

International Conference on Higher Education (ICHE)

The Liberal Arts/ Humanities and the Professionalization of the Undergraduate Curriculum

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What Are the Humanities/ Liberal Arts?

What Are the Humanities?

The humanities can be described as the study of how people process and document the human experience. Since humans developed these abilities, we have used philosophy, literature, religion, art, music, history and language to understand and record our world. These modes of expression have become some of the subjects that traditionally fall under the humanities umbrella. Knowledge of these records of human experience gives us the opportunity to feel a sense of connection to those who have come before us, as well as to our contemporaries.

Humanities

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The humanities are academic disciplines that study human culture. The humanities use methods that are primarily critical, or speculative, and have a significant historical element - as distinguished from the mainly empirical approaches of the natural sciences. The humanities include ancient and modern languages, literature, philosophy, religion, and musicology. Areas that are sometimes regarded as social sciences and sometimes as humanities include history, archaeology, anthropology, area studies, communication studies, classical studies, law, semiotics and linguistics.

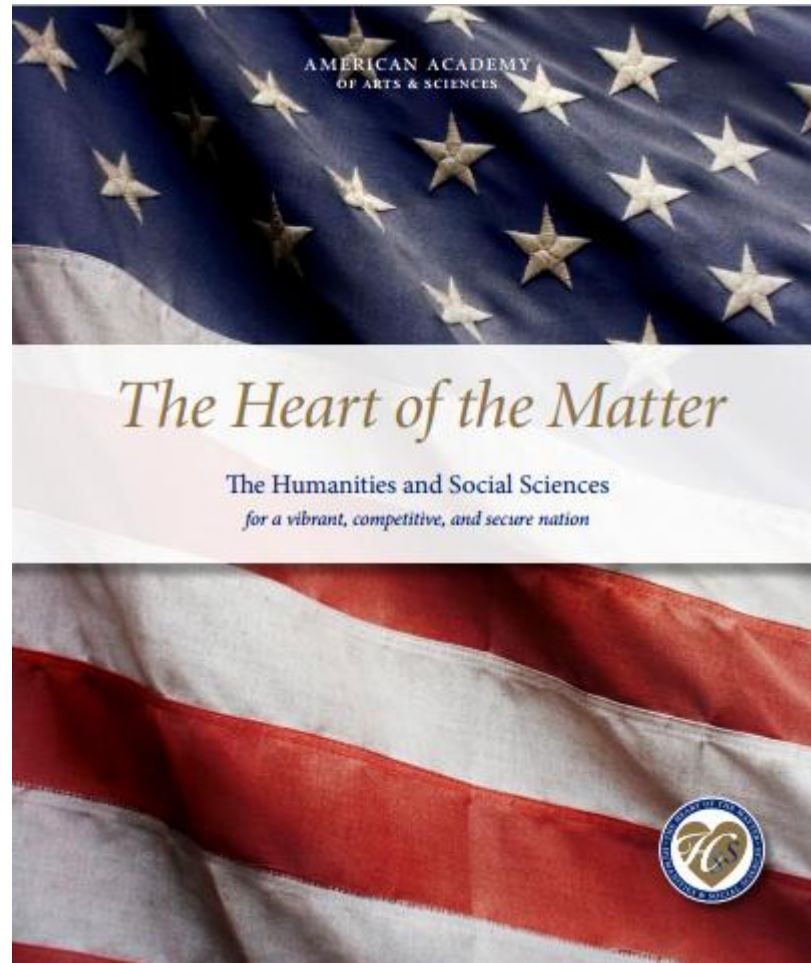
Liberal Arts

From Merriam-Webster Dictionary

“areas of study (such as history, language, and literature) that are intended to give you general knowledge rather than to develop specific skills needed for a profession”

The Importance of the Humanities/ Liberal Arts

Commission of the Humanities



We live in a world characterized by change—and therefore a world dependent on the humanities and social sciences. How do we understand and manage change if we have no notion of the past? How do we understand ourselves if we have no notion of a society, culture, or world different from the one in which we live? A fully balanced curriculum—including the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences—provides opportunities for integrative thinking and imagination, for creativity and discovery, and for good citizenship. The humanities and social sciences are not merely elective, nor are they elite or elitist. They go beyond the immediate and instrumental to help us understand the past and the future. They are necessary and they require our support in challenging times as well as in times of prosperity. They are critical to our pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness, as described by our nation’s founders. They are *The Heart of the Matter*.

(p. 13)

A general education is just as important today, and it is just as clear that it must include the humanities and the social sciences. The humanities—including the study of languages, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, comparative religion, ethics, and the arts—are disciplines of memory and imagination, telling us where we have been and helping us envision where we are going. The social sciences—including anthropology, archaeology, economics, political science, sociology, and psychology—are disciplines of behavioral, interpersonal, and organizational processes, employing empirical and scientific methods to reveal patterns in the lives of real people.

(p. 17)

Together, they provide an intellectual framework and context for understanding and thriving in a changing world, and they connect us with our global community. When we study these subjects, we learn not only what but how and why. The humanities and social sciences teach us to question, analyze, debate, evaluate, interpret, synthesize, compare evidence, and communicate—skills that are critically important in shaping adults who can become independent thinkers.

(p. 17)

The reason some of us are so committed to liberal education is not because we want students to wander through obscure and irrelevant fields of study in a meaningless quest for “breadth” but because from first-hand experience we know the immense, life-long benefits of rigorous study of the liberal arts and sciences. Among other benefits such study strengthens clarity of written and oral expression, critical and analytic reasoning, and the creativity to think outside the box—survival skills in a tough and ever-changing economy.

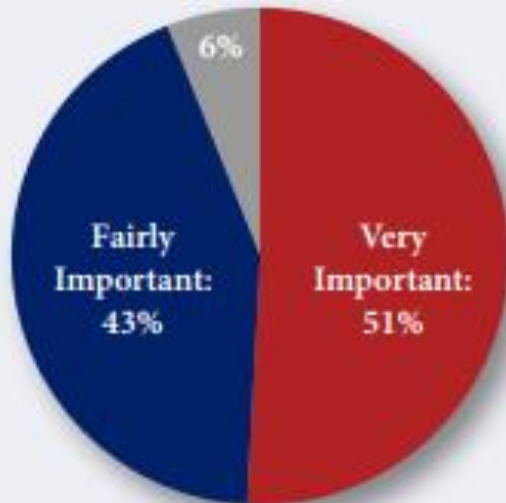
—From **W. Robert Connor** (www.wrobertconnor.com), *News & Observer*, November 12, 2012

(p. 22)

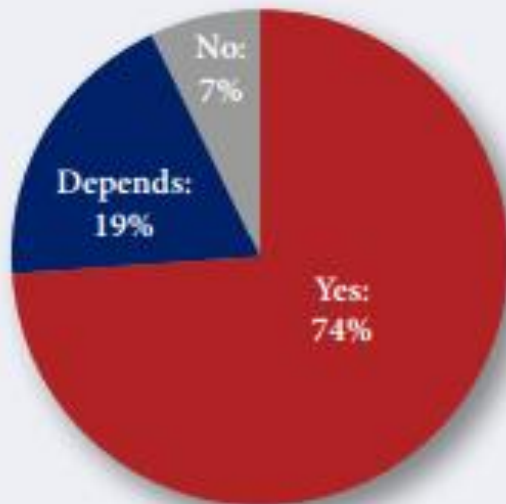
Employers who were surveyed were given the following definition of “liberal education”: “This approach to a college education provides both broad knowledge in a variety of areas of study and knowledge in a specific major or field of interest. It also helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as intellectual and practical skills that span all areas of study, such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.”

(p. 33)

**Somewhat
Important:**



**Employers endorse the concept
of a liberal education.**



**Three in four would recommend
the concept of a liberal education
to their own child or a young
person they know.**

Business leaders today are looking for a diversity of skills, and not just technical knowledge. Pivotal right now in financial services—a relationship business—is trust built around empathy, understanding, listening skills, critical thinking. It's not enough in financial services to simply be able to work with a spreadsheet. You need to convince your individual or institutional clients to take the right set of actions. The skills that come out of the humanities, the softer relationship skills—listening, empathy, an appreciation for context—are incredibly important. Of the individuals in my organization who receive the most consistently positive feedback—who are most valued by our clients—only a sliver ever went to business school. Most of them learned their financial activities at our firm, but came into the firm with a much broader range of skills.

—**Roger W. Ferguson, Jr.**, President and Chief Executive Officer, TIAA-CREF

(p. 34)

As colleges and universities develop digital media resources to increase access to a worldwide public, gifted teachers and scholars from all domains of study will experiment with these methods and explore their new powers. Clearly, we are on the eve of a new age of teaching and learning, the dimensions of which we can only begin to envision.

(p. 35)

There is no reason liberal arts education cannot flourish in a new environment using new tools. The future will still need the human skills that the liberal arts promote, and perhaps will need them more than ever: skills in communication, interpretation, linking and synthesizing domains of knowledge, and imbuing facts with meaning and value.

(p. 35)

The Heart of the Matter identifies three overarching goals:

1) to educate Americans in the knowledge, skills, and understanding they will need to thrive in a twenty-first-century democracy;

2) to foster a society that is innovative, competitive, and strong; and

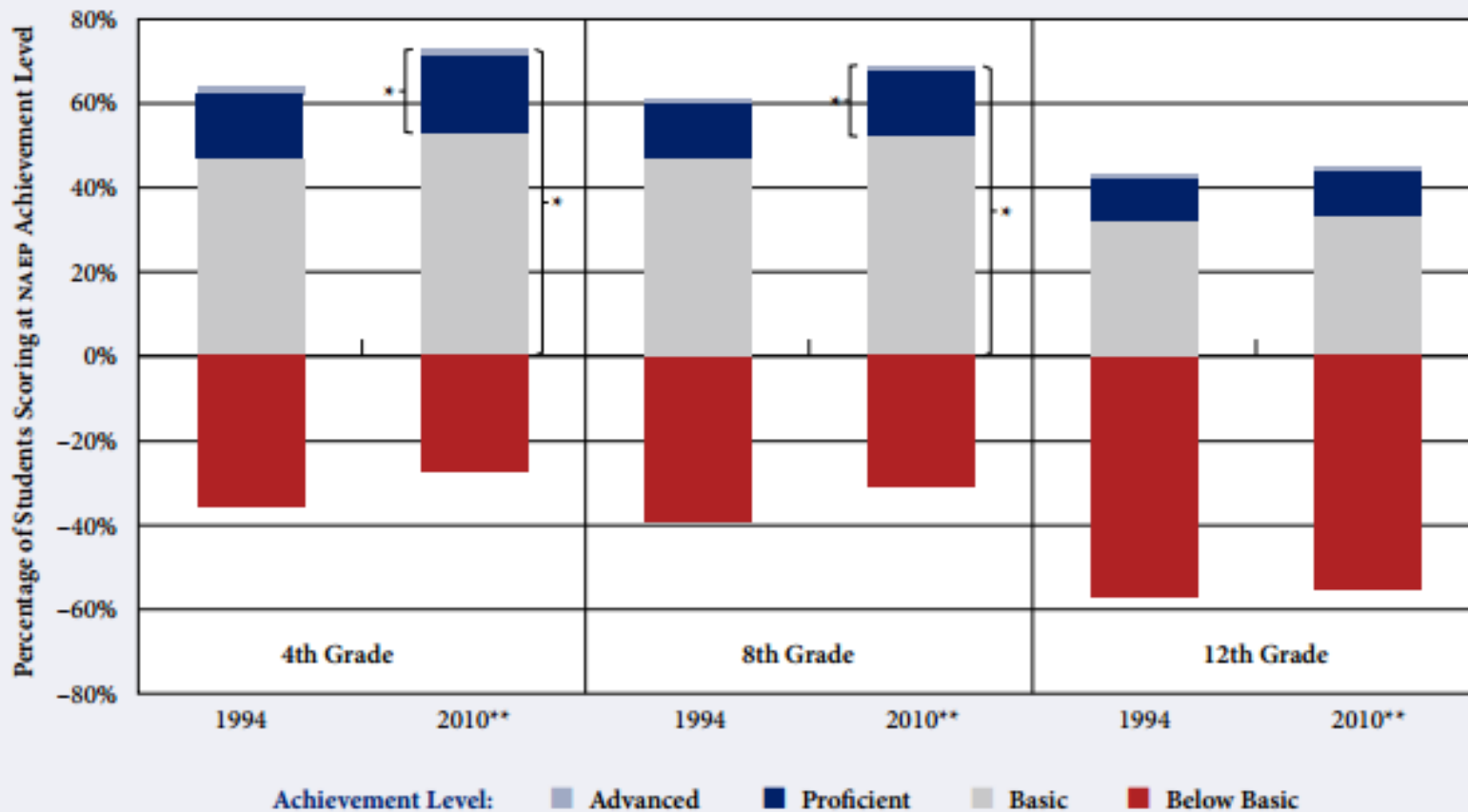
3) to equip the nation for leadership in an interconnected world. These goals cannot be achieved by science alone

The Talked About Crisis
or
The Numbers Crisis

Evidence of the particular needs of the humanities and social sciences now reaches us from every sector. Parents are not reading to their children as frequently as they once did. Humanities teachers, particularly in K-12 history, are even less well-trained than teachers of STEM subjects. And funding to support international education has been cut by 41 percent in four years. Each of these pieces of evidence suggests a problem; together, they suggest a pattern that will have grave, long-term consequences for the nation.

(p. 9)

History Achievement of 4th, 8th, and 12th Graders as Measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1994 and 2010

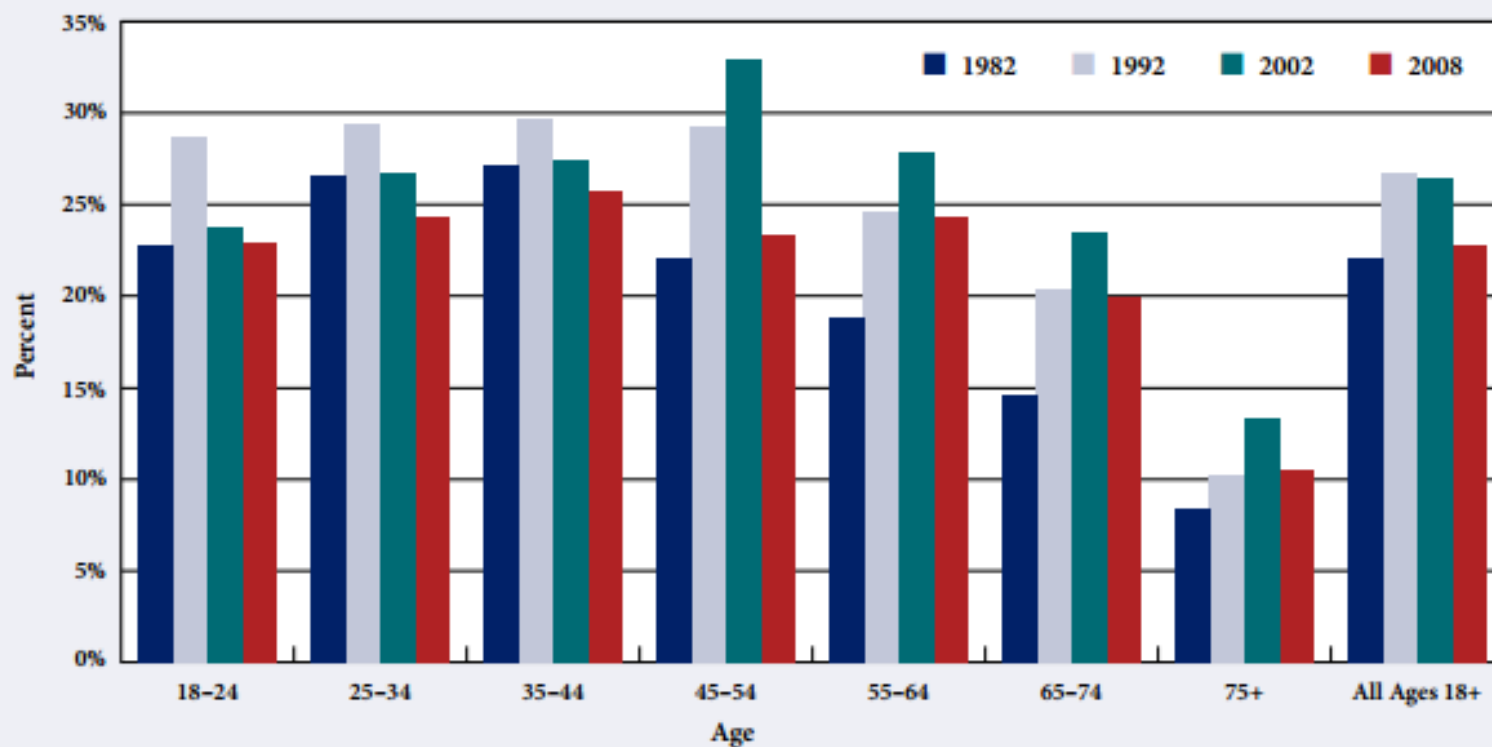


* The percentage of students scoring at or above this level was significantly different ($p < .05$) from the percentage in 1994.

** Accommodations permitted for English language learners and students with disabilities.

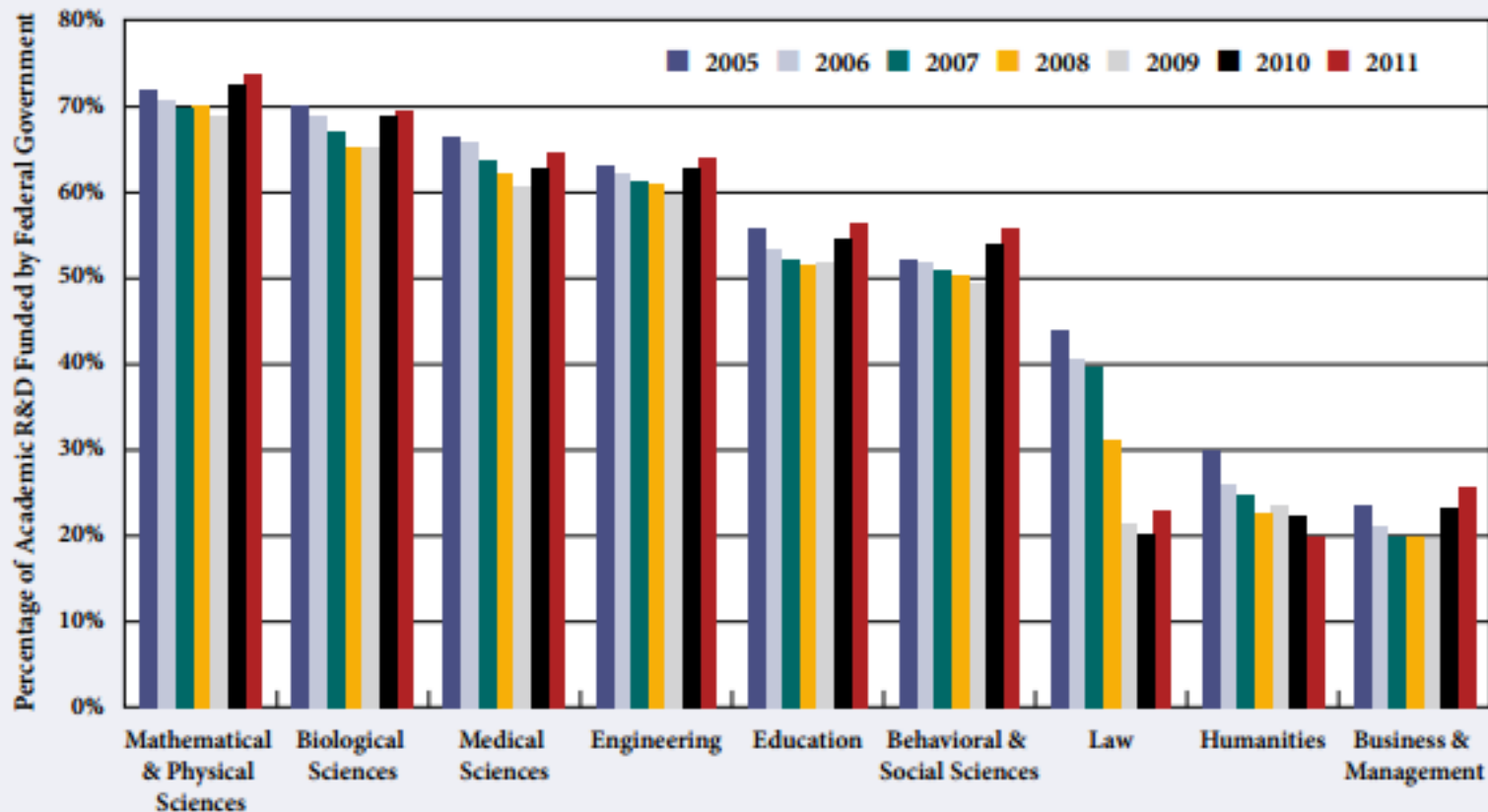
Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress, *The Nation's Report Card: U.S. History 2010*, NCEES 2011-468 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011), 2 fig. C.

Percentage of Americans 18 Years and Older Who Visited an Art Museum or Gallery in the Previous 12 Months, by Age, 1982–2008



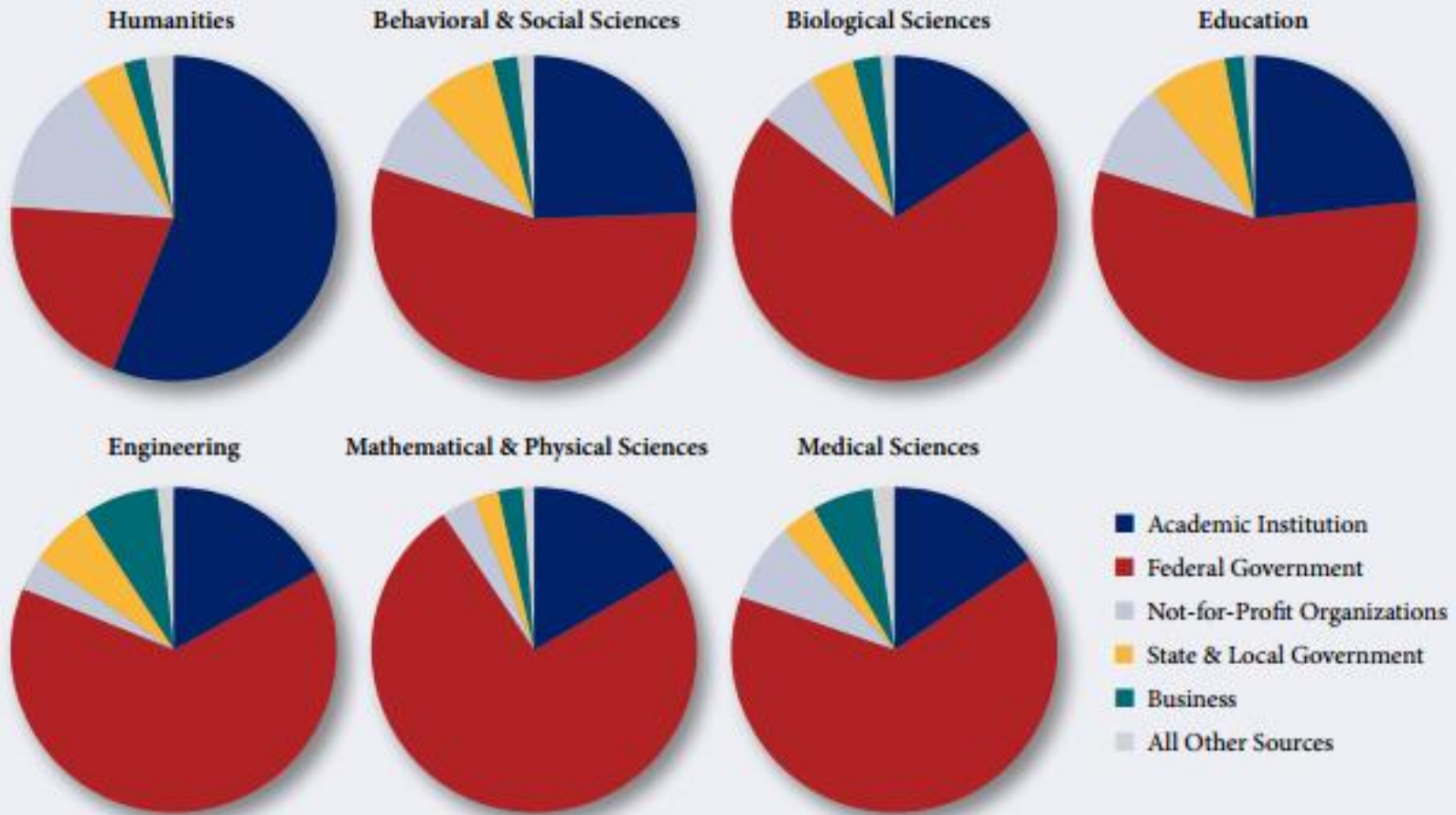
Source: National Endowment for the Arts, Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (1982, 1992, 2002, 2008). Estimates generated using the Cultural Policy and the Arts Data Archive's (CPANDA) online data analysis system at <http://www.cpanda.org/stage/studies/a00260>.

Federally Funded Share of Expenditures for Academic Research and Development in the Humanities and Other Selected Fields, Fiscal Years 2005–2011 (Percent)



Source: National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges/Higher Education Research and Development Survey (data were accessed and analyzed using the NSF's online data analysis tool, WebCASPAR, at <https://webcaspar.nsf.gov/>).

Sources of Funding for Academic Research and Development in the Humanities and Other Selected Fields, FY 2011 (Percent)



Source: National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Survey of Research and Development Expenditures at Universities and Colleges/Higher Education Research and Development Survey (data were accessed and analyzed using the NSF's online data analysis tool, WebCASPAR, at <https://webcaspar.nsf.gov/>).

“The word on the street today is that the humanities are in crisis, partly because of shrinking budgets and job-conscious students, partly because 'theory' has allegedly turned those students off...”

Johanna Drucker, Breslauer Professor of Bibliographical Studies, UCLA
In review of *The Humanities “Crisis” and the Future of Literary Studies* by Paul Jay, 2014, Palgrave Macmillan

The Crisis of the Humanities Officially Arrives

By STANLEY FISH

In a response to [last week's column on "Howl,"](#) the movie about Allen Ginsberg's famous poem, [Charlie from Binghamton asked,](#) "What happened to public investment in the humanities and the belief that the humanities enhanced our culture, our society, our humanity?" And he speculated that it "will be a sad, sad day if and when we allow the humanities to collapse."

What he didn't know at the time is that it had already happened, on Oct. 1, when George M. Philip, president of SUNY Albany, announced that the French, Italian, classics, Russian and theater programs were getting the axe.

The New York Times, Opinionator, October 11, 2010

The Crisis in the Humanities: a matter of numbers

SIRIS Academic, September 16, 2013

José Luis Mateos

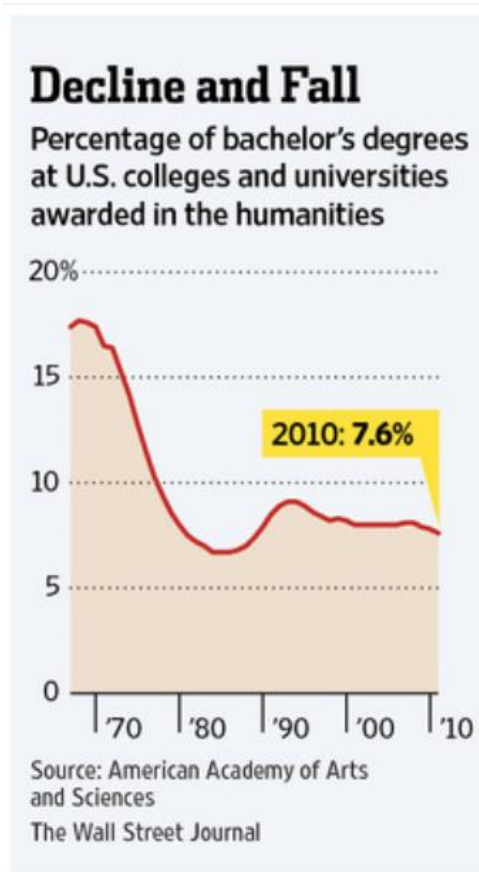
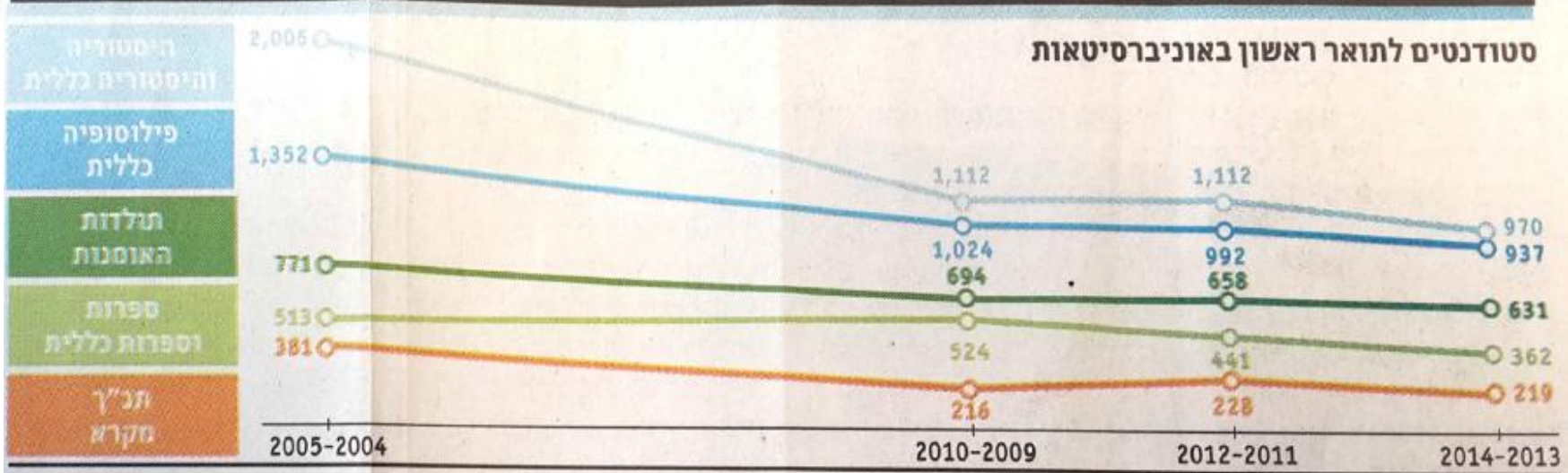


Chart 1. Source: Belkin & Levitz 2013

מדעי הרוח | תמונת מצב

סטודנטים לתואר ראשון באוניברסיטאות



נתונים: הלמ"ס

Society for Classical Studies

Classics and the "Crisis" in the Humanities

By Garrett G. Fagan

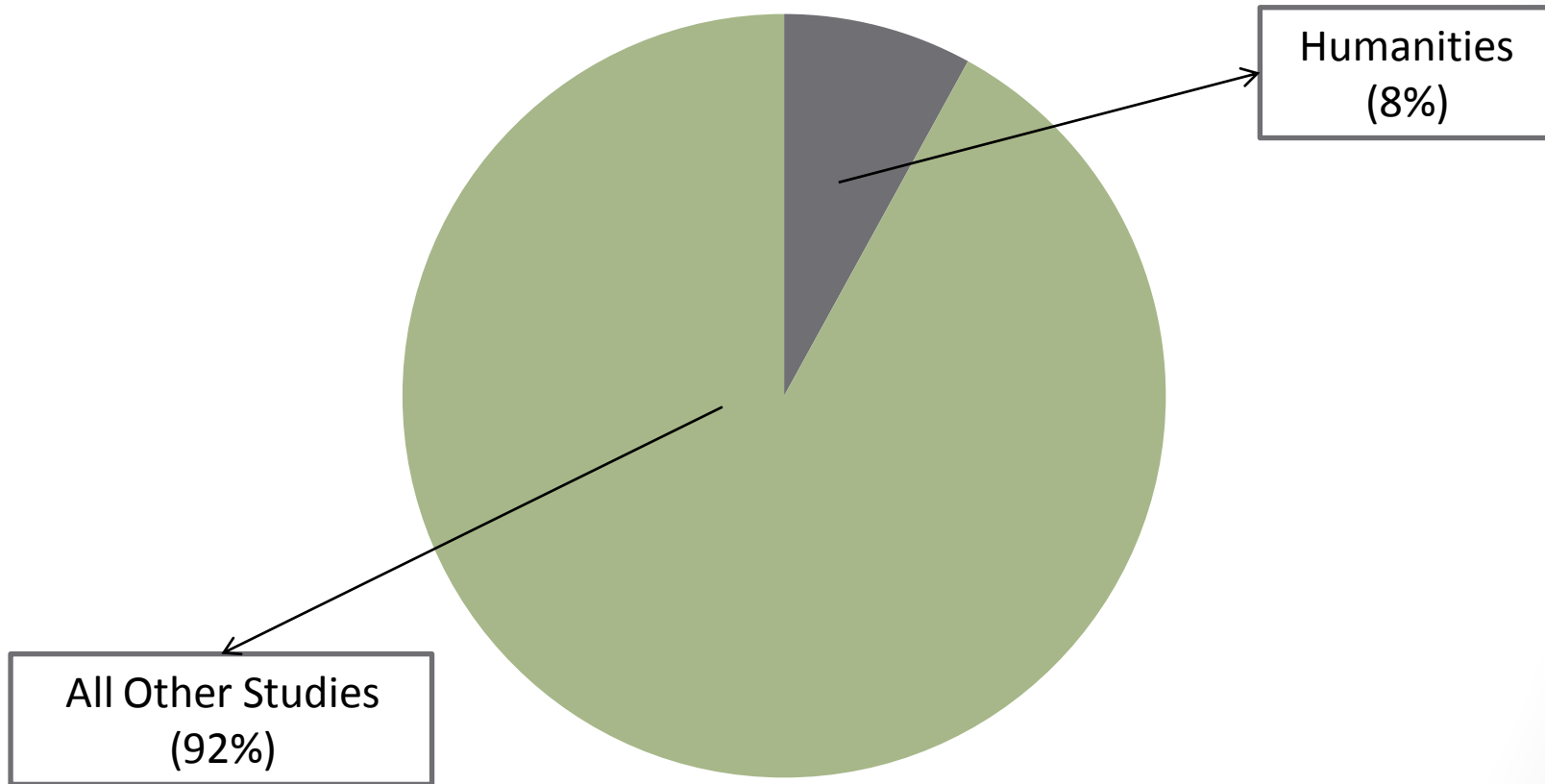
Dec. 12, 2013

- 8% of college graduates specialize in the humanities.
- At Stanford 45% of faculty sit in humanities departments, only 15% of the students major in those departments.
- Harvard has experienced a 20% decline in humanities majors

The “Crisis talk” focuses on declining enrollments in the various humanities departments and it is viewed from a narrow discipline perspective!

The Real Crisis...
or
The “Values Crisis”

The Real “Crisis”



The Real “Crisis”

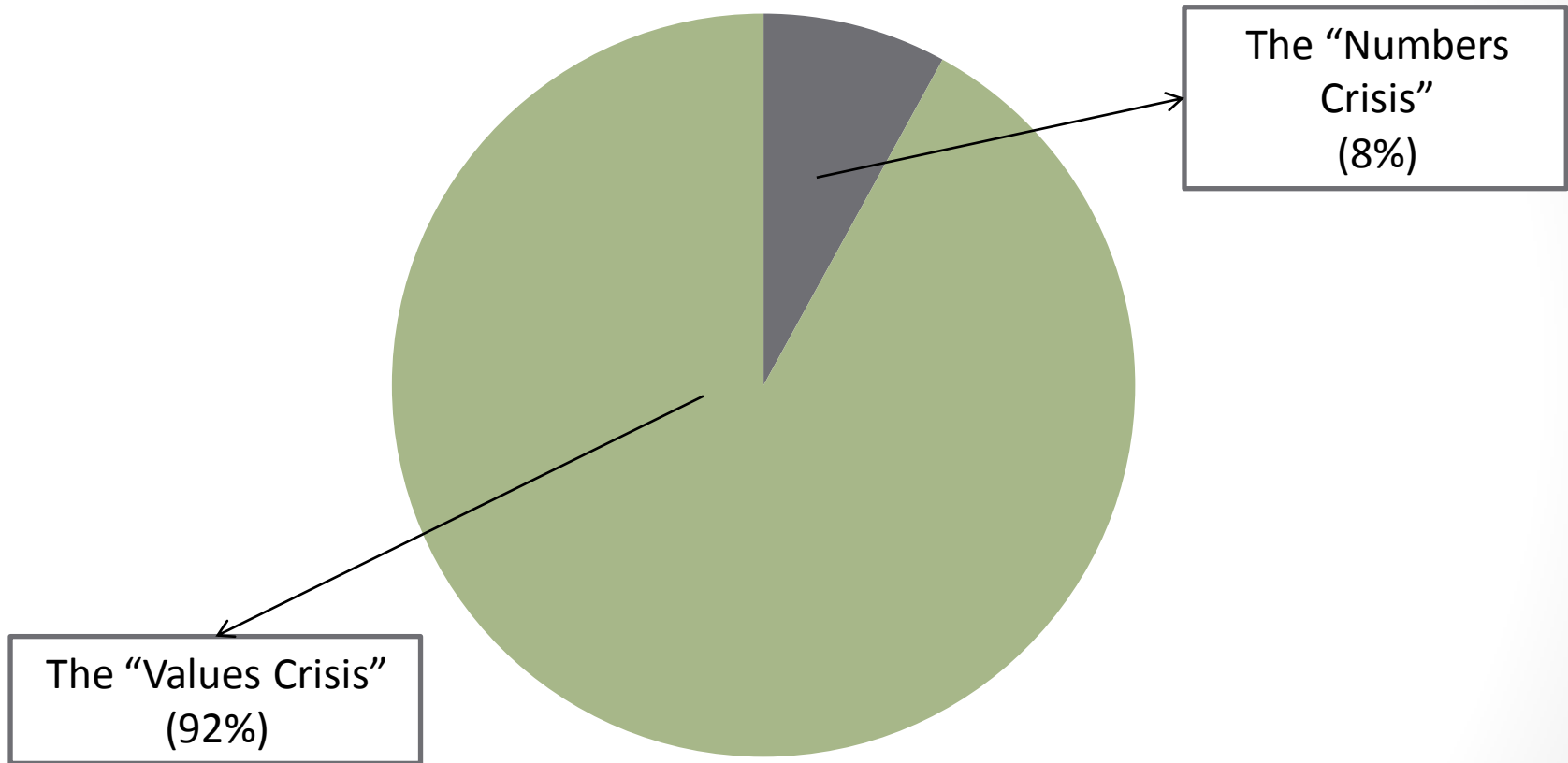
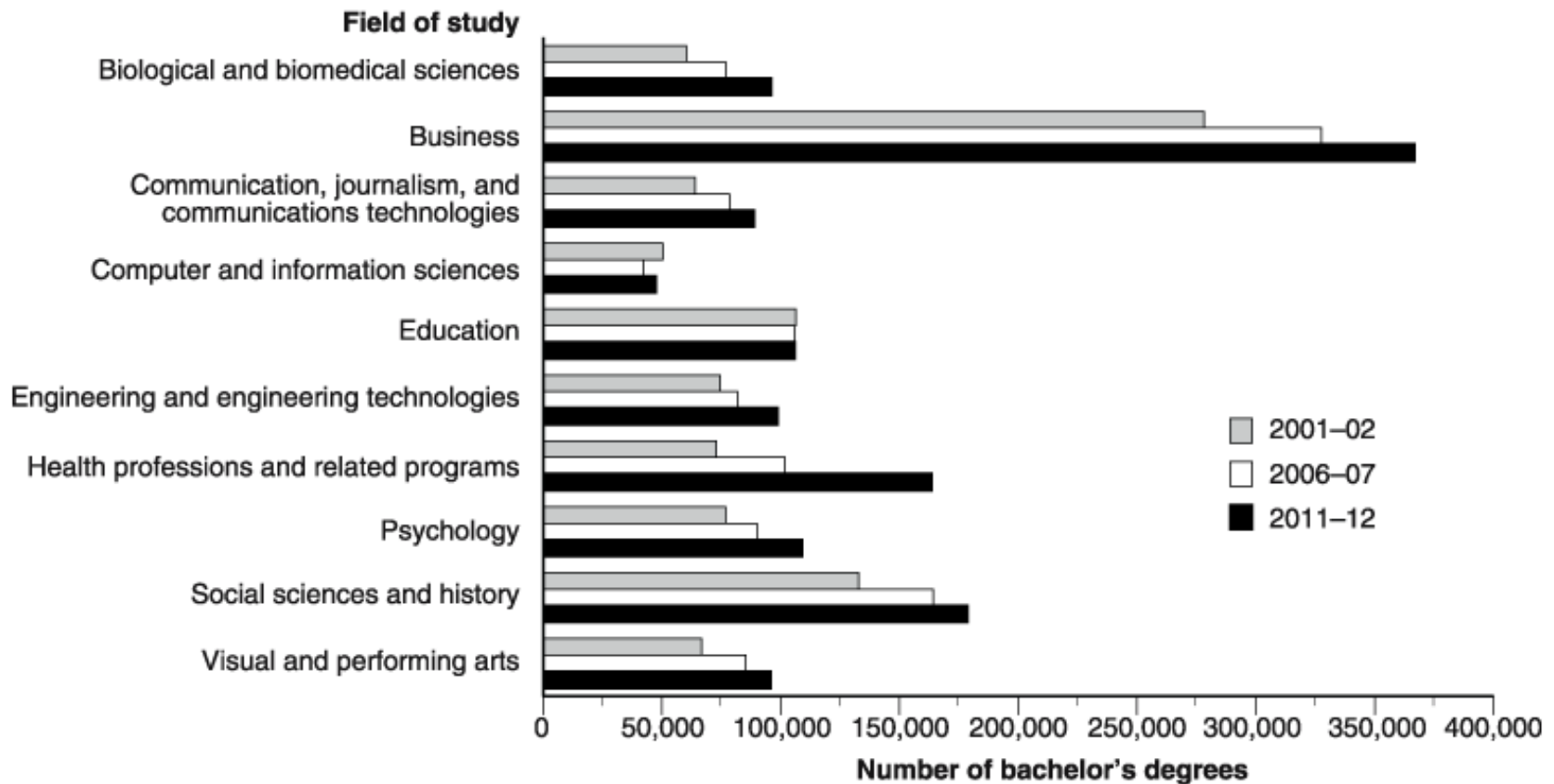


Figure 16. Bachelor's degrees conferred by degree-granting institutions in selected fields of study: 2001-02, 2006-07, and 2011-12



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall 2002, Fall 2007, and Fall 2012, Completions component.

Bachelor's degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions, by field of study: Selected years, 1970-71 through 2011-12

	1970-71	1980-81	1990-91	2000-01	2005-06	2011-12
Total	839,730	935,140	1,094,538	1,244,171	1,485,242	1,791,046
English language and literature/letters	63,914	31,922	51,064	50,569	55,096	53,767
Foreign languages, literatures, and linguistics	20,988	11,638	13,937	16,128	19,410	21,764
Liberal arts and sciences, general studies, and humanities	7,481	21,643	30,526	37,962	44,898	46,925
Philosophy and religious studies	8,149	6,776	7,423	8,717	11,985	12,651
Theology and religious vocations	3,720	5,808	4,799	6,945	8,548	9,369
Sub Total	104,252	77,787	107,749	120,321	139,937	144,476
% of Total	12.4	8.3	9.8	9.7	9.4	8.1

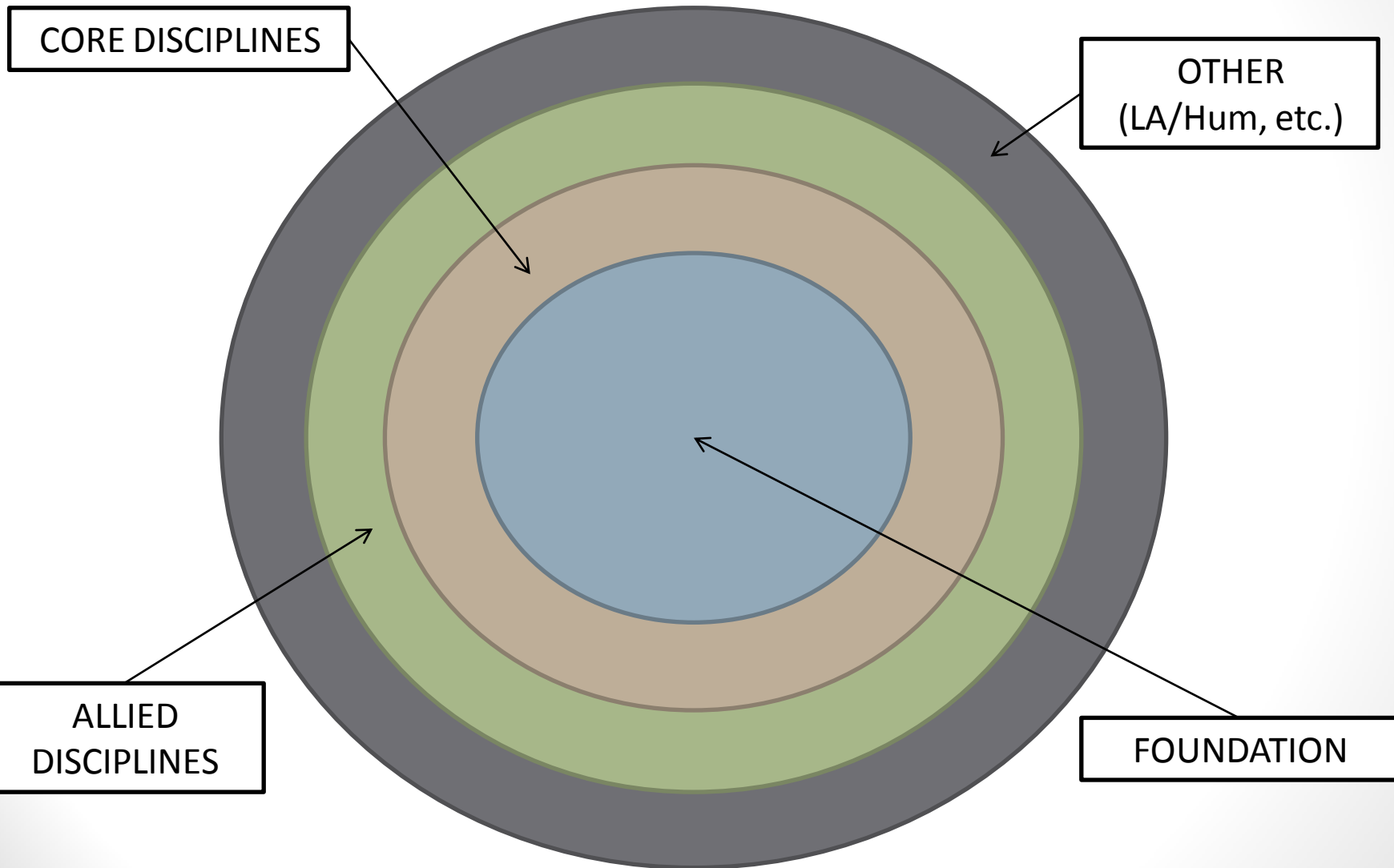
The vast majority of college and university graduates do not benefit from the values and ethics imbedded in the study of humanities

Reason...

One of the main reasons is the slow/creeping professionalization of the undergraduate curricula!

The Professional Degree

The Professional Degree



Columbia University Bulletin

School of Engineering & Applied Science

1962-1963

Credits

Total Credits for B.S degree (IE)

142.5 (100%)

Total LA/Humanities

26.0 (18.2%)

The SEAS 1962/3 – Credits Distribution

	<u>Credits</u>	
Foundation	43.5	(30.5%)
Allied	30.0	(21.1%)
Core	43.0	(30.2%)
LA/Hum.	26.0	(18.2%)
	—————	—————
	142.5	100%

Mission

Columbia Engineering, The Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science at Columbia University in the City of New York, prepares talented students to become innovative, socially responsible leaders in industry, government, and academia. Our education is grounded in the fundamental principles and creative approaches of engineering, while being critically informed by the broader perspective of a distinguished liberal arts education. This interdisciplinary education mission is enriched by a research endeavor focused on expanding the knowledge base of engineering and creating technological solutions that serve society. Columbia students, faculty, and alumni strive to improve the human condition locally, nationally, and globally with their enthusiasm to learn, to question, and to solve some of the world's most pressing current and future challenges.

But...

This is not a typical program.

Most undergraduate professionally oriented programs will at best have 10-12 LA/Humanities credits.

BGU engineering for example started with 12 pts. – down to 6 pts.!

Why are professional schools
reluctant to adopt a Columbia
type model?

In Recent Decades...

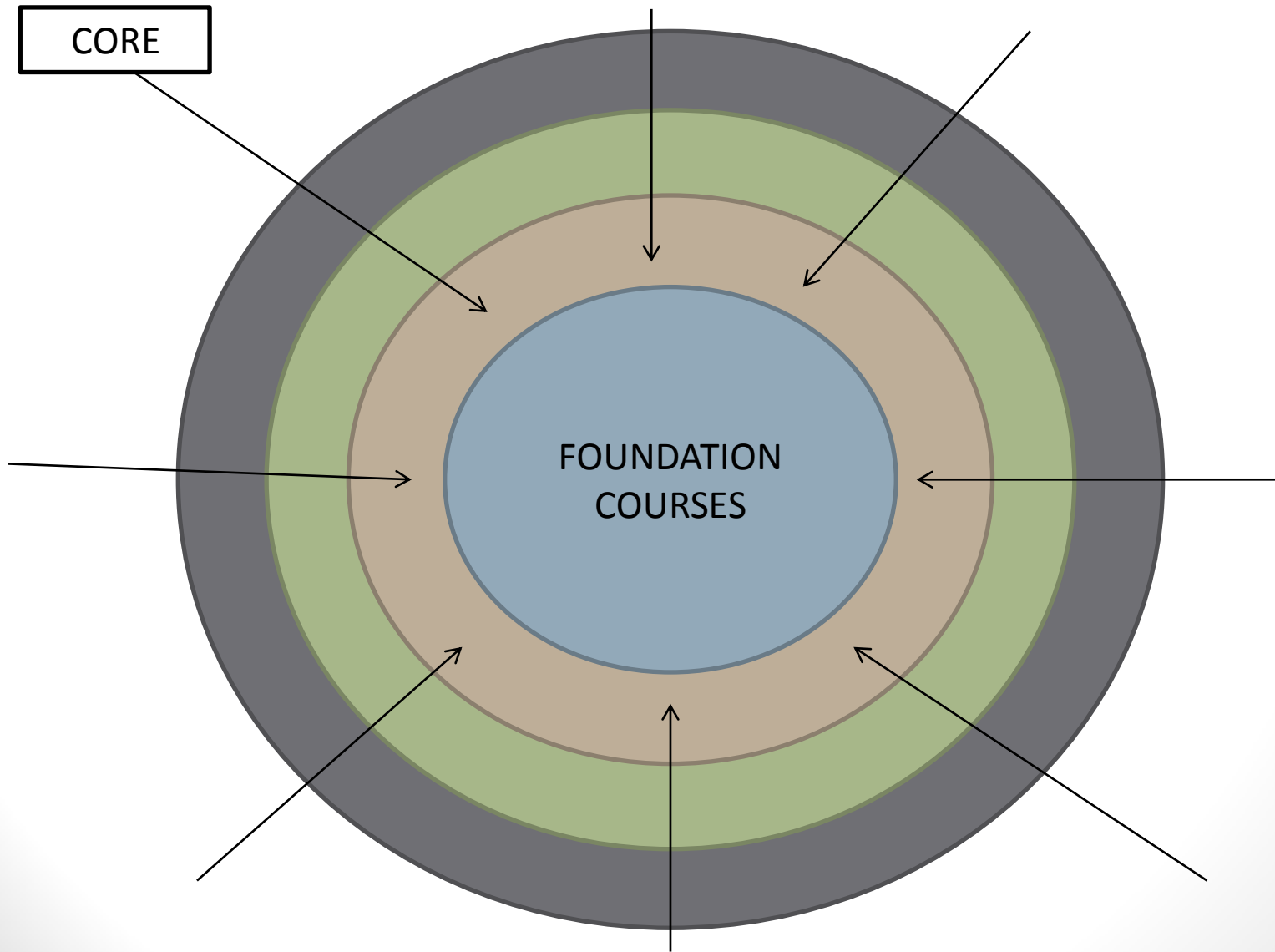
- Explosion of Knowledge
- New fields of study
- New technologies

Knowledge Doubling Curve

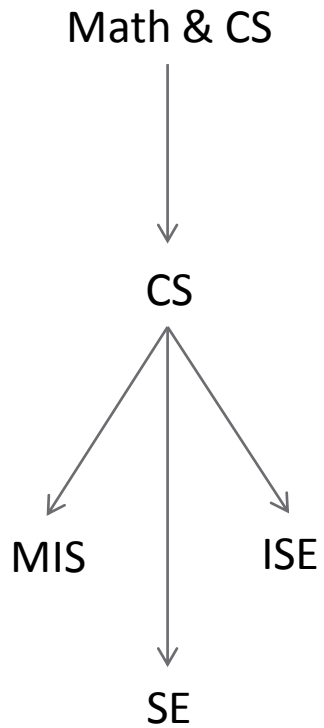
“Buckminster Fuller created the ‘Knowledge Doubling Curve’; he noticed that until 1900 human knowledge doubled approximately every century. By the end of World War II knowledge was doubling every 25 years. Today things are not as simple as different types of knowledge have different rates of growth. For example, nanotechnology knowledge is doubling every two years and clinical knowledge every 18 months...”

David Russell Schilling, “Knowledge Doubling Every 12 Months, Soon to be Every 12 Hours”, *industry tap into news*.

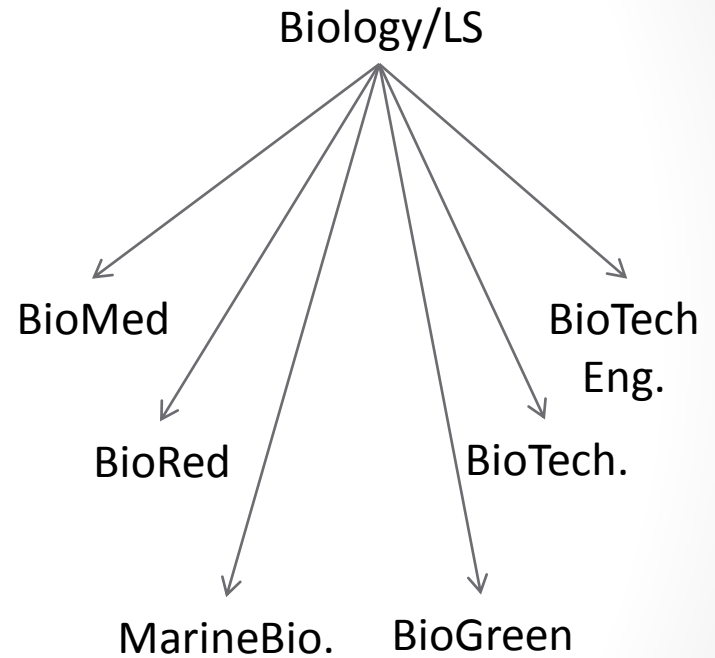
Pressure of New Knowledge/ New Technology



Creation of New Disciplines



NANOTECHNOLOGY



How do disciplines react to this pressure?

Given that:

- There is a perceived need to expand the core
- There is an upper limit of total credits
- It cannot “weaken” the foundation
- Risk of split/spin off new disciplines

The typical approach...

CANNIBALIZE!

And do so by taking the path of least resistance:

- a. Shrink LA/Humanities...
- b. Shrink allied disciplines...

Change of Direction...

The Humanities must become part of the “foundation” of all professional programs!

Possible Barriers...

- “Territorialism” of professions
 - Loss of lines
- Accreditation bodies
 - Diluting discipline
- Employers
 - Reduce on-the-job training
- University/College Administrations
 - Reluctance to tackle issue of budget/lines reallocation

Possible Aids...

International organizations dealing with student/faculty mobility, cooperation, credit transfer (European organizations, UNESCO, etc.) should champion a minimal humanities “foundation” program to be incorporated into the curriculum of every professional discipline.

Such a program should consist of a:

- Universal module
- Continent/ Regional module
- Country/ Local module

All the scientific and technological skills of which we can conceive will not solve our world problems if we do not build and adapt a base of human and cultural understanding; ethical and moral underpinnings; sensible rules of law for the 21st century; and integration with the insights, inspirations, and communications of the arts.

—**Charles M. Vest**, President, National Academy of Engineering

The Heart of the Matter p.44

If we aspire to provide a four-year college education that transcends the acquisition of specific job skills, we need to be able to specify what the content of such an education would be, and what would constitute the measure of its assessment. If, for instance, we actually believe that college students should receive a “liberal” education, what do we have to do to ensure that they are receiving it?

—From **Stanley Katz**, “The ‘Best-Educated’ Country,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 14, 2010

The Heart of the Matter p.30

In presenting a case for the establishment of the NEH and its partner agency, the National Endowment for the Arts, Glenn Seaborg, then head of the Atomic Energy Commission and a member of the 1964 Commission on the Humanities, told a Senate committee:

We cannot afford to drift physically, morally, or esthetically in a world in which the current moves so rapidly perhaps toward an abyss. Science and technology are providing us with the means to travel swiftly. But what course do we take? This is the question that no computer can answer.

Contention...

Solving the “Values Crisis”

will also

Solve the “Numbers Crisis”

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“Note too that a faithful study of the liberal arts humanizes character and permits it not to be cruel”

Ovid (43BC – AD~18)

Thank You!