

**University of Michigan Regents Communications:
Items for information**

SUBJECT: Faculty Governance Update

DATE: February 2026

1. Welcoming President-Elect Kent Syverud

At its meeting on Monday, 12 January, the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs unanimously voted to adopt the following [motion](#):

The Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs welcomes Kent Syverud as the 16th president of the University of Michigan. Mr. Syverud is no stranger to Ann Arbor. His record as a teacher and an administrator is impressive. At Michigan Law and at Vanderbilt Law he played a leading role in keeping the doors open to previously under-represented groups. As Chancellor and President of Syracuse University Mr. Syverud invested in the research enterprise, worked with students to address racism, built new dormitories, and created new support structures promoting mental health. He earned a reputation as a willing listener and engaging interlocutor. At Syracuse Mr. Syverud served *ex officio* on virtually every committee of faculty government, and we are told that he was an active participant in faculty-led administrative work. These are all qualities of leadership we need here at U-M, and we trust that he will bring this disposition toward consultative administration to Michigan.

We are heartened by these and other aspects of Mr. Syverud's record, and we look forward to working with him to advance this university's public mission in the months and years ahead.

On the 22nd of January the Faculty Senate Office hosted President-elect Syverud at a reception on the top floor of Weiser Hall. In attendance were sixty faculty colleagues involved in faculty government. It was an entirely convivial occasion.

We are encouraged by the fact that—during the time he was a faculty member at the U-M Law School—Professor Syverud was an active participant in the work of faculty government. In 1991 he was made a member of the Legal Services Task Force, which helped establish legal protections for faculty who were caught up in controversy; and in 1994 he led a faculty committee developing a definition of tenure. As associate dean he was actively engaged with Black students, listening to their concerns and advocating for their interests. He played a key role in [Grutter v. Bollinger](#), the case by which the U-M Law School defended its use of race as a criteria for admission. In an April 2001 editorial published in the *Detroit News* he described how he had 'watched with wonder as future lawyers come to appreciate classmates of all races as individuals'. In this and in other aspects of his work as associate dean he showed courage and moral fortitude, qualities that we need at Michigan.

We look forward to working with President Syverud in the months and years to come.

2. Follow-on from November 2025 Faculty Senate vote

The [Faculty Senate vote of November](#) broke records: more faculty voted than have ever before voted in our institution's history. In the time since the vote faculty government has been working to bring the nine motions we adopted into effect.

- The [Financial Affairs Advisory Committee](#) has been engaged with [Motion One, which asks the University to reverse the new policy for faculty travel](#). We are in ongoing dialogue with interim Vice President Bobby Hewlett and others from his office, presenting faculty dissatisfaction with Collegiate Travel Planners and advocating for a reconsideration of the policy. VP Hewlett has listened carefully to our concerns, and we are hopeful that further discussion will yield good results.
- The leadership of our [Medical Affairs Advisory Committee](#) and I recently met with Vice President David Miller to discuss [Motion Two, which calls for the resumption of gender affirming care for people under 19](#). We are also in discussion with providers. These discussions are sensitive, and they are ongoing.
- Many of us are overwhelmed by the pressures that Generative AI is placing on teaching and learning in our classrooms. In [response to Motion Four](#), the Provost and the Vice President for Information Technology have recently put together a faculty-led working group to focus on teaching and learning following the AI revolution. I look forward to working with the group to bring the concerns and ideas of aggravated faculty into focus.
- [Motion Six asks the University to afford us the necessary materials to remediate our teaching materials](#) in advance of the April 2026 deadline. Since the motion's passage the Vice President for Information has [made available a newly expanded website with resources to help faculty manage the work themselves](#). It is not enough: remediating course materials is time-consuming and vexing, and it is silly to ask busy faculty to become, one by one, expert in the technicalities. We continue to advocate around these matters.
- [Motion Seven highlights the injustice](#) that recent changes in the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities have done to our students. Our Student Relations Advisory Committee is in continuing discussions with the Vice President for Student Life and with President Grasso about this matter. The SRAC is also looking into the ongoing (and badly conducted) prosecution of student protestors through the Office for Student Conflict Resolution. [Here is the Daily's summary](#) of our recent discussions around these matters.

- About [Motion Five](#)—which calls for the restoration of a widely popular unit offering statistical advice to faculty and students—there is little to say. I continue to hope that this inexpensive part of the University’s research apparatus can be brought back to life.

3. Resolution Supporting Immigrants Who Work and Study at the University of Michigan

At its meeting on 2 February SACUA adopted the following motion:

As teachers and students at the leading public university in the United States, we know that learning rests on exchange across languages, geographies, and traditions. Immigration is a positive good for higher education. International faculty, staff, and students widen the educational mission of universities in the United States by broadening classroom learning, by enriching the arts and humanities, by fueling laboratory work, and by expanding our clinical practice.

Recent events in Minneapolis have highlighted the violence with which the Trump administration is pursuing its campaign against immigrants and those who advocate for them. Here in Washtenaw County, [parents dropping their children off at school](#) have to worry that immigration authorities will apprehend them at bus stops or outside the school’s doors. With arrests and even killings of legal immigrants and citizens, the U-M community must now live in a state of fear, anxiety, and insecurity.

The Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs stands in solidarity with immigrants who work, study, and teach at the University of Michigan and for all those who have become targets of the federal government. We call the U-M administration’s attention to [Motion Four of the University Senate meeting of April 2025](#). This resolution asked the University to adopt a policy of non-compliance with federal authorities; it asked that the University would not share information with the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement; it asked for a programme of legal support for international staff, faculty and students; and it asked the University to ensure that students forced to leave the country can complete their degrees in a timely manner.

We have not had a formal reply to this resolution, which passed by a U-M faculty vote of 2,744 to 203. We now ask this University’s leadership to rise to the moment and to make every effort to support and protect the staff, faculty and students on whom our educational and research mission relies.

4. Building Connections

In the past few months the Faculty Senate Office has organized several on-campus work retreats, most recently on 4 February, when we convened at the Lurie Engineering Building on North Campus. These retreats offer a quiet space to work with other scholars and artists, and an opportunity for faculty to prioritize their research and creative work. Lunch, after the work

session, is a chance to share interests and work with other colleagues, to learn about each others' research, to grow professional and social networks, and to experience the University as a collective. At a time when many of us feel as though the academic vocation is itself under siege, these occasions build solidarity and a sense of common purpose.

We are grateful to the Office of the Provost, whose support makes these occasions possible.

Submitted: 6 February 2026

Derek R. Peterson
Chair of the Faculty Senate
Ali Mazrui Professor of History and African Studies