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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA)
Monday, October 22, 2018 3:15 pm
Fleming Administration Bldg, Room 5075

Present: Atzmon, Beatty, Lippert, Marsh (chair), Malek, Schultz, Spencer; Schneider, Snyder

Absent: Carlos, Potter

3:20 Call to Order/Approval of Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 3:20 and the Agenda was approved unanimously.

3:25 SACUA entered into Executive Session to discuss:

SACUA statement on recommendation letters was approved via email vote:

Further statement on the rights and responsibilities of faculty as they relate to writing letters of reference:

In light of recent events on the Ann Arbor campus, the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA) strongly reaffirms its commitment to the defense of academic freedom and the rights and responsibilities of academic tenure.

SACUA reasserts its commitment to the American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) Statement of Professional Ethics, which stresses that a faculty member's evaluation of a student's merit should be the primary concern in providing letters of recommendation and to the Association's assertion that faculty members "have a particular obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and to further public understanding of academic freedom."

In its previous Statement on Letters of Reference, SACUA affirmed a community standard. Clear understanding of that standard should protect students and faculty alike. SACUA therefore objects to any suggestion that its Statement on Letters of Reference can be used as an endorsement of sanctions against a member of the faculty.

SACUA is concerned that the widely circulated disciplinary letter recently issued by the Dean of LSA may have a chilling effect on members of the academic community who may, for legitimate and deeply held personal reasons, feel uncomfortable about providing letters to certain organizations or individuals. Such discomfort is fully in accord with the principle of intellectual integrity that is the core of academic freedom and does not represent "exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students," which is deprecated by the AAUP.

SACUA asserts that recommendation letters represent the personal endorsement of the writer and, as such, the decision to write any letter must remain the prerogative of the author; faculty members should not have to fear reprisal for declining to write a letter. To the extent that any member of our academic community feels coerced into providing a

recommendation letter, or stating opinions that he or she does not believe, the integrity of the recommendation is tarnished and the academic freedom that is central to our University is impugned.

Other Topics:

- SACUA nominee for the Duderstadt panel.
- Update on private Meeting with the Provost
- UM-Flint faculty governance issues including curricular purview
- Tri-campus Committee update
- UM-Flint and the AEC survey

5:00 Under Matters Arising in open session, Vice Chair Beatty reminded SACUA that she would be attending the Big Ten faculty governance leaders conference in Iowa next week and invited SACUA to send topics of interest to her.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas Schneider
Senate Secretary Pro Temp

University of Michigan Bylaws of the Board of Regents, Sec. 5.02:
Governing Bodies in Schools and Colleges
Sec. 4.01 The University Senate

"...[t]he Senate is authorized to consider any subject pertaining to the interests of the university, and to make recommendations to the Board of Regents in regard thereto. Decisions of the University Senate with respect to matters within its jurisdiction shall constitute the binding action of the university faculties. Jurisdiction over academic polices shall reside in the faculties of the various schools and colleges, but insofar as actions by the several faculties affect university policy as a whole, or schools and colleges other than the one in which they originate, they shall be brought before the University Senate."

Rules of the University Senate, the Senate Assembly and the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs:
Senate: "In all cases not covered by rules adopted by the Senate, the procedure in Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed."

Assembly: "The Assembly may adopt rules for the transaction of its business. In appropriate cases not covered by rules of the Assembly, the rules of the University Senate shall apply."

SACUA: "The committee may adopt rules for the transaction of its business."