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Cerritos College named finalist twice for 2024 Excelencia Award

NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars and The Village honored for boosting Latinx student success

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NORWALK, Calif. – September 10, 2024 – Cerritos College has been honored twice as a [finalist](#) for the 2024 Examples of Excelencia award for its successful STEM and housing support programs. The national recognition awarded by Excelencia in Education highlights innovative programs with evidence-based practices that accelerate Latinx student success in higher education. The college's NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars and The Village student housing project were selected in the associate-level category of the awards from a pool of 103 submissions from 20 states across the nation.

NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars (NCAS) program

Launched in 2019, the NCAS program at Cerritos College aims to advance students' STEM skills and prepare them for STEM careers, with a special focus on increasing Latinx representation in STEM. The one-year program is designed to boost transfer rates for underrepresented students, enhance career success in STEM fields, and equip students with skills for thriving in STEM careers. In 2023, the NCAS cohort had a 94 percent Latinx, with participants achieving higher success rates in STEM courses, faster degree completion, and greater transfer rates to four-year institutions than non-participants. [Read more about the outcomes of NCAS.](#)

The Village student housing

Opened in 2020, The Village is California's first community college housing program exclusively for students facing homelessness. In addition to providing safe and secure housing, students who live at The Village benefit from wraparound support services, including comprehensive educational planning, financial literacy education, emergency aid, food, clothing, hygiene items, legal assistance, and other essential resources and services. Four years after its grand opening, data shows that the college's efforts to address students' basic needs have led to higher success rates among its students. Students living in The Village have higher GPAs, complete their programs faster, and are more likely to transfer to four-year institutions compared to those not participating in the housing programs. [Read more about the impact of The Village.](#)

“This national recognition of two of our programs is a testament to our efforts in increasing Latinx student success,” said Cerritos College President/Superintendent Dr. Jose Fierro. “Our NCAS program makes STEM fields accessible to underrepresented students, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to achieve their long-term goals. The Village addresses significant disparities in basic needs and insecurities experienced by a majority of our students. Our goal with these programs is to eliminate barriers to education and provide a pipeline to social advancement. We are prepared to expand these groundbreaking programs to better serve our students and our community.”

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 nearly 300 degree and certificate programs in nine divisions. Annually, more than 5,000 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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