State of Rural Initiatives at Bakersfield College

Bakersfield College has remained committed to bringing educational and training opportunities to students in Kern County’s rural communities. As the need in the various communities in rural Kern County has grown, Bakersfield College has responded by increasing access to courses and student support services in Delano, McFarland, Wasco, Shafter, Arvin, Lamont, Lost Hills, and South Bakersfield. In the last two years, the Rural Initiatives team has grown to increase regular presence throughout the aforementioned communities, and has even established two co-locations with partner agencies. By actively leading in efforts such as Early College and Adult Education, the Rural Initiatives team has opened more opportunities for all community members. Lastly, Bakersfield College has leveraged various funding sources to be able to bring and expand new programs to rural communities, such as HVAC and Industrial Automation.

In the recent ACCJC accreditation cycle, Bakersfield College received commendations for the work done to provide quality and equitable services to all students. One of those commendations read as follows:

Commendation 2: The team commends the College for its commitment to mission as exemplified by its proactive outreach to and support of its students in the rural portions of its 5,000 square-mile service area, including the communities of McFarland, Arvin, Wasco, Shafter, and Delano, through the Rural Initiatives program. The College’s efforts to partner with these and other rural Kern County communities to offer classes and support services at remote sites has helped create the foundation for a college-going culture throughout the Bakersfield College service area. (II.A.1, II.C.3)

Bakersfield College rural areas have seen tremendous growth, both in number of sections offered and FTES. Specifically, the number of sections have more than doubled in the last four years (see graph below).

![Number of Rural Sections, by Location and Academic Year](attachment:image.png)
Similarly, the number of FTES in rural locations have also seen tremendous growth, increasing 74% over the last four years (see graph below).

![Number of Rural Sections, by Location and Academic Year]

**Events and Actions Taken**

The Rural Initiatives team has been strategic about growing Bakersfield College’s presence throughout rural Kern County, as well as online through our social media platforms. The goal of every event we organize and action we take is to ensure that residents throughout Kern County know that they have access to educational opportunities in or near their hometown.

**Team Structure and Staffing**

The department has made an intentional effort to move away from the “Delano Campus” designation, and instead operate under the “Rural Initiatives” name. This has helped build stronger relationships with communities outside of Delano. Additionally, it has helped in leveraging team members from various programs under the Rural Initiatives umbrella such as Early College, Adult Education, and Delano Campus to support all initiatives.

The Rural Initiatives team has grown to 20 members, housed at Delano Campus, Wasco Adult Learning Center, Job Spot, or in Arvin.
Facilities

Co-Locations

After the success of the co-location with Bakersfield Adult School at the Job Spot in South Bakersfield, a similar co-location has been established in partnership with the Wasco Adult Education program. As a result, Bakersfield College is now able to offer courses and services in Wasco during the morning and early afternoon, which is a change from prior years.

Bakersfield College’s partnership with the City of Shafter has allowed for expansion of student services for BC students at the Shafter Learning Center. Much like the Job Spot and Wasco Adult Learning Center, this partnership has allowed us to offer courses and services during times of the day we had not been able to offer in the past.

New Facilities

In October 2018, Bakersfield College broke ground on the HVAC lab at the Delano Campus. By leveraging various funding sources, including economic workforce development funding secured by Assemblyman Rudy Salas, the HVAC lab will be completed in time for the Fall 2019 semester.

Community Outreach

Being engaged in the communities we serve has been an ongoing goal for the Rural Initiatives team. Beyond high school outreach, the Rural Initiatives team has become increasingly involved in other aspects of the local communities we serve. In the past year the team has participated in National Night Out events, outreach in the vineyards, community resource fairs, Christmas parades, Trunk-or-Treat events, and many other activities. The team has also made strides in building relationships with local elementary school districts to begin reaching students at a much younger age.

Additionally, the Rural Initiatives team has engaged with local chambers of commerce, community alliances, and other non-profit organizations. Through these partnerships, we have been able to reach more families throughout rural Kern County.

The team has coordinated presentations to update the respective communities on updates regarding Bakersfield College. Such events included a community update in Arvin to inform residents of the work currently going on, as well as the upcoming Arvin Center funded by Measure J.

Looking Ahead at the Next 3 Years

In the coming year, the Rural Initiatives team will take its engagement with college wide initiatives such as Guided Pathways to the next level. In order to better serve students in rural Kern County, the team will regularly engage with all departments on the Panorama Campus to acquire as much knowledge as possible to bring back and implement in a completion coaching team framework. The work of the rural initiatives team will move from “cross-training” to “cross-engaging.” This means that team members assigned to specific roles (i.e. Early College or Adult Education), will step in to support other initiatives. The objective of this approach to doing the work is to increase the number of certificate completers, graduates, and transfer students coming out of rural Kern County.
Two major projects on the horizon for Bakersfield College in rural Kern County will be the construction of the Learning Resource Center at the Delano Campus, as well as the construction of the Arvin Center. As the planning for design and construction on these two facilities begins, the Rural Initiatives team will be actively developing the programming that will be housed in those buildings.

While the Rural Initiatives has many plans to innovate and expand its reach, one of the primary focuses for the coming year will be growing the Industrial Automation pathway. In the 2019-2020 school year, the program will expand beyond Delano into the communities of Wasco and McFarland. As industry demand for employees with the skillset in industrial automation increases, it is important for Bakersfield College to grow its capacity to produce a highly trained workforce. In collaboration with the Industrial Automation team on the Panorama Campus, the Rural Initiatives team will make a big push to bring awareness to the opportunity in North Kern.

The future is bright for Kern County’s rural communities.