7 - Innovations: Monitoring and Mitigating Risks and Tradeoffs

BC views education as a continuum, one that begins earlier than formal schooling. Learning and development is a lengthy process and begins the minute children are born with the vocabulary they gain during infancy. BC has begun efforts to insert itself into this entire continuum. No longer waiting to welcome or manage whoever shows up, BC is working in new and collaborative ways, including with regional high schools as well as groups like the NAACP, to engender generational shifts through dialogue with parents respecting behavior and infant children. BC is using multiple measures and compressed or accelerated courses to move students through basic skills classes more efficiently. BC is offering more and more high-touch activities and services to identify and aid students who might otherwise be lost in the system because they lack familial support structures. BC is redesigning curriculum in basic skills to move students into college-level work sooner, in Career and Technical Education to ladder certificates to create degree pathways, in general education to reduce units so that disciplines can develop Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADT). BC is also addressing the baccalaureate level to capitalize on the opportunity to offer an Applied Baccalaureate in Industrial Automation—not available in the state of California—to meet regional industry needs. BC is positioned to realize many of these efforts because of a shift in leadership from hierarchical to distributed and an emphasis on professional development and data management to effect positive change.

These changes offer risks or trade-offs that are vigorously debated on campus. There is also a sense that there are risks and trade-offs that cannot be anticipated at this point. However, BC is committed to bold action rather than a “wait and see” or “let’s approach the change cautiously and take time to plan” position. The abysmal completion rates across California, especially for our students of color and those who are in lower socioeconomic status levels, propel our assertive action. BC is rapidly moving ahead with confidence, alignment, discipline and rigor, with an eye to monitor success regularly and mitigate problems by making mid-course corrections. Here are some examples organized under the five goals:

Identifying, Monitoring and Mitigating Potential Risks and Tradeoffs

Goal 1 - Before BC

• Using multiple measures and compressed or accelerated courses to move students through basic skills classes more efficiently offers promise, but each has the possibility of pushing students too far too fast. BC will continue its study of each and their impact on student learning and success.

Goal 2 - Skilling Up

• Offering many more high-touch activities and services to identify and aid students who might otherwise be lost in the system must be weighed against offering more sections of high-demand classes and classroom experiences that continue to challenge students to learn. BC will continue its study of each to determine their impact on student learning and success.

• California Community Colleges are legally obligated to spend 50% of expenditures directly to classroom faculty salaries. Given first-generation, low-income students who are not ready to engage with the learning in the classroom, the repurposing of resources outside the classroom to provide the needed support could negatively impact BC’s compliance with the 50% law.

Goal 3 - Transfer and Completion

• When we are attempting to gain more numbers of baccalaureate attainment, we risk getting
caught in the trap of compromising quality and our fundamental mission of learning. When BC concentrates on measuring student achievement, it risks losing focus on student learning outcomes work. BC is already aware of the need for balance. It has four data strands identified in the Renegade Scorecard: Student Learning (SLO/assessment), Student Achievement (progression and completion), Operational Data, and Perception Data such as surveys and CCSSE. Note that the first data strand is on student learning and BC is committed to ensure that balance is maintained.

Goal 4 - Equity

• Taking an active role in community schools and service organizations in order to affect the educational pipeline at the parenting level runs the risk of disaffection in the community at the intrusive role BC is trying to play. BC needs to become even more involved and collaborative with its diverse service communities and avoid any sense of uninvited and external paternalism.

• All efforts, including emphasis on progression and completion along with student learning, have focused on identifying and working to ameliorate disproportionate impact on underrepresented groups. BC will continue to monitor student completion and success along with learning, as well as develop new ways, like EquityTV, to further engage the community at key points along the educational pipeline.

Goal 5 - Engaged and Distributed Leadership

• BC has moved from a hierarchical to a distributed model of leadership. Several risks exist: some are uncomfortable with the shift in or perceived diminishment of their power. Employees new to leadership roles step up and may “burn out.” This is a work in progress and we will continue to monitor these risks.

• Supporting a comprehensive professional development plan bears potential risks, including fiscal sustainability. To minimize financial risk, Bakersfield College primarily relies on non-operational fiscal resources to support these events. Additionally, income from conference registration fees (collected from non-college attendees) further offsets the cost of hosting these learning events. Finally, BC is actively pursuing corporate sponsorship to co-host these conferences, thereby further reducing BC’s financial investment.

• Employees attending professional development events on campus bear the risk of taking away time from direct contact with students, i.e., in the classroom and providing services. To mitigate this impact, employees are informed of learning events at least one semester in advance. This notice allows faculty, for example, the ability to secure substitute instruction during their absence or to schedule an alternate learning activity. For staff and administrators, advanced notice of conferences affords them the ability to adjust the department’s workforce to ensure continuity of student services.