



## Tucson ‘DREAMer,’ community leaders join others across state in call for immigration reform

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**JESSICA GARCIA**

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Jessica Garcia, like many young adults and youth in southern Arizona, knows firsthand the challenges faced by immigrants when it comes to higher education.

Garcia, who has lived in Tucson for nine years and is enrolled at Pima Community College, aspires to further her education at the University of Arizona but would have to pay a higher tuition as an out-of-state resident. Already, she said she has had to decline an internship to the UA’s Eller College of Management.

The reason? She is an undocumented immigrant who was born in Chihuahua, Mexico and brought to the United States as a child with her family.

“I hope for some relief from fear of deportation,” Garcia said Nov. 21 at Arizona Speaks, a gathering of community leaders from all political and career backgrounds in Tucson with a call to Congress and President Barack Obama to act now on immigration reform. “I want to

keep my family together, study business and continue to be a part of this community.” Garcia is a “DREAMer,” one of about 1.8 million immigrants who would benefit from the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. While not granting a path to legalization and citizenship, DACA provides an opportunity for a segment of the undocumented immigrant population to remain in the country without fear of deportation, allows them to apply for work permits and increases their opportunities for economic and social incorporation, according to the Immigration Policy Center of the American Immigration Council in Washington, D.C.

More than 175 people attended the Arizona Speaks assembly in Tucson, held simultaneously with similar gatherings in Phoenix, Yuma and Sedona.

“We call on our Arizona Congressional delegation to act now on immigration reform,” said Bishop Gerald Kicanas. “It is an economic imperative and a civil societal imperative.”

The Rev. Grady Scott, pastor of Grace Temple Baptist Church in Tucson, spoke about a shared sense with immigrants of feeling uncomfortable among others as an African-American man.

“We can’t allow this issue to die or divide us,” Scott said. “If we work together as people of all ethnicities and backgrounds, we can do this.”

Community leaders included Msgr. Raul Trevizo, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Tucson; several diocesan priests; Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild; Tucson Police Chief Roberto Villaseñor; Dr. H.T. Sanchez, superintendent of the Tucson Unified School District; Dr. Amy Bieter, president and chief executive officer of Carondelet St. Mary’s Hospital in Tucson and Jim Click of the Click Automotive Team.

Many of those in attendance signed their names to a letter urging the congressional leadership to move forward with immigration reform.