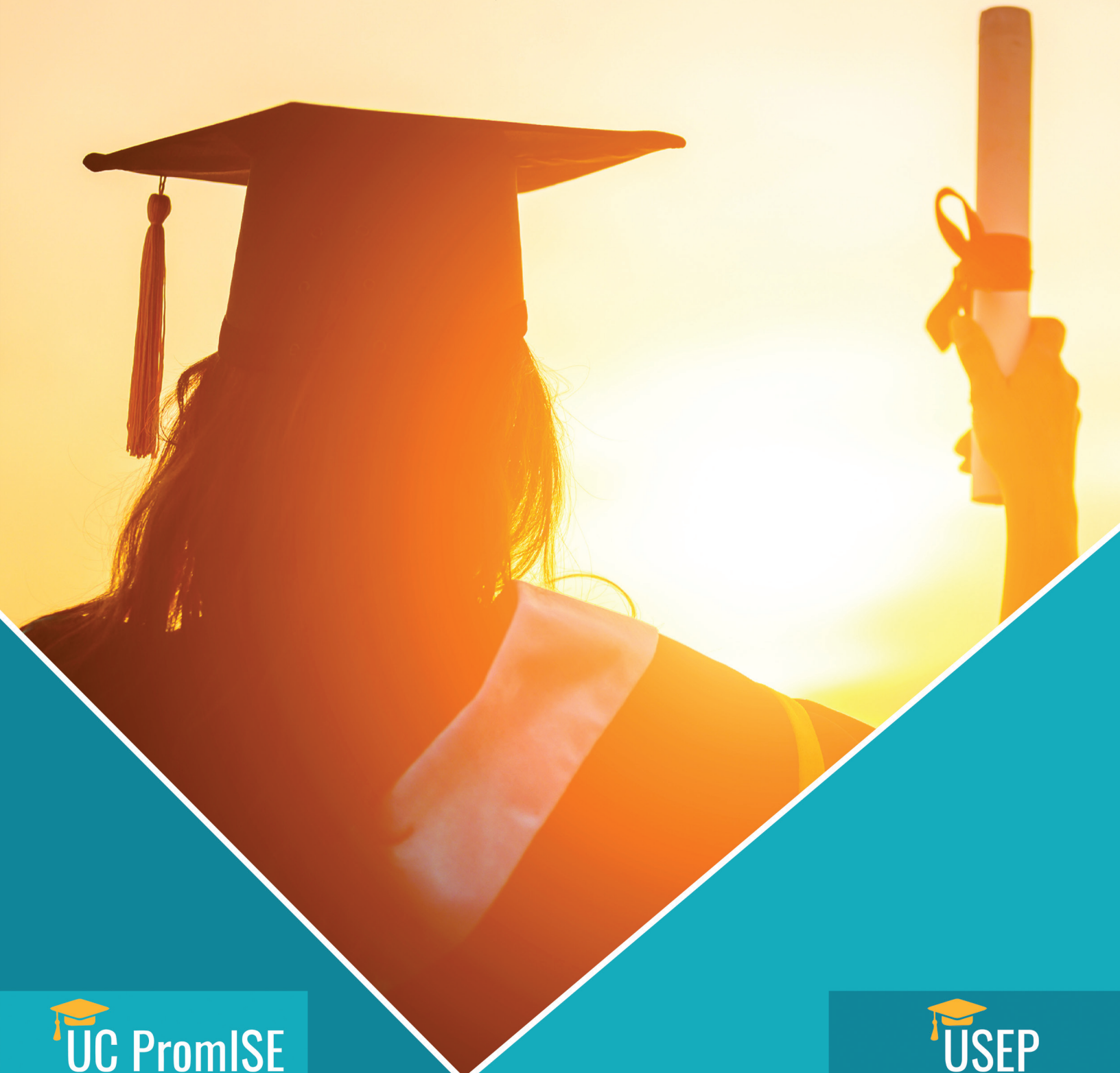


PERSISTING INEQUALITIES AND PATHS FORWARD:

A Report on the State of Undocumented Students
in California's Public Universities



RESEARCH TO ADVANCE EQUITY AND INCLUSION

This report is the result of a collective research effort between the UC Collaborative to Promote Immigrant and Student Equity (UC PromISE) and the Undocumented Student Equity Project (USEP). Both generate research with the goal of informing policies and practices that will advance equity and inclusion for undocumented students.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past two decades, California has opened the halls of higher education to undocumented youth. State policies and institutional practices have steadily increased their numbers, and California now hosts one in five of the nation's undocumented college students. But how are these students faring once they arrive on campus?

This report takes stock of the experiences of undocumented college students attending California's two public university systems: the California State University and the University of California. Based on survey responses from nearly 1,300 undergraduate students during spring 2020, it powerfully illustrates how undocumented immigration status disrupts college students' educational experiences and wellbeing. It offers specific steps that educational institutions can take to combat persisting inequalities and forge pathways toward equity and inclusion.

The following are key findings from the report:

Part 1: How are Undocumented Students Faring on Key Outcomes?

Undocumented immigration status compromises students' academic performance, educational experiences, and mental health. Though they are civically and politically engaged, these actions reflect their need to fight for inclusion in U.S. society.

Academic Performance and Educational Experiences

- 65% reported a GPA of 3.0 or higher while 11% reported a GPA under 2.5.
- 76% reported being distracted in class because they were dealing with or thinking about an issue related to their immigration status and 64% lost needed study hours.
- 38% reported participating in one or more professional development experiences, such as an internship or career-relevant employment.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- 31% reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depression at a level that warranted clinical treatment.
- 72% felt they needed to see a professional during the 2019-2020 academic year because of problems with their mental health, emotions, or nerves. However, only 48% had ever sought support.
- 28% reported poor or fair health, nearly three times the rate of a national sample of young adults.

Civic and Political Engagement

- 29% had participated in an organization that tried to solve a social problem during the 2019-2020 academic year.
- 41% had spent time participating in a community service or volunteer activity during the 2019-2020 academic year.
- 79% reported talking to people to persuade them about voting for or against certain politicians or political issues.

Part 2: How Common are Immigration-related Stressors?

Undocumented students must manage everyday manifestations of their immigration status as they attend college. They experience high financial strain and are often worried about deportation, both of themselves and their family members. On campus, they must negotiate a bureaucracy not designed for them and confront anti-immigrant sentiment.

Financial Strains

- 96% reported worrying about not having enough money to pay for things, with 60% worrying a lot of the time or almost always/always.
- 59% reported experiencing food insecurity.
- 46% reported going without materials needed for their studies at least sometimes.

Deportation Threat and the Immigration Policy Context

- 39% reported that they, a family member, and/or a friend had been involved in deportation proceedings, been detained, or deported.
- 50% reported thinking about their parent/guardian's deportation once a week or more and 38% reported thinking about their own deportation as frequently.
- Respondents reported moderate levels of social isolation. For instance, 58% reported feeling at least sometimes that they have no liberty and need to stay home.

Campus Climate

- 44% received inaccurate information about how to complete a university procedure or form.
- 56% agreed that they can present their whole, authentic self on campus without worrying about repercussions.
- 31% reported sometimes or often hearing students express negative feelings about undocumented immigrant communities. Only 11% reported faculty and 10% reported staff expressing such feelings as frequently.

Part 3: Are Undocumented Students Using Campus Resources?

Undocumented students are using general resources in a limited capacity. However, undocumented students frequently use undocumented student services which provide targeted programs and support and facilitate referrals to appropriate offices across campus.

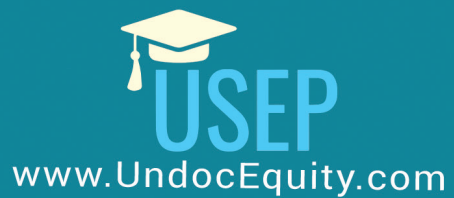
Campus-wide Resources

- 24% agreed that their immigration status prevents them from accessing the resources they need on campus.
- 98% used at least one general campus resource during the current academic year with 21% using one or two resources, 36% using three or four, 27% using five or six, and 14% using seven or more.
- The most frequently used resource was the basic needs/food pantry with 53% of students using this resource; a third of those who visited did so at least once a week.

Undocumented Student Services

- 74% reported having been to an office or met with a person who focuses on supporting undocumented students. Of these, 82% had met with a professional staff member.
- 65% reported accessing immigration legal services on campus.
- 81% of students who had accessed undocumented student services reported being referred to another person on campus who could provide support, services, or resources.

These findings demonstrate that educational institutions must continue to advance policies and practices that will promote equity and inclusion for undocumented students. Most critically, campuses must increase funding and support for undocumented student services. Collaborative programming and joint staff positions between undocumented student services and key campus-wide resources, such as academic support services, mental health counseling, and basic needs supports, will facilitate access and use. Campus-wide commitment will be imperative to foster a truly inclusive educational environment.



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