



Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce

Real Solutions to Real Challenges

October 24, 2018

Meeting Summary

The Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce members met at the offices of Grensler, an architecture and design firm, to continue their discussion on the affordability challenges that are facing California's community colleges. In the morning they conducted an internal meeting that heard a presentation from representatives of Grensler and Compton Community College on a proposed new dormitory aimed providing affordable housing for community college students, received updates from taskforce members and discussed a draft organization of the report. They closed out the meeting with a presentation from East Los Angeles College on their 10,000 meals challenge, which provides vouchers to students facing food insecurity that can either be redeemed in the cafeteria or local restaurants.

In the afternoon they met with outside groups with an interest in supporting community college students which ranged in focus from business, social justice, research and advocacy. The taskforce members heard from these groups on both what was and was not working regarding how colleges support low income students.

Taskforce Meeting

1. Compton College: Proposed Dorm with the Goal of Alleviating Housing Insecurity

Compton College has entered into a partnership with Grensler on exploring the possibility of building a dorm on Compton's campus to provide housing to its students. Representatives of Grensler gave a presentation in which they illustrated how affordable housing can cost almost 50% more to build than market rate. Generally, this is due to the economies of scale for profit developers can bring to the project to bring costs down. To alleviate this, they proposed utilizing standardized, modular units that can be prebuilt in a factory and install. This would standardize the construction process, be more efficient than building individual buildings in the field while still creating a high quality space to live.

In partnership with Compton students, Grensler conducted a series of focus groups to identify the specific groups of students that Compton College serves, how they spend days both at Compton and when they are off campus and how the proposed dorms could fulfill their housing needs. Specifically, they identified four different groups of students:

- Traditional students or those in between the ages of 18 – 24.
- Students with families.
- Formerly incarcerated youth.

- Returning students aged in their 30s or 40s.

Each of those populations would face a different mix of facility needs. For example, it would likely be appropriate to house an 18 -24 in a multi-bed dorm room with common living and dining facilities, but this would likely not work for students with families. For each population Grensler proposed various housing configurations, all of which were modular and could fit on Compton College's Campus.

2. Updates from Committee Members

Committee members gave updates on various items they have been researching and whether or not they should be included in the final report. Below is a summary of each committee member's update:

James Limbaugh, President, West LA College

President Limbaugh spoke about a range of issues. Specifically, he addressed:

- The importance of changing campus culture on campus. He gave an example of the need to find a way for a student to tell their story once – not have to constantly prove they are poor to receive services.
- Importance of data collection in affordability issues.
- How a dedicated social worker in either the financial aid office or connected with a food pantry could help improve student services.
- That the Board of Governors should make it a priority to improve upon the affordability challenges facing our students.

Matt Wetstein, Superintendent/President, Cabrillo College

Discussion on how Tacoma College is an excellent example on a college taking a proactive approach to affordable housing. High housing prices in Seattle had started to impact housing prices in the Tacoma area and thus Tacoma College started working with the local housing agency to identify students who could qualify for Section 8 vouchers and connect them to services. Additionally, he suggested that the League invite Russel Lowery-Hart, President of Amarillo College in Texas to discuss affordability issues. President Lower-Hart has made serving low income students a focus of his presidency and has done remarkable things.

Pamela Luster, President, San Diego Mesa College (Co-Chair)

Suggested that we should ask serious questions on why we charge tuition at all. She wondered what the administrative costs of collecting fees are and how much the system is generating via fee revenue. She also brought up Sara Goldrick-Rab's proposal regarding providing free meals for college students who formerly qualified for free or reduced lunches.

Tammeil Gilkerson, President, Laney College

Spoke about the partnership her district is attempting to form with the area Rotarians and how that might be an example of a partnership between districts and community based organizations.

3. Discussion of Format of Report

After a discussion regarding the format of the report, Keith Curry proposed that it would follow the below format:

- 1) Introduction Letter from Marvin Martinez
- 2) Preamble (Taskforce Fact Sheet)
- 3) Data- CEO Inventory Survey Result (Frank Harris and Luke Woods to provide a summary report)
- 4) Student Stories (4-5 students, putting names and photos to the issue)
- 5) Community College Highlights Examples
 - o Cypress Program for Homeless Students (JoAnn Schilling)
 - o Compton College Housing Study (Keith Curry/Deborah Shepley)
 - o LACCD Cal-Fresh (Mary Gallagher)
 - o College and County Partnership (?)
 - o San Diego City College Food Pantry through the Academic Program (Ricky Shabazz)
- 6) Affordability, Food & Housing Access Taskforce Recommendations
 - o Policy
 - o Partnerships
 - o Access
 - o Housing
 - o Food Insecurity
- 7) CEO and Board of Trustees Road Map (Consider contracting with Sara Goldrick-Rab to write this section)

4. East Los Angeles College – 10,000 Meals Challenge Program

Paul De La Cerda, Executive Direct of the East Los Angeles College Foundation, gave a presentation on its 10,000 Meals Challenge Program. Intended to address food insecurity, employees and local restaurants have been asked to donate to the campaign that then provides food vouchers for students experiencing food insecurity. These vouchers can then be utilized at either the campus cafeteria or local restaurants. In addition to donating to the program, restaurateurs are asked to craft an item on their menu that is both nutritious and costs at max \$5.

Students are eligible for vouchers by going into the health office and stating why they need them. The vouchers are given out weekly and in the meantime the college works with the student to identify factors that are behind why a student is food insecure. Each voucher is good for \$5 and students generally receive at least five – ten when they ask for them at the health office.

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Community and Equity Partners Meeting

To get a better understanding of the affordability challenges impacting low income students, equity partners were invited to the meet with the taskforce in the afternoon. They were asked what colleges were doing (and most importantly not doing) in the following areas:

1. Access
2. Food Insecurity
3. Housing Insecurity
4. Partnerships
5. Policy

Below is a summary of ideas discussed within each area. For a table with each suggestion from all equity partners, please [click here](#).

Access

California College Promise

- Targeted to full time students with low financial need.
- Use is limited.

Extended Opportunity Program and Services:

- LA Metro and book voucher cards given out to EOPS students increases access.
- EOPS generally does a good job at supporting low income students.

Total Cost of Attendance: Real Barrier to Attending College

- Free/low tuition makes tuition at California community colleges not a barrier to higher education.
- Policy makers are beginning to understand this.

Emergency Grants:

- Grants that can help a student pay for financial emergencies.
- Proven to help students stay in school.
- Problems with 50% law calculation.
- Could fund an emergency grant program similar to the way transportation or health programs are funded.

Food Insecurity

Cal Fresh

- Connecting students to Cal Fresh is important tool in supporting low income students.
- Colleges can do a better job connecting students to services by providing access to dedicated point of contact or a social worker.

Meal Plans:

- Should students who qualify for free and reduced lunches in K-12 qualify for free meals on community college campuses?
- For colleges with meal plans, allow students to donate any unused meals to those in need.

Food Pantry Infrastructure:

- Need better facilities to store food.
- Lack of refrigeration greatly reduces ability of colleges to store perishable items.

Housing Insecurity

Affordable Housing:

- Provide tax incentives for developers of low income housing that have specific set asides for students.
- Partnership between Tacoma Community College and Tacoma Housing Authority an excellent example of how colleges can connect low income students to housing funds.
- Credit checks and deposit requirements significant impediments to affordable housing.
- Colleges may have land that could be utilized for affordability housing.
- Can't use scheduled maintenance funding on dorms.

Partnerships:

Business Community:

- Colleges need to do a better job identifying their student needs.
- Leverage apartment associations to find affordable housing for students.

Government Entities

- Partnerships between county health and human service agencies and community colleges essential to alleviating affordability challenges.
- Designated single point of contact between institutions helpful to increase access for services.

Foundations/Non-Profits:

- Many community based organizations are offering services that would benefit students, but colleges aren't aware of them.
- Similar to business organizations, colleges need to do a better job telling their story.

Policy:

Operations of a Financial Aid Office:

- Smoothly running financial aid office are essential to supporting low-income students.

- Embed social worker into campus to connect low-income students to existing services.
- Assign a specific financial aid rep to individual students (Cypress College as a model).
- Gates Foundation is coming out with a roadmap on how financial offices can function efficiently.

Cal Grants and Other Forms of Financial Aid:

- Cal Grants are far too tuition focused.
- Not enough Cal Grants to serve all low-income students.
- Emergency grants are a flexible option to help students.
- Recent budget actions have created financial aid programs in Proposition 98 and gradual increases in the number/amount of Cal Grants.