Feedback for the University from the “Our Community” Conversations

What would an ideal Michigan State University look like? Participants in the “Our Community” series of conversations contemplated this, and considered how to realize those ideals. For participants, the ideal MSU would be a place of inclusion, transparency, respect, safety, value, care, empowerment, accountability, collaboration, honesty, and trust. The ways to get there included improving and changing leadership, offering training for leaders and mentors, promoting and embodying inclusion, listening, reviewing power imbalances, communicating better, holding people accountable, seeking and allowing input, treating people with respect, becoming more transparent in actions and policies, providing more resources, and shifting the emphasis to academics.

While suggestions for university action could not be guaranteed to be implemented, some were, and are, already under way, some will be soon, and some cannot be implemented as written/suggested. But all ideas were shared with senior academic administration in both raw and synthesized form. In keeping with the intent of transparency and openness, the anonymous responses of participants, compiled from all four meetings, are available below.

It is important to note that these facilitated conversations happened in the heat of the moment, when emotions were raw and the MSU community was reeling from developments in February and March of 2018. The following list brings together feedback for the university regarding leadership and culture, using participants’ own words. These sentiments were representative of the range of suggestions made.

What actions could the university take that could lead us to the ideal?

- Speak up when you see something that is not right
- Express opinion to Board of Trustees
- Bring in new leadership; run for the Board of Trustees
- Support faculty steering committee to remove Board of Trustees
- Stop letting administration bully us
- Stop putting “leaders” on pedestals
- Demand that those who didn’t take action be held accountable
- Demand action from board, president, provost...all those people at the top
- Open up communication with the Provost
- SPEAK UP. Silence is what caused this mess. Be part of the solution...or feel complicit
- As a staff person, I have no faith in leadership being able to make changes. Upper mgmt. doesn’t care what we think
- Protest, vote, advocate, confront until there’s change
- Attend council meetings
- Stop talking about it and do something
- Take ACTION – immobility leads to helplessness
- Consider leaving, getting a job outside MSU
- Be aware of power and lack of power. Stay. Be the change I wish to see
- I could promote accountability/transparency at all campuses, not just MSU
- Interrupt: bias; injustice; flawed thinking
- Focus on inclusion and diversity:
  o in committee work
  o promotion/tenure processes
  o new training programs classrooms
  o networking events
  o asking others for input when decisions affect them