



STRATEGIC NATIONAL ARTS ALUMNI PROJECT

Tracking the Lives and Careers of Arts Graduates

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Arts Graduates Find Their Way to Jobs and Satisfying Lives

Findings from a national study released this week show that Americans with arts degrees are generally satisfied with their educational and career experiences. For example, nine of ten (87%) arts graduates responding to the survey who are currently employed are satisfied with the job in which they spend the majority of their work time. Of those employed alumni, 82% were satisfied with their ability to be creative in their current work, whether working in the arts or in other fields.

The report, *A Diverse Palette: What Arts Graduates Say About Their Education and Careers*, details findings from more than 36,000 arts alumni of 66 institutions in the United States and Canada. Participating schools include research universities, independent colleges of art and design, conservatories, liberal arts colleges, and arts high schools. The results from the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) provide insights into the lives and careers of arts graduates of all ages, including their satisfaction with their educational training and experiences, various employment paths, involvement in the arts outside of work, and overall satisfaction with their jobs and income.

“Many think an arts career is an on-off switch, with graduates becoming professional artists or leaving the field to pursue a different path,” remarks Steven Tepper, associate director of the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University. “But there are many variations and hues. Many arts graduates work both in and outside of the arts simultaneously; most continue to make and perform art even when they work as lawyers or lab technicians; and they use their arts training in a variety of settings and careers. In a sense, then, arts graduates never really graduate from the arts....they stay involved.”

Indeed, arts graduates are very involved in the arts and in arts organizations. For example, seven of ten (72%) perform or make art during their non-work time. Almost half (45%) of all respondents donated money to either an arts organization or an artist in the past 12 months, including more than a third (37%) of those with household incomes of under \$100,000. Nationally, only 6% of all U.S. households earning under \$100,000 contribute to the arts (Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, 2007).

According to Samuel Hoi, president of Otis College of Art and Design, “My college, which has been tracking alumni outcomes for some years, uses SNAAP so that we can better understand our work in the context of nationally comparative data.”

Other noteworthy findings from the 2011 SNAAP survey include:

- Only 4% of SNAAP respondents report being unemployed and looking for work – less than half the national rate of 8.9% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).
- 84% of employed alumni agree that their current primary job reflects their personalities, interests and values, whether their work is in the arts or other fields.
- Only 3% of all currently-working arts graduates are “very dissatisfied” with their primary job.
- Those with degrees in the performing arts and design are the most likely ever to be employed as professional artists, with 82% of dance, theater and music performance majors, and 81% of design majors working as professional artists at some point.
- Degree level matters in terms of whether an arts graduate works as a professional artist. Eighty-six percent of those with a master’s degree in the arts have worked as professional artists compared 71% whose highest degree is a bachelor’s.
- 57% of all arts alumni have at some point worked as teachers of the arts, and 27% do this currently.
- Aspects of their institution with which alumni are least satisfied include career advising, opportunities for degree-related internships or work, and opportunities to network with alumni and others.

According to Sarah Bainter Cunningham, executive director of research at Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, “SNAAP allow us to imagine a future where schooling, public policy, and data merge to form new ideas about igniting the passion and creativity of the next generation of artists.”

SNAAP is a collaboration between the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and the Vanderbilt University Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy. Participation in the annual survey is open to all degree-granting colleges and universities as well as arts high schools. The registration deadline for this year’s national administration is July 2, 2012.

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SNAAP was launched with generous support from the Surdna Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Houston Endowment, and other funders. The project is based at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, School of Education, 1900 East Tenth Street, Suite 419, Bloomington IN 47406. More information including a copy of the annual report is available at snaap.indiana.edu as is an interactive SnaapShot based on the findings.