

Dear Anonymous,

I am writing because I am deeply saddened and disturbed to hear of your experiences at Fullerton College, and that they were clearly so very different from my own.

As background, my name is Sophia Alexander. I had the good fortune of attending Fullerton College from 2014 to 2016, as well as the honor of serving the students of the college as the President of the Associated Students, the student government of the school.

During my two years there, I was fortunate to have had contact with much of the administrators of the school, including adjunct and tenured faculty, deans, vice presidents, department and division chairs, counselors, classified and student support staff, and the office of the president of the school—as well as many, many students.

In this time, I observed almost the polar opposite of what you describe in your letter. Student leaders continuously worked with faculty and administration, and all shared ideas about how to make the campus better. We reached out and heard from much of the student body through surveys, a campus wide newsletter, and anonymous suggestion boxes, on the issues that most directly affected their lives.

To that point, I can say that campus sexual harassment and assault was regrettably one of the main concerns that we heard—and far too often, frankly. But those concerns were primarily oriented around long walks to cars at night, lack of available safety escorts, safety call boxes, and distant parking lots. The campus administration and student government responded to this, and campus safety increased their personnel available for escorts.

Student leaders were also present at planning committee meetings to give input for new construction on campus to ensure that, among other concerns, parking would be adequate—and adequately lit—when the new campus construction is completed. We also floated ideas to ask community based self-defense experts to teach free or reduced self defense classes for women on campus, but unfortunately were not able to complete the work on getting that to fruition.

Perhaps this is something that the current student leaders—or maybe even an anonymous student feeling the call to help their campus community—would like to pick back up, and build into a program to assist in these problems?

Unfortunately, the issue of sexual harassment and assault is one that continues to plague thousands of campuses around the nation, and has clearly proven to be one of the most intractable public issues of our day. There is no perfect, silver bullet solution, and the answer requires hard work, and dedicated efforts to change our campus (and national) cultures and educate students, educators, and increase the number of personnel responsible for victim advocacy and reporting. I hope that you'll join on with the work that the administration, faculty, and student leaders have done, and help them continue to improve all outcomes related to this issue—every helping hand helps.

As for neo-nazis, white supremacist groups, and religious extremism on campus, Fullerton College is lucky to have a diverse student body that is 70% students of minority races—as well as diverse staff and faculty— that consist of a multitude of all major races and ethnicities present in the population of the United States and the state of California, as well as persons of color, women, and LGBT community members holding positions of senior authority in nearly every department on campus.

It is also the case that while serving as the president, my own student government was naturally rich with diversity—of all types, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, religious affiliation, class, ability, sexuality, and even professional background—and these beautiful people also held senior leadership roles in the student government and in campus club leadership. Not one of them—in the faculty, administration, or student body or government—was ever “token.”

Further, personally, I am a Jew (so *please* believe that I share your opposition to white supremacist groups), grew up very poor, am a disabled Navy veteran, and felt comfortable enough and so supported at Fullerton College that I came out to the student body as transgender, and transitioned during my tenure as president.

And those feelings were not misplaced—when I transitioned I had the full support of the administration, student body, and faculty as I went through this dramatic change, and not for one second did I feel that I was treated differently or in a discriminatory fashion.

I say all of this not to attempt to disprove or dismiss your concerns. These are all my own perceptions and experiences on campus, as the experiences you have shared are your own.

It is certainly possible that things have changed in the time since I transferred, especially given the political events of the nation during this tumultuous time and the rises in reported hate crimes since November, 2016 (as reported by the SPLC, and ACLU, among others). You are correct in your statement that an open campus does not imply that students should be objected to abuse or prejudice of any kind, and while I have since moved on from Fullerton College, I would like to ask you to, as a valuable and important part of the campus community, to become involved in the efforts to fight for a better future—for *all* Americans and Californians.

If things are as truly as dire as you have said, please reach out to me directly (I will ask the *Observer* staff to give you my information, and I would like to help you solve these issues while continuing to protect your identity). Furthermore, the current President of Fullerton College is Greg Schulz, who has made it a priority to hold open regular open meetings with students, and has an open door policy—you can literally walk in and ask to set up a meeting, and he will see you. You will be entirely safe and your concerns heard—and backed up with immediate corrective action—if you reach out to either of us. I promise you this.

Fullerton College is not a perfect school—there is no such place—but it is still a wonderful school. While I am sad to hear of your negative experiences, I do want to say that I do believe it is a college populated with passionate and brilliant faculty, dedicated and professional administrators, and talented, diverse, and driven students, from all walks of life engaged across all academic departments and all extracurricular interests. Transparency, accountability, and dedication to improvement are traits that I think almost anyone would use without hesitation to describe Fullerton College, and I hope that you will join me and a network of thousands of others to work to make it better every day and work together with us to amend the problems you have outlined.

Thank you for writing, and I hope you are having a successful Spring semester so far.