



**Government Relations Advisory Committee (GRAC) Minutes:
January 22, 2026, at 2-2:45 (regular meeting), via Zoom**

Meeting Information:

Circulated: 2/19/2026

Approved: 2/26/2026

Present: Kevin Cokley (Chair), Shevon Desai, Scott Greer, Chris Kolb (VP for Government Relations), Karyn Lacy, Nell Dority (Government Relations Specialist), Nakhiah Goulbourne, John Mansfield, Ann Marshall (FSO), Shahzad Mian, Rima Mohammad, Rogerio Meireles Pinto (SACUA liaison), Sara Samuel, Jeffrey Yackley,

Absent: Jowei Chen, Lisa Fein, Anouck Girard, Beth Wilensky

1. The meeting was called to order and the minutes from the previous meeting were approved.
2. Chris Kolb update
 - The [Michigan Association of State Universities \(MASU\) published a report on the economic impact of state universities](#) in Michigan. Michigan universities' combined economic impact of \$44.9 billion is 28 times larger than the state's 1.6 billion appropriation to universities (pg. 9). As a research university, U-M's economic impact is also proportionately larger than other universities in the state.
3. GRAC initial discussion on economic impact of universities
 - Anecdotes are important for filling in the big picture presented by the MASU report. The New VP for Communications is developing talking points to help faculty convey the impacts of their work in ways that may be more meaningful to a public audience. Students can be very effective ambassadors of such anecdotes, and it is important to more creatively tell U-M stories.
 - [RU4M reports](#) demonstrate the federal funding impact of R&D at universities, with four MI universities contributing \$30+ billion annually. Neither the RU4M nor the MASU report capture the impact of U-M graduates' careers for the state economy. U-M also has stories to tell about U-M graduation rates, students graduating with very little debt, and research stories that resonate. U-M also has impact through U-M purchasing across the state. An example of one better known story is U-M's development of [histotripsy](#).
4. Discussion on preparing for a new U-M president
 - Senate Assembly (SA) members and SA committee members, including some faculty from GRAC, will attend a Faculty Senate reception for Kent Syverud to be held later in the day. Kent Syverud comes to U-M having twelve years of experience as a university president, is cognizant of the current political environment, is a U-M alum, and was both a U-M law faculty and associate dean. VP Kolb shared appreciation for Kent Syverud's initial one-on-one interactions with leadership. A faculty member shared that he was impressed with Syverud's stated approach for sharing U-M's culture and organization to the world. Syverud has expressed humility and a willingness to listen. Another GRAC member shared interest in having the new president lead as he interacts with the regents. Appreciation was shared for the legal expertise that Syverud will bring to the position.
5. Discussion on revisiting institutional neutrality



- A question was raised about whether it could be meaningful to have an institutional response to the murder of Renee Good. Old Dominican University released such a statement, but most academic institutions have not. Is what happened in Minneapolis a social and political issue or a moral issue? A rationale for the institutional neutrality policy is that top-down U-M statements might dampen the marketplace of ideas. A faculty remarked that a neutrality stance has far reaching implications, such that people start to be neutral about U-M's positive impact and people may become less interested and invested in university life.
- There was discussion about plans for the high-performance computing center and concerns that U-M has not engaged the Ypsi community as much as it should have. It was noted that the proposed location is an industrial site, with Ford, LG Energy, and others in close proximity. A comment was shared that, if the AI bubble breaks in the for-profit sector, AI in the academic sector will likely still be important. Many people have signed up for the [January 29th open house](#) about the project.

6. Chair Cokley invited GRAC members to submit agenda topics for the next GRAC meeting.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Marshall, FSO, Faculty Governance Coordinator