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March 15, 2014

Report for: The Israeli Council of Higher Education. From: Prof. Charles Stanish

Re: The Current State of Archaeology in Israel - Changes and Developments since the External Evaluation Report 2011.

The committee reported that archaeology in Israel is a small but vibrant academic discipline that meets or exceeds international standards in teaching and research. Archaeology in Israel is a fundamental academic endeavor that has served, and continues to serve, Israeli students and society. Israeli archaeologists' contribution to our global knowledge in this field far outweighs their numbers. Our interactions with the many stakeholders were highly professional and overall quite positive in tone.

All five departments have very good to excellent programs. All of our recommendations are intended to improve these departments; we see no need for any serious structural changes in any department at this time. We are therefore quite optimistic for the future of academic archaeology in Israel, as long as adequate funding is forthcoming and if universities make the appropriate adjustments to changing environment in which the discipline is conducted.

Two broad issues emerged in our evaluation that deserves mention here. First, in the last generation, archaeology around the western world has shifted from a solely humanistic discipline to one that includes both humanistic and scientific approaches. Israel is a leader in this paradigmatic shift. Scientific archaeology is more akin to field disciplines such as geology, paleontology and so forth with all of the expenses that accrue to a scientific enterprise. This shift in emphasis requires the appropriate increases in funding levels to maintain high quality science.

A second theme concerns the BA curriculum in archaeology. The BA in Israel is generally constituted as a preparation to a career in archaeology. BA students take a number of archaeology-specific technical courses (ancient stone and pottery analysis, for

instance) for their department requirements and practicums in faculty labs. The Committee notes that archaeology curricula in many peer countries around the world are shifting to emphasize technical courses that are both useful in archaeology and as well as being *transferable* to other careers. These include Geographic Information Systems, statistical analyses, mass spectrometry, isotope analysis, virtual reconstructions, architectural visualizations and so forth.

This programmatic shift would meet increased societal demand for better training in science and technology. It carves out an outstanding academic niche for students who are otherwise intimidated by science and technology to be trained in these skills, while still learning archaeology and ancient history. In many ways, being the most scientific of the humanities and the most humanistic of the sciences, archaeology can be a very successful bridge to STEM fields for a significant segment of the population.

The Committee therefore suggested that, in general terms, many of the archaeology-specific technical courses in the BA should be gradually shifted to the MA targeted to those who have chosen this field as a career. Simultaneously, the BA should be enhanced with more transferable skill training, along with the traditional archaeological theory, method and humanistic studies in ancient history. This would transform the archaeology BA to a study program that prepares young people for careers outside of the discipline, as well as allow them the training to go into the field if they desire.

This recommendation was met with uniform resistance among the various archeological faculties. Part of this resistance is the traditional academic fear in the social sciences and humanities of anything innovative, but it must also be said that the current BA curriculum is deeply intertwined with faculty research. We urge the departments and CHE to examine the BA curriculum in the future with the aim of expanding its potential to be relevant to more young people for professional preparation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Stanish', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Charles Stanish
Director Cotsen Institute of Archaeology
Professor, Department of Anthropology