

# Anti-intellectualism at UAlbany

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Using state funding as an excuse, the University at Albany is phasing out its classics, French, Italian and Russian departments, while expanding its technologies and business programs. The decision is an act against its middle-class and working-class students who are denied a comprehensive education and are instead trained as bearers of practical skills that have market value.

To deny individuals the full range of education and consequently turn them into instruments of the market is not only betraying an educational ideal. It is a violation of the human right to develop one's full potential.

Humanities do not have market value. They are knowledge that, among other things, enables students to approach the market itself "critique-ally." The university administration, which is more at home in the business world and unsympathetic to intellectual matters, has decided that students do not need such critique-al knowledge.

This is a corporate priority. Corporations demand a work force that is technologically skilled and gets specific jobs done competently without thoughtful questioning of their consequences for the public good or pointing to "other" ways

they can be done.

The humanities are critique-al knowledge rooted in the "other" — other organizations of social relations, other modes of thinking, other forms of behavior, other values and ethics of work. French, Italian, Russian, and classics are essential to providing this knowledge in a world where the "other" is becoming increasingly more significant. Students at Albany are now limited to reading about the "other" in translation.

What is lost in that translation is the otherness of the other. The other is made to be like us. We become estranged from all who are not like us.

The reactions to the proposed Cordoba Center in Manhattan are a symptom of not knowing the "other."

The reduction of the humanities is justified by the vulgar business logic of supply and demand. According to the administration, there are not enough students in these programs. This is ironic because the reason more students are not taking courses in other cultures is the provincial and anti-intellectual culture of pragmatism fostered by the administration.

UAlbany is a "research" unit of the State University system. Its task is not only teaching, but also research. Faculty in foreign languages and cultures

not only make scholarly contributions to contemporary knowledge, but their very presence changes the ecology of knowledge and adds to the range and quality of scholarship in English, philosophy, history and other humanities and social sciences.

UAlbany is becoming a regional campus for training local technocrats and business people by leaving education in "other" languages and culture to those universities that educate the international ruling elite.

These universities are actively establishing centers for global studies. They educate a global elite that knows other languages and cultures and runs the global economy while the University at Albany trains its students for basic jobs in the new economy.

This two-tier education perpetuates class inequalities. Educators are the vanguard of struggles for social equality. But UAlbany is becoming an agent of inequalities. Eliminating these foreign language programs at Albany is a class decision that deprives students of a full education that is available to students in elite universities. It imposes business priorities on education and naturalizes class inequalities.



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**STUDENTS MAKE** their way from one class to the next at the University at Albany, where planned program cuts have raised concerns about whether education there will be driven by corporate priorities.

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