

**The Growth Resource Outreach Valued and Empowerment Program (The GROVE):
A Five-Year Plan to Address Food and Housing Insecurity**



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Introduction

Although not a new problem, the number of students facing homelessness and food insecurity while attending California Community Colleges has significantly increased in recent years. With the matter of homelessness present in our community, Dr. Keith Flamer, President of College of the Redwoods (CR), resolved to learn more about this quiet, but important segment of the student population. He recognized that many students contemplate or leave college without completing their educational goals when poverty and homelessness become insurmountable barriers.

One of those students was Tammy; a first-generation CR student who was forced to spend the semester camped in a friend's backyard, using a bathroom in the garage when she failed to find housing in the fall of 2017. Tammy did not have a car and would walk an hour from the bus stop to her tent every morning and every evening. In the winter months, with night classes and a

limited bus schedule, she was dropped off over 11 miles from her camp. Tammy would walk more than 3 hours to get “home”, carrying a flashlight for protection when she passed other homeless camps along the way. Some nights, when classes got out late, she would set up camp in the woods behind the college and study by flashlight.

Another student was Bobbi, a single mother of four young children from Southern Humboldt, who attended classes at CR in the spring of 2019. Bobbi and her children shared one room in a three-bedroom house until a domestic situation forced her and her four children to leave. With nowhere to sleep that night and her support system dismantled, anxious and afraid, Bobbi brought her children with her to the college. The local shelters did not have enough beds for her and her four children.

The difficulties that Tammy and Bobbi faced are just two examples of how housing and food insecurity affects our students. Tammy and Bobbi were fortunate in that they eventually connected with resources in the community that stabilized their basic housing and food conditions and helped them attain more independence and autonomy.

However, many of our students are not so fortunate. Many students face similar challenges and barriers while going to school. Not all of our students have the support systems in place to help them navigate the complex institutional public relief organizations. This plan serves as College of the Redwoods’ attempt to reduce CR student food insecurity and homelessness by 2025.

Organization Overview

The College has undertaken several initiatives that focus on supporting students who experience housing and food insecurity. Students on the Eureka Campus have access to an on-campus food pantry, clothing closet, showers, lockers, laundry facilities, a 24-hour ADA accessible restroom, and a housing liaison to help them locate local housing and emotional/mental health counseling.

Students receive assistance to sign up for CalFresh and other public assistance, and are given help to apply for Extended Opportunity Programs & Services (EOPS), TRIO Student Success Program, and Disability Services and Programs for Students (DSPS). Students qualifying for

these programs receive various supports including but not limited to: textbook vouchers; free bus passes; career, academic and personal counseling; free tutoring; priority registration; laptop and calculator loan program; free printing; textbook lending library; free cap and gown rental for graduation; and application fees paid for university applications.

In the spring of 2019, CR implemented a Redwoods Room and Board Scholarship program to more fully support students experiencing housing insecurity. The College awarded six scholarships in the program's pilot and expects to increase the number of awardees to eight in fall 2019.

Each scholarship award is for a period of one semester and is renewable for a maximum of two academic years if the student continues to meet the scholarship requirement criteria. The program is designed to provide transitional housing for students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity. Students receiving the scholarship are given a bed in a double occupancy residence hall room and a dining facility meal plan and provided with the support and life skills needed to transition to off-campus housing as soon as they are capable.

Each student is required to meet multiple times a semester with a college counselor to develop, implement and review his or her career and academic goals. They also meet with the College's Financial Literacy Specialist, who assists each student with personal finance management, and federal financial aid and scholarship applications to ensure students acquire the financial and money management skills needed to live independently.

The College is piloting a program in summer of 2019 that will allow homeless CR students to park overnight in the Eureka Campus parking lot. An assessment of the pilot program will be discussed with the Board of Trustees in the fall semester.

GROVE Plan Goals

This plan has three major goals. How these goals will be evaluated are addressed in the evaluation section of this plan.

GOAL #1 Continue to increase academic success (G.P.A.; retention, persistence, unit completion, degree, certificate, or transfer) among housing and food insecure students.

GOAL #2 Reduce housing insecurity among students attending CR by 2025.

GOAL #3 Reduce food insecurity among students attending CR by 2025.

GROVE Program Project Description

Forty-four percent of 9-12 grade students from feeder high schools have been identified as homeless or housing insecure (HCOE, 2019). Approximately eighteen percent of students on community colleges campuses experience homelessness or housing insecurity. The most recent data released by the HOPE Center has identified much of the northern region of California as having the highest rate of basic need insecurity, which included food insecurity (59%), housing insecurity (70%), and homelessness (24%) (Hope Center, 2019).

Two hundred fifty-eight students self-identified as homeless or at risk of being homeless in spring semester 2019. Forty-nine percent were first-generation; 17.6% of these students had dependents, and 6.3% were veterans according to the most recent data.

The target population for the five-year GROVE plan is CR students who are housing and food insecure, at risk to become food insecure, homeless or at imminent risk of being homeless. The program will provide upstream (prevention) and downstream (response) interventions.

Prevention strategies will first focus on helping students build healthy relationships. By working with local community partners, the GROVE will strengthen relationships and build community capacity to support our students regardless of age or circumstances. The GROVE will use research-based practices known to prevent or respond to student homelessness and food insecurity to advocate for local and state policy changes.

The GROVE will provide students with services such as housing identification, rental assistance, move-in assistance, food assistance, and culturally competent intensive case management services to assist with basic needs. Each student will meet with the program associate faculty counselor to develop, implement and review the student's career, academic, and personal goals.

A financial aid staff member will assist each student with personal finance management, and completing federal financial aid and scholarship applications.

The GROVE will become an official partner in the Humboldt Housing and Homeless Coalition (HHHC) and join Del Norte and Humboldt County's Continuum of Care efforts to end homelessness. The project staff will work with Del Norte and Humboldt County's Coordinated Entry system to ensure that a Housing First model is employed within our District that prioritizes individuals and families facing the highest vulnerability and needs for permanent, supportive housing.

Grove Program Evaluation

The GROVE will be included in the College's annual program and assessment evaluation cycle work to ensure that the program is meeting the program and student learning outcomes.

Summary

Although ambitious, we believe if we work together as a community, the College can reduce student housing and food insecurity by 2025. We enter this work with the knowledge that the challenges facing students attending CR will be diverse and complex; however, the importance of completing this work cannot be understated. If our students are to move towards self-actualization, the pinnacle of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, we have to make sure that their basic needs such as food, shelter, security, are met.

Addendum A

GROVE Program Food and Housing Insecurity GOAL Implementation Timeline

2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Room and board scholarship program to expanded to 8 students	Room and board scholarship program is expanded to 10 students	Room and board scholarship program is expanded to 15 students	Students are able to get the services they need to assist with their basic needs without leaving the campus they attend classes	All three locations (EKA, DN, KT) offer services that are equal, equitable, and based on individual needs
The on-campus safe overnight parking service is piloted for students who live in their cars	Emergency Hotel Vouchers are made available to assist those students in transition	Dress for Success service is in place	Land Lord Mediation service is in place	Community Connections-formal service-learning opportunities in the community for students are in place
Finish Food Pantry expansion to KT/DN and start to lay the foundation for G.R.O.V.E. services in these locations.	Career/work experience opportunity is in place Pantry coordinators are hired.	Monthly Food Service is in place. Students are able to get food to supplement their weekly allotment of food	International immigration information and resources are offered for students at the G.R.O.V. E.	The program is able to move to a full up stream preventative model due to the decrease or reduction of food and housing insecure students
The GROVE program is opened at the EKA campus and (2) Associate Faculty Homeless Coordinators/Advocates and (1) Part-time AOC is hired and trained	Transportation assistance is in place	SSI/SSD enrollment assistance is in place	Legal Assistance information and connections to resources are offered for students offered at the G.R.O.V. E	Sustainability mechanism is in place
Join Humboldt and Del Norte Continuum of Care network		Mobile Food Pantry Service is in place		
Emergency/Temp rooms in Residence Halls are made available for up to 14 days	On-line database for housing information is developed	Rent/Deposit Assistance for students living on/off campus is made available		
CR policies and procedures that create barriers are reviewed and revised				