



## **Report on Activities of the Development Advisory Committee (DAC) for 2025-2026**

### **Overview:**

- *From:* Lori Tschirhart, Chair, Development Advisory Committee (DAC)
- *Subject:* Report on Activities of the Development Advisory Committee (DAC) for 2025-2026
- *Committee Members:* Vinay Aakalu, Nakhiah Goulbourne, Sergey Gutor, John Mansfield, Kimberly McKee, Stefan Szymanski, Lori Tschirhart, Ivy Wei, Jefferson Williams, Erika Hathaway
- *SACUA Liaison:* None
- *Meeting Dates:*
  - Wed. 10/8 from 12pm-1pm
  - Wed. 12/3 from 12pm-1pm
  - Fri. 1/16 from 3pm-4pm
  - Mon. 3/23 from 1pm-2pm

### **2025-2026 Committee Charge**

1. Discuss with the VP for Development the effects of federal or state policy changes on the University that impact development goals or efforts;
2. In partnership with the SACUA Chair, the Faculty Senate Office (FSO) Director, and Development, discuss opportunities for development support to obtain funds for new Faculty Senate initiatives to be proposed this year;
3. With the Communications Advisory Committee (CAC), explore and offer recommendations regarding how the University promotes faculty research and facilitates community engagement to the wider Michigan public;
4. Assess Office of University Development (OUD) current approach to communicating with faculty and provide recommendations for increased engagement;
  - a. Assess platforms and channels (websites, faculty orientation, communications and marketing, etc).
  - b. Assess diversity of topics necessary for success (policy, characteristics, values, etc.).
  - c. Identify opportunities to amplify faculty awareness of unit-level development infrastructure and fundraisers; advise and/or assist OUD with the creation of informational materials for interested faculty members



- d. Communicate to faculty the existing safeguards in place to prevent the undue influence of donors, sharing information about due diligence processes and University values (including academic freedom), and OUD code of conduct.
5. Consider such other emergent issues or topics brought forward by DAC committee members or the Vice President for Development for discussion over the course of the year. The committee may also continue discussing any issues or topics raised in the committee's most recent annual committee report.

## **Committee Actions**

DAC met four times over FY 2026, bringing in representatives from CAC, SACUA, and FSO when topics concerned each respective entity.

Broadly, DAC's work focused on:

1. Educating DAC members regarding the workings of OUD and campus units that work in partnership with OUD
2. Communicating to OUD faculty perspectives related to development efforts and funding strategies.

This fiscal year's conversations were contextualized by:

1. the priorities of the United States by the 47th Presidential Administration, which dramatically affected federal funding and placed added pressure on institutions of higher education in the United States of America
2. The priority of the University of Michigan Faculty Senate to defend academic freedom

## **Information Obtained**

DAC learned that development efforts have been steady despite tumultuous changes to federal and state policies that have the potential to impact development goals and efforts.

DAC members considered the overlap of charge between the DAC and Communications Advisory Committee, and the two committees' mutual interest in communicating U-M research activities and works to public audiences. DAC members learned that historically, these two committees were part of the same group.

Members also inquired about institutional guardrails in place to ensure that donors' financial contributions cannot be leveraged to influence academic freedom, hiring, or campus policy. Committee members asked about policies in place to preserve public trust and protect the institution from ethical conflicts associated with donor funds. VP Baird shared that OUD and the institution follow due diligence processes and have a code of conduct to ensure compliance and protect the institution's integrity and thus brand. Committee members were assured that if a donor is advocating for priorities or in ways that are not acceptable, their gifts will not be accepted. Processes are different and more in-depth depending on size and type of gift.



## **Recommendations**

The committee serves as a useful conduit toward preparing faculty for engagement with development. To increase benefit in future years, we recommend:

1. increased orientation for DAC members at the beginning of each fiscal year including:
  - a. a list of unit-level development contacts in each of the schools and departments.
  - b. code of conduct language and details about specific safeguards, due diligence processes, and any other policies designed to ensure ethical and compliant development activity.
  - c. Highlighted recent, successful campaigns that could serve as models
2. facilitated periodic information exchanges between members of CAC and DAC. Perhaps plan for at least one joint meeting per fiscal year.

## **Overall Summary of Committee Work**

In FY 26, DAC oriented faculty committee members to the workings of the Office of University Development, clarifying the work of OUD in relationship to that of unit-level development offices; provided development advice to a unit without a development office; discussed the state of development at the University of Michigan in current economic, financial, and cultural contexts; discussed the specifics of recent successful campaigns, explored parameters in place to perform development work ethically and in compliance with standards; and considered the communications and marketing infrastructure designed to communicate our institution's compelling educational and research contributions to the public.