



## **From the Chair of the Faculty Senate**

Dear colleagues:

For some time we in faculty government have been concerned that a significant number of us are self-censoring: that is, we are choosing not to teach or speak around controversial or difficult subjects. Earlier this semester our “Protections for Faculty Working Group” circulated a survey among U-M faculty, asking respondents to respond to a set of questions gauging their sense of security around teaching and research.

We are today releasing the [results of this survey: they can be found here, and I hope you will read them in their entirety](#). A letter from the committee [synthesizing the survey results can be found here](#). The survey paints a worrying picture of academic freedom at this, America’s leading university serving the public interest. Almost half of the 734 respondents report that they have felt pressure to censor what they teach, and 226 respondents have acceded to this pressure. It is not that university administrators are censoring what we teach. The disposition toward self-censorship arises out of personal insecurity: a great many of us fear that we’ll be doxxed by students or critics, and a substantial number of us feel that the protections afforded by U-M are insufficient. By censoring our teaching—by toning down our inquiry into subjects that may aggravate our students (and their parents)—we are effectively delimiting what thousands of U-M students learn in the classroom. The survey shows that the subjects most compromised relate to racism and racial justice, to U.S. politics, to Israel’s genocide in Gaza, to gender, and to climate science.

This survey is by no means scientific. It is a match struck in the dark, and it illuminates some of the pressure that we are all facing. The working group will shortly be meeting with colleagues in the Provost’s office to discuss the survey findings, and they will be offering recommendations to [expand the resources that U-M offers to faculty who find themselves facing harassment](#).

This is the task that lies ahead: to build up infrastructures by which to enhance our collective and individual security, to give ourselves license to teach and speak with courage about the most pressing, most controversial subjects of our time.

## **A New Guide for Faculty Facing Harassment from FOIA Demands**

One of the mechanisms by which angry and opinionated people harass faculty is by using the Freedom of Information Act to generate self-serving demands for private information. Generally FOIA is a great benefit to all of us: it allows journalists and others acting in the public interest to get hold of information that would otherwise be out of bounds. But it can also be used as an instrument by which to intimidate faculty. Because we work at a public institution, anyone with an axe to grind can pay the requisite fee and demand to see our University emails, the materials we house on a university-owned device, and the communications through *personal* emails and devices related to our work at the University. [The U-M FOIA office will screen these requests](#) and work with faculty to determine what must be handed over to the requestor. In recent briefings to faculty, U-M has indicated that it considers emails, text messages, chat messages, work calendars, personnel files, travel records, drafts of scholarly works, and data to be subject to FOIA.

That is why—last week—the [Protections for Faculty Working Group published a white paper titled “Freedom of Information Act Guidance for Faculty.”](#) It offers U-M faculty specific, actionable advice on how to insulate yourself from unwelcome and harassing FOIA requests. Not all of us need to worry over these things. But if you are in the spotlight, if your research and teaching are controversial, and if well-resourced people outside the institution have reason to try to embarrass you, do please [read through the white paper](#) and follow the sound advice it offers.

## **CSCAR’s Return: A Victory for U-M Faculty**

In November [2025 thousands of U-M faculty voted in favor of Senate Motion 5](#), which called for the restoration of funding for Consulting for Statistics, Computing and Analysis Research. CSCAR, as it is called, is a small and much-loved unit that furnished U-M students and faculty with expert help in

working out how to set up a survey, how to interpret statistical data, and other technical questions. In summer 2025 CSCAR's funding was withdrawn by the Vice President for Research. Its shuttering occasioned much unhappiness, for thousands of people had relied upon its good offices for their teaching and research. [A public letter composed by SACUA described CSCAR's closure](#) as one among several instances wherein U-M administration was short-circuiting faculty input into consequential decisions concerning the University's work.

Last week [it was announced that CSCAR was to be re-opened under the custodianship of the Institute for Social Research](#), where it will offer many of the same services that it had earlier offered to faculty and students. The resurrection of CSCAR is a victory for Michigan faculty, and we are grateful to the organizations and departments that have now contributed to CSCAR's welcome resurrection.

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Further Developments**

[In my February 2026 newsletter I argued](#) that the favorable legal landscape ought to lead U-M to reinvest in the pursuit of the commendable goals of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion program. U-M shuttered its Office of DEI in March 2025, turning its back on decades of hard work promoting social and racial justice. In response the Faculty Senate [adopted a resolution calling on U-M to "continue DEI initiatives](#) that are in alignment with our university values, an extension of the mission of our schools, and legally compliant." That resolution passed by a vote of 2,123 to 574.

I am pleased to say that the former president of our university, Mark Schlissel, is in agreement with the rest of the faculty around these matters. Last week he [published an article in the \*Detroit News\*, calling the closure of the ODEI "preemptive capitulation"](#) to federal authorities. Dr. Schlissel's editorial points out that "the goal of creating inclusive learning environments where all students can thrive isn't controversial when stripped of political rhetoric. Nor is making the resources of public universities available across the full spectrum of the populations they serve." As he notes, the closure of the ODEI at Michigan wasn't driven by evidence that these programs were ineffective or harmful, nor was it the product of a broader campuswide discussion. It was driven by political fear.

He concludes his editorial by reminding us that "the current moment demands

public support and institutional courage.” Universities like U-M “shouldn’t wait for political winds to shift again before recommitting to their core responsibility of serving all members of our society.”

I admire Dr. Schlissel’s forceful and eloquent statement, and I hope that our incoming president, Kent Syverud, will study his editorial and take its recommendations to heart.

## **Update on Collegiate Travel Planners**

In our November 2025 meeting the Faculty Senate overwhelmingly adopted a resolution calling on U-M to make the Collegiate Travel Planners service optional. Fully 3,350 faculty members voted for the resolution, more than any other resolution in U-M’s history.

In the months since the passage of the resolution our [Financial Affairs Advisory Committee](#) has held a series of meetings with [Executive Vice President Bobby Hewlett](#) and his office about CTP and its future. I have myself been engaged in these discussions together with SACUA member Jesse Capecelatro. The process has been moving at a frustratingly slow pace, and on an almost daily basis we are hearing from members of the faculty who have struggled with CTP. It is clear that the platform has not become more useful, or more attractive to faculty, in the time since the resolution’s adoption.

In recent meetings VP Hewlett’s office has adopted an approach that is generally consonant with the faculty view. I am not in a position to lay out the terms of this new arrangement, but I can say that we are in daily discussions about the mechanisms by which faculty will be re-empowered to make their own bookings for travel as soon as possible. We continue to press on this matter, offering advice and input with the goal of making travel easier to organize and less of an imposition on faculty members’ time, energy, and money.

## **The University Senate Meeting: A Call for Resolutions**

The Senate—all ~7,800 of us—will convene on **Monday, April 27, at 3:00 in University Hall, in the Ruthven Building**. I hope that many of you will attend in person (though there will also be a Zoom option). We will be hearing from

President Grasso at 3pm, who will be giving us a valedictory talk and discussing the work that lies ahead here at UM. The bulk of the meeting will be spent discussing resolutions put forward by members of the faculty. [Anyone who would like to attend the Faculty Senate Meeting \(physically or virtually\) should register using the link provided here.](#)

In preparation for this important meeting we are now soliciting proposed resolutions from members of the faculty. Resolutions are the very foundation of faculty governance here at U-M: they articulate the view of our faculty and give us in faculty government a mandate around which to organize. In November 2025 [the Senate overwhelmingly voted to endorse nine resolutions on a wide range of subjects](#). Once they were adopted these resolutions became the focus of our efforts, and—as this newsletter shows—they have in turn shaped policy here at U-M.

**If you have in mind an important issue on which you would like the University Senate to vote, I invite you to put together a resolution.** Each resolution must be moved by a minimum of three members of the Senate: the movant and two supporting members. The resolutions we receive will be put forward at the Senate meeting on April 27; advocates will make the case for each resolution in turn, and critics' views will likewise be aired. After the Senate meeting each resolution will be put to a vote. By rule, **resolutions need to be submitted by 13 April** (though we would be glad to have them in advance of that date).

If you've a resolution in mind and are unsure about how to put it together, get in contact with us at [facultySenateoffice@umich.edu](mailto:facultySenateoffice@umich.edu). We are happy to offer advice about format and form.

## **SACUA Welcomes Three New Members**

At its meeting last week the [Senate Assembly voted to elect three members of the faculty to serve three-year terms](#) on the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs. The three valiant colleagues we've elected are:

- [Steven Buchman](#), the M. Haskell Newman Collegiate Professor of Plastic Surgery in the Medical School;
- [Kim Kearfott](#), a professor of nuclear engineering and radiological sciences in the College of Engineering and a professor of radiology in the Medical

School; and

- [Michael Schubnell](#), a research scientist in the Department of Physics in the College of LSA and a current member of the Senate Assembly.

Service on SACUA is a very substantial commitment of time and energy: we meet weekly for two hours to discuss and organize around controversial subjects. The time that SACUA members dedicate to university service is time that they might otherwise dedicate to more enjoyable pursuits. So I am—and I am sure we all are—grateful that these three distinguished people have stepped forward to serve.

## Clinical Faculty Dialogues

Over the course of this academic year my colleague [Dr. Soumya Ranganajan](#) and I have organized several listening sessions to give us the opportunity to hear from clinical faculty about the concerns that they have in their work for the University. The last of these listening sessions will take place at 10 am on Wednesday, 8 April in the Ruthven Building. Having organized several meetings with clinical faculty working in the hospital system, we'd like on this occasion to meet with clinical faculty who are not employed at Michigan Medicine.



If you're a member of the clinical track faculty, and if you'd like to work with us to develop a more vigorous and substantial relationship between faculty government and clinical faculty, then do please attend this occasion. [For more information on the Clinical Faculty Dialogues, and to register, please point your browser here.](#)

## Opportunity to Inform Policies on Child Care and Caregiving at U-M

On behalf of the U-M Faculty Senate Committee on the Economic and Social Well-Being of the Faculty (CESWF), the CESWF Chair and I invite you to take a survey administered by the U-M ADVANCE Program about child care and caregiving needs. CESWF is conducting this survey to identify areas that may need improvement and to inform policies that could enhance the environment for all faculty.

The anonymous survey will take 5-10 minutes to complete and will be available through **tomorrow, Wednesday, April 1**. You are welcome to contact the ADVANCE Research & Evaluation team at [advancesurveys@umich.edu](mailto:advancesurveys@umich.edu) if you have any questions or concerns about the survey.

**Follow this link to the Survey:**

[Take the survey](#)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

[https://umich.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_enDkt3vRYEaEY3c](https://umich.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_enDkt3vRYEaEY3c)

We look forward to your participation!

A luta continua,

Derek R. Peterson  
Chair of the Faculty Senate  
Ali Mazrui Chair of History and African Studies

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From the Chair of the Faculty Senate

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