UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS' COMMUNICATION
Item for Information

Subject: Faculty Governance Update – Lines of Communication

Decisions made by the Regents of the University of Michigan have profound and long-term effects on the U of M academic community as well as the state and the country. The University of Michigan is among the great public research universities and has recently been ranked 18th out of 400 of the world's greatest universities (London Times, 2011). Regents' decisions critically affect the scholarship, research and teaching of individual faculty members, the ability of the university to recruit and retain the most able faculty to teach and train our students and affect the university's international stature as one of the world's great public research university.

The Senate Assembly, which represents the members of the university community with the most longevity—the faculty-- is an **elected representative body** that speaks to the Regents and to the Administration as the faculty's collective "voice". Its depth of representation is critical to its mission—since all schools and colleges of the university from all three campuses elect its members to three-year terms. It is not a single voice, or a single source of information—it is many speaking as one—in short, the definition of a university..

The information that comes to the Regents and on which crucial decisions are based must be the soundest, the most in-depth, the most impartial and the most informative available and all sources should be clearly identifiable. It is important that this information be made available to the board in a timely way.

The July 2011 Faculty Governance Update submitted to the Regents stated that, "SACUA would like to reestablish communication between the Regents and SACUA by reinstituting individual private meetings with each of the Regents during the coming year." This is to provide a direct channel of timely information from the faculty and its representative body to the Regents. So far, Regents Maynard, Newman, and White have taken time out of their busy schedules to meet with SACUA. From SACUA's perspective, these were very valuable exchanges that have fostered open and candid dialogue and that also set the tone for future exchanges. SACUA is scheduled to meet with Regent Darlow on December 5, 2011. These private meetings in past decades have produced good will and understanding among all participants and SACUA is hopeful that this will also be the case this year.

Even more than the private meetings, SACUA believes there is a compelling potential benefit to the Regents to receive faculty information and opinions through the elected and representational central faculty governance structure created by the Regents' Bylaws. It is SACUA's belief that the University Senate, Senate Assembly, SACUA, and the Senate Assembly advisory committees could be of much greater use to the Regents in crafting policy with a core of informational strength than has been the case in the past. The faculty collectively has a vast expertise—and is composed of scholars and

researchers with a wealth of information-gathering skills, experience and historical perspective in addition to rapidly accessible sources that can be made available on short timelines. Use of these faculty skills and procedural knowledge by the Regents presents a unique opportunity for deepening the pool of information on which the Regents base their decisions. It is critical for the Regents to have unfiltered and complete information before them when making decisions that affect so many and so much at the University. This requires the established and routine use of the central faculty governance structure for that information.

SACUA would like to engage the already existing direct lines of communication to the Regents more often and more effectively. With the exception of the advisory committees appointed by the administration on which members are selected and whose deliberations are confidential, central faculty governance participants are elected and serve as part of a proportional and representational process. For the other faculty groups on campus, selection by administrators is the norm. Even in the election of executive committee members, the highest vote getter is not always elected. School wide "executive faculties" are convened to vote on matters that may not concern or be the provenance of most of their members. This is true, for example, of the executive faculty in the Medical School on the Ann Arbor campus, which has a far larger number of clinical and research track faculty than instructional track faculty members. Neither clinical nor research faculty members are subject to tenure considerations, yet they have voted on such issues that affect only tenure-track instructional faculty and will continue to vote on them.

The July 2011 Update also stated that, "[t]he clear first priority of SACUA for the upcoming year is to increase Senate Assembly (and the full University Senate) involvement in central faculty governance issues so that SACUA is acting in full partnership with both SA and the Faculty Senate." Since then, SACUA Chair Kate Barald sent individual welcoming messages to each of this year's Senate Assembly new and returning members to encourage each member's participation and to initiate a dialogue about faculty governance and the faculty's concerns and priorities.

In September, to establish additional lines for exchanging information, SACUA met with Vice President for Global Communications and Strategic Initiatives Lisa Rudgers to discuss SACUA's and the Senate Assembly's role in promoting the image of the University including the perception of faculty governance by the Administration. This dialogue will continue as Vice President Rudgers meets with the Senate Assembly on November 21, 2011.

Submitted: November 2011

(On behalf of SACUA)