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CONTACT: Katie Emerson

(909) 324-0345

katharine.emerson@vmapr.com

Six Colleges to Examine Impact of Caring Campus through National Study

LONG BEACH, CA – Six community colleges from across the country will help demonstrate the impact of Caring Campus through a quantitative study examining student outcomes and their relationship to a culture of care. Funded by the Lumina Foundation, the study will explore how Caring Campus contributes to student retention, persistence, completion, and overall success.

Lawson State Community College in Alabama, Patrick & Henry Community College in Virginia, Oakton College in Illinois, Hartnell College in California, and Temple College and Ranger College in Texas will each participate in the grant-funded study. Together, these colleges will help build a clearer, data-informed understanding of how intentionally fostering connection and belonging influences student outcomes.

“Lawson State has seen transformational change across our institution since implementing Caring Campus,” Lawson State President Dr. Cynthia Anthony said. “We’ve experienced the qualitative impact, but this study will allow us to close the loop by examining the data behind what we did, how we did it, and the impact it made. That insight is critical to continuous improvement and informed decision-making.”

Over the past few years, Lawson State has seen increases in both fall-to-fall and fall-to-spring retention, as well as marked improvement in overall student success. Anthony said student surveys and focus groups consistently reflect that students feel known, supported, and cared for beyond the classroom. From warm referrals and cross-department collaboration to providing access to basic needs resources and support, Caring Campus has helped make care more visible and intentional across the institution.

“Caring Campus has done exactly what we were hoping it would do,” Anthony said. “Once the philosophy becomes embedded, it shapes how people interact every day – both with students and with each other.”

At Patrick & Henry Community College, Caring Campus is deeply woven into the fabric of the institution. Faculty and staff engage in the behavioral commitments, and Caring Campus principles are incorporated into hiring, onboarding, and professional development, ensuring a shared understanding of care from the moment new employees join the college.

“What makes Caring Campus so powerful is that it’s truly middle-out, not top-down,” Patrick & Henry President Dr. Greg Hodges said. “It gives the people closest to students the structure and language to scale care in meaningful ways. That’s especially important in today’s higher education environment.”

As the nation’s first gold-certified Caring Campus institution, Patrick & Henry has consistently expanded its implementation, with plans to further embed Caring Campus practices among adjunct faculty.

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Hodges said that enrollment has grown steadily over the past four years, which he partially attributes to the college's welcoming, student-centered culture.

"We've seen strong growth, but what we haven't had yet is a way to examine causality," Hodges said. "This study gives us an opportunity to pair what we know anecdotally with quantitative data and better understand the impact of the Caring Campus work that's already deeply embedded on our campus."

The findings from this study will not only aim to inform current Caring Campuses, but also provide valuable insight for the broader higher education community on the power of care.

"This research represents an important step in strengthening the evidence and research around care, connection, and student success," Caring Campus CEO and founder Dr. Brad Phillips said. "Thank you to the Lumina Foundation for investing in this work and partnering with us to better understand and scale what helps students thrive."

Learn more about how to become a Caring Campus by contacting IEBC Chief Operating Officer [Ken Sherwood](#).

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

IEBC_LUMINA1: Caring Campus has helped make care more visible and intentional across Lawson State Community College. Lawson State is one of six community colleges that will demonstrate the impact of Caring Campus through a qualitative study examining student outcomes.

IEBC_LUMINA2: At Patrick & Henry Community College, Caring Campus is deeply woven into the fabric of the institution. This care will be further examined in a grant-funded study through the Lumina Foundation.

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(562) 688-5721



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3711 Long Beach Blvd., Suite 6044 | Long Beach, CA 90807