The humanities are central to the mission of a research university and must be given high priority in planning and budgeting. Presidents and chancellors need to make sure that message is communicated widely and acted upon. This is my main message today.

In my installation address at The University of Iowa in 2003, I stated—and not for the first time—that few, if any, disciplines or pursuits are more central to the university’s core educational mission, and our deepest lives, than the arts and humanities. On numerous occasions, I have also said that the arts and humanities are the “soul” of the university.

In academia, we are many communities in one, with a common soul of the humanities, of philosophy, of letters, of history, and of the arts, in all their wonderful forms. The arts and humanities are central to the thought processes, purposes, and languages of the university, the foundation of education and inquiry based in critical thinking. At their core, the arts and humanities are about intuiting and imagining possibilities for being human with integrity and value.

We have recently been remembering former University of Iowa and Dartmouth President James Freedman, who passed away not long ago. President Freedman was one of the greatest advocates of the humanities and a liberal education. He wrote, "Liberal education urges upon us a reflectiveness, a tentativeness, a humility, a hospitality to other points of view, a carefulness to be open to correction and new insight that can mitigate these tendencies toward polarity, rigidity, and intolerance." How better to describe a university at its best?

I come to these positions regarding the arts and humanities not as a professional artist or humanist. Although I have a humanistic background from my undergraduate years and a background and continued interest in music, within academia I wear the hats of physician and scientist. Yet as a university leader, and indeed as a university citizen, I believe it is paramount that I advocate strongly for the arts and humanities and that all university presidents do so as well.

During my tenure as Vice President for Research at the UI, federal dollars for arts and humanities faculty decreased. The University itself picked up what slack we could. In some of the leanest years, we devoted up to 50% of our discretionary research funds to support arts and humanities projects. More importantly, we implemented an aggressive lobbying campaign at both the federal and state levels on behalf of arts and humanities funding. I followed the lead of other senior research officers around the Big Ten to lobby for NEH and NEA funding in the 1990s when those entities were threatened with significant cuts, if not extinction. Coming out of these efforts was the University of Iowa’s Arts and Humanities Initiative, a source of dedicated, ongoing funding.
I am proud that our AHI program continues. And even in these times when our universities are under great pressure to focus on economic development, our Research office is also hiring a new Associate Vice President to focus on the arts, humanities, and social sciences.

When I assumed the Presidency at Iowa in 2003, I felt strongly that we needed to continue our institution’s central commitment to the arts and humanities. I thank my colleague Tom Dean for helping me develop the idea of focusing particular years on strengths and priorities that cut across disciplines of our institution. One of our first major acts was to declare 2004-2005 the Year of the Arts and Humanities.

Through this year, our goal was to raise the profile of these fields and help our constituents, alumni, friends, and supporters all recognize and celebrate the immense reach and profound importance of academic arts and humanities. Even more importantly, we strove to emphasize the university’s role in creating for our students a life of discovery. Although our immediate goal was a year-long celebration in which new works would be commissioned and innovative thinkers encouraged to take new steps in their respective disciplines, we viewed this initiative as just the beginning of our larger commitment to the study of that which makes us fully human.

We also envisioned the Year of the Arts and Humanities as central to our public mission. We wanted the celebration to reach deeply and broadly into our communities. Partnerships with cultural, academic, and governmental institutions throughout Iowa were thus crucial.

I wish to acknowledge Jay Semel, Director of Iowa’s Obermann Center of Advanced Studies, and Christopher Merrill, Director of the Iowa International Writing Program and Professor of English. Jay and Chris co-chaired the YAH initiative and were the ones who were central to realizing its success.

The core of the Year was an internal grants program that issued 38 awards totaling close to $130,000. What made this grant program especially distinctive was its requirement that applicants develop a plan with the Iowa public as audience or partner or both.

The results were even more impressive than we had hoped. Some of the projects were:

- Master classes at area schools by jazz performer Joe Lovano, organized by our performing arts center, Hancher Auditorium
- A conference sponsored by the University of Iowa Office of International Programs on Czechoslovakia behind the Iron Curtain at the Cedar Rapids National Czech and Slovak Museum
- A visiting Chinese brush painter conducting calligraphy workshops and demonstrations throughout the state in partnership with our Department of Asian Languages and Literature and numerous local and statewide arts organizations
• Storytelling and painting activities to capture and reflect stories of Alzheimer’s and dementia patients through the Center for Aging and College of Nursing
• Arts and humanities workshops for girls at the Iowa Juvenile Home, building on previous work done at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women, teaching girls to develop self-portraits in painting and poetry that could help them identify and cope with life difficulties.

Following the Year of Arts and Humanities was the Year of Public Engagement, just now completing. While not specifically focused on the arts and humanities, the Year of Public Engagement carried forward the spirit of YAH in its public emphasis and its support of several arts and humanities projects as well. We conducted another grants program, and two examples of winning projects are:

• An oral and documentary history project sponsored by the Iowa Women’s Archives to collect and preserve the stories of Latina women in our state, and
• A web-based project sponsored by the literary journal *The Iowa Review* that collects and displays writing by everyday Iowans.

Many of our institutions have long histories of strength in the arts and humanities. At The University of Iowa, for example, it was the vision of Iowa Graduate College Dean Carl Seashore to grant graduate credit for creative work that turned the modern university into a patron and creator of the arts.

• This was the culmination of an emphasis on the equal status of creative and scholarly work started at Iowa in 1896 with the UI’s first course in creative writing.
• The first masters degrees in the fine arts based on creative work at Iowa were awarded in the 1920s in music and painting. In 1940, Iowa awarded the first MFA’s in the United States.
• By the 1930s, Iowa was awarding Ph.D.’s for creative dissertations in the English field, -and the term (and concept) “writer’s workshop” for the graduate seminar in creative writing was coined.
• As the program developed under the leadership of Paul Engle from the 1940s to the 1960s, it was given control over its own curriculum and activities.
• In 2003, the Workshop won the National Humanities Medal, only the second organization to win that honor (the National Trust for Historic Preservation was the first) and the first university-based organization to be so honored.

But these legacies of the arts and humanities must be nurtured and sustained in our institutions on an ongoing basis. With the traditional lack of significant financial resources from both the public and private sectors in the arts and humanities, university commitment and leadership at the highest levels are critical to maintaining and enhancing their central role not only within the academy, but within our society generally.
Ultimately, the fate of the arts and humanities on our campuses is in the control of the President. There is no excuse not to fund arts and humanities initiatives, and every reason to do so.

Creativity and determination are needed, but there are ways to do it.

- Dollars should be aggressively reallocated toward the arts and humanities.
- Universities need to set a high priority on pursuing philanthropy in the areas of the arts and humanities.
- In the capital campaign just completed at Iowa, we raised $19.3 million for specific arts and humanities activities (Museum of Art, Hancher Auditorium, Old Capitol Museum) and substantial additional funding for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, including funds for a new Art and Art History Building.

Regardless of specific initiatives and strategies, the President's most powerful tool for support of the arts and humanities is the bully pulpit. University leaders should not be afraid—indeed, they should feel compelled—to use a significant amount of their influence and “political capital” in support of the arts and humanities. In the higher education world today, dollars do indeed speak loudly. But the costs in the creative and humanistic realms are inherently smaller, so strong leadership must amplify their importance in and centrality to the higher education mission.

In his book *Becoming a Leader*, Warren Bennis, Distinguished Professor of Business Administration at the University of Southern California and the founding chairman of USC’s Leadership Institute, says that good leadership involves two basic elements: curiosity about the world and the ability to express one’s self fully. This is also the essence of a liberal education, grounded in the arts and humanities. As Bennis says, “The process of becoming a leader is much the same as the process of becoming an integrated human being.” If the arts and humanities are the basis of our own leadership, we must manifest and reflect that groundwork in our own priorities as university academic leaders.

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