The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal 67-20
(Voting Units: Full Senate)

“Creation of Racial and Social Justice Days of Service and Learning for Juneteenth and MLK Day Annually”

Introduced by: Amy L. Howard and Rachel Jones

I. Introduction and Historical Background

Karvas Gamble Jr., Eric Reason, Korryn Gaines, Rekia Boyd, Kionte Spencer, Darius Tarver, Wayne Arnold Jones, Manuel Ellis, Victor Duffy Jr., Kobe Dimock-Heisler, Clinton R. Allen, Dontre Hamilton, Timothy Caughman, Sylville Smith, Corey Jones, Tyre King, Eric Garner, Miles Hall, Kendrick Johnson, Charleena Lyles, Michael Lorenzo Dean, Trayvon Martin, Renisha Mcbride, Kiwane Carrington, Oscar Grant III, Breonna Taylor, Kalief Browder, Darrien Hunt, Troy Hodge, William Green, Ahmaud Arbery, Dion Johnson, Tony Mcdae, Jamel Floyd, George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, Italia Marie Kelly, David Mcatee, Chris Beaty and millions of other Black individuals murdered by racist violence) and the larger issues of systemic racism and white supremacy in this country.

A 2019 Time article titled Diversity Has Become a Booming Business. So Where Are the Results? notes that institutions of higher education in STEM sectors are increasing positions like the VP of Diversity and Inclusion in an effort to support a more diverse workforce. Despite the growth in these administrative and leadership positions in corporations as well as on college and university campuses, achieving diversity and inclusive excellence in science, technology, engineering and math fields is not flourishing, and success in achieving diversity and inclusion remains an ongoing and systemic issue which disenfranchises those already otherwise underrepresented and underserved.

If Michigan Technological University wishes to be a leader in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the University Senate urges the administration to consider how the Fourth Industrial Revolution will lead not just in technological development but through changing the way we live and work to create a more equitable and inclusive virtual and lived world for all.

The University Senate is committed to promoting understanding and change of racial and social injustices on campus. Past actions include Senate resolutions and the creation of an ad hoc committee for promoting and facilitating tolerance and understanding. Ongoing measures are needed to reach our university mission of creating “a diverse and inclusive community of and for scholars that is conducive to excellent teaching, innovative research, and the personal and intellectual growth of its students, faculty, staff, and alumni” (Michigan Technological University Diversity Statement). To continue realizing this mission, faculty, staff, and students will benefit from institutionally-supported opportunities to explore how racial inequality affects our community.

II. Proposal

Juneteenth is a celebration of the day the last enslaved Black persons in Galveston, Texas were freed in 1865. It is a day meant to celebrate freedom and remember the important contributions of Black people and culture to the development of our nation. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Day celebrates the civil rights leader’s life and legacy. It is a federal holiday designated as a national day of service to encourage all Americans to volunteer to improve their communities. Celebrating each by exploring how racism has affected us as a nation, an institution, and as individuals signals to all community members, particularly People of Color, that we are willing to openly and honestly confront racism on our campus. Ideally, both days will spur a campus-wide examination of who we are as an institution and how we perpetuate or break down all systems of oppression. Spending two days in reflection and conversation can and should promote discussions about privilege, power, oppression, and change that last the entire year in classrooms, offices, and departments across campus.

In order to combat individual and systemic racism (and intersectional issues faced by marginalized groups) on campus, we ask the administration to take the following concrete steps:

- create a committee composed of leadership from each academic unit, Student Affairs, and other Staff areas that will work in tandem with the VP of Diversity and Inclusion
- To create and implement annual campus-wide days of service and learning on Juneteenth (June 19) and MLK Jr. Day (3rd Monday of January) that serve as committed days of educational and community engagement among faculty, staff, and students.
- The VP of Diversity and Inclusion (in conjunction with a campus-wide committee composed of at least one faculty member from each academic unit and other nominations from Student Affairs and Staff sectors) will be responsible for overseeing these days of service and learning.

As the University Senate, we are proposing two days annually to be utilized as dedicated institutional days of commitment to education and service to diversity, equity, and inclusion, however, this is only the beginning of what Michigan Technological University must do to demonstrate a true commitment to equity, as two dedicated days of education and service are performative measures and our campus needs action-based measures to follow these observances.

Furthermore, the University Senate asks the administration to consider implementing the following additional action-based measures following the creation of the days of service and learning so we can become a leading STEM institution who leads with equity first: require baseline diversity education to all faculty and staff; create general education courses aimed at equity-based learning for all first-year students; dedicated recruitment of underrepresented groups; dedicated support services for underrepresented students, staff, and faculty; dedicated funding and prioritization of hiring diverse faculty and staff; enhanced campus programming and curriculum dedicated to diverse voices and perspectives; increased fundraising for internal scholarships to support underrepresented identities; administrative consultations with social identity student groups and staff/faculty sectors to analyze issues on campus; action based steps
as informed by the Campus Climate Survey in which many issues around equity are noted. This list is not exhaustive, and additional measures are needed to prioritize diversity and inclusion.