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Bakersfield College Selected as Baccalaureate Pilot Site Location

For more than 100 years, Bakersfield College has been dedicated to its mission and design to support students as they develop their educational base in preparation for transfer to a four-year college or university. Today, the California Community Colleges Chancellors Office announced Bakersfield College has been selected as one of just 15 colleges in California to pilot a four-year degree program.

“I sincerely thank the local community for its support and faith in Bakersfield College as we went through our research and recommendation process to develop the Baccalaureate of Applied Science in Industrial Automation at Bakersfield College,” said Bakersfield College president Dr. Sonya Christian. “Bakersfield College was established in 1913 with a specific purpose – to prepare students with the first two years of higher education before they transfer to a four-year university. Today, Bakersfield College has made history as we look to the future evolution of the community college role in California and importance to students.”

In September 2014, California Governor Jerry Brown signed SB 850 (Block), authorizing the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges to establish a statewide Baccalaureate Degree Pilot Program at 15 California community colleges. In December 2014, Bakersfield College completed the required application process and proposed the development of a Baccalaureate of Applied Science in Industrial Automation. This degree will provide students with the option to complete all required coursework for a Bachelor of Science degree in an area that is much-needed by the community Bakersfield College serves. Over the course of the application process, Bakersfield College obtained statements of support from more than 80 representatives of local businesses, education, and government to illustrate how strongly the greater Bakersfield community supported the college’s application for the baccalaureate pilot program. Each of these statements of support is posted on the Bakersfield College website at www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/baccalaureate-degree/letters-of-support.

Bakersfield College’s process of applying for the Baccalaureate of Applied Science was one of exploration and discovery. The college understood that the economics of the local community can prove prohibitive to local students seeking four-year degrees in industrial areas. Only 15% of the population in the area Bakersfield College serves holds a bachelors-level degree. As a community college serving the needs of the community, Bakersfield College has an important role in improving the degree attainment rate, and ultimately, the economy of the area it serves.

Industrial automation represents the technology-driven business model of the 21st century. In today’s industry, an engineering team is involved in developing new products or systems. These teams work with technologists who can apply scientific or technical knowledge in the design, manufacturing, and repair of automation systems. Bakersfield College’s Baccalaureate of Applied Science will train students with the skill set that the technologist requires, meeting the needs of a number of local employers, including major local areas of agriculture, distribution, and manufacturing. According to Economic Modeling Specialists International data, technology-driven positions in Kern County have grown over 11% since 2009 and will grow an additional 20% over the next nine years.

“Students who graduate from Bakersfield College’s Baccalaureate of Applied Science in Industrial Automation will have the education necessary to allow them to apply for highly-skilled positions at any number of local employers,” said Liz Rozell, Dean of Instruction and the
lead on the application team. “The Industrial Automation degree will prepare students with project management skills that can take them into jobs working directly with engineering teams on product development. Typically, there are more than 200 openings in Kern County’s oil, agriculture, manufacturing, and logistics industries for these types of positions, with a median income of $85,000.”

Complete information about Bakersfield College’s Baccalaureate of Applied Science in Industrial Automation is posted online at www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/baccalaureate-degree.

Bakersfield College opened its spring semester today to more than 16,600 students – a number 4% higher than the enrollment for spring 2014. This increased enrollment illustrates the continued positive gains in California’s economy and the rebounding of higher education funding. With the addition of the Baccalaureate of Applied Science, Bakersfield College will help more students stay in Bakersfield, develop the skills they need to succeed in Industrial Automation, and expand the college completion rate of the local area.

Bakersfield College will now develop the application criteria for students interested in the Baccalaureate of Applied Science in Industrial Automation program, with the goal of having the first students in the program starting with the Fall 2015 semester.

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