



From the Chair of the Faculty Senate

Dear colleagues:

I begin this February newsletter by conveying a resolution that the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs has just adopted.

Resolution Supporting Immigrants Who Work and Study at the University of Michigan

As teachers and students at the leading public university in the United States, we know that learning rests on exchange across languages, geographies, and traditions. Immigration is a positive good for higher education. International faculty, staff, and students widen the educational mission of universities in the United States by broadening classroom learning, by enriching the arts and humanities, by fueling laboratory work, and by expanding our clinical practice.

Recent events in Minneapolis have highlighted the violence with which the Trump administration is pursuing its campaign against immigrants and those who advocate for them. Here in Washtenaw County, [parents dropping their children off at school](#) have to worry that immigration authorities will apprehend them at bus stops or outside the school's doors. With arrests and even killings of legal immigrants and citizens, the U-M community must now live in a state of fear, anxiety, and insecurity.

The Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs stands in solidarity with immigrants who work, study, and teach at the University of Michigan and for all those who have become targets of the federal government. We call the U-M administration's attention to [Motion Four of the University Senate meeting of April 2025](#). This resolution asked the University to adopt a policy of non-compliance with federal authorities; it asked that the University would not share information with the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement; it asked for a programme of legal support for international staff, faculty and students; and it asked the University to ensure that students forced to leave the country can complete their degrees in a timely manner.

We have not had a formal reply to this resolution, which passed by a U-M faculty vote of 2,744 to 203. We now ask this University's leadership to rise to the moment and to make every effort to support and protect the staff, faculty and students on whom our educational and research mission relies.

Adopted by the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs, 2 February 2026

Some Resources for Immigrants and Those who Support Them

There are a number of institutions and organizations that are responding to the current moment with legal and practical support for immigrants.

- The Michigan Immigrant Rights Center is a legal resource center that offers advice to those caught up in the dragnet of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Their website can be found here: <https://michiganimmigrant.org/>.
- The Movement for Immigrant Rights Action (MIRA) has a rapid response number to report ICE sightings (which they then share with their networks), at 734-224-3852. Please note that false reports can be harmful. Don't report unless you're sure. Their website can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/view/mira-washtenaw/>.
- The Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights (WICIR) offers legal referrals and court accompaniments. There are a great many resources on their site, which can be found here: <https://wicir.org/>. You might wish to donate to WICIR to support legal and other aid to defend immigrant rights.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is Legal

In March last year the U-M administration bowed to legal and political pressure from federal authorities and [shuttered the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#). At the time U-M faculty recognized that President Ono's unseemly retreat from DEI was an act of cowardice. The closure of the ODEI deprived U-M of the services of a number of committed, insightful and smart staff who had been working to open our university's doors to communities that have been underserved in institutions of higher learning. By a vote of 2,213 to 574 [the U-M faculty voted in April 2025 to 'continue DEI initiatives that are in alignment with](#)

[our university values](#), an extension of the mission of our schools, and legally compliant.'

It is now clear that the U-M faculty view on DEI is, in fact, legally correct. In August last year federal judge [Stephanie Gallagher struck down the Department of Education's attempt to cancel DEI programs](#). In her ruling she determined that the Trump administration's campaign against DEI had 'stifled teachers' free speech, causing millions of educators to reasonably fear that their lawful, and even beneficial, speech might cause them or their schools to be punished.' On 21 January 2026 [the Trump administration dropped its appeal of Judge Gallagher's ruling](#). The legal uncertainty that U-M authorities cited to explain the cancellation of DEI is now resolved. Programs that support diversity, equity, and inclusion in educational institutions are legal.

These developments have caused Michigan State University trustee [Rema Vassar to argue, in a newly-published editorial letter](#), that MSU should reinstate the DEI programs and offices that had been hastily shuttered last year. 'There is now zero legal justification—not even the pretense of pending litigation,' she writes, for MSU to equivocate over this.

I share Trustee Vassar's view on the matter. The University of Michigan is America's leading public university, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion remain [three of our institution's six 'core values'](#). While we have made advances in our efforts to broaden the student body to represent the citizenry of our state, the demographic and pedagogical reasoning that formerly made DEI necessary is no less pressing now. Around 15 percent of Michigan's people are Black Americans, and in Detroit, the city where our university was born, over 75 percent of residents are Black. Neither our student body nor the composition of our faculty reflect this basic fact. [While the University's data around this is poorly presented](#), it shows that 2,030 current U-M undergrads identify as Black—about 5.7 percent of the total student body. Some 409 faculty members identify as Black, about four percent of the total body. [Generations of Black students and faculty have advocated for a wider, more diverse university](#), for a curriculum that articulates Black people's experience, and for a professoriate that reflects the demography of our state. We've made progress in these areas, but there remains much work to be done.

We here at U-M need to discuss the mandate of a revived Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. That discussion can now happen without the threat of

federal sanction. The time to have that discussion is now.

Advocating Against Funding Cuts for Research: We Need Volunteers!

In cooperation with the leadership of the Faculty Senate at MSU, we are planning an event in Lansing to dramatize the consequences of funding cuts for the research and medical work we do here at U-M. Our intention is to convene a meeting of faculty senate leaders from across Michigan's public universities, then to gather at the state capitol in Lansing, where we'll hold a press conference and meet with legislators. The plan is to hold this event on a Friday in April this year.

If your own research work has been undermined or halted by funding cuts, and if you'd be willing to talk to legislators and the press about the matter, would you please let me know? Please do so using [this volunteer form](#).

Clinical Faculty/Faculty Senate Dialogues

My colleagues in faculty government and I are putting together a series of meetings that are meant to help us better understand the concerns, issues, and priorities of clinical faculty here at U-M. In 2023 the Faculty Senate expanded to include all faculty with at least a fifty percent appointment as clinical professor. We in faculty government are now trying to understand how best to advocate for our newly enfranchised colleagues.



The next installment in this ongoing series of meetings will happen on Friday, February 20th at 7 am (!) in University Hospital South, room F4367. I'll be there—though I will be bleary-eyed. So will my colleague [Dr. Soumya Rangarajan, the first-ever clinical professor to serve on SACUA](#) (and this year's vice-chair). We hope all clinical faculty who are able will attend this in-person event. If you can, [please register to attend](#) (but you are welcome to just drop in without registering). We will hold another session next month on Zoom.

For more information and for directions to the venue, [have a look at the Clinical](#)

[Faculty Dialogues webpage.](#)

Outstanding Clinical Track Faculty Award (from the Provost's Office)

Allow me to remind you that the Provost Office's deadline for nominations for the inaugural Outstanding Clinical Track Faculty Award is **February 26, 2026 at 5pm ET**. The award honors senior clinical track faculty who consistently demonstrate excellence in their specific practice domain and have advanced the academic mission. For more information, selection criteria, and to submit nominations, please use [the awards portal](#). Questions about the award may be directed to provost.faculty.awards@umich.edu.

Sign up to Attend a Work Retreat!

For me the Faculty On-Campus Work Retreats have been one of the highlights of the academic year. The retreats offer groups of faculty time and space to work on their own research and writing, then to share lunch and convivial conversation with like-minded colleagues. It's a way to build solidarity, make friends, and get some work done.



The next of the Work Retreats will happen on 25 and 26 February in the Hatcher Library's gallery, on Central Campus. [For more information and to sign up for the work retreats, visit this website.](#)

In solidarity,

Derek Peterson
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Chair of the Faculty Senate
