

The University of Michigan Regents Communication

Request for Action

Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement

Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir

Anne Curzan, Ph.D., former dean, Geneva Smitherman Collegiate Professor of English Language and Literature, Linguistics and Education, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, professor of English language and literature, professor of linguistics, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and professor of education, Marsal Family School of Education, retired from active faculty status on May 24, 2026.

Professor Curzan earned a BA in linguistics from Yale University before earning her master's and doctorate in English language and literature from the University of Michigan. Professor Curzan joined the faculty at the University of Washington in 1998 and returned to the University of Michigan as assistant professor in 2002. She was promoted through the ranks to professor in 2012.

Professor Curzan's career is uniquely distinguished in teaching, leadership, and public intellectual work. To name only a few of her many achievements, she received the University's Henry Russel Award for outstanding research and teaching in 2007, the Faculty Recognition Award in 2009, and the John Dewey Award for undergraduate teaching in 2012. She was named an Arthur F. Thurnau Professor in 2007 and the Geneva Smitherman Collegiate Professor of English, Linguistics, and Education in 2018. She led the English Department Writing Program 2004-2012, was UM faculty athletics representative 2012-2016, and served as the College of Literature, Science, and Arts (LSA) associate dean for the humanities 2015-2019. Professor Curzan then served as the dean of LSA from 2019-2024, which included ushering LSA effectively through a global pandemic and other singular institutional challenges of the time. For years, she co-led the weekly show "That's What They Say" on the local NPR station Michigan Public Radio and wrote every two weeks for the Lingua Franca blog for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Her TED talk "What makes a word 'real'?" has millions of views, and she has created the audio/video courses "Secret Life of Words: English Words and Their Origins" and "English Grammar Boot Camp" for Wondrium (formerly The Great Courses).

Professor Curzan's academic books include *Fixing English: Prescriptivism and Language History* (2014) and *Gender Shifts in the History of English* (2003), and her best-selling book *Says Who? A Kinder, Funner Usage Guide for Everyone Who Cares About Words* (2024) has been featured in national newspapers and popular podcasts. Her co-authored textbook, *How English Works: A Linguistic Introduction*, is currently in its third edition, and the fourth edition of her co-edited

teaching textbook *First Day to Final Grade* will come out in 2027. In 2016, she received the Linguistics, Language, and the Public Award from the Linguistic Society of America.

The Regents now salute this distinguished scholar and teacher by naming **Anne Curzan, dean emerita, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, Geneva Smitherman Collegiate Professor Emerita of English Language and Literature, Linguistics and Education, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor Emerita, professor emerita of English language and literature, professor emerita of linguistics, and professor emerita of education.**

Requested by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Kinsey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Jon Kinsey

Vice President and Secretary of the University

May 2026