

Minutes of Meeting: 5/12/25

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs

Monday, May 12, 2025, 3:00

The hybrid meeting was held in 1100 Ruthven and via Zoom

Present: Derek Peterson (Chair), Soumya Rangarajan (Vice Chair), Kirsten Herold, Vilma Mesa, Heather O'Malley, Melanie Tanielian, Kentaro Toyama, Alex Yasha Yi

Absent: Jesse Capecelatro, Rebekah Modrak (Immediate Past Chair)

Faculty Senate Office: Eric Vandenberghe, Luke McCarthy, Meaghan Blanchard

Press:

Glenn Hedin -- Daily

Genevieve Monsma -- Record

3:01pm-3:03pm: Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Minutes

The agenda was approved. The minutes for the 5/5/25 meeting were approved.

3:03pm-3:27pm: Chair's Update

Summary:

- Chair Peterson wrote to Interim President Grasso in light of his [recent appointment](#) as Interim President. Chair Peterson indicated a desire to have Interim President Grasso meet with him and SACUA. Interim President Grasso was receptive to this invitation.
- Chair Peterson has been meeting with members of the Board of Regents and will continue to do so moving forward.
- The election for Secretary of the University Senate will start imminently. At this time there is one candidate that will be listed on the ballot for consideration by the University Senate.
- A protest organized by the University Staff United union will take place on 5/13 at Ingalls Mall. The protest is regarding recently terminated staff not being allowed standard union representation during disciplinary hearings. Discussion takes place on this subject from a labor perspective.
- There is an ongoing search for a faculty ombuds. Chair Peterson and Immediate Past Chair Modrak are serving on the search committee. Once final candidates are

- identified it is expected that SACUA will meet with each candidate. This process is expected to take place over the summer.
- Chair Peterson has received messages from faculty members advocating for more robust protection of faculty from external threats. The Senate has previously explored and discussed related issues, and this is discussed as something that could be pursued further. A call for SACUA members interested in reviewing this subject further is made. Several members show interest and will follow up on the subject.
 - The FSO Director shares a SOP draft pertaining to the agenda planning process. This is briefly reviewed and will be further reviewed at a later meeting. Slight improvements are made by committee members during this brief discussion.

Action: Updates

3:27pm-3:44pm: Presidential Search

Summary: Chair Peterson met with Regent White last week and discussed the upcoming presidential search. The importance of faculty involvement in the search process was strongly conveyed. Regent White indicated that she is supportive of faculty involvement in the search process. She requested a list of 8-9 potential candidates that the faculty feel would be a good fit for the position.

SACUA sent out a survey to the Senate Assembly membership late last week regarding the upcoming presidential search. Responses are coming in, and the deadline for members to respond is Wednesday. A reminder will be sent out later by the Chair. Chair Peterson indicates that a drafting committee will be formed once the response deadline passes.

A member of SACUA served on the most recent presidential search committee. They proceed to generally explain the process, while not sharing any specific details. Discussion ensues based on the information provided.

A question is asked about whether SACUA should consider advocating for an open search process. Discussion ensues on this.

At the conclusion of the conversation, a call is made for SACUA members who are interested in serving on the aforementioned drafting committee. Four members volunteer and will follow up asynchronously. It is noted that it appears that the Regents wish to move at a rapid pace, and that faculty governance will need to keep pace to ensure their opinions are heard.

Action: Discussion

3:44pm-4:00pm: Senate Assembly Elections & Unit “Professionalism” Requirements

Summary: SACUA proceeds to continue a conversation started at a prior meeting regarding the recent development that the Medical School administration has adopted a professionalism “filter” for those eligible to serve on the Senate Assembly beyond those indicated within the Faculty Senate Rules or Regent’s bylaws. The immediate past Chair had corresponded with members of the Medical School administration for clarification on this policy and provided the materials received to SACUA prior to the meeting. Chair Peterson indicated that this filter has been used to remove candidates for consideration in at least one prior election.

Discussion ensues on this topic. A member indicates that administration should not have a say in which faculty run in these faculty governance elections. The faculty of each unit can implement their own requirements, but the administration should not have a say over these decisions. Another member asks for clarity on the definition of “professionalism” in this context.

A member asks about the reason for this new rule. Discussion ensues on this with opinions offered. A question is asked about who specifically is making the determinations on who is eligible to stand for election. A call is made for more transparency. A member finds that the professionalism filter language is found in the 2025 email to Medical School faculty and not the 2024 email.

After discussion, it is determined that there are two drafts that SACUA will work on in the coming week. The first draft will be a letter to the Medical School administration regarding the professionalism filter. This letter will indicate that the faculty should be able to run elections associated with faculty governance on their own accord, free from administration input. The second draft is a resolution to be considered by the Senate Assembly regarding standard language reinforcing faculty autonomy to determine the criteria for elections within their own individual units. Two SACUA members offer to take the lead on these drafts and will share them with the rest of the membership later in the week.

Action: Discussion

4:00pm-4:27pm: University Senate Resolutions Follow up

Summary: SACUA revisits the results of the [4/17/25 Special University Senate meeting](#). Each of the motions passed by wide margins and with record voter turnout. It is indicated that the faculty are united on these issues and that the faculty leaders should follow up to ensure that these positions are acted on appropriately. Each of the motions are discussed.

Motion 1 was titled “Resolution to Establish a Mutual Defense Compact for the Universities of the Big Ten Academic Alliance in Defense of Academic Freedom, Institutional Integrity, and the Research Enterprise.” Context for this motion was

provided. A member asks how this will be pursued. This compact is being pursued by individual faculty governance bodies at the separate Big Ten institutions; it is not associated with the Big Ten Academic Alliance directly.

The initial language that inspired this resolution came from faculty at Rutgers University. A member suggests that the Chair correspond with those faculty leaders at Rutgers to find a path forward. Another suggestion is that the Chair reach out to the regents to discuss this further. Discussion ensues on proper strategy for discussing this with the regents and administration.

Motion 2 was titled “Statement in Support of the Core Mission and Values of Higher Education in the United States of America.” It is determined that there is currently no further action item needed regarding this motion.

Motion 3 was titled “Resolution to continue DEI initiatives that are in alignment with our university values, an extension of the mission of our schools, and legally compliant.” Differing opinions are voiced on how SACUA should proceed in advocating for this motion. A new position in the administration was recently announced in the wake of the closure of ODEI; a member asks about the details of that new position. A member indicates that broad community input via town halls could provide fruitful paths forward. Discussion moves to the current political landscape, both nationally and at UM.

Motion 4 was titled “Resolution Urging the University of Michigan to Protect International Students, Faculty, and Staff from Unwarranted Detention.” SACUA determines that the authors of the resolution should meet with OGC, the International Center, and student leaders in GEO to determine the best path forward for supporting the aims of this motion. A member suggests also meeting with the Provost’s Office regarding funding options to support the items mentioned in the motion.

Action: Discussion

4:27pm-4:31pm: Committee Nominations Work Update

Summary: The FSO Director provides an update on the committee rosters for the upcoming academic year. There are a few items to finalize, and then SACUA can review for approval at the next SACUA meeting. There are a couple items that will need to be tied up prior to the meeting that the FSO Director will discuss outside of the meeting via email.

A call is made for further nominations for the ABIA and Kinesiology Dean Search committee. The FSO Director will reach out about this after the meeting.

Action: Update

4:31pm-4:44pm: Matters Arising / New Business / Agenda Building

Summary:

- The Chair brings up a personnel matter that will need to be addressed potentially in the next two weeks. Further details will be provided via email in the coming days.
- SACUA is asked about the upcoming SACUA retreat. Members voice that there is value having it off-site, as well as prior to the start of the school year.
- Faculty award materials were shared with SACUA members earlier in the day. These awards will be determined at the 5/19 SACUA meeting.
- The Faculty Senate Rules are discussed regarding unit elections to the Senate Assembly.

Action: Discussion and updates

4:44pm: Adjournment

ADDENDUM

SACUA Actions

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

- On February 12, SACUA endorsed a “Statement in Support of Valued Members of Our Community,” which had been drafted and approved by the following: The Committee on Anti-Racism (CAR); The Committee on the Economic and Social Well-Being of the Faculty (CESWF); The Committee on Fairness, Equity, and Inclusion (CFEI); The Committee on the Oversight of Administrative Action (COAA); and faculty representatives from the Queer and Trans Task Force.
- On March 17th SACUA met to (1) rank Standing Judicial Committee members for potential inclusion on a hearing committee for a pending 5.09 matter, pursuant to the votes of the tenured SACUA members, (2) approve a process to rank additional members by e-vote between meetings, (3) approve appointing the hearing committee membership pursuant to SACUA’s rankings, subject to faculty nominee availability and avoiding a committee that is all male or female, and (4) approved providing the SACUA chair with authority to resolve on SACUA’s behalf any objections to the committee on the grounds of potential bias. Relatedly, on March 25th and April 7th, the tenured members of SACUA voted to rank potential faculty for inclusion on the hearing committee, and a hearing committee was accordingly appointed by SACUA on April 10th.

- On April 16, SACUA approved a letter from SACUA to Amy Grier, Associate Director, University Human Resources regarding the recent termination of employees as a consequence of taking part, as students, in on-campus protest activities.
- On April 28, SACUA nominated the following faculty for consideration by the President for appointment to the Honorary Degree Committee:
 - **John Carson**, Associate Professor of History and Director Academic Program, History, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts
 - **Earl Lewis**, Thomas C Holt Distinguished University Professor of History, Afroamerican and African Studies and Public Policy, Director, Center for Social Solutions, Professor of History, Professor of Afroamerican and African Studies, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and Professor of Public Policy, Gerald R Ford School of Public Policy
 - **Cindy Finelli**, David C Munson Jr Collegiate Professor of Engineering, Professor of Education, Marsal Family School of Education, Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and Director Academic Program, Graduate Education, College of Engineering
 - **Rebekah Modrak**, Professor of Art and Design, Penny W Stamps School of Art and Design
- On April 30, SACUA voted to rank nominees to chair the Administration Evaluation Committee, with the highest ranked and interested nominee being **Ashootosh Tripathi**, Associate Research Scientist, Life Sciences Institute and Research Associate Professor, College of Pharmacy, who was thereby appointed to chair the Administration Evaluation Committee for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Vandenberghe
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. 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."