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Glendale Community College Puts Its Culture of Care into Action Following Eaton Fire

LONG BEACH, CA – In the aftermath of the Eaton Fire in January, Glendale Community College (GCC) responded swiftly and compassionately, providing critical relief funds and essential resources to students and employees in need – highlighting the college’s deep-rooted commitment to care, connection, and community.

Among those affected was Shirley Chavez, a dedicated part-time student working toward an associate degree in science with aspirations of becoming a counselor at a rehabilitation facility. A mother of four, Chavez was forced to evacuate and ultimately lost her home in the fire.

“Glendale College was one of the first to check in on me amid all the chaos,” Chavez said. “It was such a surprise, and I was incredibly grateful for the support they offered. It made a huge difference.”

Glendale College staff took immediate action, personally reaching out to every student they knew who lived in evacuation zones and fire-impacted areas. Through these individual outreach efforts, the college identified urgent needs and offered meaningful support. With the help of the Glendale College Foundation and GCC CARES, the college’s basic needs program, the college distributed gift cards for food and necessities, as well as direct disaster relief funds. The college also provided temporary hotel accommodations for displaced students, and extended housing assistance for up to one year for those who lost their homes.

Staff worked closely with each student to assess their academic standing and determine how best to support them, whether that meant helping them persist in their classes or facilitating a withdrawal from the semester.

“When I first started making the calls to check in on our students, I was struck by the amount of gratitude and surprise we were met with to be receiving so much support and aid,” Glendale College Dean of Student Affairs Dr. Tzoler Oukayan said. “It was incredibly impactful for me to be able to tell them they didn’t need to do anything to receive the funds we were offering. It was important they knew they weren’t alone.”

Even beyond financial assistance, the college community stepped up to provide additional meaningful support. Faculty, staff, students, and administrators organized a supply drive, providing food, toiletries, socks, undergarments, t-shirts, and more. Members of the Human Resources department assembled duffel bags of supplies and delivered them to employees who were unable to go to campus.

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“As somebody who was trying to help students and was also impacted by the fire myself, I am so grateful to be part of the Glendale College community,” Dr. Oukayan said. “To be a Caring Campus and to have the tools and mindset to respond with intention and empathy makes all the difference.”

Glendale College staff and faculty are currently undergoing a self-relaunch of Caring Campus, reaffirming their dedication to fostering a supportive, purposeful, and student-centered environment.

“Glendale Community College’s response to the Eaton Fire is a powerful example of what it means to be a Caring Campus,” Caring Campus founder and CEO Dr. Brad Phillips said. “Their ability to act quickly, compassionately, and intentionally in the face of crisis shows a deep, authentic commitment to student success.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

IEBC_GLENDALE1: In the aftermath of the Eaton Fire in January, Glendale Community College responded swiftly and compassionately, providing critical relief funds and essential resources to students and employees in need.

IEBC_GLENDALE2: Glendale Community College faculty, staff, students, and administrators organized a supply drive for students after the Eaton Fire, providing food, toiletries, socks, underwear, t-shirts, and more.

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