

Fostering Inclusion for Black Immigrant Students at HBCUs

Authors: India Heckstall, Christian Collins, Felecia Russell, and Melquin Ramos





**PRESIDENTS' | ON HIGHER EDUCATION
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Introduction

Since their establishment, Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) have played a vital role in providing educational opportunities to students traditionally neglected due to systemic inequities in the American postsecondary education system. HBCUs hold a unique mission of promoting academic excellence, cultural awareness, and community engagement, rooted in their history of enrolling and educating Black students during periods of societal, racially-based segregation where HBCUs were the sole postsecondary institutions educating Black students. While the American postsecondary education system no longer experiences de jure racial segregation, the importance of HBCUs in offering accessible education opportunities has remained consistent.


As of 2022, the U.S. Department of Education officially recognized 99 HBCUs.¹ Close to 40 percent of all Black students apply to at least one HBCU,² and 10 percent of all Black college students are enrolled at an HBCU despite the fact that these institutions comprise only three percent of all postsecondary institutions.³ Additionally, going to an HBCU increases the likelihood of graduation for Black students compared to their Black peers at similar non-HBCU institutions.⁴


Although continuing to serve as a key point of access to educational opportunities for Black students, HBCUs have recently witnessed a decline in enrollment. Between 2010 to 2021, overall enrollment and Black student enrollment at HBCUs declined by 12 percent and 19 percent respectively,⁵ a worrying trend given how effective HBCUs are at generating positive socioeconomic mobility for Black students compared to similar institutions.⁶ Though the overall college enrollment rate has decreased slightly over the same period,⁷ the effect on HBCUs has been far more pronounced.


Critical to the viability and sustainability of HBCUs moving forward is their capacity to serve immigrant students, including Black immigrants. Over the past two decades, the number of immigrant students enrolled in postsecondary education has nearly doubled.⁸ In 2021, over 329,000 Black first-generation immigrant


- 1 “Fast Facts: Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” National Center for Education Statistics, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=667>
- 2 Ashley Edwards, Justin C. Ortagus, Jonathan Smith, et. al., “HBCU Enrollment and Longer-Term Outcomes,” Annenberg Institute, December 2023, <https://doi.org/10.26300/4xqa-cs32>
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Gregory Price and Angelino Viceisza, “What Can Historically Black Colleges and Universities Teach About Improving Higher Education Outcomes for Black Students?,” National Bureau of Economic Research, April 2023, https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w31131/w31131.pdf
- 5 “Fall enrollment in degree-granting historically Black colleges and universities, by sex of student and level and control of institution: Selected years, 1976 through 2021,” National Center for Education Statistics, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_313.20.asp
- 6 Gregory Price and Angelino Viceisza, “What Can Historically Black Colleges and Universities Teach About Improving Higher Education Outcomes for Black Students?,” National Bureau of Economic Research, April 2023, https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w31131/w31131.pdf
- 7 “College Enrollment Rates,” National Center for Education Statistics, May 2023, <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cpb/college-enrollment-rate>
- 8 “International Student Enrollment Trends: 1948/49 to 2022/23,” Institute on International Education, <https://opendoorsdata.org/data/international-students/enrollment-trends/>

Black immigrant-origin students in higher education are increasing, with:


Over
329,000
First-generation Black immigrant students


416,000
Second-generation Black immigrant students


Accounting for
28%
of all Black students in higher education


However, those with undocumented status are experiencing a decline in enrollment across higher education

students,⁹ excluding Black international students,¹⁰ were enrolled at an institution of higher education in the United States.¹¹ This brief aims to explore the role of HBCUs in addressing the unique needs of Black immigrant students and to emphasize the importance of tailored support for Black immigrant students at these institutions.

HBCUs are Better Positioned Than Peer Institutions to Serve the Unique Needs of Black Immigrant Students

HBCUs specialize in providing environments for students from marginalized populations to safely explore educational and social opportunities, as evidenced by the fact that more students attend HBCUs during periods of heightened racial animus.¹² Black HBCU graduates report higher levels of mentorship and academic support, and they are more likely to feel prepared for life after college compared to Black non-HBCU graduates.¹³ These aspects are vital not only to the Black experience in the American postsecondary system but to the immigrant student experience as well.

Black immigrant-origin¹⁴ students in higher education are increasing, with over 329,000 first-generation Black immigrant students and 416,000 second-generation Black immigrant students accounting for 28% of all Black students in higher education.¹⁵ However, those with undocumented status are experiencing a decline in enrollment across higher education. Fifty-six thousand undocumented Black students were enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions in 2021, constituting 13.8 percent of all undocumented students

9 The term “first-generation immigrant student” is defined as a foreign-born student who has gained citizenship or permanent residency.

10 The term “Black international student” is defined as a foreign-born student who has not gained citizenship or permanent residency and is residing in the United States for the temporary purpose of education, and who also identifies as Black.

11 “National Data: Immigrant and International Students in Higher Education,” President’s Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/national/national-data/>

12 Dominique J. Baker and Tolani Britton, “Hate Crimes and Black College Student Enrollment,” Stanford Center for Education Policy and Analysis, January 2021, <https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/wp21-01-v012021.pdf>

13 Giselle George-Joseph and Devesh Kodnani, “Historically Black, Historically Underfunded: Investing in HBCUs,” Goldman Sachs Research, June 13, 2023, <https://www.goldmansachs.com/intelligence/pages/gs-research/the-case-for-investing-in-hbcus/report.pdf>

14 The term “immigrant-origin” is defined as individuals or communities whose ancestry traces back to foreign countries, indicating that they or their ancestors migrated to their current place of residence from another nation.

15 Jeanne Batalova and Miriam Feldblum, “Investing in the Future: Higher Ed Should Give Greater Focus to Growing Immigrant-Origin Student Population,” Migration Policy Institute and Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, August 2023, <https://www.presidentsalliance.org/the-future-higher-ed-growing-immigrant-origin-student-population>

enrolled in a college or university.¹⁶ However, between 2019 and 2021, enrollment for all undocumented students decreased by 4.2 percent.¹⁷ Unfortunately, college campuses are not always a place of refuge for undocumented Black students due to unique challenges they face during their academic journey. Undocumented students are barred from accessing a number of federal financial aid programs, are frequently denied in-state tuition rates,¹⁸ and are legally prohibited from accessing federal outreach and supportive services programs like TRIO.¹⁹ Additionally, undocumented Black students experience double invisibility because of two of their salient identities: Black and undocumented.²⁰ These barriers and restrictions pose unnecessary difficulties for undocumented students seeking to enroll in postsecondary education. Undocumented students also experience psychological stresses and often find it difficult to feel a sense of belonging on college campuses.²¹ It is crucial for institutions to create environments that foster a sense of belonging for Black immigrant students, as this plays a critical role in their overall success.

HBCUs are uniquely positioned to welcome and retain Black immigrants, including undocumented Black students, by fostering a sense of belonging among student populations traditionally underserved in postsecondary education. HBCUs have historically served and currently better serve Black students regardless of their nativity and immigration status, despite often being undervalued and under-resourced compared to non-HBCU institutions.

16 “Fact Sheet, Undocumented Students in Higher Education: How Many Students Are in U.S. Colleges and Universities, and Who Are They?”, American Immigration Council and Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, August 2023, https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/07.23-Undocumented-Students_v3.pdf

17 Ibid

18 Felecia S. Russell, “The Invisibility of UndocuBlack Students within the Undocumented Community in Higher Education,” Temple University, May 2022, <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12613/7762>

19 Katherine Knott, “Undocumented Students Could Access Federal College-Prep Programs Under Biden Proposal,” Inside Higher Ed, January 17, 2024, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/2024/01/17/pushback-biden-plan-open-trio-undocumented-students#:~:text=Undocumented%20students%20have%20been%20barred,grants%2C%20loans%20or%20work%20assistance.>

20 Felecia Russell and Alonso R. Reyna Rivarola, “What does it mean to be UndocuBlack? Exploring the double invisibility of Black undocumented immigrant students in U.S. colleges and universities,” New Directions in Higher Education, September 1, 2023, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/he.20480>

21 Kayon A. Hall, “Undocumented Black Students and Hermeneutical Injustice: Higher Education’s Role in Leaving Them Out of the Undocumented Conversation,” Journal of First-generation Student Success, October 18, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1080/26906015.2022.2115327>



56,000

Undocumented Black students were enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions in **2021**



Constituting **13.8%**

of all undocumented students enrolled in a college or university



However, between **2019-2021** enrollment for all undocumented students decreased by **4.2%**



Strategies to Support Black Immigrants and Black Undocumented Students

Immigrant students are integral to the sustainability of colleges and universities across the United States, with Black immigrants playing a particularly significant role in the nation's social and economic growth. In 2021, Black immigrants accumulated over \$150 billion in household income and paid over \$30 billion in taxes.²²

Policymakers now have a unique opportunity to strategically invest in HBCUs, empowering these institutions to support their students, especially Black immigrant students and Black undocumented students. These recommendations aim to amplify support, improve recruitment efforts, and address financial aid accessibility for Black immigrant students at HBCUs.



Institutional-level Strategies

Audit Admissions Policies to Bolster Recruitment of Black Immigrant Students

HBCUs play a pivotal role in fostering educational opportunities and empowerment within the Black community. However, in order to truly embody inclusivity, it is essential for HBCUs to proactively examine and audit their admissions policies. This will allow HBCUs to recognize and celebrate the diversity within the Black community, including first- and second-generation immigrants. The auditing process includes admission offices undergoing an interrogation of current recruitment policies to ensure those strategies include undocumented Black students and immigrant-origin students. Admission offices must also examine their scholarship packages, retention efforts, and campus climates.

Auditing admission policies ensures that HBCUs remain relevant and responsive to the changing demographics by actively recruiting from Black immigrant communities. These processes ensure that the college environment reflects the multifaceted nature of Black experiences. By fostering an inclusive environment, HBCUs can harness the diverse skills and perspectives of undocumented students, thereby enriching their academic communities and enhancing their cultural fabric. HBCUs have a longstanding commitment to providing equitable educational opportunities for all Black individuals. Auditing admission policies aligns with this mission, reinforcing the commitment to inclusivity and creating an environment where every Black student, regardless of their immigration status, feels welcomed and supported. By auditing policies, HBCUs can remain deliberate in working with Black immigrant students for favorable outcomes.

22 "Black Immigrants in the United States," American Immigration Council, February 24, 2023, <https://immigrationimpact.com/2023/02/24/black-immigrants-in-the-united-states/>



Build a Supportive Environment for Black Immigrant Students

Recruiting Black immigrant students to HBCUs is a crucial step toward diversity and inclusion; however, the commitment to their success extends far beyond recruitment. Building a supportive environment for these students is essential to ensure they thrive academically, culturally, and emotionally.

Partner with national organizations to support undocumented individuals

This may include partnering with organizations such as DREAM.US,²³ Immigrants Rising,²⁴ and Undocublack²⁵ to support Black undocumented students on HBCU campuses. Other means of support include offering resources like financial aid, mentorship programs, language support services, counseling, advocacy, and cultural integration initiatives specifically for undocumented students. For example, Morgan State University²⁶ and Delaware State University²⁷ partnered with Dream.US to provide scholarships, support services, and mentoring to undocumented students who are ineligible for in-state tuition or completely barred from attending public colleges and universities in their home states because of their citizenship status.

23 “Our Partner Colleges,” TheDream.US, <https://www.thedream.us/about/our-partner-colleges/>

24 Immigrants Rising, <https://immigrantsrising.org/>

25 Undocublack Network, <https://undocublack.org/>

26 “Morgan to Partner to Support Maryland Dreamers,” Morgan State University News, January 20, 2023, <https://www.morgan.edu/news/morgan-to-partner-to-support-maryland-dreamers>

27 “When Dreamers & HBCUs Meet, American Success Stories are Made,” Thurgood Marshall College Fund, originally published on January 22, 2018, <https://www.tmcf.org/events-media/tmcf-in-the-media/when-dreamers-hbcus-meet-american-success-stories-are-made/>



State-Level Policy Solutions

Advance Tuition Equity Policies & Defend Against Restrictive Efforts

In-state tuition and financial aid play pivotal roles in enabling undocumented students to access higher education and pursue their academic aspirations. For undocumented students, in-state tuition rates often represent a more affordable pathway to college. However, undocumented students frequently face barriers in accessing in-state tuition and financial aid due to their immigration status as well as state policies that may bar undocumented students from accessing in-state tuition or enrolling in public universities.²⁸ This exclusion limits students' educational opportunities and perpetuates cycles of inequality, impeding socioeconomic mobility for impacted populations.

Passing tuition equity laws for undocumented students is a crucial step in ensuring equitable access to higher education for all individuals, regardless of immigration status. Several states have already enacted tuition equity laws, which allow undocumented students who meet certain residency requirements to pay in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities. As of February 2024, 24 states and Washington, D.C. provide in-state tuition to undocumented students, 18 states and Washington, D.C. provide access to state financial aid, and nine states actively block access to in-state tuition.²⁹ Overall, tuition equity laws play a vital role in promoting educational equity and fostering a more inclusive society.



Massachusetts included tuition equity in the state's FY 2024 budget.

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28 "State-by-State Policies on Higher Education Access for Undocumented Students," The Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/states/>

29 Ibid.

Expand State Investments in HBCUs

States should also expand funding for public HBCUs as they often serve a significant number of students from underserved communities. Fifty-two percent of HBCU students are first-generation students,³⁰ and 73 percent of HBCU students qualify for Pell grants, compared to 36 percent of all other undergraduate students.³¹ Yet these institutions frequently receive vastly less funding per student compared to the non-HBCU land grant colleges or universities within the same state.³² This funding disparity undermines the ability of HBCUs to provide quality education, support services, and resources to their students, perpetuating systemic inequities and hindering the academic success and advancement of students of color.

Addressing funding disparities is essential for promoting educational equity and ensuring that all students have access to affordable higher education and the support they need to thrive academically.



Federal-Level Policy Solutions

Increase Federal Investments in HBCUs to Support Student Success

Increasing federal funding to HBCUs is crucial for addressing the unique needs and challenges faced by Black immigrant students, including those who are undocumented. HBCUs have long served as pillars of support for Black communities. By channeling resources toward these institutions, we can create a more inclusive educational environment that specifically caters to the diverse experiences of Black immigrant students.

Historically, HBCUs have received inequitable funding and investments from federal, state, and local governments.³³ Among public institutions of higher education, HBCUs depend more heavily on these funding sources compared to non-HBCU public institutions (54 percent of overall revenue compared to 38 percent).³⁴ The funding disparities between HBCUs and non-HBCUs underscore the importance of renewing our shared commitment to rectifying historical funding inequities and ensuring a more equitable landscape for all institutions of higher education.

Federal financial support for HBCUs could contribute to the development of targeted programs and services that address the cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic factors affecting Black immigrant students. These

30 “About HBCUs,” Thurgood Marshall College Fund, <https://www.tmcf.org/about-us/member-schools/about-hbcus/>

31 “Investing in Better Futures for Students and For All of Us,” United Negro College Fund, 2023, https://cdn.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-Fact-Sheet-Myriad_08-23-1.pdf

32 “Secretaries of Education, Agriculture Call on Governors to Equitably Fund Land Grant Universities,” U.S. Department of Agriculture, September 18, 2023, <https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2023/09/18/secretaries-education-agriculture-call-governors-equitably-fund>

33 Denise A. Smith, “Achieving Financial Equity and Justice for HBCUs,” The Century Foundation, September 14, 2021, <https://tcf.org/content/report/achieving-financial-equity-justice-hbcus/>

34 Krystal L. Williams and BreAnna L. Davis, “Public and Private Investments and Divestments in Historically Black Colleges and Universities,” American Council on Education, January 2019, <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Public-and-Private-Investments-and-Divestments-in-HBCUs.pdf>




Photography by: Katie Moum/Unsplash

students often encounter distinct challenges related to acculturation and navigating a new educational system. Increased funding would allow HBCUs to implement initiatives such as mentorship programs, language support services, cultural awareness campaigns, and other basic needs support, creating a more welcoming and supportive atmosphere. Investments in HBCUs can facilitate the expansion of scholarship and financial aid opportunities tailored to the needs of Black immigrant students, especially those who are undocumented.

Directing additional investments and funding toward HBCUs is essential for supporting Black immigrant students in promoting their academic success. By tailoring programs, expanding financial aid opportunities, and fostering partnerships, HBCUs can create an educational environment that not only addresses the specific challenges faced by Black immigrant students but also celebrates the richness of their cultural contributions. This targeted support will contribute to the overall strength and diversity of the academic community at HBCUs.

Permanent Protections for Dreamers

There are several pieces of proposed legislation that would open up pathways to permanent protections for Dreamers, undocumented individuals who arrived in the United States as children and grew up attending



U.S. schools and institutions of postsecondary education.³⁵ While some Dreamers have been able to gain work permits and relief from deportation through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, access to these benefits is limited. Moreover, threats to DACA leave the future of beneficiaries uncertain. Passing permanent relief for Dreamers would significantly alleviate financial aid barriers facing undocumented students in the United States and provide them with security as they pursue education, careers, and life after high school. Various legislative proposals over the years would allow eligible individuals to obtain conditional residency status, followed by permanent residency, and eventually citizenship if they meet certain criteria, such as completing high school or obtaining a GED and pursuing higher education, military service, or employment.

The precise number of individuals impacted varies by proposal.³⁶ The most inclusive proposals include various pathways to citizenship, no age caps, as well as hardship exceptions, such as for parents who may have difficulty meeting employment or education requirements. Ultimately, passing legislation with a pathway to citizenship would address the legal limbo faced by many undocumented students while potentially removing significant barriers to accessing financial aid for postsecondary education. Once granted legal status, Dreamers could become eligible for federal student aid programs, including Pell Grants, federal work-study, and federal student loans, making college more affordable and accessible. In addition, many would be able to work in positions from which they were previously excluded, providing additional financial security and the ability to pursue careers related to their program of study. While the benefits of such legislation go far beyond college access, expanding access to higher education would be an important outcome of its enactment.

Repeal Section 505 of IIRA/IRA

Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRA/IRA)³⁷ imposes restrictions on states' ability to offer in-state tuition rates to undocumented students. This provision prohibits states from providing in-state tuition benefits to undocumented students unless they also offer the same benefits to all U.S. citizens, regardless of residency. As a result, many undocumented students living in states without a tuition equity policy are effectively barred from accessing in-state tuition rates, which are typically significantly lower than out-of-state rates, making higher education prohibitively expensive for them.

Repealing Section 505 of IIRA/IRA would remove this barrier and allow states to offer in-state tuition rates to undocumented students without being required to extend the same benefits to all U.S. citizens. This change would make higher education more affordable and accessible for undocumented students, enabling them to pursue their academic and career goals without facing exorbitant tuition costs.

Repealing Section 505 of IIRA/IRA would represent a significant step toward addressing the financial aid barriers facing undocumented students in the United States. Allowing states to offer in-state tuition rates without federal restrictions would help level the playing field and ensure that all students have equitable access to higher education opportunities.

35 "Federal Policies," Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/national/federal-policies/>

36 Ibid.

37 "Legislative Recommendations Regarding Immigrant Students' Higher Education Access, Federal Financial Aid, and Professional and Occupational Licensure," Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, January 7, 2021, <https://www.presidentsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2020-01-07-Legislative-Recommendations-Regarding-Immigrant-Students-Higher-Education-Access-Federal-Financial-Aid-and-Professional-and-Occupational-Licensure.docx.pdf>

Expand Access to Federal Financial Aid Programs to Undocumented Students

Federal financial aid programs, such as Pell Grants and student loans, play a crucial role in alleviating the economic burden associated with pursuing postsecondary education. These programs enable students to cover tuition, textbooks, and living expenses, making higher education a realistic and attainable goal. However, current federal law prohibits undocumented students from accessing federal student aid programs.

Enabling undocumented students to pursue postsecondary education not only benefits them personally but also contributes to the nation's talent pool and economic growth, serving as a crucial driver of socioeconomic mobility.³⁸ A postsecondary credential enables undocumented students and their families to escape poverty, access jobs with family-sustaining wages, and actively participate in the nation's economy. By granting federal financial aid to undocumented students, America is making an investment in the untapped potential of these individuals. Conversely, denying federal financial aid perpetuates inequities and reinforces systemic barriers, hindering academic achievement, limiting professional aspirations, and impeding the ability to break free from socioeconomic constraints. This contributes to broader societal inequities by obstructing pathways to education and economic mobility. A commitment to social justice necessitates addressing these disparities and ensuring that individuals, regardless of immigration status, have the opportunity to pursue their educational and professional goals while contributing to society.

Extending federal financial aid to undocumented students is a crucial step toward building a more equitable and inclusive postsecondary education system. By recognizing the potential in all students, regardless of immigration status, we not only empower individuals to achieve their aspirations but also contribute to a stronger, more diverse, and economically vibrant society.

Expand TRIO programs eligibility to Undocumented Students

The Federal TRIO programs are outreach and student services programs designed to serve individuals with low-incomes, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities with assistance accessing postsecondary education.³⁹ TRIO programs include several initiatives such as Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services.

The U.S. Department of Education recently proposed regulations aimed at broadening the eligibility criteria for Federal TRIO programs to include undocumented students.⁴⁰ This expansion would allow these programs to serve eligible undocumented students as they enroll in high school and pursue postsecondary education. Denying undocumented students access to TRIO programs exacerbates existing disparities in postsecondary education. TRIO programs offer academic support services such as tutoring, counseling, and mentoring, which can greatly benefit undocumented students who may otherwise lack access to such resources. These services can help improve educational outcomes for undocumented students. Additionally, TRIO programs can fill the gaps in college preparation programs for undocumented

38 J. Geiman, "Promoting Equity for Undocumented Students in Postsecondary Education," Center for Law and Social Policy, October 2021, <https://www.clasp.org/publications/fact-sheet/promoting-equity-undocumented-students-postsecondary-education/>

39 "Federal TRIO Programs," U.S. Department of Education, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/index.html>

40 "TRIO Subcommittee Issue Paper Session 1," U.S. Department of Education, January 12, 2024, <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2023/trio-subcommittee-issue-paper-session-1.pdf>



students by offering information and assistance with college admissions, financial aid applications, and other aspects of the college enrollment process. By investing in the education of undocumented students, TRIO programs can help break the cycle of poverty and improve the economic outcomes of these individuals and their families.





Conclusion

Understanding the unique experiences of Black immigrant students at HBCUs is crucial for creating inclusive and supportive educational environments. Recognizing the importance of belonging for these students not only enhances their academic success but also contributes to their overall well-being. The presence of Black immigrant students on campuses supports a diverse learning environment, as they bring unique perspectives to college campuses. Amplifying investments in HBCUs ensures a supportive environment that celebrates diversity and inclusivity, while extending federal financial aid programs to undocumented students underscores a commitment to equitable educational opportunities for all. By increasing support and recruitment efforts to include Black immigrant students, HBCUs can bolster enrollment sustainability. Addressing these interconnected facets empowers individual students to thrive while actively contributing to a more just and enriched educational system and economy.

Overall, these recommendations aim to create a more supportive and equitable environment for Black immigrant students in postsecondary education by addressing financial, cultural, and systemic barriers. Implementing these policies requires collaboration between federal agencies, educational institutions, and advocacy groups to ensure comprehensive support for this diverse student population.

Acknowledgements

INDIA HECKSTALL, Senior Policy Analyst on Education, Labor, and Worker Justice

India Heckstall, senior policy analyst on the education, labor, and worker justice team at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), specializes in workforce development and postsecondary education issues. India centers racial equity in her work and has deep expertise in creating pathways to better jobs for workers and advocating for accessible and equitable postsecondary education and training opportunities for people with low incomes, immigrants, and adult learners.

India was formerly a policy manager at Opportunity@Work, where she focused on policies enabling economic mobility for skilled workers through alternative routes. Prior to that, India was at the National Skills Coalition, where she supported workforce, education, and human services policies, particularly in California; and also served as a program associate at Higher Learning Advocates, where she crafted federal policy agendas; monitored relevant federal legislation on postsecondary education, workforce, and supportive services; and served as a project manager for the organization.

Beyond her work, India is actively engaged in Women in Government Relations where she previously served as co-chair of the education taskforce. India earned a master's degree in public policy from American University and a bachelor's degree in political science from Campbell University.

CHRISTIAN COLLINS, Policy Analyst on Education, Labor, and Worker Justice

Christian Collins is a policy analyst with CLASP's education, labor, and worker justice team. A native of Akron, Ohio and proud product of public schools, he brings expertise in labor rights advocacy and workforce and economic development. He holds a strong commitment to promoting racial justice through public policy and advocacy. Prior to CLASP, Christian was a researcher with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). In this role, he assisted local union chapters with organizing efforts and partnered with outside organizations and partners to advocate for increased rights and benefits for workers. Christian has also served as a research assistant at Urban Institute and a state fiscal project campaigns intern with the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities since moving to Washington, D.C. While in his home state of Ohio, Christian interned for both the Ohio State Senate and Columbus City Council. Christian is currently pursuing a master's degree in public management at Johns Hopkins University. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science with a minor in public policy from The Ohio State University and attended Kent State University during his undergraduate studies.

DR. FELECIA S. RUSSELL, Director, Higher Ed Immigration Portal

Dr. Felecia S. Russell is the Director of the Higher Ed Immigration Portal at the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration. She previously served as the Director of Undergraduate Admission at California Lutheran University, and as adjunct professor in the college of education. Her research agenda explores the experiences of non-Latinx undocumented students, more specifically Black undocumented students, and the intersections of race and immigration status. Her forthcoming book, *Amplifying Black Undocumented Student Voices in Higher Education*, centers her educational journey and a qualitative study exploring the experiences of 15 Black undocumented students. It will be published by Routledge on April 15, 2024. Dr. Russell received a BA in political science from Cal Lutheran, and MPP from Pepperdine University, and Ed.D in higher education from Temple University.

MELQUIN RAMOS, Data Research Consultant

Melquin Ramos serves as a data and research consultant at the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration. In this role, he supports the Presidents' Alliance on research and data projects and written pieces related to international, immigrant-origin, and refugee students. Melquin works as an independent consultant in the field of international education in the areas of research, writing, and analysis; data management; virtual exchange; study abroad; and international programming. He previously served as a visiting fellow at the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean located in Santiago, Chile. Melquin holds a master's in organizational leadership from the George Washington University and a bachelor's in criminology and criminal justice from the University of Maryland, College Park.



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Contact the Director, Higher Ed Immigration Portal,
Felecia Russell, felecia@presidentsalliance.org

740 15th Street NW, Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20005

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The Center for Law and Social Policy

www.clasp.org

Contact Senior Policy Analyst, India Heckstall,
iheckstall@clasp.org

1310 L St. NW, Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20005