Good morning my dear colleagues and friends,

Like many of you, I am excited to start a new year, a new semester with new resolutions, a new vigor, as we come together to connect in community and move forward with the energy, passion and commitment to our students that is Bakersfield College.

I followed many of you on social media as you posted pictures of family members and friends celebrating the holidays together at home as well as travelling to a variety of different places.

This year’s Christmas break was an especially rewarding since it seemed like I was gifted with space and time to read and reflect back on 2018…..a year of great rewards for me, along with some difficulties that only life can surprise us with.

During all of this, I was struck by BC’s history of excellence and leadership and more importantly, our history of kindness and generosity; where faculty and staff are part of a deep seeded culture of providing safe heaven to our students, where faculty and staff are bridge builders in our community. This is why I never fail to tear up when Jen Garret and our students lead us through *Bridge Over Troubled Waters* at convocation.

Yes, that is what you do every day for each other, for our students, and for our community. The waters of unrest and turbulence, which we might come to anticipate as the natural course of life….. Yet together, we provide that path, that bridge that allows them to continue the journey of life.

Today, as we pick up the mantle to complete an academic year and start a new calendar year together, remember our history, our story and our gift in building bridges as we do the difficult and rewarding work of educating our students and community.

As we work through our differences and engage with all that our community represents, let us be the force, the heart, the voice and the spirit that unifies and not divides….after all, we are BC and we are Bakersfield.
I am so sorry I could not be there in person today. Certainly I am with you in my heart and in my thoughts, but I am at the accreditation Commission meeting in my role as a Commissioner, where as it happens, BC’s accreditation status is to be considered.

It is moving for me to be here, knowing that our work together will be reviewed by the Commission, and I reflect on all that we’ve accomplished and all the work that went into writing our report. Of course, I will leave the room as BC’s case is reviewed in closed session, and we will all wait in anticipation together until BC receives the Commission’s decision.

The work of Accreditation began in spring 2016, with BC writing teams organizing around the standards. In spring 2017, we launched the full ISER writing process at opening day. From there, in retreats, small group meetings, and lab settings, our writing teams engaged in the detailed work to respond to the standards. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students contributed to the early draft documents and collection of evidence. Throughout summer and fall 2017, these teams held campus-wide forums, updated our websites, and refined their writing before shipping it off to our editing team.

In fall 2017 and spring 2018, our editing team, led by Nick Strobel, began the work to share BC’s story in a single voice. Through countless hours and many, many late nights, Nick carefully wove the fabric of our ISER. After a detailed edit, we revealed the complete ISER at College Council in May at the Delano campus.

The outcome of the site visit was no coincidence. It is a direct result of the engagement and participation from the hundreds of you who contributed to this work - thank you.

**Early College:**

Our mission of student success has been constant for over 100 years. But how we do our best work to support student success keeps changing; changing with the availability of newer technologies; changing to keep up with new research proven pedagogies and various other shifts that have occurred in the world around us.

Recently, BC has taken this one step further. We have been able to effectively anticipate change and in fact lead and grow the change in a way that is supportive of the demographics and students we serve here in the Central Valley. Our student success work, our student equity work, does not reflect the lag time of reacting and adopting, but the lead time of anticipating and creating.
We read market signals and anticipate the shifts in Sacramento and Washington DC. Let me give you some examples:

- We positioned BC well in our investment and growth in quality online and academic technologies over the last several years so that we are now ahead of the curve as the state is bringing on an online community college.

- We opened our doors wide to student access in rural communities predominantly with first generation students and this has led to a significant growth in BC’s FTES resulting in significant increase in state appropriation to KCCD first and then to BC. These additional resources have allowed us to invest in growing our tenure-track faculty numbers, our classified staff and our managers.... And why? To support our students and advance their success.

- We were woefully lacking in facilities.... Lacking primarily in two ways (1) facilities that have exceeded their life span of 50 years and are just outdated and (2) new facilities to accommodate growth in our student numbers. So we went out to the voters in 2016 and asked them to Vote yes on J.... and they said Yes.

- We anticipated and led the Guided Pathways work in the state long before the key aspects of Guided Pathways became legislated in the new funding formula – specifically the momentum points in the completion section of the funding formula; the special admits category of “inmate education” and “dual enrollment”.

- We have been trailblazers with both Inmate Education and dual enrollment.... I would add “dual enrollment with equity” which characterizes our Rural Initiatives.

Looking forward, I would say that we are now anticipating and creating the next wave in the state by further clarifying and defining “dual enrollment with equity” through the scaling up of the Early College program. Early College in our rural communities will be life changing, where first generation students will “see college” as they transition from eighth to ninth grade. Our actions will help improve the college attainment levels, with equity, in the south central valley.
In this regard, I am happy to announce that Senator Jean Fuller will be leading this work for Bakersfield College and bringing the necessary connections to create the momentum needed to do this difficult intersegmental work. Fortune was definitely smiling on us when Senator Fuller decided to say “yes” to BC. She is a powerhouse with a heart for the students in the central valley and the communities we serve. We are blessed to have her working with us.

Senator Fuller will be working with a talented and dedicated BC team including:
1. The dual enrollment and early college team led by Steve Watkin
2. The Rural Initiatives Team led by Abel Guzman,
3. The enrollment team led by Michelle Pena
4. Community Relations team led by Norma Rojas Mora
5. And most importantly the faculty who are serving our rural students and the faculty chairs who have been leaders in scheduling courses out in our rural communities.

Because of you, we are bringing college closer to home for many who might not otherwise make it to college.

**Guided Pathways**

In order to “case manage” our students in a high-touch environment, BC has organized the various majors in 10 meta-major clusters. This narrows the focus for the completion coaches to focus on students within their meta-major.

This year, BC has further integrated the planning that happens on our campus. Specifically, I would like to point out two additional aspects that have been integrated into our Guided Pathways work.

(1) The systems development and the analytics that are produced from them and
(2) the development of the funding formula calculator that makes us smarter managers of the limited resources we have.
Let us look at some of the data developed by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness:

We have significantly increased our number of first time students attempting 15+ units in their first term. We have over doubled the number since Fall 2015, but can still do much better.

Additionally, if we break the data up by meta-major, we can see how our students in each cluster are doing related to our first momentum point.
Our first-time students completing transfer level math and English is also on the rise. In regards to English, we started out in Fall 2015 with only 15% and last year we increased to 22.8%.

So, the incredible thing about this work is that we are organizing students in similar clusters paired with completion coaching communities that are informed and prepared with the data and high-tech, high-touch tools to help our students succeed.

We are focused on developing systems which propel our work to the next level. Tools such as Starfish, Tableau, and the Program Pathways Mapper that was developed by Bakersfield College in collaboration with the state Chancellors office, will launch the next level of student support at BC.

**Facilities and Measure J**

This will be the first year that we really feel the impact of construction on campus. One of our larger projects, the Campus Center, will be closed for 21 months and we will celebrate a groundbreaking event on Wednesday, January 16th at 10:30AM.

Food Services has been relocated to the huddle and the kitchen operations will take place at Tony’a pizza across Mt. Vernon. In addition to the food trucks from local vendors, BC Food Services has added a food truck of our own, Gades Grub, which will be located in the quad, serving all the BC hot foods we love.

The BC Southwest Shuttle will continue operations to assist students who have no mode of transportation to and from the main campus to BC Southwest. This shuttle takes a number of students to and from the main campus or BC Southwest who otherwise would not have a way to attend their classes. I’m grateful for being able to provide this option, one again, for our students.

Every year, Commencement is unique and this year is no exception. Memorial Stadium will be closing for the renovation of the track and field, so this year’s graduation will take place at Rabobank. Jennifer, Monika and Kristin already visited
the facility and have big plans for graduation (indoors with air conditioning). I hope to see you there.

Closing

Colleagues and friends,

The pressures of a new year and a new semester can be overwhelming. We set high expectations, make New Year resolutions, embrace new things, cut out old habits and if you're like me, you can't help but over think all the possibilities, challenges, and gifts 2019 has in store.

I’ve discovered one of the best strategies to stay grounded is to reflect, plan, and set a pace with a grateful heart. This year we celebrate Mahatma Gandhi’s 150th birthday. Gandhi did not shy away from conflict. But he engaged with in a peaceful manner..... always aware of the human dignity in the other.

As we tackle another semester of doing the difficult and complex work of educating our students so that they transforms their lives and the lives of individuals in their community, let’s bring the spirit of gratitude, peace, love of the other, to our collective work......

In community, we actively choose to see each and every student as an important part of our own existence, incorporating them into our one unified story of Renegade tradition, Renegade excellence, Renegade Kindness, Renegade Boldness, Renegade Compassion, and Renegade Courage.

This upcoming year, there is no telling how the waters will be, but I can assure you the strength of the bridges that we are building..... they are very strong. They are the masterpiece of many hands, many minds, and many hearts.... All working with the same goal.

This campus is truly an innovative and remarkable place of hope, diversity, acceptance, and dreams. It’s an exciting time to be at BC.

I thank you for continuing to have me as your president. I am deeply honored and proud of the work we do.

We are.... BC

Todos Somos.... BC