

AN OPEN LETTER TO CANDIDATES FOR MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

Dear MSU Presidential Candidate,

We love MSU. And, if you are successful in your candidacy for the presidency, we are confident that you will come to know and love MSU. We are an alliance of students, faculty, staff, and alums who have come together to demand transparency, accountability, and institutional change at MSU. We have come together to Reclaim MSU.

MSU seeks a president who, as outlined in the November 5 position description, embodies MSU values of “the highest level of integrity; appreciation for a diverse community; respect for, and support of, students, faculty, and staff; empathy; and a visionary, innovative approach to leadership that addresses the challenges and opportunities in higher education for 2030 and beyond.”

We agree. These are not values that we have seen in our recent presidents and they are deeply needed. However, we need more. We also seek and need a president with experience and understanding that is not addressed in the official description.

We need a president with a deep understanding of and commitment to ending sexual violence. MSU has started to challenge the longstanding culture of unresponsiveness around sexual abuse and assault. The university has established a Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (RVSM) Expert Advisory Workgroup, provided more resources for prevention and counseling, and implemented new policies. However, these mean nothing without committed leadership. We seek a president who will respect (not ignore) the advice of the RVSM experts, who will support (not denigrate) survivors, and who will build on the work that has been started at MSU to help create fundamental institutional change.

We need an external candidate because our culture is broken. Any candidate who has succeeded in this calcified, top-down, secretive and retaliatory culture cannot effectively change it. The Michigan Attorney General is currently investigating MSU’s conduct in relation to Larry Nassar. Any candidate who has risen high enough within MSU to be a candidate for the presidency has risen high enough to be a potential subject of this ongoing investigation.

We need a president with a strong commitment to transparency, accountability and shared governance, who demonstrates this commitment by agreeing to **engage with the MSU community openly to rebuild our trust**. Earlier this year, 86% of the voting faculty expressed no confidence in the Board of Trustees and 83% of the Faculty Senate called for the entire Board’s resignation. We recognize that most recent searches for university presidents are conducted confidentially. However, MSU is not like most universities. On our campus, hundreds of student athletes and patients experienced decades of sexual abuse because university officials ignored them. Our former president has been charged with lying under oath regarding the Nassar investigation. And our interim president has claimed privately and publicly under oath that survivors are lying. At the same time, he lies about the reasons that MSU closed the healing assistance fund set up to help support survivors of Nassar’s abuse and their families. We are advocating for an open search and will continue to do so. However, we urge *you* to engage publicly with the entire MSU community. We need you to challenge MSU’s secrecy and lack of accountability. *Now*, before you are hired.

We love MSU, but we do not trust our presidential search process. We do not trust our Board of Trustees. And we do not trust our interim President. We hope we can trust you to work with the entire MSU community to rebuild our trust and pride in MSU.

ReclaimMSU