



Blue Ribbon Panel Report

Submitted March 21, 2019



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Executive Summary

In the fall of 2018, Provost and Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs Martin Philbert appointed a Blue Ribbon Panel of faculty to investigate the question, “What ought to be the intersection between political thought/ideology and a faculty member’s responsibility to students?” This report is the product of the panel’s work and makes recommendations about principles to guide professional reasoning in the context of faculty members’ (including graduate student instructors’) responsibilities as teachers at the University of Michigan. The report also describes the panel’s process.

To learn the perspectives of faculty, students, and staff members on the issues involved in the charge, the panel collected written input from and held open meetings on all three University of Michigan campuses. The input we received highlighted the breadth of contexts across the university, and reinforced that these are issues about which many members of our community are passionate. Other sources that informed the panel’s investigation included legal principles pertaining to the specification of faculty responsibilities, existing university policies, and, for comparison purposes, policies of other universities. The report provides summaries of the information gathered from these different sources.

The panel’s recommendations center on a single core statement of principle, namely that as faculty members make judgments and act in their role as teachers, they must do so based solely on educational and professional reasons. The recommendation honors the dual rights and responsibilities of faculty members—their fundamental rights to academic freedom as scholars and their concomitant responsibilities as teachers employed by an educational institution. The full report includes specific observations and details about the considerations involved in the enactment of this principle. The majority of the panel endorses these conclusions; there is one dissenting view, included in the report.

Because challenges will inevitably arise in specific instances, the report recommends a supplemental governing principle regarding the need for a clear process for students or other faculty to bring concerns safely to the attention of the unit in which the faculty member teaches. It also suggests when reviews should involve diverse faculty members. The report provides further observations pertinent to this supplemental governing principle.

Finally, the report highlights the fact that, to safeguard the integrity of the academic enterprise, these principles must also apply to the university’s practices and decisions.

I. Provost's Charge to the Panel

In the Fall of 2018 the Provost's Blue Ribbon Panel was asked to consider and offer recommendations on the question: "What ought to be the intersection between political thought/ideology and a faculty member's responsibility to students?"

The Provost further specified the following objectives:

- i. To examine relevant University policy, including but not limited to statements in the Standard Practice Guide and the Faculty Handbook
- ii. To gather and review relevant policy statements of peer institutions
- iii. To gather input from stakeholders across the University
- iv. To recommend how to clarify current policy or create new policy that clearly articulates institutional principles and expectations at the intersection of faculty members' responsibility to students and their personal views.

Membership

Chair:

James Duderstadt, President Emeritus and University Professor of Science and Engineering

Members:

Deborah Ball, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, William H. Payne Collegiate Professor of Education, Professor of Education, School of Education

Susan M. Collins, Edward M. Gramlich Collegiate Professor of Public Policy, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, and Professor of Economics, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Deborah Goldberg, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, Margaret B. Davis Distinguished University Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Don Herzog, Edson R. Sunderland Professor of Law, Law School and Professor of Political Science, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Bill Lovejoy, Raymond T. J. Perring Family Professor of Business Administration, Professor of Technology and Operations, Associate Dean for Specialty Programs, Stephen M. Ross School of Business and Professor of Art and Design, Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design

Administrative Lead:

Christine Gerdes, Special Counsel to the Provost

II. Outreach

Using multiple mechanisms, our panel solicited feedback on our charge from the entire community of faculty, students, and staff at all three campuses of the University of Michigan. We thank the many who provided thoughtful perspectives in writing or in person; these were extremely valuable for our deliberations. We first describe these mechanisms and then summarize the range of opinions we heard across all the mechanisms.

A. Outreach Process

1. Online comments:

The panel distributed a solicitation for on-line open-ended comments to all faculty, students, and staff at the Ann Arbor, Flint, and Dearborn campuses of the University of Michigan. Our goals were to ensure that all who wished to share their perspectives with us had a way to do so and to enable us to hear a wide range of perspectives that could inform our deliberations, i.e., we viewed it as a listening tool and not a research tool or community referendum. Anyone who wished was welcome to comment, and could do so multiple times if they chose. It is also likely that the community members who did provide input were those who felt most strongly about the issues in multiple directions. Therefore, any attempt to use the on-line responses as a quantitative assessment of community opinion would be inappropriate and, indeed, we did not use it in that way.

The on-line form was first advertised on November 30, 2018 through a University Record story, with a link to the on-line comment form. An email solicitation with the link was also sent directly to all faculty, staff, and students on all three campuses (over 120,000 individuals) on December 3. A reminder was sent through a University Record story on January 3, 2019 and the form was closed to further comments on January 18. Both the email solicitation and on-line form are in Appendix II. Responses to the form are completely anonymous.

We received 1127 responses to the on-line form, with the majority (ca. 85%) from the Ann Arbor campus and the rest split somewhat evenly between Flint and Dearborn. Just under a third of the responses were from staff, about 20% each from graduate and undergraduate students and the rest from faculty of different ranks. Subsets of the panel read through all the responses for each question and reported back on the qualitative range of perspectives to the rest of the panel.

2. Listening sessions:

Between December 12, 2018 and January 10, 2019, the panel held four two-hour listening sessions; two on the Ann Arbor campus and one each at the Flint and Dearborn campuses. The goal for these was similar to the request for written feedback; to learn the range of perspectives from campus community members to inform our deliberations on our charge. These were not meant to be times for the panel to respond to questions about their deliberations because we were still in full listening and learning model. Indeed, at the time of the sessions the panel had not formulated any kind of position.

The dates, times, and locations of the listening sessions were also announced in the University Record articles and the direct email that announced the on-line comment form (Appendix II), as well as in a

Record article on December 12. We kept no formal records, but attendance varied between 25 and 50 individuals for each event.

Because we did not know what to expect on attendance, we initially requested that people sign in so that their names could be called to speak in a first-come, first-served basis, but relaxed that requirement as it was clear we had sufficient time for all attendees who desired to speak at each of the sessions.

When a panel member was unable to attend one or another of the listening sessions due to prior obligations, other panel members provided them with an update to ensure all panel members had similar information.

3. Feedback to an outreach email address

For those who preferred to write a free-form answer rather than respond to the questions in the on-line form, we established a special email account to receive feedback (panel.outreach@umich.edu). This was advertised in the same ways as the on-line comment form and the listening sessions. We received 11 responses to this email account, about half of which were simple clarification questions.

4. Meetings/feedback with specific groups:

In addition to the public outreach sessions, we also solicited input from targeted groups of faculty and students that were broadly representative across campus. We met with SACUA and with the Deans at the Ann Arbor campus (the Academic Program Group). In addition, the Chairs of the Humanities Departments within LSA requested a meeting, which was very helpful. Solicitations for written feedback were sent to Central Student Government, Rackham Student Government, Flint Student Government, and Dearborn Student Government. A response was received from Flint.

Finally, members of the panel were individually invited to a public Teach-In by the Unappointed Advisory Committee on Academic Freedom, held on November 27, 2019. Those of us without prior commitments attended.

5. Internal process:

The committee met nearly weekly for approximately five months; first to formulate plans to gather input and then for extensive review of the input received, as well as of documents that are discussed in the next section. We considered a range of possible scenarios to broaden our context beyond considerations related to faculty writing letters for recommendation for students. In these in-depth discussions, we identified areas of agreement and then focused on points on which panel members views differed. We reached consensus on most, but not all points. A dissenting view is included in this report (section V).

B. What We Heard from Our Outreach

The very large number of written and verbal comments we received spanned a wide range of topics and perspectives and we do not attempt a comprehensive summary. In this section, we begin with some general points and then focus on the diversity of views we heard about key themes and tensions that

are central to our charge. These were important input into our extensive discussions, and informed our recommendations in section IV.

Our charge relates to issues about which some members of our community are passionate. The strength of their views was often reflected in the commentary. Some told us about ways in which the tensions our panel was grappling with impact them personally. Some emphasized the need for more effective dialogue across difference, relating to the on-going work across campus to promote diversity, equity and inclusion.

Some comments took a broad view. However, many people specifically addressed issues related to letters of recommendation, and to recent campus incidents. In particular, some focused on the usage of sanctions related to faculty behavior, and their concerns about implications for campus climate.

The input we received highlighted the breadth of contexts across our university. Politics is intimately intertwined within the work of some units on campus – in course materials, classroom discussions, career deliberations, research projects and more. Faculty and administrators in these units tend to have long histories and extensive experience with the inherent tensions related to political views and faculty-student interactions. Some best practices have emerged as unit leaders have dealt with difficult past cases – which have often not come to public attention. However, contexts may be evolving in ways that raise new challenges, due to factors such as social media, demographic trends, and current events. In contrast, faculty, students and staff in some other parts of campus have tended to think of politics as far removed from the work they do. Thus, some see keeping the two separate as the way to avoid conflict.

1. Faculty responsibilities to students:

The online questionnaire began by asking about a faculty member's responsibility to students. Respondents generally agreed that the items on our provisional list (teaching; advising and mentoring; giving feedback) are indeed responsibilities. However, some argued that these responsibilities apply only in a faculty member's area of expertise. Some also suggested responsibilities they would add to the list, such as developing critical thinkers, maintaining respect for students, and being a role model.

We heard a much wider range of views about "recommending" as a faculty responsibility. This came in part because people interpreted the term differently. Some gave it a very broad meaning – advising students about future courses of action, classes to take, etc. Others took it in the way we intended -- providing a reference. However, some of these took a very narrow interpretation – a *requirement* that faculty members write letters of recommendation. One view was that there is never an obligation for a faculty member to write a letter, or to explain their decision. In contrast, some said they would never refuse to write based on what a student believed or where the student wished to go. Many argued that the obligation is conditional on academic and professional considerations (that we discuss in section IV). Understandings of faculty responsibility overlapped with understandings of academic freedom, discussed further below.

2. Academic freedom:

Respondents interpreted academic freedom in a variety of ways, with some explicitly noting that they were unsure of its meaning and when it applied. One interpretation was that academic freedom provides each faculty member with extensive discretion over their own actions, limiting the university's

jurisdiction. However, others (especially faculty respondents) recognized that academic freedom pertains to scholarship and research, and also to students as well as to faculty.

Some respondents expressed the view that their responsibilities as faculty members are limited to those things explicitly written down (such as in appointment letters and University policies). Others recognized that it would be impossible to craft policy for every contingency. Thus, universities (like other employers) invariably have expectations related to the behavior and actions of the faculty they employ, beyond the ones explicitly delineated.

We received feedback suggesting that more guidance related to these complex topics would be welcome. However, we also heard concerns about over-regulation – especially if additional policies are designed in reaction to a specific, outlier event. This would constrain many responsible faculty because of the actions of a few. Attending these comments was a desire to avoid a transactional framing of faculty roles that focused on their obligations as employees, or that framed informal faculty-student interactions (such as letter writing) as entitlements.

3. Freedom of speech and freedom of action:

Freedom of speech and freedom of action were intertwined in some of the testimony, and given a range of interpretations. There is a difference between speech and action; however, the line between them can be uncertain, particularly in the classroom.

Respondents commented on the asymmetry of power in many faculty interactions with students and staff. Within the classroom, complete freedom of expression on the part of faculty can credibly be interpreted as attached to potential action-based consequences for taking contrary positions (grades, supporting one's career, etc.), creating a chilling effect on the less powerful partner in the exchange.

We heard members of our community voice their objections to a faculty member being expected to do something she saw as inconsistent with her personal values – sometimes interpreted as a form of forced speech or action. Others (especially faculty) emphasized the importance of a faculty member respecting the choices of her students. If done respectfully, this could involve explaining the faculty member's view to the student. Particularly strong views were expressed by many on both sides of this issue about the usage of sanctions in these contexts.

4. Politics in the classroom:

While there was broad consensus that diversity of thought and speech is important to the university and its people, we heard a range of views about the place of politics in the classroom. Some said politics has no place at all in classes, and that professors should teach critical thinking skills (how to think, not what to think). This was especially true for classes in which the subject matter is generally distant from political considerations.

Some were comfortable with discussion of political issues in the classroom, but argued that a faculty member's own individual political views should never be introduced in the classroom (or in any faculty interactions with students). These respondents worry about faculty members pushing their individual views, and alienating students who may disagree.

Others stressed that the classroom as a place for debate is essential to its nature. They tended to see engaging students in political controversies as a faculty member's responsibility – exposing students to the range of views on a topic, teaching them to think for themselves and modeling ways to discuss controversial topics. This requires faculty to manage discussions carefully and with respect for the diversity of perspectives. These respondents tended to stress the value of professorial discretion as to when and how to bring politics or current events or a faculty member's individual views into the classroom because such discussions can be powerful learning opportunities. This was particularly salient for our humanities colleagues, for whom the discussion of potentially controversial issues is integral to their pedagogy.

5. *Process:*

We also heard from many respondents about the importance of a transparent process for deliberation, sanction, appeal and review. This included those with very different views about recent incidents on campus, and about the issues discussed above.

III. Prior Work Relevant to Our Charge

Existing UM and other relevant policy and procedure documents were reviewed for content related to the charge of the Blue Ribbon Panel. These include AAUP documents, UM Senate Assembly documents, the UM Standard Practice Guide and Faculty Handbook. The complete list is provided in Appendix I, along with a reproduction of relevant passages and a summary of the relevance of each to the charge of the Blue Ribbon Panel.

An executive summary of this prior work is as follows.

The documents affirm a fundamental allegiance to freedom of speech, expression and inquiry, and a respect for those freedoms in others. Individual faculty freedoms are not unlimited and are always qualified by, among other things, honoring their responsibilities to students and colleagues as members of the UM and scholarly communities, avoiding outside engagements that constitute conflicts of interest, and respecting the autonomy of others.

Existing documents contain somewhat contradictory language in affirming the autonomy of each individual in matters of conviction, but offering little guidance in those cases where exercising one's own autonomy impedes the autonomy of others. In the specific case of freedom of speech, existing documents condemn undue interference in the freedom of others to speak, but leave the definition of "undue" up to judgment and the particulars of each case. In the case of interacting with students, existing documents affirm the need for faculty to encourage students' free pursuit of learning, respect them as individuals and protect their academic freedom. There is little guidance for situations where one person acting on their perceived freedom impinges on the freedom of another. We offer some clarification on this point.

Existing documents suggest that, in general, faculty should support students in their own development, and do so by a variety of means. In the specific instance of faculty writing letters of recommendation, these documents suggest that, when a faculty member is writing a letter of reference, merit and

conduct relevant to the opportunity or position should dominate in the letter, avoiding anything not directly relevant to potential performance. We expand on that theme and elevate it to a more general principle.

Some sections of existing documents address potential romantic and/or sexual relationships between faculty members and students, and in that narrow context have little relevance to our charge. The broader issue of recognizing the boundary between a faculty member's professional responsibilities and other aspects of their interaction with students is relevant. For example, these sections assert that faculty must strive to support a professional, productive, and equitable environment for independent learning and academic growth for students. This implies honoring a student's right to take full advantage of all educational opportunities that are consistent with the mission of the University, as well as avoiding conflicts between a faculty member's professional responsibility to and their personal interactions with students. It also implies that students' interests take precedence in addressing challenges at this interface.

Those documents and sections that address process issues assert that the freedom of inquiry is sufficiently central to the mission of the University that interference with another's exercise of that freedom can be subject to sanction. When a violation is hypothesized, it is suggested that the process of consulting with and disciplining faculty members begin with the appropriate administrator (e.g. chair or dean), and be handled with appropriate standards of due process and rights of appeal. Sanctions, when applied, should be proportional to the severity and persistence of misconduct and a process of peer review should be engaged prior to the imposition of significant sanction. We reaffirm these conclusions.

Finally, existing documents recognize that threats to academic freedom arise constantly, from both internal to the university and from outside pressures, and the university must be vigilant in resisting such threats from either source. We reaffirm this caution.

IV. Recommendations

Statement of Principle

Faculty members have both rights to academic freedom as scholars and responsibilities as teachers employed by an educational institution. These responsibilities are to one's disciplines and fields and to the students with whom they work. Faculty deal with students in a variety of formal and informal settings. They teach them in classes, advise them in and out of office hours about intellectual and career matters, conduct reading groups and independent studies, hire them as research assistants or to work in labs, write them recommendations, serve on their dissertation committees, and so on. In all such settings, absent the most unusual circumstances, faculty must base their actions solely on educational and professional reasons.

Observations

1. We include “professional reasons” to cover such everyday and legitimate actions as these: declining to hire a qualified and intellectually gifted student for lab work because they are chronically late or routinely lose valuable specimens; declining to write a letter of recommendation because one is too busy or does not know the student well enough or think they are qualified for the position. Sometimes it is appropriate to explain to students the grounds on which one declines to do such things, but sometimes it is not. There is plenty of room for discretion in exercising one’s educational and professional judgment. “Discretion” here does not mean that anything goes; it means making a reasoned judgment on the basis of the range of relevant or appropriate reasons.
2. The principles governing faculty apply to graduate students when they hold graduate student instructor (GSI) appointments and serve as instructors. But they are also students and are entitled to actions from their own faculty that are based on professional and educational reasons.
3. Faculty may of course have wholly extracurricular dealings with students. They may worship at the same church, coach Little League together, and so on. The statement does not ordinarily govern faculty conduct in such settings. However, if conversation there turns to giving students the type of intellectual or career advice one would properly offer in office hours, the statement does govern. Likewise, extracurricular friendly conversation is surely permissible in office hours. At the level of principle, we can leave the point intuitive.
4. Challenging questions surround what one might mean by “political.” On a broad conception, some educational and professional considerations are surely political. Teaching and scholarship both rely on and contest such classic and explicitly political constructions as the republic of letters and the insistence that we should pay attention only to the merits of the argument, not the status of the speaker. Therefore, we have flipped the explicit charge from the provost in order to do a better job of answering what we believe to be the real questions. Instead of trying to characterize which considerations are out of bounds as political, the statement focuses on what is in bounds or permissible as a reason to treat students differently. Faculty must not act on bias: the obvious and still pressing questions surround race, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. However, whether the student grew up in your hometown, shares your taste in music, and other such idiosyncratic matters are also out of bounds as reasons for treating a student differently.
5. All kinds of political questions properly arise in teaching, in the work students do writing papers or dissertations, and so on. To give just a few examples, there is obviously nothing wrong with a public policy course discussing racism and poverty, a dissertation on American history investigating the forced relocation of Native Americans, or an ecology workshop examining climate change. Such work is at the core of what universities do. The statement means that faculty members can justify their approach to such topics only by appealing to educational and professional reasons. For instance, it is within bounds educationally for a teacher to state a sharp political view in the classroom in order to generate argument and further discussion, provided that it is relevant to the course material and clear that students are free to disagree – and that what matters is how cogent their arguments and evidence are, not whether they ‘toe the party line’. Faculty may not reward students because they are politically like-minded. Nor

may faculty deprive students of equal opportunity and fair evaluation because they disagree politically. Nor may faculty help students pursue future educational and professional opportunities because they politically approve of the students' aspirations, or refuse to help because they politically disapprove. We suspect that most faculty members agree with these points and act accordingly, without giving it much thought.

6. Some faculty seem to imagine that any and all requirements to do things they do not want to do are invasions of academic freedom. This misperception was evident in a few of the online comments we received. However, as made clear in the canonical 1940 AAUP Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, academic freedom attaches to certain facets of teaching and scholarship, not to any and all demands of the job. Furthermore, students too have canonical claims to their own academic freedom – and to having their autonomy respected. The statement also enshrines students' rightful claims to equal treatment, the kind of equality at issue in justice being blind, or more generally in not paying attention to irrelevant facts.
7. The statement adopts a very strong presumption, not an absolute rule. Indeed, few if any rules are absolute. (Despite "Thou shalt not kill", most of us think it is permissible to kill when one's own life is threatened, or in a just war.) In some cases that arguably fall under the description of "most unusual circumstances," faculty should strive to make alternative arrangements that do not disadvantage the student. However, we do not suppose this applies in every such case: for instance, that of a student who wishes to master advanced database management to assist a criminal organization. Who, then, decides which departures are justified? On that question, we offer a...

Supplemental Governing Principle

To count as permissible, a departure from the statement of principle – a claim that in some particular case the circumstances are indeed most unusual – has to be reasonable. It is not enough that the faculty member's stance is sincere or conscientious. There should be clearly defined procedures for those with complaints. In disputed cases, in the first instance the local unit ought to investigate the matter. Judgment from the local unit is not guaranteed to be right, but is entitled to some deference. If there are appeals to higher levels of the unit or the university, review ought to involve diverse faculty members.

Observations

1. The university is remarkably sprawling and diverse. The general principle is by design highly abstract. It properly plays out differently in different units. The basic case for giving local units initial jurisdiction is epistemic: they have a better grasp of the problems and possibilities of their own setting. The university has essentially a federal structure, and standard arguments for subsidiarity apply.
2. The case for faculty diversity in these settings is similarly epistemic, following a standard rationale for free speech. A diverse group will better surface different vantage points and arguments, and their discussion is more likely to lead to a sensible outcome.

3. We leave open what the relevant dimensions of diversity here are, because that too may well vary case by case, unit by unit, even complaint by complaint. The relevant dimensions of diversity will be case specific but should include diversity of thought related to the issue(s) in dispute. We do not adopt a view on whether an initial determination can properly be made by a chair or program head acting alone or with informal faculty consideration, or just how to structure more explicit faculty participation in possible later stages of a grievance.
4. Asking whether the departure is reasonable, given how narrowly the statement of principle casts the scope of justified departures, is not the same as asking whether a review committee would themselves depart. Compare cases of heated political disagreement. One can be pro-choice and still agree that opposition to abortion is reasonable. No surprise, then, that the medical school is used to making such accommodations – and as noted above, to working out other arrangements for students and patients when a faculty member wishes not to be involved.
5. There is plenty of room for discretion in deciding whether or how to sanction unreasonable departures from the statement of principle. Again, discretion does not mean that anything goes; it means making a reasoned judgment. A faculty member working out alternative arrangements that do not disadvantage the student would ordinarily count as a reason to mitigate or avoid sanctions. However, the matter is not settled by any single relevant reason.
6. Here too some reasons are out of bounds. Just as a faculty member cannot justify treating a student badly because of a disagreement about political views, so too the university cannot justify treating a faculty member badly because of a disagreement about political views. Nor may the university properly respond to the fact of noisy or powerful pressure from outside. It too may act in these matters only for educational and professional reasons: only to safeguard the integrity of the academic enterprise. That enterprise can be corrupted from within or without; the university's responsibilities run in both directions.

V. Dissenting View

Deborah Goldberg

My concerns with the majority report recommendations are twofold: First, the recommendations include a governing principle that is too absolute with very little room for reasoned faculty judgment. Thus, it could easily be used as a basis for a rigid policy that would result in faculty being sanctioned inappropriately and a consequent atmosphere of fear among faculty. Such an atmosphere is already apparent in some quarters. Second, although it includes several important and valuable recommendations on implementation with which I agree, these are not called out as of co-equal importance with the primary principle.

I elaborate on these concerns below and offer an alternative approach, but first offer some thoughts on the charge; these differ from the majority report only in emphasis.

Background

As is well-described in Section III of the majority report, the University currently provides little guidance in navigating the complex terrain “where one person acting on their perceived freedom impinges on the freedom of another.” Our committee’s charge was to provide guidance in the case when faculty acting on their perceived freedom of political thought/ideology may conflict with faculty responsibilities to students. Addressing this requires defining both political thought/ideology and faculty responsibilities to student.

Political thought/ideology can be defined quite narrowly, e.g., in relationship to current US and global political parties and partisanship to much more broadly as encompassing the full range of moral and ethical considerations to which an individual may be committed. Because the definition of political is variable among individuals, I could not draw any defensible boundaries between what is or not considered political and therefore took the latter, very broad view. Thus, I refer to ethical and moral commitments rather than political ideology below.

Responsibilities to students include both fairly transparent and formal activities that deal with groups (teaching, evaluation) and less transparent, more informal activities that are often, although not always, more one-on-one (e.g., research mentoring, professional sponsorship, letters of recommendation). The latter group is clearly discretionary at the level of individual students; including them as part of general faculty responsibilities in no way assumes that every student who asks is entitled to a letter or research or professional sponsorship. The balance of these responsibilities to students, along with other faculty responsibilities (research, service, outreach) varies with formal position, abilities and preferences of faculty, and needs of a unit, and no single faculty member could possibly maximize activity in all of these things. For these reasons and, as is typical for professional positions, these responsibilities are not specified in writing but are nevertheless part of the professional norms of faculty. The relevant issue is therefore not whether a faculty member must write a letter of recommendation or must sponsor a research project for any student who asks, but what are the permissible and what are the impermissible reasons to refuse to do so.

Potential Conflicts Between Political, Moral, and Ethical Commitments and Faculty Responsibilities

For the more formal faculty responsibilities to students (teaching, evaluation), UM already has multiple eloquent statements on the importance of training students to think carefully about potentially

controversial subjects, the need for promoting civil and respectful discourse around controversial subjects, and ensuring that evaluation of students remains strictly on merit of the student's work. (see SACUA and the Senate Assembly's statements on [Academic Freedom in teaching](#), and on [Teaching Responsibilities](#)).

Fewer guidelines exist for the less formal responsibilities such as mentoring in research, career or educational guidance, offering professional opportunities (e.g., sponsoring conference or workshop attendance), or writing letters of recommendation. There are clearly many permissible reasons for not agreeing to do any of those things for any particular student such as insufficient time, lack of sufficient knowledge of the student, evaluation of the student as not well-qualified, lack of interest in the desired topic (for research mentoring). On the other hand, it is clearly impermissible to refuse to engage in any of those activities for a particular student based on that student's identity relative to the antidiscrimination policies of the University and legal frameworks.

The gray area is when these informal activities, especially letters and professional sponsorship that can be viewed as a form of personal endorsement, potentially raise a conflict between supporting student autonomy and allowing faculty autonomy of conscience. **The university generally should expect that faculty will prioritize student autonomy in such cases. Faculty nevertheless should have the right to refuse to promote student educational aspirations that go against their own ethical and moral commitments, as long as those commitments are based on well-reasoned judgments and are not discriminatory based on individual identity.** Thus, it could be appropriate for a faculty member to refuse to sponsor a student research project that the faculty believes is unethical (but is still in accordance with university rules) or to write a letter of recommendation to an organization or institution the faculty member believes is unethical. Even in such cases however, faculty still have responsibilities to the student. First, is the educational responsibility to help the student understand the reasoning and evidence that led to that stand of conscience and why it justifies their action in not supporting the student. Second, is to help the student find alternatives to mitigate any harm to their educational goals; for example, refer them to other potential research mentors, professional sponsors or letter writers. For the latter, writing a "to whom it may concern" letter to be placed on file at the Career Center is also an option.

Implementation and Applicability

The majority report recommends a main governing principle, and a subsidiary governing principle, along with multiple observations under each. Two aspects of these strike me as particularly important and I call them out here for emphasis, with some preliminary wording to adjust for my version of the general principle.

It is to be expected that not everyone will always agree on what constitutes a "well-reasoned judgment" or even what is discriminatory and whether those arguments justify treating a student differently. *"Therefore, there should be clearly defined procedures for those with complaints. In disputed cases, in the first instance the local unit ought to investigate the matter. Judgment from the local unit is not guaranteed to be right, but is entitled to some deference. If there are appeals to higher levels of the unit or the university, review ought to involve diverse faculty members."*

"Just as a faculty member cannot justify treating a student badly because of a disagreement about political views, so too the university cannot justify treating a faculty member badly because of a disagreement about political views. Nor may the university properly respond to the fact of noisy or

powerful pressure from outside. It too may act in these matters only for educational and professional reasons: only to safeguard the integrity of the academic enterprise. That enterprise can be corrupted from within or without; the university's responsibilities run in both directions."

VI. Concluding Remarks

All who join the University community gain important rights and privileges and accept equally important responsibilities (UM Faculty Senate Faculty Handbook 1990). Most faculty and student activities proceed smoothly without review or reflection, relying on commonly understood norms of professional behavior.

Because these presumed common norms can at times fall short, it is useful to identify principles regarding those rights and privileges. Such principles can provide guidance in cases when questions arise. The panel's challenge was to provide guidance in those cases where faculty acting in accordance with their own beliefs might, in the course of performing common faculty responsibilities, find themselves torn between their deeply held personal views and supporting the ability of students to choose their own, potentially different, paths.

In considering this challenge, we examined documents and policies dealing with faculty and student responsibilities and conduct at the University of Michigan and elsewhere. We noted that there are instances where one person's desired freedoms could curtail another's. We sought to provide principled ways of considering such cases.

What we found from our outreach efforts suggests that we would benefit as a community from discussing these issues, our proposed principles, and how they might apply in specific cases. We recommend a process that respects the decentralized nature of the University of Michigan by creating opportunities for discussions at the departmental as well as college levels to build greater common awareness and understanding.

Appendix I: Excerpts from Prior Work

The following documents are excerpted below:

- A. AAUP Statement of Professional Ethics
- B. Senate Assembly statement adopted June 18, 1990, and reprinted in Section 1.B of the Faculty Handbook (Fundamental Tenets Statement)
- C. Senate Assembly Statement, January 2010 on Academic Freedom, reproduced in Faculty Handbook section 1.C
- D. UM Standard Practice Guide 201.96: Professional Standards for Faculty
- E. UM Standard Practice Guide 201.65-1:Conflicts of Interest and Conflicts of Commitment
- F. UM Faculty Handbook Section 1.A.: Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression, see also SPG 601.01:Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression
- G. [ADVANCE Program Guidelines for writing letters of](#) reference
- H. UM Faculty Handbook Section 12.E.: Faculty Handling of Student Records/References and Student Life – Career Center's [Best Practices for Letter Writers](#)

- I. UM Faculty Handbook Section 8.A.: General Principles
- J. [2003 report by the Academic Affairs Advisory Committee \(AAAC\) to the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs \(SACUA\), titled "Teaching Principles and Responsibilities"](#)
- K. UM Faculty Handbook Section 8.D.11: Personal Relationships Between Faculty and Students
- L. UM Standard Practice Guide 601.22: Prohibitions Regarding Sexual, Romantic, Amorous, and/or Dating Relationships Between Teachers and Learners, Policy Background section.
- M. UM Standard Practice Guide 601.22-1: Employee-Student Relationships

For each of these, relevant passages are pulled out and quoted, and the section closes with a summary of the relevant content from those passages.

A. AAUP Statement of Professional Ethics

“As teachers, professors encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students. They hold before the best scholarly and ethical standards of their discipline. Professors demonstrate respect for students as individuals and adhere to their proper roles as intellectual guides and counselors. Professors make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct and to ensure their evaluations of students reflect each of the student’s true merit.

They respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student. They avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. They acknowledge significant academic or scholarly assistance from them. They protect their academic freedom.”

Relevant content: Evaluations should be based on merit and with respect for students’ academic freedom.

B. Senate Assembly statement adopted June 18, 1990, and reprinted in Section 1.B of the Faculty Handbook (Fundamental Tenets Statement)

“All who join the University community gain important rights and privileges and accept equally important responsibilities. We believe in free expression, free inquiry, intellectual honesty, and respect for the rights and dignity of others. We respect the autonomy of each person’s conscience in matters of conviction, religious faith, and political belief. We affirm the importance of maintaining high standards of academic and professional integrity. In defining the rights we enjoy and the responsibilities we bear, we must keep those basic principles in mind.

All members of the University have civil rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. Because the search for knowledge is our most fundamental purpose, the University has an especially strong commitment to preserve and protect freedom of thought and expression. Reasoned dissent plays a vital role in the search for truth; and academic freedom, including the right to express unpopular views, is a cherished tradition of universities everywhere. All members of the University have the right to express their own views and hear the views of others expressed, but they must also take responsibility for according the same rights to others. We seek a University whose members may express themselves vigorously while protecting and respecting the rights of others to learn, to do research, and to carry out the essential functions of the University free from interference or obstruction.”

Relevant content: This section reinforces a fundamental allegiance to freedom of expression and inquiry, and respect for these freedoms in others. It has somewhat contradictory language in that it

affirms the autonomy of each person’s conscience in matters of conviction, but offers no guidance in those cases where adhering to one’s strongly held conviction impedes the autonomy of others. We offer clarification on this point.

C. Senate Assembly Statement, January 2010 on Academic Freedom, reproduced in Faculty Handbook section 1.C

“Academic freedom includes the following specific freedoms:

- freedom of research and publication ...
- freedom of teaching ...
- freedom of internal criticism ...
- freedom of participation in public debate. Both within and beyond their areas of expertise, faculty members are generally entitled to participate as citizens in public forums and debates without fear of institutional discipline or restraint, so long as it is clear that they are not acting or speaking for the University.

Since academic freedom derives from the institutional structure of American universities, it is qualified in various respects. However, when academic freedom is so qualified, it is of critical importance that restrictions be drawn up and implemented with substantial faculty input, in such a way as to minimize infringement of academic freedom. In large part, this goal should be accomplished by ensuring that institutional discipline of faculty members is in proportion to the severity and persistence of misconduct, and by insisting that alleged offenses be handled with appropriate standards of due process, including, wherever possible, the judgment of competent peers. For the rest, however, it must be recognized that contemporary threats to academic freedom are constantly evolving. This University — its faculty, administration, and students alike — must exercise constant vigilance in resisting such threats, whether they arise within the university or from outside.”

Relevant content: The section emphasizes freedom of inquiry and expression without much about the potential for one person’s views to impact the freedom of others. However, it does say that complete freedom is not unlimited and always somewhat qualified, but formal restrictions should be generated with significant faculty input. Discipline of faculty members should be proportional to the severity and persistence of misconduct, and be handled with appropriate standards of due process and, wherever possible, the judgment of peers. This section recognizes that threats to academic freedom arise constant, from both internal to the university and from outside pressures, and the university must be vigilant in resisting such threats.

D. UM Standard Practice Guide 201.96: Professional Standards for Faculty

“The University of Michigan strives to create and maintain a community that enables all of its members to reach their full potential. To do so requires an environment of trust, openness, civility and respect. The University is firmly committed to a policy of prohibiting behaviors which adversely impact a person’s ability to participate in the scholarly, research, educational, patient care, and service missions of the University. The University has a compelling interest in ensuring an environment in which productive work and learning may thrive. At the same time, the University has an interest in respecting freedom of speech and protecting academic freedom and in preserving the widest possible dialogue within its instructional and research settings. As such, the University recognizes and expects there to be open discourse and exchanges that may cause some of its members to feel uncomfortable. It is through such

exchanges that the flow of ideas and countervailing thoughts and experiences are expressed which can facilitate deeper understanding and learning.

However, the University also expects its members to engage each other in a professional manner, with civility and respect. This is particularly true of its faculty, as the faculty has not only the obligations of all citizens in the community at large but also the obligations that derive from common membership in the community of scholars. The faculty has a particular responsibility in this regard, since one of its obligations is to model informed, rational discourse not only to students, but also to the university community and the general public. The faculty operates under an ethical imperative not to bring the University into disrepute and to conduct themselves consistent with these obligations and responsibilities.”

“While this policy affirms the commitments set forth in SPG 601.01, “Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression,” the University will not tolerate conduct which hinders other members of the community in the exercise of their professional responsibilities and academic freedoms. The University is prepared to act to prevent or remedy behaviors that interfere with, or adversely affect, a community member’s ability to learn or fulfill the individual’s professional responsibilities. Efforts to ensure compliance with this and other University/unit policies are consistent with the SPG.”

There is a section (III) on alleged violations of this policy that contains the following.

“Alleged violations of this policy should be reported on a timely basis to an administrator (e.g., Dean, Chair or Director in an academic unit, Academic Human Resources, or the immediate supervisor of the person alleged to be in violation of the policy). This administrator must ensure that appropriate action is taken to address the situation. If warranted, a prompt inquiry shall be undertaken, and the faculty member shall be afforded an opportunity to respond to the allegations against him or her prior to a determination as to whether the policy has been violated. Such responsive information will be considered prior to this determination.

Prior to the imposition of any significant sanction or disciplinary action, to ensure that a level of peer review has occurred, the administrator shall consult with a relevant faculty executive or advisory committee. Each unit will determine the process by which peer review can be effectively and efficiently achieved and the appropriate sanction or sanctions recommended. Concerns regarding alleged unprofessional conduct may arise from a pattern of behavior and interactions, or from a single significant event. The faculty who provide the peer review should look at the totality of the circumstances and not just the precipitating event.”

“A faculty member who is sanctioned or disciplined under this policy has the right to appeal such action under the applicable procedure, typically the school/college faculty grievance procedure.”

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“A faculty member who is sanctioned or disciplined under this policy has the right to appeal such action under the applicable procedure, typically the school/college faculty grievance procedure.”

Relevant content: Refers to faculty as members of society at large, but also as members of a community of scholars and this implies particular responsibilities to model informed, rational discourse. It states that freedom of speech and expression does not imply unfettered freedoms. In particular, UM will not tolerate conduct which hinders other members of the community from exercising their own academic freedoms. The section supports reporting violations to an appropriate administrator, e.g. dean or chair, and the process includes the right of the accused to respond and/or appeal, and that the imposition of significant sanction be preceded by a process of peer review.

E. UM Standard Practice Guide 201.65-1: Conflicts of Interest and Conflicts of Commitment

Much of this document deals with more standard conflicts of interest, such as financial or personal ties that may encourage behavior in conflict with one’s responsibility as a member of the University community. But, there is some content relevant to our charge. As the section states, a potential conflict of interest exists “whenever personal, professional, commercial, or financial interests or activities outside of the University have the possibility (either in actuality or in appearance) of

- (1) compromising a faculty or staff member’s judgment;
- (2) biasing the nature or direction of scholarly research;
- (3) influencing a faculty or staff member’s decision or behavior with respect to teaching and student affairs, appointments and promotions, uses of University resources, interactions with human subjects, or other matters of interest to the University; or
- (4) resulting in a personal or family member’s gain or advancement at the expense of the University.”

Other relevant content includes the following.

“Right to Outside Interests: Faculty members and staff members have the right to acquire and retain outside interests of a professional, personal, or economic nature that do not conflict with University interests or with the individual employee’s commitment to the University, to the University’s students, sponsors, patients, or to other parties to whom the University has a duty.”

“Violations of this policy as determined by the appropriate dean, director, supervisor, or conflict of interest committee are considered misconduct on the part of a faculty or staff member and may be subject to institutional sanctions up to and including termination of appointment in accordance with applicable disciplinary procedures.” It specifies that

“When a faculty member or staff member has disclosed a potential conflict of interest or conflict of commitment, and the appropriate dean, director, supervisor, or conflict of interest committee has determined that a conflict exists, the appropriately designated University official or body will also

determine whether further management or elimination of the conflict is required. If required, that official or body will develop a plan in consultation with the faculty or staff member, and the faculty member or staff member must abide by the terms of the plan.”

Relevant content: This section reaffirms the right of any member of our community to engage in outside activities, but it recognizes the potential for conflict between those activities and the mission of the University. In particular it is a potential conflict of interest whenever personal beliefs bias one’s research and/or actions with respect to students. In cases of violation of the principle institutional sanctions can be appropriate, but the review of the violation and sanctions begin at dean or director level, or with the formation of a committee.

F. UM Faculty Handbook Section 1.A.: Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression, see also UM SPG 601.01: Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression

“Recent events at the University of Michigan and elsewhere emphasize the pressing need for members of the University community—including administrators, faculty, staff, and students—to reaffirm formally their deep commitment to freedom of speech and artistic expression and to clarify the implications of that commitment. Freedom of speech in this context will be taken to encompass all forms of communication and artistic expression as well as the freedom to listen, watch, protest, or otherwise participate in such communication. It is hoped that this reaffirmation will win the support, in spirit and in letter, of people representing the entire spectrum of opinion of the University community in order to create a truly open forum, one which diverse opinions can be expressed and heard.

Expression of diverse points of view is of the highest importance, not only for those who espouse a cause or position and then defend it, but also for those who hear and pass judgment on that defense. The belief that an opinion is pernicious, false, or in any other way detestable cannot be grounds for its suppression.”

“At the same time, however, the rights of free expression enjoyed by speakers or performers do not negate the rights of free expression of those who would protest the speech or performance.”

There are a number of passages dealing with the reciprocal rights of speakers and protestors, security concerns, etc.

“Because freedom of speech and expression play such a critical role in the functioning of a university, undue interference with the exercise of these freedoms by members of the University community may constitute grounds for resort to law or other formal action. Any University procedures for formal action must be even-handed in their application to all parties—whether organizer, protester, or audience member, or administrator, staff, faculty, or student—and must provide full due process and equal standing to bring a complaint.”

Relevant content: This section pertains to free speech, but reinforces that there must be freedom of expression on both sides of a debate, and a tension can arise when one side seeks to silence or disrupt the other. A dialogue is suggested on the issue of freedom of speech so administrators, faculty, staff and students are all exposed to its implications in the modern world. As a principle each side should respect the other’s right to free speech, and do nothing to inject “undue interference” into either the speaker or the protestor’s ability to express themselves (the definition of “undue” is left to judgment and the particulars of a case). Sanction may be applied when undue interference occurs, but

sanctioning procedures must be even-handed in their application to all parties and provide full due process and equal standing to bring a complaint.

G. ADVANCE: Guidelines for Writing Letters of Reference

Per its website, the “ADVANCE Program focuses on four areas relevant to the success of a diverse and excellent faculty: recruitment, retention, climate, and leadership development. Together, these encompass not only multiple stages of faculty careers but also multiple mechanisms by which faculty diversity and excellence at U-M are enhanced.” ADVANCE has promulgated guidelines for writing letters of reference. This document says that “your letter will identify the characteristics and achievements that are directly relevant to the candidate’s potential job performance. The key to effective and accurate letter writing is focusing your comments on criteria that are relevant for this evaluation.” (underline in the original).

“. . . personal traits that are directly relevant to the job performance can be discussed. Characteristics such as motivation, dependability, patience, creativity, ability to troubleshoot, poise, listening skills, etc. can be discussed. Avoid personal statements that are not related to job performance (past or future). For example, avoid irrelevant statements such as "she is practically part of my family" or "he is very active in his church or other community organization." These may be true, but they decrease the professionalism and impact of the evaluation.”

Relevant content: This suggests that merit and conduct relevant to the job should dominate in a letter, avoiding anything not directly relevant to performance on the job.

H. UM Faculty Handbook Section 12.E.: Faculty Handling of Student Records/References and UM Student Life – Career Center’s Best Practices for Letter Writers

This section has content on FERPA and the handling of student information. It then states: “Faculty provide an important service for students when they write letters of recommendation on request by the student. In writing these letters, however, faculty members should take care to provide information based on personal observation or knowledge. In addition, faculty should not respond to a third party’s request for a reference for a student without that student’s prior consent. The Career Center publishes a guidebook for faculty, Graduate Student Instructors, and staff, that provides additional information.”

The UM Career Center’s Best Practices for Letter Writers includes the following language: “Below are some suggestions for best practices in reference letter writing. It is important to remember that the student’s merit should be the primary guide for determining how and whether to provide a reference letter.”

“Writing a Letter: Before

- If possible, arrange a meeting with the student to discuss their specific academic and career goals.
- Communicate honestly and directly whether or not you are able to write a positive letter on behalf of the student. If limited knowledge of the student’s talents or a negative impression would prevent you from providing a positive letter, discuss those issues with the student at the onset. This clarification may encourage the student to pursue other sources or initiate a conversation to address your concerns.”

Relevant content: This language states directly that a student's merit is the primary guide when determining whether to provide a reference letter. It also underscores the need for honest and direct communication with students who request letters.

I. UM Faculty Handbook Section 8.A.: General Principles

"In all of their dealings with students, it is expected that faculty members will be fair and equitable, will support students in their own development within the University community, and will adhere to the highest standards of professional conduct."

Relevant content: Faculty members should support students in their own development.

J. 2003 report by the Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) to the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs (SACUA), titled "Teaching Principles and Responsibilities"

This document is intended "to guide faculty administrators and staff in their efforts to sustain and strengthen a supportive educational environment for our undergraduate, graduate, and professional students."

Section 1 on "Individual faculty responsibilities" lists desirable attributes for teaching excellence, among them encouraging freedom of inquiry and allowing broad differences of opinion on debatable matters.

Relevant content: This is potentially relevant with its listing of freedom of inquiry and broad differences of opinions on debatable matters as part of faculty responsibilities to students.

K. UM Faculty Handbook Section 8.D.11.: Personal Relationships Between Faculty and Students

This section encourages faculty to make a real difference in their students' lives, but then cautions:

"However, as a matter of sound judgment and professional ethics, faculty members have a responsibility to avoid any apparent or actual conflict between their professional responsibilities and personal relationships with students."

Relevant content: This statement is in the context of potential romantic and/or sexual relationships between faculty members and students, and in that narrow context has little relevance to our charge. The broader issue of recognizing the boundary between a faculty member's professional responsibilities and other aspects of their interaction with students is relevant.

L. UM Standard Practice Guide 601.22: Prohibitions Regarding Sexual, Romantic, Amorous, and/or Dating Relationships Between Teachers and Learners, Policy Background section.

"The University of Michigan strives to create and maintain a community that enables each person to reach their full potential. To do so requires an environment of trust, openness, civility, and respect. The University is firmly committed to a policy of prohibiting behaviors that adversely impact a person's ability to fully participate in the scholarly, research, educational, patient care, and service missions of the University.

The teacher-student relationship lies at the foundation of the educational process. As a matter of sound judgment and professional ethics, faculty members have a responsibility to avoid any apparent or actual conflict between their professional responsibilities and personal relationships with students.

Faculty have a collective responsibility to the student experience as members and representatives of the University community, and with each class of incoming students who are bound together in space and time.

The faculty at the University fulfill their essential role with students in learning, research, and service environments, and do so with a commitment to honoring the highest professional and ethical standards. An overarching goal for the context of the faculty-student relationship is to create a professional, productive, and equitable environment for independent learning and academic growth. Student well-being and the pursuit of academic excellence are central to any faculty-student relationship. At its best, the faculty-student relationship nurtures the advancement and pursuit of knowledge and can lead to life-long professional mentorships and connections. At its worst, the inherent imbalance in the power dynamic between faculty and students can lead to real or perceived exploitation of the power differential.

The University is committed to putting students' interests first in addressing the challenges and competing interests that arise when defining limitations on certain types of teacher-student relationships. The limitations set forth in this SPG are based on roles and responsibilities, group affiliations, and community norms, as well as the University's diversity, scope, scale, and geographic and virtual reach. The University similarly recognizes the importance of its members' interests in academic freedom, freedom of expression, and intellectual inquiry, and believes these are best protected by common understandings and avoidance of unprofessional relationships."

Relevant content: This section is in the context of potential romantic and/or sexual relationships between faculty members and students, and in that narrow context has little relevance to our charge. However, the supporting language used explicitly asserts that faculty must strive to support a professional, productive, and equitable environment for independent learning and academic growth for students, asserts students' rights to take full advantage of all educational opportunities that are consistent with the mission of the University, that faculty must avoid a conflict between that professional responsibility to students and their personal interactions with students, and that students' interests take precedence in addressing challenges at this interface.

M. UM Standard Practice Guide 601.22-1: Employee-Student Relationships

"When an employee's professional responsibilities make it possible for him or her to influence the status or circumstances of a student and when a romantic and/or sexual relationship occurs or has occurred between the employee and the student, an inherent conflict of interest arises. When a conflict of this nature occurs, the employee must disclose the relationship so that a resolution to the conflict can be sought.

Romantic and/or sexual relationships between an employee and a student have the potential to pose risks to the employee, the student, and third parties. As a matter of sound judgment and professional ethics, all employees have a responsibility to avoid any apparent or actual conflict between their professional responsibilities and personal relationships with students. This policy defines the norms the

University expects employees to observe if they are having or have had a romantic and/or sexual relationship with a student.

In such relationships, voluntary consent by the student may be suspect because of the potentially unequal nature of the relationship. A romantic and/or sexual relationship between an employee and a student can lead to a complaint of sexual harassment when the student feels that he or she has been subjected to harassment. In addition, other employees or students may express concerns about undue access or advantage, favoritism, restricted opportunities, or unfavorable treatment as a result of the relationship. These concerns are damaging whether the favoritism is real or perceived. Concerns arise in cases where the relationship between the employee and the student remains amicable, as well as in cases that lead to accusations of harassment. For all these reasons, the University strongly discourages romantic and/or sexual relationships between employees and students when an employee's professional responsibilities make it possible for him or her to influence the status or circumstances of the student. Actions that may influence the student include but are not limited to initiating or participating in administrative decisions or actions.

Relevant content: This section was also drafted to address the context of potential romantic and/or sexual relationships between faculty members and students, and again in that narrow context has little relevance to our charge. However it does bring up the consideration that to advantage or disadvantage a student on the basis of an extra-professional relationship between a faculty member and the student is not only inappropriate within that dyad, but is damaging to the community as a whole, whether the favoritism is real or perceived.



Opportunities for Input - Faculty Panel

1 message

Email to Community

Office of the Provost <targetemail@umich.edu>

Mon, Dec 3, 2018 at 4:30 PM

Dear faculty, staff and students:

As members of the panel appointed by Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs Martin Philbert, we have been charged to examine the broad question, "What ought to be the intersection of faculty members' political thought/ideology and their responsibilities to students?"

Our charge is not to formulate specific policy or processes, but to recommend appropriate considerations and principles.

We are seeking broad input to inform our task through two main mechanisms.

- 1) A survey with open-ended questions [here](#) distributed to the entire University community. This survey will remain open until January 18, 2019.
- 2) Open meetings conducted on the Ann Arbor, Dearborn, and Flint campuses

Ann Arbor:

Wednesday, December 12, 3:00 – 5:00 pm, Forum Hall, Palmer Commons

Friday, January 11, 10:00 am -12:00 pm, East Room, Pierpont Commons

Dearborn:

Thursday, January 10, 9:00-11:00 am, Quad E, Fairlane Center North

Flint:

Thursday, January 10, 3:00-5:00 pm, French Hall, Room 111

The purpose of these open meetings is to solicit a broad range of perspectives on the intersection of faculty members' political thought/ideology and their responsibilities to students. To maximize the opportunity for panel members to hear from a large number of community members, speakers will be asked to sign in when they arrive and will be limited to three-minute presentations.

In addition to completing the survey, you can email feedback to the panel at panel.outreach@umich.edu.

Thank you,

Blue Ribbon Panel members

James Duderstadt, President Emeritus and University Professor of Science and Engineering (Chair)

Deborah Ball, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, William H. Payne Collegiate Professor of Education, Professor of Education, School of Education and Research Professor, Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research

Susan Collins, Edward M. Gramlich Collegiate Professor of Public Policy, Ford School of Public Policy, and Professor of Economics, LSA

Deborah Goldberg, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, Margaret B. Davis Distinguished University Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, LSA

Don Herzog, Edson R. Sunderland Professor of Law, Law School and Professor of Political Science, LSA

Bill Lovejoy, Raymond T. J. Perring Family Professor of Business Administration, Professor of Technology and Operations, Associate Dean for Specialty Programs, Stephen M. Ross School of Business and Professor of Art and Design, Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design

Online Form Questions

1) By "responsibilities to students," we have provisionally identified the following:

- Teaching
- Advising and mentoring
- Assessing and evaluating
- Giving feedback
- Recommending

Do you agree that these are responsibilities that faculty have to students? Are there any you would delete (and why)? Are there others you would add (and why)?

2) Can you envision situations in which there are conflicts between faculty members' political thought, commitment, and ideology and faculty members' responsibilities to students?

If so, please describe the conflict(s) and provide recommendations for managing them.

3) Do notions of academic freedom bear on question #2? If so, how? If not, why not?

4) Is there anything else we should take into account?

OPTIONAL

Please click on the campus with which you are most closely affiliated:

- Ann Arbor
- Dearborn
- Flint

OPTIONAL

Please click the description that best describes your status with the university:

- faculty - tenured
- faculty - on the tenure track, but not yet tenured
- faculty - clinical track
- faculty - lecturer
- faculty - research track
- staff member
- postdoctoral fellow
- undergraduate student
- graduate student
- other

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