

ARVIN COMMUNITY FORUM

APRIL 28, 2011

Present from KCCD: Sandra Serrano, Pauline Larwood

Present from Bakersfield College: Greg Chamberlain, Cornello Rodriguez, Amber Chiang, Joyce Ester, Nan Gomez-Heitzeberg, Primavera Arvizu, Debbie Spohn

Erica Hernandez: We are here to talk about a potential center for Arvin. I know what it feels like not to be able to take classes. [Led Pledge of Allegiance]

Blanca Cavazos: [introduced the Panel]

Mayor Tarver: I understand that there is a potential to put a Cal State up here on Bear Mountain. In this community, education is #1. The key to freedom is education. The city is definitely willing to step in the direction you want us to. Public service is our job. We are listening to the people in the community. We have children who need to go to college. We are a welcoming community. We want you here. Thank you for coming here. We really appreciate it. It is a starting point.

Councilman Guzman: Thank you to everyone for coming. We want a college campus in Arvin. Arvin high has a class average of 500 students [of graduates.] Thirty percent of those go to BC. That number can double if you are willing to come to Arvin. We are asking for your support. Twelve - fifteen percent [of the graduates] go to CSUB; very few go to private universities. We have 15-20 acres across from Arvin High School sitting vacant. We have grants and all kinds of services here to support your organization. Five members of the council are here. I don't know of one that is going to say no.

5th District Supervisor Karen Goh: Thank you for being here. I am so encouraged because you care about education. You are committed to pursuing a positive future. Dr. Chamberlain, thank you so much. I know you care about education. On behalf of the communities, we're asking that you provide equal access to these communities. Let's work together and find alternative resources. They cannot do it alone; you cannot do it alone. Let's work together for equal access. Thank you so much for listening and for being here.

[Introduce KCCD Chancellor Serrano] Arvin High School Principal Carlos Sardo was unable to attend due to registration for incoming freshmen at the high school tonight. [Introduced Arvin School District Superintendent Dr. Michelle McLean, Lamont School District Principal Cheryl McConaughy, KCSOS Board of Trustee Jose Gonzalez]

Jennifer Wood-Slayton, Healthy Communities –Welcome on behalf of Healthy Communities. For the last two years, you have been creating a vision of what we want for these communities in South Kern. The number one priority is education. This is exciting and encouraging. Education is the key to our children having a better life, having the American dream. We are identifying strategies to make this happen. To make sure that the classes are the right classes here. Tonight is the first step in a ten-year process. Thank you for being willing to be here, Bakersfield College, to share what you are already doing.

Jim Young: This is a work in progress. This started back in 2003. BC made a commitment to serve teacher aides and teacher's assistants. We had 80 students enrolled in a 3-year program. We have some that completed that program. We slowed down some, and now have picked up again. This year we have 864 students this semester enrolled in Bakersfield College that graduated from Arvin High School. This translates to 50 classes. We want to improve the number of courses that are here. We have met with the Board of Trustees to make our case to increase the number of classes. We want them to go to the next step and commit to adding a college center here in the next 5 years. In the spring of 2010, the city council voted to offer 25 acres of land to Bakersfield College across from AHS. There is room for a spray park, soccer fields, an elementary school, etc. This can transform our entire community by attracting businesses here because we have education and recreation for our children. Our goal is to insure that our young people have an opportunity for a first rate education. Thank you for coming.

Dr. Greg Chamberlain: Let me share with you what Bakersfield College offers in South Kern. [Introduced staff] We want to be able to listen carefully and capture the comments from you and your community members. Our main purpose in being here is to share what we are doing in the South Kern Area and to listen to you and to hear what your questions and concerns may be so that we can continue to work on the education partnership. We have stepped up our operations here in South Kern. We have had several Outreach activities. The Math professors came to work with the high school students, as the transition to college level math is difficult. There are posters around the community [announcing the class schedule]. Those posters will be updated each term so that you can see which courses will be offered in the next semester. In addition, you may have seen last week advertisements promoting BC courses in Arvin. On the blue flyer, the new web page is listed and we will continue to publish information about South Kern courses, with directions to the web site. At Arvin High School, we have placed an educational advisor.

Dr. Joyce Ester: In early March, we had a meeting, and agreed to provide educational advisor opportunities. The role of the educational advisor is to assist students in setting their educational goals, assist with completion of forms, etc. Since March 17, Elizabeth Ochoa has

been on campus 2 days per week, and has seen 129 students. Just today, she reported seeing 40 students by 3 p.m. Some of the main questions she's getting are about registration and assessment. There is an AD 540 form that allows you to be able to pay resident fees rather than out of state fees [that she can help with]. We will be re-evaluating her hours at the end of the term to decide whether or not that should be increased.

Primavera Arvizu, director of EOP&S, CARE, and CalWorks: I have met with the counseling staff to discuss student support issues. EOP&S encourages enrollment and retention of first generation students. We have book vouchers, additional tutoring. CARE is designed to assist those students that are underprepared. It encourages transfer. We want to transition them off of welfare and into the work force and help them to be successful in college.

Greg Chamberlain: Most classes require textbooks; getting textbooks is a challenge. "We The People" helped to get the textbooks distributed.

Jennifer talked about education being #1. One of the issues that came up is the transportation issue and transportation concerns. We have met with Kern Regional Transit. We had some very productive meetings. Kern Regional Transit will be combining some of their routes that is going to make their routing much more efficient. They will be aligning the bus routes so that they are more efficient and get transition time reduced. We offer many classes in the evening; there is no bus in the evening. Kern Regional is planning to schedule a bus in the evenings. It would leave BC at 9:30 p.m., which would allow participation in night classes. They are very excited about offering more opportunities for students in this area.

We are slowly increasing the number of classes here. Keep in mind the budget for the state of California is difficult. We will not be reducing the number of classes offered in Arvin, but will increase the number.

Nan Gomez-Heltzeberg: So many have mentioned how inspiring it is to have all of you represented here tonight. This is a community that cares about the future. One of the things we care about is children, and we want to assure an education for our children. The selection of classes is based on what it takes to go to a university after completing BC, what are your needs for those who are going directly into the work force. When we schedule classes here, we are looking for stepping stones to a degree. The other thing we looked at was assessment scores. All students must take an assessment test. You will note that the schedule reflects classes that will help them be more successful. SD B1 is the class that we recommend that all students take to make them more successful by helping set goals. We continue to assess this and may need to increase this.

Greg Chamberlain: I would encourage students to get on the waitlists. We use the waitlists to help determine what the needs are and where to add additional sections. We have shared

what we are doing in South Kern: there are four summer courses scheduled, with five in the fall. This is growth from the last two years. We want to hear from all of you.

Blanca Cavazos: We'll open the floor to comments from residents and from community organizations, representatives from the City of Arvin.

David Powell (City of Arvin): I'd like to speak to the transportation issue. A survey of residents in Arvin was conducted. Overwhelmingly we have students who want to go to BC. We have the facilities, the buses, and the drivers, and we can help them get there. Better if you put a school here.

Isaac George: In planning for the city of Arvin, Dr. Young is an inspiration. He is primary in bringing us all to talk about this. He has asked me to share what it would do if we could get a college center. It would provide revenue to the city. For every dollar [in building costs], the city gets 1.9% for building permits. A 49-unit apartment building just paid \$700,000 in fees. Beyond the city's revenue, we talk about having a college center. It is a lively place; that is the future of the community. We want our children to be educated. When college kids are in the community, they spend money. More restaurants are needed; more apartments are needed. It also has other advantages. We are working on our master plan for the next fifteen years. We are working on grants. In the master plan, we would like to include the school. We want to make this into a college center where our children interact. We will be building a park right next to it with \$3.5 million grant. I can solve your transportation problems. We can make it a cleaner place by having a college center here in Arvin.

Chief Tuscon: The focus is the kids. I have worked at and attended two community colleges. Arvin High School is underrepresented. What is missing here? College is the next level that is now missing. Nearly 20,000 people live in this community. We don't have access. There are children being left behind in Arvin. [Asked the "We the People" team to stand.] This is what is important. I want to make sure you look at those here. You name the profession and vocation, it's here. The kids here talk to me all the time. We already know it should be in Arvin. What you are hearing tonight is an underrepresented community saying "Yes, we can."

Lamont School District Trustee Herbie Chiang: I'm happy to be here because this is what we need. The trouble we are having here is transportation. We need transportation. When I came here, we had no transportation in Lamont. Sometimes kids have to get up early in the morning to catch the bus. Give us a chance. We need this college.

Arvin Union School District Superintendent Michelle McLean: This is one of the biggest turnouts I've seen in a long time. I support the initiative. The dropout rate is between 40-50%. Only 14% of Latino students transfer. The number one reason cited to drop out was financial – to take care of family. There is lack of equal access. The community values education. They

want to give back to the community. Our district gives college scholarships to junior high students. Thank you to the various sponsors. With unemployment at 41% and people's inability to make a living wage, having a college education is desperately needed.

We have 3,300 students at Arvin School District. We have many farm workers that only attended through elementary. They work long hours. They probably would love to be able to take classes. This gives them hope to see a college center here. Children are looking forward to meeting their education and want BC to be a part of this. Not just the children, so can you. I went to school after I got married and had children. So can you.

Delores Huerta: Thank you very much for making this possible. I want to say that to the people here tonight, farm workers do the most sacred work of all because they feed our country. The children are being denied an education. Having a community college here would make such an incredible difference. The Latino community is already the majority. This is the community that needs a college education. To deprive them of that education is a sin. We are here to say that we need a college here in Arvin. We expect that to happen; there cannot be any excuse for not putting a college extension in Arvin.

[lady w/Delores]: [A community needs assessment report; shared statistics.] Three hundred residents were interviewed. Only 19% have received an 8th grade education or better. Only 12% had received an undergraduate degree. Almost 50% have attended adult school. We note that adults are attending. The Constitution Team put Arvin on the map. The students that attend BC from Arvin will put BC on the map. If you are in favor of a campus here, please stand. If we leverage this, it would do a lot for Kern County by recognizing the contribution of these farm workers.

Arvin Chamber of Commerce representative Joet Stoner: I am a long time resident of Arvin. I took an ITV class while in high school. That allowed me to get ahead. We have loads of students that are way above average. Our students will succeed no matter where they go. A lot of students can't stay because they have to go get their education somewhere else. By making an education available here, we can keep them here. It is a full circle. The more educated you are, the more likely you are to go into business. We know how much we are benefited by education. Bring it. We are ready.

2003-2006 Former Students:

[name??]: The classes that are offered are on a flexible schedule. I am so grateful for those classes. I was able to finish my course work. Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world. My father didn't learn to read until age 40. I'm a product of BC.

Electra Sanchez: (2009 graduate of Arvin High School) I'm here to represent the Chamber of Commerce. I'm in favor of the campus. I'm proud of my background of farm workers. I am a product of BC. "Go to college" is the message. I want kids to go to college. I want them to go to BC and not have to travel miles each day. I want our kids to continue their education without having to worry about having gas money to get to class the next day. Lamont, Arvin, and Weedpatch are growing and striving for higher education. Some parents are so tired they can't take their kids to class. Raise your hands if you are in support. Some of the kids don't get [positive role models] until they get to college. If you give our kids a chance today, we will know that our kids are getting the education necessary to make these communities healthier, more productive places to live.

Margarita Perez (former student): I wasn't surprised to see so many of my co-workers here. Many women of Arvin and Lamont took classes before [in 2003]. It was wonderful to see how hard they were willing to work. [Many] learned to speak English and got good grades. Many continued our education. For many of those women that were taking those classes, this wasn't a stepping stone but an end of the road. Thank you for those classes that you offered in the past. Thank you for the classes you are offering now. Thank you for classes that you will continue to offer.

Jennifer (former student): I was pleased that for the first 3 semesters, I could take classes at Arvin High School. Arvin and Lamont are united. Knowing classmates helped; I was scared. I would love to see these kids and their kids be assured of an education in this area.

Olivia Flora: (currently a BC student) Last semester, I took Chemistry. By having a site here in Arvin, I work and go to school. We are not just looking at the students, we are looking at the parents. I will bet you anything that 25% of the mothers here will attend.

[Name??] I would really appreciate it if you would bring a satellite campus to Arvin. We have a really large undocumented population; students are taking a risk driving [to Bakersfield]. You don't have that many willing to take the risk. Not as many have access. We are stereotyped as being uneducated. I would be able to take courses here because my parents can't afford the drive. The classes I need aren't offered here. We need higher level classes. Not everybody here has really low scores. People feel that Arvin people are stupid because the classes are so low. We need higher level classes. We have the facilities; I don't see why you don't want them here.

[Name?]: the bus from Arvin to BC takes two hours. The buses don't run on schedule and don't run on our schedule. People are missing classes and tests and that affects our grades. I know some that had to drop out because they had to miss so many classes. I am looking forward to a center.

Jesus (currently attending BC): I currently drive 4 days a week to classes. The 60 miles there and back is expensive; it probably costs \$20/day. That's a lot of money. I had to get a part-time job to help pay for it. Transportation costs are taking half of my pay. I am asking for higher education in Arvin.

Maria (Arvin High School senior): As a kid when I used to pass by Arvin High and was impressed. People in my community could be inspired by a college campus. A BC Center will not only increase our opportunities but benefit the community.

[Arvin High School Senior]: I knew that I would go to Arvin High. AHS students will be inspired. Thank you for helping with transportation. We need to take that one step farther and give the students a chance to increase their skill set. We have students at AHS who have the perspective that they don't measure up to other high schools. A center would let them know that BC believes in them. It is an investment in Arvin. Education is the best investment.

Jonathan: Open enrollment [at BC] started today. No classes were available by noon today. A lot of students are willing to take that chance. I am sure that the parents are willing to step up and get an education.

Erica: I don't have a ride at the right time. There are many issues. We appreciate any consideration.

Kirby (high school senior): Our options are limited. We have to drive to find the classes that we need. We can't find a job.

Alfredo (currently attending BC): The classes fill up quickly. Most of us want to get an education. My mom wants me to do better than she did. Students here want to go to BC.

Elena: I have lived here for 7 years. I am the first person in my family to graduate from college. I have four young daughters. I support a BC Campus here. Please consider a campus here because of establishing a strong connection to the community, responding to community needs. Honor your heritage. Just think if kids saw the campus there and know that it was accessible to everybody.

[Name??] – It is very difficult to go all the way to Bakersfield during the foggy season. There are many accidents. I would like for the students to be independent, not dependent on government help to bring an education here. Thank you, all the parents who are here. Thank you for being here. We need better job opportunities.

Veronica Ramirez: I think that there should be a satellite campus in Arvin. Not only would it have an immediate effect. My teacher asked why we have the largest grape production in the

world and yet we get our grapes from Brazil. A local campus would have an effect on the community. People to study our own community and fix our problems.

?? Regpalla: (from Arvin High School) I am very excited to be able to report that before noon today, one of the [AHS] classes was completely filled. Thank you for being here. Just as a counselor, the feeling I get from our community is that despite numbers and projections, we are hoping that BC can look beyond the outlook and help transform a city. Thank you for being here. I'm really looking forward to working with you.

David Villarino (FIELD): We have been asking for you to consider putting classes here. What took you so long to get here? There is no excuse for not putting it here. We have heard it said that it is about education equity. AHS has a 50% dropout rate. We are really struggling with basic skills. Adult schools are closing. We are left with community organizations like FIELD and the Huerta Foundation. Over the last 10 years, we have served over 5000 people. We have a high school recovery program. Another 75 will graduate out of this program. It is not about the building and the land. It is about showing respect to the folks that are here and really making an effort to get classes here. Obviously there is a demand. As you know, the non-Hispanic whites are going to be leaving in big numbers. We are not going to have the economy that we need because we are not going to be trained. You can change that.

Trujillo: I had to drop out of BC; I'm now attending FIELD. It's great that my brother has the chance to attend this college.

Greg: In closing, Thank you all. Thank you for listening to what we had to say. BC will increase services as revenue allows. We continue to work on transportation issues. We will be addressing other obstacles and looking at CTE issues as well. I am very pleased to work with Healthy Communities. I will be here until you have your questions answered.

Jennifer: Thank you for joining us and for being willing to be here. Before we close, I want to focus on Healthy Communities. A lot of opportunities are going to bring us to the next level. Along with what they are bringing to South Kern comes a challenge to make sure we are taking advantage by creating a college bound culture. It is up to us. Make sure your kids go to college. It is about taking that accountability. Encourage you to be part of this initiative.

Blanca: First, we strongly support and encourage BC to increase courses offered here. Second, we urge the college board to accept the offer of land in the city of Arvin. Third, we request that the board develop a plan to have a center here or cooperate fully with our study. We make that commitment. I am so encouraged to see that we are taking steps in that direction. There is true support here. We are here to welcome you. These are the people that will welcome you and support you along the way. We know that it is tough economic times. Tough times call for tough decisions.