

Data culled from the first 1,000 signatures and comments on the petition to

Keep UMaine's Language Majors

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/keep-umaines-language-majors>

1. 76% of the respondents to this survey were from MAINE.
2. The greatest number of comments referred to the "devaluation" of the educational programs at the University of Maine.
3. Many spoke of the institution's responsibility to train language teachers for high and elementary schools. Many pointed out the current lack of qualified language teachers in the state. Should the current situation continue to worsen, language programs statewide would clearly be threatened even more.
4. Worries were expressed about the brain drain that this action would provoke; students seriously interested in language acquisition would have to leave the state to pursue this area of interest.
5. Several other issues were common fodder in many of the statements: diversity, university versus trade school, etc. Many can be gleaned for the selected comments that indicate very lucid insight in the subject. They follow:

VERY QUOTABLE RESPONSES:

# 738:

Mar 31, 2010, Tony Brinkley, Maine

I can think of nothing that is more important for a liberal arts education than the cultural power that comes from knowing more than one language. I am quite sure from discussions with people I know in the business community that a second or third language would be regarded as a tremendous asset for anyone they were considering for a job. In addition, French in Maine is a heritage language--in many ways as much of the mother-tongue as English is. For many of our students, a knowledge of French is a knowledge of who they are at the deepest level of their creativity. And, also in addition, Spanish is rapidly becoming for the United States as a whole what French is to Maine. Can we teach French or Spanish or German without upper-level courses? Not if the goal is an emerging fluency. Given that the upper-level courses, is there anything in addition to have a major in any of these languages? Not so far as I can see. As for Latin, it is a prerequisite for fluency in Western culture. Surely students at the University should have the possibility of such fluency available. I don't think a reasoned argument can be made--either pedagogically or fiscally--for eliminating any of the language majors.

# 596:

Mar 30, 2010, RAYMOND LAGUEUX, Maine

The "Flagship Campus" is certainly sinking by eliminating modern language majors; NOW, more than ever, we need a global perspective to better understand the rest of the world; languages are the key to understanding. By eliminating a basic communications core, the university will be encouraging Maine's "best and brightest" to LEAVE MAINE and make their way to the benefit of some other university and state. Let's not lower the bar for academic quality at the expense of our state's most important product - the next generation of global Maine citizens. It's a "small, small world, really after all!"

# 547:

Mar 30, 2010, Brian Doore, Maine

In the interest of full disclosure, I am employed at the University of Maine. That being said, the

credibility of my work is shaped in part by the reputation of UMaine, and the University of Maine System. I agree with the hundreds of other posters who have made impassioned pleas about the inherent worth of the language programs. Honestly, I don't think anyone involved in this decision would disagree either. I would like to approach this from a different angle -- one of competitiveness for extramural funding. It is a reality now that Universities must fund many positions (including my own) with grants, contracts, and other funding from outside the State of Maine. In part, those funders examine the strength of the University, the ability of that institution to support broad learning goals, and the talents of the entire faculty and student body. Eliminating core areas like the classics and languages devalues everyone -- even if they don't directly engage with these departments. One example is that of a child of a friend of mine -- a national merit scholar, accepted to several Tier I schools. UMaine has offered that person a full scholarship in the Engineering program. That young person isn't ready to sign on the dotted line though. The reason? UMaine is considering cuts in ancillary areas of interest. Losing this young person will most certainly be a future leader in this field is a blow to UMaine and to our state. Therefore my plea does not go to President Kennedy, or other members of APPWG, except to implore them to appeal to the legislature for some direct involvement in UMaine's issues. I know UMaine's troubles are a reflection of Maine's economic struggles, and yet; I know that the learning, work, and research that happens at UMaine is a key component of getting us out of this mess. My plea is to strengthen UMaine as a whole in order to make it a stronger contender for projects like off-shore wind. What does the language department have to do with getting a project like that one? I think everything.

# 436:

Mar 29, 2010, Anonymous, Maine

My daughter will be graduating from UMaine in May and has been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study in Germany next year. This opportunity would never have been possible without the Foreign Language Department at UMaine. Please think more globally as you weigh this momentous decision for the young men and women of Maine.

# 392:

Mar 29, 2010, Anonymous, Maine

Do what is right for the future of Maine! Provide our students with the tools necessary for success. Do NOT eliminate majors in French, Spanish, and German. The Academic Program Prioritization Working Group is demonstrating old-fashioned 20th century attitudes and knowledge in making decisions for the students and citizens of Maine (as well as of the United States) of the 21st century. In a world that has become increasingly interdependent, it is essential that we prepare our students for their global future and the increasingly diverse makeup of our citizenry. Instead of recommending the elimination of majors in world languages, the APPWG should be recommending: a) the implementation of a language requirement for graduation from UMAINE, so that our students are truly ready for the future; and b) the active promotion of the study of languages as a major. Are the members of the APPGW Committee aware of all the economic initiatives with Germany, Canada, and France? In addition, this poorly researched decision will have a severely negative impact on the quality of world language educators for our public schools. Over the past 10 years, it has become more and more difficult to find qualified teachers of world languages (especially of Spanish and German, but also French) for our Maine public schools.

# 387:

Mar 29, 2010, Anonymous, Massachusetts

I graduated from the University of Connecticut, but I had the fortunate opportunity to study abroad in Salzburg, Austria through UMaine's German Department. I had nothing but positive experiences throughout the entire process - from the pre-visit preparation, to the coordination with our advisor, the coursework during my time abroad, and then transitioning back to the states. That being said, the majority of my colleagues were from UMaine and I learned as much from my peers as I did from the instructors.

UMaine has a superb language department and study abroad program and it would be a major loss to the university if language majors were no longer offered.

#### RESPONSES REFLECTING THE QUESTIONING OF STUDENT AND PARENTS

# 361:

Mar 29, 2010, Catherine Gram, Maine

Keeping languages alive keeps our Maine economy alive. Students need languages to succeed in this global market. Languages such as Spanish, French, German and Latin are necessary in our K-12 schools, as they are cognate languages with English which facilitates learning and interlinguistic connections. Moreover, students see the value of learning languages they feel they will use, even if just for travel. Keeping majors in those languages at the university level ensures that we will have the teachers we need to teach languages to our future students. Monolingualism is no longer an option.

# 348:

Mar 29, 2010, Tirza Clark, Maine

While I am not currently a Language Major, I will be taking a German minor, and was hoping to complete it as a major should I return for my Masters degree. If the language is cut, I will have no reason to return to the University of Maine. I appreciate your consideration.