

DREAMers face immigration nightmares

By Payton Romans and Ximena Alaniz

None of these three DREAMers at Perry remember the place of their birth, but all of them know the words to the Pledge of Allegiance.

DREAMers — young immigrants who moved to the United States because their parents wanted a better life for their families — hope for a higher education and living the American dream without fear of being deported to a country they never called home.

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Junior Arturo Alcauter

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The law — called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA) — provides deportation protection, work permits and driver's licenses to the children of undocumented workers. To be eligible, the youth must have entered the country before their 16th birthday, not committed any serious crimes and be in school, college or the military. After every two years, DREAMers must apply for renewal.

But the DACA program under the Trump administration faces scrutiny and doubt. Congress is seeking alternative legislation that will protect the DREAMers but create stricter guidelines. President Donald Trump has said he supports the program but faces opposition to it from some in his administration. Several conservative state attorney generals also are trying to dismantle the program on legal grounds.

Junior Arturo Alcauter was less than a year old when he and his family moved to America. They immigrated from Michoacán, Mexico for his father's new job in the U.S. While his mother was pregnant with Arturo, she remained

in Mexico. Alcauter's father, meanwhile, was already working in a repair garage to earn money to afford bringing over his wife and child. Once he had enough saved, he brought both his wife and his newborn son across the border to the United States, where they have lived ever since.

For 15 years, Alcauter has absorbed American culture, learning English and Spanish, which his family speaks at home. After graduating from Perry, he hopes to attend Indiana University and become an immigration lawyer.

He's disappointed that his dreams to fight for the rights of immigrants someday might end because his own strong ties to America would be cut, and he'd be forced back to his birthplace, somewhere that he doesn't know.

"It's a big generalization," Alcauter says in answer to Trump's mostly false declarations on the campaign trail about many Mexican immigrants bringing drugs and committing rape. "He sees what one immigrant does and thinks that's what we all do. He doesn't see that we work hard and that we came here for a better life."

At just a few weeks old, Maria Sanchez moved to the United States with her parents. After Maria was born

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in Puebla, Mexico, she and her parents moved to the United States within a few weeks, searching for a new beginning. Puebla is a beautiful, historic state in Mexico, but traditionally has had a high poverty rate. It has been a stage for fuel thieves in 2017, attracting drug cartels seeking new revenue streams. The murder rate has skyrocketed.

"It was very difficult for my parents to get a start when we moved here. They had to find a way to make a life for themselves and for us in a new country where they didn't even speak the language," Sanchez said.

Once she became old enough to apply for DACA status, her family jumped at the opportunity to enroll her, she said. Recently, the Perry junior has been using her status to apply for jobs



Junior Maria Sanchez

and get her driver's permit. She planned on using her DACA credentials for college applications in the future; but due to the possible repeal, Sanchez is not sure if she will be able to continue her education further than high school level.

"I've always wanted to work as a dental assistant," she said. "It's really sad now that I'm not even sure if I will be able to apply to any colleges or work anywhere in six months."

Like Sanchez, many young DACA status students no longer know if they will be able to pursue preferred career choices after they graduate high school.

Daniela Alaniz, a PM alumna, and sister to Ximena Alaniz, who co-wrote this article, was brought to this country when she was 4 years old, from San Luis Potosi, Mexico. (Ximena was born in the United States so she is a citizen.) Daniela Alaniz has always been a good student, now getting all A's and B's in college. Her mother enrolled her oldest daughter in summer programs to keep her sharp when school was not in session, but those summer programs ended before Ximena could attend. But the sisters agree that their parents sought out academic opportunities for them and urged them to be independent and go on to higher education.

Like other students in DACA, Alaniz had to fill out a series of paperwork, hire a personal lawyer and pay a \$500 fee to join the program. The process took more than six months.

Once a DACA student, Alaniz was awarded a full scholarship to Marian University, where she is now a junior majoring in biology and chemistry with a concentration in pre medicine.

She researches independently, guided by her professors, examining how environmental factors affect cancer growth. Alaniz also studied synthesis

and application of graphene, a conductor that scientists have discovered has promise in appliance, computer and solar cell production. If DACA is eliminated, Alaniz will not be able to afford college without private scholarships.

On a more practical level, as a DACA, Alaniz works legally and is the only one in her family with a driver's

license. She works three jobs to pay for textbooks and car insurance.

"I'm not going to give up; that's not my mindset," she said. "I will continue to go on with my career no matter what happens, and I will continue to search for opportunities to reach my goal, which is ultimately to become a doctor."



Junior Gretel Calderon stands in the back right with her family at their home (Photos by Alexis Lee).

Will Trump renege college, job benefits?



Junior Gretel Calderon stands for the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Act (DACA) was created by the Obama administration. The act allowed eligibility to illegal immigrants to acquire 'deferred action', meaning that they would have a renewable two-year period of approval for a work permit and withstanding against deportation.

According to the US Citizenship and Immigration Service, over 787,000 immigrants were enrolled in the DACA program as of March, 2017. Ten thousand live in Indiana.

Over five years later, now under different administration, current president Donald Trump has announced his plan to repeal DACA. Attorney General Jeff Sessions held a gathering on Sept. 5, making the announcement. In his speech, he said, "The nation must set and enforce a limit on how many immigrants we admit each year, and that means all cannot be accepted."

According to Sessions' speech on September 5th, "Failure to enforce the laws in the past has put our nation at risk of crime, violence and even terrorism."

He says that no new people will be administered into the program and that participants will start to lose their work permits and protection against deportation as of March 6, 2018, a rough six months away.

This announcement has created an uproar among Dreamers, the name given to the immigrants involved in DACA, coined by the DREAM act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) of 2001.

DACA is a program directed towards children, and according to a recent survey conducted by Tom Wong of the Center for American Progress, respondents had come over to America

at an average age of six and a half years old. Because of the young age of the people affected, an argument raised to defend DACA is that the children had no say or responsibility in the matter.

"They had no choice in coming over and shouldn't have to be punished because of what their parents decided," said junior **Brenna Weaver**.

An argument that's being used is that these kids didn't have any say in coming over, so you can't just ship them off somewhere."

-Tom LoBianco



Junior Gretel Calderon

In an interview with Tom LoBianco, a CNN reporter and analyst for the White House, LoBianco describes this issue as, "The latest step in the ongoing immigration battle between the left and the right."

LoBianco says that the political side of the argument is fascinating because there is a lot of sympathy for youth.

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With a number of protests breaking out, one of the most notable was a march of Dreamers and DACA support-

ers near Trump Towers in New York City, with some protesters sitting in the middle of the busy street as an act of political disobedience. A number of them were taken into custody and later arrested.

"We're constantly helping the US economically."

-Gretel Calderon

Junior **Gretel Calderon**, who is also a DREAMer and came over when she was 3, says that the way Trump paints immigrants sound like they are free loaders who do nothing for the economy, but that is wrong. "We're constantly helping the U.S. economically, especially with all the money we pay to register for DACA."

The Center of American Progress, a liberal research organization, estimates that the nation will lose over \$430 billion in the span of a decade if Trump repeals DACA and doesn't replace it.

"So many of these immigrants are already built into the fabric of the American economy, and they're thriving," says LoBianco. "It's not like we're paying for people on the street to come over to this country to continue and be people on the street."

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Requirements for DREAMers

- Moved to the United States before 2007
- Under age 31 in June 2012
- Clean criminal record
- Enrolled in school or have a high school diploma or the equivalent



Junior Brenna Weaver