

Good afternoon,

My name is Anna Rouw and I graduated last year from the University of Tulsa with a BA in Political Science. Last week, I was informed of the changes TU intends to implement in order to focus on student success and promote programs that can lead to jobs "central to life." I'm sure you all have received many, many emails in the past week regarding these changes and I hope to be another voice in the chorus urging you to change your mind.

My time at TU was one of the most joyous and educational periods of my life. I made incredible friendships, found a community, and grew both personally and academically. One of the best components of a TU education, in my opinion, is the community and diversity. At TU, I made friends with a wide range of people, not merely my political science cohort. My friends' majors ranged from mechanical engineering, biology, theatre, philosophy, sociology, mathematics, computer science, nursing, education, and marketing, just to name a few. And all of my TU friends have gone on to pursue wonderful careers in their fields, not just my STEM and business-focused friends. Philosophy majors now pursuing careers in medicine and academia, a graduate of the theatre program working with a theatre company, and a range of liberal arts graduates pursuing careers in education, law, social work, and research. As for myself, I am currently working as a non-partisan researcher for the Oklahoma House of Representatives, and I would not have found my passion for public policy had it not been for my TU education. Personally, I believe that policy research, and the chosen professions of my classmates, are jobs "central to life."

But I think this misses the point. While study after study have shown the value of a college degree to secure employment and raise lifetime earnings compared to a non-degree holder, the value of higher education lies not only in its ability to produce job-ready individuals. I mentioned earlier TU's diversity. Looking at colleges when I was 18, I wanted a campus where I would be challenged to think critically. At TU, the vibrancy of all the colleges, A&S, Business, ENS, and Health Sciences, helped me achieve this goal. My peers challenged me to think differently about problems, while I can confidently say I challenged their modes of thinking, too. The intermingling of students from various educational areas produces a holistic, well-rounded, and nuanced approach to thinking about issues. The cutting and reducing of certain programs is not only a disservice to students directly affected, it is a disservice to the education of all.

Lastly, I hope to touch on the report itself. The report was conducted secretly, with little to no input from students and faculty. Further, while the report lists its findings and recommendations, no data is given to validate them. As someone who works for state government, I can tell you that the value of transparency is no small matter. When decisions such as these affect the entire community, an organization ought to include as many voices as possible and be as transparent as possible.

I say this without disrespect but the proposed changes are a bad idea. There is value in a liberal arts education, if not in my individual testimony then in the sheer number of testimonies I'm sure you have received. I hope to continue to proudly call TU my alma mater, but based on its current trajectory, I'm afraid I'll instead do so with embarrassment. I urge you to reconsider.

Thank you,
Anna