

Let Process Guide Progress

by Paul LaFollette, Editor



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*Do not be hasty, that is my motto.
Treebeard*

So Temple now has a Confucius Institute. Confucius Institutes (CI's) have raised a fair amount of controversy in the past few years, with claims that the Chinese National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (Hanban) has, in some cases, violated principles of academic freedom. Several universities in the USA and Canada, including Penn State, The University of Chicago, McMaster, and The Universite de Sherbrooke, have recently closed their CI's.

Others, such as the University of Pennsylvania, have heeded the advice of their faculty to avoid negotiations with Hanban. The AAUP has recently issued a statement which recommends that,

"... universities cease their involvement in Confucius Institutes unless the agreement between the university and Hanban is renegotiated so that

- *(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; and*
- *(3) the university-Hanban agreement is made available to all members of the university community."*

However, this editorial does not intend to pass judgment upon Temple's newly created Confucius Institute. Clearly Temple will benefit from offering a Chinese Language major and our students will benefit from a program that can get them certified to teach Chinese in the public schools. Furthermore, the Director of Temple's CI, Professor Louis Mangione, has reasons for believing that the threats to academic freedom will not become manifest at Temple (see the accompanying interview with Professor Mangione). Given that the Confucius Institute is an accomplished fact, it is now time to watch, carefully but hopefully, how this institute functions. If we see any evidence of improper behavior, we must be prepared to take action.

The thing that I *do* want to fuss about is the manner in which this CI was created. It was simply announced on May 18, 2015, ten days after Commencement. Surely the advice of the faculty should have been solicited prior to deciding to bring such a controversial program to Temple. But it was not. The faculty Senate was not aware of this. Neither was the Senate's Educational Programs and Policies Committee (EPPC). Nor the CLA collegial assembly. Nor any recognized faculty body that I can find.

Article II paragraph 6 of our Faculty Senate Constitution states

6. As a necessary means by which the powers of the Faculty Senate can be exercised, the administration shall bring to the Faculty Senate through the Steering Committee full information concerning new academic policies, possible changes in existing policies which are being considered, new programs, possible changes in existing programs which are being planned, and all major administrative decisions which are being reviewed or for which ratification is requested.

Nothing of the sort was done in this case. Unfortunately, in recent years, our administration has demonstrated little interest in giving the Faculty Senate and other faculty bodies the courtesy of asking our opinions. Some years ago, the President and Provost used to at least pretend that they cared what we thought. In the recent past, however, more and more decisions have been simply announced, often over the summer when there are few around to notice. Examples include the new academic calendar, the changes made to presidential tenure policies, and now the Confucius Institute.

I do not dispute the administrations ultimate right and responsibility to make such decisions. I understand the frustration that administrators can feel as they watch faculty bodies laboriously fletcherize each now proposal before swallowing it. But, like most faculty members, I value process over progress. A university is a long lived, possibly ent-like, institution, and in *most* cases can afford, and should take, the time necessary make progress deliberately. There may occasionally develop a situation in which nimbleness is called for, and we have demonstrated our ability to respond in a lively fashion when it is called for. But we should never be unnecessarily hasty.

Furthermore, the faculty often have expertise that the administration may lack. Perhaps more importantly, we have the ability to approach proposals from a different point of view, a point of view to which administrators may be blind. Working together we can make better decisions founded on deeper insight.

The faculty Senate and Steering Committee have spent the past couple of years politely, and relatively quietly, asking that we once again be invited to the table. I think it is now time for us to become a bit more noisy.