



**Report of the University Senate
Ad-hoc Committee to Review
Institutional Policy and
Procedures for On-campus
Events**

1/20/21

Background and Motivation for investigation:

A political rally (the “Trump Train”) organized a parade to start and meet in the Rozsa Center Parking lot on Sept. 27th.

Students, faculty, and staff sent emails to faculty or their supervisors expressing great distress at the events that they described taking place during the Sept. 27th rally.

In these emails, among other things, students stated that they were the targets of:

- Rape threats
- Racist slurs
- Anti-LGBTQ+ slurs
- Intentional “rolling coal”
- Intentional Covid policy violations

On Sept. 30th, the Senate Executive Committee was made aware of these emails, and at the next senate meeting, an Ad-hoc committee was formed.

The committee was charged with three main action items:

- **Documentation of September 27th:** to collect any available recordings, photographs, testimonials, and/or firsthand reports of what happened on September 27th. Particularly focused on what happened on the MTU campus.
- **Analyzing and summarizing events policy and procedure on campus:** (speech policy on campus, process for reserving campus spaces, policies at other institutions, Covid events policy, etc.)
- **Making recommendations for improvements** to better serve MTU's campus community: to the policy, procedural, or communication structures surrounding campus events.

MTU heard about this event after it had already been advertised

- The first public announcement of the event was made by the organizer, Naomi Luekema, via Instagram on **Sept. 17, 2020**.
- A second announcement of the event was made on September 24, 2020 via the Keweenaw Report
- These posts listed Naomi Luekema as the event organizer and **announced the Rozsa Center parking lot as the starting point for a parade.**



President Trump Parade Sunday Afternoon - Keweenaw Report

11/9/2020, 3:37 J

PRESIDENT TRUMP PARADE SUNDAY AFTERNOON

September 24, 2020 Featured, Local News, News 6,053 Views

If you're a fan of President Trump with no plans for Sunday afternoon, then you're welcome to meet up with other Trump fans, at the Rozsa Center parking lot, and take part in a mobile parade showing support for our president.

Organizer Naomi Luekema.

"It's very much a patriotic, American thing, support President Trump, all he's doing for our country, trying to preserve our Constitutional rights, and I would like to show him some love and support on that."

The parade starts at 2pm with the singing of the National Anthem and will travel through Houghton, across the bridge into Hancock, head towards Lake Linden, then up US 41 and back through Hancock.

A link to the events Facebook page is here.

Approval process

- On **Sept. 22, 2020** Michigan Tech faculty and staff became aware of these announcements and began sending emails to supervisors and others asking whether or not this event had permission to gather at their stated location of the Rozsa Center parking lot.
- **Bonnie Gorman emailed Jessie Stapleton**, Director of Student Leadership and Involvement, and **Brian Cadwell**, Director and Chief of Public Safety and Police Services on **Sept. 22**. **She asked if this group had reserved the space**. Cadwell responded 27 minutes later that **"I have not seen a request for space usage"**.
- Cadwell contacted Naomi Leukema to notify her that she was required to fill out forms if she wanted to use the Rozsa parking lot.
- The event was approved on September 24th, 2020.

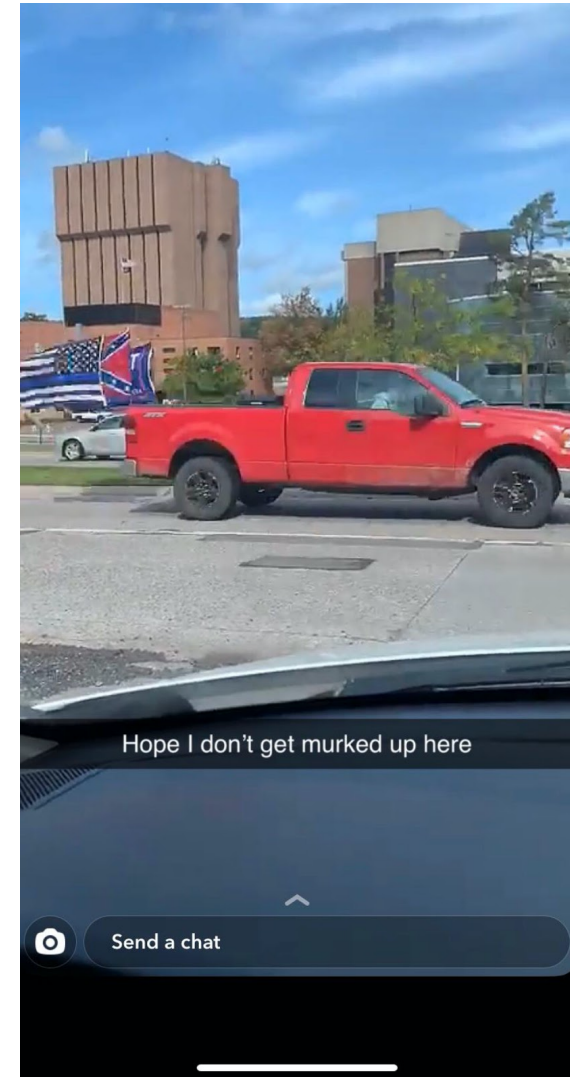
- **Leukema estimated that 40 to 50 vehicles were expected for the event.**
- **After the event, Brian Cadwell estimated that approximately 400 to 500 vehicles attended.**



During the time vehicles were in the parking lot the following were observed:

Confederate battle flag anchored on the back of a pickup truck.

(Picture to the right) Social media post from MTU student who understands this as a threat (vehicle seen on the road through campus).



During the time vehicles were in the parking lot the following were observed:

Lack of face coverings, or face coverings worn incorrectly.

Social distancing not being observed.



During the time the event was driving by the Michigan Tech campus the following were observed:

There were also counter-protests on MTU campus. Photos of counter-protests largely show appropriate masking and/or distancing.





Video:

Loud honking was reported throughout campus and the town for hours, disrupting many students in their academic work.



Video:

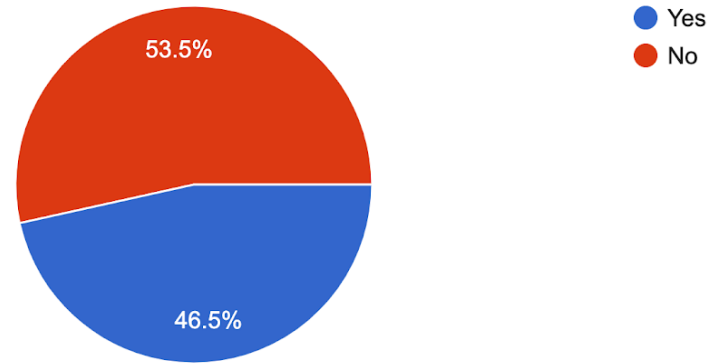
Student counter-protestors were the victims of intentional “coal rolling” by drivers in the parade.



A survey was conducted to collect info about Sept. 27th. Summary of the results:

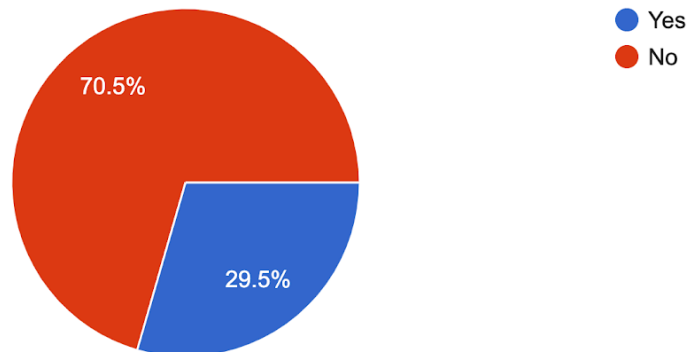
Did you experience anything that made you feel unsafe during the event on September 27th?

101 responses



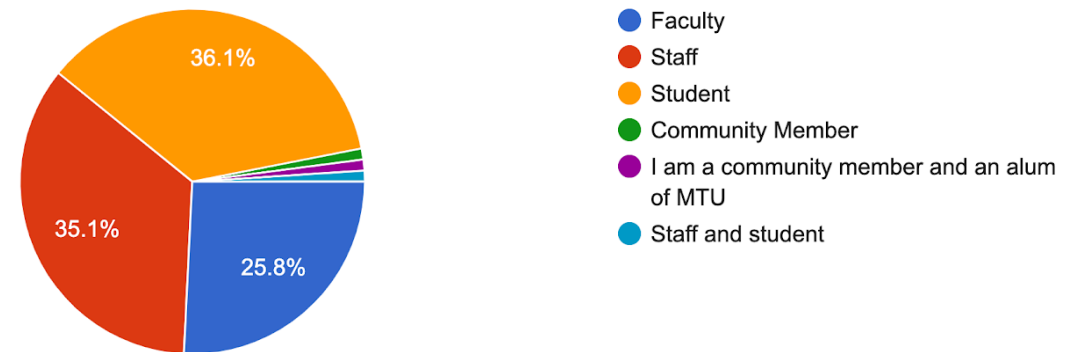
Did you observe violations of COVID-19 protocols on campus property?

95 responses



What is your affiliation with the university? (optional)

97 responses



Most concerning comments from the survey:

- “Well, to start off I was told many times that **I was going to be raped.**”
- “A man told my friends and I to our faces that he was going **to rape us.**”
- “I saw too many **unmasked individuals.**”
- “This is supposed to be a place of learning and to allow events that **purposely disrupt** the environment of the students for a political show is incredibly disappointing.”
- “I witnessed these people yelling **at people of color, LGBTQ people, and women horrible things. An uncountable amount of racial slurs including the n word.**”
- “The students staying in the dorms I am in contact with told me they contacted the police about the **highly disruptive noise.**”
- “I was called many names, including **bitch, c***, and whore.** I was also told that I am **“a liberal deserving of rape.”**”
- “Some of the passengers in the beds of the pickup trucks **had water guns and were spraying people giving thumbs down,** or counter protesting with Biden-Harris signs, or other contrary messaging.”
- “...more than one person did that thing where they make their **tailpipes spit smoke^ at us.**”
[^aka “rolling coal”]

After the event: a sample email - from Lena Stenvig, Emma Ryden, & Sarah Stadler -

I, among others, demand that if the University is to start down the path of becoming a truly safe and inclusive community for all of its students, it do the following:

- 1) We want a public denouncement on white supremacy from you, Koubek, and USG representatives and a statement on Tech's commitment to supporting and honoring BIPOC in higher education
- 2) Create an easy and well-known way to report racially motivated microaggressions and acts of violence
- 3) Require all professors to include and address diversity in their courses
- 4) Create Black, Xicanx, Indigenous, and Gender Studies majors
- 5) Create accountability aside from professor evaluations for students to voice concerns over instructors that engage in xenophobic, homophobic, and racist dialogue
- 6) Hire more BIPOC across all positions
- 7) Fund retention and graduation initiatives that help BIPOC graduate from Tech.

I stand in solidarity with minority students on campus who have been hit hard by these recent events, and I hope for their sake that you do as well.

10/31/2020

Michigan Technological University Mail - Open letter In Response to Recent Events



Danielle Meiorow <dmeiorow@mtu.edu>

Open letter In Response to Recent Events

Lena Stenvig <lssstenvi@mtu.edu> Wed, Sep 30, 2020 at 3:37 PM
To: Amy Lyn Howard <alhoward@mtu.edu>, Stefani Vargas Krause <skrause@mtu.edu>, Amber Kemppainen <amber@mtu.edu>, Paige Short <prbeyers@mtu.edu>, Kevin Trewartha <kmtrewar@mtu.edu>, Danielle Meiorow <dmeiorow@mtu.edu>

MTU Senate Committee on Promoting and Facilitating Equity and Understanding,

I am speaking on behalf of myself in addition to my classmates Emma Ryden and Sarah Stadler.

I am writing to you in regards to recent events at Michigan Technological University that have deeply troubled me concerning the University's priorities for student safety, especially the few and frequently ignored voices of minority students around campus.

I am speaking primarily, of course, about the parade in which Michigan Technological University has permitted to occur on public university property—this parade that has and will encourage violence against minorities both attending the university and residing in the local area. Not only did this parade feature most attendees neglecting the use of masks during a pandemic, it also disrupted the peace for those simply trying to exist on campus via the screaming of violent language out of vehicle windows towards minority students, in addition to the blaring horns that managed to pierce the bubble of safety in homes and dorm rooms for which some students took refuge for the duration of the parade.

The University claims it will not "discriminate based on viewpoint". I have lived my entire life in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. I have been exposed to drastically different viewpoints in my life here, and I can say I truly do understand what it means to avoid discrimination based on what people's experiences are and what they believe, however I simply cannot stand by and listen while my friends tell me they do not feel safe in the U.P., and that this parade has affirmed their thoughts that the University does not take their safety seriously. When I first attended Tech, I was proud to hear Tech proclaim that it is one of the safest college campuses in the nation—now I feel ill knowing that is only because students understand that if they reach out to the University they will receive little to no help resolving the issue at hand.

It is also an insult to both myself and others when the University prides itself in advertising photos of minority students on campus when said students receive very little support from Michigan Tech in order to succeed. This includes minority students who are posted all over Tech's website, yet of whom Tech has failed to the point they have since left the university.

I, among others, demand that if the University is to start down the path of becoming a truly safe and inclusive community for all of its students, it do the following:

- 1) We want a public denouncement on white supremacy from you, Koubek, and USG representatives and a statement on Tech's commitment to supporting and honoring BIPOC in higher education
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I stand in solidarity with minority students on campus who have been hit hard by these recent events, and I hope for their sake that you do as well.

Sincerely,

Several universities and civic organizations were benchmarked regarding event policy.

Notable findings:

- Applications must always be prepared in advance, with varying lead times.
- If any protesting or media is expected, then police services are to be available.
- Police should be expected to write tickets if there is a gathering without a permit, or violations of policy.
- No advertising is permitted until and unless the event is approved.

Concerns raised during committee investigations regarding event policy:

- The request, release, waiver forms do not always take into account students and student life on campus.
- Outside event promoters are not always required to submit a risk management assessment.
- Violations may not always be enforced during events.

Recommendations for Improvement:

- **Concern #1:** Many in the campus community felt blindsided by the presence of this event on campus.
 - **Recommendation:** Create a listserv that students can sign up for that would notify them of any events held on campus that are put on by outside groups.
 - **Progress:** Ian Repp (AVP for University Marketing and Communications) and Brian Cadwell (Director and Chief, Public Safety and Police Services) **are in the planning phases for such a listserv**, and will have more updates as the term progresses.

Recommendations for Improvement:

- **Concern #2:** Outside groups are currently not required to submit a risk management plan/assessment for their proposed events, unless such events are blatantly physically risky (e.g. a snowmobile demonstration).
 - **Recommendation:** Require all outside groups to submit a risk management plan for their events prior to approval.
 - **Progress:** Brian Cadwell and Jessie Stapleton (Director of Student Leadership and Involvement) are working on a revision of this procedure, based on Stapleton's template for student org events. All outside groups will be required to submit a risk management plan/assessment prior to the approval of their event.

Recommendations for Improvement:

- **Concern #3:** If an outside group and a student group request a space on campus at the same time, or within a given publicly established window of time, students should get priority in reserving the campus.
 - **Recommendation:** Restructure reservation procedure such that if a space is requested by an outside group and a student group within the same 48 hour window (or a similar window), student groups have priority for reserving the space.
 - **Progress:** Kellie Raffaelli (Associate Dean for Student Engagement) **is working on a revision of the reservation procedure that would prioritize student organizations.**

Recommendations for Improvement:

- **Concern #4:** Recommendation: The University should not approve gatherings that risk growing so large during a pandemic. If an event grows beyond the size planned in a way that renders Covid safety unenforceable, the event should be shut down.
 - **Recommendation:** The University should not approve gatherings that risk growing so large during a pandemic.
 - **Progress:** By all accounts, the University did not expect the event to grow as large as it did. As proposed, it fell within the Health & Safety Level 3 guidelines that were in effect on Sept. 27th. Brian Cadwell has stated that one thing he learned from this event was that any potentially volatile event should have more Public Safety staff on duty in future.

Recommendations for Improvement:

- **Concern #5:** Advertising an event as taking place on campus before the university has approved the event is potentially misleading.
 - **Recommendation:** Most universities that the committee benchmarked required that groups not use the campus in advertising for an event prior to the university's approval of use of grounds for said event. Use of the university in advertising prior to approval is often grounds for not approving the proposed event. The committee recommends that MTU adopt this policy.
 - **Progress:** New recommendation as of this report.

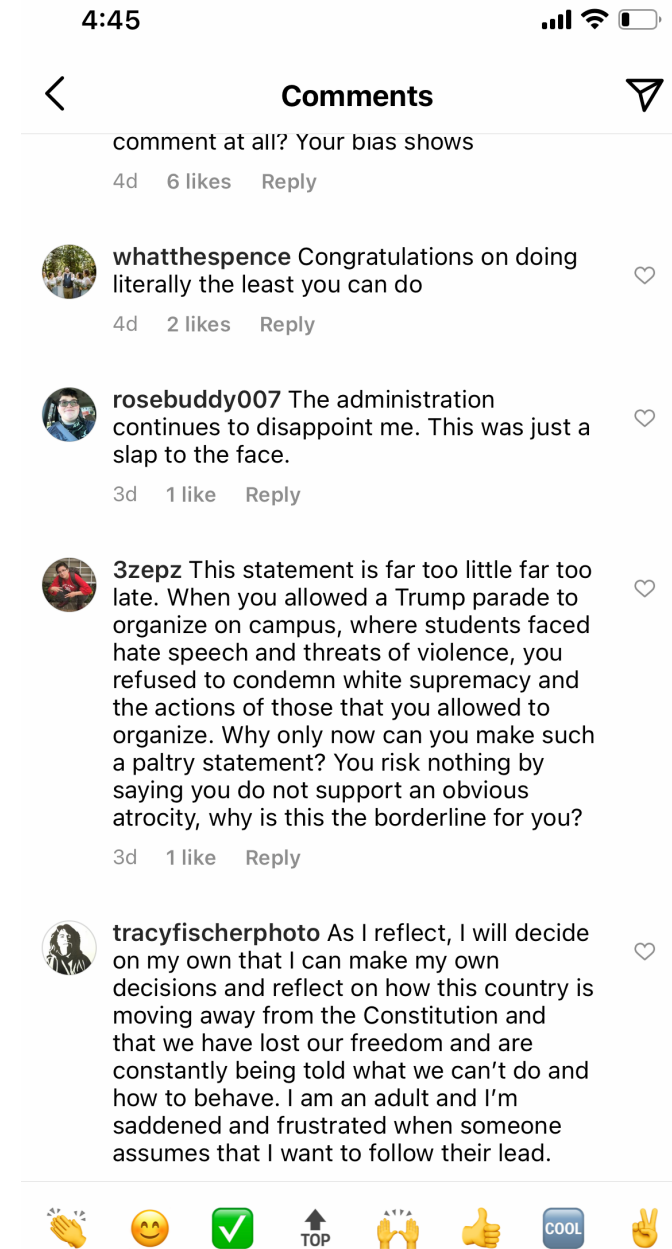
Recommendations for Improvement:

- **Concern 6:** Many in the campus community have expressed that they feel disconnected from the administration, and want to hear the administration publicly address the concerns raised in response to the parade of Sept. 27th (many of which are beyond this committee's purview and are focused on the larger culture of the university).
 - **Recommendation:** The University Administration should begin an ongoing series of public town hall discussions, where students, faculty, and staff can openly ask questions and discuss the culture of the University, with a focus on how to make a better, more inclusive, MTU. Ideally, these discussions will lead to further policy, communication, and cultural improvements for our community.
 - **Progress:** Dr. Wayne Gersie (VP for Diversity and Inclusion) was already in the planning phase for just such a town hall when the committee approached the administration with this recommendation. More information to come.

After the event: Screenshot from Jan 11 (posted on President Koubek's statement regarding the incidents at the US Capitol).

Students continue to feel unheard in their concerns about the campus culture, and are still discussing the Sept. 27th event and our university's response to it.

There are more conversations to have, and there is more work to be done.





Questions?

thank you for your time