

COMMUNITY VOICES: Taking control of our destiny and creating a brilliant future through higher education



- By Romeo Agbalog
- Aug 27, 2020

As I speak and listen to people in our community, I sense their feelings of angst, despair, fear and uncertainty about our current state and the future amid this COVID-19 pandemic. While our current economic climate has been a challenge for many of us,

higher education is one way each of us can take control of our own destiny and help create the future we want to see.

In the midst of widespread unemployment and economic austerity, now has never been a better time to enroll at Bakersfield College. While most of us are sheltered in place, we can take advantage of this time to upskill or chart a new career path to compete in tomorrow's job market, or post-COVID-19 economy, and be able to do this all from the comfort and safety of your own home.

As many of our local educational institutions work to adapt to the ever-changing public health environment, BC was one of the first institutions to evolve and innovate, shifting instruction and student services online weeks before Gov. Newsom announced his first stay-at-home order back in March.

Though some students may be apprehensive of taking courses online, and the application process may seem cumbersome, know that BC has demystified these processes, and its dedicated faculty and staff are ready, and working around the clock to be as accommodating and flexible as possible so that no student falls through the cracks.

Also to get students started on their educational journey, BC launched the Student Information Desk, or SID, a virtual Welcome Center that is a one-stop shop to connect students with counselors, advisers, admissions and financial aid technicians, and other resources ready to help you join the Renegade family. It's simple, just go to www.bakersfieldcollege.edu and click the "Get Help Now" button, and you'll be connected with a BC representative via Zoom who will get you started on your educational pathway.

Now online coursework and learning may seem daunting to some, but take comfort that BC was leading the way in quality online instruction long before the pandemic, and it's not as hard as you might think if you give it a try. If you have trouble grasping a concept or finishing up a project, you may lean on the support of professors and the academic

support staff at the Writing Center, Tutoring Center, MESA and more, who are all available on virtual platforms to help.

Further, BC also knows that many parents, students and educators alike have concerns embarking on another year of online instruction for their children in K-12 schools, so BC partnered with the Kern County Superintendent of Schools office to offer a four-course certificate in effective teaching and learning online to give educators additional skills and training to help make online teaching more impactful for Kern County children and families.

If food insecurity or other household difficulties stemming from this COVID-19 pandemic are prohibiting you from enrolling, the Renegade Pantry has implemented a drive-thru pickup and partnered with Community Action Partnership of Kern to provide food and hygiene items to our students throughout the school year.

Perhaps you're on the fence about enrolling full-time but want to make a change and lend a hand during these challenging times. BC has created plenty of opportunities to do just that. Drawing upon the American spirit of neighbor helping neighbor, BC has created a one-unit course in contact tracing that will give you the tools to help root out COVID-19. BC has already trained 300 people in contact tracing techniques and is offering more courses starting this week through the end of October. BC nursing students are also on the frontlines with our health care professionals, assisting with patient intake and distributing personal protective equipment to local hospitals.

Regarding this COVID-19 pandemic, this too shall pass, but don't let this opportunity to transform your life and position yourself for success pass you by. This opportunity just may be the silver lining to this pandemic that you've been looking for. Enroll now, don't hesitate and become a Renegade today.

Your path to a brighter future is just a mouse click away.

Romeo Agbalog represents Area 4 on the Kern Community College District Board of Trustees and is also the executive director of Kern Citizens for Sustainable Government, a local non-partisan, non-profit public policy organization focused on effective, efficient, and fiscally sustainable local government.