



STRATEGIC NATIONAL ARTS ALUMNI PROJECT

Tracking the Lives and Careers of Arts Graduates

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Study Shows the Majority of Arts Graduates Find Satisfying Work

Findings from a national survey released this week show that, contrary to widespread belief, most arts graduates are employed and holding jobs consistent with their educational goals. For example, 92% of those who wish to work currently are, with most finding employment soon after graduating. Two-thirds said their first job was a close match for the kind of work they wanted. And almost three-quarters (74%) of those who intended to work as a professional artist had done so at some point since graduating.

The findings of the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) are based on information from 13,581 alumni of 154 arts high schools, arts colleges and conservatories, and arts schools and departments within universities. Those responding to the fall 2010 survey graduated from fine arts, theater, dance, music, creative writing, media arts, film, design and architecture programs. The results provide insights into the lives and careers of arts graduates including: (1) what they studied in school; (2) satisfaction with their educational training and experiences; (3) the various jobs they have held, (4) their involvement in the arts outside of work, and (5) personal information such as where they live, family and individual income, and educational debt.

“Artistic careers exemplify new ways of working in the growing contingent economy, and the experiences of artists might increasingly become the norm for many 21st century workers” says Steven J. Tepper, associate director of the Curb Center at Vanderbilt University and SNAAP senior scholar. “For example, arts alumni have high rates of self-employment with more than six of ten being self-employed at some point, and more than half of professional artists hold two or more jobs.”

Most professional artists are quite satisfied with the opportunities to be creative in the job in which they spend the majority of their time. For example, 80% of fine artists, 71% of photographers, 68% of dancers or choreographers, 68% of actors, and 61% of musicians were *very satisfied* with the opportunity to be creative at work.

“SNAAP transforms our ability to track the professional outcomes and satisfaction of our graduates. It allows us to be better informed about our results, more engaged with our alumni, and more responsive in our curricula,” says Douglas Dempster, dean of the College of Fine Arts at The University of Texas at Austin. “SNAAP is also indispensable to satisfying the increased calls for accountability in higher education.”

Additional key findings from the 2010 survey are:

- Arts graduates are happy with their training, with 90% reporting their overall experience at their institution was either good or excellent.
- Most (76%) arts alumni would attend their same institution again.
- A majority of fine artists (78%), dancers or choreographers (75%), craft artists (69%), actors (68%), musicians (68%), photographers (66%), and directors, producers or managers in theater and stage (64%) were very satisfied with the opportunity to do work consistent with their personality, interests, and values.
- Of those currently working outside the arts, 54% said their arts training is relevant to the job in which they spend the majority of their time.
- Arts school graduates are 18 times more likely to volunteer at an arts organization (37%) than the population at large (2%).
- Arts alumni are critical for populating the teaching field, as more than half (52%) of arts graduates have taught in the arts at some point in their careers.
- Almost a third (30%) of former professional artists and those who wanted to be an artist but did not do so pointed to debt, including student loan debt, as a reason to find other work.
- Almost three quarters (71%) of arts alumni who are not currently professional artists continue to make or publicly perform their art.

According to George Kuh, Indiana University professor emeritus and SNAAP project director, "SNAAP represents the largest dataset available about the lives and careers of arts graduates. After three rounds of extensive field testing and responses from over 19,000 participants, we are now making the survey available to all degree-granting colleges and universities as well as arts high schools." The registration deadline for the 2011 national administration is July 1, 2011.

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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 snaap.indiana.edu including an interactive SnaapShot based on 2010 findings.