

Dear Members of the Faculty Senate,

After we passed, with overwhelming majorities and unprecedented participation, four motions defending the University of Michigan from the Trump administration's assault on higher education, five of our Regents – Jordan Acker, Mark Bernstein, Michael Brehm, Paul Brown, and Denise Ilitch – published [an op-ed in the Michigan Daily](#) promising to fight for our institutional independence – which is guaranteed in the Michigan constitution.

We commend the five for taking a stance. We also want to acknowledge an email signed by President Santa Ono acknowledging the motions and promising to discuss “the resolutions with the Regents and the university's leadership.” He writes, with regard to Motion 1, which recommends that we enter into a Mutual Defense Compact with other Big Ten universities: “I also recognize and appreciate the suggestion that the University of Michigan engage collaboratively with the 18 member institutions of the Big Ten Academic Alliance. This is an important and constructive complement to my ongoing work with the AAU, APLU, and ACE, and I welcome the opportunity to explore additional avenues for cooperation with our peers.”

We are pleased to see that a majority of the Regents, along with President Ono, are beginning to follow the faculty's lead, and we welcome their stated intent to stand firm against interference in our internal deliberations and decisions. We also believe, however, that the Regents' op-ed could have and should have taken a much clearer stance. In [a column by right-wing Detroit News pundit Nolan Finley](#), Regent Bernstein is quoted “We need to do a better job of speaking with clarity and purpose about our work around diversity.” Indeed.

Speaking with clarity and purpose would begin by naming the communities the Trump administration is attacking, such as immigrants and international students, faculty, and staff; trans and queer people; women; Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous Americans along with other people of color. Our unwavering support for them and our commitment to preserve and further enhance the diversity of our university and to affirm our steadfast commitment to equity and inclusion need to be articulated clearly and openly – do not hide behind wishy-washy formulations such as “all of us,” because some of us are so much more vulnerable than others.

It appears that the University of Michigan will replace the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, which they closed without consultation with the university's stakeholders, with an Office of a "Vice Provost for Access and Opportunity." Access and opportunity are good things, but they mean nothing without a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion – the antonyms of which are, of course, uniformity or homogeneity, inequity or injustice, and exclusion. We would like to see the new office staffed with the brilliant members of the ODEI office who were callously dismissed.

The op-ed closes with this sentence: "In this moment, it is only by standing together that we can preserve the public university as a truly exceptional American institution." We hope that this signals a new-found commitment to the ideals of shared governance, the true foundation of any university that wants to be "truly exceptional."

Best,
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