

# UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

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**“Dreamers” in the Equality State**

**September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

The Trump administration announced the end to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program known as D.A.C.A. It is a 5-year-old Obama administration policy that prevented about 800,000 young undocumented immigrants from being deported, thereby enabling individuals brought to the U.S. as children to go to college, pursue careers and start families of their own. These individuals are known as “Dreamers.”

More than 1.2 million Dreamers nationally, including about 998 in Wyoming, have been approved for DACA.<sup>1</sup> Canceling DACA would have an enormous impact on the lives of these Dreamers and their families in Wyoming, the “Equality State.” As the Director of the Latina/o Studies Program (LTST) at UW, and with the endorsement of all the LTST faculty, we write in support of the Dreamers in Wyoming and nationwide. Specifically, we write to encourage the protection of undocumented immigrant students at the University of Wyoming.

Many of our faculty members in Latina/o Studies and other disciplines have worked hard to establish a safe educational space for our students by engaging in culturally responsive teaching and supporting their academic success. UW President Nichols in her memo to the University concerning DACA, made a clear commitment to DACA students by stating:

The University of Wyoming is inclusive and committed to nurturing an environment that values and manifests diversity, internationalization and mutual respect.... We have made additional resources available on immigration and DACA concerns... I encourage students and employees who are affected by changes to the DACA program or who

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<sup>1</sup> Source: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

have immigration concerns to contact Mr. Adam Severson, University of Wyoming College of Law, at [immsupport@uwyo.edu](mailto:immsupport@uwyo.edu) or 766-2397 for questions or assistance. University policies regarding disclosure of student records remain the same under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, known as FERPA. We do not release student records without written consent from the student or a lawfully issued subpoena, warrant or judicial order....The University Counseling Center -- which may be reached at 766-2187 and is located in Room 341 of Knight Hall -- is available to students experiencing problems from this or any source. (8/6/17)

Historically, in the state of Wyoming many DACA families have meaningfully contributed to the economic prosperity of natural resources and tourism in Wyoming. The mothers, fathers, cousins, uncles, aunts, sisters, and brothers have worked to lay down the pipeline for the oil industry in Casper and Gillette, Wyoming...they work in the hotels in the tourist areas of Jackson Hole, Wyoming...they work in the extractive industries such as coal mining in Rock Springs, Wyoming. In spite of the illnesses, injuries, and fatalities that these families have experienced, their children, the “Dreamers” have had access to a fair education. The “Dreamers” are now entering a range of cornerstone professions in Wyoming including teaching, medicine, counseling, researchers, engineering, law, retail/sales, media and marketing, and a variety of other fields. The “Dreamers” and their families continue to contribute to Wyoming’s economy and participate as educated residents of Wyoming.

While this letter expresses support for UW DACA students, the Latina/o Studies Program and faculty would also like to join the national petition of collective universities that outlines specific actions for university administration to act on behalf of DACA students at UW. These actions, which we encourage our own administration to undertake, are as follows:

1. Ensure that DACA student privacy remains guaranteed.
2. Assign an administrative office such as the UW Chief Diversity Officer, the responsibility for counseling DACA students on their educational situation.

3. Advertise that DACA student counseling services are available on a strictly confidential basis.
4. Continue in-state resident tuition for DACA students who have qualified previously, including the recipients of scholarships.
5. In the event of arrest, imprisonment, and deportation, or in the event a DACA student is reluctant to appear on the UW campus, make arrangements for online distance education or continuation and completion of their degree programs for all current DACA students.

We would like to encourage UW President Nichols, administrators, faculty, staff, and students to stand united in their support of DACA students. We strongly recommend that these actions be instituted as soon as possible, so that DACA students can be assured of institutional support towards continuing in school in Spring 2018, and the administration's commitment to DACA student retention and timely completion of their degree programs at UW.

Sincerely,



Director, Dr. Cecilia J. Aragón

Faculty of the Latina/o Studies Program, Dr. Lilia Soto, Dr. Margarita

Pignataro, and Jennifer Macias

Interim Director, Jacquelyn Bridgeman, School of Culture, Gender, and Social Justice