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Caring Campus

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CONTACT: Katie Emerson

(909) 324-0345

katharine.emerson@vmapr.com

Los Angeles Pierce College Staff and Faculty Establish a Supportive Campus Culture Through the Caring Campus Program

LONG BEACH, CA – Los Angeles Pierce College is strengthening its culture of belonging for both students and staff by successfully implementing Caring Campus, a program that teaches principles, tactics, and habits to create a more welcoming, connected environment, thereby improving student retention and success.

Data from the Institute for Evidence-Based Change shows that students who feel more connected to their college are more likely to be retained, persist from semester to semester, and complete their academic goals. Caring Campus's work to increase connectedness aims to help ensure students achieve all that they can from their college experience.

Pierce College focused first on implementing the Caring Campus program for staff in spring 2022, prioritizing training for those who are the college's earliest point of contact for students. The school then expanded training to faculty, completing the Caring Campus program on Feb. 29, and ensuring that the entire Pierce College team was equipped to create and support an ongoing culture of care.

"Caring Campus has put a magnifying glass up to our college not only in terms of our behavior and how we interact with students, but also to help us identify the gaps that exist amongst our team," Pierce College Interim President Aracely Aguiar said. "Participating in the Caring Campus programs for both staff and faculty has helped us successfully hand off students from one area to another – from our classified staff on the front lines who help our students with big-picture items, to the faculty that interact with the students in the classroom daily."

Professional Development Coordinator and Caring Campus Liaison Shannon Krajewski said she first sought to bring Caring Campus to Pierce College after hearing about the program through colleagues at other community colleges. Krajewski thought Caring Campus would be an impactful program that would give employees the tools to improve student success across all demographics.

To support the implementation of Caring Campus principles and techniques, Krajewski and her team developed a Caring Campus logo, produced nametags for all employees, created Caring Campus blazers and hoodies for ambassadors, and more. Krajewski has also helped to coordinate employee-centric events, such as a de-stress blanket-making event, a festive Halloween event, and more.

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“I believe it’s important to first establish that sense of community and comradery among employees and then to bring that culture of care to students together,” Krajewski said. “Our campus really just feels lighter since we started Caring Campus. It feels like people are more connected and more compelled to go out of their way for others.”

Pierce College is known to be a diverse campus, both in terms of varying cultures and age groups.

“I think a real team and true caring campus is required to have a cohesiveness amongst everyone, and that sentiment gets picked up on by students,” Aguiar said. “Caring Campus has helped us become more intentional and responsive to the needs of our students and community members. I look forward to sustaining the momentum of Caring Campus and hopefully we can continue to expand the program even further to the management side.”

Aguiar and Krajewski both said staff and faculty alike were enthusiastic about embedding Caring Campus principles into their daily work.

“Pierce College is an excellent representation of what it takes to embody and engrain Caring Campus into a school’s culture,” Institute for Evidence-Based Change and Caring Campus founder Dr. Brad Phillips said. “We are so proud of the exemplary implementation we’ve seen from Pierce College, and we can’t wait to see all they will continue to accomplish in the future in helping their students feel connected and seen.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

IEBC_PIERCE1: Los Angeles Pierce College professionals have embraced the Caring Campus program, implementing a number of techniques to help strengthen student connectedness to the college.

IEBC_PIERCE2: Los Angeles Pierce College professionals de-stress and deepen connections while learning to make chunky blankets. Pierce College staff and faculty have both participated in Caring Campus, which has helped to establish a sense of community and comradery among employees. The employees can then bring this culture to students together, establishing a sense of belonging on campus.

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(562) 688-5721



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3711 Long Beach Blvd., Suite 5033 | Long Beach, CA 90807