

THE CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW ENGLAND

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www.caneweb.org



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As members of the Executive Committee of the Classical Association of New England (CANE), representing more than six hundred and fifty teachers of Latin, Greek and Classical Studies at all levels, we are concerned to learn that the University of Maine intends to end its Latin major. The study of Latin is unique among languages in that its pedagogical focus on reading refined literature and the complexity of the language itself compel the rapid development of critical thinking and analytical reading skills among its students. As the foundation for all of the romance languages and the source of more than half of all English vocabulary, Latin provides an invaluable resource for anyone whose interests center on the development and use of language. In addition studies have repeatedly shown that students of Latin score significantly higher on the verbal portions of the SAT and GRE than students of other languages. Latin majors also stand out among humanities graduates precisely because they are not plentiful, and the rigor for which the language has a reputation makes them highly sought after by a number of employers who have great respect for the intellectual demands of the major, including those in the legal and financial industries.

Perhaps you are unaware that there is a critical shortage of Latin teachers in many parts of the country, including Massachusetts and Connecticut, as well as New York, Virginia, Maryland and Texas. The return to standards based education has spurred great interest in the reintroduction of the teaching of Latin, beginning at the middle school level. It is no coincidence that these are states which rank highly in their commitment to the quality of their educational systems. We need more, not fewer, Latin majors, and unlike many of their liberal arts classmates, they will find jobs even in this difficult economy.

On a more practical note, we are surprised that the University of Maine would dispense with a major that has been offered by all competitive universities for the last 800 years. Latin and the Classics are still a hallmark of excellence in tertiary education.