

Editorial: California Dream Act helps, but is limited

By [the Editorial Board](#)

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The California [Dream Act](#) is spawning fascinating and far-reaching partnerships, as we will witness today at the Mexican Consulate in Sacramento.

About 25,000 California high school graduates a year realize, with a jolt, when they apply to college or for jobs that they are legally different. Born in other countries and brought to the United States as young children by parents who overstayed visas or entered the country illegally, they know no other place as home.

Congress has failed to put these homegrown kids on a path to citizenship. But fortunately, the California Dream Act, which took effect a year ago, provides some hope to these kids by giving them a shot at a college education.

Today, an expected 3,000 students from 24 northeastern California counties, as far away as Shasta, will gather in Natomas for a “Steps to College/Pasos a la Universidad” fair. They will be able to apply for private scholarships and state financial aid. What will make this unusual is that the event will take place at the Mexican Consulate of Sacramento and be co-hosted by a state agency, the California Student Aid Commission.

The Mexican government also has launched a private scholarship drive with a \$35,000 donation matched by contributions from California organizations. Last year, 186 high school students and 70 college students from the 24 counties received scholarships totaling \$150,000.

The irony, of course, is that that if this college program works, these students will stay in California and contribute to this nation’s prosperity.

As the consul general of Mexico, Carlos González Gutiérrez, told The Bee’s editorial board, it is “highly unlikely” that these students would return to Mexico. They have

roots here. Further, California expects to be 1 million short of the college graduates it needs by 2025, so they will be in high demand.

Mexico's hope, according to the consul general, is that over time, they will engage in exchange with Mexico, as immigrants from other countries do with the countries of their ancestors. "We believe the more integrated they are, the more time, resources and disposition they will have to engage as a diaspora with Mexico," he said.

González Gutiérrez mentioned President Barack Obama's trip to Mexico last May, where he announced the launch of the U.S.-Mexico Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation and Research. One of the goals is to increase the number of U.S. students studying in Mexico and Mexican students studying in the United States, as well as faculty and research exchanges.

If these initiatives raise education levels and bring about more economic and cultural exchange, both countries will benefit.

But let's not allow positive visions of exchange to obscure the big issue for Americans. Congress must fix our broken immigration system, including passing a federal DREAM Act. A leaked draft of principles from a House Republican retreat this week shows Republicans may be making progress. It stated, "It is time to provide an opportunity for legal residence and citizenship for those who were brought to this country as children through no fault of their own."

No matter their parents' immigration status, kids who receive college educations with the California Dream Act should be on a path to U.S. citizenship, not consigned after graduation to the shadows and an economic netherworld.