

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Caring Campus Regions Bring Texas Colleges and Universities Together to Support Student Success

LONG BEACH, CA – Community colleges and universities in Texas are coming together to form Caring Campus Regions, which will aim to ensure that every student experiences consistent care and support, help eliminate transfer barriers, and allow institutions to share data and better understand student progress and needs.

Laredo College, Del Mar College, Coastal Bend College, and Texas A&M University – Kingsville will make up one Caring Campus Region, while Texas A&M University – Central Texas, Austin Community College, and Temple College form another. Both regions are supported by a grant from the Greater Texas Foundation.

“About 80% of our students who graduate here transfer to one of the universities, whether that be Kingsville or another A&M university,” Laredo College President Dr. Minita Ramírez said. “Through Caring Campus, we want to continue encouraging our students to grow and develop, and show them consistent care throughout their journey. That shared vision between the three community colleges and university was one of special interest to me.”

The regional approach will also allow the institutions to share data and gain a clearer understanding of the students they serve and how they progress between institutions. Ramírez said the information will help Laredo College consider both students’ experiences and the data as it makes decisions about the college’s future.

Throughout her time in education, Ramírez has focused her research on “Hispanic Migration to Higher Education,” which has revealed three barriers that often keep students from higher education: they don’t think they will succeed, they don’t think they can afford it, and they don’t have family support. Ramírez said today’s students are now facing a fourth barrier: they don’t think they will fit in.

“The only way to reach those students is if someone cares,” Ramírez said. “People may forget exactly what you said or did, but they will never forget how you made them feel. If you can make them feel cared for, considered, wanted, and show that they belong here, they will want to stay and succeed.”

As part of the regional collaborative work, each campus is engaging in the traditional Caring Campus coaching.

Laredo College staff have completed their training, and are now implementing Caring Campus behaviors including wearing nametags to be easily identifiable and approachable and the 10-foot rule to acknowledge and offer to help students within a 10-foot radius.

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Staff are developing tools to reinforce these behaviors, including a Caring Campus presentation that committee members can use when visiting departments; reminders such as cards, stickers, or office and window decals using Caring Campus branding; and a recurring “Meet Your...” communication that will introduce employees to different departments, share what they do, where they are located, and how they can help students.

“The response from our staff has been very positive,” Dr. David Arreazola, Caring Campus committee chair and vice president of Student Success and Compliance, said. “One of the strengths of Caring Campus is that the work is being shaped by employees themselves.”

Arreazola said Caring Campus has given employees a common language and framework for strengthening and celebrating the caring practices that already existed at Laredo College, allowing employees to be more intentional in every interaction with students and coworkers.

“Over time, we hope that culture strengthens students' sense of connection and belonging and contributes to persistence, completion, and overall student success,” Arreazola said. “We also hope it strengthens our own internal culture by reminding us that student success is a shared responsibility across Laredo College. That, to me, is the long-term promise of Caring Campus: taking the care that already exists within our institution, making it more intentional and consistent, and ensuring students experience it wherever they encounter Laredo College.”

Laredo College will expand Caring Campus to faculty in the spring, ensuring all employees are aligned in creating a caring experience for students and are attentive to their feelings and needs.

“Our new Caring Campus regional approach is an innovative way to ensure students feel a continuous culture of care across the region, and Laredo College is doing an outstanding job of fostering that welcoming environment,” IEBC CEO Ken Sherwood said. “Thank you to the Greater Texas Foundation for partnering with us in this vital work. We hope to bring Caring Campus Regions to other states across the nation soon!”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

IEBC_LAREDO1: Laredo College is part of the Caring Campus regional work, which will aim to ensure that every student experiences consistent care and support, help eliminate transfer barriers, and allow institutions to share data.

IEBC_LAREDO2: Laredo College staff and faculty are engaging in Caring Campus, all employees are aligned in creating a caring experience for students and are attentive to their feelings and needs.

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