

Government Relations Advisory Committee (GRAC) Agenda

April 20, 2021
1-2:30 p.m. EDT
ZOOM

In attendance:

Kara Charbarneau, Michigan Medicine
Marisa Conte, University Library
Elizabeth Devlin, Faculty Senate Office
Justin Hodge, School of Social Work
Chris Kolb, VP for Government Relations
Daniil Manaekov, LSA
Renee Nguyen, ISR
Alexandra Rivera, UM Library, Chair

Absent:

Morgan Beeler, SEAS
Anna Ceballos, General Studies
Vincent Glud, ITS
Erin Kahle, Nursing
John Mansfield, Engineering
Michael (Mike) Thompson, Michigan Medicine
Jacob Pearlman, Michigan Law
Kentaro Toyama, SACUA Liaison

Chair Rivera called the meeting to order at 1:03pm. She requested that the committee review the minutes and if they had any changes to please provide them by Friday.

Government Relations Budget updates

VP Kolb shared that the legislature is starting to release some appropriation bills and they have briefly viewed the higher education appropriation bill. The House has released some of the bills that vary in department funding from a full year of funding to quarter funding. The budgets will have to be negotiated with the governor. The House subcommittee on higher ed will pass out its version tomorrow morning at 9am and the Senate will be moving as early as today. There will be differences between the Senate and the House.

The infrastructure package the Biden administration has unveiled that is a \$2.2 trillion proposal has not been made into legislation yet but there is anticipation that something will move out of congress on infrastructure. In Washington DC, there has been a renewed focus on investing in science which bodes well for the university, but still there is work to come.

Committee member Nguyen commented on the potential impact of quarterly budgets on recipients, such as the university. U-M must approve tuition for next year which is dependent on state aid.

VP Kolb responded that they have not done it for all budgets – they did it for a few departments that were revealed today, and the other state departments were a full year. VP Kolb anticipates that Higher Ed would get a full year allocation. He shared that he has meet with almost all the leadership in Lansing and they have been receptive.

Committee member Manaekov understands that Republicans would like more input in health policy and would like to know if the anger is directed largely at the administration or towards the university, since it was the university that produced the projections a year ago.

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VP Kolb indicated that the negative sentiments have been focused on the administration and not the university, as has been recorded in the media.

Committee member Manaenkov asked if there has been any conversation about a shutdown. VP Kolb indicated that it is anticipated that something will pass. If negotiated with the governor it may take longer but he does not anticipate that this negotiation process will be prolonged through to September 30.

Committee member Hodge inquired about voter suppression bills that have been introduced and the university's commitment to civic engagement, and whether there will be on campus activity/plans around voting rights and voter suppression.

VP Kolb responded that the voter suppression bills have not been discussed yet. If passed by the legislature this would almost certainly be vetoed by the Governor, but if the voter initiative process is enacted, that would prompt the need for dialogue and information of what it would mean going forward, since the Governor could not veto it if the legislature adopted the bills via the voter initiative process.

Elected Official Roster

The Committee and VP Kolb discussed having a roster/database of government officials that are affiliated with the university to include either present employees or alumni.

Committee member Hodge indicated that a roster would be a first step in a partnership between the Ginsberg Center and him through the School of Social Work to create a civic engagement program.

Committee members discussed how the roster/database would be beneficial for individuals, faculty and staff not directly engaged with government relations.

VP Kolb indicated that having a database of committees and commissions would be helpful. Government Relations is already familiar with elected officials that occupy the higher levels of government.

VP Kolb will discuss internally to see if they have the capacity and resources to maintain a database with this information and will let the committee know if this is a project they would like to undertake.

VP and Committee items for feedback

VP Kolb requested feedback from the committee on what issues the committee would be interested in providing input and discussion moving forward.

Committee members would like to discuss vaccination mandates, if a vaccination mandate is possible, and what this would mean for the university. Would it be possible, and how it would impact students, faculty, and staff?

VP Kolb indicated higher ed institutions that are mandating vaccinations are private. In Michigan, Oakland University is going to require students that live on campus to be vaccinated. He does not anticipate a mandate coming from the university currently.

Committee members and VP Kolb discussed the future of in person work and safety plans and protocols in place to promote a normal fall semester. The increase in the population of vaccinated individuals will support the transition back to in person activities.

Committee members asked VP Kolb about the debate over gun control given the recent increase in gun violence and hate crimes, and the shootings at Briarwood mall. VP Kolb relayed to the committee that there may be a minor

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movement over some agreed upon policies with bipartisan support at the federal level. In the interim, the change of gun violence as a public health issue will change some of the dialogue surrounding the gun issue.

Chair Rivera reviewed topics that were discussed during the last year. There were issues surrounding street repair and university building that impacted town gown relationships. The understanding of what is the university's responsibility versus the city's responsibility. These town gown topics of shared infrastructure are going to be another perennial focus going forward. Chair Rivera requested other topics that the committee would like to give or get feedback on for future focus.

Committee members would be interested in Government Relations conversations around affordable housing and the role the university would like to have to work with county and cities to combat the affordable housing crisis.

VP Kolb shared that what has changed at the local level is the passing of the affordable housing millage and funding stream that will help with the supply. Government Relations is interested in being part of the ongoing conversation, but the university does not view themselves as a solution to the issue.

Committee members asked if money from the rescue could be redirected to help with the housing issues.

VP Kolb indicated that much of the rescue plan money has been allocated to student support and COVID testing, and there may be other restrictions on the money.

Recommendations for critical items to focus on next year

Chair Rivera suggested topics for next year could include racial injustice, policing around campus, and police reform as she anticipates these issues will have an on impact the university.

VP Kolb will consider future topics for the committee's focus and will provide the information at a later date.

Chair Rivera thanked the committee for all their work during the past year and VP Kolb's participation and contributions.

2:00pm – meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted by
Elizabeth Devlin
Faculty Senate Office