Though Polarized, Michigan Tech Community Feels Safe

By Artemis Allison

HOUGHTON, Mich. – After the United States presidential election on Tuesday, November 3rd, students at Michigan Tech might be concerned about how the election might end up being called; however, the student body does not feel concerned about how their fellow students might respond, with many hoping that these recent events will instead lead to us drawing closer together no matter how the results end. Robby Rollins, a Computer Networking and Systems Administration graduate student at Tech, said that the differences between this election and the election in 2016 with how split the community feels; “however, even though I feel that there is this split between Trump and Biden I feel that no matter what the community will still come back together and work towards helping each other no matter their political stance. The MTU community has always come back together and figured out issues or differences as they arise.”

The perceived strength and unity of Tech’s community, in fact, is a common theme among Michigan Tech students who were asked about how they felt both about the election and it’s impacts on Tech’s community: “I feel like there'll be a few disgruntled folks here and there, but I wouldn't expect anything too crazy. If anything, maybe some stolen yard signs/flags. I feel like this community, overall, is fairly strong despite some polarizing political views” said Cameron Whiteside, a second-year mechanical engineer. This strength, however, some students feel is only limited to the Tech community itself, with concerns in the general community might react: Mars Long, a second year scientific and technical communication major, felt that “the student community I feel will handle the election well and be agreeable for the most part the broader community I have a lot less faith in. I’m hoping it’ll be ok but I’m going to personally be a bit on edge for at least a week after.”

“I think the MTU community will handle things relatively calmly, but I fear how locals and others may react. Either rioting if Trump loses or celebrating if he wins. In general I do not think the students will act out much though, we aren't that large or lively of a campus,” says Bee Kellogg, a sixth-year medical lab science major. The division between political parties and between the campus and the Houghton County community seems to be a major point of contention for Michigan Tech students, and to some, it feels to be a direct result of how the media portrays it. "In the days leading up to the election, I saw more attack ads compared to policy related ads. This genuinely made me sad about the way politicians score points against each other. It also raised a question that, if the people we elect to represent us are trying to divide us, then what can we really expect from them to do for us?” said Chaitanya, a second-year masters student in electrical engineering.

“As an educator, it's disconcerting to witness yet again the abundance of negative campaign attacks in national and local political ads, which rely on misinformation to confuse voters, or worse, disinformation - that is, outright lies - to deceive voters. Unfortunately, we know that negative campaigning can be very effective. At minimum, this cynical tactic works to disenfranchise voters who feel too disgusted to partake in the process,” says Doctor Sue Collins, an associate professor in the Humanities department.