

Two schools, one spot

BC, CSUB positioning Kern County students for decades to come

Bakersfield is home to two major institutions of higher education — Bakersfield College and Cal State Bakersfield. Each has a rich history and tradition of serving students and meeting the needs of the Bakersfield community. Since opening its doors to 13 students in 1913, BC has grown to serve more than 33,000 students annually. And since its founding in 1965, CSUB has grown to serve more than 10,000 students annually, with more than 70 percent of its 50,000 graduates remaining and working in the Central Valley. Though each institution has a different focus, both share a common goal: to position Kern County students for success that will advance the economic vitality and the health of our community.

The challenge is clear, however. According to data reported by the California Department of Education, Kern County's educational attainment rates are below state averages, with adults over 25 years of age earning bachelor's degrees at half the rate statewide, and in some surrounding rural communities, rates drop to below 2 percent.

And yet, as presidents of your community college and state university in Bakersfield, we believe that we are living in the best of times for higher education serving the Bakersfield community.

WE HAVE STATEWIDE SUPPORT

At the state level, each of our systems are seeing major reforms designed to advance timely completion. The CSU's ambitious Graduation Initiative 2025 aims to increase graduation rates, while the community college system is implementing a new funding formula that incentivizes completion, particularly of the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT). Senate Bill 1440 legislation

guarantees students who complete an ADT at BC can transfer with 60 credits to a CSU with junior-level status. These reforms have positioned each college to maximize the dollars that flow to our community from Sacramento.

WE HAVE AN AWARD-WINNING COLLABORATIVE MODEL

After launching the Kern Promise and later the Finish in 4 project with fully-mapped four-year transfer programs from BC to CSUB, both have received statewide accolades and secured additional funding to strengthen our partnership. In December 2017, CSUB earned recognition as a transfer champion because of the increase of the ADT degree holders it was enrolling and graduating, most of whom are BC ADTs. In September 2018, Bakersfield College earned the California Community College Chancellor's Student Success award for our work with CSUB on transfer pathways. As a result of that collaboration, CSUB also has received national recognition for the social mobility of its graduates and its quality education at an affordable price.

WE HAVE LOCAL SUPPORT

Just last year we received an outpouring of support from business and industry leaders, community leaders and political leaders for the co-location of a BC facility on the CSUB campus. These letters were publicly presented to the Kern Community College Board of Trustees at its December 2018 meeting.

Now is the right time to implement our bold vision for a BC-CSUB co-location.

A co-location model is a model of opportunity for leadership among faculty, staff and students to become a model of quality education for the state and for



Sonya Christian and Lynnette Zelezny

A co-location model is a smart move for our students and our community. By creating the conditions for BC students to enroll in BC courses on the CSUB campus, we will streamline transfer pathways and create efficiencies that result in savings for the student and the taxpayer. Imagine 1,000 students per term each take one less three-unit course to earn their degree due to lower waitlists, less wandering through non-degree-applicable courses and a clearer focus on their end goals. That savings equates to \$370 per student, or \$370,000 per term for those 1,000 students. Over a 20-year period, that's a savings of \$14.8 million.

the nation. This will be a model through which students learn the 21st century skills of creativity, innovation and problem-solving that will serve them well in our quickly-evolving, automated work. These tangible skills will serve them well as we diversify the industry base we attract to our region.

This partnership is essential to make the San Joaquin Valley an economically booming, vibrant community. By expanding educational opportunities and focusing on completion of the baccalaureate, we will bring

communities out of poverty to engage in active citizenship and lead healthy, productive lives.

It is a great time to be in Bakersfield.

Sonya Christian, Ph.D., is starting her sixth year as Bakersfield College's 10th president. Lynnette Zelezny, Ph.D., in July 2018 began her tenure as Cal State Bakersfield's fifth president. Christian can be reached at president@bakersfieldcollege.edu, and Zelezny can be reached at 661-654-2241.