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Faculty Senate Administrative Policies Committee  
Final Report: Investigation of the UoM Confucius Institute  
9/22/15

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The Faculty Senate (FS) Administrative Policies Subcommittee was charged with investigating the Confucius Institute (CI) at the University of Memphis in Fall 2014. This investigation was charged in response to concerns by an unnamed faculty member over the *purpose, function within the University, and practices of CI*. In response to this charge, the subcommittee surveyed the Provost, and interviewed the Director of the CI, the budget officer responsible for the CI, and several individuals who have interacted with the CI but are not affiliated. The subcommittee chair has spoken with several individuals who are not affiliated with the CI, but are aware of its activities in the broader community. In addition, the subcommittee reviewed the funded proposals against budget expenditures, and a sustainability action plan submitted by the CI. The following report documents the findings and conclusions of this year-long investigation.

The CI states ‘that it is committed to providing a world class opportunity to teach and promote the Chinese language and culture to K-12, collegiate, and post-collegiate students.’ Based on the evidence collected, the subcommittee has confirmed that the CI has done the following since its inception:

- a. assisted the University in recruiting qualified Undergraduate and graduate students from China to enroll at the U of M.
- b. developed exchange programs between Institutions in China and the University of Memphis.
- c. donated more than 5000 volumes of books in both English and Chinese about philosophy, economics, arts, etc. to the University
- d. provides funding for one Chinese language teacher to teach two Chinese classes a semester in the Department of Foreign Language for credit hours.
- e. recruited 50 teachers to teach Chinese language and culture classes in more than 50 partner schools in the state of Tennessee
- f. sponsored and organized study abroad programs and a summer bridge camp to high school students, University students, and educators (principals, superintendents, and educators.)
- g. served as an official testing center for Chinese language (HSK, YCT, and BCT).
- h. facilitated students (with scholarship), faculty members to conduct collaborative research with Chinese scientists and University faculty.
- i. sponsored culture events at least two to three times a year (Lunar New Year and Mid-autumn Festival) in Rose Theater to entertain and expose diversity to the University students, faculty and staff, administrators, and community.

**After verifying the completion of the aforementioned list of activities, the subcommittee has concluded that the CI is fulfilling its stated purpose.**

Regarding the function of the CI within the University, it is categorized as a Center within the University of Memphis organization. Generally, Centers are units within the university that share a common idea or vision and an overall and clearly defined set of objectives. They are not required to be associated with existing academic departments or units. Centers can be established within and across all scientific fields. The CI follows a set of bylaws and reports to a governing board, which includes the University of Memphis President and Provost. According to the bylaws, the board appoints a Director, and Assistant Director(s) as needed to manage the operation and programs of the Institute. The following outlines the verified activities of CI that contribute directly to the University of Memphis' mission:

- a. The CI developed and continues to support the Asian Studies and International Trade (ASIT) Bachelor of Liberal Arts Study Program through University College. The ASIT program offers Humanities courses, international economics courses, and Asian language courses. The program typically has between 50-80 students enrolled in these for-credit courses.
- b. The CI provides support for internships, scholarships, and study abroad programs to the ASIT students.
- c. The CI provides funding for one Chinese language teacher to teach two Chinese classes a semester in the Department of Foreign Language for credit hours.

**Therefore, after verifying the list of activities presented above, the subcommittee has concluded that the CI meets the general definition of a center and is governed in a manner which is consistent with other centers operating within the University organization. In addition, the CI enhances the academic, research, and outreach missions of the University of Memphis through its recruitment, enrollment, and retention of graduate and undergraduate students in the ASIT program.**

The practices of the CI refer to the methods of outreach, financial planning, financial expenditures, and personnel management. It is noted that all requests for information from the subcommittee were met in a timely and open manner. The subcommittee has reviewed documentation of these practices as provided by CI, University of Memphis Business and Finance Division, and the University Legal Office. Below are the conclusions of the subcommittee on the practices of the CI:

Methods of Outreach: The CI organizes and supports several notable and substantial forms of outreach to the community that have been verified by the subcommittee such as:

- a. recruited 50 teachers to teach Chinese language and culture classes in more than 50 partner schools in the state of Tennessee
- b. sponsored and organized a summer bridge camp to high school students, University students, and educators (principals, superintendents, and educators.)

- c. sponsored culture events at least two to three times a year (Lunar New Year and Mid-autumn Festival) in Rose Theater to entertain and expose diversity to the University students, faculty and staff, administrators, and community.

Financial Planning: The CI writes proposals to support the continuation of its programs. The proposals and budgets are reviewed by the Office of Research Support prior to submission to ensure compliance with university, state, agency and federal policies. These proposals were reviewed by the subcommittee and no irregularities were found. Further, the programs proposed and funding requested from external agencies were clearly articulated in the proposals and the funding requests appeared consistent with effort proposed.

Financial Expenditures: Upon receipt of a grant for the CI, the University and/or University Foundation manages contractual terms with external agencies. The University and/or University Foundation accounting offices are responsible to ensure compliance to contractual terms and that funds are appropriated as outlined in the grant proposal. Budget amendments require approval from the sponsoring agency. A review of expenditures of the operating budget shows that the CI has expended its operating budget on clerical support staff, students, scholarships, fellowships, instructors, travel, and material resources for its programs. Revenue accounts exist in the University Foundation so that the CI can recover fees for certain programs which help to offset expenses. Revenue accounts are not used to employ full time personnel. The CI is charged full Indirect Costs by the University for each grant it receives. In return the University has allowed for space and administrative support of CI.

Personnel Management: Through external grants, the CI funds clerical positions, part-time employees, teachers/instructors for its Chinese Language and Confucius Classroom programs, and a/an Assistant Director(s). The Director is a full time faculty members and does not receive extra compensation for the running the CI. Currently, the Director is granted one course release per semester by his department. For the Chinese Language and Confucius Classroom programs, candidates are recruited and initially vetted by the CI and then further vetted by partner K-12 schools. The CI facilitates and supports applications for selected applicants to the US Immigration and the State Department for J-1 visas. Participants in these programs return home upon completion of their program(s). The subcommittee has found no evidence that the procedures adopted by the CI to recruit, manage, and employ teachers in these programs have violated any policies outlined by the University and/or laws of United States.

**Therefore, after verifying the practices of CI as presented above, the subcommittee has concluded that the CI follows University policies, state and federal law, and that its outreach programs are designed and implemented to enhance local and regional communities as stated in its mission. The subcommittee has not found any evidence that the personnel funded by the CI have a conflict of interest or act unethically in the advancement of the mission of the center. In fact, the CI at the University of Memphis has been designated as a Model Confucius Institute as a result of its practices.**

**The subcommittee is aware of concerns that have been reported worldwide about the Confucius Institutes around the world as they are funded primarily by HanBan, an agency self-purported to be independent of the Chinese government. It has been reported that teachers employed by some Confucius Institutes around the world are instructed against having any in class discussions on or any involvement with topics sensitive to the Chinese government. According to the actual mission stated by Hanban, “Hanban is committed to developing Chinese language and culture teaching resources and making its services available worldwide, meeting the demands of overseas Chinese learners to the utmost degree, and to contributing to global cultural diversity and harmony.” In reviewing letters of support and feedback provided by K-12 partner schools, local government officials, university personnel, and individuals who have interacted with the CI at the University, the subcommittee has found no evidence that University of Memphis CI has deviated from its stated purpose, censored information or debate, or acted disingenuously in the achievement of its mission.**