FACULTY SENATE
SENATE ASSEMBLY
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

1120 Ruthven Building
1109 Geddes Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

Communications Advisory Committee (CAC) Minutes for 1/22/26 Meeting

Meeting information:

Circulated: 10/22/26
Approved: 10/29/26

Members present: Henry Seeger (Chair), Nicole Boucher, Basit Zafar, Pat Herbst, VP Ken Kettenbeil, Talisha Reviere-Winston (OVPC), Jim Cranford, Kirsten Herold (SACUA), Lynda Pence, Thandiwe-Kesi Robbins

Members absent: Laura Beny, Phil Christman, Brian Love, Kim Saks

Faculty Senate Office staff present: Eric Vandenberghe

Minutes:

3:02pm-3:03pm: Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Minutes, Announcements

The agenda was approved. The minutes for the December meeting are approved.

3:03pm-3:27pm: 90-day plan, VP updates

Summary: VP Kettenbeil provides an update. He took over the role of interim VP for Communications on 1/2/26. Two major announcements made over the course of the past several weeks include the hiring of the new football coach, Kyle Whittingham, as well as the President-elect, Kent Syverud. Phase one of the "Look to Michigan" campaign is winding down, and phase two will ramp up soon. VP Kettenbeil describes efforts to properly communicate around salient issues affecting the University community.

VP Kettenbeil lays out his vision for the first 90 days of his tenure as VP of Communications. He plans on listening to the stakeholders of the University to learn about past communication strengths and challenges. He describes efforts to connect with the Office of the Vice President of Communications staff. A major priority for the Office is to implement an effective communications strategy for the incoming President of the University.

Personnel updates are provided for OVPC. Paul Corliss recently joined UM as the new Assistant Vice President for Public Affairs and Internal Communications. Rick Fitzgerald, a long-time member of the OVPC team, has rejoined the unit to consult. He had previously served as VP for Public Affairs, as well as Interim VP for Communications.

Phase two of the Look to Michigan campaign is described. This phase will focus on moving from declaration to demonstration. The idea is to provide specific breakthroughs and value provided by work completed at UM. Members provide suggestions for this campaign. One suggestion is showcasing the arts and humanities, in addition to medical and scientific work.

VP Kettenbeil provides an update on the President's Public Intellectuals request. This is a

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means of media training and guidance for faculty to showcase their work to the public. The details of this initiative are currently being shared with small groups for feedback before sharing them broadly.

The floor is open to questions from the committee. A member discusses the announcements of the new football coach, as well as the president-elect. The member indicates that in both instances outside media outlets broke news of these announcements prior to official word from the University. The member indicates that it would be better for UM to provide official word of these announcements soon before or soon after outside media outlets break the news. VP Kettenbeil describes some of the factors that go into the timing of these types of personnel announcements. These include requests from the new personnel. Members discuss how the University can handle these situations moving forward.

Members ask VP Kettenbeil how they can best assist OVPC during this time of transition. VP Kettenbeil indicates that the committee can provide valuable feedback on what OVPC is doing well, and where there is room to improve. He indicates that feedback on the Public Intellectuals materials is very welcome. He will be sharing this feedback with the President.

A member indicates that this initial information about the resources provided through the Public Intellectuals initiative is very promising. They further indicate that the need for this type of resource has come up in several meetings both on this committee and otherwise. A member discusses the need to align the incentives for academics to increase public exposure and appreciation for the work done at universities. The member indicates that this is an issue across academia, and one that will require working with the deans and other unit leaders.

A member discusses the need for expert communicators in STEM fields. Another member suggests some related initiatives and will see if they wish to attend a future CAC meeting. The Faculty Governance Coordinator will share a document with the committee where they can offer further feedback on the Public Intellectuals initiative.

Action: Discussion

3:27pm-3:29pm: Update from DAC (Henry)

Summary: Chair Seeger spoke to the Development Advisory Committee (DAC) at their most recent meeting on the work the CAC has been engaged with over the course of the academic year. They discussed the ways that the two committees could collaborate moving forward. The Committee is asked if inviting DAC Chair Tschirhart would be beneficial. The suggestion is met with agreement, and Chair Tschirhart will be invited to a future CAC meeting.

Action: Discussion

3:29pm-3:33pm: Discussion: next steps for the survey subcommittee

Summary: Members of this subcommittee provide an update. The work on the survey is currently on hold, as the committee would like feedback from VP Kettenbeil before proceeding. The subcommittee has collected example surveys that may be used in shaping the committee's survey. It is suggested that this survey could be conducted every few years.

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VP Kettenbeil expresses interest in this survey. He and his team will consider this and discuss the survey further at a future committee meeting.

Action: Discussion

3:33pm-3:36pm: Discussion: faculty media promotion subcommittee

Summary: A call is made for a member to chair this sub-committee. Member Cranford volunteers and will meet with Chair Seeger later to discuss this matter further. This sub-committee can look at the previously discussed Public Intellectuals initiative.

Members discuss the different ways in which people consume media. Some prefer short form video content, while others prefer long-form written content, among others. A member voices a need for a multi-pronged approach. This is discussed.

Action: Discussion

3:36pm-3:45pm: Matters Arising

Summary: A call is made for volunteers to join committees and serve as committee chairs.

A member discusses the role of The Record and points out an article in which the article was corrected. The member notes that this is a positive action that should be replicated when possible. Further discussion ensues on this, and the meeting concludes.

Action: Discussion

3:45pm: Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Vandenberghe
Faculty Governance Coordinator
Faculty Senate Office