

## One narrative that the media promotes is that intrinsic humanistic values lead to jobs, grants, and other tangible outcomes.

Building on our finding that the media assesses the “value” of the humanities in terms both intrinsic and economic ([KF 4-1](#)), we find that the media in our [Collection 1](#) also advances a causal narrative linking the two values. The media understands that “intrinsic” humanities values enable the student, university, and/or community to secure “extrinsic” outcomes. In effect, this narrative directly links the humanities’ intangible values (such as critical thinking, empathy, and community service) with extrinsic values like marketability, grants, and employment<sup>1</sup>. Rather than view each kind of value as separate, such discourse implies that intrinsic values lead to extrinsic activities (e.g., employment) that have an economically tangible outcome.

[Topic 73](#) illustrates this pattern. Articles highly associated with this topic describe private and public organizations that fund humanities initiatives and research projects. Top words include: *community, support, work, education, leadership*. Top documents confirm that engaging in community initiatives and other intrinsic activities like critical thinking are eligible for fundable work (e.g., see article [a](#)).

[Topic 2](#) exemplifies aligning the intrinsic learning of *skills* with quantifiable outcomes. This topic’s documents emphasize that students should develop humanities-associated skills as employment skills (see article [b](#)). This topic’s top words include: *students, learning, skills, education*. In this discourse, to be an employable student after college means treating values like creativity, analytical thinking, and learning about cultural diversity as economically-oriented labor. Rather than view these

values in and of themselves, the media sees them as *skills*, thus imposing economic imperatives. This observation raises the following question: does the media’s tendency to equate the humanities’ intangible values with quantifiable, economic results repress the sense of the humanities as having values in their own right?



View of Topic 73 in [Topic Bubbles](#)



View of Topic 2 in [Topic Bubbles](#)

**Document collection studied:** [Collection 1](#): U.S. Top Newspapers, 1989-2019 (articles mentioning humanities)

**Topic model of this collection:** [250 topics](#)

**Sample Topics:** [2](#), [25](#), [61](#), [73](#).

**Representative articles:** [a](#), [b](#).

**Evidentiary documentation for this key finding:** [Team 4 Report](#).

<sup>1</sup> Expressly academic discourse also tends to equate “soft skills” with economic advantages (see [KF 8-1](#)).