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To: THA Housing Authority Staff & CHAP Partners  
From: Michael Mirra, Executive Director  
Date: April 16, 2020  
Subject: Executive Emergency Authorization #7: Waiving CHAP Program Requirements

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*Michael Mirra*

THA Board Resolution 2020-03-18(1) allows the Executive Director (or his designee) to take emergency actions during the COVID-19 pandemic that he deems necessary to ensure continued operations of Tacoma Housing Authority while protecting its employees, clients, vendors, partners and the community as a whole.

This Executive Action authorizes changes to the requirements of THA's College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP). The changes recognize that our college partners and the college students are all struggling through this pandemic.

### **CHAP Program Requirements During Coronavirus Pandemic**

Students in the College Housing Assistance Program must meet program requirements in order to maintain eligibility for the program. If they do not maintain their eligibility, they are removed from the program. THA ends their rental assistance if they are using a tenant-based subsidy or they are not granted a lease renewal if they are a tenant at one of CHAP's partner properties.<sup>1</sup>

This Executive Actions permits THA to make the following adjustments to Chapter 19, Part IV, Item 5 of the THA Administrative Plan through Fall term 2020.

- Waive minimum credit requirements and allow students to disenroll if needed.
- Waive academic progress requirements.

#### **1. Waive Minimum Credit Requirements**

Currently, students using tenant-based subsidies need to be enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits by their second term on the program. Students residing in covered units at Koz properties, must be enrolled in 6 or more credits (*See* Chapter 19, Part IV of the THA Administrative Plan).

Current 2019-2020 financial aid awards are based on the household's 2018 income. Students may face significant changes to their income as a result of the pandemic. In such cases, a student's current financial aid package may not be sufficient to cover tuition and expenses for all the credits they were previously enrolled to earn.

Additionally, with the move to fully online instruction, some courses will be cancelled (specifically lab and studio courses, as well as practicums and internships). Students in programs that require these courses will not be able to enroll in the courses until the Governor's stay at home order has been lifted. The education partners and PIE staff do

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<sup>1</sup> Program eligibility requirements are currently limited to Koz at the Dome and Koz on Market.

not recommend that students enroll in unnecessary classes simply to maintain their housing assistance.

Given these recommendations, THA will waive the minimum credit requirements until Fall term.

**2. Waive Academic Progress Requirements**

Currently, students are required to maintain a cumulative 2.0 GPA by their second term in the program. If they do not meet the requirement, they are granted one term to work with academic support services to raise their GPA (*See* Chapter 19, Part IV of the THA Administrative Plan).

With the shift to fully online instruction, students with limited or no access to the internet will face barriers. If their GPA drops, they will also have difficulty accessing academic support services due to campus closures. Additionally, online instruction has been shown to have increased rates of attrition as well as poorer outcomes, especially for low-income students.

Further, given the stresses that accompany the COVID-19 pandemic (unemployment, economic downturn, lack of childcare, general uncertainty, etc.), THA should not students to maintain their ability to concentrate on their studies. In partnership with the education partners, PIE staff recommend suspending the 2.0 GPA requirement in recognition that the online format may not be beneficial for all students, especially those with limited access to technology and students living in larger households that must share devices and computers.

In response to these recommendations, THA will waive academic progress requirements until Fall term.

The education partners will continue tracking and reporting as usual. THA will not issue any notices of termination of assistance for students who do not meet the enrollment or academic progress requirements.

**This policy change is effective immediately.**

Cc: Derek Young, THA Chair