
Report of the Advisory Committee on the University of Michigan Principles on Diversity of Thought & Freedom of Expression



September 2024



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University of Michigan Principles on Diversity of Thought & Freedom of Expression

The University of Michigan serves the public through teaching and research. We create and advance knowledge. We prepare the next generation to participate in democracy. We fulfill our mission¹ through rigorous scholarship and scrutiny in the humanities and sciences, in the arts and engineering, in every field and every discipline. Open inquiry and spirited debate — the lifeblood of our institution — promote discovery and creativity.

We have a proud history of engaging with issues of great societal importance. Our 1988 Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression policy, built upon the Board of Regents 1977 Freedom of Speech Guidelines, affirms protections for speakers, performers, and the audiences who assemble to watch and listen and for protesters who are free to disagree but not disrupt the presentations.² Our practice of confronting controversial topics is a hallmark of our culture. We uphold “the right to intellectual freedom” by practicing “firm traditions of self-criticism, by learning to respect differences of opinion and belief, and by recognizing that the progress of a society is inextricably linked to a diversity of opinions and beliefs and the freedom to express them.”³ When we fall short of these ideals, we vow to learn from our missteps as a community that aspires to be “leaders and best.”⁴

As a great public University guided by the letter and spirit of the First Amendment, we enthusiastically embrace our responsibility to stimulate and support diverse ideas and model constructive engagement with different viewpoints in our classrooms and labs, lecture series and symposia, studios and performance halls, exhibits and publications, and among our entire community of students, teachers, researchers, and staff. When we disagree on matters of intellectual significance, we make space for contesting perspectives. We must listen critically and self-critically.

Our commitment to freedom of expression is entirely consistent with our commitment to nurturing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community. By bringing together individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints — and supporting and empowering them to use their voices and share their views — we make our community stronger and advance our mission.

We affirm the value of exchanging ideas; questioning assumptions; learning from those with whom we disagree and those whose voices have been marginalized; challenging views we find misguided or pernicious; and engaging with the broadest range of scholarly subjects and materials. We strive to meet conflict and controversy with understanding and reason, refuting our opponents rather than revoking invitations or refusing them a platform, and contesting their ideas instead of attacking their character.

Not all ideas are of equal value. That is precisely why they must be subject to intense scrutiny and thoughtful debate. Our deep commitment to free expression does not extend to speech or conduct that violates the law or University policy, including targeted speech that constitutes bullying,⁵ defamation, destruction of property, discrimination,⁶ harassment,⁷ violence, or threats. And the University may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the University’s ordinary activities.

We recognize that free inquiry and expression can offend. Every member of our academic community should expect to confront ideas that differ from their own, however uncomfortable those encounters may be. We commit to these Principles because they help us to create, discover, and fulfill our vital mission.

¹ Mission Statement, University of Michigan (October 9, 1992) (“The mission of the University of Michigan is to serve the people of Michigan and the world through preeminence in creating, communicating, preserving and applying knowledge, art, and academic values, and in developing leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future.”).
² SPG 601.01, Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression, <https://spg.umich.edu/policy/601.01>.
³ Hon. Thurgood Marshall, Written Excerpts from Commencement Address, University of Michigan (December 19, 1964).
⁴ Louis Ebel, “The Victors” (1898).
⁵ See, e.g., Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities, IV.F. (“Bullying: any written, verbal, or physical act, or any electronic communication, directed toward a person that is intended to cause or that a reasonable person would

know is likely to cause, and that actually causes, physical harm or substantial emotional distress and thereby adversely affects the ability of another person to participate in or benefit from the University’s educational programs or activities. Bullying does not include constitutionally protected activity or conduct that serves a legitimate purpose.”).
⁶ See, e.g., SPG 201.89-1.
⁷ See, e.g., Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities, IV.F. (“Harassing: conduct directed toward a person that includes repeated or continuing unconsented contact that would cause a reasonable individual to suffer substantial emotional distress and that actually causes the person to suffer substantial emotional distress. Harassing does not include constitutionally protected activity or conduct that serves a legitimate purpose.”).

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Executive Summary

Foreword

As befits a great public research University dedicated to *Artes, Scientia, Veritas* and the methods of inquiry we practice each day to live up to our motto, this entire project began with a question. On Friday, February 10, 2023, in a meeting in Room 100 of Hutchins Hall with President Santa J. Ono and faculty from the University of Michigan Law School, President Ono was asked: would he recommend to the Board of Regents that they adopt the University of Chicago Statement on Freedom of Expression?¹

It was an important and timely question. As of February 2023, nearly 100 colleges and universities, or faculty units within, had adopted the Chicago Statement “or a substantially similar statement.”² That so many schools, including more than twenty fellow members of the Association of American Universities,³ saw the need to adopt some form of the Chicago Statement provided

grounds for us at least to consider whether to adopt it ourselves. Like other schools, we had heard calls to disinvite speakers deemed controversial by some and seen instances where protestors shouted down speakers who did come,⁴ neither of which is consistent with our values as a public University bound by the First Amendment.⁵

In light of those challenges, the most salient question in February 2023 was whether we should adopt the Chicago Statement, or whether our existing policy and practices were sufficient to preserve an academic environment where freedom of expression and diversity of thought can flourish.

While there have been times in its more than 200-year existence when the University has fallen short of its aspirations,⁶ our modern history reflects persistent, purposeful efforts to promote diversity of thought and preserve freedom of expression.⁷

of Regent Baker on student group protest shutting down an April 29, 1988, political science department symposium).
⁵ As a branch of state government under Article 8, Section 5 of the Michigan Constitution, the University must comply with the First Amendment. *Healy v. James*, 408 U.S. 169, 180 (1972). The Supreme Court has been clear that “undifferentiated fear or apprehension of disturbance is not enough to overcome the right to freedom of expression,” and a school’s “mere desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that always accompany an unpopular viewpoint” cannot “justify prohibition of a particular expression of opinion.” *Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Cmty. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 508-09 (1969). A 2024 Knight Foundation-Ipsos nationwide survey found that 33 percent of students favor “[i]nstituting speech codes, or codes of conduct that restrict potentially offensive or biased speech on campus” and 25 percent of students favor “[d]isinviting speakers because some students perceive their message as offensive or biased against certain groups of people.” Knight Found.-Ipsos, *College Student Views on Free Expression and Campus Speech* 2024, at 38 (2024), https://knightfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Knight-Fdn_Free-Expression_2024_072424_FINAL-1.pdf; see also Len Niehoff, *Doe v. University of Michigan: Free Speech on Campus 25 Years Later*, 71 U. Miami L. Rev. 365, 372-76 (2017).

University leadership has long acknowledged the importance of fostering diversity of thought, including describing it as an “affirmative obligation.” Thus, at the October 17, 1962, formal meeting of the Board of Regents, after considering a “report . . . from the Senate Advisory Committee” and a letter from “the student group ‘Voice,’ the Regents approved a Committee on Public Discussions.”⁸ The Regents concluded that the “University has an affirmative obligation to see that students and faculty are offered a comprehensive, impartial, and objective program of on-campus public discussion of important and controversial social issues.”⁹ The Regents directed the Committee to “[t]ake leadership in arranging the most useful kind of public debate on important issues, and insure that over a reasonable period of time the University hears responsible speakers with a wide variety of viewpoints.”¹⁰

Moreover, the University has for decades sought to protect freedom of expression from efforts to disinvite or disrupt speakers. Thus, at the October 21, 1977, formal Regents meeting, upon motion of Regent Paul W. Brown, the Board adopted “guidelines with respect to the rights and obligations of speakers, performers, audience members, and protestors at The University of Michigan (Freedom of Speech).” Those strongly worded guidelines provided, in part:

- “It is the right of any and all speakers invited by members of the University community, or groups under the aegis of the University, to set forth their views and opinions at the University.”
- “It is inappropriate for the University to ban any invited speaker from appearing before the University community.”
- “Pressure to revoke an invitation for a speaker to appear at the University because of the potential for a violent reaction to the speech, or the threat of disruption of the speech, constitutes intellectual blackmail, and cannot be tolerated. Likewise, the purposeful shunning of a controversial speaker of some merit solely because his appearance may invite disruption or violence is contrary to the intellectual ideals of the University community, and is a major concession to demagoguery.”¹¹

The Board’s Freedom of Speech Guidelines were developed in response to a significant event two years earlier, when, on March 12, 1975, protestors shouted down a speaker at an honorary degree ceremony in Rackham Auditorium.¹² On April 21, 1975, the University’s Senate Assembly, by a vote of 45-0, denounced the disruption as “a denial of the freedom of speech held dear by all in this nation, but most especially

¹ See Comm. on Freedom of Expression, *Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression* (2015), <https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/FOECommitteeReport.pdf>.
² See *Chicago Statement: University and Faculty Body Support*, FIRE, <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/chicago-statement-University-and-faculty-body-support> (last updated May 2024).
³ Compare *id.*, with Ass’n. of Am. Univs., *List of AAU Members*, https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Who-We-Are/AAU%20Member%20Universities%20listed%20by%20year_updated%202023.pdf (last visited Sept. 11, 2024).
⁴ See, e.g., Rick Fitzgerald, *Richard Spencer Will Not Come to U-M This Semester*, Univ. Rec. (Jan. 26, 2018), <https://record.umich.edu/articles/richard-spencer-will-not-come-u-m-semester/>; Mary Masson & Jina Sawani, *Michigan Medicine Statement on Protest at Medical School White Coat Ceremony*, Mich. Med. (July 26, 2022), <https://www.michiganmedicine.org/news-release/michigan-medicine-statement-protest-medical-school-white-coat-ceremony>; Appendix A, Exhibit 1 (email from Dean Mark West on student protest disrupting a discussion featuring a former Solicitor General of Texas); University of Michigan, *Proceedings of the Board of Regents (1987-1988)*, at 280 (1988), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/u/umregproc/acw7513.1987.001/284> (remarks

⁶ See, e.g., James Tobin, *Lost Star*, Heritage Project, <https://heritage.umich.edu/stories/lost-star/> (last visited Sept. 11, 2024).
⁷ If commitment to free speech can be shown by a history of significant protest, Michigan may be judged favorably. For example, on October 16, 1969, “20,000 people, primarily students and faculty,” gathered in the Big House for a “‘moratorium’ protest against the Vietnam war” that featured “a dozen speakers including Sen. Philip A. Hart.” *Peace Rally at Michigan Stadium, October 1969* (photograph), in Ann Arbor News, Oct. 16, 1969, <https://aadl.org/node/388609>. In February 1970, the Black Action Movement led the “largest student protest in the University’s history,” including a boycott of classes, in support of increased Black enrollment “comparable to the state’s Black population, by 1973; more financial aid for Black students; more Black faculty; more support for Black studies programs; and a center for Black students.” James Tobin, *Thirteen Days in 1970: The BAM Strike*, Mich. Today (Mar. 22, 2024), <https://michigantoday.umich.edu/2024/03/22/thirteen-days-in-1970-the-bam-strike/>. On March 11, 1970, a student organization, Environmental Action for Survival, Inc., hosted an event in Crisler Arena where thousands of people gathered as part of a four-day Environmental Teach-In—a prototype for Earth Day celebrations. James

Tobin, *Earth Day Eve*, Heritage Project, <https://heritage.umich.edu/stories/earth-day-eve/> (last visited Sept. 11, 2024). Since then, the University has hosted thousands of speech events where supporters and detractors have heard a broad range of ideas.
⁸ University of Michigan, *Proceedings of the Board of Regents (1960-1963)*, at 942-43 (1963), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/u/umregproc/acw7513.1960.001/974>.
⁹ *Id.* at 942.
¹⁰ *Id.*
¹¹ University of Michigan, *Proceedings of the Board of Regents (1975-1978)*, at 926 (1978), <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/u/umregproc/acw7513.1975.001/954>.
¹² See Glen Allerhand, *Katzir Speech Interrupted by Protest; One Arrested*, Mich. Daily, Mar. 13, 1975, at 1, 7, <https://digital.bentley.umich.edu/midaily/mdp.39015071754449/397> (“With shouts of ‘Free, Free Palestine’ and ‘Down with Zionism,’ about 100 Palestinian supporters yesterday afternoon interrupted a speech by Israeli President Ephraim Katzir at Rackham Auditorium.”); see *id.* (“[T]he demonstrators began a half hour of shouted slogans that forced Katzir to silence.”).

by those on a campus devoted to freedom of expression.”¹³ The Senate Assembly called on the Senate Assembly Committee on University Affairs (SACUA) to “appoint an ad hoc committee to prepare a report” on “freedom of speech and academic freedom as they pertain to University practices.”¹⁴ In October 1975, following the ad hoc committee’s work, the Civil Liberties Board, a standing committee of the Senate Assembly, began “[t]he drafting of proposals and guidelines.”¹⁵ On February 25, 1976, the Civil Liberties Board had a draft “Statement on Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression: The Rights and Obligations of Speakers, Performers, Audience Members, and Protestors at the University of Michigan.”¹⁶ On March 15, 1976, the Faculty Senate unanimously adopted that Statement with revisions.¹⁷ After further revisions, the Statement was approved by SACUA on January 24, 1977, approved by President Robben Wright Fleming on January 26, 1977,¹⁸ and, as noted above, approved by the Regents in October 1977.¹⁹ The October 1977 Statement served as the University’s free expression policy for nearly eleven years.

At their July 1, 1988, formal meeting, the Regents adopted a new freedom of expression policy, one also drafted by the Civil Liberties Board. That policy is now enshrined in University Standard Practice Guide 601.01: Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression²⁰ and has been in effect for more than 36 years. It provides, in part:

- “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.”
- “Within its lawful authority to do so, the University will protect the right of any member of the University community, or any invited speaker or artist, to speak or perform, and also will protect the rights of those members of the University community who wish to hear and communicate with an invited speaker or artist.”
- “It is inconsistent with full respect for freedom of speech and expression—though itself a form of protected speech—for members of the University community to exert pressure to revoke an invitation for a speaker to appear at the University because of the potential for a

violent reaction to the speech, or the threat of disruption of the speech, and such pressure should be resisted. Likewise, refusal to invite an individual to speak solely because his or her presence may invite violence and disruption is contrary to the intellectual ideals of the University.”

- “Canceling, stopping an event, adjourning to another time or place, or allowing protracted interruption of a speech, meeting, or performance is inconsistent with full respect for the rights of free expression and communication of those present.”

As should be clear from that excerpt, Standard Practice Guide 601.01: Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression is a powerful statement of our values; and it builds on an important history of declarations and policies by and from the faculty and Regents affirming the importance of diversity of thought and freedom of expression. In February 2023, the time was ripe to consider whether we should clarify, reemphasize, or strengthen our stated commitment to these values.



President Ono’s answer set us on the path to where we are today. President Ono told the Law faculty that he wanted the University to consider “craft[ing] a Michigan-specific policy that is even more speech protective.” The next day, President Ono asked me to reach out to the faculty member who had posed the question, Professor Gabriel Mendlow, and shortly thereafter directed me to chair a faculty committee charged with drafting Michigan’s own statement.

Our committee included Professors Mendlow, Michelle Adams, Kristina Daugirdas, Don Herzog, and Chandra Sripada, and we began work in April 2023. Throughout the spring and summer, our committee met frequently, debated the underlying issues, and exchanged and critiqued multiple drafts of a document that came to be titled the University of Michigan Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression. The draft was shared with members of the University’s leadership team, deans, and other faculty and staff, and amended based on their advice. The draft was amended further based on focused discussions with the Regents in July 2023.

[edu/policy/601.01](#).

²¹ See Appendix A, Exhibit 9; see also *DRAFT: University of Michigan Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression*, Univ. Rec. (Oct. 19, 2023), <https://record.umich.edu/articles/University-of-michigan-principles-on-diversity-of-thought-and-freedom-of-expression/>.

²² Rick Fitzgerald, *U-M Seeks Feedback on Principles in Support of Free Speech*, Univ. Rec. (Oct. 19, 2023), <https://record.umich.edu/articles/u-m-seeks-feedback-on-principles-in-support-of-free-speech/>.

In October 2023, the University published a draft of the Principles²¹ and sought anonymous feedback from our community.²² The Regents and the University’s leadership team reviewed the comments and edited the draft further.²³ On January 16, 2024, at a special formal Regents meeting,²⁴ the Board adopted the University of Michigan Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression.²⁵ President Ono then charged me with chairing a faculty, staff, and student committee to provide guidance on three questions: (1) how is the University doing in terms of living up to the aspirations embodied in the Principles; (2) what can we do to get us closer to meeting those aspirations; and (3) should the University adopt some form of the University of Chicago’s Kalven Report, which establishes “[a] heavy presumption against the University . . . expressing opinions on the political and social issues of the day”²⁶

On March 24, 2024, the University announced the formation of a committee charged with answering those questions.²⁷ The Principles Committee, as it became known, has representatives from all three campuses and our academic medical center. It includes thirty-two faculty members from twelve different schools and colleges; a librarian; seven staff members; and two students.

The Principles Committee met as a whole on March 10, 2024, and the work continued thereafter at the subcommittee level. Professor Jenna Bednar chaired Subcommittee One, which assessed the current state of diversity of thought and freedom of expression at Michigan; Professor Mika LaVaque-Manty chaired Subcommittee Two, which examined ways in which the University can better meet the aspirations in the Principles; and Professor Kristina Daugirdas chaired Subcommittee Three, which considered whether the University should adopt a version of the Kalven Report.

Early into their work together, Subcommittee One members made an important decision about how best to answer the question before it. Given the goal for the Principles Committee to complete work by the start of the new academic year, there was not enough time

for the University’s Survey Research Center to design and conduct a survey to assess the climate at Michigan for diversity of thought and freedom of expression. Subcommittee One decided instead to seek open-ended, qualitative feedback from our academic community. Thus, on May 28, 2024, the Principles Committee sent an email inviting faculty, students, staff, and alumni from all three campuses, our academic medical center, and other locations to offer anonymous comments on six questions relating to diversity of thought and freedom of expression here.²⁸

The Principles Committee received comments from 4,133 respondents, including 584 undergraduates, 545 graduate students, 887 faculty members, 2,066 staff, 725 alumni, and 36 retirees.²⁹ The comments were read by at least two members of each subcommittee. I read all the comments and can share that they demonstrated that our community took the questions seriously and offered deeply thoughtful, strong, and sometimes anger-filled perspectives. The comments are inspired, inspiring, challenging, and cause for both hope and concern. Appendix B contains a sample of comments that reflect diverse views held by people across the full scope of roles and affiliations, including many comments that are deeply critical of the University.

The subcommittees worked extraordinarily hard throughout the summer, with in-person and online meetings and conversations; correspondence among and between subcommittee members; and drafting, discussion, debate, editing, and redrafting.³⁰ The subcommittees submitted their reports in August. Each of the three subcommittee reports is the product of deliberation, compromise, and consensus among subcommittee members, including agreements to disagree.

The three Principles Subcommittee reports are presented in full in Part II. They are summarized below but must be read in their entirety to do them justice.



¹³ See Appendix A, Exhibit 2; Exhibit 3.

¹⁴ See Appendix A, Exhibit 2.

¹⁵ See Appendix A, Exhibit 5; see also Exhibit 4.

¹⁶ See Appendix A, Exhibit 6.

¹⁷ See Appendix A, Exhibit 7.

¹⁸ See Appendix A, Exhibit 8.

¹⁹ University of Michigan, *supra* note 11, at 926.

²⁰ SPG 601.01, Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression, <https://spg.umich.edu/policy/601.01>.

²³ The final version of the Principles reflects important feedback from the community. See Appendix A, Exhibit 10.

²⁴ Regents’ Special Meeting (Jan. 16, 2024), <https://regents.umich.edu/files/meetings/02-24/2024-02-1-2.pdf>.

²⁵ Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression (Jan. 16, 2024), <https://regents.umich.edu/files/meetings/01-24/2024-01-X-1.pdf>.

²⁶ Santa Ono, President, Univ. of Michigan, Statement at January 2024 Board of Regents (Jan. 16, 2024), <https://president.umich.edu/news-communications/>.

[statements/statement-at-january-2024-board-of-regents/](#).

²⁷ Don Jordan, <https://record.umich.edu/articles/committee-to-advise-on-diversity-of-thought-free-expression/>.

²⁸ See Appendix A, Exhibit 12.

²⁹ See Appendix A, Exhibit 11.

³⁰ Subcommittee One met twelve times; Subcommittee Two met eight times; and Subcommittee Three met twelve times.

The Principles Committee members have done a tremendous service for the University of Michigan. They dedicated hundreds of hours over the last five months to answer difficult questions implicating some of the most challenging and controversial topics in academia and our nation. They shared their differing backgrounds, expertise, experiences, and viewpoints in the type of constructive dialogue and debate that reflects our academic community at its very best. They made space for conflicting opinions; they listened critically and self critically; and they exchanged ideas and questioned assumptions. In other words, they embodied the values and aspirations in the Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression. We all owe them a profound debt of gratitude.

There is much work to be done. But the University should be proud that, through a collaborative process, it has sought out and been deeply influenced by the views of our academic community; it has taken a critical look at its own strengths and weaknesses and demonstrated the courage to reveal our community’s candid concerns and critiques; and it now has before it nuanced, thoughtful ideas for the future.

This report is sure to generate debate and disagreement. Thank goodness for both.

Timothy G. Lynch
Vice President and General Counsel
September 17, 2024

Summary of the Subcommittee Findings and Recommendations

Subcommittee I

“Subcommittee One was charged with assessing the degree to which [the] University of Michigan is living up to the Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression.”³¹

Subcommittee One’s report draws on and gives primary voice to the perspectives of the more than 4,000 people who responded to the Principles Committee’s request for comments.

Given the timing of the request for comments,³² and events (most often) on the Ann Arbor campus in the months after the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel, many comments concerned the University’s responses to protests. A large number of commenters strongly objected to the University’s decisions to take down the encampment on the Diag; block a Central Student Government vote on two referenda regarding the Israel-Hamas war; and propose a draft disruptive activity policy. In the view of one commenter, “[t]he Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression . . . is entirely hypocritical. The University claims to provide avenues for free speech, but regularly restricts the right to speak.”³³

Yet, as Subcommittee One also found, “some Jewish members of the UM community feared going to

campus, experienced a menacing atmosphere around the encampments, perceived some of the pro-Palestinian speech to be antisemitic, and experienced censorship against their own views.”³⁴ Moreover, some “Jewish students objected” to what they perceived as a “lack of constructive dialogue coming from the pro-Palestinian side, and from UM more generally.”³⁵ Similarly, another commenter, a faculty member, bemoaned a lack of constructive dialogue, particularly given the “complexities and nuances of this ongoing tragedy.”³⁶

The comments reviewed by Subcommittee One reflected diverse views on a wide range of other topics. Subcommittee One found a “complex picture”³⁷ on how our community views the environment for diversity of thought and freedom of expression here:

- “Evidence shows diversity of thought is lacking, as most respondents agree that liberal or progressive voices dominate the conversation. Deficiencies in constructive disagreement are compounded by social pressure that silences people who disagree with prevailing perspectives. Individuals holding conservative, libertarian, and traditional Christian views report significant pressure to self-censor.”³⁸
- “Both conservatives and liberals worried that the climate of opinion at UM was overwhelmingly liberal or progressive. Conservatives felt that many people at the University presumed that left-wing views were correct, that everyone agreed with them, that there was nothing to be said in favor of conservative views, or perhaps that most others were oblivious of conservative views.”³⁹
- “Conservatives also mentioned a common assumption that all conservatives agree on certain hot-button issues,” and “[s]ome self-identified liberals or progressives worried that their lack of exposure to conservative views made their own thoughts weaker.”⁴⁰

These types of concerns cut across all roles at the University: “Students fear hostility from peers and sometimes bad grades from faculty. Faculty members fear ‘cancellation’ by their students and sometimes by colleagues, unit heads, and higher administrators. Staff fear retaliation from supervisors and ostracism for expressing dissenting views.”⁴¹

Some members of the University “objected to UM’s DEI initiatives as enforcing an ideological orthodoxy, contrary to its commitment to freedom of expression. They objected to any requirements to avow commitment to DEI—for example, in required

DEI statements for job or admissions applications and staff evaluations.”⁴² “Other[s] understood diversity of thought in terms of representation of a full range of human experiences . . . [and] view[ed] DEI initiatives as contributing to this value.”⁴³ One commenter offered that as a “DEI implementation lead . . . the time I spent in that particular community . . . [was] an inspiring example of what a ‘constructive climate for diversity of thought’ could look like.”⁴⁴

Subcommittee One’s Report closes on an important note:

- “[T]he search for knowledge requires humility. It means recognizing the limits of our current understanding, both individually and as a human collective. It means listening to those who challenge assumptions, and understanding that those who challenge us have the power to shake us free from preconceptions, force us to reexamine our sometimes-faulty thinking and give us a greater chance of making new discoveries.”⁴⁵

Subcommittee II

Subcommittee Two was asked “whether the University of Michigan should do better in terms of diversity of thought and freedom of expression, given the recently affirmed principles, and, if so, how.”⁴⁶

Subcommittee Two recognized that “[a]t a general level, the answers to both questions are easy: even the best institutions fall short of their ideals, especially when the ideals are as ambitious as the Statement of Principles. Thus we should do better. And, we believe, we can.”⁴⁷ Yet the questions are difficult because there are at least as many ideas for increasing diversity of thought and protecting freedom of expression as there are members of the entire Principles Committee.

Subcommittee Two itself exemplified diversity of thought. For example, Subcommittee Two members had divergent views on whether active steps should be taken to broaden the range of perspectives in the faculty ranks (and, if so, how):

- “[O]ne of the perspectives that is likely missing is what might broadly be considered conservative. Committee members differ on what this missing perspective means, how it might be remedied, or whether it is a problem to remedy in the first place. Some members of the committee believe that increasing faculty who themselves espouse a range of conservative views would increase such voices being heard in our community. Some members believe this would be appropriate, even



³¹ See *infra* p. 14.
³² The request for comments opened within days of the University’s removal of the encampment on the Diag.
³³ See *infra* p. 25.
³⁴ See *infra* p. 24.

³⁵ See *infra* p. 18.
³⁶ See *infra* p. 18.
³⁷ See *infra* p. 14.
³⁸ See *infra* p. 14.
³⁹ See *infra* p. 39.

⁴⁰ See *infra* p. 16.
⁴¹ See *infra* p. 19.
⁴² See *infra* p. 22.
⁴³ See *infra* p. 23.

⁴⁴ See *infra* p. 23.
⁴⁵ See *infra* p. 29.
⁴⁶ See *infra* p. 30.
⁴⁷ See *infra* p. 30.

important, in fields where increasing people espousing such political views might be relevant and complement scholarship in those fields. Some committee members strongly object to hiring on the basis of any kind of ideological orientation.”⁴⁸

Subcommittee Two agreed that “at the moment of local, national, and even international polarization, many discussions are unidimensional, even binary: in political discussions, there are just ‘left’ and ‘right,’ ‘progressives’ and ‘conservatives,’ ‘us’ and ‘them.’”⁴⁹ Subcommittee Two rejects that view:

“Polarizing trends increase the idea that there are only two sides; we argue that the key is to foster a *plurality* of views, give more visible recognition to the multidimensional nature of political and ideological perspectives, abandon false dichotomies, and acknowledge the plasticity of terms like ‘conservative,’ ‘liberal,’ as well as the variance in the concomitant political positions of each over time.”⁵⁰

Subcommittee Two highlights several key underlying, essential principles:

- “Charity, humility, and respect are the guardrails of pluralist conversations. Well-intentioned people make mistakes.”⁵¹
- “It is entirely reasonable to expect members of the University community to abide by norms of civility, respect free expression, and be broadly supportive of the University’s fundamental missions. But a bright line can and must be drawn between promoting the norms of civility and pluralism and asking employees – both faculty and staff – for pledges of fealty to specific ideologies or endorsements of worldviews, political projects, philosophies, contested solutions to pressing problems. A central premise of pluralism is that thoughtful people can disagree, and the University should take great care in avoiding a culture where people feel they cannot disagree.”⁵²
- “In terms of research: ‘The University should be a place to think seriously about the unthinkable.’ The University is a place where all ideas get a fair hearing and serious scrutiny. These ideas may be currently unpopular, historically marginalized, or even silenced. They may also be ideas never yet thought elsewhere.”⁵³

⁴⁸ See *infra* p. 34.

⁴⁹ See *infra* p. 33.

⁵⁰ See *infra* p. 33.

⁵¹ See *infra* p. 33.

⁵² See *infra* p. 33.

⁵³ See *infra* p. 32.

⁵⁴ See *infra* p. 32.

⁵⁵ See *infra* p. 34.

⁵⁶ See *infra* p. 35.

- “In terms of teaching: ‘The University should be a place that opens minds.’”⁵⁴

Subcommittee Two recommends a campus-wide “Pluralism Initiative” to “bring together units from across the three campuses to promote a diversity of perspectives, prepare a diverse body of students, faculty, and staff to enter our pluralist community, to promote models for civil discourse and collaboration across different viewpoints, and to evaluate the campus climate regularly for its inclusion of different voices.”⁵⁵

Subcommittee Two also offers a number of potential ideas to support pluralism:

- “. . . including a new essay in the U-M essay section, asking [applicants] to write about how they would engage people and ideas they disagree with.”⁵⁶
- Adding a “University-wide requirement for all new students to take a course on themes around freedom of expression, diversity of thought, and dialogue across differences could create a better understanding of the issues, the rules and norms governing our community, and thus prepare students to be engaged and thoughtful members of the community.”⁵⁷
- “Creat[ing] a freestanding regular (e.g., biannual) freedom of expression and diversity of thought climate survey for all three campuses, to be conducted by University experts (e.g., the Institute for Social Research).”⁵⁸
- “[T]he Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, in coordination with the proposed Pluralism Initiative, [should] increase its programming around freedom of expression and diversity of thought.”⁵⁹
- “[T]he University [should] support team-based teaching explicitly across different viewpoints.”⁶⁰
- “An annual lecture recognizing and celebrating a person, whether academic or not, who exemplifies work across difference.”⁶¹
- “A manuscript prize open to authors outside the University comprising a cash award and a publication contract from the University’s press.”⁶²

⁵⁷ See *infra* p. 35.

⁵⁸ See *infra* p. 36.

⁵⁹ See *infra* p. 37.

⁶⁰ See *infra* p. 37.

⁶¹ See *infra* p. 38.

⁶² See *infra* p. 38.

⁶³ See *infra* p. 38.

⁶⁴ See *infra* p. 40, (quoting Office of the President, University of Michigan, Statement at January 2024 Board of Regents (January 16, 2024), at [https://](https://president.umich.edu/news-communications/statements/statement-at-january-2024-board-of-regents/)

- “A public dialogue across difference . . . to model a conversation, not a debate, across a topic on which the participants disagree.”⁶³

Subcommittee III

Subcommittee Three was asked to consider “[w]hether the University should adopt some form of the University of Chicago’s Kalven Principles, which establish ‘[a] heavy presumption against the University . . . expressing opinions on the political and social issues of the day.’”⁶⁴

Subcommittee Three answered “in the affirmative.”⁶⁵

“The University of Michigan should adopt the Kalven Report’s heavy presumption against institutional statements on political and social issues of the day because it will advance the University’s mission and protect its longstanding commitment to diversity of thought and freedom of expression.[⁶⁶] The University’s status as a public institution and its commitment to developing leaders and citizens only strengthen the case for avoiding institutional statements on political and social issues.”⁶⁷

In the view of Subcommittee Three, “universities must refrain from taking institutional positions on contested political and social issues of the day. The critics—the ‘instrument[s] of dissent,’ in the [Kalven] report’s terms—are the individual members of the academic community. The University must make way for their voices.”⁶⁸

Subcommittee Three highlighted some of the problems with institutional statements, including:

“[A]s our political and social climate has grown fractious in recent decades, it has become increasingly common for University leaders or departments to issue statements on social and political developments. These institutional statements might condemn a new development, express solidarity with those affected by it, or advocate for a specific policy.

University leaders have issued these statements for a variety of reasons—to affirm core values, show compassion, or reinforce a sense of community. Sometimes leaders acquiesce to pressure from students and others who believe that they can advance a cause by getting powerful institutions to affirm their views.

president.umich.edu/news-communications/statements/statement-at-january-2024-board-of-regents/). The full text of the Kalven Report is available at <https://provost.uchicago.edu/reports/report-Universitys-role-political-and-social-action>.

⁶⁵ See *infra* See *infra* p. 40.

⁶⁶ “One subcommittee member endorses the recommendation (that there be a heavy presumption against the University expressing opinions on the political and social issues of the day and that University leaders should seek other means to engage with the community), but is not prepared at this time to endorse the

Such institutional statements disserve the University’s mission. They undermine our commitment to open inquiry by suggesting that those who disagree are unwelcome. They cause would-be dissenters to worry that voicing disagreement may jeopardize admission, grades, or advancement. This risk is especially acute for statements issued by or on behalf of departments or other units that make up the University because of the closer connections among the individuals within those units.”⁶⁹

Subcommittee Three recommends that the principle of institutional neutrality apply broadly, including to “the president, members of the president’s leadership team, deans, center directors, department chairs, and any others authorized to speak for an academic unit.”⁷⁰

Subcommittee Three notes that its “recommendation does not preclude speech by University leaders on matters of internal governance, that is, on policies and decisions related to running the University. Nor does our recommendation preclude speech by University leaders in their individual capacities rather than on behalf of the institution.”⁷¹

Finally, Subcommittee Three addresses a prominent argument against institutional neutrality:

“Some have argued against institutional neutrality on the ground that neutrality is neither possible nor desirable. They often quote Bishop Desmond Tutu, who insisted: ‘If you are neutral in a situation of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.’[⁷²] We submit that there is more than one way to fight oppression and other societal ills. The contribution that universities can make is both critical and distinctive—but it is also necessarily indirect. Universities combat oppression through teaching, learning, inquiry, and debate about the foundations of injustice, its consequences, and what it would take to rectify them.”⁷³

more general concept of institutional neutrality or its rationale.”

⁶⁷ See *infra* p. 40.

⁶⁸ See *infra* p. 41.

⁶⁹ See *infra* p. 42.

⁷⁰ See *infra* p. 43.

⁷¹ See *infra* p. 43.

⁷² See, e.g., E.J. Dionne, South African Prelate Brings Message to City, N.Y. Times (Dec. 11, 1983).

⁷³ See *infra* p. 42.



Subcommittee I

“In a University, a public space, people have the right to speak, the right to protest,” said John Lewis, the civil rights leader and American politician, in 2017 address¹ at the University of Michigan. “Dr. King said from time to time that the time is always right to do right. So I would advise the students and the University community, whatever you do, do it in an orderly, peaceful, nonviolent fashion. Listen. The University is supposed to be a place of learning, debating. Never try to silence someone.”²

1 Our Charge and Assessment

Subcommittee One was charged with assessing the degree to which the University of Michigan is living up to the Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression. We embarked upon this work with the aim of supporting Subcommittee Two in their task of determining how the University community can do better and supporting Subcommittee Three in their charge of determining whether the University should adopt a policy of institutional neutrality. The challenges we raise for UM policymakers to address are underlined in this report, in the context in which they arose for us.

Overall, we found a complex picture of free speech, expression and diversity of thought on campus. Evidence

shows diversity of thought is lacking, as most respondents agree that liberal or progressive voices dominate the conversation. Deficiencies in constructive disagreement are compounded by social pressure that silences people who disagree with prevailing perspectives. Individuals holding conservative, libertarian and traditional Christian views report significant pressure to self-censor.

The Israel-Hamas war has heightened tensions and raised the stakes. We heard from several Jewish students who objected to the lack of constructive dialogue coming from the pro-Palestinian side and expressed safety concerns regarding growing antisemitism. At the same time, several respondents expressed frustration that demands for divestment from companies linked to Israel weren’t given adequate consideration after the Board of Regents declined to do so in March of 2024.

Many members of the UM community offered thoughtful recommendations on how the climate for freedom of expression, diversity of thought and constructive disagreement can be improved. By far the leading themes emerging from their recommendations is that UM needs to represent a wider diversity of ideas and better model and teach skills of constructive disagreement.

Public Television (DPTV) (Nov. 27, 2017). Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1zSBZdftE&t=1s>
² *Id.*

2 Process

Our subcommittee met every two weeks from March to August 2024. We discussed what evidence would be most useful to gather to assess how well UM upholds the values of freedom of expression and diversity of thought. We quickly determined that we would most like to hear from our community.

We recognized several challenges in the process of gathering information from students, faculty, and staff on our three campuses as well as in the academic medical center. Given the short timeframe, we could not hold focus groups or other forms of face-to-face deliberative input. We also did not have the time to commission a professional survey organization like the Survey Research Center at the Institute for Social Research, which would have allowed us to reach a representative sample of our population.

Quantitative data regarding our points of concern are infeasible to acquire. In a University of our size, with millions of discussions taking place on campus every year, it is impossible to get a comprehensive list of instances of “cancellation,” of experienced barriers to freedom of expression, or to get any sense of the ratios of impeded or unconstructive to total discussions. The committee was also not able to identify systematic and objective ways to measure and quantify diversity of ideas at UM.

More importantly, we recognize that what qualifies as “controversial or unsettled matters” can be subjective, difficult, or painful, leading to wide disagreement on what constitutes “constructive disagreement.”

For these reasons, we thought reporting widely held perceptions was the better way to go and we decided to focus on gathering qualitative information as a way to understand the various ways in which UM is living up to or failing to live up to our principles. We also wanted to gather individuals’ narratives of how our practices regarding speech are going, for better or worse, to clarify our own understanding of the shape and scope of the Principles, as well as to consider the disagreements within our community of what counts as a violation or fulfillment of our Principles.

We also referred to external data sources. See Appendix A, Exhibit 13.

2.1 Working Definitions

In designing the request for community input we needed to define our terms. Here we describe our working definitions and then the instrument itself.

We understand freedom of expression to refer to the ability of community members to voice their views without inappropriate constraints. Vertical constraints are imposed by formal University policies or official actions. Horizontal constraints arise from informal social pressures. UM is legally restricted from imposing many vertical constraints by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Horizontal constraints arise from the culture and need to be addressed mainly by adopting practices to shift the UM community’s informal norms and habits regarding freedom of expression.

We understand diversity of thought to include two aspects. *Diversity of ideas* pertains to the presentation of multiple perspectives on controversial or unsettled issues. A University affirms diversity of ideas when, on controversial or unsettled matters—especially those of moral, social, or political significance—the University strives to have a variety of meaningfully different perspectives and arguments represented. *Constructive disagreement* refers to an environment in which there is substantive engagement with ideas and arguments, without personal attacks, interference with others’ rights to freedom of expression and to hear what others are saying, or other kinds of inappropriate pressure to adopt a particular view. Substantive and civil discussion is particularly important across political divisions.

2.2 Community Input

The most important and extensive information we gathered was qualitative feedback from members of the UM community. We invited students, faculty, staff, and alumni from our three main campuses, Michigan Medicine, and other locations (e.g., the Biological Station) to report their experiences and impressions of (1a) barriers to freedom of expression at UM; (1b) settings or cases of a constructive climate for freedom of expression; (2a) cases where diversity of thought is lacking at UM; (2b) examples of a constructive climate for diversity of thought at UM; (3) their opinions on whether UM should adopt a principle of institutional neutrality; and (4) their ideas for supporting freedom of speech and diversity of thought at UM. (Appendix A contains the complete wording of our invitation for feedback.) We emailed our invitation to all students, faculty, and staff with an active UM account at all UM locations, notifying them that their electronic responses would be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law, and in this report, we have removed any identifying information to preserve anonymity. From May 24 to June 30, we received 4133 responses: 584 (12%) from undergraduates, 545 (11%) from graduate students, 887 (18%) from faculty, 2066 (43%) from staff, 725 (15%) from alumni with an active UM account, and 36 (1%) from retirees. There were 3265 respondents from the Ann Arbor campus (79%), 483

¹ John Lewis, Address at the Penny Stamps Distinguished Speaker Series: Conflict and Peace Initiative at the University of Michigan’s International Institute, the King-Chavez-Parks Visiting Professors Program, and Detroit

(12%) from Michigan Medicine, 176 (4%) from Flint, 173 (4%) from Dearborn, and 35 (1%) from other locations. A number of respondents fall into more than one category and were invited to indicate all forms of their relationship with the University, such as being both alumni and staff. Some entries were blank. Every entry was read by at least two committee members.

We analyzed responses on two dimensions: (1) how the respondent understood the principles of freedom of expression and diversity of thought, particularly as applied to UM’s internal affairs; and (2) how well the respondent thought UM was exemplifying or failing to live up to these principles as they understood them.

3 How the U. Michigan Community Sees Barriers to Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression

3.1 Lack of Diversity of Thought on Campus, Especially in Classrooms

Voices of the community

Some respondents understood diversity of thought in terms of campus representation of views along an ideological spectrum. Diversity is lacking when represented views are overwhelmingly on one side of the spectrum. By far, most complaints about failures of diversity of thought at UM reflected this ideological spectrum view.

Both conservatives and liberals worried that the climate of opinion at UM was overwhelmingly liberal or progressive. Conservatives felt that many people at the University presumed that left-wing views were correct, that everyone agreed with them, that there was nothing to be said in favor of conservative views, or perhaps that most others were oblivious of conservative views.

Respondent 3234 [Staff, Michigan Medicine] stated: “During residency lectures, it is assumed that all residents are liberals and therefore everyone has the same viewpoints on topics such as abortion, trans athletes, and referring to mothers as ‘birthing peoples.’ Since the assumption is that everyone thinks the same, why would other opinions be sought? It’s also at the point where I feel I cannot express different opinions or I would lose the respect of my colleagues.”

Conservatives also mentioned a common assumption that all conservatives agree on certain hot-button issues.

Respondent 3335 [Faculty, Ann Arbor] said: “I think that there is informal pressure to not express positions that are too conservative. . . . There is also a tendency to group ‘conservative’ issues into a single category and expect a single opinion. I received a survey once that

said ‘what is your opinion on abortion, gun control, and affirmative action?’ There was only one response scale given! So, since my opinion is against, for, and undecided, what answer was I supposed to give?”

Some self-identified liberals or progressives worried that their lack of exposure to conservative views made their own thoughts weaker.

Respondent 2160 [Faculty, Ann Arbor] said: “It seems our community is becoming more and more politically homogeneous, favoring liberal/left viewpoints (which is admittedly my own view!). While there seem to be countless opportunities to learn about topics from liberal/left viewpoints, I’ve seen very few opportunities to engage seriously with conservative ideas and/or critically examine ideas promoted on the political left. I worry this leaves me with serious blind spots.”

Many respondents were particularly concerned about the lack of diversity of thought in syllabi and class discussion.

Respondent 128 [Faculty, Ann Arbor] was “horrified” by a demand to revise their syllabus for R&E [Race and Ethnicity] certification in ways that were “indicative of a lethal combination of pedagogical ignorance and self-righteousness.”

Respondent 409 [Undergraduate, Ann Arbor]: “There are also professors that make blanket and sweeping statements of opinions, trying to disguise them as facts (sometimes those statements are straight up false, e.g. one instance when an Arab-American Studies professor blatantly said that the US is not a democracy with nothing to back up their statement). Those who are very obviously opinionated also make it very uncomfortable for students to speak up (e.g. how can I feel comfortable responding after such a statement?).”

Several respondents objected to the left-leaning tilt of “mandatory” [i.e., recommended by higher administration] language on syllabi.

Respondent 3584 [Faculty, Staff, Ann Arbor] expressed the belief that “mandatory” syllabus language illustrated how the “victim mentality permeates everything.”

However, some respondents objected to the idea that lack of viewpoint diversity was a problem in itself.

Respondent 3154 [Faculty, Ann Arbor] said their course syllabi focus on left-leaning content: “My own course syllabus doesn’t contain much diversity of thought. I draw on thinkers from the center and the left primarily; I don’t look for folks who think about

community building, economics, justice, etc. from the right, justifying my approach by figuring ‘the devil doesn’t need an advocate.”

Respondent 3960 [Faculty, Ann Arbor]: “[T]o say that ‘diversity of thought’ is lacking in syllabi calls into question the academic freedom of faculty and is a chilling suggestion. . . . There cannot be free speech for a range of opinions if outside arbitrators who are not even experts on said topics are asked to weigh in on ‘diversity of viewpoints’ on syllabi. This is what is going on in states trying to rid education of truthful information about the history of racism.”

Some respondents understood diversity of thought in terms of representation of a full range of human experiences. Some of these respondents commended the syllabi they encountered for incorporating diversity of experiences. Others held that such diversity was deficient in some courses.

Respondent 3795 [Faculty, Ann Arbor] wrote: “So many syllabi still only feature white, cisgender, . . . non-disabled, heterosexual authors (and in most fields, they are also men).”

Some respondents singled out other elements of curricular and course design for narrowing diversity of experiences—for example, the lack of attention to accessibility (e.g. Respondent 293 [Staff, Ann Arbor]).

Challenge for UM

This is only a small sample of respondents’ concerns about the lack of diversity of thought at UM in both senses of this value. Yet these concerns must be balanced with concerns about academic freedom. UM will need to consider how any policies it adopts for increasing diversity of thought in courses and curricula are compatible with respecting the academic freedom of faculty members to design their courses.

3.2 Failures of Constructive Disagreement

Voices of the community

For the most part, feedback from the community suggests that deficiencies in constructive disagreement arise from either the lack of representation of disagreement in the curriculum and campus more generally, or barriers to freedom of expression experienced by people who disagree with prevailing views. Hence, many individuals who express concerns about the climate of opinion at UM don’t even get to the point of experiencing expressed but unconstructive disagreement. They experience homogeneity of opinion and presumptions that only one point of view is correct.

Respondent 3344 [Graduate student, Ann Arbor], said: “It’s just automatically assumed that everyone has the same political ideas and it creates an environment where it’s very awkward and professionally/socially deleterious to stand out and say ‘actually, no, I don’t believe what you assume I believe.’ We’re also often forced to wear symbols that clearly imply certain political views, e.g. pronoun pins. I think the biggest problem is that it’s taken for granted that X political position is obviously right and shared by everyone, which is a more covert way of controlling speech and antagonizing/isolating people who don’t share the dominant views.”

Although the sheer absence of expressed disagreement was a common complaint, respondents also sometimes observed that disagreement at UM was met or pre-empted by ridicule and vilification. When students were viewed as posing barriers to free expression and diversity of thought, this was most often through informal peer pressure, ridicule, and the possibility of “cancellation” through mass backlash.

Respondent 3325 [Graduate student, Ann Arbor] said: “During my first semester on campus in fall 2020. . . . [m]any individuals including faculty and staff made strong claims about conservatives. Even during general meetings, some people seem to assume that everyone on the campus shares their political beliefs. I identify as a liberal politically, but I do not feel comfortable to share any political statements. During meetings, professors and other faculty have made comments that vilify other conservatives and portray them as ignorant. I do not feel comfortable to speak more critically in this situation. . . .”

Some respondents say that the presumption that only left-wing views are correct, and the fear of recrimination for expressing disagreement, have seriously undermined UM’s teaching mission.

Respondent 361 [Faculty, Ann Arbor]: “It is assumed in faculty meetings, in classrooms, and on campus that one holds a liberal viewpoint. . . . Denigrating political candidates and viewpoints that are viewed as right of center is commonplace Being in the health sciences, even topics that have nothing to do with politics on the surface have become taboo. I was called a racist in teaching feedback for suggesting that BMI was associated with poor health outcomes. I have been incrementally removing foundational content from courses so as not to agitate students and potentially face questions from administration.”

Respondent 454 [Graduate student, Ann Arbor]: “You are with the majority or you keep your mouth shut. . . . [U]nless it’s extreme liberalism, no one at U of M wants to hear it (and I am very liberal). I had an MSW professor make a comment recently that was something to the effect of, ‘well, don’t get me started on my thoughts on religions.’ . . . To just assume that everyone in the room feels the same way is not right. . . . I agree that white privilege exists and that I, as a cis-gender, heterosexual white female have had more access than my peers and that is not right, but literally every week in social work classes that’s the majority of what we talk about. . . . But . . . when do I learn how to be an actual social worker??? All I’ve learned about in 6 months is about racism and that I have had more privilege than I deserve. I have been made to feel less than (some might argue rightfully so, but am I not a human, too?). I have learned no skills in how to actually run social work sessions or help people.”

Another area in which respondents identified failures of constructive disagreement concerns the Israel-Palestine conflict. Several pro-Palestinian respondents expressed frustration that Regents had (allegedly) mocked them.

For example, Respondent 315 [Staff, Dearborn] cited “[w]hen the board of regents . . . mocks student protestors” as an instance where diversity of thought is lacking.

Several Jewish students objected to the lack of constructive dialogue coming from the pro-Palestinian side, and from UM more generally. They expressed concerns for growing antisemitism on campus.

For example, Respondent 208 [Undergraduate, Ann Arbor] said: “I hear students calling Israelis subhuman, saying they deserve to die, professors calling Jews oppressors and Jews are committing a genocide. . . . The only places I have ever felt listened to was Hillel and Chabad. I’m dreading returning back to Michigan next semester. . . . Literally your students are aggressive asf and as soon as they learn that I am Israeli or a Zionist, they refuse to talk to me. I want to talk to muslims. I want to talk to palestinians. . . . But your students shun me. they ostracize me. . . . What the hell am I supposed to do with students who treat me like garbage because of my country of origin? How am I ever supposed to have a constructive conversation with people who don’t want to have one?”

Others objected that pro-Palestinian activists prevented constructive disagreement by driving out attempts to recognize complexity and nuance.

For example, Respondent 283 [Faculty, Ann Arbor] said: “I definitely see instances where anyone who is not fully on board with the activism of the day may be ostracized or otherwise made to feel like they aren’t welcome—or at least their opinions aren’t welcome. Many on campus, for example, feel compassion for what is going on between Israel and Palestine, and many of us realize that the issue is not as straightforward, simple, and one-sided as those who were most vocal/activist purported. Yet because we weren’t screaming and camping out on the quad, the views of many went unheard, making me feel like UM’s outwardly face was the oversimplified version that seemed antisemitic and one-sided, when reality is that many (most?) of us understand the complexities and nuances of this ongoing tragedy.”

Yet many respondents perceived the encampments as an exemplary setting for constructive disagreement:

Respondent 186 [Undergraduate, Ann Arbor]: “The most inclusive environment I’ve seen on campus was the encampment, which the administration decided to have torn down. The students and staff there were more than willing to listen to anyone—even the pro-genocide group that hung around the edges daily.”

Respondent 585 [Graduate Student, Ann Arbor]: “The most constructive climate for freedom of expression I have seen at the University of Michigan was the pro-Gaza encampment that was brutally raided by police with University support. As a Jew, I felt that the people at the encampment were often open to hearing Jewish perspectives so long as they were not shared with the intention of provocation. My opinions on Israel-Palestine do not fit neatly into those of the organizers but I still felt it was a welcoming environment and an encouraging sign of democratic, grassroots resistance to University inaction.”

Challenges for UM

Members of the UM community identify failures of constructive disagreement at both a general cultural level and as arising in the form of highly focused and polarized crises. UM needs (1) to better model and teach constructive disagreement across campus as a general matter and (2) to scale up efforts to promote constructive ways of disagreeing over specific highly polarized issues, especially when they have reached a crisis point on campus.

3.3 Social Pressure, Self-Censorship, and Challenges in Voicing Diverse Viewpoints

Voices of the community

Many respondents report feeling pressured to conform to certain viewpoints and staying silent to avoid negative reactions from others. Students fear hostility from peers and sometimes bad grades from faculty. Faculty members fear “cancellation” by their students and sometimes by colleagues, unit heads, and higher administrators. Staff fear retaliation from supervisors and ostracism for expressing dissenting views. (Note that some of these cases cross the line from horizontal to vertical barriers to free expression, as noted above, in Section 3.1.). Some respondents blame the administration for setting a bad example in its one-sided communication.

The most common type of speech for which respondents experienced obstructions or the need for self-censorship was conservative, libertarian, and traditional Christian views. Some respondents even experienced pressure against views that were only modestly to the right of the most left-wing views. For example:

Respondent 302 [Faculty, Ann Arbor]: “Faculty certainly self-censor themselves a lot. One is afraid that student and sometimes faculty activists would bring forth accusations of racism, sexism, ableism and whatnot over minor or more likely non-existent issues, and that the administration would either do nothing to protect and ensure the due process, or would even join in the condemnation of the accused. The case of Bright Sheng a couple of years ago is a good example how fast and badly things can develop. From my own classroom experience, and from colleagues, I know that self-policing in classrooms reached its high peaks in 2020-2021, when people would walk on eggshells for fear that someone decides to be offended and raises hell. I am not even talking about ‘expressing opinions’ in class, which is indeed a subtle and difficult issue, but just about censoring words (for example colors: ‘white’, ‘black’, ‘blue’, ‘red’, as applied to inanimate objects), that any reasonable person under normal circumstances would consider neutral.”

Respondent 326 [Alumni, Staff, Graduate Student, Ann Arbor]: “I feel as if there is informal pressure to conform to particular viewpoints, both in classrooms and in social situations on campus. I consider myself politically centrist, but only feel comfortable expressing viewpoints that conform with more liberal ideologies. I’ve had experiences in classrooms in which I’ve received poor feedback and lower grades for viewpoints outside of liberal ideology. Students with conservative viewpoints are sometimes harassed

on campus by other students, called ‘bigoted’, etc. . . . [T]he pendulum has swung so far that I’ve lost friends on campus for merely associating with people with differing beliefs. It creates a very divisive and unproductive setting where it feels like an echo-chamber of the same ideologies with minimal opportunity for peer discourse.”

Respondent 338 [Graduate Student, Ann Arbor]: “There is a clear and intense left slant in nearly all of the University’s communication. I believe that this makes students who align with these views feel validated in shutting down the speech of other students. I personally identify as center right, and I have been called a nazi multiple times when voicing even moderate opinions.”

Respondent 490 [Staff, Michigan Medicine]: “I am frequently ridiculed for being libertarian and for my faith.”

Respondent 495 [Graduate Student, Ann Arbor]: “[T]he majority of the students I have met at UM law are what I consider hyper liberal. . . . [T]hese same students, as a majority, have the power to suppress other views. . . . I never spoke on an opinion I carried even in classes where it was specifically asked of me for fear of retaliation. [S]tudents will silently shun you once they discover you are an other. . . . [T]he Republican law students have a group called the Federalist Society. . . . These students are generally’ forced to keep to themselves because the hyper left will not engage with them and will tell each other, ‘Careful he’s a FedSoc.’ While the federalist society members are friendly and willing to have good debate the hyper left is not. As for me personally, I had to actively avoid the Fed Soc label (As a liberal Democrat!) by never speaking on even the slightest disagreement with this majority for fear of losing friends, social status, or student government position, etc. . . . I have found the super majority of hyper liberal students . . . sow discord and create an uncomfortable environment. They tend to have a my way or the highway attitude with no discussion on the matter.”

Respondent 555 [Faculty, Staff, Ann Arbor]: “As long as your opinions and beliefs align with the majority, there is freedom of expression. I have often been called out publically for my beliefs not being aligned with my co-workers/leaders. I am a conservative Christian and rarely voice my opinion because of being singled out for my beliefs/lifestyle.”

Respondent 3299 [Alumni, Ann Arbor]: “I found my Criminal Law class two years ago to have great potential for discussions, but typically students were

shut down by their peers in follow-up questions/discussion points if they said anything other than the most liberal viewpoint. (I am liberal myself, but I cannot stand shutting down other people in that way and threatening them with being labeled racist in front of their peers and/or the entire school when they say something moderate/conservative).”

Respondent 3470 [Faculty, Michigan Medicine]: “As a faculty member in the medical school who has conservative leanings, I am surrounded by 90+% of my peers who see absolutely no problem with publicly and vociferously demeaning any and all who are not lockstep with the approved left-wing viewpoints of our time. In our team room, there have been open conversations between faculty on: how Christians (in particular, Catholics) are universally bigoted and ignorant, how the names of those who vote for a certain political candidate should be made public and the person fired, how those who question the morality of youth sex reassignment surgery or abortion until the point of birth should be fired, and countless others. No one seems to have any problem with these open conversations, but when any pushback is given, the conversation becomes overtly confrontational and the individual who pushes back (usually me) is treated with great skepticism, sometimes being treated as a pariah indefinitely by some. Additionally, regular University emails extolling the virtues of left-wing activism in all its various forms (in particular, those supporting so-called ‘Pride Month’ and Black Lives Matter protests) are the norm and give license to employees to actively ostracize others who disagree with them (views, I should add, that roughly 50% of the country hold). Not only does this environment make for a toxic one where alternative (i.e. traditional, up until about 10 years ago) viewpoints are suppressed, but it also diffuses into the learners who will become the next generation of clinicians and educators. As an example, we had a patient on one of my teams who was seen one day wearing a hat with a slogan for a particular political candidate. This patient was then known to my residents and medical students as ‘that patient with the MAGA hat,’ and one student opined, ‘well, I suppose we have to take care of bigots too.’”

Some staff feared negative career consequences for expressing their views. Some staff said that administrators suppressed staff freedom of expression by telling staff to “stay in their lane,” enforcing DEI orthodoxy, and threatening career repercussions for complaining about work conditions. We note that workers have a legal right against employer retaliation for complaining about work conditions, over and above UM’s policies on freedom of expression. For example:

Respondent 86 [Faculty, Ann Arbor]: “I have observed a situation where staff feel strongly pressured to not raise concerns about unreasonable faculty supervisors. The power imbalance is obvious (relatively newly hired staff in ‘soft money’ positions, reporting to a very senior full professor who appears to have little regard for working hours, among other things).”

Respondent 344 [Staff, Ann Arbor]: “At work freedom of expression is not allowed for staff. We’re told our job is to get the work done and that’s what we’re paid to do. With that, I do not post any of my political beliefs or anything else that can have a negative influence on my position.”

Respondent 280 [Staff, Michigan Medicine]: “There should be policies that allow for freedom of religious expression in dress. . . . [A]s a Christian I no longer feel that I can wear a cross (I am not talking something large, just a small one on a necklace or small earrings). It has been communicated to me that these should not be worn as it could be offensive to some. I can openly state that I would find symbols of satanic worship to be offensive, but I would still support the right of others to wear such things. I feel a great disparity in terms of being Christian and prefer to not be on Michigan Medicine property nor to get my care here because I don’t feel like values are respected.”

Respondent 2140 [Staff, Ann Arbor]: “The most significant barriers to my personal freedom of expression at the University have to do with voicing my work-related concerns and opinions in the office. I was recently told to ‘stay in my lane,’ and I was given the impression that more senior management than my supervisor were the one(s) issuing that order. . . .”

Challenges for UM

Barriers to freedom of expression arising from the culture at UM are more difficult to dismantle than barriers arising from official policy. The challenge is greater because UM’s culture reflects the political polarization and toxic political discourse of the wider society, in which personal vilification, insulting group stereotypes, bullying, and shunning often replace constructive disagreement and sharing of experiences. Nevertheless, UM is legally required to address harassment on grounds of religion and pressure on staff not to speak about workplace conditions. UM should consider how to improve its practices in these areas. To ensure freedom of expression more broadly, UM should consider how to promote a general expectation that discourse on campus, especially in classrooms and workspaces, focuses on addressing relevant issues and avoids attacks on speakers and the identity groups to which they belong. At the same time, not everyone can

expect that their values will be reflected in UM policies, particularly in health care settings where patients are involved. UM should consider how to ensure that individuals are free to disagree with policies even if they are required to comply with them, and that the justification for its policies not be framed in ways that denigrate those who disagree.

3.4 Cancellations

Voices of the community

Some members of our community expressed concern about “cancellation,” which includes both “deplatformings” and “pressure campaigns.” Deplatformings consist of attempts by various groups to prevent a speaker from being invited to speak (disinvitations) or to interrupt or shut down the speaking event itself (disruptions). Pressure campaigns consist of attempts by various groups to get scholars to avoid making certain claims as part of their research or teaching activities or when they speak out on matters of public concern, or to stop them from assigning certain works or projects to students as part of their teaching, or require them to undertake activities related to their teaching (e.g., write letters of recommendation) to which they have political objections.

Some respondents mentioned particular instances while others referred to a culture of cancellation.

Respondent 871 [Retiree, Ann Arbor]: “My primary examples of lack of diversity of thought at UM are the terrible situations that happened with Prof. Bright Sheng and Prof. Phoebe Glockner. Those happened a few years ago but cannot be easily forgotten. They are still a Sword of Damocles hanging over faculty heads.”

Respondent 3155 [Faculty, Michigan Medicine]: “The treatment of Bright Sheng, who is not US born and probably wasn’t as familiar with the meaning black-face has received in the US, was also concerning. Sure, he should have known, and a colleague should have warned him, but it also seemed that the outcry and removing him from the course was too big a reaction—it seems there was no room to discuss this incident rather than simply find a scapegoat and move on.”

Respondent 794 [Undergraduate, Ann Arbor]: “There’s close to no freedom of thought, particularly around social and political issues. Unless you fit the mold that cancel culture wants, you can’t speak. Doesn’t matter if it’s just one particular view that doesn’t align or all

of them, if you’re ever so slightly different in your personal viewpoints of political and social issues you’d be cancelled.”

Respondent 930 [Faculty, Ann Arbor]: “The only opinions that are socially acceptable to be expressed are those that mirror the opinions of the far left. Expressing contrasting opinions puts the person at risk for being ‘cancelled’ or worse.”

Data from the Public Record

We reviewed cases for the last 10 years primarily drawing on data from FIRE databases.³ The FIRE database lists 9 cases involving deplatforming and disruption in that timespan. Of the 5 deplatforming attempts, the University refused pressures for disinvitation and affirmed its commitment to free expression in 3 cases. In 2 cases, the University initially canceled an event but then reversed course and subsequently allowed the event to successfully go forward. Of the 4 disruptions, 3 were mild to moderate, and the event nonetheless was completed successfully. In one case, the disruption of the Honors Convocation event in 2024 by pro-Palestinian protesters, the event was cut short and a planned speaker could not complete their remarks. In sum, in this database, attempts at deplatformings were rare, nearly all did not succeed, and in many cases, the University stepped forward to affirm free speech principles.

The FIRE database⁴ lists 10 cases involving pressure campaigns against UM scholars in the last 10 years. In most cases, the University declined to formally investigate the targeted scholar or an investigation cleared the scholar. In reviewing these cases, there were certainly missteps in individual cases. But we were not able to find systematic patterns to suggest that the University has been excessively sensitive to student or interest group pressure, overzealous in investigating faculty, or excessively punitive.

Challenges for UM

Our review of the public data corroborates the perceptions of our community: while publicized attempts to cancel members of our community are rare and usually do not succeed with their stated purpose, they do have a chilling effect on the community as a whole. In addition, some subcommittee members are aware of unpublicized cancellation attempts not reported in the request for feedback which have absorbed the energies of some unit heads and chilled the speech of targets and others who are aware of these attempts.

³ https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/campus-deplatforming-database#campus-deplatforming/?view_44_search=University%20of%20Michigan&view_44_page=1
⁴ https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/scholars-under-fire#search/?view_22_page=1&view_22_filters=%5B%7B%22operator%22%3A%22contains%22%2C%22value%22%3A%22University%20of%20Michigan%22%2C%22field%22%3A%22field_2%22%7D%5D



3.5 Threats and Opportunities from DEI

Voices of the community

Some respondents understood diversity of thought in terms of campus representation of views along an ideological spectrum. Diversity is lacking when represented views are overwhelmingly on one side of the spectrum. Respondents who took this view sometimes objected to UM’s DEI initiatives as enforcing an ideological orthodoxy, contrary to its commitment to freedom of expression. They objected to any requirements to avow commitment to DEI—for example, in required DEI statements for job or admissions applications and staff evaluations.

Respondent 2433 [Staff, Michigan Medicine]: “Michigan Medicine Core Value #5 - TEAMWORK: ‘We will work together with a shared purpose rooted in equity and fairness where diversity is celebrated, respected and valued’ . . . incorporates both professional behavior and ideological compliance and neglects the ways staff may achieve Teamwork by means other than ‘celebrating’ diversity.”

Respondent 537 [Faculty, Ann Arbor] shared that during a department discussion of a project proposal involving critiques of critical race theory, an administrator said to the assembled faculty, “Where is [the researcher] going to find critiques of this theory? By watching Fox News?” The respondent then recalled: “My colleagues in the room started laughing. It was at that moment I realized that as a department, our commitment to scholarly debate and discussion was dead. We were now committed to upholding and defending DEI. There is, of course, plenty of scholarly criticism of critical race theory, much of it coming from prominent scholars of color.”

Respondent 3939 [Faculty, Michigan Medicine]: “While I have not been subjected to direct confrontations, I frequently sense that sharing an opinion that challenges or even slightly deviates from the prevailing narrative is unwelcome. . . . While I commend the University’s dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, I am concerned that the approach taken may be excessively zealous. It seems that any critique of policies, formal or informal processes or procedures, risks the critic being labeled as ‘anti-DEI’ and, by extension, ignoble. I believe that this has resulted in a loss of open-mindedness within our community and has inadvertently forced the discourse into a dichotomy that allows for no shades of gray, where nuance is seemingly not tolerated.”

Respondent 4082 [Faculty, Ann Arbor] noted that: “With a population of 50,000 students, 30,000 staff

members, and 8,000 faculty members, one would expect to observe a spectrum of opinions on DEI&SJ issues, reflective of the national debate. However, at UM, there is a conspicuous absence of voices openly questioning or challenging the prevailing DEI&SJ narrative. . . . This situation stands in stark contrast to other academic institutions where at least some openly dissenting voices are present. For example, other universities host moderate voices like Jonathan Haidt at NYU and Steven Pinker at Harvard, as well as more conservative figures such as Robert George at Princeton and Niall Ferguson at Harvard/Stanford. Many of these scholars are affiliated with organizations dedicated to freedom of expression or conservative causes. The complete absence of such openly dissenting voices at UM is a telling indicator of the suppressive environment that has developed on our campus.”

Other respondents understood diversity of thought in terms of representation of a full range of human experiences. Respondents who understood diversity of thought in these terms were likely to view DEI initiatives as contributing to this value.

As respondent 2134 [Graduate Student, Ann Arbor] put the point, “In the SPH, we recognize the importance of lived experiences, everyone has a unique life, with different circumstances that brought them there. Sharing and actively listening to opinions are the only way to learn from others.”

Respondent 2131 [Alumni, Staff, Ann Arbor] (who also praised [University lawyer]’s training on freedom of expression) said: “I had the privilege of spending a period of time as a DEI implementation lead, and will wholeheartedly affirm that the time I spent in that particular community (including the training opportunities, the monthly meetings, the guest speakers, etc.) were an inspiring example of what a ‘constructive climate for diversity of thought’ could look like.”

Challenges for UM

We regard both conceptions of diversity of thought to contribute to a full understanding of how this value may be realized at UM. We note that an understanding of diversity of thought as rooted in lived experience would encompass far more wide-ranging experiences than are captured in UM’s DEI categories, which stress certain racial/ethnic and gender identities of Americans. We encourage UM to consider how DEI initiatives may both help and hinder diversity of thought in both senses distinguished above, i.e., diversity of ideologies and diversity of experiences. They may help by affording some of the background conditions for expression of these

kinds of diversity. They may hinder by (a) reducing our understandings of diversity of thought to the identity categories perceived to be focal in UM’s current DEI initiatives; or (b) requiring community members to avow adherence to particular views about UM’s DEI initiatives, or document their professional contributions to teamwork or other UM values in terms of DEI. Faculty, students, and staff should instead be afforded a range of options for representing their contributions.

3.6 University Intervention in Campus Processes

This Committee collected comments from UM community members at a time when protests and conversations concerning the University response to the Israel-Hamas War had stoked tension on campus. Community members referenced University actions in the 2023-2024 academic year that, they felt, either made or had the potential to make the University less open to free speech and expression.

Voices of the community

Several respondents to this committee’s request for input expressed their concern about UM’s cancellation of the Central Student Government (CSG) vote on the Ann Arbor campus of two petition-based questions about the University’s response to the ongoing Israel-Hamas War.

Respondent 593 [Undergraduate Student, Ann Arbor] said: “I consider the University’s decision to cancel a CSG vote on resolutions AR 13-025 and AR 13-026 a significant suppression of free speech. The reasoning for doing so was dubious, and cancelling an entire vote on the basis of one improperly sent email feels disproportionate and targeted, and gives off the impression that University administration will cancel any votes they personally do not like. The email sent out by University administration brought up the content of the resolutions, heavily implying that the decision to suppress these votes was not content neutral, but a deliberate silencing of speech relating to the current war in Gaza. This feels convenient for the University, as a strong showing for the pro-divestment side might pressure administration to take action.”

Respondent 528 [Faculty, Ann Arbor] wrote: “You also shut down a student-led CSG vote on the pretense that an email sent out corrupted the integrity of the vote, as if all elections are not frequently blasted on all media, email included. This affront to democratic values highlights the extent to which the University will go to make sure that a narrow range of views are even heard, let alone accepted.”

Respondents also expressed concern about the March 27th, 2024 release of a draft policy to address protests on campus, titled the Disruptive Activity Policy (often referred to in responses as “the DAP”). Shortly after community feedback had been provided in response to this policy, the University decided to forgo pursuing the policy. But several respondents to this committee’s request for comments expressed that the draft policy made them feel less welcome to voice their opinions on campus.

As Respondent 2204 [Undergraduate Student, Ann Arbor] states: “. . . Regarding pressure to conform, I would again point to the DAP and the presence of both police officers and private security corporations, and the regents’ selective application of University policy against only those movements with which they disagree.”

Respondent 2583 [Staff, Ann Arbor] also commented that “The University sending out the draft proposal on ‘Disruptive policy’ makes a clear statement on where the University stands on free speech and it is on the side of those who support Israel and was created to silence protestors and civil disobedience (something UMich prides and markets as an activist campus) and in the draft policy it silenced faculty/staff with the threat of losing their job.”

And finally, Respondent 3729 [Faculty, Ann Arbor] believed that “. . . The draft Anti-Disruption Policy embraced a view of UM in which virtually any form of protest would have been effectively banned.”

3.7 Barriers Stemming from Protests and Disruptions (and Responses to Them)

Voices of the community

With regard to the Gaza protests, some Jewish members of the UM community feared going to campus, experienced a menacing atmosphere around the encampments, perceived some of the pro-Palestinian speech to be antisemitic, and experienced censorship against their own views.

Respondent 643 [Undergraduate, Ann Arbor] said: “As a Jewish student, I had to avoid the diag during finals week or I would have an antisemitic pro-terror mob chanting for my death in my face. . . . Threats and harassment are not protected free speech.”

Respondent 745 [Graduate Student, Ann Arbor] said: “As a Jewish student at the University of Michigan, the climate for freedom of expression has been deeply troubling due to the presence of antisemitic protests on campus. In classrooms, I have felt a palpable sense of fear and anxiety, which has made it difficult to engage fully in academic discussions.”

Respondent 2142 [Graduate Student, Ann Arbor]: “As a Jewish student, I no longer feel safe on campus. I haven’t gone to the diag in nearly 7 months. . . . There are . . . signs on the diag calling for ‘intifada,’ which glorifies an armed uprising against Jews. Because such slander and threats are allowed on campus, I do not feel that I can freely express my Jewish identity safely. . . . On October 11th, before Israel had entered a war with Hamas, and only 4 days after October 7th (the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust, involving acts of mass rape and murder), a letter signed by over 1000 faculty and staff circulated at the University of Michigan that blamed Israel for Hamas’ actions. Could you imagine if any other minority at the University was blamed for . . . being raped? For being victims of terrorism? Of course not, because it’s absolutely unacceptable. Shortly after October 7th, I wrote an article to submit to the Daily expressing that Jewish students felt unsafe. My article was immediately rejected. The Michigan Daily, among other institutions on this campus, are not welcoming places for Jewish people.”

Most advocates of pro-Palestinian protests who wrote about barriers viewed the administration as the main source of obstruction, particularly but not only through sending campus police, who they believed were violent and suppressed their speech. (References to violence appear 349 times in our feedback. Most of these references occur in respondents’ objections to police violence against pro-Palestinian protesters.) Characteristic responses include the following.

Respondent 636 [Undergraduate, Ann Arbor] said that a barrier to freedom of expression is “our regents refusing to hear our complaints and demands for a better University. What is free expression if no one will give us the time to listen? The encampment that was set up on the diag on April 22nd and torn down three weeks later peacefully asked the regents for a conversation about disclosing the University’s investments and divesting from companies aggravating the ongoing war.”

Respondent 750 [Retiree, Ann Arbor]: “The decision to shut down the entirely peaceful encampment on the diag was shocking; the use of force (physical violence, use of pepper spray by police on non-violent and non-resisting students) was in direct violation of my sense of free expression of opinion on campus.”

Respondent 2067 [Graduate Student, Ann Arbor]: “We had a big scuffle at the [building location] where people had been hanging signs on windows and walls for YEARS without any issue, most recently surrounding the GEO strike, but as soon as someone

put up a Palestinian flag, we immediately got notice that we must take all signs down. [University administrators] admitted that the Palestinian flag was the impetus for the demand to take everything down.”

Many members of the community who supported protests viewed all protests as necessarily disruptive. They further believed that disruptive protests should be respected by the administration and even protected under the law.

Respondent 9A (Alumni/Staff, Michigan Medicine) identified “[c]alling protests disruptions when in fact protests are a right and meant to be disruptive” as a barrier to freedom of expression.

Respondent 435D (Staff, Ann Arbor), said: “I think it is abundantly clear that the University only wants expression it can control: time, place, topic, method. . . . Furthermore, the University continues to equate disruption with being unlawful, which is unconstitutional.”

Members of the community also articulated a view that they deserve “to be heard.” These respondents tended to view the University as akin to a democratic community, and they expressed that it is the responsibility of leadership to listen to what community members say and give these views due weight. These respondents tended to view protests, even disruptive protests, as an avenue to get UM leadership to listen to their concerns.

Respondent 292 [Undergraduate, Staff, Dearborn]: “Stop being afraid of students protesting. We are asking you to see us and change.”

Respondent 61 [Undergraduate, Ann Arbor]: “Step out of your office and shake off your confrontational aggressive nature. Try to truly hear and represent the students. Everyday the divide between the regents and the students grows and you’re responsible for that. Divest from israel.”

Respondent 2159 [Faculty, Ann Arbor]: “The Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression . . . is entirely hypocritical. The University claims to provide avenues for free speech, but regularly restrict the right to speak. Students have attempted to join Regents meetings, requested to dialog with campus leaders, and have implemented their right to peacefully protest. There is no support by the administration, that I have observed, to engage respectfully and professionally with students who have demonstrated. Instead, the University continues to assert alternative truths and use violence against its OWN students to serve its purpose.”

Respondent 3894 [Undergraduate, Ann Arbor]: “Acknowledge the long history of student protest, and protest in general, as disrupting outdated ideas and pushing for positive social change. Allow students to express their opinions freely, including through public demonstrations, without fear of a disproportional response from the University or from law enforcement. Acknowledge the diversity of thought on campus by actually recognizing all viewpoints, and meeting with student leaders to listen to what they have to say. Show us that you’re actually listening to the responses on this survey. Make students feel like you actually care what we have to say.”

Challenges for UM

Some objections to UM’s response to protesters appear to reflect misunderstandings of speakers’ First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and assembly, and confusions between legal rights to freedom of speech and civil disobedience, which, by definition, is illegal. UM should consider how to improve the community’s understanding of the scope and limits of the constitutional right to freedom of expression and its distinction from civil disobedience. In particular, time, place, and manner restrictions are often needed to ensure that others have the freedom to speak and hear what speakers are saying, and to ensure that groups can control the agenda and the floor when they assemble for purposes that they choose for themselves.

When the University exercises available discretion, it should communicate its decision clearly. And when it decides to enforce existing policy, it should give time for the community to adjust its behavior. While the University of Michigan did not experience the same extent of violence as other campuses this year, more open communication may have mitigated some of the distrust.

4 Views of the Community on Institutional Neutrality

According to many respondents, institutional neutrality functions as a shield against majority viewpoints and officially sanctioned viewpoints, enabling individuals to speak freely without suffering official sanction and peer pressure. Neutrality also functions to ensure that everyone feels that they are included in the UM community. For UM to purport to represent the views of the entire community is both impossible, because people disagree, and undesirable, because it is inconsistent with freedom of speech and open inquiry, which may find that currently adopted institutional positions are mistaken. Moreover, for UM to take an official position on politically contested issues may involve reducing complex and nuanced issues to simplistic claims.

Respondent 114 (Alumni, Staff, Ann Arbor): “The University must be a place for everyone and I see institutional neutrality policy as part of that. History has shown that some contemporary support for a political/social issue may not be well respected by history in future generations, and create new challenges for the University that are currently unanticipated. By default, any person in the president, provost, dean or chair role is seen as a representative of the dept/school/University, and thereby any support statements are by default representing the view of the whole unit—which is simply impossible. . . . Any group ‘bullying’ the University to make statements is fundamentally at odds with the principles of free speech. We can agree to disagree, and I will continue to support your right to free speech as long as that speech does not suppress the rights of others.”

Respondent 448 (Graduate Student, Ann Arbor): “I thought the University’s official communications directly after the Dobbs and the Students for Fair Admissions v Harvard decisions were inappropriate. Stating that the University welcomes speech and thought from all sides when these contentious issues were decided by the Supreme Court would have been appropriate. It would have been fair to characterize those decisions as controversial and invited dialogue and use of University resources to help the University community come to terms with what happened. However, announcing uniform disappointment with conservative outcomes felt inconsistent for an institution that seeks truth from all sources.”

Respondent 474 (Faculty, Dearborn): “For me, the recent conflict between Israel (and its backers) and Palestinian communities (and their backers) is pretty instructive and there have been pressures from both sides to publicly adopt positions that ignore the nuances and roots of the ongoing armed conflict. My department, for example, was asked by students and alumni to adopt what I would describe as a brash public position calling for University divestment from Israel, a ceasefire, and a broad condemnation of Jewish ‘settler colonialism.’ There are clearly voices on the other side pushing for protesters to be treated as pro-Hamas, terrorist sympathizers, and antisemites. . . . [O]rganizations to which I belong are being pressured to adopt positions that are indicative of blanket support for one political position or the other, which imply that I should support positions that I don’t necessarily. The Faculty Senate in January, for example, adopted a toothless resolution to support divestment from Israeli companies complicit in the military actions in Gaza. This implies that I, as a faculty member should support this position and

reduces my level of comfort with taking positions to the contrary. (For the record, I don’t disagree, but I don’t want the Faculty senate, my department, the University, or anyone else taking positions for me). These kinds of organizational position-taking exercises (and the pressure for them to be taken—whether from Congress or the student body) is where a lot of informal barriers to particular positions are coming from in my opinion.

Respondent 512 (Graduate Student, Ann Arbor): “I believe that all academic institutions, especially public institutions should always remain politically neutral. As a student it can feel very good to know that your University supports you in your beliefs BUT it can also be very difficult to pay for a school and live, learn and work somewhere that fundamentally goes against you and your opinions.”

Respondent 3211 (Staff, Michigan Medicine): “I believe that the University should not be involved in taking stances on political issues. I believe it undermines diversity of thought and feeds into perceptions about universities as political actors rather than being institutions of higher learning and free thought.”

Respondent 3532 (Graduate Student, Ann Arbor): “The aftermath of October 7, shows why the University shouldn’t be taking issues on controversial issues. The students and faculty are deeply divided on many key topics and the school should encourage these discussions as much as possible. Open inquiry and spirited debate start from the top and should be something that should be emphasized by every administrator.”

Other members of the community denied that institutional neutrality was either possible or desirable. It is not possible, they say, because not taking a stand implies support for the status quo and neglects the ways outside injustices negatively affect members of the UM community. It is not desirable because, in certain extreme cases, UM needs to take a firm moral stand to uphold fundamental moral principles. UM needs to use its institutional power to oppose injustice and grave harms. Some respondents also noted that UM has a history of taking an official position in exceptional circumstances and suggested that it would be ducking its responsibilities or masking its complicity in injustice to adopt neutrality now.

Respondent 213 (Alumni, Staff, Ann Arbor): “Neutrality is fine when there truly are ‘fine people on both sides’—but when there are real issues that must be called out, one cannot equivocate, even when ‘both

sides’ must be called out for misdeeds. I was a student when the shanties were built on the diag in protest of apartheid in South Africa. The University’s response was not perfect but, in the end, it was better than the current situation. Students did not fear retribution for calling out the South African regime or the University’s support (by way of investment). Discussions, while frequently charged, were held openly.”

Respondent 301 (Staff, Flint): “It is an ethical responsibility of entities with power or voices of power to stand up for those without or who have lost their voices. I don’t think institutional neutrality is a responsible direction for the University. I don’t think the University needs to take a side on every issue but I do think when significant issues arise that the University should be vocal and take action against inappropriate actions of others.”

Respondent 317 (Undergraduate, Ann Arbor): “A policy of ‘institutional neutrality’ is not and can never be truly neutral, because the refusal to take a position on political and social issues implicitly supports the status quo. I believe the University has a moral obligation to oppose ongoing harm in the world and use the investment of its endowment as a tool to enact political change.”

Respondent 494 (Faculty, Ann Arbor): “[I]t was really important to our community, that campus leaders at all levels, acknowledge the murder of George Floyd and the history of violence that lead up to and continues following that event. Conversations in the community needed to happen and campus leaders needed to lead in order for productive conversations to occur. I would worry that ‘institutional neutrality’ would mean that no messaging or actions would follow events like this that do matter to our community.”

Challenges for UM

Should UM decide to adopt a policy of institutional neutrality, it will need to clarify what institutional neutrality entails and whether it can distinguish among such issues as divestment from Israel, UM’s internal efforts to mitigate climate change, and UM’s DEI initiatives. In addition, it will need to consider how to respond when outside events have profoundly distressing impacts on members of the community, and to ensure that its responses do not favor some members over others.

5 Recommendations from the Community

Many members of the UM community offered thoughtful recommendations on how the climate for freedom of expression, diversity of thought, and constructive disagreement can be improved. By far the leading themes emerging from their recommendations

is that UM needs to represent a wider diversity of ideas and better model and teach skills of constructive disagreement.

Respondent 468 [Staff, Michigan Medicine] advocated for “offering training programs on active listening and constructive engagement with differing viewpoints.”

Respondent 568 [Alumni, Staff, Dearborn]: “In a recent meeting, someone stated a political view in a way that made it seem that everyone must agree with them and the other viewpoint was undesirable. The manager of the group paused the meeting and asked everyone to remember that there are always two sides to every issue and that we need to consider that our campus is very diverse, and most likely composed of people who fall on both sides of issues. This reminder really helped the group to move forward. The tone of the original speaker changed. This really helped those in the group on the opposite side of the issue to feel validated and included.”

Respondent 2162 [Faculty, Ann Arbor]: “I witnessed a vigorous but respectful debate between a student protester and a visitor to the encampment about the Israel/Palestine conflict. I wished that interaction could have been viewed by the nation as it encapsulated precisely the kind of exchange of ideas we hope to facilitate at this University.”

Respondent 2267 [Undergraduate, Ann Arbor]: “What the University can do is ensure that faculty make sure that all viewpoints are supported. We should read texts from across the political spectrum. We should read controversial texts, things that make people angry and passionate about discussing. . . . As a right-leaning individual, I can handle having a left-leaning teacher with ease so long as they are willing to hear multiple opinions and foster discussion. . . . I certainly think that more time should be dedicated to discussing opposing views, ideas, and concepts.”

Respondent 3234 [Staff, Michigan Medicine]: “The main recommendation I have is to hire faculty that have different opinions and provide more opportunities for collaboration between different viewpoints. Currently, both political sides have made scapegoats out of the other. It’s easy to hurt people you don’t understand. As an academic institution, it should be your duty to bridge that gap through knowledge.”

Respondent 3721 [Faculty, Ann Arbor]: “All courses and all teachers should be trained in asking their students the following ‘regardless of what you believe about this particular issue, please take the following position and argue for it. (Or against it.)’”

Other recommendations from the UM community include the following.

Respondent 393 [Alumni, Staff, Other]: “Have an appreciation day for invisible ethnic minorities, who know their identities while others do not. Allow conservative voices to flourish on campus—and protect them from all flavors of violence. Allow Catholics and evangelical Christians and ‘pro-life’ zealots and pro-U.S. students and speakers to be visible and protect them from violence on campus.”

Respondent 502 [Staff, Ann Arbor]: “Displaying art and imagery that has the capacity to upset in a legitimized institution (many people assign strong truth values to museums) can make people who natively hold those ideas feel more welcome. U of M still struggles with allowing art in its institutions that criticizes itself, but it is a step in the right direction that must be followed through on.”

Respondent 653 [Faculty, Ann Arbor]: “The University needs to make sure that it’s supporting its faculty when they get ‘called out.’ That doesn’t mean that they need to affirm that the faculty member is “right”, but they need to not join the pile on or leave the faculty member out to dry. (Instead, they can offer support to the faculty member in addressing the issue in a constructive manner).”

Respondent 3474 [Alumni, Faculty, Michigan Medicine]: “Improve the climate for conservative viewpoints on campus, perhaps affirmative action for conservative faculty, administrators or others can be pursued to allow for more balanced discussion. There is virtue to be found on all sides if you allow yourself to listen.”

There were also a significant number of respondents who noted that on the whole, the University maintains a positive and welcoming environment for diversity of thought and freedom of expression, and encouraged UM to nurture that environment responsibly.

Respondent 2128 [Alumni, Faculty, Ann Arbor]: “I’ve had numerous positive interactions with colleagues that included respectful discussion of difficult issues from multiple perspectives. I value this very much. As I mentioned above, I think the climate for free expression and honest discussion and debate at U-M, while having some room for improvement, is in pretty good shape overall. I urge you to steward this well.”

6 Summary and Conclusions

Our committee solicited perceptions of the campus climate at a particularly charged moment for UM and universities around the nation. The October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas on Israel and the resulting Israeli military response ushered in a year that divided our campus, led to frequent protests, and prompted a four-week encampment on the Diag. Demonstrations at other campuses resulted in highly publicized and sometimes violent clashes between protesters on opposite sides of the issue and between pro-Palestinian protesters and police. These events influenced much of the feedback we received related to free speech and expression.

Across the span of the responses, we identified three major themes.

(1) Many respondents report constraints on freedom of speech and expression, especially but not only with respect to conservative views on abortion, affirmative action, DEI, gun control, the rights of trans athletes, and other subjects. Respondents noted horizontal constraints from students and colleagues in the form of social pressure and some pointed to the University’s decision to cancel a CSG vote in December, 2023 as a vertical constraint which closed an avenue for students to share their views.

(2) Many respondents report a lack of diversity of thought, especially but not only with respect to the lack of conservative perspectives and critiques of liberal and progressive positions.

(3) Respondents criticized the University’s response to pro-Palestinian protests from both sides of the issue. Some believed the University did not do enough to support and protect Jewish and Israeli students and allowed a hostile, antisemitic environment to develop in classrooms and around the encampment on the Diag. Others took the opposite position and criticized the University for not engaging frequently enough with pro-Palestinian groups, failing to adequately consider divestment from companies linked to Israel, and for attempting to limit the speech and expression of pro-Palestinian groups through the cancelation of the CSG vote and the removal of the encampment on the Diag.

Throughout our work, we found a disconnect between institutional policies and community members’ perceptions of those policies. In other words, while we clearly found generalized suspicion and impassioned criticism of University policies, it was difficult for us to attribute that distrust to the policy itself. Relatedly, we

also observed that responses sometimes followed patterns of the national political conversation, with a tendency to flatten complexities and oversimplify assumptions about the “other.”

A number of responses expressed a strong desire for UM to expand instruction around critical-thinking and respectful engagement. We found these responses encouraging, in that they showed a hunger for constructive dialogue and debate, and an acknowledgement of the danger that groupthink poses—especially to a community dedicated to learning.

In the view of this committee, the search for knowledge requires humility. It means recognizing the limits of our current understanding, both individually and as a human collective. It means listening to those who challenge assumptions, and understanding that those who challenge us have the power to shake us free from preconceptions, force us to reexamine our sometimes-faulty thinking, and give us a greater chance of making new discoveries.

As has been said many times before, communities such as ours must create an environment where respectful engagement and debate flourishes. Such an endeavor is a long-term project, one that will inevitably come with setbacks. It cannot be achieved in one summer or one year. Every modification is an experiment providing an opportunity for learning and evolution.

The University administration plays an important role in fostering such an environment. It can and must give people the opportunity to develop skills, provide models for engagement, and establish and uphold policies. However, institutional leadership and policies are not enough. It takes social alignment too; students, faculty, and staff must recognize the importance of free speech and diversity of thought, and then play their own part and meet their own responsibility for fostering such a culture and engaging in constructive dialog in the quest for knowledge and solutions.

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Subcommittee II

Subcommittee Two was asked whether the University of Michigan should do better in terms of diversity of thought and freedom of expression, given the recently affirmed principles, and, if so, how. At a general level, the answers to both questions are easy: even the best institutions fall short of their ideals, especially when the ideals are as ambitious as the Statement of Principles. Thus, we should do better. And, we believe, we can. We emphatically emphasize the basic principle that colleges and universities are places where ideas should be debated, including ideas that are controversial and that generate significant public debate and substantial differences of opinion.

In addition to the Statement of Principles, the Subcommittee calls attention to the University's mission statement, its efforts to foster greater diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as the recently articulated Vision 2034 and the principles guiding the University's Culture Journey. One central idea in all these commitments is pluralism, both as a fact — members of our community have profound disagreements on important matters — and as an ideal — this diversity of views is a good thing. Indeed, the very idea of a modern public University presupposes both meanings of pluralism.

Our recommendations thus include no fundamental shift in strategic direction, but suggestions on how to make *explicit* the commitment to pluralism as a central element of the University. Such a commitment stresses the freedom of expression, respectful dialogue, and debate. Diversity is a core value and defining trait of our University community; pluralism is the blueprint for its continued, fruitful existence.

In our recommendations, we propose an explicit institutional commitment to foster pluralism, a Pluralism Initiative, which will promote expressed diversity of thought in scholarship — in research and teaching — and foster an inclusive culture for all members of our community.

Preceding those recommendations is a chronicle of the subcommittee's process and considerations informing the recommendations. While this adds substantially to the length of the report, we felt it was more important to be transparent and explicit about the work behind the recommendations, about which many in the University might be curious, than to be overly concise.

Subcommittee Process

The Subcommittee met from spring 2024 through August 2024. Given the broad scope of its charge, it solicited themes and ideas informally, discussed matters brought to it both anonymously and from specific individuals, including students, faculty, and staff. It reviewed the feedback gathered in June 2024 by Subcommittee One. In addition to discussions, subcommittee members reviewed a variety of literature, data, and editorial writing from along a spectrum of viewpoints regarding freedom of expression, the future of University education, and related topics.

Our recommendations are tempered by two factors.

First, subcommittee members themselves hold a range of views on the topics, including detailed specifics about the recommendations in this report. We considered many ideas on which committee members have principled and substantive disagreements. In what follows, we indicate degrees of agreement on specific ideas, and we include ideas on which no consensus was reached. We stress this diversity as a virtue of our process and offer it as a model for continued conversations across a diversity of views. The recommendations that did achieve majority support did so amongst subcommittee members with different backgrounds, University roles, and worldviews.

Second, we identified *feasibility and logistical challenges* for some of the ideas we considered. For example, we considered whether every student entering the University

of Michigan should have a required course on freedom of expression. Although many subcommittee members regard it as a good idea in principle, there currently isn't *any* course required of every student, or even every undergraduate student, at U-M. It and similar ideas may be too challenging to implement, but we nevertheless note that universities turned out to be surprisingly agile at implementing significant changes during the pandemic. Our practical recommendations deliberately tend to build on structures and processes already in place to both avoid creating new administrative burdens and expedite implementation.

The Challenges

Subcommittee One has written a thoughtful analysis of the current situation of freedom of expression at the University. Drawing from them, but painting with a broad brush, we characterize the challenges our community faces as follows:

First, there are significant *perceptions* that U-M's climate for freedom of expression and diversity of thought is problematic. These perceptions take many forms: the University fails to foster or even actively suppresses expressions that should be allowed; the University and its community promote and even require cultural and ideological conformity; and the prevailing culture leads to individual self-censorship in both formal and informal settings.

Perceptions aren't reality, but they certainly can shape it, and the feedback received shows they are widespread enough to take seriously. We note the last two, being outside the domain of laws, bylaws, and policies, as being particularly worthy of consideration and return to them later in this report.

For this reason, second, we acknowledge that diversity of expressed thought in the U-M community may not be as great as it could and perhaps should be: if a substantial number of people feel they can't express their perspectives, this is a *fortiori* true. People silence themselves. Feedback from Subcommittee One suggests some of those perspectives are political (for example, substantial numbers of people who identify with conservative values say they don't feel comfortable expressing their views in various University settings) or based on identity (for example, there are some settings in which students fear the repercussions of revealing they are nonbinary or religious). Excessive self-censorship inhibits the type of robust discussion and free exchange of ideas that the University seeks to foster.

One of the central challenges, the subcommittee believes, is that these silences are often socially and culturally enforced by local norms. Students, for example, report that their reluctance to express their political views in a class when they know they are in a minority is often due to their perception of what other students might think, rather than how they expect their instructors will respond. Addressing informal culture with policies can be difficult, even counterproductive. Great care has been taken in the subcommittee's recommendations not to over-engineer solutions to these dynamics.

Third, among the members of the University community, there are significant misunderstandings about the law, history, policies, and even philosophical meanings of freedom of expression and diversity of thought. To be sure, some of these are what philosophers call "essentially contestable concepts," on which disagreements may be insurmountable — and are appropriate.¹ The University nevertheless should, and can, do more to educate all members of its community and to foster thoughtful dialogue about their meanings.

General Guidelines for Implementation

The University is a setting in which every view must be possible to consider, but not every setting is appropriate for every expression.

We distinguish between the University in its research mission (the University as a "think tank") and teaching mission.

In terms of research: "The University should be a place to think seriously about the unthinkable." The University is a place where all ideas get a fair hearing and serious scrutiny. These ideas may be currently unpopular, historically marginalized, or even silenced. They may also be ideas never yet thought elsewhere. The goal here is to find where the current wisdom may be incorrect, and to extract the nuggets of good ideas that might be lurking in otherwise not so great packages or not so great marketing campaigns. This is a special role of the University in society, and we should defend and celebrate it. We acknowledge boundary-pushing examples (e.g., Holocaust denialism or openly and avowedly racist views), but we should not let boundary cases lead to slippery-slope arguments that it is acceptable to limit the speech or writing of others or discussion about ideas because it is *potentially* offensive. The onus should be on those wishing to limit expression or debate to justify why, in a given context, some topics should be off-limits. The default should be — in the contexts where research conclusions and/or ideas that are out in the public are highlighted and promulgated (such as lectures, symposia, and publications) — to let unpopular or non-mainstream views be aired so that others can respond.

In terms of teaching: "The University should be a place that opens minds." The University is a place where students grapple with a wide range of ideas. This grappling can focus on perspective taking ("Why do people agree with this even though I don't?") and looking for common ground on norms, policies, programs, etc. There is evidence, including from courses at U-M, that collective efforts to solve an actual concrete problem can generate cooperation and understanding across different perspectives.

Beyond these general ideas, free expression of ideas should be fostered in ways that maximize the pursuit of these goals. That has some implications for thinking about constraints:

- *Not every context benefits from unconstrained expressions of ideas.* Classrooms are an example of a place where instructors appropriately may limit *how* an idea is engaged or even what ideas are appropriate. An instructor may — and we believe must — ban students booing or shouting down their peers because that affects the learning environment. Similar constraints may be appropriate for course substance. For example, an evolutionary biology course may rule out the exploration of strictly scriptural creationism, but that topic could be explored in a philosophy or religion course. A lecture on microeconomics may stipulate that consumers' self-interested rationality cannot be

questioned in that lecture, but may be challenged even in a later lecture or in another economics course.

- *Not every person is equipped to discuss every view given differences in education, skill, values, proximity to the issue, and history.* In other words, worthy of consideration is not just the setting but the qualifications of the speaker for opining on the issue. This does not mean that anyone should be treated as the final authority on any issue, but there should be a responsibility to listen with care and respect to those who have expertise or lived experience.
- *Charity, humility, and respect are the guardrails of pluralist conversations.* Well-intentioned people make mistakes. Feedback from Subcommittee One suggests one of the reasons people silence themselves is that they fear "saying the wrong thing." Conventions around language use and the way ideas are expressed change, sometimes rapidly, which makes such a fear understandable.² Because expressed ideas are better than silence, a principle of charity toward others' speech, humility about one's own beliefs — what philosophers call *fallibilism* or *epistemic humility* — and respect toward others' right to express themselves should therefore guide the culture the University tries to foster.
- *Compelled speech should be the exception, not the norm.* We believe the institutions and the members of our community should avoid compelling others to disclose private beliefs or "speak for" others based on their perceived identity or status.
- Of course, there are pedagogical reasons for compelling speech from students as part of the learning process. For example, the practice of "cold calling" on students for any number of reasons is a common instructional tool; there are important contextual exceptions to this general principle, largely in the realm of student learning.
- It is entirely reasonable to expect members of the University community to abide by norms of civility, respect free expression, and be broadly supportive of the University's fundamental missions.
- But a bright line can and must be drawn between promoting the norms of civility and pluralism and asking employees — both faculty and staff — for pledges of fealty to specific ideologies or endorsements

² Consider, for example, the currently active conversation about whether "people with disabilities" or "disabled people" is a more inclusive and respectful phrase. For the last few decades, the former has replaced the latter because it focuses on "person first," but recently the latter has come to practice again because it highlights that "disability" is a construction imposed on a person. The distinction involves substantive and meaningful questions about facts and concepts that are a matter of disagreement even among experts. Therefore,

of worldviews, political projects, philosophies, or contested solutions to pressing problems. A central premise of pluralism is that thoughtful people can disagree, and the University should take great care in avoiding a culture where people feel they cannot disagree.

- It must be noted that many positions in the University may require the furthering of goals or outcomes about which an individual may have a diverging viewpoint. It is necessary and expected that a person does their job, regardless of their beliefs; in fact, it is in accounting for this possible disparity between personal beliefs and job duties that the University makes itself a more inclusive employer. When there is a breach in this distinction, the opposite is true. For example, if the University has announced as an institutional policy that it gives preference in admissions to people from geographic areas that are under-represented, people whose job involves implementing that policy should be required to implement it as a condition of employment. But no individual, even those working to implement it, should be required to say that they support this policy or think that it is a good idea.

Pluralism means *multiple* perspectives, not just two.

At this moment of local, national, and even international polarization, many discussions are unidimensional, even binary: in political discussions, there are just "left" and "right," "progressives" and "conservatives," "us" and "them." Polarizing trends increase the idea that there are only two sides; we argue that the key is to foster a *plurality* of views, give more visible recognition to the multidimensional nature of political and ideological perspectives, abandon false dichotomies, and acknowledge the plasticity of terms like "conservative," "liberal," as well as the variance in the concomitant political positions of each over time. Also, the current framing of even these debates often pits freedom of expression and diversity of thought against universities' DEI efforts, when in fact *the former are integral to full realization of the latter*. To be sure, there can be tensions when thinking about competing interests in realizing them, but these tensions are at the level of policy implementation, not values.³

Empirical evidence from U-M and many other similar universities suggests that, on the unidimensional political scale, faculty and students skew center-left. Thus, one of the perspectives that is likely missing is what might

uncertainty about how to express oneself can be entirely reasonable.
³ For discussion about whether freedom of expression and universities' other commitments are in tension, see Jessica Blake, 'A New Low': Civil Rights Chief Calls Out Discrimination on Campuses, Inside Higher Ed (Aug. 2, 2024), <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/2024/08/02/us-civil-rights-chief-speaks-free-speech-discrimination>.

¹ See generally W.B. Gallie, *Essentially Contested Concepts*, 56 Proc. Aristotelian Soc'y 167 (1956).

broadly be considered conservative. Committee members differ on what this missing perspective means, how it might be remedied, or whether it is a problem to remedy in the first place. Some members of the committee believe that increasing faculty who themselves espouse a range of conservative views would increase such voices being heard in our community. Some members believe this would be appropriate, even important, in fields where increasing people espousing such political views might be relevant and complement scholarship in those fields. Some committee members strongly object to hiring on the basis of any kind of ideological orientation. Regardless of differences on that point, committee members generally support fostering an inclusive environment which welcomes people with a range of political views, including conservatives.

Many viewpoints in contested arenas of society boast robust data, credentialed experts, and millions of adherents. At its best, a University classroom will explore these opposing worldviews in good faith, with nuance, and depth, even when an instructor or the University itself has taken a strong position on the matter. For instance, most economists will have their own perspectives on the minimum wage, laissez faire economics, and free trade; notably, there are strident disagreements on these matters even among those who call themselves conservative economists.

Conservatism, however defined, is not the only perspective many in our community perceive to be underrepresented or on which people across political perspectives disagree. Examples abound covering a vast array of topics, including views on the value of charter schools, the utility of standardized tests for admission to schools, the very definition of anti-racism, and recommended mechanisms to resolve intractable conflicts at home and abroad.

Political perspectives are not the only domain relevant for the mission of the University. There are challenging discussions to have at a contemporary prestigious American University campus about religion, identity, colonialism, etc., but they should be allowed to happen with faculty and students participating in discussion respectfully across diverse viewpoints. To be sure, robust discussion and disagreement does happen every day on our campus, but it is clear from U-M's own surveys that microcultures (department, schools/college, and unit cultures) on campus have greatly varying levels of expressed viewpoint diversity. (Even members of our committee report a variety of discussion practices, norms and styles in classrooms and campus workplaces.)

Given the capacious definition of pluralism that animates this subcommittee's report, we strongly recommend *against* solutions that increase polarized, unidimensional thinking, that further "balkanize" and isolate perspectives and modes of thinking, or that utilize metrics to represent already reductive labels. Rather, the goal should be tolerance for, and active encouragement of expressions of, ideas and perspectives that are not mainstream in the contemporary academy.

Create structures to foster freedom of expression and dialogue, instead of ad hoc reactions.

For the above reasons, we believe the University should put in place structures that foster freedom of expression and diversity of thought within our community. Indeed, this committee has had to grapple with the way the most recent discussions — and open conflicts — shape our thoughts, even as we try to think of ways that realize the University's longstanding value commitments in the medium-term context of the early twenty-first century. Our report is unavoidably a product of its historical moment, and whatever solutions emerge will reflect that, while also recognizing that fostering pluralism is necessarily a project that requires long-term commitment.

The Pluralism Initiative

Out of the guidelines above emerges our recommendation to reaffirm the University's commitment to pluralism by creating a campus-wide Pluralism Initiative. The purpose of the initiative is to *bring together* units from across the three campuses to *promote a diversity of perspectives, prepare a diverse body of students, faculty, and staff to enter our pluralist community, to promote models for civil discourse and collaboration across different viewpoints, and to evaluate the campus climate regularly for its inclusion of different voices.*

We propose this as a distributed effort, as opposed to a unified central administrative unit, but with significant resources appropriate to its mission. Its explicit mission should include all aspects of scholarship, specifically teaching, research, and public engagement, as well as extra-curricular intellectual aspects of campus life. It should involve collaboration of units and draw participants from internal and external constituencies. We stress the distinction between an initiative and a center because we believe all units should be concerned with and interested in contributing to the work of such an initiative. A looser initiative would also make it possible to distribute the resources for the work to units, not concentrate them on a separate center. U-M's current Arts Initiative strikes us as one model.⁴

We recommend the Pluralism Initiative as an explicit administrative structure coordinating what we propose below.

Entering the U-M community

We recommend the following at the various moments of entry into the University.

Students

- **Admissions:** Create mechanisms to signal U-M's commitment to freedom of expression and diversity of thought at the moment of admissions. For the schools and colleges using the Common App, this might include a new essay in the U-M essay section, asking the students to write about how they would engage people and ideas they disagree with.⁵
- **Orientation:** Although the length of the new student orientation has been reduced in recent years, and although we know that information provided in those settings can already be overwhelming, Student Life and other units have many **first-year experience programs** that could and should include engagement around freedom of speech and diversity of thought. Some already exist; they could be expanded, with a focus on *actual dialogue and concrete problem solving*, not one-way communication of the University's principles and aspirations. One such activity could be to reflect further and discuss the essay they wrote in their application about engaging those they disagree with.
- **Curriculum:** A common, University-wide requirement for all new students to take a course on themes around freedom of expression, diversity of thought, and dialogue across differences could create a better understanding of the issues, the rules and norms governing our community, and thus prepare students to be engaged and thoughtful members of the community. We recognize this as a challenge: existing models, such as Intergroup Dialogue, are premised on instructor-intensive small groups. But initiatives in this direction are already underway, such as LSA's potential "grand challenges" requirement, and we encourage the University to invest in such efforts.⁶

Faculty and staff

We take seriously political scientist Steven Teles's analysis of the left-of-center political orientation of many University faculties.⁷ Teles argues that the disappearance

of center-right and conservative faculty from major research universities in the last decades is partly due, as others have also argued, to self-selection.⁸ But Teles argues this self-selection may be due, at least in part, to perceptions of hostility to their ideas — in the same way scholars have shown the "self-selection" out of academic pipelines by other underrepresented minorities may be due to similar perceptions. It is problematic when people self-select out of applying for jobs or pursuing academic careers because they feel unwelcome due to their identities or their political views. We therefore encourage the University to consider how DEI efforts to increase the diversity of faculty might be expanded to diversity of thought.

Pipelines and recruitment: There is a perception among a nontrivial number of people in our community, including some members of this subcommittee, that when faculty or staff recruitment involves writing so-called diversity statements, applicants are asked to affirm specific ideological commitments and that, in some cases, the statements may be used as ideological litmus tests by search committees. There is a wide variety of views on the committee about to what extent this is the case. There is nevertheless an agreement that if and when it occurs, it is problematic, and that a perception that it is widespread may itself be a problem.

This subcommittee stresses that it is appropriate, indeed necessary, to expect those who enter our community as faculty or staff to affirm their commitment to the various ethical and professional standards that govern our work. Those include a recognition of the many ways in which faculty and staff must fairly and equitably serve people not like themselves and with whom they may disagree in many dimensions. But some members of the subcommittee worry that some uses of diversity statements may be an instrument that is in fact inconsistent with its goal of increasing the diversity or the sense of inclusion among the faculty.

Maintaining a diverse and civil community

Many efforts can help maintain a diverse and civil community. Here, we enumerate a number of possibilities, recognizing there may be many more. Indeed, one of the goals for the Pluralism Initiative would be to function as both a site of ongoing activities and a source of new ideas.

⁴ Another possible model is the Michigan Society of Fellows, whose junior and senior members are selected and term-limited.

⁵ The general Common App essay that all applicants write, regardless of their target college, has a list of prompts from which students choose one. In addition, applicants to U-M currently write two additional short essays, one asking them to describe a community they belong to and the other explaining their reasons for choosing the specific U-M school or college they apply to. It is an addition to this U-M-specific set of prompts we propose.
⁶ In winter 2024, the LSA Curriculum Committee began considering the possibility of a college-wide requirement focusing on persistent "wicked

problems" confronting the world. One option for such a requirement are courses on dialogue around disagreements. No decisions about the requirement have been made as of this writing.
⁷ Steven Teles, *Beyond Academic Sectarianism*, 60 Nat'l Affs., Summer 2024, at 3.
⁸ See, e.g., Neil Gross, *Why Are Professors Liberal and Why Do Conservatives Care?* (2013).

The following ideas have varying degrees of support among subcommittee members. Concerns include both substantive and logistical factors.

Regular efforts to gauge the climate around freedom of expression

Subcommittee One’s early-summer 2024 request for feedback demonstrated that thousands of members of the University community were eager to take the question seriously and share their views. This calls for systematic and ongoing mechanisms to collect information on all three campuses. We do recognize the “survey fatigue” that may already exist, given the many requests everyone receives in their daily lives, but we regard this matter as important. Here are some possible mechanisms:

- Create a freestanding regular (e.g., biannual) freedom of expression and diversity of thought climate survey for all three campuses, to be conducted by University experts (e.g., the Institute for Social Research) or an independent third-party investigator. The freestanding nature of the survey would signal its importance for the University and thus be a benefit. Its being yet another survey would be a potential disadvantage.
- Incorporate freedom of expression and diversity of thought questions to existing instruments. **University-wide and unit-specific climate surveys**, such as those administered by Advance Program, may be a mechanism for faculty and some staff. **Incorporating questions on classroom climate regarding diversity of thought to course evaluations** might be a mechanism for students.
- Link the Statement of Principles explicitly into the **asynchronous and synchronous opportunities to Learn and Engage offered through the Culture Journey initiative**. Several of the core values (Respect, Inclusion, Diversity) naturally offer opportunities to explore diversity of thought and freedom of expression. As well as being synergistic with our work, **the Culture Journey is designed to engage all three constituencies** - students, faculty, and staff.

Increase and recognize student opportunities beyond the curriculum

Student learning does not take place only in the classroom. It is important that some of it is entirely student initiated and not officially connected to the University. This is both for reasons of student autonomy and the University’s status as a public institution. Still, we urge the University to consider the following:

- **Highlight the diversity of co-curricular opportunities across a wide range of political, cultural, and policy perspectives, and increase those opportunities**

where necessary. Many opportunities already exist for students to gain internships or other pre-professional opportunities in institutions and organizations that reflect a range of perspectives. The Public Service Internship Program, Michigan in Washington Program, and units such as LSA’s Opportunity Hub have internships in many different political organizations, government institutions, think tanks, and corporations. Students often seek ones that are in alignment with their own values, which is commendable; sometimes they want to explore perspectives they might not hold or are unfamiliar with. (For example, students often report having had mind-opening experiences in national security internships.)

In addition, the University might consider expanding programs like Michigan in Washington to more local units, such as creating a “Michigan in Lansing” program. This is not only because it would increase opportunities, but because state and local politics have assumed ever-increasing importance in recent decades.

- **Recognize the value of a diverse set of student organizations.** Voluntary student organizations (VSOs) make up the majority of U-M’s nearly 2,000 student organizations. The majority of VSOs are not political, even in a broad sense of the term. On the unidimensional scale, the majority of politically or policy-oriented organizations can be associated with left-of-center politics. On a campus where the majority of students have such views, this is an understandable phenomenon, especially for student-initiated efforts. There are, however, a number of organizations associated with conservative or right-wing orientation as well as policy commitments or religious perspectives not espoused by the majority of students. We do *not* propose a special treatment for these or any other organizations that represent minority perspectives, but that units recognize and include diverse organizations when they organize events around relevant topics. The institutional recognition of this viewpoint diversity may provide a more collaborative and intellectually more complex relationship between student groups and academic units than often has been the case on campuses. We also note that there are student organizations that pursue the kinds of pluralistic ends we are calling for. One such example is the student-initiated “We Listen,” whose purpose is to bring together students across ideological differences for constructive conversations. It is, however, instructive — and lamentable — that We Listen is currently dormant.



Increase faculty capacity

Instructional faculty play a crucial role for U-M students in **modeling respect** and **engaging with** a diversity of ideas. At the same time, the demands on faculty to manage pedagogical and other classroom challenges have steadily increased. We therefore propose that as expectations on faculty increase, the University should make efforts to support them and increase their capacity to meet such expectations.

- Many faculty, especially those teaching topics known to be controversial, include **syllabus statements** about the norms of discourse, freedom of thought and expression, and the diversity of thought in their courses. As the University has done with other similar statements about accommodations, sexual misconduct, and the like, it should provide recommended language for instructors. Such statements should naturally be consistent with University-wide policies. Paraphrasing James Madison, however, we recognize that the efficacy of syllabus statements decreases in proportion as their efficacy becomes needful. That is, the proliferation of syllabus statements decreases their likelihood of being read and taken seriously — including by the instructors themselves. We know from student testimony, for example, that courses whose syllabi promise support for student mental health and well-being may nevertheless routinely include practices known to be systematically bad for mental health.
- For this reason, we propose that the **Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, in coordination with the proposed Pluralism Initiative, increase its**

programming around freedom of expression and diversity of thought. In addition to CRLT, many other units across the three campuses provide faculty and classroom support. They should also be invited to use their resources to this end, and be supported by the University as needed. But we particularly stress CRLT’s role, given its centrality and its widely recognized excellence in faculty development efforts.

- We recommend that the University support **team-based teaching explicitly across different viewpoints.** Team-teaching is costly, but its value in promoting other academically valuable goals, such as interdisciplinarity, can easily extend to diversity of thought. We do not merely suggest having a progressive and conservative faculty member teach a course on a politically charged theme (although we would welcome such courses), but divergent perspectives on policies, methods, or even research subjects. An example might be a course dovetailing with the Vision 2034 theme of Sustainability, Climate Action, and Environmental Justice, team-taught by one instructor who believes in a rapid move to alternative energy and another who might argue for policies that slow the climate change with a focus on societal impact instead of speed. Such an example illustrates how the potential of such an idea transcends a false progressive/conservative dichotomy. Carefully thought-out pairings or even larger teams could help model the actual complexity of many fraught questions and thereby help undermine the often-unidimensional binary thinking we are hoping to combat.

Recognize exemplars of the diversity of thought

The University has many ways of signaling what it values: there are awards for teaching, research, public engagement, and other forms of action. Many of these are for faculty, some are for students, and some for staff. The University also recognizes people outside the University through many mechanisms: honorary doctorates, awards, high-profile lecture invitations.

The committee discussed specific models, enumerated below.

- **An annual lecture recognizing and celebrating a person, whether academic or not, who exemplifies work across difference.** We emphasize it would not be their own partisanship or identity that would cause them to merit the award, but their ability to find common ground working with people who don’t share their partisanship or identity. The partisanship in question could be political or policy-oriented, but it would not need to be.
- **A manuscript prize open to authors outside the University comprising a cash award and a publication contract from the University’s press.** While other outputs are ephemeral and local in nature, this award would provide a tangible recognition of and catalyst for the work on pluralism happening at U-M. It would signal U-M’s commitment on the national stage, as well as provide a nexus for community engagement around the selection of the manuscript and celebration of its publication.
- **A public dialogue across difference.** This would be a public-facing version of team-teaching across difference. The goal would be to model a conversation, not a debate, across a topic on which the participants disagree. This would exemplify the value of a University, in contrast to so much polarized and strident public discourse. The criterion for selection would be to recognize individuals who are not polemicists, but serious thinkers.
- **Small-group dialogues across difference.** Nationally, several organizations (e.g., Braver Angels; Make America Dinner Again) have organized small-group events that facilitate discussions among people with different viewpoints. We envision creating a large number of such opportunities on campus, including in dining halls and libraries, so that they become a routine part of campus life.

This subcommittee does not agree on all of these, particularly on the first two. Subcommittee members opposed to them worry about how these would be awarded and how they would be interpreted. They strongly oppose a prize seemingly for “diversity of thought” that becomes a de facto celebration of one political perspective, such as conservatism. The committee as a whole does believe that these recognitions should not be associated with any specific political perspective. This is particularly important if Subcommittee Three’s recommendation on institutional neutrality is adopted, but it is important even without it.

The community of the University of Michigan

We conclude by considering for whom we are creating this report. It is, in the broadest sense, for the entire University of Michigan community. That can mean many things: students, faculty, and staff, but also alumni, donors, the residents of the State of Michigan, the United States, and the world. All are included in the University’s mission statement. But our primary focus in this report has been the three active constituencies of students, faculty, and staff. Their different roles entail differences in how the policies and principles of freedom of expression and academic freedom apply. For this reason, it is important to discuss those differences and acknowledge the implications. We do stress the importance of each group’s freedom to express themselves as freely as possible, given their roles, as well as their right to feel respected as members of the U-M community, regardless of their views.

Students are arguably the population to whom the University owes the most. They are one of the two main reasons for the existence of the University, and they choose our community believing U-M can play a crucial role in their intellectual, professional, and personal growth. We know the entire community can learn and benefit from our students. Indeed, both historically and in the present, students have played and continue to play a significant role in helping the University live up to its ideals. But, still, they are, by definition, here to learn. For these reasons, the University owes students extensive — but not unlimited — forbearance as they practice their emerging agency as scholars and citizens. For example, the University should be cautious about blaming students for a lack of intellectual or civic skills we may have failed to provide them.⁹

Faculty historically — and appropriately — enjoy the broadest academic freedom. By “faculty,” we include tenured and tenure-stream faculty, lecturers, clinical and research faculty, and librarians. Although different employment statuses may and likely do affect faculty perceptions of the scope of freedom, we believe the University should promote and protect all faculty members’ ability to pursue their scholarship — both research and teaching — as freely as possible. Academic freedom also entails responsibilities, particularly in the context of teaching. Faculty model, or may fail to model, for their students the intellectual and professional standards that make the pursuit and sharing of knowledge in a pluralist context possible.

Finally, *staff* at the University play a significant role in achieving the institution’s goals. As a rule, staff do

not enjoy the same degree of freedom as students or faculty. Their employment is not protected by tenure, and their roles, as staff, are usually far more narrowly circumscribed than those of any faculty. They do, however, represent many kinds of professional excellence, life experiences, and walks of life. As a matter of empirical fact, the cultural, demographic, religious, socioeconomic, and political variation among U-M staff is likely a better representation of the state of Michigan or, indeed, the United States than the variation in U-M faculty. We believe this is a virtue, and perhaps an unacknowledged resource, of our pluralist community. We therefore believe the University and the members of its community should remember and appreciate this fact in both formal and informal settings, to live up to its commitments to creating an inclusive community.

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⁹ Louis E. Newman, *If We Want Free Speech, We Need to Teach It*, Inside Higher Ed (July 18, 2024), <https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2024/07/18/if-we-want-free-speech-we-need-teach-it-opinion>.



Subcommittee III

On the recommendation of President Santa J. Ono and Vice President and General Counsel Timothy G. Lynch, the Board of Regents voted on January 16, 2024, to adopt the University of Michigan Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression.¹ Citing the University’s mission, the Principles affirm that, “[a]s a great public University guided by the letter and spirit of the First Amendment, we enthusiastically embrace our responsibility to stimulate and support diverse ideas and model constructive engagement with different viewpoints.”² To put the principles into practice, President Ono asked Vice President Lynch to convene a committee to provide guidance on three issues, including “[w]hether the University should adopt some form of the University of Chicago’s Kalven Principles, which establish ‘[a] heavy presumption against the University . . . expressing opinions on the political and social issues of the day.’”³ Answering this question was our subcommittee’s charge.⁴

After reviewing published commentary, numerous institutional statements, and several thousand written submissions from members of the University community—and after much discussion and debate—we answer President Ono’s charge in the affirmative. The University of Michigan should adopt the Kalven Report’s heavy presumption against institutional statements on political and social issues of the day because it will advance the University’s mission and protect its longstanding commitment to diversity of thought and freedom of expression.⁵ The University’s status as a public institution and its commitment to developing leaders and citizens only strengthen the case for avoiding institutional statements on political and social issues.

In the following sections, we lay out the rationale for our recommendation and make some additional points. In particular, we clarify that our recommendation

¹ Request to Adopt Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression from Santa Ono, President, Univ. of Michigan, and Timothy Lynch, Gen. Couns., Univ. of Michigan, to Univ. of Michigan Bd. of Regents (Jan. 16, 2024), <https://regents.umich.edu/files/meetings/01-24/2024-01-X-1.pdf>.

² Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression (Jan. 16, 2024), <https://regents.umich.edu/files/meetings/01-24/2024-01-X-1.pdf>.

³ Santa Ono, President, Univ. of Michigan, Statement at January 2024 Board of Regents (Jan. 16, 2024), <https://president.umich.edu/news-communications/statements/statement-at-january-2024-board-of-regents/>. The full text of the Kalven Report is available at Kalven Committee, Report on the University’s Role in Political and Social Action (1967), <https://provost.uchicago.edu/reports/report-Universitys-role-political-and-social-action> [hereinafter Kalven Report].

⁴ Although we recognize that the impetus for the Kalven Report was a demand for divestment, we do not address the issue here because it was not within the ambit of our charge, nor was it mentioned in the request for community input. Many community members commented on divestment anyway, arguing

does not preclude speech by University leaders on matters of internal governance, that is, on policies and decisions related to running the University. Nor does our recommendation preclude speech by University leaders in their individual capacities rather than on behalf of the institution. We also highlight steps other than issuing statements that University leaders can take to show compassion, foster community, and respond to crises that affect the University community.

Advancing the University’s Mission

Commentators have used various terms to express the idea that universities should avoid taking institutional positions on the political and social issues. The most prominent terms are “institutional neutrality” and “institutional restraint.” We use the term “institutional neutrality” because most commentators do—not because we think it is the best label for the view we endorse. The term “institutional neutrality” is potentially misleading because it suggests that universities must be neutral about everything. This is wrong. Universities should not be neutral, for example, about academic values like truth and respect for evidence. Furthermore, as we elaborate later, University leaders must make and defend many contestable and value-laden decisions about internal governance.

We begin, then, by explaining what we mean by “institutional neutrality.” At its core, this term describes a commitment to the distinctive role that universities play in our society as institutions dedicated to learning and the pursuit of knowledge. As the Kalven Report puts it, “[t]he University is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic.”⁶ To play this role effectively, universities must refrain from taking institutional positions on contested political and social issues of the day. The critics—the “instrument[s] of dissent,” in the report’s terms⁷—are the individual members of the academic community. The University must make way for their voices.

The touchstone for our analysis is the mission of this University. The University of Michigan was founded in 1817 as a “public corporation devoted to the pursuit of knowledge and the education of students.”⁸ Since 1989, the University’s mission has been distilled as follows:

that University leaders should be free to express opinions on political and social issues because the University’s investment decisions already reflect tacit positions on such issues. We do not dispute this premise; investment decisions may have expressive significance. Even if they do, however, we disagree with the view that taking tacit positions is a persuasive reason to endorse additional, express statements on political and social issues.

⁵ One subcommittee member endorses the recommendation (that there be a heavy presumption against the University expressing opinions on the political and social issues of the day and that University leaders should seek other means to engage with the community), but is not prepared at this time to endorse the more general concept of institutional neutrality or its rationale.

to serve the people of Michigan and the world through preeminence in creating, communicating, preserving and applying knowledge, art, and academic values, and in developing leaders and citizens who will challenge the present and enrich the future.⁹

We believe that the University advances this mission best by embracing its role as the “home and sponsor of critics”¹⁰—and of learners, teachers, creators, and contrarians.

Institutional neutrality serves the affirmative goal of cultivating a thriving and inclusive community across our three campuses and academic medical center. As a public institution, the University of Michigan brings together many thousands of individuals with different identities, experiences, and viewpoints. Institutional neutrality signals to “members of an eclectic community that all will be treated with respect”; it reflects “the promise that people won’t be disadvantaged in virtue of their identity, including partisan identities.”¹¹

Importantly, institutional neutrality is not passivity. Fostering a culture of open inquiry and spirited debate requires more than restraint. To be the “home and sponsor of critics,”¹² a University must defend every inquirer with relentless vigor and must allow lawful, peaceful protest. It must nurture a community that welcomes questions and constructive disagreement. And it must safeguard dissidents from threats and harassment just as energetically as it shields those who hold conventional views.

The work of creating knowledge can be destabilizing. It requires us to examine what we think we know and consider the possibility that we might be wrong. We learn through immersive study, unfettered exchange of ideas, contestation of principles, robust disagreement, and questioning of longstanding assumptions. This intensive process advances the state of human knowledge, and it allows us to revise, and sometimes discard, beliefs that were once considered unassailable. Precisely because not all ideas are of equal value, universities must take affirmative steps to ensure that ideas are subject to scrutiny and debate.

⁶ Kalven Report, *supra*.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Why 1817 Matters, Hist. Univ. Mich., <https://historyofum.umich.edu/why-1817-matters/> (last visited Sept. 9, 2024).

⁹ Mission, Univ. Mich., <https://president.umich.edu/about/mission/> (last visited Sept. 9, 2024).

¹⁰ Kalven Report, *supra*.

¹¹ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Neutrality Is a Fiction—But an Indispensable One*, Atlantic (Apr. 20, 2023), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/04/neutrality-journalism-jurisprudence-carl-schmitt-moral-clarity/673757/>.

¹² Kalven Report, *supra*.

This kind of engagement plays a vital role not only in education and knowledge creation, but also in cementing the foundation of our democracy. Without the ability to understand others’ views—even if we would vehemently reject them—democracy cannot function. By promoting research, reflection, and dialogue, we help students become full participants in our democracy and advance our mission of developing leaders and citizens. The University of Michigan does so in part by teaching and modeling constructive engagement and respectful disagreement among community members. A policy of institutional neutrality complements these efforts and is especially important at a time of intense political polarization.

Yet, as our political and social climate has grown fractious in recent decades, it has become increasingly common for University leaders or departments to issue statements on social and political developments. These institutional statements might condemn a new development, express solidarity with those affected by it, or advocate for a specific policy.

University leaders have issued these statements for a variety of reasons—to affirm core values, show compassion, or reinforce a sense of community. Sometimes leaders acquiesce to pressure from students and others who believe that they can advance a cause by getting powerful institutions to affirm their views.

Such institutional statements disserve the University’s mission. They undermine our commitment to open inquiry by suggesting that those who disagree are unwelcome. They cause would-be dissenters to worry that voicing disagreement may jeopardize admission, grades, or advancement. This risk is especially acute for statements issued by or on behalf of departments or other units that make up the University because of the closer connections among the individuals within those units.

In addition, such statements are poor teaching tools. The drafters don’t necessarily have expertise related to the topic at hand and the statements are usually short and conclusory. Instead of encouraging the community to pursue a deeper understanding of the underlying issues, the statements themselves become the focal point for the community’s attention, inviting questions like: how closely, how forcefully, does the statement reflect my own views and preferences? To the extent that statements are perceived to fall short, they attract lobbying for clarifications and additional statements.

There is also the problem of omissions: those whose plight is unacknowledged by a statement may perceive a message that they are less worthy of concern. Disaffected community members may respond by lobbying for comparable recognition in yet another statement. Eliciting leadership statements can quickly become a primary goal of advocacy efforts—efforts that might be more effectively directed elsewhere.

Some have argued against institutional neutrality on the ground that neutrality is neither possible nor desirable. They often quote Bishop Desmond Tutu, who insisted: “If you are neutral in a situation of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”¹³ We submit that there is more than one way to fight oppression and other societal ills. The contribution that universities can make is both critical and distinctive—but it is also necessarily indirect. Universities combat oppression through teaching, learning, inquiry, and debate about the foundations of injustice, its consequences, and what it would take to rectify them. In this way, universities empower individual community members as instruments of dissent—and of persuasion.

In the end, institutional statements on social and political matters do more harm than good. Such statements are unlikely to sway the world beyond the University, and they do not solve the complex problems that University leaders face on campus. They might satisfy some members of the community, but they do so at the cost of alienating or inflaming others. Such statements erect barriers to debate and dissent, and they channel energy away from the kind of learning and engagement that is at the core of this University’s mission.



Having explained our recommendation, we turn next to addressing several crucial issues of implementation.

The Kalven Report does not identify the individuals who might speak (or might be understood to speak) for the University or its component parts. We clarify that the relevant University leaders include the president, members of the president’s leadership team, deans, center directors, department chairs, and any others authorized to speak for an academic unit. Individuals who serve in these roles are stewards of the institution and should discharge their responsibilities in a way that aligns with the University’s mission.

Separately, we elaborate on two vital qualifications to our recommendation: (1) speech by University leaders on matters of internal governance (that is, policies and decisions related to operating the University, including admissions, budget, buildings, curriculum, hiring, and promotion); and (2) speech by University leaders in their individual capacities rather than on behalf of the institution or one of its constituent parts.

Speech Regarding Internal Governance

University leaders make many contestable, value-laden decisions about internal governance—that is, about how to run and lead this institution. Nothing in our recommendation precludes University leaders from speaking about those decisions or about their aspirations for improving the University. For example, there was no way for the University to remain “neutral” about the merits of affirmative action when its admissions policies were challenged before the Supreme Court in 2003. Whether the University maintained or abandoned its affirmative action policies, it would have been taking a position on a highly contested political matter. How we admit students is both a matter of internal governance and one that implicates social and political issues that are hotly debated in our society. Having made a decision, it was right for University leaders to defend it publicly.

More broadly, a University cannot govern itself without making difficult decisions on contested matters. These include decisions about admitting students, hiring and promoting faculty, supporting and funding academic programs, and regulating student conduct.



¹³ See, e.g., E.J. Dionne Jr., *South African Prelate Brings Message to City*, N.Y. Times, Dec. 11, 1983 (§ 1), at 62.

When University leaders make such decisions, norms of openness and transparency demand that they explain their reasoning. It would be counterproductive—indeed, silly—to hold that the University as an institution (or University leaders speaking in their official capacities) may not speak publicly or take positions on ideologically contested matters that directly concern the University’s internal governance.

That said, University leaders should still take care to ensure that their speech on internal governance does not undercut the commitment to institutional neutrality. There will not always be a clear distinction between appropriate speech on internal governance and institutional speech that improperly opines on the external political or social issues of the day. In differentiating between the two, there will be ambiguities, gray zones, and line-drawing problems on which reasonable people will disagree. However, we believe that this distinction is coherent and workable.

First, University leaders should refrain from making statements that take positions about events outside the University. Such events do not become matters of internal governance simply because they affect some members of the University community.

Second, to the extent that University leaders speak on politically charged questions that impact the University community, they should focus their comments on matters of internal governance. For example, when a political event in any part of the world affects faculty, staff, or students at our University, it may be appropriate for University leaders to take steps like extending application deadlines, providing additional support for certain educational or research programs, or even modifying policies. In explaining their decisions, however, University leaders should avoid opining on the wider political questions. Consistent with this recommendation, University leaders may show compassion by acknowledging the intensity of emotions among community members, but they should avoid expressing empathy in a way that explicitly or implicitly takes sides on a social or political issue. In short, University leaders should ensure their communications are consistent with the spirit of institutional neutrality and advance the goal of fostering and affirming a diverse and inclusive community.

Third, when University leaders make and speak about contestable decisions involving internal governance, they should recognize that their decisions may well remain a topic for debate and discussion. Leaders should

affirm that community members who disagree with the University’s position remain welcome to voice their disagreement publicly. Participation in institutional governance is an element of academic freedom. By welcoming dissent, University leaders reinforce the point that debate and inquiry are fundamental to our mission as a public institution of higher education.

Speech in an Individual Capacity

Pursuant to our recommendation, University leaders—including those who are faculty and those who are not—retain the right to speak on social and political matters in an individual capacity.¹⁴ While the line between individual and institutional speech may sometimes be murky, there are ways to clarify in what capacity a person is speaking. University leaders suggest they are speaking on behalf of the institution when they communicate through official channels like a University email listserv or website or a speech at a mandatory University event. Conversely, leaders imply they are speaking for themselves when they write academic articles, participate in academic panels, or publish op-eds in independent newspapers. Government employees who speak on academic panels or at other public events often begin with a disclaimer that they are speaking in their individual capacity and not on behalf of their employer. University leaders should adopt this convention to clarify when they are speaking in their individual capacity.

University leaders have the greatest latitude to speak on contested matters when they are addressing questions within their own academic field and speaking based on their own professional expertise. For example, a public health scholar serving in a leadership role is free to opine publicly on a vaccine mandate (even one not directly affecting University governance) so long as they make clear that they are speaking in their individual capacity. Still, leaders should be slow to leverage the prestige of their office to gain a public platform for personal expression. It is particularly inappropriate for leaders to issue personal statements to signal that they are on the “right” side of a controversial issue. Such pronouncements subvert the leader’s office and undermine the University’s mission to welcome all points of view.

Even though University leaders generally enjoy strong free speech rights in their individual capacities, speech that is protected by the First Amendment or by University policy could disqualify a person from continuing in that role. For example, if a dean makes highly controversial, but protected, statements in their individual capacity, the provost might find that the speech undermines the dean’s ability to serve in that role. Faculty might have a robust

publicaffairs.vpcomm.umich.edu/key-issues/guidelines-for-political-campaigns-and-ballot-initiatives/frequently-asked-questions/.

right to make rude comments in a faculty meeting, but that does not mean that the department must make them chair. University leadership positions do and should come with certain responsibilities and limitations, including on public speech.

Finally, we note that while individual faculty may speak about politically contested matters on their own behalf, groups of faculty should not speak collectively about external political or social matters on behalf of their schools, departments, and other academic units. Because of the smaller scale of these units, the real or perceived risks associated with disagreement (including lower grades, poor performance evaluations, and tenure denial) loom larger and the impact on the educational and scholarly environment is greater. As a result, the threat to the University’s mission is especially acute.

Beyond Statements

We close by reiterating that a policy of institutional neutrality is not a call for passivity on the part of University leaders when a major event roils the community or even the globe. Nor is it an expression of indifference, a call for absolute silence, or an endorsement of the status quo. Instead, our recommendation calls for directing the University’s energy, attention, and resources to activities that are at the core of its mission.

Caring for all members of our academic community is an important part of leadership. We encourage University leaders to find ways to show compassion and foster community that don’t involve issuing statements—and to do so on an ongoing basis rather than just in response to crises. The University has a sizeable expert staff devoted to supporting students and other members of the community, and University leaders should enlist their assistance. University leaders should also remember the valuable role that they can play by personally showing up and listening to the concerns of community members, especially but not only at difficult moments. Sometimes listening is more powerful than speaking.

When a crisis does occur, it is the University’s obligation to educate—for example, to help students understand the roots of a conflict or the sociopolitical impacts of an election. As a great public University, we must prepare our students to lead in a diverse democracy by teaching them to listen carefully and empathetically, to think broadly and deeply, and to communicate effectively across differences. The University of Michigan is home to extraordinary expertise—to many individual critics—who can teach our students, share their perspectives, and help them develop these skills. University leaders can advance our mission best by organizing educational and developmental opportunities and then ceding the floor to other speakers.

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Susan Scott Parrish, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor; professor of English language and literature, LSA; professor of Program in the Environment, LSA and School for Environment and Sustainability; and chair of the Michigan Society of Fellows.

Alisse Portnoy, associate professor of English language and literature, LSA.

¹⁴ Note that use of University resources for political purposes may implicate other University policies. Guidelines for Political Campaigns and Ballot Initiatives, Vice President for Pub. Affs., Univ. Mich. (Feb. 1, 2024), [http://](http://publicaffairs.vpcomm.umich.edu/key-issues/guidelines-for-political-campaigns-and-ballot-initiatives/frequently-asked-questions/)

Acknowledgments

President Ono played a formative and continually important role in this entire project, starting with his faculty meeting at the Law School in February 2023 and up through the date of this Report. Without his commitment, close engagement, and deep support, this project would not have come to fruition.

Members of the Board of Regents, like their regental predecessors did in 1962, 1977, and 1988, have demonstrated in both word and deed their commitment to the values of diversity of thought and freedom of expression. Their decision to call a special meeting of the Board in January 2024 with just one agenda item—adoption of the University of Michigan Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression—speaks volumes. The Regents were deeply involved in reviewing and amending the Principles, and that document reflects their intent and voice. Special thanks to Regent Mark Bernstein, who was a true champion for adoption of the Principles.

The members of the University’s dedicated executive leadership team asked important questions and provided excellent advice and input on all the drafts of the Principles. They made it better each step of the way. Special thanks to Richie Hunter, for her support and wisdom throughout this entire project.

Professors Michelle Adams, Kristina Daugirdas, Don Herzog, Gabriel Mendlow, and Chandra Sripada—the faculty committee members who worked on this project in the spring, summer, and fall of 2023—produced through their expertise and constructive dialogue the first, second, third (and more) drafts of the University of Michigan Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression. They are the intellectual founders of the Principles.

The Principles Committee’s three subcommittee chairs—Professors Jenna Bednar, Kristina Daugirdas, and Mika LaVaque-Manty—were the analytical, practical, and moral stewards and facilitators of their subcommittees. They are extraordinary scholars, teachers, and engaged University leaders who also have world-class diplomatic skills. With only five months available, they led their subcommittees with grace and brought forward three outstanding subcommittee reports.

The Principles Committee’s dedicated and inspiring faculty, librarian, staff, and student members gave hundreds of hours of their time over the last five months

to ponder and answer some of the most challenging questions in academia. Their profoundly important, serious work furthers the University’s mission in powerful and practical ways. The three subcommittee reports they created will be studied and drawn upon for years to come. They are exemplars of the Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression.

The members of our academic community who offered comments on the first draft of the Principles, as well as the more than 4,000 community members who responded to the Principles Committee’s request for input, had a tremendous impact on the process and this entire Report. Thank you for taking the requests so seriously. Your candid comments were extraordinarily meaningful and truly made a difference.

Andrew Rutledge, Senior Associate, and Brian A. Williams, Assistant Director and Archivist for University History, both of the University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library, demonstrated time and time again why the Bentley collection is the very best around and just how profoundly talented our expert Bentley Library archivists are in helping people understand and draw upon the vast treasures of information and knowledge preserved there.

Christopher Billick, Assistant Vice President for Digital Strategy and Michigan Commons in the Office of the Vice President for Communications, played a vital role in the project by creating and implementing the digital surveys that collected feedback from our community in a privacy-focused manner—efforts yielding the more than 4,000 responses that serve as the foundation for all the three subcommittee reports. Christopher is the kind of person who works behind the scenes to facilitate the outstanding creative work of his team.

Jennifer Thomas, Graphic Designer for Michigan Commons in the Office of the Vice President for Communications, designed and typeset the report, creating focused clarity in an era of intense competition for visual space and attention. She is the reason this Report looks so good.

Connor Titsworth, Campus Multimedia Specialist for Michigan Commons in the Office of the Vice President for Communications, captured a majority of the images in this report. He has a gift for finding the best angles from which to visualize and tell our stories.

Thank you to Michigan Photography and Roger Hart for giving us a birds eye view of campus through breathtaking aerial images.

OGC attorneys Patty Petrowski, Dave Masson, Gloria Hage, Jack Bernard, Tom Kent, and Kelly Cruz have provided continually world-class legal advice on difficult First Amendment questions and have been tremendously supportive colleagues. Special thanks to Jack Bernard for his expertise, for his help understanding the history of SPG 601.01, and for years of great conversations on these issues.

OGC executive assistants and operations managers Beth Humpert and Martha Bayer, with tremendous

patience, outstanding logistical expertise, and practical wisdom, made this entire project run smoothly, no matter the challenge.

OGC law clerks Karisma Keeton, Eddie Chapman, Colton French, and Alex Rochon—all terrific students at the University of Michigan Law School—provided superb cite-checking, proofreading, and editing assistance and helped get this project over the finish line.

Kim Clarke provided outstanding help in shedding light on the history of protest at the university and the increasing frequency of institutional statements.



Appendix A: Exhibits

Exhibit 1

9/4/24, 12:17 PM

Commitment to Freedom of Expression and Free Speech

[View this email in your browser](#)

M LAW DEAN'S UPDATE

March 24, 2022

Hi everyone —

I write today to address the events that occurred yesterday at a Federalist Society event. Freedom of speech is a bedrock principle of our academic community, and the free exchange of ideas is at the heart of our mission as a public law school.

At a time when our nation is badly divided over a host of political, social, and legal issues, feelings run high here at Michigan, as they do everywhere. Many of the political and legal issues in play touch us deeply and personally, and their discussion can inflict real pain in ways that fall more heavily on some members of our community than others. Our role as a law school is not to ignore that fact, much less to demand that students bury their beliefs, identities, or values. But our role does call us to model a core professional ethos: the best lawyers are those who listen closely to their adversaries' positions to understand their strengths and vulnerabilities and to prepare the strongest possible response.

The Federalist Society event titled "The Writ-of-Erasure Fallacy and the Texas Heartbeat Act," was a debate-style event that included Jonathan Mitchell, a former Solicitor General of Texas, and Michigan Law Professor and Dean Emeritus Evan Caminker. The legal question discussed during this event was plainly appropriate for law school debate, and the event presented an opportunity to sharpen critical thinking about legal moves in one of the most important constitutional debates of our time. Protesters disrupted Mr. Mitchell's presentation by blocking visual access and interfering with his ability to communicate to the audience. These acts were fundamentally contrary to our values and pedagogical mission—not to mention our rules—and it frustrated the free speech interests of both the speaker and fellow students who were entitled to listen.

Exhibit 1

9/4/24, 12:17 PM

Commitment to Freedom of Expression and Free Speech

At Michigan Law, we respect the right of speakers to be heard, free from harassment or interruption. The Law School neither asks about a speaker's views nor interferes in student organization programming based on those views. An academic community simply cannot suppress speech in an open forum based on the belief that it is pernicious, false, or even detestable. Disapproval can be expressed by counterprogramming, by asking tough questions, by nondisruptive demonstrations, or by boycott. But it violates our most basic norms to prevent a speaker from speaking or to deprive other members of the community of the chance to listen and learn.

To be sure: Civil disobedience has played an important role in our history, and there are times when we each must follow our own conscience. It is not the Law School's place to decide whether underlying moral outrage is justified. Nevertheless, disrupting an event such that a speaker is not able to be heard is a violation of the University's policies and norms, including the University's [Standard Practice Guide for Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression](#) and the University's [Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). We apply these rules evenhandedly and without regard to viewpoint. The choice to violate them has consequences both for individuals and for our community.

Michigan Law is a community, and we should all think carefully about the kind of community we create together. We remain committed to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment. We remain dedicated to cultivating a scholarly community that promotes intellectual inquiry through vigorous discourse. We continue to affirm our commitment to freedom of speech and artistic expression for all—including when members of our community find speech or a speaker reprehensible. I urge you to approach these events as important opportunities not only to learn, but also to practice the skills and capacities you will be required to rely on as lawyers.

Best,
MDW

Exhibit 1

9/4/24, 12:17 PM

Commitment to Freedom of Expression and Free Speech

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University of Michigan Law School · 701 S State St · Ann Arbor, MI 48109-3091 · USA

Exhibit 2

April 21, 1975

passed 45-0

To: Senate Assembly

From: SACUA

Re: Disruption of Speakers on Campus

The statement below was adopted on March 27, 1975 by the Civil Liberties Board. SACUA presents it for possible adoption by Senate Assembly.

STATEMENT ON HONORS CONVOCATION DISRUPTION

Civil Liberties Board

The disruption of a University of Michigan convocation honoring Ephraim Katzir, a molecular biologist and biophysicist of international stature, was a denial of the freedom of speech held dear by all in this nation, but most especially by those on a campus devoted to freedom of expression. The clash of ideas is encouraged in such an environment, but the forums must provide that viewpoints be expressed in civil manner, rather than in the disruptive chanting of slogans.

Freedom of speech was attacked that day.

The right of persons to hear a speaker was abridged. There was no denial of the same right to those who disrupted the convocation, as they had peacefully demonstrated outside the meeting hall where their message could be heard and seen by those entering. Moderation was shown by the administration in allowing disruptors adequate time to desist, and force was used only when reason and persuasion did not influence those opposing the speaker. The disruptors showed a disregard for the rights of an audience to hear the person they had come to hear, whether or not the audience agreed with that speaker. Alternative public forums are available on campus to those wishing to present dissenting views.

FOR INTER-UNIVERSITY CORRESPONDENCE

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

25 March 1975

MEMO TO: Members. Civil Liberties Board

FROM: Jack Rothman, Chairman

SUBJECT: Special meeting on disruption of Honors Convocation

The Civil Liberties Board has been asked by SACUA to consider civil liberties aspect of events at the Honors Convocation. In transmitting this request from SACUA, Chairman Carl Cohen comments as follows:

"The recent disruption of the University convocation in honor of Ephraim Katzir has caused a very widespread concern about the state of civil liberties on the campus.

No one seriously doubts that such disruptions deny the rights of speech to persons, and chill the atmosphere in which controversial figures can appear on the campus with safety."

I am calling a special luncheon meeting to review the matter. It will be Thursday, March 27, 1975, at noon, in the University (Faculty) Club, the Alcove Table, in the Michigan Union. (Our usual facilities at the League were not available.)

I hope we can make this a brief gathering, recessing at 1:15 or 1:30 p.m.

If you have a view on the subject and are able to draft specific language beforehand, this should tend to expedite our deliberations.

bc
cc: C. Cohen

U.S. Mail

(ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY BY SENATE ASSEMBLY, APRIL 21, 1975)

Because differences of opinion have come to exist within our community on the nature, scope, and rationale of freedom of speech and academic freedom as they pertain to University practices, be it resolved:

That SACUA appoint an ad hoc committee to prepare a general report on this question. The committee might take the recent report of the Woodward Committee on Freedom of Expression at Yale University, including the dissenting report by one member of that committee, as a guide for their report.

Submitted by

Shaw Livermore

RESOLVED:

A university is characterized by and committed to the spirit of free and rational inquiry. It is governed by the conventions of dignified behavior and respect for the rights of all individuals to attend classes and to express and hear controversial opinion. Abridgement of these rights, by measures that anticipate potential misconduct, or by confrontation and disruption, must not be tolerated.

We call upon the University of Michigan, through the agency of its executive officers, to:

- a) reaffirm the freedoms of expression by which the academic community lives;
- b) safeguard the right to speak and listen in the lecture hall and to teach and learn in the classroom without fear of violent interruption or shutdown;
- c) resist all threats, coercions, or other attempts to disrupt academic proceedings regardless of whether such disruptions are impelled by the desire of the many or by the will of the few;
- d) use against disruptors established disciplinary and/or judicial processes with speed and vigor, whether or not disruptors are members of the University community.

Submitted by

Paul Ilie

(PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY SENATE ASSEMBLY,
APRIL 21, 1975, as amended above)

45-0

Senate Assembly
Civil Liberties Board
The University of Michigan

Next meeting:
Tues., July 8, 1975
12:00 noon
Michigan League, Rm. 2

An ad hoc committee has been established by SACUA to consider the question of freedom of speech on the campus. This committee is composed of two members of the Civil Liberties Board (Professors Chambers and Friedman) and two interested faculty members of the campus community (Professors Berk and Livermore). The Committee is chaired by Professor Rothman, outgoing chairperson of the Civil Liberties Board.

The Committee is guided in its work by three resolutions passed at the Senate Assembly meeting of April 21, 1975: one by the Civil Liberties Board; another offered by Professor Livermore; and a third by Professor Ilie.

Several basic documents are available to work with:

- 1) The Woodward report on Freedom of Expression, prepared at Yale University.
- 2) Several U of M statements touching on the subject (Civil Liberties Board statement of September 14, 1969 on right of ROTC faculty and students; Rules of the University pamphlet). Existing University policies are broad and imprecise.

At its first meeting on July 1, 1975 the ad hoc committee delineated several issues which bear on freedom of speech matters. These include:

1. There is a difference between a talk sponsored by a group which is a constituent part of the University and a talk sponsored by the University itself as an official corporate entity. The latter may pertain also to a formal administrative unit of the University such as the Law School or the School of Education.
2. There is a distinction between an open, voluntary meeting which one may attend or not, and one which is an official event in which one may be a "captive audience"--such as a graduation. Students who wish to attend such an event for purposes of culminating their educational careers may find themselves "forced" to listen to a speaker whose views are abhorrent to them.
3. Particularly in events officially sponsored by the University, there may be a difference between speech per se, and giving prominence to an individual who symbolizes a given political policy or philosophy which is honored or legitimated through such a formal corporate invitation to speak.
4. Questions were raised concerning criteria of "appropriate" and "inappropriate" dissent or protest. At what point does expressing an opposing opinion in a public pluralistic exchange become an oppressive act which prevents a speaker from having access to an audience? Can such criteria of acceptable dissenting behavior be specified?

5. Regarding the dissenting view in the Woodward statement support in the ad hoc committee for the opinion that a minority, oppressed or has little power should have authorization to prevent is critical or unfriendly to its perceived interests. It is difficult such constraints on freedom of speech (who decides?), and counter than suppression of opinion would appear to be the best remedy. might be when public advocacy places a particular group in clear physical danger. The ad hoc group questioned when such general to groups in the contemporary American scene.

One committee member suggested that the group proceed by systematic and critiquing the Woodward report. It might be well to precede by having each committee member give general reactions to the Woodward what he views as positives as well as deficiencies in that report to principles expressed or procedures suggested. What types of might be desirable or necessary?

encl. Rules of the University Community

U.S. mail July 3, 1975 to:

Professors David Chambers
Bruce Friedman
Jack Rothman
Sylvester Berki
Shaw Livermore

FOR INTRA-UNIVERSITY CORRESPONDENCE

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

MEMORANDUM

TO Members, Civil Liberties Board
FROM Bruce Friedman, Chairman
SUBJECT First meeting, date and agenda

I have scheduled the first meeting of the Civil Liberties Board for Wednesday, 29 October, 1975, noon to 1:30 p.m., in Meeting Room 5, at the League. The room is on your left as you enter the front door of the League. You may purchase your lunch in the main cafeteria across from the meeting room and carry your tray into the room or purchase lunch in the snack bar in the basement and bring your tray up the stairs. This procedure has worked well in the past. Please be as prompt as possible

A G E N D A

1. Freedom of Speech. As you will note in the background reading, the issue of freedom of speech was precipitated by an interruption of a lecture by President Katzir last Spring (note the Ilie and Livermore motions of the Assembly minutes of 21 April, 1975, and the reaction statement of the Civil Liberties Board which was referred to the Senate Assembly and adopted). An additional conflict was avoided when Secretary of State Kissinger declined to speak at the graduation ceremonies last Spring. A disruption of his speech had been planned at that time. An ad hoc committee chaired by Jack Rothman debated the issue of freedom of speech this past Summer (note minutes of the meeting of 3 July 1975). The ad hoc committee studied the Woodward report from Yale which took a firm position on the issue of freedom of speech (see enclosure). For background reading I am also including an editorial from the Wall Street Journal, a report from the Civil Liberties Board of September 1969, and my recent statement to the Assembly Committee Chairpersons on the current goals of the Civil Liberties Board.

We have an immediate problem with regard to freedom of speech. An associate of Dr. Shockley from Harvard has been invited to the campus in the near future to present his racial views. He has asked for assurances of protection from the administration. Our first agenda item will be to draft guidelines for the administration to use to protect his right of freedom of speech as well as that of other invited speakers. I hope that these guidelines will be concrete and practical and will protect the rights of both the speaker and the protesters. I hope further that we can establish time frame guidelines to use when removing protesters who do not desist when the speaker commences. To this end, would you come to the meeting with written ideas and/or a written proposal for these concrete guidelines. The drafting of proposals and guidelines by the Civil Liberties Board has been much easier in the past when Board members come to the meeting with written proposals which can then be discussed.

Members, Civil Liberties Board

- 2 -

The next agenda item will be then to discuss how to develop statement on freedom of speech which can be adopted by the Assemb be a longer range project than the guidelines mentioned above whi immediately, but I forsee that these guidelines can be incorporat position statement. Our group is clearly too big to write the po by the committee of the whole. In addition, we will discuss vari ulating interest on the campus in the freedom of speech issue via discussions. Please give some thought to ways of funding speaker different formats we can use.

2. Social Security Numbers Used as Identification. Facult complained to me that the social security number is used extensiv versity for identification purposes. The social security card ex that the number is not to be used for these identification purpos use of this number for identification leads to compilation of dat computers. I am going to ask one of the members of the Board to problem before the meeting to determine the extent of the problem impact of prohibiting it. Please think about the problem.

3. Peggy Kusnerz pointed out to me that the Rare Book Ro the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library, is currently exhibiting mate theme of "Documents in the History of Intellectual Liberty."

October 9, 1975

MEMORANDUM

TO Members, Civil Liberties Board

FROM Bruce A. Friedman, Chairman

SUBJECT Minutes of Civil Liberties Board Meeting 29 October 1975

NOTE: Next meeting is Wednesday, 19 November 1975, Meeting Room #3 of the League, 12 Noon - 1:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Joel Berger, William Cash, David Chambers, Carl Cohen, Norma Diamond, Bruce Friedman, Charles Garvin, Peggy Kusnerz, Jose Ramirez Shaw Livermore, member pro tem

ABSENT: Edward Voss; member pro tem Sylvester Berki

The meeting was convened at 12:10 by Bruce Friedman. After brief intro- ductory remarks and introduction of members, Peggy Kusnerz delivered a brief report on the upcoming distribution of the University Directory and anticipated sales at the Union newsstand. She related that of the 16,500 published copies of the Directory, approximately 2500 copies will be available for public sale. These additional sale copies in the past have been bought by University person- nel who desire to have an additional copy, book salesmen, local businessmen, real estate agents, and insurance salesmen. The majority of the Board members felt that the public sale of the Directory was no great infringement on the civil liberties of the University personnel whose names are included in the Directory. Shaw Livermore did point out that he objected to the sales of lists by governmental agencies and thought that the sale of the Directory to the pub- lic for a profit was analogous. It was decided by consensus that Peggy Kusnerz should write a letter to the Publications Office asking them to include a warn- ing on the cards that are distributed next Fall requesting information from Uni- versity personnel for the Directory. The warning should state that the Directory will be sold publicly and that personnel should withhold any information which they do not wish to be disseminated in this manner.

Bruce Friedman next pointed out that Joel Berger is studying the issue of the use of the social security number as a universal identifier within the Uni- versity. He has prepared an information paper on this matter which will be discussed at an upcoming meeting.

The meeting then turned to the question of freedom of speech. Bruce Friedman gave a brief history of the deliberations which have taken place thus far. An ad hoc committee meeting this past Summer composed of Jack Rothman, Chairman, Dave Chambers, SyBerki, Shaw Livermore and Bruce Friedman discussed the matter at some length. A recommendation was forwarded to SACUA recommending the sponsor- ship of seminars and lectures on the campus to discuss freedom of speech. It was the desire of SACUA that a position paper on freedom of speech, perhaps with con- crete guidelines, should be drafted by the ad hoc committee. At the end of the

summer, the ad hoc committee was dissolved and the issue of freedom of speech was adopted as a major agenda item of the Civil Liberties Board. Berki and Livermore were made pro tem members of the Civil Liberties Board until the deliberations of the Board on freedom of speech were finished.

There was agreement that a position paper could be developed of speech in parallel with plans to sponsor seminars and lectures at the University on freedom of speech. Since a controversial speaker might appear on the campus in the very near future, it was decided to attempt to develop some concrete guidelines were necessary, and if so, what they should be.

Shaw Livermore pointed out that the Katzir disruption was handled by the administration, a position also taken by the Civil Liberties Board in the Spring. The assumption was made that if the Board established no lines, the administration will pursue a similar course of action. Disrupters should there be new disruptions of a speech. There was discussion about whether the University should institute its own judicial process against protesters in addition to civil penalties. Since the University does not have its own police force and depends on the Ann Arbor police, the penalties invoked once the Ann Arbor police are called are, at least, up to their discretion.

In an attempt to obtain a consensus among the members of the Board, varying levels of the issue moving from the general to the specific were discussed. Separate statements in principle were approved by the Board. It was understood that these agreements in principle could be altered or rescinded at a later date. The three agreements in principle approved are the following:

1. The affirmation of the right of any and all speakers to appear on the University and espouse their views.
2. It would be inappropriate for the University to bar any speaker from appearing on the campus.
3. It is the right of the University to take steps to insure the right of any speaker on campus to speak, and the obligation of the University to request to insure the right of any speaker on campus to speak. (U This time was what steps are to be taken, and whose request would be considered.)

There was a brief discussion as to what constitutes disruption. The discussion ranged from Charles Garvin's opinion that only a disruption was significant, to Carl Cohen's point that the disruption of opportunity outside the hall to register their protest and that a disruption of communication between the speaker and the audience was significant.

Discussion at the next meeting will revolve around the right of the University to penalize protesters within its own campus and how disrupters should be curbed within an auditorium.

STATEMENT ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION: THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF SPEAKERS, PERFORMERS, AUDIENCE MEMBERS, AND PROTESTORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CIVIL LIBERTIES BOARD

25 February 1976

(Revision of Statement of 21 January 1976)

PREAMBLE

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

This 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 judgement on that defense. For this reason, freedom of speech must not be restricted, governed, or curtailed in any way by content; the belief that some opinion is obscene, pernicious, false, or in any way detestable cannot be grounds for its suppression.

When a speech or some form of artistic expression such as a play or concert is disrupted or curtailed, ostensibly as a protest against a speaker or performer as a symbol of a policy, institution, or nation, the effect is just as surely an attack against freedom of speech and artistic expression as an attack on the intellectual content of the speech or performance. Protestors have ample opportunity to register their distaste for speakers or performers before or after their performance.

For the above reasons, the Civil Liberties Board of the Senate Assembly recommends endorsement and adoption of the following guidelines pertaining to the right of freedom of speech and artistic expression at The University of Michigan:

GUIDELINES

- 1.e It is the right of any and all speakers invited by members of the University community, or groups under the aegis of the University, to set forth their views and opinions at the University. The limits of this right of freedom of speech are those generally understood in this society, and delineated in the Constitution and other statutes.
- 2.e It is inappropriate for the University to bar any invited speaker from appearing before the University community.

3. It is the obligation of The University of Michigan to insure the right of any invited speaker to talk and be heard, and also to insure the rights of those members of the University community who wish to hear and communicate with such an invited speaker.
4. It is the right of the University to make a judgement when it is likely that the rights of an invited speaker to talk and be heard and the audience to listen will be infringed upon, and to take appropriate measures to *safeguard* these rights, even when such measures are not requested or desired.
5. The revocation of an invitation for a speaker to appear at the University because of the potential for a violent reaction to the speech, or the threat of its disruption, constitutes intellectual blackmail, and cannot be tolerated. Likewise, the purposeful shunning of a controversial speaker of some merit solely because his appearance may invite disruption or violence is contrary to the intellectual ideals of the University community and is a major concession to demagoguery.
6. Within the confines of a hall or physical facility, or in the vicinity of where an invited speaker is addressing an assembled audience, protestors must not interfere unduly with the communication between the speaker and the members of the audience. *The concept of unduly interference does not include* This restriction must not be interpreted as a suppression of the usual range of human emotions commonly displayed by an audience during heated discussions of controversial topics. Existing regulations, in general, restrict the use of University halls and physical facilities to University organizations.
7. The rights of protestors must be guarded as zealously as those of speakers. Protestors may certainly express their opposition to a speaker in a reasonable and orderly fashion outside of the hall or physical facility or area where a lecture or meeting is being held.
8. Speakers are encouraged to engage in a meaningful dialogue *deserve to be actively involved* and to exchange ideas with members of the audience so that points of contention can be directly addressed. This dialogue may be terminated by the speaker or by the chairperson or by request of members of the audience if and when this exchange of ideas itself is used as a means of disruption, and interferes unduly with the communication between the speaker and the audience.
9. If protestors within the confines of the hall or physical facility interfere with the communication between the speaker and the audience, the chairperson or University representative present must put the protestors on notice that they are abrogating the civil rights of the speaker and the members of the audience. If the protestors do not promptly cease and desist from their actions, the chairperson should proceed with those measures deemed necessary to reestablish order, up to and including the physical removal of the protestors from the area. Adjourning, postponing, or allowing an extended interruption of a speech or meeting is tantamount to the complete denial of the right to speak as well as the right of the audience to listen. The overriding goal of the chairperson during disruptions must be to reestablish an atmosphere conducive to communication between the speaker and the audience as rapidly as possible.
10. Enforcement of these guidelines and sanctions against those in the University community or other outside this community who willfully violate them shall be governed by existing mechanisms utilizing the University Council, the President

and other administrative officers, and the Director of Security. We lament the fact that there is no effective judiciary body at the present time to adjudicate violations of the basic right of freedom of speech in University activities. *to present*

11. Because the ~~right~~ *members need the security of the freedom* of freedom of speech plays such a critical role in the functioning of a university, the violation of this right by members of the University community is evidence of blatant disregard for the spirit of free intellectual inquiry and, as such, constitutes grounds for severe University disciplinary action.

BAF/bw
2/26/76

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

SENATE ASSEMBLY

Minutes of Assembly Meeting, March 15, 1976

ATTENDANCE

- Present: Professors Baublis, Bishop, Browder, Brown, Rucknagel, Malvitz, Cosand, DeKornfeld, Dernberger, Eisley, Gikas, Gray, Hildebrandt, Ilie, Jones, Kachaturoff, Kaplan, Kelsey, Kish, L., Leary, Lehmann, Olson, Lindberg, Livermore, Lytle, George, Asgar, Nesbitt, Scott, Krahmalkov, Sherman, Soucek, Stross, Taren, Terwilliger, Van der Voo, Votaw, Weeks, West, Williams, Hoch, Colburn, Johnson
- Absent: Professors Adams, Berki, Bornstein, Child, Christensen, Corpron, Browne, Deskins, Flynn, Smith, Guinn, Harris, Hoffman, Horsley, Edwards, Kessler, Kish, G., Lands, Lucchesi, Mullen, Murphey, Proctor, Tubergen, Seger, Sibley, Springer, Wilson
- Guests: Professors Bruce Friedman and Frank Whitehouse, and Vice-President Richard Kennedy

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Johnson at 3:22 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Assembly meeting of February 16, 1976 were approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following announcements were made by Chairman Johnson for the information of the Assembly.

- a. Attention was directed to the Henry Russel Lecture, to be presented on March 23, 1976.
- b. Professor Brockway, as chairman, and the members of his Research Policies Committee were commended for the care with which they had planned the recent series of forums on research in recombinant DNA, a sentiment that was endorsed unanimously by the Assembly on presentation of a motion to this effect, offered by Professor Williams.
- c. The members were reminded of the forthcoming meeting of the University Senate on April 13 and urged to encourage their colleagues to attend, especially since the agenda would include such timely items as a progress report from Vice-President Overberger on DNA research as well as a discussion of significant governmental trends affecting higher education, President Fleming to be asked to comment on the latter in terms of implications for the University.
- d. Slated for discussion at the April meeting of the Assembly are reports expected to be available from the Committee on the Economic Status of the Faculty as well as from Committee B with respect to research in recombinant DNA.

ASSEMBLY MINUTES 3-15-76 (CONT'D) - 2 -

FREEDOM OF SPEECH ON CAMPUS

In introducing Professor Friedman, chairman of the Civil Liberties Board, Chairman Johnson pointed out that the Assembly now had before it for discussion and action a statement from the Board on freedom of speech on campus, revised on the basis of reactions expressed by members of the Assembly at their February meeting. Thereupon Professor Lehmann moved that the Assembly adopt the statement as presented, a motion which, having been seconded, was subsequently offered for discussion.

Seeking to sound out his colleagues on the matter, Professor Hildebrandt expressed a reservation with respect to section 9 of the document, proposing that they consider deletion of the sentence proscribing cancellation or adjournment of a meeting under disruptive circumstances. He was particularly reluctant to see the possibility of "adjourning to another time or place" ruled out, an option he wished left to the chairperson or, for that matter, to the group as a whole. He was bothered, too, by the undefined phrase "extended interruption," all of which led him to suggest that the sentence be deleted in toto. In the view of his Board the sentence served a purpose, however, Professor Friedman indicated. Cancelling or adjourning a meeting would penalize those who had come to hear the speaker. Nonetheless, Professor Hildebrandt still felt obliged to offer an amendment, which was seconded, deleting the phrase "adjourning to another time or place." Expressing his opposition, Professor Ilie asserted that invitations to speakers are not ad hoc affairs but represent advance planning and appropriate publicity. People come prepared to hear the presentation; to adjourn a meeting under the circumstances is tantamount to capitulating to disruptive influences. There being no further discussion, a vote was taken and the amendment defeated.

Speaking to the original motion that the Civil Liberties Board statement be adopted as presented, Professor Jones pointed to some language he found troublesome, in particular phrases such as "undue interference" and "extended disruption", whose adjectives he would prefer to see deleted, without, however, intending to inhibit spontaneous emotional reactions. The Board shared this latter concern, Professor Friedman explained, having tried by the choice of such words as "undue" to distinguish between normal expression of emotion, on the one hand, and planned interruption, on the other. Use of the word "extended" had a similar intent. While Professor Jones felt such qualifiers detracted from the prerogatives of a chairperson, the Board, according to Professor Friedman, actually saw them as giving the chair greater latitude, a sentiment in which Professor Weeks concurred, noting that "undue interruption" was to be construed as "inappropriate interruption." Following a few further comments in response to Professor Rucknagel's query concerning the matter of enforcement, the document was adopted as presented in a unanimous vote by the Assembly.

Speaking for its members, Chairman Johnson expressed the appreciation of the Assembly for the care and diligence with which Professor Friedman and the Civil Liberties Board had proceeded in addressing these significant questions on behalf of the University community.

STATEMENT ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION:
THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF SPEAKERS, PERFORMERS, AUDIENCE MEMBERS,
AND PROTESTORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CIVIL LIBERTIES BOARD
(as approved by SACUA January 24, 1977)
and by President Fleming on 1/26/77)

(APPROVED BY REGENTS, OCTOBER 21, 1977)

PREAMBLE

Recent events at The University of Michigan and elsewhere emphasize the pressing need for the members of the University community including faculty, students, and employees to reaffirm formally their deep and lasting commitment to freedom of speech and artistic expression, and to clarify the consequences of that commitment with respect to University activities and events. 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, or otherwise participate in such communication. It is hoped that this reaffirmation will win the support, in spirit as well as in letter, of people representing the entire spectrum of opinion of the University community for creation of a truly open forum, one in which diverse points of view 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. For this reason, freedom of speech must not ordinarily be restricted, governed or curtailed in any way by content except where the law, as interpreted by the Supreme Court of Michigan, or the Supreme Court of the United States, holds that such an expression does not fall within constitutionally protected free speech. In all instances, University authorities should act with maximum constraint, even in the face of obvious bad taste or provocation. The belief that some opinion is pernicious, false, or in any other way detestable cannot be grounds for its suppression.

When a speech or some form of artistic expression such as a play or concert is disrupted or curtailed, ostensibly as a protest against a speaker or performer as a symbol of a policy, institution, or nation, the effect is just as surely an attack against freedom of speech and artistic expression as an attack on the intellectual content of the speech or performance. Protestors have ample opportunity to register their distaste for speakers or performers before or after their performance.

The Civil Liberties Board of the Senate Assembly recommends endorsement and adoption of the following guidelines pertaining to freedom of speech and artistic expression, and prompt establishment of an effective judiciary body at The University of Michigan to adjudicate violations of freedom of speech and artistic expression in University activities.

"Freedom of Speech" statement

-2-

GUIDELINES

1. It is the right of any and all speakers invited by members of the University community, or groups under the aegis of the University, to set forth their views and opinions at the University.
2. It is inappropriate for the University to bar any invited speaker from appearing before the University community.
3. Within its lawful authority to do so, the University will protect the right of any invited speaker to talk and be heard, and also will protect the rights of those members of the University community who wish to hear and communicate with such an invited speaker.
4. It is the right of University officials to make a judgment when it is likely that the rights of an invited speaker to talk and be heard and the audience to listen may be infringed upon, and to take appropriate measures to safeguard these rights, even when such measures are not requested or desired.
5. Pressure to revoke an invitation for a speaker to appear at the University because of the potential for a violent reaction to the speech, or the threat of disruption of the speech, constitutes intellectual blackmail, and cannot be tolerated. Likewise, the purposeful shunning of a controversial speaker of some merit solely because his appearance may invite disruption or violence is contrary to the intellectual ideals of the University community, and is a major concession to demagoguery.
6. Within the confines of a hall or physical facility, or in the vicinity of where an invited speaker is addressing an assembled audience, protestors must not interfere unduly with the orderly communication between the speaker and the members of the audience. This prohibition against undue interference does not include suppression of the usual range of human emotions commonly displayed by an audience during heated discussions of controversial topics.
7. The rights of protestors must be guarded as zealously as those of speakers. Protestors may certainly express their opposition to a speaker in an orderly fashion outside of the hall or physical facility or area where a lecture or meeting is being held, or organize alternate forums.

"Freedom of Speech" statement

-3-

8. Speakers are encouraged to exchange ideas with members of the audience and to engage in a meaningful dialogue germane to the subject at hand so that points of contention can be directly addressed. This dialogue may be terminated by the speaker, or by the chairperson, or by request of members of the audience to the chairperson, if and when this exchange of ideas itself is used as a means of disruption and interferes unduly with the orderly communication between the speaker and the audience.
9. If protestors within the confines of the hall or physical facility interfere with the communication between the speaker and the audience, the chairperson or University representative present must, if possible, put the protestors on notice that they are interfering with the rights of the speaker and members of the audience. If the protestors do not stop their undue interference, the chairperson or University representative should proceed with those measures deemed necessary to reestablish order, which may include the physical removal of the protestors from the area. Cancelling, adjourning to another time or place, or allowing an extended interruption of a speech or meeting is tantamount to the complete denial of the right to speak as well as the right of the audience to listen. The overriding goal of the chairperson or University representative during a disruption must be to reestablish as rapidly as possible an atmosphere conducive to orderly communication between the speaker and the audience.
10. Application of these guidelines and sanctions against those in the University community or others outside this community who violate them shall be the responsibility of the President or those to whom he may delegate authority.
11. Because freedom of speech plays such a critical role in the functioning of a university, interference with the exercise of this freedom by members of the University community is evidence of a blatant disregard for the spirit of free intellectual inquiry and, as such, constitutes grounds for severe University disciplinary action.

The University of Michigan serves the public through teaching and research. We create and advance knowledge. We prepare the next generation to participate in democracy. We fulfill our mission through rigorous scholarship and scrutiny in the humanities and sciences, in the arts and engineering, in every field and every discipline. Open inquiry and spirited debate — the lifeblood of our institution — promote discovery and creativity.

We have a proud history of engaging with issues of great societal importance. Our 1988 Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression policy, built upon the Board of Regents 1977 Freedom of Speech Guidelines, ~~guides our institution.~~ **affirms protections for speakers, performers, and the audiences who assemble to watch and listen and for protesters who are free to disagree but not disrupt the presentations.** Our practice of confronting controversial topics is a hallmark of our culture. We uphold "the right to intellectual freedom" by practicing "firm traditions of self-criticism, by learning to respect differences of opinion and belief, and by recognizing that the progress of a society is inextricably linked to a diversity of opinions and beliefs and the freedom to express them." When we fall short of these ideals, we vow to learn from our missteps as a community that aspires to be "leaders and best."

As a great public university guided by the letter and spirit of the First Amendment, we enthusiastically embrace our responsibility to stimulate and support diverse ideas and **model constructive engagement with different** viewpoints in our classrooms and labs, lecture series and symposia, studios and performance halls, **exhibits and publications**, and among our entire community of students, teachers, researchers, and staff. When we disagree on matters of intellectual significance, we make space for contesting perspectives. **We must listen critically and self-critically.**

~~Diversity of thought informed by different perspectives and lived experiences generates better ideas and moves us forward toward a more just and equitable society.~~

Our commitment to freedom of expression is entirely consistent with our commitment to nurturing a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community. By bringing together individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints — and supporting and empowering them to use their voices and share their views — we make our community stronger and advance our mission.

We affirm the ~~freedom to exchange~~ **value of exchanging** ideas, ~~question~~ **questioning** assumptions, ~~learn~~ **learning** from those with whom we disagree, ~~challenge~~ **challenge** and those **whose voices have been marginalized**; **challenging** views we find misguided or pernicious; and ~~engage~~ **engaging** with the broadest range of scholarly subjects and materials. We strive to meet conflict and controversy with ~~empathy~~ **understanding** and reason, refuting our opponents rather than **revoking invitations or** refusing them a platform, and contesting their ideas instead of attacking their character.

Not all ideas are of equal value. That is precisely why they must be subject to intense scrutiny and thoughtful debate. Our deep commitment to free expression does not

extend to speech or conduct that violates the law or University policy, including targeted speech that involves **constitutes** bullying, defamation, destruction of property, **discrimination**, harassment, violence, or threats. **And the University may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the University's ordinary activities.**

We recognize that free inquiry and expression can offend. Every member of our academic community should expect to confront ideas that differ from their own, however uncomfortable those encounters may be. We commit to these Principles because they help us to create, discover, and fulfill our vital mission.

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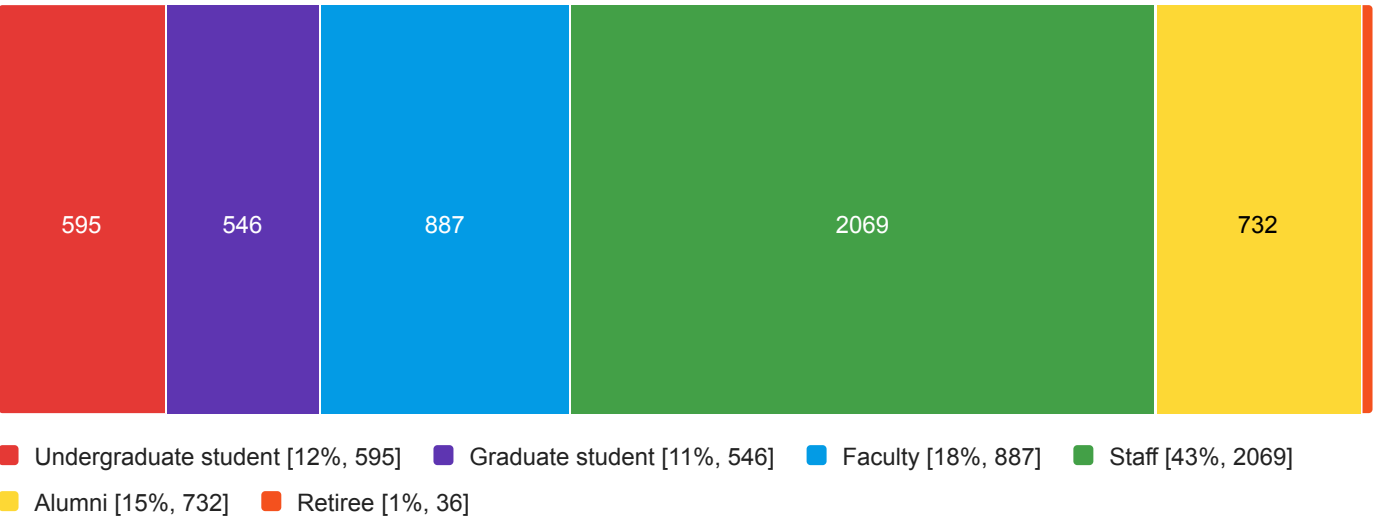
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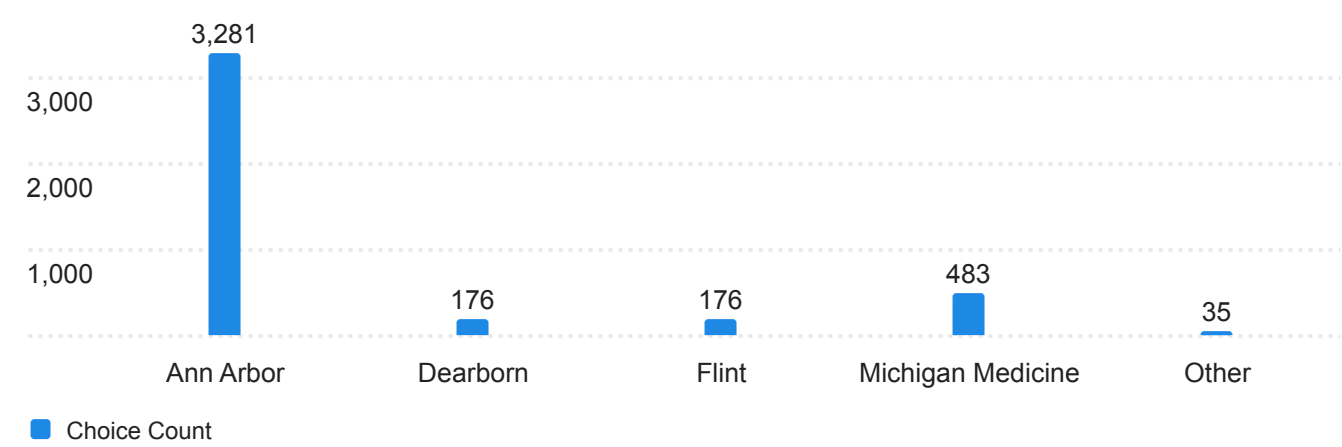
All responses

1

Which of the following best describes your current role(s) in relationship to the University of Michigan? (Select all that apply).



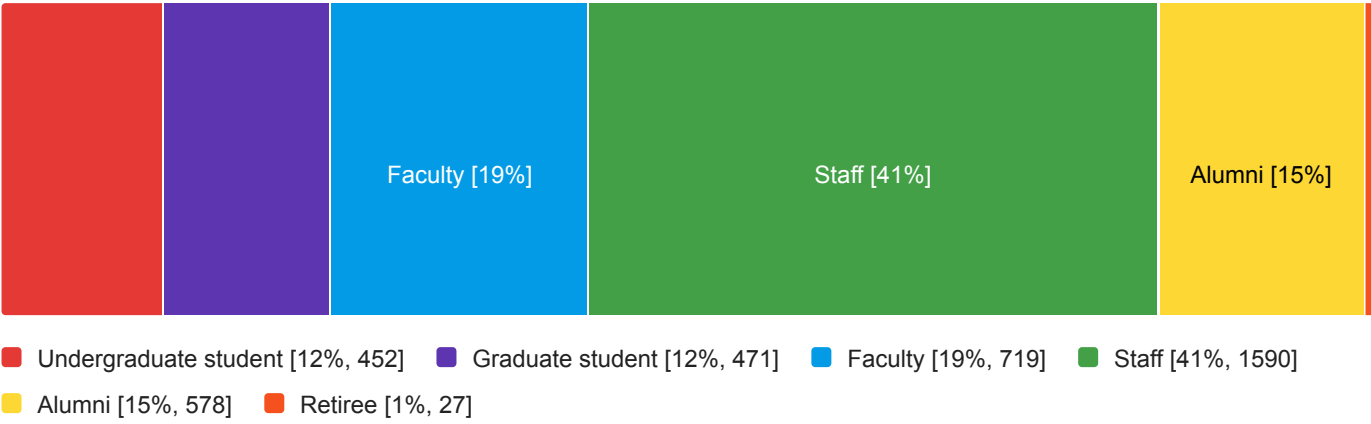
What would you identify as your principal University location?



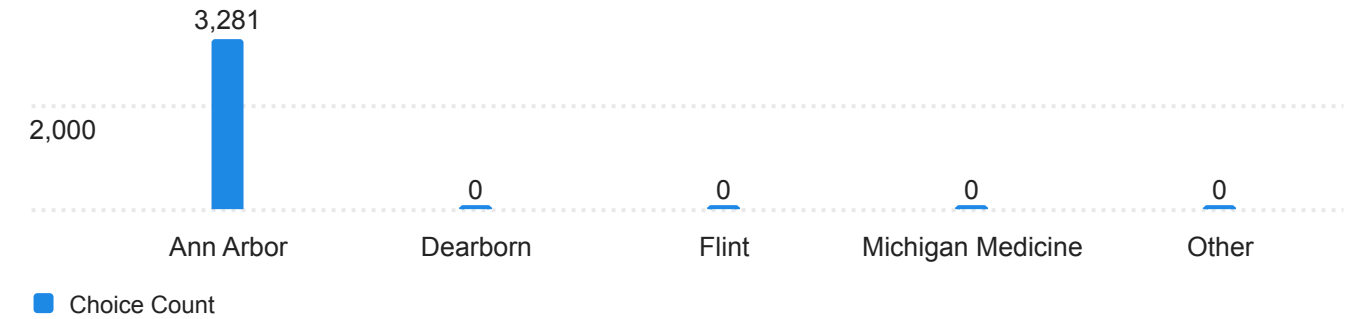
Ann Arbor

2

Which of the following best describes your current role(s) in relationship to the University of Michigan? (Select all that apply).



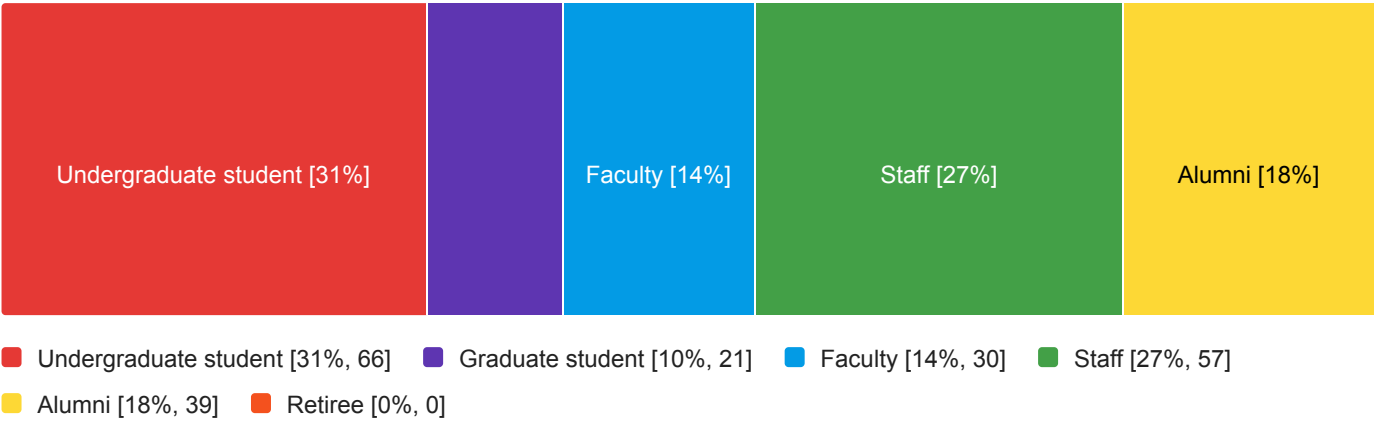
What would you identify as your principal University location?



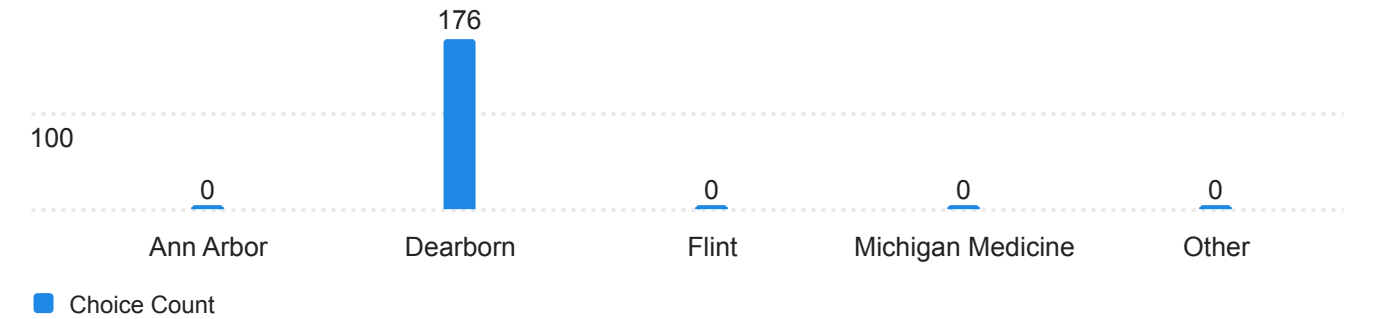
Dearborn

3

Which of the following best describes your current role(s) in relationship to the University of Michigan? (Select all that apply).

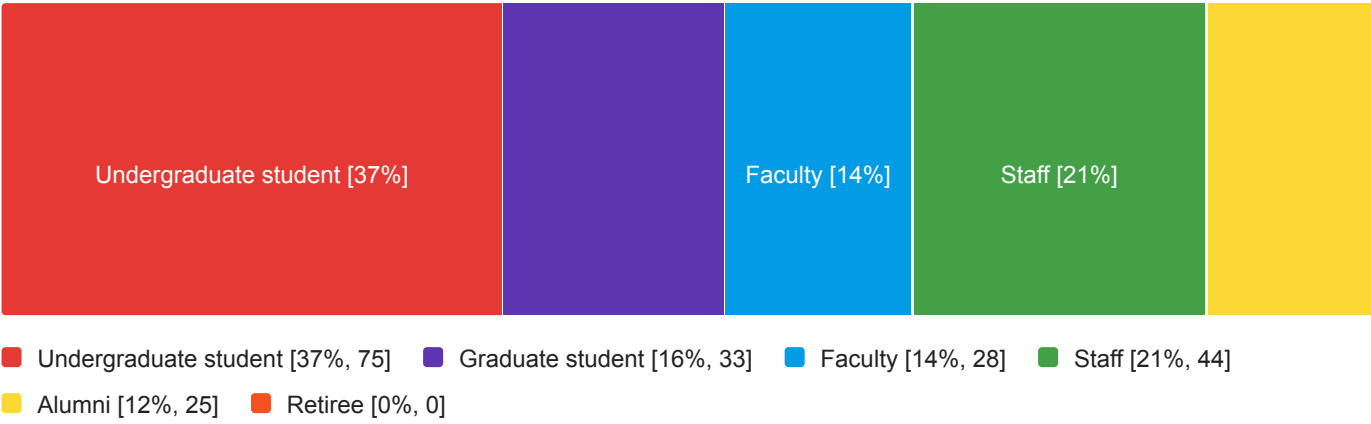


What would you identify as your principal University location?

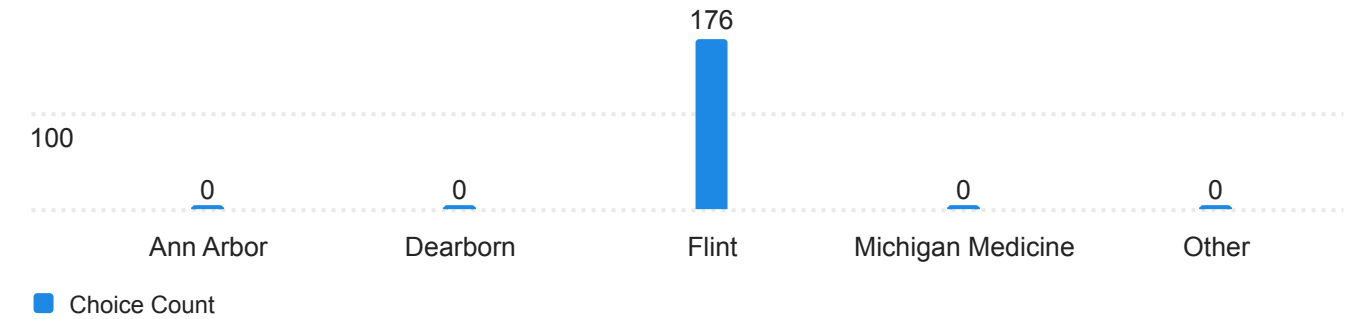


Flint

Which of the following best describes your current role(s) in relationship to the University of Michigan? (Select all that apply).

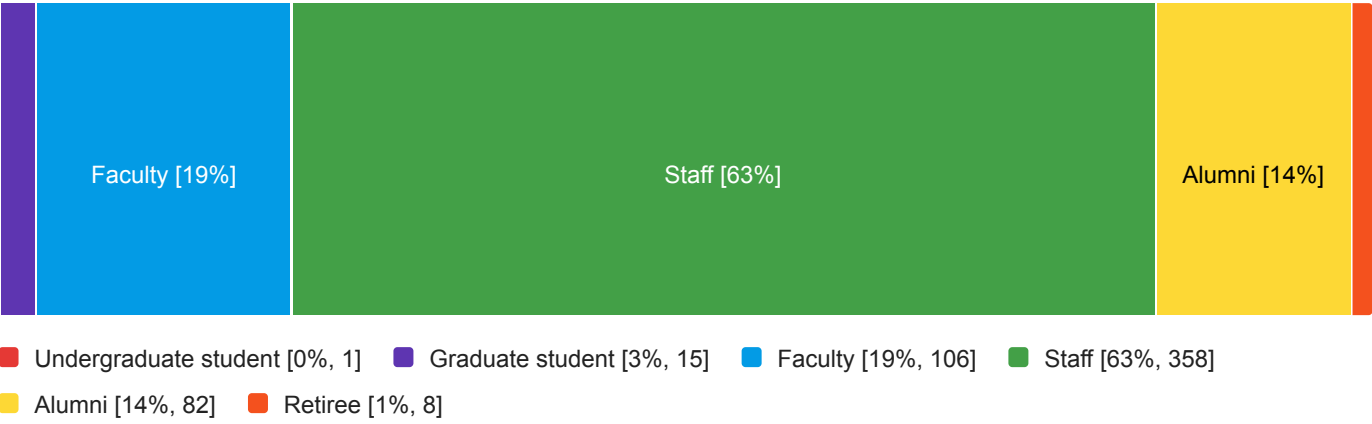


What would you identify as your principal University location?

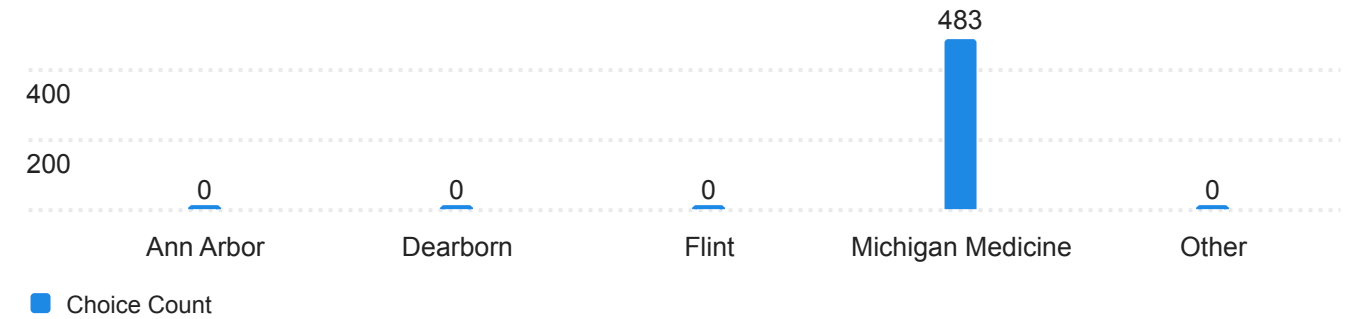


Michigan Medicine

Which of the following best describes your current role(s) in relationship to the University of Michigan? (Select all that apply).

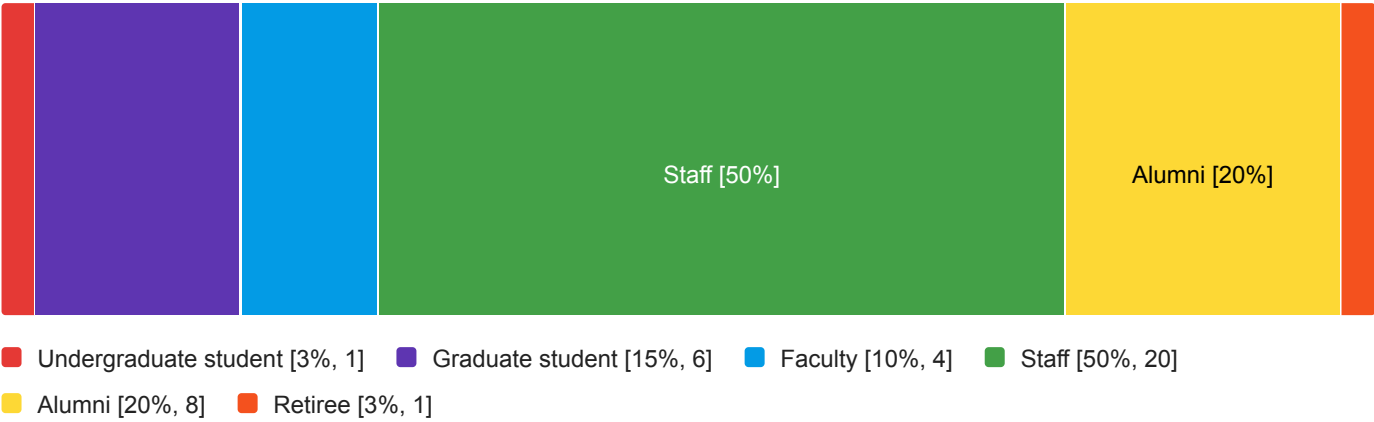


What would you identify as your principal University location?

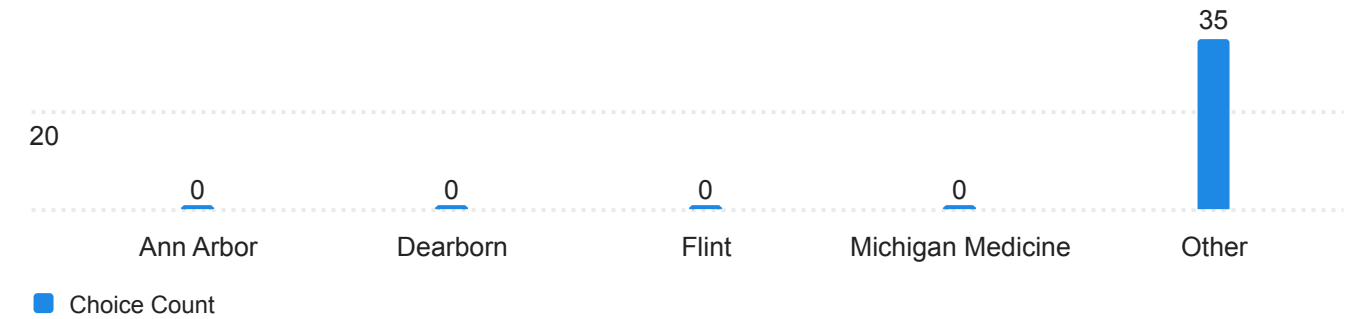


Other

Which of the following best describes your current role(s) in relationship to the University of Michigan? (Select all that apply).



What would you identify as your principal University location?



Appendix A, Exhibit 12: Text of the Request for Input

On January 16, 2024, the Regents of the University of Michigan adopted a set of principles on diversity of thought and freedom of expression (see [here](#)). The University established a committee of 44 faculty, staff, and students from all three campuses and Michigan Medicine to consider how well we, as a community, are living up to these principles and to make recommendations for improvement.

To help inform the work of the committee, we are requesting input from the entire University of Michigan community on three issues: the climate for (1) freedom of expression and (2) diversity of thought at the University of Michigan; and (3) whether the University should adopt a proposal to maintain “institutional neutrality” in its communications on social and political developments that do not directly implicate matters of University governance.

We have chosen to use open-ended questions to provide a full opportunity for you to share your experiences and unique point of view in the manner you think best.

Please note that we are not asking for personally identifying information and your responses will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. The following questions seek your input, and you are free to choose which questions you would like to answer.

We will hold open this call for input until June 30, 2024.

Sincerely,

[The Advisory Committee on the University of Michigan’s Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression](#)

0. Preamble: Demographics Questions

Which of the following best describes your **current** role(s) in relationship to the University of Michigan? (Select all that apply).

- Alumni
- Faculty
- Staff
- Student

What would you identify as your principal University location?

- Ann Arbor
- Dearborn
- Flint
- Michigan Medicine
- Other

1. **Freedom of expression** refers to the ability of community members to voice their views without inappropriate pressure or constraints, especially on matters of intellectual, moral, or political significance.

How would you describe the climate for freedom of expression at the University of Michigan?

Please tell us your stories about your personal experiences of the climate for free expression. As you respond, you might consider locations (e.g. classrooms, meetings, social spaces, performance spaces, online) and who welcomed or prevented expression (e.g. faculty, staff, students).

1a. If you are experiencing barriers to free expression, what are they? Do you see these barriers as targeting the subject matter of speech, particular viewpoints, the identity of the speaker, or something else? What do you see as their cause? Examples of barriers might be:

- Formal or informal policies issued by the University
- Instances in which you have been, or feared you would be, penalized for expressing your opinion (e.g., due to a power imbalance)
- Instances in which you were selectively ignored, interrupted, or otherwise prevented from being heard
- Informal pressure from faculty, students, other peers, or campus groups to conform, either in person or through social media

1b. Please tell us your stories of examples you’ve seen of a constructive climate for freedom of expression at the University of Michigan. Where and how have you seen free speech welcomed? Have your professors, supervisors, or peers instituted policies or practices that open up opportunities to speak? Please describe such observations, including, for example:

- Formal or informal policies issued by the University
- Instances in which you were supported, or expected to be supported, for expressing your opinion or others protected your right to do so
- Instances in which you were invited to express yourself or felt heard

- Informal support from faculty, students, other peers, or campus groups to express yourself, either in person or through social media (e.g., attentive listening, expressing appreciation for the contribution, responding to it constructively)

2. **Diversity of thought** refers to an environment where people encounter meaningfully different points of view about issues of intellectual, moral, or political significance.

How would you describe the climate for diversity of thought at the University of Michigan?

2a. If you see problems, where do you think diversity of thought might be lacking? Examples might be:

- in course offerings and course syllabi
- in the viewpoints expressed in campus talks and speaker series
- in the personal views expressed by faculty, students, or staff, either inside or outside the classroom
- in other forums associated with the university, such as faculty meetings, university offices, organizations, institutes, or clubs
- in social media and other campus communications
- in the types of viewpoints favored in recruiting or promoting graduate students, faculty, and staff

2b. Have you seen examples of a constructive climate for diversity of thought at the University of Michigan, and if so, where? Examples might be:

- You encountered people discussing things about which they or you disagree
- You were exposed to new ideas, art, or perspectives
- Instructors solicited opposing points of view in the classroom
- Students engaged constructively with diverse points of view in class discussion
- Unit leaders invited critical feedback on policies and practices in ways that protected respondents from adverse consequences (for example, anonymous surveys, focus groups led by outside facilitators with unit leaders not present)
- Members of the campus community expressed an appreciation for diversity of thought, particularly ideas different from their own

3. The University is considering a proposal to maintain “institutional neutrality” in its communications on social and political developments that do not directly implicate matters of university governance. This means that leaders would refrain from taking positions on behalf of the University about social or political issues and would comment on such issues only to the extent that these issues directly bear on University operations. Under this approach, individual

members of the University community would retain their existing rights to speak on their own behalf.

What is your position on institutional neutrality and why?

As you respond, you might consider the following:

- What leaders and which units should be covered by the proposal? University-level leaders such as the President and Provost, unit-level leaders such as deans of schools and chairs of departments, both university- and unit-level leaders, or neither? Should a unit, such as a department, be able to take a position on social and political issues on behalf of its members?
- Should institutional neutrality be maintained for all social and political issues or should there be exceptions?

4. What additional ideas do you have for how the University might support freedom of expression and diversity of thought, whether directly through its rules and policies, or indirectly through the campus climate it promotes?

Appendix A, Exhibit 13: Review of Campus Surveys

As part of the committee's work, we reviewed a number of surveys of campus climate for freedom of expression and diversity of thought conducted by other organizations. We provide links and brief highlights from these reports below.

Free Expression and Constructive Dialogue in the University Of North Carolina System
([Link](#))

- Faculty do not generally push a political agenda in class and treat broader political views inclusively
- Liberal views are overrepresented
- All students self-censor, but conservative students do it more
- Though both are feared, peers are feared more than faculty
- Students are seeking opportunities for constructive dialogue
- Relatively few students perceive themselves to become more liberal or more conservative during college

University of Wisconsin System Student Views on Freedom of Speech ([Link](#))

- 74% of very liberal students think professors encourage expiration of diverse viewpoints, but this decreases systematically across the political spectrum, with only 35% of very conservative students agreeing.
- 15% of very liberal students felt pressured to agree with a specific political or ideological view expressed in class, while 64% of very conservative students did
- 12% of very liberal students did not express their views because they worried the instructor would give them a lower grade, but 73% of very conservative students did
- 28% of very liberal did not believe that administrators should ban expressions of views they felt were harmful but 40% supported such bans. 79% of very conservative students felt such bans were inappropriate but 7% supported them.¹

Politics on the Quad Report: Students Report on Division and Disagreement at Five US Universities
([Link](#))

¹ This was muddled slightly when the question was asked in inverse: When asked if administrators should allow expressions of speech they found harmful, 68% felt such expression should not be or rare be allowed with 8% feeling they should be. For very conservative students 23% felt such expressions should not be or rarely be allowed and 54% felt they should.

Similar divides of varying strengths are reflected when students are asked whether instructors should stop a student from speaking if some students feel the student is expressing a view that caused harm.

- At Michigan, 45% of liberals agree unpopular opinions can be expressed freely on campus, but only 21% of conservatives agree. That gap is the largest among the five schools studied, and contrasts sharply with University of Florida, where 57% of conservatives agree unpopular opinions can be expressed freely on campus.
- It should, however, be noted that this is in part because at more liberal campuses, (Harvard and Brandeis), liberals and conservatives both hold the perception unpopular opinions cannot be freely expressed to a higher degree
- Remarkably, the perceived climate for unpopular opinions did not have an effect on students' likelihood to self-censor. Surprisingly, liberal were likely to self censor and conservative students very likely to self sensor regardless of the the campus climate
- 40% of students of color and White liberals at the University of Michigan (and Penn) report a climate of hostility towards students of color. (The lowest reported rate was Brandeis at ~25%.) Moderate and conservative students reported much lower levels of hostility to students of color (~10-20%)

Heterodox Academy Campus Expression Survey 2023 ([Link](#))

- 59% of students in 2022 reported being reluctant to discuss at least one of the five controversial topics the survey asked about
- The primary reported reason for why students self-censor on controversial topics in the classroom was fear of negative reactions or retribution from fellow students (chosen by 62% of students)
- Interestingly, Black or African American students were the least reluctant to discuss such topics in class
- Students who reported high levels of interaction with fellow students were less likely to self-censor in class.

FIRE Campus Freedom Survey - 2024 ([Link](#)) & Specific Results for University of Michigan (Ann Arbor campus only)

- 69% of Michigan students surveyed said they would be very or somewhat uncomfortable publicly disagreeing with a professor on a controversial topic. Just 30% said they would be somewhat or very comfortable.
- A majority of students (56%) report that self-censor during conversations with other students on campus occasionally, fairly often, or very often.

Appendix B: Additional Comments from the Survey

1a. *If you are experiencing barriers to free expression, what are they? Do you see these barriers as targeting the subject matter of speech, particular viewpoints, the identity of the speaker, or something else? What do you see as their cause?*

“The election last fall where, rather than letting the necessary discourse and argument take place amongst the student body, was completely shut down by the University. In that case, regardless of whatever stance one may have on the climate surrounding the Palestinian genocide, interfering with student affairs to that degree is unacceptable. To me, that demonstrates the University’s commitment to maintaining regular institutional practices, and silencing any manner of free speech from either side.”

“No DEI initiative is subject to critical examination. Efficacy cannot be questioned. No downsides or unintended consequences can be imagined. The framing discourage any discussion of these issues. There are some unambiguous examples of public shaming and of punishment for suspected non adherence to dogma. There is widespread perception that even suspicion of being unsupportive of DEI will be penalized. This gives clear fear of speaking out in department meetings. The department chair shows willingness to punish.”

“I am frequently formally and informally pressured to agree to statements with which I do not agree particularly as it pertains to moral and political views. It is “assumed” that everyone agrees with the political leanings of the University, which tends to skew left. If we expressed our disagreement, we would be prevented from holding certain positions, and possibly even fired. I have frequently been in meetings with those over me who express positions that I do not hold and ask me, “Right?” or “Don’t you agree?” or similar things. I know if I disagree, it could have negative consequences because of the nature of the question, so I remain noncommittal. When I was a student, there was extreme pressure from multiple faculty to agree with far left-leaning perspectives that I did not hold.”

“At its best, DEI initiatives at U-M are designed to boost opportunities for success for all. Sometimes, though, I feel some pressure in the classroom to only represent one perspective on issues. My students are far more liberal than I am and also less tolerant of multiple perspectives (DEI and beyond).”

“Unfortunately, over the past several years a culture of competitive grievance has been allowed to thrive at the University, with each iteration of identity oriented groups becoming more extreme in their claims of marginalization, intersectionality and disenfranchisement. Moderate political expressions of almost all types are actively discouraged and too frequently punished. Any position that does not actively embrace the “anti-racist” orthodoxy of actively “disrupting whiteness” is responded to as if it were right wing hate speech. This silences moderates and empowers extremists on both sides of virtually every issue.”

“The University has adopted measures to limit freedom of expression of the student body. Particularly egregious examples include the unprecedented cancellation of student body voting on resolutions AR 13-025 and AR 13-026, as well as the recent violent destruction of the encampment on the Diag.”

“I have observed a situation where staff feel strongly pressured to not raise concerns about unreasonable faculty supervisors. The power imbalance is obvious (relatively newly hired staff in “soft money” positions, reporting to a very senior full professor who appears to have little regard for working hours, among other things).”

“My colleagues and I appealed to our department for acknowledgment and condemnation of the Israeli government’s actions, specifically the destruction and genocide inflicted upon Palestinians in Gaza. We . . . reached an agreement, which unfortunately was later reneged upon. Previously, we utilized the departmental listserv to raise awareness about the humanitarian crisis instigated by the Israeli military. However, [an administrator] criticized our email as inappropriate use of the listserv, disregarding our concerns expressed during the meeting. This institution consistently stifles student voices addressing humanitarian issues related to Israel, evident even within departmental spheres. Moreover, the recent police raid on a peaceful campus protest further exemplifies this suppression.”

“The climate of free expression here at the University is strained and imbalanced. members of the University community fear retaliation for expressing opinions that differ from the University leadership in any way. some points of view are protected because they are the same as those in power here at the University while the others are faced with the very real threat of retaliation for expressing an opinion that is critical of the University or differs from the opinions of University leaders. students are getting banned from large parts of campus, being violently forced off of campus for peacefully protesting, and they are being doxxed. I am deeply saddened by the state of the University. protesting and civil disobedience are key parts of a democracy and those rights should be preserved and encouraged at academic institutions like ours.”

“The University’s proposed protest/disruption policies were extremely alarming; it seemed like the only purpose was to intimidate students from their right to protest.”

“I wouldn’t say I felt personally discouraged by the University to speak my mind. My overall impression about the University of Michigan as a student, is that while there is certainly an identifiable ideological aspect to every class, we are encouraged to share our opinions and have a constructive dialogue, regardless of what it may be about.”

“There is a strong barrier to express criticism of policies related to DEI, antiracism, etc. Such criticisms are often branded as intolerant or racist, and brushed off. Substantial progress on these issues require robust engagement and discussion.

One of my colleagues was attacked on social media (and elsewhere) by graduate students who found her not to be sufficiently supportive in an encounter. In my opinion, this colleague would normally be considered progressive and an “ally”. The incident was very disturbing.”

“The principles of DEI are understandable and acceptable. However the ‘execution’ of those principles seem to ‘miss’. Conservative and/or Christian Conservative beliefs become intolerable for the same people applauding DEI principles. The expressions of conservative beliefs are normally met with intolerance and/or fear of being labelled as ‘rebellious...ignorant...not following expected Univ norms.’ The ONLY reason I am comfortable saying this, because I am retired . . . Often employees w Conservative or even ‘Republican’ points of view, ‘hide’ or simply give ‘lip service’ to the points of view being offered by DEI advocates. HOWEVER, it is interesting to discover there are many many many more employees (conservative) hiding than thought. DEI is a solid steadfast principle ... espoused by conservatives as well... but not experienced by conservatives. No one should feel their chance for promotion is stuck on the DEI Scale.”



“The proposed Disruptive Activities Policy, where the University expresses support for free speech, provided it doesn’t interfere with nor disrupt others - it was extremely vague and left loads of room for administrative interpretation about what activities could be considered disruptive, by whom, when, and how it would be enforced.”

“I found it appalling that my freedom of having a commencement and honors event disrupted by leftist protestors unacceptable. School policy should have had them immediately removed as my enjoyment and expression of honoring my students was disrupted.”

“With my 15 years as a member of the community, the climate for freedom of expression is at an all-time low. This expands all the way from overall political ideology to even just minor day-to-day exchanges with coworkers. You are only free to express yourself if it fits the accepted narrative.

I do not share any personal opinions or pieces of my identity at the University despite being always encouraged to be my “authentic self.” I have seen students, coworkers, and guests who have been ostracized for saying anything that ruffles the feathers of the student body. Guests are uninvited from campus (literally removing their expression), students are bullied to the point that they transfer (I personally know 8 students who have done this), and staff are treated in such a way that they become seen as a “problem” at work.

In work meetings, there is always a pressure to conform - again, not just political opinions, but to whatever the desired outcome is that hurts the least amount of people’s feelings. Departments have become nonfunctioning in an environment where no one can call out poor performance.”

“There are many stated policies for respectful conversations in syllabi, but what that actually means is that some professors can coerce certain opinions from being said, since there is a broad interpretation of the meaning of respect. There are also professors that make blanket and sweeping statements of opinions, trying to disguise them as facts (sometimes those statements are straight up false, e.g. one instance when an Arab-American Studies professor blatantly said that the US is not a democracy with nothing to back up their statement). Those who are very obviously opinionated also make it very uncomfortable for students to speak up (e.g. how can I feel comfortable responding after such a statement?). Student organizations also always insinuate bias, which makes students very uncomfortable in expressing different opinions (e.g. SCPP openly complained about the Ford School administration

ignoring the voices of a very vocal political cause, despite the University already making many statements on the cause, to a group of prospective students). The competitive culture in the University is manifested in competition to conform with those who are the loudest, and those who do not hold the correct views often find themselves isolated. I believe there is a genuine culture of fear perpetrated to and by the student body due to the loudness of certain opinions. It also exudes an arrogant and entitled attitude one holds for possessing the correct views. This is manifested in how student organizations (or even University and school admissions) decide who to include, leading to an opposite effect of exclusion, contrary to the aims of DEI that everybody likes to champion.

I think the University culture is too deeply rooted in fear because of some overemphasized voices, and the fear contributes to many negative aspects of the culture of U-M.”

“In recent years, freedom of expression in the UofM became severely restricted, following the overall trend in the US academia. I am, and have always been, a moderate liberal. Thirty years ago, this was an academic mainstream. However, in recent years, far-left views became a dogma, which you challenge at your own peril. As a tenured professor approaching retirement, I personally do not care much, but for a young colleague with opinions like mine this situation is really bad. At a condition of getting a job, one must write a “DEI statement”. What do you do if you are not a fan of the whole DEI thing, being an old-fashioned “color-blind” person who does not care about ethnic origins, sexual orientations, etc. of peers and students? It became generally acceptable to chant “from the River to the Sea...” (= destroy Israel) on campus. Absurd statements like “sex is only a social construct” became an orthodoxy. One can easily be branded a racist for thinking that there are substantial differences between a wide variety of traits of different human populations, although the lack of such differences after 100 000 or more years of independent evolution would be a miracle. In good old days, to be a non-racist (non-sexist, etc.) it was enough to attribute the same dignity and rights to every person regardless of geographical origin, karyotype, etc. but now you cannot say this, because you would be accused of unconscious bigotry.”

“In an interview I was requested to express my support for DEI. While I support diversity, I do not support much of the political baggage “DEI” comes with and the violations of procedural fairness it has become notoriously associated with. It seems to be a litmus test for a political affiliation which I do not feel my job prospects

at a public institution should depend on. My office also displays other symbols and slogans that are not politically neutral and reinforces a message that one political view is acceptable.”

“I attended a Ross DEI presentation where my race, sexual orientation, and gender were simultaneously used as examples of classes of people whose achievements were not as important as those of other groups. I also was told that my political views on abortion and free speech were harmful.

In a separate incident, my religion was used as an example of a group that is not diverse enough, and that because of my affiliation I was made to feel like I owed something to society.

I thought the University’s official communications directly after the Dobbs and the Students for Fair Admissions v Harvard decisions were inappropriate. Stating that the University welcomes speech and thought from all sides when these contentious issues were decided by the Supreme Court would have been appropriate. It would have been fair to characterize those decisions as controversial and invited dialogue and use of University resources to help the University community come to terms with what happened. However, announcing uniform disappointment with conservative outcomes felt inconsistent for an institution that seeks truth from all sources. Furthermore, I think such (mandatory and University-wide) communications reinforces the dangerous and misguided sentiment that the governing bodies are illegitimate when we disagree with its decisions.”

“I am afraid of making an honest mistake and having it turn into a witch hunt. I admit to my mistakes and if I am not aware of them, I am more than willing to learn from them in a constructive and civil manner. But the climate here lately makes it so that you can’t mess up. I worry about what will show up on my teaching evaluations, because these hold too much power. Expect a lot from your students, in terms of work (but you are fair and clear with your policies) and responsibility? That will likely show up negatively on your evaluations. I ignore Rate My Professor but it equates harassment in my opinion. I would never do that to my students, so why are they allowed to do that to faculty?”

“Staff don’t seem to have equal free speech protections as others within the University.”

“I feel like I cannot express my thoughts due to the radical nature of expression taking place on campus. I feel threatened by the extremists who are encamping on the diag, making me feel unsafe and unvalued if I’m not

rioting in the streets, and I feel incredibly pressured by the students on campus, on social media, and even via email, who are demanding everything from the police being dismantled (and now even the US military) and that the students need to do more to stop the regents. The emails the student government are sending is trauma-inducing and extremist in nature. I even heard some of the ‘campers’ are looking up police addresses. How can I feel safe on a campus if this kind of behavior is happening? This pressure to protest and do harm to others is getting to be outrageous. I come from a long line of police, military, and fire... people who have given their lives to defend others, and it is horrific and traumatizing to me to see, and hear about, people fighting the police on campus. This cannot continue. People have a right to remain quiet on issues and to protect their own peace. How dare ANY student on that campus demand others convict and criminalize entire nations when 1) the vocally active members have no idea what that other student is going through in their lives that requires them to remain quiet for their own sanity and health and 2) they are not willing to criminalize entire nations. The people in those countries, regardless of what side one takes, are just trying to survive and do their best. We are all humans and, yes, we should all stand up for things that are unjust, but who gets to decide who’s right and who’s wrong? And when does peaceful protest get to turn into fighting the police and criminalizing people who are just trying to keep others safe? U of M students are out of control. This is just outrageous to me.”

“I did not sign public protest letters, because I was concerned about possible consequences. I decided to keep quiet.”

“The policies instituted by the University and its administration constantly aim to limit freedom of expression related to particular topics, which I will refrain from mentioning here for fear that my opinions will be filtered out by keyword. Given these formal policies, I fear expressing my opinions in this climate of top-down governing by the University.”

“When the current war started, I and many others more or less refused to mention the issue within an academic capacity. I am a [scholar] specializing in this conflict. I’m not saying my point of view is right, but I can guarantee you that the academy is an intellectually poorer place because of people like me who are disengaging from academic involvement in the matter because we see people getting intimidated or doxxed.”

“The people had a right to encampment.”

“The barriers to free expression that I encounter within the University setting primarily arise from a misalignment between the institution’s prevailing views and my own deeply held personal beliefs. As someone who adheres to Christian principles, I often find that my perspectives are marginalized and met with resistance. It appears that the freedom to express oneself openly and authentically is predominantly afforded to those espousing liberal ideologies, while viewpoints like mine are met with skepticism or even suppression. This disparity not only inhibits the richness of dialogue and diversity of thought within the academic community but also undermines the fundamental principle of free expression upon which the academic institution should ideally thrive.”

“I have no confidence that responding to this will improve anything.”

“The University’s response to the encampment demonstrate a disregard for freedom of speech and assembly. It appears the University is willing to send police after their own students at the request of donors. A true neoliberal University, the concern for academic freedom is merely a facade. The only demonstrable interest the University of Michigan has shown is the accumulation of money. Maybe also the athletic program...”

“For me, the recent conflict between Israel (and its backers) and Palestinian communities (and their backers) is pretty instructive and there have been pressures from both sides to publicly adopt positions that ignore the nuances and roots of the ongoing armed conflict. My department, for example, was asked by students and alumni to adopt what I would describe as a brash public position calling for University divestment from Israel, a ceasefire, and a broad condemnation of Jewish “settler colonialism.” There are clearly voices on the other side pushing for protesters to be treated as pro-Hamas, terrorist sympathizers, and antisemites. My discomfort is not that these pressures are on me personally, but that organizations to which I belong are being pressured to adopt positions that are indicative of blanket support for one political position or the other, which imply that I should support positions that I don’t necessarily. The Faculty Senate in January, for example, adopted a toothless resolution to support divestment from Israeli companies complicit in the military actions in Gaza. This implies that I, as a faculty member should support this position and reduces my level of comfort with taking positions to the contrary. (For the record, I don’t disagree, but I don’t want the Faculty senate, my department, the University, or anyone else taking positions for me). These kinds of organizational position-

taking exercises (and the pressure for them to be taken - whether from Congress or the student body) is where a lot of informal barriers to particular positions are coming from in my opinion.”

“Fortunately, I have not faced very many barriers to free expression. Most of the barriers I face are informal pressures from professors and peers to remain quiet on my beliefs because they differ from the majority, and I don’t want to be accused of being hateful because someone misunderstands what I believe. I think a lot of this tension comes from the terrible way the media on both sides paints those they disagree with.”

“I am a Jewish anti-zionist and I have refrained from activism since October 7th *specificially* for fear of University reprisal.”

“I feel that the University’s proposed policy on disruptions was a barrier to free expression, as it was proposed in direct opposition to protesting that was happening at the time. The policy felt very oppressive to students mostly, but as a staff member, I felt that I would not be able to keep my job and stand up for what I believed in. I did not take part in protests or support protestors on social media because I feared for my job. These fears did not come from my supervisor or my department, but from the policy and the University.”

“I have experienced fear that I would be penalized for expressing my opinion. While I have not feared the University would penalize me directly, I have feared that a student, professor, or administrator would penalize me for self-expression. There is also informal pressure from certain faculty, students, administration, and organized labor groups to suppress dissenting voices. I think a cause of this tension is the intrusion of political polarization into areas of life where it doesn’t belong. Social media further creates a power imbalance since the slightest disagreement can balloon without warning into battle with strangers across the globe. Power has shifted towards the pearl clutchers and the easily offended of all walks of life. The “Doxxing” phenomenon is a barrier to all speech, but especially surrounding popular topics about which a chronically online mob can be summoned.”

“There is a certain amount of conformity expected surrounding issues of moral relevance, especially around the use of pronouns, gender expression, abortion, and sexuality. These are things that many Americans have differing viewpoints on, but there is not room for that conversation at U-M. Those that disagree must remain silent so they are not tagged as closed-minded, bigots or religious zealots.”



“In most cases, I do feel as I don’t have a say or I would be penalized for having an opinion. There is an immense pressure for ideas or opinions to lean into one political side and I find it very hard to even have the courage to express my opinions in class. I find it very plausible that if I do speak out on a certain issue in a class setting or online, that I would get some blowback.”

“The biggest barrier to free expression is self censorship from students who think there will be repercussions. These are usually students with conservative viewpoints afraid of being labeled in negative ways. There is also a problem of self censorship by faculty in the classroom because of concerns that if they make a mistake (e.g., get someone’s pronouns wrong) or voice an unpopular opinion, they can be reported by students and sanctioned by the University.”

“To me, the biggest change I’ve noticed over the past several years is a shifting of norms and informal pressures to conform, especially around political issues. It’s unfortunate, but in the classroom, I have increasingly tried to steer clear of issues that are politically controversial because the discussions are increasingly unproductive.”

“I am terrified to express myself on campus. You have broken my trust and it will be difficult for you to regain it.”

“I’m concerned about the compulsory (in some depts/ colleges) or expected (e.g., by students in large lecture courses) recording of all classroom lecture/discussion. It is not clear how long these recordings are retained, who has access to these recordings and the criteria under which such recordings can be viewed by staff and administrators. The fact that the recordings exist are a potential threat to academic freedom of faculty and free speech of students who participate in the discussions.”

“You literally sent police to pepper spray your own students and faculty for being encamped on the Diag.

In this moment, you are somewhere between George Wallace and Bull Connor.

You implemented a Regents policy that limits the number of community comments and restricts the number of speakers on a particular issue. This led to me not being able to share my experiences trying to be a father . . . trying to navigate cost of living and educating kids in Ann Arbor.

I have been told that the department email list is basically only available to celebrate publications and to mourn the deaths of former colleagues, even though I am grateful to those who share information about issues affecting members of the University community and many people have expressed gratitude to me when I have done likewise.

You made very clear that speaking at all about Palestinians is not allowed, given the number of people who had to have meetings after being reported-on. I was one of those people . . . So you are not being equal in your policing of expression (though, let’s be clear, you are definitely policing expression).”

“There seems to be a lack of acceptance towards conservative viewpoints amongst many students at the University, to the point where dialogue is oftentimes shut down. However, in the classroom, I feel as though my professors and other instructors made a concerted effort to address all viewpoints.”

“I have some difficult individual faculty colleagues who set a department culture where there is not much dialogue, and even little action. The Dean is aware of these issues but no action is ever taken.”

“When speaking about current issues, it’s clear where the University lies in its opinion. Therefore, this past year, it is difficult for students to react in regular ways via protest. Because the University has clear bias in its viewpoint, students speaking towards a different perspective have feared not only for ramifications in their educational standing, but also in their personal lives. Speaking out in a way that differs from the University’s opinion

causes students to be fearful of both law enforcement that the University provides for their “safety” and fellow students who victimize themselves in the situation. The University’s continued harsh attitude toward protesters reinforces student divides and provides little avenue for students to express themselves.”

“I consider myself progressive but compared to my perception of the majority of students, I feel practically conservative. Since younger people drive the zeitgeist -- and many of my fellow staff are strong advocates for students -- I feel informal pressure to conform by keeping my opinions to myself and paying lip service to things I don’t necessarily believe strongly in. As a staff member who is supposed to be out of the fray, I feel nervous about trying not to get painted as out of touch or “unsupportive” of students.”

“As an international student, I have self-censored out of fear that the professors or some of my fellow classmates simply won’t even entertain my points of view, which significantly differ from their U.S.-centric perspectives on many social, policy, and ethical issues. Therefore, professors and students should do more to express openness to different points of view, particularly those of international students, who can always provide new perspectives to important issues.”

“I have been involved with the University the past 23 consecutive years, and have never once felt unable to freely express my thoughts or opinions if I desired to do so. I have often been aware of others expressing themselves respectfully without incident.”

“I don’t personally feel barriers to free expression. However, I am a liberal surrounded by liberals, so I don’t hesitate to share my opinions. If I were conservative, I might feel intimidated.”

“My classes have been disrupted by protests on campus and students at the encampment purposely made it difficult for me to get to the library. I respect the right for students to protest but not when it is done in a disruptive way that affects my education and makes me feel unsafe walking through the diag.”

“I would be very afraid to question any University D.E.I. policy or publicly say anything negative about the GEO for fear of social consequences or being labeled a bad person by faculty and graduate students. In general, I don’t think the University of Michigan is friendly place for a conservative or even someone who believes in personal responsibility. And that’s true even though, I think most of the faculty do believe in personal responsibility; there’s just an imbalance in terms of who speaks the loudest.

And it seems the faculty lives in fear of getting yelled at by the graduate students.”

“a) As a faculty member speaking about vitally important but potentially controversial topics (specifically race, religion, sexuality) I am aware that there are organized groups that delight in taping classroom presentations looking for a “gotcha” moment. I talk about these topics anyway, in part because they are important, in part because I am in a privileged position (tenured full professor, cis, white, male) but I suspect that others in more vulnerable positions might not talk about potentially controversial topics, to the detriment of our students’ education.”

“I believe while there is no barriers to free expression, it must come with a sense of responsibility. In today’s world, students are heavily influenced by social media and are eager to engage in activism. However, this enthusiasm needs to be channeled correctly.

It’s important to ensure that activism does not disrupt the University’s plans, study schedules, or ceremonies, nor should it force others to participate or witness it against their will. Universities should remain places of learning and respect, where all students feel safe and valued.

There are many ways and avenues for students to express their views and engage in activism (University campus definitely is not) without causing disruptions or making others (students, staff, faculty, and leaders) feel threatened, disrespected, or humiliated. Campus activism should be conducted in a manner that respects the diverse perspectives and needs of all students.

Thank you for considering my thoughts on this matter.”

“I consider the University’s decision to cancel a CSG vote on resolutions AR 13-025 and AR 13-026 a significant suppression of free speech. The reasoning for doing so was dubious, and cancelling an entire vote on the basis of one improperly sent email feels disproportionate and targeted, and gives off the impression that University administration will cancel any votes they personally do not like. The email sent out by University administration brought up the content of the resolutions, heavily implying that the decision to suppress these votes was not content neutral, but a deliberate silencing of speech relating to the current war in Gaza. This feels convenient for the University, as a strong showing for the pro-divestment side might pressure administration to take action. Suppression of votes like this makes me feel as if the University will limit the visibility of and legitimacy of any speech that calls into question University policies and administration, which I find incredibly troubling. It also makes me feel like in the future, I cannot trust more official channels like CSG to make my voice heard

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“As a . . . faculty member here at Michigan Medicine, I am afraid to even say what ethnicity I am while at work in fear of penalization, scrutiny, and/or hate speech. It’s incredibly disheartening to be part of a community that says they celebrate diversity and allows free speech, but their actions clearly demonstrate otherwise. Removing posters expressing support for Palestinians from graduate students’ office windows, suppressing freedom of thought, arresting student activists, and pressing the Washtenaw County Prosecutor to prosecute some 40 student activists, demonstrates how the University of Michigan constructs barriers to freedom of expression.”

“How wonderful it would be if we could cultivate an environment where the best ideas win out through rational, rigorous debate within the bounds of respectful, civil discourse. Is it possible to create public forums where people can come from different angles on a given issue to detail their respective argument for or against a position? This would take time, patience, and understanding - all severely lacking in our social media age of instant gratification and diminished attention spans.”

“The University of Michigan continues to practice what is likely an illegal form of compelled speech. Forcing faculty to issue statements on issues that implicate one’s personal morality (as DEI statements do) is wrong, and these are clearly being used as an ideological litmus test. I was forced to do this to keep my job and I considered it humiliating and unethical.”

“Students with strong views bully other students, faculty, and administrators to hew to their perspectives. The corporatization of the University leads to treating the students as customers and falls in line with a narrow set of beliefs leading to an orthodoxy of thought, instead of a diversity of perspectives that is fundamental to the purpose of the University, which is to seek truth.”

“I do not experience or witness barriers to free expression. In my unit, in fact, I see more free expression than sometimes feels appropriate for a workplace. Faculty, staff, and students seem to feel free to use bulletin boards and workplace email listservs to freely communicate their strongly held convictions. For those who may not share the same convictions or beliefs, it can be overwhelming to be surrounded by strong messaging, and be receiving non-work-related emails. On balance, I think that’s the price to pay to work at an institution so devoted to freedom of expression and belief. But all that to say, it does not appear the University is formally or informally putting up barriers to expression.”

“If I were honest about my political beliefs that are relevant to DEI, I don’t think I could get hired if I were applying to a junior UM job today, because I am in favor of treating students without regard to race or gender in most educational contexts. This makes me concerned that my opinions will be seen as contrary to the University’s mission by colleagues and administrators. I am also aware that the graduate students in my department would not be pleased with my opinions, so I am very selective about what I say around them, since I don’t want my graduate courses to be canceled for low attendance.”

“I feel that Michigan Medicine is pushing transgenderism and gender ideology on its staff. We should not be forced to adhere to this ideology.”

“The University should offer a secure (fenced) dedicated space for protesting that allows others to avoid the area of they choose. Activities or signage that promote violence should be banned. Only students, faculty, staff with valid Mcard should be allowed in the protest area.”

“Faculty should have the right to teach and express class materials openly and freely without fear of a grievance, complaint, or firing.”

“The University of Michigan is an ideological monoculture. Messaging from official UM channels (e.g. the Record) is narrow and highly politicized. Students are rewarded for parroting the dominant narrative, and critical thinking is actively suppressed. Many faculty aggressively police student speech and

encourage students to self-censor and shut down discussions that challenge the “elite consensus”. Open discussion about many important issues is impossible.”

“Silence has become a more comfortable position for conservatives.”

“You will not get accurate feedback on these surveys unless you guarantee anonymity and make it clear that you are not collecting email or personal information on survey respondents. If you want a true measure of what people think, you need to make them feel safe. Those feel marginalized are afraid to speak otherwise. I will answer surveys that guarantee anonymity.”

“There is freedom to express opinions here on instances as long as they align with social norms that are publicized. There is informal pressure to fall into alignment on policies, opinion law, and elections. For example, I do not believe in abortion, and I am afraid to express this opinion here as I am confident people would retaliate against me (verbally). This makes me feel isolated and alone. I do not judge or nor would I refuse to care for someone who had an abortion, nor would I ever share my opinions with them, as they are personal and morally and ethically define who I am, therefore, why should someone chastise me for this? Its not hurting them. While I understand that the University is choosing to continue reproductive care and thats within their jurisdiction as a health care entity, bringing additional light to it via emails allows staff the opportunity to think its okay to talk about and therefore not inclusive.”

“Email “storms” are also pernicious. a loud group of people dominate and no one else wants or dares to get involved. This leads to cynicism and disengagement. Department chairs should be trained in how to prevent and, if necessary, stop email storms. Serious discussions cannot be conducted over email.”

“The climate for freedom of expression is heavily supported by the University, if you are a student or professor. As a staff member, I know I am not allow to speak my mind, or even speak up or there will be serious consequences. We are to keep our mouths shut on matters political or other at all times even in the face of protestors who are spitting in our faces and getting physical with us, we are not allowed to say anything back.”

“It is terrible. Professors face serious risk of investigation and cancellation for saying anything that might make a student even the slightest bit uncomfortable, where uncomfortable includes having a different point of view.”

“As a faculty member from a minoritized background who teaches on issues of race and culture, it is my job to challenge students in their often reductive thinking on matters of ethnicity, race, and racism (from both sides--there are overly-simplistic versions of “the US is entirely racist!” as well as “there’s no such thing as racism in society!”). Students push back on this because I am asking them to grow.

Minoritized faculty members, especially those tasked with teaching that we consider so important that we have an entire requirement for it, need the assurance that our administrators will similarly press back on students who feel challenged in their thinking, as challenging thinking is exactly what we’re here to do.”

“Yes, there are certainly barriers to free expression for fear of retaliation and an inability to advance in leadership positions. I have been involved in DEI training exercises, where members of the DEI executive leadership team have boldly stated, “Leaders who cannot align with such initiatives do not belong in leadership roles.” These types of statements directly go against the Board of Regents Statement “as a great public University ... we enthusiastically embrace our responsibility to stimulate and support diverse ideas and model constructive engagement with different viewpoints.” I understand my responsibility as a leader to promote professionalism, fairness, and equitability for patients and staff alike, however, not all organizational initiatives align with my values and morals. Should my personal viewpoints and values be discredited because they differ? Does the organization prioritize “diversity” or only when it benefits their agenda. As a result, I did not feel safe to speak up and share experiences with DEI leadership members.”

“Due to the extremely strong anti-Israel sentiment on campus, I find it prudent for me to avoid talking about my heritage as an Israeli.”

“As a . . . member of the Event Management Team, I have never experienced a barrier to being able to freely express my ideas. I have always believed, though, that as a proud member of the University of Michigan community, that what I say and what I do while on campus or while representing the University of Michigan needs to be an appropriate representation of the University and myself. Being a part of Michigan is bigger than just me. When you are representing the Block M, you act like it. Respectfully. Responsibly.”

“I wish I could say that freedom of expression thrives on campus. But it doesn’t. In particular, self-censoring occurs all the time. I know I do it. And I know, specifically, that students do it -- a lot -- as they have told

me this. Yes, there is a general commitment to freedom of expression. But it exists only to the extent that that one’s views are consistent with the prevailing consensus on campus, some of which stems directly from University policies, such as DEI. I should add that I am a liberal; that I support the goals of diversity, equity and inclusion; and that in my job I believe I am more proactive than most faculty in supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. But I cannot imagine speaking out against anything related to DEI that I disagree with, such as that job applicants should not be required to submit statements that say all the right things about DEI. And again, this is coming from a liberal supporter of DEI. I cannot imagine being a conservative student on campus.”

“Draconian penalties levied against student protestors have a chilling effect on a climate of free expression on campus, as do surveillance cameras placed on the diag and especially inside the Hatcher Library. Police presence on the Hatcher Library steps, requests to remove tables during a work-from-the-diag event are all indications that the University will not permit any speech that threaten relationships with donors. All of these actions make our campus less welcoming to the broader community and undermine the integrity of UM as a place of learning and inquiry.”

“The requirement for DEI statements for promotion and tenure is compelled speech. It is unconstitutional. MIT recently dropped these tests of loyalty to approved institutional viewpoints. We have a history of the DMN annual lecture in response to the House Un-American Activities Committee in the 1950s, where compelled speech focused on a different set of call-letters: loyalty to the “USA”.

These statements read very much like a confessional that may be required by a religious seminary, i.e. tell how your faith in xyz is expressed in your daily activities. However, instead of a religion, it’s UM teachings of preferred thought.

This is wrong, and UM should do as MIT and stop it.”

“I have seen graduate students be pressured by the GEO leadership to espouse and promote specific viewpoints and make it hard for those with other political/social opinions participate in the union (even though it governs their contract).”

“Even though we say and promote that we welcome feedback and freedom of expression, there’s still a strong sense of fear in this organization. Employees are concerned about the safety of their job or well-being if they speak up and our lived hierarchy presents barriers.

We don’t have balance throughout the institution. Even the formation of this Freedom of Expression Committee is imbalanced.”

“Given the outstanding quality of much of the education and research and public service of the University of Michigan, it is difficult, and at some level seems unfair, for me to be as critical as I am of the University on this topic. However, here is my honest opinion. I believe that the main barrier to free expression in the areas of political, moral, or social significance is simply the overwhelming progressive orientation of the entire institution and statements by its leaders supporting this orientation as the only defensible one. I express my more conservative or traditional opinions in private emails, but not more publicly, since this seems unwelcome. Progressive political statements have been made over mass emails by leadership at various levels decrying systemic racism alleged to be rampant at the University, open support for the pro-choice position on abortion by the University President, institution of a pronoun policy impacting faculty speech rights without asking for broad input or debate, and other progressive positions. No statements decrying the de-platforming or firing of conservative faculty from other universities are ever issued by our administration, even though such incidents have become common. When police are uniformly and unfairly maligned by students and faculty with no expression of appreciation for the professionalism of most of them, or courses and lectures on “toxic masculinity,” eliminating “whiteness” and so on are offered, one senses that complaining about this would be futile and possibly dangerous. A conservative who thinks required DEI statements from faculty candidates is unwise could not feel free to defend this in his or her faculty application; it would be an invitation to rejection. The Davis, Markert, Nickerson Lecture on Academic and Intellectual Freedom is invariably given by a progressive. This seems to contradict the spirit of the award, which celebrates individuals (Davis, et al.) who around 1950 opposed the then-orthodox anti-communist position of the University. Today, a thoughtful conservative, or at least a non-progressive, might be the most appropriate recipient of such an award, since it would take courage to be an open conservative at the University of Michigan. But it seems that it is inconceivable to most University of Michigan leaders that there could be such a thing as a thoughtful or moral conservative. It seems that only progressives can be awarded for supporting “academic freedom,” while conservatives do not deserve such freedom. I have made suggestions to DEI office, Deans, and others, that, in addition to the views progressive thinkers such as Kendi, Hannah-Jones, and others, the views of moderate and thoughtful black thought leaders such as Glenn Loury, John McWhorter or Bob Woodson might be given a



hearing. These suggestions are ignored, and seemingly are unwelcome.

In sum, I have found that the most interesting debates and discussions on important issues such as climate change, race, sexuality and gender, abortion, censorship, the true condition of our universities, and many other hot-button topics are best, and most honestly, carried out on-line and outside of the purview of the University. I learn more in a month or two about these topics from Bari Weiss’ Free Press, and from Glenn Loury’s podcast than I could ever learn at the University of Michigan. The University of Michigan is a great place to learn science, computing, languages, and other specialties, but is simply not the place to discuss the burning political and social issues of the day. These discussions are fortunately taking place elsewhere.”

“The reality is that the University of Michigan is one of the most powerful and prestigious institutions of higher learning in the world, and its incentives (financially and otherwise) are geared towards serving this legacy as much as possible. This leads to an embrace of freedom of expression under the condition that the institution remains comfortable and “undisturbed” by that freedom of expression. While that is an understandable qualifier, it naturally and reasonably creates tension with the community — particularly student activists — because true freedom of expression, especially in opposition to administrative choices the University makes, will inherently be very uncomfortable for the University of Michigan as an institution.”

“There is routinely informal pressure (with the implicit threat of official pressure in the form of reporting) from students and other faculty to profess agreement with doctrinal ‘progressive’ beliefs, no matter how poorly supported those beliefs may be by actual empirical evidence.”

“Barriers to free speech abound at the University of Michigan and arise not for lack of rules and bylaws but due to lack of enforcement, a weakness of the will to act

by those who are meant to protect our community as a whole. Offenders act with impunity, knowing there are no consequences. Will the new policy include measures that will be taken against violators, bullies, those who fear debate and only wish to drown it out? Will all guest speakers be allowed to speak at the University or will they be blocked by those who fear debate without penalty? Will calls for death go unpunished with weak explanations? Will students continue to storm through reading halls, offices, intentionally disrupting and intimidating other students and faculty without any fear. Will University of Michigan continue to be a place where students are afraid to state their mind on social media for fear of bullying and intimidation? Will U of M faculty use their position to try to influence their students, thereby instill fear in those students who disagree (names can be provided)? Will the call death to jews and death to Israel continue to echo in the halls of U of M in the name of “free speech”. All these are not hypothetical situations but real events from my / my family/ my friends and colleagues experiences. What this proposal lacks is a clear definition of the consequences for those who violate these laws and a promise to act upon it.”

“I assume that I’m not the only one struck by the irony of this committee. It has been formed in the wake of a unilateral—and immediately challenged—presidential statement on related issues, the use of police to break up the Israel-Palestine encampment on flimsy pretexts and with suspect timing, and the dystopian-named kickoff of “The Year of Democracy and Civic Engagement.” It is chaired by the University Counsel—in contrast to the recent Harvard report on similar matters, which was co-chaired by a law school professor (a good idea) and a philosophy professor. It is important to recognize that the head of a committee always has disproportionate influence on the workings and conclusions of the group. The problem with the Michigan approach here is that the Counsel’s office functions in much the same way as in-house counsel does at private corporations large and small—to protect the client (risk management, response to law suits, legal liability, etc.). This is often a

useful, indeed necessary, function—but not here, where the issues are primarily of a qualitatively different sort, involving as they do intellectual and academic goals, internal disagreements, and so on. A committee of 44 persons may sound inclusive, but it is almost surely a bad idea. At best, it will be ineffectual. At worst, it will be dominated by a small number of its members. People of good will will be asked to compromise on all kinds of matters because that is the nature of committee work. Such compromises will almost certainly involve (sacrifice of) principles. Better to write a dissenting minority report, on the grounds that any compromise is likely to be worse than what we currently have on the books. In this context, it’s worth asking why our current policies are considered so defective that this committee needs to exist, or why the results of such committees routinely end up being at odds with AAUP positions. One of the lessons of campus protest of the 1960s is that University presidents who came down hard on protesters, as our president has, tended to stay in office but are not remembered fondly. Those that sought compromise were routinely booted out but came to be honored in retrospect. It is hard to see how, in the current academic/political context, this committee can fail to be an appendage of the first group. There are people on the committee whom I like and respect, friends and colleagues who understandably felt the issue at hand was too important to say “no” to. I believe they are likely to regret how the committee report, whatever it says, ends up being used. Naturally, I hope they are right and I am wrong.”

“Since learning about the University as a young person growing up in Detroit’s Downriver suburbs, I’ve always considered U-M to be a place where free expression flourishes. This was evidenced during my time as a student in the 1990s and, in my opinion, remains true today.”

“There have been instances where I have feared for my safety through intimidation. As a Jewish student on campus, allowing hate speech to proliferate among the faculty and students has made it hard to be fully Jewish in any space. This hate speech and antisemitism makes me fear that being openly Jewish would hurt my standing in any space I am in, including evaluations from faculty that make up our grades.”

“U of M has a comparatively good speech environment as compared to other campuses. I have not felt formal or informal official pressure to constrain my opinions. The major source of speech constraint is what you call “informal pressure to conform.” Especially around topics that code as “social justice” oriented—equity, identity, etc. TO be clear, my own views are very much on the left;

the constraint on me is much less than it would be on students and colleagues who *don’t* generally have left-liberal politics.

But on “those kinds” of topics—race, gender, orientation, identity, religion—it’s remarkable how much pressure can be felt to express un-nuanced views in a completely confident way. This affects the students more than it affects me, especially in my own classroom—I teach plenty of controversial topics, and the only one I regularly experience internal anxiety in discussing is abortion (I’m a man). But it affects me too, especially in non-classroom discussions, whether on social media or in print. The layers of explanation required that you don’t mean X or Y or Z (genuinely illiberal views or whatever) when what you’re simply trying to say is A or B or C (complications to liberal views) is a huge disincentive to discuss nuanced hard issues where you don’t really have to. And then the social media rage mobs that randomly descend, both in response conversations on social media *and* in response to conversations off social media are really quite upsetting at a personal level.”

“I have been “selectively ignored” in my long-standing requests to include antisemitism content in my department’s DEI training modules.”

“I have to hide my conservative viewpoints, which is extremely isolating. One will find that they can slowly learn of other conservatives in the community only through a very careful inquiry.”

“I just graduated last month, and for the past year I experienced MAJOR pressure from my peers to conform with their views on the Israel-Palestine conflict - specifically the pro-Palestine side (for the record, I do not feel strongly about the conflict either way). If I did not, I would be ostracized in person, attacked on the Law School’s all-school email listserv, and generally made to feel like the entire body of my peers was against me and thought I was an evil, inhuman individual.”

“I think there are two large forces, that are not necessarily the fault of the University. One is peer pressure, or *perceived* peer pressure. There is certainly a sense that certain opinions are not to be voiced in public in academia these days. I have no skin in the game, so this isn’t something I suffer from academically, but I can imagine that people with unorthodox vies about gender, DEI, or politics, to name just that, are unwilling to speak their minds freely. The other issue, or the elephant in the room, is the conflict in the Middle East, which has led to extreme reactions on both sides of the aisle and makes the rest of us shut up to avoid repercussions (again, not from the University). I emphasized twice that I don’t think

the pressure comes from the University, but one might ask whether the University should foster an atmosphere in which those pressures are reduced. The word “safe space” is used often to silence people, but I would argue that “safe space” could mean the opposite: this is where students, faculty, and staff should feel safe to say what they really think.”

“I think the University does a very nice job trying to find a middle ground in an otherwise almost impossibly divisive environment. I feel the ability to raise issues is as good as could be expected.”

“The fact University leadership, department leadership and others state opinions on social and political issues creates a chilling atmosphere on campus for speech and free expression. The way the University handled the 2016 election was inappropriate, in how there was a day of grieving hosted and promoted by the president’s office.”

“As a non-tenured faculty member, I’m simply not going to express my opinion on anything that goes against what I perceive as the prevailing opinion of my department. There is so little upside to doing so, and plenty of potential downside. For example, I don’t agree with plenty of my department’s DEI initiatives, as I think the relentless focus on race and gender isn’t helpful for anyone involved, but I’m not going to say that since it’s obviously a priority for our chair.

The campus climate, particularly among students, is so overwhelming liberal that I don’t think the students often even hear a conservative viewpoint. This does not seem to be a huge issue within the College of Engineering, as most faculty simply teach their technical content and most students are simply here to obtain that training and go get a job.”

“The recently adopted U-M Principles on Diversity of Thought and Freedom of Expression are a dangerous, insidious, and politically-motivated attack on higher education in the State of Michigan. The statement follows a playbook that has been used to undermine academic freedom in other intellectually repressive states such as Florida, Ohio, Texas, Wisconsin, etc. Embedded in the first paragraph is a selective invocation of SPG 01.01 that deemphasizes the right of protest or the responsibility of those in power to engage in good faith with constituents who have legitimate grievances. The most recent evolution of the University’s position assumes that all intellectual and academic exchanges occur on an equal playing field and fails to engage with differences of privilege and power. As such, it seeks to further disenfranchise the disenfranchised. This line of thinking follows a problematic trajectory of prioritizing

the free speech of those already in power, even extending freedom of speech to institutions and corporations, while suppressing the free speech of the marginalized, who often have no recourse but protest to address systemic inequities and harms. I fear this is evidence that the University’s position has unfortunately been influenced and even coopted by a political ideology whose proponents seek to protect privilege (and specifically “property” rights--the right of individuals to hoard wealth at the expense of societal good) at all costs and see true democracy as a threat to their extractive, hegemonic power.”

“While the formal policy demands freedom of expression, there seems to be a Palestine exception and little freedom of speech about Palestine. Whether wrongly dubbed anti-semitic or breaking up the encampment on the diag, the practice is quite clear. It is hypocritical. There should be freedom of expression for ALL points of view.”

“As a political conservative and Christian, I never talk about political issues at work. It seems that many of my colleagues are extremely liberal politically, and I fear that they would lose respect for me and/or not want to me friends any more if they knew my true opinions. Additionally, I strongly disagree with many of the emails sent by department and University administrators after consequential political events. For example, after supreme court decisions about abortion and affirmative action, I strongly disagreed with the political sentiments expressed by many University administrators.”

“In general, I have not encountered many barriers to free expression at the University. The most significant one took place in 2021, and was around the issue of Palestine. Students in my unit were pushing for the program to make a statement denouncing the May 2021 missile attacks on Gaza. While we were reluctant to make such a statement for many reasons (and did not), in conversations with administration it was very clear that we were extremely circumscribed even in the language we could use to respond and that any language had to explicitly “both-sides” the question. So the “Palestinian free speech exception” has been the one I have encountered most directly.”

“U-M needs to continue to be a bastion of free speech. For me, this starts with erring on allowing more speech rather than less. That said, U-M also needs to be more specific and restrictive in when and where certain speech takes place. For example, it is grossly inappropriate for protesters of any ilk or opinion to interrupt teaching in classrooms or labs. Similarly, impeding access to buildings should not be allowed. Protesting during student

celebration or other public events is questionable. Taking protests to private homes and property is off-limits and simply illegal.”

“The protests on campus have been a nightmare as of late, and I have been scared to go near them, especially having a differing opinion. Of course protesters have the right to do so, but there really needs to be some sort of parameters regarding the places these protests take place. They have been incredibly disruptive to academic/classroom productivity, meetings, ceremonies, etc. Places that should be considered apolitical, separate, and safe. Even the Michigan Union has been on occasion overrun by protesters while I was studying in there, and I was nervous due to the sheer capacity of people in the facility and the potential for harm in case of emergency. Protests need to be safe, and those of a differing opinion shouldn’t feel threatened by protest.”

“University administration is the sole restrictive force that is preventing my free expression. University policies are targeting the subject matter of my speech. Do better.”

“I think many faculty have a difficult time distinguishing and balancing free expression and expression that creates harm. In class situations individuals state their opinions that may be based on false or misleading information and in some cases it is not challenged by the faculty person and often harm is done to the folk that are most often marginalized. When brought to faculty a defensive posture is taken with the statement of free expression. Thus, more works needs to be done to inform, educate and practice with faculty navigating these nuances and difficult spaces. As well as more in person mandatory sessions for students to learn about free expression and ways in which in can create harm. We are in a cancel culture moment that really leads to silencing voices that is more damaging and harmful to us all.”

“I’ve felt like it’s taboo (or not welcomed from higher-ups) to talk about salary equity and the lack of living wage for many positions, including my own, at the University.”

“I haven’t faced any barriers regarding my free expression. In fact, I feel very comfortable being myself and voicing concerns. Faculty and staff have used my correct pronouns, listened to my struggles, and given me tons of feedback and attention.”

“I have not personally experienced barriers to free expression, however, the University could do a better job to de-escalate the tension connected to the conflict in Gaza. The University hasn’t been a place to have

constructive conversations on the topic as it’s sensitive.”

“There has been an increasingly pervasive institutional “group think” developing within the institutional culture over the past several years, to the point that Orwellian “newspeak” seems to have overwhelmed and replaced the traditional intellectual culture. Diversity of thought has increasingly meant only politically progressive forms of ideology—just the opposite of the original meaning of the word, diversity. Moral content of sensitive topics (e.g., gender identity politics) has assumed an almost triumphalistic, even religious character when much of the assumptions upon which they are based are a matter of opinion rather than being established on any solid evidence. Thoughtful and polite dissent from the accepted, dominant ideology is not tolerated. Students and trainees have been subjected to indoctrination rather than actual education in many areas that should be matters of open debate. The result is herd mentality rather than a truly diverse exchange of ideas.”

“I have found it extremely difficult to openly and honestly express my viewpoints at the University of Michigan, and I often remain silent to avoid repercussions for expressing views that differ from the progressive orthodoxy. For example, I have concerns about how DEI statements are used as a political litmus test in hiring and promotion, but anything short of enthusiastic support of these policies immediately gets one labeled as “part of the problem” and “holding back progress.” I have seen colleagues sharply criticized for voicing very reasonable concerns along these lines, and so, as a pre-tenure faculty, I have felt compelled to muzzle myself many times. Basically, any conservative or even centrist viewpoint is simply not welcome. It is more than a little ironic that those who enforce conformity to this single progressive dogma through intimidation and slander view themselves as champions of diversity and inclusivity.”

“Sadly, freedom of expression and liberalism have been under attack for the past 5 years at the University of Michigan. A new ideology has flourished and become institutionalized which does not allow for any dissent. While the origins of this new ideology were noble and addressed major social problems, it has become corrupted and demands fealty from faculty, trainees and students. It has become commonplace to remain silent or face severe retribution in response to perceived transgressions of speech or thought. The brazen disregard of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is truly astounding. Racial preferences and adherence to the new dogma are commonplace for hiring and promotion. I have witnessed many such examples and mentioned meritocratic principles (a hallmark of liberalism) at my own peril. I have seen an exceptional, talented, and accomplished

candidate dispatched because they said “I treat all people equally” in an interview. (The backroom discussion was chilling - and it may go without saying that I did not feel comfortable speaking up on his behalf due to fear of retribution) This new climate is toxic and a complete inversion of liberal values - freedom of expression, open debate, equality and justice.”

“I do not feel free to express my views, especially after receiving emails from UM leadership that did not maintain neutrality and included messaging that was heavily skewed towards one side of ongoing international conflict.”

“Students are reluctant to speak freely about controversial topics including race, gender, sexuality, and nationality because they fear the reaction of other students. A small minority of students see themselves as allies of every possible minority group and look for reasons to be offended. They have been trained by DEI administrators that view their role as social justice warriors rather than University staff addressing specific problems for particular groups.”

“As a PhD student, I will not raise many convictions and arguments due to the potential costs these perspectives will have to my career. These topics are particularly those related to Israel, race, and current strands of left wing thinking.”

“The way this administration has bullied the black and brown students on campus is repugnant and has been hard to take. Even just the continued messaging re: antisemitism at the most recent regents meeting didn’t take into considerations the many accounts of antisemitism experienced by Jewish members of campus who are protesting for an end to the genocide.”

“The University’s communication on the protests surrounding the conflict in the Middle East has had a profound chilling effect on my speech. The University President and Regents have criticized and condemned antiwar protestors repeatedly, labeling them as a group by the worst actions taken by a small minority of protestors....I have lost all confidence in President Ono and the Regents and am actively looking to leave the University.”

“I have had doctors that I work with make nasty, horrible statements about President Trump, never giving any consideration or care that others may not agree with them.”

“Many of us are in a difficult spot of having different political beliefs than others with we share an identity with.”

“I think that there is informal pressure to not express positions that are too conservative. And there is often little acknowledgment that opinions on hot-button issues may be non-binary. There is also a tendance to group “conservative” issues into a single category and expect a single opinion. I received a survey once that said “what is your opinion on abortion, gun control, and affirmative action?” There was only one response scale given! So, since my opinion is against, for, and undecided, what answer was I supposed to give?”

“The most prominent barriers are coming from students in the classroom. I have had many students share during office hours how they have learned not to not saying anything because they are either white males or it might not be politically correct. I see this as very serious issue because a large percentage of students’ grades in my classes are based on class participation. I have also seen attempts from students to cancel faculty in my department through social media.”

“As a person on a visa to be able to work here, there is always a concern over losing the job and being evicted out of the country if you say something that the school doesn’t like. Luckily until now, I don’t have any issue that needs me to speak out. It might be beneficial for us to have an active international student and scholar association that speaks for us.”

“Calling protests disruptions when in fact protests are a right and meant to be disruptive.”

“I have no doubts I cannot express anything conservative. I have to spin my papers towards liberal viewpoints and the DEI nonsense for my grades to not be impacted.”

“I am an older alumni/staff member who tries very hard to understand all sides of an issue. But, whether it is my age or mu life experience, I am constantly worried that I will “say the wrong thing” in a work setting. This relates to cancel culture and what I view as our inability to tolerate even the smallest of missteps. I would to feel comfortable asking questions, learning more, and educating myself without the fear of reprisal. That said, I have not been called out for anything in particular. But, I live in fear of speaking up on the wrong side of an issue simply because I am uneducated and/or unaware. There is a lot of pressure to be perfectly on point at all times.”

“I have experienced fear that I would be penalized for expressing my political opinions. I identify as a conservative and I would be judged and demonized by several members of my school if they knew. They assume everyone is libral and on many occasions have openly expressed their disgust of anyone who would not vote according to their beliefs.”

“Yes, I am taking a class now where I feel like it is not safe to share my true opinions due to a power imbalance. I had a professor refer to Republican governors as “confederate governors.”

“As a result, I don’t really share my opinions for fear of reprisal, and I am now in a mode of disengaging and “just get through the class,” which is a bad place to be.”

“All policies and communications make it pretty clear that the University is very liberal. It makes conservative voices feel the need to be hidden and invites ridicule from others when they speak up. I also believe that the use of group emails for political causes and protests should not be allowed by faculty or students. it creates negativity and takes away from the education freedom and positive learning environment. As a conservative, I keep my opinions to myself on campus at all times because I don’t feel comfortable sharing them because of the extreme bias. I feel it would negatively affect my status and faculty position.”

“The RECORDING of Zoom conversations is BAD for development stages of group opinion generation. Many wish that their exploratory views not be made part of a “permanent” record; so they do not offer opinions at all. Valuable voices are muted.”

“I am an independent. Been that since John Anderson. I cannot speak on many topics because they are not the typical campus othodoxy. The atmosphere is stultifying. My entire departement is afraid to have a discussion on grades, course content, incoming grad class composition, exams etc.”

“I think if you lean liberal and would like to express liberal ideas and beliefs, you are safe. However, if you have conservative views then you cannot express those ideas or beliefs equally, or freely. You would be instructed to leave “politics” out of the workplace, and possible would be treated differently. There seems to be a double standard when it comes to free expression. It seems to be free, only if it aligns with certain ideologies.”

“The climate for free expression on the Flint campus has been positive. I don’t fear expressing my opinion and have had the opportunity to share it where appropriate. Our students also seem to be able to engage in expression with minimal barriers. SPG 201.89-1 does a good job of regulating the tension between expression and harassment on our campus.”

“It is well known and felt personally, that as a conservative, you must keep all opinions to yourself. The University of Michigan is completely intolerant of any conservative feedback. I want to keep my job!

I am flabbergasted that the school of medicine chose to publish a photo of palastinian supporters and others who wore their affiliation scarfs as the primary photo respresentative of medical school graduation. Seriously? The graduates who didn’t wear the affiliation around their neck weren’t worthy of recognition? It inflamed many and supported a few. Unconscionable.”

“I’ve been working remotely since 2020, so it has been a blessing to remove myself from the daily informal campus pressure in many routine business activities that are standard practice. Some examples that occurred almost daily prior to remote work:

- Walking into a management office and seeing “#NotMyPresident”.
- A large staff meeting where a leader states a disparaging remark about President Trump, then says “I mean, we all feel the same, right??” to the group.
- The University sponsoring ‘grief’ sessions in various departments when Trump won in 2016.
- Every US or world event that does not reflect the UM think police requires an official email apparently to explain and condemn an action that may not have been faculty’s preferred outcome.
- Professors wearing political shirts during voting season with their hoped for outcome.”

“In my opinion, The University Record has a very left leaning views on social issues, especially political.”

“Freedom of expression is constrained by an oppressive culture, constantly expanding, that emphasizes fragility and offense over free exchange of ideas, experiences, or opinions. Self-censorship is part of our daily life.”



1b. *Please tell us your stories of examples you’ve seen of a constructive climate for freedom of expression at the University of Michigan. Where and how have you seen free speech welcomed? Have your professors, supervisors, or peers instituted policies or practices that open up opportunities to speak?*

“I have found other UM folks who are fully underground about their concerns about what has happened to this once wonderful campus. That’s where I get my freedom of expression: these small hidden oases of reality and critical thinking in the desert of secular religious zeal and unquestioned “social justice” and “DEI” dogmas—nothing from UM leadership thus far has made any of this better.”

“I miss the time in which we could talk with each other about controversial issues too. Now anything controversial is avoided at almost any cost. And, if there is a conversation about it, it is monopolized by those who know how to talk.”

“The statement of the Regents in support of the free thought is a step in the right direction.”

“In housing students are allowed to put whatever they want on their dorm room doors. When something creates distress in the community, the practice is to talk to the student about the impact of their decisions and work towards, at a minimum, a recognition of that impact. The goal is to help them understand their choices in a deeper context.”

“I think the formal policies issued by the University surrounding freedom expression are good. Taking this past year as an example, I appreciate the way that the University handled the protests. Although I do not agree with some of the viewpoints of the protestors as the situation is quite multi-faceted, I think it’s important to ensure freedom of expression and the right to protest while still ensuring that all students feel safe on campus. I think the University did a very good job handling this, especially considering the responses of other universities throughout the country. I did notice that the protests on our campus were quite peaceful all things considered, so I appreciate that protestors were allowed to continue in expressing their viewpoints. All that said, from a peer standpoint, some of the protestors were not welcoming whatsoever to differing viewpoints, going back to my previous point regarding informal pressures and such. I think that living within this bubble/echo-chamber of a college campus, many peers/students have become

very intolerant to different viewpoints- which will not suit them well in the world outside of a college campus, in my opinion. I’m truthfully not sure how to fix this because again- I think this comes naturally with a college environment - but I wish in terms of informal/ social situations, people are more accepting of differing viewpoints (of course, as long as those viewpoints are not inherently hateful/bigoted/dangerous). This has become quite subjective on our campus where even standard conservative/centrist viewpoints are labeled as bigoted. In turn, this provides no opportunity for constructive discourse. The reality is that not everyone thinks the same, has the same life experiences, or perspectives. And in my experience, I truthfully don’t think that the curriculums do a sufficient job of teaching this in a way that fosters collaborative, tolerant discourse. College is supposed to prepare us for the real-world. I personally don’t feel that I’ve learned how to engage in constructive discourse without labeling/classifying differing viewpoints.”

“In general, throughout my college (Engineering), the climate seems pretty welcoming of free expression.”

“Our chair has helped develop a more constructive climate in my department. She requests input from many members of the department, including those who are not supportive of the initiative discussed.

In her correspondence to the department, she has highlighted points of view that would be considered as forming a range of the political spectrum. I think this has been very helpful for the climate of the department.”

“This survey is an example of a constructive climate for freedom of expression at the University of Michigan.”

“Maybe I only see this because I sometimes enjoy playing devil’s advocate, that is, being a contrarian, in discussion settings. I pride myself and being able to understand many viewpoints of an issue at once, so I sometimes bring these viewpoints up in classes or discussion sections to create diversity of thought. Overall I’ve Felt like professors and GSIs respect and appreciate diversity of thought, from the classes I take at LSA to my core courses at SMTD.”

“I found it constructive that the illegal encampment of students in the Diag were removed by the police.”

“Individual professors have provided excellent avenues for constructive conversation and dialogue about difficult social issues in their classrooms. Usually I find this looks like them providing an introduction to the topic we are going to discuss, and then largely turning the discussion over to the students. I find the students here to be very capable of informed, respectful dialogue, and the professors usually only have to intervene to provide clarification on a point or to remind us of time constraints. The most impactful discussions happen when professors pose an issue to the class that they themselves are having trouble wrapping their minds around-- when we are able to dialogue with professionals in the field, we learn even more than if they were to just tell us what to think.”

“Those regular messages during election periods that spell out what can and can’t be done as a University employee: they provide a framework for understanding and constructive engagement.”

“The law school has organized lunch talks where faculty and guest speakers presented on various issues within the Israel-Palestinian conflict which I felt were a constructive climate for freedom of expression.”

“I also appreciated in my first year, the University being willing to host a presidential debate, and reminding the student body that decorum and open-mindedness are just as important as expressing our opinions on the issues.”

“There have always been protests on the diag for decades- I feel students and faculty know they are welcome to speak their mind but recently protestors are stepping into traditionally academic areas and interrupting daily life.”

“I have been allowed to conduct peaceful outreach on my campus, even though the vast majority of students and staff disagree with my position. I have been able to have countless conversations with people, and I think regardless of our positions, after speaking to each other, we are able to see that the good in the other person, rather than looking at the other as an enemy.”

“Formal policies issued by the University talk about creating an atmosphere for all voices to be heard, but I don’t find that to be true in the day to day.”

“Allowing the encampment until serious safety considerations arose made me feel that the University was at least trying to provide an opportunity for free speech.”

“Forums driven by faculty and institutes on campus are by far the best way the University supports freedom of expression. Concerts, performances, debates, lectures, art installations, and protests have all contributed richly to the discourse that the University fosters. The use of digital platforms in a free, privacy-preserving manner has also been historically a great way the University has allowed for free expression.”

“I appreciated Dr Runge not buckling to student pressure regarding the speaker for last year’s medical school white coat ceremony.”

“Dearborn itself has been a lot better than Ann Arbor. I feel this is likely because we have such a high percentage of Arab American students. Our students are more free to speak openly with faculty and amongst themselves than they are at Ann Arbor.”

“Freedom of expression does not include the right to interfere with other’s movement or safety.”

“I used to attend WeListen sessions that were a fantastic open forum for constructive debate of tough issues.”

“Though it should never have happened and should have been enforced sooner, the removal of the Palestine group from campus grounds was a positive. Completely removing ANY political angle or belief, the campus has RULES to follow for protesting, and it should be followed fairly, no exceptions. No one is allowed to interrupt the learning of another individual, and that includes disruptions preventing access to that learning. When rules are broken, you pay the price - no political coloring whatsoever. I also appreciate the campus not caving to demands asking for LEARNING, EDUCATION, and the Sharing of information globally to be inhibited or stopped by anyone.”

“There is no free speech for staff. We are never invited to share or express ourselves.”

“In individual convserattons with fellow students however, I have had my viewpoints changed on multiple subjects and I believe have swayed others as well both to the “left” and to the “right”. Healthy dialogue thrives offline at U of M.”

“Professors and other students at flint have made it feel easier for me to express and talk about what is happening.”

“We have such a wonderful diversity of talks, performances, and arts that represent many different experiences and identities.”

“The policy issued on January 16, 2024 is encouraging. The fact that you are soliciting this feedback is also encouraging. I firmly believe that any institution that makes a stand for free expression and ideological diversity will reap an enormous windfall of public goodwill. We do not have to react to every issue in the news. We do not have to offer constant reassurances that we are ‘on the right side.’ What we need is to stay laser focused on OUR MISSION AS A University which is to educate our students (allowing for diverse and controversial views) and advance our science.”

“Free speech does not extend to threats and harassment and the University should stop pretending that it does.”

“There are individual courses I’ve taken in the SMTD where professors have done a great job establishing a classroom climate welcoming of free expression. Often, this has meant ensuring that each student in the (small, seminar-type) class is given an explicit turn to speak, including the quietest students, and that if one student is speaking significantly more than others, they are gently reminded that enough time should be left for each student to speak. In small classes, this has worked well.”

“In several instances I’ve been required to choose a pronoun even when I don’t feel comfortable doing so. For example, to enter Zoom meetings I’ve had to select one of 3 (he, she, they) when it should’ve been optional to share that. I’m at work and don’t want to share my pronouns nor be judged on whether the rest of the group feels I’ve selected the one they think I should have.”

“Despite some challenges, I have also experienced a constructive climate for freedom of expression at the University of Michigan. In particular, some professors have actively fostered an inclusive atmosphere in their classrooms by establishing clear guidelines for respectful discourse and encouraging diverse viewpoints. These formal and informal policies have been instrumental in creating a safe space for all students to share their perspectives.”

“One of my managers openly encouraged and welcomed different ideas and viewpoints. However, it was not the words that mattered, but their actions. When someone

would speak up with an idea or comment that may have been counter-cultural or unpopular, this manager did not berate the person or act to undermine them, but rather fostered discussion to better understand why someone believed what they did. Constructive conversations CAN happen, but it takes humility among those in power and bravery among those afraid of consequences.”

“I have had constructive conversations with colleagues with whom I disagree when those colleagues are informed and basing their arguments and positions on evidence rather than meaningless slogans. The more informed we are about the issues we take positions on, the easier the conversation becomes. I have also had positive experiences in the classroom environment, when students are faculty are focused on shared readings/ texts rather than drawing from what they learned on TikTok or in a slogan. If we can take some of the disputes out of the Diag and into the classroom, I think we can foster a more inclusive and understanding community. No one student group should ever be given a monopoly over the conversation or be permitted to claim a space as their own.”

“My professors do not penalize students who miss class to protest as they respect their constitutional and human right to protest and understand they will most likely already be penalized for exercising a basic right on their University campus in a violent and disproportional manner.”

“The vast majority of my students appreciate that [my] course follows the University of Chicago freedom of speech policies and that I do not accept students complaining about controversial topics on behalf of other students. Everybody is expected to speak for themselves.”

“I witnessed a vigorous but respectful debate between a student protester and a visitor to the encampment about the Israel/Palestine conflict. I wished that interaction could have been viewed by the nation as it encapsulated precisely the kind of exchange of ideas we hope to facilitate at this University.”

“For the most part, I think freedom of expression is alive and well on campus. Although I worry about what could happen with my lecture captures, I don’t let that restrict what I teach or how I teach. I have not experienced repressive attitudes from other faculty or students. This is true in department meetings, classrooms, and other meetings on campus that I have participated in.”

“Free speech is welcomed as long as it takes a very left leaning view. Just look at the posters on the walls in the medical school. “Tell us about your microaggressions you’ve been exposed to”, “Please join our rent control union”. All left leaning causes and concerns. You will not find one single poster representing a right leaning political viewpoint on a board anywhere in this institution that isn’t immediately ripped off the wall. Just walk around and try to find one. I did. None.”

“Multiple professors have been able to foster great atmospheres for discussion in which it was clear that dissent was not just tolerated but welcomed.”

“I love that the University allows employees to have tattoos, unnatural hair colors, and otherwise express themselves through clothing and their appearance.”

“Our seminars are truly what a seminar should be. People are encouraged to talk and contribute. If they do not participate, they are asked to give their opinions.”

“In my role as an instructor, I try to encourage students to share their opinions/thoughts even if they are different from what I am teaching in class. I want students to realize there are different ways to view issues and to understand some of the reasons why those opinions exist.”

“The best experiences that I have seen are in the classroom, when someone raises a contentious issue and we confront it head-on, but at the same time tactfully and sensitively. It is so satisfying to see students leave their “corners” and meet one another half-way, recognizing complexity where before they saw things very simply. In departments, Chairs could facilitate open discussion by actively inviting everyone to participate. Not just: “would anyone like to comment on this” (where some will, of course, speak), but “so-and-so, would you like to say anything” (for someone who has remained silent). This can happen in the classroom as well. Otherwise, you tend to see some people speak, but many others remain silent out of fear or hesitation. The Chair or teacher could also say at the start: “I would like this to be an open and frank discussion, conducted respectfully toward all. I will ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak.” This lets everyone know the ground rules, and also that everyone will speak if they wish, not just those who feel comfortable doing so.”

“I gotta say, I’m a little worried that any positive experiences I list are going to be used in a biased “Look, we’re doing so well!” campaign. Please don’t do this. Things aren’t going well.”

“University policies encourage staff to turn in other staff for expression that is considered “harmful” or “triggering” of others, usually those on the political left. Yet, individuals are increasingly categorized/defined by their race/sexuality/gender. Offensive terms like “Whiteness” are tossed around by campus speakers and DEI staff. I don’t think that this is improving the inclusiveness/diversity on the campus, just the opposite.”

“During the 2024 Honors Convocation there were protestors that disrupted the ceremony. This was extremely frightening to me as a honors recipient. I am all for more strict policies concerning protestors during private events on campus.”

“DEI events in our department have opened spaces for many opinions and experiences to be shared.”

“My advisor is great about asking people to speak up. All of my professors have been great about this, too. Granted, I’m an engineering student (and it’s probably pretty hard to say something politically incendiary about fluid dynamics).”

“The atmosphere is not different from that of totalitarian regimes such as the former Soviet Union. There is such a pressure to conform with the ideological platitudes of the day, a new orthodoxy based on the excesses of identity politics and the subjection to the “principles” of Critical Race Theory, that there is little room to express any critical views. The Library, where I work, is a good example: the Library administration strongly encourages adherence to this ideology. I am sure that there is a silenced majority that is critical of this situation. I have seen colleagues being humiliated by a mob who, as self-declared social warriors, decide what is offensive. I miss a strong leadership from the president and the administration in general to avoid insane situations such as the suspension of a professor of musicology for displaying an old version of the film Othello, where the main character appears with a black face as it was widely accepted at the time. Is this a new inquisition?”

“The only time I’ve felt free is when discussion/feedback is anonymous.”

“It means a TON when colleagues reach out to say ‘hey that thing you said, I agree with it, you’re taking a lot of unfair flak for it, thank you for saying it.’ Those are some of the best ‘intellectual freedom’ / affirmation moments I’ve felt here, when it feels like colleagues affirmatively bolster the value of my participation in some optional discussion.”

“I’ve definitely had great discussions in classes about really interesting (even if controversial) topics. But I’ve found more and more students acting hostile (both in in-class interactions (i.e. the questions they ask following when you speak, acting mad at you directly in class for something you stated, etc.), and outside of class), when someone says a viewpoint in those classes that they do not agree with. I found my Criminal Law class two years ago to have great potential for discussions, but typically students were shut down by their peers in follow-up questions/discussion points if they said anything other than the most liberal viewpoint. (I am liberal myself, but I cannot stand shutting down other people in that way and threatening them with being labeled racist in front of their peers and/or the entire school when they say something moderate/conservative).”

“Only privately amongst colleagues with whom I have a relationship based upon trust have I been able to engage in respectful discussions where we can agree to embrace our differences and attempt to learn from one another. The University has a tremendous amount of work to do on allowing conservative viewpoints to be respectfully heard on campus, and allowing for true discourse.”

“The most freedom of expression I have ever encountered has been at DEI committees, at both the department and University level. In particular, one of the research centers at MM has a diversity committee who has it in its bylaws - and as a reminder at the start of every meeting - that all voices are welcome and all issues will remain confidential. THAT is a safe place for me. THAT is the only place in the University where I feel free to express my mind.”

“People in my department are supportive of speech broadly, though I have seen students express such open disdain for conservative viewpoints (and those that hold them) that it has caused other students (who I suspect hold those viewpoints) to stay quiet and, in one case, leave the University completely.”

“I have taken many classes with professors who care deeply about free speech and who have sought out unpopular opinions on controversial issues. These faculty members should be the model for the school at large. The point was never to make us accept a particular viewpoint but to critically engage with both sides.”

“The only time any opinions seem to be requested are surveys like this one, and I am not confident that these surveys are even read or considered.”

“My very close faculty colleagues know how I feel, because we’ve discussed in person in informal settings (like over drinks or lunch). The new principles on diversity of thought and freedom of expression seem like a good start for providing formal structure to allow real discussion and learning around these issues.”

“When people keep their emotions in check, productive conversations about contentious issues can be held. I have had really respectful conversations with many professors and peers on campus of drastically differing viewpoints from my own when we are able to set aside emotional reactions to perceived injustices and difficult issues without anyone feeling invalidated, or especially scared. I don’t know whether that comes with maturity and practice or with training and policies though.”


“On paper, the climate at UM is one where freedom of expression is celebrated. For example, I am responding to this survey without fear of retribution, and I am grateful for the opportunity.”

“My department has maintained a policy of not taking departmental positions on controversial social or political issues. This included not taking sides in the recent GEO strikes. I think this policy has allowed for different positions on these issues to coexist peacefully within the department.”

“In our team huddles, we welcome discussion from all members. This is a common practice.”

“The LSA Inclusive Cultural Liaison program has been a haven for respectful, empathetic, accountable, and productive discussions regarding some of, if not the most difficult issues we are facing as a community.”

“I appreciate the guidance from CRLT, IGR, and Ginsberg. They are the true leaders and experts on campus.”



2a. *If you see problems, where do you think diversity of thought might be lacking?*

“I’ve seen a lack of diversity of thought among professors and administration, particularly but not exclusively in the law school. I’ve found the professors and administration to be overwhelmingly moderate or conservative in political viewpoints.”

“I feel the University/Michigan Medicine promotes/ endorses a “leftward” culture on social issues such as abortion, DEI policies, LGBT related issues without acknowledgement that a substantial portion of students/ faculty/employees are not in full agreement with the University leaders’ promoted perspectives on these issues.”

“I think diversity of thought is threatened across the entire campus because if someone were to truly voice opposition to the mainstream or counter narrative they face widespread criticism and blowback. Look at the Israel Gaza conflict on campus. Both sides have demonized each other and by doing so shutdown any possibility of frank and honest conversation. No one is willing to make concessions and that leads to a deeper rift between the populations on campus.”

“In my opinion, entire departments (eg. Women and gender studies) are ideologically homogeneous and their course offerings reflect that. The absence of conservative speakers on campus probably also contributes to the lack of diversity of thought.”

“Diversity is lacking if it runs contrary to the DEI programs, especially diversity of viewpoints on Israel.”

“The University makes decisions and statements with a liberal, and usually quite progressive, lens. If one does not agree, it can be a very uncomfortable institution to work for and represent.”

“There is a lack of conservative thought that is allowed on campus.”

“There is little evidence of diversity of thought in the University’s communications including emails, newsletters and official messages.”

“I don’t think the University lacks in diversity of thought, but the University doesn’t allow for equal expression of all thought.”

“View UM as a very liberal/left-leaning institution. In actuality, I think views and perspectives are much more diverse on campus.”

“I only see one viewpoint in all communications distributed by the University. It favors liberal, far left perspectives. It feels like an underground community shares viewpoints and information not allowed in the general University population. Jobs feel as if they are in jeopardy otherwise.”

“I think the main area diversity of thought is lacking on all three campuses is social class. The Ann Arbor campus feels like a walled garden that is not interested in engaging with the working class populations primarily found on the other two campuses, especially the Flint campus.”

“The University caters far too much to far-left student groups. The most current example is the pro-Palestine demonstrations - although UofM’s response has been much better than other institutions, they have been given far too much leniency, much more than a similar movement from the other side of the aisle would be given.”

“Students and faculty who dissent from group orthodoxy face penalties ranging from social ostracism to administrative and grading penalties.”

“Diversity of thought is disappearing at UM unless it adheres to the social-political agenda of DEI. We desperately need to return to focusing on matters of scholarship. Especially in STEM fields, the emphasis should be on scientific and mathematical content, not on social-political themes.”

“I think the University is strong in respecting diversity of religion and race and other demographics but not necessarily in respecting politically controversial viewpoints. I can see challenges involved in doing so but also the need for individuals’ ability to express their views. Respecting others’ views without treating them differently when their views differ is crucial to an inclusive environment and feeling accepted.”

“The “University Record” is highly and unduly political, in choosing and presenting its coverage. The LS&A Dean used to insert political commentary in her messages to the College in 2020-2021, which was inappropriate. It appears that she is not doing it anymore, which is good.”

“I worry that generationally, our campus feels different about diversity of thought/First Amendment rights. Both extremes of the political spectrum want to shut down thoughtful discourse.”

“Same comments as before. I think it is lacking in course content- I’ve been required to read Marxist ideology, but conservative viewpoints, in my experience, have been entirely neglected. Even when we disagree, I think it’s important to understand & thoughtfully reflect on differing viewpoints to truly create leaders and the best. Without this understanding, we tend to fall back into classification and labeling which does not set us up well for constructive discourse. I attended the University for undergrad as well, and in an extracurricular organization that I was involved with, a peer was running for a leadership position. He was dismissed from the election because he had re-posted “pro-life” content on his Instagram. Solely based on this, peers complained that he was “hateful” and “bigoted” toward women. I am a woman, and I am pro-choice, but this is an entirely inappropriate “reason” to ban someone from a leadership position. This is a pretty good example of the echo-chamber that I previously referred to.”

“The center of campus, the Diag, should be held accessible to all points of view. It is a very meaningful place on campus, and as such, all students should have access to expressing their views in this location. This location shouldn’t be at the mercy of the first group to squat down and disrupt open discourse of all kinds. There are a range of issues that could be aired in the center of campus, but what we have seen in the last few months is the views of a small minority usurp all others.”

“There is very little diversity of thought in this University. Every other email I receive seems to be pushing some leftist position. The outside speakers that are brought onto campus are almost exclusively left leaning.”

“In my teaching at UofM, I actively encourage “diversity of thought” in my classroom. My students often disagree with each other, and I often disagree with my students. In fact, I encourage my students to question the readings, challenge my analysis, and come up with their own interpretations of the assigned texts. By encouraging debate and disagreement in my classroom, I have learned a great deal from my students over the years.

However, I won’t entertain certain viewpoints in my presence, and I don’t believe that all ideas are equally worthy of consideration. [] I am keenly aware that a growing number of Americans believe that all trans women are pedophilic “groomers” who should be banned from public life and imprisoned as “sex offenders.” I am not interested in “dialogue” with people who do not view [trans women] as . . . human beings, and I would be deeply troubled if the University hired anti-trans scholars under the guise of promoting “ideological diversity.” During this heightened moment of anti-LGBTQ politics

in the United States, I implore you to avoid platforming anti-trans and anti-gay voices. There are many hateful ideologies in this world, and they do not deserve greater representation on this campus.”

“Most speakers especially MLK speakers are recruited from very liberal groups or media sources. When has a conservative speaker been recruited to speak. They would typically be labeled as ‘hate speech’ advocates.”

“It is a pretty left leaning organization in practice, process, and communications. I don’t experience this negatively, but if I were a student who more centrist or right leaning and evangelical, I’d experience a large amount of group think here.”

“I think the University and Medical School are doing an outstanding job of trying to educate people, lead by example, and promote inclusiveness. I think there are still some individuals (trolls, really), who just are not interested in educating themselves about race, inclusiveness, discrimination, equity vs. equality, etc. I am not sure what can be done about it aside from continuing to do what we’re doing. Encourage more individuals at all levels to speak up-- and show them that it’s safe to do so.”

“UM has never been a beacon of diversity of thought. I have long criticized that UM LOVES to talk about diversity *except* if it include diversity of thought.”

“The research done on campus, especially through the School of Social Work, is consistently dehumanizing of diverse ethno-racial groups that have been grouped into monolithic racial groups and blamed for all of the world’s evils--while refusing to hold the microscope to the same offenses of other ethno-racial groups. I see this effort as being consistent and the opposite of diverse.

- Encourage study of the Western cannon, the Classics, etc., alongside other disciplines.
- Have an appreciation day for invisible ethnic minorities, who know their identities while others do not.
- Allow conservative voices to flourish on campus--and protect them from all flavors of violence
- Allow Catholics and evangelical Christians and “pro-life” zealots and pro-U.S. Students and speakers to be visible and protect them from violence on campus.
- The antidote to limitations on free speech is more free speech.

I am a Liberal in the truest sense of the word--and a life-long Democrat. Universities, unfortunately, have become, increasingly, anti-Liberal (regressive politically), anti-inquisitive, and almost like military camps for turning out like-minded soldiers who hate all things U.S. U-M should do its part to reverse this trend.”

“Mandatory commitments to DEI are I believe a litmus test to weed out applicants and constrain diversity of thought. The University should go the way of MIT and get rid of these commitments. These are present in interviews, job applicationa dn daily work life. I was instructed to readabou “white supremacy culture” as an employee of the University. This came across as offensive to me as whiteness was disparaged to an uncomfortable level. My appointment at the University involves me dealing in HR and financial concerns. I do not see why I needed to be made to read politically divisive and speculative at best information.”

“Diversity of thought is discouraged by many faculty teaching undergraduates, and it certainly is not represented in the University Senate of SACUA.”

“Lecturers’ viewpoints are suppressed insofar as they are kept in suspense about their continued employment. Economic precarity makes these teachers unwilling to speak out controversial issues. Lecturers routinely bring the University hundreds of thousands of dollars in tuition beyond their own modest salaries/benefits. Yet lecturers do not enjoy the same job security as the army of bureaucrats whose salaries depend on revenue generated by lecturers on the “frontlines.”

“There’s a reason universities are currently being derided for being bastions of illiberal left-wingers: they are. And UM is not much of an exception. I’m a left-winger, and I think there are too few conservative voices on campus and in campus events. I don’t trust myself to be right all the time, nor do I trust that what is an apparent consensus today will seem right a few years down the road. If I had ideas (and evidence to back it) that ran against the consensus on UM campus (say, evidence that racially homogeneous teams were more effective than diverse ones), I would hesitate to say it very loudly on campus. Many students are illiberal, many faculty also are, and the campus environment writ large is not really open to meaningful, respectful dialog with more conservative voices.”

“Michigan, as a whole, is a more liberal leaning campus like many higher education institutions. While not a true echo chamber, there is a lack of diverse speakers. However, trying to balance the lies, misinformation, disinformation, and blatant discrimination that is more prevalent now from certain popular speakers with sharing a diversity of opinions in getting more difficult.”

“There is a wide diversity of thought on campus and efforts to portray it as a monoculture are grounded in the desire to destroy the culture of free expression here

and suppress the formation of identities and political perspectives that are inclusive of minorities and freeing to espouse.”

“A few immigrants who’ve yet to earn their ability to stay permanently in the states still want to be here, but they have fewer choices. Part of my job is talking with many different members of labs on campus. I have met people years deep into doctoral and post doc studies who have expressed feeling trapped, silenced and stuck, for fear of losing their one job which allows them to stay away from a home country which would seek to destroy them.”

“We don’t see a lot of encouragement to see two sides of an issue. The exchange of ideas needs to be more transparent as a model for our students. What does proper debate and reasoned logic look like? How do you respectfully disagree with a position instead of with a person? How do people come to consensus? This is lacking in society as a whole, but what better place to give it a platform that at the University of Michigan?”

“I don’t know that there is a lack of diversity of thought at the U, but instead an inability to listen to nuance on many occasions. Very few issues are straightforward and there always seems to be an us against them mentality voiced by those who speak the loudest.”

“If we want to be a global University, which I believe is critical for fostering a robust understanding of diversity, we need to enable and encourage more of our students to see the world. This doesn’t mean going to Europe or other “familiar” locations. They need to see, with their own eyes, the lives of people Africa, Southeast Asia, Pacific Islands, and/or Middle East, etc. Without this perspective, how can they really begin understand diversity in its fullest sense?”

“Our students lack exposure to viewpoints from those with Republican, third-party, and independent political perspectives. I fear they will be shocked and ill-equipped to deal with others after graduation and entering the “real world.”

“We need conservative perspectives on campus, while still prioritizing science and facts. We need voices from those who are not among the educational and economic elite. We need to be able to critique the acts of governments, our own and others. U-M administration should be willing to answer questions from the community and to hear concerns raised without being immediately defensive.”

“The climate in several classrooms I’ve been in is intolerant, and at times, aggressive. This is an issue with mostly students not respecting diversity of thought, though I think professors can help keep things focused and respectful. There are students who take up the entire space and don’t leave much room for others to speak, and if someone has a differing view, they do not respect that. Some students strongly expect everyone to have the same opinion as themselves. Professors are not responsible for other people’s behavior, but I think some of them could do a better job of steering discussions to being calm and respectful, and keep the conversation from being very one-sided. I can think of many times where I was afraid to say my perspective in a classroom discussion. The most important thing to me is creating a culture where everyone can say what they really believe without backlash.”

“I’ve been at four universities and Michigan is by far the least friendly to diversity of thought. My sense is that there is some diversity, but buried because nobody wants to speak out of line.”

“Diversity of thought is lacking in most, if not all, of the humanities-oriented schools and departments and across most of the social science oriented schools and departments.”

“I don’t think diversity of thought is lacking at UM; I think the idea that it is is often a bad-faith argument put forth by people seeking to discredit academia more broadly -- both its research and teaching missions.”

“While agree with the student protestors, I don’t like the fact that Jewish students on campus feel threatened. For example, the whole ‘from the river to the sea’ chant could be really upsetting and I wonder if students saying it even understand what it means.”

“I can’t speak for other departments, but I know my department tries to ensure our courses represent various perspectives, modalities of learning, canons of knowledge, etc. I have found our faculty meetings as a generative space of rigorous discussion on a variety of topics.”

“You do not have diversity of thought. You have a singularity of thought, which is fine. Your brand is a Unity of Liberal think. Unity makes you stronger. Still, you keep saying that it’s Diversity that makes you stronger, but you are not diverse. You indicate Equity is fairer than Equality. It’s not. It’s punishing some and rewarding others. And Inclusion. Please. Your Inclusion excludes a lot of people.”

“In major campus communications (e.g., the University Record) I rarely ever see an opinion or viewpoint published that represents a more “Conservative” or “Republican” or “Right-leaning” perspective. Most of the articles highlighted focus on issues and opinions that demonstrate affinity for “Liberal” or “Democrat” or “Left-leaning” points of view. There is no doubt that universities in our country lean “left” when it comes to politics, but it would enrich our community much more to infuse diversity of political viewpoints from “right-leaning” individuals or groups. Let the best ideas and rationale win out; break down the echo chamber.”

“I think the University as a whole is very biased in socioeconomic representation and viewpoints. We have a lack of perspective for the viewpoints held by those who work blue-collar jobs and/or don’t have college aspirations or backgrounds. We operate in the world in our communications as if everyone else has the same motivations and priorities as we do. This state of mind leaves little room for diversity of thought and can make people feel pushed away if they have different backgrounds or beliefs.”

“Again - there is no diversity of thought promoted here. At best, it’s paid lip service. Let’s pick an easy example of commencement speakers. When was the last time the commencement address was given by anyone remotely identified with the political right? It was probably Rick Snyder.”

“Diversity of thought” is a dogwhistle for “conservative thought.” Shame on y’all.”

“I actually don’t think diversity of thought is lacking in an overall sense - just about every viewpoint can be found in some corner of the University. But I don’t think anyone doubts that there’s a dominant (strongly liberal) viewpoint on this campus, especially among faculty and students. Staff, in my experience, are more diverse in their viewpoints than either faculty or students, but feel much less free and able to be outspoken about their thoughts, on either small scales or large scales.”

“The Collegiate Fellows program seems designed to reduce diversity of thought by only hiring faculty who are extremely progressive on social issues. Indeed, all the fellows I’ve encountered were noticeably to the left of typical UM faculty members.”

“The humanities seem particularly culpable for a lot of worrying trends in my opinion on college campuses. I think that professors with a particular political agenda embolden students and ‘activists’ within the classroom

to express sometimes radical viewpoints (from my perspective) and be virtually unchallenged.”

“I believe the most prominent struggle I see is in the personal views expressed by fellow staff members. People communicate with the assumption that everyone sitting in a room agrees, and they are more interested in talking than listening. I am confident that my views would be rejected and that I personally would not be accepted into the community holding the views I do. There is only tolerance for those who agree.”

“As a classical Enlightenment Liberal myself, there are way too few Conservative faculty and students (more students than faculty), which is a problem because our Progressive students get poorly trained in debating and defending their viewpoints because they face very little resistance.”

“I have no desire to see conservatives speak, but there are some doing serious work and they are so clearly and obviously eliminated from the University writ large. It’s an obvious failing that gives way too much credence to conservative attacks on the system. What are we so afraid of? Let them speak and air the best of their arguments. The University should have better ones and if not, that’s something to think about.”

“Official UM social media and campus communications tend to paint a rosy picture of the University. While not wrong, this often means that dissent and legitimate critique of the University is not given the same weight.”

“Course syllabi, especially in my field/school (LSA) take for granted a single, generally far left world view. This is bias of *omission*: I often agree that the individual texts on syllabi are worth reading! But what’s not there is important, too. This filters into the priorities for specialities in new faculty hires and grad student recruitment, as well, creating a feedback loop. Moreover, some of my colleagues and many GSIs in my department don’t seem willing to recognize that there are limits to academic free speech in the classroom: that pressuring students, politically, and on topics not relevant to the course, is inappropriate.”

“I think there’s a lot of sane people like me that believe in common sense and are afraid to share their beliefs to unjustly be called racist or sexist, it’s really hard to defend yourself. Typically, the larger the classroom, the more afraid I am to share my beliefs. In a smaller group where all of us know each other, I feel more confident as I’ve gotten friendly with everyone else, and everyone else with me.”

“I have not experienced a problem regarding freedom of thought. I have heard opinions across the political spectrum in the context of class, faculty meetings, and public expression.”

“I do not accept the idea that universities are bastions of left-wing radicalism that suppress more conservative viewpoints. If left-wing viewpoints are expressed more often than right-wing ones are, that is because members of universities tend to be more left-wing: they are overall more cosmopolitan, more exposed to diverse and multiple cultures, more willing to see beyond existing social norms, etc.”

“The University is inclusive of diversity of thought. New ideas are valued and encouraged.”

“I believe this University has a very polarized climate for diversity of thought. Given that, I believe there is a diverse presence of thought, particularly within social dynamics, but the course offerings and University led forums/settings seem to be lacking.”

“Funding programs like the Humanities Collaboratory, Arts Initiative, OVPR Anti-Racism grants, & NCID enable the creation and communication of new

knowledge, connections with diverse cultures and societies - these self-conceived projects are absolutely political acts of free speech that the University is deciding to support. These projects are done BEST with the most value for our world when experts, students and community are all part of the work. In my opinion, any and all project funding by U-M should be required to produce a public-oriented communication of its findings.”

“We have an overabundance of course offerings and educational courses on DEI initiatives, but yet I do not believe the organization truly stands behind the concept of supporting “diversity.” It is pushed in leadership meetings, our hiring practices, and our committee work, yet HR has not been helpful or supportive when leaders seek guidance and direction. There is more to diversity than the color of our skin, gender, or sexual preferences. Our minds are what make us diverse and that is what creates a beautiful work environment.”

“Like most American colleges these days the range of opinion is heavily tilted to liberal / leftist thought. This in itself is not a problem, but the predominance of liberal ideas leads to a smugness that stifles flexibility of thought. I have seen colleagues talk to their students like children, imposing their own political views on them without even



being aware that there may be other views on the issue. This turns the classroom into a place of indoctrination rather than inspiration, and is diametrically opposed to the stated ideals of the University.”

“U of M needs to reckon with the reality that it is actually a conservative institution, and to make more space for genuinely leftist and anti-racist and anti-sexist and anti-ableist diversity of thought.”

“And here at UM I was part of a search . . . this year where an exceptionally qualified candidate was summarily dismissed because they did not say the right words about DEI. (Ironically, this person had taken more actions to support students from diverse backgrounds that I’ve ever seen. But words, not deeds, were what mattered.)”

““Diversity of thought” is not an academic value; evidence-based thought is an academic value. The premise of this question is deeply troubling and in fact anti-intellectual.”

“Diversity of thought is most lacking in the coursework offered and viewpoints favored in the humanities and social sciences.”

“The University has an ideological mono-culture. It is close to impossible to get a conservative hired to the faculty, and conservative students generally feel shunned.”

“Diversity of thought is definitely most lacking in regards to the University’s own communications and policy that refuses to deviate from a status quo that upholds the violent, militaristic, and imperialist ideals of the United States. Rather than doing what is right, the University is siding with whatever makes them the most money while ignoring the students they are meant to serve and educate while also using its influence to undermine the opinions of these student’s who are supposed to be the “leaders and the best.”

“Within our immediate team that meets every week, I believe we have cultivated a really good culture where people can speak freely, and we have political and social discussions regularly and respectfully. However, outside of that, I still have concerns.”

“Diversity of thought is not able to be constructive or present when one side camps in the Diag, yells hate speech and intimidation, and multiple listservs and groupchats are full of anti-Israel and antisemitic speech.”

“I don’t think diversity of thought is lacking, rather I think the climate around thoughtful discourse can be improved.”

“The graduate student union is a huge force against diversity of thought, and aggressively enforces their views over graduate students who want nothing to do with them.”

“There has been no room for pro palestinian speech among University leadership, and there has been no room for genuinely anti racist speech (not transparently fake platitudes).”

“I think this question is fallacious. We should seek diversity of identity, diversity of experience, but not diversity of thought for its own sake. We don’t need balanced representation of every opinion.”

“Most of the above lol. Overwhelmingly left liberal mood on campus. People can be really blind to just how naturalized that ideological set point is. One of the classic ways this happens is in how it’s acceptable to talk about certain groups, especially where those groups are associated with ‘bad’ views: Christians, rural populations, poor whites. Crude generalizations are fine, pejorative language is fine, contempt is fine, etc etc. People aren’t even *really* being mean about it most of the time; it’s just that the lefty set point of the entire background conversation is so entrenched that the problems with talking about groups that way is...invisible to them? Like these are often well meaning kind people who just don’t see what they’re doing. I think that’s a clear result of ideological homogeneity.”

“The most important area in which we lack diversity of thought is in accepted versions of our shared history. We are not allowed to describe the unique and important steps taken by the world and the United States and the West as leaders that have led to human flourishing and individual freedoms, the destruction of slavery and racial segregation, and the reduction of normalized violence between nations. In short, there is not diversity of thought when it comes to asking how we arrived at the privileged position we are in because it is not possible to describe the history of Western culture in positive terms.”

“Naysayers aside, U-M has, and encourages, a wide diversity of thought.”

“There is not enough diversity of thought in administrative faculty; i.e. deans, executive committees, etc. It is unthinkable to question the merits of DEI or discuss how it promotes bias and discrimination, and the

harms it causes for students. Bias against white or Asian students and faculty applicants is ignored (or perhaps even desired) to achieve the sacred goal of promoting under-represented minorities. Logic, reason, and analysis are not valued anymore, you are just expected to parrot the prevailing view and fall in line.”

“There is very little diversity of thought. The use of DEI statements (performative statements that declare fealty to a set of questionable beliefs) in hiring decisions exacerbates the problem. (It makes hiring iconoclastic stars very hard, and easy to hire middling academics.”

“In my experience, the University of Michigan is slightly more conservative than the typical flagship state University. I do not necessarily believe this is a bad thing; it likely reflects the views of taxpaying Michiganders. This means that the University must work to cultivate more liberal perspectives on campus (while simultaneously maintaining dialogue among its more conservative populations).”

“I think when we are experiencing things we need to think, how would we approach this if it was happening to another group. I cannot imagine that if students or faculty were calling for the death of another minority group in the manner it is currently for Jews, that the University would allow it. Again, diversity means “alike” not actual diversity. I feel any conservative within the University is automatically looks at as the problem and being against diversity. It truly feels like a farce.”

“I’m sorry, but we do not have problems with “diversity of thought” on this campus. Concerns about “diversity of thought” are dog whistles for those who wish to silence voices in favor of diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

“I have seen diversity of thought first-hand among staff, faculty, and students, as well as events around campus. I think that all sides insist, incorrectly, that their viewpoint is the one being oppressed.”

“I think diversity of thought is strong here. I do think that progressive voices are well represented and are most prominent. I think there is more opportunity to hear truly productive dialog between people on opposite sides of an issue in conversation together. But those conversations need to be productive, empathetic, and respectful. I think we need more evidence of diversity of thought in action where people are honest about what they think and feel but can engage in respectful and productive conversation as a way to show us how to do it better.”

“I see a reasonable enough diversity of thought on certain intellectual issues, but ironically, there is little diversity of thought on the issue of diversity itself. In fact, the University’s DEI mission is self-contradictory, because it’s not possible to not support it (or various aspects of it). Let’s unpack this: There is plenty of evidence that a diversity of ideas is a good thing, and so I certainly believe in cultivating it. I do think there is a point beyond which diversity becomes so great that it’s impossible for people to communicate at all, but in general, it’s easy to believe that diversity is a good thing. Inclusion is also a good thing. Who in their right mind would exclude someone from full participation in the classroom, or University life in general, because of the person’s race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, nationality, national origin, veteran’s status, age, or any other demographic characteristic? So diversity is good and inclusion is good. Equity is a bit trickier, because it can be defined in multiple ways. Despite Proposition 2 (or whatever it was), there is no doubt that we continue to put our thumbs on the scale to favor applicants of color. If that were not the case, then there would be no difference between the academic performance of students of color and white students. It’s quite obvious that there is a difference, which means that it’s obvious that we’re still favoring students of color in our admissions processes. One can view this as a good thing, a bad thing, or a mixture of good and bad. What one can’t do is assume that the performance differences are due to racism among faculty and within the University in general. Yet that’s what is often assumed, and my department (and other units on campus) go through the most twisted mental gymnastics to try to either deny it, or find a way to change the rules so the differences disappear). This decision to do away with SAT and GRE scores is just the latest manifestation of this. At least Rackham gave us an opportunity to defend the use of GRE scores- not as the be all and end all, but just as one potentially helpful piece of information among many. Unfortunately, the decision to abolish their use had already been made, and the discussion- despite the fact that the few of us who argued for keeping them were on far stronger intellectual ground- had already been made. So what happens? Almost all of the entering grad students in my department come from elite colleges. After all, if someone has a mediocre GPA from a non-exclusive college, we don’t have high GRE scores to provide evidence that the student could hack it in our doctoral program, so these applicants have no chance. So yeah, DEI in general is a good thing, but the “E” part of it is tricky, and we can’t have a serious discussion about the issue because too many topics and views are taboo.”

“The climate is generally very good at the classroom level. Conservative pundits make hay of the most outlandish claims emanating from America’s classrooms,

but the reality is this: 80-90% of my students are middle class or rich, and UM is part of the network of 80 or 100 elite colleges and universities that reproduce the country's upper middle class. For those intent on defunding education in the US, or on drumming up Facebook interest in the supposed menace of "woke" campuses, zooming in on the most extreme quotes by the most extreme students or faculty is a useful exercise. But it is absolutely not representative of what takes place in classrooms day in, day out."

“There is certainly a lack of politically conservative thought and opinion in the University relative to the nation as a whole, and I believe we should create an environment in which many different opinions can be voiced. But this is challenging to address in a context in which the rising form of “conservative” thought is authoritarian and antidemocratic: is it really in keeping with the mission of the University to engage and further legitimize ideas antithetical to democracy, for example? The University needs to first identify the principles it actually stands for, and then work to create an environment in which people are able to have difficult conversations. But that does not mean treating all perspectives as equal. There’s no neutrality here -- any stand the University takes is a political one, so that stance should reflect its values.”

“I think the environment regarding diversity of thought is robust! I’ve heard many different viewpoints and have always felt we were safe to speak our opinions and perspectives.”

“I have seen diversity of thought first-hand among staff, faculty, and students, as well as events around campus. I think that all sides insist, incorrectly, that their viewpoint is the one being oppressed.”

“I see the University of Michigan in some cases upholding diversity of thought regarding speakers, events, and so on, but as someone from Canada, I think that overall U of M skews as the rest of the United States does towards conservatism.”

“Perspectives from lower-income and lower-status members of our community are not as valued.”

“My own course syllabus doesn’t contain much diversity of thought. I draw on thinkers from the center and the left primarily; I don’t look for folks who think about community building, economics, justice, etc. from the right, justifying my approach by figuring “the devil doesn’t need an advocate.” In my area, we don’t have a lot of campus talks and speakers that express conservative opinions. I also don’t hear genuinely conservative opinions from fellow faculty, staff, or students. In attending an event sponsored by We Listen (a student organization) about an economic topic, I was very impressed by students’ erudition, but thought I could characterize all opinions expressed as left to center left. Many, maybe even most departments, ask faculty and staff for DEI statements in hiring. Does this have an impact on diversity of thought? Could someone express commitments in diversity, equity, and inclusion and also hold conservative opinions?”



2b. Have you seen examples of a constructive climate for diversity of thought at the University of Michigan, and if so, where?

“I see no evidence whatever of diversity of thought. Rather I see a self-righteous, intolerant, and generally uninformed minority dominating campus life and forcing recalcitrant individuals -- and the administration itself-- either to capitulate or keep silent.”

“To be honest, in this polarized society, I avoid most conversations with UM friends or colleagues with whom I suspect may take on the “other” side of a viewpoint than my own, for fear that the conversation could end badly. Most of my colleagues, I believe, do the same... What a shame too, because there are so many bright minds here to learn from!”

“In this election year, it would be nice if the University were able to facilitate truly inclusive dialog on the many important issues facing our country. I am not optimistic that this will happen however, and I fear that the University will continue to drift further away from the prevailing moderate political sentiment in the state of Michigan.”

“The student orgs on campus do a fantastic job facilitating diversity in thought and powerful conversations.”

“The only place I had seen have a constructive climate of freedom of expression was at the encampment for Palestine. There was a variety of thoughts & expression shared during the month the encampment blessed the campus. Speakers came to give lectures, literature was shared, and it became a community space for freedom of expression.”

“I have seen people express privately an appreciation for diversity of thought, but not publicly.”

“CRLT trainings are especially ripe for discussions about diversity of thought.”

“Most instructors I had always presented both sides of arguments, however you could usually tell which side they believed in. They are only human.”

“In small group settings, it’s a lot easier. People are not out to get you, and this is highlighted when you have genuinely constructive conversations in groups of less than 6. More than that, and it begins to feel like a mob.”

“People discuss different points of view in various required workshops, but certain points of view, though in some people’s opinion are valid are held up as being incorrect. Thus, when the groups meet (e.g. in ADVANCE workshops) there really is only one correct answer based on the opinions of the organizers. All of us are required to sit through these meetings in order to serve on certain committees. If there was real discussion, then these could be valuable, but there isn’t. Instead the few courageous participants to challenge the ideas are criticized and, once in my case, yelled at for being non-conforming. This sets up an atmosphere of self-censorship with the idea of just get me out of here. This is exactly the opposite philosophy that the organizers of these workshops claim to want to instill. The atmosphere is wonderfully supportive if you agree and stifling if you do not.”

“Most of the opportunities to hear diversity of thought as staff are the learning and professional development zooms. We also follow other schools and sometimes, but rarely, hear a differing viewpoint.”

“Displaying art and imagery that has the capacity to upset in a legitimized institution (many people assign strong truth values to museums) can make people who natively hold those ideas feel more welcome. U of M still struggles with allowing art in its institutions that criticizes itself, but it is a step in the right direction that must be followed through on.”

“Students are respectful of other students’ opinions in class. usually too respectful, since actually the range of opinions expressed is limited.”

“I’ve had some classroom discussions that covered controversial topics where professors preface it by saying everyone’s opinion is important and we need to be respectful of each other. One professor gave everyone a chance to speak and asked students specifically if they wanted to give some input. If the professor overall disagreed with the student, she would find something she could agree with and build off of the student’s idea. I think it’s important to find some common ground. These discussions should be “how can we learn from each others perspectives” instead of “it’s you vs me in a debate and someone has to win.”

“We have healthy debates in our breakroom.”

“Our department held a listening session after Hamas attacked Israel. It was awkward and there was a lot of silence, but it was well attended and once people started to talk, they were given respect and were heard. I would do it again and I would ask several questions that I have now.”

“I was in a team building conference years ago and the presenter said, “no one here thinks that a baby is born just a boy or just a girl, do you?” The way this was presented made interjecting difficult.”

“A number of my classes promoted critical thinking and a diversity of thought was evident in these classes.”

“What goes too far is protest activity that interrupts classrooms, study time/spaces, and U-M operations. U-M can continue to champion free speech, diversity of opinions, and First Amendment freedoms, while still enforcing policy and law and preventing these unfair and unwanted disruptions. But, there must be consequences for violating policies and law. There will be consequences for violations of policy in the workplace and in society after students graduate or leave from U-M. As an institution of higher learning, this should be a lesson taught at this institution, as well.”

“I have set many “point/counterpoint” debates in my classes and if the parameters are described and the classroom culture is welcoming, it can be beautiful. However, most faculty do not know how to create that kind of classroom culture.”

“In small, seminar-type courses, I’ve heard students productively disagree about a variety of ideas, frameworks, and current events. (These are the aforementioned courses where professors have made a deliberate attempt to make time and space for each student to speak.) I’ve been exposed to many new ideas through UM coursework and heard many professors express the desire to make people of all thought backgrounds feel welcome.”

“I actually found that my sorority (Chi Omega) was a great place to experience diversity of thoughts. Because we maintained genuine friendships, people felt free to express their opinions, learn from others, and ask questions. The current conflict in the Middle East is an obvious issue right now, and I genuinely felt that my sorority fostered an open climate for discussion. People shared their experiences and discussed concerns and opinions without fear of being lambasted.”

“I’m really happy that the University generally stood by Kristin Collier as the speaker at the white-coat

ceremony in 2022. She gave a great speech and was extremely professional and respectful, including toward those who were not being professional and respectful toward her. And, as far as I’m aware, she has not been institutionally penalized in any way, even as her character and qualifications were attacked and vilified (in wildly unfair ways, as anyone who knows her will affirm) informally and online. It seems to me like her way of approaching colleagues and students is a model of what constructive engagement should look like.”

“I have often seen undergraduate students raise thought-provoking issues about matters on which I have a different opinion, or that are contrary to the official position of the University. The students often come to class with a skepticism born of their own experiences and tend to be eager to try out new ideas. This is all wonderful! Unfortunately, I have also seen graduate student instructors try to penalize undergraduates for expressing views the GSI regarded as offensive. It is important to allow students to foster and develop their own viewpoints, even if those diverge from those of the instructor, provided that they are based on evidence.”

“The University of Michigan does a good job of bringing experts from many different areas together to solve many problems. People do a good job of reaching out to other department and fields of study to create very well improved conference, research, lectures, research projects that utilize the diversity of thought and expertise on this campus.”

“Most of the faculty I know who truly value these ideals are retired or nearing retirement. This is a growing problem of long gestation.”

“(1) Instructors soliciting various points of view in the classroom, or even presenting them so that students can consider them.
(2) Exposure to scholars in other departments and fields so that we get outside our own frame of mind and assumptions.
(3) Critical feedback through surveys, etc., can provide an occasion for open discussion of the results.”

“I think the Diag has a historic place as a center for freedom of expression and protest. I just wish people remember it is a public place for all of us to share and respect that as well.”

“I feel like all of my professors are willing to engage in thoughtful conversation and appreciate students with deep thinking.”

“I have been awed by the way in which diversity of thought is handled in the spaces I am in which center on disability and accessibility.”

“This survey feels like a small step forward, though I admit I have my doubts about whether it is really anonymous, which gives me pause about answering honestly.”

“Before the pandemic, I felt like there was more diversity of thought and you could actually discuss issues with other faculty in a constructive way. You could disagree with someone, but still be on good terms. Since the pandemic, this is gone. People form factions and aren’t interested in engaging in meaningful discussion.”

“The inclusion of policies that offer scholarships or free tuition to students from poorer households, and the opportunities for first-generation college students, are both examples where the University is seeking true diversity.”

“I am a scientist, so my personal experience with support for diversity of thought comes during the brainstorming sessions we engage in while writing grant proposals, interpreting data, and designing experiments. I can also “think through” questions on social issues with my close colleagues.”

“I can’t really remember the University ever really expressing any appreciation for diversity of thought at any level, until just recently. They’ve turned a blind eye or been overtly hostile to diversity of thought. At almost every level. While there are exceptions professors, students, administrators have been one sided and completely unwilling to consider anything “equal.” Back in the day sometimes over a beer you’d have a fun student debate but I can’t imagine that goes on much anymore. One example I can think of is I heard a Dean speaking, a DEAN, and she apologized for referencing a Wall Street Journal article, and that she read it. The WSJ, not some far right Q website, but one of the biggest financial papers in the world. Because it leans a little right. That’s the mentality we’re dealing with.”

“Anonymous surveys are great for a constructive climate for diversity of thought as we can be honest without consequences or feeling of discomfort.”

“I have been exposed to many, many new and different ideas and concepts as a student and employee of U of M. This has happened mostly as a result of discourse with other students, staff, and faculty. All leaders I have worked under have encouraged open dialogue.”

3. *What is your position on institutional neutrality and why?*

“As a postmodern scholar, I neither believe in the existence of pure objectivity nor neutrality.”

“Neutrality is incredibly dangerous. The University is funding genocide, and being neutral is evil.”

“It is an ethical responsibility of entities with power or voices of power to stand up for those without or who have lost their voices. I don’t think institutional neutrality is a responsible direction for the University. I don’t think the University needs to take a side on every issue but I do think when significant issues arise that the University should be vocal and take action against inappropriate actions of others. Take a stand against the wrongs of others, not of the others themselves.”

“I’d like to see institutional neutrality across the board. I don’t think departments need to “speak for their members” because even if you don’t agree, you’re not going to step out and say “I don’t believe that” for fear of reprisal or negative consequences. People can have their own opinions and they can say “These are my opinions and don’t represent those of the University or anyone else.”

“I think colleges/schools, programs, and offices should be able to voice political stance (i.e. the school of social work may refer to its code of ethics when condemning a major political event). I don’t think that there should be institutional neutrality in that the institution should address the campus community in terms of emotional and physical wellbeing (i.e. acknowledging specific groups that may be affected, shedding light on related campus resources).”

“I strongly oppose an “institutional neutrality” policy. True ideological “neutrality” is impossible, especially given the University’s professed commitment to “diversity, equity, and inclusion.” How can an institution promote anti-racism without commenting upon racist developments in society that directly impact students, faculty, and staff of color?”

“First, will there be actionable consequences for violations of institutional neutrality. If not.... then why have a policy.”

“I want the institutions I am a part of to be bold and courageous in standing up to oppression and injustice.”

“When it comes to political, moral, and social debates, the job of a University is to teach students to think about and question the positions of both sides, not to choose a side for them.”

“This is pretty disgusting to be honest. We are on the brink of catastrophic climate change; we are party to unprecedented genocide on multiple international fronts; we are witnessing AI advancement that is redefining every aspect of science, education, and art; and we are staring down a presidential election that might dissolve the foundation of democracy in the United States. What an absurd time for a University to decide it doesn’t have opinions on the state of the world. What is it that we’re trying to teach here? How to go bury our heads in the sand?”

“I do not think institutional neutrality is a good idea. I have been proud of the statements Chancellor Grasso has made on local and national issues that reflect the values of our institution. His written communication a “Response to Wall Street Journal Opinion Piece” on February 7, 2024, not only showed the University’s commitment to the Dearborn community, it also reaffirmed the University’s values of free speech. His written communication “Support for Human Rights and Expression” on December 14, 2022 is another example of an important statement communicated by UM-Dearborn’s Chancellor that expressed the University’s values while reinforcing the freedom of speech. Although one could argue these were written with political neutrality principles, I fear the future where these communications are challenged as partisan and ultimately silenced. President, Provosts, unit-level leaders must be able to communicate on local and global issues when those communications support the University’s values in a non-neutral manner. This is what it means to be a leader and the University of Michigan as an institution is a leader.”

“If there is wide consensus among a department on a pressing social issue, that department ought to be able to take a position. That consensus might be measured by a petition, survey, or poll, for example. Departments can and should actively create avenues for this to occur. Departments at UM can constitute communities of experts in fields that are deeply affected by social issues. The Department of Afroamerican and African Studies, for instance, should be able take a position on issues relating to anti-Black racism.”

“Professors should not be able to provide comments during class unless it is the subject matter of the class (e.g., a course on middle eastern politics could rightly discuss, and the professor provide a personal opinion based on their expertise in the subject matter, this topic whereas it is hard to see how a particle physicist or organic chemist would realistically integrate their opinions on the IDF or Hamas while discussing the Higgs Boson or a claisen condensation). When professors do this, it intimidates the students in their class to conform to the person in power’s viewpoint to “get a good grade or recommendation.”

“People who are more highly educated tend to embrace more progressive beliefs. People who are less highly educated tend to embrace more reactionary beliefs.

It is only natural that an institute of higher learning should be progressive in its beliefs and its culture. This is the result of higher education.

It is only natural that conservative, reactionary belief systems just can’t hold up in a truly academic setting, for they are the inevitable results of ignorance, intellectual laziness, and “sound byte” culture.

I therefore think it is impossible for the University to honor “institutional neutrality” in any realistic sense without violating its core mission, which is necessarily progressive by nature. The fact that reactionary groups feel alienated on campus is a good thing - it means the University is successfully doing its job.”

“As a department chair, I am in favor of an institutional neutrality policy. I do not issue statements on behalf of the department related to social or political issues, despite requests to do so. I think that such statements could come from student groups, faculty groups, or professional societies. One challenge to an institutional neutrality policy, however, may be disagreement on what counts as a political or social issue.”

“The health system should be entirely neutral on all political and contentious social issues. Patients should not feel that unwelcome or minority opinions might impact their healthcare.”

“The University cannot know everyone’s position and no individual at any level should say that they speak for the University.”

“There can be no true academic freedom without institutional neutrality. Only that neutrality allows for intellectual diversity and risk-taking that leads to education, creation, and discovery.”

“Given the heightened political climate right now I do think institutional neutrality is sorely needed. We saw that any statements issued this year from University leadership were quickly interpreted as “good” or “bad” by the campus community, which then leads to additional back-pedaling and staff trying to provide additional context. It is impossible to please everyone and is so fraught that statement are issued in a watered-down fashion, or not issued at all. If we had a practice of not issuing statements, then our stakeholders would not be waiting and wondering why a statement hasn’t been issued, or poised to poke holes in it.

I think when it comes to practical matters about campus safety, or actions occurring on campus where faculty, staff and students need to be informed, those should be OK. But making a statement about activities being “right or “wrong” that have no direct bearing on the functions of the University is throwing kerosene on a fire.

Best of luck to the committee in sorting out the guardrails around this topic!”

“The last 8 months have demonstrated the very obvious problems with not maintaining institutional neutrality. Absolutely it should be maintained for all social and political issues. As soon as exceptions are made, the entire exercise is pointless.”

“A unit of any kind should only take a position if it’s able to express the nuances of the individuals in the unit. It’s up to each unit to do its due diligence of engaging its members, staff, faculty, and students, to determine the collective beliefs. Having done that, it is also the unit’s responsibility to be accountability for how it expresses them.”

“How do you reconcile institutional neutrality with our DEIA values? They can’t be separate things.”

“Neutrality is a vote for the status quo. How can a University that calls itself “Leaders and Best” or that trumpets its DEI initiatives or promotes the MLK Symposium stay neutral on issues of justice, especially when it has billions of dollars to invest?”

“I absolutely think the institution should adopt a policy of neutrality EXCEPT in cases of racism and attacks on other identity groups that will have large ripples across our campus. There should be a mechanism for identifying how those on our campus might be impacted and providing a list of resources for helping those affected.”

“I used to support the idea that it was necessary to take positions on certain issues. This has been so perverted by virtue signaling and its theater that I think I would welcome institutional neutrality. I am sick of the constant need that many people feel to be outraged about every little thing. There is real work to be done to make the world a better place. What we’re currently doing isn’t it. It’s performative and does nothing to move the needle.”

“I do not think institutional neutrality should be maintained, as the University stands for principles and values that are not neutral. Values of intellectual honesty, free inquiry, DEI, reasoned dissent, artistic expression are not neutral, and social and political developments will sometimes compromise these values. In these cases, it would make sense for the University not to remain neutral, and to take a position that would reinforced these principles and affirm the University community.”

“I think that all leaders should be expected to follow institutional neutrality when it comes to issues of social and political matters. I would go beyond applying this expectation for chairs and deans and also include center and institute directors. I cannot see a compelling reason for exceptions. I think the policy should include clarification of the distinction between academic products that may arise from a unit (e.g., white papers) and statements of support or alignment with one side of an issue. Simultaneously, individuals should be encouraged to express opinions on their own behalf.”

“I think that the University has a moral imperative to support human rights, including POC and queer rights. I think it is important for the University to be a voice for social justice and change. I think it has failed miserably at this in the past, especially in response to issues that the University has exacerbated.”

“I understand the theory behind the Kalven Report, and while there is some appeal to it, I also get concerned about how it might hamstring the University advocating for women’s rights, LGBTQ+ rights, taking a stand against dictators and fascist governments, and more. In some ways, institutional neutrality seems like a copout and puts higher ed into even a more isolated ivory tower.”

“Who decides what is “close enough” to the University for leaders to take a position? I think it depends on the situation.”

“I am against institutional neutrality. The University is an incredibly powerful American institution. By default, the University sides with conservative policies until pressured to change.”

“I think in order to not make the DEI efforts & the University values feel like “hollow” efforts or lip service, that University-level leaders should not be neutral. I think they need to model the values and speak out when they see injustice, harm, discrimination, etc happening in the world. This would also help with making a more diverse student, faculty and staff population feel welcome and safe here. It seems wrong to not address injustices that literally affect their lives and act like everything is okay when it’s not.”

“A unit, such as a department at least, should be able to take a position on social and political issues on behalf of its members.”

“In terms of level, I think it is extremely important for departments and Institutes to be able to have collective statements. Given the hierarchy of our institution, where some faculty and all staff are much more vulnerable than others, it is imperative we not only allow individuals to speak freely and thus be more open to being targeted. Especially when a department is speaking about or from their academic expertise, statements of collective comment can and should be allowed.”

“I have recently found myself dismayed by the political posturing of my former union, GEO, during discussions and actions on campus regarding events in the Middle East. It impressed me as far outside their mandate and responsibilities to declare a position on an international crisis. Therefore, I’m generally supportive of the idea of “institutional” neutrality, that is, by those who are explicitly speaking on behalf of the University as an entity. I do think that it’s entirely appropriate for University leaders such as deans, chairs, and directors to express concern or support for members of their communities who may be affected by some external event or policy debate and would not want to see them held back from such expressions.”

“I believe that institutional neutrality is a good thing because at the level of notoriety that the University of Michigan is, professors and faculty, not limited to, seem to use this great institution as a platform for their beliefs. Once that happens, it reflects on the University as a whole and that is wrong. Of course, the media is one-sided and slanted toward acquiring clicks but that is another story. There must be a way for a separation to occur. Tough first amendment argument.”

“I would be cautious about adopting this neutrality stance. There are many political and social issues that, while not directly affecting matters of University governance, may have indirect but very important

consequences for the University and its community.... issues that make the state an appealing (or not) place for University members to reside, for example. I would like the University to have freedom to take positions where they deem appropriate. Ultimately I would like to place my trust in the Regents and the University President to use their good judgement about where or when or why it is important and beneficial and meaningful to weigh in, versus where it is too divisive and/or unnecessary or low impact to take a position.”

“One can’t be neutral on politics, and one shouldn’t aspire to in the first place. I think the best anyone can do is be aware of their biases and try to be explicit about them. Asking for neutrality on an issue would put the University in an embarrassing position if, for instance, if teaching evolution were at issue again, like it was in the aughts. Taking no position on the foundational cornerstone of biology would be contrary to the mission and work of the University. I think we should all continue to speak, recognizing we are accountable to those of us in the institution- staff, students, faculty, patients, and also to our broader community.”

“The way the University of Michigan is balkanized into its separate schools that are fiercely independent requires every level of admin to be neutral. There is almost never a right and wrong answer on issues, and so admin taking a side on things where a distinct portion of students disagree chills dissent and creates a climate of fear to speak out. If the school is not neutral, it becomes an echo chamber of all the same ideas being bounced back and force, and people who disagree are silenced, and as a result, we leave this school much more ignorant than when we entered it.”

“The University has a large platform and considerable influence, and it would be an absolute waste to maintain institutional neutrality for all social and political issues. University pressures contributed to the end of apartheid in South Africa -- imagine how much would have been lost if all universities had scrupulously adhered and encouraged their students to adhere to a principle of institutional neutrality.”

“I feel the institution should remain neutral on social and political issues. Whereas the individual faculty, employees should be able to voice their personal views on political issues, the institution should not promote take “official” stances on divisive issues as there should not be an assumption by leaders that this view reflects a vast majority of the constituents.”



4. *What additional ideas do you have for how the University might support freedom of expression and diversity of thought, whether directly through its rules and policies, or indirectly through the campus climate it promotes?*

“Truly have a diverse work force. This would include conservatives in the leadership roles along with faculty.”

“Hire professors with diverse viewpoints, get rid of DEI statements, promote initiatives geared towards healthy conversations between individuals with different points of views.”

“I really appreciate UM taking community feedback on this topic. It is near impossible to please all in the community regarding this topic, but important to try. Regardless of the outcome, I think so long as this community feedback is reviewed earnestly, this was a good process.”

“While hiring is controlled by faculty who will only replicate themselves, there is nothing to be done.”

“Host moderated debates between prominent figures/scholars (who will participate in good faith, i.e. not social media trolls) with opposing political views on important subjects: climate change, economics, AI, healthcare, etc. Encourage student questions and discussion after. This is already being done extensively in the podcast sphere.”

“Fundamentally reorganize the faculty hiring process to promote political diversity in the same way that student admissions and faculty hires have been reorganized to promote ethnic diversity. Surely intellectual inclusion is as central to the University’s mission as is social reengineering.”

“Find a way to hold departments accountable and follow through.”

“Clear rules never hurt anyone. Most of the issues that we have had with activists over the past year have been due to a lack of concrete rules and consistent enforcement of those rules. Defining what is and is not acceptable behavior not only prevents unacceptable behavior from occurring, but also protects first-amendment activities.”

“Embrace a culture of controversy, exchange of ideas, offensive and violent opinions, and prepare people for real life. Train people on how to receive criticism and engage in conversation or negotiation with absurd, offensive, or radical people, instead of training people on how to express their opinions without offending anyone. I do not know if you have realized it, but those trainings do

not serve their purpose: people simply shut up. Perceived cost/reward almost never makes honesty worth, in any controversial topic.”

“It has to become safe for faculty, students, and staff to express opinions that contradict the positions taken by the University without repercussions. Students need to be supported by faculty when they express ideas contrary to the majority in the room and not denigrated or belittled. Even something as simple as saying, “Yes, there are many people who hold that position, let’s talk about that a little more...” instead of the routine shutting down of the idea and assigning derogatory labels to those who hold the idea. Leaders should be educated about when and how it is appropriate to discuss political positions with their staff and not to assume agreement nor to pressure agreement. The campus has a significant number of faculty, staff, and students who hold more traditional moral perspectives that may be different than that held by the University - there has to be a way for these individuals to hold their moral positions without being pressured to endorse positions or take actions they view as immoral.”

“I think that it’s important to make avenues for peaceful conversations and to hear staff, students, and faculty views in a meaningful way. To try to heal divisions and move towards a more positive future. I think what is going on now on campus is serious and stressful for everyone, but not everyone is being heard in a meaningful way and it’s leading to discontent.”

“Actually listen to the criticism of the populations you serve--even if it isn’t worded in the way you want to hear it.”

“The University should support reasoned analysis and positivity, dialog, resolution and positive things. Students who break the rules and especially laws should face the consequences.”

“It would be interesting to see the University sponsor a regular point/counterpoint forum of some type for volunteer speakers/writers to present their point of view on a given topic (anonymously if necessary) to help re-establish the norm of principled and fact informed debate.”

“The entrenched faculty will not allow change.”

“Enforce the rules that are already there and don’t cater to violent protesters, ie: allowing them to camp, providing them electricity, water and other resources that support their unlawful behavior.”

“University leaders should follow established processes and policies when implementing any enforcement actions, and it should be applied consistently, not with preference to certain political viewpoints. Students should be allowed to protest if peaceful and not be removed with patently biased pretexts. Leaders should dialogue with protesters and take steps to make protesters feel heard.”

“Bring in speakers from many different walks of life, including and especially those who would challenge the majority of people here, to give public talks. Provide them with ample security as I suspect that there may be intense protests at the slightest bit of deviation from the mainstream view here. Education should be about how to think, not what to think, and introducing people to a wide range of viewpoints encourages the former. People need their ideas challenged. Perhaps it will make them more open and empathic to each other.”

“Make it very clear what activities are permissible and which activities cross a line into non-permissible. Make it clear up front and understood what consequences are for crossing the line and why.”

“The State of Michigan and the U.S. have a lot of people with many different backgrounds, beliefs and ideologies. The University could consider why freedom of expression and diversity of thought within UM is not nearly as varied as the freedom of expression and diversity of thought that is evident throughout the State of Michigan and the U.S.A. as a whole.”

“This would be difficult to accomplish, but it would be helpful for the student experience if there was a way to discourage moral policing. The students who do it tend to be the most engaged in University matters, but their actions cause other students to withdraw and disengage. This is especially harmful given the difficulties associated with college and graduate level learning and the widespread prevalence of depression and anxiety disorders in students.”

“Create campus conversations or ways to have discussions that are meaningful. Host “tell me more” discussions where people with opposing views have conversations but cannot interrupt each other and can only respond “tell me more.”

“We can’t have true freedom of expression and diversity of thought when people with disabilities are included only as second class citizens, when grad students with disabilities drop out because they can’t get

accommodations, when access to extended sick-leave lacks flexible access for waxing/waning conditions and is managed by risk-management and not by healthcare in collaboration with the employing unit.”

“Because the faculty tend to hire “more of the same” political and sociological viewpoints, then there is little philosophical diversity on campus. Sadly, for a University diversity of thought should be our real currency.”

“Give the broadest protections possible to constitutionally protected free speech and expression. Any and all rules and policies should be informed by and cite the relevant case law (Supreme Court). This serves an educative function and may prevent avoidable violations of constitutionally protected speech.”

“I would also like to see more training and discussion about how to handle and respect those who have differing points of view, instead of trying to get everyone to think the same...”

“Hire a more diverse faculty. Stop demanding loyalty oaths from new employees including faculty and administrators. Same goes for student applicants.”

“This is such a loaded questionnaire that I’m not bothering to respond to it--it’s clear the University is much more interested in pandering to right-wing politicians and their supporters (i.e., University donors) than it is in fostering freedom of expression. I am extremely disappointed in the direction that the University of Michigan seems to be taking.”

“Take a strong stand against the “heckler’s veto”. Disruption and harassment should be met with sanctions if the behavior is not corrected.”

“There are so many presentations, workshops, etc. on specific kinds of DEI. I would like to see more programming and opportunities to support communicating across political, social, and other divides. If we can communicate and really care about what someone else has to say (rather than prove how much better informed we are) that would be a truly revolutionary change for our institution.”

“I appreciated the clarity of thought that went into the decision to clear the recent protest encampment. It has been many decades since I participated in antiwar demonstrations, but I understood then, as now, the differences among peaceful demonstration, civil disobedience, disruptive protest, violent resistance, and unrestrained riot. That needs to be made clear to this generation, as well.”

“I am plainly in support of cultivating an environment where diversity of thought is supported and championed. I think this past year, freedom of speech impacted accessibility for folks within our community, and I was disheartened to see students losing access to services, events, celebrations, etc. because their peers were “disrupting” the status quo. I don’t think that one group should impact another’s access to various campus resources, and that students have the right to utilize and access resources that they, in part, help fund.”

“It would be useful to have some classes or training on the topic of how to hear unpleasant or disagreeable ideas expressed and how to appropriately respond to them.”

“I appreciated the effort to create this survey. I don’t normally answer surveys, and especially if there is some ideological bias in them. I think this is a problem, because then the University only gets one part of the picture. I think this is another argument to support institutional neutrality. If the University is not neutral, that means it will have a certain leaning to one side, and therefore, it will be hard to reach out to the people on the other side. Thank you again for this! GO BLUE!”

“The University should not ban students from protest. It should have a look back at the history of protests students have done on this campus and look at today. The University should be ashamed by its harsh punishment to students who are doing what they’ve always done: supporting what they believe and inciting global movements for peace.”

“Create additional avenues for criticism of the University to be legitimized within the University itself.”

“I think unit leadership should consider how they — though their most mundane meetings, convenings, and teams — actively do or do not foster freedom of expression and diversity of thought through the intentionality (or not) of their approach and the support they provide.”

“I couldn’t even be on the diag and had my classes interrupted. That is unacceptable. The policy for freedom of speech to include marching with drums and bullhorns through my classes is ridiculous!”

“The undergraduate student body is not diverse -- especially in terms of income. A system that admitted students from within the state -- either automatically or via lottery -- who meet certain minimum criteria would diversify the racial and income makeup of the campus. That would likely also lead to a diversity of thought on campus.

But in general, departments, college, and other units on campus need to find a way so that the people most willing to yell and bully others don’t dominate discussion.”

“The University should enforce time, manner, and place limits on First Amendment speech.”

“I think consistency of enforcement of policies is key. If one group is permitted to bend the rules for, say, a protest, other groups should also be permitted to bend those rules or else the rules should be changed.”

“There is a rich tradition of protest, but there have to be consequences when rules are broken. The University needs to enforce these rules. So if protesters want to do a sit-in or break into a University building, or cause damage or disruption, consequences need to be enforced. Freedom of action, but not without consequences if they are disruptive or violating rules. MLK was happy to be arrested and go to jail, the student protesters today want to be able to do the same thing but without any consequences.

The students at the encampment should be punished. They stole the Diag from other students and prevented freedom of expression for those with opposing viewpoints. Allowing them to do that unpunished, stifles freedom of expression for others.”

“I think there is the most work to be done on the campus climate and norms. We have to figure out a way to give people “low stakes” opportunities to engage with ideas and perspectives they may disagree with, and we need to do a much better job promoting values of intellectual curiosity and humility.”

“Administrative support of the faculty is the most important thing. This is especially true when faculty have been attacked or threatened by outside forces. Administrators (chairs, deans, provost, president) must have the faculty member’s back. I’m still waiting for examples of the “full-throated support” recommended by the advisory committee on targeted faculty.”

“The faculty need to be reminded that they (we) have been entrusted to do the very important job of education and research. We have obligations to the populations of Michigan and the US to promote objective inquiry and critical thinking. We should be humble and consider the possibility that the elite consensus is not correct on every issue, and that there might actually be something to learn by considering the diverse experiences of Michigan residents.”

“Don’t squash student movements.”

“I think DEI is incredibly important but for some students it seems very overbearing. For example, students feel compelled to include preferred pronouns even if they are indifferent to how a person addresses them.”

“If you’re reading this--and I pray there is a reasonable human on the other end of this interface, I urge you to pass on this message: *lead from the top*. Don’t just issue a communication or policy. *Show* faculty that you have their backs. Take a principled stance to support freedom of speech, even when some community members may feel uncomfortable. There needs to be categorical support for freedom of expression on this campus that does not make an exception for faculty who are critical of Israel. If we can’t even discuss things in a classroom or on campus, where else can we turn?”

“I am among those who believe that there are already adequate rules and policies in place at the University of Michigan to support freedom of expression and diversity of thought. We do not need more rules and policies. More rules and policies, particularly in a time of increased tension and polarization, will inevitably lead to rules being weaponized by those in power, in arbitrary ways, against vulnerable targeted groups and individuals. We do not need more repressive penalizing judgments against members of our own community. We need dialogue, understanding, and tolerance, and dispute resolution that seeks to reintegrate disaffected members, rather than penalize and extricate them.”

“Upper administration needs to stop being hypocritical and actually defend free speech, even when that is irksome to the administration. That is the ethical

thing to do. And we look to our administration (and administrators) to take ethical positions.”

“I think the University has been handling these complex issues relatively well. The most important component in educating students and affecting climate in these regards will be to increase the emphasis on face-to-face conversations, rather than didactic presentations. I’ll never forget an initial faculty DEI meeting in which there was a powerpoint presentation with a brief “break out” session in which faculty could talk about difficult personal situations. The group discussions took off and were compelling and valuable but they were cut short so the presenters could cover more of their powerpoint presentation, which nobody remembers.”

“I strongly believe that universities are places where people - young and not-so-young - must be encouraged to build critical thought and test the boundaries of what they think is the right way to make change. Freedom of expression and the space for critique is not only a vital tool of learning regardless of age, but builds stronger communities. I encourage UM to suspend the power dynamics that are inherent in a huge bureaucratic institution and listen to divergent thought - especially when it is coming in such large numbers. I think that the way in which UM has dealt with the Gaza solidarity protestors is lacking in its ability to respond in a way that respects concerns, builds trust, and creates safety for the larger community. I also think that not addressing concerns about divestment and transparency are not neutral stances and should that be the case there would be many policies that UM would have to review.”



“Our University (among many others), has lost its way on freedom of expression and diversity of thought. We need to clearly state and focus on our values in this regard, and then consistently apply them. I suggest this involves 1) Institutional neutrality, where the University and its units do not comment on various issues of our time. 2) Restructuring of DEI. As currently manifested, one, narrow ideological perspective is the only acceptable viewpoint in DEI. DEI should be restructured to, ironically, be broader and more inclusive or varied perspectives, thoughts and groups, including those that might be contrarian. 3) Outline free speech policies and consistently apply rules. This means actually enforcing rules that intimidation, bullying, and other tactics and behaviors are not acceptable and defended by free speech. Freedom of speech necessitates not allowing ‘mob’ tactics to shout down and intimidate, as this is done to impede on others speech.”

“There need to be actual, real consequences for people who violate University policies, regardless of what political positions those people hold. Until such time as the University decides its going to enforce its own rules in a viewpoint-neutral manner, all the surveys and statements in the world are meaningless.”

“I think our policies (specifically SPG) work pretty well to support freedom of expression. I think we could be more intentional about pursuing pluralism as a University value and creating spaces for responsible expression of diversity of thought, and training/supporting faculty, staff, and students to engage with those who disagree with them through dialogic strategies. We need to learn how to disagree better and how to be open to and remain in relationship with those who disagree with us.”

“The main recommendation I have is to hire faculty that have different opinions and provide more opportunities for collaboration between different view points. Currently, both political sides have made scapegoats out of the other. It’s easy to hurt people you don’t understand. As an academic institution, it should be your duty to bridge that gap through knowledge.”

“I’m waiting for the pendulum to swing back to some sort of sane place where we welcome a true exchange of ideas. I’m not sure this is something the University can make happen though.”

“Students who break into buildings and vandalize University and private property while intimidating their peers must be punished. The University needs a no-tolerance policy for these students, and those who committed such acts must be suspended or expelled. If there are no consequences for these unacceptable acts, these students will continue to commit them.”

“Refrain from bringing police on campus at 6AM to dislodge an entirely peaceful, outdoor protest. Stop defining impermissible “disruption” so broadly as to cover just about anything other than quiet deference. This makes “anti-disruption” into a potential pretext for halting otherwise normal, traditional forms of noisy protest.”

“It’s not conservative to uphold our principles espoused through the Constitution. It is still a radical new idea to allow such freedom of thought and expression that even those who hate us and want to bring us down are allowed to express their views. Our democratic norms are the least hypocritical ever known and allow for the unlimited human potential we have unleashed. They are rare, still in the infancy of progressiveness, and need your protection.”

“Ban DEI statements and any other compelled speech in faculty hiring. Only research and teaching statements should be required.”

“The DEI bureaucracy at the University is too big and enforces a political environment that’s extremely hostile to anyone who disagrees with their niche radical views (by which I mean views that run much deeper than their stated surface-level purpose to promote diversity/inclusion). The problem will only be solved if the DEI bureaucracy is cut back.”

“There must be immediate reflection and reforms in the DEI bureaucracy, which currently has a strangle hold on the UM climate by promoting the binary oppressed/oppressor narrative.”

“There is too much to put into a survey like this, but I do applaud the fact that institutional neutrality is actually being discussed by the University of Michigan which at times seems desperately separated from reality. Improve the climate for conservative viewpoints on campus, perhaps affirmative action for conservative faculty, administrators or others can be pursued to allow for more balanced discussion. There is virtue to be found on all sides if you allow yourself to listen.”

“Hire based on merit and not on race/gender. You will get much more diversity of thought if you actually hire the best person and not look at identity on hiring, etc.”

“Make it clear that University serves to be a forum for ideas and not an arbiter for the validity or appropriateness of those ideas. Ideas must stand on their own and the best way to evaluate them is through the crucible of debate and dialogue.”

“Don’t give in to a loud minority.”

“As other universities have done, replace DEI statements with a service statement in the hiring process. Faculty jobs consist of research, teaching, and service. It makes far more sense for the hiring process to reflect that.”

“Stop shutting down student votes. It was very disappointing to see a University that claims to pride itself in civic engagement suppress a student vote because they didn’t like the question it was asking. You can disagree with a topic, and it’s clear that this specific action did very little to no effect on de-escalation. If anything, it further inflamed tensions.”

“Diversity of thought should be given equal importance to other forms of diversity. We have made marked strides in valuing our diversity in race/gender/sexual orientation which we can be proud of, but have not yet lived up to the goal of more inclusive diversity of thought in our system.”

“All courses and all teachers should be trained in asking their students the following “regardless of what you believe about this particular issue, please take the following position and argue for it. (Or against it.)”

“I think the University first has to focus on admitting students / hiring faculty and staff from a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, etc. in order to have a diversity of thought. This could targeted recruiting, special grants/scholarships. This could also mean that HR and supervisors should go through anti-bias training to expand job opportunities to others.

Another area should be more transparent ways to share feedback and concerns with leadership. Perhaps, there are avenues that exist already, but it would be helpful to outline it to others.

I appreciate the University taking time to consider our views. In some moments, it will be uncomfortable, but one needs to be out of their comfort zone in order to experience growth.”

“I am concerned about retaliation against students, staff, and faculty who choose to express their personal or professional opinions. Increasing higher education in this country feels less free.”

“Thank you for engaging the community in this discussion. I realize there is no easy answer to this! I am proud to be part of an institution that is willing to grapple with it.”

“Consciously begin to recruit invited speakers and potential faculty that can challenge in a civil manner the groupthink that is suffocating this University. Faculty and senior administration must be the role models for this culture change to occur. If this does not happen, the Academy will become an echo chamber (if it hasn’t

already) in which the true believers talk to each other and no real exchange of different (diverse) ideas will occur. Without a conscious effort upon the part of universities like UM, the divide between the two Americas will just become wider and will eventually lead to some form of rupture.”

“Acknowledge the long history of student protest, and protest in general, as disrupting outdated ideas and pushing for positive social change. Allow students to express their opinions freely, including through public demonstrations, without fear of a disproportional response from the University or from law enforcement. Acknowledge the diversity of thought on campus by actually recognizing all viewpoints, and meeting with student leaders to listen to what they have to say. Show us that you’re actually listening to the responses on this survey. Make students feel like you actually care what we have to say.”

“The University should apply its existing time, place, and manner rules equally. For example, student groups who want to hang banners in the Diag must get permission. This was not applied to the students who erected the “encampment.” No one should be able to disturb a class by marching through it with a megaphone. This is obvious. No draconian measures are needed, just an enforcement, and therefore promotion of, civility.”

“Allow the students to create another encampment on the diag. Promote diverse thought leaders from the region of conflict to direct institutes and collaboratives.”

“U-M has a long tradition of campus protest and we need to respect and support the right to such protests in the future. In the modern era, with greatly different means of communication, the possibility of manipulation and use of disinformation alters the environment in meaningful ways.”

“Much as I hate to say it, we may even need “affirmative action” for conservatives. When our law school only has 3 Republican faculty members out of 60-some, something is off. We risk becoming irrelevant if we only hire from one small part of the very large political spectrum.”

“By waiting until students have graduated or moved off campus to start their summer jobs and internships the University is burying this survey. The University intentionally waited until fewer students were paying attention to their emails so that they would receive fewer responses to this email. This manufactures results which make it appear as if there are fewer instances of repression than there really are. This is yet another reason why this survey is illegitimate.”

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- P.22 – The Cube (“Endover”) and reflection: Connor Titsworth
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