



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Financial Aid Council; Washington State Student Services Commission (WSSSC)

**CC:** Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC); State Board for Community & Technical Colleges (SBCTC)

**FROM:** DEI in WA Undocumented Students Work Team; Multicultural Students Services Directors Council (MSSDC)

**DATE:** March 18, 2021

**RE:** Recommendations and considerations for equitable distribution of Undocumented Student Emergency Aid funds

As we continue to serve students experiencing significant financial, social, physical and mental health crises due to the COVID 19 pandemic, it is imperative to recognize that our undocumented students have been largely left out of federal and state funded relief efforts. Additionally, the concurrent pandemics of systemic racism, xenophobia, and violence against people of color and immigrants continues to create fear and mistrust, and imposes harm on our undocumented communities. Within this context, the DEI in Washington Undocumented Student Work Team asks that colleges examine their approaches in serving undocumented students, and work to ensure supports are advancing racial and economic equity, especially in regards to the emergency aid funding made available from Section 14 of ESHB 1368 and allocated by WSAC.

As part of the guidelines provided by WSAC, colleges are required to develop policies for equitable awarding and distribution of funds. Additionally, WSAC has encouraged colleges to implement processes that are “low barrier,” “student friendly,” and “as inclusive as possible.”

As your campus works to develop policies and procedures to distribute this emergency aid to undocumented students, please remember that WSAC guidance allows for local flexibility and discretion. We encourage colleges to be intentional to ensure policies do not create unnecessary and arbitrary barriers for students.

### ***Application Process***

In considering the application process and the application itself, the following considerations are recommended:

- Be mindful of language that can deter undocumented populations from requesting help (use terms like “request form” or “fund dispersal form” instead of “application form” which may shut out students)
- Simplify the form and only ask for necessary information to protect sensitive data and student privacy
- Ensure the form is available in multiple languages



- Using a “no wrong door approach,” consider using a similar or the same form or process for other types of emergency aid (i.e. CARES) to simplify and normalize the process

### ***Outreach to Students***

- Connect with departments who work closely with undocumented students (i.e DREAMers Taskforce, ABE/ESL, Transitions Center, Benefits Hub, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion center)
- Ensure communication is coordinated campuswide and does not only come from Financial Aid
- Build upon existing trust and relationships with undocumented students and have advisors and navigators connect directly with students
- Host application workshops or Q&A sessions and identify a point of contact students can easily connect with if they have questions or concerns
- Connect with external stakeholders such as local school districts, non-profits, churches, immigrant rights organizations, and other community groups
- Ensure that outreach is multilingual, culturally aware, and mindful of communication differences
- Broadly communicate funding on your college’s social media and website to spread awareness and send information en masse to faculty, staff, and students using email, text messaging, and other means

### ***Expanding Access***

- Include students from all programs and areas of study such as students enrolled in ABE, ESL, Running Start, and high school completion programs
- Encourage, but not require students to complete a WASFA application
- Be culturally aware when connecting with students, families, and communities to be mindful of communication differences
- Use symbolism, like an office decal (many campuses use a butterfly symbol), to signal a safer space for undocumented students to have conversations with trained staff

### ***Bridging Gaps in Funding***

It is important to recognize that our undocumented students have been disproportionately impacted by the economic and health impacts of COVID, are largely ineligible for federal or state stimulus or public benefits, and have significant unmet needs. While some colleges have secured alternative emergency aid funding to support undocumented students, it has not been enough to meet the need. As a result, we encourage colleges to consider how this new funding can help bridge the gaps that exist by these recommendations:

- Examine unmet emergency needs of undocumented students from prior quarters. Review previous applications and awards to disburse additional funds to enrolled students without requiring them to reapply
- Ensure the privacy of student information and the safety of students, identify students who might qualify who have not submitted a WASFA application



We appreciate your commitment to equity and racial justice and hope you will partner with us in this work to honor and serve our undocumented students and communities. We welcome the opportunity to further discuss additional ways our various groups can collaborate on training, policy recommendations, and ensuring equitable access to basic needs supports for all students regardless of citizenship status.

In Solidarity,

DEI in Washington Undocumented Students Work Team Members:

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