



**Communities  
for Our Colleges**

# **PATHWAYS TO COLLEGE:**

**A TOOLKIT FOR UNDOCUMENTED  
STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES**

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# INTRODUCTION

## WELCOME TO WASHINGTON'S GUIDE FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

If you or your child is undocumented, navigating college in the United States can feel overwhelming. But in Washington, you are not alone. Our state has taken important steps to make sure undocumented students can go to college, get financial help, and pursue careers—just like any other student.

**This guide is for you—undocumented students and their families. It offers simple, clear information about how to:**

- **Apply to college** (including community colleges and universities),
- **Get financial aid** through Washington's WASFA application,
- **Find scholarships, internships, and career opportunities,**
- **Understand your rights,** and
- **Connect to support services** like food, housing, child care, and mental health resources.

Washington state believes all students, regardless of immigration status, deserve the opportunity to succeed. Every year, thousands of undocumented students graduate from our high schools and begin their college journeys. Many go on to become teachers, engineers, business owners, health care workers, and leaders in their communities.

Your family is an important part of Washington's future. By helping undocumented students go to college and find fulfilling careers, we are building stronger communities and preparing for a better tomorrow.

We hope this guide answers your questions, eases your worries, and helps you plan the next steps in your educational journey.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year, about 2,000 undocumented students graduate from Washington high schools.<sup>1</sup> They join over 10,000 undocumented students already working hard in colleges and universities across the state. **Washington has passed laws that make it easier for undocumented students to:**

- **Pay in-state tuition** (the same cost as other WA residents)
- **Apply for state financial aid** using the WASFA (instead of FAFSA)
- **Get professional licenses** for jobs like nursing, teaching, or cosmetology
- **Access basic needs** like food, housing, and childcare while in college

But many families don't know about these resources or how to use them. That's why this guide exists.

**In this guide, you'll find helpful information on:**

- **How to apply to college** (including community colleges and four-year universities)
- **How to pay for college**, including applying for aid using the WASFA and finding scholarships
- **What your rights are** as an undocumented student in Washington
- **How to start a career**, including through internships, fellowships, or starting your own business
- **Where to get support** for housing, food, health insurance, and mental health

Even though federal laws often make life difficult for undocumented families, Washington continues to lead with inclusive state laws and programs that protect your rights and support your dreams.

Whether you're just starting to think about college or looking for career pathways after graduation, this guide is here to support you every step of the way.

1. Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education & Immigration, Washington State Profile, Higher Ed Immigration Portal, [www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/state/washington/](http://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/state/washington/)

## IN-STATE TUITION AND FINANCIAL AID FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Access to higher education can transform the lives of undocumented students and strengthen Washington's communities and workforce. Washington is one of the states leading the way in expanding college access for undocumented students by providing in-state tuition and state financial aid, regardless of immigration status. Understanding these opportunities is essential for students, families, and educators working to ensure that all students can pursue their educational goals. **This section explains how undocumented students can qualify for in-state tuition under Washington law and outlines available financial aid options, including the WASFA, designed to help make college more affordable for undocumented students in our state.**

### IN-STATE TUITION FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Undocumented students may qualify for in-state tuition rates in Washington, helping to make college more affordable. In 2003, Washington passed **House Bill 1079**,<sup>2</sup> allowing eligible undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities, even if they lack legal immigration status.

Washington is one of 24 states plus the District of Columbia that offer in-state tuition to eligible undocumented students.<sup>3</sup> This policy recognizes that investing in all students strengthens Washington's communities and workforce.

#### Eligibility for In-State Tuition (HB 1079):

- **You have earned a high school diploma, GED, or diploma equivalent and**
- **You have lived in Washington for at least one year before starting college.**
- **You submit a signed HB 1079 affidavit promising to apply for permanent residency when eligible.**

### FINANCIAL AID OPTIONS

#### Federal Financial Aid (FAFSA)

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is used to determine eligibility for state aid, federal grants, loans, and work-study programs. However:

- **Eligible:** U.S. citizens and eligible noncitizens (permanent residents, refugees, asylees)
- **Not Eligible:** Undocumented students, including DACA recipients
- **Eligible:** U.S. citizens with undocumented parents can complete FAFSA and receive aid.

2. Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.15.012(2)(e) (codifying HB 1079, in-state tuition for undocumented

3. National Immigration Law Center, Basic Facts About In-State Tuition for Undocumented Immigrant Students (Aug. 2021), [www.nilc.org/issues/education/basic-facts-instate/](http://www.nilc.org/issues/education/basic-facts-instate/)



## Note on FAFSA Changes:

In December 2023, the U.S. Department of Education released a new FAFSA form requiring contributors (including parents) to create FSA IDs using Social Security numbers.<sup>4</sup> This created barriers for mixed-status families, as undocumented parents without SSNs have faced challenges in completing the FAFSA, delaying aid for eligible U.S. citizen students.

## Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA)

Washington has created WASFA<sup>5</sup> to provide state financial aid to eligible undocumented students, including DACA recipients. The REAL Hope Act (SB 6523, 2014),<sup>6</sup> the Washington State Dream Act (HB 1817, 2013),<sup>7</sup> and the Our Colleges, Our Future Act (SB 5194, 2021)<sup>8</sup> expanded eligibility to undocumented students meeting residency requirements.

The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) is an application form, not a financial aid program. It is used to determine eligibility for state-funded financial aid, such as the Washington College Grant, which provides support for all Washington residents including undocumented, DACA students and mixed status families. You can still be considered a Washington resident if you are undocumented. Colleges may also use information from the WASFA to determine your eligibility and financial aid award.

## Eligibility to use the WASFA:

- **You have earned a high school diploma, GED, or diploma equivalent and**
- **You have lived in Washington for at least one year before starting college.**
- **Submitted the WASFA by the priority processing deadline**

Through WASFA, eligible students can access Washington College Grant and other state financial aid programs to help pay for college.

## APPLYING TO WASHINGTON'S COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES (CTCS)

Washington's community and technical colleges (CTCs)<sup>9</sup> offer an affordable, accessible pathway for undocumented students to begin or continue their higher education journey. CTCs provide a variety of programs, including associate degrees, professional certificates, and, at many campuses, bachelor's degree options. **This section will guide you through how to apply to a CTC in Washington, how to confirm your residency for in-state tuition, and what to expect as you pursue your education.**

4. U.S. Dept. of Education, FAFSA Simplification Act Implementation (Dec. 2023), [www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/guid/fa-fafsa-simplification.html](http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/guid/fa-fafsa-simplification.html)
5. Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), [wsac.wa.gov/wasfa](http://wsac.wa.gov/wasfa)
6. REAL Hope Act, S.B. 6523, 63d Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2014)
7. Washington State Dream Act, H.B. 1817, 63d Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2013)
8. Our Colleges, Our Future Act, S.B. 5194, 67th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2021)
9. Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges, Explore Our Colleges, [www.sbctc.edu/our-colleges/explore-colleges](http://www.sbctc.edu/our-colleges/explore-colleges)

## HOW TO APPLY TO A CTC

To apply, you will need to:

- **Choose the community or technical college** you want to attend
- **Complete the college's application for admission** (most applications are available on each college's website)
- **Submit your residency affidavit** to qualify for in-state tuition under HB 1079 if you are undocumented
- **Complete the WASFA** (Washington Application for State Financial Aid)<sup>10</sup> if you are seeking state financial aid

## Residency Affidavit for In-State Tuition

Undocumented students can qualify for in-state tuition by submitting a residency affidavit under HB 1079.<sup>11</sup> To be eligible, you must:

- **Earn a high school diploma**, GED, or equivalent before your first college term
- **Maintain a primary residence in Washington** for at least 12 consecutive months immediately before your first term
- **Promise to apply for permanent residency as soon as you are eligible**, and agree to engage in activities to prepare for citizenship (such as civics or citizenship courses)

## DEGREES OFFERED AT CTCs

### Associate Degrees

Community and technical colleges offer associate degrees,<sup>12</sup> typically requiring 90 credits, which are equivalent to about two years of full-time study. These degrees can help you enter the workforce directly or transfer to a four-year university to continue your education.

### Bachelor's Degrees

Many Washington CTCs now offer bachelor of applied science (BAS) degrees<sup>13</sup> and other bachelor's degree<sup>14</sup> options in high-demand fields such as information technology, health care, and business. Program availability varies by campus, so check your college's website for specific offerings.

10. Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), [wsac.wa.gov/WASFAelig](https://wsac.wa.gov/WASFAelig)

11. Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.15.012(2)(e) (codifying HB 1079, in-state tuition for undocumented students)

12. Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Types of Degrees, [www.sbctc.edu/becoming-a-student/right-degree-you/types-of-degrees](https://www.sbctc.edu/becoming-a-student/right-degree-you/types-of-degrees)

13. Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.50.810 (2024), [app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.50.810](https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=28B.50.810)

14. Washington State Board for Community & Technical Colleges, Bachelor's Degree Programs, [www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/bachelors-degrees/](https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/bachelors-degrees/)

## APPLYING TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES IN WASHINGTON

Washington's public and private universities provide opportunities for undocumented students to continue their education and pursue their career goals. Applying to these universities requires understanding deadlines, required documents, and financial aid options available to you. **This section will guide you through what you need to know to apply as a freshman or transfer student, including information about testing, transcripts, in-state tuition, and financial aid.**

### STANDARDIZED TESTING (SAT OR ACT)

Public universities in Washington **do not require SAT or ACT scores**<sup>15</sup> as part of the admissions process. However, if you are applying to universities outside Washington, some may still require these test scores. Check each college's requirements to confirm.

SAT scores are typically valid for five years from the test date.

### TRANSCRIPTS

If you graduated in the U.S.: Do not send transcripts unless the Office of Admission requests them.

If you graduated outside the U.S.: You will need to upload a scanned, unofficial copy of your transcripts for grades 9 and higher as part of your application.<sup>16</sup>

### APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID (WASFA)

Undocumented students in Washington can apply for state financial aid through the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA),<sup>17</sup> which is separate from the federal FAFSA and designed specifically for undocumented students and others ineligible for federal aid. While designed to address a specific gap, the application is open to any student choosing not to apply for federal aid, for any reason.

#### To apply:

- Visit <https://wsac.wa.gov/WASFAelig>.
- **Review the guide** and eligibility requirements.
- **Complete and submit your WASFA** by your college's priority deadline.

15. University of Washington, Freshman Admission FAQs: Are SAT/ACT Required?, [admit.washington.edu/apply/freshman/faq/](https://admit.washington.edu/apply/freshman/faq/)

16. University of Washington, Transcripts and College Coursework for International Students, [admit.washington.edu/apply/international/transcripts/](https://admit.washington.edu/apply/international/transcripts/)

17. Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA), [wsac.wa.gov/WASFAelig](https://wsac.wa.gov/WASFAelig)

## RESIDENCY AFFIDAVIT FOR IN-STATE TUITION

Undocumented students seeking in-state tuition at public universities in Washington must submit a residency affidavit (HB 1079 affidavit).<sup>18</sup> To qualify, you must:

- **Earn a high school diploma**, GED, or equivalent before your first term
- **Maintain a primary residence in Washington** for at least 12 consecutive months before starting college
- **Promise to apply for permanent residency** when eligible and participate in activities preparing you for citizenship

## APPLYING AS A FRESHMAN

Most Washington universities open applications for freshman admissions<sup>19</sup> on **September 1**, with deadlines typically in **early January** for fall quarter admissions. Check your intended college's website for specific dates, especially if applying for other quarters.

You can apply using:

- **The Common App** (<https://www.commonapp.org>)
- **ApplyWeb** (varies by institution)

Requirements typically include:

- **Completing College Academic Distribution Requirements** (CADRs)
- **A minimum GPA of 2.0** (check each college's specific requirements)
- **Application fees** (usually \$50–\$90; fee waivers may be available)

**Admission to Majors:** Some programs offer direct admission to your major at the time of application. Check your intended department's website for deadlines and requirements.

## APPLYING AS A TRANSFER STUDENT

Most universities in Washington open applications for transfer students<sup>20</sup> on December 1 for fall quarter admissions. Deadlines for other quarters vary by school, so check your intended university's admissions page.

### **Admission to Majors:**

- Many programs require a separate application for admission to your major.
- Some campuses offer direct admission to your major during the application process.

Deadlines for major applications vary by department, so review your program's website for specifics.

18. Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.15.012(2)(e) (codifying HB 1079, in-state tuition for undocumented students).

19. University of Washington, Freshman Application Process, [admit.washington.edu/apply/freshman/](http://admit.washington.edu/apply/freshman/)

20. University of Washington, Transfer Application Process, [admit.washington.edu/apply/transfer/](http://admit.washington.edu/apply/transfer/)

## PURSUING PROFESSIONAL CAREERS AND FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Undocumented students in Washington have pathways to pursue professional careers and financial independence after completing their education. Recent state legislation has expanded opportunities to obtain professional licenses regardless of immigration status, and tools such as the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) can help undocumented individuals engage in work, entrepreneurship, and financial activities. **This section explains your options to prepare for your professional future while living in Washington.**

### PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE FOR UNDOCUMENTED INDIVIDUALS

In 2024, Washington passed **House Bill 1889**,<sup>21</sup> which allows individuals to obtain professional licenses and certifications regardless of immigration status as long as they meet all other licensure requirements, including education, examinations, and training.

- This law allows undocumented individuals, including those without DACA, to **pursue careers in fields such as health care, cosmetology, and other licensed professions in Washington.**
- It is important to note that this law **does not provide a work permit or authorization to work under federal law;** it allows you to hold a state license, which can support your professional goals.

### USING AN INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (ITIN)

An Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)<sup>22</sup> is issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to individuals who are not eligible for a Social Security Number but need to report earnings and pay taxes in the United States.

#### **An ITIN can help you:**

- **Report earnings to the IRS**
- **Open a bank account**
- **Establish credit**
- **Start a business**
- **Receive an Employer Identification Number (EIN)** for business operations

Obtaining an ITIN does not change your immigration status or provide work authorization, but it can be a valuable tool for financial independence and stability.

21. H.B. 1889, 68th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2024).

22. Immigrants Rising, Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) Guide (June 2022), [immigrantsrising.org/wp-content/uploads/Immigrants-Rising\\_ITIN-Guide.pdf](https://immigrantsrising.org/wp-content/uploads/Immigrants-Rising_ITIN-Guide.pdf)



# Scholarships, Fellowships, and Internships for Undocumented Students

## SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND INTERNSHIPS FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Scholarships, fellowships, and internships can help undocumented students pay for college, support living expenses, and gain valuable career experience. Washington state and many private funders provide opportunities for undocumented students to access financial aid, even when federal aid is unavailable. **This section will guide you through the types of funding**

### SCHOLARSHIPS THROUGH SCHOOL FOUNDATIONS

**Most colleges and universities in Washington have campus foundations that offer scholarships to students.**<sup>23</sup> Many of these scholarships are open to undocumented students regardless of immigration status. Check with your college's financial aid office or scholarship office to learn about available opportunities.

### WASHINGTON COLLEGE GRANT

Undocumented students in Washington who meet eligibility criteria can receive state grants through the **Washington College Grant program**,<sup>24</sup> helping to cover tuition and fees at community colleges, technical colleges, and universities.

### FEDERAL FUNDING

Undocumented students, including DACA recipients, are not eligible for federal financial aid (FAFSA) under current law.<sup>25</sup>

### PRIVATE SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

**Many private organizations and foundations offer scholarships and fellowships** specifically for undocumented students, regardless of immigration status. These opportunities may be based on academic achievement, community involvement, or intended career fields.

For a comprehensive, regularly updated list of scholarships and fellowships that do not require U.S. citizenship, see Immigrants Rising's resource library:

- Immigrants Rising, List of Scholarships and Fellowships, <https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/list-of-scholarships-and-fellowships/>

23. Washington Student Achievement Council, Paying for College: Types of Aid, [wsac.wa.gov/college-bound/types-of-aid](https://wsac.wa.gov/college-bound/types-of-aid)

24. Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington College Grant, [wsac.wa.gov/wcg](https://wsac.wa.gov/wcg)

25. U.S. Dept. of Educ., Federal Student Aid: Non-U.S. Citizens, [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens](https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens)



# Scholarships, Fellowships, and Internships for Undocumented Students

## FELLOWSHIPS: FUNDING, CAREER EXPERIENCE, AND SKILL BUILDING

**Fellowships<sup>26</sup> are structured opportunities that can provide funding while also giving you professional experience, much like an internship.** They can be a valuable way to earn money to cover living expenses while developing skills in your field of interest, expanding your professional network, and gaining exposure to potential career paths.

**Examples of fellowships may include:**

- **Research positions**
- **Community organizing or policy fellowships**
- **Pre-law or pre-health fellowships**
- **Fellowships with nonprofit organizations**

Fellowships are often available to undocumented students, and many organizations specifically support undocumented youth seeking professional growth opportunities.

### Internships

**Internships provide hands-on experience in your field of interest and can help you build professional connections while developing your skills.<sup>27</sup>** Some internships are paid, providing additional financial support during your studies. Undocumented students can often participate in internships, particularly if the positions are stipend based or do not require employment authorization.

Check with your college's career center and organizations in your field of interest for internship opportunities open to undocumented students.

### Student Loans in Washington

In 2020, Washington passed **SB 6561<sup>28</sup>**, creating the **Undocumented Student Support Loan Program** to help undocumented students pay for college expenses. However, as of 2025, the program is not currently funded due to budget constraints in the state's biennial budget.<sup>29</sup> While the law remains in effect, no new loans are being issued under this program until funding is restored.

If you are considering loans, it's important to understand alternative options, repayment requirements, and how they fit into your long-term financial plans. Speak with your college's financial aid office to learn more about current resources available to undocumented students.

26. Immigrants Rising, List of Scholarships and Fellowships, [immigrantsrising.org/resource/list-of-scholarships-and-fellowships/](https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/list-of-scholarships-and-fellowships/)

27. Immigrants Rising, Life After College: A Guide for Undocumented Students, [immigrantsrising.org/resource/life-after-college-guide/](https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/life-after-college-guide/)

28. Wash. S.B. 6561, 66th Leg., Reg. Sess. (2020) (codified at Wash. Rev. Code § 28B.92.200 et seq.). Session Law: Laws of 2020, ch. 326, § 1.

29. Wash. ESSB 5167, 69th Leg., Reg. Sess. (2025) (enacted) (codified in session laws at ch. 424, Laws of 2025). Available at Office of Financial Management - 2025-27 ([ofm.wa.gov/budget/state-budgets/2025-27-enacted-budgets](https://ofm.wa.gov/budget/state-budgets/2025-27-enacted-budgets)) Enacted Budgets and Governor's Veto Letter (May 20, 2025), [governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/5167.pdf](https://governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-05/5167.pdf).



## CAMPUS RESOURCES FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

Washington's colleges and universities offer a range of campus resources to help undocumented students meet their basic needs, support their academic success, and protect their privacy. **These resources can include access to food, housing support, emergency aid, child care assistance, health insurance options, and culturally responsive guidance from campus offices.** Understanding these resources can help you navigate challenges while staying focused on your education.

### BENEFIT HUBS

In 2023, Washington passed **HB 1559**,<sup>30</sup> expanding **Benefit Hubs** to every college campus in the state to ensure that students have access to basic needs services. Benefit Hubs can connect you to:

- **Housing support**
- **Food access and grocery delivery**
- **Utility bill assistance**
- **Other basic needs resources**

### EMERGENCY AID

Most colleges and universities in Washington continue to offer **emergency aid** to students facing financial hardship. This support can help cover urgent expenses such as food, housing, medical costs, or transportation. Check your college's website or contact the financial aid office to learn how to apply for available aid.

Additionally, while students previously benefited from federal funds distributed under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF)—authorized by the CARES Act of 2020<sup>31</sup> and extended through CRRSAA and ARP—HEERF funding has now ended. As of 2025, no new funds are available through this federal program, and all allocated resources have been fully expended.

If you need assistance today, explore your college's aid programs or apply for state-supported resources like the Student Emergency Assistance Grant (SEAG),<sup>32</sup> which is funded for the 2025–26 academic year.<sup>33</sup>

### CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

In 2023, SB 5225 (**Working Connections**)<sup>34</sup> expanded child care assistance to undocumented students enrolled at community and technical colleges in Washington, helping student parents balance educational goals with family responsibilities.

30. Wash. H.B. 1559, 68th Leg., Reg. Sess. (2023)

31. Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136, 134 Stat. 281 (2020)

32. 2SHB 1893, 66th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2019)

33. Wash. State Bd. for Cmty. & Tech. Colls., Student Emergency Assistance Grant Program Guidelines, FY 2025–26 (2025), available at [www.sbctc.edu/resources/documents/colleges-staff/grants/student-emergency-assistance-grant-program/fy26-seag-guidelines.pdf](http://www.sbctc.edu/resources/documents/colleges-staff/grants/student-emergency-assistance-grant-program/fy26-seag-guidelines.pdf)

34. Wash. S.B. 5225, 68th Leg., Reg. Sess. (2023)



## UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEI OFFICES

Many campuses have **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offices or Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) programs** that provide culturally responsive support for undocumented and BIPOC students.<sup>35</sup> **These offices can:**

- **Help you navigate college systems**
- **Connect you to scholarships and resources**
- **Provide advocacy and community support**

Contact your college's DEI or multicultural office to learn what support is available for undocumented students.

## PRIVACY PROTECTIONS (FERPA)

**The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974**<sup>36</sup> protects the privacy of student education records at all educational institutions receiving federal funding, including for undocumented students. This means your immigration status and personal information in your educational records are confidential and cannot be shared without your consent.

## HEALTH INSURANCE OPTIONS

**Starting November 1, 2023, all Washington residents—regardless of immigration status—became eligible to purchase health and dental insurance** through Washington Healthplanfinder.<sup>37</sup> As of 2025, low-income undocumented immigrants may also qualify for state-funded premium subsidies through Cascade Care Savings, and a Medicaid-like program is available for those under 138% of the federal poverty level, though enrollment is currently capped due to limited funding.<sup>38</sup>

## BEYOND UNDERGRADUATE: GRADUATE SCHOOL, PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL, AND BUILDING YOUR CAREER

Pursuing education after your undergraduate degree can expand your career options, deepen your expertise, and increase your earning potential. As an undocumented student, you can access graduate and professional pathways, secure fellowships and scholarships, and build financial independence through entrepreneurship or individual contracting. **This section will help you understand your options, how to prepare, and where to find support for your journey beyond your bachelor's degree.**

35. Washington Student Achievement Council, Supporting Undocumented Students, [wsac.wa.gov/supporting-undocumented-students](https://wsac.wa.gov/supporting-undocumented-students)
36. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g
37. Washington Healthplanfinder, Health Coverage for Immigrants, <https://www.wahealthplanfinder.org>
38. Wash. State Health Care Auth., Apple Health Expansion, [www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/programs-and-initiatives/apple-health-medicaid/apple-health-expansion](https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/programs-and-initiatives/apple-health-medicaid/apple-health-expansion)

## GRADUATE SCHOOL VS. PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

**Graduate schools** offer advanced study and research in specific academic disciplines, such as earning a master's or PhD in fields like education, social work, or engineering.

**Professional schools** prepare you for specific careers that require licenses, such as law or medicine. Examples include law school (JD programs) and medical school (MD or DO programs).

### Key Differences:

- **Graduate programs** focus on research, theory, and advanced academic study.
- **Professional schools** prepare you to enter licensed professions through specialized training.

## CHOOSING YOUR PATH

### Before applying, consider:

- **Interests:** Choose a field you are excited about, as graduate and professional programs typically last 2–5+ years.
- **Career Goals:** Some careers require specific degrees. Research what education your desired career path requires.
- **Budget and Timeline:** Master's programs often take 2 years, while PhD programs may take 4+ years. Professional programs vary in length and cost.<sup>40</sup>

## APPLYING TO GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

The application process differs by program but generally includes:

- **Résumé:** Summarizing your academic achievements, work/volunteer experience, and awards
- **Transcripts:** Official records from your undergraduate institution(s)
- **Letters of Recommendation (LORs):** Professors or employers write these to support your application, describing your skills and readiness for graduate-level work.
- **Personal Statement:** A written essay explaining your goals, experiences, and why you are a good fit for the program. Check each school's website for specific prompts and requirements.

### Additional Tips:

- **Research your programs early** to understand prerequisites and deadlines.
- **Contact admissions offices** to clarify eligibility for undocumented students.
- **Explore potential funding** through scholarships and fellowships available to undocumented students.

40. Immigrants Rising, Life After College: A Guide for Undocumented Students, [immigrantsrising.org/resource/life-after-college-guide/](https://immigrantsrising.org/resource/life-after-college-guide/)

41. University of Washington Graduate School, Admissions FAQs, [grad.uw.edu/admission/faq/](https://grad.uw.edu/admission/faq/)

## TESTING REQUIREMENTS

### Graduate School (GRE)

**The Graduate Record Examination (GRE)** is used by many graduate programs in the U.S. It costs around \$200 and is valid for five years. Many programs are waiving GRE requirements, so check your specific program before registering.<sup>42</sup>

### Professional School (Law: LSAT & CAS)

- **Credential Assembly Service (CAS):** Required for law school applicants to manage transcripts, LORs, and documents (\$195 for five years)
- **LSAT:** Standardized law school admission test (\$238 as of 2025)
- **Fee Waivers:** Available to qualifying applicants; check eligibility.<sup>43</sup>

### Pre-Law Support for Undocumented Students:

#### Immigrants Rising offers:

- **Pre-Law Bootcamp:** A 4-day intensive resource program for undocumented students. <https://immigrantsrising.org/pre-law-program/pre-law-bootcamp/>
- **Pre-Law Fund:** A \$2,500 stipend to cover LSAT prep and application fees (requires Bootcamp participation). <https://immigrantsrising.org/pre-law-program/pre-law-fund/>

## PAYING FOR GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL

### WASFA

Undocumented students who have completed a bachelor's degree are not eligible for the Washington College Grant, which is limited to undergraduate study. However, some graduate funding such as scholarships, may require information from the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) to assess a student's financial need or eligibility. Students should check directly with the financial aid office of their intended graduate or professional program to learn what funding options are available.

## SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

### Many graduate and professional programs offer:

- **Merit-Based Scholarships:** Based on achievements
- **Conditional Scholarships:** Tied to specific program requirements
- **Need-Based Scholarships:** Based on financial need

42. Educational Testing Service (ETS), GRE General Test, [www.ets.org/gre](http://www.ets.org/gre)

43. Law School Admission Council (LSAC), Applying to Law School, [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org)



# Beyond Undergraduate: Graduate School, Professional School, and Building Your Career

Undocumented students cannot receive federal loans but may seek **private scholarships and fellowships**, including:

- **Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans**
- **Ford Foundation Predoctoral and Dissertation Fellowships**
- **National Academy of Education/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship**
- **University of Washington Graduate Student Equity & Excellence programs**

Negotiating your aid package is often possible—do not hesitate to ask your program for additional funding.

## **PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES**

- **Private universities** often provide larger aid packages through private funds but have higher tuition.
- **Public universities** may have lower tuition, but out-of-state rates may apply, and state/federal aid may not be sufficient for undocumented students.

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INDEPENDENT CONTRACTING**

If you have an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), you can:

- **Start a business**
- **Engage in independent contracting** (often as a 1099 contractor)
- **Build professional services** income while practicing your trade

Many undocumented students pursue entrepreneurship or consulting as a pathway to financial independence while building career skills.

This toolkit is designed to give you an overview of the basics of resources and access for undocumented students in Washington state. Some details may change in the future as policies or programs are updated, but this guide covers the key information you need to get started.

**If you have questions or want the most up-to-date information, you can always reach out to:**

**Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA)  
Student Financial Assistance**

Email: [wasfa@wsac.wa.gov](mailto:wasfa@wsac.wa.gov)

Phone number: **888.535.0747**



## APPENDIX: OTHER RESOURCES

This appendix provides a curated list of resources to support immigrant students and families, organized by theme and jurisdiction to help educators, advocates, and community organizations navigate the complex landscape of immigration-related services. Divided into Washington state-specific and national efforts, these resources span critical areas such as legal protections, educational access, financial aid, mental health, professional development, and community advocacy. From state-level policies like the **Keep Washington Working Act and WASFA guidance**, to national programs like **TheDream.US** and **Immigrants Rising**, this collection aims to equip stakeholders with actionable tools and up-to-date information that foster safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environments for all immigrant students.

Washington State	
<b>Legal &amp; Policy Protections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>OSPI Guidance on Protections for Immigrant Students:</b> Outlines key practices for K-12 public schools, including enrollment rights, data privacy, and how schools should respond to immigration enforcement.</li> <li>• <b>Keep Washington Working Act:</b> Prohibits state agencies and schools from assisting federal immigration enforcement, ensuring safe zones for students.</li> <li>• <b>Governor’s Executive Order 17-01:</b> Reaffirms Washington’s commitment to tolerance and inclusiveness for immigrant residents.</li> </ul>
<b>Education &amp; Financial Aid</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC):</b> Offers financial aid options like WASFA for undocumented and DACA students, plus guidance on residency and tuition.</li> <li>• <b>Seattle Council PTSA Resource List:</b> Includes organizations supporting immigrant youth and families, plus legal and education resources.</li> </ul>

Washington State	
<p><b>Community &amp; Advocacy Organizations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAIN):</b> The largest immigrant-led coalition in WA. Offers a deportation defense hotline (1-844-724-3737) and a bilingual resource finder.</li> <li>• <b>Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP):</b> Provides free legal consultations and Know Your Rights materials.</li> <li>• <b>Legal Counsel for Youth and Children (LCYC):</b> Partners with NWIRP to offer immigrant safety planning and legal support.</li> </ul>
<p><b>School &amp; Educator Support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Washington Education Association (WEA) Guidance:</b> Offers best practices for educators, including FERPA protections and emergency planning for families.</li> <li>• <b>NEA Immigration Guidance Booklet:</b> Includes sample Safe Zone policies and resources for school districts.</li> </ul>
National	
<p><b>Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration:</b> A coalition of college and university leaders advocating for inclusive immigration policies in higher education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Higher Ed Immigration Portal:</b> A digital hub with data, policy analysis, and tools for supporting undocumented, DACA, refugee, and international students.</li> <li>• <b>Campus to Career Guide:</b> Practical steps for noncitizen students navigating employment-based visas.</li> <li>• <b>Legal Pathways Hub:</b> Resources for institutions to support students with DACA, TPS, and other statuses.</li> <li>• <b>Policy Briefs &amp; Toolkits:</b> Covering topics like tuition equity, refugee access, and DACA updates.</li> </ul>
<p><b>National Immigration Law Center (NILC):</b> Focused on defending and advancing the rights of low-income immigrants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Higher Education Toolkit:</b> Includes tuition equity laws, state-by-state access maps, and advocacy tools.</li> <li>• <b>Know Your Rights for Students &amp; Schools:</b> Co-developed with United We Dream and AFT, includes emergency planning and educator guidance.</li> <li>• <b>Policy Fact Sheets:</b> Covering DACA, financial aid access, and state legislation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>United We Dream:</b> The largest immigrant youth-led network in the U.S., empowering undocumented students and communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Resource Library:</b> Guides on DACA, deportation defense, and community organizing.</li> <li>• <b>Education Justice Guide:</b> Support for educators and school staff working with immigrant and refugee children.</li> <li>• <b>Notifica App:</b> A secure app for emergency planning and alerts during enforcement actions.</li> </ul>

National	
<p><b>American Immigration Council:</b> Provides research, legal support, and advocacy to shape fair immigration policies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tools &amp; Resources Hub:</b> Includes educator materials, policy explainers, and state-level data.</li> <li>• <b>Immigration Where You Live:</b> Interactive maps showing immigrant demographics and economic contributions by state.</li> <li>• <b>Legal Education &amp; FOIA Resources:</b> For attorneys and advocates supporting immigrant students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Immigrants Rising:</b> Empowers undocumented young people to pursue education, careers, and entrepreneurship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Resource Library:</b> Covers financial aid, mental health, legal options, and institutional practices.</li> <li>• <b>Scholarship Lists:</b> Includes fellowships that don't require proof of citizenship.</li> <li>• <b>Entrepreneurship Guides:</b> Step-by-step support for freelancing and starting a business without work authorization.</li> <li>• <b>UndocuEducators &amp; UndocuBlack Initiatives:</b> Tailored support for educators and Black undocumented students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>TheDream.US:</b> The largest college access and success program for undocumented students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>National &amp; Opportunity Scholarships:</b> Up to \$39,000 for tuition and fees at partner colleges.</li> <li>• <b>Partner Colleges:</b> Nearly 80 institutions across 20+ states.</li> <li>• <b>Student Success Resources:</b> Academic advising, career support, and community building.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI):</b> Focuses on racial justice and migrant rights for Black immigrants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Know Your Rights Workshops:</b> Held in the U.S. and Mexico for Black migrant communities.</li> <li>• <b>Legal Clinics &amp; FOIA Litigation:</b> Exposes abuses in detention and policing.</li> <li>• <b>Black Migrant Ecosystem Convenings:</b> Build solidarity and leadership across Black immigrant communities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>My Undocumented Life:</b> A volunteer-run platform offering resources and community for undocumented students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Scholarship Database:</b> Regularly updated with national and local opportunities.</li> <li>• <b>Mental Health &amp; Emergency Planning Guides:</b> Include family preparedness and rapid-response networks.</li> <li>• <b>Faculty &amp; Ally Toolkits:</b> Practical steps for supporting students in schools and colleges.</li> </ul>
<p><b>UnDocuProfessionals</b> A national community supporting undocumented individuals transitioning from student to professional life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mentorship &amp; Career Coaching:</b> One-on-one guidance and workshops.</li> <li>• <b>UndocuAlly Training:</b> For educators and practitioners.</li> <li>• <b>Job Board &amp; Non-Employment Opportunities:</b> Internships, fellowships, and independent contracting resources.</li> </ul>