

Research Advisory Committee (RAC) Minutes for 04/08/2026 Meeting

Meeting information:

Circulated: 10/7/26

Approved: 10/14/26

Members present: Orsolya Lautner-Csorba (Chair), Arthur Lupia (Vice President for Research and Innovation), Alena Stocking (OVPR), Greg Rybarczyk, Mrinal Sarkar, Magda Ivanova, Jesse Capeceletro (SACUA), Fadhl Alakwaa, William A. Calvo-Quirós, Audrey Bennett, Tyler Nix, Quentin Stout

Guests present: Jill Jividen, Assistant Vice President for Research

Members absent: Karen Downing, Seth Guikema, Nina White

Faculty Senate Office staff present: Meaghan Blanchard

Minutes:

12:01: Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Minutes, Announcements

The agenda was approved. The minutes for the 03/18/2026 meeting are approved.

12:03: Vice President Lupia Update

Summary: VP President Lupia shares information about President Grasso's testimony in front of the House Committee on Education and Workforce. At said testimony, he spoke about foreign interference in research.

VP Lupia updates the committee on the status of certain grants and the continuation of said funding channels.

VP Lupia shares information about the NIH's and NSF's current funding status and his interpretations of how this will impact faculty at the U-M. VP Lupia states that the people employed at these agencies believe in the mission of the university, and they will continue to support and fund projects as they can. As of now, the main federal agencies have received their annual budgets, which were either at or above last year's figures. In turn, these agencies are having trouble spending the entirety of their budget by the end of July, which they are legally required to do. VP Lupia encourages faculty members to reach out to him if they are worried about their programs/funding, and he encourages faculty members who have already turned in grant proposals that are currently in limbo, to reach out to their agencies and advocate for their work directly.

VP Lupia assumes that Cooperative Agreement (U) Grants from the NIH will be scarce this year, as the current director wishes to flatten the geographic distribution of grants in the Senate, meaning grants will be spread out more evenly between states rather than being more concentrated on highly populous areas. In turn, he projects that more RO1s will be

given out this year, though it is not clear if the U-M will receive a significant number of these.

VP Lupia shares that he continues to visit Washington regularly to advocate for the University of Michigan.

Action: Discussion

12:12: Jill Jividen, Bold Challenges Presentation

Summary: Assistant VP Jill Jividen gives an overview of the OVPR's Bold Challenges Program.

The Bold Challenges initiative was started by Rebekah Cunningham, the previous Assistant Vice President of Research in 2022 to break down silos, catalyze cross-campus connections, become leaders in solving societal challenges, and bring in more large-scale, center-sized grants. The OVPR oversees this program to ensure that they can be nimble and adapt quickly to federal funding requirements. This initiative provides different levels of funding for teams, and it also provides staff support to assist with strategic planning and proposal management.

There are several ways in which faculty can receive support from Bold Challenges:

1. Pollination events, or networking events, where faculty may come together to share ideas and connect with other specialists. Teams (3 people or more) who meet at these events can apply for up to \$10,000 to continue follow up programming, including workshops, project funding, etc.
2. The Boost Program, a semester long program designed to support early stage collaborative research, with staff support and up to \$75,000 to conduct activities like research, data gathering, staff hiring, and other essential functions.
3. Accelerate, a program designed to support teams that are targeting large-scale, external funding opportunities, with up to \$125,000 in seed funding and staff support.

A committee member expresses their support for interdisciplinary initiatives like this and noted that these initiatives also create strong supportive communities. The committee member also asks that OVPR continue to help departments understand the value of interdisciplinary research and ensure that promotion pathways encourage these collaborations.

A committee member asks how many teams have been supported by this initiative. Assistant VP Jividen estimates that over 80 teams have been supported by the Bold Challenges Program. The ROI for this program is extremely high. Last year 1.6 million dollars in funding was given to teams and over 80 million dollars of grants were brought in.

A committee member encourages the OVPR to conduct more research into which senior members of the university sit on/have sat on the panels for some of these major research grants and awards. These members are an asset that can assist faculty in preparing their grants.

A committee member asks how to better make the Flint and Dearborn campuses aware of these initiatives. VP Jividen encourages the committee to share their bi-monthly newsletter.

A committee member asks how to connect with other faculty experts if they do not have the time or bandwidth to participate in the Bold Challenges program. Assistant VP Jividen recommends using Michigan Experts, though she acknowledges that it is currently more STEM focused.

The committee thanks VP Lupia for his continued engagement and hard work for the committee. His work and willingness to meet is very much appreciated.

VP Lupia thanks Chair Lautner-Csorba and the committee for their continued engagement with these important faculty issues.

Action: Discussion

12:40 Committee discussion about following year

Summary: The committee discusses committee charges for the year 2026-2027. A finalized summary of these charges will be included in the committee's final report.

Action: Discussion

Respectfully submitted,

Meaghan Blanchard
Operations Lead
Faculty Senate Office