Welcome to a new semester and a new school year at Bakersfield College!

Our story began 103 years ago during the fall of 1913, when the college welcomed 13 students to the Kern County High School campus. Today, we welcome a rapid growing number of students to our beloved campus on the hill and a new story begins as we welcome our fledgling cohort of 14 baccalaureate students in industrial automation in 2016.

When I think about those first 13 students who enrolled in the first classes at Bakersfield College, I imagine the generations that benefited from quality education, state-of-the-art education, and leadership focused on the future, engagement and dedication from their community. I often wonder what they would think of BC today. I wonder what their reaction would be if asked whether their investment of over a century ago had paid off. And I imagine the return on their investment was far, far greater than they ever could have imagined.

We are 82 days away from Nov. 8th when this community will decide on re-investing in state-of-the-art technology, quality education, leadership focused on the future, engagement and dedication from our community. Let’s imagine if Measure J is approved, what the return on this new investment would look like in 50 years… or even 100 years. What an honor and privilege for each and every one of us to say that we are BC and it is our hands that are writing the next historic chapter of BC’s story.

The Olympics in Rio tells us story after story of athletes, from around the globe living their passion, dedication, fierce work ethic, belief in self, in sportsmanship, in teamwork, and in the future.

We are BC — the training grounds and learning grounds for developing, mentoring, and patiently cultivating such outstanding characteristics in our students and in each other — you only have to look around. On these grounds, in this theater, and in our classrooms, our lives are ones of care, dedication, leadership, and engagement. These qualities are what make this college the great institution that it is. Aristotle said that excellence is never an accident. It is the result of high intentions, sincere effort, intelligent execution, and it represents the wisest option among the other alternatives. It is no accident that our students achieve excellence. It is the result of your intentions, effort, and execution in presenting wiser options for our students, and guiding them to excellence.

We are BC and together, we can build… A better BC.

In a special way, I’d like to recognize a group of people who have been involved to make today’s celebration and festivities better than ever before. For the delicious food service provided by Eric Sabella and his team; For our fantastic team of ushers led by Chris Glaser, including Somaly Boles, June Charles, Heather Barajas, Isabel Casteneda, Bernadette Martinez, Jacki O’Bannon Strong, Felicia Scott and our wonderful students; For our interpreters, Jerice and CJ; For content from Kate Pluta, Nan Gomez-Heitzberg, Zav Dadabhoy, Bill Potter, Lesley Bonds, Steve Waller and Nicky Damania; For the M&O team including Jason Brown, Ramon Puga, and Rachell Morehouse; For our video, media and technical team including Manuel De La Santos, Kristin Rabe, and Kevin Ganger; For graphics and printing by Dylan Wang; For the collaborative and creative writing by Monika Scott; and for two women who are complete rock stars in everything they do — Shannon Musser and Jennifer Marden.
Last year was one of great accomplishments for BC

We...

• Secured approval for Bachelor of Science Degree as one of 15 community colleges in California that was approved to develop a program

• Were chosen to participate in the AACC Guided Pathways Project as one of 30 colleges

• Were recognized by the Campaign for College Opportunity for AA-T and AS-T growth

• Hired 39 tenure track positions

• Increased instructional sites for rural communities

• Received funding from the Kern County Board of Supervisors for the 1+1+2=Game Changer Program at Arvin High School.

• Received the Opportunities Grant to support Inmate Education

• Received donation from the Wonderful Company for Delano facilities

• Received outside funding of Title V funds, SSSP and Equity $3.2 million, EOP&S $1,044, 078 (35% increase), and AERA donation, $500,000.

• Welcome Center established as part of the Outreach Program.

• Summer Bridge Program held 20 sessions and a rural session with Wasco High School

• Veterans Resource Center visits increased from 2,000 visits to 8,000 visits.

• Outreach to High Schools increased applications to the college by 17%.

• Using multiple measures placement for the MIH cohort of 1600 students, BC saved students 2111 semesters, or 6,333 units.

• First Student Convocation held for incoming freshmen, 912 students and family members attended.

• BC spent approximately $232, 654 on professional development, most of the funding from grant.

• FTES grew to 14, 909 an increase of 5.8%

• New signage, track replacement, handicapped entry doors, and sidewalk repair totally $1,156,700.

• Approximately $222,000 were spent on program review requests.

• Faculty continue to participate in research and publish.

• All applications have been processed as of August 13th and August is the busiest time of the year.

• This year the FAO increased the number of students serviced with a decreased in the average wait time. The average wait time for August went down from 118 minutes to 6 minutes.

The state of Bakersfield College has never been stronger. According to a recent study by the RP Group, our students account for nearly two-thirds of all FTES within the region for fire technology, emergency medical services, and construction crafts. The BC nursing program generates over 500 FTES per year and represents 26% of the nursing FTES in the whole Central Valley region. Bakersfield College is an indispensable source of educational transformation and job training, extending to communities across the vast central valley. Our Allied health, fire tech, child development, culinary arts, and FACE departments are making a real difference in every life here in Kern County. Enrollments continue to break records.
and our campus has grown to one without boundaries as we rise to meet the growing number of students in rural locations such as Delano, Shafter, McFarland, Wasco, Arvin and Lamont and online.

Friends, in the midst of the clamor on improving student completion, which of course we are focused on, BC continues to keep Student Learning at the forefront as reflected by its placement in our list of Strategic Directions. A commitment to provide a holistic education that develops curiosity, inquiry, and empowered learners. Our students are encouraged to question their surrounding world; question assumptions; ground their work in research, and support conclusions with evidence — so it’s expected that our students are able to think critically when they finish our courses. This means our work in and out of the classroom and in every service we provide is intentional, with the purpose of helping students improve their ability to examine all of the options — make wise choices — think critically — communicate effectively and carry these skills with them as empowered lifelong learners.

This spring, every department completed course level outcomes and program level outcomes. All courses were mapped to programs and institutional learning outcomes. This work happened because of you, your leadership and engagement.

WE are BC! And learning is at the heart of what we do.

I have promised Nan Gomez-Heitzberg and Kate Pluta that we will engage as a campus in our accreditation, self-evaluation work, and assessment in preparation for the fall 2018 site visit with a vengeance… But after November 8th. In the meantime, we have 82 days to build A Better BC!

Just like in the 50’s — We believe attending college, especially as a first generation college student can be intimidating and stressful. That’s why we have programs like the Summer Bridge. Students who participate in Summer Bridge complete their courses 5% higher than their non-participating peers, while participants also see a 4% increase in course success.

The numbers show early intervention is helping students begin college with the strong foundation they need to succeed. Faculty, who have been here less than three years, if you have not signed up for a summer bridge yet, please do so right away for next summer.

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We are writing the next chapter of BC’s story.

The decision was made in the spring of 1950 that Bakersfield College would have its own campus. The land was chosen — it was empty, barren, probably very dusty and it was right here — this 153-acre lot on the China Grade Bluffs of Panorama drive. The ground was not yet broken, but the seed was planted and the location was chosen; this was the place. This was the place where hundreds of thousands of students would make their way “up the hill” to attend college for the very first time.
County. This was the place designed with modern architecture and current technology in mind. This was the revolutionary campus, created by state of the art cutting edge thinking. The group was asked to ‘dream big’ and think beyond the first students who would be coming to the campus when it was competed. These were the facilities and this was the place needed to house the learning environments and support services to advance our entire region for the next half century.

Memorial Stadium was the first structure built on campus, and in fall of 1955, the football team hosted their first game against Pasadena City College. There were 18,000 roaring fans in the bleachers, cheering on the Renegades. Choosing our iconic stadium to be built first was a practical decision as it is situated on the highest elevation of the property. The excavated earth was then used during the remaining construction to level the other parts of campus. Fourteen facilities followed in quick succession including, the gymnasium, located in the southwest corner of campus followed by the pool — which was planned because none of the local high schools had a swimming pool.

Just like in the 50’s — It is the leadership and engagement of our departments that support students fully and overcome challenges to not only lead 15 of the 19 Renegade teams to postseason play last year, but has also produced some of the finest scholars in our community. Involvement in athletics has the potential to be one of the best student success interventions around. At BC, our entire athletics department works in unison to ensure that each of our Renegade athletes has a full schedule, adheres to his or her academic plan, regularly attends class, studies for exams, and still manages to show up for practice each day.

This year, coaches, we will follow your lead and rally around every student to ensure he or she has a team of people committed to challenging and supporting him or her all the way to commencement. I am looking to each one of you for your commitment to serve as a Completion Coach to our students — guiding them through the often difficult and sometimes, intimidating terrain.

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When students finally made the move to 1801 Panorama drive, it was spring break of 1956. There was no grass — just dust — and when it rained, there was only mud. The unique plank style walkways were a small help in the courtyard between the Administration and business buildings. These were a necessary path and Charlie Mae Littlejohn, class of 1956, said the only drawback was the lack of landscaping. She said, “This condition was certainly not good for the white buck shoes.”

Just like in the 50’s — today, we’re determined to help students get on the path they need to complete classes in quick succession. That’s why, we will do everything in our power to ensure our college prepared students, get the credits they need to complete their associate degree for transfer in just two years. In 2014, only three transfer degrees were listed in our catalog. This fall, students can choose from a variety of 28 different Associate Degrees for Transfer with guaranteed articulation to any California State University of their choice. This upcoming fall, 18 high schools will join the Renegades as our first pilot cohort of the
Renegade Promise. With your support, we are confident these 100 students will walk across the commencement stage in May 2018 to earn a transfer degree and begin the next step of their lives. And in years to come the cohort of Renegade Promise students will grow to a much larger number.

Last spring 2016, our students who utilized academic support, had substantially higher completion and success rates than their peers who do not. With completion rates as high as 93% and course success rates topping out at 15% higher than the average student, these services are absolutely critical to ensuring student persistence and completion. With over 80% of our students entering BC unprepared for college-level coursework, it’s no secret that our English and Math courses serve as critical make-or-break points for thousands of our Renegades each year.

With this knowledge comes an immense responsibility to arrange the most effective interventions proven to advance student success in gateway courses. Let’s declare 2016-2017 the year of Academic Support by “Extending the Classroom” into the tutoring center, the writing center, the student success lab, the math lab supplemental instruction, and all academic support services so that students don’t see walls but rather an extended space where they can practice their Writing and their math.

In summer of 2016 we piloted extend the classroom in some of our academic development courses. This fall, BC will launch this extended classroom model in all sections of Math 60 and English 53, serving over 1,300 students. Students will spend in a study areas with peer mentors, tutors and faculty where there is help and guidance readily available.

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Outside of Humanities Building

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Back to 1956, when the students in Charlie Mae’s class complained about their white shoes getting muddy, the campus was alive and many courses offered. The Humanities Building was a hub for a variety of classes including English, Speech, Art, Mathematics, Geography, History, and more.

Just like in the 50’s, the BC campus is still alive and we’re fostering creative and supportive, student environments. ASTEP is just one example — Our African American Success through Excellence and Persistence program helped students pass their English classes at four times the rate of students not in the program. Through structured study time, this group of students inspire growth and transformation into their best selves — learning in community, reminding each other about homework, offering each other rides, and lifting one another to their highest potential. It is the leadership and engagement of faculty and staff
that make it a great time to be at BC.

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Founded in 1913 as a way to spark regional growth and advancement, our college has been on the forefront of tackling the needs of our students and our community for the past one hundred and three years. We have not only been an engine of economic development for our community but we are a place of inspiration for the arts, culture, and humanities. We have taken our students to the Vatican, to sing for the President of the United States and the pope and in summer 2018 to sing at the Sydney Opera House.

In both 1913 and 1956, our community’s choice to invest in BC was the right choice and we’ve responded with the flexibility to meet educational needs, branching out to offer programs necessary for the economic development and cultural improvement of the Bakersfield area. Most importantly though, the focus has always remained on our students and their learning.

*This is the place of the first college in Kern County. This is the place where hundreds of thousands of students make their way “up the hill” to attend college for the very first time. This is the place designed with modern architecture and current technology in mind. This is the campus and these are the sacred spaces which will give pulse to the endless opportunities for future generations.*

We live in an era of viral soundbites and tweets rather than one of comprehensive and detailed discussion. But let us not be reluctant to tell our story, openly and honestly; boldly in all its detail; and in all its glory. Let’s joyfully shout out the BC story from the roof tops for the next 82 days and beyond. Let us use Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.

Can we get 82 pieces of writing in the community voices section of the Californian?

Every day from now until November 8th. Just 500 words to describe one thing that we do… We are BC and we are a Jewel of Kern County. We must dream big because the future of Bakersfield College and the future of our community depends on honoring our past by pushing for an unlimited future.

We will continue to balance bold new directions with elegance and poise. We will continue to encourage punctual completion with gentle compassion and strong support. We see the face, heart, and brilliant mind of each individual student in the crowd of thousands and our mission is as important as it’s ever been.

*I’m proud to say the state of Bakersfield College has never been stronger.*

Just like in 1913... Just like in the 50s... And now, in 2016, we stand united to write the next chapter of BC’s story.

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Together, let’s build...A Better BC