

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal 50-22 (Voting Units: Full Senate)

“Proposal to Create an ‘October Recess’”

Submitted by: The Academic and Instructional Policy Committee and the Undergraduate Student Government

I. Introduction

For many students, the Fall Semester stretch from the start of instruction to the current Fall Break (i.e., Thanksgiving Break) in November is strenuous and is often accompanied by a feeling of exhaustion. Not surprisingly, the Center for Student Health and Well-Being observes an annual spike in student emergency appointment calls in the month of October (see below). Numerous universities, including a number in Michigan and among our benchmark institutions, incorporate a mid-semester Fall recess to help alleviate some of these issues.

The mid-semester recess implemented at Tech in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique opportunity to pilot an “October Recess” ([Senate Proposal 55-20](#)). For many students, faculty, and staff the recess that occurred on October 15th and 16th of that year offered an opportunity to decompress and reorganize before completing the second half of the semester. Although 2020 is not a representative year due to COVID, emergency mental health appointments did not peak in October as in other years (see below).

The University Senate, by proposing the inclusion of a mid-semester “October Recess” in the Academic Calendar, will support and facilitate mental health and

wellness for employees and students, ultimately promoting a healthier and more productive campus environment for all.

II. Rationale

Starting the Fall semester on the last Thursday of August (rather than the Tuesday after Labor Day or the Monday before Labor Day when Labor Day falls on September 5, 6, or 7th as mandated under [Senate Procedure 101.1.1](#)) will create an opportunity for a 2-day break in mid- October without losing any days of instruction. This change will interfere with the current scheduling of Orientation week. However, a shortened orientation as accomplished in August of 2020 is possible, and Student Affairs supports a mid-semester, recess in October.

An “October Recess” is intended to provide faculty, staff, and students with an opportunity to focus on personal mental health and wellness as an institutional strategy for promoting long-term success for the remainder of the academic year. The current proposal is focused on suspending instruction, a direct benefit to both students and faculty, but such a recess would also afford staff the opportunity to take needed days off as well.

The need for a mid-semester recess is evidenced by the seasonal variation and increased number of emergency student appointments made with the Center for Student Health and Well-being during the month of October (Appendix A, Figures A1 and A2). The benefits of the emergency Fall 2020 recess on students’ mental health, may be correlated by the decrease in the relative number of emergency appointments made with the Center during the month of October that year (Appendix A, Figure A3).

The impact on faculty and staff is evidenced by the number of employees who seek assistance and other support through the Employee Assistance Program during the second fiscal quarter (October-December) (Appendix A, Figures A4

and A5).

The need for and benefits of establishing an “October Recess” at Michigan Tech are consistent with a broader mental health crisis on U.S. college campuses, an issue which has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ In response to this crisis, a number of our institutional peers have already adopted a mid-semester recess, including the University of Michigan Ann-Arbor, Michigan State University, Colorado School of Mines, Missouri University of Science and Technology, Lehigh University, Grand Valley State University, Purdue University, the University of Illinois, and the University of Minnesota Duluth.

Establishing an “October Recess” to promote a safe, healthy, and well campus is supported by institutional stakeholders from across the University, including the Provost, the Dean of Students, the Graduate School, the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being, the Registrar, the Graduate Student Government, and the Undergraduate Student Government. The Undergraduate Student Government has been a particularly strong proponent of a Fall, mid-semester recess having passed two separate resolutions, 2020-2021, #6 and 2021-2022, #2 (see Appendix II), in support of a recess.

Removing the current Fall semester Labor Day contingencies, and instead beginning on the Thursday before the last Monday in August, addresses two major issues with the current Academic Calendar scheduling procedures:

- Exam week occasionally ends inopportunistically close to the Winter Holidays. For example, in 2018 Exam week ended the 21st of December and in 2023 will end on the 22nd of December under the current calendar. In these years, grading of exams must be completed over the Christmas Holiday.
- Currently Mid-Year Commencement occurs at times both before and after exam week.

Lastly, the proposed break would be between the two 7-week tracks (Track A and Track B) of the Fall semester, which will provide a convenient recess between the tracks, as well as additional time for faculty to evaluate final grades for these courses.

III. Proposal

The current proposal would establish an “October Recess” occurring on the Thursday and Friday of Week 7 of each Fall Semester. To accommodate an “October Recess” the Fall semester will start on the Thursday before the last Monday in August. “October Recess” will commence with the Fall 2023 semester and will be part of the Academic Calendar for all subsequent Fall semesters.

The following changes to Senate Procedure 101.1.1: Guidelines for an Academic Calendar of 14 Instructional Weeks will include the following changes.

Current Senate Procedure 101.1.1 Reads:

Fall semester classes normally will start the Tuesday after Labor Day, but when Labor Day falls on September 5, 6, or 7, classes will begin the Monday before Labor Day.

Further fall semester guidelines:

- Labor Day is a holiday for those years when classes begin before Labor Day.
- Classes will be dismissed for K-Day the afternoon of the Friday following Labor Day.
- Fall break will be the week of Thanksgiving.
- The last day of classes will be the Friday that falls on December 9 through 15.
- Final Exams will be scheduled for Monday through Friday of the week following the last day of classes.

- Fall Commencement will be held on the Saturday following Final Exams, unless it falls on or after the 21st of the month of December, in which cases commencement will be held on the Saturday prior to Final Exams.

Proposed Amendment:

Fall semester classes will begin on the Thursday before the last Monday of August. ~~Fall semester classes normally will start the Tuesday after Labor Day, but when Labor Day falls on September 5, 6, or 7, classes will begin the Monday before Labor Day.~~

Further fall semester guidelines:

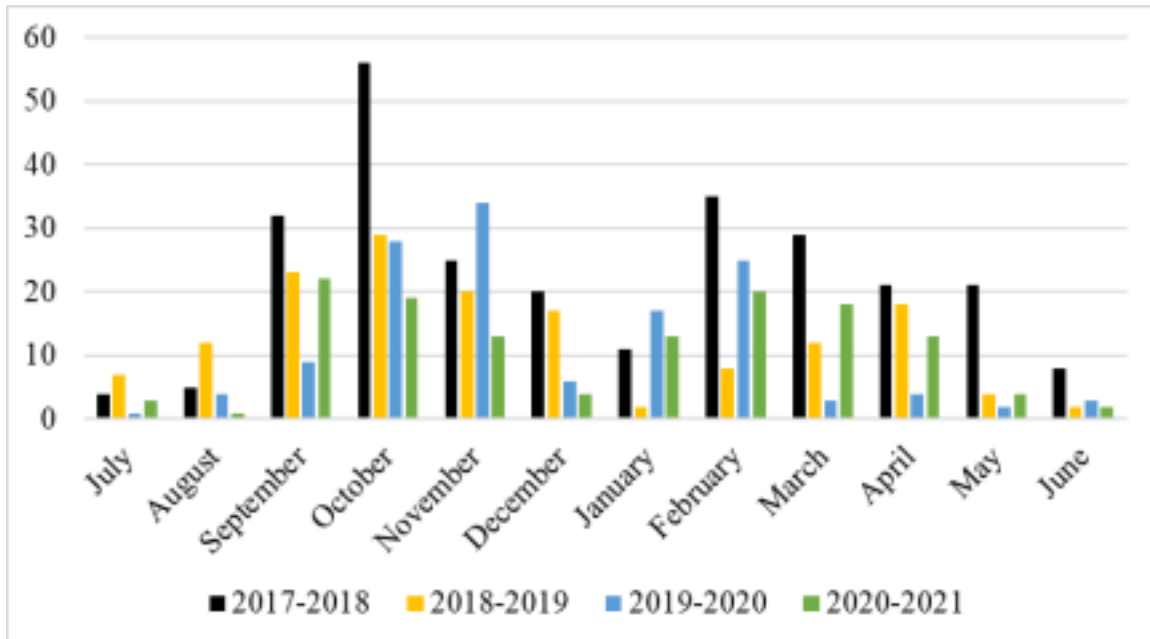
- Labor Day is a holiday ~~for those years when classes begin before Labor Day.~~
- Classes will be dismissed for K-Day the afternoon of the Friday following Labor Day.
- ~~An October Recess will take place the Thursday and Friday of Week 7.~~
- Fall break will be the week of Thanksgiving.
- ~~The last day of classes will be the Friday that falls on December 9 through 15.~~
- Final Exams will be scheduled for Monday through Friday of the week following the last day of classes.
- ~~Fall Commencement will be held on the Saturday following Final Exams.~~

The proposed changes to Senate Procedure 101.1.1 would result in the following Academic Calendar for Fall 2023.

Proposed Fall 2023 Academic Calendar	
Instruction Begins	Thursday, August 24
Labor Day Holiday	Monday, September 4
K-Day	Friday, September 8
Career Fair	Wednesday, September XX
October Recess	Thursday & Friday, October 12-13
Fall Break (Thanksgiving Break)	November 20-24
Last Day of Classes	Friday, December 8
Final Exams	December 11-15
Commencement	Saturday, December 16

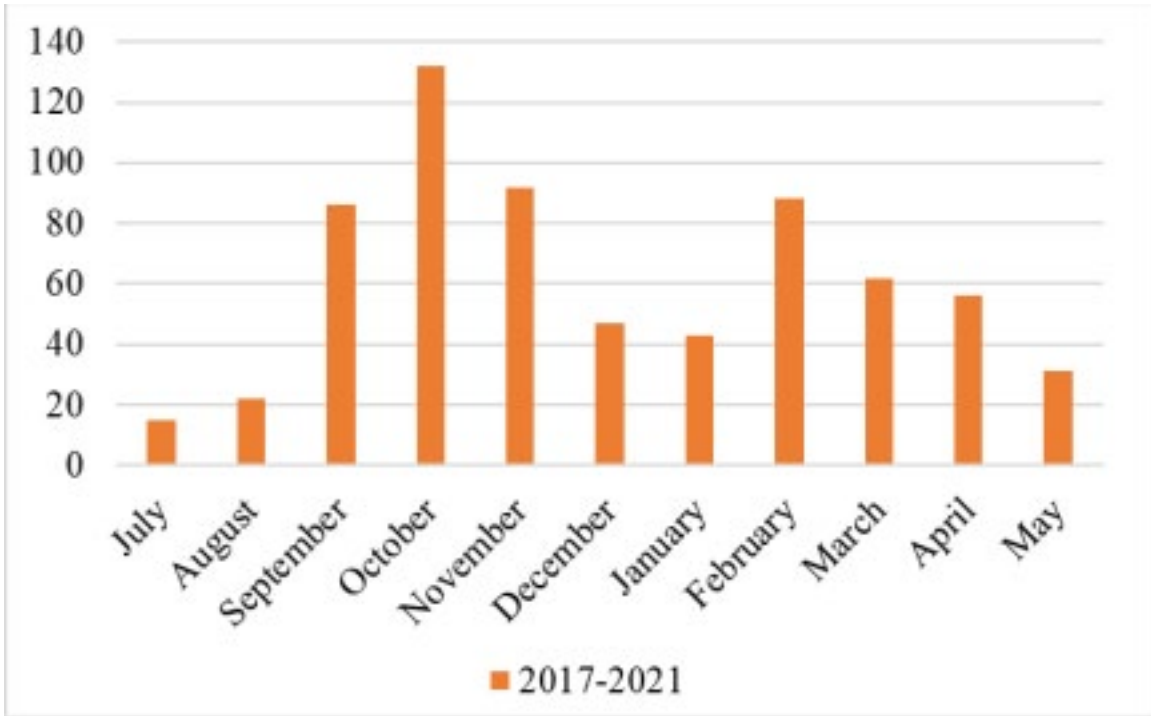
Appendix A

Figure A1: Emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month between 2017 and 2021.



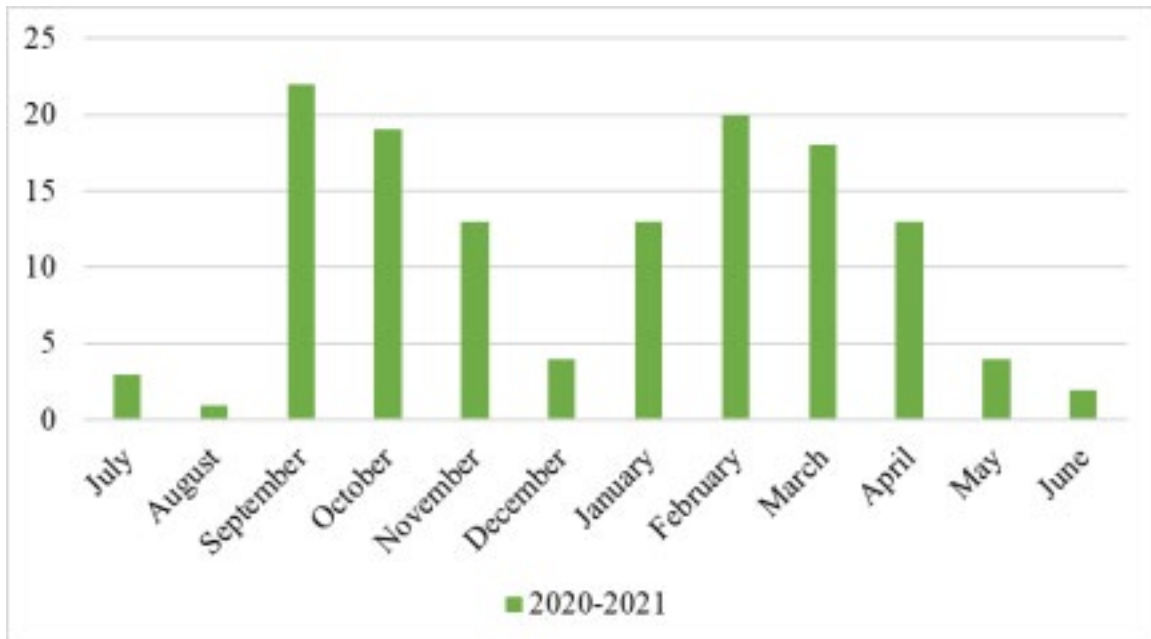
Emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month between 2017 and 2021 (Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being, 2022). The relative number of emergency contacts typically peaks during the month of October, showing that a break during October could relieve mental health pressure on students.

Figure A2: Aggregated number of emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month between 2017 and 2021.



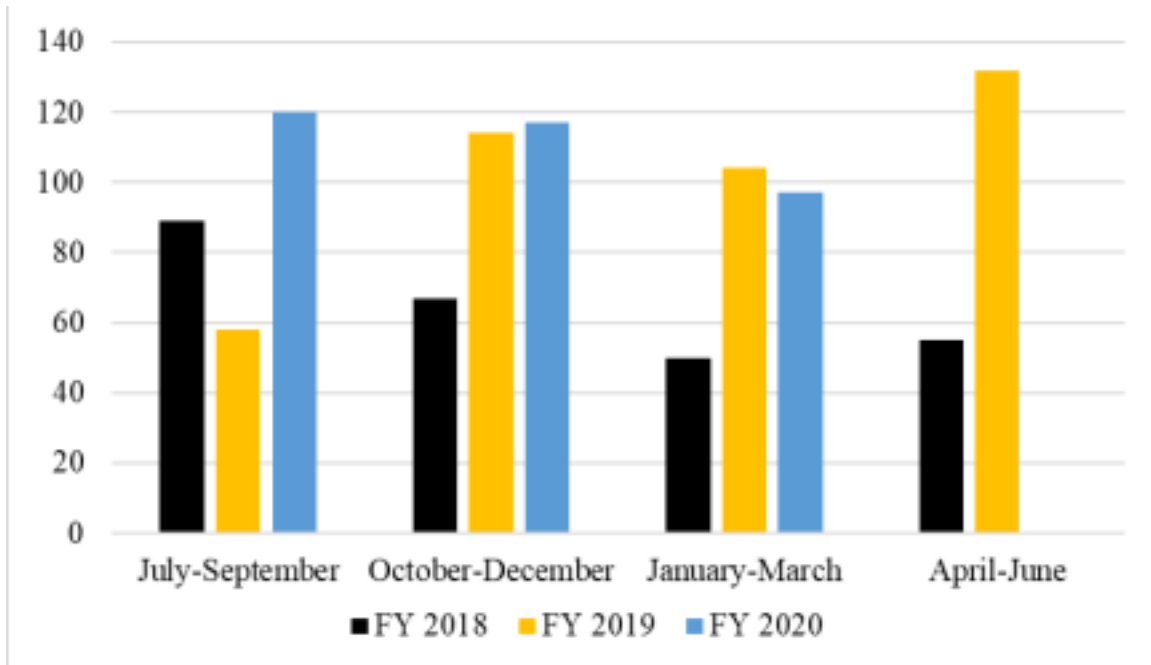
Monthly aggregated number of emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month between 2017 and 2021(Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being, 2022). The gross number of emergency contacts for the past 5 academic years is the greatest for the month of October.

Figure A3: Emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month during the 2020-2021 Academic Year.



Emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month during the 2020-2021 Academic Year (Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being, 2022). During this year, the relative number of emergency contacts did not peak during October. Results from 2020, although not representative due to COVID, did show a decrease in emergency contacts.

Figure A4: Counseling appointments with MTU's Employee Assistance Program by fiscal quarter between 2018 and 2020.



Counseling appointments with MTU's Employee Assistance Program by fiscal quarter between 2018 and 2020 (Human Resources, MTU, 2022).

Figure A5: Gross number of appointments with MTU's employee assistance program by fiscal quarter between 2018 and 2020.



Gross number of counseling appointments with MTU's Employee Assistance Program by fiscal quarter between 2018 and 2020 (Human Resources, MTU, 2022). The gross number of counseling appointments for the past 3 fiscal years is the greatest for the second fiscal quarter (October-December).

Appendix B.

Document B1

Michigan Technological University Undergraduate Student Government

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-2021, #6
Freiberg

INTRODUCED BY: Zofia

A resolution to express support for the outlined calendar changes that would accommodate a mid-Semester recess in the academic calendar.

Introduced On: 2/17/2021

Adopted On: 2/17/2021

Rationale for Mid-Semester Recess:

For many students, the stretch of the Fall Semester from the start of instruction to the current Fall Break in November is incredibly difficult and often results in a sense of burnout. The Center for Student Health and Well-Being observes a spike in emergency appointment calls in the month of October as shown in figure 2.1 in the appendix. Many other Universities, such as University of Michigan, incorporate a mid-semester recess to help alleviate this issue.

Dr. Amber Bennett, MTU's previous director of counseling services stated:

"While provision of a fall break will not fully address the spike in mental health concerns for students, it will provide everyone with an opportunity at the midpoint of the semester to take a deep breath, decompress, reflect, and reorganize over the course of an extended weekend."

The mid-semester recess implemented in 2020 for COVID-19 specific opportunities presented a unique opportunity to test-run this concept. For many students, this break indeed offered relief. Below are two quotes from undergraduate students who responded to a survey USG administered to gather student opinion.

"The first stretch of the fall semester (Labor Day to Thanksgiving) is so difficult, it made a huge difference just to have those extra two days off! I would say it's practically a necessity to implement the fall break change!"

"Mid-October is consistently a downturn of my mental health problems. Having a break

helped mitigate that.”

In consideration of the above, it should be a priority of our University to offer a consistent mid-semester break for the health of our student body.

Rationale for Removing Labor Day Contingency from Instructional Start Date:

Removing the Fall Instruction Labor Day contingencies and instead beginning on the Thursday before the last Monday in August addresses the following issues:

- Exam week occasionally ends incredibly close to Winter Holidays. For example Exam week ended the 21st of December in 2018 and will end the 22nd of December in 2023 with the current calendar. In these years, grading of exams must be completed over the Christmas Holiday.
- Mid-Year Commencement occurs both before and after exam week.
- There is an irregular Labor Day Holiday.
- There is a lack of consistency with Career Fair and other landmark campus events.

Current Senate Procedure 101.1.1 Reads:

Fall semester classes normally will start the Tuesday after Labor Day, but when Labor Day falls on September 5, 6, or 7, classes will begin the Monday before Labor Day.

Further fall semester guidelines:

- Labor Day is a holiday for those years when classes begin before Labor Day.
- Classes will be dismissed for K-Day the afternoon of the Friday following Labor Day.
- Fall break will be the week of Thanksgiving.
- The last day of classes will be the Friday that falls on December 9 through 15.
- Final Exams will be scheduled for Monday through Friday of the week following the last day of classes.
- Fall Commencement will be held on the Saturday following Final Exams, unless it falls on or after the 21st of the month of December, in which cases commencement will be held on the Saturday prior to Final Exams.

Proposed Amendment:

Fall semester classes will begin on the Thursday before the last Monday of August.

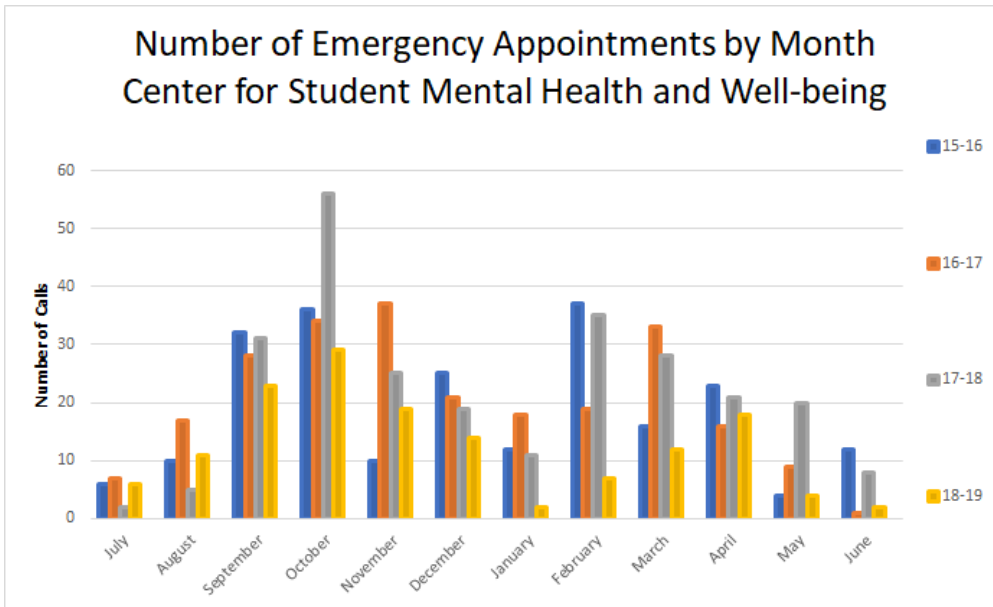
Further fall semester guidelines:

- An October Recess will take place the Thursday and Friday of Week 7.

- Labor Day is a holiday.
- Classes will be dismissed for K-Day the afternoon of the Friday following Labor Day.
- Fall break will be the week of Thanksgiving.
- Final Exams will be scheduled for Monday through Friday of the week following the last day of classes.
- Fall Commencement will be held on the Saturday following Final Exams-

Appendix:

1.0



2.0

Proposed 2023/24 academic calendar			
	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Summer 2024
Instruction begins	Thursday, Aug 24	Monday, Jan 8	Monday, May 6
Holiday	Monday, Sept 4	Monday, Jan 15	Mon, May 27/Thur, Jul 4
K-day	Friday, Sept 8		
Career fair	Wednesday, Sept XX		
Mid-semester break	Oct 12 - 13		
Break week	Nov 20 - 24	Mar 4 - 8	
Last day of classes	Friday, Dec 8	Friday, Apr 19	Thursday, Aug 8
Final exams	Dec 11 - 15	Apr 22 - 26	Friday, Aug 9
Commencement	Saturday, Dec 16	Saturday, Apr 27	

2.1

Current 2023/24 academic calendar			
	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Summer 2024
Instruction begins	Tuesday, Sept 5	Tuesday, Jan 16	Monday, May 13
Holiday	Monday, Sept 4	Monday, Jan 15	Mon, May 27/Thur, Jul 4
K-day	Friday, Sept 8		
Career fair	Wednesday, Sept XX		
Break week	Nov 20 - 24	Mar 11 - 15	
Last day of classes	Friday, Dec 15	Friday, Apr 26	Thursday, Aug 15
Final exams	Dec 18 - 22	Apr 29 - May 3	Friday, Aug 16
Commencement	Saturday, Dec 16	Saturday, May 4	

3.0

Proposed 2022/23 academic calendar			
	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Summer 2023
Instruction begins	Thursday, Aug 25	Monday, Jan 9	Monday, May 8
Holiday	Monday, Sept 5	Monday, Jan 16	Mon, May 29/Tue, Jul 4
K-day	Friday, Sept 9		
Career fair	Wednesday, Sept XX		
Mid-semester break	Oct 13 - 14		
Break week	Nov 21 - 25	Mar 6 - 10	
Last day of classes	Friday, Dec 9	Friday, Apr 21	Thursday, Aug 10
Final exams	Dec 12 - 16	Apr 24 - 28	Friday, Aug 11
Commencement	Saturday, Dec 17	Saturday, Apr 29	

3.1

Current 2022/23 academic calendar			
	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Summer 2023
Instruction begins	Monday, August 29	Monday, Jan 9	Monday, May 8
Holiday	Monday, Sept 5	Monday, Jan 16	Mon, May 29/Tue, Jul 4
K-day	Friday, Sept 9		
Career fair	Wednesday, Sept XX		
Break week	Nov 21 - 25	Mar 6 - 10	
Last day of classes	Friday, Dec 9	Friday, Apr 21	Thursday, Aug 10
Final exams	Dec 12 - 16	Apr 24 - 28	Friday, Aug 11
Commencement	Saturday, Dec 17	Saturday, Apr 29	

**Michigan Technological
University**



Undergraduate Student Government

A resolution to reaffirm USG Resolution No. 2020-2021 #006, in support of Fall Break and Institutional Wellness

Introduced on January 26, 2022

Revised on February 15, 2022

Adopted on February 16, 2022

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-2022, #002

INTRODUCED BY: Zachary Olson and the Student Affairs Committee

WHEREAS, On February 17, 2021, the USG adopted *USG Resolution No. 2020-2021 #006*, introduced by Zofia Freiberg, expressed support for a mid-semester recess during the fall (henceforth referred to as “Fall Break” for the purpose of this resolution) and outlined changes to the academic calendar to accommodate such a recess;

WHEREAS, A “Fall Break” is intended to provide faculty, staff, and students with an opportunity to focus on personal mental health and wellness as an institutional strategy for promoting long-term success for the remainder of the academic year;

WHEREAS, The USG, led by Zofia Freiberg, undertook a robust campaign of advocacy in order to achieve the goal of Fall Break, but was unable to secure a vote for the proposed policy in the University Senate;

RECOGNIZING, The need for the establishment of a Fall Break is evidenced by the large relative number of emergency appointments made with the Center for Student Health and Well-being during the month of October (appendices A and B);

RECOGNIZING, The need for the establishment of a Fall Break is evidenced by

the number of employees who seek assistance and other support through the university's Employee Assistance Program during the second (October-December) fiscal quarter which, for many, might lead to formalized clinical mental health support (appendices C and D);

RECOGNIZING, The need for the establishment of a Fall Break is evidenced by the persistent mental health crisis on US college campuses, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic ;¹

RECOGNIZING, The benefits of the emergency Fall 2020 "Fall Break" on students' mental health, as evidenced by the decrease in the relative number of emergency appointments made with the Center for Student Health and Well-being during the month of October for that year (Appendix E);

RECOGNIZING, The large number of institutional peers to Michigan Technological University that have already adopted a "Fall Break", including Colorado School of Mines, Missouri University of Science and Technology, Lehigh University (one-day mid-semester recess on Election Day in November), Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University, University of Michigan Ann-Arbor, Purdue University, the University of Illinois (two-day mid-semester recess during November), and the University of Minnesota Duluth;

RECOGNIZING, Establishing a "Fall Break" to promote a safe, healthy, and well campus is supported by institutional stakeholders such as university administrators, academic leaders, student service experts, leaders of registered student organizations; and, anecdotally, individual faculty members and individual staff; and

RECOGNIZING, The University Senate of Michigan Technological University, by proposing policy changes to the administration regarding the Academic Calendar, has the ability to support and facilitate mental health and wellness for employees and students which, ultimately, promotes a safe and healthy campus environment for everyone.

¹"Unrelenting Campus Mental Health Crisis". (2021). Washington, DC: *Inside Higher Ed*

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Undergraduate Student Government at Michigan Technological University, a shared governance entity, urges the establishment of a “Fall Break” beginning with the Fall 2023 semester and all subsequent Fall semesters;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that “Fall Break” occurs on the Thursday and Friday of Week 7 of each Fall Semester;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Undergraduate Student Government at Michigan Technological University suggests for the Fall 2023 semester and all subsequent fall semesters that the academic calendar is adjusted to accommodate a Fall Break by starting the semester on Thursday before the last Monday in August;


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the University Senate Liaison and the President of the Undergraduate Student Government at Michigan Technological University present this resolution at the first University Senate meeting after its adoption;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the President of the Undergraduate Student Government at Michigan Technological University sends a copy of this resolution to Michigan Technological University President Rick Koubek, University Senate President Sam Sweitz, University Senate Academic and Instructional Policy Committee Timothy Scarlett, Provost Jacqueline Huntoon, Center for Teaching and Learning Director Michael Meyer, Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Wallace Southerland III, General Counsel and Secretary to the Board of Trustees Sarah Schulte, *The Lode* Editor-In-Chief Cat Madish, and other individuals subject to the approval of the Executive Board of the USG;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution appears in the official minutes of the first Undergraduate Student Government General Body Meeting after its adoption, and will be circulated to the student body via publication on the USG website and USG social media accounts by the USG Public Relations Committee; and

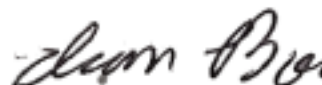
FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Undergraduate Student Government at Michigan Technological University honors former USG Student Affairs Committee Chair and MTU alumna Zofia Freiberg, who worked tirelessly towards the goal of a Fall Break during the 2020-2021 Academic Year, for her contributions to the proposed calendar change, her dedication to students, and her role as an exemplar for passionate

and ethical leadership.

X _____


X _____
President Zachary Olson Secretary
Cheyenne Scott



X _____


Ian Boulis, Student Affairs Committee Chair

APPENDIX A: Emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month between 2017 and 2021.

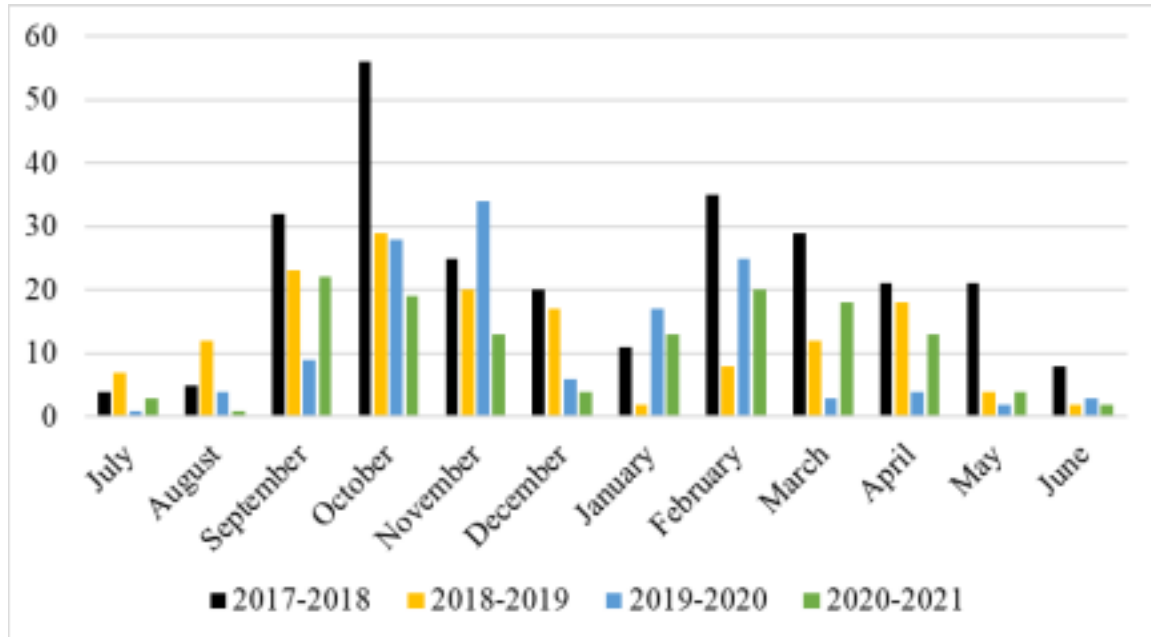


Figure 1: Emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month between 2017 and 2021 . N.B.: The relative number of emergency contacts

typically peaks during the month of October, showing that a break during October could relieve mental health pressure on students.

² McLeod, Crystal. (2022). Houghton, MI: Michigan Technological University, Center for Student

APPENDIX B: Gross number of emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month between 2017 and 2021.

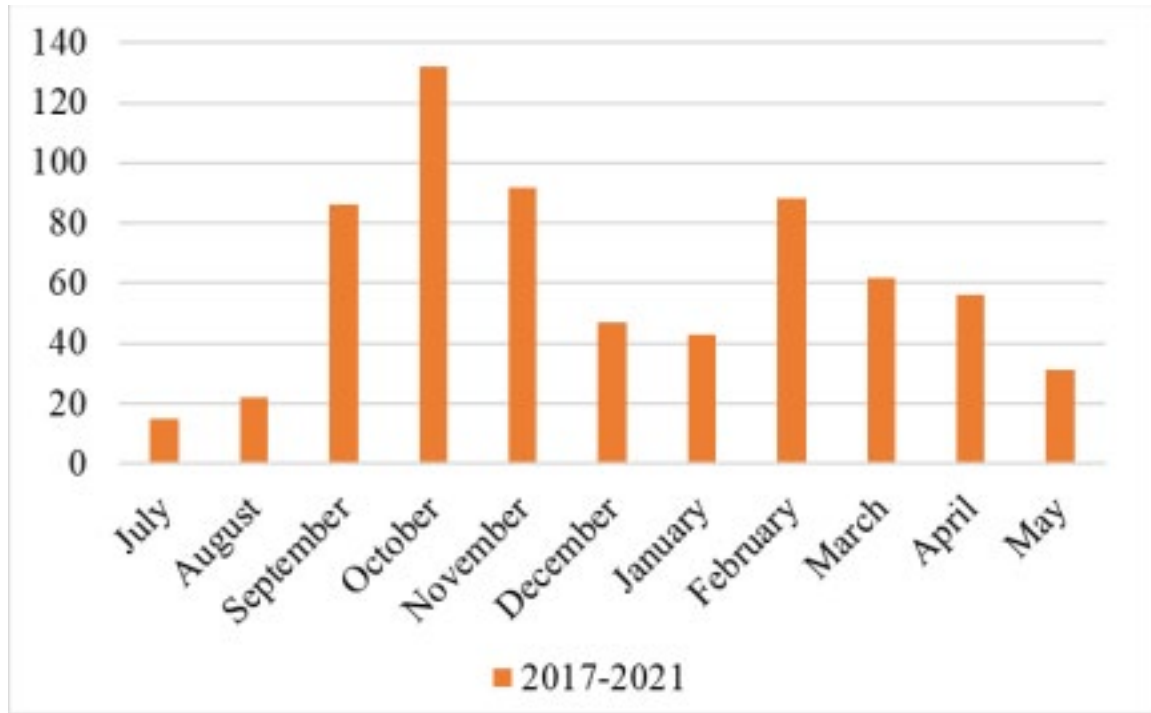


Figure 2: Gross number of emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month between 2017 and 2021². N.B. The gross number of emergency contacts for the past 5 academic years is the greatest for the month of October.

APPENDIX C: Counseling appointments with MTU’s employee assistance program by fiscal quarter between 2018 and 2020.

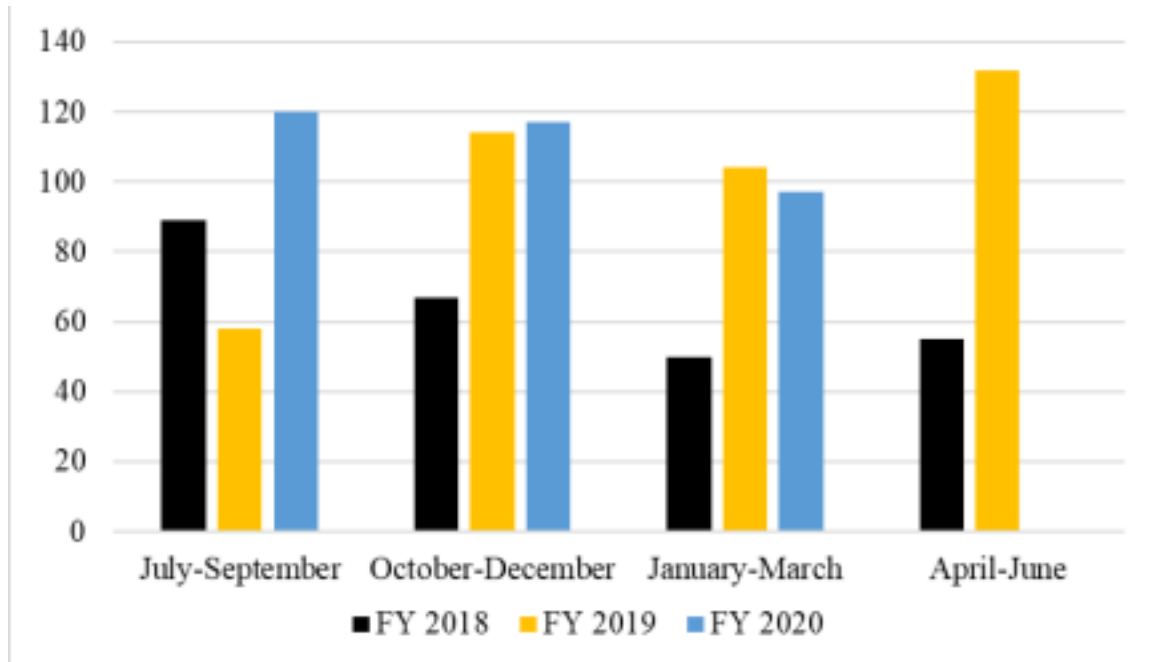


Figure 3: Counseling appointments with MTU’s employee assistance program by fiscal quarter between 2018 and 2020 .³

³Hiller, Renee. (2022). Houghton, MI: Michigan Technological University, Human

APPENDIX D: Gross number of appointments with MTU’s employee assistance program by fiscal quarter between 2018 and 2020.



Figure 4: Gross number of counseling appointments with MTU’s employee assistance program by fiscal quarter between 2018 and 2020³. N.B. The gross number of counseling appointments for the past 3 fiscal years is the greatest for the second fiscal quarter (October-December).

APPENDIX E: Emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month during the 2020-2021 Academic Year.

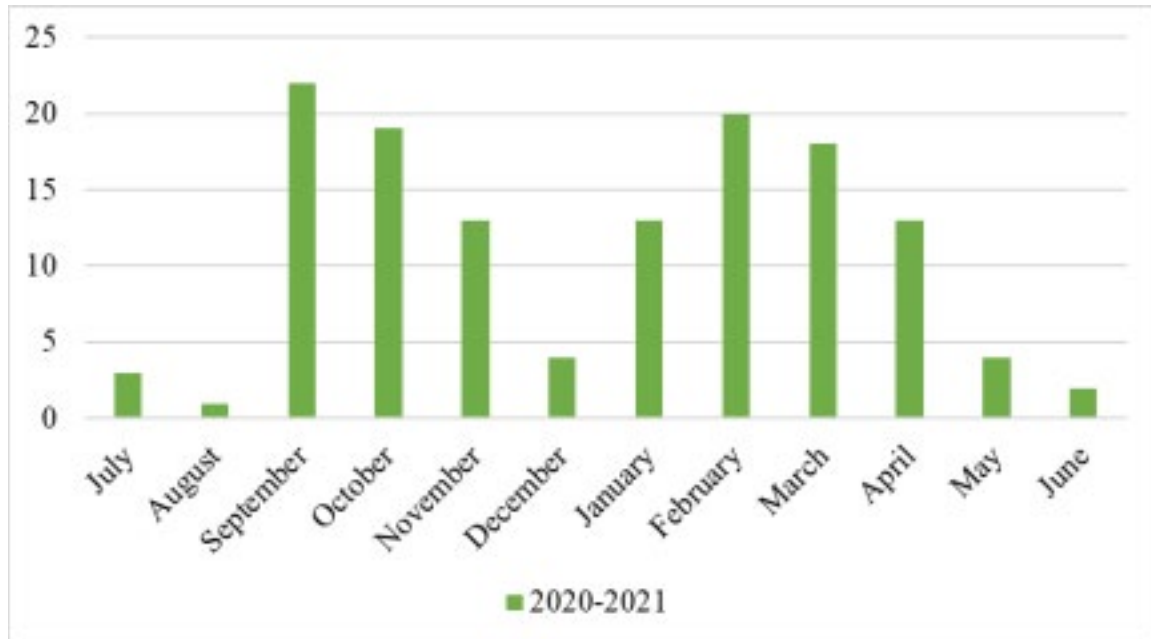


Figure 3: Emergency contacts to the Center for Student Mental Health and Well-being by month during the 2020-2021² Academic Year. During this year, the relative number of emergency contacts did not peak during October. Fall Break was temporarily implemented for the 2020-2021 Academic Year, showing a correlation between the implementation of Fall Break and improvements to students' overall mental health during October.