



Research Advisory Committee (RAC) Minutes for 3/18/26 Meeting

Meeting information:

Circulated: 04/01/2026

Approved: 04/08/2026

Members present: Orsolya Lautner-Csorba (Chair), Karen Downing, Alena Stocking (OVPR) Mrinal Sarkar, Quentin Stout, William A. Calvo-Quirós, Magda Ivanova, Jesse Capecelatro (SACUA)

Members absent: Fadhl Alakwaa, Audrey Bennett, Seth Guikema, Tyler Nix, Greg Rybarczyk, Nina White

Guests present:

Ravi Pendse, Vice President for Information Technology and Chief Information Officer

Brad Orr, Associate Vice President for Research - Natural Sciences and Engineering

Zach Weber, Government Affairs Manager

ITC members: Natasha Allen, Susan Borda, Jim Cranford, Larissa Sano, Angelica Previero

Faculty Senate Office staff present: Eric Vandenberghe

Minutes:

12:00pm: Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Minutes, Announcements

The agenda was approved. The minutes for the February meeting are approved.

12:02pm: IT Support for Research (AI/HPC, etc).

Summary: The Chair introduces VP Pendse and thanks him and the ITC for joining the meeting. VP Pendse speaks about work being done to improve research computing for the UM research community. His office and OVPR work collaboratively on this project and others, and he thanks VP Lupia and his staff for their partnership. This thanks is reciprocated by OVPR. The overarching focus of this project is to ensure researchers at Um have the necessary tools to meet their goals.

Funding has been secured to finance the second Great Lakes High Performance Computing Cluster. Related to high performance computing, UM faces three primary challenges. The first is the need for more computing power. The current data center is at power capacity. The next issue is that the current computer facility is over six years old, which is outdated by industry standards. The third issue is the growing need for increased data storage.

VP Pendse proceeds to discuss the ongoing negotiations with Los Alamos for related



computing resources. He is hopeful that the deal will be finalized imminently. The plan is for further resources to be up and running by September.

ITS will be sharing information with researchers regarding their research storage. High speed storage costs 1000 times more than regular storage. This will be useful information to see what cost UM pays for each researcher's data.

VP Pendse discusses Artificial Intelligence at UM. There are currently many tools available by ITS. ITS will work with researchers to get the tools that are needed if they are not immediately available. He proceeds to discuss the benefits and challenges of AI. He hopes that UM can be a leader in responsible AI use that can be modeled across the globe.

VP Pendse announces that Maizey will be upgraded to Maizey 2 imminently. It will utilize the Model Context Protocol, which is not available in the current iteration. He also announces a mid-April event titled "Everything Wrong with AI." It is an opportunity for the UM community to offer their opinions on AI.

A question is asked about the network infrastructure. VP Pendse informs the committee members that the network went through major upgrades during the most recent pandemic. The upgrades allow UM researchers to perform their work at speeds unavailable at most other institutions.

A member asks how UM protects our data. VP Pendse indicates that data protection is something that ITS takes very seriously. There are many protocols and defense mechanisms in place. He indicates the importance of training personnel to recognize and avoid phishing and other malicious emails that can compromise the UM system. He notes that the emergence of AI in the hands of bad actors has increased the need for more vigilance. UM networks receive 700,000,000 malicious cyber threats each day. He indicates that the ITS team is diligent in addressing these threats.

The Chair thanks VP Pendse for speaking with the committee.

Action: Discussion

12:25pm: Research update

Summary: The Chair introduces the guest and thanks them for joining the meeting. Manager Weber provides an update on actions being taken or considered by the federal government that could impact UM.

An update is provided on the state of indirect cost. The rates for FY26 remain as they were negotiated. There was "blocking language" included in FY 26 appropriations bills that state this. There is work being done to get the FAIR model codified for FY27. Work is ongoing, and no uniform guidance has been determined at this time.

Congress has passed 11 of the 12 appropriations bills that fund the federal government for FY26. There is an expectation that there will be a supplemental spending request to come from the Trump administration to fund the ongoing military operation in Iran and Middle East.



The Senate HELP Committee held a hearing earlier this month entitled “Transparency and Trust: Exposing Malign Foreign Influence in Higher Education”. This is a continuing focus on research security in higher education in Congress.

A tentative timeline is provided for the President’s Budget Request. It is expected to be submitted to Congress during the last week of March. This is later than in the past.

The Office of Federal Relations recently submitted programmatic ideas to the Michigan Congressional Delegation. These are in support of key research accounts and programs across the federal government.

AVP Orr discusses delays in FY26 spend plans across the federal research enterprise. This uncertainty is discussed. Concerns have been expressed with UM’s delegation offices on this matter. An update is provided on federal funding to UM compared to other years. Factors to watch include science agency budgets, NIH multi-year budget transition, federal priority shifts toward corporate performers and less funded locations, etc. Further challenges are discussed.

A member asks how UM is responding to shifting guidance from the federal government regarding work with international students, particularly from countries deemed as adversaries by the federal government. This is discussed.

UM is continuing to work with sponsors and preparing for evolving sponsor requirements. Work continues in order to ensure strong governance oversight and compliance structures

The guests are thanked for their presentation and discussion.

Action: Presentation and discussion

12:55pm: Committee business

Summary: Chair Lautner-Csorba indicates that a document will be shared after the meeting for committee members to suggest charge items for next year’s committee. These will eventually be shared with SACUA and OVPR. She also indicates that the final report will be completed with committee input following the next meeting.

Action: Discussion

12:57pm: Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Vandenberghe
Faculty Governance Coordinator
Faculty Senate Office