Q: I am an undocumented student looking to apply to Penn as a high school senior or as a transfer student. How does the application process work for me?
A: Any student can apply/transfer to the university without being turned away due to lack of US legal immigration status. Students should complete the Common Application and Penn supplement as international applicants. If accepted, students might be asked to provide student visas. Since undocumented students cannot return to their countries of origin in order to acquire such student visas, they need not submit one. Hence, it is okay to disregard reminders to submit such forms.

Q: Do I need to have Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to apply to Penn?
A: Deferred action status is not required upon application to the University of Pennsylvania, but it does affect students’ eligibility for work study in their financial aid packages. The University itself will not provide legal consultation to accepted students aiming to apply for DACA, but there are various community organizations that might be helpful.

Q: As an undocumented student, am I eligible for financial aid at Penn?
A: Yes, undocumented students are eligible for financial aid. They must apply as international students and complete the CSS Profile.

Penn has need-blind financial aid for all American, Mexican, and Canadian citizens, and is need-aware for all other students. Applicants should make sure to be truthful about their need for aid when applying. Once the application is submitted, it cannot be edited to request more aid.

Q: As an undocumented student, who should I contact to answer personalized questions?
A: Penn’s centers as well as Penn for Immigrant Rights are great resources for undocumented students. Their contact information is as follows:
   La Casa Latina: Patty Mendoza (pmendoza@upenn.edu)
   Makuu: Marlena Reese (marlena@upenn.edu)
   Pan-Asian American Community House: Shiella Cervantes (shiella@upenn.edu)
   Greenfield Intercultural Center: Vanessa Iyua (viyua@upenn.edu)
   LGBT Center: Becka Schept (reschept@upenn.edu)
   Women’s Center: Jessica Mertz (jmertz@upenn.edu)
   Penn for Immigrant Rights: America Perez (perezam@sas.upenn.edu)
Q: As an undocumented student, do I qualify for work study and are there restrictions due to my status?
A: Undocumented students without DACA are not eligible for work-study. In this case, Student Financial Services (SFS) would work with them to find other forms of aid that can replace the work-study.

Undocumented students with DACA are eligible for work-study. There are no restrictions since they can work for any on-campus employer. Off-campus employers are not under the control of the University so students would need to research their specific requirements for employment.

Q: As an undocumented student, can I take out a loan?
A: Yes, undocumented students should ensure that their loans are University of Pennsylvania loans and not federal loans, as they are not eligible to receive federal loans. Students can set up a direct deposit account with SFS so money can be more easily transferred.

If an undocumented student does not have a bank account, two viable options are the Student Federal Credit Union (SFCU) and Wells Fargo (previously Wachovia). For both, students simply need their Penncard and another form of identification. SFCU might ask for government documentation for which students can provide an international ID, passport, or DACA work permit. Undocumented students are not restricted to these two banks, these are merely the two options recommended for Penn students.

Q: As an undocumented student, do I qualify for Penn Student Insurance Plan (PSIP) and what are my options if I cannot pay for it?
A: Yes, we understand that given their status undocumented students might not currently have health insurance. However, all students are required to have some form of health insurance, so they will need to request PSIP. Like any other student, if they cannot afford to pay the cost of PSIP, SFS will work with them and potentially cover the cost.

Q: Are there restrictions due to my undocumented status in terms of financing summer courses?
A: Undocumented students would go through the same process of applying for summer funding as they did for academic year funding.
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Q: I am an admitted undocumented student. What is the best method of transportation to Philadelphia?

A: Domestic flights require an official government identification for which students can present currently valid passports from their countries of origin - not matriculas or other foreign identification cards. A valid passport can be acquired from a consulate office in the US, so undocumented students need not leave the country.

Moreover, visas are not necessary to travel domestically. Undocumented students who now have a work permit due to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) can use their permit as a form of ID.

Students can also use other forms of transportation such as trains and buses, but flying is the safest method. If undocumented students still feel uncomfortable, it is recommended that they can travel wearing Penn gear to ensure the public knows they are students.

Q: Are there certain student groups that I cannot join due to my status and/or ability to submit background checks?

A: This remains an area to be explored. Most student groups do not require any sort of background check. However, certain organizations such as federally funded programs, programs that travel, and programs that work with children, may have restrictions as they may require background checks. Without DACA, undocumented students are less likely to be able to join programs such as Big Brother Big Sister. With DACA, undocumented students would have to see if they are able to undergo a background check. With or without DACA, federally funded programs tend to be out of reach.

Undocumented students should not be afraid to ask the organizations themselves or try to find alternate opportunities as Penn has many resources.

Q: Are there restrictions on summer internship opportunities?

A: Undocumented students without DACA only qualify for internships with stipends, that they can later file taxes on with their Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN).

Undocumented students with DACA have a full range of internships and programs they can apply for but will still be ineligible for employment that requires citizenship, such as government positions.
Q: As an undocumented student, am I able to study abroad?
A: Undocumented students with DACA can apply for advance parole by submitting Form I-131 to USCIS citing an educational reason. If granted, this would allow them to complete a semester abroad and re-enter the US. There is very little information as to students who have successfully done so, but the University of Pennsylvania stands by all of its students in their efforts to further their learning experiences.

Q: What is the environment like at Penn for undocumented students?
A: “Coming out” regarding one’s immigration status is a personal choice and students should not feel pressured to share their status if they do not want to share. Penn is a place that can be inclusive and embracing of students that bring new experiences to the table. Being open about one’s status can be a very empowering experience. However, immigration is a contentious issue and, unfortunately, there may be people who do not understand someone’s experience; students should exercise discretion as to whom they approach if they wish to keep their status private.

Ultimately, students should not forget that there are other undocumented students at Penn who may understand them better, as well as people within places such as the three cultural centers willing to listen. It is up to the undocumented individual to do what feels most comfortable.

Q: Is there a sense of community amongst undocumented students at Penn?
A: Students that self-identify as undocumented upon acceptance to Penn will be invited to an “UndocuOrientation,” where they can meet other undocumented Penn students and ask personalized questions from undocumented upperclassmen. While this is a very private event, other ways to be involved will come up through Penn for Immigrant Rights, a student group composed of undocumented students and allies.