The topic of immigration has been a controversial subject in the United States since its founding. It has become especially salient in recent years, especially during the latest presidential election as candidates from all parties provided numerous proposals to address the ever-growing issue.

One key aspect that must be highlighted is the immigration of undocumented, unaccompanied children. This group of migrants are especially vulnerable, calling for policies that address the large number of children fleeing to the U.S. The latest statistics released by U.S. Customs and Border Protection show that 59,692 unaccompanied minors and teenagers were detained between October 2015 and September 2016. This represents a 49% increase compared to the previous year.

For these youths, the primary motivation for immigration is to escape violence, as well as to overcome poverty and reunify families. According to a 2014 analysis, there is a positive relationship between violence and the flow of children: “meaning that higher rates of homicide in countries such as Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala are related to greater numbers of children feeling to the United States.”

● “Unaccompanied alien child” (UAC) is a technical term defined by law as a child who have no lawful immigration status in the U.S., has not attained 18 years of age, and has no parent or legal guardian in the U.S. Due to their vulnerability, these young migrants receive certain protections under U.S. law.

This issue guide offers a range of four potential approaches for addressing the immigration of unaccompanied minors in the U.S. Each approach offers unique policy options, many of which derive from previous legislations in the U.S. Our goal is to avoid the technical side of legal debates and policy prescriptions, instead providing unbiased information to prompt an accessible deliberation based on common values.
Approach Summaries:

- **Approach One**: Immediately deport all unaccompanied alien minors.
- **Approach Two**: Maintain strict border control, deport unaccompanied alien minors, and provide foreign aid to the countries they emigrate from. By providing foreign aid, this approach attempts to dissuade undocumented child migrants from crossing borders.
- **Approach Three**: Includes the provision of foreign aid, while granting legal citizenship for undocumented minors considering they meet strict requirements. Approach Three would give unaccompanied minors a path towards citizenship with certain stipulations.
- **Approach Four**: Grants complete citizenship to all unaccompanied alien children and provides foreign aid. This approach provides asylum to all unaccompanied youth migrants and provides foreign assistance to their home countries.

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**The Weingartner Initiative on Deliberative Democracy**

This issue was prepared by the Weingartner Global Policy Fellows, under the leadership of Professor Joel Schwartz. The 2017 fellows are: Gowri Buddiga, Clare DaBaldo, Connie Lee, Caroline Nutter, Alfred Ouyang, Carolina Panzardi, Kristina Posner, and Jade Song.

The purpose of this initiative is to facilitate nonpartisan deliberations to find common ground between citizens of the world.

A special thanks to Werner and Mary Anne Weingartner for making this fellowship possible.

For more information on the Weingartner Global Initiative, please visit www.wm.edu/charlescenter
Approach One: Immediately and Quickly Deport All Undocumented Alien Children and Increase Border Control

There are several reasons why U.S. immigration authorities would send an undocumented immigrant back to his or her country of origin: the immigrant entered and resides in the U.S. illegally, the immigrant overstayed his or her visa, the immigrant fails to obey the terms of his or her visa, etc. According to this approach, these immigrants, regardless of age, would be identified then immediately deported. Undocumented, unaccompanied minors from Canada or Mexico would be returned in expedited removal proceedings while undocumented minors from other countries that are more difficult to access are transferred to the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement to await a decision about when and how they would be deported. In the end, the goal of this policy approach is to identify and deport unaccompanied, undocumented minor while simultaneously strengthening U.S. borders on all sides.

In order to apprehend and deport the thousands of unaccompanied, undocumented children already in the country, the U.S. government would need to implement strict enforcements at both state and federal levels. U.S. immigration agencies would be responsible for this enforcement.

Immediate identification and deportation can be facilitated by:

- Expanding both money and manpower for immigration agencies, like ICE
- Hiring and training new enforcement agents and attorneys to process existing and incoming cases
- Funding expenses such as detention beds, airplane flights, and chartered buses as well as caregivers and social workers that are meant to specifically aid minors
- Fortifying borders by closely monitoring ports and building walls

Specific ways to enforce border control may include:

- Securing ports of entry by requiring extensive and thorough checks on all foreign goods that enter
- Coordinating U.S. law enforcement agencies with law enforcement agencies of surrounding countries; increasing border zones by 100 miles
- Creating agreements between the U.S. and other countries that permit customs agents to inspect cargo in each other’s country

There are several drawbacks to utilizing immediate deportation as a solution for consistent flows of undocumented, unaccompanied minors into the United States. The most prevalent issue is cost. Short-term and long-term costs will be
incredibly high with this policy requiring the hiring and extensive training of several new employees to care for a vulnerable population. Also, border technologies and resources experience diminishing utility over time as they require frequent replacements, updates, and repairs over the years.

Even with training employees, there is still a possibility that undocumented, unaccompanied minors would be treated unfairly during this process because of a lack of protection. Inhumane practices are not new in the process of deportation but they are difficult to combat. There is also the question of whether this solution can solve the underlying problems of the immigration of unaccompanied minors.
Approach Two:
Increase Border Control and Provide Foreign Aid

Understanding that undocumented children are fleeing vulnerable and conflict-ridden area is critical to this policy approach. In addition, it is important to note that dissuading child migrants from crossing into our country forces them to look for other, less protected routes. For children facing desert heats and other severe elements, this journey can be fatal. This approach focuses on addressing these issues by maintaining the tightness of border control and continuing to carry out deportations of undocumented, unaccompanied children, but increasing foreign aid to those countries where most undocumented children are coming from.

The first component of this approach focuses on the deportation of undocumented minors in the U.S., a step highlighted in Approach One. Like Approach One, Approach Two advocates for utilizing methods and dedicating funds to sending undocumented minors back to their home countries. In addition, this approach emphasizes the need for the United States to invest in aiding those countries where most undocumented children come from to tackle the source of the problem.

The question at hand, however, is whether the reforms being contemplated would do enough. Something like “creating a North American Investment Fund in which money from Canada and the United States would help Mexico reverse its growing development gap with its northern neighbors.”

In 2005, immigrants in the United States, many of them undocumented, sent to their relatives back home more than $45 billion in so-called remittances. This has exceeded foreign direct investment and foreign assistance to the region three years in a row. Increasing foreign aid to Mexico and parts of Central America in forms of economic assistance, but also social and political assistance to build capacity and reduce conflict, would aim to address the source of undocumented and unaccompanied child migrants entering the U.S.

The model for providing foreign aid would resemble the Alliance for Prosperity, a regional plan implemented by countries of the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) in accordance with the United States to confront the constant flow of emigration of unaccompanied minors. The plan consists of five main goals: to stimulate the productive sector to create economic opportunities, to develop opportunities for the people of the Northern Triangle, to improve public safety and enhance access to the legal system, to strengthen institutions to increase people’s trust in the State, and to implement the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle.

Stimulating the productive sector to create economic opportunities, and developing opportunities for the people of the Northern Triangle may include the following steps:

- Promoting strategic sectors and attracting investment
- Reducing energy costs and ensuring reliability of electricity supply
- Modernizing and expanding infrastructure and logistical corridors
- Coordinating border management
- Encouraging international trade
● Tightening links between labor supply and demand from businesses
● Building human capital

Improving public safety and enhancing access to the legal system, and strengthening institutions to increase people’s trust in the State may include the following steps:

● Boosting programs to prevent violence
● Strengthening institutions responsible for public safety
● Modernizing the justice system
● Ensuring the State’s financial capacity
● Increasing transparency

Implementing the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle may include the following goals:

● Territorial focus and regional coordination
● Financing
● Executing the Plan
● Assessment and follow-up

While these goal are broad, …

“Stronger growth in our economies requires attracting private investment, promoting certain sectors with development potential and concentrating activities in strategic geographical areas. This will be possible only if at the same time we undertake measures and carry out projects to reduce energy costs, make essential investments to improve infrastructure and logistics, and facilitate trade in a more integrated fashion. Also, these investments and measures must be concentrated in areas and regions that can become future centers that drive development.

Our people’s investment opportunities and improving their quality of life will be achieved only if their skills are fully developed. Labor supply and demand from businesses must be more tightly linked. We also need more effective vocational training, greater access to and better quality secondary education, and more investment in children, the human capital of the future.

Improving public safety and access to justice are essential for our people to live together in peace and for promoting private investment. We need to do more to prevent violence, make schools safe, and protect at-risk youths. We must also strengthen government institutions and the justice system so as to attack the roots of the problems of violence and lack of safety that we endure. All of these measures will complement the efforts that we make to fight drug trafficking and organized crime.

Successful implementation of the Plan requires handling of our resources in a way that is transparent and coordinated. Public spending must be more efficient and more effective. At the same time, it is necessary to improve the financial management of the public sector by improving our budgetary procedures and how the budget is executed. Our tax system must be modernized so as to bring in more revenue.

Financial management must also be modernized so as to introduce new tools for financing and debt management. This will enable us to guarantee economic sustainability, have more resources for investment, and reduce wasteful spending.

Teaming up with the private sector to promote their investments and with the international community will be essential to give the Plan greater viability in terms of financing and execution.”
Like the other approaches, there are potential drawbacks to Approach Two. Again, strengthening border control practices may involve an extensive amount of long-term and short-term costs to support initiatives like detention and deportation. Likewise, providing foreign to countries that experience high levels of poverty, crime, and violence requires large amount of funding and coordination from several parties.
Approach Three: 
Provide a Path for Citizenship While Investing in Foreign Aid

Under policy Approach Three, undocumented, unaccompanied minors in the U.S. would be granted a path to citizenship, provided they meet several necessary requirements. Foster families will be appointed to undocumented minors until these minors go on to complete the necessary education to apply for legal working and military serving status in the United States. Nonetheless, undocumented minors may still be deported if they fail to meet the necessary requirements to gain legal status. In addition, the U.S. would invest in foreign aid for the home countries of these minors. Several aspects of this policy reflect legislation that has either been presented or already implemented in the past.

Deferred action allows undocumented citizens to extend their legal status to reside in the United States. This time of policy would allow immigrant minors in the U.S. to try and complete steps to naturalization before applying for legal status. This policy advocates for federal grants to public schools in border zones that receive an disproportion amount of unaccompanied minors to alleviate the financial burden for state governments.

This approach would require that the people who came to the United States as children meet several guidelines in order to be considered for deferred action. Some of these specific requirements for the people might include the following:

- Individuals under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
- Came to the United States before reaching his/her 16th birthday;
- Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time;
- Were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making his/her request for consideration of deferred action with United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS);
- Has no lawful status on June 15, 2012;
- Are currently in school, have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, have obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, or are an honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States;
- Have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, or three or more other misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety.
- Have a limited amount of time to complete the application once the application is sent out to them.

Possible benefits of policy Approach Three can be narrowed down into three main categories: social benefits, economic benefits, and national security benefits. Beneficiaries of this policy would generally be well-educated and criminal records-free, making them stable, active, and productive.
forces in society. In addition, according to CBO, this act will cut deficit and increase government revenues over time. Students could add trillions in taxable income to the economy over the course of careers. No “free” green card would be obtained for undocumented minors under this policy which would minimize the economic pressures from providing social welfares. Finally, this policy would contribute to the military’s recruitment efforts and readiness. Allowing immigration and border security experts to focus on those who truly pose a serious threat to the nation’s security would be a fair way to deal with innocent children brought to the U.S. while concurrently detaining criminals.

Like the other policies, there are potential drawbacks to policy three. Applicants who do not meet the requirements would immediately be deported. Fear of deportation may drive away many applicants who indeed meet the requirements of this policy. Therefore, many eligible personnel may not even apply for citizenship.

Other difficulties with this approach may include:

- Economic burdens for federal and state governments in the short run. Governments need to dedicate resources to support the eligible immigrants’ education costs.
- High education barriers. If the basic education level for applicants is set too high, undocumented immigrants may have trouble meeting this requirement as undocumented minors have lower levels of education than U.S. born residents in the same age range.
- Unbalanced geographic representation on where the applicants come from. Since 2016, 77% of those who have received a temporary work permit are Mexican and no other country accounted for more than 3% of approvals.

Critics of granting citizenship may consider this approach to be “amnesty” for undocumented immigrants, despite the rigorous process. Additionally, this approach puts a fiscal burden on state and federal governments.
Approach Four: Provide Unconditional and Immediate Citizenship and Residency While Investing in Foreign Aid

Under policy Approach Four, all undocumented, unaccompanied minors who arrive in the United States would be granted unconditional and immediate citizenship and residency. These minors would not be subject to any rigorous screening processes after entering U.S. borders and would instead be aided in the process to naturalize these child migrants. In addition, this approach applies steps introduced in policy Approaches Two and Three for the United States to invest in aiding those countries where most undocumented children.

Citizenship laws for young migrants can act as effective tools to promote the inclusion and integration of immigrants in the U.S. By granting a young generation certain formal, like full access to public benefits, voting rights, and the right to run for public office, society will benefit from having a new population of workers, both skilled and unskilled. In addition, this policy would act as a symbolic function to create a sense of welcoming, a tool for that is useful for integrating immigrants into society.

In recent years, requirements for immigrant minors to become citizens have been deliberately tough to acquire. These requirements include lengthy in-country waiting periods, high fees and standards, and a widespread adoption of citizenship tests. The intention of this legislation is to ensure that new members of society have the tools necessary to succeed and act as functioning members of society. However, these requirements should not be so strict for unaccompanied minors who enter the U.S. to escape difficult circumstances. These children often have little choice in leaving their home countries and instead are forced to migrate to the U.S. and surrounding countries. This policy would work to address the need to aid this vulnerable population by facilitating the naturalization process. A policy attempting to facilitate naturalization for minors may include the following:

- Eliminating the use of a citizenship test that is too demanding. A test demanding this type of detailed knowledge is often difficult for even well-educated natives.
- Providing positive incentives for immigrants to find employment. These immigrants should be provided with opportunities to enter the workforce either through training programs or educational programs.
- Providing other beneficial programs like English classes. This may help integrate immigrants into the U.S. and again, help them contribute to a better educational and labor market.
- Allowing citizens to acquire dual citizenship. Dual citizenship would incentivize immigrants to apply for U.S. citizenship that may otherwise be wary of losing citizenship for their home country.

Most migrants who enter the United States travel through dangerous environments to escape
their home lands. These children do not migrate casually but instead migrate because they are truly in difficult circumstances. In addition to granting unconditional citizenship, Approach Four utilizes aspects of Approaches Two and Three by advocating for foreign investment into the home countries where most unaccompanied child migrants come from. The combination of providing an unconditional path to citizenship and an investment in foreign aid is intended to help those who are already in the U.S. while working towards solutions that may prevent the need for foreigners to even migrate to the U.S.

Benefits to providing and helping undocumented minors citizenships are both symbolic and concrete. For example, if this new generation of migrants are made citizens who own a sense of belonging to society, they are more likely “to shape the laws and norms in their communities for generations to come.” They are better able to invest in their communities without having to fear the possibility of deportation. Another benefit to legal status is the significant economic gains (in terms of growth, earning, tax revenues, and jobs) that would occur due to the creation of a permanent class of residents. This would be a major economic benefit to the nation. Legal status enables immigrants “to produce and earn significantly more than they do when they are on the economic sidelines. The resulting productivity and wage gains ripple through the economy because immigrants are not just workers – they are also consumers and taxpayers.” This new group of consumers and taxpayers will most likely have increased earnings to spend on purchases that will stimulate demand in the economy and therefore, create jobs that expand the U.S. economy. Increased earning can also contribute to additional taxes both at the federal level and state and local levels. This significant economic impact would benefit Americans in the long run.

Like the other policies proposed, policy four poses a financial problem. Aiding undocumented minors in gaining citizenship requires more programs and an increase in workers. The question is whether this financial burden should be placed on federal or state governments. If the financial responsibility is placed on state governments, specific states, especially those closer to the Mexican border where many migrants travel from, may be opposed because they would have to help an disproportionately higher number of migrants through the citizenship process than states that are less likely to have huge influxes of immigrants. Especially because these migrants are young and vulnerable, they would need special care and assistance throughout the naturalization process. While the long-term economic benefits are clear, it is questionable whether federal, state, and local governments want to take responsibility for these short-term financial burdens because these costs take an extensive amount of time and research to be measured.
Immigration is such a prevalent topic of discussion in the United States at the moment and it is our duty as citizens to be engaged in these conversations. As citizens, we have the right and duty to influence key legislation that may impact the lives of hundreds of thousands of people both within and outside our borders. In order to carry out this duty, every American has the responsibility to consider all possible ways of addressing the influx of undocumented, unaccompanied migrants into the U.S., regardless of which policy they favor initially.

We hope that participating in this deliberative process will both inform participants about the issue of undocumented, unaccompanied minors and provide relevant information in a balanced, conscientious, and substantive way. Each participant will have had the opportunity to converse with fellow citizens in a public forum separate from outside opinions and should then be more capable of rationalizing their own views.

The following table provides a summary of the approaches to facilitate a constructive deliberation by highlighting the most important elements of each.

### APPROACH ONE

**Deport all undocumented, unaccompanied minors. Do not provide foreign aid.**

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<tr>
<th>EXAMPLES OF WHAT MIGHT BE DONE</th>
<th>SOME DRAWBACKS TO CONSIDER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Require federal agents to identify and deport all undocumented minors</td>
<td>Potential use of inhumane practices by agents during deportation process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase funding and support for border patrol by hiring and training more bodies and expanding ICE at federal levels</td>
<td>Costly solution both short-term and long-term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase border zone by 100 miles (200-mile border zone); build a wall</td>
<td>Does not address the underlying problem of preventing illegal immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand funding for technologies and resources needed for detention and deportation specific to minors (e.g. beds, food, flights, busses, attorneys, caregivers, social workers)</td>
<td>Expensive in both short-term and long-term; border technologies and resources experience diminishing utility over time (e.g. replacements, updates, repairs)</td>
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**APPROACH TWO**

Deport all undocumented, unaccompanied minors. Provide foreign aid.

All immigrants should be deported regardless of age. In order to combat the influx of immigrants, the U.S. should invest in the home countries of immigrants to incentivize citizens to stay in their home countries.

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<td>Increase border control practices (e.g. increased funding for ICE, devoting resources to border control)</td>
<td>Expensive in both short-term and long-term; does not address the underlying problem of preventing illegal immigration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invest in funds for foreign law enforcement to curb violence and conflict that motivate people to migrate from foreign countries</td>
<td>Expensive solution that must be extensively measured over time in order determine effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase funds given to general aid and poverty relief programs; increase funds given to minor-specific programs (e.g. UNICEF, Save the Children, etc.)</td>
<td>Expensive solution that must be extensively measured over time in order determine effectiveness</td>
</tr>
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**APPROACH THREE**

Grant citizenship to some qualified undocumented, unaccompanied minors. Provide foreign aid.

This approach would allow only immigrants who meet strict requirements to gain citizenship. They would need to go through a rigorous process but if they meet requirement, they would avoid deportation. In addition, foreign aid would be provided to mitigate problems in those countries that are forcing immigrants to come to the U.S.

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<tr>
<td>Appoint and subsidize foster families to minors until migrants apply for citizenship</td>
<td>Short-term financial burden on federal and state governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant temporary legal status and deferred action until certain requirements are met; should a minor be convicted of a felonious criminal act, immediate deportation ensues</td>
<td>Long-term benefits cannot be measured until years after the policy is implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upon application reception, individuals will be deported or accepted as citizens</td>
<td>Dropping citizenship application rates because strict requirements incite fears of deportation; amount of time residing in the U.S. is not considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide foreign aid to home countries</td>
<td>Expensive solution that must be extensively measured over time in order determine effectiveness</td>
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</table>
### APPROACH FOUR

- **Grant citizenship to all undocumented, unaccompanied minors.**
- **Provide foreign aid.**

All undocumented minors would be welcome to the U.S. and aided in the citizenship process. In addition, foreign aid would be provided to mitigate problems in those countries that are forcing immigrants to come to the U.S.

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<tr>
<td>Grant immediate, unconditional citizenship to those who cross U.S. borders; “if you make it here, you can stay”</td>
<td>Financial burden for federal government and unequal responsibility for border states/local governments near borders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide educational and employment programs (e.g. English-learning programs) to help create a new, skilled workforce</td>
<td>Requires funding and the hiring and training of employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide foreign aid to home countries</td>
<td>Expensive solution that must be extensively measured over time in order determine effectiveness</td>
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Bibliography

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This initiative would not be possible without the ongoing support of Werner and Mary Anne Weingartner.