

August 25, 2025

Dear Provost Long, Dear President Scholz,

We as officers of the Austrian Studies Association, the Coalition of Women in German, the German Studies Association, the Association of Jewish Studies, and the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies, write this letter in the name of our members to urge you emphatically to maintain the language, literature, and culture programs in German and Scandinavian, along with Russian, Judaic Studies, and other programs in the Schnitzer School of Global Studies and Languages, that are central to its standing as a public flagship university with a legacy for supporting the liberal arts. We understand that public higher education institutions must balance their budgets, but plans for reduction or elimination of programs over the summer reflect a process that excludes any possibility for inclusive, meaningful consultation with faculty. The consequences of these actions would be devastating for students in Oregon who deserve access to the advanced study of literatures and cultures in departments and programs of national and international standing. We call on you to withdraw the centrally driven identification of programs for elimination, reduction, or merger, and to return such important curricular decisions to the relevant faculty professionals.

The potential elimination of 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. These language programs, grown and maintained over many 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. The proposed cuts to these language programs, where many Jewish studies faculty are housed, are a serious threat to the future of Jewish studies at the University of Oregon. This damage is further augmented by the proposed cuts to the Religion Department, where other key Jewish studies faculty are housed. The recent inauguration of the Schnitzer School of Global Studies and Languages should be the occasion and the framework for accelerating this growth, rather than for curtailing it through the excision of some of its key parts.

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, the faculty of the University of Oregon counts among its members a number of 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.

To terminate or substantially reduce the economically, culturally, and intellectually valuable work done in UO language 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 in meaningful ways to ensure that changes to programs and curricula reflect the values that have long distinguished UO as a leading institution in international cultural exchange on the West Coast. Please feel free to contact us at the emails below.

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