



FACULTY SENATE

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

From the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate

From the Chair

Dear colleagues:

My time as chair of the Faculty Senate is now at an end, and I will soon be returning to a life of dignified obscurity.

What has faculty government accomplished in the year past? One lesson we have learned is this: our priorities, if expressed clearly and emphatically, can shape administrative decision-making here at U-M. The [votes we took in November 2025 have occasioned substantial shifts in policy](#) around a range of consequential matters. And [today the administration announced that](#)—as of 1 May—the Collegiate Travel Planning service will no longer be required for university-financed travel. This change is a response to [the almost-unanimous vote of the Senate](#), by which more than 3,300 faculty expressed their wish that CTP would be made optional. Here, then, is a victory for shared governance.

But I am most proud of the work that we've together done to defend and build an academic culture that expresses the best of public education in America. Like many of you, I see U-M as a bulwark against an encroaching authoritarianism and as an incubator for our democracy. Like many of you, I hope for a university that teaches our students to look critically on the structures that define and constrain knowledge. Like you, I hope to teach students to recognize injustice and inequity and to act purposefully for the common good. That is—[as I argued to the graduating students in December](#)—the legacy that generations of student activists here at U-M have set out for us today.

So I am glad, this year, that [we've re-opened a discussion around what to do to advance racial justice](#) in the absence of our Office of Diversity, Equity, and

Inclusion. I am glad that [we've worked to keep the Diag open for acts of protest and civil dissent](#). I am glad to have been part of ongoing discussions [reckoning with the pedagogical and environmental dangers of GenAI](#). I am proud of our Student Relations Advisory Committee, which has been working with Vice-President Harmon to develop a more just set of procedures regulating student conduct. I am proud of our Protections for Faculty Working Group, which has given us [practical resources by which to speak and act confidently in public life](#). I am proud of our Financial Affairs Advisory Committee, which has been working with Executive Vice-President Hewlett and with staff unions to reform [Work Connections, the university office that deals with disability cases](#). And I am glad that—last week—[colleagues from nine public universities assembled in Lansing to argue the case for public education](#) with leading legislators.

I urge you to play your part in all of this. Volunteer to serve on an advisory committee. Stand for election to the Senate Assembly. Join the [U-M chapter of the American Association of University Professors](#). Most urgently: [please vote in the University Senate election](#). There are seven consequential and worthy resolutions under consideration. **The voting period ends today at 5:30 pm.** Whatever your view on the resolutions might be, please fill in your ballot at [vote.umich.edu](#). The more of us who vote, the more effective faculty government can be.

I end this missive by thanking President Domenico Grasso, who came into office a few days after I was made Senate chair. He has been willing to discuss the most vexing subjects with myself and other representatives of the faculty, and he's held other executive officers to a similar standard of accountability. In these ways he's done much to encourage a productive working relationship between faculty government and administration. Thank you also to Provost Laurie McCauley, who has taken on complicated problems and worked with us toward productive solutions. And thank you to the eight dedicated members of the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs, especially the Vice-Chair, Dr. Soumya Rangarajan, who has taught us how better to advocate for the unique concerns of clinical faculty at U-M.

Thank you, finally, to the talented people who make the machinery of faculty government run: Dr. Luke McCarthy, the Director of the Faculty Senate Office; Dr. Meaghan Blanchard, who coordinates events; and Dr. Ann Marshall and Eric

Vandenberghe, who curate the work of the 18 advisory committees of the Senate Assembly.

In the coming academic year I will continue to serve as a member of the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs. My successor as chair will be [Dr. Kentaro Toyama](#), the W.K. Kellogg Professor of Community Information in the School of Information. He will be ably [assisted by Dr. Kirsten Herold](#), a lecturer in the School of Public Health, who will be the Vice-Chair. We are in good hands, and I look forward to working with them in the year to come.

A luta continua,

Derek R. Peterson

Ali Mazrui Chair of History and African Studies

Chair of the Faculty Senate

From the Vice Chair

Thank you to all of the Faculty at the University of Michigan for electing me the first ever Clinical Track member of the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA) in the spring of 2024, and for my SACUA colleagues for electing me Vice Chair of the Faculty Senate for the past year. In my time in this role, we have made great progress in the recognition of over 2000 clinical faculty at the University across 16 schools and colleges and all 4 campuses (Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Flint, and Michigan Medicine). The clinical faculty are as diverse as the University itself. They range from the ~1800 and rapidly growing clinical faculty at Michigan Medicine and the other health professions who are essential to our patient care mission, to law clinic and legal writing faculty, to architects and urban planners, and the musicians, actors, and dancers who make our School of Music, Theatre, and Dance one of the top programs in the world.

While our contributions to the fabric of the University may differ, many of our concerns are shared. Clinical track faculty (along with research track faculty) do not have the protection or freedom afforded by tenure, and also do not have a union. We have some shared concerns with our tenure track colleagues, including protecting academic freedom to teach, do research, and practice our crafts

without political interference or external threats. However, we have unique challenges within the clinical track. The lack of access to sabbatical and 12-month contracts make it difficult for clinical track faculty to have opportunities for professional development without adverse effects on promotion and salary.

I myself this year have had the opportunity to work in the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington D.C. as a legislative staffer through the Health and Aging Policy Fellowship. This has been a formative experience for me, and I am deeply grateful to my Chair and fellow faculty in the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine at Michigan Medicine for providing me protected time from patient care to pursue a long hibernating passion of mine. However, we should not be dependent on individual departments to allow us to fulfill our dreams in our academic career. As I remain on SACUA for one more year, I hope to advocate for all clinical track faculty to be afforded the same access to professional development as our tenured faculty. We also champion the creation of separate tracks for promotion for faculty who are masters of their craft, including Michigan Medicine doctors who take outstanding care of patients, then simply want to return home to their families, or those faculty who take time away from private nursing, architectural, or business practice to teach the outstanding students who come from all 50 states, D.C., and over 120 countries across the world for their expertise. Thank you for entrusting me with this challenge and responsibility, and all of us involved in faculty government will continue fighting for you.

Dr. Soumya Rangarajan
Clinical Assistant Professor in Geriatric Medicine
Vice-Chair of the Faculty Senate