Bakersfield College president pledges support for undocumented students

by Jose Gaspar, Eyewitness News
Monday, November 21st 2016

DELANO, Calif. (KBAK/KBFX) — Bakersfield College President Sonya Christian pledged support for the approximately 700 to 800 undocumented students known as DREAMers, who attend classes in Bakersfield and at its Delano satellite campus.

"Students, let me make this very clear. Bakersfield College stands with you," said Christian as she addressed a group of students, faculty and staff Monday in Delano.

Ever since the presidential election, colleges and universities have been reaching out to undocumented students to allay any fear and anxiety about their immigration status as it relates to their enrollment in school.

During the presidential campaign, President-elect Donald Trump said he would take action to immediately end programs put in place by President Barack Obama that temporarily protect undocumented students from deportation and also allows them to apply for financial aid.
That bothers students.

"All the time I'm always wondering if my fellow friends who happen to be illegal get deported or not. You know?" said BC sophomore Richard Rufo.

Christian emphasized inclusiveness and said educating students should not be a political issue.

“We are here simply to support our students and we are here to affirm that education is a right for all to show our support for students who may falter because of circumstance,” said Christian.

Trump has recently toned down his talk of deporting undocumented immigrants, stating he will prioritize the removal of those who have a criminal history. But even that is unclear, as he has not stated if he plans to deport immigrants with misdemeanor crimes along with those convicted of more serious felony crimes. Trump has said he would deport all roughly eleven million undocumented immigrants in the country, but has since backed off that statement, saying he will decide what to do at a later date.

In light of the uncertainty, Bakersfield College plans on providing experts to give legal advice to students about immigration matters starting in December. The support expressed by Christian and others toward undocumented students drew applause from students.

"To know that there's someone that stands by us and supports us at 24/7, like 100 percent, I have a good feeling knowing that they're for us," said BC sophomore Selena del Bosque.

The BC president ended her speech on an upbeat note.

"We are all dreamers. Todos somos dreamers," said Christian.
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