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CONTACT: Katie Emerson
(909) 324-0345
katharine.emerson@vmapr.com

Delta College Prioritizes Success Through Commitment to Student Belonging in Caring Campus

LONG BEACH, CA – Delta College in University City, MI, is championing student well-being both in and out of the classroom through the institutionalization of Caring Campus strategies. With a focus on fostering a sense of belonging, the college has seen improvements in enrollment, retention, and completion rates, underscoring its commitment to student success.

"Many colleges don't fully recognize the power of relationships as an elixir for student success, often overlooking the importance of how students feel in an academic setting," President Dr. Michael Gavin said. "Caring Campus serves as a crucial reminder, providing concrete strategies for staff and faculty to engage with students and create a culture that truly supports them. It's the kind of value system that higher education should strive for."

Delta College has further institutionalized Caring Campus at the college by providing new faculty members with training that includes a yearlong exposure to Caring Campus principles. As part of this program, experienced faculty mentors are paired with those new to the concept through Faculty Investment Teams (FIT). These teams meet biweekly to discuss what's working in the classroom, what needs improvement, and how to best apply Caring Campus strategies.

"Caring Campus has given us a common language and a framework to share the culture we've always had at Delta," English professor Kristin Cornelius said. "We've grown to understand the more we are there to support and champion each other through our FIT model, the greater ability we have to create meaningful and impactful relationships and learning communities for our students."

Students have also responded positively to the care they feel on campus, sharing with faculty how the culture has made a difference in their academic journeys, as well as to their mental health and well-being.

"The work of Caring Campus helps amplify our mission to serve our community and create connections," Cornelius added. "It allows us to care for each other and our students in meaningful ways, breaking away from the 'one-size-fits-all' mindset."

Delta College's focus on care and connection has been a contributing factor in increasing the college's statistics. From Fall 2022 to Fall 2024, enrollment increased by nearly 20%, retention rates rose from 58.5% to 61.2%, and completion rates jumped from 16.8% to 26.8%. Delta College has also expanded its student support services, including 24/7 telecounseling services, a food pantry, and a substance recovery program, to address students' non-academic needs.

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"Caring Campus is important because it answers the question our staff and faculty have, which is 'what can I myself do to help improve retention and student success in and out of the classroom?'," Vice President of Instruction/Learning Services Dr. Reva Curry said. "We can empower our staff and faculty to answer that very question thanks to being part of the Caring Campus family."

Delta College's dedication to Caring Campus serves as a role model for community colleges across the nation, showcasing the power of care and connection in transforming student experiences and success.

"Delta College is a shining example of what happens when a campus community wholeheartedly embraces the principles of Caring Campus," Caring Campus founder Dr. Brad Phillips said. "Their work is creating a positive ripple effect, not just in student outcomes, but in fostering a truly supportive and inclusive campus culture."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

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