



September 3, 2021

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Dear Dr. Passerini,

We write in response to your letter of June 3, 2021, which references our chapter's statement protesting the suspension of the Asian Studies M.A. Program and calling for its restoration with new investment. As we read it, your letter makes three broad claims: 1) that your decision to suspend the program was not "racially motivated;" 2) that the decision came following "an interactive, transparent process that allowed for the fullest discussion and clearly implemented the principles of shared governance;" and 3) that our suggestion that the decision indicates a "lack of commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is wholly without any factual support [...]."

With regard to the first claim, our statement never claimed that your decision was racially motivated. We are concerned about the impact of the suspension of the Asian Studies MA Program at a moment when the administration is indicating a greater interest in DEI.

Let us focus on the questions of transparency and shared governance first and foremost. In fact, the very reason that the AAUP advocacy chapter has come to be involved is because of faculty complaints about the lack of transparency about the numbers used in profit and loss statements, about the lack of timely information regarding the requirements of the APSA process, and about a decision-making process in which the considered views of the Asian Studies Program faculty, the Language, Literatures, and Cultures faculty, the A&S College Planning Committee, and the Dean of Arts & Sciences (at first) were rejected.

Specifically, the Asian Studies faculty never received clarification regarding whether the numbers used in the APSA process included the salaries for two faculty positions in the program (one who had retired and one who left after his position was switched from tenure-track to term). Indeed, as the CPC pointed out: "As with other programs under review, there is a concern that the budget calculations do not accurately reflect the financial viability of the program. In particular, faculty costs seem to have been improperly calculated in the case of this program" (CPC Review, Nov. 13, 2020, p.2).

The faculty repeatedly asked the Dean to show them the calculations demonstrating that the MA Program was losing money, but while the Dean promised to do so, he never did. The Dean also rejected the LLC faculty's request to arrange a meeting with you and advised against sending a letter from the Asian Studies faculty to you.

This lack of transparency is compounded by the fact that – contrary to your letter's statement that "the viability of the Program had been of concern for several years" – as recently as 2017, the Huron report on MA programs indicated that the Asian Studies MA was one of three programs in Arts & Sciences that was generating more revenues than expenditures.

In addition, after the Asian Studies MA Program had received an endorsement for further resources from the CPC, particularly filling the tenure-track faculty position for a China specialist and implementing the new programs already approved by the Faculty Senate, as well as an endorsement from the Dean of A&S in late 2020, suddenly in January 2021, the faculty was told the MA Program would be suspended. They were given little time to develop an alternative proposal, and when they requested help with the additional market research which they were told they needed, their request was denied. They nonetheless provided enrollment projections in accordance with their professional judgment.

Furthermore, the faculty of the School of Diplomacy and International Relations, with which Asian Studies has a dual-degree MA Program, was never consulted about the Asian Studies MA, and thus the suspension of the Asian Studies MA simultaneously suspended the dual degree program without any input whatsoever from faculty in the other program. It should be noted that the School of Diplomacy is being tasked with increasing its number of graduate students – and yet one of its programs has been suspended and some of its newly admitted students lost.

Finally, the decision to suspend the Asian Studies MA breaks the university's long-standing international agreements with institutions in China and prevents the building of new agreements that were already in process. Disrupting decades of cooperation with international partners and cutting off promising new avenues of collaboration over the objections of the faculty obviously contradict the university's oft-stated commitment to internationalization.

These are not examples of transparency, nor of "fullest discussion," nor of shared governance. Under the AAUP standards of shared governance, faculty have primacy in the area of curriculum and, in areas of faculty primacy, the university administrators should "concur with faculty judgment except in rare instances and for compelling reasons which should be stated in detail" (AAUP, *Policy Documents and Reports*). With regard to academic programs specifically, the AAUP standards, under Regulation 4d, state: "The decision to discontinue formally a program or department of instruction will be based essentially upon educational considerations, as determined primarily by the faculty or an appropriate committee thereof" (AAUP, *Policy Documents and Reports*). In this case, the reasons for suspending the Asian Studies MA Program were neither compelling nor stated in detail, and all the faculty bodies in fact approved sustaining it instead. When it

was not sustained, the Asian Studies faculty and the LLC Department faculty requested that you reconsider your decision to suspend it.

Most in contradiction with the university's commitment to DEI – the decision to suspend the Asian Studies MA Program comes after two decades of systematically depriving Asian Studies of resources in general despite its 70 years of history at Seton Hall. Our university used to have a China House, an Asian Studies Department, an Asian Studies Center, and multiple tenure-track faculty lines. Over the years, as explained in detail in multiple memos and reports from the faculty, Asian Studies has been decimated by your predecessors, despite faculty support for replacing retirees in tenure-track lines and despite ties both with Asian universities and with Asian American communities in New Jersey. It should come as no surprise that we are appalled by this latest decision by a Seton Hall provost. And it should come as no surprise that this decision is not viewed as demonstrating a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The fact that Africana Studies and Latinx Studies have also been deprived of resources and particularly tenure-track positions suggests that past administrations have not had a meaningful commitment to diversifying the faculty and to providing our diverse student body with the educational opportunities they deserve. However, you still have the opportunity to make good on this commitment. An excellent first step would be to reverse the decision to suspend the Asian Studies MA Program. Indeed, if SHU is seriously committed to DEI, then it should, instead of suspending the MA in Asian Studies, which has long played an instrumental role in fulfilling the mission and function of the University, invest in the program.

Sincerely,  
SHU AAUP Advocacy Chapter