

The Disposability of Humanities

Gray Wo

In the Spring of 2025, my Latin professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago announced to the class that she, along with several other non-tenure track professors, were at risk of losing their jobs. Under a [proposed plan](#), UIC's school of Literatures, Cultural Studies, and Linguistics would be restructuring (and cutting) its departments and offered majors to reduce costs—which, by extension, would result in reduced staff. While this announcement caused some pretty large ripples close to home, it wasn't the first one higher education in Chicago has faced.

In late 2024, Columbia College announced it was going to be [cutting down on its programs](#) as well. Many of the discontinued or combined degrees were based in the arts or humanities, and these changes predicted twenty-five faculty members would lose their jobs.

And now, one of Chicago's most lauded schools, the University of Chicago, is doing the same thing. In July of 2025, The Chicago Maroon, UChicago's official student newspaper, wrote an article breaking down the university's [announcement to restructure](#) its Arts and Humanities division and pause many of its graduate programs ([almost all of which were also humanities based](#)) alongside reactions from UChicago staff.

The article outlines an eerily similar situation to the one we saw at UIC just a few months prior—the work was being placed onto professors to come up with alternative solutions and adjustments to the proposal with a deadline only two months away.

All three of these universities claimed these changes were due to financial deficits and debt, but choosing to cut humanities *is* a choice the universities are making, especially when we can see that not every university is struggling as much as they claim. UIC has just hit its [all time highest enrollment](#).

Why is it that when push comes to shove and money is on the line, it is always the humanities and the arts that are most easily discarded?

In a world that is becoming more and more reliant on technology with each passing year, STEM-based degrees and jobs seem to be held in higher and higher regard while all other education paths fall to the wayside. The use of AI in nearly every sector is beginning to result in computers and code doing the thinking for us, and the reduction and minimization of the programs meant to diversify the thoughts and experiences of students-turned-workers means that the viewpoints we are offered and bring with us as we approach the future will only become more slim.

UIC and UChicago's announcements to restructure their colleges came in the wake of President Trump's crack down on DEI in universities, which ([despite some pretty valid concerns about debt in UChicago's case](#)) is no coincidence. A good chunk of the programs that face being cut, reduced, or reorganized are language and culture based classes. Chicago has one of the [most diverse populations in the U.S.](#) UIC itself is one of the [most diverse schools in the country](#) and claims to be a minority serving institution, yet it is cutting the programs that represent that diversity and those minorities the most.

Now more than ever, in this political and social climate, it is important that places of education remain spaces in which their students feel not only seen and represented, but understood. As the world continues to globalize and we become more interconnected with people from around the world, it is vital that we learn the history and roots of those we are interacting and working with. We risk not only narrowing our own viewpoints, but excluding those that may provide insight from another angle by not having even the most basic understanding of other cultures and people.

The arts and humanities are important. Diversity of thought is important. And our universities cannot claim to truly be places of higher education if they are not offering programs beyond the ones that are most profitable for them and most digestible for those in power.