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15 July 2021

Hon. Robert S French, AC
Chancellor,
The University of Western Australia

Dear Chancellor,

I was so shocked by the proposal to close Anthropology & Sociology at UWA that when I wrote to you to object on July 10, I had not yet realised the almost as devastating impact on UWA Asian Studies. To strip research as a legitimate activity from the remaining Asian Studies staff and turn them into language teachers only is to further the image that one of Australia's top universities is rapidly turning into the Crawley Institute of Technology. This is a term already being used in public and on social media as is evident from the ABC Perth interview yesterday in which the Vice Chancellor was asked, and did not answer, the question: "Will this turn UWA into the Crawley Institute of Technology?"

I also wish to comment on the appalling process of "consultation". I believe I am correct in stating that UWA staff had no knowledge of this proposal before it was announced. In other words there was NO consultation with them. To announce to them, "Here is a proposal, you have until July 20 to consult on what type of redundancy you may be eligible for", is not a proper consultative process in any sense of term. It is consultation equivalent to asking a death row inmate what he would like for his last meal.

As a former head of school, I strongly suggest that the proposal be immediately withdrawn, the current head of school should then be instructed to call a meeting of all staff with the Vice Chancellor attending. Before the meeting a transparent version of the school's budget, showing for each discipline group, money earned and money spent, should be sent to all staff, and at the meeting they should be called on to begin a process of consultation collectively to help solve the problem.

I assume that you are aware of the two petitions opposing the Proposal that, as of now have almost 8000 signatures, and I hope that you are visiting the website that has been created by social science students on this issue. It presents a powerful case against the proposal, particularly the comments by current postgraduate research students.

<https://www.savesocialsciencesuwa.net>

This is a public relations disaster that grows worse with each passing day. The University is being damaged.

With best wishes,

John

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Gordon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Dr John L Gordon (PhD, Harvard 1975)

Head, Department of Anthropology (1988-90, 1992-94, 1998-99)

Head, School of Social & Cultural Studies (2000-2007)

Deputy Executive Dean & Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts (1994-95)

Director, Asian Studies Centre (1988-89)

Director, Centre for South & Southeast Asian Studies (1985-87)

The Editor, Anthropological Forum (1988-2000)

cc: Prof. Amit Chakma, Vice-Chancellor

Prof Amanda Davies, Head, School of Social Sciences