



SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

December 16, 2024

Mr. Robert J. (R.J.) Nemer
Office of the President
The University of Akron
Akron, OH 44325-4702

Re: Department of Anthropology

Dear President Nemer,

The Society for American Archaeology (SAA) has learned that the leadership of the University of Akron decided last month to eliminate (“retrench”) the Department of Anthropology. For the reasons outlined below, the SAA strongly urges you to reconsider this choice.

The SAA is an international organization that, since its founding in 1934, has been dedicated to research about and interpretation and protection of the archaeological heritage of the Americas. With more than 6,000 members, the SAA represents professional and avocational archaeologists, archaeology students in colleges and universities, and archaeologists working at tribal agencies, museums, government agencies, and the private sector. The SAA has members throughout the United States, as well as in many nations around the world.

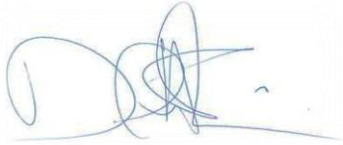
Archaeology is part of the larger discipline of anthropology and is not just about the past. It improves knowledge of human history that contributes to a better understanding of the present, allowing us to make wiser decisions about a future that must grapple with social injustice and inequality, environmental degradation, climate change, and a host of other problems. In addition, archaeology both gives and receives valuable cross-disciplinary activity. Geography, biology, geology, and computer science are just a few of the areas that benefit from archaeological and anthropological data collection and analysis. This is a global endeavor, and the University of Akron has an outstanding reputation in the field, its anthropology department being one of the few that teaches geophysical survey, one of the most important technologies that can be taught to aspiring archaeologists.

The University of Akron is also a leader through its Certificate in Field Archaeology, which trains students to enter cultural resources management, a booming sector where qualified candidates are in high demand. This certificate requires a great many experiential learning opportunities including shovel, pedestrian, and geophysical surveys, excavation, and lab work. There is particular demand for geophysically-trained archaeologists in Cultural Resource Management (CRM), which is a billion dollar per year industry. Akron is, in fact, one of only a

handful of universities in the nation providing such a valuable career pathway.

Anthropology and archaeology are part of a solid liberal arts education and are firmly connected to the “hard” sciences. They provide valuable career opportunities and create solid research that connects with communities, educates us about our shared past, and informs our future. The department’s faculty are preparing a rebuttal report and will present it to the school’s Joint Committee on Retrenchment next month. We urge you to accept their position and reverse the decision to retrench the Department of Anthropology.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Sandweiss', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel H. Sandweiss, Ph.D., RPA
President

Cc: Dr. Timothy Matney