

EDUCATING ON THE INSIDE

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE INMATE SCHOLARS PROGRAM

October 2021

ISP FAST FACTS

Classes: This fall we are offering four brand new courses!

Faculty: The Inmate Scholars Program has added 5 new professors!



Facilities: We offer instruction in 5 prisons in a mixture of face-to-face as well as correspondence classes

WELCOME BACK!

We have finally been allowed back inside the prison facilities. It has been exciting to be able to go back to teach in-person. Some of us are still teaching correspondence classes, but it has been wonderful to be able to see our students in-person again.

HELLO AND GOODBYE

It is so hard to say Goodbye, but we have had to do it a lot this year. We had to say goodbye to our students when everything shut down and now we have had to say goodbye to some of our colleagues. Professor Jennifer Craig, who was in charge of this newsletter last year, has moved back to the East Coast. Her dog shenanigans stories will be especially missed. We have also had to say goodbye to Camilla Anderson, who worked tirelessly in the office to make sure that we dotted all our Is and crossed all our Ts. She kept our crazy train on track. Congratulations to Camilla on her promotion! Lucky for us, she did not move very far away, and we can still visit.

Together with our sad Goodbyes, we are also going to say some Happy Hellos to some new faces to our program. Please welcome Bianca Moreno (Communications), Mark Osdale (Communications), Scott Dameron (Kinesiology), Tina Cummings (Kinesiology), and Dan Kimball (Chemistry) to our Prison Education Family.

Congratulations to LaReina Villanueva for her promotion to Department Assistant III. She has been working in the ISP department since 2016 and has done a wonderful job. She is always there to answer questions or help with the copy machine. Never leave us alone with that copy machine LaReina!

NEW HANDBOOK IS FINISHED!

Check out the new handbook for the ISP. Thank you to the committee for putting together a wonderful resource for our new and continuing faculty in this program. The committee was composed of Bryan Hirayama (Program Lead), Jenny Craig, Isaias Hernandez, Michael Muhme, Jeff Newby, Gabriel Searcy, Joseph Tipay, Teresa Pickens, and Sara Wallace (editing).

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Mark Osdale is a new faculty member in the ISP, and he is teaching communication. He has worked at Bakersfield College for one year, but he has been a Renegade since he received his AA in communication.

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He says (about going into the prisons for the first time) that “I was anxious my first week, many that know me were concerned that I wear my heart on my sleeve and must be careful to not over connect or share with the students. The anxiety disappeared about 5 minutes after I started the class.” He was also surprised about how well the students wrote.

Mark began his journey into higher education when he earned an AA from BC in Communication and American Sign Language. His BA in Communication is from CSUB in Communication, and his MA in Communication is from Arizona State University.

He was born and raised in Southern California, and he was a paramedic from 1981 to 1985 in Los Angeles and Orange counties, moved to Bakersfield in 1985 where he worked for Hall Ambulance as an EMT-Paramedic until 1994. He married in 1987 and had four children. In 1994, he decided to change careers and began working at Toys R Us until 2018 when we closed the store. He became a single parent of the children in 2002 and after they graduated, he began my academic journey. Instructors at Bakersfield College encouraged me to change from a business major to communication. Mark says that “this was the best decision of my life and I have the teachers at BC to thank for this.”

In his spare time, he loves playing Pokémon Go, which is where he met the love of his life and his fiancé. He also loves to cook.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Kern Valley State Prison Yard C has their own newspaper! The editor-in-chief, Brandon Menard, for The Pioneer, has provided some information for our newsletter about their paper. Check out this month's paper, which is all about Mental Health to coincide with Suicide Prevention Week.



In early December 2014, two people incarcerated at Kern Valley State Prison, Facility C, proposed a newsletter highlighting positive events on the yard to the facility captain. With little at their disposal but a typewriter and a ream of paper, they wrote a single-page article about the recent “Jog-A-Thon” held on the yard to purchase baseball equipment for the Pixley-Tipton Youth Baseball Program. They presented the finished product to staff, and two weeks later *The Pioneer* was born.

In time, *The Pioneer* expanded from a staff of two to a staff of five (and at times, even larger!). Today, it strives to present itself as a (somewhat) professional (if sometimes irreverent) publication devoted to its mission of “connecting people to what is important, beautiful, and real.” By emphasizing articles and submissions which humanize the incarcerated and encourage positive changes in its readers, *The Pioneer* is currently read by a majority of the facility as well as nearly fifty outside organizations who work to help reform prison conditions and promote effective rehabilitation. As it gained more and more support from CDCR, it eventually evolved into a core group of incarcerated people encouraging positive behavior and running a variety of fundraisers, special events, and other rehabilitation programs. Today, both staff and the readers of *The Pioneer* look forward to inspiring further transformation on the yard as they help build a positive future for incarceration together.

Want to learn more about what it is like to educate on the inside?
Sara Wallace, English Professor at Bakersfield College, has published six blog entries for her blog titled: "Reflections from Inside: Teaching inside Prison Facilities" on *Medium*. Some of the blog entries are titled "Reflections from Outside" since instructors were not allowed in the prison during the pandemic. She has been working as a full-time instructor at a total of five different prisons since the Fall 2019. This blog is her reflection about doing this important work. The latest blog entry is focused on self-care. Check it out for some tips!
<https://sarawallace-75158.medium.com/reflections-from-outside-b0cd176c598c?sk=7e9c93c157b033ebca81ad931f23ecb4>

