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### **In-State Tuition Fails to Draw Illegal Immigrants to College, Study Finds**

*By Andrea Fuller*

State laws that allow illegal immigrants to pay lower in-state tuition have not led to higher college-enrollment rates in that group, according to a [study](#) published last week by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Ten states have passed laws allowing such students who live in the state and meet other criteria to pay in-state tuition at public colleges. Tuition for state residents is often half as much as for out-of-state students. The first states to pass such laws were Texas and California in 2001.

But laws allowing those students to pay in-state tuition have not translated into a statistically significant rise in probability for illegal immigrants to enroll in college, the researchers found.

Aimee Chin, an author of the study and associate professor of economics at the University of Houston, said there may be several reasons for that finding. Because they are ineligible for federal aid, she said, illegal immigrants may struggle to afford even reduced tuition. Earning a college degree also may not significantly improve their job prospects, Ms. Chin added, because of restrictions on employers' abilities to hire workers without proper documents.

### Positive Effects for One Group

The study found that the state-tuition laws had had a positive effect on college attendance for one group of illegal immigrants: Mexican men ages 22 to 24. Ms. Chin said that women, in general, already have higher college-going rates, so men may be more responsive to financial incentives to enroll. And older students have had more time to work and save money for their education than younger students.

The study's authors say state laws allowing illegal immigrants to pay in-state tuition may have a greater effect on college enrollment over time, with more students potentially learning about the laws and becoming ready for college. The study used data on enrollment available through 2005.

If Congress passes an immigration bill known as the Dream Act, which would give illegal immigrants who are college students a clear path to citizenship, then the benefits of a college education would be much greater for those students, Ms. Chin said.

"If the Dream Act were to pass," she said, "then we're in a different policy regime, and there could be a tremendously larger response to these laws."

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