

University of Michigan Regents Communication:

July 2026 Faculty Governance Update

Item for Information

Subject: July 2026 Faculty Governance Update

Executive Summary

- 1) Happy 250th! UM's Clements Library houses 58 editions of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, arguably the spark that ignited the American Revolution. The pamphlet's history demonstrates the power of ideas, the unavoidability of politics and controversy, and the abiding resonance of democratic ideals.
- 2) Responses to an informal survey of the Faculty Senate ($n=173$) showed broad satisfaction with inspiring, supportive colleagues; talented, energetic students; and healthy university resources. Top concerns included eroding shared governance; poor representation by SACUA; and ideological tensions.
- 3) Requesting Regent Acker to resign.

1. Happy 250th!

To celebrate Independence Day and America's Semiquincentennial, we highlight one of the University of Michigan's many touchpoints with American independence. According to Clements Library Director Paul Erickson, "[The Clements Library is one of the best places in the world to study the history of the American Revolution.](#)" [Among its rich holdings are 58 editions of *Common Sense*](#), Thomas Paine's classic revolutionary text.

[Paine initially published the pamphlet anonymously](#), possibly because he knew how radical it was at the time. British loyalists found the document contemptible, and wrote their own pamphlets in response. Even some we now count among America's founding fathers were not thoroughly convinced. John Adams, for example, sympathized with the goal of independence, but [he found Paine's vision for self-governance too extreme](#).

Nevertheless, at a time of uncertainty and political polarization, Paine, with his clear arguments and plain language, galvanized public opinion against the British monarchy and toward democracy. *Common Sense* is widely credited with paving the way for the *Declaration of Independence*. Today, Americans view its ideas as self-evident.

2. Responses to informal survey of the Faculty Senate.

173 responses were received to an informal survey of the Faculty Senate, asking about what faculty were most (1) satisfied and (2) dissatisfied with at the University of Michigan. After reading each of the responses myself, I prompted Claude to do an analysis, which it did

shockingly well. Below are the top three issues participants raised to each of the two questions, excerpted from [Claude's full analysis](#).

Q1: What is one aspect of your experience at the University of Michigan that you are especially satisfied with?

1. COLLEAGUES, COLLEGIAL CULTURE, AND INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY (n=60)

The single most common source of satisfaction. Respondents describe the quality, brilliance, kindness, and collaborative spirit of their faculty peers, as well as a broader sense of intellectual community among faculty, staff, and students. [...]

2. STUDENTS – QUALITY OF AND SATISFACTION WORKING WITH OR TEACHING THEM (n=34)

Many faculty cite their students as a primary source of satisfaction – the quality, motivation, curiosity, and diversity of both undergraduate and graduate students. [...]

3. RESEARCH SUPPORT, FUNDING, AND INFRASTRUCTURE (n=29)

Faculty express satisfaction with the resources, funding opportunities, and institutional infrastructure available to support their research. [...]

Q2: What aspect of your experience at the University of Michigan is most in need of improvement?

1. EROSION OF SHARED GOVERNANCE AND FACULTY VOICE IN INSTITUTIONAL DECISIONS (n=36)

The single most common complaint, and the most broadly felt across faculty. Respondents across the political spectrum describe a structural deterioration in the role of faculty in university decision-making. [...]

2. QUALITY, EFFECTIVENESS, AND POLITICAL BIAS OF FACULTY SENATE / SACUA (n=22)

A large number of respondents – predominantly though not exclusively moderate or conservative – are critical of how the Faculty Senate and SACUA have operated in recent years. Complaints fall into two related categories: (a) the Senate has become ideologically captured and no longer represents the breadth of faculty opinion; and (b) the Senate is strategically ineffective, spending time on symbolic resolutions and rhetorical posturing rather than consequential governance. [...]

3. POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CLIMATE – POLARIZED VIEWS (n≈31 total)

This is a deeply divided topic with significant respondents on both sides. It is presented here as a single topic because the underlying concern – that the university's ideological environment is not inclusive of all voices – is shared, even if the identified problem and proposed solution differ sharply. [...]

All of the input is informative, and SACUA will take it into consideration, both to affect the substance and style of what it takes up.

3. Requesting Regent Acker to resign.

The statement below was approved by the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA) on July 1, 2026.

Now that a [formal investigation](#) and Regent Jordan Acker's own remarks have verified [earlier allegations](#) of obscene comments he made about an undergraduate UM student, among others, we call on him to resign from the Board of the University of Michigan.

The statement Mr. Acker delivered at the Regents meeting on June 25, 2026, was neither a genuine apology nor accountability, and we do not accept any claim that it was either. A true apology would have specified what he was apologizing for and indicated to whom he was making the apology. Accountability would have involved some form of atonement, as well as recognition that it does not help the university to have a leader confirmed to have made such comments. He could have resigned; reimbursed UM for the [significant costs](#) of what could have been an unnecessary investigation; assigned himself relevant community service; or perhaps all of the above. Continuing on the Board as if nothing has happened is not accountability. It demonstrates that his judgment has not improved since the reported events, and that, in turn, suggests he is unfit to influence such important decisions as selecting UM's next president.

As faculty who share in the governance of this university, we feel ashamed. And, as no true apology appears forthcoming from Mr. Acker, we apologize both to the victims of his remarks for his aspersive, derogatory, and deeply invasive comments and to the broader University of Michigan community for his failure to model our values.

Respectfully submitted: July 2, 2026



Kentaro Toyama

Faculty Senate Chair (2026-27)

W. K. Kellogg Professor of Community Information