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● **STRATEGIC  
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PROJECT**

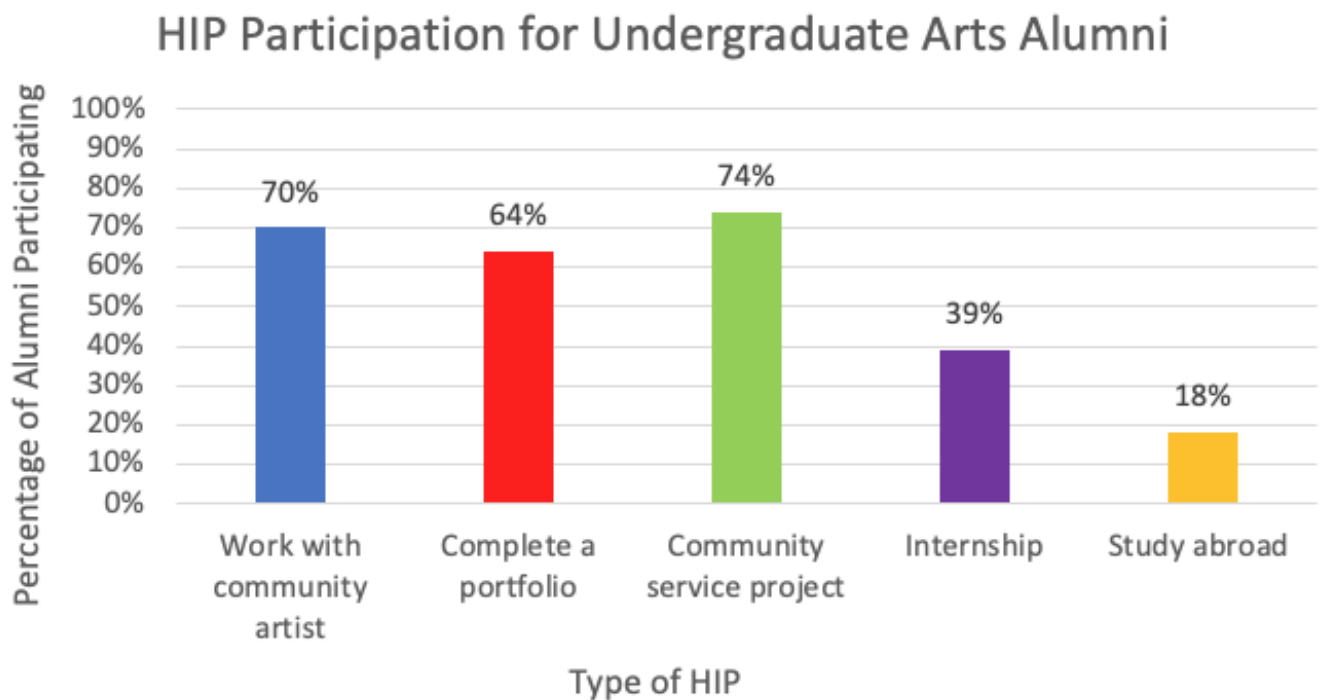
**VOLUME 10, NUMBER 3**

## ● **Unpacking High-Impact Practices in the Arts: Predictors of College, Career, and Community Engagement Outcomes**

SNAAP research scientist, Angie L. Miller, Indiana University Bloomington, and co-authors Nathan Martin, Arizona State University and Alexandre Frenette, Vanderbilt University, used SNAAP data to explore whether participating in “high-impact practices” (HIPs) such as internships, community service, study abroad, creating a portfolio, and working with an artist in the community are related to various educational, career, and community involvement outcomes for alumni with undergraduate degrees in the arts. This study originated from a presentation at the annual [Social Theory, Politics, and the Arts Conference](#) in 2017, and was recently published in [The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society](#).

There is a great deal of research on the benefits of participation in “high-impact practices” (HIPs) in higher education, especially related to their influence on student learning and development ([Kuh, 2008](#)). To be considered an HIP, the activity necessitates a considerable amount of students’ time and effort, offers structured opportunities for reflection and integrative thinking, provides substantive feedback from faculty, provides opportunities for learning outside of the classroom, incorporates meaningful contacts with faculty and peers, and involves interactions with a diverse group of people ([Kuh & O’Donnell, 2013](#)). However, most HIPs emphasized in the higher education curriculum (i.e. learning communities, service learning, undergraduate research with faculty, internships, senior capstone projects or culminating experiences, and study abroad) are not discipline-specific.

This study explores whether more traditional HIP participation (community service, internships, and study abroad) and discipline-specific HIPs (working with an artist in the community and use of portfolios) predict academic, career, and community involvement outcomes. Data from 43,515 undergraduate-level arts alumni from the 2015 and 2016 SNAAP survey administrations suggests that many arts alumni were involved in HIPs during their time at their institutions, to varying degrees (see Figure 1). Furthermore, a series of regression models found that several different types of HIP participation were significant predictors of a variety of educational, career, and community involvement outcomes, although the magnitude of the relationship varied greatly depending on the outcome. These relationships were apparent even after statistically controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, parent artist status, parent education level, years since graduation, major, institutional type, and institutional size.



For academic outcomes, all five of the HIPs included in the models (internship, study abroad, community service, portfolios, and working with community artists) predicted significantly higher levels of skill development and college satisfaction. However, working with a community artist and

completing a portfolio or community service project had stronger net associations with these academic outcomes in comparison to internship or study abroad experience. ≡

For post-graduation outcomes, alumni who worked with community artists and completed portfolios or internships were significantly more likely to have shorter initial job searches and to find jobs that closely matched their postsecondary training. In these models, internship experience was one of the strongest predictors of a shorter initial job search and closer match with training; conversely, study abroad experience was not significantly related to either of these early career outcomes. In terms of their current careers, arts alumni who worked with community artists, completed portfolios, and completed internships as students were significantly more likely to currently work in an arts occupation.

Finally, each of the five HIPs was associated with significantly higher levels of current involvement in the arts community. Moreover, working with community artists and completing portfolios predicted a greater likelihood of current arts practice or performance during personal time. Two notable exceptions to this pattern were that internship and study abroad experiences were negatively associated with performing art in one's personal time.

Not featured in the article, there are some illustrative comments that also support the findings regarding the importance of portfolios and working with artists in the community. A cursory review of several open-ended text box responses from the SNAAP survey further demonstrates their potential impact. When reflecting on how their educational experiences *might have been improved*, several alumni recognized that portfolios and working with community artists might have enhanced their skills and knowledge:

**“It would have been great to have a required class for art majors that taught us how to put together a portfolio for various purposes – as well as how to market that portfolio to various audiences. Having us take it in the final year of undergraduate studies would serve as a good transition to post-grad life, even for people like me who go into non-art fields.”**

**“There was NO training in developing a portfolio or how to do the “business of art.” That was the worst part of my education! We should have been taught what to include in a portfolio. I never SAW an artist’s portfolio until after I graduated. I had no idea what one was.”**

**“There should have been more collaboration with local artists and other art students”**

**“There wasn’t a lot of interaction with the local art community. I would have loved to know who my local artists were at that time to get wisdom and guidance from them.”**

The findings from this study provide further evidence for the importance of HIP participation for undergraduates, as well as the consideration of working with an artist in the community and creating a portfolio as discipline-specific HIPs. This unique conceptualization might further inspire HIP research for other major fields as well. It can also provide support for resource allocation for continued HIP implementation at the institutional level, as HIPs are often time- and labor-intensive not just for the participating students, but also for the supervising faculty.

Furthermore, the use of alumni rather than student data offers a distinct advantage when connecting HIP participation to outcomes beyond student learning and persistence. Collecting information from alumni can provide rich information that goes past the educational experience, also exploring career outcomes and post-graduate community involvement. Additionally, expanding the understanding of “successful” alumni outcomes beyond just income and employment rates and into areas such as the relevance of work to training and community engagement enriches our perspective on the value of an education in the arts.

*This DataBrief was prepared by Angie L. Miller, Indiana University Bloomington; Nathan Martin, Arizona State University; and Alexandre Frenette, Vanderbilt University.*

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