9 - Sustainability: Engaging Stakeholders: Student, Faculty, and Community Partners

In its February 2014 accreditation report, ACCJC commended Bakersfield College for its community connections:

The Team commends the College President for her enthusiasm, community spirit and speed in which she was able to bring the vast range of college services and educational programs into the conversations with local community and business leaders. As reported by one Chief Executive Officer of a local business organization, the College is now an important resource that is available to the community because the College President has taken the time to bring that message and those resources into the Bakersfield community.

Community support for BC is remarkable. In the recent submission for the Applied Baccalaureate Program, BC received over 70 statements of support from local CEOs and community organizations (Appendix G, p. 77).

The BC community is deeply networked internally and externally. Through text messages, tweets and blogs, the network regularly activates to respond to various issues and interests. For example, when our student body president attended a community forum on the impact of addiction on high school students and educational advancement, he immediately activated the integrated network and mobilized a team of faculty and administrative leads to respond. In January 2015, the CEO of Kern Taxpayers Association emailed the president about interest from the Logistics Industry to start career academies at Arvin and Shafter High Schools to create a pipeline into BC’s proposed Applied Baccalaureate degree. In a matter of minutes, the president involved the superintendent of Kern High School District and a team from several partner organizations to “make this happen” by fall 2015. These stories represent normative behavior for a college and community increasingly adaptive, rapidly flexible, responsive to change, and simultaneously rigorous and disciplined in approach.

BC’s involvement in the AB 86 regional adult education initiative is illustrative. Working with nearly 30 educators in the Kern Consortia Regional Area from districts throughout Kern and Tulare counties (Appendix G, p. 79), BC is addressing unique pre-collegiate needs of adult learners to close achievement gaps. BC representatives identify and employ approaches proven to accelerate student progress toward academic or career goals, e.g., contextualized basic skills and career technical education. Other strategies reduce the duration for adult learners to progress through educational pathways. BC will formalize agreements with the adult school to maximize articulation and generate cooperative curriculum design, aligning course content with college requirements.

Frequent and relevant communication with stakeholders is a vital aspect of BC’s engagement strategy, evidenced by coupling traditional media outreach with new media opportunities including blogs, vlogs, and social media marketing via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Gatherings of community leaders in 2014 addressed our work in SSSP and Equity. Examples include High School Principals and Superintendents Breakfast, African American Community Leaders, National and State Legislators Forum, and Latino Community Leaders gathering (Appendix G, p. 78).