

STATEMENT CONCERNING THE LATIN MAJOR

In 1984, when the Classics Professor at the University retired, I approached Arthur Johnson, then the President of the University. I asked him if we could get a replacement; that teaching Ancient History, without any Classics courses offered would be difficult for me. He answered thus: "how can you have a good University without Latin and Greek?" I also invited to campus John Dillon, Regius Professor of Greek at Trinity College Dublin. He lectured on campus and he also stayed in the President's house. As a result of our efforts, one Classics Professor, Tina Passman, was hired to teach in the Dept of Foreign Languages and Classics. She is still here. There is no separate and expensive Classics Dept. on this campus. Whether or not there is a Latin Major, she will teach the exact same courses. No money is saved. Nothing is changed. Indeed, ending the Latin major amounts to nothing more or less than (anti-Humanities) window dressing.

As Provost, President Kennedy (strangely) tried to end the German and Latin majors. He failed. We managed to stop him, with strong Faculty objections and with some outside help from Phi Beta Kappa. Now as President, he is trying again; most unfortunately he might succeed. Why has he chosen to focus on *these languages*? German is a major modern language; it is also the language of science and scholarship. Is that one of his reasons? If Latin is ended, there will be *no Latin major anywhere in the Maine System*. And those students who cannot afford Colby, Bates and Bowdoin College, will not be able to study Classics. Recent Orono graduates have gone on to the PhD. And some have already become professors of Ancient History. Without a viable Latin major this will no longer be possible. The field also remains attractive to students; enrollments for my Greek and Roman History courses are higher than ever. In addition, it is a seminal field for general education. And education is *not* the same thing as training! A College of Arts and Sciences is about the education of citizens, who are able to make rational judgments about social and political life; and a general education which enables them to enhance their quality of life, including the cultivation of the arts and other intellectual pursuits. The major purpose of the University is the preservation, dissemination and advancement of knowledge. This is more important than the (for the most part) illusory notion that the University is an engine for the improvement of the State's economy. Pure research with no practical end in mind has proven in the long run to be the *more* practical alternative. One obvious example: No Einstein's Theory of Relativity: No GPS. One example, among many, from the Humanities: No ancient Greek Stoic theory of spiritual equality based on "natural law": No Enlightenment based theories of modern democratic egalitarianism.

Tina has delivered the major not only adequately, but with excellence. There are at least two adjuncts available to teach Latin, if and when needed. One can also teach Greek. When the argument from budgetary reasons is seen as a weak argument the additional and spurious argument suggesting that Tina on her own, at this point, can no longer deliver the major is simply demonstrably untrue. And the issue should not be one individual, but rather the field!

I hope that the committee and the Faculty Senate can help reverse this disturbing trend; the sad fact is that at this point the University of Maine is in the process of becoming a University in name only.

Yours sincerely,

Jay Bregman

Professor of History