

Forum explores battle for in-state tuition for immigrant students

Pittsburg State University students, faculty and community leaders will gather at PSU at 2 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 8, to participate in a forum on the ongoing battle over in-state tuition for immigrant students in Kansas and other federal issues that affect young immigrants. The forum, which is part of the nationwide DREAM in Motion student tour, will take place in the Crimson and Gold Ballroom of the Overman Student Center on the PSU campus.

Cindy Perez, PSU freshman and president of the Hispanics of Today (HOT) organization at PSU, said the discussion will include the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which provides a path to permanent residency for immigrant students in the U.S. at least five years who came to this country at age 15 or younger, provided that they earn a two- or four-year college degree or serve active duty in the U.S. military.

Melinda Lewis, the director of policy advocacy and research at El Centro, Inc., in Kansas City, Kan., will participate in the forum. Lewis is a member of the national United We Dream steering committee.

“Pittsburg values education and diversity,” Lewis said, “so it is the perfect place to have a dialogue about the kinds of public policies that support both.”

At the forum, organizers will show a documentary film, “Instate,” by Lawrence filmmaker Ranjit Arab. The film chronicles the passage of HB2145 in 2004 and the subsequent court challenge by the Federation for American Immigration Reform. HB2145 allows any Kansas high school graduate to attend a state college or university at in-state tuition rates if he or she has attended school in the state for at least three years. The film attempts to explore the issue from many perspectives and is designed to help viewers understand immigrant students’ plight and to spark dialogue about the appropriate response.

“We want to help PSU and the community understand the challenges immigrant students face and to encourage people to get involved in the ongoing efforts to promote higher education for all Kansans,” Perez said.

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