The TF has rated the MA Program in Asian Civilizations, which offers the M.A. degree in Chinese Studies and Japanese Studies, as “weak.” Owing to 3 unanticipated resignations, Japanese is not currently accepting M.A. students. Tenure-track requests for a Japanese Coordinator and Japanese Cultural specialist have been, and will continue to be of highest priority for ASLL and will be addressed again in our 2010 requests. Thus, we ask that assessment of the Japanese studies program be deferred until faculty strength is restored.

The Chinese Studies M.A. program rating was based exclusively on two perceptions: 1) “very few faculty members (1.5 FTE)” and 2) “the program recruits heavily from the PRC and Taiwan and . . . is not diverse in that all students in the program are international.

These two perceptions are both inaccurate and fundamentally flawed. First, there are 4.5 (not 1.5) FTE faculty (Coblin, Feeley, Ke, Shen, and Robertson). The individual tracks represent disciplines but are not free-standing or isolated, since students in the Asian Civilizations M.A. take courses from faculty in all tracks to fulfill degree requirements. Because of the strong interdisciplinary nature of our M.A. program, the 4.5 FTE faculty strength covering literature and culture, historical linguistics, and applied linguistics is sufficient for its optimal functioning and commensurate with that of other well-respected Chinese M.A. programs in the U.S. Our Chinese M.A. program can continue to function in excellent stead without additional cost to the University.

Regarding item 2: There are two reasons why international students comprise a distinct majority: characteristics of the M.A. program and the time-consuming nature of Chinese language learning. The Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) track trains students to become college and university Chinese language lecturers and thus recruits students who have native or near native proficiency in Chinese. According to ACTFL, it takes US students 3-4 times longer to attain proficiency in Chinese than in cognate languages such as Spanish, German, and French, and since most US high schools do not offer Chinese language instruction, most students with a BA in Chinese do not yet have the proficiency to train as college teachers of Chinese. Furthermore, not all students in the TCFL track have been from China and Taiwan. S. Ross-Lazarov and C. Fillebrown recently graduated in this track and enjoy professional teaching positions. The literature/culture track could easily increase diversity of the student cohorts if CLAS would agree to a T.A. appointment for the program’s potentially larger G.E. courses. Faculty in this track (Feeley, Robertson) are working to create more G.E. courses to generate higher enrollments, with the goal of supporting one or more .25 HTE TAs. (We should note that for five years prior to 2008, all required literature and culture courses were offered by the .5 FTE faculty member, since a vacated 1 FTE faculty position in Modern Literature & Culture had not been filled despite repeated requests.) Feeley, the new faculty member in this track, has markedly enriched program offerings.

In response to the TF’s assessment that “The second language and linguistics tracks are viable,” we wish to highlight the significance of our linguistics-based Teaching Chinese as a Second Language program. Taught by Professors Ke, Shen, and Coblin, this track has a national and international reputation. We are ready to provide testimonies from authorities around the world confirming the reputation of this track, a reputation that over the years has attracted many major awards of external funds to Iowa, e.g., Confucius institute, US Dept. of Education, Henry Luce Foundation, Freeman Foundation, Stanley Foundation. Iowa should prize this signature program at the forefront of developing first-rate Chinese language teachers for the 21st century, teachers crucial to the training of a generation of students who will need the skills to interact with China on behalf of US interests, economically, politically, intellectually, and culturally. By all means, now is not a time to reduce opportunities at UI for our students to learn the skills and knowledge they will require in the 21st century transnational Asian context. These graduate programs and training opportunities are unavailable anywhere else in the state of Iowa.

Finally, we reject the TF Report’s concluding remark, “With limited faculty numbers in Japanese and Chinese, the graduate program is not viable unless the program is restructured and merged with programs having a similar focus. Unless a suitable restructuring/merger can occur, the Task Force recommends closure of this program.” To begin, this statement is in part flatly contradicted by the Report’s own statement that the Chinese Language and Linguistics Tracks are currently viable as they stand. Thus, no changes appear warranted here. And, as shown above, the statement regarding limited faculty numbers is demonstrably fallacious as regards the Chinese faculty in particular. As regards the Japanese Program, its challenges in staffing are best solved by filling currently empty positions. The report recommends merger with other “similar” programs but provides no justification for how such a step will strengthen the Chinese Program or the Graduate Program in general. Nor does it identify such “similar” programs at Iowa with an Asian focus or emphasis. The recommendation is vague, erroneous, and poorly reasoned. It is hard to conceive how any reasonable University administration could seriously entertain it.