

STATEMENT AT JUNE 13 2019 FACULTY SENATE SESSION re: STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

I. WHY DID WE DRAFT THIS RESOLUTION IN THE FIRST PLACE?

Thank you for your question. I would like to begin by thanking the Senate for permitting me to speak, to all of the many colleagues who are in attendance today at this important discussion, and above all, to our Academic Secretaries for handling everything so patiently in this historically unprecedented session of the Stanford Faculty Senate. Adrienne Emory, in particular deserves all of our gratitude and admiration, as does Tom Wasow.

FIRST, IMPORTANT TO NOTE: THE RESOLUTION IS MODEST

Let me begin by pointing out what we very much hope is clear: that the resolution drafted by C-Lib is modest and uncontroversial. All the resolution asks for is, when you boil it down: transparency, unbiased scientific rigor, and a commitment to faculty consultation and governance. This is also a recognition of the fact that the Faculty Senate does not have budget oversight, and so we are unable to push for anything pertaining to funding support for Stanford University Press. What we can propose, and hopefully vote in favor of, is to establish a sound process for this discussion.

Let me begin by providing context for why C-Lib felt it necessary to draft this resolution.

MISSTATEMENTS & REACTIONS

First, one catalyst for this resolution comes from the origins of the SUP crisis itself - not merely the budgetary decision that was made, which alone would have been enough to trigger a maelstrom of criticism - but also the circumstances surrounding that budgetary decision. Although some have since tried to downplay or deny the record on this point, it is established fact that dismissive, insulting, and unfounded statements were made about SUP by our administration - not just once, but repeatedly - and that these statements, when coupled with Stanford's rejection of SUP's budgetary request - set off a chain reaction of criticism of the Stanford administration and support for SUP, in equal measure. [NOTE, in case asked: The first known instance of this was on April 19 in the Provost's initial meeting with department Chairs.]

More than 13 departments, schools, and programs on campus have issued letters:

History, Classics, DLCL, East Asian Studies, Music, Religious Studies, American Studies,

English, the Law School, the Ed School, Anthropology, Sociology, Theater and Performance Studies

More than 16 national and international learned societies have done the same:

American Historical Association
American Anthropological Association
American Comparative Literature Association
American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies
American Sociological Association
Association for Asian Studies
Association for Jewish Studies
Association for Political and Legal Anthropology
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
International Center of Medieval Art
Association of University Presses
Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes
Latin American Studies Association
MESA: Middle East Studies Association NA
Modern Language Association
Phi Beta Kappa Society

Strangely, one of the few H&S departments to respond so far is Philosophy. And one of the few learned societies to respond so far is the American Philosophical Association.

Caught up in this maelstrom, it has been the goal of C-Lib in this resolution to do what we can to get things back on a solid foundation of transparency, rigorous and unbiased scientific analysis, and a commitment to faculty consultation and governance - because without this, there seems to be little end in sight. As Adrienne Emory noted in response to the deluge of requests to attend today's proceedings, that this "exceeds anything I've seen in my 6 years in the office." For myself, in my 13 years at Stanford (admittedly not a lifetime, but neither is it that short of a period of time), I've never witnessed this kind of anger and resentment: meetings small and large wherein hands have slammed tabletops, voices have been raised, and in some cases, tears have clearly been held back. And of course, the tone of criticism only gets louder and sharper as one listens to the broader scholarly community across the rest of the United States and the world. Truly, this has been such a self-inflicted wound for Stanford, such an unforced error, that the situation feels largely out of control. It has been remarked that this PR debacle has probably already cost Stanford more money than it would have cost to endow SUP in perpetuity, let alone agreeing to the more modest 5-year package.

Our aim in this resolution is to try and calm things down and, again, return to a footing of transparency, rigorous and unbiased scientific analysis, and a commitment to faculty consultation and governance.

TERMS OF THE DEBATE/THIS IS A CHOICE/AUSTERITY

In terms of the original catalyst for this resolution, one more point is essential to add: that the statements issued by the administration have been operating in terms and premises that so very many people in the Stanford community and beyond simply do not accept. The terms of the debate, as set out for us by the Provost and the administration, themselves are unaligned with our values as an institution. They also are out of step with the realities of academic publishing, which I feel that Alan Harvey spelled out clearly in his presentation, and so I will not repeat here.

But with regards to values, the Provost's original decision, and all subsequent statements by relevant Deans, attempted to present this as a "purely budgetary issue"- hence terminology such as "right-sizing," "structural deficit," "sustainability," and the like. Such claims, however, requires that anyone listening (a) forget the disparaging remarks that have been made about SUP (remarks that, besides having no basis in reality, were certainly not motivated by budgetary concerns) and (b) buy into the idea that one of the richest universities in the world cannot afford to support its press - even though less-endowed peer institutions do so, and even though the total 5-year request by SUP (the one that was rejected) amounts to approximately 3 one-hundredths of 1 percent of Stanford's endowment. While attempts has been made to say: yes, while Stanford's endowment is immense, it is all "tied up" and "restricted"; that "incremental unrestricted general funds" are quite small - but the fact is that few at Stanford, and even fewer outside of Stanford, accept such claims about "fiscal austerity" at face value.

The debate over SUP is a debate over VALUES and PRINCIPLES, and thus it needs to be undertaken transparently, rigorously, and with a commitment to broad and unbiased consultation. The choice by top-level administrators to do and say what they have was just that: a CHOICE, a DECISION based upon a system of values, not purely or even principally on fiscal concerns.

Follow-up statements by the administration on this account have done little to convince us otherwise, and to the contrary have in certain cases inflamed sentiments further, and here I speak of statements made repeatedly by top-level administration pitting Support for SUP on one hand against, of all things, Graduate Funding & support for First-Generation Students on the other. Such statements, which treat PhD and First-Gen students as bargaining chips in the discussion, have been met with widespread,

immediate, and justified DISGUST. I should note that, recently, the administration has also attempted, in some circles, to claim that such statements were never made - which, again, the historic record refutes.

II. SINCE THEN, ONLY MORE REASON TO VOTE YES ON THIS RESOLUTION

This brings me to your second question, on which I will be as brief as possible.

As everyone here likely knows, the Provost has since created an ad hoc committee to work expressly on the SUP issue. So I take the question to be: Isn't this Committee precisely what is being asked for in the C-Lib resolution, and if so, then isn't the resolution satisfied?

The answer is: While we are aware of the formation of this committee, and while we have only the utmost respect for those colleagues who have been appointed to it, this committee does NOT satisfy the specific requests or overall spirit of the resolution on the floor today. This is not because of who is on the committee, but rather burning questions about how was this committee was formed, and how its charge was articulated and explained.

THE COMMITTEE:

Ron Egan

Judy Goldstein (Chair)

Roland Greene

Jay Hamilton

Paul Harrison

Bernie Meyler

*Aron Rodrigue (added only after protest of Jessica Riskin)

We know more now than we knew then, and everything we've learned has made our resolution all the more critical, we feel.

First, in terms of the formation of the committee, we have since learned that Provost Drell intentionally chose only those individuals who would "understand the trade-offs involved when resources are limited." This led to the formation of a comm. staffed exclusively with Chairs, present or former.

The idea of trade-offs, then--that there "need" to be cuts--is not merely a "possible outcome" of this committee in terms of its potential recommendations. Rather, it has always been intended that "trade-offs" would be part of the very DNA of the committee.

Second, as for the Charge of the committee, we have learned that the original language thereof framed the role of the committee members as providing "faculty input into the process of right-sizing" (Where "right-sizing," everyone knows, is code for "down-sizing.")

So from the outset, this committee - no matter how much respect we have for its members - is crafted from the get-go with "trade-offs" and "right-sizing" built into its DNA. This strikes us, not as a committee that is built to work towards undetermined outcomes, but rather towards carefully ruling out any possibility that such a committee could, for example, recommend "no change" to the Provost, or perhaps even "increased funding."

Third, and this is an uncomfortable but necessary point to raise, on May 13 at a meeting of the "Future of the Major" committee (a committee entirely unrelated to SUP, of course), the ranking member of the Provost's SUP committee made open and openly negative remarks about SUP that resembled those made on April 19. (These comments were entirely unprompted, and were said in the presence of multiple colleagues, including Dean Anderson. When pressed on the source or basis for the statements, none could be provided.) Later, on May 21, at a meeting convened by 2 H&S Deans with the History department on the SUP matter, it was also communicated openly that the initial intent of the Provost had been to eliminate SUP altogether (but that this initial impulse was put in check).

It's useful to note, we also think, that this committee was formed without any consultation with the Committee on Committees, or with the office of the Academic Senate, as per our understanding. Stanford Presidents and Provosts are not obliged to work with the CoC, as many here may know, nevertheless the CoC has tried to impress upon top administrators the value and utility of doing so, since it is in fact part of the CoC's charge that it "recommend to the President and the Provost members from the Academic Council to serve on University Committees and on other ad hoc committees and bodies." Had such advice been sought and taken, there is a fair chance that we would not be here today discussing this resolution, since undoubtedly the CoC would have anticipated the issues involved. But here we are. (I, for one, would much rather be celebrating the retirement of our dear colleague, Becky Fischbach, the veritable poster child of the Humanities, rather than here having to, along with colleagues, defend the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Arts against our own administration.)

I will close by citing just one final set of circumstances that raise concern as well. In recent days, we have learned, top-level administration has been seeking to "clarify" the Committee-on-Library's (C-Lib) charge, specifically as it relates to SUP: a kind of

digging into the archives to determine the "letter of the law" with regard to C-Lib's formally defined relationship, if any, to SUP. We would simply say: The timing of these attempts at "clarification" are highly suspect. Why this sudden urge to clarify all of a sudden? Why now? - and can really only be taken in one way: as an effort, through legalistic means, to de-legitimize the resolution under discussion today, or to suggest that it never really had any place in taking up the SUP question at all.

On this issue the historical record is clear. The Committee on Libraries has, for many years, repeatedly taken up and discussed issues related to Stanford University Press. This role (if one wishes to call it "customary" or otherwise) was true when John Bender served as Chair of C-Lib. It has remained true of the committee today, when it is Chaired by Jessica Riskin. This is why it is C-Lib which is bringing forth this resolution, and why for the past 2 months, this issue has been front and center within C-Lib discussions both during and after formal committee meetings.

IT FOR THESE REASONS - WHEN VIEWED TOGETHER AND AS A WHOLE - THAT WE FEEL THE RESOLUTION UNDER CONSIDERATION BEFORE THE SENATE TODAY IS ESSENTIAL. We need to recommit, as an institution, to transparency, unbiased scientific rigor, and a commitment to faculty consultation and governance.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

-Tom Mullaney, Professor of Chinese History, Stanford University