



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

Name: Geoffrey Recktenwald
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Primary College: College of Engineering
Primary Department: Mechanical Engineering
Current Faculty Title: Senior Academic Specialist
Education (Degree, Year, and Institution): PhD, 2006, Cornell University
Year of Initial Appointment: 2013

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:

As an academic specialist I do not have the tenure protections enjoyed by the tenure stream faculty. However, my role as an educator requires that I have the freedom to challenge and diversify my students' thinking. I have always worked hard to do this while creating a classroom environment where all feel included.

However, attacks on free speech, the suppression of heterodox viewpoints, and a lack of clear university protections for academic speech has created an atmosphere where academic specialists cannot feel safe in the classroom and this undermines our educational priorities. The solution to this problem involves a

clear statement of MSU's dedication to free speech, clear definitions on what constitutes hate speech, and a fair/transparent judicial process.

I bring to the committee several experiences that have shaped my understanding of free speech and capabilities in facilitating dialog. First, for 3 years I organized and ran a Cornell lecture series where we invited a speaker to address a controversial topic, facilitated a open dialog on the ideas between students, and then constructively engage with the speaker. Second, for several years I ran a community reading group where we chose books on topics that would challenge our preconceived notions and practiced the art of listening and questioning rather than debating. Both of these experiences were enriching for all parties involved and fostered a spirit of inclusivity.

As you can see I have been interested and active in this area for a long time. My most recent MSU involvement was contributing at the MSU Anti-Discrimination Policy Summit in April of 2023. I've been a frequent advocate for healthy academic dialog in all of my circles of influence.

I would like serve on this committee with the goal of seeing MSU become a world leader in academic freedom and a place where we can dialog about contentious topics with an atmosphere of collegiality. Leadership in this area is needed in academia, as evidenced by the positive response to the "Chicago Statement" on free speech. In less than 8 years, the "Chicago Statement" has been adopted by over 100 universities, including Michigan State University. I believe that MSU can raise the bar and be THE example of productive academic dialog in the 21st century.