

# Undocumented Students of America (USA)

## // Vision

To restore dignified treatment and equal opportunity to students criminalized by immigration law.

## // Mission

Undocumented Students of America (USA) at Emory is an organization of undocumented students working to promote systems of outreach, advocacy, and support for undocumented students at Emory and beyond.

## // Values

As an organization, we are informed by the following values, and we commit to abide by them as we engage in our mission:

- Equal opportunity
- Education
- Prudence
- Citizenship
- Empowerment
- Thoughtfulness
- Diplomacy
- Empathy
- Resilience
- Human freedom and dignity
- Respect
- Community
- Growth
- Responsibility
- Wisdom
- Resilience
- Optimism
- Determination

## // Who We Are

It began with a knock. We undocumented students have been knocking on the doors of institutions of higher learning for many, many years. Emory was among the first to answer. In fall 2015, the school opened its doors to qualified undocumented students with DACA status, and their acceptance came with an offer of financial aid to meet full demonstrated need.

DACA students arrived on campus that semester, and after three months of thinking they were alone in their particular struggle, three of them were able to meet and disclose their citizenship status to each other. These three immediately recognized the empowering value of coming together in a community, of forging friendships rooted not so much in a common struggle but rather in the response of resilience and hope to that struggle.

With the help of two campus professionals, Lenet Rivas and Dr. Christine Ristaino, they decided to found an organization comprised of Emory undocumented students so that they could provide guidance to incoming Emory undocumented students, a safe space for them to share their stories, and a voice through which they could fearlessly express their spirit.

In fall 2017, Emory's doors further opened to admit all undocumented students regardless of DACA status. In its vanguard momentum, the university legitimized and acted upon the calls of undocumented students—an effort that ameliorated many anxieties and worries of those same students.

Today, we at Emory USA have established a direct line of communication with Emory students, faculty, and administrators. The identities of our members are completely confidential, and members are encouraged to involve themselves in as little or as much of the organization as they see fit.

Some are actively engaged in meetings with the university's working group on the interests of Emory undergraduate and graduate undocumented students. Others are involved in political advocacy in the greater Atlanta area. Still others enjoy simply coming together for dinner and a bit of good conversation. In short, we are here to work alongside those in the Emory community to support each other in whatever way we decide is best for us.

## // **Contact Information**

If you are an undocumented student or an ally, we would delight in knowing you and including you in our activities. For all inquiries, please feel free to contact **USA at Emory** at [usaatemory@emory.edu](mailto:usaatemory@emory.edu) or Dr. Ristaino, or Dania Quezada.

**Christine Ristaino**, PhD in Italian Literature  
Faculty Advisor of USA at Emory  
Senior Lecturer and Teacher Trainer, Italian Studies Program  
[cristai@emory.edu](mailto:cristai@emory.edu)  
404.727.6437

**Dania Quezada**, Class of 2019  
Emory College of Arts and Sciences  
Student Intern at Emory USA  
[dquezad@emory.edu](mailto:dquezad@emory.edu)