



Welcoming DREAMers

Why it's right to enable eligible undocumented immigrants to apply for a medical education

Overview

Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine was the first medical school in the United States to announce that it accepts applications for admission from undocumented immigrants.

Commonly called "DREAMers" (after proposed federal legislation known as the DREAM Act, for "Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors"), these young people were brought to the U.S. as children and have lived in this country for more than five years. Stritch accepts applications only from DREAMers who qualify for the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which is administered by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The ethical and pragmatic reasons that the school continues to take the lead in regard to these students are outlined in this FAQs document for Stritch School of Medicine faculty and staff.

What is DACA status?

On June 15, 2012, President Obama announced the creation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. It enables qualified "undocumented immigrants" to receive a two-year, renewable authorization to remain and work in the United States.

To obtain DACA status, DREAMers must meet certain criteria. These include arrival at the United States before age 16, specified levels of education or military service, and an absence of a felony conviction or problematic record of misdemeanors. *A full list of criteria is posted at <http://tinyurl.com/daca-criteria>*

With DACA status, students receive an Employment Authorization Document (work permit) and can apply for a Social Security number.

Why has the Stritch School of Medicine made DACA DREAMers eligible for admission?

Loyola University Chicago's Catholic and Jesuit values clearly require the Stritch School of Medicine to open the admissions process to these young people. The dignity and worth of persons call us to steward the talents of qualifies applicants rather than reject their contributions for arbitrary, arcane, or political reasons. Social justice requires that we foster the conditions for full participation in the community by all members of our community. DREAMers who meet criteria for DACA status already are woven into

the fabric of our society and have a basic right to contribute to the fullest extent of their abilities. This ethical approach continues a tradition articulated by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. See <http://tinyurl.com/usccb-migrant>.

This approach makes pragmatic sense, as well. The United States is facing a significant shortage of physicians. In addition, large portions of the U.S. population are underserved by the current distribution and demographic profile of physicians. DREAMers represent a previously untapped source of qualified and diverse talent that will enrich the medical education environment, the medical profession, and the lives of patients. DREAMers generally are bicultural, bilingual, and possess insight into the migrant experience.

In a nation with a large recent immigrant population, DREAMers can increase the capacity of the physician workforce to treat the array of patients encountered in clinical practices.

Upon completion of MD degrees, can DREAMers get a license, a residency, and practice medicine?

Yes. With the conferral of DACA status, medical school graduates become eligible for medical licenses and residency training.

Are DREAMers' applications treated preferentially in regard to selection for admission?

No. DREAMers do not receive special treatment in the Stritch School of Medicine selection process. They must compete on the same level required of all applicant for admission. Many DREAMer applicants have outstanding qualifications and they contribute to the competitive nature of the applicant pool.

Do DREAMers take away admissions slots from other applicants?

No. The Stritch School of Medicine does not dedicate spots to any category of applicant. Consistent with that long-standing policy, no adjustment has been made to the number of admission slots available to accommodate DREAMers. Stritch has gradually been increasing the number of admission slots in recent years. This is part of a nation effort to expand the physician workforce. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges Center for Workforce Studies, medical schools will be graduating 30 percent more students in the coming years to address the national physician shortage.

Are these students treated preferentially in regard to financial aid?

No. It's important to note that financing medical education presents a substantial obstacle for DREAMers because they are ineligible for federally guaranteed student loans. Such usually compose an important part of the financial aid package. As a result, students with DACA status cannot obtain financial aid available to students who are U.S citizens.

To address this iniquity, the Stritch School of Medicine utilizes several financing options for students with DACA status. Such packages combine school-based aid with new types of targeted loans for DACA

status. Loans have been available through two partner organizations, the **Illinois Finance Authority (IFA)**, the infrastructure bank of the State of Illinois and **Trinity Health**. This IFA loan program is modeled on Public Health Service loan programs and requires that the recipient provide a year of service in a designated underserved area of the State of Illinois for each year he or she receives the loan. The loan is interest-free with completion of the service obligation and repayment of the principal does not begin until completion of the service period. If the recipient fails to complete their service requirement, a high-interest rate attaches to the loan retroactive to the date of issuance. This loan program is designed to enhance the physician infrastructure of the state and provide much-needed services to Illinois residents in serious need. Because the IFA does not rely on taxpayer funding, no tax dollars support this loan program (<http://www.il-fa.com/about>). The Trinity Health loans more closely resemble Federal student loans in that they have a fixed interest rate and carry no particular service obligations. Students in this program are expected to maintain a relationship with Trinity Health through a Trinity-Stritch leadership development program. Sources of funding for the class to enter in July 2016 have not yet been announced.

What obstacles remain for DREAMers?

The remaining long-term concern is the stability for the deferred action program. DACA status was created by the executive branch of the government and thereby subject to change in a new Presidential administration. As a two-year renewable status, it cannot provide the long-term security that comes with a path to citizenship. However, using this concern to deny opportunities for a medical education only perpetuates existing injustices. That approach falls short of the Loyola University Chicago's Jesuit, Catholic values. It also denies the Stritch School of Medicine the opportunity to attract the students who are particularly well qualified to meet the future health needs of a changing world.

For additional updated information, visit <http://ssom.luc.edu/daca/>

Updated 8/18/15