



From the Chair of the Faculty Senate

Dear Faculty Senate Members,

My hope was to keep these newsletters down to no more than 5 topics each, but it crept up to 6 this month:

- **More on AI at UM:** SACUA is working on multiple AI issues in parallel. You can help by sharing ideas for teaching that either (1) avoids/limits AI use; or (2) instructs on better AI use:
https://umich.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_72l8g7FCK5KhWF0
- **Introducing SACUA member Michael Schubnell:** Michael, a Research Scientist in the Physics department, was elected to SACUA for a 3-year term that started this past May. Among other things, he has raised issues of importance to Research-track faculty.
- **Research faculty category normalization:** Appointment and promotion criteria for the Research Scientist track will be adjusted for better consistency and differentiation from other tracks.
- **Update on OMB rule for federal funding:** UM pushed back, as did tens of thousands of public commenters, including UM faculty. Now, the NSF is proposing its own rule – [submit a public comment by Aug. 24](#).
- **Remembering Tom Schneider:** Tom, a UM graduate and longtime Director of the Faculty Senate Office, passed away on March 26, 2026. We express our thanks for his many years of service and condolences to his friends and family.
- **Save the date for the first *Open Questions* panel!** On Sept. 17 (4-5:30pm), the Faculty Senate Office will be hosting the first “Open Questions” panel to support genuine dialogue. The first panel will be about institutional neutrality as a policy.

More details below.

May the rest of your summer feel long!

Kentaro

Kentaro Toyama
Faculty Senate Chair
W. K. Kellogg Professor of Community Information

More on AI at UM: Faculty express a very diverse range of opinions about AI – here are two from recent surveys: “[AI’s impacts are] disastrous for myself as an individual, educator, and researcher, for my students and co-workers, for my community, and for the world,” and “The most pressing issue is to ensure access to the best AI tools for all faculty and staff.” *Both* of these views seem to be shared by many, and there are a rich variety of other perspectives, as well. Opinions within SACUA are also diverse, and so, we are working on multiple, co-existing agendas – some seeking more AI, some seeking less, depending on the context, and with the goal of creating options that faculty can pick and choose from.

You can help us by sharing effective ideas for teaching that either (1) avoid/limit AI use; or (2) instruct on better AI use. We will compile and disseminate what we receive. Please submit ideas in [this Qualtrics form](#).

And, in other AI-related news...

- Last month’s Faculty Senate survey shows the following items receiving the most interest: (1) Redesigning pedagogy and assessment for an AI-saturated environment; (2) Establishing a university-wide AI code of conduct; and (3) Creating AI-free assignment and examination spaces. ([The fully tally is available in slides.](#))
- SACUA is forming an AI Committee, and its charge, also multi-pronged, will likely include efforts toward (1) options for limiting AI use by students in coursework (along the lines of [Motion 2 from the Faculty Senate’s April, 2026, meeting](#)); (2) instructional modules for AI ethics and caution; and

(3) strategies for preparing our students for workplaces that expect fluent AI use.

- The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) consults with individual faculty to help them develop responses to AI that align with their teaching goals and context, including structured AI adoption and informed AI abstention. CRLT has also worked with some departments on strategic planning around AI and teaching. CRLT Executive Director and Associate Vice Provost, Matt Kaplan (mlkaplan@umich.edu), welcomes such collaboration with other departments, too, subject to CRLT capacity.
- UM has a natural champion for making [AI more safely available](#) in the person of our Chief Information Officer, Ravi Pendse. However, as no office is visibly holding a banner for AI caution or skepticism, I have been searching for one that might. (Any takers?) If no single such office emerges, we plan to work across multiple offices on AI concerns.
- Provost McCauley and CIO Pendse's AI in Education Working Group report is due to be released soon. SACUA will aim to complement the administration's efforts.

Introducing SACUA member Michael Schubnell: "I am a Research Scientist in Physics in LSA. I grew up in southwestern Germany, near the French border, and came to Michigan with a Ph.D. in physics. Since then, my work has moved through astrophysics and cosmology. I have built and flown scientific instruments on balloons to study cosmic rays, spending many months in New Mexico and Antarctica. One thing I love about experimental science is the challenge of the unexpected. We ask big questions about the universe, but in the field the work – and sometimes the success – can come down to mundane last-minute fixes with a soldering iron in hand. For the past decade, much of my work has been with DESI, the Dark Energy Spectroscopic Instrument, a major international cosmology project based in southern Arizona, where I have been privileged to serve as one of the scientific leads.

"As a research-track faculty member on SACUA, I want to give research faculty a stronger voice in university conversations. One thing I would like to emphasize is that research is not something separate from teaching. Some of the most important learning happens when students are participating in research. They learn to ask better questions, build judgment, and learn things that textbooks can't quite teach.

“Lately, I have found myself thinking a lot about generative AI. Not just what it can do, but how it is changing the way we teach, learn, work, and think. Universities should help lead that conversation about ethics, teaching and learning, sustainability, and what all of this means for us as humans.”

Research faculty category normalization: Since March 2025, Associate Vice President for Research–Health Sciences and Research Faculty Affairs, Lisa Prosser, has been leading a process to review and normalize the appointment and promotion criteria for the Research Scientist track at UM. (We appreciate that the process has been highly consultative!) Among other things, the new criteria more clearly differentiate the track from Staff Scientists by acknowledging a broader set of scholarly contributions, and differentiate from Research Professor roles by no longer requiring PI status on grants. One goal is greater consistency across the campus with respect to the Research tracks, though units may adapt the new criteria to fit their unique circumstances. The new criteria will take effect starting the next promotion cycle, *i.e.*, for promotions taking effect September 2027. For Research-track faculty: If you witness or experience any issues with the changes, don’t hesitate to contact AVP Prosser (lisapros@umich.edu), the Faculty Senate Office (facultysenateoffice@umich.edu), or me (facultysenatechair@umich.edu).

Update on OMB rule for federal funding: In May, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) proposed a [new rule for all federal grants](#) that would make [grant decisions subject to political approval](#) and enable [sudden termination of grants](#) for arbitrary reasons. A lot has happened since then, and continues to happen:

- UM, in its [formal response](#), requested “that the agency withdraw the proposed rule.”
- Nearly [57,000 comments](#) were submitted by the public, including many of you – thank you! One estimate suggests that [94% of the comments were against the rule](#). Apparently, 1,000+ is a large number of comments for a federal rule, and [the administration is required to consider and respond to every unique comment](#), before implementing the rule.
- The comments – especially if unaddressed – lay a foundation for organizations to file legal suits against the rule, and [many organizations](#)

[seem prepared](#) to do so.

- In a related case, U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani ruled that [federal agencies cannot terminate grants based on changing administrative priorities, once awarded](#). That decision may preempt parts of the proposed OMB rule, but [the OMB might try other tactics](#).

Now, the National Science Foundation (NSF) is proposing to update its grant policies in line with the OMB rule, even though the rule is not yet in effect. NSF grantees and those who care about American science are encouraged [to submit a public comment](#) by Aug. 24; [more information is available](#) from the non-profit, Stand Up for Science.

Remembering Tom Schneider: The Faculty Senate Office recently learned that Thomas Schneider, who served as the Director of the Faculty Senate Office for almost a quarter of a century and retired in 2019, [passed away on March 26, 2026](#), at the age of 75. He is warmly remembered by generations of Faculty Senate leaders. Karen Staller, Faculty Senate Chair 2013-14, wrote, “Tom was such a wealth of institutional knowledge. I always appreciated his insights, historical perspective, and the ease with which he was able to adapt to an ever-changing cast of characters around him, be that faculty, staff, or administration.” Robert Ortega, FSC 2017-18, said, “Tom... offered steady, reasoned opinions on all matters relevant to faculty. Tom provided guidance on concerns when asked, but carefully prioritized faculty opinion on issues that differed from university administration.” His contributions to faculty governance still resonate in the work that the Faculty Senate Office and SACUA do today, and we remain grateful for his passion for supporting faculty at UM. We send his family and friends our deepest condolences.

Save the date for the first *Open Questions* panel! [To strengthen our university’s collective capacity for deliberative discussion](#), we are inaugurating the first “Open Questions” panel on Sept. 17 (4-5:30pm) in Forum Hall in [Palmer Commons](#), with the topic of *institutional neutrality* as a policy for universities. The panel series will host discussions of moderately controversial topics with the goal of encouraging genuine dialogue – *not* debate. In a time of deep polarization, we hope many of you are eager for a true exchange of ideas. More details to come. Everyone is welcome – for now, please save the date!

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