



National Humanities Alliance

April 22, 2011

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan,

We write on behalf of the National Humanities Alliance (NHA) to express our deep concern regarding reports of a \$50 million, or 40%, cut to the Department of Education's International Education and Foreign Language Studies (IEFLS) programs—Title VI and Fulbright-Hays—as part of the final FY 2011 spending agreement. The Alliance is a coalition of 104 organizations and institutions dedicated to the advancement of humanities education and research, including scholarly societies, humanities centers, higher education and other non-profit associations, and individual colleges and universities.

It is our understanding that under the FY 2011 Continuing Resolution (HR 1473), which does not single out international education programs in the bill's text, you will have final discretion in managing reductions to the Higher Education budget account. *We urge you not to implement these disproportionate cuts to the international education programs. Furthermore, we ask you to provide the strongest possible funding for these programs in both FY 2011 and FY 2012.*

As noted in a 2007 NRC report, over the last fifty years the Higher Education Act (HEA)—Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs “have served as the foundation for the internationalization of higher education in the United States” and “enhanced the body of knowledge about foreign languages and area studies.” The IEFLS programs form the core infrastructure of the federal government's investment in advancing broad global literacy for our citizenry, and ensuring a pipeline of expertise for the government, business, and non-profit sectors.

The Alliance is deeply distressed by reports of these cuts. In the words of some of our members, such as the Modern Language Association: “Devastating cuts of 40% ... will do catastrophic damage to efforts to equip students with the linguistic and cultural knowledge necessary to understand today's world. Given the widespread recognition of the challenges of globalization and the complexity of international relations, the decision to slash funding for education programs like Fulbright-Hays by more than \$50 million is incomprehensible” (MLA Executive Council, April, 2011).

Similarly, the Middle East Studies Association, states: “such a drastic cut to these two programs would jeopardize the United States' national capacity in language expertise and area studies knowledge. Many of the Title VI programs in Middle East studies are located at state universities that already are under enormous financial pressure. Title VI is a collaborative program; each federal dollar leverages more money from university budgets to support the education of students.

Without that incentive vital pipeline programs producing students who serve our country in a wide variety of ways, from public service to education to business, to government agencies to the military, will be lost." (MESA Board of Directors, April, 2011).

The 14 IEFLS programs support comprehensive language and area study centers within the United States, research and curriculum development, opportunities for American scholars to study abroad, and activities to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in international service. As the Alliance conveyed in a letter earlier this week, along with other members of the Coalition for International Education, these are carefully crafted programs, adjusted and expanded by Congress over the last two decades to reflect rapid global changes and 21st century challenges. Given the fiscal pressures faced by most higher education institutions, continued federal investment is especially critical at this time: "Most of these university-based programs would be eliminated without Title VI/Fulbright support, especially when state and local governments and institutions of higher education also are financially strapped" (CIE Letter, April, 2011).

At many institutions, Title VI/Fulbright Hays programs provide the lynchpin for maintaining robust international, area studies, and foreign language programs. They aid in campus' effort to recruit and retain expert faculty, to support graduate education and research, and to provide broad educational opportunities to students. They have also provided a unique source for professional development, and advances in teaching and learning, at the K-12 level.

Cuts of the magnitude proposed will not only cripple individual centers and programs, it will weaken the nation's education and research infrastructure. The advancement and dissemination of knowledge across the range of humanities and related social science fields—e.g., History, Languages, Literature, Philosophy, Religion, Political Science, Area Studies, Archaeology, Anthropology—relies on the ability of scholars to engage with their colleagues internationally; to apply new global perspectives to the pursuits of their disciplines; to access research resources overseas; to secure translated works; and to develop advanced proficiency in non-English languages. Directly or indirectly, the HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs have supported these capacities, which are really as vital to the sciences and other fields of learning, as they are to the humanities.

As you move forward in developing a revised spending plan for the Department, we ask that you take into account the unique contributions of Title VI/Fulbright-Hays, and that you administer cuts as fairly and proportionately as possible within the FY 2011 Higher Education account budget, in order to provide these programs the strongest, continued support possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michael Brintnall
President, National Humanities Alliance &
Executive Director, American Political
Science Association
National Humanities Alliance



Jessica Jones Irons
Executive Director
National Humanities Alliance