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THE HUMANITIES IN CURRENT ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

The Rockefeller Foundation has never had a program concentrating attention on the needs of the humanities disciplines. These disciplines are not a focus of current Foundation programs either, but they have a vital role to play in two major program areas, University Development and Equal Opportunity, and a central role in a third program, Cultural Development.<sup>1</sup>

University Development

Study and research in the humanities is a primary activity of a university that aims to provide superior undergraduate education, training, and research for a nation and region. This is clearly the case also at institutions in developing countries even though study and training in the natural, medical, and agricultural sciences are more often stressed. These today are the dramatic disciplines; rapid and spectacular advances are expected from them. But neither the study nor the application of technology can sustain orderly and meaningful social growth if they are not accompanied by an understanding and expression of cultural values. The disbalance toward technology in developing as well as developed societies threatens to pervert values. This can lead not only to a loss of a sense of direction but in all likelihood also to a misapplication of technological advances.

The need for improving humanities teaching and research at the selected universities in the Rockefeller Foundation's program is evident today and will grow. It can be argued that the natural, medical, and agricultural sciences at these universities have such massive financial and personnel requirements that these should more aptly be the responsibility of governmental

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<sup>1</sup>The principal humanities disciplines are history, literature including comparative literature and language, philosophy, and religion including comparative religion.

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sources, leaving to institutions such as The Rockefeller Foundation, which have comparatively modest means, responsibilities in the humanities (and in the social sciences and arts) for which the need is just as great but the costs considerably lower. So far The Rockefeller Foundation has made commitments in two humanities disciplines at New Delhi, in history at the universities in Santiago, Chile; it has seconded one of its humanities officers to Ibadan and has helped there also in a closely allied arts field, the theater. Rockefeller Foundation officers and scholars on Foundation assignments have over the years developed considerable insight and expertise concerning the needs of the humanities (and of the arts) at the selected universities: RWJ at Ibadan, RXC at Khartoum, PWB and RXC in East Africa, JMD at Cali, JPH and GF at Santiago, BRC at the UPI, CG at Delhi. Considerable background information and knowledgeable officer talent are available. What is required is agreement on a plan of action permitting the Humanities and Social Sciences Program to make a more substantial contribution in the humanities in order to carry out the Foundation's commitments to the selected universities.

#### Equal Opportunity

The humanities will of necessity be a principal focus of attention if the goals of the Equal Opportunity Program at Fisk and other selected predominantly Negro colleges are to be achieved. These institutions will not be able to attract high quality white or Negro students if work in the humanities disciplines is at a low or mediocre level. It is not possible to build a high standard liberal arts institution without raising study and research in the humanities to the levels achieved at Oberlin, Reed, Amherst, and Smith. The Negro colleges seek funds for many purposes and will understandably not reject proffered help restricted in its uses. But a program aimed at meeting fundamental education goals cannot succeed unless it provides

for the growth of the human mind and spirit as well as for the understanding of social processes and for the satisfaction of bodily and environmental needs.

Yet another case can be made for the humanities at predominantly Negro colleges. The American Negro has a history, a heritage, and modes of artistic expression which, while an essential contribution to American culture, are unique and worthy not only of preservation but also of further development. There is no incompatibility between achieving the breakdown of racial barriers and the continuation of a distinct and multifold cultural heritage. Thus a program in the humanities (and in the arts as well) at predominantly Negro colleges should have the added and special mission of sustaining and encouraging a unique American cultural force which is today threatened with extinction.

#### Cultural Development

It is in the area of Cultural Development that the Foundation activities in the humanities can have their most significant impact. Cultural Development is the only one of the five program areas in which The Rockefeller Foundation has no history of a consecutive working experience. Compared to the Foundation's record in the fields of nutrition, population, assistance to overseas universities, and support of Negro higher education, its activities in the cultural field in the United States to 1963 were scattered and undirected. The work in this new area requires thoughtful planning and can be advanced through judicious experimentation. The Cultural Development Program that has been emerging from the thinking of Humanities and Social Sciences and Arts officers reflects the two related mainstreams, the humanities and the arts, which go to make up the cultural field. "Arts" and "humanities" are not interchangeable terms; they represent distinct sets of experience, of study, of activity; but the creative and performing arts and the humanities disciplines are just as obviously intimately related and central to the avowed Trustee purpose of

forwarding cultural development in the United States. For example, humanities scholars in the colleges and universities can have a direct bearing on the standards and vitality of creative and performing arts activities in these institutions. The Reed College grant offers an example and a framework for future investigation of the needs and opportunities for strengthening the cultural aspects of the curriculum and of the role of academic institutions in surrounding communities. By helping to develop the careers of <sup>imaginative</sup> emerging writers and literary scholars, the Foundation can also make a direct contribution to the cultural standards of the colleges and universities, not only because these artists might be on leave from or in residence at colleges and universities, but also because creative writing as an art form probably has the single most profound impact on the cultural awareness of students. The relevance of respective humanities disciplines to activities in music, theater, and dance can also be demonstrated.

There was an inherent logic, not only administrative but intellectual as well, to the reorganization that joined the Foundation's Humanities and Social Sciences Programs. While the social science disciplines have their own and independent purposes, humanists and social scientists work and increasingly should work in active collaboration. The historian shares the interests of economists and political scientists; the literary scholar cannot work wholly independently of the sociologist and anthropologist. Apart from the intellectual justification there is the practical fact that the Humanities and Social Sciences Program is intimately involved in both the Equal Opportunity and University Development areas and that humanities activities are central to both of these.

The relationship of Humanities and Social Sciences to Arts should continue to be a cooperative and mutually reinforcing one. Aspects of Cultural Development which are exclusively or predominantly creative or performing arts fall within the Arts Program. Aspects of Cultural Development



which are predominantly aimed at strengthening the humanities disciplines fall within Humanities and Social Sciences. Where, as in the Reed College grant, both the Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences are involved, there is a need for joint or inter-program auspices.

Elimination of the humanities component from Humanities and Social Sciences or the absorption of humanities activities into the Arts Program would not only weaken both officer groups but would also be antithetical to the achievement of Foundation aims in Cultural Development.

82