



# Simplifying the Financial Aid Application Process for Undocumented Students

## THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS CASE STUDY

### Challenges

- Goal of helping more undocumented students have access to a higher education; financial aid identified as a barrier
- Application process for state financial aid was paper-based, a cumbersome, inefficient, and poor experience

### Regent Solutions

- Regent Access

### Key Benefits

- Applicants have an experience that mirrors the FAFSA, with an intuitive interview format, personalized skip logic, integrated help, and Spanish translations.
- Automatic EFC calculation in accordance with federal methodology
- Data validation ensures fully-completed applications.
- Application data managed through an ISIR formatted data file, so you can easily export it into your financial aid system.

### Institutional Profile & Vision

The University of North Texas (UNT), located in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, is home to more than 38,000 students and offers 230 degree programs. UNT is one of the nation's largest universities, one of the Top 5 Texas universities, and generates an economic impact of \$1.65 billion annually.

As the most-comprehensive public research university providing a top-quality education in one of the nation's largest, most-dynamic regions, UNT will be celebrated for its academics, arts, and athletics. UNT will be a diverse and inclusive institution, creating knowledge and innovations that will shape the future while cultivating excellence in the next generation of scholars and leaders for the global community.

### 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.

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"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."<sup>1</sup>

—President Neal J. Smatresk

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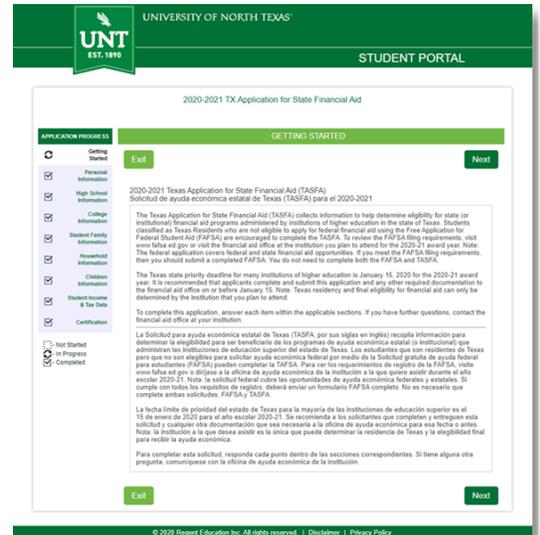
UNT's Financial Aid team identified access to financial aid as a major barrier to higher education for undocumented students and sought innovative ways to simplify the process.

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

## Addressing the Financial Aid Access Barrier

While US and eligible non-citizens in Texas can apply for state aid using the online Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), undocumented students must download, print, complete, and submit the eight-page paper Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA) to be considered for state awards. "Requiring undocumented students to print an application, fill it out, and submit it creates a barrier that isn't acceptable. It also results in inefficient use of our staff and delivers a poor experience for student applicants," explains Lacey Thompson, Director of Operations for Student Financial Aid and Scholarships at UNT.

UNT's financial aid department sought to address the disparity between the application experiences. After extensive research, they selected and deployed Regent Access to convert the paper-based TASFA into a user-friendly, online experience that mirrors the FAFSA.



"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. Regent Access was very easy to implement, the Regent implementation team was great to work with, and the students have been pleased with the automation of the TASFA."

—Lacey Thompson, Director of Operations for Student Financial Aid and Scholarships

## Significantly Increased Aid Awarded

With the e-TASFA, student applicants have an experience similar to the FAFSA, from the intuitive interview format, personalized skip logic, and integrated help to the electronic signatures.

For UNT financial aid staff, the e-TASFA eliminates manual submission receipt, processing, and tracking. Expected Family Contribution (EFC) calculations also are automated in accordance with federal methodology. Finally, the e-TASFA performs data validation to ensure fully-completed applications, thereby increasing departmental efficiency and dramatically decreasing the time required to process applications.

UNT also is materially increasing aid to undocumented students. They deployed the e-TASFA in January of 2017. As of March of the 2020-2021 aid year, along with their natural student growth, **UNT is already seeing 3x the number of e-TASFA applications that they did that first year** – a figure they anticipate will continue to grow.

Let us see what we can do for your institution!

### About Regent Education

Regent Education is the leading provider of SaaS solutions that automate financial aid verification, packaging and disbursement for not only traditional academic years but also borrower-based academic year and competency-based education using standard and nonstandard terms as well as non-term enrollment models. Regent's financial aid management solutions offer institutions an unprecedented ability to automate the financial aid process to increase efficiency, mitigate compliance risks, expand enrollment, improve the student experience and satisfaction and enhance financial management and financial aid lifecycle visibility. For more information, please visit <http://www.regenteducation.com>.