



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

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

The Trusted Expert and Internationally Recognized Leader
for all Postsecondary Student Transitions

Academic Peer Leaders: Resurgent 20th Century Activity Leads to Gains in 21st Century Outcomes

Jennifer R. Keup

2017 AAC&U Annual Meeting
San Francisco, CA



*Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities*



@jrkeup
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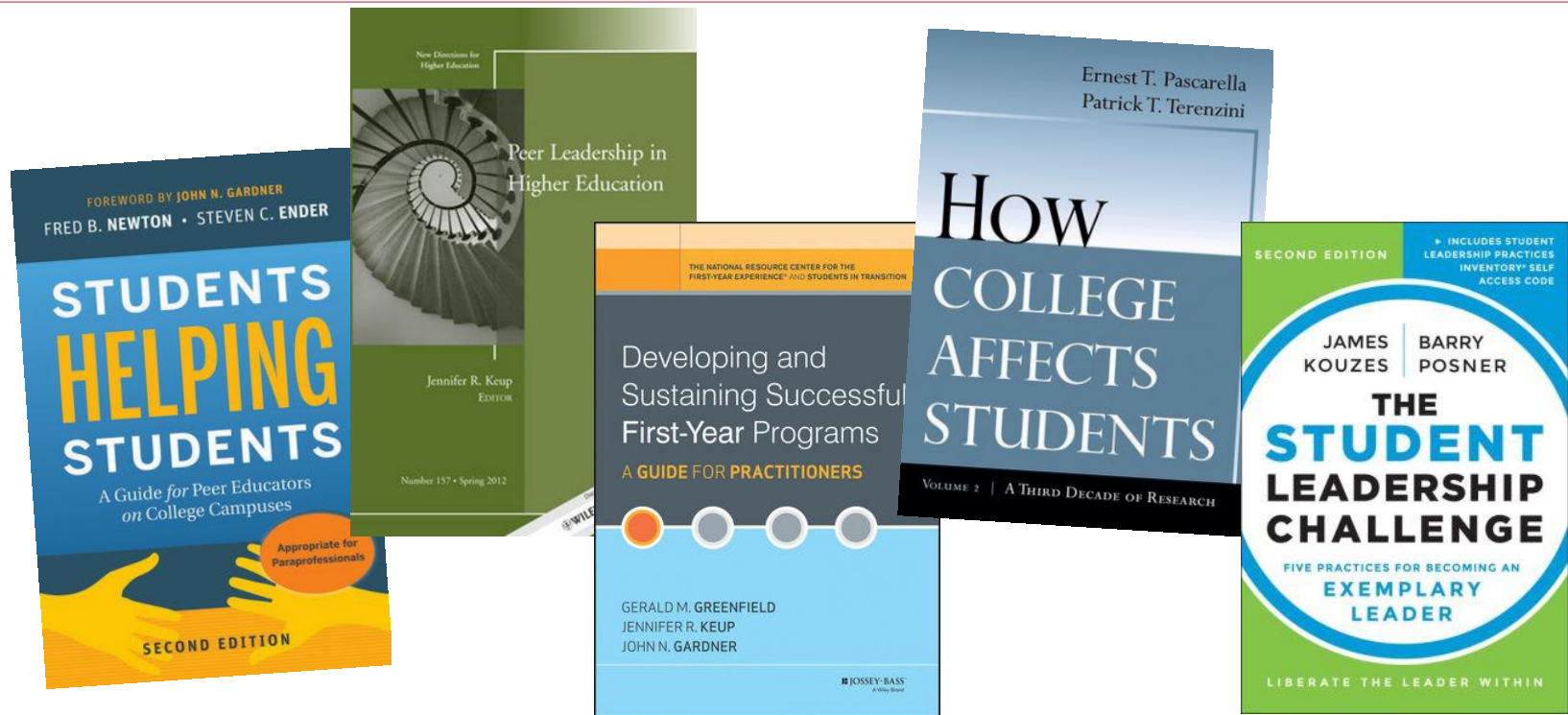


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Session Learning Objectives

As a result of attending this session, participants will:

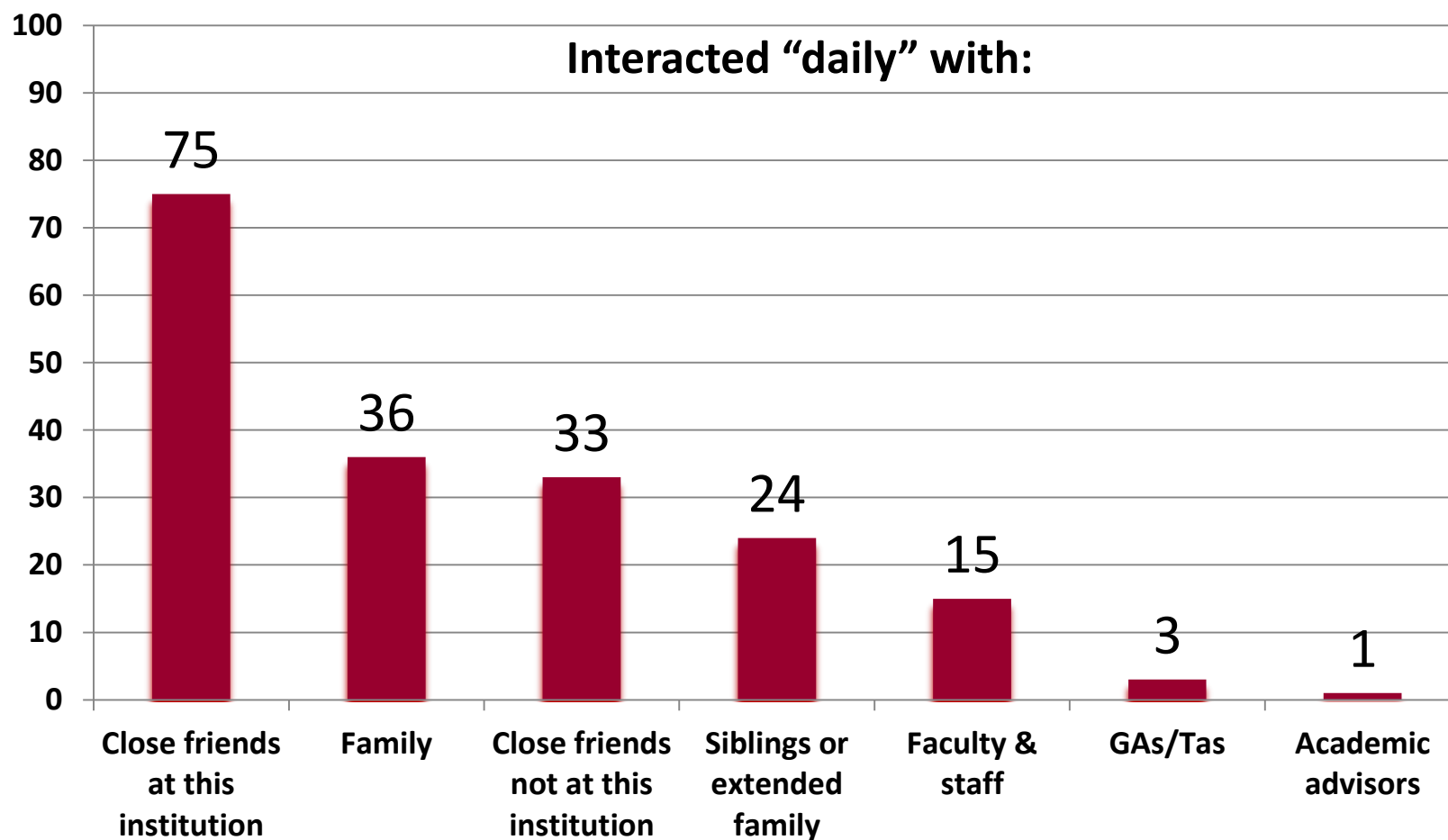
- ...gain a greater understanding of the characteristics of PL programs and their relationship with 21st Century learning outcomes.
- ...advance their understanding of PL as an emerging practice in colleges, departments, and academic support programs.
- ...have the opportunity to compare their peer leader program to a national profile and to consider innovations and refinements to their program.



Introduction

BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

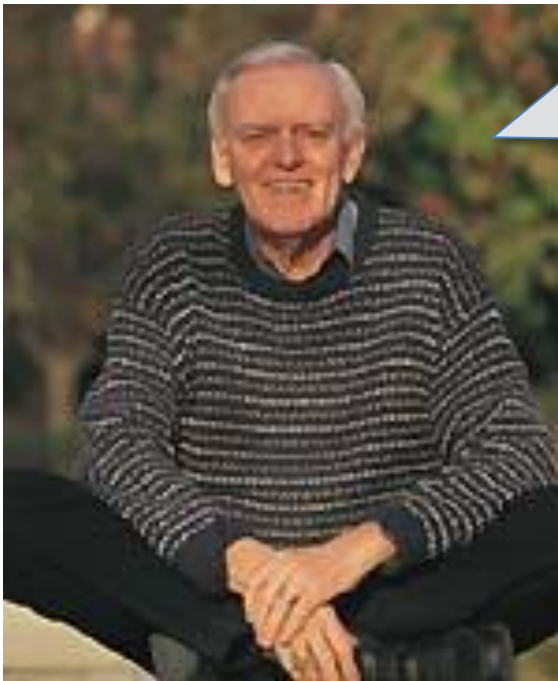
Support Networks in the First Year



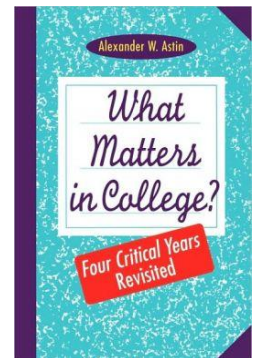
*2016 YFYC Survey

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, p. 398)



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Peer Pressure

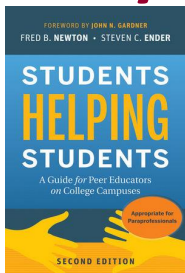
- Peers have a significant and profound impact on the undergraduate experience:
 - Intellectual development
 - Academic Engagement
 - Moral Development
 - Clarification of Political and Social Values
 - Determination of Academic and Social Self-Concept
 - Interpersonal Skills
 - Critical Thinking Skills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

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

Defining Peer Educators

“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.**”

(Newton & Ender, 2010, p. 6)



Background on Peer Leaders

- Historically, Peer Leaders were situated in cocurricular units (orientation, residence life)
- Recently, the use of Peer Leaders in the classroom and academic realm has become more widespread
 - Roles: tutors, Supplemental Instruction leaders, and peer advisors
 - Courses: English composition, introductory mathematics, gateway courses, and first-year seminars
- The lines between curricular and cocurricular spaces are being intentionally blurred

Background on Peer Leaders

- Peer leaders are empowered to exert influence in a less intimidating way than staff or faculty
- Student paraprofessionals are an effective and efficient resource
- The use of peer leaders provides benefit to:
 - Programs: improved student outcomes, stronger bridge between faculty/staff and students
 - Students: more opportunities for student interventions
 - Peer leaders: engagement with faculty & staff, leadership training

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www.studentvoice.com/p/Project.aspx?Project=04

Project - Baseline - Campus Labs 2013 National Survey of Peer Leaders

Dear Student,

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina is conducting a research study on the peer leader experience and would like to invite you to participate. You are being asked to participate in this study because you have been identified as a student who has been involved in one or more peer leader experiences on your campus.

The purpose of this research is to gather information students' involvement and experiences as peer leaders. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a 10 - 15 minute survey about your involvement in peer leadership roles and the impact this involvement has had on your educational experience.

By participating in this research, you are providing information that will contribute to the knowledge of peer leadership in Higher Education. This information can be used to better and expand peer leadership experiences for others in both student and professional form.

Your participation is confidential. The information from this study will be kept in a secure location at the University of South Carolina. The results from this study will be reported in the aggregate and participants will not receive any further contact after completing the survey. This survey will take place at approximately 60 campuses across the United States and will be administered to an estimated average of approximately 1,000 students at each campus.

Participation in this survey research allows you to enter a drawing for one of four \$500 airline flight vouchers or one of 10 \$100 American Express gift cards. At the conclusion of the survey, the website will ask for your information to be entered into the drawing. This information will be kept confidential and will be destroyed upon the conclusion of the distribution of the prizes. You are eligible for the prizes whether or not you complete the survey.

Your participation in this study is your decision and you may choose to withdraw from this study at any time. Participation, non-participation, or withdrawal from this study will not have an impact on your grades, credit, or any other benefit to which you might otherwise be entitled.

We would be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. If you have study related questions or problems, you may contact us by phone at 803-777-2134 or by e-mail at NRCcrsch@mailbox.sc.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at the University of South Carolina at 803-777-7095.

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www.studentvoice.com/p/Project.aspx?q=04

Project - Baseline - Campus Labs 2013 National Survey of Peer Leaders

University of South Carolina

8% Complete

The purpose of this survey is to gather information about your experience as a peer leader. We define a peer leader as an **undergraduate student** who has been selected to serve as a mentor, educator, or advisor to other students through a position with a campus-run organization.

As you answer each question, please reflect on your experience(s) as a peer leader. Your responses will be used to help researchers study and better understand the peer leadership experience. All individual responses will be kept confidential. Responding to this survey will take approximately 10 - 15 minutes.

QUESTION 2

What college or university do you attend?

Status as a Peer Leader

We define a peer leader as an undergraduate student who has been selected to serve as a mentor, educator, or advisor to other students through a position with a campus-run organization.

QUESTION 3

Are you currently serving as a peer leader?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know

BACK NEXT

2:29 PM 76%

www.studentvoice.com/p/Project.aspx?q=04

Project - Baseline - Campus Labs 2013 National Survey of Peer Leaders

Type of Peer Leader Experience(s)

QUESTION 4

What type of campus-based organization have you worked for as a peer leader, either currently or in the past? (Check all that apply)

☐ Athletics

☐ Academic - peer advisor

☐ Academic - Supplemental Instruction leader

☐ Academic - tutor

☐ Academic - other (e.g., teaching assistant, lab assistant)

☐ Admissions

☐ Campus activities

☐ Community service or service learning

☐ Counseling or mental health

☐ Financial literacy

☐ First-year experience

☐ Greek life (i.e., social fraternity or sorority)

☐ International student office

☐ Judicial affairs or student conduct

☐ Multicultural affairs

☐ Orientation (e.g., new student, extended, or summer orientation)

☐ Outdoor or recreational sports

☐ Physical health

☐ Religious

Methods

2013 NATIONAL SURVEY OF PEER LEADERS

Method: Data Source

2013 National Survey of Peer Leaders

- 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



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 & SPONSORSHIP OF PEER LEADER EXPERIENCES

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 (<i>"mark all that apply"</i>)	%
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

Most Common PL Sponsors

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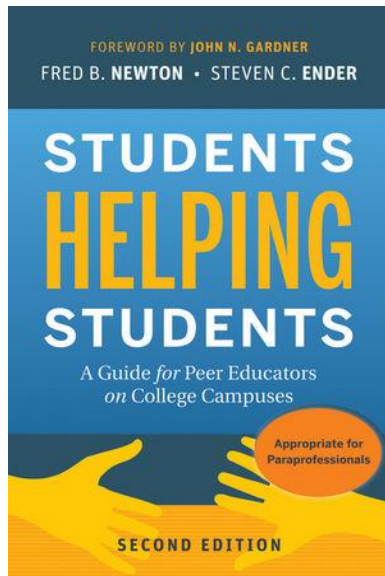
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Least Common PL Sponsors

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





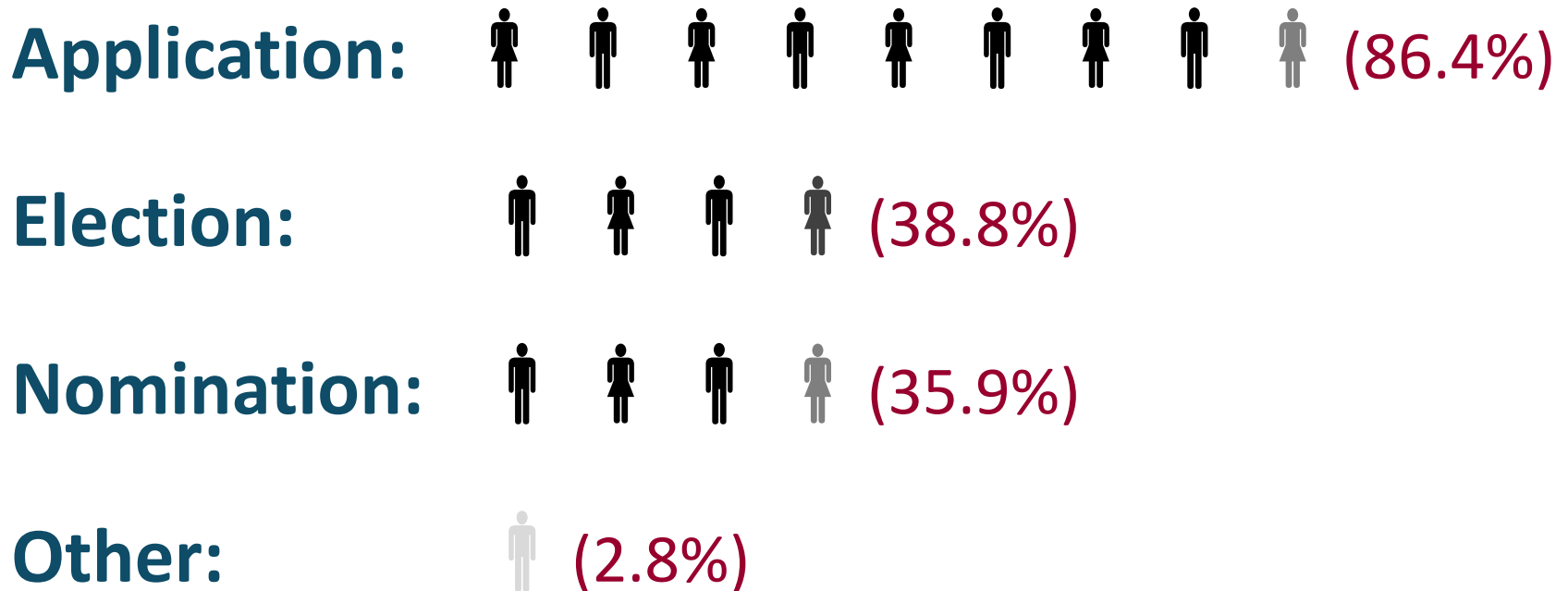
“Students who have been **selected and trained** to offer educational services to their peers. These services are intentionally designed to assist in the adjustment, satisfaction, and persistence of students toward attainment of their educational goals, Students performing in [*these*] paraprofessional 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

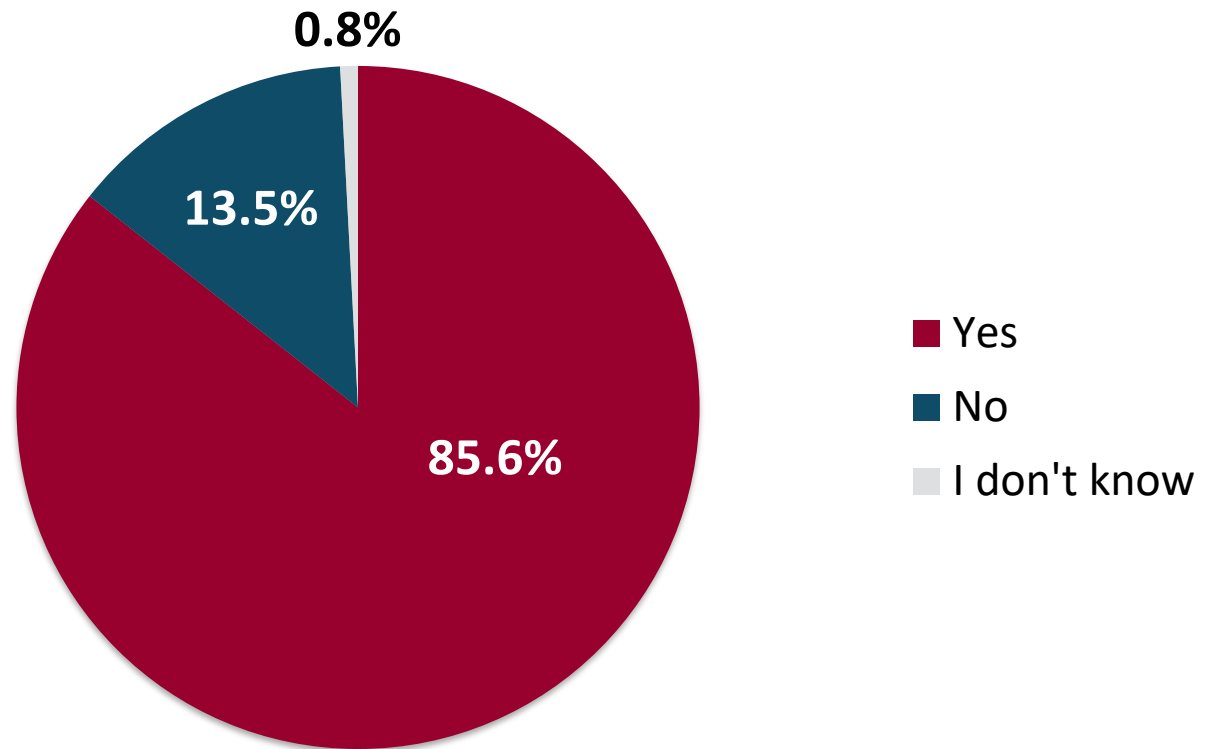
Which of the following best describes the peer leader selection process you went through (n = 3,942)



Training

Were you trained for your peer leader position(s)?

(n = 3,942)

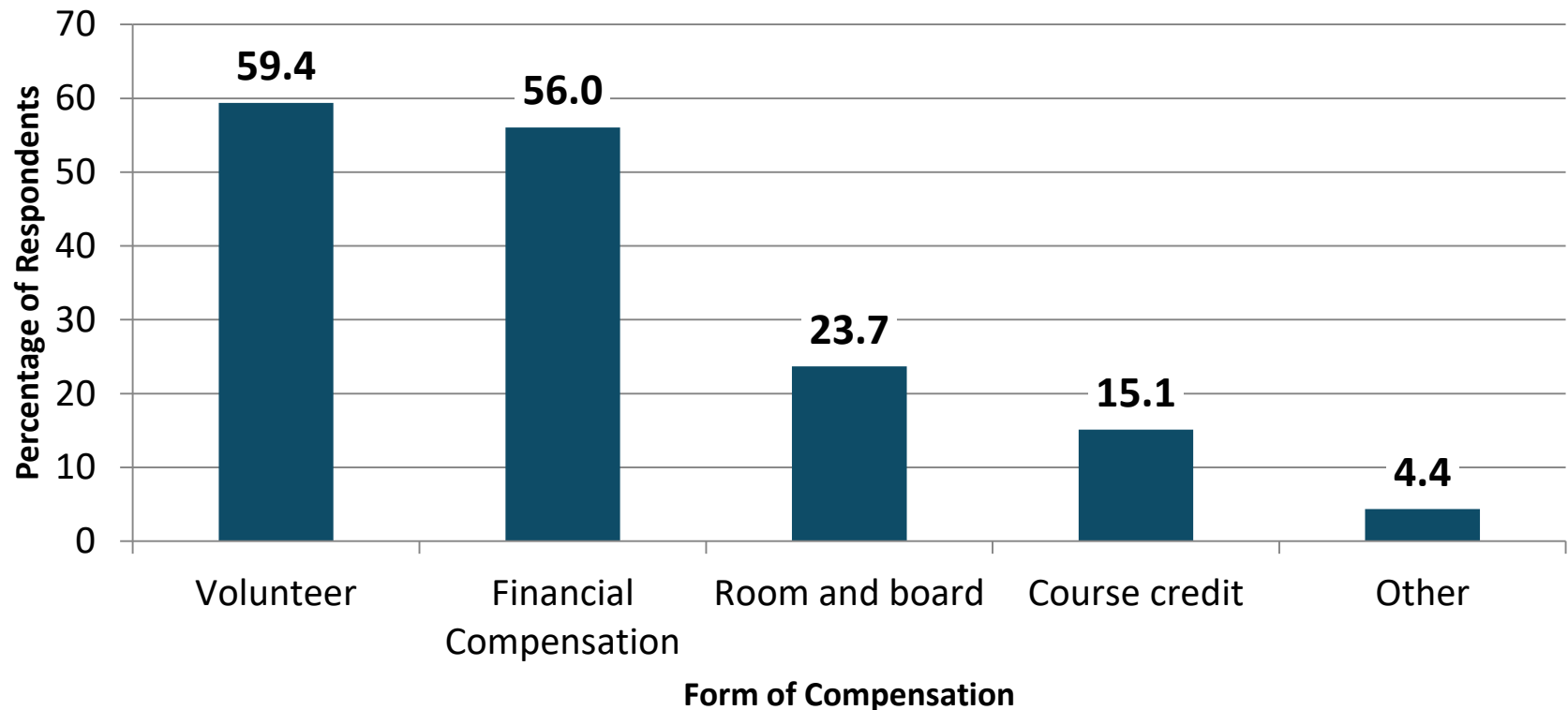


Trends in Peer Leader Training

- 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

Compensation

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





Findings

PEER LEADER OUTCOMES

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

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.”



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

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 pursuing 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 Academics

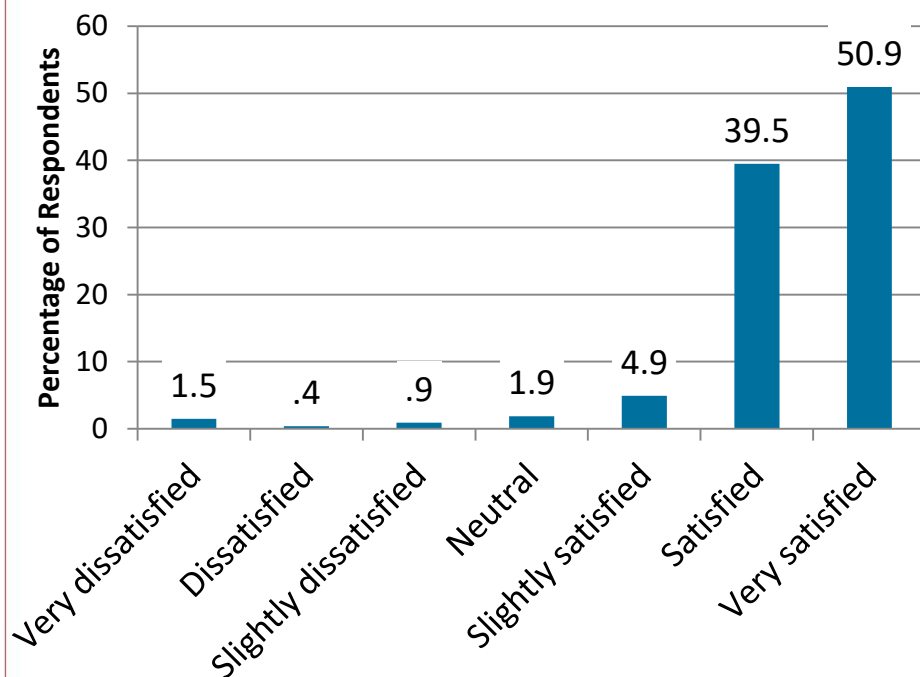
“As a Biology major, tutoring in chemistry and biology courses keeps the information fresh in my head. As I take higher level courses that requires me to remember basic concepts, I already know them thoroughly and I am able to grasp new concepts better.”

“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. ”

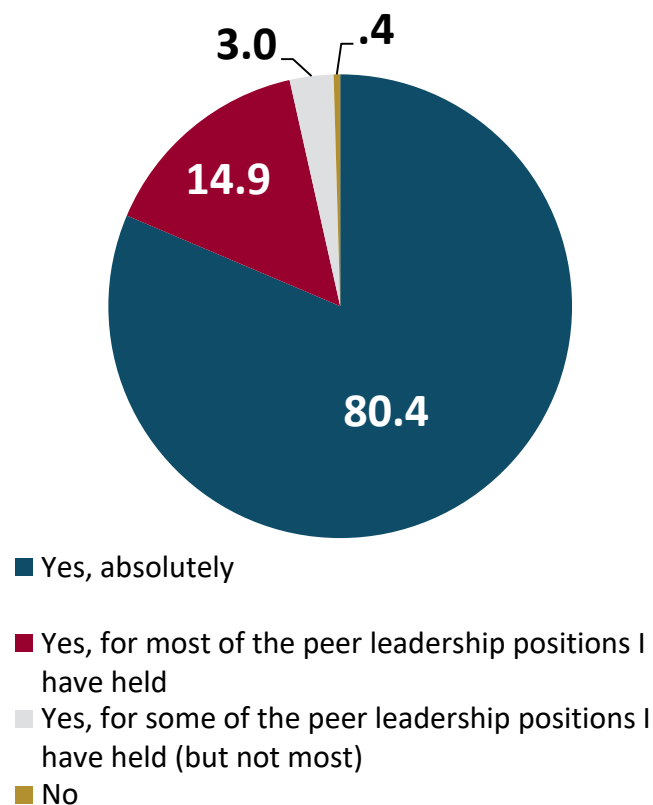


Satisfaction with PLEs

How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your peer leadership experiences?



Would you recommend being a peer leader to other students?





Conclusions

PEER LEADERSHIP AS A HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE

High-Impact Educational Practices

First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. 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.

Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professor. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects

Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.



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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.”

(Kuh, 2010)

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 of HIPs

“[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 in Brownell & Swaner, 2010



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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**





Thought is action in rehearsal.
Sigmund Freud

Conclusions

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS & TAKEAWAYS



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Takeaways - Overall

- Peer leaders report engagement in experiences
 - 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 (95%) would recommend at least some peer leadership positions to other students
- Insight into common and potential selection, training, and compensation models

Takeaways - Overall

- 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
- How do PL practices reflect and affect equity issues



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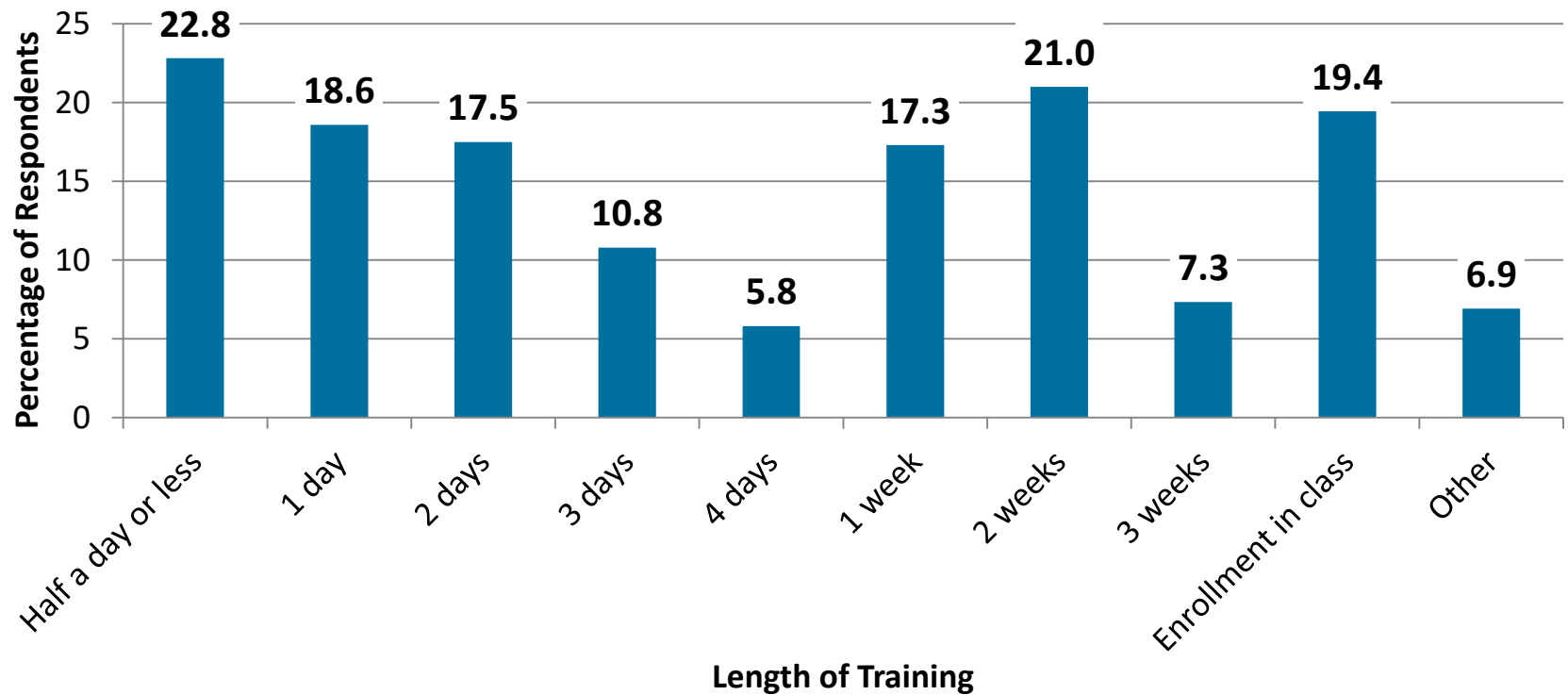


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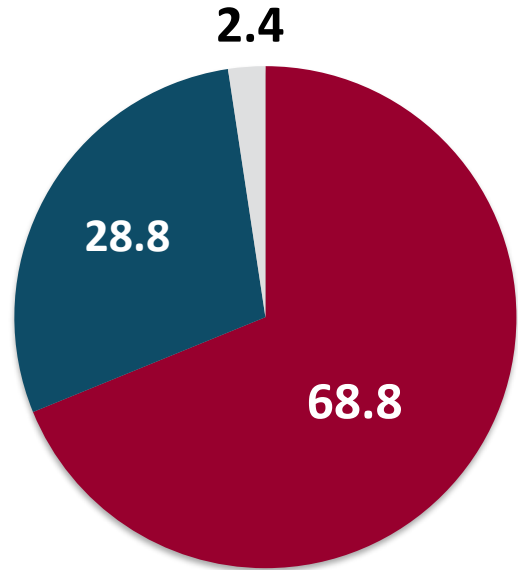
Training

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



Training

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



■ Yes ■ No ■ I don't know

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

