

A Second Language for Our Home, Juniata College

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Historian Jacques Barzun observes that, in the twentieth century, the United States wasted more than one thousand years of educational experience by producing graduates who could only speak one language. Dr. Allan Goodman, president of the Institute of International Education, argues, “Foreign language study in our nation today is at its lowest level in history.” A decrease in foreign language studies contributes to a national security crisis!

As an international student, I have experienced the benefits of speaking at least two languages fluently, Indonesian and English. Despite my past nightmare of writing CWS papers, tonight I’m proud that I can stand here to speak publicly to Juniata College in my second language. Speaking a second language might just be the key to my success.

President-elect Troha, we clearly state in our mission that a Juniata College education prepares students to become leaders of the globalized world. If this is the case, Dr. Troha, you have to do more and require Juniata students to learn a second language.

And I would encourage all of you, my fellow students and friends, to learn and to speak a second language fluently. Why? First, education has become international. Second, business is international. Third, being international is at the heart of liberal arts education at Juniata College.

Why do we go to Juniata College? Why do we keep complaining about eating Baker food but still study here? Why do we pay that expensive college tuition and put ourselves in huge debt and wake up early for classes?

Education is an investment! A Juniata College degree allows us to be competitive in the job market. But education in the U.S.A. has changed dramatically to become more internationalized. Let me give you some statistics: Open Doors, a study published by the Institute of International Education, reports that the number of international students studying in the United States has increased by 6.5% to a record high in 2012. China and India send the most international students. However, Open Doors reports further that the number of U.S. students studying abroad increased by just 1.3%. The United Kingdom, where the first language is English, is the leading destination.

According to our website, ten percent of Juniata College’s student population is international. And we are expecting more to come! But only twelve out of thirty-four study abroad programs at Juniata are foreign language programs. This means that although we are studying abroad, we will be speaking English at nearly 65% of the sites.

Today, more and more international students are able to speak two languages and thus are better equipped to face the global community. Dr. Troha, is Juniata College still falling behind? Are we paying less attention to foreign language studies? Yes, we are. Now, education is more international than ever. Juniata needs to require students to study a second language.

Alongside education, business has also increased its international networks. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, in 2010, U.S. multinational companies grew remarkably by more than 10%. And, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, foreign investment in the U.S. from all over the world has already increased by 84% in the last decade.

How important is a second language to college students, then? Let us imagine, my fellow students, if we were to send our résumés to a multinational company like Deloitte, General Electric, or Hershey. Now we would be competing with other students who have the same skill set but who speak fluent Chinese. General Electric and Deloitte will prefer to hire the effective students who speak Chinese and who can attend meetings overseas. They are ready for the globalized business world.

Dr. Troha, Juniata College students need to stand out in the international business world. For education, for business, for our bright future, it is common sense that Juniata College needs to require students to study a second language. We would flourish with a second language.

Education and businesses have internationalized. Juniata College as a liberal arts institution values internationalism. On our website, it is written that “a Juniata College student who fully engages in a liberal arts lifestyle recognizes the value of being a citizen of the world.” What better way to be citizen of the world than to know a second language?

Juniata *has* worked hard to internationalize. We already have a Global Engagement Initiative so that 41% students study abroad and nearly 10% of incoming students are international. In 2012, Juniata College became the first rural school to receive the Senator Paul Simon Award for Comprehensive Internationalization. How proud we are as Juniata College students! But we must do more.

President-elect Troha, in a recent college newspaper article you stressed the importance of transparency, global engagement, and academic excellence. Let us combine them! Let us embrace second languages in our second home.

Let us be proud to claim that we, Juniatians, are fluent in two languages in 2020. Make second language courses, Chinese, Spanish, German, French or Russian, part of the graduation requirement! Juniata students will evolve to be active citizens and leaders of the world. And we will be contributing less to the national security crisis.

Terima kasih! Thank you!