



# National Campaign Program Project Proposal

Participating School: University of Chicago

Ambassador: Yangyang Cheng (*PhD, Physics'2015*)

## **Project Topic:**

Immigration Reform and Its Impact on Undocumented College Students

## **Project Overview:**

Immigration reform is inarguably one of the most important and controversial topics at the forefront of our national conversation. It has great bearings both on the university campus, where “undocumented students” is not just a vague concept in the news, but our classmates and friends, however unaware we may be of their status and struggles, and in the greater IL region with its large immigrant population and multiple established organizations devoted to the issues of immigration policy and immigrant rights. One of our ambassadors, Yangyang Cheng, is an immigrant from China herself, and this topic is near and dear to her heart. We sincerely hope that through this project, we can further understanding of the issue within the campus community, and add a small but firm voice to the national movement towards comprehensive immigration reform.

## **Events/Initiatives:**

### 1) *Background research and partnership building (Fall 2014)*

To better understand the topic and form regional alliances, we will study existing national and regional policies, legislative proposals and academic studies on immigration with a focus on undocumented college students. We will also reach out to individuals and organizations in the field to learn more about the issue and their work, and form partnerships for this project.

### 2) *Campus Engagement (Winter/Spring 2015)*

To raise awareness and further understanding of the issue, we will launch a *campus-wide interactive campaign*, by conducting interviews and surveys seeking both international students to tell their own immigration story (aiming to include students from diverse parts of the world and backgrounds), and domestic students to talk about their understanding of immigration and undocumented students, followed by hosting information briefings and/or

poster sessions on current status of immigration in this country, existing policy and legislative proposals.

3) *Global Perspective (Winter 2015)*

Immigration is not just an American issue, but a global issue, with the impact of US immigration policy felt on its neighboring countries, and the shift in public sentiments reflected in the outcome of the 2014 European elections. We will organize event(s) through the International Policy Program at the IOP to discuss the impact of US immigration policy on neighboring countries, immigration situation and policy in other countries, and other related topics from a global perspective.

4) *Legislative Push (Spring 2015)*

The fundamental problems with our broken immigration system cannot be solved without legislative action. We will communicate with our representatives to push for passage of comprehensive immigration reform in Congress, by visiting their offices and speaking to their staff, and/or collecting signatures (from our campus outreach events and other potential partners) and writing to said members of Congress. We also plan to attend the fifth annual Illinois Immigration Integration Summit in spring 2015 (Yangyang attended the fourth annual summit in 2014).

**(Major) Measurable Goals:**

Through this project, we hope to

- 1) Establish connections and long-term partnerships with individuals and organizations in the area of immigration reform both on campus and in the Greater Chicago region, and raise awareness of the issue of undocumented students and the need for comprehensive immigration reform on campus
- 2) Help clear misunderstanding and foster communication between immigrants and natural-born citizens, as well as among different fractions of the immigrant community on campus
- 3) Gather support from the student community and potential further regional support for passage of immigration reform, and lobby elected representatives on this issue in the form of office visits, joint letter and/or public testimony
- 4) Keep update of this project on IOP's website/blog/IOPTV, with conclusion write-up in one of the on-campus student publications.
- 5) More ambitious hopes include possible public speaking opportunities to advocate for immigration reform, and conducting a workshop at next year's IL Immigration Integration Summit on the issue of undocumented college students.

## **How will you collaborate with consortium schools?**

The issue of immigration is not a Chicago issue, and we will be more than happy to collaborate with any other schools in the Program: schools in different states may experience the issue of immigration quite differently, which would also add valuable perspective to the topic. Regardless of geographical locations, by communicating through email/video chat, we can share the findings of our research & resources, brainstorm methods of campus engagement/outreach, and write guest posts for each other school's student publications on this topic.

Representatives from other schools can be invited to attend next year's IL Immigration Integration Summit.

If we have enough schools together on this topic, we can DRAFT A JOINT LETTER TO CONGRESS/THE WHITE HOUSE to push for further legislative/executive action on the issues of undocumented college students and immigration reform in general.