AAU REPORT URGES STRONGER EMPHASIS ON HUMANITIES AT RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

While the humanities are experiencing a vigorous revival among the nation's research universities, that trend will not continue unless universities provide their programs with sustained support and fully integrate them into the broader goals of the university, according to a new report by the Association of American Universities (AAU).

To accomplish this, the report calls on research universities to make the humanities a major focus in institutional strategic planning; strengthen the recruitment and placement process for humanities graduate students and encourage undergraduate humanities studies; promote outside humanities programs, including partnerships with K-12 schools; increase the use of digital and information technology in the humanities; and encourage and seek greater outside funding for the humanities, including the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

The humanities include such disciplines as English, history, foreign languages, philosophy, and the arts. These disciplines receive funding from NEH, private foundations, and other organizations, but their primary source of support is the nation's colleges and universities.

AAU is an association of 62 leading public and private research universities. The list of members can be accessed at http://www.aau.edu/aau/members.html.

The report, prepared by the AAU Task Force on the Role and Status of the Humanities, examines the state of the humanities among leading research universities in the United States. It demonstrates that humanities faculty at each of the 62 AAU institutions are engaged in a broad array of innovative activities: from using information technologies to create new language tools and interactive historical archives to collaborating with scientific and engineering disciplines.

But this innovation and creativity cannot be taken for granted, says the report. Some humanities disciplines face declines in student enrollment as well as funding constraints and a shortage of opportunities for young faculty. Moreover, today's focus on the vocational aspect of a college education can overshadow the value of the humanities in the education of all students.
The 19-member AAU task force, which includes eight current AAU university presidents, surveyed the organization’s 62 campuses to examine how the humanities are being supported at large research universities and whether they are receiving appropriate emphasis.

“We found that universities are supporting a wide variety of humanities projects and facilities, but many of these efforts are being carried out on an ad hoc basis, without full integration into the broader goals of the university,” said University of Virginia President John Casteen, who chairs the AAU task force. “For that reason, our report recommends that university presidents and chancellors purposefully incorporate the humanities into their institutional planning and that they regularly remind the university and the broader community of the fundamental importance of the humanities.”

He added, "The humanities, more than any other area of study, help us to define who we are – as individuals, as a society, and even as a planet – and who we wish to be in the future. No research university can succeed without an extensive, vigorous humanities program.”

AAU President Nils Hasselmo said that AAU would follow up the report by encouraging its member universities to set up campus-based roundtables to re-examine the role of the humanities in academic and community life. "AAU is seeking ways to translate this report into a national action plan," he said. “It is important that our campuses work together to achieve our common goal of reinvigorating the study of humanities.”

"Reinvigorating the Humanities: Enhancing Research and Education on Campus and Beyond" is available on the AAU Web site at: [http://www.aau.edu/issues/humanities.html](http://www.aau.edu/issues/humanities.html).

A list of sample projects is enclosed. There also are contacts and projects at each of the 62 AAU campuses.

The report’s recommendations are as follows:

1. University presidents and chancellors should make the humanities a major focus in institutional strategic planning, and should regularly emphasize to the university and the broader community the fundamental importance of the humanities.

2. University presidents, provosts, and humanities deans should seek out, enlist, and support faculty leadership in building strong humanities programs, and should provide mechanisms for evaluating and selectively funding faculty-driven initiatives.

3. Universities should strengthen the recruitment and placement process for humanities graduate students and should seek ways to encourage undergraduate students to study the humanities.

4. University presidents, provosts, and humanities deans should provide flexible structures for interaction and collaboration across humanities disciplines, and among the humanities and the social and natural sciences and the professional schools.
5. Universities should promote successful programs in the humanities inside and outside the institution, and build partnerships with K-12 schools and other educational and cultural organizations.

6. Universities should seek new opportunities to strengthen foreign language and cultural instruction.

7. University presidents, provosts, and humanities deans should support the development and use of digital information and technology in the humanities.

8. University presidents, provosts, and humanities deans should take responsibility for sustaining the vigor and quality of humanities scholarship and its dissemination and preservation through book publishing and other appropriate communication mechanisms.

9. University presidents, provosts, and humanities deans should provide funding for selected strategic initiatives in the humanities and encourage and support outside fundraising.

10. AAU and the leaders of its universities should work with other universities and organizations in a concerted effort to increase funding for the humanities through the federal government and private foundations.

The AAU humanities task force was created in 2001. Following is the list of members:

John T. Casteen, III, President, University of Virginia (Task Force Chair)
George Rupp, President Emeritus, Columbia University (Task Force Co-Chair, October 2001-June 2002)
Robert Berdahl, Chancellor, University of California, Berkeley
Lee Bollinger, President, Columbia University
William Chace, President Emeritus, Emory University
Rebecca Chopp, President, Colgate University (formerly Dean, Yale Divinity School, Yale University and Provost, Emory University) (through July 2002)
Robert Connor, President, Teagle Foundation (formerly Director, National Humanities Center)
Edward Hundert, President, Case Western Reserve University
Shirley Strum Kenny, President, Stony Brook University-State University of New York
Steven Knapp, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, The Johns Hopkins University
Don Michael Randel, President, University of Chicago
Hunter Rawlings, President Emeritus, Cornell University
John Sexton, President, New York University
Ruth Simmons, President, Brown University
Catharine R. Stimpson, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Science, New York University
Teresa Sullivan, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, The University of Texas System (formerly Vice President and Graduate Dean, The University of Texas at Austin)
Jon Whitmore, President, Texas Tech University (formerly Provost, The University of Iowa)
Pauline Yu, President, American Council of Learned Societies (formerly Dean, College of Humanities, University of California, Los Angeles)
Nils Hasselmo, President, Association of American Universities (ex officio)

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*The Association of American Universities is an association of sixty US and two Canadian research universities organized to develop and implement effective national and institutional policies supporting research and scholarship, graduate and professional education, undergraduate education, and public service in research universities.*