

I would like to preface this statement by saying that I struggle being vocal on topics that can turn political or contentious. This is not because I lack conviction, or fear controversy. It is that as a Counselor at Bakersfield College, I need to stay as neutral as possible, so students of all backgrounds feel comfortable confiding in me. Up to this point I feel I have accomplished this as students will vent and complain about faculty, politics (on both sides), family and many other topics. It is imperative that I continue to allow all students to feel comfortable disclosing things to me. However, the recent attack on student housing has caused me to feel the need to speak out.

During my counseling sessions students open up about a wide variety of issues that cause them stress. They will often breakdown and cry because of the weight of their situations. I have had suicidal students, anxious students, overwhelmed students, depressed students, and any other issue you can think of. One that comes up **very often** is a struggle with housing. Countless students are couch hopping, others are living at the mission, and many are homeless. Having the option of housing would be amazing and very helpful to our student body.

I have done my research and spoke to various people directly involved with this project. They have said that the current proposal is housing for **students only**. They need to be enrolled in classes and it will function like a traditional residential student living area. It's not low-income housing for the community, and any issues would be dealt with. This is a resource for students. Seeing blatant lies makes me very sad and even angry. Hearing that the flyers and rumors could have come from BC personal really breaks my heart.

Everyone is entitled to their opinions, but we are not entitled to our own facts. We also need to be careful of how we come across to our students. As educators we need to be able to help and teach all of our students, no exception. While I would hope we can get along as educators, I recognize that is not always possible. But we should always be there for our students and we must choose our words wisely.

Thank you for your time.

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