

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Organized 1884

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Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia
270 Washington Street, SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

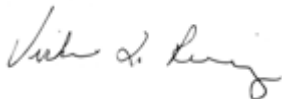
Dear Members of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia,

It has come to the attention of the American Historical Association that the University of Georgia Board of Regents has enacted a policy that denies students who have excelled in Georgia classrooms the opportunity to attend a top tier state university. According to 4.1.6 of the University System of Georgia Board of Regents Policy Manual: "A person who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible for admission to any University System institution which, for the two most recent academic years, did not admit all academically qualified applicants (except for cases in which applicants were rejected for non-academic reasons)." This criterion refers to Georgia's top five public universities. This policy, along with Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, which denies in-state tuition for childhood arrivals who qualify for federal deferred status (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or DACA), effectively creates a new type of educational segregation. Indeed, Georgia is the only state in the nation, which denies both in-state tuition and enrollment in your public research institutions. There are an estimated 19,000 DACA students in Georgia. For many of these young Americans, Georgia is the only home they have ever known.

To qualify for DACA, young people must meet a set of requirements: continuous residence in the United States since July 2007; arrival before their sixteenth birthday; a high school (or equivalent) education; and either an honorable discharge from a branch of the U.S. military or enrollment in school. The state of Georgia has already made substantial investments in its DACA students through its K-12 elementary system, and it makes little sense for the state to squander the dividends of those investments by denying these high achievers access to the next step on the ladder to success. To deny access to academically qualified, competitive students seems counterintuitive to the productive, educated workforce on which our economy and democracy depend.

The American Historical Association is committed to equity and access in education, not only as educators ourselves, but because as historians we understand the price our nation has paid in the past when some of our neighbors were denied equal access to public educational institutions. In bringing our expertise as historians to bear upon this issue in a state where we will hold our annual convention in January 2016, we are concerned that the provisions of clause 4.1.6 in the Regents' Policy Manual create a tiered, segregated university system, one that denies opportunities for some of Georgia's talented high school students, based solely on their immigration status. These hardworking, ambitious young Americans have had no control over that status, just as their African American predecessors – also excluded from sectors of the state university system - had no control over their segregation. They have earned the chance to acquire the knowledge and skills that will enable them to maximize their contributions to their state and their nation.

Sincerely,



Vicki L. Ruiz
President, American Historical Association