



To: Colleen Conway, Immediate Past Chair, SACUA
From: Alexandra Rivera, Chair, Government Relations Advisory Committee
Subject: Report on Activities of Government Relations Advisory Committee 2021

Members:

Morgan Beeler, SEAS
Kara Charbarneau, Michigan Medicine
Anna Ceballos, General Studies
Marisa Conte, UM Library
Vincent Glud, ITCS
Justin Hodge, School of Social Work
Erin Kahle, Nursing
Daniil Manaenkov, LSA
John Mansfield, Engineering
Renee Nguyen, ISR
Jacob Pearlman, Michigan Law
Alexandra Rivera, UM Library
Michael Thompson, Michigan Medicine

SACUA Liaison: Kentaro Toyama

Meeting Dates: 9/15/20, 10/13/20, 11/10/2020, 12/8/2020, 2/11/2021, 4/20/2021

Summary:

Along with most of the world, during the Corona virus pandemic, the committee conducted its work virtually. The committee membership represented a wide array of UM schools/ departments. They brought a diverse and timely expertise to the deliberations of the committee including in the areas of health, economic forecasting, information and data access, law, and politic science. The committee focused extensively on the pandemic and the impact on the university and community as well as the federal, state and university budgets. Other topics included the presidential and state elections related to education, and possible committee projects. And an important area of focus was the retirement of VPGR Wilbanks and the resulting search and hiring of new VPGR Kolb. The committee recognized Vice President Cynthia Wilbanks for her 22 years of excellent and impactful leadership of the Office of Government Relations.

Summary Topic 1 – COVID 19 was, of course, at the top of everyone’s mind. The committee received updates from VP Wilbanks and VP Kolb on the ramifications of and the federal, state, and local response to the pandemic related to higher education, the UM and surrounding communities.

We also discussed state and local health department and campus activities to educate on the disease in an effort to mitigate its spread and also about what was happening within our own and tangential communities.

Summary Topic 2 – Throughout the year the federal, state, and university budget implications for the University and higher education were a regular discussion topic. This year the committee also consulted on the pandemic, the resulting university budget freeze and Federal CARES Act and its impact on the University.

Summary Topic 3 – The federal and state elections were assessed through the lens of higher education. Additionally, VP Wilbanks was one of the planners for the presidential debate the UM was slated to host. Despite the UM’s decision to not host the event, there were numerous activities held across campus that related to the election and civic engagement. We talked about these initiatives and ways to continue to foster interest in civic engagement post-election. We discussed whether the creation of a database of elected officials working at the UM would be useful to government relations.

Topics to be continued or carried forward to next year are:

Topic 1 - Continue to assess and provide input re: UM response to COVID 19 as it relates to campus and the broader community.

Topic 2 - Analyze and advise on symbiotic issues of the University and state and local communities such as affordable housing, community infrastructure, social justice, etc.

Topic 3 - Assess federal and state budget implications for UM and higher education.