THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION
ITEM FOR INFORMATION

RE: Faculty Governance Strategic Participation

SACUA devoted time early in the summer to identify initiatives we think are in the strategic interest of the University. We are also considering the best ways to be "at the table," to have our insights be heard and valued. We want to be effective. We view shared governance like a choir; the faculty informs and enriches the whole by providing many diverse voices. The faculty will never speak with a single voice; such would be suspect and boring. We can provide insight and advice and seek and speak the truth judiciously. The function of faculty governance, in part, is to express with coherence the voices of the faculty to the University at large and the administration in particular. There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors.

The very name of SACUA bears witness that we are an "advisory committee." Our strength lies in our ability to influence the deliberations and the direction of the University. Professor Ted St. Antoine advised us not to employ a labor-management model to understand the nature of the relationship of the faculty with the administration. Instead, as members of a great University, we should participate by seeking the whole truth, looking for common interests and making our recommendations based on the truth and interests we discover. Tactful honesty and constructive insights are the prerequisites for shared governance. We hope (in the strongest sense of that word) to receive respect and honesty as we offer them.

One aspect of our strategy is developing the expertise of our committees. For years, the Senate Assembly advisory committees to senior officers of the University have been composed of those willing to volunteer themselves. Many of these faculty members have served the University well and their service has been honorable and appreciated. Some of our committee members have had professional expertise related to their committee service. As we move forward, we are intentionally seeking to increase this latter type. For example, if the work of the committee involves surveys, we will invite faculty with recognized abilities in constructing survey questions to participate.

Implementation of these initiatives anticipates correlative responses from others in the University. As we seek the truth, we need to meet a corresponding willingness for transparency and sharing. Committees need to receive the information they request without undue delay or resistance. We cannot be faulted for a slanted perspective if we request information that is not forthcoming.

Finally, we plan to make the scope of our efforts reflect issues that affect the entire University. We will review and advise on University-wide policies and procedures. For example, we will continue to monitor benefits changes; we remain concerned that the University claims to "save" costs by shifting benefits expenses from the University to faculty and staff members and thus reducing their compensation. For

many years the University maintained a social contract with its employees; now that is breaking down, often in a regressive manner that affects most those that can afford it least, even when alternatives are available. Such changes have impact for everyone and as such must be within the purview of shared governance.

We look forward to a great year in the history of the University of Michigan.

(Submitted September 2010)

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.