



## Government Relations Advisory Committee Minutes

Minutes of November 17, 2021  
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Present: Larry Gant (Chair), Chris Kolb (VP for Government Relations), Michael Atzmon (SACUA Liaison), Marisa Conte, Justin Hodge, Renee Nguyen, Michael Thompson, Ruth Person, Jacob Pearlman, Andrea Lewis, Elizabeth Devlin

Absent: Erin Kahle, Daniil Manaenkov, Okeoma Mmeje, Megan Tompkins-Stange, Stilyana Mechkova

Guest: Dana Sitzler, Associate Director of State Outreach

1:02: Chair Gant called the meeting to order.

### Topic 1: Relationship Building

The committee discussed some tools used to facilitate productive conversations when discussing diverging opinions. Chair Gant shared that he has used Liberating Structures to help facilitate difficult conversations. He invited the committee to share training and other programs that members have used.

The committee discussed WeListen organization and the work they have done on campus. WeListen is a grassroots campus organization, and a link was shared to more information about the group. <https://maizepages.umich.edu/organization/welisten>

Government Relations plans future outreach to WeListen to look into their campus activity.

### Topic 2: Community Outreach and Engagement – Michigan Road Scholars Program

VP Kolb introduced Dana Sitzler, Associate Director for State Outreach and the facilitator of the Michigan Road Scholars Program. The program has been put on hold due to the pandemic but will relaunch spring of 2022.

<https://www.govrel.umich.edu/index.php/stateoutreach/michigan-road-scholars/>

Associate Director Sitzler gave the committee an overview of the Michigan Road Scholars Program and shared a presentation. The program is a five-day bus tour for faculty members that visits communities across the state. The program acts as a traveling seminar and has been active for 20 years.

There is an application process, and out of the 60-95 applicants, 30 are chosen including one graduate student. The applications are submitted in November and decisions are made before the December break. The program accepts applications from faculty on all three campuses. The faculty members are a mix of new faculty and faculty members who have been at the university for several years. Associate Director Sitzler invited the committee to email her directly with any questions or if they would like to help promote the program at [dds@umich.edu](mailto:dds@umich.edu).



The committee discussed having similar internal programs that would give faculty opportunities to interact across schools and colleges and across all three campuses.

The committee noted that the Institute for Social Research (ISR) has programs where the researchers teach classes with their dual appointments. The researcher that is teaching a class invites a guest speaker and also invites students, faculty, and staff. This is one way that they are trying to build the community with other units more broadly.

Chair Gant wondered how the university will engage in the upcoming election cycle, and he discussed the extent to which the committee could help with those efforts.

VP Kolb indicated that the Democracy & Debate Program is still ongoing. One of the efforts was to have a satellite secretary of state and clerk's office at a museum and a second office will be located on north campus. These efforts will be helping to connect the community to the ability to vote on campus, including registering and ballot submission.

VP Kolb shared that the Ginsberg Center is building an electronic database in order to access resources on campus. This database could also capture what different issues faculty are interested in for internal cross campus collaboration.

### Topic 3: Future Items

Chair Gant invited the committee members to give suggestions for future speakers and meeting topics.

The committee suggested the following:

- [Democracy & Debate Program](#) Campus Engagement
- General funding and state appropriations for the university
  - VP Kolb suggested possible speakers to invite to a future meeting, new state budget director, Chris Harkins, the senate appropriations chair, or the subcommittee chair for higher education
- University Research Corridor
- Michigan Association of State Universities

2:00: The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Devlin  
Faculty Senate Office