FACULTY SENATE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

University of Michigan Regents Communication: November 2026 Faculty Governance Update

Item for Information

Subject: November 2026 Faculty Governance Update

Executive Summary

1) Congratulations to Regent Paul Brown and to Regent-Elect Amir Makled
2) A rising concern for faculty: salaries not keeping up with inflation, Part 2
3) 36th Annual Davis, Markert, Nickerson Lecture on Academic and Intellectual Freedom
4) Appreciation and thanks to President Domenico Grasso

1. Congratulations to Regent Paul Brown and to Regent-Elect Amir Makled

The Faculty Senate congratulates Regent Paul Brown on his re-election, and Regent-Elect Amir Makled for his election, to the University of Michigan Board of Regents. SACUA and the Senate Assembly look forward to working with them, along with the continuing members of the Board.

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

Last month's Faculty Governance Update mentioned that faculty salaries not keeping up with inflation was the top issue indicated by a range of faculty. We have begun to gather data to consider.

For non-unionized faculty in most of our schools and colleges, annual "merit" increases for, *e.g.*, tenure-track faculty have been in the 0-3% range in recent years; even assuming an annual 3% increase that would mean a 19% salary increase between 2020 and 2026. (Most faculty – especially in Dearborn – would not have seen that level of increase.) During the same period, the U.S. Consumer Price Index rose 29%, so most faculty's inflation-adjusted salaries have fallen behind by at least 10%. Meanwhile, in Washtenaw County, home prices have doubled over the last decade.

Lower salaries have an impact on retention, on hiring, and on morale, all of which will gradually impact the excellence of the university. We also believe that the impact has been hardest on our junior faculty, who also often feel the pinch of childcare and housing. We will continue to gather more data, including comparisons with peer universities.

3. Thirty-Sixth Annual Davis, Markert, Nickerson Lecture on Academic and Intellectual Freedom

On November 5, we hosted Michael Ignatieff, a true polymath. Ignatieff was a noted author, historian, and member of the Canadian Parliament, before he became president of Central European University (CEU), which he moved from Hungary to Austria to avoid Victor Orban's authoritarian attacks on the university.

Ignatieff began with stories of his personal ties to Chandler Davis, after whom the lecture series is named. Davis, after being fired from the University of Michigan for refusing to answer questions before the McCarthy-era House Committee on Un-American Activities, became a professor at University of Toronto where Ignatieff was a student. Later, Ignatieff reconnected with Davis through his wife, Natalie Zemon Davis (U-M PhD, 1959), who served on the board of CEU. All three of them had been involved in various forms of activism and remained committed to intellectual freedom throughout.

Ignatieff acknowledged the difficult nature of decisions that universities must make, especially under polarized national politics and the influence of big donors. Notably, he expressed a strong belief in institutional neutrality as well as the need to push back against some demands by big donors. He was joined on stage by panelists U-M Professor Robert Mickey (Political Science) and Visiting Professor Tatjana Papić (Law).

4. Appreciation and thanks to President Domenico Grasso

The Faculty Senate is deeply appreciative of President Domenico Grasso and his service to the University of Michigan. He became our president during a tumultuous time and steered the ship with a steady hand. In his first semester as president, he and his wife, Susan, welcomed the Senate Assembly to the President's House for an afternoon – something that faculty do not remember happening with his recent predecessors. We remember his firm support for academic freedom when there were calls to punish critics of Charlie Kirk. And, throughout his time as president, President Grasso was always open to engaging with the faculty, even when there were differences; and he pressed his senior officers to do the same.

We had hoped to thank him at our upcoming Faculty Senate General Meeting, but as he had a sudden scheduling conflict, we will do a smaller send-off at a later SACUA meeting, where he will be presented with the following T-shirt.



We wish him and Susan a very happy and relaxing retirement and look forward to photos of him wearing the shirt on their Sprinter van adventures!

Respectfully submitted: November 6, 2026

Kentaro Toyama
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