



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 First-Generation Artists (Part 1)

Most college and university professionals are well aware of the differences that exist between first-generation college students and their counterparts, and the challenges that first-generation students face in trying to be successful in higher education without the resources that are available to other students.

This DataBrief describes the students who are considered “first-generation artists,” then discusses the differences between these students and their counterparts in institutional satisfaction. (Next month, we will look at the success of first-generation students in obtaining a career in the arts.) This DataBrief draws upon data from 67,978 undergraduate-level arts alumni from 140 postsecondary institutions in the United States, collected between 2011 and 2013.

Defining First-Generation Artists

For the purposes of this brief, first-generation artists are defined as alumni who responded no to the question, “were/are either of your parents, guardians, or close relatives professional artists?”

Almost four-fifths (79%) are first-generation artists, meaning they did NOT have parents, guardians, or close relatives who have been professional artists.

Composition of First-Generation Artists (FGAs)

A slightly larger proportion of Black (84%), Hispanic/Latino (84%), and Asian alumni (82%) are first-generation artists, compared to White graduates (79%). Another way of looking at this is that 21% of White graduates are first-generation artists, compared to 16% (Black and Hispanic/Latino) or 18% (Asian) among alumni from other racial and ethnic groups.

There is also a difference in the majors selected by first-generation artists as opposed to the others.

Table 1: *Major degree areas for first-generation artists and their counterparts*

Major Area	FGA	Not FGA
Architecture	82%	18%
Art History	79%	21%
Arts Administration	80%	20%
Arts Education (Art, Music, Dance, Drama)	81%	19%
Creative and Other Writing	80%	20%
Dance	78%	22%
Design	79%	21%
Fine and Studio Arts (including Photography)	79%	21%
Media Arts	79%	21%
Music History, Composition, and Theory	78%	22%
Music Performance	77%	23%
Theater	82%	18%
Other Arts	80%	20%
Total	79%	21%

First-generation artists seem slightly more likely to complete degrees in architecture and theater, while their counterparts seem more inclined to complete degrees in fine and studio arts and music performance. This may possibly be due to first-generation artists choosing majors with a clearer and less “risky” career path.

First-Generation Artists and Institutional Satisfaction

In the SNAAP survey, alumni are asked to respond to several items regarding their satisfaction with various aspects of their education at the institution from which they graduated, as well as a few items that provide a more general impression of the students’ satisfaction overall. The next figure shows that first-generation artists were less satisfied on seven of the ten measures, while sharing the same opinion on three.

Figure 1: [Satisfaction with various aspects of education at institution \(Click to view\)](#)

First-generation artists rated their overall experience lower than their counterparts, and were slightly more likely to say that if they could start over again, they wouldn’t attend the same institution. First-generation artists were also less likely to feel well prepared for further education. These findings indicate that institutions may need to

provide resources to assist those students with less outside understanding of the arts, in order to enhance their institutional experience.

SNAAP News: 2015 Survey in the Field

The 2015 SNAAP survey launched the second week of October and will be open until late November. Arts graduates of these schools have received an invitation to participate:

- Alberta College of Art + Design
- Arizona State University
- Art Academy of Cincinnati
- Art Center College of Design
- Brigham Young University
- California College of the Arts
- California Institute of the Arts
- College of Charleston
- Columbus College of Art and Design
- DePaul University
- Drexel University
- Eckerd College
- Emily Carr University of Art and Design
- Evergreen State College
- Florida International University
- Indiana University Bloomington Jacobs School of Music
- Kendall College of Art & Design of Ferris State University
- Maine College of Art
- Maryland Institute College of Art
- Memphis College of Art
- Messiah College
- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design
- Minneapolis College of Art and Design
- NSCAD University
- OCAD University
- Pacific Northwest College of Art
- Rhode Island School of Design
- Ringling College of Art and Design
- San Diego State University
- San Francisco Art Institute
- School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- School of the Museum of Fine Arts-Boston
- School of Visual Arts
- St. Cloud State University
- St. Olaf College
- Texas Christian University
- UCLA, School of Theater, Film & Television
- University of Iowa
- University of Montevallo
- University of New Haven
- University of New Mexico
- University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- University of North Carolina School of the Arts
- University of North Texas
- University of Saint Francis-Fort Wayne
- University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
- University of Texas at Austin

- New Hampshire Institute of Art
- University of Victoria
- New York Conservatory for Dramatic Arts
- Utah State University
- Northern State University

This DataBrief was written by Zach Morgan, with assistance from Alex Frenette, Sally Gaskill, and Angie Miller.



Indiana University School of Education
Center for Postsecondary Research
1900 E. Tenth Street | Bloomington, IN 47406-7512

[Subscribe me.](#)

[Unsubscribe me.](#)

