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Caring Campus

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Nexus Between Caring Campus and Guided Pathways Creates Impactful Student Experience for Diverse Learners

LONG BEACH, CA – Colleges and universities are seeing an increasing number of learners from diverse backgrounds on their campuses, making it crucial for the institutions to establish cultures that welcome these students and set them up for success.

One recognized and respected way to achieve this is Guided Pathways, a framework of structural and policy changes that help higher education institutions redesign the college experience, giving all students the support they need to feel welcomed and thrive on campus.

The Institute for Evidence-Based Change's (IEBC) Caring Campus builds on Guided Pathways by introducing cultural and behavioral practices, providing a holistic framework aimed to propel higher education toward a future where students seamlessly achieve their academic and career goals.

Dr. Robert Johnstone, a leading national voice for Guided Pathways, cites Caring Campus as a vital tool to help colleges and universities ensure their students feel valued and cared for on campus. Johnstone established the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement (NCII) to expand on his passion for helping community colleges increase student learning, completion, and labor market outcomes while also closing opportunity gaps. His vision for student success aligns with the work IEBC pursues through Caring Campus in increasing student connectedness to their college, creating a nexus between the two organizations.

"Caring Campus really goes hand-in-hand with Guided Pathways," Johnstone said. "Caring Campus shows colleges that they have the power and agency to act in ways that will make students feel valued and validated, which in turn helps students see the value in their education and helps them succeed. Guided Pathways and Caring Campus both help ensure that colleges respond to and embody their purpose for all students."

In Texas, Guided Pathways is known by the name Talent Strong Texas Pathways. Caring Campus Coach Dr. Martha Ellis helped to design Talent Strong Texas Pathways in her role as senior pathway lead at the Texas Success Center, creating a framework to help improve student outcomes in higher education.

"Caring Campus really brings a positivity to campus cultures that makes a huge impact at all institutions – from small, rural colleges, to the largest colleges in Texas," Ellis said. "Caring Campus and Talent Strong Texas Pathways are married together beautifully to bring about both the policy, structural, and cultural changes that are necessary to help students thrive."

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Internal reports from multiple Caring Campus colleges show that Caring Campus' work in increasing student connectedness impacts the entire campus, raising levels of achievement for all students across all demographics.

"Caring Campus not only impacts students, but also staff, faculty, and administrators," Ellis said. "Our staff on the frontlines – those running the front desk or in the admissions office – don't always realize the profound impact they can have on students. Caring Campus really provides that tangible feeling that makes all staff and faculty feel and see that they are valued and can make a difference for our students."

Caring Campus fosters a community that works to create a culture of care on campuses, devoting time and resources to ensuring students feel a sense of belonging. Johnstone and Ellis both agreed that Caring Campus and Guided Pathways/Talent Strong Texas Pathways are different sides of the same coin, with each program working to increase student persistence, retention, and success.

"Guided Pathways/Talent Strong Texas Pathways and Caring Campus work perfectly in tandem together, tackling the concept of student success from two important angles," IEBC President and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Brad Phillips said. "Both strive to improve students' experiences nationwide, and we are proud to be included in the same discussion as these powerful programs."

IEBC's work is funded by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, ECMC Foundation, Ascendium Education Group, and the Greater Texas Foundation. These funders are instrumental in allowing Caring Campus to serve community colleges and universities, and promote student connectedness and success.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

IEBC_GUIDEDPATHWAYS1: Dr. Robert Johnstone founded the National Center for Inquiry and Improvement in 2013 to expand on his passion for helping community colleges increase student learning, completion, and labor market outcomes while also closing opportunity gaps.

IEBC_GUIDEDPATHWAYS2: Caring Campus Coach Dr. Martha Ellis (middle) poses with Houston Community College Chancellor Dr. Margaret Ford Fisher (right) and Vice Chancellor Dr. Betty Fortune (left) at a Caring Campus coaching session. In addition to serving as a Caring Campus coach, Ellis coaches for and helped to design Talent Strong Texas.

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