

Some Fast Facts About The Humanities

Public Investment in Humanities Research, Education, and Public Understanding is Breathtakingly Small

- Government funding for the humanities has fallen sharply since the 1980s; with a current budget for the National Endowment for the Humanities of only \$145 million.⁴
- Federal spending for programs that focus specifically on humanities activities fell from \$855 million in 2008 to \$594 million in 2014.⁵
- And, in 2011, humanities research received only 0.48% of the amount dedicated to science and engineering research and development in higher education.³

Humanities Education is Suffering

- No more than a third of American undergraduates major in the arts and humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences combined — no more than 1% in English language and literature, 1% in foreign languages, 1% in math and statistics, less than 1% in philosophy and religious studies.⁶
- Under 30% of 12th grade students are proficient in writing, history and civics.³
- Similarly, fewer than 30% of public high school students take history courses with a teacher certified in the subject area and with a degree in the field.³

The Humanities Enrich Our Lives and Communities in Myriad Ways, But There are Signs of Slippage

- Studies point to a correlation between the number of humanities courses taken in college and the likelihood of civic engagement.³
- Sixty-eight percent of U.S. adults attended an arts event (theater, museum, or musical performance) in 2010.⁷

In 2012:

- 54% of Americans reported reading a book, a decline from 61% in 1992.
- 24% had visited a historic site in the previous year, a decline from 35% in 1982.
- 21% visited a museum or art gallery in 2012, versus 27% in 1992.⁷

“The humanities are the foundation of the values, freedoms, and civility of society. Excellence in the scholarship and teaching of these disciplines is critically important in an era when rapid advances in the physical sciences and information technology are profoundly altering life and presenting new moral questions and dilemmas.”

— John G. Medlin, Jr., Chairman, Wachovia Corporation; trustee, National Humanities Center (1990–99)



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The humanities are devoted to helping us understand and interpret the human experience, as individuals and societies.



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What are the Humanities?

From an academic standpoint, the humanities include the study of history, philosophy and religion, languages and literatures, fine and performing arts, media and cultural studies, and related fields.

While these disciplines differ in the methods they employ and the materials they examine, together they encompass the range of ways in which we discover and preserve the past, enable a deeper understanding of contemporary concerns, and provide tools for shaping the future.

Humanities research adds to our knowledge of the world as scholars investigate differences between cultures and communities across time; explore the ways we think and believe; and ponder how we create art and meaning from our lives.

Humanities education encourages students to think creatively and critically, to reason, and ask questions. And, as the humanities offer insight into nearly every aspect of life, they have been considered a core element of a well-rounded education since ancient times.

The Humanities Provide Excellent Career Preparation

- More than a third of Fortune 500 CEOs have liberal arts backgrounds, and more of them hold liberal arts B.A.s than professional degrees. The same is true for doctors and lawyers. Almost 60 percent of all U.S.- born CEOs have degrees in humanities.¹
- Four out of five employers agree that all students should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences.²
- In a recent survey of top CEOs, 74% said a liberal arts education was the best fit for today’s global economy.¹
- Between 2000 and 2009, humanities majors scored 9% higher on the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) than business majors.³
- At peak earnings ages, workers who majored in the humanities earn more each year on average than those who majored in professional or pre-professional fields.²



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THE NATIONAL HUMANITIES CENTER

For forty years, the National Humanities Center (NHC) has encouraged excellence in scholarship and teaching while constantly affirming the vital importance of the humanities in American life.

Its influence can most readily be seen in the influential work of NHC Fellows as well as in the classrooms of thousands of teachers at every level across the United States.

Research Support

The Center continuously sparks humanistic scholarship by providing 40 Fellows a year with optimal conditions for free and creative inquiry.

Since 1978, the Center has awarded fellowships to over 1,400 scholars (1,240 from U.S. institutions, 214 from overseas) working in 45 humanistic fields.

Collectively, NHC Fellows have:

- Produced nearly 1,600 books as well as countless essays, articles, and other works.
- Won or been finalists for the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the MacArthur Fellowship, the Pulitzer Prize, the Bancroft Prize, and many others.
- Ninety-nine former Fellows have been made members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, many have become presidents of major learned societies in the United States and other nations, and many more are recognized as leading scholars in their fields.



“...technology alone is not enough—it’s technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the results that make our heart sing.”

— Steve Jobs, founder, Apple Inc.

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“If we value [humanities institutions] and what they make possible, we simply cannot take them for granted. If they are to flourish and survive, they need our sympathy, they call urgently for our attention; they depend upon our support.”

— Francis Oakley, president emeritus, Williams College; trustee emeritus, National Humanities Center; NHC Fellow (1990–91)

Education Programs

Since 1983, when it first welcomed high school history and literature students to participate in seminars led by scholars, the National Humanities Center has been distinctive for its commitment to linking scholarship to improved teaching.

- Millions of visitors each year make use of the Center’s free online resources, which contain hundreds of historical documents, literary texts, works of art and teaching tools.
- Since 1996, NHC summer institutes have attracted more than 1,000 teachers and college instructors from across the United States for in-depth, onsite training at the Center.
- In 2008, the Center launched its award-winning digital lessons and webinar series—30 workshops per year on a wide variety of topics in history, literature, and culture—which allow participants to directly interact with scholars and other teachers while gaining subject knowledge and tools for use in the classroom.

Public Engagement

The Center acts as a forum for increasing public understanding and appreciation for the humanities.

- The Center offers a rich annual schedule of lectures, podcasts, concerts, film screenings, and exhibits as well as periodic conferences and symposia on a variety of topics of public interest and scholarly importance.
- Through its ongoing “Humanities Moments” project, the Center is encouraging people from all walks of life to reflect on the humanities influence in all of our lives and to share their experiences with others.

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SOURCES: 1-Diehl, Randy. “Liberal Arts in the Workforce.” College of Liberal Arts, The University of Texas at Austin. 2-Association of American Colleges and Universities. Liberal Arts Graduates and Employment: Setting the Record Straight. 2014. 3-American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Humanities Report Card. 2013. 4-Bowley, Graham. “A Bill Funding Arts and Humanities Endowments Passes House Committee,” New York Times, July 20, 2017. 5-American Academy of Arts & Sciences. The State of the Humanities: Funding 2014. 6-Oakley, Francis. “Forging the Anchors of the Mind.” News of the National Humanities Center. Winter 2008. 7-National Endowment for the Arts, Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (1982, 1992, 2002, 2012)