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CCCSE Report Highlights Power of Care in Transforming the College Experience

LONG BEACH, CA – Examples of instructors checking on students in distress, custodians offering encouragement during test preparation, classified professionals guiding students toward academic goals, and faculty members learning their students' names early illustrate how Caring Campus fosters meaningful connections that enhance the student experience. The impact of this work is highlighted in a recent report by The Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), "[Essential Conditions for Community College Student Success: Maximizing Student Engagement by Fostering a Culture of Caring.](#)"

Caring Campus was founded on research that shows students who feel connected and supported on campus are more likely to persist, stay enrolled, and succeed. The CCCSE report, which drew on survey data from more than 64,000 students across 167 community colleges, reinforces this point, showing that an investment in a culture of care measurably benefits students.

"Care functions as a lever for engagement – once an institution invests in a caring culture, engagement becomes more authentic, deeper, and creates the conditions for student success," CCCSE Executive Director Dr. Linda Garcia said. "Our report shows that when students feel supported, seen, and connected at their college, their engagement levels and GPAs are higher. Caring matters because it is a foundational condition that enables engagement."

The report identifies five benchmarks for measuring student engagement: academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student effort, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners. Students who reported experiencing a "strong culture of care" at their institution showed substantially higher engagement across all benchmarks compared to those in "mixed" or "weak" care environments.

CCCSE also highlights five key components of caring – sense of belonging, self-efficacy, stigma and help-seeking behaviors, basic needs support, and mental health and well-being – and provides questions institutions can use to assess their own culture of care.

The report concludes with a feature on Caring Campus, identifying it as a leading framework that equips employees in higher education with practical tools and strategies to foster a welcoming environment and lead with care.

"We wanted to highlight Caring Campus because it offers tangible, actionable practices for building a culture of care," Garcia said. "Colleges are seeking these kinds of concrete, replicable examples to bring care to life on their campuses. Like Caring Campus, CCCSE emphasizes that a caring culture must reach all students and that institutions implementing these approaches demonstrate stronger relationships with students and improved outcomes."

MORE

Garcia gave the opening address at the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) virtual conference, held Oct. 22-23. Caring Campus CEO and founder Dr. Brad Phillips also hosted a keynote panel at the conference featuring Oakton College president Joianne Smith and Bossier Parish Community College Chancellor Rick Bateman, who spoke about how their colleges are cultivating student belonging and fostering caring environments that elevate student success.

“Caring Campus creates transformational experiences on campuses, helping students achieve success while engaging staff, faculty, and administrators in the process,” Phillips said. “We are honored to be featured in CCCSE’s report and hope it inspires institutions nationwide to prioritize care on their campuses.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

IEBC_CCCSE1: Caring Campus demonstrates that genuine care can transform student experiences. The power of this approach is highlighted in a recent report by The Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), “Essential Conditions for Community College Student Success: Maximizing Student Engagement by Fostering a Culture of Caring.”

IEBC_CCCSE2: Caring Campus was founded on research that shows students who feel connected and supported on campus are more likely to persist, stay enrolled, and succeed.

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