

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

August 18, 2016

Dear Student Leaders,

During the past couple of weeks, you may have read about the decision to convert the space historically used as a women's study lounge in the MSU Union to an all-access quiet study lounge. The decision, reached in late May, was made in order to ensure compliance with our federal Title IX obligations, which are very clear on this issue, and to provide the most inclusive solution possible by opening the quiet study lounge to all students.

In addition, we have attempted to preserve a private space for women by adding an ante room, which includes private lactation spaces to the existing women's restroom, and creating a separate entrance to the restroom. The redesign and construction of the space is set for completion this month.



**Division of  
Student Affairs  
and Services**

Office of the  
Vice President

Student Services Building  
566 E. Circle Drive, Room 153  
East Lansing, MI 48824-1113

517-355-7535  
Fax: 517-432-2855  
studentaffairs.msu.edu

Though the university believes this decision was necessary, we understand the emotional connection many of our women students have with the lounge, as well as its historical significance. Many have questioned the timing of the closure. The decision was made in May, after a new concern was raised with the university. This was in addition to past concerns raised by some students. Looking at all of the concerns, as well as our obligations to Title IX, we decided this course of action was best. That being said, we admit this decision could have been communicated better to students, including you as a student leader. We are all striving to be better when it comes to inclusion, and this is a case where we could have been better. For that, we apologize.

We know many of you have strong feelings about this decision. We encourage you to express those feelings and support community members who wish to make their voices heard. We only ask those that voice their opinions do so in a way that is respectful and lawful. Free speech is a core value at MSU. More information can be found at:

<http://president.msu.edu/advancing-msu/presidents-statement-on-free-speech.html>.

We are aware of the concerns some students have expressed about safety and harassment. We take those concerns seriously and as you know, MSU is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and inclusive campus for all students. All students should be able to study and utilize campus spaces without experiencing harassment or discrimination. Students experiencing harassment or discrimination are encouraged to report such incidents to MSU's

Office of Institutional Equity and where violations of MSU's policy are found, individuals will be held accountable.

By reporting and addressing such behaviors we can send a clear and decisive message that harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated on our campus and together we can cultivate a campus community where all students feel safe.

We want to sincerely thank you again for your leadership at MSU. Your involvement in campus initiatives is instrumental in helping MSU achieve its goal of inclusive excellence. To that end, we will make available opportunities to meet with you when you return to campus. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to reach out to any of us.

Sincerely,

Vennie Gore  
Vice President for Auxiliary Enterprises

Denise Maybank  
Vice President, Student Affairs and Services

Jessica Norris  
Title IX Coordinator