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Chair of the Assembly and the Academic Council
Faculty Representative to the Board of Regents
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200

August 15, 2011

MARK YUDOF, PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Re: Editorial Committee Resolution on the UC Press's *Flashpoint* Series

Dear Mark:

At the direction of the Academic Council, I forward a resolution from the UC Press Editorial Committee's regarding cancellation of the *Flashpoint* series. In March 2011, the UC Press cancelled its *Flashpoint* series, which was an electronic publication fashioned after an academic journal, specializing in literary studies. Access to *Flashpoint* was facilitated through the California Digital Library. Only five years old when it was discontinued, this series was in part funded by a Mellon Foundation grant and utilized volunteer faculty editors. Although Academic Council laments the demise of this series, the Council is primarily concerned with absence of consultation with the Editorial Committee in the decision-making process that led to the cancellation of this series.

The Academic Council emphasizes that although the Editorial Committee's primary responsibility is to approve manuscripts to be published by the Press, it is appropriate that the committee be consulted when major changes are being considered in the direction of a publication. In the same vein, it is appropriate that the Editorial Committee be consulted on budgetary matters concerning the UC Press. Although Council and the Editorial Committee can appreciate the tremendous budgetary stress that the UC Press is under, we reiterate that the role of the Senate's Editorial Committee is to provide for the academic integrity of the publications of the UC Press. This integral relationship inexorably links UC faculty to the UC Press. Indeed, faculty are not naïve to the fact that the landscape for academic publishing is changing dramatically in this digital age. However, it is important that the Senate in general, and the Editorial Committee in particular, play a crucial role in mapping out this terrain for the UC Press.

I hope that you will communicate the Senate's concerns to the UC Press management with an emphasis on the importance of shared governance in the affairs of the Press.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Daniel L. Simmons, Chair
Academic Council

Copy: Academic Council
Professor Louis S. Warren
Professor Marry Ann Smart
Martha Winnacker, Academic Senate Executive Director

Encl. 1

UC PRESS EDITORIAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT AND RESOLUTIONS
June 30, 2011

On 3 June 2011, the Editorial Committee of the Academic Senate met with the Flashpoints faculty editors Ed Dimendberg, Dick Terdiman, Jody Greene, and Judith Butler, and with Fordham University Press senior editor Helen Tartar, co-ordinator for the Mellon Grant that has partially supported Flashpoints publications.

After this conversation, and after studying documents submitted by UC Press and the Flashpoints editors, the Editorial Committee concurred that the dispute has raised three issues, one concerning the process of terminating Flashpoints, the others concerning the current direction of UC Press and faculty governance.

1. We find that the process of canceling the Flashpoints series was badly flawed.

The Editorial Committee has had a significant role in the development and governance of Flashpoints extending to approval of every one of the books. The series was intentionally designed like an academic journal, to have strong editorial control among volunteer faculty editors. As with UC Press journals, management should have approached the Editorial Committee for approval of any changes in the group of volunteer faculty editors. In this light, termination appears to have been peremptory and the abrupt dismissal of the volunteer faculty editors unprofessional.

None of this is to say there were not reasons for concerns about the future of the Flashpoints series. We understand that UC Press is facing an unprecedented financial hardship. We also recognize that the Editorial Committee typically does not dictate which books the press shall publish, but only evaluates and if necessary revokes those selected by professional editors. But innovative series like Flashpoints require supervision by boards of volunteer faculty editors. Appointment to those boards and changes to them should be cleared with the Editorial Committee, as should major changes in publishing direction, such as the abandonment of entire fields of inquiry like literary studies.

We commend the Press for the vision that created the Flashpoints experiment. However, our sense is that Flashpoints may have been terminated before its titles had sufficient time to reach a market. If the experiment was failing, appropriate responses would have included adjusting the business model before canceling the series. **Given all this, we urge the University of California Press to reconsider their decision to terminate the series, and suggest they find a way to recast it in a more workable form.**

2. In this connection, our discussion touched on several larger issues about which the Editorial Committee expresses grave concern. Most important among these are the narrowing of the UC Press list over the last decade or more and the de-emphasizing of

scholarship by assistant professors, whose publication prospects have never been worse, in favor of high profile authors and trade books. While we understand the pressures on UC Press directors to conform to corporate governance and publishing strategies, we object in the most strenuous terms to this direction.

The committee feels that UC Press has an obligation to attempt publication of university scholarship in major humanities fields including literary studies and that attempting publication involves innovation and good-faith experiments that are allowed to run over a standard period of time.

We resolve that the proper direction for UC Press is to expand, not reduce, its experimental, innovative publishing ventures, offering a degree of special attention to fields neglected by commercial presses, and we encourage the Press to build bridges to faculty with vigorous research programs (like the Flashpoints editors).

3. Finally, we wish to remind press managers that shared governance must be the approach in many publishing decisions. The Editorial Committee is appointed by the Academic Senate to advise UC Press and to ensure the academic integrity of its publication program. UC faculty and UC Press are mutually dependent. Neither can prosper without the other. **We are resolved that the best course is for faculty and press to join forces against the many threats now confronting academic publishing. We, the membership of the Editorial Committee, are eager to play an active role in mapping out the terrain for an academic publishing in the digital age, and to act as liaison with faculty and administrators as these new models evolve.**

Louis S. Warren
UC Davis
Chair, Editorial Committee, 2010 – 11

Mary Ann Smart
UC Berkeley
Co-Chair, Editorial Committee, 2010-11
Chair, Editorial Committee, 2011 - 12