I. Introduction:

In conducting the 2016 academic review of the undergraduate Asian Studies Program and the Master’s Program in Asian Pacific Studies (MAPS) at the University of San Francisco (USF), the external peer review committee (the Committee) was given detailed and thoughtful self-studies of the programs under review, an executive summary of the previous academic review of these programs, and a host of other documents. During our 3-day campus visit from April 13 to April 15, the Committee was afforded ample access to all relevant parties, including full-time and part-time faculty, students, alumni, directors of Asia-related institutions, and representatives from a wide range of the administrative units from the Deans to the Career Services and Development Offices. Below is a brief summary of our findings.

First and foremost, the Committee is deeply impressed by the outstanding strengths of both programs under review. USF is truly unrivaled by its peer institutions across the United States in terms of the quality, disciplinary range, and dedication of both full-time and part-time faculty in Asian and Asian Pacific Studies; diversity in faculty and student body; unique and well endowed institutional resources such as the Ricci Institute, the Center for Pacific Studies, and the Philippine Studies Program; the prime geographic location of San Francisco; and above all, the unique claim to the long Jesuit history in Asia.

Given the fact that San Francisco and the Jesuit intellectual tradition constitute the twin pillars of the core identity of USF—a Jesuit university with San Francisco as its namesake—both Asian Studies and MAPS should have been the flagship programs of the university. However, the Committee was astonished to find that this is not the case. The Self Study of the Asian Studies program clearly indicates that, despite the dedication of the excellent Asian Studies faculty, strong student interest, and the professional advantages of a degree in Asian Studies in today’s workplace as attested to by dozens of MAPS alumni who met with the Committee, the number of USF undergraduates who declared a major in Asian Studies has remained in the single digit. At USF, small enrollments lead to smaller resources allocated to the program, which makes running a successful program even more difficult. Hence the vicious circle of downward spiral. The current director of the Asian Studies Program is stepping down after this year, yet given all the difficulties directing the program (as detailed in the Self Study), none from the faculty is willing to step up to take over the program directorship next year. The Asian Studies Program Self Study concludes that the program should either become a department in its own right or be disbanded and folded into the Department of International Studies. In short, despite the embarrassment of riches in resources, the Asian Studies Program at USF is performing vastly below its
potentials to the point that the status quo of the program structure has become manifestly untenable.

Relative to the current state of the Asian Studies Program, the MAPS program is by all measures thriving. One of the many indicators of this success came in the form of dozens of MAPS students and alumni who attended in force a meeting with the Committee to speak highly and movingly about their program. However, despite the many impressive achievements of MAPS, it is the consensus of the Committee that serious structural weaknesses have prevented USF from leveraging the strengths of both the Asian Studies and MAPS programs to serve its own core educational missions. Because of this lack of a coherent vision on the part of the University, MAPS too has failed to live up to its own full potentials.

An argument could be made that USF has a growing Department of International Studies that could, for all intents and purposes, take over the missions of the Asian Studies Program, which is small in the number of majoring students and receives little administrative support. However, applying enrollment figure (i.e., the tuition-driven model of growth and management) as the only meaningful yardstick for both measurement of success and resource allocation can ultimately be financially self-defeating for the University as a whole. In recent years, with the ever-increasing costs of higher education in the U.S., more and more private liberal arts colleges and universities that rely on tuition as the primary source of income are facing closures. To avoid a similar fate, USF must look beyond the tuition-driven principle of decision-making to pay more attention to endowment growth, which in turn hinges upon building a unique institutional identity. Given USF’s inherent advantages in Asian Studies, a strong Asian Studies Program needs to be front and center to the core identity of USF.

While both Asian Studies and International Studies are essential to the educational missions of the university, each has its own distinctive strengths and each appeals to different groups of university patrons. The International Studies Major across the United States attracts an increasing number of undergraduate students in part because many perceive, rightly or wrongly, that the catch-all nature of the IS major as a “study of all nations in the world” would ensure maximum coverage of career opportunities for liberal arts degree holders. On the other hand, prospective donors as a whole are much more motivated by demonstrated commitment to specific regions of the world. Individual philanthropists are generally more interested in focused causes that they can personally identify with and/or relate to. Various U.S. businesses and government funding agencies also tend to target strategic regions of the world as opposed to the broad category of “International Studies.” To most donors, regional studies remain much more appealing than the generic International Studies. Furthermore, while many other American universities also offer degrees in International Studies, the unique advantages in Asian Studies that the USF enjoys is what truly makes the University stand out from the crowd. To future USF alumni whose long-term loyalty greatly depends upon their sense of belonging while in school, Asian Studies would provide a much better community experience as opposed to the sprawling International Studies. In short, it would be a grave strategic error for USF to subsume the Asian Studies Program under the International Studies Department.
II. Recommendations

To best utilize the wealth of resources at USF in regards to both the Asian Studies undergraduate program and the MAPS program, the Committee makes three major recommendations as follows.

1. All Asia-related resources, including the Center for Asia Pacific Studies and the Ricci Institute, as well as the various study abroad programs run by USF in Asia, need to be better interlinked.

2. A new department of Asian Studies should be created as an institutional hub of all Asia-related educational resources at USF.

3. To complement USF’s existing Asian Studies faculty strengths in humanities, at least two or three new lines in social sciences should be created to form the core faculty of the new department in Asian Studies.

III. Why a department is a better model than an interdepartmental program

Given its urban location, its curricular strengths in Asia Pacific studies, its M.A. program, existing endowments and program resources, and its unique position in the long Jesuit history in Asia, the University of San Francisco is poised to take a leading role among West-coast institutions that teach about and do research on Asia. Bold strokes are needed to reach this goal. We cannot stress enough the need for administrative vision and financial support at this crucial juncture in the history of the university. With only a slightly different combination of current elements and the addition of a few new faculty lines, the university is set to become a leading light in the field.

We see many advantages of a department over an interdisciplinary program.

First, an Asian Studies Department would better serve the needs of today’s students. Students with diverse backgrounds are deeply interested in Asian languages, societies, politics, and cultures. Increasingly, knowledge of Asia has become a necessary skill in today’s globalizing world. In addition, some of these students want to explore their own ethnicity; some come from Asia and want to learn about other Asian countries; while many others are inspired to learn about Asia by their high-school Asian language classes. To have a solid education in Asian Studies, students need the support of a community of committed faculty within a coherent organizational structure on campus. They also need a dedicated space on campus for personal interaction with their professors and other students. However, both critical elements for students of Asian Studies are lacking at USF. During our meeting with two Asian Studies majors, it became immediately apparent that the two had never met before and both spoke about the lack of a feeling of community in the program. (In contrast, the MAPS graduates spoke passionately on the subject of a sense of community and the lengths that faculty had gone for them).

Second, faculty in a department can better coordinate curriculum to serve the needs of students in contrast to faculty in an interdepartmental program who must first be mindful of the needs of their ‘home’ departments. No matter how comprehensive an interdepartmental major may be, it cannot do the job if required courses are not offered on a regular basis.
Third, a department, by its nature, will have better access to university resources and more political clout at the university level. We heard, for example, that the Business School had dropped a plan to allow MAPS students to enroll in any of its courses, thus “pulling the rug out from under our feet.” Setbacks are less likely to happen with a strong department that enjoys administrative backing. To build this department, a course relief (or even two) must be built into the job of Chair, thus ensuring a consistent level of engagement on the part of faculty (in contrast to the recent removal of a course release for the director of the Asian Studies program).

Finally, a department can better coordinate with external entities than a program. Currently, MAPS enjoys an effective, cooperative relationship with the Ricci Institute and with the Center for Asian Studies while Asian Studies less so. Better coordination between MAPS and Asian Studies is critical to building strong networks among alumni and to fostering long-term loyalty to the university. In sum, a Department of Asian Studies signals that the University has recognized the importance of a key region of the globe and that it is willing to dedicate resources to its study, a sign that will not be lost on prospective donors. We can imagine a campaign that would be based on the concept of “USF’s new Asian Century.”

In addition to the strengths that a department could build on, there are advantages to combining the undergraduate Asian Studies program with the MAPS program. A sustained effort on the part of the current director, John Nelson, and other directors before him, has led to a successful program that serves its students well. With some tinkering, we believe that the MAPS model—cohort focus, small classes, different tracks, core curriculum—could be expanded to include the undergraduate program as well. We recognize that MAPS originally targeted working people, but its current cohort consists mainly of younger post-graduate who either focus on Humanities for preparation for a Ph.D. or who take a business/social sciences track. As MAPS evolved over the years, it has created a successful model that could be emulated by its undergraduate counterpart.

To summarize, the undergraduate program would benefit greatly from the kind of attention that the faculty bestows on MAPS and the required foundational courses that MAPS currently offers. Conversely, MAPS might experience the benefit of higher enrollments and faculty available to teach its courses without an overload or without depending so much on adjuncts as is currently the case. A secondary benefit to Asian Studies would be that MAPS works well with the Center for Asia-Pacific Studies and in this context provides its students with necessary career networking opportunities and informational sessions. Allowing USF undergraduates to take advantage of the strengths of MAPS would ultimately be beneficial to both parties with a likely increase in the number of 4 + 1 program students to boot. Given that MAPS has recently been admitting a larger group of students from China, students at the undergraduate level would benefit from more contact with students from that region. There might also be a chance to help foreign students better adjust to an American academic environment and even improve writing skills if they were part of a larger Asian Studies Department.
IV. What would a new department look like? Preliminary ideas for uniting themes/constellations of inquiry

ASIAN STUDIES:

We recommend that the Asian Studies undergraduate program be more closely linked with the MAPS program through the new department which should be modeled after the International Studies program at USF. As detailed above, we see important reasons why Asian Studies should be kept independent. A major reason is the location of the University of San Francisco, which contributes to the uniqueness of the program. There are few four-year colleges or universities within San Francisco, so there are few direct competitors, such as San Francisco State. Other strengths of the program are: the accomplished faculty, the unique concentration in Philippines Studies, and the 4+1 Program for completing a BA & MA in five years. A main weakness is a lack of a cohesive vision. Another weakness is an absence of a cohort experience for undergraduate majors.

USF’s Asian Studies Program could follow a couple of models.

One model is to re-conceptualize and re-frame the program around core themes. The learning outcomes, currently quite broad, should be replaced by more specific ones addressing these core themes. We see that the current strengths of the program are culture and religion. The focused theme could be something like “Critical Heritage Studies” or “Culture, Heritage, and Contemporary Issues.” These themes would allow the utilization of the current strengths of the program but associate them with contemporary topics as well. The current possible topics for a capstone project (as listed on the USF website) focus on an array of contemporary topics ranging from migration to the environment to technology. Such topics can be re-framed within the overall themes. Heritage studies and, within that, the study of heritage tourism, are vibrant, growing interdisciplinary fields with pragmatic applicability. Culture and religion are crucial aspects both tangible and intangible heritage. Moreover, UNESCO’s ever-growing World Heritage list shows the great importance of the conceptions, selection processes, and cultural politics of heritage. We recommend that a tenure-track social scientist, perhaps an anthropologist or specialist of urban policies, be hired in order to develop the contemporary aspects of the program. The curricular of Critical Heritage Studies programs at other institutions, as well as The Association of Critical Heritage Studies, can provide useful models.

Another model is provided by the University of California Riverside’s Asian Studies Program, which is broadly multi-disciplinary, and offers two areas of focus, East Asian Studies and Comparative Asian Studies. According to the website the “East Asian Studies option focuses on China, Japan, or Korea and the languages, histories, literatures, cultures, art, and religions of the region,” while the “Comparative Asian Studies” option allows students to take a broader perspective by developing a comparative, interdisciplinary approach to the study of different geographical and cultural areas of Asia and Asian America.” This program seems to be well complemented by (rather than competing with) the Global Studies Program, which does not emphasize Asian Studies. However, we should keep in mind that UC Riverside, as a research institute, is much larger than USF and draw from a larger number of faculty (there are 26 faculty members in the committee in charge).

In addition, a challenge faced by an interdisciplinary major is a question of which disciplinary methods ground each student’s intellectual development, for successfully accomplishing a capstone course and applying to graduate programs. We recommend that,
rather than the current structure of having three gateway courses (History, Philosophy or Religious Studies and Politics), that an “Introduction to Asian Studies” interdisciplinary gateway course be offered. A fund should be made available for faculty developing such a course. The first year, the course could be taught with several guest speakers who will learn from one another.

The Asian Studies program can be modeled after the International Studies program, which offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees and offer distinctive, well-designed tracks. We have heard from a number of people at USF that the success of International Studies seems to have weakened the Asian Studies program. However, we see that strengths of International Studies and Asian Studies could be focused on quite distinctive core themes.

A key strength of International Studies at USF is anthropology; there are several tenure-track/ tenured anthropologists in the program. And International Studies is conceived around a precise focus: “a broad understanding of the processes of globalization, the role of international institutions, the complex nature of conflicts, and global economic issues.” On the other hand, Asia is not strongly presented in International Studies; there are only two tenured/ tenure-track faculty specializing in Asia: Taymiya R. Zaman—Director of Asian Studies-- and Stephen Roddy.

Therefore, our recommendation is that an Asian Studies Department be modeled after International Studies, which offers both BA and MA, but that Asian Studies offer themes that are quite distinct from International Studies. We believe that in the long run, the Asian Studies Department would be able to draw a larger number of students. A large number of majors is one measure of the success of a program. There are other measures, such as accomplishing a long-term goal of significant fundraising focused on Asian Studies. Given the location and the resources available on campus, this goal is a very viable one.

As a department, the BA and MA programs would provide strong cohort experiences. Whereas the 4+1 program is under-publicized to undergraduate majors, this opportunity could eventually draw many more majors to the program. Undergraduates could learn from M.A. students in numerous ways. The Center for Asia Pacific Studies, which seems to be doing an excellent job organizing events, should be a site that is more specifically linked with courses, so that students can attend events as a cohort rather than just as individuals.

V. MAPS

The MAPS program has been flourishing in recent years, with a strong number of students. Our suggestions aim at providing a structure so that long-term stability and success of the program can be achieved, rather than the success of the program heavily depending on the particular faculty members directing and teaching in the program.

Some of the salient strengths of the program are the high quality of courses, a dedicated faculty, and a strong cohort experience for students. These qualities are attested not only by current students but also by the alumni, who spoke highly about their experiences in the program. Although the MAPS program has had its highs and lows in respect to stability and number of students as seen reported in the Self Study, both recent graduates as well as older students uniformly praised the high quality of courses and the dedication of the faculty. In this regard, another strength of the program is the locations of
campuses in the city (including one in downtown for School of Management). The urban location makes the university extremely well situated to draw from the diverse population of San Francisco, especially for those students who want to get an MA and continue working in the city (or get the degree while continuing to work in the city). Furthermore, the desirability of living in San Francisco makes the program stand out. There is a caveat in this desirability, in that the living cost of San Francisco is very high. This puts pressure on the University to consider offering some of the courses in the program online. We recommend that the university refrain from this inclination. The alumni strongly and unequivocally opposed the idea of shifting some of the program towards offering online courses in combination of a year of residency. It would “cheapen” the program and their degree, one student said. The alumni are a powerful resource for recruiting potential students, and it is the cohort experience that makes this resource all the stronger.

Other strengths of the program are the two separate concentrations within the MAPS program: humanities/social sciences concentration or business concentration, as well as the dual-degree options of MA with MBA. We have noted that many of the current students and alumni pursuing or having obtained dual degrees consider the most formative learning experiences were through courses in the humanities/social sciences concentration rather than the MBA program. At the same time, the dual-degree options provide flexibility and what is considered a pragmatic orientation.

Currently the 4 + 1 program is not as well publicized as the MAPS/ MBA Dual Degree Program. There is no link to the 4 + 1 program on the homepage of the MAPs program. However, it is on the “Program Details” page, listed under “Dual Degrees” along with the MAPS/ MBA Dual Degree Program. So it is a not a question of being able to find information on the program. However, it is not well publicized directly to undergraduate students.

Professional development and mentorship, the keystone of which is the annual Career and Networking Forum, is another area of strength. The success of this forum is dependent on the great amount of work put in by the directors, faculty and staff. Continued, and more, support from the university is needed in order to ensure that this success does not rely so heavily on the determination and effort of those involved, so that when personnel change, the forum will continue to be a valuable event. A structural support, through closer interlinking of existing resources, can help in establishing long-term stability.

A major weakness of the program is the small number of tenured or tenure-track faculty, especially in the Social Sciences, and the lack of stable full-time faculty overall. Current directors do not have a core faculty they can rely on. Many of the courses are taught by non-tenure-track faculty. Often the instructor of a course has to be found at the last minute due to an adjunct faculty member moving on to another appointment such as a postdoc. Related to this issue is the lack of a space whether the NTT faculty can hold office hours and gather.

Currently MAPS curriculum emphasizes culture (religion, philosophy and literature), politics, and economics, with a heavy focus on E. Asia (China, Japan, Korea). Some coverage is extended to Hong Kong, Singapore, and the Philippines. We suggest that courses focusing on other regions of Asia, such as Southeast Asia, South Asia and Central Asia, as well as pan-Asian themed courses that investigate the dynamic interlink across Asia
and beyond be offered as well. Currently, coverage of other regions are included in certain courses that focus mainly on East Asia. Examples include International Politics of the Asia Pacific (which also includes Southeast and South Asia) and East/West: Early Global History (which covers the Philippines and India in addition to E. Asia). We understand that currently in most courses focusing on E. Asia, another region such as S.E.Asia can be studied as a final project topic.

VIII. Ideas for increased collaboration among the Centers

--Create UROPs or “undergraduate research opportunities” at the Ricci Center, which could be linked, to the Asian Studies curriculum. (This would require expanding the current program of student jobs at Ricci).

--Create a stable number of student internships that send students out to work in the Asian American community of San Francisco. Draw on alumni base or the connections of the Ricci Institute (art and book), or CAPS (business). Students should get some academic credit in their home department.

--Provide seed money for events that highlight collaboration between the centers and Asian Studies faculty.

IX. Specific Problems and Possible Solutions

Although we recommend creating a new department that could better coordinate efforts between MAPS, Asian Studies and the Centers, we recommend that the administration address concerns of the faculty. In our numerous conversations, we discovered a few themes or threads of discontent.

The MAPS program is running well for the most part as we described above, with faculty, staff and students expressing enthusiasm for recent developments in the program. We also heard distinct wishes from faculty, staff and students. MAPS wants to accommodate 50 students (currently 40); it needs more funding for scholarships to attract the best students; it needs the Business School to get on board and cooperate more fully with curriculum and opportunities for students; and lastly, the administration must tackle the housing problem at the post-graduate level.

Asian Studies faces more challenges as we detail above. In addition we heard from faculty about specific concerns. We list those concerns and possible solutions below.

--Faculty who had served in administrative roles sounded pessimistic about the future of the Asian Studies program.
Restore course relief for the director and later for the chair of the new department. Meanwhile, continue to provide funding for hiring administrative assistant to the program director despite the current small number of majors. Because of its inherently complex relations with other universities units, an interdisciplinary program demands from its director a considerable amount of energy in coordination, which does not proportionally lessen with the decrease in the number of majors.
Lack of faculty participation on a day-to-day basis (though many Asian Studies faculty attended a meeting with us). Anecdotally, we heard that only half of the Asian Studies faculty is active in meetings and decision-making. We recommend that the administration explore a few possible scenarios for encouraging the participation of all faculty who teach about Asia at USF.

a. Create an advisory committee for the new department consisting of Asian Studies faculty from around the university. This committee would not vote on department issues but would engage in curricular discussion and planning for the future.

b. Create joint appointments between the new department and other departments around the university (though this can be problematic when it comes to promotion and evaluation of service).

c. Provide seed money for projects that facilitate collaboration between the new department and Asian Studies faculty around the university. Team-teaching would fall under this rubric as would a lecture series, etc. Projects that focus on student experience should be given priority.

d. Hire an outside Chair with a proven track record of consultation and collaborative decision-making. An effective faculty leader could make the difference to the success of the new department.

--The Registrar no longer allows cross-listing of courses. This weakens Asian Studies enrollments at a time when the institution needs to be doing its best to limit attrition in the humanities and social sciences. We recommend that cross-listing be reinstated.

--Anxiety about declining enrollments
Need for more practical courses to draw pre-professional students. Given current enrollment trends, the hiring of a few social scientists would draw students. (For example, the department could offer a history of business in Asia course). Offerings in social sciences should be better coordinated with Chinese or Japanese language study. Again, sustained coordination with the Business School would be desirable.

--Lack of a sense of intellectual community or curricular focus among faculty.
The new department and, by extension, all Asian Studies faculty members at the University should engage in a retreat during which they discuss the goals of a major in Asian Studies. Some consensus should be reached on what students should master during their years at USF. What methodologies/approaches will the curriculum emphasize? If there will be an “Asian Studies” major, what structure will best serve students? Above, we mention the need for a foundational course (Zaman and Roddy have a proposal in the works). The next goal is to define learning goals for the new department as well as procedures for interacting with the many and diverse Asian Studies “communities” on campus.

--Lack of student community
As we described above, students in Asian Studies do not know their fellow majors. MAPS students presented the opposite scenario. We understand that Asian Studies does not want to be put under the authority of CAPS, but there must be better coordination so that
undergraduate students can better enjoy events and job fairs put on by CAPS. Conversely, MAPS students should be encouraged to attend MCL events.

--Lack of physical space on campus.
Space is a pressing issue on campus. However, we do not advise putting the new department in the same space with CAPS due to past history. The Department and the Center can remain independent bodies while still improving their coordination with each other.

--Separation of language faculty from the rest of Asian Studies faculty
Rather than have East Asian language faculty in a large modern and classical languages department, it would make more sense to place language faculty with the new social science faculty (one of whom should be an anthropologist as suggested above) and any future hires in literature/language. This would allow a proper Chinese Studies major to be developed (we were surprised to find that USF does not offer a Chinese major at this time). Given the success of the Japanese major (The recent AS self-study reports 14 Japanese Studies majors in 2010 and 11 Japanese Studies majors in 2015), we believe that a Chinese major would draw students given institutional support. Although study of Chinese language has been weak in the past, there are many students who would be interested in comparative courses that deal with China.

The administration needs to explore incentives to encourage faculty in MCL to join the new Asian Studies Department. Perhaps less dependence on adjuncts and the hiring of lecturers on a long-term basis would encourage tenure-stream faculty in this direction. Another incentive might be a tenure-track position in Chinese language and literature.