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A Quality of Life Question

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The National Endowment for the Arts has awarded the University of Dayton one of the first research grants given by the organization on the value and impact of the arts on the economic well-being of communities.

Donald Polzella, a psychology professor who now serves as associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences, said the $10,000 one-year grant will fund a statistical analysis of the relationship between engagement in the arts and quality of life.

"I was really interested in looking at the impact of the arts on the non-artistic spheres of communities," Polzella said. "Other studies have looked at how the arts impact behavior in schools, but research has not gone very far in seeing how that plays out in a community."

Polzella and Jeremy Forbis, assistant professor of sociology, will analyze data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and its Survey of Public Participation in the Arts.

It's the first time the NEA has funded research projects to look at the impact of the arts on economic development, the health and viability of arts organizations and how engagement in the arts might affect individuals and communities in areas such as mental health and community development.

"In order to create well-designed and responsive arts programs and policies, we need to have solid, research-based evidence about how art works," said NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman in a release announcing the grant awards. "We are excited to learn what these projects will reveal and look forward to sharing each of them broadly with the American public."

Grants totaling $250,000 were awarded to 15 organizations, including Harvard University, Fordham University and the University of Illinois.

For interviews, contact Don Polzella at 937-229-2170.