



Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) Minutes
December 12, 10:45 am – 12:15 pm (Provost attending 11 am to noon)
Ruthven Conference Room 1100 and via Zoom (hybrid)

Minutes of Meeting: 12/12/2025

Circulated: 1/26/2026

Approved: 1/30/2026

Present: Silke Weineck (Chair), Netta Berlin, Ceren Budak, Bilal Butt, Christine Gerdes (Special Counsel to the Provost), Ann Marshall (FSO), Laurie McCauley (Provost), Rafael Neis, Soumya Rangarajan (SACUA liaison), Mireille Roddier, Jennifer Trigger, Yi-Li Wu

Absent: Hayley Bedell, Colleen Conway, Robert Deegan, Mick Kennedy, Gavin LaRose, Albert Liu, Rahul Mannan, Luke McCarthy (FSO), Scott Spector, Jon Wargo,

1. In preparation for the arrival of the Provost, AAAC members briefly discussed AAAC agenda items.
2. Follow-up discussion on recommendations for supporting international students, faculty, and staff. Possible recommendations include the following. Provide:
 - More robust information about the resources available to international students.
 - For example, a hotline, a centralized location, and/or single person to coordinate help and information. There is a lot of anxiety and fear among international students. If twenty emails are needed or if the student needs to ask again and again for help from multiple places (Student Life, International Institute, Rackham, Dean's Office, School/College etc.) this quickly becomes taxing, especially if the school or college initially says no. Some entities may feel uncomfortable seeking support from some offices given the current climate, e.g., Dean of Students Office.
 - The information needed can be very specialized and may change frequently, and more support is needed for those navigating such complexities. For example, an international student who makes an error with their taxes could face serious consequences. While the International Center provides assistance, they may not be able to help in all situations given the variation by country and the number of special circumstances.
 - More financial support for the international graduate student assistance fund that is currently allotted only \$20K. Imagine an international student arriving with minimal belongings, and if something were to happen, students need to know they'll be supported.
 - More legal support. While there are legal resources, these resources feel under-supported to international students. U-M currently pays for up to a 90-minute meeting with a screened attorney. Then it is the student's responsibility. While 90 minutes may be enough for some, it may not be enough for others. **Action Item:** The Provost's Office will reach out to Student Services to compile data on how many students have needed more legal support than provided.
 - Additional "safe spaces" on campus. For example, more classroom space (or space spaces like classroom) that are legally protected. Also needed is additional clarity about students' rights. In this OGC [document](#), if an officer enters a patient's room, the patient is given clear guidance to politely tell the federal officer that patient must notify DPSS and not engage with the offer until DPSS arrives. Similar guidance would be helpful earlier in the document about actions to take for



classrooms, etc. **Action Item:** AAAC member will email OGC about this item and cc in GCAC Chair Jordan Siegel.

- Ongoing support for addressing a culture of fear among young people. NPR reported on recent investigations within Detroit high schools. Students bring such cultures of fear with them to college. Classrooms filled with fear are not places where real teaching and learning can happen.
- For counseling services to be effective, counselors must be able to relate to and deeply understand the issues facing international students. Consider hiring more international counselors.
- It was noted that additional support for international students can occur through existing structures and need not involve spotlighting programs or students.

3. Impacts of federal funding cuts and ways to support faculty

- The Provost presented several slides on FY24 – FY26 U-M research awards and expenditures. In brief, overall research expenditures, the number of research grant submissions, and submissions by amount have increased. However, to date, the number of research awards and the awards by amount have declined in FY 2026. The Provost invited AAAC discussion about how best to support faculty given these trends.

Discussion

- It could be helpful to extend the tenure clock as needed. U-M units can have a tenure clock of ten years, and unit-level exceptions can be made. There were also concerns about potential reductions in force (RIFs).
- Faculty, such as OB/GYNs researching gender and health disparity, have had to change their projects. Grant projects have been softened because of a fear the grant will be lost. Philanthropic funds may be needed in some cases. A tremendous amount of time has been lost. It can take a year to write a grant. The ten-year tenure deadline could be an issue.
- AAAC members suggested that unified U-M messaging could be helpful. A COVID-like scenario may be needed -- for faculty to include a statement in their dossier explaining the need to suddenly change their work. Another example is three engineering faculty who were recently hired to do social justice work, but now have to pivot their research.
- Concerns were expressed about the dismantling of CSCAR and cuts to U-M block funds. This is happening at a time that faculty need more resources.
- Appreciation was shared for the [bridging funding](#) program. Additional, similar support is needed for faculty doing “disallowed” research, especially junior faculty and faculty doing research on topics such as misinformation & polarization and transgender research, among others.
- Support and seed grants are needed for faculty doing international research, whose travel and long overseas stays are essential and may not result in immediate tangible outcomes. This is critical for the social sciences and humanities.
- The Provost remarked that two new initiatives would soon be announced to support faculty with their research during this uncertain time. The first is an opportunity to [apply for research support from U-M's Strategic Initiative Fund](#). Faculty are invited to make a case for how their research is collaborative, furthers the value of higher education, and how the project will develop the PI as a public intellectual. The [second opportunity](#) will focus on junior faculty who have already submitted a grant application with a high score but have not yet been funded.



- It was noted that U-M is still resilient in areas such as philosophy and a robust language education curriculum, and such disciplines are particularly important at U-M while being threatened at other institutions.

5. Committee Discussion

- After the Provost left the meeting, the minutes from 11/12/2025 were approved and AAAC briefly discussed next steps.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Marshall, Faculty Governance Coordinator (FSO)