

The Humanities in Our Lives

THE VALUE OF HUMANITIES MAJORS

The disciplines within the humanities collectively teach about dimensions of the human experience, as well as research and communication skills valuable later in life. History, literature, languages, philosophy, and the study of the arts help shape understanding of human cultures and provide perspective and tools of analysis.

DEGREES IN THE HUMANITIES

After World War II, the number of humanities bachelor's degrees that American universities awarded rose sharply, then suffered a significant decline in the 1970s and 1980s before rebounding to some extent in the 1990s. In the last decade, humanities degrees have again seen a marked decline.

KEY FACTS

- After 10 consecutive years of declines, the humanities' share of all new bachelor's degrees fell below 12% in 2015 for the first time on record.
- Within the humanities, almost every discipline experienced a decline in the number of degrees awarded from 2012 to 2015.

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

Many colleges and universities are developing programs to engage and attract students to the humanities while they are still in high school. Flagler College, in St. Augustine, Florida, has pioneered a week-long interdisciplinary humanities summer program for high school sophomores and juniors. Funds for the program—and similar programs run by the University of Florida and Eckerd College—were provided by the Florida Humanities Council.

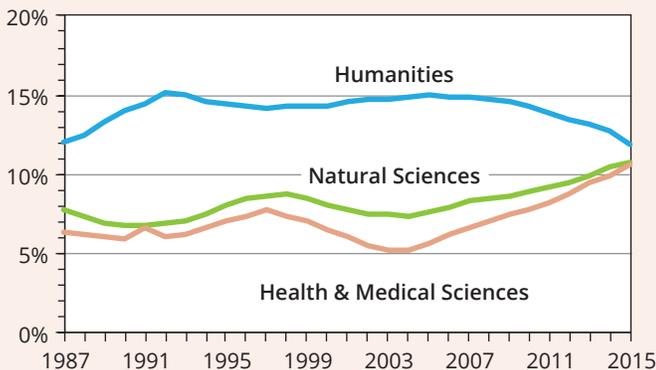
"Students need to understand that studying in the humanities helps make them broader thinkers and better citizens. It also puts them more in control of their lives in the world."

The course "Pirates, Protest and Preservation: Exploring the Stories of St. Augustine" lets students explore the town from the vantage points of literature, history, women's studies, Latin American studies, rhetoric, ethics, and environmental studies. Through lectures, field trips, and conversation, the students gain a sense of college-level study of the humanities.

The Humanities in Our Lives series (#HumInOurLives) highlights the many and diverse forms of humanities activities in the nation, and key facts about the health of the field.

THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

Share of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded



For more on the broad trends that mark American engagement with various forms of the humanities, visit humanitiesindicators.org or email humanitiesindicators@amacad.org.

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