

**UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION
Items for Information**

SUBJECT: February 2025 Faculty Governance Update

1. Faculty request research support.

With the political challenges that have arisen in the past few weeks, there is obviously a lot of anxiety around disruptions to research funding. The SACUA Chair is sharing information and research updates with the Senate Assembly. In response, we're hearing from many faculty who ask us to communicate requests for research funding support to the University central administration. Faculty ask that University leaders:

- Provide information about emergency funding to mitigate loss of federal funding;
- Transition staff positions funded by federal grant money to a permanent university funding source;
- Develop criteria for advancement and promotion that are not based on externally funded research and supports public scholarship and other non-academic forms for the dissemination of knowledge;
- Provide optional extensions to the tenure clock for faculty who encounter cuts to federal funding or disruptions because of Executive Orders;
- Ensure that the University of Michigan Press remains committed to publishing research manuscripts by faculty who are positioned within targeted communities. The publishing of these materials is crucial for tenure.

2. Faculty ask University leaders to stand up to discrimination and to protect members of our community.

In light of recent executive orders maligning members of our community, faculty are reaching out to SACUA and the Faculty Senate Office with concerns about the silence from the central administration. They are asking that University leaders:

- Recognize the value that these important groups—two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual people, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and undocumented people, and individuals and communities represented by and working on DEI initiatives, including Black, Indigenous, Latine, Arab/MENA, Asian, and other people of color, religious minority groups, and women—contribute to our campus and actively counter negative narratives stigmatizing and denigrating these peoples;

- Confirm what support the Institution will give to students, staff, and faculty if they are taken by ICE from our workplace; and
- Challenge coordinated, ideological attacks on education, defend the values we stand for and the autonomy of educational institutions, and robustly articulate why higher education is an essential component of democracy and a public good that advances scholarship, innovations, healthcare, the economy, culture, and creativity.

3. Winter DMN panel on political attacks on academia.

Our Davis, Markert, Nickerson committee is planning an extraordinary event for March 13/14, 2025—a panel that will examine right-wing attacks on higher education, featuring Dr. Jason Stanley, the Yale professor who wrote *Erasing History: How Fascists Rewrite the Past to Control the Future*; Dr. Isaac Kamola who, among other scholarship, published the highly circulated "[Manufacturing Backlash: Right-Wing Think Tanks and Legislative Attacks on Higher Education](#)"; and Dr. Amna Khalid, who has [written extensively](#) on the violations against free speech on campuses, the importance of student activism, academic freedom, and censorship. Details of the event will be publicized in Faculty Senate Office emails and on our website.

4. Faculty Concerns for Dearborn campus

We have been engaging in many conversations with UM-Dearborn faculty from several colleges who have concerns. A significant concern lies in the fact that the budget model imposed on the UM-Dearborn campus in recent years has created inequality and competition amongst the four colleges. The faculty have been constructive in offering budgetary analyses that consider alternatives to the budget model and the current austerity measures in the College of Arts, Sciences, and Letters (CASL) to improve the financial outlook for the UM-Dearborn campus as a whole. We have also raised serious concerns of faculty members within the UM-Dearborn College of Engineering and Computer Science (CECS). These issues reflect a troubling pattern of governance violations in which guidelines and bylaws are not followed, which is undermining faculty governance and the faculty's ability to effectively fulfill their academic and professional responsibilities. We have asked for the opportunity to discuss these issues with executive officers and, as of the time this report is submitted, await a response.

5. SRAC review of the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities

SRAC, the Student Relation Advisory Committee, completed an extensive review of proposals to revise the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities, and the committee's recommendations, as well as a cover letter providing context and explanation, were sent to Vice President Harmon. This process was a real collaborative effort by faculty, staff, and students and

thereby reflects the perspective of the University community, which was the intention when this process was created in 1999.

6. AAUP President Todd Wolfson addresses the Senate Assembly

In response to concerns about the “crisis in higher education” expressed by Senate Assembly (SA) representatives, SACUA invited Dr. Todd Wolfson, associate professor in Media Studies at Rutgers University and President of the national American Association of University Professors (AAUP), to speak to the SA on November 18, 2024.

Dr. Wolfson spoke about the assaults on university campuses, the weakening and abolition of tenure, academic freedom, and shared governance, the shuttering of colleges and programs across the country, and the growing army of higher ed bureaucrats who run universities like corporations. He reminded faculty that, fifty years ago, higher education was one of the most respected sectors in the country and called for a national campaign to support and re-valorize higher education, to define our narrative for ourselves, and to uphold the value of higher education as an agent of our innovation and of our economy that creates social mobility and social progress.

He concluded by urging faculty to organize and to join the group who represents you on campus: LEO (Lecturers), GEO (Graduate Students), GLAM (Librarians, Archivists, and Curators), the [UM-Flint AFT-AAUP local 5671](#) (Flint tenure track faculty), and the Dearborn and Ann Arbor UM chapters of AAUP (tenure track faculty).

7. Faculty On-Campus Work Retreats

Building off of the success of the Faculty On-Campus Work Retreats in the fall, the Faculty Senate Office, with support from the Provost’s Office, is hosting six 3-hour retreats this winter. The retreats offer faculty 3 hours of quiet work time followed by lunch learning about colleagues’ research and creative work. As research and creative work time often gets suppressed by the demands of teaching and service, participants report that the hours of dedicated time, in the same space as other faculty, is extremely effective and has enabled research, paper- and grant-submissions across a vast range of disciplines from film and media studies, to medicine, kinesiology, architecture, and sociology, among others. There will be two retreats offered in February and two in March. Faculty can sign up at the [Faculty Senate website](#).

8. Questions about the Institutional Neutrality policy

Not only faculty, but also staff and students, are confused and anxious about how the institutional neutrality policy is being enforced. The [Michigan Daily](#) reported that University

Housing staff used the policy to shut down an event being held by RAs. The housing staff told the organizers that the program had to be “neutral.” Our understanding, when the policy was shared, was that students would not be affected by the policy and, of course, no one interpreted RAs as University leaders, like Regents, the president, executive officers, chancellors, and deans. When the policy was announced, faculty were told that a FAQ sheet providing clarity about the policy and its implementation would be published. It’s been almost four months since the policy was launched and the FAQ sheet has not surfaced. On December 19, 2024, the SACUA Chair sent the Provost’s Office and General Counsel staff [a set of questions about the IH policy](#) from the faculty to be answered in FAQ sheet. We have not yet received responses to the questions.

9. Correcting Benefits issues for UM Employees

After learning of faculty issues, the SACUA Chair has been investigating and sharing information with the Faculty Senate about a number of issues with benefits. We’ve learned and communicated with faculty that (1) it’s less expensive for benefits-eligible dual-career couple employees at the University of Michigan to sign up for medical plans separately instead of being covered under one spouse’s plan; (2) it’s less expensive for benefits-eligible dual-career couple employees at the UM to insure their children under one spouse’s plan instead of splitting them between plans; (3) male tenure-stream faculty member expecting a child are eligible for modified duties; (4) two UM married tenure-stream faculty expecting a child are each eligible for modified duties; and (5) tenure-stream faculty who are birth mothers may choose to take 6 weeks of maternity leave (with no research, teaching or service duties) after childbirth *and* 6 weeks of parental leave (with no research, teaching or service duties) within the first year of the “event” (12 weeks of leave total) or to take 6 weeks of maternity leave (with no research, teaching or service duties) *and* one semester of modified duties (with no teaching duties; the academic unit determines if there are research and service duties) .

10. SACUA letter, Regental overreach

SACUA drafted and endorsed [a statement](#) calling for fair and transparent processes, not tainted by the influence of individual Regents, and requesting that the original decision made by Provost McCauley regarding OAMI Director Rachel Dawson be respected.

Submitted: February 8, 2025



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