



MISSION CRITICAL

The Role of
Community Colleges
in Meeting Students'
Basic Needs



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NATIONAL
REPORT

How Colleges Are Helping Students in Need

Colleges across the country are providing direct assistance to their students, creating partnerships, and/or connecting students with local resources. They are financing this work through grants, government programs, partnerships, and other means.

The following vignettes show a variety of creative, resourceful approaches colleges are using to meet their students' basic needs. These brief summaries are included as examples of what is possible. They do not show the full range of supports each college provides for its students.

Examples of Providing Food Assistance

- ▶ **Madisonville Community College (KY)** has food banks on three campuses and a \$40,000 fund for student emergencies. The college also asks for and receives anonymous feedback from students and uses that feedback to make improvements.
- ▶ The **Maricopa Community Colleges (AZ)** expanded partnerships with local food banks to provide drive-up food distribution for students, their families, and the community. These partnerships also help the colleges stock their multiple food pantries. In addition, the colleges used a state grant to hire a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach staff member who connects students with resources. Some Maricopa colleges also have

“I think [my college] just cares about you as a student, and they definitely care about you as a person.”

—Student

hired social workers for on-site student assistance. The colleges developed a Basic Needs and Community Resources website that continues to evolve as new supports are identified, and they use support from local foundations to provide gift cards to students.

- ▶ **Ozarks Technical Community College (MO)** offers free breakfast to all students five days a week when classes are in session. Students do not need to demonstrate need; the food is simply available to everyone with a valid student ID. A pilot program on one campus showed that participating students earned better grades on midterms and finals than students who did not participate. In addition, nearly 90% of students who participated in the pilot completed spring courses, compared to 83% of nonparticipants. Based on that data, the college expanded the program to all six of its campuses.
- ▶ At the food pantry of **Sinclair College (OH)**, students can shop every two weeks for hygiene products, cleaning supplies, diapers, formula, wipes, and a selection of refrigerated and frozen food items. A licensed social worker at the pantry is available to assist students with accessing community resources. The college also offers a free, no-questions-asked lunch four days a week. In addition, the Homefull mobile grocery visits campus every week and offers easy access to fresh, quality groceries for students. Homefull accepts cash, credit, and SNAP/EBT. Moreover, the college's partnership with Impact Solutions offers supports to students including legal assistance, financial counseling, medical advocacy, and family caregiving referral.
- ▶ **Tarrant County College Northwest (TX)** partners with Community Link and the Tarrant Area Food Bank to offer the Community Food Market on its campus once a month. The farmer's market-style experience offers fresh foods including meats and produce to all community members at no cost.

Examples of Providing Housing and Transportation Assistance

- ▶ **Cuyahoga Community College (OH)** recently announced plans for the Cleveland Scholar House, a new apartment complex that will provide housing for single students with minor children. The new housing will be built adjacent to the Metro Campus of Tri-C (as the college is known) and will also serve students enrolled at nearby Cleveland State University. The Cleveland Scholar House will provide wraparound services including child care, rental support, academic support, and mental health support. In addition to Tri-C and Cleveland State, partners in the project include CHN Housing Partners, the United Way of Greater Cleveland, the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority, and Step Forward. The project will be funded through the Ohio Housing Finance Agency's Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, which is expected to cover about 75% of the building's \$12 million development cost.

"Transportation is a huge obstacle for me. There are times where I don't know how I'm going to pay for parking or I don't know how I'm going to make it to school."

— Student

- ▶ **Long Beach City College (CA)** allows up to 15 students to sleep overnight in their cars in the campus parking garage. Students are given access to Wi-Fi, restrooms, and showers. The college also provides case management services to help the students find housing.
- ▶ **Tacoma Community College (WA)** has a program to provide students experiencing housing insecurity with long-term and short-term housing. The program is in partnership with the Tacoma Housing Authority.
- ▶ **Ventura College's (CA) Basic Needs Center** assists students with the state's food assistance program and helps students find housing and transportation.



"Most students ... in my situation want to keep it a secret. If they out there starving, nobody know they're starving. ... Advisors should [ask more questions]. ... Once you're talking to that person about your classes and stuff, that is an opportunity to ask you about your living situation, your food, your finances."

— Student

Examples of Providing Assistance to Address Multiple Basic Needs

- ▶ SparkPoint at **Cañada College (CA)** is a one-stop education center where students can access a full range of services that lead toward financial stability. The services include financial coaching, a food pantry, food and housing resources, access to public benefits, and a free legal clinic.
- ▶ The NTCC Care Center at **Northeast Texas Community College (TX)** is a centralized resource that includes a food pantry, mini kitchen (called a Cook Nook), and hygiene area. The NTCC Care Center also offers peer mentorship for students, face-to-face group therapy for students, and connections to resources to address a range of student needs. A weekly student-led Health & Wellness Group addresses health from head to toe. Past sessions have included a psychiatric nurse practitioner speaking about mental health and a blood pressure clinic. The Center ramps up its work during midterms and finals and offers animal therapy, 10-minute chair massages for students and faculty, and healthful snacks.
- ▶ The Student Advocacy & Resource Center at **Northwest Vista College (TX)** provides emergency student aid, help with essential needs, and individual and group mental health counseling at no cost to students. Essential needs services include The Store, where students can sign up for twice monthly curbside groceries; the GrabNGo, where students can grab a snack and a drink daily; and a Health and Wellness Station, where students can acquire personal care items.
- ▶ The Growing Together Support Program at **Rockland Community College (NY)** strives to ease struggles that single parents may encounter. The support includes connection to resources on and off campus, academic advising, application support for on-campus child care subsidies, grocery and gas assistance, bus passes, weekly workshops, and a support group for single parents.



“[My college] is like mom and pop to students. I’m an adult student, but there’s nowhere that I can’t go on this campus and receive the necessary resources to fit my needs. ... [They] honor their students.”

— Student






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