

THE ART OF WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS: EXPLAINING DIVERGENT  
OUTCOMES OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES IN THE U.S.

by

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## **DEDICATION**

*For Thelma Nelson and Victor Nelson.*

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Seven years ago I moved to Northern Virginia to begin my doctoral studies at George Mason University. Though I walked in late to my orientation because it was my first time on campus and I got lost, I arrived just in time to hear one professor tell us, statistically, only half of our cohort would graduate. From that moment I was determined to finish. Little did I realize how many people would be so instrumental in helping me make that happen. While a solitary endeavor in many ways, the completion of this dissertation and the degree was only possible because of the support and encouragement I received from too many people to count.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Tables.....	ix
List of Figures .....	x
List of Abbreviations.....	xi
Abstract .....	xii
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Dissertation Roadmap .....	14
Chapter Two: Theory .....	16
Chinese Language Learning in the U.S. ....	18
Literature Review.....	21
Internal Institutional Needs .....	22
Entrepreneurship and Sponsors .....	25
Opposition .....	28
Reputation.....	29
Hypotheses & Measurement .....	32
Internal Institutional Needs .....	33
Entrepreneurship and Sponsors .....	34
Opposition .....	34
Reputation.....	35
Data Collection Process & Interviews .....	36
Main Findings .....	44
Chapter Three: Established & Maintained Confucius Institutes.....	49
University of Maryland.....	52
Internal Needs.....	53
Sponsors .....	55
Opposition .....	56
Reputation.....	57
College of William & Mary .....	58
Internal Needs.....	59
Sponsors .....	62
Opposition .....	63
Reputation.....	63
George Mason University .....	65
Internal Needs.....	65
Sponsors .....	66

Opposition .....	67
Reputation.....	67
Temple University.....	68
Internal Needs.....	69
Sponsors .....	70
Opposition .....	70
Reputation.....	71
University of South Carolina .....	72
Internal Needs.....	72
Sponsors .....	73
Opposition .....	74
Reputation.....	74
University A.....	74
Internal Needs.....	75
Sponsors .....	76
Opposition .....	76
Reputation.....	77
University B .....	77
Internal Needs.....	78
Sponsors .....	79
Opposition .....	80
Reputation.....	80
The College Board’s Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms Network .....	81
Internal Needs.....	86
Sponsors .....	86
Opposition .....	87
Reputation.....	87
Conclusion .....	88
Chapter 4: The CI Reversals of the University of Chicago and Pennsylvania State University ...	91
The Confucius Institute at the University of Chicago.....	97
Controversy .....	100
The Role of North American Professional Associations.....	101
Committee to Review the CIUC.....	108
The Demise of the University of Chicago’s Confucius Institute .....	109
Internal Needs.....	110
Sponsors .....	111
Opposition .....	112
Reputation.....	112
Conclusion.....	113
The Confucius Institute at Pennsylvania State University.....	115
Evolution of Pennsylvania State University’s Confucius Institute .....	116
Early Issues with Pennsylvania State University’s Confucius Institute.....	118
CI Initiatives and Continued Issues at PSU.....	120
Internal Needs.....	124
Sponsors .....	124
Opposition .....	125
Reputation.....	126



Conclusion .....	126
Conclusion .....	127
Chapter Five: Confucius Institutes that Failed to Establish .....	130
University of Pennsylvania .....	133
Internal Needs .....	134
Sponsors .....	134
Opposition .....	135
Reputation .....	136
Florida International University .....	136
Internal Needs .....	136
Sponsors .....	138
Opposition .....	138
Reputation .....	139
University C .....	140
Internal Needs .....	142
Sponsors .....	142
Opposition .....	143
Reputation .....	143
University D .....	143
Internal Needs .....	144
Sponsors .....	144
Opposition .....	144
Reputation .....	145
University E .....	145
Internal Needs .....	148
Sponsors .....	148
Opposition .....	149
Reputation .....	149
Conclusion .....	150
Chapter Six: Conclusion .....	153
Future Research .....	158
Limitations .....	159
References .....	161

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 1. Confucius Institutes by Region.....	4
Table 2. Top 10 Countries Hosting the Largest Numbers of Confucius Institutes.....	4
Table 3. Internal Needs Present at U.S. Institutions .....	45
Table 4. Important Sponsors Present at U.S. Institutions .....	46
Table 5. Degree of Opposition Present at U.S. Institutions .....	47
Table 6. CI Reputation & Importance of the Transnational CI Network at U.S. Institutions .....	48

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 1. Modern and Chinese Language Enrollments Growth Index in Higher Education (1960-2013).....	20

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

American Association of University Professors .....	AAUP
Beijing Language and Culture University .....	BLCU
Beijing Normal University .....	BNU
Canadian Association of University Teachers .....	CAUT
Central China Television .....	CCTV
Chicago Public Schools .....	CPS
Confucius Institute .....	CI
Confucius Institute at Maryland .....	CIM
Confucius Institute and Confucius Classroom .....	CICC
Confucius Institute at the University of Chicago .....	CIUC
Dalian University of Technology .....	DUT
East Central Ohio Educational Service Center .....	ECOESC
Florida International University.....	FIU
Georgia State University .....	GSU
Houston Independent School District .....	HSID
Memorandum of Understanding .....	MoU
Office of China Affairs .....	OCA
People’s Republic of China .....	PRC
Public Diplomacy .....	PD
University of Maryland .....	UMD
University of South Carolina .....	USC
William & Mary .....	W&M
William & Mary Confucius Institute .....	WMCI
Zhejiang Normal University .....	ZJNU

## **ABSTRACT**

THE ART OF WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS: EXPLAINING DIVERGENT OUTCOMES OF CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES IN THE U.S.

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Dissertation Director: Dr. Eric M. McGlinchey

After the first Confucius Institute opened in 2004, the Chinese government-funded program grew quickly. Today, there are over 500 in the world and over 100 institutes in the United States. Despite this apparent success, this dissertation explains why some institutions establish Confucius Institutes, while others close or fail to establish Confucius Institutes. Using qualitative research methods, this project analyzes the experience of seventeen U.S. institutions through interviews and publicly available data and records. Theoretically, this project acknowledges the work of public diplomacy scholars but grounds the research in literature that helps explain the institutions' decisions from the organizational level. It focuses specifically on the role of internal institutional need, policy entrepreneurs and sponsorship, internal opposition, and the reputation and perception of the transnational Confucius Institute network. Data suggest that an institution's need and its perception of the larger network are the main drivers of the

partnership outcome. The majority of institutions indicated that a desire to start or grow Chinese language programs on campus was a major impetus to the establishment of the Confucius Institute. Similarly, an institution's perception of the larger transnational Confucius Institute network played an important role in determining partnership outcomes. A number of the closed and failed-to-establish cases, however, had negative experiences with aspects of the network.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

China has quickly grown to be one of the world's largest and most dominating economic powers. And while it continues to modernize and strengthen its military capabilities and technology, it has also taken purposeful steps to improve its soft power capabilities. The real struggle for China, however, has been figuring out how best to leverage its latent soft power resources, which include its civilization's rich culture. The highest levels of Chinese government publicly tout the importance of soft power to its continued growth and peaceful development. In fact, the concept itself can, in part, be distinctly linked to rhetoric from the top leadership regarding China's place in the world. From Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" to China's "world of harmony" view, in which diverse countries and societies peacefully coexist and respect one another, achieving cultural superpower status requires increasing Chinese soft power (Li 2009, 250). David Shambaugh addressed these issues and concluded that, until now, China's most tenable soft power resource remains money, as seen through spending in the form of investment deals, major loan packages, and foreign aid, and other avenues. While China acknowledges the importance of the need to influence global public opinion, it has largely fallen short, though not for lack of trying (Shambaugh 2015). Polls by BBC and Pew confirm this, as do soft power indices such as those from the U.K.'s Institute for Government (McClory 2013).

China wants to present an alternative to Western power while also demonstrating that it is not a threat. As a counter to the “China threat” thesis, Beijing has embarked on a mission to mold perceptions of its rise as peaceful. However, the effort to convince both its neighbors and the West that it can be a responsible and respectable global partner is an upward climb. In addition to the economic initiatives mentioned above, China is working to create a positive global image to counterbalance the prevailing narrative through the Confucius Institute.

The Office of Chinese Language Council International, commonly known as either Hanban or the Confucius Institute Headquarters, oversees the Confucius Institute. The Confucius Institute was established with the goal of presenting the world with “the proper image” of China. In order to do this, it drew lessons from the previously established major national cultural institutions in Western Europe, including France’s Alliance Française, Germany’s Goethe Institut, and the UK’s British Council. Unlike these other institutions, the Confucius Institute uses a network approach to its organization. The vast majority of Confucius Institutes today are organized as a partnership between Chinese sponsor institutions and foreign host institutions, many of these partners being universities.<sup>1</sup>

Over the 13 years since its inception, although not without difficulties along the way, the Confucius Institute has grown in unprecedented ways. Whereas the comparable

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<sup>1</sup> Since the Office of Chinese Language Council International is sometimes referred to as the Confucius Institute Headquarters, it is important to note that the larger program is often called either the Confucius Institute program or initiative. Individual partnerships between Chinese sponsors and foreign hosts are also called Confucius Institutes. Through context clues, it should be clear whether a specific CI reference is linked to the larger CI program or a specific CI establishing abroad.



institutions mentioned grew over a period of 60 or even 100 or more years, according to Hanban’s website, at the end of 2016 there were 511 Confucius Institutes as well as 1,073 Confucius Classrooms — the latter being Chinese language programs that generally operate in primary and secondary educational environments (“Kongzi Xueyuan-Guanyu Kongyuan” 2017).<sup>2</sup> By organizing the CIs as partnerships with foreign universities, Hanban is able to leverage existing infrastructure in establishing a brand abroad. The expectation of the CIs is that the universities provide space for them to operate, saving them the expense in capital and human resources of securing a location. Further, by attaching the CIs to universities (or sometimes K-12 schools or non-profits), they are able to leverage existing brands and get support from their new colleagues advertising their work and programs. This strategy has helped Hanban to expand quickly, but their occupying of physical space on university campuses has also raised a number of concerns. Despite the rapid growth, there have been numerous cases of CIs closing worldwide, including two in the U.S. in 2014. Furthermore, there are many known instances of CIs not being established despite interest or attempts to do so. This dissertation delves into the structure- and agent-related causes that have lead to these divergent outcomes. While this dissertation focuses on the issues present at CIs in the U.S., it is also important to acknowledge that the same outcomes are present in Canada, Japan, Russia, France, Sweden, and Germany. For more specific information on the Confucius Institute’s worldwide spread, see Tables 1 and 2 below. As shown in Table 2, the number of CIs currently operational in the U.S. far exceeds that of any other country.

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<sup>2</sup> While I am using Hanban’s figure, the website indicates 512 CIs. I use 511 consistently because I know that one of the CIs listed as “open” in the U.S. is not. Lists of CIs in other countries have not been verified.

Table 1. Confucius Institutes by Region

<b>Region</b>	<b>Number of CIs</b>	<b>% of total CIs</b>
<b>Europe</b>	160	31.3%
<b>Americas</b>	170	33.3%
<b>Asia</b>	115	22.5%
<b>Africa</b>	48	9.4%
<b>Oceania</b>	18	3.5%
<b>Total</b>	511	100%

*Source:* “Kongzi Xueyuan/Ketang,”  
[www.hanban.org/confuciusinstitutes/node\\_10961.htm](http://www.hanban.org/confuciusinstitutes/node_10961.htm). Accessed June 20, 2017.

Table 2. Top 10 Countries Hosting the Largest Numbers of Confucius Institutes

<b>Top 10 Countries</b>	<b>Number of CIs</b>	<b>% of Total CIs</b>
<b>USA</b>	110	21.5%
<b>UK</b>	29	5.7%
<b>South Korea</b>	23	4.5%
<b>Germany</b>	19	3.7%
<b>France</b>	17	3.3%
<b>Russia</b>	17	3.3%
<b>Thailand</b>	15	2.9%
<b>Australia</b>	14	2.7%
<b>Japan</b>	14	2.7%
<b>Canada</b>	12	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	270	52.6%

*Source:* “Kongzi Xueyuan/Ketang,”  
[www.hanban.org/confuciusinstitutes/node\\_10961.htm](http://www.hanban.org/confuciusinstitutes/node_10961.htm). Accessed June 20, 2017.

In a broad sense, the in-roads Hanban have established in foreign countries are important for a couple of ways. First, it is evidence that China values spending resources on a program that works to engage with the world. Second, the program emits a state-sanctioned message and image. To better understand the rationale for establishing such a program the following section delves into literature on soft power. It first discusses ways

in which soft power is conceptualized and research on soft power more broadly. Then it illustrates how the Chinese government and Chinese scholars think about and respond to the West's modern use of the term soft power. Finally, it contextualizes research on the Confucius Institute and the connection between language learning and perceptions using these frames, discusses the strengths of the extant research and demonstrates ways in which this dissertation can inform our understanding of the Confucius Institute even further.

Joseph Nye defines soft power as the ability to get what one wants through attraction instead of coercion or force (Nye 1990b). While not the first scholar, thinker, or politician to conceive of the importance of influence and an aspect of power beyond traditional economic and military might, Nye's work on soft power propelled the concept to the center of political and academic discussions. There exists a tension between the growing academic literature that seeks to better understand the mechanisms of soft power, i.e. how it attracts, and policy circles that focus on the need for more soft power. One of the difficulties in discussing soft power is that, while scholars and policymakers talk about it in the aggregate, soft power mechanisms work in a multitude of contexts and with myriad audiences. Consider for a moment the distinct contexts and audiences of some potential sources of soft power: an international sporting event; student, scholar, and administrator exchanges; blockbuster movies and talent competitions; and joining new international organizations, trade agreements, and resolving territorial disputes.

Blanchard and Lu (2012) bring attention to the inadequacy of aggregate studies of soft power. Similarly, they argue that, all too often, studies of soft power mechanisms are

not properly contextualized nor do they focus enough attention on the message that is trying to be communicated. To address this first issue, part of this chapter seeks to frame the Confucius Institute from the perspective of language learning in the U.S. Data from the Modern Language Association will later illustrate that Chinese language learning trends in the U.S. are in fact distinct from those of many other languages.

Other theoretical issues with soft power have emerged regarding Nye's work. Specifically, some scholars see Nye's use of attraction as the main causal mechanism of soft power problematic (Bially Mattern 2005; Hall 2010). This is largely due to the fact that it is at times difficult to know the real motivations behind any given action or decision. For instance, when considering "high" and "low" aspects of cultural attractiveness, Hall (2010) suggests that a university's enrollment numbers could be motivated by its reputation and stature and thus fueled by the potential economic gain of the student rather than attraction; similarly, consumption of popular culture may be due to an interest in special effects and by the massive Hollywood marketing apparatus as opposed to attraction.

It is also difficult to discuss motivations for learning language. A 2012 survey by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), however, circumvents this issue and shows that, regardless of motivation, there is a connection between the learning of a language and positive perceptions of its origin country. The survey collected data on Australian attitudes towards Indonesia, specifically looking to measure respondents' factual knowledge of Indonesia and their perception of the society. The poll found that respondents who had studied Indonesian language had a higher level of understanding

and a more positive perception of Indonesia than respondents who had never studied Indonesian language (Hill 2016, 374). While it is unclear whether respondents were preconditioned to have a more positive perception of Indonesia, the poll still indicates a strong reason why countries may want to increase language learning abroad.

Nye's emerging work on soft power quickly found its way into Chinese academic and policy discourse and evolved as Chinese scholars reinterpreted it. Academics point to Wang Huning as the first Chinese scholar to discuss soft power with a uniquely Chinese perspective in the early 1990s. Wang Huning (1993) emphasized that, of the sources of influence outlined by Nye, culture played a particularly important role for China. Li Mingjiang argues, "Traditional Chinese culture is singled out as the most valuable source of Chinese soft power" (2008, 292). Interviews with Chinese scholars suggest that, while there is a small contingent of those who see China's political power as the main source of its soft power, the culture-centric view remains stronger (Glaser and Murphy 2009, 13). One contemporary leader of this latter perspective, Yu Xintian, contends that Chinese life in the social and political realms is inseparable from its culture (Glaser and Murphy 2009, 13; see also Yu 2002).

The timing of Nye's *Bound to Lead* (1990) and early discussions of soft power in China coincided with domestic programs and events abroad that precipitated the promotion of Chinese language learning, which later led to the Confucius Institute. While Chinese scholars started to consider soft power as it might pertain to China and its peaceful rise, there was an increase in foreign students coming to China to study Chinese. Cheng (2009) credits this increase to the economic difficulties Japan was facing. In 1999,

at the 2nd National Work Conference on Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, Vice-Premier Qian Qichen argued that teaching Chinese to foreigners was “a national cause” and had “important and far-reaching meaning in expanding China’s influence”; Chen Zhili, Minister of Education, agreed and “called for intensifying efforts to promote Chinese language learning overseas” (Cheng 2009, 114).

According to Cheng, former vice mayor of Shanghai Yan Juanqi said that “to promote Chinese learning overseas is beneficial to the revival and the spreading of traditional Chinese culture, to the projection of a benign image of China on the international stage, as well as to the expansion of China’s influence in the world” (Cheng 2009, 115). The close link between the promotion of language learning and state policies is nothing new. The advent of English teachers being sent overseas via Fulbright and the Peace Corps, as well as other similar government-sponsored programs, and the political objectives and impetuses behind that is well documented (Åkerlund 2014; Bu 1999; Lindsay 1989).

While studies have shown no correlation at the national level between the number of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in a country and that country’s public opinion of China (Xie and Page 2013), there are studies that indicate a positive relationship between a society’s engaging in exchanges and promoting learning of their language and a more positive perception of that society among those populations targeted with such efforts (Hill 2016; McConnell 2008; Metzgar 2012). Atkinson (2010) adds to this while focusing particular attention on the need for strong socializing opportunities in the exchange program. The CI acts as a type of reverse exchange, where those individuals

participating in CI programs have direct access to and contact with Chinese nationals as instructors. The events and programs put on by the CIs also allow for a great deal of interaction outside of a traditional classroom setting. In a way, the CIs allow willing participants some benefits of an exchange program without traveling abroad. This line of research is important to establishing the possibility of programs like the Confucius Institute impacting participants and affecting attitudinal and perceptual change. Hubbert uses the Confucius Classroom as a context through which “to examine how students and parents experience the Chinese state through their everyday encounters with its policies, representations, and representatives” (Hubbert 2014, 330). Her research on the Confucius Classroom “reveals the disarticulated and conflicted nature of the imagined state, but also suggests that the consequences of official policy are an effect of the intentions, representations, and practices beyond the control of official policy endeavors” (Hubbert 2014, 331). These everyday encounters and their variations from person to person, institution to institution, and even over time may be helpful in understanding the range in perceptions of the CI program. Ultimately, soft power is limited to the extent that it is able to reach and, in turn, affect target audiences and their attitudes.

In fact, soft power projections and their receptivity may vary according to whether they are employed by democratic or non-democratic states. James Sherr, in his discussion of the humanitarian aspects of Russian soft power projection as seen through the role of the Orthodox Church and Russkiy Mir Foundation, notes that Russian soft power much more closely resembles soft coercion. Sherr describes soft coercion as influence that is indirectly coercive and dependent on covert methods and new forms of

power, such as energy in the case of Russia—sources of power that are difficult to describe as either hard or soft. It is not a matter of influencing outside constituencies to get what the state wants but telling them what they want (Sherr 2013, 111).<sup>3</sup> This is less obvious in the Chinese case but still relevant, reminiscent of the way early iterations of Hanban agreements supposedly asked foreign partners to agree to the One-China policy (Golden 2011; Peng 2011).

Despite the elite rhetoric, Nye (2013) argues that China and Russia do not understand soft power. Nye reiterates the need for soft power to derive from attractiveness and from individuals, the private sector, and civil society. He argues that China and Russia have been trying to build soft power from government, something that will likely only get it limited or meager returns, at best. While the CI project is a vast Chinese government initiative, it is also one set up to act as a joint venture between partnering institutions and to leverage the talents of Chinese language teachers who inherently appreciate foreign language and culture. While the government's role is a main pillar of the project, its success is just as reliant on the Chinese individuals who travel abroad to work in the CIs and interact with the local publics all over the world. It is from this perspective that the CI project really connects to so many distinct research traditions. It also suggests that governments may be learning how to devise soft power building projects.

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<sup>3</sup> Blanchard and Lu also bring up the point of economic payments. In some cases, grants and loans can be considered a soft power mechanism, stemming from good will and benevolent governments. On the other hand, often we think about economic payments as being associated with hard power. Blanchard and Lu suggest that we could consider excluding economic payments as a type of soft power if they come with explicit conditions or implicit *quid pro quos*.



From the Chinese perspective, which strongly emphasizes the connection between soft power and culture, using public diplomacy methods as international outreach is a natural fit. As Nye (2008) contends, governments use the instrument of public diplomacy to communicate with and attract foreign publics. Specifically, they do this by communicating potential soft power resources such as culture, politics, and values. Wang (Yiwei Wang 2008) argues that most public discussion in China around its public diplomacy works to counter the “China threat” theory and address China’s image abroad.

As an academic field, public diplomacy is a nascent one, but it is growing rapidly (Gregory 2008). A relatively recent paradigm shift from old to new public diplomacy aligning with the change in the global media and communications environment juxtaposes the old one-way messaging to the new multi-directional messaging that is prevalent today (Melissen 2005). Snow observes another evolution in the field of public diplomacy, namely that what once was government-to-government exchange later evolved to a government-to-publics model, and now we see a publics-to-publics model (Snow 2009). In other words what once was the strict role of state diplomatic and information agencies and missions is now evolving to include general publics, or in the CI instance, university and local/regional communities.

Research on the Confucius Institute is also growing. Studies of the Confucius Institute in mainstream media in the U.S. show that it is viewed in the news as generally positive, although the introduction to the institute by the *The New York Times* relies on cultural and historical stereotypes without providing descriptive and informative news on the program in the U.S. (Lueck, Pippis, and Lin 2014; Metzgar and Su 2016). Zaharna

(2009) highlights the distinction between foreign external communication for relationship building and “linear” communication for informational transference for the purpose of persuasion or control. Conceptualizing CIs as a type of foreign communication for relationship building, Zaharna (2014) applies her relational network theory to demonstrate the many levels upon which such networks exist. The unique organizational structure of the CI project suggests different levels of analysis for the prospective researcher. These include the sponsor institution’s close affiliation with Chinese universities, the directives they take from Hanban in Beijing, the constituent part of a larger network of CIs worldwide, and a new online CI learning environment.

In effect, the Confucius Institute is an embodiment of the merger of public diplomacy and the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. This mechanism works to send Chinese teachers and administrators, who are more or less informal diplomats, to local schools, universities, and communities so that they may experience Chinese culture and life, directly connecting foreign institutions and individuals with Chinese citizens. These teachers and administrators are representing China and, for many, may be the first direct connection they have ever had to China. It is through these individuals and the classes they teach, either language or culture (or both), that the Confucius Institute works to improve China’s image. For some localities, it can act to strengthen existing links and relationships, and in others it can serve as the first connection the community has ever had with China. These individuals play an important role in how the local community receives the CI and in turn how local individuals perceive China.

One of the most difficult aspects of public diplomacy work is measuring efficacy. Ideally, the Chinese government would like to see that the Confucius Institute is drawing foreigners to study Chinese language and culture, it is difficult to determine to what extent that is actually happening. Aside from difficulties associated with determining a reliable outcome measurement system, there is another issue related to the CIs' actual inroads in foreign countries. While partnering with foreign host institutions offers advantages related to placement and branding, it also requires cooperation between Chinese and foreign institutions for initiation. With 511 Confucius Institutes worldwide, it is obvious that there is no real shortage of interest on the part of foreign institutions in opening a Confucius Institute. That said, the closures at the University of Chicago and Pennsylvania State University imply that the story is more complicated than global acceptance of the CI program. The examples of institutions that never opened a CI echo this implication. Despite the attention that the closures received, there is no known research to date that tries to explain why different institutions respond differently to the Confucius Institute. This dissertation seeks to remedy this gap.

As a topic of research, the Confucius Institute exists at the congruence of soft power and public diplomacy, internationalization in higher education and education policy. For this reason, this dissertation is relevant to various different stakeholders. For universities, it highlights some of the more successful ways to establish a CI as well as some of the issues that have arisen. For Hanban, it might be able to offer a distinct perspective of the decision-making process that goes on in American universities while also distinguishing what American institutions are looking to receive from foreign

partners. For the researcher, this dissertation urges a more nuanced consideration of the theoretical implications of international agreements among universities. For a topic that usually finds space in the realm of public diplomacy, it actually needs a more rigorous theoretical field. While public diplomacy scholars are often the first to agree that their field lacks theoretical underpinning, through this dissertation I urge public diplomacy to consider the role of organizational variables as important for future research and a possible avenue from which the field may be able to adopt insight and theory. Further, there is no known research in public diplomacy that considers a similar variation, despite the growing amount of research on soft power instruments and public diplomacy programs.

## **Dissertation Roadmap**

The Confucius Institute is a highly visible Chinese government public diplomacy program. Despite what scholars have to say about public diplomacy and soft power, there exists a disconnect between China's mission for the Confucius Institute and the rationale for host institutions to seek a CI partnership. While China seeks to change the way the world views it, the motivations of the foreign host institutions are very different. Even though understanding public diplomacy is important in understanding the broader Confucius Institute, it does not aid in understanding why efforts to establish CIs abroad are not always successful. Instead, this dissertation argues that the answer lies in the host institutions' behavior, decision-making and coalition building. The following chapter outlines literature from political science and business that illustrate key dynamics responsible for the various partnership outcomes. Then I present my hypotheses and

describe the observable implications that would support my hypothesis. Next, I cover my data collection process and finally describe my main findings. My three data chapters take each possible outcome in turn. Chapter three focuses on Confucius Institutes that were established and remain open today. It includes seven universities and a discussion surrounding The College Board's Confucius Institute and Confucius Classroom network. Each university is discussed individually, where I use interview data and publicly available data to assess each hypothesis in turn. Chapter four focuses on the two U.S. instances of CI closings. The narrative is an in-depth account of actions that took place on- and off-campus that impacted the closings of the CIs. Chapter five looks at five universities that have not opened CIs. While one university is still hoping that it will open one in the future, the other four are fairly certain that they will not pursue the CI project moving forward. The dissertation concludes with a chapter that summarizes the main conclusions and discusses potentially fruitful future directions for research.

## CHAPTER TWO: THEORY

The Confucius Institute project represents a very specific public diplomacy initiative with its goal closely tied with affecting the way the world understands China. Some scholars liken the project to the European national cultural institutions and with good reason. Hanban acknowledges having used the British Council and Alliance Française as examples of institutions it sought to emulate. However, circumstances around the beginnings of the European cultural institutions follow a power-dominance model as many were established in former colonies. The CI initiative is undoubtedly seeking to influence a growing positive sentiment about China worldwide but, unlike its European counterparts, not in the context of a recent colonial power. Its growth and structure also set it apart from its predecessors and are reasons some scholars and policymakers argue that it should not be likened to the aforementioned European institutions (Hartig 2012; K. King 2013; Yang 2010). Despite these differences, the Confucius Institute still can be viewed as a tool of public diplomacy.

Cull (2009) provides a useful starting definition of public diplomacy, stating that it “is an international actor’s attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public” (12). The *goal* of public diplomacy is closely linked to this definition; specifically, public diplomacy aims to manage and frame a country’s brand and image in a particular way. The Confucius Institute Headquarters functions in

this way as it manages staff, curriculum, and events held by individual Confucius Institutes around the world. By overseeing these aspects, it seeks to maintain a grasp on the brand and image connected with China disseminated vis-à-vis Confucius Institute programming and events.

According to the Hanban website the official function of a CI is as follows:

Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters, as a public institution affiliates with the Chinese Ministry of Education, is committed to providing Chinese language and cultural teaching resources and services worldwide, it goes all out in meeting the demands of foreign Chinese learners and contributing to the development of multiculturalism and the building of a harmonious world. (“Hanban-AboutUs-HanBan” 2017)

And below, another official statement connects the purpose of the program with larger public diplomacy objectives and ideals. Specifically:

Over recent years, the Confucius Institutes’ development has been sharp and they have provided scope for people all over the world to learn about Chinese language and culture. In addition they have become a platform for cultural exchanges between China and the world as well as a bridge reinforcing friendship and cooperation between China and the rest of the world and are much welcomed across the globe. (“HanBan-Confucius Institute/ClassRoom-About Confucius Institute/ClassRoom” 2017)

As the statement notes, Hanban/Confucius Institute Headquarters- a public organization- is affiliated with the Chinese Ministry of Education as well as with the Ministry of Defense. The State Council governs both ministries. Some academics argue that the CI project is about creating an entry point for the world to engage with China (Kluver 2014). Another related goal may be to create an epistemic community that is knowledgeable about Chinese cultural complexities and nuances and sympathetic to its modern day

challenges. A third possible goal, with a particular emphasis on young people, is to inculcate a divergent worldview of China.

This chapter seeks to frame the Confucius Institute in a way that assists in understanding why there are three divergent partnership outcomes among U.S. institutions. While it is important to consider the public diplomacy objectives that surround the Confucius Institute, the previous discussion illustrated that the nascent field of public diplomacy provides insufficient theoretical understanding with which to probe the variation in CI partnership outcomes. Instead, to advance understanding on this issue, the chapter is set up as follows. The following section contextualizes Chinese language learning in the U.S. as an important issue for public schools and universities. Next, the chapter looks to extant literature in political science and business administration for variables that contribute to the divergent partnership outcomes, specifically focusing on the role of internal institutional needs, entrepreneurship, opposition, and reputation. Then I present my hypotheses and explain my data collection process and interview data. The chapter ends by highlighting my main findings and offering thoughts on two poignant exceptions.

### **Chinese Language Learning in the U.S.**

In an attempt to better contextualize Chinese language learning, this section draws on data from the Modern Language Association (MLA) on post-secondary language enrollments. The MLA began collecting fall semester enrollment data in 1958, with the exception of surveys in 1969 and 1971, which cover both semesters. The below MLA



data reflects the rate at which Chinese language learning has grown in the U.S. since 1960 (see Figure 1). While the overall increase in language learning is outpaced by the overall growth in total enrollments, the rate of increase of students learning Chinese far outpaces even the growth in total enrollments. Specifically, while there are nearly five times more students in 2- and 4-year degree granting public and private universities in the U.S. from 1960 to 2013, the number of students learning Chinese increased by a factor of nearly 90 over the same period. For comparison, French, German and Russian all saw decreased enrollments over the same period; Spanish increased a little more than four-fold and Arabic came the closest to Chinese, increasing by nearly 63 fold (but even so, there were just over 32,000 students of Arabic in 2013 compared with 61,000 studying Chinese the same year).

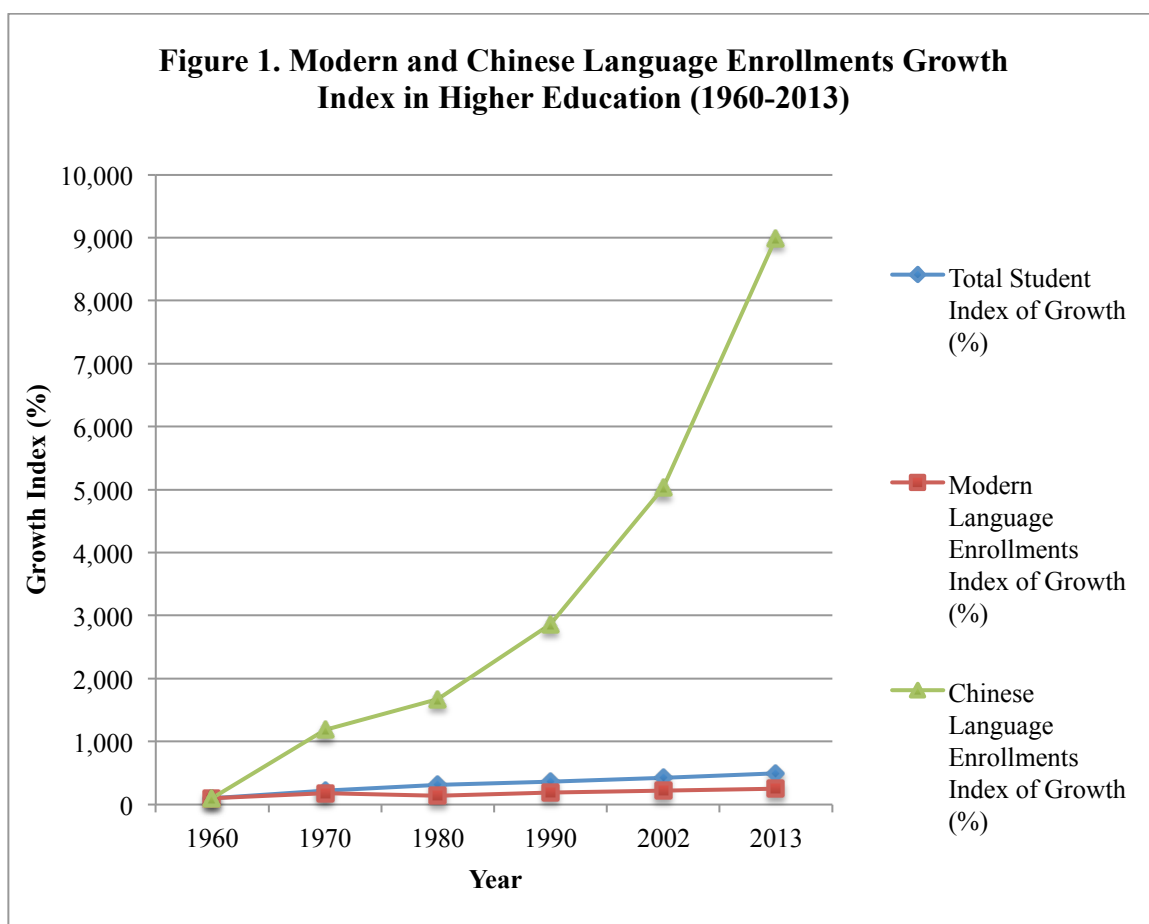


Figure 1. Modern and Chinese Language Enrollments Growth Index in Higher Education (1960-2013)  
 Source: Goldberg, David, Dennis Looney, and Natalia Lusin. 2015. "Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2013." New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America. [https://apps.mla.org/pdf/2013\\_enrollment\\_survey.pdf](https://apps.mla.org/pdf/2013_enrollment_survey.pdf). Accessed July 31, 2017.

The MLA data indicate a steady growth in interest among American college students in Chinese language study. As of 2013, there were 61,055 students learning Chinese at the college level. There is a continued push at the policy level to improve and expand the teaching of critical languages in the U.S. The National Security Education Program (NSEP) lists 60 less-commonly taught languages that it considers critical

language, of which Mandarin Chinese is one.<sup>45</sup> The need for increasing Chinese language learners and knowledge is also visible at the highest levels of government. For instance, President Barack Obama in 2009 launched the 100,000 Strong campaign, which sought to have 100,000 students studying abroad in China – a goal met in 2014 (McGiffert 2014).

Engulfed under the U.S.-China Strong Foundation umbrella, the 100,000 Strong campaign is now joined by a new initiative based on an announcement in 2015 by Presidents Barack Obama and Xi Jinping: 1 Million Strong. The new campaign seeks to increase the number of K-12 students studying Chinese from roughly 200,000 to 1,000,000 by 2020 (Allen-Ebrahimian 2015). Between the initiatives put out by NSEP and President Barack Obama, it is clear that learning Chinese is valued as an important pillar of national security and policy. From this perspective, it is possible that the growth of Confucius Institutes in the U.S. is connected with schools' desires to satisfy this imperative at the national level. In fact, some scholars argue “that universities are parastatal agents that...have operated as agents of national policy more often than they have, as a body, influenced the direction of national policy making and politics” (O’Mara 2012, 588; see also Kerr 2001).

## **Literature Review**

As an important part of China’s public diplomacy, the Confucius Institute provides a mechanism for China to access audiences and try to positively impact international public opinion. In most cases, however, this does not reflect the motives of

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<sup>4</sup> For more on NSEP’s critical language programs, see <https://www.nsep.gov/content/critical-languages>.

<sup>5</sup> Here, Chinese is specified as Mandarin Chinese because Cantonese, another Chinese dialect, is also considered to be a critical language; elsewhere Chinese language refers to Mandarin.

Confucius Institutes' hosting institutions. Public school systems and universities are not there to assist China meet this goal and yet, by structuring the Confucius Institutes as a partnership between a Chinese sponsor and foreign host institution, Hanban has created a mutually beneficial program for all parties. For China, the program provides access to new audiences and for foreign countries the program provides access to important human resources, including teachers and personal connections to China. MLA data on Chinese language learning trends show a significant rise in recent decades. Given China's rapid development over the same period, perhaps this should not come as a surprise. The growth of Chinese language learners in the U.S. relative to other languages, however, substantiates the needs of U.S. schools and universities for expanding China-related programming. Coupled with high-level policy pushes to further increase the number of Chinese language learners in the U.S. and American students who have studied in China, public school and universities are left to help meet this need. The following section delves into literature that addresses plausible variables accounting for the variation in partnership outcomes. Specifically, they focus on the CI as an education innovation that helps fulfill internal needs of the educational institutions, the role of faculty and administrative champions that sponsor the new CI, the role of opposition factions, and the role of the CIs perceived reputation that connects to the broader CI network

### **Internal Institutional Needs**

One way to conceptualize the Confucius Institute is as an educational innovation that addresses the growing need to provide Chinese language courses and programs in educational settings. CI program materials suggest that many universities utilize Hanban

instructors to teach credit-bearing courses and in some cases to build up existing or establish new Chinese minors and majors. Such activities help universities and schools to attract and retain students. Especially considering the rising interest in Chinese-language learning, it stands to reason that programs would be interested in establishing new or expanding existing offerings to better meet the interests of tuition-paying students. So, from the perspective of some schools and universities, Confucius Institutes and their resources may help keep a program relevant and competitive.

In a way it can be likened to Peter Drucker's (1985) idea of a process need, in which universities experience a missing or weak link in Chinese language teaching. Furthermore, a process need must consist of a self-contained problem, a clear definition of the objective, specifications for the solution that can be clearly defined, and high receptivity. The only criterion that it does not fit is that it sometimes violates the typical culture and values in the industry. Despite this issue, the innovation of the Confucius Institute is one possible solution to a couple of China-related needs that some universities experience.

Another model that stresses the importance of internal needs is Graham Allison's organizational process model that focused on the role of the individual units and their outputs as policy. This model's "explanatory power is achieved by uncovering the organizational routines and repertoires that produced the outputs" (Allison 1969, 702). In other words, Allison stressed the importance of the differentiation of functions between units and the distinct tools and playbooks they had at their disposal. The units most relevant in examining university's CI decisions most often include the upper echelons of

the administration, the faculty senate, the global or international affairs unit, the language department or department of East Asian studies and possibly other units with, or seeking ties with, China. Even though each unit is a part of the larger institution, each would likely approach new programs or connections with China from different perspectives, with different emphases, and with different rationales.

Research on military innovation blends aspects of the above work by Allison and Drucker. While focusing on doctrinal innovation, Zisk argues that even though militaries prefer stability, autonomy and control, they are not unitary actors and instead much more closely resemble a collection of high-level political brokers, akin to executive leadership in a large firm, working to satisfy the needs of their units (1993, 20). Zisk also points to arguments in the literature suggesting that competition for resources is a major driver of innovation, especially when the potential innovation does not endanger the institution's prestige or access to current resources. While military units often vie for finite resources, universities compete for students and funding. While access to international students, continuing education and research funding and grants from a myriad of sources makes competition in the higher education sphere a non-zero sum game, competition is nonetheless fierce. The aspect of innovation is particularly important for institutions that need to be creative in the way they piece together funding and other resources. So for some universities, the Confucius Institute represents a way to meet the needs of their students, the administration and other important stakeholders, or both.

*H<sub>1</sub>: Institutions with a demonstrable need for Chinese language courses, instructors, or program expansion are more likely to establish and maintain a Confucius Institute.*

## **Entrepreneurship and Sponsors**

Management literature on innovation also emphasizes the critical role of sponsors or entrepreneurs. When these individuals are effective, they play an important positive role in committing to and realizing an innovation (Howell 2005). Management literature discusses the degree to which choosing a successful project to sponsor can have enormous positive or negative repercussions for one's career (Drucker 1985; Christensen 1997; Christensen and Eyring 2011).

Social scientists have examined the importance of policy entrepreneurs in agenda setting and the diffusion of policy innovation. In *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, John Kingdon (2011) outlines the main characteristics and incentives of the policy entrepreneurs. For Kingdon's entrepreneurs, "their defining characteristic...is their willingness to invest resources—time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money—in the hope of a future return" (2011, 122). As for what might move these would-be entrepreneurs to invest resources, Kingdon suggests motivations relates to ones career, values, or, in the case of policy wonks, for the thrill of the game. Kingdon envisions this last group of entrepreneurs as people who are likely taking into consideration a combination of personal job-related factors and maybe value-specific platforms but also the fact that they derive pleasure from the process of policy creation (2011, 123-124). In an alternative definition, Mintrom defines a policy entrepreneur a person "who seeks to initiate dynamic policy change...through attempting to win support for ideas for policy innovation" (Mintrom 1997, 739). After controlling for alternative explanations, Mintrom found that policy entrepreneurs have had a statistically significant positive effect on the

consideration and approval of education legislation at the state level. Similarly, Corbett (2003) argues that critical junctures and policy entrepreneurs in the European Community were responsible for policy innovation related to the Erasmus program and other education policy innovations. These savvy individuals present policy innovations in such a way that they will appeal to a diverse set of stakeholders with the goal of building a supportive coalition. Moravcsik's (1999) work on supranational entrepreneurs, on the other hand, challenges the extant literature, which regards policy entrepreneurs as playing a causal role in policy creation. He argues that their role is often redundant or counterproductive, especially considering the strategic advantage of policy entrepreneurs derives from their exclusive knowledge on a particular issue. Moravcsik points to asymmetry of information at such a high level; nation states have vast security and informational gathering systems as resources. Similarly, he argues the importance of considering the possibility of entrepreneurs as epiphenomenal, or that there may be other parties just as interested in the innovation that are performing the same function and thus making the entrepreneur's efforts redundant (Moravcsik 1999, 273). At the public school and university level, it is easier to understand instances in which individuals might have a monopoly on information or crucial connections necessary for coalition building. Indeed, the structure of the CI organization at large and the partnerships between U.S. and Chinese organizations are strong but this dissertation also highlights cases in which individual agency can at times work around the structural components of the interactions.

Scholars have noted that Hanban's decision to create institutes funded in part by their foreign hosts means that there is already a level of commitment required by the host



from the beginning of the partnership (d'Hooghe 2014; Hartig 2012). This buy-in by local stakeholders suggests the likelihood of tangible internal needs or reasons on the part of stakeholders that will affect whether, how and why partnerships will unfold. But with such unique and complex organizational structures, as are typical in educational institutions, variation in perceived advantages and disadvantages as well as costs and benefits will almost inevitably vary from partner to partner. From this perspective, strategic alliance literature is able to shed light on relevant organizational dynamics, of which a critical aspect is trust. Work has been done to conceptualize trust at multiple levels within a firm (Currall and Inkpen 2002). In the context of strategic alliances with international partners, a cultural dimension of trust is also particularly important.

Relevant here is the Chinese concept of *guanxi*. The term can be roughly translated as relationship or personal connection. As a concept, *guanxi* focuses on the importance of relying on personal connections in a myriad different contexts. For example, in business it is not uncommon to prefer an individual with *guanxi* to an otherwise unknown, but highly qualified individual. While recent rapid development and changes to international business have begun to challenge some *guanxi*-related practices, they remain strongly entrenched in the cultural life of Chinese people. It is also imperative to consider the strong emphasis put on personal relationships, connections, and networks in societal contexts beyond China. Willis argues that successful joint Western-Chinese educational partnerships require, what he calls, “active” *guanxi* relationships that exhibit trust, respect, and empathy (Willis 2008). Moreover, these relationships are necessary if the partnership is to last long-term or develop.

Li et al (2016) take this analysis one step further in writing on resolving cultural differences in higher education strategic alliances involving Sino-British partnerships where alliances include joint or dual-degree programs and overseas campuses. They find that one of the most effective ways to manage cultural differences is to locate and train individuals who understand the cultural logics on both sides. This close connection between trust and the role of culturally in-tune individual agents is expected to play an important part in successful CI partnerships.

The above discussion suggests that a Confucius Institute is more likely to be established and maintained with the right agent. Specifically, an individual with strong ties and understanding of China who can serve as an entrepreneur and effectively persuade divergent on-campus groups will be able to act as the champion for a new Confucius Institute.

*H<sub>2</sub>: A Confucius Institute is more likely to be established and maintained when a culturally in-tune, politically savvy individual commits to sponsoring the project and seeing it through.*

## **Opposition**

While research on entrepreneurs and champions largely focus on the positive role they play in advancing certain policy or programs, there is always the possibility that actors or groups are also working against the same goal. Relevant here is Graham Allison's third process model, which describes the bureaucratic politics paradigm. According to Allison, "the decisions and actions of governments are essentially intra-national political outcomes: outcomes in the sense that what happens is not chosen as a solution to a problem but rather results from compromise, coalition, competition, and

confusion among government officials who see different faces of an issue; political in the sense that the activity from which the outcomes emerge is best characterized as bargaining” (Allison 1969, 708).

In terms of the Confucius Institute, the bureaucratic process model points again to the role of agenda-setting but also explicitly directs attention to the perspectives, priorities and perceptions held by various players. Some players may be working with the best interest of the organization as a whole, others for their specific office, and still others may be working for their own personal gain. A further distinguishing characteristic from the organization process model is the possibility that the individual players look to benefit a potentially wide range of units with incompatible needs.

Literature and media coverage on Confucius Institutes indicate that they can have a polarizing effect and Allison’s work is important as it helps postulate the various perspectives players may take while confronting a problem or set of problems. This hypothesis seeks to probe the likelihood that a closed or failed to open Confucius Institute is the result of an outright opposition. The expectation here is that partnership outcome will depend on the strength of the internal opposition.

*H<sub>3</sub>: The stronger the opposition, the less likely the CI will open or remain open.*

## **Reputation**

The potential effects of a strong opposition are a very important consideration in the Confucius Institute story. However in general, it has been surprising that the effects of the visible opposition were not more robust. Critics expected the negative press, closings, and critical reports on the CI would lead to a cascading effect of further hesitation in

partnering and closures. Beginning with the AAUP report in June 2014, followed by the University of Chicago announcing its decision to not renew its contract in September 2014 and Penn State's similar announcement weeks later, there was an expectation that these actions would continue to grow and these sentiments would strengthen. Scholars have addressed this cascade effect in terms of individual preferences vis-à-vis regime change. Timur Kuran (1991) argues that an individual's expressed public preference is a function of their private preference and the size of the public opposition. In trying to account for the fall of the Soviet Union, Kuran argues that while many people's private preference favored regime change, the risk of harm at first was too high. But as the size of the opposition grew, more people felt able publicly to show their true private preference. He describes this mechanism as a threshold number; only high-risk takers participate at first, but growing participation provokes a cascade effect. As the cascade continues, it affects more and more people. In the end the size of the public opposition is so large that even the extremely risk-averse are willing to change their public preference.

In the case of the Confucius Institute, there was an expectation in 2014 that the public concerns around the CI would also have a cascading effect, one that more schools, professors, and administrators would support publicly. But this did not happen. One possible explanation for this comes from the mediating effects of epistemic communities or networks. Haas (1992) defines an epistemic community as a network of experts with a similar knowledge base. Such communities now "play a role in articulating the cause-and-effect relationships of complex problems, helping states identify their interests, framing the issues for collective debate, proposing specific policies, and identifying

salient points for negotiation” (Haas 1992, 2). Keck and Sikkink (1998) call these transnational advocacy networks. They conceptualize these networks as either being formal in the case of an NGO or informal like alumni from a specific program. While their work focuses largely on the formal NGO networks, this research suggests that the Hanban officials, the sponsor institutions, their administrators and teachers and the network of host institutions make up their own informal network of Confucius Institute advocates.<sup>6</sup>

Keck and Sikkink further elaborate on the “complex interactions among actors, on the intersubjective construction of frames of meaning, and on the negotiation and malleability of identities and interests” (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 4). The Confucius Institute advocate network is indeed complex. As mentioned above, actors in the network include at a bare minimum all the individuals involved from the sponsor institutions, Hanban, its governing body, and the host institutions. The very nature of the organization means that this network is also transnational and thus, these actors are involved in both international and domestic policy issues at the same time.

As mentioned earlier, commitment by a host institution signals a certain level of buy-in. Resources committed are significant. Host institutions (in most cases) are committed to providing a physical space for the Confucius Institute and associated overhead costs that come with that space. They are to provide administrative resources for the institute in addition to the time that it takes to coordinate with Hanban, help orient

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<sup>6</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of the network Hanban has constructed, see Zaharna, R. S., “China’s Confucius Institutes: Understanding the Relational Structure & Relational Dynamics of Network Collaboration,” in *Confucius Institutes and the Globalization of China’s Soft Power* (Los Angeles, CA: Figueroa Press, 2014), 9–32.

new Chinese directors and teachers, etc. This investment means two things. First, commitment, while not irreversible, is a big deal. Borrowing from Paul Pierson, the establishment of a Confucius Institute should be viewed as a critical juncture (2000). Once the time, effort, and resources have been spent and a CI has opened, it makes sense that this action becomes more difficult to reverse. As prominent examples of Chicago and Penn State indicate, despite whatever real reasons there may be, a reversal is symbolic and polarizing. In this respect, establishing a CI can be considered a path-dependent event. In many cases, CIs help institutionalize the partnership between the host and sponsor schools and bring about new connections and areas of interest. In many cases as this activity continues, the network of activity becomes more complex, and the likelihood of a reversal of an established CI decreases.

The pre-opening commitment also signifies buy-in by local stakeholders to the broader Confucius Institute advocacy network. This would place any opposing groups or individuals at odds against the network and, in reliance on Kuran, may partly explain why the cascade of closures stopped where it did. Succinctly put, negative perceptions about the CIs did not manifest a cascade effect to bring about change because the larger advocacy network helped diffuse positive ideas and norms to the local network nodes in support of the CIs.

*H<sub>4</sub>: A Confucius Institute is more likely to open and remain open, as long as the host institutions positively perceive the larger network.*

### **Hypotheses & Measurement**

From the perspective of the host institutions, the hypotheses herein consider both external and internal factors that the literature suggests may affect partnership outcomes.

Specifically, they focus on variables including internal institutional needs, the role of individual agency in the form of CI sponsorship, opposition to the CI, and role of the CI and Hanban's reputation. The following section takes each hypothesis in turn to discuss observable implications as they pertain to variable measurement.

### **Internal Institutional Needs**

*H<sub>1</sub>: Institutions with a demonstrable need for Chinese language courses, instructors, or program expansion are more likely to establish and maintain a Confucius Institute.*

As data from the Modern Language Association indicate, the growth of Chinese language learners has been steadily on the rise since the 1960's. In order to meet this demand, U.S. universities need to expand their course and program offerings. While the Confucius Institute is only one possible way in which a school might meet this need, it comes with a distinct set of advantages and disadvantages- a fact illustrated by the decisions that inform each institution and their respective partnership outcome.

As previously outlined, there are both high-level governmental initiatives and student-level demand for growing Chinese language programs. This hypothesis thus focuses on the Confucius Institute as an innovation that fulfills the need for expanded China-related programming and well-trained Chinese instructors.

The following indicators measure the degree to which the CIs acted as an innovation for the individual institutions. First of all, data is collected on the change in Chinese language enrollments as well as majors and minors at the individual institutions. These data are obtained through interviews. Separately, institutional references in support of any of the major Chinese language learning projects are analyzed in detail since such

support indicates either a tangible or perceived need. Such programs include Project Pengyou, 100K Strong, 1 Million Strong, and NSA's STARTALK. Finally, relevant administrators were asked about their institution's broader partnerships with China to better contextualize the CI within the specific school's strategic plans.

### **Entrepreneurship and Sponsors**

*H<sub>2</sub>: A Confucius Institute is more likely to be established and maintained when a culturally in-tune, politically savvy individual commits to sponsoring the project and seeing it through.*

Management (Drucker 1985; Christensen 1997) and policy agenda-setting research (Corbett 2003; Kingdon 2011; Mintrom 1997) suggest that entrepreneurs play an important role in successful innovation. Furthermore, research on institutional trust indicates that individuals with strong cross-cultural understandings and connections also greatly help facilitate strong and mutually beneficial partnerships. Interview data and published secondary data are collected to approximate the degree of entrepreneurship involved in CI partnership creation. Specifically, interlocutors were asked to describe how their institution came to be interested in the CI program, where the idea was generated and how the project evolved. In many cases this process involved key individuals. If applicable, data was also collected regarding these individuals' connections to China, Hanban, other CIs, and the proposed sponsor institution.

### **Opposition**

*H<sub>3</sub>: The stronger the opposition, the less likely the CI will open or remain open.*



Allison's bureaucratic politics model suggests that policy outcomes may be just as well explained by intra-institutional rivalries and bargaining as it is by bureaucratic need and function. Opposition here is defined as a clear and articulate sentiment against the CI. Opposition here is operationalized in terms of strength, where it can be strong, weak or unknown. Strong opposition would include vocal small groups or individuals seeking to persuade others. A weak opposition would include known instances of faculty, staff, or students expressing concern or reservation regarding the CI. Lastly, cases with no indications of opposition in either interviews or secondary sources are considered to have no known opposition.

## **Reputation**

*H<sub>4</sub>: A Confucius Institute is more likely to open and remain open, as long as the host institutions positively perceive the larger network.*

In order to measure U.S. partner, or prospective partner, perceptions, this research focuses on a few key factors. First, those individuals interviewed were asked about whether they reached out to already established Confucius Institutes while either contemplating applying or during the application process and, if so, how that affected their thinking. Individuals were also asked about what impact certain events had on their institutions' decisions. Specifically, they were asked about the impact of the AAUP's report and the media coverage surrounding the closures of the CIs at the University of Chicago and Pennsylvania State University. Other indicators of institutional perception include data from websites, news, and interviews that address the institution's previous

experience with their proposed or official partner institution or Hanban.

### **Data Collection Process & Interviews**

The impetus for this project began when I was taking a Chinese refresher class at George Mason University. As is discussed in the following chapter, George Mason University has a Confucius Institute and a CI instructor was teaching my course. A couple weeks into the fall 2014 semester I read about the CIs at the University of Chicago and, subsequently, at Pennsylvania State University. I was interested in reading the accounts of what took place at both institutions and ruminated over how that seemed to be in juxtaposition to what I was experiencing and observing at my own institution. In essence, that was the beginning of my interest and the start of my dissertation. After contemplating various ideas about a potential direction for the project, and with major guidance on the part of my committee, I decided to delve into the variation in partnership outcomes. Such a direction greatly benefitted from the lack of ambiguity in my dependent variable. Similarly, it was evident that other developed countries were experiencing the same variation in partnership outcomes, which made the project appealing in its potential to derive meaningful conclusions that could apply to regions beyond the U.S. Specifically, there were known reversals in Canada, Japan, Korea, Sweden, France, Russia and reports that institutions in Germany, Canada, and Denmark decided not to open a CI. Indeed, research on the Confucius Institute is growing rapidly but, since the institute is only thirteen years old, there remains plenty of unanswered questions. Particularly of interest to me is that there is no known research to date that addresses the divergent partnership outcomes.

It is, more or less, easy to establish the open CIs in any given country. Hanban's website lists all Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in each country. In my own investigation, however, it appears that simply looking at the number listed on the website offers insufficient precision. For instance, checking each individual institute listed for the U.S. showed that Hanban did not frequently update the list. At a recent glance, Hanban had listed a Confucius Institute at a university where it never actually opened and it took years for the University of Chicago and Pennsylvania State University to be removed from the list. Regardless, it is fairly easy to identify which CIs are operational at any given time. It is also easy to identify which have closed. In my research, there is a decent scope of Western media that will report on issues and especially closures of CIs. In other words, it was easy to identify the whole universe of cases that fit in the established and maintained group and the established reversals group. Early on, I discovered press releases and news articles that mentioned certain institutions not opening CIs, specifically after considering applying to Hanban. At that stage I thought that it would be easy to learn about more such cases through internet searches and word of mouth with interlocutors. It did not turn out to be that simple. Internet searches came up empty, LexisNexis searches returned little or no new cases, and interlocutors were largely unwilling to divulge such information if in fact they knew of any. Either way, it quickly became clear that one of the limitations of this study would be to choose the inclusion of failure to establish cases in any scientific way.

Despite some of the early difficulties, it was clear that this project would be best informed by undertaking a case-study approach. First and foremost, the two closures that

received a fair amount of press in the national media would be best served by in-depth analyses. The rationale for using a case-study approach was that it would provide more detail and accuracy into the processes and decisions that led to the closures in each case. More broadly, George and Bennett (2005) remind us of some of the major advantages of case study research including the ability to highlight new variables, which is critical to the development of new hypotheses. Moreover, the ability to process trace allows the research to better understand the causal mechanisms that are in play. In the case of the Confucius Institute specifically, the hope is that process tracing would highlight the logic behind the decisions and important actions that took place, which led to the three different outcomes. One commonly cited pitfall with case study research is selection bias, with a particular focus on the issues from a truncated sample of cases (G. King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). This project, while it would benefit from including a larger number of established and maintained cases, maintains a selection of cases that represent the known range of variation on the dependent variable.

Difficulties related to finding cases that fall into the failure to establish category, however, suggests that there is a degree of uncertainty among that set of cases. Specifically, as one interviewee noted, it is highly possible that many universities at some point considered the possibility of opening a Confucius Institute. If discussions were tabled at a very early stage, however, it is possible that there would be no digital footprint. While policy and academic circles consider the Confucius Institute very young at only thirteen years old, when considering individuals' careers and institutional memory thirteen years is quite long. During the course of research for this project, I came across

many names and points of contact who would have been able to provide information about discussions surrounding a potential Confucius Institute but it was difficult to track many of them down. Some had taken positions elsewhere (including high-level administrative positions, making it difficult to find time to speak), others had retired, moved abroad, or, in one case, suffered from a serious health event. These practical issues in addition to possible years removed from discussions or negotiations can make details fuzzy. Despite these issues, I was able to retrieve data and reach individuals willing to speak with me about the nature of the potential relationships, thus allowing me to analyze the full extent of the variation of the different outcomes. The actual number of universities that fit into the third category, however, is unknown, prompting a serious caveat about making generalizations from that group of cases.

Future iterations of this line of research would benefit from a quantitative evaluation of all CIs in any given country. In theory, it would be possible to administer a survey that would cover the entire universe of cases. While not addressing the possibility of non-responses, this initial deep-dive into a group of important cases would help discover what, if anything, from the extant literature can be seen as driving the CI partnerships and the variation in outcomes. Furthermore, the case study approach would be more apt to uncover new possible variables driving outcomes since news analysis and discussions with key stakeholders carries an unpredictable quality.

Given the circumstances, the method for case selection was as follows. Narrowing down the field of the established and maintained CIs depended on a few key issues. First, I wanted to include the University of Maryland, where the first CI in the U.S. was

established in 2004. Next, I wanted to include the College of William & Mary since it is one of the more prestigious schools to have a Confucius Institute. The Director, Dr. Stephen Hanson, was also Vice Provost for International Affairs and Director of the Reves Center for International Studies. He participated in a written symposium on the Confucius Institute that Foreign Policy published amidst the CI controversy following the American Association of University Professors' statement (Levine et al. 2014). His unique perspective, coupled with his experience at the State of Washington's Confucius Institute, made him an important person to contact with rich experiences on the subject. Temple University was also an interesting case. Located in Philadelphia, it opened a CI opened in 2015, the year after Pennsylvania State and the University of Chicago closed theirs. Its relative proximity to State College, PA and the claims by some that the closures might have a cascading effect and lead other schools to close or not open new CIs made Temple worth further research. Next, the University of South Carolina was included for a couple of reasons. As a flagship university, it seemed to be similar to many other established and maintained CIs. Furthermore, it had been open beyond one contract cycle, suggesting a level of commitment and success. Originally, my intent was not to include George Mason University since it is my home institution. George Mason University's Confucius Institute Director is Gao Qing, who also happened to be appointed the Director of the new U.S.-C.I. Center in Washington D.C. I met Gao Qing at his Dupont office to learn more about the plans for the newly opened Center. Through our discussions I discovered interesting details about GMU's CI and realized I could speak to individuals about this with whom I had not previously met. The last two

established and maintained cases represent very different institution types and CIs with different university and community orientations. They would help broaden the field of cases and as it turned out proved unique in a couple important ways.

In addition to the narrative around the CIs at the universities, a second round of data collection was conducted into the CIs that exist at public school districts in the U.S. By examining these cases, I hoped to add analytical power to my existing data. There are currently 6 public school districts in the U.S. that house CIs and included in my interviews are representatives from three of them. The remaining three, much like in my experience with university CIs, were unavailable to speak to me. One did not respond and two responded in such a way that made known their hesitation and concern regarding my research.

Since the dissertation stemmed from the two universities that closed their CIs, including both was important to the research design. Moreover, each experienced their CI in very different ways. As noted in the earlier discussion, the failed-to-establish group was the most difficult. First of all, not one person I spoke with was willing to go on record. Not only does this make the narrative difficult, trying to balance specific details with a level of vagueness that would not easily make their identities and affiliations known, but it is a real methodological issue. Data transparency and project replicability are critical to the scientific method (G. King 1995). Unfortunately, that is a limitation to part of the current project. Future work might benefit from using public-records requests to seek out data in a systematic way. In my experience, however, FOIA requests do not make it any easier to find individuals who are willing to go on the record. This makes a

trade-off for possible public data in place of people who, albeit anonymously, may be willing to provide information. Since there is not a great deal known about cases in this group, it made sense to attempt interviews of relevant parties who might be able to provide context and details that would be incomplete in a FOIA-obtained paper trail.

Despite these many issues, this dissertation uses data from 46 interviews. Interviews included representatives from 15 U.S. universities, 3 U.S. public school districts, the American Association of University Professors, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the U.S. Government, and the U.S.-Confucius Institute Center in Washington D.C. The interviews took place between January 2016 and April 2017. Among the completed interviews, 29 gave permission to record and 23 gave permission to use their name. In total, 27 interviews were conducted in person, 14 took place over the phone, 4 over Skype and one via email. The interviews were semi-structured, beginning with an approved list of questions for CI directors, university faculty, and university administrators, varying where necessary for each of the three cases. Additional questions were approved for interviews with government officials and policy/non-profit experts. Interviews lasted between 25 and 90 minutes.

For those who gave permission, interviews were recorded using a smartphone application. The application also acted as a storage location until the audio files could be uploaded to a password-protected cloud account at the end of each day of interviews, if not before. Immediately following successful upload to the cloud, all audio recordings were deleted from the application and the device remained locked for the duration of the field research period, except for those periods of time when the device was in use. While



the nature and risk associated with interlocutors speaking with me was minimal, I was diligent to provide as much respect for their privacy as requested, giving each individual the choice of being named or anonymous.

The rationale for semi-structured interviews had much to do with the fact that, while a good amount about the individual CIs could be obtained through their websites and from media coverage, I anticipated learning unexpected facts about each of them and, as interviews go, my questions evolved as I learned in the moment. Most importantly, I sought to engage interlocutors in order to learn about how the CI came to be. Specifically, I wanted to know who was involved and why, the rationale for opening the CI and the process of establishing it. For those established CIs, I then wanted to know about its reception on campus and their experiences in the communities in which they were anchored. For the CI reversals, I was particularly keen to learn about what precipitated the change that led to its closure. For the cases of CIs that failed to establish, it was important to understand how the process began and why it stopped, or had not yet been realized. Lastly, it was important to ascertain whether faculty and administrators were following events that took place surrounding the closures at Penn State and the University of Chicago, whether they kept abreast of news reportage about the CI more broadly, and what kind of response, if any, was had by university and/or local community members.

Armed with an Institutional Review Board-approved recruitment email, I contacted as many individuals as I could from the institutions listed above. I anticipated a degree of reluctance, especially from any Chinese directors or teachers, but I was not

prepared for the degree of difficulty I experienced when trying to arrange interviews with American faculty and administrators. Since I began research after the University of Chicago and Pennsylvania State University institutes closed, and the AAUP and CAUT published reports critical of university-CI arrangements, and there were hearings on related topics in the U.S. House of Representatives in December 2014, key personnel seemed especially weary to speak with me. In some cases, their hesitance was understandable, but then again, this seemed to feed into concerns and appear to validate certain critiques. One interviewee told me that someone claiming to conduct research had previously contacted them. Later it turned out the individual had misrepresented themselves and used the data for purposes other than what they said they would. Under the circumstances, I began to understand more fully why so many individuals would not be willing to speak to me or, as happened more often, would simply not respond to multiple attempts to reach them.

The interviews conducted remain the focal point of the data for the dissertation but secondary sources were also critical. I relied heavily on university websites and CI websites, when available, and local and regional news to gather data about specific CI programming and China programming more broadly. These sources provided important contextual and background information as well as names and dates that would be used to help triangulate data gleaned from interviews and elsewhere.

## **Main Findings**

Most significantly, the variation in Confucius Institute partnership outcomes is most closely dependent on the institution's own needs and perceived strategic benefit (see

Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7 below). One of the most interesting conclusions is connected to the role of the CI champion or sponsor. Despite the important role of facilitator or catalyst, the policy entrepreneur’s role is eclipsed by the internal institutional needs. Another important take away is that a negative perception of the Confucius Institute is not the only reason that a school closes or does not open an institute. Instead, this research concludes that the Confucius Institute advocacy network is strong and, instead, at least two of the three schools with negative perceptions of the program saw the CI closed or never opened because of variables related to Allison’s bureaucratic politics model.

Table 3. Internal Needs Present at U.S. Institutions

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Expand China Programs</b>	<b>Language Course &amp; Instructors</b>
Established & Maintained	University of Maryland	X	
	Temple University	X	X
	College of William & Mary	X	X
	George Mason University	X	X
	University of South Carolina	X	X
	University A	X	X
	University B	X	X
	College Board CICC Network	X	X
Established Reversals	Pennsylvania State University	X	
	University of Chicago	X	X
Failed to Establish	University of Pennsylvania	X	
	Florida International University	X	X
	University C	X	unclear
	University D	X	X
	University E	X	unclear

Table 4. Important Sponsors Present at U.S. Institutions

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Administration</b>	<b>Faculty</b>
Established & Maintained	University of Maryland	X	
	Temple University		X
	College of William & Mary		X
	George Mason University	X	
	University of South Carolina		X
	University A		X
	University B	X	
	College Board CICC Network	X	
Established Reversals	Pennsylvania State University		X
	University of Chicago		X
Failed to Establish	University of Pennsylvania		X
	Florida International University	X	
	University C	unclear	
	University D	X	
	University E	unclear	

Table 5. Degree of Opposition Present at U.S. Institutions

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Weak</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
Established & Maintained	University of Maryland		X	
	Temple University			X
	College of William & Mary		X	
	George Mason University		X	
	University of South Carolina			X
	University A		X	
	University B			X
	College Board CICC Network			X
Established Reversals	Pennsylvania State University		X	
	University of Chicago	X		
Failed to Establish	University of Pennsylvania	X		
	Florida International University		X	
	University C		X	
	University D			X
	University E		X	

Table 6. CI Reputation & Importance of the Transnational CI Network at U.S. Institutions

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
Established & Maintained	University of Maryland	X		
	Temple University	X		
	College of William & Mary	X		
	George Mason University	X		
	University of South Carolina	X		
	University A	X		
	University B	X		
	College Board CICC Network	X		
Established Reversals	Pennsylvania State University			X
	University of Chicago		X	
Failed to Establish	University of Pennsylvania		X	
	Florida International University		X	
	University C			X
	University D		X	
	University E		X	

### **CHAPTER THREE: ESTABLISHED & MAINTAINED CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES**

This chapter describes and analyzes seven established and maintained Confucius Institutes (CIs) and the public school CIs that operate as part of The College Board Confucius Institute and Confucius Classroom (CICC) network. Data draws from interviews with representatives of seven university and three public school CIs in the U.S. They represent a diverse group of public and private institutions, establishing CIs between 2005 and 2015, including those at the University of Maryland, Temple University, the College of William and Mary, George Mason University, the University of South Carolina and two undisclosed universities, as well as three public school districts.<sup>7</sup>

Analysis focuses on four main independent variables, and a related hypothesis, that play important roles in the divergent partnership outcomes of the CIs in the U.S. The first hypothesis draws from business literature on innovation and political science literature on military innovation. I argue that the Confucius Institute can best be understood as an educational innovation, in that it has provided a viable solution to

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<sup>7</sup> Even among the group of established and maintained CIs, I experienced a surprising degree of hesitation to speak on the subject or for interlocutors to use their name. While some institutions had five or six individuals who were willing to speak about their CI experience, there were others where only one or two responded to requests for an interview.

budget constraints and the growing need, felt both nationally and locally, for Chinese language programs and courses. Specifically, I expect institutions with demonstrable need (for instructors, more courses, building China programming, etc.) to be more likely to have established and maintained CIs. Second, business and social science literature point to the role of sponsors (aka champions) or policy entrepreneurs as critical in agenda setting or to the success of policy or innovation diffusion. For this reason, I hypothesize that a CI is more likely to be established and maintained when there is a strong sponsor (well-connected faculty member or high-level administrator) backing and propelling it forward. Third, the cases of closures of CIs at Penn State and the University of Chicago, as well as concerns raised by the American Association of University Professors and by members of Congress, suggest that growing opposition may be key. This hypothesis draws on the work of Graham Allison and his *bureaucratic politics* model, which suggests that an organization's decisions are the product of intra-organizational political outcomes. In other words, the "competition, confusion, compromise, and coalition" among individual players are driving the outcomes (Allison 1969, 708). Instances of strong opposition are expected to lead to closures of CIs or in failure to establish new CIs; instances of weak or no (known) opposition are expected to have no detectable impact on the sustainment of established CIs or on the establishment of new CIs. For this work here, a strong opposition is characterized as an active effort to influence others (via petitions, publications, etc.) and a weak opposition is one in which concerns are raised but often in private or in isolation and have no observable effect. The last hypothesis considers the perception and reputation of the Confucius Institute program. It draws on



the work of Keck and Sikkink (1998) and Haas (1992) about the creation of epistemic communities and transnational advocacy networks to assert that a CI is more likely to remain open to the extent that the host institutions maintain a positive perception of the larger transnational CI network. In many cases, there is a strong and clear link between key individuals on campus and the work of the broader network (in this case, succinctly put, increasing knowledge of China and Chinese language).

This chapter takes each institution in turn, beginning with a brief introduction of important facts about the university and CI, contextualizing pertinent historical background, and then analyzing observable implications in order to assess to what degree each hypothesis holds true. Due to significant variance among accessible data and interviewees, every hypothesis cannot be addressed for each institution, but in addressing each in turn it offers transparency about data shortfalls. Following the discussion of all the subject universities, this chapter takes a look at the Confucius Institutes that operate in public schools in the U.S. The section will begin by discussing the arrangement of networks of Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms in elementary and secondary educational institutions associated with The College Board. Interviews with three representatives, each from a different public school Confucius Institute, provide an additional layer with which to probe the different hypotheses and test the mechanisms that appear to operate at the university level. Fieldwork conducted at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual National Chinese Language Conference helped differentiate the public school and university CIs. The chapter ends with a summary of the main conclusions.

## University of Maryland

The Confucius Institute at the University of Maryland (UMD), also known as the Confucius Institute at Maryland (CIM), cooperates with Nankai University in Tianjin China. The university's storied relationship with China dates back to the first the attendance of its first Chinese student in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and includes its participation in the "ping-pong diplomacy" of the 1970s. Currently, former UMD President Dr. Dan Mote sits as an executive member on the Confucius Institute Governing Council and has strong ties with Chinese leadership. The CIM was first established in 2005 as part of a pilot program with Hanban and was the first CI to open in the U.S. It is further distinguished as being the longest-running CI still in operation today. It received "Model Confucius Institute" status for its work in community engagement and for creating its own network of Confucius Classrooms in K-12 institutions in the area. The "model" status brings with it a commitment from Hanban of additional funds for a new, updated facility that will house exhibitions, a performance hall, and updated technological capabilities.<sup>8</sup> While many of the following cases of CIs are predicated on the needs of universities to start or grow Chinese language programs, the CIM does not use Hanban instructors for credit-bearing courses, nor is it part of the university's core China curriculum. Rather, the CIM supplements other university-affiliated China

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<sup>8</sup> The number of institutes that have received "Model Confucius Institute" status is unclear, but it appears to be an additional way for Hanban to acknowledge standout institutes and to offer additional funds for certain resources. Of the schools interviewed, Maryland is the only one to receive this distinction. The subject did not come up in interviews with any other school.

programs by strengthening the relationship with China and augmenting Chinese language education in regional primary education.<sup>9</sup>

### **Internal Needs**

Administrators at UMD view Dr. Mote’s creation of an overarching strategy to increase programming on China as an important precursor to the opening of the university’s Confucius Institute.<sup>10</sup> Since the university already had a robust China program, and for other reasons that will be discussed in further detail later, the Confucius Institute was not designed to deliver any credit-bearing courses for the university. Rather, the Confucius Institute was used as part of Dr. Mote’s plan to augment the university’s portfolio of China programs—a portfolio that has continued to grow to such an extent that UMD now has its own Office of China Affairs (OCA), which boasts a sponsorship with the U.S.–China Strong Foundation as an implementation partner for its “One Million Strong” initiative. The pilot CI was initiated with the aim of connecting public schools and the business community in Maryland to China. While some interlocutors suggest that this was Hanban’s initial intent with the CI project, this has not been verified. Regardless, the outward orientation of the CIM has, indeed, been effective in strengthening ties

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<sup>9</sup> Some conversations insinuated that the CI was more important to Hanban than it was to UMD. This asymmetrical power dynamic is interesting, and I am not quite sure how to tackle it. How aware are the universities of this dynamic? How aware of this is Hanban? It would also seem that this was the case with the closures, since both cases ultimately closed due to the assertion of the host universities. As for UMD, however, it is clear that Hanban would value its position as the oldest CI now that the first to be established has closed.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Donna Wiseman, telephone interview, February 17, 2016.

between primary and secondary educational institutions and state and local business leaders.<sup>11</sup>

From the beginning, the CIM emphasized programs within K-12 institutions in the region. It achieved this primarily through a network of Confucius Classrooms,<sup>12</sup> which focus efforts on teaching Chinese language and culture to primary and secondary school students. From UMD's perspective, this is a way to establish a pipeline of incoming students with some existing academic background in Chinese.<sup>13</sup> In other words it is a way of encouraging younger students to consider UMD as an institution of higher learning later on. For a university that already has a Chinese program and major, a focus on K-12 education could lead to greater overall interest in Chinese language learning and China more broadly. The University of Maryland has an in-state student rate of roughly 70 percent, which means that a focus on local K-12 education has the potential to shape the incoming student population. Not only that, but for students it means having access to a well-established Chinese language department so that they can continue their language studies all while paying in-state tuition. According to one administrator, the goal would

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<sup>11</sup> At the University of Maryland, there was an additional project that was funded in part by Hanban with the College of Education. The project was a teacher certification program that came out of the CI connection but that closed in recent years due to irreconcilable terms in the agreement. One administrator raised concerns about the residual impact the dissolution of the program might have on the remaining CI. In the end, the agreement and project had no discernible impact on the CI's operations. This anecdote suggests that additional ties to the university are not necessary for a strong and impactful CI. To date, no other institution mentioned further collaborations with Hanban, whereas collaborations with the sponsor university seem common. To the contrary, collaboration with Hanban has been difficult for some of the CIs. Specifically, the reporting system and timely release of funds has been an issue at multiple institutions.

<sup>12</sup> The Confucius Classrooms are organized under Confucius Institutes at regional elementary and secondary schools. Not all CIs operate Confucius Classrooms and, as with the CIs, there seems to exist a great deal of variation among them. The CC aspect of the program largely falls outside the purview of this dissertation, but it is worth mentioning since, especially for some CIs, it remains a pivotal piece of the work they do.

<sup>13</sup> Mr. Williams (pseudonym), interview, February 19, 2016.

be to have students come in with existing knowledge of and interest in China and Chinese language but majoring in other fields, with the outcome that UMD would graduate students in business or STEM fields, for example, who also have a working background education in China studies. According to another administrator, the fact that students who participate in the Confucius Classrooms seem to test better in general standardized testing was part of the appeal for public school officials and may be one of the reasons CIM now operates 11 Confucius Classrooms in the region.

The CIM established a strong connection with the local business community through the creation of a CI-specific endowment, another feature that sets UMD's program apart from other CIs included in this study. At the time of interviews, no other institution had discussed plans or expressed interest in the possibility of an endowment. As one administrator put it, it is not common practice in Chinese circles and therefore took a little longer to put together than it might have in other dynamics. In the end, however, a \$1 million endowment was established for the CI, mostly through the generosity of local Chinese business leaders. In addition to differentiating it from other CIs, this endowment also signifies a high level of commitment on behalf of the university and local business community.

## **Sponsors**

In the case of CIM, Dr. Mote's leadership played a critical role in its establishment. During Mote's tenure as University of Maryland president, he initiated and championed the development of an overarching China strategy and used his own personal connections to lead his institution to be the first American partner university for

the CI program. As university president, his leadership and agenda-setting translated into the smooth adoption of a China strategy with a high level of built-in administrative support, which in turn helped pave the way for the Confucius Institute. This support was not a given for universities that had a faculty member act as the initial driver. The CIM in this case was unique for the overlap between agency and support of the upper administration. Mote's personal relationships further solidified UMD's connection to Hanban and made the institutions natural collaborators. These personal contacts have only continued to strengthen with his being brought on to the governing board and acting as a strong and vocal supporter of the CI program worldwide.

In addition to the support of the former university president, CIM enjoys the strong ties maintained by the new university president with China and Hanban. Interlocutors also shared that the university leadership continues to view CIM as an important partner, and the university staff sees it as an integral part of the overall China strategy.

## **Opposition**

In this case, the known opposition at UMD can be characterized as weak since, although it was recognized, no other action was taken to try to affect the outcome of the partnership. From the onset, the administration purposefully decided it would be best to continue to have the foreign language department responsible for teaching all credit-bearing courses, in part due to the concerns and objections of tenured faculty. According

to one administrator, faculty members were concerned about the presence of the CI and implications it might have for their job security.<sup>14</sup>

While the current head of the Chinese program did not respond to any attempts at contact for an interview, Dr. Marshall Sahlins discusses personal communication with the former department head. According to Sahlins, the department head was not consulted before the CI was established (Sahlins 2014, 54).<sup>15</sup> One administrator did note that the university wanted to make their CI less academically focused, “even before the issues started.” In this case, the administrator was referring to the issues raised by the AAUP and faculty concerns at the University of Chicago. The fact that the CI had a different focus from the start may have made it easier to underemphasize this fact but it also suggests that there were considerations of possible opposition on behalf of the administration even during the early exploratory phase of the project. A fully staffed Chinese language program and ample resources to meet student need meant that the university did not need Hanban instructors the way that many other programs did.

## **Reputation**

In considering the expectation that closures and otherwise negative press might impact other established CIs, CIM was well insulated. As Keck and Sikkink would argue, Mote played an important role in the CI advocacy network, whereby his connections

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<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that I was unable to discuss the CIM with faculty or staff from the Chinese language program, and thus my interview data does not include a contingent of the campus community that reportedly had reservations about the CI.

<sup>15</sup> Interlocutors at UMD explained that the Chair of the School of Languages, Literature, and Culture when the CIM opened was Dr. S. Robert Ramsey. Sahlins does not mention Ramsey by name but just refers to him by his title. Through Sahlins’ personal communication, the former Chinese department head reports that “‘the whole thing [the new CI] was set up in secret’ through a relationship between Hanban and the Physics professor, and then between the latter and the University president” (Sahlins 2014, 54).

helped legitimize UMD's role. The visibility of the program, its distance from the Chinese language program, and the high degree of support it continued to receive from top University leaders kept it well insulated from any potential fallout from negative press and other adverse developments in connection with CIs elsewhere.

### **College of William & Mary**

The William & Mary Confucius Institute (WMCI) was first announced in the fall semester of 2011 and celebrated its opening ceremony in February 2012. William & Mary (W&M) is one of the most elite public institutions in the U.S., making it one of Hanban's most prestigious partners, and it partners with Beijing Normal University (BNU)—a top university in China. The program is marked by a strong degree of support from top administrators and, unlike UMD, uses Hanban instructors to teach credit-bearing courses. As its campus is located in Williamsburg, Virginia, however, it is far removed from any cosmopolitan area and has only a small Chinese community.

William & Mary is considered a critical case in part because of the administration's public support for the CI project. Vice Provost for International Affairs and CI Director Dr. Steve Hanson collaborated in an article published by *Foreign Policy* that shared divergent views from six academics on the AAUP report and other relevant issues related to the U.S. CIs (see Levine et al. 2014). For Dr. Hanson, while in theory the points the AAUP made are important, they also miss the mark about the true function of



the CIs and how they operate within the universities.<sup>16</sup>

### **Internal Needs**

As with many other established and maintained CIs, William & Mary's program can be viewed as an educational innovation that uses Hanban funding and human resources to augment China-related programming. Major collaborations thus far have focused on art, art history, and music and have been initiated with the School of Education and East Asian Studies. W&M made a strategic decision to use Hanban instructors to teach credit-bearing courses. Unlike with some other programs, the institution had an established Chinese language program (including a major). The collaboration has meant that Hanban instructors can help supplement courses while freeing faculty members from time teaching beginning-level Chinese language courses, allowing them to devote more time to research or to teaching more advanced courses (as will be seen below, this is similar to what took place at the University of Chicago).

Beyond the obvious needs of the university, the CI also brought important benefits to faculty, staff and the local community. And even though administrators noted that after the CI was established, William & Mary saw a slight drop in credit bearing Chinese language enrollments, this does not mean the WMCI suffered. In fact,

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<sup>16</sup> Specifically, Hanson explains how the three points the AAUP are not as straightforward as they might seem at first. His thoughtful response calls into question some of the logic commonly used by critics and in turn challenges the association to better consider the ramifications of the university requirements and implicit accusations in the report. For instance, Hanson argues that the AAUP's urging that CI teachers receive the same rights as other faculty members seems misinformed. As recipients of J-1 visas, they are subject to all regulations that govern the visa but U.S. universities have no ability to dictate who China agrees to send. He goes on to say that if the AAUP is against J-1 recipients from any country that falls short of ideal standards of the U.S. then there needs to be much greater discussion of the matter that goes beyond consideration of China specifically.

enrollments increased due to increasing interest in the non-credit courses available for faculty, staff, and community members. Furthermore, the WMCI is involved with many other programs on and off campus that have made it an important and well-integrated unit, for example a certain degree of collaboration with the Colonial Williamsburg Association. Community relations have grown to be an integral part of the CI and a major focus of its work. The ability of the CI to also help organically build more programs seems to be part of the favorable conditions for sustainability.

Beyond the immediate needs of W&M's Chinese coursework and curriculum, the WMCI precipitated a reestablishment of relations between W&M and BNU.<sup>17</sup> The relationship now affords both parties significant benefits. Faculty exchanges continue to be an integral part of the W&M-BNU relationship. One interlocutor noted a specific instance.<sup>18</sup> W&M had recently gone through a curriculum redevelopment period, which came up in discussions with BNU faculty who were interested in doing the same. Administrators arranged to have a group of BNU faculty come to W&M to meet and discuss issues with faculty. While this offered tangible benefits for BNU faculty, it also was yet another way in which W&M received more global recognition.

As an elite university with research-focused faculty, the faculty and administration wanted the CI to have a research focus. One research interest the CI supports is the philosophical study of the *Yi-Ching*, the *Book of Changes*. The institute

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<sup>17</sup> Originally, the team setting up the CI had to be careful with what they agreed to. During the contract period and early negotiations, it became clear that BNU had a long list of expectations and intentions, not all of which W&M would be able to agree to. Part of this was likely due to the excitement of BNU, which, after numerous CI partnerships, was excited about a new and prestigious American partner university. From the BNU side, it was important to select a CI director with strong in-country experience—yet another way of demonstrating the importance of W&M to BNU.

<sup>18</sup> Dr. Ma Lei, interview, February 3, 2016, College of William & Mary campus.

helps by sponsoring events that bring together prominent American and Chinese scholars on the subject.

Beyond the immediate Hanban resources, the reestablishment of relations with BNU brings further advantages to W&M, including a new summer program for BNU students in Williamsburg. The program began in 2015 and brought 40 BNU undergraduate students to Williamsburg for a summer session. This has been a major program for W&M insofar as it brings in a significant influx of supplemental tuition over the summer from international students. From the perspective of the BNU students, it is a great opportunity to experience the American higher education system, including an American university's campus life, as they take classes with American faculty alongside W&M students and stay in the university dormitories. Following the inaugural summer, administrators deemed the program a success, and according to interviews, the universities plan to continue the program.<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned earlier, W&M's location presents a certain obstacle at a time when many universities use their cosmopolitan draw as part of their recruitment strategy. Dr. Hanson made the point that establishing a CI might help build a Chinese community on campus that would prove attractive for prospective China-studying scholars. The value of this goes both ways; that is, the CI can offer visiting scholars and students from China a sense of community. This benefit is translatable to any institution where there is no

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<sup>19</sup> Dr. Ma Lei, interview, February 3, 2016, College of William & Mary campus.

established Chinese community close by.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, one aspect of the CI's innovative nature lies in the direct link to recruitment of Chinese students. Dr. Hanson shared with me that following WMCI's establishment, the predominant Chinese television broadcaster, China Central Television (CCTV), came and filmed a recruitment video at W&M to be aired to Chinese audiences back home in China.<sup>21</sup> While the video focused on the CI at the College of William & Mary, it also did a lot to advertise the college itself, its surroundings, claims to fame, etc. The video in turn helped raise the profile among Chinese students looking to come to the U.S. for some part of their higher education.

## **Sponsors**

The early process of establishing a CI at William & Mary varied greatly from that for the University of Maryland. Initially, faculty member Dr. Yanfang Tang introduced the idea of establishing a CI at William and Mary but did not find the necessary support from the upper administration to move forward with the project. Later, Tang approached a new cohort of administrators and found a more supportive attitude. People aware of Dr. Tang's efforts claimed that she felt there was a growing demand for Chinese courses and that, without additional support, the existing department and resources would be soon be overextended. While she was an important sponsor of the program, she was at the mercy of needing a sympathetic administration. Later Dr. Hanson took over some of the role as

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<sup>20</sup> Some observers want to link the existence of a CI and the growing Chinese student population on university campuses. Many were surprised to hear that the mission of the CIs was to engage with the local community and teach Chinese culture and language to non-Chinese. These links listed here are a few of the only ways I became aware of how the CIs might be linked to a growing Chinese student population.

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Stephen Hanson, interview February 4, 2016, College of William & Mary campus.

sponsor, but Dr. Tang's involvement was crucial and the partnership should be credited to her continued pursuit of a CI.

### **Opposition**

Hanson said there has been some level of concern raised about the CI, but that, until the time of the interview, he was able to assure those concerned that the W&M administration maintains full control of the CI. In short, Hanson claimed that the CI would continue so long as there is no threat to W&M's core values and mission and as long as he can convince any worried contingents at the university that the CI is adding value and is not impinging on any academic freedoms. The sporadic nature of the voicing of concerns would thus have me classify opposition at W&M as weak. There is no indication, through interviews or other data, that there was any attempt by the campus or community members with concerns to further influence others with their hesitations on the subject.

### **Reputation**

There are a number of reasons that suggest W&M educators should be considered part of the CI advocacy network. The university put in place a small team that would lead the application process. This team did their due diligence and made sure to reach out to already established programs to learn about the application process and solicit advice (including things these schools wished they knew, lessons learned, etc.). With an application complete, the team went to Washington, D.C., and met with officials at the Chinese Embassy. Hanban officials were glad to receive William & Mary's CI

application, and the officials at the embassy informed the team that their application would be fast-tracked, presumably because of the elite standing of William & Mary in American higher education.<sup>22</sup>

Relevant to the critique that the CIs limit freedom of speech and, in some cases, promote self-censorship is W&M's experience with hosting world-renowned scholars. The administrators who ran the WMCI proclaimed it to be very open minded. Some faculty and staff who were indirectly involved in the CI also shared the sentiment. They would cite examples, such as W&M's hosting of academics who traditionally have been critical to PRC policies. WMCI sponsors seminars with prominent China-studying scholars, some of whom may be critical of China and its policies, such as Harvard's Dr. Elizabeth Perry, for instance. Dr. Perry's presence and support by WMCI indicates its commitment to scholarship and also demonstrates to critics that CIs can support activities that may not be in line with Chinese government policies. They also cite the following example.

Halfway through WMCI's first five-year contract, a William & Mary student organization, not affiliated with the CI in any way, hosted the Dalai Lama. Regardless, Dr. Hanson, upon learning of the organization's plan, made a point to share with Hanban during his subsequent visit to China the fact that the university would be hosting the Dalai Lama. According to Dr. Hanson, there was no issue on the part of Hanban with this

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<sup>22</sup> Ms. Blue (pseudonym), interview, February 2, 2016, College of William & Mary campus.

matter.<sup>23</sup> It is unclear why exactly W&M did not experience any resistance from Hanban, or any other official Chinese unit, regarding their Dalai Lama visit.

### **George Mason University**

George Mason University (GMU) partnered with Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU) to open its Confucius Institute in 2009. GMU is a public university with its main campus in Fairfax, Virginia. Not only does the university use instructors from BLCU for credit-bearing courses, but the CI and instructors gave significant assistance to the university in developing a Chinese major. BLCU is one of the major foreign language universities in China and, at last count, host to 18 CIs. Their focus on foreign language education and the Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language program makes them a natural fit for many foreign institutions looking to strengthen or establish their Chinese language programs.<sup>24</sup>

### **Internal Needs**

For GMU, the CI was an educational innovation that helped fill the need for language instructors while also furthering China connections, including those that related

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<sup>23</sup> I suspect that some of this is due to the institutional learning that Hanban had to go through. As a new agency, running, as one scholar puts it, China's "only international program," it is understandable that there would be a steep learning curve about how to maneuver certain issues. For Hanson, it was a matter of diplomatically sharing that the university adheres to ideals that focus on creating an environment of diverse viewpoints. WM's elite status and highly valued partnership may also have made it subject to different, more flexible rules and expectations.

<sup>24</sup> Originally, I did not intend to use GMU as a case study due to my personal connection to the CI but through conversations I learned that there were interesting aspects about the CI. More specifically, these details came through conversations with university administrators that I did not have any connection to regarding the CI prior to the start of the dissertation. The only exception to this is the director, Gao Qing, who is also the interim director of the US-CI Center in Washington, DC. The Center seemed like an important organization to learn more about, and through our conversation some details about the GMU CI also came up.

to student recruitment. In the 2000s, GMU's Chinese language program experienced a marked uptick in interest. The provost at the time learned of the CI initiative from a Chinese community member who suggested it as a route to building the university's Chinese language program. While GMU offered Chinese language courses at the time, the establishment of a CI meant that the university could work towards creating a major. GMU did this by using CI instructors to teach for-credit courses, without whom it would be difficult to offer the requisite language courses for a major. Another function of the GMU CI has been to help integrate China studies into curricula campus wide. The CI acts as a starting point for some faculty interested in adding China-related units to existing syllabi.

Aside from William & Mary, GMU is the only other university to indicate a direct connection between the CI and Chinese international students. More specifically, GMU's CI has helped facilitate new partnerships in China for possible avenues of student recruitment, a lucrative prospect for the university.

## **Sponsors**

Similar to the experience at UMD, with GMU Provost Stearns' leadership, the CI received high-level administrative support from the start. Beyond Stearns' involvement, GMU's CI instituted the use of executive sponsors.<sup>25</sup> Their role is to act as intermediaries between the CI and the campus community. In so doing, they are able to facilitate campus connections that have led to new programs, exchanges, and advertisement of

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<sup>25</sup> Dr. Smith (pseudonym), interview, February 18, 2016, Fairfax, VA.



sorts for the CI.<sup>26</sup> Institutional trust has been a mainstay of the relationship, and with help from BLCU partners and executive sponsors, the CI has been valued and important on both sides. The trust between institutions and the role the CI plays on campus has been strong enough to withstand some faculty concerns over its connection to Hanban and the Chinese state.

### **Opposition**

Campus members have voiced concerns, but opposition was never more than weak. More detail about the university's opposing members is not known; interlocutors mentioned only in passing that they existed.

### **Reputation**

The provost, the executive sponsors, and the CI administrative staff all facilitated a positive image of the CI. These units all highly valued GMU's Chinese partnerships, as evidenced by their collaboration on projects and facilitation of new linkages between China and the U.S. and between academic units on campus and within curricula. The network these units formed and the ways in which the campus used the CI made it easy for the CI to distance itself from the controversy at other schools and nonprofits. Being located in the Washington, D. C., metro area, GMU's CI is in close contact with other area CIs, specifically those at UMD and George Washington University (GWU).

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<sup>26</sup> This is the type of facilitation that I anticipated I would find more often in the "successful" CIs, but that has not necessarily been the case. Instead, it is clear that there exists a great deal of variation among the CIs.

## Temple University

Temple University, a public research university in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, established their Confucius Institute in 2015 with Zhejiang Normal University (ZJNU). The announcement of Temple's CI was curious, due to its proximity to Penn State and the timing of the announcement on the heels of the Penn State CI's closing. Upon further investigation, it became clear that, as in many cases, the CI program took years to put together and seemed precipitated by internal university needs. Confucius Institute instructors teach credit-bearing courses on campus, and the faculty intends to use the extra teaching capabilities to develop a Chinese major. In 2013 there was an unsuccessful attempt to sign a CI contract, making it even more clear that the CI endeavor was a long time in the making and not overtly impacted by the other CI issues or controversies that were happening elsewhere.<sup>27</sup>

Temple has maintained a distinct posture in its relationship with Asia, including its successful and fully functioning Tokyo campus. While other potential CI sponsor universities were discussed, Temple ultimately partnered with ZJNU largely due to personal connections forged through two decades of cooperation and relationship building. The institutional trust that this helped create facilitated the relationship necessary for Temple to move forward with the partnership. Temple's history with modern China dates back to Deng Xiaoping's first trip to the U.S. at the onset of China's opening up to the West in 1978. During that trip, Temple gave Deng Xiaoping his only

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<sup>27</sup> In 2012, they discussed the possibility of a Chinese major, but enrolments paled in comparison to the Japanese program, which had long been the case, largely due to the campus in Japan. Despite all the offerings for Chinese-language study abroad opportunities, students preferred to take the more streamlined route and attend a direct exchange with the established campus abroad.

honorary degree. Since then, Temple has put forth a concerted effort to cultivate stronger ties with China. One notable connection is the Beasley School of Law's Rule of Law LLM program with Tsinghua University in Beijing. The partnership was established 16 years ago and continues to be a flagship China connection for Temple. Their connections include Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) to share visiting scholars, students, and faculty. As such, the newly minted CI joins a long list of China projects.

Much like some of these other programs, the CI was established in order to fit a very specific set of internal university needs: to create a Chinese major in order to establish a Chinese teacher certificate. Temple represents another instance in which Hanban resources were leveraged directly to fill specific university programming requirements. The application process, however, was fairly drawn out and took years. During that time, there were a couple site visits made by Chinese officials from the Chinese Consulate in New York. According to Provost Dai, these visits were made on behalf of Hanban officials who were unable to come to the U.S and visit Temple themselves.<sup>28</sup> The impression was that there were other area applicants they were competing against.

### **Internal Needs**

The demands put on the Chinese program at Temple were growing, including a clear need to train Chinese language teachers in the greater Philadelphia area and Pennsylvania. Perhaps surprisingly, Temple, which remains the largest supplier of certified teachers in the state, had neither a major nor a certification program for Chinese

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<sup>28</sup> Provost Hai-Lung Dai, interview, January 21, 2016, Temple University campus.

language teachers. In fact, the two are closely linked, at least in Pennsylvania, where a major must exist in order to be able to offer a teacher certification program. At some point, these discussions coincided with the proposal to bring a CI to campus.

## **Sponsors**

Among the longstanding relationships was a partnership with ZJNU. A member of the Chinese language faculty at Temple starting making research and teaching trips to ZJNU almost 20 years ago. Gradually, the new colleagues learned more about the programming offered by one another and conversations began about a CI. Specifically, it was reported that the ZJNU faculty who were interested in trying to establish a CI approached this particular faculty member.<sup>29</sup> ZJNU had already established two CIs with African universities, demonstrating their commitment and capacity when it came to the CI project.

## **Opposition**

The Provost specifically asked Dr. Elvis Wagner to join the CI team as an associate director. As the head of some of the foreign language teaching certification programs on campus, he was in a unique position to help streamline the process for a new certification in Chinese. Furthermore, he made a point to reach out to the Temple University faculty union before the official announcement to have a conversation about the upcoming CI establishment, as a way to discuss potential concerns before they

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<sup>29</sup> There have been claims by some individuals that Hanban seeks to cultivate relationships with certain foreign host institutions. Hanban has denied this, stating that initiation of the partnership is done through application of a foreign host institution to Hanban. This issue did not emerge during the research period as a major theme, but it is worth noting.

became an issue, which helped answer questions about the CI.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the strong support of the upper administration also alleviated concerns. In general, support from the upper administration seems to be necessary to a good working partnership. According to the Provost, Temple had so many programs with China that the plan was more about leveraging resources to establish a major and offer a Chinese language teaching certification.<sup>31</sup> There was no indication that the CI was intended to help facilitate further connections with China.

## **Reputation**

In the case of Temple, there was no apparent backlash against the new CI, despite the issues that took place at nearby Penn State just months before. My analysis suggests that aligning the project with a longstanding partner was critical. Provost Dai recalled there being other sponsor universities considered, but ultimately one of the strong reasons to opt to work with ZJNU came down to the close working relationship that was built upon nearly 20 years of personal partnerships. For some interested hosts, the reputation of the larger network is managed by the working relationship it has with the Chinese sponsor institution. While Temple did not appear to have prior connections to Hanban, the faculty and research connections between Temple and ZJNU aided in the CI's (and its application) positive reception. The institutional trust created among partners is an important part of the network's reputation.

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<sup>30</sup> Dr. Elvis Wagner, interview, January 21, 2016, Temple University campus.

<sup>31</sup> Provost Hai-Lung Dai, interview, January 21, 2016, Temple University campus.

## **University of South Carolina**

The University of South Carolina (USC) first established a Confucius Institute with Beijing Language and Culture University in November 2008. The public university is located in Columbia, South Carolina, and uses its BLCU instructors for credit-bearing courses. Over the course of the Confucius Institute's lifespan at USC, the university was able to develop a Chinese major.

### **Internal Needs**

USC grew its Chinese language program from teaching roughly 30–50 students annually in 2005 to over 500 presently. During the same period, the USC Chinese program grew from a mash-up of Asian studies courses to a full-fledged major in 2014 and Hanban resources were instrumental in growing the USC Chinese major. According to one interviewee, the major is now a sustainable academic unit of the university. This individual also explained that USC has enjoyed an overabundance of Chinese instructors and recalled one credit-bearing course with only three students in it.<sup>32</sup> Taking advantage of the circumstance, the Hanban instructor specifically tailored the course around a contemporary Chinese film that was pertinent to their majors and Chinese language level. The partnership now allows MBA students focusing on international business the opportunity to study abroad with a premiere Chinese language school while also having access to top-notch instructors while on their home campus.

The CI has also helped USC in a number of other ways. The CI is known for its unique collection of Chinese films, which is Ye's specialty. So far, they have hosted an

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<sup>32</sup> Dr. Harris (pseudonym), Skype interview, August 2, 2016.

annual film academy for seven years, with the most recent 2016 academy being co-sponsored by two other CIs and hosting acclaimed actors from China.<sup>33</sup> One interviewee claimed that the Confucius Institute is well integrated into the community, with events more focused on the community than on campus. The CI has sought to engage the local and state government with Chinese delegations, but that aspect of the relationship remains superficial. There have been opportunities for faculty to go to the Chinese sponsor institution for research trips, and there has been some, albeit minimal, Chinese student recruitment from the sponsor institution to USC.

## **Sponsors**

Director Ye started at USC in 1992 and first considered trying to open a Confucius Institute in 2005. While he said he did not know a lot about it, at the time he was the Director of Asian Studies and wanted to further the university's China connections. Ye commented on how the program was especially appealing due to the draw of the Hanban instructors and how that would further develop programming. The majority of the students, however, came to the CI to take classes from the Moore School of Business. Ye suggested BLCU as a sponsor institution. His personal experience there 30 years prior and its reputation as one of the premiere institutions teaching Chinese as a second language made it an exemplary partner.

The USC administration supported the endeavor from the time Ye first started to think about the program, first garnering the support of Mark Becker, who was the provost at USC at the time. Becker has since moved on to become the president of Georgia State

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<sup>33</sup> Dr. Tan Ye, telephone interview, May 27, 2016.

University and wanted to also establish a CI there, at which point he called upon Ye to share his experience with GSU faculty and administrators.

### **Opposition**

There was no indication that the campus community was concerned about Hanban and its connection to the Chinese government. Any problems that may exist with the CI are organizational, not philosophical or political.<sup>34</sup> For instance, one semester, the Hanban instructors did not arrive for the start of classes, leaving four sections without instructors.

### **Reputation**

Ye functioned as a local activist, influencing Becker both at USC and later when Becker took a position as university president at Georgia State University. Ye's connection to BLCU was also important to the reputation of the larger network since he had firsthand experience with the institution. He was able to advocate for BLCU as a strong partner with capable instructors in teaching Chinese as a foreign language.

## **University A**

University A is a research university with a Confucius Institute in its second contract period. Despite the institution's having an established Chinese language program, the head of the department that encompasses the Chinese major wanted to open a CI.

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<sup>34</sup> Dr. Harris (pseudonym), Skype interview, August 2, 2016.



Unique aspects of University A's programs include its relationship to Tibet and the Dalai Lama. The desire to further collaborations with an established Chinese partner institution was an important driver of the CI partnership but, to date, the CI does not play a crucial role in university programming. Instead, it mimics aspects of the CI partnership at William & Mary, where there is a need but the language program is sustainable without the CI, and it is afforded a significant amount of support from high-level administrative leadership.

### **Internal Needs**

University A opened a CI with an established Chinese partner institution, which was thus seen, in part, as a way to further collaborations between the universities. At the time, the university enjoyed abundant collaborative agreements with China, but this was seen as a way to strengthen the relationship further. According to Dr. Wayne, a high-level administrator with CI management responsibilities, at the beginning of the contract period most of the activities revolved around outreach.<sup>35</sup> Later, University A made a conscious effort to turn their focus to more research-oriented work, specifically conference organization. Additionally, University A made use of Hanban instructors for credit-bearing courses, but to date they do not host any Confucius Classrooms. While they had a strong and well-established Chinese language program, using Hanban instructors for credit-bearing courses has helped to lighten the teaching load for their own professors.

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<sup>35</sup> Dr. Wayne (pseudonym), interview, March 14, 2016.

In addition to the close connection to the Chinese language program, the CI established other campus connections. University A and its Chinese sponsor university together established a self-sustaining program as part of the Art History Department. Other programs began with faculty in the English, Anthropology, and African Studies Departments. According to Wayne, while the CI brought many advantageous connections to the university campus and surrounding community, the Confucius Institute is not critical to its programming. While is a valued partnership, the dissolution of the CI would not mean dissolution of critical programs.

### **Sponsors**

Dr. Wayne's account highlighted the role of the Foreign Language Department head as the person who initiated the application process. This person is not Chinese and does not speak Chinese. Little else is known.

### **Opposition**

In the wake of Penn State's and the University of Chicago's ending their CI agreements, Wayne expected to receive questions and concerns from the campus community. Later, following the report by the AAUP, he went so far as to take the contract to the university's General Counsel for review. None of the issues raised in the report seemed present, but he wanted to be prepared to discuss any issue with the faculty senate or any other campus contingent. In the end, only passing comments were made to Dr. Wayne, leaving him surprised there was not more concern.

The only issues Wayne raised pertained to the budget, in particular how Hanban routinely did not approve a portion. Ultimately, Wayne and his colleagues grew to expect this and anticipated that roughly \$10–20k of funding would have to come from another campus source.

## **Reputation**

Dr. Wayne, the only member of the faculty or administration at University A who responded to interview requests, was well informed and eager to discuss issues. As concerns about the Dalai Lama often arise when discussing Confucius Institutes, University A represents an interesting case since they have hosted both the Dalai Lama and Madame Xu Lin, head of Hanban. In fact, University A's connections to Tibet run deep and include many Tibet-related research activities and campus activities that facilitate Chinese–Tibetan dialogue. Dr. Wayne succinctly said that he has not received any opposition from Hanban regarding the Dalai Lama's visits, which occur roughly every three years.

## **University B**

University B is public research university with a CI in its first five-year contract term. The university uses Confucius Institute instructors to teach credit-bearing courses. University B has a unique orientation to the local community. As an attempt to differentiate themselves from other CIs in the area, they decided to establish the Confucius Institute with a business focus. In so doing, the CI has successfully partnered with local government and business-minded agencies in the greater metropolitan area. To

my interlocutors' knowledge, there was no previous affiliation with the Chinese sponsor institution.<sup>36</sup>

### **Internal Needs**

The university president made a point to increase internationalization and focus on five countries in particular, of which China was one. For University B, it was important to be able to grow its China-related programming across the university, and Hanban instructors would be able to assist with credit-bearing language courses and other cultural initiatives. In 2015, there were 389 enrollments in Chinese courses at University B's CI. This number is up 30 percent from when the CI started and continues to grow. As Ms. Nicole continues to advertise, she has seen steady growth and is aware of steady growing interest since her arrival.<sup>37</sup>

Since Nicole joined the CI, she has seen a slow but steady increase in non-credit Chinese course enrollments. Most are students in the arts and humanities. University B does make use of Hanban instructors to cover credit-bearing courses. While the university does not have a Chinese major, they do have a Chinese minor and offer elementary and intermediate courses through the World Languages Department. Nicole is not aware of what circumstances were prior to her arrival, but at the time of the interview there were only two students participating in the Hanban scholarships.

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<sup>36</sup> I spoke with two representatives from University B, one American and one Chinese, who work directly for the Confucius Institute. Their experience with the CI varies, but both were excited to speak with me and were enthused with the work they do. The president's office and founding faculty members did not respond to any attempt at contact for an interview.

<sup>37</sup> Ms. Nicole (pseudonym), interview, March 17, 2016.

The university does not offer any HSK testing, in part because other CIs in the area cover that need. Its CI is working hard to expand its programming, including community-facing events. Recently, the CI got involved with the local world affairs organization to establish a program for young professionals who deal with China for work but have never been there. The program consists of a two-week culture and experience tour to China, with the hope of fostering a collaborative partnership that will make the new tour self-sustaining.

Ms. Nicole suggests that the CI spends roughly half their time on internal, rather than external, engagement and activities. The internal focus is on Chinese language instruction as well as integrating the CI into the campus community. According to Ms. Nicole, when she was on-boarded, even though the CI had been in place for a couple of years, there were many academic and administrative units not familiar with the name, let alone what the CI did. The university–CI relationship was extensive, but there was a serious branding issue. She sees her role, among other responsibilities, as bridging that gap. Most on-campus collaborations are with the Language and Culture Department, the Department of Public Health, the International Center, and the Asian Studies Center. They do, however, seek to further collaborations with the business school, especially since it is the business community that makes the city such a draw and is the other main focus of the university.

## **Sponsors**

According to one interlocutor, the university president made six visits to China in 2010 to discuss the possibility of establishing a CI with various institutions. The Chinese

sponsor institution had other CIs already and was a strong fit for the needs of University B. In addition to the university president, the partnership was established with the help of another faculty member and an associate provost. Together, these key individuals were responsible for successfully establishing a CI at University B, and based on interviews, there was a strong degree of trust in the program, the sponsor institution, and the administrative leadership.

### **Opposition**

Neither interlocutor knew of any opposition on campus, however, none of the sponsors were available for an interview and they may have been in a better position to speak on the subject.

### **Reputation**

The driving force behind the new CI at University B came from the new university president who, according to one source, relied on colleagues from another institution to introduce the CI program to University B. The president's familiarity with the CI program worked in conjunction with the university's new initiatives around internationalization. University B's unique ideas on differentiation set the prospective CI apart from the other CIs in the area, allowing it to help diversify the types of connections Hanban would likely be able to build.

The university also maintains an advisory board that focuses specifically on China-related activities at the university. Beyond strengthening linkages, the board offers insight into how the university may and may not want to engage with China.

## **The College Board's Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms Network**

While the majority of Confucius Institute partnerships in the U.S. are between Chinese universities and U.S. universities, The College Board's Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms (CICC) network in public elementary and secondary schools represents a distinct and important partnership arrangement. By describing the significant ways the CICC differs from the majority of university-level partnerships, this section probes the hypotheses in a different context. In doing so, it enhances analysis of the arguments in this dissertation while also clarifying how the network operates in the public school environment.

There are six Confucius Institutes at public schools in the U.S. The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Confucius Institute was the first to open, in May 2006, under the direction of Mr. Bob Davis, who served as both the Director of the Confucius Institute and also CPS's Manager for World Languages and International Studies ("Bob Davis" 2015). CPS partners with Hanban and East China Normal University in Shanghai and is the only public school Confucius Institute that mirrors the partnership arrangement present in most university-level CI relationships. According to publicly available information, Davis' experience in China before arriving at CPS impacted the direction of his work (Osno 2011). In an interview with Dr. Guy Alitto at the University of Chicago, Dr. Alitto pointed out that Hanban considered the CPS CI as an important success story, its value being in its ability to reach such a large number of students.<sup>38</sup> According to Davis's bio on the U.S.–China Strong Foundation website, the CPS CI served 13,000

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<sup>38</sup> Dr. Guy Alitto, telephone interview, February 27, 2016.

students as of 2015.<sup>39</sup> In late 2010, Davis took a position as the new Executive Director of Chinese Language and Culture Initiatives at The College Board.

There are currently five major China initiatives at The College Board, two of which include the Chinese Guest Teacher Program, to be discussed in greater detail later, and the CICC network. One major distinction of these Confucius Institutes is that The College Board effectively stands in place of the foreign sponsor institutions found at the university level, so the partnership is between the host institution, Hanban, and The College Board. Furthermore, The College Board-administered CIs do not include a physical space in the schools or districts, nor are there instructors included in the agreements. For these reasons, these CIs are better conceptualized as grants administered by The College Board.

To date, The College Board administers the five remaining Confucius Institutes in public school districts across the country. These districts applied for Confucius Institutes through The College Board following a request for proposals. Currently, these CIs are located in some of the country's largest public school districts, including Broward County Public Schools in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Clark County School District in Las Vegas, Nevada, Davis County Schools in Salt Lake City, Utah, East Central Ohio Educational Service Center in New Philadelphia, Ohio, and Houston Independent School District in Houston, Texas.

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<sup>39</sup> For reference, CPS's Office of School Quality Measurement notes that the district served 360,676 K-12 students in 2016, compared with 399,720 in 2006. ("CPS Stats and Facts" 2017) Membership data can be found at <http://www.cps.edu/SchoolData/Pages/SchoolData.aspx>.



Within the CICC network, Broward County Schools is the only known district with a Chinese Resource Room opened with the establishment of its CI, but it is distinct from the physical spaces the CIs occupy at the university level. Where CIs at universities nearly always include a set of offices and rooms on campus for administrative and class-related purposes, the public schools do not have the same requirement. Instead, the CIs in public schools operate as grants that fund creation and expansion of curricula and programing. According to The College Board's website, funding cannot be used for salaries of either administrators or instructors.<sup>40</sup> Instead, CICC network schools and others can apply for a visiting teacher from China to teach Chinese. While this does not provide any monetary assistance for the schools, it eliminates the search aspect, and this can be beneficial if it would otherwise be difficult to hire a trained teacher for the position either in a given timeframe or in a certain geographical area.

There are other consistent personnel distinctions, especially pertaining to the CI directors. While the CIs in universities have both a Chinese and American director, the public schools often have one point of contact. HSID has a CI grant manager. Broward County's CI director is also Coordinator of Advanced Studies for 271,000 students in the district. ECOESC's Director of Distance Education is also the CI director. The CI administrators in the remaining two districts are in charge of the world language curriculum. While it is true that many CI directors at the university level also have other

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<sup>40</sup> Administrators from The College Board were unavailable for interviews on the topic and it does not appear that they are looking to open any more CIs right now. Instead, this section refers to information found regarding the application process for the 2012-2013 school year, when they were soliciting applications to begin with. A webpage on frequently asked questions addresses many relevant topics here. For reference, see <https://professionals.collegeboard.org/k-12/awards/chinese/confucius/faq>.

administrative duties and titles, they are often tied to international education and/or Chinese studies and they receive a Chinese co-director to assist with CI management. In most cases, the administrators in the public school districts did not have prior experience with China or Chinese language.

This important difference can best be understood as a result of the program's similarity to a grant. As one administrator put it, the closest to a physical location for their Confucius Institute would be her desk. Funding supports teacher training, strengthening of curriculum, student and administrator travel, and technological needs. This administrator also notes, unlike university CIs, there is no possibility of receiving Chinese teachers as part of the grant.<sup>41</sup> Instead, if a school or district needs, they can apply for a Chinese guest teacher through The College Board but the salaries remain the responsibility of the school or district.

In addition to thinking about the public school Confucius Institutes as grants, it is also useful to conceptualize them as networks that are extremely diverse and diffuse. The public school CIs basically act as their own network of Confucius Classrooms. The CIs themselves support Chinese language classes and cultural events in schools and classrooms across the whole district. The Ohio and Texas CIs have separate Confucius Classrooms, also funded by The College Board, as part of their network. As The College Board's website notes, the CIs are meant for large districts that oversee multiple school-based Confucius Classrooms versus the Confucius Classroom-specific grant, which funds a small district or a single school seeking to establish an individual Confucius Classroom.

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<sup>41</sup> Ms. Hill (pseudonym), interview, April 8, 2017, Houston, TX.

In discussions with Chinese language teachers at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual National Chinese Language Conference in Houston, Texas, they explained how the Confucius Classroom designation means access to an impressive network of teachers and resources. For some, CC funding was the reason they were able to attend the conference at all. The College Board also has its own network of standalone Confucius Classrooms. But there are more configurations still. Specifically, the Asia Society also has its own network of Confucius Classrooms, and schools can also apply directly to Hanban or seek to establish a Confucius Classroom through a local university-based Confucius Institute; or, on rare occasions, some Confucius Classrooms have been established with Chinese sponsor universities.

With regard to The College Board's five public school CIs, they have created their own network. The directors are in close contact with one another and with their liaisons at The College Board. The nature and the novelty of their CIs have led to a natural connection. Together, they have worked on new ways to strengthen their Chinese programs and broaden the opportunities for their students. One example of this is a new language contest they created. The five public school CIs collaborated to create the first annual National Chinese Math-Science-Arts Competition in Tampa, Florida, with plans to hold the second in February 2018 in Layton, Utah. Top winners in local competitions would go on to represent their respective districts. Whereas this past year was limited to the public school CIs, they plan to open the 2018 competition to any school willing and able to participate, distinguishing between immersion and general divisions and age groups (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade, middle school, and high school). The

sponsors for the upcoming second annual competition include Hanban, The College Board, and the five public school CIs.

### **Internal Needs**

Based on application requirements, The College Board CICC application targeted accredited schools that demonstrated proven success in Chinese language implementation and evidence to support its impact as well as proven efforts to strengthen existing program implementation. It was also required that applicant schools or districts had previously participated in Chinese-related College Board or Hanban programs, such as the Chinese Guest Teacher Program or an AP Chinese Language and Culture course. In effect, these requirements significantly limited their pool of applicants, making eligible districts those with strong Chinese programs and at least a passing familiarity with either Hanban or The College Board Chinese programs, or both. For the public schools, it was less about an education innovation and more about access to funding and the network. Interviewed administrators commented on the program expansion made possible with The College Board grants.

### **Sponsors**

Data related to the sponsorship of the CIs in the individual districts is limited. One administrator said that The College Board approached them with a tailor-made application because of interest in a unique and timely aspect of their program.<sup>42</sup> Another

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<sup>42</sup> Ms. Hill (pseudonym), interview, April 8, 2017, Houston, TX.

administrator said that the district level administrators were keen on the idea as a way to increase their internationalization.<sup>43</sup>

## **Opposition**

Interviews with public school CI administrators gave no indication of opposition either internally or from parents. When asked about their school and community's response to the AAUP report and the closings at the University of Chicago and Penn State CIs, one administrator responded by saying that the political issues are a concern of the universities and just not an aspect of the public school landscape. Other administrators mentioned the pride that comes with their CI designation and how many parents are thrilled that their children are afforded such opportunities in their schools. Even articles discussing the local CIs do not mention the concerns and closures that are prevalent at the university level.<sup>44</sup>

## **Reputation**

The reputation of the CICC network appears to be isolated from the broader CI program generally. As discussed in the previous section, the public schools did not experience any known instances of opposition. One possible explanation for this might stem from their connections to The College Board, where community members and

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<sup>43</sup> Mr. Bob McKinney, telephone interview, March 21, 2017.

<sup>44</sup> See Emily Chaiet, "Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Opens Confucius Institute," *The Circuit*, January 13, 2015, <http://www.cbhscircuit.com/?p=6027>; Louise Shaw, "Language Arts of China Shared: Davis County Students Embrace Language of China," *The Davis Clipper*, October 11, 2015, [http://www.davisclipper.com/view/full\\_story/26897679/article-Language--arts-of-China-shared--Davis-County-students-embrace-language-of-China?instance=lead\\_story\\_left\\_column](http://www.davisclipper.com/view/full_story/26897679/article-Language--arts-of-China-shared--Davis-County-students-embrace-language-of-China?instance=lead_story_left_column); and Karen Yi, "Cypress Bay High Brings China Home to Students," *Sun Sentinel*, January 13, 2015, <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/education/fl-confucius-institute-broward-20150112-story.html>.

parents do not question the CI because The College Board is a known and trusted entity in secondary education in the U.S.

## **Conclusion**

Of the CIs investigated in this chapter, individual sponsorship played an important role in all of them, although to varying degrees. At the College of William & Mary, Temple University, and the University of South Carolina, for instance, the initial impetus came from a particular faculty member. At University B and the University of Maryland, it came from high-level administrators, namely the university presidents. Alone, however, champions proved insufficient for CIs to take root. For instance, it took faculty at William & Mary a couple of attempts before successfully establishing a CI due to an initial lack of administrative support. Administrative support, or at least acquiescence, is paramount. Despite a general desire on the part of universities to engage with China and offer more opportunities to faculty and students, some administrations do not provide outright support for the CI.

Of the institutions interviewed, the only one not to use Hanban instructors for credit-bearing courses was the University of Maryland. Major reasons a university would seek to establish a CI seem to be: to grow the Chinese language program, to establish and expand an overarching China program on campus, and to develop a Chinese major. As one interlocutor put it, the Hanban instructors are well trained, meaning the university does not need to try to locate outside language assistance through a new tenure-track hire or qualified adjuncts. While many of the institutions said they were pleased with the overall health of the sponsor and host institution relationship, many had encountered

issues with Hanban's management. Despite hassles with accounting, budgets and travel-related issues, the universities benefited from the strengthening of relationships or the establishment of new partnerships with Chinese universities. Expanding partnerships, courses, and opportunities for faculty and staff were at the core of what was most important to the universities hosting CIs. In this respect, the institutions found an effective educational innovation to meet needs of the students, campus, and communities.

The universities seemed acutely aware of the grievances the media, AAUP, and, specifically, Marshal Sahlins were bringing up. At University A, for instance, Dr. Wayne was surprised there was not more of a response to the AAUP report or the Chicago closing and the associated news coverage. Dr. Hanson at William & Mary occasionally discusses with concerned parties the inner workings of the WMCI and says that so long as he is able to dispel their concerns and sees none of his own, the partnership will continue. Even if concerns exist around the CI, there is an over-arching sense of need to increase engagement with China. For some, it is establishing a Chinese major; for others, it is furthering collaborations with a strong, established partner. For the universities interviewed, there were no noteworthy objections or contingents of concerned individuals with the exception of CIM's making a point of not using CI staff for credit-bearing courses as a measure to head off any controversy. From the beginning, Chinese language faculty at the University of Maryland were wary of Hanban instructors replacing them. While faculty and administrators from other institutions also spoke about concerns raised, none of them were strong enough to thwart the establishment of sustainment of any CI program. Maryland is also unique in that they were the second CI to open in the world.

The skepticism some Maryland faculty experienced may also be due to the fact that there was only one other CI at that time, established the same year. Over the 12 years since then, the other universities have been afforded the ability to learn from the early partnerships and thus eliminate some of the uncertainty with the program.

While each institution and corresponding CI partnership is unique, the most important factor for partnership maintenance lies in its ability to act as an educational innovation. And, the program sponsors and maintaining a positive or neutral reputation from the perspective of the local community played an important supporting role. In many cases, the program sponsors are critical in establishing institutional trust between partners, and in turn, this trust, the sponsors' relationship and their confidence in the CI overall positively effects the perceptions community members have with regard to the school's CI. While all institutions were aware of the potential issues (presumably the reason so many declined to speak with me!) and the common negative media portrayal, for most, engagement with China was not going to change. Interviews suggested that the survival of the CI partnership depends most on fulfilling a continued need and not endangering any academic freedoms. These conclusions are echoed in unexpected ways in the following chapter, which investigates the two CI closings in 2014.



## CHAPTER 4: THE CI REVERSALS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO AND PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

After nearly five years of hosting a Confucius Institute, the University of Chicago announced their decision not to renew the contract in September 2014. National news outlets and *Inside Higher Ed* immediately reported on the closure (Redden 2014b; Tatlow 2014). Roughly a week later, Pennsylvania State University announced a similar decision. At this point, major news networks also picked up the story, including *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*. As opposed to the print articles that, up until that point, would talk about the growing CIs in the U.S. or their role on campus and in the surrounding communities, these articles discussed the closings with a highly suspicious tone (Belkin 2014; Jacobs and Yu 2014; Redden 2014c). This chapter details a more nuanced story than was portrayed in the media and, more specifically, takes on the important task of highlighting some of the issues and dilemmas with the CI project that manifested in the cases of Pennsylvania State University and the University of Chicago.

Analysis focuses on four main independent variables, and a related hypothesis, that impact the divergent partnership outcomes of the CIs in the U.S. The first hypothesis draws from business and political science literature on innovation. I argue that the Confucius Institute can best be understood as an educational innovation because it provides a viable solution to budget constraints and the growing need for increased

internationalization on campus and specifically Chinese language programs and courses. I expect institutions with demonstrable need for Chinese language instructors, courses, building China programming, etc., to be more likely to have established CIs.

Second, business and social science literature point to the role of sponsors or policy entrepreneurs as critical in agenda setting or to the success of policy or innovation diffusion. For this reason, I hypothesize that a CI is more likely to be established and maintained when there is a strong sponsor such as a well-connected faculty member or high-level administrator supporting the program.

Third, the cases of closures of CIs at Penn State and the University of Chicago, as well as concerns raised by the American Association of University Professors and by members of Congress, suggest that growing opposition may be key. This hypothesis draws on the work of Graham Allison and his *bureaucratic politics* model, which suggests that an organization's decisions are the product of intra-organizational political outcomes. In other words, the "competition, confusion, compromise, and coalition" among individual players are driving the outcomes (Allison 1969, 708). Instances of strong opposition are expected to lead to closures of CIs or in failure to establish new CIs; instances of weak or no (known) opposition are expected to have no detectable impact on the sustainment of established CIs or on the establishment of new CIs. For this work here, a strong opposition is characterized as an active effort to influence others and a weak opposition is one in which concerns are raised but often in private or in isolation and have no observable effect. The CIUC example sets the standard for a case of strong opposition.

The last hypothesis considers the perception and reputation of the Confucius Institute program. It draws on the work of Keck and Sikkink (1998) and Haas (1992) about the creation of epistemic communities and transnational advocacy networks to assert that a CI is more likely to remain open to the extent that the host institutions maintain a positive perception of the larger transnational CI network. In many cases, there is a strong and clear link between key individuals on campus and the work of the broader network, which here means increasing knowledge of China and Chinese language.

The analysis for this chapter is distinct from that in the chapters on the established and maintained CIs and those that failed to establish. Whereas those chapters both cover a few institutions, this chapter presents just two case studies of closures but in much greater detail. Thus, the narrative focuses on important pieces of the story, many of which were untold until now. The story unveils and analyzes the hypotheses through each narrative as it happened. Following the structure of the other two chapters, for each case, each variable is considered in turn independently for a concise review of the important indicators present.

In comparison with the CIs that remain in operation, or the ones that never came to fruition, these two cases provide unique insight. The closing of the CIs at both the University of Chicago and Pennsylvania State University caught the media's attention, but there is significance in the fact that they opened the institutes in the first place. In other words, in order to open the institutes, the universities each had to perceive the project as desirable and properly incentivized. In this respect, the narration of the first

part of each story echoes those in the chapter on the established and maintained CIs. Contrary to the CIs in the next chapter, which simply never materialized, these two cases resulted from a conscious decision to close. Actively making this decision carries more risk than ceasing to make plans or having interests wane. For a project that grew as controversial as the CI, both administrations knew that there was a possibility the decision would cause friction among parties, lead to bad press, and possibly affect other relationships. These potential repercussions are much more tangible than the effects of aborting efforts to establish a CI.

This chapter demonstrates the critical importance of strategic incentives in the role of a continued CI partnership. For Pennsylvania State University, these incentives diminished over time, leading the administration to deem the partnership obsolete. For the University of Chicago, the incentives remained strong, but ultimately external forces led to a surprising decision to close the institute. Individual agency played an important supporting role in the cases of setting up both CIs, but those individuals who helped establish the partnerships were unable to keep them going. In the case of Chicago, a negative perception of the project and its proximity to the Chinese government was the reason for its closing, but in an unsuspected way. At Pennsylvania State University, faculty and administrators discussed possible concerns regarding Hanban overreaching, though in the end they did not experience any overreach.

This chapter is also important in that it ties in some of the major criticism about the CIs and can trace the connections between some of these opponents and oft-cited articles. The role of University of Chicago faculty member Marshall Sahlins and his

connection to the CAUT and, in turn, the AAUP further elucidate some of the behind-the-scenes work that has gone on in opposition to the CIs. His connection to the University of Chicago and the abrupt end to its CI do not appear coincidental. Contrary to the raising of concerns, neither institution experienced any wrongdoing or overstepping on the part of the CI or Hanban.

The chapter is structured as follows. After a brief discussion of the data, the first half delves into the case of the University of Chicago, beginning with important background on how it was established and run as well as its role on campus. The following section looks at the beginning of the controversy around its CI and how the Canadian Association of University Teachers and the American Association of University Professors and their reports were linked to the University of Chicago. The next section discusses the committee that the University of Chicago's president, Dr. Robert Zimmer, arranged to review the CI leading up to its potential contract renewal. The first half ends with a discussion on the demise of this CI with an in-depth variable analysis.

The second half of the chapter focuses on the case of Pennsylvania State University's CI, beginning with important background. The next section discusses early issues experienced at PSU, including loss of personal connections between institutions and Hanban's not following through on program agreements. Then the chapter discusses some of the smaller issues that followed and how the CI was not able to augment cultural programming in the way intended. After an in-depth variable analysis of this second case, the chapter concludes with a discussion about the impact of both of the CI reversals.

In the U.S. to-date, there have only been two institutions to open Confucius Institutes that later closed. Newspapers and online news sources reported widely on the two, and based on a conversation with an administrative assistant at Pennsylvania State University, higher-ups instructed them not to speak with reporters and others who called to inquire about the CI's closing. The time elapsed between the closings and my research did not seem to weaken the prevailing atmosphere of skepticism and mistrust around the subject. I experienced a high degree of resistance in speaking with people at both institutions.

In early 2016, I spent one week on each of the campuses of Pennsylvania State University and the University of Chicago. In total, I conducted 11 interviews with faculty and administrators from the two institutions. Eight interviews occurred in person, two over the phone, and one via Skype. Of these eleven interlocutors, five requested that I use a pseudonym when referencing our conversation.

At Penn State, I attempted to speak with an additional 14 individuals, three of whom outright declined my requests. The other individuals did not respond to my multiple attempts at contact. Representatives from the Dalian University of Technology faculty implementation team, the American faculty member credited with initializing the project, Dr. Dennis Simon, and Dr. On-cho Ng, chair of the Asian Studies department, did not respond to my requests for an interview. State College mayor Elizabeth Gorham declined my request, despite her outspoken interest in the CI at Penn State.

At the University of Chicago, I attempted to speak with an additional 10 individuals, four of whom outright declined my request. Unfortunately, University of

Chicago upper administrative leadership, former Confucius Institute board members, and petition signatories declined my interview request. Multiple attempts to contact former CIUC director Dali Yang and current CEAS director Donald Harper, among others, went unanswered. Multiple sources said that Dr. Dali Yang decided not to speak to anyone on the subject. Although I was unable to speak directly with many faculty and administrators closely involved in the PSU-CI and CIUC projects, many of my sources were close to those individuals and the affected academic units and are well aware of the issues that impacted the CI's work and final decisions at each institution.

### **The Confucius Institute at the University of Chicago**

The case at University of Chicago was unique in many ways. First and foremost, the University of Chicago was one of the most prestigious institutions to host a Confucius Institute. It was also evident that their Chinese program had a long and distinguished history. In this regard, the fact that they opened a CI was curious in the first place. Based on media coverage of the University of Chicago CI story, it was clear that there was a contingent of faculty that was actively seeking to raise awareness of the presence of a CI on campus, and they later circulated a petition. Over 100 faculty members signed the petition in late spring 2014. The articles also mentioned that a committee convened to review the CI project at the University of Chicago and make recommendations about its future. Based on these articles, I intended to speak with faculty and administrators directly involved in the CI activities, those who helped organize the petition, those who

helped assemble the recommendation report, and others from the East Asian Languages and Civilizations (EALC) department. While I was unsuccessful in securing interviews with any individuals who worked directly on the CI, I was able to speak with knowledgeable professors who worked closely with CI staff, many of whom were privy to the decisions it made pertaining to EALC at Chicago.

The CIUC opened in 2010. The negotiation process took place in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis and the election of President Barack Obama. These two events combined meant a few different things for the University of Chicago. According to one interlocutor, the financial crisis meant that even a prestigious and well-endowed institution like Chicago felt a certain amount of financial pressure. At the same time, President Obama's former teaching position at the University of Chicago further augmented its reputation, especially internationally. Around the same time, Hanban leadership decided to establish a few new CIs that would focus on research and establish further links between prestigious U.S. institutions and China. Besides Chicago, Stanford University, the University of Michigan, and Columbia University all established CIs. The understanding was that these CIs would receive greater funding from Hanban and be more committed to academic research than other CIs.<sup>45</sup>

At the time, the city of Chicago already played host to one of the most successful CIs. The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) established a CI in May 2006 to teach Chinese to elementary and secondary students across the city. According to enrollment, one of the most easily measurable indicators of outcome, the CPS's CI was one of Hanban's most

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<sup>45</sup> Dr. Edward Shaughnessy, interview, February 10, 2016, University of Chicago campus.



storied successes.<sup>46</sup> The Mayor's Office drove the initiative, and the opportunity for the public school students was unique. In fact, they remain one of only six public school districts in the U.S. to have its own CI.<sup>47</sup> The prospect of a new CI at the University of Chicago made for friction between interested parties in Chicago, especially given how successful the public school CI had been. It soon became clear that Hanban had very different intentions for the University of Chicago CI, and initial tensions soon calmed.<sup>48</sup>

As the well-known Chicago School of Economics had praised the Chinese economic miracle, Hanban's initial interest in the university was only natural. The China-studying faculty, however, felt invested in the project and compelled to have a humanistic angle, at least to some degree. The CI ultimately was set up to fund research on contemporary China, with an emphasis on economics. While some interlocutors mentioned Hanban's interest in staying away from humanities and culture altogether, there was inherent overlap with the Chicago China-studying faculty. These dynamics surrounding CIUC were unexpected in many ways since much official rhetoric from China regarding the CI states that the project focuses on language and culture. Similarly, many observers outside of China argue that staying within the realm of culture is a much safer route for the project to take.

Another unique aspect of the University of Chicago Confucius Institute project was its relative proximity to a new Beijing Center that Chicago was working to establish. The center would offer research support to Chicago-affiliated faculty and students

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<sup>46</sup> Dr. Guy Alitto, telephone interview, February 27, 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Again, these are distinct from the Confucius Classrooms that usually operate in K-12 settings.

<sup>48</sup> Dr. Edward Shaughnessy, interview, February 10, 2016, University of Chicago campus.

conducting research in China. While it was not meant to act as a recruiting office or China campus, the center was going to offer considerable conveniences to China-studying faculty and students and potentially raise the university and its programs' notoriety in China even more. The center was going to be set up in a space adjacent to the Renmin University campus in Beijing. In fact, Renmin University owned the space that Chicago rented. The director of the CI, who was key in its establishment, was unwilling to discuss the topic, so some of the circumstantial details remain vague. In the end, however, it seems that conversations around a potential CI came up with Renmin University faculty and staff and ultimately the partnership moved forward.

According to sources, the CIUC contributed \$350-400k annually to the University of Chicago, a much higher sum than the roughly \$150k that most CIs have to contribute to their host institutions.<sup>49</sup> They accepted research proposals, and funding also went towards student travel and language studies beyond Chicago. Aside from funding research projects, the CIUC also contributed to conferences, workshops, exhibits, lectures, publications, and public events.

## **Controversy**

The controversy with the CIUC began when a group of faculty who were opposed to the corporatization of the university learned of the project. The faculty members originally targeted a new economics institute project that was going to be named after Milton Friedman. Along with that project, the group also brought attention to a campus in

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<sup>49</sup> The initial contract stated that Hanban would contribute \$200k, but I do not have a copy of the supplemental contract, which may very well have allotted additional funds to the university.

Cairo and the newly instituted CI. One interlocutor said that during consultations with the University of Chicago president and his staff, the upper administration admitted to not looking closely enough into the agreement and that they would be amenable to a closer review of the contract when it was up for renewal five years later.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, the president of University of Chicago and upper administration all declined requests to speak on the subject. Following an initial petition against the corporatization of the university, one member of the group, Professor Emeritus Marshal Sahlins, closely monitored the CIUC and developments of the CI project more broadly. A second petition was circulated in Spring 2014 with over 100 signatories. In addition, they gave a presentation to the University of Chicago student government on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014, seeking support for the petition.<sup>51</sup> Students on the council passed a motion to discuss the issue at the next assembly after concluding that they did not have enough information at the time to decide whether to support the petition. Due to their significant connections outside of the campus community, the concerns of these few individuals disseminated among a broader subset of the academic community, with important implications. The following section will expand upon how Chicago's connections with relevant American and Canadian associations later impacted the CIUC and conversations held by many regarding the Confucius Institute program.

### **The Role of North American Professional Associations**

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<sup>50</sup> Dr. Bruce Lincoln, interview, February 8, 2016, University of Chicago campus.

<sup>51</sup> Bruce Lincoln to the University of Chicago Student Government, May 8, 2014, <http://sg.uchicago.edu/uchicago-student-government-alumni/>.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) first learned of the Confucius Institute in January 2011, when a member of the CAUT's Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee contacted the association president, Dr. James Turk. This faculty member was concerned with plans some colleagues at the University of Manitoba had to establish a CI. Over the following months, Turk corresponded directly with representatives at the University of Manitoba, but the university ultimately decided to establish the CI. There was no further communication on the issue until two years later, in June 2013, when Turk received word that discussions had ceased and the decision was made not to establish a CI.<sup>52</sup>

Marshall Sahlins, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at the University of Chicago, and the Chicago faculty member most critical of the Confucius Institute on campus, published a piece in *The Nation* about the CIUC in October 2013 (Sahlins 2013). The article criticized universities for being in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis the Chinese government. In addition to the work the CAUT had already conducted, Sahlins' article made an impression and shortly thereafter was followed by a report from the Canadian association. The CAUT also contacted all Canadian CIs and asked for a copy of their contracts while expressing their concerns about the project. There was a large degree of agreement between Sahlins and the CAUT. Moreover, the AAUP reached out to Turk to see if he would act as an advisor with the Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure as it prepared a similar report on the Confucius Institutes in the U.S.

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<sup>52</sup> According to Turk's article, in addition to Manitoba, the University of British Columbia also rejected CI proposals, although the British Columbia Institute of Technology established a CI at a later date.

The AAUP published its report on the Confucius Institute in June 2014. Unlike the CAUT, however, the AAUP did not make any systematic effort to reach out to the established CIs and share the report or press them on the pertinent issues. According to the AAUP committee chair, Dr. Henry Reichman, the committee also did not have any China specialists or any individual who had direct contact with any Confucius Institute.<sup>53</sup> Despite these issues, all individuals interviewed were well aware of the report and many went to great lengths to be able to support the university's CI posture—whatever that may have been (Redden 2014a). Specifically, the report urged universities to close their CIs unless they were able to renegotiate (if necessary) three issues. First, universities need to retain full control over academic matters (e.g. teacher recruitment, curriculum); second, CI faculty must be given the same rights as faculty at the host university, and; third, the university–Hanban agreements need to be accessible to all members of the university (“On Partnerships with Foreign Governments: The Case of Confucius Institutes” 2014).

Even though the report was not shared specifically with CI host institutions in the U.S., it was quickly disseminated within the community, including sponsor universities in China. One member from the AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, Dr. Michael Berube, English Professor at Pennsylvania State University, was on a trip to China as part of the Consortium of Humanities Centers and Institutes (CHCI) when the AAUP published their report about the CI. While CHCI was interested in expanding to include international humanities programs, one representative from Sun Yat Sen

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<sup>53</sup> Dr. Henry Reichman, telephone interview, February 25, 2016.

University in Guangzhou (a CI sponsor institution) addressed a faculty member from the University of Chicago, asking why Chicago had a problem with the CI and why there was an issue with soft power. The faculty member responded by saying there was no issue with soft power per se, only that the CIs tried to do so on university campuses as opposed to street corners, making it clearly at odds with academic freedom and autonomy.<sup>54</sup> Although, it is significant that Berube was surprised to hear that the CI was built as a project to engage foreign audiences and non-Chinese students. The misunderstanding seems pervasive.

There is an apparent disconnect between the AAUP and Chicago contingent and those in support of the CIs. The arguments of those organizations and individuals in opposition to the CIs seem much more suited to the satellite campuses American universities are setting up in China (U. S. Government Accountability Office 2016). With a couple exceptions, the vocal opponents were not directly involved in the work of the CIs, nor were they aware of how the individual programs used the CIs. In the minutes from the student government meeting, Lincoln noted that for him, at least, the issue was not just about the Chinese government's influence on campus but about any outside influences having undue affects on the values of American academia.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, Lincoln remarked in the meeting that he would have the same reaction to an institute funded by any other country or corporation. According to one interlocutor, the University of Chicago accepted funding from the Danish, Basque, Norwegian, and French

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<sup>54</sup> Dr. Michael Berube, interview, January 12, 2016, Pennsylvania State University campus.

<sup>55</sup> Student government notes can be found on the following website <http://sg.uchicago.edu/uchicago-student-government-alumni/>. The meeting in question took place on May 8, 2014.

governments just to name a few. The presentation and comments seemed to reflect a lack of knowledge that the University of Chicago accepted funding from numerous outside governments, although none established a formal institute.

Those critical of the Confucius Institute noted being hopeful that the CIUC closing and the reports published by the CAUT and AAUP would have a more cascading impact. Specifically, they referred to a comment made by Dean Peg Barratt of George Washington University, stating that there was safety in numbers when looking to establish a CI and that top universities opening CIs increased her comfort level, as well (McIntire 2013). Following this logic, the University of Chicago's closing of their CI should have the corresponding impact of causing some institutions to reconsider their agreements. To date, however, this effect has yet to manifest, even among the other more prestigious projects (Fingleton 2014). That said, it is unclear if the controversies may have stymied other would-be partner institution projects in the very early stages. None of the people from the various universities interviewed gave any indication of being privy to such, but they represent a limited sample.

While these issues gained interest among a sub-sect of faculty on campus, none of them were Chinese-studying faculty members. The CI was largely brought on campus due to student demand. There was growing interest in Chinese language courses among Chicago students, and the EALC department experienced a shortage in supply of language instructors to meet the growing student demand. In the early- to mid-2000s the Chinese Consulate in Chicago asked area schools including the University of Chicago if they needed language teachers. At that point, the university accepted two Hanban

instructors. These instructors, just like the CI-subsidized teachers, fell under the supervision of the East Asian Language and Civilization department. They taught for-credit courses and used department-approved curricula and resources. Furthermore, they received high marks in their evaluations from students.<sup>56</sup> One of the tangential criticisms of the CI project is the exclusive use of simplified characters. As opposed to traditional characters, which continue to be used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and other overseas Chinese communities, simplified characters were instituted in Mainland China to aid with literacy. Especially for foreigners, learning simplified characters is significantly easier, and because of the limited exposure to the characters in general it is difficult to learn traditional characters after. Some critics have made the point that CIs' exclusive teaching of simplified characters is part of the CCP's CI agenda. It limits foreigners from access to Chinese literature printed prior to the change, which first occurred in the 1950s. On the other hand, as Professor Guy Alitto from Chicago points out, use of simplified characters is just the natural progression of Mandarin teaching currently. Most students are more interested in studying abroad in China as opposed to Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Singapore, and unless they are doing original research in the humanities there is no inherent need for literacy in traditional characters.

In addition to the two Hanban instructors who came to campus by way of the Chinese Consulate, once the CI was instituted, the University of Chicago received a third Chinese language teacher. The additional language teaching and the research funding were the major value added for the program. This third language teacher came

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<sup>56</sup> Dr. Edward Shaughnessy, interview, February 10, 2016, University of Chicago campus.



specifically out of the partnership that formed the Confucius Institute and, to the surprise of some of the China-studying faculty, proved different from the two who came from the relationship the faculty and administrators had with just the Consulate. In terms of logistics, it was an extra burden for the faculty and staff to assist the teachers in acclimating to the local customs and way of life. In many international education contexts, this is a major burden on time and resources for the local staff. Despite these issues, the concerns raised about the Chinese language instructors having free reign in the classroom could not be substantiated. For credit-bearing courses, the instructors worked within the department guidelines for curricula and texts. In other words, they did not use Hanban-issued texts. The University of Chicago's model was geared toward research and teaching as opposed to community outreach or raising its campus profile, and there were no non-credit courses taught by the CIUC instructors.

From the start, the CIUC mission focused on research to a greater extent than most CIs. The research funding was therefore a critical component for the University of Chicago. As one person close to the CI reported, the funding mostly went to faculty members working on China projects, but in turn this funding often supported graduate students via research and assistantships. In that respect, the funding was seen as very important to faculty and students alike. Unfortunately, much like the way that faculty and staff have lamented the slow and inefficient handling of the annual budgets, the release of funds for such projects was also difficult to manage and funds were often not received in a timely manner, affecting many parties.

## **Committee to Review the CIUC**

In early 2014, University of Chicago President Dr. Robert Zimmer formed a committee to look into the CI. With the contract up for renewal later that year and in light of some of the criticisms raised, they were tasked to report back with recommendations on how best to proceed. President Zimmer asked that the report be kept confidential and to this day has not been made public beyond the eyes of faculty and staff. The report committee met with the Faculty Council's steering committee twice and reported feeling as though they were under close examination concerning the CI's actions and on-campus activities. One interlocutor close to the committee reported disappointment that the document was not made public.

After meeting with the Faculty Council's steering committee, the entire Faculty Council convened to discuss the issue with the committee. Those present included 50 members and additional administrators and other stakeholders, including many of the deans. One interlocutor, who was present for the meetings, described the ordeal and shared how many of the Chinese Studies Committee members felt offended by the suspicion raised. The Faculty Council and opponents seemed to miss the fact that the China Studies Committee made the decision to establish the CI in the first place. While there were some concerns among the China Studies Committee faculty when the CI was first being discussed in 2009, one of the arguments Dali Yang made was that the EALC had a positive and easy experience with the Hanban instructors who had been teaching on campus for years. There is no evidence to suggest that the dissenters knew about this reality.

Even one faculty member who reportedly often dissents from the China Studies Committee spoke out claiming that he detected a hint of “yellow fever” among the dissenters. In the end, the anti-CIUC contingent said that they did not need a motion, and the president said that he would take all of the opinions and issues under advisement. One individual reported that the vast majority was supportive of or ambivalent toward the CI, and so any motion would not have ended favorably for those against the CIUC.<sup>57</sup>

The report notes, “Though there has been some routine friction in the relationship with CI headquarters, some we talked with valued the resulting conversations as an opportunity to change some attitudes and habits at CI headquarters and in the Chinese higher education world. These faculty and staff members noted that the demands and expectations of CI contacts have been evolving and show evidence of responsiveness to our University of Chicago priorities.”

### **The Demise of the University of Chicago’s Confucius Institute**

On September 19, 2014, a Chinese-language newspaper in Shanghai, *JieFangRiBao* (sometimes known as the *JieFang Daily* or *Liberation Daily*), ran an article based on an interview with Hanban Director Xu Lin in which, among other topics, she brought up the University of Chicago’s CI (Yi Wang 2014). In the article, Xu Lin is quoted as having told the University of Chicago administration that, in response to the faculty petition, if they wanted to withdraw she would agree. The article continues to say

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<sup>57</sup> Dr. Renner (pseudonym), Skype interview, April 6, 2016.

that her attitude made Chicago anxious and in turn Chicago agreed to continue managing the CI. The CIUC director, Dr. Dali Yang, shared the *JieFangRiBao* interview with President Zimmer. According to Dr. Renner, Mark Hansen was going to sign the renewal on a Friday but did not, and by the time he returned to work after the weekend it was clear that the university was going to rescind the contract. From Dr. Renner's perspective, it was clear that Sahlins was posturing and, as that was the case, Xu Lin felt compelled to react. Sahlins is well known in China, and according to Renner's Chinese sources, it was Sahlins' article and other work that compelled Xu Lin to give the interview she did. By mentioning the University of Chicago president in the printed interview, her actions ultimately were the final nail in the coffin. Some Chinese colleagues of Renner also reportedly understood that dealing with Hanban could be difficult. There was some concern, all along and especially following the fallout, that the end of the CIUC might have blowback for the Beijing Center, but so far that has not been the case. Even so, China-studying faculty at the University of Chicago did find significant value in the CI, especially with the indirect funds it had for graduate student funding, and found the CI closing to be a hardship.<sup>58</sup>

### **Internal Needs**

Institutional needs played a surprising role in the University of Chicago's decision to establish a CI. At the time, following the economic crisis, Chicago was trying to figure out what the coming years would bring, and to them the funding offered by Hanban was enticing. Hanban instructors teaching Chinese language courses meant that Chicago

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<sup>58</sup> Dr. Renner (pseudonym), Skype interview, April 6, 2016.

faculty had more time and energy for their own research pursuits and teaching upper-level language courses. The funding, while directly for faculty research, also indirectly helped fund graduate students as faculty had line items for graduate student assistance built in to many of their research budgets. Even though funding did not always arrive efficiently, and on occasion Hanban instructors would miss the beginning of the semester (due to travel and visa issues), the EALC valued the CIUC's contributions and were significantly disappointed by its closing. Furthermore, interview evidence suggests that their value to the department and the university community did not diminish over time.

### **Sponsors**

For Chicago, agency was less important to how the CI was set up. Rather, it was the agency of one key individual that led to its demise. That said, the CI director did play an important role in facilitating the relationship as the university was trying also to establish its Beijing Center, which was going to share real estate with Renmin University in Beijing. Unfortunately, without being able to speak with Dr. Yang, the exact details of how the institute was first conceived remain unclear.

More than the initial establishment of the CI, agency played a uniquely important role for the University of Chicago. Unlike many of the cases described thus far, however, the CIUC's demise was in large part a product of the work of Marshall Sahlins. His work as part of the group on campus who opposed corporatization was the beginning. The petitions he helped create and circulate, the articles and monograph he published on the subject, and the resulting reports from the CAUT and later the AAUP, which were in part based on his published work, alerted professors, media, and bureaucrats in China. In the

end, his calling attention to certain issues and his work to reach other concerned parties appear to be the catalysts that compelled Madame Xu Lin to address the University of Chicago's CI and president by name in such a manner that it precipitated a change. Over the course of a weekend, President Zimmer decided to scrap an all-but-signed agreement to renew.

### **Opposition**

As detailed in the above sections, the opposition at the University of Chicago was strong. The small contingent of faculty members who were against the corporatization of the university learned of the CI early on and followed its evolution closely, working diligently to influence opinions of others on campus. In fact, I argue that the group saw an opening early on when, according to Dr. Sahlins, President Zimmer admitted to not reading the contract more closely (Sahlins 2015, 58). This early opening led the group to closely follow what was going on, and Dr. Sahlins soon became a vocal critic, publishing on the missteps of the CIs. The group initiated two faculty-signed petitions and Dr. Lincoln attended student government meetings to seek influence with student representatives on campus.

### **Reputation**

The initial coverage of the story that broke surrounding the University of Chicago's closing of its CI implied that the perception of the CI's closeness to the Politburo and the ruling Chinese elite was one of the main reasons it closed. In a way it was, but not for the reasons expected. The anti-CI faculty contingent at the University of

Chicago garnered support via a campus petition. As one faculty member put it, petitions are circulated often at the University of Chicago. But the references of the petition and the fact that those who were against the CI were loud voices seemed to be what made an impact. For them, the proximity to the Chinese state was a grave concern. This contingent also had an unusual role in facilitating a discussion with the CAUT and then the AAUP that seemed to further substantiate their claims. But, prior to this dissertation it was not widely known that the Sahlins' piece in *The Nation* impacted the CAUT's report about the CIs, which in turn impacted the AAUP's report on the same.

For those who were close to the CI, the proximity to the Chinese state was not an issue. Instead, it was that Hanban's program management led to frustrations with instructors and budgetary funds often arriving late. There was no evidence to suggest that the anti-CI contingent knew of the other Hanban instructors at Chicago and that they had been present for a while.

## **Conclusion**

The story of the CIUC is interesting in unexpected ways. While the news articles got many things right, it is as though they got it right for the wrong reasons. The University of Chicago did indeed have strategic incentives that made the CI worthwhile and added value to the overall program. For sure, the work of Dr. Marshall Sahlins was important in the story, as well, but his influence seems to have been much more important outside the campus community than it was internally. His continued interest in the CI following the initial petition concerning the corporatization of the university led to the publication of articles that brought attention to the CI project as a whole. His article in

*The Nation* was an important piece that further substantiated some new concerns the CAUT was beginning to uncover in Canada following the issue at McMaster University in Toronto. The AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure then asked the CAUT's executive director to help prepare its report on the CIs. Meanwhile, there was discontent among some China-studying faculty at the University of Chicago, who feared that Sahlins' piece and subsequent influence elsewhere presented an inadequate and ill-informed view of what the institute actually did. It certainly succeeded in raising the CI's profile in the academic community and spotlighting a need for further conversation on the subject. It was at the time that the CAUT and AAUP were formulating their reports that the University of Chicago, at the request of the president, was also undergoing its own internal review of the CIUC's value and future. The council that was convened to review the report seemed to come away with a consensus that, despite the handful of dissenters, the CIUC did indeed bring value to the university and by and large was something worth continuing, even if there were aspects of the relationship that could be renegotiated. This was going on during the Spring 2014 semester, with the AAUP coming out with their report in June 2014. While I do not have a copy of renewal CIUC contract from summer 2014, I know it was going to be signed in September 2014. It was just days before the contract was going to be signed that Xu Lin's interview was published in *JieFangRiBao*. The article suggested a level of influence over the University of Chicago and President Zimmer, which was the last straw. Commentators at the University of Chicago suggested that Marshall Sahlins' publications provoked Xu Lin's comments. Had it not been for the interview, the contract would have been signed just



days later. While it is impossible to say what the future would have held for the partnership beyond that renewal, everything was set for the project to be renewed. The CUIC was providing a service to the university community, and most people saw value in the institute for research purposes, language instruction, and faculty and graduate student funding. Even more interesting, the majority of people had a positive view of the institute despite the red tape and other issues. The work and persistence of a few loud voices had a reverberating influence beyond the UC community that ultimately led to the closing of the CIUC through unanticipated ways. As this chapter will go on to demonstrate, the case of Penn State's CI presents a very different set of issues, and the two closings were not connected. Instead, the coincidental timing led to reporting that over-exaggerated the meaning behind the closings and the potential to influence other schools.

### **The Confucius Institute at Pennsylvania State University**

During one week spent in State College, Pennsylvania, in January 2016, I spoke with only two individuals who were willing to go on the record to discuss the former Confucius Institute at Penn State. While I anticipated having some issues, I did not expect so much obstruction on the part of the Penn State administration regarding the former Confucius Institute. It was my first site visit to conduct interviews and it proved the most difficult. Not only did I experience difficulties leading up to my week at PSU, but I

experienced further issues once I was there too.<sup>59</sup>

### **Evolution of Pennsylvania State University's Confucius Institute**

Pennsylvania State University opened its Confucius Institute in 2010 with the help of a political science professor who had strong connections with Dalian University of Technology. Dr. Eric Hayot, a comparative literature professor, was the institute's first director, followed later by PSU linguistics professor Dr. Ning Yu. Originally, PSU intended to establish a CI with a research center in line with DUT's strengths in science and tech. In addition to the major research component, Penn State planned to leverage the instructors and Hanban's resources to focus efforts on cultural programming for both on-campus and community outreach activities.

Unlike the majority of institutions at which people were interviewed for this research, Pennsylvania State University was one of the few schools to decide not to use Hanban instructors to teach for-credit courses. As one administrator close to the former CI put it, the China-studying faculty felt that it would be an inappropriate use of the Hanban resources and that the language courses were the responsibility of Penn State faculty, not a role for outsourced instructors. This is a unique perspective on the role of the CI and Hanban funds among studied universities, where most with established CIs or prospective plans for one saw it as an opportunity to employ well-trained Chinese

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<sup>59</sup> I went to the Old Botany Building to speak with the current administrative assistant for the Department of Asian Studies. Through a brief conversation it became known that she (and others) had been instructed not to speak with the press or any reporters who called asking about the CI. It also became known that Dr. Ng was aware of my interest in speaking with him. Despite the fact that Ng was on the CI board, he said he was not the right person with whom to speak. One student I met mentioned that the department was very hush-hush about the former CI. In fact, this student who was a Chinese minor was unaware that the CI had closed.

language instructors for students who might not otherwise have the ability to study Chinese.<sup>60</sup> Instead, the Asia-studying faculty saw the opportunity as a way to fund additional China-related research and relieve the burden of providing students and the broader community with cultural programming.

When the CI opened in 2010, the university already had an Asian Studies program, but not yet a Chinese major. Over the course of the CI's lifespan at PSU, the Asian studies program grew into a separate department with a major in Chinese language. While the CI did not contribute to credit-bearing classes during its time at PSU, the program did contribute to the renovation of one of the main buildings that now houses the Asian studies department. Beyond that, the CI's role in the new department was a supplementary one that assisted with non-academic needs for the program and its students.<sup>61</sup> This was deemed a great benefit to the Asian studies faculty, removing some of the burden of organizing cultural events for students, etc. Ultimately, the CI spent more of its time on such activities than initially intended. The following section explains a couple issues that took place early on in the CI's lifespan at PSU, which had unforeseen consequences and problems the CI was unable to overcome.

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<sup>60</sup> Again, this gets at the fact that the tale of the CIs is not just one about Chinese soft power but also the role of corporatization in American universities. On the one hand, many institutions readily acknowledge the change that is taking place and the added pressures placed on them to diversify offerings and capture tuition dollars while at the same time dealing with decreased funding, especially in the case of the state universities. But again, even the elite schools with impressive endowments continue to struggle with this. I am continually struck by how the story in the news leads to very different conclusions than those that my research has uncovered—namely that, first, Hanban has no control over curricula and that instructors receive high marks from students and remain under close control by the departments and, second, the most important factor in determining the success of a CI is in the strategic incentive (generally, satisfying student demand for classes and/or possibly establishing or strengthening a Chinese program) of the host institution side.

<sup>61</sup> Dr. White (pseudonym), telephone interview, January 6, 2016.

## **Early Issues with Pennsylvania State University's Confucius Institute**

The CI was set up with the initiative of Dr. Denis Simon, a trained political scientist who works on IT issues and has accumulated experience in both academia and business. He had extensive personal connections with Dalian University of Technology. With Dr. Simon's strong interest in topics related to IT and DUT's institutional strengths, Penn State initially planned to build the CI into a "China and Science" research hub. As it turns out, Simon left Penn State only a year after the CI was established. He is now the vice chancellor of Duke's satellite program in China and has been unavailable for an interview regarding his help with Penn State's CI.<sup>62</sup>

Simon leveraged his connections with DUT to set up the CI, but his short tenure at PSU precipitated unintended problems. To start, it was difficult for the humanistic faculty who remained to run the institute. They had no connections to DUT and were out of their element running a science and tech-focused institute. Despite this, the program continued as planned and the CI Director, Dr. Eric Hayot, prepared a call for proposals from the campus community. The "China and Science" theme was established with Hanban approval to fund research projects from PSU faculty. Following a great response from the campus community, Hayot managed to decide on three exemplary projects. After he informed the chosen recipients, he reached out to Hanban to begin the administrative work necessary to support the projects. Hanban informed Hayot, however, that the projects would not be funded after all. According to Hayot, the projects had to do

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<sup>62</sup> Despite multiple attempts to contact, Denis was not available for an interview.

with smoking cessation in China and environmental issues.<sup>63</sup> The director admitted to feelings of frustration and disappointment in needing to go back to the scholars and tell them that their projects would not be funded after all.

While the two sides had agreed upon the budget for said projects, Hanban needed to give final approval. According to Hayot, the refusal to fund the projects was likely the beginning of the end for the CI at Penn State. Given that the CI was not going to use Hanban instructors for credit-bearing courses and then the agreed-upon research plan fell through, the CI was left only to engage in cultural events and some language-related training and programming.<sup>64</sup> It is also important to note that Hayot had little direct interaction with Hanban. Instead, he often went through Niu Xiaochun, who was DUT's representative and co-director of the Confucius Institute. Sometimes Hayot would ask former Penn State President Rob Erickson, who grew up in China, for his assistance due to his negotiation skills. Most interaction took place in person on an annual basis and, beyond that, direction was received via email. Most email correspondence from Hanban would elaborate on events the CI needed to organize and host. While Niu was seen as a very competent co-director, Hayot's inability to interact directly with Chinese administrators meant more difficulties. Furthermore, as the years passed, there was frustration over the continued decrease in the annual budget.

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<sup>63</sup> It is unclear why the research was an issue, especially considering how the CI at Colorado State University focuses specifically on water issues. This seems to suggest that Hanban does not have an issue with science related projects and yet, for some unknown reason, Penn State's CI ran into unexpected trouble with their research proposals.

<sup>64</sup> Dr. Eric Hayot, interview, January 15, 2016, Pennsylvania State University campus.

Contemporaneous to Simon's work on establishing the CI and following his departure, humanities faculty members continued to cultivate their own China connections, none of which led to additional ties with Dalian University of Technology. For their Chinese-studying students, faculty felt they would be better served with connections in Nanjing and Beijing, as many of them already had relationships with such programs and universities. The relationship between Nanjing University and PSU grew, and many Asian studies faculty saw it as a strong natural partner for the department and its students. The department recently received a three-year grant from the Henry Luce Foundation to partner with Nanjing University on a new Globally Engaged Humanities Project. At one point, PSU faculty even considered briefly the idea of a new CI with Nanjing University, but realizing that Hanban would not likely approve, ultimately they decided against pursuing a new CI. Regardless, PSU's connections to Nanjing and other institutions grew while the Asian studies program found their connections to DUT to be a rather unnatural fit.<sup>65</sup>

### **CI Initiatives and Continued Issues at PSU**

While Simon's quick departure was a disappointment to the program, that alone did not necessarily need to lead to other issues. But, unfortunately for PSU, Hanban's refusal to fund faculty-led research and not using Hanban instructors to teach for-credit

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<sup>65</sup> It is interesting that PSU has a faculty implementation team for Dalian University of Technology. PSU has an energy institute that works closely with DUT, but entirely separate from the CI. After failing to connect with the director of the institute, I reached out to a contact at PSU. This individual was able to get the director on the phone. After exchanging pleasantries and a few chuckles, my contact asked the director about the CI and the institute's connection. My contact's demeanor changed dramatically, offering short and grave responses of "I see" and "Yes, I understand." After hanging up, this person informs me that Dr. Song received my emails but cannot speak about the CI.

courses meant there were limited activities for the CI to engage in. Penn State ended up focusing Hanban resources on augmenting cultural programming on campus and in the local community. Engagement with the Chinese Students and Scholars Association was a natural place for PSU's CI to turn first. Even with the CSSA, however, cooperation was limited, with the CI helping facilitate their Chinese New Year celebrations and a fashion show at one point.

Another promising avenue for on-campus collaboration was PSU's Tea Institute. The Tea Institute was interested in partnering with the Confucius Institute in bringing a famous tea master to campus. Unfortunately, there were issues with the programming because the tea master was Taiwanese, and beyond that they were unable to secure interest and commitment from the Confucius Institute to create any meaningful programming. Through email correspondence with those involved in the Tea Institute, there seemed to be disappointment, but they did not seem overly surprised by how their efforts turned out.

Other possible community engagement for the CI included setting up a language program at State College High School. Unfortunately the staff member who coordinated the program was unavailable to speak on the subject. According to Dr. Hayot, however, the Hanban instructor sent to work in the high school program did not have the right qualifications for the position. At one point, PSU graduate students assumed responsibility of the program, only to dissolve not too long after.

The CI also hosted a pedagogical workshop to which it invited speakers and Chinese teachers from the area. Geography and weather often impeded attendance and

abundance of events. Similar workshops were held by the CI at the University of Pittsburgh and considered to be very successful. The CI at Pittsburgh, however, was structured very differently, and again, serving a larger metro area made it easier as well. While administrators at Penn State noted how they had hoped to mirror their CI after the one at the University of Pittsburgh, many variations among the programs meant that was not possible.<sup>66</sup>

In recent years, Hanban has started to offer generous scholarships for international students to study in China. American universities have varied policies on how to use and manage students looking to study abroad for credit. Penn State faculty said that during the CI's tenure, there had been no graduate students who made use of the funding, although there had been a small number of undergraduates who took advantage of the scholarship program. In so doing, these students studied Chinese language at DUT for an academic term. Since PSU had other Chinese partner institutions, including those that excel in the field of teaching Chinese as a second language, the CI connections to DUT were not highly sought after for these students. The CI even tried to arrange a Hanban-funded trip to China, but the program fell through due to low enrolment.

Aside from offering scholarships, the other main language-related activity was administering the Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK), the PRC's Chinese proficiency test. HSK competence is required for students to apply for scholarships and is sometimes used by students to gauge language level and need for improvement. PSU would administer the HSK periodically, but they maintained only a moderate numbers of students,

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<sup>66</sup> Dr. Ma (pseudonym), interview, January 13, 2016, Pennsylvania State University campus.



administering roughly 10–12 exams each time. The moderate to low number of test takers may be attributed to a number of factors, including geography, timing, and lack of need for HSK (for instance, students who participated through study abroad through PSU partners, as opposed to seeking Hanban scholarships, would not have needed testing).<sup>67</sup>

While the inaugural celebration was well attended and, overall, White said that the CI received decent attention from the campus community, that interest waned as the years passed.<sup>68</sup> Another faculty member noted how, even though the Chinese language courses gained in popularity, they did not experience the same with the cultural events on campus. Even though the PSU faculty greatly appreciated having the support, the PSU experienced continued difficulties with CI programming.

Nearing the end of the contract term, one administrator suggested to the Asian Studies Department that they consider ending the partnership. While there was a little pushback from department members, ultimately the decision was made to close the CI. From the point of view of the administrator, the institute was not proving to generate enough return on investment. Beyond the initial disappointments, much of the supplemental cultural work left for the CI to engage in also led to mediocre results. As one faculty member put it, the decision to close was much more of a practical matter than what seemed to have happened at the University of Chicago around the same time. One faculty member close to the Chinese Co-Director, Niu Xiaochun, said that her contract was up and she was returning to Dalian shortly when she found out that the CI was not

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<sup>67</sup> Dr. Li (pseudonym), interview, January 14, 2016, Pennsylvania State University campus.

<sup>68</sup> Dr. White (pseudonym), telephone interview, January 6, 2016.

renewed. Both the Chinese co-director and the PSU faculty member said they were surprised by the decision but that they had no further information.

### **Internal Needs**

Unlike many other institutions, Penn State was not interested in using the CI as a way to supplement credit-bearing Chinese language teaching. Instead, PSU saw the CI as an opportunity to build a “China and Science” research hub. This would have helped the CI stand out while also leveraging some of Penn State’s strengths and further building its China connections. Unfortunately, with Hanban rejecting the proposed research projects under the auspices of the project, the CI was left to only augment cultural programming on campus. This rendered the CI much less strategically useful for Penn State almost immediately.

There were other issues that diminished the CI’s value to the university community. The DUT connection for students studying Chinese was not as useful as many of the other China connections the university already had, so many students made use of other opportunities for studying abroad. Hanban’s propensity for decreasing the annual budget meant for more frustration for less money. These issues together led the administration to see less of a return on investment.

### **Sponsors**

The role of agency was particularly important for Penn State, where the strong personal connections of former faculty member Dr. Denis Simon first connected PSU to DUT in order to establish a CI. Even though PSU had other connections to DUT, there

was no evidence to suggest that DUT would have been considered as a possible CI partner without Simon's initiative. As a matter of fact, the humanities faculty had copious China connections, but with other institutions. When Simon left PSU, the partnership struggled to maintain its momentum. One administrator noted how if Simon had stayed, the partnership would have likely been in a much better position.

For Penn State, agency was pivotal to establishing the relationship. Since the main agent left Penn State and was not able to facilitate the relationship any further, it is difficult to determine whether his connections could have maintained the partnership through another contract cycle. It is clear that the relationship suffered after his departure.

## **Opposition**

Opposition against the CI at Penn State was weak. Dr. Michael Berube, who was a member of the AAUP's committee for academic freedom and tenure expressed concern over the Confucius Institute in broad terms. He did not work closely with the CI at Penn State but learned of others' concerns through the AAUP. Other concern around the CI on campus came from the Tea Institute. Neither of these issues, however, were broadly publicized on campus and there was no attempt to dissuade university contingents from further cooperation or association with the CI.

For most of the administrators and faculty involved in the project, issues related to the Confucius Institute mostly had to do with bureaucratic issues pertaining to aspects of the relationship with Hanban. That being said, the PSU faculty and administration did discuss the possibility of ramifications that might come from partnering with Hanban. For them, any sign of overreach on the part of Hanban would lead to the university dissolving

the partnership. While this was not the issue for PSU, in their mind it warranted discussion.

## **Reputation**

The extent of Penn State's connections to Hanban is unclear. The university had established ties with Dalian University of Technology, as evidenced through Dr. Denis Simon, the DUT faculty implementation team, and the Joint Center for Energy Research between Penn State and DUT. In an interview with Dr. Eric Hayot, he shared that the Penn State CI tried to collaborate with area CIs and emulate, specifically, the University of Pittsburgh's CI. Although, Penn State struggled to duplicate the success at Pittsburgh, there were no indications that there were any negative connections to the broader transnational network. Instead, the impact of Hanban's decision not to fund research projects at Penn State had lasted implications and the relationship was unable to recover.

## **Conclusion**

Penn State did not approve of using Hanban instructors for credit-bearing courses but, in the end, their CI did not suffer from political conflicts. Instead, when one of their faculty members, who leveraged personal contacts at Dalian Institute of Technology to establish the partnership, departed shortly after the CI opened, difficulties ensued. While Hanban might have made the same funding decisions even if Simon had stayed at Penn State, faculty and administrators felt as though his connections and relationships would have helped, whether that be in convincing Hanban about funding the projects or coming to an agreement on tweaking the funding plans for the "China and Science" research

project plan. Without his connections and facilitation, the initial plans for the CI fell through and the partnership never fully recovered. While some faculty enjoyed the benefit of Hanban assistance with cultural programming that normally would have been wholly their responsibility many other projects led to underwhelming outcomes. Included in these, just to name a few, were the Chinese language project with the local high school, the teacher workshop, and the attempt on part of the Tea Institute to cooperate with the CI. As PSU struggled to recoup its investment in the CI, other China connections strengthened for the Asian studies department, which in turn made the CI even less relevant and suitable to PSU's needs.

### **Conclusion**

For the University of Chicago and Pennsylvania State University, similarities in their CIs and experiences seem to start and end with the timing of their closures. For Chicago, they were happy to receive the Hanban funds and instructors, which together would free up faculty time and energy for more advanced language courses and faculty-led research. As a prestigious research institution, their portfolio of international connections was immense, and for many the Hanban project was not a concern. It wasn't until a small but loud contingent of faculty who understood the project as a propaganda tool of the Chinese government began raising alarms that concern grew. This contingent helped call for a committee review of the CI and sent two petitions around to Chicago faculty. While the internal review highlighted some improvements that the partnership craved, they found the project to add value to the campus and faculty and student need. Hanban Director General Xu and her comments in the September 2014 *JieFangRiBao*

article is what precipitated President Zimmer's last-minute change and announcement to close. Pennsylvania State University, on the other hand, suffered from a string of disappointments around the intended programming. When Dr. Dennis Simon left, the remaining individuals at PSU struggled in their communication with Hanban and maintaining relevance with the partnership with Dalian University of Technology. PSU was unique in that they were one of just a few institutions to feel uncomfortable with using Hanban instructors to teach credit-bearing courses. The CI's diminished usefulness for PSU was further evidenced by the fact that the Asian studies program developed into a full department while receiving very little help from the CI.

These two cases further demonstrate the great degree of variation in the Confucius Institute configurations and potential. My research suggests, however, that internal institutional needs were of critical importance for both institutions. As the strategic incentives dwindled for Penn State, it was difficult to justify continuing the partnership. Costs to the host institutions came directly in the way of overhead and indirectly in the way of time and energy of faculty and staff to help with events, facilitate campus connections, and assist with orientation to the local area, visa paperwork, and logistics. Given these costs and since PSU's CI only assisted with cultural events, it was hard to justify the use of resources for underwhelming returns.

For the University of Chicago, the CI fulfilled important needs of the EALC faculty and the administration. Hanban provided language instructors to a department with a growing need that, in turn, would help free up faculty time that otherwise would have been spent on teaching lower-level language courses. Additionally, Hanban funds

were spent on faculty research that trickled down to help support graduate students, too. Unfortunately the University of Chicago suffered from a small but forceful anti-CI contingent that applied just the right amount and type of pressure. Marshall Sahlins and Xu Lin's personalities clashed in just the right way so as to force President Zimmer's hand, leading to the unanticipated closure of the CI.

Agency plays an important assisting role in the tale of most CIs. It is often the catalyst that starts the CIs, but alone, agency does not play a sustaining role. Beyond the initiation of the relationship, personal connections and *guanxi* do not appear to be robust enough to sustain the partnerships without strategic incentives. On the other hand, the perception of proximity to the Chinese state can, as the case of UC elucidates, be enough to derail and defunct the project. The next chapter uses instances of unrealized CIs to further explain the relevance of these variables, including instances where the nature of the project and its proximity to the Chinese government halted the project in its early stages.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES THAT FAILED TO ESTABLISH**

According to one interlocutor, a very large number of universities have likely considered opening a CI; while I share this sentiment, these universities have been difficult to identify. Possible reasons for this are many. In some cases, key individuals have retired, moved abroad, or changed institutions and feel uncomfortable commenting on the situation at a former employer. For others, the discussions and events in question occurred five or even ten years ago, so some details remain unclear or are hard to recall. Other reasons institutions may hesitate to publicize failed attempts to establish CIs stem from either the political nature of it (see the Florida International University as an example of such a possible scenario) or fear of negative implications for other prospective or existing partnerships. In comparison to the established and maintained CIs and the established reversals, there is a much greater degree of variation among cases of aborted attempts to establish CIs. The reluctance to speak about the failed CIs remains pervasive.

As with the two previous chapters, here the analysis focuses on four main independent variables, and a related hypothesis, that play important roles in the divergent partnership outcomes of the CIs in the U.S. The first hypothesis draws from business literature on innovation and political science literature on military innovation. I argue that the Confucius Institute can best be understood as an educational innovation, in that it has



provided a viable solution to budget constraints and the growing need, felt both nationally and locally, for Chinese language programs and courses. Even among the CIs that failed to open, I expect a demonstrable need (for instructors, courses, expanding China programming, etc.) to be part of the reason for the initial pursuit of establishing a CI. While not a part of the current project, a survey of schools that never pursued a CI would, I expect, have made that decision in part because the institution had no immediate need for one. Second, business and social science literature point to the role of sponsors (aka champions) or policy entrepreneurs as critical in agenda setting or to the success of policy or innovation diffusion. For this reason, I hypothesize that a CI is more likely to be established and maintained when there is a strong sponsor (well-connected faculty member or high-level administrator) backing and propelling it forward. Third, the cases of closures of CIs at Penn State and the University of Chicago, as well as concerns raised by the American Association of University Professors and by members of Congress, suggest that growing opposition may be key. This hypothesis draws on the work of Graham Allison and his *bureaucratic politics* model, which suggests that an organization's decisions are the product of intra-organizational political outcomes. In other words, the "competition, confusion, compromise, and coalition" among individual players are driving the outcomes (Allison 1969, 708). Instances of strong opposition are expected to lead to closures of CIs or in failure to establish new CIs; instances of weak or no (known) opposition are expected to have no detectible impact on the sustainment of established CIs or on the establishment of new CIs. This research characterizes a strong opposition as an active effort to influence others via petitions, publications, etc. and a

weak opposition is one in which concerns are raised but often in private or in isolation and have no observable effect. The final hypothesis considers the perception and reputation of the Confucius Institute program. It draws on the work of Haas (1992) and Keck and Sikkink (1998), respectively, about the creation of epistemic communities and transnational advocacy networks to assert that a CI is more likely to remain open to the extent that the host institutions maintain a positive perception of the larger transnational CI network. In many cases, there is a strong and clear link between key individuals on campus and the work of the broader network.

This chapter looks at five institutions that have failed to establish a Confucius Institute.<sup>69 70</sup> The first two are discussed by name; the remaining three are discussed based on interviews with faculty and administrators who asked that neither their names nor affiliations be shared. By offering anonymity, I was able to reach interlocutors who otherwise would not have been willing to speak on the subject. The anonymity of both individual and institution, however, make replication of the project nearly impossible.

This is one of the obvious shortcomings of this dissertation, but I argue that, as an initial

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<sup>69</sup> In addition to those discussed here, I also reached out to Dickinson State University in North Dakota. Local university press reported that the university decided in February 2012 to halt plans for a CI. Dickinson seems unique in that their decision was in part tied to the effects of a university scandal regarding an audit that uncovered the university's awarding degrees to Chinese students who did not fulfill the degree requirements. *Inside Higher Ed* reported on the scandal the same month the local news outlet published about the CI. Interview requests were declined or went unanswered. A records request was sent in May 2017 but I have not yet received any documentation.

<sup>70</sup> There is another university that possibly fits the *failed-to-establish* set of cases. I met one faculty member in person and corresponded with another over email. The one I met in person told me that the school never voted about potentially bringing a CI, while via email this department head told me that colleagues voted against bringing a CI to campus before she arrived. The exchange was intriguing but ended abruptly when I asked if the department head might be able to put me in touch with a colleague who was there for the vote. I followed up a couple weeks later and never heard any more. The department head was saddened to think that the other individual I spoke with, who collaborates with CIs and has a pro-CI view, could mislead the public into thinking that the department as a whole is pro-CI. The department head said they are against any foreign government financing education in this country.

deep dive into the subject, this study speaks to the need for future research on such topics. This chapter depicts five cases in which, despite a demonstrated need in most cases, a lack of influential sponsors, strong opposition on campus, or a negative perception of the larger transnational CI network proved a barrier to the establishment of a CI. In four cases, the U.S. institutions decided not to further pursue the CI, while at the fifth school, they are still hoping that one day they will open a CI. For the University of Pennsylvania and Florida International University, it was a clear matter of wanting to stay away from politics associated with Hanban and the CI project. For one, there was a great amount of frustration with Hanban that led them to quit the application process, and for one university, there was not enough of an incentive to find the right leadership. The majority of the data in this chapter are based on seven interviews from individuals at five institutions, five of whom asked to remain anonymous. Supporting data were gathered through news articles, published meeting minutes, and emails retrieved with the assistance of a university's general counsel.

### **University of Pennsylvania**

According to one China-studying faculty member, Penn considered opening a CI from 2007 to 2008. As an elite university, it had many connections with China, but at the time there were no committees in place that worked to coordinate and keep track of all China projects on campus.<sup>71</sup> This had considerable impact on the fate of the proposed CI insofar as an education faculty member's ability to initiate and progress on the CI application without the China-studying faculty members' knowledge. Penn President Dr.

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<sup>71</sup> Dr. Black (pseudonym), telephone interview, January 21, 2016.

Amy Gutmann began to work on a university-wide plan to focus on China projects but a strategic committee responsible for overseeing all China-related projects was not in place until after the failure of the proposed CI. The push by the upper administration to focus on China partnerships has led to many new research and funding outlets. In the opinion of one faculty member, the wealth of new China-related activities and partnerships decrease the likelihood of any future CI partnerships.<sup>72</sup> It was shared that, despite this, following the abandonment of efforts to establish the proposed CI, the Director of the Center for East Asian Studies had a meeting with Hanban in Beijing that felt much like a recruiting meeting. Hanban's interest in establishing a CI at Penn, as a top-tier research university, would lay in the expected prestige around the program and boasting a very prominent school among its list of host institutions.

### **Internal Needs**

Even though Penn is a top-tier research university, individual academic units may still be lacking in funding and research collaborators, etc. Without speaking to the faculty member who originated the program, it is hard to know for certain, but according to one faculty member, the Graduate School of Education did have a need for additional funding at the time.<sup>73</sup>

### **Sponsors**

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<sup>72</sup> Unlike Dr. Sahlins and the anti-CI group at the University of Chicago, the China-studying faculty member qualified his statements to say that he did not think it was right to pass judgment on other schools, especially cash-strapped, that did facilitate a CI partnership. In his opinion, however, it was "questionable at best" for a top-tier university to do so.

<sup>73</sup> Dr. Black (pseudonym), telephone interview, January 21, 2016.

A faculty member who was a Chinese national in the Graduate School of Education initiated the work to establish a new CI. According to one China-studying faculty member, the Graduate School of Education professor had ties with the proposed sponsor institution. This faculty member had managed to complete a good portion of the application process when some of the China-studying faculty learned of it. Unfortunately, as documented throughout the cases, agency and personal connection alone are not enough to establish and sustain a CI partnership.

### **Opposition**

In 2010, *The Chronicle of Higher Ed* reported that a former director of the Center for East Asian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn), Dr. Cameron Hurst, III, said that the university decided not to apply for a CI (Schmidt 2010).<sup>74</sup> According to the article, Penn's decision was due, at least in part, to discomfort with the Chinese government's role in the project. Also, a China-focused faculty member explained that a second concern, in addition to that of whether Penn should be involved with this kind of a state-run project at all, had been raised when they found out about the proposed CI. Another source claims that the China-studying faculty were "strongly opposed to the very idea" of hosting a CI. According to Jensen, faculty "did not want a CI on our campus to compete with our own programs, to introduce inferior pedagogy, and to engage in various unwelcome 'soft power' initiatives ... such as are going on everywhere else there are CIs" (2012, 288).

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<sup>74</sup> I was unable to contact Dr. Hurst. According to personal communication with a current administrator, since Penn's decision not to pursue the CI project further, he retired.

## **Reputation**

For China-studying faculty at Penn, there was a serious concern regarding whether the university should be involved in a project that was backed by the Chinese government. From their perspective, it seemed questionable for an elite American research university to participate in the program. While it is unclear if the institution would have proceeded with the proposed project had it been with one of the top schools in China, it was clear that the China-studying faculty had a degree of skepticism surrounding the Confucius Institute project as a whole.

## **Florida International University**

Florida International University is one of the largest public universities in the U.S. and is considered by the Carnegie Foundation to be a research university, with the highest level of research activity. According to its website, “FIU has positioned itself as one of South Florida’s anchor institutions by solving some of the greatest challenges of our time” (“About Us - Florida International University - FIU” 2017). Although the university’s plan to establish a CI was never realized, interest in its China programs remains strong. For example, FIU’s “Beyond Possible” 2020 Strategic Plan reports that growing enrollment in its Tianjin China program is one important way for the university to meet its goals for enrollments in the coming years (“BeyondPossible2020” 2015).

## **Internal Needs**

While the university has a strong orientation towards Latin America and the Caribbean, beginning in the mid- to late- 2000s, FIU began to develop its China connections. Ahead of the Beijing Olympics, the Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management established the Marriott Tianjin China program, in September 2006. Dr. Peng Lu, who directed FIU's Tianjin Office leading up to the program's start, also helped facilitate connections between Dr. Jose de la Torre, former Dean of the Chapman Graduate School of Business, and Chinese representatives in Qingdao, a sister city of Miami.<sup>75</sup> While the CI was not expected to effect the Chapman Graduate School of Business, it would have provided more available language instructors, which was important to the newly established Chinese track in their International Master of Business Association degree program. De la Torre supported the increased ties to China and the possibility of opening a CI at FIU to serve campus and regional communities and needs.

As the university sought to expand China projects and programs, the foreign language department hoped to include Chinese in its curriculum. As a public university, FIU often needed to get creative when it came to funding non-STEM programs. In that vein the Confucius Institute would help fill that need in a way similar to how it funded the Japanese and Korean programs. An email from May 2004, written by Dr. Doug Kincaid, said that the program would assist primarily in the promotion of Chinese as a second language in Latin America and the Caribbean. Increasing Chinese language teaching capacity at FIU would be a welcome "by-product" of the CI, but that would not be the focus. In the same email, Kincaid said the CI had the potential to "be an excellent

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<sup>75</sup> Dr. Jose de la Torre, Skype interview, April 26, 2016.

complement to the other initiatives we are pursuing in China.” It is not known how the situation changed between the time of the email in 2004 and the spring of 2009, when FIU applied for a CI, but FIU now offers advanced Chinese language learning opportunities and the ability to take the HSK.

## **Sponsors**

Dr. Peng Lu came to FIU in 2002 and is currently the Associate Vice Provost for International Affairs at FIU. According to multiple sources, he was instrumental in facilitating many China connections from the time he joined FIU. Dr. de la Torre reported that Dr. Lu was instrumental in connecting him with contacts in Qingdao. In a May 2004 email, Dr. Doug Kincaid wrote that Dr. Lu’s “contacts and knowledge of Chinese institutions have proved quite valuable for FIU, and I would support his doing exploratory work to facilitate our decision” about whether to move ahead with applying for a CI.<sup>76</sup> Currently he is responsible for the university’s China programs in their entirety. Although I cannot say for certain whether he initiated the CI plan, he was critical to the application process.

## **Opposition**

Based on personal communication with one faculty member, there was a degree of skepticism regarding FIU’s decision to apply for the CI, but under the circumstances, the issue related to the Dalai Lama stopped the agreement from going forward. It is unclear how strong the faculty opposition was.

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<sup>76</sup> Doug Kincaid, email correspondence, May 21, 2004.



## Reputation

The team reached out to established CIs and colleagues there to inquire about the process and their partnerships. After receiving assurances that the CIs focus their efforts on language and culture and avoid political entanglements, the team at FIU felt confident with their decision to go ahead and apply. FIU submitted an application to Hanban in Spring 2009. They were under pressure to submit an application because there was interest from another area school and, at the time, Hanban claimed it was unwilling to open CIs at more than one location in the same area. Moreover, the team had reason to believe that Hanban favored another area school over FIU and they, too, were in a similar stage of the application process. Unfortunately, Dr. Lu Peng received an email from the Director of the Confucius Institute Development Division at Hanban on July 1, 2009. The email wrote:

Greetings Dr. Lu,

We have received the CI application, but we found that your university has hosted the Dalai Lama three times and accepts funding from him. This is against the principle of the CI. If you want to open a CI, you must change this. Also, if you open a CI we will provide funding, but it will only be 150k USD.

Jiang Yandong<sup>77</sup>

While the conflicts between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama are well known, this ultimatum on the part of the Hanban official remains interesting. It is unclear whether Jiang Yandong was aware that the institution's emails are considered public

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<sup>77</sup> The email was retrieved as part of a formal request made through the university's general counsel. The original email was in Chinese and Dr. Lu Peng translated it for his colleagues. The above translation is my own.

documents. It also suggests that, since 2009, there has been a change in policy, as William & Mary has hosted the Dalai Lama and University A has a longstanding relationship with him. Following the email response of Hanban official Jiang Yandong, the FIU team discussed the matter further but, in the end, decided not to continue with the application. According to former Provost Dr. Wartzok, the email signaled a degree of incompatibility in mission and values between Hanban and FIU.<sup>78</sup>

### **University C**

Dr. Gray is a vice president at a land-grant university that has tried to start a CI since roughly 2007.<sup>79</sup> Gray came to University C in 2011 from another institution, which had just opened a CI. While he was attending a steering committee meeting soon after arriving at University C, the issue of the CI came up. According to Dr. Gray, the university was first interested in a CI project at a time when Hanban had steady funding streams and was enthusiastic about establishing CIs quickly. Minutes from the meeting suggest that University C's administration was not supportive of the idea at the time. Specifically, Dr. Gray described issues with the potential partners that have hindered the project over a period of nine years.

University C decided to suggest partner schools with which it had existing collaborative projects they wanted to further leverage. At the time of Gray's arrival, there were three suggested host schools. The first school was a strong contender for a year but then was tabled when the case was made that the second school was a better fit for the CI

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<sup>78</sup> Dr. Doug Wartzok, personal correspondence, June 15, 2017.

<sup>79</sup> Dr. Gray (pseudonym), telephone interview, March 9, 2016.

project. The second potential school had connections to Confucius himself, with ties specifically to his life and burial place. Unfortunately, the strong partnership the two universities shared proved not enough as that institution learned more about the situation unfolding at the University of Chicago.<sup>80</sup> The events taking place at the University of Chicago made the Chinese institution reconsider further involvement in the CI project. It was at that time that University C moved on to consideration of a third potential sponsor institution. This third institution, however, was blacklisted as a partner for American universities. Given University C's extensive work on secure research, including for the Department of Defense, the blacklist is especially relevant in the case of University C.

Beyond the issues related to potential partner institutions, additional issues presented themselves. Certain components of the CI stood at odds with the university's core values in teaching, research, and engagement with the community and K-12 schools. Dr. Gray also alluded that it might be difficult to find an appropriate space on campus to physically house the institute. Finally, the longevity of funding was a concern to University C. Considering this along with discrepancies in information on how much funding the institution would receive from Hanban and the lack of clarity surrounding Hanban's funding disbursement mechanisms, important details remain that Dr. Gray and other stakeholders at University C need to ascertain before moving ahead with plans to establish a CI.

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<sup>80</sup> Dr. Gray noted that faculty members from the University of Chicago were at the potential Chinese sponsor institution at the time. Thus, the Chinese university was acutely aware of what was happening at the University of Chicago.

## **Internal Needs**

Dr. Gray's account implies the importance of strategic incentives. First and foremost, University C seeks to strengthen an important and already established partnership. When asked about whether University C would accept Hanban's recommendation for a sponsor institution, Gray replied that it valued working with an existing partner over the alternative, which was having Hanban choose a partner with the possibility of establishing a CI sooner. University C, seeing China as an important partner, seeks to enhance overall programming and collaborations in relation to China. Unfortunately, the CI and its emphasis on language and culture put it at odds with University C's main focus. While the surrounding community would stand to benefit from further international connections, this is just not a top priority for University B, especially considering the difficulties discussed above (i.e. campus placement, funding longevity). In the meantime, University C has also managed to secure a new Chinese Studies minor. While Dr. Gray suggested that University C continued to work towards opening a CI, the establishment of a new minor and some of the remaining friction seem to suggest a lack of needed momentum.

## **Sponsors**

As mentioned above, Dr. Gray arrived at University C roughly four years after the university began thinking about establishing a CI. Dr. Gray seemed earnest in his interest to establish a CI at University C, but his work was still more focused on finding the right fit. Furthermore, Gray did not provide information on how the school first learned about the CI program and whether there was an early champion supporting the efforts.

## **Opposition**

While Gray did indicate that some faculty on campus raised concerns about the CI, University C's main issues related to finding a suitable partner.

## **Reputation**

For University C, the issue of the CI project being affiliated with the Chinese state was not a very serious one. Our conversation gave no indication that this was in any way a major obstacle for University C. Rather, this was in issue only insofar as the case of the University of Chicago affected University C's second choice for a Chinese partner school. This Chinese institution had direct contact with faculty from the University of Chicago and may have been more privy to the particulars of that situation than other institutions would have been. This connection made the Chinese institution less interested in pursuing CI partnerships at the time.

## **University D**

University D is a smaller private university outside a large metropolitan area. When the university started to discuss the possibility of a CI in 2007, there were no other CIs in the metro area. Dr. Bryan was a high-level administrator at University D and knowledgeable about the university's interest in the CI program.<sup>81</sup> Hanban responded to initial interest by saying that a likely partner institution would be the Beijing University of Technology. The two universities participated in many exchanges of faculty and

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<sup>81</sup> Dr. Bryan (pseudonym), telephone interview, March 16, 2016.

administrators, and representatives from University D met with Hanban officials in Beijing on numerous occasions.

### **Internal Needs**

The strategic incentives were very important for University D. It had a few connections to universities in Chongqing and was looking to further connections in China and to expand China-related course offerings on campus. Expanding its course offerings and global portfolio were a large part of the institution's interest in the project. Unfortunately for University D, Hanban's response to and handling of their application seems to have contributed significantly to a CI not being established.

### **Sponsors**

For University D, there was no one individual who led the work to establish a CI. With one member of the board of trustees and his extensive China connections, the CI project had long been discussed as a possible avenue through which the university could expand its relationship with China. Around 2007, supporters of the idea reached critical mass and the university submitted an application to Hanban for a CI. The connections held by the member of the board were helpful in facilitating connections in China, but the university's interest went beyond that. They sought to expand relationships, with a CI being one potential avenue for such considered up until enough joint interest led to an agreement among university administrators to submit an application.

### **Opposition**

No known opposition existed.

## **Reputation**

For Dr. Bryan, the whole process was “smoke and mirrors.” Despite University D’s efforts to submit a complete and thorough application, Hanban continued to request more. In Dr. Bryan’s experience, Hanban continued to request additional materials for their application, one by one, until finally responding to say it would be another year until any more CIs would open. Following the experience at University D, Dr. Bryan decided to seek partners elsewhere and not work with Hanban in the future. The team at University D made a point to reach out to other schools and inquire about their experience with Hanban and the CI project. These schools and administrators warned of some of the precise issues University D experienced. Despite the frustration, Hanban never definitively told University D that they would not be able to establish a CI. In fact, the conversations continued well beyond receiving the news that it would be at least another year, but in the end discussions quieted and interest waned.<sup>82</sup>

## **University E**

University E is a large public research institution with an extensive portfolio of international projects. Starting in the mid-2000s, there was an institutional need to strengthen its Asian studies opportunities. Dr. Michaud reported that the institution had worked to open a Confucius Institute prior to starting his work as head of international

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<sup>82</sup> Again there is this issue of prestige. Hanban’s treatment of William & Mary’s application was very different from that of University D. While it may be the case that Hanban was looking to slow the rate at which they opened CIs in the US or in the region, University D was not a top-ranked school and thus may not have received the same treatment had they been a more attractive partner university.

programs.<sup>83</sup> The application process stalled when a faculty member, who was tapped as the would-be CI's new director, was told she should not take on the role by her department chair. The chair wanted this faculty member to focus on her tenure efforts and not get inundated with administrative work that would potentially delay her tenure. As Dr. Michaud took over the role in international programs, he sought to revive the CI efforts, but there were still no other available candidates for the CI director role. At this point, however, he learned of an area school that was just establishing a new CI.

Dr. Michaud reached out to the new CI director to inquire about the possibility of a collaborative opportunity. While the director was unclear as to what that would look like, he was interested in the idea. They soon realized that University E's strength in the visual arts would complement the CI host institution's strengths in music and language. At this point the two administrators devised a plan that would have University E host teacher trainings and museum nights that would leverage its visual arts collection. Around the same time and during a trip to Beijing to meet with an University E recruiter, Michaud met with Hanban officials. They were not keen on the arrangement University E had with the local CI because they wanted Michaud to have his own CI. After a lengthy discussion on the topic, the meeting adjourned with Michaud agreeing to resume the search for an appropriate director so that the university could open a standalone CI. Despite his efforts, no new potential CI directors presented themselves.

After a couple of years of negotiating with Hanban, University E was able to start its teacher trainings and museum nights. The area CI director was able to allocate a

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<sup>83</sup> Dr. Michaud (pseudonym), telephone interview, September 23, 2016.



portion of the budget directly to Michaud for the programming. Michaud retired after the first year of programming, and the collaborative agreement dissolved after the second year, when the area CI had a diminished budget with which to run the institute. The arrangement University E had with the other area university was unusual, albeit short-lived.

Although there was nothing compelling as it pertained to University E's arrangement, Michaud fielded negative comments and concerns from members of the campus community. And, in fact, this was not the first time he experienced CI-related concerns. Dr. Michaud's experience with the Confucius Institute had begun at a previous institution, where he employed a Chinese national to assist with China-related projects. This individual decried the CI as a propaganda tool of the Chinese government and not a worthwhile project. This person was a trusted assistant, but Dr. Michaud saw the CI as a valued pursuit, "They are largely, in my experience, cultural and linguistic in their orientation and pretty apolitical, but they are trying to put a favorable light on China, understandably." Interestingly, however, University E had a different experience along the way.

One year for Chinese New Year, the Chinese Students Association invited a consular official to attend. When the official accepted, the Chinese Students Association approached Michaud for assistance in developing an itinerary that would be appropriate for a foreign diplomat of such high standing. As part of the plan, the official met with the university president and provost. At this meeting, the official threatened to personally end any plans for a CI if they hosted the Dalai Lama. (For some reason, the official seemed to

think there was a strong possibility the Dalai Lama would reach out to University E.) The incident infuriated the president but, ultimately, there was no conflict to resolve with a visit from the Dalai Lama. It is unclear what precipitated the outburst since University E had no relationship with the Dalai Lama—although Michaud surmised it may have been related to issues the consulate was facing with other CI host institutions. The incident left a strong impression on Michaud and highlighted the significance of this issue to Hanban and, by association, Beijing.

### **Internal Needs**

While there were strategic incentives for University E to establish a CI, they were driven not by student need, but rather by an institutional desire for strengthening Asian studies opportunities. University E's China Working Group demonstrated that there was a plethora of China related projects on campus and certainly a reason to have a China-related institute that might act as a focal point for China related research and studies. Unfortunately, it seems that needs carry the most weight when driven by student demand. While we cannot know for sure if student-driven demand would have changed the outcome of the university's efforts at establishing a CI, we do know that the incentives it did have were not enough for those efforts to ultimately succeed.

### **Sponsors**

According to Dr. Michaud, University E's inability to open a standalone CI originated from lack of a clear CI director. For many CIs, the director is the one who initiates the partnership and whose agency is an important driver of the project. Although

it is unclear how the initial plans for a CI began at University E, the application and process stalled when there was no replacement for the faculty member originally slated as its director. At the very least, this suggests any strong agent existing up until then was not salient enough to find an alternative director and keep the CI project afloat. Michaud played an important role in the collaborative partnership, but it certainly did not make sense for him, as an administrator in charge of international programs, to take on the role of director in addition to those considerable responsibilities.

### **Opposition**

Opposition at University E, while present, was weak. While Michaud fielded concerns about the CI project, the university and administration were excited about the prospect of a CI. It would have been a welcome addition to the campus community and the international programs.

### **Reputation**

There was no negative association of the CI with the Chinese government until the consular official's visit for the Chinese Student Association's Chinese New Year celebration. The threat regarding hosting the Dalai Lama enraged the president and provost, and it is unclear how this act colored their opinion of the project or Hanban. Regardless, around University E's cooperation with the area CI and efforts to establish its own CI, there were no prevailing negative attitudes concerning the CI itself or its connection to the Chinese government. Administrators such as Michaud, who had a

sympathetic perspective regarding Hanban and the PRC's goals behind the project as a whole, tempered the few voices that expressed concern.

## **Conclusion**

While we know the number of CIs that continue to operate and the ones that have closed, there is no clear way of knowing how many universities have considered opening CIs. A systematic attempt to look at an important subset of public universities uncovered a couple of the universities in this chapter, which suggests that a wider survey of universities could uncover even more and may be able to contribute to more robust findings in the future. All individuals interviewed were asked if they knew of any additional universities that would fit this category, but none said they did.

Without knowing how many institutions fit this category, it is impossible to make reliable generalizations from the data. That said, there are conclusions that support those made in previous chapters and a few new points. While connected individuals are important catalysts to beginning conversations and are valuable in assisting in negotiations, the data suggests that without strong internal needs, even with a lack of strong opposition, the existence of campus sponsors alone is not a reliable indicator of CI outcome. Similarly, it appears as though strong internal needs are necessary but insufficient if there are larger issues linked to the overall reputation of the CI project. In other words, data suggest a successful establishment of a CI requires both a positive, or at least neutral, perception of the CI project, along with clear and actionable strategic incentives. Furthermore, internal needs that encompass student demands seem to be the most powerful.

In addition to the stated variables, institutional trust is yet again an important factor in the cases where CIs were attempted not successfully to be established. In fact, there appear to be two layers of institutional trust present. University C demonstrated the importance of institutional trust between partner universities to the point where the American university felt comfortable waiting nearly a decade to work with a Chinese sponsor institution with which they share a strong working relationship. There is a strong likelihood that University C would have been able to open a CI had they allowed Hanban to assign it a sponsor institution.

The second aspect of institutional trust refers to the relationship between the host institution and Hanban. While issues with Hanban were discussed in greater detail in the previous chapters, here they also remain relevant. University D struggled to reconcile their words and actions after a noncommittal period. For Dr. Bryan, Hanban's treatment of University D was enough to vow never to work with them in the future. Lastly, university relationships with the Dalai Lama (or potential relationships as the case was with University E) played a more prominent and negative role than was the case for universities in the previous chapters. While there is little ambiguity over the PRC's stance on Tibet and the Dalai Lama, interviews suggest a degree of variation in how Hanban regards universities that work or seek to work with the Dalai Lama. FIU and University E both encountered pushback from Hanban and their consulate, respectively. This is in stark contrast to the treatment of University A and The College of William & Mary,

neither of which had any issue from Hanban with their schools hosting the Dalai Lama.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> This point is certainly worth noting but I also think it is one that needs further investigation, possibly beyond this dissertation. I suspect sometime around 2010-2012 there was a point when Hanban realized this was not acceptable by many foreign universities and they changed their policy. Of course, it was a learning process, one in which Hanban received negative feedback from foreign universities in the way of bad press or agreements that were canceled, as was the case at FIU. While I do not have any data to back this up, I have emails and interviews suggesting that in the late 2000s it was not feasible, and interviews from more recent years that suggest it is not an issue.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The Confucius Institute sits at the intersection of international education, education policy, and public diplomacy. Understanding the Confucius Institute and its role in projecting a tailored image of China abroad will only grow in importance in coming years. In addition to earlier reports by the AAUP and CAUT, a recent report by the National Association of Scholars indicates continued concern in policy circles for what Confucius Institutes mean for American education (Peterson 2017). These reports are likely to continue since the disconnect between the repercussions of constricting public education budgets and the pressure universities experience to expand international cooperation, especially with China, have not yet been rectified. This is evident as many of the cases of universities with CIs pursued the possibility in order to strengthen and expand their portfolio of China related programs and curricula. Most importantly, many of these universities see the Confucius Institute as providing access to well-trained Chinese teachers able to teach credit-bearing Chinese-language courses. In turn, expansion in China-related curricula often affords universities the opportunities to establish new majors or minors.

As a Chinese government public diplomacy program, the field of public diplomacy is a logical place to search for answers about the Confucius Institute. But since it focuses on questions related to, *inter alia*, global public opinion and public engagement

in order to mitigate foreign policy choices abroad, it is ill equipped to supply answers that address the reception and the divergent partnership outcomes of the Confucius Institutes. In order to answer this question, this project relies on literature that addresses organization-level variation, since in these cases the majority of the decisions surrounding the CI were made by the educational institutions. The need to turn to organizational focused literature hints at the fact that the way the CIs interact with local institutions is incongruent with the current trajectory of public diplomacy research. Moving forward, as public diplomacy research continues to develop, the incorporation of organizational-level variables should be considered.

Below, I offer a summation of the broader conclusions of this study and discuss ways in which they can inform future research, public diplomacy partnerships, and university programs. My first hypothesis drew from business literature on innovation and political science literature on military innovation. Nearly all of the universities or academic units that pushed for a Confucius Institute viewed the program as an academic innovation. Collaboration with a Chinese sponsor institution and Hanban would satisfy many institutions' needs to increase language courses or expand programming and China connections. Each institution expressed desire in expanding programming and the vast majority intended to use Hanban instructors for Chinese language courses. In this regard, the Confucius Institute is reminiscent of Peter Drucker's process need, where a weak or missing system link leads to innovation. In this case, the Confucius Institute is an educational innovation that supplies the weak link in the realm of Chinese language teaching in particular while also further institutionalizing university partnerships with



Chinese counterparts. Even in those cases where the CIs either closed or failed to open, both of these needs were still apparent. It is also helpful to recall Allison's work with particular attention paid to his *organizational process* model. Allison argues that this model views policy as an outcome of the missions and work of various offices. Under this model, certain academic units view the Confucius Institute as a viable solution for various internal institutional needs. After all, all established and maintained cases, except CIM, used Hanban instructors to teach credit-bearing courses and both George Mason University, Temple University, and the University of South Carolina needed the CI in order to build their Chinese language program into a university major. As indicated by the foreign language enrollment data collected by the Modern Language Association, the growth of Chinese language learning at the university level is outpacing other Germanic and Romance languages which generally have been the most commonly taught. Zisk argued that military innovation originated from competition over finite budgetary resources. In this dissertation, I have argued that the CI is an innovative way for universities to augment programming, including the start of new Chinese majors in some cases, and thus compete for students and tuition dollars. Even in the prestigious institutions such as Chicago and William & Mary, this was an important factor in bringing in the CI. And while the University of Pennsylvania failed to establish a CI, it still echoes important findings, specifically that despite the opposition of the Chinese-studying faculty, there were other interested units on campus that felt compelled to seek out a CI.

Second, business and social science literature point to the role of sponsors as critical in agenda setting and to the success of policy or innovation diffusion (Kingdon 2010). For this reason, I hypothesize that a CI is more likely to be established and maintained when there is a strong sponsor supported the program. While there were clear sponsors in many of the cases, a further distinction between faculty or administrative sponsor was important in many cases. While key faculty members propelled the CIs forward at times, they needed administrative support but did not always have it, as was the case for William & Mary early on. On the other hand, an institution had an advantage in the decision-making aspect if the university president was a key program sponsor like at Maryland and FIU. At Penn State, Dr. Simon's contacts with DUT were critical to the initial impetus but following his departure the partnership struggled. One faculty member surmised that if Simon had still been at Penn State once the issued had started that they likely would have been resolved. The example of FIU provided further evidence of another unexpected way in which strong agency and sponsors were incompatible with the CIs. Despite the great deal of work and connections facilitated by Dr. Peng Lu, they were incompatible with the ultimatum he received by way of the Houston consulate regarding FIU's past connections with the Dalai Lama.

Fieldwork for this dissertation began roughly 15 months after the coincidental back-to-back closings of the University of Chicago and Pennsylvania State University. The relatively short period of time between the closings and the start of interviews led to some uncertainty regarding whether the closing cascade would continue. As Chapter Four illustrated, however, the reason for the CI at Penn State closing had nothing to do with

opposition. Furthermore, I argue that there was no broader cascade because of a combination of internal needs, strong sponsors, and a positive perception of the larger transnational CI network that persisted at individual CIs despite the closings. Together, these variables acted to isolate the individual CIs from the negative press and closings that surrounded the institute over the years.

The third hypothesis was substantiated with persuasive data that illustrated how strong opposition would lead to closures of CIs or failure to establish new CIs. It is also important to note that instances of weak opposition had no discernable impact on the sustainment of established or new CIs. It remains unclear, however, if there is any way to determine whether a university will experience strong or weak opposition. At Penn, the China-studying faculty felt as though the discussions pertaining to the possibility of a CI should have included their expertise and opinions from the start. Meanwhile, at Chicago, the timing of the CIUC's establishment along with other instances of 'corporatization' meant the CI opposed group would carefully watch the CI's development.

The final hypothesis considered the perception and reputation of the Confucius Institute program. It considers the broad CI network as a transnational advocacy network made up of local nodes in the host community but also the sponsor institution, as well as Hanban and other connections such as the connections among U.S. schools. It draws on the work of Haas (1992), Keck and Sikkink (1998), respectively about the creation of epistemic communities and transnational networks. Zaharna (2014) develops this one step further to specifically consider the CI project as a broader relational network. This research builds on the above works to assert that a CI is more likely to remain open to the

extent that the host institutions maintain a positive perception of the larger transnational CI network. In many cases, there is a strong and clear link between key individuals on campus and the work of the broader network. Director Gao Qing at George Mason is one such example. Not only is he the Director of George Mason's CI but he is also the Director of the Confucius Institute U.S. Center in D.C. The Center works closely with Hanban and the George Mason CI works closely with many regional CIs. Director Gao Qing thus links Hanban to stateside CIs in an important way. Experienced and trusted individuals favorably impact the perceptions of the broader network and its reputation. As FIU experienced, the opposite is also true. When FIU received an email from the Houston Consulate asking for them to choose either a CI partnership or its relationship with the Dalai Lama, FIU administrators terminated its CI application. At least for FIU, this rigidity had an immediate and negative impact on the CI network's reputation. Since this occurred, there have been schools with CIs that have also hosted the Dalai Lama, suggesting that Hanban has reconsidered some requirements of its foreign hosts but this has not yet been substantiated by research.

### **Future Research**

While this dissertation provides substantial evidence to answer the question regarding what accounts for the divergent partnership outcomes of the CI in the U.S., it highlighted even more important questions and promising areas for future research. Future research would benefit from an investigation that looked into the organization-level variation that exists on the part of the Chinese sponsor-institutions. While one Chinese interlocutor shared this critique, it is unclear what variation is experienced on

behalf of the Chinese sponsor-institutions. In one interview, an administrator shared that their Chinese colleagues were exacerbated by the CIs because they took away from their research and home life. It is an assignment passed around begrudgingly.

Earlier in the dissertation, I indicated that the U.S. is not the only country to experience this same variation in partnership outcomes. A survey of international news outlets provides evidence that universities in Canada, Japan, Sweden, Germany, Russia, and France have either closed CIs or experienced instances of CIs that failed to open. To date, I am unaware of any other in-depth work that seeks to understand the different outcomes. Thus, future research would benefit from an investigation of whether host institutions in other countries also base partnership decisions on similar variables. (English language research focuses on Western experiences with the Confucius Institutes with a couple notable exceptions. For more see Hsiao and Yang 2014a, 2014b; Wheeler 2013.)

### **Limitations**

A major and striking limitation of this dissertation is access to information. The degree of hesitation I experienced was much greater than expected. This was due to the extent of negative publicity on the CIs. On the one hand, the skepticism potential interlocutors had with regard to speaking with me was understandable. On the other hand, interlocutors discussed the many ways in which they benefitted from a Confucius Institute partnership, yet critical reports like those from the CAUT, the AAUP, the NAS and the corresponding calls and emails from reporters caused them to shut down. In order to continue the dialogue in a constructive manner, the foreign host institutions and their

CIs need to be able and willing to report on their activities and contacts. Resolving this discrepancy is necessary for reliable data and dispelling misunderstandings. Additionally, it was difficult to track key individuals down in the cases where they had moved or retired. For these reasons, the number of final interviews pale in comparison to the number of individuals who were initially contacted for an interview. Future research would benefit from a systematic review of publicly available data.

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