

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**

Senate Assembly

Monday, April 21, 2025, 3:15

The Hybrid meeting was held in 2000 University Hall, Ruthven and Zoom

Minutes: April 21, 2025

Circulated: September 16, 2025

Approved: September 22, 2025

**In-person attendees:**

Meaghan Blanchard (non-voting), Theadora Danciu, Pauline Jones, Luke McCarthy (non-voting), Rebekah Modrak, Heather O'Malley, Derek Peterson, Soumya Ragarajan, Craig Smith, Deirdre Spencer (non-voting), Kentaro Toyama, Eric Vandenberghe (non-voting), Jon Zelner

**Virtual attendees:**

Charlotte Karem Albrecht, Mark Allison, Mousumi Banerjee, J Sybil Biermann, Jonathan R Brennan, Helen Julia Burgess, Jade Burns, Jesse Alden Capecelatro, Rogerio Castilho, Amy I-Lin Cheng, Meghan Courtney, Simon S Cushing, Robert Keith Duncan, Terri Friedline, Caren S Goldberg, L Jay Guo, Brendan Haug, Shake Ketefian (non-voting), Joshua Kautsky Hausman, Sarah T Hawley, Ingrid L Hendy, Yihe Huang, Kevin L Joiner, Brad Killaly, Yongqing Li, Charles Lwanga, Vilma Mesa, Shahzad I Mian, Andre Monteiro Da Rocha, Karin M Muraszko, Susan Y Najita, Mojtaba Navvab, Mukesh Nyati, Phillip Lee Palmbo, Jessica Pasquale, Pamela Ehresman Pennock, Harmony Reppond, Joy Rohde, Stacy Rosenbaum, Joel Rubenstein (non-voting), Kimberly Saks, Suzanne M Selig (non-voting), Albert J Shih, Lauren B Smith, Christina Snider, Brian A Stewart, Melanie Schulze Tanielian, Ashu Tripathi, Elizabeth M Viglianti, Craig Lawrence Wilkins, Jason Randolph Young, Robert M Ziff, Paul Zimmerman

**Guests:**

Isaac Kamola, Associate Professor Department of Political Science at Trinity College

**Press:**

Genevieve Monsma- The University Record

Edith Pendell- The Michigan Daily

**3:19pm Come to Order, Minutes and Announcements**

The meeting was called to order, with quorum, and the minutes from the previous meeting were approved by consent. Senate Assembly meetings are open to the public. Only Senate Assembly members are allowed to contribute to the discussion.

**3:20pm Senate Assembly Chair Update – Chair Rebekah Modrak**

1. Three new members were [elected to SACUA](#):
  - a. Jesse Capecelatro, associate professor of mechanical engineering and of aerospace engineering, College of Engineering.
  - b. Kirsten Herold, lecturer IV in dean’s office, School of Public Health.
  - c. Kentaro Toyama, W K Kellogg Professor of Community Information and professor of information, School of Information.
2. The Chair thanked the Vice Chair for her work over the course of the past year.
3. SACUA elected the Chair and Vice Chair for the next academic year:
  - a. Chair: Derek Peterson, Ali Mazrui Collegiate Professor of History and African Studies, Associate Chair, Department of History, Professor of History and Professor of Afroamerican and African Studies
  - b. Vice Chair: Soumya Rangarajan, Clinical Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine
4. The Chair thanks the outgoing members of SACUA, Simon Cushing and Craig Smith, for their service and work on the committee.
5. A group of faculty members have started meeting to discuss immigration issues affecting the University of Michigan. If any other faculty are interested in joining, they are encouraged to reach out to the Chair.
6. There will be a march in support of DEI on the Diag at scheduled for Tuesday, April 22 at 5:00pm. The march will include brief scheduled speakers and a silent march.

**3:24pm University Senate Meeting Follow Up**

The special University Senate meeting took place on 4/17/25. There were four motions considered. Each motion, as well as the vote results, are included below:

[Motion 1](#): 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

**Option Votes**

Yes	2761 (92.8%)
No	214 (7.2%)

**Voter Summary**

Total	3088
Abstain	113 (3.7%)

[Motion 2](#): Statement in Support of the Core Mission and Values of Higher Education in the United States of America

**Option Votes**

Yes 2843 (95.1%)  
No 146 (4.9%)

Voter Summary

Total 3088  
Abstain 99 (3.2%)

[Motion 3](#): Resolution to continue DEI initiatives that are in alignment with our university values, an extension of the mission of our schools, and legally compliant.

**Option Votes**

Yes 2123 (78.7%)  
No 574 (21.3%)

Voter Summary

Total 3088  
Abstain 391 (12.7%)

[Motion 4](#): Resolution Urging the University of Michigan to Protect International Students, Faculty, and Staff from Unwarranted Detention

**Option Votes**

Yes 2744 (93.1%)  
No 203 (6.9%)

Voter Summary

Total 3088  
Abstain 141 (4.6%)

The Chair voices her appreciation for those who called for the special University Senate meeting, those who authored the motions, the Faculty Senate Office team, and all others who helped with this process.

Each of the motions passed by a wide margin. It is indicated that this shows a unified voice on these critical issues. The Chair sent the motions to President Ono, Provost McCauley, and the Board of Regents. The Chair announces that a writing campaign to contact the UM administration is currently being developed with more information to come.

The Chair asks the Assembly members for their thoughts.

A member indicates that the university should focus on issues that are widely popular in the broader community and cautions against focusing as much on DEI. The member indicates that DEI is controversial in certain circles in the state, and the administration would be better served if they were to focus on issues with broad support.

Varying opinions are shared in response to this sentiment. One member recalls personal and generational experiences of racism, and how African Americans have labored to improve conditions for minorities. Another member discusses taking into account the flaws with DEI moving forward and striving to do better. A member indicates that the public should be educated on how DEI positively impacts the community. A member discusses health disparities in Flint for minority patients.

Speaking on motions one and two, a member points out that we need to be oppositional to those who are oppositional to us. We cannot have a transactional relationship with those who will keep asking for more and more. It is cited that Columbia University capitulated to the Trump Administration and their situation has not improved in a satisfactory way.

The Chair requests the Assembly members to recommend further strategies to encourage the UM administration to act related to the proposed motions. A member suggests hosting an event(s) in the Fall term related to the history discussed earlier regarding DEI.

A member asks logistical questions related to motion 1. Where does this motion stand with other members of the Big Ten Academic Alliance? It is indicated that some institutions have passed the resolution, some are considering the resolution, and some will not be considering the resolution. The member suggests that the Senate Assembly consider how they will respond if leadership ignores this request. Suggestions are made. Information is provided on the criteria to hold a University Senate Meeting.

A member indicates that dismantling the Department of Education will neutralize related civil rights laws that correlate with DEI. The member suggests that state governments need to begin pushing back on these issues now.

### **3:53pm AAUP Academic Freedom Syllabus Discussion and Breakout Groups**

The Faculty Senate Director introduces the topic and describes how it is necessary to create avenues in which academic freedom can be discussed. This topic was discussed heavily at the 3/14 workshop following the event “The New McCarthyism: Authoritarianism and the Future of Academic Freedom.” The FSO Director proceeds to introduce the guest, Isaac Kamola, to discuss this topic further

Professor Kamola presents the Assembly with several resources related to academic freedom [produced by the AAUP](#). One such resource is the Academic Freedom Module. Per the website, the module “is designed to give a foundational understanding of academic freedom.” The module is designed in a way that is versatile and can be molded to fit a wide range of audiences. Additional resources include an academic freedom syllabus for students, a lesson plan for instructors, background reading materials, as well as topics and cases.

The FSO Director provides the Senate Assembly members present with materials and discussion questions related to academic freedom. The members proceed to join breakout groups, both in-person and online, to further discuss these topics. After approximately 30 minutes the members return as a group to report back to offer their perspectives.

A member reports back that people who are looking at academia from the outside may not have a full grasp of the applications of particular research. Those in academia can provide a better understanding and advance knowledge in unexpected ways. The member also voices the benefits that free speech provides.

A member discusses that it is critical to have the freedom to tell the truth in the medical field. A point is made that it is necessary to share the expertise of the faculty with the public and help them realize the benefits.

A member notes the importance of generating knowledge. The member also indicates that it is important to balance individual rights and collective rights.

A member offers ideas generated during their conversation. One such idea is a class for students on autocracy.

A member suggests forming a summer working group focused on publicizing academic freedom.

The FSO Director shares a few final words on academic freedom and thanks the guest.

#### **4:47pm Outgoing Member Remarks**

The Faculty Senate Director thanks the outgoing Senate Assembly members for their work this year.

#### **4:50pm Matters Arising**

A member thanks fellow member Craig Smith for his efforts this past year.

A member thanks the Chair for her work this year.

**Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:00 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Vandenberghe  
Faculty Governance Coordinator  
Faculty Senate Office

## **ADDENDUM**

### Senate Assembly Actions

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

- On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the Senate Assembly elected the following members to SACUA for three-year terms, starting on May 1<sup>st</sup>:
  - Jesse Capecelatro, Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Associate Professor of Aerospace Engineering, College of Engineering
  - Kirsten Herold, Lecturer IV, School of Public Health
  - Kentaro Toyama, W K Kellogg Professor of Community Information and Professor of Information, School of Information

### [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."