

December 11, 2020

President Suresh Garimella
Provost and Senior Vice President Patricia Prelock
University of Vermont
Burlington, VT 05405
via email: president@uvm.edu; provost.office@uvm.edu

Dear President Garimella and Provost Prelock,

The American Anthropological Association has been following with great concern the budgetary issues facing the University of Vermont. We certainly understand the difficult decisions that have to be made in addressing the university's financial stability with the goal of keeping the best interests of the students in mind. We are especially troubled, however, to learn that the university plans to hobble the College of Arts and Sciences by eliminating 12 majors, 11 minors, and four master's programs, in addition to consolidating three language departments.

Since this news was presented in the higher education press earlier this week, I have been in touch with Dr. Julie Roberts, who, in her capacity as Executive Director of the American Dialect Society, is a colleague through the American Council of Learned Societies. Our scholarly society is most directly focused on anthropology training programs, but the success of these programs often depends on close collaborations with colleagues in geology, linguistics, religious studies, classics, and area studies programs. The world faces a welter of complicated problems that will only be successfully tackled by interdisciplinary collaborations, placing in a proper historical and cultural context such urgent matters contemporary matters as understanding spread and contagion, the social production of vulnerability, and how to dismantle the structures of inequality that permit this vulnerability to persist. Both fundamental research into the nature of individuals, groups, and cultures; and applied research into the effectiveness of policymaking and the impact of changes to our national security, education, and healthcare systems, are important to understanding how this pandemic has affected, and will continue to affect, the way we live.

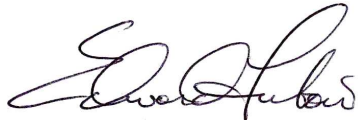
The programs on the chopping block reflect the breadth and complexity of the problems we face in the 21st-century, and play a key role in developing culturally sensitive strategies in a world that is increasingly animated by cross-cultural contacts. Whether students go on to graduate studies in these fields or to other professions, they carry with them a sensibility gained from their exposure to these fields that enable them to be involved in improving healthcare and educational systems, working towards environmental sustainability, protecting cultural heritage, reducing global inequalities, and increasing awareness of the many forms of household and families that raise our children and take care of our elderly.

The University's College of Arts and Sciences would do well to maintain, if not strengthen, the offerings available through these programs to your incoming students and, in turn, what your graduates will offer future employers. The new normal is that companies are now looking for

candidates with essential critical thinking skills that include analytical ability, cultural understanding, effective communication, and an overall engagement with the world.

Taken together, the College's programs are an outstanding training resource and feel that this loss of capacity would be widely felt. Thank you for considering this request to look again at the serious implications of eliminating these important programs. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can answer any further questions you may have.

Sincerely,



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