



November 10, 2017

Letter to the Editor,

In my role as Chief Academic Officer of the University of Vermont, I am writing to share my thoughts, some additional context, and to provide a number of important clarifications to the Cynic's November 7, 2017 editorial entitled "*Humanities Majors Deserve More.*"

I am always pleased when students ponder the purpose, value, and meaning of their chosen degrees. These are important questions that are worthy of your deep consideration. I am not among those who dismiss the humanities as useless. I have written about (see my [blog page](#)) and speak frequently of the value of the humanities, or more broadly, the Liberal Arts. The Liberal Arts are important, in fact, essential both to a comprehensive education and to our success as a society.

Counter to the author's assertion, we do not market the University "with an emphasis on scientific research and tech." We market UVM as a research university with a commitment to liberal education, offering a breadth of ideas, resources, and opportunities. In fact, the [faculty features page](#) on the prospective student website, our "brag page" if you will, includes profiles of just a few of our outstanding faculty members. Among them: Professor Jacques Bailly in the Department of Classics, Professor Major Jackson in the Department of English, Professor Yutaka Kono in the Department of Music, Professor Wolfgang Mieder in the Department of German and Russian, Professor Jeff Modereger in the Department of Theatre, and Professor Jonah Steinberg in the Department of Anthropology.

College campuses with their mix of specialized and historic structures are extraordinarily expensive to maintain, and it is true that a number of our buildings could benefit from renovation. UVM is not alone in this regard. We will continue to address our maintenance and renovation needs systematically and over time – over a long time. The STEM facility is our current major undertaking, but before that came the renovation of Old Mill. Recently, we have invested in a number of projects of direct benefit to the humanities including the Billings Library, the Taft School, Royall Tyler Theatre, Wheeler Barn, and Southwick.

The President and I have supported humanities programs as well. In the last several years we have expanded and enhanced the Humanities Center, and approved the creation of Minors in Jewish Studies, Musical Theatre, and Writing. We regularly provide financial support for special events and enrichment activities within the humanities (speakers, conferences, performances, etc.), and we funded the creation of a [publication](#) celebrating the humanities at UVM.

Our support for the humanities is clear.

It is a mistake to frame the humanities and STEM as an “either-or” proposition. The power of what we have to offer as a university lies in the partnerships we forge across disciplines. Just as the engineers and scientists we are preparing to tackle global challenges must be culturally competent and effective communicators, our liberal arts graduates – who will also be called upon to forge solutions to the grand challenges – will live and work in a world that requires a degree of literacy and competency in mathematics, the life and physical sciences, and finance. I am confident that we are preparing *all* of our students to make important contributions to the most pressing issues of our times.

David V. Rosowsky, Ph.D.
Provost and Senior Vice President