

UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON

## Leadership Without Borders

Samuel E. Kelly Ethnic Cultural Center  
Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity

# Graduate School Prep Toolkit for Undocumented Students

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Released: 2020





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**MISSION**

Leadership Without Borders (LWB) works to serve and empower undocumented students at the University of Washington. LWB offers leadership development resources, college success navigators, the Husky Lending Library, a space for community building, and connections to other campus and community resources.

The Graduate School Prep Toolkit for Undocumented Students, as its title says, aims to help you begin your planning process and apply to graduate programs in the United States. It addresses the needs of undocumented immigrants interested in pursuing graduate education. We hope to reassure you that your academic and professional goals are achievable.

The toolkit provides some information that may be relevant to those interested in a professional programs such as medical school. Some information may be relevant to those current graduate students. However, the main bulk of the content will be for those in the pursuit of attending graduate programs.

We will also provide specific information about graduate programs and support at the University of Washington and in Washington State. We also encourage you to contact us or visit us at the Leadership Without Borders Office so we can help you access additional resources.

**PART 1: WHY GRADUATE SCHOOL?**

**Why should I consider applying to graduate school?**

A graduate training will provide you:

- > Skills that apply to your daily and professional life, and expand your intellectual horizons
- > Doors to advance your career, make money, and acquire professional fulfillment
- > Opportunities to network and give back to the community.

**What are graduate programs that I can apply for?**

Undocumented students can apply to any graduate program in the United States. Your professional goal and circumstances in your own life will help you decide which program is best for you.

Master's	Ph.D.	Professional Degrees
e.g. social work, student affairs	e.g. education, sociology, political science, STEM	e.g. law, medicine, business school
1-3 years	5+ years	1-5+ years
Funding is very limited	Funding can be better, but it varies	Funding is limited
Practice-oriented	Research-oriented	Practice-oriented

**What are the difficulties that undocumented students have in pursuing graduate school?**

Undocumented immigrants are disproportionately underrepresented in higher education. Throughout history our undocumented students have face tremendous difficulties when pursuing their dreams of achieving a higher education. However, over the years, our strong and resilient undocumented students and professionals have risen up to build the wonderful foundations of support and advocacy as we see them today.

Undocumented students' experience in their pursuit of education is completely different from that of traditional American students. We want to acknowledge that if you are undocumented and are reading this, **YOU BELONG HERE AND WE ARE HERE FOR YOU, YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**

**PART 2: CHOOSING A GRADUATE PROGRAM**

## What should I keep in mind when choosing a graduate program?

As you research about potential graduate programs, think about the following aspects:

- > Program curriculum
  - Does the program offer the skills and knowledge I wish to learn about and commit to for many years?
- > Program's UndocuCompetency and commitment to Diversity and Inclusion
  - What academic support resources are available for undocumented or minorities students?
  - What support does the school have for undocumented and minorities students' job search and career development?
  - Who on campus should I contact to discuss the particulars of my application and needs as an undocumented student?
  - Does the school have an Undocumented Student Resource Center? Is there a representative from the program that I can speak with?
- > Funding
  - How are doctoral students funded? At what rate? Does funding cover conference attendance and research after candidacy? How is funding for doctoral students distributed? Is funding centralized through the university or does it come from individual departments?
  - Is the school willing to consider funding a school visit?
  - What is the school's policy on providing funding for undocumented/DACAmented students?
  - How involved is the school in assisting students to find external funding and fellowships?
- > Future mentors
  - What is the caseload of advisees for each professor in the department?
  - Who are the mentors that I am interested in in working with? (identify 2-4 mentors)
- > Requirements and timing of application
  - What is the program's policy on admitting undocumented students?
  - What is the program's required prerequisites (entrance exam scores, coursework, years of work experience etc.)?
- > Location
  - How affordable is living or commuting to campus?
  - Does attending this school allow me to keep my commitment to family and/or significant other?
  - Would online programs be a good fit for me?

**Testimonies:** "Do 'shop around' to see which program will be a good fit for you. I only applied to the programs that I would definitely go to, leaving out those I was uncertain about. I didn't want to have my last option to be the only one to accept me. Ultimately, I went with a program that allowed me to have a payment plan, and defer semesters if needed."

## PART 3: FINANCIAL AID

### What are the financial aid options available at the school and department?

Financial aid is a broad term which may encompass federal loans, tuition waivers, scholarships, and other awards. Unfortunately, undocumented students are unable to apply for federal loans, but, depending the state and the school, they may be eligible for other forms of funding. At UW, for instance, undocumented students seeking financial aid should contact their school's financial aid office, and they may be asked to submit a [Washington Application for State Financial Aid \(WASFA\)](#). UW's Financial Aid office provides an informative overview on [this page](#). For more Washington state-based information, students may also wish to click [this link](#). At California schools, students may be asked to submit a [California Dream Application](#). Based on these applications, students may be eligible for:

- In-state tuition
- Tuition waivers
- Broader institutional aid
- Other awards



Loans will need to be repaid in the future, while other types of financial aid may not need to be repaid. Institutional aid may vary by school and department. There may be privately funded fellowships and scholarships available. (See next sections for more details).

### **Finding Assistantships, Fellowships, & Scholarships**

Assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships are three types of funding that do not require repayment. Assistantships are awarded by the university that graduate students are applying for or currently attending. Fellowships and scholarships may be awarded by the university or from organizations and foundations outside of the university; these types of funds are often called extramural or external. It is advisable to apply for both types of funding--that is, funding from within your institution and from reputable organizations or foundations outside of your institutions. In some cases, students may only apply for assistantships, fellowships, and/or scholarships once they are enrolled in their graduate program. However, this information is usually explicitly indicated on the award overview or in the eligibility criteria. All three of these awards may be very competitive.

> **Assistantships:** Assistantships are on-campus contracted employment. For this reason, [DACA students can hold assistantships](#). At the UW, there are generally [three different types of assistantships](#): teaching, research, graduate staff. Assistantships often include a full or partial tuition waiver, health benefits, and a stipend (monthly pay). At [UC Merced](#), students with DACA status can hold four assistantship positions: Graduate Student Researcher (GSR), Research Assistant (RA), Teaching Assistant (TA), or a Graduate Student Instructor (GSI). Unfortunately, at both schools, those who do not qualify for DACA will not be eligible for the above positions. Both schools offer other employment opportunities for DACA students, but these may not include the full financial package that an assistantship offers.

> **Fellowships:** Fellowships are monetary awards for tuition, research, living, and/or other expenses. At the graduate level, a fellowship may require an active research agenda or an area of research interest. In other contexts, a fellowship may be merit-based (i.e. based on a student's GPA, community involvement, and/or other factors). Depending on the organization or foundation overseeing the award, the term "fellowship" may be used synonymously with "scholarship." A fellowship's overview and eligibility criteria can help you determine whether or not a research agenda is required and can help you determine citizenship requirements.

> **Scholarships:** Scholarships are monetary awards that usually assist with tuition and/or other expenses. Scholarships are frequently merit-based, though occasionally they may take the form of a monetary prize for academic work produced. Here again, at the graduate-level, variations may occur (see above). A scholarship's eligibility criteria can help you determine citizenship eligibility.

Assistantship tuition waivers (whether full or partial) usually pay out to the school, while the stipend (the salary) goes directly to the student. Fellowships and scholarships, when awarded, may pay out directly to the school or directly to the student.

### **University-based Funding Searches**

A thorough search for funding may follow a pattern like this: search within your own department, search in related or affiliated departments, search your institution more broadly, then turn to funding opportunities outside of your school from **reputable** institutions, organizations, or foundations.

Information on assistantships, both types and availability, can usually be found within one's own graduate department. For instance, when looking at a graduate program online, you'll often see a link or tab titled "funding" or "awards." If this information isn't readily available on your graduate program's site, contact a graduate advisor in that department for more information.

Depending on the university, graduate students may be able to hold assistantships outside their own department. Some of the ways you may search for assistantships outside of your department **at UW** include the following:



- For teaching assistantships, look at affiliated graduate departments or [academic areas](#) you have expertise in (i.e. department/discipline you received your undergraduate degree in). If there's no information about assistantships or it's unclear whether or not assistantships are open to students outside the department, contact the academic advisor.
- For research assistantships, look at [Research Centers](#) on campus to deduce which Centers' research projects and foci may resonate with your own research interests and goals. If there's no information on the Center's site about graduate funding opportunities, contact someone at the center.
- For graduate staff assistantships as well as the other types of assistantships, you may need to look on the [Human Resources job site](#) under a specific category or you may need to look at [Handshake](#) (if the school has Handshake). Handshake may not be accessible for students until they are enrolled in classes.
- Some departments compile all of their funding information, including assistantships, fellowships, and scholarships, [on a single blog](#) or they may have an internal listserv which provides funding updates/information. You can find them by searching departmental pages and/or by doing a [university-wide site search](#).

Individual academic departments often have a list of **department-specific** fellowships and scholarships that may appear alongside their assistantship information or on a different page of their website. Additionally, affiliated departments and/or research centers may have links or tabs on their site which list fellowship and scholarship activities. At UW and at other schools, the [Graduate School may have a designated funding list](#) that shows opportunities open to students from an array of disciplines on campus. Read the eligibility criteria on these awards carefully to see if there are any restrictions. Many UW-based fellowships are open to undocumented students, but if you're unsure, it's usually best to contact the department overseeing the award or contact a mentor to ask on your behalf.

If you're having difficulty locating information on individual department or university-wide sites, you might try either of the following Google searches or any variation thereof:

Name of university + name of department + graduate funding (or funding for graduate students or graduate fellowships)  
Name of university + graduate school + graduate funding (or funding for graduate students or graduate fellowships)

### Outside of the University Funding Searches

There are a number of reputable external organizations and foundations (i.e. outside of one's university) that provide fellowships and/or scholarships for graduate students. Additionally, other universities may offer research fellowships or additional awards that students (broadly speaking) may apply for.

One way to find these opportunities is to search a public funding database, curated by a university, or a subscription funding database, which your own school may provide access to. These databases provide an array of awards and are structured so that students can check boxes or filters to help narrow or expand their searches.

[Harvard's CARAT database](#) and the [Illinois Fellowship Finder](#) are two examples of funding databases curated by universities, which are "publicly" open (i.e. anyone can access them). These two databases may be especially helpful for Master's students seeking scholarships and fellowships. Doctoral students may also find these two databases useful, but may also wish to search [UCLA's Graduate and Postdoctoral Extramural Support Database \(GRAPES\) database](#) to find longer-term, competitive fellowships. A subscription database like Grant Forward requires a university-based login and password in order to access. It includes an array of external funding opportunities including, but not limited to fellowships and scholarships.

In a database, you can use filters and/or open search boxes to create an intersectional funding search. For instance, one can choose an academic level, discipline (or broader disciplinary area), type of funding, and/or social identities. Most of these databases have a filter for DACA/non-DACA students or a filter that states "no citizenship restrictions" or one can use the open search box. For example:

Master's + public health + scholarship + LGBTQ + no citizenship restrictions

Creating synonyms for your search terms may also be useful as databases tend to differ in their vocabulary and scope. For instance, a synonym for “Master’s” might be “current graduate student;” a synonym for “public health” could be a larger category (“social sciences” or “health”) or a narrower category like “epidemiology.” A synonym for “no citizenship restrictions” may be “undocumented.”

If you get few to no results when searching in a funding database, don’t worry. Often, it’s a matter of finding a specific balance between the terms you’re searching in, and that balance will vary by database. For instance, if you’ve clicked 3 or more filters within a database and you get few results, try unclicking 1 or 2 of the filters. If you’ve used a very specific, narrow term to describe your discipline, and no results appear, try panning out--what’s the broader academic area your discipline falls under? Alternatively, if you get too many results, it’s time to add a few more filters or terms to your search.

Creating a list of search terms can be very useful both for database searching and Google searching. For instance, the following Google search--Master’s in public health external funding--will connect you to lists of awards other universities’ public health programs curate (once you scroll past the advertisements, that is!). Professional or academic organizations in your field of study can be a wonderful way to search for funding.

Read critically, though, no matter where you’re searching for external funding. [Scholarship scams are a reality](#), and the awards that ask for too much personal information or that ask for a very short essay and virtually no other supporting materials, should be approached with caution.

Below are some examples of national fellowships and scholarships open to undocumented graduate students from reputable organizations or foundations. Read the award overviews and the eligibility criteria carefully to ensure you’re a good fit. If you have questions, remember you can always reach out to the organization and/or ask a mentor to reach out on your behalf:

- > [Byron Hanke Fellowship](#)
- > [Davis Putter Scholarship](#)
- > [Ford Foundation Fellowship Programs](#)
- > [Hispanic Scholarship Fund](#)
- > [Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans](#)
- > [Point Foundation LGBTQ Scholarship Fund](#)
- > [Prism Foundation](#)
- > [Rhodes](#)

Additionally, [Immigrants Rising has two helpful pdfs](#): one covers 2020 Graduate Fellowships open to DACA and/or non-DACA students; the other covers 2020 Graduate Scholarships open to DACA and/or non-DACA students. The pdfs provide overviews of fellowships and scholarships. Carefully read the academic level, US region, field of study, and eligibility criteria to determine which awards are a good fit for you.

Lastly, you may also consider fundraising online/offline to help you cover graduate school application costs.

### **Testimonies:**

*“Finances will always be a challenge for us, but we have shown to be creative in this pursuit. Don't be afraid to organize your own food sale or fundraiser!”*

*“I didn't have much time to apply for scholarships, but I started saving up as soon as I finished my undergraduate studies. I have applied to scholarships offered within my program, and others I've found using the guides suggested here.”*

## **PART 4: APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL**

Once you have selected the graduate programs you would like to apply for, let's begin the application process by considering the following components:

- > Standardized Admission Test (Entrance exam)
- > Personal Statement/ Statement of Purpose
- > Letter of Recommendations
- > Resume & Transcripts
- > Interview
- > Financial profile
- > Application Fee waiver

### **Standardized Admission Test**

Undocumented students are eligible to take entrance exams. However, the testing agency will require specific personal IDs without which you will be denied access to testing; even if you have paid your registration fee, you will not receive a refund. In the case where you do not have the required documentation, contact the testing agency office as soon as possible.

Prior to registration, make sure that:

- > Your graduate program requires that you submit the test scores.
- > You have the ID documents required to register and enter the test room
- > You have had sufficient time to prepare, and are ready to take the test

Some graduate programs weigh heavily on standardized admission test scores (GRE, MCAT, LSAT, GMAT, DAT, etc.). Others programs allow scores to be optional. Others may even explicitly state on their website that, in fairness to all applicants, they will not review the scores of this test even if you choose to submit them. Some graduate programs are gradually making GRE scores optional, such as Bio/Biomedical Graduate (MS or PhD). A list of these schools can be found [here](#). Be sure to check requirements carefully on the website about score requirements, and contact the Office of Admission to ask for clarifications if needed.

Due to the COVID19 outbreak, there may be institutional changes regarding entrance exams requirements and other policies for graduate school admission forthcoming.

Commonly accepted personal IDs are driver's license and passport (even if you have DACA). Other documentation includes Enrollment Certification, which may be acquired from the Office of the University Registrar (for UW students, contact [regoff@uw.edu](mailto:regoff@uw.edu)) Below you can find the ID documentation requirement as specified by each Standardized Admission Test agency on their websites.

### **GRE**

The applicant's ID must:

- Be original
- Be government issued
- Be valid
- Contain a recent photograph
- Have the student's full name
- Must include a signature

Example: US driver's license or passport

If you do not meet the identification requirements, you must contact the ETS Office of Testing Integrity (OTI) at least 7 days before registering to test. Afterward, you will receive an approval notification from them and/or they may request further documentation from the student. Once you have been approved, you will be eligible to register and take the GRE (Identification Requirements for the GRE® General Test).

ETS Office of Testing Integrity (OTI)



Email: TSReturns@ets.org  
Phone: 1-800-750-6991 (U.S. & Canada)  
1-600-406-5430 (all other locations)  
Monday- Friday 7:30 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. ET  
Fax: 1-609-406-9709

### **GMAT**

The Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) is required or applicable for business school, such as a Master's in Business Administration (MBA). For a valid identification, a passport is required. If the applicant does not have a valid passport, they must call or email the GMAT, so their passport requirement gets waived due to the applicant's undocumented status.

GMAT's contact information:

Email: GMATCandidateServicesAmericas@pearson.com  
Telephone (toll-free): +1 (800) 717- GMAT (4628), 7 a.m.- 7 p.m. CT  
Telephone: +1 (952) 681- 3680, 7 a.m.- 7 p.m. CT  
Fax: + 1 (952) 681- 3681  
Link to register for the GMAT: <https://www.mba.com/exams/gmat/plan-for-exam-day/identification-requirements>

### **LSAT**

The Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) is required for law school applicants in the United States, Canada, and many other countries. The LSAT tests the student's reading comprehension abilities, analytical reasoning, and logical reasoning.

Link to register for the LSAT: <https://www.lsac.org/lSAT>

Fact sheet for candidates planning to take the LSAT: [https://www.lsac.org/sites/default/files/media/lSAT-candidate-info-sheet\\_0.pdf](https://www.lsac.org/sites/default/files/media/lSAT-candidate-info-sheet_0.pdf)

If the student is not able to obtain a valid identification card, then they must contact LSAC before the registration deadline.

LSAC contact information:

Email: LSACinfo@LSAC.org  
Phone: 215- 968-1001 then press 0 to speak to an LSAC candidate representative.

### **MCAT**

The Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) is required for medical school. Applicants must provide a valid social security number (SSN) to obtain an MCAT ID number. DACA SSN is acceptable. If the applicant does not have a social security number, they must contact the American Medical Colleges (AAMC) to issue them an alternative ID number (Valid Identification for MCAT Examinees).

Link to register for the MCAT: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/taking-mcat-exam/register-mcat-exam/>

Link of a checklist for proper identification: <https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/valid-identification-mcat-examinees/>

### **DAT**

The Dental Admissions Test (DAT) is required for dental school. DAT requires applicants to have two forms of identification: one with the applicant's picture and full name, and the second one with the applicant's signature.

Link to register for the DAT: [https://www.prometric.com/en-us/clients/ada/pages/dAT\\_checklist.aspx](https://www.prometric.com/en-us/clients/ada/pages/dAT_checklist.aspx)

If the applicant has more questions regarding valid identification, make sure to contact the Department of Testing Centers at 800- 232- 2162.

### **Personal Statement/ Statement of Purpose**

- > Begin drafting as early as possible (ideally 6 months) prior to the application deadline.
- > Do careful research about the institution, potential faculty/mentors, current students, as well as alumni.



- > Reach out to faculty and/or students at the school. This is an opportunity to learn more about faculty research and recognize whether your own research interests would be a good match. Many faculty members are willing to offer their time and support to students.
- > Find other ways to get to know the program. It may be helpful to find work opportunities in the school or department. You may also ask to sit-in a classroom. For example, the UW School of Social Work allows you to schedule an appointment, school visit, or to sit in on a class. Call 206-543-5676 or email [sswinfo@uw.edu](mailto:sswinfo@uw.edu) for details or fill out our information request form.

### Letter of Recommendations

Each graduate/professional program may specify different numbers of recommendation letters and how many of them need to be written by a faculty member.

It is important that you choose a recommender who you have a strong relationship with. The recommender should understand what your goals are in pursuing graduate/professional schools. Let them know far in advance of the application deadline (on average 2-3 months).

The most important thing is to get a strong letter of recommendation. Have a conversation with your recommenders about the content of the letter, and be prepared to let them know what information about you should be highlighted in the letter. You may find it helpful to provide them your resume, transcript, personal statement etc. Do not be afraid to ask "Would you feel comfortable writing a strong letter of recommendation for me?" Or "Do you feel that you are familiar enough with my background to write me a very strong letter of recommendation?"

A great recommender knows you as a person in addition to your achievements. It may be helpful for you to know how recommenders write their letter. [This letter of recommendation](#) for an NSF fellowship applicant is a great example.

We cannot emphasize enough that it is your responsibility to get your letters sent in on time. Do not hesitate to send your recommenders reminders closer to the application deadline.

**Testimonies:** *"Start early and have a timeline. I planned ahead and saved up for the GRE; gave myself 4 months to study and it wasn't enough for me. I started talking to my supervisor at work about my desire to apply to grad school. When I was ready to apply, she was able to write me a letter of recommendation. For my Personal Statement/Statement of Purpose, I drew from personal experience and the work I was doing at the time as well as volunteer experiences."*

### Resume & Transcript

As you work to build your resume and transcript, remember that there is no "best" profile, and that everyone's transcript may have some "blemishes". Applicants are viewed holistically by the admission committee. If you are experiencing doubts, remember that the worst thing that could happen is not giving yourself the opportunity to be considered!

### Interview

First, if you receive an interview invitation, congratulations! Only applicants who have made it to the short list of finalists are asked to interview, as interviews are time-consuming and costly. Not all programs interview, but be prepared for the possibility, especially if you're applying for a slot in a particularly competitive program or field. Some programs require an in-person interview, while others may require a virtual interview.

The purpose of the interview is to permit members of the department to get a "look" at you. To meet you, the person. Sometimes applicants who seem like a perfect match on paper aren't so in real life. What do they want to know? Whether you have what it takes to succeed in graduate school and the profession, like maturity, interpersonal skills, interest, and motivation. How well do you express yourself, manage stress, and think on your feet?

There is a variety of interview formats depending on the field, program, and institution. Sometimes you may be able to find a detailed outline of the interview on the website. For example, UW School of Medicine provides a comprehensive overview of

their interview, including potential questions and the schedule on [their website](#). Other times, the program administrator may directly communicate with you about interview details after you have received an invitation.

Some programs may cover your interview expenses, such as airfare, ground transportation, stay, meal, and even incidental expense (expenses incurred while traveling for meals or other services with an itemized receipt).

**Testimonies:** *"I didn't have a formal interview but I had conversations with a recruiter from the online program. She asked me about my familiarity with online courses and how I saw myself managing time with a full-time job, assignments, etc."*

### Financial Profiles

If you are accepted into the program of your choice but have difficulties affording it, contact specific departments at the school to seek help. Here are some points of contact:

- > Financial Aid Office
- > Admission Office
- > Dean of Students Office (if not hearing back from the other offices)

**Testimonies:** *"I enrolled in an online Master degree. At my school, the online degree has a separate department. My program recruiter connected me with the financial aid officer who specifically manages online programs."*

### Application Fee Waiver

Many times, graduate/professional programs will only offer application fee waivers to U.S. Citizens or Legal Permanent Residents. Nevertheless, it does not hurt to ask if they can also provide undocumented students (with or without DACA) with an application fee waiver.

Graduate school applications can range anywhere from \$50 to \$100+ each. Many students will often apply to 10 or more schools. If you are undocumented and do not qualify for application fee waivers, application fees could very well add up to more than \$1,000. This is not even including related costs, such as sending official transcripts and taking the GRE.

Who should you contact? Often, there won't be one specific person in charge of application fee waivers, but you will want to reach out to someone who understands and is willing to help you navigate the process. Below are a few contact points at UW.

- > Graduate School Admissions Office (specific to Graduate Program)
- > [Student Financial Aid Office](#)
- > [UW GO-MAP](#)
  - GO-MAP encourages prospective and current undocumented graduate students to stop by the GO-MAP office to get acquainted with our services and student programming. For more information, please contact Vanessa Álvarez, program officer, at [gomap@uw.edu](mailto:gomap@uw.edu)

Additionally, you are always welcome to seek support and advocacy from Leadership Without Borders and the [Samuel E. Kelly Ethnic Cultural Center \(ECC\)](#).

**Testimonies:** *"I paid the application fee, but it was later reimbursed as "payment" toward my first semester."*

**How should you contact these departments?** E-mail works just fine. In your e-mail you want to tell them about yourself, your interest in the program, your financial difficulties as an undocumented student, and ultimately make your request for an application fee waiver.

**When should you contact them?** The sooner the better. Don't wait until the day when you are submitting your application online! As soon as you know you are interested in applying to a particular program, reach out to the program/school to find out if you qualify for an application fee waiver.

Another way to acquire a fee waiver is to attend information sessions hosted by the program. One example is Grad School Virtual Fairs provided by [CareerEco Virtual Events](#). Simply by signing up and joining the information session, you may be

offered a fee waiver and receive more information about the program. It is also a good way to get connected with school admission officers.

**Testimonies:**

**Should I disclose my immigration status to my recommenders and in my applications?**

This is one of the most commonly asked questions by prospective undocumented students. It comes down to a personal choice on how comfortable you feel about making this information known to the application committee and in general. You should not feel obligated to disclose your immigration status; however, you should not provide false information in your application. If the program application provides specific instructions on how to fill in your information as an undocumented student, be sure to observe this carefully.

It is advisable that you get feedback from mentors and allies as to when and to whom you should disclose your status. In appropriate situations, this may bring positive outcomes for the following reasons.

- > Undocumented students have unique life experience. They are able to bring unique and valuable insight into the classroom and in professional settings.
- > An undocumented student's status likely has a significant impact on their identity and academic/professional plan. One may find it important to include it in the narrative of their own journey.
- > Disclosing your status will open more doors to support and help you find more allies.

**Testimonies:**

*"I decided to share about my experience as a DACA recipient because it certainly shaped my career choices and gives me a different perspective from my peers. I shared my status but presented my circumstance as one of perseverance, resilience, and determination."*

*"The more I open up and be vulnerable about my situation, the more I receive support and doors open for me. This was at a time when the DREAM Act has not been in place, and back in the day, it wasn't common in this state to support undocumented immigrants."*

*"I grew up in a family where we are taught not to talk about our experience. But in graduate school, doors open when I am not afraid to ask questions and be my own advocate."*

*"Faculty staff have much more experience in the field than you. When they understand your situation, they can open more doors for you"*

*"Undocumented students have entered and succeed in graduate school even before DACA exist. There are professors and mentors out there who understand and are willing to help you. For example, they may extend deadlines for you knowing that you are experiencing exceptional circumstances".*

*"My academic community did not come from the same background as me and did not know a lot about immigration policies. Still, they were in it with me. I let my struggles touch their lives and built my relationships across the borders."*

**PART 5: LIFE AFTER GRADUATION**

**If DACA ends, should I still pursue graduate school?**

If graduate/professional school is your ultimate goal, the answer is yes! Even If DACA goes away, no matter where you go in life, you will still carry with you extremely valuable experience, skills, and relationships from your studies. Today, many UndocuProfessionals who have come a long way are here to advocate for you. We have built a strong foundation of support and advocacy for our undocumented community, and we will continue to grow.

**What jobs can I have without DACA?**

There are several options to work if you do not have DACA, such as becoming self-employed as an independent contractor, starting a sole proprietorship, starting a limited liability company as a worker cooperative, or working abroad. Depending on your field of study and experience, you will be able to identify the best option for you.



Immigrant Rising provide many resources regarding work opportunities for undocumented immigrants, including info sheets and webinar records, all freely available on their website.

**On-campus Employment at the University of Washington**

Since the Trump administration is not immediately ending any current grants of DACA or work permits, your UW employer should not ask to verify your work permit again until your current expiration date. At that time, if you qualified for and timely renewed your DACA and work permit or obtained a work permit on another basis, you will need to present your new work permit to your employer to show that you continue to have authorization to work.

If you no longer have a valid work permit, your employer will most likely provide you with a notice of layoff when your current work authorization expires, since you will no longer have legal authorization to work. In some situations, you may be able to negotiate with your employer to be placed on a leave of absence until you can show you are authorized to work again; however, your employer is not obligated to agree to this.

More information about DACA and workplace rights is forthcoming.

**Network opportunities**

Our goal is to continually build a strong network of supporters for our undocumented students here at the University of Washington. If you have any questions, we encourage you to contact Leadership Without Borders to speak with our Coordinator, Hugo Garcia Villa, or our student staff members. We are here to support you and are more than happy to help you establish connections within our community. Additionally, during the school year, LWB may offer networking events featuring UndocuProfessionals or UW alumni serving as guest speakers or panelists. Furthermore, our affiliated RSO, Purple Group, have meetings every week during the school year where you can come and bond with our students and join our workshops, presentations, and discussions on numerous topics.

Below is a short list of nation-wide Undocumented student networks. Be sure to check out their website and social media platforms for latest updates!

- > MyUndocumentedLife
- > Immigrant Rising
- > Pre-Health Dreamers

**Testimonies:**

*"Yes! There are many ways you can continue to practice your field of study, or become an independent contractor. I have used the guides on Immigrants Rising for this, it's very helpful!"*

**PART 6: EMAIL TEMPLATES**

**Template emails to school administrators**

To Associate Director of Admission (PhD Program, Biomedical Sciences, Houston, TX)

"My name is \_\_. I am an undergraduate student at the University of Washington, Seattle. I am interested in applying to [School and Graduate Program name]

I would like to ask about the graduate program's citizenship requirement for admitting students. Currently I am an undocumented, non-DACA student, and am in the process of adjusting my status. Currently I do not have US citizenship nor Permanent Residency. I am wondering if I would be eligible to apply to the program.

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions for me."





Sincerely,

[your name]"

**Template emails to asking for application fee waiver**

"Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. [It's even better if you had contacted the person earlier on regarding your status, so they remember you and thus be more willing to help you] I am applying to the [enter the name of the graduate school program that you are applying to] program graduate admission for [enter the semester/quarter and year you would be entering, e.g. Fall 2022]. I recently checked the school's admission website and noticed that only U.S. citizens and permanent residents are eligible for application fee waivers. I would like to confirm with you, and perhaps the Office of Graduate Admission, in regards to the case of undocumented students/DACA-eligible students on this restriction.

Receiving the fee waiver would relieve a great financial burden for me and my family. I thank you for your response in advance.

Sincerely,

[your name]"

**Template to Faculty asking for Informational Interview**

Dear Dr. \_\_\_,

My name is \_\_\_. I am an undergraduate senior at the University of Washington, Seattle studying \_\_\_. I am interested in applying to [Graduate Program name] in Fall 2022.

Your research about gene expression and chromatin regulations and cardiovascular diseases align strongly with my interest. I am wondering if you are accepting new PhD candidates, and whether it is possible for me to get to know more about the work that you do? If possible, I would greatly appreciation an opportunity to talk with you or a member of your research team over a brief informational interview.

From my current research on molecular mechanism of aging in yeast, I learn that ... [describe your research in 1-2 sentences] I would love to know whether it is possible to replicate my experiment on a human heart cell line. Besides working with single cell imaging data, I have presented my study on this topic. For your information, I have attached my poster below.

I am available to make a visit to campus on [provide a few dates and time]. Please let me know if you are available during this time, or if it is possible to connect with your students, or other faculties with similar interests. However, I completely understand if you are unable to accommodate my request at this time.

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions for me.

Sincerely,

[your name]

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

As I am developing this toolkit, I am an undergraduate student in my 4th year at the University of Washington. I went through the experience of applying to Ph.D. programs in Biology and Biomedical Sciences as a non-DACA undocumented student.

Through that journey, I did a lot of research and received many supports from my family, friends, colleagues, and mentors. I would like to share as much resources as possible, and I hope that you may find it helpful. -- Bao Nguyen

**Please NOTE:** the resources provided may not apply to you since every undocumented case is different.

A very special acknowledgement to Rebecca Brown, UW Graduate Funding Information Service (GFIS) for her wonderful support and dedication to this project and our student community. She provided extremely valuable resources regarding financing graduate studies, as well as feedback to the development of this toolkit. She will be more than happy to provide support if you need, and may be contacted through GFIS at [gfis@uw.edu](mailto:gfis@uw.edu)

Many special recognitions to the individuals who provided extremely valuable testimonies to this toolkit. Your success is the drive for many undocumented students here at the University of Washington and across the nation, for if one of us makes it, all of us can.

Many thanks to Leadership Without Borders for supporting and guiding me from the creation to completion of this project.

This toolkit would have not been possible without contribution from resilient undocumented students/professionals and their allies. It is a collective resource. If you wish to provide feedback, have questions, or would like to contribute a testimony, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

## REFERENCES & RESOURCES

### UW resources

- UW Graduate Funding Information Services <https://www.lib.washington.edu/commons/services/gfis>
- <https://blogs.uw.edu/sswadmis/about-us/s>
- UW Student Financial Aid Office: <https://www.washington.edu/financialaid/>
- UW GO-MAP <https://grad.uw.edu/equity-inclusion-and-diversity/go-map/>
- UW Undocumented Graduate Students: <https://grad.uw.edu/equity-inclusion-and-diversity/go-map/undocumented-graduate-students/>

### Nation-wide resources

- <https://mydocumentedlife.org/graduate-school-students/>
- <https://undocuphds.wordpress.com/2017/06/09/10-questions-to-ask-your-potential-graduate-graduate-institution/>
- <https://mydocumentedlife.org/2015/11/01/i-am-undocumented-how-do-i-pay-for-graduate-school-part-2-of-2/>
- <https://undoc.ucmerced.edu/academic-support/pursuing-graduate-school/why-graduate-school#apply>
- [https://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/GRE/img/sample\\_confirmation\\_letter.gif](https://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/GRE/img/sample_confirmation_letter.gif)
- <http://undoc.universityofcalifornia.edu/after-uc.html>
- <https://uleadnet.org/>
- <https://onedrive.live.com/View.aspx?resid=F5CF4190C5492F4D!106&wdSlidId=260&wdModeSwitchTime=1587953342405&authkey=!APISK3pnOI9jMqI>
- <https://www.coloradocollege.edu/offices/careercenter/begin-your-search/resources-for-undocumented-and-daca-students.html>
- [https://immigrantsrising.org/resources?\\_sft\\_topics=higher-education](https://immigrantsrising.org/resources?_sft_topics=higher-education)
- <https://digitalcommons.law.scu.edu/stu-immigration/1/>
- <https://mydocumentedlife.org/2020/05/16/undocugrads-workshop-learn-how-to-apply-navigate-graduate-school-as-an-undocumented-student/>
- CareerEco Virtual Events: <https://www.careereco.com/Fair/UpcomingFairs#2/>
- Graduate Reaching a Dream Deferred- Grad School Decoded: The Undocumented Way. <https://www.csustan.edu/sites/default/files/gradschooldecoded.pdf>
- Monitor graduate school admission across the community: <https://www.thegradcafe.com/survey/>

**Health, Medicine & STEM fields resources**

- Pre-Health Dreamers: <https://www.phdreamers.org/>
- Bio/Biomedical Graduate (MS or PhD) Programs Dropping GRE Requirement  
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1MYcxZMhf97H5Uxr2Y7XndHn6eEC5oO8XWQi2PU5jLxQ/edit#gid=0>
- Medical schools providing free tuition: <https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/news/20190220/kaiser-permanente-medical-school-to-offer-free-tuition>
- Philip Guo's Ph.D. Guide (STEM): <http://www.pgbovine.net/PhD-application-tips.htm>

**Connect with LWB and Purple Group on Social Media**

- Leadership Without Borders on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). Email: undocu@uw.edu
- UW Purple Group on Facebook: Contact LWB's office. Email: undocupu@uw.edu