AAU/ACLS Humanities Convocation: Reinvigorating the Humanities

Welcome and Introduction to the Convocation (9:00 a.m.-9:30 a.m., Ballroom C & D)
Edward M. Hundert, M.D., President, Case Western Reserve University; Chair, AAU/ACLS Humanities Steering Committee

Humanistic Learning and Citizenship in a Global Society (9:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m., Ballroom C & D)
Don Michael Randel, President, University of Chicago; President-elect, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
Thomas Mallon, Deputy Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

A “flatter” world and our changing demography at home call for the knowledge and comparative methods of the humanities. Understanding what it means to be human today and in the past can help us to appreciate varied identities and cultural difference in a diverse and multilingual society. The future will require the ability to engage in acts of cultural translation, to engage with the languages and cultures of others both in the United States and in the world. As concepts of nations and nationalism are changing, these challenges raise crucial questions about citizenship. How can we prepare our students and the public to be citizens in a global society while also teaching the traditions that define what it is to be American? Understanding our own history, including our American traditions of democratic pluralism and diversity, will allow us to be citizens at home and in the world. The panel will consider how the humanities can help to frame and to address the social, cultural, economic, and international relations challenges that we face in the 21st century.

Reading and Knowing in the Information Age (11:15 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Ballroom C & D)
Paul N. Courant, Professor of Economics and Public Policy, and former Provost, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
James O’Donnell, Provost, Georgetown University, also Delegate, American Philological Association

This panel will address the importance of the humanities given the information age that we all live in now. The focus is both to identify how the humanities can help us cope with the wealth of information we are all confronted with and to identify the opportunities for using digital technologies for research and communication with the public, including the preservation and strengthening of libraries and the means of scholarly communication, among other issues.

Luncheon (1:00 p.m.-2:15 p.m., Ballroom A & B)
The Public Sphere of the Humanities
The Honorable James Leach, United States House of Representatives (R-IA)
The Honorable David Price, United States House of Representatives (D-NC)

The AAU Humanities Report recognizes that the federal government, private foundations, and the academic community must collectively work together to tie the humanities to national priorities. While AAU campuses report that there isn’t a crisis in the humanities, they recognize that academia must effectively communicate the relevance of the humanities in the public sphere. The AAU report found that one of the challenges in strengthening the role of the humanities in public policy and beyond is to build bridges between academia and other public sectors. This session will
provide a Washington perspective on the state of the humanities—with an emphasis on how the humanities can move more effectively into national debates and how the academic community can build partnerships outside of academia.

Presidential and Scholarly Leadership in the Humanities (2:30 p.m.-3:45 p.m., Ballroom C & D)
David J. Skorton, President, University of Iowa; President-elect, Cornell University
David Marshall, Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts, University of California, Santa Barbara
Nicola Courtright, Professor of Fine Arts, Amherst College; President-elect and Delegate, College Art Association

This session will highlight the first recommendation in the AAU Humanities Report (the importance of presidential leadership in emphasizing to the university and broader community the fundamental importance of the humanities). Speakers will explain the need for a collective process for making the humanities a major focus in the institutional strategic planning process, without committing institutions to a specific pedagogy or curriculum, and identify the kinds of issues and strategic plans that academic institutions should address regarding the state of the humanities, both from the perspective of a president and a humanities dean/scholar.

Making the Humanities Count (4:15 p.m.-4:45 p.m., Ballroom C & D)

Introduction: Patricia Meyer Spacks, Edgar F. Shannon Professor of English Emerita, University of Virginia; President, American Academy of Arts and Sciences; former Chair, ACLS Board of Directors
Norman M. Bradburn, Senior Fellow, National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago; Co-Chair, Humanities Indicators, American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Building public support of the humanities requires accurate data that demonstrate the need and importance of support. Currently, there is no national data set for the humanities. In conjunction with a consortium of national humanities organizations, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences will create a prototype set of indicators—statistical data about the people who work in the humanities and the work they do—designed to provide a comprehensive picture of the state of the humanities in the United States, from primary to higher education to public humanities activities. Norman Bradburn will discuss what preliminary data reveal about the state of the humanities and how better data might be developed.

Going Forward (4:45 p.m.-5:45 p.m., Ballroom C & D)
David Schaberg, Associate Professor, Asian Languages & Cultures, and Co-Director, Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, Los Angeles
Beth S. Wenger, Katz Family Chair in American Jewish History and Associate Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania

The goal of this session is (l) to suggest a shared agenda based on panel discussions and draft solutions; (2) to suggest ways in which the solutions can be used to bolster this agenda; and (3) to outline follow-up steps to the convocation, both on an individual and institutional level.

Edward M. Hundert, President, Case Western Reserve University
Pauline Yu, President, ACLS

The Charles Homer Haskins Prize Lecture (7:00 p.m.-8:15 p.m., Ballroom C &D)

A Life of Learning
Martin E. Marty, Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus, Divinity School, University of Chicago

Reception and Buffet Dinner in honor of the Haskins Lecturer
(Reception, 8:15 p.m.-9:00 p.m., Courtyard; Buffet Dinner, 9:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m., Ballroom)