March 28, 2017

Dear Member:

As the Chief Academic Officers of the 28 American Jesuit colleges and universities, we write to affirm the importance of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to our institutions and to our nation. We reach out to you as members of Congress, particularly alumni of Jesuit institutions, encouraging your support for continued federal funding for these organizations and for other federal agencies that support research and inquiry. They are critical not only to our cultural life and to higher education, but also to the civic vitality of our nation.

As you know, and have no doubt experienced first-hand, academic excellence in the Jesuit tradition joins intellectual rigor in the liberal arts with our commitment to social justice, service, leadership, and care for the whole person. While each of our institutions is unique, a strong commitment to the liberal arts, specifically the arts and humanities, is fundamental to our curriculum and to faculty scholarship. In particular, our undergraduate students benefit from an education grounded in the humanities, the arts, and the sciences.

The NEA and the NEH are essential partners as we endeavor to inspire and educate future leaders and ethical contributors to society. Through exposing our students to the arts and humanities, we open them to new ways of thinking about our world, allowing them to see things through a different lens. While the budget of these agencies is only a pittance of federal spending – less than .01 percent of the federal budget – their impact is critical not only for our students and our faculties but also for the general public.

Let us share a few examples of some of the impacts the NEA and the NEH have had on our campuses:

- Boston College has received ongoing support from the NEA to support several landmark exhibitions and related interdisciplinary programs at the McMullen Museum of Art. NEH funding has supported important initiatives at the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life.
- The College of the Holy Cross has hosted NEH summer institutes for school teachers, which provide opportunities for K-12 teachers to develop new and innovative curricula. The subjects of these many institutes range from *Literatures, Religions and Arts of the Himalayan Region*, to *Polis and Res Publica: Classical Political Theory and the American Constitution*. The funding has also supported numerous workshops and programs for K-12 teachers in the central Massachusetts region.
- An NEH Challenge Grant precipitated the aggregation of an endowment at Fairfield University that now supports a Humanities Institute, which sponsors numerous student-faculty initiatives, curricular development and public humanities programing. This year the NEH-funded Institute, along with support from NEA, and other funding sources, is sponsoring *War Stories: Courageous Storytelling by
Veterans, a series of workshops and performances by homeless veterans. It is also co-sponsoring a program that enables Fairfield students to bring Shakespeare to underprivileged adolescents in the Bridgeport inner city.

- With three NEH Challenge grants, Loyola University Maryland raised an additional $5.4 million in private donations leading to the creation of its Center for the Humanities and a first-year seminar program among other initiatives. The Center’s programs enrich the campus, the curriculum, and faculty scholarship, and many are open to the public, bringing distinguished speakers such as Tracy Chevalier, Francis Fukuyama, Toni Morrison, Terry Waite, and others to the Baltimore community.

- NEH funding has had a crucial impact on research and teaching at Marquette University over many disciplines and decades, allowing projects that could not have occurred otherwise. A few examples include collections in the Raynor Memorial Libraries, funded by an NEH Challenge Grant, an NEH Summer Institute connecting Marquette experts on America’s First Nations with scholars from other schools, and The Children in Urban America project, which provides digital information to teachers, students, historians, and general users throughout the region and country.

- Similarly, at Rockhurst University, faculty participation in NEH summer institutes and fellowships has enhanced the understanding of modern Asia through information received through lectures by some of the most well-known scholars of South Asia, and collaboration with fellow summer institute participants. Participation in this and other programs directly impacts students as faculty incorporate this scholarship into their classrooms.

The humanities and the arts have never been more essential. Our students must learn to think critically and to analyze carefully. They must grapple with what it means to be human, particularly at this juncture of the twentieth-first century. The NEA and the NEH are essential partners in this work, which is central not only to educational institutions but also to society. As someone who is a product of a Jesuit education deeply rooted in the arts and humanities, we hope that you will support the continued work of these important agencies.

Sincerely,

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