CSUB Wins Unprecedent National Honor for Teacher Preparation

Oct. 16, 2019 – A program designed to increase the number of teachers amid an acute shortage in the Central Valley has earned California State University, Bakersfield the prestigious Christa McAuliffe Excellence in Teacher Education Award, bestowed by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. CSUB is the sole recipient of the McAuliffe Award this year; only two other California universities have won the award in its entire 17-year history.

“Our Kern Teacher Residency Programs have transformed how teachers are prepared at CSUB in very innovative ways,” said Kristina LaGue, professor and department chair of Teacher Education at CSUB. “We’re thrilled that our efforts to train and retain qualified teachers are being recognized, but the real beneficiaries of our Kern Teacher Residency Programs are the teachers who receive authentic, hands-on experience, and the students who have the opportunity to learn from such committed and well-prepared teachers.”

Created with three rural school districts in 2014 to address the critical need to recruit and retain well-prepared teachers with specific expertise in STEM, the Kern Teacher Residency Programs provide teacher residents with tuition and a living stipend to complete a yearlong, co-teaching clinical practice. At the end of the spring 2019 semester, the KTRP pathways will have prepared more than 160 teachers across six district partnerships, and approximately 85 percent of the teacher residents are still teaching in high-need schools in Kern County.

“Each year, I am inspired by how AASCU institutions move the bar to serve their students and advance the economic and cultural development of their communities,” said AASCU President Mildred Garcia. “These Excellence in Innovation Award winners truly demonstrate how our
members serve as Stewards of Place, prioritizing student success and leaving a lasting impact on their regions."

The winning programs possess top-level administrative support, connect with an institution’s mission and strategic agenda, contribute to significant institutional improvements or programming, are grounded in research and incorporate best practices, according to an AASCU media release.

“I am so proud of CSU Bakersfield’s Kern Teacher Residency Programs, which have flourished under the leadership of Dr. Kristina LaGue,” said CSUB President Lynnette Zelezny. “Since the launch of the first residency program in 2014, the university has forged partnerships with local school districts and, together, we are transforming education in Kern County. Our success is measured by the commitment of our residents to stay after graduation and continue their work with students in the areas of our county with the greatest needs. This wonderful acknowledgment from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities comes at an exciting time of growth and renewed purpose at CSU Bakersfield, and we accept it with pride and gratitude.”

The Kern Teacher Residency Programs were launched to solve the most pervasive education crisis in Kern County: the lack of qualified teachers. A 2017 report by the California Department of Education underscored the severity of the problem: Though 22,000 new teachers were needed throughout the state that year, only 11,500 new teaching credentials were issued. In Kern County, 813 non-credentialed teachers were hired in 2016-17, according to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

“This is a serious issue of equity,” LaGue said. “The districts that are serving our students who are the most vulnerable often have the lowest numbers of credentialed teachers. As teacher educators at CSUB, we feel a great sense of responsibility to provide teacher preparation that will lead to qualified teachers who will stay in the profession and will serve students in the central valley. We are continuously seeking resources and developing programs that will help improve the current educational context for our students, families, and community.”

The awards will be presented Oct. 27 at the AASCU annual meeting in Phoenix.

CSUB is the only recipient of the Christa McAuliffe Award, but several universities are being recognized in other areas, including Fresno State, for creating a program to produce the next generation of leaders for the nonprofit sector.

The only other California universities ever to have won the Christa McAuliffe Award are Fresno State and San Diego State.
Pictured: Cristal Zuniga from the Kern Rural Teacher Residency Program co-teaching 4th grade at Alicante Elementary in the Lamont School District. Cristal is currently in her first year of teaching 5th grade at Valle Verde Elementary in the Greenfield School District.

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About CSUB’s Department of Teacher Education:

The Department of Teacher Education at CSU Bakersfield offers a variety of high-quality traditional, intern, and residency teacher preparation pathways. In addition, the department offers two added authorization programs in Bilingual Education and Literacy and a Master of Arts degree program in Education--Curriculum and Instruction. The department has received several multi-million dollar grants from the U.S. Department of Education and other foundations to support the innovative teacher preparation work. Approximately 300 teachers graduate from the credential programs each academic year.

About CSUB:

California State University, Bakersfield is a comprehensive public university committed to offering excellent undergraduate and graduate programs that advance the intellectual and personal development of its students. An emphasis on student learning is enhanced by a commitment to scholarship, diversity, service, global awareness and life-long learning.

The University serves more than 11,000 students between the main campus in Bakersfield and CSUB Antelope Valley and counts more than 50,000 alumni from its four schools: Arts and Humanities; Business and Public Administration; Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Engineering; and Social Sciences and Education.

For more information about CSUB, please visit www.csub.edu.