



**SECRETARY FOR ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON FREE SPEECH AND HATE SPEECH
SELF-NOMINEE FORM**

Name: Jennifer Brandon
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Primary College: MSU Libraries
Primary Department: Digital Development and Strategies
Current Faculty Title: Digital Interface Developer and Reference Librarian
Education (Degree, Year, and Institution): MLIS 2006 Wayne State University
Year of Initial Appointment: 2008

If placed on the final election ballot and elected, I agree to serve: Yes

Save this completed document with the following file name format: **your last name_nomination_form**.

Email completed nomination form to the Secretary for Academic Governance at acadgov@msu.edu by March 4, 2024 6 pm EST.

Instructions for Nominee: In one page or less, describe your reasons for seeking a nomination for the position on the Ad Hoc Committee on Free Speech and Hate Speech. These might include prior personal or professional experiences, special discipline-specific expertise, and/or representation of a specific community. This statement will be used to aid the faculty members of the Steering Committee in determining the *ad hoc* committee's membership.

Nominee's Statement:

Definitions (from Google OxfordLanguages):

Freedom of Speech: the right to express any opinions without censorship or restraint.

Hate Speech: abusive or threatening speech or writing that expresses prejudice on the basis of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or similar grounds.

Freedom of speech requires the removal of restraints. Disallowing hate speech requires placing restraints on speech. These two concepts in their purest forms are at odds with one another. Allowing one negates the other. Furthermore, allowing freedom of speech requires no further framework or criteria to be met.

Putting restraints on freedom of speech by defining some speech as hate speech does require a framework to be put in place. The following questions could begin a discussion of ideas that would need to be agreed upon in order to build a framework for what speech is not allowed:

What constitutes hate speech? Can hate speech be codified? Is it based on intent, or how it is perceived by others? If it is based on intent, who will decide what the intentions of the speaker are/were? Who makes the final decision on what is and what is not hate speech? How will this affect instruction of historical facts or scientific theories they may be uncomfortable to some? At what point is it the responsibility of the individual to process uncomfortable information that is not defined as hate speech? Can we provide assistance in helping individuals understand uncomfortable information that is not determined to be hate speech?

I was a student at Michigan State University beginning in 1981, with a student job at MSU Libraries. I also worked at MSU Libraries as a library assistant in the 1980s. I moved away in 1990, but have been a librarian at MSU for the last 16 years. From 1981 until the present, I have witnessed a transformation in higher education, including the prevailing opinions around [positive and negative liberties](#) pertaining to collective and individual freedom. Of course, in four decades, one can only expect that change will occur. My desire to be on this committee is so that I may contribute my perspectives based on my knowledge and experience, and to help the University keep moving in a positive direction, one that maintains freedom of speech to the extent allowed and agreed upon, preserving the integrity of instruction while maintaining the comfort and safety of the University community.