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**Harvard Kennedy School Names THA-TCC College Housing Assistance Program
“Top 25 Innovations in Government for 2018”**

TACOMA, WA – The Harvard Kennedy School Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation has named Tacoma Housing Authority and Tacoma Community College’s *College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP)* as one of the [“Top 25 Innovations in American Government for 2018.”](#)

Started in 2014, the THA-TCC [CHAP](#) provides rental assistance for up to 150 TCC students per year who experience homelessness or who are at serious risk of homelessness. Most students in the program are parents. The program supports them with rental assistance for up to three years or until graduation, whichever comes first. To qualify, they must demonstrate adequate progress toward a degree. The joint program accepts applications each year, and when accepted, students receive on-campus support to ensure they successfully find housing and are on track with college. The program also extends to TCC students who begin their studies while in prison, and who come to campus to continue their studies. Most are mothers reuniting with children, and often, face the toughest housing challenges. This partnership supports some of the most vulnerable students in our community, and its results have been positive for the students and the community.

BACKGROUND OF CHAP

The TCC general student population, in comparison to the student population at other colleges, is older, more likely to be the first in the family to attend college, more likely to be low-income, more likely to be working and more likely to be parents. TCC welcomes these students warmly. A TCC degree is transformational in their lives and is a major milestone to adult prosperity.

Yet a growing number of enrolled TCC students are homeless. In 2014, TCC surveyed its students. At the time, 100 students reported that they were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Students experiencing homelessness are much less likely to finish college.

“A college can offer wonderful programs and support services, but if students don’t have a place to go home to at night, chances are they won’t be finishing their programs,” said Mary Chikwinya, TCC Vice President for Student Affairs. *“CHAP gives students who are among the most likely to drop out a way to stay and finish.”*

That data prompted the TCC and THA partnership. They began with a pilot cohort of 47 homeless TCC students, 76 percent of whom were parents. THA provided them with rental assistance. TCC provided the on-campus support. TCC and THA then tracked metrics for the next two years for the cohort and for another 100 homeless students who applied for assistance but did not fit in the cohort. The results were very encouraging:

- **Retention and Graduation Rates:**
60 % of pilot cohort students graduated or remained enrolled; in comparison only **16 %** of the other homeless or near-homeless students remained enrolled in school.
- **Grade Point Average**
The cohort students earned an average **3.05 GPA**, higher than the overall TCC GPA of **2.97**.

The CHAP is one of fifteen initiatives in THA's Education Project. This project seeks to spend housing dollars, not just to house people, but also to get two other things done: to help them succeed as “parents, students, wage earners and builders of assets”; and to help public schools and colleges, like TCC, educate low-income students.

SCALING –UP CHAP

These metrics from the initial cohort encouraged THA and TCC to expand the program. In 2016, the imperative to expand became critical. In that year, the University of Wisconsin HOPE Lab surveyed TCC students about their basic needs. This was part of a national survey of community college students. *See, Hungry and Homeless in College (Wisconsin HOPE LAB 2017)* That study found 27 percent of TCC students reported an experience of homelessness in the 12 months prior to answering the survey; 69 percent reported an experience within that time of serious housing instability, such as eviction for nonpayment of rent.

In response to this data and the alarming picture of what TCC students face, THA and TCC scaled up CHAP. The CHAP now pays to house 150 homeless or near homeless TCC students each year, most of whom are parents. More research will continue. Principal Investigator Sara Goldrick-Rab of Temple University will conduct a third party evaluation of CHAP, funded by the Kresge Foundation.

“This partnership with TCC not only houses needy families but does so in a way that helps them get a college degree,” said Michael Mirra, THA Executive Director. *“In that way it promotes their lasting success and prosperity, and that of their children. It also helps TCC succeed at its critical educational mission. This partnership with TCC is a very good use of a THA housing dollar.”*

NOTE: The program model presumes that THA’s rental assistance will allow these TCC students to find housing in reasonable proximity of the campus. That is getting harder to do in Tacoma’s new rental market, one of the tightest in the nation. In response, THA is purchasing apartments and properties around the TCC campus.

About Tacoma Community College

Since opening its doors in 1965, TCC has provided a high-quality, affordable education to more than 500,000 people. Serving Tacoma, Gig Harbor, the Key Peninsula, online students and the women’s prisons, TCC educates about 13,000 students annually. Many TCC students are the first in their families to attend college. 58 percent receive financial aid, 13 percent have children, and 48 percent work while attending school.

100 percent committed to student success, TCC continually finds innovative ways to help students. Since launching its Open Educational Resources initiative in 2011, TCC has saved students collectively more than \$5 million on textbooks. Designated an Achieving the Dream Leader College, TCC provides a model for other schools seeking to engage students and boost completion rates. TCC is also one of 67 colleges selected nationally to participate in the Department of Education’s Second Chance Pell pilot program, providing access to education for incarcerated individuals. Designated as Military Friendly College®, TCC is proud to serve Pierce County’s military community. In fall 2018, the college will open a food pantry on campus to support students experiencing food insecurity.

About Tacoma Housing Authority

Established in 1940, Tacoma Housing Authority provides high-quality, stable and sustainable housing and supportive services to people in need. It does this in ways that help them prosper and help our communities develop equitably. THA develops and manages real estate and provides rental housing. In partnership with thousands of private landlords, it helps families pay the rent in the private rental market. It delivers supportive services to help families succeed as “tenants, parents, students, wage earners and builders of assets who can live without assistance”. THA seeks to do its work in ways that help our community be an “attractive place to live, work, attend school, shop and play,” and that help Tacoma be “safe, vibrant, prosperous, attractive and just.” For more information about THA and its work, especially its Education Project, go to www.tacomahousing.org.