“The humanities remind us where we have been and help us envision where we are going” (American Academy of Arts & Sciences. The Heart of the Matter. Cambridge, MA: American Academy of Arts & Sciences, c2013).

In a 2010 letter requesting that the American Academy of Arts and Sciences create a Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences to assess the state of humanities and social science research and education, Senators Lamar Alexander and Mark Warner wrote that “Our nation’s founders valued broad humanistic and scientific education as the basis for an informed citizenry and a representative government” (American Academy of Arts & Sciences 2013, 64).

**Question:**
Why did our nation’s founders value broad humanistic and scientific education as the basis for an informed citizenry and a representative government?

Earlier in the twentieth century (1965), “President Lyndon Johnson signed the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act into law. The act called for the creation of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) as separate, independent agencies” (“How NEH Got Its Start,” NEH, accessed March 30, 2015, http://www.neh.gov/about/history). “Over the past 46 years, the NEH has played an essential role in advancing the nation’s understanding and appreciation of the humanities. With NEH support, scholars and cultural organizations have undertaken research leading to the publication of more than 7,000 books...produced major reference works...supported archaeological excavations...mounted major exhibits...trained 95,598 teachers and professors...and supported films” (“NEH: An Overview,” NEH, accessed March 30, 2015, http://www.neh.gov/news/fact-sheet/neh-overview). Other sponsors who have supported important humanities work include the American Council of Learned Societies, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the Library of Congress, and the National Archives and Records Administration.

**Questions:**
Reflect on the past in terms of the nation’s founders and the creation of federal funding agencies like the NEH and the NEA. Do you think that the nation’s founders would be pleased today about the state of the humanities?
How have the NEH and the humanities impacted your life either personally or professionally?

In addition to operating and providing leadership at a national level, the NEH also supports the work of 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils. The new NEH Chairman William “Bro” Adams called attention to the contributions being made at the state level in a recent speech: “Here’s the point: as with our grant programs, the excellence and diversity of our grantees and their work is striking. Seen through the lens of that work, and that of the state councils, it’s clear that the humanities are reaching impressively large numbers of people in many compelling, and compellingly different, ways” (“Address to National Federation of State Councils,” NEH, accessed March 30, 2015, http://www.neh.gov/about/chairman/speeches/address-national-federation-state-councils). Toward that end, NEH Chairman Adams has launched a new initiative, The Common Good, which is designed to “encourage humanities scholars to turn their attention to topics that have widespread resonance with

This document also is available on the Humanities Council web site. See http://humanitiescouncil.appstate.edu/
the American people and that lend themselves to the methods and concerns of the humanities” (“About The Common Good,” NEH, accessed March 30, 2015, http://www.neh.gov/commongood). Special initiatives include Standing Together, which focuses on the experiences of war and of veterans as viewed and interpreted by humanities scholars.

The increasing importance of the humanities in varied fields such as national security, biomedical science, computer science, geography, and international affairs is recognized by other federal funding agencies, including the Department of Defense and the National Institutes of Health. See separate document for a list of federal grant programs that incorporate the expertise of humanities scholars.

**Questions:**

How does your area of expertise apply to these types of programs focused on science and international affairs?

What role do you envision yourself playing in projects related to these funding opportunity programs?

New ideas for collaborations and partnerships between the humanities and other academic disciplines continue to be developed. The Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences suggested creating “public-private partnerships to ensure the future benefits of humanistic and social scientific activity and support innovation in all fields” (American Academy of Arts & Sciences 2013, 41). The Commission’s second suggestion is to craft a “culture corps of interested and qualified adults, including retirees and veterans, to aid learning and enrich curricula at all levels of education….By matching interested adults with schools, community centers, and other organizations, the program would provide a venue for the transmission of humanistic and social scientific expertise from one generation to the next” (American Academy of Arts & Sciences 2013, 51). And, as the NEH recognized through its establishment of the Office of Digital Humanities, “the digital world offers vast new possibilities, not only for delivering instruction, but also for facilitating research and for making the past and future possibilities come alive to students of all ages: historic buildings are reconstructed; family trees can be traced; classic texts and manuscripts are made accessible” (American Academy of Arts & Sciences 2013, 52).

**Questions:**

How do you think public-private partnerships for humanities funding would work?

What ideas do you have for creating either a local or regional version of a public-private partnership?

What do you think about the idea of a culture-corps? How would it work in your area of expertise?

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation President Don Michael Randel described the humanities this way: “What we really hope for is a certain quality of mind…a way in which the mind never ceases to be full of wonder of the world and all its people” (“What Are the Humanities?” North Carolina Humanities Council, accessed March 30, 2015, http://nchumanities.org/content/what-are-humanities).

**Questions:**

What is your vision for the future of the humanities?

What do you think the future holds for humanities funding?

What ideas do you have for supporting the idea of the “certain quality of mind”?