

A More Balanced Playing Field at San Jose State University

By Cinthia Rodriguez - El Observador

Over 30 students showed up to support the AB 540 resolution that passed at San Jose State University on March, 24, 2010.

The AB 540 undocumented students at San Jose State University have a reason to celebrate during Spring break. With the passage of an amendment on Wednesday, March 24, 2010, the students will be able to apply for campus scholarships and explore other resources that accommodate their needs.

Collective Voices for Undocumented Students, a grassroots student movement, presented the resolution to the Associated Students (AS) Board of Directors. The resolution, gives AB 540 students the opportunity to apply for much needed scholarships and further expansion of resources on school grounds. "As an AB 540 student, this is great success, not only for me but for all the AB 540 students," said Karla Flores, a junior communication and Spanish major.

California educators and students refer to AB 540 after the bill number that allows certain nonresident students to receive an exemption from non-resident tuition. AB 540 was enacted in Oct. 2001; states that students who attended a high school in California for a minimum of three years and graduated or received the California State GED are eligible.

"The AB 540 students are not an invisible group on campus and that's how they've been treated all the time, so by passing this resolution we are acknowledging their existence within this university," said Victor Guendulain, a senior behavioral science and anthropology senior. "Hopefully whatever resources created is beneficial."

Over 30 students meet at the Student Union where AS meets to discuss business in support of the resolution, awaiting results as if a professor was announcing a cancellation of an exam. Some students also shared personal testimonies before the student body. After the testimonials, Lucila Ortiz, Director of Internal Affairs for AS, presented the resolution to the Board, briefly explained it and the complete resolution was read out loud. The amendment passed with no opposition from the Board.

"I think that it opens a lot of doors to future generations, regardless of the status, so I'm very happy about it," said Latu Tapaatoutai, a senior history major.

The majority of AB 540 students depend heavily on scholarships and grants, allowing them to pursue higher education. Now imagine the impact of the statewide budget cuts has on AB 540 students. The passage of the amendment couldn't come at a better time. It can alleviate some of the anxiety students face when dealing with tuition and other fees. "We're not done yet, we still have a lot of work," said Roberto Garcia, a senior sociology major.

The push for equal treatment for all students regardless of status is crucial in preparing the next leaders. Access to resources like scholarships levels out the playing field and benefits the community in the long run.