

Mt. SAC faculty fights on campus student housing proposal



By [Richard Irwin](#)

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Faculty is fighting a student housing proposal at Mount San Antonio College. A long line of professors told the Mt. SAC board of trustees that student housing wasn't needed or wanted at the community college in Walnut.

In March, President Bill Scroggins formed a student housing task force. He said Mt. SAC had been approached 18 months ago by an equity development group, Antarctica.

"They said in this economy, there's a lot of cash chasing revenue. 'So we've got the money and what we'd like to do with this money is help education, in particular community colleges,'" Scroggins recalled. "What have you got that produces any kind of revenue that will eventually pay off whatever investment we make in your college."

So the two parties talked about the parking structure and the daily rates that could be charged. "That didn't pencil out," Scroggins said. They also talked about solar power fields. "Now, we (Mt. SAC) see with our incentives and zero-interest loans, we are going to build that cheaper than anyone else," he said.

The Mt. SAC CEO pointed out that the City of Industry had considered building student housing with redevelopment money on the west parcel. "Conversations with the Walnut City Council said 'hell, no, we're not going to have housing on Grand Avenue, but we'd be OK with housing over by Cal Poly,'" Scroggins said.

So Antarctica was asked to show that student housing was feasible. It had the Cokley Group conduct a student survey on housing. "They saw enough demand for at least 500, maybe 1,000 students in student housing," Scroggins said.

These documents were shared with the task force in September. The survey suggested housing would be attractive to athletes, out of state and international students.

Mt. SAC librarian Chisa Uyeki disagrees, saying international students don't want student housing because cheaper lodging is already available. "Kinesiology has indicated that most of its athletes would not be able to afford the cost, currently estimated at \$800 a month," Uyeki said.

She pointed out that financial aid doesn't cover housing for American students. "Since these students are those most likely to need low-cost housing, the current pricing would be higher than existing alternatives," Uyeki added.

There are 11 community colleges that offer student housing.

"Current colleges with student housing are rural college such as Tulare and Modesto, which do not administer them in the way that Mt. SAC proposes, which is for profit," Uyeki said. "Mt. SAC is not a rural college and doesn't have the same needs." She said Cal Poly housing is available to Mt. SAC students.

Scroggins said Antarctica considered building in the eastern end of Parking Lot F and the adjacent hillside. That lot was also considered for the controversial 2,000 space parking structure planned by the college.

Resident parking would impinge on land used by the agricultural department.

"The Academic Senate opposes the construction of any student housing on campus that may have a negative impact on an educational program," said Beta Meyer. She asked the college to stop all planning activities.

"We're looking at the feasibility and it's not our recommendation to put it on ag land," Scroggins replied. "But we feel the Lot F location with ameliorated parking was feasible in terms of moving the project forward."

Barbara Crane, who has worked at Mt. SAC for 40 years, feared the project would subtract resources from other programs. "In order to assure profitability, Mt. SAC needs to invest \$5-\$15 million for developing the site's infrastructure. This investment is needed in order for the contractors to achieve a profit and make the project worth bidding on," Crane said.

She was also concerned with security. "What would happen in the event of alcohol or other behavioral problems? Other campuses with student housing have indicated that this is a primary ongoing problem," Crane said.

Before the task force looks at the education master plan, environmental impact report or facilities master plan, Scroggins said it has concerns about these same issues.

"We had several discussions about all these issues you mentioned -- security and health and student life," Scroggins said. "The idea being, since we're not in the business of operating student housing, to have the operator handle as much of this as possible."

He said the college is trying to answer all these questions before deciding if student housing is even feasible.