



FACULTY SENATE

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

From the Chair of the Faculty Senate

The Winter semester of 2026 is nearly at an end, but the pace of events is by no means diminished. This newsletter addresses some of the most pressing matters that now lie before us.

About Kent Syverud

All of us involved in faculty government are full of concern over the welfare of [Kent Syverud, who was until last week our President-Elect](#). I have met Mr. Syverud on three occasions, and have formed a positive impression of his disposition: I found him to be an attentive and active listener, willing to take advice and criticism. His record as a faculty leader here at U-M was a source of encouragement, too. [As I wrote in my January 2026 newsletter](#), there was a sound foundation on which to build a productive and meaningful relationship between the U-M faculty and our new president.

Last week we had news that Kent Syverud will not be taking up the U-M presidency, as he is presently receiving treatment for late-stage cancer at U-M hospital. This is a great blow. I've written to Mr. Syverud and to Dr. Ruth Chen to express our worry about his diagnosis and our deep concern over his health. As I told him: I look forward to the day, following his recovery, when we will welcome him to the University of Michigan as a member of our Law School faculty.

Statement Concerning Regent Jordan Acker

My colleagues and I convened on Saturday afternoon this past weekend to discuss the distressing reports about Regent Jordan Acker. We adopted the following resolution, and I am releasing it now in accordance with SACUA's preferred timetable:

The Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs has reviewed the [recently-published reports concerning Regent Jordan Acker's communications on social media](#). The reports allege that he divulged private information about a University of Michigan student on an open Slack channel with his colleagues. In this communication he is reported to have lewdly and misogynistically speculated on the student's sexual activity and posted her picture.

The conduct described in this report is disgusting, a violation of trust and professional standards, and unbecoming of the high office to which Regent Acker has been elected. If these allegations are true, Regent Acker should resign his position immediately.

Adopted by the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs and approved for circulation on April 20th, 2026

Earlier today the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Board of Regents [released a statement responding to this motion of SACUA](#). They indicate that the reports on Regent Acker's communications will be "investigated thoroughly, fairly, and expeditiously."

Faculty Senate Meeting, Monday April 27th

The Faculty Senate—i.e. yourself, myself, and pretty much everyone else on the U-M faculty—will convene as a body at 3:00 pm on April 27th at University Hall, in the very heart of the beautiful Ruthven Building. Do please come in physical form if you can, for the more of us who are present in the flesh the more vigorous and meaningful our discussions will be. And there will be cake. But if you prefer, there is a Zoom option. Irrespective of whether you will be present in corporeal or ethereal form, [do please sign up for the University Senate meeting here](#).

Under discussion [will be seven consequential resolutions](#), all of them brought forward by distinguished members of our faculty. They address several matters of importance to the U-M faculty:

- One resolution asks that faculty [would be allowed to take classes at U-M without paying tuition](#);
- Another asks for [more and better child-care support for faculty and staff](#);
- A resolution calls on U-M to [build infrastructure that allows us to put distance](#) between our students and GenAI where GenAI-free classrooms accord with our teaching priorities;
- There is a resolution calling on U-M to [reverse its recent policy barring transgender athletes](#) from participating in varsity, club, and intramural sports;
- A resolution calls on the administration to [halt the use of Early Decision admissions](#), which advantages a well-resourced and well-connected minority over the majority of potential U-M students; and
- A resolution asks the University [to reject collaboration with the “Department of War”](#), which has signaled its intention to send military officers to Ann Arbor for training meant to “restore and maintain the warrior ethos” among the officer corps.

We are a faculty of diverse views, and we will have differing opinions about these resolutions. That is why I encourage you to take an active part in the Senate meeting on April 27th. If you’d like to request a speaking slot by which to offer support or criticism of a specific resolution, please put your name down on this [signup form](#).

After the Senate meeting on the 27th I hope you will cast your vote upon these resolutions. These votes give us in faculty government a clear indication about the things that we together care about; and if adopted they give us a mandate around which to organize our work.

Report on the Nine Senate Resolutions of November 2025

The November 2025 vote of the Faculty Senate was the largest in the University's history: some 3,500 members of the faculty cast a vote. The nine resolutions were adopted by vast majorities, and they have been an important point of focus for us in faculty government over the past year. As a means of encouraging your participation in the April 2026 Senate meeting, allow me to offer here a report on our efforts:

- [Motion 1 asked the University to make Collegiate Travel Planners service optional.](#) In the months since the vote our Financial Affairs Advisory Committee has held a number of meetings with EVP Bobby Hewlett to press on the matter. After much discussion, I can say that the Vice President and his colleagues are now working on a plan that would restore faculty members' freedom of choice around travel planning. The pace at which this new policy is being developed is slow, and we continue to hear regularly from colleagues who are justifiably frustrated about CTP.
- [Motion 2 asked Michigan Medicine to restore gender-affirming care for minors.](#) I have held several meetings with administrators and with providers about this important matter. As you might imagine these are sensitive discussions, and they are continuing.
- Motion 3 called on the University to [reject President Trump's "Compact for Excellence in Higher Education."](#) The compact appears to have come to nothing, and U-M was never (to our knowledge) invited to join it.
- [Motion 4 asked the University to adopt a comprehensive approach to Generative AI.](#) In the time since the vote the Provost and the Vice President for Information Technology have [commissioned an "AI in Education Working Group"](#) to take the temperature of the faculty and develop recommendations. At the Faculty Senate meeting on April 27th we will be discussing a [follow-on resolution calling for the creation of GenAI-free](#)

[zones on campus.](#)

- Motion 5 called on the University to [restore a popular office that had offered support for faculty and students](#) needing help with statistical analysis. It was recently announced that CSCAR, as the office was called, has been revived and [is to be housed within the Institute for Social Research.](#)
- Motion 6 asked the University to [offer more extensive support for faculty seeking to make our digital teaching materials accessible](#) according to ADA guidelines. This week [the federal government announced that the deadline](#) to make such materials accessible has been pushed back to 26 April 2027. The resources available here at UM to help us transition our teaching materials have been expanded since the vote, [and a list can be found here.](#)
- Motion 7 called on the University to [restore fairness and due process in the policies that govern student conduct.](#) In the time since the vote our Student Relations Advisory Committee has been working with Vice President Martino Harmon to develop a set of necessary revisions to the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities. These discussions are ongoing. [The University's treatment of pro-Palestinian student protestors](#) remains a source of concern for faculty government.
- Motion 8 [expressed our unhappiness about the new federal rules that govern H-1B visas.](#) We have conveyed this motion to upper administrators at U-M.
- Motion 9 [asked that a representative chosen by faculty government would be included in all future executive-level searches at the University.](#) We have conveyed this resolution to the Regents and to President Grasso. There have not been executive-level searches at U-M since this resolution's

adoption, and we do not know whether upper administrators accept our view of the matter.

As you will see, the 2025-26 record of effective faculty government is mixed. Faculty in Ann Arbor are not unionized, and our power to exert influence over university affairs is sharply limited. The past year has shown that, in areas where our collective view is clearly and emphatically articulated, administrators do feel obliged to pay faculty government heed. Strong and unequivocal votes of the Senate are the most durable and most consequential form of persuasion we can exercise.

About the Athletic Department

Since 2002—when the Athletic Department was islanded off from the rest of the University—faculty government has had a very limited role to play in the Department’s operations. In my view it is now time for faculty to re-assert our role as stewards of the University’s culture and as architects for transparency and good government. The Athletics Department is full of talented, principled people who work closely and effectively with our students to transform their talents into success, and they bring much pride to all of us. But in Athletics as in other parts of the University transparency and accountability are essential to the work of public education.

A more vigorous oversight mechanism would help ensure that the educational mission and ethical responsibilities of the university remain paramount. The commercialization of NCAA athletics is now well advanced, and U-M has been able to navigate the dynamics of revenue-sharing with great success. But even as we celebrate the championships that our student-athletes win, we need also to articulate and defend the purposes of collegiate athletics: as part, not the whole, of a student’s vocation here at Michigan. That is why faculty government ought to have a more pronounced role to play in the affairs of the Athletic Department: it is us who set the standards of academic excellence, who establish the reputation of the institution, and who are responsible for its educational identity. This is the [view that the American Association of University Professors articulated several decades ago](#), and it is the view that now guides our advocacy in the domain. Faculty government ought to assert its historical role as guarantor of our

university's purpose.

So at our meeting on 6 April SACUA adopted the following resolution:

A Call for Robust Faculty Engagement with the Athletic Department

Whereas the faculty of the University of Michigan are tremendously proud of our student-athletes' successes; and

Whereas we regard U-M's athletic prowess as a shared mark of distinction; and

Whereas, at other universities, the faculty are directly involved in the oversight of athletic operations; and

Whereas, at the University of Michigan, faculty were until 2002 members of a [Board in Control of Intercollegiate Athletics](#), which oversaw the operations of the Athletic Department; and

Whereas a new [Advisory Board for Intercollegiate Athletics](#) was created in 2002. The ABIA is chaired by the Athletic Director, and it has no independent powers concerning the operations of the Department; and

Whereas in previous years [faculty government has pointed out that the ABIA's operational rules](#) do not promote transparency or good government; and

Whereas the work of the Athletic Department is increasingly complex, and benefits from the expertise and knowledge that our world-class faculty offer; and

Whereas the Department is irrevocably tied up with the larger University in which it sits, and its operations are aspects of the mission of public education; and

Whereas the University as a whole would benefit from greater transparency and accountability in the Athletic Department;

Now be it resolved:

That the [newly created Ethics, Integrity, and Compliance Office](#) should be given

greater responsibilities in relation to the Athletic Department. The EICO should have a presence within the Athletics operation so that athletes, coaches, and staff would feel comfortable discussing difficult matters with a supportive and independent third party;

That the ABIA should be reconstituted as an Advisory Committee of the Senate Assembly, [as described in Regents Bylaw 4.06](#). Like the [11 committees that currently advise U-M Vice-Presidents](#), the ABIA would operate under a faculty chair, who would work closely with the Athletic Director to set the agenda, assemble materials, and engage relevant parties to discuss operational issues with the ABIA as necessary;

That the ABIA would be empowered—like other Senate advisory committees—to discuss and offer advice around the full range of activities managed by the Athletic Department, under agreed-upon rules of confidentiality; and

That the ABIA chair would prepare an annual report and discuss it with the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs in closed session.

Adopted by the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs on April 13th 2026.

Faculty Senate Leaders from Across Michigan to Meet in Lansing

This semester we've been working with colleagues at Michigan State University to convene a meeting of faculty senate leaders from all of Michigan's 15 public universities. Faculty leaders in Michigan have never (so far as I know) met as a body. It appears to me to be a missed opportunity: faculty can advocate for our institutions with greater clarity and more passion because it is us who are on the front lines of higher education. We have to deal with the mechanics of old and decaying buildings; we have to respond to contemporary pressures around our curriculum; and it is our research that is constrained by financial shortfalls and changing priorities in higher education funding.

So myself and a dozen colleagues from sister institutions in Michigan will be

meeting at the state capitol on Thursday 23 April. We will sit first with [Senator Sarah Anthony](#), who chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee, after which we will meet with [Rep. Nancy DeBoer](#), who chairs the House Education and Workforce Committee. We will thereafter decamp to the Michigan State campus, where we'll talk together about a forward path for faculty government cooperation in Michigan.

This is an experiment, and what will come of it I do not know. It is a first effort to develop new ways of explaining what we do and why it is important to the citizens and the elected leaders of our state.

New Leaders of Faculty Government!

At our meeting on 6 April [SACUA elected new leaders for the 2026-27 academic year](#). My successor as Chair of SACUA (and therefore of the Faculty Senate) will be [Kentaro Toyama](#), a professor in the School of Information. Kentaro has long been invested in faculty government. He was vitally involved in the revival of the U-M chapter of the American Association of University Professors; this year he's willingly stepped up to chair our Academic Affairs Advisory Committee. He's a clear-minded and effective organizer, and he'll be an excellent chair.

The vice-chair for 2026-27 will be [Kirsten Herold](#), a lecturer in the School of Public Health. Kirsten was until 2025 the president of the Lecturers' Employee Organization. She is the first lecturer in U-M's history to be elected to sit on SACUA. She, like Kentaro, is deeply knowledgeable about the mechanics of university administration, and she knows how to get good things done.

I am very grateful to these two distinguished colleagues for their willingness to step into leadership roles in faculty government. It is not an easy job that lies ahead, and they have my support and my confidence.

In solidarity,

Derek R. Peterson

Chair of the Faculty Senate

Ali Mazrui Professor of History and African Studies