

# Bridging the Divide: Bringing the Arts, Humanities, and Sciences Together

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# Context

- **Ohio State University (1986-2016)**
  - Associate Dean, College of Humanities
    - University-wide Interdisciplinary Research Center Task Force Team
  - Director, Interdisciplinary Program in Sexuality Studies
  - Director, Diversity and Identity Studies Collective
  - Chair, Department of English
    - Integrated Major in English and Math
    - Interdisciplinary Video Games Minor
    - Medical Humanities Program and Narrative Medicine
    - Environmental Humanities Program
- **Dean, College of Liberal Arts, University of Nevada, Reno (2016-present)**
  - Interdisciplinary Program in Gender, Race, and Identity
  - Partner in interdisciplinary programs in cybersecurity (history, political science) neuroscience (psychology, philosophy)
  - Early stages of design thinking project

# Haven't We Already (Philosophically) Bridged This Divide?

As our challenges become more complex, even strictly scientific problems require a broader perspective, akin to that embraced by historians, philosophers, and other humanist scholars.

Kevin Boehnke, "Oh the humanities," *Science* 6 March 2015

# Haven't We Already (Philosophically) Bridged This Divide?

Surely our conceptions of politics, culture, and morality have much to learn from our best understanding of the physical universe and of our makeup as a species.

Steven Pinker, "Science is Not Your Enemy: An Impassioned Plea to Neglected Novelists, Embattled Professors, and Tenure-Less Historians," *New Republic* 6 August 2013

## STEAM, not STEM

Almost everyone I talk to

# Some of the Challenges

## 1. Addressing disciplinary differences between the Arts and Humanities and the Sciences

### Examples:

- Different research/creative standards, outlets, and “products” (collaboration vs. individual authorship, books vs. articles, which journals, creative work vs. scientific work)
- Different roles of grant-acquisition and stewardship
- Different possibilities for patents, inventions, and entrepreneurship
- Different roles of postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduates

## 2. Knowledge of each others' fields based on superficial, outdated, or incorrect information or no knowledge at all

# Some of the Challenges

3. Different cultural capital at the university and within society
4. Unequal resources and rewards
5. View of Humanities and Arts research or output as unimportant, unnecessary, not real “research” - what “use” is it to society?
6. Misguided assumptions about what Humanities and Arts faculty “do”
7. Add-on rather than integration approach

# How To Bridge The Divide: Culture Change: The Value of Academic Interdisciplinary Collaborations

Can build trust, connections, understanding, and opportunities

- Example: Medicine and Narrative class (co-taught by medical professor and literature/narrative professor) out of which grew a research study on med student burnout. Later, opportunity arose for Humanities professors (Phelan and Fletcher) and Medical Researchers (Infectious Disease group) to work together. Simultaneously, Phelan led a group in developing an interdisciplinary academic program in Medical Humanities. Growing field of Narrative Medicine (Columbia University, Master of Science)

# How to Bridge the Divide: The Value of Interdisciplinary Academic Programs

Increased understanding - transforming fields, overcoming lack of understanding of what researchers and creative artists in the Arts and Humanities do - and vice versa about the sciences

Example: suggestion from Medical faculty that Humanities faculty might translate scientific research for the general public. Overlooks the fact that Arts and Humanities faculty might have something substantial to add to the research itself - e.g. Disability Studies, Philosophy of Science, Ethics of Science, Sexuality Studies, Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, Computational linguistics, Digital Humanities



# How to Bridge the Divide: The Value of Interdisciplinary Academic Programs

Could interdisciplinary academic programs aimed at problem solving, such as Design Thinking, help increase understanding as well as develop better academic and research paths?

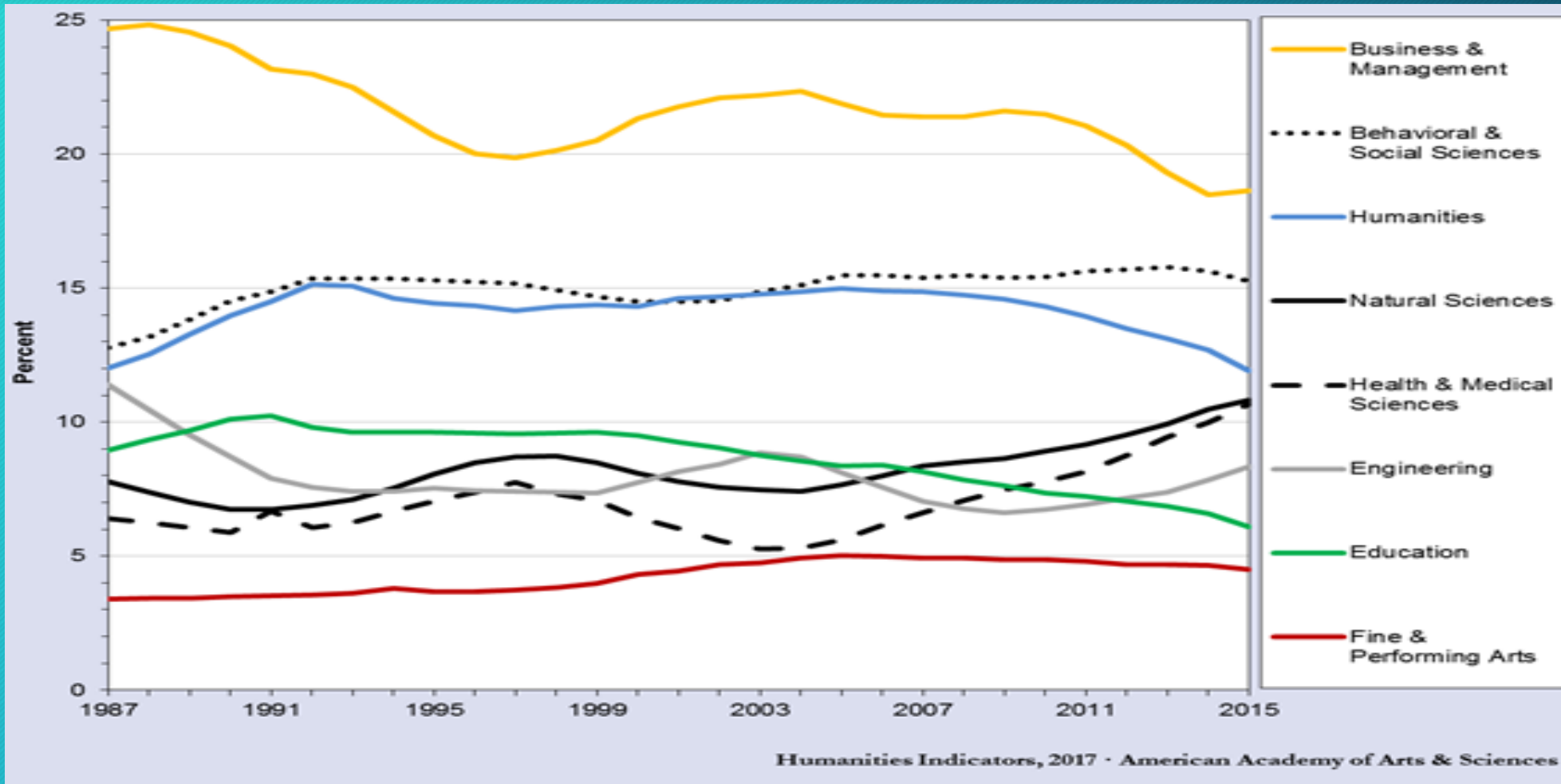
[Consider critique by Peter N. Miller, “Is Design Thinking the New Liberal Arts?” (2017)]

# Another Reason to Include the Academic

Humanities Indicators Project of the Academic of Arts and Sciences reported on June 5, 2017:

The number of bachelor's degrees in the Humanities conferred in 2015 -- 212,512 -- was down 5 percent from the year before and nearly 10 percent from 2012, the high point for such degrees.

# Another Reason to Focus on the Academic



*Has there ever been a moment in American life when the humanities were cherished less, and has there ever been a moment in American life when the humanities were needed more?*

Leon Wieseltier, editor, *New Republic*

# How VPR's Can Help Bridge the Divide: The Value of Vision, Resources, and Advocacy

## Resource allocation

- Example: Science group who offered grants for Humanities faculty to work with them on projects. Good idea, lots of problems.

## What to do instead?

# How VPR's Can Help Bridge the Divide: The Value of Vision, Resources, and Advocacy

## Vision and Advocacy within university and outside university

- Protest cuts to NEH and NEA as vigorously as one does cuts to scientific funding and attacks on the findings of science
- Broaden lobbying and educational efforts: e.g., National Humanities Alliance, K-12 education
- Create joint/interdisciplinary lectures and workshops
- Start-up funding
- Develop collaborative grant-writing resources and opportunities - talk to stakeholders ahead of time
- Connect with the local community
- Recalibrate messages for media and internal communications

# How VPR's Can Help Bridge the Divide: The Value of Vision, Resources, and Advocacy

Advocacy with administrators, STEM/all faculty, all students, and the community

- Value of Humanities and Arts Classes
- Foster opportunities for collaborative interdisciplinary research, teaching, lectures, symposia
- Advertise interdisciplinary and A&H contributions
- Differentiate between the Humanities and the Arts