



CASE STUDY

FAST Fund at Compton College



Believe in Students
Empowering college student for success

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



“

It's a very different world and we have to be empathetic. Schools that may want to start a FAST Fund need to understand that emergencies our students have are very real for them – meaning a student not having food at the time may mean that they might not come to campus. Even \$200 can be ‘life or death’ now when it may not have been before.

NIKKI WILLIAMS • COMPTON COLLEGE



In the fall of 2018, the Faculty Development Committee at Compton College convened its regular book club which was, at the time, reading Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab's, *Paying the Price: College Costs, Financial Aid, and the Betrayal of the American Dream*. That December, Compton hosted its Real #114 conference where Goldrick-Rab was also giving the keynote address. Around this same time, colleagues Judy Crozier, Nikki Williams, and Vanessa Madrid were able to connect with Sara, who helped them think through a faculty-led approach to supporting students' basic needs at Compton - which was already making significant strides toward becoming a leading institution addressing housing and food insecurity among community college students.

In the following fall, Judy and others had an opportunity to attend the 2019 #RealCollege conference where they learned about developing a food bank and food pantry on campus. These learnings would prove promising in enhancing basic needs resources (e.g., housing, food, mental health, technology, and transportation) for Compton College students through the Tartar Support Network. At the same #RealCollege convening, the Compton group was introduced to Edquity (now Beam). The Compton College and Edquity connection would go on to harvest a meaningful partnership, as Edquity leveraged its technology platform to get Compton College students emergency financial support swiftly through a mobile app. All of this, during the pandemic, Compton College students who received emergency aid via Edquity were twice as likely to graduate.



Using Data to Identify Need for Systemic Change

When the FAST Fund kicked off at Compton, “housed” primarily in the department where Judy and her colleagues were (Fine Arts, Communication and Humanities Guided Pathway Division), the team leveraged their faculty senate to help spread the word about the availability of the fund. They also shared flyers across campus and with their local union, and many professors shared the information in Canvas. With a wider net cast, the FAST Fund team received a steady volume of applicants. Interestingly, the team noticed an influx of requests coming from cosmetology and nursing students, the latter of which often requested financial assistance for their medical kits (which could be up to \$1,000). While this prompted the team to clarify its criteria, the FAST Fund team at Compton College also recognized that there was a broader, institution-wide issue that they elevated to university administration.



THE COMPTON FAST FUND TEAM RECEIVES A NUMBER OF EMAILS FROM
**students indicating how the program was
instrumental in helping them get their needs met**
— RANGING FROM GROCERY ASSISTANCE TO DIAPERS FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

With clearer criteria and program parameters, such as (a) students declaring their request as an emergency, (b) the FAST Fund team following up to ensure that the student is enrolled, and (c) verifying that the request was precipitated by faculty, the FAST Fund team at Compton noted fewer applicants from the point of its launch. However, the requests now tend to be, as Nikki Williams described, “more aligned with the actual FAST Fund mission.” Even with this change, the Compton FAST Fund team receives a number of emails from students indicating how the program was instrumental for helping them get their needs met - ranging from grocery assistance to diapers for their children.

One of the ways that Compton’s FAST Fund is particularly unique is through the backing received from the college’s president, Dr. Keith Curry. Describing him as both a “good donor and partner”, even after the FAST Fund at Compton College received its initial seed funding, a considerable percentage of the program’s resources (tens of thousands), even to date, have been allocated from Dr. Curry. Other important partnerships have included their faculty senate as well as their local union, where the team is able to share announcements and have speaking time on their agenda.

Now, a few years post-pandemic with their FAST Fund in place, the team at Compton College is clear that students are experts in their own lives and experiences, and that higher education professionals looking to establish a FAST Fund need to be great listeners (and less presumptuous). For instance, while the team set up digital platforms for disseminating the FAST Fund dollars (i.e., Venmo), what they discovered is that many students often preferred checks - even when they were told that the digital alternative meant “getting the money instantly.” For these students, the digital option wasn’t even feasible because they did not have access to those platforms. So when students indicate what they need, the Compton FAST Fund team listens, and they are even presently engaged in trainings on strategies to normalize and encourage students to ask for help.



Believe in Students

Empowering college student for success

CASE STUDY

FAST Fund at Compton College

[Learn More](#)

[BELIEVEINSTUDENTS.ORG](https://believeinstudents.org)