

- › First Time Visitor?
- › About Us
- › News & Resources
 - › News
 - › Press Releases
 - › Resource Library
 - › Media and Podcasts
 - › Agency Publications
- › Arts Advocacy
- › Arts Learning
- › Grants
- › Programs
- › Opportunities & Events
- › Southwest Arts Conference
- › The Choice is Art
- › Home

-  Follow us on Twitter
-  Become a fan on Facebook
-  ShowUp to AZ arts events

News

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October 26, 2012 »

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October 25, 2012 »

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October 18, 2012 »

Oh, SNAAP! It's still Arts in Education Week



By Patrick Fanning on September 14th, 2012



A week of blog posts about arts education wouldn't be complete without a bit of discussion about postsecondary arts education, right? Fortunately for all of us, there is a group of people doing quite a bit of research about graduates of universities with degrees in the arts, so we don't need to reinvent the wheel. Their research presents a great opportunity for us to shape our understanding of what it means to graduate in this country with a degree in the arts.

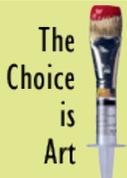
SNAAP – short for Strategic National Arts Alumni Project – is based at Indiana University and administered in cooperation with the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University. It has been around since 2008 and serves as a survey tool of people who have received degrees in the arts (including diplomas from arts high schools). In June of this year, the project released findings from its latest national survey in a report titled, [A Diverse Palette: What Arts Graduates Say About Their Education and Careers](#). The survey included responses from over 33,000 arts graduates.

The report presents a multitude of compelling statistics and I encourage you to read the full-length publication. I'll point out some of the numbers that I find to be particularly interesting. Respondents reported that they were most satisfied with their instructors (90%), the opportunity to take non-arts classes (84%) and the freedom and encouragement to take risks (81%) at their undergraduate institutions. Conversely, the areas in which respondents were most dissatisfied included career advising and information about further education options (50%), opportunities for degree-related internships or work (46%) and opportunities to network with alumni and others (41%).

The dissatisfaction among respondents with opportunities and advising is something we as a sector can work to change. Our work at the Arts Commission focuses on lifelong learning and we are currently thinking of ways to better align with that mission, by maintaining work in K-12 education and creative aging, but including programming and opportunities for college students, veterans and adults. We all have to remember that learning is a lifelong activity.

I think the satisfaction numbers related to risk-taking and non-arts participation are very interesting. I have always found, both during my undergraduate studies and in my professional work, that successful practitioners of the arts are endlessly curious people. They are curious within the confines of their artistic discipline, but they also seek experiences beyond their major focus. Learning an instrument or creating a painting is never done in a silo. It is also interesting to look at this statistic within the context of the other side of the spectrum. We know a great deal about the importance of a comprehensive K-12 curriculum that includes the arts, but it is important to also remember that postsecondary students also need a comprehensive education to prepare them for life in the 21st Century. These numbers seem to indicate that the demand is there and that students are taking advantage of opportunities to develop their education in a more comprehensive manner.

This post is by no means exhaustive in terms of the data presented in the report. I hope you will take a moment to read at least the press release about this study. Sally Gaskill – the SNAAP manager – has posted a more [thorough blog post](#) about the SNAAP findings on ARTSBlog. Check it out. She points out that this study is just “the tip of the iceberg”. I would also encourage you to follow the work of SNAAP on a regular basis. They have a [Facebook](#) page, a [website](#), and a [Twitter](#) feed. The work



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they are doing is fascinating, informative and not being done by anyone else.

Thank you for celebrating National Arts in Education Week with us. Stay connected to Arts Commission Arts Learning news and programs throughout the year by subscribing to our monthly, [Arts Learning Newsletter](#). And join us at the [2012 Joint Arts Education Conference](#) on October 15th at the Mesa Arts Center to connect with statewide colleagues and learn more about how we can support amazing arts education programs and providers in our communities, year-round.

In honor of National Arts in Education Week, the early registration rate for the [Joint Arts Education Conference](#) (JAEC) has been extended to September 16th.

The Joint Arts Education Conference is presented by the Arizona Commission on the Arts and the Arizona Department of Education, and hosted by the Mesa Arts Center. The conference will take place October 15, 2012, and provides professional development and networking opportunities for teaching artists, educators, arts administrators, and arts education advocates.

For a full conference agenda and to register, visit www.azarts.gov/jaec.