Recent Events and Commitment to Safety and Inclusion

At the Monday, February 23, Student Commission meeting a K student asked StuComm to support his effort to allow him and others to carry a concealed weapon on campus. The commission declined to support his effort. Some have reported that the student visibly displayed an empty gun holster and made threats to individuals and or groups. The meeting made some students feel unsafe.

On Tuesday students expressed safety concerns via a social media campaign and directly to college administrators and trustees. On Wednesday morning the College's security department asked the student who displayed the empty gun holster on Monday to allow a search of his residence hall room and car. He cooperated, and no weapon was found. Our Director of Campus Security did a complete threat assessment of the situation and the individual with the empty holster. The director has extensive training in this area through the FBI and the Michigan State Police. In his professional judgment, this individual did not pose a threat to the campus community or to individuals on campus. Weapons are not, and will not be, allowed on campus. No weapon was involved in any of the events of the past three days. The wearing and showing of an empty holster is not against the law or the Kalamazoo College code of conduct. Nor does the action in and of itself constitute bullying and harassment. Nevertheless, we know that some felt bullied or harassed. That concerns us deeply.

We also are concerned about a much deeper issue—our institutional progress toward building an inclusive, safe environment for all students, particularly students of color. On Wednesday afternoon we met with students expressed safety concerns stemming from Monday’s StuComm meeting. About 100 students attended and we have heard very clearly that many have concerns about feeling safe on campus, and that these feelings are not only predicated on Monday’s incident, but also arise out of a broader set of concerns, including not being heard, not feeling included within our campus community, and at times being targeted as an individual or as part of a group.

Creating a campus that is safe and inclusive for all is a top concern of ours. The events of this week remind us that while we have made many strides (including diversifying the student body, adding a new major in the curriculum, and with training and on-going work on campus climate and student support) there is much more that must be done to meet our aspiration of a campus that is fully inclusive. We pledge to keep the lines of communication open. We invite all members of the campus community—students, faculty, staff—to consider our individual roles in creating a safe and inclusive community including how we interact with each other in person and on social media. We also commit to continuing to examine and eliminate or change institutional practices and structures that inhibit a truly inclusive community.

--President’s Staff