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Due to a statewide movement in the requirements of the Basic Skills Initiative, Bakersfield College is in the process of putting together new action plans that will be implemented to increase student learning and in turn increase the student retention and success rate.

Currently, there are two major projects being conducted: the statewide Basic Skills Initiative and a project BC has put together called The Foundations of Excellence. BC also had Dr. Hunter Boylan, director of the National Center for Developmental Education, come in and audit the school last year.

“What we’re trying to do is help students become college prepared,” said Vice President of Student Learning Ed Knudson. “If we are going to better prepare students for transferring or the work force, we have to make sure student skills meet those standards. It’s important that we get students ready for the fundamental step.”

Basic Skills are defined as foundation skills in reading, writing, mathematics, learning skills, study skills, and English as a second language, which are necessary for students to succeed in college level work. Through the Basic Skills Initiative, the school will be addressing the best practices that can be implemented that will benefit developmental students, or students that are not completely prepared to take transfer-level classes.

“It’s like they say,” said BC President William Andrews. “If you don’t use it you lose it. It’s difficult for students who have been gone for many years to come back and take the assessment test. Our goal is to move them as rapidly as we can to get them ready to transfer.”

The Foundations of Excellence was a three-part effort, according to Dean of Student Learning Patti Ross, in collation with the National Center for Developmental Education. Boylan conducted three separate audits of the school, first reviewing instruction, then supportive services, and administrative support. He will be sharing his findings with the school on Sept. 21 at 10:30 a.m. in the Renegade Room.

Though the spring 2007 retention and success rates overall are not any better or worse than the rest of the state, what the state and the school are trying to do with these programs as a whole is bring the student retention rate up, which in return will improve student success.

Last spring BC had 89.6 percent of students that were retained and 68.8 percent who were successful. State wide last spring 82.89 percent of students were retained and 66.42 percent were successful.

Retention rate does not include the number of students that drop a course, but the amount of people that stick a class out with either failing or passing grades.

The student success rate is defined as student retention rates that have passed with a grade of C or better.

“You always strive for 100 percent student retention rates,” said Andrews. “Professors teach for success, it’s part of our basic skills mission. I feel it’s critical that we do what we can for students to be successful”

On average, out of every 10 students that join a class, two people drop due to uncontrollable variables and only between six and seven students actually pass and move on.

“Early dropping could deal with the students life events and early enrolment,” said Ross. “Freshman that graduated in spring 06 may not be completely ready for the college experience.”

Currently BC offers academic development courses that help students prepare to take their college courses. But according to Ross, their target is to learn new ways of teaching.

“The academic development program has a lot of pre-collegiate courses that specialize in study skills reading

etc.,” said Ross. “We’re lucky that we at least do have that offered. Some schools don’t.”

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