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Making Meaning of the Dream: Understanding how Latina/o AB540 Community College Students are Accessing and Navigating the California Dream Act

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Making Meaning of the Dream: Understanding how Latina/o AB540 Community College Students are Accessing and Navigating the California Dream Act

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Jessica Rae Cristo

2015
ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Making Meaning of the Dream: Understanding how Latina/o AB540 Community College Students are Accessing and Navigating the California Dream Act

by

Jessica Rae Cristo

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Daniel G. Solórzano, Co-Chair

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The lives of “undocumented” college students are continuously in flux with the ever-changing policies in both education and immigration. These students have constantly accessed new information and navigated new policy on their campuses. The ways in which they do this and the type of student support that is needed has been a topic of recent research on undocumented students, particularly those in California, where the majority of undocumented students reside. Since 1985, California has been creating educational policies that address “in-state” residency requirement and access to state financial aid. Through Leticia v. UC Regents (1985) undocumented students were allowed to receive state financial aid and were viewed as state residents within the state’s public colleges. This decision was appealed in 1990 and from 1990 to 2001, students were viewed as foreign students and had to pay out of state fees. In 2001, AB540 was passed allowing undocumented students, who graduated from a California high
school and met other criteria, to be enrolled as state residents. However, AB540 did not allow students access to state financial aid, such as the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver, Cal Grants or access to state funded programs.

In 2012, California’s public universities and colleges implemented a new educational policy AB130 and AB131, known as the California Dream Act. The policy provided eligibility for state funded financial aid, programs, and scholarships to AB540 students. The policy was estimated to affect 26,000 AB540 college students, with the majority of those students being Latina/o community college students. Since its onset, there have been over 29,000 AB540 students, from all public systems (UC, CSU, CCC), submitting California Dream Act applications. The data for 2013-2014 indicated that only 25% of those students received a Cal Grant, with the majority of the applications being those that recently graduated high school. Past studies have suggested that with the AB540 policy there was a discrepancy between the number of eligible students and those that filed an AB540 affidavit. It was possible that this would reoccur with the California Dream Act.

The 12 Latina/o AB540 students’ recounted their personal journeys through the process. The interviews revealed, “missed opportunities” in receiving vital financial aid information, which led to 11 of the 12 students not receiving a Cal Grant through the new policy. Due to their past experiences with the financial aid office and other campus staff, the students relied on their AB540 peers, siblings, and or local community agencies that were known advocates for immigration rights. Policy agents in the study described a loosely coupled system that did not allow for information on the policy to be distributed, which in turn hindered the success of the policy because information was limited to a few people and the responsibility to implement the policy fell solely on the financial aid office.
This research and findings from this case study were significant because they presented new research on a new state educational policy and presented new findings on the way Latina/o AB540 community college students were accessing information and navigating policy on campus. The results suggest that the ways students made meaning of the policy and their experiences on campus affected their application process; additionally, policy agents who implemented the policy on campus were creating unnecessary obstacles for AB540 students.
The dissertation of Jessica Rae Cristo is approved.

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Linda Rose, Committee Co-Chair

Daniel G. Solórzano, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015
DEDICATION

My dissertation is dedicated to my mother, who was the first Dr. Cristo in our family.

To my brother, Bob, we are each other’s greatest supporters; I love you both.

I also dedicate this study to the thousands of AB540 community college students who have been fearless in their journey through higher education. To the 12 students who shared their stories with me, I am grateful to them and hope that this study brings positive systematic change.
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To my newfound friends: Rob, Leticia, Deborah, and Faraah your friendships have meant so much to me and I thank you for always understanding me.

Most importantly, I want to acknowledge the wonderful and talented staff that I worked with on my campus: Aurora, Frances, Karla, Lorena, and Maria. Their knowledge, guidance, and support throughout this study made it possible for me to make this dream come true. To the AB540 student group that assisted me in the early stages of this study, I am grateful to them for sharing their experiences, guiding me in the right direction, and for allowing me to be an advocate and ally to them.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2011, the California Dream Act\(^1\) was passed as an educational policy that allowed eligible undocumented\(^2\) students the right to receive state funded financial aid for the first time, since 1995. In California (2012) there were an estimated 26,000 undocumented students enrolling into the state’s public 4-year and 2-year colleges who are eligible for the new policy (PEW Hispanic Center, 2012). The majority of undocumented students were financing their college education through the state’s AB540 (2001) policy, allowing qualified\(^3\) undocumented students to be recognized as state residents, which allows them to receive in-state resident tuition (ISRT). Because the AB540 policy was not a form of financial aid, undocumented students, especially Latina/o students, continued to cite financial barriers as one of the major obstacles in accessing a college education (Abrego, 2006). Additionally, past research has found that Latina/o AB540 students had difficulties in accessing accurate information on the policy and implementing the policy on their campus (Chavez, Soriano, & Olivarez, 2007; Gonzales, 2010).

“Few studies have documented the interconnections” between new legal policies and the interpretation and everyday application of those laws by those whom the policies were intended (Abrego, 2008, p.710). Educational policies begin with policy makers or policy agents, which include those who receive policy and those who create policy (Dorner, 2012). Often, these policy agents are given the opportunity to discuss the ways in which they interpret the policy and its

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\(^1\) California Dream Act (2011) consists of AB130 and AB131. AB130 provides students access to private and public scholarships for public universities and AB1313 provides student access to the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver for community college and Cal Grants for CSU and UC campuses.

\(^2\) The term “undocumented,” can be defined as persons who entered the U.S. without authorization or have entered the U.S. legally and are continuing to reside in the U.S. pass their authorization period (USC Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis, 2006).

\(^3\) Eligibility requirements for AB540 status include: consecutive enrollment in a California high school for at least three years and be a high school graduate from a California high school.
affects, however for those who are impacted by a new policy, such as students, the way they made meaning of the policy is not often studied (Dorner, 2012). Since the onset of the California Dream Act, there have been 16,000 AB540 students applying for state financial aid and 9,000 of those who successfully received aid a form of aid within one of the public four-year and two-year campuses (California Student Aid Commission, 2013). This study examined the implementation process of the California Dream Act, from its inception in the state legislature to the policy agents who were implementing the policy at the California Community College Chancellor’s Office, Los Angeles Community College District, and one its campuses, which served a high portion of AB540 students. The study’s unit of analysis was Latina/o AB540 community college students, who are the largest population utilizing the California Dream Act; the way they made meaning of the policy on one community college campuses within the Los Angeles Community College District was examined.

**Statement Problem**

The highest portion of Latina/o AB540 students attend a campus in the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD)\(^4\), which enrolled 4,519 undocumented students in 2013; it is likely that this estimate was underreported because AB540 status is based on self-reported information and students’ submission of the AB450 affidavit. El Sol Community College\(^5\) served a large portion of AB540 students. Past studies on Latina/o AB540 students indicated that when the AB540 policy was enacted it had a minimal impact because the legislation did not include

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\(^4\) Enrollment for 2011-2012 was 2,424,860 of which Latina/o students represent 35.92% of the student population according to the CALIFORNIA Community College Chancellor’s Office. [www.ccco.edu](http://www.ccco.edu)

\(^5\) LACCD enrolled 4,519 AB540 status students in Fall 2011. The enrollment number only represents students who filed an AB540 affidavit on one of the campuses. El Sol Community College (pseudonym) served 4% of the total AB540 student population in the LACCD.
guidelines for informing Californians about the new policy and the information was not disseminated widely to high school and college counselors, which resulted in a limited number of students applying for AB540 status (Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007; Gonzales, 2010b.). For those students who were able to access and utilize the policy, they relied on their close relationships with teachers and counselors, who they felt comfortable with disclosing their personal information regarding their immigration and financial status (Gonzales, 2010b.).

Community colleges that service a high percentage of Latina/o AB540 students must recognize these obstacles so that these students do not continue to be marginalized from the general Latina/o population (Huber & Malagon, 2007).

The obstacles that Latina/o AB540 community college students will encounter in accessing and navigating the California Dream Act remain unknown. Although recent publications⁶ are addressing the ways colleges can assist AB540 students, many of the suggestions assume that the students will use traditional methods to seek out these services and do not address the cultural component that is needed when assisting immigrant students. Latina/o students bring with them a wealth of cultural knowledge⁷. Unlike their Latina/o counterparts who were given access to information by the college’s student service departments, such as: admissions, enrollment, and financial aid, AB540 students have not utilized these traditional method of student services in the same way. In the past, AB540 students were not required to seek services from the financial aid office and other student supportive services because they were not eligible for these state funded services.

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⁶ Examples include the Community College Consortium for Immigration Education (2012)
This case study addressed how policy agents were disseminating information on the California Dream Act and implementing the policy in the LACCD. Latina/o AB540 community college students were included in this study to provide information on how they interpreted the policy and the ways in which they navigated the policy on their campus. The ways in which both students and policy agents made meaning (sensemaking) of the California Dream Act will assist practitioners in the community colleges to create systematic changes on campus when implementing new educational policies. “Sensemaking is about the interplay of action and interpretation” its focus is one’s action based on interpretation (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p.410). The California Dream Act required AB540 to undergo a new process within their campus. The results from student interviews provide data about how students were accessing, navigating, and utilizing the policy and the findings from policy agents’ interviews provided information on how the policy was enacted from the state level to the campus level.

**Research Questions:**

1. How are policy agents of the California Dream Act making meaning of this Act?
   a. State level
   b. College district level

2. What is the Los Angeles Community College District doing to implement the policy at their campuses?

3. How are the Latina/o AB540 community college students making meaning of the policy on their campuses?

**Background**

It is estimated that there are 2.1 million young immigrants living in the U.S. and 65,000 are graduating high school every year (PEW Hispanic Center, 2012; Immigration Policy Center,
Often, these students arrive with their parents and do not have legal documentation that allows them to reside in the country; this lack of documentation creates obstacles for students, especially when seeking higher education (Abrego, 2008). Although undocumented students come from various countries and represent a variety of ethnicities, the majorities are from Latin American countries, predominately Mexico and Central America (Immigration Policy Center, 2012b).

Many Latina/o undocumented students who are now seeking a college degree were brought to the U.S. at an early age (Abrego, 2008). These students can be identified as the 1.5-generation, a concept sociologist Ruben G. Rumbaut (2004) advanced to distinguish between immigrant children who arrived in the U.S. at a young age from those who arrive to the U.S. in their late teens or early adulthood. During their elementary and secondary education, undocumented students were granted access to an education under Plyer v. Doe (1982), which excluded public schools from denying illegal or undocumented students a right to an education. Although Plyer V. Doe allows undocumented students to attend K-12, it does not establish a legal right to higher education (Huber & Malagon, 2007).

For undocumented students, educational policies coincide with immigration law. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996 has been cited as one of the first policies that affected the newest generation of undocumented students who are currently attending or trying to attend college (Gonzalez & Portillos, 2007; Olivas, 2004; Perry, 2006). IIRIRA was aimed to reduce illegal immigration by enforcing penalties, such as deportation removals for those that have committed crimes with sentences of five years or more. Deportations were retroactive, until 2002. Recent immigrants who entered unlawfully would be required to leave the U.S. for three years as a penalty, unless pardoned. Section 505 of IIRIRA
affected undocumented students by placing restrictions on benefits, including in-state college
tuition. Under this policy, undocumented immigrants’ residency did not allow them to qualify for
state residency benefits for postsecondary education, unless those benefits were also granted to
other citizens or nationals of the United States (Flores & Oseguera, 2009). IIRIRA complicated
the work of state legislators because it did not give clear directions on how to include
undocumented students into the state tuition policies; this lack of direction has resulted in states
creating legislation that affects immigration policy differently in each state (Flores & Oseguera,
2009). Depending on how states interpreted IIRIRA restrictions, certain states created in-state
resident tuition policies (ISRT) that were aimed at providing undocumented students a right to
reduced tuition rates (state resident rates) (Gonzalez & Portillos, 2007; Flores & Oseguera,
2009).

The case for access to higher education for undocumented students began in California
with Leticia A. vs. University of California Board of Regents (1985). The court ruled that certain
undocumented students met residency provisions that allowed them to pay in state tuition fees at
the public four- year colleges and two- year colleges, and they were eligible for state financial
aid programs, such as Cal Grants. The policy was in practice from 1985-1995, although during
that period, the University of California Regents continued its efforts to appeal this policy. In
1995, the policy was repealed and undocumented students in California returned to paying out of
state tuition at all public universities. In 2001, California passed Assembly Bill 540, which
allowed undocumented students, who met certain eligibility criteria, to pay in state resident
tuition fees at public colleges and universities.

Since the passage of the AB540 policy, researchers have found disparities between the
number of eligible AB540 students and the number that applied for AB540 status on campus
The disparities were attributed to the lack of access to correct information regarding the policy. In a qualitative study regarding AB540 information dissemination, Gonzales (2010a.) found that only a limited number of college ready undocumented students received accurate information regarding the policy and those that were not tracked, as college ready, did not receive any information regarding the educational policies that affect them. Similarly, Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez (2007) found that Latina/o AB540 students were receiving incorrect information from school officials and many were not aware of the policies until they arrived to college, where they were often presented with another obstacle, which was how to navigate the college system as undocumented students. These findings are supported by the TRPI’s (Thomas Rivera Policy Institute) 2002 study on financial aid as a perceived barrier to college for Latina/o students. The study surveyed 1,210 Latina/o students and their parents; it was found that although the majority of parents and students were accessing information on financial aid from school counselors or officials, they continued to have misconceptions regarding colleges’ costs and the types of financial aid available to immigrant students.

It is evident that Latina/o students are having difficulties in accessing correct information regarding financial aid and more importantly they and their families rely on school counselors and staff to supply them with accurate information (Zarate & Fabienke, 2002; Gonzales, 2010; McDonough & Calderone, 2006). If Latina/o students are having difficulties, their undocumented counterparts attending community college are struggling more because they must navigate college through the context of their illegality (Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007; Gonzales, 2011; Huber & Malagon, 2007; Perez, Cortes, Ramos & Coronado, 2010). Within this context, they must also develop a political awareness and legal understanding of the immigration
and educational policies that affect them (Abrego, 2008; Gonzales, 2008, 2010, 2011). It is possible that the policy agents who implemented past policies for undocumented students, such as AB540 were unaware how Latina/o students were making meaning of those policies and the resources they used to access and navigate policy on their campus; therefore it is critical to understand how the California Dream Act is being implemented from state level to the student user level on campus.

The newness of the California Dream Act, coupled with recent changes in immigration law, creates a necessary examination into the needs of Latina/o AB540 students, who are navigating particular services on campus for the first time. It is essential for the California community college system to be inclusive of Latina/o undocumented students on their campuses and for the student service programs, faculty and staff on the campuses to understand the obstacles students may encounter as they begin to utilize the California Dream Act policy.

This case study examined the meaning making process of the policy agents who are implementing the California Dream Act at the state and district level and the meaning making process of Latina/o AB540 community college students, who represent the majority of undocumented students in the state who are utilizing the policy.

Research Design

Population

The study’s participants were a non-randomized convenience sample of 12 self-identified Latina/o AB540 community college students who attend El Sol Community College, which is located within in the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD). The study included interviews with policy agents who were implementing the California Dream Act within the state,

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8 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) 2012
the California Community College Chancellor’s Office, the LACCD and one of its campuses. These policy agents included: Gil Cedillo, Los Angeles City Councilman and author of the California Dream Act legislation, a Vice Chancellor from CCCCO, and a director administering financial aid implementation at the LACCD. Also, eight policy agents within Student Services’ department were interviewed, including a vice president and representative(s) from the following departments: Admissions, Counseling, California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWorks), Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOP&S), and Financial Aid.

Research Site

The case study was conducted at El Sol Community College, which is an urban community college located in Los Angeles County. El Sol’s student population was near 28,000 of which 78% were identified as Hispanic. Citizenship status on campus varied with the majority of the participants being U.S. Citizens (80%) and others varying in residency status, which included temporary resident/refugee status, student visa, and “other” which signifies AB540 students. According to Los Angeles Community College District enrollment data for 2011, there were nearly 4,500 AB540 students within the district and El Sol serves almost 5% of those students. At this campus there was one student activities’ group for undocumented students and multiple academic programs that recruited AB540 students, however these programs are academic programs and do not function as part of the Student Service Programs, such as the financial aid office, where AB540 students now visit to apply for the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver and to verify their Cal Grant.

Case Study Design

The study was a qualitative multi-method case study design using interviews, a demographic questionnaire, and a review of printed materials. A case study design was chosen
because it allowed students to tell their stories about a chronological process that occurred, applying for the California Dream Act. In an in-depth study of a process, a case study method is preferred (Yin, 2009). In educational Latina/o research it is also helpful to use critical practices (Zarate & Conchas, 2003) and methodologies that are cognizant of students’ race, family and cultural resources and strengths, and explore students ethnic identity (Zarate & Conchas, 2003). In order to provide the participants with this type of critical practice, I used LatCrit (Latina/o Critical Theory) a complementary theory to Critical Race Theory (CRT) as my theoretical framework when I designed data collection instruments, interviewed the Latina/o AB540 community college students, and when I examined and discussed the results of their interviews. Latina/o Critical Race Theory legitimizes students’ lived experiences, sensemaking, and includes the experiences of immigration and language. “A CRT and LatCrit framework recognizes that the experimental knowledge of Students of Color are legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education” (Solórzano, Delgado, & Bernal, 2001, p.314). Using the LatCrit framework, the Latina/o AB540 students had an opportunity to voice their lived experiences and how they made meaning of the California Dream Act and its effects on their lives.

Documenting lived experiences is essential in Latina/o educational research because it provides the participant the opportunity to describe their experiences in “their own voices” (Munoz & Maldonado, 2011, p. 294); it is a form of counterstorytelling, one of the tenets of Critical Race Theory (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) and is a fundamental practice in LatCrit. “Counterstories account for resistance in the struggle for equity and are told from the perspective of people of color” (Munoz & Maldonado, 2011, p. 295). Latina/o AB540 community college students’ stories’ are not reflective of the general Latina/o
student population, although Latina/o students are still a marginalized group, Latina/o AB540 students’ experiences are unique and may counter those of their peers.

Significance

This study was important because it contributes to the growing educational research on Latina/o students in higher education, in particular undocumented students within the California community college system. Recent publications addressing the concerns of student services offices within colleges and community colleges in assisting undocumented students have focused extensively on the AB540 policy. Previous guidelines and promising practices have placed the institution at the center, whereas this study’s unit of analysis was the student.

This study drew upon past research on undocumented Latina/o students’ struggles with navigating the college system, which is not designed to be all-inclusive; rather it provokes students to seek out other nontraditional navigational methods (Contreras, 2009). These methods include those that Tara Yosso (2005) identifies as capitals within students’ community cultural wealth. These capitals include: familial, linguistic, social, resistant, and navigational. Community cultural wealth recognizes the assets Students of Color bring with them into the classroom, assets that are frequently underutilized and or unrecognized by the educational system (Yosso, 2005). Navigational capital “acknowledges individual agency within institutional constraints, but it also connects to social networks that facilitate community navigation through places and spaces, including schools” (Yosso, 2005, p.80). The California Dream Act requires AB540 students to navigate the community college through a traditional method; a method that previous studies have asserted does not validate their existing funds of knowledge. Students are not accustomed to nor were they encouraged to utilize student services’ departments and programs; now with the passage of this new policy, they began to access information and navigate these traditional places
and services. How Latina/o AB540 community college students interpreted the policy and the course of action they used to access information and navigate the process remains unknown. It was possible that the students practiced similar methods they used during the implementation of the AB540 policy or due to the difference between AB540 and the DREAM Act; they may began to utilize different navigational methods on the community college campuses. Also, it was unknown how community college campuses introduced them to and encourage them to utilize the services they were now eligible to receive.

The findings from this study were summarized in an executive summary for the administrators at El Sol Community College and those working within its Student Services Department. The summary was also provided to Councilman Gil Cedillo and the Vice Chancellor of the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO), and the Los Angeles Community College District director who participated in this study. In the next chapter a review of pertinent literature related to the topic of Latina/o college students, particularly those within community college and those utilizing educational policies for “undocumented” students.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter discusses pertinent policies and past research studies on Latina/o undocumented students, with a focus on California Latina/o AB540 students who are accessing and navigating the California Dream Act in community colleges. Federal laws and state policies are discussed first, as it foregrounds the legislative issues that are impacting Latina/o undocumented students. The literature review begins with a discussion of immigration policies, which have affected undocumented students’ access to higher education. Immigration policies affect educational policies; past studies on how undocumented students, particularly AB540 students, accessed and navigated policies are discussed. Lastly, the theoretical frameworks of meaning making, Critical Race Theory, and Community Cultural Wealth, are discussed.

Immigration Policies Affecting Immigrant Students

Immigration and educational policies have affected undocumented students in their search for higher education. The current generation of undocumented students has experienced the repercussions of legislation that resulted in policies that created barriers to higher education and anti-immigrant sentiment. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) (1996) has been cited as one of the first policies affecting current undocumented students who are attending or trying to attend college (Gonzalez & Portillos, 2007; Olivas, 2004; Perry, 2006). IIRIRA aimed to reduce illegal immigration by enforcing penalties, such as deportation removals for those that have committed crimes that have a sentencing of five years or more. Deportation removals were retroactive, until 2002. Recent immigrants who entered
unlawfully would be required to leave the U.S. for three years as a penalty, unless pardoned. Section 505 of IIRIRA affected undocumented students by placing restrictions on benefits, including in-state college tuition. Under the policy undocumented immigrants’ state residency did not allow them to qualify for state residency benefits for postsecondary education, unless those benefits were also granted to other citizens or nationals of the United States (Flores & Oseguera, 2009). IIRIRA complicated state colleges because it did not give clear directions on how to include undocumented students into the state tuition policies; this lack of direction has resulted in states creating legislation that affects immigration policy differently in each state (Flores & Oseguera, 2009). Depending on how states interpreted IIRIRA restrictions, some states created in-state resident tuition policies (ISRT) that were aimed at providing undocumented students a right to reduced tuition rates (state resident rates) (Gonzalez & Portillos, 2007; Flores & Oseguera, 2009).

For undocumented students living in states that did not take the initiative to create ISRT polices, they were endanger of not attending college because of the high tuition rates. ISRT policies vary among the states and are constantly in-flux. For example, in 2011 during the presidential campaign between Mitt Romney (R) and President Barack Obama (D), Wisconsin voters revoked the ISRT policy they had previously passed in 2009. In the same year Maryland passed an ISRT policy but limited the policy to community colleges only, while Connecticut passed ISRT legislation for the first time. These varying polices within the states creates a complex educational system for undocumented students who must comprehend ever changing state legislation (Flores & Oseguera, 2009).

Anti-immigrant sentiment grew in California and was reflected in the passage of Prop 187 (1994). Although the federal court deemed the proposition unconstitutional, the realization
that voters approved it created a hostile environment for undocumented immigrants. Prop. 187 were designed to eliminate social services, health care, and public education to non-U.S. born immigrants. The proposition caused fear of detainment and deportation. Undocumented students were also fearful of not being able to continue with their education because under Prop 187 they would not have had the legal right to be in school. Although it the proposition did not go into effect, Prop 187 led to a widespread anti-Latina/o sentiment across the country (Suarez-Orozco, 1996).

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, immigration enforcement increased and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security was created. In a review of immigration regulations after 9/11, journalist Ted Hesson, an immigration news editor for ABC/Univision, found that there was a significant increase in immigration enforcement funding, increase in deportation removals, the use of local police officers to enforce immigration laws under “secure communities” program, and an increase of deportation centers (2012, September 11). More recently in 2010, Arizona enacted an anti-immigrant law, SB1070. The law requires “illegal aliens” to carry identity and documentation at all times (not having these papers will result in a federal misdemeanor), allows local police officers to detain anyone that appears suspicious of being illegal, and makes illegal working a federal misdemeanor. Although the U.S. Supreme Court challenged SB1070, the court struck down only three of the provisions: federal misdemeanors will not be given to those found working illegally or who are found without identification and police officers cannot arrest anyone on mere suspicion of being illegal-the state can require people to produce identification once they are detained or arrested by an officer for another infraction, crime or suspicion of a crime. SB1070 affects undocumented students living in AZ
but also has repercussions to those living in other states. Since its inception in 2010, multiple states have written similar legislation.

**Federal DREAM Act**

Undocumented students are currently awaiting federal immigration reform and the passage of the DREAM Act, an immigration and educational policy that would allow them to legally reside in the U.S. if they are in the military or in college. The federal DREAM Act also would provide access to higher education by providing federal funding for tuition. Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL), Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Representatives Howard Berman (D-CA), and Chris Cannon (R-UT) introduced the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act into congress in 2001. The DREAM Act would benefit undocumented students ages 15-35 that have been continuously living in the U.S. for five years, have been residing in the U.S. since the age of 15, do not have a criminal record, graduated from high school and are enrolled in a college or are in the military (UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education, 2007). These requirements would grant undocumented students conditional lawful permanent resident (LPR) status for six years, which will provide the student time to complete at least two years of college or military service and be eligible to work legally. If the student successfully meets the educational requirements, the conditional status would be moved. Students would also be eligible for federal financial aid, which would be limited to federal work study, student loans, and individual states would be allowed to provide state funded financial aid (Immigration Policy Center, 2011).

The DREAM Act failed to become federal law in 2010 by a five-vote margin; it is likely to be brought to the Senate again. Supporters of the federal DREAM act cite the economic
benefit of increasing the number of undocumented students in college. There DREAM act would affect an estimated 2.1 million children and young adults, as well as 114,000 students who are have already obtained at least an associates degree to receive conditional residency status (Immigration Policy Center, 2011). Since a college degree is linked to the amount of annual income and job placement, then providing these students with opportunities to receive financial aid for a college education and the opportunity to work after graduation is an economic benefit. Providing legal residency would also allow access to investments, such as purchasing a home, car, and other properties. More importantly the DREAM Act would likely increase the high school graduation rate of Latinos/as, reduce the dropout rate, and increase college enrollment, retention, and graduation (Immigration Policy Center, 2011).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

Since the federal DREAM Act has continued not to pass, President Barack Obama has found another way to support undocumented students, known as “Dreamers”. In an effort to assist students with employment during and after graduating from college, President Obama initiated the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in June 2012. This federal program came into effect on August 15, 2012 and allows undocumented people ages 18-30 years old to apply for a work permit. President Obama hoped that undocumented students would be able to use these temporary social security cards to find employment that would support their educational efforts, i.e. such as paying tuition. The policy also assists recent graduates in finding employment. To apply the person must have: arrived to the United States before age 16, have continuously lived in the country since time of arrival and be under the age of thirty-one. The person must also be enrolled in either college, the armed forces, or be obtaining a GED. Most importantly, the person must have proof of being in the U.S. on June 15, 2012 or within a certain
time frame and must not have any convictions or have any significant misdemeanors. The form requires $465 to file, which includes a federal background check and fingerprinting.

The DACA secures students’ residency in their home state and makes it possible for them to function in the community without fear of deportation. There have been over 154,000 DACA cards issued since January 2013—undocumented students who have received their DACA are now temporarily documented. The effects of the DACA on access to higher education and success remains unknown, however students would be able to find employment in places that are likely more suitable for them as students. In turn, students who could not afford their state’s tuition may be able to pay more because of their new employment. For those students who have graduated, they will now be able to find employment and utilize the knowledge they have acquired. Still, these students are lacking federal financial aid, a reality that has become a barrier to access and retention in higher education. Past studies on access and success within ISRT states are discussed as an educational policy that affects many Latina/o undocumented students.

**Educational Policies Affecting Undocumented Students**

Educational policies addressing the educational right of undocumented students have been developed since 1982, through Plyer v. Doe. The Supreme Court’s ruling in Plyer v. Doe (1982) stated that undocumented children could not be denied public education unless the denial "furthers some substantial state interest.” Through Plyer v. Doe (1982) undocumented students have gained access to education, however the case did not establish the right to education and did not discuss access to higher education (Huber, & Malagon, 2007; Flores, 2010).

There are individual state laws that either allow or forbid undocumented students from applying to public state college and universities. Besides state laws that prohibit undocumented students from attending college, they also lack federal financial assistance, which poses a barrier
to college access, even for those students who qualify have ISRT in their state (Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007; Gonzales, 2007, 2010, 2011; Flores & Chapa, 2009; Abrego, 2008; Huber & Malagon, 2007; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002; Abrego & Gonzales, 2010; Gonzales, 2007; Perez, 2010; Contreras, 2009). In 1985, California attempted to address this barrier by allowing undocumented students to receive in-state resident tuition at for the CSU and UC system and apply for state financial aid. This policy was enacted through Leticia v. UC Regents (1985); the state Supreme Court ruled in favor of the undocumented students who were seeking financial assistance. The court ruled that the definition of residency was undetermined at the time because both the CSU and UC system had different definitions regarding residency and the definitions did not coincide with the definition of being a U.S. citizen. “At that time, the court ruled that charging nonresident tuition to undocumented students was unconstitutional because both UC and CSU used a different definition of "residency" for undocumented aliens than it used for United States (U.S.) citizens” (Assembly Committee on Higher Education, 2001).

The policy under Leticia v. UC Board of Regents (1985) was practiced until 1990, then the policy was appealed by the UC Board of Regents in the second district court of appeals; this decision is also known as the Bradford decision. Both policies questioned the definition of residency to establish tuition costs. Since 1990, various assembly bills have been proposed to address the issue of residency for tuition purposes.

In California from 1990 to 2001, undocumented students were treated as foreign students or out-of state students for tuition purposes. Under the Uniform Residency Law, undocumented students did not meet residency status. Governor Davis vetoed prior legislation that would exempt them from being considered out of state or foreign students (Assembly Bill 1197, Firebaugh, 2000). Davis argued that AB 1197 was contrary to the Illegal Immigration Reform
and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (IIRIRA), in which undocumented “aliens are ineligible to receive postsecondary education benefits based on state residence unless a citizen or national of the United States would be eligible for the same benefits without regard to their residence” (Title VIII, Section 1623). AB 1197 would have been amended to include that all out of state legal residents receive the same benefits as undocumented students who had graduated from a California high school.

In 2001, Assembly Bill 540 was passed; it is a form of in state resident tuition (ISRT) policy for undocumented students who are residents of California but do not hold legal residency status. The majority of undocumented students who attend California’s colleges do so through the state’s ISRT policy, Assembly Bill 540 (2001). AB540 legislation allows students who attended a California high school for three years and graduated with a diploma or its equivalent, to pay in-state resident tuition at public universities and community colleges. Students must file an AB540 affidavit with the college, in which they acknowledge their status as an immigrant and pledge to become a citizen when it becomes possible.

The legislative history of undocumented students creates multiple barriers to accessing higher education because their identity on campus is constantly changing. The ways undocumented students interpret the educational policies that affect them and the way policies are put into place, needs to be studied (Olivas, 2004). While educational policies for undocumented students affect all students, i.e. K-12, undergraduate, and graduate students, the legislation discussed are created for and utilized by college students.

**California Dream Act**

The AB540 policy was a temporary solution to the growing number of undocumented students in the state who were seeking a college degree. However, as many studies have
suggested, AB540 is an inequitable policy that allows students to attend college but does not offer financial assistance (Huber & Malagon, 2007; Flores, 2010; Abrego, 2006). States that have ISRT have an increase of Latina/o undocumented students attending college, particularly community college because of its lower fees (Flores, 2010). Though undocumented students are attending college at higher rates, social and educational theorists have postulated that advancement in higher education for undocumented students was largely dependent on financial aid. Access to financial aid has proved to be a variable that affects the success of all Latino college students (Hernandez & Lopez, 2005).

California’s version of the DREAM Act policy was passed in 2011 with the passage of Assembly Bills 130 and 131. The California Dream Act’s path to law began in 2006 under the legislation SB160, which would have provided AB540 students with in-state financial assistance for the UC and CSU colleges and the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver for community college campuses. The bill was passed but was then vetoed by republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and again in 2007 and 2008 the governor vetoed the California Dream Act as SB1. Assemblyman Gil Cedillo (D-CA) authored all versions of the bill. In 2011, the newly elected democratic Governor Jerry Brown, signed the California Dream Act as two separate bill, 130 and 131.

AB130 allowed students who met AB540 criteria to apply for scholarships that are non-state funded and AB 131 allowed students who met AB540 criteria to submit at California Dream Act Application for state financial aid, such as Cal Grants for the UC, CSU, and CCC system and the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver at community colleges. The DREAM Act application was released in the summer of 2012 and eligibility for state financial aid for UC and
CSU campuses began in the Fall 2012 and Cal Grants commenced in Fall 2013 for AB540 community college students.

The protocol for applying required all AB540 students to complete a DREAM Act application online. The California Student Aid Commission is responsible for administering this protocol. Community college students are eligible for the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver (BOG), depending on their income level and are eligible for Cal Grants. In addition to the online application, community college AB540 students must also fill out a BOG Fee Waiver application, which is distributed on the student’s campus and returned to the campuses’ college financial aid department.

The California Dream Act policy aims to break the main barrier of Latina/o AB540 college success, which is financial aid. Gonzales (2010a.) stated that AB540 students had reached their limit in the educational pipeline because they were unable to receive federal financial assistance and were unable to find employment after they graduated because of their illegal status. Now, with the passing of California Dream Act students will have the opportunity for the first time to seek state funded financial aid. Although the California Dream Act is aimed at increasing undocumented student enrollment and retention by providing state funded financial aid for the first time, how this new process will be implemented and understood at the district(s) and campus(s) level is unknown.

The California Dream Act requires applicants to first file an AB540 affidavit with their college before submitting a Dream Act application online. Recalling the barriers students encountered with the dissemination of AB540 information, the new policy relies on students to be informed on AB540 policy before they move forward to the California Dream Act application. Once students’ applications are successfully processed they are eligible for state aid.
In the past, Latina/o AB540 students were not engaged in conversations about financial aid when they were in high school and were excluded from information regarding the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver for community colleges because state financial aid programs did not apply to them at the time. With the passage of the California Dream Act, it is essential for colleges that serve Latina/o AB450 students to receive adequate training in understanding the issues of undocumented students and the new policies that affect them (Perez, Cortes, Ramos, & Coronado, 2010).

**Making Meaning of the Policy**

In reviewing the multiple immigration and educational policies affecting Latina/o AB540 students it is important to understand how these students are *making meaning* of the process in accessing and navigating the California Dream Act on their college campuses. Meaning making or sensemaking is a process about “the interplay of action and interpretation” its primary focus in on one’s action or a group’s action based on interpretation (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p.410). Educational researchers, such as Park et al. (2009, 2013) have focused on students’ sensemaking of programs and services in community college; emphasizing on how students accessed information about these policies directly affected their understanding of the program and influenced the way they navigated their participation in these policies or programs.

The educational policies creating barriers for undocumented students have lead researchers to investigate the navigating practices these students undertake when they seek out a college education. Students’ navigational practices are an important factor in their ability to access information and understand these educational policies. In “Placing Youth Sensemaking Center Stage to Improve Opportunities for Success in Postsecondary Education” (2009) Park et al., discussed how certain populations, such as low-income Latina/o students, are the target for
educational policies and programs that are created to increase college access and success. However, these policies and programs are not proven to have a significant impact, which Park et al. (2009) attributed to a “knowledge gap” policymakers have about the target population.

Researchers and policy makers need to understand how students make sense of policies or programs that are designed to benefit their college access and success (Park et al., 2009).

In using sensemaking as a theoretical and methodological understanding of how one interprets policies, researchers can learn how students understand their opportunities and barriers in utilizing educational policies that are focused on benefitting them. Park et al., (2009) states:

Sensemaking, generally defined, is the process by which social actors make meaning of experiences and ideas. Sensemaking is important as it precedes and frames decision-making and action. It is the mediating process by which meanings are constructed and actions are developed (p.1).

Understanding students’ sensemaking or meaning making process is vital when researching how policies reshape aspects of students’ lives (Dorner, 2012). Researchers and community leaders that are concerned with policy implementations often neglect the process of policy implementation and instead chose to focus on the immediate outcomes (Dorner, 2012).

Educational policies are a sensemaking process, as those who implement the policy and those who utilize the policy bring with them their own set of values, background knowledge, and experiences (Spillane, Reiser & Reimer, 2002).

In “Policy Implementations and Cognition: Reframing and Refocusing Implementation Research,” (2002) researchers, Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer discussed the sensemaking process of implementation agents as involving individual cognition and cognitive structures (knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes). Sensemaking derives from the individual’s own meaning they have of a
policy and within that interpretation the individual utilizes their own background knowledge, past experiences, beliefs and attitudes about the subject or policy; as they make meaning of the policy it affects how they implement the policy (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002).

Students and policy agents undergo a sensemaking process when implementing, accessing and navigating educational policies. The ways both students’ make meaning of the policy may or may not differ from the way the policy agents made meaning of the policy and how they foresaw its implementation.

**Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit)**

This study utilized the meaning making process of both Latina/o AB540 community college students and policy agents of the California Dream Act. The ways in which the students in this study navigated and accessed information about policies are discussed in the context of Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) because it is a scholarship that allows for the educational experiences of Latinas/os and Chicanas/os to be examined through multiple “racialized layers” that include culture, language, and immigration⁹, which are important factors within this study and will likely affect how Latina/o AB540 students are making meaning of the California Dream Act. Emerging from the scholarly work of educational LatCrit researchers, Yosso (2006) described the theoretical framework of *Community Cultural Wealth*. Latina/o culture is used as a foundation that exerts cultural wealth, which is a knowledge that is constantly growing and being shared amongst others. Yosso (2006) discussed how the educational system has consistently related to Latina/o students and their families using a deficit framework, which blames the

student and their family for lacking a cultural capital or knowledge that would allow them to gain the social capital that is needed to socially excel. The concept of cultural capital derives from Pierre Bourdieu’s (1973) sociological theory that there is a certain type of knowledge needed to succeed and excel in society; this knowledge brings a social and cultural capital that is inherit to other classes, i.e. middle or upper class. Only through formal schooling can other groups gain access to the appropriate knowledge. Those seeking social mobility need to create a network of social ties that will provide them with opportunities for advancement and opportunities to acquire more capitals (Deutsch, 2006). Through these relationships, one acquires membership and status that will open doors to greater opportunities, however these memberships are often limited to the dominant social group (Deutsch, 2006).

In an educational context, the concept of cultural capital as being something that Students of Color lack, creates inequitable practices, that are a form of cultural deficit thinking (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). Deficit thinking interprets the student’s lack of knowledge as a result of their minority culture, in which the parents/families are at fault for not providing their children with the necessary skills or “prerequisite skills” needed to be successful in school (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). In relation to Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital, educational institutions utilizing a cultural deficit model, are blaming students and their families for not having a certain capital or understanding of schooling, which makes them unsuccessful. In order to fill this gap of knowledge, schools often place educational models that are successful for the dominant group onto culturally linguistically diverse groups, hoping for similar results (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). Cultural deficit thinking faults students and their families for lacking the social and cultural capital defined by institutions, as necessary for success.
Examples of cultural deficit thinking within community colleges was seen in Solórzano, Villalpando, and Oseguera (2005) study that found Latina/o students often received poor academic guidance in community college because both the faculty and the college, as a system, had low academic expectations of Latina/o students. These “deficit-based expectations” about students’ ability is perpetuated by structural barriers, which prevent students from completing transfer level coursework. In Solórzano and Ornelas’s (2004) study about the disproportionately low number of Latina/o transfer students; faculty and staff were interviewed regarding academic motivation and potential barriers. The majority of faculty, staff, and administrators in the study, exhibited some type of cultural deficit thinking in that academic responsibility shifted from the institution (faculty, staff and administrators) to the student and their families, with some interviewees stating that they believe families do not value education. Cultural deficit thinking allows an institution to have lower expectations and academic standards for some students (Munoz & Garcia, 1996). Those within the system believe they need to and have right to “fix” a student so that they can conform to a traditional educational model (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). Educational researchers have begun to discredit the deficit framework, especially when researching Latinas/os; it is a framework that has often plagued past educational studies (Munoz & Garcia, 1996).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a framework that can be used to discuss the disfranchisement of students of color within the educational system(s) and provide legitimacy to students lived experiences. CRT stems from legal education, where there was a lack of race consciousness in the discourse (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT is based on five tenets: (1) Racism is central and intersectional; (2) Interest convergence; (3) Social justice; (4) Storytelling/Counter-storytelling, and (5) Interdisciplinary perspective.
For education, Solórzano (1998) describes five tenets as being necessary in educational research on Latina/o students. He describes the five tenets as: (1) The intercentricity of race and racism where race and racism are central and fundamental to “defining and explaining how the U.S. function” (p.73); (2) The challenge of dominant ideology is a challenge against educational institutions that claim objectivity or neutrality; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the centrality of experimental knowledge; and (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches. A CRT framework in education recognizes that schools are inequitable institutions, race is central to the experiences of students and race continues to be a significant factor in determining social inequities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). School systems are a reflection of these social inequities; for students of color and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, these inequities are reinforced in the school’s structure (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

LatCrit (Latina/o Critical Theory) stems from CRT and includes language and immigration as part of the analysis of students’ experiences and legitimizes the racial experiences of Latinas/os in comparison or contrast to other groups. There is a space where race, language rights, culture rights, and immigration status intersect; the educational experiences of Latina/o students are multilayered among these subordinations (Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Within a LatCrit framework, the ways in which Latina/o AB540 students’ apply their community cultural wealth toward accessing and navigating new policy information can be understood.

Community Cultural Wealth

Community Cultural Wealth was a reaction to educational institutions having historically viewed Latina/o students and other students of color as lacking the social and cultural capital required for success (Yosso, 2006). Community Cultural Wealth argues that students of color
bring with them a social and cultural capital that has not been recognized or acknowledged by institutions, especially those employing Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of social capital as the standard. In creating the concept of cultural wealth, Yosso (2006) explained that income is seen as providing one form of capital and wealth is an accumulation of that capital over a period of time. Wealth, described by Oliver and Shapiro (1995) is the total amount of an “individual’s accumulated assets and resources” in connection to culture, it is the person’s accumulated resources that are inherent and are also gained from the culture in which they participate in, their community and their family (as cited by Yosso, 2006, p. 95). For Latina/o students this wealth comes from an accumulation of cultural assets and resources they have received over time and which are used as a functioning skill when experiencing educational institutions (Yosso, 2006).

There are six capitals within community cultural wealth, they are: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant. Aspirational capital is the ability for students to maintain their hopes and dreams, despite recognizing real or perceived barriers. Linguistic capital is the intellectual and social skills obtained through communication experiences Latina/o students encounter in their daily lives being bilingual and acting as interpreters for their family. Familial capital is the cultural knowledge and sense of community history that relates to concept of family and kinship. Social capital within a community cultural wealth framework refers to the networks and contacts that are established with peers and within the community, which are used to navigate systems. These relationships are a resource that provides emotional support, navigational support, and information. Navigational capital is the skills acquired to operate within an environment, context, or an institution that is not historically created for People of Color. Resistant capital is the knowledge and skills developed through oppositional behavior toward inequalities both historically and currently. This shared history is a form of community
cultural wealth that is passed on by maintaining traditions as way to combat subordination of group’s culture.

Utilizing a community cultural wealth framework within educational institutions allows for students of color to draw upon inherit and learned cultural skills to navigate through the system. Often schools operate on the assumption that students of color “lack” necessary knowledge, social skills, and abilities to navigate within the educational system (Valenzuela, 1999, as cited in Munoz & Maldonado, 2011); this “lacking” refers to the institution operating within a cultural deficit framework. For Latina/o immigrant students, their skills draw upon the capitals described in community cultural wealth, to create a navigational approach that differs from their peers, both Latino and non-Latino, and creates a *counterspace* within the college (Munoz & Maldonado, 2011). A *counterspace* is described as sites that allow students of color to create a “positive collegiate racial climate” (p. 70) and is a space where notions about students’ race and culture can be challenged (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Latina/o AB540 students create academic and social counterspaces within their college campus; it is through these spaces that students embrace and strengthen their community cultural wealth. In the context of undocumented Latina/o students, they are likely to be more disfranchised that their Latina/o counterparts because unlike their peers who are citizens, undocumented Latina/o students carry with them the additional barrier of being illegal (Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007; Gonzales, 2011; Gonzales, 2008; Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Abrego, 2008; Jacoba, & Ochoa, 2011; Ortiz & Hinojosa, 2010; Perez et. 2010).

**Latina/o AB540 Students Accessing & Navigating Policies**

This research study was centered on Latina/o AB540 students’ access to information regarding the California Dream Act and the navigational practices they participate in on their
campus. The California Dream Act was discussed in relation to AB540 practices; the issues and concerns with AB540 implementation and interpretation may be similar to the California Dream Act. Because the California Dream Act is a recent addition to current educational policy, it is important to understand the impact of how the community college campuses are delivering information and how Latina/o students are accessing and interpreting the policy on their campus.

Many Latina/o undocumented students who are now seeking a college degree were brought to the U.S. at an early age (Abrego, 2008). These students are described as the 1.5-generation, a concept sociologist Ruben G. Rumbaut (2004) are distinguished between immigrant children who arrived in the U.S. at a young age from those who arrive in the U.S. in their late teens or early adulthood. California serves a high portion of 1.5-generation students and Latina/o students in its educational system, including undocumented students (Pew Hispanic Center, 2012). The 1.5 generation students have often begun reading and writing in their primary language and enter the educational system in the U.S. in elementary school. They have become acculturated into the U.S. through schooling and in their community (Rumbaut, 2004). In regards to the way undocumented or immigrant students view their educational experiences, students who are part of the 1.5 generation have undergone the assimilation or acculturation process through their schooling. Most often the students cite their schools as the place where they were taught civic engagement and for some, they were taught the value of higher education. The K-12 system created a sense of equality; this sense of equality then diminishes as students become aware of their illegality. Prominent researcher on undocumented students, Robert Gonzales, discusses this awareness of illegality as now being part of the students’ transition into adulthood (2011). Entering adulthood is now coupled with having to identify with illegality or lack of status.
Similar to other students who receive information about college during high school, some undocumented students become aware of ISRT policy when they are preparing to leave high school (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2010a.; Huber & Malagon, 2007). However, for an undocumented student to use ISRT policies, they must first be aware of their illegal status. In “Learning to be illegal: Undocumented youth and shifting legal contexts in the transition to adulthood” (2011), Gonzales interviewed 150 Latina/o 1.5 generation students, which included high school students, four-year college students, and two-year community college students in Southern California; from this large sample size he has written many articles that discussed the barriers students have and the ways in which they navigate college and educational policies. When undocumented students leave the safety of the K-12 educational system, they must confront their illegality, a process Gonzales describes as “learning to be illegal” (2011). Students in his study discussed learning about their illegality when they were preparing to apply for college; students had to ask their parents for their social security number, which they did not have or were told they, could not apply for financial aid by their high school counselor. These situations forced students to confront their illegality and disclose their status to school staff; for undocumented students “transition into adulthood is accompanied by their transition into illegality” (p.603).

Regarding high school students specifically, Gonzales (2010a.) conducted 78 in depth interviews with undocumented Latina/o high school students. Students in the study were grouped into “college goers” and “early exiters.” College goers were students who had clear intentions to attend college and were supported by high school administrators, such as counselors. These students discussed being aware of AB540 policy and its effects on their tuition costs. Because they understood that AB540 lowered the cost of tuition, they felt prepared to attend college. For
those described as “early exiters,” they were students who decided to leave high school early and did not pursue college. When asked about AB540 policy, early exiters stated that they were unaware of the policy; they had left high school without information regarding AB540 and had missed opportunities in high school when the information may have been disseminated. Some early exiters stated that if they had known and or understood how AB540 would decrease the cost of tuition, especially for community colleges, they would have likely attended college.

Gonzales (2010a.) views the dissemination of policy information as discriminatory; students who were deemed “college going” by their high school’s staff received information, while those who were not seen as “college going” did not receive the information and subsequently they left high school without the proper guidance and information. Similar to the tracking process of other SES and minority students (see Oaks, 2008), Latina/o undocumented students are also being tracked and the information about policies are being denied to certain groups.

Misinformation and lack of information often occurs with Latina/o students, especially on information regarding financial aid (Nora, 1990). In 2006, the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) released findings of their California survey on Latina/o students’ ages 18-24 and their perceptions about financial aid. The survey was administered to over 50,000 students living in Los Angeles County, of which 400 were interviewed. The results indicated that students were unfamiliar with the application process for government loans and grants (41%) although the majority did know about the Pell Grant (54%). These findings demonstrated that the financial aid process is two-fold; a student must be aware of the different types of aid, but also must understand the eligibility requirements and application processes. The FAFSA (Free Application For Free Student Aid) also posed difficulties (51% reported), however only 17% reported that their parents filed the FAFSA without their assistance, while the others stated that they did the
process with their parents online. Most Latina/o students are taking a “leadership role” in the financial aid application process (Zarate & Fabienke, 2002) a role AB540 students have also taken in the previously cited studies.

Financial aid remains the most vital variable in a Latina/o students’ decision to attend college and persist in college (Hernandez & Lopez, 2005). Without the security of financial aid, Latina/o students are less likely to socially integrate into the college (Cabrera, Nora, & Castaneda, 1992). Another survey by the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) (2004) of Latina/o parents and students, found that the dissemination of financial aid information to the Latina/o community was not sufficient; seventy percent of the parents were not familiar with the college admissions process and the costs of college. The lack of information or misinformation derives from the way information is disseminated to the students and their families. Students reported receiving college information from their teachers (56%), their parents (19%) and their family members or relatives (10%). Parents also stated they received most of their college information, including financial aid information, from school counselors and teachers (49%). Since the majority of Latino parents and their children are receiving information from school officials, it is vital that the information be accurate; however, in the study 51% of the students and 71% of the parents surveyed indicated not receiving any information or advice regarding financial aid from their schools. TRPI is concerned that the lack of sufficient and accurate financial aid information may deter Latina/o students from applying to college. Also distressing, is that half of the student and parent respondents believed that citizenship status is a factor in admissions and in receiving financial aid; they did not cite any other means to financial a college education for noncitizens.
Accessing information on financial aid has become dependent upon the ability and willingness of high school counselors to disseminate this knowledge as part of the college knowledge the student needs. McDonough & Calderone’s (2006) study of 63 counselors, who worked in urban high schools with low SES students, discovered that high school counselors often became the gatekeepers to financial aid knowledge. Counselors with limited experience or knowledge about college were more likely to work in schools with primarily under-represented students. The counselors also had limited knowledge beyond the basics, such as FAFSA and Pell Grants.

These studies cited indicate that Latina/o students do have difficulties in accessing accurate information regarding financial aid; hence AB540 students may have a more difficult time because they require information that frequently changes and is correlated to state and federal legislation. Also, AB540 students become their own variable in the issues of access because they must choose to disclose their status to their high school counselor or to someone working at the college. For Latina/o AB540 to be able to disclose about their status and receive the proper guidance they need they must establish trusting relationships with counselors and other helpful adults (Gonzales, 2010b).

Once students graduate from high school, they must then begin the navigation process of college, which poses different barriers and obstacles for undocumented students. Researchers have found that when Latina/o undocumented students attempt to understand legislation while they are attending college, they are disheartened by the experiences they have with unknowledgeable staff/faculty who are unwilling to assist them. Contreras (2009) identified the ways in which 20 Latina/o undocumented students in Washington State tried to navigate the new ISRT policy, HB 1079. Respondents stated they tried to seek guidance from administrative office
and student service offices, but their ability to ask for assistance was contingent on their knowing that the staff member was sensitive to undocumented students. The majority of the interviewees believed that the lack of information caused them not to attend college, despite being qualified.

The researcher also pointed out the fact that unlike Abrego’s (2008) study, where AB540 students felt empowered by their new “AB540” status and became politically involved in federal DREAM Act movements; students in her study did not feel empowered by HB1079. Contreras explained that this could be due to differences in states, California versus Washington, concluding that states with a higher population of undocumented students, the ISRT policies may be more impactful.

In a longitudinal study by Gonzales (2008), he noted that noted Latina/o AB540 students often receive misinformation from community colleges and universities’ admissions offices and other staff members in student services. Students reported that staff was unaware of policies for neither undocumented students nor how to process the application for AB540 status. Similarly, Olivas (2004) found the application and admissions process to college as a difficult process to negotiate for undocumented students because it varied by state’s definitions of residency status and tuition policies for undocumented students.

Students receiving misinformation regarding policy changes and requirements was apparent in the early research studies on Latina/o undocumented students’ access of AB540 policy (Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007; Olivas, 2004). In a quantitative analysis of the number of those students who were eligible for ISRT status in comparison to those who applied for ISRT status in their home state, Flores (2010) found disparities. The data set was taken from Current Population Survey (n=60,000), from which enrollment trends based on residency were analyzed. States with ISRT policies did increase Latina/o college enrollment (1.54 times more
likely to enroll); those who did enroll were adults ranging in ages 21-24, were predominately female, and were residing in a metropolitan area. All ISRT states had higher number of qualifying Latina/o ISRT students then the number of students enrolled. The percentage of students who were aware of their state’s policy is unknown; it is possible that enrollment would be higher depending on the ways information regarding ISRT was disseminated. Residing in ISRT states have also statistically increased students’ likelihood of enrolling into college in comparison to other Latina/o undocumented students who are not living in ISRT states (Flores, 2010). Among the states with ISRT, enrollment patterns for undocumented students were difficult to find because there is no central database within the states.

Similarly, Chavez, Soriano, and Oliverez (2007) found that AB540 policy had a minimal impact on undocumented students in California because the percentage of students who were eligible was higher than those who had completed the AB540 affidavit. It is their speculation that the legislation was not properly disseminated to high school students or college students, nor counselors, which resulted in a limited number of students filing an AB540 affidavit. There is an estimated 553,000 students who qualify for AB540 status, with the largest percentage of students attending a community college campus (Immigration Policy Center, 2012). Despite this large number of possible applicants, only 4,519 AB540 students are enrolled in the Los Angeles Community College District, which is the second largest community college district in the United States (Los Angeles Community College District’s Office of Institutional Research, 2012).

Undocumented Latina/o students, who participated in R. Gonzales’ past research studies, indicate that they also experienced times when they and their college’s staff were unaware of the criteria for enrollment for specialized programs (2010b.). Programs that were specific to low
income, first generation, and first time college student often excluded undocumented students because of their status. One example given by Gonzales (2010b) is the TRIO program, which is a beneficial program to Latina/o students however it excludes undocumented students because the program receives federal funding. Federal funding programs deny access to undocumented students because of their illegality; it is unknown whether the federal DREAM Act would provide access to these specialized programs to undocumented students.

This lack of information and misinformation has caused many Latina/o AB50 students and undocumented students to navigate the higher education system amongst themselves with the support of peers and adult mentors (Abrego, 2006; Chavez, et al., 2007; Gonzales, 2010b, 2011; Perez, et al., 2010; Seif, 2011). Studies on how Latina/o AB540 students are accessing higher education indicate that it is their social network, comprised of their peers, supportive administrators and staff, and familial relations that help guide them through the process. Perez (2010) found that these students are navigating the higher educational system together. Interviewees in his study (n=104) stated that they felt that undocumented students had to take the initiative to seek out college information and opportunities for themselves. Although student should be confident in seeking out information from student services, such as admissions, financial aid, counseling, etc. they instead relied on each other for information sharing. AB540 students often created peer support groups on campus that functioned as a space to inform one and other on current legislation (Chavez et al., 2007). These supportive networks also functioned as advocacy groups where students become politically engaged and incorporate civic duties into their daily lives, while continuously being noncitizens. There are currently over 30 identified AB540 student advocacy support groups in California as well as statewide networks (Chavez, et al., 2007) that had rallied students to march to Sacramento in support of the California Dream.
Act; they also protested in Washington D.C. in support for the federal DREAM Act. Gonzales (2008) views this phenomenon of political activism as undocumented students way to exercise human capital. Within their “informal existence” they are finding their political strength to mobilize and speak out in defense of their educational rights.

**Role of California Community Colleges**

California Community colleges are central to the issues facing Latina/o AB540 students because the majority of those students attend a community college campus. In California, Latina/o students represent the majority of students in the public K-12 system and the California Community College System (2011-2012). The state also served the largest portion of undocumented students, with an estimated 26,000 undocumented students graduating each year from high school and 1.17% of those attending a community college (Immigration Policy Center, 2012).

Undocumented students, particularly Latina/o students enroll into community college at a higher rate than other undocumented or immigrant groups (Abrego, 2008; Szelenyi & Chang, 2002; Flores & Oseguera, 2009; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). Latina/o students chose to begin their higher education at a community college for a variety of reasons, most notably because of its open door policy, proximity to home, and flexible schedule that allows students to stay committed to their familial obligations and work (Kurlaender, 2006). In a longitudinal study of Latinas/os using data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, it was found that Latina/o students continued to chose community colleges despite their socioeconomic status and academic level that was similar to other minority groups who did not chose community college (Kurlaender, 2006). Despite having high Gaps, academic achievements, and high SAT scores the Latina/o students chose community college where as
other students, Whites and African Americans with the same profile did not and instead chose four-year universities (Kurlaender, 2006). The review of data concluded that the choice of community college for Latina/o is racially influenced (Kurlaender, 2006).

Although the majority of AB540 students attend smaller community colleges, they too are often misinformed or uninformed about AB540 policy (Huber & Malagon, 2007). Research suggests that community college counselors working with an immigrant population must understand the acculturation and assimilation process of immigrants, as well as tailor their counseling interventions with the immigrant students’ needs (Brilliant, 2010). Often these students are coping with immigration stress and have new and different challenges than their peers; counselors should facilitate the student’s adjustment into college and encourage the college to recognize the immigrant students’ cultural perspective (Brilliant, 2010).

In Huber and Malagon’s (2007) study of six AB540 college students, all participants had a form of social support that provided them guidance on how to navigate the college system. Three of the six interviewees were not made aware of AB540 policy while they were in high school. Two students in this study were attending a community campus and the majority of the students stated that there was a lack of information about AB540 among the faculty, staff, and other college officials. “The law plays a powerful role in the lives of undocumented students” (Abrego, 2008, p.710). Undocumented students have to continuously interpret the laws and in turn create a legal consciousness (Abrego, 2008), which is often done with support from each other versus formal support from their college. The results from that study indicated that undocumented Latina/o students felt legitimized as group with the passage of AB540; they were no longer identified with the stigma of the word “undocumented” and were now able to view themselves as part of a collective group, AB540 students (Abrego, 2008). Despite being a part of
a socially recognized group in college, Abrego (2008) emphasizes that AB540 students are still a minority within a minority and are “legitimatized” within a certain context that of being students within a California community college, outside of this environment; they continue to lack a legal identity.

The researchers cited in this literature review also discussed the ways in which institutions can provide support to Latina/o undocumented students. The barriers and obstacles these students encountered often occurred when they were confronting their illegality as adults and were trying to attend college. Because the community college is the first choice for these students, it is essential that these campuses find ways to facilitate the new California Dream Act process, as to insure that accurate information is disseminated and the issues that arose with the AB540 policy do not reoccur. Institutions should employ knowledgeable staff that are bilingual and are sensitive to undocumented students (Perez, 2010). Colleges could also create workshops to educate administrators, instructors, staff and counselors. Perez (2010) suggests that these workshops provide a historical and legal context, as well as provide “concrete procedures on to better serve undocumented students” (p.35). At the community college, students must also have college knowledge on the transferring process, which will now include a complex financial aid component for AB540 students. Gonzales (2010b.) also argues for clarity from the institutions regarding the multiple criteria and processes for students. With the California Dream Act, AB540 students will be entering the financial aid process and must communicate with the financial aid office on their college’s campus, which maybe the first time they have visited that

10 The literature cited was written before the passing of President Barack Obama’s federal policy, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) 2012. Many undocumented students are now able to receive temporary resident status and work permits, however not all students qualify and or can afford the $465 application process. The DACA will be discussed in the research findings and discussion.
Familial and peer support is also essential for students. College counselors should encourage AB540 students to seek out these student support groups and find supportive academic programs students can participate in (P. Perez, 2010; Perez, 2010; Brilliant, 2010; Ortiz & Hinojosa, 2010, Perez et al., 2010). Colleges should include families of Latina/o AB540 students in their design of student services, while also understanding that undocumented students’ parents may still reside in their country of origin and are not living with the student, therefore including peers and extended family is essential (Perez, 2010).

Utilizing these recommendations community colleges in California, especially in Los Angeles, should be providing a clear pathway for AB540 students to learn and utilize the new California Dream Act, and possibly the new Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. In 2013, preliminary data from CSAC for the fall of 2013 indicated that there was 29,200 applications in total and 7,465 students were awarded financial Cal Grants. Of those students receiving a Cal Grant, 6,014 were recent high school graduates (CSAC, 2013).

Summary

Studies on Latina/o AB540 students have focused on the multiple barriers students’ encounter when they try to access college. The most crucial barrier for these students is financial aid. As for many Latina/o students, financial aid is key factor in college retention, however for AB540 students the lack of financial aid is a key barrier because they are legally prevented from obtaining federal aid. Recently, the passage of the California Dream Act, has allowed AB540 students to apply for state financial aid and private scholarships. This shift in educational policy
required students to navigate the traditional student services’ system on their campus. Historically, AB540 students have not sought out certain student services and or departments, such as the financial aid office, because they were denied access to certain services based on their citizenship status. The California Dream Act provided these students an opportunity to have equal access to state financial aid, however it is unknown how students are accessing information about the new policy and how the California community colleges, who serve the largest portion of Latina/o AB540 students, are providing access to information, services and support for this transition.
Chapter Three: Methods

The process Latina/o AB540 community college students have undergone to access information and navigate the new California Dream Act was the focus of this study. Latina/o AB540 students are a distinctive sub-group of the large Latina/o student population within California community colleges; consequently, their identity is formed from different social and academic experiences. “Law plays a powerful role in the lives of undocumented students” (Abrego, 2006, p.720); therefore it was critical to understand how the students interpreted policy and navigated the policy in their daily lives.

To understand this process, both students and policy agents from various levels participated in the study. In this chapter, I discuss the research design, the site selection, research participants, the theoretical methods, and the data collection and analysis methods that were used in this study.

Research Design

This study was a case study that used a qualitative research design. A case study design was chose because it provided me, the researcher, to study a chronological process that both students and policy agents underwent (Yin, 2009). Qualitative methods are applicable when the experiences of a certain population (i.e. Latina/o AB540 students) are being explored (Maxwell, 2004). This research design was guided by the following research questions:

Research Questions:

1. How are policy agents of the California Dream Act making meaning of this Act?
   a. State level
   b. College district level
2. What is the Los Angeles Community College District doing to implement the policy at their campuses?

3. How are the Latina/o AB540 community college students making meaning of the policy on their campuses?

Through in-depth interviews, Latina/o AB540 community college students were able to discuss their own unique experiences of utilizing the California Dream Act on their campus, El Sol Community College. In depth-interviews were also conducted with policy agents, those that were charged with implementing the policy on the state level, district, and the campus level. The policy agents who implemented the California Dream Act discussed, how they understood the policy, the obstacles they believed study maybe encountering, and their implementation plan.

As a case study, it was vital to have interviews from multiple groups (students and policy agents). Interviewing is recommended to give participants the opportunity to provide historical accounts of their experiences (Maxwell, 2004; Creswell, 2009). With the use of interviews of both students and policy agents, the participants were able to provide rich data on their experiences. An alternative design using quantitative methods such as standardized surveys and comparison groups would not provide the exploratory information that will be obtained for this study. Rather, interviews with open-ended questions provided qualitative data to answer the study's research questions. These questions were aimed at understanding the sensemaking process as it affects the implementation of the California Dream Act and the utilization of the policy among Latina/o AB540 community college students. Additionally, the absence of a national
database of undocumented students who are attending college and are utilizing an ISRT policy (Flores, 2010), prevent using a control group or comparison group in this study.

Using the case study methodology I also conducted a review of documents from state the states’ California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO), the local community college district (LACCD), and El sol Community College (see Appendix I). With the use of interviews and the document review, I was able to examine the information and how that information was disseminated. The documents the students stated seeing are discussed in chapter four. The study provided information on how policy agents disseminated information to Latina/o AB540 community college students and the implementation process that was given by state and district policy agents to the campus level administrators in student services.

**Site Selection & Access**

The selected campus for this case study was El Sol Community College, which served a high portion of Latina/o AB540 students within LACCD. El Sol Community College is an urban community college located in Los Angeles County. El Sol’s student population is nearly 25,000, of which 78% are identified as Hispanic. Citizenship status on El Sol’s campus varies: 82.1% U.S. Citizen, 8.6% Permanent Resident, .6% Temporary Resident/Refugee, 3.0% Student Visa, and 5.8% other. According to Los Angeles Community College District enrollment data for 2011, there were 4, 519 students classified as AB540 students within the district and El Sol served 4% of those students.

El Sol community College did not have an identified AB540 office or counselor; instead the campus had one student organization for undocumented students. The student services’ division consisted of the following offices: admissions office, counseling, financial aid,
matriculation, EOP&S, and CalWorks. The campus had an institutional researcher that assisted me in gaining access to the campuses’ policy agents. I had to provide El Sol’s institutional researcher a copy of the UCLA IRB approval. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness emailed eligible administrators and staff in the student services division, to participate in the study. The email that was sent was my recruitment letter for El Sol policy agents (see Appendix F), which detailed the study’s criteria and provided information on how to contact me if they wanted to participate in the study. Once I conducted the first interview, I had more eligible students contacting me to participate in the study.

To gain access to students, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at El Sol, approved a recruitment flyer to be posted around the campus (see Appendix B). Students were directed to contact me via cell phone if they were interested in participating.

Participants

The study's participants included: 12 Latina/o AB540 community college students from El Sol Community College and eight policy agents from the campuses student services division. The policy agents from El Sol consisted of administrators and staff people. There was one administrator from the following: admissions, financial aid, EOP&S, and Cal Works. There was also one vice president that was interviewed. The staff interviewed consisted of: one full-time counselor, one part-time counselor, and one classified staff person in admissions. Although the recruitment email was sent to more twenty representative working within the students services division, these eleven were the one ones that responded and were willing to participate.

The student participants self-identified as Latina/o and were attending El Sol. The students had AB540 status on campus and identified themselves as current “users” of the
California Dream Act or “non-users” of the policy. The academic year students started El Sol varied. I had initially proposed recruiting students from the 2010 to 2012 academic years. Students within those years would have been on campus either before the California Dream Act or after. In an effort to recruit at least 12 students, I did not have start year as an eligibility requirement. However, the 12 students that did participate did represent the academic years of 2011 to 2014, which means there were students who enrolled before the policy and when the policy was enacted. These different academic periods allowed me to see if any changes had occurred before, during, and after the implementation of the policy. Students who enrolled before 2012 are participants who had to change status on campus. Those that enrolled in 2012 or after are students who were more likely to apply for the AB540 and California Dream Act simultaneously. The student participants were part of the first group or cohort to have received information from the state, district, and/or campus, regarding changes in financial aid and student status through the California Dream Act.

The study also included three participants total, from the state level and district level (LACCD). The state level policy agents will include: Gil Cedillo, Los Angeles City Councilman and author of the California Dream Act legislation and the AB540; his expertise on the issues of Latina/o AB540 students and his interpretation of how California Dream Act was intended to alleviate the students’ financial barriers, will provide this study with qualitative data on the sensemaking process of a policy maker.

At the state community college level, a Vice Chancellor from CCCCO was interviewed and at the district level, one of the directors from the financial aid department was interviewed. In studying the process an AB540 student underwent as they encountered new policy, it was vital to understand what the initial process state legislators had attended to occur.
Data Collection Methods

Semi-Structured Interviews

The research study used semi-structured interviews with participants. The interviews with both policy agents and students were guided by different interview protocols (see Appendix E & F). Using semi-structured interviews allowed the participants and the researcher, to focus on the sensemaking process of the California Dream Act and the actions the participants decided to take to navigate and utilize the policy at El Sol.

The methods used to collect interview data were culturally appropriate to the setting and the students, and were linguistically appropriate to meet the needs of the students. The students were asked if they wanted to conduct the interview in English or Spanish. All students chose English; at times, during the interview, some students spoke in Spanish when describing their experiences. The student participants described their sensemaking process they underwent during their attempt to access information, apply for the California Dream Act, and utilize the policy on campus.

Once the 12 interviews were completed, the recruitment flyer was removed from the research site. The interviews were conducted on El Sol’s campus, at a designated location provided by the campus and at a time selected by the student. Interviewing students on their college campus allowed them to be in their natural setting. Participants’ natural setting is “where participants experience the issue or the problem under study”; interviewing participants in this natural setting is one of the fundamentals of qualitative research (Creswell, 2009, p. 175). The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and were then transcribed. During the interview, I also took notes, which assist me in the transcription process. Per UCLA IRB, the students did not have to sign a consent form. They were provided a “student information letter”
that detailed the reasons for the study, how their participation assisted the study, and how the findings would contribute to the campus’s understanding of the California Dream Act Application process (see Appendix C. At the start of each student interview, students completed a demographic questionnaire that asked them timeline questions, such as their age, sex, pseudonym for the study, and when they enrolled into El Sol (see Appendix D).

Similar to the student interviews, the interviews with the policy agents from El Sol, occurred on campus at a location they designated. All the participants asked to be interviewed in their office(s). They were asked to sign a letter of consent (see Appendix G). The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and were then transcribed. The interviews with Vice Chancellor from CCCC0 and district representative were done via telephone and were recorded using my cell phone’s recorder. The interview with Congressman Gil Cedillo was in person at his Los Angeles City Hall office, however this interview was not recorded, per his request and he did sign the letter of consent. For this interview I had to strictly take notes.

**Demographic Questionnaire**

The demographic student questionnaire was designed to provide background information from the students. Questions included their age, pseudonym for the study, the year they enrolled into El Sol, and their transfer plans. This questionnaire consisted of nine questions that the student filled out before the interview protocol began. The data collected from this questionnaire is provided in chapter 4, Table 1.11

**Document Review**

I reviewed documents that were published by the California Department of Education, LACCD, and EL Sol Community College. I also referred to the legislation of Assembly Bill 540,

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11 See Appendix D
130 and 131, to understand the processes described by state policy agents. The documents that were reviewed consisted of flyers/brochures from the above-mentioned institutions and from nonprofit organizations that were known to be advocacy groups for undocumented students and immigrants. In order to discuss the results of this study, I carefully read the California Dream Act Application and Instructions found online on the California Student Aid Commission website. I also referred to the CSAC website, CCCC0 website and the El Sol’s website to view information that was mentioned by the participants, both students and policy agents.

**Data Analysis Methods**

**Interviews**

Using the qualitative methods framework, I coded the transcripts based on themes that emerged (Maxwell, 2005), which included themes that were prevalent across all interviews, with all participants and those that emerged that pertained to the participant group, i.e. students. The narratives (responses) were sorted into categories based on common themes identified by the different groups of participants. A summary of the findings that address the proposed study’s research questions were presented in detail in the results chapters and are discussed using the theoretical frameworks in the discussion chapter. The coding plan for this study was based on the initial themes that were presented in the interview protocols. For students, those themes were: understanding the policy and its value, accessing information, and navigating and utilizing the policy on campus. For policy agents, those themes were: describing experiences with the policy, their implementation vision, students’ ability to access information, and any foreseen obstacles.

Interviews were also analyzed and discussed using Yosso’s (2005; 2006) *community cultural wealth*, part of Latina/o Critical Race Theory and the sensemaking process. Through *community cultural wealth*, I was able to analyze the ways in which Latina/o students navigate...
the California Dream Act process on their campus, the resources they utilized to access information and the knowledge they bring with them into these processes. Using community cultural wealth allowed me to use a cultural competent theory when discussing Latina/o AB540 students.

Interviews were analyzed using the sensemaking (meaning making) process, which allowed me to understand the way students and policy agents were making meaning of the California Dream Act. For policy, sensemaking or meaning making attributes a person’s understanding of a policy based on their own knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). It is essential to identify how students and policy agents were making meaning of the policy because it affected how the process was implemented (for policy agents) and how the policy was accessed and utilized (for the students).

Documents

The documents were analyzed based on the following criteria: readability, use of multiple languages, clear steps to apply for the policy on campus or at a community college, clear identification of all the services provided through the policy, a list of the necessary documents that are needed to apply for the California Dream Act, information on where and how to process the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver, and contact information for the services and or identified people on campus who can assist with the process.

Theoretical and Methodological Concept

Using the theoretical and methodological concept of sensemaking, I examined how both AB540 Latina/o community college students and policy makers from the state level to the Los Angeles Community College District level, are making meaning (sensemaking) of the California Dream Act. In researching how educational policy, such as the California
Dream Act, affects the students who want to use the policy, it was important to begin with understanding how both students and policy makers were making meaning of the Dream Act. As discussed in chapter two, “sensemaking”, is the process by which “social actors make meaning of experiences or ideas...it is important as it precedes and frames decision-making and action” (Park, Yonezawa, Mehan, & Dantow, 2009, p.1). Collecting qualitative data from both students and policy agents allowed me to understand the actions these groups take in implementing and or utilizing the California Dream Act.

**Reliability & Validity**

Reliability in this study was measured through the checking of transcripts, assuring that coding procedures were analogous for each transcript and that codes were defined. Furthermore, this study’s design used similar methods and theoretical framework(s) as past studies of AB540 Latina/o college students, which increases reliability. Accuracy and validity were enhanced through data triangulation. The data was triangulated through interviews and document reviews that pertained to the research questions and were discussed by the interviewee. Gathering information from multiple sources about the implementation, navigation and utilization of the policy assisted in validating the information reported by the students. To enhance validity, all interviews, except one, were recorded and all were transcribed. Participants were allowed to review the transcript of his or her interview and make comments as needed. Participants had access to review their statements throughout the data analysis period; this was a form of *member checking*. Creswell (2009) describes member checking as a way to ensure validity by having participants engage in a continuous dialogue about the data they provided so that their meaning of the research problem is
accurately described and analyzed. To insure the document review is accurate, I had the authors of the documents validate the documents, when possible.

There were potential ethical issues because during the time of the study I was working at El Sol Community College and I have been an active advocate for the AB540 student club, however not all AB540 students participate in this student organization nor was I the faculty director for this organization. The student group also consists of many members, who I had not met. Also, I have not worked in any departments or offices within student services. During the time of the interviews (April, 2014), I was the director of the first year experience program at El Sol Community College. None of the participants were students in the program during the time I was the director. My role on campus did not influence or jeopardize the participation of the administrators or staff because I did not oversee or evaluate any other faculty or staff members in student services or academic affairs. During the analysis period (July, 2014), I was no longer employed full-time at El Sol; I began working at the Los Angeles Community College District in the Office of Student Success, which is part of the institutional effectiveness division. Therefore, my time on campus was limited and I had not seen any of the student participants on campus since the day of their interview.

Summary

The experiences of Latina/o AB540 students in community college continue to be understudied by educational researchers. This study attempted to identify the accessibility of a legal educational policy that applies specifically to the target sample. The study furthered its reach to a larger audience by examining state-level, district-level and college level implementation processes of the California Dream Act and the efficacy in meeting the needs of Latina/o students. The results from this study were discussed within the
theoretical framework of LatCrit and sensemaking. The results were discussed through the emerging themes in the study, along with the sensemaking process of both students and policy agents. In the following chapters, I provide the results of this study and its implications on the research of Latina/o AB540 community college students' transition into the California Dream Act.
Chapter 4: Findings from Student Interviews

There are an estimated 26,000 eligible AB540 students who are expected to file for the California Dream Act, with the largest percentage being Latina/o students who attend community college (PEW Hispanic Center, 2012). This qualitative case study examined the implementation and utilization process of the California Dream Act on one large urban community college campus, El Sol Community College. This study focused on the experiences Latina/o AB540 community college students had in applying for the California Dream Act and navigating this new policy on campus. Also included in the study were campus policy agents from the student services department who implemented the California Dream Act, an LACCD financial aid representative, a vice chancellor from the CCCCO, and the policy maker of the California Dream Act (AB 130 & AB131). The study’s design was based on the following research questions:

2. How are policy agents of the California Dream Act making meaning of this Act?
   a. State level
   b. College district level

2. What is the Los Angeles Community College District doing to implement the policy at their campuses?

3. How are the Latina/o AB540 community college students making meaning of the policy on their campuses?

These research questions were addressed through in-depth interviews with 12 Latina/o AB4540 students, eight policy agents from student services’ department, one policy agent from the college’s district office, one from the state chancellor’s office and the writer of AB130 and AB131, California Dream Act.

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In education, the students are the end user of state and district policies and therefore they were the unit of analysis in this case study. The results of the student interviews are presented in this chapter. This chapter is organized in the following way; first a description of each finding is presented and then evidence supporting each finding is provided. The evidence supporting the finding(s) is from student interviews and a review of online and printed documents.

The findings from the policy agents’ interviews and a description of the research site are presented in chapter six.

The most important findings regarding students’ meaning making of the California Dream Act are described. This includes students’ experiences in accessing information on the policy, navigating the application process, and utilizing the policy on campus. Students’ individual stories serve as a counterstory to the perceived processes that were described by the policy agents who were implementing the California Dream Act. The opportunity for a student of color to provide an account of his or her own lived experience is crucial to the methodology of the study, as it provides first hand accounts of students’ experiences. Yosso (2006) states that counterstorytelling within Critical Race Theory (CRT) Scholarship, “is the method of recounting the experiences and perspectives of racially and socially marginalized People of Color” (p. 10) and by using this method students are able to describe their lived experiences with the California Dream Act. First hand accounts of the process also provided an opportunity for understanding the validity of community cultural wealth, as the stories contributed to the collective group’s memory (Yosso, 2006).]
Findings from Student Interviews ¹²

The table below represents the demographics of the 12 students. The table includes the year the participant graduated from high school the year they began El Sol Community College, their Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals Status, and their California Dream Act status. The 12 students form two groups of students: six students who identified themselves as “not using” the California Dream Act and six students who identified themselves as “using the California Dream Act.” A “yes” in their Dream Act status indicated that they identified themselves as currently using the policy on campus and a “no” status indicated that the student did not identify himself or herself as currently using the policy.

Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>H.S. Graduation</th>
<th>Enrolled in College</th>
<th>Dream Act</th>
<th>DACA</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Summer 2012</td>
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</table>

- Student identified as having a “pending status.” For the purpose of the study he is identified as using the policy because California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) successfully accepted his application.

¹² Please refer to the Glossary of Terms (Appendix A) for definition on policies and acronyms.
The study’s recruitment flyer requested students to identify themselves in one of these two groups (see Appendix B). Although there were six students who identified themselves as “not using” the policy, all the participants were in fact using the California Dream Act, based on the policy’s legal definition of AB131 (see Appendix K). All the participants were using the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver during the time of their interview and therefore were actively using the California Dream Act.

There were four findings about students meaning making of the California Dream Act that were supported by two or more or more students:

**Finding 1**: Students definition of the California Dream Act varied. The group of students who identified themselves as not using the policy did so because they were not currently receiving a Cal Grant (six students). Therefore they equated receiving a Cal Grant to being a California Dream Act student. However, these six students were in fact using the California Dream Act because they received a BOG Fee Waiver, which is part of AB131. The BOG Fee Waiver is a state funded program that pays for community college students’ tuition fees if they meet eligibility requirements. In defining the policy, not all the students were aware that AB540 community college students were eligible for a Cal Grant (10 of the 12 students were aware).

**Finding 2**: Only one student of the 12 had successfully received a Cal Grant; the other students encountered obstacles that prohibited them from receiving their Cal Grant. The one student that is utilizing the policy to its fullest extent is receiving a BOG Fee Waiver and a Cal Grant. All the students qualified for the Cal Grant, however eight students encountered obstacles in navigating the policy on campus and believed it was due to a lack of knowledgeable staff within student services and lack of dissemination of accurate information from the campus at proper times, i.e. before application is submitted and afterwards.
Finding 3: Students accessed information regarding the California Dream Act from their AB540 peers at El Sol, their siblings, and online resources published by nonprofit organizations that were affiliated with immigration advocacy groups. The way students made meaning of the policy was based on the information they received from these various places.

Finding 4: All members of both student groups (users and non-users) were unsure how the California Dream Act would assist them when they transferred, i.e. they were unaware how the policy was being enacted at the four-year universities. Although some students discussed attending workshops at El Sol regarding the California Dream Act application, they do not recall receiving information about financial aid options for AB540 students who transfer to four-year universities.

The results of the student interviews are presented in relation to the findings. During the interviews, students provided useful information, descriptions, and shared their feelings regarding the application process. The most poignant quotes that supported the finding(s) are presented first as introduction to each section.

The survey’s questions were divided into three sections: Defining the California Dream Act, Accessing Information on Policies, and Navigating the Policy on Campus. The results of this survey are presented below within in the context of emerging themes within in each section.

Finding 1: Defining the California Dream Act

“Dream Act student is someone who is using their Cal Grant.” –Lucia

“The Dream Act is financial help through the state…but I am confused. I called CSAC and they said we are not allowed to get money because we are getting the fee waiver and the workshop here [El Sol] told me, ‘no’ we are allowed to get money.” –Adriana

“I have some friends that got money, but I don’t know how, I haven’t. I haven’t received anything.” -David
The students were asked to identify themselves as either “users” of the California Dream Act or “non-users.” Although the students defined the policy differently, they all had similar experiences in accessing, navigating, and utilizing the policy on campus. The students who identified themselves as “not using” the policy did so because they equated the policy with receiving a Cal Grant. These six students described the California Dream Act as a policy that allows AB540 students to receive a Cal Grant; because none of the students in the group had yet received a Cal Grant they did not identify themselves as “Dream Act students.” Lucia, a former executive board member of the student AB540 group on campus, stated that a “Dream Act students is someone who is using their Cal Grant.” When a Cal Grant is awarded, students are able to choose whether they want to use their Cal Grant. Lucia, similar to other interviewees in this group of “non-Dream Act” users, did not discuss the BOG Fee Waiver as part of the California Dream Act, nor did they mention the access to state funded scholarships as part of the new policy. Another former member of the AB540 student group, Adriana, stated that she was not “really sure” what having the California Dream act meant. The Dream Act is financial help through the state…but I am confused. I called CSAC and they said we are not allowed to get money because we are getting the fee waiver and the workshop here [El Sol] told me, ‘no’ we are allowed to get money.” Adriana’s quote is an example of how students received different definitions; for now, she believes that having a Cal Grant means that you are using the California Dream Act.

There were two other students within this group; Adam and Lloyd who were unaware that AB540 students could receive a Cal Grant, until they received emails from CSAC stating that they had not submitted a GPA Verification Form. When asked if he was receiving the California Dream Act, Lloyd replied, “The Cal Grant is the Dream Act but the fee waiver is like
paying tuition, it’s not like financial aid.” Lloyd had been paying out-of-state tuition since 2008, only taking a few classes at a time. “I didn’t tell anyone about my status,” he said. He continued to discuss how he was shy and then embarrassed to tell anyone that he was not a citizen.

Adam was also unaware that AB540 students could receive the Cal Grant; he initially thought it was only for when a student transfers. However, he recently received an email from CSAC stating he needed to send his GPA Verification Form. “I didn’t know we had to send that, nobody told me about that form. If I send it, what do I get,” he asked. I responded to him, stating that the form is part of his application for a Cal Grant. Although he received the email two months ago in March, he has not asked anyone at El Sol (staff members or faculty) about the GPA Verification Form.

Although the group of students identified themselves as currently not using the California Dream Act, they were actually using the policy because they all had received a BOG Fee Waiver and were part of the EOP&S program. The difference between this group and the group who were identified users reflected the way they defined the policy.

The group of six students that identified themselves as “using the California Dream Act” defined the policy as including the BOG Fee Waiver, access to scholarships, and or receiving Cal Grants. Despite providing the accurate definition of the policy, these students also had obstacles in obtaining their Cal Grant (four out of six) and two students believed that the Cal Grant was only given when you transfer to a four-year university. One of these two students, David stated that he considered himself using the policy because he had a BOG Fee Waiver and was in EOP&S. However, in regards to the Cal Grant, he stated, “It is my understanding they hold the money and they give it to you after you transfer. So, I don’t know if I go to UCLA I’m going to be able to use that money?” I asked David if he knew of anyone (AB540 student) who was receiving
money. He replied, “I have some friends that got money, but I don’t know how, I haven’t. I haven’t received anything.” He was unsure if these friends had received Cal Grants or were receiving some other type of aid, i.e. scholarships. David has not inquired with the Financial Aid Office about the Cal Grant.

Romero also had a similar understanding. Romero, who is an active member of the campus’s AB540 student group, stated that the Cal Grant is for when you transfer to the four-year university. “That’s what they told us,” he said. Romero is referring to an early California Dream Act workshop hosted by the financial aid office and the AB540 student group. At that workshop in the beginning of school year (September, 2012) he was told that Cal Grants were for the four-year universities. He stated that it was the summer program in 2012 and the first AB540 student activities group meeting he attended that provided him with information. Romero is correct; at the onset of the California Dream Act in June 2012 many AB540 students at El Sol believed that community college students were not eligible for the Cal Grant. As a faculty member at that time, I too remember that CSAC and preliminary flyers from their website did not indicate that community college students would be eligible for a Cal Grant. In addition, El Sol’s financial aid office was not ready to provide the campus or its students with information regarding the policy, an issue that is discussed in the next chapter. Both Romero and David had applied for the California Dream Act during its early stages. David stated that he had applied “multiple times” because he had not heard any response from CSAC or El Sol.

Only one student from the entire study of 12 students, Jose, has successfully received his Cal Grant. In discussing his application he stated that he received assistance from the

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13 According to the CSAC publication “Guide for the California Dream Act 2012-2013” it stated that AB540 community college students would be eligible to receive Cal Grants for the 2013-2014 academic year.
immigration lawyer that his family hired to file the DACA applications for himself and his two 
sisters. However, none of his sisters received a Cal Grant and they too are attending El Sol. One 
of his sisters is his twin sister. “I have the Cal Grant, but my sisters don’t. I don’t know why, we 
have exactly the same information, one of my sisters is my twin and she doesn’t have Cal 
Grant!” I asked Jose if his twin sister has gone to the Financial Aid Office to ask about the status 
of her application. He said she has not gone. This was an important finding that addressed a 
larger issue, which is the actual processing of applications that is done between CSAC and the 
campus Financial Aid Office. The majority of the students (eleven) began El Sol in 2012 or 
earlier when the policy commenced. Only one student, Emily enrolled into El Sol in 2014. 
Emily defined the AB540 policy and the California Dream Act simultaneously. She believed that 
AB540 was the name given to the undocumented students and the California Dream Act is what 
they use to pay in state tuition in the form of a BOG Fee Waiver and a Cal Grant. Emily has not 
gone to any AB540 student group meetings, although she has seen their flyers around campus. 
She has gone directly to the financial aid office for assistance and although she has found the 
experience exhausting, she is continuing to submit paper work to them so that she can receive a 
Cal Grant this semester. 

Students within both groups stated that they applied for the Cal Grant but still had not 
received it due to obstacles in the application process. These are obstacles are discussed in the 
next section.

Finding 2: Obstacles in Obtaining the Cal Grant

“I don’t understand what’s going because I went online to check my status, there were like three 
things that they have to give me money for and it said ‘non-eligible’, ‘eligible,’ and ‘not given 
the money.’ I didn’t understand did I get money?” - Stephanie

“I have a Cal Grant, but the check was not released. There’s some confusion. I have to prove to 
the campus I am the same person that CSAC has.” - Emily
“I think they [Financial Aid Office] needs to be more prepared...maybe there’s not a high percentage of AB540 students, but I think that there is, it’s just that they [AB540 students] are kind of afraid to ask for help.” – Lucia

One of the reasons for students having different definitions of the California Dream Act is because some of the students received inaccurate information or did not receive sufficient amount of information, which resulted in them having obstacles in navigating the policy on campus. Only one student in the study, Jose, had received the Cal Grant and two other students, Stephanie and Emily, had come close to receiving their Cal Grant disbursement. Stephanie has been carrying her financial aid award letter she received online with her for a few months. “I don’t understand what’s going on because I went online to check my status, there were like three things that they have, to give me money for and it said ‘non-eligible’, ‘eligible,’ and ‘not given the money.’ I didn’t understand; did I get money?” She said she is not sure what it means or who to go to, i.e. which office, to ask if she does or does not have a Cal Grant. Because Stephanie is receiving a BOG Fee Waiver she said she is okay financially and has a part-time job to assist her family. When asked if she would find the extra money useful, she said “of course” because she is currently giving her mother her earnings.

Emily had also come close to receiving her Cal Grant funds; they were dispersed. Her CSAC online file states that she has been awarded for this academic year, 2013-2014; however, her check has not been sent by CSAC because of a student identity issue. Emily must prove her identity to CSAC and El Sol; this problem arose when she used her DACA social security number on the California Dream Act application. This is a common issue that the El Sol Financial Aid Director addresses in the subsequent chapter.

These students’ obstacles were due to a lack of information and a lack of assistance after they received notifications from CSAC regarding their Cal Grant. Emily and Stephanie did have
Cal Grants that were “pending,” however they needed guidance to complete the process so they could receive their funds. Other students described obstacles they encountered within the Financial Aid Office.

**Financial Aid Office**

Nine students discussed their encounters with El Sol’s Financial Aid Office in their attempt to complete their California Dream Act application and or make corrections to their application so that it could be processed and they could receive their Cal Grant(s). There were various examples of misinformation or lack of information that each of the students experienced with staff members at the Financial Aid Office. For example, Lindsey had spoken to someone at El Sol’s financial aid office who told her that the “Dream Act” and the “Fee Waiver” are two different things. Although the BOG Fee Waiver has an additional form that must be filed on campus, both the Cal Grant and the BOG Fee Waiver are part of the California Dream Act policy. Lindsey described her first interaction with a staff member; “Some girl at Financial Aid said it [Cal Grant] is for when we transfer. But she wasn’t really aware of what I was asking. I really don’t know what grants I am eligible for…I don’t know what a Cal Grant should look like.” Lindsey was not aware of the GAP Verification Form and therefore has not submitted the form.

When AB540 students submitted a California Dream Act application they were automatically applying for a Cal Grant, however without submitting a GPA Verification Form, the application was incomplete. Submitting the GPA verification form was the most discussed obstacle students encountered. Eight students discussed not receiving their Cal Grant due to not submitting a GPA Verification Form. The Financial Aid Office does submit the form on the student’s behalf if the student has completed 12 units or more. However, for the eight students
who did not receive their Cal Grant due to the GPA verification form, the financial aid office did not automatically send the form despite these students having 12 units or more; the majority of the students in this study (11 total) have 12 units or more.

Within this group, there were five students who made multiple visits to the Financial Aid Office in an attempt to complete or correct their application. One of these students, Adriana, had visited the Financial Aid Office and the Admissions Office numerous times, trying to understand who was responsible for assisting her with the GPA Verification Form. “The campus made a mistake and didn’t send it [GPA verification form], so I went to Admissions and they said they did. Everyone is playing the blame game. Admissions blames financial aid, financial aid blames admissions. Then I called CSAC, they said they didn’t get it and now it’s late.”

Another student, Lloyd had a similar experience. He had made multiple visits to the Financial Aid Office to discuss the message he was receiving from the online application. “I tell them [Financial Aid Office] that I am AB540 and I applied for the Dream Act and there’s a huge stop sign [online symbol] that says go to [your] Financial Aid Office. They just gives me a blank face, like ‘what do you want me to do.’” Lloyd said he has given up trying to explain to the staff members at the Financial Aid Office what his online application says.

Similarly, David was trying to work with the Financial Aid Office on his California Dream Act Application, but has become doubtful of their ability to assist him. “You really want to get that money or get whatever you can get and it really makes you feel frustrated that you are supposed to go to get help an they are tell you ‘oh well, we don’t know’.” He also stated that he felt that the office was not concerned about the obstacles he was encountering nor was the staff researching the answers for him. “I don’t trust them anymore.” David does not trust that the information he is receiving from the office is accurate. When the California Dream Act was first
announced in June 2012, he went to the Financial Aid Office to find out more about the policy. He told me that the office was unaware about the policy and therefore they could not provide him with clear directions. He went numerous times to “check” to see if anyone in the office knew about the policy; they continued to tell him to comeback another time. In September 2012, he made his last visit to the Financial Aid Office; he printed out the directions for the online California Dream Act from the CSAC website and brought it to the office to educate the staff about the policy, however he felt that they were still not ready to help him.

These experiences with “front of the line” staff are similar to those experienced by other AB540 students. Gonzales (2008) stated that numerous students in his study reported receiving a great deal of misinformation within student services’ offices at the community colleges, especially from those staff members that students were in direct contact with them. When AB540 students do attempt to navigate these offices, they may experience anxiety in speaking to offices because student affairs personnel may not be adequately trained (Perez et al., 2010); this is similar to what David had experienced.

Adriana was another student who used her DACA social security number on her application. She resubmitted her application and according to CSAC there is now a discrepancy between the parent income information she previously provided and the more recent income total. “I called CSAC, they said I put the wrong number [for parent’s income].” She has gone to the Financial Aid Office for assistance, however Sylvia, the financial aid counselor who replaced Alberto, is not available on Mondays. Adriana stated, “I can only come on Monday to try to fix this….I work all the other days.” The unavailability of assistance has caused an additional obstacle for Adriana.
It appeared that the needs of these students were not being met. Two other students, Lucia and Adriana, discussed their feelings that the Financial Aid Office did not understand or recognize the issues AB540 students were encountering with the online California Dream Act application. They expressed concerns that no one explained to them what the steps were after an AB540 student submits the online application, i.e. troubleshooting the online process. Lindsey described how the office was organized as representation of how they are not supportive or aware of AB540 students’ needs. “There are windows, usually with student workers at them. They don’t know about AB540 so they tell you to come back when that person [Sylvia] is here.” She described how there are only a few computers and they are utilized for FAFSA purposes, meaning the computers were set to the FAFSA website. She believes that when a student needs assistance with FAFSA they could easily retrieve their FAFSA application from those computers to show the financial aid staff, therefore receiving assistance in navigating their online application. She suggested that if the Financial Aid Office wanted to help, they could provide computers with the California Dream Act application set as the default. “There should [also] be a window just for the California Dream Act and the person at that window would know the answers.”

There were four students of the 12 that discussed going to Alberto, the financial aid counselor who was assigned to assist AB540 students in 2012, but was reassigned to another campus for the 2014-2015 academic year. These students worked with Alberto on troubleshooting their online application, however none of them have received a Cal Grant to date. Since Alberto’s departure, these four students have not gone to visit with Sylvia, the financial aid counselor who is now unofficially charged with assisting AB540 students. “I don’t really know who the new person is,” said Lucia. “Now that he [Alberto] is not there I don’t go to
the Financial Aid [Office]. Now, if I have a question, I ask my supervisor or the counselor who works in the office where I work.”

These students’ experiences within the Financial Aid Office have caused additional obstacles, however these obstacles can be resolved. Some of the students decided to stop going to the office for assistance because they felt that they were not being assisted to nor were they successful in receiving their Cal Grant. The way students were navigating the process stemmed from the information they received or accessed regarding the policy. The third finding describes the multiple ways students in this study have accessed information regarding the California Dream Act.

Finding 3: Students accessed information regarding the California Dream Act from their AB540 peers at El Sol, their siblings, and online resources published by nonprofit organizations that were affiliated with immigration advocacy groups.

“I didn’t go to the workshops; I guess I was shy cause of my status, my situation. I wouldn’t be serious about it.” Lloyd

“When I got here I didn’t know what to do or what to ask. I had to pay a lot for two classes, when I asked the office they told me to go to admissions, and they explained the affidavit.” Alesandro

“I checked online first, to see if you guys [El Sol] worked with AB540 students. I told them [admissions] about my status and they told me what I had to do” Emily

This study focused on how students made meaning of the policy; the way they interpret the policy affects their actions in navigating the policy on campus. To understand how they were interpreting the policy, students were asked about where and how they accessed information regarding the California Dream Act. In reviewing their responses, they began their stories about accessing information by first describing their experiences in disclosing their status to someone on campus. As noted previously, for AB540 students to access information about financial policies that pertain to them, they have to first disclose their status to a staff or faculty member.
These experiences of disclosing status are discussed first in this section, followed by the results regarding accessing information.

The ways in which students had accessed information are categorized in the following: Information from High School, Familial Support, AB540 Student Activities Group, Financial Aid Workshops, and Community Resources.

**Disclosing Status on Campus**

Disclosing their undocumented status is the first step for many AB540 students in accessing information (Gonzales, 2010). Students approached their disclosure about their “undocumented” status to El Sol in a variety of ways and at different times, i.e. not all students disclosed their status upon enrolling into the college. Some students were not compelled to disclose their status until there was a financial need to do so, such as to apply for AB540 status.

Table 2 illustrates to whom the students disclosed their status to and the occurrence that lead them to disclose their status.

Table 2.

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<th>Participant’s Name</th>
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<td>Lucia</td>
<td>H.S. Counselor</td>
<td>Was charged out of state tuition</td>
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<td>Lloyd</td>
<td>EL Sol Math Instructor</td>
<td>Was paying out of state tuition &amp; could no longer continue to pay</td>
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<td>Romero</td>
<td>El Sol’s Summer Program staff</td>
<td>Staff addressed issue first</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>El Sol’s Summer Program staff</td>
<td>Staff addressed issue first</td>
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The person(s) or office the students decided to disclose to varied, which indicated that there was no particular office or person that an AB540 student at El Sol was directed to go to. Only one student, Emily, went directly to the Admissions Office to request an AB540 affidavit. She had read El Sol’s website, which instructs AB540 students to apply for the AB540 affidavit at the Admissions Office when they are applying to the campus. Emily stated, “I checked online first, to see if you guys [El Sol] worked with AB540 students. I told them [admissions] about my status and they told me what I had to do.” The table also indicates the importance of special programs on campus and particular people on campus that students felt comfortable in disclosing their status.

The majority of the students discussed their status to the staff of one of El Sol’s summer programs. There were three simultaneous summer programs on campus that year (2012) and the six students participated in one of the various programs. All six stated that the AB540 policy was...
discussed in the summer program(s) as well as the topic of undocumented students, before they self-disclosed. Since the programs discussed the issue of being an undocumented student first, students felt comfortable disclosing their status in order to receive proper information. “Not until I came to El Sol’s summer program did I know there was an affidavit or form,” stated Lindsey. After the summer programs, through adult mentors (program staff) and by creating a network amongst themselves, these participants were able to access information. Researchers have suggested that AB540 students are likely to accesses information together as a group and with the assistance of a few trusted adult mentors (see also Abrego, 2006; Chavez, et al., 2007; Gonzales, 2010b, 2011; Perez, et al., 2010; Seif, 2011). The students who participated in these summer programs stated that they continue to visit the staff and faculty of these programs in regards to the California Dream Act.

For Lloyd, he disclosed his status to his instructor, whom he trusted. “I was in danger last year of not continuing, I owed $800.” When he told his instructor that he would be unable to return to El Sol because he lacked financial aid due to his status, his instructor asked him if he was receiving the California Dream Act. “He told me to apply, said that its financial assistance.” Lloyd discussed how he was always intimidated to ask for assistance from any of El Sol’s offices and from other students. “I knew of other undocumented students, but I never said I was one…I saw the flyers for the AB540 student activities group, but I was just too shy to go.” Lloyd’s experience is comparable to those of other AB540 Latino/a students in past studies. Participants in Huber & Malagon’s (2007) study indicated that they did not receive information about the AB540 policy until after they began taking courses at their community college. Being unaware of policies, such as AB540 may have caused the policy to have a minimal affect (Chavez, Soriano, and Oliverez, 2007).
Although the students had different accounts to whom and when they disclosed their status, all students had to request an AB540 affidavit from the Admissions Office; therefore all students had to disclose their status again to an Admissions Office staff member. An undocumented student that qualifies for AB540 status must also file the affidavit before they apply for the California Dream Act. However, in accessing information from the Admission Office, no participants stated that the admissions office told them about the California Dream Act. The role of the Admissions Office is discussed in the following chapter.

**High School Experiences**

In discussing accessing information, I asked the participants if they had inquired about their college options while they were in high school. The majority of the students knew the term “AB540” in that it referred to undocumented students, however they were not aware of the AB540 affidavit that had to be filed at the Admissions Office in order to have the AB540 status on campus (eleven students). Once more, the student(s) had to disclose their status to someone at the school in order to receive information regarding policies that affected them.

Lucia described the first time she learned about her status and its effect on her college aspirations. “In my senior year [2011] a teacher had the class do college applications. At the time I didn’t know about being undocumented or about papers. They were asking for a social and I didn’t know what a social looked like. So I talked to my professor and then she told me ‘you don’t have a social?’ and I told her no. She sent me to sit down and then I started reading books while they did their applications.” Lucia’s description is similar to those found in previous studies regarding AB540 students’ experiences in high school. Gonzales and Chavez (2012) described how undocumented students “awaken to a nightmare” when they become aware of
their status and their college aspirations must change as they recognize the circumstance their illegality has brought upon them.

Lucia had planned to attend California State University, Monterey Bay but after she was accepted she realized she would not receive financial aid because she did not have a social security number, which the FAFSA asked for. She decided to disclose her status to her high school college counselor but he did not tell her about the AB540 policy. “I don’t think he knew it’s like he wanted to help but didn’t know how.” She then disclosed her status to another counselor and he was able to give her information about the AB540 policy. “He told me I was an AB540 and when that happened it was kind of disappointing because I wasn’t able to go where I wanted to go.” The counselor did not mention AB540 policy as it pertained to the CSU and the UC system nor did he tell her she had to file an affidavit at the community college.

When she began attending El Sol she assumed that the college would know she was an AB540 student and charge her in-state tuition. “The school told me I owed them over $1,000 and I couldn’t register till I paid.” She returned to see her high school counselor; he called El Sol and they explained to him that Lucia had to file an affidavit.

Similarly, Adriana recalled asking for assistance from a group of UCLA mentors who visited her high school’s senior class. “They guided me through the whole college process, but since they never faced that problem they were trying to connect me to other friends with the similar issue, but I needed the money right on the spot.” Adriana had been accepted to UC Riverside but was unaware that she needed a social security number to apply for financial aid; she was unaware about the AB540 policy. When UC Riverside asked her for a deposit to hold her place, she then realized she could not afford to attend college. “I was in the top 4% of my class. I graduated with honors, but when I got the admission letter they said they needed a
deposit and for on-campus housing, that’s when everything came (she cries), I realized, ‘oh wow’ I didn’t know that, I didn’t know the social would be important; it was never an issue in [high] school, no one asks.”

Some students, such as David, Lindsey, and Jose attended college information nights with their parents, but their high school counselors only focused on the FAFSA and other types of aid they were not eligible for. These three students stated that there were other AB540 eligible students at the meeting, however the topic of being an undocumented student, being an AB540 student or the topic of the California Dream Act never arose; therefore the students left the meeting without information about the policies.

These high schools counselors were unaware about the policies that affected undocumented students. The participants’ experiences with high school counselors were similar to those found in previous studies regarding dissemination of college information from counselors (see also McDonough & Calderone, 2006). The counselors functioned as gatekeepers of college knowledge. Student participants in Gonzales (2010b.) study had difficulty in accessing information from their high school’s staff because to do so they had to trust the staff member, so that they could disclose their status; the first step in accessing information.

Lastly, one student (Lloyd) was told by his high school teacher that he could not go to college because he was “illegal” and therefore could not receive financial aid. He said that after his experience with that teacher, he did not believe college was an option for him. A few years later, he was told by his soccer coach that he could be a student at a community college and play soccer there. Lloyd came to El Sol for soccer but when he arrived he did not disclose his status to anyone, which resulted in him paying out-of-state tuition. Similar studies have found that AB540 students or undocumented students encountered obstacles when they tried to access information
about their higher education options from high school personnel (Gonzales, 2008, 2010, 2010b; Contreras, 2009; Abrego, 2008). Gonzales (2010) found that information regarding educational policies, such as AB540, was often withheld by high school administrators or staff who only disseminated information to students who they perceived as “college ready” undocumented students. In the traditional form of tracking, AB540 students who were tracked as college going students were more likely to receive information about these educational policies. This lack of information and misinformation students received was a prelude to them enrolling into El Sol Community College.

**Familial Support**

There were two students who sought out information from their siblings who attend El Sol. Stephanie had an older sister who attends El Sol and Jose had two sisters who began attending when he enrolled. For Stephanie, she stated that she was “lucky” to have her sister guide her through the AB540 affidavit process, the BOG Fee Waiver, and the California Dream Act application. She took home the BOG Fee Waiver so that her sister could assist her in answering questions regarding their family’s income. In terms of filling out the forms and submitting them, Stephanie felt the process was easy. Still, she is one of the students whose Cal Grant is pending because she has not responded to CSAC’s award letter.

As discussed earlier, Jose is the only student in the study with a Cal Grant. Although his two sisters do not have a Cal Grant, he feels that they have supported each other in this process and at times his twin sister assisted him with other college processes such as registering for classes and ordering text books.
The participants discussed accessing information from the AB540 student activities group on campus. El Sol has one AB540 student group on campus, which provides workshops and weekly group meetings. Their faculty advisor is a full-time counselor. Six of the twelve participants were active members in the group. The AB540 student group provided information to its members regarding the California Dream Act. Within the group of active members, two students were on the executive board during the 2012-2013 school year when the California Dream Act was enacted. The six students who were members (Jesus, David, Romero, Lindsey, Lucia, and Adam) recalled having workshops for the California Dream Act amongst themselves during the fall of 2012. These students also filed their application in June 2012, when CSAC first released the application online.

Lucia, who was one of the former executive board members, described how the group asked for assistance from El Sol’s Financial Aid Office. “We went to financial aid and asked for a workshop, someone that could help us with it.” That is when the Financial Aid Office identified Alberto as the counselor to attend the workshop that the group was having in December 2012. Previous studies on AB540 students have found that AB540 student groups, support groups, or political action groups have served as supportive networks to students (Chavez et al., 2007). Despite these particular students being at the forefront, only one of them received a Cal Grant. Also, Romero who continues to be an executive board
member in the group was not aware that he or other AB540 students in community college were eligible for a Cal Grant. The student group did provide support to the students. “Entre nosotros, nos ayudamos” (amongst ourselves we help each other),” stated David. Though the student group did not always provide accurate information; it is unknown where the executive board members and their academic advisor accessed information. How information is distributed amongst the El Sol staff and offices is discussed in the next chapter.

These examples of how some of the members of the AB540 student group felt responsible provide information to the AB540 students at El Sol was disconcerting to one of the other participants. Alesandro was adamant in voicing his concern about the AB540 student group at El Sol being a “branch” to the campus. “It’s not fair to say that they [AB540 student group] have the responsibility for us. Our main objective is to be a student.” He was concerned that the group was taking on the responsibility that the El Sol administrators should be doing, such as assisting students with the California Dream Act application, BOG Fee Waiver form, and with the DACA. Since these forms contained valuable and personal information, he said he was reluctant to ask his fellow students for assistance. “What if they messed up or they had the wrong information? What am I supposed to say; a student helped me?” He believed that El Sol purposefully places the responsibility on the group in order not to serve the AB540 students. “I went to ask them [counseling office] if there was someone for us to talk to, like an AB540 counselor. They said yes but that I would have to make an appointment and that would take two weeks. The counseling office recommended me to go to AB540 student group.” When Alesandro said that the office told him there was a “counselor for AB540 students” I asked him if he knew who that was. At the time of the interview, El Sol did not have a designated or formal AB540
student counselor. The counseling office was referring to the faculty advisor for the AB540 student group. The students who participated in the AB540 student group also participated in the workshops the Financial Aid Office began hosting in January 2013. Students attended these workshops to access more information regarding the California Dream Act and other opportunities they had as AB540 students.

**Financial Aid Workshops**

Students were asked if they had accessed information from any Financial Aid Office workshops and or did they speak to anyone at El Sol’s Office of Financial Aid about the California Dream Act, BOG Fee Waiver, and or the Cal Grant. During the 2012-2013 school year, the financial aid office had its first workshop about the California Dream Act, which took place on January 9, 2013 and another one on February 20, 2014. Ten participants were on campus during that time, however only two, Lucia and Lindsey, remembered going to the January workshop. Lindsey stated “I went to the workshop but I had more questions and they said they were sorry that I have to go back [to the office] another time. I have gone four times. Why should I even go in there, they are not going to help me” Lucia recalled the event, stating that Alberto discussed the “steps to the application, but when it came to students needing actual help doing it on the computer, they really couldn’t help.” It appeared to her that it was difficult for Alberto and the Financial Aid staff to go through the procedural online steps because many students had individual questions regarding their situations.

During the 2013-2014 academic year the financial aid office continued having their general workshops for all students and had only one workshop about the California Dream Act during the fall semester. There were three students who recalled attending that workshop: Stephanie, Alesandro, and Adriana. They stated that the workshops were overcrowded with
AB540 students. Alesandro stated, “There were a lot of people and not enough help. I think there are a lot of AB540 students then the school realizes.” Adriana said that there were so many students, some were standing in the back and others were standing outside the door trying to listen to Alberto. “At the workshops Arturo was getting bombarded and some of his coworkers were trying to help but they had to keep asking him for help,” stated Adriana. Although she and Stephanie went to the workshop, both of them stated that they needed more assistance. The workshops provided a way for students to access information; still many of the obstacles students encountered required them to speak to someone one on one in the Financial Aid Office. For those students who went to these workshops they did not discuss receiving information on “next steps” after they had submitted their online application. They also did not receive information on how the California Dream Act was being implemented at the four-year universities.

Students also accessed information from community agencies and online resources, which often supplemented the information they received from the AB540 student group and the Financial Aid Office’s workshops.

**Community Resources**

The majority of the online resources students used were from nonprofit organizations located within the Los Angeles community and the state. At the end of the interview I asked students to list the websites they frequented for information regarding the California Dream Act. Students also identified informational flyers that were published by CSAC, COFEM, CA. Dream Team L.A., CA. Dream Network, CHIRLA and El Sol. Table 3 lists the names of these online resources and printed materials, and the number of students that identified them as a source of information.
Table 3.

*Documents (flyers) and Websites*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Document</th>
<th>Type of Document</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “The California Act: Financial aid is available to AB540 Students attending a California Community College”</td>
<td>Printed flyer</td>
<td>CSAC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “You can afford college!”</td>
<td>Printed flyer</td>
<td>CA. Dream Network</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “California Dream Act Workshop”</td>
<td>Printed announcement</td>
<td>El Sol Financial Aid Office</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. “10 things you need to know about the California Dream Act”</td>
<td>Printed flyer</td>
<td>CSAC</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Financial Aid student’s pathway to success guide</td>
<td>Printed Brochure</td>
<td>El Sol Financial Aid Office</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. CHIRLA website <a href="http://www.chirla.org">www.chirla.org</a></td>
<td>Online source &amp; advocacy group</td>
<td>CHIRLA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. CA. Dream Network (CDN) <a href="http://www.cadreamnetwork.org">www.cadreamnetwork.org</a></td>
<td>Online resource &amp; advocacy group</td>
<td>CHIRLA</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. COFEM <a href="http://www.cofem.org">www.cofem.org</a></td>
<td>Nonprofit organization</td>
<td>COFEM</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the students accessed the information on the CSAC’s website, which hosts the California Dream Act application, [www.caldreamact.org](http://www.caldreamact.org). Eight students recognized at least one of the flyers that were presented from CHIRLA\textsuperscript{14}, California Dream Network, Dream Team Los Angeles, and COFEM\textsuperscript{15}. After the interviews, I had flyers on display. These flyers and El Sol’s AB540 Financial Aid Office brochure were on display to assist students in recalling possible promotional materials they may have seen in the past. The most recognized flyer was the “Steps to the CA. Dream Act,” published by the California Dream Network, which is a branch of CHIRLA and the AB540 student advocacy group “Wise Up.” CHIRLA started the grassroots organizations Wise Up, a committee of undocumented high school students and the California Dream Network, which consists of undocumented college students.

The “Steps to the CA. Dream Act” flyer described both pieces of legislation AB130 and AB131, which are the assembly bills that constitute the California Dream Act. The flyer tells students what they qualify for; this information is accurate (see Figure 1.).

\textsuperscript{14} Coalition for Human Immigration Rights of Los Angeles

\textsuperscript{15} Consejo de Feraciones Mexicanas en Norteamerica
This flyer was published online on November 2011 and described the eligibility requirements and definitions for all the educational policies affecting undocumented students in the state: AB540, AB130 and AB131. There were five students who were familiar with this flyer; they had also sought out services at CHIRLA for their DACA application.

Although the flyer is accurate in regards to the legislation, there is pertinent procedural information that is missing, such as sending GPA verification to CSAC in order to receive the Cal Grant. The flyer also states that students may qualify for CalWorks (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids), which is a state funded program for those who qualify for state sponsored social services. According to the California Department of Social Services’ website, noncitizens who qualify for social services include immigrants who are lawful permanent residents (possess green card), have current refugee status, and holders of “U” or “T” visa. It does not specify if AB540 student could apply, however AB540 students are not eligible for lawful permanent resident. Also, it does not specify if their DACA qualifies them for
CalWorks; it is likely that due to the DACA being granted to undocumented students for work purposes, it will not qualify them for social services. Of the seven written paper flyers that were reviewed for this study, four of them stated that AB540 students could qualify for CalWorks, including El Sol’s AB540 financial aid brochure.

In reviewing the documents and the websites from organizations, I found that they provided students with information about their legal rights and educational rights for college. All the websites and flyers (see Appendix I) stated that students should check with their campus’s financial aid office for eligibility criteria. The information provided was general information but many of these resources lacked the navigational steps that students needed to take after they submitted their California Dream Act application. Only the flyers from CSAC, Dream Team L.A., and El Sol’s Financial Aid Office stated that students needed a GPA verification. Students did return to the CSAC website to find information on the application and many also visited the CHIRLA website. For those students that visited COFEM and CHIRLA offices, they stated they did so because of the DACA, however they were also provided information about the California Dream Act application. Students frequented the website for information, including the flyer in Figure 1.

In regards to the DACA there were no published documents created for students or websites that recommended AB540 students should not use the Social Security numbers they received through DACA on their California Dream Act application because the DACA social security numbers are temporary and for work purposes, hence they are not linked to any identifying information. There were three students that discussed having put their DACA social security numbers on their application, which caused confusion for CSAC and El Sol’s financial aid office; this is discussed in the following section.
Students were shown El Sol’s Financial Aid Office’s AB540 brochure but none of the 12 students said they recognized the brochure. Lucia stated that the brochure must be new because she has never seen one specifically for AB540 students before and she has frequented the financial aid office to find information that she could share with the AB540 student group.

**Finding 4: Uncertain how the California Dream Act is used at the four-year university**

“I’m not really sure how it works. I think it [CA. Dream Act] will help me but I don’t think it will cover everything” - Adam

“I think it will help pay for books and maybe some of my tuition, but I am not really sure” - Carlos

The students were asked about how the California Dream Act worked when they transferred to a four-year university. None of the students were able to distinctly state how the policy functioned at a public four-year university. The topic of financial aid for transfer AB540 students was not discussed by any of the students when they were describing their experiences within the Financial Aid Office or when they discussed accessing information on the policy. All the students understood that the policy was being enacted across public universities. Since my study focused on their understanding of the policy as community college students, I did not ask follow up questions to my initial question regarding transferring. The question resulted in all the students stating they were “not sure” or “I don’t know” or “it will help.” Common answers included the one Adam gave, “I’m not really sure how it works. I think it [CA. Dream Act] will help me but I don’t think it will cover everything” or the response Carlos had; “I think it will help pay for books and maybe some of my tuition, but I am not really sure.” The students were unsure what types of financial aid they would be eligible under the California Dream Act at a four-year university. The students will be eligible for Cal Grants, similar to those that they are currently eligible for. Only one student, Stephanie, used the word “tuition” versus the work
“costs” which the other students used. She said, “I believe that it [CA. Dream Act] will not cover my tuition, it’s just for books, I think.”

It is possible that students were unaware of how the policy was implemented at the four-year universities because they themselves were not receiving a Cal Grant and or because they are unsure of how many different “costs” the four-year university has, i.e. tuition, books, housing, meal plans, etc.

Summary

The results of the student interviews indicated that their definitions of the California Dream Act were based on where the students accessed information. Where students first accessed information, i.e. from friends, family, AB540 student organization, online, or printed flyers, was where they created meaning about the policy. The way students make meaning of a policy can affect their next steps in the process (Park et al., 2009). Similarly, the students in this study interpreted the policy as having a positive and beneficial impact. Despite not all students were benefiting from the policy in its entirety, all the students did have a BOG Fee Waiver, which was helpful. Alesandro stated, “It was a big relief to pay less when I just had AB540. [Before] I had to work in order to pay but knew that was worth it.” Two students stated that the policy made their lives less stressful because they could afford to take more courses, which is one of the most impactful changes to AB540 students. For Emily and Lindsey, they would not be able to attend El Sol if it were not for the BOG Fee Waiver they are receiving. Lindsey waited for the California Dream Act to pass before she enrolled into college.

The results presented here are the most significant findings as they relate to the research questions. The 12 student participants did discuss other issues regarding their feelings about being an “AB540 student” and their newly found freedom in having a DACA social security
Students also discussed how they navigated the EOP&S office, which is a program they became eligible for under the California Dream Act. Again, similar to the findings regarding the Cal Grant, accessing information on EOP&S was varied and there were obstacles within navigating that program as well.

Lastly, students provided possible solutions to the obstacles they encountered on campus. These solutions are discussed in Chapter six.

In the next chapter, the results of the policy agents’ interviews demonstrate that the way they interpret the policy affects the experiences the students had in navigating the application process.

Chapter 5: Findings from Policy Agents

Introduction

In this case study, policy agents, those that interpret and enforce educational policies were interviewed. It was vital to understand how those who were charged with enforcing the policy on El Sol’s campus made meaning of the policy. Similar to the students who were interviewed, policy agents derived their interpretation of the policy from the places and persons who provided the information. In summary, information regarding the California Dream Act was disseminated from the top down, i.e. from the state to the local campus level (see Figure 1.). Four different layers of policy agents were interviewed, starting at the state level with Gil Cedillo, the creator of the California Dream Act and co-author of the AB540 policy. Next, a policy agent from the department of student services at the CCCCO was interviewed and a policy agent administering financial aid implementation for the Los Angeles Community College District was interviewed. At El Sol, eight policy agents within the Student Services’ department were
interviewed, including a vice president and representative(s) from the following departments: Financial Aid, Admissions, EOP&S, Counseling, and Cal Works.\textsuperscript{16}

Policy agents at the campus level varied in their direct contact with students. Those with less contact were agents within higher-level administrative roles, however they had received direct instructions or information from CSAC and CCCC0 regarding the implementation of the California Dream Act; these policy agents included the Vice President, Financial Aid Administrator, and the EOP&S counselor. Other policy agents, who worked closely with students in offering “front of the line” services, did not directly receive information from CCCC0 or CSAC. These participants included counselors, admissions’ office and Cal Work’s staff. Table 4. identifies the policy agent, their workplace role, and their experiences with the policies, AB540 and/or California Dream Act.

Table 4.

\textit{Policy Agents Experience with AB540 Policy and California Dream Act}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Workplace Role</th>
<th>Experience with Policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles City Councilmember</td>
<td>Represents a district on the L.A. city council</td>
<td>Co-authored legislation supporting Undocumented students in CA., including the CA. Dream Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chancellor at CCCC0</td>
<td>Oversees implementation of student services’ polices</td>
<td>Implemented both AB540 &amp; CA. Dream Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LACCD director</td>
<td>Oversees the financial aid departments and communication between district and the CCCC0</td>
<td>Implemented the CA. Dream Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President at El Sol</td>
<td>Oversees student services division Received protocols for all student support services from the CCCC0</td>
<td>Implemented both AB540 &amp; CA. Dream Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{16} There were 11 policy agents interviewed.
Administrator in Financial Aid Services At El Sol
Oversees financial aid department’s staff and programs.
Implemented the CA. Dream Act

Administrator in Admissions Dept. at El Sol the state.
Implements admissions polices from District and oversees all staff in admissions department.
Implemented AB540

EOPS Director at El Sol
Oversees the EOP&S program and staff.
Implemented EOP&S application to AB540 students

Classified Staff in Admissions at El Sol
Oversees secretarial staff, including front of the line staff & student workers.
Implemented AB540

Full-Time Counselor At El Sol
Provides student academic planning for the first year experience program.
Assists students with AB540 CA. Dream Act

Adjunct Counselor at El Sol
Provides student academic planning through the counseling department (evening shift).
Unfamiliar with both policies

Administrator At El Sol
Oversees the CalWorks program & staff.
Unfamiliar with both policies

The table illustrates that each policy agent had an administrative type of role within the state, district, or campus (six participants), while others worked directly with students on campus (six participants). Some policy agents on campus were familiar with one or both of the policies, while some agents were unaware of how the AB540 policy and the California Dream Act functioned. Although there was one counselor and an administrator from Cal Works who were unfamiliar with both the AB540 policy and the California Dream Act, it can’t be said that these two participants were not aware of undocumented students right to attend El Sol, instead they were unaware of the governing educational policies that allow them to do so and the type of state financial aid and programs they were eligible for.
The in-depth interviews of the 11 policy agents provided data that addressed research question one and two:

1. How are policy agents of the California Dream Act making meaning of this Act?
   a. State level
   b. College District level

2. What is the Los Angeles Community College District doing to implement the policy at their campuses?

These research questions were addressed through in-depth interviews with each of the policy agents. The interviews were guided by the following topics: defining policy, implementing policy, and foreseen student obstacles in accessing and navigating the policy on campus. The results are discussed within those topics. Where appropriate, I have made links to information provided by the policy agents to the experiences the student participants discussed in their interviews. The connections between the information given by policy agents and student participants support the research findings. The order of the policy agents’ interviews are presented in the same order as Table 3, with the higher-level administrators presented first. A summary of the key findings is presented at the end of this chapter.

**Administrative (top level) Policy Agents**

The findings indicated that information was disseminated from the top (state level) to the bottom (campus level). As the information was disseminated, the meaning of the policy shifted depending on which policy agent was asked to define it. In this section, the findings from the author of the California Dream Act (Gil Cedillo) are presented and the
findings of those policy agents that received direct information from the state legislature, CCCCO, and CSAC are discussed.

These policy agents had the clearest definition of the California Dream Act because they were directly involved in its creation or implementation. The policy agents who were highly involved were: Gil Cedillo, a Vice Chancellor from CCCCO, a Vice President at El Sol, an administrator from the Los Angeles Community College District’s Financial Aid Department, the Administrator of the Financial Aid Office, the Administrator of the Admissions Office, and the Director of the EOP&S Program.

Gil Cedillo, primary author of AB130, AB131 (CA. Dream Act) and co-author of AB540

Gil Cedillo is currently a Los Angeles City Council member for District 1. In the past, he served as a California State Assemblyman in 2010 and was a former California State Senator in 2002. He has authored and co-sponsored numerous state bills that are aimed to increase equality for undocumented residents within the state. He was a co-author of the AB540 policy and the primary author of AB130 and AB131, the two bills that create the California Dream Act.

He is currently implementing AB60 (2013), a new law that allows undocumented residents of California to apply for state driver’s licenses starting January 1, 2015; a bill, which he introduced to the state legislator in 1997.

Defining Policy

Councilman Gil Cedillo defined the California Dream Act by describing the policy’s eligibility requirements for students. He stated that students must first qualify for AB540 at
their campus and then apply to the California Dream Act through the CSAC website. He discussed the historical context of both the California Dream Act and the AB540 policy as being in line with past educational policies that ended segregation “such as Mendez v. Westminster (1946) and Plyer v. Doe (1982).” These policies bring students closer “to receiving financial aid... [our] the goal is to get financial aid,” he said. The councilman is concerned about AB540 students not having “true” financial aid, such as the type(s) of aid that other students receive through the FAFSA (federal funding). His ultimate goal is for AB540 students to have similar options. He discussed California Senate Bill 1210 (The Dream Loan Act), a law that would allow AB540 students to apply for college loans. At the time of our interview (June, 2014), SB1210 was being debated within the state assembly; it later became law on September 28, 2014. Councilman Cedillo viewed himself as a policymaker, which he is. When asked about how policies are implemented on the ground level, i.e. on college campuses, he felt that responsibility for implementation relied on those governing agencies that are charged with implementing polices, such as CSAC for the California Dream Act.

Implementing Policy

In terms of his role as a policy maker in the implementation of these policies, he stated that as a policy maker he “makes broad policy strokes” which “we [policy makers] hope get implemented.” I asked him to describe the policy’s implementation process from legislation to the student level on a college campus. He stated, “We are a broad branch of the state.... which makes policies. The leadership role [in implementation] is CSAC, we rely on them to get that done.” The important role CSAC plays is that of overseeing the other “implementing agencies,” such as the community college districts or campuses. When I
asked about possible systems in place for the implementation process or the dissemination of information regarding the policy, he stated that CSAC or the CCCO should be creating these systems; “our focus is the policy.” As a policy maker, he understood his role as one of creating legislation and working to make it into law.

**Foreseen Student Obstacles in Accessing and Navigating Policy**

Cedillo discussed that he was not sure what obstacles students were encountering in trying to access information and navigate the policy on their campus. He said he was “sure” that there were obstacles because the legislation was new. He stated, “It is the role of other governing bodies, such as CSAC to implement these policies.” Lastly, I asked him if he had heard of any specific challenges AB540 community college students are encountering in accessing information and utilizing the policy on their campus, he responded by stating that “this is one of the difficulties, no one comes back to say how it went” and he hopes CSAC is receiving this feedback. As with all new policies, he said, “problems can't be realized” until it goes into effect. However, he stated that CSAC and the educational institutions received financial assistance (undisclosed) to support the implementation of the policy. Cedillo did state that having real financial aid is still an obstacle for AB540 students, “there is still a need for financial aid,” he stated. As stated before, at the time of the interview he and his fellow lawmakers were lobbying support for Senate Bill 1210, the DREAM Loan Act. On September 28, 2014, CA. Governor Jerry Brown signed SB1210 into law; AB540 students can begin applying for state loans in July 2015 through the California Dream Act application.

As a policy maker, he has focused on creating legislation that provides undocumented immigrants with state rights. He understood the process that colleges must undergo in
interpreting and implementing polices for students. He has great hope that the policy is assisting students in receiving a higher education.

**Vice Chancellor from California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO)**

Similar to the policy maker, the Vice Chancellor that was interviewed from CCCCO had an extensive knowledge and experience with the both the AB540 policy and the California Dream Act. She collaborated with former California State Assembly Member, Marco Antonio Firebaugh, who was the primary author of the AB540 policy. The Vice Chancellor also recalled working in community colleges during the time of *Leticia V. UC Board of Regents* (1985) when undocumented students in public universities were viewed as California residents and therefore were allowed to apply for Cal Grants, and its aftermath, the *Bradford v. UC Board of Regents* ruling (1992) which prohibited undocumented from receiving Cal Grants, i.e reversing the Leticia ruling. The University of California, California State University, and the California Community College system were functioning under the Bradford ruling until the California Dream Act (2012) was initiated; a span of 20 years.

In her work at the CCCCO, she has assisted in creating implementation type tools, such as forms, the “I Can Afford College” website, and distribution materials.

**Defining Policy**

She clearly defined the California Dream Act and AB540 policy. She viewed the California Dream Act as a beneficial policy that allowed students to receive state financial aid, including the BOG Fee Waiver and EOP&S eligibility. She stated that the policy was “vital to AB540 students’ success.” She stated that the community colleges serve a large portion of AB540 students; therefore the policy has a greater impact for the California community colleges.
As a long-time advocate for AB540 students, she was also involved with SB1210, the California Dream Loan Act.

**Implementing Policy**

The Vice Chancellor had experience in implementing educational policy through state level campaigns via websites. In order to publicize the California Dream Act and other financial aid opportunities, she worked with CSAC to create the website [www.icanaffordcollege.com](http://www.icanaffordcollege.com); a website that provides all community college students in the state with information regarding all the types of financial aid and the eligibility requirements for each, such as Cal Grants, BOG Fee Waiver, and the California Dream Act. Because the website was created in collaboration with the CCCCCO and CSAC, the information regarding eligibility requirements, state financial aid eligibility, and program opportunities is accurate. On the website there are two flyers (pdf. format) that provide AB540 students with information on AB540 and the California Dream Act. One flyer is titled, “10 Things You Need to Know About the California Dream Act” and the other is titled, “The California Dream Act: Financial Aid is Available to AB540 Students Attending a California Community College.” These flyers were included in the flyers/printed materials shown to students after their interview (see Table 3). Two students recognized seeing the “California Dream Act: Financial Aid is Available to AB540 Students Attending a California Community College” flyer when they went online to the “I Can Afford College” website. No students recognized the flyer, “10 Things You Need to Know About the California Dream Act” flyer, which is the flyer that the Vice Chancellor had hoped AB540 students had seen on their campus. The website asks campuses to make copies of these flyers for distribution on their campus.
It is her belief that the CCCCO provided the community college districts and campuses with a lot of materials to disseminate to AB540 students on their campuses. However, when asked to identify any obstacles students maybe encountering in applying to the California Dream Act, she said there “may be” a lack of information. “We (CCCCO) developed a policy memo guidance to go to the community colleges and an outreach campaign.” She described her role as Vice Chancellor has been to “craft guidelines and materials,” such as the AB540 affidavit, which her division in CCCCO wrote. Still, the role of the CCCCO is to only “provide guidance to the district rather than telling them what to do.”

The Vice Chancellor was asked how she expected the dissemination of information to have occurred, she replied, “Through the ‘I Can Afford College’ website, flyers, and the information network among AB540 students [which] is extensive.” However she stated “there maybe individuals who do not have any access to the colleges, [so] it may take more work to inform them of their options.” When asked if future AB540 students in high school are receiving information on the California Dream Act, she stated that the high schools may have posted the flyers from the website, although there was no outreach campaign from the CCCCO to the high schools.

Although dissemination of information regarding the policy was not a major concern for the Vice Chancellor, she was aware of the discrepancy in the number of eligible AB540 students who received a Cal Grant and those that did not. “There was an issue about processing applications…there was a whole batch of applications that did not get processed.” Two students in the study, Adam and David, mentioned this occurrence of unprocessed applications. Both students stated they had submitted more than one application at the onset. David stated that he did the California Dream Act application multiple times because it was “never” processed the
first time. The Vice Chancellor acknowledged that students who applied when the first
application went online in the summer for 2012 had difficulty in submitting the application; these
were complications that have now been corrected. Later, when I interviewed the Financial Aid
Office Administrator, she explained in detail the complications that occurred at that time with
students who submitted multiple applications. These findings are presented later in this section.

**Foreseen Student Obstacles in Accessing and Navigating the Policy**

In terms of obstacles students maybe encountering, she felt that their may still be a lack
of information, which her office has tried to address through the “I Can Afford College”
campaign and website. The campaign consists of radio and television commercials, including the
online resources.. I asked her if the CCCCO had any feedback or follow-up on how well the
website and the flyers were doing in providing information to students on campus. “They don’t
comeback and tell us. I don’t know if they posted it [flyers] but we know that we sent them.” She
asked that once the study was completed that I return to tell her what the obstacles were
identified by both the students and the campus.

Increasing AB540 students’ access to accurate information and increasing the number of
them who apply for the California Dream Act is a goal for the CCCCO. The Vice Chancellor
suggested that campuses needed to have the information on their website and information needed
to be available at the admissions and financial aid office Currently, for the 2014-2015 academic
year, El Sol’s website did have information regarding the California Dream Act; the information
was located under the title “forms” which on the Financial Aid Office’s webpage, off the
homepage. The website provides only two pdf forms; one is the CSAC “Completing the
California Dream Act” instructional guide (53 page document) and a flyer for past Dream Act
workshops, which were discussed by the students in Chapter 4.
Another obstacle she identified was that AB540 students using their DACA social
Security numbers on their California Dream Act Application. “The DACA is creating confusion
for AB540 students. There were colleges telling students with DACA that they no longer qualify
for AB540 because they are looking at DACA in relation to their California residency
requirement.” Using a DACA social security number was an obstacle that two students discussed
in the previous chapter. The Vice Chancellor did not address the larger issue, which is the
application itself. The California Dream Act application has a space for students to type in either
a “Social Security Number or ITENS Number,” since many AB540 students recently received
their social security numbers it is likely that they felt inclined to use that number versus an
ITENS number, which is given for tax purposes so not all students have one, or leave question
blank. El Sol’s Financial Aid Administrator addresses this common issue.

In her role, she can only prescribe ways to implement a program or policy but cannot set
a campus wide protocol; that is left to the district and campuses to do. After a student has
accessed information, the Vice Chancellor understood that the students may still need assistance;
therefore she would not object to an AB540 center on the campuses, where there would be
trained staff to assist students in the application process. The Vice Chancellor was also candid in
saying that she was not sure of the obstacles AB540 students are encountering. Similar to
Councilman Gil Cedillo, she does not receive feedback from those implementing the policy on
campus and is unable to connect student experiences to the activities, websites, or other types of
plans set forth by the CCCCO.

A Financial Aid Director at Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD)

The LACCD has a financial aid department that oversees the many policies regarding
financial aid at both the state and federal level. Their primary role is to oversee the technical
software and platform that manages the campuses financial aid applicants’ information and oversees the distribution of financial awards. The department also provides trainings and regular meetings with the financial aid directors from each of the campuses. One of the department’s directors was interviewed.

**Defining Policy**

The director she described how AB540 students were now allowed to apply for the BOG Fee Waiver and receive Cal Grants. In the past, the district had provided AB540 students with private scholarships as a way to assist them. The passage of the California Dream Act was a positive change for the district; the director recognized that there was a high portion of AB540 students on their campuses. She stated “AB540 students began receiving BOG Fee Waiver in the Spring 2013; the Cal Grant in academic year 2013-2014.”

**Implementing Policy**

The director discussed how the office provides training to financial aid directors and staff on an ongoing basis. The district did not provide official protocols to the campuses on how to implement the policy; rather they provided the financial aid directors/administrators with the information given to them by the CSAC and the CCCCO. Functioning as a facilitator of policy information, the district provides trainings on the multiple financial aid policies, with the main focus being on how to record applications within the system. In terms of the Cal Grant, the director stated, “We will sponsor our annual Cal Grant Day for staff...we will have representatives from the California Student Aid Commission provide training to our financial aid staff.” During this upcoming training she hopes to receive feedback from campuses’ financial aid staff. “In the afternoon we will have open discussions with staff to solicit their feedback and input on how to improve the
delivery of financial aid to our Dreamers.” The directors stated that she is aware that there may be discrepancies in the number of eligible AB540 students and the number of AB540 students who applied for Cal Grants. “We are still compiling the data” of this past year’s Cal Grant awards and the program is “in its infancy” therefore issues were inevitable.

The district conducted a few workshops during the months of February through April, to inform AB540 students about the BOG Fee Waiver and the Cal Grants. The director believed that AB540 students were already knowledgeable about the California Dream Act before it was implemented on the campuses. As a district, she felt that they were “the first” in comparison to the other community college districts in having a BOG Fee Waiver application ready for AB540 students. During the first academic year of the BOG Fee Waiver, 2012-2013, there was a BOG Fee Waiver published specifically for AB540 students.

The district is also planning more outreach to students. They “outreach staff” will be providing more workshops on the campuses alongside the campuses and will “work on surveys that will provide” data to “address issues.” There will also be “LACCD Financial Aid Awareness Days” on the campuses; on those days “students can go to any of the campuses to get information” on all financial aid programs. The surveys that she mentioned are similar to the student services’ surveys that the district conducts on the multiple student services provided, i.e. counseling services, tutoring services, admissions services, etc.

**Foreseen Student Obstacles in Accessing and Navigating Policy**

The director believed that students did not have many unforeseen obstacles because they (AB540 students) were already aware of the upcoming policy, however she stated she was not sure what the students’ issues or obstacles were on the campuses. To understand these obstacles, she is encouraging the financial aid directors to discuss ways to assist
AB540 students. She was also aware that the district website needed to be updated and provide AB540 students with more information. Currently, she stated that the campuses are focused on “take rate” of the Cal Grants, meaning how many Cal Grant applications the campus is receiving from AB540 students through the California Dream Act.

The district office is responsible for collecting data on various student programs and services from each campus in order to report to the state Chancellor’s Office. The CSAC does report out data on the amount of Cal Grants awarded; however when that information is first released, it is not always disseminated by systems, i.e. CSU, UC, and CCC. Therefore, the director did not want to comment on the obstacles in the application process or any obstacles on the campuses that may have deterred AB540 students from successfully completing their California Dream Act application and receiving a Cal Grant.

Vice President at El Sol Community College

One of the four El Sol’s Vice Presidents was interviewed. He has been a long time administrator and faculty member at El Sol. He began his definition of the California Dream Act by first defining AB540, stating that one must understand the importance of that policy first. “Once the AB540 policy was passed, I was instrumental in providing students with access to new programs, such as the first year experience program that began in 2006.” First year experience programs were referenced by the student participants; there were six participants stated that being in a first year program was beneficial in that it supported them in accessing information and these programs were a safe place to disclose their undocumented status.

Defining Policy

The Vice President clearly defined both the California Dream Act and the AB540 policy. He felt that “El Sol was a model for other community colleges” in how they assisted AB540
students. He referred to the importance of the AB540 student group as “leading the charge” in advocating for the California Dream Act. “Many of El Sol’s former students were also part of the massive lobbying campaign in Sacramento for the California Dream Act.”

As a Vice President, he received direct information from the CCCCO, which he shared with the Financial Aid Administrator. He stated that he received the memo from the Vice Chancellor who was interviewed in this study. Also, the Financial Aid Administrator on campus shared with him the information she received via email and memos from CSAC.

**Implementing Policy**

He stated that the Financial Aid Department was given direct information from CSAC regarding the implementation process and he worked directly with the Financial Aid Department and its administrator in implementing the information they received. The information he received was from CCCCO and primarily regarded eligibility requirements. In explaining the memos he received from the CCCCO and the district office, he said they explained the policy but did not necessarily give campuses a protocol to follow. He believed that the counselor overseeing the EOP&S program received a protocol because that program often gets state mandated protocols as it is a specially funded program and must meet certain state requirements. His account of the information dissemination process supported the account the Vice Chancellor gave in terms of the CCCCO not providing logistical information or protocols to the campuses, but rather information about the policy and student eligibility.

The Vice President stated that the campus began implementing the California Dream Act through the Financial Aid Department. “Information is being given to students through the college’s outreach, orientations, and when financial aid department presents to new students.” He also referenced the workshops the Financial Aid Office offered during the year. When asked how
affective these workshops were he stated, “I think these practices have been very affective, in fact we kind of have been a model for other campuses.”

The Vice President felt confident that AB540 students were aware of the California Dream Act and that El Sol was successful in implementing the policy on campus. The Financial Aid Office is solely responsible for implementing the California Dream Act application process. He understood that the administrator of the Financial Aid Department may have difficulties because students are not accessing the office; however he believes that is due to their fear of self-disclosure and that with the assistance of the AB540 student group, he believes more students will be willing to apply.

**Foreseen Student Obstacles in Accessing and Navigating Policy**

In terms of accessing policy information on campus, the Vice President understood that AB540 students sought out information from their peers and believes that “the longer a student is here” the more information they will learn about AB540 opportunities. He felt that one of the major obstacles was the continued fear about self-disclosing one’s undocumented status and fear of filing a California Dream Act application. “The process has been difficult for the students because they questioned where the information was going, like is the information going to INS.” He believes that students were also reluctant to file the application because of the parent information that is required.

“There is still a parent obstacle because the parents have to report their income. The students may understand that El Sol is not reporting the information to INS but the parents may not. Students still have a fear of the unknown, but once they become
informed they realize that they have the same opportunities…some of my best students in my classroom have been AB540 students.”

While the Vice President felt that students were reluctant to share parent information, the students in the study did not report parent reluctance. None of the students stated that their parents did not want to provide them with their family’s tax information. I did ask students about their parents’ willingness to provide their personal information and financial information; all students stated that their parents understood the purpose of needing to disclose that type of information because the student had explained that it was needed in order to provide assistance to them as a student. Three of the students stated that their parents were aware of the California Dream Act’s passing because they had seen the information publicized on Spanish language television news. Two other students stated that their parents had attended financial aid information meetings at their high school, before attending El Sol.

Financial Aid Administrator at El Sol Community College

The Financial Aid Office began the implementation process of the California Dream Act in the fall of 2012. The initial passing of the policy was in 2011 for AB130 and 2012 for AB131. The commencement of the BOG Fee Waiver and the Cal Grant at the community colleges began on January 1, 2013. The findings from this interview provided the greatest insight into the technical and logistical obstacles the Financial Aid Office encountered, which helped explain why students encountered the obstacles that they did. The Financial Aid Administrator agreed to be part of this study because she said she wanted to explain the difficulties she and her staff are having with the online application, processing the application, and the intense collaboration she has had to do with CSAC in order to for an AB540 student to successfully receive a Cal Grant.

Defining Policy

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The Financial Aid Administrator defined the policy as it relates to her department; therefore her definition included the student’s eligibility to receive a Cal Grant and a BOG Fee Waiver at the community college. At the onset of the policy, she stated that her office sent emails and posted flyers/posters to make students aware of the new policy. The students interviewed stated that they did not receive emails from El Sol’s Financial Aid Office.

There was some disbelief, she stated when students were made aware of the policy. “Initially when AB540 students heard the Dream Act came out, they didn’t believe it. They said ‘okay well that means I’m going to disclose my status, what’s the consequence of that?’ You are legally saying you are illegal.” She said this trepidation caused some students not to apply. “A very limited amount of students applied for fee waiver and for scholarships.” The Financial Aid Office held workshops focused on the BOG Fee Waiver first because that was immediate aid that her office can control. The BOG Fee Waiver is granted through El Sol and is granted on the spot when a student turns in the application to the office.

**Implementing Policy**

In preparing to implement the policy on campus, the administrator went to 10 workshops hosted by CSAC. “Not even the District Chancellor [gave information], I went to the commission [CSAC]… [I asked] how will it look? What about the correction process? I even asked questions that right now I am still dealing with.” She also had a commissioner from CSAC come to El Sol to assist her in training her staff on the application process. Still, her office encountered obstacles, such as staff members being unaware of AB540 students. Traditionally, the administrator noted, AB540 students do not come to the Financial Aid Office. She had to train her staff on what an AB540 student is, how they should not ask them for a driver’s license
or social security card as form of identification, and she continues to do trainings on the actual California Dream Act application.

Implementing the policy has proven to be “difficult” and “frustrating.” The Financial Aid Administrator discussed multiple obstacles that have occurred in her department with processing students’ California Dream Act application. These obstacles can be seen as logistical issues that are largely due to the application itself and CSAC’s oversight of the process, nevertheless the Financial Aid Administrator felt that these obstacles are have created problems in implementing the policy because AB540 students are not all receiving their Cal Grants nor are there as many applications as California Dream Act applications she had expected.

The most impactful obstacle she has encountered is trying to make corrections on the California Dream Act application. As discussed in Chapter 4, the students stated that they had obstacles in completing their application because they did not submit their GPA Verification Form or they used their DACA social security number. These obstacles can be corrected, according to the Financial Aid Administrator, but for her or the staff to make these corrections the student must come in person to meet with them.

The first obstacle that she encountered was with students who submitted an application multiple times. This was an issue that both the Vice Chancellor and some of the students raised. “The instructions were not clear. Some students actually went in and filled out the application 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 times and each time they get a different number, so which one do I use? How do we go back and make corrections? The first time it [online application] came out there was no instructions; it says ask the financial aid department, we don’t even have clear instructions on how to make correction.”
Each time a student filled out an application, an identifying number was generated to identify the student with the application. This number was given to the student’s college’s financial aid office. When the application was first implemented many students were receiving “error” messages, stating that their application could not be submitted and because there was no directions given to the student on what the error was, many decided to submit another application and continued to do so until one was successfully “submitted.”

If a student filled the application multiple times, such as one of the student participants did (Adam), then, according to the Financial Aid Administrator, she has to call CSAC to figure out which application they should use. CSAC asks her to verify that the student is from El Sol, their date of birth, and their home address. This process is difficult when there are multiple applications for one student and there is “no real information” that identifies the students, such as a social security number.

The only identifying information that she receives from the student’s California Dream Act application is there name, date of birth, home address, and phone number. Therefore, when a student submitted the application more than once or had begun multiple applications, the CSAC system recognized each application as a separate student. CSAC provides the Financial Aid Office a list of AB540 students who have applied for the California Dream Act and have put El Sol as their home campus, meaning if they were to receive a Cal Grant it would be issued to El Sol. The Financial Aid Administrator must go through the list to make sure each student is an El Sol student and send back a corrected list to CSAC. She stated that this is an ongoing process that time consuming on both her end and CSAC’s.

Identifying the student became a greater obstacle for her office and CSAC when AB540 students began using their DACA social security numbers on their California Dream Act
application. This issue was discussed before by the Vice Chancellor and by two students in this study. She stated that students needed to understand that the “social security card through DACA, it’s only temporary and it cannot be used as regular social security.” She said when students use their DACA social security numbers some of them, not all, are redirected (via the CSAC’s website) to file a FAFSA instead. Currently, when we met, she was working on FAFSA applications that were filled out by AB540 students. She hopes to find these students in the El Sol system and plans to email them so they can come into the Financial Aid Office. The office needs to “override” the error in the system. “The only way to do this [override] is to have them come into the office,” she said.

Another common obstacle was in answering the parent income question because there are AB540 students whose parents do not live in the United States and the application does not allow them to put income from a relative, sibling, or another person they are currently living with whom maybe financially supporting them. “Sometimes parents are in Mexico and they are here being supported by uncle and aunt. We have here [financial aid office] an extended family support request form. The student has to actually explain this to us and we need to see if it’s legitimate.” I asked her if a student makes a mistake in their application, such as putting in social security number, filing a FAFSA instead, or not stating their parents’ information, can the student correct that information online; the answer was no. “After you submit the application online it starts getting processed and you cant go back, you have to come here [financial aid office].”

She discussed the loss of Alberto, the financial aid counselor whom the student participants had discussed. “I know they felt comfortable with him. He cared. They don’t come in here as much; they aren’t conformable with this office yet.” She stated that Sylvia was taking
his place. “She use to do the processing before and Alberto would do the face to face” with the students; now that he is gone, she has to do both. The director believed that losing Alberto was a loss and she hopes that students will come in and see that Sylvia can assist them just as well as he did.

Lastly, she stated that her staff has caused the implementation process to be difficult for the AB540 students. She disclosed that her staff is fearful in assisting AB540 students because they do not want to give them inaccurate information; they rather “wait” till someone else who knows the policy is in the office. Currently, the designated person in the office is Sylvia, who has replaced Alberto as the designated financial aid counselor to assist with the California Dream Act applications. There were two students who discussed working with Sylvia on their application appeal. Sylvia is assisting these students’ appeals to CSAC, which has to be done through an appeals process because one of them (Adriana) could not be identified by CSAC (this was caused by using the DACA social security number) and the other student’s (Emily) parent’s tax information was flagged and had to be verified by the Financial Aid Office.

The Financial Aid Administrator believed that one of the causes for her difficulty with her staff is that they still do not understand the policy and that their work attitude has gotten in the way of assisting AB540 students. She said that some of staff “Think, ‘I just work 9 to 5 and that’s it.’ But it’s about personality. You have to have the right personality to work in financial aid. If you don’t have the right personality sometimes it’s hurting the process. We have to extend ourselves to help the student.” The frustration her staff encountered, was also felt by the student participants, who discussed experiencing obstacles in the financial aid office. Some students stated that they felt the office did not want to really help them and kept telling them to come back; an issue the Financial Aid Administrator said is upsetting to her too because she knows
that a student may not return. “When we keep telling them to come back, to come back, I know they probably won’t. I am also worried about those that never make it to our office.”

**Foreseen Student Obstacles in Accessing and Navigating Policy**

The Financial Aid administrator believed that AB540 students were encountering obstacles in accessing accurate information because the information is limited to just her office. She said she had hoped that El Sol, as campus community would have taken ownership of the policy and assist her office in telling students about the California Dream Act. Also, she understood that the application itself was difficult because it was new to them and it also did not logistically function correctly. She recognized that CSAC used the FAFSA as a model to create the California Dream Act application, which did not benefit AB540 students because they had no prior experience with FAFSA or any other financial aid type of form.

Since the Financial Aid Administrator provided multiple examples of obstacles the department is encountering with the application process, I asked her how the campus is addressing these issues. She stated, “The communication is not here on the campus.” She recognized that the California Dream Act is seen as a financial aid problem, “it’s just me” because the policy is related to the BOG Fee Waiver and Cal Grant it is seen as a Financial Aid Office policy. She would have liked more ownership of the policy between all the student services programs and she said feels guilty too “for giving students wrong information” because “we don’t always know what’s going on.”

Her explanations on why it was difficult to process the California Dream Act application and especially to make changes to the application, helped explain why many of the student participants had obstacles. There were 11 students in the study that had not received a Cal Grant. Of those students, eight of them were not aware of the GPA verification form that they were
supposed to request from the financial aid office. One student was not aware of that he could
receive a Cal Grant, while two other students were planning to “give up” in their appeal process
because they were frustrated with having to take multiple trips to the financial aid office and not
receiving proper assistance. These students recognized the lack of communication between
departments on campus. The students’ experiences are a result of this lack of communication and
the lack of a protocol or instructions from CSAC and the CCCCO to the Financial Aid
Administrator.

**Admissions Office Administrator**

The administrator overseeing the Admissions Office was interviewed because his office
is where AB540 students must disclose their status in order to file an AB540 affidavit. The
Admissions Office played an important role in the student participants’ stories on disclosing
status. If a student was not aware of the AB540 affidavit, they had to later return to the
Admissions Office to ask for the affidavit. For some of the students, it was at this office that they
first disclosed that they were “undocumented.”

**Defining Policy**

The administrator stated he was not too sure about the requirements for the California
Dream Act but believed they were similar to those of AB540, a policy that he knew well. He
described to me the AB540 policy and the residency requirements that are needed to qualify. He
believed that his office did a “good job” in implementing AB540, which included reaching out to
the local high schools so that students were aware of their that option. Because he was more
familiar with the AB540 policy, I asked him if he had received any protocols from the CCCCO
or district regarding the AB540 policy. He stated that the “CCCCO sent a memo explaining the
policy” and the eligibility requirements. He worked closely with his administrative assistant to
implement the AB540 policy in their office. In terms of protocols on how to implement the AB540 policy, he said he did not receive any. “All these questions came up; we had to contact the legal counsel at the district, which sometimes happens with new laws.” He stated that since the AB540 policy has specific rules regarding residency status, including Visas; it was difficult at first to determine who was eligible.

**Implementing Policy**

The Admissions Office Administrator stated that the California Dream Act was a “financial aid matter” and the admissions office is “not related in any way to a student’s California Dream Act application.” Although he does not feel that his office is directly related to the Financial Aid Office, almost all students began their navigation process at the admissions office. More importantly, the filing of the AB540 affidavit is an undocumented student’s first step in becoming matriculated into college.

He stated that he believed “philosophically that the district and the campus support AB540 students.” However, he says he wished that the state and the district would give clearer definitions and protocols when a new policy comes down from the state. He says they always “leave it up to the campus to figure out”- the implementation process and the “campus is left with having to define the policy.” This concept was important to understanding how he as an administrator made meaning of the California Dream Act policy. He believed that it is up to the campus to define the policy, whether for the faculty/staff and or the students. As a result of not receiving information from CCCCO, the district, or his supervisor directed to his office, he could not define the policy nor did he feel part of its implementation. It was possible that his staff shared the same meaning towards the policy because he oversaw the department.

**Foreseen Student Obstacles in Accessing and Navigating Policy**

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The Admissions Office Administrator was not able to identify any foreseen student obstacles because, as he stated, he did not see his department as playing a role in the California Dream Act nor was he aware of students having difficulties with the application. He had not seen the California Dream Act application nor was he aware of types of information students needed to provide. There were a few times during the interview that he said that the policy was “a Financial Aid [Office] issue,” a sentiment that the Vice President also shared. I asked him if he thought there should be a supportive program for AB540 students; he responded that there was an AB540 student group. He said that it was important that all programs are equitable, i.e. if the campus is designating help to one particular group, they should be doing it for all other “unique groups.”

The findings from this interview were similar to other interviews with policy agents who were not directly involved or included in the California Dream Act. The findings suggested that if the policy agent was not directly communicated with by any other higher-level administrator, i.e. a vice president, district office, or CCCCO, they did not feel responsible in knowing about the California Dream Act.

**Director of Extended Opportunity Programs & Services (EOP&S)**

There were three counselors interviewed in the study; one of them administered the EOP&S program. She had knowledge about AB540 students and that under the new California Dream Act they were allowed to apply for the EOP&S program. The EOP&S program provides students with priority registration, an academic counselor, and book grants. This program is also provided in the California State University system. In the program, students receive priority registration status and are provided with an intrusive counseling model that uses a case management approach. Prior to the California Dream Act, she had “no real contact with AB540 students.”
Defining Policy

In defining the policy the EOP&S Director described the memo she received from the CCCC0 stating that AB540 students were now eligible to apply for the EOP&S program under the California Dream Act. “As of January 1st 2013, EOPS was allowed to admit AB540 students. Prior to that we had to turn them away cause of the BOG fee waiver-they didn’t qualify before.” Now AB540 students are accessing the EOP&S office; applications are picked up in person and submitted to the office.

Implementing Policy

In implementing the policy she had the EOP&S Office work with the AB540 student group and their advisor. “We worked a lot with the student AB540 group’s faculty advisor and the financial aid office,” the counselor stated. Through their interactions, the EOP&S Director had hoped that the “word would get out” about AB540 students being eligible to apply for EOP&S. In the study, almost all the participants (ten total) were enrolled into the EOP&S program, however the majority did not state it has part of their description of the policy.

In describing the processes that students undergo to apply for the EOP&S program she stated, “It starts with their Dream application at financial aid” then the students come to the EOP&S office. In terms of providing students with information she stated, “we did as much as we could…there were workshops (through financial aid office) and it’s in the catalogue.” She also described the students as being more assertive in looking for programs that they qualify for; however she was unsure how many EOP&S students were AB540 students because the office does not ask them. Instead, they see if the student qualified for the BOG Fee Waiver, Part B.
There is a state protocol to implement EOP&S, which comes from the CCCCO. These guidelines were followed for the inclusion of AB540 students; hence the director stated she did not have to change anything. “There is always a limited amount” of space for students in the program; that number is designated by the state. EOP&S program enrolls on a first come, first serve basis.

**Foreseen Student Obstacles in Accessing and Navigating Policy**

It was difficult for the EOP&S Director to state what obstacles AB540 students may be encountering because as she stated before, she was unaware which of the students in the program were using the California Dream Act. She truly felt that through their peers and the AB540 student group, more AB540 students would know that they were eligible to apply to the program.

Similar to other policy agents at El Sol, her meaning making was derived from her role on campus and her department’s connection to AB540 students. Since she directly received information from the CCCCO, she had deeper understanding of the policy. These policy agents had minimal one on one contact with students because of their administrative positions, which included overseeing the implementation of a variety of policies that affected the total student population. Their understanding of the California Dream Act stemmed from the information they received from CCCCO and or CSAC.

**Policy Agents Representing Student Services Division**

Other policy agents interviewed were not as directly involved in the creation or the implementation of the policy on campus, however they did have more contact with students on an individual level. The policy agents in this group are: an Admission Office staff person, the Director of Cal Works, a full-time counselor, and a part-time evening counselor. These agents defined the California Dream Act in various ways, mainly as a policy that assisted AB540
students or undocumented students; however the ways in which the policy assisted students was not clear. They viewed their role as limited and their involvement constrained because they were not directly told by CCCCO or CSAC about the California Dream Act nor did they receive directions from either agency.

**Staff Member at Admissions Office**

A classified administrative assistant from El Sol’s Admissions Office was interviewed and shared similar responses to the Administrator of the Admissions Office; stating that the California Dream Act is a policy that the Financial Aid Office has to implement.

**Defining Policy**

Similar to the Administrator of the Admissions Office she felt that the policy was not directly related to the admissions office; therefore her meaning of the policy was based on the belief that she did not need to be aware of the policy. This is a message she may have received from her supervisors, the district, or the CCCCO, which she says did not address anything to the Admissions Office regarding the California Dream Act. In terms of defining the AB540 policy she was able to clearly define it because she was part of the initial AB540 implementation at El Sol

**Implementing the Policy**

Although she was not part of the implementation process for the California Dream Act, she was active in the implementation process of AB540. “Like every other policy, they [CCCO] say ‘this is coming down, these students maybe eligible’. We worked together with the district to come up with the affidavit.” She stated that there were implementation obstacles for AB540 in the beginning:
“Trying to get the students to be honest with the form, a lot of them thought, at that time that we were going to contact INS, so a lot of them were hesitant. When the student was applying we would look to see if they didn’t meet the requirements for residency, we would tell them they were exempt from tuition under AB540 guidelines, they had to sign the form but a lot of them didn’t want to sign. We had to explain to them that their information was not going to be released to anyone.”

She built relationships with the local high schools and the principals; by informing them about the AB540, she believed students arrived to the campus more informed. When asked if that same implementation process was done with the Californian Dream Act, she stated, “I think it has more to do with financial aid, so I didn’t really work on that.” She also conducted trainings with the admissions staff on what the AB540 policy meant and how students who did not have residency status could apply using the affidavit. “It was important for the staff to understand who was eligible because they need to manually recode the students’ status in the system,” which is a process they continue to do. “It was important to me that they treated the students like the rest of the students, not to make them feel uncomfortable about turning in the form [AB540 affidavit].”

Both she and Administrator of the Admissions said that they do not assume that a student is undocumented; only when a staff member sees that a student selected no residency status, would they then ask them if they want to file an affidavit. “It does not happen all time… a staff person at the counter may not ask,” and therefore a student may leave without information regarding AB540, unless they self-disclose during that first interaction.

**Foreseen Student Obstacles in Accessing and Navigating Policy**

The staff person was unable to identify any obstacles that AB540 students’ may have encountered when accessing information on the California Dream Act and navigating the policy.
on campus. She did discuss that “communication from the top down” was an obstacle for any new policy that comes to the campus. She believed that those in top administrative positions, such as those working at the CCCCO and the district are not communicating, which makes it difficult for the personnel on campus who have to implement policies. When asked if the Admissions Office staff should be trained on the California Dream Act, she disagreed; “it’s too much information.” For example she said, “Admissions deals with residency status” and “the California Dream Act is a financial aid issue, it has to do with money and immigration status.” The belief that the policy involved immigration may have come from confusing the state’s “Dream Act” with the federal “Dream Act,” which would provide federal financial aid to undocumented students and provide them amnesty. The Director of Cal Works also had the same misunderstanding.

I asked her if she or her staff have been asked by students for assistance with the California Dream Act online application, she said she “never heard” of the online application and has never seen it; “students know to come here for AB540 and they know to go to Financial Aid [Office] for Dream Act.” The way she made meaning of the policy

The way she made meaning of policies was through her direct communication with administrative officials and governing bodies. Since she did not receive direct communication from these higher-level officials, she interpreted the California Dream Act as a policy that affected AB540 students but was the sole responsibility of the Financial Aid Office to interpret and implement the policy for the students.

**Full-time Counselor**

A full-time counselor who worked in general counseling and in one of the first year programs was interviewed. Being that he worked within a special program, he had experience
working with AB540 students; special programs, such as El Sol’s summer bridge programs, are one of the places where six students in the study stated they disclosed their status. The counselor was able to define both the AB540 policy and the California Dream Act; he believed that being a counselor full-time and working one-on-one with the same group of students in special programs, attributed to his knowledge of the policies.

He currently was working with a cohort of students (150-200 students) and had daily access to the students. As a full-time counselor, he split his time between the first year program and general counseling. He also worked on Saturdays in general counseling. He stated that the students were comfortable with asking him for assistance because he was able to follow up with them regarding information and assistance. He discussed how this is an important factor in students’ acquisition of information; they need someone from the college to close the feedback loop and provide accurate information. “I wish that our campus had a more seamless approach…many of the academic professionals were left in the dark as to how this policy would play out for students.” In terms of academic professional, he is referring to the faculty members of El Sol who are under the division of Academic Affairs and are not always privy to information that those working in the Student Services division obtain.

**Implementing Policy**

In his role as a counselor, he assisted in implementing policy because he worked with students who were navigating the process on campus. The majority of the students the counselor worked with were those that had already submitted their California Dream Act and were getting denied the BOG Fee Waiver and the Cal Grant. Often, he stated that students needed assistance with their parents’ tax information because if they estimated incorrectly they did not receive the BOG Fee Waiver.
In terms of getting the information to the students, he felt that losing the previous financial aid counselor, Alberto was a setback. “That was really hard for the students when he left.” More students have now been asking him for assistance with their application and with the DACA. “I have assisted students with the DACA. It would be good if the campus helped too.” He also felt that the student AB540 group was essential to providing information and assisting other AB540 students, but he did state that the campus could always do more. “There are workshops but students always have more questions; it’s the same thing with the FAFSA.”

As a full-time counselor he attends his department’s weekly meetings and if he chooses to, he can attend the Student Services’ division meetings. He stated that in the counselors’ meeting is where he learned about the California Dream Act. The department chair made the counselors aware of the policy so that when and if they were meeting with an AB540 student they could make them aware of the new policy. The counselor did state that sometimes counselors are unaware if a student is an AB540 student, unless they disclose that information during their meeting. Although the full-time counselor and his colleagues seemed equipped with information, the student would first have to make an appointment with a counselor to access this information. The counselor was aware of this dilemma. He stated that as with all other El Sol students, “some never see a counselor while they are here.” In the study, only one student (Alesandro) had asked to speak with a counselor; when he disclosed that he was an AB540 student he was referred to the AB540 student group and was told to come back when the counselor, who supervises that group, was in the office.

**Foreseen Student Obstacles in Accessing and Navigating Policy**

The counselor recalled instances in which students complained about the Financial Aid Office’s lack of guidance in troubleshooting the California Dream Act application; “I tell them to
just come here,” to his office. Because he has made students aware that he is knowledgeable about the online application and financial aid, AB540 students have been able to work on their online applications with him, which in turn has increased his knowledge of the application process. He believed that accessing information was still an obstacle for students, as well as going to the financial aid office, a place where most AB540 students have never visited. He hoped that with the policy’s information being on El Sol’s website and the resources AB540 students shared with each other, they would become knowledgeable about the process. The counselor viewed himself as a “navigational partner” with the student, trying to figure out the policy alongside with them.

**Part-time Counselor (evening shift)**

A part-time counselor who worked in general counseling’s evening shift was also interviewed. Her experiences with the California Dream Act differed from the full-time counselor who was interviewed. The differences derived from her part-time employment status and working in the evening, she was not always privy to the information that the full-time counselors received.

**Defining Policy**

The counselor stated that she did not receive information regarding the California Dream Act from the CCCCO, district, nor from her department. “There is no trainings for adjuncts on the Dream Act or AB540…I am not sure if there was one for full-timers; I didn’t hear of anything, but the full-timers get trainings on changes [to policy].” When asked if she could define the AB540 policy she stated that it allowed undocumented students the right to pay in-state residency tuition, however she was not sure of the process in becoming an AB540 student, i.e. the affidavit. As for the California Dream Act, she said a student she had met with had told
her that it was helping them [AB540 students] with fees and that they were now eligible for Cal Grants.

**Implementing Policy**

The counselor stated that she was not aware of how the Financial Aid Office was implementing the policy; however she could not foresee any obstacles in the implementation process. “I don’t think they have a problem, it seems accessible because it’s online.” She understood that as a counselor she did play a role in assisting students with all policies. “This can impact my work, cause I could be giving them wrong information.” I asked her where she goes for assistance when there is a policy or situation that she may not understand. She replied, “I ask the counselors who have been there forever or the chair.” Although she was able to ask others for assistance, she said it is difficult in the evening because most offices are closed. There are few instances where she tells a student that she will call them after she gets the information he or she is seeking. “I call the student back with the information…it is difficult because in the evening we never get the same students coming back, so I call them.”

**Foreseen Student Obstacles in Accessing and Navigating Policy** The counselor felt that she was at a disadvantaged because she was part-time and believed that other adjunct counselors were likely unaware of the policy’s specifications. She said she was “worried” that the other counselors and even other faculty members knew a lot about the California Dream Act than she did. “I would like there to be training” on the subject.

The interviewee had made meaning of the policy through her limited experience with the policy. Since she had not received information from her administrator or her coworkers, she was unaware of the policy’s details, but also felt responsible for knowing more about the policy. Her
understanding was also stemmed from her position on campus, which was limited by her working part-time and isolated from other student service office due to her evening shift.

**Administrator from Cal Works (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids)**

An administrator from the Cal Works department was interviewed. The department is part of the Student Services division and according to documents published by: CCCCO, El Sol’s Financial Aid Office, and Dream Team L.A., the Cal Works program is accepting AB540 students under the California Dream Act.

**Defining Policy**

The administrator overseeing Cal Works stated that she knew there were changes for AB540 students, in that they were getting access to more support. However, she did not know that students were allowed to receive state financial aid. I told her that they were now allowed to receive the Cal Grant B or C, if they met the need requirement. In learning that AB540 students were receiving Cal Grants and were eligible for EOP&S she said that AB540 students might become confused and mistakenly think they qualify for CalWorks, which they do not because it is a federally funded program. She stated, “For Cal Works, they have to be citizens, so AB540 doesn’t qualify for Cal Works.” This realization that the department was not accepting AB540 students due to citizenship status was unexpected. In my document review, I had come across many documents that stated AB540 students were eligible for Cal Works. In reviewing the actual written law, AB131 that was chaptered on October 8, 2011, it does not state that AB540 students would qualify for this program. It states that students “are eligible for to apply for, and participate in any student financial aid program administered by the State of California to the full extent permitted by federal law” (para. 4, Legislative Counsel’s Digest, 2011). Since Cal Works is administered by the state’s welfare program it is possible to view it as a program that would
accept AB540 students, however the program is tied to federal funding as well and therefore requires its participants to be citizens.

The Cal Works Administrator stated that she knew about the federal Dream Act because of what she read and heard about in the news. Her interaction with AB540 students was limited due to her office not servicing AB540 students. In trying to define the AB540 policy she stated, “I am aware that they are able to complete their education in the U.S. and they have to have a certain amount of time in high school.” She was candid in stating that she could not truly define the two policies, AB540 and the California Dream Act.

**Implementing Policy**

The administrator stated that she had not been part of any implementation process for either policy, however she did discuss how policies in general are implemented in student services’ departments. For Cal Works, the program is monitored by the state and is also mandated by the CCCCO. To be eligible, she said, “a student must have a child and be receiving some type of aid,” i.e. welfare. “Many have not received their high school diploma,” which is a requirement for the FAFSA (federal aid), instead participants use the funding they receive from Cal Works and county assistance.

**Foreseen Student Obstacles in Accessing and Navigating Policy**

The administrator felt that students might find obstacles in accessing information on campus. Because she was unaware of the California Dream Act, she felt that the campus needed to share the information with the other departments. Similar to other administrators who were not directly involved with the implementation of the California Dream Act, her understanding of the
policy was limited due to her not having received any information from higher-level administrators.

This interview was vital in understanding how information was not being disseminated between the student services divisions. There was information being provided to students that stated they could apply to the Cal Works program, yet it was the program’s administrator’s understanding that they could not apply and that Cal Works would not accept any AB540 students into the program due their lack of legal citizenship. This miscommunication has resulted in misinformation. Once are interview was complete, I told her that there were was a “CA. Dream Act” brochure that El Sol’s Financial Aid Office produced stating that students were now eligible for Cal Works. She said she was going to try to find out how this occurred and was “shocked” that CCCCO did not inform her.

**Summary of Policy Agents Findings**

During the interviews, the participants discussed how they made meaning of the California Dream Act policy, their role in implementing AB540 educational policies (if any), and any foreseen obstacles Latina/o AB540 students may have encountered at El Sol in navigating the application process. The ways in which the interviewees made meaning of the policy was related to the information they did or did not receive from administrators and other governing agencies. The main findings from the interviews were the following:

**Finding 1:** Only policy agents who were directly involved in the California Dream Act (Financial Aid Office and EOP&S) received information regarding the policy.

**Finding 2:** Policy agents understood the California Dream Act as policy that was to be implemented solely by the Financial Aid Office.
**Finding 3:** The Financial Aid Office continues to struggle with processing Cal Grants due to the complicated correction process that requires the student to come into the office and then the office communicating with CSAC on an individual level for each student.

**Finding 4:** Policy agents from CCCCCO, the Los Angeles Community College District, and El Sol described a lack of communication between departments regarding how AB540 students’ success in accessing and navigating the California Dream Act on campus. Additionally, Councilman Gil Cedillo and the CCCCCO Vice Chancellor stated that they do not receive feedback regarding the implementation process.

**Finding 5:** Not all policy agents who have direct contact with students were told about the California Dream Act nor were they trained about the policy.

The findings from El Sol’s policy agents was vital to the study because it provided an understanding of how the institution interpreted the policy, which in turn affected how they implemented the policy for the AB540 students on the campus. The findings also provided connections between the students’ experiences and the logistical and departmental issues that were occurring on campus, specifically within the Financial Aid Office and the Admissions Office.

Table 5. is a summary of some the meaningful data that was provided by El Sol’s policy agents. The table illustrates various obstacles each of the institution’s policy agents had in regards to implementing the California Dream Act and the resources and solutions they identified to make implementation of the policy successful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Agent</th>
<th>Obstacles</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Students and their parents are</td>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>AB540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>student group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
fearful of disclosing information. Students may not be aware of policy and more time on campus will increase the number of applicants.

Administrator in Financial Aid Office

Corrections to applications are done individually with student and with CSAC. CSAC, CCCCO, nor district provided sufficient amount of information. Front of the line staff remains unknowledgeable about policy. Students are reluctant to come into the office. Office needs campus support and needs to share policy information with other departments.

Correspondence with CSAC

Emailing students and providing workshops. Need campus support.

Administrator in Admissions Office

He is unaware of the application process.

Financial Aid Administrator

None provided

EOPS Director

Students’ awareness of eligibility for EOP&S maybe limited

Financial Aid Administrator

Through word of mouth and flyers students will become more aware of program.

Administrators in Admissions

She is unaware of the application process

Financial Aid Administrator

None provided

Classified Staff in Admissions

Students negative experience in the Financial Aid Office has caused the to seek services from himself and other faculty. Students have difficulty in answering tax information questions.

Counseling Department Chair and received training

Information should be provided to faculty so they can assist students.
Part-time Counselor  She did not receive training or information about the Policy. Student services offices are often closed in the evening.  Counseling Department Chair and seasoned counselors  Train par-time counselors on the policy.

CalWorks Director  El Sol’s staff and faculty are not aware of the policy. Students may think they qualify for Cal Works.  None provided  Information should be provided to all departments

The policy agents in this study contributed to the understanding of how educational policies were disseminated from the top-down. In reviewing the results of these interviews, the participants’ responses described an administrative model, in which some units communicated with one and other, while others did not. To address the research question of how the state, district, and campus made meaning of the policy, it was important to identify where they received their information from and what was the message they received. Figure 2. below depicts this process and these communicative relationships. It was also important to depict the navigational path of the student participants’ because the path(s) they took were a reflection of how the El Sol Student Services operated and communicated with one and other.

Figure 2. Organizational Chart for Policy Agents
Those policy agents in high positions, which include Gil Cedillo and the Vice Chancellor from CCCCO understood the policy as a widespread policy. They were concerned with the state-wide affects the policy would have on AB540 students. They both stated that they do not receive feedback from campuses on the ways in which the policy was implemented and how AB540 students were accessing and navigating the policy on the campus. This is not to say that either of them were not interested in the affects of the policy, rather their positions as high officials was to support legislation and mandate its implementation versus instructing campuses how to implement the policy.

Once an educational policy goes into affect and the CCCCO sends out memos to the community college districts; depending on what the policy entails, the supervising vice presidents are notified. At the same time, the CCCCO sends out memos to colleges for “district-wide distribution,” which are email list serves that are categorized by roles on campus, i.e. faculty, administrators, presidents, etc. These memos are public and can be found online at the CCCCO website. District level chancellors then oversee implementation of a policy within the district campuses.

In relation to Figure 1., the policy maker and the CCCCO operate in a top down approach with information coming from the state legislator to CSAC and to the CCCCO. The CSAC is before the CCCCO in that they had to create the California Dream Act process for students to then access.
The Financial Aid Administrator stated that she and other financial aid administrators were contacting CSAC directly about the policy. As illustrated in the figure, there is two-way communication between the financial aid office and CSAC. The LACCD’s financial aid director stated that her department provides workshops and trainings to campuses’ financial aid directors and staff. Still, for a student’s Cal Grant to be monitored, it has to be done through the campus and CSAC. Through this constant feedback and monitoring, between the community college campuses and CSAC, CSAC has seen that some community college campuses’ California Dream Act applications are disproportionate to the number of AB540 students they have on their campus. This information was given to me by El Sol’ Financial Aid Administrator, who also stated that CSAC is sending out a “Dream research team” consisting of CSAC officials and community college financial aid administrators to those campuses to investigate how the policy is being implemented on the campus and what information is being provided to their AB540 students.

The LACCD’s financial aid director received information from both the CCCCO and CSAC in regards to the California Dream Act. The district’s financial aid department solely communicates with the financial aid departments on the campuses; those in other student services’ departments do not attend the workshops or trainings. Their implementation role was to insure that campuses financial aid departments were aware of the policy and understood what documentation (coding) they needed to make in the system to record the amount of AB540 BOG Fee Waivers they granted.

The Vice President at El Sol received direction from LACCD’s Chancellor and the CCCCO. His role is to disseminate information and assist in implementation of policies that affect the departments he oversees. He held meetings with the administrators of these
departments, where information was discussed and shared. Through my interviews with administrators from these departments, they described a process in which they received information from CCCCO. Although they discussed the Vice President as making campus decisions, they primarily received instruction or information from the CCCCO. The relationship with the CCCCO appeared to be one-direction.

Also apparent in the figure is that the student services’ offices did not communicate with one and other, an issue that the Financial Aid Administrator, the Admissions Administrative Staff Member, and the Cal Works Administrator discussed as important in implementing this policy. The student interviews validate this lack of communication. Students described navigating to multiple offices and receiving contrary information or no information, causing them to feel frustrated and they recognized that the departments did not speak with one and other.

Lastly, the faculty of El Sol, who are represented by Academic Affairs, is on the outside of the model because they are not part of the Student Services Division. Faculty did not receive information from student service offices, CSAC, the Vice President (interviewee), and were not included in the implementation process of the California Dream Act, for the exemption of counselors who are considered faculty but are also part of the Student Services Division. Though faculty members are not within the division and are not linked to these offices, they do act as “front of the line” personnel when a student discloses their undocumented status to them first, which starts their navigation process of becoming an AB540 student. This pathway is also illustrated in Figure 1.

The students’ navigational path (s) begins at the places where they disclosed their status. Once the student disclosed their status, they had to navigate to the admissions office to file an
AB540 affidavit and after, they had to go to the financial aid office to complete at BOG Fee Waiver. Students sometimes completed the online California Dream Act application on their own or within a workshop. Almost all stated receiving some type of assistance. Because only one student was successful in receiving a Cal Grant award, the other 11 students had to navigate back to the financial aid office for assistance; a process that required multiple visits.

In the next chapter, the findings from the entire study will be discussed and I provide recommendations to El Sol Community College that address the obstacles in accessing and navigating the California Dream Act on the campus.

**Connecting Students and Policy Agents Findings**

There were findings from both groups of participants, students and policy agents that were connected. The students’ experiences are counterstories to the process that some of the policy agents described. Their experiences are also a reflection of the policy agents’ findings. The first group of findings regarding students’ not receiving their Cal Grants was related to the Financial Aid Administrator who stated having difficulties in processing applications because of the challenging process in correcting information. The Financial Administrator stated that she had to call CSAC individually to sort out the specific issues with each California Dream Act application. One of the obstacles in correcting the applications was due to that fact that the application did not have a distinct identifying number, such as school identification number or Social Security number. Because this work required time and constant communication with CSAC, students were being told to return on another day, which become a cycle. There were six students in the study who were waiting for their GPA verification to be accepted by CSAC, a process that follows the protocol described above.
Another finding within the student group was that the students were unsure how the California Dream Act would assist them financially when they transferred. This was information that could have been given by the Transfer Center because student’s aid is related to the college they select. Therefore, the financial aid office could describe the aid available for public colleges but it is Transfer Center that discusses students’ financial aid options. The policy agents at every level understood the policy as being implemented only through the financial aid department; hence the Transfer Center was not discussed as assisting in the implementation plan. This is not to say that the Transfer Center did not address the issues of AB540 students’ financial aid options when they transfer to a four-year university, however those that were interviewed did not discuss the center’s role in policy.

Students also discussed their navigational path as “back and forth” between different student services’ offices. Two students described getting information that contradicted what the previous office told them and three students were not made aware of the AB540 policy at the Admissions Office, which subsequently caused them to pay out-of-state tuition costs. There were policy agents that discussed a lack of communication between student services’ offices and between the CCCCO and the campus. Figure 1., showed that the different units in student services do not formally communicate with one and other, rather they tend to operate as separate units. There were students that noticed this lack of communication and felt that this affected the application process. Recommendations on how to address these findings on the campus will be discussed in Chapter Six and will include the recommendations given by the students and policy agents to resolve some of these obstacles.
Chapter 6: Discussion

Past studies have examined the obstacles undocumented students have encountered in seeking a higher education. A few studies have also examined how undocumented students have accessed California’s in-state resident tuition policy, AB540 (see Gonzales, 2010; Perez, 2010; Flores, 2010; Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007; Abrego, 2008). However, there is limited scholarly and systematic research on how AB540 students are currently accessing the recent California Dream Act within community colleges. This study focused on the ways Latina/o AB540 community college students made meaning of the California Dream Act and how they accessed and navigated the policy at El Sol Community College.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the key findings from student and policy agent interviews within the context of emergent themes, past research studies, and the theoretical framework of meaning making and Community Cultural Wealth. Next, the study’s limitations, the implications for campus procedures, and recommendations for future research are provided. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a personal reflection by the researcher.

Missed Opportunities
Past research in sensemaking or meaning making suggested that the way individuals or a group understands a policy affects their decisions on how to access that policy (Hill, 2001; Park et al., 2009). In this study, the Latina/o AB540 students understood that the California Dream Act affected the sequence of actions they took in navigating the policy. The main findings from their stories indicated that student participants identified themselves as either users or nonusers of the policy based on how they interpreted the policy; the interpretation was dependent on if they believed they were or were not receiving a Cal Grant. The data suggested that the eleven students did not receive a Cal Grant due to a lack of information or to misinformation, which resulted in missed opportunities to receive financial assistance.

These missed opportunities to fully utilize the policies intended for AB540 students were evident in students’ stories. Some students were unaware of the AB540 policy when they first enrolled at El Sol, which resulted in them paying out-of-state tuition and the majority were unaware that a GPA Verification Form was needed in order to apply for a Cal Grant. Most importantly, there were two students who were unaware that the California Dream Act allowed community college students to apply for Cal Grants; AB540 students being unaware of the Cal Grant was a major concern for the Vice Chancellor from CCCCO.

Park et al. (2009) attributed the lack of Latina/o students taking advantage of special programs and educational policies that exist to increase access and success, was due to a “knowledge gap.” This lack of knowledge did not rest in students’ inability to understand or access information, instead it resulted from the ways the campus and the CCCCO distributed information and implemented policies. The Vice Chancellor stated that the information was disseminated through their website and via flyers/posters that were supposed to be displayed by the campus. This is an example of the knowledge gap that exists between policy makers and their
target population. For students to access these programs and policies, policy makers need to understand how students, particularly Latina/o students, make sense of policies (Park et al., 2009). One of the ways students interpret policies is based on how they understand their opportunities and barriers (Park et al., 2009). For the students in this study, they interpreted the policy as beneficial, however only one student in the study had successfully received his Cal Grant. Students that were currently awaiting their Cal Grants interpreted the navigational process as difficult and this led some students to become frustrated and lose hope in ever receiving their Cal Grant.

Access to information about the policy on the El Sol campus was limited, which led to students not utilizing the policy to its fullest. The Financial Aid Office provided only two workshops before the California Dream Act application was released. Although, the director from the LACCD stated having financial aid workshops on campuses, the students in this study did not attend those district workshops. The students who attended El Sol’s workshops said they were not helpful because they were overcrowded, did not provide detailed information, and did not assist students through the entire online application process. They said they needed more assistance but found it difficult to ask for assistance during the workshop. On the campus, students did not report seeing an outreach campaign, flyers, or brochures about the California Dream Act; many of them turned to the AB540 student group to access more information. Also, information could only be obtained from staff and faculty working within the Financial Aid Office and from full-time counselors in the counseling department, who were trained on the policy. AB540 students were not able to receive information from the Admissions Office regarding the California Dream Act.
A study similar to the current one found that undocumented students who were eligible for the AB540 were not using the policy when it was first implemented due to a lack of guidelines for informing Californians about the policy and a lack of dissemination amongst high schools and colleges; these factors resulted in only a minimal amount of students applying for AB540 (Chavez, Soriano, & Oliverez, 2007). For this study, the results indicated that although students were applying for the California Dream Act, they encountered procedural obstacles, such as: submitting a GPA Verification Form, returning to the financial aid office to check their application status, using a DACA social security number on the application, or knowing about alternative forms to file when parents’ tax information is unavailable. The students’ who were not receiving their Cal Grant due to not completing one of these procedural steps, stated that this information was not disseminated to them.

Students’ impression of the Financial Aid Office’s staff was that they were not equipped to meet their needs. Having a point-person or staff officially charged with assisting AB540 students is an important factor in two previous studies (Perez et al., 2010). El Sol does have one point-person in the Financial Aid Office. The students were cognizant of the reality that having one sole person in charge of working with AB540 students may be detrimental because that designated person may leave the campus. The issues the EL Sol students encountered in navigating the policy affected their use of the policy on campus and this may have occurred at other campuses. According to CSAC, there were 29,200 California Dream Act applications submitted but only 7,465 Cal Grants were awarded for the 2013-2014 academic year (CSAC, 2013). The majority (80.56%) of the Cal Grant awards were “high school entitlement grants” given to AB540 students who recently graduated from high school; in this case, the student’s high school sends the GPA Verification Form. CSAC has recognized that there are a low
number of current AB540 students receiving the Cal Grant, which they attribute to students lack of GPA Verification Form and using the DACA social security number. The results of the current study are in line with CSAC’s findings.

**Utilization of the Policy**

Educational policies have the ability to “reshape” students’ lives on campus and can affect students’ identity and choices (Dorner, 2012). The impact of the California Dream Act was positive for the AB540 students in this study. They stated that it was helpful because they were able to apply for a BOG Fee Waiver. The policy did affect the way the students interacted with the campus. As AB540 students they were accessing student services’ programs, such as EOP&S for the first time and had the opportunity to receive financial assistance. The LACCD plans to survey students to understand their experiences in the application process.

In using their network (in person and online) of fellow AB540 students, the students were able to find information about the policy and their peers often assisted them with the application. The campus AB540 student group played a role in distributing information and assisting students in their application. The students who participated in the group and or who were former executive board members of the group felt that the group did assist AB540 students. But, the group did not always provide accurate information. An executive board member was unaware of his eligibility to receive a Cal Grant.

**Community Cultural Wealth**

The student participants discussed how they accessed information regarding both the AB540 and the California Dream Act. The ways in which the students sought out information from their community and the way they navigated through the application process as a group were examples of students utilizing their *community cultural wealth*, as described by Yosso.
Community cultural wealth recognizes the cultural assets students’ bring with them into the educational system, assets which support the students’ navigation of an institution that was not created for them (Yosso, 2005). For Latina/o students this wealth comes from an accumulation of cultural assets and resources they acquired over time (Yosso, 2006). There are six types of community cultural wealth: aspirational, linguistic, social, familial, navigational, and resistant. The findings from the student interviews in this study were examples of social, familial, and navigational capital. The experiences the students shared were counterstories to the perceived processes that were expected of AB540 students when they applied for the California Dream Act. These lived experiences were the unit of analysis for this study.

Within the framework of community cultural wealth, the AB540 student group created social capital for the students because it was an established network that assisted them in navigating the college and the policy. Most of the participants were comfortable with discussing their obstacles and accessing information from each other within the group setting. Yosso (2005) stated that Latina/o students bring with them cultural assets that are used as functioning skills within an educational institution. Having this social network was important to the students, especially those that had been a part of the group before the onset of the California Dream Act (four students). Latina/o students’ social capital is derived from community resources and networks that consist of peers and people within their community (Yosso, 2005). This was evident in the outside community resources students accessed for information, such as CHIRLA, COFEM, and the CA. Dream Network. These supportive networks provided emotional support and assisted students in their navigation process.

Students used their navigational capital in the way they maneuvered through the system and continue to do so in completing the process. Despite not feeling supported by the Financial
Aid Office and sometimes having received unclear answers, some of the students continued to pursue their Cal Grants while other students felt frustrated with the process and did not want to continue to pursue their Cal Grants. As Yosso (2006) noted, navigating the educational system needs to be done with both social and familial support; this was seen with students who assisted their brothers and sisters in the application process. Though students were using the AB540 student group, online resources, and their familial capital to access information, they may have chosen not to discuss the obstacles they encountered to getting the Cal Grant. When navigating alone, some AB540 students experienced anxiety with having to disclose their status or seek information. It is also possible that because financial aid is a personal matter, in that students had to provide personal financial information, they were less likely to share with their peers any obstacles they may have encountered.

**Policy Agents**

In addressing research questions one and two, the meaning making process that policy agents used in interpreting the California Dream Act affected their decision-making framework. The policy agents at El Sol interpreted the policy as a financial aid matter and they did not fully make meaning of the policy, at an individual or department level. For those policy agents that were directly connected to the policy (Financial Aid Office and EOP&S) they had a clear understanding of the policy; but AB540 students continued to struggle with obtaining their Cal Grants.

The way policy agents at El Sol’s Student Services’ departments constructed their meaning of the California Dream Act affected their actions. Past studies on AB540 students discussed the important role of staff, teachers, or faculty had in supporting students through their navigational process. Perez et al., (2010) stated that faculty and student affairs have a
tremendous impact on Latina/o AB540 students. Similarly, Contreras (2009) found that when undocumented students were exposed to a supportive staff member on campus whom they could trust, it assisted them in navigating college. Front of the line staff members became crucial in these students' experiences.

**Limited Access to Information for All Stakeholders**

Access to information regarding the California Dream Act was limited to those on campus who were directly affected by the policy, the Financial Aid Office and EOP&S. The administrators of other departments and programs such as the Admissions Office and CalWorks did not receive training or information regarding the policy; they only received a mass memo email from CCCCO announcing the policy. Teaching faculty and staff working in Academic Affairs were not aware of the policy's procedure, i.e. application process and eligibility requirements. It is not known how faculty, who are trying to or want to assist AB540 students, were accessing information because there is no office for AB540 students and the designated person to assist them in Financial Aid Office, Sylvia, was not formally introduced to any of the faculty or those working in Academic Affairs.

The lack of information sharing amongst all the departments and faculty was an issue that El Sol’s policy agents raised, especially those that were not aware of the policy. The CCCCO, the district, nor the Vice President(s) informed faculty and other administrators outside of student services about the application process. Similarly, director from LACCD was only sharing information to those working within the financial aid offices and not the entire students’ services division. Students had suggested that faculty needed to be aware of the policy so they could assist students, who may go to them for assistance.
For students, who are the primary stakeholders of the California Dream Act, the information they received was limited to the CSAC website and to the few workshops provided by the Financial Aid Office. They sought out information from outside resources, which poses a problem if that information is incorrect. There were flyers that were reviewed in this study that had inaccurate information and or did not state that students needed to submit a Cal Grant. As indicated by the Vice Chancellor, she was not sure if students had seen the distribution materials that were sent to the community colleges or if they accessed the “I Can Afford College” website. Two students had accessed information from the website and had seen one of the flyers from CSAC.

**Lack of Communication between El Sol’s Student Services’ Offices**

It was evident that the different student services’ offices did not exchange information and although the Vice President stated that the administrators from each of the departments do meet, it was unclear if the California Dream Act was a topic that they discussed and or shared with those working within the offices. El Sol’s policy agents were working within a *loosely coupled system* as described by K.E. Weick (1976). These systems have departments that are connected by certain events or users, such as students; however, they function independently from one and other. The Financial Aid Administrator described having this type of system, she stated, “We don’t know what the other department is doing and we need to know, departments have to stop trying to take ownership, we all have to work together.” The student participants experienced this loosely coupled system and the lack of communication between departments caused them to feel frustrated when they sought out information from one department to the next.

For policies to be effective, policy agents must use their knowledge when implementing new policies (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Past knowledge and experience with students
can assist in the implementation process or it can disrupt the process (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). The majority of the policy agents were limited in their experiences with AB540 students and limited in their knowledge of the California Dream Act. However, the Admissions Office’s staff member and administrator had a vast amount of knowledge regarding the AB540 policy and had conducted numerous trainings with staff and high school counselors regarding the policy but they did not share this knowledge with others, such as the Financial Aid Office, but it was not. The policy agents from the Admissions Office felt they were solely responsible for the implementation of AB540 and did not see a connection between their role in implementing the AB540 policy and the implementation of the California Dream Act. For the Financial Aid Administrator, who had a depth of knowledge regarding the policy, her limited experiences with AB540 students and her staff’s limited experience with AB540 students hindered the implementation of the policy.

**Lack of Accountability from Higher Level Administrators**

Policy agents at El Sol were not provided meaningful implementation protocols from the state’s policy agents such as the Vice Chancellor from CCCCO or Councilman Gil Cedillo. Protocols needed to be in place, ones that provided efficient ways to outreach to AB540 students, provide access to information to both students and faculty, and to better assist AB540 students within the Financial Aid Office. It was also apparent that the ways in which the CCCCO reached out to AB540 students did not consider the students’ past experiences with the student services or financial aid. AB540 students were accustomed to visiting the Admissions Office for the AB540 affidavit; an experience in which they had to disclose their undocumented status. The students did not access the Financial Aid Office because in the past they were not eligible for any type of state or federal aid. Park et al. (2009) stated that when policy agents do not take into
account the lived daily experiences of students whom they are creating policies for, it is difficult for those policies or programs to be successful. The lived daily experiences of the students in this study demonstrated that the majority Latina/o AB540 students made meaning of the California Dream Act based on the extent to which they were able to utilize the policy.

The Vice President and the administrator of the Admissions Office continued to interpret the policy as a “financial aid matter” that could only be implemented through the Financial Aid Office. By having this understanding, it placed the accountability of the policy solely onto the Financial Aid Administrator and not El Sol as a campus. For educational policies to be affective there needs to be an organizational or institutional understanding of the policy (Dorner, 2012). The Vice President did not discuss any widespread planning or distribution of information to other offices or departments (with the exception of EOP&S) or faculty. As an educational institution, El Sol did not attempt to collectively understand the policy or make meaning of the policy as a collective body and by doing this they prohibited themselves from making meaning of the policy, which in turn excluded them from assisting AB540 students.

The Vice Chancellor at CCCCO and the Councilman Gil Cedillo were the two highest-ranking officials in this study. Both stated that there was no real oversight regarding how well AB540 students were acquiring information and utilizing the California Dream Act. The oversight for the policy is done by CSAC; it is not known from the Vice Chancellor if and how that information CSAC receives is being shared with her or the campuses. As policy moves from the state, down to the campus level, it is not clear which policy agent should be monitoring the policy’s progress and providing feedback to other policy agents and policy makers.

Limitations of the Study
This case study was limited to AB540 students who were currently enrolled in one community college. The study was also limited to its sample of Latina/o AB540 students versus AB540 students of other ethnicities. Lastly, the study was limited to only one student services’ staff member, the other policy agents were in administrative roles, and to 12 students.

Implications for Policy and Procedure

Policy agents who are implementing new educational policies need to recognize the lived experience of students who the policy is intended to assist. The campuses must acknowledge the community cultural wealth that students bring with them to school and use those cultural capitals in addressing issues of access and implementation. Policy agents on a community college campus should strive to have a formal protocol for new policies that all faculty and staff understand and the student services’ departments should establish a feedback loop between departments and all other divisions regarding information on new educational policies. This study has shown that without information sharing and protocols, policies become difficult to navigate and are less successful. Latina/o AB540 community college students continue to be a segregated population in the sense that their needs continue to be overlooked. Although there has been a rise in the creation of AB540 student centers, community colleges would benefit from a mandate from the CCCCO to create these types of centers.

This study has documented the effects of the California Dream Act on the lives of AB540 students. It is important for California’s two-year colleges and universities to have an in-depth analysis of the students’ experiences in utilizing the policy so that changes can be made in how policies are put into effect. The data has demonstrated a large discrepancy in the number of eligible applicants and the number of processed applications. The 2013-2014 CSAC data stated that there were 29,200 California Dream Act applications, surpassing the projected 26,000
applicants. Within this group only 25% (7,465) were awarded a Cal Grant, with the majority (80%) of them awarded to recent high school graduates, who filed the application while they were still in high school.

As previous researchers have stated, AB540 students have to be highly aware of the ever-changing education and immigration laws; as these policies change so do their experiences on campus (Abrego, 2008). A systematic change is needed at El Sol, one in which all departments recognize the need to better support and serve AB540 students and agree to change their operating systems. System wide change is a difficult and lengthy process; therefore the recommendations given are ones that can be quickly implemented. The following are specific recommendations to El Sol Community College to increase AB540 students’ access to accurate information, to lessen the navigational obstacles students have encountered, and to provide campus-wide accountability.

**Recommendation 1: Increase Policy Outreach Campaign within Campus**

The results from both the students and policy agents’ interviews indicated that access to information was limited due to the ways in which the information was distributed, i.e. flyers/posters on campus, AB540 student group meetings, and Financial Aid workshops. These past methods of communication regarding the policy did not reach all students and at times were inaccurate. To increase accurate communication regarding the California Dream Act, the following actions are recommended:

- Mass email to all newly enrolled El Sol students regarding financial aid options as community college students. This email would provide information about FAFSA, AB540, and the California Dream Act. Information for all policies would include eligibility requirements and clear steps on how to apply. It is vital that the email indicates
the following information for the California Dream Act application: Students must request a GPA Verification Form from the Financial Aid Office, students cannot use their DACA social security number on the application, and if a student is unable to provide tax information or has errors in the application they must go to the Financial Aid Office to file correction forms. The email should also provide a link to the FAFSA website and the California Dream Act. The idea of emailing on students is the fastest and easiest way to insure that potential AB540 students will receive the information.

- The CCCCO posters that were created for the California Dream Act should be displayed in every classroom, including all Student Services’ Offices.

- The LACCD should open their trainings on the California Dream Act to other administrators and staff working in Student Services’ Divisions.

- The El Sol website should be updated to include information, procedural steps, and links to the California Dream Act application, the CCCCO and CSAC. Information similar to that of the email should be displayed on either the homepage or the Financial Aid Office page. Currently this information or these links are not displayed anywhere on the website. Information regarding AB540 is only found on the Admission Office page; their page should provide a link to the Financial Aid Office page.

- The Financial Aid Office should create a YouTube video on how to apply for the California Dream Act. This video would have step-by-step directions on how to file the online application, including how to avoid common technical errors and information on what to do if the application is not “submitted.” The video can feature Sylvia, the appointed Financial Aid Counselor designated to work with AB540 students. Students would be able to recognize her and feel more comfortable in approaching the office. This
video can also be used in trainings for staff and faculty. Other. Local community colleges that have already produced YouTube videos for AB540 students.

- The Financial Aid Office should provide up-to-date information pertaining to CalWorks and include all the steps to apply for the policy. The brochure should address submitting the GPA Verification Form and not using a DACA social security number. This brochure should be placed inside every Student Services and Academic Affairs’ Office, inside the mailboxes of all faculty and staff, outside the Financial Aid Office, given to the AB540 student group, and given to the offices of all special programs. The brochure should also be distributed to local feeder high schools’ counselors, college centers, and in the main high school office.

- The Financial Aid Office should increase the number of workshops they have during the year. It is recommended that they have at least one workshop a month regarding the California Dream Act application process and collaborate with the Transfer Center, to provide information on how the policy works on the four-year campuses, i.e. UC and CSU campuses.

**Recommendation 2: Increase Assistance at the Financial Aid Office**

Both student and policy agents’ recommended increased student assistance in the Financial Aid Office. Therefore it is recommended that the office designate more financial aid counselors to assist AB540 students. These additional counselors should have rotating schedules so that there is always someone in the office to assist the students, including on the days when the Financial Aid Office is open past 5 p.m. Recently the California Community Colleges received Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) funds through the state’s SB1456 law (2012). The SSSP mandates that campuses increase counseling services to students and
matriculation services; this funding can be used to increase the amount of counseling services within the Financial Aid Office (CCCCO, 2012).

The Financial Aid Office would also benefit from hiring an AB540 student worker in their office. Since the AB540 students rely on each other for assistance, having an AB540 student worker would increase the amount of AB540 students coming into the office for assistance; it would also increase access to accurate information.

The Financial Aid Office also needs to increase staff trainings about the California Dream Act. There were initial trainings done by the administrator and CSAC at the onset of the policy in 2012, however these trainings need to continue and can be improved now that the obstacles in the application have been identified. Front line staff should be required to attend trainings.

**Recommendation 3: Provide a Designated Space within Student Services Division to Serve AB540 Students at El Sol**

Currently, El Sol does not have a designated space or AB540 center on campus to assist students with all policies and procedures that pertain to them. A legitimate space is needed to provide a more streamlined approach in assisting students and providing access to accurate information. Centers have not been mandated by the CCCCO, however the Vice Chancellor stated that she supports community colleges in creating AB540 centers. There are some community colleges that have established centers and the UC Regents designated funding via a mandate from UC Regents President Janet Napolitano, for the creation of supportive services for AB540 students. There are six University of California campuses that have created AB540 student centers. It is only logical that El Sol, which serves one of the highest portions of AB540 students, should create a designated space. This would provide a place where faculty and staff
can assist students and would lessen any students’ apprehensions about going to the Financial Aid Office for assistance.

**Recommendation 4: Provide Trainings to all Student Services Staff**

To lessen the burden on the Financial Aid Office, El Sol’s President and Vice Presidents should require all front of the line staff within the Student Services’ Offices and Academic Affairs to be trained on the California Dream Act. Training should also be provided to all part-time counseling faculty, who are likely to meet with students in the evening, when offices are closed. These counselors need to have a thorough understanding of both AB540 and the California Dream Act because the students that they are advising may not be able to come to campus during normal business hours or as with most students, they may not return to Counseling Office.

It is important that the Transfer Center be integrated into the campus’s trainings and workshops about the California Dream Act. The Transfer Center should provide California Dream Act workshops on a routine basis; similar to the workshops they do for other students who wish to transfer. They should also create a brochure or flyer stating how the policy affects students when they transfer and what their financial aid options are at the public four-year campuses in the state. This information is vital and timely, as the new DREAM Loan Program (SB1210) will commence in fall 2015.

**Recommendation 5: Trainings or Information for Teaching Faculty**

Both full-time and part-time teaching faculty should be encouraged to participate in trainings or discussions about the policy. The Office of Professional Development could provide these instructors with “flex credit,” which are mandated credits that faculty must acquire throughout the year for professional development purposes. The Office of Professional
Development does have its own budget and can provide additional incentives if needed, such as food or stipends. This type of training can be a part of the campuses’ Student Equity Plans. All community colleges in the state have recently submitted equity plans that are part of SSSP and SB860 (2014), which is state legislation that provides funding for the implementation of colleges equity plans that are aimed at increasing student success among low-income students, predominantly Latina/o and or African-American, foster youth, and veterans. Currently, the Los Angeles Community College District is encouraging its campuses to use SB860 funding for professional development for faculty to increase student success for Latina/o and or African-American students. For these students, access to financial aid is a major factor in college retention and success.

**Recommendation 6: Establish an Outreach and Recruitment Campaign to Feeder High Schools**

The Vice Chancellor from CCCCO stated that there was no official outreach campaign to high schools. Despite this, high school counselors have sought out information for their soon to be AB540 students by attending CSAC sponsored workshops (in-person and online) and trainings. Most noteworthy is UCLA’s IDEAS (Improving Dreams, Equality, Access and Success) conference that was held in 2014, in which many students and high school counselors attended in order to receive information about the California Dream Act application process. This training is available online. The Educators for Fair Consideration (E4C), which also publishes an annual scholarship resource guide for AB540 students, also conduct trainings to high school counselors and staff.

These types of resources and events are mentioned to demonstrate how El Sol, as a community college, should be outreaching to their local feeder high schools and recruiting
AB540 students by providing students early access to information regarding the California Dream Act. There is an estimated 65,000 immigrant students graduating high school every year, with the majority living in California (Immigration Policy Center, 2012). The CCCCO and the community colleges, such as El Sol should capitalize on this opportunity to provide high school students with accurate information and assistance in applying to the California Dream Act. The outreach and recruitment campaign to high schools should include:

- CCCCO insures correspondence between the local community colleges to local high school administrators regarding the policy.
- Distribution of materials, including campus specific AB540 materials, such as El Sol’s brochure.
- Outreach and recruitment staff from the community college campuses should present information regarding the AB540 and the California Dream Act to students and parents during information session, i.e. college fairs, FAFSA parent workshops, college centers, etc.
- If possible, provide special workshops, trainings, and parent information nights specifically for AB540 students and their parents on the high school’s campus throughout the year.
- CSAC should inquire about having a link to their website, “I Can Afford College” from the high schools’ website.

**Recommendation 7: Provide the Parent(s)/Caregiver(s) of AB540 students with Informational Sessions and Workshops**

With recent changes in federal and state legislation, it is important that the campus addresses the doubts or reluctance that parents/caregivers may have about disclosing some information. It is recommended that El Sol host AB540 parent(s)/caregiver(s) informational
workshops both at El Sol’s campus and at the local feeder high schools regarding the multiple resources for AB540 students, including the California Dream Act and new legislation, such as DAPA (Deferred Action for Parent Accountability, 2014) and SB1210 (student loans). These events should be on an ongoing basis and should also coincide with when applications are due. These information sessions and workshops are to also be done at the local feeder high schools in order to provide parents/caregivers with information before the student enrolls into El Sol.

Suggestions for Future Research

Recommendations for future research studies on AB540 Latina/o AB540 community college students could include replicating this study at more California community colleges, especially those that are in remote locations where access to nonprofit organizations maybe scarce and the size of the AB540 student population may be smaller. This study could also be replicated at public four-year campuses to study how those institutions and its AB540 students are accessing and navigating the policy. Also, a study that includes a parent component would be vital in understanding how parents or caregivers are making meaning of the new educational policies.

Another suggestion is a longitudinal study with students who used the California Dream Act at a community college and their experiences with the policy when they transferred to a four-year campus. The purpose would be to see how the process has evolved for students and how it influenced students’ college experiences, i.e. their transfer college choice, pursuing graduate school, differences in how institutions provide information and the different navigational steps the students took. Lastly, the timing of the California Dream Act and the DACA was simultaneous. A study focusing on how students’ lives were affected by both policies would contribute to understanding AB540 students.
Personal Reflection & Conclusion

My experience with AB540 students began in 2008, when I became a program director at El Sol Community College. The first encounter I had was with a student who disclosed to me her “undocumented” status. She wanted to participate in my program and was not sure if it would be “free” to her. “Of course it is free,” I told her, although I was not sure if the grant had any citizenship regulations; I could not deny any student. It saddened me that AB540 students had to be cognizant of their immigration status and had to constantly inquire if they were allowed to participate in college programs. As a community college instructor I feel responsible in meeting all of my students’ needs. When the California Dream Act was announced, I waited for the campus to provide us (faculty) with detailed information about what the policy entailed and how we could assist students in applying. When that email never arrived, I was infuriated. I strongly believe that community colleges have been profiting from AB540 students and the CCCCQ should recognize that these students were paying in-state residency tuition and sometimes out-of-state tuition for the past twenty years. AB540 students should be seen as true stakeholders of their campuses and the CCCCQ. The CCCCQ should have communicated with districts, campuses, and with students in inquiring what the needs were of AB540 students. I have continued to navigate the California Dream Act, as well as other new immigration policies with the students who have entrusted me with their personal stories. Still, this process of accessing and navigating feels unsupported by the campus and my advocacy efforts, as well as those of other faculty members, continues to occur behind closed doors: after class, during office hours, on weekends, and off-campus.

I was determined to have my dissertation focus on Latina/o AB540 community college students because for me, it involves the issue of equity among community college students in the
California community college system. During the process, I was overwhelmed with the students’
candor in discussing their status and the harsh working conditions they encountered pre-DACA.
The Latina/o AB540 students I interviewed carried multiple burdens with them from their home
and from their community. They believed that by participating in this study, El Sol may be
encouraged to change their practices when servicing AB540 students and will increase support to
their specific needs. I hope that the recommendations to policy agents both within the state and
at El Sol will provide Latina/o AB540 with a legitimate space to help them succeed within the
community college system.

This case study provided an in-depth understanding of how Latina/o AB540 community
college students attending El Sol Community College made meaning of the new California
Dream Act. With a large population of AB540 students on campus, El Sol should strive to
implement promising practices and culturally competent practices for implementing policies
pertaining to Latina/o AB540 students. It is likely that other community colleges are
encountering similar implementation obstacles. The campus needs to have a student-centered
approach when implementing new policy because it is the student who is the user of these
policies and their feedback is crucial to their success and the success of the college.

The recommendations in this study will be disseminated to the EL Sol Community
College’s administration, faculty and staff via an executive summary. The executive summary
will also be shared with the Vice Chancellor from CCCCO who was interviewed and with
Councilman Gil Cedillo, as well as other stakeholders in the California higher educational
systems and community agencies including the California Community Colleges Chancellor's
Office.
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APPENDIX A

Glossary of Terms

Assembly Bill 540 (2001): Authorizes any students, including undocumented students, who meet criteria to be eligible for in-state resident tuition within in any of the California public colleges and universities. Eligibility requirements are: 1) Attend a California high school for 3 or more years, 2) Graduate from a California high school with a high school diploma or a high school diploma equivalent, 3) Registered or plan to enroll at a public college/university in California, 4) File or plan to file an affidavit with the college/university, and 4) May not be a non-immigrant hold a valid lettered non-immigrant visa. AB540 was introduced by Assembly Member Marco A. Firebaugh (D-South Gate).

Assembly Bill 130 and 131 (California Dream Act 2011): California Dream Act consists of AB130 and AB131. AB130 provides students access to private and public scholarships for public universities and AB131 provides student access to the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver for community college and Cal Grants. AB130 and 131 was introduced by Senator Gil Cedillo.
Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver Program (BOG Fee Waiver): This program waives the enrollment fees at California Community Colleges; waivers are based on student and or family’s household income.

Cal Grant B and C: Cal Grants are state funded programs for students who are classified as California residents or classified as AB540 by their college’s Admission and Records Office who are pursing eligible programs. There is a six-unit minimum enrollment requirement to be eligible for the payment; units from other colleges may be combined if a consortium agreement has been approved. Not all colleges participate in consortium agreements. California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) determines preliminary eligibility; final determination selection is determined by each school based upon CSAC regulations. Cal Grant A is an entitlement grant awarded to students attending a University of California campus or a California State University campus. There is also a Cal Grant A competitive grant. Cal Grant B is an entitlement grant for low-income students and is used in the community college as well. This grant is for the purpose of books and living expenses. There is also a competitive Cal Grant B, which is used when a student transfers to a four-year university. Cal Grant C is for the purpose of occupational, technical, and vocational programs. The amount awarded for all Cal Grants varies and is dependent on the reported student or family’s household income or expected family contribution (EFC) and the educational program they are enrolled in.

California Student Aid Commission (CSAC): The principal state agency that is responsible for administering state financial aid programs for students attending public and private universities, colleges, and vocational school. CSAC administers the processing of the BOG Fee Waiver, Cal Grants, and the California Dream Act, among other programs.
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA, 2012): This federal program commenced on August 15, 2012. The federal work program allows undocumented people ages 18-30 years old to apply for a work permit, i.e temporary social security card. Eligibility requirements are 1) Arrived in the United States before the age of 16, 2) Have continuously lived in the country since time of arrival and 3) Be under the age of 31. The person must also be enrolled in either college, the armed forces, or be obtaining a GED. The application must also have proof of being in the U.S on June 15, 2012 or within that time frame and must not have any convictions or have any significant misdemeanors. The DACA form requires $465 to file, which includes a federal background check and biometrics. The DACA is a three-year work permit that must be renewed thereafter.

APPENDIX B

Student Recruitment Flyer
Dear Student,

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If you meet the following criteria you may be able to participate in a research study conducted by Jessica Cristo, M.A. (principal investigator) from the Graduate Education and Information Studies Department at UCLA.

The study seeks participants who self-identify as Latina/o AB540 community college student who attends this campus, and fits in one of the following criteria:

1) Are currently utilizing the California Dream Act
2) Have attempted to apply for the California Dream Act but are NOT utilizing the California Dream Act this academic year 2013-2014.

What I will be asked?

Those who would like to be a part of the study will be interviewed for a minimum of one hour, on campus. During this interview, you will be asked questions regarding how you received information about the California Dream Act, your experience in applying to the policy, and how you are currently using or not using the policy on the campus. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and will be anonymous. To insure confidentiality, a pseudonym will be given to the participant and no other identifiable data will be disclosed.

Why is this study is being conducted?

This study is being conducted to understand how Latina/o AB540 students are accessing the California Dream Act and navigating the policy on the campus. Your participation in this study will be part of a larger study investigating how policy makers and those in working in student services’ departments understand the California Dream Act and how they are assisting students in their departments/offices.

What will happen if I participate in the study?

If you decide to participate in the study, you may contact the researcher via email to set up a time/date for your interview. You will be required to meet at least once for a minimum of one hour. The interview will take place on campus in a vacant classroom or area of your choosing that will be in a private setting.

At any time of the study, you may decline your participation (withdraw from the study) and the researcher will not use any data collected from the interview.

The interviews will be voice recorded and you will be allowed to view the transcript of the interview for approval, before the researcher writes the results.

The researcher may need to contact you for clarification during the research period, which will be from March 2014 –June 2014. If you would do not want to be contacted after the interview, you may request so after the interview and or at any time during the research period.

All information will be kept confidential and pseudonyms will be used. also, any paperwork, such as notes and transcripts of the interview will use the pseudonym and codes will be used to secure autonomy.

For your participation in the study, you will receive a $25 gift card for Amazon.com. This gift card can be used to assist you in purchasing textbooks, school supplies, etc. You will also receive a copy of the study upon request.
How do I participate?

If you would like to participate and meet the criteria listed above, you may contact the researcher via cell phone 323-708-4860. This study is limited to a small number of students. Therefore, interviews will be scheduled on a first come first serve basis. All interviews must be done in person with the researcher.

Questions or concerns?

You may contact Jessica Cristo (323) 708-4860 or email at jcristo80@gmail.com.

APPENDIX D

Demographic Student Questionnaire

AB540 Latina/o Community College Students
The following questionnaire is for student interview participants.

Name (pseudonym):
Please choose a pseudonym for the purposes of this study.

DOB:

Age:

Gender:  ____ M  ____ F

1. What high school did you graduate from?
2. What semester/year have you enrolled in your community college (before 2008)?
3. Are you currently a full time student (12 units or more)?
4. During which semester/year did you apply for AB540 status on your campus?
5. Which semester/year did you file the California Dream Act?
6. Have you completed a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals? If so, when (month/year)?
7. When is your expected graduation date from this community college?
8. If you are planning on transferring to a 4- year college/university,
   a. When are you planning on transferring (semester/year)?
   b. Which university are you planning on transferring to?
9. Please list any online (Internet) resources you access for information regarding undocumented students, California DREAM Act, Federal DREAM ACT, and immigration policies.

APPENDIX E

Student Interview Protocol

AB540 Latina/o Community College Student Interview Protocol
The following questions are about your experiences as an AB540 student on campus and the resources you have used to navigate the new California Dream Act policy on campus. You answers will be helpful to the college and you will be able to provide recommendations to campus student service programs.

I. Understanding the policy and the value/meaning they place on it

   a. How would you describe the AB540 policy?

   b. What steps did you take to apply for the California Dream Act? What were the challenges (if any) of the application process?

   c. How would you describe the California Dream Act (AB 130 & AB131) and its personal effect on you as an AB540 community college student?

   d. What do you view as the benefits of being a Dream Act student?

   e. In what ways (if any) has the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), coupled with the California Dream Act, changed your experiences on campus?

   f. How will the California Dream Act assist you in the 4-year college/university?

II. Accessing information on the policy

   a. When you were in high school, did you meet with your school’s college counselor and if so, what did you discuss? College applications? Types of financial aid programs? Other?

   b. Did your high school engage you parents/or adult family members in conversations/workshops/information on financial aid in college? If so, please tell me about it.

   c. When you came to the community college campus, what student services’ offices did you visit? How did you decide to visit these offices?

   d. Did anybody at the college inform you about any services or programs for AB540 students on campus? Who? Where? When?

III. Navigating & utilizing the policy on their campus

   a. Did you take any steps before applying for the California Dream Act? Such as gathering information about the application process or filling out any California Dream Act sample forms.
b. When doing the application, did you seek out any assistance? From who? Was it helpful, why or why not?

c. Did the campus provide certain steps that Dream Act students must complete? i.e. directions to go to certain offices

d. Did your campus, i.e. student services’ offices notify you about your eligibility for other state funded programs on campus? If so, please describe these meetings/workshops/flyers and how useful they were to you.

APPENDIX F

Recruitment Email for Policy Agents

Dear Administrator (s) and Staff
This email was sent to you because you either direct or work in an office in the Student Services Department, which serves as the “front of the line” service for our incoming students.

If you are interested, you may be able to participate in a research study conducted by Jessica Cristo, M.A. (principal investigator) from the Graduate Education and Information Studies Department at UCLA. The study, entitled “Making Meaning of the Dream: How Latina/o AB540 Community College Students are Navigating and Accessing the California Dream Act,” seeks administrative and staff participants who provide “front of the line” services to AB540 students on campus.

Eligibility:

1) Working as a director/administrator in a student services department (admissions, counseling, financial aid, matriculation, or enrollment)
   Or
2) Working as a staff employee, either classified or student worker in a student services department (admissions, counseling, financial aid, matriculation, or enrollment)

What I will be asked?

Those who would like to participate in the study will be interviewed for a minimum of one hour, on campus. During this interview, you will be asked questions regarding how your department/office have implemented the California Dream Act policy, your understanding of the policy, and the services that you believe AB540 student may need.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and will be anonymous. To insure confidentiality, a pseudonym will be given to you and no other identifiable data will be disclosed.

Why is this study is being conducted?

This study is being conducted to understand how Latina/o AB540 students are accessing the California Dream Act and navigating the policy on the campus. Your participation in this study will be part of a larger study investigating how students, policy makers and those in working in student services’ departments understand the California Dream Act and how they are assisting students in their departments/offices.

What will happen if I participate in the study?

If you decide to participate in the study, you may contact the researcher via email to set up a time/date for your interview. You will be required to meet at least once for a minimum of one hour. The interview will take place on campus in a vacant classroom or area of your choosing that will be in a private setting. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.
At any time of the study, you may decline your participation (withdraw from the study) and the researcher will not use any data collected from the interview. The interviews will be voice recorded and you will be allowed to view the transcript of the interview for approval, before the researcher writes the results.

The researcher may need to contact you for clarification during the research period, which will be from April 2014 –June 2014. If you would do not want to be contacted after the interview, you may request so after the interview and or at anytime during the research period.

You will receive a $5 Starbucks gift card for your participation.

**How do I participate?**

If you would like to participate and meet the criteria listed above, you may contact the researcher via email: jcristo80@gmail.com.

**Questions or concerns?**

You may contact Jessica Cristo (323) 708-4860 or email at jcristo80@gmail.com. The supervising chair for this study is Dr. Daniel Solórzano and Dr. Linda Rose, UCLA School of Education.

If you have any questions regarding your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211 Box 951694
Los Angeles, CA. 90095-1694

**APPENDIX G**

**Administrator/Staff Participant Informed Consent Form**

**Study Title:** Making Meaning of the Dream: How Latina/o AB540 Community College students are Accessing and Navigating the California Dream Act
**Principal Investigator:** Jessica Cristo, University of California, Los Angeles  
**Faculty Sponsor:** Daniel G. Solórzano, Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles

**Purpose:** This study is being conducted to understand how Latina/o AB540 students are accessing the California Dream Act and navigating the policy on the campus, how policy makers and those in working in student services’ departments understand the California Dream Act and how they are assisting students in their departments/offices.

**Procedure:** If you decide to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the principal investigator (Jessica Cristo) for a minimum of one hour. There is no right or wrong answer to the interview questions. The purpose of the interview is to learn about your experiences directing and or working in a student service department/office that serves as the “front of the line” resources/services to AB540 students on this campus. You have the right to refuse to answer any interview question you do not want to. You also have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime.

The interview will be recorded on a digital voice recorder to insure accuracy of your responses. You may have the right to review the digital file made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part. You may be given a copy of the transcript of the interview, so that you can check for accuracy before the data from the interview is used in the study.

You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

**Risks and Discomforts:** I do not foresee any risks or discomforts in participating in this study. However, based on your work experiences that you share there is a risk that a reader may be able to identify you. Your participation is anonymous and a pseudonym may be used in place of your real name.

**Benefits:** Your participation will provide policy makers and those working in student services’ from your college vital information on how to improve the services and assistance to AB540 students.

**Compensation:** Participants will receive a $5 gift card to Starbucks for their participation in the interview. The gift card will be given after the interview is over.

**Refusal or Withdraw of Participation:** Your participation is completely voluntary. At any time you may withdraw from this study.

**Confidentiality:** All information that you provide is completely confidential. It will be maintained in a confidential manner and will only be seen by the principal investigator. Your participation in this research is completely anonymous. No personally identifiable information will be collected from you at any point in this study. Any written information, such as the
interviewer’s notes and transcripts will not have any identifying information; a pseudonym will be used and a code number. All information will also be kept in a secure setting.

Contact information: If you have any questions regarding this study and or your participation in this study, you may contact the principal investigator, Jessica Cristo at (323) 708-4860 or email at jcristo80@gmail.com.

If you have any questions regarding your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211 Box 951694
Los Angeles, CA. 90095-1694

**SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT**

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<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
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<tr>
<td>Signature of Participant</td>
<td>Date</td>
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**SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT**

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<td>Signature of Person Obtaining Consent</td>
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APPENDIX H

Interview Protocol for Policy Agents

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The purpose of this interview is to obtain information from state officials and college administrators, who are designated policy makers or policy agents, about the impacts of the California Dream Act policy on AB540 community college campuses and students.

1. Please describe your experience with the California Dream Act and the AB540 policy.
2. What was (is) your vision (as administrator, author of policy, etc.) for developing a successful approach for implementing the California Dream Act on your college campus? Has that vision changed?
3. What were your expectations of AB540 students’ ability to successfully access information on the California Dream Act and successfully apply to the programs they are now eligible for?
4. In what ways do you think the California Dream Act will assist AB540 students in community college?
5. Were there any “systems in place” either at the Chancellor’s level, district level or campus level, to assist with the California Dream Act?
6. Are there any gaps in implementing the California Dream Act on your campus as they pertain to: a) Increasing student’s knowledge about the policy, b) Increasing student access to the application process and services, and c) Creating a student focused approach for implementation?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Flyer/Website/Document</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Type of publication</th>
<th>Date of publication</th>
<th>Critique/Notes on document or websites review</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California Dream Act Workshop FLYER</td>
<td>Financial aid and scholarship office at El Sol</td>
<td>“Come to one of these workshops to find out how the California Dream Act will help AB540 students”</td>
<td>Flyer circulated on campus</td>
<td>January 2013 for workshops on Jan 9 and Feb 13</td>
<td>There is no name on whom to contact just the location and phone number of FA. A section to know if you are eligible for AB540 status, where the affidavit says “you have filed for legal immigration status”. Apply for BOG waivers for “Terms starting after January 1, 2013. Assistance from EOPS, CARE or CalWorks beginning January 1, 2013. “State and financial aid like Cal Grants (2013-2014 academic year) and Chafee Grants” (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Application for AB540 students under the California Dream Act Community Colleges 2012-2013 Board of Governors Fee Waiver Application POLICY FORM TO FILL OUT</td>
<td>CSAC/Fee Waiver form</td>
<td>Application for the BOG fee waiver</td>
<td>A policy form that is filled out in person with the FA office or turned into them by hand. Review process is in front of the student.</td>
<td>Uses the term “undocumented student can compete the CA. Dream Act application instead of the FAFSA. The dream act app. Will gather information regarding your family’s income and assets and will issue you and your college information that will help determine eligibility for the BOG fee waiver, as well as additional financial aid programs. Asking about PARENTS, use the term undocumented and give your college “information” just gives them a link to the dream act application. They have to sign a certification for all applicants statement: key may be asked to submit their parents’ 2011 taxes Federal FA programs are available to documented AB540 students who are enrolled part time….By completing the FAFSA additional financial assistance may be available in the form of Pell grants and other grants, work study and other aid. AB540 students may apply for Cal grants for the 2013-2014 school year. Award is Jan. 1, 2013 through March 2, 2013. And requires that you file either a CA Dream Act application or a FAFSA and that you submit verification of your GPA. FA program information and application assistance is available in the college financial aid office.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHIRLA Coalition for human immigrant rights of Los Angeles</td>
<td>Online source and advocacy group</td>
<td>Formed in 1986 to advance the human and civil rights of immigrants and refugees in L.A.; promote harmonious multi-ethnic and multi-racial human relations and through coalition-building.</td>
<td>Online and in office:</td>
<td>Community Education and outreach, group seminars, workshops on immigration laws and a 1800 #. When laws change you go there to know your rights” a “know your rights card” Student options. Organizing immigrant community by engaging families. Has the WISE UP committee of high school students created in 2001 that helped win access to AB540. Part of CA Dream Network. CA Dream Network active in 38 colleges/univ. Trains leaders in high school. GIVES links to CA. Dream Network and Wise up. Policy advocacy program systemic change through state, federal and local policy. Resources focused on immigration and knowing rights.</td>
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advocacy, community education and organizing empower immigrants and their allies to build a more just society. Educating, Organizing, Advocating.


| COFEM | Online source and advocacy group The mission of the Consejo de Federaciones Mexicanas en Norteamérica (COFEM) promotes the advancement of the Latino community in North America through public policy advocacy, community organizing, leadership and organizational development, educational and cultural programs, and bi-national economic development. | Has scholarship information, outdated. Does provide in office assistance to those seeking immigration information. Provides leadership training. |

| Dream Team L.A | Online source and advocacy group Founded in 2009 it aims to create a safe space in which undocumented immigrants’ from the communities and allies empower themselves through activism and life stories. Grass roots organization CA. dream act application deadlines, which includes the EOPS care and CalWorks. Have an easy to read table of Grant/scholarship when to apply who do I contact, what it is and the type of application required. “grant awards”. Says to go to the financial aid office and to complete one ca dream act application. For AB540 it says what it is and the requirements. “Warning: the language in the affidavit may be confusion, we highly recommend getting help in filling out the application form a knowledgeable resource. Not filing our the form correctly can result in students not being granted AB540 status at their school. Most schools already have these forms available when applying to school, so they should be able to help you out. If they tell you different, education them on AB540 and your right to an education. |
| Website is grouped into: deferred action, CA. Dream Act, AB540, Dream Act Blog, subscribe, donate, about us, regions and Wise up Link. |
| DACA: 7/26/12: Gives information packets and who is eligible to apply for DACA. These are the info packets that CHIRLA was giving out. |
| CA. Dream Act: 11/30/2011: Step 1 is AB540, Step 2 is Dream Act part 1 Ab130 signed into law on July 25, 2011, apply to privately funded scholarships at a CSU (i.e. foundation scholarships). Part 2 AB131 signed into law Oct. 8, 2011 apply for BOG, Institutional Aid and Cal Grants, effective January 1, 2013. Published a Dream Act Fact Sheet: A clear Step 1 and Step 2 of the dream act. Does not have steps on the actual online application or the link to the CA commission AID. CHIRLA said they are helping with the this application that it would “be like FAFSA for AB540 students” |
| 3540: 2/26/11: describes the bill, there are 11 states offering the affidavit “nonimmigrant alien –temporary admittance as a F visas or J visas. Have to be a NOT an immigrant alien or AB540. Gives a link to the affidavit from |
| CA Dream Act Application Deadlines | Dream team L.A. [http://dreamteamla.org](http://dreamteamla.org) | 1 sheet grid shows all they types of grant/scholarships (FA) when to apply, who to contact, What it is and types of applications that are required, i.e. dream act or institutional applications | It is a printable flyer that is found online on their website, pdf. | Unknown | This is an easy to follow chart that has all the applicable types of financial assistance:
Privately funded
Bog
EOPS/CARE
Cal Grant A or Cal grant B (community col)
Cal Grant C
Chafee Grant
The “who do I contact or where do I apply?” has them going to the FA office, or EOPS or FA office or CA. Student Aid Commission. All of them except for the EOPS/CARE require a CA. Dream Application and GPA verification form. The bog says either the CA Dream Act or the BOG Waiver form. |

| “YOU can afford college!” Regardless of your immigration status. “These are three CA laws that undocumented students can qualify for to make a college education more accessible and affordable. | CHIRLA with the sponsorship of CA Dream Network and Wise UP | Step 1: AB540 gives the history and the requirements
Step 2: CA Dream Act Then says AB130 and AB131 the requirements | A flyer that is a pdf | 11/17/2011 | This is an easy to follow Step 1 and Step 2. The readers know they have to be an AB540 student first and they know the requirements. There is no mention of the CA commission or the Dream act website. Says to go to chiral or cadreamnetwork.org for more information.

Does say Effective January 1 for fee waiver and Cal grants, even though the fee waiver kicked in Spring 2012. Does have the different non-immigrant students’ definitions in terms of the types of visas they have. |

| The California dream act: Financial aid is available to AB540 students attending a California community college. | Icanaffordablecollege.com Part of the CA. community college chancellor’s office | Tells them what they can apply for:
Privately funded scholarships
Bog (starting Jan. 1, 2013)
Assistant from EOP&S CARE CAL works (Beginning Jan. 1 2013)
State financial aid like Cal grants for 2013-2014 academic year and Chafee grants. | This website and flyer is informational but does not clearly state that students have to provide a GPA Verification Form from their campus. States that students can be eligible for the CalWorks program but that may not be true because the program receives federal funding and students need be on state aid, which is denied to undocumented persons in the U.S. |
How you know you are an AB540 student. Does say that they have to file an affidavit saying you have filed or will file when you are eligible to do so for legal immigration status. Please see the college Admission office to determine if you are AB540 eligible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California Dream Act FAQ’s</th>
<th>CSAC</th>
<th>FAQ for students</th>
<th>Flyer pdf of FAQs</th>
<th>Na</th>
<th>Says the CA Dream Act is a combination of 3 bills, AB540, 130 and 131.</th>
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<td>Says what the AB540 is</td>
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<td>Addresses “parents’ information” says you are “required” to submit parental income and asset information.</td>
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<td>Demographic which is the “same as the information that students have already supplied to their high schools and college”. This is not necessarily true because students in K-12 don’t disclose their status or their parents, just local address. This “demo” information about legality is new in respect to providing the information to another source, i.e. the CA Student Aid Commission. Students do disclose on the Ab540 affidavit but that does not require parental information, i.e. tax information. Does say that “there are no check and matches between the CA Dream act application and any federal database”. Says student and parent information is protected by the same privacy and information security laws and safeguards as all other Cal grant applicants—but this is the first time they are applying, they can’t assume they know the privacy laws of state financial aid.</td>
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<td>Advises middle school children to “talk with your parents about seeking information to apply for citizenship”. This is difficult to do. Both high school and middle school children should know about the DACA. Tell them to keep records, i.e. immunization records, attendance, report cards, awards, student id cards, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Worksheet for the California dream act application. 2013-2014 | CSAC | Worksheet to fill out before going online to do the real dream act application | PDF worksheet | Describes the dream act and AB540. “To apply for state financial aid like the UC grants, state university grants and the BOG waivers and Cal grants “must verify with their college on the financial aid filling requirements.

It is NOT an application for federal financial aid and students should NOT complete both applications. Need to have parents or self’s tax information

Parent refers to biological or adoptive parent. “Grandparents, foster parents, legal guardians, siblings, and uncles or aunts are not considered parents on this form unless they have legally adopted you. Give info of the parent you lived w/in the last 12months. Whoever provided the most financial support. If they remarried give “information about your stepparent”

Parents total current balance cash savings in checking account

Net worth the $ you have.

| Dream.csac.ca.gov California dream act application | CSAC | This is where you go to apply. The new site has a distinction between those who are starting a new application, continue application, and parent signature. | 2013-2014 application period | Pin site for parents is still in English.
Website and worksheet is in English still.
Paper application in Spanish NOW
But still have to go online to submit it


Cash for college
Educators for fair consideration
CA dreamers in action

Now has a link to DACA when you go to RESOURCE PAGE

Training webinar dates
(ask student services if they attended these).
SPECIAL Alert: December 5, 2014
To financial Aid administrators and high school counselors

From Catalina G. Mistler chief program administration and services division
(Contact her)

CA Dream act application training webinars
Saying it was “redesigned to make it easier for students…”
Release of the application was 12.6.14

| Powerpoint of CA student aid commission of there training. A one-time | CSAC | For FA directors and high school counselors to show them the Powerpoint | Dec.4,2013 | The steps that a student takes step by step the pages on internet. Shows qualifications. Academic Year 2014-2015. Now have helpful hints on the side, a sidebar on each webpage. Students have to give IRS information or not going to file. Put zero for social security number for |
live training but can be accessed online at any time.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>new 2014-2015</th>
<th>parents. Invalid data after you submit it versus at the beginning of the application process the invalid wouldn’t let you move to the next page. Requesting a parent pin. CALSAR has their information where they check in to see if the application is filed and if there is anything they need to do.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E4FC Educators for Fair Consideration</td>
<td>According to them 25% of undocumented immigrants are living in CA. Talk about DACA that is it renewable for two year. They have an educator’s tool kit.</td>
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<td>“Provides access to institutional and state-based financial aid for AB540 eligible undocumented students.”</td>
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<td>AB540 requirements. What the affidavit looks like. Then the different AB131 for state based financial aid beginning Jan. 2013. The different types of Cal Grants you can get at each type of university. CA Dream Act and verification.</td>
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<td>There best practices for institution: AB540 point person</td>
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<td>Inclusive website</td>
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<td>Enable students to lead the process</td>
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<td>Matching residency Statuses</td>
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<td>Develop a relationship with Residency deputy</td>
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<td>Income verification</td>
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<td>Campuses should have:</td>
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<td>• Scholarships</td>
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<td>• Paying for college</td>
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<td>• Build institutional change</td>
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<td>• find allies</td>
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<td>• connect with other schools</td>
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<td>• get staff training from E4FC</td>
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<td>• identify institutional barriers</td>
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<td>• help organize the students</td>
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<td>• elevate their voices</td>
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<td>• Creating a safe space</td>
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<td>• Respect and confidentiality</td>
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<td>• Create a physical space</td>
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<td>• Poster, book, articles, etc.</td>
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<td>• Having one point person</td>
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<td>• Don’t as students to self-identify</td>
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<td>• Awareness of language</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Courageous conversations</td>
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<td>• Involve parents</td>
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</table>
FEBRUARY 21, 2001

An act to add Section 68130.5 to the Education Code, relating to public postsecondary education.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST


Existing law establishes the California Community Colleges under the administration of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. Existing law authorizes the establishment of community college districts under the administration of community college governing boards, and authorizes these districts to provide instruction at community college campuses throughout the state. 

Existing law authorizes community college districts to admit, and charge a tuition fee for, nonresident students in accordance with specified criteria.

Existing law establishes the California State University, and authorizes the operation of its various campuses under the administration of the Trustees of the California State University. 

Existing law authorizes the trustees, on the basis of demonstrated financial need and scholastic achievement, to waive entirely, or reduce below the minimum rate, the tuition fee of a nonresident student, as defined.

Existing law prescribes residency requirements for students at public institutions of postsecondary education, including, among others, the campuses of the California Community Colleges and the California State University. With respect to alien students,
existing law specifies that an alien, including an unmarried minor alien, may establish his or her residence unless precluded by the federal Immigration and Nationality Act from establishing domicile in the United States. These provisions are applicable to the University of California only if the Regents of the University of California act to make them applicable.

This bill would require that a person, other than a nonimmigrant alien as defined, who has attended high school in California for 3 or more years, who has graduated from a California high school or attained the equivalent thereof, who has registered at or attends an accredited institution of higher education in California not earlier than the fall semester or quarter of the 2001-02 academic year, and who, if he or she is an alien without lawful immigration status, has filed an affidavit as specified, be exempted from paying nonresident tuition at the California Community Colleges and the California State University.

The bill would authorize a student exempt from nonresident tuition under the bill to be reported by a community college district as a full-time student for apportionment purposes. The bill would require student information obtained in the implementation of the bill to be confidential.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. (a) The Legislature hereby finds and declares all of the following:

(1) There are high school pupils who have attended elementary and secondary schools in this state for most of their lives and who are likely to remain, but are precluded from obtaining an affordable college education because they are required to pay nonresident tuition rates.

(2) These pupils have already proven their academic eligibility and merit by being accepted into our state's colleges and universities.

(3) A fair tuition policy for all high school pupils in California ensures access to our state's colleges and universities, and thereby increases the state's collective productivity and economic growth.

(4) This act, as enacted during the 2001-02 Regular Session, allows all persons, including undocumented immigrant students who meet the requirements set forth in Section 68130.5 of the Education Code, to be exempt from nonresident tuition in California's colleges and universities.

(5) This act, as enacted during the 2001-02 Regular Session, does not confer postsecondary education benefits on the basis of residence within the meaning of Section 1623 of Title 8 of the United States Code.

(b) It is the intent of the Legislature that:

(1) A state court may award only prospective injunctive and declaratory relief to a party in any lawsuit interpreting Section 68130.5 of the Education Code, as added by this act during the 2001-02 Regular Session, or any lawsuit interpreting similar requirements adopted by the Regents of the University of California pursuant to Section 68134 of the Education Code.

(2) This act will have no impact on the ability of California's public colleges and universities to assess nonresident tuition on
students who are not within the scope of this act.

SEC. 2. Section 68130.5 is added to the Education Code, to read:

68130.5. Notwithstanding any other provision of law:

(a) A student, other than a nonimmigrant alien within the meaning of paragraph (15) of subsection (a) of Section 1101 of Title 8 of the United States Code, who meets all of the following requirements shall be exempt from paying nonresident tuition at the California State University and the California Community Colleges:

(1) High school attendance in California for three or more years.

(2) Graduation from a California high school or attainment of the equivalent thereof.

(3) Registration as an entering student at, or current enrollment at, an accredited institution of higher education in California not earlier than the fall semester or quarter of the 2001-02 academic year.

(4) In the case of a person without lawful immigration status, the filing of an affidavit with the institution of higher education stating that the student has filed an application to legalize his or her immigration status, or will file an application as soon as he or she is eligible to do so.

(b) A student exempt from nonresident tuition under this section may be reported by a community college district as a full-time equivalent student for apportionment purposes.

(c) The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and the Trustees of the California State University shall prescribe rules and regulations for the implementation of this section.

(d) Student information obtained in the implementation of this section is confidential.
Appendix K

AB130 & AB131 (California Dream Act) Legislation

BILL NUMBER: AB 130    INTRODUCED
BILL TEXT

INTRODUCED BY  Assembly Member Cedillo
(Principal coauthors: Assembly Members Alejo and Lara)
(Principal coauthor: Senator De León)
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Allen, Ammiano, Bonilla, Fong, Furutani, Monning, and Yamada)
(Coauthors: Senators Hancock, Padilla, and Yee)

JANUARY 11, 2011

An act to amend Section 68130.7 of, to amend, repeal, and add Section 68130.5 of, and to add Sections 66021.6, 66021.7, and 76300.5 to, the Education Code, relating to student financial aid.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 130, as introduced, Cedillo. Student financial aid: eligibility: California Dream Act of 2011.

(1) Existing law requires that a person, other than a nonimmigrant alien, as defined, who has attended high school in California for 3 or more years, who has graduated from a California high school or attained the equivalent thereof, who has registered at or attends an accredited institution of higher education in California not earlier than the fall semester or quarter of the 2001-02 academic year, and who, if he or she is an alien without lawful immigration status, has filed a prescribed affidavit, is exempt from paying nonresident tuition at the California Community Colleges and the California State University.

This bill would enact the California Dream Act of 2011. The bill, as of July 1, 2011, would exempt a person who has attended, for 3 or more years, at least one of which shall have been in a high school, and graduated from, secondary school in California from paying nonresident tuition at the California Community Colleges and the California State University. Under the bill, persons attending and graduating from California technical schools and adult schools, as well as high schools, would be included within the scope of this provision.

(2) The Donahoe Higher Education Act sets forth, among other things, the missions and functions of California's public and independent segments of higher education, and their respective institutions of higher education. Provisions of the act apply to the University of California only to the extent that the Regents of the University of California, by appropriate resolution, act to make a provision applicable.
In any action in which a state court finds that a specified law, or any similar provision adopted by the regents, is unlawful, existing law authorizes the court to order the administering entity that is the subject of the lawsuit to terminate any waiver awarded under that statute or action, as equitable relief, prohibits the award of money damages, tuition refund or waiver, or other retroactive relief, and provides that the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California are immune from the imposition of any award of money damages, tuition refund or waiver, or other retroactive relief in a lawsuit.

This bill would amend the Donahoe Higher Education Act, as of July 1, 2012, to require the Trustees of the California State University and the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, and to request the regents, to establish procedures and forms that enable persons who are exempt from paying nonresident tuition under the provision described in (1) above, or who meet equivalent requirements adopted by the regents, to apply for, and participate in, all student aid programs administered by these segments to the full extent permitted by federal law, except as provided. This provision would apply to the University of California only if the regents, by appropriate resolution, act to make it applicable. If a state court finds that this provision adopted by the regents, is unlawful, this bill would provide that the same limitations described above would apply.

This bill would further provide that, on and after January 1, 2012, a student attending the California State University, the California Community Colleges, or the University of California who is exempt from paying nonresident tuition under the provision described above would be eligible to receive a scholarship derived from nonstate funds received, for the purpose of scholarships, by the segment at which he or she is a student.

Existing federal law requires that a state may provide that an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States is eligible for any state or local public benefit for which that alien would otherwise be ineligible under a specified federal law only through enactment of a state law that affirmatively provides for that eligibility.

This bill would find and declare that the amendments to the Donahoe Higher Education Act described above are state laws within the meaning of this federal provision.

(3) Existing law establishes the California Community Colleges under the administration of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. Existing law authorizes the establishment of community college districts under the administration of community college governing boards, and authorizes these districts to provide instruction, for prescribed fees, at community college campuses throughout the state. Existing law authorizes the waiver of these fees for, among others, students who are eligible under income standards established by the board of governors.

This bill, as of July 1, 2012, would require community college districts to waive the fees of persons who are exempt from nonresident tuition under the provision described in (1) above, and who otherwise qualify for a waiver under this provision, under regulations and procedures adopted by the board of governors. Because the bill would impose new duties on community college districts with respect to determining eligibility for fee waivers, the bill would
constitute a state-mandated local program.

(4) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.


THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. This act shall be known, and may be cited, as the California Dream Act of 2011.

SEC. 2. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(1) It is the intent of the Legislature that all students who are exempt from nonresident tuition pursuant to Section 68130.5 of the Education Code and that are deemed to be in financial need shall be eligible for all financial aid.

(2) Section 66021.6 of the Education Code, as added by Section 3 of this act, does not grant these pupils any advantage over the student population as a whole in determining who qualifies for, or receives, financial aid.

(3) Increased access to financial aid for all students in California's universities and colleges increases the state's collective productivity and economic growth.

(b) It is, therefore, the intent of the Legislature to address these issues by enacting the California Dream Act of 2011.

SEC. 3. Section 66021.6 is added to the Education Code, to read:

66021.6. (a) Notwithstanding any other law, and except as provided for in subdivision (b), the Trustees of the California State University and the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges shall, and the Regents of the University of California are requested to, establish procedures and forms that enable persons who are exempt from paying nonresident tuition under Section 68130.5, or who meet equivalent requirements adopted by the regents, to apply for, and participate in, all student aid programs administered by these segments to the full extent permitted by federal law. The Legislature finds and declares that this section is a state law within the meaning of subsection (d) of Section 1621 of Title 8 of the United States Code.

(b) The number of financial aid awards received by California resident students from financial aid programs administered by the segments shall not be diminished as a result of the application of subdivision (a). The University of California is requested to comply with this subdivision.

(c) This section shall become operative on July 1, 2012.

SEC. 4. Section 66021.7 is added to the Education Code, to read:

66021.7. Notwithstanding any other law, on and after January 1, 2012, a student attending the California State University, the California Community Colleges, or the University of California who is exempt from paying nonresident tuition under Section 68130.5 shall be eligible to receive a scholarship that is derived from nonstate
funds received, for the purpose of scholarships, by the segment at which he or she is a student. The Legislature finds and declares that this section is a state law within the meaning of subsection (d) of Section 1621 of Title 8 of the United States Code.

SEC. 5. Section 68130.5 of the Education Code is amended to read:

68130.5. Notwithstanding any other provision of law:

(a) A student, other than a nonimmigrant alien within the meaning of paragraph (15) of subsection (a) of Section 1101 of Title 8 of the United States Code, who meets all of the following requirements shall be exempt from paying nonresident tuition at the California State University and the California Community Colleges:

(1) High school attendance in California for three or more years.
(2) Graduation from a California high school or attainment of the equivalent thereof.
(3) Registration as an entering student at, or current enrollment at, an accredited institution of higher education in California not earlier than the fall semester or quarter of the 2001-02 academic year.
(4) In the case of a person without lawful immigration status, the filing of an affidavit with the institution of higher education stating that the student has filed an application to legalize his or her immigration status, or will file an application as soon as he or she is eligible to do so.

(b) A student exempt from nonresident tuition under this section may be reported by a community college district as a full-time equivalent student for apportionment purposes.

(c) The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and the Trustees of the California State University shall prescribe rules and regulations for the implementation of this section.

(d) Student information obtained in the implementation of this section is confidential.

(e) This section shall remain in effect only until July 1, 2012, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before July 1, 2012, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 6. Section 68130.5 is added to the Education Code, to read:

68130.5. Notwithstanding any other law:

(a) A student, other than a nonimmigrant alien within the meaning of paragraph (15) of subsection (a) of Section 1101 of Title 8 of the United States Code, who meets all of the following requirements shall be exempt from paying nonresident tuition at the California State University and the California Community Colleges:

(1) Secondary school attendance in California for three or more years, at least one year of which shall have been at high school.
(2) Graduation from a California secondary school or attainment of the equivalent thereof.
(3) Registration as an entering student at, or current enrollment at, an accredited institution of higher education in California not earlier than the fall semester or quarter of the 2001-02 academic year.
(4) In the case of a person without lawful immigration status, the filing of an affidavit with the institution of higher education stating that the student has filed an application to legalize his or her immigration status, or will file an application as soon as he or she is eligible to do so.

(b) A student exempt from nonresident tuition under this section
may be reported by a community college district as a full-time equivalent student for apportionment purposes.

(c) The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and the Trustees of the California State University shall prescribe rules and regulations for the implementation of this section.

(d) Student information obtained in the implementation of this section is confidential.

(e) This section shall become operative on July 1, 2012.

SEC. 7. Section 68130.7 of the Education Code is amended to read:

68130.7. If a state court finds that Sections 66021.6 and 68130.5, or any similar provision adopted by the Regents of the University of California, is unlawful, the court may order, as equitable relief, that the administering entity that is the subject of the lawsuit terminate any waiver or eligibility awarded under that statute or provision, but no money damages, tuition refund or waiver, or other retroactive relief, may be awarded. In any action in which the court finds that Sections 66021.6 and 68130.5, or any similar provision adopted by the Regents of the University of California, is unlawful, the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California are immune from the imposition of any award of money damages, tuition refund or waiver, or other retroactive relief.

SEC. 8. Section 76300.5 is added to the Education Code, to read:

76300.5. (a) A district shall waive the fees of a person who is exempt from paying nonresident tuition under Section 68130.5, and who otherwise qualifies for a waiver under Section 76300, under regulations and procedures adopted by the board of governors. The Legislature finds and declares that this section is a state law within the meaning of subsection (d) of Section 1621 of Title 8 of the United States Code.

(b) This section shall become operative on July 1, 2012.

SEC. 9. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.
AB 131, as amended, Cedillo. Student financial aid.

(1) The Donahoe Higher Education Act sets forth, among other things, the missions and functions of California’s public and independent segments of higher education, and their respective institutions of higher education. Provisions of the act apply to the University of California only to the extent that the Regents of the University of California, by appropriate resolution, act to make a provision applicable.

Existing law requires that a person student, other than a nonimmigrant alien, as defined, who has attended high school in California for 3 or more years, who has graduated from a California high school or attained the equivalent thereof, who has registered at or attends an accredited institution of higher education in California not earlier than the fall semester or quarter of the 2001-02 academic year, and who, if he or she is an alien without lawful immigration status, has filed a prescribed affidavit, is exempt from paying nonresident tuition at the California Community Colleges and the California State University.

This bill would exempt a student who has attended, for 3 or more years, at least one of which shall have been in a high school, and graduated from, secondary school in California from paying nonresident tuition at the California Community Colleges and the California State University. The bill would include students attending and graduating from California technical schools and adult schools, as well as high schools.

This bill would amend the Donahoe Higher Education Act, as of July 1, 2012, to require the Trustees of the California State University and the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, and to request the regents, to establish procedures and forms that enable
persons  students who are exempt from paying nonresident tuition under the above-described provision, or who meet equivalent requirements adopted by the regents, to apply for, and participate in, all student aid programs administered by these segments to the full extent permitted by federal law, except as provided. This provision would apply to the University of California only if the regents, by appropriate resolution, act to make it applicable.

This bill would provide that persons  students who are exempt from paying nonresident tuition under the above provision, or who meet equivalent requirements adopted by the regents, are eligible to apply for, and participate in, any student financial aid program administered by the State of California to the full extent permitted by federal law. This bill would require the Student Aid Commission to establish procedures and forms that enable those persons  students who are exempt from paying nonresident tuition under the above provision to apply for, and participate in, all student financial aid programs administered by the State of California to the full extent permitted by federal law. This bill would prohibit persons  students who are exempt from paying nonresident tuition under the provision described above from being eligible for Competitive Cal Grant A and B Awards unless specified conditions are met. The bill would make these provisions operative as of July 1, 2012.

(2) Existing federal law requires that a state may provide that an alien who is not lawfully present in the United States is eligible for any state or local public benefit for which that alien would otherwise be ineligible under a specified federal law only through enactment of a state law that affirmatively provides for that eligibility.

This bill would find and declare that the amendments to the Donahoe Higher Education Act described above are state laws within the meaning of this federal provision.

(3) Existing law establishes the California Community Colleges under the administration of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. Existing law authorizes the establishment of community college districts under the administration of community college governing boards, and authorizes these districts to provide instruction, for prescribed fees, at community college campuses throughout the state. Existing law authorizes the waiver of these fees for, among others, students who are eligible under income standards established by the board of governors.

This bill, as of July 1, 2012, would require community college districts to waive the fees of persons  students who are exempt from nonresident tuition under the provision described in (1) above, and who otherwise qualify for a waiver under this provision, under regulations and procedures adopted by the board of governors. Because the bill would impose new duties on community college districts with respect to determining eligibility for fee waivers, the bill would constitute a state-mandated local program.

(4) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that, if the Commission on State Mandates...
determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to these statutory provisions.


THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 66021.6 is added to the Education Code, to read:

66021.6. (a) Notwithstanding any other law, and except as provided for in subdivision (b), the Trustees of the California State University and the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges shall, and the Regents of the University of California are requested to, establish procedures and forms that enable persons who are exempt from paying nonresident tuition under Section 68130.5, or who meet equivalent requirements adopted by the regents, to apply for, and participate in, all student aid programs administered by these segments to the full extent permitted by federal law. The Legislature finds and declares that this section is a state law within the meaning of Section 1621(d) of Title 8 of the United States Code.

(b) The number of financial aid awards received by California resident students from financial aid programs administered by the segments shall not be diminished as a result of the application of subdivision (a). The University of California is requested to comply with this subdivision.

(c) This section shall become operative on July 1, 2012.

SEC. 2. Section 68130.5 of the Education Code is amended to read:

68130.5. Notwithstanding any other law:

(a) A student, other than a nonimmigrant alien within the meaning of paragraph (15) of subsection (a) of Section 1101 of Title 8 of the United States Code, who meets all of the following requirements, shall be exempt from paying nonresident tuition at the California State University and the California Community Colleges:

(1) Secondary school attendance in California for three or more years, at least one year of which shall have been at a high school.

(2) Graduation from a California secondary school or attainment of the equivalent thereof.

(3) Registration as an entering student at, or current enrollment at, an accredited institution of higher education in California not earlier than the fall semester or quarter of the 2001-02 academic year.

(4) In the case of a student without lawful immigration status, the filing of an affidavit with the campus of the California State University or the community college district that the student has filed an application to legalize his or her immigration status, or will file an application as soon as he or she is eligible to do so.

(b) A student exempt from nonresident tuition under this section may be reported by a community college district as a full-time equivalent student for apportionment purposes.

(c) The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges and the Trustees of the California State University shall prescribe rules and regulations for the implementation of this section.

(d) Student information obtained in the implementation of this section is confidential.
SEC. 3. Section 68130.7 of the Education Code is amended to read: Section 68130.7. If a state court finds that Section 66021.6, 66021.7, or 68130.5, or any similar provision adopted by the Regents of the University of California, is unlawful, the court may order, as equitable relief, that the administering entity that is the subject of the lawsuit terminate any waiver awarded under that statute or provision, but no money damages, tuition refund or waiver, or other retroactive relief, may be awarded. In any action in which the court finds that Section 66021.6, 66021.7, or 68130.5, or any similar provision adopted by the Regents of the University of California, is unlawful, the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California are immune from the imposition of any award of money damages, tuition refund or waiver, or other retroactive relief.

SEC. 4. Section 69508.5 is added to the Education Code, to read: Section 69508.5. (a) Notwithstanding any other law, and except as provided for in subdivision (c), a person who meets the requirements of subdivision (a) of Section 68130.5, or who meets equivalent requirements adopted by the Regents of the University of California, is eligible to apply for, and participate in, any student financial aid program administered by the State of California to the full extent permitted by federal law. The Legislature finds and declares that this section is a state law within the meaning of subsection (d) of Section 1621 of Title 8 of the United States Code.

(b) Notwithstanding any other law, the Student Aid Commission shall establish procedures and forms that enable persons who are exempt from paying nonresident tuition under Section 68130.5, or who meet equivalent requirements adopted by the regents, to apply for, and participate in, all student financial aid programs administered by the State of California to the full extent permitted by federal law.

(c) A student who is exempt from paying nonresident tuition under Section 68130.5 shall not be eligible for Competitive Cal Grant A and B Awards unless funding remains available after all California students not exempt pursuant to Section 68130.5 have received Competitive Cal Grant A and B Awards that they are eligible for.

(d) This section shall become operative on July 1, 2012.

SEC. 5. Section 76300.5 is added to the Education Code, to read: Section 76300.5. (a) A district shall waive the fees of a person who is exempt from paying nonresident tuition under Section 68130.5, and who otherwise qualifies for a waiver under Section 76300, under regulations and procedures adopted by the board of governors. The Legislature finds and declares that this section is a state law within the meaning of Section 1621(d) of Title 8 of the United States Code.

(b) This section shall become operative on July 1, 2012.

SEC. 6. If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.