Increasing Inclusivity for Undocumented Asian Pacific Islander (API) Students On Your Campus

IMMIGRANTS RISING
TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION

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Introduction

Undocumented Asians and Pacific Islanders (undocuAPI) refer to immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands. Many Asian immigrants become undocumented as a result of overstaying their visas for temporary work, study, tourism, asylum, or some other form[1]. Among undocuAPI, India and China accounted for the largest share, followed by Philippines and South Korea (see figure 1). Since 2000, undocuAPI make up the fastest-growing population of undocumented immigrants in the United States[2].

Figure 1. Center for Migration Studies, State-level Unauthorized Population and Eligible-to-Naturalize Estimates (2017)

| Country	Undocumented Population	% of Asian Undocumented Population	% of Total Undocumented Population
India	629,183	37.0%	5.9%
China	304,211	17.9%	2.9%
Philippines	175,743	10.3%	1.6%
South Korea	166,257	9.8%	1.6%
Vietnam	82,270	4.8%	0.8%
Pakistan	49,653	2.9%	0.5%

Source: Center for Migration Studies, State-level Unauthorized Population and Eligible-to-Naturalize Estimates (2017).

Figure 2. Undocumented and DACA-Eligible Students in Higher Education by Race

Undocumented Postsecondary Education Students

Other 2%
White 12%
Black 15%
AAPI 25%
Latinx 46%
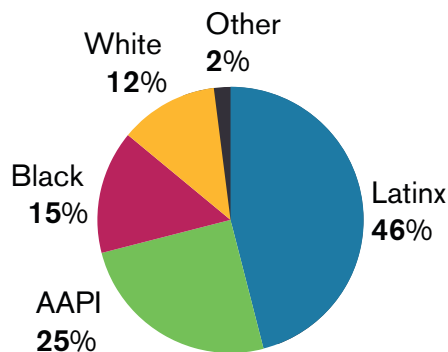
DACA-Eligible Postsecondary Education Students

Other 1%
White 10%
Black 7%
AAPI 17%
Latinx 65%
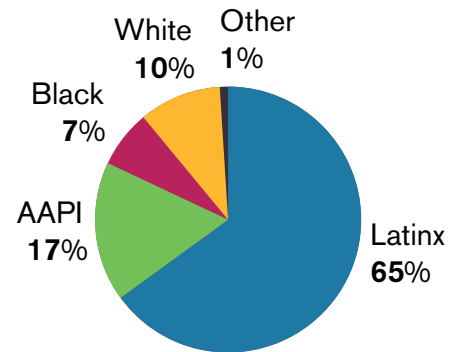
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (2018).

While institutional support for undocumented students in postsecondary institutions are increasing, undocuAPI students still feel unheard and underserved. These students point to a lack of culturally-relevant support, along with a lack of institutional knowledge of their community as the main contributing factors

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1   "How Immigration Shapes Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities." Asian Americans Advancing Justice. June 2019.
2   Ramakrishnan, Karthick and Sono Shah "One out of Every Seven Asian Immigrants is Undocumented." AAPI Data. September 2017.

to their experience. UndocuAPI students make up 25% of the undocumented population in postsecondary institutions[3]. If left unaddressed, this gap in service will only grow as the population grows.

This resource will serve as a template for educators to recognize undocuAPI presence, increase advocacy, and create safe spaces to provide support to this underseen community. These promising practices are relevant to Dream Resource Centers (DRCs)/Undocumented Student Programs (USPs), API student-serving programs, and other key student support programs.

Building community takes time, so you may not see the impact of these practices instantly. However, your continued efforts are building trust with undocuAPI students, normalizing diversity within the undocumented community, and overall improving the services you have to offer. Let's work together to foster inclusive spaces for ALL undocumented students in higher education!

Recommendations

1. Learn about the complexities of the API community.

- Examine your own assumptions about API students. Actively learn more about API students' experiences and unique needs.
- Understand the impact that the Model Minority Myth[4] has on undocuAPI students. This stereotype plays a large role in APIs not seeking or receiving support for their needs.
- Break down the diversity within the API community. Consider differences in ethnic groups, language, socioeconomic status, religion, means of migration, etc. Keep in mind the intersectionalities that undocumented API students embody.

2. Uplift undocuAPI narratives and leaders to empower your undocuAPI students.

- Uplift undocuAPI leaders and organizations on social media, presentations, and programs. This shifts the narrative to include the presence and contributions of undocuAPIs in the undocumented movement. UndocuAPI organizations around the country are **UPLIFT** and **Empowering API** in Los Angeles, **ASPIRE** in the San Francisco Bay Area, and **RAISE** in New York City.
- Develop relationships with undocuAPI students to ensure they feel comfortable in continuing to utilize resources, services, and programs. Once a student feels safe, encourage conversations that explore their relationship to their status and develop their undocumented identity.
- Empower undocuAPI students through mentorship, undocumented student or community organizations, and leadership development opportunities.
- Hire undocuAPI professional and student staff in DRCs/USPs. Educators who share the same identity not only normalizes the presence of undocuAPIs on your campus but also serve as examples for your students.

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3   Feldblum, Miriam et al. "Undocumented Students in Higher Education: How Many Students are in U.S. Colleges and Universities, and Who Are They?" New American Economy. April 2020.

4   Asian Americans were labeled as "model minorities" in a 1960s TIME article, which wrongly attributed their socioeconomic mobility to their cultural values. The Asian American community has refuted this label as a "myth" created to divide communities of color.

3. Create spaces in your DRC/USP that recognize and welcome undocuAPIs as part of the undocumented community.

- Include images of undocuAPIs on your website, social media, promotional materials, and DRCs/USPs physical spaces. Diverse content allows visitors to recognize that the undocumented community is multicultural.

- Participate in special occasions that celebrate the API community, such as API Heritage Month, Filipino American History Month, Diwali, Lunar New Year, Ramadan/Eid Al-Fitr, etc. Consider dedicating social media posts; adding posters or decorations to your space; and attending or collaborating on programs.

- Invite undocuAPIs to be guest speakers for your programs. Do not limit them to participate in topics that only pertain to undocuAPIs. Normalize having a diversity of guest speakers for programs relevant to the undocumented student population.

4. Increase the accessibility of resources for undocuAPI immigrants.

- Share resources that are translated into API languages, especially materials that can be shared with undocuAPI students' family members. Examples include **Immigrant Legal Resource Center's Know Your Rights Red Cards** and **AB60 Drivers Licenses on the DMV website**.

- Promote API-specific resources from the local community. These resources can range from community centers, health centers, legal providers, and workers centers.

- Find (or create!) scholarships that are undocu-friendly and open to non-Latinx undocumented students.

- Disseminate DRC/USP materials in spaces that API students frequent. These can include resource centers, academic departments, welcome centers, and student unions.

5. Develop partnerships between DRC/USPs and API student organizations, API-serving programs, and the Asian American Studies department.

- Cross-promote events between departments and student networks.

- Provide training across departments about their respective population needs, resources, histories, and experiences.

- Collaborate on projects and programs that explore the intersectionality of both populations. These can include research, publications, multimedia projects, workshops, programs, etc.

6. Dedicate a campus-wide effort to increasing your institutional capacity to support undocuAPI students.

- Discuss intersectionality in UndocuAlly trainings. Acknowledge the diversity of the undocumented community including undocuAPI student experiences and specific challenges undocuAPIs face.

- Develop a diverse Undocu-Student taskforce and include campus partners who identify as API and/or serve API students. Consider front-facing staff from departments like Financial Aid, Admissions, Career Services, Outreach & Recruitment, etc.

- Ensure DRC/USPs participate in programs that target API students by key departments such as, Outreach & Recruitment, Associated Students, etc.

Read more about the undocuAPI experience:

- **Undocumented Asians, Left in the Shadows** by Soo Mee Kim and Aggie J. Yellow Horse (2019)
- "Undocumented Youth Rise Up" in **We Too Sing America: South Asian, Arab, Muslim, and Sikh Immigrants Shape Our Multiracial Future** by Deepa Iyer (2017)
- **Paula's Story: How Building Community Overcame Feelings of Exclusion** by **UndocuWisdom** (2017)
- **Model (Undocumented) Minorities and "Illegal" Immigrants: Centering Asian Americans and US Carcerality in Undocumented Student Discourse** by Tracy Lachica Buenavista (2016)
- **Undocumented Immigration and Asian and Pacific Islander Students: An Issues and Policy Primer for Developing Critical Awareness and Advocacy among API Educators** by Tracy Lachica Buenavista (2012)

Connect with organizations that support undocuAPIs:

- **Asian Americans Advancing Justice** (AAJC)
- **Asian Pacific Labor Alliance** (APALA)
- **Empowering Pacific Islander Communities** (EPIC)
- **Korean Resource Center** (KRCLA)
- **National Korean American Service & Education Consortium** (NAKASEC)
- **South Asian Americans Leading Together** (SAALT)
- **VietRISE**

Highlight undocuAPI stories:

- Community Leaders
  - **Jose Antonio Vargas**, a Filipino journalist-activist and author of **Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen**
  - **New Latthivongskorn**, a DACAmented physician and co-founder of **Pre-Health Dreamers**
  - **Phal Sok**, a Cambodian refugee who was formerly incarcerated and an organizer at **Youth Justice Coalition Los Angeles** who empowers immigrant youth for justice
  - **Set Hernandez Rongkilyo**, a community activist, **filmmaker** and co-founder of **UndocuFilmmakers Collective**
  - **Soultree**, a Filipino **artist** and healer with roots to the Marshall Islands
  - **Tam Tran**, a **filmmaker**, early **advocate for the Dream Act** and founding member of IDEAS at UCLA
- Videos
  - **Julie Yeeun Kim by Define American** (2020)
  - Immigrants Rising Entrepreneurs (2019-2023): **Bo Daraphant**, **Cris Mercado**, **Eun-Jeong**, and **Ian**
  - **The Women of UPLIFT** (2018)
  - **Halmoni with Ju Hong** (2016)

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About Us

Founded in 2006, Immigrants Rising transforms individuals and fuels broader changes. With resources and support, undocumented young people are able to get an education, pursue careers, and build a brighter future for themselves and their community. Immigrants Rising is a fiscally-sponsored project of Community Initiatives. For more information, visit **immigrantsrising.org**.

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