



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII[®]
MĀNOA

July 31, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: R. Anderson Sutton, Dean
School of Pacific & Asian Studies

FROM: Reed Dasenbrock 
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: OVCAA Response to your response to the SPAS Program Review

Thank you for your memo of July 28th, which is a very thorough response to the SPAS Program Review conducted earlier this year. You respond to all the key issues raised in the external review team's report, and clearly, you have already begun to act on some of their recommendations. This memo should serve to memorialize our acceptance of your response and to highlight some of the issues that I think deserve particular attention going forward.

Faculty Roles and Appointments:

While you as SPAS Dean and I as VCAA tend to know about major Asia/Pacific initiatives on campus, the point that we need a mechanism to encourage more effective communication about such initiatives across campus (and also externally) is a good one. I look forward to getting your concrete suggestions on how to do this and to work with you on implementation. The suggestion about offering affiliate status is moot, since the mechanisms for this are already in place and work well.

The recommendation that joint appointments partly in SPAS be funded by other colleges as a way to build capacity in Asian and Pacific Studies is certainly something you would welcome and which would strengthen SPAS. However, to be perfectly honest, I think it has zero chance of being implemented in the present budgetary climate. What we do need to do instead (complementing the point made in the paragraph above) is to make sure you as SPAS Dean are informed about searches that will be likely to produce potential Asia-Pacific specialists and therefore likely affiliate center faculty.

Equally implausible in the present climate is the proposal to reinstate the associate dean position. I do not believe that this is justified given the present size of SPAS.

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SPAS Internal and University-Wide Articulation:

It seems as if you already have a good game plan on strengthening the connections between Asian Studies and Pacific Island Studies, and I encourage this discussion to continue.

UH Press is one of the greatest assets for the visibility of Asian and Pacific Studies at UH, and I strongly support anything you can do to strengthen the connection between the Press and SPAS. Let me know how I can help.

Given your dual role as Dean and AVC, you are our key point person on relations with the East-West Center (EWC), and I encourage you to continue to work closely with EWC leadership, especially as the key personnel continue to change.

Curricular Issues and Assessment:

Continued involvement with assessment will be essential as we move towards our next WASC reaccreditation report and visit.

Communications Strategy and Information Sharing:

The external review team recommended appointing a full-time media specialist, and I agree with your assessment that the right approach to take on this at the present time is to attempt to obtain this expertise more inexpensively through student help of various kinds.

Your plan to conduct a SPAS-wide orientation for all new students is a good one.

Student Support and Academic Outcomes:

Your plan to conduct listening sessions with SPAS students on issues such as advising and IT support is also a good one.

The decline in the number of majors in Asian Studies at both the graduate and undergraduate levels is a very serious concern, especially since it coincides with the campus moving towards a new budget model in which resources will be increasingly tied to enrollments. The faculty need to understand that this is a challenge that everyone will need to work together on to respond. You put it perfectly when you state that “this is perhaps the most important, and the most challenging, of the many recommendations made by the reviewers.” The centers in SPAS are

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highly active in a myriad of ways, and we probably need to do a better job leveraging that activity and consequent visibility into visibility for the academic programs in Asian and Pacific Island Studies. Communication is key here, and your idea to involve alumni is a great one. If, as would occasion no surprise, the cost of education is a challenge, I would encourage you to work with your development officer to see what can be done to increase the scholarship dollars available to SPAS students.

Administrative Systems and Staffing:

The suggestion to have SPAS-wide meetings of support staff is an excellent one.

Infrastructure and Technology:

Of course, we know that Moore Hall is a less than perfect environment for learning and teaching. We do expect that the Hanban-financed renovation of much of the first floor will help in this regard. The reviewers suggest that renovations to Moore Hall be on the university's list of renovation projects. Unfortunately, there are so many buildings on campus that are in worse shape than Moore that anything beyond minor remodels and improvements are not likely to be forthcoming in the near future.

I think the IT issues mentioned in the report overlap with the communications issues, and I hope that as student help devoted to this area becomes available, some of the improvements the Review Team calls for in your website and electronic presence can be achieved.

Comments on Area Centers:

Reliance on Title VI funding is an inescapable part of SPAS's past, present, and future, and SPAS is to be commended for how well it did in the last Title VI funding round and for how little damage has been sustained by the School's array of centers and programs given the level of Title VI funding cuts. A SWOT analysis would identify the potential level of Title VI funding after the next presidential election to be undeniably the biggest possible threat to SPAS's vitality and excellence, and if there are further major cuts to Title VI funding, the current structure of many different centers with discrete staff support probably becomes unsustainable.

I say this because it is not easy to see where funds to make up additional Title VI cuts would come from. In this context, paying attention to enrollments for the degree programs in SPAS is essential, as is the cultivation of support from alternative sources, including international entities, national foundations, and private donors. Some centers in SPAS have been quite successful in

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this cultivation, others markedly less so. The Center for Okinawan Studies seems to me a very good candidate for additional alternative funding, and I look forward to hearing more about the consortium for Okinawan Studies you mention. There has also, of course, been some interest at the state level in funding some of the SPAS centers. We need to cultivate all possible sources of support, and I look forward to working with you on taking the steps we need to take to secure some of these sources.

Some of the issues mentioned here involve concrete steps that are easily achievable in the short term, while others are more complex and involve a longer time horizon. I look forward to receiving a report from you by July 31, 2016 detailing the progress that has been made on the issues and plans you identify in your report of May 14.