

Minutes of Meeting: January 13, 2025

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Approved: February 3, 2025

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs

The hybrid meeting was held in 1100 Ruthven and via Zoom

Present: Rebekah Modrak (Chair), Simon Cushing, Ann Marshall (FSO), Luke McCarthy (FSO), Vilma Mesa, Heather O'Malley (Vice Chair), Craig Smith, Soumya Rangarajan, Derek Peterson, Melanie Tanielian, Alex Yasha Yi

Absent: NA

Press:

Genevieve Monsma – *University Record*

Sarah Spencer – *Michigan Daily*

3:02 Call to Order and Approval of the Minutes

- The 12/9/2024 and 1/6/2025 meeting minutes were approved.

3:04 Chair's Update

- Chair Modrak alerted faculty in her Chair newsletter that dual U-M career couples are likely overpaying health care premiums if they have enrolled in U-M health plans jointly instead of signing up separately. Chair Modrak had received ten emails from faculty in response to the newsletter item since the email went out earlier in the day. There are unresolved questions about fiduciary responsibility given UM's possible financial incentives. We are working with UM Benefits to encourage them to correct the problem on the open enrollment form going forward.
- Chair Modrak plans to meet with the Chair of the Grievance Procedure Task Force, a Provost Office committee formed to review Ann Arbor's [faculty grievance procedures](#) and the [Model Grievance Policy](#). While a SACUA-nominated faculty member serves on the task force, there is no SACUA member serving. Task force members may not be aware of the history of issues with the grievance process or the reasons SACUA and other committees, such as COAA, have worked to make changes to faculty grievance procedures.
- SACUA members were invited to suggest discussion topics for the SACUA Chair's January 14th meeting with the Provost:
 - The SACUA list of topics recently prepared for discussion with President Ono should be consulted.
 - Institutional neutrality policy
 - DEI and the firing of Rachel Dawson: It was noted that a recent email communication from President Ono about U-M's vision did not mention DEI and that it was difficult to navigate to [U-M's core value about DEI](#). It was recommended that Chair Modrak ask the Provost if she thinks DEI is a core value and, if yes, what plans are there for defending this core value.

Concerns were raised about the Regents increased involvement in the day-to-day operations of U-M, including: 1) that such activity is new and not consistent with the typical role of a university president and provost, 2) the Regents seemed to reach a conclusion about Rachel Dawson based upon limited information and that previous U-M administrations have worked to set reasonable boundaries with the Regents, 3) concerns with the idea of the Regents as the “boss” of the president.

- SACUA had a related wider discussion about Regents’ communications and the Michigan constitution with regards to state boards.
 - There was discussion about Regents’ use of social media, its influence, and what constitutes responsible communication by the Regents. A question was asked about whether there is a central guide for how communications are to be regulated? What is the distinction between acting on one’s own volition and not on behalf of one’s role (Regents, faculty, administrators, students)? Are there relevant institutional norms and/or SPGs and how does one differentiate between communication and harassing and/or bullying?
 - The Michigan constitution includes language about state boards’ “[general supervision](#)” regarding public education. It is unclear what general supervision means, its scope, and whether general supervision covers an individual’s employment status. A question was asked about whether there has been or might be MI supreme court cases on the matter.
- Members of the Student Relations Advisory Committee (SRAC) have been meeting frequently to review campus proposals to revise the student code and progress is being made on this project.

3:30 Senate Assembly Agenda Approval

- The January 27th Senate Assembly agenda was briefly discussed and approved unanimously without any changes.

3:35 Discuss Draft of Statement - Current Matter

- This agenda item was in Executive Session and no minutes were taken.

4:05 Continued Discussion of Two Ideas (RE: Faculty Congress and Faculty Self-Censorship) and Next Steps

- This agenda item was in Executive Session and no minutes were taken.

4:45 Matters Arising / New Business / Agenda Building

- No issues were raised during Matters Arising

4:46 Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Marshall

Faculty Governance Coordinator
Faculty Senate Office

[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."

[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."

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