



## SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

May 23, 2021

President and Vice-Chancellor Lambert  
Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Valentine  
The University of Sheffield  
Western Bank  
Sheffield, UK  
S10 2TN

Dear President Lambert and Provost Valentine,

It is the understanding of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) that the leadership of the University of Sheffield is considering closing the school's archaeology department, and that the final decision will be made during a meeting on May 25. The SAA strongly urges that you and the rest of the University Executive Board (UEB) vote to maintain the department, as it plays a key role in educating many of the archaeologists who carry out their important work around the world.

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 nearly 7,000 members, 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.

Archaeology is the study of the human past through the material remains left behind by those who came before us. The goal is to understand human cultures through their histories and lifeways. By doing so, we are better prepared for our present and future. We cannot, however, tell the stories of our ancestors if we do not properly train the next generations of archaeologists. The University of Sheffield's archaeology department is a storied program that has produced some of the leading scientists in the field, and has led the way in expanding the horizons of the discipline.

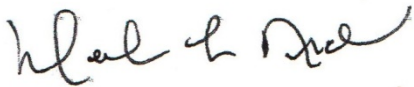
To give just one example, the department is one of the pioneers in zooarchaeology, which plays an enormously important role in the fields of anthropology as well as archaeology. We cannot understand past societies without understanding how their peoples interacted with their environments. Zooarchaeology, through research into the animals that previous humans lived with and around, fills this gap by enabling us to far better understand how those societies functioned in their settings, and how they dealt with changes in those environments. In that respect, when it comes to the challenges posed by the impacts of climate change, zooarchaeology's importance will only grow. The University's zooarchaeology lab is one of the leading facilities in the world, and has trained and hosted many of the world's leading scientists in this area. To close it now would represent a serious setback in our efforts to come to grips with our changing environment.

It is our understanding that a vote will be held this Tuesday, and that the options include 1) maintaining the department; 2) shuttering the department and archaeological research entirely; and 3) discontinuing the department, but maintaining some archaeological and anthropological research, but with most staff still being made redundant. For the reasons mentioned above, the SAA strongly urges the UEB to select

option one, and ensure that the University's archaeology department remains the vibrant and innovative place of higher learning that it has been for decades.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Nichols". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Deborah Nichols, Ph.D., RPA  
President