

The Decline of the Study of Humanities at the Collegiate Level: Perceptions of Non-
Humanities Faculty and Career Advisors

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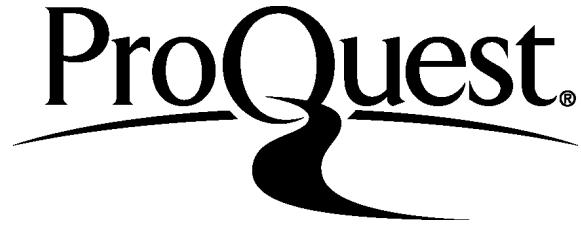
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Abstract

Since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution and reinforced by the advent of modern technology and engineering, the study of the Humanities has declined in proportion to the public perception of their relevance. A variety of causes have been postulated for this decline, ranging from the genesis of industrialization and business to the need to meet changing consumer expectations and demands; the latter boosted by the current economic conditions. This de-emphasis of the Humanities poses a number of educational problems in American society, including the transformation of the Humanities themselves, and their perceived uselessness to modern students. However, the Humanities innate abilities and skills to meet specific employer needs in an educational system that cannot possibly teach everything in four years, has not been addressed. It is the purpose of this study to elicit the experiences, feelings, and opinions of individual non-Humanities faculty and Career Advisors in order to ascertain the climate of thought within the halls of academia themselves. A greater understanding of the actual skills and experience needed for vocational success may help in bolstering the Humanities for the future and perhaps provide hints towards ways the Humanities may adapt, survive, and thrive in the new century.

The Decline of the Study of Humanities at the Collegiate Level: Perceptions of Non-Humanities Faculty and Career Advisors

“No words to describe it. Poetry...they should've sent a poet” (Starkey, 1997), these words spoken in awe, failing to describe the beauty they perceived, come from the movie *Contact*. Ellie Arroway has just hurtled across the galaxy, headed to a meeting, first contact, and when confronted with the beauty of a celestial event, this acclaimed scientist with years invested in study and research, is at a loss for words. This inability to describe the view was due not to ineptness, but to a disconnection; a loss of touch with the human side of existence, a separation from the Humanities. Long prompting us to ask *why*, the Humanities teach us to reflect deeply about ourselves and the world, and free us from the diversions and coercions of others so that we can make up our own minds. Though a part of the educational cannon for a thousand generations and valorized by educators, theologians, and politicians in every age, they are in danger of disappearing from today’s curriculum to make way for increased focus on subjects which provide more tangible, practical, and marketable benefits. This shift has prompted the Researcher to ask why, and what is being lost.

The Humanities have long been integral to the higher education model, specifically of the Liberal Arts model embraced by a great many global colleges and universities. These studies are designed to teach the students to open their minds and discover different modes of thought, reason, and comprehension. Through ancient texts and events, through modern interpretations and applications of history’s lessons, and through the wisdom of the ages, the student trained in the Humanities will be equipped with the tools to intelligently analyze, categorize, comprehend, and make informed decisions of any situation that they encounter in their professions, social interactions, or personal challenges. This is the goal of the Humanities, to teach students what it

means to be human, and to think humanely and ethically. Unlike the Sciences which only prompt us to ask the *what* and the *how*, the Humanities prompt us to ask *why*.

With this in mind, the Researcher intends to explore what value the Humanities hold for students, parents, faculty, Career Advisors, and employers by examining: the current educational environment, the experiences and understandings of non-Humanities faculty, its vocational attributes according to Career Advisors, and the history of the Humanities contributions to society. This research should encourage students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and Career Advisors of the value and vitality of a Humanities driven education, and its inclusion in all teaching models.

Delimitations and Limitations

In effort to provide a succinct investigation while maintaining control over the study the following delimitations were identified by the researcher. The sites chosen for inclusion were all geographically located in the greater Philadelphia area, and needed to be established Liberal Arts colleges or universities with a student population of 1500-5000. Institutions with larger student populations were excluded as it was felt that the faculty and Career Advisors experiences and understandings with respect to student expectations and rationale would be generalized, lack specificity, and provide less concrete data. Institutions dedicated to more specialized training, such as health care or technology, were excluded given that their focus on technical and trade specific skills would inherently take precedence over the broader attributes of the Humanities.

While the researcher attempted to reduce the number of limitations to the study through organization, structure, and implementation, the following issues were encountered. The gravest limitation to the study was of time constraints, resulting in a diminution in the intended diversity

of sites or participants. Furthermore, the number of participants was reduced by a full third from the original targeted amount. Additionally, the participants, while covering the diverse fields required, were mostly all from two institutions. Again, this was due to the time constraints of the study, as finding willing participants from multiple sites became a challenge.

Literature Review

The objective of this paper is to examine the current view and perceptions of the Humanities subjects in higher education with regard to its history, contributions, and decline within the halls of academia. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, the Humanities have been in decline (Donaghue, 2010), its weakness being two fold. The first, is a public perception of the Humanities as unimportant or irrelevant (Plumb, 1970); the second that our modern, globalized, industrialized world assigns values to subjects based on their tangible and measurable usefulness, contributions, and applications in technological and scientific advancements in industry, something to which the Humanities do not lend well (Cohen, 2010; Cote & Allahar, 2011). The following will present the historical significance of the Humanities, their continued importance in modern curriculum, and the current literature regarding the subject.

Defining the Humanities and its role in education requires great effort as its construction is a mix of reason, philosophy, and speculation; yet a solid comprehension of it is essential. For many, the Humanities are mysterious studies for elite academics in their ivory towers; comprehensible to few, and inaccessible to the rest. Those students required to read Voltaire's *Candide* may be further turned off to such study when attempting to understand Pangloss, Candide's moralizing philosophizing mentor who taught a metaphysico-theologico-cosmology philosophy, a bewilderingly bizarre subject, and consequently lived a very poor and

feeble life (Voltaire, 1998). This highly complicated and jocular response is a perfect representation of the current view of the Humanities studies as humanistic fluff miring the education system down. However, the question remains, what usefulness, tangible or otherwise, do the Humanities offer?

Defining a Legacy

While the Humanities are often understood to be the more artsy subjects in a school's curriculum, designed to give the student a mental break from the rigors of hard study, this understanding is grossly misguided. The following will present the historical tradition of education and a comprehensive definition of the Humanities and the non-Humanities.

For the sake of this study, the following definition is used: it is a subject, or subjects, that use analytical, critical, logical, rhetorical, and speculative methods to promote the cultivation of culture, politics, history, literature, ethics, art, philosophy, religion, and language in order to better understand the human condition. Complicated as this definition is, when broken down its essence is very simple. The Humanities are those subjects or activities that probe us into deeper thought, urging us to ask why. Dr. Leon Kass, a strong proponent of the Humanities, sat down with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in 2009 and said, “[Humanities scholars] find, even in small things, ways that someone has chosen to either express or to give an account of how other human beings have negotiated the human condition” (p. 11). According to Kass, the true essence of studying the Humanities is not something as esoteric as learning its history, or an overview of the literature. Instead, the true essence is in the discovery about humanity, the illumination of past generations, about the things they considered important, and the universal truths about life (NEH, 2009). The Humanities compose a fundamental part of the

Human experience and can tell us how humans in the past grappled with and understood aspects of that experience (Bennett, 1984).

One of the fundamental characteristics of the Humanities is its natural flexibility. The Humanities often confront questions or problems that have multiple perspectives and outcomes predicated by free will, passions, chance, fortune and fear resulting in a loss of predictability and repeatability. Thus, “It’s hard to quantify and to have precise conclusions when you deal with qualitative phenomena” (Konnikova, 2012, p. 2), additionally, “The Humanities work where systemic and predictive methods fail” (Parker, 2008, p. 90). In a later publication Parker explains that, “Humanities methodologies are especially sensitive to the way that cultural and epistemological frames of reference affect the outcome of any investigation” (2009, p. 6). Humanities flexibility and ability to value variables like free will, grants it maneuverability lacked by other more rigidly structured subjects.

This maneuverability can be demonstrated by using Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* (1883) and pondering the fate of character Long John Silver (Mendelson, 2010). In reflecting on the text and asking probing questions, issues such as; fate, luck, destiny, psychology, freedom, nature, life and death emerge, issues that are difficult to define due to politics, ethics, and morality. In addition to helping to develop critical thinking, the author concludes that this process supports the goal of a Humanities based education to, “Cultivate a broad, balanced, yet critical understanding of the human experience, an understanding that is not only appreciative of variation, but also attentive to virtue and its alternatives” (Mendelson, 2010, p. 350). The Humanities are a collection of mankind’s attempts to understand themselves and others, its virtue and alternatives, and their comprehension of the invisible ties that bind us all together; it is their legacy.

Origins of the Humanities. The origins of the Humanities coincide with the origins of education. With the earliest stirrings of society came the need for organization and education. Many early civilizations needed educated individuals to run the government and therefore instituted a form of state education, and though each was different in what it prioritized, some staples were rhetoric, history, language, religion, philosophy, and politics, some other notable subjects were military education, agriculture, and engineering (Quintilian, 90). Since our current educational system finds its earliest roots in the forms, and functions of ancient European models, Roman writer Marcus Fabius Quintilian's description of Roman Education provides an interesting insight (Quintilian, 90). Living and writing in the first century C.E., after the Greek and Latin schools merged practices, knowledge, and traditions under the Roman Empire, Quintilian reports how for generations the cultural and political elite of Rome alone enjoyed the benefits of this education. Quintilian describes a system heavy in rhetoric and incredibly repetitive. Besides rhetoric, its curriculum comprised of language, geography, mythology, antiquities, history and ethics, and included works of literature like the Iliad and the Odyssey and other ancient works; all of which formed what is considered the Humanities (Quintilian, 90).

Though generally not included under the umbrella of Humanities by modern standards, mathematics tends to walk in both circles (Strathern, 1996). In fact, centuries before Quintilian reported on the Roman Education system there lived the mathematician and philosopher Pythagoras. Living in the 4th century B.C.E., Pythagoras viewed mathematics with such reverence that he, and his followers, practiced it as a religion (Strathern, 1996). "Pythagoras was more than just the mathematician and philosopher. He also managed to combine the roles of religious leader, mathematician, mystic, and dietary adviser" (Strathern, 1996, p. 9).

Pythagoreanism, as his following was called, centered around mathematics and philosophy,

believing that, “beyond the jumbled world of appearances there lies an abstract harmonious world of number” (Strathern, 1996, p.11). Though Pythagoras almost certainly did not come up with the famous Pythagorean Theorem, he saw the beauty mathematics offered in organizing and defining the world (Strathern, 1996). This reverence with the number and of form, is not just an ancient occurrence, but is still widely accepted and practiced today. “There’s a certain allure to the elegance of Mathematics, the precision of the hard sciences” (Konnikova, 2012, p. 1).

From its noble beginnings, the Humanities stagnated as Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East descended into centuries of war, pestilence, and decline; it was not until the relative stability and growth of the renaissance that the ancient writings and musings, long suppressed by the Catholic Church, were rediscovered and the search for wisdom was once again reignited, Humanities ancient legacy reclaimed (Brownworth, 2009).

The Humanities and the Academy. Following an era of growth, exploration, and revolution the newly formed United States of America experienced a period of expansion and the development of widespread education. It was now no longer the sole privilege of the elite, but, slowly at first, lower classes began to enjoy its benefits as society grew. In addition to the explosion of art and learning spawned by the renaissance, a growing stable economy created a need for a more educated workforce (Tolley, 1996). While this need had historically been filled by the elites, now the middle and lower classes began to contribute. During this period, academies began to open across America, especially along trade routes (Beadie, 1993). While they were established by different groups, notably by religious organizations, many of them arose only in response to two factors. The first was, “A growing mercantile economy” (Tolley, 1996, p. 228), the second was society’s obsession with the classics (Wilhelm, 1997)

As education grew and spread, the Humanities found their niche in the cultural centers and ‘polite society’ of Western Europe, and America (Tolley, 1996). In the booming antebellum agricultural society of America’s south, education heavily saturated in the classics was not only typical, it was fashionable. Kim Tolley addresses this in an article fittingly titled for the age of its content, *Science for Ladies, Classics for Gentleman* (1996). According to Tolley, “Although the great majority of academy students may not have gone on to college, the attainment of classical knowledge conferred a gentlemanly polish on boys who eventually planned to manage their fathers’ plantations or pursue a career in business” (1996). A review of the subjects that conferred this gentlemanly polish found that they were all at the heart of the Humanities; Greek, Latin, History, and Classical Literature (Tolley, 1996). In reflecting on the writings and wisdom of Sullust:

All men who wish to be superior to the animals must strive with all their powers not to pass through life in obscurity; in contrast to the other animals our power lies not only in our bodies but also in our minds, which are the ruling actors and which unite us to the gods, whereas the body is common to us and the brutes. (Earl, 1961, p. 7)

From this, we can derive education as essential to improving our minds and raising us up above the brutes. It is important to note that in the American antebellum south, Science subjects were viewed as an inappropriate study for male students since, “The analysis of science and revealed religion will ultimately terminate in the same point...the invisible God” (Ludlow, 1884). Thus, prior to the Civil War, science was not typically included in the curriculum of many early male academies in America.

The allure of the Classics was so great that many Americans began to identify with personas found in antiquity. They used these identities or personalities from the past in order to, “Draw upon the wisdom of the ancients as a paradigm for constitutional government and public action” (Wilhelm, 1997, p. 13). George Washington has often been compared to Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, a great Roman aristocrat and military leader; John Adams adopted the name Brutus; Samuel Adams would use multiple ancient personalities for himself, including Julius Vindex Poplicola and Emperor Nero; and Alexander Hamilton went by Pericles, Camillus, Phocian, and Tully (Wilhelm, 1997). When faced with the tremendous task of founding a new nation, and government, America’s founding fathers drew upon the wisdom of the past and were well served by studying their successes and failures.

Modern Humanities. In our modern era, the Humanities are once again entering a period of change. This time, they find themselves being pushed aside, marginalized, and excluded (Mendelson, 2010). As originally stated this decline can be attributed in part to the discoveries and intense applications of various technologies in our society (Cohen, 2010; Cote & Allahar, 2011). As technology and industry grows, job requirements become more and more technical, forcing school administrators to provide more rigorous and specialized education (Looseley, 2011; Schlee & Harich, 2010). This comes at the expense of the Humanities, in the form of shrinking requirements and reduced importance.

In addition, education itself has entered a transformative period. Due in equal parts to poor economic conditions, and consumer expectations, universities are increasingly focusing on providing students with marketable job skills, rather than on the traditional development of the student’s mind (Granderson, 2013; Schlee & Harich, 2010). This shift in expectations and

technical training leaves little room for the traditional Humanities studies of moral, ethical, philosophical, analytical, critical, and logical skills.

Definition of the Non-Humanities. As mentioned earlier, the Humanities are by nature, flexible, subject to variation, and heavily influenced by philosophy, religion, and ethics. It has an inherent ability to adjust to changing circumstances, and to account for characteristics such as: free will and emotions. Converse to the Humanities method of rhetoric, form, philosophy, and theology are the studies and traditions that rely on more a more rigid structure like the scientific method for procedures, methods, analysis, and discussion. These studies, like the Humanities, deal with the natural world, seeking to understand the relationship and order of all physical things, both small and large in the search for knowledge, answers, or solutions to problems. However, this search is handled in a very structured, measurable way, seeking to categorize and organized the natural world in predictable and repeatable forms. “The processes that are used in [these studies] to seek out the meaning of the natural world are inquiry, discovering what is, exploring, and using the scientific method” (Dugger, 2010, p. 2). While it is a foolish and dangerous practice to paint things in black and white, there are many educational disciplines that share a common attitude, process, and heritage. This shared tradition or ethos, is based off of rigorous testing, logic, and order; or summed up nicely by Lord Kelvin, “If you can’t measure it, you hardly know it” (Mendelson, 2010, p. 342).

This assertion that to truly know something requires empirical evidence is not rare and has in fact been butting heads with the Humanities for some time. Supporting this clash and the subsequent decline of the Humanities, “Those things that were easy to measure tended to become objectives and those that couldn’t be measured or were more difficult to measure were

downplayed or ignored” (Looseley, 2011, p. 15). It begs the question about what is lost and overlooked by ignoring those things that are hard to quantify, measure, and order.

In regards to the unifying aspects of these non-Humanities studies, C.P. Snow’s book *The Two Cultures* encountered the same awkwardness in defining the separation between the Humanities and the non-Humanities. In defending his choice of grouping individuals from different practices together under the two labels of the literary intellectuals and the scientists he described how, “There are common attitudes, common standards and patterns of behavior, common approaches and assumptions” (Snow, 1959, p. 10). In revisiting the work six years later a further distinction was made, “The scientific process has two motives; one is to understand the natural world, the other is to control it” (Snow, 1965, p. 67). This shared educational tradition even transcended cultural traditions such as religion and politics (Snow, 1959).

As explained above, the inverse of the Humanities studies those subjects that employ the scientific method, however, this is a broad classification, and raises far more questions and exceptions than it eliminates. Though these subjects have similar goals, to understand the natural world, they have differing educational methods and traditions. Attempting to single out a specific subject or group of subjects that are the converse of the Humanities would be simplistic and irresponsible. This is stated with the understanding that rigidly sorting individuals, ideas, or groups into two distinct categories is awkward at best, but in order to avoid the pitfalls of a dissertation on what defines the groups and mapping out divisions and sub divisions, two distinct groups with differing educational and anthropological traditions will be used. In reality, the converse to the Humanities studies, who currently receive less academic, administrative, and public support; are those areas that receive the widest academic, administrative, and public support. Though these subjects tend to be found in the STEM fields (Science, Technology,

Engineering, and Mathematics) examined below, for the sake of simplicity, and keeping in mind the differing educational and philosophical traditions, this group shall be referred to as the Science studies.

This conflict between the Humanities and the Science studies is nowhere more apparent than in the demands of modern society in education, economy, and the job market. The focus is almost exclusively on training in the Science studies (Granderson, 2013: No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001; Windschuttle, 1997). The shared tradition of the Science studies to rely on testing and logic to procure answers to physical questions and to define and order our world is without a doubt a noble pursuit; however, it falls short and even fails in the face of the aforementioned variables considered by the Humanities. Indeed, not every question or problem will lend itself neatly to the scientific method. A publication in Scientific American in 2012 reported that, “Most disciplines aren’t quantifiable, scientific, or precise. They are messy and complicated” (Konnikova, 2012, p. 1). While it can be argued that some traditionally non-Humanities studies, such as mathematics, are influenced by and applied to both circles, some elements are wholly in one camp or the other (Strathern, 1996). Such examples are rhetoric and Engineering; the former identified as an exclusive Humanities complex skill, the latter as the practical and marketable application of Mathematics (Parker, 2009, p.6).

This is not to imply that the Science studies are without use, or incapable of contribution. Snow credits them with defining and shaping the Industrial Revolution (1959, p. 23). When looking at that period Snow offers that the advances, discoveries, and innovations of the industrial revolution were conceived, created, and spread by the Sciences, even submitting that the only way to adequately understand the Industrial Revolution is through the structure of scientific method (1959, 23). Additionally, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed into

law in 2002, supports the Science studies for a variety of reasons including societal contributions, and economic demands. Its contributions to society are everywhere seen, and to educators and administrators delights, its structure allows for quick and easy assessment of learning and comprehension.

Marginalization and Decline of the Humanities

The evidence presented demonstrates Humanities role in education, and supports its claim to relevance and inclusion in curriculum; however, the Humanities are still in decline. Though many authors, researchers and teachers recognize the benefits of the Humanities (Konnikova, 2012; Looseley, 2011; Mendelson, 2010; NEH, 2009; Snow, 1959 & 1965;), the research proposes that, “[The] Humanities education is in a period of decline perhaps greater than at any time since the founding of the modern university” (Mendelson, 2010, p. 341). This decline can be attributed to the combined weight of many factors including; growing Science curriculum, international competition, local, state, and federal legislation, economic conditions, increasing technical job requirements, and shrinking academic and administrative support (Dugger, 2010; Granderson, 2013; Lakes, 2007; Schuster, 2003; Schlee & Harich, 2010).

Growing Curriculum and Declining Support. In today’s market new advancements in science, technology, engineering, and medical research, have nearly become a daily occurrence. As job requirements for entry level positions increase educational institutions are placed under a larger burden to prepare students to meet these needs (Schlee & Harich, 2010). This combined with increasing economic pressure, and the effects of market driven thinking within the halls of academia, Science studies have grown at the expense of the Humanities (Looseley, 2011). This growth is not without support. Many educational reforms directed at the Science studies came as

a result of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) international ranking of educational achievement (Lakes, 2007). In 2002, out of 29 countries, the United States ranked 24th (Lakes, 2007). In order to stay relevant and compete with international education programs state and federal legislation began reforming schools, and though not directly related to UNESCO's report, several provisions in the NCLB Act also address this achievement gap (Lakes, 2007; NCLB, 2001).

This push for greater achievement in the Science studies combined with the ever increasing cost of a college education, forces students to evaluate a potential degree path on its vocational outcomes alone (Granderson, 2013). This focus is partly due to the financial burdens of the current economic conditions. In 2011, the average graduate left college with \$26,000 in student loan debt, coupled with an unemployment rate of 8.9% for recent graduates, makes the choice that much more imperative (Granderson, 2013).

In addition to decreased value, the Humanities must also contend with shrinking academic and administrative support (Mendelson, 2010; & Schuster, 2003). A study of the number of full-time faculty in the U. S. over the last three decades of the 20th century, show that even though the number of positions rose by over 170,000, the percentage of Humanities faculty fell from 22% in 1968, to 16% in 1998 (Schuster and Finkelstein, 2006, Table A-3.3a, p. 447; cf. pp. 47-48). The American Associate of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) note a similar drop in Humanities majors graduating with a bachelor's degree in 2004, falling from 17.4% in 1966 to 8% (2007). These numbers are sobering to say the least, and what is more, evidence presented in another publication states that the declining Humanities faculty, when not being eliminated completely, is being replaced with adjunct or full-time non-tenure (term) faculty (Schuster, 2003).

Exploring this changing trend in university hiring practices and its effects on academia, the research suggests that the adjuncts and full-time term faculty are assessed completely on their teaching abilities (Schuster, 2003). While this is not inherently bad, it does suggest that do to this focus, “The appointees are less accessible to students. Furthermore, in varying degrees, they bring less scholarly authority (as measured by publications) to their job, and they are less integrated with the campus culture” (Schuster, 2003, p. 21). Additionally, these adjuncts and term faculty seem to be, “more cautious about addressing controversial issues without the protection of tenure” (Schuster, 2003, p. 19). The decline of Humanities faculty and degree-completing students coupled with the intense difficulty in assessing student learning and outcomes in the Humanities generates a degree of uncertainty, and this uncertainty, “May be one reason why deans, college presidents and provosts, prestigious panels, and the Department of Education have not extended the same call for enhanced instruction in the humanities that we regularly hear regarding STEM fields” (Mendelson, 2010, p. 342).

Economic and Market Influences. One of the keys to the decline of the Humanities has been its perceived uselessness when it comes to job acquisition. The contention is that this educational fluff has little use to us in a market based on numbers and technology. This permeation of market based thinking into higher education emerges in how university administrators have been transformed into managers, “The logic of which, presumably, is that the only ones left to be managed are the academics” (Looseley, 2011, p. 14). In fact, *CNN* recently reported that the governors of both Florida and of Texas have introduced plans to reduce the tuition costs at State colleges for STEM studies degrees (Granderson, 2013).

Though the STEM studies share a heritage and certain practices with the Humanities, the promotion of STEM Studies still comes at the expense of the Humanities. First coined by the

National Science Foundation (NSF) in the early 2000's, STEM gained wide acclaim in education due to the support of the NSF, the International Technology and Engineering Educators Association (ITEA), local governments, and even NASA (Dugger, 2010, p. 2). These studies are often grouped together due to their interconnectedness, and contributions and applications to society (AAAS, 1993, p. 23; Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology [ABET], 2002, back cover; Dugger, 2010, p. 2; National Research Council [NRC], 1996, p. 24; ITEA, 2000, p. 7).

Recognizing the need for a better educated work force, recent declarations and initiatives have been set by individuals such as the President of the United State and from organizations such as the Lumina Foundation for Education and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Nash & Zaback, 2011). Responding to the various calls to improve the quality of education, its availability, and diversity; these groups have set rather bold goals for colleges and universities to meet such as, "A national goal for 60 percent of Americans to have a high-quality degree or credential by 2025" (Nash & Zaback, 2011, p. 1). In comparing the degrees awarded from 2004 to 2009, the data shows that while the Arts and Humanities increased by 15%, the Sciences, when combining the STEM degrees with Health, and Business and Communication degrees, increased by 53% (Nash & Zaback, 2011). While the Humanities commanded significantly more awarded degrees at the undergraduate level in sheer numbers, at the Master and Doctoral levels the number of degree completions dropped dramatically, signifying both the usefulness of the Humanities as a foundation for skills and learning, and the economies need for specialized degree holding employees (Nash & Zaback, 2011).

Returning to the *CNN* report; in defending his decision, Florida Governor Rick Scott asked, "Do you want to use your tax money to educate more people who can't get jobs in

anthropology” (Granderson, 2013, p. 1). A cutting question to be sure, however, citing the GOP’s own script the author remarks that the government should not be picking winners and losers, adding that, “Just because the vocational outcome between the two [degrees] might be different doesn’t mean it’s the government’s role to assign its value to society” (Granderson, 2013, p. 1).

This valuing of the, “materially useful and the merely academic” (Looseley, 2011, p. 13), is targeted directly at the Humanities; however, “Parents can joke about liberal art majors and kids coming back home after college, but it’s an infringement on civil liberties for government to strong arm students into technical degrees by artificially manipulating costs” (Granderson, 2013, p. 2). While students and parents should consider the prospect of job acquisition while pursuing an education, it is not the duty of the government to sanction some majors and demonize others (Granderson, 2013; Looseley, 2011).

Skewed View of Education

While arguing in favor of Humanities influenced education, it is hard to avoid the common accusation that the Humanities do not provide enough tangible skills and training required for job acquisition. In the current economy this concern is not unfounded; however, such thinking demonstrates how the perception of education has skewed from its original traditions. Earlier I discussed the origins of the ethos of our educational system, how it originated as a study of philosophy and rhetoric, how the founding fathers were heavily influenced by the Classics when building our nation, and that in the pre-civil war American south there existed a plethora of classically trained Greek and Latin speaking farmers (Jefferson, 1779; Quintilian, 90; Tolley, 1996; Wilhelm, 1997). That educational system was based off of thought,

reason, philosophy, ethics, and history. It did not focus on job training, because the goal was to cultivate a thoughtful, critical, and informative individual (Tolley, 1996; Wilhelm, 1997).

In recent decades, however, education is seen less as the development of one's mind, and more as job training and preparation. In this way, universities have transitioned from academies to something akin to corporations training individuals for business and technology jobs (Cote & Allahar, 2011). In fact:

If your criteria are productivity, efficiency and consumer satisfaction, it makes perfect sense to withdraw funds and material support from the humanities — which do not earn their keep and often draw the ire of a public suspicious of what humanities teachers do in the classroom — and leave standing programs that have a more obvious relationship to a state's economic prosperity and produce results the man or woman in the street can recognize and appreciate. (Fish, 2010)

These criteria of productivity, efficiency and consumer satisfaction are based on a market value system, which has permeated into the educational system (Looseley, 2011). Treating education as a business creates obvious friction with those subjects that fail to produce tangible and measureable results, thus casting them as inferior and irrelevant. However, lacking this arm of education creates an inability of many to understand the significance of the lessons of the Humanities and even of our own history (Mendelson, 2010; Snow, 1959). Research also suggests that, if taken literally, many of the themes in the Humanities appear esoteric; they become just nice stories for bored academics with little or nothing of value (Mendelson, 2010).

Despite the Humanities central role in education at the beginning of the academy, many now argue, for a variety of reasons, that education should shift its focus away from esoteric

subjects, and focus on job preparation (Dugger, 2010; Granderson, 2013; Schlee & Harich, 2010). Even the NCLB Act supports this in its stress on STEM Studies, and standardized testing (2001). Bowing to public pressure to make reforms of any type, leaders such as the Governors of Florida and Texas find the most economical choice based on market driven thinking, and support it (Granderson, 2013). Thus, we find the nature and expectations of education changing, declining academic performance, and increasing technical and curricular standards; all the while subjects like history, philosophy and ethics are treated as extra-curricular (Mendelson, 2010; Snow, 1959).

Benefits of the Humanities

In what has been discussed thus far we have looked at the reasons why others have studied the Humanities, but not why we should. The reasons given previously have all been based upon the cultural attitudes, individual's interest in the subject or, on the endless search for unanswerable questions, any and all usefulness being implied. Yet, in an age of intense oversight, crowded classrooms, growing curriculum, and rigid standardized tests, implied usefulness is no longer enough and tangible evidence is required, though, "It would make things a whole lot easier and more manageable if everything came down to hard facts" (Konnikova, 2012, p. 3). Essentially, viewed as a business investment, there is too much at stake in education to invest in the ambiguous Humanities subjects, where the return is variable and hard to measure (Looseley, 2011).

Seeking to expose the usefulness of the Humanities, and in response to Lord Kelvin's measurement equals knowledge, "Actions immersed in contingency and subject to contending options cannot yield certainty, but the absence of certain knowledge does not signal an absence

of knowledge altogether” (Mendelson, 2010, p. 348). To support this claim, the Humanities can draw upon the wisdom of Michel de Montaigne, a French Renaissance writer. Published around 1595, Montaigne’s meandering work *Essays* sought to describe man in all forms. Montaigne states in Book One that, “When learning to judge events well it is wonderfully useful to rub and polish our brains by contact with those of others” (1595). Simply put, we cannot rely on our own minds and experiences to make sense of the world, but should, through contact with others, combine our minds, experiences, and wisdom to seek understanding.

This market driven thinking described puts the onus on the Humanities to show its tangible contributions to education in order to remain relevant (Looseley, 2011). Humanities saving grace then is that its contributions are not all philosophical, as it does have some tangible benefits for individuals in education, vocation, and life. These benefits can be divided into two groups, personal and societal contributions. The former molds a fuller deeper individual, capable of critical thought, creative thinking, and enhanced ability to make moral and ethical judgments and decisions. The latter uses the same skills and applies it to the betterment of others, cultivating a fuller society.

Personal Growth. When broken down to its essence, the purpose of education is to relate in a comprehensible way an appreciation and a curiosity for the vast accumulated knowledge of humanity. Its goals are to teach the next generation to develop and use analytical, critical, logical rhetorical and speculative skills for use in culture, politics, science and industry. Simply put, the goal of education is to teach students how to think.

In January of 2013, the Washington Post reviewed the book, *The Artistic Edge* by Lisa Phillips. The book focused on the tangible life, or meta-skills, which children learn from the

Arts (Strauss, 2013). The review stated that, “While important to study for their intrinsic value [the arts] also promote skills seen as important in academic and life success” (Strauss, 2013, p. 1). The book identified ten meta-skills that children learn from the arts. These skills are: creativity, confidence, problem solving, perseverance, focus, non-verbal communication, receiving constructive feedback, collaboration, dedication, and accountability (Phillips, 2012), and research supports the usefulness of these meta-skills in vocation and life (Schlee & Harich, 2010). In comparing job requirements for entry level against mid and upper management level marketing jobs the research found that in addition to technical training companies valued individuals trained in oral and written communication as well as critical thinking skills; “These meta-skills are relevant not only for entry-level jobs but also for advancing into middle- and senior-level marketing jobs” (Schlee & Harich, 2010, p. 342). Thus the importance of the Humanities lies in its ability to cultivate these meta-skills.

A strictly Science studies based education also lacks the ability to infer outcomes, or solutions. When presented with data that is incomplete, in a state of flux, or subject to chance or choice the scientific method is unable to provide adequate solutions. In reality:

What we do face regularly, daily, immanently are countless decisions, large and small for which scientific reasoning and formal logic are unsuitable, which present ambiguous and imperfect information, which lie outside the scope of prior experience, and about which opinion is divided. (Mendelson, 2010, p. 351)

When faced with such situations, we must rely on something other than method and structure, we must rely on wisdom. The Humanities success in handling such complex situations is its natural

interdisciplinary structure (Looseley, 2011, p. 10). Deriving support from Parker; the Humanities are good at:

Working across and between discrete explanatory models, at acknowledging and not seeking to rise above the situatedness of their material, thereby reaching places which social-science methodologies alone may in some cases attain only in the abstract because they construe the particular. (Parker, 2008, p. 90)

In such a situation, it becomes wonderfully useful to rub and polish our brains together with others, especially with those possessed with past wisdom (Montaigne, 1595).

Societal Contributions. The Humanities often extort those possessed with wisdom and experience to share it with others, and such would be the call again. The research has demonstrated the job market demands for employees to be trained and equipped with both technical knowledge, and meta-skills (Schlee & Harich, 2010). This is supported by:

[That] the kind of reasoning I have been addressing in this essay, of practical judgment, is a staple in the daily routine of every student, parent, administrator, politician, business or social worker, cleric, health professional, educator, police officer, judge, plumber, farmer, technician, mechanic, waiter, information specialist, volunteer, or any independent individual with the freedom and resources to make her own decisions. (Mendelson, 2010)

The ability to think clearly, concisely, and alternatively is needed in just about every profession currently in practice. Yes, it is true that our economy is in need of information technology specialists, but they are also in need of politicians, and philosophers; one skilled in action the other in reflection. The idea that we should educate every person in the Science studies would

limit our ability to respond to our societal needs, to grow culturally, and would close our minds to the wisdom and experiences of the past, of thousands of years of history. If in doubt one should ask, “Why would we allow education in humanistic praxes to atrophy when they provide a principle means by which almost all of us learn how to discover and develop meaningful new solutions to unprecedented problems” (Mendelson, 2010, p. 352)? A great strength of the Humanities is its ability to, “Deal with the unique and the provisional” (Looseley, 2011, p. 12). Two things our society should dread losing.

Our education system is also designed to do more than just teach students to think and reflect, but also to contribute. In seeking a way to prepare future generations to be leaders, Founding Father Thomas Jefferson saw education as the answer. He wanted to create good and qualified citizens that would be able to recognize and resist tyranny from their government (Jefferson, 1779).

The most effectual means of preventing [tyranny] would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large, and more especially to give them knowledge of those facts which history exhibiteth, that possessed thereby of the experience of other ages and countries, they may be enabled to know ambition under all its shapes, and prompt to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes. (Jefferson, 1779)

What Jefferson was proposing was an institution whose sole goal was to produce educated individuals capable of cognitive understanding, and effective decision making. While the Science studies can certainly contribute to this it needs to be balanced by ethics, tempered by history, supported by logic, and inspired by art and passions. Science studies rigorous scientific

format inhibit this, and can even lead to a deafness of the beauty of its craft (Snow, 1959, p. 15). Jefferson was not proposing an institution that stifled alternative thinking, and rewarded conformity; or in other words, an education cemented to one method without deviation.

In the end, the Humanities gift to the learner is an appreciation of thought, ethics, introspection, self-criticism, of analysis and assessment, and to Jefferson's delight a sense of civic responsibility. In this fashion the Humanities contributions to education are far-reaching and profound.

Multicultural Influences

Given the state of modern education in America, the need for greater understanding and a wider approach to teaching has never been more important. While America may not be experiencing the same volume of immigration as it had in past generations, the drive to integrate and educate all equally is now on the forefront of national concern. The question many school administrators are facing is how to educate all equally, with so many barriers, and dwindling resources each year? Teachers face classrooms increasingly filled with students from a plethora of backgrounds, and teaching to each of them is a daunting task. However, following the mantra that, "All are equal in teachability" (Snow, 1959, p. 47) teachers plug along striving to teach an expanding curriculum to a diverse student body with diminishing resources. While this essay is not intended to lay out a plan of action of cultural and educational reform, it is intended to redress the glaring lack of support the Humanities receive in the classroom despite their educational, cultural and ethical contributions.

Given the importance of multiculturalism in higher education today, understanding its benefits and how they align with the Humanities will help to demonstrate its integration into

curriculum and educational philosophy. Multicultural education is important due to its ability to increase productivity, promotion of cognitive and moral growth, cultivation of problem-solving skills, multiple perspectives, and the development of a broader view of the world. It also, “Increases positive relationships through achievement of common goals, respect, appreciation, and commitment to equality among the intellectuals at institutions... [and] decreases stereotyping and prejudice” (Ameny-Dixon, 2003). The goal of a well-rounded education is to cultivate the growth of the attributes of creativity, wisdom, and understanding; attributes which are shared by both the Humanities and a multicultural education. In this way, if competence is the goal, the two are inextricably linked.

The Humanities offer first and foremost the collective cultural wisdom of hundreds of cultures, thousands of individuals, and countless experiences. In order to understand the Humanities, one must be cultural aware and competent. Presented with the various differences of opinions, perspectives, experiences, worldviews, and languages drawing any conclusions from the past require a deep understanding of history and humanity. Striving to develop multiple competencies across different skill sets, multicultural education focuses on, “[The] understanding and learning to negotiate cultural diversity among nations as well as within a single nation by becoming aware of one’s own perspectives as well as becoming conscious of other perspectives as a foundation of informed cross-cultural interaction” (Ameny-Dixon, 2003). The Humanities ability to respond to multicultural issues is apparent in its natural ability to, “Deal particularly well with singularity, understanding how to account for particularity without either crudely generalizing and categorized, or slipping into outright subjectivity” (Parker, 2008, p. 84).

Societal, cultural, and personal intolerance is based on generalization, categorizing, and subjectivity. This intolerance thrives on ignorance and cultivates fear, false conclusion, and

hatred. The Humanities help to train us to ‘deal with singularity’ and to meet people where they are in their lives and culture (Parker, 2008). When we quote Cicero or Caesar, or speculate on the philosophies of Plato or Pythagoras we must do so within the constraints of their society, their experiences, their religions, their cultures, and their language. When Xenophanes declares that, “No man knows, or ever will know, the truth about the gods” (Strathern, 1996, 11), we ought not to judge him heretical for believing in multiple gods, nor in doubting their truths. We must instead strive to understand him and his culture before passing judgment.

A conference held at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina on the issue of human rights was the subject of a 2012 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education Journal*. The discussion on the concept of Human rights began simply that, “People everywhere should be treated with dignity not because they are citizens of a particular country but simply because they are human beings” (Harpham, 2012, p. 1). However, this issue quickly became murky in the shadow of cultural differences, and on varying definitions of human, justice, law, rights, gender, and race (Harpham, 2012). While these distinctions will likely always be mired down in dispute, the act of discussion helps by, “Exposing [students] to the world outside [their] circle of experience, and by requiring [them] to make judgments, assessments, and interpretations of uncertain situations” (Harpham, 2012, p. 7). While the Humanities allow for the development of those abilities by awaking cognitive skills and exposing one to experiences outside their known ‘world’, it does so in a safe environment. Free from the penalties of failure, students are able to focus on the issues at stake and learn from the collective wisdom of the past for application in their future (Harpham, 2012).

Review

In the end we should strive not to view the Humanities and Science studies as separate like Snow when he describes them as two groups separated by an ocean; but rather see them as different methods of answering the same questions (Snow, 1959); or in other words:

The tools of mathematical and statistical and scientific analysis are invaluable. But their quantifiable certainty is all too easy to see as the only real way of doing things when really, it is but one tool and one approach – and not one that is translatable or applicable to all matters of qualitative phenomena. (Konnikova, 2012, p. 3)

We should do well to remember that there is no one perfect educational system, or method, or activity. A New York Times article expressed cynicism about the Science studies ability to categorize and organize the world, “Any understanding of human good and evil has to deal with phenomena that biology ignores or tries to explain away – such as decency, self-respect, integrity, honor, loyalty or justice” (Konnikova, 2012, p. 2).

The cost of marginalizing the Humanities education has led to cultural, social and economic decay according to a number of studies and authors (Bloom, 1987; Fish, 2010; Hirsch, 1998; Lind, 2006; & Windschuttle, 1997). Others state that the marginalization of the Humanities will have far reaching effects on the future generations of both educators and students:

Over time, the awareness by career choosers of the changing odds may dissuade many talented men and women – undergraduates and graduates students with considerable career mobility – from pursuing academic careers. The consequences will not be

measurable, but the losers will be future generations of students, and indeed, society itself. (Schuster, 2003, p. 21)

In this time of change, and controversy that our nation currently faces it is wise to draw upon the wisdom of the past (Wilhelm, 1997), to keep our praxes from atrophy (Mendelson, 2010), and to, “seek and hold dear whatever wisdom we can find, wherever we can find it” (NEH, 2009, p. 12).

When considering all of the evidence presented thus far, it becomes apparent that a combined approach between the Humanities and the Science studies would best prepare students for life and vocation; “Ultimately...schools need to find a balance between the knowledge and skills that graduates need for entry-level jobs and the knowledge and skills needed to advance to middle- and upper-level management positions” (Schlee & Harich, 2010, p. 3). This balance is not only important for the student, but also for the teacher, administrator, researcher, academic, and scientist. If the gap between the Science studies and the Humanities is not bridged than, “When those two senses have grown apart, then no society is going to be able to think with wisdom” (Snow, 1959, p. 53), and a society bereft of wisdom is what Jefferson sought to avoid (1779). Once bridged, the Researcher suggests that these groups can mutually benefit each other. For the Humanities, its impact lies in its:

Capacity to produce graduates and scholars skilled in the intercultural hermeneutics of discursive practices, in other ways of knowing, and in the epistemological principle that it is the processes of inquiry, rather than their outcomes, that are what constitute understanding. (Looseley, 2011, p. 17)

For the Science studies, rigorous testing, training and methodology help to organize and understand what we observe and encounter, and to apply it to society and industry.

For those that seek legislative reforms and mandates to address the chaos of the educational system, its bloated curriculum, erroneous applications and enormous cost, would do well to remember that, “just because the vocational outcome [of education] might be different doesn’t mean it’s the government’s role to assign its value to society” (Granderson, 2013, p. 1), and should consider that, “Any official who’s concerned about higher education in this country should address the skyrocketing costs, not demonize degrees they don’t appreciate” (Granderson, 2013, p. 2).

In the end, this study seeks to examine the feelings and reactions of various professors and career advisors throughout small Liberal Arts institutions and to analyze those responses in order to gain an understanding of the state of the Humanities from within the halls of academia itself, and the perceived employment opportunities therein.

Methodology

It is the purpose of this research study to examine the perceptions of the Humanities as a viable field of study for today’s student in higher education. To do this the Researcher conducted a qualitative study aimed at exploring the phenomenon of the declining support and conception of the Humanities in higher education by examining the understandings, experiences and perceptions of non-Humanities professors and Career Advisors. A qualitative research approach was selected for application in this study because of its focus on experiences, and its reflective nature; in this way a qualitative study seeks to ask and understand why, not what or how (Cresswell, 2012). To ascertain the usefulness of the Humanities studies in higher education, one-on-one interviews were conducted with each the selected participants. Through the interviews the Researcher sought to examine the Humanities role in the development of

meta-skills, the cultivation of citizenship, student success in job acquisition, and adaptability and maneuverability across multiple fields and skill competencies.

Sites and Participants

The participants, eight in total, were chosen from higher educational sites in the greater Philadelphia area. By design, the participants had to meet the following criteria to be considered for the study; the faculty needed to have at least a Masters level degree, have taught for a minimum of five years in a non-Humanities subject as defined by the Researcher, and work at a Liberal Arts institution. The Career Advisors needed to have at least a Bachelors level degree, have a minimum of five years careers or non-education related work experience, and work for a Liberal Arts institution. Table 1 provides the breakdown of the participants, and their experiences in higher education.

Interview Protocol

The data was collected via interviews with each of the participants, which were subdivided into two parts. These were a pre-interview questionnaire followed by a one-on-one interview. The first section was designed to locate qualified participants, and the second to gather relevant data about the individual's experiences and perceptions of the Humanities across multiple fields.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire. Each participant was first given a brief pre-interview questionnaire designed to gather their basic data, and to establish them as a good candidate for the study. The questionnaire was distributed via email, and returned to the Researcher prior to meeting for the later one-on-one interview. In this questionnaire the participants were asked to define the Humanities; this was then compared to the Researcher's for conflicts or differences, if

none existed then the interview when scheduled progressed as normal, if conflicts existed then time was spent in discussion about the meaning and nature of the Humanities to establish a common understanding before continuing on with the interview (For an example of the pre-interview questionnaire, please see Appendix A; for the questionnaire data, please see Table 1).

One-on-One Interview. Once a qualified participant was identified and returned the pre-interview questionnaire a one-on-one interview was conducted, which was recorded with the participant's knowledge and permission. Given the difference in professions between the faculty members and the Career Advisors the interviews needed to follow slightly varying tracks, though the questions asked were inherently the same with only minor adjustments made. Both interview protocols were divided up into three sections (For an example of the one-on-one interview questions, please see Appendix B).

Section one was designed to build upon the information gathered in the pre-interview questionnaire and focused on the participant's personal qualifications and academic and professional history. The second section sought the participants understanding of and involvement with the Humanities. These questions focused on how the participants defined and viewed the Humanities studies in the various contexts of their personal experiences and education, their particular subject area, and at their current institution. On the last point, a few of the participants were even able to provide relevant data about other institutions where they have worked within the last five years. The final section of questions focused on the impact and decline of the Humanities in higher education. The participants were asked to reflect on how, if at all, the Humanities had impacted their lives ethically, emotionally, culturally, creatively, theologically, professionally, or philosophically. The interviews concluded with the participants pondering an education lacking or bereft of the Humanities studies. Lasting about 45 minutes,

the interviews were conducted in a closed quiet space of the subjects choosing, and at a time convenient for them.

Data Analysis

The purpose of this study is to examine the current perception of the Humanities studies as a viable choice for current students by examining the experiences and understandings of non-Humanities faculty and Career Advisors. To explore this, when completed the interviews were coded and general themes began to emerge, such as the role of career services in the academic and vocational success of students. The various ideas explored by the participants revolved around the usefulness and benefits of the Humanities, parental and student expectations of education, and the misconception of the vocational potential of different majors. Using these themes along with relevant literature, the Researcher developed a narrative.

Role of the Researcher

I approached this study from a Humanities dominated background. Grounded in primary source research methods, impassioned by History, and dedicated to the Liberal Arts model of higher education, the decline and decay of the Humanities subjects was my driving force to conduct this study. Years spent as a student of History gave me the analytical and speculative skills necessary to conduct a qualitative study aimed at eliciting the experiences and conceptions of the participants. However, these skills that allowed me to conduct the study also created limitations, challenges and assumptions. As entwined with the Humanities as I was, it was difficult at first to separate my assumptions of the usefulness of the Humanities from what the research was actually saying; thus many revisions and revisits were needed to correct this. In addition, while I possessed a comprehensive conception of what the Humanities consisted of, my

understanding of the non-Humanities in its subject range, anthropology, traditions, practices, and skill sets proved to be woefully inadequate, leading to many early false assumptions and conclusions. Through research, reflection, and discussion these limitations were exceeded, the assumptions corrected, and the challenges overcome.

While it is improbable, and quite unlikely that the Humanities will reclaim dominance over the academic, social, and political circles; it need not be abandoned. Its lessons are many and important. It at once both supports and questions various points of view, traditions, and methods. The role of ethics in medical, technological, and scientific research alone should be evidence enough of the contributions and necessity of a reflective component to any field of study. In this way, an integrated approach should be considered at all educational levels and across different educational models.

Table 1:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Profession</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Years In Field</u>	<u>Degree(s)</u>		
				<u>Undergraduate</u>	<u>Graduate</u>	<u>PhD</u>
Cassie	Career Advisor	F	3 / 10*	English Major	M. of Education	-
Carol	Career Advisor	F	23 / 5*	English	MBA	-
Parker	Physics Faculty	M	11	Literature Major	Pending	-
Cathy	Chemistry Faculty	F	13	Chemistry	M. of Chemistry	Chemistry
Brent	Business Faculty	M	8	Educational Studies	M. of Divinity & M. of Science in Economic Development	Philosophy
Anna	Accounting Faculty	F	15	B.A. of Science	M. of Clinical Nutrition; M. of Business Administration & CPA	-
Mike	Mathematics Faculty	M	18	Mathematics	M. Mathematics & M. Mathematics	Mathematics
Mary	Mathematics Faculty	F	5	Elementary Education	M. Mathematics	-

*Years in Career Services work / Years in non-education related work

Discussion

Once the interviews were complete and transcribed, they were coded line by line for recurring ideas or foci; the resulting foci were then organized into six individual themes which gave rise to a narrative. The themes are: the Value of the Humanities, Citizenship, Career Services and Support, Job Acquisition and Marketability, Student Barriers, and the Future of the Humanities. Though these themes stand alone in their importance a few cross between and over each other, such as: the role of career service departments in student confidence and post graduate vocational success, the expectations and perceptions of parents and students about the

college experience, and the vocational potential of different majors. The following traces these ideas as they were related by the participants and compares and contrasts them against each other.

The Value of the Humanities

While the research and the participants support and demonstrate the usefulness of the Humanities in education, both state that things are changing within the academy (Konnikova, 2012; Looseley, 2011; Mendelson, 2010; NEH, 2009; Schlee & Harich, 2010; Snow, 1959; Snow, 1965; Strauss, 2013). Traditional conceptions of the Humanities are changing, and consumers question their vocational prospects (Looseley, 2011). In response, schools are increasingly focusing on tangible and measurable skills, abandoning the historical well-rounded education model (Konnikova, 2012; Schlee & Harich, 2010). Addressing this, the participants reflected the value of the Humanities in higher education, its vocational aspects, and its continued integration in the academy.

When each of the participants was asked to provide their own definition of the Humanities the responses were varied. It was clear that some have given the concept much thought and had a fully realized definition, others considered it to be very broad encompassing even some of the soft sciences, a few narrowed the Humanities down to just literature and history, and one considered the Humanities separate from the liberal arts. For Carol the Humanities are, “The integrative subjects about which one reflects and thinks.” Cathy, Brent, and Mike all believe it to be the study of the human condition, while Parker simply stated that any degree with a B.A. after it is within the Humanities spectrum, but also conceded that understanding the Humanities is like, “Critical thinking in a different language.” In all cases, the

participants agreed that the Humanities involved some basic subjects; History, Philosophy, Language, Literature, Ethics, and English. What is interesting about the participants is that even though they are all involved in non-Humanities vocations, and when possessed, higher degrees are in highly specialized fields; nearly three quarters of the participants have an undergraduate degree in a Humanities subject, or in an unrelated field to what they current teach or work in (Please see table 2). While these varying definitions cast the Humanities in a different light, it demonstrates the Humanities maneuverability and diversity across different educational models and levels.

Most of the participants directly stated that the Humanities have great value in higher education today, while others conditionally agreed stipulating that it should be balanced by training across different fields. In reflecting on the usefulness of a strictly Humanities degree as it relates to vocational acquisition, the Career Advisors both state that it is still a viable and valuable option for students, but that ultimately it comes down to how the students prepare and market themselves to employers. “I do think that the Humanities are extremely viable. I do think that the onus in on the student however to discern for themselves what direction they want to go in when they leave here” (Cassie). In addition, the Humanities help students prepare for vocation and life, “You need to learn how to think, you need to learn how to be critical, to ask the right questions and to not take things at face value, and those I think are what the Humanities broadly do for you” (Carol). This is supported by Parker with, “When you go to [college] you are learning how to learn, you’re not learning a trade.” This view of the higher education as trade or vocational training is a part of a widespread misconception of the role of education in society (Konnikova, 2012; Granderson, 2013; Looseley, 2011). Rather than understood in its historical form of providing a well-rounded education, it is instead perceived as job preparation

with measureable tangible benefits. Thus, those subjects without such easily measureable results lose significance and value.

Though public perception of the academy has shifted away from a well-rounded approach, every participant noted the necessity for students to receive such an education (Konnikova, 2012; Granderson, 2013; Looseley, 2011). Colleges and universities have long been in the practice of providing their students with a broad education; this includes the full gambit of subjects from philosophy to business. In a sense, “The job of [education] is to teach people how to think...to express their thoughts...how to reason, how to critique, how to integrate, how to read and write” (Carol). Supporting this, Anna described how we need to be whole human beings, this means studying something of everything, not just one method, or idea. Brent agrees saying that philosophy is immensely important because it teaches other disciplines how to be reflective. Supporting this concept, Cathy believes and actively promotes in class, the idea that we have an obligation to understand and attempt to solve world issues. She also stated that those students not majoring in chemistry or biology need to have enough scientific literacy and understanding to form critical and logical assessments when it comes to the contributions of organizations like the NSF, and that political science majors also need this literacy if they are going to be running for elections and making decisions one day; they need to know that people doing science is a good thing. We are not all destined to study the reflections of Marcus Aurelius or to be chemists; but as an individual and a society, we cannot assign value to something in which we have no literacy.

Though appreciative of the Humanities, the participants all called for and supported the idea of an integrated approach. This method would balance the growing technical and skill knowledge that students need to enter the job market with the critical, logical, ethical, and

speculative skills imparted by the Humanities. When reflecting on the options the Humanities studies offer students, Anna felt that though still valuable, “You need some technical skills under it; computer, research, practical concrete skills.” Cassie states that, “I think that the more courses that you can take that apply to a variety of applications and disciplines, the more general knowledge you have I think the better off you are today.” When discussing the importance of the Humanities, Brent examined both the Humanities and the Scientific Method’s ability to answer the question, what is the good life? “You can’t answer that through...research, you have to answer it ethically.” Moving forward, institutions should strive to integrate the reflective speculative nature of the Humanities into the rigorous structured methods of non-Humanities subjects.

Citizenship

An important element of education is its role in creating good and qualified citizens, instilling a sense of civic responsibility, and of political literacy. Through the lessons of history, understanding of democratic process, and the cultivation of critical thinking and civil duty, the Humanities help to shape and nurture an individual into a qualified critical contributing member of society (Jefferson, 1779). When asked how higher education is doing at producing capable and well informed citizens, the participants responses were mixed with several stating that some institutions were more successful than others; with the rest noting that higher education across the board was not producing good citizens. While the concept of citizenship is explained above, Mike discusses education for the liberated man in ancient Greece, “For the liberated man; that was the man who studied the liberal arts, and that was to become a good citizen.” Essentially stating that to be educated at a liberal arts university implies being educated as a good citizen.

While the cultivation of good citizens is a part of the Humanities, it is not necessarily a part of

the non-Humanities, making the shift away from the Humanities studies a simultaneous shift away from citizenship.

When considering the inequities of the world, and the concept of social justice, some of the participants believe that it is imperative that students graduate with sense of societal obligation. Despondent, Cathy responded to some institutions lack of civic mindedness, “You can completely graduate and still have your head in the sand about the world around you, and that you have any responsibility whatsoever to make this world a better place.” In voicing their agreement, Brent categorically states that institutions are not producing good citizens citing that, “We have vacated our vocation of getting students to ask why, they’ve become lemmings. It’s been all about the degree and getting a job.” Though not as pessimistic as Brent; Cassie and Mary both describe the need for good role-modeling by teachers, staff, administration, as well as good academic performance, institutional stewardship, justice in terms of hiring practices, and the allocation of campus resources, as vital to the cultivation of civic minded students. By utilizing the methods of role-modeling and good institutional practices, along with discussion of world issues and social justice institutions can begin to cultivate the growth of good and qualified citizens.

Career Services and Support

Most institutions today have a career services support office for their students, which is designed to help students identify their strengths, skills, and interests; find a major that aligns with these attributes; and helps the students prepare experientially for vocation. Though the Career Advisors exist to help students figure out what major best suits their talents and interests, and to help them prepare them to enter into a vocation according to Cassie, “It’s not [our]

responsibility to tell someone what to do; that is really against the code of career services.” The participant goes on to say that students need to be thoughtful about what major they choose, because they will be in that major for four years, and if they do not like being in the classes, they are going to like the work place even less. Such a warning should caution students into being more reflective about their interests and strengths and to, “Do more of what you like, and less of what you don’t” (Carol), or summed up nicely by Cassie, “Once you get the major then let’s find the vision.” Though their approach to career services is structured along line of student interest and strengths and supported by research like the Meyers Briggs personality test, career services is not a one size fits all, it is very individualized and specific (Briggs-Meyers, 1985).

Despite the resources available in the career services department, many students often do not take advantage of their help. Though there are a variety of reasons for this, they tend to fit into two general themes; lack of information, and lack of support. Each of the participants was asked if they had access to, and if so if they sought advice from a career advisor when they were college. Some simply were not aware of any such support, while others went instead to professors, friends, and family. Noting this gap, Carol could only state that despite daily meetings, “We [only] see the tip of the iceberg of students.” In this way, Carol and Cassie relate how the Career Services office is often not equipped to reach the whole student body and lack the administrative support to expand their efforts. Thus, with the bulk of students not utilizing the resources of the career services office it became apparent that teachers seem to have integral roles in helping students who were unsure of their major, including some of the participants. In such situations, Anna admitted that she does not refer the student to the career services office, nor seek their support or guidance. Brent and Mary even related how as undergrad students they were talked into majors that they did not want by uninformed teachers or parents. The support

and guidance that the career services office can provide students is immense, yet largely unknown or disregarded.

In addition to the lack of information about the assistance offered by the career services department, there is a lack of support from the Humanities themselves. While it is clear that both student and parental expectations of a college degree is job acquisition, it is apparent that the non-Humanities majors have more vocational support built into them, while the Humanities tend to not have the connections as readily available for students. An example of this is internships. Reflecting on the vocational leanings of the non-Humanities majors, “All of the [non-Humanities] professors are preaching the doctrine of the things you’re going to need to know when you get into the work force” (Cassie). While this participant admits that the Humanities are at a disadvantage in this regard, they do not think that a Humanity’s major is limited in their capacity to land a job. Though a Humanities degree may not limit the vocational diversity of the student, it does not always provide the built in experiential component that helps to prepare students for employment.

This lack of information and support is not a symptom of the past, but rather a continuing problem. Cassie stated that the biggest issue they have to deal with is deconstructing student’s expectations and impressions of the relationship between a college degree and job acquisition. While the tradition of higher education has been to produce a well-rounded individual, modern interpretations by consumers view it instead as an investment in their economic future (Mendelson, 2010; Looseley, 2011), a view in which students and parents believe that because they put all this money in, they should see this much in benefits at the end of four years. However, as Cassie states, “Education is not a savings account.” The participant believes that this view grew out of concepts of the past, how there was a time when possessing a college

degree was a ticket to good employment, but with degree inflation and a saturated market this had changed (Cassie; Brent). Mike often meets with perspective student interested in the Mathematics department, and a substantial number of them are only interested in the practical applications of the subject such as engineering, not in its history or philosophy. While this focus on marketability and job acquisition is not inherently bad; the current economic climate is certainly contributing to it; the Humanities themselves and many institutions are not prepared for the shifting expectations (Cassie).

This skewed view of education also extends into the perspectives of students and parents on the relationship between a major and its employment diversity. First mentioned by the Career Advisors, several participants brought up the misconception both within and outside the halls of academia that an individual's major limits the variety of jobs that they can do. While this may be true for some highly specialized and technical trades, such as the medical field, the participants noted that an individual's choice of major had very little to do with their actual vocation. Ultimately, "If you're a management major, or if you're a history major you can apply for the same jobs, it really just depends on what your experiences are, your degree itself doesn't matter that much" (Cassie). Voicing her agreement, Carol points out that, "There's no one on one correlation between what you study and what you do, very little." According to Parker, part of this misconception can be attributed to the salary discrepancy nationally between technical jobs and their Humanities counterparts; however they note that though some non-Humanities jobs may have a much higher starting salary, there are often fewer of those jobs available. According to the participants and earlier research, judging a major by its perceived vocational opportunities alone is a common mistake that does not take into consideration students interests, strengths, or the quantity of jobs available (Schlee & Harich, 2010).

Though some Humanities degrees afford the student with great career mobility, not all have the same vocational maneuverability. Playing the devil's advocate, Anna demonstrated the danger of a purely Humanities centered education by pointing out the difficulty artists have in establishing a career. There are few jobs for musicians or artists, so they often must make certain sacrifices in order to make that their profession. The participant did concede that this is not the case for all Humanities majors. Maddy also considered the job opportunities for Humanities majors to be very narrow. Prior to our conversation, the participant believed that teaching was one of the only career paths available for Humanities majors, though this may be due to their limited definition of the subjects within the Humanities spectrum. The participant does believe that the Humanities are still a viable field of study in which a student can be financially successful. Again, this demonstrates the need for student's to make conscientious choices about what to study and how to best support it with experiences.

A common thread that all of the participants noted was the importance of the student's personal choice when choosing a major and its impact on their academic and professional success, or more accurately guided choice. Both Cassie and Carol strongly support students choosing a major that they enjoy regardless of any perceived vocational outcomes. These personal choices that students make have more of an impact on their employability than their major does, "It's not about the degree, it's about...the choices that the student makes; it's about the experiences that they decided to take on during their years in the university. To me that is more indicative of future success in your career, than the major that you pick" (Cassie). When meeting with students, Carol makes a point to really encourage students to not think about job acquisition when they are choosing a major, because if they chose one based on the practicality of it, but don't like it then, "If you don't like it, you're not going to be good at it, and you're not

going to get a job in it anyway. So you might as well find out what you love and do it really, really well, and then put legs on it.” By this the participant meant to bolster the student’s marketability with internships, volunteer experience, and other such endeavors that would present them as a whole package to a potential employer. Having gone through this process as an undergraduate student when becoming dissatisfied with the major chosen by his parents, Brent sates, “I had to ask myself, what am I interested in?” In the end, students concerned with their vocational prospects upon graduation should make the effort to meet with their institutions career services office to discuss options, interests, and pre-vocational experiences such as internships. With the trust and understanding of parents, and the institutional support of the administration the career services office can reach more students, and help them successfully prepare for vocational life.

Job Acquisition and Marketability

When conserving the decline of the Humanities the participants consistently pointed to the expectation and focus of students and parents on issues of job acquisition and marketability as a reason for declining interest. They contend that students are more interested in the tangible practical skills offered by degrees, giving rise to more specialized education. The participants also noted several misconceptions of students on the vocational outcomes of individual majors, and especially that a college degree ensures a job.

Though the Career Advisor’s and non-Humanities faculty support the process of guided student choice when selecting a major, the temptation to base this selection on job acquisition, market trends, specialized training, and technical skills often drive students to majors that they perceive as more stable or useful, but that they are less interested in. When students are focused

on job acquisition, markers such as job market trends seem to indicate value, and can contribute greatly to the choice of degree, however this can be a dangerous practice. According to one of the Career Advisors, they do not buy into job market trends as an adequate yard stick by which to measure the employability of degrees and subjects, citing that, “Things wax and wane, for a while nursing was big...now in nursing it’s hard to find a job. The same thing is happening in education [now]” (Cassie). Furthermore, remembering the importance of student choice such practices, “[Are] not being very honoring to what the student feels that their strength are, and what they’re really interested in.” Even if the market trends are accurate, and the student enjoys the field, they still have four years of education, or more depending on the field, to go before they can begin working. During this time the market trends can change and shift, resulting in increased difficulties in job acquisition or inadequate preparation. Thus, such awareness and understanding of these trends can aid in a student’s choice, but such focus at the expense of interest or skill can create issues for the student.

Even if the student’s degree choice is not based on job market trends, the participants suggest that many come into college with the false or unrealistic expectations of the nature and value of the education. The participants contend that at the end of four years students fully expect to be employable, that is that their degree ensures them a job. While neither the Researcher nor the participants are arguing against the importance of job acquisition, such a strict focus often drives students into majors that they may not necessarily have chosen for themselves, or for their interests, and puts the onus on institutions to provide more tangible marketable majors or degree paths. According to Carol this importance placed on job acquisition by students as the deciding factor when selecting a major is often an echo of parental expectations. This focus, combined with a common misconception that the Humanities do not

provide enough employment opportunities, drives students into other degree paths, yet, “For the majority of jobs, whether you’re looking at English, Psychology, Communications, Missions / Anthropology, Theology, this whole spectrum of degrees they will fit into almost any kind of work place, any kind of organization can benefit from the skill sets students have acquired from those different majors” (Cassie). In this way a student’s employability is not measured in their degree, but in their skill sets, experiences, and interests.

Further support for students focused on job acquisition to branch out and learn from different degrees and modes of thinking is provided by Cathy. Supporting the well-rounded educated student, Cathy provides insight into the preference of a current hiring manager. The participant works closely with someone who manages hiring for a company that employs a lot of science majors, such as Chemistry, and they really like hiring Humanities majors because they know how to think. Agreeing with the hiring manager and stressing the need for scientists to be good thinkers, “I want people that can interact with the world, that are intelligent about other subjects; that are good thinkers” (Cathy). The participant also noted that though students come in wanting to be employable many of them, “Have unrealistically low expectations about how much work they’re going to need to do as well as they want to” (Cathy). Believing that in responding to this rising employability focus by becoming more technical and focusing on tangible skills, Anna thinks that institutions are sacrificing their traditional well-rounded education. Mike notes sadly that this increased focus on marketability and tangible skills is not student driven, but a cultural shift, “When the culture is about getting the education so that you can get the job it’s harder to value learning for learning’s sake.” Education has become a means to an end, “At the end of four years they get a piece of paper, and then that piece of paper is a ticket to get little pieces of green paper” (Mike), and that is it. In a sense, while focus on job

acquisition is immensely important for students today, they would be well served to incorporate skills and methods of other educational traditions to supplement and reinforce their own training.

Another aspect that the participants identified that heavily influenced student choices was the expectation of high vocational or financial success that a college degree will confer. This student expectation of success puts the onus on the institution to either change or address its practices. What should students expect though? Modern culture implies that we are all entitled to a big house, fancy car, and all these things that are a part of the 'good life'. Students now expect a degree that will in turn get them a job that will pay a lot of money and help them get the good life; however, Brent states that he believes this is the wrong expectation of a college education. The participant describes that students who are expecting rightly should expect three things. A college degree (1) should help them grow and discover what impassions and excites them so that they can be involved in the world and vocation, (2) it should give them skills that teaches them how to do stuff, and (3) it should give them a reason to do something with what they have learned; or in other words a college education should give them a what, a how, and a why for their lives. An education or life devoid of these, according to the participant, is a waste. While a college degree can certainly aid students financially in job acquisition, the attainment of such a degree is not a guarantee.

While the faculty and Career Advisors work to deconstruct and align student expectations, they find that many of these expectations are influenced by parents. Parents often exert a great deal of influence on their child's choice of major, and while some choose to work in conjunction with the Career Advisors on campus, others tend to use their own judgment and wisdom. All of the participants state that parents are concerned about their children being able to get a job, which is a very valid concern. In fact, Brent even originally chose his original major

simply because his parents wanted him to, but it becomes an issue when students are pushed into degrees that they don't like, or are not good at. Cassie cites this scenario, "There are students that come in and say my parents don't want me to be this major, but it's what I want to be." This disagreement will even occasionally lead some parents to refuse to pay for degrees that they do not approve of, resulting in students studying subjects that they have little or no interest in, and therefore will have less of a chance of being employed in. Cooperation and communication between students and their parents, as well as support from the career services office can help to avert these types of scenarios.

Parental influence extends and builds off of notions of the past (Cassie). Firmly believing that college grads should be able to more readily get a job, according to Cassie, parents will buy into the notion that, "[The students] major determines their future." In addition, a lot of parents push their child to get a degree in business, thinking that there are a lot of jobs in business. However, Carol states that, business is the most difficult major to get a job in if you do not know exactly where you want to do and you have not prepared for it experientially, concluding derisively that, "[They] want to major in management, but you're 21, what are you going to manage?" This is all a part of the conception that a college degree is a ticket to not only job opportunities, but high paying ones. Cassie and Carol note that students will often ask how they can use their degree to support themselves, or believe that their choice of a major influences their job opportunities and job type. This is where the career services can help students by identifying their skills and interests, and teaching them that, "Just because you're a Communications major doesn't mean that you can't look for jobs outside of Communications" (Cassie). Parents concerned with student success after college would be well served by working

in conjunction with the career services office to identify the student's skills and training through experiential components such as internships.

Another element that pulls students and parents from one major to another are those that offer more tangible skills that relate in more observable ways to the job market and employer demands. In class, Mike notes that students are often more concerned with the practical implications and uses of the material being presented than on its inherent beauty of structure and form. While he will oblige to answer the practical implications of the material, he also strives to instill an appreciation in the students of the forms, structures, and philosophy of the content. For the students concerned that their preferred major does not offer enough tangible skills sought by employers, the Career Advisors describe how they work with students to discover how they can study what they love and find way to apply that to their marketability by, “[figuring] out with them what ways that their History skills could turn into transferable skills” (Cassie). In this way, the tangible skills sought by employers can be found within both the Humanities and non-Humanities fields.

The impact of rising expectations, changing job requirements, and misconceptions about the nature of education as a financial investment has led to specialization and seclusion in the halls of academia. Higher Education Institutions increasing focus on more technical and tangible skills at the expense of the traditional well-rounded education seems to be a response to two factors, the first being increasing standards from the Department of Education and Federal legislation, the second being the skill and competency demands employers impose on new hires, which in turn effects the enrollment levels at colleges that have adapted to these new demands as opposed to those that have not (Lakes, 2007; NCLB, 2001). In response to these increasing legislative, economic, and employer demands, more and more schools are increasing the

academic standards and expanding the available curriculum that students need to understand and achieve before graduating. So as to not increase the tuition cost or duration of degree paths this growth comes at the expense of the Humanities, reducing the student's interaction with subjects, individuals, and information outside of their major. This specialization and seclusion of majors is addressed by Cassie, "There's an extraordinary amount of loss that happens when we try to make our education so specialized that we almost can't see the forest for the trees." Cathy supports this cross discipline intermingling, "Students do better when they are participating in a learning community, so if you cut your [core requirements], then all your majors are in vacuums where there's not much overlap between people." This intermingling helps to build on campus community, initiate conversations and debate, and prompts students to reflect more about their, and other, disciplines.

While the legislative demands and pressures from the Department of Education and the Federal government are real, from a career perspective the specialization of degrees limits student growth and vocational maneuverability. For a student only learning how to do one thing in college this is a big risk since, "It's unrealistic to expect that anyone is going to do one thing for the rest of their lives. The majority of people in the country will go through anywhere from 7-10 jobs in their lifetime, and that's the average" (Cassie). Additionally, specialized training has a shelf-life, once that particular training is out of date or no longer necessary the student can find themselves blocked from career advancement, or worse without one. Carol reflects on this trend of specialized education and states that, "I would rather see someone study primarily Humanities with a really strong career advising and an experiential component to what they do, rather than messing around with totally vocational things in the university setting." Though

specialized training and education certainly has its role, in medical and trade fields, students need to reflect carefully before they enter such programs.

Further supporting integrative educational programs, the Humanities often provide specific skills that the other subjects, due to burgeoning curriculum requirements do not have time to teach such as critical thinking and effecting writing. Teaching Chemistry, a highly specified field, Cathy states that good writing and creativity are very important skills for scientists; “I need my scientists to be good writers”, but indicated that she does not have the time to teach these skills in class. Given the sheer volume of required knowledge the participant noted that four years is not enough time to teach all of the information of their field, “So more than anything else I need to teach my students how to think, so that they can teach themselves other things later.” The ability to self-educate is an invaluable resource to an individual in their lives and vocation, thus it is a skill highly valued by employers (Schlee & Harich, 2010).

In exploring the danger of separating education into compact specialized bubbles, Brent and Mike examine how bereft of the understandings of the Humanities individuals become insipid and dangerous. Lacking a Humanities inclusive education, specialized individuals lack the perspective and ability to critically and ethically analyze their work, “A nuclear physicist that doesn’t know why he or she should not build a nuclear bomb is a petrifying person” (Brent). Agreeing, Mike states that if a scientist does not have the perspective that History provides of how the scientific method has been used to destroy our humanity they are a very dangerous person. “Einstein had that perspective; he understood what quantum mechanics could do and the great harm that it could do to Humanity” (Mike). In this way the importance of History and Ethics in continuing developments and discoveries that drive our economies and technologies cannot be understated.

While the dangers of specialized education are many and real, for some fields this intense focus is required simply to be adequate at it. An example of this is Accounting, “If you want to do Accounting then you have to understand the rules and methods” (Anna). Another subject that requires specialization if the student intends to progress to higher programs is Mathematics. Mike notes that even though he wishes that he could recommend to all of his students to branch out and minor in Philosophy or History; should the student wish to enter into a graduate program in Mathematics, “[They] need four years of undergrad training in Mathematics to be able to go to grad school in math...the specialization is so high and so technical that you need that much time so that you are at the point that you are proficient in the language.” In such situations students that intend to go on to graduate school, or who choose highly technical degrees will have to rely on the institutions required core or common requirements to expose them to enough Humanities course work to expand their understanding and perspectives.

For the students in such highly technical majors, required Humanities courses are often viewed to be unnecessary to their studies. Brent notes this view when he states that universities have become trade centers churning out more and more graduates. This process has led to grade and diploma inflation resulting in the watering down of the achievement of an undergraduate degree. When considering some of the Humanities courses offered by institutions people do have a sense that, “Oh, not everybody needs to know this, so why bother teaching it” (Cassie)? While believing that specialization has its place at the graduate level, at the undergraduate level, “It’s more important for students to gain a generalized base of knowledge because they don’t know where they’re going to end up, they don’t know what field they’re ultimately going to spend the majority of their life in, or what fields” (Cassie). By cutting such courses what we are really doing is, “Self-limiting the kinds of experiences that students are having” (Cassie). Given

the uncertainty of the current economic times, and the rapidity with which technology and systems are advancing, limiting exposure to knowledge of any kind inhibits our ability to think critically and uniquely.

In this way, the view of college has seemingly irrevocably shifted from the traditional Liberal Arts model to a glorified job preparation institute due to market trends, employer expectations, notions of the past, political pressures, rising consumer demands, and misconceptions. While teachers, Career Advisors, and institutions adjust to these new demands and expectations, the Humanities struggle to adapt and show its usefulness, yet the research and the participants agree that the skills, attributes, and wisdom of the Humanities is not insignificant and can contribute greatly to student's personal, academic, and vocational success.

Student Barriers

As more and more opportunities arise, the spectrum of students attending college from different backgrounds grows steadily and institutions are expanding their academic support systems to keep up with the demands. While many of the participants noted that the biggest obstacle that they encounter is academic preparedness, others mentioned having issues with language barriers and disinterested students. Anna, Mike, and Mary all mentioned a significant gap in entering student's mathematical abilities and understanding, which in turn holds the entire class back from progression. Mary even states that she is often forced to not introduce higher level concepts into class because she knows that many students will not be able to keep up. Noting the significant difference, "In the abilities and the diversity in the students backgrounds just in terms of what they know", Mike likes to talk about the history of the field to show how

different cultures have contributed to the curriculum and knowledge over time. In so doing, the he hopes to increase the student's interest and investment in the course.

Teaching to a wide range of different majors, Parker discusses the various barriers he encounters. Regularly teaching to Education majors he expresses disappointment in both the students' investment in their education and their lack of involvement despite their intended vocation. Regardless of the fact that these students all intend to be teachers one day, they are often quiet and unengaged in class work, a frightening combination when effective teachers are frequently marked by their mastery of content and engagement in the classroom. In addition to unengaged and disinterested students, the participant also contends with language barriers, and must spend significant time outside of class to support and aid those student's comprehension of course content.

Another basic meta-skill critical to life and vocational success in decline is the ability to write effectively (Schlee & Harich, 2010). As a Career Advisor, Carol deals with many students each year that come in with a great deal of potential, but who do not know how to write effectively, "So what do you do if you can't write? You have to learn to write, everything else is going to impinge on that." At the same time Cathy states the necessity of writing for scientists in academic and professional success, and yet this is a skill that they do not have the time to teach in class. Faced with these, and numerous other problems, teachers struggle to impart the knowledge and skills needed to meet both academic standards and basic vocational necessities. This task is further hampered by the students own engagement and interest, forcing institutions to respond with increased academic support programs and resources.

Future without the Humanities

At the end of the interviews, each participant was asked to comment on a future higher educational system lacking or bereft of the Humanities. The participants all felt that such a future would be lacking, citing issues of comprehension, lack of creativity, missing perspectives, and a qualitative difference in our experiences.

A future education lacking the Humanities would limit our comprehension and ability to view multiple perspectives. According to Mike, lacking the Humanities in education would hinder our ability to put data into a relatable and comprehensive context. Additionally, he asks how will we examine and explore the concept of mystery, “Mystery is something that doesn’t go against reason and logic, it transcends reason and logic so it can’t be accessed by them” (Mike). Furthermore, if we eliminate the Humanities from education it would be like having someone describe a sunrise to you, but never seeing one for yourself. “I can give you all the physical formulas for a sunrise that you’d like to see...but seeing a sunrise transcends all that. The formulas can capture the physics, but they can’t capture the experience” (Mike). What we would really be missing is a qualitative difference in our understanding of what is real, true, good, and beautiful.

Furthermore, this education would create barriers between action and reflection; as well as stifle creativity. Studying one subject alone does not contribute to society; contribution comes with an integration of practices and ideas. Sitting alone in a room reflecting without action does not contribute, nor does all action without reflecting. “So the philosophers need to teach us how to be reflective, but the activists need to teach the philosophers what they’re reflecting on” (Brent). In the opinion of Parker, a future without the integration of the Humanities, “Would turn [us] into robots. We would be great at memorization and certain trades, but we would lack creativity. We would lose the beauty of creativity; we would become a static group of people.”

Carol expressed disappointment over such a future education, and summed it nicely by saying, “I don’t really know how you can work on the future if you don’t know the past.” Removing the Humanities from the forefront of education would signal the loss of creativity and of the ability to see across multiple perspectives.

In the end, the participants all agreed that while important to education, the Humanities as a group are in need of some transformative work. “I think it would be wise for Humanities departments to recognize that their PR could use a little work” (Cassie). The changes required of the Humanities are not in its curriculum, but in how it is perceived. Departments should work closer with Career Advisors to help students put legs on their interests, school administrations need to better support the career service departments, and students need to understand that their choice of major does not directly influence their employment opportunities.

Conclusion

While in sheer numbers the Humanities still maintain the majority of programs awarded, they are losing ground both to rising specialized degrees, and in the devaluation of its ancient traditions (Nash & Zaback, 2011). Long prompting us to ask why, the Humanities taught generations to reflect and to ask questions; however, like higher education in general, they are being viewed now wholly as a means to an end. Through the expectations of their parents, and the market driven thinking that has permeated into nearly every aspect of American society, students are taught to view education as the ticket to job acquisition and ultimately the good life (Mendelson, 2010). The gathered research, and presented perceptions of non-Humanities faculty and Career Advisors demonstrates the falsity of these expectations as measured by the misconception of the purpose of education, the job market trends, and the skills sought by

employers. The participants in this study have repeatedly stated the importance for students to study those subjects that they are interested in, and to supplement this with practical experience through avenues such as internships.

Moving forward, the body of knowledge required by employers for technical positions will continue to grow as more and more advancements are made. Already some of these fields are so highly specialized that institutions are unable to cover all of the material during the standard four year degree path. In such situations, students must rely on their own ability to continue their education alone, and must hope that their previous education has given them the knowledge and skills necessary for the transition. In this situation, Humanities related departments will need to adapt and change, not the curriculum, but in their student support and public perception. These departments should begin to supplement the content with real world experiences and aggressive support from career services to assist and prepare students for life after college.

The goal of the Humanities continues to be the well-rounded education of students in what it means to be human, and to think humanely and ethically. Remembering that the Science studies often only prompt us to ask the *what* and the *how*, the Humanities remain the lone voice prompting us to ask *why*.

Recommendations for Future Studies

While the research suggests that significant investment in a student's natural skills and talents coupled with a cultivation of their interests and passions contributes more to their success as measured by job acquisition and vocational satisfaction, this study was limited by both size and scope. Future studies should expand to more institutional sites of varying traditions, and

incorporate the views and experiences of hiring managers, and public officials. The inclusion of additional sites of varying traditions would provide researchers and educators with a broader understanding of the view of the Humanities across the educational realm, and help to establish trends. The additional subjects to future studies would help to examine the actual skills looked for by employers in entry level to mid and upper level management positions, as well as gain a conceptualization of the climate of thought in political and public arenas of the state of the Humanities in higher education today. This understanding could then be used to better prepare and equip higher education institutions to address societies need for an education that provides them the skills needed for employment and the wisdom needed for advancement.

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Appendix A

Pre Interview Questionnaire

Non-Humanities Faculty

(To be emailed and returned prior to the interview)

1. Name
2. Profession and title
3. How long have you been teaching? (Years)
4. How long have you been at your current location? (Years)
5. What degrees do you have, and from where?
6. Have you ever been published? If so, please list the title(s).
7. Please briefly provide your own definition of the Humanities.

For the purposes of this study the following definition of the Humanities will be used. The Humanities is a subject, or subjects, that use analytical, critical, logical, rhetorical, and speculative methods to promote the cultivation of culture, politics, history, literature, ethics, art, philosophy, religion, and language in order to better understand the human condition.

Career Advisors

(To be emailed and returned prior to the interview)

1. Name
2. Profession and title
3. How long have you been doing this? (Years)
4. How long at this location?
5. What degrees do you have, and from where?
6. Please briefly provide your own definition of the Humanities.

For the purposes of this study the following definition of the Humanities will be used. The Humanities is a subject, or subjects, that use analytical, critical, logical, rhetorical, and speculative methods to promote the cultivation of culture, politics, history, literature, ethics, art, philosophy, religion, and language in order to better understand the human condition.

Appendix B

Non-Humanities Faculty

Personal qualifications and history

1. Why did you want to become a teacher/professor?
 - a. Content/students/another driving force?
2. Why (subject)? Why (location)
3. You indicated that you have _____ degree. Why did you pick that?
4. Did you seek/receive advice from an advisor or career counselor when deciding?
 - a. If so, what did they say?
5. Were there any environmental issues that majorly contributed to your decision?
 - a. Financial, social, political...
6. How long after graduating did you start teaching?
 - a. Have you ever considered leaving the field? Why?

Understanding and view of the Humanities

7. You indicated in your email response that your definition of the Humanities is _____.
 - a. Follow up question(s).
8. In this study I will be using the following definition of the Humanities?
 - a. The Humanities is a subject, or subjects, that use analytical, critical, logical, rhetorical, and speculative methods to promote the cultivation of culture, politics, history, literature, ethics, art, philosophy, religion, and language in order to better understand the human condition.
 - b. Do you have any questions about this?
9. Tell me a little about your approach to learning and teaching.
10. Do you actively seek to integrate the Humanities into your subject? Why? How?
11. In your opinion, are the Humanities necessary in education?
 - a. If so, why and what are the benefits?
 - b. If not, why not?
12. Do you believe that the Humanities are a viable field of study for today's students?
 - a. Why/Why not?
13. In your own words, what do students expect from a university degree/education?
 - a. Do you believe those expectations are realistic?
14. How would you react to a student saying that you cannot make a living with a Humanities degree?
 - a. How much do you think this should influence a student's choice of study?

Implications

15. Thinking of your own undergraduate education, were you required to take any Humanities courses?
 - a. Is there any particular one that comes to mind that was especially important to you?

16. Faced with growing curriculum, many colleges/universities are deciding to cut required Humanities courses. What do you think about this change?
 - a. What would you say if _____ (course they mentioned in 15.a) were cut?
 - b. If a student were to ask you, “why study _____ (subject)”; what would you say?
17. School (where they work) calls itself a Liberal Arts college. In your own words what is the goal of a liberal arts college?
 - a. How integral are the Humanities to that goal?
18. Considering the growing spectrum of students attending college from different backgrounds; socioeconomic, ethnic, academic ...; from a multicultural perspective how can / should colleges address their needs?
 - a. Do you think that the Humanities courses can help?
19. In your opinion are colleges/universities producing good citizens?
 - a. How do you educate a person to become a good citizen?
 - i. Thomas Jefferson said, “The most effectual means of preventing [tyranny] would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large, and more especially to give them knowledge of those facts which history exhibiteth, that possessed thereby of the experience of other ages and countries, they may be enabled to know ambition under all its shapes, and prompt to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes (Jefferson, 1779, 415).”
20. How would you feel if someone said to you that the Humanities are obsolete?
21. Imagine for a moment an education bereft of the Humanities in all but superficial forms, what is your opinion of such an education?
22. Thank you is there anything else that you would like to add?

Career Advisors

Personal qualifications and history

1. Why did you enter into this profession?
 - a. Students/job satisfaction/another driving force?
2. Why (Location)
3. You indicated that you have _____ degree. Why did you pick that?
4. Did you seek/receive advice from an advisor or career counselor when deciding?
 - a. If so, what did they say?
5. Were there any environmental issues that majorly contributed to you decision?
 - a. Financial, social, political...
6. How long after graduating did you find employment in your field?
 - a. Have you had any difficulty remaining in your field?
 - b. If so how did you overcome it?

Understanding and view of the Humanities

7. You indicated in your email response that your definition of the Humanities is _____.
 - a. Follow up question(s).
8. In this study I will be using the following definition of the Humanities?

- a. The Humanities is a subject, or subjects, that use analytical, critical, logical, rhetorical, and speculative methods to promote the cultivation of culture, politics, history, literature, ethics, art, philosophy, religion, and language in order to better understand the human condition.
 - b. Do you have any questions about this?
9. Tell me a little about your approach to learning and your work with students?
 10. Do you actively promote the Humanities in your advice to students? Why? How?
 11. In your opinion, are the Humanities necessary in education?
 - a. If so, why and what are the benefits?
 - b. If not, why not?
 12. Do you believe that the Humanities a viable field of study for today's students?
 - a. Why/Why not?
 13. In your own words, what do students expect from a university degree/education?
 - a. What do parents expect?
 - b. Do you believe those expectations are realistic?
 14. How would you react to a student saying that you cannot make a living with a Humanities degree?
 - a. Would you agree or disagree?
 - b. How much do you think this should influence a student's choice of study?
 15. What advice do you typically give to Humanities students during their four years?

Implications

16. Thinking of your own undergraduate education, were you required to take any Humanities courses?
 - a. Is there any particular one that comes to mind that was especially important to you?
17. Faced with growing curriculum, many colleges/universities are deciding to cut required Humanities courses. What do you think about this change?
 - a. What would you say if _____ (course they mentioned in 16.a) were cut?
 - b. If a student were to ask you, "why study _____ (subject)"; what would you say?
18. School (where they work) calls itself a Liberal Arts college. In your own words what is the goal of a liberal arts college?
 - a. How integral are the Humanities to that goal?
19. Considering the growing spectrum of students attending college from different backgrounds; socioeconomic, ethnic, academic ...; from a multicultural perspective how can / should colleges address their needs?
 - a. Do you think that the Humanities courses can help?
20. In your opinion are colleges/universities producing good citizens?
 - a. How do you educate a person to become a good citizen?
 - i. Thomas Jefferson said, "The most effectual means of preventing [tyranny] would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large, and more especially to give them knowledge of those facts which history exhibiteth, that possessed thereby of the experience of other ages and countries, they may be enabled to know ambition under all its shapes,

and prompt to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes (Jefferson, 1779, 415).”

21. How would you feel if someone said to you that the Humanities are obsolete?
22. Imagine for a moment an education bereft of the Humanities in all but superficial forms, what is your opinion of such an education?
23. Thank you, is there anything else you would like to add?