



**Government Relations Advisory Committee (GRAC) Minutes:
February 26, 2026, at 2-2:45 (regular meeting), via Zoom**

Meeting Information:

Circulated: 4/17/2026

Approved: 4/23/2026

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

Absent: Jowei Chen, Lisa Fein, Anouck Girard, Shahzad Mian, Rogerio Meireles Pinto (SACUA liaison), Beth Wilensky

1. The meeting was called to order and the minutes from the previous meeting were approved.
2. Chris Kolb update
 - The MI Governor released the annual state budget recommendations, with the higher education budget flat from the prior year and with some funds again designated as one-time money. The federal budget passed, with the exception of the Homeland Security budget. Indirect cost funding was held constant for all of higher ed. There has been some negotiation regarding the [FAIR](#) model. The State of the Union was held on February 24th and the MI State of the State was held on February 25th. The [annual U-M Congressional breakfast](#) in D.C. raised \$147,000, with U.S. Rep Lisa McClain as the keynote. The party of the keynote speaker alternates each year.
3. GRAC initial discussion on update items
 - There was discussion about possible funding levels for higher ed under the next governor. Funding levels for education are being [debated](#) by the candidates for governor, with attention also on K-12 funding. Allocations are influenced by the need to balance the state budget. Everyone values education, but no one wants to invest in it. Under the Snyder administration, education funding was cut by 15% and state budgets have been flat at best since then.
 - Unlike Texas and Florida, in Michigan, institutions of higher education have constitutional autonomy, with U-M and other state schools governed by an elected board.
4. Federal challenges to Higher Ed – revisiting DEI given the federal court decision, ICE operations, and Government Relations role
 - For DEI, the courts have upheld legal protections for DEI in higher ed and the federal administration's attacks against DEI have no legal standing. The University of Texas Board recently passed a policy telling faculty not to discuss controversial topics in class. Could such a policy be passed at U-M? Yet, even without the repressive state policies in place at the U. of Texas, U-M leadership nevertheless ended ODEI at U-M.
 - U-M leadership has considered academic freedom to be a bright line that cannot be crossed. VP Kolb noted that there are risks of the Supreme Court overturning a case which the office is monitoring along with OGC for potential impacts.
 - ICE operations have occurred in the county, If ICE is reported on campus, Non-interference is recommended by U-M and also that OGC be contacted.
 - The role of the Office of the Vice President for Government Relations is to lead the university's advocacy at local, state, and federal levels, protecting core commitments to education,



research, and patient care. The office sets the advocacy priorities for the University and appointed government relations officers act on behalf of U-M with key decision makers, policymakers and stakeholders in order to promote and safeguard the mission of the institution. The team perform a wide variety of duties and activities including lobbying on behalf of the university at all levels of government, monitoring regulatory requirements and proposals, analyzing the impact of proposed legislation and/or policies on the university's ability to educate students, conduct research, and other issues related to running a large public institution

6. Engaging with Legislators

- As part of U-M's lobbying team, Government Relations works with a lobbyist on right of the Republican party that helps provide interpretation and predictions about what may be beneficial and strategies for communication. Government Relations does the same with lobbyists on the other side of the aisle. The advice is still for U-M to not draw attention to itself. U-M is a national brand. On the state level, U-M is viewed as very liberal. U-M is, at times, at the crosshairs of current debates.

Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Marshall, FSO, Faculty Governance Coordinator