July 14, 2014

Chairman Hal Rogers
Interior and Environment Subcommittee
Chairman Ken Calvert
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Nita Lowey
Interior and Environment Ranking Member
Ranking Member Jim Moran
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Rogers and Calvert and Ranking Members Lowey and Moran:

As you and your colleagues consider FY 2015 funding levels for the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) urges you to adequately invest in these federal agencies that, with sufficient funding, could support high-quality undergraduate student-faculty collaborative research, scholarship and creative activities. The bill approved by the Subcommittee on Interior and Environment Appropriations on July 8 proposes to fund each of the endowments at $138 million—a cumulative reduction of $16 million in budgets that have been persistently underfunded. We urge the Committee to reject this proposed reduction.

Undergraduate research is an inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline. The more than 10,000 members at nearly 1,000 institutions that belong to CUR believe that the best way to capture student interest and create enthusiasm for a discipline is through research, scholarship, and creative activity undertaken in close collaboration with faculty members. Federal investments in research support this endeavor broadly and the FY 2015 Interior and Environment spending proposal adversely affects the health and prospects of undergraduate research in the arts and humanities on campuses nationwide.

Federal investments in undergraduate research are more vital than ever, and have a profound impact on local communities across the country. Undergraduate research provides significant opportunities to students and faculty to examine and improve upon artistic disciplines like dance, music, poetry, and literature, as well as education, linguistics, and history. Earlier this year, CUR hosted an event on Capitol Hill featuring the work of undergraduate researchers in the arts and humanities. The well-attended event provided staff an opportunity to learn about the importance of research in the humanities and the potential role of the federal government in supporting the endeavor. Federal spending priorities should recognize undergraduate research’s important role in building a workforce equipped to innovate on the job, and think critically and creatively.
When debating FY 2015 funding levels, we ask that you and your colleagues adequately invest in both the NEA and NEH. While both Endowments need additional funds, given the current fiscal environment, further exacerbated by sequestration and budget caps, we ask that the Committee at least maintain the FY2014 level provided for these programs of $146 million.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202.783.4810 ext. 201 or eambos@cur.org, if you or your staff have any questions. Thank you for your attention to these views.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth L. Ambos
Executive Officer

Cc: Members of the House Appropriations Committee