

# SNAAP 2013 Institutional Report

## University of Utah

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College of Fine Arts 2014 Emerging Leaders Interns

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document contains findings from the 2013 Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) survey of University of Utah alumni from the College of Fine Arts. In it we discuss the purpose of SNAAP, relevant findings, good news from the data, areas for consideration and how it will be used in the forthcoming *ArtsForce 2014* conference.



**COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS**

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THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

## Introduction

In 2013, the College of Fine Arts (CFA) collaborated with the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) to learn about the experiences of arts alumni working both in and outside of the arts. The CFA Emerging Leaders Interns analyzed the SNAAP results of alumni from across the CFA. This report outlines important information about the experiences of CFA alumni who are working and have worked as professional artists, as well as those who are currently working in arts-related and non-arts fields; experiences of alumni's education in the CFA as they relate to their current primary means of income; and areas for consideration within the curriculum of the CFA based on the alumni's experiences.

The conclusion of this report outlines how the Emerging Leaders Interns are organizing *ArtsForce 2014*, a one-day conference for CFA students, and using the 2013 CFA SNAAP results to help current students better prepare for the world of work and articulate the value of their arts degrees in the modern workforce.

## Strategic National Arts Alumni Project

SNAAP is an annual online survey, data management, and institutional improvement system designed to enhance the quality of arts-school education. SNAAP's mission is to investigate the educational experiences and career paths of arts graduates nationally. SNAAP provides these findings to educators, policy makers, and philanthropic organizations to improve arts training, inform cultural policy, and support artists ([snaap.indiana.edu](http://snaap.indiana.edu)). The data gathered by this survey can be instrumental in helping the University of Utah's College of Fine

Arts to evaluate and improve the quality of education and career preparation students receive.

The data that are presented in this report represent all respondents, drawing on alumni from as far back as 1983 and earlier through the class of 2012. Of the 4,535 total alumni contacted by SNAAP, 553 responded, representing 12% of those contacted.

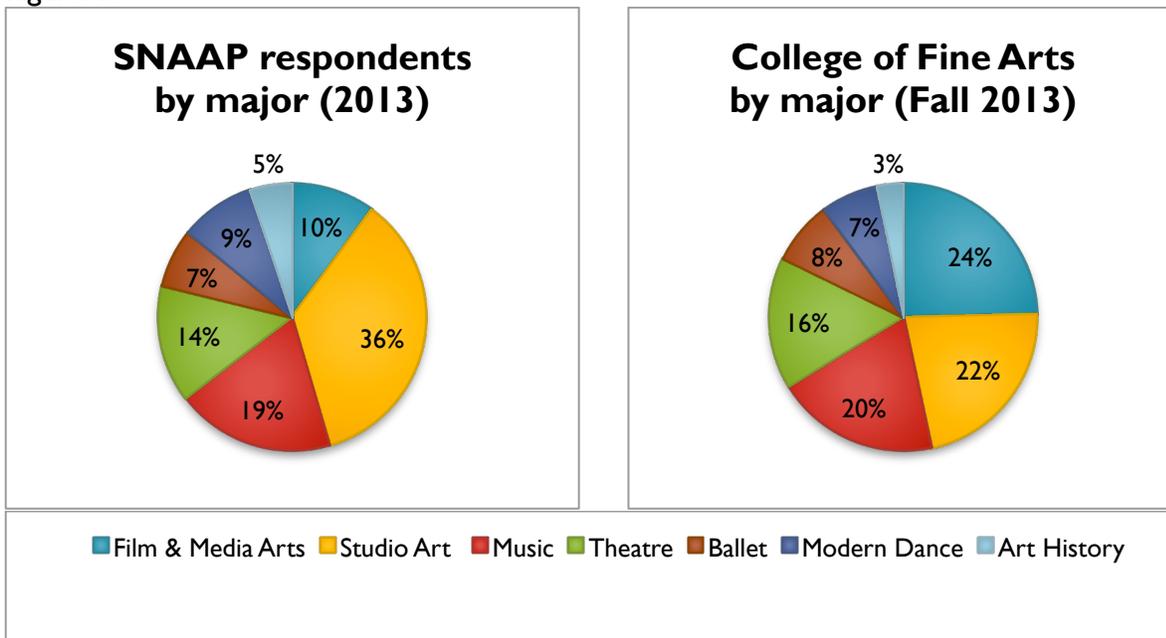
## **Demographics**

The undergraduate alumni respondents (n=553) graduated in the following years: 37% of respondents graduated between 2004 and 2012, 22% of respondents graduated between 1994 and 2003, and 40% graduated before 1993.

Of those alumni who responded, 40.5% identified as male, 59% as female, and less than 1% identified as transgender. Ninety-three percent identified as White or Caucasian; 1% as Black or African American; 4% as Hispanic, Latino or of Spanish origin; 1% as American Indian; 0% as Alaska Native; 2% as Asian, and 3% as other.

When asked to select their major, 35% of respondents chose fine and studio art, 19% music, 14% theater, 10% film, television, and broadcasting majors, 9% dance majors, 7% ballet, and 5% art history. Figure 1 compares these percentages with the proportion of students in each CFA major in the 2013-2014 academic year.

Figure 1.



\*Film & Media Arts was not established as an individual department until 2008 which accounts for the disproportionate representation

## Main Findings

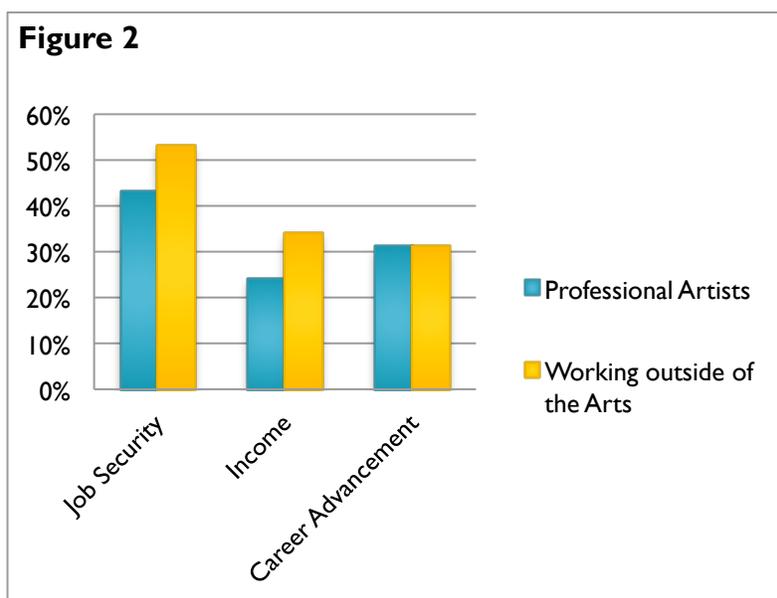
The CFA Emerging Leaders Interns found that the following facts illuminated the experiences of arts alumni working both inside and outside of the arts. This section includes a comparison of those who work within the arts to those who work in other fields and a discussion of critical skills related to their work. It discusses alumni responses to questions about job satisfaction, income, and job security in their primary position. It highlights skills that alumni feel are essential to their current positions and whether or not those were attained during their College of Fine Arts education. It concludes with possible areas of consideration for the College of Fine Arts faculty and administration.

## Professional Artists

Of the alumni who responded, 76% are currently working or have worked as professional artists. Of those who are not currently employed as artists, 64.8% continue to practice art in their personal time. Of these respondents, 43% perform or make art daily, or several times a week.

## Arts-related Fields vs. Non-arts Fields

Of arts alumni who work in non-arts fields, 75% find their arts training to be relevant to their current employment. Respondents said the primary reason they never worked or no longer work in the arts is because they sought higher pay or steadier income in other fields (62%). Other reasons for pursuing work outside of the arts were related to family (34%), change in interests (32%), and lack of available artistic work (31%). (Respondents could choose more than one answer.) The top three non-arts occupational fields in which respondents were working are:

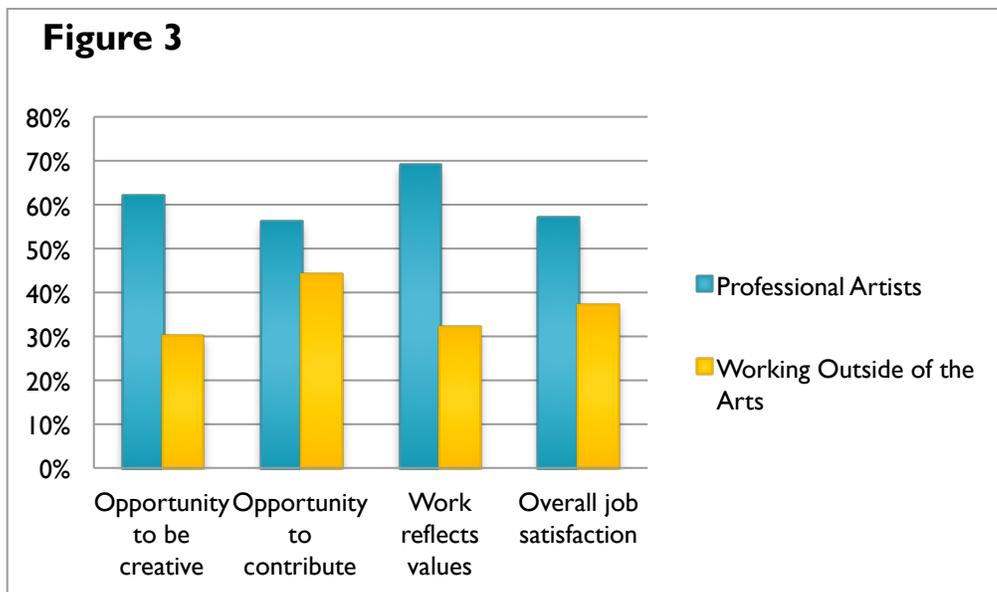


1. Education, training, and library
2. Office and administrative support
3. Sales

In comparing the responses of those working in non-arts fields (n=157) to the responses of those working in arts fields (n=256), non-professionals reported higher levels of satisfaction with job security (53% vs. 43%) and income (34% vs. 24%). The same percentage (31%) of professional artists and non-professional artists reported satisfaction with the opportunity for career advancement (see Figure 2).

Those working within arts-related fields, however, reported higher levels of satisfaction with (see Figure 3):

1. The opportunity to be creative (62% vs. 30%)
2. The opportunity to contribute to the greater good (56% vs. 44%)
3. Work reflecting values, personality and interests (69% vs. 32%)
4. Overall job satisfaction (57% vs. 37%).



## **Positive Findings about the College of Fine Arts**

Along with these findings about careers, there was overall good news reported by arts alumni about their education at the University of Utah. Of the respondents, 90% rated their experience in the CFA as either excellent (47%) or good (43%). When asked if students would choose the University of Utah CFA again, 72% of alumni said either “definitely yes” or “probably yes.” The respondents’ feedback reflects overall positive experiences with their education in the College of Fine Arts.

Another positive finding was that the CFA faculty was the primary contributor to the positive experience of alumni. Of alumni surveyed, 88% reported that they were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with instructors in classes, labs, and studios. Seventy-two percent of alumni also mentioned a high level of satisfaction with regard to a sense of belonging, and 74% of alumni reported a high level of satisfaction with freedom and encouragement to take risks in the CFA.

## **Areas for Consideration in the College of Fine Arts**

Along with the positive feedback from respondents, the data also indicated areas that could be improved in the CFA at the University of Utah.

### Professional Artists

The College of Fine Arts can work to improve access to resources that respondents found important for career success. Current or past professional artists reported the following

as the most important resources to success in their artistic career (respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer):

1. Strong network of peers and colleagues (78%)
2. Mentors and teachers (74%)
3. Material resources (61%)

Of the resources needed to achieve success in their artistic careers, alumni also reported the following resources as the most lacking during their studies in the CFA:

1. Material resources (37%)
2. Prizes, grants or commissions (36%)
3. Publicity or acknowledgement of work (34%)
4. Strong network of peers and colleagues (32%)

### All Respondents

Another area for consideration is the skills that are taught at the CFA. Respondents, both working in and out of the arts, reported that the following skills were important to their primary career. They also rated how well the CFA helped them to cultivate these skills (see Table 1).

Table 1. Important Skills to a Professional Career

	Important to Career	Learned at the CFA
Creative thinking and problem solving	98%	36%
Improved work based on feedback, interpersonal relationships, and working collaboratively	96%	47%
Broad knowledge and education	96%	47%
Networking and relationship building	95%	17%
Leadership skills	94%	22%
Critical thinking and analysis of arguments and information	94%	45%

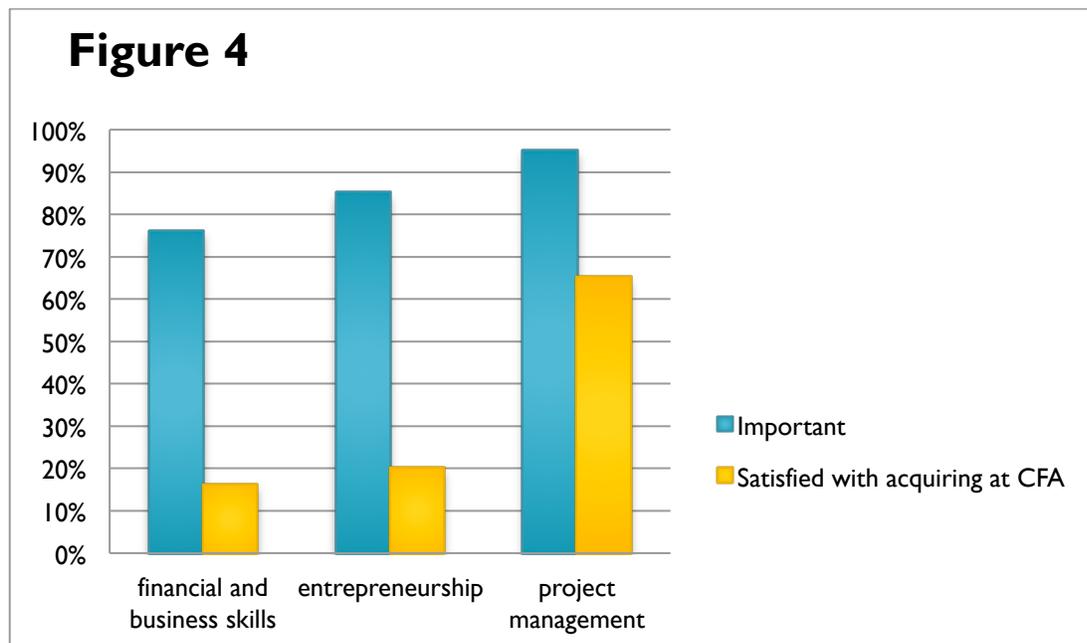
The data also suggest that some alumni felt unprepared for their transition post graduation.

1. 53% felt very dissatisfied or somewhat dissatisfied with advising about their career or further education
2. 53% felt dissatisfied with opportunities for internships and degree-related work
3. 34% felt dissatisfied with academic advising
4. 14% did not feel prepared for graduate school after their arts education

### Self-employment

Another important finding from the SNAAP data is the fact that 77% of respondents said they are currently or have been previously self-employed, and 65% of professional artists are self-employed. However, all respondents reported low levels of satisfaction with learning business and financial skills while at the CFA (see Figure 4).

1. 76% of alumni reported that financial and business skills were important in their profession or work life. However, only 16% of alumni felt satisfied with learning financial and business management skills in their degree.
2. 85% of alumni said that entrepreneurial skills were important in their profession or work life. However, only 20% of alumni felt satisfied with learning entrepreneurial skills in their degree.
3. 95% of alumni reported project management to be very important in their profession or work life. However, only 35% of alumni felt satisfied with their opportunity to develop project management skills in their degree.



## Discussion and Possible Implications for *ArtsForce 2014*

*ArtsForce 2014* will be presented in a conference format and will include these major sections: a panel of young alumni who work within/outside of the arts, an interactive career design workshop, networking opportunities, and panels focused on various aspects of arts careers (arts advocacy, community organization, education, entrepreneurship, and performance).

**Networking:** Alumni reported that strong peer and colleague networks were critical to their success in the arts and were insufficient while at the CFA. At *ArtsForce 2014*, participants will have opportunities to network with peers, alumni and community members throughout the conference. During the strategic career design workshop, participants will learn best practices in networking. We are hoping that this portion of *ArtsForce 2014* will help students understand that networking is involved in every aspect of their lives. Our goal is to provide the tools and empower students to take the initiative in making genuine connections to help them propel their futures. Students will participate in a networking lunch where they can use what they learned in the previous session and strengthen their network.

**Career Assistance:** Alumni reported dissatisfaction with academic and career advising. Over the last two years, the CFA has put significant resources and efforts toward improving the academic advising experience of undergraduate students by hiring professional academic advisors and providing consistent training for these advisors across multiple levels of the institution: department/school, college, and university. The CFA academic advisors work closely with the departments/school to assure that students' educational pathways can meet their intended goals, whether those goals are to stay within the arts or not; and that students can articulate the transferrable skills they are learning in their arts degrees. The CFA advisors have also participated in professional development opportunities to better understand the many career pathways available for arts graduates, and they have forged a stronger connection with the University of Utah Career Services Office.

*ArtsForce 2014* will underscore the importance of participants becoming knowledgeable about various career pathways. Career professionals will present important career tools related to helping students understand their web presence, seek information (job searching and beyond), communicate professionally, introduce themselves, network, and career plan as a whole.

**Internships:** Another concern is that internships and work within the arts are often not available to students. During *ArtsForce 2014*, campus organizations— Career Services, the Hinckley Institute of Politics, the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center, the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, and Arts Bridge—will talk to students about internships that are available. In order to prepare these campus organizations to present at *ArtsForce 2014*, the Emerging Leaders Interns will meet with each organization to help them understand the feedback from our alumni and the needs of arts students.

**Skills:** According to the SNAAP data, alumni felt least satisfied with how their degree helped them acquire budgeting and financial skills, entrepreneurial skills, and project management skills. Although teaching these specific skills is outside of the scope of what *ArtsForce 2014* can offer, the selected participants in the young alumni panel will be prepared to make sure that they address these concerns. Panelists will provide advice about how participants might begin to work on these skills while still studying at the University, highlight resources they use to be successful, and mention what they wished they had known or opportunities that they wish they had sought out when they were students.

Another way we hope to promote dialogue about these skills is to invite and integrate experts on business skills, entrepreneurship, and other aspects of self-employment so that students can receive helpful advice from these professionals during the panel presentations.

There has been a discussion about inviting an arts-savvy lawyer from the Utah Lawyers for the Arts, members of the University of Utah's Lassonde Center, and other professionals who specialize in policy around these topics.

## Conclusion

The data from the 2013 SNAAP alumni survey have helped the CFA Emerging Leaders Interns understand the experiences of alumni and, in turn, assess the current needs of CFA students.

The data reveal obvious strengths and areas of consideration for the CFA. *ArtsForce 2014* is organized to address some of the areas that current students and alumni identified as the most important. Also, resources will be discussed that alumni report are the most insufficient, such as networking and career advising assistance, including internship opportunities, and business skill development.

By analyzing the findings from the 2013 SNAAP survey of University of Utah alumni from the College of Fine Arts, the Emerging Leaders Interns see that there may be a disconnect between the skills needed in careers and those that are taught in an arts education, as well as between students learning skills and being able to articulate them. Arts education is often focused on the creative process, nurturing creativity, and mastery of a particular art. These are areas that SNAAP respondents report as important skills needed in their careers and these as the strongest areas that respondents received in their CFA arts education. Undoubtedly, creativity and the creative process are paramount skills developed in the arts; however, one of the major concerns is that without other important skills needed

to succeed in the world of business—such as budgeting, finance, project management, and entrepreneurship—truly talented artists will go unseen, unheard, and unnoticed. *ArtsForce 2014* can be an important answer for students who ask: How do I take hold of my future?

