

# ***Making a More Inclusive Environment within College Classrooms***



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***What does DACA  
stand for?***

# ***Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals***

***What is DACA?***

DACA is a U.S. immigration policy established in 2012 that allows certain undocumented individuals who were brought to the country as children to:

- **Defer deportation** for a renewable two-year period,
  - **Apply for a work permit, and**
- In many cases, access benefits, such as obtaining a driver's license, **enrolling into certain colleges and universities, and even qualifying for in-state tuition** (depending on the state).



***This presentation is based on the  
following dissertation:***

NAVIGATING THE CHANGES OF SOUTHERN  
HOSPITALITY: A CASE STUDY ON DACA  
STUDENTS PAYING BIG TO ATTEND  
COLLEGES IN THE SOUTH AND THE IMPACT  
ON STUDENTS' FINANCIAL AND  
EMOTIONAL STABILITY

# Introduction of Study

- This phenomenological qualitative case study examined the financial and emotional hardships faced by college students within the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. More specifically, the research focused on DACA students enrolled in higher education institutions within the southeastern region of the United States with the state of Georgia's public university system being the focal point.
- As of current day, **there are three states that block DACA students' enrollment in certain public institutions**, while ten states block DACA students' access to in-state tuition, which hinders students' college experiences with a sense of exclusivity and monetary difficulties (Undocumented Tuition Map, 2023; Rivera, 2023).





***What three states block DACA  
students' enrollment in certain  
public institutions?***

***Georgia***

***South  
Carolina***

***Alabama***





***What ten states block DACA  
students' access to in-state tuition?***

*What ten  
states block  
DACA  
students'  
access to in-  
state tuition?*



# Problem Background

- Higher education access is a critical component for many in the United States of America, yet there are deep challenges for higher education access for DACA recipients in the southeastern region of the country. DACA students are affected with financial and mental burdens, which leaves a long lasting, negative impact for many (Rivera, 2023).
- DACA recipients are almost as likely as American adults to be enrolled in college between the ages of sixteen and thirty-two. DACA students are also less likely to have completed college than American adults, with four percent of DACA recipients completing college and eighteen percent of American adults completing college (Batalova, et al., 2017).



# Problem Statement

- In addition to the implications of DACA students paying high prices to attend higher education institutions, specifically in the state of Georgia and other southeastern states, students are bombarded with other responsibilities to keep their college dreams afloat, resulting in emotional hardships, such as fatigue, burnout, and dejection (Clark-Ibáñez, 2021).
- The lack of commonality in the process among states becomes discrepant and significantly changes the outcomes for DACA students living in different regions of the country (Dickson et al., 2017).

# Purpose of the Study

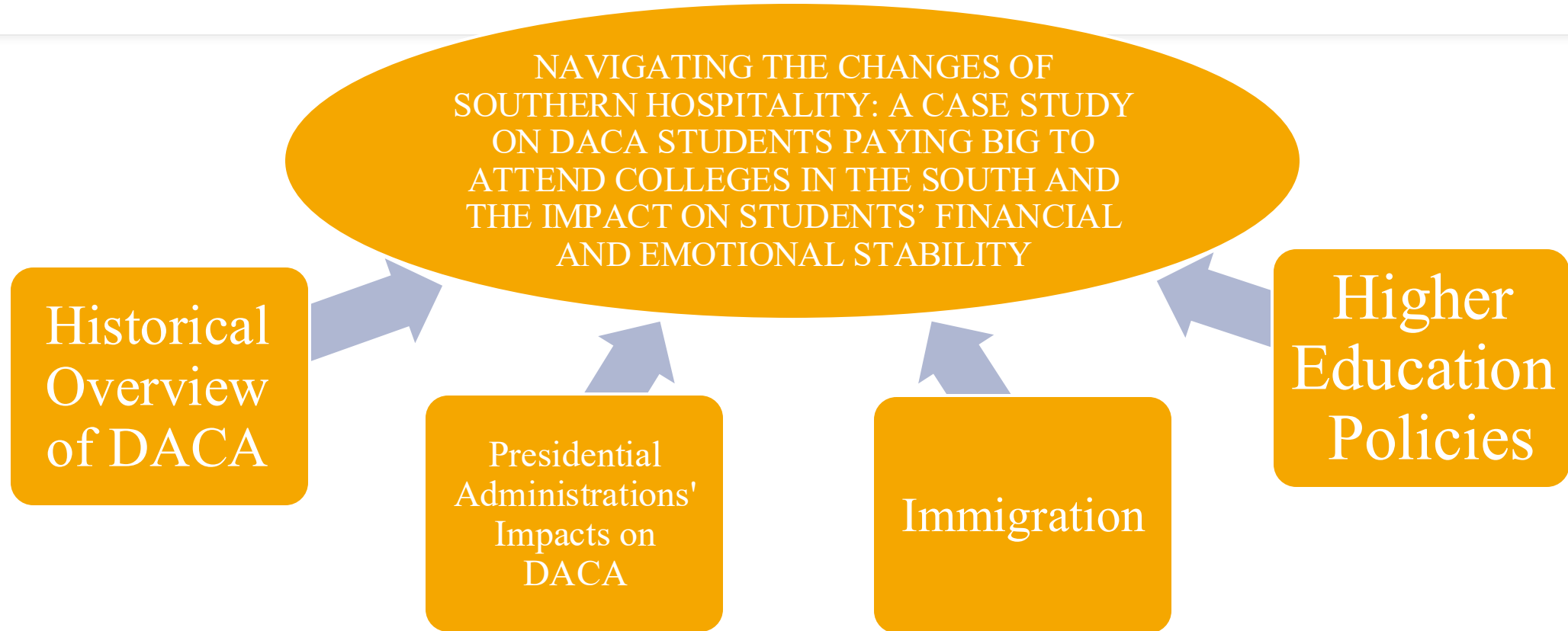
- For this study, the exploration of students' perceptions and experiences with the DACA program and the program's policies, as the policies vary state-by-state, was conducted. This research explored the perceptions of DACA students in the state of Georgia who identify with various racial and ethnic backgrounds. The study examined the direct effect of the current DACA policies in the state of Georgia for DACA students (Cisneros & Russell, 2023).

# Significance of the Study

- The study closely examined the perceptions of students under the DACA program and revealed the financial and emotional hardships of students enrolled in institutions within the University System of Georgia.
- This study is relevant to impact policies regarding DACA students within the University System of Georgia and adds to the body of literature related to examining the marginalized group of students under the DACA program in the southeast region of the United States.



# Literature Review



# Literature Review

## NAVIGATING THE CHANGES OF SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY: A CASE STUDY ON DACA STUDENTS PAYING BIG TO ATTEND COLLEGES IN THE SOUTH AND THE IMPACT ON STUDENTS' FINANCIAL AND EMOTIONAL STABILITY

<u>Historical Overview of DACA</u>	<u>Presidential Administrations' Impacts on DACA</u>	<u>Immigration</u>	<u>Higher Education Policies</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since June 15, 2012, DACA has been an immigration policy utilized to assist and support children of immigrants (Singer &amp; Svajlenka, 2013).</li> <li>• Within the first year of the act's policy enactment, specifically between August 15, 2012 and June 30, 2013, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) agency received 557,412 applications (Singer &amp; Svajlenka, 2013).</li> <li>• In 1982, the Supreme Court case of Plyler v. Doe allowed undocumented students the right to attend public secondary schools. The discussion of the students' support in obtaining associate's degrees, or even bachelor's degrees, were not mentioned at the time of the ruling (Alexander &amp; Alexander, 2012).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political division is a significant factor within the topic of DACA and how the policy has been created, modified and enacted for individuals (Chen, 2017).</li> <li>• At the end of President Obama's first term, the DACA program was implemented and extended to approved applicants (Kerwin and Warren, 2016).</li> <li>• During his first term as president, Trump attempted to rescind DACA, which provided controversy and debates throughout the nation (Johnson, 2018).</li> <li>• Romero (2021) describes the support that Biden provided the DACA policy and other immigration reform tactics with by further examining the differences in recent presidential administrations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 40 million individuals who reside in the United States were born in a different country, and a number of those individuals are DACA-eligible or are DACA-recipients (Budiman, 2020).</li> <li>• Based on survey tools from the American Immigration Council, Georgia has a large-sized community of immigrants compared to other neighboring states, such as Alabama and South Carolina (American Immigration Council, 2023).</li> <li>• In the matter of DACA, the state of Georgia hosts the most DACA recipients in the southeast region, with about 20,000 individuals; Alabama and South Carolina are home to about 4,000 and 5,500 DACA recipients, respectively (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Tools, 2023).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Georgia Senate Bill (S.B.) 492, established on May 14, 2008, requires the state's undocumented students, including DACA recipients, to pay out-of-state tuition (Higher Ed Immigration Portal, 2023).</li> <li>• According to the Higher Ed Immigration Portal (2023), Georgia BOR Policy 4.1.6, passed on October 13, 2010, denounces the opportunity for undocumented students, including DACA recipients, from enrolling in some of the state of Georgia's most prestigious and top-ranking public colleges and universities, including (U.S. News &amp; World Report, 2023): <i>Georgia Institute of Technology</i> <i>Georgia College &amp; State University</i> <i>University of Georgia</i></li> </ul>

# *From the participants...*



- “You know, it's always that uncertainty where it's like, and just feeling like an outsider, because you're like, my friends don't get it, these people at my college don't get it. Where am I? I don't get it. I don't know. And then explaining everything, I feel like I'm to a point where I'm tired. I feel like I've gotten to my breaking point of people wondering. I'm like, yeah, I'm DACA. They're like, what is that? Yeah, here we go again. And I'm like, I have to explain it again—even to people who work in the offices of my college. It's frustrating.”
- “But once I've been accepted, I don't feel like I noticed a difference with anyone specifically. I don't think people know, unless I start talking about it. But, as far as getting in, yeah, it just feels like you're not wanted. Because they make it so difficult. One of the things that I struggled a lot with when I was applying initially to schools and doing my research, and again, granted, this was when DACA was really new, but even so now, I feel like a lot of colleges aren't educated on what exactly DACA is, and you're the one that has to explain it to them. And it almost feels like the schools don't even care to educate themselves for potential students that they could have. And, it's pretty annoying. I constantly have to break it down. I live here and having to go through that back and forth and kind of forcing your way in is basically why I say, whenever I meet a DACA student, I'm like, I know your struggle.”

# *From the participants...*



- “I definitely was like, I won't lie to you, like it was kind of like something I aimed for. I mean, it's just being from down here and I feel really from down here. I did want, you know, to attend UGA. UGA is huge. To me, it was, like, if you look back at it, like, the past, I can't even remember the last governor of Georgia that hasn't gone to UGA. So, you know how they tell you, like, strive, dream, whatever, and then you're, like, oh, I can't get in. It was a huge letdown. It was very depressing.”
- “Yes, I wanted to go to UGA. That was my main dream school that I really wanted to get into. And it was shattering whenever I found out, like, I couldn't. So, yeah, it definitely took a toll on me. And then just, you know, feeling. It was just very, like, heartbreaking, you know, just like knowing that I couldn't go there because I definitely wanted to expand myself a little bit more. Obviously, there are different schools, such as Kennesaw that's close to me, but I did want to go to UGA, and you know, get that college experience that everyone usually talks about that you hear about and just really get to know more, you know. And, also I wish I could study abroad, which is another big thing I wish I could do, but I can't. Just those two things, I feel did take a toll on me.”

# *From the participants...*



- “Yeah, so a lot of it is more so financially because of my financial situations. I only take a certain amount of classes and because they charge me so much, it decreases the amount of classes I can take. So, it kind of sucks sometimes because I see other people, you know, moving forward at a faster pace than I am.”
- “As a DACA recipient, I’ve changed my major so many times because becoming a nurse was just not an option financially at my age and with the jobs that I had. I became a C.N.A. to try to get into the working field as close to a nurse that I could be and to get a little bit more money. And I felt like, okay, I have this, I need to figure out what I really want to invest my money in. And I really wanted to do nursing, but I needed to figure it out and also save money. But yeah, financially it does impact everything that I do. Because again, I am paying for most of it on my own.”
- “It was very heartbreaking seeing like, well, that experience because I'm like, well, even though we're the same, I don't get the same opportunities. I was raised here, too, and they were, too. But, they don't care. As soon as you jump into the, oh, you want to go to college— here's your cost. Paying out-of-state tuition has been about three times more than my friends pay.”<sup>21</sup>

# Research Setting

- The research was conducted within three of the twenty-six institutions of the University System of Georgia, which is in the southeastern region of the United States.
- Participants were allowed to complete the research process in the natural environment in which the phenomenon was taking place—their institution, and participants were granted the opportunity to complete specific categories of the process virtually due to changes in higher educational settings and the influx of online educational environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kumar & Pande, 2021).

# Research Setting (cont.)

- Table 2 represents the student ethnic demographics of six institutions within the USG.
- University #1 and University #2 are the institutions in which participants represented for the study, while University #3 represents the institution that one student transferred from.
- Universities #4, #5, and #6 are representative of the three institutions in which DACA students are ineligible to attend in the state of Georgia (*University of Georgia, Georgia Tech, Georgia College & State University*).

**Table 2**

*Student Demographics of Specified Institutions within the University System of Georgia (2022-2023)*

Ethnicity	University #1 (DACA Student Eligible)	University #2 (DACA Student Eligible)	University #3 (DACA Student Eligible)	University #4 (DACA Student Ineligible)	University #5 (DACA Student Ineligible)	University #6 (DACA Student Ineligible)
Black or African American	25%	42%	4%	6%	8%	3%
Hispanic	15%	14%	35%	7%	8%	6%
Asian	6%	16%	2%	12%	30%	2%
White	46%	18%	55%	68%	38%	83%
Multi-Racial	5%	5%	1%	4%	4%	3%
International	2%	3%	1%	2%	10%	2%
Unknown	1%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Total Undergraduate Enrollment	39,0005	28,927	4,525	30,714	18,415	5,265

*Source: U.S. News and World Report*

# Demographics of Participants

- The sample for the study included six Hispanic DACA students and one White/Hispanic DACA student between the ages of 22 and 30.
- Most participants are undergraduate students at their respective institutions, while two of the participants (#1 and #4) completed their degrees in fall 2023.
- The following shows commonalities between all participants:
  - Remained as DACA recipients and USG students for at least four years
  - Remained under the DACA program and the USG during their tenure as college students
  - Employed at full-time, part-time, or multiple jobs while pursuing their degrees

**Table 1**

*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Age of Arrival to the United States	Years of Enrollment in USG	Pursued Degree
#1	28	Male	Hispanic	3 years	10 years	Bachelor
#2	23	Male	Hispanic	7 years	5 years	Bachelor
#3	22	Female	Hispanic	3 months	4 years	Bachelor
#4	26	Female	Hispanic	3 years	8 years	Bachelor
#5	30	Female	Hispanic	9 years	12 years	Bachelor
#6	28	Male	Hispanic	3 years	10 years	Associate
#7	22	Female	White/Hispanic	3 years	4 years	Bachelor



# Implications

- The findings of this study are relevant to inform the higher educational community on the policies enacted by the USG, and how these policies directly affect DACA students, who attend college in the USG.
- The findings of the study are also relevant to inform society on the long-lasting, negative impacts that the restrictive policies of DACA in the state of Georgia may bring to those specific individuals under the DACA program.
- As noted in the literature, DACA students face the most restrictive policies in the southeast region of the nation when in pursuit of post-secondary education.
- The findings of this study may inspire change agents and policymakers to explore the policies of DACA within higher education in the southeast region and consider making modifications to the rulings of DACA in the southeast region, allowing the policy to showcase more similarities in comparison to other regions of the nation.

*Now, with this information...*

*How can you make a more inclusive environment within your college classroom?*

- ✓ Learn more about DACA and immigrant student experiences, and inform your fellow colleagues.
- ✓ Don't assume students are citizens or have equal access to resources.
- ✓ Use inclusive and respectful language in class.
- ✓ Be aware of scholarships, financial aid options, and resources for undocumented students that you can share.
- ✓ Be flexible and empathetic with academic expectations. Acknowledge the added stressors DACA students may face, such as work obligations, legal uncertainty, and/or family separation.
- ✓ Show support!!!

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***Thank you so  
much!  
Any questions?***