Board Expands to Strengthen Ties with Local Businesses and Communities

Six new board members recently joined the BC Foundation board of directors, signaling the Foundation’s increased focus on connecting with local industries, businesses and individuals that have a strong interest in, and commitment to, the college.

The new members were approached by the board Nomination Committee, led by past board chair Jeff Bell, with an eye toward strengthening the board’s ties with different industries and community groups.

Most of the new members are either alums or have had family members impacted by the college, and all represent industries or communities that stand to benefit from the college’s programs and our successful graduates.

We are proud to welcome the following new board members:

**Pawan Gill** manages Human Resources, Risk Management, and Community Development for the City of Arvin. With the college’s plans to establish a campus in Arvin (set to open in 2024), Pawan is excited to be active with the Foundation as the Measure J-funded campus comes to fruition. Prior to taking her position at the City of Arvin, Pawan spent 10 years with UCLA Health in Los Angeles.

**Ariana Joven** graduated from Bakersfield College, where she had a special interest in the college’s agriculture classes, even though she didn’t have an ag background. She currently serves as Government Affairs Manager at The Wonderful Company, and was previously Executive Director of the Kern County Farm Bureau where she advocated on behalf of local farmers.

**Paul Pavletich** is an alum of Bakersfield College, and his family has long-standing ties to the college (and served as the voice of Renegade football for more than four decades). He served as Student Body President, and he has always been an active supporter of BC’s athletics program. Paul owns Premier Lighting in Bakersfield.

**Lauren Skidmore** is District Director for Assemblymember Vince Fong, and she is a fourth generation cattle rancher. Lauren previously served as director of Kern Citizens for Sustainable Government. She participates each summer as an instructor in the Kern Energy and Ag Academy at BC (in partnership with the Kern County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce), where high school students are introduced to local professionals, careers, and other topics important to these industries.

**Amy Thelen** is a Bakersfield native who spent time in San Diego, Utah, and Austin before moving home to put down roots. She is Vice President of Bitwise, Bakersfield, where she is in charge of shaping the Bitwise ecosystem to fit Bakersfield’s personality. Amy oversees the local campus, managing multiple projects while ensuring Bitwise is creating a place for the community that is diverse, inclusive, and progressive.

**Karen Zuber** is Bank of America’s Market Manager for Bakersfield and Senior Vice President-Local Markets Organization. She also brings to the board a knowledge of East Kern communities, as a resident of the Kern River Valley and previous VP and Small Business Banking Manager in Ridgecrest. Karen is responsible for community partnerships, sponsorships and philanthropy and is known for her genuine commitment to supporting projects that improve the quality of life in Kern County.
From the Executive Director

While it feels like much in the world has been put on hold during the pandemic, the BC Foundation has been “firing on all cylinders,” especially when it comes to building a deeper connection with the industries and businesses in our community.

Some of our best examples of community connections will be in the spotlight during our 13th Annual Sterling Silver.

This is when we honor some of Bakersfield College’s most committed supporters. This year’s event will be broadcast on KGET/Channel 17 on March 6th. Normally, we would have a special “in real life” event, but we will not let social distancing get in the way of saying THANK YOU to the people and families who have made a lasting impact on the college. Please join us at 7 p.m. on March 6th!

Speaking of supporters, nearly 500 people and organizations donated to the BC Foundation in 2020! During this pandemic year, these folks remained committed to funding scholarships, supporting athletics, and helping our programs grow.

Donations coming into the Foundation go into one of approximately 400 different accounts, depending on how the donor has directed the funds. Sometimes we work with a supporter to identify a project that is near and dear to them, and sometimes contributors know exactly how they want their money to be used. Regardless, our team is committed to honoring our donors by honoring their intent. If you are a contributor, thank you!

If you’d like to talk about how you can make a difference in students’ lives, reach out to any of us on the Foundation team; let’s work together to find (or create) a fund that you would be proud to support. I can be reached at (661) 395-4840 or at Cheryl.Scott@bakersfieldcollege.edu.

Stay safe and be well,

Cheryl
Cheryl Scott
13th Annual Sterling Silver Goes Virtual!

On Saturday, March 6, 2021, the Bakersfield College Foundation will present its thirteenth annual Sterling Silver event. The 2021 Sterling Silver will differ from years past, as it will be televised on KGET/Channel 17 from 7:00 pm-8:00 pm, offering the opportunity for a wider viewing audience from the safety of home. Sterling Silver will also be available to view on KGET.com, the KGET app, and on KGET’s Facebook page, www.facebook.com/KGET17News, for those outside of Kern County.

The Sterling Silver broadcast will honor Greg & Mary Bynum (and their business, Bynum, Inc.), as the Corporate Philanthropists of 2021. We will posthumously honor Patricia Mettler and Margaret “Peggy” Haight as Individual Philanthropists for their contributions to Bakersfield College. The memory of Becki Whitson, retired Behavioral Science faculty, BC Alumni Association President, former cheerleader and cheer coach, and beloved friend of BC will be celebrated as this year’s recipient of the Bakersfield College Foundation’s Service Medal.

Sterling Silver is the BC Foundation’s signature fundraising event, and this virtual format provides the opportunity to share the mission of the BC Foundation with more viewers. The support from our sponsors (listed below), as well as the BC Foundation Board of Directors has been unwavering through this challenging year. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Bakersfield College Foundation’s scholarship program, The 13th Annual Sterling Silver on March 6th. For more information or to make a contribution please visit supportBC.org, or contact Heather Pennella at 661-395-4885 or heather.pennella@bakersfieldcollege.edu
Finlinson Fund Supports Public Art at BC

When Burns Finlinson became the fourth president of Bakersfield College, in 1968, he surely had no idea that his name would be connected with an enriching public art program on campus well into the future. The Lydia Jennings Finlinson and Burns L. Finlinson Fund was established in 2005 with a gift to the Bakersfield College Foundation of just under $85,000 from the estate of Edith Finlinson, daughter of Burns and Lydia Finlinson. Edith wanted to honor the family's connection to BC through a legacy gift. The Foundation established an endowment, and interest from the fund brings to life one free campus event annually or biannually. As Edith specified, the events must be open to the public and must feature music, art, dance, or drama. The fund generates about $12,000 each year, and a campus committee (comprised of the Deans and Chairs in the areas of English, art, music, drama, and history) reviews and selects projects to fund. The committee is urged to select projects that bring performers, musicians, and artists from outside the Bakersfield College community.

In 2019, Finlinson funds were made available to the campus community through an application process, and several impactful projects have benefitted from the funding, including the Art Inclusivity Lab facilitated by art professor Ronnie Wreст, and the Panorama Music Summit coordinated by Josh Ottum and Kris Tiner. Both of these projects were planned as in-person events, but the ingenuity of both groups translated them to public online presentations in 2020, open to the public.

Most recently, funds from the Finlinson endowment are being used to help bring The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service’s new bilingual (Spanish and English) exhibition, “Dolores Huerta: Revolution in the Fields / Revolución en los Campos” to campus. The exhibition is now available for viewing at The Wylie and May Louise Jones Gallery website bakersfieldcollege.edu/art/jones-art-gallery.

The Finlinson funds are so important to the Bakersfield College community, and we are most grateful to the continued guidance of Ann Finlinson in ensuring we are respecting the intention of the gift.

Members of the campus community may apply for Fall 2021 funding opportunities through April 15, 2021. More information is available at supportBC.org/employees/.
Mento Buru Brings New Life to BC Fight Song
Contributed by Matt Munoz

Veteran local Latin ska band Mento Buru are currently producing a short film about the group’s reimagined recordings of the historic Bakersfield “Renegade Fight Song.” Filmed in collaboration with the BC Foundation and the Commercial Music Department, the project will chronicle the group’s connection to the fight song as members of the Renegade marching band in the late-80s. The group formed in 1992 and was known for performing in the BC quad area stage during their early years.

Mento Buru bandleader Matt Munoz (BC Class of ‘89) approached Music Dept. professor Josh Ottum in 2017 about recording new arrangements of the fight song with engineering students as an in-class project. Over the course of a few class sessions, the project was completed from recording to mixdown. The result surpassed expectations with three exciting new recordings completed: one set to a swinging ska jazz, plus two hyperactive punk rock style versions with and without the fight song lyrics (group vocals recorded with the band and students). Both the band and students had a great time working together.

In the summer of 2020, Mento Buru bandleader Matt Munoz approached the Bakersfield College Foundation about revisiting the recordings during the quarantine with some new ideas. The original studio tracks were delivered to engineer Josh Graber in Los Angeles for a brand-new studio mix and mastered by Alex Dobbert at The Hit Lab in Nashville. Along with those new mixes, an accompanying new film short will combine original class studio footage of Mento Buru, along with interviews and appearances by the BC Cheer Team, BC drumline instructor Tim Heasley and others filmed by campus videographer Alberto Vargas. The goal of the project is to promote school spirit and to recognize Mento Buru’s Bakersfield College roots. Release date scheduled for spring 2021. Go Gades!

Photo credit: April Massirio
Scholarships help close the poverty gap and serve students through COVID-19 pandemic

Written by Amanda Stone, Scholarship Manager

I spend a lot of time dispelling misconceptions students have about scholarships as the Program Manager for Scholarships at Bakersfield College. Time and again, I watch students’ eyes widen as they realize that they absolutely can qualify for this form of educational funding which seems so elusive.

Students are relieved to learn they don't necessarily have to be a perfect 4.0 student, attend full-time, be eligible for Federal grants, or engage in a jillion extracurriculars to have a shot at receiving scholarships at Bakersfield College. They see themselves in the criteria of our scholarships that look to support students from all walks of life including: the formerly incarcerated, single parents, undocumented, LGBTQIA+ students, and more. At Bakersfield College, there really is no “typical” scholarship recipient, and we are proud that our opportunities reflect the beautiful diversity of our student population.

Even more, students are reassured when they learn just how much funding is available to them at BC. They are encouraged to hear that the BC Foundation offers nearly $500,000 in scholarship aid to Renegades each academic year. And that the Office of Financial Aid awarded more than $75 million dollars in Federal and state aid, including $15 million in COVID-19 relief through CARES Act funding.

In addition to these sources of funding, private philanthropy plays a major role in the success of California Community Colleges. Recently, BC was named as one of 34 California colleges to receive a portion of a $100 million dollar donation, of which the college will receive $150,000 annually in Finish Line Scholarships for the first five years.

As COVID-19 exacerbates the financial strain on our students, these generous sources of funding continue to serve students and help in our efforts to close poverty gaps in our community. In devotion to this effort, Bakersfield College and the Bakersfield College Foundation have established the Bakersfield College Student Emergency Fund.

The BC Student Emergency Fund provides students an additional source of emergency assistance, funded through generous private donations, including from BC staff and faculty. This emergency aid is available not just to students affected by the pandemic, but students who have an immediate financial need that impacts their ability to continue at BC.

Bakersfield College students are encouraged to apply for every single resource possible, starting with Federal, State, and institutional aid. But after that, any students who still have an emergency financial need that jeopardizes their ability to continue their education with us, are encouraged to let us know so we can help.

Students are amazed to find out that they are surrounded by so many accessible resources and that something as “prestigious” as a scholarship is well within their grasp. This is one of the reasons why I truly believe that BC is the best option for individuals thinking about attending for the first time or returning to college. BC offers quality education that is affordable and completely supportive of all students no matter their situation, resources, or circumstance. I am delighted to work with so many compassionate people who genuinely care about the well-being of this community.

If you consider yourself one of those same compassionate people and if you have the means, I encourage you to donate to the BC Student Emergency Fund at www.supportBC.org.
Panorama Feature: Your BC Story

In every issue of Panorama we will be highlighting a few of our proud BC alums. You can share “Your Story” at https://www.supportBC.org/tell-us-your-bc-story/

Karin Young-Gomez
Class of 1992

I started at BC in the Fall of 1989, just after graduating high school. I had been admitted to Cal Poly SLO as an engineering major if I would have started their early summer program. But, feeling like I was not yet ready to go away to school, I opted for BC. BEST decision ever! I figured out pretty quickly that engineering was not a good fit for me. However, not knowing what to do, I decided to enroll in a 2 unit Career Counseling class at BC. After completing a few aptitude and personality assessments, I realized that working with people was probably a better choice for me. This was fully recognized once I took my first Psychology course. It was during my semester in General Psychology in the Forum classrooms with Dr. James Whitehouse that the lightbulb clicked on and I felt that sense of “Ahh! This is where I belong!” While I did not declare myself as a psychology major at BC, I began taking as many Psych classes as my schedule would allow. In 1992, I graduated with my AA in Liberal Studies and transferred to UC Davis as a psychology major (with a transfer agreement between BC and UCD). Because all of my BC classes transferred to UCD, I was able to complete my BA in two years (which saved a ton of money). I graduated cum laude from UC Davis with a psychology major and sociology minor and a couple of years later I began grad school at the California School of Professional Psychology in the Bay Area.

Within four years I had my Psy.D. and returned to Bakersfield as Dr. Young-Gomez. As a licensed psychologist, I worked in forensic/correctional settings for about 20 years before migrating back toward education and BC. I now teach at BC as a full-time psychology faculty member. One of my greatest joys is teaching General Psychology in the Forum classrooms just as my mentor before me. I am forever a Renegade and am so very thankful to have returned to the place where my educational and professional journey began.

Lori Toia- Class of 2000

I came to Bakersfield from San Diego where classes were either too crowded or scarce. I was able to get the classes I needed and when I needed them right away. I am a student with a disability and the services for students with disabilities was phenomenal! They assisted me in getting my accommodations necessary to successfully pass all my classes with honors!
Get to know the BC Foundation Team

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