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## **Irvine Valley College Institutionalizes Caring Campus into School's Framework**

**LONG BEACH, CA** – When Irvine Valley College (IVC) set out to build Inspire 2035, its 10-year strategic plan, campus leaders asked students and employees to share one word they felt best described IVC. The most frequent responses – “caring,” “supportive,” and “inclusive” – captured the heart of a college deeply committed to cultivating a culture of connection and success.

As a Caring Campus, IVC strives to create a welcoming environment for both students and employees every day. This commitment to care is now embedded into the college's framework for the future. One of the six priorities in Inspire 2035 is workplace culture and growth, with an aligned goal to further strengthen a culture of care.

“Having care reflected in our strategic plan is one of the many ways we're elevating Caring Campus and truly incorporating it into the vision of what we aspire to be – not just at IVC, but across our entire district,” IVC president Dr. John Hernandez said. “Caring Campus has been the primary contributing factor to the institutional culture we see at IVC today.”

Launched amid the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, IVC began its Caring Campus journey with a unique opportunity to build a sense of community at a time of deep isolation. Early efforts included drive-through food distributions and support fairs, all branded as “IVC Cares,” helping to introduce and expand the identity of Caring Campus to students and employee groups.

Today, that culture of care is embedded throughout campus life. Every meeting for employees, governance committees, and campus councils begins with a “Caring Campus Moment” – a time set aside to recognize colleagues who were seen demonstrating support or care in an interaction with a student or colleague.

“It's such a powerful way to start a meeting,” Hernandez said. “It affirms our values and reinforces the behaviors that define who we are.”

Each year, IVC honors individuals who exemplify this Caring Campus spirit through its Caring Campus Ambassador award, presented at the annual employee recognition ceremony.

The college further institutionalized its commitment by establishing the Caring Campus Committee as a formal shared governance body. The committee uses a tri-chair model that includes representation from faculty, classified professionals, and administrators. One of the tri-chairs is a manager who completed the Caring Campus Academy for administrators, ensuring leadership is aligned with Caring Campus principles.

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In student listening sessions conducted as part of the strategic planning process, students described a strong sense of community and care at IVC.

“To me, that’s the most powerful testament of all,” Hernandez said. “Our students are experiencing the same sense of belonging and pride that our employees feel every day. Caring Campus has really permeated across our entire campus and become an institution-wide commitment.”

IVC has reached record enrollment and seen notable gains in graduation over the past two years, which Hernandez attributes, in part, to the culture of care driven by employees who understand the role they play in student success.

“Irvine Valley College exemplifies what’s possible when care becomes more than just a thought – it becomes a shared responsibility,” Caring Campus CEO and founder Dr. Brad Phillips said. “The college’s work to integrate Caring Campus into every level of the institution shows a deep, lasting commitment to student and employee success.”

#### PHOTO CAPTIONS:

**IEBC\_IVC1:** As a Caring Campus, Irvine Valley College strives to create a welcoming environment for both students and employees every day.

**IEBC\_IVC2:** Each year, Irvine Valley College honors individuals who exemplify the Caring Campus spirit through its Caring Campus Ambassador award, presented at the annual employee recognition ceremony.

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