

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

To the MSU campus community:

I was shocked, and I am grieved, to learn about the gunfire deaths at Central Michigan University this morning. Mount Pleasant is my hometown and I know the impacts of this tragedy will afflict the entire community.

I offer the deep sympathy of my family and the support of the entire Michigan State University community to our kin, our colleagues, and our friends in Mount Pleasant and at CMU.

Security on campus is the uppermost priority for universities everywhere, including at Michigan State. MSU Police have extensive planning in place for an active shooter incident. Those plans are drilled routinely, including coordinating with people and units across campus.

That planning includes many ways for us to communicate with the campus community, families, visitors, and the public in the event of an emergency. I strongly urge all members of our community to ensure their text, telephone, and email contact information is up to date at alert.msu.edu.

On Wednesday I traveled to Washington, D.C., to brief Michigan's congressional delegation, alumni, and others on the progress Michigan State University is making in response to the numerous investigations stemming from Larry Nassar's criminal conduct while at MSU.

Joining me was Jim Blanchard, my fellow former governor, whose DLA Piper law firm is assisting MSU with the five congressional or federal Department of Education inquiries that are underway.

Members of Congress and alumni listened, asked many questions, offered advice, and shared ideas for policies and processes to help with the healing and to protect students, patients, and others from sexual assault and harassment. I reaffirmed our commitment to continue our conversations across the MSU community, thus allowing us to learn from the experiences of survivors and responders to ensure we are creating a Spartan model that respects and treats every single person with dignity.

I was pleased to report to our D.C. audience that the [Relationship Violence](#)

I was pleased to report to our D.C. audiences that the [Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Expert Advisory Workgroup](#) I appointed last week had its first meeting. The workgroup quickly identified and addressed one problem, the need for a new protocol for police notification of the Office of Institutional Equity when investigating a sexual assault complaint. As I explained in my community letter last week, the workgroup will move promptly to recommend solutions when they reach consensus, and we continue to encourage MSU community members to submit suggestions using the [online form](#).

Along the same lines, earlier in the week I presided over my first meeting of the University Council, which convenes the Faculty Senate, college deans, Council of Graduate Students, Associated Students of MSU, and others with administrators, the provost, and the president. I delivered a report about our compliance efforts, answered questions, and heard several students and faculty members urge that their voices be heard in the Board of Trustees' search for a permanent president.

Looking toward next week, it is unfortunate that MSU will again likely wind up in a national spotlight when a white identity group holds an event Monday afternoon at the MSU Pavilion for Agriculture and Livestock Education. This group has earned notoriety for staging provocative, and sometimes violent, rallies in places like Charlottesville, Virginia, and at the University of Florida.

Freedom of speech protections under the U.S. Constitution prohibit public institutions like Michigan State from denying speakers access to our campus unless they pose an imminent risk. MSU attorneys used mediation to negotiate an agreement that met our requirements that the timing and location of an event that might threaten safety be held so as to minimize the risk of violence or disruption. Our staff found a way to keep safety as a top priority without abrogating First Amendment-protected speech, which in this case is plainly loathsome and in opposition to our values. I want to assure everyone that MSU Police are taking all appropriate security measures.

Michigan State always has recognized the right to free speech, even speech we find repugnant. Diversity of thought and the freedom to represent it and to speak it are essential to fostering scholarly excellence and to maintaining a democratic society. We do not silence people based on who they are or what they think. Yet people are still responsible for what they say and do.

Nobody affiliated with Michigan State invited this small, hateful group, and I doubt they'll find support. The remarkable accomplishments of our diverse community of scholars expose the fraudulence of their racist rhetoric every day. But they come here hoping to gain energy by provoking reaction to their

day. But they come here hoping to gain energy by provoking reaction to their taunts. If we take the bait—if we return their hate—it only supports the preposterous claims to victimhood that sustain their ideology. They court headlines. They crave confrontation, because without it, their message of hate falls on deaf ears.

Let's instead register our opposition by depriving them of the attention they desperately seek. For that, and for public safety, I'm urging people to steer clear of the area near the Pavilion. There are other community events that provide much better opportunities to demonstrate who Spartans really are: people motivated by love and inclusion, not hate and exclusion, and dedicated to making a positive difference in the world. For information, go to the MSU Council of Graduate Students [event website](#).

I hope our students enjoy a much-needed spring break next week and that they return ready to enjoy a beautiful Michigan spring and prepared to charge into the final weeks of the semester.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Engler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

John Engler

President