

Woman with a Heart for Bakersfield

Jessica Grimes



Dr. Jessica Grimes has a heart for students – guiding them to achieve their goals whether they are short-term or committed to the pursuit of higher education. A dynamic mentor and gifted administrator, Jessica prioritizes collaborating with academic and corporate communities to enhance career pathways,

especially among disproportionately impacted students. Jessica brings her positive leadership skills to broaden the minds and expand opportunity for collegiate students of Kern County.

Jessica Grimes, PhD, is Dean of Instruction and Career Technical Education (CTE) at Taft College. Instrumental in the development of programs that promote student career planning, Jessica participates in a grant collaborative with K-14 institutions within the West Kern Community College District and the local adult education network. Recently launched is the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics-Careers in Technology Coalition known as STEM-CiTE, an intersegmental partnership among schools within the Taft College District to increase awareness of STEM-CiTE corridors and achievement. This program explores beneficial opportunities for K-14 schools to develop and promote the college-completion pipeline.

Dr. Jessica Grimes' powerful mission encourages “building a healthy community of black women where they are supported and empowered with the ability and the resources needed to develop and thrive within their community and beyond.” She is the chairperson of No Sister Left Behind, an organization that inspires women of color to pursue overall well-being in their education, career, and personal lives. Additionally, she serves as co-chair with Superintendent/President Dr. Debra Daniels, of

the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Taskforce at Taft College.

An advocate for women's heart health, Jessica has helped raise awareness and funds for Go Red for Women. Jessica translates her personal challenges into messages of hope and healing for others.

Born in Akron, Ohio, Jessica, entered the world as the tenth child of eleven; the ninth and last daughter of the Grimes family. When the economy took a nosedive in the early 1980s, Jessica's family made a cross-county move to Bakersfield to be closer to their relatives. Here Jessica spent her formative years graduating from South High School before continuing a distinguished academic career. Jessica graduated in 2002 with a bachelor's degree in English and Religion from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, CA. Subsequently, in 2004, she earned a master's degree in Religion and Arts from the Yale Divinity School in New Haven, CT. In 2019, she went on to receive a PhD in Literature and Criticism from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

For 20 years, Jessica has been happily married to Traco Matthews, the Chief Program Officer at Community Action Partnership of Kern. Together, their passion is to bring the world of academia and achievement to the students of Kern County. Jessica enjoys reading, traveling, hiking, singing, dancing, and playing board games.

