



Simplifying the Financial Aid Application Process for Undocumented Students

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS CASE STUDY

Challenges

- Goal of helping more undocumented students earn a higher education
- Application process for state financial aid was paper-based and cumbersome

Regent Solution

- Regent Access

Key Benefits

- Automates the processing of state funds for undocumented residents
- Calculates the student's EFC in accordance with federal methodology
- Available for both new and returning students
- Advanced skip logic
- Parent and student e-signature capability

Client Profile

The University of North Texas (UNT), located in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, is home to more than 38,000 students and offers more than 220 degree programs. UNT is one of the nation's largest public research universities, is one of the Top 5 Texas universities, and generates an economic impact of \$1.65 billion annually.

Serving Undocumented Students is a Top Priority

One of President Smatresk's four targeted action plans, outlined in the 2017 State of the University, is improving student access to education. This effort extends to undocumented students who struggle to overcome tremendous barriers attaining a higher education.

UNT's Financial Aid team identified access to financial aid as a major barrier to higher education for undocumented students and sought innovative ways to simplify the process.

"These students aspire to a better life and are doing what our society asks of them — they work hard, study hard and play by the rules. We need to encourage them to stay focused, hopeful and invested in their education."¹

-President Neal J. Smatresk

Automating the State Financial Aid Application

While U.S. and eligible noncitizens can apply for both financial and state aid using the online, electronic version of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), undocumented students are required to complete, print and mail the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) to be considered for state awards. While the online FAFSA offers students clear directions and helpful hints embedded into the application; undocumented students must rely on nine pages of directions to fill out the four-page paper Texas state application. "Requiring undocumented students to print an application, fill it out, and submit it - this creates a barrier that isn't acceptable," states Lacey Thompson, Director of Operations for Student Financial Aid and Scholarships.

Student View of TASFA Application

Efficiencies Gained via Automation

The online TASFA, or eTASFA, affords UNT's financial aid team significant time savings and efficiency gains. When the paper-based TASFA applications were submitted via mail, financial aid team members were required to receive, process and track these submissions. Now, this processing time has been eliminated. The paper-based process also required the financial aid team to manually input the applicant's information into the calculator to determine the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Now, the online TASFA, automatically calculates the EFC thereby increasing departmental efficiency and dramatically decreasing the time required to process the application.

Creating a Strong Student Experience

UNT's financial aid department sought to close the disparity between the financial aid application experiences. After extensive research, they selected and deployed Regent Access to automate the TASFA.

"Our goal is to create a financial aid application process for undocumented students that is equivalent to that of the FAFSA experience and Regent Access has gotten us extremely close," explains Thompson. "Regent Access was very easy to implement, the Regent implementation team was great to work with, and the students have been pleased with automation of the TASFA."

Within the first several months of deployment, Thompson and team used Regent Access to confirm more than 100 otherwise undocumented students were eligible for financial aid – a number they expect will only continue to grow.

1 <https://www.unt.edu/notices/support-daca-and-undocumented-students-message-president>

About Regent Access

Regent Access, offered by Regent Education, automates, streamlines and simplifies the paper-based state financial aid application process for undocumented students. Regent Access empowers states and institutions to offer an electronic version of their state financial aid application, including the ability to electronically upload required documents, offer parent e-signature capabilities, and automate the expected family contribution (EFC) calculation. By offering this powerful online application, states and individual institutions can minimize the amount of time and resources required to process these applications, and undocumented students will find themselves one major step closer to attaining a higher education degree.

For more information, please visit www.regenteducation.com.