Project Topic:

Immigration Reform and Its Impact on Undocumented College Students

Project Overview:

At the University of Utah, and at college campuses across the nation, undocumented students remain disadvantaged due to their immigration status. While there are social and academic opportunities for these students to participate in, they continue to be marginalized because most students and faculty fail to recognize the difficulties that such undocumented students face each day. To address these issues, we propose two policy initiatives: an awareness campaign and creating a student immigration policy group.

Events/Initiatives:

1) The policy group will focus on changing campus policies to be more inclusive of undocumented students, as well as providing the necessary resources they need to succeed. The group will have official meetings monthly to coordinate and measure progress. Similar to a think tank, the student group will work to modify existing campus policy concerning undocumented students. Additionally, the policy group will work closely with our school’s student government (ASUU), primarily the Government Relations Board, to produce sound state legislative proposals.

2) Another issue these students face is the chilling effects that the local and national media put out related to immigration reform. When faced with various challenges, many undocumented students are discouraged from seeking effective forms of help due to an unnecessary fear of deportation. In collaboration with existing groups that voice the opinions of various ethnic student communities at the University of Utah (i.e. Office for Equity and Diversity, Movimiento Estudiantil Chican@ De Aztlán, Pacific Islander Student Association, Asian American Student Association), our awareness campaign will provide education dispelling the myths associated with undocumented college students. By the end of the year, we hope to have a campus environment much more cognizant of the issues undocumented college students face.

3) We anticipate hosting four forums throughout the year that both engage and challenge our student body about immigration reform
related to undocumented students. By providing a well rounded dialogue spread throughout the year, students will continually be thinking critically on the issue. To do this, we will host two forums each semester (i.e. October/December, February/April). We will work with the Hinckley Institute of Politics at the University of Utah (a department experienced in hosting successful forums) to provide the resources, contacts, and marketing ability to make these events a reality.

Measurable Goals:

1) Undocumented high school graduates in Utah are unable to qualify for state financial aid for in-state university education. As such, the policy group will push for Utah specific legislation that models other states currently providing access to state financial aid for undocumented students (e.g. Texas and Oklahoma).

2) By working with the Office of Equity and Diversity and the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarship at the University Utah, our awareness campaign will launch an advertising initiative to highlight existing scholarship opportunities for undocumented students. By the end of the school year, our goal is a 25 percent increase in the current amount of scholarship money earned by undocumented students. Moreover, we hope to see a rise in the number of undocumented students enrolled at the University of Utah, showing a greater number of undocumented persons accessing higher education that otherwise would not due to economic barriers. The University of Utah already measures these trends; all that would be required is working alongside the Office of Budget and Institutional Analysis.

3) The forums to be hosted will sequentially discuss: (1) immigration reform’s affect on economy and education; (2) policies for undocumented students gaining citizenship; (3) benefits of the education undocumented students receive; (4) how current immigration policies directly affect undocumented college students. Our goal is to have a high student attendance and participation at these forums increasing student awareness.

Collaboration With Other Consortium Schools:

Our proposals, or similar ones, can be easily implemented on virtually any college campus. The collaborative process has already begun in Utah as just last year University of Utah President David Pershing began such intercollegiate engagement on immigration. By issuing a letter signed by presidents of six other Utah schools, President Pershing urged our states
representatives to work toward reforming our immigration system. Our student group will work directly with President Pershing on ways to include other consortium schools in furthering this dialogue.

**Conclusion:**

There are vast resources and organizations already in place on our campus (including some that have been mentioned above), but their lack of coordination slows down progress. This is true for colleges and universities nationwide. What our awareness campaign and student group will do is weave these together in a comprehensive way that will bring about the most success. Our immediate student efforts are crucial and past due. We cannot afford to wait any longer.