

1989

Sub-Grants (1989-1990): Memorandum 02

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followed by visits of state council members and staff to the offices of nearly every state delegation -- gave the issue of the needs of state councils a high profile among the legislators.

3. **Changing Leadership in Humanities Organizations** - Over recent weeks, a number of changes at the executive level has occurred at organizations of interest to the NHA membership. Among private institutions:

o **W. Robert Connor**, professor of classics and chairman of the Council of the Humanities at Princeton University has been selected as President and Director of the **National Humanities Center** (NHC). A widely recognized scholar of classics and ancient history, Mr. Connor served as 1987-88 President of the American Philological Association (an NHA member). Mr. Connor will succeed Charles Blitzer who left the Center in 1988 to assume the presidency of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Kent Mullikin, acting director of NHC during the interim, was appointed to the newly established position of Associate Director, beginning July 1 when Mr. Connor takes office.

o **David Featherman**, professor of sociology and director of the Institute on Aging and Adult Life at the University of Wisconsin, has been selected as president of the **Social Science Research Council**. With a PhD in sociology from the University of Michigan, his research focus has been structural features of societies -- education systems, occupational ladders, ethnic group relations -- and their effect on individual lives. Mr. Featherman will succeed Frederic E. Wakeman, Jr., an historian of China who has headed the SSRC since 1986. Mr. Wakeman will return to the University of California at Berkeley as the Haas Professor of East Asian Studies.

And at the **National Endowment for the Humanities**:

o **John T. Agresto**, resigned in late February as NEH Deputy Chairman for Policy to become President of the Madison Center, a non-profit research and policy organization established in 1988 by William Bennett and Allan Bloom and concerned with higher education. Mr. Agresto, an historian, joined the NEH staff in 1982 and served as Acting Chairman of NEH during the 1985-86 interim between the chairmanships of William Bennett and Lynne V. Cheney. His tenure at the Madison Center will be brief because he was named President of St. John's College (Santa Fe, New Mexico) and will take up duties there in August.

o **Celeste Colgan**, Mrs. Cheney's closest advisor and colleague in the management of NEH, became Deputy Chairman (dropping the "for Programs and Administration") upon the departure of Mr. Agresto. Ms. Colgan holds a PhD from the University of Maryland in nineteenth century British literature. She has been at NEH since late 1986 and was appointed Deputy chairman for programs and administration in 1988.

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o Jerry Martin, who had served since early 1987 as Director of NEH's Division on Education Programs, became Assistant Chairman for Studies and Evaluation. Mr. Martin holds a PhD in Philosophy from Northwestern University and served on the faculty of the University of Colorado for twenty years including a stint as chairman of the philosophy department. In his new position, Mr. Martin works closely with Mrs. Cheney in developing and evaluating long-term projects and goals for the agency.

o Kenneth Kolson is serving as Acting Director of the Division of Education Programs until a new director is selected. Mr. Kolson, a political scientist, has served as the Assistant to the Director in the Education division since last June. From 1985 to 1988, Mr. Kolson was with the Division of Fellowships and Seminars Programs where he was responsible for summer seminars.

4. NEH Council Review of Regrant Policies - For the last several months, a review of the rationale for NEH's regrant programs has been underway at the executive staff and National Council for the Humanities levels. There is some mystery as to the ultimate purpose of the review but its origins seem to have at least the following non-mutually exclusive elements:

o A general concern that NEH is responsible for the funds appropriated by Congress and that by distributing some of these funds through regrant organizations, the Endowment has insufficient control of the integrity of the expenditures.

o A specific allegation that in some instances, scholars who are unsuccessful applicants for NEH fellowships, have been able to subsequently receive NEH-funded fellowships through regrant organizations. NEH's Office of Planning and Budget has reportedly run comparisons between NEH records of unsuccessful fellowship applications and regrant organization lists of fellowship recipients.

o A view that no organization should have long-term or continuing relationships with NEH. This sentiment noisily surfaced in last year's New York Public Library dispute but has been an undercurrent for some time. Former Rockefeller Foundation president Richard Lyman's 7/6/88 New York Times letter aptly summarized a problem for some with this view: "Surely, its [NEH's] mandate, as a Federal agency, is different from that of the big foundations. It has a responsibility for the overall health of the humanities in the United States that no private foundation has."

o A view that the regrantee organizations' fellowship programs essentially duplicate activities effectively carried out by the NEH's Division of Fellowships and Seminars. (As an editorial aside, it would be interesting to juxtapose this view with the recently fashionable and generally bipartisan belief that the federal government should get out of any activity that can be performed by the private sector).

o A view that NEH needs to shift funds now dedicated to the regrant programs into other program areas.

When the NEH Council met February 9-10, the Research Committee reviewed and discussed a background paper on the history of NEH support for four regrant organizations involved with the International Research Regrant program prepared by David Coder (the NEH Research Division staff member responsible for administering three of the regrant programs). The paper was in response to discussion during a closed session at the Council meeting in November 1988. While no final policy recommendations were expected from this public session, the committee "reaffirmed two principles a) NEH should not guarantee long-term support to any organization, and b) NEH should not have outside groups do what NEH itself can do.

As follow-up to the February meeting, NEH staff began or continued several studies including an analysis by the Director of the Office of Challenge Grants, Harold Cannon, of the strategy of weaning regrant institutions from long-term NEH support by means of the challenge grant mechanism. A catalyst for studying this approach was NEH's recent experience with a large challenge grant to the American Council of Learned Societies that featured an agreement that no further NEH support for the ACLS core fellowship programs would be forthcoming beginning in 1991 (i.e., ACLS will no longer receive regrant funds for its core programs after 1990). At the time of the grant to ACLS in 1986, officials of both the granting agency and the recipient believed that the large increase in the ACLS' endowment -- anticipated to be generated directly and indirectly through the challenge grant -- would permit the fellowship programs to continue at very close to the level of spending of 1984 when ACLS was receiving a significant portion of its program funds through NEH regrants. Because several of the assumptions upon which the ACLS and NEH based their agreement proved inaccurate (e.g., interest rates, timing of bridging grants) and despite the ACLS' fully matching the grant ahead of schedule, the expectation now is that funds available for the ACLS' core programs in 1991 will be less than 70% of the level available in 1984. Because a number of NHA's members have been concerned about the outcome of the ACLS "weaning" in terms of the resulting shrinkage of funds available to support scholarly research, the Alliance wrote to Mr. Cannon expressing concern about the expressed interest of NEH officials in extending "the ACLS model" to other groups involved in the regrants program.

On May 4, the NEH Council Committees on Research programs and Fellowships and Seminars programs met jointly to discuss fellowships both in terms of continued consideration of regrants program-related issues and in the relationship between the Research Division's Interpretive Research program and the NEH Fellowships programs. The agenda for the policy discussion was laid out in a three page memorandum from Mrs. Cheney dated 5/4/89. (Apparently, other materials such as Mr. Cannon's discussion of challenge grants and regrants were not included in the materials distributed to the

Council members for this meeting.) Council members participating from the Research Committee included Leon Kass (Chair), Paul Olscamp, and James V. Schall (Donald Kagan was absent); from the Fellowships and Seminars, Robert Hollander (Chair), John Shelton Reed, and Jeanne J. Smoot (Alvin Bernstein and James Clayburn LaForce were absent). Mrs. Cheney attended and actively participated in the session. Public visitors included the William V. D'Antonio, Samuel R. Gammon, and Eugene Sterud, chief executives of the American Sociological, Historical, and Anthropological Associations respectively.

Much of the discussion of the regrant programs was in the context of figures included in Mrs. Cheney's memo indicating that the numbers for direct NEH and indirect (regrant) fellowships were nearly in balance in 1988:

NEH: 454 fellows received direct support from four Fellowship programs (University Teachers; College Teachers; Historically Black Colleges and Universities; and Summer Stipends)

Regrants: 380 (183 - ACLS; 39 - IREX; 66 - SSRC; and 26 - Committee for Scholarly Exchange with the Peoples Republic of China
65 to Research Centers
445)

Like Mrs. Cheney, the Council members did not seem to draw any particular inference from the balance between direct and indirect fellowships. Factors deemed important in weighing the advantages and disadvantages of regrant programs were:

o Oversight - It was clear that Council members want to be seen as exercising this function. Generally, there was no indication that the regrant institutions have been mispending or inadequately reporting on the expenditure of the NEH funds. Rather, the members would like to have a more visible line of oversight from the Council to the regrant agencies. One recommendation likely to be acted upon was to invite the leader of one of the regranting institutions to meet with the Council to discuss their group's NEH-supported program(s) in terms of selection policies, peer reviewing, safeguards, and so forth. (Mr. Olscamp remarked that in the event that questions were raised in Congress or elsewhere, he would be more comfortable in saying the Council had exercised its oversight responsibilities through such a session.)

o Long-term support - While general concerns were expressed in this area, no particular changes were considered. Mrs. Cheney's memo stressed that each of the regrant institutions are unique and played down the applicability of the ACLS model.

o Diversity - There seemed to be an explicit consensus that the diversity of fellowship sources fostered by the regrant programs is valuable.

o Exclusivity of the regranting institutions - The Council members worried that the regranting agencies are elite institutions and that in practice the grant cycles are rarely open to others. As with the long-term question, the members seemed satisfied that continued vigilance would be sufficient.

o Overhead - The NEH was urged to prepare reports comparing the overhead costs to NEH of the regrant institutions. There was a clear consensus for holding down overhead payments on regrants. It was also noted favorably that the fellowships regranting through the university-based humanities centers involved no overhead from NEH. Likewise, the humanities centers are the only agencies regranting fellowships at the stipend levels of NEH (currently \$27,500 per annum compared with a top ACLS fellowship of \$15,000 per annum.)

The central issue in the concern about the relationship between the Interpretive Research program and the Fellowships programs is one of equity. Mrs. Cheney characterized the issue as follows:

"Both programs support scholarly activities that are intended to lead to substantial contributions to scholarship. Fellowship awards have a ceiling of \$27,500. Interpretive Research awards are typically for more since they provide not only salary stipends for principal researchers, but additional amounts for secretarial help, travel, research assistance, etc. The Fellowship program has traditionally offered support to individuals for full-time study for a year or less, while the Interpretive Research program makes most of its awards to collaborative projects involving more than one scholar and requiring more than a year of support.

"The difficulty arises with applicants who fall somewhere in between: an individual scholar, for example, who wishes travel support or research assistance or whose project will take longer than a year. Such an applicant, if successful in the Interpretive Research program, will likely receive more support for his or her project than an applicant in Fellowships despite the Endowment's having no assurance that the project merits greater support than comparable projects in Fellowships. This raises a question of equity that we would like the Council Committees for Research Programs and for Fellowships and Seminars to consider."

The Council members, led by Messrs. Kass and Hollander, were clearly opposed to pursuing an idea floated by Mrs. Cheney in her memo for the introduction of a limited number of "Distinguished Research Fellowships" that would provide the \$27,500 stipend for up to three years. On the other hand, there was support voiced for making NEH fellowships renewable, on an annual competitive basis, for up to three years. Mr. Kass spoke compellingly of the democratic, all-compete-for-the-same-prize character of the present fellowship arrangements.

Interestingly, at least in the public discussion, the consideration of this problem of equity between programs did not touch upon the

considerably different peer panel procedures followed by the two divisions.

The recommendations and/or comments that emerged from this discussion included:

o The view that the problem of overlap between Interpretive Research and the fellowship programs actually involves only a few applications.

o The Interpretive Research guidelines should be revised to emphasize even more clearly that the program is intended to support collaborative research. (The current guidelines are already very explicit as to eligibility: "Research projects that require coordinated or collaborative efforts involving various combinations of researchers and consultants, research assistants, and clerical or technical support personnel are eligible for support in the Projects category. With the exception of archaeology projects [i.e, art history and ethnohistory projects that rely primarily on the analysis of excavated materials], all applications for support of individual study and research for periods of a year or less normally should be submitted to the Endowments Division of Fellowships and Seminars.")

o To make Fellowships more equitable, NEH should explore feasibility of making available the possibility of competing for limited travel and other project expenses through the Division of Fellowships and Seminars.

5. **NBA Board: 1989-90** - Following elections at the Alliance's 1989 Annual Meeting last month, the Board of Directors from 4/89 to 4/90 is comprised as follows: **Edward H. Able *** (American Association of Museums); **Susan L. Ball** (College Art Association); **Edward C. Carter II** (American Philosophical Society as Chairman, Independent Research Libraries Association); **L. Jane Christensen** (National Council of Teachers of English); **William V. D'Antonio** (American Sociological Association) Vice President; **Phyllis Franklin *** (Modern Language Association); **Roderick S. French** (George Washington University) President; **Samuel R. Gammon** (American Historical Association) Immediate Past President; **David A. Hoekema *** (American Philosophical Association); **Joseph S. Johnston, Jr.** (Association of American Colleges); **Stanley N. Katz** (American Council of Learned Societies); **David J. Lull** (Society of Biblical Literature); **Margaret W. Reynolds** (Linguistic Society of America) Secretary-Treasurer; **Catherine E. Rudder *** (American Political Science Association); **Eugene L. Sterud** (American Anthropological Association); **Larry E. Tise** (American Association for State and Local History); **Duane E. Webster** (Association of Research Libraries); **Jamil S. Zainaldin** (Federation of State Humanities Councils).

* = Standing committee chairs serve on the Board ex officio.