



### **Professor Paul Manfredi's comments following the tenth anniversary of CIWA**

[W]e at CIWA are equally concerned about academic integrity and freedom, and go to great effort to provide high quality educational opportunities for substantive teaching and learning about China for precisely that purpose. The concern that we operate somehow at the mercy of external forces is simply misplaced. The fact is that we at CIWA maintain full control over what Confucius Institute appointees do at every stage of their work in the United States, from developing course materials, to what is said and done in classrooms. We provide direct and extensive oversight of their work from even before they arrive, and up to their departure.

Full appreciation of why we are so confident in the integrity of this program requires a very brief history: the hosting responsibilities for CIWA were shifted from the University of Washington to PLU at the beginning of this year. PLU was identified as a worthy educational organization for this purpose due to our long-standing commitment to the study of Chinese language, culture and society and for our promotion of US-China cultural—amongst which also educational—connections spanning many years. In the context of the new Confucius Institute directives, “*long-standing*” is the crucial point. Though CIWA is only 10 years old, our connection to the individuals involved in this program extends back much longer. This is to say that as we at PLU and CIWA do our work of setting up exchanges of students and faculty, and of facilitating programming on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, our Chinese partners are and have always been situated at Sichuan University, an institution with which PLU formed a partnership in **1985**, *decades* before the Confucius Institute programs came into being. It is also worth noting that Sichuan University is the premier institution of Sichuan province, which is a sister province of Washington state, again another long-standing relationship that provides for a wide array of cooperative activity, from educational and cultural, to business and economic, and many points in between. The main difference between our first interactions with Sichuan University and those of today is that now we have more funding to pursue our programs. And once again, the actual dispensation of those funds, including all decisions concerning the ways that those funds are utilized, are and have always been managed, supervised, and expended by the same individuals in SU’s Office of International Studies. Otherwise, nothing has changed in the nature of our programming in all of this time. What *is* now different is only the scope and impact of our programs (larger), and the regrettable political climate that the people of the United States and China now find ourselves in.

We wish to clarify that we are not attempting to speak of all Confucius Institute programs across the United States, much less the other 400 or so in operation elsewhere in the world. We would like to mention, though, that a thorough analysis of Confucius Institute programs has already been done by our own Government Accountability Office in 2016 and again in 2019. A relevant passage from the 2019 report follows:

Several school officials, researchers, and others we interviewed expressed concerns that hosting a Confucius Institute could limit events or activities critical of China—

including events at the institute and elsewhere on campus. Two officials who expressed these concerns were faculty members at one case study school who have not applied for Confucius Institute funding for a research project because they believed Hanban would not approve of the topic. *In contrast, officials at multiple case study schools noted that U.S. school faculty members make all decisions regarding conference themes, guest speakers, and topics for events at their institute. Officials at some schools offered examples of events and activities their Confucius Institute had sponsored that addressed topics that could be considered critical of China. Specifically, they reported hosting a conference discussing intellectual property in relation to China and events on Tibet, territorial disputes in the South China Sea, and religion in China.* (emphasis added)

We reiterate, in some instances elsewhere in the United States, there may well have been issues with regard to academic freedom, or some other forms of political influence on US-based educational institutions. That notwithstanding, we can speak clearly and knowledgeably about what is happening in Washington state, where there is, in our experience, simply no cause for concern.

Our goals are to promote Chinese language and cultural study, period. Moreover, in the absence of this support, many programs, would simply collapse, which is to say that going forward literally thousands of Washingtonian students will lose the benefit of these learning opportunities and the globally competitive jobs that result. In effect, years of goodwill and friendly connections would come to nothing. Actually, worse; by curtailing this program we are sending a distinct message to our friends and partners of many decades. This message is: you don't matter, and we don't appreciate your efforts to bring us closer as cultures, as societies, as peoples. We would like to avoid sending that message if we can possibly manage it. Among other things, this will greatly harm or in some cases end our ability to train globally skilled people to support Washington's growing economy.



**Paul Manfredi**



Director, CIWA

Chair, Languages and Literatures

Pacific Lutheran University