

## University of Rhode Island

### Ad Hoc Committee to Review the Confucius Institute as a URI Center

#### Report on the Confucius Institute

### **Background**

Agreements to establish a Confucius Institute (CI) at the University of Rhode Island were signed on January 20, 2007 by Madam Xu Lin, Director of Hanban, and Dr. Robert Carothers, President of the University. On October 25, 2007, President Carothers and President Yang Wei from Zhejiang University signed a supplementary agreement establishing a partnership as required by Hanban. That same month, Dr. Yan Ma, Professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, was appointed Director of the Institute. In October of 2007, a Grand Opening celebrated the establishment of the Confucius Institute with a Chinese Traditional Music Concert followed two days later by a performance of Butterfly Lovers by the Yue Opera at Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Providence.

The mission of the Confucius Institute at the University of Rhode Island promotes an understanding of and enhances educational programs on Chinese language and culture. Through Chinese language and culture courses, the Confucius Institute at the University of Rhode Island provides special support and strengthen the unique programs of the Chinese International Engineering Program, the visual literacy and new media program between URI and Zhejiang University in China, the Chinese librarianship and information professionals program, and fosters other educational and research-driven programs of benefit to both China and the U.S., including our International Business Program and programs in Asian Studies and the Liberal Arts. ([www.uri.edu/confucius/](http://www.uri.edu/confucius/))

Since 2007, the CI led by Dr. Ma has supported many activities and programs to promote an understanding of the Chinese language and culture and provide opportunities for cultural exchange. The CI has played a constructive role in starting and expanding programs related to China. Successful cultural events included annual, well-attended Chinese New Year celebrations and Moon festivals plus a performance by the Ethnic Art Ensemble of Guizhou University. The Institute supported two of the twelve weekly colloquium sessions of the fall 2007 Honors Colloquium “China Rising,” coordinated by Drs. Ma and Tim George. The CI has offered language and calligraphy classes for the URI community, provided language instruction in elementary schools, given scholarships and arranged for URI undergraduate and graduate students and Rhode Island school children to study in China, sponsored trips to China by URI faculty and administrators as well as Rhode Island public officials, assisted Chinese faculty and dignitaries visiting URI, and facilitated two large donations of Chinese books to the libraries at URI and the Cranston Public Library and the donation of Chinese musical instruments to the URI Music Department.

In accordance with the University’s requirement to review centers after an initial three-year period of operation in May 2010, the URI Faculty Senate Executive

Committee appointed an ad-hoc committee to evaluate the Confucius Institute (CI) as a non-research center. The review committee used the criteria for evaluating centers in the University Manual: centrality of the Institute to the University's mission (8.85.21); the activities of the Institute with regard to the University's mandate for teaching, research, and outreach (8.85.22 and 8.90.22); the contributions of the Institute to the goals in the Academic Plan (8.85.23); the cost, funding, operation, and effectiveness of the Institute (8.85.24 and 8.90.22).

The Review Committee solicited written and oral comments from specific individuals who had worked with the URI Confucius Institute or Confucius Institutes on other campuses. These included URI staff, faculty, and administrators, as well as Rhode Island residents. The Committee also sent a letter to all URI faculty requesting comments. Copies of these solicitation letters, which specify the specific sections of the University Manual related to center reviews, are in Appendix A. Dr. Yan Ma, Director of the CI at URI, met with the Committee in the Confucius Institute facilities located in the Carothers Library and Learning Commons and provided written documentation at various times; this documentation is in Appendix B.

The following sections on findings and recommendations are followed by conclusions and a summary recommendation.

### **Committee Findings and Recommendations**

The section that follows is to convey what the Review Committee found, followed by recommendations based on these findings.

1. The Director has done an incredible amount of work with dedication, great time commitment, and sometimes use of her own resources. She has a long list of accomplishments for the Institute and has established good relations with the local Chinese community and families who have adopted Chinese children to help them maintain a strong connection with their heritage.

*Recommendation:* The Director should be commended for her dedication and effort during the past three years. The Confucius Institute Director and a URI Confucius Institute Advisory Board (see #2) should consider the potential for continuing and extending long-term Chinese community relations with current and potential donors.

2. The Institute's Director has tried to accomplish many things, sometimes lacking focus. This lack of focus and the proliferation of activities are reflected in publications, the Institute's web page, and misunderstandings displayed by reviewers who often commented about programs that were not CI programs.

*Recommendations:* This confusion on campus indicates a need for a clearer explanation of what the Confucius Institute does and its mission. Creating a local Confucius Institute Advisory Board that meets regularly and is actively involved in planning, setting priorities, and supporting communication with Hanban is essential. This Board should select programs with a clear focus in supporting Chinese language learning and outreach. The Institute might serve as the agency for Chinese-language proficiency testing in cooperation with the Chinese Language Flagship Program. URI's CI needs to define itself as having a unique character and focus to distinguish itself from other CIs, particularly the one at Bryant University.

3. Coordination and cooperation with other China-related programs on campus have been uneven.

*Recommendation:* To facilitate cooperation among URI Chinese-related programs, a coordinating committee should be created with representation from programs and offices including the Confucius Institute, Chinese Language Flagship Program, Chinese language program, International Engineering Program, International Business Program, Asian Studies Program, Office of International Students and Scholars, and the Provost's office. This committee will allow for more effective promotion of the primary goal of the Confucius Institute, which is to "develop mutually agreed upon and mutually beneficial strategies for the development of Chinese language and culture programs at URI and in Rhode Island."

4. The budgeting and accounting of the CI are opaque. Often planning has not followed established practices and has not been done in a timely manner. Despite the fact that it may be difficult for any CI director to reconcile the way American universities operate with Hanban policies and practices, bookkeeping has not been systematic. Financial reports that the Committee received are in Appendix C. The contribution from URI in terms of salary, the Director's release from two classes, benefits, space in the Carothers Library and Learning Commons, space on the Providence campus, and staff were not explicit in the budget.

*Recommendation:* Bookkeeping records should follow established URI procedures and be comprehensive, timely, and transparent. Records should reflect in-kind contributions and monetary gifts. Receipts should be submitted in accordance with URI policies and procedures.

5. Hanban requested that its funds supporting the URI CI be frozen, although a significant amount of funds remain from Hanban's 2009 contribution. However, the Review Committee did not receive information about how those funds would be spent or plans for re-establishing funding.

*Recommendations:* The URI administration should ascertain and address Hanban's explicit concerns about funding and management of CI funds and take steps to address the concerns so the funding can be resumed. The Director, Board, and URI administration should consider the danger that freezing funds has for our reputation in China and for our partner support with Zhejiang University, which would significantly impact programs such as the International Engineering Program. A less than positive reputation for URI could negatively influence Chinese scholars or others invited to work with URI; therefore, the administration should take steps to address the concerns of Hanban so that the funding can be resumed.

6. Members of the campus community have expressed concerns over potential negative repercussions from some fund-raising relationships and practices that circumvent established URI procedures.

*Recommendation:* The Institute has potential to contribute significantly to the University's fund-raising efforts, but should follow University and URI Foundation policies at all times.

7. Problems with cooperative planning and, in particular, coordinating the large gift of books to URI have resulted in a contentious relationship with library faculty.

*Recommendations:* The Institute should accept no materials without consultation with the library or other recipients so that gifts will be of value and useful. In addition, the Director and the local CI Advisory Board might consider moving the office of the Confucius Institute out of the Library when other appropriate space is available.

8. The Confucius Institute's and Hanban's involvement in selecting, hiring, and funding regular faculty has been problematic.

*Recommendation:* Hanban funds should continue to be used to teach non-credit classes for URI students and the Rhode Island community. If the funds could help support for-credit classes at URI, the faculty in the appropriate academic program(s) must review and approve each position and the person(s) to teach the classes.

9. The administrative management and reporting structure of the CI is undefined; this includes identification of the person to whom the Director reports. Procedures for review of the CI Director also are undefined.

*Recommendation:* The Provost should identify the person to whom the Director reports and clarify management expectations and accountability. The Dean of Arts and Sciences is a logical choice at this time.

10. Responsibilities involved in directing the CI have required an overwhelming time commitment for the Director. Staffing of the Institute has been inadequate.

*Recommendation:* The University should add staff support with experience and familiarity with URI and its systems. This person does not have to know Chinese. In addition, the Director and URI CI Advisory Board should set priorities that can be achieved with the staff available.

## **Conclusion**

Knowledge of Chinese language and culture is critical for URI students. China has a population of over 1.3 billion people. Its military and diplomatic potential is very important. It has become a major player in the global economy with rapid growth in the private sector. The Chinese government is making an increased commitment to science and technology and to solving environmental problems. The centuries-old Chinese culture has significant impact on fashion, art, and film.

The University's ties to China are important and will become more so as its China-related programs continue to grow. These include the Chinese Language Flagship Program, Chinese language program, International Engineering Program, International Business Program, and Asian Studies Program. Ties to the Chinese and Chinese-American communities in the state also are important. The active involvement of a focused Confucius Institute at URI can promote Chinese culture and language and be a valuable asset to these Chinese-focused programs.

Many responders mentioned how the goals and activities of the Confucius Institute complement the URI's mission and the Academic Plan, 2010-2015. Related to Goal II, the Institute has helped fund undergraduate and graduate students for a changing world

with experiential learning opportunities particularly through the summer study programs in China. Goal IV of the Academic Plan promotes “Global Citizenry” and aspires to expand international/global programs and opportunities; the presence of an active Confucius Institute at URI can be a major contributor to this goal. Likewise, the Confucius Institute can help prepare the URI community and state citizens to engage in a multicultural world and to understand human differences, which is under Goal V to ensure an equitable and inclusive campus community.

### **Summary Recommendation**

The Review Committee recognizes the importance of keeping the Confucius Institute at URI and recommends that the Institute be continued if Hanban funding is restored.

### Confucius Institute Review Committee

Laura Beauvais

Winnie Brownell

Tim George

Mike Honhart

Margaret Ordoñez, Chair

Steven Swallow

Wen Xiong

## Appendix A

### Letters to Solicit Responses Evaluating the URI Confucius Institute

*Letter for persons contacted individually for comment on the Confucius Institute.*

The Confucius Institute at URI is being reviewed by a Faculty Senate committee as directed by the University Manual (sections 8.85.10-17 and 8.90.10-40). The Review Committee identified you as being familiar with the Confucius Institute and its mission, activities, organization, and/or involvement in teaching and community outreach. We solicit your comments to aid the Committee in assessing the contribution of the Institute to the University and the URI community.

This review of a non-research center will evaluate the Institute's mission on the following criteria: centrality of the Institute to the University's mission (8.85.21); the activities of the Institute with regard to the University's mandate for teaching, research, and outreach (8.85.22 and 8.90.22); the contributions of the Institute to the goals in the Academic Plan (8.85.23); the cost, funding, operation, and effectiveness of the Institute (8.85.24 and 8.90.22).

According to the 2007 Confucius Institute Proposal, the mission of the Confucius Institute at URI is "to promote an understanding and enhance the learning conditions of the Chinese language and culture at the University of Rhode Island and the community in Rhode Island. Through Chinese language and culture courses, the Confucius Institute at the University of Rhode Island would provide special support and strengthen the Chinese International Engineering Program, the visual literacy and new media program in China, and the Chinese librarianship and information professional program."

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*Letter sent to URI faculty for comment on the Confucius Institute*

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## Appendix B

### Information Provided by Dr. Yan Ma to the Confucius Institute Review Committee

Email received from Dr. Yan Ma, 6/14/2010

Dear Margaret,

As a faculty member who has received two courses release each semester to direct the Confucius Institute since fall 2007, I have spent 70-80 hours a week and 356 days a year since October 2006 when I started to prepare the Confucius Institute proposal and later to work for the Confucius Institute. I have been the Special Assistant to the University President on China Affairs since 2007.

Dr. Ma received her Ph.D. in the Department of Curriculum of Instruction in the Program of Communications and Technology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Ma was tenured in 1999 and promoted to Full Professor in 2003.

In addition to the presentation that I delivered to the Confucius Institute Review Committee, I would like to emphasize that THINK BIG, WE HAVE DONE at the Confucius Institute to fulfill the Mission of the University and the Mission of the URI Confucius Institute.

I would like to point out where the URI Confucius Institute stands in comparison with other Confucius Institutes in the US.

In summary, what we have done at URI Confucius Institute is EXTRAORDINARY not only that we have produced quality programs, but also we managed it with limited personnel and other resources. Hanban asked University of Miami when it was setting up its programs to visit our Confucius Institute in November 2009 as a model to learn from our experience. At that point, Hanban still valued our work highly.

#### **Space:**

The URI Confucius Institute has the most beautiful space with authentic Chinese cultural setting among all Confucius Institute in the US. When the Ethnic Art Ensemble of Guizhou University, China toured and performed in 10 Confucius Institutes in the US last fall, they performed at URI and visited out Confucius Institute, they said that the URI Confucius Institute was the most beautiful one to represent Chinese culture among all Confucius Institutes that they had visited. URI Confucius Institute has another beautiful office on Providence Campus.

#### **Total Fund Raised in Rhode Island and in China Excluding Fund from Hanban:**

Dr. Yan Ma has raised funds and received in-kind donations to support Confucius Institute programs from 2007 to 2010: **\$306,106.00**

#### **Administrative Structure:**

The Confucius Institute at URI has a well-structured administrative body to lead the Institute. The Confucius Institute has been directly administered under URI President and Provost leadership. There is a working Steering Committee whose members represent URI and State stakeholders to make major decisions on the programs of the Confucius Institute that has been running and will run. The International Development Board provides support for major programs and development of the Confucius Institute.

### **Academic Programs:**

#### Sustained Teaching of Chinese Courses:

Chinese language courses offered to the RI community have been designed to **sustain** the Confucius Institute. Since 2007, I have designed 20 community non-credit courses on Chinese language and culture and assisted China-funded professors to offer two credit-based courses at URI. URI Confucius Institute is different from some Confucius Institutes in the US that run programs with no goals to sustain the Confucius Institute.

URI Chinese Flag Ship Program has been supported by the Confucius Institute since the grant proposal writing time. The Confucius Institute and Dr. Yan Ma's time was part of the Proposal. Since 2009, the Confucius Institute has awarded scholarships \$8000 in 2009 and \$9500 in 2010 to students in the Chinese Engineering Program to study Chinese at Zhejiang University. In 2009, there were over 400 students took credit-based and non-credit courses.

#### The Successful China Rising Honors Colloquium

The Confucius Institute was a major sponsor for the 2007 China Rising Honors Colloquium, which was the most successful program to begin Chinese studies at URI. None of the Confucius Institutes in the country has ever had such a quality program on China in its scale, depth or range of topics, highly-profiled speakers, and the dynamic interaction of URI academic scholarly community and the New England community for the fall semester of 2007. Professors Timothy George and Yan Ma were the coordinators.

#### The Prestigious Graduate Program of Chinese Information Services

Since 2007, as part of the Mission of the Confucius Institute, GSLIS offered LSC590 Chinese Information Services course led by Professor Yan Ma to lead graduate students in North America to go to China to study Chinese language, history, culture and libraries from the ancient types to the most modern ones. Students participated this program are from the University of Rhode Island, University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of Maryland, University of Iowa, San Jose State University, University of New York at Albany, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Simmons College, University of Hawaii, Pratt Institute, the City University of New York, New York Public Library, and the Library of Congress. Twenty-four students have participated in this program so far. It is a known program in the Library and Information Science field in North America and among the national and international library associations.

### **Chinese Culture Programs:**

The Chinese culture programs presented by the URI Confucius Institute are the best quality among all Confucius Institutes in the US.

Never in the history in Rhode Island or US, a full Chinese Yue Opera of *Butterfly Lovers* by the Ningbo Yue Opera Troupe was presented to the American audience. It was made possible by the Confucius Institute in 2007 as a grand opening performance in the Providence Veterans Memorial Auditorium. Dr. Yan Ma raised funds of \$155,390 from RI community and China for this unprecedented First Chinese Art Festival in Rhode Island. *Butterfly Lovers* is the equivalent of *Romeo and Juliet* in Western culture. Over 1400 people attended the event. See a sample thank-you email from the audience as attached.

The Confucius Institute Steering Committee designated the Chinese Moon Festival as the Confucius Institute Signature Event each year and established the Chinese Art Festival in Rhode Island. Each Chinese Moon Festival provided URI and RI community an opportunity to The Moon Festival is not only a time to celebrate the Chinese version of the American Thanksgiving, but it is also an occasion to welcome new students to come to URI to study Chinese and initiate all the Institute's programs in the new academic year. Last year's Moon Festival provided the opportunity to welcome the University's new president, Dr. David M. Dooley, as well to welcome faculty and students, especially those who have come to URI for its Chinese programs. A 24-course dinner, highlighted with the popular, Chinese Moon Cakes were be served. At each year's Moon Festival, the Steering Committee decided to give one major award to a person who supported the Confucius Institute the most or provided the most important leadership for the Confucius Institute.

The first Chinese Art Festival in Rhode Island in 2007 welcomed the Yue Opera of *Butterfly Lovers*. In 2009, URI Confucius Institute held the 2nd Chinese Art Festival in Rhode Island by inviting the Lion Dance from Hubei University and the Ethnic Art Ensemble of Guizhou University, China to perform performed at the Edwards Auditorium in November, 2009. President David Dooley, Provost DeHayes, and Mayor Allan Fund from Cranston City and 700 participants attended.

Every Chinese New Year, the URI Confucius Institute has presented the URI and RI community with a authentic Chinese New Year celebration. Our web site shows the programs that we have delivered:

[http://www.uri.edu/confucius/media\\_gallery.html](http://www.uri.edu/confucius/media_gallery.html)

All these programs provided URI with positive image to the community to welcome students and stakeholders in general.

Chinese culture programs have been developed to enhance URI academic and research programs. Ningbo Performing Art Academy was invited to celebrate the First Chinese art Festival in Rhode Island in 2007 by presenting its authentic Yue Opera of *Butterfly Lovers*. The Academy was invited in 2010 to celebrate the Chinese New Year when President Dooley became the URI President. The goal to replicate the ancient Chinese architectural complex named Tianyige located in Ningbo was laid out in the Confucius Institute proposal, which was somehow featured in the Chinese news in Chinese and English languages. The foundation was laid by Dr. Robert L. Carothers, President Emeritus who visited Tianyige in 2008 and met with Ningbo City officials. On February 13, 2010, President Dooley shared his vision to build a Center for Chinese Studies at URI, which will be a special and unique Center in the Northeast Region. This Center will embrace all China programs at URI and beyond. The Center for Chinese Studies will provide multi-functions in its design, such as classrooms, classrooms, the Tianyige Chinese

Library, conference rooms, offices, display rooms, a stage, a Mahjong Museum, a courtyard with water pond(s), living quarters for students and visiting scholars, etc. The Tianyige Library will be named after its famous building in Ningbo. It is part of the Center.

### **Vision for Research, Academics and Higher Education Partners in the World**

The Confucius Institute organized the visionary conference “Enhancing Multiculturalism: Chinese Cultural Immersion” for Global Leaders and Partners in Higher Education, Hangzhou, China, May 25-28, 2008. Nineteen Vice Provosts, Deans, Chairs and professors from US, Netherlands, Ireland, Australia, and China participated in the Conference. The purpose of this conference is to work with stakeholders in the US and around the world to lead the research and academic studies of China. The URI Confucius Institute paid all fees for the participants when they landed in China because URI Confucius Institute has strong support of its international partners. The international partner in China paid all these expenses as donation to the Confucius Institute.

The Confucius Institute organized and sponsored of the 32nd Conference of Zhejiang University Alumni in North America, October 17-20, 2008. Over 50 ZJU alumni participated in the Conference. Dr. Yan Ma organized a Symposium of Chinese Education, Culture, Science and Technology and China Rising. Vice President Mingjiang Ni from Zhejiang University participated in the Conference. These well-established ZJU alumni in North America are the potential donors, sponsors, and partners to work with the Confucius Institute on various programs. Professor Ma established the Rhode Island Chapter of the of Zhejiang University Alumni in North America and served as the Chairperson of the RI Chapter.

Dr. Yan Ma coordinated China trips to visit Beijing, Zhejiang University, Zhejiang Province and other parts of China for academic, research, business, administration, and state-to-state collaborations for the following URI and State higher education partners:

Paul Gandel, Vice Provost (2004)

John Grandin, Director of IEP (2005)

Bahram Nassersharif, former Dean of Engineering (2005)

Linda Ann Riley, Associate Dean and Professor of Engineering

School of Engineering, Computing and Construction Management, Roger Williams University (wife of Bahram Nassersharif) (2005)

Gerry Tyler, Chair, Political Science Department (June 2007)

Garry Bozylinsky, Vice Provost (December 2007)

Lynn Pasquerella, Vice Provost (June 2007 and May 2008)

Harold Bibb, Associate Dean, Graduate School (May 2008)

Melvin Wade and Angela Wade, Director of Multicultural Center (May 2008)

Dr. Bernard Lafayette Jr. and Kate Lafayette, Director, Center for Peace and Non-violence (May 2008)

Jayne Richmond, University College (September 2008)

Robert Carothers, President (September 2008)

Lt. Elizabeth Roberts (December 2008)

Jennifer Wood (December 2008)

Peter Alfonso, Vice President (December 2008)

Total: 15 people

All these academic and research oriented programs were designed to expand the network of stakeholders to collaborate with the URI Confucius Institute for global education.

None of the Confucius Institute Directors in the US could have done all of these with limited personnel to assist Dr. Yan Ma in delivering these quality programs the past three years.

**The Following is an sample email from an attendee of the Yue Opera *Butterfly Lovers* in 2007:**

from Marcelline <[zambucom@cox.net](mailto:zambucom@cox.net)>  
to Yan Ma <[yanmauri@gmail.com](mailto:yanmauri@gmail.com)>,  
date Oct 28, 2007 6:26 PM hide details 10/28/07 Reply  
subject Butterfly Lovers Opera  
mailed-by [cox.net](http://cox.net)

Dear Dr. Ma,

I had the good fortune to be in attendance of the Ningbo Yue Opera last evening. It was just gorgeous. Fabulous. Exquisite. My husband, our friends, and I loved, enjoyed, and appreciated every minute of it.

This e mail is sent your way in thanks for bringing this beautiful cultural experience to the Veterans Memorial Auditorium. We all found last evening's performance an absolutely wonderful and rich celebration of Chinese culture and one of the best artistic experiences that has come to Rhode Island.

Thank you for all that you did in making last night's performance possible.

With sincere thanks,

*Marcelline and Robert Zambuco*