Inmate Education – Talking Points
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1. SB 1391 – signed by the Governor on September 27, 2014 -- Community Colleges: Inmate Education Programs: Computation of Apportionments

2. SB-1391 directs the Department of Corrections and Chancellor of California Community Colleges to establish an interagency agreement to expand college access to college courses and waives the open course provisions in statute and authorizes apportionments for these students.

3. There are three prisons in the Bakersfield College, Delano Campus area of responsibility. These prisons house over 12,000 inmates and average 150 percent of their design capacity.

4. We started with Kern Valley State Prison (KVSP) in Spring 2015. KVSP houses 3,720 inmates and is 152 percent of design capacity. The pilot course is a COMM B1 – Public Speaking and has 27 students enrolled.

5. The pilot course is helping us gain insight into: how to operate in these facilities; the prison culture and the inmate student; and the safety and security of our BC faculty and staff.

6. It will require resources to have a Bakersfield College program that leads to a degree having value for these inmate students.

7. On November 5th, Sonya and I met with state leadership from the California Department of Corrections and California Community Colleges Board of Governors. Senior leadership from Kern Valley State Prison (KVSP) also attended. We discussed the impact of SB 1391; agreed the climate was right for Bakersfield College to start offering courses at the prison; and decided to start something small in our Spring Semester.

8. On November 20, a BC team of administrators and faculty (instructor and counselors) toured KVSP and met with the Assistant Warden and Kern Valley Adult School Vice Principals. Our discussions and tour included: information about prospective students the prison determined ready to matriculate; assessment processes both short term and long term; prison life to include security measures; classrooms and living facilities; student support activities to include tutoring and advisement; BC instructor training and orientation; course materials to include textbooks and consumables; and the agreed start in our spring semester.

9. Based on the information from our meetings, we scheduled the pilot course that began Spring 2015 and the students were selected by prison officials based on behavior record, projected parole date, and potential for success based on input from Correction Officers.

10. The key focus is developing practices that promote maximum safety and success of our instructor(s) in this environment. I have met frequently with Bryan Hirayama to safeguard his efforts this semester and gain insight into improving BC efforts in the future.

11. BC Delano Campus could become a national model for prison educational reform.

12. State officials are redirecting state funding to reduce recidivism rates, and this includes bringing higher education to inmates.

13. External funding agencies like the Macarthur Foundation, as well as the Ford Foundation, are funding exploratory grants for regional consortium groups that develop collaborative programs to reduce the prison population.

14. California Prisons use a Correspondence Course model currently and we could learn from other model programs like Bard College’s prison initiative in New York.