



From the Chair of the Faculty Senate

Dear Faculty Senate Members,

I hope the first month of the academic year went well for you! In Faculty Senate news...

- **Top issue for faculty – salaries not keeping up with inflation:** Help us understand this better with a [very short survey about how you might allocate a bonus](#).
- **What to do if you face workplace challenges:** There are a range of ways to address workplace challenges you might face. Details below.
- **Introducing Director of the Faculty Senate Office, Luke McCarthy:** Neither Faculty Senate committees nor I could do our work without him.
- **Faculty Senate events:** Coming up: short speeches on the Diag about grading policies (Oct. 8, noon-1pm; [sign up to speak](#)); Faculty Mixer (Oct. 9, 4:30-6pm; [register](#)); Open Questions panel on norms for university ceremonies (Oct. 22, 4-5:30pm; [register](#)).
- **Shared governance and grade covering at LSA:** SACUA is considering a response to recent decisions that should have involved much more consultation with faculty.
- **AI, AI, AI!** Want to weigh in on AI's interactions with the university (in contexts other than instruction)? [Sign up to join a new AI committee](#).

More details about all of the above are appended below.

Finally, over the next month, **you can help turn out the vote!** [UMICH Votes](#) is a non-partisan project run by U-M faculty and students and supported by our Provost. [Sign up to have volunteers come to your classes](#) to [encourage students to vote](#).

Happy October!

Kentaro

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

Top issue for faculty – salaries not keeping up with inflation: Last month's newsletter survey suggests that (1) *salaries not tracking with inflation* was the top concern for the faculty by a wide margin. Combined with concerns we have heard about the challenges of childcare/family care and housing, especially for junior faculty, SACUA believes faculty pay is a key concern and will take it up as a core focus. It would help us to understand the strength of this interest for you, relative to other issues involving financial resources – [please complete this very short survey](#).

After salaries, the next issues with the most votes were (2) university AI policy; (3) U.S. "Compact for Higher Ed"; (4) immigration challenges; (5) digital content accessibility; (6) childcare/family care; and (7) travel booking/reimbursement processes. Senate Assembly committees will be working on all of these topics this year. [More survey results are available in a separate document](#), where results are also broken down by faculty track and by unit. SACUA will take the survey results into consideration (along with other information) as we prioritize issues.

What to do if you face workplace challenges: A [previous newsletter survey](#) suggests that most faculty are satisfied with their work and working environment. However, some of us do face workplace challenges that affect us individually. If you are facing a difficult situation at work, below are some options, in roughly the order in which you might consider them (*i.e.*, consider the top option first):

- Discuss with your chair, dean, mentor, or a trusted colleague. They may be able to address the issue or point you to options (unless they are part of the issue).
- If you are a member of a union with a collective bargaining agreement, raise the issue with your union steward (e.g., [Lecturers](#), [Librarians/Archivists/Curators](#), [Flint tenure-track faculty](#)).
- If you are *not* covered by a union contract, raise with an ombuds. There are [unit ombuds](#) and university [faculty ombuds](#). (There are also separate [staff ombuds](#).) An ombuds can [help you navigate options](#), though they are

required to be neutral with respect to specific cases. Our faculty ombuds – Mary O’Riordan and Stephanie Preston – are very knowledgeable about the various processes available to faculty for resolving issues.

- Initiate a grievance or arbitration procedure. Union members should look up their contract (e.g., [LEO](#), [LEO-GLAM](#), [AFT-AAUP Flint](#)), or contact their steward for how to do this. Non-union faculty should consult their campus’s process ([Ann Arbor](#), [Dearborn](#), [Flint](#)).
- Outside of the university, you always have the option of consulting a lawyer and possibly filing a lawsuit. However, it’s a good idea to have at least learned about and considered the internal processes before going that route.

In addition, the Faculty Senate Office is always happy to discuss issues with you or to help you navigate these options. Do *not* hesitate to reach out to Luke McCarthy (facultysenateofficedirector@umich.edu) or me (facultysenatechair@umich.edu); we will keep discussions confidential to the extent possible. Speaking of Luke...

Introducing Director of the Faculty Senate Office, Luke McCarthy: One of the things I appreciate about U-M is that we are blessed by incredible staff. The four staff members of the Faculty Senate Office are no exception, and their remarkable leader is Director Luke McCarthy, without whom I absolutely could not do my job as Faculty Senate Chair. He is the Faculty Senate’s chief of staff, legal advisor, counselor, editor, event coordinator, and institutional memory all rolled into one. Here’s his self-introduction...

“I am honored to serve as Director of the Faculty Senate Office. I grew up near Traverse City and graduated from Western Michigan, Michigan State, and the Florida State University College of Law, with degrees in English (BA/PhD), Philosophy (BA), and Law (JD). I have been an editor for numerous journals, including as executive editor of the *Florida State Law Review* and production editor for *Comparative Drama*.

“After law school, I worked as a general practice attorney in a rural office, handling criminal defense, divorces, child neglect, bankruptcies, property disputes, probate, negligence, civil litigation, appeals, and municipal law. I chaired the board of a local women’s shelter, and I served on a county hospice board. Eventually, I joined a firm in Grand Rapids as partner.

“With a deep appreciation of the role of universities in society, I then permitted myself to be pulled back to higher education, and completed a PhD focusing on

American literature (in particular, Edith Wharton and William Carlos Williams). Now happily serving in the Faculty Senate Office, I am amazed each day by the U-M faculty: by their ingenuity, their tenacity, and their dedication to their students and to expanding our understanding of ourselves and our world.”

Faculty Senate events: First, a recap of two September events: On the 17th, we had a successful launch of the Open Questions Panel Series, with a [write-up in the University Record](#). I am very grateful to Professors Michelle Adams and Gary Harper, both for sharing their well-considered opinions on institutional neutrality and for modeling terrific dialogue while disagreeing.

A week later, we hosted five of six U-M regent candidates at the Regent Candidate Forum. It was good to hear most of them support faculty voice and input into university decisions, and to do so on [the Record](#) (and [on YouTube](#))!

Upcoming events (those marked [FS] are Faculty Senate events):

- [FS] Oct. 8, noon-1pm (The Diag): Political Speech in the Public Square: On Grading Policies ([sign up to speak](#))
- Oct. 8, 4-6pm (Rackham Amphitheater): Lee Bollinger [12th U-M President]: [“How to Speak Your Mind / How to Change Your Mind”](#)
- [FS] October 9, 4:30-6:00pm (Kelsey Museum of Archaeology): [Faculty Mixer](#) – socialize with your faculty colleagues and visit the University’s famous Kelsey Museum of Archaeology during our annual event ([register to attend](#)).
- [FS] Oct. 22, 4-5:30pm (Rackham Amphitheater): [Open Questions Series: On Norms for University Ceremonies](#) ([register to attend](#)).

Grade covering at LSA: In August, the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts announced that a new [grade covering program would be piloted](#) in AY2027-28 (*next year*) for first-year undergraduates. The program was picked up in the [national media](#), generating [controversy](#) especially among those who got the details wrong. Then, on Monday (Sept. 28), [President Grasso asked LSA to “pause”](#) the pilot program. SACUA has heard from LSA faculty that neither the pilot nor its suspension involved widespread consultation with faculty, which, if true, would be a failure of [shared governance](#) – problematic for a large program about the educational process. SACUA is discussing a formal response. (People who feel strongly about the grading policy itself can [sign up to speak](#) at the next [Political Speech and the Public Square](#) [Oct. 8, noon]).

AI, AI, AI! Whether you love it, hate it, or feel something in between, AI is an

unavoidable topic these days. SACUA cannot keep up with the sheer number of ways in which AI affects the university... in research, hiring, environmental impact, admissions, student experience, communications, professional development, funding, and on and on. (Teaching is another big category, but there seem to be many efforts to address AI in instruction across the university.)

SACUA member Michael Schubnell suggested that we should apply the collective intellectual capacity of the University of Michigan to address this challenge, and so we are proposing to form a “Committee of Committees” for AI. We will place faculty members on committees that match their AI interests (or anti-interests, as the case may be); ask them to meet once or twice a month through the academic year; and work toward a report, representing the committee’s understanding of their topic and recommendations for the university. Reports would be published online and discussed by SACUA, forwarded to U-M leaders, sent to Faculty Senate committees, and so on, as appropriate. If you would like to contribute to a faculty-led effort to understand how U-M can better engage with AI, please [sign up here](#).

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