



Proposal for the 2015 BCSGA Constitutional Amendments

In the spring of 2014, BCSGA went through a quick re-organization and philosophical shift, which resulted in a transformation of the BCSGA Constitution. Through the 2014-2015 instructional year, the current BCSGA Officers noticed many inaccuracies, ambiguities, and concerns within the amended constitution. Thus, starting in December 2015, seven BCSGA Officers and the Director of Student Life decided to make improvements to the constitution in order to ensure a more just and accountable student government at Bakersfield College.

The committee members reviewed student government constitutions at five other California Community Colleges (Orange Coast Community, Columbia College, Antelope Valley College, Los Angeles Community Colleges, and Citrus College). In addition to this review, the committee wanted to align BCSGA with best practices of student governments in higher education and model governing practices after the Federal Government's. Hence, today BCSGA has passed a revised edition of the BCSGA Constitution.

A number of initiatives have been established to ensure that this new version of the constitution will benefit the Student Body at Bakersfield College and that the Student Body is aware of these changes.

Constituency Outreach

1. A Campus-wide Town Hall Meeting
BCSGA hosted a Town Hall meeting on Thursday, March 26, from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Fireside room. The intent of this meeting was two-fold: (1) Inform the Student Body of the current state of BCSGA and (2) inform the Student Body of the proposed changes to the BCSGA Constitution.
2. Tabling to the Constituents
BCSGA hosted informational tables outside the Campus Center the week of March 23, 2015, to inform the constituents of constitutional changes being proposed. BCSGA Officers were able to solicit feedback on a one-on-one level. Informational tabling will continue until the week of General Elections.
3. Mass Email to Enrolled Students
On Friday, March 20, 2015, a mass email was sent to all enrolled students at Bakersfield College with various updates from BCSGA. The first item addressed on this email newsletter was an announcement of the Town Hall meeting and a link to the proposed changes to the BCSGA Constitution.
4. Meet with Professor Holmes and his class
President Dominguez and Senator Fowler met with Dr. Holmes and reviewed the BCSGA constitutional changes. As a Political Science professor and the Chair of Academic Senate, Dr. Holmes was an ideal ally to consult with as part of the BC Participatory Governance. On Thursday, March 26, President Dominguez and Senator Fowler met present to Dr. Holmes' class the constitutional amendments and solicited more constituent feedback.

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While revising the BCSGA Constitution, there were four main areas necessitating alteration. Below is a list of these areas and the explanations for why these changes support the mission and foundation of BCSGA.

Area One: Redevelopment of the Preamble and Mission Statement for BCSGA

Although the previous version of the BCSGA Constitution had a preamble, it did not speak to the voice of the Bakersfield College Student Body. To rectify this, BCSGA did establish a mission statement. A preamble and mission statements are standard and critical elements for any student government's organizational strategy. The reviewed constitutions from other community colleges had established organizational preambles and mission statements, which serve as foundational guides in the establishment of governmental objectives. With the newly defined preamble and mission statements, BCSGA hopes to develop strategic and tactical plans for future objectives and initiatives.

BCSGA's preamble and mission statements are essentially its statement of purpose; they serve as a guide for all of BCSGA's decision-making. It should help Officers within the organization know what decisions and tasks best align with the mission of BCSGA. A well-defined mission and preamble statement offer insight into what the Student Body views as the primary purpose for attending Bakersfield College. BCSGA would like to generate short and long-term goals using the mission and preamble statements. Goals may include shared targets, outreach goals, and student satisfaction and awareness.

The addition of a preamble and mission statements creates a student Constitution that is more in line with the US Constitution, creating an opportunity for Officers to learn more about the format of the federal Constitution.

Area Two: Creating a 3-Branch Government to ensure checks and balances

The outlined three-branch government proposed in the revised BCSGA Constitution improves the overall structure and efficiency of the BCSGA for two reasons: (1) This system provides a network of checks and balances and (2) mirrors the United States federal government for the education of participatory governance members.

This proposed monitoring system allows one branch of the government to act individually while submitting to the authority of the other two branches. The older version of the BCSGA Constitution did not allow for separation of Executive and Legislative Powers. Both executive and legislative officers were represented at the Senate table. Modeling after the federal government, the legislative power of the government is vested in the Student Body, meaning that it is the only part of the government that can make new laws or change existing laws. The Executive Branch and its agencies issue regulations with the full force of law, but these are only under the authority of laws enacted by the Student Senate. The executive branch of the government is broadly responsible for implementing, supporting, and enforcing the laws made by the legislative branch. Chaired by the BCSGA Parliamentarian and composed of four appointed senators, the new Judicial Review Board will monitor BSGA Officers' work performance in accordance with duties outlined in the BCSGA Constitution and Codes. Should the Officers fail to uphold their duties, the new Constitution outlines the parameters by which the Judicial Review Board will act in a clear and just manner.

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The result of the implemented checks and balances is a more subservient government. Ultimately, BCSGA serves the student population, and with the proposed power-checks, the revised Constitution will maintain Bakersfield College's goal of putting the students' needs first. An added benefit of installing checks and balances into the BCSGA is the inherent educational opportunity available to elected officials. By reflecting a more simplistic version of the US federal government's checks and balances system, BCSGA provides a hands-on civic education for both constituents and Officers. This is an opportunity for students to garner relevant knowledge while preparing them to be competent citizens and working individuals.

Area Three: Appointed versus Elected Officers, and the Support Staff

All current members of BCSGA were elected into office by majority vote during the General Elections. The new proposed amendments model the Federal Government in that only the President, Vice President, Director of Student Organizations, and Senators are elected. The Director of Student Organizations was left as an elected office for two reasons: first, the Director of Student Organizations works with a variety of constituents and club needs, and second, BCSGA hopes to develop a House of Representatives from the current Inter-Club Council meetings. Therefore, the Director of Student Organizations remains as an elected position. This leaves the other five officers as appointments: Director of Finance, Director of Legislative Affairs, Director of Student Activities, and Parliamentarian. All appointed positions are interviewed and recommended by the President and BCSGA Advisor, then confirmed by the BCSGA Senate Body.

The appointment and election processes both have advantages. The appointment process allows the BCSGA President and the Director of Student Life to select the most suitable individual for the job based on qualifications and experience. The new elections process enables a wider group to have input in the decision. The process is democratic and it makes the incumbent more accountable to the voters.

The new Support Staff will be composed of three or more secretaries, as opposed to only one elected secretary (as the previous Constitution provided). A larger support staff will allow for more thorough documentation of agendas, minutes, and other official paperwork.

Area Four: Structure, format, and clarification on processes of the Constitution

The constitution of an organization contains the fundamental principles but does not prescribe specific procedures for operating an organization for which governs its operation. Bylaws set forth in detail the procedures of a group must follow to conduct business in an orderly manner. The bylaws establish the specific rules of guidance by which the group is to function. They provide further definition to the articles of the constitution and can be changed more easily as the needs of the organization change.

BCSGA Officers noticed many inaccuracies, ambiguities, and concerns within the current version of the BCSGA Constitution. Below lists additions made to fix the discrepancies in the previous Constitution.

1. Established consistency of calling the student government the Association or BCSGA

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2. Created an Article that outlines the Association as a whole (including the mission statement and the three branches of the government)
3. Created an Article that outlines the membership of the Association and its officers. Some of the information was redundantly stated in the previous Constitution; thus, having a new article that dresses the membership was needed.
4. Addition of a non-discrimination clause to instill the importance of diversity and equity
5. Established an Oath of Office to which all Officers will adhere
6. Established designated Articles for each of the three branches of the Association. Each branch has its own article to ensure all the components fall within the appropriate branch.
7. Reducing the BCSGA Senator allocations to 12
8. Creating 4 new positions, Justices, within the Judicial Review Board
9. Determined the powers and duties of all BCSGA Body and its Officers
10. Established the Vice President as the head of the Senate Body
11. Established a Speaker pro-Tempore
12. Condensed some articles into the appropriate Article of the Branch
13. Established the elected and appointed BCSGA Officers
14. Removed Secretary as an elected officer and established the position as an employee(s) of the Association
15. Established clear and just processes and protocols for the Judicial Review Board, including succession, appointments, elections, and vacancies
16. Established a gender-neutral constitution
17. Ensured that consistency within the constitution as it read and referred to other elements of the constitution