



**Student Government Resolution 119.015**

**A Resolution Advocating for Proper Communication from Truman State University  
Residence Life Staff in Emergency Situations**

**Sponsored by Adam Barker, Health, Wellness, and Safety Committee Chair; Doug Adolphson, Ella Freudenthal, Cami Smith, and Tori Woods, Health, Wellness, and Safety Committee Members**

WHEREAS,

- The Student Government is the official governing body of the Student Association and exists to represent the present and long-term best interests of the Student Association in the formulation of University policy and in the fulfillment of the University's mission; and
- On the night of October 27th, 2019, the Kirksville Police Department initiated a traffic stop on the 300 block of W. Patterson St. near the Truman campus; and
- The facts of the incident are as follows<sup>1</sup>:
  - The Kirksville Police Department discovered the individual to be in possession of a gun as they removed him from the car; and
  - The individual threatened self-harm and asked the officers on scene to shoot him, indicating that he wanted to die by "suicide by cop;" and
  - The Kirksville Police Department, Department of Public Safety, and Highway Patrol officers immediately established a safety perimeter around the traffic stop; and
- The standoff between officers and the armed individual lasted approximately twenty minutes before the individual was taken into custody<sup>2</sup>; and
- Students were aware of the event while the standoff was occurring, due to its close proximity to campus and many students' off-campus housing; and
- False rumors that an armed person was on campus quickly circulated among students via social media and text messaging, including messages from some Student Advisors to their residents; and
- Due to this false information, many students perceived a threat to their safety; and

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<sup>1</sup> Student Government Resolution 119.007

<sup>2</sup> <https://ktvo.com/news/local/armed-kirksville-shooting-suspect-arrested-after-brief-standoff>

- In one instance, the Student Advisor on-duty and other Residence Life staff sent a message based on secondhand rumors from residents to the GroupMe of the Missouri Hall Student Advisors informing them that an “active shooter” was on campus; and
- This rumor and others about a violent intruder on campus were not based on any official reports or alerts; and
- It is the responsibility of the Department of Public Safety, not Residence Life, to officially communicate the occurrence and details of potential threats to campus safety<sup>3</sup>; and
- A better and more effective message would have been to simply warn students of a potential threat, not spread unverified rumors of a violent intruder on campus;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT,

- Recognizes the staff of Residence Life for their continual hard work and commitment in ensuring on-campus residents live in a safe and healthy environment; and
- Acknowledges the difficulty in knowing what to communicate during a potential emergency when there is limited information; and
- Acknowledges that many students felt unsafe during the incident on October 27th, 2019 due to quickly-spread rumors from individuals and groups across campus, including Residence Life staff; and
- Requests that Residence Life staff defer to the Department of Public Safety for official communications regarding threats to campus safety; and
- Requests that Residence Life staff ensure they are not spreading any false information to their residents in emergency situations; and
- Encourages Residence Life to guard against spreading false rumors in the future by implementing better training to inform staff how they should react and communicate during potential threats to campus safety.

THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT DIRECTS THAT,

Additional copies of this resolution are disseminated to Dr. Sue Thomas, President; Janna Stoskopf, Vice President of Student Affairs; Dr. Jamie Van Boxel, Director of Residence Life; Sara Seifert, Director of Truman’s Department of Public Safety; University Archives and the Truman Media Network.

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Jamie Van Boxel, Director of Residence Life, and Sara Seifert, Director of the Department of Public Safety; personal communication; November 21st, 2019

Passed by Unanimous Consent, February 16, 2020.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deanna Schmidt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

Deanna Schmidt, President of the Student Association.