By Dorothy Leland

Congress must do its part

A young girl was brought to this country by parents who sought a better life, who instilled with her their will and their courage and their determination that the world a better place — imagine a student working with drones to improve water use in agriculture, while his parents spend their days picking crops just to afford the bare essentials in life.

Congress must do its part. Bipartisan groups across the country are urging a legislative solution — laws enacted by Congress that would extend DACA protections to students who grew up here and call this country home through new legislation. We as a campus will continue to do our part.

Many members of Congress have made a similar pledge, and one in the time is to follow through. They have the opportunity to prove they value human over party policies, and to move us toward a society that recognizes the American ideals of hard work and ingenuity rewarded with rich opportunities to build their own futures.

Dorothy Leland is the chancellor of UC Merced.

By Jefferson Leiva

DACA announcement

Extend protections for undocumented students, including 600 at UC Merced

For more than five long, anxious years, we believed that it wasn’t enough. In our own echo chambers of social media, we saw and heard the passionate support of #DearDreamer. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, students and others spread like wildfire, sparking hope among our immigrant communities.

But with President Trump’s decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, I realize they had been waging a fight that we lost from the beginning.

From the time we arrived as children in America, we understand this fight was necessary for our communities and families. We knew it would be hard. We knew that Trump and his administration would try to tear down the hard work and progress we’ve made.

But we didn’t know the fight would be against us.

Our voices weren’t heard.

The DACA announcement

President Trump has promised to build a wall between us and Mexico. To a president whose experience is in the real estate business, construction, perhaps this will be his true accomplishment. Metaphorically but also literally, Trump plans to use the wall to erect barriers and walls around the world.

Those of us lucky enough to find comfort in the shadows — including giving up information that made us exceptionally vulnerable. We filled our form 1-821, asking for consideration of deferred action, with our fingerprints, DNA and eyes. Every report card and transcript. Every vaccine, medical certificate are waging a war against the future. Nearly 1 in 4 undocumented students in the UC system are at UC Merced. We have seen firsthand the positive impact those young people have had on our university, our campus community, our region and the state.

These are hardworking, law-abiding, taxpaying young people who enrich our campus and our community. They are setting a positive example for their younger siblings, keeping their promise, and they are making lives of their families and communities better. They are not a drain on our economy, and they provide an asset to those of us lucky enough to have been here.

Removing these students from our county would unerringly disrupt our neighborhoods and communities, and it would ruin lives in ways that are simply unconscionable — and it would have a disproportionate effect on the state of California and in communities like ours.

Instead, we should use our collective energy and creativity to develop ways to keep them here and encourage their successes.

College is difficult even for students who come from affluent backgrounds with high-educated parents who can help guide them through this labyrinth. It’s more difficult for first-generation students, whose parents are unprepared but lack the educational background to give the timely advice they need. And it’s more difficult for students who come from low-income families, who often must work one or more jobs to support themselves and their loved ones.

Undocumented students share all of those burdens and more, and what they accomplish in the face of these challenges is truly remarkable. Imagine their desire to make the world a better place — imagine a student working with drones to improve water use in agriculture, while his parents spend their days picking crops just to afford the bare essentials in life.

Jefferson Leiva is an immigration and video editor for Global Student Square, an international student journalism network that works to bring youth voices into global news. He recently graduated from Stagg High School in Stockton.