April 24, 2006

Dear Professor Giordani, Professor Smith, members of SACUA and the Senate Assembly:

I am happy to report that the Student Relations Advisory Committee (SRAC) has faithfully adhered to its guiding objectives and has achieved a high level of productivity during the 2005-2006 academic year. This summary highlights the activities of the SRAC carried out in the past few months. These include:

- Establishing a climate of cooperation and a commitment to participation and dialogue with an extremely wide range of (campus) organizations and services, including MESA, U-M Mental Health Workgroup, the Michigan Daily, and Michigan Student Assembly, and the Ann Arbor News.
- Gathering and/or reviewing extremely high-quality data describing the present state of the University climate and student life, notably in areas such as mental health, diversity, the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative (MCRI), course evaluations, student housing and foodservice, and student health insurance options.
- Fostering the involvement of university faculty, staff and students with valuable knowledge and expertise.

Over the past year, the SRAC also outlined a number of recommendations to improve both the short- and long-term quality of the University of Michigan student experience. Some of these recommendations require little if any additional funding and can be implemented relatively quickly, such as our support of the Michigan Student Assembly Textbook Initiative. This resolution urges the University administration to push for the implementation of a policy requiring all academic departments and/or professors to disclose the required textbooks for the upcoming semester at least one month before the first day of class. The SRAC sees this initiative as a high priority, and will work, in conjunction with the Academic Affairs Advisory Committee and the University administration to implement this policy.

Internally, the SRAC reviewed its committee composition and voted to ensure that graduate student representation would be consistently included in the committee (currently, the SRAC is comprised of four student members; two each from the student government council and graduate student council appointed for each academic year by MSA; however, a graduate student representative has not been named.)

The SRAC also recommends revision of the current system of student course evaluations. Specifically, after carefully reviewing the questionnaire content, implementation, accessibility, and follow-up mechanisms, we have concluded that making course evaluations available online and throughout a semester session (rather than simply at the end of the course) would allow students to give feedback when it can be most useful, and for instructors to adjust the course accordingly and in a timely fashion. Such evaluation procedures are taking place within the Engineering School, but we feel that this revision should be carried out on a university-wide basis. While this recommendation is larger in scope and more fundamental in nature and would
likely entail more time and effort to implement, we believe that it will have an important impact on course quality, as well as on student and faculty performance. Issues on “ownership” of evaluation results and specific content were examined by the Academic Affairs Advisory Committee.

In conclusion, the SRAC has achieved several successes this year. As the 2005-2006 Chair, I have had the privilege of working with an excellent group. One of the SRAC's major strengths is that the support personnel, faculty, staff, and students involved in the committee believe very strongly in it. It is my hope that the SRAC will continue along this productive trajectory in the upcoming year.

Sincerely yours,

Teresa Satterfield, 2005-2006 Chair