



We, the Board of Directors of the Kentucky Museum & Heritage Alliance, wish to express our disappointment in the Western Kentucky University's recent decision to discontinue its support for the M.A. Program in Folk Studies. This program has been a cornerstone of the Department of Folk Studies & Anthropology for the past half century.

As representatives from museums, arts organizations, historical societies, and other cultural institutions throughout the state, we understand that this small yet vibrant program's value and reach extended far beyond Bowling Green. Graduates of the M.A. Program in Folk Studies have gone on to be leaders in museum and heritage work (both public-facing and academic) throughout Kentucky and, indeed, the entire United States. That this program must now experience intentional "demolition by neglect" is a cause for great concern not only among its alumni, but also by many professionals nationwide who knew of it fondly by reputation thanks to its outsized impact within the many disciplines it touched. We are unable to imagine the WKU Department of Folk Studies & Anthropology's continued success without the adequately sized staff of tenure-track faculty and other resources necessary to sustain such important work.

As the KMHA Board of Directors looks to the future, not only for WKU but also for the state of museum and heritage work throughout Kentucky, we strongly encourage you and your colleagues to avoid similar decisions detrimental to the long-term health and stability of the other important programs based within the WKU Department of Folk Studies & Anthropology: the Kentucky Folklife Program and the Kentucky Archaeological Survey. The value of these initiatives to the citizens of the Commonwealth cannot be understated, as they serve constituents throughout the state's 120 counties. There is simply no successor institution elsewhere in Kentucky that is ready to take over either program if they should fail to receive the staffing and resources necessary to operate effectively in Bowling Green. As such, we ask that you continue to ensure their vitality and longevity at WKU.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for understanding just how important the 50-year WKU M.A. Program in Folk Studies remains to museum and heritage professionals throughout Kentucky and beyond. Saddened by its avoidable suspension, we find ourselves more committed than ever to advocating on behalf of the Kentucky Folklife Program and the Kentucky Archaeological Survey. Please be assured that we will be closely monitoring decisions related to their stewardship in the future.

Sincerely,

The Kentucky Museum and Heritage Alliance Board of Directors

Tommy Hines, KMHA President, **WKU Folk Studies M.A. alumnus**  
*South Union Shaker Village, Auburn, Ky.*

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