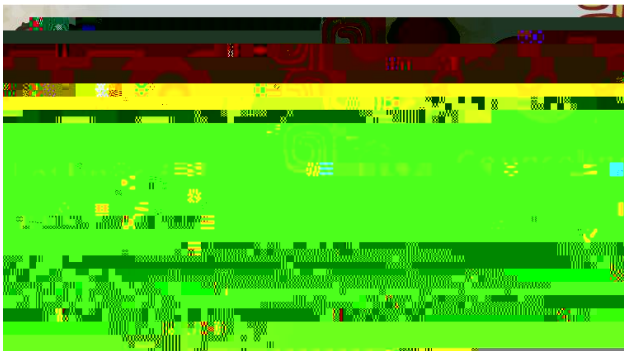


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Orange Coast College's Counseling Latinos for Equity and Engagement (CLEEO) Project has formed a partnership with First Choice Bank to provide 10 scholarships annually to students at the College. The scholarships are available in \$1000 and \$500 increments, and the first distribution took place in December 2020.

First Choice also has provided OCC's CLEEO Project with a grant through the Orange Coast College Foundation that will go toward additional scholarships awarded at the College's annual scholarship event, Honors Night, in May. Additional planning is under way to establish a workshop series at Coast that will help students and employees learn about financial literacy and cultural competency.

"Like all financial institutions in United States, First Choice Bank takes steps to remain compliant with the Community Re-Investment Act, which asks banks to address financial literacy, especially in low to moderate income populations within the communities in which they serve," says OCC Associate Professor and CLEEO Project Coordinator Eric Cuellar. "I am pleased to see First Choice Bank being proactive in reaching out to diverse communities in Orange County, including at Orange Coast College."

Cuellar shares that an OCC alumni and First Choice Bank employee named Jarold Ramirez, along with his colleague Nora Perez, helped to facilitate the partnership upon realizing that the two organizations share many of the same goals that the CLEEO Project is working toward. "Jarold graduated from OCC and eventually transferred to Cal State Fullerton and plans to attend law



school. He has kept in touch over the years, and has continued to attend events organized by CLEEO,” Cuellar explains.

The CLEEO Project was founded in 2016 by Cuellar, and in 2018 he teamed up with OCC professors Jordan Stanton and Rendell Drew to create a CLEEO Learning Cohort with a theme of "Race, Ethnicity, and Equity in America." The learning cohort focuses on developing an and