

In-State Tuition for the Undocumented: the Kaushal Study

The offering of in-state tuition rates to undocumented college students (rather than charging them the much higher out-of-state tuition rates) has sparked some controversy over the years. One point of debate regarding this policy has been the possible reduction of college opportunity and achievement among native youth who want to enroll in postsecondary education. Another point of debate concerns the efficacy of this policy for the undocumented youth in the United States. To explore these points, Kaushal recently completed a study of these hypothetical policy effects, using data from the Current Population Survey monthly outgoing rotation group for 1997-2005. That study makes the following points, among others:

1. "...the policy [in-state tuition for the undocumented] is associated with a 2.5 percentage point (31 percent) increase in college enrollment, a 3.4 percentage point (14 percent) increase in the proportion with at least a high school diploma, a 3.7 percentage point (37 percent) increase in the proportion with at least some college education...and a 1.3 percentage point (33 percent) increase in the proportion of Mexican young adults with a college degree..." [p. 789] [Note: The seemingly small percentage point levels noted above result in large percent differences, such as 31 %, because the outcome levels for this specific population have a relatively small base number.]
2. "I do not find any evidence that in-state tuition policy for the undocumented has an adverse effect on the educational outcomes of natives. On the contrary, there is some evidence that the policy caused a small increase in the proportion of U.S.-born young adults with college education, and that it raised the college enrollment of U.S. citizens of Mexican heritage...a tuition subsidy for the undocumented may increase awareness of the benefits of college education and lower its costs, in turn improving opportunities for college education and lower its costs, in turn improving opportunities for college education for citizens with Mexican parentage..." [p. 789]
3. "...this analysis suggests that access to subsidized education increases college enrollment and education of noncitizen Mexicans. However, despite the fact that most states with large immigrant populations now provide in-state tuition to undocumented students, college enrollment and education among Mexicans, who comprise a majority of the undocumented persons in the country today, remains low and the gap in college education between Mexican noncitizens and natives (or other noncitizen young adults) remains wide. It may be that uncertainties surrounding legalization dampen the demand for college education among the undocumented..." [p.790]
4. "In the regressions on outcomes relating to educational attainment (at least some college education, an associate degree or higher degree) the sample is restricted to 23-28-year-old adults..." [p. 776] [Note: The study's analysis **included** two-year degrees in its statistical modeling of postsecondary achievement as predicted by a variety of factors, including in-state tuition for the undocumented population.]

This study will benefit both researchers and policy makers because it discusses important issues for both groups. Interested parties should browse the original article to consider fully the study's methodology, limitations, and strengths. Neeraj Jausal (Associate Professor, School of Social Work, Columbia University) provides details in an article ("In-State Tuition for the Undocumented: Education Effects on Mexican Young Adults") published by the peer-reviewed *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* (Vol. 27, No.4, pages 771-792). Readers with some background in the statistical analysis of social interventions will find the content and style of the paper accessible.

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[Abstract by Willard Hom, Director of Research & Planning, Chancellor's Office, California Community Colleges, 2/17/09]