



# STRATEGIC NATIONAL ARTS ALUMNI PROJECT



## SPECIAL REPORT

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The Internship Divide:  
The Promise and Challenges of  
Internships in the Arts



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*with*

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## SNAAP Mission

The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) investigates the educational experiences and career paths of arts graduates in North America. SNAAP provides the findings to educators, policymakers, and philanthropic organizations to improve arts training, inform cultural policy, and support artists.



## Special Report

### The Internship Divide:

The Promise and Challenges of Internships in the Arts

*Based on the results of the 2011, 2012, and 2013 SNAAP Surveys*

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## Introduction

Internships are becoming an increasingly common part of undergraduate life and early careers. Internship programs are highly popular among students in part because they represent an opportunity to learn about the world of work, build on classroom learning, and grow professional networks. This is particularly true for arts students<sup>1</sup>—for whom rates of interning, both during and after college, are high and who often perceive internships as the necessary “foot in the door” in highly sought-after creative occupations.

Nonetheless, there has been much recent debate regarding the value of internships, especially for students at the undergraduate level. Several scholars and journalists have pointed out how internships—particularly unpaid ones—may provide the intern limited educational or professional value.

Debates about the intern economy often reference the plight of the young and the jobless. By most employment and earnings-related measures, this is a challenging time to be young. In a study of shifts in the standing of young adults from 1980 to today, Carnevale, Hanson, and Gulish (2013) found that people are reaching nationwide median earning levels later and later in life. In 1980, a young adult reached the median wage at 26 years old; in 2012, the median was reached at age 30. To ease the transition into adulthood, compensate for a lack of employment, or limit the burden of college debt, young adults are living at home longer or moving back home after college. In diagnosing the family/generation issues surrounding this situation, observers have coined terms such as “the accordion family” (Newman, 2012), “the boomerang generation” (Read, 2009), “disconnected youth” (Edwards, 2013), and “the new lost generation” (Carnevale, Hanson, & Gulish, 2013).

Depending on whom you ask, internships can be seen as either a cause of (Perlin, 2011) or a solution to (Glaeser, 2013) the problem of youth unemployment. The popularity of internships partly stems from their perceived potential to advance the intern’s career. Prior studies have linked internships with better chances of getting a career-oriented job after graduation (Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Coco,

2000). In an op-ed, Harvard University economist Edward Glaeser (2013) suggested the government should provide student loans for unpaid interns to create pathways to employment for students of all economic backgrounds. Self-proclaimed “Intern Queen” Lauren Berger (2012), after 15 internships in four years, wrote a book celebrating internships as “inarguably, the most valuable experience of today’s college student” (p. 5). In a survey of 50,000 employers by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and America Public Media’s *Marketplace* to understand the perceived role of higher education in career preparation (2012), employers claimed to place greatest emphasis on a potential hire’s experience—most notably, internships—even above factors such as college major and GPA. However, not all internships are created equal.

According to a 2014 survey of students by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (2014), paid interns are considerably more likely to receive a job offer upon graduation than their unpaid counterparts. In the for-profit sector, 65.4% of students who held paid internships reported receiving at least one job offer upon graduation, compared to only 38.5% for unpaid interns; the latter figure is approximately the same as the job-offer rate for college seniors who did no internship at all (38.6%). This study does not break down the offer rates by specific industry; it is likely that the for-profit unpaid internships cluster in industries with crowded labor markets, like media and entertainment. Nonetheless, both paid and unpaid internships are in high demand.

The Strategic National Alumni Project (SNAAP)—an online survey, data management, and institutional improvement system designed to enhance the impact of arts-school education—brings much-needed nuance to assessing the promise and addressing the challenges of the intern economy. In particular, SNAAP data help participants identify historical trends across cohorts, compare internship practices between various arts majors, analyze how the intern economy might reinforce inequality, assess educational benefits, and contrast career outcomes for paid

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1. When we refer to “arts” we include architecture; art history; arts administration; arts education (art, music, dance, drama); creative and other writing; dance; design; fine and studio arts (including photography); media arts; music history, composition, and theory; music performance; theater; and other arts.

Cohort	Have ever been a paid intern	Have ever been an unpaid intern
1983 and before	16%	15%
1984–1993	28%	29%
1994–1998	35%	35%
1999–2003	38%	38%
2004–2008	41%	46%
2009–2013	43%	54%

Table 1. Percentage of undergraduate alumni who indicated they completed paid and/or unpaid internships, by graduation year. Alumni who did one or more paid internships and one or more unpaid internships are counted once in each column.

and unpaid interns. In the context of an intern economy that appears to be rapidly changing, this SNAAP Special Report focuses on the experiences of 10,698 of the most recent undergraduate arts alumni who graduated between 2009 and 2013 and whose experiences reflect current economic realities. Comparisons to older cohorts are also included to help examine trends and provide historical context.<sup>2</sup>

### Mapping the Intern Economy: The Rise, Demographics, and Inequality

To what extent has the intern economy changed in recent decades? Are recent arts students more likely to do paid or unpaid internships?

SNAAP survey respondents were asked whether they had ever been paid or unpaid interns, and as Table 1 details, the results, by year of graduation, confirm a substantial rise in the prevalence of internships, paid as well as unpaid, among arts alumni.

Until recently, most undergraduate arts majors did not undertake an internship. Among alumni who graduated in 1983 and before, only 16% completed a paid internship and 15% were unpaid interns. Several SNAAP respondents who graduated in the 1970s and 1980s indicated that internships were not available or that they were unaware of the existence of such programs at the time.

For recent arts alumni, in contrast, paid or unpaid internships have practically become a rite of passage. SNAAP data on alumni who earned their undergraduate degree between 2009 and 2013 show that recent arts graduates are even more likely to do internships. Overall,

Cohort	Did an internship while at institution	Have ever been an intern (paid or unpaid)
1983 and before	19%	20%
1984–1993	31%	39%
1994–1998	37%	50%
1999–2003	41%	55%
2004–2008	46%	62%
2009–2013	55%	69%

Table 2. Percentage of undergraduate alumni who indicated they completed at least one internship while attending SNAAP institution, by graduation year, and percentage of undergraduate alumni who indicated they ever completed at least one paid or unpaid internship, by graduation year.

43% of these SNAAP respondents have ever completed a paid internship and 54% have ever been unpaid interns. Breaking down these numbers further:

- Around one in six (16%) of recent arts graduates completed one or more paid internships (but no unpaid internship).
- Over one in four (27%) did one or more unpaid internships (but no paid internship).
- One quarter (25%) undertook at least one paid and at least one unpaid internship.
- Less than one third (31%) of recent graduates were never interns.

Therefore, 69% of recent arts alumni (graduating between 2009 and 2013) undertook some type of internship experience (paid, unpaid, or at least one of each) (see Table 2). Respondents were also asked whether they interned while attending their SNAAP institution and 55% of recent graduates reported that they did so.

Combined, Tables 1 and 2 show a considerable rise in the prevalence of internships among arts graduates; in particular, Table 1 shows that paid and unpaid internships were increasing at an equally common rate until a decade ago, when unpaid internships began growing more substantially. Among the many potential reasons for this shift is a greater demand for internships by students attempting to launch their careers during a recession. The rise in demand is also likely linked to demographic changes, especially the larger number of college-age youth. During the first decade of the 21st century, the number of 18- to 24-year-olds in the US increased by 11% (from 28 to 31.1

2. Comparisons across all cohorts draw on responses of almost 68,000 undergraduates arts graduates from 140 institutions.

Major	Have ever been a paid intern	Have ever been an unpaid intern
Architecture	79%	37%
Art History	43%	73%
Arts Administration	59%	87%
Arts Education (Art, Music, Dance, Drama)	13%	43%
Creative and Other Writing	35%	71%
Dance	27%	50%
Design	68%	54%
Fine and Studio Arts (including Photography)	34%	53%
Media Arts	47%	70%
Music History, Composition, and Theory	34%	40%
Music Performance	25%	30%
Theater	41%	50%
Other Arts	41%	75%

Table 3. Percentage of recent undergraduate alumni (from 2009–2013) who indicated they have ever completed paid and/or unpaid internships, by major field. Alumni who indicated they did one or more paid internships and one or more unpaid internships are counted once in each column.

million); simultaneously, the college enrollment rate among such youth increased from 36% in 2001 to 42% by 2011 (Snyder & Dillow, 2013, Chapter 3). This crowded labor market makes it possible for organizations and companies to draw competent workers/students even with unpaid internships.

### Major Differences

Although we tend to speak of one intern economy, there may be at least two types: an intern economy that includes fields with highly formalized, typically paid internship programs often overseen by professional associations (e.g., architecture) and an intern economy that includes fields with more disparate, usually unpaid internship programs with less supervision from professional bodies (e.g., art history, writing, media arts). Different patterns for these two types are reflected in Table 3, which depicts the percentage of very recent alumni (2009–2013) by major field who have ever completed paid and/or unpaid internships.

SNAAP data for recent undergraduate arts alumni provide these key major-related insights:

- Alumni from certain majors are more likely than others to do internships.
- Alumni from certain majors are more commonly paid for internships.

When considering the figures above, it is important to note that alumni often report doing paid *as well as* unpaid internships. For example, among recent design alumni, 68% reported doing at least one paid internship and over half (54%) reported doing at least one unpaid internship. One third of recent design alumni (33%) undertook at least one paid and at least one unpaid internship, and only 15% of them were never interns.

Certain majors can require students to do internships in order to graduate, but this is less often the case in fields such as music performance and dance. For those fields with less formal pathways to paid internships, educators should consider ways to make it easier for students to find internships that are a good match for their training, educational goals, and aspirations. Finally, the considerable paid/unpaid variation by major suggests that educators should be aware of how these different economic arrangements might influence students differently across disciplines—from the quality of internship to issues of access and equity.

### Gender, Race, and Socioeconomic Status

Much of the growing public debate about internships stems from concerns regarding inequality. Commentators argue that certain groups—such as women, non-White (particularly Black and Hispanic/Latino), and lower socioeconomic students—are systematically disadvantaged

Demographics	Did an internship while at institution (paid or unpaid)	Have ever been a paid intern	Have ever been an unpaid intern
Gender: Men	51%	43%	46%
Gender: Women	56%	43%	57%
Race: White	55%	42%	53%
Race: Black or African American	52%	40%	55%
Race: Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	53%	41%	58%
Race: Asian	60%	57%	56%
First-generation college graduate	51%	37%	48%
Non-first-generation college graduate	56%	45%	55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>54%</b>

Table 4. Percentage of recent undergraduate alumni (from 2009-2013) who indicated they completed at least one internship while attending SNAAP institution and have ever completed paid and/or unpaid internships, by gender, race, and parents' education. Table excludes transgender, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, "other" race/ethnicity, and respondents who selected more than one race/ethnic category due to low numbers of respondents. First-generation college graduates are those whose parents or guardians did not complete a four-year degree or higher.

by the highly informal intern economy (Frederick, 1997; Perlin, 2011; Swan, 2015). Notably, critics suggest that the intern economy advantages individuals who can afford to intern for little to no pay and, due to its informality, benefits people with family connections that help them secure the best positions. Consequently, there are concerns that the intern economy reinforces and, perhaps, exacerbates larger patterns of inequality within society. Particularly in the arts, with the dearth of studies examining these claims, it is difficult to respond to them.

In this section, we consider how various demographic factors are related to the likelihood of doing internships. How do gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status affect how arts students experience and navigate the intern economy? Are certain groups more likely than others to do paid as opposed to unpaid internships?

In this study, at least half of recent arts alumni from every demographic group reported doing an internship while enrolled at a SNAAP institution (see Table 4). However, SNAAP data show some notable trends by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, especially when considering who did paid and unpaid internships:

- Women were more likely than men to have undertaken an internship during their undergraduate education (56% compared to 51%). While women and men were equally likely to ever have done paid internships, women were much more likely to have been unpaid interns (57% compared to 46% for men).
- Black and Hispanic/Latino alumni were less likely to have done internships than their White and Asian counterparts. Black and Hispanic/Latino graduates were also slightly less likely to have done paid internships and more likely than White alumni to have done unpaid internships.
- First-generation college graduates were less likely than non-first-generation college graduates to have been interns while enrolled in school (51% compared to 56%) as well as before or after graduation (paid or unpaid). Parents' level of education is often interpreted by social scientists as a proxy for socioeconomic status; therefore, this finding provides evidence that these students of lower socioeconomic status fare less well in the intern economy.

SNAAP data are consistent with many commentators' concerns about the intern economy in that women, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and first-generation college graduate arts alumni all appear to have held a disproportionate number

Demographics	Did an internship while at institution (design)	Have ever been a paid intern (design)	Have ever been an unpaid intern (design)
Gender: Men	77%	72%	42%
Gender: Women	77%	66%	58%
Race: White	79%	68%	52%
Race: Black or African American	61%	55%	55%
Race: Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin	65%	50%	48%
Race: Asian	75%	75%	57%
First-generation college graduate	73%	61%	47%
Non-first-generation college graduate	79%	71%	55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>54%</b>

Table 5. Percentage of recent undergraduate design alumni (from 2009–2013) who indicated they completed at least one internship while attending SNAAP institution and have ever completed paid and/or unpaid internships, by gender, race, and parents' education. Table excludes transgender, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, "other" race/ethnicity, and respondents who selected more than one race/ethnic category due to low numbers of respondents. First-generation college graduates are those whose parents or guardians did not complete a four-year degree or higher.

of unpaid internships—which, as will be considered below, are tied to significantly weaker career payoffs than paid internships. However, one possible explanation for this overrepresentation might be that these demographic groups tend to cluster in majors in which unpaid internships are more common than paid ones. For this reason, to further investigate the findings above, our study considered the subsample of recent design alumni (N = 1,571).

### *The case of design*

As previously mentioned, both paid and unpaid internships are very common among recent design alumni. More than two thirds of these alumni (68%) reported having done at least one paid internship and over half (54%) had been unpaid interns. Despite the high prevalence of paid and unpaid internships in design, the demographic trends described above are even more visible in the design major field than in the arts as a whole (see Table 5):

- Women and men were equally likely to have done internships while enrolled at school in design programs, but across all internships men were much more likely to have been paid interns (72% compared to 66% of women). Also, less than half of men (42%) had done unpaid internships, which is disproportionately low compared to women (58%).
- Black and Hispanic/Latino alumni were least likely to do internships while at their institutions compared

to Whites and Asians; this trend remained constant for paid internships (which, again, are tied to better professional outcomes than unpaid internships).

- Children of college-educated parents were more likely to do internships (paid or unpaid) than first-generation college graduates in design.

As noted in previous SNAAP reports, the arts are not immune to the widespread patterns of inequality in society. These findings on the demographics of the intern economy for recent arts graduates support concerns that the existing internship system reinforces unequal pathways to careers for groups at a historical economic disadvantage such as women, Blacks and Hispanic/Latinos, and first-generation college graduates. Women appear to be at least as likely as men to do internships but more likely to take on unpaid internships. Black and Hispanic/Latino graduates appear to be less likely to do paid internships than White alumni—a trend even more visible in design, a major with a strong prevalence of both paid and unpaid internships. More data is needed to understand the “matching” of students with intern hosts. In securing internships, how do the various groups differ? More broadly, how important are networks in the matching process, and what can schools do to make it more equitable?

Moreover, first-generation college graduates are less likely to do internships at all compared to alumni whose parents graduated from college. Since first-generation college graduates, as a group, are typically of lower socioeconomic standing than non-first-generation college alumni, to better understand the role of personal finances in the intern economy, the section below considers how interns and non-interns support themselves during their studies.

### Forms of support

How do students with internships pay for their education compared to those who do not intern? Does one group tend to take on more debt than the other? How important is family financial support among these groups?

We know from previous SNAAP reports that arts graduates who have student loan debt are less likely to pursue artistic careers, and debt is cited as a main reason why alumni leave the arts in the years following graduation. Since alumni of lower socioeconomic status are less likely to do internships, and more likely to take on debt (Huelsman, 2015), we would expect former interns to take on less debt than their counterparts.

Graduates were asked how much student loan debt they incurred to attend their respective SNAAP institution. Surprisingly, there is no considerable difference between the levels of student loan debt among recent alumni who were interns compared to those who were never interns (Table 6). Slightly more former interns (34%) reported graduating with no debt compared to those who were never interns

(32%), but overall the debt distribution is extremely similar for both groups. Patterns of debt are also almost identical among alumni who did or did not undertake paid or unpaid internships.

Therefore, while prior SNAAP reports show that debt is a main reason for graduates leaving the arts, the minimal differences in this study in debt-related measures between former interns and non-interns refines our understanding. Debt seemingly affects professional outcomes but does not appear to inform which strategies graduates use to build their career—at least in terms of internships. Perhaps internships are becoming so ubiquitous and are perceived as so critical that students view the extra hours of (even unpaid) work-based training as a necessary cost, even if working a second or third job is required to avoid incurring still greater debt.

One important difference between those who intern and those who do not relates to family support. The former were more likely to receive financial support from family:

- Sixty-seven percent of recent alumni who did not intern while enrolled in school indicated that parents or family helped pay for their education; the figure is 8% higher (75%) among alumni who did intern.
- The gap in family support is similar between recent alumni who had unpaid internships and those who did not; 75% of former unpaid interns indicated they received such support, compared to only 67% for alumni who did not undertake an unpaid internship.

Loans	Did an internship while at institution	Did not intern while at institution
More than \$60,000	13%	11%
\$50,001-\$60,000	4%	4%
\$40,001-\$50,000	5%	5%
\$30,001-\$40,000	8%	9%
\$20,001-\$30,000	13%	14%
\$10,001-\$20,000	11%	11%
\$10,000 or less	7%	9%
None	34%	32%
Not Applicable	5%	6%

Table 6. Distribution of student loans for recent undergraduate alumni (from 2009-2013) by whether they indicated they completed at least one internship while attending SNAAP institution. "Not applicable" signifies that alumni indicated they did not have any costs associated with their education or preferred not to answer the question.

Graduates who did internships were therefore more likely to receive financial help from parents or other members of their family to help them support their education. This finding may partly confirm concerns by critics regarding the intern economy as a system most advantageous for those who can afford to work for free (Frederick, 1997; Hesmondhalgh, 2010; Kamenetz, 2006; Perlin, 2011). It also may reflect the relationship between financial resources and networks. Families who provide financial resources for college may also provide important connections that help students find internships. Along with these concerns, this important finding—paired with the demographic trends above—should prompt educators to work to establish or strengthen forms of support for potential interns.

### *Why Not Intern?*

There may be other reasons, beyond demographics, why recent graduates might not have undertaken internships. Among these, two stand out.

First, 8% of recent graduates who did an internship while at their institution pursued further education immediately after their bachelor's degree; that figure nearly doubles (15%) for graduates who did not intern while at school.

This trend among arts students seems historically consistent. Overall, among SNAAP undergraduate alumni from all cohorts (not only recent ones), 7% of graduates who held internships while at their institutions pursued education immediately after graduation, compared to 14% for alumni who did not intern while at their institution.

These data suggest at least two potentially overlapping explanations. First, some undergraduate students might not seek hands-on professional experience in the form of internships if they are already planning to attend graduate school (where they likely expect to become even better prepared for professional life). Also, when approaching graduation, undergraduate students with less professional experience might aim to strengthen their preparation for the workforce through further education.

Second, most (63%) recent graduates who did at least one internship while at their institution described being “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with opportunities for degree-related internships or work while at their institution. Conversely, only 31% of those who did not do an internship while at school indicated they were satisfied with these opportunities. This finding underscores that a student's

choice to do or not do an internship is largely influenced by the extent to which the school actively facilitates such opportunities. Educators should recognize their important role in meeting the needs and expectations of all students interested in securing internships—particularly, as outlined in the next section, because internships are tied to skill development and satisfaction with overall educational experience.

### **Education: Satisfaction, Skills, and Place**

Prior research on students in non-arts fields suggests that doing an internship is tied to various educational benefits such as improved academic performance (Swail & Kampits, 2004); leadership abilities (Barr & McNeilly, 2002); and “soft skills” including interpersonal skills, attitude, and ability to handle stress (Divine, Miller, & Wilson, 2006). Are internships related to improved educational measures for arts alumni?

#### *Satisfaction with Education*

As we know from previous SNAAP reports, arts alumni are extremely satisfied with their overall experience while pursuing a degree. However, undergraduate alumni who did internships seem to be slightly more satisfied: 90% of recent graduates who interned while at their institution rated their experience as “good” or “excellent” compared to 87% for non-interns.

Similarly, 76% of recent graduates who were interns while at their institution reported they would “definitely” or “probably” attend the same institution if they were to start over again, compared to 72% for alumni who did not intern. Slightly more former interns (86%) indicated that they would recommend their institution to students just like them compared to recent graduates who never interned (82%).

Former interns reported being slightly more satisfied with their education than graduates who never interned, which, as the next section suggests, may be partly due to the skills the former acquired during their education.

#### *Skills Differentials*

SNAAP asked graduates to what extent their institution helped them acquire or develop a series of skills, including artistic technique, critical thinking and analysis, project management, and communication skills (persuasive speaking and clear writing). Alumni indicated whether

Skill/ability that institution helped recent undergraduate alumni acquire	Have ever been an intern	Have never been an intern	Percentage difference
Networking and relationship building	76%	66%	10%
Technological skills	80%	72%	8%
Leadership skills	79%	72%	7%
Entrepreneurial skills	35%	29%	6%
Financial and business management skills	31%	25%	6%
Interpersonal relations and work collaboratively	85%	79%	6%
Persuasive speaking	73%	67%	6%
Project management skills	82%	78%	4%
Research skills	81%	78%	3%
Improved work based on feedback from others	94%	92%	2%
Creative thinking and problem solving	95%	94%	1%
Critical thinking and analysis of arguments and information	93%	92%	1%
Artistic technique	91%	91%	0%
Broad knowledge and education	91%	91%	0%
Clear writing	76%	76%	0%
Teaching skills	56%	57%	-1%

Table 7. How much (by percentage) institutions are indicated by recent undergraduate-level alumni to have helped them acquire identified skills (“some” or “very much”), by whether alumni indicated they interned while at institution.

they felt their institution helped them acquire or develop these skills or abilities “not at all”, “very little”, “some”, or “very much”. Table 7 compares these answers for recent arts alumni who did or did not intern while at their undergraduate institution.

These responses suggest that internships might be an especially useful pedagogical strategy for developing certain skills and abilities:

- Former interns were more likely to report that their institution helped them develop networking and relationship-building abilities (76% compared to 66% for non-interns), commonly expected learning outcomes in a work-based setting. Considering the importance of networks in building project-based artistic careers (Jones, 1996), networking is an especially valuable ability and a key reason for interning.
- More access to the world of work via internships might lead to more familiarity and comfort with new technologies. Accordingly, 80% of former interns reported that their institution helped them develop

technological skills compared to 72% for their counterparts.

- Entrepreneurial and business-related skills, while reportedly low overall among SNAAP respondents, is slightly higher for graduates who did an internship (35% and 31%, compared to 29% and 25% for non-interns). Further research should unpack which components of these skills alumni need addressed in order to inform curricular changes, although internships might provide a hands-on method to develop these capabilities.
- Since interns are often part of teams (with fellow interns and/or employees), internships are related to improved interpersonal, persuasive speaking, and leadership skills (+6% or +7% for each). These responses are consistent with what we know about adapting to a new work role and becoming participants within a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Over 90% of graduates—former interns and non-interns alike—overwhelmingly agreed their institutions helped them

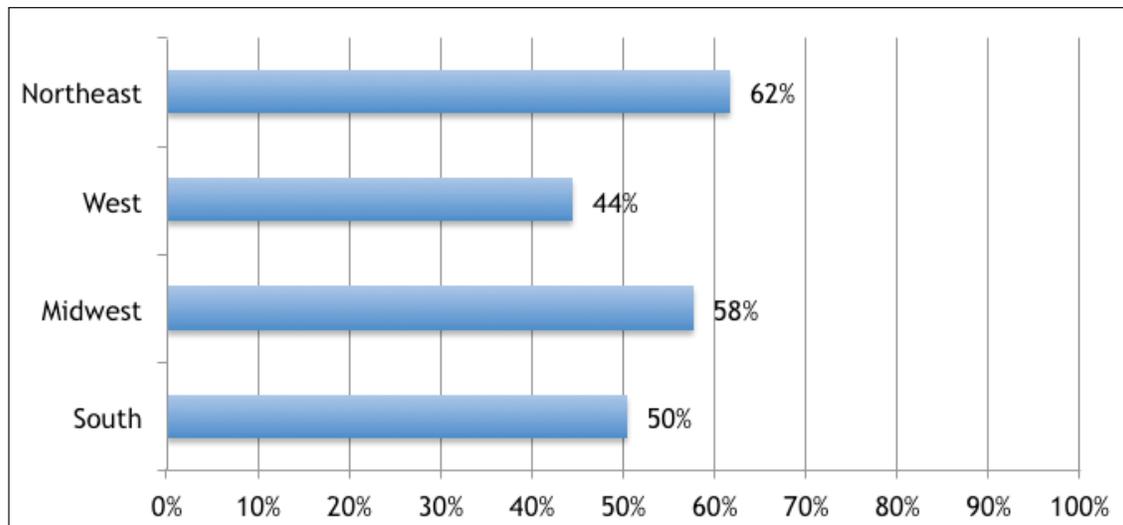


Figure 1. Percentage of recent undergraduate alumni who did an internship while enrolled at SNAAP institution, by school's region.

develop core arts-related skills such as artistic technique and creative thinking. The cultivation of certain skills and abilities appears to be so central to arts curricula that additional internship experience will play little to no perceived role in their further growth.

Overall, interning appears to be positively related to developing various skills. However, to ensure students reap the pedagogical benefits of internships, prior research suggests that schools must be sure to allocate sufficient resources (faculty and advisers) and prioritize rigorous intern engagement so that students can make thoughtful linkages between classroom learning and what they are learning as interns (Moore, 2013).

### *Schools, Internships, and Place*

How does the prevalence of internships change based on a school's geographic location, size (enrollment), and type?

#### *Region*

Arts schools are increasingly acting as engines for local, creative economic growth (Comunian, Taylor, & Smith, 2014), and internships are apparently contributing to this growth. Graduates who completed an internship while enrolled at their institution were slightly more likely to take up residency in the town/city where they studied (39%) than alumni who did not intern while enrolled

(34%). However, not all regions afford the same internship opportunities.

In the intern economy, geography matters. As Figure 1 illustrates, alumni from schools in the Northeast (62%) are more likely to have undertaken an internship as part of their undergraduate studies than students in the West (44%) or South (50%). This finding is relatively unsurprising since the Northeast features especially high population density, which facilitates more exchanges between schools and other sectors.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, Figure 2 suggests the overall internship numbers above might obscure a more significant trend. Alumni from schools in the Northeast are considerably more likely to do *unpaid* internships than graduates from other geographic regions. Nearly two thirds (65%) of alumni who recently earned their bachelor's degree from schools located in the Northeast completed an unpaid internship (before, during, or after studying at a SNAAP school), compared to approximately half of alumni who graduated from schools in other regions of the US. We suspect that while the Northeast has more opportunities for interning, the competition there is also greater, with more aspirants seeking these positions in the Northeast. Economists would predict that an oversupply of "internship seekers" would put downward pressure on wages and that students would be willing to work for free if necessary.

3. It should be noted that alumni enrolled at schools in one region might have been interns in different regions, particularly during summer.

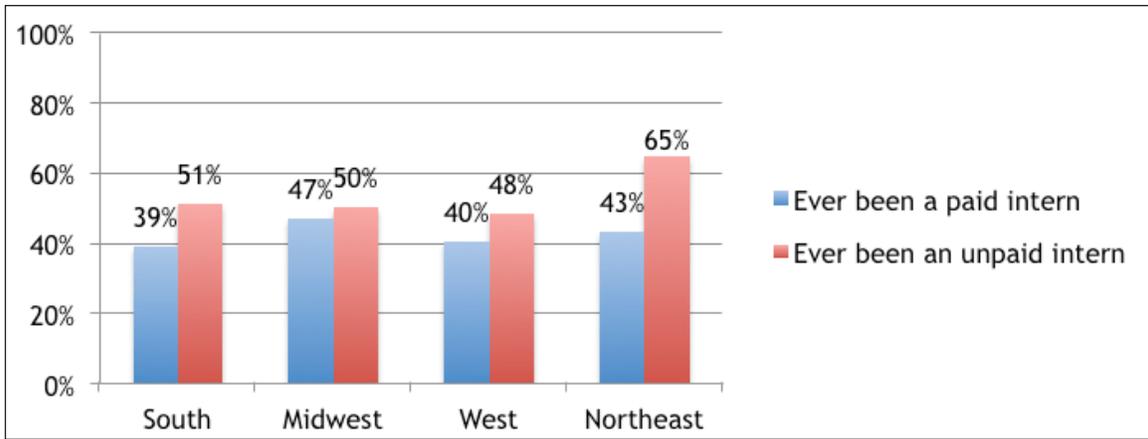


Figure 2. Percentage of recent undergraduate alumni who indicated they ever did a paid or unpaid internship, by school's region.

The comparative figures suggest a strong discrepancy between paid and unpaid internships for alumni in regions other than the Northeast. Alumni from schools in the South and West also featured a considerably higher prevalence of unpaid than paid internships among their recent graduates (+12% and +8%), and recent alumni from all regions were more likely to have done unpaid than paid internships.

### ***Institution Size and Type***

The intern economy differs for schools and graduates not only based on geographic region but also based on institution size and type.

Approximately half (51%) of recent alumni from schools with 10,000 or more students reported doing internships during their undergraduate education, compared to 61% for

alumni from smaller schools (see Figure 3 for more detailed numbers).

Similarly, recent alumni from private institutions were far more likely to do internships while enrolled than graduates of public institutions (62% compared to 49%). Combined, these findings suggest that a school's local intern economy differs by geographic region, institution size, and institution type. Smaller schools, where students might get more customized and personalized attention, do slightly better at encouraging and facilitating internships. Additionally, schools in every region—but especially in the Northeast—must address and attempt to correct the discrepancy between paid and unpaid internships, especially, as the next section discusses, because of the more limited career benefits the latter appear to offer.

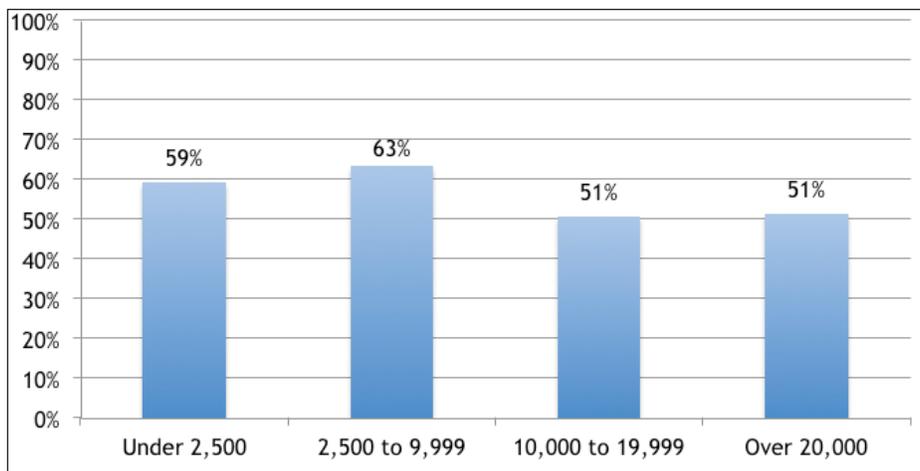


Figure 3. Percentage of recent undergraduate alumni who indicated they did an internship while enrolled at SNAAP institution, by institution size (enrollment range).

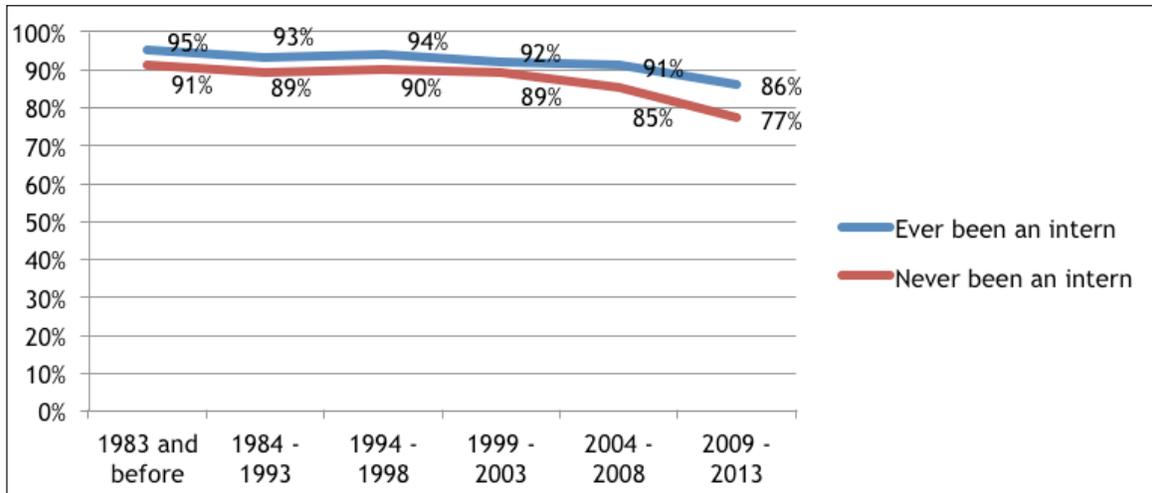


Figure 4. Percentage of undergraduate alumni who indicated they found a job<sup>a</sup> within one year of graduation, by cohort, comparing graduates who indicated they did or did not intern while attending SNAAP institution.

<sup>a</sup> Excludes graduates who immediately pursued further education or otherwise did not search for work after leaving program

## Outcomes: Careers

In this section, we consider how alumni who do internships fare on the job market compared to graduates who never intern. Is undertaking an internship, paid or unpaid, related to getting a job faster after graduation? Are arts graduates who do internships more likely to work in arts-related occupations and feel satisfied with their job? Overall, among SNAAP respondents, we found that paid internships yield considerable career-related rewards, but unpaid internships appear to be far less beneficial.

### Getting a Job

Internships are an educational experience, through which students may also become better prepared for the world of work, by acquiring various skills, building their networks of professional contacts, and having experiences that might lead directly to employment after graduation.

As previously described, doing an internship is tied to skills acquisition. In terms of networks, more than half (57%) of recent graduates who did an internship were satisfied (“somewhat” or “very”) with opportunities to network with alumni and others while at their institution, compared to 48% for graduates who did not intern. Similarly, recent graduates intending to be artists who did not intern were more likely to identify the absence of “a strong network of peers and colleagues” as a significant barrier to achieving success in their artistic careers (32%, compared to 26%

for graduates who did intern). However, did SNAAP respondents who did internships fare better on the job market than their peers who did not do internships? Among those alumni who looked for work immediately after graduation, respondents with internship experience fared best. About two thirds of recent graduates (66%) who reported doing an internship during college found a job within four months of graduation, compared to 57% for other alumni. Within one year of graduation, the difference is still very similar: 86% of graduates who did an internship while at their institution reported finding work, compared to 77% for those who did not intern. Based on data from previous cohorts of graduates, it seems that former interns have consistently found employment more quickly than their non-interning peers, but this trend has become more pronounced in the last decade (see Figure 4).

When we look at all internships over graduates’ lives (before, during, or after attending a SNAAP institution) we find that paid internships are even more closely related to finding a job than unpaid internships (see Figures 5 and 6). (Note: We suspect these findings between paid internships and work opportunities right after college would be more pronounced if we could restrict our analysis to paid internships while in school, rather than all internships. SNAAP data indicate which graduates have “ever” been paid or unpaid interns, and who interned during college, but do not permit us to isolate whether internships done during college years were paid or unpaid.)

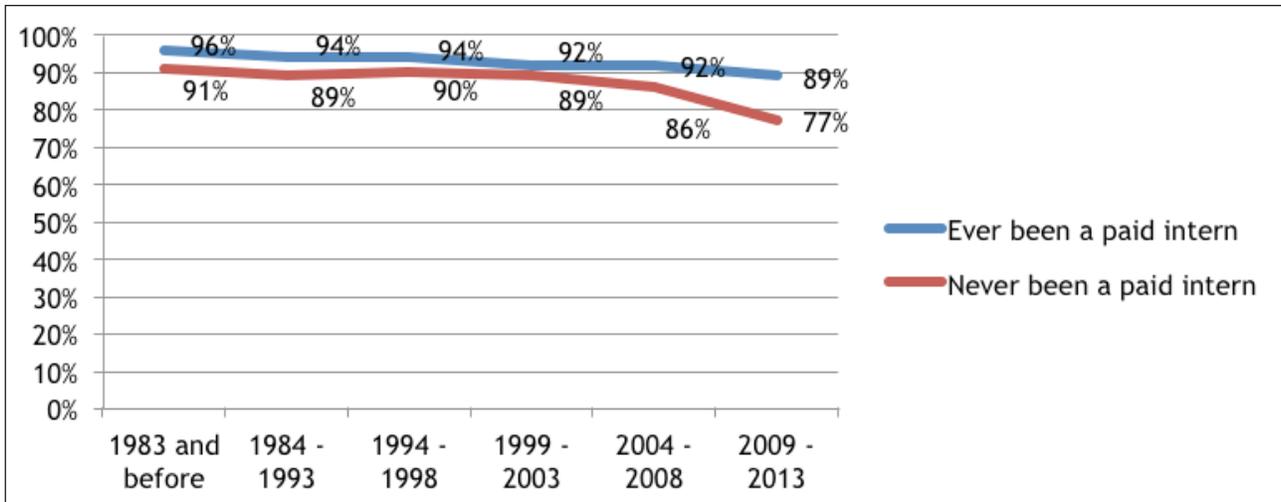


Figure 5. Percentage of undergraduate alumni who found a job<sup>a</sup> within one year of graduation, by cohort, comparing graduates who have or have not undertaken a paid internship.

<sup>a</sup> Excludes graduates who immediately pursued further education or otherwise did not search for work after leaving program.

Figure 6 shows that having an unpaid internship does not appear to be related to finding a job more quickly after graduation. Conversely, having a paid internship has consistently been related to finding a job more quickly after graduation. Recent graduates (2009–2013) who have done paid internships, during school or outside of school, have fared especially well compared to alumni who have never been paid interns, with 89% of the former finding work within one year of graduation compared to 77% for the latter.

Unpaid internships, therefore, appear to be unrelated to getting a job after graduation, as opposed to paid

internships. This finding is consistent with other research, which shows that being an unpaid intern far from guarantees securing a paid position (Frenette, 2013). It should be noted that students do unpaid internships for many reasons beyond immediately aiming to secure paid employment, such as trying out a career or type of employer, building a resume to help land a prestigious paid internship, or meeting a course requirement. Moreover, before the recent critiques of the intern economy gained resonance, the prevailing wisdom was that all internships were related to improved job market outcomes.

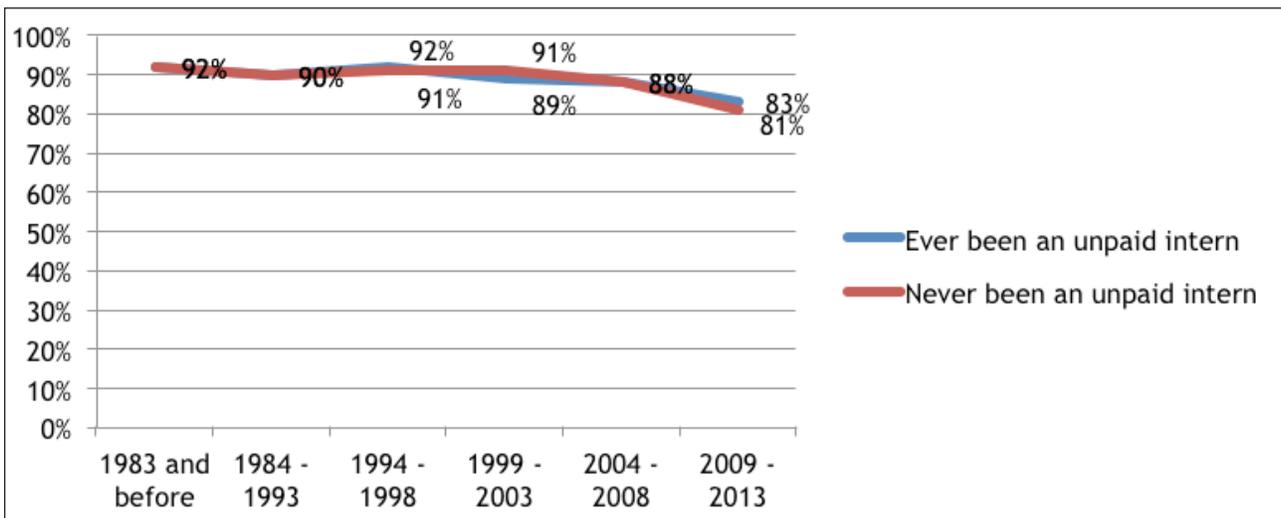


Figure 6. Percentage of undergraduate alumni who found a job<sup>a</sup> within one year of graduation, by cohort, comparing graduates who have or have not undertaken an unpaid internship.

<sup>a</sup> Excludes graduates who immediately pursued further education or otherwise did not search for work after leaving program.

### Who Works in the Arts?

Are alumni who do internships more likely to work in the arts than their non-intern counterparts? Although paid interns find employment more quickly than unpaid interns, is one type of internship more strongly related to whether graduates spend most of their work time in an arts-related occupation after graduation?

As a whole, recent undergraduate alumni who had an internship while enrolled at their institution were likely to find a job in the arts. When surveyed, more than half (59%) indicated that the job in which they spent the majority of their time was in the arts, about one third (34%) were spending the majority of their time working outside of the arts, and 7% were currently unemployed. In comparison, those alumni who did not intern while at school were as likely to be working in or outside of the arts (45% to 45%) and the remaining 10% stated that they were currently unemployed.

Therefore, these findings suggest that doing an internship is positively related to spending the majority of one’s time working in the arts, but only for alumni who have ever done paid internships. Paid internships seem to function as an important pathway to arts-related employment, much more so than unpaid internships. When asked to indicate the occupation in which they spent the majority of their time, recent alumni who had been paid interns (before, during,

or after college) were much more likely to be working in the arts than graduates who had not. Former paid interns mainly (62%) were in arts-related occupations, compared to less than half (46%) for alumni who did not undertake a paid internship. Conversely, former unpaid interns and alumni who did not do an unpaid internship were about as likely to be working in the arts (53% and 51%, respectively).

### Job Satisfaction

The 2013 SNAAP Annual Report, *An Uneven Canvas*, revealed that job satisfaction is nearly universal among arts alumni, staying relatively high regardless of one’s gender, race/ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. However, might doing an internship be related to one’s job satisfaction after graduation?

Since internships offer an opportunity for students to “try out” an occupation (thereby gaining clearer career goals), develop skills, and network, we would expect alumni who did an internship to find jobs that fit their aspirations and goals better than their non-interning peers. This hypothesis is supported in Table 8, which shows that former interns said they were more satisfied with their current work on a variety of measures including opportunity for career advancement, income, and job security.

Since doing an internship is linked to a higher probability of working in the arts, unsurprisingly, former interns reported

Aspects of job satisfaction for recent undergraduate alumni	Interned	Did not intern	Percentage difference
Opportunity for career advancement	72%	61%	11%
Income	63%	54%	9%
Job security	80%	73%	7%
Opportunity to be creative	74%	67%	7%
<b>Overall job satisfaction</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Work that reflects my personality, interests, and values	75%	70%	5%
Balance between work and non-work life	74%	70%	4%
Opportunity to contribute to greater good	69%	69%	0%

Table 8. Percentage of currently employed recent undergraduate alumni (from 2009–2013) who indicated they are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with identified aspects of their current work, by whether they indicated they had completed at least one internship while attending SNAAP institution.

Aspects of job satisfaction for recent undergraduate alumni	Have ever been a paid intern	Have never been a paid intern	Percentage difference
Opportunity for career advancement	74%	62%	12%
Income	64%	55%	9%
Opportunity to be creative	76%	67%	9%
Work that reflects my personality, interests, and values	77%	69%	8%
<b>Overall job satisfaction</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>7%</b>
Job security	80%	74%	6%
Balance between work and non-work life	75%	70%	5%
Opportunity to contribute to greater good	71%	68%	3%

Table 9. Percentage of currently employed recent undergraduate alumni (from 2009–2013) who indicated they are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with each aspect of their current work, by whether they indicated they had done a paid internship.

Aspects of job satisfaction for recent undergraduate alumni	Have ever been an unpaid intern	Have never been an unpaid intern	Percentage difference
Opportunity for career advancement	68%	67%	1%
Opportunity to be creative	71%	70%	1%
Work that reflects my personality, interests, and values	73%	72%	1%
Job security	77%	77%	0%
<b>Overall job satisfaction</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Income	58%	60%	-2%
Balance between work and non-work life	71%	73%	-2%
Opportunity to contribute to greater good	68%	70%	-2%

Table 10. Percentage of currently employed recent undergraduate alumni (from 2009–2013) who indicated they are “somewhat” or “very” satisfied with each aspect of their current work, by whether they indicated they had done an unpaid internship.

being more satisfied with their opportunity to be creative at work. However, the contrast between intern/non-intern on job satisfaction measures becomes noticeably different when we compare the effects of ever doing a paid vs. unpaid internship (see Tables 9 and 10).

On nearly every measure, doing an unpaid internship has no substantial relationship to job satisfaction. In fact, compared to graduates who have not undertaken an unpaid internship, recent alumni who have been unpaid interns reported slightly more dissatisfaction with their current income, balance of work and non-work life, and

opportunity to contribute to the greater good. Conversely, doing a paid internship is related to feeling more satisfied on all measures, including one’s opportunity for career advancement, income, and the opportunity to be creative.

It is worth pointing out that the better work outcomes among those who had paid internships might relate to competition and sorting. If the most talented or ambitious students and graduates tend to secure the paid internships, we would also expect these individuals to secure jobs more quickly and more closely related to their goals and interests.

## Conclusion

The rise of internships over recent decades has led to a vigorous national debate regarding the educational and professional value of certain internships and the fairness of the internship system. This debate needs to be informed with data that provides historical context, considers differences between fields, and delves into the educational and career-related benefits of paid and unpaid internships. Responding to this need, this SNAAP Special Report, based on the experiences of 10,698 recent undergraduate arts alumni who graduated between 2009 and 2013, provides several key findings:

- This report confirms the considerable rise in the prevalence of internships among arts alumni; 69% of recent alumni have ever done a paid or unpaid internship.
- Over the last decade, unpaid internships have become more common than paid ones among arts alumni.
- Graduates from some majors (e.g., architecture and design) tend to do more paid internships, while internships for alumni from other majors (e.g., art history) tend to be unpaid.
- Women, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and first-generation college graduates all appear to hold a disproportionate number of unpaid internships.
- Graduates who did internships were more likely to receive financial help from parents or other family members to support their education.

- Former interns report improved networking and relationship-building abilities. Interning is also positively related to developing technological, leadership, and entrepreneurial skills.
- Paid internships yield substantial career-related rewards (finding work more quickly, job satisfaction, etc.); unpaid internships appear to be far less beneficial.

This report highlights how doing an internship is linked to positive educational and employment-related outcomes, but also calls attention to an important divide: paid internships are tied to considerable career rewards, yet groups at a historically economic disadvantage such as women, Blacks, Hispanic/Latinos, and first-generation college graduates hold a disproportionate number of unpaid internships, which appear to be far less beneficial. Educators must lead in ensuring a more formalized, meritocratic, and therefore more equitable intern economy.

Further research is needed to better understand how students navigate the intern economy—particularly, how students find internships, how many internships graduates are doing, how interns support themselves, how well interns feel they are mentored, and whether the above translate into better educational and career outcomes.

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## About SNAAP

SNAAP is a survey administered online to arts graduates of participating institutions in North America. More than 100,000 alumni with degrees in architecture, art, creative writing, dance, design, music, theater, and related fields have responded to the SNAAP survey since 2008.

Institutions register for SNAAP in summer, and alumni receive invitations to participate in fall. SNAAP produces for each participating institution a confidential report with valuable, actionable data. Designed to be a self-sustaining research project, institutional participation fees underwrite the cost of survey administration, data analysis, and school reports.

Based at the Indiana University School of Education's Center for Postsecondary Research and Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University, SNAAP was developed with start-up funding from the Surdna Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and others.

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