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FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION

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The Power of Peers:
Exploring the Impact of Peer Leadership Experiences

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April 1, 2014

Session Learning Objectives

As a result of attending this session, participants will:

- Gain a greater understanding of the characteristics and outcomes of peer leadership experiences

- Advance their understanding of peer leadership as an emerging and innovative high-impact practice

- Have the opportunity to compare features of their peer leadership programs to a national profile of characteristics of students experiences in these roles
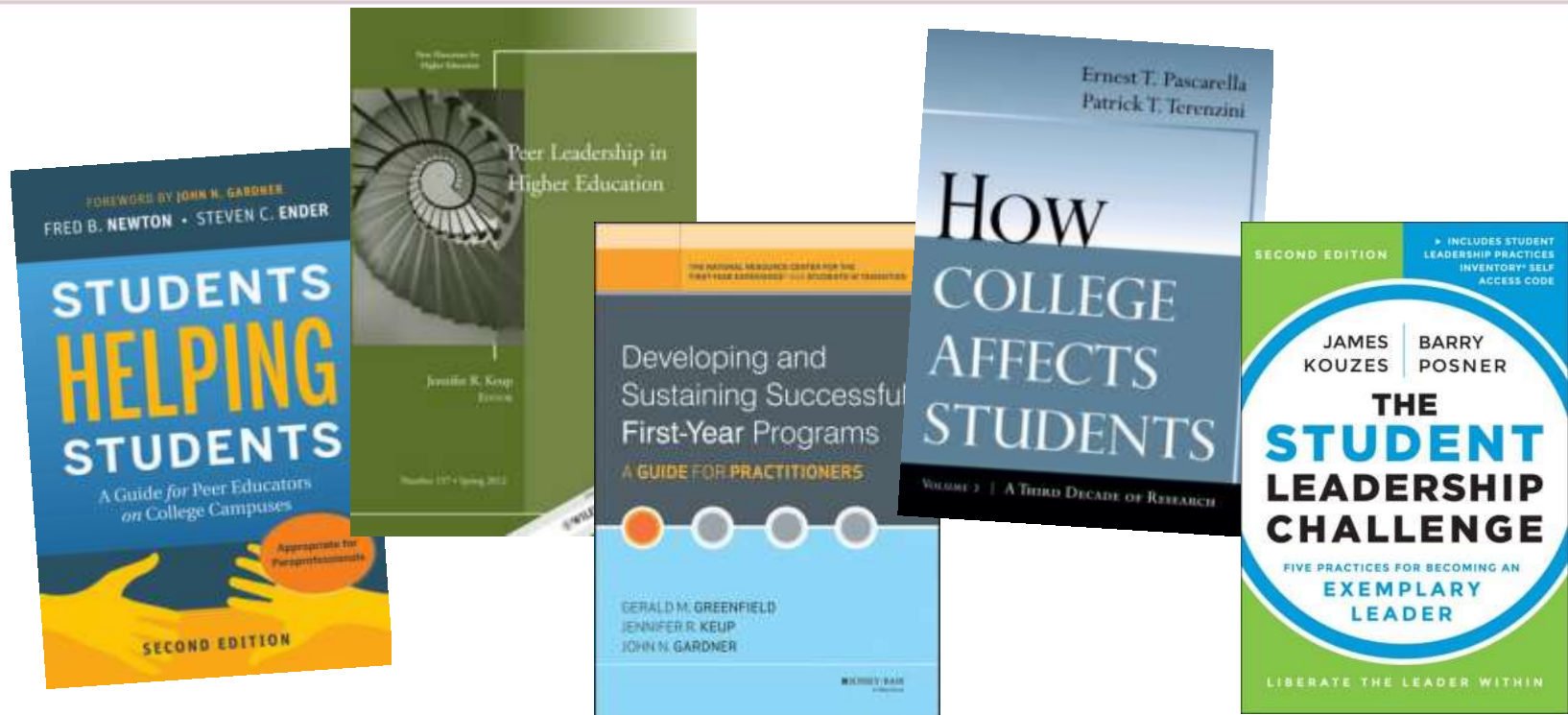
Introduction

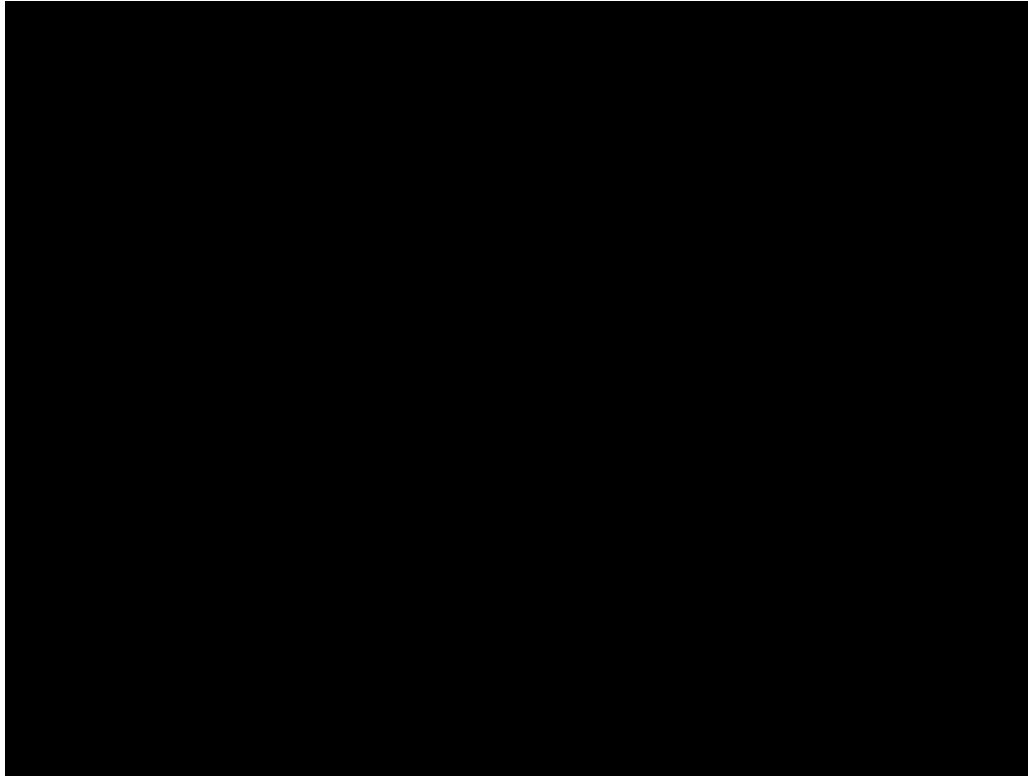# BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Peer Influence Happens

Peer Influence Happens

Peer Pressure

- Peers have a significant and profound impact on the undergraduate experience:
  - Intellectual development
  - Academic Engagement
  - Moral Development
  - Clarification of Political and Social Values
  - Determination of Academic and Social Self-Concept
  - Interpersonal Skills
  - Critical Thinking Skills
  - Positive Gains in Writing and Reading Comprehension

(*Greenfield, Keup, & Gardner, 2013; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Skipper, 2005)*

Peer Pressure

"The student's peer group is **the single most potent source of influence** on growth and development during the undergraduate years."

(*Astin, 1993*)

Defining "Peer Leadership"

"Students who have been **selected and trained** to offer educational services to their peers. These services are **intentionally designed** to assist in the adjustment, satisfaction, and persistence of students toward attainment of their educational goals, Students performing in [*these*] paraprofessional roles **are usually compensated** in some manner for their services and are **supervised by qualified professionals**."

(*Ender & Newton, 2000; Newton & Ender, 2010*)

Background on Peer Leaders

- Historically, Peer Leaders were situated in co-curricular roles in orientation or residence life *(Ender & Kay, 2001)*

- Recently, the use of Peer Leaders in the classroom and academic realm has become more widespread *(Greenfield, et al., 2013; Shook & Keup, 2012)*
  - Roles: tutors, Supplemental Instruction leaders, and peer advisors
  - Courses: English composition, introductory mathematics, gateway courses, and first-year seminars

Background on Peer Leaders

- Peer leaders are empowered to exert influence in a less intimidating way than staff or faculty (*Cuseo, 1991; Hart, 1995*)

- Student paraprofessionals are an effective and efficient resource

- The use of peer leaders provides benefit to:
  - <u>Programs</u>: improved student outcomes, stronger bridge between faculty/staff and students
  - <u>Students</u>: more opportunities for student interventions
  - <u>Peer leaders</u>: engagement with faculty & staff, leadership training
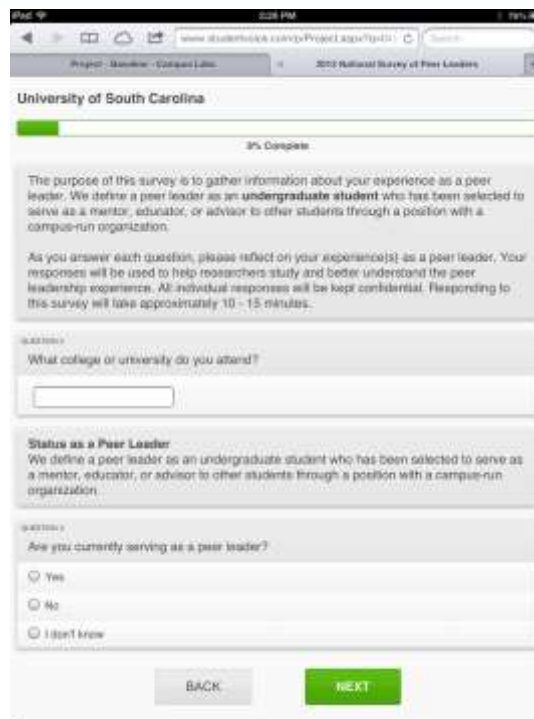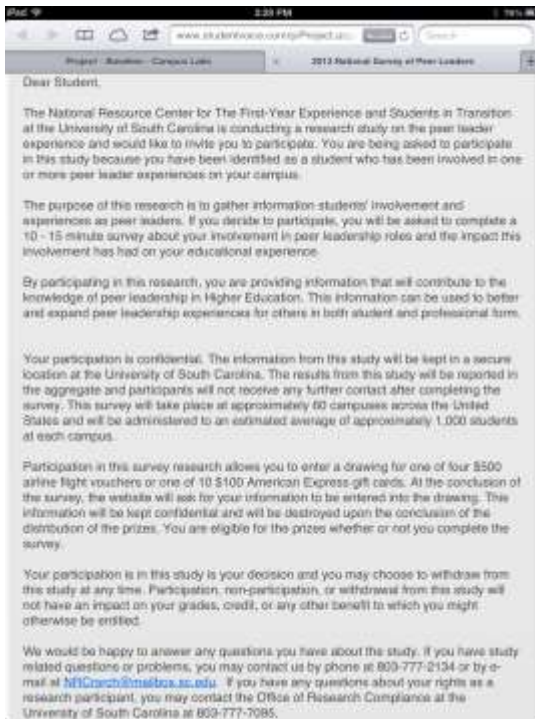
Methodology

2013 NATIONAL SURVEY OF PEER LEADERS

www.sc.edu/fye

Method: Data Source

2013 National Survey of Peer Leaders

- Pilot in 2009 garnered 1,972 student respondents
- 2013 survey was a partnership with 5 leading educational organizations involved with peer leaders:
  - ACUHO-I
  - International Center for Supplemental Instruction
  - NACA
  - National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition
  - NODA
- Institutional recruitment took place first

49 Participating Institutions:
2013 National Survey of Peer Leaders

Angelo State University
Appalachian State University
Bethany College
Brigham Young University
Campbell University
Cedar Crest College
Colorado State University
East Carolina University
Eastern Illinois University
Fort Hays State University
Framingham State University
Furman University
Georgia Southern University
Hofstra University
Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne
Indiana University East
Kennesaw State University

Lesley University
Lyndon State College
Madonna University
Minot State University
Missouri State University
Montclair State University
Morgan State University
Northern Illinois University
Ohio University
Oklahoma State University - Main Campus
Oregon State University
San Jose State University
South Dakota State University
Southern Arkansas University
Southern Illinois University
Stetson University
Temple University

The College at Brockport
The University of Maryland - College Park
The University of New Orleans
The University of South Florida
The University of Tampa
University of Central Florida
University of Florida
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
University of Maryland Baltimore County
University of South Carolina Columbia
University of South Carolina Upstate
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Wayne State University
Wells College
Wittenberg University

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Method: Data Source
2013 National Survey of Peer Leaders

- Student survey administered from 3/26/2013-6/1/2013

- 4,932 student peer leaders responded to the survey (28.6% response rate)

- Student sample over-represents women and high academic performers

- Student sample has adequate representation by race/ethnicity, class standing, & Pell Grant eligibility

Findings

TYPE AND NUMBER OF PEER LEADER EXPERIENCES
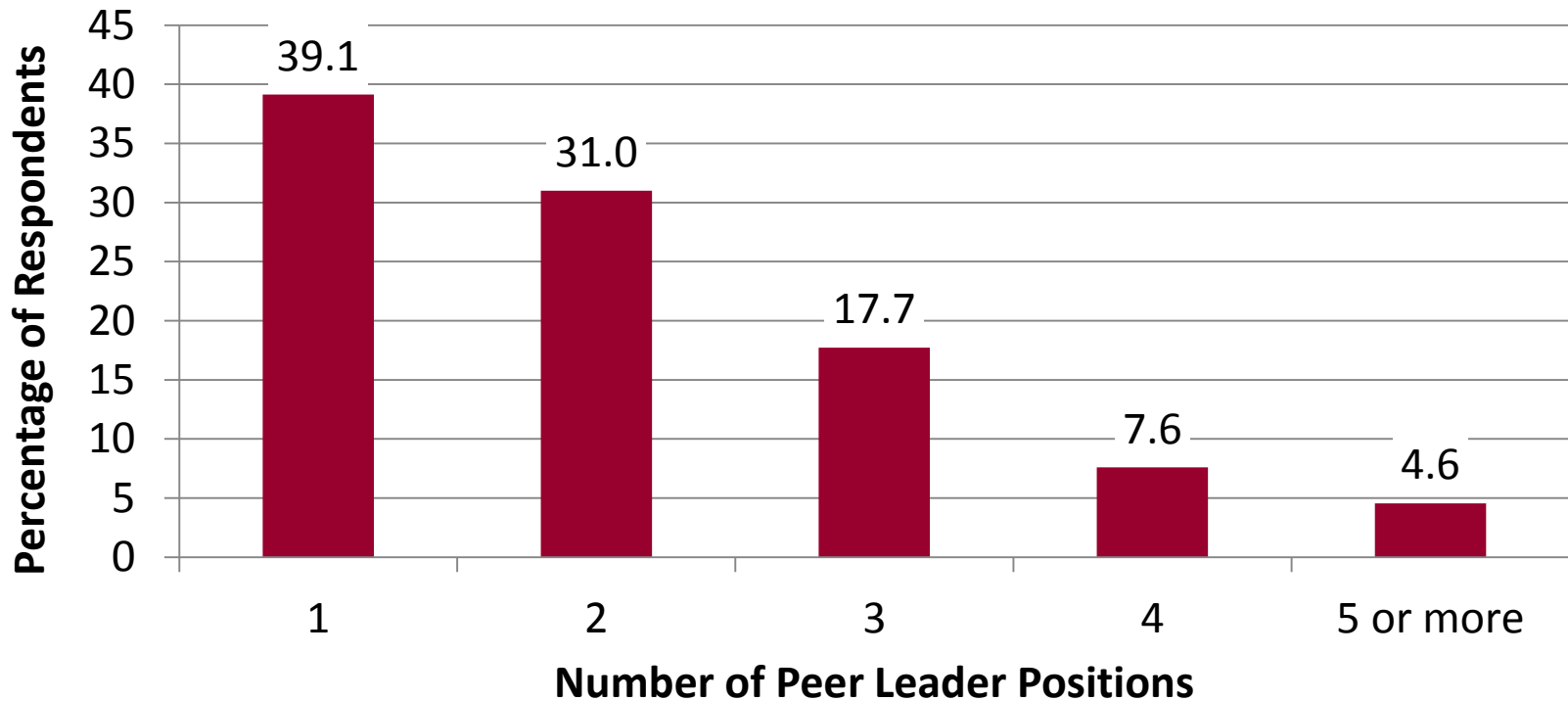
How are peer leaders being used on your campus?

Most Common PL Sponsors

What type of campus-based organization have you worked for as a peer leader, either currently or in the past? (n = 4,016)

Peer Leader Experience	%
Student clubs and organization(s)	44.5
Residence Hall	28.9
First-Year Experience	28.6
Campus activities	28.5
Orientation	24.6
Academic - peer advisor	24.5
Community service or service learning	23.8
Academic - Tutor	23.4

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Least Common PL Sponsors

What type of campus-based organization have you worked for as a peer leader, either currently or in the past? (n = 4,016)

Peer Leader Experience	%
Athletics	9.5
Admissions	9.3
Religious	8.9
Academic-Supplemental Instruction leader	8.7
Multicultural affairs	5.4
Study abroad	5.2
Outdoor or recreational sports	4.3
Counseling or mental health	3.1
Student productions or media	2.8
Judicial affairs or student conduct	2.6
Physical health	2.6
International student office	2.2
Financial literacy	.8

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Number of Peer Leader Experiences

How many peer leader positions do you currently hold? (n = 3,527)

Number of Peer Leader Experiences

What is the highest number of peer leader positions have you ever held at one time? (n = 4,016)
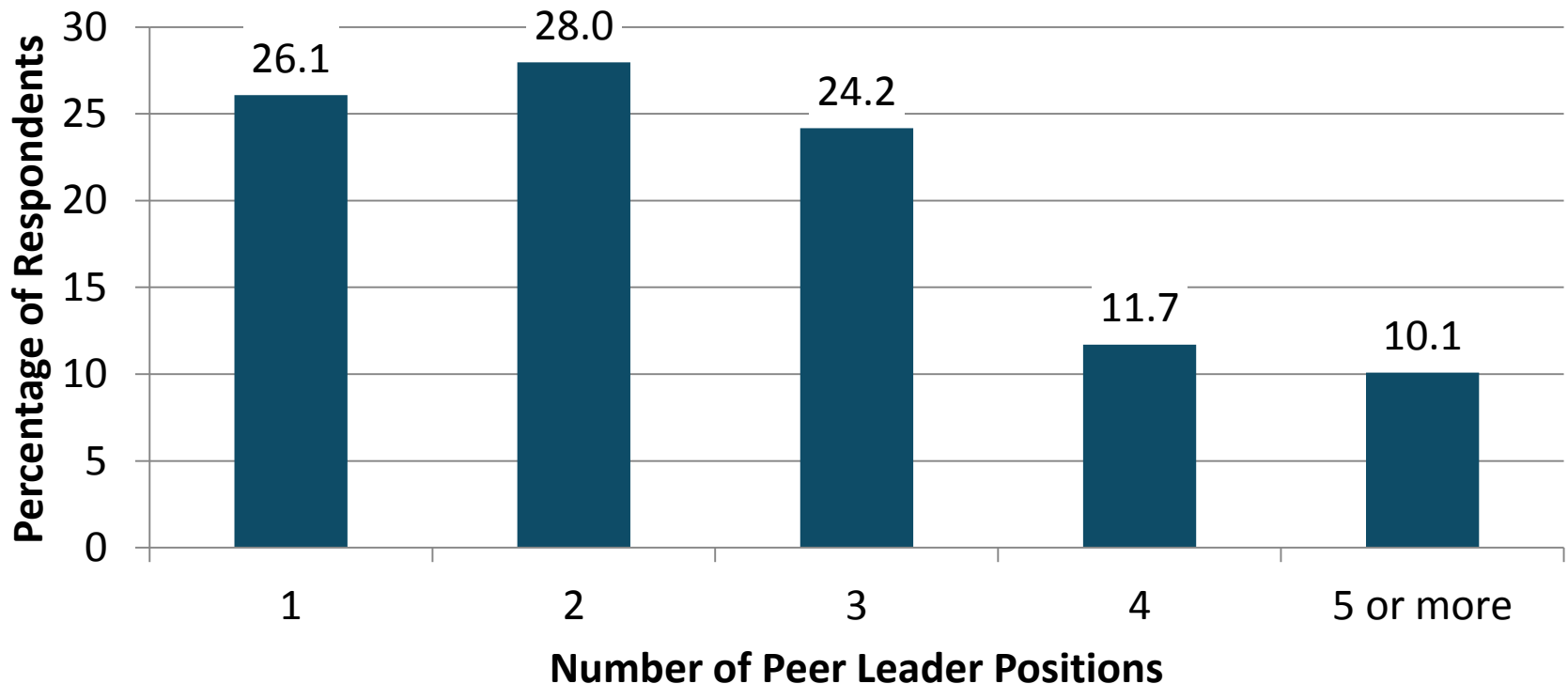
Number of Peer Leader Experiences

Including any current positions, how many total peer leader positions have you held during your college experience? (n = 4,016)

Chart: Percentage of Respondents by Number of Peer Leader Positions

Number of Peer Leader Positions	Percentage of Respondents
1	19.1
2	19.8
3	16.9
4	13.6
5	10.4
6	6.4
7	4.6
8	3.3
9	1.4
10 or more	4.4
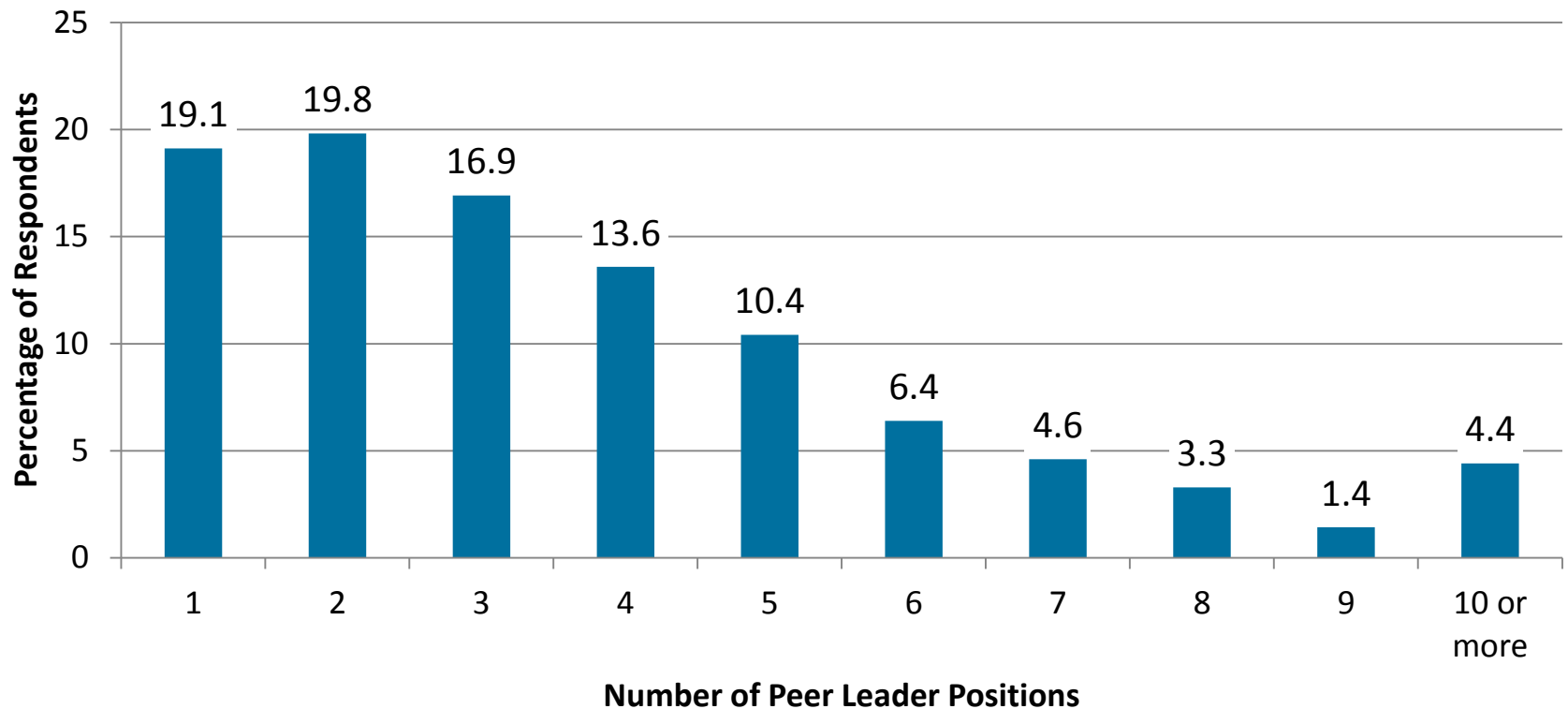
Time Spent on PLEs

On average, how many hours per week do you spend performing your peer leader responsibilities? (n = 4,016)
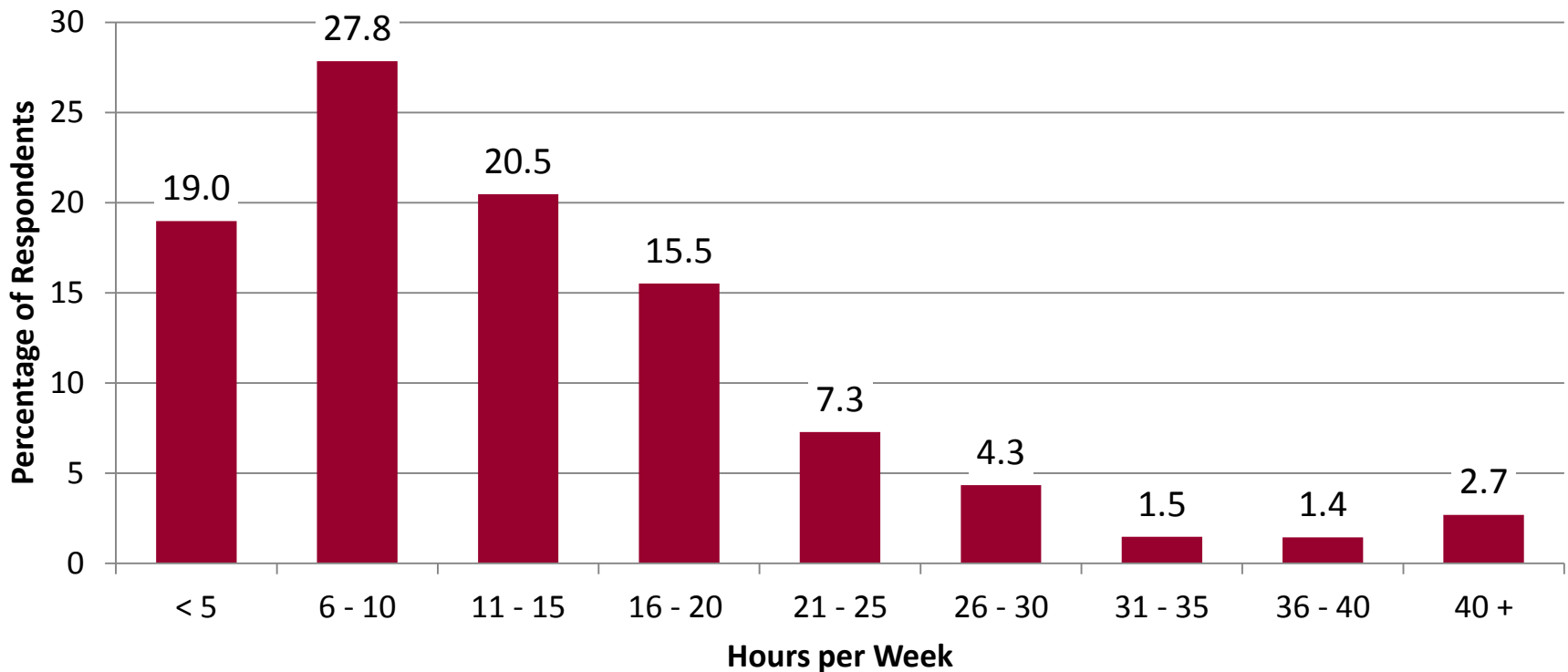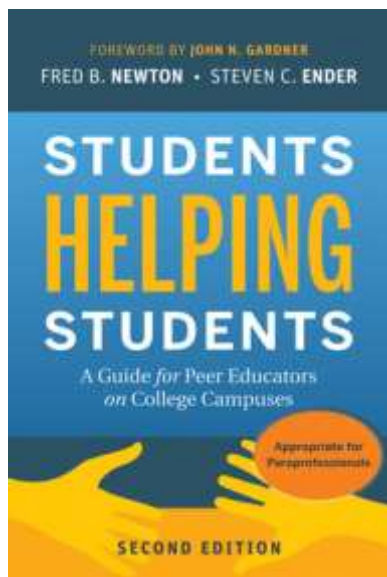
"Students who have been **selected and trained** to offer educational services to their peers. These services are intentionally designed to assist in the adjustment, satisfaction, and persistence of students toward attainment of their educational goals, Students performing in [*these*] paraprofessional roles are **usually compensated in some manner for their services** and are supervised by qualified professionals."

Results

PEER LEADER SELECTION, TRAINING, & COMPENSATION

PL Selection Process

Which of the following best describes the peer leader selection process you went through (n = 3,942)

Application: (86.4%)

Election: (38.8%)

Nomination: (35.9%)

Other: (2.8%)

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Training

Were you trained for your peer leader position(s)?
(n = 3,942)

0.8%

13.5%

85.6%

Yes

No
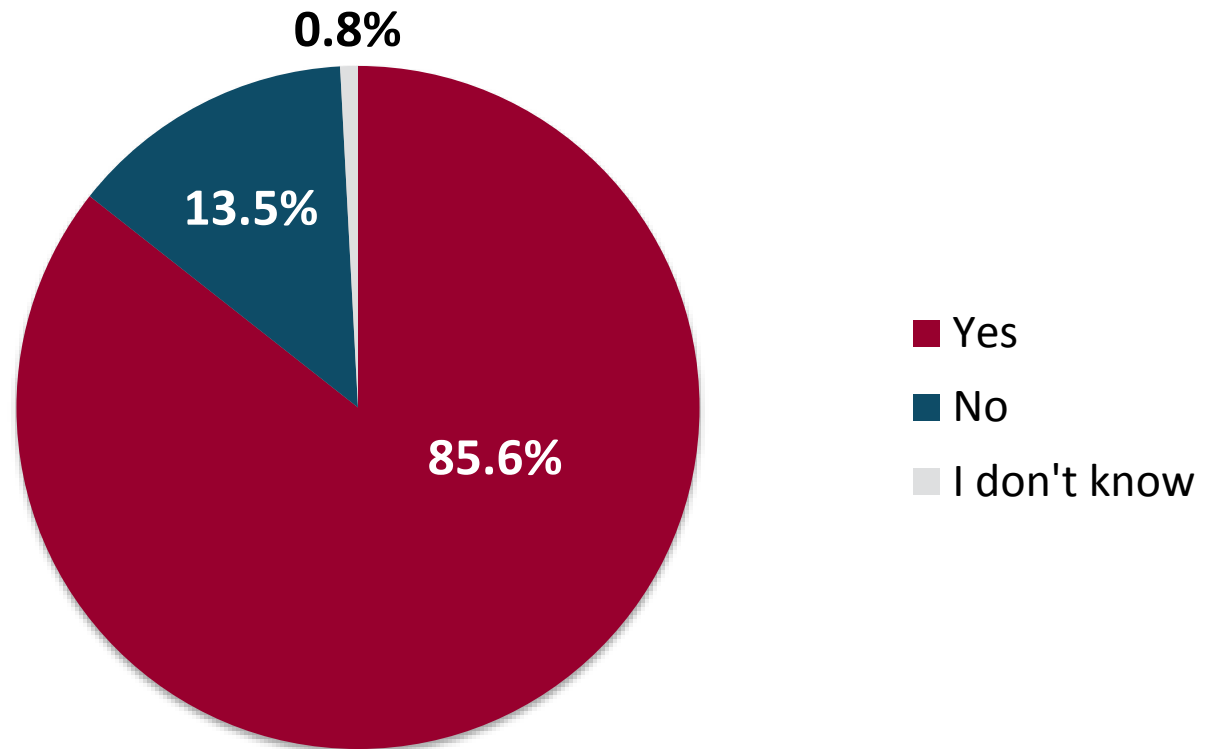
I don't know

Training

How long was the initial formal training for your current and/or previous peer leader position(s)? (n = 3,353)

Bar chart — Percentage of Respondents (y-axis) vs. Length of Training (x-axis):

Length of Training	Percentage of Respondents
Half a day or less	22.8
1 day	18.6
2 days	17.5
3 days	10.8
4 days	5.8
1 week	17.3
2 weeks	21.0
3 weeks	7.3
Enrollment in class	19.4
Other	6.9
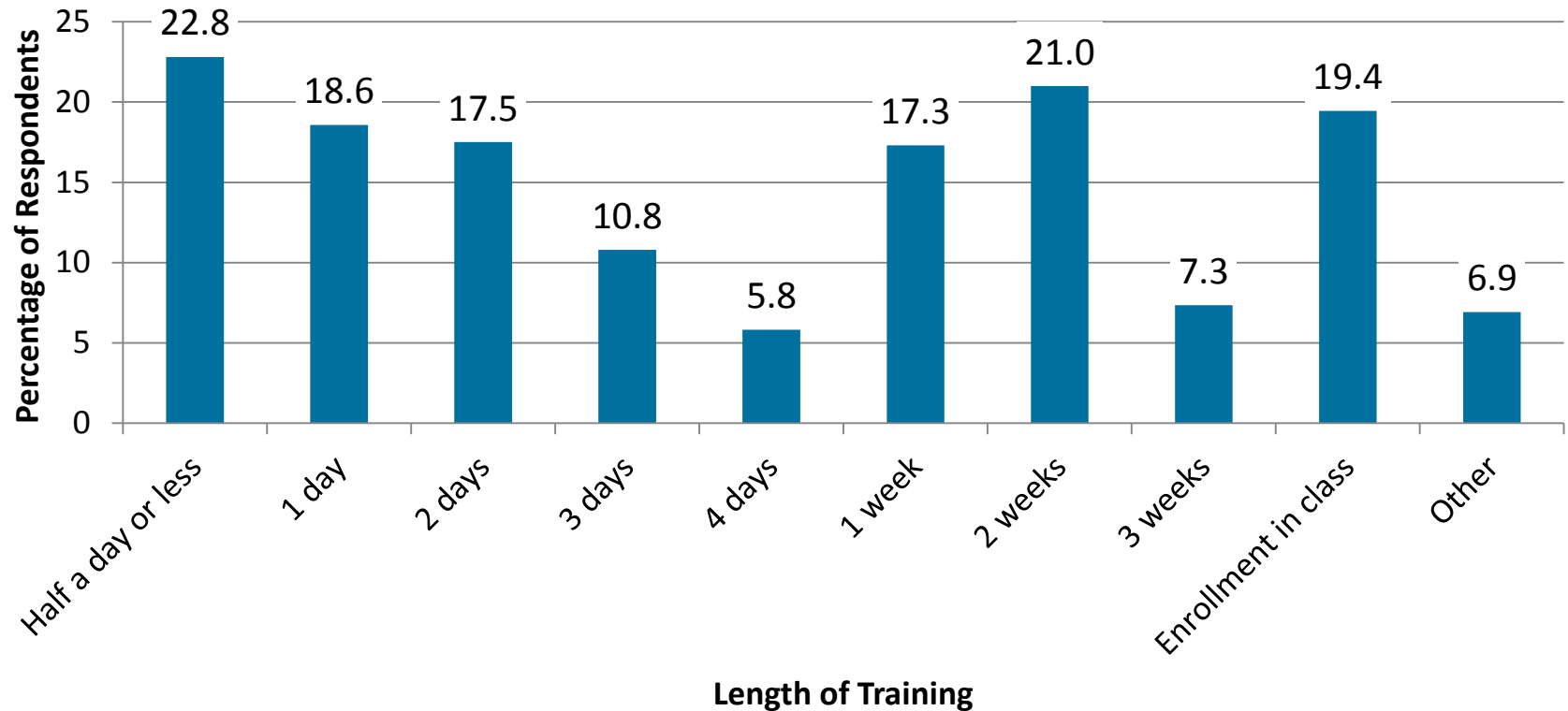
Training

Did you receive any additional ongoing formal training after the initial training? (n = 3,353)

Pie chart:
- Yes: 68.8
- No: 28.8
- I don't know: 2.4
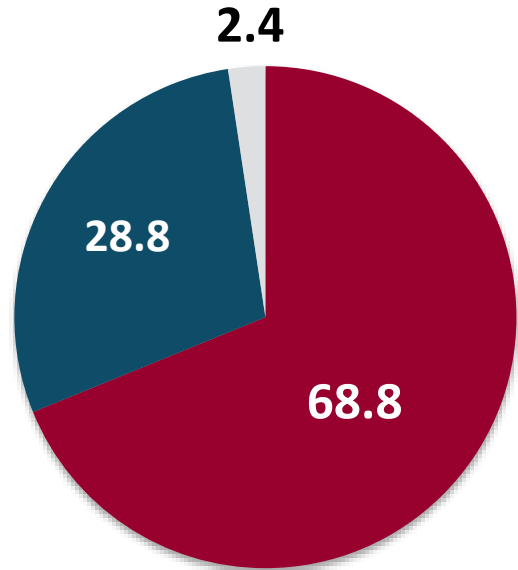
Legend: ■ Yes ■ No ■ I don't know

What type of additional ongoing formal training did you receive? (n = 2,303)

Bar chart — Percentage of Respondents:
- Retreat: 38.5
- Staff meetings: 61.2
- Meetings with supervisor: 47.8
- Other: 7.1
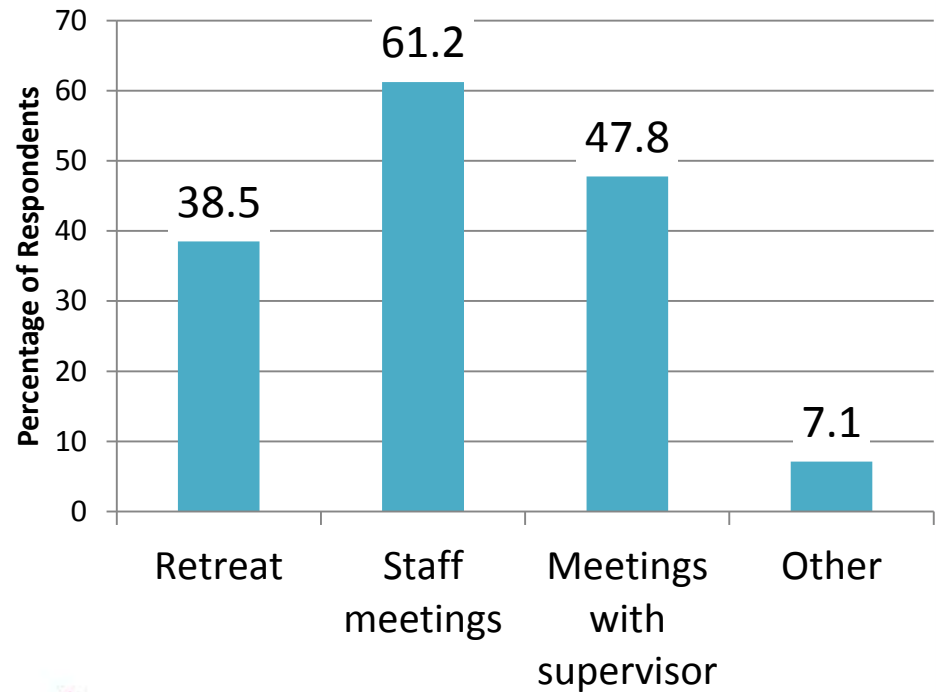
What peer leader training models are you findings most effective?

Trends in Peer Leader Training

- Longer training modules

- Ongoing support & professional development

- Curricular components

- Outcomes focused

- Focus on supervision as part of training

- Peer leadership & training among peer leaders

- Integrated across campus and across PLE

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Compensation

What compensation did or do you receive for your work as a peer leader? (n = 3,942)

Bar chart with y-axis "Percentage of Respondents" (0 to 70) and x-axis "Form of Compensation":
- Volunteer: 59.4
- Financial Compensation: 56.0
- Room and board: 23.7
- Course credit: 15.1
- Other: 4.4

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The Economics of Human Development

Hope
Wellbeing
Strengths
Engagement → Academic Success

Findings

PEER LEADER OUTCOMES

What are the stated outcomes for peer leaders at your institution?

Outcomes of Peer Leader Experiences

- Student peer leaders were asked to report their growth in four outcome areas:
  - "To what degree has the following (outcome) changed as a direct result of your peer leadership experiences?"

- Outcome areas
  - Skills
  - Undergraduate Experiences
  - Employability Outcomes
  - Academic Performance

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Outcomes of PLEs

Skill Development	% Increased
Leadership	87.3
Interpersonal communication	82.5
Teamwork	77.5
Time management	73.6
Project management	72.9
Organization	71.5
Presentation	67.5
Critical thinking	65.8
Written communication	53.4

Self-Rated Change in Skills

"Peer leadership increases your communication skills dramatically... I just feel strongly about peer leadership because it boosts your confidence."

"The responsibilities of peer leadership helped me to learn more about organization, time management, as well as teamwork, and cooperation."

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Outcomes of PLEs

Undergraduate Experience	% Increased
Knowledge of campus resources	83.6
Meaningful interaction with peers	81.2
Feeling of belonging at institution	76.6
Meaningful interaction with staff members	75.9
Interaction with people from different backgrounds	75.6
Meaningful interaction with faculty	73.3
Understanding people from different backgrounds	72.9
Desire to engage in continuous learning	71.8
Desire to persist at institution	68.9

Self-Rated Impact on Undergraduate Experience

"When I first got the job I was shy and unsure of myself a lot of the times but over the past almost two years I have grown and become more confident. I have learned to communicate effectively with people from different backgrounds. I have also had the opportunity to become close to faculty and staff that I work with. I feel more connected to campus and have enjoyed being there for freshmen students that are struggling with the college transition."

Outcomes of PLEs

Employability Outcomes	% Increased
Building professional interpersonal relationships	77.9
Applying knowledge to a real-world setting	72.7
Bringing together info from different places	71.2
Providing direction through persuasion	67.8
Analyzing a problem from new perspectives	65.8
Expectations for success in a FT job after grad	65.5
Creating innovative approaches to a task	65.4
Engaging in ethical decision-making	64.5
Sharing ideas with others in writing	46.2

Self-Rated Change in Employability

"Tutoring in the writing center made me more interested in pursing a career related to assisting students with writing, especially ESL students ."

"Because of my leadership experience, I finally figured out what I want to do with my life after I graduate. I am much more motivated now than I was when I was a freshman to complete my courses with decent grades. I am very motivated to learn the content of my courses as opposed to just getting a grade."

Outcomes of PLEs

Academic Performance	% Increased
Academic skill development	39.9
Overall academic performance	23.8
Grade point average	19.0
# of credit hours completed each term	15.1
Facilitate timely graduation	1.8

Self-Rated Change in Skills

"As a Biology major, tutoring in chemistry ... the information ... level ... basic ... both as peer leaders and academically. ... ter."

"Being a peer leader has affected my academic performance by surrounding me with other peers who work hard both as peer leaders and academically. Their example h... strengthe..."

"Commitments with my peer leader positions have interfered with the amount of free time that I have to study for exams, complete assignments, and become further involved with my coursework. "

Satisfaction with PLEs

How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your peer leadership experiences?
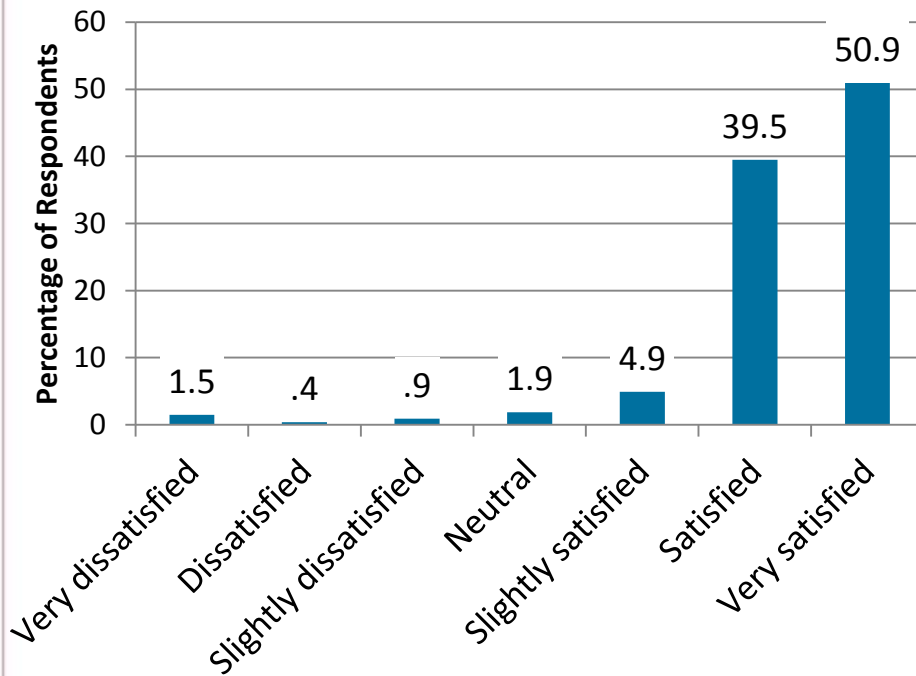
Would you recommend being a peer leader to other students?

- Yes, absolutely
- Yes, for most of the peer leadership positions I have held
- Yes, for some of the peer leadership positions I have held (but not most)
- No

Conclusions

PEER LEADERSHIP AS A HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE

Definition of High-Impact Practices

"Teaching and learning practices that have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds. These practices take many different forms, depending upon learner characteristics and on institutional priorities and contexts. [*HIPs are*] practices that educational research suggest increase rates of retention and student engagement."

<div align="right">(Kuh, 2010)</div>

10 High-Impact Practices

☑ First-Year Seminars and Experiences

☑ Common Intellectual Experiences

☑ Learning Communities

☑ Writing-Intensive Courses

☑ Collaborative Assignments & Projects

☑ Undergraduate Research

☑ Diversity/Global Learning

☑ Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

☑ Internships

☑ Capstone Courses and Projects

Characteristics of HIPs

- Creates an investment of time and energy
- Includes interaction with faculty and peers about substantive matters
- Real-world applications
- High expectations
- Includes frequent feedback
- Exposure to diverse perspectives
- Demands reflection and integrated learning
- Accountability

Consider Adaptability

"It stands to reason that [*HIP*] key conditions can be adapted and incorporated into any teaching and learning situation inside or outside the classroom to promote higher levels of student performance. There are doubtless other high-impact activities…in which large number of students participate."

Kuh, 2010

High-Impact Practices

- ☑ First-Year Seminars & Experiences
- ☑ Common Intellectual Experiences
- ☑ Learning Communities
- ☑ Writing-Intensive Courses
- ☑ Collaborative Assignments & Projects
- ☑ Internships

- ☑ Undergraduate Research
- ☑ Diversity/Global Learning
- ☑ Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- ☑ Capstone Courses & Projects
- ☑ **Peer Leadership**

Takeaways - Overall

- Peer leaders report engagement in experiences
  - Largest concentration of respondents reported spending between 6 and 15 hours per week on PL responsibilities
  - Most report active involvement in selection process
  - Many have training experiences of a week or longer
  - Majority report ongoing training
  - Many do not receive compensation (i.e., volunteer)
- Peer leaders report satisfaction with the experience
  - Nearly all respondents (96%) would recommend at least some peer leadership positions to other students

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Takeaways - Overall

- Insight into common and potential selection, training, and compensation models

- Peer leaders report Growth due to experiences
  - Overall majority report gains on nearly all outcomes in skills, undergraduate experiences, and employability outcomes
  - Academic outcomes not as strongly affected by PLEs
  - Method of advancing intercultural competency
  - Highly transferable to career

- Peer leadership as an emergent HIP

Questions and Answers

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