



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Palo Alto College and San Antonio Housing Authority launch Housing Assistance Program for Alamo Colleges students**

Alamo Colleges District-Palo Alto College launched a Housing Assistance Program through a partnership with the San Antonio Housing Authority (SAHA) to provide Alamo Colleges students with housing vouchers to offset rental costs by 50 percent.

“We are experiencing something that the rest of the country is experiencing, which is an insecurity crisis among college students,” said Gilberto Becerra, vice president for student success at Palo Alto College. “It’s much larger than housing... It’s about breaking that cycle by removing the obstacles, so they can get a degree and be self-sustaining.”

Based on a financial wellness survey conducted in spring 2018, 33 percent of Palo Alto College students indicated housing insecurity, such as having trouble affording utilities or having to move frequently.

The program sets aside up to 20 housing vouchers for households referred by Palo Alto College. The voucher requests will be processed within 30-45 days – placing eligible students at the top of a wait list that normally takes two to six years to be fulfilled. With the vouchers, students may rent from a landlord in the private rental market.

Students who are homeless or at risk of being homeless are considered eligible for the program if they: Are enrolled in at least 12 credit hours at Palo Alto College or one of the Alamo Colleges; maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA); and do not owe money to SAHA. If a student meets the criteria, they may complete an application through the College’s S.H.A.R.E. Center.

The Housing Assistance Program is the newest in a suite of advocacy services offered at Palo Alto College based on the idea that if students’ basic needs must be met in order for them to successfully obtain their educational and career goals. Based upon four years of advocacy services data, students who take advantage of the College’s other services show increased rates of success when compared to the general student population.

“This is to get people back on their feet; get people back into the workforce into in-demand occupations,” said Becerra. “Whatever stops a student from being successful academically, we’re going to remove that obstacle.”

The Housing Assistance Program is part of Palo Alto College’s three-prong approach to confronting the issue of homelessness among its students:

1. Pre-emptive interventions to help students avert homelessness through financial literacy, financial planning, and connections to community resources.
2. Emergency housing program funded through Palo Alto Colleges Emergency Aid Program (EAP) for students needing short term shelter for up to three days (funded in part through the Trellis Corporation).
3. SAHA housing vouchers provided to Palo Alto College students for longer-term housing. Students remain eligible for the vouchers as long as they continue meeting the criteria, up to one semester after graduating from Palo Alto College.

For more information about the Housing Assistance Program and Palo Alto College’s other advocacy services, students may visit [alamo.edu/pac/share](http://alamo.edu/pac/share) or email the S.H.A.R.E. Center at [pac-share@alamo.edu](mailto:pac-share@alamo.edu).

Palo Alto College, part of the Alamo Colleges District, is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges and a recipient of the 2015 Texas Award for Performance Excellence, a finalist for the 2016 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, and a Rising Star winner of the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. With over 10,000 students, Palo Alto College is accredited to offer associate degrees and short-term certificates. The College is located on the south side of San Antonio at 1400 W. Villaret Blvd. at I-410 and Texas Hwy 16 and online at [alamo.edu/pac](http://alamo.edu/pac).

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