

COTA Alumni Data: Can I get some satisfaction?

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Research Questions

There is a general assumption that students with an undergraduate arts degree do not attain success compared to their peers in other fields.

- Does this assumption bear out to be true or false?
- How is success measured (Income level, personal satisfaction, happiness index, etc.)?
- Are there standard success benchmarks? If so, what are they? Do we use a comparison of non-arts groups for such benchmarks?
- What data are available on undergraduates with arts degrees?
- What other data are available?
- What has been measured, what trends can we compare it to?
- Are graduates in the arts able to take advantage of more broad job opportunities?

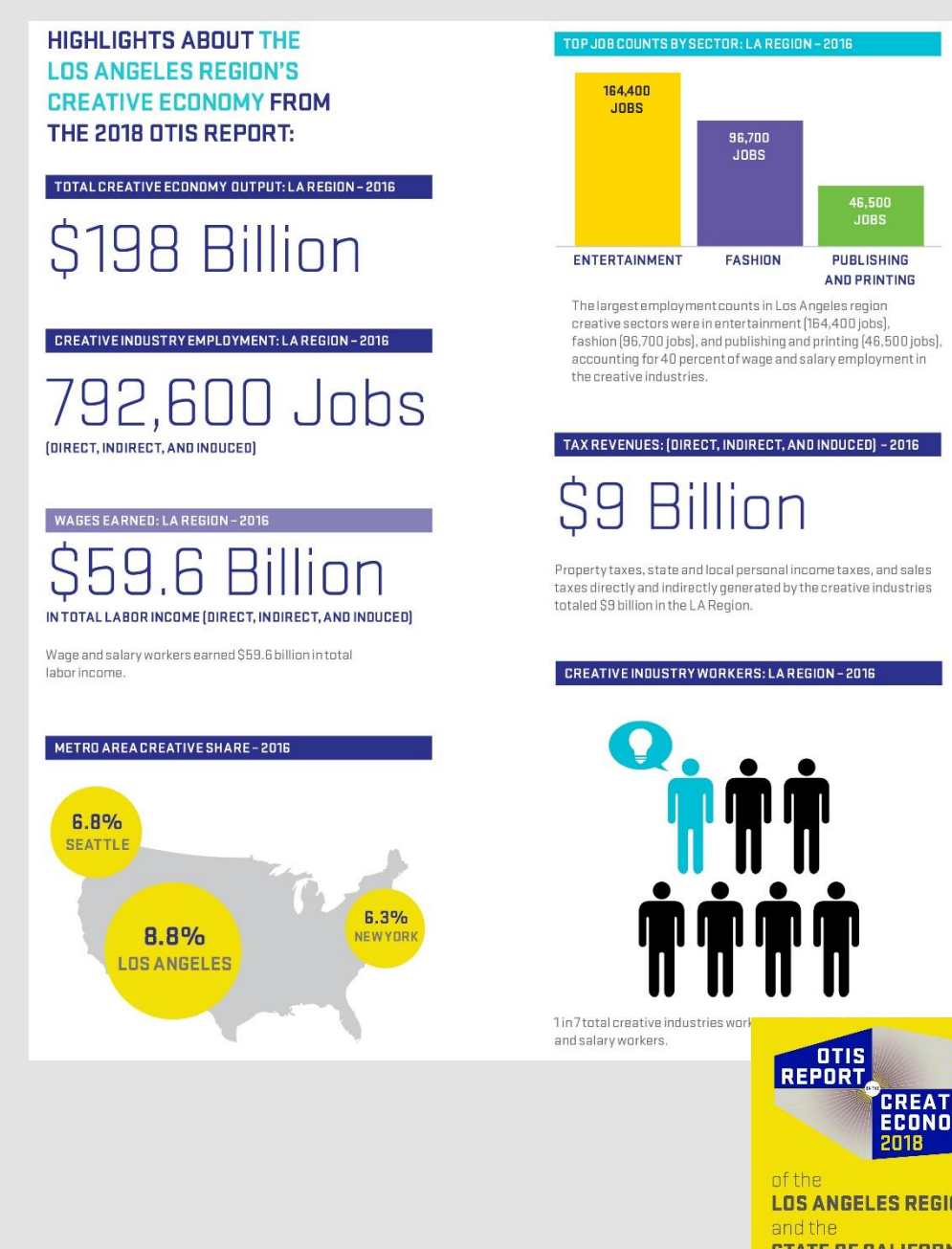
Review of Literature

In our review of existing literature and data sets, we found incongruent findings with both positive and negative data reports related to alumni success in the arts. What we have found is that existing reports tend to support the goals of the reporting organizations. In many instances, there appears to be an attempt to justify the existence of the arts, when other disciplines do not appear to feel the pressure to do so. We also reviewed multiple first destination reports such as the SNAAP survey.

For Example, **Otis College of Art and Design**, a specialized private arts college, produces a highly distributed report in collaboration with the Institute for Applied Economics entitled **The Otis Report on the Creative Economy**. This report attempts to address the entirety of the economic impact of the arts, design, and related fields on the economy of California. The report emphasizes the arts as an economic juggernaut in the commercial, educational and non-profit sectors of the California economy. The report for Otis then serves as a marketing and recruitment tool for their college.

Conversely, the **Creativz Report-Creativity Connects: Trends and Conditions Affecting U.S. Artists** takes a national perspective on the arts and the economy. It presents more of a deficit perspective. A partnership between the Center for Cultural Innovation and the National Endowment for the Arts, the report's conclusions emphasize a deficit perspective.

The universities that we found tracking first destination data in the arts report information with titles like "Overall Success Rate" similar to Miami University in Ohio.



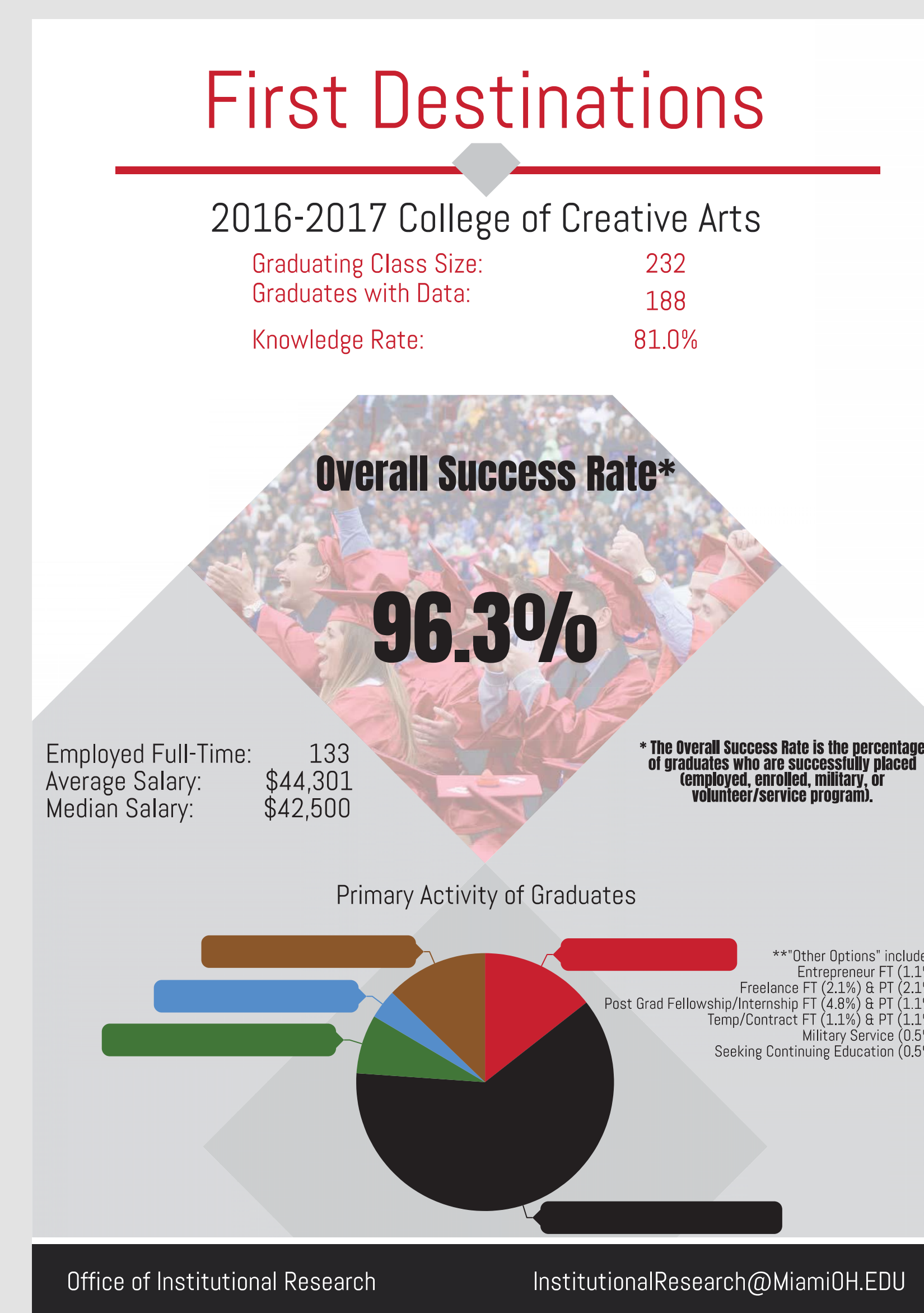
2. Artists share challenging economic conditions with other segments of the workforce.

Making a living as an artist has never been easy, but broader economic trends such as rising costs of living, greater income inequality, high levels of debt, and insufficient protections for "gig economy" workers are putting increasing pressure on artists' livelihoods. Artists also face unique challenges in accessing and aggregating capital to propel their businesses and build sustainable lives.

3. Structural inequities in the artists' ecosystem mirror those in society more broadly.

Race-, gender- and ability-based disparities that are pervasive in our society are equally prevalent in both the nonprofit and commercial arts sectors. Despite the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity of the country and the broadening array of cultural traditions being practiced at expert levels, the arts ecosystem continues to privilege a relatively narrow band of aesthetic approaches.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | INTRODUCTION | TRENDS AMONG ARTISTS | DOWNSTREAM OPPORTUNITIES | SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY | TECHNOLOGY | EDUCATION | TRAINING | FUNDING | IMPLICATIONS | VIEW OF ARTISTS | POLICY | APPENDIX | DOWNLOAD PDF



Methods

The COTA Data Fellows team is utilizing a quantitative approach to our Data Fellows project. Through an extensive literature and existing instrument review, we have developed a survey to be distributed to COTA alumni. Our goal is to collect enough survey responses to provide significant data related to the success and satisfaction of alumni who have graduated within the last 10 year with an undergraduate degree in the Arts.

7. Did your college major equip you with transferable skills (check all that apply)?

My college major did not equip me with transferable skills. Ability to serve as a leader

Ability to think creatively. Ability to be organized and manage time wisely

Ability to revise and refine. Ability to communicate effectively

Ability to think critically. Ability to gather, interpret and analyze information

Ability to work in a team and listen to others

8. How long have you been in your current career/job?

1-3 years more than 9 years

4-6 years Unemployed

6-9 years

9. How would you categorize your employment?

Traditional Employment (ie 9-5 M-F)

Freelance/Gig Economy/1099

Other (please specify) _____

10. Are you currently working in a field related to your degree?

Not related to my degree

Somewhat related to my degree

Related to my degree

Highly related to my degree

11. How satisfied are you with your current job/career?

Not Satisfied

Somewhat Satisfied

Next Steps/Future Directions

- Review of the project through COTA Dean and Associate Dean
- Coordinate with Alumni Association to prepare for survey distribution
- Approval through IRB
- Distribute survey and collect data
- Analyses of data
- Develop report and prepare for distribution
- Review how document can be utilized to improve outcomes for current students and support for graduates

Implications for Action

Using the data from the survey, we can begin to examine ideas relating to:

- BEACH 2030 goals: defining how COTA graduate success is measured within the arts (happiness index, salary, income level, personal satisfaction) within the next 10 years. What does that specifically look like for CSULB COTA grads in comparison to other schools across the country?
- Developing COTA wide internship program or professional practice seminars to prepare graduates for understanding of realistic workforce expectations, average income levels, and overall general understanding field.
- Continue to send annual survey to COTA graduates to collect data.