

No Excuses Poverty Initiative
Recognition & News Releases

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board announces the 2015 Star Award winner

Nov. 20, 2015 – Austin, Texas – Today at its annual State of Higher Education luncheon, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board announced the 2015 Star Award winner for exceptional contributions toward meeting one or more of the goals of *Closing the Gaps by 2015*, the state's strategic plan for higher education that comes to a close at the end of the year.

This year's winner is Lone Star College-University Park for its Education and Career Positioning System (ECPS) - Linking Student Pathways to Careers program. The ECPS is a suite of applications that works with the U.S. Department of Education's "MyData" site. According to Shah Ardalan, president of LSC-University Park, the ECPS applications provide students, faculty, advisors, and parents with the ability to simulate, validate and plan students' education-to-career options and suggests the best individual journey to achieve students' goals. The ECPS does this by analyzing an individual's interests, values, skills, and academic records and distributes personalized student analytics. This innovation takes "Big Data" and brings it down to a personal level to allow students and parents to partner with educational institutions and the workforce by taking an active role in viewing their own information.

"There were many excellent Texas programs to choose from among this year's seven Star Award finalists, but Lone Star-University Park's innovation surpassed the Star Award judges' criteria and expectations. This ECPS innovation is an outstanding example of how Texas institutions creatively help to close the education gaps that challenge our state," said Commissioner of Higher Education Raymund Paredes. "The Coordinating Board is proud to recognize Lone Star-University Park and the people who developed and implemented this state-of-the-art program that benefits Texas students."

The Coordinating Board received 48 nominations and 42 applications for this year's Star Award program. In addition to Lone Star College-University Park, this year's finalists were:

- Alamo Colleges – Alamo Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (Alamo I-BEST)
- Amarillo College – No Excuses Poverty Initiative: Creating a Systemic Approach to Overcoming Poverty Barriers in Higher Education
- Houston Community College – V.A.S.T. Academy (Vocational Advancement/Skills Training)
- Lone Star College-Montgomery – THE (Teaching Highlighting Engagement) Initiatives
- North Central Texas College – Project Xtreme Academic Makeover
- The University of Texas at Arlington – Pathways to College Access and Career Readiness

"Thanks to the innovative and dedicated efforts of Texas higher education institutions, the state is about to achieve our *Closing the Gaps* goals at the end of the year. These types of initiatives will play a vital role in meeting the goals laid out in our new strategic plan, *60x30TX*," said Commissioner Paredes.

The Star Award was established in 2001. Winners are selected by a review committee consisting of Coordinating Board members, out-of-state higher education experts, and Texas community leaders. Representatives of institutions, organizations and groups from all over Texas have been recognized for their efforts to develop and implement the state's most successful programs, projects, activities and partnerships. These efforts are helping Texas close the gaps in student participation and success in higher education, excellence in programs and services, and research development and expansion.

###

THECB Mission Statement The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board promotes access, affordability, quality, success, and cost efficiency in the state's institutions of higher education, through *Closing the Gaps* and its successor plan, resulting in a globally competent workforce that positions Texas as an international leader in an increasingly complex world economy.



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Supporting Student Success: Discussions about Adult Education and Developmental Education Reform in Community Colleges (https://sites.ed.gov/octae/2016/08/29/supporting-student-success-ae-and-dev-ed-reform-in-comm-colleges/)

Earning a postsecondary degree or credential has become a prerequisite for the growing jobs of the new economy. President Obama has challenged every American to commit to at least one year of higher education or postsecondary training to better prepare themselves for the challenges they will face in the ever-evolving workforce. OCTAE is committed to supporting community college students and, in turn, strengthening the coordination and alignment between adult education and developmental education programs at community college campuses to better prepare students for the 21st century job market. The *Supporting Student Success: Adult Education and Remedial Education Reform in Community Colleges* initiative is a technical assistance activity, funded by OCTAE to support the President and the Department's goals.

As part of *Supporting Student Success*, OCTAE, through the support of the Manhattan Strategy Group is hosting three Community of Practice (CoP) discussions this fall. The CoPs will be hosted on the LINC'S online platform. To comment in the discussions, free membership to LINC'S is required (<https://auth.lincs.ed.gov/lincs-user-mgmt-webapp/signup?referer=community.lincs.ed.gov&modal=false>), but no membership is necessary to read the discussion. Make sure you are subscribed to Postsecondary Completion LINC'S Community of Practice (<https://community.lincs.ed.gov/group/postsecondary-completion>) group for more information. Learn more about LINC'S here (<http://lincs.ed.gov/about-lincs>). We highly encourage you to join the CoPs by signing up prior to the start of the discussion.

Get involved! The CoP discussion of best practices listed below will be led by current practitioners of adult education and developmental education programming.

- **Building Bridges Between Adult Basic Education and Developmental Education: October 17-21, 2016**
 - This discussion is designed to present strategies and models for collaboration and communication between Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Developmental Education (Dev Ed) programs based on work being done at Amarillo (TX) College and Gateway (CT) Community College.
- **Intensive Skill and College Readiness Programs at Community Colleges: November 7-11, 2016**
 - This discussion will lead with the presentation of two programs, St. Louis (MO) Community College's *Academic Academy* and Gateway Community College's *Academic Bootcamp*. They will provide information about their opportunities surrounding skill development, college and work readiness competency development, and career guidance.
- **Re-Visioning Student Instruction and Support: December 1-8, 2016**
 - This discussion is designed to present national programming which incorporates intensive support services. Individuals from St. Louis Community College and Amarillo College will begin by sharing some of their practices which include, but is not limited to: face-to-face advising, online media instruction, and community based supports integrated into training.
(<http://sites.ed.gov/octae/files/2016/06/Erin-Berg.jpg>)

Guest blogger: Erin Berg, OCTAE Community College Program Specialist



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🕒 August 29, 2016 (2016-08-29T13:27:31) (<https://sites.ed.gov/octae/2016/08/29/supporting-student-success-ae-and-dev-ed-reform-in-comm-colleges/>)

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Department of Education Enlists AC for Student-Success Project

by Joe Wyatt

Published September 2, 2016

Amarillo College has received affirmation from an authority second to none that its innovative integration of resources to support underprepared adult students is not only unique and worthwhile, but simply too promising to keep under wraps.

TAMARA CLUNIS & the ARC



The U.S. Department of Education wants AC to share its methodology nationwide.

The DOE's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) informed AC in August that AC is one of only four community colleges being enlisted to participate in a new and far-reaching project dubbed Supporting Student Success.

The project was established to identify and widely share the best methods community colleges are using to align developmental and adult education programs to support students in their transition to post-secondary education and employment goals.

Thanks to the purposeful integration of its acclaimed Poverty Initiative into the formula, AC has done that and more.

"Our adult education students and our developmental education students, many of them have great needs," Dr. Tamara Clunis, AC's dean of academic success, said. "Our integration of academic support and social services support is what makes this project work at AC.

"It's a great honor to be recognized for our ability to serve our least-prepared students and help adult learners build their basic skills while they're completing workforce training," she said. "Our adult and developmental education alignment really is cutting-edge. This is an exciting opportunity for us to share our expertise with other community colleges around the country."

A letter AC received from OCTAE stated: "Using evidence-based criteria and recommendations from program experts and academic researchers, project staff selected Amarillo College from a diverse pool of community colleges nationwide. Your institution was validated in the program area of Student Support."

The letter also stated: "Highlights of various aspects of your institution's program will be featured in upcoming materials developed for the Department of Education."

Moreover, in the year ahead, Clunis, AC President Russell Lowery-Hart, and Jordan Herrera, director of social services, will share AC's best practices through a variety of platforms, messaging directed toward colleges in OCTAE's network that are striving to better align developmental and adult education services.

OCTAE also has invited AC leadership to participate (expenses paid) in both a Thought Leader's Summit and a Minority-Serving Institutions Conference later this year in Washington D.C., and to contribute to a national webinar in March.

"We are honored by the Department of Education's support for and advocacy of Amarillo College," Lowery-Hart said. "Our work is not only changing lives. We also are dramatically improving the financial future of our community by ensuring more students earn degrees leading to employment."



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AC poverty initiative recognized at national level

Published: Wednesday, December 14th 2016, 5:30 pm CST

By Jennifer Mutz, Reporter [CONNECT](#)

AMARILLO, TX (KFDA) - Amarillo College's No Excuses Poverty Initiative has been recognized at a national level.

AC has been nominated to receive a Bellwether Award by the Community College Futures Assembly.

The school's Advocacy and Resource Center has attracted attention as the school tries to provide services for students in poverty.

"What we are known for is our poverty initiative which started in 2012 and it's just a cohesive list of different programs that we have here at Amarillo College that help our students who are in need," said AC Director of Social Services, Jordan Herrera.

AC has a food pantry, a clothing closet and also provides scholarships for those who may not have the funds to pursue higher education.

They also provide transportation services for students along with a lending library where students can check out books rather than purchase them for their classes.

According to the Assembly, these efforts are unique which landed AC a spot to possibly win a Bellwether Award on January 31.

"We are being recognized for our work and we are really happy for the nomination and we were even more excited when we found out that we were a finalist," said Herrera. "We are one of 10 in the planning, governance and financing category and we are one of 30 who have been picked from 3,000 applicants."

Regardless if AC wins or not, Herrera said they are proud to have served about 600 students through the initiative this semester alone.

All resources will be available to all students regardless if they are full or part-time.

The main Advocacy and Resource Center is open and ready to serve AC students.

It's located at the Washington Street Campus on the first floor of the Ware Student Commons, Room 108 and is open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

If you are looking for more information regarding the center visit their [website](#).

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New student commons provide AC students with daily essentials

Published: Tuesday, August 2nd 2016, 5:40 pm CST

Updated: Tuesday, August 2nd 2016, 6:29 pm CST

By Nelly Ramirez, Reporter **CONNECT**

AMARILLO, TX (KFDA) - Beginning this fall Amarillo College students will be able to find four popular campus services under one roof.

With the opening of a new student commons on AC's Washington Street campus, students can now find social services, an adult student program, a food pantry and a clothing closet in one location.

Before the commons area was renovated, students had to visit different AC buildings to find each service. Now that all the services are together AC officials say they will be able to better assist the students.

"All of the services have made an impact on students here at Amarillo college," Social Service Director Jordan Herrera said. "I would say that every one of these services are able to provide hope for some of the students, especially those who have hit a brick wall."

While AC designed these four services to help students overcome life issues and stay in school, students themselves help keep the food pantry and clothing closet stocked.

"We are really proud to say that our pantry is run 100 percent on donations. That really helps us get all of our AC community involved in participating with us in our food pantry and it helps them feel like they made a difference as well," Herrera adds.

Any AC student enrolled in a class can qualify for these services.

Herrera says now that they have more space, AC can fully utilize the clothing closet to its full potential.

The closet program offers students an opportunity to choose a business attire for interviews or work. Students can find belts, shoes, pants, blazers and dresses in the clothing closet, and once students pick out an outfit it is theirs to keep.

"We started these services to provide a gap for them to not have to feel what its like to go without food, to go without clothes. We have provided all of these services for them to utilize here on our campus," Herrera said.

Students who use the food pantry have access to it twice a month, and AC offers additional help for students who need more assistance.

AC is working on an online ordering system which will allow students to place a food pantry order in a quick, convenient, and discretionary fashion.

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Amarillo College now providing students a free stress management program

Published: Thursday, September 15th 2016, 3:09 pm CST

By Jennifer Mutz, Reporter [CONNECT](#)

AMARILLO, TX (KFDA) - Amarillo College recognizes the impact stress can have on students and will now provide a free stress management program.

'Success Over Stress' (SOS) is a new support group that AC has launched this fall semester with hopes that it will alleviate student stress and give them the opportunity to express their concerns and anxieties instead of bottling them up.

"Mental health issues are learning issues," said Dr. Alan Kee, Psychology Professor. "For example, a depressed brain just cannot learn very effectively. So, if students can get some good treatment, they have a chance of recovering and then they can complete their certificate or their degree and actually make a better living for themselves and their families."

This SOS program kicked off freshly this month but students are encouraged to enter the support group at any time during the semester to help relieve stress levels.

"When you think about stress, it's something that you want to deal with on the front end and the reality of it is, over time it tends to escalate," said Kee. "If it's not dealt with early on, the stress can pile up."

The focus of this group is to intervene early in a student's life and provide support over time to avoid behavioral changes that could be harmful to a student and their studies.

The motivation toward the campuses outreach begins with one suicidal tragedy and now Dr. Kee and Amarillo College are working to prevent this from happening again.

"Two and a half years ago, I had a student in a class who was distressed," said Kee. "She never returned to class and I later found out that she did in fact take her life and that just always stuck with me. It was tragic, it was heart breaking and that was a stimulus to start thinking about what I can possibly do to maybe make a difference and to intervene with a student who may be at risk."

60 percent of AC students are in poverty, which is a risk factor for mental health issues and also makes it hard for students to find inexpensive counseling.

So, now students will be able to join together each Thursday afternoon in Dutton Hall to share and learn strategies for dealing with stressful situations.

"In the group itself, we would have students volunteer to share a stressful situation that they are dealing with and the class would help walk them through the steps of recovering."

Amarillo College will also be opening a counseling center within the next week that will be located on the second floor of the Student Services Center.

This will also be available free for students and it will provide them the opportunity to have a more personal one to one counseling session.

For more information regarding the SOS program and the counseling center visit the AC's [website](#).

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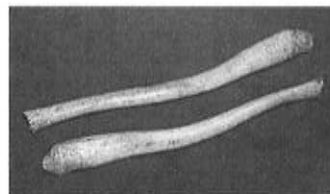


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New Amarillo College program will aid low-income families

Published: Friday, June 3rd 2016, 3:54 pm CST

Updated: Monday, July 18th 2016, 4:25 pm CST

 By Nelly Ramirez, Reporter [CONNECT](#)

AMARILLO, TX (KFDA) - Starting in the Fall, legal students from Amarillo College will be providing counseling services to low income families.

"We know that there is a low income population in Amarillo, many of whom do not have access to legal resources," Legal Studies Coordinator Robin Malone said. "We hope we can reach out and touch that segment of the community and assist them in navigating through the legal process because it is a very complicated process. It is our position that every body should have access regardless of their income level."

This is all being made possible after AC received a \$25,000 grant from the Texas Bar Foundation.

Some of the cases students will be able to work on include custody, child support, protection orders, housing and immigration.

Students will be working under the supervision of local attorneys who do pro bono work.

They will be interviewing clients, drafting legal documents and receiving hands on experience.

Clients will come from the Legal Aid of Northwest Texas organization.

"We can help them (Northwest Texas) with their back log and at the same time we are going to be helping our students and were going to be serving more students and more people in the community," Malone said.

Another way AC students and their families will benefit is by a developing legal clinic.

"There will be a walk in legal clinic for our legal students, will have volunteers come in and what I am envisioning is hosting a family law day on a Monday," Malone adds. "If you have a family law issue and your a student you can come in to the walk in clinic and you can speak to an attorney about your issues and hopefully they can navigate you through and lead you in the right direction."

The Internship will be offered in the Introduction to Law and Legal Profession course.

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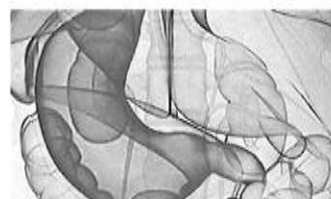

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Amarillo has the first No Limits, No Excuses Univ. in the country

Amarillo, TX - It's the first No Limits, No Excuses college in the country and it's right here in our area.

Amarillo College is now providing help to students outside of the classroom.

"A couple months ago I was on a skiing trip with a few of my friends. I just fell tumbling down and I felt my leg move in a way it was not supposed to move," says Hoz Fierro, Blue Blazer, Amarillo College student.

To make matters worse, Hoz Fierro wasn't insured at the time.

"When I turned nineteen they took away the Medicaid I had," says Hoz Fierro, Blue Blazer, Amarillo College student.

At that point, he didn't know who to turn to.

"A lot of my classes suffered I was doing poorly," says Hoz Fierro, Blue Blazer, Amarillo College student.

He ended up receiving more support than he could have ever hoped for.

"From the people at Amarillo College, helping me and doing everything they can, got me in to get checked within less than a week. I had my MRI and I got to see an orthopedist finally," says Hoz Fierro, Blue Blazer, Amarillo College student.

In the past when Amarillo College saw students not performing well, they tried to offer them more academically, until they learned that's not what most people needed help with.

Sixty percent of their students are living in poverty.

"It was the life issues outside of the class that were having a bigger impact in their academic set skills in class. So we put a system into place that connects students to services in the community, connects them to financial aid, transportation support, child-care support," says Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Amarillo College.

"When students come in and they're having a problem, or if they tell a faculty member or their teacher or the professor something...what we're going to do is have a streamline process where it comes to me and we're going to try to find resources for those students. We want to make sure they're a success," says Trudy Banner, social service coordinator, Amarillo College.

Resources ranging from food to medical costs to clothing.

"We also implemented a mentoring program starting in the Fall. So, we are working one-on-one with our students based on Donna Beegle's navigator neighbor, role model," says LuLu Cowan, Special Assistant to President, Amarillo College.

Hoz is one example of how obstacles can sometimes stand in the way of a student's education.

"A lot of my classes suffered, I was doing poorly when this happened and now I'm getting A's. I think having been in the situation without the help, I would have been struggling a lot more and probably thought it would be best to drop classes," says Hoz Fierro, Blue Blazer, Amarillo College student.

His advice, never give up hope.

"Now I'm here standing, still in a leg brace but I'm standing and I feel good. I mean there's just tons of services you can find here at Amarillo College. There's really no excuse not to graduate from here," says Hoz Fierro, Blue Blazer, Amarillo College student.

If you want information on how you can receive help call the Amarillo College Advising Office at 806-371-5441. Ask for Trudy Banner, social service coordinator.

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PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES > No Limits No Excuses >

NO LIMITS NO EXCUSES – Amarillo Partners for Postsecondary Success

No Limits No Excuses aims to dramatically increase the number of young adults in Amarillo who complete their postsecondary education, setting them up for success in the workplace and in life.



No Limits No Excuses (NLNE) began with a \$1.3 million grant, plus \$200,000 in coaching serves from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in June 2011. The Amarillo Area Foundation serves as the lead organization of 21 partners representing a cross-section of the Amarillo community. NLNE's overarching goal is 10,000 More Degrees, Zero Excuses by 2025. Degree is defined here by certificate, training program, Associates, Bachelors, Masters or Doctorate that leads to a living wage job in the Panhandle. Interventions focus on college readiness, access, persistence, retention, completion, and education about local in-demand living wage jobs.

INITIATIVES

- Development and implementation of community engagement program for all sectors of the community
- Outside evaluation of ACE, PRO (Pursuing Real Opportunities) and Bridges® (career cluster course planning)
- Community Report Card on measurable objectives to meet goal
- Support of career clusters at AISD, AC, and WTAMU to develop clear pathways and curriculum alignment at all levels in advising and counseling students
- Shared learning experiences at all levels
- Multiple data collection and evaluation measures for informed decision making and improvement of programs
- Work with business and industry to connect curriculum and training for local jobs, internships, development of jobs, and sector partnerships with education, community, and employers for living wage jobs
- Neighborhood and college success coaches

2014 NLNE Highlights:

- Development and ratification of the NLNE Success Plan.
- Multiple national presentations, including to the Achieving the Dream Institute.
- Our second Texas Convening drew attendees and speakers from all over the state and nation.
- Launched Community Success Partners to engage the local business community.
- NLNE Coaches at Amarillo Independent School District's San Jacinto, Whittier and South Lawn schools served 383 students and their families; 35 received GED's, 54 went on to postsecondary instruction with an additional 195 working on literally and GED.
- Cal Farley's Neighborhood Navigators served 589 families. 369 needed help accessing food or hygiene items, while 348 were pursuing educational support. Cal Farley's also provided 109 poverty trainings reaching 4,764 people. Their goal is to educate about poverty while removing the barriers for family to access education that leads to a living wage job.

- Amarillo College's NLNE Coaches retained 58% of their 2013 cohort, and 91% of their 2012 cohort one year out, and 60% of their cohort two years out.
- Amarillo College's Career and Employment services made 6,449 contacts with students through presentations, email, appointments, walk-ins, and hiring events. They reviewed 1,426 resumes and posted 1,201 job openings from 358 different employers.
- Amarillo College's Social Service Coordinator provided 461 referrals or services to AC students. 58 were food pantry services, 75 for housing/shelter and 85 needed help with transportation.
- West Texas A&M University's Student Success Center helped 741 at-risk students during their 2012-2013 year.

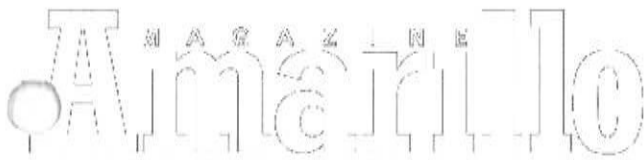
Success Story:

Rose Hall, a single mother of 10 children, had lived in poverty all her life. She would have never thought about getting her GED until she heard it was offered at San Jacinto Elementary where several of her children attend school. Working with a No Limits Success Coach at the school, Rose achieved her GED. But she didn't stop there. She is now taking classes at Amarillo College with her oldest child. He was inspired to stay in high school, graduate, and continue on to Amarillo College as a result of his mother's hard work and example. It is our hope that Rose's success will change the trajectory for her entire family of 10 children. So far, the odds are looking good.

NLNE Partners:

- Amarillo Area Foundation
- Amarillo Chamber of Commerce
- Amarillo College
- Amarillo Economic Development Corporation
- Amarillo Independent School District
- BSA Health System
- Cal Farley's
- City of Amarillo
- Harrington Regional Medical Center, Inc.
- Leadership Amarillo and Canyon
- No Excuses University/Turnaround Schools
- Northwest Texas Healthcare System
- Panhandle Regional Planning Commission
- Panhandle Twenty/20
- Sage Oil Vac
- Texas Health Institute
- US Department of Agriculture
- United Way of Amarillo and Canyon
- West Texas A&M University
- Workforce Solutions
- Xcel Energy

Watch the No Limits No Excuses
VIDEO



(1)

Designed to encompass all that is currently Amarillo



(<http://amarillomagonline.com/issue/>)

SEARCH:

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE (/SECTION/20) - Posted October 4, 2012 9:47 a.m.



photo courtesy of Amarillo College
Amarillo College's Food Pantry is an essential asset for students who cannot afford the costs associated with tuition, books, school and food all in the same month.

When in Need

Amarillo College offers variety of programs to ensure student success

For many students graduating from area high schools, the dream of attending college has been in the forefront of their minds for years.

Finding their way around campus, attending that first lecture and meeting new people are welcome challenges for those eager to grow and find success. Students may receive scholarships, federal grants or even financial assistance from family members to support their educational trek. However, many students embark on the journey alone and unaware of the difficulties they will soon face.

Trudy Banner is the Coordinator of Social Services at [Amarillo College](http://www.actx.edu/) (<http://www.actx.edu/>). She is the campus' go-to adviser for students in need of assistance. More importantly, AC's programs have the potential to alleviate the fear associated with attending college on a limited income. "What the university found is that a lot of students don't finish the programs that they start, and it isn't always due to finances with tuition and books," explains Trudy.

Many students attending Amarillo College are on a fixed income, presenting problems for students if financial burdens arise in their personal lives. These incidents are the primary reason assistance programs are so vital to the AC community. "We are finding that there are so many things that people need help with and they don't know where to go for help. Usually it's something like paying an electric bill; maybe they lost their job, need help paying rent, transportation issues or even childcare," Trudy says.

Some of the programs available to students include United Way, 211, Cal Farley's, Panhandle Community Services, work force solutions, veterans programs those who qualify, and more recently, the AC Food Pantry. The Food Pantry is an essential asset for students who cannot afford the costs associated with tuition, books, school and food all in the same month. The Pantry is a place for students to come and get groceries free of charge.

"The Food Pantry was founded when faculty noticed that students needed food," Trudy says. "Some of them may be lacking the money to get by from paycheck to paycheck and they just do not have enough food. A group of people got together and decided we are going to start a food pantry so students

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are able to come once or twice a month to get groceries."

This is an excellent resource for those struggling to make ends meet, and all of the food is donated from members of the community and outside resources. The Food Pantry also offers smaller kitchen appliances and hygiene products to students when available.

AC became the first no-excuses college in the area. Trudy says this is important to the vision of the program. "We decided that we have to find a way to keep students from dropping out just because they have to pay a \$200 electric bill." Trudy explains that many of the students' socioeconomic statuses are at the poverty line or below, and "education is the key so that they can start making more money, but they have to realize there are a lot of barriers that keep them from completing their education."

In addition to the Food Pantry, AC offers resource services for students who have housing or transportation dilemmas. "A lot of people don't have cars or they have cars with big repairs. If you don't have a car, it's hard to get around, to get to work, to get to school and hard to get to the East Campus," says Trudy. These services help connect students to gas and bus vouchers. Although Trudy says there are still flaws with students taking night

classes because the busing systems only run at certain times.

Housing presents various difficulties as well because students are living on a tight fixed income. "A lot of times students are going to school full time and they may be unable to make a rent payment. We try to connect them to affordable housing or programs that assist them with housing. There are programs that these students are able to qualify for such as HUD housing or Panhandle Community Services," adds Trudy.

Trudy and the Amarillo College Social Services Department are always looking to take the next step toward bettering the graduation rates of their students. In fact, there is a plan in the works to start a clothing pantry on campus for students who cannot afford new clothes. Like the food pantry, this service would be free to students who need help. "We are trying to see if something can be done to create a clothing pantry here on the main campus. We would have to find people to donate, and right now we would have to figure out how we would handle the clothing," explains Trudy.

"There are so many different resources and they change all the time," Trudy concludes. "Don't be afraid to stop and ask if you need help. If we don't know the answer, we will connect you to someone that does."

learn more about the assistance programs offered at AC, visit its [website \(http://www.actx.edu/resources/index.php?module=article&id=9\)](http://www.actx.edu/resources/index.php?module=article&id=9).



by Ethan Black

Ethan is currently finishing his graduate degree in Sport Management from West Texas A&M University, with an emphasis on Sport Sociology and Marketing. In his spare time, he enjoys playing sports and spending time with family and friends.

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AC Employees to Provide 200 Students with Sacks of Food for Thanksgiving

Published: Monday, November 21st 2016, 3:59 am CST

Updated: Monday, November 21st 2016, 5:03 am CST

AMARILLO, TX (KFDA) - The [Food Pantry](#) at Amarillo College is spearheading an effort to help feed AC students and their families this Thanksgiving.

The Food Pantry asked the entire AC workforce to provide food donations to fill 100 sacks; however, the AC Family's extraordinary response was such that the Food Pantry now will provide 200 sacks of food.

The sacks will contain everything needed to make a Thanksgiving meal – canned corn, yams, cranberries and pie filling, gravy mix and boxes of stuffing, pie crusts, and even supermarket gift cards for purchasing perishable items, for instance a turkey or ham.

Who: AC officials and the first 200 currently enrolled AC students, on a first-come basis.

What: Thanksgiving Sacks giveaway sponsored by the AC Food Pantry.

When: 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. (or as long as sacks last) **Monday, Nov. 21**

Where: College Union Building, first floor – **Washington Street Campus** (100 sacks); Jones Hall, second floor – **West Campus** (50 sacks); and Student Service Center – **East Campus** (50 sacks).

Source: Amarillo College

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Food Pantries for College Students

By Matthew Watkins

APRIL 21, 2016

The stereotype is so old that it's enmeshed in popular culture: College students arrive on campus to find a surplus of food — enough for food fights in dining halls or to pack on the infamous “freshman 15.”

But lately, college administrators have discovered that some of their students face a different reality. Many are struggling to find enough to eat.

As a result, universities across the state have begun offering a different kind of meal option. All-you-can-eat dining halls are still a mainstay for students who can afford them. But now, campuses are also opening free food pantries to serve their needier students.

In recent years, at least 14 colleges in Texas and hundreds across the country have opened food pantries, **according to the College and University Food Bank Alliance.** They range from big public schools like Texas Tech University and the University of North Texas to community colleges like Tarrant County College and Amarillo College. Most were created after administrators or students realized that food insecurity was a growing problem at their schools.

“We want our kids to go to college, but a lot of them can’t afford nutritional and healthy foods,” said Ashlee Taylor, a graduate student at Texas Tech who worked with classmates to open a pantry there this semester.

The reasons for opening them vary, but many campus officials cited two key factors. For one, the average cost of tuition and fees has increased more than 95 percent statewide since 2004, **according to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board**. Meanwhile,

the number of college students from low-income families has grown. Many of those students get all or part of their tuition paid for, but with little or no financial support from their families, they struggle to keep up with other living expenses.

Often, when choosing between paying for a meal or paying for tuition, healthy eating habits will be sacrificed.

"A lot of students are pretty much just one step away from being food insecure because there is not much of a cushion there," said Debra Reed, a professor of nutritional sciences at Texas Tech.

At the University of North Texas, the office of the dean of students opened a food pantry a little over a year ago after noticing "a number of students" were skipping meals. Some were attending school while homeless — they couch surfed in friends' living rooms to get by, said Associate Dean of Students Rodney Mitchell.

"Our stance here at UNT is that, with all of our students, we want to address all their needs," Mitchell said.

The pantry at UNT is similar to most of the others in the state. It is set up in a small room within the student union. Students can set an appointment or show up during open hours to pick through canned or dry foods, plus personal hygiene products and bottled water. There are no refrigerators, so fresh or frozen foods aren't available.

This academic year, students have visited the pantry about 500 times, Mitchell said.

Many of the pantries are supplied by donations and staffed by volunteers. Maintaining them costs little, if anything. But their operations can provide a lifeline for students who may otherwise have to halt their education.

The Texas Tech pantry opened last month and mostly caters to international students. Those students, many of whom come from Asia, are unfamiliar with the culinary offerings of Lubbock. Some have families that they need to feed but have visas that don't allow

them to work off-campus jobs.

“Most graduate students make well below the poverty level,” said Taylor, who is president of the Tech’s Graduate Student Advisory Council.

But as the pantries proliferate, their creators say they still need to work on convincing students to use them. Students may feel embarrassed or believe that struggling to put food on the table is a rite of passage for people in college.

They need to understand that eating enough and staying healthy will help them succeed, said Catie McCorry-Andalis, dean of students at the University of Texas at El Paso, which opened a pantry about a year ago. And the food banks try to discretely give them that help, she said.

“We need to make sure that there are virtually no obstacles and barriers to a student pursuing their education,” McCorry-Andalis said.

Disclosure: Texas Tech University is a corporate sponsor of The Texas Tribune. The University of Texas at El Paso was a corporate sponsor of the Tribune in 2012, and The University of North Texas was a sponsor in 2014. A complete list of Tribune donors and sponsors can be viewed [here](#).

*This story originally appeared in **The Texas Tribune**, a nonpartisan, nonprofit media organization that informs Texans—and engages with them—about public policy, politics, government, and statewide issues.*

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Author:

Matthew Watkins writes about higher education and the business of college sports for The Texas Tribune.



SAC launches student food pantry

By Elaine Ayala | November 20, 2016 | Updated: November 21, 2016 4:32pm

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When we think of college students and college living, it's easy to draw on images of beat up bean bag chairs, bookcases constructed from cement blocks and lots of lots of ramen noodles.

It's a stereotype that could be funny, if it weren't so cruel.

Throughout the country, there's a rising number of college students that should be concerned about writing papers and tests. But in addition to those demands, they live precariously on the edges of hunger and homelessness, inches from dropping out. They want to stay in school but have overstayed their welcome on a friend's couch, don't have bus fare, can't pay essential bills and can't rely on family.

Last week, faculty, staff and students at San Antonio College, led by President Robert Vela, launched an anti-poverty initiative named the Student Advocacy Center. It raised \$1,000 worth of non-perishable food to start what a college campus shouldn't have — a student food pantry.

An advertisement for SA Specialties, a company specializing in complete heating and A/C systems. The ad features a logo with a Texas map outline and the text "SA Specialties". Below the logo, it says "COMPLETE A/C EQUIPMENT CHANGE OUT STARTING AT \$4,998". The contact information "210-658-0440" and "saspecialties.com" is provided, along with the code "TA CLB00041917E".

It was willed into existence by faculty who witnessed the suffering of students, said Lisa Black, the center's director and an associate professor of social work.

Black, who credited Vela with getting the center off the ground, said the project was spurred by several faculty members who learned of a college pantry in Amarillo.

SAC isn't the only local college with a pantry. Palo Alto College will launch its own in early December, officials said, and Northwest Vista College holds food drives every year.

In the two classrooms where the SAC pantry is housed in the Chance Academic Center, student volunteers last week were organizing packages of noodles, stacks of canned tuna and boxes of cereal. They'll need shelving and continued food donations.

Black said students have stopped by, though appeared hesitant to take any food. She's haunted by the thought of one of them — he wanted to see where the pantry was, to know it existed, but didn't reach for anything. All he said was, "I'm OK for now."

Even students in great despair crave independence. They don't want to be needy, but studies show they are.

A survey reported in the magazine Inside Higher Ed last month said 22 percent of college students have "very low" levels of food security. Latino and African American students came in at a higher percentage; white and Asian students fared better.

"All of us know that many times, student losses have nothing to do with heart or commitment" to academics, Black said. One student recently left SAC because she couldn't pay a \$200 utility bill and took a second job to keep the lights on for her family.

"We are the downtown inner-city campus," said Dee Dixon, SAC's Senior Student Success adviser and Staff Council president. "We have students who face all manner of socioeconomic challenges."

SAC has students who are homeless and others who live at the shelter Haven for Hope, she said. The Student Advocacy Center's goal will be to help students succeed and get them on a path to prosperity.

“Prosperity is not just financial,” Dixon cautioned. “It’s more than that. It’s mental prosperity, where they feel safe and can provide for themselves.”

In addition to emergency food, the center will provide case management. Four graduate students in social work from UTSA and Our Lady of the Lake University will provide it as part of their training.

Next semester, the center will have 10 graduate students to help students navigate the maze of local, state and federal resources available to them.

“Help isn’t a handout that lists the 50 places that can help you,” Black said. Case managers will make calls on behalf of students who don’t speak “the language of bureaucracy. They’re lost, and because there is distress, it’s easy to just give up.”

Case managers will teach students to advocate for themselves, too.

That’s the social justice side of the center, Black said. “We’re not just giving food. We want to help build that student up and develop the skill set to navigate the system. They won’t need it forever.”

They just need it now.

The poverty on college campuses doesn’t surprise State Rep. Diego Bernal. “The depth of hunger in our city is larger than many of us realize,” he said.

The San Antonio Democrat saw as much during his visits to the 55 public schools in House District 123; and he saw several solutions that will show up as proposed legislation.

One proposal, which would cost nothing, is to allow school districts to give to students the unopened, untouched cafeteria food they now throw away.

To reach SAC’s pantry, call 210-486-1003.

eayala@express-news.net

Twitter: @ElaineAyala