



STRATEGIC NATIONAL ARTS ALUMNI PROJECT

Tracking the Lives and Careers of Arts Graduates in America

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SNAAP: New National Project to Examine Impact of Arts Training

The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) was launched today to examine the impact of arts training. It will provide a first-ever in-depth look at the factors that help or hinder the careers of graduates of arts high schools, arts colleges and conservatories, and arts schools and departments within universities, whether the alumni work as artists or pursue other paths.

Arts alumni who graduated 5, 10, 15 and 20 years earlier will provide information about their formal arts training. They will report the nature of their current arts involvement, reflect on the relevance of arts training to their work and further education, and describe turning points, obstacles, and key relationships and opportunities that influenced their lives and careers.

The results of the annual online survey and data analysis system will help schools strengthen their programs of study by tracking what young artists need to advance in their fields. In addition, the information will allow institutions to compare their performance against other schools in order to identify areas where improvements are needed. "SNAAP will allow arts education institutions to assess their effectiveness and help them better prepare their students for the careers they enter - in the arts or not," says Mary Schmidt Campbell, Dean, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. The Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research will administer the annual survey in cooperation with the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University. Steven J. Tepper, Curb Center associate director, says "SNAAP is a milestone for cultural policy research, because it will go beyond profiles of individual artists and provide a comprehensive look at the creative workforce in America and the critical role of training institutions in preparing artists and creative workers." The project will be guided by a National Advisory Board comprised of leaders from all types and levels of arts training institutions, visual and performing artists, and arts and community development leaders from the nonprofit and commercial sectors.

Artists often don't end up working in the exact fields in which they trained. Instead, they may work at the boundaries between disciplines. They frequently move between the nonprofit and commercial sectors and hold multiple jobs. Moreover, there is a growing demand for arts training, both from students and the rising number of employers in the creative economy. Arts-training institutions and civic policy makers need good data to respond and plan effectively. "More than any arts education project in the past few decades, SNAAP has the potential to guide needed change in the curriculum," says James Undercofler, president and CEO of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Over time, SNAAP findings will allow institutions to learn more about the impact of their educational programs to better understand, for example, how students in different majors use their arts training in their careers and other aspects of their lives. Policy makers and community leaders will be able to use SNAAP findings to understand local, regional, and national arts workforce issues and market patterns. The results will also indicate how students who have trained intensively in the arts contribute to their communities and different areas of the economy.

According to George Kuh, Indiana University professor and SNAAP project director, the arts alumni survey will be extensively field-tested in 2008 and 2009 with as many as 100 institutions before its first national administration in 2010. "We'll learn a lot about what matters in arts training from these early results and also be able to fine-tune the survey for future use," stated Kuh. The Vanderbilt University Curb Center will host a national conference in 2010 to explore the educational and cultural policy implications of SNAAP findings.

After several years of studying the need for and feasibility of the project, the Surdna Foundation recently awarded a five-year \$2,500,000 leadership grant to help launch the project. Phillip Henderson, Surdna Foundation President, believes that SNAAP will be "one of the signature accomplishments of our foundation in this decade, and its value to arts training institutions will only increase over time."

"For the first time, SNAAP results will allow us to see how high-quality, deep training in the arts guides professional careers of creative American citizens," says Sarah Bainter Cunningham, Arts Education Director at the National Endowment for the Arts. In addition to Surdna and the National Endowment for the Arts, support from other funders is anticipated to support the testing phases of the project and insure widespread participation. SNAAP is expected to become self-sustaining through institutional participation fees by 2012.

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The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) is based at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, School of Education, 1900 East Tenth Street, Suite 419, Bloomington IN 47406-7512. More information is available at: www.snaap.indiana.edu.

Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP)?

SNAAP is an online survey system to collect, track, and disseminate national data about the artistic lives and careers of alumni who trained as visual, performing, or literary artists at both the high school and college levels. As an ongoing research system, it will allow education institutions, researchers and arts leaders to look at the systemic factors that help or hinder the career paths of alumni, whether they chose to work as artists or pursued other paths. SNAAP will be administered as an annual survey of alumni at specified junctures at 5, 10, 15 and 20 years following their institutionally-based arts training. Once fully operational, SNAAP findings will allow for national and other comparisons and can be disaggregated in various other ways so that institutions can better understand, for example, how students in different majors use their arts training in their careers and other aspects of their lives.

Who in general will benefit from SNAAP?

Information gathered through SNAAP will benefit arts training institutions, policy makers, and arts leaders, as well as parents and students considering intensive arts training. The information will provide the first national profile of how artists prepare in this country and allow for deepened understanding of what constitutes artistic success and contribution. In addition, data gathered through SNAAP will assist government entities, funding organizations, and arts leaders in making investment decisions in education, training and resource allocation.

Why is SNAAP important now?

Arts training institutions have articulated an urgent need for objective data. The information that SNAAP will provide is especially timely given the changing environment in which arts training institutions operate: career opportunities are shifting, competition for both students and resources is on the rise, and a generational shift in leadership is underway. Institutions require data to respond and plan effectively. Accreditation requirements also include data regarding alumni paths.

How will key groups benefit from SNAAP?

For arts high schools, arts colleges and conservatories, SNAAP will provide information to:

- improve institutional hires, address alumni needs and enhance development efforts
- strengthen curriculum by tracking what striving young artists need to advance in rapidly changing arts fields
- clarify what students learned and how it has been used in both arts and non-arts contexts
- compare their work to that of similar institutions to identify strengths and gaps
- learn more about the institutions from which their students came to create more productive learning links and better match students to institutions

For policy makers, community development professionals, and funders, SNAAP will provide systemic information about:

- what led artists to pursue careers in the arts and other fields, including financing and other resource factors
- local and regional arts workforce issues and market patterns for community developers and planners
- how students who have trained intensively in the arts contribute to the creative economy nationally and by specific locale
- gaps in the arts training ecology, across disciplines, at different training junctures and across various geographic locales
- support mechanisms and resources needed to encourage and sustain artists in their most

For parents and students considering intensive arts training, SNAAP will provide information about:

- arts career paths
- educational resources
- the roles of professional relationships, and
- obstacles to achieving arts training and professional goals

Who will be surveyed?

SNAAP's primary clients are all arts high schools, arts and design colleges and conservatories, and arts schools and departments within comprehensive colleges and universities. We will survey alumni who graduated 5, 10, 15, and 20 years earlier from the arts training programs that participate in SNAAP.

What kinds of questions will the SNAAP survey ask?

- early interests and training as well as current involvement in the arts
- types of art practiced and how often
- current and past careers and education
- relevance of arts training to work and further education
- turning points, obstacles, critical relationships and opportunities
- support and resource needs post graduation
- experiences as teachers
- current family situations
- unions and other professional affiliations
- income and support, student debt, other fiscal issues
- career impact and influence of faculty and staff, other artists, classmates, family, friends, coworkers, and other arts professionals

How will SNAAP data be collected?

SNAAP is a web-based survey that collects data from alumni through questions that make use of dropdown menus and check boxes. A unique feature of the survey instrument is that it creates a *Lifemap* for each respondent upon survey completion, which provides a visual representation of the impact of various professional, educational and personal experiences on career development. The survey has been specifically developed to reflect the non-linear nature of arts training and careers and to be user-friendly. Without influencing responses, respondents can obtain real-time comparisons between their answers to specific questions and those of other survey respondents.

SNAAP funders (updated October 2008)

To launch SNAAP, the Surdna Foundation provided a five-year \$2,500,000 leadership grant to Indiana University in partnership with the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University. The Houston Endowment awarded a three-year grant of \$600,000, the Cleveland Endowment provided \$100,000 over two years, and an anonymous foundation committed a three-year grant of \$450,000. The National Endowment for the Arts has supported SNAAP with \$60,000 for 2007-2008 with an invitation to submit proposals for additional future funding. Support from other organizations is anticipated to support the various phases of the project and insure widespread participation. SNAAP is expected to become self-sustaining by 2013 by institutional participation fees.

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