Campus newspapers are much more focused on the “crisis” of the humanities (especially in economic terms) than mainstream media.

Unlike generic news media such as top-circulating US newspapers (see KF 1-1), college and university student newspapers consistently address educational issues in terms of problems and problematics. Compared to our Collection 4 (articles from top U.S. newspapers), for example, our Collections 13 and 14 (respectively, 16,573 articles mentioning “humanities” and 21,182 articles mentioning either “humanities” or “liberal arts” from student newspapers on the UWire service) contain a substantial amount of “crisis” discourse. Topic models of these collections (C-13.250 and C-14.250 at 250 topics) show that topics about education or the humanities are characterized by articles mentioning “crisis” or related words (“situation,” “problem,” etc.) referring to urgent issues.

In C-13.250, for example, topics in which “humanities” appears among the most frequent words such as #77 (education funding cuts), 181 (campus infrastructure), and 148 (education) are particularly representative. All are crisis or problem-related. (By contrast, we note, “crisis” is not prominent in our Collection 18 of UWire articles mentioning “science.”)

Crises and problems represented in Collections 13 and 14 show up specifically in sets of topics related to (a) funding cuts and (b) concerns about future employment. Out of 28 topics in C-13.250 that focus specifically on the humanities, 10 can be characterized as problem-oriented. (That is, 5 or more of the topic’s top articles raise problematic issues and/or strike alarming tones in their headlines and content.) In this group, topics discuss either funding (see topic #205 on college education, 72 on university administration, and 62 on government-funded education) or desirable skills for employment (e.g., #148 on humanities skills and 167 on humanities and sciences/STEM).

One especially significant topic in Collection 13 appears in our 200-topic model of collection: #40 (on human life and culture). In this topic, “humanity” suggestively appears close after “crisis” among top-ranked words, while the content of most of the top articles’ associated with the topic revolves around economic issues. For example, article a discusses criticisms of the economic value of the humanities; b makes “economic crisis” the umbrella topic for the Humanities on the Edge speaker series; and c details how the humanities can be a useful tool for understanding narratives of both ethical and economic value.

Document collections studied:
* Collection 13: U.S. Student Newspapers (articles from UWire mentioning “humanities”)
* Collection 14: U.S. Student Newspapers (articles from UWire mentioning “humanities” or “liberal arts”)

Topic models of these collections: C-13.200, C-13.250; C-14.250

Evidentiary documentation for this key finding: WE1S Report