

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND
STUDENTS IN TRANSITION

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Data from the 2017 National Survey on The First-Year Experience: Creating Connections to Go Beyond Traditional Thinking

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Experience and Students in Transition
Midwest First-Year Conference
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What If...?



- Brand new institution (just like the one you work at now)
 - You get to start first-year programs from scratch
 - What would they look like?
 - Features, characteristics, structures?

Now consider...



- Who does your newly designed first-year initiative serve?
 - Who benefits the most?
 - Assumptions about students?
 - Who doesn't it serve?

Goals for this Session

- Introduce national data on first-year programs
- Present information on benefits of first-year programs
- Engage in a discussion about how to best serve all first-year students on our campuses

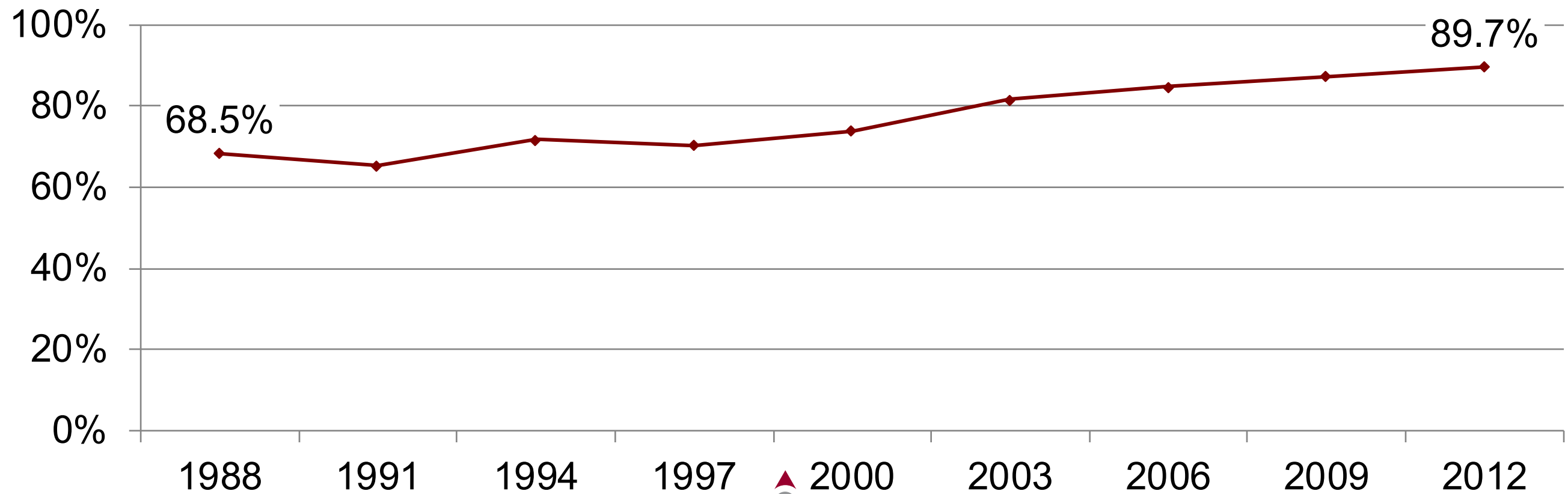
National Survey of First-Year Seminars

- Since 1988, the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition has triennially conducted a national survey of the features of first-year seminars
- Has provided the most comprehensive national picture of the practice related to curricular interventions to support students in the first college year



Why Continue to Study First-Year Programs?

Institutions Offering a First-Year Seminar



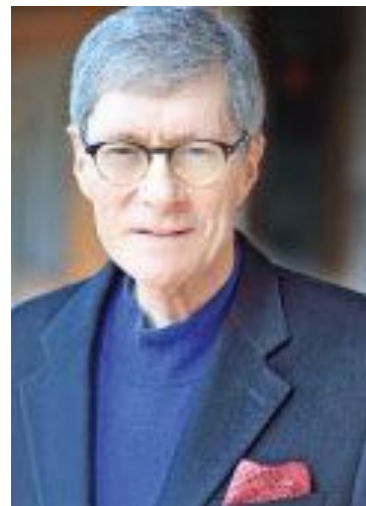
Victims of Our Own Success?



Victims of Our Own Success?

- Does conducting and reporting on a survey on only one FYE program contradict the messages by thought leaders in FYE movement?

FYE: A Working Definition



“The first-year experience is not a single program or initiative, but rather an intentional combination of academic and co-curricular efforts within and across postsecondary institutions.”

(Koch & Gardner, 2006)

FYE: A Working Definition



“Because supporting first-year student success is a topic that is not easily localized or specific to one functional area, an effectual first-year experience (FYE) requires campus-wide coordination and cooperation.”

(Young & Keup, forthcoming).

“Excellent” FYE: A Working Definition

“Excellence [is] characterized by an approach to the first year that spans the curriculum and cocurriculum. This approach is central and systemic rather than appended or patched to the core institutional mission.”

(Barefoot et al., 2005)



“High-Impact” FYE: A Working Definition

“The highest quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members’ own research.”

(Kuh, 2008)



Victims of Our Own Success?

- “FYE Course”

Victims of Our Own Success?

- Singular program as "Campus FYE"

Time for a Change

- Reconsidered survey to include focus on FYS and on multiple FYE programs
- Similar to efforts previously undertaken by JNGI
 - Sought their partnership in this enterprise

2017 National Survey of First-Year Experiences

- Administered from March-July 2017
- 3,977 institutions were invited to participate
 - 4 waves: CAO, CEO, CSAO, 2012-13 NSFYS participants,
 - JNGI Process participants
- 537 campuses responded (13.5% response rate)
- All respondents reported offering at least one FYE program



2017 NSFYE Overview

- General information about institutional attention to the first year
- First-year seminars
- Pre-term orientation
- First-year academic advising
- First-year learning communities
- Residential programs/initiatives
- Early-alert systems
- Common reading programs

2017 NSFYE Findings

OVERALL ATTENTION TO THE FIRST YEAR



Institutional Objectives for the First Year:

Most Frequent

Institutional Objective	Freq.	%
Academic success strategies	432	80.4%
Academic planning or major exploration	407	75.8%
Knowledge of institution or campus resources and services	406	75.6%
Connection with the institution or campus	403	75.0%
Introduction to college-level academic expectations	375	69.8%
Retention or second-year return rates	337	62.8%
Common first-year experience	331	61.6%
Student-faculty interaction	328	61.1%
Career exploration and/or preparation	305	56.8%
Writing skills	276	51.4%

Institutional Objectives for the First Year: Less Frequent

Institutional Objective	Freq.	%
Introduction to a major, discipline, or career path	265	49.3%
Analytical, critical-thinking, or problem-solving skills	264	49.2%
Personal exploration or development	264	49.2%
Social support networks	262	48.8%
Intercultural competence, diversity, or engaging w/ difference	254	47.3%
Developmental education, remediation and/or review	235	43.8%
Health and wellness	218	40.6%
Information literacy	218	40.6%
Introduction to the liberal arts	201	37.4%
Oral communication skills	182	33.9%

Institutional Objectives for the First Year: Least Frequent

Institutional Objective	Freq.	%
Civic engagement	178	33.1%
Integrative and applied learning	132	24.6%
Discipline-specific knowledge	122	22.7%
Project planning, teamwork, or management skills	120	22.3%
Digital literacy	113	21.0%
Other, please specify	59	11.0%
Graduate or professional school preparation	42	7.8%
Our institution has not identified campuswide objectives specifically for the first year	23	4.3%

Institutional Objectives for the First Year

Public

1. Academic success strategies
2. Academic planning or major exploration
3. Knowledge of institution or campus resources and services
4. Connection with the institution or campus
5. Introduction to college-level academic expectations
6. Retention or second-year return rates
7. Career exploration and/or preparation
8. Student-faculty interaction
9. Common first-year experience
10. Introduction to a major, discipline, or career path

Private, Not-for-profit

1. Academic success strategies
2. Connection with the institution or campus
3. Knowledge of institution or campus resources and services
4. Common first-year experience
5. Academic planning or major exploration
6. Introduction to college-level academic expectations
7. Student-faculty interaction
8. Retention or second-year return rates
9. Writing skills
10. Social support networks (e.g., friendships)

Institutional Objectives for the First Year

Two-Year

1. Academic planning or major exploration
2. Academic success strategies
3. Knowledge of institution or campus resources and services
4. Connection with the institution or campus
5. Introduction to college-level academic expectations
6. Developmental education, remediation
7. Career exploration and/or preparation
8. Student-faculty interaction
9. Introduction to a major, discipline, or career
10. Common first-year experience

Four-Year

1. Academic success strategies
2. Connection with the institution or campus
3. Knowledge of institution or campus resources
4. Academic planning or major exploration
5. Introduction to college-level academic expectations
6. Retention or second-year return rates
7. Common first-year experience
8. Student-faculty interaction
9. Writing skills
10. Career exploration and/or preparation

Most Common FYE Programs/Initiatives	Freq.	%
First-year academic advising (ADV)	422	80.4
Early alert systems (EA)	415	79.0
Pre-term orientation (OR)	396	75.4
First-year seminars (FYS)	386	73.5
Placement testing (PT)	346	65.9
Peer education (PE)	327	62.3
Student success center (SSC)	290	55.2
Developmental education (DEV)	286	54.5
General education (GE)	284	54.1
Convocation (CNV)	276	52.6

Notes: n = 525.

Less Common FYE Programs/Initiatives	Freq.	%
Residential programs (RES)	256	48.8
Learning communities (LC)	245	46.7
First-year gateway courses (GATE)	206	39.2
Common reading (CR)	201	38.3
Summer bridge (SB)	193	36.8
Leadership programs (LEAD)	186	35.4
Writing-intensive coursework (WR)	186	35.4
Service-learning (SL)	167	31.8
Mentor by campus professionals (MT)	166	31.6
Experiential learning or learning beyond the classroom (EXP)	163	31.0

Notes: n = 525.

Least Common FYE Programs/Initiatives	Freq.	%
Undergraduate research (UGR)	111	21.1
Study abroad (SA)	102	19.4
Other (OTH)	24	4.6
None	0	0.0

Notes: n = 525.

Common FYE Programs

Public

- First-year academic advising
- Early alert systems
- Pre-term orientation
- First-year seminars
- Placement testing
- Developmental or remedial education
- Student success center
- Learning communities
- General education
- Peer education

Private, Not-for-profit

- Peer education
- Early alert systems
- First-year academic advising
- Pre-term orientation
- First-year seminars
- Convocation
- Placement testing
- Residential programs or initiatives
- General education
- Student success center

Common FYE Programs

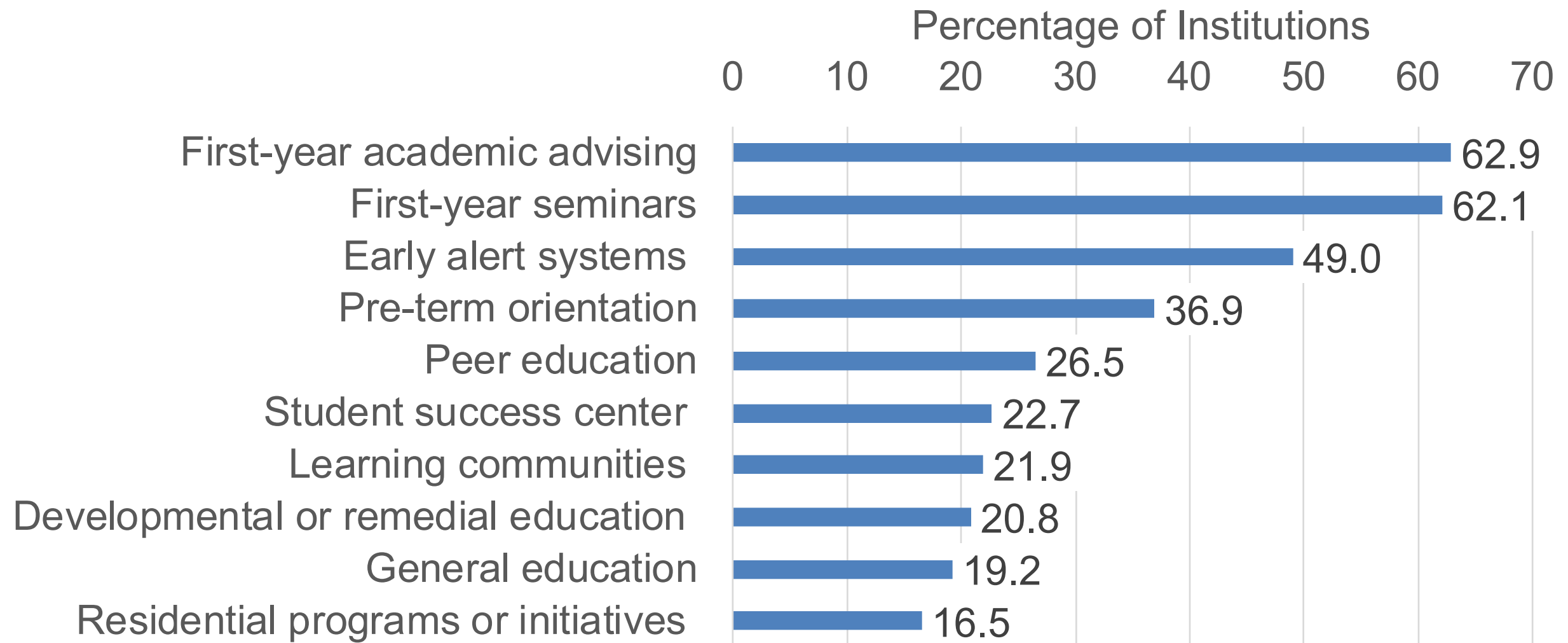
Two-Year

- First-year academic advising
- Placement testing
- Developmental or remedial education
- Early alert systems
- First-year seminars
- Pre-term orientation
- Student success center
- Peer education
- General education
- Learning communities

Four-Year

- Early alert systems
- First-year academic advising
- Pre-term orientation
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- Convocation
- Placement testing
- Residential programs or initiatives
- General education
- Student success center

Primary First-Year Programs



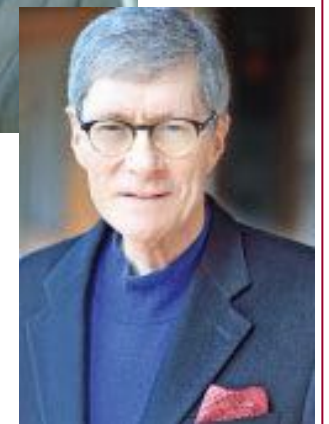
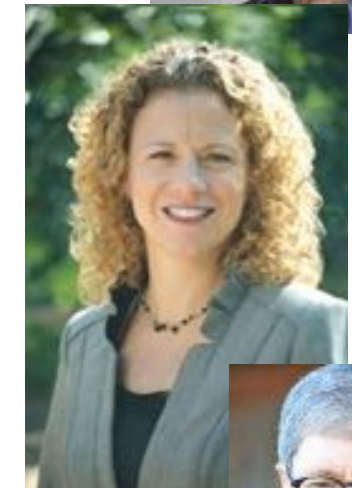
Outcomes from First-Year Programs

- Academic and social adjustment
 - Overall FYE (Blackhurst, Akey, & Bobilya, 2003; Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2002-3; Logan, Salisbury-Glennon, & Spence, 2000; Mayhew, Stipeck, & Dorow, 2011; Nadler, Miller, & Dyer, 2004; Paul, Manetas, Grady, & Vivona, 2001; Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle, & Keller-Wolff, 1999).
- Improved confidence and self-efficacy (throughout and beyond first-year)
 - Summer bridge programs (McLure & Child, 1999; Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle, & Keller-Wolff, 1999; Suzuki, Amrein-Beardsley, & Perry, 2012).
- Increased student engagement
 - Service-learning, peer mentoring, and orientation (Kuh, 2008; Nadler, Miller, & Dyer, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005).
- Introduce the campus culture and build campus community
 - First-year residential communities, learning communities, and orientation (Blackhurst, Akey, & Bobilya, 2003; Brower & Inkelas, 2010; Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000; Jacobs 2010; Nadler, Miller, & Dyer, 2004).
- Improved critical thinking, analytical thinking, and problem solving skills
 - Learning communities and common reading experiences (Goldfine, Mixson-Brookshire, Hoerrner, & Morrissey, 2011; Walker, 2003).

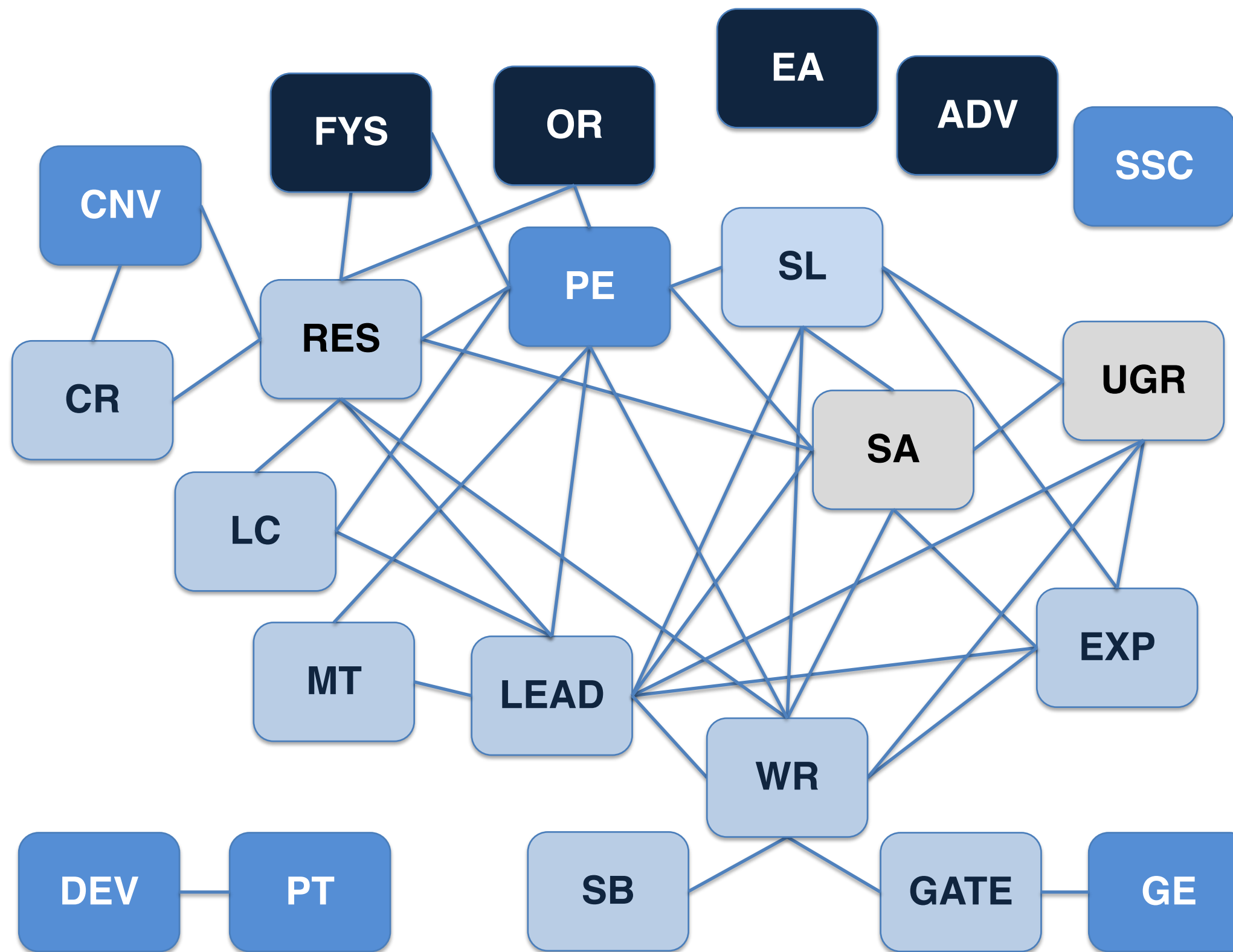
Coordination of FYE Programs

“A true first-year experience includes more than just one ‘star’ program and, instead, represents a constellation of support programs.”

(Greenfield, Keup, & Gardner, 2013)

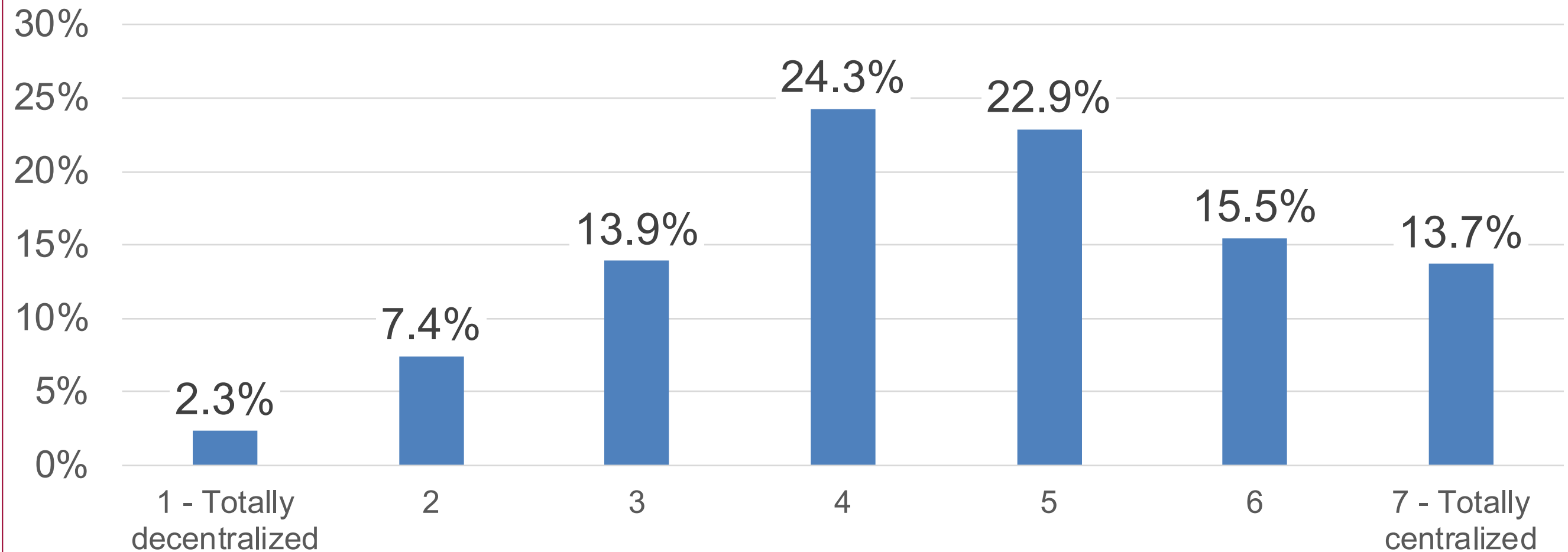


A Constellation of FYE Programs



Coordination of FYE Programs

How Coordinated are first-year programs on your campus?



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Coordination of FYE Programs

Does your institution have any of the following formal organizational structures to coordinate the first-year experience?	Freq.	%
First-year program office	164	40.0%
Cross-functional first-year team (e.g., team inclusive of curriculum and co-curriculum)	159	38.8%
First-year program committee, task force, or advisory board	158	38.5%
Other campuswide FYE coordination	127	31.0%
First-year curriculum committee	62	15.1%

Outcomes from Combined First-Year Programs

First-year seminar is coupled with another course in a learning community leads to:

- Increased first-to-second year retention,
- Elevated perceived value of academic skills, and
- Improved academic satisfaction (Crissman, 2001; Keup, 2005).

Finley & McNair (2013) found that engagement in multiple “high-impact practices” was associated with improved gains in:

- Deep learning,
- General education,
- Practical competence, and
- Personal and social development.



Outcomes from Combined First-Year Programs

- Moreover, these benefits, while present for all students, were particularly pronounced for first-generation students.
- In addition, participation in these practices revealed “larger boosts for particular groups that view their learning less positively in the absence of such practices” (Finley & McNair, 2013, p. 19).



Outcomes from Combined First-Year Programs

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What can we do?

GOING BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL



What can we do?

- Self-reflection in our institutions/programs/courses
 - How do we talk about transitions?

Language of Transitions in Higher Ed

- “Ease the Transition”
- “Making Accommodations”
- Transitions are a problem that need to be solved
- “Reducing Departure”
- “Retention”

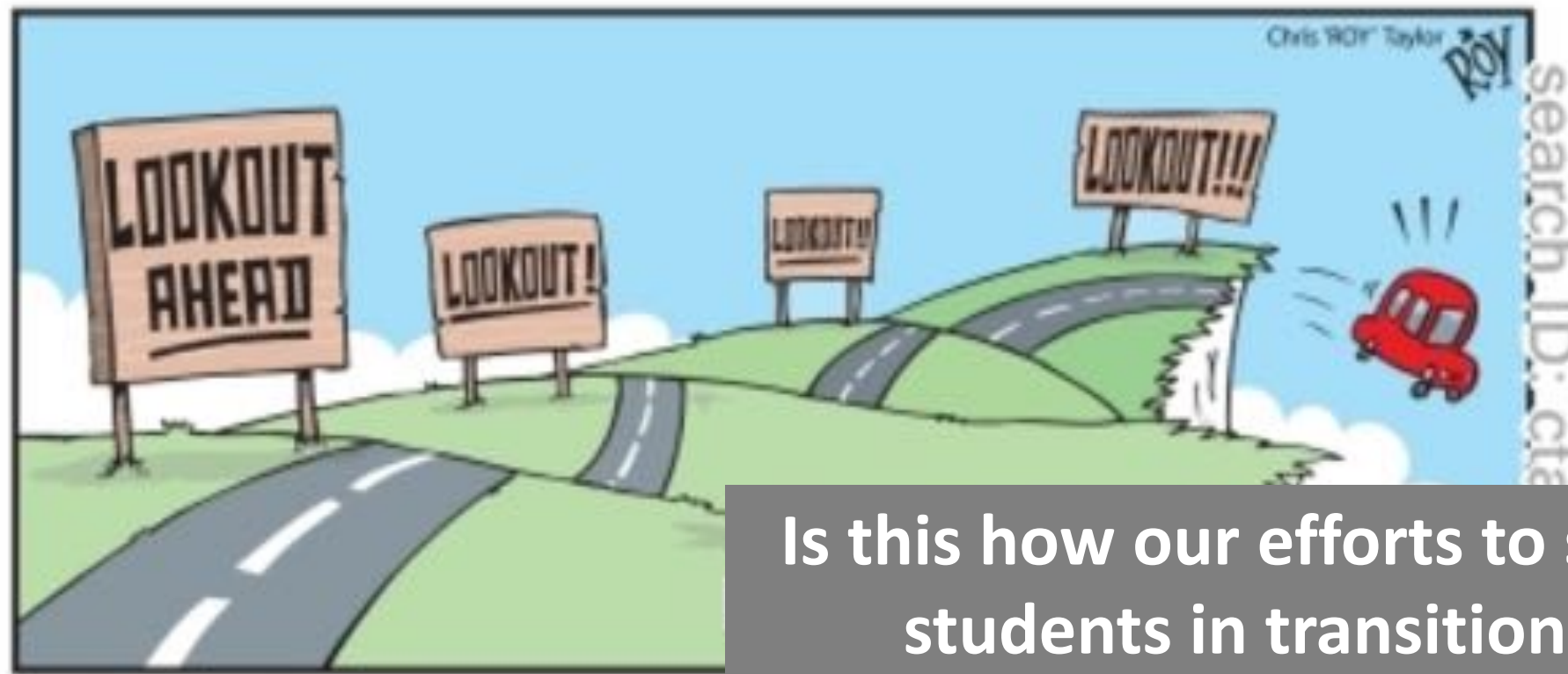


Language of Transitions in Higher Ed

- Once we get through this transition, we can get on with the real learning
- Assisting students with transitions forces us to do something separate and different from our planned learning or educative process.
- Transitions are distinct from the learning process – an unavoidable hill that it becomes our duty to smooth out

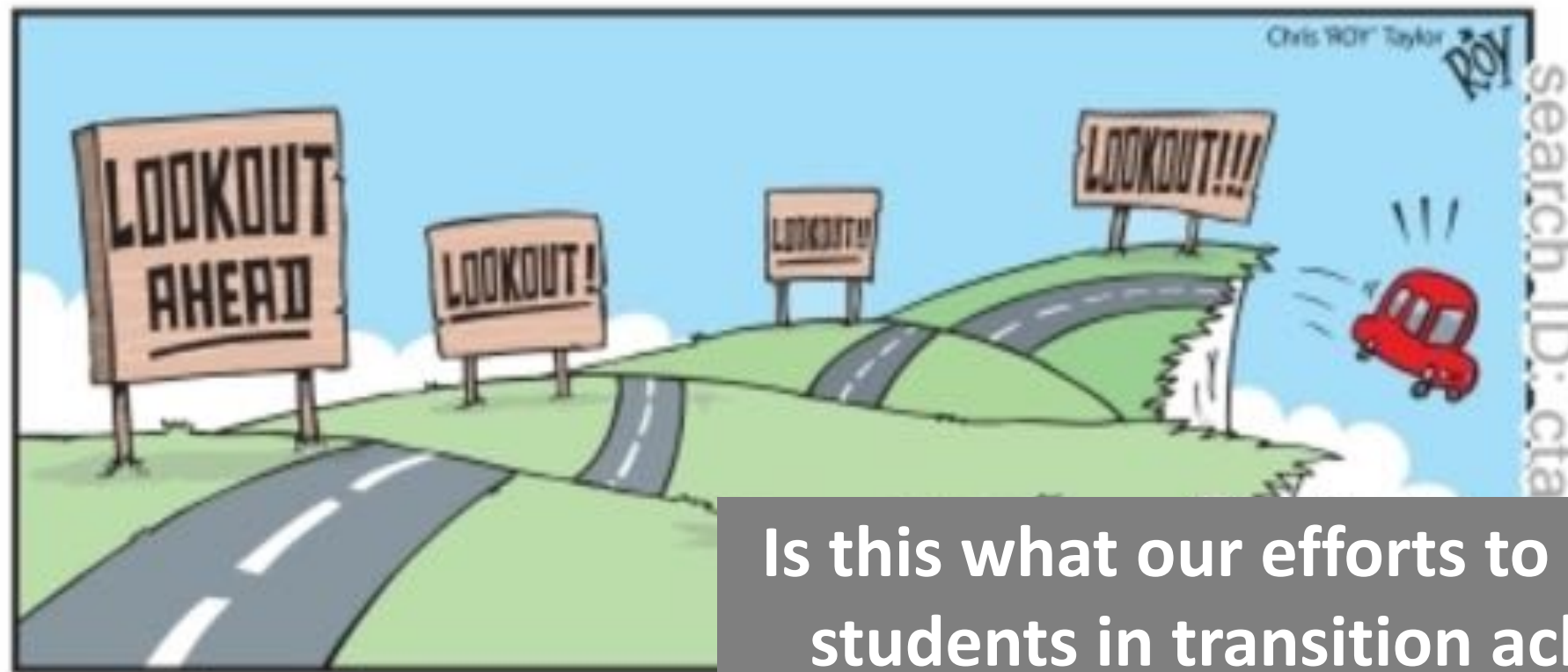


Challenge in Perception of Supporting Students in Transition: “Moving the cliff”



Is this how our efforts to support students in transition are perceived?

Unintended Consequences of Supporting Students in Transition: “Moving the cliff”



Is this what our efforts to support students in transition achieve?

Differences in FY Programs

All First-Year Student Success Programs, Initiatives, or Courses by Institutional Type (n = 525)

	Institution type		
	Two-year	Four-year	Difference
	%	%	%
Greater at 2-year			
Developmental or remedial education	68.3	50.2	-18.0
Placement testing	70.7	64.4	-6.3
Other	6.5	4.0	-2.5
Greater at 4-year			
Convocation	11.4	65.2	53.8
Residential programs or initiatives	11.4	60.2	48.8
Common reading	16.3	45.0	28.8

First-Year Seminar Prevalence

Two-Year

- 2012-13: 86.2%
- 2017: 58.5%

Four-Year

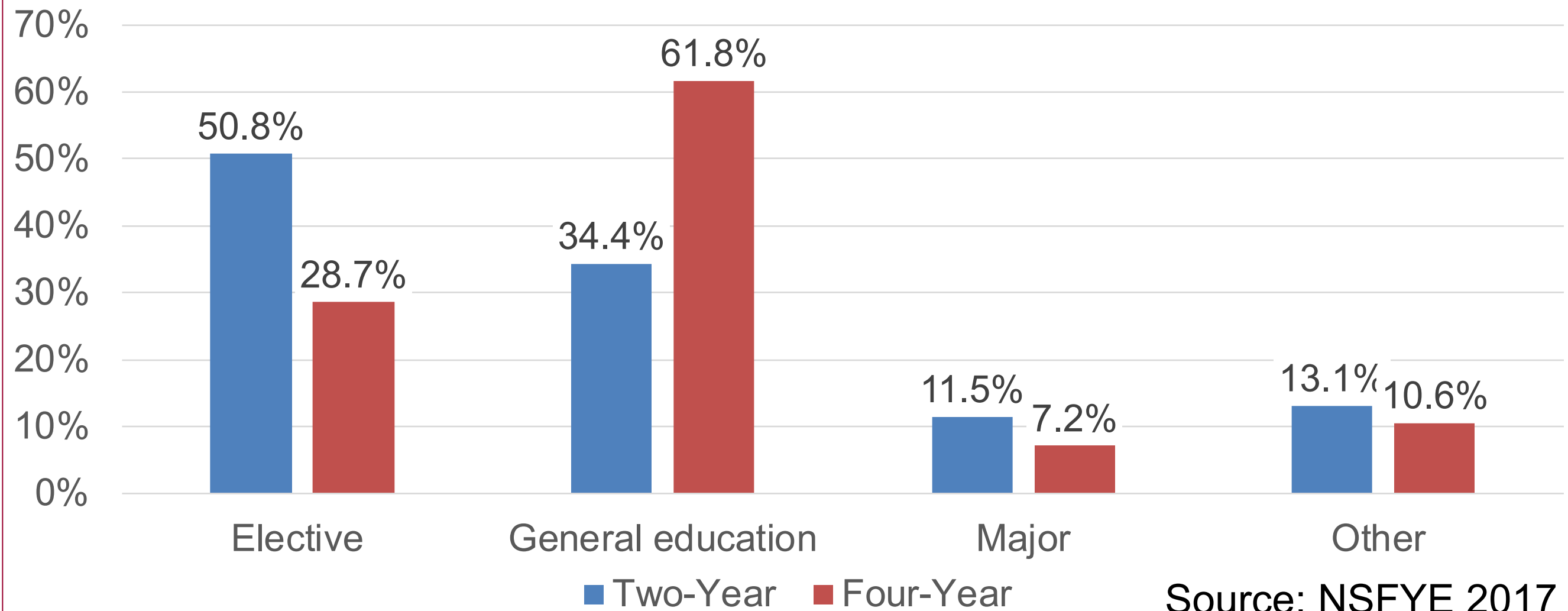
- 2012-13: 91.0%
- 2017: 78.1%

Source: NSFYE 2017

Promising and High-Impact Practice in the FYS

	Institution type				
	Two-year			Four-year	
	Freq.	%		Freq.	%
Promising or high-impact practice					
Greater for two-year institutions					
Goal setting and planning	59	89.4%		202	66.9%
Greater for four-year institutions					
Common reading experience	18	27.3%		140	46.4%
Diversity, global learning, or experiences with difference	35	53.0%		215	71.2%
Writing-intensive	19	28.8%		139	46.0%
Service-learning	12	18.2%		104	34.4%
Monitoring of student class attendance	36	54.5%		200	66.2%

How Are Credits Applied in FYS?



Source: NSFYE 2017

Formats of Pre-Term Orientation – Two-Year

Forms of Pre-term Orientation at Two-Year Institutions	2017 NSFYE	2014 JNGI
On-campus pre-term activities	79.1%	86.3%
Online orientation	59.7%	45.1%
Outdoor adventure/wilderness experience	6.0%	-
Pre-term advising or registration	74.6%	87.7%
Welcome Week (i.e., on-campus immediately preceding term)	43.3%	-
Other, please specify	9.0%	2.5%
Don't know	-	0.4%

Activities during Orientation

Two-Year

1. Introduction to campus resources and services (98.5%)
2. Registration or course enrollment (82.1%)
3. Introduction to campus facilities (80.6%)
4. Academic advising (79.1%)
5. Placement testing (59.7%)
6. Involvement opportunities (52.2%)

Four-Year

1. Introduction to campus resources and services (94.2%)
2. Introduction to campus facilities (89.3%)
3. Academic advising (87.7%)
4. Sessions for family members (82.2%)
5. Registration or course enrollment (80.6%)
6. Involvement opportunities (80.3%)
7. Community building (79.9%)
8. Discussions about health and wellness on campus (71.5%)
9. Convocations or other celebratory activities (65.4%)
10. Structured interaction with faculty (64.1%)
11. Placement testing (62.8%)
12. Discussion of personal issues and challenges (57.3%)
13. Discussions about identity, diversity, or social justice (56.3%)

Participation in Academic Advising

	Institutional type				
	Two-year			Four-year	
% participating in first-year advising	Freq.	%		Freq.	%
10% or less	0	0.0		5	1.7
11-20%	4	4.5		1	0.3
21-30%	2	2.3		0	0.0
31-40%	5	5.7		5	1.7
41-50%	5	5.7		3	1.0
51-60%	7	8.0		3	1.0
61-70%	8	9.1		6	2.0
71-80%	14	15.9		12	4.0
81-90%	10	11.4		22	7.3
91-100%	33	37.5		244	81.1

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What can we do?

- Recognize and validate what “non-traditional students” bring to the table

How are we

“Adult entry [programs], by their very nature, are located on the periphery of mainstream HE. They aim to prepare students for the transition to HE proper by introducing them to aspects of university study. This situation creates the potential for something of a contradiction, by involving students in the community of HE in some ways while keeping them at arm’s length in others.
...All of the participants in this study revealed an awareness of their position on the periphery of HE, and some aspects of this were a source of confusion and even anger.”



O'Donnell & Tobell, 2007

What can we do?

- Contextualize the transition
 - All new transitions can be difficult, understanding why this one might be different
 - It might not be that they need better “study skills” – What they really might be struggling with is learning the language of an unfamiliar culture

Thank You!

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2017 NSFYE Findings

FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS

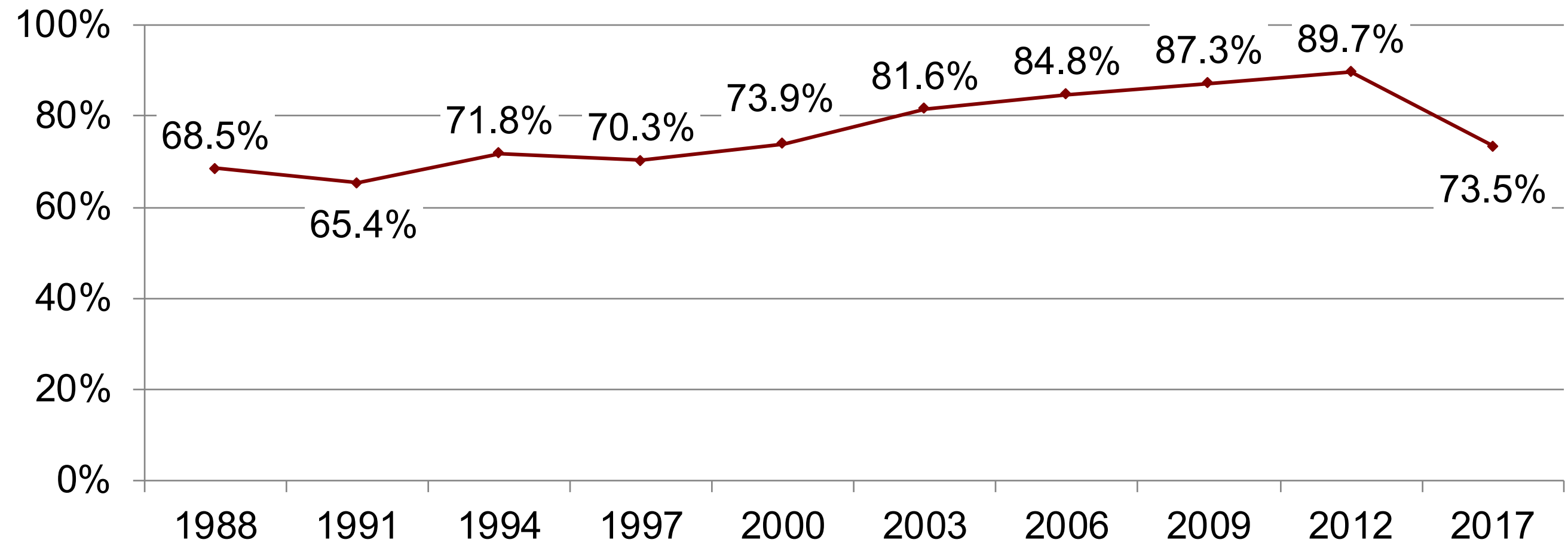


First-Year Seminars

- 73.5% of respondents reported offering a first-year seminar

First-Year Seminar Prevalence

Institutions Offering a First-Year Seminar



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My Initial Reaction



What I thought I had done



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First-Year Seminars

- 73.5% of respondents reported offering a first-year seminar
- Possible explanations:
 - Measurement/Researcher error
 - Previous overestimation from self-selection
 - Actual drop in prevalence

First-Year Seminars

- Measurement/Researcher Error
 - Noticed the trend early on
 - Added clarifying language
 - No real change in the prevalence

First-Year Seminars

- Previous overestimation from self-selection?
-or-
- Actual drop in prevalence?

First-Year Seminars

- 2009 NSFYS: 87.5%
 - 2009 NSFYS Respondents to 2017 NSFYE: 75.3%
- 2012 NSFYS: 89.7%
 - 2012 NSFYS Respondents to 2017 NSFYE: 79.8%
- 2017 NSFYE: 73.5%
 - Respondents to all three: 77.5%

(More detailed analysis
available in forthcoming
research report)

First-Year Seminars

- Previous overestimation from self-selection? -
or-
- Actual drop in prevalence?
- Probably a little of the former, mostly the latter
 - Analyses point to a drop in prevalence of about 13 percentage points

First-Year Seminar Prevalence

Public

- 2012-13: 90.3%
- 2017: 73.9%

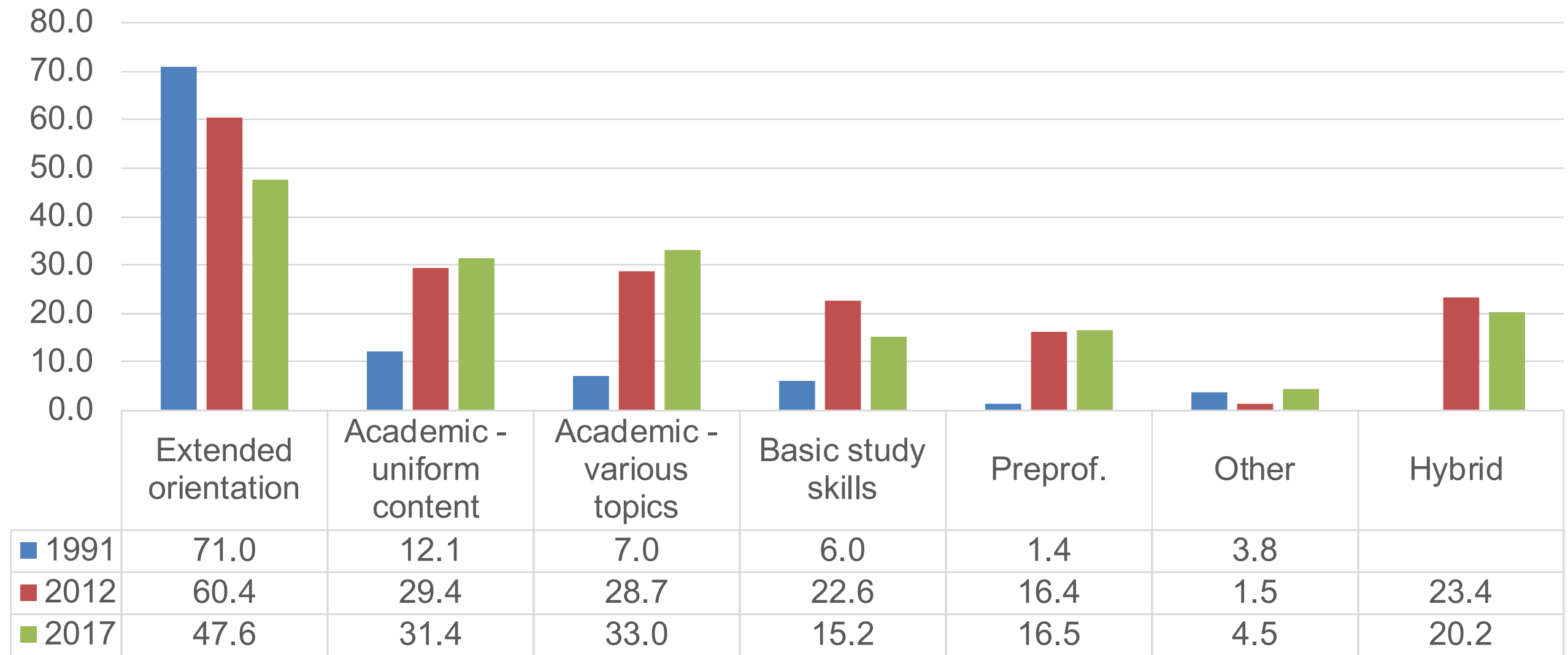
Private, Not-for-profit

- 2012-13: 89.1%
- 2017: 73.7%

Reasons for Decline?

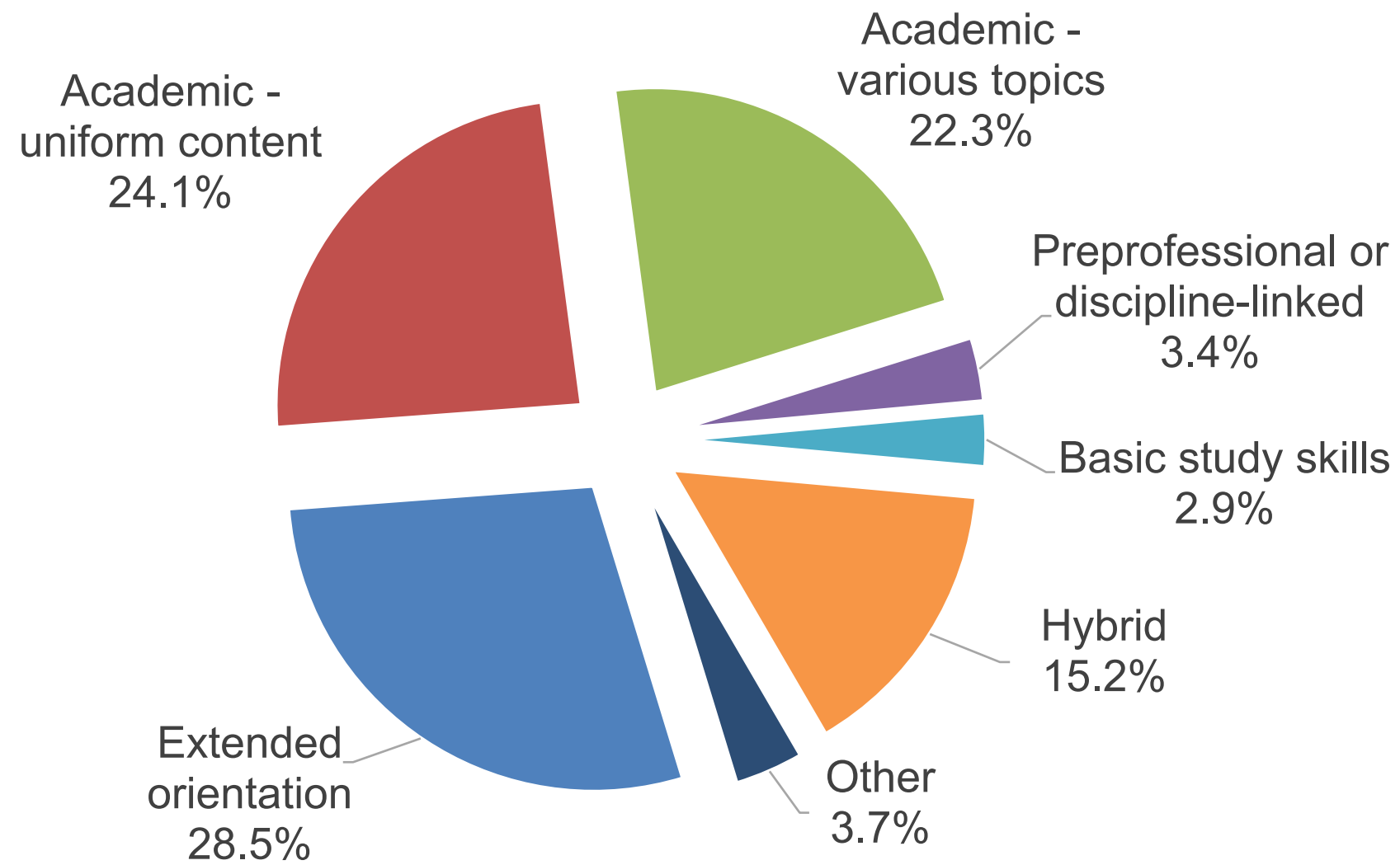
- 74% is still a lot!
- Less replacement of FYS?
- FYE efforts more diverse and widespread
- Assessment showing FYS doesn't have the impact it once did (on certain campuses)?
- Decrease in certain seminar types... (spoiler alert)
- Others?

Seminar Type Distribution



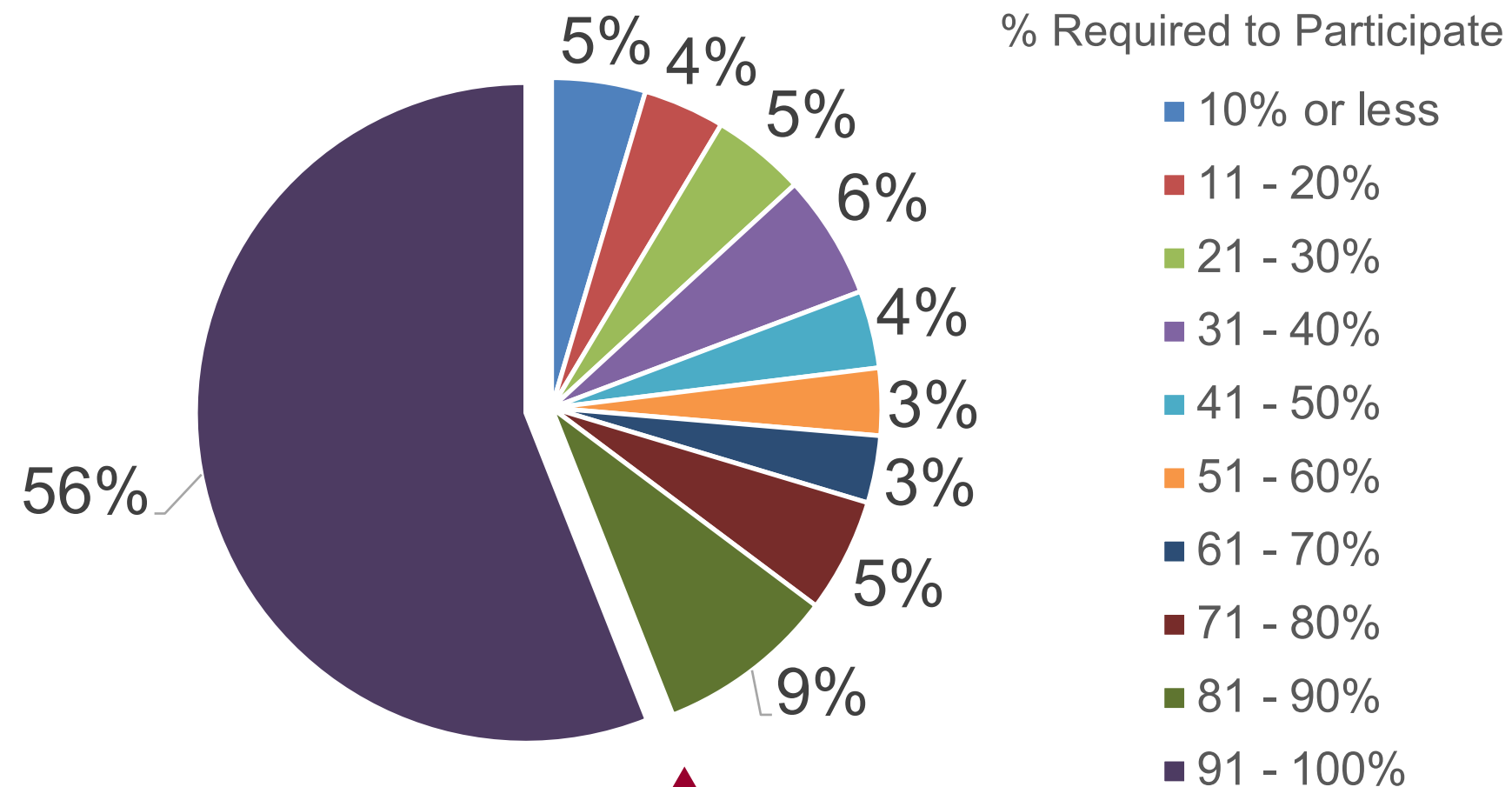
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Primary FYS

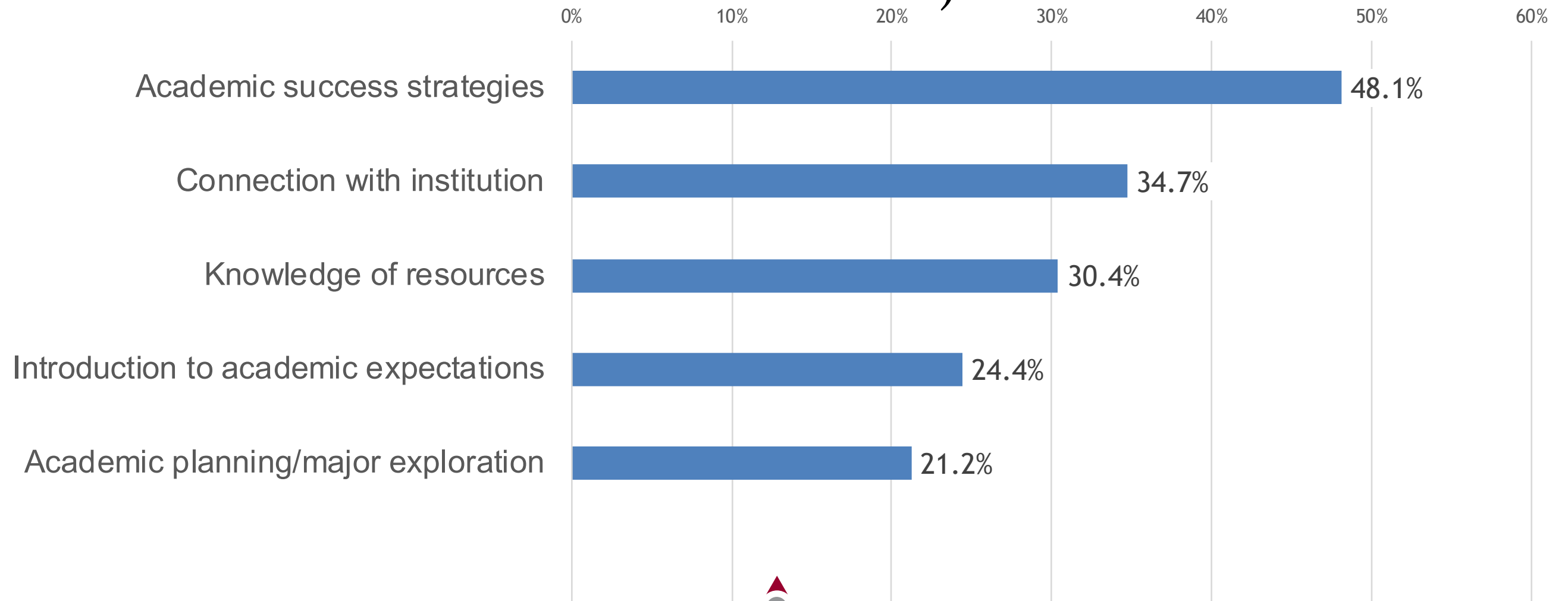


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Access to First-Year Seminars



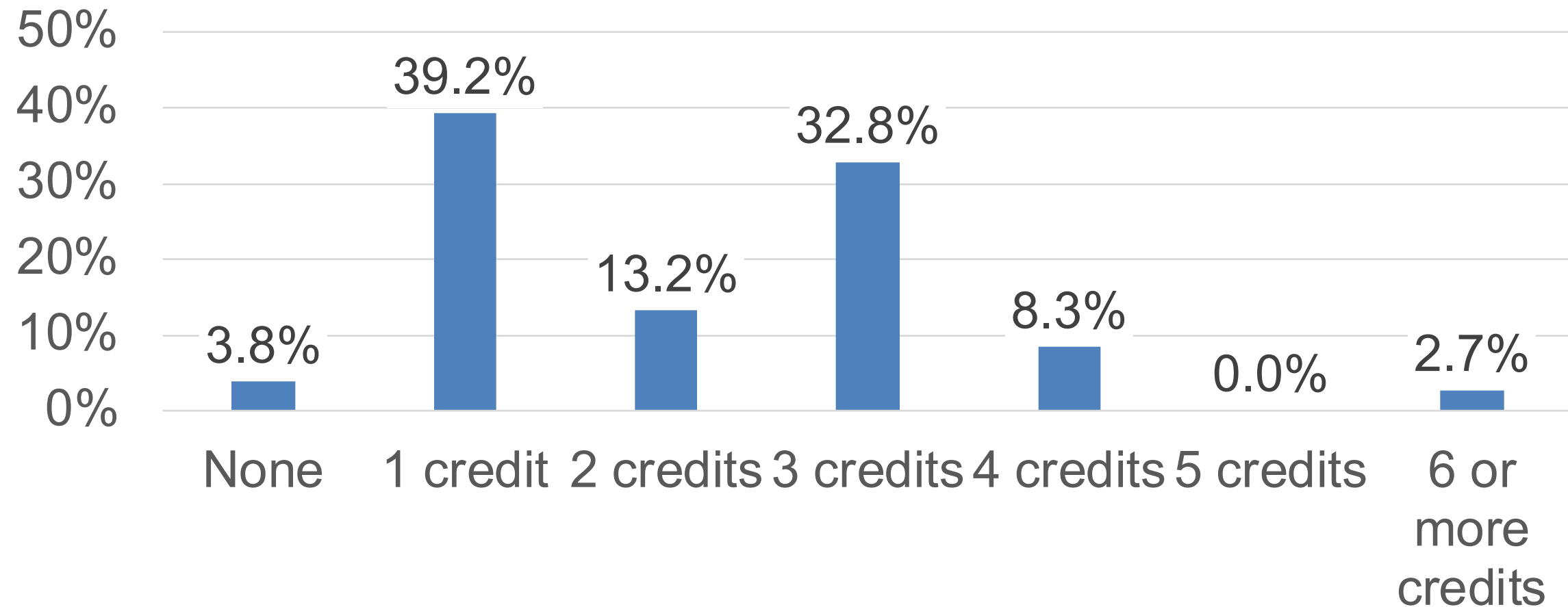
FY Seminar Objectives



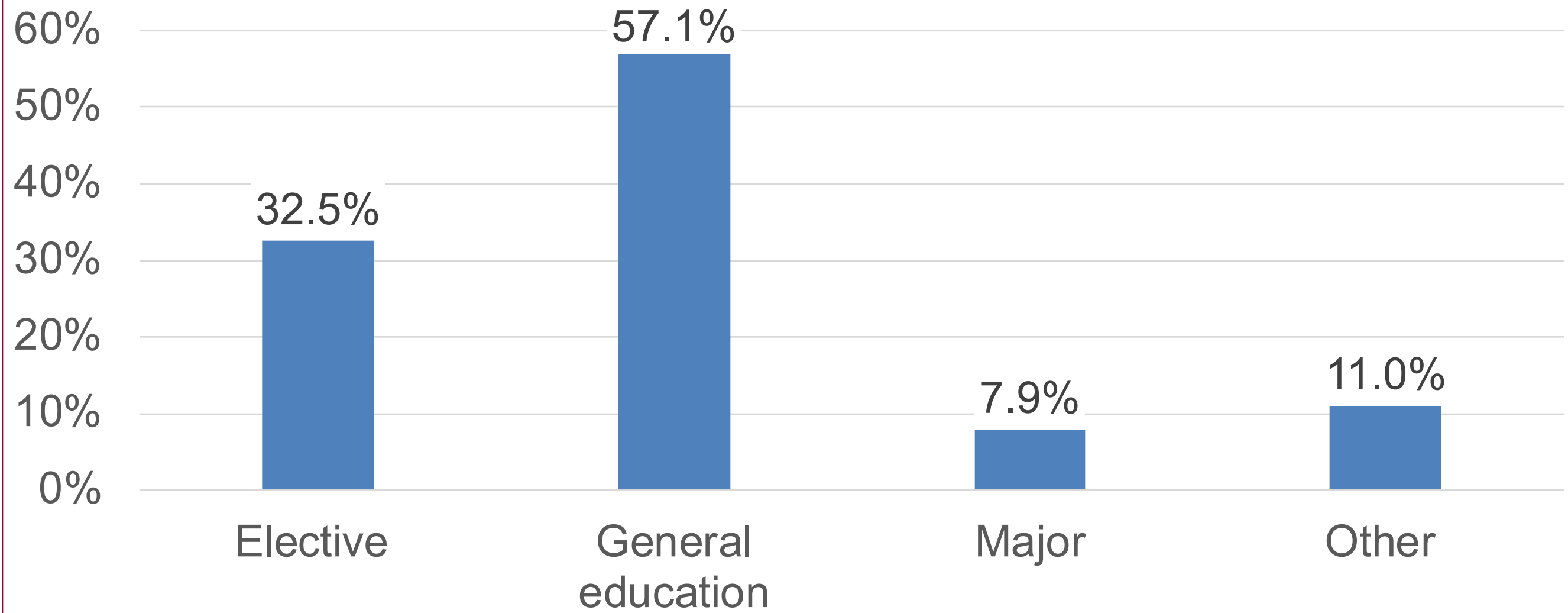
Give Me Some Credit

86% are Letter-graded

How many credits does FYS Carry?

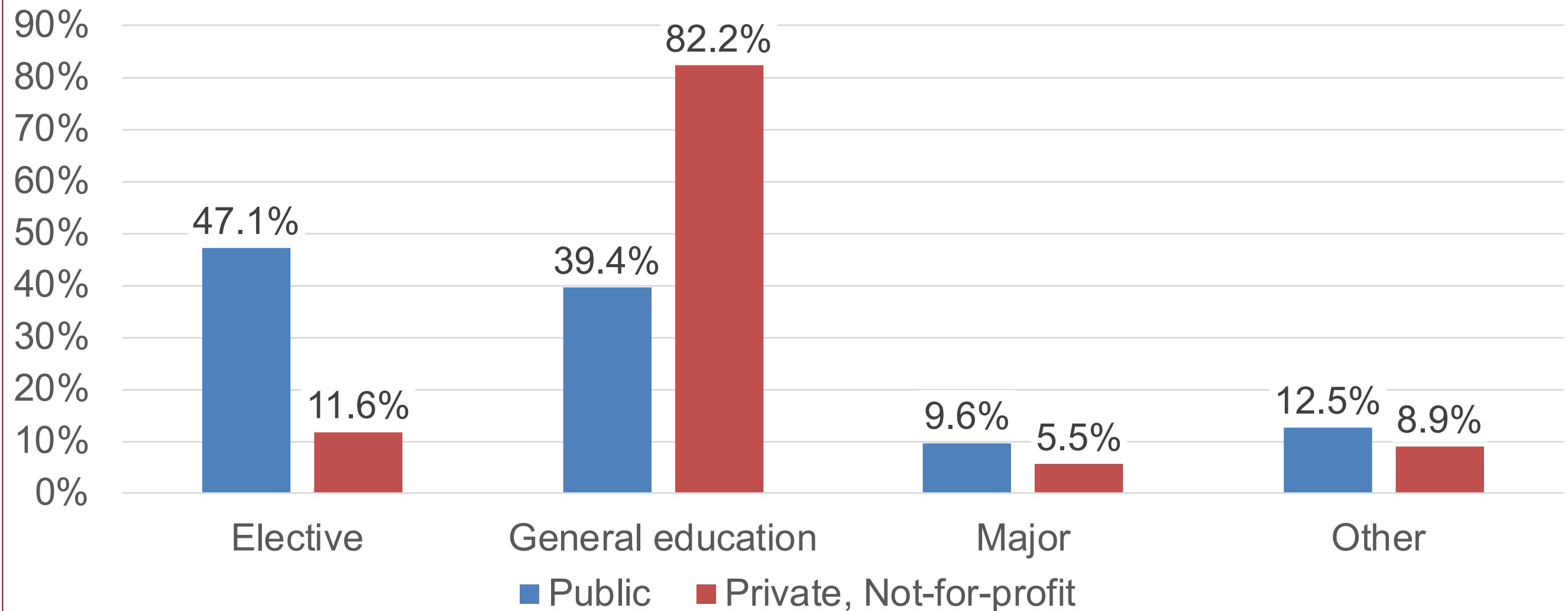


How Are Credits Applied?

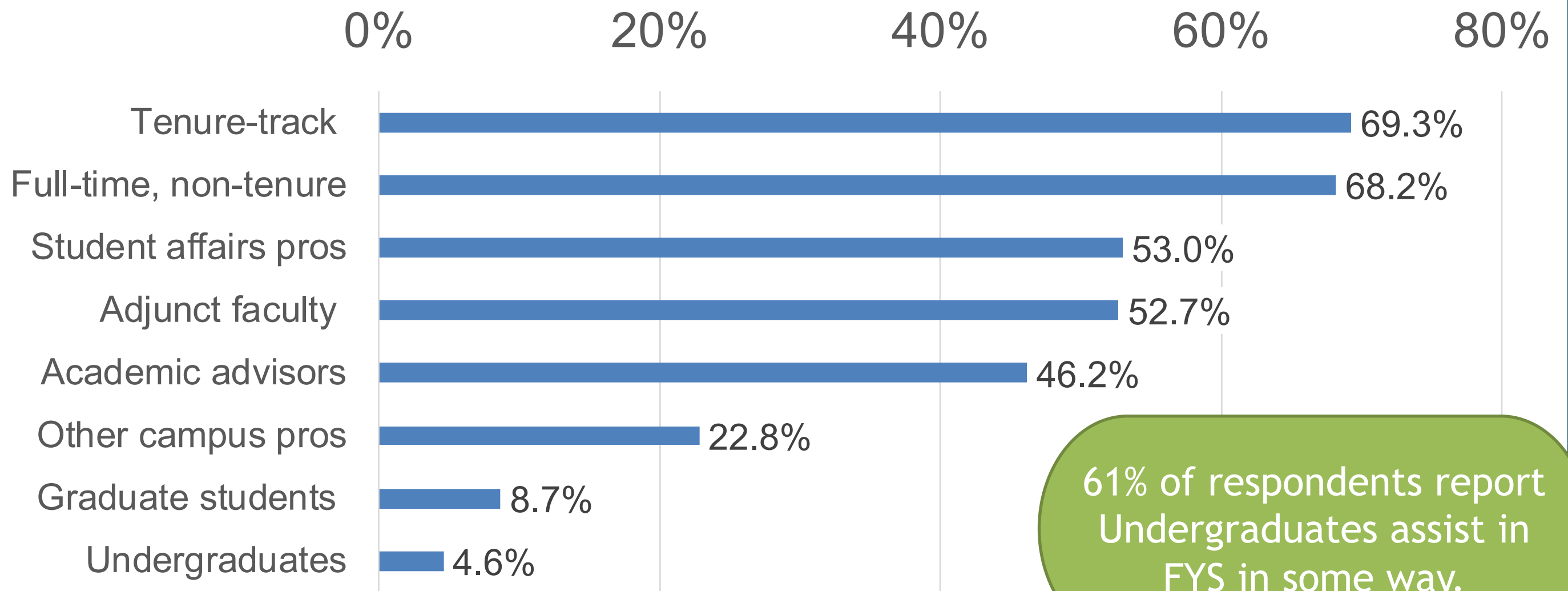


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How Are Credits Applied?



Who's Teaching the FYS?



61% of respondents report Undergraduates assist in FYS in some way.

2017 NSFYE Findings

PRE-TERM ORIENTATION



“Pre-Term Orientation”

- Listed as being offered by 75.4% of respondents to NSFYE
 - 80.6% Four-Year
 - 58.5% Two-Year
- Lower than previous estimates:
 - 100% Four-Year (Barefoot, Griffin, & Koch, 2012)
 - 98.2% Two-Year (Koch, Griffin, & Barefoot, 2014)

“Pre-Term Orientation”

- Survey wording artifact?
- “Pre-Term” vs. “New-Student” or other terminology
- Used same terminology as JNGI survey, but different question method
- More research needed to understand lower percentage

Pre-Term Orientation Prevalence

Public

•74.6%

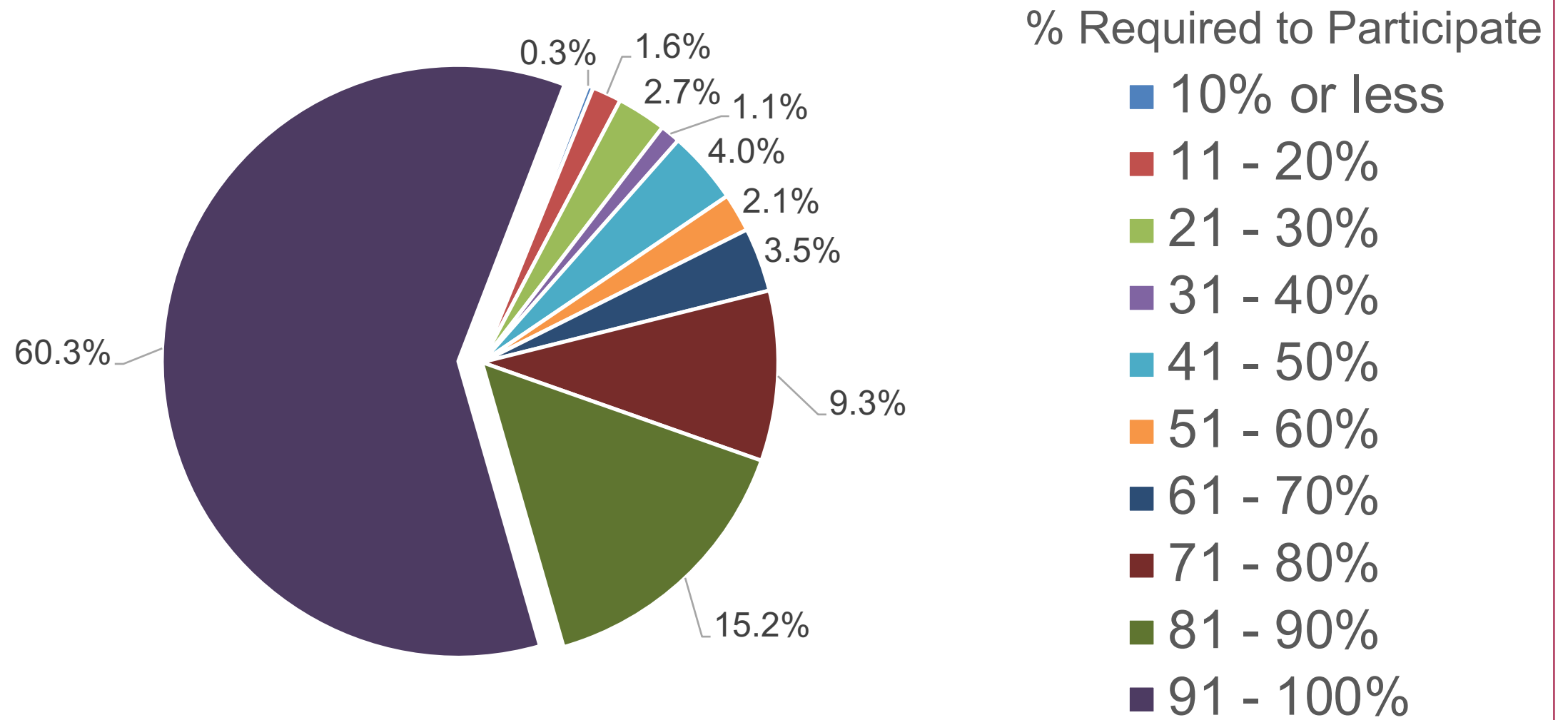
Private, Not-
for-profit

•77.0%

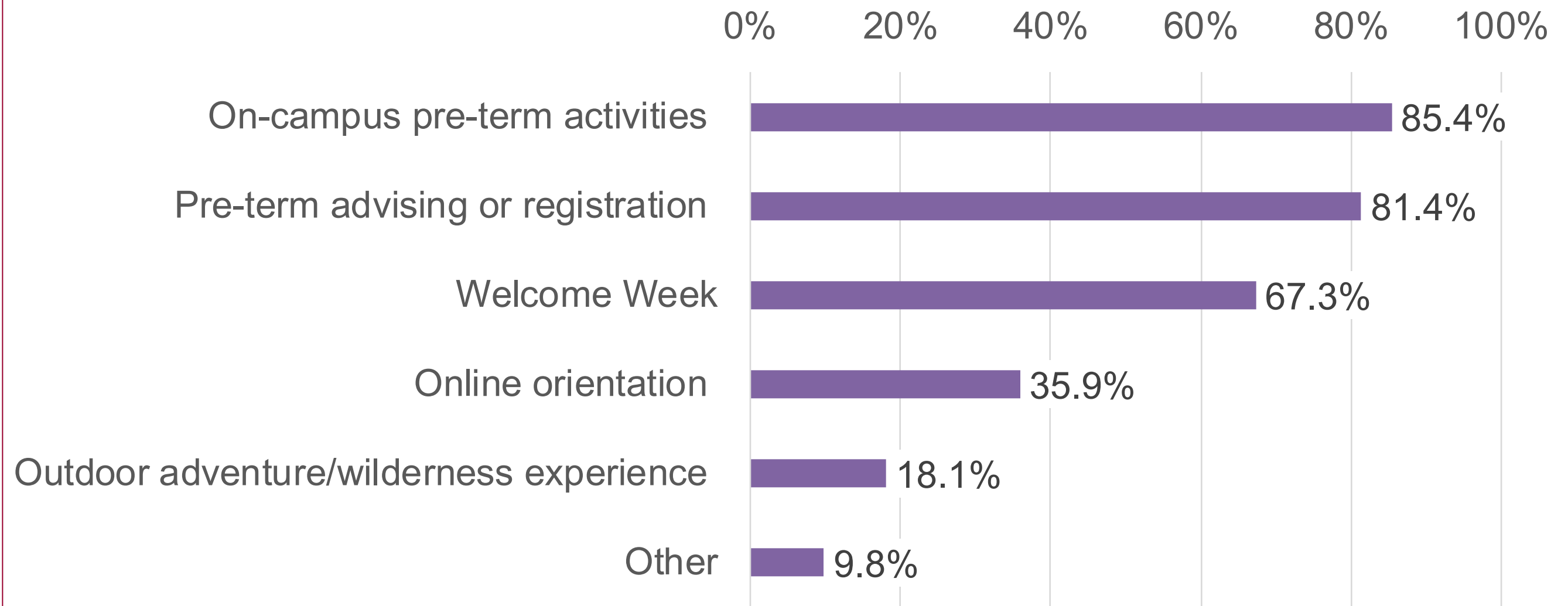


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Access to Pre-Term Orientation



Formats of Pre-Term Orientation



Formats of Pre-Term Orientation – Four-Year

Forms of Pre-term Orientation at Four-Year Institutions	2017 NSFYE	2012 JNGI
On-campus pre-term activities	86.7%	80.5%
Online orientation	30.7%	18.4%
Outdoor adventure/wilderness experience	20.7%	21.5%
Pre-term advising or registration	82.8%	86.6%
Welcome Week (i.e., on-campus immediately preceding term)	72.5%	87.8%
Other, please specify	10.0%	-

Activities during Orientation

Orientation Activity	Total
Introduction to campus resources and services	94.9%
Introduction to campus facilities	87.8%
Academic advising	86.2%
Registration or course enrollment	80.9%
Sessions for family members	76.3%
Involvement opportunities	75.3%
Community building	71.0%
Discussions about health and wellness on campus	63.8%
Placement testing	62.2%
Structured interaction with faculty	58.0%

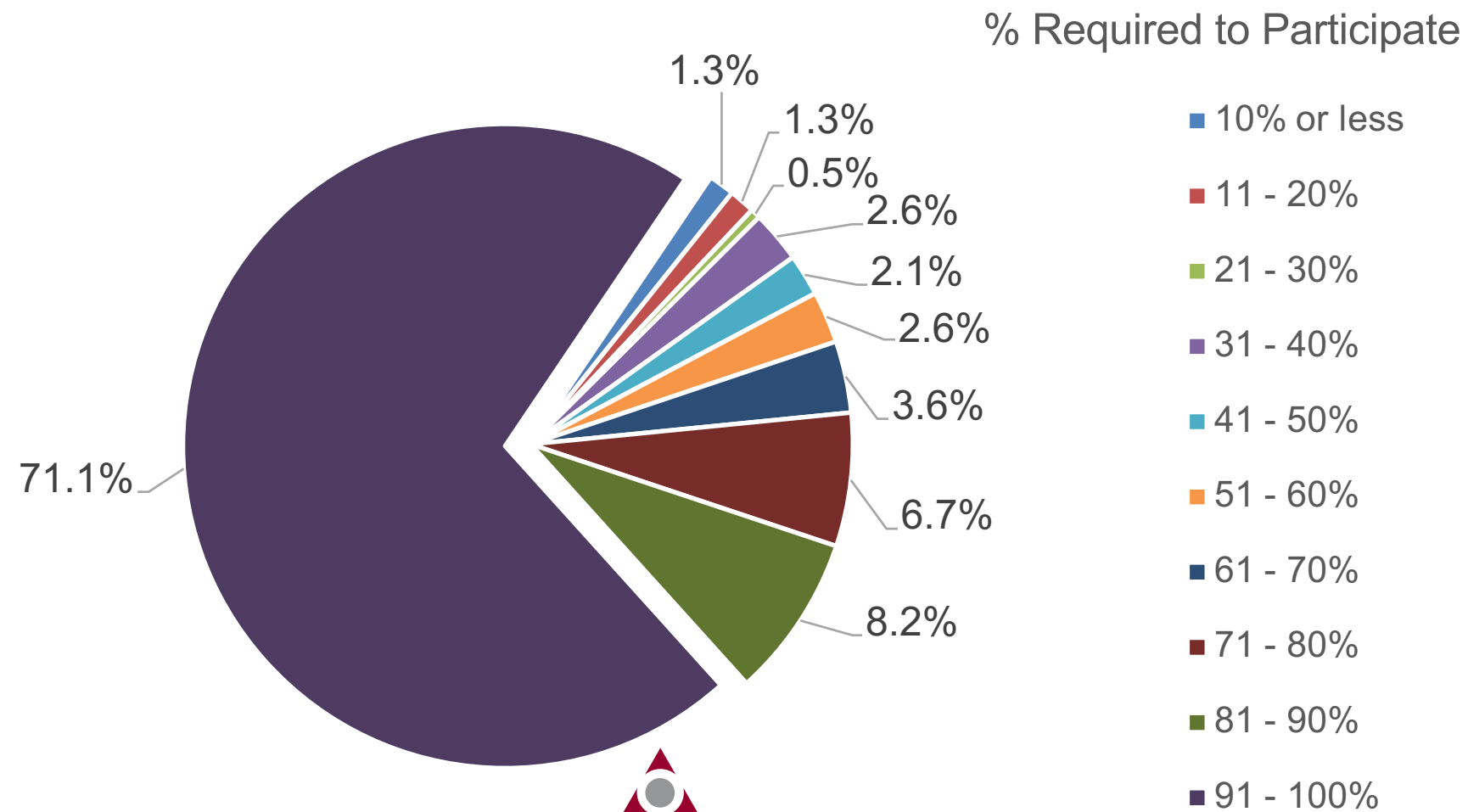
2017 NSFYE Findings

FIRST-YEAR ACADEMIC ADVISING

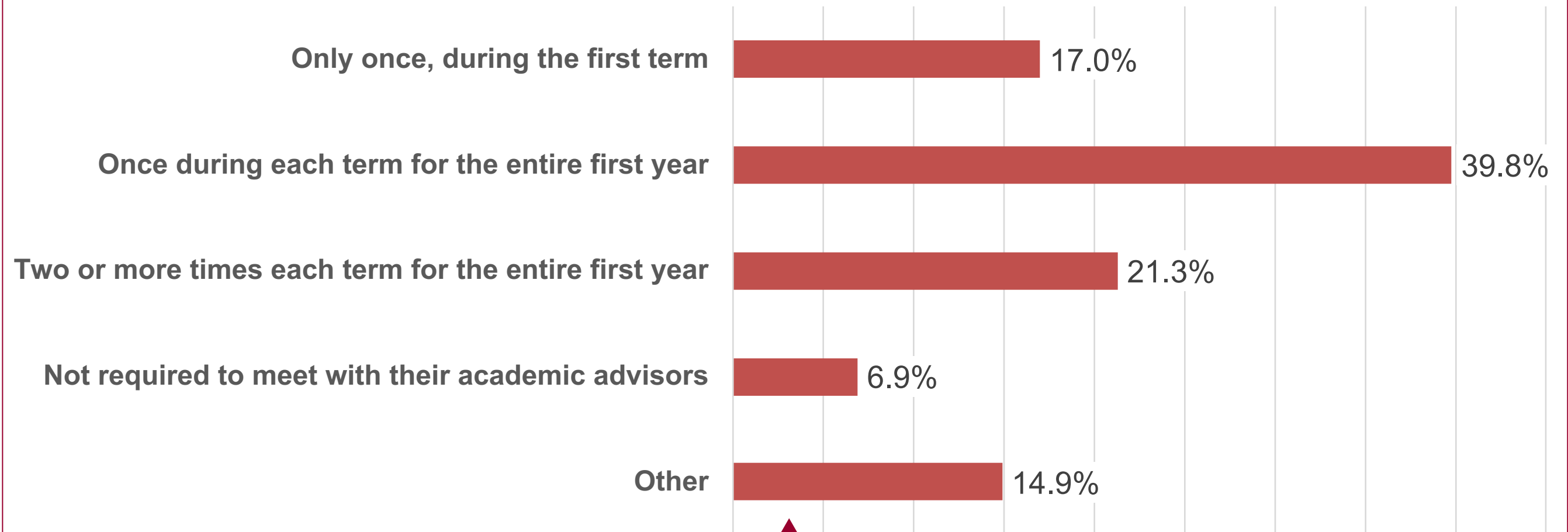


Access to Academic Advising

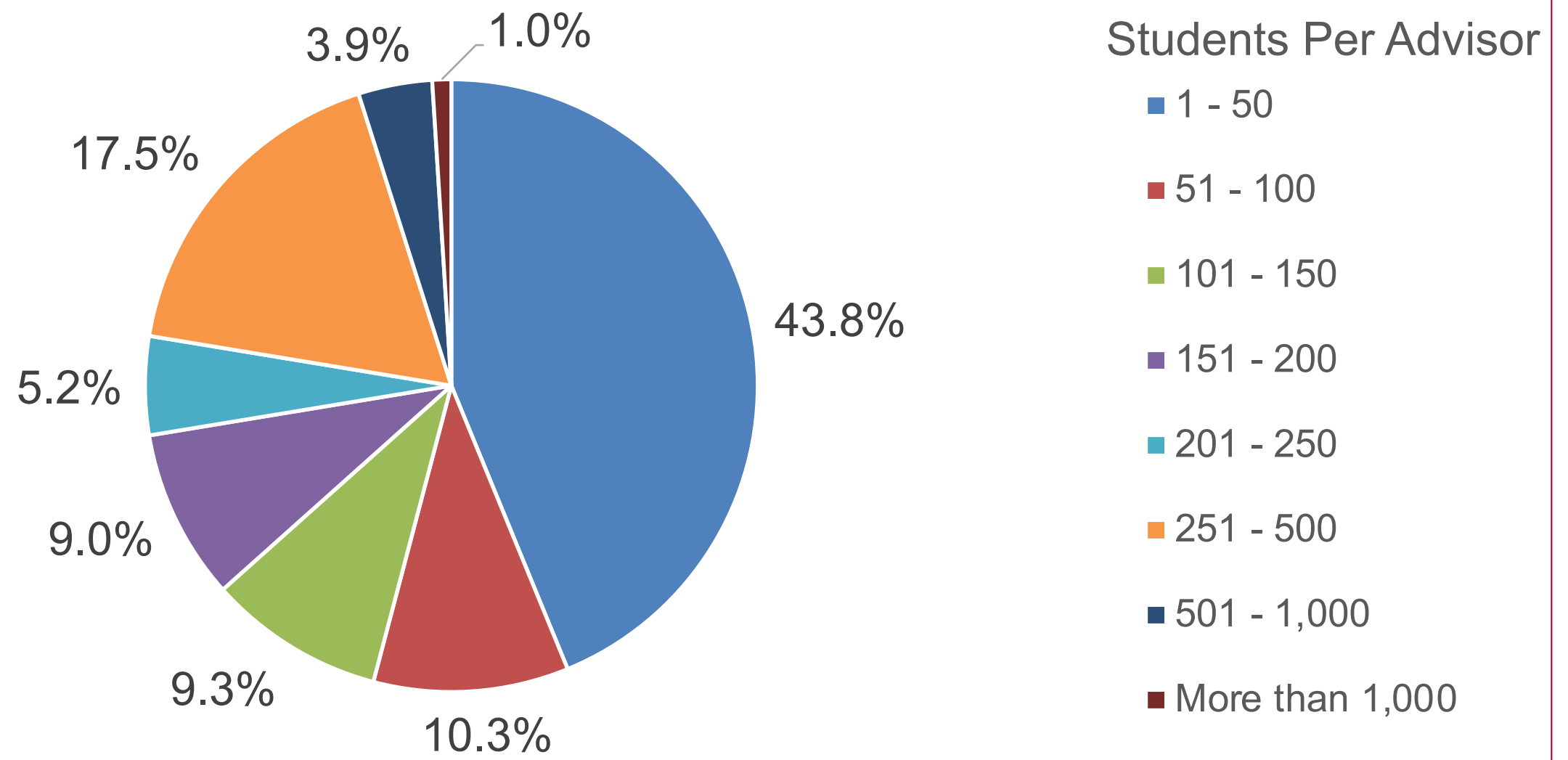
80.4% of responding institutions offer first-year academic advising



Contact with Advisors



Advising Load



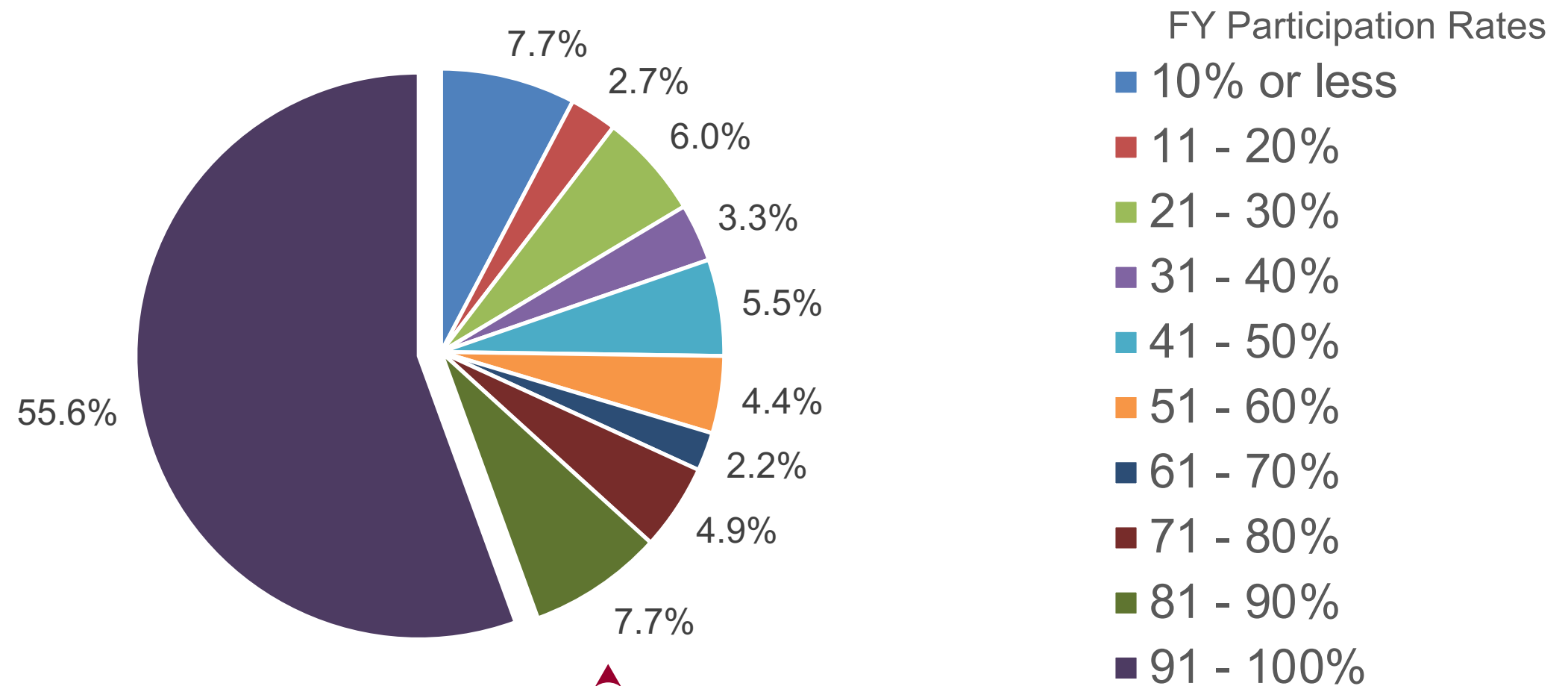
2017 NSFYE Findings

COMMON READING PROGRAMS



Access to Common Reading

38.3% of responding institutions offer common reading programs



Characteristics of Common Reading Programs

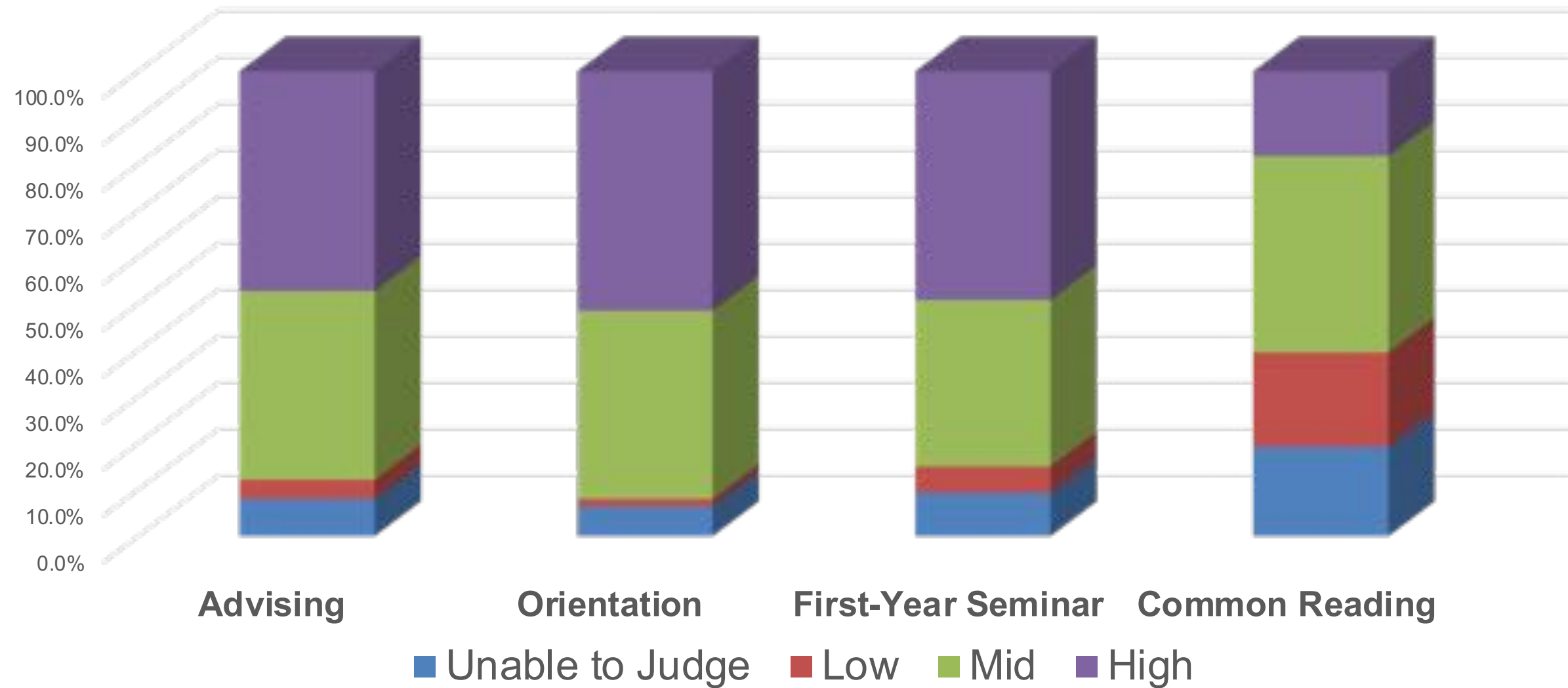
- On-campus speakers- 74.7%
- Discussion groups - 67.0%
- Incorporated in first-year seminar - 62.6%
- Campus programming throughout academic year – 50.0%
- Student-faculty interaction – 33.5%
- Films - 34.6%
- Incorporated in English/writing courses - 32.4%
- Campus-community engagement – 30.8%

2017 NSFYE Findings

FIRST-YEAR PROGRAM COMPARISONS

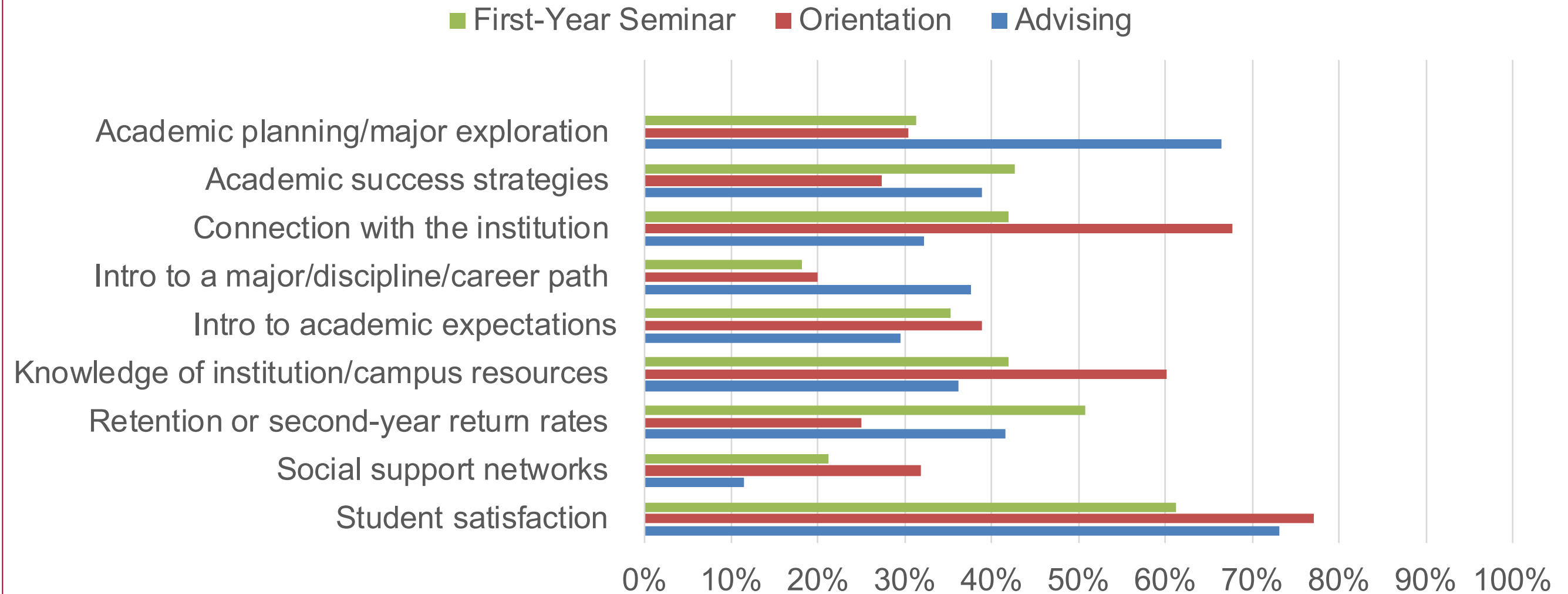


Return on Investment



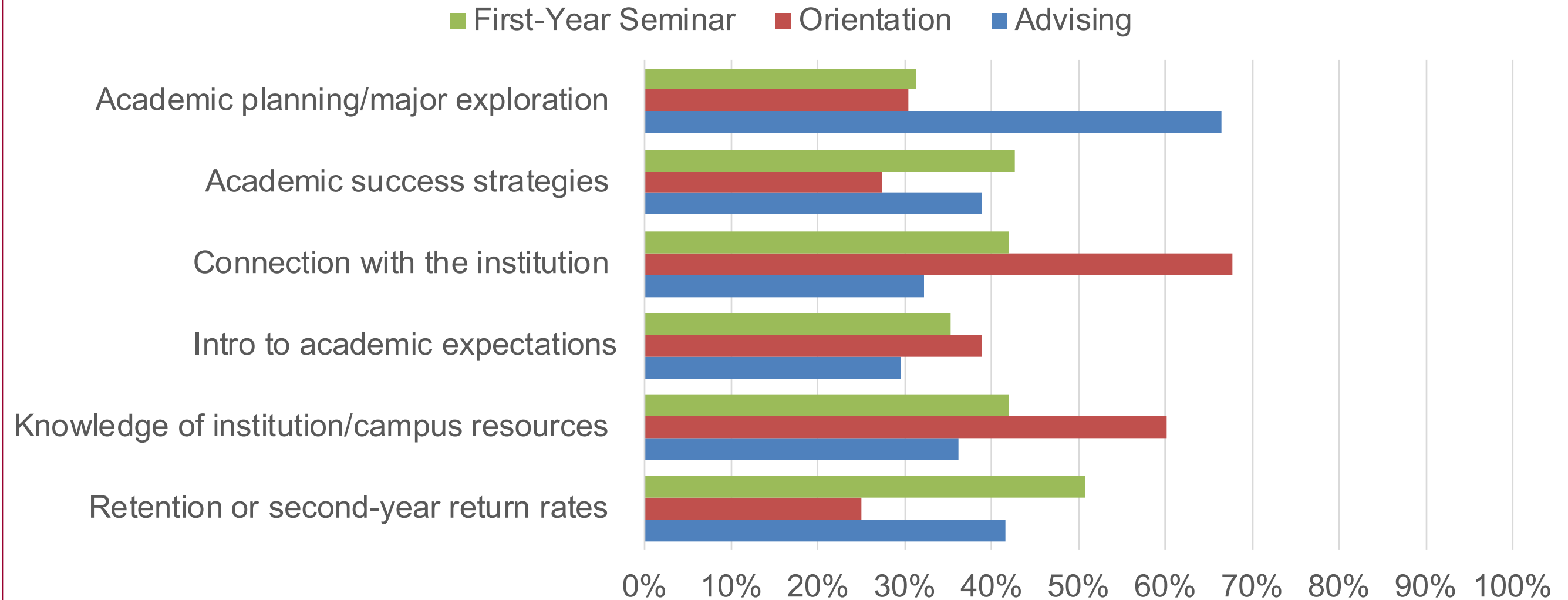
FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Assessed Outcomes – Selected Programs



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Assessed Outcomes & FY Objectives



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Questions and Conclusion

Thank You!

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