



General Counsel's Advisory Committee (GCAC)

Minutes of Meeting 10/17/25

Circulated: 11/14/25

Approved: 11/21/25

Present: Jordan Siegel (Chair), Yulia Sevryugina, Cam Amin, Daniel Birchok, Jason Fetting, Aric Knuth, Michael Lempert, Farina Mir, Stevens Wandmacher, Tim Lynch (VP and General Counsel) Kentaro Toyama (SACUA), Chris J. Walker, David Santacroce

Absent: Nancy Allee, Tom Braun, Julian Mortenson

Faculty Senate Office: Eric Vandenberghe

8:46am-8:49am: Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Minutes, Announcements

The agenda was approved. The minutes for the March GCAC meeting were approved. Introductions were made. The Faculty Governance Coordinator will provide table tents at the next meeting.

8:49am-9:37am: Discussion of defense of free speech and academic freedom

Summary: VP Lynch thanked the committee members for serving on this committee. He indicated how this committee has helped him in the past and shares his expectations for how the committee can proceed this academic year. Robust conversation with diverse perspectives from a broad range of disciplines will lead to a fruitful year. The committee had submitted questions prior to VP Lynch, but utilizing a looser, more conversational meeting will benefit VP Lynch and the committee more. VP Lynch indicates his desire for student members on this committee if possible. This request will be considered. Ground rules for meetings are set.

The Chair thanks the administration for their defense of freedom of speech and opens the floor for further conversation on this matter. VP Lynch indicates his support for freedom of expression and the first amendment. A member agrees that freedom of expression within the classroom has been supported but indicates that this support outside of the classroom has not been as robust. Another member highlights recent examples of student protestors facing disciplinary charges. This is discussed. A member brings up the need for restorative justice. Members offer their perception on how the university has handled student protestor disciplinary cases.

VP Lynch indicates he will not be able to provide privileged information on some topics that the committee discusses. A discussion on norms takes place. A member indicates that even when the letter of the law is followed, there can be uneasiness and vulnerability felt by community members when norms are not followed. Following the standard process is seen as protection. When extra-normative action is taken, communication with the community is critical. VP Lynch provides insight in the role he and his office play at the university.

A member discusses an ongoing problem of students being afraid to speak their mind in



class. Other members indicate that this is felt across the university. A member discusses a recent study conducted on this matter and suggests that this study be reviewed at a future meeting. Members share their experience with this issue. A member discusses the need for robust discussion in class that changes a student's ability to think critically, and that it is not about balancing political ideology.

Action: Discussion

9:37am-9:42am: Immigration issues face by UM Community members

Summary: The Chair introduces this topic. The University had provided related guidance to the UM community earlier in the year. A suggestion is made for further materials that can be shared, distributed, and utilized as community members face related situations. He asks VP Lynch about the feasibility of this request.

VP Lynch indicates support for this and that his office has been working on this resource. It will be distributed soon. The committee offers support for this positive development.

Action: Discussion

9:42am-9:46am: Mutual Defense Compact

Summary: Chair Siegal brings forth this topic, asks VP Lynch about the feasibility of joining an academic defense compact with other Big Ten institutions. He also asks about the legal defense of the university.

VP Lynch discusses generally lawsuits that UM has been a part of in the past calendar year. Challenges and opportunities in working with other institutions are discussed.

Action: Discussion

9:46am-9:57am: Institutional Neutrality

Summary: The Chair introduces this topic. There has been some confusion by the public regarding UM's Institutional Neutrality policy. A request for further clarification is made by the committee. This policy does not have any bearing on faculty who do not serve in leadership roles within the university structure. Discussion ensues on who falls under this policy. Further clarification from central administration is forthcoming.

Action: Discussion

9:57am-10:05: ECRT

Summary: The Chair shares thoughts on Motion 4 from the November 2024 University Senate Meeting: "Accountability for the Handling of Gender-Based Violence at the University." Consideration is made for an independent audit of its activities to investigate gender-based violence. The Chair indicates some ideas on how to make that investigation most effective.

The Chair then shifts the conversation regarding update to the [discrimination, harassment](#)



[and misconduct policies](#). A request for more clarity on how the data collected is used and shared is made. Discussion ensues on this. Confidential resources are available.

Action: Discussion

10:05am-10:19am: The University's legal posture in relation to student protestors

Summary: A member asks about the surveillance on UM's campus. The increase in cameras on campus is discussed.

Members offer perspectives on how the University administration can handle protests differently in the future. Examples of past protests at UM, and a recent protest at UMASS-Amherst, are shared. Further discussion ensues, and the meeting concludes.

Action: Discussion

10:19am: Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Vandenberghe
Faculty Governance Coordinator
Faculty Senate Office