

# The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project

## What is the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP)?

SNAAP is an online survey system to collect, track, and disseminate national data about the artistic lives and careers of alumni who trained as visual, performing, or literary artists at both the high school and college levels. As an ongoing research system, it will allow education institutions, researchers and arts leaders to look at the systemic factors that help or hinder the career paths of alumni, whether they chose to work as artists or pursued other paths. SNAAP will be administered as an annual survey of alumni at specified junctures at 5, 10, 15 and 20 years following their institutionally-based arts training. 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.

## Who in general will benefit 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 will provide 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 groups benefit from SNAAP?

**For arts high schools, arts colleges and conservatories, 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
- 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 paths
- educational resources
- the roles of professional relationships, and
- obstacles to achieving arts training and professional goals

### Who will be surveyed?

SNAAP's primary clients are all arts high schools, arts and design colleges and conservatories, and arts schools and departments within comprehensive colleges and universities. We will survey alumni who graduated 5, 10, 15, and 20 years earlier from the arts training programs that participate in SNAAP.

### What kinds of questions will the SNAAP survey ask?

- 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 will SNAAP data be collected?

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 "Life Map" 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. Without influencing responses, respondents can obtain real-time comparisons between their answers to specific questions and those of other survey respondents.

### SNAAP funders

To launch SNAAP, the Surdna Foundation provided a five-year \$2,500,000 leadership grant to Indiana University in partnership with the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University. The National Endowment for the Arts has committed \$60,000 for 2007-2008 with an invitation to submit proposals for additional future funding. Support from other organizations is anticipated to support the various phases of the project and insure widespread participation. SNAAP is expected to become self-sustaining by 2012 by institutional participation fees.

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The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) is based at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, School of Education, 1900 East Tenth Street, Eigenmann Hall, Suite 419, Bloomington IN 47406-7512. For more information contact Sally Gaskill at 812.856.0735 or [snaap@indiana.edu](mailto:snaap@indiana.edu) or visit the SNAAP website: [www.snaap.iub.edu](http://www.snaap.iub.edu).