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Developing a Support Center without Borders: Enhancing services for students without documentation

Edith Melendez

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Purpose Statement

- The purpose of my project was to review literature on the challenges undocumented students face.
- This literature overview will be used to inform a summer research project.

Motivation

- As researchers have pointed out, there is a strong need for our communities and institutions to develop programs undocumented students so that we can secure their academic success.
- As Bhat reminds us, we have a responsibility of upholding “every student’s right to an education in a safe environment.”

Challenges

Undocumented students who enroll in four-year universities face many challenges:

- Limited opportunities for educational assistance
- Limited trained personnel in multicultural issues
- Limited avenues for financial assistance
- Limited psychological assistance
- Limited transition support

Educational assistance

Undocumented students have limited access to academic structures to support their success:

- Academic support services and programs
- Extra-scholastic activities
- Mentorship programs

Financial assistance

Students without documentation have limited opportunities to fund their education:

- Small amounts of financial assistance for tuition
- Limited by eligibility requirements for scholarships and other funding sources
- Limited financial literacy
- Limited employment opportunities

Psychological assistance

Students without documentation have limited access to mental health professionals who understand psychological impacts of undocumented status:

- Sense of shame
- Sense of discrimination
- Sense of fear
- Sense of disconnect

Future discussions

As thousands of highly qualified undocumented students enter higher education institutions, scholars continue to debate the best ways to overcome barriers:

- Establish multicultural support programs and services
- Train faculty, staff, and administrators
- Expand college outreach and transition programs
- Develop more scholarship and grant opportunities
- Redesign mental health services
- Establish coalitions and partnerships

Research Foundations

From a school psychologist perspective, I want to evaluate how centers in Washington State can better serve and empower undocumented students:

- Improve academic achievement
 - Promote student motivation and engagement
- Promote Positive Behavior and Mental Health
 - Reinforce positive coping skills and resilience
- Support Diverse Learners
 - Provide culturally responsive services to students from diverse backgrounds
- Strengthen Family-School Partnerships
 - Help students transition between school and community learning environments

References

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Questions?
