

July 23, 2025

Dear Provost Shrivastav, Dear President Whitten,

We as officers of the German Studies Association, the Austrian Studies Association, the American Association for Teachers of German, and the Coalition of Women in German, write this letter in the name of our members to urge you emphatically to maintain the language, culture, and history programs at Indiana University that are central to its legacy and that have made it the top producer of humanities PhDs in the nation (as determined by the Carnegie Classification framework). We understand that public higher education institutions must comply with state law, but the early actions recommended by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education reflect a process that did not leave time or opportunity for inclusive deliberation by faculty. The consequences of these actions would be devastating for students in Indiana who deserve access to the world-renowned liberal education that has long distinguished IU. We call on you to withdraw the “voluntary” submission of programs for elimination or merger (which include nearly all of IU’s programs in world languages and cultures and many in history) and to return such important curricular decisions to the relevant faculty professionals.

The discussion of eliminating language and literature programs based on an arbitrary enrollment threshold seems short-sighted and leaves the experience of many students who minor in language programs or who study languages in the service of other majors unseen and unvalued. Currently IU offers 80 languages of study—more than any other American university. Those language programs, the result of decades of care and attention, have provided your graduates with pathways to educational opportunities, jobs, and professions that rely on clear communication and cultural literacy. Language departments and the professional organizations that serve them cultivate local, regional, and international relationships that generate the kinds of exchanges, activities, and growth that feed economies and that strengthen ties between universities and the communities they serve. These language programs have produced graduates prepared to form meaningful and lasting partnerships with global corporations and national employers who are more inclined to do business with and to trust those who have demonstrated an investment and interest in bilateral exchange. IU students trained by these language programs have been the recipients of scholarships designed to train a workforce prepared for critical jobs in US security. These distinctions are an unmistakable result of IU’s investment in the highest quality of language instruction.

On an individual level, the academically trained professionals who teach languages provide highly individualized guidance toward internships, apprenticeships, fellowships, scholarships, and advanced degrees that students nationally cite as crucial to their success in achieving their college and post-college goals. Moreover, Indiana University’s faculty counts among its members numerous internationally recognized researchers and scholars (including members of our organizations), who not only demonstrate the exceptional teaching and mentoring skills referred to above but who also win grants, fellowships, and awards and consistently publish articles and books that drive knowledge forward in a variety of fields around the world.

IU students trained in your language programs have, in your words, President Whitten, used their language education “[to make the world a safer and more connected place](#).” To terminate the economically, culturally, and intellectually valuable work done in the IU languages programs would be detrimental to your state, its young people, and your emerging workforce in ways that might not yet have been taken into account in the decision-making process. We urge the campus administration and relevant state representatives to preserve the study of languages, linguistics, and cultures as essential components of the university curriculum by allowing these programs to continue. Should cost-saving measures be necessary, we request that the faculty be consulted to ensure that changes to programs and curricula reflect the values that have long distinguished IU as an international leader in cultural exchange. Please feel free to contact us at the emails below.

Michael Shaughnessy, Executive Director, *American Association of Teachers of German*
mike@aatg.org

Caroline A. Kita, President, *Austrian Studies Association*
austrianstudiesassociation@gmail.com

Brigetta Abel, President, *Coalition of Women in German*

Claire E. Scott, Vice-President, *Coalition of Women in German*
president@womeningerman.org

Margaret E. Menninger, Executive Director, *German Studies Association*
director@thegsa.org

