

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

January 22, 2025

Dear Committee Members,

First, let me thank each of you for your willingness to serve on this important committee. Your dedication to Michigan State University, and to the transformative power of the humanities, is deeply valued. I understand that this process may feel challenging for some, and I want to express my gratitude for the thoughtful and constructive approach I know you will bring to this effort.

The Purpose of This Committee

This committee is charged with exploring the potential benefits and challenges of integrating the RCAH into CAL. This includes evaluating how such an integration might strengthen the humanities at MSU, support students and faculty, and position us to meet the evolving needs of higher education. I also want to hear about the challenges that may be faced with this integration.

Some members of this committee and the broader community may have concerns or skepticism about this process. I acknowledge those feelings and assure you that this effort is grounded in a genuine commitment to help ensure that the humanities thrive at MSU—not just for today, but for future generations of students, faculty, and scholars.



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Why This Work Is Important

The humanities are at the very heart of Michigan State University's identity and mission. They empower students with critical thinking skills, a deep understanding of human experience, and the ability to navigate and enrich an increasingly complex world. Yet, like many institutions across the country, MSU faces the challenge of declining enrollments in humanities programs and the ongoing need to ensure their vitality and sustainability. For instance, while overall applications to MSU have increased year-over-year at this point in time by about 5%, the number of applications to CAL have slightly declined (from 2,333 to 2,153 at this point in time, roughly down 8%) and in RCAH applications stand at 116 now compared to 173 last year—about a third fewer.

As Provost, it is my responsibility to ensure that MSU's resources—our people, programs, and financial investments—are aligned to best support our mission of advancing knowledge and transforming lives. This includes making difficult decisions about how to preserve and enhance the humanities, which remain vital to our university and the communities we serve. The reality is that our resources are finite, and we must deploy them with great care to ensure their maximum impact. Preserving and building upon existing strengths is far more feasible than attempting to rebuild after losing ground. This requires a forward-thinking and adaptive approach, balancing immediate needs with long-term sustainability to ensure that MSU continues to provide exceptional opportunities for students. Thus, the current thinking for aligning RCAH administratively within CAL.

Guiding Principles

These are the principles I have kept top of mind on this matter, and my hope is that you will also keep these principles at the forefront as you undertake this work:

- The Value of the Humanities: Our decisions must reflect the central role of the humanities in MSU's mission and the unique contributions of RCAH and CAL to the university.
- **Respect for RCAH's identity:** RCAH's residential model, innovative programs, and contributions to the humanities should remain integral to its future.
- Collaboration and Inclusion: It is vital to engage stakeholders, gather diverse perspectives, and consider what is most important to preserve, strengthen, and reimagine.
- Sustainability and Stewardship: Resource constraints are a reality, and we must consider how best to position MSU for long-term success and sustainability in a rapidly changing higher education landscape.

Deliverables

Your task is to provide a preliminary report by April 1, outlining the potential benefits and challenges of moving RCAH into CAL and identifying potential models for integration that respect the distinct strengths of both units. This report can then be given a thorough review by the appropriate bodies within the academic governance structure in the month of April, and that feedback from governance will be returned to the committee for further refinement of the report. I am hoping to have your final report by May 10 to allow time for me to follow-up with the Committee prior to the end of the Spring Semester.

Timeline

I understand that the timeline for this process is ambitious. This timeline is intentional. It allows for a clear and focused path forward that encourages robust dialogue while ensuring that we move forward in a timely manner, providing clarity and reducing uncertainty for faculty, staff, and students.

I also recognize that engaging in this kind of work requires careful thought and input, and that it can be challenging to achieve meaningful results in a constrained timeframe. However, I also want to emphasize that this timeline reflects our collective need to act thoughtfully, but decisively, in response to the financial challenges. Moving with purpose and efficiency helps ensure that we maintain the momentum necessary to implement decisions in a manner that best supports our faculty, staff, and students.

Based on the committee's feedback, I ask that instead of the committee having a report by April 1, that the committee move forward with issuing a preliminary report by **April 1, and a final report by May 10**. I appreciate your flexibility and commitment to balancing the importance of thoroughness with the need for timely action.

Closing

I deeply appreciate your commitment to approaching this task with integrity and care. MSU is at its best when we work together to address both challenges and opportunities, and I have every confidence that this committee will contribute meaningfully to a stronger future for RCAH.

Thank you for your service, your thoughtfulness, and your shared commitment to the university's mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thos. D. Jeitschko". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Thos." and last name "Jeitschko" clearly legible.

Thomas D. Jeitschko, Ph.D.

Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Cc: Kevin Guskiewicz
Ashley Green
Teresa Mastin
Victoria Nelson
Angela Wilson