



INSTITUTE *for* EVIDENCE-BASED CHANGE
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Community colleges launch ‘Caring Campus Initiative’ across the U.S.

Ten community colleges across the U.S. are now hard at work with the Institute for Evidence-Based Change (IEBC) to incorporate the ‘Caring Campus Initiative’ into their student success efforts for the fall 2019 semester.

Supported by IEBC coaching and guidance, staff teams engage in work developing specific behavioral commitments helping staff to better connect with, and support, students to help them reach their educational goals.

Funded through a \$1 million grant from Ascendium Education Group, one of the nation’s leading higher education philanthropies, the objective of IEBC’s Caring Campus 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 grant, IEBC will work with 20 colleges across the U.S. over the next two years. Each campus agrees to participate in the Caring Campus Initiative, a coaching-based approach ensuring all staff play a role in enabling students to achieve success. The second group of 10 colleges will begin work in spring 2020.

“Who do students meet first on campus? It’s the staff,” said IEBC President and CEO Dr. Brad Phillips. “With Caring Campus, they encounter a warm, welcoming, friendly environment with staff professionals who are glad they’re there.”

The Caring Campus approach covers a semester of intensive work with IEBC coaches who meet with staff teams, returning every three weeks. “You have to go back to your department, share what’s happened, and then get feedback,” said Dr. Phillips. “This is what starts the next meeting. ‘What did we learn? What do we need to change?’ They involve colleagues and supervisors. It’s an intensive process.

“Caring Campus is designed to leverage and enhance a college’s existing student success efforts, with little to no cost to the institution to implement these interventions. Smiles don’t cost anything. Asking a student his or her name doesn’t cost anything. You don’t have to buy software, or build a building.”

Dr. Phillips recalled an example from a previous Caring Campus college: “In one department, there is a long hallway. It’s noisy, so office doors are closed. Large signs were placed on the doors saying ‘Open – Please Come In.’ It helped tremendously. Students had been afraid to open a closed door.”

“Our Ascendium funded program is tapping an under-utilized resource for colleges. Staff will be forever changed in the way they see their role as they are integrated into student success efforts,” said Dr. Phillips. “What happens: staff satisfaction goes up because they are making connections with students and their colleagues, connections that would have otherwise not been made.”

Research has documented students leaving college because they do not feel connected to the institution. 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 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, non-majority students, students from low-income households, and first-generation students to feel welcome and that they belong in college.

The fall 2019 Caring Campus colleges are:

Baltimore City College, Baltimore, MD
Delta College, University Center, MI
Eastern Gateway Community College, Steubenville, OH
Estrella Mountain Community College, Avondale, AZ
Hinds Community College, Raymond, MS
Irvine Valley College, Irvine, CA
Maysville Community & Technical College, Maysville KY
Mountwest Community & Technical College, Huntington, WV
North Lake College, Irving, TX
Yakima Valley College, Yakima, WA

IEBC is a nationally-recognized nonprofit organization dedicated to helping education stakeholders — K-12 school systems, community colleges, universities, employers and others — use evidence-based data, collaboration and coaching to make informed decisions and craft solutions that improve practice and dramatically increase student success through our innovative approach. Learn more about IEBC at www.iebcnow.org.

Ascendium Education Group (formerly Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation & Affiliates) is the nation’s largest federal student loan guarantor, a leading postsecondary education philanthropy and a provider of student success services for postsecondary institutions. Ascendium, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, provides information, tools and counseling to help millions of borrowers nationwide avoid default and keep the door to re-enrollment open. Ascendium’s philanthropic mission is to elevate opportunities and outcomes for learners from low-income backgrounds so they can better achieve postsecondary educational and career success. To learn more, visit ascendiumeducation.org.