

Four Days for Freedom University, Georgia

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Last Spring, a group of young people [did something that had never been done before](#) in the state of Georgia: they publicly declared that they are undocumented and then stepped out into a street in front of Georgia State University. They unfurled two banners. One read “Undocumented and Unafraid.” The other, “We Will No Longer Remain in the Shadows.” They sat down and refused to move.

In doing so, they put themselves at risk not only of being arrested (they were) but also of being deported.

What they did was both desperate and brave. The desperation came, in part, from the Board of Regents a few months earlier banning Georgia’s undocumented students from the state’s top schools. The bravery came, in part, from the example set by Civil Rights activists across history. Inspired by the heroic efforts of Georgia’s undocumented young people, who tirelessly demand their right to education (and their families’ right to live without fear of deportation and harassment by police and lawmakers), UGA professors, students and the Athens community decided to stand up beside them.

[Freedom University](#) opened its doors in October of 2011 in defiance of the USG Board of Regents’ [ban on undocumented students](#), offering college-level courses for free, regardless of immigration status. The Board of Regents’ Policy 4.1.6 is only one manifestation of the anti-immigration fervor in the South, but it is the one that is most destructive to the dreams of Georgia’s college age students who are unable to secure legal documentation. *Freedom University commits to remain steadfast in its operations and will actively advocate for the ban to be overturned, but we’ll need your support.*

Why “Four Days for Freedom University Georgia”?

On August 26th, Freedom University will welcome a new cohort of students from all over North Georgia and will offer four courses during the academic year. Thanks in large part to your efforts, last year folks from all over the world chipped in with donations and books, signed petitions, [marched on the Georgia Board of Regents](#), and [demanded that Georgia’s legislature end its attack](#) on immigrants, students and workers.

With double the number of students and the racist Right smarting from our defeat of their proposed ban on undocumented students from ALL of Georgia's campuses, we need to bring more donors and petition signers and rally goers into the Freedom University fold. We've created this campaign, 4 Days 4 Freedom U, as a means to best prepare for our second ever academic year. *Each day of the campaign we will send out an email announcement detailing what you can do to support our work.*

To sign up for their Action Alerts, head to their [list signup page](#).

Message from Bethany Moreton

Dear LAWCHA colleagues,

We in Georgia must ask you again to consider spreading the word about Freedom University as we gear up for our second year serving the students locked out of Georgia's colleges.

When the Board of Regents of the University System of **Georgia banned undocumented students from the top five state campuses**, we went to the young activists who had been arrested blocking traffic in front of the capitol to protest a spate of anti-immigrant legislation. We asked what, if anything, we could do to support their efforts. **Their top priority was to stay in school.** We recruited a national board of advisors, put together a team-taught American Studies syllabus, and launched a once-a-week, 3-hour seminar for about 25 students from around the state. Our UGA students and recent alumni volunteered to coordinate rides and handle the administrative side of things; our community allies in the Athens Economic Justice Coalition established our 501(c)3 status; and friends, colleagues, and family members (including many of you!) donated money and books. Meanwhile, in part thanks to Freedom University's efforts, the UGA elected bodies of faculty and students all passed resolutions condemning the ban, and a state bill barring undocumented students from all Georgia public campuses was defeated in the legislature; the original five-campus ban, however, remains in place.

We are grateful for all the support you have given this project already; unfortunately, we still need your help keeping the doors open for a second year. More than fifty students have applied, and we will start four new courses at the end of this month. **Please help undocumented Georgia students continue their educations and fight the ban by giving a book or donation, or by circulating this appeal via social media and listserves:**

<http://www.freedomuniversitygeorgia.com/donate-done.html>

Thank you for your continued solidarity; these students are making the history that LAWCHA will one day be writing, and they need our support .

Yours,
Bethany

Author



[Rosemary Feurer](#)

Rosemary Feurer is Professor of History at Northern Illinois University. She is the author of *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950*, among other books and essays. She is working on *The Illinois Mine Wars, 1860-1940* and a new biography of Mary Harris "Mother" Jones.