January 21, 2022

President Ochoa and Provost Kantardjieff,

In response to the university’s decision to be back in-person for classes and activities for the spring semester, we are not only concerned about the health and safety of our students but more immediately the impact such administrative decisions will have both inside and outside of the classroom for students, faculty and staff alike.

As the student government at CSU Monterey Bay, Associated Students’ core mission is to serve, empower, and be the primary advocates for all CSUMB students. Associated Students also strives to advance inclusion, equity, and promote diversity in all of its identities.

Given this, it is our responsibility through our shared governance to bring up critical and time sensitive students' concerns to our university administration, which we are doing so as it relates to the campus COVID safety policies that we believe directly affects student learning conditions alongside faculty and staff working conditions.

We also acknowledge and support the importance of a recent student-created petition on Change.org advocating for CSUMB to temporarily move to virtual learning like many other institutions of higher education. CSUMB is one of just five of the CSUs not reverting to virtual learning temporarily due to safety concerns.

Additionally, in Monterey County, our positive COVID rates have nearly doubled just within the last week with the peak expected to hit on January 24th. If our concerns can not be addressed in full to ensure a safe return to Spring semester then please follow the lead of this student-created petition.

There are numerous inconsistencies related to a series of recent information being shared with the student body such as:

- The Otter Vaccination Registry (that has not been updated on how best to address proof of boosters prior to students returning to campus for the start of the semester).
- Loopholes of testing for students returning or checking into housing (especially on East Campus who are exempt from testing).
● Shared faculty and staff concerns not being addressed adequately to prepare them for what to expect and how to handle different cases that will emerge as a result of students who test positive in their classes or at their events.
● Lack of transparent protocols to address student absences due to quarantine restrictions without students being penalized for non-attendance to in-person classes while being quarantined.
● Lack of COVID-19 testing on the weekends.
● Conflicting information on masking enforcement and communication regarding large indoor gatherings (refer to email from President Ochoa sent on January 15th) wherein currently at CSUMB such events are being canceled, postponed or moved to outdoor venues.

These are just a sample of the larger issues many of us are concerned about affecting our students that we seek better internal communication and administrative transparency to clarify.

Again, the fact that we are one of a few CSU campuses who has chosen to be in-person while other CSU campuses have opted for an interim plan to delay in-person instruction is now creating more issues than necessary.

As AS, we are ready to work with you to identify alternative solutions on how best to respond to these student concerns immediately is critical right now lest we see students either choosing not to return to campus or attend their classes and campus-wide events for these issues that remain unresolved creating even greater fiscal and operational issues for the university.

In unity,

Our Associated Students (2021-2022)

Associated Students

President, Victoria Bartindale-Guffey
Vice President of External Affairs, David Castillon-Mendoza
Vice President of Financial Affairs, David Ledesma
President/Chair, Nevan Bell, Inter-Club Council
President/Chair, Lynda Munoz, Sports Club Council