



September 5, 2023

Dear President Gee,

We write on behalf of the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures (ASAIL) to urge you to reconsider the recently proposed cuts at West Virginia University (WVU), including thirty-two undergraduate and graduate programs, nine percent of majors, and sixteen percent of full-time faculty. We find it alarming that the majority of these cuts are aimed at humanities and education programs, which are critical to the future of our field and vital to the creation of informed global citizens.

The humanities underpin the very foundation of the university system and are essential to the endeavor of West Virginia University as a land-grant university whose mission is to provide research and educational resources for all citizens within the state. The proposed brutal cuts to WVU's programs—especially the elimination of the entire language program—betray that land-grant promise.

In today's global world, students need access to multiple languages and diverse cultural knowledge from professors with research expertise and real-world experience. Such language study, while valuable on its own, augments every major; from business to English, from psychology to engineering, all of today's professionals benefit exponentially from knowledge of multiple languages and cultures. We know that students with even minimum proficiency in another language have higher educational attainment, better job prospects and starting salaries, and are better able to navigate cultural and social differences in our global world.

Further, students deserve access to studies in creativity of the sort provided by the MFA in Creative Writing; this proposed cut speaks to the work at the very heart of our field.

Reduced state and federal funding for education is affecting all state institutions, as we know all too well. Innumerable journalists have run the numbers: if not for state funding cuts, WVU would not be in its current financial bind. The solution is not to slash programs in a way that will harm students, faculty, and the citizens of West Virginia, but instead, to lobby for increased funding, make fiscally sound decisions about capital improvements, and decrease administrative bloat.

We must all push back against attempts to undermine higher education. These extreme cuts blame a need for financial exigency on individual programs instead of calling to account the real culprit here—state and administrative negligence. In the end, carrying out these proposals will take educational opportunities away from lower-income, rural students such as those at WVU,

destabilize tenure and academic freedom, and eliminate programs that encourage critical thinking.

Ultimately, the Association for the Study of American Indian Literatures urges WVU's governing board and administration to uphold its own mission, which promises to create "a diverse and inclusive culture that advances education, healthcare, and prosperity for all by providing access and opportunity; by advancing high-impact research, and by leading transformation." Slashing core academic programs undermines both this promise and WVU's role as a flagship institution that has pledged to serve the common good.

Signed,

ASAIL Board
www.asail.org