

About the Higher Education Access Alliance

The Higher Education Access Alliance (HEAA) is a growing coalition of community-based and non-profit organizations committed to increasing higher education opportunities for all Colorado students, regardless of legal or economic status

We are led by five Colorado non-profit organizations: the Center for Policy Entrepreneurship, Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, Colorado Progressive Coalition, Metro Organizations for People and Padres y Jóvenes Unidos.

HEAA is building a statewide network of students, parents, educators, community and business leaders, and elected officials to promote higher education access for all students. Your leadership is critical to our success!

Tuition equity legislation will grant all qualified students, regardless of legal or economic status, access to higher education and the opportunity to extend their education beyond high school. Our goal is to see this legislation passed during the 2009 legislative session.

To remain competitive and attract jobs, Colorado must educate its future work force – including immigrant and refugee students from around the globe who graduate from our high schools.

Our work now focuses on raising awareness about this important issue among leaders like you across Colorado.

Ten other states have passed tuition equity legislation, including many other Western states. Two of those states also offer financial aid to all students.

Proposed federal legislation, known as the DREAM Act, would grant immigrant students (who have lived in the US for at least five years and arrived before age 16) a permanent path to US citizenship in exchange for two years of military service, two years of a bachelors program, or completion of a two year associate's degree. It makes sense for Colorado to act now so that when this happens, our workforce will be prepared with the skills necessary to meet our state's changing economic needs.

Thank you in advance for the work we are about to do together!

For more information, visit our Web site at www.heacolorado.org or contact:

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About the issue

An educated workforce is critical for Colorado: as a state, as diverse communities, as a collection of individuals. To remain competitive and attract jobs, we must educate our future workforce – including undocumented students who graduate from Colorado high schools. This will attract more jobs, improve our productivity, create a larger tax base and add wealth to our communities.

Many other states, including several of Colorado's neighbors, have already approved tuition equity legislation. Two of these 10 states – New Mexico and Texas – also offer financial aid. These states have demonstrated leadership that will strengthen their economies and create a culture of high academic expectations for all students.

The difference between the in-state and out-of-state college tuition rate is \$11,199 per year for a full-time student to earn a four-year degree at the University of Colorado (Denver). The cost differences for career and technical education certifications are also significant. Out-of-state tuition rates for a two-year degree can be as much as \$9,000 per year.

Currently, Colorado is one of only three states that prohibit undocumented residents from receiving public benefits including financial aid. As a result, many undocumented students cannot afford to attend college once accepted.

More and more, Colorado's changing economy necessitates education beyond high school. As the federal government works on solutions that allow undocumented students to earn legal status, it is important for states to act so their qualified students will be able to continue their educations.

How you can help

Tuition equity for Colorado high school graduates affects all Coloradans.

To compete and attract jobs, we must have a highly skilled workforce – from doctors and teachers to machinists and welders. It's also to our advantage in today's global economy to have a diverse work force.

That's why HEAA is working hard to broaden our coalition of supporters across the state. Here are just a few ways you can help:

- **Become a member of HEAA.** Join our growing statewide coalition of community and business leaders, students, parents, educators and others as we work to raise awareness about this important issue. There is no cost to join. We will list your organization as a member of HEAA.
- **Help recruit other leaders in your community.** Inform other leaders in your community about this issue and encourage them to join HEAA. Contact HEAA for a copy of our coalition-building tool kit, which is full of helpful tips, strategies and messages.
- **Support us as HEAA lobbies lawmakers.** Join alongside us as we meet your local legislators and contact them directly to share information about tuition equity. Urge your legislators to support our proposal and encourage your friends, families and colleagues to do the same!
- **Share your ideas with us.** Let us know how this issue is received in your community and forward ideas our way! We want to know how we can best support your work as we move forward.
- **Contribute financially.** Make a donation to HEAA to help fund more coalition building, spokesperson training, communications, outreach and more.

To reach HEAA directly, visit our Web site at www.heaacolorado.org or contact:

Kristee Paschall, HEAA Coordinator

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Fact sheet

Looking for quick facts? This list highlights frequently requested information:

- Ten states have passed legislation granting in-state tuition to students who graduate from their high schools and meet other criteria, regardless of their legal status: California, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah and Washington.
- Two states offer financial aid to undocumented students: New Mexico and Texas.
- Colorado is one of just three states that do not allow in-state tuition for undocumented students. Arizona and Georgia are the other two states.
- Until 1996, undocumented students *could* pay in-state instead of the more expensive out-of-state tuition.
- In Colorado, in-state tuition at the University of Colorado at Denver for the 2008-2009 school year is \$4,950. Out-of-state college tuition costs \$16,149. That's a difference of \$11,199 per year or \$44,796 for a four-year degree.
- Colorado has the second highest percentage of college graduates in the nation, but ranks 32nd in sending our own high school graduates to college.

Frequently asked questions

Here are some of the most commonly asked questions about the issue of in-state tuition and financial aid for undocumented students. Please don't hesitate to contact HEAA directly at www.heacolorado.org with your questions.

How does this issue affect me?

Communities benefit from educated residents. Incarceration and crime rates decrease with education and civic involvement increases significantly. Additionally, to remain competitive and attract jobs, Colorado must educate its future work force – including undocumented students and refugees who graduate from Colorado high schools. An educated and skilled local work force attracts jobs, improves productivity, creates a larger tax base and adds wealth to our communities. And in today's global economy, the more diverse – the better!

Have other states passed legislation to provide in-state tuition and financial aid to undocumented students?

Yes! Ten states have passed legislation granting in-state tuition to *all* students who graduate from their high schools and meet other criteria, regardless of their legal status: California, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah and Washington. Two states offer financial aid to undocumented students – New Mexico and Texas.

What impact has the legislation had in states where it has been passed?

States that have enacted tuition equity have seen no negative effects of enrolling undocumented students at in-state tuition rates. They have not experienced dramatic increases in population nor have they seen displacement of native enrolled students. And there has been no significant impact on the budgets of states who offer tuition equity to all their students.

Has Colorado tried to pass this type of legislation in the past?

Yes, but repeated efforts have failed to win enough votes in the legislature to pass in previous years. Colorado is one of just three states that prohibit in-state tuition for undocumented students. Arizona and Georgia are the other two states.

Why not let the federal government address this issue?

We are hopeful that in the future federal leaders will show the courage necessary for thoughtful, comprehensive immigration reform. The results so far have been less than stellar. Consider what happened with the bipartisan DREAM Act. This federal legislation would have made it easier for states to offer in-state tuition to undocumented students who want to attend college or serve in the armed forces by providing them legal status. But the legislation was just eight votes shy of winning approval in the U.S. Senate in October 2007.

Frequently asked questions **continued**

Why is HEAA pursuing legislation during the 2009 legislative session?

It makes good sense. Our communities benefit from increased education and the reality is that daily life in Colorado – from cities to rural areas – requires technological know-how, higher-level thinking and advanced reasoning ability. Our changing economy necessitates education beyond high school.

Federal inaction also has left states no other option but to take the lead and introduce local legislation.

Shifting demographics contribute to the sense of urgency, too. A 2008 study by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education reveals that the latest projections for high school graduates show a “demographic sea change.” The findings show that the United States is not only entering a period of overall decline in the number of graduates, but also will see an ethnic shift “with rising numbers of graduates from populations our educational institutions have not served well.”

Whether immigrants and refugees are from Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America or some other part of the world, they are an important part of American culture and have much to contribute to our society.

Won't this issue take care of itself once the federal government addresses immigration reform?

No, states will have to pass their own legislation after immigration reform is approved at the federal level. And we simply can't afford to wait. Colorado must follow the lead of other states to ensure a well-educated, skilled and global work force. Let's give *all* graduates from Colorado high schools the opportunity to pursue more education.

Doesn't this proposal merely reward illegal behavior?

Undocumented workers contribute to our economy. They pay local, state and federal taxes; fill labor shortages; and boost the economy through consumer spending and increased work force productivity. They often bring their children to live with them while they work. Those children attend and graduate from Colorado public schools. Denying those kids access to a college negates the investment in their education.

How many undocumented Colorado high school graduates would pursue college in state if this option were made available to them?

There is no current data tracking this information, so we don't know for certain until we try. Many of our undocumented high school graduates are unable to pursue college because out-of-state tuition simply is too expensive.

Why should we provide in-state tuition for undocumented students who likely will remain without legal status upon college graduation?

It's likely that in the future the federal government will find solutions so that undocumented immigrants and refugees can more reasonably earn legal status. It's worth it for states to act now so that when this happens, their work forces will be prepared with skills necessary to meet each state's economic needs.

It can take years – decades, even – for the legal status papers of undocumented workers and their children to be processed, forcing them to wait years for legal status.

To keep families and communities together and build a competitive, skilled work force, we should give current high school students the opportunity to pursue more education.

Why wouldn't we instead provide in-state tuition to college students who live across Colorado state lines in neighboring Wyoming or Utah?

Our focus is on Colorado high school graduates. It makes economic sense that Colorado should give our own high school graduates the opportunity to pay in-state instead of expensive out-of-state tuition to attend a four- or two-year college or take career and technical education courses to further their education.

Colorado has the second highest percentage of college graduates in the nation, but ranks 32nd in sending our own high school graduates to college.

The reality is that daily life in Colorado – from cities to rural areas – requires technological know-how, higher-level thinking and advanced reasoning ability. Our changing economy necessitates more education beyond high school.

What can I do?

The issue of in-state tuition and financial aid for Colorado high school graduates, regardless of their legal status, affects us all. That's why HEAA is working hard to broaden our coalition of supporters across the state. Here are just a few ways you can help:

- Become a member of HEAA.
- Contribute financially.
- Help recruit other leaders in your community.
- Join HEAA as we lobby your local lawmakers.
- Be HEAA's eyes and ears in your community.
- Share your ideas with us.

Be sure to check out the "How you can help" handout in this packet for more information.

Additional resources

Interested in learning more? Here are some organizations that are focused on related issues and advocacy work:

Center for Policy Entrepreneurship

www.c-pe.org

The Center for Policy Entrepreneurship (CPE) is a private, non-profit public policy research and advocacy organization dedicated to identifying, developing and bringing to life creative and effective solutions to critical challenges. CPE is a founding member of HEAA.

Colorado Employers for Immigration Reform

www.coeir.org

The Colorado Employers for Immigration Reform is a coalition of business leaders in Colorado that represents agriculture, labor, hotels, restaurants, landscaping and other business sectors and advocates for immigration reform.

Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition

www.coloradoimmigrant.org

The Colorado Immigrant Rights Coalition, a founding member of HEAA, is a statewide membership-based coalition of immigrant, faith, labor, youth and ally organizations founded in 2002 to build a unified statewide voice to defend and advance justice for all immigrants and refugees in Colorado and the United States.

Colorado Progressive Coalition

www.progressivecoalition.org

Formed in 1996, the Colorado Progressive Coalition builds coalitions, conducts research, organizes communities, gets out the vote, develops new leaders, registers thousands of new voters each year, and lobbies elected officials to build a progressive future for Colorado on issues of racial, economic, environmental and social justice.

Metro Organizations for People

www.mopdenver.org

A founding member of HEAA, Metro Organizations for People's mission is to empower people to strengthen and transform their communities through community organizing. MOP is affiliated with PICO, a 30-year-old network of faith-based community organizations in 150 cities nationally.

National Immigration Law Center

www.nilc.org

The National Immigration Law Center provides useful data and information focused on the economic issues related to investing money in K-12 education and the pursuit of higher education.

Padres y Jóvenes Unidos

www.padresunidos.org

With roots in the struggle for educational justice, Padres Unidos y Jóvenes Unidos has evolved into a multi-issue organization that is led by people of color who fight for educational equity, student rights and justice for immigrants. Parents and students are empowered to organize, develop new leadership and realize meaningful change. The organization is a founding member of HEAA.

Progressive States Network

www.progressivestates.org

Progressive States Network aims to transform the political landscape by sparking progressive actions at the state level. The organization published a strategy report to help legislators fight state anti-immigration proposals during the 2008 session.