



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.

Spotlight on Internships

Which types of arts majors are most likely to do internships? What is the balance of paid versus unpaid internships? How is this changing over time?

As SNAAP's 2014 Annual Report [*Making it Work: The Education and Employment of Recent Arts Graduates*](#) made clear, internships are becoming an increasingly common part of undergraduate life. Internship programs are highly popular among students in part because they represent an opportunity to learn about the world of work, build on classroom learning, and grow professional networks. Nonetheless, there has been much recent debate regarding the value of internships, especially for students at the undergraduate level. Several scholars and journalists have pointed out how internships – particularly unpaid ones – may provide limited educational or professional value for students.

SNAAP data are helpful for assessing the promise and addressing the challenges of the intern economy. In particular, SNAAP data can help identify trends across cohorts and bring much-needed nuance by comparing internship practices between various majors. This Spotlight expands on the recent Annual Report by differentiating between paid and unpaid internships for those with undergraduate arts degrees and considering which majors are more likely to be interns.

The Rise of Paid *and* Unpaid Internships

The intern economy has changed over the past decade.

- Most undergraduate arts majors did not have internships until recently.
- Unpaid internships became more common than paid ones in the last decade.

Cohort	Ever Been a Paid Intern	Ever Been an Unpaid Intern

1983 and before	16%	15%
1984-1993	28%	29%
1994-1998	35%	35%
1999-2003	38%	38%
2004-2008	41%	46%
2009-2013	43%	54%

Table 1. Percentage of undergraduate alumni who completed paid and/or unpaid internships, by graduation year. Alumni who did one or more paid internships and one or more unpaid internships are counted once in each column.

Among alumni who graduated in 1983 and before, only 16% completed a paid internship and 15% were unpaid interns. These figures stand in stark contrast to recent alumni (43% and 54% respectively).

Paid and unpaid internships increased at an equally common rate until a decade ago, when unpaid internships began growing more substantially. There are many potential reasons for this shift, but among them is an increased demand for internships among students attempting to launch their careers during a recession.

Major Differences

SNAAP data for recent undergraduate arts alumni provide two key insights.

- Alumni with certain majors are more likely than others to do internships
- Alumni from certain majors are more commonly paid for internships.

Major	Ever Been a Paid Intern	Ever Been an Unpaid Intern
Architecture	79%	37%
Art History	43%	73%
Arts Administration	59%	87%
Arts Education (Art, Music, Dance, Drama)	13%	43%
Creative and Other Writing	35%	71%
Dance	27%	50%
Design	68%	54%
Fine and Studio Arts (including Photography)	34%	53%
Media Arts	47%	70%
Music History, Composition, and Theory	34%	40%
Music Performance	25%	30%
Theater	41%	50%
Other Arts	41%	75%

Table 2. Percentage of recent undergraduate alumni (from 2009-2013) who have ever completed paid and/or unpaid internships.

Although we tend to speak of the "intern economy", there may be at least two types of intern economies: fields with highly formalized, typically paid internship programs often overseen by professional associations (e.g., architecture and design) and fields with more disparate, usually unpaid internship programs with less supervision from professional bodies (e.g., art history, arts administration,

creative writing, and media arts).

It is also worth noting that some majors have required internships in order to graduate, but this is rarely the case in other fields such as music performance and dance. For those fields with less formal pathways to paid internships, educators should consider ways to make it easier for students to find internships that are a good match for their training, educational goals, and aspirations.

Finally, alumni often report doing paid *as well as* unpaid internships: for example, among recent design alumni, 68% report doing at least one paid internship and over half (54%) report doing at least one unpaid internship.

Looking Ahead

The rise of internships over recent decades has led to vigorous debate regarding the educational and professional value of certain internships. These debates need to be informed by historical insights and must consider differences between fields.

Beginning in 2015, institutions that participate in SNAAP will have the option to add an Intern Module to the core survey. The resulting data will make it possible to tease out important differences between the benefits of paid versus unpaid internships, as well as more accurately show how the intern economy works (or does not work) for alumni from various majors.

SNAAP 2.0: Timeline for the 2015 SNAAP Survey

The "new SNAAP" will be released in March 2015. SNAAP 2.0 will include a shortened core survey, topical modules, a new tiered pricing structure, and a selection of new participation models.

The timeline for SNAAP 2015:

- April to July: Registration open
- August: Submit alumni contact information
- September: Customize messages to alumni
- October: Payment
- October and November: Surveying
- November and December: Customize your reports
- Spring 2016: Institutional reports delivered

Complete details will be available in our *2015 Invitation to Participate*, available in March. We welcome your questions at snaap@indiana.edu or (812) 856-5824.

Special thanks to Alexandre Frenette for this month's DataBrief. A member of the SNAAP research team and postdoctoral scholar at Arizona State University's Herberger Institute of Design and the Arts, Frenette wrote his doctoral dissertation on internships.



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