



STRATEGIC NATIONAL ARTS ALUMNI PROJECT

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

SNAAP is an annual online survey, data management, and institutional improvement system designed to enhance the impact of arts-school education. SNAAP will provide the first national data on how artists develop in this country, help identify the factors needed to better connect arts training to artistic careers and allow education institutions, researchers and arts leaders to look at the systemic factors that helped or hindered the career paths of alumni, whether they have chosen to work as artists or pursue other paths.

SNAAP 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 as well as to fulfill accreditation requirements for alumni outcomes.

SNAAP is administered by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research (George Kuh, Director) in collaboration with the Vanderbilt University Curb Center for Art, Enterprise, and Public Policy (Steven J. Tepper, Associate Director).

Who is surveyed and what kinds of questions are asked?

Arts alumni at specific junctures (5, 10, 15 and 20 years after graduation) are asked about:

- ◆ current and past careers and education
- ◆ types of art practiced and how often
- ◆ relevance of arts training to work and further education
- ◆ support and resource needs following graduation
- ◆ experiences as teachers
- ◆ current family situations
- ◆ unions and other professional affiliations
- ◆ income and support, student debt and other financial issues

How is SNAAP administered?

SNAAP partners with arts high schools, art and design colleges and conservatories, and arts schools and departments within comprehensive colleges and universities to administer the survey to their graduates. SNAAP is a user-friendly Web-based survey specifically developed to reflect the non-linear nature of arts training and careers. A unique feature of the survey instrument is that it creates a *Lifemap* for each respondent which provides a visual representation of the impact of professional, educational and personal experiences on career development.

What do participating institutions receive?

Reports that summarize the lives of alumni since graduation for:

- ◆ comparisons and analysis of the national aggregate group, and peer group, of respondents on key indicators (e.g., graduation rates, percentage pursuing arts careers, non-arts career paths, income levels)
- ◆ confidential internal institutional analyses of their alumni with appropriate comparison groups

Access to data files for individualized institutional research

What have we learned so far?

Forty (40) institutions participated in the first field test in 2008. SNAAP invited 24,000 alumni to complete the survey, and 1,739 completed the online questionnaire. Because relatively few responded, we cannot yet draw meaningful conclusions from the results. Nonetheless, the information is the single largest data set of arts alumni ever assembled.

Illustrative findings include:

- ◆ Two-thirds (67%) of arts alumni have taught or currently teach the arts
- ◆ Seven in ten (69%) alumni not currently working as professional artists say their artistic training is relevant to their current work
- ◆ More than half (58%) of arts alumni who currently work as professional artists hold three or more jobs
- ◆ 38% of alumni who are not currently professional artists continue to practice their art
- ◆ Two-thirds (68%) of graduates who once thought they might become professional artists, but did not, indicated that the promise of a steady income stream pulled them into other fields

2009 work scope

Based on the results of the first field test, we made significant changes to the questionnaire and the survey administration process along with a redesign of the Web interface to be used in the second field test. We believe these improvements will improve response rates and significantly strengthen the validity of SNAAP data.

SNAAP is working with 54 institutions for the second field test. Thus, a total of 87 institutions will have participated in the first two years. Of these, 17 are arts high schools and the others are postsecondary institutions.

Next steps

SNAAP will launch its first national administration in 2010. Institutions will pay a reasonable participation fee, between \$1,000 and \$7,500, depending on institutional size. In 2011, Vanderbilt University's Curb Center plans to host a national conference and release a publication titled *Training and Preparing Artists and Creative Workers in the 21st Century*.

Current funders

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National Advisory Board

The National Advisory Board is chaired by Kenneth C. Fischer, and includes the following artists, arts educators and arts administrators: Terence Blanchard, Antonia Contro, Douglas Dempster, Barbara Hauptman, Sammy Hoi, Colleen Jennings-Roggensack, Steven Lavine, Fred Lazarus, Abel Lopez, Ann R. Markusen, Carlos Martinez, Bebe Miller, Stephanie Perrin, Carla Peterson, Gwyn Richards, Leslie Shepard, and James Undercofler.

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