



INSTITUTE for EVIDENCE-BASED CHANGE
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Ascendium Awards \$1 Million Grant to the Institute for Evidence-Based Change Supporting its Caring Campus Initiative

San Diego, Calif. Ascendium Education Group, one of the nation’s leading higher education philanthropies, has awarded a one million dollar grant to the Institute for Evidence-Based Change (IEBC) for the Caring Campus Initiative. The objective of this program is to increase student retention and success in community colleges by creating and cultivating Caring Campus environments through the intentional inclusion of all staff in student success efforts.

Under the two-year grant, IEBC will work with 20 colleges from around the United States to participate in the Caring Campus Initiative, which is a coaching-based approach to connect all staff to students, ensuring that all staff play a role in removing barriers and enabling students to achieve success.

Research has documented students leaving college because they do not feel connected to the institution (Tinto, *Leaving College*, 1993). Caring Campus recognizes and leverages the value of connectedness for increasing the likelihood that students will continue towards, and succeed in attaining, their educational goals. Staff are often the first contact students have with the institution: a phone call to student services, a meeting with financial aid officers, landscape staff while walking across campus, bookstore clerks, and a wide range of other personnel. Staff interaction with students can set the stage for successful enrollment, persistence, and completion. It is particularly important for students from historically underserved populations, students less familiar with college, students of color, students from low-income households, and first-generation students to feel welcome and that they belong in college.

“For so long, we have focused primarily on faculty to help facilitate student success,” said IEBC President and CEO Dr. Brad Phillips. “This is a glass half-full approach and overlooks a valuable resource of additional student support and inspiration. Caring Campus highlights the importance of recognizing and supporting the contributions of staff who are often the first contact, who solve problems and help new students navigate a new environment.

“IEBC’s Caring Campus initiative coaches, supports and encourages all staff to find ways to remove critical barriers to student success in a team approach. We are grateful to the Ascendium Foundation whose support will help us further develop this initiative in a way it can be replicated at many other institutions and positively impact students,” said Dr. Phillips.

“We’re excited to partner with IEBC on this project,” said Amy Kerwin, Vice President – Education Philanthropy at Ascendium. “Everything that happens on campus, both in and out of the classroom, influences student success. Students from historically underrepresented groups have the most to gain from involving the entire staff in efforts to eliminate obstacles.”

About The Institute for Evidence-Based Change (IEBC)

The Institute for Evidence-Based Change is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving academic success for all students. Learn more about IEBC at www.iebcnow.org

About Ascendium: Elevating opportunity through the power of higher education since 1967

Ascendium Education Group (formerly Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation & Affiliates) is the nation’s largest student loan guarantor as well as a leading higher education philanthropy and provider of student success services for postsecondary institutions. Founded in 1967, Ascendium provides information, tools and counseling to millions of borrowers nationwide, helping them avoid the consequences of default and keeping the door to re-enrollment open. Ascendium’s philanthropy program funds initiatives aimed at exploring, validating and scaling evidence-based strategies for overcoming systemic obstacles to completion of postsecondary education, particularly for students from historically underrepresented populations. All of Ascendium’s operations are grounded in the belief that every individual has potential to contribute meaningfully to their community and society. We work to unleash that potential through the power of higher education, and to eliminate barriers that stand in the way of its fulfillment. To learn more, visit ascendiumeducation.org