

A Statewide Network Promoting College
Readiness, Access and Success

POLICY ACTION UPDATE



¡ENLACE FLORIDA!

MISSION:

to promote meaningful and sustainable policy change and development to break down all barriers and enhance college **readiness**, **access**, and **success** for Latinos and other underrepresented students in the state.

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ENLACE FLORIDA is a W.K. Kellogg Foundation initiative managed by the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships.

The ENLACE FLORIDA network provides information and analysis to policy makers and education stakeholders throughout Florida's education system. Our objective is to promote policies and best practices that will enhance college readiness, access, and success for Latino students and other underrepresented groups. The ENLACE FLORIDA network monitors policy issues under consideration at the district, state, and federal levels. Here, in bullet form, are a few urgent items. We urge all ENLACE friends and interested parties to review the issues, contact their representatives, and express their views on these important items.

MCKNIGHT DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program was established by the Florida Education Fund (FEF) in 1984 with support from the McKnight Foundation to increase the number of African American doctoral students in disciplines where African American students have been historically underrepresented. Some 526 Fellowships have been awarded to African American students pursuing a doctoral degree in selected fields of study, with fellows especially encouraged to pursue degrees in particular disciplines, such as engineering, mathematics, and biology. In 2006, the FEF—a partner of ENLACE FLORIDA—agreed to broaden the program to include Hispanic students, and the state legislature appropriated funds for this purpose. As a result, fourteen McKnight Doctoral Fellowships in 2006-07 were awarded to Hispanic doctoral students. In the 2007-08 budget, the legislature has authorized an allocation of \$2,260,000 to the Florida Education Fund, \$500,000 of which is provided to continue to recruit and support Hispanic students for the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program. ENLACE FLORIDA strongly endorses the work of the FEF, particularly its doctoral fellowship program, and encourages the governor to give final approval to this line in the budget. For more on the FEF and the fellowship program go to: <http://www.fefonline.org/index.htm>.

THE DREAM ACT

Members of the ENLACE FLORIDA network have consistently expressed grave concern about the plight of undocumented high school graduates who are unable to pursue higher education because they do not qualify for in-state tuition rates. By some estimates, as many as 5,000 high school graduates in the state of Florida are undocumented students. Although they may have graduated with a high GPA and test scores that qualify them for admission to a state university, they are unable to continue their education because they simply cannot afford to pay out-of-state tuition. Many of these students came here as young children and have lived in the state for years. Often, they graduate with the hope of pursuing a university degree, only to learn that the doors of higher education are closed to them. Florida legislators, led by Representative Juan Zapata (R-Miami) have championed immigration reform that would allow undocumented high school graduates who meet certain criteria to qualify for in-state tuition.

This year, hopes for reform rest in a comprehensive immigration reform package being negotiated in Washington. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, initially introduced in Congress in 2003, would allow states to offer in-state tuition to undocumented immigrant students. It would also provide a path to legal residency and, ultimately, citizenship for undocumented immigrant students who were brought to the U.S. as young children, and would allow them to pursue higher education or military service. The DREAM ACT has been incorporated into the "Security Through Regularized Immigration and a Vibrant Economy" (STRIVE) Act (Title VI). House and Senate negotiators are currently working on a comprehensive reform bill that the president can support. ENLACE FLORIDA urges all friends to contact their representative or senator and urge them to support a bill that includes the DREAM ACT.

You can contact your Representatives by email at <http://www.house.gov/>

You can contact your Senators by email at: <http://www.senate.gov/>

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