

Petition for Board Minutes, Greater Transparency on and More Time for Decisions Regarding the Financial Sustainability Review

We, students and alumni of Whitman College, are concerned about the rapid pace with which decisions are being made about the future of academic programs at Whitman, as well as the lack of transparency about the impacts these changes will have on our remaining time at Whitman and for future generations of students. We therefore request that the Board meeting minutes that have led to the current plan for financial sustainability be made available to the student body, and that we be given until the beginning of April to provide feedback on any possible changes. President Murray has denied an initial request for board minutes but students should have access to documents that concern the governance of our institution.

The Financial Sustainability Review that was sent to the student body is incredibly vague and seems intentionally written so that students remain uninformed about changes to our institution. For instance, the current proposed changes include cuts that disproportionately affect the Humanities and Fine Arts. 68% of the cuts will be within those two academic areas, with a reduction in faculty of 14%. Additionally, Classical Studies will be reduced to a minor, as will Chinese and Japanese. It will be much more difficult for Environmental Humanities students to complete their major requirements. It is unclear whether other proposed new areas of study such as Neuroscience, Creative Arts, and Social Justice Studies will be majors, minors, or concentrations. This lack of transparency is alarming to us.

We recognize that our individual experiences in the Fine Arts and Humanities at Whitman will not have much impact on financial decisions being made. Therefore, we state here that we as future alumni will be unwilling to donate to an institution that shows a clear lack of investment in a liberal arts education. We will not encourage prospective students to attend an institution that is undermining its own commitment to the liberal arts. We are unwilling to pay for our children to attend our alma mater (if we choose to complete our study at Whitman). We will contact alumni and discourage them from donating. Through its disregard for faculty advice, despite the school's "model of shared governance," the Whitman College administration and Board of Trustees have demonstrated a lack of regard for the academic integrity that we cherish as Whitman students.

As the largest source of revenue to the school, we as a student body will continue to voice our dissent for the rapid pace with which these changes will be affected. We understand that the COVID-19 pandemic and the anticipated drop in enrollment in colleges and universities nationwide necessitate cuts and adjustments to all aspects of our lives at Whitman. We demand that more time and greater transparency be given to us so that we can be a real part of the decision making processes at our school, instead of sidelined and left with little understanding of the implications of these changes, a state in which many of the Whitman faculty find themselves now.

Sign the petition [here](#).