

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION
Items for Information

SUBJECT: April 2025 Faculty Governance Update

1. Special Faculty Senate Meeting Vote Results

With overwhelming majorities, the Faculty Senate of the University of Michigan passed four resolutions defending the University and its people from the federal administration's political interference this week. The Senate, the 7600-member body that includes all faculty as well as research scientists, librarians, archivists, and curators, debated the motions on Thursday, April 17th; the electronic vote closed on Sunday, April 20th. 3088 senate members voted, an unprecedented level of participation.

[Motion 1](#) (adopted with 92.8% of the vote) urges the university administration to enter into a mutual defense pact with the members of the Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA). [Motion 2](#) (95.1%) adopted the "Statement in Support of the Core Missions and Values of Higher Education in the United States of America," drafted by a group of BTAA faculty leaders to protect academic freedom and free speech. [Motion 3](#) (78.7%) asks that all legally compliant DEI initiatives be continued at the university and that ODEI staff be reinstated, among other measures, and [Motion 4](#) (93.1%) urges the administration to protect international faculty, students, and staff members from unwarranted ICE detention.

The overwhelming margins of the vote reveal that we faculty are a remarkably unified voice, a unanimity that is a source of great strength at this moment. I presented the vote results to the President and Regents yesterday, and urged them to act on the faculty's recommendations.

2. 2025-26 SACUA

Dr. Derek Peterson (the Ali Mazrui Collegiate Professor of History & African Studies) was elected as the new SACUA Chair for 2025-26. Soumya Rangarajan (Clinical Assistant Professor of Geriatric and Palliative Medicine) was elected Vice-Chair. Their terms began on May 1, 2025.

The 2025-26 SACUA includes new members Jesse Capecelatro (Associate Professor of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering), Kirsten Herold (Lecturer IV in the School of Public Health), and Kentaro Toyama (W K Kellogg Professor of Community Information and Professor of Information), and returning members Vilma Mesa (Professor of Education and Mathematics), Heather O'Malley (Assistant Research Scientist in Pharmacology), Melanie Tanielian (Associate Professor of History), and Alex Yasha Yi (Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, UM-Dearborn).

3. Increased surveillance on campus is compromising trust on campus

Faculty across campus have voiced concerns about the increased surveillance — the plain clothes officers trailing and photographing students in academic buildings, the omnipresence of drones, the Blue-coated security on the public square of the Diag, the high-powered surveillance cameras. While proponents may argue that surveillance enhances safety, many faculty and students feel a sense of oppression and observe that the extensive surveillance chills free expression and infringes on civil liberties and privacy. The increased surveillance this year includes:

- Approved contracts with AmeriShield in October 2024 for some \$800K+. AmeriShield provides plain clothes officers who are surveilling students on campus. Our understanding is that the men taking photos of students on several occasions (including the work-in) and tracking students on campus are employees of AmeriShield.

- The Michigan Law ACLU recently distributed an [open letter](#) expressing concerns about threats to civil liberties posed by the [surveillance cameras](#) recently installed to monitor the Diag and the Law Quad. The letter begins:

We, the undersigned members of the University of Michigan community, ask the University of Michigan to remove the surveillance cameras that have recently been installed in the Diag and the Law Quad. The University has failed to provide notice to community members that they are under surveillance, where the surveillance cameras are located, the purpose of the cameras, whether they are being monitored in real time, or under what circumstances surveillance video is viewed. We believe the surveillance cameras pose a threat to civil liberties at this public university, violate stated University values, violate the University's own policy on "Oversight and Governance" of cameras, and violate the privacy rights of students whose domiciles border the Law Quad.

- There is also concern with the surveillance camera installed outside the Edward Said Multicultural Lounge in the North Quad.

- DPSS drones are frequently seen flying above events, such as at the recent Silent March for DEI on the Diag. We have been told that the drones are there to protect protesters by alerting DPSS about the presence of outside agitators, but their presence does not feel protective.

Our venerable institution of higher learning was designed to be a space of intellectual growth, learning, dialogue, and critical engagement that aims to cultivate a vibrant environment where students, faculty, and staff actively participate in the pursuit of knowledge, not a space of surveillance and punishment. If there are security concerns, we ask that these are handled in ways that do not employ surveillance.

4. Improper Handling of Tenure Case


The *Michigan Daily* recently published an [investigative piece](#) about former School of Music, Theatre & Dance Assistant Professor Somangshu Mukherji who filed a grievance following his botched tenure decision in which then-Provost Susan Collins overturned a positive tenure recommendation by the SMTD Dean David Gier and Executive Committee. The grievance hearing board found such severe procedural violations in the Provost's Office's handling of the tenure case that the board concluded unanimously that Dr. Mukherji should be reevaluated for tenure with supervision by the Faculty Senate.

The *Michigan Daily* article is worth reading closely, including the additional content in links provided by the reporter. Among other things, the article shows how a compliant dean and hostile colleagues — in this case a professor who signed an internal evaluation secretly co-authored by a colleague who had bullied and harassed the tenure candidate — can work with the Provost's Office to negate the procedures that safeguard against bias and inaccuracies entering a faculty evaluation. As former Provost Collins overturned the grievance hearing board's ruling in favor of a second tenure review for Dr. Mukherji, we see how the grievance system can be completely ineffective at remediating even such obvious improprieties. These problems persist; in the past year, another unanimous GHB decision was reversed by the current provost.

It's worth noting that, when the Office of General Counsel learned the facts of Dr. Mukherji's case during the discovery phase of his subsequent lawsuit, they neither redressed the harm by recommending that he be granted the proper tenure review that the grievance board asked for, nor did they recommend respecting the original positive decision of the SMTD Executive Committee and Dean. Neither did the OGC hold the internal evaluators responsible for intellectual dishonesty and plagiarism.

We ask that the University of Michigan administration remedy the wrongs in this case and reinstate Dr. Mukherji.

Submitted: April 30, 2025



Rebekah Modrak
SACUA Chair