

	Susan Werner

Please provide a narrative summary of your project.

Stockton University has approximately 50 new students moving into the residence halls every year who have limited or no parental support and, while they are academically strong, do not have the financial resources to buy what they need to live on campus. For many of these students, Stockton becomes their home as they are coming out of "couch surfing" homelessness, have aged out of foster care, or have parents and guardians with addiction issues or other reasons that they cannot be caretakers. They are eager to leave their trauma behind them and earn their college degree, which we know is one of the most effective ways to rise above poverty. Without support, this population has a 3% four-year graduation rate, compared to the 42% four-year graduation rate of students whose parents attended college, or even the 27% four-year graduation rate of first-generation students.

A 2015 study of former foster youth and homeless youth at Stockton University revealed that shame and stigma associated with living on campus but not having the necessities that their peers had increased overall stress levels, decreased feelings of belonging and a "place" on campus, both risk factors for dropping out of school (Hernandez-Mekonnen, R. et al., 2017). A program as simple as donated dorm room supplies (an estimated \$200 per student) increases a sense of inclusion and makes the transition to college life smoother.

With this in mind, we request \$10,000 per year for two years to supply a dorm room package for incoming Stockton students without parental support and who are coming out of disadvantaged situations. Currently, a pilot program for this population is in its second year of funding through an Absecon-Galloway Rotary grant. Students are chosen from the incoming EOF class and are invited to select a pattern from the 20-piece dorm room collection at OCM.com. The supplies are on each student's bed when they arrive for the summer academy. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this program is having positive effects on recipients.

Outlined below is the revised internal workflow for the Student Housing Essentials program. The process identifies the departments needed to successfully execute the program, and potential staff members to help steward the process and program.

Office of Financial Aid

- The Office of Financial Aid will identify eligible first year or transfer students who have a dependency override. Filing a dependency override indicates that the student has no adult financially responsible for them. The student must provide documentation of their situation to the office which is then screened with objective criteria. Using this selection method ensures that the students who need the support are targeted and that they only need to share their personal stories once.

Residence Life

- Residence Life will cross reference the list of students receiving dependency overrides with the students who will be living on campus and will share that list with the Office of the Dean of Students.

Office of the Dean of Students

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- Residence Life will advise the student their bedding has arrived and will be waiting for them.

Foundation: Advancement Services

- The Foundation Office will process the invoiced payment from OCM.com

Timelines:

- **Fall Semester:**
 - Pull the list of eligible students (those with deposit and eligible for housing assignment) in the second week of July.
 - Student response must be received by the third week of July with pattern choice.
- **Spring Semester:**
 - Pull the list of eligible students (those with deposit and eligible for housing

Strategic Impact

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This project addresses **Inclusive Student Success 1.3.5** in that students without parental support are more likely to be minority students. According to Strayhorn (2012), students cannot feel a sense of belonging until they feel that they matter. Increasing a sense of belonging in this population by meeting their needs and welcoming them on the first day could improve a sense of well-being, academic achievement, retention, and graduation rates (Means, D. & Pyne, K., 2017).

It supports **Diversity and Inclusion 2.1.3** because the funding would be targeted to offer supportive resources for an overlooked diverse population, and the success of this project initiated with Compass Funding will be used to obtain future philanthropic support from the community.

This project has cross-divisional, cabinet-level support. Diverse students who have their needs met in meaningful ways are more likely to succeed in the classroom, persist in their education, participate in campus activities, and experience a reduction in mental health issues. The project benefits the students and the university by attracting donors who will help sustain the project, and it provides a meaningful DEI initiative for an underserved student population.

Means, D.R., & Pyne, K.B. (2017). Finding My Way: Perceptions of Institutional Support and Belonging in Low-Income, First-Generation, First-Year College Students. *Journal of Career Development*, 58(6), 907-924. doi: 10.1353/csd.2017.0071.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2012). *Strayhorn's Student Success: A Practical Guide to Improving Student Retention and Graduation Rates*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Assessment Plan

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This project will be a success when it increases sense of belonging and persistence in the students who receive the supplies. Matrices for this exist and could be implemented in the future but participating in the Student Housing Essentials project should not be contingent upon agreeing to participate in assessment.

The current pilot program within the Educational Opportunity Fund program offers a control group and if this project is funded, by 2025 there would be four cohorts of student recipients to assess. Other desired outcomes such as physical and mental health, participation in campus life, and participation in RISE activities could be assessed.

Budget Summary – Compass Fund Requested Funding Only

Item	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	Notes/Comments

Have you discussed and received endorsement of