The importance of the humanities to a liberal arts education will be on full display during a two-day symposium marking the official launch of the Wake Forest Humanities Institute on March 18 and 19.

Two nationally known advocates for the humanities — historian Edward Ayers and author Stanley Fish — will join Wake Forest faculty and students to discuss the importance of interdisciplinary research and education in the humanities. The symposium, “The Humanities in the 21st Century,” is free and open to the public. Ayers will discuss how the humanities are addressing 21st century issues in his keynote address, “The Puzzle of Innovation in the Humanities.” He will speak at 4 p.m. on Friday, March 18, at Reynolda House Museum of American Art.

Ayers has served as president of the University of Richmond since 2007. He is known for his pioneering work in digital and public humanities — using technology to provide new ways to teach and present research in the humanities research. He is the Founding Executive Director of the Virginia Center for Digital History and co-founder of the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia. He also has served on the National Council for the Humanities.

Prior to his remarks, a panel of Wake Forest seniors will discuss how their academic experiences have shaped their view of the humanities. Their discussion, “Perspectives on the Future of the Humanities at Wake Forest,” will begin at 3 p.m., also at Reynolda House.

On Saturday, March 19, four faculty groups that have worked on interdisciplinary issues over the last year will discuss their collaboration at 10 a.m. in the Benson University Center, room 401. One of those groups — made up of faculty from the English, religion, political science and theatre departments and the divinity school — has been studying conflicts in the Middle East and South Africa from their varied academic perspectives; they will discuss their upcoming trip to South Africa this summer as part of their ongoing study of “Peace and Conflict Management.”

Fish will speak on the purpose and importance of humanities education on Saturday afternoon at 1:30 p.m., also in Pugh Auditorium. His remarks, “Are the Humanities...”
Good for Humanity? The Aims and Place of the Humanities in Liberal Education,” will be followed by a panel of Wake Forest faculty members.

Fish is currently the Davidson-Kuhn Distinguished University Professor of Humanities and Law at Florida International University. He is the author of numerous books and a frequent commentator on the humanities, education, law and society for The New York Times. He is dean emeritus of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and a former faculty member at the University of California Berkeley, Johns Hopkins and Duke University.

The Humanities Institute was founded last October to support interdisciplinary scholarship, research and education in the humanities. “With the public launch, we want to get the word out that the institute will champion the role of the humanities as central to liberal arts education and an intellectually vibrant campus,” said Mary Foskett, associate professor of religion, who was named director of the Humanities Institute in January. “When many schools are underfunding or disbanding humanities programs, Wake Forest has stepped up to reaffirm the importance of the humanities to our identity and purpose.”

In December, Wake Forest received a $500,000 challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to fund the institute. Through fundraising and donations, Wake Forest will match the NEH grant threefold, yielding a total of $2 million to endow the institute.

The symposium schedule is as follows. For more information, registration and a list of speakers

**Friday, March 18**
(Friday’s sessions will take place at Reynolda House Museum of American Art in the Babcock Auditorium)

**3 p.m.**
Student Panel Discussion: “Perspectives on the Future of the Humanities at Wake Forest”
Seniors Teddy Aronson, Maddie Brandenburger, Elaine Zhi Shing and Clint Wilson

**4 p.m.**
Keynote Address: “The Puzzle of Innovation in the Humanities”
Edward L. Ayers, President of the University of Richmond

**5:15 p.m.**
Reception
Saturday, March 19
(Saturday’s sessions will take place in the Benson University Center, room 401)

10 a.m.
Interdisciplinary Faculty Seminars Annual Symposium
Faculty participants in four interdisciplinary groups will discuss their collaborations.

Noon
Lunch (by reservation)

1:30 p.m.
“Are the Humanities Good for Humanity?: The Aims and Place of the
Humanities in Liberal Education”
Guest speaker: Stanley Fish, Davidson-Kahn Distinguished University Professor of
Humanities and Law, Florida International University

Faculty Panel Discussion:
Michele Gillespie, Kahle Family Associate Professor of History
Simeon Ilesanmi, Washington M. Wingate Professor of Religion
Herman Rapaport, Reynolds Professor of English
Moderator: Rebecca S. Thomas, Professor of German and Associate Dean for Faculty
Development, Wake Forest College

– By Kerry M. King (’85), Office of Communications and External Relations