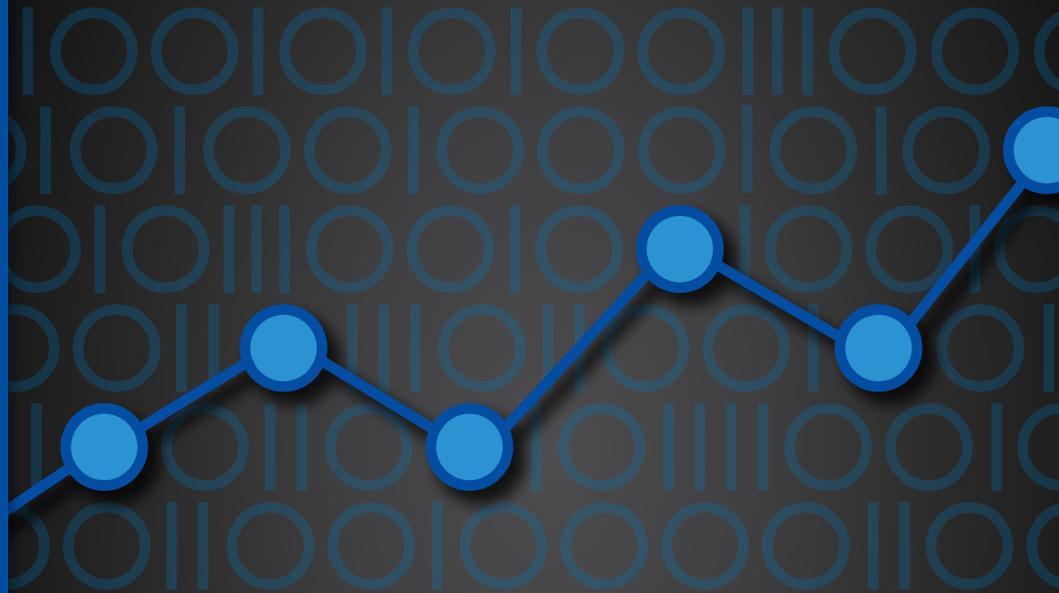


# HUMANITIES INDICATORS

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS & SCIENCES



## THE STATE OF THE HUMANITIES: HIGHER EDUCATION 2015

[humanitiesindicators.org](http://humanitiesindicators.org)

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## Table of Contents

3	Introduction
4	Estimated Number of Departments in Surveyed Humanities Disciplines, Fall 2007 and Fall 2012
5	Percentage of Humanities Departments Ceasing to Grant Degrees at Some Level, by Control of Institution and Discipline, Fall 2007–Fall 2012
6	Degree Completions in the Humanities as a Percentage of All Degree Completions at That Level, 1987–2013
7	Humanities Bachelor’s Degrees Earned as “Second Majors,” 2001–2013
8	Associate’s Degree Completions in Selected Fields as a Percentage of All Associate’s Degree Completions, 1987–2013
9	Humanities Bachelor’s Degree Completions as a Percentage of All Bachelor’s Degree Completions, by Control of Institution, 1987–2013
10	Advanced Placement Exams Taken in Major Fields, 1996–2013
11	Median Number of College Credits Earned in Selected Subjects by 2008 Graduates, by Student Major
12	Median Annual Earnings of Full-Time Workers with Bachelor’s Degrees in Selected Fields, by Highest Degree Earned and Undergraduate Major, 2012
13	Occupations of Humanities Majors, by Highest Degree Earned and Undergraduate Major, 2012
14	Number of Postsecondary Faculty Teaching in Selected Academic Fields, 1999–2012
15	Percentage of Humanities Faculty Members Employed Part-Time or Off the Tenure Track, by Discipline, Fall 2012
16	Percentage of Humanities Departments Engaged with Digital Activities, by Carnegie Classification and Activity Type, Academic Year 2011–2012
17	Academic Research and Development Expenditures in Selected Fields, Fiscal Year 2012
18	Sources of Funding for Academic Research and Development in Selected Fields, Fiscal Year 2012
19	New North American Academic Books in Humanities Subjects, 2009–2012
20	Data Sources





## Introduction

The past year was marked by considerable debate about the health of the humanities in higher education. The discussion focused on the number of students earning degrees in the humanities and tended to prioritize the economic value of the degrees over the broader social value of the skills and knowledge imparted by the humanities disciplines. This report provides a more complete—and balanced—portrait of the field. In certain areas—such as funding for academic research and production of new knowledge—the humanities have recently shown signs of growth. At the same time, the number and shares of students earning humanities degrees at the bachelor’s and master’s levels decreased, reinforcing recent narratives of decline.

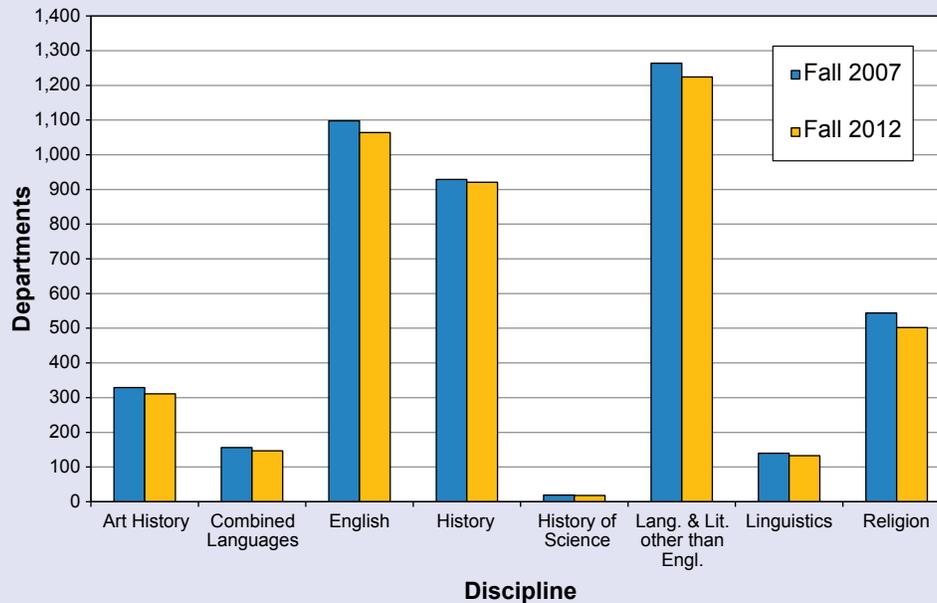
Drawing on information gathered for the Academy’s Humanities Indicators and its Departmental Survey (administered in 2008 and 2013), this report highlights a variety of measures of the health of the humanities in higher education—numbers of departments, students, and faculty, as well as data on digital engagement, research spending, and the publication of new academic books in the field—and supplies the most current data available in early 2015.

The Humanities Indicators were first published online in 2009, and now serve as a nationally recognized resource for information on the state of the humanities. The Indicators website offers information on 103 topics and includes over 500 graphs and data tables detailing the state of the humanities in schools, higher education, and the workforce; levels of support for research and other key activities; and the role of the humanities in the day-to-day life of the nation. The Indicators use data that meet the highest standards of social scientific rigor, and rely heavily on the products of the U.S. federal statistical system.

*Each measure included in this publication was posted within the past year to the Humanities Indicators website (<http://www.humanitiesindicators.org>). Please visit the website for related metrics, important information regarding data and methodology, and downloadable tables containing the exact numerical values underlying the graphs presented here.*



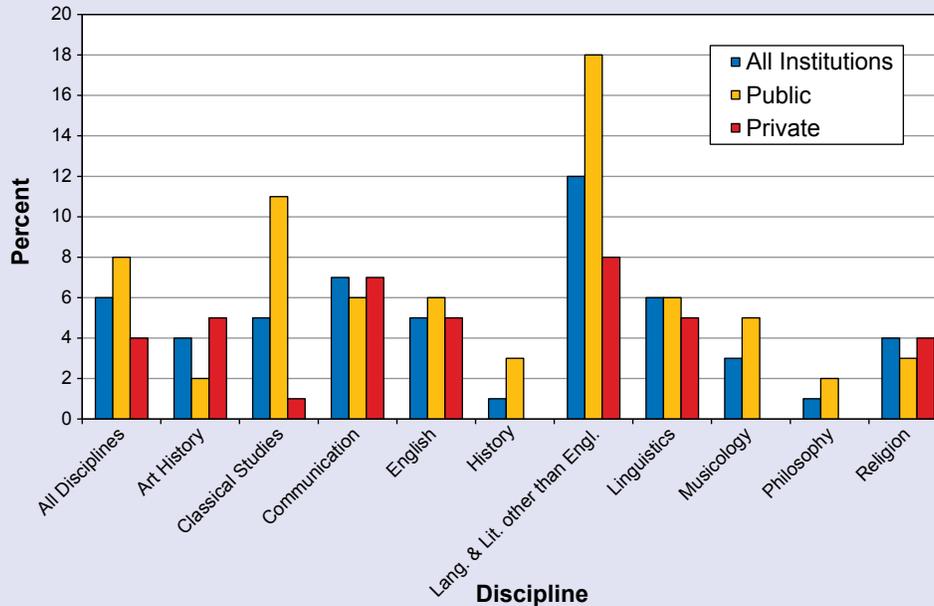
## Estimated Number of Departments in Surveyed Humanities Disciplines, Fall 2007 and Fall 2012



Data on trends in the number of departments and faculty in the humanities have traditionally been scarce. To address the need for this information, the Academy began in fall 2007 to survey departments about faculty, students, and other departmental characteristics. Despite recent concerns about the effects of the recession on the field, a follow-up survey of conditions in 2012 turned up very little evidence of decline in the number of humanities departments. (Note: this chart exaggerates any losses since the sample for the 2012 survey was not designed to account for new departments created between the two surveys.)



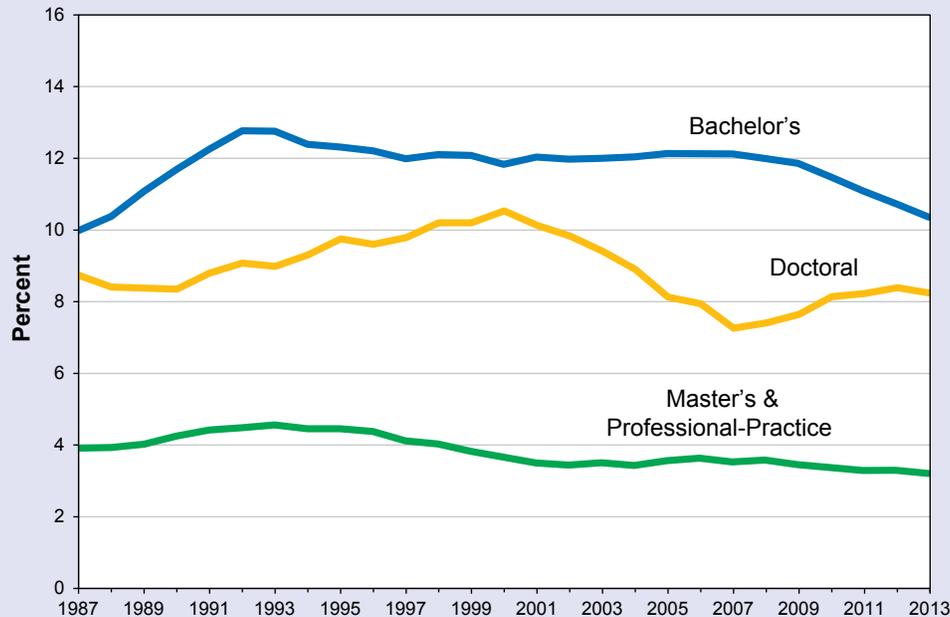
## Percentage of Humanities Departments Ceasing to Grant Degrees at Some Level, by Control of Institution and Discipline, Fall 2007–Fall 2012



While the Academy's survey of humanities departments did not find a statistically significant decline in the number of departments from 2007 to 2012, it did reveal that some departments had ceased to grant a degree at one or more levels during this period. Among the disciplines in the survey, 6% of all departments lost a degree at some level. A larger proportion of departments at public colleges and universities experienced such a loss (8%).



## Degree Completions in the Humanities as a Percentage of All Degree Completions at That Level, 1987–2013



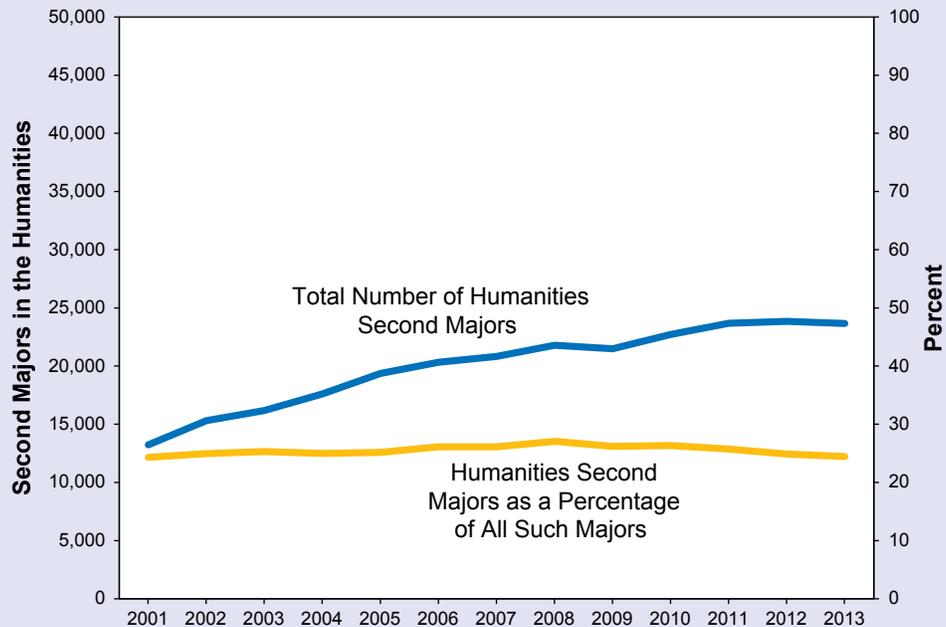
After almost two decades in which the share of all new bachelor's degrees conferred on students in the humanities had been stable, the percentage dropped from 12% in 2007 to approximately 10% in 2013.

The shares of degrees awarded to humanities students at other levels each followed different trajectories

from 1987 to 2013. The share of degrees conferred at the master's degree level has been in an extended period of gradual decline (from a high of 4.6% in 1993 to 3.2% in 2013). Over the same span, the share at the doctoral level peaked at 10.5% in 2000, fell as low as 7.3% in 2007, and then rose to 8.4% in 2012 before slipping to 8.2% in 2013.



## Humanities Bachelor's Degrees Earned as "Second Majors," 2001–2013

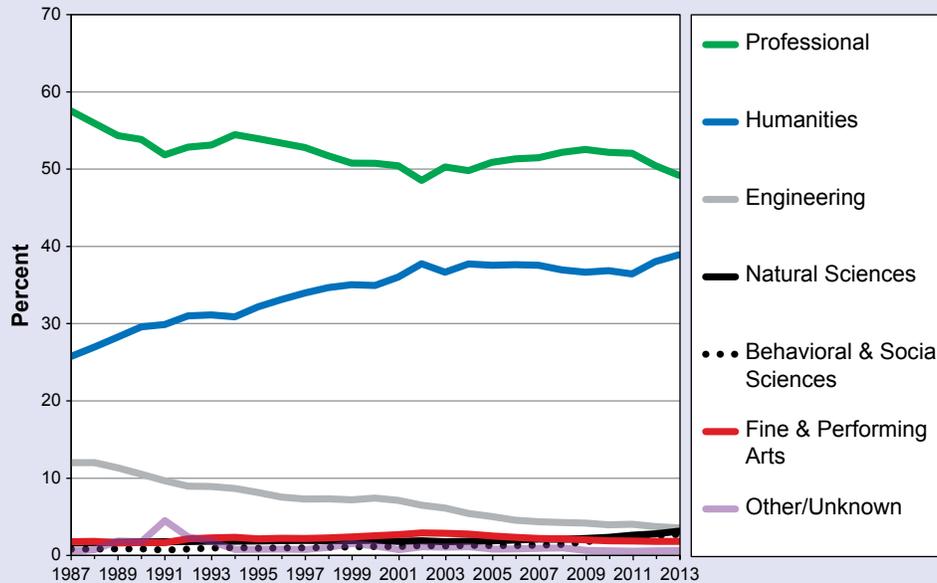


For most of the early 2000s, the trend for second majors in the humanities was similar to the trend among first majors: steady, modest growth in the numbers of degrees granted. As a share of all second majors, however, the trend for the humanities reflected stasis and then decline, similar although less pronounced than the trend for first degrees.

The humanities' share of bachelor's degrees earned as second majors was more than twice as large as that for first majors. In 2013, approximately 25% of second majors were in the humanities (23,715 in all), compared to 10% of first majors.



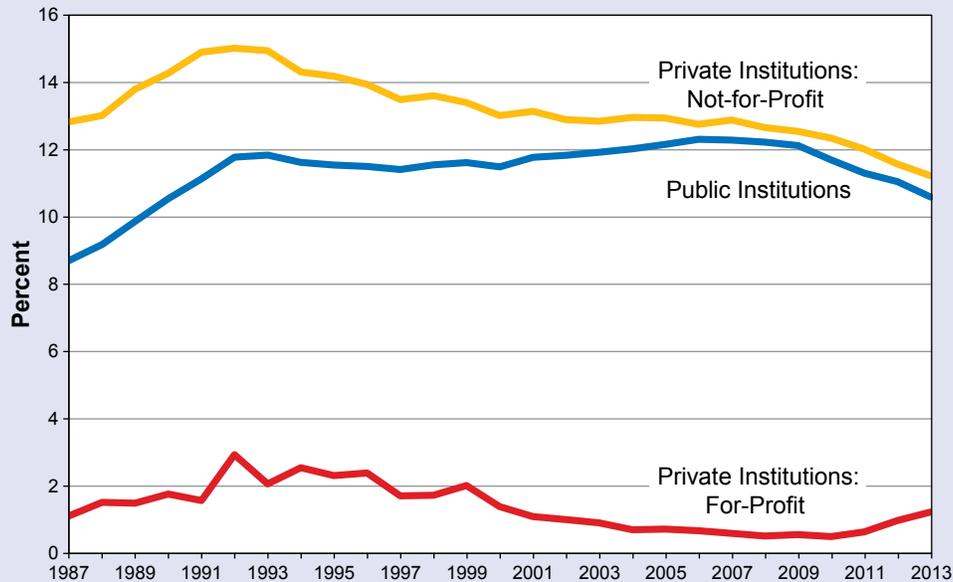
## Associate's Degree Completions in Selected Fields as a Percentage of All Associate's Degree Completions, 1987–2013



While recent years have seen a decline in the number of graduates earning humanities degrees at four-year colleges and universities, at the community-college level, the share of associate's degrees earned in a humanities discipline or requiring a substantial amount of humanities coursework—a degree in liberal or general studies, for example—increased in 2012 and 2013 (the most current years for which data are available). In these years, the humanities' share of all associate's degrees was almost four times as large as the field's share of all bachelor's degrees, evidence that two-year institutions are a key element of the humanities higher education ecosystem.



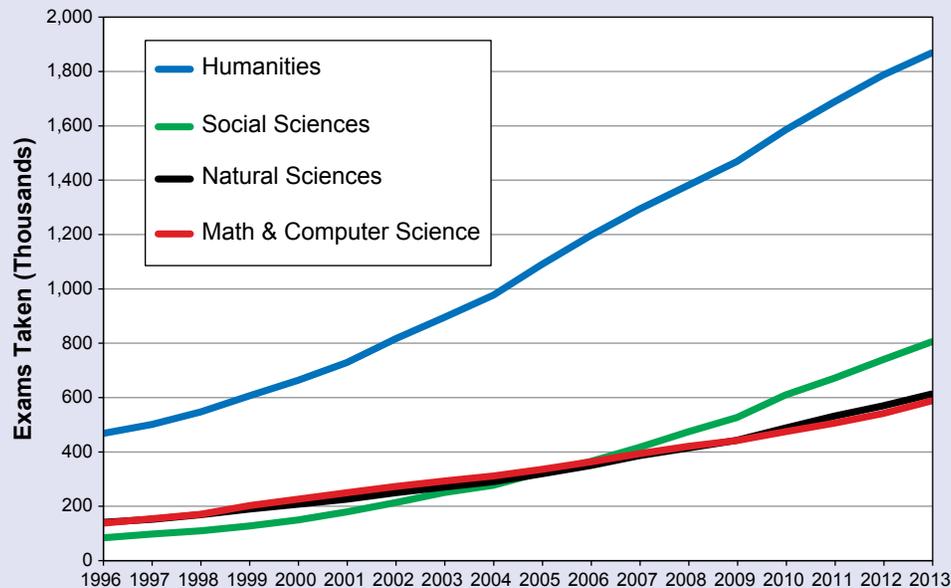
## Humanities Bachelor's Degree Completions as a Percentage of All Bachelor's Degree Completions, by Control of Institution, 1987–2013



At the four-year level, private not-for-profit colleges and universities have traditionally conferred a larger portion of their degrees in the humanities than have their public counterparts. That began to change in the 1990s, when the share of degrees awarded by private and public not-for-profit institutions at the baccalaureate level began to converge. Since 2003, the shares have differed by less than one percentage point and have experienced a parallel decline.



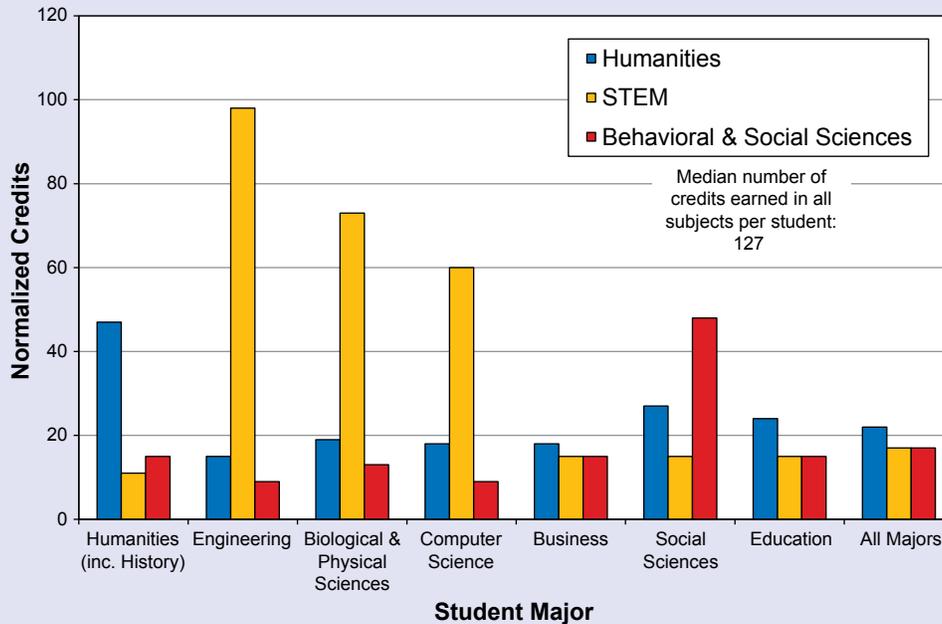
## Advanced Placement Exams Taken in Major Fields, 1996–2013



Most of the available data can only tell us about students as they emerge from higher education institutions with degrees—if they do emerge. It may be useful to contrast the trends in the number of degree recipients at the end of the undergraduate pipeline with the trends among high-school students. One of the more interesting points of contrast is the substantial rise in the number of high-school students taking Advanced Placement exams in the humanities relative to other fields. The possible relationship between trends at the high-school level and those at the college level has yet to be fully studied.



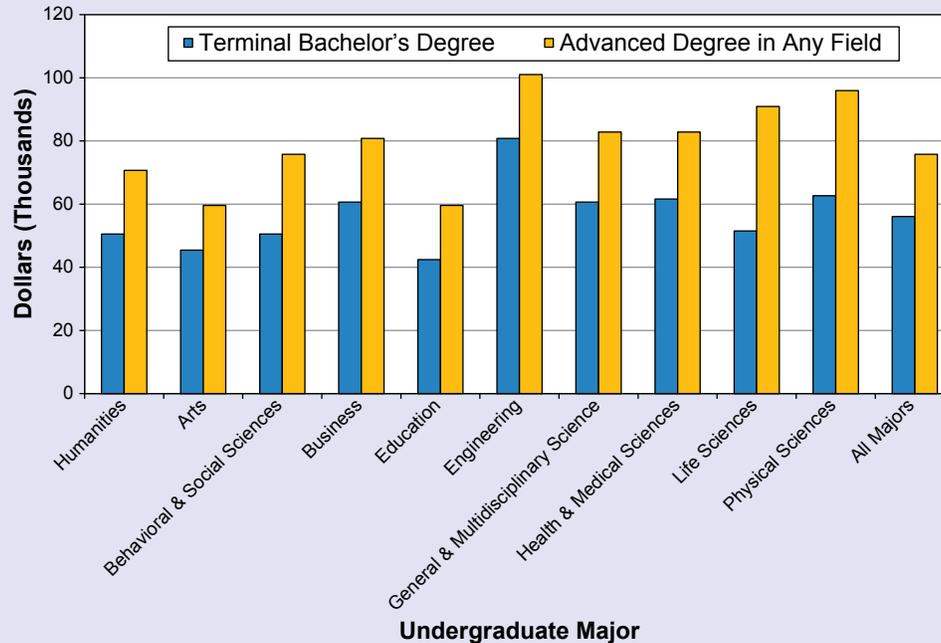
## Median Number of College Credits Earned in Selected Subjects by 2008 Graduates, by Student Major



There are relatively few data about the role of humanities instruction for students majoring in other fields, but an occasional study by the Department of Education indicates the humanities play a greater role than their share among undergraduate majors might suggest. The most recent data, which sampled students graduating with a bachelor's degree in 2008, found that students were earning a larger percentage of course credits in the humanities (a median of 22% of all credits earned) than the field's share of all undergraduate degree recipients (12%).



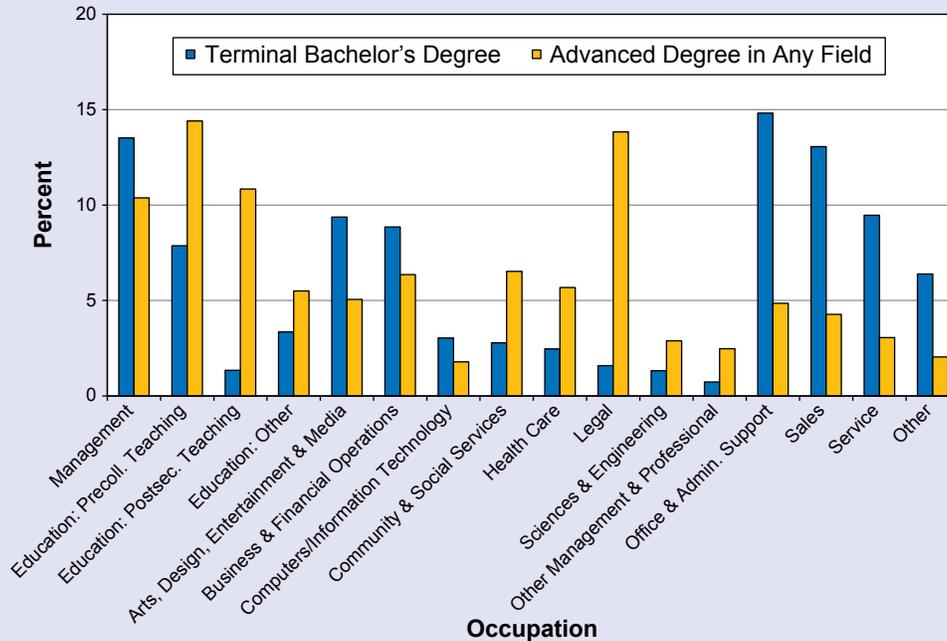
## Median Annual Earnings of Full-Time Workers with Bachelor's Degrees in Selected Fields, by Highest Degree Earned and Undergraduate Major, 2012



After college, the median earnings of humanities majors are somewhat lower than the median earnings of all workers with college degrees. Among humanities graduates with a terminal bachelor's degree who were employed full-time in 2012, median annual earnings were \$51,000, which placed the field above education and the arts, and on par with the social, behavioral, and life sciences. Earning an advanced degree in any field (44% of humanities majors employed full-time hold such advanced degrees) boosted humanities majors' earnings by 40%.



## Occupations of Humanities Majors, by Highest Degree Earned and Undergraduate Major, 2012

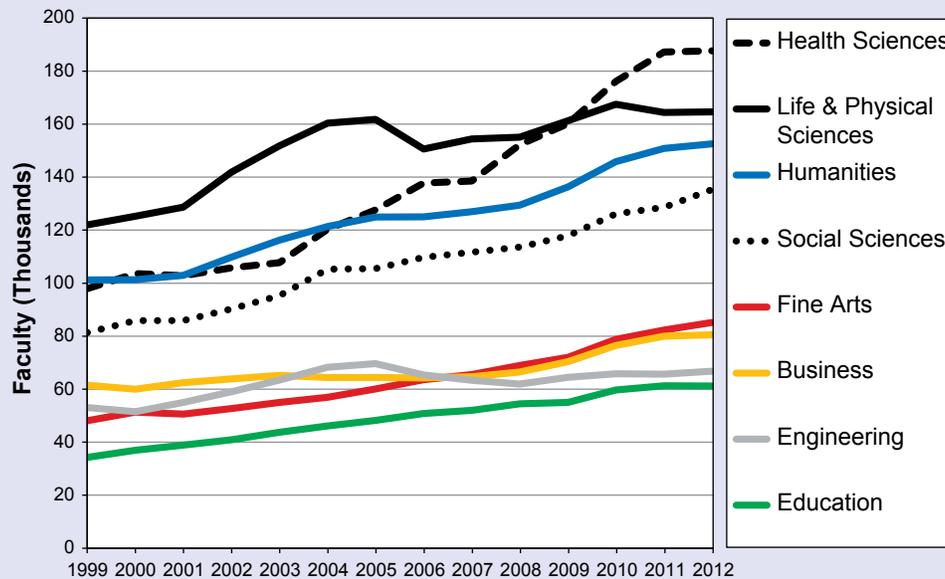


Humanities majors were less likely than those in most other fields to be employed in professional, managerial, or related occupations, but were the most likely (apart from those who majored in education) to work in the education field. Among humanities graduates whose highest degree was a bachelor's degree, almost 12% were in education; among those who had gone on to earn an advanced degree, the share was 31%.

Approximately 18% of humanities graduates with terminal bachelor's degrees and 36% with advanced degrees worked in "applied humanities" occupations that allow for direct application of knowledge and skills cultivated in the field. These include education-related jobs; museum and library occupations; writing, editing, and journalism occupations; and tour and travel guide jobs.



## Number of Postsecondary Faculty Teaching in Selected Academic Fields, 1999–2012

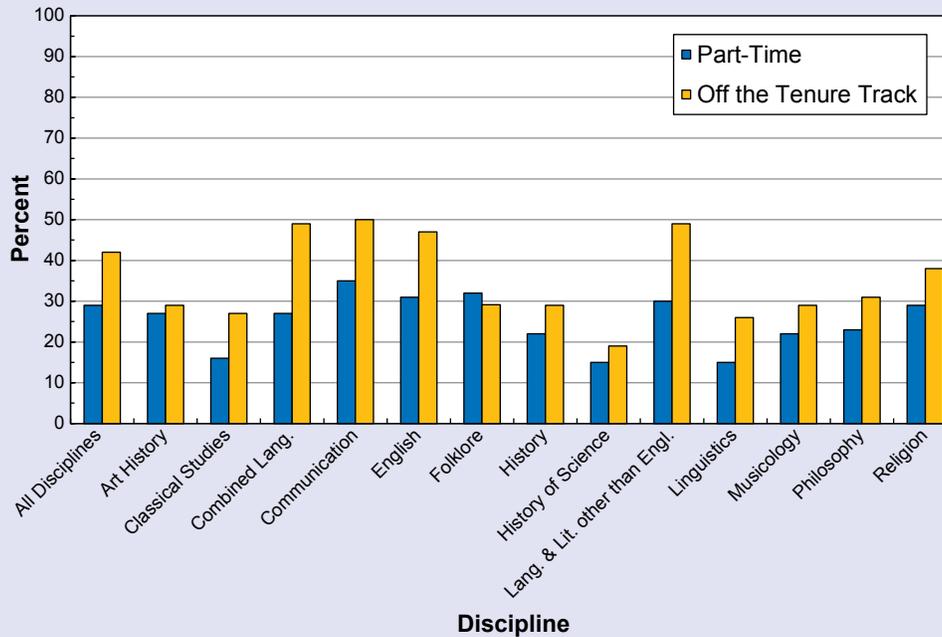


From 1999 to 2012, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the total number of humanities faculty members teaching in higher education increased by 51% at two- and four-year colleges. This compares to an increase of approximately 40% in overall enrollment in those institutions over the same span.

Although the number of humanities faculty members increased over the 2000s, similar growth occurred across most fields. As a result, the proportion of all college and university faculty members who taught in humanities disciplines changed little, hovering between 11% and 12% from 2004 to 2012.



## Percentage of Humanities Faculty Members Employed Part-Time or Off the Tenure Track, by Discipline, Fall 2012

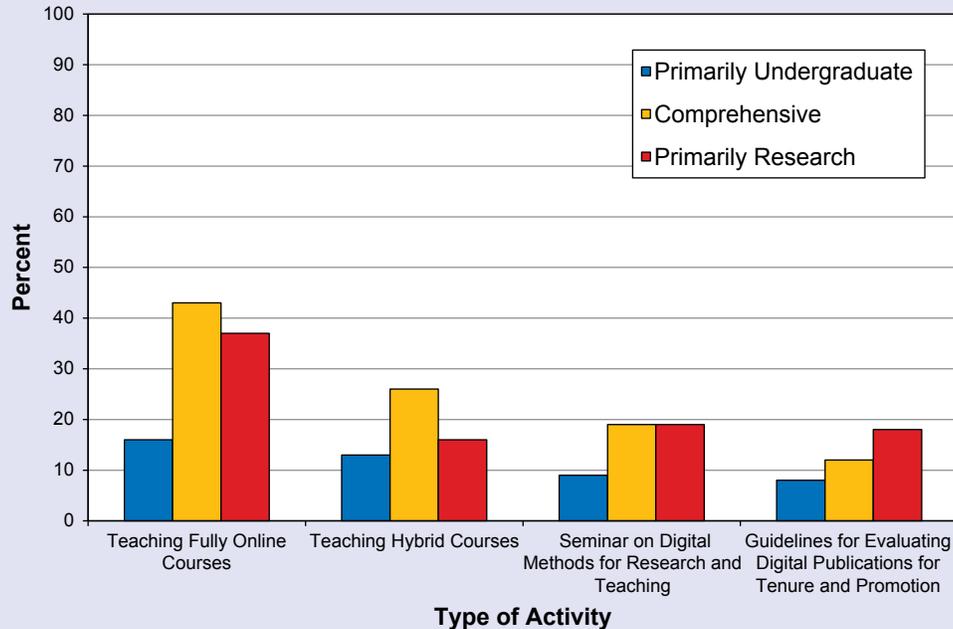


Given growing concern about humanities faculty members employed in “contingent” positions (off the tenure track and often part-time), the number of faculty employed in the humanities provides only a partial picture of the employment situation in academia. The Academy’s survey of humanities departments clarifies the situation at four-year institutions. In 2012, less than half of the humanities faculty

members were employed off the tenure track. (This generally includes the percentages also recorded in this chart as employed part-time.) The percentage of faculty employed off the tenure track ranged from 19% in history of science programs (which tended to be situated in specialized doctoral-level programs at research universities) to almost 50% in the communication and language disciplines.



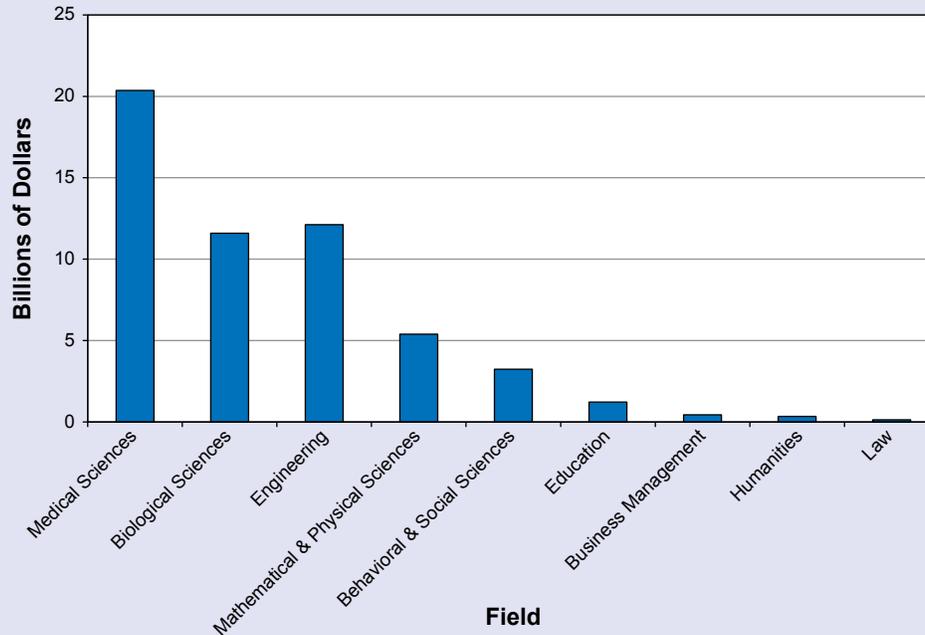
## Percentage of Humanities Departments Engaged with Digital Activities, by Carnegie Classification and Activity Type, Academic Year 2011–2012



Alongside employment concerns, there has also been considerable discussion in and around the field about the integration of new technologies into teaching and research practices. The Academy's survey of humanities departments found that in academic year 2012, less than half of the departments in surveyed humanities disciplines engaged with these technologies for either type of activity. Over one-third of the humanities departments—particularly at comprehensive and research institutions—were using digital tools to extend teaching beyond the traditional classroom, but comparatively few departments were supporting the use of new technologies for research through student training or guidelines for evaluating faculty-authored digital publications.



## Academic Research and Development Expenditures in Selected Fields, Fiscal Year 2012



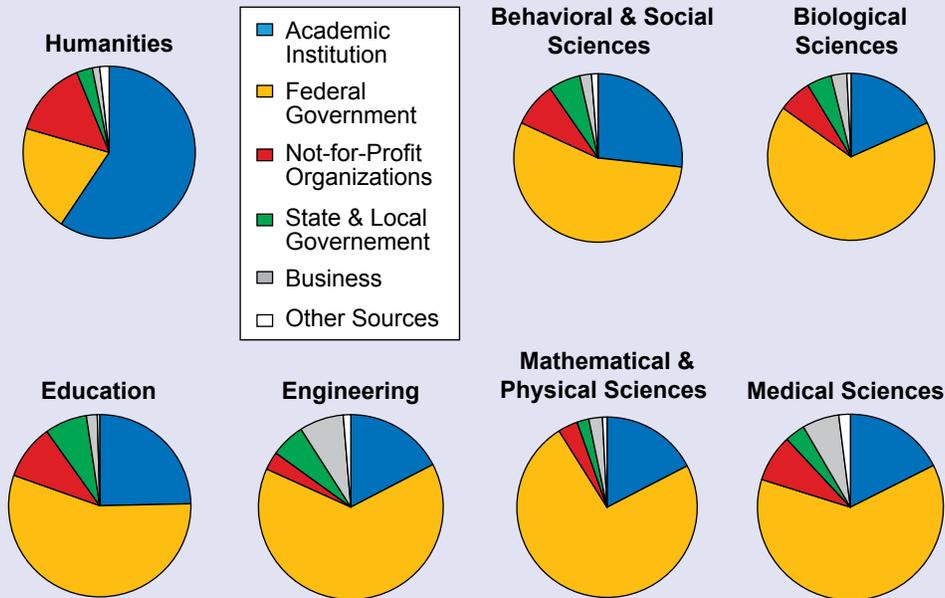
Another area of significant concern for many in the field is the disparity in financial support for research in the humanities compared to that of other fields. Expenditures on humanities research and development by the nation's colleges and universities (funded by a variety of sources; see page 18 for details) were dwarfed by those on research in the sciences and engineering. In 2012, spending for humanities research equaled

0.55% of the amount dedicated to science and engineering (when all scientific fields are considered).

While comparatively quite small, the amount of funding for academic humanities research has increased in recent years. After adjusting for inflation, expenditures in 2012 (approximately \$340.6 million) were 54.6% higher than in 2005.



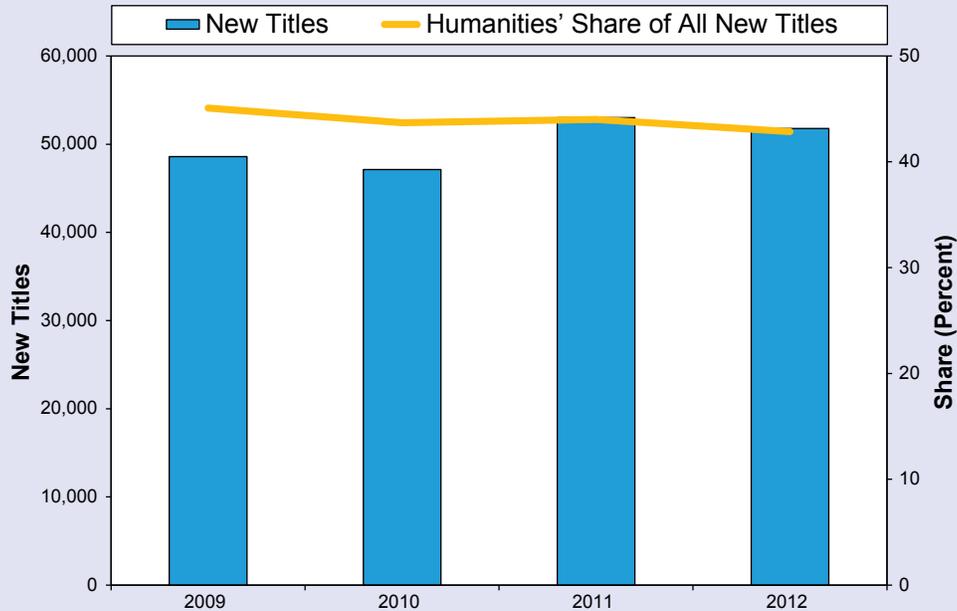
## Sources of Funding for Academic Research and Development in Selected Fields, Fiscal Year 2012



In comparison to other fields, academic humanities research and development in 2012 was more likely to be funded either by educational institutions themselves or by not-for-profit entities. Academic institutions supplied 59% of the funding for humanities research, while the federal government provided 20%. In the education, engineering, and science fields, more than 55% of academic research funding came from the federal government.



## New North American Academic Books in Humanities Subjects, 2009–2012



The humanities direct a larger amount of their research energies to the publication of book-length research than do other fields. Despite concerns about the state of humanities publishing in recent years, the number of new academic titles released annually in the humanities was slightly higher in North America in 2012 than in 2009, rising from 48,597 new books published to 51,789.

While the absolute number of new titles in the humanities increased from 2009 to 2012, the field's share of all new academic titles published in North America contracted slightly, from 45% to 43%.



## Data Sources

**Page 4:** Susan White, Raymond Chu, and Roman Czujko, *The 2012–13 Survey of Humanities Departments at Four-Year Institutions* (College Park, Md.: Statistical Research Center, American Institute of Physics, 2014), 4, Table 1a.

**Page 5:** Ibid., 32, Table 23.

**Page 6:** U.S. Department of Education, Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS), accessed and analyzed via the National Science Foundation’s online data system, WebCASPAR (<https://ncesdata.nsf.gov/webcaspar/>). For an inventory of the specific degree programs included in the broad disciplinary categories of the humanities accounted for in this Indicator, see [http://www.humanitiesindicators.org/cmsData/xls/NSF\\_CIP\\_Code\\_Catalog.xls](http://www.humanitiesindicators.org/cmsData/xls/NSF_CIP_Code_Catalog.xls).

**Page 7:** Ibid.

**Page 8:** Ibid.

**Page 9:** Ibid. Institutions have been categorized according to the IPEDS classification of institutional control.

**Page 10:** The College Board, “AP Data—Archived Data,” <http://research.collegeboard.org/programs/ap/data/archived>.

**Page 11:** U.S. Department of Education, Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study, accessed and analyzed via the National Center for Education Statistics PowerStats tool (<http://nces.ed.gov/datalab/>).

**Page 12:** U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey Public-Use Microdata Sample.

**Page 13:** Ibid.

**Page 14:** U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics Program, Employment and Wage Estimates (data downloaded from <http://www.bls.gov/oes/home.htm#data>). For the purposes of the Humanities Indicators, a faculty member is defined as an employee of a two-year or four-year college or a university who teaches credit-earning courses and who may also perform research activities.

**Page 15:** White, Chu, and Czujko, *The 2012–13 Survey of Humanities Departments*, 6–8, Tables 2–3.

**Page 16:** Ibid., 26–27, Tables 17–18.

**Page 17:** National Science Foundation (NSF), 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 NSF’s online data analysis tool, WebCASPAR, at <https://ncesdata.nsf.gov/webcaspar/>).

**Page 18:** Ibid.

**Page 19:** Developed from a compilation by Stephen Bosch (University of Arizona) of data provided by Ingram Content Group (Coutts Information Services) and YBP Library Services.



## Humanities Indicators

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