

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

March 14, 2018

An open letter to the MSU community about Trust

We are living through troubling times at Michigan State University. No one is immune to the damage that has been done to our university. While we cannot change what has happened, we must now turn our attention to actions that promote healing -- healing for Nassar's survivors and for the rest of the MSU community.

One obvious casualty of this ordeal is Trust. Many members of our community have lost the conviction that our leaders, our processes, our procedures, and our policies can keep us safe and healthy. The trust that these long-standing structures will protect us from unfair and arbitrary treatment has faltered.

The members of the Office of the University Ombudsperson have been listening and thinking deeply about our role in facilitating the needed healing and transformation. Our office was created 50 years ago in a time that was also characterized by a loss of trust. For 50 years we have served as an independent and neutral third party, existing to make sure that students with grievances get a fair and unbiased hearing of those grievances. Our creation document, now called *Student Rights and Responsibilities*, explicitly charges us with assisting students "in the expeditious settlement of their problems," AND with protecting students with complaints against the university from any form of retaliation. We also have an important responsibility to assist faculty, staff, and administrators in understanding and appropriately applying university policies and processes, as well as helping them think through concerns involving students.

At this time of organizational crisis and transition, the role of the University Ombudsperson is more important than ever. We stand ready to continue our 50-year mission of listening respectfully and helping students who feel unheard or misused by the university. We will continue to help the university community understand the policies and practices that ensure concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon "expeditiously." At our core, we continue to advocate for fairness and justice.

Please keep us in mind as an important resource for addressing problems inside and outside of the classroom. Our conversations with each of you are held in strict confidence. We pledge to do our part in rebuilding MSU and the trust that is at the foundation of this effort.



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