

Circle of Funds: Funding Strategies for Undocumented Students

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Abstract: This paper seeks to (1) find ways to open doors closed to college funding for undocumented students in the U.S.; (2) construct a rejoinder to critiques that considerations of higher education for undocumented students focus too much on money; and (3) advocate for students whose voices/stories elevate our work as academics. This analysis is informed by the results of a study of undocumented students as well as the author's personal experience. Participants in the study primarily used three sources of funding for college: scholarships/fellowships, employment in the underground economy, and support from sponsoring/advocacy organizations. The Appendix outlines strategies for helping undocumented students fundraise for college education.

Introduction

For undocumented students, a significant barrier to achieving a degree in higher education stems from their ineligibility to apply for and receive federal and, in many cases, state financial aid despite their families' investment in the system (Perry, 2006). This paper presents the ongoing struggles endured by undocumented students as they finance their college educations. In the Appendix, I provide an outline of pragmatic funding strategies for this population of students and their supporters, allies, and advocates. These strategies were compiled after decades of working with undocumented students, including those interviewed for this study.

The current state of immigration in the United States is littered with examples of inhuman practices and discourse. There is continued anti-immigrant discourse in public media and various U.S. institutions (Bloch et al., 2020; Finley & Esposito, 2020; Rodriguez, 2020). Reports of inhuman detention facilities and deportations persist: lack of comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) and other such policy failures continue exasperate a broken immigration system (Filkins, 2023; Romero, 2023; Sullivan & Kanno-Youngs, 2023). Specific examples include repeatedly failed efforts to pass the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act throughout the past 22 years and the attack on DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). DACA helped some but not all undocumented students. DACA was implemented by the Obama administration in 2012 and provided a two-year work permit and deprioritization for deportation, yet offered neither a change in immigration status (i.e., undocumented people remained undocumented people) nor a pathway to citizenship. The latest on DACA, after a failed attempt to phase out the program by the Trump administration, followed by Biden administration's failure to restore it to its original form, is *current* DACA holders may continue to benefit from the program, as well as apply for renewals. As of 2023, new applications are being accepted but are not being processed pursuant to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit decision No. 21-40680 (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS, 2022). Moreover, when undocumented students are stigmatized as "illegal," they can be denied federal student aid and other forms of college assistance." Undocumented students face the real possibility of being deported/removed from the United States, for many the only country they have ever known.

There is some good news at the state level, such as state "DREAM Acts." For example, laws enacted in New York State in 2002 and 2019 allow eligible undocumented college students to pay in-state tuition (AN ACT to Amend the Education Law, 2002; Enacts the New York State

DREAM Act, 2019), provided the applicant has met the following eligibility requirements: (1) attended at least 2 years of high school in New York; (2) graduated from a New York high school or earned a GED; (3) applied to college within 5 years of earning the diploma or GED; (4) showed proof of residence; and (5) filed an affidavit at the college that the applicant filed for authorized status as soon as they were eligible. Other states such as California have similar laws. However, no state can provide a pathway to citizenship or residency as these processes lie in the jurisdiction of the federal government. For immigrant rights advocates, CIR continues to be a major target.

The goals of this analysis include: (1) find ways to open the many closed doors to college funding that so many undocumented students face in this country; (2) construct a rejoinder to critiques that considerations of higher education for undocumented students focus too much on money for college degrees by those who have plenty of both; and (3) give an example of a journal article serving a dual purpose of being intellectually stimulating/engaging, and executing a practical purpose, in this case, advocating for students whose voices/stories elevate our work as academics. The body of this paper presents the results of a mixed-methods study I conducted with undocumented students and the Appendix provides a brief outline of fundraising strategies for helping undocumented students fundraise for their college education.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the paper is informed by the critical pedagogy tradition and Yosso's community cultural wealth theory (Yosso, 2006). Critical pedagogy is rooted in the interrogation of powerful systems that affect, influence, and mandate the education that occurs or, rather, is allowed to occur in classrooms, schools, and all places of teaching and learning. An important concept in critical pedagogy is student agency. Identifying the potential for societal change, and the potential in oneself to be part of that change, is foundational to education. Giroux (2001, p. 38) wrote, "Thus it is important that students come to grips with what a given society has made of them, how it has incorporated them ideologically and materially into its rules and logic, and what it is that they need to affirm and reject in their own histories in order to begin the process of struggling for the conditions that will give them opportunities to lead a self-managed existence." This quote is exemplified by the persistent struggle of undocumented students for a college education in the face of anti-immigrant discourse, detentions and deportations, and a broken immigration system that places their livelihoods and their lives in peril. Despite these challenges, undocumented students and their allies have found creative ways to fund their college education, while still advocating for systemic changes that would alleviate the need for such strategies to exist in the first place. Thus, in the spirit described by Giroux in the quote above, undocumented students will continue to seek and create opportunities that lead them toward a better way of life despite the challenges they confront. This analysis aims to provide important lessons about the role of agency and resistance among a group of students that continues to be marginalized and misunderstood in U.S. society.

In addition, to critical pedagogy, Yosso's (2006) community cultural wealth theory provides an important lens through which to understand how undocumented students seek an additive approach to their current situation and employ the various forms of capital Yosso describes in her theory. Despite the oppressive challenges that undocumented students face, they see value in themselves, their families, and the communities they reside in. This is particularly true through their use of social capital which Yosso (2006, p. 45) defines as the "networks of people and

community services” that undocumented students use to generate income to fund their college education. This analysis will examine specific examples of how undocumented students use social capital.

Methods

This analysis is informed by a mixed methods study (Del Razo, 2012). Within this larger study, key aspects of fundraising by undocumented students were identified that aligned with my personal experience across decades of witnessing and author’s decades of witnessing and helping undocumented students’ efforts to fund their college education. The qualitative portion of my study consisted primarily of interviews conducted in California and Arizona in 2011, the year before DACA was introduced. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted according to Brinkmann & Kvale’s (2014, p. 4) definition of interviews as conversations “where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and interviewee”. Indeed, throughout these interviews, the subjects often noted that it felt more like a *platica* (a talk) than an interview. Interviews typically lasted 90 minutes but some went as long as 3 hours. The interviews provided personal disclosures of participants’ immigration status and the challenges of financing their college education. Participants also provided practical and useful advice on how to generate income within a system that produces financial barriers for undocumented students.

The quantitative portion of my study involved implementing a national survey, the College Matriculation of Undocumented Students (CMUS). The CMUS survey was distributed online to undocumented students from the high school graduating class of 2011. The survey was informed by the existing research literature on the topic, by decades of my own experience working with undocumented students, his research on the topic, and by the CIRP (Cooperative Institutional Research Program) survey which “has provided data on incoming college students’ background characteristics, high school experiences, attitudes, behaviors, and expectations for college” for more than a half century (Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), n.d.). Items on the CMUS survey included questions about participants’ financial situations and the importance of finding funding for their college education. The survey data provided an important backdrop to the stories that surfaced during my interviews and lent a pragmatic, mixed-method approach to the study that would examine the commonalities of both methods (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Together, these two methods provided rich data that made clear the sense of urgency that undocumented students associate with funding their college education. Where the survey data left questions, the interviews provided answers. As discussed below, the findings of this study contribute and understanding of the important and continuing conversations surrounding how undocumented students strategize to fund their college educations.

Findings I: Lack of Funds, Sparse Scholarships, and Inventive Fellowships

Funding their college education is very important for undocumented students and a top concern for a vast majority of them. As Figure 1 below shows, when asked, “Do you have any concern about your ability to finance your college education?” over 84% of the students reported that this was a major concern because they were not sure they would have enough funds to complete their college education. Close to 12% of the students reported that they had some concerns and 4% indicated that they had no concerns about their ability to finance their college education. Since this 4% translates to 12 students in the survey sample (N=290), then it is possible that these 12 students had secured sufficient funding to finance their entire college

expenses. This shows that not all undocumented students are unable to pay for college, but it does show that it is only a small percentage of them that are able to do so.

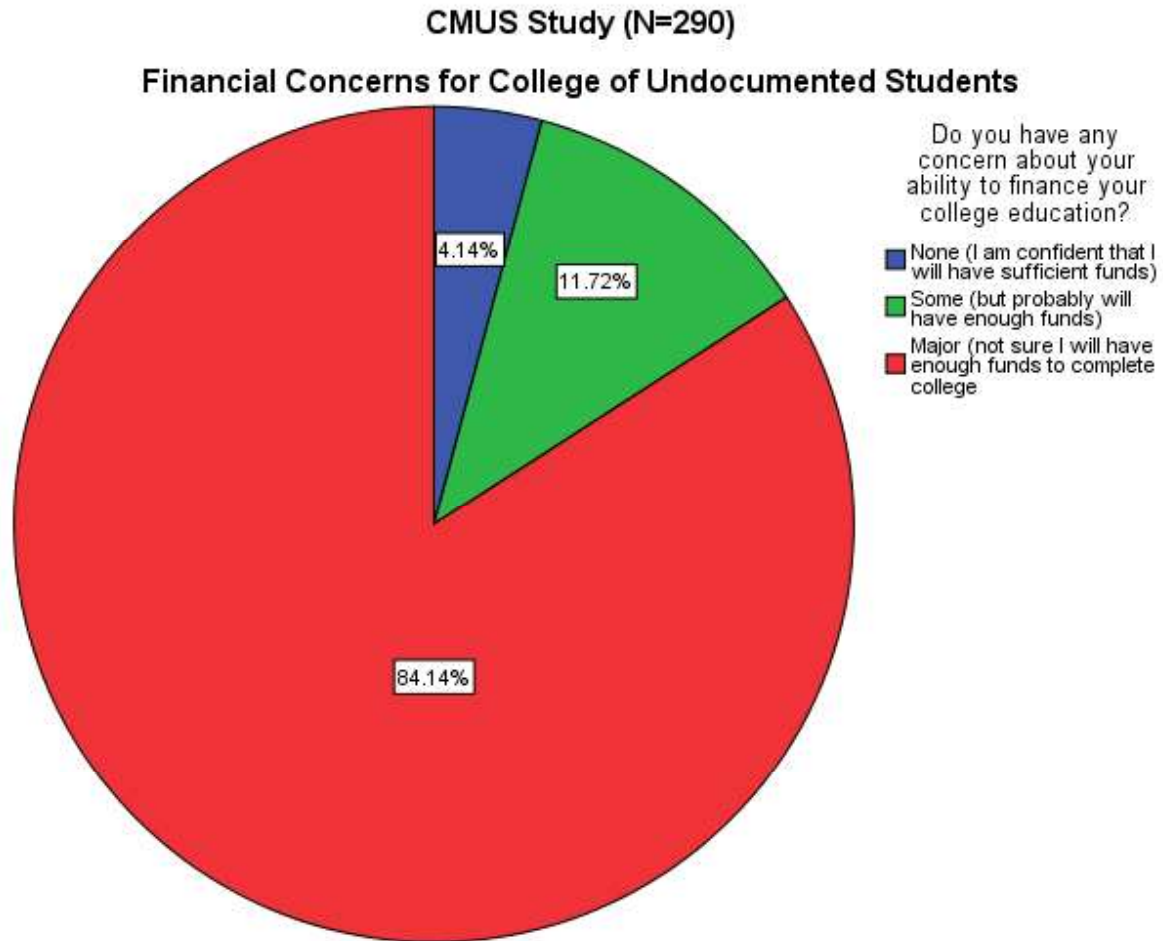


Figure 1

These percentages are staggering when compared to the national norms found in the 2011 CIRP Freshman Survey (Pryor et al., 2011), which asked the same question to the entering 2011 Freshman class. Table 1 (below) helps make this point more clearly. As Table 1 shows, almost a third (32.6%) of the National 2011 Freshman class were not concerned about paying for their college expenses while only 4.1% of the CMUS respondents reported feeling this way; a difference of 28.5%. As previously mentioned, the most staggering difference was that fewer than 12% of the National 2011 freshman class had a major concern about paying for their college expenses as compared to 84% of the CMUS respondents who reported feeling this way, which indicates *a difference of over 72%*! Although there are many issues that undocumented students are facing, the inability to fund their college education caused the biggest barrier for them, and it was the academic challenge most frequently reported by participants. In fact, 96% of the students surveyed “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their biggest challenge in going to college is money. (See Figure 2 on p. 34.)

Table 1

2011 CIRP Freshman Survey and CMUS Survey Comparison

| Do you have any concern about your ability to finance your college education? | <u>2011 CIRP Freshman Survey</u> Weighted National Norms – All Respondents | <u>CMUS Study (N=290)</u> Non-Weighted All Respondents | Differences |
|--|---|---|--------------------|
| None (I am confident that I will have sufficient funds) | 32.6% | 4.1% | 28.5% |
| Some (but probably will have enough funds) | 55.5% | 11.7% | 43.8% |
| Major (Not sure I will have enough funds to complete college) | 11.9% | 84.1% | -72.2% |

To deal with these financial challenges, undocumented students reported using a variety of strategies to earn income for college: scholarships, fellowships, and working in the underground economy were the three methods most commonly reported. Students also turned to advocacy organizations for support and guidance. Participants' stories gleaned through interviews revealed how each of these strategies carried particular benefits and challenges.

Monica's Story: For economically disadvantaged students who are *not* undocumented, applying for federal aid is a common strategy for funding college expenses. Because undocumented students are not allowed to apply for any type of federal aid, scholarships become an important avenue of funds. However, as Monica points out in the interview excerpt below, few scholarships available for undocumented students, and those that exist are usually highly competitive. Monica shared her challenges in securing scholarships for her college education when she said,

It's hard. You have to be more resourceful. We have been through millions of websites to find scholarships. The first thing I look for is requirements. Some don't specify that you have to be a resident and then you look a little closer and it's there. [*She points to a make-believe application.*] Argh! I have to go through a

lot like that. Then, I find a scholarship for undocumented students, which is like one in 50. But those are hard to get because undocumented students tend to be good students. So, the competition amongst undocumented students is harder than those that are not.

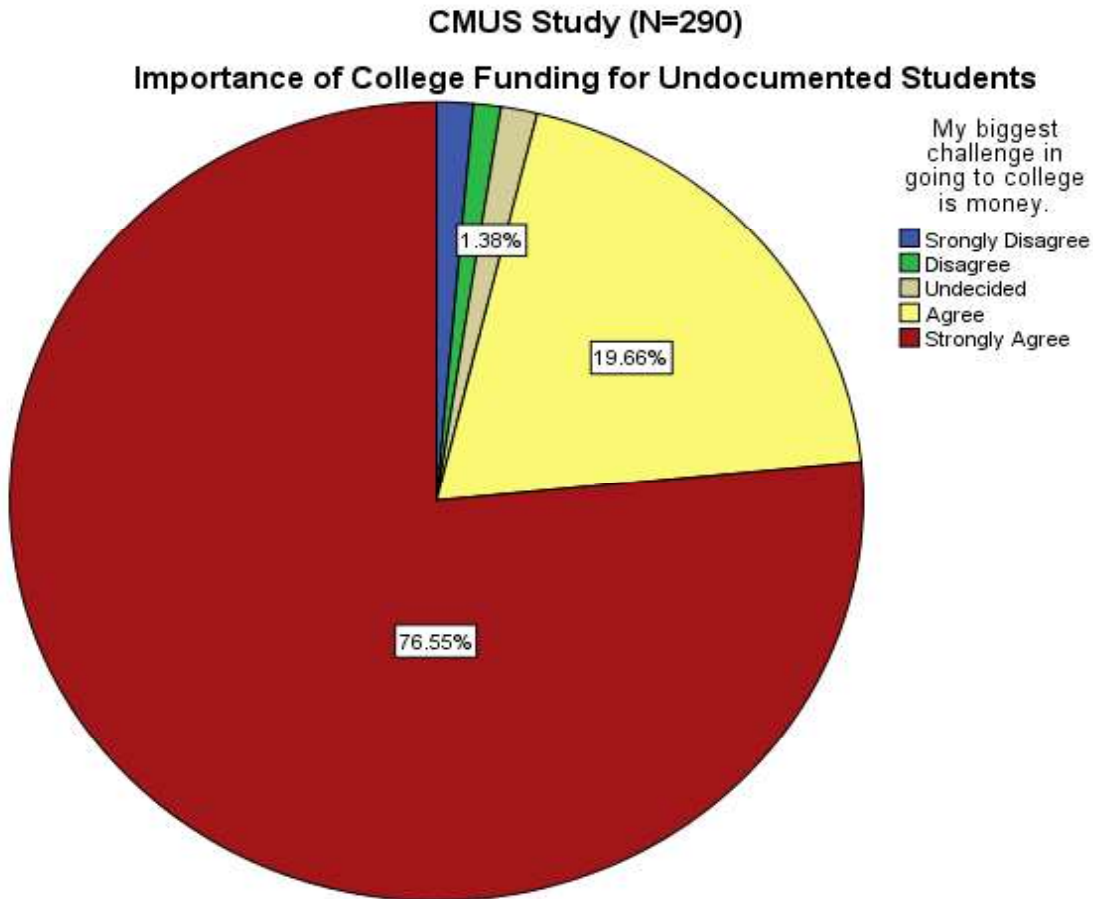


Figure 2

As Monica described her experience of searching for scholarships that permit undocumented students to apply, she explained how frustrating it was to discover that few were available to her. This description is indicative of many undocumented students in general and specifically for the students in this study. Other interviewees described similar experiences. Although discouraging, scholarships remained an important source of revenue for students interviewed in the study. Most of the students (14 of 16 or 87.5%) reported receiving at least one scholarship.

The survey data corroborated the data collected from the interviews in regard to how important scholarships were for undocumented students. When asked how much of their first year's educational expenses they expected to cover from "aid which need not be repaid" such as scholarships, over 82% responded that this type of aid would cover at least some of their first-year expenses. Over 21% expected this type of aid to cover 76%-100% of their first-year college

expenses. These results suggest that undocumented students are well aware of the importance of scholarships in helping them pay their way to college.

Daniel's Story: Fellowships are another type of aid that fits within this category is fellowships. Daniel discusses how he secured a fellowship with an organization that worked closely with the police department. Originally from Zacatecas, Mexico, Daniel, came to the U.S. when he was one and a half years old. Daniel's father was already in the U.S. and managed to fly his family, which consisted of his mother, older and younger sisters, and Daniel, to the U.S. Daniel's younger brother was born in the United States years after the family arrived. The family moved frequently but finally settled in one of the south cities of Los Angeles County. Despite his immigration status, Daniel participated in a police youth program and wanted to become a police officer. At the time of our interview, Daniel had graduated high school two months prior and was majoring in business at a local community college.

Given his experience in a police youth program, Daniel saw an opportunity to locate a fellowship with an organization that worked closely with the police department. Using his connection with the police youth program, Daniel informed the administrator of the fellowship, Rachel, that he was interested in the fellowship but that his undocumented status prevented him from providing a social security number, which was required in order to receive funds via check. Rachel improvised a way to award the fellowship funds. Daniel said, "They paid the other kids with a social [*i.e., social security number*] through a check. But for us that don't have a social, we got gift cards and bus passes. They helped us out. They said they would pay me in different ways. I thought that was pretty cool." Daniel's networking smarts and the social capital he brought to the table were key in helping secure this fellowship. On Yosso's definition of social capital as "networks of people and community resources" (Yosso, 2006, pg. 45), Daniel used the social capital he had gained as a participant in the police youth program to help secure this rare fellowship that accepted and found creative ways of helping undocumented students.

Important in this example is how organizations can fund undocumented students while still ensuring that they stay within the restrictions of any existing policies their organizations may have even in a place like a police department. Although not as many participants in the study reported securing fellowships as they did scholarships, this was still an important finding in the data as it demonstrated creative workarounds for generating income for undocumented students. way that some undocumented students were using to generate income. This study revealed that many organizations are interested in including undocumented students in securing fellowships but feel they wouldn't be able to pay the students because of their status. It was important to discover how an organization was able to not only provide a fellowship for an undocumented student but also find a way to compensate him without issuing him a check. Colleges and organizations supporting higher education may benefit from this example.

Findings II: Working in the Underground Economy

According to my study, over 78% of the survey respondents and over 68% of the students interviewed reported living below the poverty line. Securing income for college expenses determines whether or not the students ultimately enroll and persist in college. In addition to scholarships and fellowships, finding work in the underground economy was another method for generating funds for the students interviewed. Some students used an entrepreneurial attitude to create ways to make money on their own, as was the case with Chalo.

Chalo's Story: Chalo is originally from Coahuila, Mexico and came to the United States when he was 6 years old. Chalo's father had arrived earlier upon learning that one of his sisters in the U.S. was dying. His father eventually settled in the U.S. and worked as a dishwasher. Chalo, his mother, and younger brother came to the United States with visas, which eventually expired and resulted in his family losing their authorized, documented status. Chalo's youngest brother was born a couple of years after they arrived and is the only U.S. citizen of the family. Chalo began working at a very young age and started several businesses such as wedding coordinator and dance instructor for *quinceañeras* (15th year birthday parties). Chalo had graduated from high school two months prior to our interview, had just started community college, where he was majoring in electrical engineering with an emphasis in Computer Science.

Chalo considers himself self-employed and uses his skill and creativity to help pay for his expenses. He shares his ideas with other students. He said,

It's hard to find jobs and I tell them to go to a mom-and-pop shops and try to remake their menus. Most students have access to computers and can work with [Microsoft] Word and PowerPoint and put pictures of their food on a PowerPoint presentation. And then they can create a slide show that changes their picture of their food. You could go up to them with an example and say, "Oh, I see you don't have anything like this for your restaurant" and tell them "I can provide your restaurant with a virtual menu like this" and they end up wanting it. That's what I did. That's the idea I give them.

Chalo's understanding of technology and those who use it prompted him to come up with this very creative way for him to provide services that businesses would pay for. These are examples of creative methods of generating funds by using the technology and know-how that some teens may have.

Finding employment in the underground economy was beneficial at times, as in Chalo's case, but for others, their undocumented status affected them in ways that also affected their parents. In order to survive, undocumented students' parents often work in the underground economy to provide an income to sustain the family. These jobs are often exploitative, with low pay and long hours. The students reported that their parents often encouraged them to go to college so that they would not have to work in these kinds of jobs. This is common among many families in general but specifically within immigrant families where many view the United States as a place where their children will have a better life and financially succeed at a higher level than their parents (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Immigrant children who are here with authorization have shown the ability to assimilate and succeed in the U.S. at higher levels than their parents, especially when compared with other children of immigrants who are born in the United States (Suárez -Orozco & Suárez -Orozco, 1995). However, when it comes to undocumented children, we can encounter a situation of segmented assimilation.

Segmented assimilation changes this straight-line path into the American mainstream. Various factors (e.g., non-acceptance, racial discrimination, lack of resources) disrupt upward mobility among the children of immigrants, resulting in them not improving upon their parents' economic status (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014; Zhou, 2006; Portes & Zhou, 1993). A unique distinction amongst children of immigrants is that undocumented students do not possess an authorized immigration status in this country and thus, acceptance as an individual who can benefit from public structures (e.g., public financial aid, working with authorization, and

licensures) is non-existent for many. Hence, many choose to enter the underground economy into jobs like those of their parents to see if they can generate funds for their college education and, sometimes, for their own survival. Many students in this study worked in this underground economy and experienced many of the injustices that their parents had undergone. However, they still viewed it as a source of funds they hoped would help in paying for college. In the following stories, the students discuss what they have had to endure in these jobs in order to secure funds for college such as the case was for Augusto.

Agusto's Story: Augusto is originally from Jalisco, Mexico and came by plane to the U.S. with his mother and older sister using travel visas. He was one and a half years old when he left Mexico. His father met the family in Los Angeles where the family eventually settled in one of the south cities of Los Angeles County. The family eventually grew to six with the arrival of Augusto's younger sister and brother. Like many other undocumented students, Augusto comes from a mixed-status family. Augusto plans on attending a local community college and majoring in Engineering or Business. Augusto knew that paying for college would be a big expense so despite securing a scholarship, it was still not enough to cover all his expenses. Augusto shares how he worked with the janitors at his school to try to save money for college: "I tried to do it once a week. I would tell them to give me \$5 to help them out, like after school, or sometimes during lunchtime. I would tell them; I could clean up something during lunch. Like students would drop hot Cheetos on the floor and I could pick them up. I would also pick up bottles and recycle them, too."

Even though it was tough on him for his friends to see him picking up trash with the janitors, Augusto mentioned how he "had to do what he had to do" to make money for college. Augusto also tried working in other cities to help generate money. He said, "I also went to Anaheim. I told my friends that I can clean houses and the owners can donate whatever they can. It was hard to do this, but I had to do this because I am going to school and to pay for school." Augusto's strong desire to go to college superseded any other personal concerns he had about picking up trash at his high school or cleaning houses in strange cities. He was very determined to find funds that could help him pay for college. Similar to Augusto was Leticia, who also had a story of working as a means of raising funds for college, but she had a different circumstance than Augusto.

Leticia's Story: Leticia is originally from Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, and came to the U.S. when she was 5 years old. Leticia's journey of migration was through the *cerros* (the highlands) that separate Tijuana from the U.S. She crossed with her mother, her older sister who was pregnant at the time, and her sister-in-law. Leticia remembered the journey as being very scary as they crossed through the night with ant-infested food and contaminated water, which they consumed due to a lack of resources. After seven failed attempts to cross, they finally made it. Her father had already made the trip to the U.S. and once reunited, he brought the family to one of the south cities of Los Angeles County where they eventually settled. Leticia lost her mom to cancer when Leticia was in the ninth grade and this tragic experience is what makes her determined to become a registered nurse who aids cancer patients.

Leticia became a teenage mother during her senior year in high school but still managed to graduate on time with a 3.3 GPA. She took two years off to work before she enrolled in her local community college. Leticia saw herself in a difficult financial situation when she became pregnant in high school and was forced to work to create a funding stream to support her family. She describes how she did it:

In my senior year, I got pregnant, so after I graduated; I stayed home and looked for a job. I found one where I worked in a warehouse opening boxes but that soon ended. So, one day, I made *raspados* [shaved ice] and went to my old high school and sold them. But it was hard for my son. He was so little. He was 3 months or 4 months. My *suegra* [mother-in-law] couldn't take care of him so I took him with me when I went selling. I started making food like ceviche, burritos, tortas, y enchiladas and I would sell them at businesses, like *fabricas* [warehouses] with my son. It was embarrassing because they would tell me, "What are you doing here? You went to school here." I would tell them that I have to because I have no papers. It was hard but I had to do it.

Leticia described how difficult it was to earn money to feed her child while trying to save some money for college. So, despite having a three-month-old baby with no daycare, Leticia used her entrepreneurial skill to create a source of revenue to support her son and also save additional money for college. Leticia found it difficult and embarrassing to sell food on the streets especially when she considered that these difficult moments included her son. The following excerpt from her college personal statement shows how her son unfortunately shared the challenges she endured: "...it was very hard taking my son with me because he would be crying because the heat of the sun would bother him. Even my son was part of those moments." Leticia's sacrifices became her son's sacrifices, too. Leticia would eventually go to college after she had saved enough money to pay for tuition.

Susana's Story: Susana, another undocumented student, described how she was going to find money to go to college, which she had deferred for a semester because she did not have enough to start in the fall. This excerpt from my interview with her summarizes her difficulties and her determination to overcome them:

Susana: And now my challenges are getting a job and working to pay for college next year. I am going to work all summer and this fall semester so I can start in January. I am not going to give up on school. I plan on going back in January. I am still going to be applying for scholarships, too.

Jaime: What kind of work do you plan on doing?

Susana: Housekeeping in a hotel. I remember working in this in the eighth grade and I am going to try to get that job back again. And this other girl said she can help me get into Burger King. And I am going to be babysitting starting August so there is that. Just looking for anything that can help me. And I saw something from [telemarketing company] that helps high school graduates. I think I will be good at selling stuff for them but then I think I am going to apply for this job and then it hits me that they are going to ask me for my social and, argh! It's very frustrating. These things hit me. It's very sad. I just want to go to school. I got to go. I am getting the money.

Though it is impressive to examine the resiliency these students possessed to find financial means to pay for their college education, the risk that they may end up working under the same conditions as their parents was most troubling, threatening to keep these students in the same cycle of exploitation that many of their parents endure as undocumented workers. It is important to keep in mind that schools are powerful agents that assist with the reproduction of social and economic classes in the United States (Bowles & Gintis, 2011). Yet despite undocumented students' ability to break, or attempt to break, this cyclical process imposed by schools, Susana

shows that their undocumented immigration status made it that much harder for them than students from other marginalized communities.

There is certainly nothing wrong with hard, physical work. Working-class jobs provide ample opportunities for both cognitive and non-cognitive learning to take place (Rose, 2005). However, when these types of jobs are the only ones that certain people, especially the underclass, are provided with, then it is wrong. Specific to the population in this study, undocumented students, by working in the underground economy, risk being trapped in a systematic reproduction of an underclass of people from which they may never escape. Hence, the threat that undocumented students may not be able to break the cycle of poverty is greater for them than for other marginalized but not undocumented students who can legally work in this country. Nonetheless, the undocumented students in my study remained hopeful.

Findings III: Clubs and Organizations as Sources of Support

In addition to their and their parents' hard work, undocumented students found hope in clubs and organizations that could help them make it to college. In these organizations, students developed and sharpened their social skill, which resulted in creating greater social capital or "networks of people and community resources" (Yosso, 2006, p. 45) that they could then turn to for help in making it to college.

Students mentioned many organizations and programs helping them get to college. Some of the most recognizable were AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), MESA (Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement), and MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán). The student who best captured what each of these programs did for them was Augusto when he said, "MEChA helped me to stay organized because we organize events. MESA helps me with Math and Science — how to bundle things. AVID helped me to stay on task. That way I don't have a lot of work at the end." Several students described their involvement in at least one of these three programs as being beneficial. One thing common across all three of these programs was that these academic programs did not have social security requirements attached to them unlike many other academic programs. The social security requirement prevented many qualified undocumented students from joining other programs, while the absence of this requirement provided enormous benefits to undocumented students. Such was the case with Oscar.

Oscar's Story: Oscar is originally from Baja California, Mexico, and came to the U.S when he was two months old. His family told him that there was no border back then since they lived in Mexicali at the time. The family settled near Phoenix, Arizona where Oscar attended public schools and had recently graduated from high school. His younger sister is a U.S. citizen, and the rest of the family (Oscar and his parents) are all undocumented immigrants. Oscar's goal is to become a dentist and open up his own dentist practice where he can help his community. Oscar describes a program that provided opportunities for students like him to take college courses while he was still in high school: "It's helped me in paying for my college courses while I have been in high school. I have programs that help me pay for school. This program was in place before Proposition 300, when they didn't get in the way. Now with this law, some of my friends can't do it."

Oscar went on to explain that even though this program was no longer able to help him take college courses, the program continued to help undocumented students. Similar to MESA,

MEChA, and AVID, this particular program did not require participants to have social security numbers. This provided opportunities for undocumented students like Oscar. However, Arizona's Proposition 300, passed in 2006, required undocumented students to pay out-of-state tuition, and Prop 399 made it too difficult for programs like this to keep providing services to undocumented students. These programs required proof of residency for students to qualify for in-state tuition. These programs found it too expensive to pay for undocumented students given the higher out-of-state tuition rates they would have to pay for each of them.

Undocumented students in my study used involvement in programs as a way of making up for denied opportunities. For example, when Monica was informed that the internship she had been awarded was not going to be possible once they discovered that she was undocumented, she set out to find other opportunities to make up for opportunities denied her. The following excerpt from my interview with Monica demonstrated her resourcefulness:

Monica: You have to work with what you have. Even though I have been denied from the internship, I am involved in other things. I have had to network more. I have been active in clubs. I met a lot of people that might be able to help me. I get involved with people who might be able to help us. Like the Hispanic club, where we had different people in it. Native Americans, African Americans. We even had a scholarship fund. I couldn't get it because I was an officer. But we gave it to another undocumented student. I also met with the MEChA at ASU. I try to get by.

Jaime: Any other programs that help in making up for this lack of opportunities?

Monica: Like my Hispanics student association helped me find scholarships. And the MEChA at ASU helped to get sponsorships and clubs I could get in contact with. It helped me because I can put it on my resume. I had all these experiences ever since I was a freshman. I was friends with the dean of students and the president of the college. It felt good to be recognized.

Despite being disappointed for being denied a fellowship she had been awarded once they found out she was undocumented, Monica did not let it stop her from becoming very involved in a variety of other clubs and expanding her network of allies across the college campus. By knowing people like the dean of students, Monica was able to increase her social capital and the network of people who could help her and other undocumented students.

Along with the long-standing programs listed above, new programs have surfaced as the movement to pass the Federal DREAM Act has grown. Regional and state DREAM organizations have provided opportunities for students to be embedded into the networks that run deep into the undocumented student population and its allies. Raul discusses how his involvement in DREAM Team LA helped him learn about the DREAM Act and has given him an opportunity to join the fight for their rights as undocumented students. Raul said,

Me uní al DREAM team LA. Conocí a un estudiante de Cash for College y ahí conocí al estudiante de DREAM Team LA. Y así es como recibí más información del DREAM Act. Y con DREAM Team L.A. he peleado con ellos para nuestros derechos. [I joined DREAM team L.A. I met a student from Cash for College and that is where I met the student from DREAM Team L.A. And that's how I got more information on the DREAM Act. And with DREAM Team L.A., we have fought together for our rights.]

Raul had previously been quite emotional about being denied an internship opportunity, but he was able to bounce back when he discussed his involvement in DREAM Team LA. Organizations such as this are crucial for providing a space of solidarity for undocumented students like Raul, and many other students in this study. In fact, 13 of the 16 students interviewed (81.3%) reported being active in an organization that advocated for undocumented students.

The important role that clubs play is not limited to providing valuable services, which many do, but also in their ability to introduce undocumented students to a network of similar students who have successfully navigated the educational system into college. Participation in advocacy organizations increases the social capital of participating students, which enables them to further their own navigation to college and the navigation of others, which leads to a sense of (em)power(ment), which can result in funding opportunities for their college education, which

Conclusion

My study shows the different ways that undocumented students were generating funds to pay for college, which they viewed as the most pressing challenge on their road to higher education. Scholarships and creative fellowships became valuable sources of funding despite the scarcity of these types of aid for undocumented students. With most of the students being scholarship recipients, the students I interviewed pointed to the importance that scholarships hold for this population of students whose immigration status excludes them from most forms of public aid and many private scholarships. Students also worked in the underground economy to help save money for college and, at times, for the economic survival of their families. The concern for students working in the underground economy was the threat that they would remain in this type of work and not break the cycle of exploitative jobs that many of their parents were stuck in as undocumented workers. Though it was impressive to see the lengths that undocumented students would go to pay for their college expenses, it is disconcerting to know that these students may be part of the social reproduction that would limit them now and in the future. Nonetheless, the students benefited from this source of revenue and have used it to save money for college. The ability to generate an income is very important for undocumented students.

My subjects' use of networking showed how involvement in different organizations and meeting new people helped introduce them to the network of people and organizations that advocated for and/or supported undocumented students. This permitted the students to increase and use their social capital to help discover new resources that would eventually help lead them to college. A combination of old organizations that have traditionally helped underserved students and new DREAM organizations that specifically help undocumented students, provided important sources of college assistance that undocumented students used to become more informed about how to get to college. Networks of clubs, organizations, and programs that did not require proof of residency helped undocumented students continue along their road to college. The students in the study showed that organizations and programs like MEChA, MESA, and AVID helped students receive college resources that were denied them in other programs. By participating in these programs and others like them, undocumented students extended their network of people and resources that could help them make it to college. This was especially true when it came to organizations whose focus was advocacy for and with undocumented students. DREAM organizations are especially effective at introducing students to a large network of

undocumented students and allies who actively advocate for undocumented students at regional, state, and federal levels (Orner, 2017). These clubs, organizations, and programs increased the social capital undocumented students needed as they prepared to enter college.

To close, I remind the reader that the purpose of this article is to shed light on creative ways, complicated as some may be, undocumented students pay for their college education. The ideas, practices, and recommendations the undocumented students in this study shared were intended to provide real, practical advice for other undocumented students and those who work with them. Through this sharing, I hope those who are not undocumented students come to realize that those practices that may seem unfair will continue to exist until we have comprehensive immigration reform (CIR) that provides a pathway to citizenship for these many, deserving students. As immigrant rights advocates continue to fight for a fair and just CIR, I hope we realize we can do two things at once: 1) fight for CIR and 2) help undocumented students with fundraising strategies shared in this article. We can “walk and chew gum at the same time.”

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APPENDIX: Circle of Funds

Disclaimer: *The following model is not intended to apply to every undocumented student, nor should undocumented students ignore any safety concerns they may have in using any measures listed below. The best advice is: Consult with an immigration attorney that can best understand each undocumented student’s immigration status before attempting any suggestions listed below.*

The Circle of Funds (Figure A, below) is a model, created by the author, for raising funds for college for undocumented students. It is based on (1) the author’s extensive years of working with undocumented students directly, (2) the sharing of ideas between undocumented students and their allies, (3) the author’s own research on the college matriculation of undocumented students, and (4) his running of an organization, CORE (Chicano Organizing and Research in Education) <www.ca-core.org>, that provides scholarships to undocumented students.

This paper, though rooted in theory, is also highly practical for undocumented students and those working with undocumented students such as counselors and teachers. The Circle of Funds has been presented at numerous conferences and workshops where undocumented students have convened. Here is the model followed by a breakdown of each quadrant:

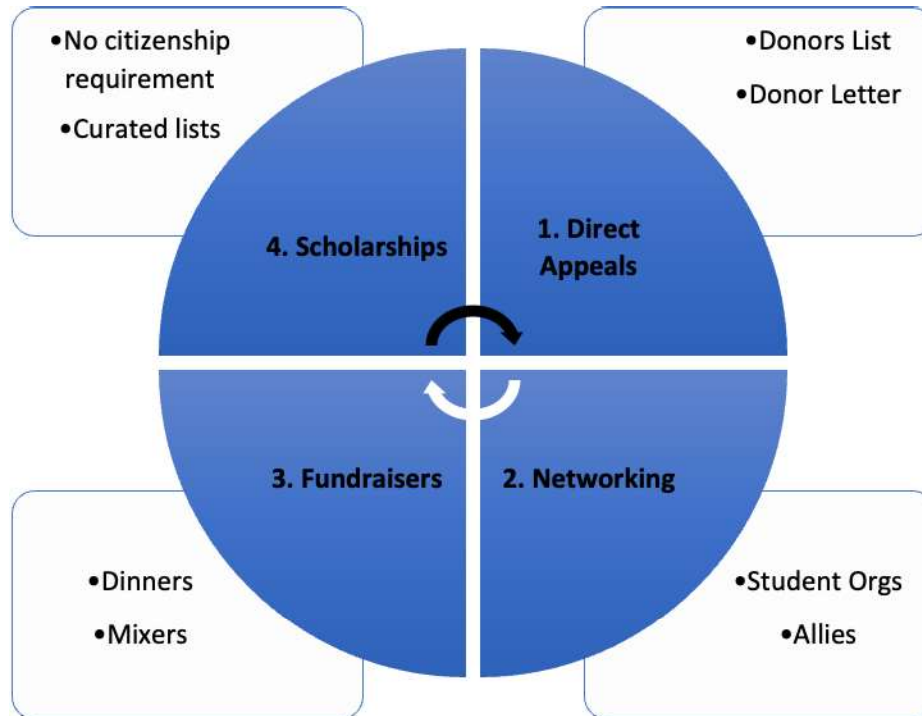


Figure A — The Circle of Funds

1. Direct Appeals — Draft a letter describing who you are and where you are going for college, then send it to a list of trusted individuals and/or organizations who can help you out.

a. For the letter:

i. Describe your situation.

1. Your challenges in going to college as an undocumented student
2. How immigration status presents unique challenges
3. Discuss your hardships and how you are trying to overcome them.
4. Talk about your financial need.
5. **ASK FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE!** Ensure you include this ask. This is usually the hardest part of the letter but remember, there are people who believe in you and what you represent and want to help out. Let them.

b. Create a list of people you trust and add to this list as you meet new people. (See Networking Quadrant below.).

c. Send your letter to people who you think might be able to help you and that you feel safe sharing it with. (See Disclaimer above.)

2. Networking with Undocumented Students/Allies/Advocate Groups — Now that you have asked some people for funds, join/create an organization that supports undocumented students.

- a. Make new friends and learn new fundraising strategies from them. Also, you might meet new donors. (See Direct Appeals above.)
- b. Keep in mind that these organizations and people have:
 - i. INFORMATION. There might be programs you can benefit from but are not aware of. These organizations/people might know and will want to share information with you.
 - ii. SUPPORT. You are not alone, and we need reminders of this fact. Generating funds is certainly the most important but so is support by those who believe in you. These folks and organizations exist, find them.
 - iii. ADVICE. There is a network of undocumented students that have gone through what you are facing or at least similar to what you are facing. Learn from them and the advice they are willing to give.
 - iv. MOTIVATION. You are an inspiration. Allow yourself to be inspired by others, in similar situations, who have achieved what you are trying to achieve.
 - v. NETWORK OF ALLIES. Most of these organizations and folks have others they know in their network of friends that want to help. The key thing to keep in mind is that you do not need to go this alone, but you might, if no one knows you need help. Networking can be one of the most important things you can do to increase your funding opportunities for college.

3. Fundraising Events — Do a fundraiser for yourself! Don't be shy or embarrassed. Ask your friends to help you by asking them to promote and lead the event. Big or small it will bring awareness of your situation which may lead to new donors. (See Direct Appeals above.)

- a. No event is too small or too big.
 - i. Examples of fundraising events have included dinners, lunches, concerts, parties, and donated art and artistic performances. All ranging in size.
 - ii. Promotion is most important. So, make sure that word of the event gets out while keeping in mind that this should include only trusted individuals. (See Disclaimer above.)
- b. No donation is too small or too big.
 - i. Remind people that any amount will help and be grateful for any amount.
- c. Don't be shy about letting yourself be the center of attention. People want to help you even those who do not know you.
 - i. As previously mentioned, people believe in you and what you represent.
- d. Create a plan. Execute it. Learn from it. And do another one.

4. Scholarships — Apply to as many scholarships as you are eligible for. Write about your efforts to ask for direct appeals for funds (See Quadrant 1 above.); Your involvement in student organizations (See Quadrant 2 above.); and Your organizing of fundraisers (See Quadrant 3 above).

- a. Scholarship organizations want to award funds to students like you. Be that student! `
- b. Look for scholarships that do not require an SSN such as:
 - I. MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund) Scholarship Resource Guide
<https://www.maldef.org/resources/scholarship-resource-guide-2022-2023/>
 - ii. Scholarships A-Z <https://scholarshipsaz.org/scholarships/>
 - iii. Immigrants Rising

<https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/list-of-scholarships-and-fellowships/>

iv. If you are entering college for the first time, apply to CORE's Que Lleva Café Scholarship www.ca-core.org

- c. The hardest part of applying for scholarships is starting.
 - i. Start by saying that you are going to work on the scholarship application for 10 minutes. A little every day goes a long way over weeks and months of work.
 - ii. You have nothing to lose and the scholarship to gain. If you apply, you have a chance. If you do not, you have no chance
 - 1. If you are not awarded the scholarship, use the essay to apply for other scholarships.

The four quadrants listed and discussed above are not a definitive list since there are other methods to fundraise that may not fit this model. The intention here is to list four areas, four quadrants in the model, to get started and/or continue to fund your own college education as an undocumented student or to fund the college education of someone else you know who is an undocumented student. I hope you find it useful.