



Berkeley  
Graduate Division

Date: January 27, 2021

To: Deans, Chairs, Head Graduate Advisors, Equity Advisors, Graduate Student Affairs Officers

From: Lisa García Bedolla, Vice Provost for Graduate Studies and Dean of the Graduate Division  
Oscar Dubón, Vice Chancellor of Equity and Inclusion

Re: **Information Regarding Funding Undocumented Students, Including New Admits and Current Students**

As the 2020-2021 academic year proceeds, we wish to share important information regarding funding undocumented graduate students, both current and prospective. Our goal is to educate the campus community to ensure that the funding information being communicated to prospective and current undocumented graduate students is as comprehensive and accurate as possible.

We remain committed to ensuring talented students, regardless of immigration status, are able to access the higher education pipeline to and through graduate study. To that end, we ask that you please share this memo with all faculty and staff in your department.

## I. Background

It is important for academic programs to understand that not all undocumented students have the same legal status and that their specific legal status determines their individual eligibility for campus funding and/or employment.

Currently, we estimate that about thirty undocumented graduate students are enrolled in various disciplines and degree programs across the campus. In the coming years, we anticipate more undocumented applicants and admits due to the success of earlier efforts to improve undocumented students' access to undergraduate study, which has prepared them to apply for graduate programs.

## II. Funding for Undocumented Graduate Students

We are happy to provide application fee waivers for AB540 students and can refund payments if applicants meet the eligibility criteria. Please advise applicants to contact the Graduate Admissions Office and the Office for Graduate Diversity.



University funding available to undocumented graduate students depends upon their DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) status and their AB540 status, as summarized in the attached grid, which also has links to additional information about the various eligibility categories. In brief, DACA is a federal program that provides a work permit for those who have qualified under the program. If a student has DACA status, they are eligible for campus employment, including Graduate Student Instructor (GSI) and Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) positions.

AB540 status is available to individuals who attended high school and/or community college in California. AB540 status confers eligibility for university fellowship support, whether this takes the form of Graduate Division fellowships, block grant awards, or awards made from departmentally-held endowments and funds. Please refer to this [funding for undocumented students chart](#) for more specific information.

In 2019, state legislation made non-AB540 students eligible to receive funding from university gifts and endowments (not state funds). This legislation may sunset after June 30, 2021. (For guidance on these restrictions and related rules, please contact the Graduate Fellowships office).

Should the bill be allowed to sunset, the Graduate Division and the Division of Equity and Inclusion are working to establish partnerships with private, nonprofit organizations to provide funding for these students. We will share more information as it becomes available.

Unfortunately, neither DACA nor AB540 status confers eligibility for federal loans and work-study appointments.

### III. GSI Requirements

Many academic programs require that graduate students serve as GSIs to gain useful teaching experience as part of their education. Teaching expertise is crucial for future faculty and extremely useful for many other professions, and we support these experiences.

However, an undocumented graduate student who does not have a work permit through DACA is not eligible for employment as a GSI. We ask that departments maintain flexibility with this requirement on a case-by-case basis and provide such students other opportunities to access a teaching experience that would fulfill the teaching requirement, such as taking a pedagogy class and/or participating in some of the workshops provided by the Graduate Division's [GSI Teaching & Resource Center](#), which any graduate student can attend, in order to develop their teaching skill set.



For hands-on teaching experience, undocumented students who do not have a work permit are eligible to lead [DeCal courses](#). Teaching DeCal courses afford students the experience of syllabus development, creating reading assignments, delivering class lectures and activities, mentoring, evaluation, and general curriculum design.

#### IV. Campus Resources

As a reminder, we have many resources on campus to assist undocumented graduate students:

1. [Graduate Student Fellowships and Awards](#) - this is a list of university and non-university private fellowship opportunities for graduate students.
2. [UC Berkeley Scholarship Connection](#) - a university-managed scholarship database that allows students to search and filter for scholarships by degree type and discipline.
3. [Office for Graduate Diversity](#) (OGD) - this office provides support for undocumented graduate students and closely coordinates with the Undocumented Student Program. Contact [Jessica Mena Flores](#), OGD's Undocumented Graduate Student Specialist, with any questions.
4. [Undocumented Student Program](#) (USP) - this office provides mental health, immigration legal, and financial support for undocumented graduate and undergraduate students on campus.

In closing, we are committed to supporting undocumented students, current and prospective. Thank you for all that you do for these valuable members of our graduate community. Please do not hesitate to contact our offices with any questions.