



**To:** Collen Conway, Immediate Past Chair, SACUA

**From:** Stephanie D. Preston, Chair, Communications Advisory Committee

**Subject:** Report on Activities of Communications Advisory Committee (CAC) for 2020-2021

**Advisory to:** Kallie Michels, VP for Communications (with Dave Reid)

**Members:** Kalli Federhofer, Caitlin Finlayson, Amanda Halbert, Marieka Kaye, Chandan Kumar, Kayla Niemann, Josh Pasek, Yulia Sevryugina, Amanda Thatcher

**SACUA Liaison:** Caitlin Finlayson

**Meeting Dates:** 9/25/20  
11/16/20  
1/20/21  
3/17/21

**Summary:**

Topics for this year

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted priorities. We discussed ways to facilitate people's understanding of the U-M response to the pandemic and increase trust in the process and in leadership. More frequent and simple communications were recommended and the new weekly COVID-19 briefing with Drs. Schlissel and Collins was introduced (which thousands of people have attended) along with regular modifications of the online FAQ materials.

We addressed faculty engagement. The third session included visits from Nikki Sunstrum, U-M Director of Social Media and Public Engagement and from the Center for Academic Innovation: Elyse Aurbach (Public Engagement Lead) & Rachel Niemer (Director, Outreach and Access). Nikki Sunstrum presented on U-M outreach to the public, e.g., through social media, which have been increasingly successful. Colleen Conway (Faculty Senate Chair and Professor of Music Education), also described her engagement process through a U-M program that helps faculty develop public pitches and activities.

We discussed fall-out from the Wilmer-Hale Report on former Provost Philbert. There had already been multiple communications about this from the university, and the response to the report would take time to unfold. The committee suggested regular, branded updates so that people would see the university to be continuing the response, to ensure accountability, and to change U-M processes that may prevent people from reporting or being discovered.

We discussed the return to school plan. U-M was proactive about reaching people on multiple platforms to ensure they knew the plan. We provided feedback on difficult decisions around graduations (for this year and last), e.g., for making early commitments that may still have to change versus waiting until we can be sure the plans will go through.

We ended with a discussion of anti-racism initiatives. We were updated on new Provost initiatives and successes from taskforces on policing and public safety. It was recommended to consider Dearborn and Flint campuses, which are often not in the front of our minds during communications and include more diverse populations. Engagement for faculty of color was recommended along with informal opportunities for people to candidly discuss issues and ongoing impediments to inclusivity.

#### Topics to consider for next year

We anticipate a continued need for clear, accessible, open communication from U-M administration to stakeholders, while demonstrating a commitment to an inclusive workplace, free of discrimination, harassment, and hostility.

The impacts of COVID-19 will likely still be felt in the coming year. Open, frequent, transparent communications about decisions will be needed. The committee can provide feedback and make suggestions to ensure broad message reach.

The committee is interested in including the other campuses in our communications.

We should address the changing landscape of scholarly and research dissemination. We need to improve attitudes around open access (OA) forms of dissemination, remove barriers to publishing OA, ensure OA publications are not disparaged in tenure and promotion decisions, and find funding to support OA publication. The library volunteers to make a presentation around this next year.