

March 8, 2018

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Academic Affairs  
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Dean Eric Yonke  
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Dear Provost Summers and Dean Yonke:

The American Historical Association is deeply concerned about the recently announced plans to significantly reduce support in the future for the humanities, including history, at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Eliminating the opportunity for students to major in history, except to the extent required for social-studies teaching certification and a special international relations track, appears to us to contradict Chancellor Bernie Patterson's own commitment (as expressed in the university's press release about these plans) "to ensuring every student who graduates from UW-Stevens Point is thoroughly grounded in the liberal arts."

We concur with Chancellor Patterson that "it is critical our students learn to communicate well, solve problems, think critically and creatively, be analytical and innovative, and work well in teams." With the sole possible exception of teamwork (which the AHA recommends be a part of the history major curriculum), those are the skills taught in history courses, as our executive director, James Grossman, pointed out in an op-ed essay in the *Los Angeles Times* in May 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-grossman-history-major-in-decline-20160525-snap-story.html>.

It accordingly seems odd—if not self-defeating—to deny students the opportunity to major in a field that would supply them with precisely the proficiencies the university quite rightly aims to engender in its students. It might be argued that abandoning a traditional history major is not the same as abandoning all courses in history, especially because of the necessary retention of classes for teacher certification, but I infer from the reference to cost

reduction that fewer history courses will be offered if the major is eliminated, thereby reducing the likelihood of non-majors to find courses consonant with their interests.

Moreover, at a time when history enrollments have started to increase in many public universities with characteristics similar to UW-SP after a period of decline, it is ironic to see UW-SP laying out plans to reduce the discipline's curricular footprint.

The AHA is America's largest and most prominent organization of professional historians, with over 12,500 members engaged in the teaching and practice of history at colleges and universities, secondary schools, historical institutes, museums, and other institutions. We advocate for the study of history in all aspects of American intellectual life. Part of that advocacy is offering advice and assistance to university and college faculty members as they seek to improve their instructional methods and appeal to today's students. We, especially the elected officers and staff members of our Teaching Division, would stand ready to aid you and your faculty in initiatives to enhance the teaching of history at Stevens Point.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'm', 'B', and 'L' in a cursive style, followed by a horizontal line.

Mary Beth Norton  
President, American Historical Association