

A University Press is a Vital Part of Stanford's Identity as a University. It is Not Meant to Be a Profit-Making Entity.

To President Marc Tessier-Lavigne and Provost Persis Drell:

You have announced the elimination of the modest annual subsidy (~\$1.7 million) to Stanford University Press, a move that will be severely damaging and likely fatal to the Press. This was done without consulting either the Academic Senate or the Editorial Board of Stanford University Press, a faculty committee. Since the news was announced a week ago, letters of protest have been pouring into the President's and Provost's office and the Academic Senate from many departments, programs and schools at Stanford including History, English, Classics, Languages, Literatures and Cultures, Music, Religious Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, East Asian Studies, Theater and Performance Studies, American Studies, the Stanford Law School and the Graduate School of Education, with signatures numbering in the hundreds.

In their letter to you, the Academic Senate's Committee on Libraries has asked that any decision about drastic restructuring at the Press be made only after full consultation and well-prepared discussion in the Academic Senate; and that any such decision be based on a careful examination of the Press's operations by an external committee of experts with experience in academic publishing. We, the undersigned members of the Stanford community, fully endorse these recommendations.

Academic presses are vital to the life of the university and to the world of learning. They are the means by which we communicate the results of our research, and the entire university mission of teaching and scholarship relies upon them. Stanford University Press is the oldest press in the western United States, with a long tradition of publishing major works in many areas of inquiry. It provides a vital public service that Stanford should be proud of.

If we use a purely financial metric to assess the value of academic books, the scholarly mission of the academy will be lost. Presses will publish only profitable books, graduate students will write only profitable dissertations, and tenure will be awarded based on scholarship that is profitable. This will skew research and publication in exactly the wrong direction, away from the mission and purpose of a university, which is pursuit of knowledge and truth, and toward marketability.

If Stanford eliminates its press, we are telling the world that we no longer value scholarship and scholarly communication but henceforth care only about the bottom line. Now more than ever, we should be sending the opposite message: that scholarly research is essential to a thriving society and that we will never waver in our commitment to producing and disseminating it.

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Your answer

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