

**ABC News**

## **Harvard Sophomore Faces Deportation After Growing up in the U.S.**

**By Cleopatra Andreadis**

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A Harvard University student who grew up in Texas, won a full scholarship to the Ivy League school and is studying molecular biology faces the possibility of being deported before he can start his sophomore year.

The case of Eric Balderas has prompted Harvard to come to his defense and press for passage of the DREAM Act which would grant temporary legal status to young people who were brought to this country at a young age and who essentially grew up in the U.S.

Balderas, 19, was detained by Immigration officials when he tried to board a plane in Boston to visit his mother in San Antonio, Texas.

Herold Ost, a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokesman, told ABC News that a hearing for Balderas will likely take place in Boston at the beginning of next month.

Balderas said he came to the U.S. illegally when he was 4, and knew he was taking a chance when he headed for the airport for a flight home Texas.

"I'd made it through before so I thought this time wouldn't be any different," Balderas told The Associated Press. "But once ICE picked me up I really didn't know what to think and I was starting to break down."

Balderas tried boarding the plane using a consulate card from Mexico and his student ID when he was confronted by immigration officials and detained overnight.

Up until last week, Balderas had used a Mexican passport when traveling, but he had recently lost it.

When asked if Harvard University was aware that Balderas was living in the country illegally when he was admitted to their school and given a full scholarship, Kevin Galvin,

Director of Media Relations, told ABC News, "Harvard accepts people from all over the world."

Harvard University is supporting Balderas and lobbying for the DREAM Act to pass.

Harvard's President Drew Faust had issued a statement calling the DREAM Act "a lifeline to these students who are already working hard in our middle and high schools and living in our communities by granting them the temporary legal status that would allow them to pursue postsecondary education."

In a statement sent to ABC News, Christine Heenan, Harvard's vice president of public affairs and communications said: "Eric Balderas has already demonstrated the discipline and work ethic required for rigorous university work, and has, like so many of our undergraduates, expressed an interest in making a difference in the world.

"These dedicated young people are vital to our nation's future, and President Faust's support of the DREAM Act reflects Harvard's commitment to access and opportunity for students like Eric," she said.

Friends of Harvard Student Press for DREAM Act

An outspoken group of undocumented immigrants, who have met twice with senior White House advisor Valerie Jarrett to discuss the need for immigration reform, say the administration has rejected a request for an executive order to halt deportations of students who came to the U.S. illegally as young children.

The four college students, well-known among immigration activists for their 1,500-mile march from Miami to Washington, D.C., sought presidential intervention after pending legislative measures that would provide a path to legal residency have become stalled in Congress.

"We are extremely disappointed with President Obama and Congress for their lack of action," said Felipe Matos, 24, who has spent nearly his entire life in the U.S. after his parents illegally brought him into the country from Argentina as a young child. "The reality is that current enforcement-only policies are terrorizing our communities across the nation and no one is taking responsibility."

Balderas' friends have also rallied around him.

"This is very frustrating that this is happening to Eric," said his best friend and Harvard classmate Mario Rodas. "He is a great asset to this country."

Rodas said Balderas is studying molecular and cellular biology and hopes to become a cancer researcher.

"It's frustrating. We are all really frustrated with this situation and that the U.S. is trying to get rid of someone like him. He can do a lot of good," said Rodas. "It is devastating to the community."

Rodas launched a Facebook page Friday highlighting the Balderas case and rallying support for the DREAM Act.

According to the Immigration Law Center, the DREAM Act is a "bipartisan legislation that addresses the situation faced by young people who were brought to the United States years ago as undocumented immigrant children and who have since grown up here, stayed in school, and kept out of trouble."

ABC News' Devin Dwyer contributed to this report

"We need this to pass, we need support and people to support Eric," said Rodas. "He is going through a tough time right now and there is a sense of urgency for this Act to pass now before the summer."