

## **AFT Immigrant Student Support Committee (AFT ISSC) Statement in Support of Immigrant Students at the San Diego Community College District**

We are in solidarity with our undocumented, immigrant, mixed-status, and refugee communities as they continue to face ongoing racist attacks through ICE raids, deportations, detentions, xenophobic violence, and state repression.

Confronted with the racist and anti-immigrant violence, California's universities and colleges have committed and need to strengthen their commitment to developing centers, services, and resources that directly support immigrant and undocumented students.

It has been through the activism of our immigrant students, community allies and the efforts of AFT ISSC, several foundations, and civil rights organizations that Immigrant Student Support Centers and programs have been created on some of our SDCCD campuses. The intended purpose has been to build the infrastructure that focuses on education, legal services, mental health, counseling, and develop programs that address the specific and challenging experiences of our immigrant and undocumented students. In these efforts, a Catalyst grant has been our major source of funding since Fall 2018. However, this funding will soon expire in Spring 2021 and we have yet to see SDCCD's commitment to institutionalize these centers.

Given the impact of multiple crises, which have been heightened by COVID-19, SDCCD administrators are at the brink of deciding which programs are "least essential". We are concerned that SDCCD will de-prioritize Immigrant Student Support Centers and the need to institutionalize them with further funding. These programs and resources are vital and cannot be denied nor compromised to "balance" their budgets.

During last year's Undocumented Student Action Week, Chancellor Constance M. Carroll stated that SDCCD "[would] continue to do everything in [their] power to make sure our students are afforded a safe learning environment." In this moment, in order to show up for undocumented, refugee, and immigrant students, SDCCD must take tangible actions.

We need to not only preserve and institutionalize services for immigrant students, but expand them. Recognizing that the San Diego Community College District has the largest immigrant and refugee student population in higher education in San Diego County; and that over a third of students in the San Diego Unified School District are either immigrants (or refugees) or the children of immigrants\*.

Additionally, in 2020, less than 50% of SDCCD's Continuing Education students indicated the United States was their country of origin. The majority of students come from over 151 countries, which makes SDCE one of the most diverse adult education institutions in the United States\*\*. We need to expand our services to meet the specific needs of this population and provide a range of services to ensure the success of their access, integration, and success. We

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We, the AFT Local 1931 Committee to Support Immigrant Students, demand that Immigrant Student Support Centers and programs be prioritized and sustained through these steps:

1. SDCCD must institutionalize Immigrant Student Support Centers on all of its campuses by permanently funding them and they must be incorporated as college priority programs;
2. Create tenure-track counselors and full-time positions for program coordinators and classified program assistants. These positions must be filled by individuals who have the institutional knowledge with regards to the admission, matriculation, registration, scholarship, and transfer process for undocumented students and must know how to process AB 540, AB 2000, SB68, CA Dream Act requirements; be up-to-date with immigration legislation; empathize with student's circumstances and have the intimate experience which create the important personal relationships that validate the immigrant experience and the work being done towards equity; have the experience of working to address the different and unique situations of our undocumented and immigrant students; and be able to maintain and build collaborations across departments. For all of these reasons, we will not accept reassignments, which do not fulfill the real needs of our undocumented and immigrant students nor accept any cuts to our current staff positions.
3. Ensure 3-4 Peer Mentor positions; our peer mentors provide vital support in the retention and success of our immigrant and undocumented students. Considering the student population these centers and programs serve and the personal relationship that is needed to serve them, this team of peer mentors must be permanent and consistent within the Immigrant Support Centers.
4. Provide allocation of adequate and equipped offices and spaces that meet the needs of our students; and
5. Maintain, sustain, and permanently fund current essential programs and activities on our campuses, such as:
  1. Workshops: AB 540, DACA, CA Dream Act, Know Your Rights, etc.
  2. Peer mentorship programs
  3. Academic and personal counseling
  4. Mental health specific resources for Immigrant Student Support Centers
  5. Legal immigration services
  6. Advice and support with registration, transfer and scholarships for students serviced by the Immigrant Student Support Centers and programs
  7. Outreach programs in our communities and in high schools
  8. Liaisons across departments such as financial aid and residency, transfer, career center,
  9. Direct support for food and housing insecurities
  10. Anti-racist and UndocuAlly trainings for faculty and staff

6. A Continuing Education to District Transition Pipeline Guarantee, (similar to Transfer Center UC Contracts) where Continuing Education students (and the District) commit to guaranteed admission to the District colleges once the CE student follows the outlined specific steps that are individualized, depending on the CE Immigrants' status.

We recognize that our immigrant students are not a monolith and navigate many systems of oppression. It is important to acknowledge that our Black undocumented, refugee, and migrant communities continue to be disproportionately targeted by state violence. Therefore, we firmly stand in solidarity with our Black communities and the Black Lives Matter Movement. Our struggles are deeply bound together and our commitment is to continue to support Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students within the San Diego Community College District. \*Using school district statistics of *English Language Proficiency* as a metric. \*\*Based on SDCCD Continuing Education 2020 student enrollment data.