

PCC Earns Grant for Basic Needs Services

U.S. Department of Ed funding will allow the college to focus on student mental health, housing support

Oregon college students face high levels of basic needs insecurity. Many students struggle to afford food and housing, utilities, transportation and childcare while pursuing their education and working towards careers that will pay them a living wage. The wrap-around services provided by community colleges, and the ability to connect students to services, are critical to meeting those needs.

As a result, Portland Community College has been awarded an \$867,839 grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Basic Needs for Postsecondary Students Program. This grant will span the next three years, beginning on Sept. 1. It will focus on



Student Tin Lee takes advantage of a PCC Foundation free laptop donation.

student mental health, housing support, increased promotion of basic needs resources, and trauma-informed care training for PCC staff and faculty.

"These grant funds could not have come sooner for our stu-

dents and will improve awareness and access to basic needs support at the college, with the intentional focus on mental health and housing," said Lauren Smith, executive dean of PCC's Student Belonging & Wellbeing. "The

trauma-informed care training for staff and faculty will be the perfect complement to this additional support, and will include an emphasis on holistic wellbeing and enhancements to the way we identify, refer, and serve students

who may be experiencing basic needs insecurity in any area."

PCC's project will be used to address both the housing and mental health needs of students. A housing navigator will be hired to assess the need, coordinate the college's response to the housing crisis, liaise with community-based organizations and housing providers, and help connect students with resources available in the community.

Funding will also be used to hire a mental health provider, who will oversee evaluations for students in need of a formal diagnosis in order to qualify for services with external providers. This will fill a large gap in PCC's counseling services while also alleviating the caseload of existing counselors by referring students who are in need of more complex mental healthcare than the college can provide. Finally, the grant will allow for the training of PCC employees about trauma-informed approaches to identify and support students with basic needs insecurity.

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