History & Vision

In Kern County, one in four residents live in poverty, with just 22% of Kern County residents 25 years of age and older holding an Associate's Degree or higher, compared with California's average of 39%. In the next ten years, more than six out of ten jobs will require employees to have more than a high school diploma. Today, only 40% of U.S. adults ages 25–64 are adequately prepared for the workforce.

Education is the key to equity, social mobility, and economic prosperity. This drives the work of educators throughout Kern County, and been the foundation for envisioned and implemented institutional, instructional, and student service policy changes locally and statewide in recent years.

With a critical lens on issues of equitable educational attainment, Kern County educators and industry leaders have been working to provide opportunities for applied learning through internships with business and industry partners, to embed academic support services for first generation and low-income students throughout the students’ pathways, and create pathways for success. Albeit a grand vision, the community is committed and inspired to usher in this vision, the promise of a college opportunity: The Kern Promise.

A College Promise is not a new concept in higher education; many states have embraced various iterations of the model. In 2015, BC conducted a literature review of unique promise programs nationwide and developed a pilot Renegade Promise program for fall 2016. BC targeted just under 400 incoming, college-ready seniors from nearly 50 high schools with a declared Associate Degree for Transfer pathway and provided priority registration, an assigned mentor-counselor to ensure timely completion through comprehensive educational planning and intrusive support.

The Kern Promise

The Kern Promise is characterized by a targeted effort to engage students in a holistic experience through a shared responsibility model where students commit to uphold academic standards while the colleges commit to provide quality support. The Kern Promise is focused on two primary goals: Timely Completion and Financial Assistance.

All students in the Promise have declared an Associate Degree for Transfer Pathway. As such, the Industrial & Transportation Technology Learning & Career Pathway is not represented below. Social & Behavioral Sciences is the most popular Learning & Career Pathway, with 17% of all Promise students pursuing the AA-T in Psychology.
**Demographics:** The majority of students in the Promise are Hispanic/Latino at 58%, trailing just behind the overall percentage at Bakersfield College. Twenty two percent are White, 12% are of mixed race, and 4% are African American/Black. The remaining 4% are represent students who are Filipino, Asian American, and Asian Indian. Further, 67% of participants are female while 33% are male.

**State of Financial Assistance** | Bakersfield College will offer financial assistance using three strategies: 1) distribution of the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver (BOGW) for eligible students, 2) maximizing federal financial aid dollars and on-campus employment opportunities, and 3) expansion of scholarships for textbooks and other supplies.
In California, state leaders have embraced a commitment to keep college affordable and accessible at $46/unit and by offering the Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver, recently renamed to the College Promise Grant for qualifying students. In an analysis of student records, the BC Office of Financial Aid determined awarded the BOGW valued at $1,288 to 53% of fall 2016 new students. Yet, the total cost of attendance for books, supplies, and fees after the BOGW is applied is $3,079.

Further, a defining feature of The Kern Promise is the reduction of excess unit accumulation. The average student at BC graduates with 85 college-level units. The estimated cost of the extra 25 units is approximately $1,150 in tuition/fees + $2,300 in books and living expenses, totaling $3,450.

Forty three percent of Kern Promise students are the first in their families to attend college, and many of them have noted financial issues as a potential barrier to their success. To address unmet academic need, the Kern Promise Completion Community made a recommendation to the Foundation Board of Directors to approve a broadened focus of the Norm Levan Scholarship Fund to include participants of the Kern Promise. The Board electronically approved this change on July 27, 2017 with the following criteria defined:

- Initial preference shall be given to recipients who are in need of financial assistance, and primary preference for those who are pursuing careers emanating from the disciplines in science or humanities
- All scholarships will be awarded for one year but shall be paid in two equal semester installments, and
- Each recipient must maintain at least a 3.0 average GPA each semester as a full time student as defined by Bakersfield College for the year for which the award is given or be enrolled in and meeting the terms of the Kern Promise

As a result of this broadened focus, Bakersfield College is able to provide scholarships up to $1,500 to Kern Promise students with remaining unmet academic need who meet the eligibility requirements of the program.

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<th>Promise Scholarship Breakdown</th>
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<td>BOGW (68)</td>
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<td>$86,940</td>
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<tr>
<th>Cohort 1 2017 Awards</th>
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<td>Completion Grant (28)</td>
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<td>$42,000</td>
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More specifically, some highlights include:
- 6 Kern Promise students are also AB540 and will receive financial assistance
- Only 3% of students have no FAFSA and/or incomplete financial aid files
- 52% of students receive the BOGW, totaling $86,940

In total, BC has awarded $706,285 to Kern Promise students, BOGW included. In partnership with the Kern Promise Completion Community, the Foundation will initiate ongoing Employee Giving
and BC Alumni Giving Campaigns through which the Kern Promise will be prominently featured. The Foundation’s initial goal is a 10% employee participation rate to raise $5,000 in the first year.

**State of Timely Completion** | The Kern Promise seeks to deepen the efforts of educational partners county-wide in order to improve equitable student outcomes. As such, BC will implement intentional and systemic strategies to address the following momentum points:

- Students attempting 15 units in the first semester
- Students completing transfer-level English and math in the first year
- Students attempting 30 units in the first year
- Students completing 9 core pathway units in the first year

As of December 2017, Bakersfield College projects promising outcomes for Kern Promise students in line with the momentum points. The Kern Promise Counselor has created the conditions for these enrollment patterns by creating and distributing abbreviated student educational plan templates in the spring term followed by clear, comprehensive student educational plans by October 31, 2017 for 100% of all students.

**Attempting 15 units in the First Semester**

Kern Promise students are on track to complete their educational pathways at the college in two years. In summer 2017, the average KP student enrolled in 2.9 units followed by 14.4 units in fall 2017. The average FTIC student completion of 12 college-level units in the first term was just 8.8% for the 2015-16 FTIC Cohort as reported in the 2016 KCCD Elements of Student Success report.

**Completion of Transfer-Level English and Math in the First Year**

As Cohort 0 of the Kern Promise nears transfer, no students have a remaining English requirement and just 6% have a remaining math requirement. While Cohort 1 is only half-way through their first year, only 15% need to complete their English requirement, while 55% need to complete their math requirement. All students are registered in the remaining required courses for the spring term. According to the 2016 KCCD Elements of Student Success data, Kern Promise students are completing their English and math requirements much more quickly than the average FTIC student.