Create university "public ambassadors" and other initiatives for the public humanities, and incentivize them.

Audience for this recommendation:
Humanities deans and department chairs.

WE1S's study of the media shows that the humanities appear to the public to be siloed in the academic world. This is in contrast to the sciences, which have a much wider public profile (see KF-5-2). However, "public humanities"--innovative initiatives and projects that reach out from the academic humanities to communities and society--are gathering momentum.

How can university administrators in the humanities encourage public humanities outreach? How can they help give the humanities a more visible role in society?

Try this:

→ **Appoint "public ambassadors" for the humanities at the university, division, and department levels**. Humanities ambassadors can organize community outreach events, visit with community leaders and schools, keep a blog for the public, liaise with the media, etc.

→ **Incentivize public ambassadors and public humanities**. Public ambassadors should be rewarded tangibly for their time and effort through such means as course relief. Departments should also explicitly write public humanities work into tenure policy as counting for promotion.[1] Departments should be rewarded with faculty hiring lines and graduate student funding to support public humanities programs.

→ **Partner with alumni for public humanities**. Alumni are one of the strongest resources the humanities have for reaching out effectively to society. Humanities divisions and departments should work with their campus's Development office tasked with fund-raising to create two-stage campaigns (mission statement from a development office.) First, partner humanities departments with alumni in public humanities initiatives that do not involve alumni gifts to the university. Then funding to the university may follow later.

→ **Invest in media, including digital-media, outreach**. Typically, universities have public relations or communications offices at the campus level. Universities should also fund staff or research assistants at the division and department level to improve websites with a robust public-humanities presence. A division or department website should surface the most wonderful gems among its research and teaching--and its faculty and students--so that the public can benefit. It should also cross-link to community library, museum, elementary and high school, and other sites to encourage university-community connections.

Resources

* Research backing up this recommendation: KF 5-2

* Related materials: WE1S Bibliography: Public Humanities | Value of Humanities

---

[1] Only 11% of departments now indicate that public humanities activity is "very important" or "essential" for tenure (Humanities Indicators).

16 July 2020; rev. 22 July 2020 (Alan Liu)