

Preparing Students for the Rigors of College in Bakersfield, CA

Bakersfield College



**Kimberly Nickell,
Student Success Lab
Coordinator**



**19,000 students
3 campuses**



**Adult + Higher Ed
Courseware**



**61.6% Hispanic
23.9% Caucasian**

The Challenge:

Bakersfield College, a 19,000-student institution that is one of the nation's oldest continually operating community colleges, provides opportunities for students from diverse economic, cultural, and educational backgrounds to attain higher education. The city of Bakersfield, California, has tripled its population in the past three decades. Hispanics, fueled by the local migrant farming economy, make up nearly half of the population.

“Bakersfield College serves a large and varied community of learners,” explained Kimberly Nickell, coordinator of the college’s Student Success Lab. “We have a growing Hispanic population, as well as a substantial population of first-generation learners. Almost 80 percent of Bakersfield’s students assess below the college level in one or more areas of reading, writing, and math. We have more than 2,000 students utilize the lab per semester, some with skill levels as low as third grade.”

The Student Success Lab was set up to aid every student in the college with educational goals. That might mean helping students with very limited skills qualify for general education courses or post-baccalaureate students prepare for graduate-level assessments. The capabilities of the lab change with every student who walks through the door.

Bakersfield College, in the San Joaquin Valley of Central California, serves an increasingly diverse community that includes a high proportion of immigrants and migrant workers. To give struggling students an opportunity at the career they desire, Bakersfield College set up a Student Success Lab, powered by Plato Courseware and other Edmentum systems.

How They Did It:

The Student Success Lab specializes in providing services that bolster students' reading levels, math skills, and grammar. Some of their courses are for credit, while others are offered free of charge.

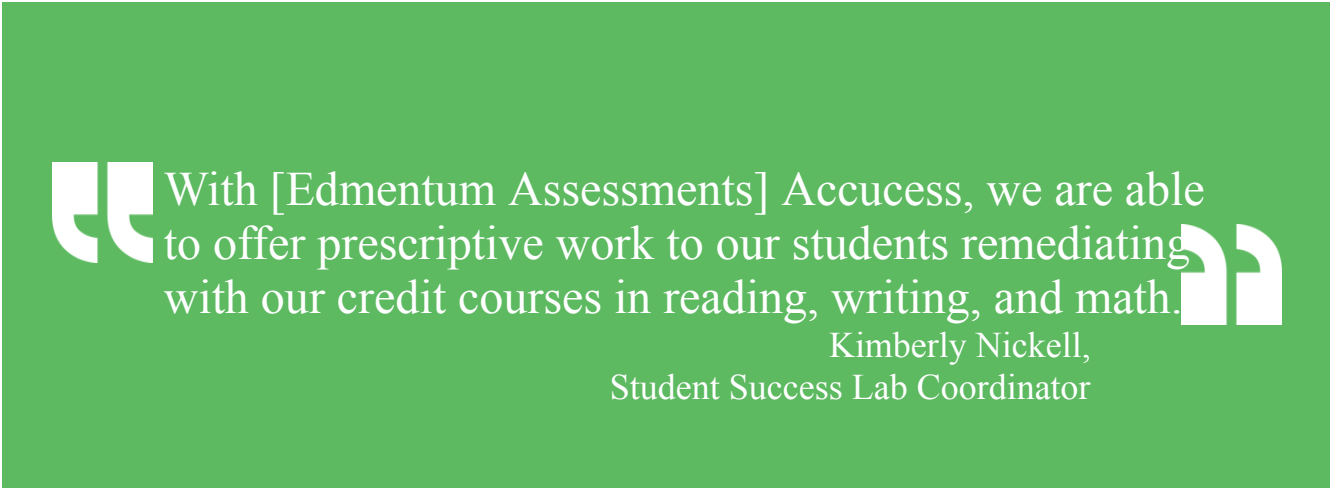
"We wanted to be able to serve students at all levels of learning, be flexible with what we offered, provide prescriptive and customizable assignments from a wide bank of content, and be able to report out in a variety of ways," Nickell elaborated. "We also realized that it was important to meet the needs of students whose goals were to prepare for standardized tests for reassessing, nursing, allied health, welding, etc."

To meet those goals, Bakersfield turned to Plato Courseware back in the early 1990's. Since then, as the program's needs have grown and shifted, so too have the capabilities of Plato Courseware.

Nickell says that the range of students who use the lab can vary widely. "Specifically, we work to remediate students who are below college level, but the breadth in the Plato content lets us also support students who are in their college-level courses and students preparing for entrance into nursing, teaching, allied health, and other career programs. We provide students opportunities to attend academic success workshops within our lab so they can work their way out of being on academic probation."

Nickell also says that part of the job is figuring out just what students need—even if they don't know themselves. "With [Edmentum Assessments] Accucess, we are able to offer prescriptive work to our students remediating with our credit courses in reading, writing, and math. For students with specific needs or support in their other courses, we can offer customized assignments that focus on just the skills they need to work on. So far, our success rates have steadily increased. As well, the ACCUPLACER®, WorkKeys®, and TEAS content helps us work with students who want to improve their test scores to be placed in higher-level courses or better their chances to enter in their chosen field of study."

Nickell is perhaps most proud of the sense of community forged in the Student Success Lab. "We promote a high-touch atmosphere, constantly encouraging students through regular checks, to seek help when they need it and finish strong."



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Success:

It is safe to say that many students would not be progressing with their education without the help of BC's Student Success Lab. In fact, when looking at students enrolled in for credit courses, the school has realized an 11.7 percent increase in student success. Support for students comes in many forms, from helping students gain work in a trade all the way to postgraduate studies.

“Bakersfield College has transformed how we educate students in these programs, but more importantly, integrated our strategies across our campus for the benefit of all programs and disciplines,” BC president Sonya Christian wrote in a recent blog post.

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President of Bakersfield College



The Future:

For more information:

Contact 800.447.5286 or visit www.edmentum.com to learn more about Edmentum's online learning solutions.