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To: bc prezmessage

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December 8th, 2022

Renegade family,

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a happy and joyous holiday season. As we enter this magical time of the year, I want to share some personal thoughts:

Many know about the Magi, the "three wise men from the East" who commemorated the birth of Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Few realize that some religious scholars believe the three kings are not Christians or Jewish, but Zoroastrians - members of an ancient religion that my family and I belong to.



Zoroastrianism traces its roots to the same geographic region that was the cradle of all primary religions of the world: ancient Persia and the Mesopotamian Valley. In this area, a very ancient tradition of Yalda has been celebrated for thousands of years to mark the longest night of the winter and therefore, the coming of Spring. Believe it or not, Yalda includes ritual celebrations such as a "Christmas" Tree, fun, food (of course) and merriment!

The underlying principles of my Zoroastrian faith gives us three commandments to live by: **Good words; good thoughts; and good deeds.** Whatever your faith is, I hope your holidays are filled with these not only during this holiday season, but throughout the new year.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS
JOYOUS KWANZA
HANUKKAH SAMEACH**

As I reflect on this season of goodwill, where we wish one another "peace on earth," I must acknowledge that members of BC's communities of color, and LGBTQ community, have shared that many do not feel peace on our own campus. It has been disheartening to see attacks on members of our campus, especially those who already feel marginalized.

I am reinforcing my commitment to the College's [Core Values](#), and invite you to support the vast diversity in our faculty, staff and student community. While there may be a small group promoting exclusion, that is not a value of this institution. Our institution has thrived on supporting initiatives that are centered around supporting all communities and all students. Initiatives that drive acceptance, inclusivity and most importantly, translate to student success through our increased graduation rates. There is no place at our institution for divisiveness or hateful rhetoric.

The California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 5 provides California Community Colleges with state regulations. Section 51201 provides us with direction on diversity, equity and inclusion. What really resonates with me is subsection (b): *"embracing diversity means that we must intentionally practice acceptance, anti-racism, and respect towards one another and understand that racism, discrimination, and prejudices create and sustain privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others."* [Cal. Code Regs. tit. 5 § 51201](#)

We must not allow the discontent or views of a few to supersede what we are required to provide at our college and the work that we have intentionally developed to support all members of our communities. This is a reminder that we are all tasked with this work.

I am hopeful that this break will serve as a reset and we come back in 2023 with a renewed sense of commitment to our students. It is all of our responsibility to ensure all students, faculty and staff feel safe and are able to thrive at Bakersfield College.

Let us have good words, good thoughts and good deeds in the new year!

