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RÍO HONDO  
COLLEGE

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# Hope Scholars

A TOOLKIT FOR SERVING COLLEGE STUDENTS  
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Produced by John Burton Advocates for Youth and Rio Hondo College

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# Introduction

Students experiencing housing insecurity are some of the most vulnerable students on college campuses, often having to choose between meeting their basic needs and making academic progress. With the rising cost of living both in California and across the nation, homelessness among college students is an increasingly pressing issue for campuses. The California Student Aid Commission's Food and Housing Survey found that 53 percent of students in the state applying for financial aid for academic year 2022-23 were housing insecure, up from 36 percent in academic year 2018-19.<sup>1</sup>

Homelessness and housing insecurity pose significant barriers to academic success. Chronic absences, lack of funding for tuition and course materials, and mental health struggles mean that students without secure housing are more likely to have lower GPAs and are less likely to complete their desired degree or credential compared to peers who have their basic needs met.<sup>2</sup> First-generation students, undocumented students, student parents, students with experience in foster care, students who identify as LGBTQIA+, and students of color experience a higher risk of homelessness, adding to the complexity of student experiences.

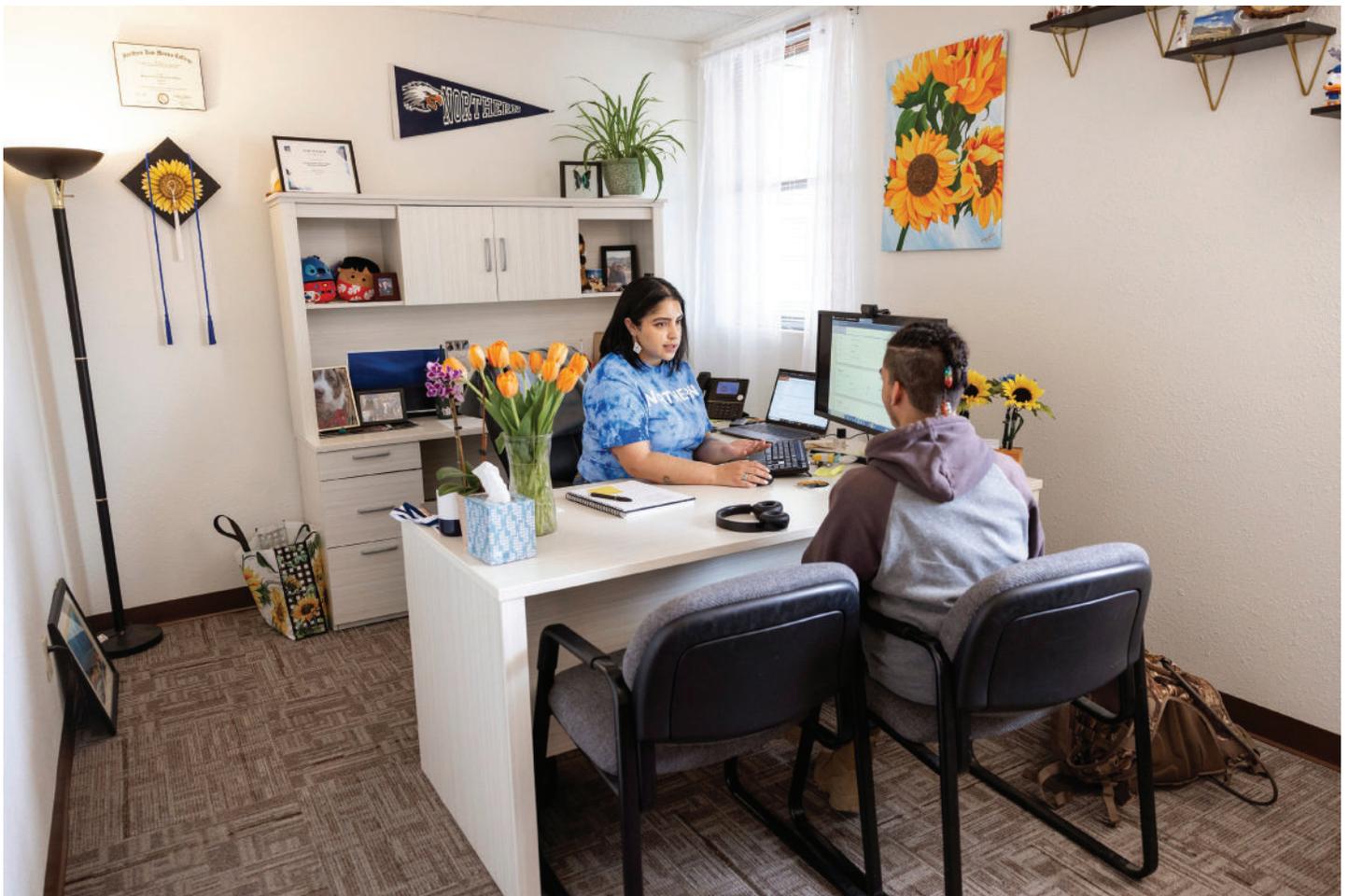
State investment in basic needs began in 2017 with a series of one-time funding allocations for the newly designated Hunger Free Campus program, with some campuses leveraging this funding to seed more comprehensive basic needs programs. In 2021, the California State Legislature

passed Assembly Bill (AB) 132, the Postsecondary Education Trailer Bill, which responded to the growing student housing crisis by allocating \$30 million annually to establish basic needs centers at California Community Colleges. AB 132 requires that every California Community College establish a basic needs center to support students experiencing basic needs insecurity and hire a basic needs coordinator. Despite this support for basic needs programs, however, many students continued to grapple with housing insecurity and related issues, especially in areas with high housing costs.



Hope Scholars is an innovative program designed by Rio Hondo College that functions in collaboration with (and as an enhancement to) the campus basic needs center to provide holistic on-campus support for unhoused and housing insecure students. The program has demonstrated success in targeting the needs of housing-insecure students. In a forthcoming qualitative evaluation of the program from the Center for Equitable Higher Education, participants highlighted that HOPE Scholars’ financial and housing resources “had critical influence on their education trajectory.”

This toolkit, a collaboration between Rio Hondo College’s Hope Scholars program and John Burton Advocates for Youth, is designed to help other California college campuses, including community colleges and 4-year colleges and universities, in developing, launching, and maintaining a similar program.



# Definitions

This toolkit uses the terms homeless or unhoused to describe students who are without a fixed, stable nighttime residence. This is a broad definition that can encompass a variety of situations, including couch surfing, living in hotels, staying in emergency or transitional shelters, and living in cars, on the streets, or in other public spaces. The term housing insecure applies to students who are at risk of homelessness, such as students facing eviction, those living in overcrowded or unsafe conditions or those unable to afford their rent.

## About Rio Hondo

Rio Hondo College is one of 19 community colleges in Los Angeles County, serving nearly 20,000 students each semester. The college is situated in one of the most expensive housing markets in the country, where housing costs are over twice the national average.<sup>3</sup> Unsurprisingly, when the Hope Center for College, Community and Justice conducted their 2018 #RealCollege survey on campus, they found that 66 percent of Rio Hondo students were facing homelessness or housing insecurity, significantly higher than the 39 percent national average.<sup>4</sup>



# About Hope Scholars

The first program of its kind in Los Angeles County, the Hope Scholars program was launched at Rio Hondo College with funding from the U.S. Department of Education for the 2019-2020 school year to provide comprehensive academic and holistic services to ensure students facing homelessness or housing insecurity achieve their college academic goals and career aspirations. The program continues to provide services above and beyond those found at many basic needs centers with the specific goal of addressing the needs of students who are unhoused or housing insecure. The high-touch, student-centered program model incorporates the following components to address the core, critical needs of unhoused and housing insecure students:

*“At least I can be that, the hope. That already wins a little bit of their battles.”*

Hope Scholars  
Counselor

## Centralized Intake and Community Building

Hope Scholars are identified and referred through RioSource, Rio Hondo’s basic needs program as well as other campus-based support programs, and for incoming students, by homeless liaisons (i.e., McKinney-Vento liaisons) at local high schools. New students are enrolled in the Hope Scholars counseling course prior to their first semester at college. This general education planning course is taught by the Hope Scholars counselor with the goal of building community among the incoming Hope Scholars using high-touch, trauma informed practices. This ensures that students can adjust their course load to accommodate housing challenges or other life circumstances that may impact their ability to enroll as a full-time student.

When Hope Scholars students enter the program, they join a diverse mix of students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages, and with various academic goals. Despite these differences, Hope Scholars students find community with their

peers knowing that despite the barriers they have faced, they have persisted towards achieving their educational and professional goals. Students are encouraged to engage with their peers through workshops, events, and group counseling/tutoring, and to share community in the Hope Scholars space.



## Student Counseling and Support

Hope Scholars uses an intrusive counseling model; counselors meet one-on-one with students and are highly proactive, following up through multiple forms of communication with students who miss appointments or have been out of touch. When students need campus resources, Hope Scholars staff walk with them to the relevant departments, connecting students through a direct handoff.

Hope Scholars staff use a collaborative approach to serving students and are trained in trauma-informed practices. While students may meet one-on-one with their preferred Hope Scholars staff member, the entire Hope Scholars team communicates about student needs. Regular case conferences with the entire Hope Scholars team help ensure that no student slips through the cracks, while also minimizing the number of times a student must share their traumatic experiences with different college staff.

## Collaboration with Basic Needs Center

The close collaboration between Hope Scholars and The RioSource Room, Rio Hondo's basic needs program, is central to the Hope Scholars model, allowing students to receive a high level of support for both academics and basic needs without placing additional demands on students. Hope Scholars and RioSource staff collaborate closely through case conferences and ongoing conversations, sharing information about each student's changing circumstances and needs to help ensure services remain relevant, and to minimize the burden on students to seek out different support.

*“My main priority is having a conversation around what is needed for the student to be well. I don't want students to be torn between being a person and being a student.”*

Hope Scholars Counselor

## Housing Assistance and Case Management

Through RioSource and a partnership with Jovenes Inc., a local housing nonprofit, students have access to a housing peer navigator who helps Hope Scholars with housing applications, accessing county homeless systems, securing emergency funding for rental deposits, and other types of housing-related needs as well as related social services resources. In addition, Hope Scholars contracts with the East Los Angeles Women's Center to provide dedicated therapeutic support and case management services to students who have experienced intimate partner violence and/or sexual assault. These staff are co-located with Hope Scholars several days a week to provide services, including workshops and training for students and staff.



## Community Housing Collaboration: Partnership with Whittier College

In 2022, Rio Hondo launched an innovative partnership with Whittier College, a private liberal arts college located less than five miles from Rio Hondo.

Supported by private funding, a cohort of Rio Hondo Hope Scholars students are provided room and board through Whittier College dormitories and residential life. The students, who must meet additional academic and age requirements beyond the usual Hope

Scholars' requirements, are integrated into the Whittier College community and have use of additional support at Whittier College, including the dining halls. These students also have access to reduced transfer barriers, the ability to audit upper division classes, and an additional two years of housing at Whittier College, incentivizing these Rio Hondo students to continue their studies at Whittier College.

## Campus Connections

In addition to a close relationship with RioSource, Hope Scholars has close partnerships with other Rio Hondo campus programs, ensuring that students have access to all campus-based supports. As students balance multiple identities, the Hope Scholars counselor maintains open communication and collaboration with EOPS, NextUp/Guardian Scholars, CalWORKS, and student equity centers like Pride Scholars and Rising Scholars. Students also benefit from Hope Scholars' collaboration with campus psychological services, financial aid, and Disabled Student Programs and Services.



## Hope Scholars Student Spotlight: Lydia

Lydia was a Rio Hondo student living with her family until mental health challenges led her to experience homelessness and display disruptive behavior on campus. Hope Scholars success coaches and counselors helped to diffuse these situations and followed up frequently with Lydia to provide consistency through ongoing support and resources. Ultimately, the Hope Scholars Campus Peer Navigator was able to secure Lydia an apartment in a permanent supportive housing program. The Hope Scholars team helped Lydia to transition to her apartment and Lydia is now safely housed, receiving mental health treatment, and is focusing on her academics.

## Hope Scholars Eligibility and Requirements

To be eligible for Hope Scholars, students must:

- Have at least a 2.5 GPA
- Be enrolled in a minimum of six units
- Have at least three touchpoints with Hope Scholars staff per year, one of which must be with a counselor. The other two touchpoints may be with a success coach, director of basic needs, or counselor, or through participating in an event.

Hope Scholars maintains a flexible approach to eligibility and requirements, recognizing that many students cannot achieve the required level of academic standing while experiencing basic needs insecurity. See Program Design and Implementation section #9 below, *Determine Who Is Eligible*, for more details.

### Hope Scholars Staffing

In addition to leveraging the services of the Director of Basic Needs, the Hope Scholars in-house program staff includes an Academic Counselor/Coordinator and Student Success Coaches. The program contracts with Jovenes, Inc. for a dedicated Housing Peer Navigator and with East Los Angeles Women's Center for a therapist and case manager. Please see Program Design and Implementation section #8 below, *Decide on Program Staffing*, for position descriptions.

### Hope Scholars Student Spotlight: Sam

Sam was a student who had been living in his car and attending Rio Hondo. Although he was doing well academically, he was disconnected from campus services before ultimately being referred to Hope Scholars.

Sam expressed to the Hope Scholars team that he was interested in obtaining a certificate. When the Hope Scholars counselor met with Sam for a transcript audit, they discovered that Sam had completed nine different degrees, over 100 units, and transfer requirements for the California State University system. The Hope Scholars counselor helped Sam understand his options beyond certificate programs and what financial aid was available to him. This helped Sam build confidence in his future and he ultimately transferred to a California State University where he is continuing his education.



# Program Design & Implementation

The steps below are designed to help basic needs centers and/or student affairs administrators launch and implement a Hope Scholars program at their college. These guidelines are intended to be flexible, recognizing that every community college environment is different. Those interested in launching a Hope Scholars program should coordinate with their campus leadership to determine the best way forward.

Included in this toolkit are reflection questions designed to help jumpstart thinking and planning for implementation of a Hope Scholars program. These questions can be used to gather information and identify where additional support may be needed.

## 1 Create a Vision

Hope Scholars is a high-touch program that supports deeply vulnerable students. For such a program to be successful, your campus leadership must understand student needs and the resources needed to sustain such a comprehensive program. Most importantly, they should feel invested in supporting students facing homelessness or housing insecurity and see the Hope Scholars model as an important solution for these students.

Campus data is key to understanding your students' needs and can also provide context in early meetings with campus administration. Leveraging basic needs case management data or #RealCollege<sup>a</sup> data can give campus leadership a greater understanding of the number of students on your campus facing housing insecurity. Students experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity can also be identified through priority



<sup>a</sup> The #RealCollege survey, created by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, gathers data from hundreds of thousands of students to assess college students' basic needs insecurity including food, housing, mental health, childcare, transportation, and more.

registration data and Independent Status data from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA).

If this data is not available, consider working with your campus's Institutional Effectiveness office to understand what sources of data are available, and/or develop a survey that can provide information to assess programmatic needs. Colleges can also add a question to their pre-registration, enrollment or Vocational and Technical Education Act (VTEA) surveys to capture housing status. In addition to quantitative data, student stories and experiences go a long way in eliciting support. With guidance and support, trusted student ambassadors can speak about their experiences and be effective advocates with campus leadership. Student profiles can also be created for use in these conversations. An example profile is provided in Appendix A.

This is also a good time to explore the degree to which capacity exists in basic needs and/or student affairs teams, to offer intensive case management services. Before making a Hope Scholars pitch, it's important to have a clear understanding of current capacity and what additional resources (including staff positions, space, and management) would be needed to launch and sustain a program along with what your vision is for the program. Creating a logic model can be helpful for capturing your inputs, outputs and program goals. It can also be helpful to create a draft budget that includes staff positions, facilities, and supplies that can be refined as you meet with campus leadership. A sample logic model is included as Appendix B, and a budget template is included as Appendix C.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How would I describe the need for a Hope Scholars Program at my campus?
2. What specific resources (budget, space, staffing) would I need to support a program?
3. What data do I have access to? What data do I need?

## TOOLKIT RESOURCES

**Appendix A:** Student Profile

**Appendix B:** Hope Scholars Logic Model

**Appendix C:** Budget Template



## 2 Build Campus Support

A good first step is to meet with senior campus leadership, including your business and finance team, to explore the feasibility of launching a Hope Scholars program on your campus. Discussions should include student needs and experience as well as direct conversations about the financial, space, and staff resources needed for the program. It's important to understand from campus leadership how programs get approved on your campus (e.g., is board of trustee approval required or are approvals handled at the administrative level) and what this means for next steps. Listen for and discuss opportunities to leverage existing resources, like exploring positions through campus resource allocation or program review processes. Having an overview that captures the needs on campus can also be helpful. A sample is included as Appendix D.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Who are the administrators and stakeholders I need to talk to?
2. What is the process for program approvals at my campus?
3. What existing services on campus can be leveraged for Hope Scholars?

### TOOLKIT RESOURCES

**Appendix D:** Basic Needs Information Sheet



## 3 Explore Funding

Funding is essential for all campus programming, both for the initial program launch as well as ongoing sustainability. Having clear conversations with campus leadership about funding needs and potential funding opportunities is key for early program development. It may be possible to leverage existing funding streams or donor relationships with support from your campus leadership. On some campuses, additional financial support can be garnered through partnerships with the college foundation, which may be able to provide grants as well as connections to donors.

In addition to leadership, other campus stakeholders can help bring the Hope Scholars program into existence. Meeting with Student Services, the Academic Senate, and Institutional Effectiveness can help provide critical support, resources, and feedback on your proposal. These relationships can help fill funding gaps that burgeoning programs often face when trying to provide emergency funding, textbook support, or meal vouchers. In addition, you may seek new grant funding. Exploring funding opportunities available through campus Student Equity or Basic Needs allocations, other state or federal opportunities, or your local community foundation may help you access funds to build your Hope Scholars program. Consulting and building relationships with campus leadership, fundraising departments, and your college foundation are essential to establishing a strong funding stream.

In addition, developing relationships with community-based partners can help you obtain in-kind donations of goods—such as snacks, backpacks, and school supplies—to help provide

for students and maintain an appropriate budget. Your college foundation can assist if a local organization requires an MOU or agreement with a 501c3 agency, or if a donation letter is required to obtain goods.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What existing funding can support this program?
2. What other funding is needed?
3. What potential sources of funding could be explored?

**HOPE HOUSING PILOT**

DT, CLASS OF '23  
HOPE GRADUATE,  
CURRENTLY AT UCLA

WHITTIER COLLEGE AND RIO HONDO CURRENTLY PARTNER IN PROVIDING A RESIDENTIAL LIFE EXPERIENCE TO QUALIFIED UNHOUSED STUDENTS THROUGH THE HOPE HOUSING PILOT. MANY OF THESE STUDENTS HAVE, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THEIR LIVES, FELT AT HOME ON WHITTIER'S CAMPUS.

MANY AIM TO PURSUE TRANSFER AND COMPLETION OF THEIR BACHELOR'S DEGREES AT WHITTIER COLLEGE.

HELP US SUPPORT STUDENTS. THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT, STUDENTS HAVE GREATER ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION. HOPE HOUSING STUDENTS HAVE DEMONSTRATED IMPROVED GPAS, AND SHORTER TIME TO DEGREE, SIMPLY BY HAVING SAFE, HOUSING.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS TO REALIZE THEIR DREAMS.

Hear from Ruby, our student!  
[Student Video](#)

RUBY,  
HOPE HOUSING  
STUDENT

## 4 Consider Facilities

Having a physical space on campus is important to creating a sense of community for Hope Scholars. Work with campus leadership and the facilities department to identify space that can incorporate access to a private office for academic and therapeutic counseling sessions and a communal study/meeting area for students. Access to storage space is helpful to house supplies like backpacks, first aid kits, clothing, blankets, and other items for students.

Consider the needs of students and what might make your Hope Scholars center a comfortable and essential place for them on campus. The physical space and budget might include amenities such as:

- Lockers for students to store items between classes
- A small pantry and/or kitchen with snacks, refrigerator, and microwave
- Loaner laptops, printer, hotspot access, and places to charge cell phones
- Personal hygiene supplies

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are the physical space requirements for my Hope Scholars program?
2. What components or services should be incorporated into the physical space?
3. What services exist in other campus spaces that can be leveraged or referred to?



## 5 Forge Campus Collaborations

Having strong relationships with other student support programs on campus ensures Hope Scholars can advocate effectively for students, and students have minimal barriers to accessing critical support. Collaboration with the basic needs program on your campus is critical. At Rio Hondo, students can access the RioSource (basic needs center) computer lab and food pantry as well as clothing donations in the building just across from Hope Scholars. RioSource is a resource not only for students but also for Hope Scholars staff, who can utilize the expertise of RioSource staff to identify supports for a wide range of needs, including food programs, domestic violence and sexual assault services, and community mental health.

It is also helpful to connect with core student support departments, like disabled student programs and services, psychological and

counseling services, and campus health services. Explore the services other campus programs are already offering on campus, such as cultural or equity-funded programs, foster youth support programs, and programs for first generation and/or low-income students. Financial aid and academic counselors can also be important allies in working with students. As students often need additional support with financial aid verifications and satisfactory academic progress appeals, it is important to work with the financial aid office to establish a contact to collaborate on issues that might arise for students. Having a designated contact in the financial aid office can streamline troubleshooting and resolve issues more quickly for students. Often, the financial aid advisor assigned to AB 540<sup>b</sup> and/or Chafee grants for foster youth are best positioned to take on this role.



<sup>b</sup> AB 540 is a 2001 California law that allows eligible students—including undocumented youth—who have attended and graduated from California schools to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities and access certain forms of state financial aid.

As relationships are developed, it can be helpful to identify and develop internal practices and policies between other campus departments and Hope Scholars that improve service delivery to students. Topics to discuss include data sharing needs—including obtaining student consent for data sharing—to ensure seamless support for students. A sample FERPA waiver that can be used to authorize information sharing is included as Appendix E.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What support programs/departments exist on my campus? Which programs and services would overlap with Hope Scholars?
2. What processes or policies can be put in place to make collaborating with these departments seamless and reduce the burden on students?
3. Do I have the necessary consents to allow data sharing between campus departments?

## TOOLKIT RESOURCES

**Appendix E:** Sample FERPA Waiver

## Rio Hondo Hope Scholars Spotlight: Campus Collaboration with Financial Aid

Because the program director for Rio Hondo’s Hope Scholars program is authorized to provide verification of homeless status for benefits such as priority registration and financial aid eligibility, the program closely collaborates with Rio’s offices of financial aid and admissions.

Students are identified through financial aid as needing determinations, and administrators then make a warm hand-off to the Hope Scholars team. The Hope Scholars program director is not only able to make determinations for these students but also communicates with admissions about the need for priority services like housing. Through this collaboration, the student is connected directly with financial aid and admissions and can seamlessly access support without having to go to multiple departments to confirm their status. In addition, the students are connected to Hope Scholars programming early in their education journey.



## 6 Forge Community Collaborations

Exploring partnerships beyond campus can ensure that students have access to comprehensive support in their community. Community-based organizations that provide for student needs, including homeless services, mental health services, food banks, and housing navigation can add capacity to a Hope Scholars program and ensure students have access to resources after they leave college.

### **Potential collaborations could include:**

**CO-LOCATED STAFF:** Having staff from local social services or housing agencies on campus reduces barriers to students accessing services.

**EXPEDITED REFERRALS:** Partnerships can ensure your students have access to impacted community services through expedited referrals.

**CROSS-TRAINING:** Community experts can support campus staff in understanding practices and resources available to students.

**COUNTY PARTNERSHIPS:** Partnerships at the county level can assist with access to benefits programs such as CalFresh, CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, General Relief and other assistance programs as well as ensure that staff stays up to date on program changes.

With all collaborations, it's important to work with partners to define roles, expectations, and outcomes. A formal MOU or contract can help clarify partnerships and support high-quality service delivery to students. Campus business and finance teams can support the development of an MOU/contract and help you to navigate the MOU approval process. Appendix F offers a sample MOU to help get you started. You will also need to develop protocols for information sharing to coordinate services for individual students. The sample FERPA waiver noted in the previous section and included as Appendix E can be used to authorize information sharing with community partners.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What organizations in my community are supporting people experiencing homelessness and/or basic needs insecurity?
2. What would a potential collaboration look like? What would be the roles, expectations, and outcomes for Hope Scholars and the partner agency?
3. Do I need funding to support this partnership or are there other resources that can be leveraged?

## TOOLKIT RESOURCES

**Appendix F:** Sample MOU



## Rio Hondo Hope Scholars Spotlight: Collaboration with East LA Women's Center

Studies of women experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles found that nearly 27 percent of these women have experienced sexual assault in the last 12 months, and 53 percent have experienced domestic violence and/or interpersonal violence in their lifetime.<sup>6</sup> Through student data and interviews, Rio Hondo found that these experiences were also reflected in their student population.

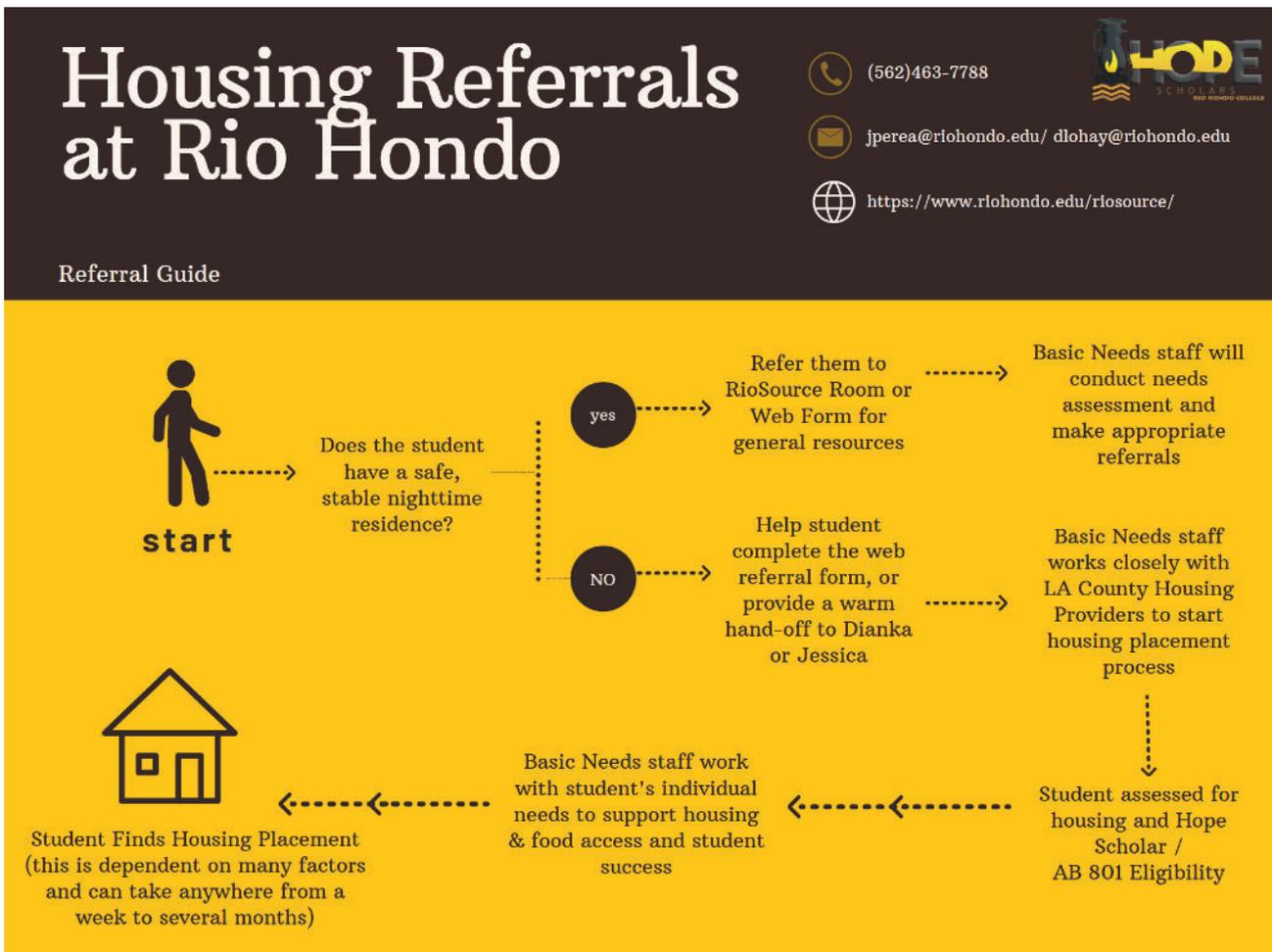
A collaboration with East LA Women's Center ensures that Hope Scholars students have access to specialized counseling and resources to address trauma related to domestic violence and sexual assault. Funded by grants from the California Office of Emergency Services and the United States Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, Rio Hondo is able to co-locate staff from East LA Women's Center at the Hope Scholars program. A dedicated therapist and program staff provide group therapy, individual therapy, court accompaniment services, emergency shelter, safety planning, and restraining order services directly to Hope Scholar students.

# 7 Decide Which Services to Offer

Students experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity require support in many areas of their lives. The Hope Scholars model is designed to address as many of these supports as possible, so that students achieve the stability needed to focus on their education. A Hope Scholars program should include these essential services, although they may be adapted to individual campuses and additional services may be included to support unique campus populations.

**The following critical services may be leveraged through campus basic needs centers, student affairs, or through partnerships with local community-based organizations:**

**HOUSING NAVIGATION:** Securing stable housing is essential for students experiencing homelessness. Assisted referrals and connections to local housing service providers should be a core service offered through Hope Scholars. Other examples of how colleges have collaborated with local homelessness response systems can also be found in JBAY’s “Connecting the Dots: How Colleges Can Collaborate with Homelessness Response Systems,” available at <https://jbay.org/resources/connecting-the-dots/>.





**FOOD SECURITY:** A food pantry and/or meal vouchers can provide a stopgap for students in need of meals and thus are likely to be highly utilized Hope Scholars resources. In addition, outreach, workshops, and one-on-one assistance can help students access benefits like CalFresh, Medi-Cal, and CalWorks.

**ECONOMIC SECURITY:** In addition to access to social safety net services like CalFresh and CalWorks, Hope Scholars programs should offer advising and one-on-one support in completing financial aid applications. Hope Scholars staff can support students in completing applications for financial aid, such as the FAFSA and CADAA, to ensure they can access the maximum amount of funding. Financial literacy and budgeting training is also a recommended component of services. To the extent that funding allows, additional financial support can also be provided in the form of book vouchers, bus passes or gas cards, gift cards, etc. A sample book voucher request form is included as Appendix G.

**MENTAL HEALTH:** Experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity is often traumatic and many Hope Scholars students have experienced other trauma as well that can impact their academic success and ability to maintain stable housing. A close collaboration with campus mental health services and/or community based mental health services is a critical piece of Hope Scholars programming.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can I ensure these essential services are included in my Hope Scholars program?
2. Are there additional services needed for my campus?

## TOOLKIT RESOURCES

**Appendix G:** Book Voucher Request Form

**ACADEMIC COUNSELING:** Hope Scholars counseling staff are the cornerstone of the program, overseeing the holistic services provided to students, and providing individualized advising to ensure students are on track academically and have identified career plans. In addition to providing this one-on-one advising, counseling staff can also help facilitate group workshops and trainings for staff and students. Academic counseling and basic needs support go hand-in-hand at Hope Scholars, and counselors nimbly integrate both into their conversations with students.

For example, a drop-in to pick up a meal voucher can become a conversation about a student's academic plans. Proactively connecting with students through check-ins and reformulating traditional student meetings into drop-in sessions creates a greater familiarity between students and program staff, allowing a greater level of trust to be built. Through these exchanges, students are more apt to demonstrate help-seeking behavior, allowing them to be connected directly to a myriad of internal and external resources.

**PEER SUPPORT AND EVENTS:** Creating opportunities for students to build community and support each other can help promote overall student success and well-being. Hosting events like group workshops, counseling sessions, and holiday celebrations can help attract students to Hope Scholars and build connections between students. In addition to internal Hope Scholars events, facilitating student connections to equity programs like the campus LGBTQIA+ center or justice-impacted student programs can deepen a student's community.



## 8 Determine Program Staffing

Program staffing will vary depending on individual campus needs and the number of students expected to be supported through Hope Scholars. Regardless of the number of staff a program needs, it's critical to ensure that staff understand the complicated and sensitive dynamics in the lives of Hope Scholars. Hiring staff who have lived experience or have experience working with diverse and under-resourced populations can help ensure that students have positive and healing interactions with the program team. Sample interview questions are included as Appendix H, which can help you to ensure that staff have the appropriate qualifications. Ongoing training for staff on trauma-informed support, intrusive counseling practice, boundary setting, and confidentiality is essential no matter the experience level of the staff. A sample training agenda for staff is included as Appendix I.

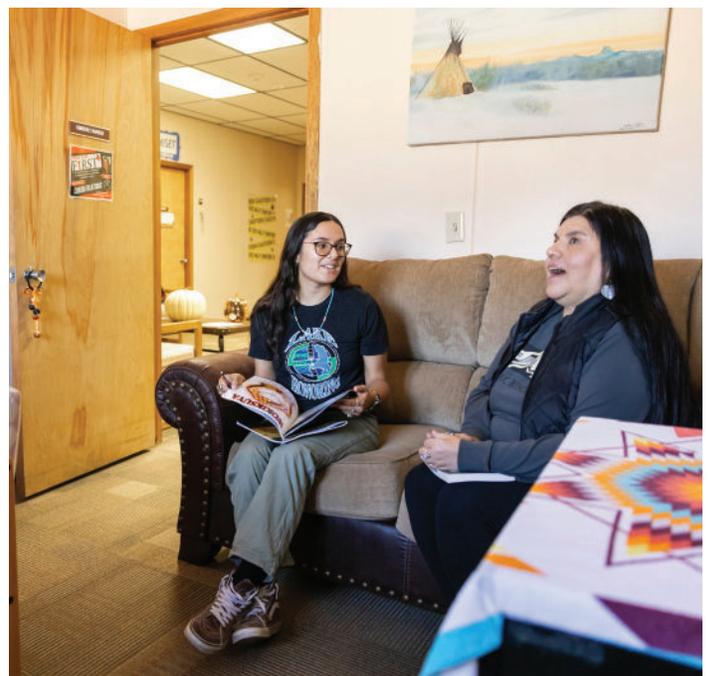
### Positions to consider are described below.

Note: Sample job descriptions for these positions are included as Appendix J, and an overview of responsibilities can be found as Appendix K.

**PROGRAM MANAGER:** A program manager provides overall leadership to the Hope Scholars program, ensuring services and staff are providing high-quality support to students. A program manager also represents Hope Scholars in the larger campus community, working to develop partnerships and provide data reporting and fiscal management. At Rio Hondo, the director of basic needs also serves as the Hope Scholars program director, and provides oversight of community MOU agreements, partnerships, and the RioSource Room, the one-stop basic needs center on campus.

**COUNSELOR/COORDINATOR:** A dedicated counselor/coordinator onboards new students and provides the high-touch and individualized academic counseling required for Hope Scholars. With their formal training, counselors can also manage other staff who are working directly with students. Having a counselor/coordinator also allows the program to offer events such as transfer application rush, financial aid completion workshops and personal development workshops to ensure that students are receiving holistic and targeted support that meets them where they are.

**HOUSING NAVIGATOR:** This specialized position is a liaison to the local county Coordinated Entry System (CES) for homeless services and maintains a rich and up-to-date list of housing resources (e.g., emergency shelter, bridge housing, permanent independent housing) and related supports (e.g., vouchers, rental arrears, problem solving funds, and other financial assistance) and assists students with what are often complicated



application processes. The Housing Navigator also helps get students “document ready” by collecting and submitting documents needed for local housing programs, reducing barriers to entry.

**THERAPIST/CASE MANAGER:** This specialized position provides clinical and case management services for students with mental health needs. In particular, the Rio Hondo Hope Scholars team has found that many students in the Hope Scholars program are survivors of sexual violence, and it is important to ensure that the person in this position has the expertise to support students with this background.

**STUDENT SUCCESS COACHES:** Student Success Coaches maximize the support available through Hope Scholars, particularly on campuses with a large number of students experiencing housing insecurity. A key job function for the coaches is outreach to students. Coaches also provide one-on-one advising, mentoring, and coaching for both academic and holistic needs. Providing consistent and reliable communication ensures

that students understand important college, transfer, and program deadlines so they can be set up for success. At Rio Hondo, Student Success Coaches have received specialized training in the FAFSA and California Dream Act Application to better assist students needing support through the independent student verification process. Student Success Coaches at Rio Hondo are onboarded with the basic needs staff, ensuring they are trained in trauma-informed practices. They are also provided with information to create a “warm handoff” to appropriate basic needs staff for students needing additional supports.

**ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT:** Administrative or clerical staff, including student workers, can help with data input, scheduling, and event planning. Administrative support staff can also assist with purchase orders, document routing, and budget tracking to ensure that funds and expenditures are properly documented and tracked per college policy.

### Rio Hondo Hope Scholars Spotlight: Basic Needs Ally Training

Basic Needs Ally Training is an essential training that Rio Hondo provides to Hope Scholars staff and campus partners. Open to staff, faculty, and student workers, this training provides an overview of the services provided by Rio’s Basic Needs Center, including eligibility and referral processes. Importantly, this training also informs the campus community about how to identify students who may need support and dispels misconceptions about what basic needs instability looks like on campus.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What staffing is necessary for Hope Scholars on my campus?
2. What are the essential trainings Hope Scholars staff should receive?

### TOOLKIT RESOURCES

- Appendix H:** Sample Interview Questions
- Appendix I:** Training Agenda Topics
- Appendix J:** Sample Job Descriptions
- Appendix K:** Web of Support

## 9 Determine Who Will Be Eligible

How program eligibility is defined determines how many students could potentially be served by your program. Many campus programs that support students have requirements around GPA and unit load. Given the lack of stability and existing crises that Hope Scholars students are navigating, many struggle academically and it may be the Hope Scholars supports that provide the necessary stability to make academic improvements.

Eligibility requirements should reflect this and minimize barriers to enroll, either through minimal or highly flexible program requirements.

Central to Rio Hondo’s Hope Scholars’ academic approach is the flexibility and grace given to students experiencing complicated life circumstances. While the program has academic eligibility requirements, they are evaluated within the context of each student’s needs and capacity— recognizing that achieving basic needs stability is essential to academic progress. Counselors do not shy away from holding students accountable through direct conversations about a student’s progress or academic program requirements. At the same

time, counselors will look for trends in a student’s progress and exhaust all paths for greater support before dropping a student who does not meet Hope Scholars’ academic requirements.

Students are given the grace to stay in the program to receive academic support if they fall below academic expectations and are given a progress contract to get “on-track” within the academic year to receive the full support of the program—specifically support with textbooks. In conversations about meeting expectations, students have agency through the program’s trauma-informed lens to make choices about accessing support options, which often include tutoring, writing lab support, and academic and psychological support workshops.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can program eligibility be structured to minimize barriers to participation for my student population?



# 10 Engage Students

Creating an engaged student community increases both persistence and retention. Rio Hondo Hope Scholars incorporates the student engagement model refined by Kahu and Nelson (2018), which utilizes a cultural lens to focus on self-efficacy, emotions, belonging and well-being within a student’s educational experience.<sup>6</sup> For example, Hope Scholars has been intentionally designed to assist students with emotional support through a dedicated support group and linkages to individual therapy sessions both on- and off-campus. Engaging with students and outreaching to potential Hope Scholars students is an ongoing task, especially considering Hope Scholars students are a highly mobile population and may not always have consistent access to a computer or cell phone.

## **To maximize engagement, consider:**

**PROACTIVE OUTREACH:** Working with other campus departments such as admissions or financial aid can help identify students who have indicated on their application that they are experiencing housing insecurity. To ensure these students are connected to stabilizing resources as soon as possible, the program should reach out to them early. When conducting basic needs intakes or providing assistance, consider also giving students the relevant program information and warm hand-offs to Hope Scholars counselors and student success coaches. A sample outreach flyer can be found as Appendix L. Maintaining an up-to-date website with information about services, eligibility and program contacts is also important. A sample website FAQ is included as Appendix M.

*“Often students come in [to Hope Scholars] in crisis and academics are not a priority. Sometimes your priority wants to be explaining the program, but really the first step is about grounding, and asking the student “where are you at?””*

**Hope Scholars Success Coach**

**INDIVIDUALIZED INTAKE PROCESS:** Meeting one-on-one with a counselor or Hope Scholars staff for an initial intake can help build a trusting relationship between staff and students. This is also a time for staff to understand the academic and holistic needs of each student so as to provide the most helpful advising and support. A sample intake form is included as Appendix N.

**HIGH-TOUCH FOLLOW-UPS:** Understanding that Hope Scholars students may not have a stable living arrangement, Hope Scholars staff should be proactive and creative about reaching out to students. Reaching out frequently, through multiple methods of communication, can help bridge the gaps. Staff should consider reaching out, even when there is no urgent need or advising deadline, to proactively address any needs that a student may have.

Often students come in [to Hope Scholars] in crisis and academics are not a priority. Sometimes your priority wants to be explaining the program, but really the first step is about grounding, and asking the student “where are you at?” - Hope Scholars Success Coach

**EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS:** Hosting events such as group tutoring or counseling sessions, holiday celebrations, and workshops can help grow engagement with Hope Scholars students, provide a sense of community, and deliver resources. Academic and social support workshops that encourage students to develop self-efficacy skills and enhance overall well-being can be instrumental in meeting these goals. Students can be encouraged to attend these events by providing food and/or transportation and by scheduling them during convenient times—like when most students are on campus. If funding is available, consider adding college tours before transfer season so students have the opportunity to explore their potential transfer campuses. A sample Fall event calendar is included as Appendix O.

**ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS:** Hope Scholars students may be balancing work and family responsibilities in addition to school. As a result, some students may be unable to be on campus at certain times, including during workshops or events. Having a flexible program model that incorporates virtual activities can help to ensure that all Hope Scholars students can participate in program activities. With a virtual course shell for all program participants, all relevant and pertinent information is easily accessible for all students.

**STUDENT ADVISORY OPPORTUNITIES:** Integrating student voice into Hope Scholars programming is vital to ensuring services are meeting the needs of students. Given that Hope Scholars students can be a highly mobile population with impacted

work and school schedules, it’s important to offer flexible ways for students to provide feedback. Student surveys or invitations to join short-term advisory groups/feedback sessions are ideal. Consider adding a Hope Scholar student to your basic needs advisory board to better understand the needs of unhoused and housing-insecure students.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do I identify students experiencing homelessness at my campus?
2. What is my plan for outreach and communications to these students?
3. What ongoing events/workshops would be helpful to students?

## TOOLKIT RESOURCES

**Appendix L: Sample Outreach Flyer**

**Appendix M: Sample Website FAQ**

**Appendix N: Sample Intake Form**

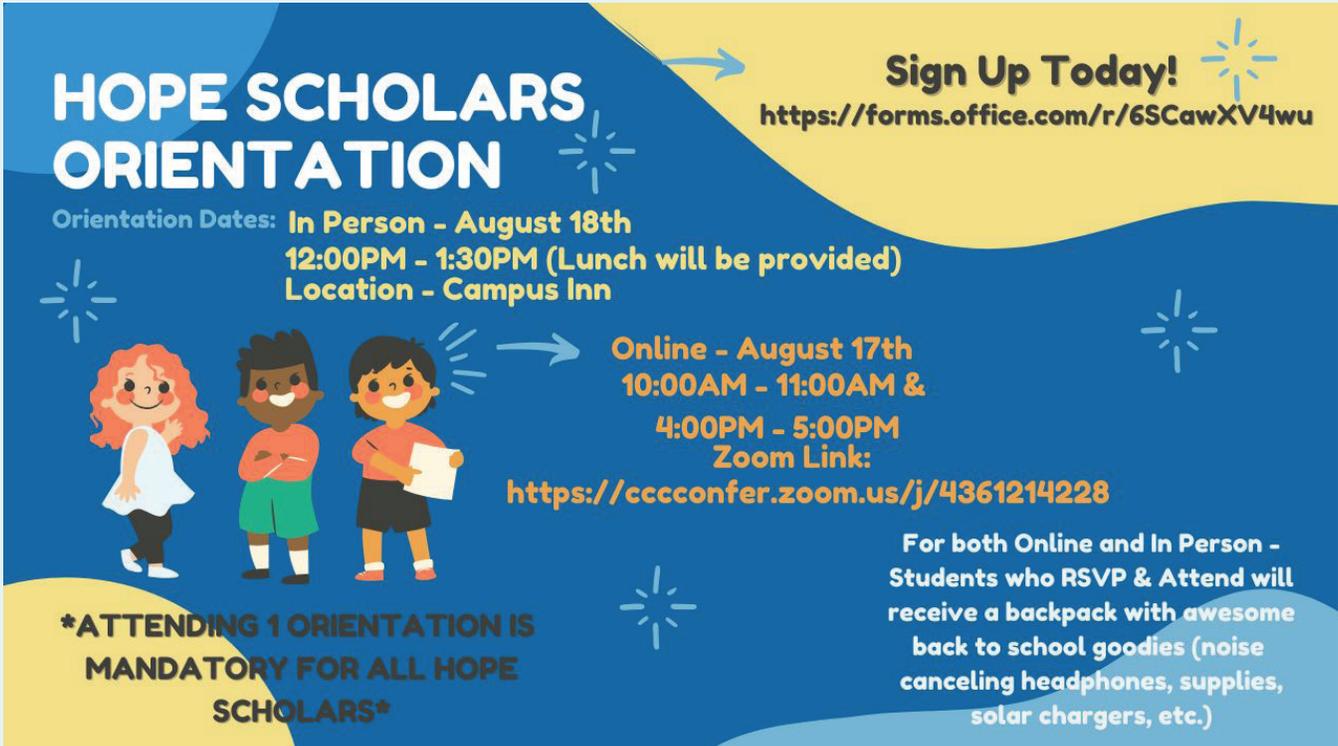
**Appendix O: Sample Program Calendar**



## Rio Hondo Hope Scholars Spotlight: Key Hope Scholars Events

Held at the beginning of each semester, the two-hour Hope Scholars orientation provides students with information about program requirements and available resources. The orientation also gives students the chance to meet other Hope Scholars students and the entire Hope Scholars staff team. Although this event is required for students, Rio makes the event engaging by providing initial book and meal vouchers, educational and hygiene supplies, and a substantial lunch (no pizza!) for students. The orientation is provided on multiple occasions at different times and days at the start of the semester, and while in-person attendance is encouraged for relationship building, online orientations are available as well.

Rio also hosts a transfer panel each fall and spring, prior to transfer deadlines. Former Hope Scholars students share about their personal experience navigating housing insecurity and how they were able to leverage Hope Scholars and other resources to support their educational journey. This in-person event is a highlight among current Hope Scholars students who can relate to alumni experiences and get inspired to pursue additional resources.



**HOPE SCHOLARS ORIENTATION**

Orientation Dates: **In Person - August 18th**  
**12:00PM - 1:30PM (Lunch will be provided)**  
**Location - Campus Inn**

**Online - August 17th**  
**10:00AM - 11:00AM &**  
**4:00PM - 5:00PM**  
**Zoom Link:**  
**<https://cccconfer.zoom.us/j/4361214228>**

**Sign Up Today!**  
**<https://forms.office.com/r/6SCawXV4wu>**

**\*ATTENDING 1 ORIENTATION IS MANDATORY FOR ALL HOPE SCHOLARS\***

**For both Online and In Person - Students who RSVP & Attend will receive a backpack with awesome back to school goodies (noise canceling headphones, supplies, solar chargers, etc.)**

# 11 Plan for Regular Program Evaluation

Every program should include an ongoing process for evaluating program effectiveness. Work with campus leadership to identify key outcomes and goals for your program, including those that might be required by grants or contracts. Beyond the number of students served, your outcomes could include academic successes like retention, persistence, course completion degree/program completion, transfer rates, GPA, referrals to services, enrollment in public benefits like CalFresh and Medi-Cal, and well-being outcomes like housing stability.

Developing a process to track data and outcomes is essential, including how to access academic records and extrapolate data from case management activities. These tracking processes should be integrated into your student information system (ex. Banner, ConexEd, SARS, Starfish), which can then be uploaded into the Management Information System (MIS) for the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO). This data is used by the CCCCCO to inform the funding allocations that each campus and district receives. Ideally, each category of services should align with the corresponding basic needs data element required to be submitted to MIS, as data element number SG23.

Direct student feedback through listening sessions, focus groups, or student surveys can also be a way to obtain feedback on program operations. A sample student survey is included as Appendix P. Reviewing data and regularly reporting on progress towards outcomes gives staff the opportunity to celebrate success and revise programming to address feedback or lack of progress on goals.

Each campus has their own resource allocation and program review process. Developing strong relationships with your Institutional Effectiveness Office can assist with these requests and processes. Having the data (both quantitative and qualitative) can support future resource allocations, as well as painting a story of student need that is not only relatable but humanizes the population that is most at-risk. These data points can assist in your justifications for space, staffing and additional funding as well as communicating your needs to the larger campus community.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are the academic and holistic outcomes I expect for my program?
2. How do I track these outcomes?
3. How will I integrate data and outcomes into my overall program management?
4. How can I incorporate student feedback into the program?

## TOOLKIT RESOURCES

**Appendix P:** Sample Student Survey

## 12 Develop Your Support System

As you implement your program, it's important to consider your own well-being. Advocacy and program development can be challenging and frustrating at times, especially when responding to vulnerable populations who are experiencing crises and trauma.

Develop a process that allows you to rest and recover from this work and build a community, both on campus and off, that can support you. Ensuring you are healthy and rested means students have access to the highest quality support and can benefit from seeing others uplift self-care.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What practices can I uplift to maintain my health and well-being?
2. Who can I turn to when I need support?



# Conclusion

Hope Scholars programs are vital resources for students experiencing housing insecurity. The holistic, proactive, and intensive services provide the necessary support to ensure that students can overcome housing insecurity and thrive in the pursuit of their educational goals. Without this support, many Hope Scholars students would be unable to continue their studies and would continue to experience the trauma of housing instability.

While launching a program takes dedicated time, resources, and advocacy, the impact on students and the campus community is deep and long lasting. There is incredible opportunity for campuses to embrace the Hope Scholars model and build more comprehensive support for students experiencing housing insecurity.

If you are interested in learning more about Rio Hondo's Hope Scholars Program, please reach out to Dr. Jessica Perea at [jperea@riohondo.edu](mailto:jperea@riohondo.edu) or visit the program website.

<https://www.riohondo.edu/support-programs/empowerment-programs/scholars-hub/hope>



# End Notes

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7. Photo Credits: Photography by Allison Shelley/Complete College Photo Library

# Appendix A: Student Profile



## HOPE HOUSING

PROVIDING BASIC NEEDS IS STUDENT EQUITY, AND CREATES STUDENT SUCCESS & ACHIEVEMENT

*THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING ALL STUDENTS TO REALIZE THEIR DREAMS.*

### PROFILE OF SUCCESS

Donteylor Maxwell, aka 'DT', is a student-athlete who has faced many obstacles in her pathway to complete her associate degrees in Kinesiology and Sports Medicines. She endured an ACL injury during basketball season, which required surgery and rehabilitation. She also balanced being a full-time student, athlete, working 20 plus hours a week at Starbucks and as a student worker at Río Hondo College.

This was essential to support herself, pay for her expenses and car, which was her place of living as she was also unhoused. DT has limited family support after losing her father due to COVID-19.

Nonetheless, she persisted with grit during these difficult times and found a way to excel in both the classroom with outstanding grades and on the basketball court. DT moved into the Whittier College dorms as part of Rio Hondo's Hope Housing Pilot Program. There she found community, support, and stability.

At a time when most students would not be able to shoulder such burdens, DT persevered. This Fall, DT will be attending her dream school- UCLA!

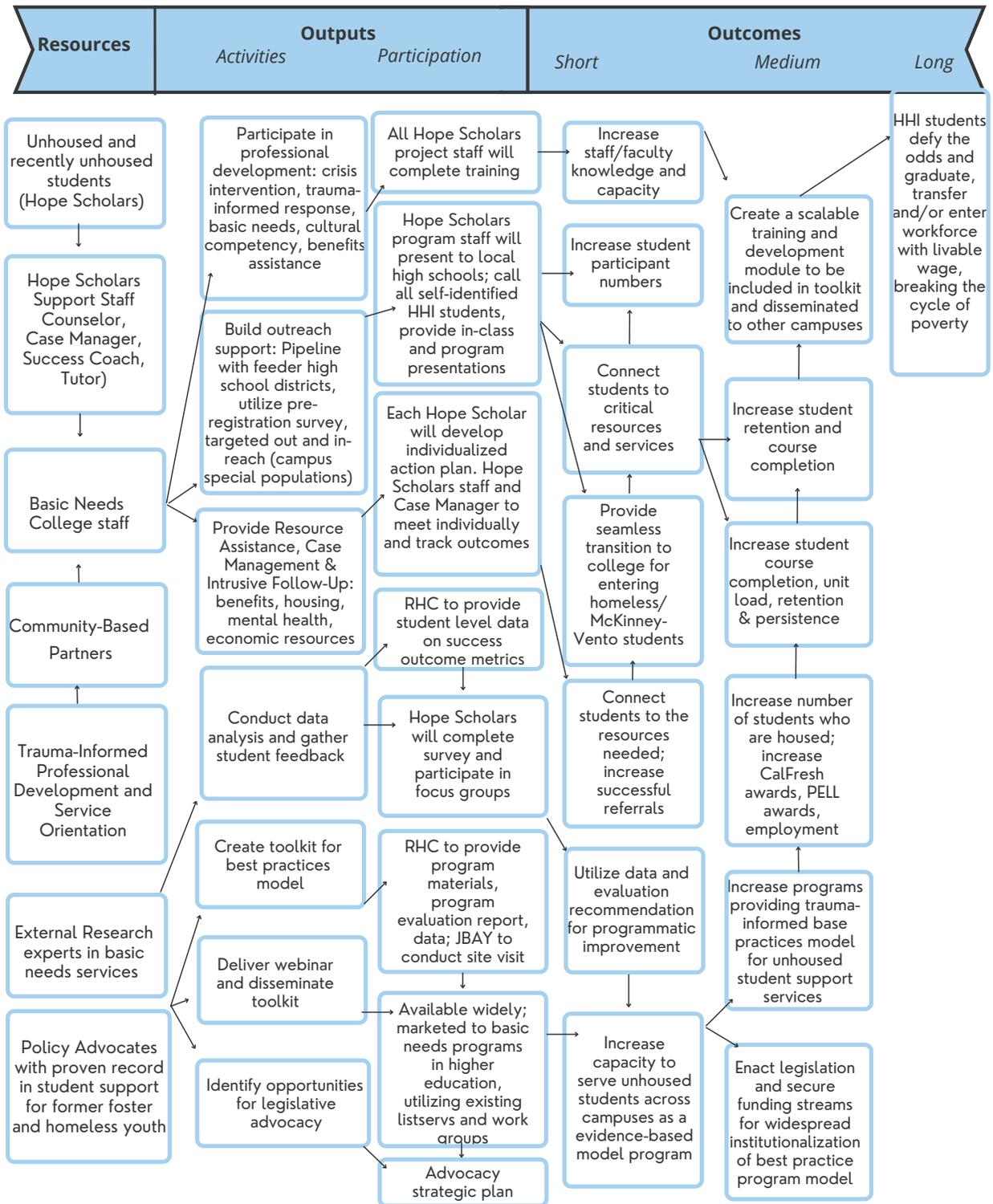
At UCLA she will pursue a bachelor's degree in Linguistics with a minor in African American and Latinx studies.



**DT MAXWELL,  
CLASS OF 2023**

# Appendix B: Hope Scholars Logic Model

## Hope Scholars Logic Model



# Appendix C: Sample Budget

## Hope Scholars Budget Template

BUDGET SUMMARY DESCRIPTION BY CATEGORY	ANNUAL	NOTES
<b>PERSONNEL</b>		
Hope Counselor/Coordinator		Critical to success of program, one dedicated FTE staff; could alternatively have a Program Manager and utilize existing trained counselors
Case Manager (MSW)		Could be leveraged from Basic Needs funds, grants
Peer Navigator: \$X/hr X 20/hrs/week X 50 weeks		Consider a partnership with a housing navigation program in your community
Success Coach II: \$X/hr X 20/hrs/week X 50 weeks		Often graduate level intern, provides on-going follow-up
<b>EMPLOYEE BENEFITS</b>		
Hope Counselor/Coordinator (@50%)		Adjust benefits percentage according to your campus policies.
Case Manager (@50%)		
Peer Navigator (@13%)		
Success Coach (@13%)		
<b>SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS</b>		
Meal Vouchers: (100 students X \$12 X 32/semester X 2 semesters + 50 students x \$12 x 4 weeks x 2 intersessions)	\$ 81,600	These are sample expenses. Adjust according to your campus costs and needs. There may be additional costs relevant to your campus and student population.
Textbooks and Educational Supplies: (avg. \$300 x 100 students x 2 semesters + \$150x 50 students x 2 intersessions)	\$ 75,000	
Educational Supplies: Backpacks, pens, notebooks, etc.	\$ 20,000	
Marketing materials for student outreach	\$ 2,500	
Graduate Stoles	\$ 1,000	
<b>OTHER OPERATING EXPENSES &amp; SERVICES</b>		
Hospitality: food for workshops, events, and graduation celebration		
Professional Development: Speakesr, Conference attendance		

# Appendix D: Basic Needs Information Sheet



## Basic Needs Information Sheet

### Overview

#### 2021-2022 ACADEMIC YEAR

- 1,526 student meals provided (March-August)
- 3,295 students/6,696 household members supported by the food pantry
- 369 AB 801 verified students
- 734 housing referrals provided
- 106 linkages to rental subsidies or shelter placements provided to students

#### 2022-2023 ACADEMIC YEAR

- 25,931 pounds of food given in the RioSource Room
- 8,650 individuals meals provided
- 853 housing referrals provided
- 157 rental subsidies

### Services and Partnerships

- Jovenes, Inc.
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority
- Whittier First Day
- Volunteers Of America
- Salvation Army
- College Corps
- Whole Child
- Union Station Family Services
- California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal
- Whittier College
- East Los Angeles Women's Center
- Bridge of Faith
- LA Food Bank
- Interfaith Food Bank
- LA Food Finders
- People Assisting the Homeless
- The Nook
- Orchard Community
- Baby2Baby
- John Burton Advocates for Youth
- United Friends of the Children

### Future Recommendations

- Pursue state-funded affordable student housing
- Establish larger and permanent space for Río Source Basic Needs Center (*privacy for student appointments, clothing closet and laundry facilities*)
- Address and advocate for family housing needs

### Survey Background

- Sponsored by Affordability, Food, and Housing Taskforce of the Community College League of California
- Administered in Spring 2023 with a 7.2% response rate (n= 1,431)
- Focus on food and housing insecurity, socio-demographics, and representativeness of samples

### Key Survey Findings

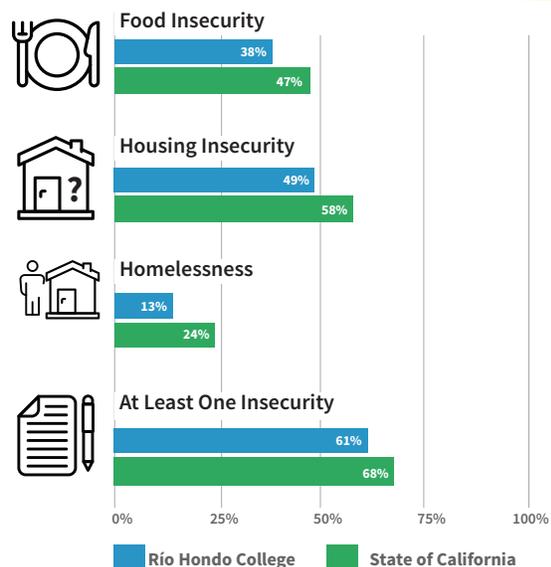
**Food Insecurity:** Over half of respondents reported anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage, with various impacts on eating habits.

**Housing Insecurity:** Nearly half of respondents reported challenges, primarily related to rent/mortgage and utility payments.

**Homelessness:** Reported experiencing some form of homelessness, primarily temporary living arrangements.

**At Least One Insecurity:** Almost similar to the state findings.

#### Río Hondo College Survey vs. Statewide Sample



Visit our website at <https://www.riohondo.edu/support-programs/>

MC/11.28.2023

# Appendix E: Sample FERPA Waiver

## FERPA Waiver for Release of Educational Records

### Student Information:

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

### Purpose of the Waiver:

By signing below, I, the undersigned student, hereby grant permission to *[Institution Name]* to disclose my educational records to the individual or organization specified below.

### Authorized Recipient:

Full Name of Authorized Recipient: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Organization Name (*if applicable*): \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Recipient: \_\_\_\_\_

### Scope of Release:

I authorize the release of the following records (check all that apply):

Transcripts    Grades    Financial Information    Disciplinary Records    Enrollment Information

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Duration of Authorization:** This waiver is valid for the following period:

Specific Date Range: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_    Indefinite (until revoked)

### Revocation:

I understand that I may revoke this authorization at any time by submitting a written request to *[Institution Name]* in accordance with institutional policies.

### Acknowledgment and Consent:

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have been informed of my rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). I voluntarily consent to the release of my educational records as described above.

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix F: Sample MOU

## Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) is entered into by and between [Community College/ District Name] (hereinafter “Community College”) and [Partner College/University Name] (hereinafter “Partner Institution”) to establish a partnership that provides Community College students with access to housing in Partner Institution residence halls.

### RECITALS

WHEREAS, the Parties desire to support the basic needs of students by providing housing to support them in completing their educational goals as described in Exhibit A (Statement of Work);

WHEREAS, Community College agrees to coordinate with Partner Institution to place eligible students in housing, as available, in Partner Institution residence halls.

### AGREEMENT

NOW, THEREFORE, Community College and Partner Institution each agree to the following:

#### **1. Partner Institution will:**

- a.** Provide housing for eligible Community College students in Partner Institution residence halls. Eligible students are defined as Community College students, ages 18-34, who are awarded a Rapid Re-Housing Rental Voucher through an authorized Housing Services Provider. Both parties will work together to provide reduced-rate housing if a voucher expires mid-year. Students will be placed by age group based on campus housing availability.
- b.** Collaborate with Community College to develop meal plans based on student needs, income, and available subsidies.
- c.** Provide parking at no cost.
- d.** Permit eligible students to reside on campus during academic breaks.
- e.** In emergency situations, provide students with access to campus support services including counseling, health, and wellness services.
- f.** Integrate Community College students into the campus community.

#### **2. Community College will:**

- a.** Refer eligible students to available housing through Partner Institution.
- b.** Handle student conduct and Title IX concerns for Community College students.
- c.** Provide transportation access, such as regional transit passes, as available.

### 3. Student Eligibility and Responsibilities:

#### a. Eligibility:

- a. Ages 18-34 with approved housing voucher or students seeking a residential experience.
- b. Must enroll in 12 units per semester and complete a minimum of 6 units.
- c. Must provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination.
- d. Must be in good academic and disciplinary standing.

#### b. Responsibilities:

- a. Adhere to both institutions' codes of conduct and housing rules.
- b. Sign FERPA waiver for records sharing.
- c. Maintain communication with assigned campus liaisons.

**4. Liaison Coordination:** Each institution will designate a liaison to manage implementation of this partnership.

**5. Indemnification:** Each Party agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the other Party against claims arising from their own acts or omissions in performance of this MOU.

**6. Non-Discrimination:** Both Parties agree not to discriminate on any basis prohibited by law.

**7. Term:** This MOU is effective from [Start Date] through [End Date], unless earlier terminated by either Party with 30 days' written notice.

**8. Termination:** This MOU may be terminated by either Party with 30 days' written notice.

**9. Notices:** All communications shall be addressed to the designated contact at each institution.

**10. COVID-19 Compliance:** Both Parties shall follow applicable public health regulations and coordinate necessary operational adjustments.

**11. Modifications:** Any amendment to this MOU must be in writing and signed by both Parties.

**12. Legal Compliance:** Parties will comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

**13. Governing Law:** This MOU shall be governed by the laws of the State of [State Name].

**14. Severability:** If any provision is found invalid, the remaining provisions shall remain in effect.

**15. Counterparts:** This MOU may be executed in counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original.

**16. Insurance:** Each Party shall maintain general liability insurance of at least \$1,000,000 per incident and \$3,000,000 aggregate, and property damage insurance of at least \$100,000.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have executed this MOU through their duly authorized representatives.

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Community College Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Partner Institution Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXHIBIT A: STATEMENT OF WORK

- A.** Housing will be provided per the terms outlined above, either through voucher or reduced rate as needed.
- B.** Students placed by age group; singles prioritized for students age 30+.
- C.** Meal plans will be customized based on stipend and offer flexible options.
- D.** Current sample rates for housing and meals should be reviewed annually and agreed upon in writing.

**[END OF MOU]**

# Appendix G: Book Voucher Request Form

## Fall 2025: Hope Scholars Book Voucher Request

### Please note

#### Total awards:

- Up to \$150 for students taking 1-5.9 units;
- Up to \$250 for students taking 6+ units.

Requests for books must be through the RHC bookstore, any requests through other websites or services will be denied.

Funds are allocated for books, not supplies.

Awards are dependent on funding, first come first served. Book vouchers will no longer continue once funds are depleted.

In order to receive Hope Scholars benefits, like the book voucher, all Spring 2024 contacts must be completed. Student must meet GPA and unit requirements.

---

**Full Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student ID** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

---

Please answer the following for **EACH** book you are requesting. Copy and paste the format of the bullet points into your response. **If you are requesting more than one book, please include them all here.**

Book #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Registration Number (CRN): \_\_\_\_\_

Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

ISBN Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Book Cost (AVAILABLE - USED) in Rio Bookstore: \_\_\_\_\_

Link to Book: \_\_\_\_\_

Book #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Registration Number (CRN): \_\_\_\_\_

Book Title: \_\_\_\_\_

ISBN Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Book Cost (AVAILABLE - USED) in Rio Bookstore: \_\_\_\_\_

Link to Book: \_\_\_\_\_

\*I am aware that for Fall 2024, we are limited to up to \$150 for students taking 1-5.9 units and up to \$250 for students taking 6+ units which will be credited to your account (depending on budget).

Yes       No

Students who are not currently enrolled at the time of completing the form will not be provided a voucher.

Students will have to pay the remaining balance for the books if they exceed the awarded amount.\*

Yes       No

I am aware that the book vouchers must be used at the RHC bookstore, any requests through other websites or services will be denied.\*

Yes       No

I am aware that the book voucher is allocated for books, not supplies.\*

Yes       No

I am aware that book voucher requests for Fall 2025 is dependent on funding, first come first served. Book vouchers will no longer continue once funds are depleted.\*

Yes       No

# Appendix H: Sample Interview Questions

## Sample Interview Questions for Hope Scholars Counselors

By selecting one or two questions from each area, for a total of about 10 questions for a 30-45 minute interview period, your hiring committee can gain important insight into their background, approach and techniques that they will use with your HOPE Scholars.

### GENERAL EXPERIENCE AND BACKGROUND

1. Can you tell us about your experience working with students who face significant life challenges, such as homelessness?
2. What motivated you to pursue a career as an academic counselor, especially working with unhoused or at-risk students?
3. How do you stay informed about the challenges faced by unhoused students and the resources available to them?

### UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF UNHOUSED STUDENTS

4. What do you see as the biggest academic barriers faced by unhoused students? How would you help them overcome these challenges?
5. How do you balance the academic needs of students with the personal and emotional support they may require, especially when homelessness may be impacting their focus or ability to engage in coursework?
6. In your opinion, what are the key psychological and emotional barriers unhoused students face in pursuing their education? How would you address these in your role as a counselor?
7. Can you give an example of how you have worked with students to create a personalized academic plan that also takes into account their housing instability?

### SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

8. What types of community resources or partnerships do you believe are essential to effectively support unhoused students, both academically and personally?
9. How do you approach connecting students with housing resources, food security services, or other basic needs that could impact their academic success?
10. How do you help students advocate for themselves, whether it's in accessing resources, communicating with faculty, or understanding their rights?

## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

11. Building trust with unhoused students can be challenging. How do you establish a safe, non-judgmental space for students who may be wary of authorities or institutions?
12. What strategies do you use to engage students who may be reluctant to seek support due to stigma or fear of being judged?
13. Can you describe a time when you worked with a student who was particularly resistant to academic counseling? How did you approach that situation?

## COLLABORATION AND ADVOCACY

14. Collaboration with other departments (e.g., student services, housing services, mental health counseling) is often key to supporting unhoused students. Can you describe a time when you worked in a multidisciplinary team to support a student?
15. How do you advocate for unhoused students within the institution or with community partners to ensure they receive the necessary accommodations and support?

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

16. How do you approach situations when a student is in immediate crisis due to housing instability or personal safety concerns?
17. If a student needs emergency housing, how would you help them navigate that process while still maintaining their academic responsibilities?
18. What strategies do you use to assist students in developing coping skills or resilience to handle difficult situations while continuing their studies?

## CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND INCLUSIVITY

19. How do you ensure that your counseling approach is culturally sensitive and inclusive, particularly for students from diverse backgrounds or identities (e.g., LGBTQ+, students of color, etc.) who may also be experiencing homelessness?
20. What steps do you take to ensure that you understand and respect the unique needs of each student, rather than making assumptions based on their circumstances?

## PERSONAL REFLECTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

21. This work can be emotionally challenging. How do you practice self-care and manage potential burnout in such a demanding role?
22. How do you continue to develop your skills and knowledge in working with unhoused students? Are there specific training or areas you feel are crucial to this work?
23. What is the most rewarding part of working with unhoused students, and how do you celebrate their successes or milestones?

# Appendix I: Sample Staff Training Agenda

Creating a training agenda for academic staff working with unhoused students requires a thoughtful approach that incorporates understanding homelessness, trauma-informed care, and practical strategies for supporting these students both academically and personally. Below is a proposed agenda with relevant topics:

## **Training Agenda for Academic Staff Working with Unhoused Students**

**Duration:** Full Day or Half Day (Adjust as needed)

**Format:** Workshops, Discussions, Breakout Groups, Case Studies

---

### **1. Introduction to Homelessness and Its Impact on Students**

- **Definition and Scope of Homelessness**

- » Understanding the various forms of homelessness (e.g., sheltered, unsheltered, couch-surfing).
- » The prevalence of student homelessness and its impact on academic success.
- » HUD vs. McKinney-Vento Definition (varies by institution)

- **Factors Contributing to Becoming Unhoused Among Students**

- » Economic hardships, family instability, mental health challenges, sexual or physical violence, and other contributing factors.
- » The intersectionality of homelessness and race, gender, sexual orientation, and other identities.

**GOAL:** To build foundational knowledge on the scope of student homelessness and understand its broad impact.

### **2. Trauma-Informed Practices in Academic Counseling**

- **Understanding Trauma and Its Effects**

- » Overview of trauma-informed care
- » Exploring the concept of trauma and its impact on students' behavior, learning, and emotional well-being.
- » Recognizing signs of trauma (e.g., withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, emotional outbursts).

- **Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment**

- » Strategies to create trust and reduce re-traumatization.

- » Practicing empathy and understanding in student interactions.

- **Communication Skills**

- » Using supportive language and active listening.
- » Avoiding language or behaviors that may inadvertently stigmatize or alienate students.

**GOAL:** To help academic staff develop skills for interacting with unhoused students in a compassionate, trauma-sensitive way.

### 3. Identifying and Addressing the Needs of Unhoused Students

- **Academic Barriers**

- » How being unhoused impacts attendance, focus, and academic performance.
- » Strategies for accommodating students (e.g., extended deadlines, flexible office hours).

- **Basic Needs**

- » Addressing issues like hunger, access to transportation, and housing instability.
- » Warm hand-off process to basic needs staff/coordinator
- » Understanding how unmet basic needs can affect student motivation and performance.

- **Mental Health Considerations**

- » Recognizing the impact of stress, anxiety, and depression on learning.
- » Discussing mental health resources and referring students to counseling services.

**GOAL:** To understand the holistic needs of unhoused students and how they impact academic success.

### 4. Resource Navigation: Connecting Students with Support Systems

- **Campus and Community Resources**

- » Overview of available campus resources (e.g., basic needs center, food pantry, emergency housing, mental health services, health center).
- » Identifying community organizations that can support unhoused students.

- **Building Partnerships with Local Agencies**

- » How academic staff can work with community organizations and social services.
- » Creating referral systems and clear communication with external partners.

- **Financial Aid and Housing Resources**

- » Navigating financial aid for students facing homelessness (e.g., emergency grants, housing stipends), AB 801 Verifications/Liaison
- » Assisting students with understanding and accessing available housing and emergency services.

**GOAL:** To empower academic staff with the knowledge of available resources and how to connect students to them.

## 5. Strategies for Academic Support and Retention

### • Personalized Academic Planning

- » Developing flexible academic plans to accommodate students facing homelessness.
- » Offering alternative assignments or adjusted expectations for students facing housing instability.

### • Mentoring and Academic Advising

- » How to serve as a mentor for unhoused students, providing both academic guidance and emotional support.
- » Building trust and consistency in advising relationships.

### • Promoting Self-Advocacy

- » Helping students advocate for themselves in academic and housing contexts.
- » Teaching students about their rights under FERPA and other policies.

**GOAL:** To provide academic staff with concrete strategies to support students' academic success, despite challenges.

## 6. Creating an Inclusive and Non-Judgmental Campus Culture

### • Addressing Stigma and Bias

- » Identifying and addressing unconscious biases related to homelessness.
- » Strategies to reduce stigma on campus and in classrooms.

### • Building a Campus-Wide Supportive Culture

- » Promoting empathy and inclusivity across the entire campus community.
- » Encouraging faculty to integrate discussions of homelessness into curricula where appropriate.

**GOAL:** To foster a campus culture that is inclusive and supportive of students experiencing homelessness.

## 7. Self-Care for Academic Staff

### • Recognizing the Emotional Toll of Working with Unhoused Students

- » Understanding how working with unhoused students can be emotionally taxing.
- » Signs of burnout or compassion fatigue.

### • Implementing Self-Care Strategies

- » Providing tools and strategies for academic staff to practice self-care.

- » Encouraging a healthy work-life balance and seeking support when needed.

- **Creating Peer Support Networks**

- » Building a community of practice among academic staff who work with vulnerable students.
- » Opportunities for peer debriefing and sharing experiences.

**GOAL:** To ensure academic staff can maintain their own well-being while supporting students effectively.

## 8. Case Studies and Group Discussion

- **Case Study Analysis**

- » Present real-life scenarios of unhoused students and work through possible interventions and support strategies.
- » Discuss solutions as a group and learn from peers' experiences.

- **Interactive Q&A**

- » Open space for staff to ask questions, share concerns, and exchange strategies.

**GOAL:** To provide opportunities for practical application of training concepts and foster peer learning.

## 9. Closing Remarks and Action Plan

- **Review Key Takeaways**

- » Summarize the most important points covered during the training.

- **Developing an Action Plan**

- » Encourage participants to outline specific actions they will take to support unhoused students in their roles.
- » Set goals for continued learning and collaboration.

**GOAL:** To ensure that staff feel confident in applying what they've learned and have a clear plan for supporting unhoused students.

## OPTIONAL FOLLOW-UP AND EVALUATION

- **Post-Training Reflection**

- » Provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on the training and its impact.

- **Ongoing Support and Development**

- » Offer additional resources or ongoing workshops to support academic staff.
- » Solicit feedback for improving future training sessions.

This agenda balances providing foundational knowledge with actionable strategies, ensuring academic staff are equipped to support unhoused students both practically and emotionally.

# Appendix J: Sample Job Descriptions

## Position Descriptions for Grant Funded Staff to be Hired or Determined

### HOPE SCHOLARS COUNSELOR/COORDINATOR

**Coordination Responsibilities:** In addition to the responsibilities listed below, the Hope Scholars/ Basic Needs Counselor/Coordinator will be responsible for day-to-day office activities, assists in the development and implementation of a marketing and recruitment plan, attends local and regional partnership meetings, serves as liaison for McKinney-Vento (K-12) high school counselor partners, assists in gathering data of student success data, interface with off-campus agencies including housing programs, will represent the Hope Scholars Program, and will meet with the Basic Needs Advisory Committee.

**Counseling Responsibilities:** Provide comprehensive counseling services to community college students; Provide information on college major and certificate programs as they relate to educational and career development; May teach counseling courses; Provide orientation for new students; Provide counseling related workshops; Provide counseling and advisement during registration; Maintain positive relationships with faculty in academic division(s) as assigned; Participate in recruitment activities; Participate in student and campus activities including but not limited to committee participation, institutional activities, staff development/flex activities; Assume professional responsibilities normally expected of members of community college faculty as described by Board Policies and the California Education Code; Perform peer reviews as required in the association contract; Participate in other contractually required activities; Meet regularly with discipline/division peers; Work towards continuous personal growth and development; Perform other duties as assigned.

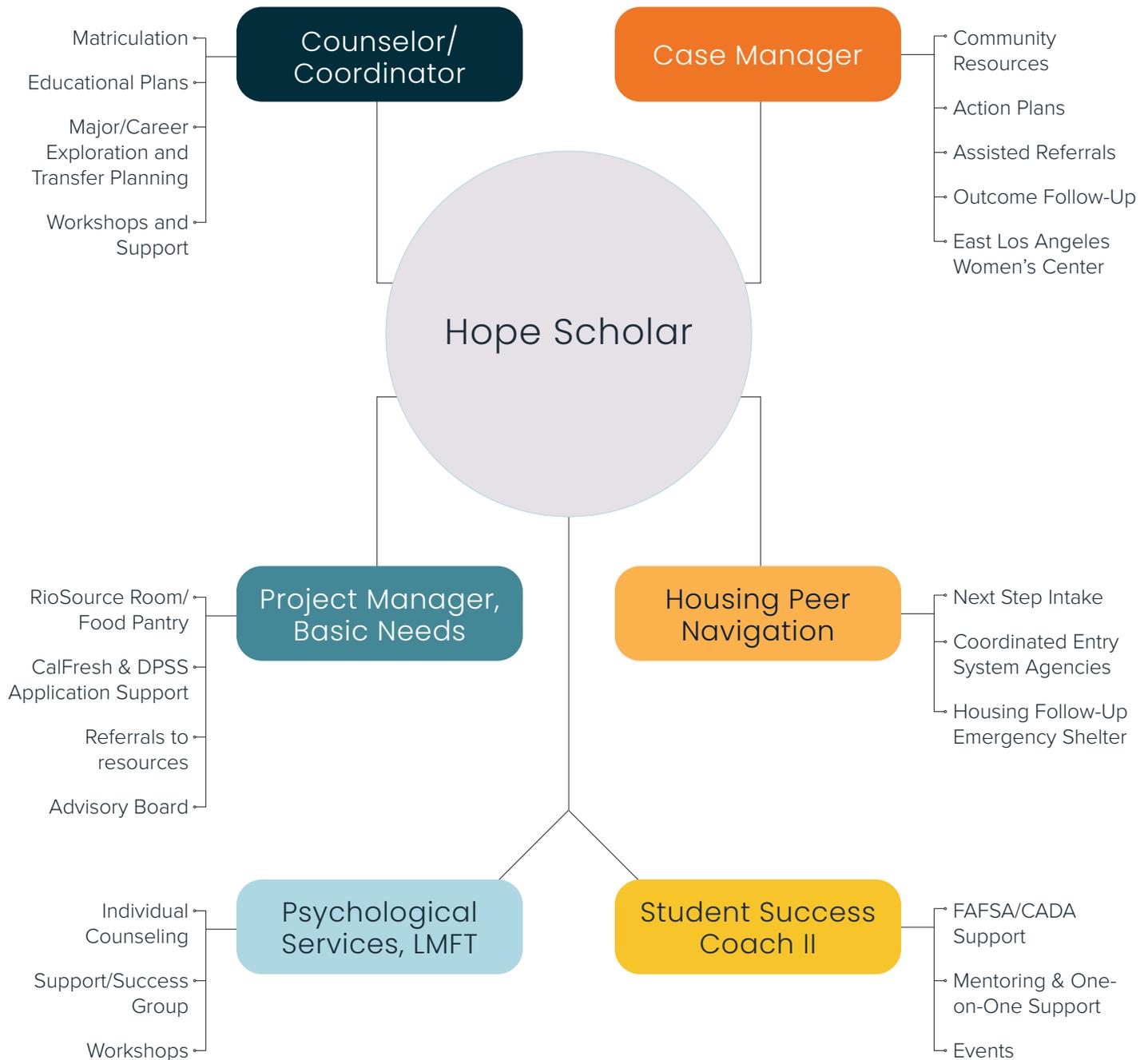
### CASE MANAGER, MSW

The Case Manager will focus on promoting student wellness through providing early support and follow-up for homeless and housing insecure students. The Case Manager will monitor students and develop action plans to facilitate referrals to on-and off-campus resources. In addition, the Case Manager will identify and coordinate with community-based agency partners, attend Advisory Board Meetings, and all Hope Scholars Core Staff training and meetings. The Case Manager will work closely with Housing Peer Navigator and Program Manager for Basic Needs to provide a coordinated response to student needs.

### STUDENT SUCCESS COACH II

Student Success Coach II will provide follow-up, coordinate workshops, events, and resources for Hope Scholars. SSC II will also call students for follow-up and appointments, connect students to resources, and will be able to complete DPSS public assistance applications on-site including CalFresh, Medi-Cal, General Relief, and housing service assessments. SSCII will provide mentorship and strengths-based coaching with Hope Scholars program participants.

# Appendix K: Hope Scholars Web of Support



# Appendix L: Sample Outreach Flyer



## The Hope Scholars Program is...

a holistic program that supports students who are unhoused, transitionally unhoused, and/or have been unhoused within the last five years.

### Program Requirements

- Complete Hope Scholars Orientation
- Complete three contacts each semester
- Enroll in 6 units or more
- Maintain a cumulative 2.5 GPA

### Program Benefits

- Academic counseling support
- Assistance with books and supplies
- Meal vouchers
- Collaboration with basic needs
- CalFresh assistance
- Tailored workshops and events



#### **How to get started...**

##### **Complete basic needs referral form using the QR code.**

A basic needs team member will reach out to you, access your situation, triage, and refer you to the Hope Scholars program if eligible.

Once referred, you will complete the Hope Scholars intake to get started.



# Appendix M: Website FAQ

## Hope Scholars Program: Frequently Asked Questions

### WHAT IS THE HOPE SCHOLARS PROGRAM?

The Hope Scholars Program is a specialized initiative designed to support community college students experiencing homelessness or housing instability. The program provides academic support, priority enrollment, resource navigation, and financial resources to help students successfully pursue their educational goals.

### WHAT TYPES OF SERVICES DOES THE HOPE SCHOLARS PROGRAM PROVIDE?

- Priority registration and academic planning
- Assistance connecting students to housing resources
- Dedicated academic counseling
- Grocery cards and book vouchers for qualified students
- Access to food pantries and basic needs support
- Career counseling and job placement assistance
- Peer mentorship and community-building activities

### WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE HOPE SCHOLARS PROGRAM?

Rio Hondo College students who are currently unhoused, transitionally unhoused, or experiencing significant housing instability are eligible. Students must also be enrolled in courses and demonstrate a commitment to achieving their educational goals.

- Students must have a 2.0 GPA
- Students must be enrolled in at least 9 units, unless they have an accommodation on file, with the goal to reach 12 units the following semester
- Students must work with the Hope Counselor on updating their educational plan and goals. Students are required to complete at least three program contact per semester to be eligible to receive program supports.

### HOW DO STUDENTS APPLY TO THE HOPE SCHOLARS PROGRAM?

Students can apply directly through the Hope Scholars Program office or designated campus staff, clearly indicating their housing situation. Additional documentation or a personal statement outlining their circumstances may be required.



## **DOES THE HOPE SCHOLARS PROGRAM PROVIDE HOUSING?**

While the Hope Scholars Program does not directly provide housing, we offer guidance and assistance in connecting students to local community housing resources and partner organizations to help secure stable accommodations.

## **IS THERE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE HOPE SCHOLARS PROGRAM?**

Yes, qualified students can receive grocery cards and book vouchers to support their educational expenses and basic living needs.

## **IF I HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS, WHO CAN I CONTACT?**

For additional information, please contact the Hope Scholars Program coordinator or visit our program office. Our dedicated team is available to support you throughout your educational journey.

# Appendix N: Sample Intake Form

## Hope Scholars Program Intake Form

Welcome! Please complete this short form to help us better understand your needs and connect you with the right resources. All responses are confidential and for internal use only.

### STUDENT INFORMATION

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Name (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred Method of Contact:  Phone  Text  Email

### ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Are you currently enrolled at Rio Hondo College?  Yes  No  Planning to enroll

Major / Area of Study: \_\_\_\_\_ Expected Graduation or Transfer Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### AREAS OF SUPPORT NEEDED: *Please check all that apply*

- Food/Groceries  Housing/Homelessness Support  Transportation  Mental Health/Wellness  
 Financial Assistance  Childcare  Academic Support  Legal Aid  Employment / Career Help  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### ADDITIONAL DETAILS (OPTIONAL)

Please describe your current situation or anything else you'd like us to know:

### CONSENT

- I understand that my information will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of connecting me with support services through the Hope Scholars program.  
 I give permission to be contacted by a Hope Scholars staff member.

Signature (Typed Name): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix O: Sample Program Calendar

AUGUST 2025						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20 9-11am Orientation	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29 11am-1pm Orientation	30	31

SEPTEMBER 2025						
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1	2	3	4	5 11am-1pm Hope Scholars Social	6	7
8 11am-1pm Time Management	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 11am-1pm Budgets 101	17	18	19 11am-1pm Resume Workshop	20	21
22	23 11am-1pm Financial Fitness	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

## OCTOBER 2025

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
		1	2	3 11am-1pm Food Budgeting & CalFresh	4	5
6	7 How much rent can I afford	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17 12-1pm Meet Transfer Center	18	19
20 12-1pm Intro to Transferring	21 12-1pm Transfer Planning (CSUs)	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

## NOVEMBER 2025

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 11am-1pm AJCC Presentation	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 GPA & Credit	15	16
17	18	19	20	21 11am-1pm Self Care & Stress Management	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

## DECEMBER 2025

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1 11am-1pm Finals Prep: Study Guide Magic	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	21				

# Appendix P: Sample Student Survey

Creating a survey for unhoused students is an important step to understand their specific needs, challenges, and access to resources. Here's an outline for a survey that can gather valuable data while being sensitive to their situation.

## Survey for Unhoused Students

### INTRODUCTION:

*Dear Student,*

*We are conducting this survey to better understand the challenges and needs of unhoused students. Your participation is voluntary, and your responses will remain confidential. This survey aims to help improve support and resources for students like you. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and experiences with us.*

---

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- 1. Age:**  18-24  25-30  31-40  41+
- 2. Gender Identity (Optional):**  
 Male  Female  Non-binary  Prefer not to say  Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Are you a parenting student?**  Yes  No
- 4. Do you plan to enroll next semester?**  Yes  No

### LIVING SITUATION

- 5. How long have you been unhoused?**  
 Less than 1 month  1-3 months  4-6 months  More than 6 months
- 6. Where are you currently staying? (Check all that apply)**  
 Shelter  Couchsurfing (staying with friends or family)  Outdoors (e.g., park, streets)  
 Car/Van  Transitional Housing  Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. Do you have access to a safe and stable place to sleep every night?**  Yes  No
- 8. How often do you have trouble accessing shelter or a safe place to sleep?**  
 Never  Sometimes  Often  Always

## BASIC NEEDS AND RESOURCES

9. Do you have reliable access to food?  Yes  No
10. Do you have access to a bathroom or shower facilities regularly?  Yes  No
11. Do you have access to clean clothes?  Yes  No
12. Do you have access to medical care when needed?  Yes  No
13. Are you able to access any of the following resources? (Check all that apply)
- Food pantry
  - Healthcare services
  - Housing support services
  - Mental health services
  - Transportation assistance
  - Job search assistance
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

14. What challenges do you face in completing schoolwork or attending school due to your housing situation? (Open-ended question)
15. Do you feel that your school provides adequate support for students experiencing homelessness?  
 Yes  No  Not Sure
16. Would you benefit from additional academic support or resources?  Yes  No  Maybe
17. Do you have access to a computer or the internet for schoolwork?  Yes  No

## EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

18. How often do you feel stressed or anxious about your housing situation?  
 Rarely  Sometimes  Often  Always
19. Do you have a support system (friends, family, community) to talk to about your situation?  
 Yes  No

**20. Do you feel safe in your current living situation?**  Yes  No

**21. Have you been able to access mental health services?**  Yes  No

## SUGGESTIONS AND NEEDS

**22. What services or resources would most help you in your current situation?** (Open-ended question)

**23. What additional support or changes could your school provide to help you succeed?** (Open-ended question)

**24. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences as an unhoused student?** (Open-ended question)

## CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses are invaluable and will help us better understand the challenges faced by unhoused students, allowing us to improve the support and resources provided.