

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 28, 2025

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Faculty Members in Texas Higher Education Drive Student Success with Help of Caring Campus

LONG BEACH, CA – At the start of Caring Campus sessions with college and university faculty, Caring Campus coaches ask the participants to reflect on someone who inspired them to become educators. Time and again, faculty recall that it was a professor who impacted their lives.

This spring, faculty members across Texas are taking part in Caring Campus, a framework designed to equip them with behavioral commitments that foster a strong sense of community and connection, both inside and outside the classroom. By creating an environment where students feel they belong, faculty can help inspire students to succeed and increase retention and persistence rates.

“The role of a faculty member requires wearing many hats – we are teachers, mentors, instructors, encouragers, coaches, and advisors. It’s not just a profession; it’s a calling,” said Edlyn de Oliveira, a music professor at Palo Alto College. “Modeling care and compassion is an integral part of what we do every day in our classrooms.”

De Oliveira said she has seen higher education evolve in many ways throughout her nearly two decades of teaching, but that one constant remains – the power of building strong relationships with students. By ensuring students feel supported academically, personally, and within their campus community, de Oliveira said institutions can help foster a desire for lifelong learning and academic success. Colleges and universities that embrace Caring Campus cultivate a culture where students thrive.

“In a world where apathy seems to be on the rise, it’s easy to lose sight of why we became educators in the first place,” said Keegan Gold, a Northeast Lakeview College chemistry professor. “Caring Campus is an opportunity to reignite that passion, connect with colleagues, and gain valuable insights from experienced educators who are just as dedicated to student success.”

While care has always been central to her teaching, Gold said Caring Campus has deepened her understanding that care extends beyond simple kindness – it is about meeting students where they are. Through commitments like practicing situational fairness, providing meaningful support, and ensuring students have access to the resources they need, faculty create an environment that truly empowers students to succeed.

“My favorite part of participating in Caring Campus has been the opportunity to build stronger relationships with students and colleagues,” said Fulden Wissinger, Texas A&M University – Kingsville ceramics and design professor. “Ultimately, I hope to create a classroom environment where students feel more supported, valued, and engaged.”

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Through Caring Campus, faculty members are encouraged to learn and use students' names, meet with students on a regular basis, implement regular assessments, create a detailed syllabus with classroom policies, and provide students with flexibility when possible.

"Faculty members play a crucial role in student success," Caring Campus CEO and founder Dr. Brad Phillips said. "By intentionally fostering a sense of connection, they help ensure that students don't just attend a college or university, but truly thrive."

With many colleges and universities across Texas already embracing Caring Campus, the Institute for Evidence-Based Change aims to further expand these efforts in a statewide approach, creating a culture of care that connects institutions, fosters collaboration, and strengthens a network of professionals dedicated to student success.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

IEBC_FACULTY1: Texas A&M University – Kingsville faculty are taking part in Caring Campus, which aims to help faculty inspire students to succeed and increase retention and persistence rates.

IEBC_FACULTY2: Palo Alto College faculty are participating in Caring Campus to ensure students feel supported academically, personally, and within their campus community.

IEBC_FACULTY3: Northeast Lakeview College faculty are practicing situational fairness, providing meaningful support, and ensuring students have access to the resources they need to create an environment that truly empowers students to succeed.

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