



For College, Community, and Justice

HOPE4COLLEGE.COM

BEYOND THE FOOD PANTRY: Meeting Student Housing Needs and Addressing Student Homelessness

**David Koppisch & Kat York June 2021
(Revised November 2021)¹**

The pandemic exposed the widespread problem of housing insecurity and homelessness experienced by many college students. Over 195,000 college students who participated in the 2020 [#RealCollege™ Survey](#), of which, 48% experienced housing insecurity and 14% were homeless at some point last year.

Colleges and universities across the country have responded to the pandemic's challenges in a variety of ways. Some built dorm space dedicated to housing homeless students. Others formed strategic partnerships with nonprofit organizations to provide rental subsidies, emergency housing and access to public benefits.

The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice compiled a list of interventions utilized by some colleges to inspire action at other colleges and universities. These strategies fall into several categories (on-campus efforts, off-campus partnerships, and emergency interventions). The interventions range from high investment and long-range to more immediate and relatively lower budget.

Identifying the Need

The first step in devising strategies to meet student housing insecurity or homelessness is a rigorous examination and measurement of the problem and whom it impacts. Faculty and staff can [be instrumental](#) in identifying student housing needs.

- Faculty can include questions about housing insecurity in admissions paperwork.
- Students should be surveyed periodically because housing situations can change very suddenly. More colleges and universities should participate in the [#RealCollege™ Survey](#) to better understand basic needs insecurity among their students.

- [Institutions should](#) partner with housing authorities, homeless service centers and social service systems which have experience in student housing insecurity.

Emergency Housing Strategies

- Portland State University in Portland, OR [partnered with First United Methodist Church of Portland](#) to create a student shelter called “The Landing” that provides free housing for students for up to an entire term.
- The [University of Oregon](#) created a student crisis fund, which students can use to pay for a temporary hotel stay or other emergency housing needs. Students at the [University of Southern California](#) partnered with a local church to convert unused space into rent-free rooms for homeless college students.
- San Jose State University in partnership with [Airbnb](#), provided short-term rental arrangements.
- [Westfield State University and Holyoke Colleges](#) in Massachusetts piloted a community college housing security program to connect students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity to on-campus housing. The program provides free room and board and continued housing during academic breaks.

Home Share Programs

- The University of Michigan operates a [home share program](#) where students can receive reduced-rent in an off-campus housing unit owned and occupied by a community resident who is at least 55 years old. In exchange for affordable rent, the student may provide light housework, maintenance, and/or other chores.
- Colleges and universities in the Raleigh, NC area work with the BWEL Foundation on the [Housing Options for Students Today](#) (HOST) program. The HOST program finds homes in the community at free or reduced cost for college students across Wake County.
- The [Berkeley Home Match](#) program connects students at the [University of California at Berkeley](#) with retirees through the Berkeley Office of Retirement to rent out affordable rooms in local homes.
- The [Nesterly App](#) connects older residents living near Stanford University and Harvard with students who want to rent out a reduced-rent or free room in exchange for light home maintenance tasks.

Off-Campus Rental Subsidies and Case Management

- [Long Beach City College \(LBCC\)](#) in California provides case management and wrap-around services for up to 40 students in supportive housing. In 2020, the college received \$2 million from the

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) to partner with [Jovenes, Inc.](#) for rapid student housing and support services. LBCC also offers emergency aid for car repair, housing, transportation, clothing, food, and anything else students deem essential.

- [Cerritos College](#) in California also partners with Jovenes, Inc. to provide low- to no-rent townhomes for homeless students. [Jovenes](#) received grant funding to build the dorm-style housing and incorporate best practices for providing traditional and academic case management, rental subsidies and housing supports, rapid rehousing and bridge housing.
- Portland State University, Portland Community College, and Mt. Hood Community College in Oregon all teamed up with two non-profits to create the [Affordable Rents for College Students](#), or "ARCS" program. The collaboration provides students with a 50% rental subsidy applied to college housing. The program removes additional barriers to housing by waiving security deposits and application fees and by providing free WiFi and reduced utility costs.
- [Barstow Community College](#) in California partners with the [New Hope Village](#) affordable housing organization to provide subsidized rents and employment assistance to students. Students pay a portion of rent once they secure jobs with support from New Hope staff.
- [DePaul USA's Dax House in Philadelphia](#) provides students with safe and stable housing and support for the continuation and completion of their studies. Residents have access to meals, service coordination, healthcare, and employment opportunities. - The newly renovated building has 24 furnished single-room occupancy units with a shared kitchen, bathrooms, and common spaces.
- The [Humboldt \(CA\) Tenant Landlord Collaboration](#) promotes best practices for tenants and landlords throughout the Humboldt State University community. They offer a 10-module certification program to help students, renters, and property owners build positive and equitable relationships.
- [Antelope Valley College](#) in California partners with the non-profit organization [The People Concern](#) to find permanent, supportive housing for college students with children that experience homelessness. Housing ranges from full apartments to individual rooms for rent.
- [John Burton Advocates for Youth Group and Jovenes Inc.](#), both based in California, published guidelines for college-focused rapid rehousing for homeless college students. In its first three years of operation, the effort has housed 62 students with a 76% retention rate. Drawing from evidence-based practices, their model focuses on:
 - assistance with housing identification and landlord recruitment,
 - rental subsidies
 - case management,
 - a housing-first approach
 - time-limitations with flexibility on program access, peer navigators
 - and partnerships with colleges and housing programs.

College-run Emergency Financial Assistance for Housing & Other Basic Needs

- [University of Montana's Office of Basic Needs](#) provides students with eviction prevention resources. They also help those with limited rental history and poor or no credit secure housing. In addition, they support students who believe they have experienced age discrimination or who lack a cosigner.
- In Georgia, [Kennesaw State University's](#) Campus Awareness Resource and Empowerment Services (CARES) helps students who have experienced the foster care system, homelessness and/or food insecurity. [CARES](#) serves as the single point of access to services and resources both on- and off-campus for Kennesaw State students. The program housed 44 students in temporary apartments and helped 111 students avoid eviction and homelessness. Kennesaw CARES has also created the "CARES RoadMap" which trains other colleges to better help students with basic needs insecurity.
- [California State University at Chico](#) provides students with
 - rental assistance
 - financial support
 - on-location case management
 - housing search assistance
 - legal assistance and negotiation with landlords
 - move-in cost assistance
 - security deposit
 - rental payments
 - lease and co-signing advising

Partnering with Local Housing Authorities

- [Community College of Philadelphia](#) partnered with the Philadelphia Housing Authority to renovate two townhomes (16 rooms plus common areas) for housing insecure students. The units are within walking distance of campus. Students pay 30% of their income, or no more than \$125/month, in rent. The Housing Authority manages the properties.
- [Columbus State University](#) recently piloted a Success Bridge program in partnership with the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, the Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio, the Community Shelter Board, and the Homeless Families Foundation. Through the partnership, 48 students received short-term rent and utility assistance, and 24 student families were provided with housing.
- Noting that their student body mirrored local clients receiving housing assistance, [Portland Community College](#) in Oregon started providing students with affordable housing and workforce training in partnership with [Home Forward](#) (formerly the Housing Authority of Portland). The program gives priority to students with experiences in the foster care system.

Building New Affordable Units

Colleges and universities increasingly partner with non-profit housing organizations to convert or build new units of subsidized housing for students. [Legislation passed in 2019 by the California General Assembly](#) generates funds to subsidize the efforts. Another [recently passed bipartisan bill](#) in California will update the state's density bonus law to support more affordable housing, particularly for low-income college students.

Here are some examples of colleges taking advantage of these new policies:

- [LA County Community College District](#) created a 35-bed transitional housing project in partnership with the non-profit Los Angeles Room & Board. Students get meals and in-house support services. The effort follows a similar partnership with another local non-profit, Shower of Hope, which plans to provide another eight beds and support services for male students enrolled at East Los Angeles College who face homelessness.
- [College of the Siskiyous](#) and [College of the Redwoods](#) in California both partnered with the organization Servitas to develop new affordable housing facilities for homeless or housing insecure students. [Imperial Valley College in California](#) houses 26 homeless young adults that attend the college using a tiny home model. [Orange Coast College](#) and [Santa Rosa Junior College](#), created heavily-subsidized, large residency halls (between 400 and 800 beds each) designed to support students struggling to pay market rate for rent.
- [Gavilan College](#) in Santa Clara County was awarded a three-year, \$1.5K grant to partner with regional community agencies offering housing services under the college Homeless and Housing Insecure Pilot (HHIP) program created under Assembly Bill 74.

Notes and References:

¹The movement to address student housing insecurity and homeless is evolving rapidly. This updated guide captures some more recent efforts and provides a categorization of strategies that might be helpful for practitioners.