

**UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
STUDENT RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**Friday, October 25, 2019
11:30 AM-1:00 PM
Michigan League – Koessler Room**

Present: Gina Cervetti, Royster Harper, Simone Himbeault Taylor, Nida Syed, Harish Ganesh, Helen Look, Jeannie Moody-Novak, Judith Beck, Mariah Fiumara, Olga Virakhovskaya, Kyriaki Marti, David Potter, Yaacov Ritov, Jill Esau, Cindy Leung, Katie Van Zanen

Absent: Amy Chavasse, Charlie Koopman, Jairam Menon, Chitra Subramanian, Evelyn Winter

Guest(s):

- Mary Jo Callan, Director - Ginsberg Center
 - Dave Waterhouse, Associate Director - Ginsberg Center
 - Erin Byrnes, Lead for Democratic Engagement - Ginsberg Center
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1. Lunch/Call to Order

Chair Cervetti called the meeting to order.

2. Review / Approval of Minutes

The minutes for September were reviewed. Chair Cervetti called for revisions. None were offered. Minutes were approved.

3. Presentation: Democratic Engagement and Student Voting: Context, Campus Landscape, Looking Ahead to 2020

Chair Cervetti welcomed the committee and introduced the guests.

Mary Jo Callan thanked the committee for the invitation to present. She gave a background overview of how and why the Ginsberg Center was charged with engaging students in the democratic process by having us read a 2018 quote by Andrew Seligshon, President of Campus Compact and Thomas Ehrlich, President Emeritus of Indiana University. Paraphrased, the quote included results of a recent study found that “less than one-third of millennials consider it essential to live in a democracy”. Mary Jo commented that one should not start a presentation with depressing information.

Erin Byrnes continued with the overview of the current landscape by showing data from various sources that many may find distressing. She went on to discuss when and how the Ginsberg Center launched the democratic engagement process as part of the strategic plan in 2016 and the timeline of activities to date.

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Dave Waterhouse presented voting data from the 2016 elections and predictions for the 2020 election. He went on to discuss how to reach students that are not civically engaged and how the Ginsberg Center recently partnered with the First Year Experience program and various student organizations to increase engagement. They are looking to deepen faculty engagement by encouraging faculty to discuss civic engagement in the classroom.

Mary Jo discussed that The Ginsberg Center has been charged with re-shaping the landscape at UM by bringing people with different views together to have dialogue across the spectrum of social and political identities. These discussions involving students include the democratic process and education about state-wide and local ballot issues in a non-partisan way. She commented that Faculty engagement is critical to success.

Mary Jo then asked the committee to discuss and share based on their role in the university how they encourage civic engagement. Q: What has your experience been with regard to discussing student voting in the classroom? Mary Jo clarified that this experience may not only be in the classroom, but can come from the student's perspective from whatever role you are in.

Some thoughts that emerged during the sharing:

- Issues of voter registration. Half of UM students are from out of state. By students voting in local issues that affect their current lives in Ann Arbor – that some consider a rigged one-party system – may allow for the local policy makers to take note.
- The November 2018 Proposal 3 on the Michigan ballot removed some of the structural barriers that were in place that prevented students from voting i.e. removed 30 day requirement to be registered to vote prior to the election.
- Student voices would be more powerful if they voted locally rather than in their resident state.
- Do the conversations actually take place? Cause? Why are people not talking about it? Fear? What other ways can we engage if they are not comfortable?
- How to get students to engage?
- Talk about process not outcome. Not UM faculty/staff role to discuss what they want. Facilitate discussions in a non-partisan way.
- The Library is expected to be neutral. A for credit class is offered regarding how to sort through information.
- Ford School – have top down, bottom up approach. Faculty as well as student groups sending out voting info.
- Engineering – challenge –Dean's email asking faculty not to talk about civic engagement in classrooms citing that many faculty are not able to discuss issues that arise. Large amount of international students and they are not wanting to feel "othered".

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- Reiterated to engage International Students in a democratic process
- Add to syllabus a blurb about voting rights and process in Ann Arbor. Can CANVAS be a resource? Link on Wolverine Access about the voting process.
- How to provide the scaffolding of information in many different places.
- Ford School is bringing in ballots and processes from other countries to discuss with students.
- Talking with colleagues – are you willing? How do you do it? Faculty meetings? Invite the Ginsberg Center. They will present.

Homework Assigned: Bring back data from colleagues for November's meeting asking them how they engage students around voting and civic engagement.

Erin led the committee in an activity that had members discuss what a photo meant to them. The photos were of the Statue of Liberty and the world from space. Following the discussion Erin reminded the committee that folks have different perspectives from the same image. Rarely, if ever, folks have the same perspective, but all are correct and personal to individual's experiences.

Erin left committee members with folders that contained additional resources.

4. Adjournment

Chair Cervetti thanked committee and guests. She commented that civic engagement can be exciting and scary when talking to students and that Student Life can help. Looking to the winter semester we will be hearing from Will Sherry, Director of the Spectrum Center. He will be discussing invisible populations. Judith Beck is collecting information to distribute as well.

David Potter made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Harish Ganesh seconded. All in favor.