

To whom it may concern,

We write on the behalf of students and volunteers of the [Carthage Institute of Paleontology](#) (CIP) to share that our program is facing an existential threat: the loss of funding for our preparator, Dr. Megan Seitz. As a preparator, Dr. Seitz is a steward for our fossils, preserving them for the scientists, students, and museum visitors of today and tomorrow. Without Dr. Seitz, the CIP ceases to exist, depriving the City of Kenosha, State of Wisconsin, and international paleontological community of a unique program. Paleontology is massively popular among nonscientists and [functions as a gateway](#), for kids and adults alike, to a broader understanding and appreciation of science in general. Amid [declining public trust in science](#), accessible science experiences like those that the CIP provides are critically important and must be protected. We urge Carthage College and the City of Kenosha to reinstate this position, and for others to consider writing a letter of support for the CIP and Dr. Seitz's position to those who can enact this change (Carthage College's [President](#), [Provost](#), and [Dean of Natural Sciences](#); [Kenosha Public Museums director](#), and [City of Kenosha](#) public officials).

Carthage College partnered with the City of Kenosha, WI to create the CIP and Dinosaur Discovery Museum (DDM) in 2005. While the CIP is not the largest program at Carthage, it is growing every year and it is, in proportion to total student population, one of the largest undergraduate paleontology programs in the world. Our alumni have worked for leading research institutions in the U.S. and abroad, published research in important scientific journals that has received international press coverage, and written about science for national news outlets. The fossil prep lab is in a public space, giving the public the opportunity to see science in action, and Carthage students from all majors as well as the public are invited to volunteer in the lab and join field expeditions to collect new fossils in Montana. In cutting this position, Carthage has failed to maintain this partnership with the City of Kenosha and deprived the community of these experiences.

Dr. Seitz was let go by Carthage in 2020, and has only been able to stay since then thanks to a generous external grant that will expire in August of 2024. Meanwhile, Carthage received [more than \\$60 million in gifts and commitments](#) from its 2023 fundraising campaign, and its President, John Swallow, is paid [over half a million dollars each year](#). However, as of this writing, Carthage has not earmarked any money for the preparator position. In the spring of 2021, current students and alumni met with school Provost David Timmerman and Dean of Natural Sciences Deanna Byrnes (the President ignored our invitation) to discuss possible options for moving forward (the meeting itself is recorded, and available upon request). The Provost claimed that Dr. Seitz's position was cut due to a decrease in college enrollment, [despite a statement to the contrary by the President](#). He also stated that cutting her position was NOT because of the COVID-19 pandemic - but we were never given an answer as to why Dr. Seitz's position was targeted.

Dr. Seitz is the sole caretaker of the fossils in the DDM's collections, and reinstating her position is necessary to protect them and ensure that both the citizens of southeastern Wisconsin and the scientific community can continue to enjoy and learn from them in perpetuity. The fossils are collected on federally owned land and excavated by Carthage students and an international team of volunteers, but ownership of the fossils lies in the hands of the American public: we are all shareholders of our prehistoric past. Because the fossils are public property, they must be cared for in accordance with the [Paleontological Resources Preservation Act](#), which requires that fossils must be curated by "staff with

adequate experience.” If the fossils in the DDM are not properly [curated](#), as defined in this act, they will be seized by the federal government and relocated to another institution on the taxpayer’s dime. If the fossils are to stay in Kenosha, the city would have to hire another preparator out of their own budget or stretch the duties of existing staff. By not paying Dr. Seitz, Carthage has passed the buck to the Kenosha Public Museums, and by extension to Kenosha itself. Furthermore, as the CIP cannot continue without Dr. Seitz, dozens of ongoing dig sites in Montana will be left incomplete and their fossils lost to the elements.

For the past four years, Carthage and Kenosha have both managed to take advantage of Dr. Seitz’s invaluable contributions to the CIP without paying her a cent themselves; Carthage still [claims the accomplishments](#) of CIP students and alumni and contributes its name to the group, while Kenosha gets a scientist to work in one of their museums and take care of the fossils in its possession for free. We believe that this arrangement, in which Dr. Seitz is dependent on sporadic external funding that may or may not be available, is not a sustainable path for long-term protection of the fossils and their contributions to the surrounding community. We therefore encourage Carthage College or the Kenosha Public Museums to rehire Dr. Seitz and provide much-deserved stability to a successful and signature program.

Sincerely,

**Amelia R. Zietlow**, CIP Class of 2020

**Brady Holbach**, CIP Class of 2020, former CIP Assistant Preparator

**Adam Larson**, CIP Class of 2020 and former DDM Volunteer Docent

**Elizabeth Ziesemer**, CIP Class of 2021

**Douglas Stefanski**, CIP Class of 2020

**C.W. Harper**, CIP Class of 2023

**Anonymous**, CIP Class of 2023

**Andrew Goebel**, Carthage College Class of 2020, Field Volunteer, former CIP Assistant Preparator

**Joseph Frederickson**, CIP Partner Student, University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Class of 2011

**Eric Olvera**, CIP Current Student

**Joseph Krakora**, CIP Current Student

**Aiden Younk**, CIP Current Student

**Brett Jackson**, CIP Current Student

**Lillian Hosfield**, CIP Current Student

**Mel K.**, CIP Current Student

**Quentin Zeller**, CIP Current Student

**Anonymous**, CIP Current Student

**Matthew W. Lee**, Field Faculty Leader and Volunteer, Assistant Professor, Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design

**Dr. David Cordie**, former CIP Assistant Preparator, Professor of Geoscience at Englewood College

**Tracy Marmande**, Field Volunteer

**Laura Shields**, Field Volunteer

**Eric Morschhauser**, Field Volunteer

**Brandon Cassady**, Field Volunteer

**Mark Wildman**, Field Volunteer, Oxford Clay Working Group, UK

**Adam Gorham**, Field Volunteer

**Joshua Schwartz**, Field Volunteer, Laboratory Manager, Earth Atmosphere & Environment, Northern Illinois University

**Chrisula Bloore**, Field Volunteer

**Taylor McCoy**, Field Volunteer

**Fran McCoy**, Field Volunteer