

President Kennedy;

This is an addendum to my previous letter. I will try to make it as brief as possible. I spent last night agonizing over it, else I would not send it at all.

Maine is trying to attract students of the highest quality. It is competing with institutions like Bowdoin, Bates and Colby. If the University can offer a curriculum as varied, and professors as qualified, to attract these students, then it will become a viable competitor to these "second tier" institutions. Tuition increases have marked protest from many quarters, but attracting a student body, foreign students included, that would otherwise go to these colleges would enable the University to increase its tuition to students who would be eager to pay for an education less costly than one from Bowdoin or Colby. This would entail, of course, that our departments be comparable to institutions of higher prestige, and that the lamentable state of Fogler library be corrected. I do not suggest that these changes would be cheap, but I do suggest that they are a long-term approach to attracting high quality students. We must think about the long term survival of the school, not just the quotidian problems of administration.

I will go back to my refrain, that Latin and German, and all the humanities, are essential to this process of attracting higher quality students. Businesses today complain that most newly graduated employees cannot write a single coherent sentence. Latin and German correct this process. The rigor of their respective studies demand that students be able to write, not just in English, but in a foreign language as well. Latin and German students learn grammar, in a way that few English students even learn, and are competent, once graduated, to pursue many other career paths. And as for history, we have here, at this University, in the History department, a professor with remarkable qualifications. This professor is under-valued, and his accomplishments unknown, both to the student body, and to the University administration. I speak, of course, of Dr. Ngo Vinh Long; a man who studied under Henry Kissinger, and who has written seminal literature on the Vietnamese peasantry. We need to utilize Dr. Long, and encourage more classes which he is qualified to teach. We have, too, a man dedicated to the study of Neoplatonism and the history of ancient Greece (and jazz). Dr. Bregman holds together the studies of ancient history. He should not have to do so. Had we another qualified history professor in this field, Dr. Bregman would be free to teach on those subjects about which he is most passionate, and offer a course of study of which even Bowdoin or Colby might be envious.

I will say of the Latin program this much: Dr. Passman does not by herself

comprise the entire department. She simply does not have the time or resources to do so. A program is just that - a systematic approach to the study of a language, supported by the voices of different professors, and conflicting opinions. I have studied in a foreign university, Trinity College in Dublin, and in their Latin department they have two professors devoted to the study of texts in the original languages, and one professor dedicated to the meaning of these subjects in English. That is not so very much to ask. It would enable the Latin program to become a fully developed department, and would even encourage a higher attendance from the student body. If we could offer varied and more provocative classes, we could entice students to attend these classes. It is essential. Latin marks us as a learned institution. The lack thereof shows that we have succumbed to the athletic-minded mentality.

Finally, I will say this. You have dedicated your energies towards the development of the Honors College, and show it off as the centerpiece of your administration. What you have not bothered to do is examine how the program actually functions (dysfunctionally), or what it is actually teaching. Unqualified professors are lecturing on subjects about which they know nothing, and students may slide through a class without reading a text, or even attending a lecture. These same lecturers are expected to deliver a coherent course of study, with texts they themselves may not have read. For their final capstone, most students simply use the papers they have written for their actual degrees, not something inspired by the Honors curriculum. If this is your showpiece, it is nothing of which to be proud. You have lavished money on a program that teaches students very little, and produces a title after a student's degree that is meaningless. Use some of that money to fund departments that actually teach something of value.

As an aside, former Secretary of Defense William Cohen graduated from Bowdoin college with a degree in Latin. Clearly the degree did not prove useless to him.

Sincerely,

Hilary Clark
Latin Major;
Minors: History; Classics
Phi Alpha Theta