



Association for Asian Studies

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Vice Chancellor Brian Schmidt
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200
AUSTRALIA

Dear Chancellor Schmidt,

I write to you on behalf of the Board of the Association for Asian Studies, a non-political, non-profit international professional association open to all persons interested in Asia and the study of Asia. With approximately 8,000 members worldwide, representing all the regions and countries of Asia and all academic disciplines, the AAS is the largest organization of its kind. As you may imagine, several of our members are either faculty at ANU or have received their training at ANU, an institution that has justly earned its reputation as one of the bright lights in our field.

It is thus with no small concern that we have learned of proposed cost-saving measures—the elimination of “less commonly taught languages” (some of which, as we know, are spoken by many millions) and the likely reduction of highly-trained professional faculty engaged in language instruction. Skilled language-learning is the cornerstone of our profession; it opens the door to the study of culture, religion, politics and everything else and is therefore a critical asset for anyone who wishes to acquire in depth understanding of the region. It is almost certain that these measures would compromise the quality of instruction at ANU and as a consequence, also compromise the ANU “brand” as certification of high quality training in Asian Studies, a field that serves the academy, diplomacy, business, and policy while informing the general public about this critical, diverse, and complex region. We understand that cost-saving measures are never undertaken lightly, but we would urge you to think very carefully in this instance of the risk of destroying a valuable asset whose renown is not only national but global.

Sincerely,

Laurel Kendall

Laurel Kendall, Ph.D.
President, Association for Asian Studies
Chair, Division of Anthropology and Curator, Asian Ethnographic Collections,
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