



From the Chair of the Faculty Senate

Dear colleagues:

Last week a private company [launched a product called Einstein AI](#). It was marketed as a digital proxy for the student: the advertising copy described how Einstein “logs into Canvas every day, watches lectures, reads essays, writes papers, participates in discussions, and submits your homework—automatically.” In short, Einstein AI was meant to “do the busy work so you don’t have to.” Within a few days the company behind Einstein AI had pulled back its product. But [as journalists have pointed out, Einstein AI is by no means out of the ordinary](#). There are abundant AI platforms that will do the pieces of work that Einstein promised to perform. All it takes are a few clicks of the button.

For many of us the rapid rise of Generative AI has occasioned both alarm and outrage. It short-circuits the work we do as teachers, making it confoundingly difficult to hold our students accountable for the things we assign them to do. Last month a U-M student [filed a lawsuit against the University, alleging that her professor and her GSI had unjustly marked her down for cheating](#). She had submitted an essay that was—in the judgement of the GSI—composed by Generative AI. Last month I was assured by the General Counsel that neither the faculty member nor the GSI are individually exposed to risk by this lawsuit. So long as faculty and GSIs are making good faith efforts to fairly evaluate our students’ work, the University will [provide defense and indemnification pursuant to SPG 601.09](#).

Notwithstanding this reassurance, the fact remains that GenAI has very quickly made it impossible for us to assign take-home work of any kind—essays, problem sets, compositions—in the sure confidence that our students will do the work themselves. Last November the Faculty Senate [overwhelmingly adopted a resolution “Demanding a Comprehensive Policy Addressing the Role of Generative Artificial Intelligence at the University of Michigan.”](#) The resolution asked the University to formulate a GenAI strategy addressing pedagogic concerns about academic integrity, the environmental impact of AI, and the

“political and ideological interference in all GenAI models in use at the University.” In response to this motion the Provost and the Vice President for Information Technology have now appointed an “AI in Education Working Group.” The working group is chaired by Dr. Mika LaVaque-Manty, of the Department of Political Science, and includes 13 members, among them representatives from Flint and Dearborn. It is meant to produce a report by the end of Winter semester.

My view is this: it is time for the University of Michigan to build infrastructures that put our students at a distance from GenAI. AI platforms deprive our students of the capacity and the disposition toward critical thinking. They dangle shortcuts and hold out easy answers, creating perverse incentives to cheating. We need to appeal to our students’ better angels and work with them to create barriers to accessing GenAI. I have in mind the following:

- Intentional learning communities dedicated to free thinking, where students could voluntarily live and work without easy access to GenAI platforms. These learning communities might be modeled after [the Residential College](#). They would appeal to students who wish to learn to think for themselves. We could call these places analogue zones, or No-Fi zones, venues where students could pursue critical thinking and cultivate the capacity for intellectual independence.
- A closed compositional platform into which students working on essays, problem sets, and other assignments would be locked, unable to navigate outward and access GenAI tools. This mechanism would not solve the problem of academic dishonesty: a student working on a problem set could use another device to access an AI platform, then copy down the answers. Nonetheless, a closed platform would make it more difficult to cut and paste.
- A training module—perhaps even a credit-bearing course—that would bring into view the societal, intellectual, political, and moral damages that GenAI portends. This training module would be designed to help create a campus culture wherein the inappropriate use of GenAI is explicitly discouraged.
- An expanded testing accommodation infrastructure, wherein students assigned to compose in-class essays and problem sets could work on these assignments under the eye of monitors. Many of us are now using blue books to assess students’ learning, and it is important that students

with differing abilities are not unduly disadvantaged by the dramatic expansion of timed examinations

Here are some other matters that are occupying us in faculty government.

Resolution in Support of Foreign Language Teaching at the University of Michigan

At recent meetings both the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs and the Senate Assembly adopted the following resolution:

The University of Michigan's language teaching programs are a defining aspect of our curriculum and a resource that enriches students and citizens alike. Since the foundation of the Center for Japanese Studies in 1947, Michigan has been a national leader in the production of knowledge and education about the world. [Michigan's language program has equipped generations of students with the skills](#) they need to live and work in a cosmopolitan world. Interpreters are vitally important in the work of Michigan Medicine, which relies on their expertise to render medical advice to their patients. Today Michigan students can study Quechua, Swahili, Mandarin, Hebrew, Uzbek, and dozens of other 'Less Commonly-Taught Languages.' Much of this has been possible because of funding from the federal government, which under Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965 has provided U-M and other American universities with financial resources to support foreign language teaching.

In September 2025 [the United States Department of Education informed the leadership of the International Institute](#) that their language and area studies programs 'are inconsistent with Administration priorities and do not advance American interests or values.' Some \$3.4 million annually have been withdrawn by this edict. At stake are the salaries of the lecturers who, by their knowledge and expertise, drive the language program. At stake also are the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) grants that made it financially possible for dozens of U-M students to study foreign languages each year.

As leaders of the faculty at the leading public university in the United

States, we are indignant at federal authorities' lamentably narrow vision for higher education. What are "American values" if not a commitment to teach and learn about the rest of the world? What are "American interests" if not the advancement of our students' capacity to communicate with and learn from people living in other places? The DoE edict deprives U-M and other universities of the resources we need to equip the next generation of Americans with the skills and knowledge to act meaningfully in the world.

Faculty government thanks the leadership of the College of Literature, Science and the Arts, which has willingly taken on the salaries of most of the language faculty left marooned by the DoE edict. We call on the University's administration to ensure that the College of LS&A is provided with financial support sufficient to offset these additional costs. We ask also for the creation of a funding stream that would offset the loss of FLAS funding for student learners. And we ask our University's leaders to work with universities across the country to stabilize their capacity to continue offering intensive foreign language instruction.

Faculty government calls upon our representatives in the United States Congress to press for the restoration and continuity of funding for Title VI and the dispersal of funds that have already been allocated. It is vitally important, at this time of great challenge, that our schools and universities would not retreat into narrow insularity. Michigan graduates must be proudly and emphatically multi-lingual, for it is by command over language that graduates will create the bonds of mutual respect and meaningful exchange that must uphold the international order.

Adopted by the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs, 9 February 2026

Adopted by the Senate Assembly, 26 February 2026

New Initiatives Defending Academic Freedom

For some months faculty government has watched in trepidation as whole areas of research and learning have been summarily shuttered by

governmental directive. Last month [a working group organized an informal survey of Michigan faculty](#), seeking to understand how our colleagues are responding to the political, financial, and moral pressures that we all face. The results are alarming. Among the over 700 respondents to the survey some thirty percent reported that they had censored what they say or teach in UM classrooms; and over forty percent had censored what they say in public life. The subjects that are under threat include teaching around race and gender, teaching around climate science, and teaching around Palestine. Some faculty report that they have installed security cameras around their homes out of fear that they will be targeted. Others have investigated wearing bulletproof vests.

To address these things the Protections for Faculty Working Group has put together a series of events meant to help colleagues better deal with the threats of our time. On 25 February [Michigan News helped organize a training session](#) to help faculty deal with hostile news reporting. In March there will be a further training session, this focused on FOIA concerns. A separate email with additional information will follow in the next few days. The working group is presently preparing a review of the resources that the Office of the Provost offers to faculty who are facing harassment. We will continue to work with the Provost on these matters.

In February the Faculty Senate Office prepared a \$500,000 application to the Strategic Innovation Fund to support the creation of an Institute for Academic Freedom. If funding is awarded, this new institute would:

- Create a fellowship program to support U-M faculty research around the history and architecture of free thought;
- Provide summer support for graduate students performing research on academic freedom issues;
- Provide travel support for faculty wishing to advocate with elected officials in support of academic freedom;
- Organize academic freedom lectures each year; and
- Develop a national conference devoted to matters of civic discourse, open inquiry, and academic freedom.

We are told that SIF funding awards will be announced at the end of April.

Upcoming Statewide Elections

Many of you will not know that the slates of candidates standing for statewide races — including those for Attorney General, Secretary of State, the University of Michigan Board of Regents, the Wayne State Board of Governors, and more — are decided by a few thousand people who show up at party conventions. It is right therefore that those of us disposed toward civic engagement would find ways to participate in the nomination processes. Here are some details.

The [Michigan Democratic Party endorsement convention is coming soon](#), and party members have the opportunity to help determine who represents the party in these key roles. One must be an MDP member at least 30 days before the convention in order to vote for one or the other of the candidates. The convention will take place on April 19 in Detroit and will run throughout the day. Here's how to get involved:

- Become an MDP member by March 18. You must be a member at least 30 days before the convention. Register for a free membership here: tinyurl.com/AprilMDP
- Save the date: April 19 (all day) in Detroit — and be there to vote.

The [Republican convention takes place on 28 March this year](#) in Novi. It works rather differently than the Democratic convention. One must be a credentialed Republican delegate—elected by a precinct, or chosen in a county convention—in order to play a formal role in the state convention. Further [details about the rules guiding the Republican nomination process can be found here](#).

Outreach to Clinical Track faculty

Clinical faculty at the University of Michigan were brought fully into the structures of faculty government [by a vote of the Faculty Senate in 2023](#). The expansion of faculty government added nearly 2,000 new colleagues to our number. This is a welcome event: it has built solidarity among and between us, allowing us to confront today's challenges from a position of organizational strength.

But the expansion of faculty government does also cause faculty government perplexity. The work that clinical faculty do is oftentimes much different from the work that tenure-track faculty do. What do clinical faculty care about? What concerns animate clinical faculty in their work, and what anxieties do they harbor? This year faculty government has put together a series of events—called the “Clinical Faculty/Faculty Senate Dialogues”—to help us take the

temperature of clinical faculty. These sessions have been convened at the University Hospital and at Mott Children's Hospital; in the coming months we will convene an event for clinical faculty on Central Campus and another on Zoom.

Building on the series of dialogue meetings, the Faculty Senate Office will be condensing what we've learned about the priorities of clinical track faculty. The goal is to create a white paper that can guide the advocacy of faculty government.

If you are a clinical faculty member, and if you have particular matters on which you think faculty government ought to focus, [please fill in this Google form](#). We will use the information you provide to help shape our collective agenda.

Sign up for a Work Retreat!

The next of our popular Faculty On Campus Work Retreats will happen on Wednesday and Thursday, 18 and 19 March, from 9 am to 1 pm in Space 2435, North Quad. These retreats are an opportunity to work in a concentrated manner on whatever it is that you have on your plate—and then share lunch and conversation with like-minded colleagues. It is an excellent way to build solidarity and get to know colleagues from across the University. [For more information about the work retreats and to sign up, visit this webpage.](#)



A luta continua,

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Chair of the Faculty Senate
