

F E B R U A R Y
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CARING CAMPUS



Welcome to the February 2025 issue of the LMC Caring Campus Newsletter! We are excited to share Caring Campus news and information with our readers twice a semester. Our newsletter will recognize Classified Professionals "Who Got Caught Caring" and we will also spotlight different departments and their staff.

What is Caring Campus?



Caring Campus was designed by the Institute for Evidence-Based Change (IEBC). IEBC is a nationally-recognized nonprofit organization that implements data-driven models to increase student success. The Caring Campus process provides new support for Classified Professional involvement in student success efforts. Caring Campus work recognizes and leverages the value of connectedness to dramatically increase the likelihood students will succeed in attaining their educational goals. If students don't feel connected to the college they attend, they are far less likely to return next term, regardless of the academic interventions and support services the college has provided. Caring Campus is designed to improve student success at colleges by coaching Classified Professionals to identify and commit to behaviors that increase students' sense of connectedness and belonging.

Who Got Caught Caring?

Aaron Nakaji



LMC Caring Campus is thrilled to highlight our Music and Recording Arts Lab Coordinator!

Who Got Caught Caring?

Caring Campus is proud to spotlight Aaron Nakaji in this edition. Aaron is the Music Laboratory Coordinator for the Music and Recording Arts Department which is located in the Music and Recording Arts Building next to Parking Lot “C”. He has been employed by LMC for eight years.

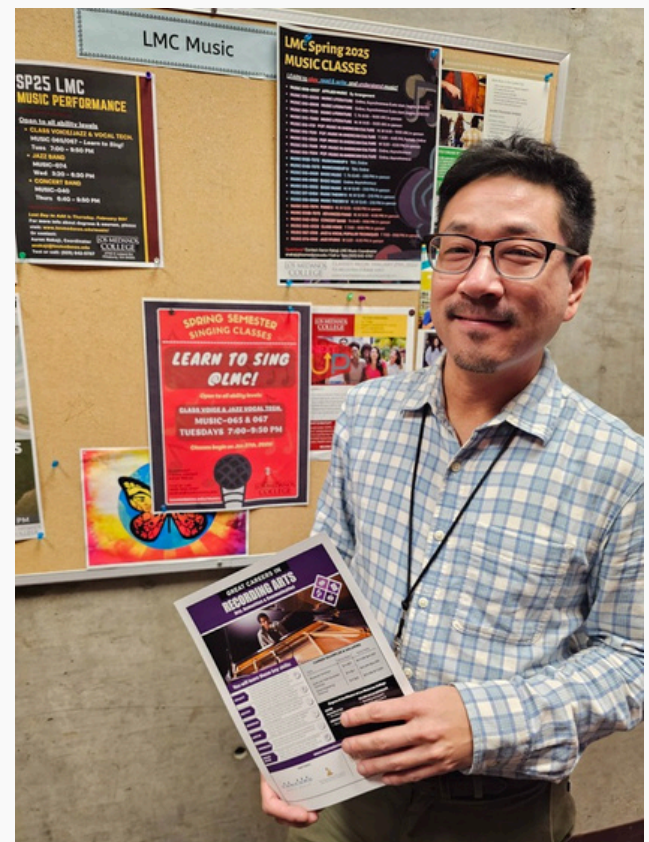
Aaron explains that his job duties include, “Supporting the Music and Recording Arts faculty members and students. I am the primary contact person regarding the capabilities of these programs, their facilities, equipment, and support services and the coordinator for utilizing these resources. I could be designing a flyer in the morning, testing equipment in the afternoon, and setting up for a band rehearsal in the evening. This shifting between duties that vary from day to day and week to week is what I find interesting about my job. There is also plenty of organizing and cleaning to do, which I find satisfying.”

Aaron comments that what he likes most about his job is that he has the opportunity to meet and work with everyone on campus, “With our Faculty, both our student-facing and “back of house” Classified Professionals, our college leadership, and most of all, our students.” Aaron also states that in his role as coordinator, he is lucky to work with students every day and due to the fact that his programs are small, he has the opportunity to know many students on a personal level.

When asked for an example of a time that he helped a student, Aaron replied, “An occasion that stood out was when I helped a music student who was unable to purchase textbooks due to a hold on their account and was in obvious distress. To sort it out, we visited EOPS, DSPS, Financial Aid, Admissions & Records, Counseling, and the Bookstore for support, and I learned so much about our resources in Student Services that day.”

Aaron participates in Classified Senate, Caring Campus, Enrollment Strategy & Planning Group, and the Success Team. In his spare time, he enjoys being in nature by camping, hiking, and exploring California’s parks. He also states, “We have a wonderful variety of urban wildlife to appreciate that our campus and lake attracts and sustains. My fellow parking lot C folks will know what I mean!”

LMC Caring Campus wishes to thank Aaron for his endless contributions to our students and staff!



Who Got Caught Caring?



Parking Lot C Urban Wildlife:



Here's what colleagues said about Aaron:

"Aaron brought a student in the Student Services building and he introduced the student to the different departments and resources available to them."

"Aaron welcomed our students as they enter the College Complex and he also helped them find their classrooms. Thank you Aaron!"



**Scan the QR code to
view more of Aaron's
Lot C wildlife images
and videos!**



Department Spotlights

Disabled Student Programs & Services

Caring Campus wishes to acknowledge and thank our DSPS personnel for all their hard work in assisting the students of LMC!



Pictured left to right: Jennifer Garcia, Geneva Toliver, Liz Esparza, Alan Palmen, and Sylvia Benzler (not pictured is Bridgette Garcia Alvarado)

JENNIFER GARCIA

Jennifer Garcia has worked at LMC for 19 years and works as a DSPS instructional assistant. Jennifer enjoys helping students and watching them achieve their goals. Jennifer shares a moment when she reassured a worried student, “I had a student come into our office struggling with a class. I tried to give the student some encouragement. The student had an exam coming up, which was giving them anxiety. The student did not want to take the exam. I told the student to try and see how well you do. They came back a few weeks later to tell me that they received a B on the exam. They were very thankful for the support. I was happy to hear that the student passed the exam and the class.” Jennifer spends her free time going on nature hikes, being outdoors, and camping. She also enjoys gardening. Fun fact- Jennifer was one of the Caring Campus Spotlight Winners highlighted in the September 2023 newsletter. Caring Campus wishes to thank Jennifer for her empathy and being a safe space for students!

Department Spotlights

GENEVA TOLIVER

Geneva Toliver has worked at LMC for almost two years as an Alternative Media Specialist. She enjoys being able to help students achieve their goals in class by discovering new technology to overcome many different limitations one may encounter. She helps students daily and regularly connects with faculty to help with instructional materials to support students in their canvas courses. In her free time, Geneva enjoys Broadway musicals and supernatural television. Caring Campus thanks Geneva for helping students achieve their goals by ensuring their accessibility needs are met!

LIZ ESPARZA

Liz Esparza has worked at LMC since 2018. Her role is a DSPS Assistant at the Brentwood Campus. She is also plays a critical role in the Caring Campus and Job Links Planning Committees. Liz enjoys multiple aspects of her job. First, she enjoys working closely with students to guide them and let them know they ARE capable of completing their goals and helping them make new goals. Additionally, she is a wonderful collaborator and enjoys working with the DSPS team. She affirms that the department is excellent at creating and implementing ideas – “My department is amazing at collaboration that results in a well-rounded support system for not only the students but for staff and each other as well.” Furthermore, Liz demonstrates care and empathy when assisting and interacting with students. She shares a time when she helped a student, “A student started walking into my office, stating they were overwhelmed and stressed with life and school. I didn’t interrupt but instead motioned for them to have a seat and a snack. They suddenly stopped and looked around and completely changed their tone and mood. They immediately said they forgot what they were thinking about and felt so relaxed and peaceful. They pointed out they loved all the plants, low music playing, and the office décor. For me, the little things count, such as creating a space that creates comfort and peace. I am honored and grateful to have been able to provide the student with a safe and calm space that they felt comfortable coming to, as well as sharing with me their situation and allowing me to listen and give feedback. It’s not always about homework or the classes- sometimes it’s providing an ear and environment that takes them to a better vibe.” In her free time, Liz enjoys doing jigsaw puzzles, weightlifting and collecting plants. Fun fact – Liz is part of the Caring Campus Newsletter committee. Caring Campus thanks Liz for her impact and heartfelt work with LMC students!

ALAN PALMEN

Alan Palmen is a new Classified Professional who has worked at LMC for 10 months as the DSPS Assistant. He enjoys supporting students as they work towards achieving their goals and making connections with the familiar faces who visit the office. Alan shares a time when he helped a student, “A student came into our office who was anxious about taking notes in class. In our meeting, I presented our smart pens, digital recorders, and Glean note-taking software. At first, she didn’t seem to like any of them... *continued on next page*

Department Spotlights

After discussing her learning and note-taking style in more detail, I presented some additional features on Glean that caught her attention. As she practiced using Glean, she expressed a new enthusiasm and said Glean would be very helpful in her class. Seeing her with a boost of motivation reminded me of how fun it is to work with students. During his downtime, Alan likes hiking, trying new foods, ice skating, bowling, spending time with family, and photography. Caring Campus wishes to thank Alan for his constant care and support of LMC students!

SYLVIA BENZLER

Sylvia Benzler has worked at LMC for 20 years. She is the Administrative Assistant III for the DSPS department. She enjoys working with a diverse group of students and connecting them to resources to allow them to be successful. Sylvia shares that “There are times when a student may come into DSPS in a very agitated and anxious state of mind. I feel very passionate about helping the student calm down, express their feelings, and then provide them with the knowledge that they will be fine. We are here to offer support, and they will continue to be successful here at LMC. We often hear from students that they would not have been able to succeed without the support of the DSPS staff, and that is why we are all so committed to helping students.” Additionally, Sylvia is a member of the Accreditation Committee, and previously, she has served on the Classified Senate, the Student Equity Plan Advisory Committee, and the DSPS Advisory Committee. In her spare time, Sylvia loves camping and traveling. She was fortunate enough to study abroad in Paris in 2022 with LMC. She has traveled all over the West Coast, including north to Canada and south to Mexico, on my Harley Davidson motorcycle. When she is not on the go, she loves to read and spend time with her nine grandchildren. They keep her young in spirit, as do the students at LMC! Caring Campus thanks Sylvia for her time, effort, care, and consideration with DSPS students!

BRIDGETTE GARCIA ALVARADO

Bridgette Garcia Alvarado started working at LMC in the DSPS office in 2019 as a student worker. She went on to obtain her bachelor’s degree and returned as an hourly program assistant in 2023. She loves working with students. Bridgette states, “They come with abundant knowledge and fresh perspectives that enrich my knowledge! I am grateful for the opportunity to grow alongside them.” She frequently advocates for students by guiding them to resources such as Financial Aid, the Marketplace, Admissions and Records, etc. She hopes that students feel supported. Bridgette is pursuing her graduate degree to one day work in higher education or the mental health field. Fun fact- Bridgette was one of the Caring Campus Spotlight Winners highlighted in the September 2023 newsletter. Caring Campus wishes to thank Bridgette for her lively energy and assisting students with their needs!

Bridgette Garcia Alvarado pictured to the right



What's new with Caring Campus?

Announcing our Newest Behavioral Commitment!

In the article, *I Don't Care What You Know Until I Know You Care: Why Caring Campuses Retain More Students*, Brad Phillips, the President and CEO of the Institute for Evidence-Based Change (IEBC), asserts that if students don't feel connected to the college they attend, they are far less likely to return next term, regardless of the academic interventions and support services the college has provided (2019). In other words, it's time to focus on **connectedness**.

LMC students were recently surveyed using the Survey of Entering Students Engagement (SENSE). When our students were asked if "at least one college staff member (other than an instructor) learned my name," the response was low compared to the responses from students from other colleges of similar size. By making this a behavioral commitment, Caring Campus' goal is to increase in the number of college staff members learning students' names. Knowing our students' names is important because it demonstrates respect, builds a sense of community, increases student engagement, and makes them feel they belong in college.

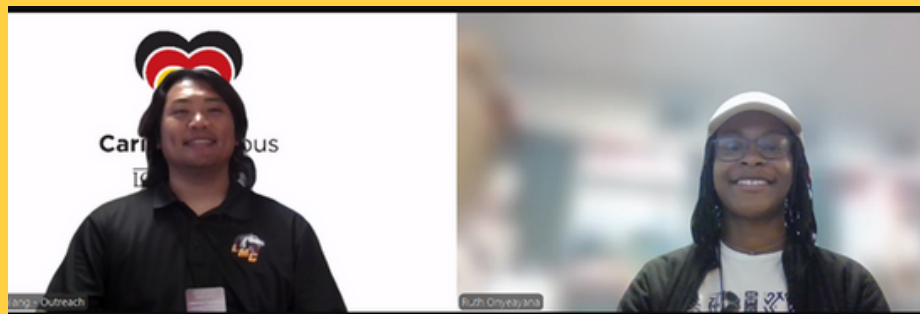
Getting to Know Students' Names is our newest Caring Campus Behavioral Commitment.

Caring Campus would like to encourage you to get to know our students. When interacting with students in person, introduce yourself and ask them for their name. Continue to address them by their name during the conversation.

When interacting with students:

- via email, address the student by name.
 - via phone, introduce yourself and ask for their name.
 - via Zoom, have the student update their display name to show their real name.
- Continue to address them by their name during the conversation.

When you see them on campus, greet them by name! Make a connection!
The small gestures make a huge impact.



What's new with Caring Campus?

Spring 2025 Welcome Week



Volunteers in the College Complex wayfinding stations were very busy helping hundreds of students on all three floors find their classrooms.



Student Life hosted Mustang Day Carnivals for our students where they gave out free food, had games and prizes, and resources for our students.

Photo Booth Fun!



It was a chilly Welcome Week, yet LMC canopies were set up in the quad each morning. Students were coming from every direction as they entered the campus. Equipped with their big smiles and their "Ask Me" badge, volunteers at the Welcome stations welcomed our students as they stepped foot on our campus.

LMC employees connected with our students; some gave words of encouragement, some joked with students, and others were there to lend a hand to colleagues also assisting at wayfinding stations.

Welcome Week is one of the six Caring Campus General Behavioral Commitments that is aimed to improve students' success by increasing the students' sense of connectedness and belonging to LMC. Welcome Week was coordinated by our Student Success Center in collaboration with Classified Senate and Caring Campus.

What's new with Caring Campus?

Fall 2024 Care & Coffee Recap

Last semester, Caring Campus launched a series of informative workshops called *Care & Coffee* to help with the engagement of professional staff and direct student success. Presented by Irene Sukhu and Lawrence Punsalang, *Care & Coffee* opened the door to all professional staff to stop by and enjoy some tea or coffee, snacks, and learn about all the different departments around our campus that interconnect in some shape or form, creating a web of success for our scholars. Our individual interactions set the stage for our student's success, and we must be equipped with the knowledge and be engaged in the process of campus-wide growth.



Care & Coffee was not just about listening to presentations and learning the fundamentals of each department or support service, but a moment to listen to all the value and hands on knowledge and experience of fellow staff and colleagues. After each department presented, the floor opened up to a Q & A that further allowed to find out more information about being engaged and seeing how vital each individual's personal connectedness to the campus and to the student made impacts. These workshops allowed for engagement and fun, and took place on a Friday each month that started in Fall 2024. The vision for *Care & Coffee* workshops is that every semester will focus on one of our five commitments. "Get to Know Other Departments" was the commitment this past Fall semester. Caring Campus worked with several LMC departments and student resources to give presentations to our Classified Professionals about the different services that are available to our students.

Our 1st *Care & Coffee* kicked off with presentations from Angela Fantuzzi of the Child Study Center, Nicole Almassey of the Outreach & Welcome Services, and Melina Rodriquez of the Student Success Center.

Our 2nd workshop included Financial Aid Office - Debbie Baskin, EOPS - Andrew Murphy and Center for Academic Support - Sandra Mills.

Our final workshop of Fall 2024 *Care & Coffee* presented by Admissions & Records - Rikki Hall, DSPS - Geneva Toliver and Library Services - Christina Goff

Care & Coffee was held on Fridays: Sept. 13, Oct. 4, Nov. 8 from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the Student Success Center (CO-200 Pittsburg Campus). Thank you to all who presented, all who came to learn, and we look forward to kicking off the next round of *Care & Coffee* soon!

Join us at Classified Senate!

LMC Classified Senate represents the diverse voices of our Classified Professionals, and Caring Campus would like to invite you to attend the Classified Senate meetings.

The meetings are twice a month and are held in a hybrid format from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Join us in person at SS4-412 and via Zoom ID: 585 278 8369.

Spring 2025 Meeting Dates:

- February 3rd
- February 24th
- March 10th
- March 31st
- April 14th
- April 28th
- May 12th



Learn more about our Classified Senate, meet your council members, join committees, get involved in campus activities, and get your voice heard.

Look Who Else "Got Caught Caring!"

Alan Palmen

Alex Harvey

Alex Wood

Ali Haddadi

Andrew Murphy

Bridgette Garcia Alvarado

Cesar Reyes

David Valencia

Erin Jimenez

Geneva Toliver

Imelda Lares

Ivan Urrutia

Jennifer Garcia

Julie Lucca

Lawrence Punsalang

Leticia Webb

Lindsay Litowitz

Liz Esparza

Lucia Garces

Melina Rodriguez

Nicholas Diaz-Galarza

Nicole Gomes

Rosy Lujano

Sandra Mills

Sonny Tran

Sylvia Benzler

Tennille McEwen

Vidal Garcia

Wenchale Story



Keep on Caring, LMC!



Caring Campus

LOS MEDANOS
COLLEGE

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THANK YOU SO MUCH!