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Caring Campus

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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San Juan College Champions Individuality, Empowers Students through Caring Campus

LONG BEACH, CA – San Juan College faculty and staff in Farmington, N.M., are inspiring students like Esmeralda Garcia to celebrate their unique identities and heritage, fostering success through the transformative principles of Caring Campus.

Caring Campus is a framework that coaches staff and faculty in commitments and strategies that boost student success across all demographics. Garcia, a criminal justice major, said the culture of care brought about by Caring Campus is evident across San Juan College, from staff and faculty to fellow students.

“San Juan College is a place where I belong and can easily call home,” Garcia said. “It is a very welcoming and safe environment where we are encouraged to freely express ourselves and celebrate our individuality.”

Garcia, who serves on the Herencia Latina Advisory Committee, works to represent Hispanic students by sharing their challenges and obstacles with staff and faculty. Through this collaborative effort, the committee helps develop actionable plans to break down barriers and support student success. Garcia said staff and faculty are dedicated to creating an environment where all students feel comfortable and seen.

“On the first day of class, our teachers encouraged all the students to share our names, their meanings, and their origins,” Garcia said. “I often go by a nickname because my first name can be difficult to pronounce, but it was incredibly empowering for my professors to commit themselves to addressing me by my full name. That simple act of respect and care left a lasting impact.”

This culture of belonging extends beyond the classroom, as the San Juan College community comes together to celebrate diverse backgrounds through events like National Hispanic Heritage Month and Native American Heritage Month. These celebrations foster a shared understanding and appreciation of the college’s rich cultural diversity.

San Juan College’s commitment to student success and establishing a culture of care was instrumental in its accreditation journey. The Higher Learning Commission transitioned the college to the Open Pathway in 2018, which is a 10-year accreditation process in which the college must complete a Quality Initiative project. San Juan focused on Caring Campus as its Quality Initiative project, focusing on strengthening faculty engagement and creating more supportive environments for students.

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“Our accreditation success is a testament to the power of cultivating a culture of care,” president Dr. Toni Pendergrass said. “Caring Campus has strengthened relationships across our campus, enabling us to meet students where they are and help them achieve their goals. This has contributed to our increased enrollment and overall student satisfaction.”

Dr. Pendergrass said colleges across New Mexico stand to gain significantly from adopting Caring Campus, empowering staff and faculty to identify areas for improvement and implement actionable solutions to give students the tools and support they need to thrive.

“When colleges embrace a culture of care, they transform not only their campuses but the lives of the students they serve,” Caring Campus CEO and founder Dr. Brad Phillips said. “San Juan College’s commitment to this vision sets a powerful example for others to follow.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

IEBC_SANJUAN1: San Juan College criminal justice major Esmeralda Garcia (left) said students feel a culture of care across campus, from staff and faculty to fellow students, thanks to Caring Campus.

IEBC_SANJUAN2: San Juan College is championing student success principles and strategies through Caring Campus, establishing them as a foundational pillar in its commitment to fostering a safe and welcoming environment for all students.

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