

Supporting Sophomore Student Success: Student- and Institution-Level Results from Two National Surveys

Dallin George Young, National Resource Center for The First-Year
Experience and Students in Transition

Laurie A. Schreiner, Azusa Pacific University



**KEEP
CALM
AND
SURVIVE
SOPHOMORE YEAR**

First Year

Orientation

Common Reading
Programs

First-Year Seminars

Student
Engagement



Senior Year

Capstone
Experiences

Job Fairs

Professional
Licensing

Graduate and
Professional School
Applications

Junior Year

Internships
Study Abroad
Peer Leadership



Sophomore Student (*Unmotivationus Middlechildibus*)

A black and white photograph of a rural landscape. A winding road curves through the scene, leading towards a large, leafless tree in the center. The background shows rolling hills and a small distant tree. The overall mood is contemplative and open.

Existential Questioning

What is the purpose of my life?

Why am I taking all these classes?

What should I major in?

What career should I choose?

Practical Questioning

Sophomore Year Matters

- Engagement
 - Focus
 - Sense of Direction
 - Sense of Belonging
 - Interactions with Faculty
-
- Lead to increases in motivation, academic success, self-authorship and thriving



How are
Sophomores Doing?

What are Institutions
(We) Doing
About/For Them?



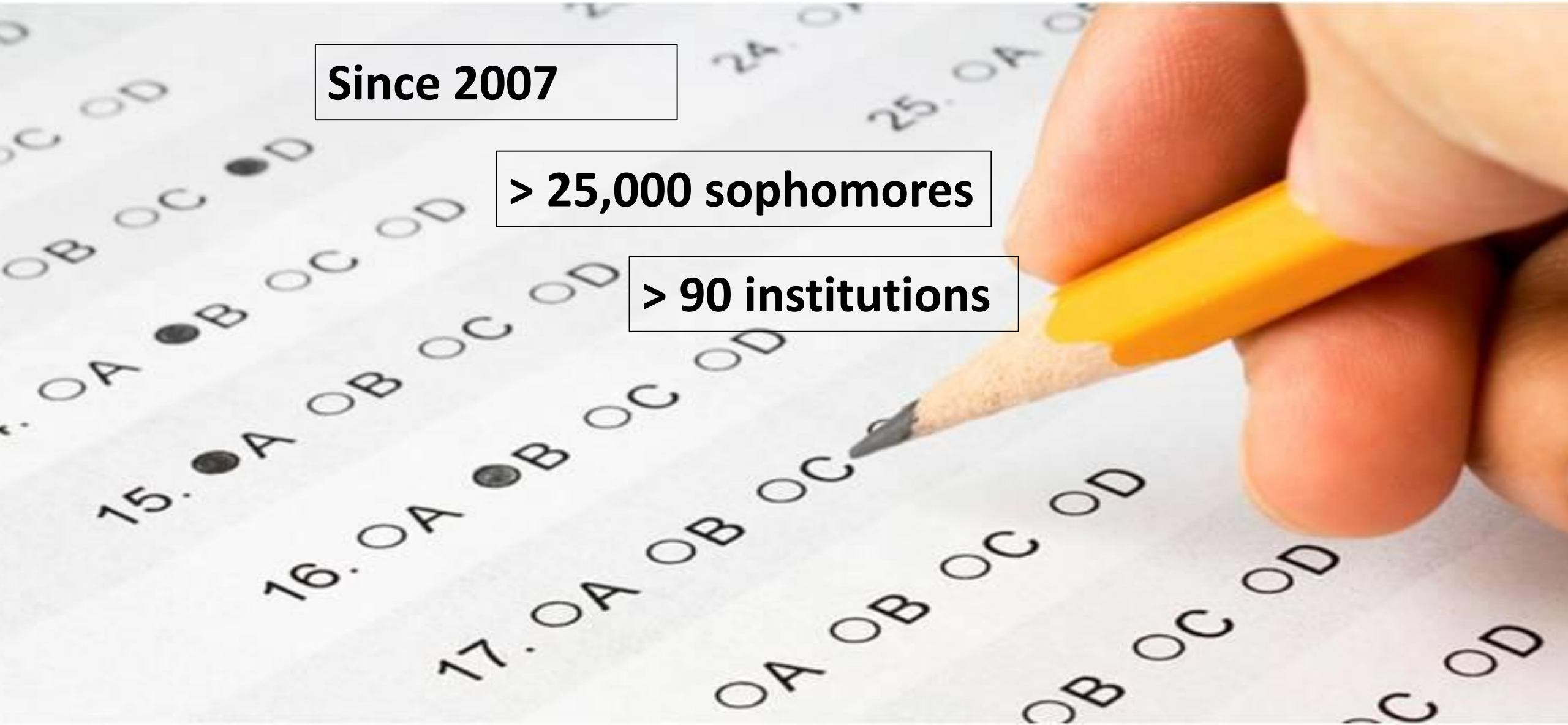
- Sophomore Experiences Survey
- National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

Sophomore Experience Survey 2014

Since 2007

> 25,000 sophomores

> 90 institutions



The Thriving Quotient (TQ)

Based on existing malleable constructs predictive of student persistence and GPA

25-item instrument with responses ranging on a 6-point Likert-type scale of *1=strongly disagree* to *6 = strongly agree*

Coefficient alpha = .89

Confirmatory factor analysis: five-factor model with a higher-order construct of thriving







**Institutional Integrity:
Delivering On Your Promises**

A Psychological Sense of Community

Sense of Belonging

Ownership

Emotional Connections

Interdependence



Spirituality



Satisfaction



OUTCOME



Family Income

First Gen

Degree Aspirations

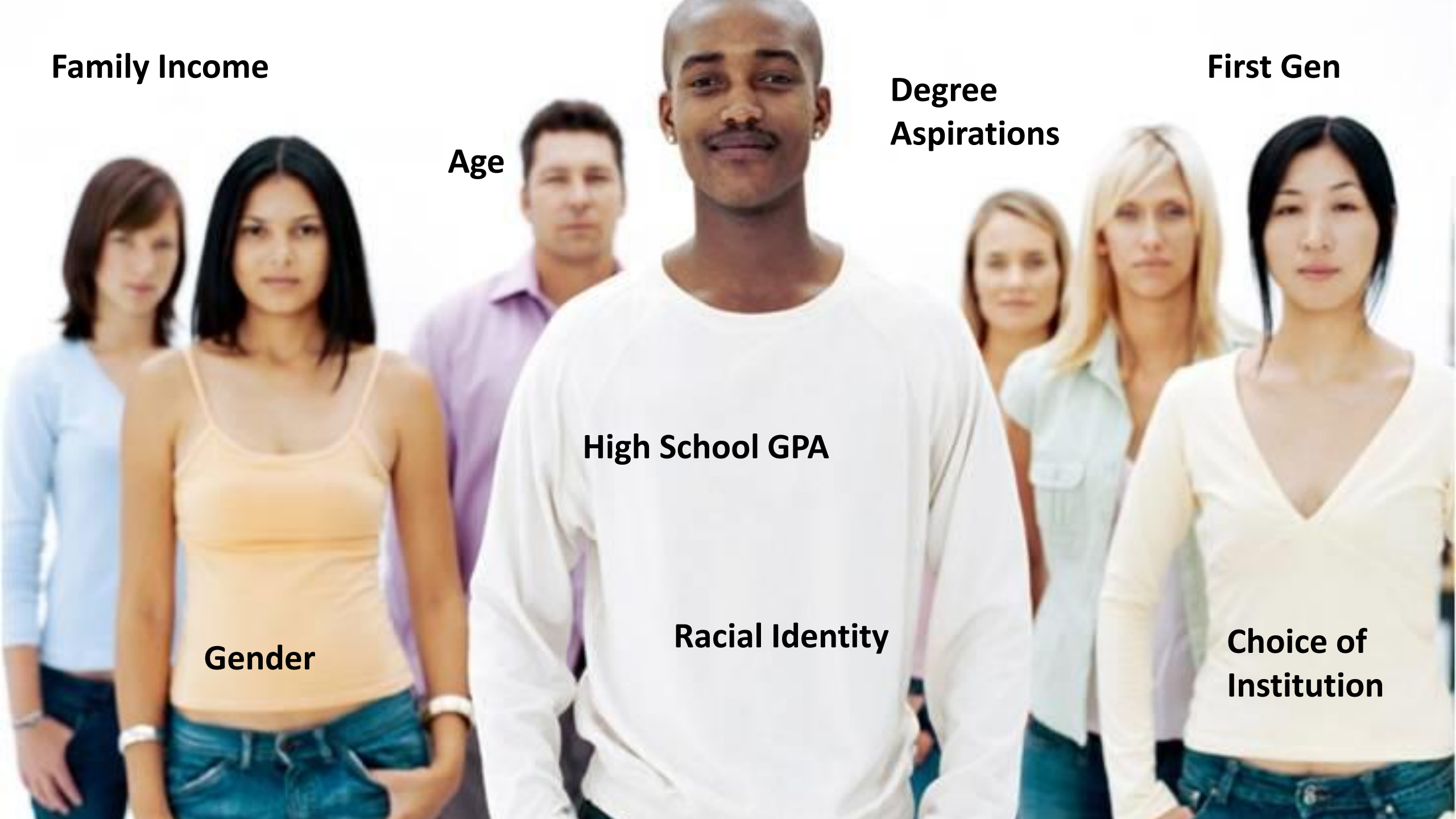
Age

High School GPA

Racial Identity

Choice of Institution

Gender



Sophomore Experience Survey 2014

(N = 4,472 complete records)

- 71.4% female, 63.1% Anglo, 22.5% first generation, 9.5% over 21
- 12.7% transfers
- 63.3% are at their first choice institution, 55.5% live on campus, 33.5% work off campus, and 22.8% work on campus
- 68.1% intend to go to graduate school at some point
- Average of 15 credits this term, 61 credits total

Campus Experiences

Student Organizations

Campus Activities

Community Service

Leadership

Greek Organizations

Ethnic Organizations

Work

Residence

Transfer

Athlete



Academic Experiences

Advising:
Frequency and Satisfaction

Learning Community

Major Certainty

Courses Dropped



GPA

SUCCESS

Faculty Interaction:
Quantity, Quality, and Type

Service Learning Courses

Sophomore-Specific Questions

**Comparison of Sophomore
Courses to First-Year Courses**

**Participation
in Sophomore
Programs**

**Comparison of
Sophomore
Year to First
Year**

**Number of
Credits**



Sophomores Slumping?

Sophomore year is worse or much worse than first year	17.7%
Courses are worse/much worse than first year	21%
Getting grades below a B average	16.4%
Still unsure of my major	9.9%
Surviving...barely	27.3%

Sophomores Slumping?

Dissatisfied with....	Percent
My grades	19.9%
Advising	20.3%
My living situation	20.3%
My health	18.4%
My interactions with faculty	13.1%
My peer relationships	12.8%
The whole college experience	12.3%
The amount I'm learning	14.1%



2014:
About 1 in 5
sophomores are
experiencing a
“slump” in
motivation, grades,
or satisfaction with
the college
experience

The Sophomore Slump ... In Students' Words

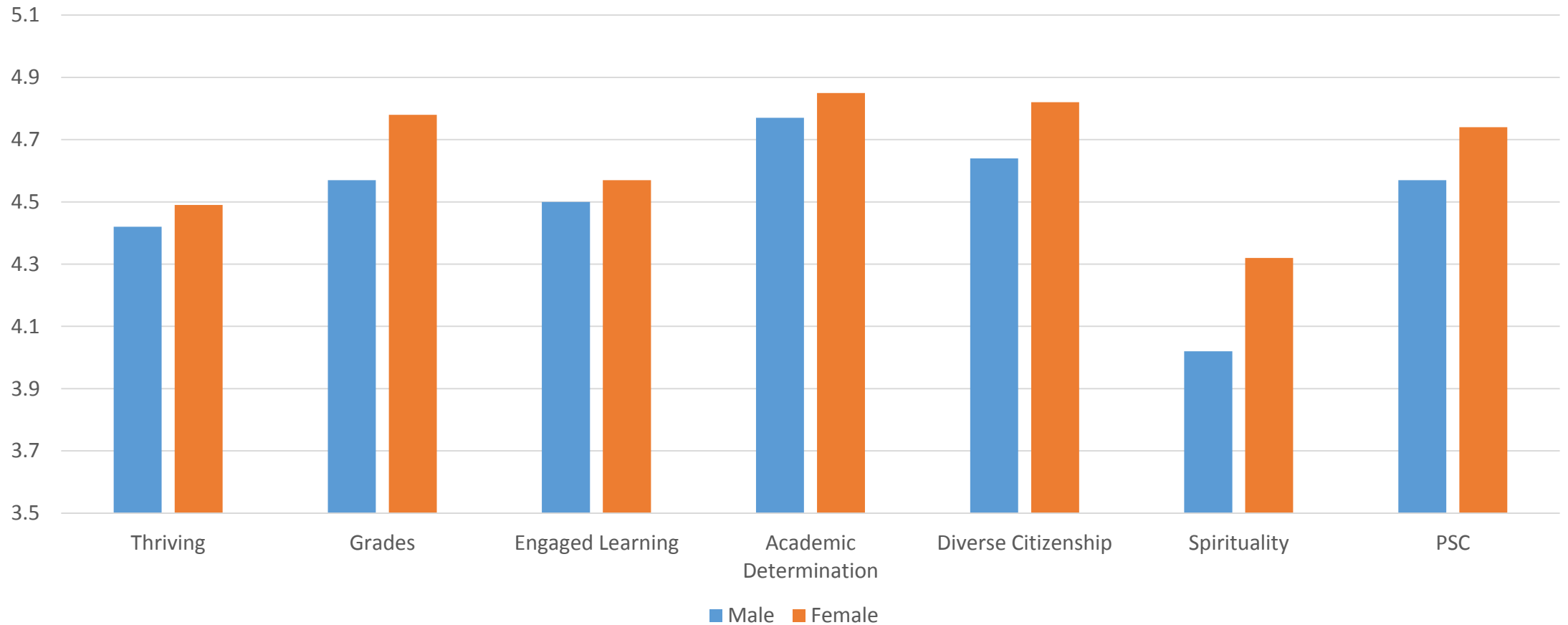
- I've lost all my excitement
- Don't see the purpose anymore
- I'm paying for all the stupid mistakes I made as a freshman
- Sophomore year is when you finish all the crappy stuff, so I expected this
- Kind of invisible on campus
- It's a lot lonelier—there's no effort on the part of the institution to involve us
- I think a lot of people are hitting an “oh crap moment”—there are a lot of forks in the road.

**“We aren’t new anymore, but
we aren’t getting out anytime
soon, either!”**



Results

Significant Gender Differences in the Sophomore Experience



What Contributes to Sophomores' Thriving?

- Sense of community
- Spirituality
- Interaction with faculty
- Institutional integrity
- Sophomore year being better than the first year
- Being sure of their major
- GPA
- Working
- Not dropping courses
- Campus involvement
- Aspirations for graduate school
- Advising frequency



$R^2 = .53$

Four Major Pathways to Thriving

- Campus Involvement
- Student-Faculty Interaction
- Spirituality
- Sense of Community

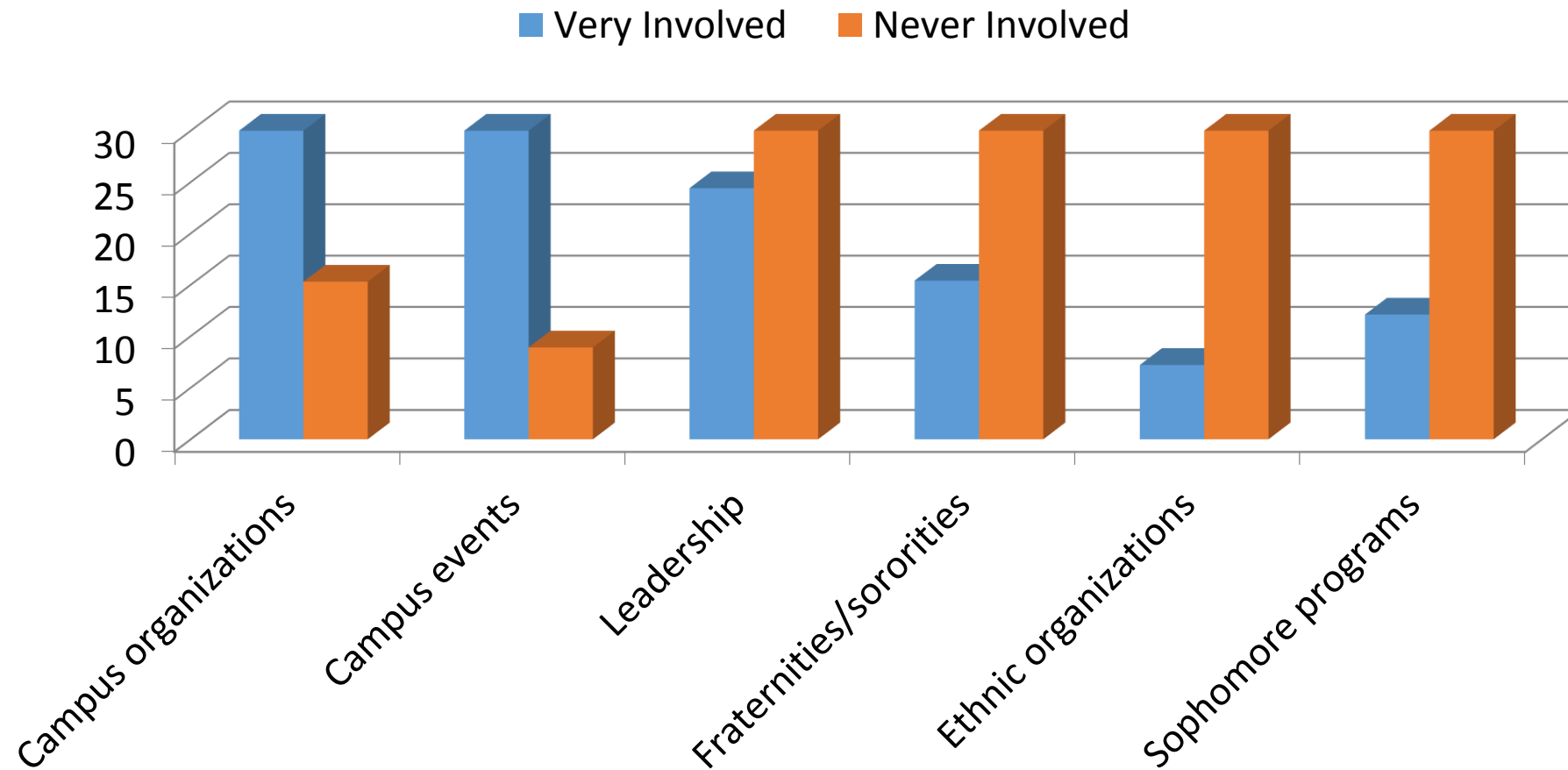


Different Pathways to Thriving

Ethnic minority students had fewer “pathways” to thriving than majority students—and those pathways differed across ethnic groups.



How Involved are Sophomores?

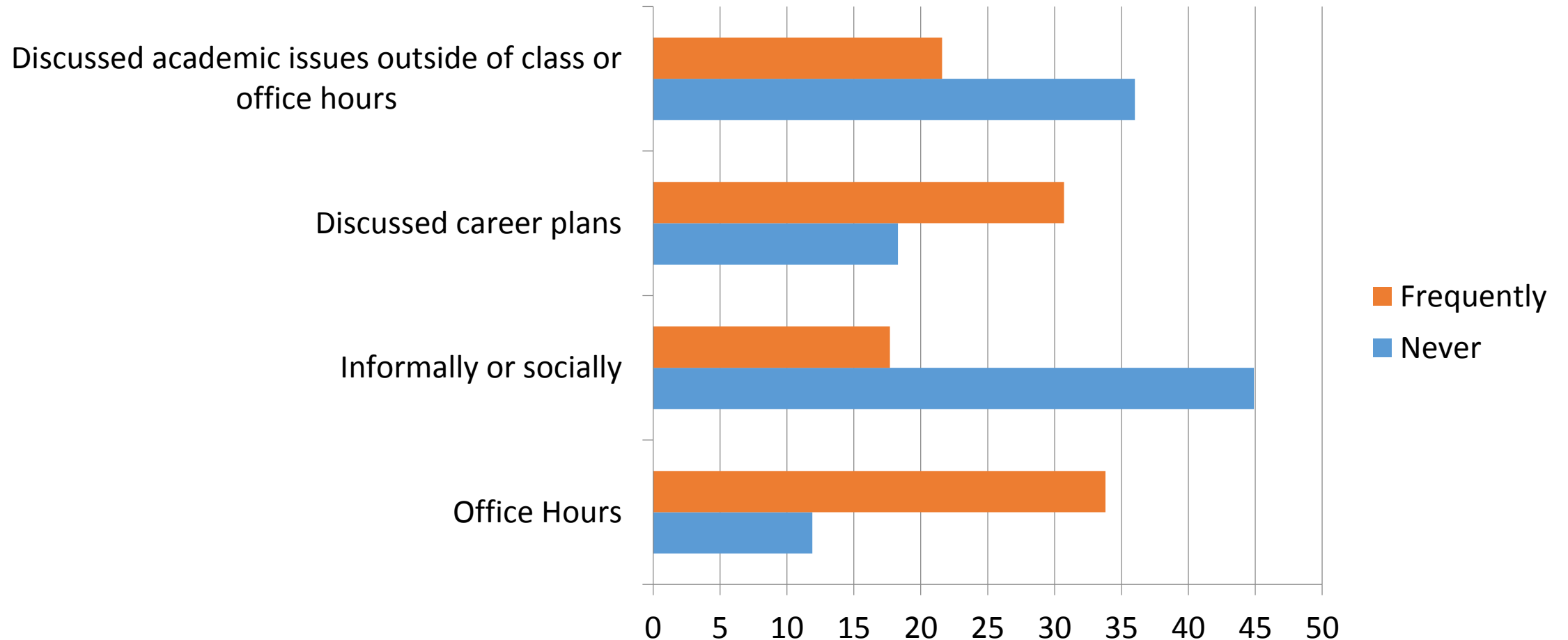


Ethnic Differences in Campus Involvement

- Latino students benefit most; White students as well
- African American students are involved, but their involvement is often limited to ethnic organizations – and does not contribute significantly to their thriving or sense of community unless they are in a leadership role.
- Asian students are least involved—and their involvement does not predict their thriving or sense of community



How much do sophomores interact with faculty?



Connection to Faculty

Sophomores' level of interaction and satisfaction with faculty was the only campus experience variable in our study that significantly predicted *every* positive student outcome.

But there were racial differences in the degree to which faculty interaction helped students thrive.



Spirituality → Thriving


**Doubly important
to students of color**



**Sense of
Community:
#1 Predictor
of Thriving**



Institutional Integrity: Delivering On Your Promises

A close-up photograph of two hands, one with dark skin and one with light skin, holding each other's fingers in a supportive grip. The hands are positioned in the center of the frame, with the fingers interlaced. The background is a plain, light color.

A key contributor to sense of
community for all students –
but especially underrepresented
students!

Institutional Integrity: Delivering On Your Promises



-- faculty and staff “walk the talk”



--expectations are met



--campus is accurately portrayed during admissions

What Predicts Sophomore Grades?

- High school GPA ($\beta = .30$)
- Number of courses dropped ($\beta = -.16$)
- Thriving ($\beta = .09$)
- Living off campus ($\beta = .08$)
- Participating in learning communities ($\beta = .07$)
- First-generation status ($\beta = -.06$)
- Interaction with faculty ($\beta = .06$)
- Graduate school aspirations ($\beta = .05$)
- Institutional integrity ($\beta = .04$)
- Service-learning courses ($\beta = .03$)



$$R^2 = .20$$

What Predicts Sophomore Intent to Graduate from this Institution?

After controlling for demographic variables:

- Sense of community on campus ($\beta = .40$)
- Thriving ($\beta = .32$)
- Participating in sophomore programs ($\beta = .13$)
- Institutional integrity ($\beta = .10$)
- Being sure of their major ($\beta = .06$)
- Living off campus ($\beta = .05$)
- Being an athlete ($\beta = .05$)
- Frequency of advising ($\beta = .04$)



$$R^2 = .27$$

What Contributes to Sophomores' Perception that Tuition is a Worthwhile Investment?



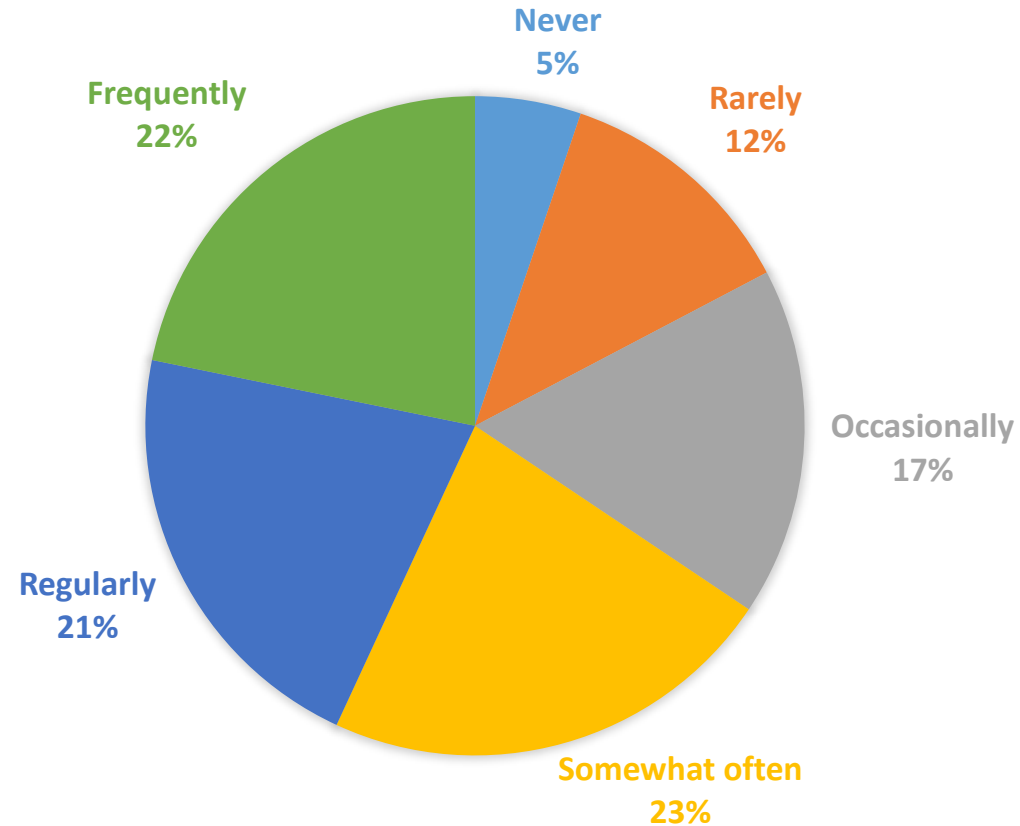
After controlling for demographic variables:

- Institutional Integrity ($\beta = .23$)
- Financial difficulty ($\beta = -.22$)
- Sense of community on campus ($\beta = .16$)
- Thriving ($\beta = .10$)
- Interaction with faculty ($\beta = .08$)
- Participating in sophomore programs ($\beta = .08$)
- Not having to work ($\beta = .04$)
- Living on campus ($\beta = .03$)

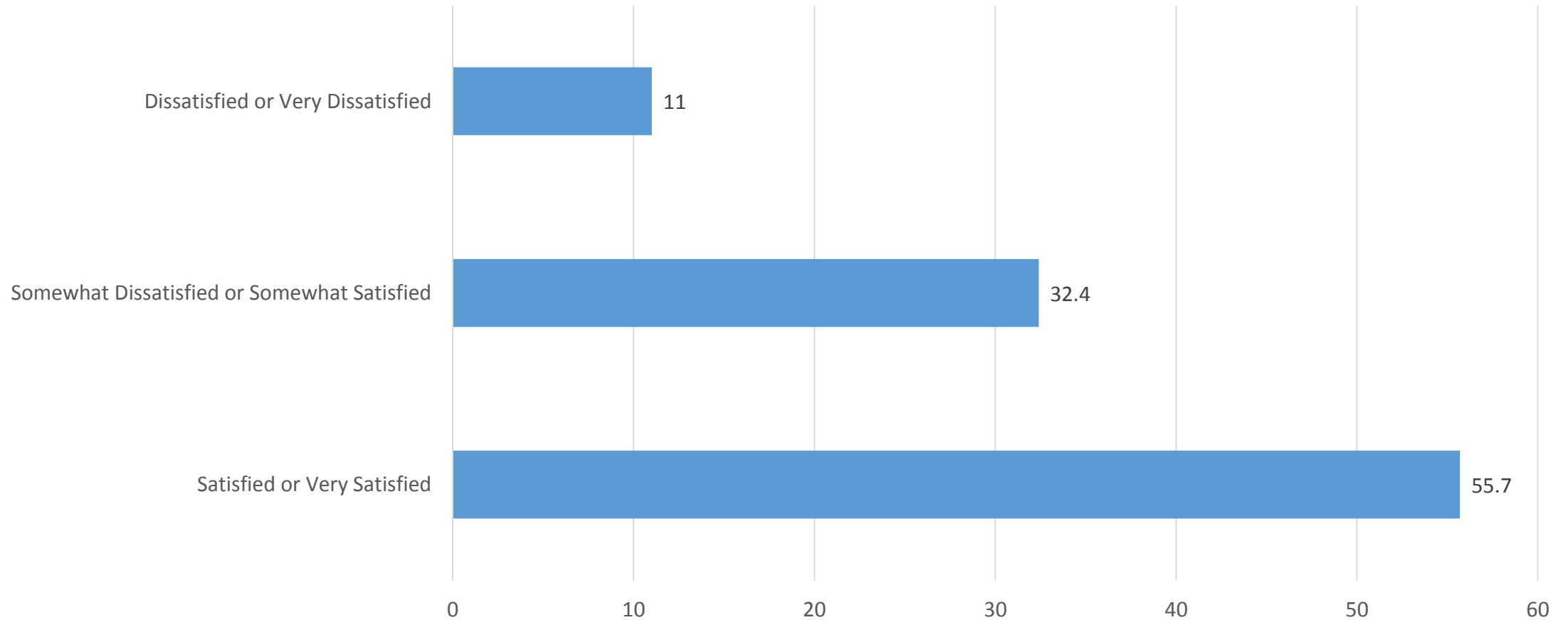
$$R^2 = .34$$

Sophomore Initiatives: Advising

HOW OFTEN DID YOU MEET WITH YOUR ACADEMIC ADVISOR THIS YEAR?



How Satisfied are Sophomores with Advising?



Sophomores' satisfaction with advising significantly predicts:

- ✓ Their overall satisfaction with their college experience
- ✓ Their satisfaction with faculty
- ✓ Their perception of tuition as a worthwhile investment




3rd Administration
(2005, 2008, 2014)

N = 778

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NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE* AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

0% Complete

National Survey of Sophomore-Year Initiatives

2014 Administration

This survey is intended to gather information regarding sophomore-year initiatives on your campus. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. While you may exit the survey at any time and your responses will be saved, we recommend completing the entire survey in one sitting.

Specifically, you will be asked questions regarding the following:

- General institutional information
- Institutional attention to sophomores
- Coordination of institutional efforts
- Types of programs offered to sophomores
- Characteristics of the predominant sophomore-year initiative
- Educationally effective practices
- Administration
- Assessment and evaluation

For the purposes of this survey, we offer the following definitions:

Campus or Institution: These terms, used interchangeably, refer to an individual campus that is either (a) an independent entity or (b) meaningfully distinct from other campuses in a system.

Sophomores: Students in their second year at the same campus (excluding transfer students). These students may not have attained official standing based on accumulated credits.

Sophomore-Year Initiative: Any educational offering specifically or intentionally geared toward sophomore students. You can find a list of examples of sophomore-year initiatives [here](#).

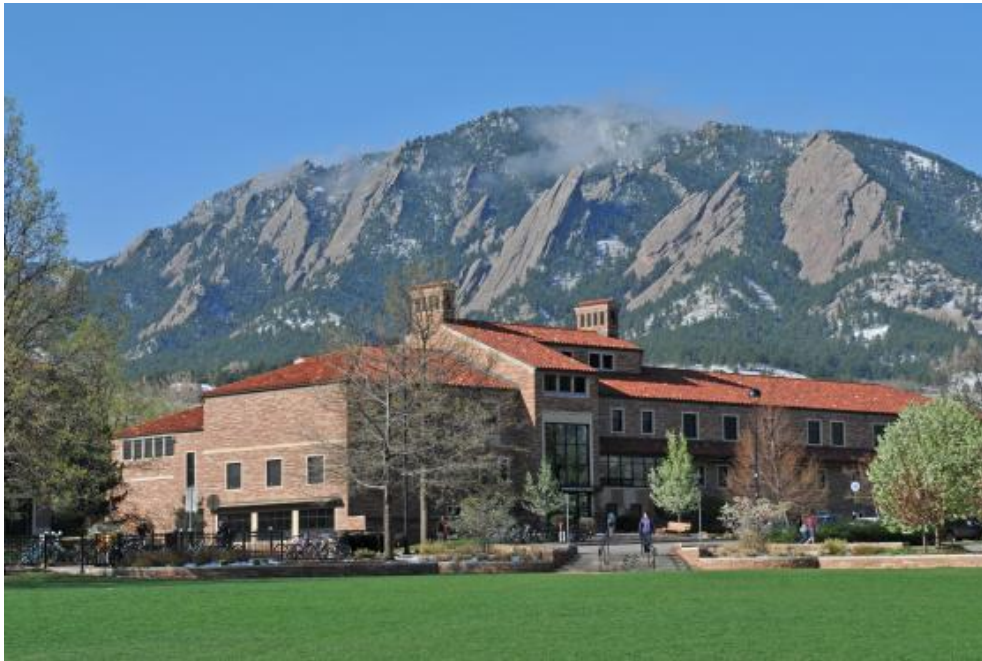
If you would like a copy of your responses, you will need to print each page of your survey before moving on to the next page.

Your responses are important to us, so please complete this survey by May 31st, 2014. Thank you.

NEXT

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11:55 AM
10/16/2014



Over-represented by:
Four-year institutions
Public institutions

Under-represented by:
Private, For-Profit
Institutions with fewer
than 1,000 students



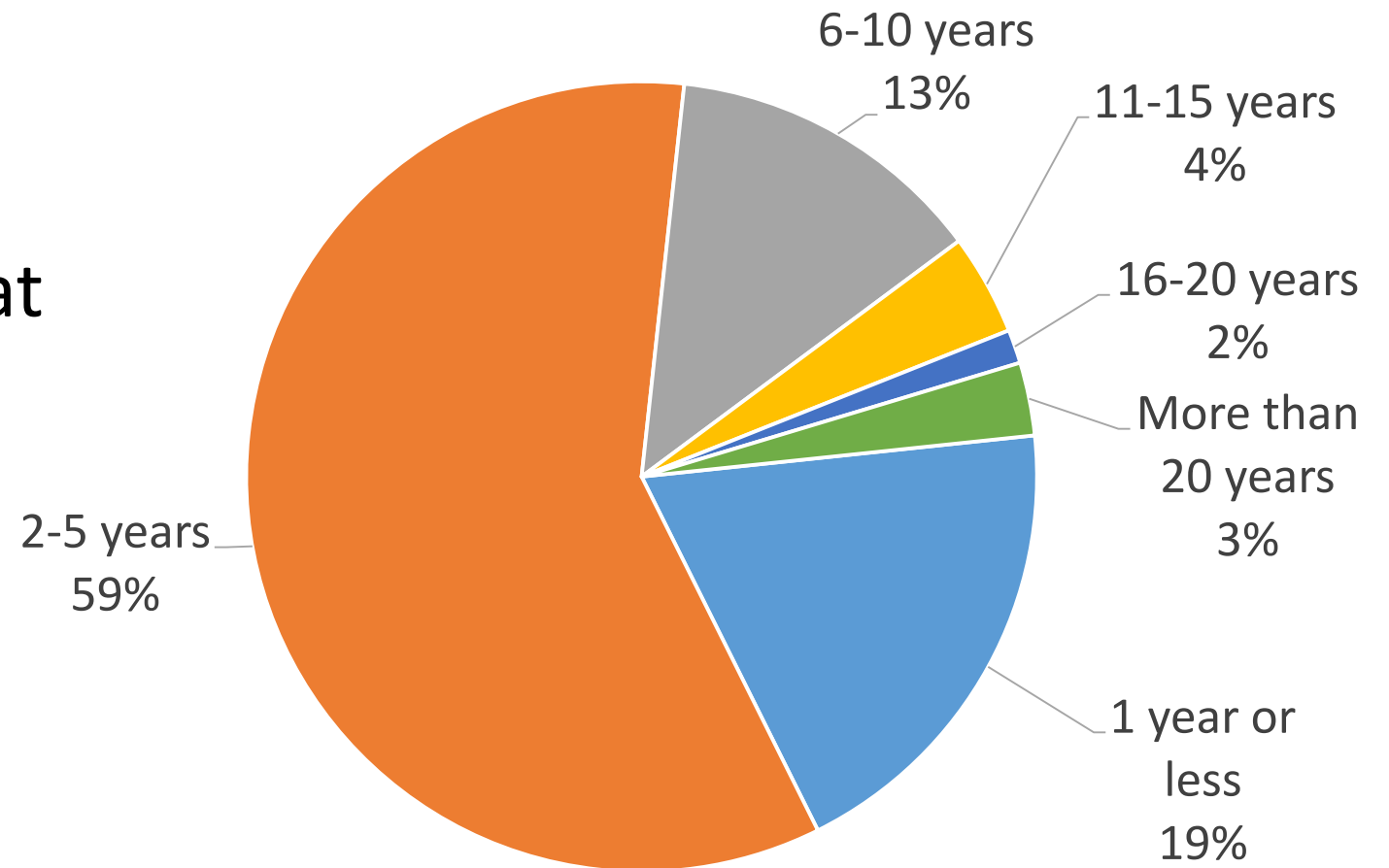
Institutional Efforts Specifically Focused on Sophomores

- Retention Study < Four Year
- Institutional Assessment
- Strategic Planning
- Program Self-Study
- National Survey < Four Year
- Accreditation < Two Year
- Grant-Funded Project

- 42% Reported “None of These”

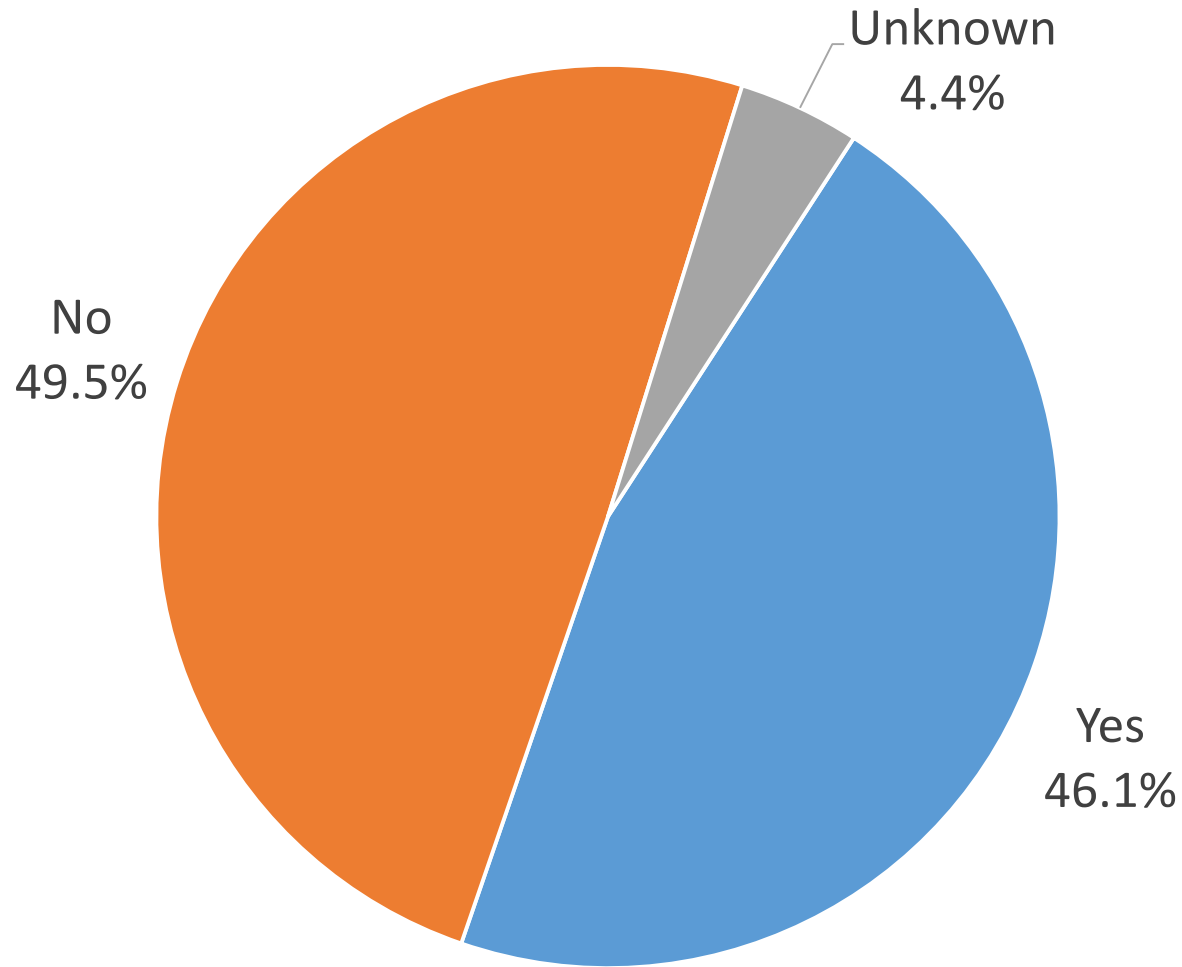


Nearly 80% of institutional efforts that include an intentional focus on the Sophomore Year are less than 5 years old



10 Most Frequent Campus-wide Objectives for Sophomores

<i>Objective</i>	<i>% of Institutions</i>
Retention	62.1%
Career Exploration	53.5%
Career Preparation < Two Year	45.4%
Academic Assistance	45.1%
Selection of a major < Four Year	44.9%
Leadership Opportunities	43.5%
Student Engagement	43.1%
Connection with institution < Four Year < Private	34.5%
Academic Skills	31.7%
Graduation Rates < Two Year < Public	31.3%



46% of
Institutions
report offering at
least one
initiative
specifically
geared toward
sophomores

What Sophomore-Specific Initiatives are Most Frequent?

- Academic Advising
 - Career Exploration
 - Career Planning
 - Early Alert
 - Leadership Development
 - Major Exploration
-
- Offered by at least one third of respondents



Initiatives More Frequently Offered by Institution Type:



Two-Year

- Internships
- Financial Aid



Four-Year

- Major Exploration



Public

- Academic Advising
- Internships

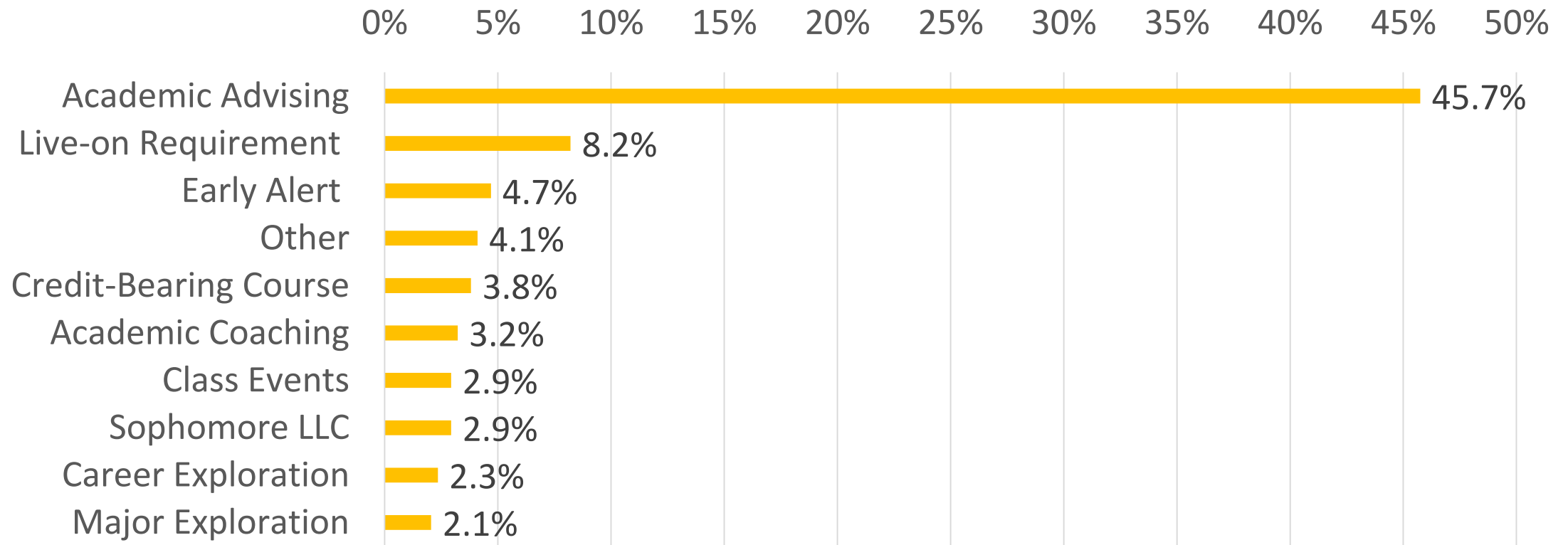


Private

- Leadership Development
- Class Events
- Live-on Requirement

Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative (Initiative That Reaches Highest % of Sophomores)

10 Most Frequent Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative



Primary Initiatives More Frequently Offered by Type:



Two-Year

- Early Alert
- Internships



Four-Year

- Live-on Requirement



Public

- Early Alert



Private

- Live-on Requirement

Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative: Categories

- Academic Advising
- Residential Initiatives
- Major and Career-Focused Initiatives
- High-Impact Practices
- Academic Support
- Curriculum or Course-Based
- Communication to Sophomores
- Campus-Based Events
- Away-from-Campus Events
- Transition-Focused Initiatives
- Financial Aid & Scholarships
- Leadership Development
- Comprehensive Sophomore-Year
- Early Alert

Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative: Categories

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- Financial Aid & Scholarships
- Leadership Development
- Comprehensive Sophomore-Year
- Early Alert

Required to Participate in Primary Sophomore-Year Initiative?

100% of sophomores required to participate:

- Academic Advising - 60%
- High-Impact Practices - 26%

No sophomores required to participate:

- Major and Career-focused - 73%
- High-Impact Practices - 30%



Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative: Academic Advising



- Academic Assistance
- Retention
- Selection of a Major
- Graduation
- Student-Faculty Interaction

Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative: Residential Initiatives



- Connection with Institution
- Student Engagement
- Retention
- Support Network
- Self-Exploration

Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative: High-Impact Practices



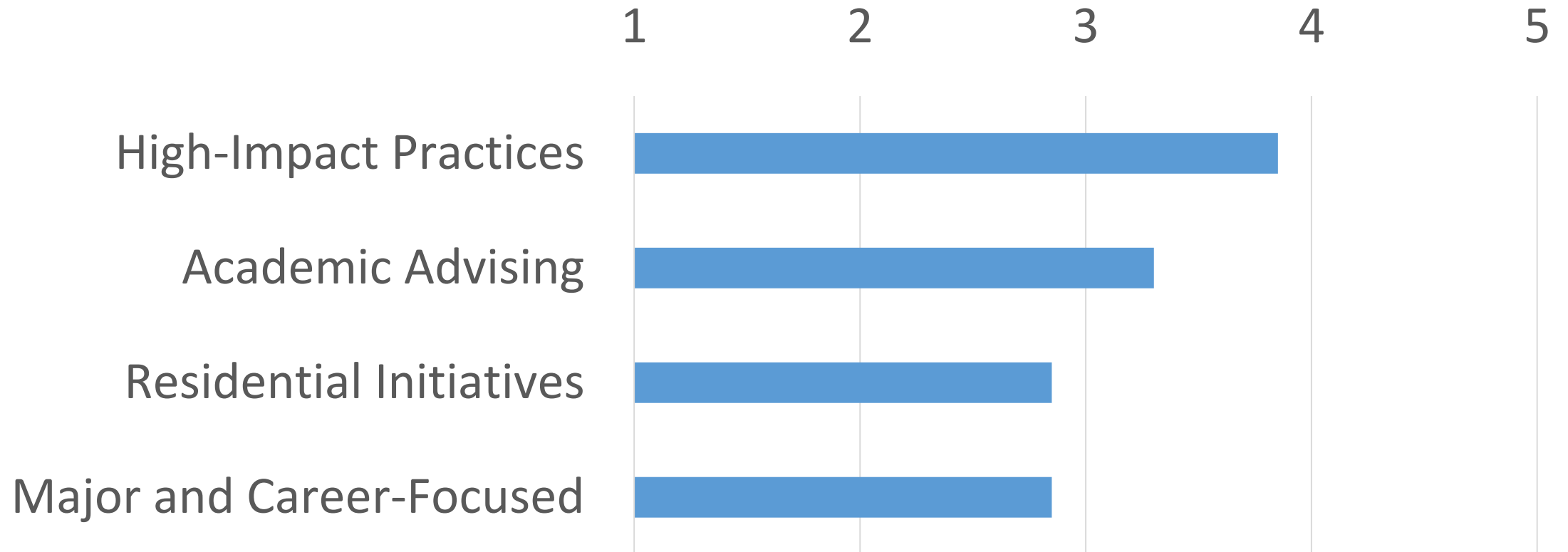
- Student Engagement
- Intercultural Competence
- Civic Responsibility
- Leadership Opportunities
- Career Preparation and Exploration
- Critical-thinking Skills

Most Important Objectives for Primary Initiative: Major and Career-Focused

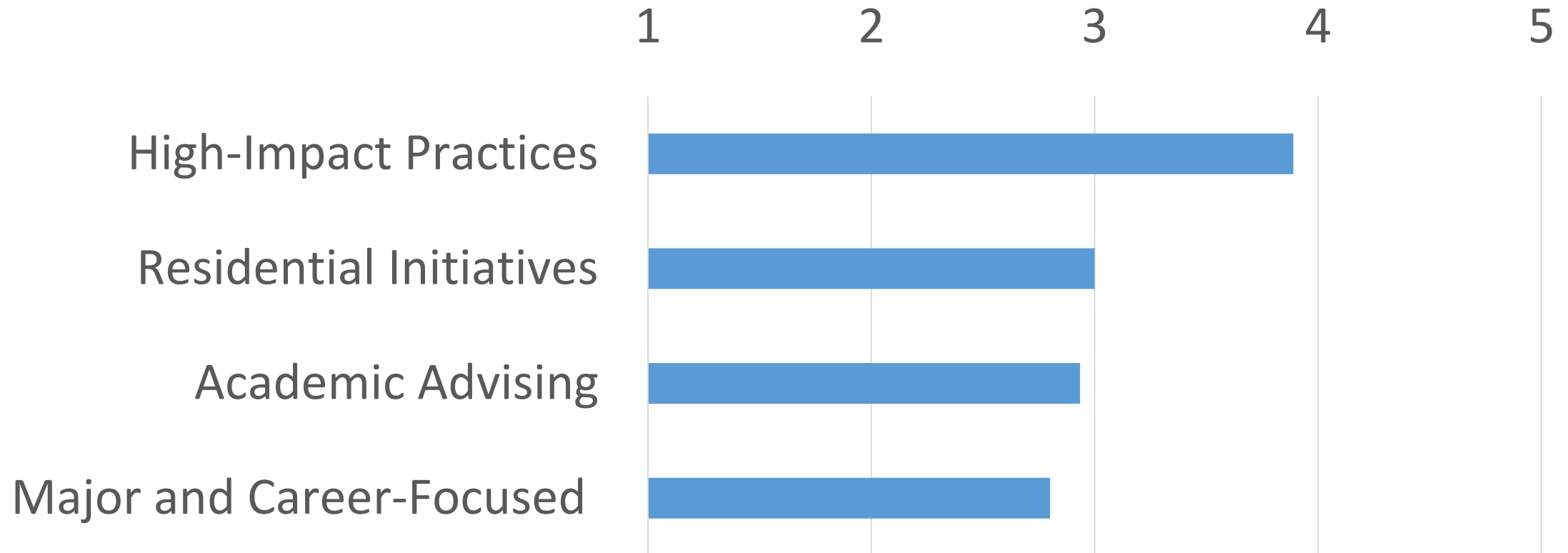


- Career Exploration
- Career Preparation
- Selection of a Major
- Retention
- Graduation

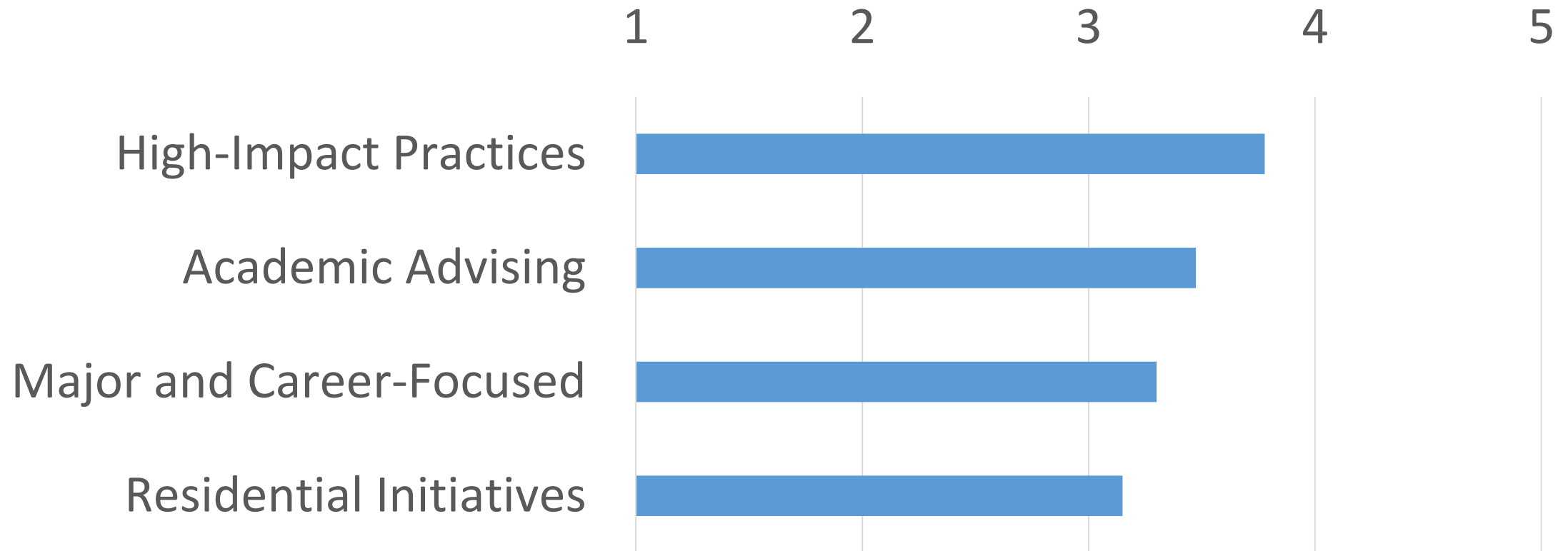
Educationally Effective Practices in Primary Initiative: **Performance Expectations at Appropriately High Levels**



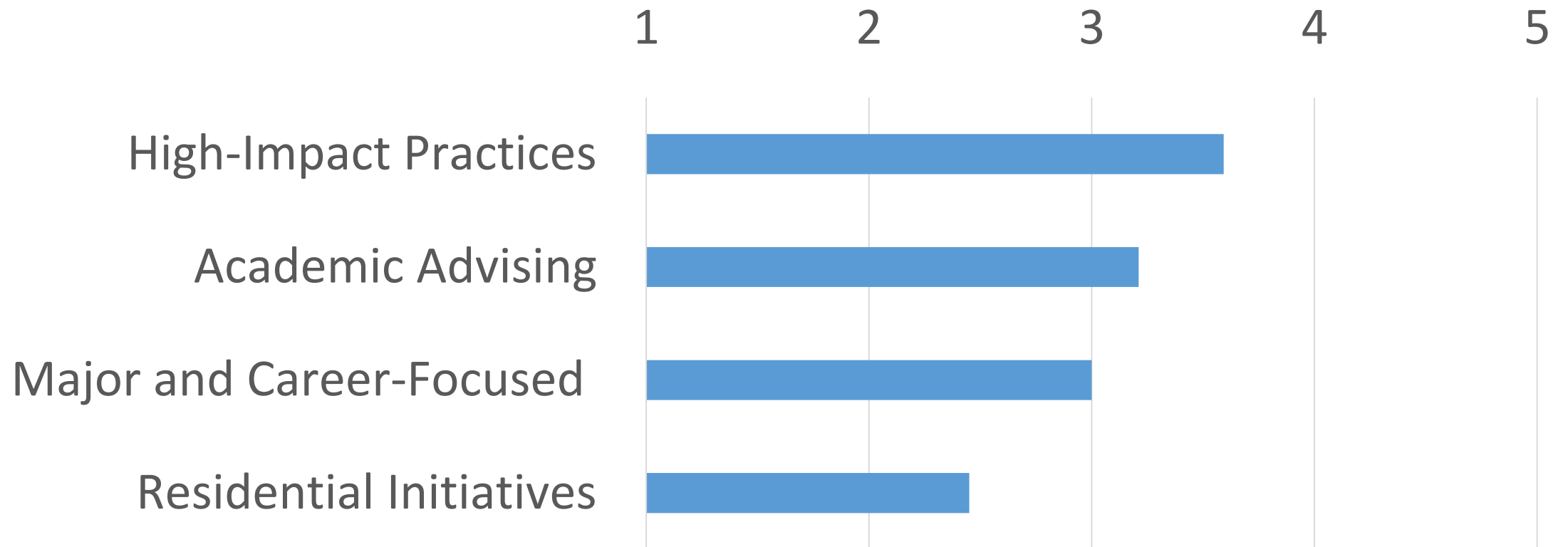
Educationally Effective Practices in Primary Initiative: **Significant Investment of Time and Effort by Students**



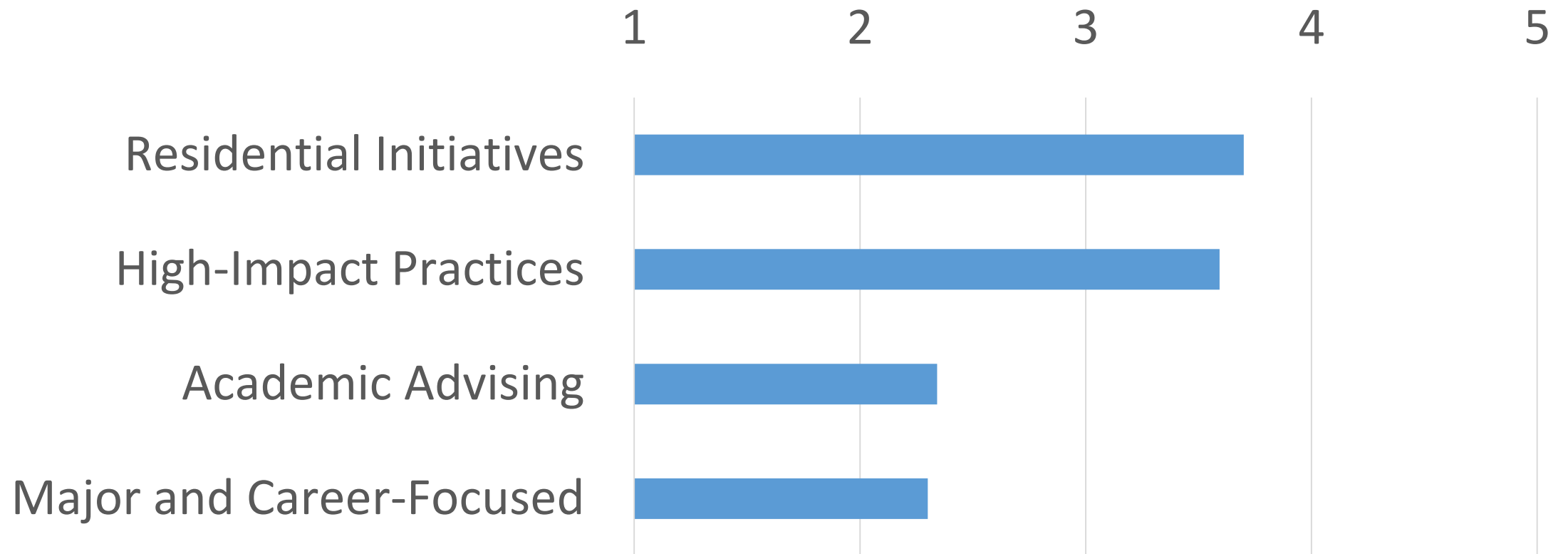
Educationally Effective Practices in Primary Initiative: Interactions with Faculty and Peers about Substantive Matters



Educationally Effective Practices in Primary Initiative: **Frequent, Timely, & Constructive Feedback**



Educationally Effective Practices in Primary Initiative: **Experiences with Diversity**



Think, Pair, Share

- Based on the information shared today:
- What are you going to **START** doing when you return to your campus?
- What are you going to **CHANGE** with respect to things you already do focusing on sophomores?
- What are you going to **STOP** doing?

