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Kern Community College District Trustees Name Dr. Sonya Christian President of Bakersfield College

Kern Community College District trustees today named Dr. Sonya Christian as the new president of Bakersfield College.

Christian, the vice president and chief academic officer at Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon, will serve as Bakersfield College's 10th president and lead the institution as it enters its 100th year of educational service to the community.

Christian's first day as Bakersfield College president is November 29. She will work on a part-time basis until January, when she begins full-time employment.

At a press conference announcing the appointment, Kern Community College District Chancellor Sandra Serrano told Bakersfield College employees and community members that Christian's appointment is cause for celebration.

"I am thrilled that Dr. Sonya Christian will serve as the next president of Bakersfield College because she understands the California Community College mission, and she has a breadth and depth of experience as a community college mathematics faculty and faculty chair, as well as administrative experience as a vice president of academic affairs and student affairs," Serrano said. "The depth and breadth of her experience in California and Oregon make Dr. Christian the right person to promote education and to develop strong relationships with educational partners and the community at large."

Christian, who was a math faculty member, division chair and dean of science, engineering, allied health and mathematics at Bakersfield College from 1991 to 2003, has held increasingly higher level administrative roles at Lane Community College over the past 10 years. She has served in her current position at Lane for two years. Previously at the Oregon college, Christian was vice president for academic and student affairs and associate vice president for instruction.

Christian also has experience as an adjunct/lecturer in mathematics at American River College and El Camino Citrus College in Sacramento and Glendora, California, respectively.

Christian earned a bachelor of science degree from University of Kerala in Kerala, India; a master of science in applied mathematics from University of Southern California; and an educational doctorate in educational leadership from University of California, Los Angeles.

Serrano said Christian's wealth of experience provides the mix of knowledge and skills Bakersfield College needs now.

"Sonya Christian has demonstrated effective leadership in improving student success. She is a successful grant writer, and she holds herself and others to high standards while achieving positive relationships among college and community groups," Serrano said.

According to Serrano, those who have worked with Christian describe her as "someone who inspires trust and confidence and as someone who is able to bring people together to effectively solve problems."

Well versed in institutional planning and in using data to inform college improvements, Christian will lead the way during a time of economic challenge in California post-secondary education. Continued budgeting cutting by the state has left community colleges leaner and more focused and with far fewer financial resources at a time when expectations for student success and completion have increased.

Christian said she is ready to take on the task of leadership at Bakersfield College.

Christian will oversee Bakersfield College mission to provide transfer classes, workforce training, and basic skills education to students throughout the Bakersfield metropolitan area as far south as Arvin and as far east as Tehachapi. The northern portion of the Bakersfield College service area includes Delano, where a satellite campus--the Bakersfield College Delano Center—has served the community since 1972.

Bakersfield College is the largest of three institutions in the Kern Community College District. The district also comprises Porterville College and Cerro Coso Community College in Ridgecrest.

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