

COMMUNITY VOICES:

Preparing students for the workplace of tomorrow

- By Bill Moseley
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Higher education is often viewed as an “ivory tower” — disconnected from the rest of the world, impractical and concerned with satisfying its own needs and the egos of those who work in the academic world. Bakersfield College is no ivory tower.

In my 22 years of service to this great institution, I’ve known literally hundreds of individuals — smart, talented and highly educated — who are absolutely dedicated to making sure that students reach their goals, whether they want to finish a degree, transfer or find a great job. My colleagues care more for individual student success than any publication, academic journal or professional kudos. Their dedication is evident in the time they take, their mindfulness and their willingness to find each individual who needs help in a crowd of 40,000 students.

However, higher education has historically been bound to an archaic measurement of learning. This measurement, called the “Carnegie Unit,” was first used in 1906. The “unit” tells us how much of something a student has learned, or more accurately, how much time they have spent studying it. If we say that a class is three units, it tells us something about how much time we can expect to devote to it. Even if we don’t know how much, we do have a sense that a four-unit class is more work than a one-unit class.

Take a look at a college transcript, if you can — if you don’t happen to have one handy, just search the web for “college transcript” and you can see some samples. Almost

every college transcript has three types of information on it: the names of the classes taken, the number of units for each class and how many units each class represents.

Now imagine you are an employer, trying to decide if a recently graduated student has learned the skills and knowledge that they will need to perform the work successfully. You know they took introduction to business, they received a B grade and it was three units. Does that tell you what you need to know? Probably not, because the information is not clear or specific. It reminds me of trying to watch a video on my computer when my internet connection is too slow. You can just make it out, if you squint your eyes and use a little imagination. This has been the standard for more than 100 years in higher education, but Bakersfield College has the tools, people and the technology to do much better.

Last fall, the academic technology team at Bakersfield College, partnering with our Career and Technical Education leadership and several academic departments, launched an innovative effort to provide students and their future employers with a much sharper picture of student learning. Called badges or microcredentials, these digital representations of learning allow employers and students to see a much more detailed view of what happens inside a college course, down to the level of the critical skills and knowledge students will master. In addition to the more detailed view of learning, badges store information, such as when and how the skill was measured. This information is authenticated and stored within the badge itself, so students will have ownership of their information and can use it in a resume or personal portfolio of their learning.

On a larger scale, badges will help to connect students with the critical skills for the jobs they are looking for upon completing their educational journey. There are already several companies who are developing job databases that are searchable by these exact same skillsets. As these develop, students will be able to use their portfolio of badges to search for jobs that match their skillsets.

For BC alumni who were students on campus five, 10, 20 years ago, I can assure you the campus you knew during your time is no longer the same campus. Bakersfield College is leading the way with innovative technology and enhancements, and resources will only become more readily available for future Renegades as we make progress. This innovation in how we capture student learning today is preparing Bakersfield College Renegades for the workplace of tomorrow.

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