


NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
MARQUETTE, MICHIGAN 49855

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

May 13, 1970

To: Faculty, Staff, and Students of
Northern Michigan University

From: 
John X. Jamrich, President

Once again we ask the University community to commemorate the death of American citizens. On May 19, 1970, Northern Michigan University will set aside the entire day to dedicate itself to a program reflecting on the death of six Black people in Augusta, Georgia.

That day will focus, through class discussions and additional special programs, on the issues of faculty-student relationships, racial tensions, and other issues of national and local importance.

At my request, a meeting was held today by the Academic Senate, the Associated Students of Northern Michigan University, Black student representatives, and administrative staff of the University to consider certain specific requests, the purposes to be achieved, and alternative means of achieving these objectives.

The administration, faculty, and students of Northern Michigan University recognize the fact that for many members of the campus community, the Augusta deaths are as much a matter of concern as was the Kent State University situation.

The Academic Senate, acting on behalf of the entire faculty, passed the following motion:

With regard to the suggestion that classes be dismissed, and in view of the generally perceived opinion that the action of simply dismissing classes last Friday was ineffective, and in recognition of the death of six Black people in Augusta, the Academic Senate in lieu of suspending classes resolves that on Tuesday, May 19, the entire University community focus its attention on the issues of faculty-student relationships, racial tensions, and other issues of national and local importance.

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During this day students are urged to go to their classes and to participate in other relevant activities related to the on-campus teach-in being conducted on the above issues. No penalties shall be applied to students who exercise their freedom of conscience to participate or not to participate in any of the activities on that day according to their best judgment.

The Senate recognizes the misunderstanding and tensions which exist on the campus, particularly the difficulties faced by Black Students, and reaffirms its commitment to the University community as an environment dedicated to removing barriers between human beings.

Reflecting some of the specific concerns for the welfare of Black Students in their academic work, the Academic Senate also passed the following recommendation:

Recognizing the hostility faced by some students on campus because of their status as members of a minority group, especially Black Students, and recognizing the disruption in the lives of the six defendants and many other Black Students who have not been able to function in their normal capacity as students during the period of time since the past sit-in, we urge the faculty to take those difficulties of their situation into account as they determine final grades for the semester. They might consider, for example, an "I" or a "WP".

While the Academic Senate has no intention of suggesting the modification of individual faculty grading procedures which we of necessity recognize as an individual, professional responsibility, the Senate does wish to call the attention of the faculty to the unusual burdens placed upon some students because of considerations of race and to the burden which these students are under to engage in activities pursuant to their need to protect and to establish their identity as human beings in a cultural climate which is often not conducive to the establishment of such identity.

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In summary, May 19, 1970 will be an Issues Day with class discussion emphasis on concerns of the campus community and special programs with a particular focus on the major issues.

It is my personal conviction that through these types of university-wide activities and working together we shall progress in the directions we have envisioned for so long.

I reached the above decision after reviewing carefully the recommendations of the Academic Senate, the ASNM, Black student representatives, and the administrative staff.

JXJ:JB