WHY THE HUMANITIES ARE CENTRAL

We live in an era in which rapid advancements in science and technology have created ethical and moral dilemmas and raised privacy issues that demand reasoned consideration of human values. An education in the humanities provides the intellectual and moral literacy needed to face the ever-changing demands of life in the global economy, where the only certainty is change.

Humanities education is perhaps the most transformative part of the undergraduate experience because these disciplines require students to consider the meaning of what it is to be human, their place in the universe, and their obligation to extend compassion and social justice to one another. The humanities are the core of liberal arts education and remain central to our educational objectives and commitment to our students. Indeed, humanities classes are an essential component of each student’s course of study, whether he or she is a major or non-major. UT students may enroll in multiple humanities courses each term to meet curricular requirements. Unsurprisingly, enrollment in classes taught by humanities faculty exceeds 51,000 annually.
The humanities focus on the quest for understanding the human experience throughout history. Using methods that are analytical, comparative, critical, and sometimes speculative, humanities faculty and their students engage in research in a broad range of disciplinary areas. From humanities scholarship emerges the understanding of narratives, traditions, beliefs, and ideas that define us as individuals and members of the human community. The stories and ideas of those who have lived before us inform our decisions about what is important in our own lives, allow us to find better solutions for the future by learning from past mistakes, and establish our human connection with peoples of the past and the present, as well as those who will become part of our future.

The humanities encourage students to acquire civic and historical knowledge, ethical reasoning, and writing skills. They come to understand what living is for and what life is about, and they come to terms with what we as individuals and as a society should care about and value. Humanities studies cultivate human core values, enable the creation of character, and enrich those personal values and integrity that form the elemental part of the human being. These educational experiences are essential to fostering students’ personal growth and are, therefore, transformative. Our nation needs critical thinkers and leaders who are fluent in these areas.
Based in the College of Arts and Sciences at Tennessee’s flagship university, the University of Tennessee Humanities Center provides faculty and doctoral graduate students the precious opportunity to pursue a sustained period of study dedicated to bringing their research to fruition. To borrow a metaphor from the sciences, the Humanities Center is the humanist’s lab. Additionally, the center sponsors a variety of collaborative seminars that bring faculty and students together to focus on a single topic. Moreover, the center’s space and ongoing seminars engage affiliated faculty and graduate students in intellectually stimulating conversations that fuel scholarly thinking, research, and collaboration.

Scholars in residence work on diverse projects like translations of sacred scripture, the devastation wrought by World War II, the Cherokee people and Jacksonian Tennessee, and the formation of religious beliefs.

AREAS OF HUMANITIES RESEARCH
- Language, both modern and classical
- Linguistics
- Literature
- History
- Jurisprudence
- Philosophy
- Archaeology
- Comparative religion
- Ethics
- History, criticism, and theory of the arts
- Aspects of social sciences that have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods
- 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
TO ATTRACT THE BEST, WE MUST BE ABLE TO COMPETE BY OFFERING COMPETITIVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TIME, FINANCIAL RESOURCES, AND OFFICE SPACE FOR SCHOLARS TO ENGAGE IN SERIOUS INVESTIGATIVE RESEARCH.

THERESA M. LEE, DEAN
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

The Humanities Center enhances UT’s national reputation and advances our journey to becoming a Top 25 public research university. Most Top 25 universities already have humanities centers and collaborative humanities initiatives as part of their postgraduate and faculty programs.

In addition, the center supports the College of Arts and Sciences’ goals to recruit and retain the best faculty and graduate students. Top-tier graduate students and faculty have many choices regarding where to study and conduct their research. The Humanities Center gives UT a competitive advantage in recruiting top talent nationwide.
A vibrant Humanities Center positions the University of Tennessee to play a vital role in shaping our nation’s future.

In response to a bipartisan request from members of the US Senate and the House of Representatives, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences convened a commission comprised of leaders from the educational, professional, government, and corporate sectors to produce a report advocating for education in the humanities and social sciences. The 2013 report placed humanities and social sciences education at the heart of a vibrant, competitive, and secure nation.

Investment in the Humanities Center enables faculty and graduate fellows to engage in meaningful research and collaboration that will produce research and educational dividends in both the short and long terms.

Katie Burnett, a doctoral candidate in English and recipient of a Mellon Foundation fellowship, was able to focus solely on her dissertation project as an inaugural fellow of the Humanities Center. She will have a competitive edge as she seeks employment as an assistant professor.
THE HUMANITIES CENTER TAKES US A BIG STEP CLOSER TO BECOMING A TOP 25 RESEARCH UNIVERSITY.

JIMMY G. CHEEK, CHANCELLOR

In 2012, the university and the college committed $700,000 as start-up money for the center. An annual operating budget of roughly $140,000 per year provides funding for the annual Humanities Center Distinguished Visiting Lecture Series (free and open to the public and shared and archived via the web), funding of five highly competitive fellowships for faculty research (the center plans to increase this to six by 2015), four dissertation completion fellowships and central space on campus for fellows and graduate students to work collaboratively. All fellows are required frequently to present their research and actively engage in seeking potential funding sources for Humanities Center efforts. In addition, the annual budget provides administrative and support staff to facilitate the work of the fellows and graduate students and to manage programming.

The start-up funds from the college and the university will provide operating support for the center through 2017, but what then? To sustain the center and its work and to keep the momentum going for humanities research that brings national recognition to UT, we must raise $6 million by 2017.

What can you do to help guarantee sustainability and growth for the Humanities Center and help lead the charge toward this national educational priority? Partner with other like-minded individuals—

• to become a charter patron of the Humanities Enrichment Fund (see Philanthropic Investment Levels document);
• to make philanthropic investments in faculty and doctoral student fellowships; or
• to provide funds for faculty awards through the Chancellor’s Faculty Challenge that can be leveraged with an institutional match.

Your support will provide stability to the center and ensure that its impact in research, education, and public service continues.
JOHN CHANDLER ('66) fondly recalls his days on campus as an undergraduate political science major. Now a successful attorney with a thriving law practice, he has remained connected to his alma mater through membership on the Dean's Advisory Board. John and his wife Beth have chosen to support the University of Tennessee Humanities Center with a substantial gift.

"The values inculcated by the humanities serve all walks of life," John says, "if you cannot write, your options are limited. Curiosity drives all professions. You don't, I think, learn empathy from a test tube—not that there is anything wrong with test tubes.

"Beth and I support the mission of the Humanities Center and believe that supporting sustained research and writing by faculty and doctoral students—and, perhaps, cross-disciplinary fertilization—offers untold possibilities."

THE VALUES INFLICTED BY THE HUMANITIES SERVE ALL WALKS OF LIFE.

JOHN CHANDLER ('66)