

# Undocumented Students and Allies campaign for scholarship initiative

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Undocumented Students and Allies (USA) is an organization that was co-founded by two IIT students in 2011 with the aim of providing a safe space for undocumented students on campus. The organization strives to support undocumented students academically, to help them with finding employment, and to allow them to feel welcomed on campus.

An interview was conducted with the president of Undocumented Students and Allies, Egle Malinauskaite, and two members of USA, Luis Gomez and Julio Reyes, to provide a better understanding of what it means to be an undocumented student and inform the readers about the scholarship funds that USA is petitioning for.

Undocumented students have no legal status in this country. Some of them do have "deferred" status that allows them to work legally and protect them from deportation. However, without this status, there is no easy path to gaining citizenship. This means that the undocumented students do not have the benefits of citizenship and most cannot even get a green card or residency.

Most of the students who are currently undocumented did not have a choice. Most were brought to this country by their parents at a young age. Malinauskaite, for example, was six years old when she came to America. He parents hid her and her brother in the back of the car and drove here through the Canadian border. She is originally from Lithuania, and the only member of her family with legal status is her youngest brother, who

was born in America in 2012. Reyes was also six years old when he was brought here from Mexico. He traveled with his brother and was separated from his mother, who came by a different route. They came through the Texas border. He has two siblings with legal status who were born in Chicago. Gomez was 12



Photo by Genevieve Hummel

years old when he came to Chicago on a plane with his parents. His parents were educated in Mexico, but due to a crisis, there were no more jobs for educated people, so they came to Chicago. These students, as well as the rest of the undocumented community at IIT, are simply trying to make the best of the situation they are in because most did not chose to be in

this situation, Malinauskaite explained during the interview.

Undocumented Students and Allies is petitioning students to support an optional \$4.50 increase in undergraduate tuition that will go towards a scholarship fund for undocumented students. Undocumented

to work and pay back the money they owe the school. The organization believes that this scholarship initiative aligns with who IIT is as an institution, because the school was founded on philanthropy and promotes diversity and inclusion.

The organization will be hosting a referendum on Wednesday, November 18, where students will be able to ask questions and voice concerns about this scholarship initiative. They will be promoting this petition and gathering signatures until the spring, when they will submit the petition to SGA. In the spring, when students go to vote in the SGA elections, there will be a question on the ballot that asks students if they wish to allow this opt-in tuition increase to happen. The question will read as follows: "Do you approve of an opt-in \$4.50 fee each semester to support undocumented Illinois Tech undergraduate students who demonstrate financial need but do not qualify for federal financial aid (FAFSA)?" If the majority of students voting approve the increase then the scholarship will be approved. USA's goal is to inform as many students about this as possible, to encourage the campus to unite and show that IIT is a progressive campus.

Any student who wishes to learn more about this organization or the scholarship initiative should look for the representative on the bridge or attend the referendum on Wednesday. Students can also contact Egle Malinauskaite, president of USA directly or follow the Facebook page for the scholarship initiative.

students cannot qualify for federal aid or federal loans like citizens can, therefore, many of them struggle to afford college. Even students like Reyes, who is a Presidential Scholar, still come up approximately seven thousand dollars short on tuition. Many students take longer than the regular four or five years to graduate from IIT because they need to take time off

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