

Higher Education of Undocumented Immigrants: The Student Adjustment Act:
Part 4 of 4
By Lillian Kim^δ

Conclusion

While both sides of the debate have persuasive support, I find the evidence presented in Sharry's paper, *Illegal Immigrants Are Not An Economic Burden*, the most compelling. Because illegal aliens are highly protective of their personal information in an effort to steer clear of the federal government, it is difficult to obtain accurate data on them. As a result, much of the evidence that does exist with respect to illegal immigrants is derived through the use of different methods, thus creating an inconsistent pool of data. What I liked about Sharry's paper was the fact that he mentioned the misconceptions that are often associated with illegal aliens. The empirical support for this argument comes from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, a reliable government source whose evidence does not require "tweaking".

The passing of the Student Adjustment Act will give undocumented aliens, many of whom were brought into this country by their parents and thus became "illegal aliens" through no fault of their own, equal opportunity to higher education. It makes sense for the United States to harness an untapped source of labor that is already familiar with the U.S. education system. However, like Romero, I too believe that in order for the SAA to be successful, education must be considered a formal form of employment. Without this formal recognition, illegal aliens with college degrees will continue to take on menial jobs due to employers' fear of getting sanctioned for knowingly hiring an illegal alien. If education is formally recognized as work (based on the theory that one serves as a

^δ Bachelors of Science, expected graduate class of 2004, Wellesley College.

valuable economic contributor to American society), illegal aliens will have their status legalized and they will be able to compete for jobs for which they have been trained.

As of this date, Texas and California have passed the SAA legislation instituting in-state tuition for undocumented students (Szelenyi). While this offers hope for the future passage of SAA in other states, it should also be noted that there are definitely hurdles to be faced along the way. For example, after September 11, 2001, CUNY abandoned a 12-year policy of treating unlawful immigrants as resident for tuition purposes and reverted to charging out-of-state tuition to these students. It was only in June of 2002, that new legislation was passed by the New York State Assembly allowing some illegal immigrants to pay in-state tuition at both CUNY and SUNY (Szelenyi). Also, the passing of the Student Adjustment Act has just been denied in the state of Virginia (Kilgore). It will be some time before the Student Adjustment Act is passed as a federal law. In the meantime, we should try to learn more about the economic and social implications of this legislation. With the SAA currently being tried out in California and Texas, studies that try to measure how much better off (if at all) an illegal alien is with a college degree should be conducted. As for the issue of illegal immigration at large, we should continue our efforts to control the numbers through traditional forms of regulation, such as at airports and at borders. We should not punish those have made their lives here.

Works Cited

- Badger, Ellen. "Myths and realities for undocumented students attending U.S. colleges and universities." Journal of College Admission no174 (Winter 2002): 10-15.
- Barbour, William. Illegal Immigration. San Diego: Greenhaven, 1994.
- Bratsberg, Bernt and Dek Terrell. "School quality and returns to education of U.S. immigrants." Economic Inquiry v. 40 no2 (Apr. 2002): 177-198.
- Chiswick, Barry. Illegal Aliens: Their Employment and Employers. Kalamazoo: The Institute, 1988.
- Cozic, Charles P. Illegal Immigration. San Diego: Greenhaven, 1997.
- Dougherty, Kevin J. "Mass higher education: what is its impetus? What is its impact?." Teachers College Record v. 99 (Fall 1997): 66-72.
- Fein, Bruce and Linda Seebach. "Laws Denying Benefits to Illegal Immigrants Are Fair." Illegal Immigration. San Diego: Greenhaven, 1997.
- Haines, David W. and Karen E. Rosenblum. Illegal Immigration in America. Westport: Greenwood, 1999.
- Honawar, Vaishali. "In-state tuition eyed for illegals; Bill supported by Democrats." The Washington Times. 3 March 2003.
- Huddle, Donald L. "Illegal Immigrants Are An Economic Burden." Illegal Immigration. San Diego: Greenhaven, 1997.

- Kilgore, Jerry. "Illegal Immigrant Legislation Should Become Virginia Law". The Virginian-Pilot 13 March 2003.
- Lewis, Bob. "Bill passes to bar illegal aliens from in-state tuition". The Associated Press. 19 Feb 2003.
- Mailman, Stanley and Stephen Yale-Loehr. "College for Undocumented Immigrants After All?" New York Law Journal (2001). 26 April 2003
http://0web.lexisnexis.com.luna.wellesley.edu/universe/document?_m=d1002e71e64414
- Miller, Berna. "Educating the 'other' children." American Demographics v. 19 (Oct. 1997): 49-54.
- Romero, Victor C. "Postsecondary School Education Benefits for Undocumented Immigrants: Promises and Pitfalls." The North Carolina Journal of International Law and Commercial Regulation v. 27 no3 (Spring 2002): 393-418.
- Schulte, Brigid and Jo Becker. "Immigrant Tuition Bill Passes in Md." Washingtonpost.com 6 April 2003 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/articles/A37911-2003Apr5.html>
- Shaffrey, Mary. "End of tuition break for illegals sought; Number who benefit not known." The Washington Times. 29 Jan 2003.
- Sharry, Frank. "Illegal Immigrants Are Not An Economic Burden." Illegal Immigration. San Diego: Greenhaven, 1997.

Szelenyi, Katalin and Chang, June C. "ERIC Review: Educating Immigrants: The Community College Role." Community College Review v. 30 no2 (Fall 2002): 55

73.

Vaida, David. "Deal with immigration creatively, not reactively." The Morning Call 17
Feb 2003 (Allentown, PA).