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Institutional agents' perspectives of institutional support for undocumented and DACA community college students

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Abstract

Given that community colleges enroll most of the undocumented and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students across the nation, there is an economic and moral imperative to understand how the sociopolitical environment has shifted educational opportunities for undocumented and DACA students. This paper unveils how institutional agents use their agency to shape the college community college experiences of undocumented and DACA students. Findings include institutional agents' perspectives on navigating challenges, resistance, and virtues in the current sociopolitical climate. Recommendations are discussed to enhance humanizing and holistic institutional support for DACA and undocumented college students, as well as a proposed undocuservingness framework.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS:

- It is important for insititutional agents to use legal and racial consciouness to better serve undocumented and DACA students.
- Hispanic Serving Community Colleges need to unpack servingness within the context of supporting undocumented and DACA students

INTRODUCTION

On September 7, 2017, former Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the termination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program[1], threatening the educational aspirations and employment outlook of approximately 800,000 recipients. Further, the murder of George Floyd in 2020, compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, illuminated the 400 years of entrenched white supremacy which continues to thrive in the U.S. socio-political context, including colleges and universities. These highly visible events and heightened racial tensions were followed by institutional responses with little notation to direct action and transformational change. While previous research examines the importance of institutional agents in supporting undocumented college students, there are a limited number of studies that capture the voices and perspectives of institutional agents, who are deemed as equity champions, on how their institution supports or does not support, undocumented and DACA students within the equity work, specifically within a Hispanic Serving community college context. We also acknowledge the heightened rhetoric on the attacks on "diversity, equity, and inclusion" and "critical race theory" by politicians through an "anti-woke" movement in states like Florida and Texas. Legislation like Senate Bill 266 in Florida (Lu, 2023) and Senate Bill 17 in Texas (Yang, 2023), which prohibit state funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion activities, will make publicly advocating for undocumented and DACA students, as well as other minoritized students, nearly impossible.

According to a report by the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, and the New American Economy (Feldblum et al., 2020), in 2019, approximately 181,000 DACA-eligible individuals and 427,000 undocumented students were enrolled in post-secondary education. This is a decline in enrollment from previous years, citing the political climate, stricter immigration policies, and the rising cost of higher education as factors. Other scholars (Pérez Huber & Muñoz, 2021a) have named structural racism and racist nativist microaggressions as factors contributing to unwelcoming campus environments for undocumented and DACA students, yet institutional agents can play an important role in supporting students in navigating their racialized terrains. As such, the purpose of this paper is to understand one case study, which is an examination of a community college, Aspen Community College[2] (a Hispanic Serving Institution), in the state of Colorado, to illuminate how undocumented and DACA community college students are supported and contextualized by state and institutional policies. The research question guiding this is, *how are institutional agents at Aspen Community College cultivating/not cultivating "undocufriendly" campus climates?*

We begin with a brief overview of the undocumented and DACA students in community colleges, institutional agent support for this group of students, and servingness. We then introduce the concepts of "undocufriendly", racial, and legal consciousness to interrogate how institutional agents are supporting/not supporting undocumented and DACA college students. We highlight findings from this study and conclude by critically considering an "undocuservingness" framework as a potential way to support undocumented and DACA students in community colleges.

[1] It is important to note that DACA is a work permit that can be renewed every 2 years and is extended only to those who were under 31 years before 2012, have continually resided in the U.S. since 2007, have completed high school or be a veteran, and entered the U.S. before the age of 16.

[2] Pseudonym

UNDOCUMENTED AND DACA STUDENTS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Over the last decade, the literature about undocumented and DACA college students has mainly focused on selective 4-year institutional settings, even though many undocumented and DACA students are enrolling in community colleges. Yet, community colleges continue to underfund undocumented and DACA students' service for support and engagement, and how undocumented students are received by their institutions is dependent on institutions' admissions policies, high school preparation, communication about resources, institutional commitment, and financial aid (Enriquez et al., 2019; Jauregui & Slate, 2009). For community colleges, scholars found that offering co-requisite courses and flexibility in course offerings and scheduling was a benefit to undocumented and DACA students (Ngo & Hinojosa, 2017; Terriquez, 2015; Valenzuela et al., 2015). Even though Undocumented Student Resources Centers (USRC) are available at various institutions throughout the United States, not all community colleges and 4-year institutions have access to this important resource. USRC's not only provide emotional safety and a sense of belonging, but they also provide visibility and institutionalized support for DACA and undocumented students (Cisneros & Rivarola, 2020). However, not all USRC's are created equal. In one study, Freeman Wong (2022) examined USRC at community colleges and found that some USRCs are often student-led. In some cases, full-time staff served in advisory roles, but a designated staff member to serve undocumented and DACA students. Finally, they found that having intentional collaborations with 4-year transfer institutions to provide a seamless and smoother transfer process for undocumented and DACA students connects them to vital resources and key institutional agents for additional support (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020; Immigrants Rising, & Foundation for California Community Colleges, 2019; Perez, 2009).

Suarez-Orozco et al.'s (2015) model of "undocufriendly" campus climates provides an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) to frame the challenges undocumented students encounter. The "undocufriendly" model considers challenges and assets for undocumented students at the student, campus, as well as state and national levels. In their survey of over 900 self-identified undocumented students, Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) found that more than two-thirds of students had experienced discrimination based on their legal status within the previous month. Students at private colleges were more likely to desire their institution to publicly endorse undocumented students (33%) compared to students at community colleges (24%) and public colleges (22%). Salazar and colleagues (2022) used this model to examine one institution that was perceived asundocufriendly by having in-state tuition policies and ample support services for undocumented and DACA students but fell short by not having adequate leadership support from administrators, and lacking financial and mental health resources for students. In short, undocufriendly does not produce an undocuserving outcome (Salazar et .al. 2022).

For instance, California and Colorado have legislation (in-state tuition and financial aid) specifically to assist undocumented students but have what Negrón-Gonzales (2017) coined as *constrained inclusion*. Constrained inclusion suggests that despite states passing legislation and policies to make college access and persistence a reality, barriers continue to exist as they navigate college environments. This exposes the reality that in-state tuition policies for undocumented students do not necessarily equate to providing institutional resources and knowledge to those who serve this population. Recent studies (Andrade, 2017; Muñoz et al., 2018) examined the immediate reactions to the Trump elections by undocumented students at community colleges, calling for heightened knowledge about their experiences. This includes discouraging the tokenization of undocumented

students for institutional purposes, for professors to disseminate information about student support services available to them, and for campus protection.

INSTITUTIONAL AGENTS AND SUPPORTING UNDOCUMENTED AND DACA STUDENTS

Faculty and staff are key in providing undocumented and DACA students with support and agency to succeed in college and serve as institutional agents. As defined by Stanton-Salazar (1997, 2001, and 2011), institutional agents hold influential positions within society or institutions (e.g., higher education) and provide students with social and institutional support centered on their needs and desires. These institutional agents often use their power and privilege to advocate for the students they serve, including for direct resources, opportunities, privileges, and services to support and uplift them. Much of the research on institutional agent support (Brilliant, 2000; Casner-Lotto, 2011; Dozier, 1993; Muñoz, 2016; Negrón-Gonzales, 2017; Nienhusser, 2014; Pérez, 2010; Pérez et al., 2011) is centered on the narratives of undocumented and DACA students and these studies see institutional agents as offering academic and emotional support. Institutional agents often advise undocumented student organizations and activities, educating themselves about the current and historical policies and legislation that can impact undocumented and DACA students' sense of belonging on campus, especially on their prospect of gainful employment after graduation (Nienhusser & Espino, 2017).

One study found two types of institutional agents who support undocumented and DACA students at a Midwest 4-year institution; *unapologetically uneducated and supportive and knowledgeable institutional agents* (Luedke & Corral, 2021). The *unapologetically uneducated institutional agents* did not know nor knew where to obtain resources and information about navigating college without legal status. Often when institutional agents are unknowledgeable about supporting undocumented and DACA students, they cost them more labor to seek their own remedies and information to help themselves. *Supportive and knowledgeable agents* are individuals with a healthy amount of awareness and knowledge and actively share them with their students. Despite this useful understanding of institutional agents, it is also important to understand the Hispanic Serving institutional context. In particular, what does the notion of servingness mean when we center on undocumented and DACA students?

UNPACKING "SERVINGNESS"

How Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) operationalize "servingness" deems as an important question to process (Nuñez et al., 2015). Despite good intentions to serve Latinx students, many scholars have identified shortcomings within the HSI designation that fail to meet the needs of Latinx students (Contreras & Contreras, 2015; Garcia et al., 2019; Garcia, 2017, 2019). The federal government defines Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) as institutions with a student population consisting of a minimum of 25% Latinx-identifying students. The federal designation of HSI has only existed since the early 1990s. As of 2019, 523 HSIs exist in the United States; this number is expected to increase (Excelencia in Education, 2019). HSIs educate more than 66% of all Latinx students in higher education (Excelencia in Education, 2019). HSIs are also eligible for Title V grant funds from the federal government to help increase the number of Latinx students accessing and completing higher education if they enroll 50% of first-generation college students. While many institutions achieve HSI status, inequities in college often persist for Latinx students compared

to other student populations on campus (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). Garcia (2019) explains that HSIs recruit and enroll more Latinx students but often need more change in their institutional culture and procedures to center on the needs and experiences of Latinx students. In her recent work, Garcia (2023) argues for transformational HSI's by centering liberatory outcomes as indicators for servingness. Her examples of critical consciousness, civic engagement, social activism, identity development, working with local communities, and incorporating language into academic experiences can provide institutions an additional method of assessing success (Garcia, 2023, pp. 50–53). More importantly, Garcia encourages HSI to take a race-consciousness approach to policy and practice as a way to understand how systemic racism impacts the everyday lives of minoritized students (Bensimon & Malcolm, 2012; Garcia, 2023).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

We ground this article in concepts of legal and critical racial consciousness. Consciousness is the process by which individuals assign meanings to their social system to construct a commonsense understanding of the world (Ewick & Silbey, 1998; Silbey, 2005). The notion of "legal consciousness" illuminates the understanding or awareness of how individuals without documentation function in everyday life "with the law … or against the law" (Abrego, 2011, p. 341). Scholars Abrego (2011) and Polletta (2000) questioned the complexity of legal consciousness for undocumented individuals in relation to making claims to inclusive resources, information, and human dignity. For example, an individual's legal consciousness level may impact decisions on how undocumented college students navigate and negotiate resources, relationships, and context (see Muñoz, 2018). The idea of "illegality" is socially constructed, which places immigrants as marginalized individuals based on the fluid interpretation of immigration laws. Thus, it is imperative to unpack the construct of "illegality" as a socially, legally, and politically nuanced practice reproducing and maintaining inequity systems in contemporary society (De Genova, 2002).

Racial consciousness recognizes that race and racism are part of everyday life for People of Color and acknowledges the racial inequities within systems and structures, including the immigration system, which impacts undocumented and DACA students (Bensimon & Malcolm, 2012). We claim that institutional agents can also have a form of legal and racial consciousness by understanding how the legal norms and laws, rooted in white supremacy, impact undocumented and DACA students as they navigate their collegiate experiences. Race and legal consciousness institutional agents also act, shift, and lead their institutions by unveiling racist nativism policies detrimental to the college success of undocumented and DACA students.

METHODOLOGY

We utilize case study methodology to understand Aspen Community College campus climate from an in-depth, holistic analysis within a sociopolitical immigration context (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). Cases may include individuals, organizations, processes, programs, institutions, and events (Stake, 2005). We specially focus on employing an instrumental case study design to provide insight into a particular issue, redraw generalizations, or build theory. This allowed us to learn more about how institutional agents play a role in cultivating undocufriendly campus climates and how institutions can become more undocuserving for DACA and undocumented students.

Site, participants, and data collection

The Aspen Community College (ACC) was selected because of its reputation of being an undocufriendly community college and for its HSI designation. ACC does not have a physical Undocumented Student Resources center, but three staff members are listed as "staff" on their undocumented student resource website. This campus is home to 500 DACA recipients, and shortly after the Trump administration, a local ACC campus Republicans group posted on their Facebook page:

> Very disappointing our campus is being used as a rallying point for a program that needs to end. Very unprofessional by the school administration to allow the #Daca rally on our campus today. It is time to #Draintheswamp on this campus…(Lauterbach, 2017, ¶ 14).

The public acknowledgment of senior leadership support of DACA recipients created tension between commitment to inclusion and diversity and the anti-immigrant rhetoric. While the larger study also included focus groups with undocumented and DACA students (see Vigil & Muñoz, 2023) from other Colorado community colleges, for this paper, we only draw on the data and analyses from 12 individual interviews with staff and faculty at Aspen Community College to shed light on how institutional agents negotiate and create an undocufriendly campus climate.

Purposeful and snowball sampling was used to identify 12 staff and faculty who are considered equity-minded or work directly with undocumented and DACA students; six instructional faculty whom students and staff recommended as advocates of immigrants; and six student affairs staff who work directly with undocumented and DACA students. We identified a campus informant who helped identify and recruit, via email, specific faculty, staff, and senior administrators on campus who have day-to-day contact or knowledge of issues of undocumented college students. Selection criteria for participants required them to have been working full-time at Aspen Community College for at least 2 years and self-identify as an advocate for equity and immigrant students. Multiple attempts were made to recruit senior leadership from ACC, but none desired to participate. Table 1 illustrates the demographics of each participant, their sex, how they disclosed their racial identities, their years on the ACC campus, and their role on campus.

nine questions regarding their understanding of the campus climate for undocumented and DACA students and notes were written by the student researchers during each interview. All identifiable information was removed, and pseudonyms of names were selected to ensure confidentiality. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and stored in an electronic file. Further, a review of documents associated with supporting undocumented and DACA students was conducted on public statements or announcements that reflect support or non-support of undocumented and DACA students.

Data analysis

Interviews and notes were transcribed and coded using Charmaz's (2011) and Saldaña's (2009) approaches to qualitative coding for social justice research. This coding process seeks to code for inequities, privilege, and power pertaining to individual and collective rights. Also, Suarez-Orozco et al.'s (2015) model of undocufriendly campus climates was used to organize the codes (assets and challenges) and highlight how institutional agents navigated and negotiated their agency and roles within the campus environment. We also use legal and racial consciousness as our analytical gaze to unveil how the concepts of

TABLE 1 Participant demographics.

Pseudonym	Sex	Self-identification by particpants	Years at ACC	Campus role
Wonder women	Female	POC	10	Faculty
Steven	Male	White	18	Faculty
Sarah	Female	POC	15	Student affairs staff
Monica	Female	POC—Latina	5	Student affairs staff
Kiko	Male	Latine (Mexican)	3	Student affairs staff
Lola	Female	POC	6	Student affairs staff
Nathaniel	Male	White	12	Faculty
Matthew	Male	Latino	20	Faculty
Erica	Female	Latina	7	Student affairs staff
Jane	Female	White	7	Student affairs staff
Myca	Female	Multiracial	11	Faculty
Biker	Female	White	13	Faculty

We conducted 12 semi-structured individual interviews with staff and faculty face-to-face and via Zoom. Each interview lasted 60–90 min to answer

Abbreviations: ACC, Aspen Community College; POC, Person of Color.

servingness and undocufriendly are practiced/not practiced by the institutional agents. The three researchers compared data and codes to establish consistent and focused codes. We then re-reviewed data to file instances of codes and developed themes through multiple conversations.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

I (first author) self-identify as a Chicana immigrant scholar with citizenship privilege who is interested in the campus climate and racial equity at community colleges for minorized populations, more specifically, undocumented college students. My worldview is shaped by living in contexts and locations where the Latinx population was small and invisible; my culture and language were often subtracted from my schooling and positioned as deficits. During my college years, I was able to reclaim my language and develop a heightened cultural pride through peer groups, Chicanx Studies, and institutional agents who viewed my cultural background as an asset. My lived experiences and racial consciousness inform my intentional choices in the research design and data analysis by naming and understanding that institutions of higher education are rooted in white supremacy and are inherently racist.

I, (Second Author) enter this work through a transformational paradigm approach focused on research that surfaces modified procedures undocumented students ought to be served and one that positions them as individuals with agency in their lives. I am invested in this work because I am a product of a community college and believe having more representation of undocumented researchers researching undocumented experiences is important. I identified as a 1.5-generation immigrant, Mexicano, and an UndocuQueer person with the privilege of having DACA. These identities are salient to me as they have molded the person I am today and continue to influence my worldview. As an undocumented person who entered the educational system in the United States at the age of 15, I remember being stripped from my culture, language, and identity when people

continued to mispronounce my name. My healing journey began after my graduate work experiences, where I learned about critical consciousness. As a critical researcher, I believe critical consciousness pushes back on traditional research approaches that often enforce imperialism and settler colonialism practices that regularly add to the erasure of historically disenfranchised people, allowing for the perpetuation of white supremacy structures.

I (third author) self-identify as a first-generation Mexican undocumented and queer undergraduate researcher. I am interested in examining how undocumented students in higher education experience and navigate oppression within systems built to exclude them, in addition to exploring and assisting in creating methods that support students with historically marginalized identities similar to my own as listed. My identities have also motivated my interest in pursuing a Women's Studies Minor, which has expanded my commitment to investigating the intersections of identities and societal and cultural positionality from an activist and intellectual perspective. Importantly, I am conscious of the privileges that I hold, some of which are attending a 4-year institution, identifying as a cis male, and having the ability to speak Spanish and English. My unique position in society informs my role in this project by aiding me in further understanding the individual, community, and policy. Ultimately, my experiences formulated through my own marginalized identities in conjunction with what I have learned regarding underrepresented communities throughout my undergraduate study have increased my interest in literature and research regarding undocumented students in higher education spaces. This project is important to me as I hope to identify both the systemic barriers and the supportive measures that exist for undocumented students. It also sheds light on instances where institutional agents may unknowingly or knowingly perpetuate inequalities, helping us address and challenge such practices in order to foster a more equitable college experience for all undocumented students, and my participation contributes essential empathetic understanding.

FINDINGS

The findings were identified from the individual interviews with faculty and staff at Aspen Community College, surrounding how they and their institutions cultivate or not cultivate "undocufriendly" environments for undocumented and DACA students. Five central themes related to campus climate were identified that resonated most from the data analysis. They include (1) subjectivity of institutional support, (2) complacency with institutional incongruencies, (3) labor inequities, (4) racial and legal consciousness, and (5) glimpses of undocuservingness.

The subjectivity of institutional support

When inquiring about the impact of the institutional response to the anti-immigration sentiments shortly after the Trump Administration took office, many staff and faculty noted that the community college president at the time responded to the sociopolitical contexts. Still, the authenticity of this form of institutional support felt performative rather than transformative action. Erica illuminates,

> "But in terms of those events, like with George Floyd and just, um, the Brianna Taylor, I mean, you name it. Right. So many of those, it, it just became too many of the same message and it just loses its meaning. And I don't know that that's anyone's fault…"

Staff and faculty also pointed to the declining enrollment and its impact on equity work, which was interpreted by institutional agents as equity work only valuable to the institution when the budget allows. The true investment in equity is perceived as a façade. Some institutional agents confirmed this by stating,

> Just recently, whenever there's some financial tie-ups, oh, we're getting rid of the ESL (English as a Second Language) program, we're getting rid of the one Spanish speaking advisor…Those are the first folks to go any time or any of the support systems that are surrounding like anything to do with, if you're ESL, anything to do with this being Hispanic or helping those students, or even DACA students, like the TRiO program. Um, anything that has to do with equity gets tossed to the wayside. It's like,, nice to have, but if we don't have it, we can still function.

For other institutional agents, the will or the interest of supporting undocumented and DACA students does exist within the culture of the institutions but also point to the budget issues as the factor for not providing institutionalized support. For example, Mattew notes, "…and the school as a whole, I feel they're committed. I just, I think they're constrained probably because of budgets that they can't hire more people or have a designated office."

Complacency with institutional incongruencies

Hurtado and Harper (2007) coined the term, "institutional negligence" (p. 16) to describe the institution's inaction on providing guidance and resources to remedy an unwelcoming racial climate. We sensed frustration among the faculty and staff when they witnessed incongruencies in services and opportunities for students. One example was within the transfer articulation agreement with a local 4-year institution. DACA and undocumented students often return to connect with their advisors at their community college to express their frustration that not all their community college credits were transferred as outlined within the transfer articulation agreement. As Erica stated,

> …I have heard that students will go over to [4-year college], I don't know which program ..but that they wouldn't take the associates or the whole degree…that technically shouldn't happen. It's just the ones that either come back and complain and it's like, well, what do you do about it? Yeah, and those conversations I know have been had at the VP level, but it just seems to be a constant thing that you hear students say that they didn't take their community college [credits] for whatever reason, even though it's clearly written in the articulation agreement.

Another example expressed how academic affairs and student affairs collaborate. ACC's equity mission has language that includes the salience strategic partnerships and collaboration. However, in practice, faculty expressed frustration with the lack of college-wide collaboration that is part of the equity rhetoric. As one faculty member expressed,

> We had a sizeable academic side-of-the-house workshop in the fall of 2019. And, this, again, this is just my perspective, I was really frustrated because I was like, where is the student service side here?
>
> Interviewer: Can you expand why you felt frustrated?

> A caste dispersions at that side of the house (student affairs), but it was just mostly like… are we moving together with this [equity] or not? Yeah. And so it was still a one-sided conversation that day, a productive one, but still one sided, like, why don't we sit down with an academic advisor and talk about this data? What did they see out of this? So, then of course, 2020 [COVID-19] happened. And then I feel like especially ACC is still not recovered at all to really make a big move…

Many of the faculty and staff have voiced their frustrations and often met with inaction as Erica stated above. We name complacency to nuance institutional negligence to unveil the unconcerned institutional approach to serving DACA and undocumented students.

Labor inequities

There were also disparities between those who conducted the majority of the work with and for undocumented and DACA students and the degree of services offered. In this case study, we learned that there was not a specific percentage of work devoted or no one had an explicit duty in their job description to serving undocumented and DACA students even though most of the students served by a few staff members were this specific population. Sarah states, "It's not really on my work description. My job description is more like financial aid, customer service, it's scholarships. I support undocumented students, in any way that I can, but is not really like my work description on." The kindness and passion of the staff are used as the primary vehicle for serving undocumented students. This labor often goes uncompensated and unrecognized by senior leadership. Jane recounts,

> I think we've made some headway in terms of intentionally trying to put materials out there in Spanish, or trying to shift the culture a little bit to include families as part of the student experience….We still have a long way to go…we probably don't have as great of a team as we want to have, you know, we look at like [4-year college] across the street and we think, gosh, you know they have an entire department and entire office dedicated to immigration services. We don't have that. So, we've got groups of people who dedicate their passion and their heart are with the undocumented students and they will go the extra mile. And then the larger institution as a whole probably has a lot, a lot more to go.

Scholars (Muñoz & Santa-Ramirez, 2022) have highlighted the labor injustices that undocumented and DACA students endure as they forth unpaid labor by initiating conversations and actions for the university to create humanizing spaces but often overlooked are the institutional agents who serve the majority of undocumented and DACA students.

Racial and legal consciousness

Despite some institutional shortcomings around serving undocumented and DACA students at Aspen Community College, we also witnessed staff and faculty exhibiting a racial and legal consciousness. Many understood how whiteness is embedded in our educational system, which often warrants activism on their part. Lola expressed, "I think it really is a slow process because we always have to fight, you know, the bigger ups. And I'm always saying there's more than one way to education than the white system way." Other faculty

and staff have a deep understanding, consciousness of the sociopolitical contexts and constraints which often impact undocumented and DACA students as learners. Steven names that institutional statement regarding the murder of George Floyd as a "brief spark of momentum to engage in conversations about race, no systemic policy came to fruition" as a result of the statement. Lola talked about how the invisibility of undocumented and DACA students is deemed unacceptable to her, and even when students disclose their status, they are still met with a chilly climate. She shared,

> I still see undocumented students being invisible and that's one of the things that I really, it hurts. It just hurts. They're not invisible. And I walk around very visible and I walk around with undocumented [students] who are very visible. And you see some sneers but I confront it and I'm always letting the undocumented student understand your voice is powerful. No matter how you wanna say it in English or Spanish. So, still I see they're not hiding, but they're not quite out in the open yet.

Disclosing legal status is a complex process for DACA and undocumented students, where local context and campus climate (Muñoz, 2016) are significant factors. Institutional agents who serve as advocates and have a racial and legal consciousness understand that undocumented and DACA students are not learning or existing under similar sociopolitical contexts as their peers with citizenship privilege. Steve, a faculty member, exemplifies this sentiment by stating,

> We were dealing with this idea of the morality behind the absurd, maybe absurdity is another word to use, that the DACA students have to prove they're more of a citizen than the "natural born" people.. the hoops they have to jump through to make that happen. And I know this is up there in elevated discourse. I would like to see something like that, get rid of those rigid requirements, and have that trickle down to the students in our classroom, where they're not worried…they don't have to come with fears to the classroom and think about, like in my case, since the majority are Latinx students here…

Steven's understanding of the social construction of legality and the role fear plays in how undocumented and DACA students show up in his classroom exemplifies legal consciousness. Faculty and staff with racial and legal consciousness understand the pervasiveness of white supremacy and how the social construction of legality impacts the educational plight of undocumented and DACA students.

Glimpses of undocuservingness

Several faculty and staff also pointed to how undocumented students are centered or have recommendations for how the institution can embody its Hispanic Servingness designation. Many mention the pre-collegiate opportunities to make the transition from high school to college more seamless for undocumented and DACA students in concurrent enrollment classes, particularly around the complex and confusing state aid process. Jane suggested,

> We have some; we've just enlarged our concurrent enrollment program to include more [Public School System] than we've had in the past. So, I feel like perhaps we need to…go into those classrooms in the high schools and provide

> a more welcoming explanation and discussions about how the Colorado state law works around state aid. So that students don't come in the door fearful. If they're in concurrent enrollment as high students with us already, they're getting a touch of our campus culture on a small level. So, opening it up a little bit in the classroom, and visiting those classrooms would be a big improvement, I think.

Concurrent enrollment can be one strategy to reach more undocumented and DACA students before they enter community college.

One faculty introduced the notion of labor-based grading. Labor-based grading is "a grading contract based only on labor is better for all students and undermines the racist and white supremacist grading systems we all live with at all levels of education" (Inoue, 2022, p. 3). This is a practice that an entire department assumed. Steve explains,

> So, and so a lot of us are trying now the labor-based grading, which is like, what's the kind of effort are you putting forward? … It's more work on our side in terms of conversations with students… and I know it takes the pressure off of me. If a student has some severe complications in the semester, I can just look at the body of work instead of looking at a number and I can say you've met the outcome. So, it does echo competency standards-based grading, but thorough conversations you can have with students.

Other faculty members point to the need to add more Spanish-based credentials for undocumented or DACA students who are better learners in their dominant language as a way to live out their HSI designation. Lola calls for more classes in multiple languages but specifically sees classes conducted in Spanish as a big need She shared,

> Yes, but we need more classes in other languages and I'm going to say Spanish. We have so many people who speak Spanish and they do better in Spanish and still can speak English but prefer a class in Spanish. We need to do more of that. I think having more Spanish-speaking classes… it doesn't mean they're going to eliminate English.

Finally, the staff and faculty stated that flexibility in advising and course offerings was key to serving undocumented and DACA students. Kiko discussed how community college students, in general, often work during the hours of 8 to 5 and encourages leadership and administrators to offer flexible work hours. He excitedly states,

> You should allow me flexibility for 8 hours of my week to do at 7 in the morning or 7 at night. So even structuring our time from 8 to 5, right…our students are working 8 to 5. So, I've had to tweak the service. I've had to work until 6 or 7 at night, but that's when they're available.

Kiko also mentioned that his department chair also witnesses higher enrollment when classes are offered on weekends or evenings as he says, "Yeah. I see my people when I offer a Saturday class, I see my people when I'm offering Monday nights when I'm offering Wednesday nights." When stating "my people," Kiko refers to ACC students with similar underrepresented identities as his own. Identities include Latinx/e, immigrant, bilingual, and/or low-income.

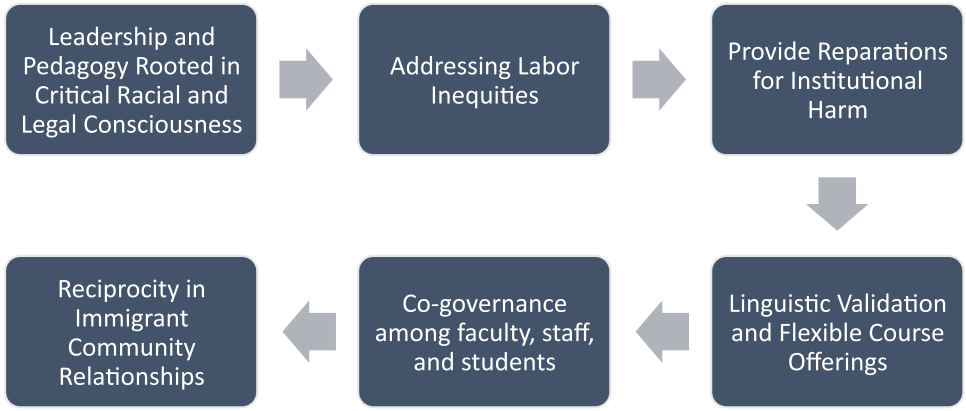

FIGURE 1 UndocuServingness framework.

TOWARDS A UNDOCUSERVINGNESS FRAMEWORK

We build on the undocufriendly framework and posit that using a racial and legal consciousness to cultivate campus climates can lead to transformational changes as Pérez Huber and Muñoz (2021b) contend, "We can engage in university common-read programs; conduct workshops and professional development around equity and inclusion; create land acknowledgments; and form equity, diversity, and inclusion committees, but these remedies alone (while important) are not by any means radical or transformative. They do not address the institutional legacy of white supremacy" (p. 198). The undocuservingness framework builds on HSI research while centering the needs of undocumented and DACA community college students. This framework is intended to start the conversation on undocuservingness in hopes that other scholars can extend and modify it. We pose the following as a potential framing of how to cultivate undocuserving colleges and universities based on some of the findings in this study (see Figure 1, which illustrates the proposed framework). We recommend that senior administrators, faculty, and staff must lead with critical racial and legal consciousness. Simply put, institutional agents must approach student services, teaching, and learning with a deep understanding of the sociopolitical systems and structures impacting undocumented and DACA students and how white supremacy continues to be upheld in many institutional practices and policies. Staff and faculty in this study gave examples of how whiteness and the performativity of equity do not create transformational change. Naming is not enough. Senior leadership has the influence and capacity to use racial and legal consciousness to create policies and practices to create undocuserving campus environments.

Addressing labor inequities is vital not only for the student success of undocumented and DACA students, but compensating and recognizing the labor to support and advocate for undocumented and DACA students by student affairs staff can help prevent burnout. It is also important to note that the labor or work to support undocumented and DACA students should not fall on the shoulders of one designated individual. A collective of faculty and staff should meet regularly to address challenges and barriers for undocumented college students. Colleges and universities need to think intentionally about how the work rooted in love and passion is recognized and compensated. In addition, the acknowledgment of harm must come with reparation for the complacency and institutional negligence exhibited by the institution. Where are the accountability entities when transfer articulation agreements are not being honored? Reparation can be refunding students their money

for credits not accepted into programs but originally articulated in the transfer agreements. Further, centering dual-language speakers as assets to the learning environment can assist with credential attainment. Can students gain credit for proficiency in another language? Understanding that a heightened understanding and learning occurs in another language is an opportunity to broaden and diversify the workforce with flexible course offerings. Next, campus-wide governance that includes voices from all constituents of community colleges will garner a student-centered and collaborative approach to discussing issues about supporting undocumented, DACA, and other minoritized students. While ACC states a collaborative and strategic partnership in its equity mission, most of the work occurred in silos. Finally, relationship-building is important to building reciprocity with immigrant communities. Understanding undocumented and DACA students' lives and experiences outside of the college setting is essential. Further, building alliances and networks within high schools and workforce entities allows community colleges to foster student success for undocumented and DACA students.

CONCLUSIONS

Salazar and colleagues' (2022) work reminds higher education leaders that just because an institution has the reputation of being an undocufriendly campus does not mean that undocumented and DACA students are being served. Institutional agents are instrumental in creating undocuserving campus environments, but having awareness and knowledge about resources and support on campus is not enough. By applying legal and racial consciousness concepts to how institutions serve undocumented, and DACA students, faculty and staff are privy to how structural racism and racist nativism impacts the daily lives of undocumented college students. Gracia (2023) liberatory outcomes for HSI's are achievable but require community colleges to center race consciousness practices and policies at the core of their mission. Given the attacks on equity, diversity, and inclusion, this task may seem impossible for some institutions of higher education, but our hope rests in the mobilization and coalition building of our communities of color. Equity doesn't just benefit minoritized students; it can create humanizing learning spaces for all students to thrive and prosper. In the end, community colleges cannot live out their HSI designation if servingness to undocumented and DACA students is not central to their student success plan.

Susana M. Muñoz: Research design; data collection; analysis; review; and editing. **Joél Orozco Almeida**: Data collection; analysis; writing; review; and editing. **Brian Jimenez Fraile**: Data collection; analysis; writing; reviewing, and editing.

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