June 4th, 2018

Dear PSU Faculty Senate,

I am writing in support of continuing the Confucius Institute at Portland State University. The CI plays a critical role in supporting equitable access to learning a critical world language across Portland Public Schools.

For many years the PSU CI collaborated with my department, schools, teachers and staff to invite as many as twenty Confucius Classroom (CC) visiting and volunteer teachers along with funding to purchase curriculum and provide language and cultural learning opportunities, especially for many of our historically underserved students. Because of this infusion of teachers and financial support PPS increased dramatically from less than a 1000 students learning Chinese to well over 3000. In particular students of color and poverty accessing this opportunity rose the most.

As academic professionals, the CI directors provide the professional and personal assistance to our newly arrived CC teachers, but PPS directs the curriculum and professional development in alignment with district and state standards. Interviews of CC teachers is conducted together in order to ensure our district identifies and invites teachers that will best fit into the various schools and meet the needs of those students. In turn when we experience a CC teacher who is struggling for either professional or personal reasons, PSU CI directors and staff partnered with us without hesitation to problem solve and resolve often challenging issues. They serve an invaluable role in the successful expansion of our offerings here in Portland.

PSU CI also regularly offers the important cultural and language learning experiences outside of the school day the greatly enrich our community. From the Chinese New Year’s celebration that features our students performing to HSK Chinese language proficiency testing, our students and families broaden their perspectives and gain opportunities not afforded by our public school system. They CI is truly an asset for PPS, PSU and the greater Portland community.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions about the important role the PSU CI plays in PPS and our community.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Bacon