

Minutes: December 16, 2024

Circulated: January 23, 2025

Approved: January 27, 2025

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Senate Assembly

Monday, December 16, 2024, 3:15

The Hybrid meeting was held in 2000 University Hall, Ruthven and
Zoom

In-person attendees: Charlotte Karem Albrecht, Meaghan Blanchard (nonvoting), Paul Fossum (nonvoting), Pauline Jones, John Magee (nonvoting), Ann Marshall (nonvoting), Luke McCarthy (nonvoting), Rebekah Modrak, Demetri Morgan (nonvoting), Heather O'Malley, Derek Peterson, Soumya Rangarajan, Craig Smith, Deirdre Spencer (nonvoting), Kentaro Toyama, Eric Vandenberghe (nonvoting).

Virtual attendees: Jayapalli Bapuraj, Sue Anne Bell, Laura Beny (nonvoting), Sybil Biermann, Jonathan Brennan, Ash Brown (nonvoting), Jade Burns, Deepa Butoliya, William Calvo-Quiros, Jesse Capecelatro, Yi-Su Chen, Amy I-Lin Cheng, S Chiravuri (nonvoting), Meghan Courtney, Robert Duncan, Alexa Eisenberg (nonvoting), Johannes Foufopoulos, Terri Friedline, Caren Goldberg, L Jay Guo, Brendan Haug, Joshua Hausman, Sarah Hawley, Ingrid Hendy, Justin Hodge, Yihe Huang, Leila Kavar (nonvoting), Gretchen Keppel-Aleks (nonvoting), Su'ad Khabeer (nonvoting), Brad Killaly, Carolyn Kuranz, Corey Lester, Yongqing Li, Helen Look (nonvoting), Brian Love, Charles Lwanga, Sara McClelland (nonvoting), Vilma Mesa, Genevieve Monsma (nonvoting), Karin Muraszko, Susan Najita, Mojtaba Navvab, Mukesh Nyati, Jessica Pasquale, Pamela Pennock, Andrew Read (nonvoting), Harmony Reppond, Ian Robinson (nonvoting), Andre Monteiro Da Rocha, Joy Rohde, Stacy Rosenbaum, Kimberly Saks, Suzanne Selig (nonvoting), Albert Shih, Lauren Smith, Jeremy Sortore (nonvoting), Jeanne Stacciarini (nonvoting), Brian Stewart, Ashootosh Tripathi, Elizabeth Viglianti, Craig Wilkins, Camille Wilson (nonvoting), Todd Wolfson (nonvoting), Yi-Li Wu (nonvoting), Alex Yasha Yi, Jason Young, Jon Zelner, Yaqing Zhang, Robert Ziff, Paul Zimmerman.

Guests: Prof. Demetri Morgan, Marsal Family School of Education
Prof. Todd Wolfson, Professor of Anthropology and Media Studies, Rutgers
University and National President of AAUP

Press:

Genevieve Monsma – *University Record*

Agenda Items

3:15 Come to Order, Minutes and Announcements

The meeting was called to order 3:19, and the minutes were approved by consent. Senate Assembly meetings are open to the public but only members are allowed to contribute to the discussion.

3:20 Senate Assembly Chair Update

1. The chair thanked all for attending, and recognized the many faculty, students and staff who supported our core values of DEI. Over 3000 participants assisted with our efforts.
2. The chair recognized Dr. Paul Fossum as outgoing parliamentarian, and recognized Deirdre Spencer as outgoing secretary.
3. The chair held a town hall for Dearborn faculty. The dean of the College of Arts, Sciences and Letters (CASL) has taken austerity measures by raising course caps. According to the chair, course caps are a matter of faculty governance. LEO Chair Kirsten Herrold reported the termination of 25 lecturers, and other appointments have been reduced from 50% to 25%.
4. These faculty members are losing healthcare and other benefits. Letters are being sent to address these issues. The Dearborn faculty are to be credited for their patience.
5. The chair thanked SACUA for nominating members for committee service. These included the medical school dean's advisory search committee, the inclusive history project, the honorifics task force, and the VP for research and innovation advisory committee. She thanked everyone who provided nominations.
6. A SACUA colleague suggested the next agenda item in today's meeting. We will hear from a faculty colleague in the Marsal Family School of Education. Dr. Demetri Morgan works on higher education and its link to democracy. Today, he will address faculty and governing boards.

3:30 Guest: Prof. Demetri Morgan, Associate Professor at the Marsal Family School of Education's, Center for Post Secondary and Higher Education. His research is on the role of higher education in fostering a diverse democracy.

Topic: "Reclaiming "Mutual Understanding" During Times of Change: Governance Consideration for UM's Faculty Senate"

Prof. Morgan's presentation examined ways to promote mutual understanding between faculty governance and governing boards, especially during a time of change. He provided information regarding the purpose of governing boards and some models of how boards work from different institutions and offered comments about what the Michigan Constitution specifies in our case.

He asked: **1.** how do we get to mutual understanding with our governing board and the administration; **2.** how do we engage in shared governance without losing institutional autonomy and losing sight of our ideals; **3.** how can the UM Faculty Senate lead these efforts.

He proposed that 3 things detract from mutual understanding: **1.** governing boards are

confusing; **2.** partnering with governing boards requires structure, strategy, and relationships for mutual understanding; and **3.** uncertainty and cross purposes.

Prof. Morgan provided context for understanding governing boards, asking: **1.** Why do governing boards exist? **2.** What are they for? **3.** To whom are they accountable?

Per the Michigan Constitution (Article VIII, section 5), the board controls and directs expenditures and exercises general supervision of the University. Prof. Morgan commented on the nature of fiduciary duty, and that the board plays an intermediary role between the state and public and the institution.

He provided different models for partnering with governing boards, and examples of board structures from different institutions, including the presence or absence of faculty representation. Michigan has a low number of board members relative to the average.

In conclusion, Prof. Morgan recommended efforts to build trust and rapport with regents.. He presented some examples of strategic methods for establishing this relationship.

Q&A. followed the presentation.

Q. We currently operate at odds with the Regents, but we should try to find common ground with them. At the same time, the Regents have been overstepping their boundaries and they need to be held into account. Faculty expertise needs to be respected. Is there a way to discuss shared interests and unite about shared institutional goals? There should be public discussion between the faculty and the regents.

Q. The Regents don't want to listen to SACUA. The Senate Assembly voted to censure the Regents. This doesn't help the relationship. We are pushing back a lot on the Regents' positions. Can there be discussion about different viewpoints on topics that we select?

Q. What are the duties of Governing Boards?

A. General supervision and control, and fiduciary duty.

Q. How can we partner with boards?

A. Nobody does shared governance well.

Q. UM and MSU have elected regents. Does this hinder or help us?

A. Michigan has statewide elections, whereas states such as Nebraska have district elections.

Q. How can we establish collaborative efforts?

A. We need to establish relationships with the Regents. He read minutes from SAC and didn't see much strategy to improve relations. What are possible quick wins? What are areas of agreement? What kind of leadership do we want to have?

Q. Small group meetings between faculty and Regents could be beneficial.

A. Select a topic of mutual interest to the faculty and the regents and see what that looks like. Open conversation using the Regent's own rhetoric.

The Regents have work to do to gain an understanding of the issues faculty care about and around carrying out their fiduciary duties. Currently, they do not ask or respond to questions and don't transact business in transparent ways.

The meeting was paused temporarily to address Zoom technical difficulties.

The chair thanked Dr. Morgan for his presentation and introduced Prof. Todd Wolfson.

4:00 Guest: Todd Wolfson is an Associate Professor of Anthropology and Media Studies at Rutgers University and the National President of the American Association of University Professors. He also served as president of the Rutgers Faculty and Grad Workers Union for about 5 years, prior to becoming the national AAUP president.

Topic: "The Crisis in Higher Education and How to Respond."

Prof. Wolfson stated that there is a shuttering of colleges and universities across the country. The growth of corporate bureaucracy weakens universities, and erodes tenure, shared governance, and threatens projects and programs. 50 years ago, higher education was among the most respected sectors in the country, which is no longer the case. Colleges and universities are under attack.

He provided the New College of Florida (NCF) as an example of conservative takeover. NCF was a premier liberal arts colleges in the country, and was dismantled by Gov. Ron DeSantis early in 2023. The first female president, Sally Ocher, was fired 2 years into her term and replaced by Republican corporate lawmaker Richard Corcoran. By summer 2023, all DEI programs were dismantled. By fall 2023, 40% of the faculty and 100 students (10% of their student body) left.

Prof. Wolfson provided examples of conservative commentary on higher education and intentions to restructure and reform public universities, including his own experiences at Rutgers. These efforts may include defunding and divestment, a corporatization of the way universities are run.

Prof. Wolfson gave examples of how changes have and may occur:

1. Adjunctification of teaching and research. and lack of job security. At Rutgers 70% of classes were taught by tenured faculty, 30% taught by untenured faculty.

2. Today that number has flipped: 70% untenured vs. 30% tenured. This is a massive change and important to note.
3. Massive amounts of student debt (\$2-3 trillion) and increased tuition. Massive institutional debt needs to be accounted for.
4. Universities are mirroring corporate structures, meaning more bureaucrats are running our institutions. This does correspond with core University missions of teaching, research, and service, and power is in the hands of lawyers and accountants rather than faculty.

Our board of regents is elected by the voters. At Rutgers they are appointed by the governor.

Prof. Wolfson addressed some concerns regarding the incoming federal administration, which wants to change how government and education work. He provided two examples of changes that may happen:

1. Changes to how accreditation works including ties between accreditation and funding.
2. Expanding definition of antisemitism to include any critique of Israel and a tie between Title VI cases and antisemitism. Administrators will continue to try to stop pro-Palestinian speech.

Prof. Wolfson's conclusions:

1. Organize. Join the group who represents you on campus: LEO, GEO, GLAM, the local chapter of AAUP.
2. Break down barriers between and among faculty and staff of all levels. Build coalition. Build and work with our students. Build alignment and have students support us. Work in coalition, collectively toward the future.
3. We need a national campaign to support and re-valorize higher education. Higher ed is valuable to our society. It is an agent of our innovation and of our economy. It creates social mobility and social progress.
4. Work with higher education unions: AFT, etc.

Q&A followed the presentation.

Q. A faculty member agreed that we need to be re-valorize higher ed and be on the offensive regarding our narrative and our mission.

A. Universities have been running themselves more like businesses. Palestine continues to be an academic issue.

Research, teaching, and service is the mission of colleges and universities.

Some small towns will collapse if colleges and universities close.

Humanities and social sciences are preferentially targeted over STEM curricula. We must get rid of divisiveness, don't allow others to define us. Organize with others to build

power at the campus level.

Q. A faculty member asked Prof. Wolfson's opinion about relations with the governing board.

A. We need to collaborate with everyone we can, including the Regents, and be clear about what we want to see happen.

Q. A faculty member appreciated the comments regarding conflation of antisemitism with critiques of Israel. Some want to defund higher ed based on antisemitism. The antisemitism argument is a way to get rid of other identities.

A. The Gaza crisis is a Trojan horse and constructive critique of Israel is misconstrued as antisemitism. The next administration will strongly curtail freedom of speech in general and on campus. We won't have the academy we thought we had. How we respond to this crisis will have to be figured out collectively.

Q. A faculty member asked about other universities in the Big 10. What are better ways of informing and getting our message out and separating the people from the rhetoric.

A. Rutgers had broad strike action in 2023. All academic workers and adjunct lecturers received 40% raises, incoming PhD students received 5 years of funding. Non-tenured workers receive tenure after 8 years of teaching. We must organize at the campus level: AAUP, LEO, GLAM. Talk with colleagues and determine what is and is not working for them. We need to pull down barriers between full and part-time faculty, post-docs, and professional staff. Visit the state capital on legislative days. We need to build a PR strategy that is tied to the future we want to see. We are weak in higher education because we have too many contingent workers. Organizing and collectively building our future is the only way forward.

Contact Julie Boland, the president of the Michigan AAUP chapter, and join AAUP.

4:50 Matters Arising

Q. A faculty member asked if we repair the relationship with the regents so we can move forward during the next administration?

A. Outreach is not as easy as it sounds. The chair has requested a seat at the table with the regents, or to share a lunch, or to sponsor a joint event with them, or have the regents meet with the Student Relations Advisory Committee. All requests have been rejected.

The chair issued a public statement expressing sympathy for politically-motivated damage to a regent's home. The regent issued a public response target the chair and unfortunately, the chair now requires home security.



Q A faculty member asked if we could reach out to the chair of the committee which advises the Secretary of the University and examine what is important to the regents.

Q. A faculty member expressed their concern for the chair's safety following public comments by a Regent which have led to a need for security at the chair's home. They suggested coordinating with Central Student Governance, and that the regents should be accountable for their values and be held accountable to the values of this university.

A. The chair is in touch with Rackham student government who is happy to work with SACUA and faculty governance.

5:00 Adjourn – The meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm.

ADDENDUM

Senate Assembly Actions

Between regular meetings, the Senate Assembly has performed the following actions that should be included in the Senate Assembly minutes:

- On October 28th, 2024, the Senate Assembly elected Craig Smith, Senior Associate Librarian, University Library, to fill a current vacancy on SACUA, with a term ending on April 30, 2025.
- On October 31, 2024, the Senate Assembly approved “Motion 1: Call to Pause Implementation of the Revised Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities,” which will be considered at the upcoming University Senate meeting on November 4, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Deirdre D. Spencer
Secretary

Upcoming Meetings

- 1/27 Senate Assembly
- 2/24 Senate Assembly
- 3/17 Senate Assembly
- 4/21 Senate Assembly

University of Michigan Bylaws of the Board of Regents, Sec. 5.02:

Governing Bodies in Schools and Colleges

Sec. 4.01 The University Senate

"...[t]he Senate is authorized to consider any subject pertaining to the interests of the university, and to make recommendations to the Board of Regents in regard thereto.

Decisions of the University Senate with respect to matters within its jurisdiction shall constitute the binding action of the university faculties. Jurisdiction over academic policies shall reside in the faculties of the various schools and colleges, but insofar as actions by the several faculties affect university policy as a whole, or schools and colleges other than the one in which they originate, they shall be brought before the University Senate."

Rules of the University Senate, the Senate Assembly and the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs:

Senate: "In all cases not covered by rules adopted by the Senate, the procedure in Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed."

Assembly: "The Assembly may adopt rules for the transaction of its business. In appropriate cases not covered by rules of the Assembly, the rules of the University Senate shall apply."

SACUA: "The committee may adopt rules for the transaction of its business."