



NEW JERSEY

Association of State Colleges and Universities

150 West State Street, Trenton NJ 08608

Phone (609) 989-1100



DACA Update

Op-ed from Mildred Garcia, president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities

The federal government shutdown ended on January 22, 2018, with a short-term, bipartisan Senate deal to extend federal funding through February 8 and a commitment by the Senate Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell (R-KY) to bring an immigration bill regarding DACA to the Senate floor within that same time period. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) President Dr. Mildred Garcia penned the following opinion piece on DACA. She urged lawmakers to deal with DACA – an issue on which most members of Congress and more than 80 percent of the American public – actually agree. February 8, 2018 is almost here and the next government shutdown is looming. Some in Congress are working on a bi-partisan bill. Dr. Garcia's op-ed ([link](#)) presents a compelling argument for going forward.

The propensity to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory has become an unfortunate feature of contemporary American politics. Nowhere is this tendency more apparent than in the political debate about the future of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, known as DACA. This month, however, Congress and President Trump have an opportunity to reverse that pattern – to fix DACA, once and for all, and to move on to other pressing challenges. We urge that they do so.

Nearly **800,000 individuals** across America now have temporary protection from deportation through DACA. Ninety-seven percent of these "Dreamers," as they are aptly known, are **either in school or employed**. One-fifth are enrolled in college. Another third are in high school and considering their options for postsecondary education and training. Five percent of DACA students have already completed their bachelor's degree.

Brought to this country as children, Dreamers are not culpable for their undocumented status. They have grown up and attended school in America as the only home many of them have known. The vast majority have little connection to where their parents came from. Rather than make them continue to live in fear and uncertainty, we have a moral obligation to enable them to continue to pursue the American Dream. That moral obligation happens to coincide with our national self-interest: These are young people who love this country and are hopeful to contribute to it as eagerly as anyone else.

www.njascu.org

*The College of New Jersey
Kean University
Montclair State University*

*New Jersey City University
Ramapo College of New Jersey
Rowan University*

*Stockton University
Thomas Edison State University
William Paterson University*

The debate about DACA drags on despite overwhelming agreement on the substance of the issue. The American public strongly supports a legislative fix. A [Fox News poll](#) in September 2017 found that 83 percent of Americans support some pathway to citizenship for Dreamers. A [Washington Post-ABC News poll](#) found more than four-fifths of adults – 86 percent – support allowing DACA participants to stay in the United States if they had arrived as a child, had completed high school or served in the military and had not committed a serious crime.

This national consensus is also reflected in strong bipartisan support for DACA. Even when President Trump announced the termination of the program this past September, he provided a window for Congress to legislate on the matter and made additional comments in support of favorable congressional action. Almost immediately, various bipartisan groups of lawmakers introduced legislation to do just that. In a recent meeting with congressional leaders, the president signaled his interest in finding a legislative compromise to the DACA conundrum. As recently as this past weekend, the president [said](#) that he is "ready and willing to make a deal" on DACA.

And yet, the obvious solution for DACA – costing no additional money and causing no partisan rift – remains elusive. If our politics can't handle a subject as substantively uncontroversial as DACA, how can it navigate the many challenges actually dividing policymakers? In higher education alone, we face uncertainties around the implementation of the new tax law, a higher education reauthorization, regulatory and administrative actions and a stalemate on the federal budget. In contrast to the disagreement we might expect on those and other issues, most people agree that we can and should solve DACA. Why, then, can't policymakers quickly dispense with the debate, take a vote on DACA and achieve victory?