



General Counsel's Advisory Committee (GCAC)

Minutes of Meeting 3/14/25

Circulated: 10/10/25

Approved: 10/17/25

Present: Sybil Biermann (Chair), Jason Fettig, Chris J. Walker, Judith Walker, Aric Knuth, Kirsten Herold, Yulia Sevryugina, Tim Lynch (VP and General Counsel), Derek Peterson (SACUA Liaison), Jamie Tappenden

Absent: Nancy Allee, Kentaro Toyama

Faculty Senate Office: Eric Vandenberghe

10:04am: Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Minutes, Announcements

The agenda was approved. The minutes for the January GCAC meeting were approved.

10:04am-11:08am: Faculty perspectives on how the General Counsel can convey to policymakers that the University of Michigan is making a difference in the lives of the students, faculty, the community, and the world

Summary: The Chair introduced the topic and provided context for its inclusion in this meeting. There is a shifting landscape in the federal government and institutions of higher education are being forced to adapt. It is currently necessary to showcase the good work being done at UM through research, education, and innovation. This message needs to be conveyed strongly and convincingly. This conversation serves as a means for the committee to assist VP Lynch with this task. VP Lynch thanks the Chair for suggesting this topic and indicates the manner in which he will utilize these stories.

A member discusses the need to distribute related stories nationally and also highlights the importance of reaching people across the state of Michigan. An example is shared regarding a series of free concerts across the state. This is a beneficial experience to the performers, the University, as well as the community.

A member highlights the recent survey of faculty conducted by the Faculty Senate Office related to this topic. There are stories in those responses that could be utilized to showcase the great impact the work conducted at UM has on the community. The member discusses tactics universities have used in other parts of the world to increase support among the general population. A question is asked of the member for any stories specific to the humanities. The member suggests that having graduates discuss in the community the positive impact a liberal arts education has had on their lives is one such avenue. Another member voices support for working closely with the alumni association.

A member voices concern for potential cuts to funding that affects extracurricular activities put on by students. The member discusses a specific program in which STEM students at UM go into local schools in the community and showcase scientific experiments to demonstrate scientific principles for school-age children. This is a direct example of UM



providing value to the local community. The member describes the role of librarians in impacting and improving the community.

A member shares an [inspirational story](#) of a graduate of UM-Dearborn, who is blind, and has worked to make nature accessible for other blind individuals.

A member talks about a program that he helped facilitate that involves students going through an outdoor trek, where they are lost. An alumnus of this program recalled it being a memory that they will call upon sometimes when they feel lost in their life.

A member suggests that the stories of medical success and innovation at UM are the ideal stories to highlight at this time. The Law School recently hosted the Federalist Society's 2025 National Student Symposium. This is mentioned as an example of diversity of thought at UM that some outside of the University might not expect. The Year of Democracy, Civic Empowerment, and Global Engagement committee is noted as being a group that could be heavily utilized at this time.

A member suggests that we should find common cause with those we disagree with. A lot of people don't realize that Universities are crucial to conducting research and assume that industry is where these innovations occur. The member suggests compiling a list of the innovations, discoveries, and impacts that have come directly from UM over the course of the past 40 years as a way of showcasing the value UM provides to society.

A member provides powerful imagery suggested by a colleague: If you walk into a pharmacy, 99% of drugs came out of research funded by the federal government. These innovations touch every part of daily life.

Action: Discussion

11:08am-11:18am: Matters arising

Summary: A member brings up concerns, including the recent implementation of changing the review process for hiring decisions and for purchases over \$50k at UM. The member also discusses concerns regarding the right to free speech on campus.

The Committee, the Chair, and VP Lynch are all thanked for their work on this committee, and the meeting concludes.

Action: Discussion

11:18am: Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Vandenberghe
Faculty Governance Coordinator
Faculty Senate Office