

Memo from Faculty Senate ad hoc Committee on Stanford University Press

November 18, 2019

Our committee was charged by the Senate to make recommendations on the governance of Stanford University Press.¹ The committee consisted of Richard Martin (Classics, Chair), Jason Beckman (East Asian Languages and Cultures), Eavan Boland (English), Adrian Daub (German Studies), Zephyr Frank (History), Monika Greenleaf (Slavic Languages), Woody Powell (Education), David Spiegel (School of Medicine), and Jeanne Tsai (Psychology), with Tom Wasow (Linguistics) attending as Academic Secretary. The committee met formally three times, starting in mid-September, engaged in continual rounds of email communication, spoke with numerous faculty, and corresponded or spoke with the directors of university presses at Chicago, Johns Hopkins, NYU, MIT, and Yale, as well as with multiple members of the University of California Press and with Alan Harvey, Director of Stanford University Press.

To telegraph our major recommendation: we are in favor of a tripartite governance system. To that end, we have endorsed the idea of a Board of Governors (recommended in a recent report by the Provost-appointed committee); we formally bring a Motion to establish a standing Committee on the Press; and we move that the Senate entrust the Committee on Committees with the role of appointing members of the SUP Editorial Board. All three components ensure that in the future there will be strengthened and dedicated faculty participation in governance and advising for the Press. The new Committee on the Press will be the lynch-pin for the successful working of this three-fold structure.

In following the Senate charge to make governance recommendations concerning the Press, our deliberations took us down many paths, including some that may appear to reach beyond the more narrow charge of this committee. We realized, however, that formulating any sort of plan for formal governance is impossible without considering the Press's history and articulating a vision of what we hope for the Press in the coming years.

We thus note, at the outset, that we believe the vocal outpouring of support for the Press from the Stanford community, the high esteem in which Stanford University Press is regarded by its peer institutions (encompassing university presses of all sizes and operating budgets), and the positive and supportive report from the Provostial Committee on the Future of the Stanford University Press all embody a narrative that should be acknowledged in all deliberations and official proceedings going forward: Stanford University Press, helmed by Alan Harvey's excellent

¹ The charge as approved on October 10, 2019 (after our Committee commenced its work, using a draft charge) asked us to explore these questions: "Should oversight of SUP be added to the charge of an existing Academic Council committee or be carried out by a new standing committee? If a new committee is to be formed, what should be its membership structure, including *ex officio* membership? What aspects of SUP's operations should be considered by the committee? What should the relationship be between the committee and the Editorial Board of SUP? How do peer institutions address faculty oversight of their presses?"

leadership, is a stalwart institution that produces thoughtful, ground-breaking, and exquisitely-made academic volumes. Furthermore, it has advanced far beyond any existing academic press in its implementation of digital publishing and development of born-digital texts, a sophisticated innovation that no other press catalogue offers at the scale of Stanford University Press. The Press, through its operations, has served a wide range of scholarly fields, has aided scholars in establishing careers based on works published with SUP, and indeed plays a vital role in disseminating the University's mission of research, education, and service beyond the walls of Stanford.

Many of the ongoing deliberations about the Press have centered on questions of financial performance and sustainability. These discussions must be contextualized by confronting the realities within which the Press operates. Stanford University Press, without any significant endowment or additional programs (such as journals) to support its operation, has maintained consistent financial performance and continually maintained a books program of the highest caliber. A books program will never serve as the basis for a "breakeven" enterprise, when looking solely at monetary returns. Alan Harvey has acknowledged this, and it is widely known by everyone in the academic publishing industry. Speaking at the Association of University Presses roundtable at Stanford University on October 25, 2019, Executive Director Peter Berkery recalled a quip by a former UCLA press director, to a room of scholars who nodded in agreement: "While commercial presses make books to make money, academic presses make money to make books." The value of these books, when accounting for their impacts on scholarly careers and entire fields, and their intrinsic value as new knowledge, should be taken into account when addressing the question of operating deficits, for an industry within which such a result is always to be expected. Given the limited support afforded by the University, Alan Harvey should be commended for his leadership and the many successes of the Press.

University presses are a vital part of the mission of universities, both in expanding knowledge and making important contributions to society: they bring new ideas into the world, publishing peer-reviewed books for scholars, students, and serious readers. In this regard, each plays a vital role in the credentialing of faculty in the humanities, which still relies heavily on academic monographs published with major academic publishers as a condition for academic postings and tenure. University presses are also, in many different forms, connected to their own universities. Through a series of decisions, oversights, and missteps, none of its own making, Stanford University Press has become somewhat removed from regular contact with Stanford faculty. The Press has had to move five times in recent years, and is now sequestered in Redwood City, thirty minutes from campus. Considering its location, the Press does involve and work with numerous Stanford faculty as authors, reviewers, series editors, and editorial board members. Nevertheless, there is a general consensus that we would like to find ways to encourage more contact between the Press and the faculty. This enhanced contact should be crafted collaboratively, and not mandated, through interactions between the Press and its governing bodies. Our aim has been to devise a governance scheme that will facilitate flexibility and collaboration, without threatening the Press with overbearing oversight or control.

In establishing a plan for the Press going forward, we must also frankly acknowledge the harm already done by the recent controversy surrounding the Press's budget and operation. A number of authors have withdrawn manuscripts to be published with the Press out of fear that its operations are being halted, and many others, for the same reason, have avoided considering the Press. Regardless of the specific shape that the Press's governance ultimately takes, our deliberations today and going forward must mark our conviction that the Press not only continues to thrive, but will be furnished with the financial resources necessary to develop new books programs (e.g. those aligned with major fields for Stanford) and new innovations in academic publishing. As an immediate outcome of these deliberations, we therefore believe a substantial show of financial backing in the upcoming annual budgeting process is crucially necessary to reflect the powerful display of support, across stakeholders in the Stanford community, for the Press's continued growth. We subsequently detail (below) our recommendations, in response to and in conversation with those submitted by the Provostial Committee on October 15, 2019.

Governance

Many of the best university presses have both governing boards and editorial boards. A **governing** board comprising members of the Stanford faculty, university administrators, and outside publishers will be extremely valuable. (We understand that the ad hoc Committee cannot formally recommend creation of such a board to the Senate; we hereby heartily endorse the notion.) The Board could provide frequent and enlightening contact between the Stanford faculty and administration and could provide expertise and consultation from a few prominent outside publishers. An effective governing board will be a good step towards raising the profile of the Press on the campus and in the publishing community. It is important to emphasize that this governing board should provide support, an expanded vision, and advice; it is not in any way intended to be punitive.

In our formal **Motion (#2)** for the November 21, 2019 Senate meeting, we propose: "The Senate recommends that the Provost work closely with the Committee on the University Press in setting up a Board of Governors, and that such Board not be established until such time as the new standing committee can be actively involved in shaping it." The Committee also wishes to offer the following further recommendations concerning any future Board of Governors (not for legislative action by the Senate, as this will be within the Provost's bailiwick):

- It should comprise at least eight individuals.
- These should include the Provost (ex officio), the Director of the Press (ex officio), the Director of the Library, and a University Development officer; the chair of the SUP Editorial Board; faculty members; and persons experienced in the finances and administration of publishing, both academic and commercial.
- The Governors should report directly to the President and Trustees of Stanford University.

- The Board should meet regularly, at least three times a year, if it is going to have an impact. The budgeted funds for the logistics of such meetings of the Board should not be an added expense for the Press's budget. The director of the Press and the Provost should sit on the board of governors as ex officio members.

To turn to **editorial** boards (as distinct from governing or advisory boards of the type just discussed): our research has shown that the role of faculty boards varies considerably across top university presses. Some have only limited involvement in the activities of their presses, whereas a few act like examining committees at a PhD oral exam. (At the University of California Press, at least one member of the board has read each manuscript submitted for final approval before the relevant board meeting.) We think the current faculty editorial board for SUP has done its job well, but for reasons that are not easy to discern, the selection of its members has fallen solely to the Press. Again, the University has been remiss in keeping track of this. We are making a formal **Motion (# 3)** to entrust the Faculty Senate Committee on Committees with making the selection of editorial board members, in consultation with our proposed new Senate Committee on the Press (**Motion #1**), and after receiving nominations to be generated by such new committee.

The editorial board should consist of nine faculty, and members should serve three-year terms. In addition to editorial advice and consultation, the editorial board should work to develop an ethos of collaboration between the Press and the faculty. Thus it would be advisable to have as many different faculty as possible serve as editorial board members, so a two-term limit would be helpful in this regard. The editorial board should elect its own chair.

The Press currently reports to the director of the Stanford Libraries. The Press also currently uses the HR and finance structure of the Library. Any decision to change the reporting structure of the Press would likely require some assistance with the additional administrative task required by a new line of reporting. The Provostial Report recommends that the Press should report to the Provost and receive the support of a finance officer in the central administration, as well as assistance with fundraising from the Office of Development. We generally agree with this but insist that the exact lines of responsibility and reporting need to be further clarified. *Most importantly*, the Provost must submit all proposed plans regarding SUP to any new Board of Governors (see *above*) in advance of making decisions.

The following remarks summarize and expand upon our reactions to the recommendations of the report submitted to the Provost on October 15, 2019 (referred to here as enumerated in that document):

A) The ad hoc committee endorses *without modification* the following 2 recommendations in the report to the Provost:

#7. The Director of SUP should be required to develop a long-range strategic plan in consultation with members of the Advisory Board [*read: Board of Governors, as per our recommendation above*] and members of the Editorial Board.

#8. In addition to creating a long-range strategic plan, the Director of the Press should submit an annual report to the Provost and the Advisory Board [*read: Board of Governors*] of the past year's activities.

B) The ad hoc committee endorses (*with comment*) the following recommendation in the report:

5. The Advisory Board, Editorial Board, and Director of SUP should devise strategies for increasing the alignment of the Press with Stanford University, particularly through expanded outreach to faculty across the university.

Comment: The Press *has* for a long time now worked hard on this issue. The proposed new Senate committee will undertake to expand outreach through an even broader, more robust and pro-active network of connections.

C) The committee endorses (*with significant modification*) the following:

1. The Press should report directly to the Provost.

2. The Press should report additionally to one of two budget officers, either to the Vice President for Business Affairs and Chief Financial Officer or to the Vice Provost for Budget and Auxiliaries Management.

Modification: The exact distribution of roles here needs to be clarified. More importantly, the Provost must submit all proposed plans regarding SUP to the Board of Governors (see *above*) in advance of making decisions.

D) The committee endorses (*with significant addition*) the following:

#6. The University should continue to provide a financial “backstop” for the Press for at least another five years. But, to go further: our committee recommends that the “backstop,” in order to shore up the press and help to dispel the uncertainty that has come of recent events, should be *added to* the Press’s base annual funding and considered a part of its ongoing operation.

Addition. The committee calls, in addition, for an endowment of Stanford University Press at a level commensurate with those of peer presses. As widely acknowledged, temporary coverage of shortfalls is not a workable long-term solution. We believe that a significant, targeted fund-raising effort must be made as soon as possible to enable the proper level of support. Nor do we see any reason to cap such effort at \$10 million (*pace* the recommendation, #6e, on p.23 of the recent report to Provost). The Board of Governors will set a proper target after full discussion.

E) The ad hoc committee offers alternatives to the following recommendations in the report to the Provost (see our Motions #1-3).

#3. “The Provost should create a Stanford University Press Advisory Board and appoint twelve members...Four members should be university administrators (including the Provost, the Vice President for Business Affairs, the Director of the Library, and a University Development officer); Four should be outside publishing experts; Four should be faculty members drawn from names furnished by the Committee on Committees of the Faculty Senate...”

Alternative to #3: Our **Motion #2** proposes: “The Senate recommends that the Provost work closely with the Committee on the University Press in setting up a Board of Governors, and that such Board not be established until such time as the new standing committee can be actively involved in shaping it.” In addition, we have offered (*above*) suggestions regarding the shape of such a future committee, but acknowledge that these details will be hammered out by the new Committee on the Press and Provost, working closely together.

#4. “The Committee on Committees of the Faculty Senate should select members of an Editorial Board of between 10 and 15 members ...”

Alternative to #4: Our **Motion #1** creates a new Senate Committee on the Press; this committee will generate nominations and pass them to the CoC, which can then, in close consultation with the Committee on the Press, invite faculty members to serve on the editorial board.

In closing, the Committee wishes to stress that *faculty involvement* at all relevant levels is absolutely key to the continued success and flourishing of SUP. The invaluable ingredient of *faculty involvement* has emerged again and again in all our discussions with directors and staff at top peer press operations. The carefully-calibrated tripartite system that we have proposed (new Board of Governors; new standing Committee on the Press; current Editorial Board), and to craft which we are today offering formal Motions for Senate approval, is the best way to integrate and activate the energies of Stanford’s world-class faculty, its administration and its superb Press.

In short, the tripartite solution produces

- Significantly more **transparency** regarding the operations of SUP, including financial and editorial issues.
- Increased and broader faculty **awareness** of SUP plans and directions.
- Deeper faculty **investment** in SUP’s role as a cutting-edge academic publisher closely associated with the University’s name and reputation.
- Closely coordinated **responsibility** for advising and overseeing SUP so as to advance its mission and enable it to flourish.

CHARGE TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

(to be presented to the Senate of the Academic Council 11/21/19)

A. GENERAL CHARGE

A Committee on the University Press, subject to the Charter and Rules of the Senate, shall be established to oversee and advise on the operations of Stanford University Press (SUP).

B. SPECIFIC DUTIES

The Committee has the following duties:

1. The Committee shall, after consultation with the SUP Director, recommend to the Committee on Committees faculty members to serve on the SUP Editorial Board. Terms on the Editorial Board should be for three years.
2. The members of the Committee shall act as ambassadors of the Press, ensuring that publishing opportunities and initiatives become widely known on campus and beyond, and shall serve to bridge relevant constituencies-- the broader Stanford faculty, the Editorial Board, and any Board of Governors or other Press advisory body as yet to be constituted.

C. REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chair of the Committee has the following specific duties:

1. Report regularly to the Senate on SUP operations.
2. Keep the Academic Secretary apprised of the substantive issues under consideration by the Committee, and report in writing to the Academic Secretary, within seven days of the Committee action, any policy decision or recommendation that may require Senate endorsement.
3. Submit to the Academic Secretary, no later than August 1, one copy of a written Annual Report of the work of the Committee during the year just completed. The Annual Report should observe the current Guidelines for the Preparation of Reports and Proposals to the Senate of the Academic Council.

D. MEMBERSHIP

The Committee shall comprise seven Academic Council faculty members: four from H&S, and three members from other schools selected on a rotating basis. Each member shall serve for three years. In addition, one graduate student from H&S shall be included as a full voting member.

E. MEETINGS

The Committee shall meet at least six times each year. These meetings shall include at least once per year the Board of Governors, the Director of SUP and selected Press staff, the Provost, and the full Editorial Board of the Press, either separately or in whatever combinations scheduling and deliberations require. The Committee is empowered to call on other persons for advice and consultation as it sees fit.

F. STAFF SUPPORT

TBD

Motions to be made on recommendations of ad hoc Senate committee on SUP (11/21/19)

Motion 1:

The Senate shall establish immediately a standing committee of the Academic Council dedicated to overseeing and advising Stanford University Press (SUP).

- a) The Committee shall comprise seven Academic Council faculty members: four from H&S, and three members from other schools selected on a rotating basis. Each member shall serve for three years. In addition, one graduate student from H&S shall be included as a full voting member.
- b) The Committee shall meet at least six times each year. These meetings shall include at least once per year the Board of Governors, the Director of SUP and selected Press staff, the Provost, and the full Editorial Board of the Press, either separately or in whatever combinations scheduling and deliberations require. The Committee is empowered to call on other persons for advice and consultation as it sees fit.
- c) The chair of the Committee shall Report regularly to the Senate on SUP operations.
- d) The Committee shall, after consultation with the SUP Director, recommend to the Committee on Committees faculty members to serve on the SUP Editorial Board. Terms on the Editorial Board should be for three years.
- e) The members of the Committee shall act as ambassadors of the Press, ensuring that publishing opportunities and initiatives become widely known on campus and beyond, and shall serve to bridge relevant constituencies-- the broader Stanford faculty, the Editorial Board, and any Board of Governors or other Press advisory body as yet to be constituted.

Motion 2:

The Senate recommends that the Provost work closely with the Committee on the University Press in setting up a Board of Governors, and that such Board not be established until such time as the new standing committee can be actively involved in shaping it.

Motion 3:

The Senate recommends that the CoC be given the responsibility to appoint faculty to the SUP Editorial Board, after receiving nominations made by the Committee on the University Press and in consultation with that committee.