



Thoughtful restraint

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MSU position on institutional statements: Thoughtful restraint

Michigan State aspires to practice thoughtful institutional restraint regarding statements on local, state, national and international incidents and current events. As an educational institution, our goal is to serve as a forum for debates, not proponents within them, with the highest value being the pursuit of truth. Institutional statements could unintentionally undermine this value, chilling academic freedom and dissent and silencing alternative views. Done too often, they also could distress the community, numb the community to leaders' voices, appear performative and/or exacerbate the situation. In general, therefore, the university, its colleges and its departments should refrain from issuing institutional statements.

As drafters of the University of Chicago's influential [Kalven Report](#) recognized in 1967, full neutrality may be untenable or inadvisable when our university's very purpose is threatened. Judiciously, institutional statements could be needed to uphold the university's position as a [mission- and values-driven organization](#), in addition to modeling for students that MSU lives what it teaches: using persuasion and reason to stand up for core beliefs. Such moments include:

1. Incidents that threaten MSU's core mission of teaching, research and outreach; its commitment to free inquiry and academic freedom; and/or its strategic plans/priorities.
2. Incidents that directly impact the broad university community, eroding MSU's core values and/or commitment to nonviolence; undermining safety and well-being; and/or otherwise interfering with the pursuit of community members' roles within the university's mission.

To learn more, please see the [president's letter](#) and the FAQs below.



Why is the university embracing restraint now when it has issued statements on national and international incidents and issues in the past?

Each administration has a different approach to institutional voice. When MSU's current president, Kevin M. Guskiewicz, started in March 2024, the administration carefully studied the topic and, after consulting with deans and other university leaders, determined that institutional restraint would bolster the university's position as a forum for debates and thereby advance academic freedom.

Can academic or administrative units host unit statements or statements by individual faculty members (or groups of individual faculty members) on university websites?

[From Civil Discourse FAQs for Faculty.]

Academic and administrative units should not make institutional statements or what may be reasonably perceived by the public as an institutional statement. Instead, they should use university web pages to provide information about the unit itself, its programs, its staff and other information related to the unit.

Employees may not make personal statements unrelated to university business on behalf of the university (i.e., by using a university platform, including a university listserv or university, college or department website, or by using their administrative title).

Does institutional restraint impact the academic freedom of MSU faculty and scholars?

No. While the leaders of the university, its colleges and its departments should exercise restraint when speaking on behalf of the institution, our community of scholars can continue to participate in any public conversation. They should, however, present their statements as their own opinion, not that of the institution.

What is the university's guidance on employees' use of social media?

[From Civil Discourse FAQs for Faculty.]

Michigan State University's social media accounts are maintained to provide information about the university and share university stories, news and highlights.

MSU faculty and academic staff are expected to carefully differentiate their official activities as faculty members from their personal activities. When the situation warrants, faculty are expected to make it clear that when they are speaking as a private citizen they do not speak for the university. For example, you may identify as faculty when posting on personal pages but should not use an administrative title or use university listservs to distribute personal views. Faculty are encouraged to observe these [guidelines](#).

For more detailed information that applies to MSU faculty, staff and student employees and interns, please see [MSU's Social Media Guidelines](#).

Where can I find more information about academic freedom, freedom of expression and free speech?

Please see [MSU's Civil Discourse FAQs for Faculty](#).



The university is committed to upholding the dignity and worth of all people by [living our values](#) of collaboration, equity, excellence, integrity and respect. To that end, university leaders will continue to offer supportive resources to community members; engage in timely and targeted outreach to impacted groups; and facilitate spaces for constructive dialogue and reflection, such as vigils, teach-ins and academic panels.

For more information, please see this [comprehensive student resource page](#) with information and links for reporting incidents of discrimination and harassment, relationship violence and sexual misconduct and crime.

For more information pertaining to students and employees, including mental health resources, please visit this [supportive resources page](#).

For MSU efforts to foster an inclusive environment in which students, faculty and staff can reach their full potential, please visit this [student resource page](#) and this [faculty and staff resource page](#).

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MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS

- [Campus Media Guidelines](#)
- [Experts directory](#)
- [Guidelines for unit communicators](#)
- [Issues and Statements](#)
- [Media Contacts](#)
- [Media Relations Procedures](#)
- [Op-ed Guidelines](#)
- [FOR MEDIA](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [University Licensing](#)
- [Policy on Endorsement, Sponsorship and Advertising](#)
- [Sparty mascot](#)
- [Copyright Permissions Center](#)
- [Spartan Spirit School Kit Requests](#)
- [Jobs at University Communications](#)
- [Communications Toolkit for Academics](#)

WEB, SOCIAL, PHOTO & VIDEO

- [Filming at MSU](#)
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- [Social @ Michigan State](#)
- [Social Media Directory](#)

Contact us

(517) 355-7505

Address

**Olds Hall
408 West Circle Drive**

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