



Government Relations Advisory Committee (GRAC) Minutes

Minutes of February 13, 2025, 11-11:45 am, regular meeting

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Approved: 3/13/2025

Present: Sue Anne Bell (Chair), Neil Canfield (Executive Director of Federal Relations and Federal Research), Shevon Desai, Anouck Girard, Chris Kolb (Vice President for Government Relations), Andi Lewis (Government Relations Specialist), John Mansfield, Shahzad Mian, Soumya Rangarajan, Sara Samuel, Beth Wilensky, Jeffrey Yackley

Absent: Jowei Chen, Nakhiah Goulbourne

1. The meeting was called to order and the minutes from the previous meeting were approved.
2. VP Kolb Update
 - VP Kolb provided a government relations update. U-M administration is sending out communications to keep people aware of recent changes. There are efforts to chart a path forward at both the state and federal level.
3. Short and long-term plans for U-M communication to faculty about legislative matters, especially in relation to research funding
 - A [Key Issues](#) page from the Office of Public Affairs provides information on federal actions, both current and ongoing.
 - Executive Director for Federal Relations and Federal Research Neil Canfield invited questions from GRAC members. The office works closely with the U-M community to inform and advise on federal legislative, regulatory and research policy affecting U-M research.
4. Strategies for conveying the importance of faculty members' work to legislative leaders.
 - There was discussion about the importance of translating the term indirect costs into language that resonates and has impact with the public, i.e. it is impossible to do research without data collection, buildings, and lights. Cuts to indirect costs are direct costs to research. Cuts mean not being able to make an appointment for a child needing brain cancer treatment. The cuts impact not just U-M, but also all of higher education and across all states and political affiliations.
 - There was discussion about how U-M touches lives across the state, including Michigan Medicine's work in Chelsea, with Sparrow, and within rural communities. The public does not always understand how research impacts their lives and how research impacts the economy. Funds from donors tend not to fill such gaps because donor funds are targeted to specific projects and not to needs like keeping the lights on.
 - U-M is a very strong brand across the political spectrum. It is known for its health care and economic development. It is important to identify a narrative that resonates with the public, such as the Hail to the Victors campaign.
 - Affordability is an important message, that everyone can get an elite education at U-M at a price they can afford.



- It was noted that, for some faculty, their entire salary comes from federal grants. Indirect cost rates vary by institution, with the lower rates for institutions that are less research intensive. Indirect costs are a very difficult topic to talk about with the public. The federal government has partnered with research endeavors since WW2. It is not possible to just turn this structure off.
- It is important to stay focused on a message, i.e. that cuts to research are cuts to treatment for Alzheimer's, cancer, diabetes.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Marshall, FSO, Faculty Governance Coordinator