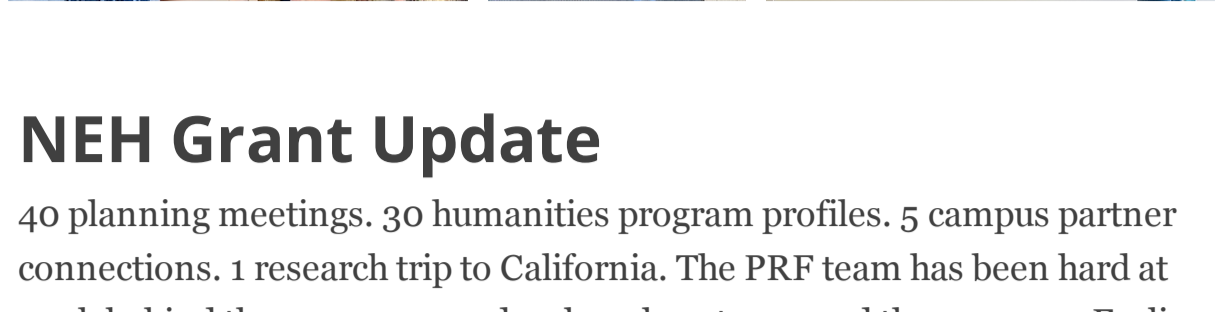


## IN THIS ISSUE

- NEH Grant Update
- Event Recap: Naomi Shihab Nye, "Poetry and Vitality"
- Student Spotlight: Senior Hannah Monti
- PRF Builds Campus Conversation Model
- The Challenge of Defining the Humanities



## NEH Grant Update

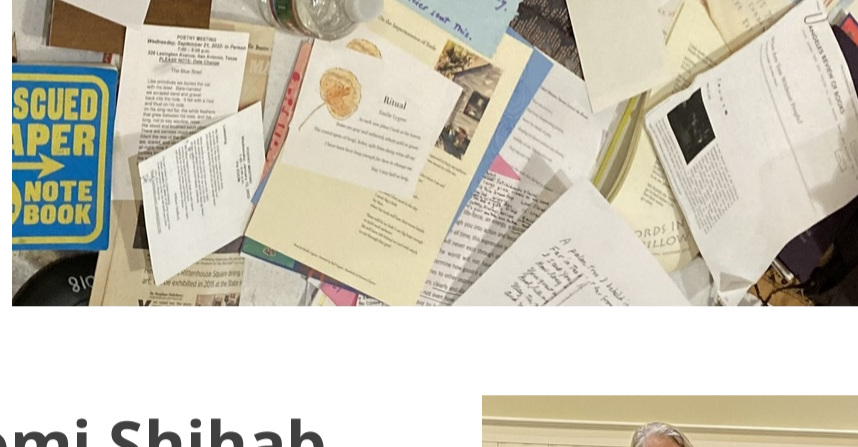
40 planning meetings. 30 humanities program profiles. 5 campus partner connections. 1 research trip to California. The PRF team has been hard at work behind the scenes as we develop plans to expand the program. Earlier this year, PRF received a \$35,000 grant from The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to develop an Engaged Humanities Hub on campus and engaged humanities Core Exploration courses. The work toward these goals this semester included:

- Meeting with other programs on campus including the Innovation program, Moreau Center, Career Center, and the Engineering and Nursing departments to explore avenues for future collaboration
- Collaborating with Core director Andrew Guest to develop an engaged humanities institute in May for faculty teaching Exploration courses
- Developing plans to create a community advisory board that will foster connections between the humanities and the greater Portland area

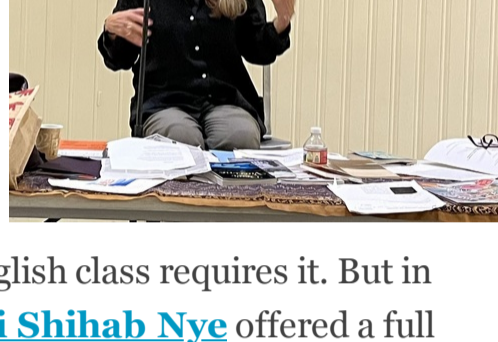
In addition to establishing connections on UP's campus, the team is researching humanities programs across the country. Interns Marley Chavarria (Class of 2025) and Sarah James (Class of 2023) have been busy compiling data from program websites, while directors Jen McDaniel and Molly Hiro recently visited [Pomona College's Humanities Studio](#) and [Scripps College's Interdisciplinary Humanities Initiative](#). The visit resulted in concrete ideas for how to implement a humanities hub on campus; the directors learned about ways to establish long-term relationships with community partners, how to troubleshoot common programming issues, and options for future funding.

Looking ahead to next semester, the PRF team plans to hold focus groups with UP students to get their feedback on Core Exploration courses and how the engaged humanities can enrich the classroom experience for students and faculty alike. Keep an eye on the PRF Instagram for more updates about the hub planning and for opportunities to participate in this research to help build a sustainable, humanities-based program that serves and enriches the UP and Portland communities.

[Find out more about the engaged humanities and PRF's 22-23 theme here >>](#)

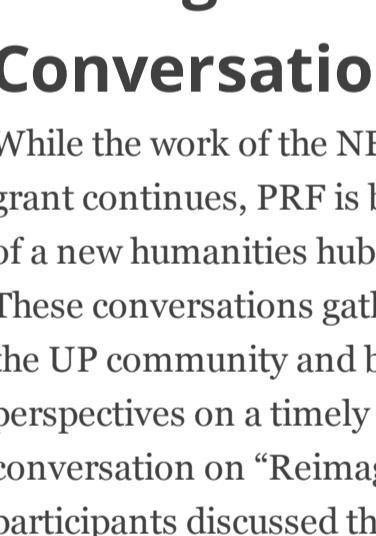
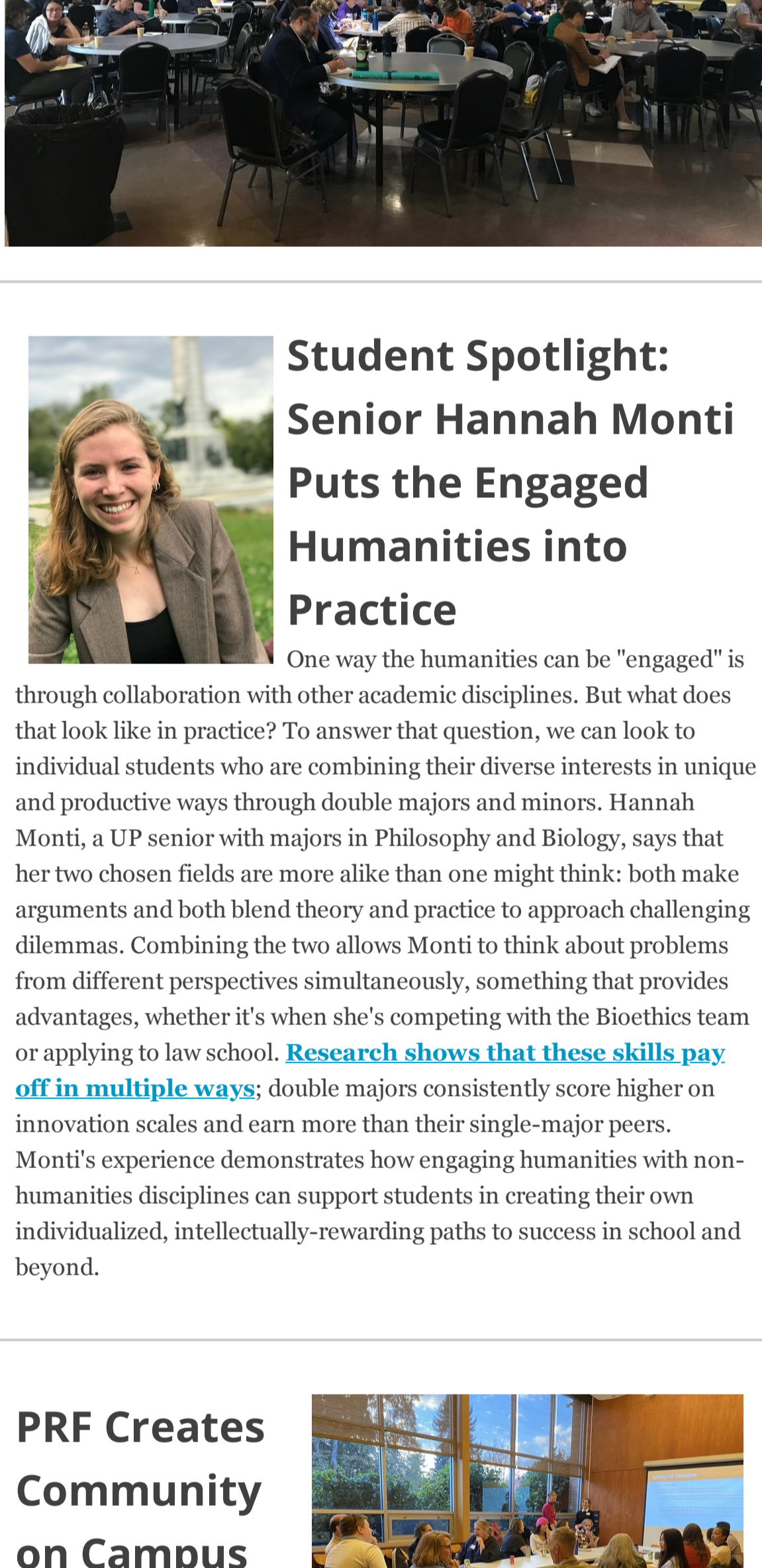


## Naomi Shihab Nye Unveils Poetry's Vital Role



For some, poetry isn't much more than abstract words on the page, something you only read when an English class requires it. But in September, [acclaimed poet Naomi Shihab Nye](#) offered a full room of UP students and faculty an alternative vision—positioning poetry as an inspiring channel for self-discovery and vitality. In an engaging workshop, "Poetry and Vitality," part of PRF's "Engaging Humanities" fall 2022 series, co-sponsored with the [Integrative Health and Wellness program](#) at UP, Nye read from an inviting spread of books and papers and shared her own stories of how poetry has impacted her life and relationships. Participants were led through a process of reflecting on questions Nye asked, and then invited to spontaneously create a 5-6 line poem from these reflections—and then a half-dozen students willingly read their freshly-drafted poems aloud!

In this interactive workshop, Nye offered both an inspiring vision and concrete tools for, as she put it, using poetry to develop a "vital relationship with your own experience" and to find a "way of being new to yourself." At the same time, Nye also helped participants see what is different about poetry compared to other ways of engaging with the self—for poetry, she claimed, while an "agreeable friend" because it's both "finite" and "intimate," is also fundamentally mysterious in nature. "So much in life is explained to us," Nye asserted; "poetry doesn't explain."



## Student Spotlight: Senior Hannah Monti Puts the Engaged Humanities into Practice

One way the humanities can be "engaged" is through collaboration with other academic disciplines. But what does that look like in practice? To answer that question, we can look to individual students who are combining their diverse interests in unique and productive ways through double majors and minors. Hannah Monti, a UP senior with majors in Philosophy and Biology, says that her two chosen fields are more alike than one might think: both make arguments and both blend theory and practice to approach challenging dilemmas. Combining the two allows Monti to think about problems from different perspectives simultaneously, something that provides advantages, whether it's when she's competing with the Bioethics team or applying to law school. [Research shows that these skills pay off in multiple ways](#); double majors consistently score higher on innovation scales and earn more than their single-major peers. Monti's experience demonstrates how engaging humanities with non-humanities disciplines can support students in creating their own individualized, intellectually-rewarding paths to success in school and beyond.

## PRF Creates Community on Campus Through Conversation



While the work of the NEH grant continues, PRF is busy building events that could become staples of a new humanities hub. One such event is the Campus Conversation. These conversations gather faculty, staff, and students from all parts of the UP community and bring them together to share and discuss their perspectives on a timely topic. In November, PRF hosted a conversation on "Reimagining Readiness." During the event, participants discussed the concept of career readiness, how college campuses and classes engage with this idea, and the multiple alternative ways "readiness" might be cultivated in today's world. The conversation allowed open and honest exchange between constituents who don't always interact all that much on campus: students shared their hopes and anxieties when it comes to feeling "ready" for the job market and faculty and staff considered how their own educations prepared them for the future in ways they couldn't see during college. The ideas and experiences from this conversation will help the PRF team consider how to connect the humanities to students' own professional development, and more broadly, will contribute to the program's ongoing development of methods for practicing the humanities on campus and in public.

## How Do You Define the Humanities? UP Faculty Share Their Takes, Help Plan for Future of the Humanities at UP

Research in higher education consistently shows that the majority of college students can't define the humanities. And while it could be easy to chalk this up to students' lack of experience, it turns out humanities faculty also find it challenging to articulate an overarching explanation for what the humanities are. But do we need to be able to define a field of study in order to experience its benefits or argue for its relevance? It might be that the very richness and complexity of the humanities resists our efforts to fence them in with a single definition.

It's simple enough to list off the humanities disciplines—Art History, English, History, Languages, Philosophy, and Theology—far trickier, though, to pinpoint what those disciplines have in common, and more challenging still to do it in a single sentence.

This semester PRF hosted two lunches for humanities faculty as part of the program's research into how an engaged humanities hub could support the work that UP faculty do; faculty from each of the humanities disciplines attended. We began each event by asking attendees to define the humanities in one sentence, and the results were fascinating with no two exactly alike. As the word cloud above (developed from a transcription of the conversations) suggests, faculty tend to define the humanities in broad terms, like the study of culture and what it means to be human, but from there definitions diverged. Some focused on practices, such as interpretation, conversation, and questioning; others homed in on ideas like contradiction, ambivalence, and a search for truth and beauty. Perhaps most clear from the conversation is that the humanities offer as many approaches to the world as there are practitioners. The task for those of us working to support the humanities at UP and in public might be to get comfortable with this multiplicity, highlighting it as a central strength of a vibrant and dynamic field rather than a problem to be solved.

