

University of Michigan Regents Communication:

October 2026 Faculty Governance Update

Item for Information

Subject: October 2026 Faculty Governance Update

Executive Summary

- 1) Appreciation for invitation to Regents' box for SACUA
- 2) A rising concern for faculty: salaries not keeping up with inflation
- 3) Grade covering and shared governance
- 4) Successful Faculty Senate events in September

1. Appreciation for invitations to Regents' box for SACUA

The Faculty Senate Chair receives season tickets to football games, and for several years, the chair has shared the tickets with other SACUA members. All of us are grateful for the tickets and for the invitation to the Regents' box, which is a beautiful space with a beautiful view. Thank you!

2. A rising concern for faculty: salaries not keeping up with inflation

In a recent survey sent to the faculty about the relative importance of Faculty Senate issues, the top concern by a wide margin was "salaries not keeping up with inflation" (66% of 149 respondents indicated it as a priority). Though this topic has not received much SACUA or Senate Assembly attention so far, it dovetails with concerns about the unaffordability of childcare and housing and challenges with recruiting and retention, which have surfaced in recent years. SACUA will gather more data and explore approaches to it.

After salaries, the next issues with the most votes were (2) university AI policy; (3) U.S. Compact for Higher Education; (4) immigration challenges; (5) digital content accessibility; (6) childcare/family care; and (7) travel booking/reimbursement processes. Senate Assembly committees will be working on all of these topics.

3. Grade covering and shared governance

The College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) announced a grade-covering pilot in August. Then, earlier this week, President Grasso asked LSA to suspend the pilot.

SACUA is concerned that while LSA leadership had discussed the policy among department chairs, there was no broad consultation with most LSA faculty. President Grasso's request to suspend also did not involve significant discussion with LSA faculty. It would be a major failure of shared governance if the most directly impacted faculty members were not consulted to start or end the program in a domain where the faculty should have primary authority: grading policy is a central aspect of instruction.

As the Faculty Senate, it is our hope that meaningful consultation with faculty – in a way that is proportionate to the issue – is restored as a norm at the University of Michigan.

4. Successful Faculty Senate events in September

On September 17, SACUA held the first of a monthly series of "Open Questions" panels, which are intended to enable and encourage meaningful dialogue about controversial topics. The topic was "institutional neutrality." The two panelists – Professor Michelle Adams from the Law School, and Professor Gary Harper from the School of Public Health – not only presented strong cases for their different views of institutional neutrality, but also they engaged in thoughtful conversation of a kind that audience members later reported they wanted more of. [The panel was covered in the University Record](#). The October 22 (4-5:30pm; Rackham Amphitheater) panel will be about norms for university ceremonies, and November 12 (4-5:30pm; Weiser Hall) will be about the value of large-scale research infrastructure.

Then, on September 24, the Faculty Senate hosted what is becoming a biennial event: the Regent Candidate Forum. We had invited all six of this year's regental candidates, and were happy to be joined by five, with four in person: Regent Paul Brown (D), Candidate Lena Epstein (R), Candidate Kyle Maas (US Taxpayers, online participation), Candidate Amir Makled (D), and Candidate Michael Schostak (R). About 50 people – mostly faculty, but also some students, staff, and alumni – came to listen in person; many more saw the livestream. [The University Record reported on the event](#), and [video has been posted to YouTube](#).

We had solicited questions from the Senate Assembly in advance. The most common ones, together with some context, were sent to the candidates a week before the event. At the event, after the candidates' opening speeches, they each had a chance to respond to questions about (1) external pressure to suppress speech on campus; (2) financial transparency; (3) Michigan Medicine's financial tensions; (4) financial independence of Dearborn and Flint campuses; (5) rule of law at U-M; (6) role of faculty in university decision-making. Faculty who attended the event were glad to hear that all of the candidates showed support for consultation of the faculty in major university decisions.

Respectfully submitted: October 2, 2026



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