

February 1, 2023

Dr. Laura Casamento, President
Utica University
1600 Burrstone Rd
Utica, NY 13502
Via email: lcasame@utica.edu

Dear President Casamento,

The American Anthropological Association has been following with great interest the budgetary issues concerning Utica University. We certainly understand the difficult decisions that must be made in addressing financial stability with the goal of keeping the best interests of the students in mind. We are especially troubled, however, to learn that you have recommended that the Board of Trustees sunset the Sociology / Anthropology major.

As you know, anthropological research provides an evidence base that allows us to produce science-backed solutions for addressing issues of national and global importance. It is being deployed at this instant to help address the persistent distribution of vulnerabilities to the pandemic, from understanding health promotion and disease prevention, to evaluating the effectiveness and reach of public health messages, to health systems strengthening that serves the most disadvantaged communities. Both fundamental research into the nature of individuals, groups, and cultures; and applied research into the effectiveness of policymaking and the impact of changes to our national security, education, and healthcare systems, are important to understanding how this pandemic has affected, and will continue to affect, the way we live.


Anthropology reflects on the breadth and complexity of the problems we face in the 21st-century and plays a key role in developing culturally sensitive strategies in a world that is increasingly animated by cross-cultural contacts. Whether students go on to graduate studies in anthropology or to other professions, they carry with them a sensibility gained from their exposure to our field that enable them to be involved in improving healthcare and educational systems, working towards environmental sustainability, protecting cultural heritage, reducing global inequalities, and increasing awareness of the many forms of household and families that raise our children and take care of our elderly.

Utica University would do well to maintain, if not strengthen, the anthropology offerings available to your incoming students and, in turn, what your graduates will offer future employers. The new normal is that companies are now looking for candidates with essential critical thinking skills that include analytical ability, cultural understanding, effective communication, and an overall engagement with the world.

The numerous marketable skills acquired by anthropology grads are sought after by a variety of employers. In the tech world alone, Google, Facebook, Intel, and Microsoft, hire anthropologists to study market trends, human behavior, and technology. In fact, the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) projects 5.2 percent employment growth for anthropologists between 2019 and 2029.

The Sociology / Anthropology Department is an essential organizational unit on campus and in the community, having produced a significant number of graduates who are outstanding contributors to serving humanity. We regard the University's Sociology / Anthropology program as an outstanding training resource and feel that its contributions are widely felt. Thank you for considering our recommendation regarding this important program. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can answer any further questions you may have.

Sincerely,



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Cc: Bob Brvenik, Chair, Board of Trustees
Jeremy Thurston, Chair-Elect, Board of Trustees