

Report and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Endowed Chairs (School of Humanities, UCI)

Overview and Charge:

On December 16th, 2015, Georges Van Den Abbeele, Dean of the School of Humanities, acting at the behest of the Humanities Executive Committee (HEC), appointed an ad hoc committee to consider proposals to establish four chairs on South Asian religious traditions.¹ The members of the committee, nominated by the HEC, are:

James Steintrager, Professor of English (chair)
Vinayak Chaturvedi, Associate Professor of History
James Lee, Associate Professor and Chair of Asian American Studies
Maria Pantelia, Professor of Classics
Alka Patel, Associate Professor of Art History

The committee was created in response to faculty concerns about the proposed endowed chairs. One of the proposed chairs (The Thakkar Family—Dharma Civilization Foundation Presidential Chair in Indic and Vedic Civilization Studies) had already received final approval from the University of California Office of the President by the time the committee was formed.² The other three chairs have gone through the steps of campus-level review. These chairs are: The Swami Vivekananda—Dharma Civilization Foundation Presidential Chair in Modern India Studies; the Shri Parshvanath Presidential Chair in Jain Studies; and the Dhan Kaur Sahota Presidential Chair in Sikh Studies. These three chairs were approved by the Vice Provost for Academic Personnel at UCI on December 8th, 2015, but have yet to receive presidential approval.

All four chairs would come with an endowment of \$2,000,000 each. This amount would include \$500,000 from the Presidential Match for Endowed Chairs fund, paid by the Regents of the University of California.

The charge of the Ad Hoc Committee as described by the Dean of the School of Humanities is to “evaluate recent gifts to the School of Humanities intended to establish chairs in South Asian religions and cultures.” It was established that this charge was broad and included consideration of the funding sources and specific gift agreements, of pertinent University policies and procedures regarding endowed chairs, and the role of faculty in development initiatives. It was also agreed that the conclusions and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee would be reported to

¹ The bylaws of the HEC include among its duties that of authorizing “the Dean to appoint, after consultation with the Chair of the faculty, all committees of the School not otherwise provided for.”

² Presidential approval for the Chair was granted on July 10th, 2015.

the HEC and to the Dean and made available *in toto* to the faculty in the School of Humanities.

Summary of the Committee's Findings and Recommendations:

The Ad Hoc Committee examined considerable documentation from a wide variety of sources. The bases of our assessment include publicly available material from the donors, various university policies, and documents internal to UCI's review procedures for endowed chairs. The committee also sought input from faculty at UCI and consulted widely with those who either were or might have been involved in the approval of the Chairs. The committee's conclusions and recommendations are summarized below:

1. The committee found that there is a lack of clarity in the implementation of policies related to the acceptance of private gifts. The guidelines stated in the UC Irvine Administrative Policies and Procedures governing University Advancement (Sec. 680-11 B.2) require approval at the department and school level prior to the acceptance of a gift. University Advancement's internal procedural guidelines for the establishment of endowed chairs appear inconsonant with this policy. The Committee recommends that clear and detailed guidelines be established in the School of Humanities to ensure consistency in the process.

2. In the view of the ad hoc committee, all four chairs were reviewed and approved with insufficient faculty input and consultation to meet the requirements of UCI's policies and procedures regarding the acceptance of gifts. Whether extensive consultation was required or not, lack of meaningful involvement of faculty experts resulted in gift agreements that indicate no coherent academic plan. Given the number of proposed chairs and their potential impact of these chairs in the School of Humanities, close consultation was necessary to ensure that the proposed agreements would complement and enhance existing programs and were in sync with the mission of the School of Humanities at large and with wider scholarly developments in the study of historical and modern South Asia.

3. The committee found that all four agreements, albeit to varying degrees, include language that is not consistent with University policies related to religious and academic freedom. We recommend that none of the chairs be established until appropriately reviewed by the HEC and other representative groups in the School of Humanities. In particular, the language of these agreements must be carefully reexamined before final approval. In the case of the two chairs proposed by the Dharma Civilization Foundation the committee recommends against accepting any endowment regardless of changes that might be made to the gift agreements. We find that association with the Dharma Civilization Foundation, the intents and views of which have been set down in public statements, is inconsistent with UCI's core values as a public university that fosters diversity, inclusion, toleration, and respect. Further, any association with the DCF in name or funding would place restrictions

on potential applicant pools in ways that run counter to academic freedom, shared governance, and faculty expertise.

4. In the case of the two other chairs, we recommend that the Humanities Executive Committee review the proposals to determine the potential advantages and disadvantages of these two endowments for the School of Humanities. The committee recommends that the language of the proposed agreements be reviewed to ensure compliance with University policy and adherence to principles of religious and academic freedom. It further recommends that the scope of the chairs be broadened to ensure a larger pool of potential applicants and a better fit with both the relevant fields of scholarship as well as the research and curricular interests of the School of Humanities. However, if the HEC determines that the chairs do not fit the research and curricular interests of the School of Humanities, the two chairs should also be declined.

We provide details of our assessment and recommendations below.

I. Analysis of Policies and Procedures Relative to the Four Endowed Chairs:

The University of California, Irvine has policies and procedures intended to ensure shared governance in curricular, budgetary, personnel, and other aspects of campus administration. This includes development initiatives. While the systemwide Academic Personnel Manual does not go into procedural detail, it does state that the “establishment and naming of endowed chairs and professorships... are subject to University policies, guidelines, and procedures to ensure appropriate financial and organizational controls” and further that “[e]stablishment and naming of an endowed chair must involve consultation with the appropriate committee(s) of the Academic Senate.”³ According to the UC Irvine Administrative Policies and Procedures governing University Advancement (Sec. 680-11): Procedures for Processing Acceptance of a Gift/Private Fund: “Before the University can accept private funds in support of a specific project, the project must be reviewed and approved at the department and school level.” Further, the Academic Senate reviews and votes on all proposed endowed chairs. This process involves a review form that is filled out and submitted by the dean’s office of a given school at the behest of the Vice Provost for Academic Personnel (“Initial Request for Approval to Establish an Endowed Chair”). The form was developed by the Academic Senate in conjunction with the administration and includes a section on “School/Unit/Faculty” consultation. It asks that “a description of the process of faculty consultation” be attached. In practice, UCI Advancement prefills this section of the form with the following: “This establishment has been reviewed and received approval from the faculty of the (specific department/school/unit) affected by the established chair.” The form is routed to the Chair of the Academic Senate, which forwards the documentation to the Council on Planning and Budget for review and approval. The

³ APM 191: “General University Policy Regarding Academic Appointees: Endowed Chairs and Professorships.”

form next goes to the Senate Cabinet for review and approval. It is then forwarded to the Chancellor via the Vice Provost for Academic Personnel for campus-level approval and on to the Office of the President for final approval.

The ad hoc committee has learned that according to University Advancement's internal procedural guidelines for the establishment of endowed chairs the initial request for approval from the Academic Senate only takes place after the gift agreement has been fully signed by all parties, including the dean of the relevant school, the Chancellor, and the donor. In University Advancement's "Gift Agreement/Endowed Chair—Full Procedure List," we find the following items in order: "13. Fully signed original Gift Agreement returned to Development Officer to forward to donor"; "14. Gift Services sends initial Request to Academic Personnel for Academic Review of endowed chair." This ordering appears counter to the spirit of shared governance, which would suggest instead that meaningful faculty consultation and approval be sought *before* and *not after* any gift agreement was fully signed. In the specific establishments that this committee was created to review, we have no doubt that this ordering contributed confusion and is partially responsible for the current unhappy status of all four proposed chairs. We will not opine on whether University Advancement's procedures violate the policy mentioned above (UC Irvine Administrative Policies and Procedures governing University Advancement [Sec. 680-11]). We would, however, recommend that the Humanities Executive Committee pass along this concern for Academic Senate review.

1. Thakkar Family-Dharma Civilization Foundation Presidential Chair in Indic and Vedic Civilization Studies:

The establishment of the Thakkar Family—Dharma Civilization Foundation Presidential Chair in Indic and Vedic Civilization Studies received approval from Janet Napolitano, President of the University of California, on July 10th, 2015. In this case, the completed "Initial Request for Approval to Establish an Endowed Chair" form had received review and approval by the relevant bodies of the Academic Senate. As noted, the form requires that "School/Unit/Faculty" consultation be described. Advancement has glossed these terms as "department/school/unit" review and approval. This form is ambiguous and confusing: do these slashes indicate that review and approval must come from both a department and a school? Or can it be either? Further, the term "unit" is used in UCI's policy manuals to designate a variety of different groupings. We put aside these ambiguities to affirm that review and approval would have to come at the very least from *some* representative group of faculty in the School of Humanities.

In the description of consultation on the "Initial Request" form for the Thakkar Family—Dharma Civilization Foundation Presidential Chair, we read: "As for consultation, this opportunity was itself faculty driven by members of the Religious Studies program, in particular Jack Miles, its current director, and past director, Keith Nelson. Since Religious studies is only a program and not a formal department,

additional consultation was sought with the Humanities Executive Committee (the School's equivalent of the academic senate), which approved the chair at its March 19, 2015 meeting." The ad hoc committee has learned that the director of the Program in Religious Studies at the time that the gift agreement was signed did not consult broadly with faculty associated with the program. By his own account, he did not feel that such consultation was deemed desirable by the Humanities Development Office. He also informed the committee that his own consulting role was minimal. To say that the establishment of the chair was "faculty driven" thus appears misleading. Second, when the ad hoc committee inquired about consultation with the Humanities Executive Committee, we learned that the Dean of the School of Humanities presented the endowed chair in question as an item of information and not as an action item for review and approval. No vote was taken on the establishment of the chair, and the most generous interpretation that the committee can put on this situation is that presentation of information was taken as tacit approval. In this regard, we concluded that the leadership of the Humanities Executive Committee appears to have been largely unaware of the committee's prerogatives and responsibilities. The committee agreed that serious discussion has to take place to identify ways to empower HEC to assume its role as a representative and executive body of the School and of the Academic Senate.

The Council on Planning and Budget (CPB) subsequently received a request from the Chair of the Academic Senate to review the gift agreement and request for Senate approval.⁴ CPB approved the proposed endowment while expressing concerns about two items in the agreement: a) the specification that "The Scholar designated to fill the Chair in Indic Civilizational and Religious Studies will have the equivalent of native proficiency in Sanskrit." The Council noted that "the number of 'native' speakers of Sanskrit is negligible as it is primarily a religious and classical literary language;" b) the Council remarked that according to the agreement "The Thakkar Family—DCF Visiting Scholar [who would take up the position prior to the appointment of a permanent chair] will have the responsibility of commencing the work towards the envisioned 'Center for Indic Civilization and Dharma Studies'" and provide this center with "an initial structure and direction." The Council expressed its concern that the funding of this center "is not explicit in the proposal nor is the matter of whether such a center is needed or feasible."

CPB further remarked that "the desire to create such a center has not been brought to the attention of the Humanities Executive Committee," that the center constitutes a "significant planning issue for the School of Humanities," and that "there is a risk that by tying the endowed chair to the envisioned center, the latter takes on a

⁴ The chair of the Ad Hoc Committee was a faculty representative on CPB at the time of the review of the Thakkar Family—Dharma Civilization Foundation Presidential Chair and Chair of CPB when the other three chairs were reviewed by the council. On taking up the chairship of the Ad Hoc Committee, he recused himself from presiding over any discussions or voting on anything related to the proposed establishments in the Academic Senate.

compulsory status that it would not otherwise have” (CPB’s concerns are summarized in the Chair of the Academic Senate’s memo to the Vice Provost for Academic Personnel dated June 17th, 2015). The Vice Provost subsequently brought these concerns to the attention of the Dean of the School of Humanities, noting that they “need to be taken into consideration in order that the endowment [be] processed in accordance with University policy and regulations” (memo from Diane K. O’Dowd, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel to the Dean of the School of Humanities dated June 19th, 2015). The committee has learned that the Dean of Humanities responded on July 14th and addressed the issue of “native proficiency in Sanskrit” and offered clarification on the reference to a potential India Center. However, the Vice Provost for Academic Personnel has confirmed that the chair and gift agreement were approved without further changes. In fact, presidential approval for the chair had already been conferred on July 10th. The committee has no way of determining how and why the Dean’s response was not incorporated into the final agreement. We can only point out the lack of coordination and attention among the various parties involved in the approval of endowed chairs and the need for clear and detailed procedures.

In the case of the Thakkar Family—Dharma Civilization Family Presidential Chair, the ad hoc committee concludes that meaningful consultation with faculty associated with the Program in Religious Studies, with departments that might end up as holders of the FTE, with individual faculty with scholarly expertise in South Asia, and with the Humanities Executive Committee as the body of elected faculty representatives of the School of Humanities did not take place. Further, we found nothing that would indicate approval by any faculty body in the School of Humanities.

2. The Swami Vivekananda—Dharma Civilization Foundation Presidential Chair in Modern India Studies; the Shri Parshvanath Presidential Chair in Jain Studies; and the Dhan Kaur Sahota Presidential Chair in Sikh Studies

The case of the three proposed endowed chairs that were announced by UCI’s Office of Communications on October 19th, 2015 is straightforward with respect to consultation. In all three instances, the “Initial Request to Approve the Establishment of an Endowed Chair” forms that passed through the Academic Senate state first that these chairs had received approval from “the faculty of the School of Humanities” and describe the consultation process as follows: “As for consultation, this opportunity was itself faculty driven by members of the Religious studies program, in particular Jack Miles, its current director, and past director, Keith Nelson. Since Religious studies is only a program and not a formal department, additional consultation will be sought with the HEC or Humanities Executive Committee (the School’s equivalent of the academic senate), at its first fall meeting. In the past, HEC has eagerly endorsed the establishment of new, fully funded chairs.”

The current and past director, however, have informed the ad hoc committee that the establishment of none of these three chairs was “faculty driven,” that there were serious reservations about the process and programmatic implications of these chairs for Religious Studies, and that any consultation was at best minimal. Further, in spite of the dean’s stated commitment to bring the three chairs to the HEC for approval at the committee’s first meeting of the 2015-16 academic year, HEC was never informed of the proposed chairs and the committee’s endorsement was evidently never sought. Indeed, the leadership and members of HEC only learned of the proposed chairs at an open meeting held on December 1st, 2015 by the HEC, faculty in the School of Humanities, and the dean. It was at this meeting that several faculty members voiced their concerns about the Dharma Civilization Foundation as a source of funding, about the relationship of the DCF to the two chairs that do not mention the organization in the chair titles, about the comportment of the DCF in relation to proper search procedures, and about the apparent lack of meaningful faculty consultation with regard to all four chairs.

The Council on Planning and Budget reviewed the three chairs at its meeting of October 28th, 2015. The Council approved the chairs based on the information available at the time, although observed that the proposal had “already been approved and publicly announced in UCI News on October 19, 2015” and that such “an announcement and approval prior to Academic Senate consideration runs counter to shared governance and undermines the Council’s ability to provide meaningful input at an appropriate juncture.” The Council’s endorsement was further characterized as “contingent on the information provided from the School of Humanities” (from CPB’s memo to the Chair of the Academic Senate, dated October 29th, 2015). The Senate Cabinet subsequently approved the three proposed endowments as well, although repeated CPB’s concerns about appropriate and timely consultation to the Chancellor.

In the case of the three chairs announced by the Office of Communications on October 19th, 2015, the ad hoc committee finds that consultation with faculty associated with the Program in Religious Studies either as individuals or as a group, with departments named as potential FTE holders in the gift agreement documentation, with individual faculty with scholarly expertise in South Asia, and with the Humanities Executive Committee as the body of elected faculty representatives of the School of Humanities did not take place. Further, there is no evidence that any of the aforementioned endorsed or approved the three proposed establishments.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

In the view of the ad hoc committee, the faculty of the School of Humanities’ public questioning of the four establishments is largely attributable to a failure of **meaningful** consultation on the part of the administration. Given this view, we feel strongly that the best course of action is to charge the Humanities Executive

Committee with reviewing all of the endowed chairs, including the Thakkar Family—Dharma Civilization Foundation Presidential Chair in Indic and Vedic Studies. While the latter has received presidential approval, we believe that normal consultation, review, and approval processes were sufficiently compromised to invalidate previous approvals by the Academic Senate and thus higher levels of administrative review and approval. HEC may decide that broader consultation with departments, the Program in Religious Studies as a whole, and faculty at UCI with research interests in the area of South Asia is needed. HEC should charge the dean with overseeing such consultation.

The ad hoc committee also recommends that the gift agreements be substantially modified to make sure that the language of these agreements is consistent with standards required of all recruitments in public research universities. We are particularly concerned about any language that implies that religious affiliation or participation in religious events is a prerequisite for chair holders. In its public statements after controversy broke out at UCI over the DCF-funded chairs in particular, the DCF has argued that “scholar practitioners” are the most appropriate researchers of their own religious traditions because they represent an “insider’s or “emic” point of view.⁵ We have no intention to argue for or against this position in this report. We simply observe that it is against UC and UCI policy to consider religious affiliation—either positively or negatively—as part of any hiring process or to require participation in religious activities as a condition of employment.

Granted, the gift agreements do not spell out the intent of any of the donors to impose the “scholar practitioner” condition on those hired into the proposed chairs. However, the agreements do include language that can be construed as a requirement, following the donor’s intent, to promote specific beliefs. For example, the gift agreement for the Thakkar Family—Dharma Civilization Presidential Chair in Indic and Vedic Civilization Studies states: “It is the Donor’s primary foundational intention, both initially and for posterity, to support their interest in uncovering the historic, current, and future potential for the pragmatic, ethical and cultural relevance of Indic philosophies, praxes, teaching, theologies towards the betterment of the condition of humanity and nature (Applied Dharma), including collaborative outreach to the local and national Hindu communities and religious institutions in India.” The language of practice and application along with the requirement of outreach to religious institutions in India appears to cross the line separating religious beliefs, affiliation, and practices from the conditions of employment. The committee felt similarly about the expectation that the chair holder of the Dhan Kaur Sahota Presidential Chair in Sikh Studies “organize Sikh-related conferences and events, including events to help organize student interest, such as visits to Sikh temples...”

⁵ From “Statement of Response to the controversy surrounding the DCF Gift to UCI,” authored Kalyan Viswanathan, Executive Vice President, Dharma Civilization Foundation.

On the whole, we would remark that all of the agreements are considerably more extensive and specific on donor intent in relation to research, teaching, and outreach than other gift agreements we have analyzed for purposes of comparison. These include gift agreements for endowed chairs tied to certain religious, ethnic, or national identities.

As noted, the ad hoc committee was charged not only with assessing the proposed chairs in relation to policies and procedures but also with providing an analysis of the funding sources and whether these sources are consonant with the mission of a public research university and with the principles of free academic expression. It is here that we turn to publicly stated positions of the Dharma Civilization Foundation in particular and provide recommendations that will, we hope, guide the HEC in its review.

While the committee recommends that the decision whether to accept or to decline the four endowed chairs in question should ultimately lie with the faculty stakeholders, we also specifically recommend that the two chairs that would have the Dharma Civilization Foundation as part of their names be rejected and this regardless of any modifications to the gift agreements. Our rationale for this recommendation is based on the principles that faculty are the appropriate judges of field and disciplinary expertise, that pools of applicants should not be unduly restricted, and that we must protect the mission and reputation of the institution—in this case, the University of California, the Irvine campus, and the School of Humanities—as a supporter of the cornerstone value of unfettered academic expression.

The committee acknowledges that both individual donors and groups of donors who represent some subsection of community interests have intents when they endow chairs. These intents may include, for example, supporting scholarly research and curricular offerings in the history, religions, culture, literature, or politics of specific ethnic or national groups. Such intents may be and often are consistent with a university governance system in which faculty expertise is paramount when it comes to evaluating scholarship and to guaranteeing sound, diverse curricula. When comparing the publicly stated views and intents of the DCF with other community-based donors, however, we find that the DCF is unusually explicit and prescriptive on appropriate disciplinary formations, what constitutes good or acceptable scholarship, and, indeed, what constitutes good or acceptable scholars.⁶ The DCF

⁶ For example, from the FAQ page of the DCF website, in answer to the question “Are the Dharma traditions not studied today in the Academy?”: “Being a significant world religion, Hinduism in particular is studied quite extensively. But it so happens that a very high majority of the professors and scholars who study Hinduism academically are non-Hindus and non-practitioners of Hinduism. This has resulted in widespread incidence of misrepresentation of Hinduism, and mischaracterization of the traditions and practices within the Hindu fold. Even Professors of Indian origin, who would ordinarily be expected to have sympathetic orientation towards

also has publicly stated views on what sort of disciplinary formations, scholarship, and scholars the foundation deems unacceptable or bad, creating a blacklist of academics.⁷ Such claims and implications are unacceptable incursions into the domains of faculty expertise and governance.

Particularly in the aftermath of the controversy about the endowed chairs at UCI, the committee has noted that the public comments made by the DCF are contrary to UCI's core values as a public university that fosters diversity, inclusion, tolerance, and respect of students and faculty.⁸ For example, the DCF has stated that it "is very unfortunate that some of the professors opposing DCF are of Indian origin with an ideological commitment to undermine initiatives that promote and nurture Hindu

their religion and culture, are often beholden to the methods of study, employed predominantly by the Area studies disciplines, which treat Hinduism and the other Dharma traditions as foreign exotica, and not lived traditions of fellow-Americans [*sic*]." See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duLH-GHSYP0> (accessed February 7th, 2016).

⁷ See, for example, the Dharma Civilization Foundation-produced video "DCF—The Reason for Its Existence," which includes criticisms of specific scholars and of their scholarship. The video is available for streaming on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duLH-GHSYP0>. The video page on the DCF website, which included this and several other videos, was taken down at some point in January, 2016, presumably in response to the controversy at UCI and its reporting. Similar criticisms are made on the DCF FAQ page in answer to the question "What are some examples of such misrepresentations and mis-characterizations [*sic*]?" "In recent times, there has been a spate of controversies related to the application of Freudian Analytical techniques to explain Hindu Gods, Goddesses and Gurus. These analytics techniques create a distorted representation of almost all the things that Hindus hold dear to their heart. Examples are the book on Lord Ganesha by Paul Courtright, 1985; the book on Ramakrishna Paramahansa by Jeffrey Kripal, 1995; the California Text Book controversy, 2005 and Michael Witzel's intervention in the case; the most recent episode of Wendy Doniger's book called 'The Hindus—An Alternate History, 2010'. This has helped in bringing focus to a long festering problem in the Academy. In prior years, Marxist interpretive lenses were used to look for who benefits, who gains in power and influence from the various principles and values within the Hindu Society, to continually discredit the spiritual realities expounded by the sacred texts of India." While not part of the publicly accessible record, faculty at UCI also received a document entitled "Current Status of Hindu Studies in North American Universities" (no author attributed) from DCF leadership that gives a more extensive list of scholars deemed unacceptable (email correspondence of June 9th, 2012 from Dr. Manohar Shinde, currently Chairman Emeritus of the DCF, to Professors Keith Nelson, Gerald Larson, Vinayak Chaturvedi, and others).

⁸ Chancellor Howard Gillman, "Free Speech and Civility," <http://chancellor.uci.edu/engagement/campus-communications/2014/141001-free-speech-civility.html> (accessed February 8th, 2016).

Studies.”⁹ The committee deems the DCF’s statements targeting faculty based on race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality antithetical to UCI’s mission of creating a safe academic environment that is conducive to sharing and critically examining knowledge and values.

While it could still be argued that gift agreements could be written in such a way as to ensure faculty control of the academic personnel processes related to hiring the proposed chairs and to exclude donor input into these processes, the committee believes that the public nature of the DCF’s views on disciplines, scholarship, and scholars would nonetheless serve as an undue limitation on the applicant pool. In short, any association with the DCF name and funding will discourage applications from scholars who disagree with the foundation’s views and, even if protected from influence from the foundation, might consider their association with the DCF untenable.

Finally, we observe with consternation that some of the scholars and scholarship specifically targeted by the DCF in publicly accessible forums have been subject to censorship, death threats, and other forms of constraint in India. We note that public universities in the United States have a strong commitment to protecting academic freedom and that this principle is a cornerstone of the University of California. The committee is deeply concerned by any attempts to suppress academic freedom, and we feel that any association with the suppression of such freedom wherever it occurs is both inherently odious and harmful to our institutional reputation.

As stated above, the committee recommends that the proposed Shri Parshvanath Presidential Chair in Jain Studies and the proposed Dhan Kaur Sahota Presidential Chair in Sikh Studies receive further review from the Humanities Executive Committee and faculty groups in conjunction with the dean.

We note that the Dharma Civilization Foundation has claimed in some news sources to have catalyzed these gifts and that certainly the various donors were in communication with one another as the gift agreements were being forged. Dr. Harvinder Sahota and Dr. Jasvant Modi, the principal donors (respectively) for the Dhan Kaur Sahota Presidential Chair in Sikh Studies and the Shri Parshvanath Presidential Chair in Jain Studies, have stated in a joint letter dated January 5th, 2016 and addressed to Dean Van Den Abbeele and faculty of the School of Humanities that they are “independent of DCF.” While according to the DCF’s website Dr. Sahota has donated in the past to the organization, because of the modest size of the donation to the DCF and the subsequent statement of independence from the organization, the ad hoc committee considers it precipitate to reject the proposed chair on the grounds of a connection to the DCF. Based on the information the ad hoc committee

⁹ From the DCF website, blog post by Kalyan Viswanathan, Executive Vice President of Dharma Civilization Foundation, in the name of the DCF Executive Committee: <http://www.dcfusa.org/wish-you-all-a-happy-and-prosperous-new-year-2016/> (accessed February 15th, 2016).

has examined, it considers a significant connection to the DCF in the case of the Shri Parshvanath Presidential in Jain Studies unsubstantiated.

The committee, as noted, nonetheless has serious concerns about how the two non-DCF chairs relate to the curricular needs, research goals, and strategic vision of the School of Humanities. These concerns extend to the entire development effort. The Thakkar Family—Dharma Civilization gift agreements make mention of an envisioned “Center for Indic Civilization and Dharma Studies.” Faculty appear not to have been consulted about the desirability, feasibility, and curricular or research missions of such a center. We note that there is no mention of a center focused on South Asian religions in either the School of Humanities most recent strategic plan (dated May 7th, 2006) nor in the more recent report “Humanities for Our Times” (2014), which could be said to serve the same purpose. The first document mentions with regard to the Program in Religious Studies the desirability of “two additional positions, one in Buddhism (to be placed in East Asian Languages and Literatures, and one in Critical Religious Studies (relation between philosophy and religion, religion and law).” The second, more recent document does make much mention of Religious Studies or related topics at all. The Program in Religious Studies is modest. The number of BA degrees awarded starting from 2006-07, when the first degrees in the major were awarded, is as follows: 1 (2006-07), 4 (2007-08), 5 (2008-09), 8 (2009-10), 6 (2010-11), 11 (2011-12), 3 (2012-13), 3 (2013-14), and 4 (2014-15). The number of degrees awarded is only one measure of program size, but we do think that these numbers suggest that serious thought ought to go into adding faculty to the School of Humanities intended primarily to serve the Program in Religious Studies. Further, because the Program in Religious Studies does not hold faculty FTE, consultation with those departments most likely to serve as FTE holders is more—not less—incumbent on the administration. In the specific case at hand, unless departments are found willing to serve as FTE holders for these chairs and unless search committees can be established, we see no way that the intent of the endowments could be met because the positions would be in effect unsearchable.

The ad hoc committee concludes more generally that the public controversy surrounding the four endowed chairs, which redounds to the benefit of neither the donors nor the university, could likely have been avoided had broader and more meaningful consultation with faculty stakeholders occurred. We recommend that the Humanities Executive Committee and the Dean of the School of Humanities work together to adopt policies and procedures that will guarantee that such consultation will take place in the future. This would entail adopting as stated policy that the Humanities Executive Committee and impacted departments review all gift agreements and accompanying documents. It would further entail approval by vote of any gift agreements by these groups. We believe that such policies and procedures ultimately tend more to expedition than obstruction, in addition to being fully in keeping with the shared governance structure of our university.

(February 18, 2016)