

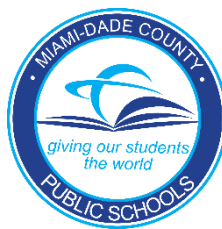


# ***Post-Secondary Resource Guide***

*for*

## Undocumented and Mixed Status Families

Miami-Dade County Public Schools  
2021



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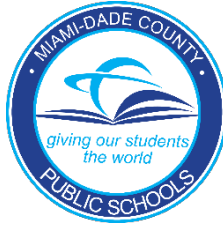
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***Post-Secondary Resource Guide for Undocumented and Mixed-Status Students***

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# Introduction



## Introduction

Planning for education after high school is often a complicated and scary process. This process can be even more daunting for immigrant students and families. The state of Florida is estimated to graduate about 5,000 undocumented students each year. Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) understands the unique challenges and cultural barriers faced by undocumented and mixed status families and has prioritized the development of resources and professional post-secondary advisement for all students.

If you are a high school student who is undocumented or whose legal guardians are undocumented, please understand that you **can** attend college and there are many opportunities open to you. You likely have many questions about going to and paying for college. This resource guide was created to provide guidance and resources for assistance to undocumented students and mixed-status families as they navigate the pathway to a post-secondary education.

Students who were born in the United States and are part of a mixed immigration status family should know that they have the same rights to federal and state resources as any other citizen. There may be a few additional hurdles for mixed-status families when it comes to completing documents but be assured that there is a solution to every challenge and there is always help if you ask for assistance.

The College Assistance Program (CAP), our Districts' post-secondary advisement program is available in every high school. CAP Advisors are highly trained professionals who provide post-secondary advisement for all students. CAP Advisors receive specific training on supporting undocumented students and mixed-status families. Mixed-status students should certainly seek advice from their CAP Advisor or school counselor. If you have concerns about telling your advisor or counselor about your immigration status, please know that by law, school officials cannot disclose immigration status. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits school districts from releasing or sharing personally identifiable information, including citizenship status, with outside entities.

Our local South Florida community also has numerous organizations that support the District's efforts to create a pathway to a post-secondary education for underserved and first-generation students. This guide was created in collaboration with many of these organizations that stand prepared to assist families in all communities in our county.

## Alumni Voice

There is no better evidence of the fact that undocumented and mixed status students can go to college than hearing it from students who have done just that. Student voice is an important component in the development of this resource guide. We have surveyed many students who have gone through this process and have included their insights in every section of this document. The following testimonials are the words of some M-DCPS alumni who went through this process and successfully enrolled in college. It is their hope that you will gain inspiration from their successes.

*“There is nothing that we cannot do. While it may seem impossible because no one in your family or immediate circle’s done it, it is up to you to create that path. Five years ago, I thought that I would never attend or graduate from college. Today, I am on my way to attending law school in the fall. Advocate for yourself because you are deserving of it all and more. Never forget where you came from and always remember to move forward.”*

– 2016 South Dade Senior High School Graduate

*“Transitioning from high school to college was one of the hardest times of my life. Through it all, my high school counselor mentored me and turned every no into a yes. She convinced to go to Miami Dade College, and it was by far the best choice for me. With perseverance and determination, anything is possible.”*

– 2016 North Miami Senior High School Graduate

*"In life we may tend to feel restricted to our given mutually shared circumstances, but I am here to say we are not. It is up to us to take our circumstances and make opportunities out of them. Once we do this, we become victorious not only in the sense of self accomplishments, but also in passing the torch and providing hope to those who will come after us. Whenever you feel like your back is against the wall and feel like giving up, just keep on pushing forward to get across your goal line in life."*

– 2018 Homestead Senior High School Graduate

*“Dream big and work hard. Nobody charges for dreaming and your hard work will make your dreams come true. Always remember that if life hits you, stand up and hit it twice as hard.”*

– 2017 Alonzo and Tracy Morning Senior High School Graduate

*“Going to school as a Dreamer is definitely a possibility, you have to be willing to put the time and effort to do the research and talk to counselors about your options. Never in a million years could high school me have ever imagined that I would be attending the University of Miami (my dream university). Don’t get discouraged, do your research, and talk to people who know about options for students in our situation!”*

– 2016 Miami Killian Senior High School Graduate

*“There will always be a way to get past a problem. Take it step by step and don’t lose courage.”*

– 2020 Center for International Education Graduate

*“Don’t be afraid to ask questions. You never know if your question is a source of inspiration and prompts action in support of other undocumented students. Confiding in a counselor or a teacher at my high school was also one of the best decisions I made because I felt less alone through the added stress when none of my friends could relate. There are people out there that want to help you, but you have to take that initiative to ask for help.”*

– 2017 Coral Gables Senior High School Graduate

*“We are haunted by the fact that a clear source of funding (FAFSA and Florida Bright Futures) is not applicable to us. These thoughts will haunt your mind during the research/application process, but know that they do not define what you can achieve.”*

– 2018 TERRA Environmental Research Institute Graduate

*“I pursued my bachelor’s degree at Franklin and Marshall College. I was humbled and inspired by the privilege to my dreams come alive. It became clear that I was more than a number, and my undocumented status did not define the person I could become. I was blessed to be part of a talented team of peers eager to make a mark in our fields, community, and the world.*

– 2016 North Miami Beach Senior High School Graduate

*“Don’t lose hope and focus on your academics, the doors will open to those who work hard.”*

– 2019 Miami Senior High School Graduate



# Getting Ready for College



## Getting Ready for College

The first thing you must know about continuing your education after high school is that it is a four-year process. The path to college begins the moment you begin taking high school courses. It really is never too early to think about the future. The more a student does during their early years to improve their academic skills, learn to manage their time, and discover their strengths all while learning about their post-secondary options and college admissions requirements, the better prepared he/she will be when the time comes to decide which path to take and secure a bright and promising future.

Starting early is a must for undocumented students. When reading this guide you will realize that your immigration status does not have to be a barrier to overcome so that you can achieve your goal of a post-secondary education. However, you cannot wait until senior year to create the academic portfolio and extracurricular responsibilities that colleges are seeking. Students who completed M-DCPS' Undocumented Alumni Student Survey indicated that starting early is the most important component of college planning.

Many of the opportunities open to undocumented students will be at highly competitive schools with private funding through merit scholarships (for more scholarship information refer to page 21). However, there are pathways to attend public universities and colleges within your own state. Many undocumented students have unique stories that have remained untold. Colleges and universities are looking to admit students with these stories that are filled with passion, commitment, and resilience. However, they are also looking for students who have prepared themselves for the rigors of college work, which can be ascertained through a student's high school transcript. Each course taken in high school tells a unique story about a student's preparation and journey. This includes the ease or difficulty of course work, the type of electives, and the academic focus of the student's courses. Furthermore, particular courses may better prepare students for certain majors or special programs of study.

It is also important to understand that grades matter. Your grade point average will reveal important information to those who review your transcript. Most private scholarships and merit based institutional aid is only offered to students with high grade point averages and outstanding academic records. It is very difficult to significantly improve your grade point average during your senior year. This is truly a four-year commitment to excellence.

However, if you started out high school with lower grades than you had hoped, don't be alarmed. It often takes time for students to gain the maturity, confidence, and insight to improve their grades. There are many post-secondary opportunities open to students in our community and your grade point average will not eliminate your opportunity to attend college. This guide will show you that there are a variety of options available to you. Reading through this guide and familiarizing yourself with college lingo,

admissions jargon, and financial aid verbiage will help you as you go through the college admissions process.

## **Acceleration Opportunities**

In the State of Florida, students have the opportunity to accelerate their learning by earning college credits for free while in high school. The more courses and credits a student completes while in high school, the less time and money he/she will spend in college. Getting started early with college courses saves time and money. These acceleration options are open to all students so you will most definitely want to consider this when planning your college preparation coursework.

Students may start taking college courses as early as 6th grade. This process of taking college courses while still in middle or high school is called dual enrollment. Dual enrollment gives students an early start at earning college credits for free while in middle or high school. (Several colleges or universities are partnered with your high school to offer these courses.) You must have a 2.5 GPA to be eligible for the introductory course. All other courses require a minimum 3.0 GPA.

Another opportunity for acceleration is taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses and exams. AP courses are college-level courses taught in high school. After completing the AP course, students typically take the AP exam in that subject, which can earn them credits and accelerated placement in college. Students must earn a score of 3 or higher to earn college credit.

Lastly, students can use CLEP (College-Level Examination Program). CLEP was created to help students with prior knowledge to earn credits without sitting through an actual course term. Students can take the exam for a particular subject and if they pass, they earn the college credit in that subject. Thousands of U.S. colleges and universities accept credits earned through CLEP.

Speak to your school counselor or school administrator to learn more specific details about the acceleration options available at your school.

# Applying for College



## Applying to College

Applying to college can be a daunting task for any student and their family. There are so many different pieces to the puzzle that you might not know where to begin. This is all new to you, and if you are a student who is undocumented or if you come from a mixed-status family, the puzzle becomes more complicated as there is more to understand and learn. The good news is that there are various opportunities for you to pursue after high school, and there are people and resources to support you along the way!

As you learned in the previous section of this guide, one of the best things you can do to set yourself up for success after high school, is to start planning early. Among other reasons, starting early allows you to begin the preparations and understand the options available to you. By beginning early, you can make yourself aware of schools' requirements for admission and start working towards meeting or exceeding those requirements.

One of the early steps in the college application process is building a strategic list of schools to which you plan to apply. Doing this early in high school can help you keep track of the various requirements and deadlines required of schools that not only accept students who are undocumented, but that support them financially, personally, and professionally. These are the institutions you will want to focus your efforts on applying and ultimately getting admitted into.

Contrary to what many students believe, there are many colleges and universities that are welcoming of students who are undocumented, and they want to support you in your future success. When building your college list, keep these various categories in mind and be sure to work them into your list.

### Public Institutions of Florida

First, be sure to research the twelve public universities within the state of Florida as well as the community and state colleges of Florida. The *U.S. News & World Report* names Florida number one for higher education for the third consecutive year this year. You can learn more about these universities at the State University System of Florida [website](#). As a soon to be graduate of a Florida high school (more details on residency waivers later in this guide), you can qualify for in-state tuition at any of these schools. This means that if you are accepted to one of these institutions, you would be charged the same amount as any Florida resident and you could potentially cover some of that cost with other financial aid and scholarship money (more details on financial aid and scholarships in later sections).

A wonderful public institution in our local community which can potentially provide undocumented students with an outstanding and free post-secondary education is the [Miami Dade College Honors Program](#). The Honors College lays a foundation that prepares students for success by providing a rigorous academic

program and connecting students with research and network opportunities. Once admitted to the Honors College, students receive the Honors College Fellows Award which covers the cost of attending Miami Dade College at a Florida resident tuition rate. As part of the program faculty assist students with applying to other scholarships that may assist in the funding of the continuation of their post-secondary education. The program is available on four of the Miami Dade College campuses, including Eduardo J. Padron, Wolfson, North, and Kendall.

## **Private Institutions**

Another set of schools that you will want to research and possibly include in your list are private institutions. Since these schools are not managed or funded primarily by state or local governments, they have the flexibility to set their own policies regarding the application and admittance of undocumented students. This means that many of these schools do not require a social security number or any citizenship documentation in their application or financial aid process. This makes them a viable option for students who are undocumented or come from mixed-status families. We have a few of these local, private institutions right here in our community that not only admit undocumented students, but also provide financial and other supports for them. These include University of Miami, Barry University, St. Thomas University, and Florida Memorial University.

As many are aware, private institutions are often quite pricey, especially in comparison to the in-state tuition of a state college or university. However, do not cross off a college because of the sticker price as the majority of students are not paying the entire cost of attendance at these private institutions. It's important to keep in mind that some private institutions have more funding and scholarship money available to give to students based on merit (your academic accomplishments), and/or need regardless of your citizenship status.

You might want to pay extra attention to schools that promote that they meet 100% of demonstrated need. What this means is that students who have been accepted to these schools are often offered significant financial aid based on a combination of need and merit. Their aid packages will cover up to the cost of attendance, which typically include private institutions, transportation, books and supplies, and other associated costs. These offers might include work-study or loans (meaning you might be required to pay a portion of it back after graduating), but this is not always the case, and if it is, you are not required to accept the loans offered. In fact, you can choose to reduce the loan amount or decline it altogether! You can review a list of schools that meet 100% demonstrated need and see those whose packages include loans on the blog [College Greenlight](#) or in [Big Future](#).

When it comes to private institutions, it's always a good idea to research the schools' individual policies and financial aid information to see how they might meet your individual needs. This is also another important place to work closely with a trusted

school college advisor or counselor and the admissions representatives at these private institutions to make sure you learn about all ways the schools can meet your personal and family needs.

A private institution in our own community that has a program specifically designed for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students is the University of Miami. [The U Dreamers Program](#) is available to academically talented DACA students who meet admissions requirements. It is available to both graduating high school seniors and transfer students in the state of Florida. The University of Miami created the U Dreamers program as part of their commitment to providing students of all citizenship statuses with opportunities to nurture their talents and pursue their goals. This program is intended to meet 100 percent of an admitted student's demonstrated financial need. The award could potentially cover tuition and fees, on-campus housing, meal plan, and University health insurance.

### **Miami-Dade Technical Colleges**

Another outstanding opportunity for you to consider as you think about continuing your education after high school is our district's robust technical college programs. Some careers do not require a bachelor's degree to get started. Some require special licenses and certifications and can take less than two years to acquire. Our Miami-Dade Public School's Technical Colleges are not only open to all students regardless of immigration status, but they are also often very flexible and relatively affordable. Many of these programs, which are spread throughout Miami-Dade County, are very successful at graduating students quickly and supporting them in securing profitable careers upon program completion. Post-secondary training programs offered at the Technical Colleges are designed to support the local workforce, with pathways in the areas of Industrial/Technical, Health/Medical, Business/Computers, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Public Service. Check out the variety of programs and their details at Miami-Dade County Public Schools Technical College webpage at <https://www.careerinayear.com/> .



# Financial Aid



## Financial Aid

### FAFSA

FAFSA is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid which is overseen by the federal government and provides financial aid to many individuals who want to pursue a post-secondary education.

Federal Financial aid is available to U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or eligible non-citizens with a valid Social Security Number. You must have (or expect to have) a high school diploma, or GED, and register with Selective Service if you are a male between 18-25 years of age. You are ineligible for federal aid if you have any past federal convictions (including sale or possession of illegal drugs).

After completing a FAFSA application, it is possible to be offered different types of aid such as grants (need-based aid that does not need to be paid back), loans (low-interest and no-interest loans, including Stafford, Perkins, PLUS) and work-study (the government pays your college to pay you for your work).

To qualify for federal aid, students must complete and sign a FAFSA either online or submitting it through the mail. In order to complete a FAFSA, you must have a valid social security number (SSN). Additionally, having a SSN will enable you to create a FSA ID (username and password) which is needed to sign the FAFSA electronically.

If a student lives with a single parent or both parents, either the single parent or one of the married parents is required to create an FSA ID provided that the parent has a SSN and the parent(s) must complete the parent demographic and financial sections of the FAFSA.

Presently, undocumented students, TPS, or DACA students, are **not** eligible for federal student aid. However, you may be eligible for state or college financial aid, in addition to private scholarships. Additionally, undocumented students are eligible to receive in-state tuition in Florida. (More information can be found on page 18.)

Since a SSN is necessary to complete the FAFSA, most undocumented students aren't eligible to file one since they lack this key component. However, DACA students with SSNs can complete the FAFSA form, but must answer the question that asks whether the student is a citizen by selecting the answer that states, "No, I am not a citizen or eligible noncitizen." ***Note: Even though DACA students complete a FAFSA application, DACA students will still not be able to receive any federal aid; however, it provides post-secondary institutions with information about a student's financial need.***

It is very important to note that a student's parents' citizenship status does not affect the student's eligibility for federal student aid. In fact, the FAFSA does not ever ask

about the parents' citizenship status. If the parent(s) does not have a SSN, the FAFSA can still be completed, as the parent will enter 000-00-000 in the parent's SSN section. If your parent doesn't have a SSN, then subsequently they will not be able to create an FSA ID and therefore, won't be able to sign the FAFSA electronically. The signature page will have to be printed out after completing the FAFSA, signed by the parent(s) and then mailed to the address indicated.

If the student is completing the FAFSA form online at [fafsa.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov) or through the myStudentAid mobile app and the parent(s) and/or student filed their income tax returns with the IRS and certain requirements are met such as having SSNs, then access to the IRS DRT (Data Retrieval Tool) may be available. With IRS DRT, this means that the parent(s) and students tax information will populate into the FAFSA if the student prefers to do this instead of manually entering in the information. If the parent(s) and /or student didn't file income tax returns with the IRS, the information can be entered manually on the FAFSA website or through the myStudentAid mobile app. If you are completing the FAFSA form to be sent by mail, follow the instructions that detail how to answer the parental financial information questions.

It is recommended that undocumented students do not complete the FAFSA since they are ineligible for Federal Financial Aid. It is important for you to be aware however, that colleges may consider your application incomplete without the FAFSA. Undocumented students should reach out to the college admissions representatives to discuss why their FAFSA is not complete. These representatives will be able to provide you with other options for demonstrating financial need that does not require you to complete the FAFSA. Undocumented students may need to utilize Financial Aid Calculators to help post-secondary institutions determine the student's financial need since they are not able to complete the FAFSA. Below please see some financial aid calculator links:

[https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/paying-your-share/expected-family-contribution-calculator#efc\\_status](https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/paying-your-share/expected-family-contribution-calculator#efc_status)

<https://www.savingforcollege.com/calculators/financial-aid-calculator>

<https://finaid.org/calculators/finaidestimate/>

## **CSS Profile**

As learned in the opening section of this guide, there are ways to earn financial aid outside of completing the FAFSA. Oftentimes, the largest amounts of aid offered to students comes from the colleges or universities to which you've been accepted. This is when the College Scholarship Services (CSS) Profile becomes important.

The CSS Profile is an online application (separate from the FAFSA) that collects information used by nearly 400 colleges and scholarship programs (included in this list are many of the private institutions explained in the beginning of this guide) to award

non-federal aid (money from the school, not the government). There is a cost associated with completing this application, but if you are a student who qualifies for the National Free and Reduced Lunch Program, you are eligible to receive a Fee Waiver from the College Board (see your CAP Advisor to access this waiver). The College Board Fee waiver will allow you, among other things, to complete the CSS profile for free.

Although the CSS Profile requires input of similar financial information as the FAFSA, and even asks for more detailed information, the application *does not require a social security number* to be completed by students or parents reporting information on the form. Completing the CSS profile is a lengthy process and requires several documents and a lot of financial information. You can get ahead of the game by starting to collect the necessary documents before the application opens on October 1<sup>st</sup> of your senior year. In order to complete the CSS profile, you will need your most recently completed tax returns, W-2 forms, and other records of current year income, records of untaxed income and benefits, assets and bank statements.

Keep in mind that it is always a good idea to get financial aid forms done as early as possible. This applies to both the FAFSA if you're able to complete it (see section on FAFSA) as well as the CSS profile and any other institutional financial aid forms. Getting these applications, along with your college applications done soon after they open is the best way to ensure that you meet schools' "priority deadlines". Priority deadlines are typically college, university, and scholarship deadlines that ensure your application will be reviewed for the most amount of merit scholarship as well as other financial aid from schools or scholarship programs. Many of these deadlines are as early as October 30th, which is why preparing parts of your application and collecting documents before applications even open will ensure that you're able to meet these early deadlines. Keep in mind that both the FAFSA and CSS profile will become available for completion on October first of your senior year.

To watch a step-by-step tutorial on how to complete the CSS Profile, visit [WWW.CSSProfile.CollegeBoard.org](http://WWW.CSSProfile.CollegeBoard.org)

# Bright Futures Scholarship and Florida Financial Aid



## **Bright Futures Scholarship and Florida Financial Aid**

Students seeking state scholarship and grant awards for postsecondary institutions in the State of Florida will need to complete the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA). This single application is utilized to evaluate the student for several scholarships offered by the State of Florida. High school graduating students should apply for state-funded programs by submitting the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA) which opens on October 1<sup>st</sup> each year. The FFAA Application can be found at [www.FloridaStudentFinancialAid.org](http://www.FloridaStudentFinancialAid.org)

Click [here](#) for steps to complete the application.

One of the scholarship opportunities provided by the State of Florida is the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. The Bright Futures Scholarship establishes lottery-funded scholarships to reward Florida high school graduates for high academic achievement. Bright Futures awards include Florida Academic Scholars award (FAS), Florida Medallion Scholars award (FMS), Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award (GSC) and the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars award (GSV). To apply for a Bright Futures Scholarship, students must submit a completed, error free Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA) during their last year in high school (after October 1 and prior to August 31 after high school graduation). The graduate must enroll in a degree program, certificate program or applied technology program at an eligible Florida public or private postsecondary education institution to receive this scholarship. The Bright Futures Scholarship automatically renews each year (up to the scholarship limit) if the student maintains the required GPA and earns the required credit hours. More information about the Bright Futures Scholarship can be found at <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/SAPBFMAIN/SAPBFMAIN>

Undocumented students, including DACA students, do not qualify for federal or state aid in Florida. This includes the MACHEN Florida Opportunity Scholarship, Bright Futures, National Merit, and federal loans and grants. However, it is strongly recommended that all students, including those who are undocumented, complete the FFAA. If an undocumented student has met the academic requirements for a Bright Futures Scholarship, they should complete the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA) during their senior year. Undocumented and DACA students will not be awarded the Bright Futures Scholarship at the time of completion; however, should their immigration status change or State legislation change within in five years of their graduation, students may be reinstated and use the scholarship to go to college. If the application was not completed by August 31<sup>st</sup> of their high school graduation year, they will not be able to apply at a later date even if their immigration status has changed.

# Florida Residency Tuition Rates



## Florida Residency Tuition Rates

The State of Florida offers in-state tuition rates to students who reside in the State of Florida. Students who are not residents of Florida for tuition purposes must pay additional out-of-state tuition. Undocumented students and students from mixed status families should be able to qualify for in-state tuition rates either by establishing Florida residency or by applying for an out-of-state tuition fee waiver.

In order for a student to qualify as a resident for tuition purposes, an independent student or a dependent student's parent or legal guardian must have established and maintained legal residence in the State of Florida for at least 12 consecutive months prior to the first day of classes for the term for which the student is enrolling. Most student under the age of 24 are considered dependent students and therefore their residency status is determined based on their parent's residence. The parents of a dependent student must provide residency documentation to establish residency for in-state tuition.

It is important that mixed-status families know about the requirements early so that they may begin the processes needed to obtain some of the documents. You will want to review [Florida Statute 1009.21 Determination of resident status for tuition purposes](#) to familiarize yourself with the required documentation. It is important to note that your parent's immigration status need not be an obstacle to your obtaining this residency status. In fact, Florida has added a pathway to residency using a student's high school transcript. Students who have completed two or more years in a Florida high school as reflected on their high school transcript, are eligible to use their high school transcript as one of the supporting documents needed to establish residency. The high school transcript may be used in place of a driver's license or voter's registration card, which eases the process for undocumented students and parents. Students who are seeking this option must apply for admission to an institution of higher education within 12 months of high school graduation. If you or your parent has difficulty obtaining any of the additional documentation like a utility bill or lease agreement, you should contact the college or universities' admissions office and work with them to find a solution. Be sure to familiarize yourself with all required documentation early on so that you are prepared when the time comes.

Another path to in-state tuition which may be used by undocumented students is the out-of-state tuition waiver. This waiver is available to students who attend a Florida secondary school for three consecutive years immediately before graduating from a Florida high school. This tuition waiver allows eligible students to pay the in-state tuition rate and is available to all students who meet criteria including those students who are undocumented for federal immigration purposes. It is important to note that students who are seeking an out-of-state tuition waiver must apply for admission to an institution of higher education within 24 months of graduation. This means that even if you plan to take a gap year or two, you should apply to a post-secondary institution in the state during your senior year.



Always remember that there are professionals both at your high school and at the post-secondary institution who are available to support you with the process of establishing residency status for tuition purposes. Establishing in-state tuition should not be a barrier for any student.

# Scholarships



## Scholarships

Funding a post-secondary education is a great concern to most students and undocumented students are often further burdened by the belief that they cannot receive scholarships. You should know that there are many scholarship opportunities open and available to undocumented students. Make sure you pay attention to any scholarships that are shared with you. A good scholarship resource guide with an extensive list of scholarships including many that do not require a SSN or ask for information about immigration status, is the [MALDEF Scholarship Resource Guide](#). Also be sure to use a trusted scholarship search engine like <https://www.goingmerry.com/> or <https://www.scholarsnapp.org/> to enhance your search.

Scholarship funding is usually based completely on a student's merit or achievement, although students can receive scholarships based on their athletic ability or their artistic talents (i.e., drawing, painting, writing, etc.) which is why it is vital to ensure that your academic record is competitive, and you are doing your best throughout **all** four years of high school. It is imperative that you end your junior year on a high note, and you start your senior year with as strong of an academic record as possible. Scholarships are generally divided into three main categories: (1) institutional scholarships; (2) state funded scholarships; and (3) private scholarships.

- **Institutional scholarships** are often part of the application process and based almost exclusively on a student's academic standing (GPA, test scores, rigor of curriculum). Athletic scholarships are also usually funded by the institution.
- **State Scholarships** are funded through the state legislative allocations. Florida has several scholarships available to graduating seniors including the Bright Futures Scholarship. Please refer to page X for additional information about applying for Bright Futures and other state funded scholarships.
- **Private scholarships** originate from an array of local, state, or organizations. These scholarships vary from local social clubs to community-based organizations to large corporate sponsors. Each private scholarship awarding entity determines the eligibility requirements for their own program. Many are open to non-citizens and undocumented students alike so you should not hesitate to apply.

The scholarship programs listed below are excellent opportunities for undocumented students. You will likely hear about these scholarships from the CAP Advisor at your school and will want to pay particular attention to them.

- **Alexander Hamilton Scholars** is a program that focuses on closing the opportunity gap for young people like Alexander Hamilton. Each year AHS selects 35 underserved high school juniors to participate in its no-cost, five-year empowerment program. Applicants must live in the United States, but do not need to be a resident. The selected scholars receive mentorship, guidance, and a comprehensive network of support to they too can leave a lasting legacy that

will forever change their communities, nation, and the world. Selected students also receive a \$500 cash scholarship to pay for college expenses. More information about eligibility for the Alexander Hamilton Scholars Program may be found at <https://www.hamiltonscholars.org/eligibility>

- **American Dream Scholarship at Miami Dade College** is for students planning to attend one of Miami Dade College's eight campuses and have earned a cumulative weighted grade point average of at least a 3.0 and qualifying college ready test scores prior to their high school graduation. This scholarship is open to all students regardless of their financial situation who reside in Miami-Dade County. Students who cannot complete FAFSA are eligible to complete the Family Contribution Estimator. This is not a federal document and undocumented families should feel comfortable sharing their financial information on this form as it does not ask for a social security number or immigration status. To access additional information and apply for the American Dream Scholarship at <https://www.mdc.edu/financialaid/scholarships/american-dream.aspx>
- **The CAP, Inc. Grant Program** provides scholarships to Miami-Dade County Public Senior High School graduates who have exhausted all avenues of financial assistance and still have an unmet financial need for college attendance. Students applying for this grant must complete a FAFSA, however, if you are an undocumented student who cannot complete a FAFSA, you will still be considered for this grant. When undocumented students apply for this scholarship, they should upload a paper copy of the FAFSA and complete the essay questions to further explain their financial circumstances that are hindering them from paying educational expenses to fund their undergraduate studies.
- **College Board Opportunity Scholarships** are an easy way to earn scholarship dollars for college. This program opens to all students in the spring of their junior year and it does not require an essay, application, or minimum GPA. These scholarships are awarded to students for their effort as they complete key steps in the path towards college. Students earn opportunities to earn a scholarship by simple college planning tasks like Building their College List, practicing for (and improving on) the SAT, Exploring Scholarships, and Applying to College. To learn more about the College Board Opportunity Scholarship go to <https://opportunity.collegeboard.org/>.
- **Dream.US National Scholarship** is for high school or community college graduates who have DACA or TPS or came to this country prior to November 1, 2015. Applicants must qualify for in-state tuition at one of their partner colleges. (Please refer to page 19 for information about qualifying for an in-state tuition waiver in Florida.) This scholarship awards up to \$16,500 for an associate's degree and \$33,000 for a bachelor's degree. Access additional information and the application at <https://www.thedream.us/scholarships/> .

- **The Dr. Jean-Price Mars College Scholarship** fund was created by Sant La to assist college-ready individuals who have achieved academically and need financial assistance to attend college. This scholarship was created as a result of the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti and is intended for students who are survivors of the earthquake and are currently enrolled in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. For a complete application, instructions, and a list of eligibility requirements please go to <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58d15a56440243fa6daa39b3/t/59074dcc6a4963659257011d/1493650894019/SANT+LA++Scholarship+Application+.pdf>.
- **The Golden Door Scholarship** provides tuition, room and board for up to four years, internship and job search support, and attendance to their annual career readiness summit to students with either DACA, TPS, or undocumented. Applicants must not be eligible for in-state tuition or federal funding, have a high GPA, enrolled in advanced or challenging high school classes, driven to excel and help others succeed and have held leadership positions or is involved in the community. While most of the applicants attend Golden Door [partner schools](#), they support students at other accredited four-year institutions on a case-by-case basis. All scholars are expected to maintain at least a 3.0 GPA each semester. Access additional information and the application at <https://www.goldendoorscholars.org/>.
- **The Hispanic Scholarship Fund (HSF)** selects 10,000 outstanding students as HSF Scholars from a broad and talented pool of applicants, who must be of Hispanic heritage and a U.S. citizen, permanent legal resident, of DACA. Applicants must plan to enroll in an accredited, public or not-for-profit, four-year university or graduate school in the United States. HSF Scholars have access to a full range of invaluable Scholar Support Services, including career services, mentorship, leadership development, knowledge building, and wellness training. HSF awards more than \$30 million in scholarships annually and, depending upon available funds, HSF Scholars may also be eligible to receive a scholarship, which ranges from \$500-\$5,000 and awarded directly to students. Access additional information and the application at <https://www.hsf.net/>
- **The Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Scholarship** is dedicated to advancing the education of exceptionally promising students who have financial need. It is an undergraduate scholarship program available to high achieving high school seniors who seek to attend the nation's most highly competitive four-year colleges and universities. The scholarship application requires families to report their Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) but does allow for families who do not file taxes to provide this information without a federal tax return. Students do not need to be a U.S. citizen to apply. For more information and application support access the following link. <https://www.jkcf.org/our-scholarships/college-scholarship-program/how-to-apply/>

- **LULAC National Scholarship Fund (LNSF)** was established to help youth in under-served communities make the dream of college enrollment a reality. Applicants must be U.S. citizens, legal residents, or DACA and must have applied to be enrolled in a college, university, or graduate school. Applicants are eligible for the three levels of scholarship awards, and include National Scholastic Achievement Awards, Honors Awards, and General Awards. The application and additional information on each award are available at <https://www.lnesc.org/lnsf>.
- **The Posse Foundation Scholarship** provides mentoring and full-tuition leadership scholarships from their six partner colleges. This program gives its recipients transition support and places Scholars in supportive, multicultural groups of ten. Miami is 1 of 10 Posse communities and selects Scholars who will attend Davidson College, Franklin & Marshall College, Hamilton College, Mount Holyoke College, Pomona College, or Syracuse University. Students must be nominated to apply for the Posse Scholarship at the end of their junior by their teacher, counselor, or CAP Advisor. Each high school in Miami-Dade County Public Schools is able to nominate up to 20 students to apply. Posse's partner colleges are open to a diverse population of student leaders and have been known to accept undocumented students. If you have interest in applying to become a Posse Scholar, be sure to talk to your CAP Advisor and read more about this opportunity at <https://www.possefoundation.org/>
- **Questbridge National College Match Program** provides full cost of attendance scholarships to some of the nation's most highly rated colleges. This scholarship is meant for high school seniors who have shown outstanding academic ability despite financial challenges. The National College Match is open to all U.S. Citizens, permanent residents, or any student regardless of citizenship who is currently attending high school in the United States. It should be noted that many, but not all the partner colleges, will consider non-U.S. citizens or permanent residents for admission and full scholarships through the College Match. For a list of college partners and more information access the following link: <https://www.questbridge.org/high-school-students/national-college-match/scholarship-details>
- **RaiseMe** is a program that awards micro-scholarships to students for small achievements over the course of their four years in high school. All students may create a RaiseMe profile and add in their grades, achievements, activities, employment, college search activities, and more. Each task completed may earn the student micro-scholarships from specific schools they are following. Once the student applies to and is accepted by the designated deadline, they are guaranteed the institutional aid earned through the RaiseMe platform. To better understand how Raise Me works and to get started go to: <https://www.raise.me/how-it-works>

# Resources



## Resources

The pathway to a post-secondary education may sometimes be difficult to navigate as information is often changing and new legislation frequently affects local and federal mandates. The good news is that there are many ways to get help. Remember that you are not alone, and you should never hesitate to ask for support, assistance, or clarification.

Get to know your CAP Advisor and school counselor as early as ninth grade. These Student Services professionals will provide academic advisement and resources to assist you in formulating and implementing your post-secondary plan. College and university admission recruiters can also be a great source of information and assistance. These individuals usually have a lot of experience helping students with unique circumstances and may be willing to walk students and their families through required documentation processes and provide alternative solutions for undocumented students.

There are also many organizations both local and national that are willing to assist and provide advocacy for you and your family. Beware of misinformation or individuals charging for services. You often can find free resources and services from reputable organizations that are able to provide current information to support undocumented and mixed status families within our community. Below you will find a list of organizations that provide both legal assistance and advocacy support. Many of these trusted partners aided with the creation of this guide and stand ready to support you.

### **Legal Assistance and Resources:**



**Americans for  
Immigrant Justice**

**Americans for Immigrant Justice (AIG):** Award-winning non-profit law firm that fights for justice for immigrants through a combination of direct representation, impact litigation, advocacy, and outreach.

<https://aijustice.org/>

**Phone:** (305) 573-1106

**Director:** Jennifer Valdes



**NATIONAL  
IMMIGRATION  
LAW  
CENTER**

**National Immigration Law Center:** Legal aid organization that advocates for human rights and humane immigration laws.

<https://www.protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/>



## **Advocacy and Resources**



**Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC):** Statewide organization working for the fair treatment of all people, including immigrants.

<https://floridaimmigrant.org/>

**Phone:** (305) 571-7254



**Florida Student Power Network:** Statewide multi-issued student organization empowering directly impacted youth through political education, organizing, and creative initiatives to build collective youth power and fighting for a people-powered government in Florida.

<https://studentpower.us/florida/>

**Immigrant Justice Coordinator:** Nery Lopez



**Mexican American Council (MAC):** The main goal of the MAC is to advance the living standards of farmworker youth by breaking the cycle of poverty through education, the arts, and civic engagement. MAC is a well-respected advocate of community issues and an agent of positive change for promoting cultural and civic engagement with a record of over 30 years of service in the community.

<https://www.mexamcouncil.org>

**Phone:** 786-243-2328

**Director:** Eddie Garza

**Program Manager:** Marilu Garza



**Sant La Haitian Community Center:** Sant La's work involves addressing the chronic service gaps for the Haitian/Haitian American community of South Florida resulting from social isolation and lack of awareness about available community resources. Their main goal is to empower, strengthen and stabilize South Florida's Haitian community by providing free access to information and services.

<https://www.santla.org>

**Phone:** 305-573-4871



**The Dream.US Organization:** TheDream.US is the nation's largest college access and success program for DREAMers. We believe that all that DREAMers need is an opportunity. All we need to do is provide them with financial support to attend one of our Partner Colleges, committed to their college completion.

<https://www.thedream.us>

**Local Contact:** Maria Gabriela Pacheco [gaby.pacheco@thedream.us](mailto:gaby.pacheco@thedream.us)



**United We Dream:** The largest immigrant youth-led network in the country. <https://unitedwedream.org/>

**Florida Coordinator:** Thomas Kennedy [Thomas@unitedwedream.org](mailto:Thomas@unitedwedream.org)

**Florida Local Organizer:** Maria Bilbao [maria@unitedwedream.org](mailto:maria@unitedwedream.org)

**Florida Advocacy Fellow:** Romina Montenegro [Romina@unitedwedream.org](mailto:Romina@unitedwedream.org)

# Glossary of Terms



## **Glossary of Terms**

### **Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)**

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) is defined as gross income minus adjustments to income. Gross income includes your wages, dividends, capital gains, business income, retirement distributions as well as other income. Adjustments to income include such items as educator expenses, student loan interest, alimony payments or contributions to a retirement account.

### **College Assistance Program (CAP)**

The College Assistance Program is a postsecondary advisory program in all public senior high schools in Miami-Dade County. The specialized focus of the program enables CAP advisors to serve students more effectively and increase equitable college and career-readiness outcomes for all students.

### **College Scholarship Service Profile (CSS Profile)**

The CSS is an application for college financial aid required by approximately 200 undergraduate institutions.

### **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)**

DACA is a program announced on June 12, 2012 by President Barack Obama that protects individuals who qualify for deportation and give them a work permit for 2 years. The program is renewable. Deferred Action does not provide lawful status.

### **Dependent Student**

A dependent student's ability to pay is determined by reviewing information provided by both the student and one or both parents.

### **DREAM Act**

The Development Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act is a piece of legislation proposed to provide a pathway to permanent residency and U.S. citizenship for qualified undocumented immigrant students. The DREAM Act has been proposed several times in Congress since 2001, but has not been approved.

### **Eligible Noncitizen**

You are considered an eligible non-citizen if you meet ONE of the following criteria: 1) you are a U.S. permanent resident with an Alien Registration Card (I-551), 2) you are a conditional permanent resident with an I-551C card or 3) you have an Arrival Departure Record (I-94) from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) with any of the following

designations: refugee, asylum granted, parolee, victim of human trafficking, T-Visa holder, Cuban-Haitian entrant.

### **Expected Family Contribution (EFC)**

The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is the amount a family can be expected to contribute toward a student's college costs.

### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

Federal law that was enacted in 1974. FERPA protects the privacy of student education records, which applies to all schools (K-12 and Post-Secondary). Overall, this law protects the immigration status of all students.

### **Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA)**

The State of Florida Financial Aid Application. This application is used for over 20 State programs including Florida Student Assistance Grant, Rosewood Family Scholarship and Critical Teacher Shortage Reimbursement Program.

### **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**

The FAFSA form allows students to request federal grants, work-study, and loans, all in one application.

### **Immigrant**

In U.S. context this term refers to all people who are born outside of the United States. Some people also use the term foreign born.

### **Independent Student**

An independent student is one who meets certain legal requirements to receive federal financial aid to pay for college based on the student's ability to pay.

### **In-state Tuition**

Refers to in-state tuition rates for students at public colleges and universities. In-state tuition when referring to undocumented students means that they are being charged resident tuition rates rather than out-of-state or international student tuition rates, higher education then becomes more affordable and thus more accessible.

**Legal Permanent Resident (LPR)**

A Legal Permanent Resident or “green card” recipient is defined by immigration law as a person who has been granted lawful permanent residence in the U.S

**Mixed Status Family**

Refers to families in which either: 1) the student is undocumented but has family members that are U.S. residents or U.S. citizens or 2) the student is a U.S. resident or U.S. citizen but has family members that are undocumented.

**Residency Status**

Refers to in-state or out-of-state residency for tuition purposes.

**Temporary Protected Status (TPS)**

Temporary immigration status granted to nationals of certain countries who are already in the U.S.

**Undocumented Student**

“Undocumented” or “unauthorized” refers to students who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the United States, who do not hold a visa to reside in the U.S., and who have not applied for legal residency in the U.S.

## **Anti-Discrimination Policy**

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida adheres to a policy of nondiscrimination in employment and educational programs/activities and strives affirmatively to provide equal opportunity for all as required by:

**Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964** - prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin.

**Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended** - prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, or national origin.

**Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972** - prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. M-DCPS does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any education program or activity that it operates as required by Title IX. M-DCPS also does not discriminate on the basis of sex in admissions or employment.

**Age Discrimination Act of 1975** - prohibits discrimination based on age in programs or activities.

**Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) as amended** - prohibits discrimination on the basis of age with respect to individuals who are at least 40 years old.

**The Equal Pay Act of 1963 as amended** - prohibits gender discrimination in payment of wages to women and men performing substantially equal work in the same establishment.

**Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** - prohibits discrimination against the disabled.

**Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)** - prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, public service, public accommodations and telecommunications.

**The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA)** - requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible employees for certain family and medical reasons.

**The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978** - prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions.

**Florida Educational Equity Act (FEEA)** - prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, national origin, marital status, or handicap against a student or employee.

**Florida Civil Rights Act of 1992** - secures for all individuals within the state freedom from discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or marital status.

**Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA)** - prohibits discrimination against employees or applicants because of genetic information.

**Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act of 2002** – No public school shall deny equal access to, or a fair opportunity for groups to meet on school premises or in school facilities before or after school hours, or discriminate against any group officially affiliated with Boy Scouts of America or any other youth or community group listed in Title 36 (as a patriotic society).

**Veterans** are provided re-employment rights in accordance with P.L. 93-508 (Federal Law) and Section 295.07 (Florida Statutes), which stipulate categorical preferences for employment.

### **In Addition:**

**School Board Policies 1362, 3362, 4362, and 5517** - Prohibit harassment and/or discrimination against students, employees, or applicants on the basis of race, color, ethnic or national origin, religion, marital status, disability, genetic information, age, political beliefs, sexual orientation, sex/gender, gender identification, social and family background, linguistic preference, pregnancy, citizenship status, and any other legally prohibited basis. Retaliation for engaging in a protected activity is also prohibited.

For additional information about Title IX or any other discrimination/harassment concerns, contact the U.S. Department of Education Asst. Secretary for Civil Rights or:

**Office of Civil Rights Compliance (CRC)  
Executive Director/Title IX Coordinator  
155 N.E. 15th Street, Suite P104E  
Miami, Florida 33132**

**Phone: (305) 995-1580 TDD: (305) 995-2400**

**Email: [src@dadeschools.net](mailto:src@dadeschools.net) Website: <https://hrdadeschools.net/civilrights>**