University of Colorado **Boulder**

2025 Program Review

Humanities Program

Academic Review and Planning

Advisory Committee Report

Approved _Ann Stevens_ 12/16/2025

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs | Date

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Process Overview

The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) review of the Humanities Program (HUMN) was conducted in accordance with the 2025 program review guidelines. The degree program report and goal setting exercise were prepared and submitted by the unit. An external review committee (ERC), consisting of two experts from outside of the University of Colorado Boulder, engaged in a virtual visit and submitted a report based upon review of relevant documents and interviews with faculty, staff, and student unit members and university administrators. ARPAC staff, employing web conferencing tools, facilitated the external review as a remote visit over April 14 and 15, 2025. The ARPAC unit liaisons submitted a summary of findings derived from the goal setting exercise. ARPAC reviewed and considered these materials, met with the chair, and wrote this report.

Past Reviews

The previous ARPAC review of the Humanities Program was conducted several years after the Department of Comparative Literature and Humanities was dismantled and only one year after the graduate degree programs in Comparative Literature were discontinued. The Humanities Program—previously housed under the umbrella of Comparative Literature—became its own unit administered by the College of Arts & Sciences (A&S). Please note that there is no record of CU Boulder having formally petitioned the Board of Regents to discontinue the Department of Comparative Literature and Humanities; while the university has called the unit a "program" since the early 2010s, it also views Humanities as a tenure-granting unit, a status that according to Regent law and policy can be held only by a college, school, or department.

Many of the recommendations from the 2016 ARPAC report were meant to help the unit in its restructuring efforts, and some of those recommendations are still relevant. In the years following the review, the unit focused on receiving tenure-granting and hiring privileges and put on hold some of the other recommendations regarding staffing, such as expanding the number of HUMN-affiliated faculty and replacing lecturers with rostered instructors. They successfully replaced the retired associate chair by moving one of the program's lecturers into an instructor (now teaching professor) line. In fall 2019, a new assistant professor joined the HUMN faculty and received a tenure-track appointment in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese (SPAN); however, it appears that an affiliation with HUMN no longer exists. In 2020, a part-time lecturer was hired to support outreach efforts via social media and to create student community via the Humanities Club and other events. In addition, an internship program was extended by assigning its supervision to a rostered faculty member.

Also in 2016, the ARPAC report had pointed out the significant problem that HUMN faced in terms of its campus location; this issue remained unresolved until new developments as of the end of the fall 2025 semester included the granting to HUMN of several offices in the remodeled Hellems Arts & Sciences Building, to be occupied as of spring 2026.

Unit Analysis

The campus' standardized description of the Humanities Program is available on the website of the Office of Data & Analytics (D&A) at https://www.colorado.edu/oda/institutional-research/institutional-level-data/information-department/academic-review-and-planning. D&A updates the profile annually in the fall semester. This report

cites data posted in October 2023, reflecting the state of the Humanities Program as of the academic year (AY) 2022-2023.

Additional data was obtained from the unit's website at https://www.colorado.edu/humanities/.

Teaching and Learning Excellence and Assessment

The Humanities Program offers a bachelor's degree in Humanities with overall 28 interdisciplinary options as well as a minor in Humanities. The unit has 59 majors, which is still impressive given its comparatively small size. The decline in enrollments that can be observed across the Arts and Humanities Division as a whole is also a challenge for the Humanities Program, but the unit correctly notes that their decline has been less severe than in other humanities disciplines on campus. The number of Humanities majors dropped by 36% over the past five years; student credit hours overall dropped by 27% according to data from 2022.

The Humanities Program emphasizes the interdisciplinarity of its bachelor's degree as its particular strength. Incorporating a broad array of disciplines from the Arts and Humanities (AHUM), Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences, the program prides itself on serving students with a real-world learning experience of interrelated ideas. The unit notes that students over the past 10 years have taken courses for the major in 27 disciplines.

The Humanities major is designed to be interdisciplinary at its core. Students receive rigorous training in four areas of Humanistic expertise (Forms of Narrative, Visualizing Culture, Conflicts in History, Sound and Meaning) to pursue highly individualized interdisciplinary paths of study that can be combined with achieving a major, minor, or certificate in another discipline (such as Writing and Public Engagement, Music, Philosophy, Psychology, Anthropology, Ethnic Studies, Communication, Dance, INVST, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, Mathematics, Cinema Studies, Theatre, Creative Writing, etc.)

As of 2022, due to its low numbers of tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty, HUMN was ranked #1 among peer units on campus for undergraduate majors per TTT faculty. Indeed, a significant challenge is staffing courses to increase enrollments. After having revised their 1000-level curriculum, the unit has seen new demands and waitlists for their courses. With only two full-time equivalent (FTE) TTT faculty and only 1.5 FTE teaching faculty, the demand cannot be answered properly.

The unit identifies opportunities in revising the demanding credit hour requirements for the HUMN major, the highest of any degree program in A&S. Developing a more concentrated 36 credit hour track for the major, relying on courses offered solely in-house, is expected to bring new majors to the program. ARPAC believes that in conjunction with lowering the credit hours for the major, creating specific double majors with non-humanities programs in A&S (e.g., Psychology, Sociology) could further enhance the unit's interdisciplinary offerings. A separate challenge for the program is that majors who want to get a double degree in HUMN and a major outside A&S face difficulties due to cross-college requirements.

Overall, the Humanities Program identifies its strength in offering highly individualized and flexible courses of study for their majors, and they want to focus on expanding this unique ability on campus to continue growing the program. Promoting their broadness and flexibility outside of the College of Arts & Sciences and becoming the hub for interdisciplinarity on campus is a central goal for the unit.

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Research, Scholarly, and/or Creative Work Excellence

Due to HUMN's status as an interdisciplinary program, it is difficult to characterize a unique disciplinary research identity for the program. Tenured and teaching-track faculty in the program, as well as the large number of affiliated faculty from other humanistic departments, are established scholars and practitioners who follow their individual research agendas. Faculty associated with the Humanities Program cover a variety of research interests relevant to the Humanities, such as pre-modern mediterranean studies, religious studies, Asian American studies, law and humanities, science and literature, English poetry, and dance.

Due perhaps to the interdisciplinary nature of the Humanities Program and its focus on undergraduate teaching, research and scholarship are generally underrepresented in the unit's documents submitted for purposes of this program review (the degree program report and goal setting exercise) as well as in the report by the external reviewers, which limits itself to noting that there is a need for a stronger research component within the Humanities Program to enhance its credibility and to attract students. The ERC calls it a visibility problem, and indeed, not only does the website of the program not feature more detailed research profiles of faculty (with one notable exception), some also do not appear on the CU Experts database. The exception is the unit's non-tenured teaching professor—who also serves as associate chair—who appears to be the most active faculty member in regard to research and scholarship; she regularly attends conferences and publishes in her field of narrative studies and narratology. ARPAC agrees with the external reviewers that the Humanities Program needs to make a stronger case for itself by emphasizing a stronger involvement in research activities.

The ERC further suggests that the Humanities Program could be integrated with the Center for Humanities & the Arts (CHA), which would help undergraduate students engage with faculty research projects and interdisciplinary programming. This seems to be a complex answer to a problem that might find a simpler solution on the level of the unit itself; thus, ARPAC does not recommend this course of action. Instead, ARPAC urges the program to create visibility for scholarly and practical activities by faculty.

Hiring and Mentoring (Faculty, Staff, Postdoctoral Fellows)

According to the D&A profile for AY 2022-2023, faculty personnel in the Humanities Program consisted of: 1 tenured and tenure-track faculty members, 2 teaching-track faculty members, and 2 lecturers. Reflecting the changes in teaching-track faculty titles that have recently taken effect, the unit reported in 2025 that faculty personnel in the Humanities Program consists of 1 full professor, 1 associate professor who chairs the unit, one teaching associate professor (who acts as associate chair), and 2 assistant teaching professors. Eight TTT professors are affiliated with the unit and, per memorandum of understanding (MOU), teach one course per every 4 semesters in the program.

Due to significant changes in the program faculty, demographic as well as salary data from 2022 are not particularly meaningful. However, the salary data from fall 2022 show a significant equity issue between the TTT professor ($147,703) and the average salary of the then-titled instructors and senior instructors ($54,991). Given that the one full professor in the unit does not appear to take any official leadership role in the program and that the associate teaching professor also serves as associate chair, more accurate and more current salary data would be useful.

Despite structural challenges such as differences in job rank, pay, and job security for teaching faculty, the ERC found that the program excels in providing a positive and supportive work environment, in which teaching faculty are motivated and enjoy significant academic freedom. But the ERC report also notes that the program relies heavily on non-TTT faculty with an excessive workload and low compensation.

There is clearly one personnel issue that stands out and needs to be addressed. As the ERC points out, and as is obvious from all documents consulted for this report, the current position of the associate chair and teaching associate professor poses a significant equity problem for the program and the college. The ERC gives good reasons for facilitating a tenure-track appointment with appropriate compensation for the teaching associate professor, who is "a crucial pillar of the Humanities [P]rogram" and who maintains a highly significant and active research profile.

According to the Office of Data & Analytics (D&A) profile for AY 2022-2023, staff personnel in the Humanities Program consisted of 1 half-time university staff member. ARPAC was informed that this 0.5 FTE staff member splits duties between Humanities and the Department of Religious Studies.

Student Success and Mentoring (Undergraduate and Graduate Students)

The Humanities Program offers highly individualized and interdisciplinary courses of study for their majors and minors, and they strive to become the central hub for interdisciplinarity on campus. Teaching faculty and students describe the culture of the program as embodying an "intellectual synergy" that covers the classical liberal arts and extends to quickly incorporating emerging inter-disciplines such as disability studies, environmental humanities, and medical humanities. The faculty has taken a student-focused approach to designing the curriculum that is facilitated by small class sizes, discussion-based seminars, and highly individualized paths of learning. Maintaining such a curriculum requires highly motivated teachers and staff, and the Humanities Program deserves respect for maintaining such a curriculum with obvious problems of being understaffed and (in the case of the teaching faculty) underpaid.

The interdisciplinary broadness and flexibility of the Humanities is its greatest strength, but also its greatest challenge as it requires more resources to maintain such a rich and diverse curriculum and to advise students to develop independent programs of study.

As mentioned previously, declining enrollment numbers are an unfortunate trend in humanities disciplines in general, and this is also true for CU's Humanities Program. In 2022, the program had 72 majors, a 36% decline over the course of 5 years. Since then, the number of majors has further shrunk to 59 in 2024. A steady decline can also be seen in the total student credit hours (SCH) delivered by the program from 3,280 in 2020 to 1,923 in 2024, a decline of almost 37%. Humanities majors make up 33% of the total credit hours; 67% are taken by non-majors. HUMN identifies the trend in declining enrollment as a challenge to the unit and has reacted by reconfiguring their 1000 level curriculum. While interest in their courses has increased, the program faces a Catch-22 situation in that they are facing significant staffing shortages to serve this new demand and to increase their SCH. The overwhelming majority of SCH are taught by teaching faculty (49% in 2022) while only 12% were taught by TTT personnel as of the same year.

The program sees opportunities in developing a concentrated major track with a reduced load of 36 credits that can be offered solely by HUMN. While this seems to be a good idea to bind

students to the program's course offerings, it seems counterproductive in regard to the desired interdisciplinarity as the distinguishing feature of the program. More promising seems to be the idea of developing specific double-major programs with non-humanities programs such as Psychology, Sociology, etc. However, extending double-major programs outside A&S would face the challenges of cross-college requirements.

As an additional solution for the crisis facing the humanities, the ERC suggests enhancing internship and career support. The program itself also suggests that HUMN would be an ideal unit in which to base and develop an Arts & Humanities internship program, although the unit does not have the labor power to do this without adding an internship manager to the roster. It would require significant expertise and management experience to design and maintain such a program, but the Humanities Program is not the only program in the Arts and Humanities who are either considering this as an option or are already running such programs. It seems to be worth looking into cross-departmental collaborations on internships that could be led by HUMN, providing efficiencies of scale across the Division of Arts & Humanities.

Inclusivity and Unit Culture

In February 2022, a collaborative group met and identified the following [five goals to advance diversity, equity and inclusion](#) at CU Boulder: (1) employee skills and development; (2) student achievement outcomes; (3) community building; (4) employee recruitment outcomes; and (5) preparing students to participate in a diverse democracy.

According to the ERC and the reports from the unit, the climate in the Humanities Program is excellent. ARPAC assesses the unit as furthering all five CU Boulder goals in this regard. The unit is to be commended for its positive and supportive work environment. Faculty in the program seem very motivated, and faculty and staff, as well as students, describe a strong culture of participation and inclusive government. This is even more impressive given the circumstances under which the unit operates (pay inequities, staffing shortage, etc.).

The unit itself emphasizes the equity concerns connected to the unfortunate location of the Humanities Program across the street from the central portion of main campus. This location has accessibility issues (it is not wheelchair accessible for example); it stands in the way of the program gaining more visibility on campus, and it is a significant challenge for the unit to foster community. This situation is not new but was already mentioned as a significant disadvantage for the program in the 2016 ARPAC report. The upcoming move of most program faculty to the Hellems Building, discussed below, will help alleviate these concerns.

It is not part of any of the documents provided by the unit, but ARPAC wonders about the role of the full professor in the unit and possible equity issues that might be an inadvertent consequence of that role. As mentioned before, significant teaching and administrative work is done by teaching professors. In the past years, the full professor in this unit has exclusively taught small seminar-style classes with an enrollment between 5 to 22 students.

Unit Planning and Governance Structures and Processes

As mentioned above, the unit spent significant time securing tenure-granting and hiring privileges and was granted these privileges as of 2024. Due to these changes, the HUMN bylaws have just been revised and were provided to ARPAC late in the review process.

According to these bylaws, the Humanities Program is led by a chair who must be a tenured faculty member of the rank of associate professor or higher and either rostered in or affiliated with the Humanities Program. The chair is elected by the voting faculty members who are rostered in the unit at or above the rank of instructor (i.e., assistant teaching professor) on at least 50% appointment in Humanities, as well as those TTT faculty who have been approved as affiliated faculty. The chair appoints the associate chair as well as the chairs of the unit's standing and ad hoc committees.

The Humanities Program has two standing committees: the Executive Committee consists of the chair, associate chair, and two members of the Program's voting faculty. Elected members serve three-year terms; the Grievance Committee consists of three faculty members and excludes the chair and associate chair. These structures do not lay out a clear role for affiliated faculty to participate in unit governance and day-to-day routines.

Support Needs
The main supporting need reported by the unit's self-documentation is to be relocated to a central on-campus location. According to the ERC report, the unit had by that time received updated correspondence that a move to a more central campus location was already "in process." ARPAC was pleased to learn in November 2025 that HUMN has been granted 3 offices in Hellems, due for occupancy by the end of 2025, though the program needs office space for five people.

Recommendations

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee address the following recommendations to the Humanities Program and to the offices of responsible administrators:

To the Unit:

1. Explore a variety of possibilities for collaborating with other units within and beyond AHUM on shared faculty and curriculum.
    a. Identify and approach potential faculty who could be affiliated with the program.
    b. Develop classes that would expand the humanities audience under a larger umbrella, perhaps oriented toward current, large-scale social issues or practical applications.
    c. Identify potential classes offered in other AHUM units for cross-listing in the Humanities Program to help expand Humanities Program offerings and support the program's interdisciplinary emphasis.
    d. Create tailored double majors with units outside of the Humanities and the College of Arts & Sciences. Such efforts would help to offset cross-college barriers to double-majoring in the Humanities Program and other non-AHUM programs.

2. Consider designing large lower-level lecture courses that can be taught by TTT faculty affiliates.

3. Work with the divisional dean to develop an Arts and Humanities internship program for undergraduates housed in HUMN and perhaps beyond. This would raise the Program's profile with AHUM undergraduates and bring together a number of AHUM units.

4. Promote the program's research profile.
    a. Emphasize the way that teaching is informed by faculty research and the research experiences that are built into the HUMN curriculum.
    b. Update the website to highlight current faculty research.

5. Assess how to include all TTT faculty affiliates in the program's governance and daily routines.

To the Dean of the Arts and Humanities:

6. Consider converting the teaching associate professor to a TTT line. The teaching associate professor serves as the associate chair of the Humanities Program and maintains an active research profile. Her position as a teaching associate professor is a notable equity issue for the program and the University.

7. Evaluate supporting the HUMN program in the effort to create/expand an AHUM-wide internship program by funding the position of an internship manager, who will work with faculty within HUMN and across AHUM to identify career-supporting needs and who will build and maintain an internship database on and off campus.

8. Explore creating shared administrative support services for certain key functions for which individual units, especially smaller units, may not have staff personnel, e.g., graduate student administrative support, event support, budget and finance support, etc.

9. Emphasize and support the important role that HUMN—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

To the Vice Chancellor for Academic Resource Management:

10. As Hellems occupants settle into the remodeled building, work with HUMN to look for opportunities to designate additional space in Hellems to adequately house HUMN faculty.

To the Provost:

11. Emphasize and support the important role that HUMN—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

Required Follow-up

The chair of the Humanities Program shall submit two follow-up reports—one due on the first of April 2027 and one due on the first of April 2029. The follow-up reports shall focus on the implementation of the recommendations from ARPAC detailed herein. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as the provost and other relevant central campus leadership will also respond to all outstanding matters under their purview arising from this review year's recommendations. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will submit one follow-up report due on May 1, 2028, while the provost and relevant central campus leaders will submit one follow-up report due on June 1, 2030.