

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

University Senate Special Meeting

Thursday, April 17, 2025, 1:30

The Hybrid meeting was held in 2000 University Hall, Ruthven and Zoom
Attendance included approximately 145 in-person and 1,389 online attendees.

Minutes: April 17, 2025

Circulated: October 24, 2025

Approved: November 6, 2025

Call of the Meeting

The [2025 special meeting of the University Senate](#) was called pursuant to [a petition](#) of more than 200 faculty. Per the rules of the Faculty Senate, which permits the calling of a special meeting by a petition of not less than fifty members of the Senate, a University Senate meeting was convened. The purpose of the special meeting, as provided in the petition, was the following:

A significant number of faculty members — along with staff, and graduate students, lecturers, and Ann Arbor residents — have expressed grave concerns about the threats to the foundational principles of American higher education and the need for faculty to take collective action within the University of Michigan and in concert with other university faculties across the U.S.

Scheduled Speakers

- Samuel Bagenstos, Frank G Millard Professor of Law, Arlene Susan Kohn Professor of Social Policy, Professor of Law, Law School and Professor of Public Policy, Gerald R Ford School of Public Policy
- Sandra Levitsky, Arthur F Thurnau Professor, Associate Professor of Sociology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and Professor of Law, Law School
- Fred Terry, Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, College of Engineering
- Keith Riles, H Richard Crane Collegiate Professor of Physics and Professor of Physics, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts
- Kentaro Toyama, W K Kellogg Professor of Community Information and Professor of Information, School of Information
- Scott Greer, Professor of Health Management and Policy, Professor of Global Public Health, School of Public Health and Professor of Political Science, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts
- Yi-Li Wu, Associate Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies and Associate Professor of History, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts
- John Carson, Associate Professor of History and Director Academic Program, History, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

- Kevin Cokley, University Diversity and Social Transformation Professor, Associate Chair, Department of Psychology, Professor of Psychology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and Professor of Education, Marsal Family School of Education
- Terri Friedline, Professor of Social Work, School of Social Work
- Derek Peterson (introduction of motion and then remarks), Ali Mazrui Collegiate Professor of History and African Studies, Associate Chair, Department of History, Professor of History and Professor of Afroamerican and African Studies, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts
- Kirsten Herold, President of the Lecturers' Employee Organization and Lecturer IV, School of Public Health
- Rima Mohammad, Clinical Pharmacist Specialist and Clinical Professor of Pharmacy, College of Pharmacy

Press:

Genevieve Monsma – *University Record*

Carter Carino – *Daily*

The remarks of speakers are summaries and are not comprehensive or a transcription.

1:30 Chair Opening Remarks

Chair Rebekah Modrak called the meeting to order and the meeting protocols were reviewed. Deirdre Spencer was recognized as Faculty Senate Parliamentarian. The University Senate meetings are open to the public and speaking privileges are limited to University Senate members. The University Senate, also known as the Faculty Senate, includes over [7,000+ members](#). For each of the four motions on the agenda, the motion sponsor will speak first for up to three minutes. Then, any scheduled speakers for or against the motion will be given the floor for three minutes. This will be followed by 25 minutes of general discussion. Procedures for speaking and basic decorum were reviewed. Zoom chat was disabled, and both in-person and zoom members were asked to raise their hand if they wished to speak. An invitation was made for written comments and/or video statements to be submitted immediately following the meeting, with a deadline of April 18th, at 4 pm, and any such statements received would then be made available on the Faculty Senate website.

It was announced that voting on all four motions would begin at the end of the special University Senate meeting and would continue for 72 hours to end on Sunday, April 20th, at 4 pm. The voting would be anonymous and through a third-party vendor.

1:42 Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

[1:44 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](#)

- Samuel Bagenstos, one of the three sponsors of the motion, moved that motion 1 be adopted. There were multiple in-person seconds of the motion.
- Samuel Bagenstos then spoke in favor of the motion. Motion 1 is being pursued across Big 10 universities, and U-M's resolution is identical to a motion adopted by Rutgers. Other Big Ten schools such as those in Indiana, Nebraska, Ohio and Minnesota, have or will soon consider this resolution. Since the beginning of the Trump administration, the academy has been at a crosshairs, with attacks on both civil society and the research enterprise, with cuts announced to NIH, the Department of Energy, and coverage of indirect costs. These attacks are a capricious termination of funding, jeopardize academic institutions, and attempt to control curriculum. Motion 1 establishes a Mutual Defense Compact to break through collective action barriers by encouraging U-M to stand up and join with other Big Ten institutions.
- Sandra Levitsky spoke in favor of Motion 1. This political moment is asking for something different from us, and universities have been facing a relentless attack. The Trump administration strategy is for universities to abandon DEI, and the strategy has been working, with a preemptive capitulation by academic leaders. This is an existential moment and most institutions are genuinely terrified. The task is to create circumstances such that universities can stand up and protect academic institutions and the research enterprise.
- Fred Terry spoke in favor of Motion 1. The stakes are very high. U-M claims to serve the people of Michigan and to develop leaders and citizens. This mission cannot be accomplished without academic freedom and, while debates are healthy, censorship is not. It is the federal administration's intent to have unchecked power and appeasement is not possible. Federal funding has been weaponized, which will harm students, research on a national level, and the economy. Universities must stand together and convince the public that research should be free from interference from either the right or the left. A unified effort is needed.
- Keith Riles spoke against Motion 1, remarking that current laws have been interpreted such that discrimination against men is permissible. The university should comply with the law and ideologues have disgraced the name of the university. U-M should choose its battles and allies wisely and it is not a wise strategy to support DEI.
- The floor was then opened for discussion. Comments covered the following topics. A Professor of Psychology remarked that U-M's local AAUP chapter voted unanimously to endorse the motion and also expressed concerns with the prior speaker's remarks, noting that anti-discrimination efforts have resulted in the opening of pathways in psychology to all genders, races, abilities, and socioeconomic statuses. A Michigan Medicine faculty member commented that, if there was some overreach in the DEI program, this doesn't mean you allow the U.S. to fall into a dual legal state. Another Michigan Medicine faculty made remarks about having lived in a communist country and experiencing restrictions on free speech and fear of neighbors informing on family members. There is power in numbers, and other countries have had peaceful transitions to democratic governments. It is important to defend academic freedom by supporting Motion 1. A Social Work faculty member asked a question about the text and whether there were any

regental bylaw considerations. An LSA faculty member remarked on the importance of protecting against authoritarianism and the actions of a despot.

2:15 Motion 2: Statement in Support of the Core Mission and Values of Higher Education in the United States of America

- Kentaro Toyama, one of the motion sponsors, moved that motion 2 be put forward. A second was made by an in-person attendee.
- Kentaro Toyama read a statement written by Pauline Jones in support of Motion 2. Motion 2 is a basis for collective action across Big Ten institutions and beyond to protect the shared values and core mission of universities, including serving the public good through teaching, research, and service, furthering economic well-being, and producing scholarship that is evidence-based and non-partisan. The motion intends to draw a clear red line to external actors for not compromising values with regards to funding, admissions, and viewpoint diversity. It is important to stand up for shared values.
- Scott Greer spoke in favor of Motion 2. Mission statements can carry weight during a storm, and universities are facing a weather gale like has never before. It is important to make clear the values U-M shares with the rest of higher education. U-M is one of the great public institutions, serving everyone, regardless of citizenship, and without discrimination. The times call for taking a stand and defending what U-M cares about.
- Yi-Li Wu spoke in favor of Motion 2. Authoritarian governments are intent on crushing dissent and demanding compliance and silence. Fear is contagious and people think there is nothing that can be done. Courage is also contagious, and U-M needs to speak out, loudly and publicly. The regents have not stepped up, and faculty must do so. Elie Wiesel said, “Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.” With rising authoritarianism, it is important to speak out loud enough to be heard all the way to D.C.
- The floor was then opened for discussion. A School of Information faculty member thanked Keith Riles for earlier his comments, stating that even though he may not agree with the speaker, it is important to have a forum where all faculty can have a space to speak. The sciences are particularly under attack, and imagine the impacts on science under a dictatorship. The sciences are directly influenced by authoritarian governments, and ICE has plans to arrest students and staff. A faculty member with specialties in the natural sciences echoed earlier comments, noting that it is not just the humanities and social science that are at risk. In response, Keith Riles noted that he supports Motion 2 and that Trump was elected through democratic processes. An LSA faculty responded that Hitler was also democratically elected.

2:36 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.

- John Carson made a motion for the approval of Motion 3. Multiple seconds were provided.
- John Caron then spoke in favor of the motion. As a historian, “We the people” was a founding sentiment of the American legal system. “All the people” did not mean “all” and the term has been greatly expanded since this time. In 1817, U-M was founded based

upon land coerced from native peoples with the promise of offering education in return. U-M was founded on DEI, but has failed to live up to DEI principles.

- Kevin Cokely spoke in favor of the resolution, remarking that it has so often been an unattainable dream to attend and teach at the best-resourced schools. Under-represented groups have received a message of not being good enough and not being deserving of what a school like U-M offers. Long before 2023, what attracted him to U-M was the audacity of U-M's aspiration to achieve diversity. DEI is not perfect, and black enrollment is not where it should be. Given such shortcomings, he fears that U-M will regress to a time when students, faculty, and staff felt as if they didn't belong at the University of Michigan.
- Terri Friedline spoke in favor of the resolution, remarking that she was saddened and angered by the disbanding of U-M DEI and the firing of African American ODEI staff. For those close to ODEI, such firings were an act of dishonesty, and many such faculty teach critical race theory and intersectionality for communities who are black, LatinX, immigrant, Muslim, Jewish, and first generation. These are empty words without a demonstrated commitment by U-M. For those who argue against DEI, it is an argument for homogeneity. The speaker was the first in her family to go to college within a community where neighbors died or became disabled from working in coal mines. The speaker wouldn't be at U-M, and at various institutions, without what was at the time a hidden and/or forbidden curriculum. U-M needs DEI, especially as an institution that was not designed for underrepresented groups.
- The floor was then opened for discussion. A faculty member from the law school remarked that it is a profound misunderstanding that civil rights doesn't offer protections. The purpose of civil rights legislation is to notice exclusions and gaps and to work to address such gaps. The idea that DEI violates the constitution turns on its head what DEI is about. A faculty member from LSA and Engineering remarked that DEI is a moral imperative, and that DEI has unfortunately been performative and light on measurable outcomes. Having grown up in Argentina during one of the most brutal of dictatorships, the stakes in the U.S. are incredibly high. An LSA faculty member remarked that he is old enough to remember not only conversations on DEI, but on affirmative action, as well as growing up learning about integration and about slavery. It is as if he is in the midst of a time warp. The conversation itself is traumatic. A research track faculty spoke of being very committed to the values of DEI, but also being very concerned about the loss of funding and feeling vulnerable. Faculty shouldn't need to choose between their values and their jobs. A Public Health faculty member spoke, noting that OVPR plans to support research track faculty and that it is important to know the administration is also coming for the rest of us. A lecturer in LSA remarked that, in terms of progress with diversity, the needle has not moved very much, with concerns of being at the mercy of the current administration and at risk of having the worst fate on the operating table.

3:07 Motion 4: Resolution Urging the University of Michigan to Protect International Students, Faculty, and Staff from Unwarranted Detention

- Derek Peterson made a motion for the approval of Motion 4. Multiple seconds were provided.
- Derek Peterson then spoke in favor of the motion. As of mid-April, over a thousand individuals have had their visa statuses terminated. In recent weeks, the actions against international students and the revoking of visas have been indiscriminate, including those that have not been charged with any crime, and people have been deported with little regard to the law. The resolution calls for U-M to rise to the moment to adopt a policy of noncompliance with regard to ICE. U-M should use its resources to support international students, faculty, and staff in response to a senseless war against immigrants. During this upcoming time of sacred days for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, these traditions remind us to welcome the stranger and treat each other as neighbors.
- Kirsten Herold spoke in favor of the resolution. U-M offers language instruction in over 65 languages and the vast majority of these classes are taught by lecturers and by international lecturers, often in various stages of their visas. International faculty are a large part of the Michigan difference, and they deserve U-M's full support. U-M may advise against travel, but what does one do if your visa process tells you that you have to travel? Whether student, faculty, or staff, U-M should be offering its full support.
- Rima Mohammad spoke in favor of the resolution. This is a personal issue for her, as a refugee, and, if it were not for the opportunity the U.S. gave her, she wouldn't be at U-M. Recent events have made her feel alone and unsafe, as is true for so much of the larger immigrant community. There is generational trauma, and the statistics on ICE actions are chilling. Let's learn from the mistakes of Columbia University and do not comply and cave in.
- The floor was then opened for discussion. A professor from the School of Information spoke in favor of the resolution and called for legal support especially for international students. A Classical Studies faculty member in LSA remarked, with regards to civil disobedience, that not all laws are meant to be followed, and some laws are morally objectionable. If laws had not been broken, African Americans and women would never have gained the right to vote. An Engineering faculty member expressed support for the resolution. An LSA faculty member spoke of the wide variety of countries that international graduate students have arrived at U-M from, noting that some have come from authoritarian countries to U-M in order to study and speak in a place where their rights would be protected.
- **Motion 4 Amendment:** Derek Peterson moved that a friendly amendment be made to Motion 4. It was proposed that, in the 5th clause, the word "students" be added, so that the Be it Resolved clause refer to "staff, students, and faculty." The friendly amendment also proposed a second sentence be added at the end of the same clause, stating, "In the event of ~~academic~~ visa revocation and / or possible immigration detention, the University shall provide the affected student, faculty, or staff member with immediate legal representation by specialized immigration counsel."
 - During discussion of the friendly amendment, a Law School faculty member suggested striking the word, "academic" prior to visa to broaden the visas covered in the fifth clause (as shown above).

- The friendly amendment was then approved by unanimous consent.
- There was additional discussion. A question was asked by a University Libraries faculty about the definition of international student. Another faculty remarked that also green card holders and naturalized citizens, in addition to visa holders, could potentially be covered by the resolution. In addition, a comment was made that there could be instances of academic reasons where a visa might be revoked (i.e. failing a class) and that this resolution is meant to focus on “non-academic” visa issues.

Chair Modrak reminded attendees that an electronic vote would begin at the end of the meeting allowing all University Senate members to vote, for a period of 72 hours, on the four motions.

Adjournment – The meeting was then adjourned, without objection, at 3:35 pm.

Ann Marshall
Faculty Governance Coordinator

[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.”