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## **Cerritos College Opens Free Campus Market Falcon's Nest to Feed Hungry Students**

The Falcon's Nest provides food, clothing, hygiene support, and emergency aid

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**NORWALK, Calif. March 8, 2022** – On March 1, Cerritos College celebrated the grand opening of **Falcon's Nest**, a centralized network of resources that support meeting the basic needs of students. The College supports students by providing a free campus food pantry with an assortment of healthy, fresh food and vegetables. The Falcon's Nest also offers clothing, hygiene support, emergency aid resources, and housing resources, among other services.

At Cerritos College, nearly 60 percent of its students receive financial aid, and more than 70 percent qualify for CalFresh – indicating they are low income and in dire financial straits.



Cerritos College has a long history of supporting underserved student populations. In 2017, the College established the Food and Housing Insecurity Task Force to tackle students' basic needs insecurity and formed a partnership with L.A. Regional Food Bank to host monthly food drives on campus. In 2019, the Board established a goal to expand campus efforts to address student housing insecurity and hunger, among other critical areas. Today, the Task Force became the Falcon's Nest basic needs team, which serves as a single point of contact for basic needs and a seamless system to connect students to food, housing, hygiene, transportation resources.

Student Jacqueline Benitez was raised by her grandmother. When she lost her grandmother in the summer of 2020, she also lost her place to live. Through the Falcon's Nest, Jacqueline was housed at Cerritos College's housing unit for homeless students called The Village. She now works at The Falcon's Nest as a CalFresh Outreach Assistant, helping fellow students in need with food assistance applications. The Child Development major also works as a babysitter with a dream of one day opening her childcare business. "Thanks to The Falcon's Nest, I can stay on track with my life and studies," said Jacqueline, who is graduating from the College in the summer.

"The Falcon's Nest is part of the Cerritos College Board of Trustees' long-standing commitment to student success through meeting students where they are. Doing that requires us to be honest about issues like housing and food insecurity, and how they affect student outcomes," Board President James Cody Birkey. "Over and over again, our students have shown that these kinds of investments make a huge difference. That's why we appreciate so much collaborative support from our local community partners in serving our most vulnerable student populations."

"By providing basic needs support such as food, housing, clothing, and hygiene, we are removing obstacles from our students' lives so they can focus on their studies," said President Dr. Jose Fierro. "We will continue to prioritize and advocate for our students' basic needs so they can ensure their educational success."

The Falcon's Nest is accepting donations of hygiene products, including shampoo, conditioner, socks, hairbrushes, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shower gel, soap, deodorant, feminine care products, and lotion.

More information about The Falcon's Nest and the College's basic needs support services can be found at [www.cerritos.edu/falcons-nest](http://www.cerritos.edu/falcons-nest).

**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. Enrollment currently averages 21,000 students. Visit Cerritos College online at <http://www.cerritos.edu/>.

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