



# The Advocate

THE STUDENT VOICE OF CONTRA COSTA COLLEGE, SAN PABLO, CALIF.

## Strict payment options limit students' choices

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The CalFresh Program, federally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) adds to the food budget to help families put fresh and nutritious foods on the table. For many students at Contra Costa College, the options to use their benefit card is limited, because even with the new food choices on campus, payment options for most of the food remains cash only.

President Mojdeh Mehdizadeh said the payment methods that Brix accepts are not determined by the college.

Payments such as CalFresh/Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) or otherwise are determined by the eatery's own vendor, located outside of the college.

"They (Brix) determine the forms of acceptable payment. Our culinary program also provides food services but they are primarily an education program and don't have resources to extend payment services beyond cash and check at this time," Mehdizadeh said. EBT is a system used in California for the delivery, redemption and reconciliation of issued public assistance benefits.

Recipients of public assistance in California access their issued benefits with the Golden State Advantage card.

EBT cards can be used at more than 15,000 businesses and over 54,000 ATM'S in California.

CCC Bookstore cashier Lydia Bran said, "The reason why we don't accept EBT at the Bookstore is because we don't sell anything that falls under the CalFresh benefit bracket like eggs, milk or bread."

Students that receive CalFresh benefits are also eligible for a restaurant meals program, however, it is carried out on a per county basis.

It allows recipients who are 60 years of age or older, disabled or homeless to use their CalFresh benefits to purchase lower cost prepared meals at approved restaurants.

Financial Aid Supervisor Monica Rodriguez said she has been working closely with Contra Costa and Solano county's food bank representatives on a plan to bring CalFresh prescreening and information about food banks to CCC.

Mehdizadeh said in order for any California college to accept this benefit on campus they would need to conduct a feasibility study before making a determination.

Rodriguez said, "The Contra Costa and Solano county food banks tabled at our Financial Aid awareness Day event in August and have continued communications with us to work on a more comprehensive plan providing these services to CCC students."

Business major Larry Thompson said, "Yes it would be awesome if EBT was accepted on campus because veterans have 10 percent off at the Dining Hall and 5 percent off at the Bookstore, so I feel all types of benefits should be accepted."