



STRATEGIC NATIONAL ARTS ALUMNI PROJECT

Tracking the Lives and Careers of Arts Graduates

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Study: Arts internships are important, but some are better than others

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. -- Findings from a [national study](#) released this week confirm the value of internships for arts students but suggest that paid internships are more effective than unpaid internships in leading to professional success.

The research analyzes distinctions between types of internships, which majors are more likely to lead to internships, the demographics of those students who do and don't undertake internships and the effects of location and type of postsecondary institutions on internships.

The report, "The Internship Divide: The Promise and Challenges of Internships in the Arts," details findings from nearly 68,000 individuals with undergraduate degrees in the arts from 140 institutions in the U.S. who responded to survey questions about their internship experiences as part of the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project at the Indiana University School of Education's Center for Postsecondary Research. Alumni were surveyed between 2011 and 2013.

The rise of internships in the arts is striking, with only 20 percent of SNAAP respondents who graduated before 1984 ever doing an internship compared to 69 percent for alumni who received their undergraduate degrees between 2009 and 2013.

Notably, the report confirms the distinction between paid and unpaid internships for recent arts graduates. "The divide between paid and unpaid internships is an important issue for arts educators, because paid internships yield many more substantial career-related rewards," said Steven J. Tepper, SNAAP research director and dean of the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University. "Unpaid internships appear to be far less beneficial and unrelated to getting a job after graduation."

An analysis of more than 10,000 SNAAP respondents who graduated between 2009 and 2013 shows that alumni who completed paid internships fare especially well on the job market compared to alumni who have never been paid interns, with 89 percent of the former finding work within one year of graduation compared to 77 percent for the latter.

Recent graduates who did a paid internship also report greater overall current job satisfaction (84 percent versus 77 percent for those who were not paid interns), as well as satisfaction with income (64 percent versus 55 percent) and opportunity for career advancement (74 percent versus 62 percent). Doing an unpaid internship does not appear to be related to finding a job more quickly after graduation, nor to higher job satisfaction.

Alexandre Frenette, the report's principal author, said the study bears out concerns that gender, race and socioeconomic status have an influence on the ability of graduates to take advantage of internships.

(more)

“SNAAP data show that graduates with financial means hold a disproportionate number of highly valuable paid internships,” he said. “Conversely, groups at a historical economic disadvantage such as women, Black, and Hispanic/Latino graduates tend to do less valuable unpaid internships.”

Concerning recent alumni, other noteworthy findings from the report include:

- Women are more likely to do unpaid internships (57 percent) than men (46 percent).
- More alumni with internship experience spend a majority of their time working in the arts (59 percent versus 45 percent).
- Alumni who interned are more likely to report that their institution helped them develop various skills, such as networking and relationship building skills (76 percent compared to 66 percent for non-interns), technological skills (80 percent versus 72 percent) and leadership skills (79 percent versus 72 percent).
- Graduates of private institutions are far more likely to do internships while enrolled than graduates of public institutions (62 percent compared to 49 percent).
- First-generation college students are less likely than non-first-generation students to have been interns while enrolled in school (51 percent compared to 56 percent).
- 75 percent of recent alumni who interned while in school indicated that parents or family helped pay for their education; while fewer recent alumni (67%) who did not intern while in school received such support.
- Alumni from schools in the Northeast (62 percent) more often report interning while in college than students in the West (44 percent) or South (50 percent).
- Certain majors are much more likely to have paid internships (e.g., architecture at 79 percent and design at 68 percent) than those in other fields (music performance, 25 percent).

The full report is available [here](#).

Participation in SNAAP is open to all degree-granting colleges and universities. This year, schools can enroll in either a one-year survey administration or elect a three-year membership. The registration deadline for SNAAP 2015 is July 15, 2015.

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SNAAP is a collaboration between the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research and the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University. SNAAP was launched in 2008 with generous support from the Surdna Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Houston Endowment, and other funders. More information including an interactive SnaapShot is available at snaap.indiana.edu.