

Dear President Scholz and Provost Long,

I am alarmed to learn of the threatened closure of the Department of German and Scandinavian at UO, as well as cuts to related programs in Holocaust and Religious Studies.

I appreciate the difficult choices universities must now make in response to the current strains, but I urge you to please consider the long-term view, for the sake of UO and for the future of public universities in the U.S. generally, and especially for the sake of the public we serve.

First of all, please let me introduce myself. From 1999-2002, I was proud to be a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Department of German and Scandinavian at UO. I was thrilled to be part of the intellectual community at UO and was inspired by the Oregon students I was honored to work with. I served on Music PhD committees and worked with undergraduates from diverse backgrounds, including Jewish students at Hillel and first-generation students from small towns or the Umpqua community, and ROTC students and veterans. Whether they were inspired to take classes in German Studies because of a love of classical music, or a desire to understand how the Holocaust happened, or to get a deeper cultural, historical, and linguistic background after being stationed in Europe, their intellectual and career quest at their state university took them to German and Scandinavian. I have held some leadership positions in my research and teaching fields of German and Jewish Studies, and frequently serve as an outside referee for fellowship applications and tenure and promotion cases. I thus feel a great sense of responsibility and concern.

German and Scandinavian at UO is a productive and essential part of the ecosystem of the humanities, not only at UO but nationally for our public universities.

In the current strained environment, it is legitimate to ask, does UO really need a Department of German and Scandinavian? I'll provide some responses.

Under normal conditions, German studies is an essential part of a strong humanities curriculum, supporting and augmenting strong offerings in History, Music (Bach and beyond) and Philosophy. This shouldn't only be available to students at elite private schools, but also at our public universities.

In the current environment, where democracy, antisemitism, authoritarianism, environmental concerns, and war need to be understood and discussed, German Studies has a vital and urgent role to play in any general education curriculum.

In a changing global economy, equipping Oregon students with cultural, historical, linguistic, and political knowledge about Germany and the Nordic countries, large and influential European centers of production, research and development has career and economic promise not only for individual students but for the region. At UMass Amherst, our new STEM German major track has quadrupled the number of our majors.

I could go on, but hope that my main points have come across, about preserving core humanities fields, to maintain our focus on the mission of the public university.

Sincerely, and with appreciation for your difficult position in challenging times,

Jonathan Skolnik