

STORIES OF **FLORIDA** THE DREAM.US SCHOLARS

TheDream.US supports Florida DREAMers to attend one of eight Partner Colleges in the state: Broward College, Florida Atlantic University, Florida International University, Miami Dade College, Palm Beach State College, University of Central Florida, University of South Florida, and Valencia College. **In recent years, TheDream.US has awarded more than 870 scholarships to Florida DREAMers and paid over \$12.5M in awards.**

Many of these Florida TheDream.US Scholars have become leaders on campus and are pursuing meaningful careers. **It is in the state's interest to keep these students studying and succeeding in their home state and to make Florida higher education accessible and affordable for even more DREAMers.** Examples of Florida-based TheDream.US Scholars - past and present - include:

CESIA BULNES, a graduate of Florida International University (FIU) with a degree in Computer Science, now works as a Program Manager at Microsoft: As Cesia stated, "Early in my college journey at Florida International University, I found my passion for computer science when I served as the Director of Mangohacks - a 36-hour hackathon. I graduated with a B.S. in computer science and I am now working at Microsoft as a program manager leading a team of engineers working on the Microsoft Teams product." *Watch an award winning FIU video [HERE](#) about Cesia and the university's support for DREAMers.*

MAURICIO RAMIREZ graduated in May 2020 from the University of Central Florida with a Finance degree. He will soon begin his full-time role at Allstate Investments within their Investments Development Program. He also serves as Founder & CEO of The Pegasus Group (PG), an organization aiming to coach UCF students into high performance careers in financial services and consulting, as well as Chief Investment Officer for PG Capital, its investment research arm. As Mauricio recently stated, "My immigrant experience has taught me that you should not allow difficult circumstances to hold you back or use them as an excuse. Doing so will prevent you from reaching your potential."

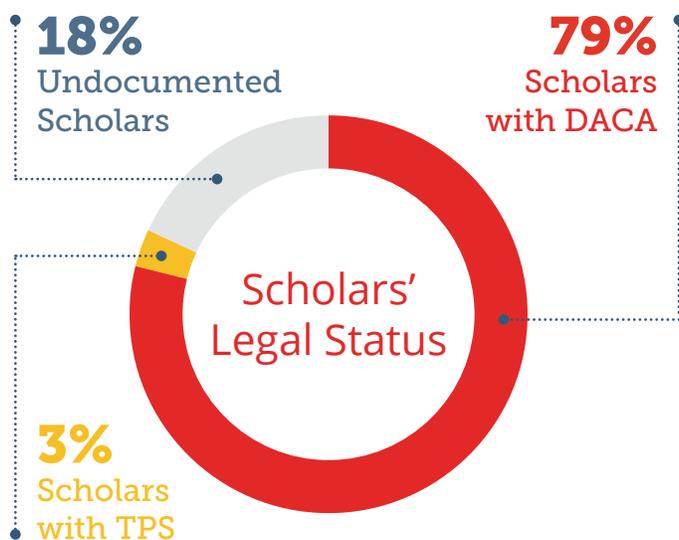
RUBEN MERCADO SANTOS graduated from the University of Central Florida in December 2020 and plans to become a doctor: As *UCF Today* recently wrote in a profile: "With the goal of becoming a physician one day, he knew that he had to find a way to pay for school without creating further financial burdens for his older sister and mother, who were already working hard to provide for his family. So he sought help from a high school advisor

who encouraged him to apply for a scholarship from TheDream.US, the nation's largest college access and success program for DREAMers. Through a partnership with UCF, the organization has provided funding for Mercado Santos' tuition, along with a small stipend for books — and now he's days away from earning his bachelor's degree. 'I attended UCF's Grad Walk a few weeks ago, and when I walked across the stage ... it was a culmination of all the sacrifices my mom and sister have made for me,' the biomedical sciences major says. 'The degree may have my name, but in reality it is awarded to all three of us.'"

IVAN VAZQUEZ, a FIU senior, was recently profiled in a *Miami New Times* story that highlighted those affected by the in-state legislative proposals introduced in 2021. As the piece noted, "Without the out-of-state waiver, Florida International University (FIU) senior and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipient Ivan Vazquez says, he wouldn't be able to afford college. Vazquez came to the U.S. from Mexico at age 13 and attended his first two years of college in Central Florida, where he paid for classes by working as a cook. "Without out-of-state tuition costs, I would never even be able to dream of going to college. It would be so detrimental, I wouldn't be able to afford it," he says. Vazquez pays for schooling at FIU with TheDream.US scholarship, which is meant for financially needy DACA recipients.

TISHA, a Broward College nursing student who has lived in Florida since age four after moving from the Bahamas, writes: "When you're undocumented, applying to colleges and universities is an especially painful process. I sat and stared at my unfinished college applications and cried. They were nearly finished – aside from the citizenship section. When I finally found a college willing to give me a chance, I didn't have money to afford it. Then, I received TheDream.US scholarship, and everything changed. College is finally a possibility. I am a first generation college student. At Broward College, I plan to study nursing. I want to help those that don't have access to the proper healthcare, be passionate about my work, and serve as a role model for my four siblings."

THEDREAM.US IS THE NATION'S LARGEST COLLEGE AND CAREER SUCCESS PROGRAM FOR IMMIGRANT YOUTH



4 years old

Average Age of Scholars' Arrival to the United States

86%

First in family to attend college

\$29,000

Average Household Income