided Denisse with the opportunity to pursue a career path that would have been impossible just a few years ago. Her studies and work ethic are all but guaranteed to endow her community with a dedicated public servant. If her work authorization were to expire, however, Denisse would not be able to finish her education and continue to provide care for the most vulnerable among us.