

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

“Sense of the Senate Resolution for Sufficient Notice of University Closure”

(Voting Units: Full Senate)

We propose that any closure of Michigan Technological University shall be declared a minimum of two hours before the closure period through the Michigan Tech Safety First Alert system. This minimum notice does not apply to extreme emergency closures including, but not limited to, fires, bomb threats, and shootings.

1. Background

On February 21, 2014 the Michigan Tech community was given two minutes' notice of university closure due to severe weather. Regardless of which side of the debate members of the campus community were on (to close or not to close), most agreed that this was not sufficient notice.

The current Michigan Tech policy states:

The president, provost and vice president for academic affairs, or their designated representative may decide to close the University for a specified period of time (examples might include but are not limited to prolonged power outage, prolonged loss of heating capability, or closure of main highway due to inclement weather). Notification will be through Safety First Alert, the University web site, and local media. Faculty and students will be excused from reporting to class.

2. Rationale

Faculty, staff, and students are actively participating in events as the day progresses. These events involve planning on the part of each member of the Michigan Tech community. Insufficient notice of closure can cause problems for all of the members of the community.

Consider the following scenarios for an example of a closure at 2:00pm which was sent through the Michigan Tech Safety First Alert system at 1:58pm.

- A class is being held from 1-3pm. Phones are not allowed in the classroom. How does this class get notified?
- A student drives in from L'Anse to attend a 2:05pm class. Right after sitting down in the classroom, the student checks their e-mail and realizes class is cancelled.
- A professor teaches two sections of the same course from 12-2pm and from 2-4pm. How are they notified and how do they handle the situation?
- A staff member is driving a shipment from the Chem Store to the Forestry building at 1:55pm. What do they do with their shipment?

In this example, the event (blizzard) was well predicted and the issue (Houghton County plows off the roads at 2pm) was known well in advance. When conditions are well predicted and/or known, there is no reason not to provide reasonable notice to members of the community.

[Introduced to the Administrative Policy Committee by Jonathan Riehl, Senior Lecturer, Department of Engineering Fundamentals (riejlj@mtu.edu)]