

NEWS | STUDENT LIFE

Trump's decision to end DACA confirms undocumented students' fears



JAIME DANIES / SENIOR STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

In response to student demonstrations following Trump's election last November, Columbia announced protections for undocumented students.

BY [AARON HOLMES](#) | SEPTEMBER 6, 2017, 12:16 PM

Undocumented students' ability to remain at Columbia through the current academic year was thrown into question Tuesday when President Donald Trump announced his decision to end an Obama-era administrative program protecting young undocumented immigrants from deportation.

Reversing the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program was one of Trump's campaign promises, but the status of the program was uncertain until this week. According to the announcement, the

program, which provides legal residence and work status to approximately 800,000 young immigrants, will begin phasing out in March 2018.

But following protests across the United States and condemnations from Democrats and Republicans alike, Trump muddled his announcement in a tweet on Tuesday evening, saying that he would revisit the issue if Congress did not “legalize DACA” in six months, leaving the future of undocumented immigrants uncertain.

“I have my authorization for another year, but what’s going to happen after that? Am I going to be able to work, or am I going to have to go under the table?” Miguel Tapia-Colin, CC ’19, said regarding his undocumented status. Tapia-Colin asked to be named in this article, rather than cited anonymously. “I’m just hopeful that I’ll be able to stay at Columbia for the rest of my time to get my degree.”

In response to student demonstrations following Trump’s election last November, Columbia announced that it would not disclose undocumented students’ information to immigration officials or let those officials onto campus without a warrant. The University will also provide pro bono legal services and mental health support groups for undocumented students.

Executive Vice President for University Life Suzanne Goldberg reiterated those promises in an email to the Columbia community Tuesday afternoon.

“Our policies and plans aim to ensure that students who had DACA coverage are able to proceed unimpeded with their studies,” Goldberg wrote. “Columbia’s dedication to inclusion and diversity, including of undocumented students, is and will remain unwavering.”

Barnard College President Sian Beilock also decried Trump’s DACA decision in an email sent to students on Tuesday.

“Changes in national policy that adversely affect us—be it ending protections for undocumented students, degrading the rights of our transgender community, or cutting federal student aid and support for research—are assaults on our mission and must be challenged,” she wrote.

Tapia-Colin said that he appreciates the measures Columbia has vowed to take to protect undocumented students, but pointed out that everyone who registered for DACA protections already turned over extensive personal information to the federal government.

He added that he’s hopeful Congress will pass legislation protecting undocumented youth before DACA is phased out. In the meantime, he called on members of the Columbia community to advocate on behalf of their undocumented classmates.

“Making sure that everyone is following up with their senators and having those allies backing us up is really important,” Tapia-Colin said. “Our professors, our teachers, our classmates, our staff, we really need them as allies.”