



STRATEGIC NATIONAL ARTS ALUMNI PROJECT

DataBrief

DataBrief provides arts educators and arts policy makers with highlights of SNAAP data and insights into the value of arts-school education. Contact us for more information.

This brief draws upon data from the more than 36,000 arts alumni from 66 institutions (8 arts high schools and 58 postsecondary institutions) in the United States and Canada who responded to the SNAAP survey in 2011. In comparing outcomes by major, we exclude double majors.

In this brief, we explore some differences in career outcomes by major.

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Major Differences: Who's Working?

- College major with the lowest percentage of graduates currently unemployed and looking for work: Arts Education at 1.9%
- College major with the highest percentage of graduates currently unemployed and looking for work: Media Arts at 7.1%

Among arts alumni who took the SNAAP survey in Fall 2011, about 4% indicated that they were currently unemployed and looking for work—the same unemployment rate as other college graduates and less than half the unemployment rate for all Americans in 2011, as reported by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Employment status varies by arts discipline. Excluding double majors, those fields with unemployed graduates over 4% include Media Arts (7.1%), Art History (5.0%) and Theater (4.8%). On the other hand, the disciplines with the lowest rates of unemployment are Music Performance (2.3%), Dance (2.9%) and Arts Education (1.9%).

Major Differences: Who's Working as an Artist?

- *College major with the highest percentage of graduates who have ever worked as professional artists: Dance, Music Performance, and Theater at 82%*
- *College major with the highest percentage of graduates who currently work as professional artists: Architecture and Music Performance at 61%*

Alumni from some disciplines are more likely than others to work as professional artists. Dance majors, Music Performance majors, and Theater majors are the most likely to work, either full- or part-time, in an occupation as an artist (where they create or perform their art). Eighty-two percent of graduates from each of these disciplines have ever worked as artists. Slightly less likely are majors in Design (81%) and Architecture (79%). Fine and Studio Art majors (including Photography) come in at 75%, Media Arts at 71%, and Creative and Other Writing at 52%. Arts Administration majors (42%) and Art History majors (30%) are the least likely ever to work professionally as artists – not surprisingly, since only 35% of Arts Administration majors and 32% of Art History majors ever intended to be artists.

When it comes to those who currently work as professional artists, Music Performance and Architecture majors inhabit the high end of the spectrum, with 61% currently working in this capacity. Design (59%), Fine and Studio Arts (55%), Media Arts and Theater (54%), and Dance (49%) are in the mid range. At the low end of the spectrum, graduates from the fields of Arts Administration (24%) and Art History (18%) are again the least likely to be current professional artists.

When looking at these variations by discipline, it is important to take into account the fact that not all students who go to arts schools intend to work professionally as artists. The most closely aligned majors between aspiration (those alumni who indicated they intended to work as an artist) and reality (those who have ever worked as an artist) are: Music History, Composition and Theory (76% v. 75%); Music Performance (85% v. 82%); Dance and Theater (88% v. 82%); and Media Arts (80% v. 71%). In terms of Architecture majors, 93% intended to work as professionals, while 79% have ever done so. Finally, the greatest disparity exists for Creative and Other Writing majors: 80% intended to work as an artist, whereas only 52% have ever done so.

Using SNAAP Data: Raymond Tymas-Jones Makes the Case for the Value of an Arts Education

Raymond Tymas-Jones is Associate Vice President for the Arts and Dean, The University of Utah College of Fine Arts. Recently he contributed this piece on "Artists and Alchemists" to Americans for the Arts' ARTSBlog.

Arts education in our society sometimes gets a bad rap. When I'm speaking with potential students and their families I'm frequently asked questions such as: What do people actually do with a degree from the College of Fine Arts? What kind of jobs do they get? How much money do they make?

These are all valid questions, but the answers are often more complicated than the inquirers desire. I often wonder whether or not these are the most important questions for people who are passionate about studying and creating art.

Tymas-Jones then quotes from recent SNAAP reports about the high job satisfaction rates reported by SNAAP respondents, the skills that arts graduates learned in college (it's not just artistic technique), and how those skills are applicable to many occupations. He concludes:

All in all, college students who major in the fine and performing arts acquire skill sets that serve graduates in a myriad of ways and opportunities. Significant percentages of responding alums in the 2011 SNAAP survey indicated that they were gainfully employed and content with their lives as contributors to the public good.

The important fact is that most alumni with a fine arts degree do not consider that they are without options and opportunities. It is inherent that artists can create for themselves and others through the power of their imagination, creativity, and innovation. In other words, artists are alchemists.

[Read the full post here](#)

Interested in Using Your Own SNAAP Data?

In the preceding section, Raymond Tymas-Jones uses *national* SNAAP data to answer important questions about the arts in higher education.

By participating in SNAAP 2013, your institution will have its *own* results to compare to national findings as well as to smaller groups of peer institutions.

The deadline to register for the 2013 SNAAP survey is coming up soon on July 15! Here's the registration site: <https://websurv.indiana.edu/snaap/registration/2013/>

During our recent Webinar, **Why SNAAP, Why Now?** we explored some SNAAP basics. Listen in to learn more: <https://connect.iu.edu/p8kqsh2ex5c/>



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