



UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS & THE ROLE OF COLLEGE CAMPUS CLIMATES

ARTICLE DETAILS

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Title: Immigrant Students' Mental Health and Intent to Persist in College: The Role of Undocufriendly Campus Climate

WHY WAS THIS RESEARCH DONE?

Undocumented college students navigate many barriers in their postsecondary education journey that impact their mental health and ability to persist in college. Higher education institutions play an important role in supporting undocumented students' college success, and whether undocumented students feel welcomed within college campus settings may impact their educational outcomes. Researchers wanted to better understand the role of college campus climates by examining the connections between immigration status, mental health, college campus climates, and college persistence.

WHAT DID THE STUDY INVOLVE?

In 2018-19, the researchers surveyed 501 students enrolled in 76 higher education institutions nationwide. The study explored how students with precarious legal status, defined as undocumented or with a temporary status, perceived their mental health and the climate of their college campus. Additionally, the study examined the impact of welcoming campus climates on students' mental health, and how students' mental health impacted their confidence to persist in college.

Among those surveyed, 387 were documented and 114 were students with a precarious legal status. The web-based survey included several measures to assess students' perception of their campus climate, positive mental health, anxiety, and the confidence they had in their ability to complete their college degree.



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WHAT ARE THE STUDY'S CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS?

The findings show students with precarious status experienced less welcoming campus climates and that precarious status negatively impacted their mental health. Perceiving the campus as welcoming was linked to positive mental health and less anxiety.

Taken together, the study shows welcoming campus climates may support positive mental health outcomes for undocumented students. Those who reported positive mental health also felt more confident they would persist in college.

RELEVANCE TO CIMH

The study's findings that welcoming campus climates support undocumented students' mental health carry implications for CIMH's members. Mental health, we know, extends beyond individual therapy and requires educational institutions that are inclusive of marginalized immigrant communities. The study's findings are particularly important for CIMH members affiliated with educational settings and provide evidence to continue advocating for welcoming educational spaces and policies to support student mental health.

FOR MORE ON THIS RESEARCH

This research was part of the Healthy Minds Study (2019) sponsored by the University of Michigan. Find more information [here](#).

The first author, [German Cadenás](#), is an Assistant Professor at Lehigh University in the Counseling Psychology Program and identifies as a formerly undocumented Latinx immigrant.

Find the full article in the *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority* journal [here](#). You can also find [another recently published article](#) drawing on the same dataset in the *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*.

