



CISCO COLLEGE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cisco College's Food Pantry: A Lifeline for Students in Need

Abilene, Texas - April 1, 2025 – Since its establishment in 2012, Cisco College's food pantry, *Food for Thought*, has played an indispensable role in supporting students facing unexpected financial difficulties. Located on the Abilene campus, the pantry was created in response to a growing awareness among faculty and staff that some students were struggling not just with their studies but with basic survival.

The stark reality of food insecurity became evident when signs emerged that students were sleeping in their cars, staying overnight in campus buildings, and attending college events not for social or academic reasons, but simply to secure a free meal.

"There have been times when I had nothing and all funds for the month had been spent. I needed food to focus because I had no energy. I can't pay attention to the required information when I'm starving, so I'd go to the food pantry to get a lunch to sustain my mind and body," said Fredrick Manuel, a Cisco College student and *Food for Thought* worker.

Recognizing the urgent need for action, the college took steps to ensure that students wouldn't have to choose between their education and their next meal. The mission of *Food for Thought* is to fill that gap, offering students access to free food and toiletry items during times of crisis. By alleviating these pressures, the pantry enables students to focus on their academic work, knowing that there is support in place to help them meet their basic needs.

The impact of *Food for Thought* has been profound. On average, the pantry serves around 20 students each week, which amounts to over 1,000 students annually.

"I'm a student that volunteers for the food pantry, and the amount of students that come in on the days that I'm there are many. Many are parents and have families, some are just struggling, and they are very grateful for the relief they receive," Manuel said.

Many of these students have families to support, so the number of individuals who benefit from the program reaches an estimated 6,400 people each year. Whether it's a student needing a meal to get through the week or a family relying on the pantry during a difficult month, *Food for Thought* stands as a beacon of hope for many.

In addition to providing immediate relief, the food pantry reflects Cisco College's broader commitment to student success and well-being. Studies show that students who are burdened by food insecurity are more likely to struggle academically, which can ultimately lead to higher dropout rates. The existence of *Food for Thought* directly combats this issue by ensuring that students have access to nutritious food, which is essential not only for physical health but also for mental and emotional well-being.

The pantry operates thanks to the generosity of community members and local organizations, who have come together to support Cisco College's efforts. *Food for Thought* receives sponsorship and donations from Taylor Telecom, KLP Real Estate, and Accurate Air Solutions, in addition to contributions from Cisco College faculty, staff, and students. The Community Foundation of Abilene recently awarded the pantry a \$7,000 grant, helping to ensure that shelves remain stocked and available to those in need. These partnerships highlight the collective effort to provide a safety net for students facing difficult circumstances.

"I was astonished when I found out that the food pantry, Food for Thought, didn't just give out lunches, but also supplied a great amount of groceries at no cost to their students. Not only do we not have to be hungry at school, we also don't have to be hungry at home when we have to study and work on our assignments," Manuel said.

Since its inception, the pantry has continuously evolved to meet the changing needs of the student population. As more students face challenges like job loss, unexpected medical expenses, or family emergencies, the demand for services like *Food for Thought* has grown. In response, the pantry has worked tirelessly to keep pace with this increasing demand, ensuring that no student goes hungry or is left without access to essential items.

Looking ahead, Cisco College remains committed to maintaining and expanding the services provided by *Food for Thought*. As the pantry approaches its second decade of operation, there is a clear understanding that food insecurity is not a problem that can be solved overnight. However, by continuing to invest in the pantry and by strengthening partnerships with community donors, Cisco College aims to provide even more comprehensive support to its students in the years to come.

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About Cisco College

Since first admitting students in 1940, Cisco College has offered programs and activities intended to encourage lifelong learning and enhance the quality of life in the communities it serves.

As a member of the Texas state system of publicly supported institutions of higher education, Cisco College maintains an open-door admissions policy and provides an array of learning, skill development and life experiences to motivate and challenge students. Classes are offered at two primary locations, Cisco and Abilene, in addition to several other off-campus sites. The College strives to maintain a student/faculty ratio which facilitates close interaction between faculty and students.

Cisco College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award Associate level degrees.