



Cerritos College
Building Futures Through Learning



News Release

Cerritos Community College District • 11110 Alondra Blvd. • Norwalk CA 90650 • www.cerritos.edu

View online release here: <https://www.cerritos.edu/releases-2020/06/TheVillage-post.htm>

Cerritos College Opens California's First Community College Housing Project to Tackle Student Homelessness

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 11, 2020

Media Contact: [Miya Walker](#)

Norwalk, Calif. – June 11, 2020 – Today, Cerritos College announced the official grand opening of The Village – **California's first community college housing development exclusively for students facing homelessness.** Located just blocks away from the campus, the project features seven modern townhomes with a mix of free and affordable rental options that will house students between the ages of 18-25 years old.

The Village is part of the Cerritos College Board of Trustee's vision and commitment to address student success by meeting students' basic needs, including issues of poverty such as housing and food insecurity. In 2016, the District entered into a partnership with Jovenes, Inc., a Los Angeles nonprofit that assists homeless and displaced young adults, to develop an innovative housing model with transitional homes and wrap-around support services exclusively for homeless students. The College also received support for the project from The City of Norwalk, Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn (4th District), and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

Homelessness is a persistent problem across California's 115 community college campuses. According to the 2019 #RealCollege Survey Report conducted by the Hope Lab:

- Nearly one in five community college students experience homelessness.
- More than half of Cerritos College students who responded to the survey faced housing insecurity and had difficulty paying rent or a mortgage.
- Students who experience homelessness and food insecurity also find it difficult to manage personal and financial responsibilities and navigate the demands of college life.
- **46%** of Cerritos College respondents experienced food insecurity within 30 days prior to taking the survey.
- **16%** of Cerritos College respondents utilized Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Only 6% of homeless students utilized housing benefits.
- **15%** of Cerritos College respondents experienced homelessness in the previous year.

Data from the #RealCollege Survey identified specific Cerritos College student groups as high risk for facing homelessness. Foster youth, African American/Black, Native American, Southwest Asian, Pacific Islander, Asian American, and undocumented students are particularly more vulnerable than other student groups, according to the report.

Cerritos College has a long history of supporting disproportionately impacted student populations, providing robust service programs and resources. The College established a [Falcon Basic Needs Taskforce](#) that seeks to improve students' ability to access food and housing services; [LINC](#) for former foster youth, [Puente](#), [UMOJA](#) Success Program, and [UndocuAlly](#) for undocumented students, to name some.

"Meeting the basic needs of our students is a major priority for the District, which includes housing students who face homelessness," said Cerritos College Board President Marisa Perez. "The Village housing project is one of the many steps we have taken to serve one of our most vulnerable student populations. The Village provides students with a secure environment so they can become self-reliant while finishing their educational goals."

"We believe the collaboration model we used to develop the Village housing project can be widely replicated across the state to solve the issue of student housing for community college students facing homelessness. We are proud to have worked alongside such great partners to provide a unique and innovative project that will serve our homeless students," said President/Superintendent Dr. Jose Fierro. "Our goal with The Village is to provide a safe haven to students who are housing insecure until they graduate and transition into their own self-supported space. When students don't have to worry about where they are going to sleep at night, they can focus on their studies and improve their grades."

"I applaud the innovative, historic work at Cerritos College to provide safe and secure housing for homeless students on campus," said Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley. "Now, more than ever, is the time for our colleges to rise to the occasion, serve as centers of strength in their communities and find creative ways to support our students most in need as we adapt to challenging times. Cerritos College's efforts to establish this new housing development, coupled with the collaborative support of local community partners throughout the process, serves as a model to our system."

"Homelessness among community college students is a huge problem, especially here in LA County, but for too long it was overlooked by policy makers because it didn't fit the preconceived notion of what 'homelessness' looks like. Cerritos College is now leading the way with this innovative model for providing housing for community college students so they can focus on getting their education and building their future. I hope that community colleges across the county follow their lead," said Supervisor Hahn.

Jovenes, Inc. will serve as the lead housing service provider for The Village. It will provide day-to-day management, **resident selection, on-site supervision, case management, and maintenance. Jovenes, Inc. will also offer** services to help students complete their educational goals. The service provider will receive referrals from Cerritos College staff and departments, such as Financial Aid, EOPS, and the Guardian Scholars Program, and **provide recommendations for alternative housing options when The Village units are at capacity.**

"Jovenes, Inc. is proud and excited to open The Village with Cerritos College. We believe that by providing housing for homeless students, we can help them achieve their dreams of higher education. Jovenes is committed to expanding- our support for students experiencing homelessness, and The Village demonstrates a new model of how colleges and housing providers can partner together to create housing opportunities that help students succeed," said Andrea Marchetti, Executive Director, Jovenes, Inc.

For more information about The Village, contact Jovenes at CerritosPN@jovenesinc.org.

About Cerritos College: *Cerritos College serves as a comprehensive community college for southeastern Los Angeles County. Communities within the college's district include Artesia, Bellflower, Cerritos, Downey, Hawaiian Gardens, La Mirada, Norwalk, and portions of Bell Gardens, Lakewood, Long Beach, Santa Fe Springs and South Gate. Cerritos College offers degrees and certificates in more than 180 areas of study in nine divisions. Annually, more than 1,200 students successfully complete their course of studies, and enrollment currently averages 23,000 students. Visit Cerritos College online at <http://www.cerritos.edu/>.*

About Jovenes, Inc.: *Jovenes, Inc. is a LA based non-profit organization which has provided housing and supportive services to homeless youth for over 30 years. Jovenes is the leading service provider for homeless youth in Southeast Los Angeles County, and offers multiple housing options, combined with supportive services, that help youth leave homelessness behind. The agency continues to expand by partnering with colleges throughout the region to provide housing solutions for students experiencing homelessness. To learn more, please visit www.jovenesinc.org or contact ehubbard@jovenesinc.org.*