



To: Silvia Pedraza, Chair, SACUA

From: Tom Braun, Chair, Committee on Oversight of Administrative Action (COAA)

Subject: Report on COAA Activities for 2021-2022

Members: Hani Bawardi (UM Dearborn)
Naomi Binnie
Thomas Braun
Adam Burak
Arlo Clark-Foos (UM Dearborn)
Gabriela Hristova (UM Flint)
Donald Likosky
Massy Matumba
John Pasquale
Karen Staller
Chuanwu Xi

SACUA Liaison: Caitlin Finlayson (UM Dearborn)

Meeting Dates: 2021: 10/21, 11/19, 12/16
2022: 01/21, 02/17, 04/21

Major Themes:

- (1) Evaluation of UM Administration: COAA focused several of our meetings on the process of evaluation of UM administrators, which is a carryover from last year's agenda. During this time:
 - a) we discussed the proposed [document](#) for evaluation of Deans created by former Provost Susan Collins and brainstormed on further improvements to this document;
 - b) COAA surveyed all UM Deans regarding their use of the AEC survey and their process of evaluation of Chairs. The results of that survey are included at the end of this report (Appendix 1);
 - c) COAA met with the chairs of the AEC committee in efforts to create a connection between COAA & AEC and to present our suggested changes to the AEC survey. A summary report is also included at the end of this report (Appendix 2).

- (2) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process at UM: After the firing of former President Schlissel, COAA had very serious conversations about the public release of Schlissel's emails by the UM Provosts. There remains great concern and fear about what activities by UM employees can be examined through a FOIA request, i.e. emails, Zoom meetings, Slack conversations, and an overall concern about privacy, or lack thereof, of communications made with UM resources. Dr. Braun invited members of the UM FOIA office to attend a COAA

meeting, but calendar conflicts did not allow for a meeting to occur. It was also suggested that COAA have UM counsel meet with them to discuss FOIA and the legal issues surrounding privacy.

- (3) Tenure protection, freedom of speech, and other recent national issues in academia: COAA discussed both local issues ([Bright Sheng](#) incident, [proposed UM-Flint post-tenure review policy](#)) and national issues ([Florida law for post-tenure review](#)) that surround efforts to weaken tenure or threaten the ability of professors to pursue research and teach unfettered from current political leadership. COAA would like UM to make a formal statement and would like to assist in creation of such a statement or future policies surrounding this issue.
- (4) Processes available for UM employees experiencing harassment and retaliation:
As a continuation from last year's agenda, COAA continued to discuss the myriad of processes that exist at UM, none of which appears, yet, to be fully understood or trusted. COAA continues to want to investigate and seek further improvements to all the following:
- a) Equity, Civil Rights, and Title IX (ECRT) office
 - b) UM-Ann Arbor Faculty Grievance Procedure
 - c) UM Ombuds Office
 - d) UM [SPG 601.90](#) on Protection from Retaliation

Appendix 1:
Summary of Email Survey Sent to UM Deans on February 11, 2022

We received 13 responses out of 28 Deans contacted to the following two questions:

(1) Do you use the annual [Administration Evaluation Committee \(AEC\) survey results](#) to determine whether to appoint or re-appoint a department chair or other individuals assessed by the survey who report to you?

Responses: 5 yes; 8 no

Other comments: AEC response rate too low (1); use own internal process (2)

(2) Do you have a formal document outlining the process you use when evaluating for appointment or reappointment of a chair? Provost Collins recently created [one for evaluation of Deans](#) and I am curious if you have a similar document that can be accessed by chairs and their departments?

Responses: 1 yes; 12 no

Other comments: the one “yes” shared their document with me; one said they have document but it is not posted anywhere for viewing

Appendix 2: Summary of COAA Requests Sent to AEC Chairs on April 28, 2022

Request #1: AEC develops a process for historical maintenance of qualitative comments provided by faculty.

Reasoning:

- (1) Qualitative comments may be a way to spotlight minority voices that may be lost otherwise and cannot be seen in the standard set of questions provided.
- (2) These comments might give an additional ability to track behaviors of “bad actors”
- (3) Historical destruction of qualitative comments has been justified due to fears of being subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). These issues need to be explicitly documented and perhaps discussed directly with Tim Lynch, UM Vice-President and General Counsel.

Request #2: AEC considers methods that can lead to Improved response rates by faculty.

Reasoning:

- (1) Increased response rates are needed to improve the quality of the information provided and generalizability of responses to the broader faculty
- (2) When COAA directly polled UM Deans on use of AEC survey, one Dean explicitly stated that the low response rates led them to abandon use of the survey to evaluate the chairs that report to them

Request #3: AEC works to promote increased and correct use of survey results by UM Deans and Provost.

Reasoning:

- (1) The AEC survey is one of the main tools cited by UM administration for evaluating Chairs and Deans; yet, when COAA directly polled UM Deans, 8 of 13 respondents said they did not use the AEC survey for evaluating those whom they lead.
- (2) The outgoing UM provost has developed a formal document for evaluating UM Deans and explicitly cites the AEC survey; yet, with vague language. With a new incoming Interim Provost, we might be able to influence how the AEC survey is used in the future.
 - (3) Biases due to gender, race, and other identities are certainly known to exist in surveys and users of the AEC surveys should be made aware of these biases and how they impact survey responses.