

To: SACUA

From: Ruth Person, Chair, Government Relations Advisory Committee (GRAC)

Subject: Report on Activities of Government Relations Advisory Committee (GRAC) for 2023-2023

Members: Ruth Person, Larry Gant, Okeoma Mmeje, Teri Rosales, Michael Thompson, Aesha Acharya (undergraduate student), Ramiro Garcia (graduate student).

Advisory to: Chris Kolb, Vice President for Government Relations

SACUA Liaison: Silvia Pedraza

Meeting Dates: September 29, October 27, December 1, February 23, March 30, April 27

Committee Charge

1. Discuss strategies to advance the civic engagement of UM faculty, students, and staff.
2. Review current and projected state budgetary priorities, especially relevant to higher education. Discuss Michigan's state budget and identify its impact on the University.
3. Analyze and summarize community issues (local, state, regional...) relevant to campus and to the University community.

Committee Actions

- Guest Dana Sitzler, Associate Director of State Outreach, presented on the 2023 Road Scholars Tour
- VP Chris Kolb provided regular government relations updates on topics such as pre-2022 election events on campus, a recap of the 2022 election results as relevant to higher education, the State's Proposed Budget for Higher Education, and an update on the Michigan House Higher Education Committee
- GRAC members offered input on: 1) strategies to promote the Road Scholars tour to faculty, 2) ideas for encouraging student voting and for alleviating long lines at on-campus voting locations

Information Obtained

- The State's proposed 2024 budget offers a potential 13.5+ million increase for higher education, including funds for infrastructure, scholarships, mental health, wrap-around support for students, and student success programs. The newly reformed MI House Higher Education Committee is also a potential area of impact.
- The Congressional Breakfast in D.C. is annual event focused on UM achievements and their relevance for federal policy making.

- Government Relations can facilitate bringing faculty expertise to the policy-making arena by: 1) connecting policy makers to researchers on an individual level, either with a legislator or agency (e.g. the Dept. of Agriculture), 2) connect faculty members to relevant legislative committee, and 3) promoting communication, sharing faculty expertise in newsletters, etc.

Recommendations

There is an opportunity for better connecting Government Relations with UM faculty expertise with the potential to inform policy making. For example, faculty expertise could have a constructive impact on VP Kolb's efforts to do the following:

- i. Extend U-M's impact statewide;
- ii. Address local issues, including housing, carbon-neutral policies, and economic development;
- iii. Increase the number of faculty serving on advisory committees within government agencies;
- iv. Increase grant funding for UM researchers;
- v. Address other key issues, such as academic freedom and support for faculty and research impacted by anti-Chinese sentiment and policies;
- vi. Improve the dissemination of government relations information and activities.

Therefore, the GRAC recommends the following as work for GRAC to pursue next academic year:

- Working with VP Kolb, identify specific areas of focus for improving faculty engagement with government relations issues;
- Within those identified areas of focus, help identify, contact, and solicit the assistance of faculty member with expertise and connections with the potential to impact policy making.
 - For example, how might faculty expertise/connections with the National Science Foundation or the Department of Education, etc., assist and inform government relations efforts?
- Consider what infrastructure or processes within GRAC or the Faculty Senate might be implemented in order to help sustain faculty engagement in those focus areas as part of the University's ongoing government relations efforts from year to year.