

PATHWAYS PROPOSAL

Pathways Housing Living-Learning Community

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San Antonio College (SAC) serves more than 21,000 students (San Antonio College, n.d.-b). The college is located in a region experiencing substantial housing insecurity. The 2025 Point-in-Time Count identified 3,625 people experiencing homelessness in San Antonio and Bexar County, including 200 young adults aged 18 to 24 (Close to Home, 2025). Housing insecurity is also common among college students nationally. A survey conducted across 91 colleges found that 59% of respondents experienced food insecurity or housing insecurity, while 14% experienced homelessness (The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs, 2025).

The target population for the proposed Pathways Housing Living-Learning Community program is SAC students experiencing homelessness or housing instability. These students may lack reliable shelter, adequate sleep, consistent access to food, or dependable transportation, which interfere with concentration, attendance, academic planning, and engagement. Kornbluh et al. (2024) found that experiencing three or more forms of housing insecurity was associated with an approximate 0.30-point decrease in grade point average, while homelessness was associated with an approximate 0.20-point decrease. The same study found that awareness of basic-needs services was associated with higher academic performance. Goldrick-Rab (2018) further states that tuition assistance alone cannot resolve these burdens as living expenses and limited safety nets continue to threaten persistence.

SAC currently addresses basic needs through its Student Advocacy Center, which provides a food pantry, daily grab-and-go items, clothing assistance, no-cost counseling, case management, benefit-application support, and emergency assistance for housing or utilities (San Antonio College, n.d.-c). SAC also participates in a \$250,000 emergency-aid grant supporting wraparound services through August 2026 (San Antonio College, n.d.-a). These resources

provide an important foundation, but students may still struggle to identify the correct office or disclose their circumstances. Hallett et al. (2018) found that fragmented services can delay disclosure and access to assistance. Their findings support the use of a visible point of contact that provides coordinated referrals and warm handoffs.

The proposed Pathways Housing Living-Learning Community will be embedded within the Student Advocacy Center. The program will use existing confidential screening procedures. It will provide individualized support plans and expanded referrals to campus and community resources. Follow-up will continue until the immediate housing crisis is resolved or the student transitions to a long-term provider. By creating a single coordinated entry point, the program is intended to reduce confusion, improve access to existing resources, and support student persistence.

Theory

Schlossberg's transition theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals respond to significant changes and how those changes affect daily functioning, relationships, and development. Transitions may be anticipated, such as entering college or graduating; unanticipated, such as losing housing or employment; or nonevents, in which an expected experience does not occur. Patton et al. (2016) explain that individuals generally experience transitions through three stages: moving in, moving through, and moving out. Moving in involves entering a new situation and learning its expectations, relationships, and resources. Moving through requires the individual to manage the transition while balancing new responsibilities and continuing challenges. Moving out occurs as the person leaves one transition and prepares for the next stage of life.

An individual's ability to navigate these stages is influenced by the four interconnected factors of Schlossberg's 4 S System: situation, self, support, and strategies (Patton et al., 2016). Situation refers to the circumstances surrounding the transition, including its cause, timing, duration, available resources, and the degree of control the person has over it. For a student experiencing housing insecurity, the situation may involve an unexpected loss of housing, financial instability, family conflict, transportation barriers, or a combination of these pressures. Self refers to the personal and psychological resources the student brings to the transition, including identity, resilience, self-esteem, coping ability, interpersonal skills, and previous experiences with adversity.

Support includes the people, groups, institutions, and community resources available during a transition. Family members, friends, faculty, advisors, case managers, and community organizations may offer emotional encouragement, practical assistance, information, referrals, and advocacy. Strategies are the coping responses an individual uses to manage the transition. These responses may change the situation, change how the individual understands the problem, or help manage the stress created by the transition (Patton et al., 2016). The four factors interact, meaning that a student with limited control over a housing crisis may still navigate the transition more effectively when reliable support and practical coping strategies are available.

Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs complements Schlossberg's framework by emphasizing the importance of physiological and safety needs. Students without reliable housing, food, transportation, sleep, or personal safety may struggle to consistently prioritize attendance, assignments, academic planning, a sense of belonging, and achievement. Addressing these basic needs does not guarantee academic success. It can, however, create conditions in which students are better able to use available support and participate in college life. Together,

Schlossberg and Maslow demonstrate that student persistence is shaped not only by motivation but also by the interaction among circumstances, personal resources, support systems, coping responses, and basic-needs stability.

Connecting Theory to Practice

The Pathways Housing Living-Learning Community will apply Schlossberg's theory through three phases aligned with moving in, moving through, and moving out. During Phase 1, Stability, students will enter the program during an unanticipated transition of housing insecurity. This phase will primarily address the situation and support factors of the 4 S System. Students will receive confidential screening, individualized case management, and connections to housing assistance, meal support, laundry services, Wi-Fi, transportation, counseling, and other urgent resources. Case managers will meet with students regularly to identify barriers, develop support plans, provide referrals, and follow up on progress. These services also reflect Maslow's (1943) emphasis on physiological and safety needs by helping students establish enough stability to focus more consistently on academic responsibilities.

After immediate needs are addressed, students will enter Phase 2, Academic Success, representing the process of moving through the college transition. Students will participate in academic advising, tutoring, faculty mentoring, study groups, and Living-Learning Community activities. They will meet with an academic advisor twice each month, attend tutoring when referred, participate in community programming, and work toward satisfactory academic progress. Workshops on study skills, time management, self-advocacy, stress management, communication, and conflict resolution will help students develop practical strategies for managing academic and personal demands.

The Academic Success phase will address the self, support, and strategies factors of Schlossberg's model. Skill-building activities will be designed to strengthen student confidence and academic self-efficacy. They will also provide opportunities to practice communication and problem-solving skills. Advisors, faculty members, staff, and peers will provide consistent institutional relationships. Coordinated referrals will also help students understand and use existing campus services, an important feature because awareness of basic-needs resources has been associated with stronger academic performance (Kornbluh et al., 2024). Rather than treating housing instability as an isolated concern, this phase will connect personal stability with academic engagement.

During Phase 3, Independence, students will prepare to transition out of the program toward employment, continued education, and stable independent housing. Activities will include career counseling, resume development, interview preparation, financial literacy education, leadership development, internship placement, and individualized housing-transition planning. Campus offices and community partners will provide workshops, mentorship, employment connections, and referrals that students can use even after leaving the program. Advising, tutoring, mentoring, case management, and skill-development workshops will be provided on campus. Housing referrals, employment connections, and long-term stabilization services will be coordinated with community partners. Across all three phases, the program will seek to improve housing stability, persistence, academic performance, graduation progress, and a sense of belonging by providing a structured pathway from immediate crisis to long-term independence.

Conclusion

The Pathways Housing Living-Learning Community responds to housing insecurity as an educational issue rather than as a problem outside the college's responsibility. Housing instability can disrupt attendance, concentration, and academic planning. Schlossberg's transition theory provides a framework for understanding how students experience that disruption. Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs further explains why students may struggle to pursue academic goals when safety and stability remain uncertain. Together, these theories support a program that addresses both the transition itself and the conditions that shape a student's ability to manage it.

The Pathways program's significance lies in its coordinated structure. Students experiencing housing insecurity often encounter fragmented services or uncertainty about where to seek help. A single point of contact makes assistance services easier to find and encourages earlier disclosure of housing instability (Hallett et al., 2018). Goldrick-Rab (2018) emphasizes that tuition assistance cannot resolve the pressures created by unmet living expenses. Kornbluh et al. (2024) also found that awareness of basic-needs resources was associated with stronger academic performance. These findings suggest that access alone is not enough. Support must also be visible and easy to navigate.

Pathways would build upon SAC's existing housing assistance by creating a more coordinated and sustained support model. It would connect housing support with academic support services. It would also provide continued support as students work toward greater independence. Housing stability affects how students engage with the school. Persistence is shaped by more than individual motivation. Students may be better positioned to engage

academically when basic needs are addressed and information about available services is accessible (Kornbluh et al., 2024).

The Pathways Housing Living-Learning Community cannot guarantee academic success. However, it can create conditions that make success more attainable. By treating housing insecurity as part of the student experience, SAC can provide a more robust and responsive form of support. The program offers a structured pathway from crisis toward stability. It also strengthens SAC's ability to serve students holistically rather than as isolated academic concerns.

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