

A Pathway Toward Addressing Nonacademic Barriers for Students

Community colleges have long been a destination for students to seek what they may not find in four-year institutions – smaller class sizes, greater access to faculty and counselors, and close proximity to family and friends. Many students seek a nurturing environment to begin college and those same community college students may need more than academic support.

While many community college students encounter significant academic barriers in completing a degree, they also face nonacademic barriers that are often equally significant. Some of these barriers – financial struggles, housing and food insecurities, transportation difficulties, and insufficient childcare – are more common as cost of living increases in a growing metropolis like Orange County.

Learning about how to best address the basic needs of students has grown as a priority amongst leaders at the District, Saddleback College, and Irvine Valley College. Both colleges have already implemented programming that serves the students with the greatest basic needs insecurities.

To address food insecurity, Saddleback College offers free groceries (fresh produce and canned goods) on the first and third Wednesday of each month through a partnership with Helping Hand Worldwide. In addition, Saddleback College has a food pantry accessible to all students, no questions asked, to support them with sustenance throughout the day.

Irvine Valley College's Food Resource Center opened in 2017 and has served over 500 bags of food. In partnership with the Orange County Rescue Mission, 400 Starbucks protein packs and sandwiches are delivered to the college



Resource centers at both colleges offer food, clothing and other essentials to students, no questions asked, throughout the day.

for students every Monday.

Both colleges have staff that can help students navigate through resources on campus to address immediate needs, but also serve as liaisons to direct students to support services throughout the county to connect students to housing, health-care, clothing and more.

In a report released by California Community Colleges in March 2019, a survey demonstrated that more than half of the students attending a California community college have trouble affording balanced meals or worry about running out of food. Also, nearly one in five community college students in California do not have a stable place to live.

For Saddleback College and Irvine Valley College leaders, the survey results were not jarring. Jeannie Harris Caldwell of

Saddleback College and Nancy Montgomery of Irvine Valley College know all too well the needs that our students face, and the numbers continue to grow.

Staff and faculty continue to identify practical solutions to nonacademic barriers for students with the development of programs that address food, housing, and health-care insecurities.

The Board of Trustees recently toured one of the resource centers at Saddleback College to learn about the extent of services that our students need. As a priority, the Board of Trustees will continue to support effective strategies through education, innovation, and collective actions to ensure that Saddleback College and Irvine Valley College are institutions where students can afford and complete their studies.

400
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