

October 12, 2018

Dear Friend of TheDream.US,

I'm writing to report to you on TheDream.US just as our fifth class starts to enroll in college. This is a report, not a request for more money; you have been a major investor in our students and I want you to know how they are doing.

In short, they are doing fantastically well in everything that is under their control: persistence, academic performance, graduation. Without the support of donors like you, almost none of these students could have gone to college and graduated. With your help, they are success stories. They have done well in college because of their extraordinary, burning motivation. We at TheDream.US would bet that most of them will be big successes in life for the same reason.

RETENTION AND GRADUATION

Low-income students at US four-year colleges have a 66% retention rate from their first to their second year. TheDream.US scholars, through their first three classes, had an average 94% first-to-second-year retention rate.

Overall, 87% of the 1,700+ Scholars enrolled in our first three academic cohorts attending 2- and 4- year institutions, were still in college last spring or had graduated. This compares to a 70% three-year persistence rate for 2- and 4- year students nationally.

This is quite extraordinary. The federal government recently announced a six-year graduation rate for all Pell Grant-eligible students seeing a bachelor's degree—49%. Our program's graduation rate will be significantly higher. (I think it is safe to say that 100% of our Dreamer students would be Pell Grant-eligible—if Dreamers were eligible for federal aid of any kind).

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Thank You!

As to academic achievements, they've been impressive. According to the GPA's reported by our Partner Colleges, our Students have a computed average GPA of 3.2 - and this was for students in 2- and 4-year institutions.

OUR PARTNER COLLEGES

Our students are performing brilliantly. But our partner colleges are the other stars of the show at TheDream.US.

When we started in early 2014, we had only a handful of colleges educating our students. Today we have over 70 partners (18 of these are part of the CUNY system, our number one partner overall).

We looked for affordable colleges that had a track record of serving and graduating low-income, first-generation students at or near the amount our scholarship (today, \$33,000 over a college career—about \$8,250 per year at a four-year college).

Many people are angry about the cost of a college degree. We're not—not at our partner colleges. These are the colleges that are doing what Americans want—giving students a good education at a relatively low price. The Dreamers have educated us in all kinds of ways. On the whole, they like their colleges a lot. Institutions like Florida International University (in-state tuition and fees \$6,560 per year); Metropolitan State College in Colorado (\$7,350); New York's Hunter College (\$6,780); and the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley (\$6,850) have gone miles out of their way to help our Dreamer students succeed.

There are people who wonder if college is still a worthwhile investment given the rising cost of tuition. These people should talk to the Dreamers. After often being told - sometimes even by their high-school counselors - that they cannot go to college because they aren't eligible for most aid programs, they only want an opportunity.

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Thank You!

And there are people who scoff at our partner colleges because of their relatively low graduation rates (compared to private colleges that serve an elite population). We can report that the Dreamers find them to be welcoming places with supportive administrators and faculty.

THE PROBLEM: POLITICS

What isn't under the Dreamers' control is the future of the DACA program that is key to their ability to work. With DACA in force, our Dreamers are working while in school and making progress in their careers when they graduate. As many of you know, however, DACA has been abolished by President Trump (he gave Congress six months to write the program into law; neither House passed such a bill). Universities, corporations and advocacy groups are fighting the abolition of DACA in court and have so far won three nationwide injunctions keeping the program in place.

But the court cases are not a permanent solution. As the judges in those cases have said, President Trump has an undisputed right to rescind DACA if he does so according to the law; the challenges have centered on the way he went about rescinding DACA, not his ultimate right to do so. Our students need Congress to pass a law giving them the right to work in the United States. If there's no such law and DACA is abolished, our Dreamer college graduates will be unable to work for a law-abiding US employer; they'll have to accept the kind of off-the-books work that has kept their parents alive.

Polls by Gallup, CBS, ABC and CNN show that an unbelievable 83-87% of American favor action to permit the Dreamers to stay here, to study and to work. There are very few issues that command such a majority. Most members of Congress will tell you that, in principle, they would like to pass legislation to help the Dreamers. But the time never seems to be right.

We hope this fall's election may create a brief moment in a “lame-duck” session when a compromise giving some status to Dreamers is possible (if the President faces a House controlled by Democrats in 2019, his Congressional leaders may persuade him that his last chance to get funding for a wall is the lame-duck session). A simple trade—wall funding for a path to citizenship for Dreamers—might have a chance.

A more-Democratic Congress might or might not help the Dreamers. It would include more legislators publicly on their side. But that will do no good unless those legislators find a way to compromise with President Trump, and some will be in no mood to compromise. We'll stay tuned.

IN CLOSING

TheDream.US set off with modest goals: in 2013, naively expecting that by now Congress would have given Dreamers access to some federal aid, we expected to be out of business by now, after offering some Dreamers (our goal was 4,000) a chance to go to college in the meantime. We'll surpass the 4,000 number. But we'll have to stay in business far longer than we expected.

With Gratitude,
Don Graham

“ *The week before my graduation when I found out I had passed all my classes, I got home and as soon as I saw my parents, we all just embraced and cried together. This wouldn't be true without this scholarship. It's more than money for tuition, it's opportunity, hope, encouragement, belief, bravery, and love. There are no amount of words I can use to thank you. - TheDream.US Scholar and a brand new Computer Scientist/Software Engineer.* ”

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Thank You!