

Caring Campus: What We Are Learning

The Institute for Evidence-Based Change (IEBC) has learned a number of important lessons about the successful implementation of *Caring Campus for Staff and Faculty* as we work with more than 120 colleges across the US, including over 70 in California. Specifically, IEBC works with community colleges to guide staff and faculty in the implementation of detailed behavioral commitments. The behaviors are proven to create a sense of belonging for students and lead to increased retention, persistence, course success and, ultimately, completion.

We would like to share these lessons, which have broad impact and implications for funders and those implementing student success initiatives in America's colleges.

First, for both staff and faculty, *Caring Campus* solves an acknowledged problem at America's colleges; too many students are not retained from semester to semester and therefore delay or do not achieve their goals of completion, transfer and transition to the world of work, earning a living wage. Staff and faculty across the nation care about students. *Caring Campus* helps these educators demonstrate caring through specific behavioral commitments proven to help students feel welcome and connected to the college. By engaging in these commitments, staff and faculty have a deep sense of the benefits of connecting with students. These commitments enable staff and faculty to engage with students in both a face-to-face and virtual environment.

For staff, that first connection they have with a student is crucial for how the student feels about higher education and their college in particular. If that first interaction is warm and caring, it encourages students to feel confident and supported. For faculty in face-to-face and virtual classroom environments, they commit to easily implemented behaviors that foster student connectedness and lead to increased course success and, ultimately, completion. Second, staff, faculty and leadership greatly appreciate that *Caring Campus* is grounded in well-established research and that colleges are demonstrating positive impacts. Local research conducted at *Caring Campus* colleges confirms the efficacy of this work.

Third, *Caring Campus* is supportive of other student success efforts and not ancillary to them. These include Guided Pathways, College Promise, accelerated basic skills, and performance funding formulas, among others. Colleges are finding ways to integrate the human connectedness aspects of *Caring Campus* into these efforts.

Fourth, *Caring Campus* costs little to no dollars to implement and sustain. Beyond the costs to engage in the initial ramp-up effort with IEBC, ongoing costs are minimal, primarily relegated to purchasing name tags and supportive materials that focus on recognition of staff and faculty as well as celebration of the effort.

Finally, we are learning that campus culture can change for the better and that behaviors of staff and faculty lead the way. We regularly hear from colleges about the ways *Caring Campus* influences culture change, such as improved communications within and across departments. And colleges are finding exciting ways to expand their culture of caring within and beyond their campus borders.

There are good resource materials available about the efficacy of the work, gathered and published by the Community College Research Center of Columbia University available at: <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/research-project/caring-campus-initiative.html>

THE INSTITUTE FOR EVIDENCE-BASED CHANGE (IEBC)

The Institute for Evidence-Based Change (IEBC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping education stakeholders — community colleges, universities, K-12 school systems, employers and others — use coaching, collaboration and data to make informed decisions and craft solutions that improve practice and dramatically increase student success. We partner with our clients to successfully implement customized evidence-based solutions to today's most pressing issues.

Institute for Evidence-Based Change

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