PSU-AAUP Supports Faculty Senate Resolution Urging President Rahmat Shoureshi to Incorporate Essential Protections for Academic Freedom Before Renewing Contract between PSU and Hanban-People’s Republic of China to Continue the Confucius Institute.

A resolution to be presented at the June 4, 2018 meeting of the Faculty Senate will urge President Rahmat Shoureshi to renew a Confucius Institute contract with the People’s Republic China only if the new contract has explicit protections for academic freedom that are lacking in the contract that will expire in the next few months.

A 2014 report by the AAUP Committee on Academic Freedom, "On Partnerships with Foreign Governments: The Case of Confucius Institutes," (https://www.aaup.org/report/confucius-institutes) raised serious concerns with the lack of protection for academic freedom in Confucius Institutes contracts at U.S. universities. This report was circulated widely by PSU-AAUP. Since 2014, six universities, including the University of Chicago and Penn State, have closed their Confucius Institutes.

The PSU-Hanban/People’s Republic of China* contract establishing the Confucius Institute is close to expiration and coming up for renewal. This affords us, the faculty and academic professionals of PSU, a window of opportunity to make an absolutely necessary correction to any new contract. (*Hanban is the colloquial name for the Confucius Institute Headquarters, affiliated with the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China).

PSU-AAUP, acting as the PSU chapter of our national professional association, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), strongly recommends support for a Faculty Senate resolution that meets the three criteria for the protection of academic freedom recommended by AAUP. AAUP, alongside our colleagues in the Canadian Association of University Teachers, recommends termination of university-Hanban contracts that do not meet the following three conditions:

(1) The university has unilateral control, consistent with principles articulated in the AAUP’s Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, over all academic matters, including recruitment of teachers, determination of curriculum, and choice of texts.

(2) The university affords Confucius Institute teachers the same academic freedom rights, as defined in the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, that it affords all other faculty in the university.

(3) The university-Hanban agreement is made available to all members of the university community.

We urge our colleagues to speak up in support of a Faculty Senate resolution that calls on President Rahmat Shoureshi to meet these conditions in the renegotiated contract between PSU and Hanban.
Q & A: Confucius Institute

What is the history of the Confucius Institute at PSU?
The Confucius Institute first came to Portland State in 2007. This is the contract that was signed in 2007. In 2014 the PSU/Confucius Institute renewal contract was executed.

The Confucius Institute curriculum was not brought to the Faculty Senate for review at that time, or at any time afterwards. If the Institute were proposed today, it would need to be approved by the Education Policy Committee, and then by Faculty Senate, as all centers and institutes with instruction as one of their primary tasks must go through this process.

The hyperlinks for the documents referenced in this document are not working for me. Would you share the URLs/web addresses so I can paste them directly to my browser?


Original 2007 contract with Hanban

2014 continuation contract with Hanban

How do CIs work?
The government organization Hanban does the hiring in China and provides the curriculum. The instructors teaching do not have academic freedom and are not eligible to join the faculty bargaining unit at PSU.

Is questioning the CI anti-Chinese, anti-communism or anti-cultural friendship associations?
No, it is not anti-Chinese. To question the Chinese Communist Party’s control of higher education and its suppression of intellectual freedom is to support Chinese intellectuals and independent Chinese political culture. No, it is not anti-communism. China experts today are clear that the CCP is better understood as “authoritarian” than as “communist.” No, it is not anti-cultural friendship associations. CIs are sometimes likened to Goethe Institutes and L’Alliance Francaise. However, unlike CIs, these are not endorsed by, and partnered to, universities but are stand-alone entities. When we endorse the Confucius Institute as part of our university, we need to make sure it is consistent with our principles of academic freedom and shared governance.