

# The 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.

*Neither an exit nor a longitudinal survey, SNAAP will be administered as an annual survey of alumni at specified junctures following their institutionally-based arts training (at 5, 10, 15 and 20 years out). Once fully operational, SNAAP findings will allow for national and other comparisons and can be disaggregated in various other ways so that institutions can better understand, for example, how students in different majors use their arts training in their careers and other aspects of their lives.*

## Why and how was SNAAP developed?

SNAAP grew out of the Surdna Foundation's response to needs articulated by arts training institutions across the country. Significant milestones in the project's evolution have included the following:

- *Early Indicators of Need:* Beginning in 2002, more than 25 of Surdna's arts training grantees individually approached Surdna for help in gathering information about their alumni. A critical mass of interest appeared to be forming, but of the few who had taken initial steps, surveys were weak and organizational capacity to analyze and act on the results was lacking.
- *Preliminary Research:* Following up, Surdna surveyed its arts grantees in 2003 to better understand the nature and scope of alumni tracking needs. An analysis of over 80 surveys revealed that across all institutional types and artistic disciplines there was strong interest in alumni tracking, driven by programmatic, institutional, and advocacy concerns. The surveys also highlighted obstacles – lack of technical expertise, insufficient staffing and inadequate financial resources. The findings suggested that economies of scale could be achieved through collaborative survey development.
- *Confirming Data:* Concurrently, at annual meetings of the Duke/Surdna Talented Students in the Arts Initiative (TSAI),<sup>1</sup> issues of alumni tracking became an increasingly prominent focus of discussion and action. At the request of grantees, expert speakers were brought in to share knowledge about best practices (spring 2004). Soon thereafter, a subgroup of TSAI participants formed to further explore the issue.
- *The Working Group:* A working group of 20 Surdna grantees (TSAI participants and others) began intensive work on survey development in fall 2004, joined by Steven Tepper, an arts policy researcher (then Deputy Director of the Princeton University Center for Cultural Policy and now the Associate Director of the Curb Center for Arts, Enterprise and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University). Two pilot surveys were developed and tested during 2005: one for arts high schools and arts colleges/ conservatories; and a second for afterschool and intensive

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<sup>1</sup> The Duke/Surdna Talented Students in the Arts Initiative (TSAI) supported 15 of the nation's leading arts training institutions (including conservatories, arts high schools, summer festivals, and dance companies) for a five-year period with multi-year programmatic and matching endowment support (2001-2005). Participants included Juilliard, CalArts, Eastman School of Music, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Aspen Music Festival and School, and Baltimore School of the Arts. Annual convenings functioned, in part, as a laboratory and think-tank for examining issues with field-wide impact.

summer institutes. Subsequently, Surdna and colleagues determined to include only the survey for arts high schools and arts colleges and conservatories in the project's launch.

- *Field Input:* From 2005-2006, through focus groups and ongoing discussions, an increasing number of field leaders, researchers, and arts training institutions and their alumni voiced interest in the survey and the potential impact it could have on the quality of future training. Over 170 alumni and their organizations tested survey questions for content and style and provided feedback on other issues. This R & D phase revealed that data collection could best be done online, increasing the potential to create a field-wide system. Consultants with relevant technical expertise joined the working group and began the design of prototypes.
- *Planning for Launch:* In the winter of 2007, the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning team<sup>2</sup> was engaged by the Surdna Foundation to assess market demand and resources, and develop a business plan for SNAAP's launch. Its work included: objective testing of market interest; exploring start-up requirements through research on similar large-scale survey systems; identifying potential hosting or survey administering organizations (SAOs); and development of a business plan. Ultimately, OMG recommended that the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research host SNAAP. The Center works closely with the Curb Center for Arts, Enterprise, and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University and the Indiana University Center for Survey Research to develop and implement the SNAAP survey.*Funding Partners:* In late 2007, Surdna Foundation provided a five-year leadership grant to help launch the project. In addition, SNAAP is being supported by the Houston Endowment, Cleveland Foundation, an anonymous foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). SNAAP is a National Partner of the NEA's Arts Education Program.

## Who benefits from SNAAP?

Information gathered through SNAAP will benefit arts training institutions, policy makers, and arts leaders, as well as parents and students considering intensive arts training. The information will provide the first national profile of how artists prepare in this country and allow for deepened understanding of what constitutes artistic success and contribution. In addition, data gathered through SNAAP will assist government entities, funding organizations, and arts leaders in making investment decisions in education, training and resource allocation.

## Why is SNAAP important now?

Arts training institutions have articulated an urgent need for objective data. The information that SNAAP provides 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. Accreditation requirements also include data regarding alumni paths.

## How will key stakeholder groups benefit from SNAAP?

**For arts high schools, arts colleges and conservatories, and arts schools and departments within comprehensive universities, SNAAP will provide information to:**

- improve institutional hires, address alumni needs and enhance development efforts
- strengthen curriculum by tracking what striving young artists need to advance in rapidly changing arts fields
- clarify what students learned and how it has been used in both arts and non-arts contexts
- compare their work to that of similar institutions to identify strengths and gaps

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<sup>2</sup> The OMG team consisted of Gerri Spilka, Executive Director, and Anita Baker, Project Director, OMG Center for Collaborative Learning; Tom Sternal, Consultant, JK/Generation; Eric Frint, President and Director, and Bruce Wrigley, Associate, Your Part Time Controller.

- learn more about the institutions from which their students came to create more productive learning links and better match students to institutions

**For policy makers, community development professionals, and funders, SNAAP will provide systemic information about:**

- what led artists to pursue careers in the arts and other fields, including financing and other resource factors
- local and regional arts workforce issues and market patterns for community developers and planners
- how students who have trained intensively in the arts contribute to the creative economy nationally and by specific locale
- gaps in the arts training ecology, across disciplines, at different training junctures and across various geographic locales
- support mechanisms and resources needed to encourage and sustain artists in their most vulnerable five years after school and beyond

**For parents and students considering intensive arts training, SNAAP will provide information about:**

- arts career patterns
- educational resources
- the roles of professional relationships, and
- obstacles to achieving arts training and professional goals

## Who is surveyed?

Alumni of arts training programs that elect to participate in the SNAAP will be surveyed; the survey will be administered to alumni from the participating institutions. SNAAP's primary clients are arts high schools, arts and design colleges and conservatories, and arts schools and departments within comprehensive colleges and universities.

## What kinds of questions are asked?

- early interests and training as well as current involvement in the arts
- types of art practiced and how often
- current and past careers and education
- relevance of arts training to work and further education
- turning points, obstacles, critical relationships and opportunities
- support and resource needs post graduation
- experiences as teachers
- current family situations
- unions and other professional affiliations
- income and support, student debt, other fiscal issues
- career impact and influence of faculty and staff, other artists, classmates, family, friends, co-workers, and other arts professionals

## How is SNAAP administered?

SNAAP is a web-based survey that collects data from alumni through questions that make use of drop-down menus and check boxes. A unique feature of the survey instrument is that it creates a *LifeMap* for each respondent upon survey completion, which provides a visual representation of the impact of various professional, educational and personal experiences on career development. The survey has been specifically developed to reflect the non-linear nature of arts training and careers and to be user-friendly.

## What products will participating institutions receive?

1. 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
2. Access to data files for individualized institutional research

Some typical examples of SNAAP reports by graduation year:

- early arts interests and training as well as current involvement in the arts
- types of art practiced and how often
- current and past careers and education
- relevance of arts training to work and further education
- turning points, obstacles, critical relationships and opportunities
- support and resource needs post graduation
- experiences as teachers
- current family situations
- unions and other professional affiliations
- income and support, student debt, other fiscal issues
- career impact and influence of faculty and staff, other artists, classmates, family, friends, co-workers, and other arts professionals.
- percent of alumni currently working in the arts, by discipline and most common types of jobs
- percent of income earned from arts-related employment, sources of support and amounts of student debt
- percent of alumni working in non-arts jobs that say their arts training is relevant/important to what they do, and percent of non-working time they spend making art
- types of non-arts jobs that draw most heavily on artistic skills and training

## Who owns SNAAP data and how can the results be used?

SNAAP data will belong to Indiana University and participating institutions according to the following principles:

- Participating institutions will receive a summary report and a file with respondent raw data to permit additional school-specific data analyses.
- Participating institutions can use their SNAAP data for institutional purposes, based on guidelines recommended by the national advisory board.
- SNAAP project staff will use the data in the aggregate for national and sector reporting purposes and other educational improvement initiatives. SNAAP may also make data, in which individual institutions and students cannot be identified, available to researchers interested in studying the career paths and experiences of arts alumni.
- SNAAP results specific to institutions and identified as such will not be made public by SNAAP except by mutual agreement between SNAAP and the respective participating institution.
- SNAAP survey administration protocols will adhere to federal regulations pertaining to the protection of human subjects (45CFR46). The SNAAP survey protocol will be approved annually by the Human Subjects Committee (HSC) at Indiana University Bloomington (IUB). Any changes to the survey protocol by participating institutions must be approved by the IUB HSC.

## What must my institution do to participate in the 2009 Field Test?

Your institution will be asked to do the following:

- Provide the best possible alumni contact information for the classes of 2004, 1999, 1994 and 1989. SNAAP will need each graduate's name, gender, degree, email address and, if possible, mailing address and phone number.
- Identify a primary Campus Contact to work with the SNAAP staff
- Communicate with your alumni about SNAAP and encourage them to participate. SNAAP will provide message templates to assist with this effort.
- Edit five email messages that will be sent from the Indiana University Center for Survey Research under your name to your alumni, linking them to the survey

## Who participated in the first field test in 2008?

Forty institutions participated:

### Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

Alfred University School of Art and Design  
Art Center College of Design  
Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University  
Boston Conservatory  
California Institute of the Arts  
Cleveland Institute of Art  
Cleveland Institute of Music  
College of Charleston School of the Arts  
Cornish College of the Arts  
Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester  
Indiana University Creative Writing Program  
Indiana University Department of Theatre and Drama  
Indiana University Hope School of Fine Arts  
Indiana University Jacobs School of Music  
The Juilliard School  
Manhattan School of Music  
Maryland Institute College of Art  
Massachusetts College of Art and Design  
New England Conservatory  
New World School of the Arts  
New York University Tisch School of the Arts  
Oregon College of Art and Craft  
Otis College of Art and Design  
Pacific Northwest College of Art  
Rhode Island School of Design  
School of the Art Institute of Chicago  
School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston  
Southern Methodist University Shepherd School of Music  
SUNY Fredonia Department of Theatre and Drama  
UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture  
University of Texas at Austin College of Fine Arts  
University of the Arts

Vanderbilt University Blair School of Music

### High Schools

Baltimore School of the Arts

Boston Arts Academy

Cleveland School of the Arts

Fine Arts Center, Greenville, SC

Idyllwild Arts Academy

Los Angeles County High School for the Arts

New World School of the Arts

Orange County High School of the Arts

### For more information about SNAAP:

[www.snaap.indiana.edu](http://www.snaap.indiana.edu)