

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**

Senate Assembly

Monday, March 17, 2025, 3:15

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

Minutes: March 17, 2025

Circulated: April 16, 2025

Approved April 21, 2025

**In-person attendees:** Julia Arboleda (nonvoting), Laura Beny (nonvoting), Sybil Biermann, Meaghan Blanchard (nonvoting), Tom Braun (nonvoting), Jon Brennan, Jesse Capecelatro, Theodora Danciu, Joshua Hausman, Ingrid Hendy, Kristen Herold (nonvoting), Charlotte Karem Albrecht, Brian Love, Ann Marshall (nonvoting), Luke McCarthy (nonvoting), Vilma Mesa, Rebekah Modrak, Susan Najita, Heather O'Malley, Jessica Pasquale, Ivette Perfecto, Wayne Petty (nonvoting), Rogerio Pinto (nonvoting), Harmony Reppond, Andre Rocha, Albert Shih, Craig Smith, Deirdre Spencer (nonvoting), Quentin Stout (nonvoting), Melanie Tanielian, Kentaro Toyama, Jon Zelner, Robert Ziff.

**Virtual attendees:** Emad Abou-Arab (nonvoting), Mousumi Banerjee, Jayapalli Bapuraj, Sue Anne Bell, John Branch, Helen Burgess, Jade Burns, Deepa Butoliya, William Calvo-Quiros, Amy I-Lin Cheng, Meghan Courtney, Simon Cushing, Emily Dove-Medows (nonvoting), Abigail Dumes (nonvoting), Robert Duncan, Edward Fox, Terri Friedline, Christopher Frieze (nonvoting), Caren Goldberg, L Jay Guo, Brendan Haug, Sarah Hawley, Mostafa Hussein (nonvoting), Khalid Kattan, Shake Ketefian (nonvoting), Carolyn Kuranz, Corey Lester, Yongqing Li, Charles Lwanga, Emmanuelle Marquis (nonvoting), Karin Martin (nonvoting), Denise McMurray (nonvoting), Shahzad Mian, Alexis Miettinen (nonvoting), Yasmin Moll (nonvoting), Genevieve Monsma (nonvoting), Karin Muraszko, Phillip Palmbos, Pamela Pennock, Soumya Rangarajan, Joy Rohde, Stacy Rosenbaum, Kimberly Saks, Suzanne Selig (nonvoting), Lauren Smith, Christina Snider, Brian Stewart, Eric Vandenberghe (nonvoting), Elizabeth Viglianti, Craig Wilkins, Alex Yasha Yi, Basit Zafar (nonvoting), Paul Zimmerman.

**Guests:**

Santa Ono, President of the University of Michigan

**Press:**

Genevieve Monsma – *University Record*

Julia Arboleda – *Daily*

**3:18 Come to Order, Minutes and Announcements**

The meeting was called to order, with quorum, and the minutes from the previous meeting were approved by consent. Senate Assembly meetings are open to the public. Only Senate Assembly members are allowed to contribute to the discussion.

### 3:19 Senate Assembly Chair Update – Chair Rebekah Modrak

1. **Regents update:** Chair Modrak had extended invitations to the Regents to work together with SACUA and SA, including to consider a draft resolution to create an ex officio role for faculty at Regents meetings. Chair Modrak was pleased to recently receive a response from several Regents, which led to subsequent follow-up meetings. Chair Modrak and SACUA member Derek Peterson met with Regent Jordan Acker, where they discussed issues of common interest, including increasing black enrollment, recruitment and support for low-income students, the need to share information about the importance of faculty research, as well as being open to having SACUA representation at Regents meetings and holding informal lunches to be attended by faculty liaisons and Regent members. In addition, Regent Paul Brown was a guest at the most recent SACUA meeting. At the meeting, there was discussion about models of shared governance, and Regent Brown expressed openness to increased communication with SACUA and to partnering on a resolution.
2. **U-M Budget and Meeting with EVPCFO:** Chair Modrak and Luke McCarthy (FSO) met with EVPCFO Geoff Chatas, Brian Dadey (Chief Financial Officer UM-Dearborn), Sara Soderstrom (Chair of Financial Affairs Advisory Committee Chair), and Francine Dollins (FAAC member) to address faculty concerns about the budgetary model at U-M Dearborn. The discussion focused on 1) strategies for encouraging synergy and cooperation between the four U-M Dearborn colleges, 2) the negative impact that increased course enrollment caps (i.e. larger classes) is having on faculty and students, especially given the role of class size on student retention, 3) issues with the budget model not allowing for differentiation between the colleges, 4) questions about why 44% of revenue from the four colleges is spent paying for administration costs, and 5) block tuition as not realistic or helpful for students. The next step is to meet with UM-Dearborn Provost Scarlatta. There are plans for six members of SACUA to spend Friday, March 21st at U-M Dearborn to meet with faculty from the UM-Dearborn Faculty Senate and UM-Dearborn AAUP.
3. **UMF AFT-AAUP:** Dan Birchok, President of the UM-Flint AFT-AAUP Local 5671, joined SACUA at its most recent meeting to provide an update on U-M Flint faculty organizing, including how the effort began and recent contract negotiations. In 2023, the interim U-M Flint chancellor spoke of laying off faculty, including tenure track faculty. In January 2024, SACUA released a statement on the issue, which was appreciated by UM-Flint faculty. In 2023, UMF-AFT filed for recognition, and contract negotiations began in October 2024. Dan Birchok has been pleased with the process. The terms of the contract have included language regarding tenure, the faculty grievance process, bylaws, SPGs, and the mission statement. Issues that are still to be resolved include addressing salaries that have fallen behind inflation, ensuring a faculty teaching load of 3-3 (2-2 for 4-credit courses), proper compensation with regards to hy-flex synchronous-asynchronous teaching modalities, protections against requirements that faculty must be on campus 3 days per week regardless of faculty teaching schedules, consistent access to research funds, and the ability to grieve university bylaws. There are 160+ members of

UMF-AFT (LEO-GLAM is about 180), and Dan Birchok is able to personally know all the UMF-AFT members. It was noted that faculty at Rutgers, MSU, and University of Pittsburgh have recently unionized.

4. **CSG Assembly & Senate Assembly:** Over the weekend, Chair Modrak attended the Black Student Excellence Gala, which was hosted by the Black Caucus of the Central Student Government. Chair Modrak remarked that, whenever she spends time with CSG students, she is deeply impressed by them. On April 1, CSG and the Senate Assembly will, for the first time, hold a joint assembly meeting. So far, nine Senate Assembly members have RSVPed, and Chair Modrak encouraged SA members to please participate. The joint assembly is a great opportunity for faculty to hear from students and for students to hear from faculty.
5. **AEC Survey:** The Administration Evaluation Committee (AEC) 2025 survey will launch on March 18<sup>th</sup>. SA members are asked to please complete the survey and to also encourage their faculty colleagues to take the survey. There are hopes for a higher response rate and appreciation was shared for the work of AEC members.
6. **Teach-ins:** On March 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, a U-M Teach-in will be held to commemorate the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Black Action Movement (BAM) Strike. The STRIKE Organizing Committee is planning two days of sessions, from 10 am to 5:30 pm, to correspond with class times. Faculty are invited to bring their classes to learn through presentations, films, and other activities about the history of activism among students, faculty, and staff. Journalist Jelani Cobb recently spoke about how the behavior of institutions during McCarthyism is a useful template for our current situation. On April 9<sup>th</sup>, there will be a screening of the film, [Keeping in Mind](#), about the firing of three faculty during the McCarthy era. In 1988, English and Honors student Adam Kulakow interviewed UM faculty about the McCarthy era, including professors Davis, Markert and Nickerson, and former president Harlan Hatcher. The English department and local AAUP arranged for the initial public showing of the film on April 19, 1989. This led to the creation of the DMN Committee and annual [DMN lecture](#). There will be panel discussion following the showing with film creator Adam Kulakow.

### 3:30 President Santa Ono

- President Ono invited questions from Senate Assembly members.
- A representative from Public Health remarked on the impact of federal funding cuts on public health and on higher education more broadly. The faculty member's own work, and that of colleagues, focuses on social inequities and vulnerable populations. He expressed gratitude for U-M's plans to offer bridge funding and asked about what support might be offered beyond 6-months and in regards to long term legal support. President Ono responded that he has been in D.C. discussing U-M's core mission and that U-M is a very well-respected institution. President Ono sits on national boards, including the Council of Presidents of the Association of Public & Land-Grant Universities (APLU), and U-M is a part of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and the American Council on Education (ACE). All of the universities that are part of these associations have been affected by OMB letters and executive orders. President Ono said that his

approach is to begin with humility. There is no playbook, and it is important to come together as a sector. Academic institutions, including Columbia, John Hopkins, and University of Maine, have not been immune. Some schools have had a complete hiring freeze and stopped all construction. U-M's response has thus far been more measured, with a more diversified portfolio that includes endowments and more students, and with an attempt to have a financial buffer. For these reasons, there hasn't been an across the board cut, and offers to Ph.D. students haven't been rescinded. The current situation is a tragedy for those who are just graduating, and there is a tidal wave of interest in joining U-M.

- A representative from the Medical School commented that higher education is experiencing crippling federal cuts and threats to U-M's work as we know it, affecting the whole campus, and that it is important to work together. The faculty member asked what the Faculty Senate can do to support President Ono's efforts. President Ono responded that the last several months have been difficult and that it is a lonely time to be a college president, with many people working long hours to protect the sector. There are efforts focused on the indirect cost issue, legal protections, and support for colleagues at other institutions who have been deported.
- A representative from SACUA asked what reassurances can be given for faculty and students who are at risk of being targeted, such as happened at Columbia, and also what will happen to the future of libraries and databases given content that has disappeared overnight? Another SACUA representative added that close to 30% of physicians are foreign born, and, in some departments, 50% of physicians are immigrants, and what are the protections? President Ono responded that, if anything happens, please communicate this to UM administration, and there are protections in the form of OGC and other governmental support. President Ono also remarked that he would like to prepare a more carefully thought-out response to the question.
- A representative from the College of Engineering remarked that there is a lack of education within some sectors of government about higher education, and what might be possible in terms of providing teach-ins in D.C. and also to leverage alumni? President Ono expressed appreciation for the question, agreeing that there needs to be more dialog with government to address views of the academy and to try to come to the conversation with humility. President Ono noted that there was a "Stand up for Science" event when he was recently in D.C. It is important also to tell stories within Senate offices about how faculty work saves lives. Faculty can help with this, and the most powerful voices are often students and patients, and those impacted by the cuts. President Ono offered appreciation for Chair Modrak and SA's efforts and expressed interest in working together with Senate Assembly to have a meaningful dialog with legislative leaders. Ono expressed interest in having additional conversations, brainstorming a strategy, and identifying ways to communicate that U-M's work is vital.

#### **4:00 SACUA Election Candidate Statements**



- Each of the [2025 SACUA candidates](#) provided brief statements about their interest in serving on SACUA. Note that Christina Snider had rescinded her candidacy prior to the SA meeting.
- **Laura Nyantung Beny:** During a time of considerable challenges, threats to academic freedom, and scrutiny to faculty governance, it is important that U-M not just react, but actively shape a way forward. As a legal scholar, Professor Beny is uniquely qualified during this time and is personally aware of the much-needed reform to the faculty grievance process. She pledges to work on behalf of faculty governance, to advocate for transparency, to safeguard faculty wellbeing, uphold academic freedom, and ensure that all faculty voices are heard.
- **Jesse Capecelatro:** Currently there are no representatives from the College of Engineering on SACUA, and engineering has relied heavily on federal funding, including his own work about the impacts of carbon capture and methane flares on indigenous communities. SACUA needs to proactive and stand up for faculty working on DEI-related grants. Professor Capecelatro is also interested in working on repairing the relationship with the regents, to engage with the Board of Regents, and to have a seat at the table at regents meetings.
- **Kirsten Herold:** If elected, it will be a milestone to be the first lecturer on SACUA since the University Senate expansion. Professor Herold is the outgoing president of LEO, and, previously as the LEO vice president, she has worked on a wide range of faculty issues and has extensive experience engaging with leadership across all three campuses. The discourse on the U-M campus has been very combative, and at times toxic, and we need a course correction to find a way to work together. There needs to be more discussion with the regents, and to represent those that have not been served, including with issues such as ADA and Work Connections. Professor Herold will work to construct more dialog, and use her experience to find common ground with the regents and administration.
- **Wayne C. Petty:** As COAA Chair, Professor Petty has worked on reforming the university's faculty grievance process, including his work on a *Faculty Perspectives* article published in today's *University Record*. As a candidate for SACUA, he will work for faculty rights, due process, and effective conflict resolution. He has witnessed a shift in faculty governance away from faculty to administration, including on crucial matters of tenure. If elected, he would strive for a more effective balance of decision making so that the voice of faculty not only be heard but respected.
- **Rogério Meireles Pinto:** One third of the country did not vote in the last election and the president won by the slimmest of vote margins. People are not engaged enough in the matters of the day, and this is happening at U-M and change is needed. Professor Pinto commends the current SACUA leadership, and there is a suppression of faculty and student voices, not only in D.C. but also at home. Faculty need to be more engaged, so that faculty don't lose their rights and their capacity to teach and do research. We cannot just drop a commitment to social justice and DEI.
- **Quentin F. Stout:** Professor Stout has worked with many groups, serving on RAC, and as Chair of ITC, and across the three campuses. Faculty and students are at the core of the

university, and those doing the actual work of organizing are the faculty. Faculty are under attack, and SACUA must take a role at both the state and national level. We need to get people excited about faculty work, such as what AI can do. There needs to be more efforts to initiate instead of reacting to the administration.

- **Kentaro Toyama:** One of the first things Professor Toyama did when he joined U-M in 2015 was to serve on AAAC. In this role, he was impressed with then Provost Pollock's transparency and willingness to respond to faculty questions. He is concerned about the current relationship between administration and faculty and wants to serve on SACUA to further faculty governance. As a SACUA member, he considers it his responsibility to respect all faculty viewpoints and to make sure all voices are heard.
- Pursuant to Senate rules, Chair Modrak asked the assembly if there were any SACUA candidate nominations from the floor. No new nominations were provided. Chair Modrak announced that the vote would begin at the end of the Senate Assembly meeting and then be open for 72 hours. SA members can vote for up to three people, and the three candidates with the most votes will be elected.

#### 4:52 Matters Arising

- An LSA representative asked if there was a way to send questions to President Ono that were not able to be addressed during the SA meeting. Chair Modrak responded that a document would be created and encouraged faculty to submit questions.
- It was also noted that, after last week's DMN lecture, *The New McCarthyism: Authoritarianism and the Future of Academic Freedom*, a smaller group of faculty met to coordinate and plan next steps.
- Another LSA representative recommended that the Senate Assembly take up President Ono's invitation to collaborate together on the issues raised during the SA meeting. For example, a committee might be created to brainstorm with him about how to move forward. Faculty know how to make arguments about how their research and teaching serve the public good. Faculty craft such statements all the time as part of their grant applications. It was recommended that a campaign to communicate these values be organized by faculty.
- A representative from the Medical School expressed agreement that such a collaboration should be pursued. Another LSA representative echoed these comments and said that there needs to be a proactive long-term strategy. Faculty have a crucial role to play and should work to identify a game plan.

**Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:00 pm.**

Ann Marshall  
 Faculty Governance Coordinator

#### Upcoming Meetings

- 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."