April 4, 2018

Dear Academic Senate,

I am delighted to hear that our representatives and student senators have taken a keen interest in creating a meditation room for all students of various faiths. I have been an LMC student for the past three years, and now in my final, as ever before, I am eternally grateful for Los Medanos College. The staff and faculty are all genuinely caring and helpful in all the many resources LMC provides. I am confident that there is no college quite like LMC and the people here. However, I must confess that I believe, in general, there is a lack of provision for students who would want to practice prayer at school. This resonates with me for it has been my personal challenge weighing heavy on my heart. As a Muslim, there are five prayers daily that I am accountable for, which are to be performed at certain times of the day, as the day progresses. Being a full-time student and working part-time means that I spend a great portion of a day at school, five days a week. But being at school, I would miss my prayers because I had no place to pray fearful that people would respond rudely, that I would be told to stop, or put myself in a vulnerable position. But I can honestly say, if there was a safe place on campus where I knew I would be safe to fulfill my spiritual obligation, it would have changed everything for me. I would have more liberty in classes being unhindered by time, instead of having to cut studying abruptly and go home. This is only my personal story, but I know that many fellow students can attest to the same dilemma.

Regardless of which religion or belief a student follows, a student may want to fulfill their religious obligation, or simply reflect, but may be feel discouraged because they feel that that have to ask for permission, explain themselves, and lack the proper privacy and safety to do so. By having a reflection room, students will feel more comfortable, supported and included on campus, and they will find much comfort knowing that there is a place they are welcome to use without judgment nor fear. In turn, a student is able to focus on the main purpose of school: the learning! They can participate in their religious practices without stressful obstacles. On that note that school is a place of learning, having a reflection room exposes faculty and students to different spiritual practices which facilitates learning about other ideas. In fact, the greater purpose of implementing a reflection room is that it creates a safe and accepting learning environment, instilling values of tolerance and open-mindedness. Exposure to differences allows for understanding and empathy amongst people. This ensures that no one feels obligated to participate, since use of the reflection room is out of the class and on an individual basis.

I know that at LMC, we take pride in our diversity and prioritize creating an equitable campus. Creating the reflection room is an affirmative step to make that goal a reality. I say this will all due to respect and consideration of all individuals at LMC.

Thank you for your time,

Hajer Ghaus