Faculty Governance Update to the Regents

Annual Presentation to the University of Michigan Board of Regents

By the Chair of SACUA

Stanley Berent, Ph.D.
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As Chair of SACUA (the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs), let me thank you for the opportunity to present to you this report. As you know, Regents' Bylaw Section 4.08 states that SACUA shall advise and consult with the President of the University on matters of University policy and shall serve as an instrument for affecting the actions of the Faculty Senate and Assembly. Pursuant to its Regental charge, SACUA has met with the President and Provost as well as other executive officers and administrators, has arranged for the annual Senate and the regular Senate Assembly meetings, and has constituted and directed the standing committees of the Senate Assembly.

Both the President and the Provost have individually visited meetings of SACUA, openly and informatively responding to specific questions posed by SACUA members. In addition, the SACUA Chair and Vice-Chair (Silvia Pedraza) have met regularly and at separate times with the provost and with the President. The relationship between formal faculty governance and the University's executive officers appears at this time to be exemplary. It is my opinion that President Coleman and Provost Courant have shown themselves to be sensitive to faculty issues and to meaningful involvement of faculty in decision making and institutional planning. It is my hope that this can be enhanced in the future.

In spring and summer 2004, SACUA undertook a poll of faculty as to the issues they see as the most important to address during the coming year. In August 2004, SACUA held a retreat to discuss the results of that poll and to plan how best to address each of the faculty's priorities. The top seven issues have become a focus for SACUA and include the following:

1. Faculty quality of life issues (e.g., childcare, parking, intellectual properties, health insurance and other benefits [before and after retirement]).
2. Evaluation of administrators by faculty.

3. Tenure/non-tenure track faculty (growth, ratios, and representation)
4. Importance of tenure to the institution (functional impact to issues such as academic freedom, faculty autonomy and creativity).
5. Shared governance (faculty contributions to policies affecting faculty)
6. Grade inflation and alteration.
7. Research support for junior faculty (and IRB issues).

While we have begun to focus on the priority areas just mentioned, SACUA continues to address a number of areas that are important to the faculty and to the institution. Some of these activities represent multi-year efforts, and some relate in part or whole to the priorities listed. These efforts will continue during the coming year.

With regard to quality of life issues, for instance, we have addressed issues related to parking, intellectual properties, and health insurance (including prescription drug coverage, the report of which to SA is expected in the near future) over past months through discussions with administrators, comment and suggestions regarding standard practice guides, and by way of advisory committee communications with key executive officers. In what is hoped to be an ongoing dialogue, I met recently with Laurita Thomas, HR Administrator.

Related certainly to quality of faculty life, in addition to institutional quality, was the creation of a central faculty ombuds position. The history behind the creation of this position is relatively long but ultimately reflects a model of cooperation between faculty and administration. The Senate Assembly in 1989 established a task force to review faculty grievance procedures. This task force, among other things, found that most disputes were settled informally rather than through formal methods. Following this, the task force recommended and SACUA requested the creation of a central faculty ombuds office. The request was more recently revived and Provost Paul Courant led the effort to create such a position. In June 2004 School of Nursing Professor Bonnie Metzger took office as the University of Michigan Central Faculty Ombuds. We are very pleased with this outcome.

About one year ago, Professor Charles Koopmann, then SACUA Chair, advised that rising costs and declining budgets would create increasing issues for the institution and for its faculty. These issues are no less pressing today. While this situation affects all levels and classes of those who work for or are retired from our institution, it is those at the lowest end of the income range or those on fixed income that are likely to be the earliest and most adversely affected (see, for example, the Budget Study Committee's

April 19, 2004 article in the University Record, available at the SACUA website: http://www.umich.edu/~sacua/SenAssb/reports.html). As data related to these issues are constantly changing, especially perhaps in the area of health care, it has not been easy to arrive at a definitive answer to the dilemma. SACUA and its various committees will, however, continue to address these issues in the coming year.

Faculty Tenure related issues will continue to be addressed by SACUA and its relevant committees during the coming, and possibly, future years. As you know from past reports, the SACUA Tenure Committee developed a Tenure Guidelines document, which was then approved by the Faculty Senate and the Provost's office. Last year's Tenure Committee turned its attention to the nature of practices across schools and units in granting tenure. The report of that effort should be forthcoming. We are now interested in two aspects of tenure that we believe to be extremely important, for the institution as well as for its faculty. We wish to clarify the functional significance of tenure to the institution, and also we want to determine the consequences, if any, of the growth of non-tenured faculty at our institution and the impact of this growth on tenure related issues and faculty governance issues more generally.

Some other and specific activities include the following:

1. On September 14, SACUA hosted the annual Faculty Governance Luncheon. This luncheon has proven to be both popular and productive. It provides an opportunity for faculty involved in governance to meet and hear from the University's executive officers, including the President as well as a number of vice-presidents, deans, and other administrative leaders, and to become introduced and oriented to their respective committees and to those on other committees.

2. The University Senate held its annual meeting on September 20, 2004. Immediately before this meeting, Senate Assembly hosted President Mary Sue Coleman_s Annual Address. In choosing to deliver her address via this venue, President Coleman sent a powerful message regarding the value and respect she holds for the faculty.

3. At the October 25, 2004 Senate assembly meeting, Professor SeonAe Yeo, Chair of the SACUA Child Care Taskforce, delivered her committee's report. This report was unanimously voted acceptance by Senate Assembly. Submission of this report culminated over two years of work by the taskforce, which with SACUA will now direct their attention to implementation of the report's main recommendations (The text of the taskforce report will be posted on the SACUA homepage: http://www.umich.edu/~sacua/).

4. Also, at the October 25, 2004 Senate Assembly meeting, the Assembly ratified the design and implementation recommendations for the Administration Evaluation Committee (AEC), a standing committee of the Senate Assembly and University Senate. The AEC was charged to report its operational experience, issues arising, and recommendations for improved functioning of the AEC process to the Senate, Senate

Assembly, and SACUA during Winter Term 2005. Following the work of the provisional AEC in its initial round of evaluations, members of the AEC are to be chosen by the same process as all other standing committees of the Senate Assembly and the University Senate, with the Chair being the Senate Secretary. This project was worked on by a number of people, two primary persons being John Lehman and Semyon M. Meerkov.

5. The annual Regent Candidates Forum was held on October 25, 2004 following the Senate Assembly meeting. The Michigan Student Association co-sponsored this event. The forum was well attended and video taped for repeated presentations on public access television (local Ch. 22). Responses from both candidates and audience were uniformly positive.

6. With multiple co-sponsors, SACUA participated in the planning and implementation of the Fourteenth Annual University of Michigan Senate's Davis, Markert, Nickerson Lecture on Academic and Intellectual Freedom. This year's speaker was Noam Chomsky, who spoke to an overflow crowd that was estimated to be well over 700 people.

7. SACUA representatives participated in the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) at CIC's annual meeting at the University of Illinois (November 11-12, 2004).

8. Provost Paul Courant presented his annual address to the Senate Assembly on November 15, 2004. In his talk, Provost Courant emphasized "challenging the present and enriching the future," the importance of "academic freedom" to the University, a balance between administration and faculty, and the necessity of preserving faculty autonomy.

In closing, SACUA has had, and will continue to have, a very ambitious agenda. We look forward to continuing our positive relationship with the faculty and students, the Regents, President Coleman and her administration, and the community. We are aware of and tremendously appreciative of the privileged role of faculty representation that the Regents have granted to SACUA and would like very much to continue to enhance communications with the Board of Regents.

At the beginning of this presentation, I thanked you for allowing me the opportunity to speak. Let me repeat that now and on behalf of the great faculty of the University of Michigan. Also, I wish to add my view, a view that has been reinforced by comments from Faculty, Regents, and Executive Officers of the University, that interactions such as these produce a positive atmosphere of collegiality that allows an informed faculty perspective to influence important institutional decisions.

Thank you.