

Socioeconomic Impact of Implementation of In-State College Tuition for Discouraged
Undocumented Students at Middle Tennessee State University

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all immigrants, who are exceptional DREAMERS of an equal world, and yet, still face dishonor and discrimination.

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ABSTRACT

Are there economic benefits in charging undocumented students at Middle Tennessee State University in-state tuition rates? Identifying positive and negative aspects that have a potential to affect the local community, the government, and the undocumented immigrants is complex. The discussion on applying in-state resident tuition to undocumented students is a topic recently explored in Tennessee. Yet, it has been gaining attention during the last few years because of political changes.

This paper examines how a cost reduction of college tuition for undocumented students affects state revenue. Secondly, it analyzes the salary level difference between a college alum and a high school graduate, considering the academic major choices of undocumented students at MTSU. The policy proposed generates a higher tax revenue for the government. It creates larger benefits for taxpayers, who would receive more support in education, healthcare, and infrastructure, and increases the likelihood of undocumented children to enroll and stay in college.

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Introduction and Context

Immigration has become such an important topic among U.S. economists, politicians, educators, and the population at large. As an immigrant, I can closely relate to the subject. Sorting the positive and negative aspects of moving to a different country is a unique and uncertain experience that millions of people, living in the United States face for diverse reasons.

The last few years of my life have been impacted by meeting Americans, Spaniards, Mexicans, Armenians, South Africans, Moroccans, and many other individuals of distinct nationalities. Encounters with immigrants and students with different backgrounds took place at MTSU's campus, my surrounding community, and abroad. My attention was captured by noticing that no matter what race, age, political, or religious denomination people have, they are human beings, with feeling, fears, and ideas, very much like me! It was at the same time that my involvement with La Comunidad, a Latino initiative that became a student organization at MTSU, created a big impact in my life. The organization grew to provide educational support to minority students and developed healthy social aspects, involving MTSU staff, professors, students and the local community. Among all good aspects of a diverse college, I quickly became aware of the challenging factors that my peers and friends were facing. It was by March of 2017 that many stories started to repeat themselves across campus and events in Middle Tennessee. All those narratives had a common topic: how difficult and expensive higher education is for undocumented students. With questions and concerns arising, approaches to the topic were taken and the idea of developing this study to better understand the situation was embraced by many. Therefore, a significant portion of this study was shaped by listening to the stories of

impacted individuals, who held many talents and ironically, could not pursue the college dream because of the affordability challenges.

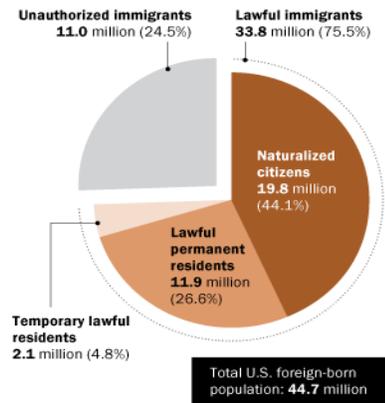
In summary, my personal experiences applying, attending, and engaging with other Middle Tennessee State University students have helped me develop curiosity. I strive to better understand and discover the immigration and educational processes that impact the lives of many young adults and their families. Therefore, this study's focus is to collect and further analyze social, educational, and economic questions in the central area of Tennessee. This study also intends to create a better understanding of the long-term socio-economic impact on Middle Tennessee, if In-State Resident Tuition (ISRT) rates are applied to all Tennessee students, including the lawful residents and undocumented immigrants.

Current Research and Literature

For Baker and Rytina (2013) on behalf of the U.S Department of Homeland Security, there are two categories of foreign-born individuals. First, the legal residents are classified as “all persons who were granted lawful permanent residence; granted asylum; admitted as refugees; or admitted as nonimmigrants for a temporary stay in the United States and not required to leave...” (p. 1). Secondly, the unauthorized residents are the people who do not fall into the first category. The majority of the second group was either admitted temporarily to the country and stayed past the deadline required in their visa or entered the U.S without inspection. Those two descriptions define well the types of immigrants encountered in American lands. (p.1)

About one-in-four U.S. immigrants are unauthorized

Foreign-born population estimates, 2015



Note: All numbers are rounded independently and are not adjusted to sum to U.S. total or other totals.
Source: Pew Research Center estimates for 2015 based on augmented American Community Survey (IPUMS).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure I: Foreign born population estimates.

To put the previous definitions into perspective, estimates from Pew Research Center (2017) indicate that in 2015, approximately 44 million immigrants were living in the United States. Where 33.8 million were legal residents, divided among naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, and temporary lawful residents, eleven million were unauthorized residents. The estimates of unauthorized immigrants can vary; however, this number is the most commonly used among researchers. With a significant increase in immigrants, researchers in a variety of fields study the cultural challenges associated with the growth of both, documented and undocumented immigrants in American communities (Ford, 2007).

Another relevant aspect related to the discussion on immigration is education. Provisions regarding the combination of those two subjects create a variety of questions, ideas, and controversies. In 2017, U.S. residents watched the new presidential

administration address and modify immigration laws related to educational questions, including the termination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. The changes suggested consequently create uncertainty and impact millions of students distributed across primary, secondary, and higher education. The new policies also affect families, educational organizations, teachers, employers, policymakers and governmental agencies. For this study, only changes and adjustments in postsecondary education are considered.

To be more specific in addressing issues related to immigrants, it is important to analyze some factors, such as the country of origin, and U.S. geographical area occupied by foreign-born individuals. First, most U.S foreign-born residents emigrated from Latin America, followed by Asia and Europe. Next, per Flores, (2010) there is evidence that some states have higher concentrations of both documented and undocumented categories of immigrants. The Center for Immigration Studies shows that; in the states of California, New York, New Jersey and Florida, foreign born individuals are at least 20% of the state population. California immigrants represent more than one quarter (27.1%) of the state's residents. (Camarota and Zeigler, 2016) That pattern is somewhat similar among unlawful immigrants. Counting, among undocumented aliens, California ranks first, with 24% of undocumented immigrants in its foreign-born population. Texas comes second, accounting for 14%, followed by Florida (9%), New York (7%), Arizona (5%), Illinois (4%), New Jersey (4%), and North Carolina (3%). (Flores, 2010, p. 242) Due to significant percentages, those states have been subjected to extensive research on a variety of immigration topics. However, the states with lower percentages of immigrants, have yet to explore questions about both categories of residents.

The southern state of Tennessee has been my adopted region of residency since 2013, and it is also the home of 322,652 other lawful immigrants, who account for 4.9% of the state's population. In addition to that, another 128,620 undocumented immigrants are estimated to be living within those borders. Undocumented immigrants represent 2% of the total state population (New American Economy, 2016). This study will focus on the 2% share of unlawful residents in Tennessee.

In addition to that, another factor to consider in this analysis is the number of undocumented young adults, who are included in the educational system, including prospective students to higher education as well as individuals enrolled in colleges and universities. To measure the number of undocumented students attending K-12 and higher education schools is somewhat difficult because schools do not readily provide data identifying immigration status of students. Nevertheless, the presence of undocumented students in Tennessee is expected to be considerable. Despite the challenges to collect accurate data on undocumented immigrants, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates that 23,000 students in the state of Tennessee lack official governmental documentation. Some of them are eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals – DACA. (Conexión Américas, 2017) However, even the DACA-eligible students have compromised futures upon completion of High School. For most of those young adults, the chances of applying, enrolling, and attending higher education institutions are slim. For many immigrants, including myself, education was always considered a priority and a success factor. However, in my story, many challenges were encountered on each step of the immigration process, as well as in my academic career. Even without fitting in the unlawful category of immigrants, I encountered several difficulties, especially related to

the costs of higher education. To my surprise, this is a common issue, faced by many students who are American by birth and foreign-born. The cost of a college education is already considered high for U.S. Citizens and lawful residents. Now, undocumented immigrants must factor in that their cost to receive the same benefits as a legal resident is, on average, three times more expensive.

In Tennessee, state policy and decision makers, representatives, and senators are now examining the best approach to provide college opportunities for undocumented students. One of the most pertinent discussion involves post-secondary institutions and the costs associated with a college degree for those specific individuals. To start that discussion, it is important to reinforce that public community colleges, technical institutions, and universities in Tennessee allow enrollment for undocumented residents who meet certain admissions' criteria. This factor itself is a determining element for young adults' success. On the other hand, the high cost of college to access those open doors is still a challenge. For the time being, undocumented students who desire to pursue the dream of attending a public higher education institution such as MTSU must pay non-resident out-of-state tuition. For the 2017-2018 academic year at MTSU, this sum equals \$27,168 only for tuition costs, compared to \$8,836 for in-state resident tuition (ISRT). This factor alone creates one of the greatest challenges to high school graduates and immigrants who want to pursue higher education in the state of Tennessee, where they reside with their families and contribute to the local economy. The unaffordability of higher education creates an exponential amount of brain waste, limiting foreign-born undocumented individuals to perform low-income jobs, while they could be contributing to the economy on a much larger scale.

In agreement with Flores (2010, p. 246), a cost-benefit analysis introduced by Caire and Becker (1967) is used in this study. They defend that educational investments are typically associated with cost, but it also has a nonmonetary aspect that creates valuable human capital, which translates into skills. Those skills are provided to companies in exchange for financial compensation. The decision process of applying, enrolling and attending a higher education institution is made by analyzing the cost and benefits of the investment, including monetary and non-monetary factors. (p. 247) Today, estimates studied by Connexion America (2017) show that private institutions across the state of Tennessee are more flexible in providing undocumented students support. Those schools are relatively more expensive than public institutions. (If, and only if In-State Resident Tuition is considered.) However, they do not practice price-discrimination and only charge one tuition rate for all students. The state of Tennessee has 23 private institutions that offer financial support for undocumented students. Those organizations represent almost a threat to public higher education institutions because students weigh the cost of attendance and availability of financial aid when choosing a college to enroll. In addition to that, it is hard to build a case for students to go to a public college, paying out of state tuition rates, with no financial support, while private institutions offer a flat tuition cost and access to scholarships and loans.

Current Situation of Undocumented Students at Middle Tennessee State University

MTSU is the second largest undergraduate institution in the state, ranking closely to The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. It is considered the biggest higher education provider for Middle Tennessee. The *2015 – 2016 Tennessee Higher Education Factbook*

(2017) indicated that MTSU had a total of 20,273 undergraduate students enrolled during that period. Considering the demographics' data on students, the amount of diversity on campus is substantial. The numbers show that most of the student body is White, followed by Blacks or African Americans. In third place are Hispanics or Latinos, with international students in fourth place, next are the Asian descendants, and lastly, American Indians and Native Hawaiians. To continue contributing to diversity on campus, the school has developed a friendly policy to undocumented students of all races, who meet specific requirements. Questions addressed in 2018 to the International Student and Scholar Services Coordinator at MTSU states that the initial application for undocumented students consists of an online form, a copy of official U.S. high school transcript and proof of immunization. To clarify, undocumented students at this University are classified as "international students" at MTSU due to the lack of U.S. proof of citizenships. The Hispanic/Latino portion of students listed above are all lawful residents. Next, it is important to consider that the applicants can apply and attend Middle Tennessee State University. However, they can only do so by agreeing to pay out of state tuition rates, which are now 3.1 times more expensive than ISRT. In addition to that, those students, who are not eligible for ISRT, also do not have the ability to receive any government financial support, including federal and state grants, scholarships, or loans. The payments received are collected in cash and in full prior to the beginning of each semester.

Data provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning and Research (IEPR) at Middle Tennessee State University shows the number of Hispanic/Latinos considered international students in 2015-2016. Student enrollment data was used to identify 54 individuals that were likely to be undocumented. Evidence presented by Baker

and Rytina (2013, p.5) shows that most undocumented foreign-born individuals are Hispanic, specifically from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Asians are the second largest group. Therefore, this factor explains the reason for collecting solely a Latino sample for this study, corresponding to only Central and South American countries. In general, there is a high probability that the number of undocumented students at MTSU is bigger than 54 if Asians, Africans, Europeans and other nationalities are considered.

In addition to that, the data set collected on those 54 undocumented students reflects their grade classification. Figure II represents the five groups of students included in the dataset. In order, 35% of those individuals are Freshman, 24% are Sophomores, followed by a 16.7% of Juniors, 22.2% of Senior, and 1.85% for undergraduate special students, who correspond to individuals that are not seeking a degree. The data also shows a decrease in the numbers of students across time. The number of enrolled seniors in that year corresponds to a decrease of 36.9% if compared to the amount of incoming freshmen. Data shows that roughly 60% of undocumented students are enrolled in the first two years of higher education at MTSU, while 39.6% continue pursuing college during the second half. The decrease in student retention can result from diverse reasons. However, numbers shown below are lower than the school average representative of the university. According to the *Middle Tennessee State University, 2016 Fact Book*, published by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning and Research the official freshman retention rate for the year 2014-2015 was 79.8%. The representation of data for undocumented immigrants during 2015-2016 shows that only 68.4% of those young adults were retained by the university.

| Grade Classification | TN | Grand Total (%) |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------------------|
| Freshman | 19 | 35.19% |
| Sophomore | 13 | 24.07% |
| Junior | 9 | 16.67% |
| Senior | 12 | 22.22% |
| Undergraduate Special | 1 | 1.85% |
| Grand Total | 54 | 100% |

Figure II: Undocumented Students by Grade Classification 2015-2016. Data retrieved from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning and Research (IEPR) at Middle Tennessee State University.

The 54 enrolled undocumented young adults across campus, helped MTSU generate a significant revenue amount during the 2015-2016 year. Tuition amounts, retrieved from Collegecalc.org (2017) indicate that each student paid \$23,736 for out of state tuition rates during Fall of 2015 and Spring of 2016. That amount represents a 282% premium if compared to ISRT, where each student was charged \$8,404. If the alternative option of ISRT was available, MTSU would have generated a much lower cash flow by students already enrolled. This drives conclusions that the decrease in tuition rates could be detrimental to the institution. However, the decrease in revenue is not the only relevant major factor to this study. Later, in the finding sections, a closer analysis of the revenue increment takes place. In addition to that, it is also correct to assume that by allowing undocumented students to pay ISRT, the number of enrolled individuals would increase, creating greater revenue. With that said, this study is not structured to analyze enrollment changes if the higher education cost was to be discounted. For the current year, 2017-2018, a greater percentage discrepancy is encountered. MTSU's website shows that ISRT fees are \$8,836, while out-of-state residents pay \$27,168. The numbers emphasize that residents from other states pay 3.1 times more for the same education. That can be considered a fair

amount by many individuals, including taxpayers who live in Tennessee. However, in the case of undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients, they are also residents of the state of Tennessee and currently contribute to tax revenues in that very same state.

Subsequently, it is important to state that the groups of undocumented students are divided across 27 major areas of study. According to the data set provided by The Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning and Research (IEPR), Nursing was the first choice for undocumented students in that time period, corresponding to 11% of the total number, with 6 Nursing students enrolled in 2015-2016. Next, Business Administration, Biology, and Accounting rank second, with 4 students enrolled in each academic major, corresponding to 7.5% each. Figure III shows the subsequent fields of study, including majors that have a smaller concentration of students. The graph representation provides an overview of major by grade classification as well. Future Nurses and Biology majors, who achieved the senior mark are likely to graduate. That gives an idea of what fields MTSU undocumented students alums are going to pursue as a professional career.

| <i>Academic Major</i> | Grand Total | Freshman | Sophomore | Senior | Junior | Undergraduate Special |
|--|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Nursing</i> | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | | |
| <i>Accounting</i> | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Biology</i> | 4 | | | 2 | 2 | |
| <i>Computer Science</i> | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| <i>Business Administration</i> | 3 | 3 | | | | |
| <i>Finance</i> | 3 | 2 | | | 1 | |
| <i>Mechatronics Engineering</i> | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | |
| <i>Marketing</i> | 2 | 2 | | | | |
| <i>Academic Focus</i> | 2 | 2 | | | | |
| <i>Family & Consumer Studies</i> | 2 | | 1 | | 1 | |
| <i>Mass Communication</i> | 2 | | 2 | | | |
| <i>Political Science</i> | 2 | 1 | | | 1 | |
| <i>Recording Industry Agribusiness</i> | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| <i>Non-Degree Seeking</i> | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| <i>Exercise Science</i> | 1 | | | 1 | | |
| <i>Nutrition & Food Science</i> | 1 | | | 1 | | |
| <i>Physics</i> | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| <i>Music</i> | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| <i>Leisure Sport & Tourism Studies</i> | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| <i>Biochemistry</i> | 1 | | | | 1 | |
| <i>Construction Management</i> | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| <i>Organizational Communication</i> | 1 | | | | 1 | |
| <i>Early Childhood Education</i> | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| <i>Entrepreneurship</i> | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| <i>International Relations</i> | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| <i>Science</i> | 1 | | 1 | | | |
| <i>Foreign Language*</i> | 1 | | | | 1 | |
| <i>Information Systems</i> | 1 | | | 1 | | |
| Grand Total | 54 | 19 | 13 | 12 | 9 | 1 |

Figure III: Majors selected by undocumented students in the 2015-2016 academic year. Data retrieved from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Planning and Research (IEPR) at Middle Tennessee State University.

Considering the most popular majors across the data set, later in this study, a comparison analysis will take place. This evaluation shows, on average, the income amounts of professionals in the field, who live and work in the state of Tennessee. That analysis also considers the Tennessee average of income for undocumented students who do not have a higher education degree.

Thesis Statement

This thesis project is designed to discover the long-term socio-economic impact of charging in-state resident tuition (ISRT) to prospective and enrolled undocumented students at Middle Tennessee State University. The study examines the impact from three different perspectives, the community perspective, the government perspective, and undocumented students' perspectives.

Approach and Methods

To begin, consent of The Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained upon the completion of social behavior research training. The approach used for this study is a mixed methodology. First, descriptive quantitative data, which consists of enrollment data from MTSU was examined. The second phase consists of the qualitative portion. The qualitative data is taken from personal statements and interviews with undocumented students. A mixed methodology gives the researcher the ability to have a balanced and more realistic overview of the issue.

The first step allowed the researcher to retrieve and analyze information from students at Middle Tennessee State University. The descriptive data analysis only

examines MTSU undergraduate data because: 1) This university is representative of the state of Tennessee as the second largest undergraduate public institution in the state, 2) This institution has a significant number of immigrants enrolled, and 3) The data is readily available. Those aspects supported the development of the study.

Also, the numerical data offered indications of residency status because, the students who were examined, had temporary U.S. residency, but also had a permanent address in the state of Tennessee. Next, the data set also includes descriptive demographic, numerical data and other insights, such as date of enrollment, grade classification, academic major, and grade point averages (GPAs). Data on students' academic majors allow the researcher to predict the most common career choices made by students of each major upon graduation, considering the positions available in the state of Tennessee. At this stage, it is applicable to say that some information collected represents estimates, due to the broad choices a college graduate can have in choosing professional careers. There is a margin of error to be considered. For example, if a student, who graduated with an accounting degree decided to pursue a marketing position upon graduation, he/she is not going to be working in their field of academic major. However, to ensure the accuracy of salary analysis, data professional positions held by MTSU graduates and the salary levels will be calculated utilizing the state figures, provided by the American Community Survey and U.S. Labor Statistics Bureau. The use of that information too is helpful to contrast and compare salary levels of college graduates to estimations of income received by undocumented immigrants, who do not have higher education degrees and subsequently would not have a career of choice.

Further, the economic impact was determined by 1) estimation of state revenue generation or expenditure, and 2) individual's compensation levels prior and after completion of higher education in diverse fields. Minimum wage data for high school graduates are compared to salary levels of college graduates divided by major. Factors that were considered for the state revenue are the tuition cost of documented and undocumented students. The analysis starts with the calculation of higher education costs for undocumented students, considering solely the out of state tuition increment. The other costs that are significant, such as housing, meal plans, and school supplies are variable and could fluctuate. Therefore, they will not be used in this study.

Later, major considerations from state government and taxpayers will be reviewed in the descriptive data analysis section, discovering if the application of in-state resident tuition to undocumented students benefits or harm the state government and community. In this section, since the state of Tennessee is taken into consideration, the analysis of only two major tax rates are considered, sales and property tax. State income tax is not going to be considered because "Tennessee's individual income tax is imposed on interest and dividend income only" (IRS, 2017). The descriptive data analysis portion should inform the study regarding positive and negative impacts of charging unlawful immigrants ISRT and create clarity on the economic effect that educated undocumented individuals have in the local and state economy.

Next, the second section of this study is the qualitative portion. The analysis of personal interviews of undocumented immigrants will reveal the impact of this economic policy issue on individuals' lives. Information on MTSU students and discouraged DACA recipients from other parts of the state were collected by referrals. Potential

interviewees were approached via e-mail or personal reference by the researcher, based on their age (from 18 to 25), immigration status, educational background, and state of residency. Brief interviews were structured and conducted during the months of January and February of 2018. Upon volunteers' interest in participating, a meeting time or a phone call was scheduled. In total, six interviews were conducted, four of them were completed in person, and the other two took place over the phone due to the physical distance between investigator and participants, who were in Memphis, and Knoxville. The interview was initially structured with seven questions, which can be found in the Appendix C. During the interviews, depending on the responses, the researcher reserved the rights to modify and include other questions. Interviewees consisted of college-age undocumented immigrants and "discouraged DACA students" who are enrolled at MTSU and/or would like to pursue higher education and would have done so if tuition was not so costly.

During the interviews, a time was also reserved for personal statements, when many participants disclosed personal information. As noted in the work published by Caire and Becker (1967), personal sources of reference are an important factor in the cost-benefit analysis that takes place when an individual is deciding to attend a higher education institution. That was emphasized by several interviewees and letters received by students. Later, in the findings section of this paper, those comments are addressed. After all sections were completed, transcripts were analyzed and de-identified. In addition to the interviews, messages, statements, and personal essays are used to express the ideas and feelings of students who face the presented challenge. These personal

statements were particularly helpful on discovering the impact on undocumented individuals.

To sum it up, the use of a mixed methodology provides evidence from different sources, including the institution's perspective, the impact on taxpayers and governmental institutions, as well as the students' points of view. In addition to that, the methodology in this study could further develop ideas that can assist decision makers. The results help inform legislative alternatives to address a current and highly controversial topic that has not been fully studied in the state of Tennessee.

Findings

After the analysis of descriptive data and the disclosure of personal statements it is correct to conclude that the results have an impact on: 1) Residents of Tennessee at large; 2) The government, including MTSU as a public institution; and 3) undocumented students. Some of those categories have an overlap. That means implications that are applicable to the population can also be applicable to the unlawful residents or even to the state government. This can create a correlation between all three groups previously mentioned.

1. The Community Perspective

The local communities in Tennessee are impacted by changes in education policies, even if they only address undocumented students. State legislators previously expressed the concerns of taxpayers, who understood that by allowing unlawful residents to attend a public higher education institution, there would be limited opportunities for citizens of

Tennessee to attend those same organizations. That statement does not hold true because MTSU does not have a maximum amount of students who can be accepted on a yearly basis; Therefore, undocumented immigrants do not take the place of any other state residents.

The second consideration from the community perspective is that when immigrants increase their salary levels, they have more purchasing power to acquire goods and services. Higher purchasing power leads to greater revenue in sales and property taxes. Therefore, the extra taxes revenue represents higher investments in infrastructure, roads, schools' improvements, parks, and healthcare. All those aspects benefit state residents at large. To put into perspective, an undocumented individual, who received a high school diploma is likely to work a low-income job. For that purpose, the minimum wage in the state of Tennessee is considered for calculations. According to the National Conference of State Legislature, this specific state has not adopted a state standard for minimum wage. Therefore, Tennessee uses the federal minimum wage amount stipulated per hour, which corresponds to \$7.25. On a yearly basis, that represents \$15,660. In contrast, students in Nursing, Business Administration, Biology, and Accounting, which are the four most popular academic majors among undocumented students at MTSU had in 2015-2016 the following income: Nurses in Tennessee made on average \$26.25 per hour, equivalent to a yearly income of \$54,747.24. Accountants received an hourly rate of \$21.96 in Tennessee, on average, while Biology graduates made \$28.68 and Business Administrators \$28.79, corresponding to 59,654 and \$59,888 respectively. Figure IV exemplifies the income difference between a minimum wage worker and a college graduate level of income. The pattern represented by a line in the graph shows the gap existent in taxable income.

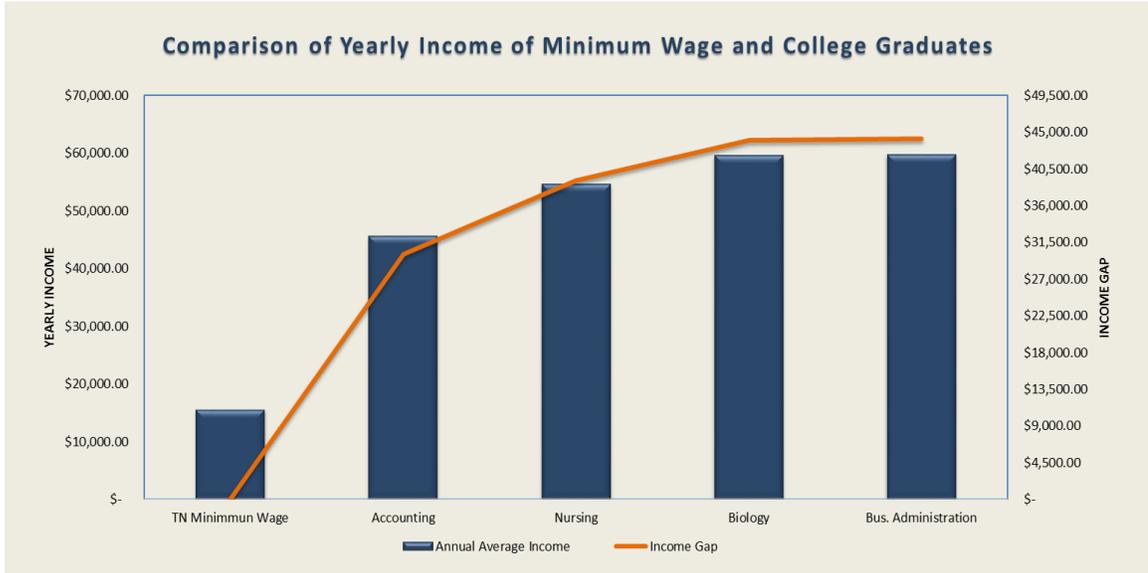


Figure IV – The comparison of individual's income between undocumented, low-income wages and college graduates, considering the four most popular academic majors among unlawful residents in Tennessee.

As previously mentioned, one of the incentives for the community is the tax revenue created by allowing undocumented students to have affordable access to higher education. Further analysis shows that students who graduate with the 4 academic majors in foci generate on average 3.5% times more taxes than the minimum wage employee. Considering general sales taxes rates of 7% on goods and services estimated to be paid in Tennessee, a nurse, a biologist, an accountant or a business person contribute yearly with \$4,262 in taxes, on average. Now, a person who is paid minimum wage pays only \$1,214 every year on taxable items. It is important to consider the fact that undocumented immigrants pay taxes at the same rates as other Tennessee residents. Therefore, the difference of \$3,048 helps offset the initial cost reduction of institutional revenue when ISRT rates were applied. If the 54 undocumented students enrolled at MTSU during 2015-

2016 generated \$3,048 in tax revenue yearly, the numbers correspond to an increase of \$164,952 in taxes every year. If that is used to contrast the gap presented before, between the decrease in cash flow from charging undocumented students out of state tuition rates, it is correct to say that in 5.01 years after graduation, the initial investment of charging those students would be fully paid. Therefore, future gains on tax revenue would be considered 100% profitable to the community and the government.

One other socio-economic aspects that can be considered for the local community is that the inclusion of undocumented immigrants in jobs can be a path to obtaining legal residency status. The hiring of immigrants in better paying jobs, that cannot be filled solely by the American workforce can also help develop the local economy, by filling positions that have a current shortage in the state of Tennessee.

2. The Government Perspective

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court Decision Plyler V. Doe established access to K-12 education to all children who resided in the United States (Powell, 1981). That decision is evident today, across the U.S because children of any race, nationality, social class, or immigration status, who reside in the United States have access to the public educational system. The state of Tennessee follows that practice. Further, the vision statement of the Tennessee State Board of Education (2005) includes, among other aspects, "...to ensure that students have the resources to accomplish high levels of learning and are prepared for postsecondary education, work and citizenship." The vision created by the state board of

education reinforces that the state government acts to ensure all residents are educated and well instructed to satisfy performance in their academic and professional careers, regardless of their immigration status. Taking into consideration of all the investments made through education of undocumented children during elementary, middle, and high school stages, it can be important that those students further their education to have a better return on the initial state governmental investment.

However, state law does not mandate the same level of access to higher education. At this stage, it is important to consider that the cost of higher education is significantly greater than primary and secondary education. However, to address the current situation, the Tennessee General Assembly issued a Fiscal Note on March 20th of 2017, which analyzes the financial impact of implementing ISRT to undocumented students who would like to pursue a college education and meet certain enrolment criteria. Considering all receivables and expenses for the 2018-2019 academic year, the state government is estimating an increase of \$3,081,600.00 net revenue by allowing undocumented students to enroll and attend public institutions. Those numbers represent the potential 587 new students who will enroll in the public institution of higher education governed by Tennessee Higher Education Commission and Tennessee Board of Regents. To add to this factor, studies conducted by Deming and Dynarski (2010) show a significant increase in college retention of students who experience a decrease in the overall cost of higher education. Based on that assumption it is possible to extrapolate that undocumented students would achieve better retention rates at MTSU than the numbers presented before, if ISRT rates were applied. Undocumented students, who are currently enrolled would have a greater chance of succeeding in their academic career.

Lastly, the retention rates previously mentioned can impact greatly Middle Tennessee State University, because higher education funding received from the state government is now based on retention rates and the number of students who graduate. It would be beneficial to the public institution to have a higher enrollment, since that could lead to a higher budget designed for the school.

3. The Undocumented Immigrants' Perspective

A third perspective of the story is the point of view of college age, undocumented immigrants, who have lived most of their lives in the U.S. The stories of the individuals present a powerful view to a compelling cause.

During this study, the data that best reflected the impact on individuals emerged in the interviews. The results of the qualitative data created several themes. To start, all undocumented students interviewed had been living in the state of Tennessee for over a decade and, therefore, all have graduated high school from the public education system in Tennessee. Next, they all had the intention to pursue higher education upon high school graduation. Another factor to consider is their areas of study are diverse, with three interviewees pursuing criminal justice. Further, once asked about the challenges faced in the college admission and enrollment process, the answers had common themes, including 1) The inability to afford postsecondary education, 2) The importance to stay close to family members, and 3) The lack of information and assistance during the college admissions and enrolling processes.

Regarding the first theme, about affordability, students made these comments:

“College was too expensive”;

“My tuition bills per semester corresponded almost to my parents’ yearly income”;

“Before I could even read or write, I knew I really wanted to go to UT, ...but when I got accepted into my dream school, things changed and I could not go because of my immigration status and because I could not afford it”; and,

“I currently work 3 different jobs and can only afford to be a part-time student because of the tuition price.”

Secondly, many of the interviewees highlighted that they were an important piece of the family structure, serving as drivers, translators, caregivers and income generators to their families. Some of them said:

“My mom had cancer and I needed to help take care of her as well as provide for my parents since she was unable to work for some time”;

“I really could not afford to move away from my parents because of the cost of living. We could not afford two bills for rent, utilities and we all shared one car.”

Third, the students indicated that the lack of support and information from high school counselors and college advisors was significant. When DACA was first approved, the learning process took place for everyone, not solely students and families. However, once interviewees were asked what challenges they encountered during higher education enrollment and attendance process, all of them mentioned the lack of knowledge. The following stories show how those challenges took place. One of the students described that when he started attending a public university in the state of Tennessee, he started out paying ISRT, and had an academic scholarship, because he graduated high school with a 4.0 GPA, but a month after classes started, financial aid contacted him to inform he would have to pay out-of-state tuition. The solution found was to decrease the load of classes he was

taking to match the out-of-state tuition for the same amount of the scholarship received, leaving him with only one 3-credit class at the time. Later in the semester, financial aid contacted the same student again, to communicate that since he was not a full-time student, the scholarship would be removed. Consequently, the student had to discontinue his education at this institution.

Other statements, included:

“My high school encouraged all students to apply for college, but in my situation, they really did not know what to do.”

“When I asked my counselor what students without paper should do, she mentioned that in that case, there was nothing she could do.”

“When DACA first came out, nobody knew how the process was, so a lot of people gave me wrong information.”

Next, another factor that created challenges was the social aspect and the production of brain waste. One of the students, while attending his first semester of college was asked by his high school long-term friends what classes he was taking. The embarrassment of explaining that he was only enrolled in one course because he could not afford out-of-state tuition created emotions. Further, decreasing the amount of brain waste among educational institutions and industries is also relevant. “Brain waste describes a situation with skill downgrading, where an individual is working in a job that requires a skill level lower than the one he/she has acquired” (Pires, 2015). That is the case of many undocumented immigrants, who would have a better career potential since they can offer bilingual skills and multicultural knowledge.

As some of those young adults stated, they are perceived as examples of determination for their families and surrounding communities. Most of the undocumented students live close to their immediate family because of the lack of options the family has. To be more specific, the first recipients of documentation thru the Deferred Act of Childhood Arrivals program had very little guidance in the higher education application and attendance process. Therefore, those are the students who serve as mentors to prospective college students and families now, because few family members are likely to advise students on the higher education process. Undocumented students are not only examples of determination, but also the drive and persistence of unlawful students in Tennessee have shown to be incredible and very significant.

Conclusion

After analyzing descriptive data and discussing major issues regarding tuition equity opportunities with undocumented students, MTSU faculty members, and state policymakers, it is obvious to the researcher that the topic is controversial and causes distress. With that said, my best efforts in this study were to represent three perspectives of the issue. Therefore, the current situation of MTSU undocumented students was analyzed, and the impact of future changes to the community, the government and to undocumented students were also considered. In addition to that, there are limitations of the study, with the greatest one being my personal bias, because of my immigrant background. With some effort, to the best of my knowledge, I removed my personal

opinions. Another limitation of the study was the difficulty of finding adequate information on undocumented students in Tennessee. At this moment, it seems that this topic has been insufficiently studied in this region, resulting in lack of relevant data on the issue.

The current situation of both lawful immigrants and undocumented students in Tennessee helps reflect the progress that has been made in regards to this subject. Institutions and individuals already have overcome many challenges, creating a much friendlier environment for immigrants, especially those who are willing to learn English, get educated, and contribute to the surrounding communities. Now, the constant changes in the number of undocumented individuals in the state of Tennessee open new channels for discussion and ideas. Implications and unanswered questions that are relevant for Tennessee can benefit other states that have similarly low percentages of foreign-born individuals.

Finally, the tuition equality topic is another issue that needs to be addressed to promote equality and fairness of education. Considering specifically the inclusion of undocumented immigrants and DACA recipients in the society to benefit the community, the government and the individual students. With that, this project aims to bring more awareness and information to a topic that has been receiving more and more attention in the state of Tennessee.

Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

| Term | Definition |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Brain waste | The non-recognition of skills and qualifications acquired. |
| DACA students | Students qualified for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals. |
| Foreign-born | A person born in a country different than the one's own. |
| In state, resident tuition | Tuition fees for students that are residents of the state where the public institution is located. |
| Lawful immigrant | A person who is in conformity with the law and rules of a country. |
| Non-resident out of state tuition | Tuition fees for students that are not a resident of the state where the public college is located. |
| Unlawful residents | People that do not have official permission to be residents of a specific country. |
| Undocumented | Without proper documentation |

Appendix B

Exemption Determination Notice

IRB

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Office of Research Compliance,
010A Sam Ingram Building,
2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
Murfreesboro, TN 37129

IRBN007 – EXEMPTION DETERMINATION NOTICE

Tuesday, January 30, 2018

Investigator(s): Barbara Rodrigues Alves Pafetti; Laura Clark
Investigator(s) Email(s): bp3q@mtmail.mtsu.edu; Laura.Clark@mtsu.edu
Department: Educational Leadership
Study Title: The Socioeconomic Impact of In-State College Tuition for Undocumented Students at MTSU
Protocol ID: **18-1110**

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the **EXEMPT** review mechanism under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) within the research category (2) *Educational Tests*. A summary of the IRB action and other particulars in regard to this protocol application is tabulated as shown below:

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| IRB Action | EXEMPT from further IRB review*** |
| Date of expiration | NOT APPLICABLE |
| Participant Size | 10 [Ten] |
| Participant Pool | Adults 18+ |
| Mandatory Restrictions | 1. Participants must be age 18+ 2. Informed consent must be obtained 3. Identifiable information may not be collected |
| Additional Restrictions | None at this time |
| Comments | None at this time |
| Amendments | Post-Approval Amendments None at this time |

***This exemption determination only allows above defined protocol from further IRB review such as continuing review. However, the following post-approval requirements still apply:

- Addition/removal of subject population should not be implemented without IRB approval
 - Change in investigators must be notified and approved
 - Modifications to procedures must be clearly articulated in an addendum request and the proposed changes must not be incorporated without an approval
 - Be advised that the proposed change must comply within the requirements for exemption
 - Changes to the research location must be approved – appropriate permission letter(s) from external institutions must accompany the addendum request form
 - Changes to funding source must be notified via email (irb_submissions@mtsu.edu)
-
- The exemption does not expire as long as the protocol is in good standing
 - Project completion must be reported via email (irb_submissions@mtsu.edu)
 - Research-related injuries to the participants and other events must be reported within 48 hours of such events to compliance@mtsu.edu

The current MTSU IRB policies allow the investigators to make the following types of changes to this protocol without the need to report to the Office of Compliance, as long as the proposed changes do not result in the cancellation of the protocols eligibility for exemption:

- Editorial and minor administrative revisions to the consent form or other study documents
- Increasing/decreasing the participant size

The investigator(s) indicated in this notification should read and abide by all applicable post-approval conditions imposed with this approval. Refer to the post-approval guidelines posted in the MTSU IRB's website. Any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918 within 48 hours of the incident.

All of the research-related records, which include signed consent forms, current & past investigator information, training certificates, survey instruments and other documents related to the study, must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) at the secure location mentioned in the protocol application. The data storage must be maintained for at least three (3) years after study completion. Subsequently, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity. IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board
Middle Tennessee State University

Appendix C

IRB Informed Consent

IRB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Office of Research Compliance, 010A
Sam Ingram Building,
2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd
Murfreesboro, TN 37129

HUMAN PARTICIPANT RESEARCH IRBF004IC INFORMED CONSENT - EXEMPT

Dear Researcher,

The IRB and MTSU reminds you that the two essential components of research involving human subjects are adequate informed consent and the protection of participant's rights, such as autonomy and confidentiality). Therefore, MTSU requests its faculty, staff and students to take the consent process of the human subject research very seriously – it is a conversation and not a mere document. If you cannot disclose a certain activity or an intervention to the participants, then you must not include such processes in your study. Moreover, the law requires the administration of the informed consent, but it does not clearly state how many times. Researchers are encouraged to remind the participants of their rights as many times as it is needed. In order to qualify for exemption, the informed consent document or a process must satisfy the following minimum requirements:

- a) Summative descriptions of the purpose of the study and the specifics on what is expected from the subjects in order for them to be research participants
- b) Participation is fully voluntary and they can withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice
- c) An overview on what will be required from the participants
- d) Clear disclosures of possible discomforts and/or potential risks as a result of the participation
- e) Total time to be taken in the study and other factors that would influence the participants
- f) Contact information for the principal investigator and the faculty sponsor if the PI is a student.

We also would like to remind our researchers that working with human participants is not an academic right; it is a true privilege.

MTSU IRB

Instructions:

This template is meant for obtaining informed consent from a human participant by providing a paper copy to disclose the research-related activities. The same text and

structure must be used for online surveys, verbal interviews through telephone or in person, and other means of collecting data.

A. Participant Copy – *Give this copy to the participant once it is signed by the PI:*

- a. Fill in all of the unprotected spaces – Do not leave any of the fields empty
- b. The research team must give disclosure of what is expected from the participant and provide a description of the study – Please note that “N/A” is not an accepted response.
- c. Once the form receives IRB approval, the PI must sign the document and hand it to the participant to read – the faculty advisor must also sign if the PI is a student
- d. In addition to allowing the participant to read this form, the investigators must also explain the procedures verbally. The investigators must encourage the participants to ask questions.

B. Researcher Copy – *Retain this copy for your records:*

- a. Fill in all of the unprotected spaces
- b. The participant will accept his/her participation by entering his/her initials.

IRB

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Office of Research Compliance,
010A Sam Ingram Building,
2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd, Murfreesboro, TN 37129

INFORMED CONSENT – RESEARCHERS’ DISCLOSURES

(Part A – Participant’s Copy)

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Study Title | <i>The Socioeconomic Impact of In-State College Tuition for Undocumented Students at MTSU</i> | Office Use |
| Principal Investigator | Barbara Rodrigues Alves Pafetti | <i>IRB ID: EXEMPT</i> |
| Faculty Advisor | Laura Clark | Approval Date: 01/31/2018 |
| Contact Information | bp3q@mtmail.mtsu.edu.br or (615) 516-7376 | Expiration Date: N/A |

Dear Participant,

On behalf of the research team, the Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) would like to thank you for considering to take part in this research study. You have been contacted by the above identified researcher(s) to enroll as a participant in this study because you met its eligibility criteria.

This consent document describes the research study for the purpose of helping you to make an informed decision on whether to participate in this study or not. It provides important information related to this study, possible interventions by the researcher(s) and proposed activities by you. This research has been reviewed by MTSU’s internal oversight entity - Institutional Review Board (IRB) - for ethical practices in research (visit www.mtsu.edu/irb for more information).

As a participant, you have the following rights:

- You should read and understand the information in this document before agreeing to enroll

- Your participation is absolutely voluntary and the researchers cannot force you to participate
- If you refuse to participate or to withdraw midway during this study, no penalty or loss of benefits will happen
- The investigator MUST NOT collect identifiable information from you, such as, name, SSN, and phone number
- The researcher(s) can only ask you to complete an interview or a survey or similar activities and you must not be asked to perform physical activities or offer medical/psychological intervention
- Any potential risk or discomforts from this study would be lower than what you would face in your daily life

After you read the following disclosures, you can agree to participate in this study by completing “Part B” of this informed consent document. You do not have to do anything further if you decide not to participate.

1. What is the purpose of this study?

This study has the purpose to understand and evaluate the educational and economic impact of charging undocumented students non-resident out of state tuition fees at MTSU

2. What will I be asked to do in this study?

You will be asked to answer questions regarding your personal experience as a student and as an immigrant

3. How many times should I participate or for how long?

Participation is limited to 1 time. The section could take up to 30 minutes

4. What are the risks and benefits if I participate?

Due to the level of confidentiality of participant's information, no risk will take place. Among the benefits of your participation are the better understanding of the impact of MTSU charging in-state resident tuition to all documented students, what could cause the educational cost to be significantly lowered, contributing to the lives of many immigrants.

5. What will happen to the information I provide in this study?

The information will be kept confidential, with no identifiers. The data will be entered in the study anonymously.

6. What will happen if I refuse to participate and can I withdraw if I change my mind in the middle?

The study is voluntary. You have the right to refuse participation and withdraw from the studies at any time.

7. Whom can I contact to report issues and share my concerns?

You can contact the researcher(s) by email or telephone (**bp3q@mtmail.mtsu.edu** or **laura.clark@mtsu.edu**). You can also contact the MTSU’s Office of Research Compliance by email – irb_information@mtsu.edu. Report compliance breaches and adverse events by dialing 615 898 2400 or by emailing compliance@mtsu.edu.

INVESTIGATOR's SIGNATURE

FACULTY ADVISOR's SIGNATURE

DATE

NON-IDENTIFIABLE PARTICIPANT ID# _____

Confidentiality Statement:

All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised, for example, your information may be shared with the MTSU IRB. In the event of questions or difficulties of any kind during or following participation, you may contact the Principal Investigator as indicated above. For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact our Office of Compliance at (615) 898 2400.

Compensation:

Unless otherwise informed to you by the researcher(s), there is no compensation for participating in this study. The investigator must disclose if the participant would be compensated in the benefits section.

Study-related Injuries:

MTSU will not compensate for study-related injuries.

Exemption Criteria:

This study was submitted to the MTSU IRB – an internal oversight entity to oversee research involving human subjects. The IRB has determined that this investigation consists of lower than minimal risk and it is exempt from further IRB processes based on the criteria: "*Category 2 - Educational Tests.*"

Note to the Participant

You do not have to do anything if you decide not to participate in this study. But if wish to enroll as a participant, please complete "Part B" of this informed consent form and return it to the researcher. Please retain the signed copy of "Part A" for your future reference.

IRB

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Office of Research Compliance,
010A Sam Ingram Building,
2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd, Murfreesboro, TN 37129

INFORMED CONSENT

(Part B – Researcher’s Copy)

| | | |
|------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Study Title | <i>The Socioeconomic Impact of In-State College Tuition for Undocumented Students at MTSU</i> | Approval Information |
| Principal Investigator | Barbara Rodrigues Alves Pafetti | IRB ID: <i>EXEMPT</i> |
| Faculty Advisor | Laura Clark | Approval Date: 01/31/2018 |
| Contact Information | bp3q@mtmail.mtsu.edu.br or (615) 516-7376 | Expiration Date: N/A |

You have been contacted by the investigator(s) because the researchers believe you meet the eligibility criteria to participate in the above referenced research study. Be aware that you must NOT be asked by the investigator(s) to do anything that would pose risk to your health or welfare, such as:

- Identifiable information – name, phone number, SSN, address, College ID, social media credentials (FaceBook page, twitter, etc.), email, identifiable information of closest relatives and etc.
- Physical activities – like exercise studies
- Medical intervention – testing drugs, collection of blood/tissue samples or psychological questions
- Nothing risky – any proposed activity that would expose you to more risk than what you would face on a day to day basis is not approved by the IRB

However, you can do the following:

- Withdraw from the study at any time without consequences
- Withdraw the information you have provided to the investigators before the study is complete
- Ask questions so the researcher must explain the procedures used in the research verbally.

The investigators must give you enough time to ask any questions. Once you have had a chance to read “Part A” (Participant’s Copy), indicate your acceptance by checking the appropriate boxes:

| | NO | YES |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ➤ I have read investigator(s)’ disclosure (Part A) for the above identified research | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ The researcher(s) explained the procedures to be conducted verbally | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ I understand each part of the interventions and all my questions are answered | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ➤ The researcher(s) gave me a signed copy of the disclosure page (Part A) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

By initialing below, I give my consent to participate in this study. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences.

X

----- **NON-IDENTIFIABLE PARTICIPANT ID#** _____

Participant initial

Date

Initial this copy and return it to the researcher and retain Part A for your reference in case you have questions or you wish to get in touch with the researcher or with the MTSU IRB

Appendix D

Interview Script

Dear participant, thank you for volunteering to collaborate on this study. It is a pleasure to have your help and opinion. I would like you to read and review the consent form. Please let me know if you have any questions and concerns. Please sign the consent form if you agree to proceed with the interview.

- 1- What is your current immigration status?
- 2- In what state, do you reside? And how long have you lived there?
- 3- Did you attend High School in the state of TN? If so, could you please provide the name and location of your High School?
- 4- Did you have plans to attend college upon high school graduation? If yes, please describe what your ideal college education would be like.
- 5- Now, could you please tell me about the challenges you faced to enroll and attend a university in TN due to your immigration status?
- 6- Is there anything you wish it was different in college admission process?
- 7- Are there any messages you would like to deliver to the state policymakers?

Thank you for your contribution to this study! Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns in regards to this study.

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