

# BC chapter of Chicano group stages walkout for courses

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At 10:30 a.m., Silvia Figueroa and Selene Magana walked out of their classes.

Figueroa left her philosophy class. Magana walked out of math.

Both stood together, holding the flag of Mexico with blue ribbons pinned on their shirts.

"It's not only going to help me. It's going to help so many different people," Magana said of their protest.

More than a 100 students showed up for the "walkout" at Bakersfield College Monday, which coincided with Mexico's Independence Day.

BC's chapter of MEChA, or Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan, organized the walkout. MEChA is a collegiate organization founded by Hispanic students at an April 1968 conference in Santa Barbara.

Many wore blue ribbons in support of the protest.

The BC students were out in support of MEChA's push for the establishment of a Chicano studies department on the community college campus. MEChA members say the school has been giving them the "run-around" with only verbal allusions of a future program.

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vice president of student learning

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"This is a sacrifice, a sacrifice we're all making to miss one day of class," said Patrick McKendry, president of BC's MEChA chapter, citing how often students miss class over frivolous things. They were missing class for a larger purpose, McKendry said Monday.

The push for a Chicano studies department started three years ago. Since then, one additional Chicano studies course has been added to BC curriculum. Bakersfield College currently has four Chicano studies courses with credits that can be transferred to other state schools.

BC officials say they are working on developing more Chicano studies courses, but officials say what the students are asking for takes time and funding to develop.

Rafael G. Galvan, president of the Associated Students of Bakersfield College, said he supports the students' desire for a program but feels they are going the wrong way about acquiring it.

Galvan said the students and MEChA should approach the ASBC about this issue and work within the system the school currently has for developing curriculum.

"Students shouldn't be missing classes," Galvan said. "If you want someone to stand up, you don't cut their legs (by asking them to miss class)."

Ken Meier, vice president of student learning, said funds are tight at BC with a recent influx of new students and a cut in funding from the state due to the lingering budget crisis.

Meier said school officials are committed to developing more courses and are assembling a group of Hispanic teachers to develop additional Chicano studies classes.

Despite the commotion, Meier said the protest was a positive thing. He said he is always pleased to see students become passionate over instruction.

"I find it very exciting when students become excited over curriculum," Meier said. "It will improve the program in the long run."