

EDUCATING ON THE INSIDE

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE INMATE SCHOLARS PROGRAM

August 2020

ISP FAST FACTS

Classes: We are offering 103 sections in the Fall of 2020, with a total enrollment of 3,148!

Faculty: The Inmate Scholars Program has 44 faculty members

Facilities: We offer instruction in 6 prisons on 12 yards

Students: We currently have approximately 1080 students enrolled in our courses!



Degrees: Scholars can earn an Associates Degrees in Communication, Psychology and Sociology as well as Certificate of Achievement in Culinary Arts and a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Automation.

WELCOME!

Thank you for reading our inaugural issue! The goal of this newsletter is to provide the Bakersfield College community with information about the Inmate Scholars Program (ISP) and the work we do, as well as connect us with our on-campus colleagues and highlight the successes and challenges for students and faculty on the inside.

In each issue, we will profile faculty and staff members, share the work that is being done inside and highlight our on-campus partners that are supporting us. We invite you to read and learn about the amazing work that is being done to break the cycle of recidivism and empower our students with quality higher education.

ISP IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Clearly, the impact of the pandemic has reached the prisons as well as prison education. For the Fall 2020 semester, we will be operating on a correspondence-based model. Whereas we know that face-to-face interaction with our students is ideal, and a life-changing experience for each of them, the Inmate Scholars Program is committed to offering classes during this time in the means necessary so our students' paths aren't slowed down.

Do you want to know how we plan to do this? Check out the Flex Workshop "Teaching Inside in the Time of Coronavirus" on Wednesday, August 19th at 11:00 via Zoom!

KERN VALLEY STATE PRISON GRADUATION!

Last August, the first ever ISP graduating cohort from BC were awarded degrees at a ceremony at Kern Valley State Prison! Seventeen men, all of whom are still incarcerated, received their Associates Degree in Communication. The commencement marked a monumental day for the students, their families, and the ISP. This visual representation of all that is possible for our inmate students was the first of many, since then our program has had five more students graduate with an AA-T in Communication, fourteen Certificates in Communication, and fifty-two students make the Dean's List.

See the **Links and More** section on the last page to watch news coverage of the celebration and hear remarks from students, as well as BC and Kern Valley staff!

SUPPORT SHOUT-OUT

Often the work of the ISP might seem isolated from that of the main campus. However, the Writing Center proved that there are ample opportunities for collaboration in serving our inmate student population. In the fall semester, we piloted a partnership with the Writing Center in which they reviewed papers and provided asynchronous feedback for sixty-six of our inmate students. The students were so excited at the chance to have some of the same options and experiences as their non-incarcerated counterparts and the Writing Center jumped at the chance to work with them.

Writing Center Lead Kimberly Arbolante told us “the Writing Center team has felt blessed by the unique opportunity and challenge to extend writing support to incarcerated students. This work fits the personal social justice and equity lenses of our staff and provides us a unique opportunity to think outside the box about how to better extend our program to more Renegades regardless of how they access our institution. While we are still in the beginning stages, we look forward to deepening our partnership with ISP faculty to support student success!” We would love to hear from other members of the BC community who want to partner with us to support our students – feel free to reach out to us!

Did You Know?

According to a 2004 study by UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research about the cost of prison education and lowered recidivism rates, “a \$1 million investment in incarceration will prevent about 350 crimes, while that same investment in [correctional] education will prevent more than 600 crimes. Correctional education is almost twice as cost effective as incarceration.”

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Get to know our two Program Managers!

Sabrina Aguilar - Before joining the ISP this fall, Sabrina was employed as the Director of Education and Programs for a private company contracted with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.


In that role, she oversaw programs in academic education, career technical education, cognitive behavioral therapy, correspondence and face-to-face college, faith-based services, library and legal library services, recreation, and security procedures.

Sabrina's education background includes a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Political Science, a Master of Arts degree in Public Administration, and she is near the completion of a Doctorate of Education degree in Organizational Leadership with an emphasis in Organizational Development.

Sabrina is a Kern County native and resident since birth. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with friends and family and playing basketball. She is excited for the opportunity to work with Bakersfield College and the Inmate Scholars Program as she has seen through her previous work the benefits of education inside correctional institutions.

Angelica Perez - Angelica Perez has been the Program Manager of the Inmate Scholars Program since September 2018. Prior to that position, she worked for Admissions and Records as a Technician and Certifying Official. Much of Angelica's work experience comes from the military and working with veterans and military dependents.

Angelica is a true believer that education opens the door to success. In her own words "education allows people to expand their knowledge, develop skills, network, and gain experience that they can bring with them into their future careers." She credits this belief, along with the drive of the students in the Inmate Scholars Program as what keeps her motivated to grow and continuously improve our program. She considers herself lucky that she gets to watch both students and instructors in the program flourish and that she gets to work with people who are changing the world in a big way. Her personal motto is "Work hard, stay humble." The faculty and staff of the ISP all agree Angelica demonstrates this creed in all she does for the program!



"This program provides the students hope for their futures and sets the groundwork for them to gain stable employment upon release, improve their overall quality of life, and serve as a positive role model for others." – Sabrina Aguilar, Program Manager

KERN VALLEY STUDENT DEBATE

About four years ago, a group of men on B-Yard at Kern Valley State Prison, with no experience or outside instruction, started their own debate group. Fast forward to Friday, November 1st, when KSVP hosted its first ever Inmate Scholars Debate Tournament. Over 25 students participated in a round robin style tournament organized by Professor of Communications John Giertz.



With the dedication of the debaters, and the support of the staff on B yard as well as the entire prison, Professor Giertz was able to push this program through, ultimately leading to this first tournament. The participants debated through five rounds of the National Speech and Debate Association's Lincoln-Douglas 2019 National Tournament Topic: Violent revolution is a just response to political oppression. The results were impressive by any standards. The students were articulate, invested and thrilled to be given this opportunity.

When the winner was ultimately announced, his facial reaction was one that will stick with those of us who attended for years to come. A look of pure accomplishment and self worth broke out across his face as he jumped up and declared that he had never won anything before. He beamed with pride as he asked one of us to sign his Top Debater certificate to make it official. It was truly a wonderful event and Professor Giertz along with the entire ISP look forward to its continued growth.

LINKS AND MORE

Check out the news coverage of the graduation at Kern Valley State Prison:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9SGL2DnDokE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhesEyajpdE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGMohs1gHjw>

For more info on our program, check out our website on the BC site:

<https://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/inmate-scholars-program>