

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

June 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans, Directors and Chairpersons

FROM: Teresa Mastin, Vice Provost and Associate Vice President for Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs

SUBJECT: Simmons Chivukula Award for Academic Leadership 2026-2027

The Simmons Chivukula Award for Academic Leadership is generously sponsored by a gift from Dr. Elizabeth H. Simmons (Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UC San Diego; former MSU Associate Provost for Faculty and Academic Staff Development and Dean of Lyman Briggs College) and Dr. R. Sekhar Chivukula (distinguished professor of Physics at UC San Diego, former MSU Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of Undergraduate Studies).



The award is for exemplary work in academic leadership at the ranks of department chair, school director, assistant dean, or associate dean (individuals must be currently holding one of these positions at the time of nomination). An individual will be selected annually based on consistently demonstrated excellence in academic leadership, including advancing inclusion.

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An individual will be selected based on consistently demonstrated excellence in academic leadership in the following ways:

- Fosters an inclusive and equitable environment within their unit
- Treats others with tact, dignity, respect, and compassion
- Empowers the success and development of others
- Develops and communicates a clear vision for the unit
- Operates from a premise of openness, honesty, and transparency
- Displays awareness of own feelings, behaviors, values, and their potential impact on others
- Exhibits humility, takes ownership of decisions and actions, and provides credit to others as appropriate
- Develops networks, partnerships, and collaborations rather than operating primarily alone
- Follows through on commitments, pays attention to detail
- Is dedicated to continuous learning and improvement
- Has served sufficient time in the role to demonstrate transformative leadership

Nomination Process

Nomination packets for 2026-27 are due **Monday, November 9, 2026**, and must be submitted using the Qualtrics form: https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7OkNDH1psSxsvps

The nominations may be submitted by faculty and academic staff, support staff, students, or individuals across these roles. It is anticipated that the strongest packets will have broad, collective support.

Materials to Submit

- Letter of nomination (no more than three pages of text; signatures do not count toward page limit)
 - The letter should address the criteria mentioned above with specific examples to show how the candidate exemplifies transformative leadership. Examples should discuss both the cause and effect of a particular instance.
- Candidate's CV
- Candidate's essay on leadership as an MSU administrator, including their philosophy, accomplishments, and impact (no more than 2 pages)
- Letter of support from supervisor/MAU administrator
- Draft citation (approximately 325 words, see tip sheet below)

The recipient will receive a \$2,000 award and will be honored in spring 2027.

All-University Awards nominations, including those for the Simmons Chivukula Award for Academic Leadership, will be reviewed for misconduct and violations of University policy to ensure alignment with the [University's Mission and Values](#) before being advanced for committee review.

Lastly, a nominee not selected for the Simmons Chivukula Award for Academic Leadership may resubmit their nomination packet in a subsequent award cycle; however, all materials must be updated before resubmitting.

If you have any questions, please contact honorifics@msu.edu.

TIPS FOR WRITING DRAFT CITATIONS

(Use this outline as applicable to the award)

IMPORTANT:

Please print the name as it should appear in the awards brochure. Draft citations should be approximately 325 words. *If you wish to see examples of draft citations, please reach out to honorifics@msu.edu.*

The citation will be printed in the program booklet. The citation should be an accurate statement of the person's achievements, but it should also be:

Distinctive. The citations should reflect an honoree's distinction; a relevant tidbit about the person (as opposed to the person's achievements) is helpful (e.g., "An advisor who is also broadly versed in music, literature, and the fine arts, Ms. X.")

Creative. Search for unusual and descriptive adjectives, varying cadences and turns of phrase.

Easily understood by a lay audience.

Citations should include such items as:

- A quotation from a student (or a colleague) from the material submitted adds human interest to the citation. Such quotations should be specific rather than general. "One of the most important things Ms. X communicates is her conviction that service in a university can be the heart of an honorable way of life." is preferable to "She was the best advisor I've ever had." Don't overlook humorous quotations.
- Statements of the person's area of expertise and the overall significance of the person's contributions/achievements to the world/the university, especially across disciplines. How far does their influence reach? State? National? International? Public/private sector? What constituent groups?
- Specific ways in which her/his excellence has been evidenced. Undergraduate, graduate, or both. Extension. Advancing diversity. Textbooks and curriculum development. Student advising and mentorship. Where do students go after MSU? Support for funding for equipment or scholarships.
- Specific evidence of scholarship and contributions to other areas of the university's mission, such as research. Avoid citing numbers of things unless they are phenomenal. Instead, cite capstone examples. Use layperson's terms where possible and cite the usefulness or results of the person's work in their largest context. Grants, professional societies, and awards are appropriate here, but only the most significant.
- Other - Professional affiliations, consulting service/outreach. MSU committee service. Again, use only the most significant examples.
- Summary sentence of the person's worthiness for the award.