



To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter requesting your attention and advocacy to the U.C. Santa Barbara Munger Hall project, proposed by Charles Munger to address the lack of housing on this campus that has been a growing issue over more than a decade. As the President of the undergraduate student body, and as an individual who has served in countless advocacy positions during my time as a student at UCSB, this project is by far one of the most pertinent concerns among the student body currently, and the lack of advocacy and response from leaders on all levels (campus, local, and statewide) has been both confusing and frustrating for the student body and the community as a whole. Student voices were not consulted in any regard when approving this project, but we believe that we can mend these issues and find solutions that truly support students.

In order to properly advocate for student concerns regarding the project, we conducted a survey over Winter Quarter, and provided a survey analysis (attached) with a more holistic approach to student opinions than we have seen over the past year. We assessed their values regarding housing in general, and then asked for their opinions about the project specifically. Here is some of what we found, please review the survey analysis for more detailed explanations and statistics on the survey:

The survey received 1,350 responses, of which all undergraduate students were invited to participate through social media, emails, and other forms of marketing. Of these students, 26.7% had visited the Munger Hall mockup near campus and completed the survey. The minority of these students expressed that there was an importance in establishing student housing no matter what, because of the housing crisis this campus saw in 2021. Affordable single occupancy rooms and daily need accommodations were also seen as positive features of the project. Among those who toured, there was still a general trend of discontent, especially towards the windowless bedrooms and suites. Density, small spaces, and artificial lighting were most often cited as factors for severe mental health concerns – a trend that is apparent across all those who completed the survey.

Out of the 73.7% of students who completed the survey without visiting the mockup voted, 36.11% voted that they did not support Munger Hall at all. This is compared to those who visited the



mockup, of which 44.16% did not support the project at all. Notably, those who visited were more likely to not support the project in any capacity. Between 13-14% of students in both pools said that they would support Munger Hall if there were changes made to the current design.

In general, and based on reports about the mockup feedback survey, we expected that students who visited the mockup may have more neutral views about the project. Contrary to our expectations, students still had negative perceptions of the project as a whole, and all students had common concerns about the project. These concerns majorly surround the lack of windows, dense atmosphere, and the potential for low-income students to be unintentionally targeted by this option which would thereby make them more likely to experience mental health issues as a result.

Interestingly, we found that Munger Hall's promise to be affordable has placed many students in a position where they feel that they cannot be too harsh on the project because they cannot afford many alternatives. This factor is the reason that I have sent this letter to you today. The mental health implications of this project are far too grand for students to feel like they "should not complain" for any reason. Students should not have to make trade-offs for their mental health in order to afford basic needs.

*This building does not have windows in the bedrooms of 94% of dorms.* The explanation by project leaders for building this model has been the "lack of evidence" to support the idea that this project will result in severe mental health issues for students within this residence hall. At best, the campus has offered to add a department for campus Counseling and Psychological Services within the building – without agreeing to support the expansion of this department despite the fact that it is already extremely constrained. This is an extreme band-aid solution for a completely preventable issue. As a campus, community, and as a society, we make promises to promote higher education for students within the UC system. Alongside this, we promise these students access to basic needs and resources to help them thrive. Yet, we risk putting students into this unnecessary position where they must choose which needs are more important while promising them that we care about their mental health.



Over the past few months, I have spoken with many UC and UCSB leaders, many of whom asked me why students have such contentions about this project. When explaining the mental health implications, many of them argued that these were moot points, that there was no evidence to suggest that mental health is a concern, and that students should not complain so much when the housing crisis is so severe. To the last point, I will continue to ask why students should just “accept” this disappointing situation that they are in no way responsible for causing. Our leaders, some of whom may be reading this letter today, could have prevented this situation many years ago.

To the other points, I often asked these individuals whether they would place their children in this residence hall. Most often, they laughed and said “That is not the point,” when that was exactly the point. Many of these individuals could likely afford better housing for their children, but the University of California is a world-renowned institution promising prestigious higher education for lower and middle income individuals. For them, this is exactly the point. I also speak to many parents of prospective students, current students, or college parents in general. Almost every single conversation I have ever had with these parents depicts extreme concern. UCSB alumni often say that they are glad they graduated before having to deal with this project.

This is not a proud legacy for UCSB. This is a disappointing band-aid solution to a deeply rooted issue not just in this county, but across California. In our response, we risk setting a precedent where college students can be so exploited as to sacrifice their health and wellbeing in order to receive an education. In our effort to be the leading institution in public education, we may become a spectacle for the exploitation of students who unfortunately pursue their degree through this university. Further, this project sets a precedent for how we can treat our citizens in this state as it continues to respond to this crisis in housing. UCSB may only be a national anomaly for a short time, before we turn our cheeks as large companies and other universities pursue similar projects.

With Munger Hall, we are telling students that we do not truly care about their health, their needs, or their quality of life while pursuing an education. We tell community members and California citizens that this urgent crisis can be easily resolved, because we are willing to sacrifice individuals in the process. We tell them that we do not truly care for their advocacy or their voices on matters that directly affect them – and no one else. We tell them that they can speak up, they can



# UC SANTA BARBARA

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use all the correct channels, but they will still be ignored in the pursuit of quick and simple solutions and private interests.

As President of the UCSB student body, I ask for your advocacy in this matter. The UCSB Academic Senate independent panel created a list of design recommendations that we ask for your support in promising. These recommendations include the addition of operable windows (of which, I would clarify as complete windows in every room), reevaluation of bedroom sizes, and potential decrease in density of this individual building. While pursuing this project, we intentionally did not set any goals. We want to work alongside all stakeholders to find negotiations that include student voices. This problem is still solvable, and I hope for your help in making this possible.

Regards,

Gurleen Pabla  
U.C. Santa Barbara  
Associated Students President