

**Middle  
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20 May 2019

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Persis Drell  
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Dear President Marc Tessier-Lavigne and Provost Persis Drell,

I write on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Middle East Studies Association of North America to underscore our deep disappointment and dismay over Stanford University's decision to drastically cut its support of its university press in order to find a "sustainable financial model" for it. An institution of Stanford's size and wealth ought to continue to set an example, not waiver on its obligations as a research university. The provost's unfortunate decision threatens to undermine academic principles, impair important scholarly activities, and tarnish the scholarly reputation of Stanford University.

The most striking aspect of Provost Drell's proposed "sustainable financial model" is not her cutting of the bare-minimum subsidy for Stanford University Press. It is the fact that she does not seem to realize what the diminishment, if not loss, of the Stanford University Press means to the institution of university presses and the community of scholars in general, as well as the scale of damage to the reputation of Stanford University. Stanford has also sent a chilling message to academic associations that it has abandoned its support for broad areas of scholarly research and thereby forgotten its obligations as, first and foremost, an institution of education and research. Furthermore, in her call for sustainability paired with additional philanthropy, Provost Drell expects donors to support a press for which the university administration itself has clearly small regard or respect, leave alone enthusiasm.

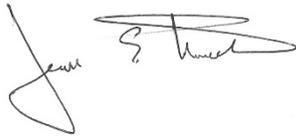
We would like to respectfully remind you that academic prestige is hard earned, and that it rests in large part on the patronage of fine scholarship and teaching disseminated through the production and reading of such scholarship. Work published by university presses—particularly one with as far-ranging and distinguished a publishing program as SUP's, with strong lists not only in core areas of the humanities and social sciences, but also law and business—is important to scholars and students in various fields, such as medicine, science, or engineering, and essential to the maintenance of cultural and intellectual vitality and diversity in the academy. Additionally, university presses have a central role to play in the academic protocols of tenure and promotion. The "financial

models” for sustainability that Provost Drell suggests contradict longstanding and critical responsibilities the press has carried as part of processes of professional review and the upholding of the highest academic standards. Imposing “financial models” for sustainability on a university press risks compromising academic freedom and rigor.

It is deeply disturbing that an administration seems not to realize the key part a university press plays in all these areas. Indeed, rather than demonstrating awareness of the significant contributions its own press has made to the academic world, it has threatened to make a decision antithetical to the patronage of fine scholarship, academic freedom and diversity. We respectfully urge your administration to affirm its public and ongoing support of its university press and ensure that Stanford lives up to its reputation as an institution that prioritizes research and teaching excellence informed by the best scholarship, as a research institution committed to diversity and academic freedom over commercialization.

We are looking forward to your positive response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judith E. Tucker', written in a cursive style.

Judith E. Tucker  
MESA President  
Professor, Georgetown University