

Statement on Proposed Program Cuts at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point

March 15, 2018

The undersigned associations urge the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point administration to reconsider its recommended elimination of thirteen undergraduate majors, most of which involve key humanities and social science programs.

We recognize the reality that effective university leaders today must not only make changes, but in some cases fundamentally reimagine their institutions in order to chart a sustainable course for the future. However, all colleges and universities benefit from strong programs in the humanities, and it is especially important for regional public institutions, which serve large populations of first-generation college students, students of color, and students from families of limited means, to provide access to in-depth education in the full range of humanities and social science programs.

The University of Wisconsin Stevens Point proposes increasing resources for programs “in areas with high-demand career paths” such as Fire Science and Aquaponics, while eliminating majors in American Studies, art, English, French, geography, geoscience, German, History, music literature, philosophy, political science, sociology, and Spanish. There is convincing evidence that college graduates can be expected to change careers—not just jobs, but careers—several times in their working lives. By focusing on preparation only for narrowly defined jobs, Stevens Point administrators risk leaving students with considerably poorer preparation for the full range of careers most Americans will experience in a working lifetime.

Access to humanities studies is essential for all students, no matter their career paths, as is the opportunity to major in these disciplines. It is deeply misguided to eliminate humanities majors based on an inaccurate presumption that they do not prepare students for high-demand careers. Technology and business leaders continually affirm the value of humanities degrees, and employment rates and job satisfaction among humanities majors rival those in STEM and business fields, according to data from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. We find it especially important that humanities and social science majors be available to students in public universities, and we urge Chancellor Bernie Patterson and Provost Gregory Summers to reconsider this plan, which would irreparably damage liberal arts education at a key public university.

American Anthropological Association
American Comparative Literature Association
American Historical Association
American Musicological Society
American Philosophical Association
American Political Science Association
American Schools of Oriental Research
American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies
American Society for Environmental History
American Sociological Association
Latin American Studies Association

Linguistic Society of America
Medieval Academy of America
Modern Language Association
National Communication Association
National Council of Teachers of English College Forum
National Council on Public History
North American Conference on British Studies
Organization of American Historians
Rhetoric Society of America
Shakespeare Association of America
Society of Biblical Literature