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UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT ACCESS TO IN-STATE TUITION

The studies below show largely positive high school completion, college persistence and college completion outcomes associated with the state of Texas's in-state resident tuition policy (HB1403; SB 1528), particularly educational outcomes of Latina/o students. These policies will continue to be debated, as agencies at the state and national level seek to achieve college completion and labor market goals.

As the 84th Texas legislature authors Keough (R) and Tinderholt (R) file House Bill 360, which would deny undocumented students in-state resident tuition if they are unable to provide citizenship or lawful residency verification, the topic of undocumented student college access is again being discussed. Since Texas enacted in-state tuition to undocumented students (HB 1403; SB 1528) in 2001, to date there have been 18 other states that have established similar legislation while others either have rescinded or banned such policies.

As the state of Missouri considers also enacting an in-state resident tuition (IRT) policy for undocumented students, a study by Potochnick (2014; Olson & Potochnick, 2015) considers whether IRT motivates undocumented students to graduate high school. The sample for this quasi-experimental study includes Mexican foreign-born non-citizens, who are 16-19 years old between 1998 and 2011 (N=6,603) from the Current Population Survey Merged Outgoing Rotation Group. This study included 11 states with IRT policies as of 2011 (including Texas) and compared them to non-policy states using a difference-in-difference design to identify a policy effect. Findings illustrate an eight-percent decrease in the dropout rate of Mexican foreign-born non-citizens in states with IRT compared to non-policy states. To further assess the effect of IRT policies, Potochnick ran multivariate regressions that controlled for individual and state characteristics that may differ between policy and non-policy states. She found even stronger evidence that IRT policies reduced the likelihood of dropout for undocumented youth when she used more statistically advanced analysis (Olson & Potochnick, 2015; Potochnick, 2014).

Other studies have also researched the effect in-state resident tuition have on the college persistence of Latino students and completion goals of states with in-state resident tuition. For example, Flores & Horn (2010) found that a large, selective 4-year postsecondary institution in Texas successfully retained 95% of its in-state tuition Latino student recipients at a similar rate to non-in-state resident tuition eligible Latino students (90%).

The study affirmed that this student population is able to succeed in higher education along with other peers in the same academic level.

Another report recently completed by the Migration Policy Institute gathered information on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) from particular states (including Texas), and found states with in-state resident tuition policies, state financial aid, and programs for adult learners or dual credit programs allowed for an increase in college-going and college completion for DACA recipients (Hooker, McHugh, & Mathay, 2015). The interviews they conducted in areas such as Austin and Houston found students who qualified for HB1137 (which allows students to remain in high school up to the age of 26) and who were DACA recipients were able to take more courses each semester; thus reducing the amount of time to degree completion. The state's wide educational eligibility rules allows for the greatest access to higher education for undocumented students who may have a nontraditional path to higher education. In this report, Texas was an ideal example of creating equitable access to higher education for undocumented students.

The studies above illustrate effects in-state tuition policies for undocumented students have on such issues as state level high school completion, college persistence, and college completion. Texas legislators and other stakeholders should consider these findings, among other research, to make an informed decision about in-state resident tuition policy for undocumented students, as 51.8% of Latina/o students account for the largest percentage of total enrollment in Texas public schools (Texas Education Agency Report, 2014).

References

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