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October 3, 2023

John B. King Jr., Chancellor (john.king@suny.edu)

Suzanne Smith, President (president@potsdam.edu)

Alan L. Hersker, Interim Provost (herskeal@potsdam.edu)

June F. O'Neill, Chair of SUNY Potsdam College Council (oneilljf@potsdam.edu)

State University of New York at Potsdam

44 Pierrepont Avenue, Potsdam, NY 13676

Dear President Smith, Provost Hersker, and Chair O'Neill:

We write as chair of the board of officers and executive director of the American Philosophical Association, the largest scholarly society of philosophers in North America, representing more than 8,000 members. This letter follows on the previous letter from the APA, which was delivered to SUNY Potsdam leadership on March 2, 2022. We urge you and all involved in making vital decisions about the future of SUNY Potsdam to preserve and support your philosophy program, rather than eliminating the major as has been proposed.

In our previous letter, we discussed some of the ways in which philosophy contributes to Potsdam's mission and goals—particularly its stated commitment to the liberal arts. We also laid out the return on investment for philosophy students and noted that your philosophy program provides much more value than numerical metrics may indicate—they play a pivotal role in university core curricula and in interdisciplinary programs, offering courses that benefit students across a wide range of interests and degree programs. And we discussed how liberal arts programs such as philosophy deliver broad, transferrable skills that are our students' best hedge against the current uncertainties of the labor market; the philosophy program's ability to provide these important benefits would be seriously diminished if the major were eliminated. Because several Potsdam campus leaders are new in your roles since our last letter, we attach it here for your reference, rather than rehashing that information in this letter.

We were troubled to learn that despite the philosophy program having been preserved after the previously proposed cuts, the recently announced "Financial Stability Plan" again slates philosophy and several other liberal arts programs for elimination. We are further troubled that the plan has been rolled out so quickly and with such limited opportunity for faculty and students to ask questions and respond to the proposals. Again, we must emphasize that eliminating the philosophy major would do a disservice to your students, betray your fundamental commitment to the liberal arts, and be financially short-sighted given its low cost compared to STEM fields and its outsized impact across your campus.

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While we understand that SUNY Potsdam, like many universities, is facing challenging times and difficult decisions, it is clear to us that the proposal to eliminate these programs is not supported by or in the best interest of SUNY Potsdam's students, its faculty, or its community. Liberal arts programming is at the core of the distinctive value offered by the American tradition in higher education, and exactly when facing times of budgetary and enrollment stress, it is important to refocus institutional priorities around that core. We strongly urge you to reconsider the plan and maintain philosophy and other core liberal arts programs.

Most sincerely,



R. Lanier Anderson, Chair, Board of Officers Amy E. Ferrer, Executive Director

cc:

Greg Gardner, Faculty Senate Chair (gardnega@potsdam.edu)

Kevin Smith, UUP President (smithkd@potsdam.edu)

Timothy G. Murphy, Philosophy Department Chair (murphytg@potsdam.edu)