

Against retrenchment (continued):

Furthermore, my department has a rather large number of minors, and these are not students whose primary orientation is literature, though proponents of retrenchment like to suggest that for the most part small language departments serve students who aren't headed for the world of practical affairs. Many of our students are in fact business majors and engineering majors who are looking to make themselves attractive to German companies by gaining language skills and cultural competence. Let us not deprive them of that crucial competitive edge.

Finally, small language departments generally aren't expensive. Quite the opposite is the case, because salaries are comparatively low, as are overhead costs. Compare the cost of educating a chemistry major with the cost of educating a German major, and you will find that the German major's education is quite a bargain—a great deal for the taxpayer.

Please don't let yourselves be taken in by the pro-retrenchment arguments. They do not stand up to scrutiny. Language departments are relatively inexpensive, and they do something absolutely crucial in an uncertain and globally interconnected world. But don't take my word for it. Ask anyone involved in military intelligence.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Reitter