Petition to the Committee of the Council   
  
We, the undersigned, having serious reservations about the presence of   
the Confucius Institute within the academic program of the University of   
Chicago, respectfully request that the Council of the Faculty Senate   
debate and decide whether to renew the contract this Fall with the Head   
Office of the Confucius Institutes, Beijing (Hanban). For reasons that   
follow, we believe that the Council has jurisdiction in this matter, and   
that terminating the relationship with the Confucius Institutes would be   
consistent with the intellectual principles and values of the University:   
  
--Although it is generally acknowledged that decisions concerning the   
establishment of entities with teaching responsibilities (“education”)   
fall within the purview of the Council for approval, and although the   
original Agreement with Hanban signed on 29 September 2009 prominently   
included such teaching, the creation of the Confucius Institute was not   
brought before the Council at that time. We believe it now falls to the   
Council to remedy that oversight with regard to a contract with Hanban   
which specifies: in Article 4, that the Confucius Institute will   
undertake the teaching of Chinese language, provide Chinese language   
teaching resources, and train Chinese language instructors; and in   
Article 6, that Hanban will provide 3000 volumes of Chinese books,   
teaching materials, and audio visual materials, as well as “send   
sufficient numbers of qualified instructors…and pay for their airfares   
and salaries.” (The Agreement of September, 2009 is appended to this email.)   
  
--The dubious practice of allowing an external institution to staff   
academic courses within the University is here exacerbated by the fact   
that Hanban is an agency of the Chinese government, and that the global   
agenda of Hanban, according to its own Constitution and ByLaws, is set   
by high officials of the Party-State, to whom the Head Office reports   
annually. It may also be noted that research proposals approved by the   
Chicago Confucius Institute are sent to Hanban for approval for funding.   
  
--Among the problems posed by Hanban’s control of the hiring and   
training of teachers is that that it thus subjects the University’s   
academic program to the political constraints on free speech and belief   
that are specific to the People’s Republic of China. The more so since   
the Hanban Constitution specifies that Chinese law applies to the   
activities of Confucius Institutes, and that the University of Chicago’s   
role in the hiring does not extend to the selection of the Hanban   
teachers. The University apparently reserves the right to refuse   
teachers proposed by Hanban, but that right has never been exercised.   
Among the unwanted effects, the University may well be complicit, then,   
in discriminatory hiring, as was exposed in the well-known case of   
McMaster University in 2011-12. A Hanban teacher was dismissed when it   
was revealed she was a follower of Falun Gong; and when the case was   
brought before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, McMaster was put in   
the position of defending itself against a charge of discriminatory   
hiring contrary to Canadian law and its own academic principles.   
McMaster thereupon did not renew its contract with Hanban. Indeed the   
Governing Council of the Canadian Association of University Teachers,   
representing some 68,000 teachers in more than 120 colleges and   
universities, recently passed a resolution “calling on universities and   
colleges in Canada which currently host Confucius Institutes on their   
campuses to cease doing so. And those contemplating such arrangements to   
pursue them no further.” In an accompanying statement, the Executive   
Director observed that Canadian colleges and universities were   
compromising their own integrity by allowing Hanban ”to have a voice in   
a number of academic matters such as curriculum, texts, and topics of   
class discussions.”   
  
--It was established in the McMaster case and has since been   
corroborated as well in an American secondary school CI (“Confucius   
Classroom”) that the Hanban teachers are trained to ignore or divert   
questions on issues that are politically taboo in China, or indeed   
criminalized, such as the status of Taiwan, Tiananmen, the pro-Democracy   
movement, etc. These questions do arise in Chinese language classrooms,   
even as they may be prompted in videos or the history texts of advanced   
language courses. A petition submitted to the New South Wales Parliament   
in 2011, signed by some 10,000 citizens, called for the termination of   
CI Confucius Classrooms in the public secondary and primary schools of   
the province, on the grounds that “the NSW government has admitted that   
topics sensitive to the Chinese government including Taiwan, Tibet,   
Falun Gong, and human rights violations would not be included in these   
classes,” and that “Confucius classes are directly linked to and funded   
by the Chinese government.”   
  
--Although the University of Chicago has ignored the provisions in the   
Agreement specifying that Hanban will supply texts and course materials   
for Chinese language instruction, this is not the case in the numerous   
smaller colleges in the US and around the world, as well as in the   
hundreds of Confucius Classrooms in secondary and primary schools, that   
are not in a position to provide their own Chinese language curriculum.   
In Chicago public schools alone, there are 42 Confucius classrooms   
operating by Hanban rules.   
  
--Although as just noted, the University of Chicago is hosting a CI   
under privileges not available to many other schools, the effect is   
that, mindful only of its own welfare, the University is participating   
in a worldwide, politico-pedagogical project that is contrary in many   
respects to its own academic values. Indeed by lending its good name to   
the CI project, the University, nolens volens, is helping to promote an   
enterprise that compromises the academic integrity of many universities   
around the world even as it is inimical to its own.   
  
For these reasons, we urge the Council of the Senate to terminate the   
contract with the Confucius Institutes.

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