AAU encourages Congress to provide $204 million in program funds for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in FY11, including $144 million for national programs and $60 million for the federal/state partnership.

The humanities are central to the missions of U.S. colleges and universities and the cultural life of the nation. Among AAU members, 62 percent of earned doctorates are in humanities fields.

Restoration of NEH Funds to Support Competitive Programs

The President’s proposed FY11 budget would cut the Endowment’s resources at a time when the agency is operating at only about one-third of its demonstrated capacity of $415 million in inflation-adjusted dollars. Specifically, the budget would cut national program funds by $7.2 million (5.6 percent) from $140 million in FY10 to $132.8 million in FY11. The relatively small amount of money saved by the proposed budget would contribute little to overall budget savings but would have a significant impact on the Endowment’s ability to support humanities research and education.

AAU supports the following funding for NEH in FY11:

- $44 million for the competitive national programs, which includes $7.5 million for a new competitively awarded graduate student program; and
- $19.6 million for the federal-state partnership.

The increased support for national programs addresses the fact that, as demonstrated by NEH application rates and feedback from the field – peer-reviewed project demand far exceeds funding available. Only 17 percent of competitive, peer-reviewed project proposals and 7 percent of research fellowships for faculty and independent scholars were funded in FY09.

A new NEH graduate student research and education program would build on the Endowment’s decision to allow graduate students to participate in NEH seminar programs, create new opportunities for collaborative faculty-student research similar to collaborations in the sciences, and help sustain the pipeline of young humanities researchers and scholars. The program would be particularly valuable because the economic recession has hit humanities disciplines the hardest in terms of student enrollment and faculty hiring.

AAU also supports the FY11 budget language citing the NEH’s intentions to “enter into a partnership with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS)...to sustain and extend AAAS’s developmental work on the Humanities Indicators project.”

The Endowment also can play an expanded role in helping Americans develop a broader understanding of other cultures and should be encouraged to broaden its global society programs. In an increasingly interconnected world, Americans need to be more knowledgeable about other cultures.