

[Http://csutalksabouttodossantos.weebly.com](http://csutalksabouttodossantos.weebly.com)

Information to share regarding the truth behind the impact of Colorado State University opening a research campus in Todos Santos, Baja California Sur.

Though the project could be beneficial to Colorado State students, there are many negative social, economic, and racial issues that CSU administration is overlooking in pursuing this campus. The land and buildings for the campus were donated by a large-scale development company called MIRA, which is creating a massive housing development in the small town of Todos Santos for wealthy United States and Canadian citizens. The development threatens an endangered species, the local fishing economy, and the well-being of many community members. It also promotes international racism and classism, as wealthy citizens will be purchasing homes CSU will be a part of this development.

As students, faculty, and staff of an institution of higher education, there is a responsibility to advocate for international human rights and not place our own interests above the well-being of those in other countries.

Information from CSU alumna, Leticia Maldonado, visited Todos Santos with CSU was negative, and a letter from ASCSU Director of Health, Mackenzie Whitesell. Thank you for your commitment to creating a more just world!

Dear CSU Students,

I wanted to share with the students of CSU some disturbing information I have recently learned about the new CSU Todos Santos campus. For those who don't know, CSU is building a research campus in Todos Santos, a small town in Baja California Sur, Mexico. An announcement was recently made about the campus, which discussed the various programs that will be available for students. The Todos Santos campus website states that "the center will benefit CSU students and research as well as Todos Santos residents."

While this statement could be true if CSU was developing this campus independently, the reality of the situation is much different. I was first informed about the truth about the campus by a graduate student, who was sent to Todos Santos and discovered a severe lack of community support for the campus. CSU received a donation of land and buildings for the campus by MIRA, a development company that creates large scale developments in

Mexico. The company is building a multimillion-dollar development (significantly larger than the size of the town) that will include homes costing \$400,000-950,000 that are intended to be purchased by wealthy people from the United States and Canada. Many of these homes will be beach-front, thus blocking access to the beaches and hindering local fishermen from making a living. The homes also threaten an endangered species, the leatherback turtle. MIRA and others claim development will bring jobs to the town. While this may be true, the jobs that it will bring are either temporary construction jobs or service jobs, such as housekeeping, that can perpetuate international racial and class barriers.

The graduate student who originally informed me of this issue spoke to many local people who were strongly against the project. There are also two separate Facebook groups that have started against development in the region, and a petition has been started in opposition to the development. It is clear that many people in the local community are strongly against the project.

After learning this information, I met with Dr. Rick Miranda, Provost, and Kim Kita, who is in charge of the project to raise my concerns and clarify their understanding of the situation. Dr. Miranda told me that CSU wanted to remain “objective” about the situation and not side with either the community or the development company. Frankly, CSU has already chosen to side with the development company by accepting such a large donation and linking to MIRA’s website (where homes can be purchased) on the Today@Colostate announcement. CSU is part of the development and many local people are clearly stating that they do not want CSU to come to Todos Santos because of that.

At my meeting, Kim Kita also told me that only a few people in the community were against the project. I told her that if that was true, I wanted documentation of all of the efforts CSU has made to gather community support and of the support she claims that local people have displayed for the project. I asked her to email me any video footage or notes from focus group sessions with local community members, any surveys that had been administered, and any other documentation of community support. She told me she would get back to me in a few days with the information. About two weeks after our meeting, she sent me a list of the types of people they had spoken to:

"100+ Individuals and community members
35 Businesses located in Todos Santos, Pescadero, and La Paz
33 NGO Contacts (Mexico nonprofit groups)
12 Local, Regional, and National Government Contacts
10+ University Professors (UABCS, and other Mexican University professors. CSU professors excluded)
3 501c3 (US nonprofit groups working in Mexico)

200+ Approximate # of contacts in Mexico in the last 2 years, particularly the last 6-9 months. This excludes US and CSU connections."

This was the only information she provided (no surveys, reports, focus groups, etc.). I asked her again to provide more information and still have not heard back since she emailed me on May 29th.

I believe that it is vital that CSU students are aware of the true implications of the new Todos Santos campus. I also want to make clear that if CSU was starting a campus independently, this would be an entirely different conversation. However, the reality is that we are tied intimately to MIRA and thus to its harmful impacts on the local people. In my opinion, we are promoting a modern-day form of global colonization and domination by wealthy countries. This violates every value that CSU has taught me and I am disappointed by the lack of concern that administration seems to have about this issue. I feel that administration does not understand the depth of the concerns and, so far, they have demonstrated to me that they are not willing to make a true effort to understand the impact on the community.

Our administration at CSU needs to start holding MIRA accountable for its impact given our role in their development. They need to provide documentation of community support for the project and show that they genuinely care about the community. Because this has yet to happen, I urge my fellow Rams to write to administration asking for them to demonstrate their commitment to the community. If they fail to do so, I believe we must stop development at the Todos Santos campus until further evaluation of the situation can take place.

As an institution of higher education, we have a responsibility to act as conscious global citizens. We cannot continue with a project of this scale until we fully understand the social, racial, cultural, and environmental

impacts of the development.

Thank you and be well,

Mackenzie Whitesell

Concerned CSU Student & ASCSU Director of Health