Standing for our Values

Just after midnight on Wednesday morning, March 4, Kalamazoo College officials were informed that a highly inflammatory entry had been placed in a Student Commission Google Doc, a document repository hosted on Google servers which allows for group editing and sharing online. The entry is racist, anti-Semitic, sexist, and homophobic. It also contained a direct threat for March 5 aimed at “faculty at Kalamazoo U, that will teach them the value of campus carry.”

As soon as we became aware of this matter, the associate dean of student development and other College administrators (including the president met with approximately 40 deeply concerned students. Over the course of more than three hours in the early morning we discussed safety measures for students directly involved (those whose contact information may have been identified by the person(s) responsible for the inflammatory entry) and students generally. We outlined measures for immediate implementation, and a campus-wide meeting later this afternoon will update concrete actions underway and to be done. An officer from the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) met with several students as well.

The College and KDPS consider the inflammatory entry a hate crime, and KDPS is investigating it as such. Police investigators also have informed the FBI and enlisted the agency’s support in the matter. Information Services personnel are attempting to determine the identity of the source of the anonymous entry. Kalamazoo College and KDPS take all threats seriously. Our campus Security staff and the KDPS will be on heightened alert with more patrols through the campus until further notice.

The Student Commission created the Google Doc in order to share information with students in hopes of being more transparent. The document allowed anonymous editing, and this capability extended to persons not associated with K.

The inflammatory comments are antithetical to Kalamazoo College and to its Honor System, which calls us to “respect those with whom we may differ and to recognize the rights held by others.” We invite all of us to stand together to reject any action that dehumanizes members of our community.

We also urge all of us to take responsibility for the accuracy of what we choose to share on social media about these matters. Posting information that is not factual carries the potential to do harm. The College’s Honor System commits us to “honesty in speech and conduct.”

We believe that Kalamazoo College is a safe place for students, faculty, staff, and visitors, and we are committed to creating a learning environment of free inquiry that not only is safe but also feels safe for all.

We invite the campus community to convene this afternoon (March 4) at 4 p.m. in Stetson Chapel for an hour of reflection that also will include an update on measures regarding safety and the campus environment. A KDPS officer will attend the meeting.

The initial assessment of KDPS is that this incident is not a credible threat and that it is unlikely
to be acted upon. Nevertheless, it is unnerving for many people, and we are taking precautions and measures to address the concerns of those who feel uneasy. Please be aware of your surroundings, and if you see anything you consider amiss please report it to the Security Department.

Eileen B. Wilson-Oyelaran
Mickey McDonald
Sarah Westfall
James Prince
Al DeSimone
Eric Staab
Greg Diment
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