



Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) Minutes
March 13, 12:45 – 2:15 pm (Provost attending 1-2 pm)
Ruthven Conference Room 1100 and via Zoom (hybrid)

Minutes of Meeting: 3/13/2025

Circulated: 4/17/2025

Approved: 4/22/2025

Present: Aubree Gordon (Chair), Colleen Conway, Christine Gerdes (Special Counsel to the Provost), Emmanuelle Marquis, Ann Marshall (FSO), Luke McCarthy (FSO), Laurie McCauley (Provost), Heather O'Malley (SACUA liaison), Frank Pelosi, Jordan Siegel, Kentaro Toyama, Arthur Verhoogt.

Absent: Robert Deegan, Albert Liu, Rahul Mannan, Mireille Roddier, Jennifer Trigger, Jon Wargo

1. In preparation for the arrival of the Provost, the minutes from 2/13/2025 were approved, and AAAC members briefly discussed AAAC agenda items.

2. Explore current practices regarding disability support for faculty and staff and provide recommendations regarding improvement.

- A recent [Record article](#) outlines support for faculty experiencing threats and harassment, including an easy way (a single email address) for faculty to ask for support.
- A faculty member provided an update on disability navigators, including pilot programs in both LSA and Engineering, with recommendations that the program be expanded campus wide. The Provost expressed interest in supporting such an initiative and invited input, including whether ECRT would be a good fit. It was suggested that at least one navigator might be embedded in each school, with the needed resources and perhaps a model similar to CAPS. There was uncertainty about who the navigators might best report to, and a question was raised about whether more than one navigator might be needed in larger schools, e.g. LSA.
- There was discussion about how to address a lack of uniformity across schools, and the Provost offered that, as first step, the pilot navigators could present to deans about the program. In addition, units could contribute to covering the cost and, if needed, the unit could ask for centralized funding, such as from ECRT and/or ADA. There is also a new Provost's Advisory Committee on Disability Affairs (PACDA) that can assist, and there is attention to benchmarking. Appreciation was shared for the Provost's initiative on scholarship related to disability, and interest was expressed in a second round of funding.
- AAAC has heard troubling stories, both recent and past, about people's experiences with Work Connections. Members shared their perspective that Work Connections addresses disability from a risk management and business perspective and not from a human perspective. There was discussion on how to address Work Connections from a structural perspective as well as how to bring together the right people to address the issue.

Action Items: Luke McCarthy offered to reach out to Vilma Mesa, the SACUA rep on the Work Connections committee, to facilitate next steps. Luke will also explore the issue with Geoff Chatas, and there was interest in having someone from the Provost's Office also involved.



3. Long Term Disability

- AAAC raised concerns about U-M's Long Term Disability (LTD) plan. If someone gets sick in their 50s or 60s, the LTD plan could make it difficult to return to work and also present financial burdens, with both an increase in health-related costs and LTD-coverage at only about 60% of base pay. Someone might have a disability at age 65 and be forced to retire even though they could be ready to return to work after 12-months of LTD coverage. While Geoff Chatas is charged with this area, interest was expressed in also having someone from Faculty Affairs involved.

4. Update on impacts of developments out of Washington DC

- The Provost invited feedback on the [new research funding program](#), and AAAC members shared their appreciation for the program. Faculty are invited to send in questions about the program, and the Provost's Office will continue to build out the [FAQ](#). The program covers training grants, and junior faculty are particularly encouraged to apply. There was discussion about how federal funding changes are impacting larger campus entities (ISR, Life Sciences, etc.) as well as smaller schools. There was discussion about what might happen next and how donor gifts are handled during this time, including questions about how to negotiate rules regarding donor gifts. The Provost remarked that faculty had submitted more grant proposals this year to date than last year and encouraged faculty to continue to excel and to submit grant proposals.
- A faculty member noted impacts on the International Institute, with questions about funding for language study and Fulbright competitions. It is a scary time for doctoral students and undergraduates, and, during tumultuous times, applications for graduate school also tend to rise. There is tremendous uncertainty, and the university is trying to model a variety of scenarios.
- There was discussion about following laws, incentives to be seen favorably by the administration, issues of anticipatory compliance, and the enormity of the balancing act that institutions are in the middle of. There was discussion about updating websites and also how not to compromise academic freedom.

7. Additional Committee Discussion

- After the Provost left the meeting, there was brief committee discussion related to AAAC next steps.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Marshall, Faculty Governance Coordinator (FSO)