

The Asian-American Studies Program

A Statement by

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Dean ad interim

I have decided not to fill for the academic year 1999-2000 the position of Director of the Asian-American Studies Program at The University of Texas at Austin with a permanent appointment.

This decision has been difficult. For both the College and The University the establishment of an Asian-American Studies Program of the first class is a priority. A search committee worked long and hard on identifying qualified candidates to launch this Program. Candidates for the directorship were identified. They visited the campus and met with students, staff, and administrators, each outlining his vision. The process has been thorough and conducted throughout by all in the best of faiths. That the process ended without a candidate being chosen is, I know, bitterly disappointing to many. Where important issues are to be decided on a university campus conflicting opinions and strong emotions are to be expected. Often the issues raised cannot be adjudicated to the satisfaction of all, to many, or even to a few. It is never good not to get something that one wants so much and that seems so near. And I am sorry for those who feel let down or perhaps are even angered by my decision.

I decided this difficult issue in the best way I knew how, in good faith and in as timely a fashion as I could. In all due respect to those who question my decision, I cannot discuss the reasons for hiring specific individuals. I can tell you that I considered and consider now the hiring of the director the most important act in establishing this program for which the U.T. Austin community has such high hopes. I looked for, and will look for again, someone who will cooperate in the broadest way to launch the program and will foster its future development. That person will be a scholar in the field, an experienced and enthusiastic administrator, an energetic teacher, and a builder of community within U.T. Austin, the city of Austin, and the State of Texas. We will begin the search for such a person during the next academic year.

In the meantime, I have asked Professor Arthur Sakamoto Jr. of the U.T. Austin Sociology Department to serve as the Interim Director of the Asian-American Studies Program. Professor Sakamoto has published and worked broadly in the area of socioeconomic attainment and racial inequality and has published in the field of Asian-American studies. He has graciously accepted this appointment, and I thank him for doing so. In order not to lose momentum, we will be offering several new courses in Asian-American Studies in 1999-2000 and will sponsor an Asian-American Visiting Lecturers Series. We will identify office space for the program and provide administrative support. I have also authorized the search not only for the new director but for an additional faculty member as well. I hope these initiatives will be a source of encouragement and hope for those who, like myself, have worked and will continue to work for the establishment a U.T. Austin Asian-American Studies Program of the highest quality.