February 1, 2014

Dear Chancellor Harris,

One year ago, in January 2013, I returned to become the tenth President of Bakersfield College. What I found here at Bakersfield was the same vibrant campus that I knew and loved since my days as math faculty, a campus with a fierce dedication to service in education and a 100-year history of innovation since bringing higher education to the southern reaches of the central valley.

I’m writing to state the obvious, that Bakersfield College should be one of your pilot sites for the baccalaureate degree (SB 850 - Community College District Baccalaureate Degree Pilot Programs). The combination of quality, capacity, dedication, willingness, community need and economic viability make this choice, for me, a self-evident one.

We are widely recognized as having one of the best Associate Degree Nursing Programs. As you know, nursing is a program where successful students are virtually guaranteed a job – healthcare needs new nurses faster than we can train them. The industry is changing however, and Bachelor’s degrees in Nursing are now the standard for entry level jobs in most areas of California. Both the need and the opportunity for Bakersfield College to address that need are immediate.

Bakersfield College is an ideal choice as one of the first community colleges to successfully offer a Bachelor’s degree for all the right reasons. It would build on existing strength to meet fundamental community health needs and build the economy. It would maintain the premise and promise of making our nursing graduates among the best prepared and most competitive in a rapidly changing marketplace. And it would continue a proud lineage of educational innovation for the citizens of the South San Joaquin Valley.

Please let me know if I can be of assistance in moving SB 850 forward in any way, as I truly feel offering baccalaureate degrees at California’s community colleges, and Bakersfield College in particular, is important to the health of California’s healthcare system. I believe that this legislation needs to be part of the next California Educational Master Plan. After all, it was Dorothy Donahoe, the legislator from Bakersfield, who in 1958 proposed developing a progressive plan for California’s Higher Education Institutions. So let’s do it, and in 2014, let’s have Bakersfield as one of the pilot sites.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sonya Christian
President
Bakersfield College
http://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/president/