

Solutions for Noncredit Programs: Roadmap from Noncredit to Credit Programs

This resource is part of the [Building Pathways to AB 540](#) resource series that discusses opportunities available for different educational institutions to build pathways for individuals who do not yet meet the eligibility for AB 540.

This section provides an overview of the opportunities that noncredit programs can provide, especially for older undocumented students who want to continue their education. It includes step-by-step guidance and tools that educators can use to open doors for in-state tuition & state-based financial aid through AB 540.

Overview

Many older undocumented students begin their journey to higher education through obtaining their high school diploma through an adult school program. Taking these classes is an excellent opportunity that allows them to gain the skills and knowledge they need to get their high school diploma or GED, learn English, or take the classes necessary to pursue their educational goals.

These programs offer options for every stage of life and almost every goal, from building job skills to living independently to developing a new interest. The benefit of participating in a noncredit program at a California Community College is that the vast majority of classes are offered tuition-free. In addition, most programs have a support system and student services that will help them explore academic goals and make a plan to meet their needs.

Many students want to obtain their GED or high school diploma as quickly as possible. However, undocumented students need to be aware of the opportunities available to them if they complete the attendance requirements for AB 540 at the same time. AB 540 allows undocumented and other eligible students to pay in-state tuition and be eligible to apply for state-based financial aid if they choose to pursue a credential or degree at a California college or university. There are two main requirements for AB 540:

- Attending three years of full-time classes (or the part-time equivalent) in California at a high school, adult school, or noncredit program/credit program at the California Community Colleges.

Note: Students can mix and match attendance at various schools.

- Obtaining a high school diploma, GED, HiSet, associate degree, or minimum transfer requirements to the CSU or UC.

For more detailed information, check out our [Quick Guide to AB 540](#).

Providing undocumented students with this information can be an important motivation for them to consider pursuing higher education. It is invaluable for undocumented students to have a roadmap to credit classes at California Community Colleges.

Building Pathways from Noncredit to Credit Programs

In 2021, Immigrants Rising was privileged to collaborate with Hilda Rivera, a former educator and mentor to undocumented students at North Orange Continuing Education (NOCE), a noncredit program in Orange County. Hilda was informing individual students about the opportunities available to them through AB 540. She also was very effective in connecting her students to the proper personnel at noncredit programs or community colleges within her district. To ensure that NOCE staff and students were aware of the necessary steps to obtain AB 540, we collectively built the [NOCE Noncredit to Credit Worksheet](#). This resource became an excellent tool for Hilda to work with individual students and a resource that students could refer back to to ensure they stayed on the right path.

This worksheet outlines the following steps that allow undocumented students to successfully meet their educational goals while fulfilling the requirements for AB 540. It also includes important contact information and valuable resources. This worksheet follows the steps listed below:

- Step 1: Explore academic goals and review academic history.
- Step 2: Review the transcripts and attendance records from all previous schools.
- Step 3: Meet with a counselor to develop a student education plan to meet academic goals and AB 540 criteria.
- Step 4: Receive the information and resources to become eligible for in-state tuition and state-based financial aid in California.
- Step 5: Verify that the student meets the eligibility requirements and make plans to apply to a California Community College.
- Step 6: Apply to the California Community College, as well as the California Dream Act and EOPS program, if applicable.
- Step 7: Submit transcripts and/or attendance verification letter with their AB 540 affidavit to admissions and records at the CCC.
- Step 8: Register for classes at a CCC to get a degree or certificate.

Using NOCE as a Model for a Statewide Impact

Based on the success of the NOCE Noncredit to Credit Worksheet, Immigrants Rising developed a [Statewide Template: Noncredit to Credit](#) that will allow other noncredit programs to build pathways for their students.

We encourage you to use this [Statewide Template: Noncredit to Credit](#) to support students as they transition from noncredit to credit programs. The individual steps outlined in the program ensure that students not only meet their educational goals but are able to meet eligibility for AB 540 and apply for state-based financial aid through the California Dream Act. Feel free to make a copy of and modify the document to meet the needs of your noncredit program.

What's Next?

We hope this resource has provided you with the necessary information to speak about building pathways from noncredit programs to credit classes with confidence.

For any questions, please contact Nancy Jodaitis, Director of Higher Education at nancy@immigrantsrising.org.

The [Building Pathways to AB 540](#) resource series was co-created by Nancy Jodaitis and Gladys Puente Valentine, who collaborated on the research, writing, and envisioning. Gladys served as a community researcher with Immigrants Rising and formally was the Undocumented Student Coordinator at Sierra College. The layout and design is by Grace Yeo, with copyediting support from Keziah Aurin.

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Immigrants Rising helps you make decisions based on your potential, not your perceived limits. Visit our website so you can see what's possible: immigrantsrising.org. For inquiries regarding this resource, please contact Nancy Jodaitis, Director of Higher Education at nancy@immigrantsrising.org. Published 3/2024.