

Change likely for two systems

'W' GRADE | The grading system is about to get a major change with the "W" becoming more important

By Jon Nelson
Features Editor

Students at Bakersfield College will soon face academic changes including the status of the "W" grade, as of January 2012, new state guidelines will impact students at BC, both present and future.

The changes were part of a plan drawn up by the California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force and student representatives from around California.

First among the new regulations that have already started is the policy concerning the "W" grade.

In the past if a student withdrew from a class in time, they received a W grade without penalty. Under the new bill, Ws now count toward the maximum number of times students are eligible to take a class.

"It's giving students incentive to be successful and move

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—Nan Gomez-Heitzeberg,
Vice President
of Academic Affairs

on," said Student Government Association Vice President Toccara Byrd.

The policy is retroactive, which means W grades already given will affect student registration.

"In the long run, it's going to help the students," said Byrd.

Other measures on the bill will only affect future BC students.

As of January 2012, students will need to have a clear academic plan and major to work toward. The plan must then be reviewed on a regular basis.

"Students need to have a plan in place," said Vice President of Academic Affairs Nan Gomez-Heitzeberg.

"Research shows it's impor-

tant to have a plan."

The Kern Community College District also wants to push student development classes.

"We have more student development classes than we did in 2009," said Gomez-Heitzeberg.

Future BC students also will see a reduction in the number of semesters they are eligible for financial aid and priority registration.

Starting soon, student loans will also be handled through outside agencies instead of on campus.

Gomez-Heitzeberg explained that the changes were brought about partly because of California's financial state.

"We don't expect the state budget to get better, and we don't expect to have anymore sections," said Gomez-Heitzeberg.

The goal of all the policy changes is to work within California's budget, while helping community college students to reach their goals.

"We want our students to have the best possible chance," she said.

FINANCIAL AID | Eligibility for financial aid likely to change with crackdowns from the government coming

By Breanna Fields
Reporter

The Financial Aid Department recently revealed changes that will affect the amount of financial aid a student is eligible to receive over the course of a lifetime.

"The government is cracking down and trying to get more control of federal student aid," said Joan Wegner, the director of Financial Aid at Bakersfield College. "It just went out of control with billions and billions of dollars."

The federal government has brought on these changes due to the significant increase in financial aid funds that have been dispersed.

The Pell Grant, the most in-demand form of financial aid that is available, has shown a 49 to 50 percent increase in the number of students receiving it in recent years.

The federal government will

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—Joan Wegner,
Director of financial aid

be putting a limit on the number of full-time semesters a student can receive the Pell Grant. It had initially been 18 full-time semesters, but as the fall of 2012-13 approaches the limitation will be set at 12 full-time semesters of Pell Grant eligibility.

The Pell Grant ranges from \$5,550 to \$555, depending on how many units a student is enrolled in and their financial situation. A student's eligibility for this grant is determined by a number of factors which include household size, income and assets.

Students that plan on attending community college for an extended period of time may want to reconsider.

"If a student hangs around a community college for too long, when they transfer they won't have any more Pell Grant eligibility," said Wegner.

After filling out the FAFSA, students will receive a student aid report that will display their remaining eligibility to receive funding through this grant.

Students will also see a change in the eligibility requirements, which, according to Wegner, will be more difficult to receive when the fall semester begins.

There are a number of other changes in the works regarding eligibility that have not been released. One qualification that we do know, however, is that students must make satisfactory academic progress, which can be maintained with the completion of 67 percent of the units attempted. Wegner assures students that more information will be available on the official BC website in the near future.

For financial aid information and notices, Wegner encourages students to check their email regularly and be aware that the priority-filing deadline for the 2012-13 school year is Mar. 2. Students that file by that date will receive an e-mail from the financial aid department letting them know what documents they must submit to complete their file.

Student government has big plans for spring semester and beyond

By Gregory D. Cook
Reporter

Despite a critical shortage of senators, the Bakersfield College Student Government Association has plans for an active semester, focusing on programs that will leave lasting effects on the college and its students.

"This year, the programs that we are getting involved with are programs that will be here after we're gone," SGA president Tawntannisha Thompson said.

That is why in addition to the usual activities, such as Spring Fling, the SGA is putting substantial time, effort and financial resources into programs such as the Renegade Food Pantry, Mentoring and Peer Services, Be Fit and other programs and projects designed to enhance student safety and success.

"The little things we do are just gone when they're done, but we're looking at programs for the student's that can still be sustained after we leave," she said.

Thompson acknowledged that last semester wasn't as successful as the SGA might have hoped for. "You know, last semester was a rocky road because we didn't start with a full executive board," she said. "But this semester, we have all the help and support that we need, so it can only get better from here."

According to Thompson, the big challenge facing the SGA this semester is filling the 16 vacant senator positions. As of Jan. 30, only three of the SGA's 19 senator positions had been filled. "Senators are the voice of the students," said Thompson, and she stressed that they play an important roll in the legislative process.

Senators are responsible for going out and having conversations with their fellow students, learning about the issues that face the students at BC, and then making those concerns known to the SGA as a whole to be acted upon if possible.

While the shortage of senators can partially be blamed on an unusually large amount of senators transferring to other schools at the end of the last semester, Thompson also points out that replacing them has been difficult.

"Students just don't know how they can get involved. You just come to Campus Center 4



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—Tawntannisha Thompson,
SGA president

and fill out an application," she said.

The executive board then conducts a series of interviews and if the candidate meets the requirements, they are installed as a senator.

The shortage of senators isn't slowing the SGA down in planning a full semester of activities though, including a month-long celebration of Black History Month, something that Thompson admits is overdue at BC.

"This year, the SGA and BC are going to celebrate Black History Month for the first time since I can remember," Thompson said.

The SGA, along with BC's African-American Student Union and others, will be presenting activities each week in February, beginning the first week with the passing out of copies of Ella Mazel's book, "And Don't Call Me a Racist," and a display from Colonel Allensworth Historical State Park. Allensworth was a California town founded, financed and governed by African-Americans, 30 miles north of Bakersfield. The following weeks will feature showings of documentary films, panel discussions and a BC's Got Talent, talent show in the fourth week.

Planning is also under way for Spring Fling. The theme for this year is "A Day At the Beach," and the SGA is welcoming input as to what activities the students would like to see.

The SGA is also funding a new African-American Male Mentor program to help increase success rates among Bakersfield College's most challenged demographic group. "African-American males currently have the lowest completion rates of anyone in community college, and anything we can do to change that is a positive thing," said General Counsel Derrick Kenner, during a meeting in which \$5,000 was allocated to the program to pay for speakers and events.

The BC Be Fit!

Program would like to encourage Bakersfield College to celebrate National Wear Red Day on Feb. 2-3 to raise awareness about heart disease among women. Students, staff and faculty are encouraged to wear red and on Feb. 2, special guest speakers will visit BC to share insights about heart disease and it's prevention.

Donations are also being accepted at www.goredforwomen.com.

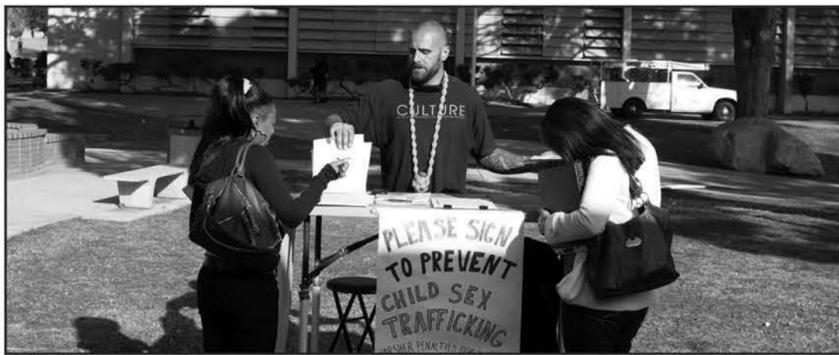
The SGA will also maintain its dedication to the Renegade Food Pantry and will try expanding the popular program through donations from faculty and staff. Last semester, the pantry served over 6,000 students at a cost of nearly \$15,000, and they hope to serve even more this semester.

"Student's cannot succeed if they're hungry, when that's all that's on their minds," said Thompson. "If we can supply that box, two or three times a month, it helps out a lot."

The best advice Thompson has for the students of BC, though, is to just express their concerns to the SGA.

"A lot of the new students don't know what we do or why we're here," she said. "But if you have a comment, concern or there's something you just don't know, come in and ask. If we don't know what you want or need, we can't fix it."

The SGA offices are located in Campus Center.



OMAR OSEGUERA / THE RIP

Dallas Martin, left, and Regina Recio sign Mike Bullock's, center, petitions Jan.25.

Petitions for bills invade BC campus

By Nicholas Sparling
Reporter

In the opening week of the spring semester, the Free Speech Area, located in front of the Campus Center, was flooded with booths set up for jewelry and craft vendors, banks, gyms, and petitioners.

The vendors and various companies present themselves with clear agendas. Petitioners, as common as they are, all around town in any highly populated area, seem to be more ambiguous.

Petitions can be used to veto a bill, recall or place in the running an official, or give a bill the potential chance of ending up on a ballot. These signatures cannot legally be used for anything else.

The majority of petitioners are hired by independent companies and treat petitioning as a job as they are paid per signature. However, this is not always the case, as it reads on the petition, "This petition may be circulated by a paid signature gatherer or a volunteer. You have the right to ask."

The statistics, according to Debbie Tharp, a petitioner for Panda Petitions, are that untrained volunteers collect only 30 to 40 percent of usable signatures where a trained petitioner averages 75 percent of viable signatures.

Jeffrey Durell could be considered a veteran petition circulator, having done so on and off for the past 19 years, and although he is employed and paid per signature by H & H Petition management, an independent California based company, he says that he petitions "to make sure important issues make it on the ballot."

"People don't understand that if they don't care enough to sign the petition it won't make it to the ballot and they won't have the chance to vote on it," said another petitioner Mike Bullock.

Some students didn't even notice the petitioners, while others like Cynthia Peterson did, but didn't sign because she said she just didn't have time rushing between classes.

For students like Rocio Rodriguez, the petitioners came up and informed her on the issue before she signed.

"Child sex trafficking caught my attention, it's just disgusting," said Alfred Cadena about his reasons for signing.

Like with any job, there comes a level of professionalism. Petitioners are absolutely not allowed to offer any sort of compensation for a signature and petitioners may not impede the flow of foot traffic or corner a potential signer. They are also required to confirm that the signer is legally registered to vote. If the signee is not registered as an eligible voter at the correct address then the signature does not count.

Petitioners can register you to vote, but unlike signatures for their initiative, they receive no payment for doing so.

It is also the job of the petitioner to properly inform the public on the issue they would be signing on.

There have been reports of petitioners venturing out from the Free Speech Area, and Tharp seemed disgusted at the idea of petitioners scouring the parking lot for signatures, saying, "Scouring the parking lot is a huge no-no, we have a reputation to uphold."

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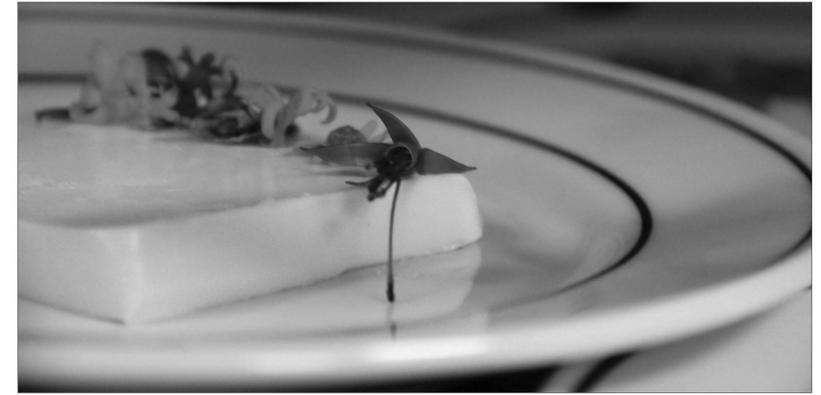


A flourless espresso chocolate torte, a white chocolate coeur a la creme and a hazelnut-gianduja tartlet were served for dessert at the Sterling Silver Dinner on Jan. 28.



Wine and Dine

Photos by: Megan Luecke



Sliced butter decorated with edible flowers was served alongside bread at the Sterling Silver Dinner on Jan. 28.

The Bakersfield College Foundation, BC culinary department, along with the help of Executive Chef William Bloxson-Carter of the Playboy Mansion, hosted the fourth annual Sterling Silver Dinner on January 28.



Chef Alex Gomez adds butter to the sauce that will later be added to a dish at the Sterling Silver Dinner on Jan. 28.



Executive Chef William Bloxson-Carter of the Playboy Mansion shows the Bakersfield College culinary students how to prepare the jumbo asparagus plate at the Sterling Silver Dinner on Jan. 28.



Chef Ruben Barrios from the Playboy Mansion, a former Bakersfield College culinary student, prepares a large pot of risotto that is paired with Norwegian Ocean Trout at the Sterling Silver Dinner on Jan. 28.



President Greg Chamberlain addresses the guests at the Sterling Silver Dinner on Jan. 28.



Chef Pat Coyle, C.C.E. studies the plates as they prepare to go out to the guests at the Sterling Silver Dinner on Jan. 28.



Guests at the Sterling Silver Dinner place bids during the live auction on Jan. 28. They were bidding on a dinner prepared in their home by Chef Coyle, C.C.E.



Bakersfield College culinary students work together in stages to plate the jumbo asparagus with tomatoes on the side at the Sterling Silver Dinner on Jan. 28.



Anna Melby, a former Bakersfield College culinary student and pastry cook at Caesar's Palace, prepares the dessert plates by making hearts in the chocolate at the Sterling Silver Dinner on Jan. 28.