FACULTY SENATE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

From the Chair of the Faculty Senate

Dear Faculty Senate Members,

Happy Halloween! Here is the October Faculty Senate newsletter…

- **Ask for inflation-adjusted salaries within your department/unit:** If we wish to be paid what we're worth, some collective action will be needed.
- **New promotion criteria for Medical School Clinical Faculty** will be announced very soon, following efforts by Med School leadership, Med School faculty, and SACUA.
- **SACUA passes two resolutions**, reaffirming the primacy of the faculty role in instruction; and requesting stronger measures to address gender-based violence at U-M.
- **Introducing SACUA member Steve Buchman:** Steve is tenured faculty at the Medical School and is a new member of SACUA this year.
- **November Faculty Senate events:** DMN Lecture on Academic Freedom with Michael Ignatieff (register); Political Speech regarding the current situation in the Middle East (register to speak); Open Questions Panel on Research Computing Centers (register).
- **Faculty Senate General Meeting on November 9, 3:15-5pm (Ruthven 2000, and online):** Please join us (register)! And, when you receive ballots via email, please vote.

As usual, details are below; apologies in advance for their length this month.

Kentaro

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

Push for inflation-adjusted salaries within your department/unit: As mentioned in the last newsletter, the top concern for faculty is *salaries not tracking with inflation*. Last month's survey asked how faculty might allocate a 10% annual bonus, where any portion allocated to housing, childcare, or other goods/services would be worth 20% more than cash. Overall, respondents elected to take 46% of the bonus as cash; 24% toward housing; 9% toward childcare; 8% toward U-M tuition for family members; and the remainder (~13%) toward charity, retirement, gym membership, supplemental healthcare, living expenses, etc. The emphasis shifts for junior faculty, who prioritized housing (38%), cash (34%), and childcare (13%).

All of that is consistent with available data and with recent stories we have heard of new assistant faculty struggling to live near their place of work. In most U-M schools and colleges, annual "merit" increases for, *e.g.*, tenure-track faculty have been in the 0-3% range in recent years; even assuming an annual 3% increase – unlikely for most – that would mean a 19% salary increase between 2020 and 2026. During the same period, the U.S. Consumer Price Index rose 29%, so most faculty salaries are likely falling behind inflation by a considerable margin. Meanwhile, in Washtenaw County, home prices have doubled over the last decade.

SACUA and I have begun to inform U-M leadership about faculty's salary concerns. Their initial response has been that salaries are set at the unit level, *i.e.*, within each college and school. That is an aspect of U-M's *decentralized* model, which is usually good for the university. It ensures that units feel responsible for keeping their budgets balanced, and it rewards "entrepreneurial" activity by allowing units to keep most of the revenue they generate from their programs.

Given that, the first site for any faculty push toward inflation-adjusted salaries is within your departments, colleges, and schools. I recommend that faculty members discuss the topic with colleagues and raise the issue at faculty meetings. (Unionized faculty, however, should work through their unions.) Reports from Senate Assembly members suggest that some schools have conducted benchmarking within the last few years for some tracks and have made adjustments. If they were sufficient, kudos and thank you! Other units may need a nudge.

Units may lack the ability to pay faculty more, however, and if so, Chairs and

Deans should be encouraged to take the issue upward, *i.e.*, with your Provost or Chancellor. U-M is experiencing an unprecedented range of pressures – rising costs; grant terminations; fewer funding opportunities; decreasing enrollment of international students (who pay out-of-state tuition); etc. Under the decentralized budget model, units may not be able to cover salary adjustments in the short- to medium-term. Meanwhile, stock market growth has been robust, and U-M's endowment has performed well. Central support may be required to ensure that faculty are paid at rates that allow us to remain a top university, but central support will not come unless the request is heard from many quarters.

At November's Faculty Senate General Meeting (see below), there will be a resolution asking for salaries that track with peer institutions and with inflation, as well as a reasonable floor for faculty salaries so that *all* of us are paid a decent standard of living. When you receive the ballot via email, please vote!

New promotion criteria for Medical School Clinical Faculty: We are delighted that the Medical School is in the final stages of a comprehensive revision of its promotion criteria for Clinical-track faculty, designed to better recognize their contributions and align promotion pathways with the work they do. Among the changes is a Clinical Care Delivery pathway that recognizes excellence and impact through a portfolio of achievement in quality, safety and outcomes; patient care, access and equity; clinical leadership and operations; innovation and implementation; and clinical expertise and influence. Detailed guidance and implementation timelines will be shared by the Medical School soon.

The Faculty Senate is grateful to Dean Tommy Wang, whose support enabled a comprehensive overhaul; Vice Dean for Faculty George Mashour and Assistant Dean for Faculty, Clinical Track, Maya Hammoud, who led the effort; former Assistant Dean Laurel Moore, who initiated this work; the Medical School faculty and departmental leaders who provided input; and Professors Derek Peterson and Soumya Rangarajan who, as SACUA Chair and Vice Chair last year, met with many Clinical faculty, drafted a whitepaper that highlighted the issue, and advocated for criteria revisions.

SACUA passes two resolutions. Periodically, SACUA feels compelled to respond to current events relevant to U-M. President Grasso requesting a

"pause" of the grade covering policy in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) without much consultation of the LSA faculty raised alarms for us. Grading policy is a key part of instruction, and instruction is primarily a faculty responsibility. Some LSA faculty told us that the original pilot was not widely discussed either. Either way, our resolution reaffirms the primacy of the faculty in decisions about instruction.

SACUA members were also shocked and saddened by the reported case of sexual assault at Cornell, which caused us to consider whether U-M could do better to prevent sexual violence. Gender-based violence has been a concern within Faculty Senate committees for many years; in November 2024, the Faculty Senate passed a resolution urging the university to take stronger measures to prevent and mitigate it. The university has taken some positive steps since, but we believe more can be done.

Other faculty members share our concerns, and some have submitted resolutions for consideration at the Faculty Senate General Meeting on Nov. 9. More about the resolutions will be sent out by Luke (Director of the Faculty Senate Office) in a separate mail.

Introducing SACUA member Steve Buchman, in his own words: "For over 33 years, the University of Michigan has been my professional home, where I serve as a tenured Professor of Surgery at the University of Michigan Medical School and a Craniofacial Surgeon at Mott Children's Hospital.

"Growing up in Suffern, New York, I headed to Columbia University to major in English and Protein Biochemistry while immersing myself in theater. That blend of humanities and science ultimately drew me to Medical School at the Medical College of Virginia, where I discovered a passion for the transformative power of craniofacial reconstruction. That calling led to seven years of residency training at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, followed by a craniofacial fellowship at UCLA under one of the field's true pioneers.

"Arriving in Michigan, I had the privilege of serving as Chief of Pediatric Plastic Surgery and Director of the Craniofacial Program, founding our fellowship program over 14 years ago. Today, my academic life is anchored by three passions: mentoring exceptional residents and medical students, running a federally funded translational research lab that moves discoveries from bench to bedside, and volunteering with Operation Smile to reconstruct children's

faces and train local surgeons across the globe, from China and India to Ethiopia and Brazil. While I am deeply grateful to have been recognized in the past as one of Michigan Medicine's Clinicians of the Year by my fellow physicians, my greatest reward has been the privilege of having been able to care for patients alongside such an inspiring community.

“I joined SACUA because I believe deeply in shared governance. Like many of you, I have watched academic institutions drift toward corporate operational models. I stepped into this role to help safeguard our foundational ethos as a sanctuary of open inquiry and faculty partnership—and I am fully committed to speaking truth to power to protect it.”

November Faculty Senate events: November will be host to several provocative Faculty Senate events, all supporting academic freedom and meaningful discourse. Join us when you can!

- Nov. 5, 4-5:30pm (Ruthven Rm. 2000): Davis, Markert, Nickerson Lecture on Academic Freedom, featuring Michael Ignatieff of Central European University (register to attend).
- Nov. 12, 4-5:30pm (Weiser Hall, 10th fl): Open Questions Panel: Research Computing Centers, featuring Prof. Karthik Duraisamy and Prof. Joy Rohde (register to attend).
- Nov. 13, noon-1pm (the Diag): Political Speech and the Public Square: the current situation in the Middle East, moderated by Mark Tessler, Samuel J. Eldersveld Collegiate Professor of Political Science (register to speak).

And, one more…

Faculty Senate General Meeting on November 9, 3:15-5pm (Ruthven 2000, and online): Every year, we host one or two general meetings for the entire Faculty Senate. (If you are U-M faculty with a 50%+ appointment, you are a member of the Faculty Senate!) General meetings are held in hybrid mode, and begin with brief updates from the Faculty Senate Chair. At this meeting, we are delighted to welcome President Grasso from 3:30-4pm, in what will be his last visit with the Faculty Senate. We will send him off with thanks for his openness to engaging with faculty government and longer-than-initially-planned service!

The last hour will be spent discussing potential Faculty Senate resolutions.

Resolutions can be informative about university issues that are not always discussed in department or unit faculty meetings. This time, there will be resolutions on faculty salaries; gender-based violence; GEO negotiations; Palestine solidarity activists; instructional decision-making; general fund budget transparency; and Senate Assembly rules. Ballots for the resolutions are distributed via email immediately after the meeting. All Faculty Senate members receive ballots, regardless of meeting attendance; voting will be open for 72 hours. A separate mail with more details will follow.

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