

August 18, 2021

Bakersfield College  
Student Government Association  
Campus Collaboration Action Grant

Dear Dr. Damania,

Please accept this application for the Bakersfield College Student Government Association Action Grant.

Infant sleep is a topic that can cause frustration and debate within communities, between pediatricians, new parents, seasoned parents and across cultures. The pressure parents feel, especially in the United States, to “sleep train” infants along a set of rigorous guidelines are often wrapped in the guise of “do what feels right for your family”. However, the unspoken claim is that failure to sleep train puts a baby at risk for sleep crutches, or unsafe sleep situations. This is simply not true according to Dr. Pamela Douglas of the Possums Program in Australia. Her work empowers parents to embrace a different approach to infant sleep that protects this neurologically sensitive period of development in babies, while also putting the joy back into this extraordinary time.

Dr. Douglas has worked as a general practitioner since 1987 emphasizing in sexual health, women’s health and mental health. Over the past 15 years Dr. Douglas has, with various teams, developed and published the pioneering evidence-base for Neuroprotective Developmental Care, or 'the Possums programs'. Dr. Douglas has authored *The Discontented Little Baby Book*, whose aim is to help give parents the tools they need to help babies cry and fret less by identifying several obstacles that may be accidentally put in the way of a healthy night’s sleep. In developing the research for this book, she has spent countless hours working with babies and new mothers, additionally she started her professional life working with an Aboriginal and Islander Community Health service, which alerted her to cross-cultural differences to infant care.

The Bakersfield College student body is diverse group, many of whom are parents or soon-to-be parents. These students come from varied cultural backgrounds and financial situations. The Western push to “sleep train” infants can be felt in all directions, especially in this time of social media prevalence. Many of these techniques assume a certain amount of privilege as many of the sleep training guidelines recommend a separate room for baby, with blackout curtains, expensive sound machines and baby monitoring systems. Dr. Douglas’s approach taps into the natural connection between mother and baby and how to use the babies’ circadian rhythm to the parent’s advantage with just the emphasis of something as cost free as sunlight.

In addition to providing more resources to our BC students who are parents, Dr. Douglas’s research could also inspire our students who are interested in infant mental health and development. Her research would be relevant to following BC Learning and Career Pathway’s: Education (Child Development), Health Sciences, and Behavioral Sciences.

I would personally aid in marketing the event through various social media outlets associated with the college, in addition to emails, and word of mouth to my own classes and throughout my department.

With the help of BCSGA, I would also like to create an electronic flyer that can be easily shared throughout these platforms. The funding needed for this one-hour presentation is \$361.85 (\$500 Australian Dollars). Dr. Douglas's clinic is first and foremost a resource for parents in need and she does not charge outrageous prices as some other professional sleep consultants would, even though her research goes far beyond the study of infant sleep.

Please let me know if you require any additional materials. I can be reached by phone at (661) 549-3464 or via email at [ashley.choate@bakersfieldcollege.edu](mailto:ashley.choate@bakersfieldcollege.edu). I look forward to discussing this exciting opportunity further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashley Choate', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ashley Choate M.S.  
Bakersfield College  
Biology Department