

# University of New Hampshire

## Center for the Humanities

### Strategic Plan Draft 11: June 23, 2009

#### Introduction

In 1986, the University of New Hampshire created the Center for the Humanities as one of four Centers of Excellence. The effort to create a center to promote excellence in the humanities involved many faculty in the College of Liberal Arts as well as both the dean of the college and the vice president for academic affairs. Shortly after opening its doors, the Center won a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities which established an endowment, assuring some degree of fiscal stability. The Center has created a wide range of programs including an annual cycle of grants and fellowships for UNH faculty, lecture series, interdisciplinary faculty seminars, its own research and outreach projects, and many special initiatives. A unit of the College of Liberal Arts, the Center is the administrative home for the Center for New England Culture as well as three interdisciplinary minors: Africana and African American Studies; American Studies; and Race, Culture, and Power.

#### The Humanities

The Center uses an expansive definition of the humanities. We refer to the 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act, which established the National Endowment for the Humanities. That act reads, in part:

*The term "humanities" includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods; and the study and application of the humanities to the human environment with particular attention to reflecting our diverse heritage, traditions, and history and to the relevance of the humanities to the current conditions of national life.*

Many scholars and citizens agree that the study of the humanities is essential for understanding the ways humans create and find meaning in their world. In an academic context in which scientific and technical fields increasingly seem to be emphasized it is especially important that the reflective, interpretive, and analytical perspectives of the humanities remain at the core of the balanced liberal education the University of New Hampshire holds as a goal. At the same time, it is crucial that humanities scholars

articulate the value of their work in ways that relate to contemporary concerns, and that we challenge ourselves to create--in our institution, in our scholarship, and for our students--forms of engagement that emphasize the importance of the humanities for lives lived fully. As United States Supreme Court Associate Justice David Souter remarked recently, "The case for the humanities is not the case for a narrow constituency."

## **Vision**

Certain that the study and appreciation of literature, languages, history, the arts, philosophy, and culture itself are at the core of liberal education and essential for civil society, the Center for the Humanities is an integrative and agile research institute devoted to faculty excellence in the humanities. The Humanities Center strives to be an intellectual crossroads, inspiring and integrating excellence in scholarship teaching, and public engagement. The Center assumes primary responsibility for sustaining a culture of distinction in all its endeavors: serving as a catalyst for excellence and innovation; linking faculty across departments and programs to inspire new forms of creativity, collaboration and the production of new knowledge; supporting the highest quality individual research projects; developing new relationships between the humanities and the arts; promoting outreach and engagement with the humanities across the university and the state; and engaging the globalizing world on behalf of the University in ways deeply informed by the perspectives of the humanities.

## **Mission**

The Center for the Humanities fosters excellence in the humanities, broadly conceived, at the University of New Hampshire. Center resources and programs support faculty scholarship, encourage reflection and inquiry across the university community and beyond, create interdisciplinary initiatives in many forms, and undertake special projects to raise the visibility of the humanities. To accomplish this, the Center endeavors to support the highest quality work by UNH humanities faculty, to build productive collaboration among faculty within and across disciplines, and to create singular projects that advance its goals on campus and in the world beyond. By pursuing its mission, the Center supports the University's research mission in particular, as well as its academic plan.

The Center accomplishes its mission by:

- Working in broad consultation with humanities faculty
- Providing funding and other forms of support, including fellowships, for excellence in faculty scholarship
- Acting as a catalyst and site for interdisciplinary collaboration among faculty
- Designing and supporting humanities programs, such as lecture series and conferences, for the university community and beyond

- Undertaking special projects that use the intellectual resources of the university in innovative and significant ways
- Offering workshops, seminars, and other opportunities for faculty development in the humanities
- Building intellectual community among humanities faculty and colleagues across the university
- Sponsoring interdisciplinary and innovative programs that capitalize on faculty strengths and interests, including the Center for New England Culture, and the minors in Africana and African American Studies, American Studies, and Race, Culture and Power
- Initiating its own public projects and encouraging and aiding faculty in outreach and engagement, sharing the intellectual riches of the university with the broader world

## Values

A set of core values guides the Center for the Humanities in its work and its dedication to creating a vibrant and productive humanities culture at the University of New Hampshire.

- **Academic Freedom:** The Center is committed to long-established principles of academic freedom, believing that freedom of inquiry and expression are at the foundation of our mission.
- **Excellence:** The Center supports, nurtures, and recognizes the highest quality and most promising work in the humanities.
- **Innovation:** The Center is a site of creativity in research. It serves as a crossroads, encouraging endeavors that cross disciplinary lines and intellectual borders.
- **Continuity:** Recognizing that much excellent humanities scholarship builds on its intellectual predecessors, the Center strives to find a balance between innovation and continuity.
- **Diversity:** The Center embraces, advocates for, and attempts to create opportunities for diversity as outlined in the University of New Hampshire's "Excellence in Diversity" initiative and as the concept applies to intellectual traditions, innovations, and directions.
- **Collaboration:** The Center strives to create and work in a collegial environment, believing that our mission is enhanced when we consult, convene, and listen carefully to our colleagues. We also work collaboratively with stakeholders who share our mission, on campus and in the public and private sectors.
- **Efficiency:** In a fiscally-constrained environment, it is essential that the Center make the most of its funds and other resources.
- **Entrepreneurship:** The Center must work creatively to enhance its financial resources and to develop new programs with mechanisms for support.

- **Advocacy and Impartiality:** The Center advocates for the humanities on the university campus and beyond. At the same time, the Center uses a panel process for the competitive awarding of significant funding, allowing Center staff to remain neutral in the process of awarding competitive support.

### **Critical Questions**

As part of the strategic planning process, the Center for the Humanities focused on eleven questions central to envisioning the future. The goals, actions and assessments in the following section are the direct result of discussions of these questions.

1. To what extent should the Center's program of semester-long research fellowships for UNH humanities faculty remain the highest priority?
2. Should the Center for the Humanities continue to use its resources in the form of small grants to faculty for their research and for public programs on campus, or should it redirect those funds to Center-directed, thematic, hallmark projects?
3. Should the Center for the Humanities devote more time and resources to bringing faculty together around interdisciplinary problems and projects?
4. Should the Center for the Humanities devote time and resources to outreach and engagement scholarship?
5. Should the Center for the Humanities invest staff time in writing grant proposals and other forms of fund-raising?
6. Should the Center for the Humanities work to create more of a sense of community among humanities faculty?
7. Should the Center for the Humanities focus on creating a physical space that serves as locus for activity in the humanities?
8. Should the Center for the Humanities be the administrative home for additional minors and other interdisciplinary programs?
9. Should the Center and the Humanities Program forge a stronger connection?
10. Should the Center for the Humanities remain part of the College of Liberal Arts, or should it be structured in a more university-wide role?

11. Should the Center for the Humanities become a center for the arts and humanities or otherwise extend its mission to embrace the fine and performing arts?

### **The Next Five Years: Executive summary**

The humanities are essential and central in university and public life. Building on its distinguished record of accomplishment, the Center will continue its work to inspire, nurture, and support a vibrant humanities culture at the University of New Hampshire. To accomplish those goals, the Center will serve as an advocate for the humanities in the College of Liberal Arts, the University, and beyond. Using resources carefully, the Center will attempt to focus its initiatives to advance its goals. This will include soliciting proposals for fellowships dedicated to themes, priorities, or projects established by the Center, and re-fashioning the Hayes Chair in the Humanities to connect it more intentionally to Center goals and programs. More broadly, the Center will work to stabilize and then increase funding for Center fellowships and other initiatives, and to inspire and seed innovative and interdisciplinary initiatives. As part of this effort, the Center will review its other funding programs to establish priorities for the use of its resources and work with the College and the UNH Foundation to establish fund-raising priorities. The Center will work to strengthen enrollment and faculty engagement in the three academic minors under its auspices, while also considering new initiatives that might embrace or recast the minors, such as ethnic studies. The Center will explore the possibilities of further integrating the fine and performing arts into its mission. A major premise of this vision is that the Center will work to increase resources and to continue to create programs of campus-wide significance. A second major premise is that the Center will form alliances appropriate for multidisciplinary work in a globalized world.

### **Priorities and Actions**

#### *Theme A: Faculty Scholarship*

Priority: Stabilize funding for faculty fellowships in the Center for the Humanities

- Fellowships in support of scholarship are the Center's highest priority
- The need for research time in the humanities is paramount nationally, and it is particularly acute at UNH

Actions:

- Short-term: Work with the College of Liberal Arts and the UNH Foundation to assure, at a minimum, the continuity of funding for five faculty fellowships each year.
- Over five years: In collaboration with the College of Liberal Arts and the UNH Foundation work to establish Center fellowships as a fund-raising priority, recognizing that external grant support is not likely for local fellowships.

- Continue to support College of Liberal Arts faculty in the development of competitive grant seeking and grant writing skills, enabling them to secure awards for their individual scholarship and for the benefit of the University.
- Work with the Vice President for Research, Media Relations, and other UNH stakeholders to raise awareness of the importance of humanities scholarship.
- Seek to move the Center to a facility more appropriate to its mission as a research institute and site of interdisciplinary, collaborative endeavors.

*Theme B: Focused Initiatives*

Priority: Strategically explore and implement Center-determined themes or areas of emphasis for hallmark initiatives that will advance and inspire humanities work, public engagement, and financial support.

Actions:

- Work with Center advisory board and other collaborators to discuss the feasibility of dedicating a portion of Center resources to themes we establish.
- Define certain fellowship opportunities in accordance with potential Center programming.
- Create programs building on the example of *The End(s) of the Humanities*, to engage faculty in cross-disciplinary collaboration.
- Create thematic initiatives that advance broad university initiatives, as in linking the Sidore Lectures to the University Dialogue.
- Work with Media Relations to promote lecture series and other events more prominently.
- Develop marketing skills, website, and the promotional skills of staff.
- Work with Yale University Press on a digitized version of the Center's *Encyclopedia of New England* and other *ENE*-related initiatives to capitalize on one of the Center's major research projects.

Priority: Link the James H. and Claire Short Hayes Chair in the Humanities more closely to goals and initiatives in the Center for the Humanities.

Actions:

- Restructure the process of selecting the Hayes Chair.
- Create a series of guidelines in which the Center and the Chair are more closely linked while protecting the autonomy of the recipient of the Chair.
- Create a structure in which the Chair's work provides benefits for the Center.

*Theme C: Integration of Research and Teaching*

Priority: Build faculty engagement with, and student enrollment in, Africana and African American Studies, American Studies, and Race, Culture and Power.

Actions:

- Work with Minors Advisory Board and the Center's associate coordinator for academic minors to create a long-range plan for recruitment and faculty engagement. This will include considering new formations and initiatives, such as the creation of a program in ethnic studies.
- Develop study-abroad opportunities for students in the minors at the University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

Priority: Explore administrative or other relationships with unaligned interdisciplinary minors and the Humanities Program.

Actions:

- In consultation with the Minors Advisory Board, create a policy for Center relationships to academic minors.
- Engage faculty and staff in the Humanities Program in discussions of the relationship between the Humanities Center and the Humanities Program, seeking common ground, efficiencies and collaboration.
- Explore financial resources for staff and program support for these initiatives.

#### *Theme D: The Humanities and the Arts*

Priority: Explore expansion of the Center for the Humanities mission to engage more directly with the fine and performing arts.

Actions:

- Initiate preliminary discussions with the Provost, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and the Vice President for Research on the feasibility of expanding the Center's mission both in terms of institutional planning for the arts and the availability of resources.
- Engage stakeholders including chairs of departments in the COLA Arts Division, faculty, Center advisory board members, and others in discussions of the viability of options ranging from expanded programs in the Center to the redefining of the Center as an Institute for the Arts and Humanities.

#### *Theme E: Resources*

Priority: Increase resources for Center activities, including fellowships, grants to faculty, the Center for New England Culture, the three minors, and new ventures including becoming a Center for Arts and Humanities.

Actions:

- Present this strategic plan to the UNH Foundation and the College of Liberal Arts and work to develop fund-raising priorities that strengthen Center initiatives and which are aligned with the University's strategic planning.
- Engage in strategic grant-writing to raise funds for specific initiatives.
- Work with the Three Minors Advisory Board to develop grant-writing and other fund-raising activities in support of minors activities.
- Explore the possibility of a major challenge grant proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities, focusing on the creation of a center for arts and humanities.

*Theme F: Visibility and Participation*

Priority: Expand the reach and success of program publicity and participation on campus and beyond.

Actions:

- Fund staff participation in training for marketing and publicizing Center activities both on and off campus.
- Create initiatives for outreach to colleagues in interdisciplinary ventures.
- Create initiatives to embrace the fine and performing arts.

*Theme G: A Global Humanities Center*

Priority: Situate the Center's work in a globalized context.

Actions:

- Create collaborative ventures with analogous units at the University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- Seek other opportunities to engage UNH faculty in inquiries into the forms, principles, and effects of cultural dynamics in a globalizing world.

*Theme H: In Institutional Context*

Priority: As the University of New Hampshire completes its central strategic plan, we must retain flexibility and agility so as to position our work within the goals and priorities that plan articulates.

Action:

- In discussions with the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, advisory board members, and other stakeholders, consider modifying this plan so as to take advantage of opportunities, reinforce priorities, and otherwise situate the Center's work within the overall strategy and specific initiatives that emerge as the university finishes its strategic plan.

### ***Appendix: The Broad Context***

The significance, definition, and uses of the humanities are the subject of ongoing national and international discussion. As the Center for the Humanities does its work, it is essential that we be mindful of the context in which we exist, as exemplified by the following issues:

- ***Relevance.*** In a changing world, many agree that the humanities are as essential as ever in education and for living a thoughtful, productive life. But as the pace of change—technological, political, social, and in other realms—accelerates, how do the humanities continue to demonstrate their significance in the world?
- ***Interdisciplinarity.*** How is knowledge configured in the humanities, and how is that served, or not served, by departmental structures and other disciplinary boundaries? Should we encourage more boundary-crossing alliances in research and teaching in the humanities? What is the Center for the Humanities' role in helping foster new alliances, and what might the university look like as a result?
- ***The broadening of the humanities' scope.*** With new configurations of knowledge, new linkages between fields, and, more generally, the widening of many humanists' gaze, how can a research center embrace a broader view, with all that entails, of the humanities?
- ***The arts and the humanities.*** It was once a cliché that artists perform and do, while humanists talk about artistic production, and in many cases funding mechanisms and other forms of support were imagined as separate entities for each of the two broad realms. Does such a distinction continue to make sense?
- ***The humanities and participation in civil society.*** Are teaching and research public work? Are humanities classrooms a point of entry into civil society? What constitutes engagement and outreach on the part of humanities scholars?
- ***The curriculum.*** What is the role of the humanities in the teaching mission of the university? What is the role of the Center in regard to curriculum?
- ***Changing forms of research.*** With technological change, the much-debated crisis in academic publishing, the decline in library resources at many institutions, what many perceive as increased university expectations in research, and the broadening, in some fields, of understanding of forms and distribution of research, how can a research center continue to support and nurture excellence

in humanities scholarship? If time has generally been the most pressing need for most humanities researcher, is that still the case?

- ***The humanities and the schools.*** Early data from the *Humanities Indicators Project* suggest that there is little connection between university humanists and teachers in K-12 education. Should a humanities center work to bridge that gulf?
- ***The funding environment.*** What is the role of a humanities center vis a vis sponsored research? Should the Center work to engender a research and outreach culture oriented toward external funding? How can that be accomplished in the university?