

To: SACUA

From: Orsolya Lautner-Csorba, Chair, Research Advisory Committee (RAC)

Subject: Report on Activities of the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) for 2024-2025

Members: Fadhl Alakwaa; Audrey Bennett; Jesse Capecelatro; Orsolya Lautner-Csorba; Karen Downing; Seth Guikema; Suresh Madathilparambil; Magda Ivanova; Tyler Nix; Angelica Previero; Mrinal Sarkar; Quentin Stout

SACUA Liaison: Alex Yasha Yi

OVPR: Arthur Lupia; Alena Stocking

Faculty Senate Office: Eric Vandenberghe

Meeting Dates:

1. Mon. 9/5: 9-10am (Initial meeting on defining committee's charges), attendance: 7/12
2. Mon. 9/30: 1-2pm, attendance: 10/12
3. Mon. 10/28: 1-2pm, attendance: 11/12
4. Mon. 11/25: 1-2pm, attendance: 6/12
5. Mon. 2/10: 1-2pm, attendance: 9/12
6. Mon. 3/24: 1-2pm, attendance: 9/12
7. Mon. 4/21: 1-2pm, attendance: 10/12

A. COMMITTEE CHARGES

1. AI Research and Perspectives: How Artificial Intelligence (AI) impacts research and can be ethically incorporated into research. Given the dynamic nature of artificial intelligence, continuous updates on AI developments and perspectives are still essential and how it impacts research and how it can be incorporated into research. Guidance in ethical use of AI in research settings. Key areas of focus should include e.g. writing/reporting, literature reviewing, data collection, data analysis, publication, education, boosting work productivity and teaching. AI regulation nationwide and University policies/practices should be discussed. Updated library resources can further support and clarify the role of AI in research.

2. Research Faculty Development: Formulate strategies to better support the development of the Research Faculty (RF) in the sciences, such as facilitating internal grants, gap and startup funds, partner and service discovery, and identifying the specific stressors of faculty burnout.

3. Research in the Arts and Humanities: What is the role of the arts and humanities in the mission of UM and in society. What is the UM's strategy to provide more support to researchers from the Arts and Humanities (e.g. financial, more protected time for research, more even a number of course preparation between tenured faculty and lecturers).

4. Emergent Issues: Consider emergent issues or topics brought forward by the RAC committee members and/or the VP for Research for discussion over the course of the year.



B. COMMITTEE ACTIONS

RAC held seven well-attended and informative Zoom meetings during the 2024–25 academic year. The first, initial meeting, on September 5, 2024, focused on member introductions and finalizing the charges for the year. The subsequent six meetings, held between September 30, 2024, and April 21, 2025, were dedicated to discussing the assigned charges and addressing other areas of concern. These meetings also served to provide timely updates on relevant and pressing topics.

1. In alignment with its charges, the Committee’s discussions throughout 2024–25 centered around the following themes:

Research Faculty Development (9/30/24; 11/25/24; 4/21/25):

- **OVPR Research Track Faculty Overview** by Arthur Lupia, Interim Vice President for Research and Innovation, UM and **Update on Research Faculty Development**. Invited guest Lisa Prosser, Associate Vice President for Research-Health Sciences, UM Office of Research
- **Faculty Development Open Discussion**. Invited guest Lisa Prosser, Associate Vice President for Research-Health Sciences, UM Office of Research
- Mental Wellness**. Invited guest Kelcey Stratton, Chief Behavioral Health Strategist, UM and Lisa Prosser, Associate Vice President for Research-Health Sciences and Research Faculty Affairs
- Update and Conversation on Federal Changes** by Arthur Lupia, Interim Vice President for Research and Innovation, UM

AI in Research and Perspectives (10/28/24):

- **AI Research Committee Report Summary** by Arthur Lupia, Interim Vice President for Research and Innovation, UM
- **Michigan Institute for Data & AI in Society (MIDAS) and AI in research**. Invited guest Jinq Liu, Executive Director of MIDAS

Current Emergent Issues (2/10/2025):

- **Response of Federal Relations on Recent Developments in the Federal Government**. Invited guest Neil Canfield, Executive Director of Federal Relations and Federal Research, UM
- UM Response to Federal Changes** by Arthur Lupia, Interim Vice President for Research and Innovation, UM

Research in the Arts and Humanities (3/24/2025):

- **Research in the Arts and Humanities**. Invited guest Geoff Thün, Associate Vice President for Research: Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts, UM Office of Research
- **Update and Conversation on Federal Changes** by Arthur Lupia, Interim Vice President for Research and Innovation, UM

2. Additionally, prior to the final meeting in May, the Committee was requested to provide feedback on priority topics and shaping the agenda for the upcoming academic year.

The questionnaire contained the following questions:

- Provide any recommendations and resolutions that SACUA and the SA should consider.**

- List of any priorities SACUA and SA should focus on in the coming academic year.
- RAC charge ideas, potential topics for next year (2025/2026).

C. INFORMATION OBTAINED

Research Faculty Development

-Overview on the work of the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR): Vice President Lupia provided an overview of the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR), emphasizing its **central role in supporting the full research lifecycle** across the University of Michigan's three campuses. He noted that the University's size and breadth of expertise enable significant innovation, though they also present unique challenges. In FY23, the University's total research volume reached \$1.86 billion.

OVPR collaborates with all academic units to catalyze, support, and safeguard research. It offers comprehensive assistance across all stages of the research process—including **identifying funding opportunities, developing and submitting proposals, project setting and management, and closeout.** Additionally, OVPR provides resources to enhance faculty competitiveness, such as grant writing and editing **workshops**, and the development of strategic tools and programs.

Maintaining high standards of **research integrity, safety, and animal welfare** is a core priority for OVPR. The office also plays a key role in building external partnerships, coordinating federal interactions, and supporting international engagement. In FY23, the University reported over 600 licenses, reflecting the creativity and impact of the UM research community.

Further support is available through **OVPR's services related to intellectual property**, including patent and copyright processes, commercialization assistance, and mentorship. A list of OVPR units and contact information was shared with committee members. The session concluded with a brief discussion on R01 grants and OVPR's funding mechanisms.

- **Research Track Faculty Overview:** Dr. Prosser (OVPR) provided an overview of research track faculty, supported by data from **all three University of Michigan campuses.** The presentation highlighted that while the majority of faculty across campuses are on the tenure track, clinical and research tracks also represent significant portions of the academic workforce. Detailed data further outlined the career paths of research faculty.

An important update to the **promotion process from associate to full research scientist** was shared. The revised criteria remove the requirement for independent PI-status funding and instead **emphasize independent scholarly contributions** and the ability to manage research resources on scale. These changes, based on recommendations from a review group, aim to better recognize key contributions often previously overlooked.

Dr. Prosser also shared the office's plans for the year, including the implementation of a **peer mentoring program**, the use of external reviewers in the promotion process, and the recent hosting of a **faculty town hall** in January. Resources to support research track faculty were also provided. Additional discussions addressed the **promotion decision-making process**, the **need to use of exit interviews**, and **clarified distinctions between tenure-track and research-track faculty, particularly regarding promotion requirements.**

- **Faculty Development Open Discussion with VP Lupia and Lisa Prosser.** The Chair introduced a discussion on faculty development, guided by questions developed in consultation with the OVPR. The conversation focused on defining research faculty development, how OVPR can best support it, effective communication strategies, and increasing the visibility of research at the University of Michigan.

Defining and Supporting Faculty Development

Committee members agreed that early career researchers primarily rely on departmental support, which varies in quality across units. As researchers advance in their careers, the need for centralized support from OVPR increases. Members emphasized:

- The importance of consistent departmental support.
- The challenge of uneven access to resources due to UM's decentralized structure.
- The value of workshops on grant proposal writing and professional development, with a call to extend these to postdocs and early-career faculty.
- The need for improved communication around existing resources, such as updated library methodologies.

VP Lupia affirmed OVPR's commitment to supporting researchers at all career stages and highlighted efforts under **Vision 2034**, including programs like **Bold Challenges**, aimed at fostering cross-departmental collaboration. Members also discussed the importance of facilitating collaborations beyond UM when necessary. The discussion briefly touched on the potential impact of the recent election on research funding, with VP Lupia sharing updates from Washington, D.C.

Effective Communication Channels

The committee considered how OVPR could most effectively disseminate information to Faculty:

- Faculty are often overwhelmed by email; targeted newsletters were proposed as an alternative.
- Timing matters—sharing information during slower academic periods may increase visibility.
- Customized emails and a centralized, filterable website for opportunities were suggested, with potential use of AI to streamline access to relevant content.

Increasing Research Visibility

Committee members questioned whether UM research is sufficiently visible and offered suggestions:

- Short, professionally produced videos showcasing researchers' work were seen as effective and multipurpose tools.
- OVPR was encouraged to consider launching faculty and staff awards to elevate visibility and recognize contributions.

-**Mental Wellness.** Chief Behavioral Health Strategist Stratton provided an overview of her background and current role, emphasizing the growing mental health concerns and elevated anxiety levels within the higher education environment. Stratton opened her presentation by asking committee members to reflect on the question: *“What does a mentally healthy workplace look like to you?”* Responses included key concepts such as **respect for cultural**



differences, appreciation, mutual respect, and having individual needs met. She then introduced the **five essentials for workplace mental health and well-being**, which are centered on **worker voice and equity: Protection from harm, Opportunity for growth, Connectivity and community, Mattering at work, Work-life harmony**

To support these pillars, Stratton shared a set of best practices:

- Raising awareness about the importance of mental health and well-being
- Managing psychosocial risks related to the work environment and culture
- Assessing mental health needs and evaluating the impact of interventions
- Providing access to evidence-based, high-quality mental health care
- Integrating mental health into a comprehensive wellness strategy

Stratton discussed the **Michigan Well-Being Collective**, formed in alignment with the **Okanagan Charter**, which UM signed to promote a holistic, sustainable, and health-promoting approach across campus. She highlighted the collective's **action areas, well-being models, and strategic initiatives**, including a **mental health strategic plan** and a **continuum of care** model.

Resources highlighted included:

- **Faculty and Staff Counseling and Consultation Office (FASCCO)**
- **Michigan Medicine Office of Counseling and Workplace Resilience** (for Medical School personnel)
- **Confidential services** such as the **Faculty and Staff Ombuds**
- Additional support via **Human Resources** and **ECRT (Equity, Civil Rights, and Title IX Office)**

The Committee provided input on how to broaden awareness of these resources. Committee suggestions included:

- Having Stratton or colleagues attend faculty meetings
- Creating stronger, targeted marketing and outreach materials

The discussion then shifted to **barriers preventing faculty from seeking help**. Faculty members cited: **Excessive workload and time constraints, Stigma** surrounding mental health, **Mistrust or paranoia** about the confidentiality of available resources. Stratton reassured the committee that all listed confidential services are indeed **genuinely confidential**. A faculty member suggested that **leadership could play a larger role** in promoting and normalizing the use of these resources.

AI in Research and Perspectives

-AI Research Committee Report Overview. VP Lupia presented an overview of the internal report produced by the Artificial Intelligence Research Committee, focusing on three primary areas: **key investments, internal innovation and coordination, and ethics and compliance.**

Key Investments: The committee emphasized the need for strategic investments to position the University of Michigan as a global leader in AI research. Recommendations include:

- Expansion of computational infrastructure to support large-scale AI work.
- Recruitment of AI-focused human capital, including faculty and staff.
- Campus-wide AI education to build awareness and literacy across disciplines.
- Enhanced funding readiness, including:
 - Promoting interdisciplinary collaboration.
 - Creating networking opportunities to connect researchers across units.

- Development of AI research consulting services to support project development and implementation.

Internal Innovation & Coordination: The committee proposed several strategies to improve coordination and communication:

- Establishing a formal AI advisory committee to counsel OVPR on AI research directions and strategy.
- Creating a centralized AI web presence to direct internal and external stakeholders to relevant resources, opportunities, and collaborations.
- Conducting in-depth interviews with faculty and administrative leaders to inform these recommendations.
- Prioritizing internal communication, collaborative culture, and external partnerships as critical components of long-term success.

Ethics & Compliance: The report underscores the critical importance of ensuring AI research adheres to the highest ethical and compliance standards. Key recommendations include:

- Reviewing and updating current policies to reflect emerging AI-related issues.
- Developing new guidance where existing frameworks fall short.
- Ensuring that ethical oversight evolves in parallel with the rapid growth of AI capabilities.

-MIDAS and AI in research. Dr. Liu presented on enabling AI in research through the work of the Michigan Institute for Data Science (MIDAS). Dr. Liu discussed the evolving definition of artificial intelligence (AI) and highlighted examples to illustrate this shift. He outlined MIDAS's collaborations with internal and external stakeholders, including industry, government, and other academic institutions, to advance a wide range of AI-related initiatives. The current state of AI at the University of Michigan was also reviewed.

MIDAS provides resources to support AI adoption, including a generative AI (genAI) tutorial series and detailed user guides. Dr. Liu shared examples of ongoing research involving genAI and noted the development of university-wide guidelines for its use. She emphasized **academia's critical role in shaping the future of AI** beyond commercial interests. Comparisons were made between the development of supercomputing and AI, noting their rapid evolution and potential global impact. Discussion followed on UM's engagement with external entities in the AI space, potential collaborations, and the application of AI in qualitative research.

The following resources were shared with members for further review:

- **MIDAS** (<https://midas.umich.edu/>)
- **MICDE** (<https://micde.umich.edu/>)
- **Generative AI Research Guide** (<https://midas.umich.edu/research/research-resources/generative-ai-hub/generative-ai-for-research-guide/>)

Current Emergent Issues

- Response of Federal Relations on Recent Developments in the Federal Government.

Mr. Canfield provided an overview of several pressing federal policy issues impacting the research community. Key topics included NIH reform, indirect cost recovery changes, the impact of federal budget cuts on vulnerable populations and public health, and developments



in visa and immigration policy. **Executive orders (EOs) are being issued at an unprecedented pace**, with significant ones **affecting areas such as antisemitism, LGBTQ+ rights, and immigration**—many of which have implications for the University of Michigan.

The recent OMB Federal Funding Memo (issued 1/27/25) that threatened to freeze billions in federal aid was highlighted; although rescinded, it caused considerable confusion. The guest also discussed a major change to **the NIH indirect cost rate**, which now caps indirect costs at **~15%** for both new and existing grants. This unexpected move has sparked legal challenges and remains under active review. Concerns were raised regarding the looming federal budget deadline and debt ceiling, with uncertainty about future research funding. Updated guidance is being shared via the OVPR homepage, and more information will be provided as developments unfold.

-UM Response to Federal Changes.

Update on 2/10/2025: VP Lupia provided a detailed overview of the federal government's system of checks and balances, explaining how the Executive Branch interprets laws to issue executive orders, many of which currently impact university research. He advised that faculty receiving new directives from funding agencies must comply, but if no communication has been received, no immediate action is necessary. The **recent NIH change to a 15% cap on indirect costs** was discussed in depth. While **legal challenges** are ongoing, the guidance is **to follow the current law when submitting grant proposals**. Caution was urged for large, phased purchases, as funding conditions may shift. **Program officers were identified as the key point of contact** for NIH-related inquiries. The broader implications of reduced indirect costs were emphasized, including the impact on life-saving university research and public health innovations.

VP Lupia shared that UM spends approximately \$120 million per month on research, and the University's leadership—including the President—is actively advocating in Washington for continued support. **Questions on DEI efforts and future advocacy were raised**, with Lupia encouraging faculty and students to **share their research stories to strengthen the case for federal support**. Committee members thanked OVPR for its clarity amid uncertainty. **The committee recommended that OVPR host a broader session to share updates and actions with the wider University community.**

Update on 3/24/2025: Vice President Lupia provided an update on the evolving federal landscape and its impact on UM. He shared insights from his recent meetings in Washington, D.C., where he advocated for UM's research mission and noted strong bipartisan recognition of the UM's contributions. Currently, **UM has received relatively few stop-work orders** compared to peer institutions. Proposal submissions continue steadily, though federal review timelines have slowed. For flagged projects, UM is actively engaging with federal agencies to determine the next steps. The recently finalized federal budget was described as a stabilizing development.

VP Lupia addressed the cancellation of several grants last week, outlining UM's response and available support. He emphasized the importance of **safeguarding human and animal research subjects** throughout this uncertain period. **A university funding program has been launched to provide bridge support** or assist in the responsible closeout of affected projects; faculty are advised to **coordinate with their deans**. Committee members raised concerns, including the **potential elimination of the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS)**, which supports

vital research infrastructure across Michigan. VP Lupia affirmed UM’s continued advocacy and responsiveness to these developments.

Update on 4/21/2025: VP Lupia updated the committee on the impact of recent federal government actions on UM. He reported that approximately 70 grants have received stop-work orders. In response, OVPR is actively working with federal agencies to determine whether affected projects can continue or, if necessary, how to wind them down responsibly. He also discussed the availability of bridge funding to support the impacted faculty. Additionally, Lupia noted a general slowdown in the federal grant review process.

Research in the Arts and Humanities:

- **Research Support for Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences.** Associate Vice President Thün presented an overview of his role supporting the research needs of 12 campus units and collaborating closely with their deans. He described the **Research Catalyst and Innovation (RCI) Program**, which promotes research and innovation across U-M’s three campuses. The RCI program includes three key funding mechanisms: **RCI Block Grants**, **Arts Research: Incubation & Acceleration (ARIA)**, and **Anti-Racism Grants**—each supporting faculty in the arts, humanities, and related disciplines through seed grants, collaborative opportunities, and societal impact initiatives. Thün also detailed the work of the **Office of Research Development (ORD)**, which builds faculty research capacity, offers proposal support (especially for large grants), and provides services like workshops and design support. He highlighted the **Bold Challenges initiative** and U-M’s involvement in the **Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences Research Leaders Network (HASS-RLN)**.

A full inventory of OVPR research development resources (<https://research.umich.edu/ord/>) is shared. Questions from faculty, gathered in advance, **addressed national threats to humanities funding, challenges in the assistant-to-associate professor transition (especially around teaching loads), and the need for better grant feedback and support.** Thün acknowledged these challenges and shared ongoing efforts to demonstrate the value of humanities research and improve institutional support. After the discussion **the committee recommended that OVPR develop grant writing workshops and target funding guidance for faculty in the arts and humanities.**

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the discussed topics over the academic year of 2024-2025, as well as the **responses to the questionnaires**, the RAC members identified the following recommendations, and priorities for SACUA and the Senate Assembly to consider for the 2025–2026 academic year. The committee proposed several key areas of interest:

- Strategies for faculty to better communicate the regional, national, and global impact of UM research.
- Exit interviews should also be conducted for Research Professors and Scientists, as these can provide valuable insights and help inform the development of more effective support systems for Research Track Faculty
- Developing more effective channels for faculty and staff to express concerns and repair trust with UM leadership and the Regents.



- The committee considered how OVPR could most effectively disseminate information: i) Faculty are often overwhelmed by email; targeted newsletters were proposed as an alternative; ii) Timing matters—sharing information during slower academic periods may increase visibility; iii) Customized emails and a centralized, filterable website for research/funding/award opportunities were suggested, with potential use of AI to streamline access to relevant content.
- Discussion on effective laboratory management and strategies for efficient time management in research would be particularly valuable, especially for junior faculty or those leading expanding laboratories.
- A proposal-writing workshop modeled after programs at other institutions was suggested by the committee, along with a call for centralized benchmarks for research development, despite challenges posed by departmental variance.
- Broaden awareness of mental wellness (and related resources) among Faculty by i) inviting presenters from the Human Resources Office of Wellbeing to faculty meetings and ii) creating stronger, targeted marketing and outreach materials.
- Committee members suggested sharing campus genAI success stories campus-wide and/or during committee meetings for further dissemination.
- Continued monitoring and discussion of AI's role and implications in academic research.
- Identifying meaningful support mechanisms for cross-unit interdisciplinary research and centers. Current networks (e.g., MIDAS, Blue Sky) are too narrow; a broader, more inclusive infrastructure is needed to foster impactful interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Considering ongoing NIH restructuring, dedicate time to exploring unconventional strategies for securing alternative research funding (both internal and external), with attention to the unique needs of different Schools and Colleges.
- Regular updates on federal policy changes affecting research at UM, including implications of non-federal grant reductions and industrial contract losses.
- Reframing UM's shared values by leveraging DEI's core strengths—such as access and resources—in a time of shifting institutional priorities.
- Addressing the decline of DEI-related content; how can AI systems be trained to support digital archives and restore critical knowledge?

As a conclusion of the committee's work in the 2024-2025 academic year, the RAC members recommend the following topic for charges for 2025–2026:

1. Monitor and respond to evolving federal actions impacting research funding.

Reassess the implications of federal policy shifts, including funding uncertainties, and explore viable alternative funding strategies.

2. Develop strategies for faculty to communicate the impact of UM research.

Identify ways to articulate and disseminate the University's research contributions at the regional, state, national, and international levels. Engage community partners to help share these narratives with policymakers.

3. Improve communication channels between faculty/staff and University leadership.

Explore more effective mechanisms for faculty and staff to voice concerns and recommend

approaches for rebuilding trust and strengthening relationships with UM leadership and the Regents.

4. Preserve and restore critical knowledge through digital archives and responsible AI use.

Considering growing uncertainty and the diminishing visibility of DEI content, prioritize the development or enhancement of digital archives and evaluate the role of AI in preserving institutional memory and critical perspectives.

5. Strengthen support for interdisciplinary research across units.

Examine barriers to meaningful cross-unit collaboration and propose concrete solutions to enhance support for interdisciplinary centers and initiatives beyond the current limited frameworks (e.g., MIDAS, Blue Sky).

The Committee would like to acknowledge the valuable support and assistance of VP Arthur Lupia; Alena Stocking from the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR); Luke McCarthy and Eric Vandenberghe from the Faculty Senate Office (FSO) and Rebekah Modrak from Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA).

The RAC members also appreciate the time and constructive dialogue shared between the committee and the invited guest speakers.