

Dear SAIC Community,

In 2015, the School awarded Kanye West (now known as Ye) an honorary degree in recognition for his artistic accomplishments to that point in time. In the years following, he has exhibited disturbing behaviors and made dangerous statements that do not align with our community values. His anti-Black, antisemitic, and incendiary statements, particularly those directed at Black and Jewish communities, are disgusting and condemnable. His words and actions have been painful for our entire community and, particularly, for those of us who feel that our identities and life experiences are under attack.

As a community, we know that there are varying opinions on what our School's response should be—even as we all agree that his behavior is indefensible. While the School grants honorary degrees to individuals based on their contributions to art and culture as of a moment in time, his actions do not align with SAIC's mission and values. After hearing from many of you, and conferring with the Board of Governors, the honorary degree awarded to Kanye West has been rescinded.

This was a difficult decision to make, and one that has been deliberated thoroughly. There is no precedent in SAIC's more than 80 years of granting honorary degrees for rescinding one, and as an institution of higher education, we know we must uphold a higher standard in protecting freedom of expression. Though we firmly believe in the right to express a diversity of opinions and beliefs, the severity of his behavior made it clear that rescinding this honor was appropriate.

Thank you to those community members who have reached out in recent days to share not only their thoughts on this matter, but how these remarks have impacted them personally. This has been a challenging time, and as always, I am appreciative of your openness, empathy, and commitment to making SAIC an inclusive community.

Elissa Tenny
President