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NEH CARES Act

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NEH CARES Act



The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) was founded on the principle that the humanities are critical to the nation's success as they connect people and encourage empathy.

It's a philosophy embraced by [Governors State University's](#) Associate Provost Rosemary Johnsen, recently selected to review special NEH grants for cultural institutions. The grants, a total of 317, will allow institutions such as museums to continue essential work, halted by COVID-19 orders to stay home and social distance.

"The public and educational audiences—from K-12 to higher ed—depend on these institutions to deliver high-quality, innovative programming, but many of the institutions themselves are heavily dependent on admissions revenue," said Johnsen.

She said the cultural staples, like the humanities, help society understand the world. "It's about the human experience. When you study the humanities you study specific incidences and literary texts, but while learning about them you also learn larger concepts of how people make sense of the world and relate to each other, and how historical circumstances impact their experiences."

Johnsen's keen insights and past experiences with NEH were key to her selection to serve as a reviewer.

In the spring, the NEH received \$40 million in funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to redistribute



to cultural institutions to retain staff to preserve and curate humanities collections, advance humanities research, and maintain buildings and core operations.

Since the act sought to deliver aid quickly, the review process was expedited for the 2,300 applications originally submitted.

Johnsen's disciplinary background as a literary scholar afforded her the opportunity to work with the NEH in the past, both as a reviewer of grant proposals and as a recipient.

In 2017, Johnsen and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences [Andrae Marak](#) were awarded a [\\$100,000 NEH grant for War, Trauma, and the Humanities](#), a course where student Veterans helped to facilitate classes on war literature from World War I to modern day. They were [awarded another grant](#) in 2018.

Following the selection of the 317 winners, the NEH acknowledged the work that went into reviewing the applications so quickly.

"We were blown away by your generosity, particularly given the difficult circumstances and the unusually fast pace of the program," the NEH wrote to Johnsen and other reviewers.

An access institution, GSU continues its work to provide access to cultural organizations to further the university's mission.