



**To:** SACUA

**From:** Rogério M. Pinto, Chair, General Counsel's Advisory Committee

**Subject:** Report on Activities of General Counsel's Advisory Committee for 2023-2024

**Members:**

Nancy Allee  
Janet Biermann  
Steven Chinn  
Kirsten Herold  
Adam Matzger  
Rogério Pinto, Chair  
Pamela J. Smock  
Jamie Tappenden  
Chris J. Walker  
Judith Walker  
Silke-Maria Weineck  
Graham Hardig  
Londen Ward

**SACUA Liaison:**

Alex Yasha Yi

**Meeting Dates:**

Fri. 9/22 from 9-10am  
Fri. 11/10 from 9-10am  
Fri. 1/19 from 9:00-10:30am  
Wed. 4/3 from 10:30am-12pm

**Committee Charge**

1. Consider emergent issues or topics brought forward by the GCAC committee members and/or the General Counsel for discussion over the course of the year
2. Continue the committee's discussions on policies and practices for protecting academic freedom, with consideration of the following:
  - a. U-M's past and current efforts
  - b. policies from other institutions
  - c. how accreditation may be employed to support academic freedom

3. Explore how the intersection of ethics, law, and retaliation concerns at the University impact its culture, with the goal of developing recommendations for possible further action by the Office of the General Counsel and/or SACUA and the Faculty Senate.

### **Committee Actions**

Academic freedom and addressing emerging issues on campus were the primary areas of focus of the committee's four meetings this academic year. Each meeting featured vigorous discussion and debate, with diverse opinions shared with the General Counsel. These opinions were consistent and revolved around the need for the U-M to uphold academic freedom, and to be transparent about its decision-making.

The Committee provided feedback on the [Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression](#). This included comparisons to similar SPGs already in place at the university, as well as related statements made at other academic institutions. Members provided insight into challenges and opportunities in the classroom for discussing challenging topics. The committee provided specific feedback on the Principles.

Once the Principles were approved by the Board of Regents at their January 16<sup>th</sup> meeting, the committee members shared their insight with the General Counsel regarding a related committee created for the purpose of examining the extent to which the university community is living up to those principles. As part of that discussion, concern was raised by the committee members regarding the draft of the "[Disruptive Activity Policy](#)." Members critiqued the rollout process as top down, and expressed concerns about the broad range of its content, and content overlap between "[Disruptive Activity Policy and SPG 601.01: Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression](#)."

### **Recommendations**

Continue to work toward the fulfillment of charges proposed by SACUA last year.