

## **Government Relations Advisory Committee**

February 7, 2019 Meeting Minutes  
4025 Fleming Administration Building

### *In attendance:*

Ellen Bauerle, Chair  
Kara Charbarneau, Michigan Medicine  
Sigrid Cordell, UM Library  
Julie Gales, Government Relations (Staff)  
Diane Giannola, Michigan Medicine  
Vincent Glud, ITCS  
Steve Gray, Law School  
Justin Hodge, School of Social Work  
Dorene Markel, Michigan Medicine  
Jacob Pollitt, CSG Representative  
Cynthia Wilbanks, Vice President for Government Relations

### *Absent:*

Colleen Conway, SMTD  
Karen Downing, UM Library  
Mark Kushner, Engineering - EECS  
John Mansfield, LSA emeritus  
Afifa Shamim-Uzzaman, Michigan Medicine

### **Introductions and Announcements**

Committee members recognized the service of US Congressman John Dingell, who represented the state of Michigan for nearly 60 years and just passed away.

### **A. Public Engagement**

UM is developing a number of strategies to present a more intentional face to the public. Engagement with UM takes many different forms, including but not limited to the faculty. UM is rolling out a new version of Michigan Experts, a website that is a central repository for Michigan faculty research areas. Michigan Experts allows the public (applicants, news media, others) to search for researchers on specific topics. Anticipate further discussion of the topic of engagement at future meetings.

On March 21, 2019, the Presidential Awards for Public Engagement will be presented to Prof. Rosina Bierbaum at the School for Environment and Sustainability and Prof. Joseph Ryan, at the School of Social Work. There will be a panel discussion with the award winners, several deans and President Schlissel as well as lightning talks by faculty about what are the motivators and barriers for faculty to engage in public discourse. Cynthia invited GRAC members to attend and invitations will be sent out to GRAC membership.

### **B. Legislative updates**

With 50 new legislators joining the 148 member legislature, the Government Relations staff are engaged in outreach to new legislators in Lansing, getting acquainted with them and learning about their priorities and the issues of greatest concern. Of particular interest, the staff wants to learn more about legislators' views of higher education. Legislators differ considerably in their prior experiences with and knowledge of institutions of higher education and health care. UM has developed a variety of content materials over the years to help legislators understand how UM is active among their

constituents, state-wide, and not just in the vicinity of the three campuses in Ann Arbor, Flint & Dearborn.

Topics under consideration by the Legislature include the poor state of Michigan roads, the use of the School Aid Fund for non-K-12 purposes, and repeal of the income tax on pensions. Although the budget proposal has not yet been presented to the legislature, many discussions are focused on identifying revenues to support multiple goals.

### **C. Executive Branch updates**

Department directors are selected by the Governor, as are deputy directors and legislative liaisons. The new Director of the Michigan Department of Transportation is an MDOT civil servant and was elevated to the top job. Dept. of Health and Human Services director, Robert Gordon, was formerly associated with the Obama Administration and will be moving to Michigan. The new Budget Director, Chris Kolb, is a former legislator and former executive director of the Michigan Environmental Council. He is also a UM grad. Some department directors remain to be named and interviews are ongoing.

The Governor's office has asked UM for help identifying faculty expertise to assist the administration with priority conversations and contacts. For example, in the area of road construction, UM have several faculty members who research materials for roads – which work better, what materials may last, and how weather/environmental conditions impact road longevity. GRAC's own Steve Gray has been working in the area of Unemployment Insurance and has been a valuable resource to the administration. UM will continue to offer support in addressing state issues and policies, both to legislators and members of the new gubernatorial administration.

### **D. GRAC Q&A:**

*How do we fix the roads if the need extends over time?*

In the past, the state has used their bonding authority to provide funding over many years. When looking at local bond proposals to fund road construction projects in communities across the state, the voters approve a high percentage of them. In other areas, the state has used their bonding authority to support prison construction and environmental priorities. Although it is not yet known what the funding mechanism will be to fund road repairs, a bonding proposal could be considered.

*Committee members expressed an interest in the topic of pedestrian safety in Ann Arbor, particularly in areas adjacent to schools including UM campus. What can be done?*

Cynthia suggested bringing the university planner to a future GRAC meeting to discuss activities that are being considered to address pedestrian safety issues.

*Health Care: No one understands health insurance regardless of age, experience, race, or education. One-third of "Go fund me" campaigns are for medical bills. Can the University address this?*

Cynthia suggested that this might be a good topic to be addressed by Student Life, especially if the concerns are focused on student health care.

### **E. Next Committee meeting:**

Our next and last meeting, scheduled for April 4, 2019, will need to be rescheduled to accommodate a scheduling conflict. The new date and time are: April 18, 2019 from 3-4pm in 5075 Fleming Building. Suggested topic: the State Appropriations Process.