



**NATIONAL CENTER FOR ARTS RESEARCH (NCAR) RELEASES  
WHITE PAPER COUNTERING FINDINGS OF THE DEVOS INSTITUTE STUDY ON  
CULTURALLY SPECIFIC ARTS ORGANIZATIONS**

**NCAR study identifies the key differences between culturally specific organizations and their mainstream peers and calls for a more equitable measurement of performance**

DALLAS (SMU) – January 20, 2016 – The National Center for Arts Research ([NCAR](#)) at Southern Methodist University today released a [white paper](#) that examines the distinguishing characteristics of arts organizations that primarily serve Asian American, African American, and Hispanic/Latino communities. The study is designed to provide insights, based on measurable data, about the operating contexts and unique challenges that these organizations face. Co-authored with Andrea Louie, Executive Director, Asian American Arts Alliance and Zenetta Drew, Executive Director, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, the goal of the white paper is to provide a more nuanced understanding of culturally specific organizations and to help establish a more equitable measure of their performance.

Inspired by the DeVos Institute’s 2015 publication “[Diversity in the Arts: The Past, Present and Future of African American and Latino Museums, Dance Companies, and Theater Companies](#),” NCAR’s paper responds to two key aspects of the DeVos Institute’s findings: **first**, that arts organizations of color are in general smaller and “far less secure” than their mainstream counterparts; and **second**, that funders might see greater results by providing larger grants to a smaller number of “effective” organizations, rather than continuing to fund a larger number of organizations through smaller grants. Based on its research, NCAR found that culturally specific arts organizations are not disproportionately smaller than their mainstream peers. Taking into account their sector and age, the data shows that they are generally younger and therefore at a different stage in their evolution than mainstream organizations. NCAR argues that the funding model proposed by DeVos would be detrimental to the cultural ecology, as it could effectively reduce the overall number of smaller organizations and therefore diminish the level of diversity, dynamism, and innovation in the field. NCAR calls for a deeper understanding of culturally specific organizations before significantly altering or abandoning their funding.

“We recognize that culturally specific organizations have particular characteristics that should be understood for what they are, neither good nor bad nor a sign of ineffectiveness but simply a different starting point,” said Zannie Voss, director at NCAR. “With this study, we want to reframe how we assess the performance of these organizations by identifying the differences in their operating contexts and by

establishing a more precise framework of what expected performance should look like, rooted in evidence-based research.”

[NCAR’s study](#) examined the operating characteristics of arts organizations that primarily serve African Americans, Asian Americans, or Hispanics/Latinos as compared to their more mainstream counterparts, and examined whether they perform significantly differently on a variety of metrics. An analysis of data from a large sample of organizations across 12 different arts and culture sectors produced several other key findings:

- Culturally specific organizations are more prevalent in sectors that have lower average budget size (e.g., community-based arts, arts education), and less prevalent in sectors with larger budgets (e.g., museums, opera companies, performing arts centers).
- Culturally specific organizations have similarly sized budgets and physical facilities as mainstream organizations but spend less on marketing, earn less from subscriptions, and have lower trustee giving; however, they attract a higher level of support from government sources.
- These organizations also demonstrate performance characteristics that distinguish them from one another (as well as their mainstream counterparts). More specifically:
  - Asian American organizations generate more attendance using fewer resources but also attract a lower level of support from all sources except for government.
  - African American organizations tend to have fewer programmatic offerings that generate lower annual attendance and program revenue but more contributed revenue, especially from individuals, foundations and corporations.
  - Hispanic/Latino organizations tend to have a higher number of programmatic offerings, full-time employees, and development expenses, which generate higher overall contributed support, especially from corporations and foundations, but lower program revenue and lower individual giving.

In order to create the level playing field it seeks to establish, NCAR’s study controlled for a number of factors:

- Inherent differences within the arts and culture sector; e.g., data shows that art museums have higher attendance rates than do dance companies.
- Organizational characteristics, especially fundamental characteristics that are difficult to change in the short term but can influence performance attributes of an organization, such as size of the physical facility and organizational age.
- The characteristics of the community where the organizations operate; e.g., New York City has a larger population with higher average income and tourist visits than most U.S. cities, but also more competition for arts and culture consumers.

“Diversity in the arts is a multifaceted and complex issue. As an academic institution that seeks to educate future leaders in the arts, we are proud to make this contribution to the broader field discussion on diversity,” said Sam Holland, dean of the Meadows School of the Arts at SMU. “NCAR was established to catalyze new and informed thinking about important issues in the arts with a data-driven approach. It is our hope that the compelling insights set out by this study will help support the sustainability of a dynamic and diverse arts and cultural community around the country.”

### **About NCAR**

In 2012, the Meadows School of the Arts and Cox School of Business at SMU launched the National Center for Arts Research (NCAR). The Center, the first of its kind in the nation, analyzes the largest database of arts research ever assembled, investigates important issues in arts management and patronage, and makes its findings available to arts leaders, funders, policymakers, researchers and the general public. The vision of NCAR is to act as a catalyst for the transformation and sustainability of the national arts and cultural community.

With data from the Cultural Data Project and other national and government sources such as the Theatre Communications Group, the League of American Orchestras, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Census Bureau, and the National Center for Charitable Statistics, the National Center for Arts Research is creating the most complete picture of the health of the arts sector in the U.S. The goals of the Center are to become the nation’s leading source of expertise on: 1) arts attendance and patronage, 2) understanding how managerial decisions, arts attendance, and patronage affect one another, and 3) the fiscal trends and fiscal stability of the arts in the U.S., and to create an in-depth assessment of the industry that allows arts and cultural leaders to make more informed decisions and improve the health of their organizations.

The project’s indices were created in partnership with TRG Arts, Nonprofit Finance Fund and numerous field leaders. NCAR’s dashboard is being created in partnership with IBM. The Center also partnered with the Boston Consulting Group to develop its mission, vision and long-term strategies.

NCAR is led by Dr. Zannie Voss, chair and professor of arts management and arts entrepreneurship in the Meadows School of the Arts and Cox School of Business, and Dr. Glenn Voss, endowed professor of marketing at Cox School of Business. Through this leadership, NCAR sources its cross-disciplinary academic expertise in the fields of arts management, marketing and statistics from Meadows and Cox faculty.

More than a dozen visionary foundations and individual arts patrons have supported NCAR with financial investments, including the Communities Foundation of Texas, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, M. R. & Evelyn Hudson Foundation, Carl B. & Florence E. King Foundation, The Tolleson Family Foundation, Jennifer and Peter Altabef, Marilyn Augur, Diane and Hal Brierley, Belle and Donald

A. Berg, Molly Byrne, Bess and Ted Enloe, Melissa and Trevor Fetter, Carol and Don Glendenning, Ann and Lee Hobson, Jeanne R. Johnson, Nancy Nasher and David Haemisegger, Nancy Perot, Sarah and Ross Perot, Jr., Bonnie Pitman, Caren Prothro and Donna Wilhelm.

For more information, please visit the NCAR website at [smu.edu/artsresearch](http://smu.edu/artsresearch).

### **About the Meadows School of the Arts**

The Meadows School of the Arts, formally established at SMU in 1969 and named in honor of benefactor Algur H. Meadows, is one of the foremost arts education institutions in the United States. The Meadows School offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in advertising, art, art history, arts management and arts entrepreneurship, communication studies, creative computation, dance, film and media arts, journalism, music and theatre. The goal of the Meadows School of the Arts, as a comprehensive educational institution, is to prepare students to meet the demands of professional careers. The Meadows School is a leader in developing innovative outreach and community engagement programs, challenging its students to make a difference locally and globally by developing connections between art, entrepreneurship and change.

The Meadows School of the Arts is also a convener for the arts in North Texas, serving as a catalyst for new collaborations and providing critical industry research. For more information, visit [www.smu.edu/meadows](http://www.smu.edu/meadows).

### **About the Cox School of Business**

SMU's Cox School of Business, originally established in 1920 and named in honor of benefactor Edwin L. Cox in 1978, offers a full range of undergraduate and graduate business education programs. Among them: BBA, Full-Time MBA, Professional MBA (PMBA), Executive MBA (EMBA), Master of Science in Accounting, Master of Science in Business Analytics, Master of Science in Entrepreneurship, Master of Science in Finance, Master of Science in Management, Master of Science in Sport Management, and Executive Education. The school also offers a number of unique resources and activities for students, ranging from its Business Leadership Center, Caruth Institute for Entrepreneurship, Folsom Institute for Real Estate, Latino Leadership Initiative, Maguire Energy Institute, and Global Leadership Program, to its Associate Board Executive Mentoring Program and an international alumni network with chapters in more than 20 countries.

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### **Contacts:**

Victoria Winkelman  
Meadows School of the Arts  
214-768-3785; [vwinkelm@smu.edu](mailto:vwinkelm@smu.edu)

May Wijaya  
Resnicow and Associates  
212-671-5167; [mwijaya@resnicow.com](mailto:mwijaya@resnicow.com)