



Government Relations Advisory Committee Minutes

Minutes of October 29, 2021

10:30am-11:30am

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Present: Larry Gant (Chair), Chris Kolb (VP for Government Relations), Michael Atzmon (SACUA Liaison), Marisa Conte, Justin Hodge, Erin Kahle, Daniil Manaenkov, Michael Thompson, Ruth Person, Jacob Pearlman, Andrea Lewis, Elizabeth Devlin

Absent: Renee Nguyen, Okeoma Mmeje, Megan Tompkins-Stange,

10:32: Chair Gant called the meeting to order.

Chair Gant welcomed the committee members and introduced the agenda. The committee members introduced themselves.

Topic 1: VP Chris Kolb: What do you view as the most critical items to think about this year for this committee?

VP Kolb welcomed the committee and thanked them for their service. He introduced himself. He noted that he joined the university community January 2021.

VP Kolb gave an overview of Government Relations and the large breadth of issues they handle spanning from local to international issues. Government Relations' efforts connect the university with the entire state.

VP Kolb would like the committee to engage in conversations that provide the faculty perspective surrounding different issues that will put emphasis on the public mission of the university. This emphasis on the public mission and collaborative effort is to ensure the university message resonates with decision makers. VP Kolb views the committee as a resource that could bring forth crucial topics and information on campus resources and activities.

Topic 2: Committee members: What do you view as the most critical items to think about this year for this committee?

Chair Gant asked the committee to share their ideas for what should be the areas of focus for the committee this year.

The committee discussed having an active role in the Democracy & Debate initiative since the university has expressed interest in making it an ongoing initiative. The group is considering developing programming toward which the committee could potentially contribute.

The committee discussed the Michigan Road Scholar's program and how pre-pandemic it would help inform communities around the state of Michigan of what the university does.

VP Kolb shared that the Michigan Road Scholar's program was in the planning stages, and they are planning on having it in the spring with a reduced number of faculty participants due to Covid restrictions. The program was put on hold due to the pandemic.



VP Kolb will invite the Dana Sitzler, Associate Director of State Outreach, who coordinates the program, to a future meeting to discuss the program with the committee.

Chair Gant would like to look into having Dearborn representation on the committee.

The committee discussed whether there are programs at the university that makes the top experts available to the local government. This could be an opportunity to connect to the broader state of Michigan.

VP Kolb indicated that one of the goals of the Road Scholars program is to connect the university and faculty to the state of Michigan. He stated that there are two state engagement staff members who are connecting with communities across the state to discover what the issues are and then to connect with faculty around those issues. VP Kolb shared that Government Relations is in the process of creating a tool to track engagement throughout the state of Michigan. He invited the committee to share their ideas for tracking tools.

The committee discussed having a database or community advisory board as a way to solicit input from communities about what sort of research partnerships would be of interest.

VP Kolb stated that the Ginsberg Institute is currently creating a database, Connecting Michigan, a connection entry point for community members to UM faculty/researchers, institutes, or colleges. VP Kolb indicated that he could invite them to a future meeting to speak to the committee about this project.

Topic 3: Committee and VP Kolb discussion: What will success look like for this committee this year?

Chair Gant asked the committee about the current or recent history and ideas for what success will look like this year.

The committee reviewed the charges, and Chair Gant suggested a more extended conversation at a future meeting.

VP Kolb indicated that he would be interested in ideas and discussion around civic engagement, budget, and to analyze and summarize community issues in a global sense. Also of interest is the increase of the visibility of university engagement at the state level which aligns with community desired outcomes. VP Kolb invited committee members to reach out to him directly with ideas surrounding these issues.

The committee discussed the importance of civil discourse in such a polarizing political environment and creating a safe space to have these needed conversations. The committee suggested discussion about the possibility of tools and training to encourage civil discourse.

11:24: The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Devlin
Faculty Senate Office