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Student Leaders Help Campus Bring Metro GoPass to Students through Pilot Program

Cerritos College launches new student transit pass program

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 31, 2022

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NORWALK, Calif. - March 31, 2022 – Cerritos College officially launched its new **Metro GoPass** program for all students. The Cerritos College Associated Students organization sponsored funding to subsidize the cost to provide students with transit passes at a steep discount of more than 90%. The **GoPass** program is through the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Fareless System Initiative Community College pilot program.



The campus's student leaders got on board with the **Metro GoPass** program to help their fellow students ease the burden of finding reliable, affordable transportation to access campus and work. The student government unanimously approved a resolution to increase the Student Activities Fee from \$10 to \$19 to cover the cost to make the transit program available to all students. The student fee had not been changed in more than three decades.

"When this student transit program was introduced to us, we were super excited," said the Associated Students of Cerritos College President Sandra Abundio. "Being able to ensure access to reliable transportation for students is crucial in their educational journeys. We are extremely grateful to attend a college that truly aims to prioritize the basic needs of students and we are proud to be a part of these efforts."

"It is exciting to finally see this student transit program on campus," said Cerritos College Board President James Cody Birkey. "It's important for our students to be able to access campus with a safe and reliable source of transportation to achieve their educational goals and become self-reliant and successful in their lives. Better access to education will remain a top priority for the Board."

"Student access to campus through safe, affordable transportation has been a major point of interest for the Board," said Cerritos College Trustee Marisa Perez, who was an early champion on the Board for student transit passes. "Our main goal is to help increase student completion and graduation rates, so by ensuring our students can travel to campus and their jobs without the burden of paying for transportation, we believe these transit passes will make a big difference."

The new transportation support will ensure that students have affordable and reliable means of transportation to access the College. At Cerritos College, 70 percent of students qualify for the California College Promise Grant, which waives enrollment fees to attend school. Fifty percent of students receive a federal Pell grant that is awarded to students with exceptional financial need – indicating they are low income and in dire financial straits.

"We are excited that Cerritos College is part of the GoPass program and has taken a critical step toward eliminating cost barriers for its students. Together, we will help students access education, internships, and jobs without having to worry about how to get to their destination or how to pay for it," said Metro Board Member and Whittier City Council Member Fernando Dutra.

"We are delighted to welcome Cerritos College to the growing list of regional community colleges joining our popular GoPass Program," said Metro Chief Executive Officer Stephanie N. Wiggins. "Studies show that having a transit pass increases student success significantly. Students with access to discounted or free transit performed better in student retention, credits earned, and completion than those without a transit card. What this means is that we are not only providing Cerritos College students with access to transportation, we are also helping change their life trajectories."

"We are removing obstacles that our students are facing one by one, including food, housing, and now transportation," said Cerritos College President/Superintendent Dr. Jose Fierro. "Our objective is to provide every student on campus with the basic resources they need to live a full life and ultimately complete their educational goals."

Meeting students' basic needs remains a top priority at Cerritos College. The campus recently opened its **Falcon's Nest**, a centralized network of resources that support meeting students' basic needs, including food, clothing, hygiene, and housing, among others.

Thanks to efforts to support affordable transportation by the Cerritos College Board of Trustees, the College has engaged in local and state advocacy to provide access to affordable transportation to low-income residents and students across the region.

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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