

Associated Students and DREAM Project advance support for undocumented students

By **Laura Gonzalez** - Nov 2, 2015



Dario Fernandez, CSUN DREAM Project Coordinator, speaks to A.S. about policies and initiatives that affect students on campus. Photo credit: Yvonne Zimmerman

Associated Students reaffirmed its support of undocumented students on campus and made its commitment public to senators and meeting attendees with a special presentation about advancements for the undocumented community.

Dario Fernandez, coordinator for the CSUN DREAM Project, spoke at the A.S. meeting about the current policies that affect many undocumented students on campus and why the CSUN community must be informed about support for students.

"Cal State Northridge is at the epicenter of this issue — California being the highest populated state with this population," Fernandez said. "And Cal State Northridge, according to the

California Student Aid Commission, has the highest number of students who apply for financial aid in this situation. So when you think about it, CSUN serves as the model in terms of how to serve not only underrepresented communities but undocumented students collectively.”

Based on surveys of the undocumented student population at CSUN, there is a need for a safe place for students to ask questions and receive assistance, according to Fernandez.

The CSUN DREAM Project, currently located in Santa Susana Hall 132, provides for student-led advocacy and organizing as well as peer mentoring and ally training. From January to June 2015, the center received 1,200 service inquiries from students for assistance.

Future projects will include carpooling systems for students, available research programs and resource guides for advisors.

A.S. Senate passed a resolution last month to spread awareness of the need for relocation of the AB540 center to the USU. The facilities committee of the USU board approved the relocation, and it will further be voted on at the next USU Board of Directors meeting.

A.S. is currently assisting the CSUN DREAM Project by looking into ways to fund them for programs through the annual budget by the end of this year, according to A.S. President Jorge Reyes.

Fernandez’s presentation explained the status of being undocumented, including a lack of a driver’s license, social security number, work authorization, paid internships and the inability to obtain a career in certain fields.

On the CSUN campus, 80 percent of undocumented students have **AB540 status**, 76 percent are protected by Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and 70 percent are California DREAM Act recipients, according to survey findings presented by Fernandez.

Fifty percent are California DREAM Act eligible but did not receive financial assistance because the amount of available money could not help every student.

Fernandez stated that not all undocumented students are able to receive means of support from measures such as AB540, which allows exemptions from paying non-resident tuitions, or DACA, which provides work authorization.

“When we talk about undocumented students, we can’t just talk about DREAM Act and DACA because we have students coming from many different countries who don’t qualify for these services,” he said.

Fernandez invited attendees to come to the CSUN DREAM Project center, meet faculty and get to know the initiatives on campus.

David Crandall, A.S. general manager, said during the meeting that supporting undocumented students has been a value for A.S. for many years.

Reyes, along with the members of A.S., has made it one of the main goals for this year.

“We are the most diverse CSU, so being that CSU that takes the initiative and is the forefront leading of the CSUs to be more friendly [toward undocumented students] is a great thing to have,” Reyes said. “We value every single student at CSUN, and we understand the importance of diversity and inclusion — especially that we really just want to make sure every Matador is getting the right and equitable treatment every other person would.”

Other meeting highlights:

- A motion to approve more available parking for students after 6 p.m. by opening staff parking spaces was approved.
- Beat the Blues Week is Nov. 2 to Nov. 5 with activities at the USU, Sierra Quad and Cleary Walk such as relaxation workshops, journaling and Yoga.
- Jeremy Mauritzen was appointed as senator for the College of Education.
- Nicole Kucera was appointed as upper division senator.
- \$9,000 was allocated to the Society of Automotive Engineers for parts for Formula SAE, \$1,000 from The University Corporation and \$8,000 from Unassigned Contingency.

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