

To President Kennedy, and to all those who would gut the liberal arts:

The measure of a university is not the sum total of its sports departments, but rather the sum total of the information it imparts to its students. A university can survive, and indeed thrive, without a sports program; the reverse cannot be said of a sports department. If a sports department lives by the credo "a sound mind in a sound body," then it should know that its definition of the pursuit of athletic excellence comes from a Latin saying, and before that, a Greek proverb. The sports department may provide that sound body, but the sound mind is the total of all the liberal arts, all the mathematics, and all the other disciplines which a student must first learn in order to label himself a scholar. Nothing is more shortsighted than to take away from academic programs, especially the liberal arts, particularly when those cuts are being made in favor of athletics. Without those academic programs, the sports department would simply cease to exist.

The University of Maine is the flagship institution of the University System in the State. As such, it should be representative of the best programs and disciplines of study within the University System. It should also reflect the best and brightest students the University has to offer. How Orono is supposed to achieve this, when departments are being cut and budgets being slashed, is a question not even an alchemist could answer; an alchemist, incidentally, who will no longer be studied because the University, in its wisdom, has failed to replace an essential history professor. The liberal arts have traditionally been the foundation of a solid university education. Achievement in the study of the liberal arts used to mark an individual as well-rounded. These are precepts our University no longer accepts or values.

What I particularly take issue with, however, is the notion that because there are not dozens of students studying Latin, it is not a valuable subject. The study of Latin is essential to the liberal arts (as are German and History and all the other liberal arts departments facing unwarranted cuts). It does not take a hundred voices to protest a policy that is wrong. It does not take even one voice. When something is wrong, it is fundamentally wrong, and it is only to be hoped that there is someone with the wisdom and power to acknowledge and act upon this. The complaints of my colleagues and instructors have failed to produce any results. I will add my protest, in the hopes that eventually there will be enough of us who are willing to speak up about the misdirection of the University's

course, that some action will be taken.

As one final point: the University is depriving its physical campuses, while it is generously funding its online programs. It is admirable to want to spread education to as many people as possible. It is a substandard education the University is offering, however. Students need the face-to-face interaction, with both their professors and peers, in order to stimulate their thoughts, encourage dialogue, and provide self-correction. All too often, a web course provides no interaction, and is just a homework and grading process. This could be achieved via mail. If providing funding for these programs means taking away the funding of essential liberal arts classes, then the University is making the fundamental error of valuing quantity over quality. Nothing can replace an education in a classroom, and if it takes one less online math class to fund a Latin or German class, the end product will be far more meaningful.

I speak as a student who has seen and lived through the policies of 3 presidents. And in during each president's tenure, I have seen a systematic decline in the valuing of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. I see the empty halls these days, in the History department and the Language department, and it saddens me that these are subjects we no longer value. We are becoming less educated and less able to think. We must reverse this course if we wish our University to retain its standard as a place of meaningful learning.

Sincerely,

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