THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

REGENTS COMMUNICATION

ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Subject: Academic Freedom and Shared Governance

Academic freedom is the liberty to teach, pursue and discuss knowledge freely and without interference or restriction by the administration of the University, by faculty colleagues or by others external to the University. It is essential that, when the University makes decisions with respect to teaching or research, those decisions are made on the basis of criteria established by the professoriate and independent of external political pressure or internal administrative fiat. The preservation of academic freedom requires a system of "shared governance" in which faculty, selected by their colleagues through the established governance system, and the administration share the decision-making authority. As our University adopts a more corporate style of management, faculty governance becomes more crucial to the protection and preservation of a liberal education. No university in this country is or can be among the top universities unless it cherishes academic freedom and has in place a strong and well-constructed system of governance shared between faculty and administration.

The Bylaws of Regents of the University of Michigan grant to the faculty extensive rights to participate in and to oversee the management of the University. Unfortunately this role delegated to the faculty is at times not recognized by the professional managers who administer the University. Also, the numbers of administrators who have been engaged in scholarly research and teaching for any significant portion of their careers are diminishing constantly. The result is that increasingly University administrators lack the background to manage an academic institution without relying upon the knowledge and expertise of the faculty. Furthermore, one trend in recent years has been to replace tenured professors or add to the ranks of the teaching and research faculty individuals who do not have tenured or tenure-track positions. This trend poses a potential threat to academic freedom.

Elected representatives of the faculty, serving on the University's Senate Assembly and on the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA), and faculty appointed by the Senate Assembly on its committees, are working together with University administrators on a variety of important projects. The Provost recently has appointed a taskforce to work on the revision of faculty grievance procedures. The Office of the Provost has also begun work on a study of faculty compensation in conjunction with members of the Committee on the Economic Status of the Faculty (CESF). SACUA is also represented on the Michigan Healthy Community Advisory Committee, a committee with broad representation from the University community which

is involved in the development of new health benefit programs for active and retired faculty and staff. Finally SACUA is looking forward to an agreement with the University's Executive Officers on the content of a document on shared governance.

Shared governance is of utmost importance to the University not only because it protects academic freedom but because it strengthens the academic programs of the University and allows the University to keep its position among the top institutions of higher education.

(Submitted, January 2008)

Regents' Bylaw 4.04. The Senate Assembly shall serve as the legislative arm of the senate…The assembly shall have power to consider and advise regarding all matters within the jurisdiction of the University Senate which affect the functioning of the University as an institution of higher learning, which concern its obligations to the state and to the community at large, and which relate to its internal organization insofar as such matters of internal organization involve general questions of educational policy.