



**Government Relations Advisory Committee (GRAC)
Minutes**

Minutes of October 9, 2025, 2-2:45 pm

Circulated: 12/5/2025

Approved: 12/11/2025

Present: Kevin Cokley (Chair), Shevon Desai, Nakhiah Goulbourne, Scott Greer, Chris Kolb (VP for Government Relations), Karyn Lacy, Andrea Lewis (Government Relations Specialist), Ann Marshall (FSO), Rogerio Meireles Pinto (SACUA liaison), Sara Samuel, Jeffrey Yackley, Beth Wilensky

Absent: Jowei Chen, Lisa Fein, Anouck Girard, John Mansfield, Shahzad Mian

1. The meeting was called to order and the minutes from the previous meeting were approved.
2. Chris Kolb update
 - On the federal level, there is a government shutdown, and, on the state level, the 2025-2026 state of MI budget was passed, including funds designated for higher education. The federal government sent a letter to nine academic institutions in early October about a proposed Compact.
3. GRAC initial discussion
 - While the federal shutdown may not have an immediate effect on U-M, it could be difficult to reach federal workers regarding U-M research grants and that, if the shutdown is extended, payment opportunities could be missed.
 - There was discussion about higher ed funding, including ongoing debates about state funding levels for education being viewed as too high by some and as not high enough by others.
 - GRAC members discussed the Compact, including how the Compact could impact academic freedom.
4. Discussion on academic freedom
 - There was a recent instance of a Texas A & M faculty member being fired over course content. This raises questions about whether academic freedom could be similarly impacted at U-M. For example, within one U-M unit, there had been discussion about standardizing syllabi, concerns about potential centralized syllabi databases, and how such approaches might be used to censor faculty.
 - It was noted that, in Michigan, there are additional constitutional protections and that, unlike other states, university boards are elected by the general voting population. Academic freedom has been talked about as a red line that can't be crossed. There is uncertainty, and it may be helpful to be prepared regardless of electoral outcomes in 2028.
 - U-M's policy of institutional neutrality was discussed, and it was noted that narratives and one-on-one conversations may resonate most strongly with voters and policy makers, i.e. how U-M research impacts people's daily lives. Examples of impactful stories include recent grads talking about the value of their degrees and stories from patients about Michigan Medicine.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Marshall, FSO, Faculty Governance Coordinator