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## Couple's donation leads to 500 Chromebooks for BC students without devices

BY EMA SASIC [esasic@bakersfield.com](mailto:esasic@bakersfield.com)

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President Sonya Christian, center, with Greg and Mary Bynum at the Bakersfield College Foundation Annual Sterling Silver Dinner in February 2019.

Provided photo

Even though Greg and Mary Bynum attended Bakersfield College in the late 1960s, they don't think they're much different from students enrolled today.

Both were the first to attend college in their families and came from low- to middle-class households where their parents couldn't afford to send them to an expensive school.

"I knew I always wanted to go to college and my parents encouraged that, but I didn't have a direction to go outside the area or the ability from a financial standpoint," Greg Bynum said. "That took me to BC."

Today, of BC's 40,000 students, 80 percent are first generation college students, approximately 80 percent are low income, and many rely on campus Wi-Fi and computer labs to complete their assignments, according to the college.

Students' responses to a March 20 survey revealed that about 1 in 10 students don't have adequate off-campus internet access. Nearly a quarter use their cellphones as their primary device to access their courses.

Due to the indicated high need for technology among students, and the current distant learning curriculum in place during the coronavirus outbreak, BC developed the Laptop Loaner to Learn Program, which will provide 500 Chromebooks for students, all thanks to a donation from the Bynums.

The donation's amount has not been disclosed.

If she was a student at BC today, "I can see myself being a person who would need a program like this to stay in school, maintain my studies, do my work remotely," Mary Bynum said.

The Chromebooks will be equipped with the necessary technology to ensure students are able to complete their college-level requirements, including the programs Canvas, Zoom and Starfish.

Students interested in receiving a Chromebook can complete an online application at <https://bcstudentlife.wufoo.com/forms/q11jhxj00qyh80/>

In late January, BC began monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic, launching a communication and education campaign, releasing a Pandemic Response Plan, and hosting daily forums across campus. By March 19, BC had moved all of its courses and student services fully online.

Greg Bynum said the transition for students without devices or connectivity must have been "a shock to the system." As a real estate developer, he has been working from home these days as well, but with essential items such as his laptop and phone.

"Our focus is to be helpful and do whatever it takes to support Bakersfield College, its foundation and student achievement," he said.

"This is a very difficult time for our students who are working to stay in class and focused on their goals despite mass upheaval to their daily routines," said BC President Sonya Christian. "The generosity of Greg and Mary Bynum will ensure our students stay on their educational path toward creating a better life for themselves, their families, and our communities."

The college is accepting monetary donations or used laptops for the Laptop Loaner to Learn Program. Those interested in helping can contact the Bakersfield College Foundation at [foundation@bakersfieldcollege.edu](mailto:foundation@bakersfieldcollege.edu).

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Emma Sasic can be reached at 661-395-7392. Follow her on Twitter: [@ema\\_sasic](https://twitter.com/ema_sasic).