

Help for undocumented students seeking to attend post-secondary institutions in New York State

A widespread misconception among students and educators is that students who are undocumented or with unresolved immigration status are not eligible to attend college. On the contrary, a NYS Law signed by Governor Pataki in 2002 expands the definition of who can qualify for in-state tuition at CUNY and SUNY campuses. Thirteen other states have similar laws allowing prospective college students, regardless of their immigration status, to matriculate in the public university systems and qualify for in-state rates.

In New York State, prospective college students must have a GED from New York State or have graduated from a NYS high school after attending at least two years, and be willing to file an affidavit promising to initiate procedures to remedy their immigration status as soon as possible.

Below is a summary of information on undocumented students and access to post-secondary education compiled by the New York Immigration Coalition (<http://www.thenyic.org>)

For more information on this topic, go to: <http://www.nysylc.org-a.googlepages.com/in-statetuition>

Some commonly asked questions:

Can undocumented New York students apply for admission in public colleges in New York State?

Yes, undocumented students can apply for public colleges in New York State – SUNY and CUNY campuses.

State colleges and universities should not ask for any information regarding immigration status when an application is submitted. When applying to a state college or university, a student is not required to put a social security number. The space for the SSN on the application can be left blank with no effect on likelihood of acceptance. State schools are not required to report undocumented students to the federal government; however, they are required to report international students with a student visa from a foreign country. Once accepted to a NY state college or university, it is KEY that students NOT be mistakenly classified as “international students.”

Private colleges and universities determine their own policies toward undocumented students. Students interested in applying to a private institution should call the admissions office and inquire about their policies toward undocumented students. Some schools are more accommodating than others.

Who is eligible for in-state tuition rates?

Non-resident tuitions for NY state colleges and universities (two- and four-year colleges) are significantly higher than in-state tuition. In New York State, undocumented students are eligible for in-state tuition if they meet the following requirements:

- *Student has attended for at least two years and graduated from an approved New York State high school and applies for attendance at a SUNY, CUNY college within five years of receiving a high school diploma, or,*

- Student has attended an approved New York State program for General Equivalency Diploma (GED) preparation, received a GED issued in New York State, and applied for attendance at a SUNY or CUNY college within five years of earning the NYS GED. Please note that this provision does not require that the student be a NYS resident for a year.

To claim residency status for tuition purposes, undocumented students must:

- File an affidavit stating that s/he has filed or will file application for legal residency; forms are available through the individual CUNY and SUNY Colleges.
- Show proof of residence (rent checks, pay stubs with a NY address, high school records, etc.)

It is important for the institution to be aware of the student's legal status to make him/her eligible for resident tuition rates. A student mistakenly classified as "international student" will NOT be eligible for in-state tuition.

Can undocumented students apply for financial aid?

Under current law, undocumented students cannot apply for state or federal financial aid. However, undocumented students can apply for private scholarships and awards for higher education. See the web page of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) at www.maldef.org for a list of private scholarships available to undocumented students. Also, the Immigrant Legal Resource Center at www.ilrc.org/scholarship.htm has additional information.

Below is a useful link with some resources on scholarships not restricted by immigration status: <http://www.nysylc.org-a.googlepages.com/financialassistanceforundocumentedstudent>

Should the student fill out a FAFSA form (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)?

Because undocumented students cannot receive federal or state financial aid, it is not necessary to fill out a FAFSA form. However, a student may wish to fill out a FAFSA in order to determine the estimated family contribution. If applying for private aid through a college or university, the school may need to know a student's estimated family contribution. In this case, fill out the FAFSA, leaving the space for Social Security number blank and marking "c. No, I am not a citizen or eligible non-citizen" in box 13. Although the application will be rejected and returned to a student, it will include a student's estimated family contribution, which can then be used by a school to determine a financial aid package.

How to decide between state (public) or private colleges?

State/Public and private colleges/universities offer different advantages to undocumented students in NY State. It is best to apply to several colleges, both public and private, to obtain a variety of options.

On one hand, it is easier to find out what to expect when applying to state/public colleges/universities. The policies of these schools are determined at the state level, so NY State public colleges/universities all have the same policies toward undocumented students. State/public colleges/universities admit students regardless of their legal status. Furthermore, qualified undocumented students are eligible for lower, in-state tuition costs. This generally makes state/public institutions more affordable than private ones. However, state/public institutions generally have less private money available for scholarships and financial aid through their institutions.

Private colleges/universities tend to have less experience with undocumented students, and there is no one set of policies that these institutions follow in admitting undocumented students. Inevitably, some private colleges/universities are more willing to accommodate the concerns of undocumented students than others. Private colleges/universities are also more expensive than the state/public schools, and the cost is the same for students regardless of their state of residence. However, once students are admitted, private institutions generally have more private resources of funding available to offer scholarships to students who cannot receive financial aid from government sources.

Scholarship guide for undocumented students:

http://www.nygearup.org/collegesense/students/scholar_undoc.htm

The New York State Youth Leadership Council is a network of young advocates representing high schools, colleges, communities of faith and community-based organizations to promote the advancement of immigrant youth through leadership development and advocacy. Go to <http://www.nysylc.org> for more detailed information about college access for undocumented students and financial aid.

The City University of New York (CUNY) Scholarship opportunities:

Macaulay Honors College (MHC)

Founded in 2001, the *William E. Macaulay Honors College (MHC)* is CUNY's landmark program for students of exceptional ability. CUNY's seven participating campuses admit incoming freshman to the Macaulay Honors College. These students, called University Scholars, are granted scholarships covering their full tuition in the fall and spring semesters for four years, given laptop computers, and awarded access to funds for study abroad programs and internships. Furthermore, University Scholars are provided with dedicated facilities such as lounges and computer labs at their home campuses, and are supported by a close community of peers, mentoring professors, and advisors.

Peter F. Vallone Scholarship Program

The *Peter F. Vallone Scholarship Program* is available to full-time students who enroll directly into a CUNY college within a year of graduating from a New York City high school, public or private, with a "B" average or better. Academic Scholars receive up to \$1,250 per year. Vallone Academic Scholars must enroll in an associate's or baccalaureate degree program, and maintain a cumulative B average or higher. Baccalaureate degree students are eligible for a maximum of 10 semesters of scholarship award. Associate's degree students are eligible for 6 semesters. To apply, students complete the Freshman Application. The Vallone Academic Scholarship is based solely on academic achievement.

For more information about the many opportunities at CUNY, please contact:

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Spanish speakers can also contact the following staff members at CUNY's Office of Admission Services:

Ms. Sonia Cardona: Sonia.Cardona@mail.cuny.edu
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