

## Divisional Strategic Planning Brief – Learning Support

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### Campus Outcome: East and Winter Campus 5 Year Plan (August 2015 – July 2020)

Goal 18. *Initiate Conversations on Housing / Food Insecurity on East and Winter Park campuses.*

### Department Outcome: Learning Support Unit Plan (2017/18)

Goal #5. Explore Funding Opportunities to Support Programming Aimed at At-Risk Students

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### BACKGROUND & DESCRIPTION

According to a national study by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab published in 2017 titled *Hungry and Homeless in College* 67% of community college students are food insecure (meaning they often go hungry), and about half were experiencing housing insecurity, and 14% were homeless. Findings from the Wisconsin Hope Lab research, and other local studies (2015 Annual Report-Florida Council on Homelessness) illuminating the degree of homelessness within our community have fueled recent efforts by Valencia students, faculty and staff to take immediate steps to address this important issue.

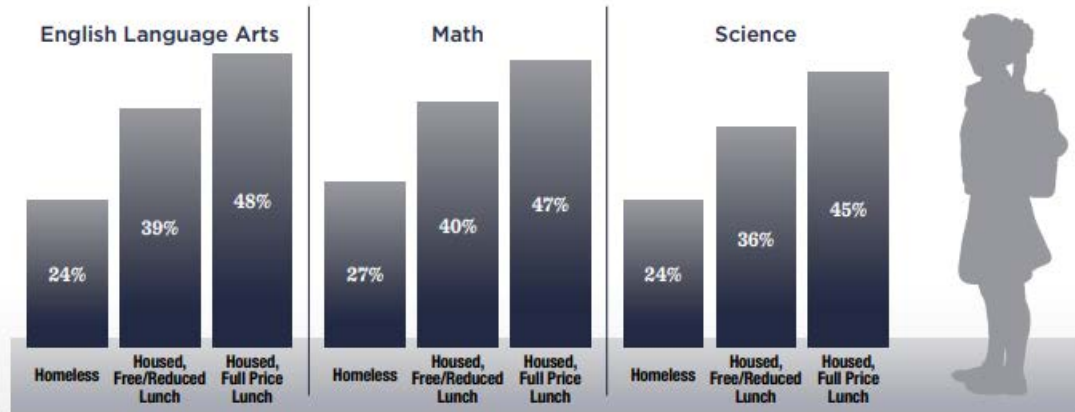
Homelessness among our students and within our community is a social issue that we, as educators, must pay attention to. The 2015 Annual Report by the Florida Council on Homelessness (FCH) reported that in 2015 “Nationally one-third of all homeless people are children and youth; Florida school districts identified 71,446 children and youth who were homeless or unstably housed”. The impact of homelessness on students in our community is significant and will compromise our efforts to create a strong and thriving local-economy. The following data from the Florida Department of Education illustrates the effect that homelessness is having on school age children. Only about 25% of students experiencing homelessness are able to successfully pass the ELA, Math and Science FSA/SSA Tests.

According to a 2017 Annual Report provided by Covenant House Florida, a local homeless youth shelter, that Valencia has recently partnered with - “60% of the 38,000 youth served have not completed a GED and 32% have attempted suicide”.

To ignore this growing issue in our nation, and within our community, would eventually thwart our best efforts to fulfill our mission. Studies clearly indicate students who arrive at our

institution without stable housing are more likely to require mental health counseling and other costly social services, impeding their ability to focus on their studies, and succeed academically.

*Students Passing FSA/SSA Tests as a Percentage of Grade-Eligible Students, 2015-16 School Year*



*Because of data availability, percentages refer to the number of students passing the test as a percentage of total students in the relevant grades, rather than as a percentage of students taking the test. Since some students did not take the tests, the percentages for all groups are lower than the actual passing rates of test takers.*

*Source: Florida Department of Education.*

The 2015 FCH report went on to suggest that “there are proven methods and interventions that give people the resources and tools to move out of the cycle of homelessness. Two of the strategies listed are being employed by our institution, specifically the Learning Support division on the East Campus of Valencia College; “Building and supporting collaborative partnerships among local and state governments and community stakeholders and providers, and Accessing education and job training programs, including postsecondary education.”

In 2013, the Campus President of Valencia College, Dr. Stacey Johnson, recommended that Dr. Leonard Bass, Dean of Learning Support for East/Winter Park Campuses join the Board of Directors of Covenant House. That appointment formalized an on-going relationship between Covenant House Florida and Valencia College.

Since 2013, the East Campus has been working strategically to create a robust education pipeline for GED graduates from Covenant House. In Orlando, Covenant House Florida offers the Independent Living Track Program to prepare youth to become self-sufficient young adults. The program incorporates classes that cover G.E.D. preparation, job readiness, and employment skills. Most of the youths who come to Covenant House Florida do not have a high school diploma and are not currently attending school. Recognizing that education is a key component of adult success, CHF offers:


- Morning and afternoon classes toward high school equivalency during the week
- Individual tutoring
- Assistance with testing fees

<http://www.covenanthousefl.org/education-orlando>

## INTERVENTION

For the last 4 years, Valencia has been strategically to encourage, support, and recruit students in CHF's GED Program through fundraising efforts, learning support activities, college campus tours, and advocacy work.

***Fundraising:*** In 2013, Valencia College partnered with Covenant House to assist with fundraising efforts, specifically targeted at increasing their ability to offer GED instruction and testing services. Since then the fundraising efforts have included participation in (4) Executive SleepOuts, hosting (2) Student SleepOuts, organizing a Silent Auction at the Shine Restaurant in Downtown Orlando.



**Difference in Our Community:  
Sleep Out for Homeless Youth**

By Dani Moritz-Long

It isn't easy being a young adult and suddenly finding yourself thrust into this place called reality. It's even harder when you're sleeping on the streets and you don't know where your next meal will come from — let alone what the future holds.

This is what inspired **Leonard Bass**, campus dean, learning support, to join the efforts of **Covenant House Florida** — an organization devoted to opening doors for homeless youth and young adults.

"I decided to serve at the Covenant House because of their mission and who they serve," said Leonard, who began serving the Covenant House in 2014. "Investing in at-risk youth has long been a focus of mine. I remember this period of my life being confusing and a critical period of transformation. Being someone who lost his father to cancer the second year of college, I can relate to the importance of mentors and a strong social support network during these years."

Similarly, Mathematics Professor Marjorie Karwowski, who has been serving the Covenant House since 2008, found inspiration in the recognition of how crucial — and difficult — young adulthood is.

"In 2006, Valencia's distinguished graduate was formerly homeless," she said. "That day changed the way I perceive the homeless. That day, I was determined to make a difference as I saw the impact Dean of Humanities **David Sutton** and Professor [Elizabeth] Eschbach had on this student."

Both Marjorie and Leonard have channeled their empathy and compassion into an effort that makes a real difference to those under the care of the Covenant House. With the help of volunteers like them and partnerships with organizations like Valencia, the Covenant House cares for youth in need and prepares them for independence and brighter futures.

"They [Covenant House Florida] have a long history of not only offering shelter to homeless youth, but providing important services that will move young people to self-sufficiency," Leonard explained. "I was especially drawn to the focus they place on education through their GED completion program. As I got to know some of the residents at the shelter, I quickly realized that they were just like other students I had worked with throughout my 20-year career in higher education. They had many of the same interests and dreams but needed guidance and someone to believe in them to help actualize those dreams."



To help make those dreams possible, the Covenant House raises money through an annual Sleep Out. During the event, so-called sleepers participate in a discussion with the serviced youth and then head outside — equipped with a cardboard box and sleeping bag — to sleep on the pavement. In doing so, they simultaneously garner an understanding of what homelessness is like and raise funds to support the shelter.

This year, the Valencia team's efforts resulted in \$4,750 raised.

**Learning Support Activities:** In 2015, the Learning Support division began working on programming at the College support homeless enrolled at Valencia. These efforts included recruiting a team of faculty, staff and students who were interested in serving as advocates for our students. As advocates we worked to connect homeless students to academic and social support services (i.e. tutoring, counseling, and scholarships). Learning Support staff also visited CHF to provide information on services, engage in service projects, and donate academic and personal items (i.e. bookbags, school supplies, clothes, hygiene products, etc.).

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## Valencia College Supports Covenant House

For the fourth year in a row, Valencia College has joined **Covenant House** in support of its annual executive edition of Sleep Out.

The Sleep Out event is a national movement started by Covenant House to raise money and awareness about homelessness and to help get kids off the streets. Last year, **Estevan Baza**, operations manager, energy conservation; **Leonard Bass**, campus dean, learning support; **Marjorie Karwowski**, professor, mathematics; and **Resham Shirsat**, director, education for sustainability, spent a night sleeping out in the elements at the Orlando City Soccer Stadium. Through their efforts, contributions from more than 65 Valencia employees raised \$9,540, and Valencia College ranked fourth among local organizations and companies who raised funds to support homeless youth. **Stacey Johnson**, president, East and Winter Park Campuses, and Valencia College Foundation President and CEO Geraldine Gallagher were significant supporters.

Leonard who serves on the Board of Directors for Covenant House Florida stated, "Every year, we see Valencia's commitment to the youth at Covenant House grow. It is no surprise that an increasing number of Covenant House youth are aspiring to higher education — with Valencia being the preferred choice for most of them. In fact, the four residents who shared their experiences with the 'Sleepers' the night of the event were all Valencia students."

"Valencia's awareness of this issue in the community and support for the Covenant House demonstrates that Valencia is committed to all elements of sustainability, which inspired me to participate in the Sleep Out," Estevan added.

Resham concluded, "I was inspired to participate in the Sleep Out because I was shocked at the survey results of how many students are homeless and trying to complete their education in the face of this deep challenge. Poverty and hunger are also part of the **United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals**, and, therefore, closely tied to my values and role as the director of education for sustainability. We cannot achieve a better quality of life for our community unless we meet people's basic needs."

**On Monday, March 5, 2018, Phi Theta Kappa Chapters at Valencia campuses will hold their Second Annual Valencia Student Sleep Out.** Last year, more than 82 students and staff participated in this event in support of homeless youth in our community. Read the February East and Winter Park Campus Concentrate for event details.



**College Campus Tours:** In the Spring of 2018, Learning Support organized two campus tours for staff and students of the East and Osceola campuses. The tours served to educate and orient CHF staff and youth to the resources and services at Valencia. Many CHF youth have indicated that a significant barrier to enrolling at Valencia after completing the GED is fear of the unknown, and unfamiliar. Simply not knowing who to contact at Valencia or which office to visit dissuades potential students from completing the enrollment process. Student are trained to survive on the streets but lack the self-esteem and sense of worth needed to thrive as a productive learner and member of society. The purpose of these tours is to connect CHF youth to College advocates, make them feel comfortable in the Valencia community, and to provide meaningful connection and direction.

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### Making a Difference in Our Community: Students and Employees Sleep Out for Homeless Youth

Share



On Monday, April 3, 2017, 150 students, faculty and staff gathered to sleep out on the East Campus lawn, trading the comforts of home for a plastic bag, cardboard and a sleeping bag.

By simulating homelessness, the participants gained awareness of what it's like to live on the street and took the first steps toward raising \$10,000 for the [Covenant House Florida's](#) General Education Development (GED) Program. The event raised \$2,095 or 20 percent of the goal. To contribute to the remaining \$8,000, [click here](#).

The Valencia Sleep Out was started by two members of East Campus' PTK chapter — Alpha Gamma Omega, Bruno Basso, vice president for scholarship, and Michael Onuchovsky, executive vice-president and PR director. They wanted to create an opportunity for students in Central Florida to take action and let the world know that they will not stand by quietly while young people suffer from homelessness. Phi Theta Kappa has an Honors Program, Honors in Action, which is designed to engage honors students in actions to foster student success and help fulfill their two-fold mission, recognizing and encouraging scholarship in a lively exchange of ideas and developing leaders who serve their communities.

Commenting on the success and the importance of the event, East and Winter Park Campus President [Stacey Johnson](#) shared, "I am so very proud of everyone who gathered to help our neighbors at the Covenant House and to help the young people they serve, particularly young women and children, who need to see a light in their future. Through the power and compassion that education and higher learning can bring, Valencia can shine that light."

***Advocacy Work:*** Since the Fall of 2016, the Learning Support division has partnered with the student organization, Phi Theta Kappa, to raise the consciousness of students towards the issues of youth homelessness in our community. They were an important group engage as according to their official website - "Phi Theta Kappa's Honors Program, Honors in Action, is designed to engage honors students in actions that foster student success and helps fulfill our two-fold mission to: recognize and encourage scholarship in a lively exchange of ideas **and develop leaders who serve their communities.**" Alpha Gamma Omega's 2016-2017 HIA theme was "Rights and Responsibilities". Their focus of work was homelessness, or more specifically addressing the needs of homeless youth in Central Florida.

*As a result of our work together, the students launched Valencia's Annual SleepOut for Homeless Youth initiative, and Addressing Social Issues Week. The SleepOut was intended to raise funding to support educational programming at CHF, and to increase the College's awareness of the issues facing homeless youth enrolled at Valencia and within our community. Addressing Social Issues Week was organized to bring attention to corollary issues facing homeless youth in our community.*



The poster features a dark background with blurred lights. The title "SleepOut Workshops" is written in a large, golden, cursive font at the top. Below the title, five workshop events are listed in a vertical column, each with a date in a grey box, the topic, and the location and time.


Date	Topic	Location & Time
26 FEB	MENTAL HEALTH	ATRIUM   1:00 PM
27 FEB	HOMELESSNESS	ATRIUM   1:00 PM
28 FEB	EDUCATION	ATRIUM   1:00 PM
01 MAR	HUMAN TRAFFICKING	ATRIUM   7:00 PM
02 MAR	FOOD INSECURITY	ATRIUM   1:00 PM

Hosted by Valencia College East Campus



**STRATEGIC RESULTS:**

***Fundraising Efforts:***



**VALENCIA COLLEGE'S FUNDRAISER:  
SECOND ANNUAL VALENCIA SLEEPOUT**

**BENEFITING: COVENANT HOUSE FLORIDA INC**  
**THE STORY:**  
 One Night. One School. One Mission. Help us impact the lives of promising homeless youth in Central Florida. Valencia College Homeless Initiative by Phi Theta Kappa is hosting the Second Annual Valencia SleepOut for homeless youth. We are rallying for those whom don't have the chance to speak out. We will be raising funds for the homeless youth at the Covenant House of Florida. The funds will go towards renovating their GED program, therefore more homeless youth will have access for higher education.

First 100 to raise \$25 or more will be eligible for a Second Annual Valencia SleepOut T-Shirt. Pick up will be at the night of event.  
 \*Proof of donation must be provided during time of pick up.

[See More](#)

REGISTER

DONATE  
TO THIS FUNDRAISER

\$4,879

MONEY RAISED

Anonymous	
Nichole Jackson	\$50
Jen Diaz	\$25
Amanda Molina	\$25
Migdalia Otero	\$25

65% Raised of \$7,500 Goal

FUNDRAISE FOR THIS CAMPAIGN

**During the 2017 CHF SleepOut** Fifty-five volunteer “sleepers” participated in the Sleep Out for Homeless Youth Executive Edition at Covenant House Florida in Orlando, raising nearly \$150,000 to support the vital services it offers. **Valencia raised \$9,275 dollars with over 50 individual gifts being given.**

## Who's Sleeping Out

Teams		Participants	
1. Team T&G	\$26,880	1.  Ken Thirtyscre	\$9,625
2. AV Homes	\$24,735	2.  David Grabosky	\$8,435
3. Toll Brothers	\$10,675	3.  Lucas Morris	\$8,300
4. Team Valencia	\$9,275	4.  Leonard Bass	\$3,890
5. Orlando City	\$3,297	5.  Marjorie Fernandez Karwowski	\$3,810
6. The CHF Mission Warriors	\$2,263	6.  Shawn Rawlins	\$3,400
7. Axiom in Action	\$2,215	7.  Matthew Young	\$3,215
8. 330(h)(5)(A)	\$1,755	8.  Frederic Guitton	\$2,680
9. Potential Rousers	\$990	9.  Mark Knott	\$1,845
10. SUBU CrossFit		10.  Brian O'Hara	\$1,650

Show All

Show All

**The Total funds raised in 2017/18 was over \$16,000.**



### ***CHF Students Served:***

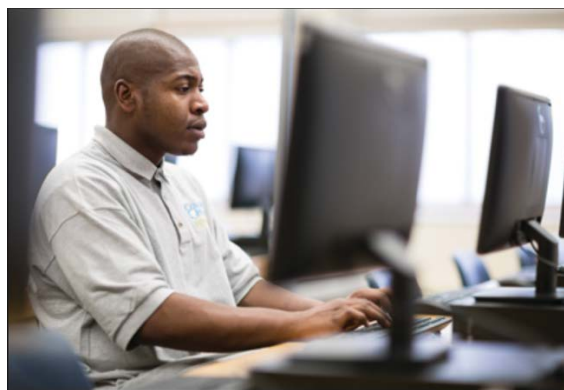
- Last year, 2017, CHF sheltered 310 homeless youth and children from the dangers of life on the street by providing emergency shelter. We also assisted 76 homeless youth in becoming self-sufficient young adults by helping them obtain employment / paid internship, and **helped 62 homeless youth escape generational poverty by helping them secure tuition waivers to pursue higher education.**

- ‘Last year, CHF provided assistance to over 850 youth and children here in Central Florida. Youth like Crystal, a homeless youth who enrolled at CHF to escape a stressful environment that was keeping her from reaching her full potential. Crystal wanted to begin living a productive life, so she enrolled in CHF’s education program to work towards earning the General Equivalency Diploma. She also received intensive job training, and quickly secured part time employment. **After obtaining her General Equivalency Diploma,** Crystal started working towards becoming a Certified Nurse Assistant and a Home Health Aid. Crystal was accepted into CHF’s Transitional Housing Program, and is thriving with the support of her case manager. ‘ <http://www.covenanthousefl.org/orlando>

- Others like Lindsay Davis, completed CHF’s GED program after dropping out of high school due to unstable housing. She went on to complete a degree at Valencia College and is now enrolled at the University of Central Florida pursuing a degree in Social Work. [http://mobile.digitaledition.orlandosentinel.com/infinity/article\\_popover\\_share.aspx?guid=74b4a3e3-0b76-4473-a07d-9fb467477b74](http://mobile.digitaledition.orlandosentinel.com/infinity/article_popover_share.aspx?guid=74b4a3e3-0b76-4473-a07d-9fb467477b74)

### ***Institutional Impact:***

**GED Center Renovated / Revitalized** - In the Spring of 2018, Covenant House Orlando completed a major renovation of their GED Training and Testing Center with the funding provided by Valencia College. The new training center is now equipped with new computers and furniture, electronic teaching materials allowing students to access their coursework from anywhere, and a completely renovated space. In June of 2018, **12 students will graduate from the program since the renovated Center was opened.** Dr. Leonard Bass, Dean of Learning Support has been invited to serve as the June 2018 Commencement Speaker, and all students are being recruited to attend Valencia College. With the new electronic teaching materials, the GED Program at CHF is also expanding its services into Osceola County to meet a growing demand for their services. Through a partnership with the Osceola Campus, a CHF Outreach Counselor, is now serving homeless youth on campus, one day a week.





***PTK Receives International Recognition*** - After two years of organizing the Annual Student SleepOut event, the Alpha Gamma Omega chapter of Phi Theta Kappa earned international recognition as a “Distinguished Chapter for Service” at their Centennial Catalyst Convention. In 2017, the Executive Board for the student organization drafted an addendum to its constitution stating that every year the Vice President would be responsible for organizing the Annual Student SleepOut fundraising event at Valencia. This was a significant gesture demonstrating the commitment our student leaders are making to the cause of homeless youth in our community.


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Share

## May 2018 Kudos

Week of May 20 – 26, 2018

East Campus Phi Theta Kappa Chapter Earns International Acclaim



No. This isn't déjà vu. The Alpha Gamma Omega chapter (AGO) of Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) has earned more recognition for the chapter's remarkable success and community service efforts — this time on an international scale.

Following the chapter's recognition at a **regional conference in March** and the **Chancellor's Student Service Award**, the team earned additional kudos for its Honors in Action project on peace and war on Saturday, April 21, 2018, at PTK's Centennial Catalyst Convention, which marked PTK's 100-year anniversary. The project, which resulted in a suicide-prevention You Are Not Alone event last fall, resulted in the chapter's designation as a top-three project internationally for the peace and war theme.

Also in recognition of the chapter's Honors in Action project and its College Project, the Valencia College Homeless Initiative's **First and Second Annual Sleep-out for Homeless Youth** events, the chapter garnered acclaim as an internationally-recognized Distinguished Chapter. This designates Alpha Gamma Omega as a top 35 chapter in the world, with approximately 1,300 chapters worldwide.

Finally, Alpha Gamma Omega Chapter President Michael Onuchovsky (who, unsurprisingly, also is a Seneff Honors College student and member of the National Society of Leadership and Success), was honored as the flag bearer of the British Virgin Islands. While Michael has no affiliation with the territory, he was selected based on his many achievements and notability as a PTK member.

## REFLECTION

Overall, I think one of the most meaningful outcomes of this initiative has been the impact that it has had on the faculty, staff, and student's at Valencia. Over the last four years I have witnessed a shift in the opinions and attitudes towards homeless youth in our community and at our institution. There is a growing concern and interest in developing programming and supportive services for these students. One of the on-going challenges with this work is identification of precariously housed students. Many homeless students do not self-identify, or recognize the benefits of informing college staff of their housing status. There are also levels and degrees of homelessness, however, research indicates that any level of housing insecurity has a significant negative impact on students ability to focus on learning. Despite the challenges, for those students who are identified and willing to avail themselves of the support available at the College, it is encouraging to see increasing numbers of faculty, staff, and students who stand ready and willing to aid them in their educational pursuits.

### *Quote from Learning Day 2018 – (Covenant House Volunteer)*

According to one of the staff from Valencia, a Librarian on East Campus, who participated in the service project at Covenant House this year “I was shocked and surprised at the number of homeless students at Valencia. It is encouraging to see how hard these students work in the midst of their situation. Seeing their tireless efforts to succeed in the midst of struggle makes me want to reach out so much more, to figure out what I can do as an educator and member of this community, to make their lives just a little bit better. I find that a little bit of help goes a long way in showing them that they have advocates and people who genuinely care about them and want to see them succeed. It's easy to help the students who “have it all together” however, through learning more about the experiences of homeless youth in our community I have realized how important it is to proactively engage students who are at-risk and struggling to complete their education”.

### *Quote from Executive SleepOut 2018 – (Valencia Sustainability Staff)*

I was inspired to participate in the SleepOut because I was shocked at the survey results of how many students are homeless and trying to complete their education in the face of this deep challenge. Poverty and hunger are also part of the [United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals](#) and therefore closely tied to my values and role as the Director of Education for Sustainability. We cannot achieve a better quality of life for our community unless we meet people's basic needs.

## NEXT STEPS:

- Establish Homeless Youth Advocates at the College – Develop Fac Dev / Edge training course focused on supporting Homeless Youth
- Design a Web-page for Homeless Youth providing information on College and Community Resources
- Pursue grant funding to hire Case Managers that can assist homeless youth in our region
- Use EAB system to track and connect homeless students to supportive services at Valencia