

Government Relations Advisory Committee Meeting

Friday, December 6, 2019

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

6039 Fleming Administration Building

In attendance:

MaryJo Banasik, Director, Faculty Senate Office
Ellen Bauerle, UM Press, Chair
Kara Charbarneau, Michigan Medicine
Vincent Glud, ITCS
Lucca Henrion, President, Rackham Student Government
Justin Hodge, School of Social Work
Andrea Lewis, Government Relations (Staff)
Daniil Manaenkov, LSA
Annalisa Manera, SACUA Liaison
John Mansfield, Engineering
Dorene Markel, Michigan Medicine
Renee Nguyen, ISR
Alexandra Rivera, UM Library
Cynthia Wilbanks, Vice President for Government Relations

Absent:

Morgan Beeler, SEAS
Karen Downing, UM Library
Diane Giannola, Michigan Medicine
Erin Kahle, Nursing
Brett Zaslavsky, Central Student Government representative

Announcements

Committee members welcomed visitor Dr. MaryJo Banasik, who attended this committee meeting as part of a program of visiting all SACUA committees during the year.

Committee members described themselves and their UM areas briefly, and Dr. Banasik likewise provided information about her background and goals for SACUA.

Committee members had been provided in advance with copies of the minutes from the 4 April and 8 November meetings, which were approved with minor emendations. Committee chair Bauerle will see that the approved minutes reach the Senate Assembly office for posting on their website, as part of a new initiative to provide a more comprehensive record of meeting minutes and agendas for Senate Assembly committees.

A. Update on UM Budget

VP Wilbanks opened the discussion portion of the meeting with a continuation of her remarks on the state budget for higher education from the last GRAC meeting.

VP Wilbanks reported that progress has been made on the budget since our last committee meeting, at which time there had been rather a stalemate in the Legislature.

The Legislature did provide a budget for UM by the 30 September deadline. There had been considerable discussion between Governor Whitmer and the Legislature about allocations to specific budget lines, and about several of the Governor's vetoes of legislation.

Recent weeks have seen passage of several supplemental spending bills that restored sums for certain programs that had previously been vetoed. \$150M in supplemental funding was restored in this way, and an additional supplemental bill is anticipated to be passed shortly.

VP Wilbanks anticipates that, from her perspective, the budget will be made close to whole. The first round of budget cuts involved the elimination of grants to students at private schools or universities, and as a result of the changed economy and demographics, schools in that category in recent years have been experiencing significant changes in their educational model.

VP Wilbanks informed the Committee that the state budget will get more attention after 1 January 2020, as usual.

Committee members raised the question of the budget and the election pledge "Fix the Roads," in light of the heavy road reconstruction Ann Arbor saw in early fall, and the ongoing work on roads and projects in different parts of town. VP Wilbanks reported that the money being used for those projects is not in fact from "Fix the Roads" funding but rather funds that had been allocated in recent years and was only now being used. She noted that roads are under the jurisdiction of many entities – cities, counties, states – and thus the source of funds for road construction is different.

Committee member Mansfield inquired about how the construction projects had been prioritized, since it seemed that some less important roads (e.g., Greene Street) had been prioritized over roads more commonly used (e.g., Hill Avenue), and that the poor condition of certain key roads that approach UM "scarcely puts our best foot forward." Committee members widely agreed with member Mansfield.

VP Wilbanks replied that since funding sources for projects vary by the type of road, it can be difficult to ensure that any given project will be funded, and/or started and completed in a road-building season. Projects are prioritized by the state and units of government on a mostly annual basis.

VP Wilbanks also repeated an observation from last month's meeting, that UM had contributed a very substantial sum of money to the city of Ann Arbor for the East Hoover Ave. improvement project. VP Wilbanks also observed that portions of South University will be largely unusable in calendar year 2020, for significant utility work, and that this will have an unavoidable effect on the Art Fair in July.

Committee members observed that Division between Madison and Hill had recently been repainted in a very non-standard fashion, and expressed skepticism that this possibly experimental layout made sense (i.e., how to plow the anomalous curbside bike lane in winter, and how to navigate the sole traffic lane when snowstorms narrow it).

VP Wilbanks reported that the UM was not involved with the city's plans for this repaving and repainting. Committee members reported on certain additional kinds of traffic issues downtown, including seeing city buses struggling with the diminished turning radius where the new William bike lane impinges on bus traffic, and on buses having trouble navigating the newly narrowed south Division.

Committee member Rivera asked about all these traffic issues: she wondered what kind of dialogue there is with large property developers in Ann Arbor. Are they asked to contribute in any way, given that their projects bring considerable increases in all kinds of traffic?

VP Wilbanks replied that developers are typically asked to make repairs if the construction process damages anything, but she is unfamiliar with details of Ann Arbor code related to damage to infrastructure by property developers.

Committee member Rivera inquired about the existence of intentional coordination between city and university units, and VP Wilbanks replied that as a result of the geography of the campus and community, that road projects and many utility projects are adjacent and co-located, there is generally considerable communication. She gave as a counter example the University of Texas at Austin, whose campus is generally more on the outskirts of the city. Committee member Charbarneau compared the layout of MSU in East Lansing, where again the university is close to the city, but there are some differences.

Committee member Glud inquired about the funding source for the considerable work on the Stadium Rd. bridge some months ago. VP Wilbanks replied that Rep. Dingell had been responsible and its funding was primarily from federal and state resources.

VP Wilbanks reported that the Governor remains committed to funding road projects. Her plan is to create a dedicated funding stream; the initial attempt to do this via a gas tax was not successful.

Committee members continued a lively discussion on the issue of roads in and around Ann Arbor, noting the poor "band-aid" approach to repairs (Committee member

Charbarneau), the fact that the first section of freeway in the US was poured in 1942, to facilitate traffic to the Willow Run bomber plant, and was not replaced until 1996, 54 years later (Committee member Markel).

B. Community Reaction to UM Hosting Presidential Debate

The committee moved on to the second topic of the meeting, the anticipated public reaction to next year's hosting by UM/Ann Arbor of the 15 October 2020 presidential debate.

VP Wilbanks informed the committee that much work is already underway on this complex event. Some details were shared with the committee, including location (Crisler), anticipated number of attendees (800), and ticket distribution (2/3 of available tickets are given to the two political parties, and the remaining 1/3 will be given to UM for its use – it is likely that the majority of these will be distributed to UM students). Safety for all concerned is obviously a top priority.

The Presidential Debate Commission is a long-standing and experienced group, VP Wilbanks reported, and it knows what sort of venue, amenities, and security perimeter will be required to allow for a safe, well-run debate.

VP Wilbanks noted several features that made UM an attractive venue, including:

- experience with large-scale crowd control as a result of university sporting events
- close communication among local, state and federal law enforcement: AAPD, UM DPSS, Michigan State Police and federal security agencies.

Committee members commented that last spring's false-alarm non-shooting in the Fishbowl had the inadvertent effect of showcasing the effectiveness of emergency response on campus.

VP Wilbanks commented that the commission had indicated they were looking for a venue in the Upper Midwest, in order to have representation around the country for the debates. She also reported that when the working group arrived to examine the venue, the director of the show indicated he was very impressed by UM's state of preparation, which was unique in his 20+ years of experience with these debates.

For the actual debate, while there be no UM logos that will appear in the televised area, media will identify where they are, so there will be no mistaking that the debates is taking place on the UM's campus. Hosting debates historically has been beneficial to the colleges and universities that have hosted.

There was brief committee discussion of the actual voting process next year, particularly concerning students, in light of the long lines they experienced at the Union polling site in 2016. Committee member Lucca Henrion commented that Rackham Student Government is working on a resolution to avoid having classes on election day, to help simplify voting for students.

Committee member Rivera mentioned that UM Library will be hosting a sample ballot.

The meeting adjourned at 4 pm.