

Affordable Student Housing Taskforce Report & Recommendations - Summary



California
Community
Colleges

Prepared By
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
Institutional Supports and Success
Affordable Student Housing Taskforce

CENTERING AFFORDABILITY, EQUITY, AND STUDENT SUCCESS IN HOUSING

Students attend California's community colleges because they present opportunities for socio-economic advancement and career mobility. This is especially true for students living in poverty. While the California Community Colleges is the most affordable higher education system in the country, the actual cost of college – when including housing, food, and transportation – has never been higher. While student housing has not been a traditional space for California Community Colleges, we know that traditional approaches often leave our most vulnerable students behind. The California Community Colleges is committed to helping our students equitably succeed. For our system, that means creating a student housing program that is committed to equity, affordability, access, student-centered design, holistic supports, district adaptability to student needs and being part of a statewide solution to housing shortages. The California Community Colleges Board of Governors' Affordable Student Housing Taskforce developed the following 20 recommendations to implement a robust program that delivers on those commitments.

Affordability

- Advance practices that effectively coordinate financial aid and basic needs supports with student housing and develop a comprehensive onboarding process that does not duplicate requests for the same student information.
- Encourage colleges to develop a process to identify at-risk students, especially students vulnerable to homelessness or facing housing insecurity.
- Encourage colleges to dedicate a few rooms to serve as emergency student housing.

Integrated Support Services

- Development of an Affordable Student Housing Community of Practice (CoP) that allows the sharing of practices among colleges with existing student housing and colleges with new affordable student housing construction grants.
- Craft professional development resources, including sample district policies, workflows, onboarding practices, and case management models.
- Establish systems to maximize and streamline available supports. Districts and colleges should leverage all available categorical programs and services, including but not limited to basic needs, mental health, financial aid, academic supports and tutoring, transportation, workforce and career services, and transfer services. Options include including developing an internal and student-facing checklist to clearly inform students of all available supports, grants, and existing resources on college campuses that offer a variety of options to ensure student needs are holistically met.
- Adapt student housing supports and services with vulnerable student populations in mind. This includes offering full-calendar year housing, providing services for adult students, and eliminating or reducing required housing deposits.

Partnerships & Advocacy

- Continue to advocate for Cal Grant reform (currently committed for 2024) and an equitable Cal Grant system that addresses students' growing cost of attendance, specifically housing costs.
- Advocate for equitable housing solutions that center equity, dignity, safety, and student success, including rapid rehousing and affordable student housing construction grants.
- With support from the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative, develop a best practice guide for partnering with community-based organizations.
- Encourage colleges to partner with rapid rehousing organizations and other nonprofit housing providers that meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity providing housing and supportive services.

Total Cost of Lifetime Ownership

- Districts should use and locally adapt the Total Cost of Lifetime Ownership Calculator (See spreadsheet in appendix) for planning and estimating of the long-term ownership of student housing facilities and associated infrastructure or programing.

Regulations

- Amend the Community College Construction Act of 1980, codified in Education Code sections 81800 – 81839 and title 5, sections 57000-57034, to allow affordable student housing facilities to be eligible for state funding and distinguish them from other ineligible revenue generating projects.
- Allow state physical plant funding (i.e., scheduled maintenance, deferred maintenance, special repairs) to be used for affordable student housing facilities by modifying title 5 sections 57000-57034 and 57200-57205, Education Code sections 84660¹, and provisional language in the California Budget section 55.

Data

- Adapt the Facilities Utilization, Space Inventory Options Net (FUSION) database to incorporate student housing data, inventories and reporting.
- Regularly query students through surveys or focus groups to understand campus-need. Examples include the Real College Survey, campus climate surveys and others.
- Evaluate regional and community composition data to better understand local needs and demographics, regional markets, and housing trends.
- Use the available Student Aid Index (formerly Expected Family Contribution (EFC)) data to inform program implementation and understand unmet financial need.
- Regularly update regional Cost of Attendance (COA) data for financial aid purposes. Districts and colleges can revisit their reported COA to ensure that it accurately reflects students' cost of living in their region. This adjustment can expand the proportion of students eligible for federal financial aid.
- Maintain data on unmet demand for housing as determined by number of students waitlisted for student housing OR unmet demand for housing as determined by county rental vacancy rates.

¹ Title 5 section 57200-57205 and EDC 84660 provide programmatic guidance for deferred maintenance and special repairs, which are under the umbrella of PPIS. However, none of these provisions currently exclude affordable student housing.