
First Meeting for Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences



Commission members in attendance included: (seated) **Leslie C. Berlowitz, Amy Gutmann, Diane P. Wood, Drew Gilpin Faust**; (row 1) **Donna E. Shalala, Billie Tsien, Pauline Yu, Annette Gordon-Reed, David Brooks, Carl H. Pforzheimer III**; (row 2) **George Lucas, James Cuno, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, John W. Rowe, Richard H. Brodhead, Roger W. Ferguson, Jr., Robert M. Hauser, Richard B. Freeman, Earl A. Powell III**; (row 3) **Phil Bredeesen, Jr., John Lithgow, Anthony W. Marx, Rev. John I. Jenkins, Tom Campbell**.

“The physical and natural sciences are inextricably linked with the humanities and social sciences,” said John W. Rowe, cochair of the American Academy Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences, kicking off the Commission’s first meeting on June 10 and 11 in Chicago. “Excellence in one cannot be achieved without excellence in – and broad-based support for – the other.”

Rowe, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Exelon Corporation, was joined by cochair Richard H. Brodhead, President of Duke University, and thirty members of the distinguished, blue-ribbon commission. The Commission was formed at the request of

U.S. Senators Lamar Alexander (R-Tennessee) and Mark Warner (D-Virginia) and Congressmen Tom Petri (R-Wisconsin) and David Price (D-North Carolina) to explore ways to bolster teaching, research, and scholarship in all disciplines.

During a wide-ranging discussion over two days, Commission members identified several themes that are likely to form the basis of their examinations for the next year.

“There is national consensus that for the nation to remain competitive, we need to strengthen our grasp of science, technology, engineering, and math,” Brodhead said. “But education isn’t an either/or affair. Business leaders all recognize the need for communications skills and cross-cultural understanding. Our everyday life as citizens requires a sense of history, of personal values and the social good. A strong infrastructure for the humanities and social sciences – supported through our schools, libraries, museums, and other cultural institutions – is critical to our nation’s health and the quality of our personal and communal life.”

Addressing concerns about the apparent decline of the American education system, and the rise of international economic competition, Commission members championed the liberal arts as a crucial element in the education of effective leaders, a flexible workforce, and a thoughtful electorate.



Commission Co-chairs **John W. Rowe** (left), Chairman and CEO of Exelon Corporation, and **Richard H. Brodhead**, President of Duke University, opened the two-day meeting.



Panel Discussion on The Importance of the Humanities and Social Sciences for American Competitiveness: Roger W. Ferguson, Jr., President and CEO of TIAA-CREF, Louise H. Bryson, Chair Emerita of the J. Paul Getty Trust, and James McNerney, Chairman, President, and CEO of The Boeing Company

“Leadership is about the social and interpersonal skills that these disciplines teach,” said James McNerney, Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer of The Boeing Company. “The breadth of the education experience is a primary source of leadership.”

Drew Gilpin Faust, President of Harvard University, placed particular emphasis on the importance of historical knowledge in a time of rapid technological change: “We ask students to help create change by becoming innovators. How do you understand how to bring about change and manage change if you have no notion of a world that was different from the one in which you are living?”

Commission members also discussed the role of the humanities and social sciences in the promotion of effective citizenship.

Danielle S. Allen, Professor of Political Science at the Institute for Advanced Study, focused on jury duty as an example of how the humanities and social sciences play a daily role in civic life. “To be a good juror you have to track narratives, you have to track argument, you have to be able to weigh evidence, and you have to be able to judge legal and moral categories,” Allen said. “These are the skills of the humanities and social sciences.”

“This Commission has an opportunity to engage all sectors of our society in a conversation about the importance of these disciplines, and how to support them in challenging economic times,” said Academy President Leslie C. Berlowitz. “We cannot compete in a global economy without a strong knowledge of foreign languages and cultures, or the development of basic writing skills in our elementary school students, or a working knowledge of our own history and institutions.”



David Brooks, a columnist for *The New York Times*, Amy Gutmann, President of the University of Pennsylvania, and Commission Cochair John W. Rowe visited during a break.

Over the next two years, the Commission will formulate recommendations for how government officials, educators, business leaders, and philanthropists can strengthen the humanities and social sciences. A primary goal of the Commission, Rowe said, will be “to find new ways to state our case and identify new advocates to help us make it.”

George Lucas, film producer, screenwriter, director, and member of the Commission, will be one such advocate. “The sciences teach us how. The humanities teach us why,” Lucas said. “You can’t continue to do the how without the why. If we ignore history, philosophy, and all of the other attempts to deal with the why, the how can become very dangerous.” ■



To learn more about the Commission, visit <http://www.humanitiescommission.org/>.

Members of the American Academy Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences

Richard H. Brodhead, President, Duke University, *Cochair*

John W. Rowe, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer,
Exelon Corporation, *Cochair*

Leslie C. Berlowitz, President, American Academy of Arts
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Danielle S. Allen, Professor of Political Science, Institute for
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Norman R. Augustine, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
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Robert M. Berdahl, former President, Association of American
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Robert J. Birgeneau, Chancellor, University of California,
Berkeley

Phil Bredesen, Jr., former Governor of Tennessee

David Brooks, Columnist, *The New York Times*

Louise H. Bryson, Chair Emerita, J. Paul Getty Trust

Ken Burns, Director and Producer, Florentine Films

Tom Campbell, Dean, Chapman University School of Law;
former Representative from California

G. Wayne Clough, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution

James Cuno, Director and President, Art Institute of Chicago;
President-Designate, J. Paul Getty Trust

Gerald Early, Professor of Modern Letters; Director, Center
for the Humanities, Washington University in St. Louis

John Engler, President, Business Roundtable; former
Governor of Michigan

Drew Gilpin Faust, President, Harvard University

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

Richard B. Freeman, Professor of Economics, Harvard
University

Dana Gioia, Professor of Poetry and Public Culture, University
of Southern California; former Chairman, National Endow-
ment for the Arts

Annette Gordon-Reed, Professor of Law, Professor of History,
and Professor at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study,
Harvard University

Anthony Grafton, Professor of History, Princeton University

Amy Gutmann, President, University of Pennsylvania

Emmylou Harris, Musician/Songwriter

Robert M. Hauser, Professor of Sociology; Director, Center
for Demography of Health and Aging, University of
Wisconsin-Madison

F. Warren Hellman, Cofounder, Hellman & Friedman LLC

John L. Hennessy, President, Stanford University

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Professor of Communications;
Director, Annenberg Public Policy Center, University of
Pennsylvania

Rev. John I. Jenkins, President, University of Notre Dame

John Lithgow, Actor

George Lucas, Producer, Screenwriter, Director, Founder,
and Chairman, Lucasfilm, Ltd.

Yo-Yo Ma, Musician

Carolyn “Biddy” Martin, Chancellor, University of Wisconsin-
Madison; President-Designate, Amherst College

Anthony W. Marx, President, Amherst College; President-
Designate, New York Public Library

James McNerney, Chairman, President, and Chief Executive
Officer, The Boeing Company

Carl H. Pforzheimer III, Managing Partner, Carl H. Pforz-
heimer and Co.

Earl A. Powell III, Director, National Gallery of Art

Hunter R. Rawlings III, President, Association of American
Universities

John Sexton, President, New York University

Donna E. Shalala, President, University of Miami

David J. Skorton, President, Cornell University

David Souter, former Associate Justice, Supreme Court
of the United States

Eric Sundquist, Professor of English, Johns Hopkins
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Billie Tsien, Architect, Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects

Charles M. Vest, President, National Academy of Engineering

John E. Warnock, Chairman of the Board, Adobe Systems, Inc.

Diane P. Wood, Circuit Judge, United States Court of Appeals
for the Seventh Circuit

Pauline Yu, President, American Council of Learned Societies