



# STRATEGIC NATIONAL ARTS ALUMNI PROJECT



## SPECIAL REPORT

### Career Skills and Entrepreneurship Training for Artists

Results of the 2015 SNAAP Survey Module



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## SNAAP Special Report

### Career Skills and Entrepreneurship Training for Artists: Results of the 2015 SNAAP Survey Module

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## Introduction

Higher education is increasingly seen as the main space for job training and preparing students for careers, and recent public debate has pushed educators and policymakers to reflect on how to best prepare students for jobs (Baker, 2009). The courses college students take are thought to impart knowledge and to develop skills that will help their careers. Co-curricular career development programming along with mentorship in and outside the classroom are thought to make students better able to find jobs and build relationships with other professionals in their field. While these assumptions may be implicit in the structure of higher education, since the 1980s, changes in the job market and in the relationships between employers and employees have made it much more common for workers to take on a series of different jobs over their work lives—resulting in careers that are increasingly self-managed, with workers designing their own career paths within, between, and outside their various jobs (Cornfield, Campbell, & McCammon, 2001; Kalleberg, 2011).

While “entrepreneur” is often treated as a job title in and of itself, it is more useful to think of this category as a relationship between a worker and his or her job, similar to the category of employee. Just as employees can have many job titles and can work in various occupations, entrepreneurs work in diverse sectors and have varied responsibilities and foci within their work. Watson (2012) proposes a shift from seeing entrepreneurship solely as creating a new business to—instead—creating, innovating, or otherwise making trades and deals between entities. This conceptualization of entrepreneurship more closely follows the many ways individual workers independently create their own jobs through working arrangements like self-employment, project-based or “gig” work, and freelancing. Even employees of large companies are often encouraged to think and act entrepreneurially. Managers who work within corporations are expected to show entrepreneurial skills in order to demonstrate their worth through increasing the company’s value (Smith, 1997).

As of 2016, over 15 million Americans were self-employed and, at any given time, 1 in 25 Americans are trying to start a business (Hipple & Hammond, 2016; Thornton, 1999). Additionally, 1 in 3 American workers earn at least some of their income outside of a traditional job as an employee with a company, most commonly in arrangements like freelancing and self-employment (Horowitz, 2015). Despite the fact that so many Americans are self-employed or otherwise work in entrepreneurial spaces, entrepreneurship is not a typical focus of study for students outside of graduate business school programs (Haase & Lautenschlager, 2011).

Students pursuing careers in arts industries do not necessarily need a degree or credential to do their work. As long as artists can create their art and start and maintain their business or other enterprise by attracting clients, maintaining records, and paying taxes as required by law, there is no educational requirement to work as an artist. In 2015, 80% of Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) respondents reported that at some point in their career they had been self-employed, had been hired as an independent contractor, or had worked on a freelance basis. Given that most artists will work for themselves or self-manage their career in some capacity, it is important to consider the value of higher education for artists and how it might best prepare students to manage a career. While artistic practice may be the primary arena of education for arts students, building strong business and entrepreneurial skills will prepare students for a career in a job market that increasingly rewards entrepreneurship.

The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) is an online survey, data management, and institutional improvement system designed to enhance the impact of an arts school education.<sup>1</sup> In 2015, SNAAP developed a Topical Module with in-depth questions about arts entrepreneurship and career skills. Career skills are increasingly regarded as a crucial element of higher education, and researchers have noted the importance of such skills in assuring successful post-college career outcomes. For example, students who report using schools’ career resources are less likely to work in unskilled occupations after graduation (Arum & Roksa, 2014). Reflecting this topic’s importance, the module was selected and appended to the core SNAAP questionnaire by 50 out of 53 (94%) of the participating institutions. Over 30,000 arts alumni of all ages with undergraduate or graduate level degrees responded to the questions, creating a rich database of information. For this report, Canadian and certain other institutions were excluded from analysis due to nonstandard administrations. For this “norms” group, over 26,200 alumni from 43 institutions responded.

A past SNAAP DataBrief (Frenette, 2015) reported on an entrepreneurial skills gap wherein 71% of arts alumni indicated entrepreneurial skills were “Very” or “Somewhat important” to their profession or work life but only 26% of alumni reported their institution helped them develop entrepreneurial skills “Some” or “Very much.” In total, the difference between these responses was 45%, leaving a substantial gap between the reported need for entrepreneurial skills and the number of alumni who feel they attained entrepreneurial skills at their institution. What does this mean for arts school alumni? Are institutions incorporating enough focus on entrepreneurial

1. The Strategic National Arts Alumni Project defines “arts” broadly to 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.

skills and career development for students who, once they graduate, are likely to need entrepreneurial skills in order to self-manage a career in the arts?

SNAAP's Career Skills and Entrepreneurship module asks alumni about their educational experiences with entrepreneurship and about confidence in their abilities to act in various entrepreneurial ways in their careers. This report focuses on understanding whether and how entrepreneurship education and career skills are emphasized in arts school or departmental curriculum and programming, how confident alumni are in their abilities, and how entrepreneurship and career development relate to alumni career outcomes.

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### Career Skills and Entrepreneurship Education: Trends Over Time

What aspects of career skills and entrepreneurship education are taught in arts schools and programs? Do students learn a cohesive set of knowledge and skills in arts schools or do gaps exist in the career and entrepreneurial skills of alumni that institutions could address?

#### Differences by Cohort

In the SNAAP module, alumni are asked whether their coursework at their institution emphasized generating new ideas or brainstorming, taking risks in coursework without fear of penalty, evaluating multiple approaches to a problem, and inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions. Generally, high levels of agreement on each of these items indicate that most arts alumni feel their coursework emphasized these topics. We know from past research that an individual's ability to improvise is a significant predictor of intentions to become an entrepreneur, so coursework that encourages creativity, risk-taking, and innovation are likely to

contribute to a student's entrepreneurial skill set (Hmieleski & Corbett, 2006). These data are cross-sectional, which means we cannot use the data to talk about changes over time; but by looking at responses of arts alumni from different cohorts, we can observe general trends in curriculum, career development, confidence in abilities, and career outcomes for students who were in school at particular times. The differences across cohorts point to potential changes in education and career outcomes for arts alumni over time.

#### Differences by Cohort: Curriculum

Among the more recent cohorts, module results show a trend toward curricula that emphasize generating new ideas, taking risks, evaluating multiple approaches to problems, and using innovative methods to reach solutions. Alumni who graduated in 1985 or before had the lowest level of curricular emphasis on these topics; but with each subsequent cohort, alumni reported higher levels (Table 1). Notable trends include:

- Coursework that allows students to generate new ideas or brainstorm has consistently been most prevalent among these aspects.
- Recent alumni indicated 10% higher incidence of coursework that emphasizes generating new ideas or brainstorming along with coursework that emphasizes inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions, compared to the earliest cohort (1985 and before).
- Coursework that allows risk-taking without fear of penalty and that encourages inventing new methods was less prevalent than the other two curricular emphases in results from recent alumni, but still remained high at 80%.

**Table 1:** Percentage of alumni, by cohort, who reported "Some" or "Very much" emphasis of key aspects of their coursework

Coursework emphasized the following:	1985 and Before	1986–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	Overall
Generating new ideas or brainstorming	83%	89%	91%	91%	93%	93%	89%
Taking risks in coursework without fear of penalty	75%	82%	81%	82%	82%	80%	80%
Evaluating multiple approaches to a problem	82%	87%	88%	87%	90%	90%	87%
Inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions	74%	80%	80%	81%	82%	84%	80%

Note: Response options for these items included "Not at all," "Very little," "Some," and "Very much."

## Differences by Cohort: Career Development

Alumni were asked about career development programming at their institution in four different areas:

1. their exposure to a broad network of relevant professionals in their area through guest lectures, workshops, and special events;
2. the integration of all aspects of career development into their education;
3. their exposure to careers in and outside the arts during their education; and
4. their use of campus career services via advising, classes, and workshops.

Some noteworthy trends by cohort emerged from these questions (Table 2). While alumni on the whole agreed that their institutions exposed them to a broad network of artists, leaders, and scholars, they reported lower levels of other types of career development programming:

- About half of alumni reported their education did not integrate all aspects of career development.
- Similarly, just over half said they were not exposed to a broad view of careers in and out of the arts.
- The most recent cohort (2011–2015) indicated the highest levels of having taken full advantage of career services.

We were interested in knowing whether overall institutional experience—either positive or negative—was related to how alumni responded about the aspects of career development programming they received at their institution. Alumni who

rated that experience “good” or “excellent”—compared to those who rated it “poor” or “fair”—reported higher levels of agreement that their institution (1) exposed them to a broad network of artists, leaders, and scholars; (2) provided an education that integrated all aspects of career development; and (3) exposed them to a broad view of careers in and outside the arts. Alumni reported taking advantage of career services at about the same rate regardless of their overall experience. These data are cross-sectional; that is, the survey is asked all at one time, so we cannot say whether a bad experience caused or was caused by certain aspects of career development an alumni had at their institution. However, knowing these are related is helpful in considering a variety of influences that can impact the educational experience.

## Differences by Cohort: Missing Pieces

In each cohort, alumni reported they would have benefited greatly from more knowledge about specific skills relating to entrepreneurship and managing their own career. In the module, alumni are asked whether they would have benefited from more knowledge on:

- a. developing a three- to five-year strategic plan to realize their goals;
- b. marketing and promoting their work and talents;
- c. communicating through and about their art through engaging with the community, speaking in public, and receiving feedback;
- d. managing finances through things like developing budgets, raising money for projects, and saving for the future;
- e. and monitoring legal and tax issues like copyright, trademarks, sales, and income tax.

**Table 2:** Percentage of alumni, by cohort, who “Somewhat” or “Strongly agree” they were exposed to key aspects of career development while attending their institution

Aspects of Career Development	1985 and Before	1986–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	Overall
Exposed me to a broad network of artists, leaders, and scholars	79%	79%	77%	79%	81%	84%	80%
Education integrated all aspects of career development	54%	48%	46%	45%	45%	51%	49%
Exposed me to a broad view of careers in and out of the arts	50%	47%	46%	44%	45%	53%	48%
Took full advantage of career services	50%	50%	50%	51%	53%	60%	53%

Note: Response options for these items included “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Strongly agree,” and “Not applicable.” (See Codebook in Appendix for details.)

**Table 3:** Percentage of alumni, by cohort, who “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” they would have benefited from more knowledge of key career-related skills

Looking at my career path, I would have benefited from more knowledge about how to do the following:	1985 and Before	1986–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	Overall
Develop a three- to five-year strategic plan to realize my goals	88%	90%	90%	89%	88%	84%	88%
Market and promote my work and my talents	91%	93%	92%	92%	91%	89%	91%
Communicate through and about my art	86%	86%	86%	84%	82%	80%	84%
Manage finances	86%	88%	88%	89%	88%	85%	87%
Monitor legal and tax issues	83%	84%	84%	85%	84%	83%	84%

Note: Response options for these items included “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Strongly agree,” and “Not applicable.”

Most alumni agreed they could have benefited from more knowledge in all of these areas (Table 3), with at least 80% of all alumni cohorts saying they would have benefited from more knowledge in each area.

Furthermore, alumni in each cohort reported about the same level of agreement (“Somewhat” or “Strongly”) when asked whether their education prepared them for work in many different jobs and roles. These reports ranged from a low of 65% in the 2006–2010 cohort to a high of 69% for the earliest two cohorts, leaving about one third of alumni in each cohort feeling their education did not prepare them for work in many different jobs and roles.

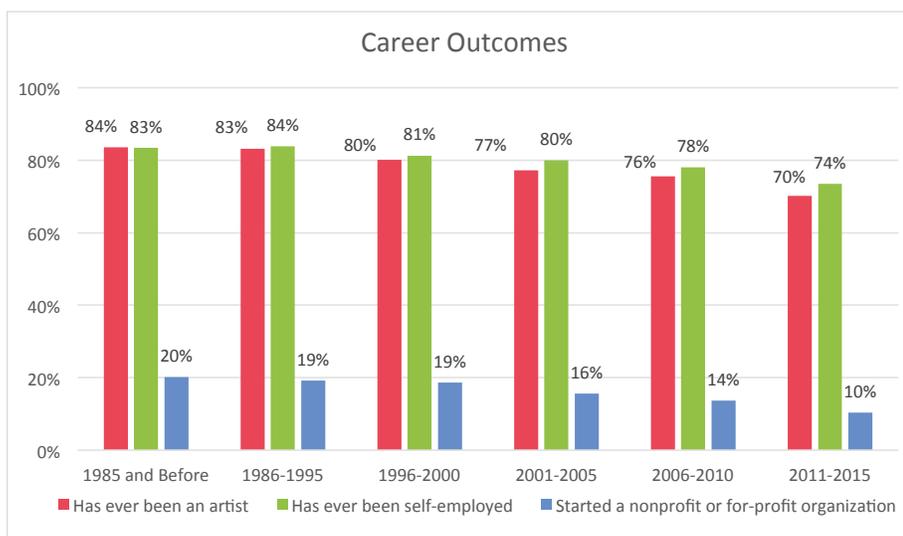
### Differences by Cohort: Career Outcomes

The likelihood of ever having been an artist, starting one’s own nonprofit or for-profit organization, and having

ever been self-employed decreased slightly with each subsequent cohort (Figure 1). This may be an effect of the increased amount of time that the older cohorts have had in the workforce—compared with the more recent graduates—than a trend toward lower rates of working as artists, being self-employed, or starting an organization. There are some differences in the rate at which alumni founded organizations, participated in self-employment, and became professional artists.

These findings reflect the larger context between self-employment and starting one’s own organization. Self-employment includes working relations like freelancing; organizing one’s own work through a series of gigs; project-based work; and other types of short-term, temporary, and non-contractual employment situations common among workers in creative industries (Lingo & Tepper,

**Figure 1:** Percentage of alumni who reported particular career outcomes in each cohort



2013). While it may look as if arts school graduates are unlikely to start their own businesses, starting one's own organization can be structurally complex and often requires incorporating the organization—a more difficult process than freelancing and other forms of self-employment. Less than 5% of U.S. workers are self-employed in their own incorporated business (Hipple & Hammond, 2016). Given this figure, the fact that between 10% and 20% of arts school graduates have founded their own nonprofit or for-profit organization shows that arts alumni, on the whole, are much more likely than average to found their own organization.

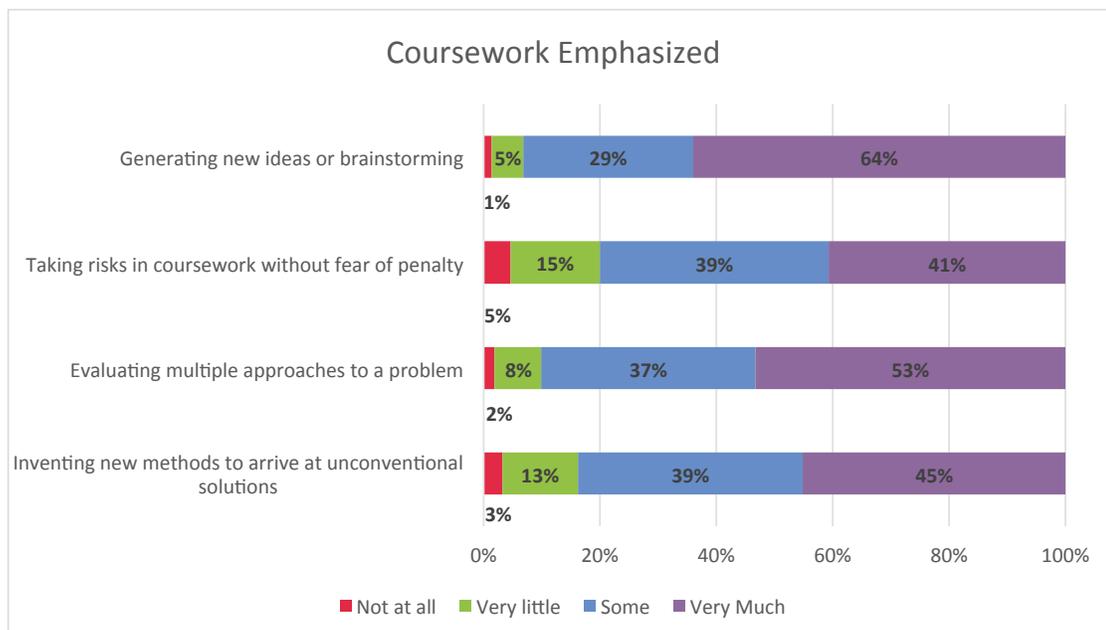
### Recent Graduates

While it is important to consider trends by cohort, many programming and curricular changes may have been implemented since some older cohorts of alumni have left their institutions. To provide the most up-to-date information and trends in education, skills, and career outcomes, the remainder of this report will focus on the responses of the most recent cohort who completed their education at a SNAAP-participating institution between 2011 and 2015. This focus will allow for the most actionable responses by arts educators, institutional stakeholders, and the arts community in general.

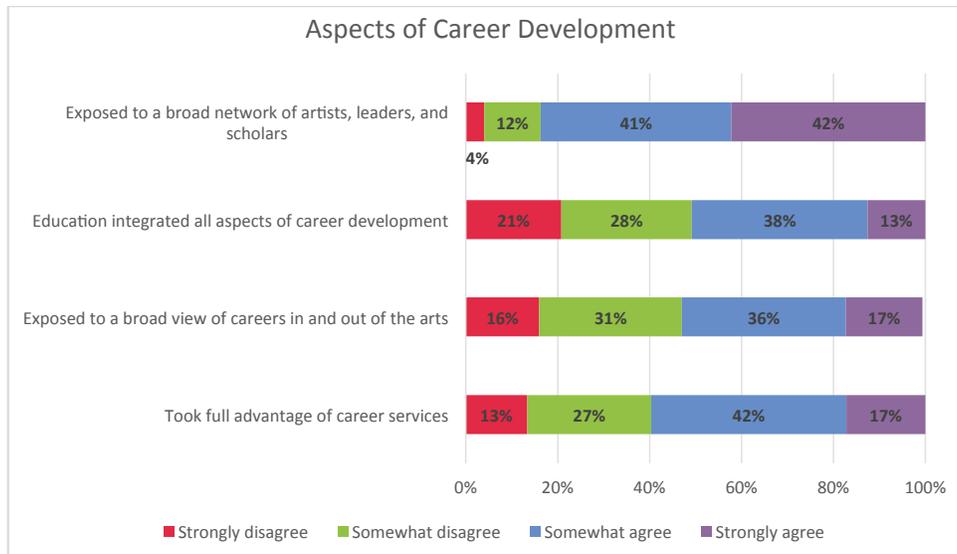
On module items regarding coursework emphasis, career development, beneficial knowledge, and preparation for multiple jobs and roles, the most recent cohort of alumni reported varied strengths and gaps in their education (Figures 2–4). Some major takeaways from the most recent cohort's responses to the module items are:

- The majority of recent alumni reported curriculum emphasizing creativity, risk taking, and innovation (Figure 2).
- Many alumni reported they were not exposed to a broad view of careers in and outside the arts, but most were exposed to a broad network of artists, leaders, and scholars in their field (Figure 3).
- Regarding gaps in entrepreneurship knowledge, at least 80% of alumni reported they would have benefited from learning more about how to monitor legal and tax issues, manage finances, communicate through and about their art, market and promote their work, and develop a three- to five-year strategic plan. (Figure 4)

**Figure 2:** Emphasis reported by recent alumni on key aspects of coursework



**Figure 3:** Exposure reported by recent alumni to key aspects of career development



Note: “Not applicable” responses were dropped from this analysis. (See Codebook in Appendix for details)

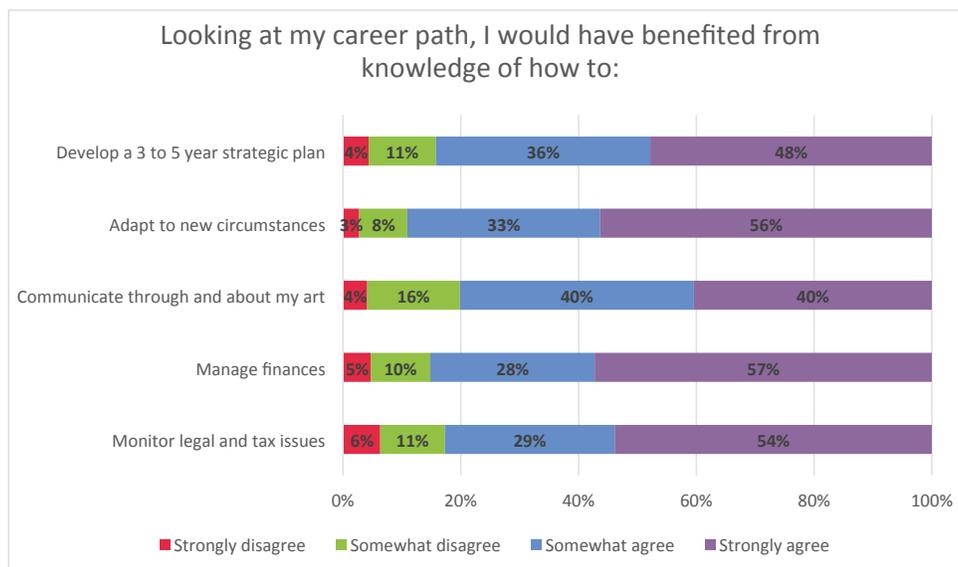
### Demographic Differences

Prior research suggests that men, Whites, and highly educated individuals are most likely to become entrepreneurs. Thebaud (2010) finds that women hold themselves to higher standards than men do when it comes to self-assessment of entrepreneurial ability; men are two to three times more likely to have confidence in their entrepreneurial ability than women. Whites participate in entrepreneurship at higher rates than do either African Americans or Hispanics (Hipple and Hammond, 2016;

Schoon & Duckworth, 2012). Lastly, people with more education are more likely to become entrepreneurs (Davidsson & Honig, 2003). Do these patterns of entrepreneurship apply to the arts?

As a whole, there are more female alumni represented in this survey. Including all cohorts, the sample is 40% men and 58% women (with another 2% who either identify as another gender or “prefer not to respond”). Of most recent alumni (2011–2015), men make up 32% of respondents and women 64% (with 4% who either identify as another

**Figure 4:** Estimated benefit to recent alumni from filling knowledge gap before leaving institution



Note: “Not applicable” responses were dropped from this analysis. (See Codebook in Appendix for details)

**Table 4:** Differences in career-related knowledge recent alumni say they “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” would have benefited their career by gender

Looking at my career path, I would have benefited from more knowledge about how to do the following:	Men	Women
Develop a 3 to 5 year strategic plan to realize my goals	83%	85%
Market and promote my work and my talents	88%	90%
Communicate through and about my art	77%	81%
Manage finances	82%	87%
Monitor legal and tax Issues	78%	85%

Note: Response options for these items included “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Strongly agree,” and “Not applicable.” Due to low numbers of respondents, the remaining other gender identity and prefer not to respond categories were not included in this analysis.

gender or “prefer not to respond”). In the most recent cohort, SNAAP respondents indicated very few differences by gender in curricular emphases and broad exposure to career development. Women did report somewhat higher rates of taking full advantage of career services (62%) compared to men (56%), and this difference between men and women extended to the areas of knowledge from which they felt they could have benefited and in their career outcomes. In the areas of knowledge from which they felt they could have benefited, women agreed they could have benefited from more knowledge at higher rates than did men for all questions. The largest differences were in managing finances (5%) and in monitoring legal and tax issues (7%).

In line with Thebaud’s (2010) findings that men are more likely than women to be entrepreneurs, male alumni reported slightly higher (4% difference) rates of founding a nonprofit or for-profit organization as well as higher rates of ever being an artist (8% difference) and ever being self-employed (8% difference) (Table 5).

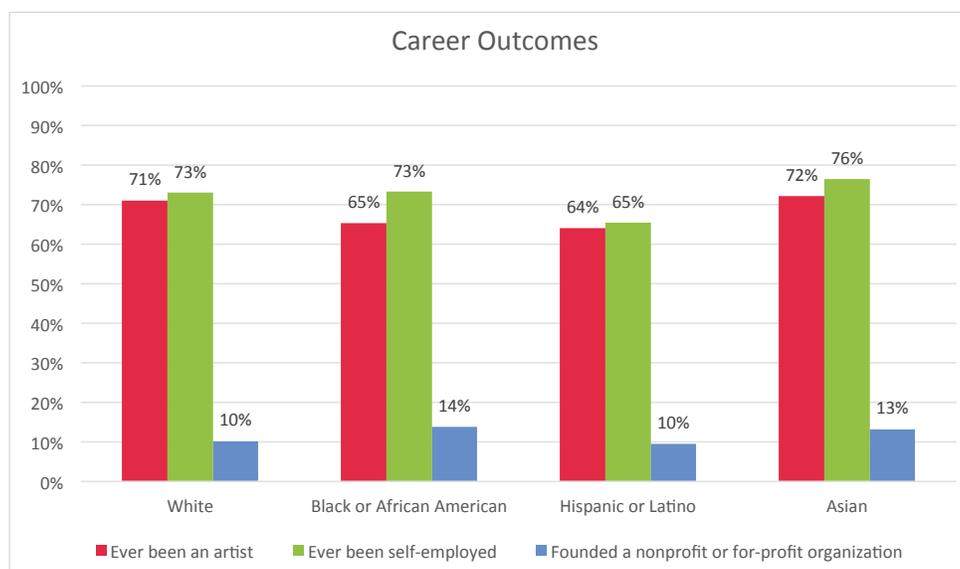
Overall, the racial/ethnic makeup of SNAAP respondents was 81% White, 2% Black or African American, 4% Hispanic or Latino, and 6% Asian, with the remaining 8% in the categories of American Indian, Pacific Islander, Other, or two or more races. (Due to low numbers of respondents in other categories, we focus here on White, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian alumni.) In the most recent cohort, 80% were White, 3% were Black or African American, 7% were Hispanic or Latino, and 11% were Asian. The differences between White, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian recent alumni in areas of coursework emphasis were small, and alumni from all racial/ethnic groups were exposed to a broad network of professionals in their field at about the same rate (3% difference from highest to lowest). All racial/ethnic groups reported within 1% difference that they felt their education prepared them for work in many different jobs and roles. However, there were some differences in career outcomes (Figure 5). White and Asian alumni indicated having ever been an artist at the highest

**Table 5:** Differences among recent graduates in career outcomes by gender

Career Outcome	Men	Women
Ever been an artist	76%	68%
Ever been self-employed, an independent contractor, or freelance worker	79%	71%
Ever founded a nonprofit or for-profit organization	13%	9%

Note: Due to low numbers of respondents, the remaining other gender identity and prefer not to respond categories were not included in this analysis.

**Figure 5:** Career outcomes for recent graduates by racial/ethnic group



Note: Due to low numbers of respondents, the remaining other race/ethnicity categories were not included in this analysis.

rates. White, Black or African American, and Asian alumni said they had been self-employed at similar rates, while Hispanic or Latino alumni were self-employed at lower rates. These discrepancies reflect some of the disadvantages for women and minorities, as suggested by previous research.

### Differences by School Type and Program of Study

Do special focus institutions differ in respect to education for entrepreneurship from more traditional baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degree-granting institutions? What effect does a student's major have on the dimensions of career and entrepreneurship skills we have been examining? Are graduate and undergraduate program alumni exposed to different types of career-related curriculum or career development while in school?

#### Special Focus Institutions

Among the most recent cohort of alumni represented in this survey, 53% attended a special focus school; that is, their institution had a special focus on arts, music, or design. The remaining 47% attended more traditional four-year colleges and universities. The differences among alumni from these school types are interesting and varied

when it comes to their curricular emphases, exposure to career development, and career outcomes.

Recent alumni from special focus institutions—compared to recent alumni from traditional four-year institutions—reported higher percentages of curricula that focus on generating new ideas or brainstorming (+6%), taking risks in coursework without fear of penalty (+11%), evaluating multiple approaches to a problem (+2%), and inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions to a problem (+8%) (Table 6). Additionally, special focus institution alumni indicated higher rates of exposure to different aspects of career development in some areas (i.e., exposure to a broad network of artists, leaders, and scholars; taking full advantage of career services), while in other areas of career development, traditional institution alumni report higher rates (i.e., having an education that integrates all aspects of career development; exposure to a broad view of careers in and outside the arts) (Table 7). Even though only 64% of alumni from special focus institutions said their education prepared them for many different jobs and roles (compared to 72% of traditional institution alumni), alumni from special focus schools reported higher rates of ever being an artist (+10%), founding an organization (+3%), and ever being self-employed (+13%) (Table 8).

**Table 6:** Differences by school type among recent alumni who reported “Some” or “Very much” emphasis of key aspects of coursework

Coursework emphasized the following:	Special Focus Arts, Music, and Design Schools	Traditional Colleges and Universities
Generating new ideas or brainstorming	96%	90%
Taking risks in coursework without fear of penalty	85%	74%
Evaluating multiple approaches to a problem	91%	89%
Inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions	87%	79%

Note: Response options for these items included “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” and “Very much.”

### Differences by Major

The SNAAP survey respondents come from a wide variety of arts disciplines. As such, their coursework and training differed. This section presents a detailed analysis of educational experiences and career development by major. When it comes to major field, there were some notable differences for recent graduates (Table 9). Some highlights include:

- Alumni from all but one major overwhelmingly reported their curriculum emphasized generating new ideas or brainstorming. The outlier in this dimension was music majors—only 79% of whom reported their curriculum emphasized generating ideas or brainstorming.
- There was a 23% range in responses by major when comparing coursework emphasis on taking risks without fear of penalty. Architecture majors and

**Table 7:** Differences by school type among alumni who “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” they were exposed to key aspects of career development among recent graduates

Aspects of Career Development	Special Focus Arts, Music, and Design Schools	Traditional Colleges and Universities
Exposed me to a broad network of artists, leaders, and scholars	86%	81%
Education integrated all aspects of career development	47%	56%
Exposed me to a broad view of careers in and out of the arts	50%	56%
Took full advantage of career services	63%	55%

Note: Response options for these items included “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Strongly agree,” and “Not applicable.” (See Codebook in Appendix for details)

**Table 8:** Differences by school type in career outcomes among recent graduates

Career Outcomes	Special Focus Arts, Music, and Design Schools	Traditional Colleges and Universities
Ever been an artist	75%	65%
Ever been self-employed, an independent contractor, or freelance worker	80%	67%
Ever founded a nonprofit or for-profit organization	12%	9%

**Table 9:** Percentage of recent graduates who reported “Some” or “Very much” emphasis of key aspects of coursework, by major

Major	Generating new ideas or brainstorming	Taking risks in coursework without fear of penalty	Evaluating multiple approaches to a problem	Inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions
Architecture	97%	89%	94%	92%
Art History	91%	75%	91%	81%
Arts Administration	93%	74%	92%	80%
Arts Education	91%	79%	92%	84%
Craft	96%	86%	94%	91%
Creative Writing	94%	88%	88%	88%
Dance	96%	82%	92%	86%
Design	98%	83%	93%	88%
Fine & Studio Art	94%	85%	89%	86%
Media Arts	94%	76%	88%	79%
Music	79%	66%	85%	70%
Theater	94%	83%	92%	86%
Other Arts	94%	76%	90%	83%

Note: Response options for these items included “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” and “Very much.”

creative writing majors (89% and 88%, respectively) were the most likely to indicate curricula focused on this area, while music majors were the least likely (66%).

- Music majors (70%) indicated the lowest level of coursework emphasis on inventing methods to arrive at unconventional solutions while architecture majors (92%) indicated the highest.

Recent alumni in different majors also varied in their levels of exposure to career development programming. Creative writing majors and studio art majors reported the lowest levels of career development programming, while arts education majors and arts administration reported the highest levels on these items (Table 10). Some patterns to note:

- Dance majors and arts education majors reported the highest levels (90% and 91%, respectively) of exposure to a broad network of artists, leaders, and scholars through guest lectures, workshops, or special events that helped them see new opportunities. Theater majors reported the lowest levels (78%) of this type of career development.

- Whether one’s education integrated all aspects of career development varied greatly by major, with a 40% difference from highest to lowest agreement level. Arts administration majors (72%) and arts education majors (76%) indicated the highest levels of having career development integrated into their education, while craft (36%), creative writing (38%), art history (41%), and fine and studio art majors (40%) indicated the lowest levels.

- Levels of exposure to a broad view of careers also had a wide range of responses, with a 33% difference from highest to lowest agreement level. Dance majors (73%) and arts education majors (70%) had the highest amount of exposure to a broad view of careers while creative writing (41%), fine and studio art (41%), and craft majors (40%) reported the least amount of exposure.

- Alumni who majored in architecture, arts administration, design, media arts, and other arts took advantage of career services at rates higher than the average for all recent alumni (60%). Creative writing and theater majors reported the lowest levels (51% each).

**Table 10:** Percentage of recent graduate alumni who “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” they were exposed to key aspects of career development at their institution, by major

Major	Exposed to a broad network of artists, leaders, and scholars	Education integrated all aspects of career development	Exposed to a broad view of careers in and out of the arts	Took full advantage of career services
Architecture	84%	59%	63%	62%
Art History	81%	41%	46%	57%
Arts Administration	83%	72%	65%	58%
Arts Education	91%	76%	70%	55%
Craft	89%	36%	40%	61%
Creative Writing	85%	38%	41%	51%
Dance	90%	63%	73%	56%
Design	85%	57%	62%	62%
Fine & Studio Art	83%	40%	41%	60%
Media Arts	82%	48%	50%	64%
Music	83%	52%	51%	55%
Theater	79%	58%	56%	51%
Other Arts	90%	56%	61%	64%

Note: Response options for these items included “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Strongly agree,” and “Not applicable.” (See Codebook in Appendix for details)

There was a 29% difference in the highest and lowest levels of agreement by major regarding preparation for work in many different jobs and roles (Table 11). In general, these majors with higher levels of preparation for multiple areas also reported higher levels of broad exposure to and participation in career development programming (Table 10). For example, creative writing majors reported the third lowest levels of preparation for work in many different jobs and roles; alumni from this major also reported relatively low levels of agreement that their education integrated all aspects of career development (38%), exposed them to a broad view of careers in and out of the arts (41%), and took full advantage of career services at the lowest level of all majors (51%). Institutions may need to further explore ways to provide career services across different major fields in the arts. Solitary fields, where art is less likely to be created or performed in groups, may not be getting the same quality of exposure.

### *Differences in Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Alumni*

For alumni from graduate and undergraduate programs, only small differences were reported in curriculum emphases and in the alumni’s exposure to different areas of career development and preparation. The only area where graduate and undergraduate program alumni differed by more than 5% was in career outcomes (Table 12). Graduate program alumni reported higher rates of ever being an artist (+7%), ever being self-employed (+10%), and ever founding an organization (+9%). These differences are consistent with the higher level of personal investment and commitment one would expect from someone who pursues further arts education, as well as the additional skills gained from this further study.

**Table 11:** Ranking of majors by percentage of recent graduate alumni who “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” their education prepared them for work in many different jobs and roles

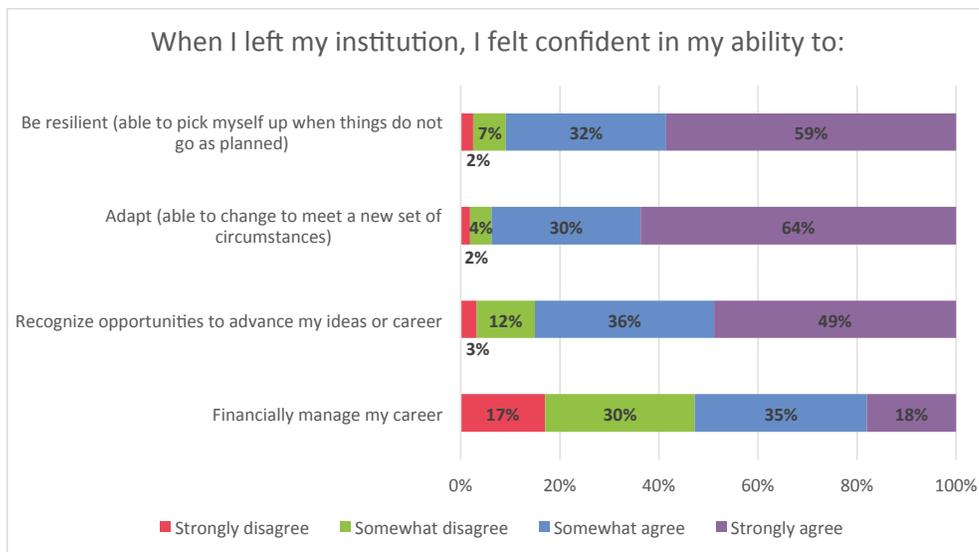
Major	% Agreement
Dance	82%
Architecture	81%
Arts Administration	77%
Theater	77%
Arts Education	76%
Design	74%
Music	70%
Other Arts	70%
Art History	65%
Media Arts	64%
Creative Writing	63%
Craft	59%
Fine & Studio Art	56%

Note: Response options for this item included “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” and “Strongly agree.”

## Confidence in Abilities

How confident are arts alumni in their personal and professional abilities? Are there differences by gender or race/ethnicity in these levels of confidence?

The module asks about alumni confidence in various career-related abilities when they left their institution. The items focus on alumni’s ability to be resilient, adapt to new circumstances, recognize opportunities, and financially



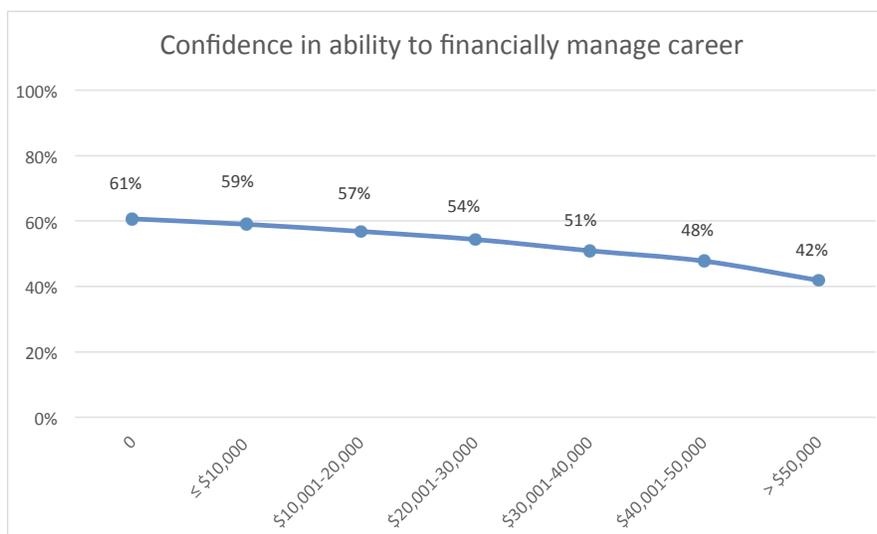
**Figure 6:** Rating of confidence in career-related abilities when leaving institution by recent graduates

**Table 12:** Career outcomes by graduate or undergraduate alumni status among recent graduates

Career Outcome	Graduate	Undergraduate
Ever been an artist	75%	68%
Ever been self-employed, an independent contractor, or freelance worker	81%	71%
Ever founded a nonprofit or for-profit organization	17%	8%

manage their own careers. Alumni reports of confidence in these areas varied by cohort, although some differences were quite small. Alumni confidence in the ability to be resilient (the capacity to be able to pick themselves up when things did not go as planned) was relatively stable across all cohorts, in the low 90% range. Likewise, all cohorts had high levels of confidence (92% to 94% agreement) in their ability to adapt by changing to meet a new set of circumstances. Levels of confidence in one’s ability to recognize opportunities to advance their ideas or career were slightly lower for some older cohorts, but somewhat higher in the most recent two cohorts (80% and 85% agreement, respectively). Lastly, alumni confidence in the ability to financially manage their career was highest with the oldest cohort (58%), but all cohorts reported relatively low levels of confidence in this ability compared to their confidence in the other three areas.

Looking more closely at the most recent cohort, distinct differences are clear in alumni confidence levels in these career-related abilities. Recent alumni (2011–2015)



**Figure 7:** Trend line for recent graduates who “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” they were confident in their abilities to financially manage their career, by level of student debt from that institution.

confidence in the ability to financially manage one’s career was much lower than confidence in other areas (Figure 6). Only 53% of recent alumni left their institution feeling confident in their abilities to financially manage their careers, while conversely 47% of alumni either somewhat or strongly disagreed they were confident in their ability to do so. Confidence was much higher in recognizing career opportunities, adapting to new circumstances, and being resilient. This drastic difference in alumni confidence in the ability to financially manage one’s career as compared to confidence in other areas is cause for concern.

One aspect of institutional experience that may influence alumni confidence in the ability to financially manage their career is level of student loan debt. Results showed an inverse relationship between alumni’s confidence in

the ability to financially manage their career and the student loan debt they had accrued from attending the institution (Figure 7). Those with higher amounts of loan debt reported less confidence in their ability to financially manage their career.

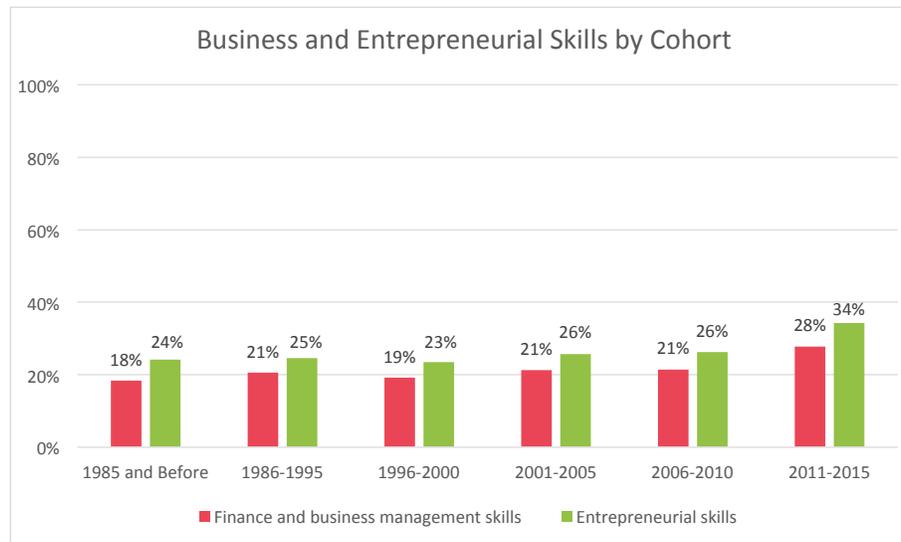
Encouragingly, recent alumni confidence in career-related abilities was extremely consistent across gender. Men and women’s reports of confidence were only 1% different, at most. Regarding race, however, a few more pronounced differences appeared in reported confidence levels at the time alumni left their institutions (Table 13). Black or African American alumni reported the lowest levels of confidence in all areas, but their level of confidence was closer to that of their White, Latino or Hispanic, and Asian peers in some areas (adapting to new circumstances,

**Table 13:** Differences among recent graduates who “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” they were confident in key career-related abilities, by racial/ethnic group

When I left my institution, I felt confident in my ability to:	White	Black or African American	Latino or Hispanic	Asian
Be resilient (able to pick myself up when things do not go as planned)	92%	86%	90%	89%
Adapt (able to change to meet a new set of circumstances)	94%	90%	91%	94%
Recognize opportunities to advance my ideas or career	85%	84%	86%	88%
Financially manage my career	54%	44%	56%	53%

Note: Response options for these items included “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” and “Strongly agree.” Due to low numbers of respondents, the remaining other race/ethnicity categories were not included in this analysis.

**Figure 8:** Percentage of alumni, by cohort, who said they developed “Very much” or “Some” financial and business management and entrepreneurial skills at their institution



Note: Response options for these items included “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” and “Very much.”

recognizing career opportunities) than in others (being resilient, financially managing one’s own career). As discussed above, alumni confidence in the ability to financially manage their own careers was much lower than confidence in other areas. This is the area where Black or African American alumni had the largest difference from their peers. While more than 50% of White, Latino or Hispanic, and Asian alumni reported they were confident in their ability to financially manage their career, only 44% of Black or African American alumni reported that they were confident in this area.

### Skill Development

What are the differences between alumni whose schools helped them develop financial, business, and entrepreneurial skills and alumni who did not get adequate training in these areas? Are alumni who feel more highly skilled in these areas more likely also to have been exposed to career development programming, to have worked as an artist, or to have been confident in other career-related abilities?

Earlier in this report, we cited a past SNAAP DataBrief, which found that while 71% of arts alumni indicated entrepreneurial skills were “Very” or “Somewhat important” in their line of work, only 26% of said they developed (“Very much” or “Some”) entrepreneurial skills while in school. This 45% difference between the need for and the development of entrepreneurial skills is what we call the “entrepreneurial skills gap.” In this report, we have looked at the trends in module responses for the types of

curriculum, exposure to curricular and extracurricular career development, specific knowledge around entrepreneurship training from which alumni would have benefited, and how confident alumni are in aspects of navigating their careers. On SNAAP’s core survey, alumni are asked about a set of 16 different skills and abilities, and about whether they acquired these while at their institutions. In the following section of this report, we see how alumni who did and did not develop two of these skill sets (financial and business management skills as well as entrepreneurial skills) differ in the areas of education and career development that are the focus of the module.

The percentage of alumni who said their institution helped them develop “Very much” or “Some” financial and business management skills and entrepreneurial skills was higher among the more recent cohorts, with the most recent cohort (2011–2015) having the highest levels of both financial and business management skills (28%) and entrepreneurial skills (34%). In general, however, most alumni felt they did not adequately develop these skill sets while attending their institution (Figure 8).

### Financial and Business Management Skills

Recent alumni who said they acquired or developed business skills while attending their institution were more likely to report their coursework emphasized generating new ideas or brainstorming, taking risks, multiple methods of evaluating problems, and innovative problem solving. Although the differences were relatively small (5% to 11% difference), they were consistent, showing that alumni who developed

**Table 14:** Differences among recent alumni who reported “Some” or “Very much” emphasis of key aspects of coursework by whether or not they developed “Some” or “Very much” financial and business management skills in school

<b>Coursework emphasized:</b>	<b>Did not develop business skills</b>	<b>Developed business skills</b>
Generating new ideas or brainstorming	92%	97%
Taking risks in coursework without fear of penalty	77%	88%
Evaluating multiple approaches to a problem	88%	96%
Inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions	81%	91%

Note: Response options for these items included “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” and “Very much.”

financial and business management skills also indicated at a higher rate having had coursework that emphasized creativity, risk-taking, and innovation (Table 14).

More apparent differences were found when examining alumni exposure to career development. Recent alumni who said they did not develop financial and business skills in school—compared to those who did develop these skills—reported 39% lower levels of integrating all aspects of career development and 35% lower levels of exposure to a broad view of careers in and outside the arts. Alumni in this group also reported 11% lower levels of exposure to a broad network of professionals in their field and 10% lower rates of taking full advantage of their institution’s career services while in school (Table 15).

Overall, recent alumni who did not develop financial and business management skills indicated somewhat lower levels of confidence in their abilities to be resilient, to adapt to new circumstances, and to recognize career

opportunities. There was one larger difference in alumni assessments of their confidence—of the alumni who did not develop or acquire these skills, only 43% reported confidence in their ability to financially manage their career, 36% lower than their peers who did develop financial and business management skills (Table 16). The differences between alumni who did and did not report developing financial and business skills in school show a pattern indicating that alumni who acquired this type of skill development also received a more comprehensive education in respect to creative and innovative emphasis in coursework and exposure to career development in programming. Furthermore, these alumni entered the workforce with greater confidence in their ability to financially manage their careers.

Recent alumni who developed financial and business skills while in school (87%) agreed they felt much better prepared for many different jobs and roles than alumni who did not adequately develop financial and

**Table 15:** Differences among recent alumni who “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” they were exposed to key aspects of career development by whether or not they developed “Some” or “Very much” financial and business management skills in school

<b>Aspects of Career Development</b>	<b>Did not develop business skills</b>	<b>Developed business skills</b>
Exposed to a broad network of artists, leaders, and scholars	81%	92%
Education integrated all aspects of career development	40%	79%
Exposed to a broad view of careers in and out of the arts	43%	78%
Took full advantage of career services	57%	67%

Note: Response options for the skills items included “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” and “Very much.” Response options for the career development items included “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Strongly agree,” and “Not applicable.” (See Codebook in Appendix for details)

**Table 16:** Differences among recent alumni who “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” they were confident in career-related abilities by whether or not they developed “Some” or “Very much” financial and business management skills in school

When I left my institution, I felt confident in my ability to:	Did not develop business skills	Developed business skills
Be resilient (able to pick myself up when things do not go as planned)	89%	96%
Adapt (able to change to meet a new set of circumstances)	92%	98%
Recognize opportunities to advance my ideas or career	82%	94%
Financially manage my career	43%	79%

Note: Response options for the skills items included “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” and “Very much.” Response options for the confidence items included “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” and “Strongly agree.”

business skills (60%). While these groups reported feeling substantially different about their preparation, however, the difference in their career outcomes was much less pronounced (Table 17). Alumni who did and did not develop business skills reported close to the same rate of ever having been an artist and ever having been self-employed (only 2% difference between them for each). The two groups were also equally likely to found their own nonprofit or for-profit organization. The more notable difference between alumni who acquired financial and business skills while in school—compared to those who did not—appears in the higher rates at which alumni with those skills were able to find a job within four months of graduating (+6%) and in their satisfaction with the income from their primary job (+14%).

### Entrepreneurship Skills

Substantial differences emerged between alumni who reported acquiring or developing entrepreneurship skills

while attending their institution and alumni who did not, further illuminating the skills gap. Recent alumni who adequately developed entrepreneurial skills—compared to those who did not—reported more coursework emphasis on generating new ideas (+6%), taking risks without fear of penalty (+15%), evaluating multiple methods of solving problems (+9%), and inventing new methods and solutions (+13%) (Table 18).

Furthermore, recent alumni who did not develop entrepreneurial skills also reported they were less exposed to broad networks of professionals in their field and took less advantage of available career services (Table 19). Additionally, these alumni—compared to alumni who did develop entrepreneurial skills—reported much lower levels of education that integrated all aspects of career development (-38%) and that exposed them to a broad view of careers both in and outside the arts (-36%).

**Table 17:** Differences in career outcomes among recent alumni by whether they developed “Some” or “Very much” financial and business management skills in school

Career Outcome	Did not develop business skills	Developed business skills
Ever been an artist	70%	72%
Ever been self-employed, an independent contractor, or freelance worker	74%	72%
Ever founded a nonprofit or for-profit organization	10%	11%
Found a job in less than four months after leaving the program	66%	72%
Very or somewhat satisfied with income for primary job	55%	69%

Note: Response options for the skills items included “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” and “Very much.”

**Table 18:** Differences among recent alumni who “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” on the emphasis of key aspects of their coursework by whether or not they developed “Some” or “Very much” entrepreneurial skills in school

Coursework emphasized:	Did not develop entrepreneurial skills	Developed entrepreneurial skills
Generating new ideas or brainstorming	91%	97%
Taking risks in coursework without fear of penalty	75%	90%
Evaluating multiple approaches to a problem	87%	96%
Inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions	79%	92%

Note: Response options for these items included “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” and “Very much.”

**Table 19:** Differences among recent alumni who “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” they were exposed to key aspects of career development by whether or not they developed “Some” or “Very much” entrepreneurial skills in school

Aspects of Career Development	Did not develop entrepreneurial skills	Developed entrepreneurial skills
Exposed to a broad network of artists, leaders, and scholars	79%	94%
Education integrated all aspects of career development	38%	76%
Exposed to a broad view of careers in and out of the arts	41%	77%
Took full advantage of career services	56%	67%

Note: Response options for the skills items included “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” and “Very much.” Response options for the career development items included “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” “Strongly agree,” and “Not applicable.” (See Codebook in Appendix for details)

Regardless of their acquired level of entrepreneurial skills, recent alumni felt they could have benefited from more education in developing and managing their careers. Yet despite this parity in feelings about missed potential benefits, alumni who developed entrepreneurial skills were more confident in other career-related abilities (Table 20). They reported higher levels of confidence in their abilities to be resilient, to adapt to new circumstances, and to recognize career opportunities. Furthermore, those with higher levels of entrepreneurial skill development reported much higher levels of confidence in their abilities to financially manage their careers.

In the previous section, we found that recent alumni who developed business and financial skills while at their institution had somewhat better career outcomes, especially in terms of finding a job quickly after leaving their program and earning a satisfactory income. When looking at the same career outcomes based on development

of entrepreneurial skills while at their institution, the gap in several outcomes is apparent (Table 21). Alumni who did develop entrepreneurial skills—compared to those who did not—had higher percentages of ever having been an artist (+7%), founding a nonprofit or for-profit organization (+3%), ever having been self-employed (+4%), finding a job within four months after graduating (+8%), and satisfaction with their income (+12%). Additionally, 86% of recent alumni who developed entrepreneurial skills felt prepared for work in many different jobs and roles, compared to only 58% of alumni who did not develop these skills.

## Conclusion

In the current economy, more workers rely on self-employment, freelancing, or other nontraditional work. Whereas higher education is set up to educate students and generally prepare them for jobs as employees, the

**Table 20:** Differences among recent alumni who “Somewhat agree” or “Strongly agree” they were confident in career-related abilities by whether or not they developed “Some” or “Very much” entrepreneurial skills in school

<b>When I left my institution, I felt confident in my ability to:</b>	<b>Did not develop entrepreneurial skills</b>	<b>Developed entrepreneurial skills</b>
Be resilient (able to pick myself up when things do not go as planned)	88%	96%
Adapt (able to change to meet a new set of circumstances)	92%	98%
Recognize opportunities to advance my ideas or career	80%	94%
Financially manage my career	43%	73%

Note: Response options for the skills items included “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” and “Very much.” Response options for the confidence items included “Strongly disagree,” “Somewhat disagree,” “Somewhat agree,” and “Strongly agree.”

**Table 21:** Differences among recent alumni in career outcomes by whether or not they developed “Some” or “Very much” entrepreneurial skills in school

<b>Career Outcome</b>	<b>Did not develop entrepreneurial skills</b>	<b>Developed entrepreneurial skills</b>
Ever been an artist	68%	75%
Ever been self-employed, an independent contractor, or freelance worker	72%	76%
Ever founded a nonprofit or for-profit organization	9%	12%
Found a job in less than four months after leaving the program	65%	73%
Very or somewhat satisfied with income for primary job	55%	67%

Note: Response options for the skills items included “Not at all,” “Very little,” “Some,” and “Very much.”

growing shift toward entrepreneurship necessitates a better understanding of the education and career skill development that colleges and universities can undertake to best prepare their students for successful self-managed careers. Arts schools and programs especially should take note of these changes, as many of their alumni—along with the job of creating and distributing their art—will engage in careers that require the self-management of financial, legal, and tax issues; marketing and promotion; and strategic planning.

Various results from the SNAAP Career Skills and Entrepreneurship module provide insights into the current state of career skills and entrepreneurship education in arts schools. Key findings from this report include the following:

- Curriculum is increasingly emphasizing creativity, risk-taking, and innovation; in more recent years, alumni have taken advantage of career services more fully.
- Less than half of arts alumni feel they were exposed to a broad view of careers in and outside the arts.
- More than 80% of alumni across the cohorts feel they could have benefited as part of their educational experience from learning more about concrete career skills like marketing and promoting their work, managing finances, and developing a three- to five-year strategic plan.

- Recent alumni from different arts majors report substantially different levels of preparedness for many jobs and roles. Dance (82%) and architecture (81%) majors report the highest levels of feeling prepared for many jobs and roles while fine and studio art (56%) majors report the lowest levels of preparedness.
- Alumni are generally confident in their abilities except when it comes to financially managing their careers; almost half (47%) of recent alumni are not confident in their ability to financially manage their careers.
- Although alumni in more recent cohorts report higher levels of acquiring business and entrepreneurial skills in school, more than 60% of those alumni still report they are not developing these skills while in school. Recent alumni who do not develop business and entrepreneurial skills are less confident in their abilities and do not feel as prepared for work in many different jobs and roles.
- Recent alumni who develop business and entrepreneurial skills during their time in school have a higher level of satisfaction with their income and find jobs more quickly after graduating.

Can entrepreneurial knowledge, motivation, and skills even be taught effectively? Haase and Lautenschlager (2010) suggest that when it is part of a university curriculum for arts and sciences students who are not in a business program, entrepreneurship is taught in a way that is too theoretical—focusing on “education about entrepreneurship” rather than “education for entrepreneurship” (p. 147). They recommend that universities provide experiential education for entrepreneurship, to prepare students for the situations they might encounter as entrepreneurs.

Essig (2009) adds that entrepreneurship should be taught across the curriculum in the same way that “writing across the curriculum” was stressed in the 1980s. She examines the case of a theater class in which the students not only put on a play but also managed the financial and structural

enterprise of putting on the play; students were responsible for clearing copyrights, marketing the play, producing and organizing the play’s run in a theater, and staying on an actual budget. Not surprisingly, students came up against real challenges they would also encounter if they were independent professionals producing a play. For example, one year the student responsible for clearing the copyright did not follow through with that responsibility; the play had to be cancelled, and the students in the next semester’s class had to deal with the budgetary constraints imposed by the past semester’s lack of funds generated by ticket sales. Educational experiences like this can provide students who are likely to engage in entrepreneurial careers with the opportunity to learn about the entrepreneurial process in a structured educational environment under the direction of a professor.

This report highlights the unequal distribution of education and skill-building that may contribute to the entrepreneurial skills gap discovered in previous SNAAP research (Frenette & Tepper, 2016; Lena et al., 2014; Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, 2011). The gap between the percentage of alumni who say their school helped them develop business and entrepreneurial skills and those who say these skills are important in their work and professional life has an impact on other areas as well. Alumni who developed business and entrepreneurial skills were more likely to report their coursework emphasized creativity and innovation. They also reported higher levels of career development programming as part of their educational experience. In light of the gaps in education, it is not surprising the alumni whose education included an emphasis on business and entrepreneurial education had stronger outcomes in terms of satisfaction with income and other aspects of their careers. Clearly, alumni who said they developed business and entrepreneurial skills have had better career outcomes and felt better prepared for their careers, but a troublingly low percentage of alumni adequately acquired these skills while in school. More emphasis is needed in arts schools on developing financial, business, and entrepreneurial skills so that arts alumni not only can create art but can also successfully manage their careers in the arts.

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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.



**STRATEGIC  
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