



May 6, 2010

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
U.S. Senate  
313 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin  
U.S. Senate  
309 Hart Senate Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lindsey O. Graham  
U.S. Senate  
290 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard G. Lugar  
U.S. Senate  
306 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Schumer, Graham, Durbin, and Lugar:

As university and college presidents, we write in support of the effort to ensure access to higher education for the thousands of undocumented high school graduates whose ability to obtain a college education is thwarted by our current dysfunctional immigration system. These are students brought to the United States as children, innocents caught up in the middle of the immigration debate. The decision to come to this country was not theirs. But America is the only home they have known and they have spent their young lives being good students, working hard, and staying out of trouble.

Approximately 65,000 undocumented immigrants graduate from American high schools every year—often unable to afford college without access to resident tuition or government-backed federal or state financial aid. The ability of these young people to contribute to the economic growth of our country, and to their own self-sufficiency, depends in large measure on their ability to further their education. Around 50% of undocumented students drop out of our high schools despite the fact that educational attainment is one of the most important predictors of an individual's economic success and quality of life.

There is a million-dollar difference, over a lifetime, between the earning capacity of a high school graduate and a college graduate. Research also shows that people who go to college are healthier, are more likely to volunteer and to participate in their community, and are less likely to be incarcerated or rely on public assistance. Undocumented children in America are guaranteed access to public elementary and secondary schools by a 1982 Supreme Court ruling which held that a state cannot deny a free public K-12 education on the basis of immigration status. Erecting barriers and continuing to restrict the opportunity for undocumented children to have access to an affordable higher education denies them economic, social and intellectual benefits that will serve both them and our nation in the future.

There are two primary pathways to remove the obstacles to higher education faced by undocumented U.S. high school graduates. The special needs and interests of undocumented U.S. high school students have been the subject of legislation known as the DREAM Act. The DREAM Act is an essential part of comprehensive immigration reform but it also stands on its own; it has been a stand-alone bill since 2001, when it was first introduced, and most recently last March (S. 729 & H.R. 1751). While the proposals

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vary, common requirements include academic success, demonstrated good moral character, arrival in the US at a young age and presence here for a certain number of years.

We understand the need for and support comprehensive reform as we recognize that the students who would benefit from the DREAM Act do not live in isolation from the parents who brought them to this country. But, if comprehensive immigration reform is not initiated in 2010, the special needs and interests of undocumented U.S. high school students should be addressed through separate DREAM Act legislation that balances all of the competing considerations in a reasonable, rational way. The undocumented high school graduates who are qualified to attend college have been waiting now for many years for federal immigration policy to be revised to provide them with meaningful access to U.S. colleges and universities. Further delay is unacceptable. It is imperative that action be taken in 2010 to finally make a college education available to these qualified graduates of U.S. high schools.

Please note that while we support the DREAM Act either as stand-alone legislation or as part of comprehensive reform, the current proposals need some fine tuning to ensure that the legislation actually meets the needs of these students who are in the United States as a result of circumstances they did not create or control. Because of the current layering of federal law and policy, state law and policy, and admission, tuition and financial aid policies and the practices of hundreds of institutions of higher education around the country, some additional changes are necessary.

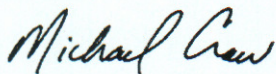
Among those changes would be the proffering of federal grant aid to DREAM Act students to remove barriers to their higher education success.

In summary, these students should have both access to college and, if successful, a clear pathway to citizenship. In the current international economic competition, the U.S. needs all of the talent that it can acquire and these students represent an extraordinary resource for the country. The DREAM Act is not social work, it is an economic imperative.

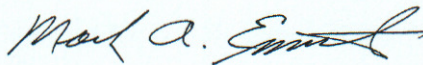
We stand ready to work with you, your colleagues in Congress, and the Obama Administration to develop and enact the immigration policy reform needed to provide a pathway for these graduates of U.S. high schools to attend college regardless of the state in which they live or the college or university to which they seek admission.

We must make progress in addressing this matter in 2010. Thank you for your leadership in doing so.

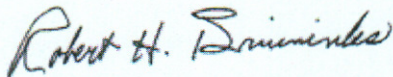
Sincerely,



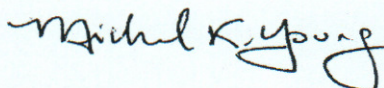
Michael M. Crow  
President, Arizona State University



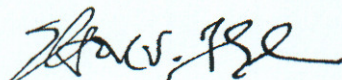
Mark A. Emmert  
President, University of Washington



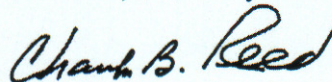
Robert H. Bruininks  
President, University of Minnesota



Michael K. Young  
President, University of Utah

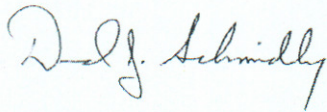


Elson S. Floyd  
President, Washington State University

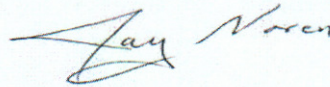


Charles B. Reed  
Chancellor, The California State University

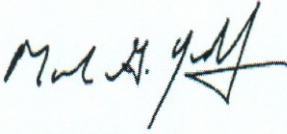




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