
SCHOLARSHIPS & IMMIGRATION STATUS

PART 3 OF E4FC'S 2016 UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP GUIDES



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How to Inquire about Scholarship Requirements



If you find scholarships that require a social security number or have residency requirements, you might want to ask them for more information about their requirements.

Consider asking:

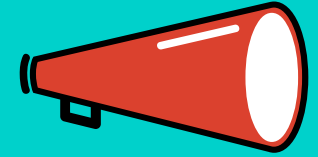
- **“Are residency requirements fixed?”** or
- **“Can students who do not meet the residency requirement still apply?”**
Note: Students with pending family petitions usually have a form called I-130 (Petition for Alien Relative). Although it might take years for this petition to become current, some scholarships have accepted the I-130 as proof of residency.
- **“Can students use an ITIN (Individual Tax Identification Number) instead of a SSN (Social Security Number)?”** Scholarship awards can be processed with just the student’s name and address. If a scholarship specifically requests a SSN, ask if it is possible to submit an ITIN instead.

ALSO:

Find an advocate to help you. If you’re uncomfortable, ask your counselor or teacher to inquire on your behalf. Make sure that whoever calls is knowledgeable about your immigration status.

Don’t lie about your status. If it turns out that the scholarship has specific residency requirements, just move on and look for another scholarship. If the scholarship catches you lying, your award will likely be revoked.

Advice for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Recipients



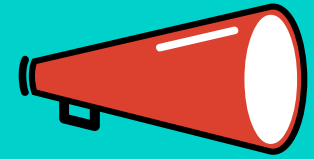
The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, announced by President Obama on June 15, 2012, has widened the number of scholarships available to undocumented students. DACA is a renewable government program that, among other benefits, gives eligible undocumented youth work authorization, a social security number, and permission to stay in the country for two years.

For more information about the program, check out E4FC's Deferred Action Resources on our website: <http://e4fc.org/legalservices/deferredactionresources.html>.

Historically, many scholarships have excluded undocumented students because they do not have valid social security numbers, work authorization, and/or lawful presence in the United States. DACA offers an opportunity for scholarship providers to re-evaluate their policies regarding undocumented students. Nationwide we have already seen some scholarship providers change their policies and allow DACA recipients to apply.

However, most scholarship providers do not know about the program yet and/or have not re-evaluated their policies. Because DACA is a new(er) program, it is important for DACA recipients to educate scholarship providers about the DACA program and the opportunities it affords to recipients. While some scholarship providers may continue to restrict their eligibility to U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents, we hope that many will decide to allow DACA recipients to apply.

Advice for DACA Recipients, cont.



To help DACA recipients determine whether a scholarship might consider them for their award, we have created the following guidelines:

Investigate whether the scholarship is government-funded.

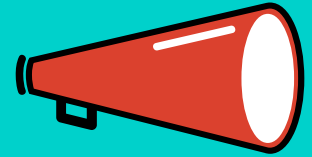
Scholarships that are funded by government dollars have very strict eligibility criteria limiting their scholarships to legal U.S. residents. If you find that a scholarship is government funded, we recommend you save your time and energy and not apply for the scholarship. Some examples of government-funded organizations include the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the National Science Foundation (NSF).

To investigate if a scholarship is funded through the government, you can do a quick web search of the scholarship by looking up the organization's website, scanning their homepage and looking for an "About Us" section. This section should describe if the organization/scholarship is privately or publicly (government) funded. Privately funded non-profit organizations are often described as 501(c)(3) organizations – they include private or family foundations, community foundations and civic or charitable organizations. Some privately-owned businesses and corporations also offer scholarships.

Ask the scholarship provider if there is a U.S. citizenship or permanent residency requirement for their scholarship.

If the scholarship appears to be privately funded, we recommend you carefully review the eligibility criteria for the scholarship. If the scholarship criteria include a U.S. citizenship or legal permanent residency requirement, we suggest you send an email to the scholarship provider. Search for a "Contact us" section on their website. You can ask a question such as, "I would like to apply for your scholarship, but I am not a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident. Is there any possibility that I can be considered for your scholarship?" (Please see "How to Inquire about Scholarship Requirements" for additional tips).

Advice for DACA Recipients, cont.



Ask the scholarship provider why there is a U.S. citizenship or permanent residency requirement.

If the scholarship provider responds that they do have a residency requirement, carefully investigate why this is the case. They might provide a response such as “scholarship recipients must be eligible to work after graduation” or “we don’t want international students applying to our scholarship” or “students need a SSN for tax purposes.”

If their response falls along these lines, we strongly advise you to educate the provider about the DACA program, the benefits to DACA recipients, and your particular situation. You might try writing something like, “While I am not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, I am a recipient of the federal government’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program. This grants me lawful presence, a social security number, and the ability to work legally in this country. Furthermore, I have lived and attended school here in _____ since I was _____ years old and fully intend to remain here after I graduate from college. Is there any possibility that I can be considered for your scholarship?”

If, however, the scholarship provider responds with something such as “our donors have set the eligibility requirements” or “we have a firm stance on this policy” or “at this moment we do not support undocumented applicants”, then it is unlikely you will be able to apply to their scholarship this year and we advise you to look elsewhere.

However, do not let these negative responses discourage you! Simply by making inquiries and sharing your story, you are making scholarship organizations aware of the DACA program and DACA recipients’ need for financial support. The more inquiries from DACA recipients that scholarship providers receive, the more likely they will be to re-evaluate their policies. You are making a difference just by courageously making the ask!

Pros & Cons to Disclosing Your Immigration Status



PROS

- You want people to be aware of the challenges you've faced and how you've overcome them
- You want people to be aware of your financial need
- You want people to be aware of your motivations



CONS

- You don't want this to define you
- You don't want this to overshadow your accomplishments
- You don't want to sound like a victim
- You don't want to alienate someone who isn't familiar with immigration issues

How to Talk About Your Immigration Status



Think carefully about HOW you talk about your status. You do not want to sound like a victim but rather like someone who has overcome challenges and succeeded.



Don't have it be the main topic (unless you know that the scholarship specifically is looking for undocumented students). You do not want your status to overshadow your academic accomplishments and aspirations.



Emphasize that: you've grown up here, it wasn't your decision to come to the United States, you want to remain in the United States, you want to become a US citizen, etc.

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Discussing Your Immigration Status: Three Scripts

LEAST DIRECT

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Even though I was not eligible for federal or state financial aid because of my immigration status, I don't want money to impede my future education goals.

I might not have enough economical resources to pay for all the expenses a university requires, but I do have the hunger for learning and for getting the higher education a university can offer.

”

Discussing Your Immigration Status: Three Scripts

MORE DIRECT

“

I was always aware of my status, even as a young boy my parents had told me about it. They explained their reasoning for coming here and what our goals and aspirations as a family were. So I grew up always knowing, however it was only until junior year in high school that I really understood the gravity of our situation. And with that understanding came a downward spiral during which I practically gave up all efforts in school; my reasoning was, why bother with all this work if it's not going to amount to anything.

I managed to better my grades and keep my hopes somewhat up during my last year in school, and even flirted with the idea of applying to some universities, but with out status and with no money it was a difficult journey ahead.

In order for one to understand who I am, it is critical that one knows my history. My name is Victor and I was born in Santa Gertrudis, Oaxaca, Mexico: a poor village where residents walk on sun-beaten, unpaved streets, and walk in night's darkness due to the lack of streetlights. My childhood is filled with memories of dirt-streets, no potable water, and acres of corn and alfalfa fields. Unfortunately, my family and I were forced to leave Santa Gertrudis, Oaxaca due to a traumatized event, and immigrate into the U.S. illegally.

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Discussing Your Immigration Status: Three Scripts

VERY DIRECT

“

Ten years ago, I was dragged to the United States from Fiji against my will as a consequence of a U.S.-supported coup d'état. I adjusted to high school here but in the post 9-11 crackdown on international students, I was denied a student visa because my parents had filed for adjustment of status and I could not prove adequate ties to my home country.

Life came to a standstill—I could not attend colleges or universities of my choice without financial aid, and all the lawyers we approached told us to ‘wait.’

Fast-forward six years and I am still waiting-in-line for my ‘authorization’ documents, now equipped with a Masters degree that means little without a nine-digit number and fighting the immigration battle in court. But I have refused to play the waiting game all over again.

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