

# EDUCATING ON THE INSIDE

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE INMATE SCHOLARS PROGRAM

March 2021

## ISP FAST FACTS

**Classes:** This summer we will be offering 91 courses to our amazing students!

**Faculty:** The Inmate Scholars Program has added three new professors!



**Facilities:** We offer instruction in 5 prisons on 12 yards

## WELCOME!

As we head into Spring Break, the ISP would like to keep you up to date with our work throughout this untraditional and challenging academic year. Even though we have had to reinvent a wheel by switching to correspondence learning, which had already been reinvented from traditional on campus instruction, our dedicated staff and faculty have kept the program not only moving but thriving.

Keep reading to learn about the work of our faculty, students, and alumni.

## ASSISTANCE OUTSIDE THE WALLS

Did you know that one of our own faculty members funds a scholarship to help those who have been formerly incarcerated as they continue their studies at BC?

Heidi Forsythe, of the Communications Department, created the Second Chance Scholarship of KCCD. The Second Chance Scholarship is awarded to returning Bakersfield College students who show potential achievement in their chosen discipline, need financial assistance (or might not otherwise qualify for aid), and who have experienced or are currently experiencing significant personal challenges such as being an ex-felon or formerly incarcerated.

Professor Forsythe also funds the award, and it is one of the many initiatives she undertakes to continually serve our students beyond instruction within the prisons. She is also currently working on setting up a workshop with other partners such as Project Rebound and Garden Pathways to help bring the career skills trainings of LinkedIn Learning to our students and alumni.

Please reach out to Heidi if you would like to learn more, donate or be involved.

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Shawn Newsom is an Associate Professor of History who has been with the ISP and Bakersfield College since 2017.

Shawn received his associate degree from BC in 2010 and continued with his studies earning his bachelor's from University of California, Berkeley. In 2017, he earned a Master of Arts from Cal State Bakersfield.

Before joining the faculty at BC as a full-time employee, Shawn was an adjunct instructor for both Taft College and Cerro Coso College, as well as for the University of Phoenix.

On a personal note, Shawn was born in Santa Rosa, CA and is married with three children. Two of his children are BC students! His hobbies include all things *Star Wars*, attending plays with his wife, and being physically active working out, cycling, or jogging.

Shawn loves working for the ISP and his commitment and enthusiasm shows. He is one of our most entertaining and colorful faculty members, and we appreciate his dedication to this work!



**"I'm in it for the  
OUTCOME, not  
the INCOME!" –  
Shawn Newsom**

## STUDENT SUCCESS

Unlike those teaching in a traditional placement, ISP faculty don't often get the chance to see or hear from previous students. Facility transfers, parole out of the area, and restrictions for contact make hearing about the post-prison successes of our alumni challenging. So when we do get to hear about them, we like to brag!



Roberto Luca was part of the pilot program for BC's Inmate Scholars Program at Kern Valley State Prison seven years ago. Luca spent 28 years in prison, beginning at age 16 and had no education. He now is a homeowner in Los Angeles, is married and works as senior program manager at Mass Liberation, an organization that helps those who were incarcerated get on their feet. Roberto's story is just one of so many amazing accounts of what education does to change the lives of our students in the ISP and break the tragic cycles caused by incarceration. Click on the links below to hear Roberto's story.

### [Don't forget to check out the latest blog!](#)

**Sara Wallace, English Professor at Bakersfield College, writes the blog: "Reflections from Inside: Teaching in the Inmate Scholars Program" on *Medium*. Click below for her latest post.**