The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal 19-20
(Voting Units: Full Senate)

"Senate Proposal on Campus Security and Safety at Michigan Technological University"

Introduced by: Senator Sam Sweitz, Department of Social Sciences

I. Introduction

We are all aware of the growing number of acts of bias crimes, intolerance, discrimination, and interpersonal and mass violence that are increasingly becoming part of our contemporary social consciousness. We also know that educational institutions, from elementary schools, to high schools, to community colleges, and universities are not immune to such incidents, and are in fact often the sites and targets of such acts. A common refrain heard in the aftermath of the worst of these tragedies, regardless of when or where they occur, is "we never thought it could/would happen here." However, it is important to acknowledge that such acts, small and large, do in fact happen everywhere, and therefore, can and do continue to happen here at Michigan Tech. Across the nation, campus safety and security concerns have rightly taken on a greater urgency and it is in this context that we as an institution and as a campus community must work proactively to adequately educate and prepare ourselves; with the mindset that these kinds of incidents "will not happen here."

II. Background/Rationale

As noted in the Senate Resolution 17-20: *Promoting and Facilitating Tolerance and Understanding at Michigan Technological University*, over the past several years multiple incidents involving acts of discrimination, marginalization, and harassment against individuals within our community have occurred. These moments have always been met with widespread condemnation across campus, but beyond the sustained work of some individuals and dedicated units, such as the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, these incidents are often treated as momentary and isolated events, to be dealt with individually and reactively as they occur.

The events of the last several years are not isolated, but rather suggest a pattern of discrimination and bias driven incidents that persist on this campus. Faculty and staff may often be unaware of many of these incidents, but our students are certainly not unaware. When asked, students report

frequent incidents of discrimination and intolerance in the form of acts of intimidation, hate speech (in the form of verbal slurs and insults, as well as the dissemination of hate propaganda), and bias motivated vandalism. Yet, despite student confirmation of these acts and the periodic recognition on the part of the University of these incidents (see for example Glenn Mroz's email of 3/26/18 attached below) there is limited cross-campus coordination to proactively and systematically deal with these issues.

As a result, much of our understanding of these events is anecdotal and undocumented. Part of this may be related to how such incidents are classified from a legal standpoint. For example, Michigan Tech's annual security report for 2019 states "There were no hate crimes reported for 2018, 2017, or 2016 at the Houghton campus location" (Michigan Tech's Annual Security and Fire Safety Report, 2019, pp. 71). The report does, under the heading *Crime Definitions*, list and define terms such as Bias, Bias Crime, Disability Bias, Ethnicity/Natural Origin Bias, Hate Group, Hate Crime, Racial Bias, Religious Bias, and Sexual Orientation Bias. However, the widely known incidents that have occurred on campus during this time frame are not reported in this document, perhaps because they have not risen to the legal definition of criminality. Furthermore, the report does not discuss the prevention, intervention, or particular institutional policies and procedures that might address these issues, even though other aspects of misconduct and criminal behavior (e.g. sexual misconduct, drug/alcohol policies, and fire safety) are discussed in particular detail within the document (Michigan Tech's Annual Security and Fire Safety Report, 2019, pp. 57-59). The absence of these incidents in the annual report may suggest a gap in how such incidents are documented and reported on campus.

Michigan Tech does have many policies and procedures in place regarding issues related to campus safety and security. The Office of Academic and Community Conduct enforces standards of conduct outlined in the Student Code of Community Conduct. This document outlines policies and procedures for a wide variety of conduct related issues, including but not exclusive to bullying, dangerous materials, discrimination, disruptive behavior, harassment (general and protected classes), threats, and weapons. The Board of Trustees Policy Manual outlines issues of discrimination and harassment among employees of the University, as does the Faculty Handbook; although both do so primarily within a legalistic framework based on Federal law (Board of Trustees Policies Manual Chapter 5: EEO 5.01–5.03: Equal Opportunity, Discrimination or Harassment; Faculty Handbook 3. Faculty Rights and Responsibilities 3.1 General Policy. 3.2 Discrimination/Harassment). Public Safety and Police Services primarily lists policies and procedures related to sex/gender discrimination and harassment, and several safety and security issues listed under *Campus and Facilities*, related to surveillance and monitoring technology, distribution of promotional materials, chalking, and weapons registration (University Policy Office University Policies General University 1.14 Sex/Gender Discrimination, Harassment and/or Sexual Misconduct; University Policy Office University Policies Campus and Facilities).

There is ample evidence that the University, Public Safety and Police Security, and other units like the Center for Diversity and Inclusion are actively working to improve campus life in the face of these safety and security issues. In fact, a wide variety of resources are available online or in person for a broad array safety, security, and inclusion related issues. For example Public Safety and Police Security provides a variety of education programs related to [crime prevention](), [active trainer shooting workshops for workplaces](), [self-defense](), and an online instructional video on [Preventing Mass Casualty Shootings](). The Center for Diversity and Inclusion offers [Safe Place training]() and coordination for underrepresented student communities ([LGBTQIA+](), [Women](), and [Students of Color]()), as well as access to a variety of [prevention resources, advocacy and support services, and complaint procedures](). The Dean of Students Office provides an [online form]() to report a broad number of concerns not limited to Discrimination and Harassment, Students of Concern, and General Student Misconduct. Improvements have also been made in terms of physical security on campus, including active shooter locks on some classrooms and lecture halls and the installation of blue light emergency phones.

However, despite these resources and the policies and procedures that are in place, there seem to be gaps in coordination and preparedness across the wider campus. There appears to be a general lack of specific policies and procedures related particularly to bias crimes (e.g. the aforementioned gap in documenting and reporting bias crimes on campus) or broader issues of campus safety and security. For example, there is no coordinated, campus-wide effort to train faculty and staff in safety procedures related to hate crimes and other disruptive classroom and campus behaviors or violent incidents. When training has occurred, it has been particular to facilities or units, and individuals, and is largely by request (although some training is required for certain individuals, e.g. related to Title IX requirements).   Furthermore, there are no clear policies and procedures related to physical security, e.g. door locks, alarm systems, systems of communication, evacuation plans, etc.

In short, the University necessarily must be more proactive in systematically creating policies and procedures, in planning, in coordinating, and in communicating preparedness for the safety and security of all students, staff, faculty, and visitors on our campus.

III. Proposal

The University Senate asks that the University Administration take a more active role in addressing the current gaps in University policies and procedures in order to address deficiencies in our safety and security preparedness. The Senate asks the University Administration to form a task force to evaluate our current approach to campus security and safety, addressing, but not limited to, the following list of concerns:

- More specific policies and procedures related to bias crimes and other disruptive behaviors that take place in the classroom and on the wider campus;

Proposal 19-20   December 11, 2019

- The need for increased safety and security initiatives, including classroom safety procedures, secure facilities, communication procedures, and coordinated, campus-wide training efforts for both employees and students;

- Improved standards and rules for reporting, documenting, and disseminating information related to incidents of bias crimes on campus;

- Coordinate with or create a standing committee (or assignment of these duties to an existing committee, e.g. the Presidential Task Force on Safety and Security), to develop, review, and coordinate planning related to a campus wide safety and security initiatives.

Proposal 19-20   December 11, 2019

Michigan Tech

Our Community
1 message

Glenn Mroz <gdmroz@mtu.edu>   Mon, Mar 26, 2018 at 3:01 PM
Reply-To: bbgorman@mtu.edu
To:

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students,

In the last few weeks, there have been several reports of slurs, insults, and disrespectful behavior toward individuals and groups on campus. These incidents are in contrast to the University's goal of community—a goal intended to support the ongoing exchange of ideas, celebration of individual differences and maintenance of an inclusive and respectful atmosphere on campus.

Some of these incidents have left clusters of students feeling unsafe on campus. This is troubling because fear has a negative impact on people's ability to learn. We are all here to learn and work together. We may not always agree with one another, but we can – and must – always treat each other with respect. People who respect each other are able to acknowledge individual differences, while also acknowledging the value of each person's individual perspective.

It's my experience that the vast majority of our community exemplifies the best of our Values Statements. Still, as the semester winds down, I encourage you to do your best to support one another, respectfully participate in challenging conversations, and ultimately listen and seek understanding of others' perspectives. This is the only way we will build a better community and ultimately a better world.

Sincerely,

Glenn

Glenn D. Mroz

President

Proposal 19-20   December 11, 2019