



General Counsel's Advisory Committee (GCAC)

Minutes of Meeting 11/21/25

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Present: Stevens Wandmacher, Jordan Siegel (Chair), Daniel Birchok, Farina Mir, Yulia Sevryugina, Jason Fettig, Cam Amin, Tom Braun, Aric Knuth, David Santacroce, Tim Lynch (VP and General Counsel), Eric Veal, Michael Lempert

Absent: Nancy Allee, Julian Mortenson, Chris J. Walker, Kentaro Toyama (SACUA), Angelica Previero

Faculty Senate Office: Eric Vandenberghe

8:45am-8:50am: Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Minutes, Announcements

The agenda was approved. The minutes for the October GCAC meeting were approved.

8:50am-9:41am: A conversation about the University's disciplinary approach to student protesters, which can also include a discussion of what is the faculty's role in ensuring that students feel freedom to express both conservative and liberal views in the classroom

Summary: The Chair introduces this topic and asks VP Lynch about the University's disciplinary approach to student protesters and the UM disciplinary system broadly. The UM disciplinary system is not a civil or criminal process. There are two paths that disciplinary proceedings can take- alternative dispute resolution (ADR), or the formal process set in the Student Statement of Rights and Responsibilities (SSRR). Due process is discussed. A member discusses internal disciplinary proceedings in the military.

VP Lynch asks the committee to consider how a disciplinary system would ideally be constructed if was built from the ground up. A committee member describes the needs for checks and balances to ensure fair outcomes. The need for an appeals process is suggested. A member advocates for both a formal and ADR process. A member indicates that there is no system that is perfect, and the system needs to be designed to minimize and correct mistakes. A member states that universities should have an interest in supporting student development and growth, including fixing mistakes. The member notes that there would be limitations on this.

Punishments handed down from this hypothetical system are discussed. Punishments need to be clear. A member discusses the benefit of deterrence. A member discusses the need for a process that is an appropriate length of time. A member discusses the need for fair stewards of the disciplinary process, with clear, separate roles.

A member discusses how community perception is directly linked to campus climate. Having a perception that a process is unfair erodes trust in the institution, and rectifying this perception is crucial to a healthy campus climate. The member indicates that there is a



perception among many on campus that the current disciplinary system is unfair. The timing of changes to the SSRR by the Regents in July 2024 gave some community members the perception that the rules were changed to specifically to deal with student protesters. Information regarding disciplinary practices at UM that have been written about in the press is discussed.

A member states that it is in the University's best interests to have fair processes. Work Connections is brought up. VP Lynch discusses discussions by regents at recent public meetings on this subject. It is very much on their minds.

A member comments on campus polarization and indicates it would be difficult to come to a consensus. Another member suggests that we need to look back at historical moments and evaluate their successes and failures. A member indicates a need to cultivate values.

Action: Discussion

9:41am-9:48am: A conversation about the University's stance regarding faculty employment contracts and related matters of enforceability

Summary: Chair Siegel asks VP Lynch if the central administration's position is that faculty at UM have legally binding/enforceable employment contracts. He further asks if the central administration's position is that the faculty handbook is legally binding/enforceable.

VP Lynch indicates the enforceability of offer letters and perhaps also letters signed when a person gets a promotion or takes on a service assignment and then asks to research things further and return to this topic in a future meeting.

A member indicates that related work was undertaken by SACUA and the Committee on Oversight of Administrative Action (COAA) in recent years and could be useful for this committee to review.

Action:

9:48am-10:04am: An initial conversation about the University's policies on long-term disability (LTD)

Summary: Chair Siegel introduces this topic and expects to discuss it further at a future meeting. An issue with UM's LTD policy is described. If a tenured faculty member must go on LTD, there is a specific date by which they need to come off it to retain their position at the University. Should they recover after that time, they would not be able to resume their employment.

There are scenarios, such as with today's groundbreaking treatments for cancer, in which a person on LTD can recover after the designated date. In that case, it is suggested that this could be a violation of tenure protections under the AAUP 1940 Statement and under the University of Michigan system for ending tenure only under the 4.09 system. A suggestion is made that once the LTD benefits expire, the faculty member be put on indefinite unpaid medical leave. The committee proceeds to discuss this. The review process for reintegrating faculty back into their role is discussed. VP Lynch indicates that he will discuss this with the Provost and CFO.

Action: Discussion

10:04am-10:15am: A brief conversation about any informational updates regarding topics discussed on 10/17 about additional support for international faculty/staff during times of great worry and concern for their safety and welfare, about any clarifying guidance to faculty in implementing the institutional neutrality policy, and about any updates on the ground about surveillance in practice

Summary: VP Lynch indicates that further guidance for international community members will be disseminated in the next week.

Clarifying guidance to faculty in implementing the institutional neutrality policy is forthcoming.

Regarding surveillance, VP Lynch suggests that the committee speak with Interim Executive Director of the Department of Public Safety and Security, Rick Arnold.

Action: Discussion

10:08am-10:15am: Committee debrief

Summary: The committee debriefs on the prior discussion, and the meeting is adjourned.

Action: discussion

10:15am: Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Vandenberghe
Faculty Governance Coordinator
Faculty Senate Office