



# TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

## **Tacoma Community College Housing Assistance Program: A Summary** *(Last Revised September 11, 2015)*

In September 2014, Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) and Tacoma Community College (TCC) launched an innovative pilot program to house up to 25 homeless TCC students and their dependents during their TCC enrollment. As a condition of the assistance, students must make adequate academic progress toward a degree. The assistance lasts until graduation or 3 years, whichever occurs first. After one year, the program's preliminary outcomes are sufficiently encouraging to allow THA and TCC to consider the program's expansion.

### **HOMELESS COLLEGE STUDENTS**

TCC has a student population of nearly 14,000 students. It is the largest post-secondary educational institution in the South Puget Sound Region. In comparison to students of other institutions, TCC students are older, lower income, more likely to be parents, more likely to be working and more likely to be the first in their family to attend college. Almost half of TCC's students receive financial aid and 41% of these students receive need-based aid. Sixty-one percent (61%) are women and forty-one percent (41%) identify as a person of color. TCC is justifiably proud of the warm welcome it gives them. A TCC degree can transform their lives. On average, a student with a TCC associate degree earns \$34,559 per year, 53.5% more than the average earnings of high school graduate.



A preliminary TCC survey of the student population, revealed a great need for housing assistance. A notable number of students are homeless. The lack of housing or stable housing presents formidable barriers to academic success. The challenges are harder for homeless students who are also parents. Most homeless students drop out.

### **THA - TCC HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

In September 2014, THA and TCC launched a pilot program to address the problem of homelessness among TCC enrolled students. The program has these three main elements:

#### *Rental Assistance During Enrollment*

THA provides rental assistance to a TCC students and dependents who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. TCC advertises the program, screens applicants, and maintains a waiting list. The college targets students in its workforce development program. (This program provides students with comprehensive case management to help them navigate careers. Completion Coaches identify barriers and provide resources for these students. TCC strives to build the work force development students as a cohort that provides its own peer-to-peer student support.) To be eligible for the THA housing assistance students must (1) be homeless or be at serious risk of homelessness (the program uses the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless), (2) meet the relevant THA rules concerning criminal history, lawful residency for at least one household member, and income eligibility. THA performs the background checks. THA inspects the rented housing to make sure it passes THA's Housing Quality Standards.

The value of the rental assistance equals what THA's regular Housing Opportunity Program (HOP) would provide and is based on the size of the household. The average value is \$460.29 per month. Unless terminated earlier for failure to fulfill the conditions of the assistance, the rental assistance lasts until graduation or for 3 years, whatever occurs first.

#### *Expectations and Conditions of Participation*

Participating students, to remain eligible for the assistance, must: (i) remain enrolled in 12 or more academic credits and otherwise make adequate academic progress toward a degree (TCC tracks the adequacy of the student's progress); (2) maintain at least a 2.0 grade point average; (3) participate in support workshops on topics such as financial literacy.

#### *Performance Measures and Evaluation*

To judge the success of the pilot, THA and TCC have chosen the following performance measures in comparison to unassisted homeless enrolled students and TCC students generally:

- grade point average ● graduation rate ● post-graduation earnings

### **RESULTS TO DATE**

The participating cohort of students has an average age of 35, 10 years older than the average age among all TCC students; 82% of the participating students are parents. With only a year of data, outcomes are preliminary. But they are promising:

- **95%** (21 out of 22) of participating students remain enrolled; in comparison, of the 146 eligible applicants the program could not serve, only **24%** (35 out of 146) remain enrolled;
- The GPA of the participating students is **3.05**; the average GPA of all TCC students, homeless or housed, is **2.96**.

### **THA's EDUCATION PROJECT**

The THA-TCC Housing Assistance Program is part of THA's Education Project. It seeks ways to spend a housing dollar not only to house needy families but to get two other outcomes: help students succeed in school; promote the success of the Tacoma schools and educational institutions serving low-income students. When it works it becomes a very good use of a housing dollar. To learn more about THA and its Education Project go to [www.tacomahousing.org](http://www.tacomahousing.org).

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