

SNAAP

Strategic National Arts Alumni Project

Tracking the Careers and Lives of Arts Graduates in America

MAY 1, 2008

Contact: Sally Gaskill

Phone: 812.856.5824

E-mail: snaap@indiana.edu

SNAAP: New National Project to Examine Impact of Arts Training

The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) was launched today to examine the impact of arts training. It will provide a first-ever in-depth look at the factors that help or hinder the careers of graduates of arts high schools, arts colleges and conservatories, and arts schools and departments within universities, whether the alumni work as artists or pursue other paths.

Arts alumni who graduated 5, 10, 15 and 20 years earlier will provide information about their formal arts training. They will report the nature of their current arts involvement, reflect on the relevance of arts training to their work and further education, and describe turning points, obstacles, and key relationships and opportunities that influenced their lives and careers.

The results of the annual online survey and data analysis system will help schools strengthen their programs of study by tracking what young artists need to advance in their fields. In addition, the information will allow institutions to compare their performance against other schools in order to identify areas where improvements are needed. "SNAAP will allow arts education institutions to assess their effectiveness and help them better prepare their students for the careers they enter - in the arts or not," says Mary Schmidt Campbell, Dean, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University.

The Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research will administer the annual survey in cooperation with the Curb Center for Art, Enterprise and Public Policy at Vanderbilt University. Steven J. Tepper, Curb Center associate director, says "SNAAP is a milestone for cultural policy research, because it will go beyond profiles of individual artists and provide a comprehensive look at the creative workforce in America and the critical role of training institutions in preparing artists and creative workers." The project will be guided by a National Advisory Board comprised of leaders from all types and levels of arts training institutions, visual and performing artists, and arts and community development leaders from the nonprofit and commercial sectors.

Artists often don't end up working in the exact fields in which they trained. Instead, they may work at the boundaries between disciplines. They frequently move between the nonprofit and commercial sectors and hold multiple jobs. Moreover, there is a growing demand for arts training, both from students and the rising number of employers in the creative economy. Arts-training institutions and civic policy makers need good data to respond and plan effectively. "More than any arts education project in the past few decades, SNAAP has the potential to guide needed change in the curriculum," says James Undercofler, president and CEO of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Over time, SNAAP findings will allow institutions to learn more about the impact of their educational programs to better understand, for example, how students in different majors use their arts training in their careers and other aspects of their lives. Policy makers and community leaders will be able to use SNAAP findings to understand local, regional, and national arts workforce issues and market patterns. The results will also indicate how students who have trained intensively in the arts contribute to their communities and different areas of the economy.

According to George Kuh, Indiana University professor and SNAAP project director, the arts alumni survey will be extensively field-tested in 2008 and 2009 with as many as 100 institutions before its first national administration in 2010. "We'll learn a lot about what matters in arts training from these early results and also be able to fine-tune the survey for future use," stated Kuh. The Vanderbilt University Curb Center will host a national conference in 2010 to explore the educational and cultural policy implications of SNAAP findings.

After several years of studying the need for and feasibility of the project, the Surdna Foundation recently awarded a five-year \$2,500,000 leadership grant to help launch the project. Phillip Henderson, Surdna Foundation President, believes that SNAAP will be "one of the signature accomplishments of our foundation in this decade, and its value to arts training institutions will only increase over time."

"For the first time, SNAAP results will allow us to see how high-quality, deep training in the arts guides professional careers of creative American citizens," says Sarah Bainter Cunningham, Arts Education Director at the National Endowment for the Arts.

In addition to Surdna and the National Endowment for the Arts, support from other funders is anticipated to support the testing phases of the project and insure widespread participation. SNAAP is expected to become self-sustaining through institutional participation fees by 2012.

###

The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) is based at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, School of Education, 1900 East Tenth Street, Suite 419, Bloomington IN 47406-7512. More information is available at: www.snaap.iub.edu.