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Four New Colleges Earn Caring Campus Certification for Advancing Cultures of Care and Student Success

LONG BEACH, CA – Four more community colleges nationwide have achieved Caring Campus Certification, a distinction honoring institutions that exemplify what it means to lead with care while advancing student persistence, retention, and success.

Patrick & Henry Community College in Virginia has made Caring Campus history as the first institution to earn gold certification, while Northeast Lakeview College in Texas, along with West Los Angeles College (WLAC) and Yuba College in California, have each earned silver certification – demonstrating their deep commitment to fostering connection, belonging, and opportunity for all students.

“Earning gold certification affirms that Caring Campus has truly become part of our culture and daily practice,” said Meghan Eggleston, Dean of Student Services at Patrick & Henry. “It is a powerful validation for our staff, showing that their dedication and hard work haven’t gone unnoticed. The certification process not only highlighted how far we’ve come, but also provided clarity on where we can grow next.”

Patrick & Henry staff and faculty have fully embraced Caring Campus, ensuring students feel supported from their very first interaction on campus and throughout their classroom experience. Simple but powerful practices, such as wearing nametags, greeting students, and rewording automated absence notifications with a caring tone, reinforce a culture where every exchange reflects compassion and support.

“It is incredibly important to me that Caring Campus is viewed as a cultural movement on our campus, not a workshop or short-term initiative that fades away,” said Dr. Chris Wikstrom, Patrick & Henry’s Vice President of Instruction & Student Services. “Caring Campus has become the vehicle for re-engagement among our staff and faculty, sparking renewed energy to rally around student success.”

Building on this foundation, Patrick & Henry is now expanding Caring Campus through a focus on mental health and trauma-informed practices. The college is cultivating a holistic model of care that includes training on understanding students’ varied experiences, modeling emotional intelligence and empathy, and providing access to a dedicated mental health liaison for both students and employees.

Patrick & Henry’s innovative work will be showcased at the upcoming [Caring Campus Conference: Building a National Culture of Care](#) on Nov. 12-14. Wikstrom and Eggleston will host a session entitled “A Caring Approach: Leveraging Caring Campus to Advance Holistic Mental Healthcare,” alongside Patrick & Henry Director of Public Relations & Marketing Monica Hatchett and faculty member and Dual Enrollment Liaison LaDonna Varner.

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At WLAC, staff have championed Caring Campus by building a culture of celebration and connection that supports both employees and students. From wearing WLAC-branded attire and nametags to organizing lighthearted events like Donut Socials and “West Wednesdays,” the college has made Caring Campus a shared experience.

“When we got the news that we achieved silver Caring Campus certification, it just made my whole day,” said Vicky Nesia, WLAC’s Executive Assistant to the President and Caring Campus lead. “We have really seen a shift in our culture, and students are noticing. Many have shared that they feel authentically cared for and that they matter at West. And our president, Dr. James Limbaugh, continues to show his support and trust in this staff-led implementation.”

The college has further institutionalized Caring Campus by embedding its principles into the Enrollment Management Plan, ensuring that care and connection remain central to student success strategies.

“Community colleges in particular can be life-changing for students,” said Michelle Long-Coffee, WLAC’s Public Relations Manager. “The difference often comes down to whether students feel cared about. Caring Campus gives us the structure and accountability to ensure that care is consistent and intentional.”

At WLAC, those practices have taken root through everyday actions – welcoming colleagues, showing school spirit, and creating opportunities to connect – that together have cultivated a sense of belonging across campus.

“Congratulations to our four newest Caring Campus certified colleges,” Caring Campus founder and CEO Dr. Brad Phillips said. “This recognition honors their teams’ dedication and highlights the powerful ways they are creating cultures where students feel supported and set up for success.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

IEBC_CERTIFIED1: Patrick & Henry Community College in Virginia has made Caring Campus history as the first institution to earn gold certification, demonstrating its deep commitment to fostering connection, belonging, and opportunity for all students.

IEBC_CERTIFIED2: West Los Angeles College has earned silver Caring Campus Certification, exemplifying what it means to lead with care while advancing student persistence, retention, and success.

IEBC_CERTIFIED3: Patrick & Henry staff and faculty have fully embraced Caring Campus, ensuring students feel supported from their very first interaction on campus and throughout their classroom experience.

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