

Immigrant Services Program

Metropolitan State University of Denver

Denver, CO



According to a January 2020 study by New American Economy (NAE), 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) data indicate that 2% of all U.S. college students, or approximately 450,000, are undocumented.¹ Given the precariousness of an unstable immigration status, it comes to little surprise that in an April 2018 study of over 1,400 undocumented college students found that, “(f)our in five Scholars (83%) described themselves as ‘very anxious’ about their immigration status, with a similar percentage (86%) expressing concern for the legal status of their family.”^{2,3}

These two studies lead to a fruitful partnership between Metropolitan State University (MSU) of Denver and three non-profit community organizations—Denver Children’s Advocacy Center, Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, and FWD.us. The goal of these partnerships was to provide key areas of support to this student population. More specifically, the partners hoped to alleviate financial, legal, and mental health stressors for undocumented students at MSU Denver. As a Hispanic Serving Institution and a key education provider in Colorado’s immigrant community, providing and modeling community partnerships is a key element to MSU Denver’s mission.

These partnerships were initiated by the Director of the MSU Denver’s Immigrant Services Program, which is charged with supporting immigrant, refugee, DACA, and undocumented students at MSU Denver. The program strives to provide all-encompassing support to ensure students’ academic success. Various staff at Denver Children’s Advocacy Center, Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, and FWD.us provided either material, staff, or programming support to students and/or campus events.

The partnerships between these three community organizations and the Immigrant Services Program resulted in direct financial support to more than a dozen DACA recipients renewing their status (FWD.us), numerous on-campus workshops to help with immigration forms, entrepreneurship resources and development, as well as Know Your Rights trainings (CIRC), and event development, coordination, and participation around mental health, anxiety, and coping mechanisms (DCAC).

Students and families received additional one-on-one support from the three community organizations while MSU Denver offers physical space for workshops and promotional support to programming organized by some of these organizations. Undocumented students at MSU Denver have reported that shared programming and community organization presence on campus assures them that they have the supports they need for emotional wellbeing and academic success.

¹ New America Economy (NAE), *Undocumented Immigrants*, (2018).

² Garcia et al., *Mental Health of Undocumented Immigrant Adults in the United States: A Systematic Review of Methodology and Findings*, (2016) 1-25.

³ Bernstein, J. & Blazer, J., *Legalizing Undocumented Immigrants: An Essential Tool in Fighting Poverty*. (2008) 408.