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FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND
STUDENTS IN TRANSITION

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# Leveraging Early-alert Programs to Foster Cross-Campus Collaborations Aimed at Student Success

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**University of South Carolina**

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# Background

What do we mean by "Early Alert" or "Early Warning"?

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"A systematic method of recording and communicating student behaviors that contribute to student attrition" and "effective intervention at the first indication of academic difficulty." (Tampke, 2013)

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www.sc.edu/fye

# Brief History of Early Alert

# Rationale

- Pushback against "Academic Darwinism"
- Belief that intervention can make a difference

| 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.

# Prevalence

- Two Year: 64.2%
- Four Year: 83.6%

- Public: 77.2%
- Private: 82.0%



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A Constellation of FYE Programs
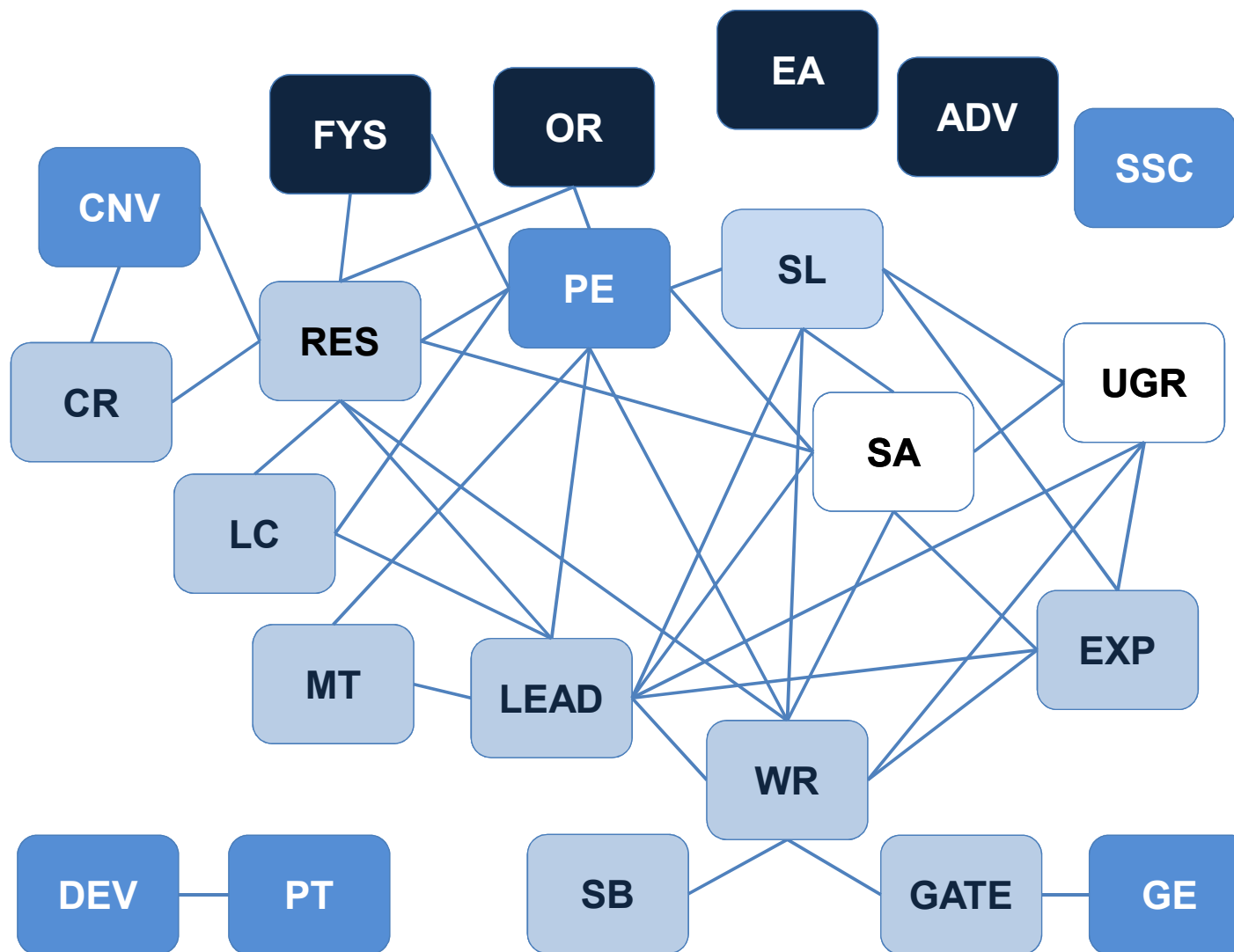
Legend:
- Lines represent correlations phi > .25
- Colors of boxes represent percentage of institutions reporting FYE program offered.

Dark Blue = > 70%

Royal Blue = 50-69%

Light Blue = 30-49%

White = < 30%

# All the Choices!

- Complexity of modern colleges and universities
- Proliferation of products
- Philosophy of student support staff
- Sources of information
- Modes of communication

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# Timing



- How "early" is "Early Alert"?

- Midterm

- First signs of issues

- Between terms
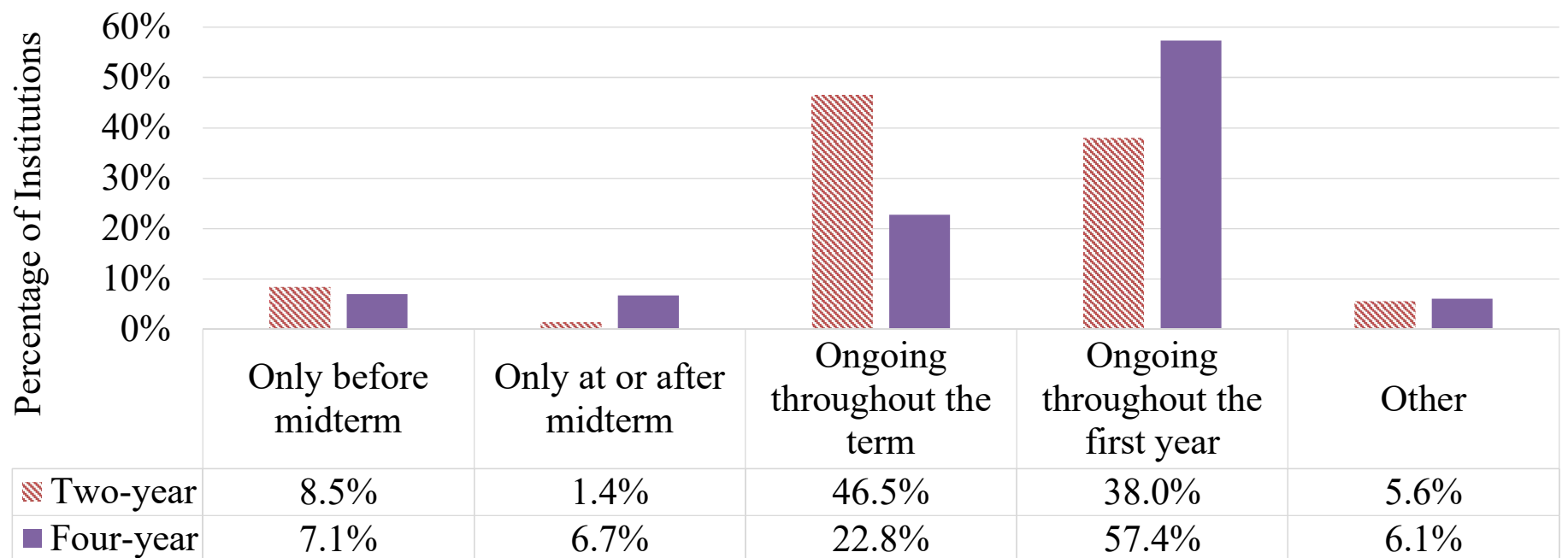
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# Timing



| | Only before midterm | Only at or after midterm | Ongoing throughout the term | Ongoing throughout the first year | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Two-year | 8.5% | 1.4% | 46.5% | 38.0% | 5.6% |
| Four-year | 7.1% | 6.7% | 22.8% | 57.4% | 6.1% |

Timing of Monitoring or Response of Early-Warning or Academic Alert System

Percentage of Institutions

# Timing



| | Only before midterm | Only at or after midterm | Ongoing throughout the term | Ongoing throughout the first year | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public | 9.3% | 6.0% | 28.2% | 50.0% | 6.5% |
| Private | 4.8% | 4.8% | 25.5% | 59.4% | 5.5% |
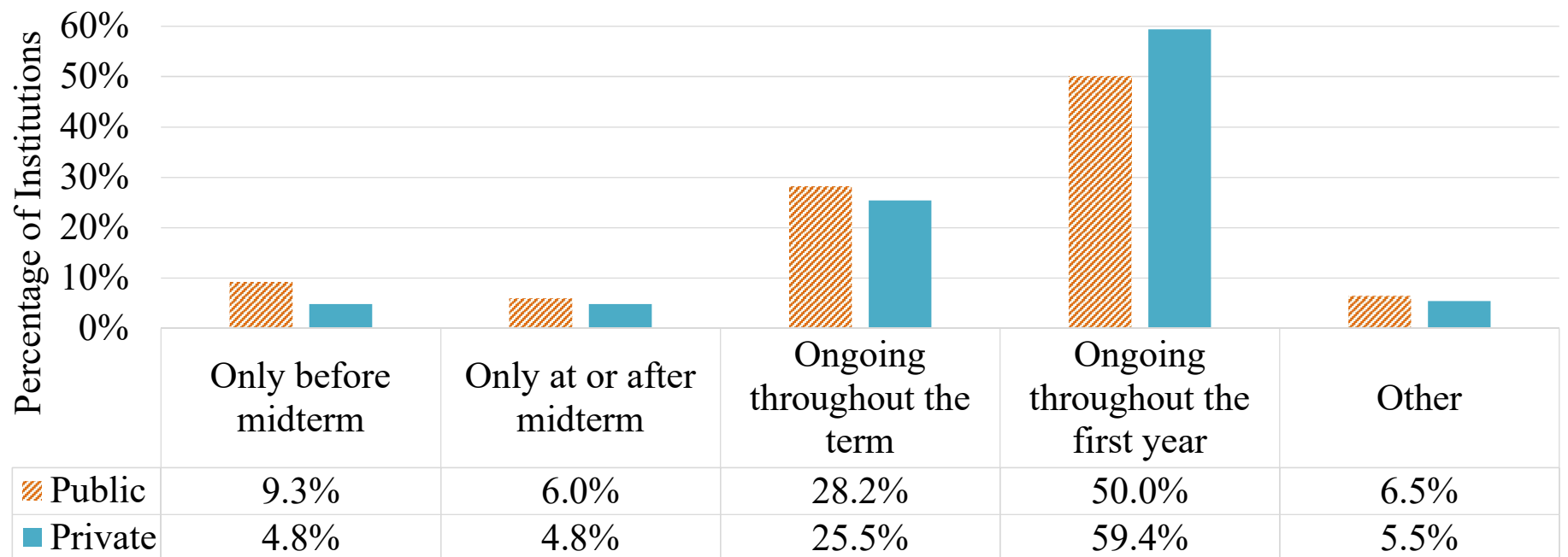
Timing of Monitoring or Response of Early-Warning or Academic Alert System

# Signals for Early Alert

- Academic performance
- Behavior
  - Disruption in class
  - Skipping class
- Conduct
- Affect
- Others?


BE ALERT!!
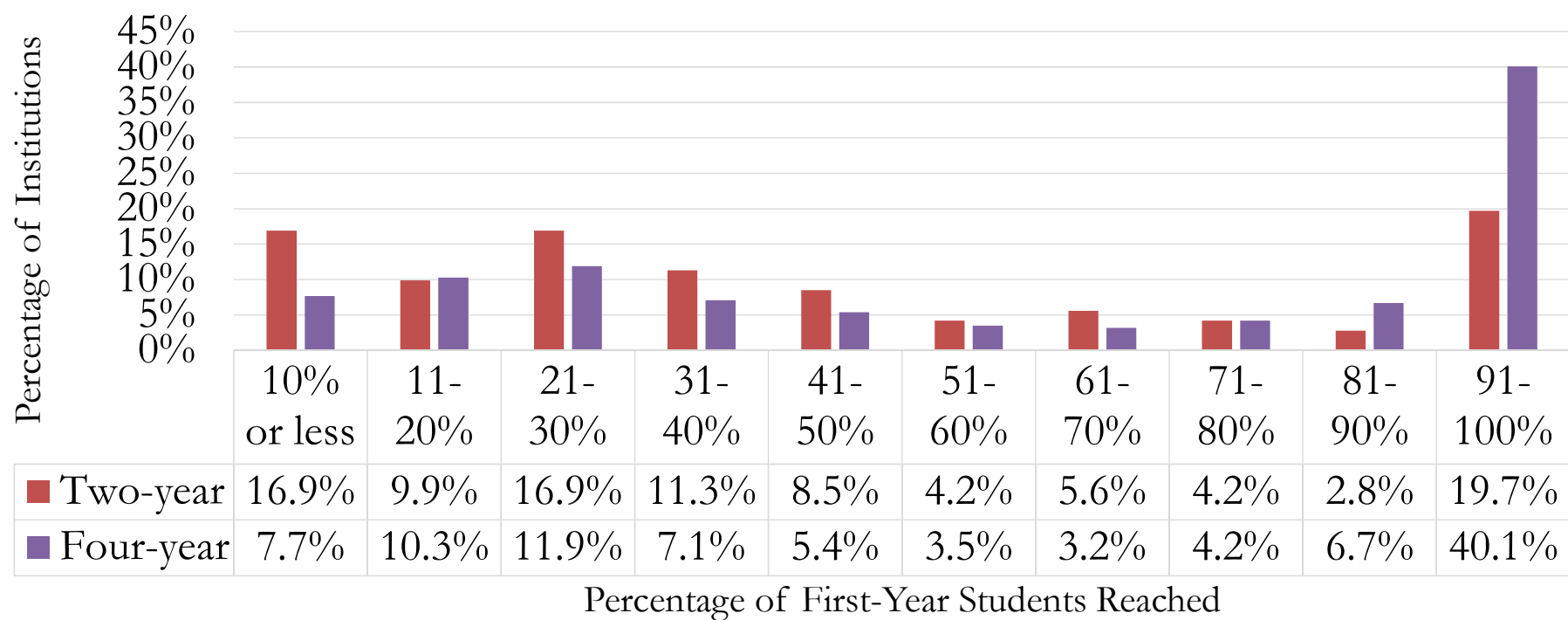EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED
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# Students Targeted

| Which types of first-year students are monitored through an early warning/academic alert system? | Freq. | % |
|---|---|---|
| All first-year students | 291 | 76.0% |
| Other, please specify | 49 | 12.8% |
| Students on academic probation | 26 | 6.8% |
| Student athletes | 24 | 6.3% |
| Students enrolled in developmental or remedial courses | 17 | 4.4% |
| Students with at-risk factors such as GED, low ACT scores, etc. | 14 | 3.7% |
| Students eligible for federal or state equal opportunity programs (EOP) | 11 | 2.9% |
| Provisionally admitted students | 10 | 2.6% |
| First-generation students | 7 | 1.8% |
| Learning community participants | 7 | 1.8% |
| Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) students | 7 | 1.8% |

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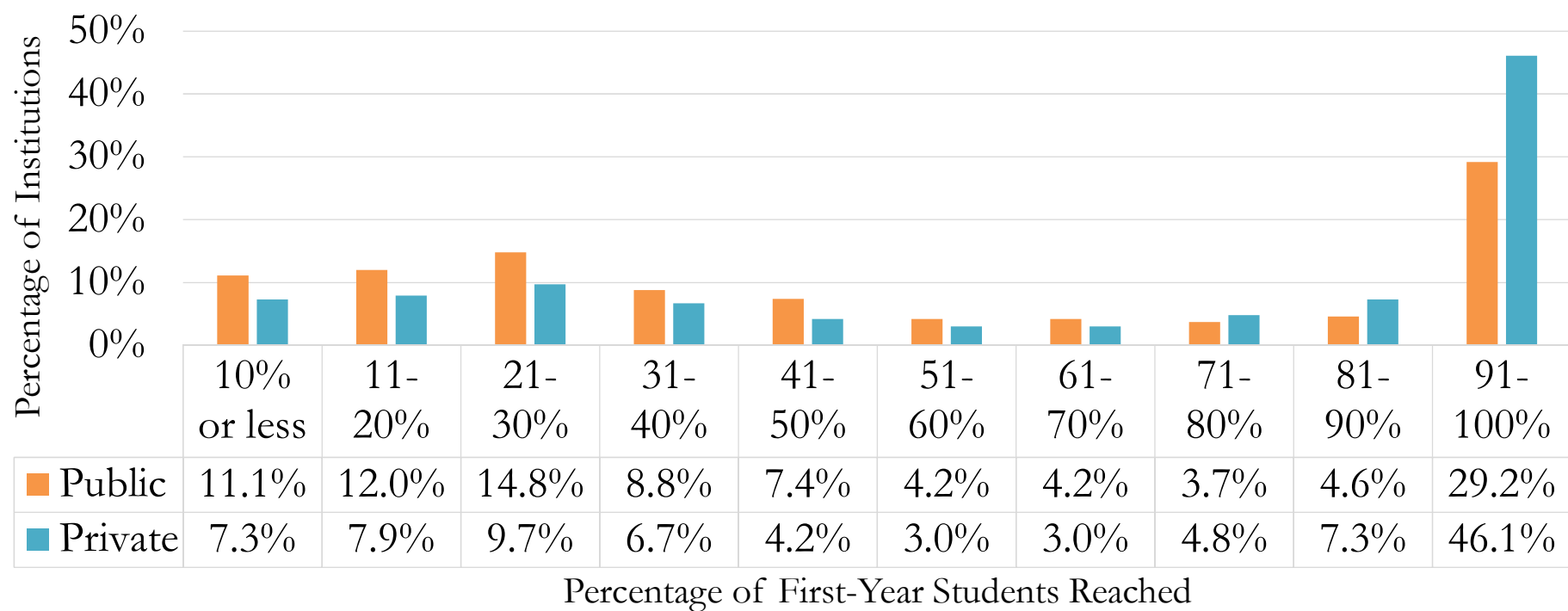UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

# Students Targeted

- ## Differences by Institution Characteristics
  - Two-year: Developmental education, Other
  - Four-year: All first-year students
  - Public: Student athletes, students on probation, other
  - Private: All first-year students, students at risk
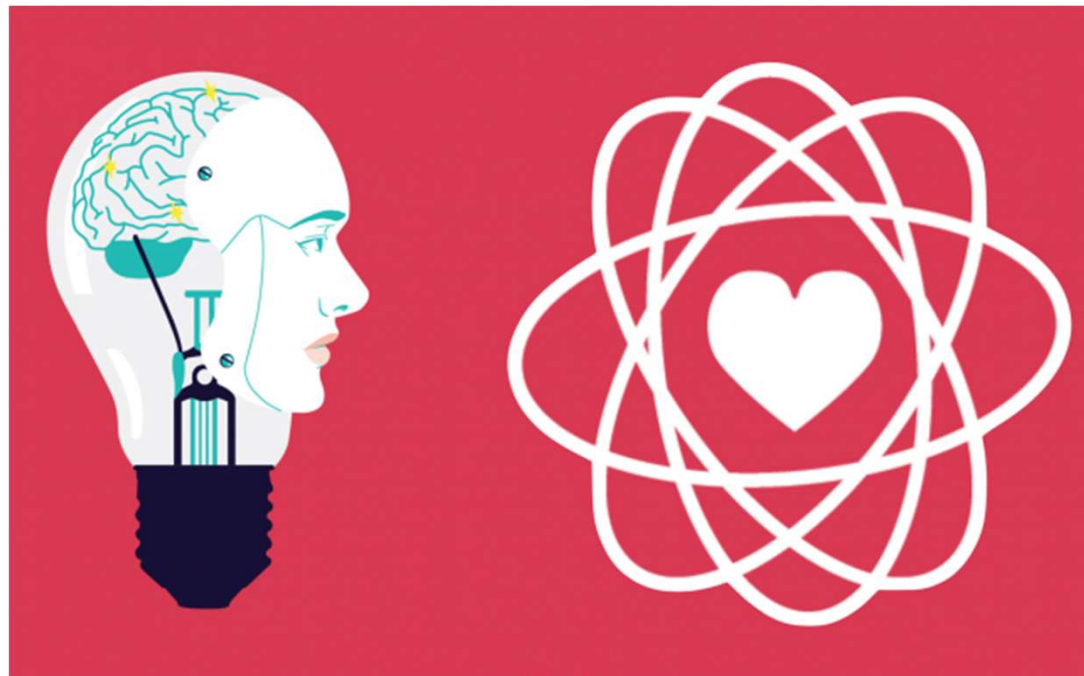
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# Reach

| | 10% or less | 11-20% | 21-30% | 31-40% | 41-50% | 51-60% | 61-70% | 71-80% | 81-90% | 91-100% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Two-year** | 16.9% | 9.9% | 16.9% | 11.3% | 8.5% | 4.2% | 5.6% | 4.2% | 2.8% | 19.7% |
| **Four-year** | 7.7% | 10.3% | 11.9% | 7.1% | 5.4% | 3.5% | 3.2% | 4.2% | 6.7% | 40.1% |

Percentage of Institutions

Percentage of First-Year Students Reached

# Reach



| | 10% or less | 11-20% | 21-30% | 31-40% | 41-50% | 51-60% | 61-70% | 71-80% | 81-90% | 91-100% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Public** | 11.1% | 12.0% | 14.8% | 8.8% | 7.4% | 4.2% | 4.2% | 3.7% | 4.6% | 29.2% |
| **Private** | 7.3% | 7.9% | 9.7% | 6.7% | 4.2% | 3.0% | 3.0% | 4.8% | 7.3% | 46.1% |

Percentage of First-Year Students Reached

Percentage of Institutions

# Role of Technology

# Role of Technology



| | Unable to judge | 1 - Entirely technology-based | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 - Entirely human-based |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Series1 | 3.1% | 1.3% | 5.2% | 7.3% | 24.0% | 14.4% | 14.1% | 30.5% |
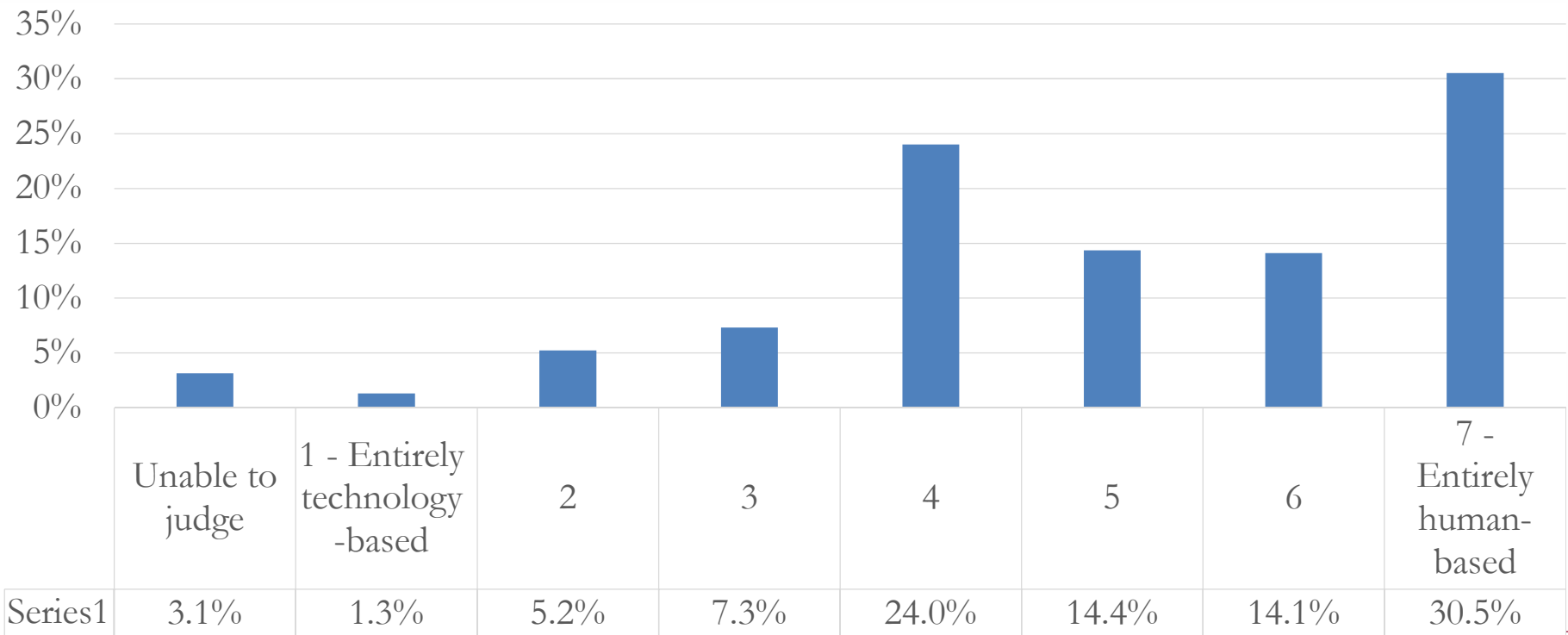
# Role of Technology

In other words, sending up a red light isn't likely to influence retention. But if that red light leads to advisers or tutors reaching out to students and providing targeted support, we might see bigger impacts on student outcomes.

(Karp, 2014)

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# Return on Investment



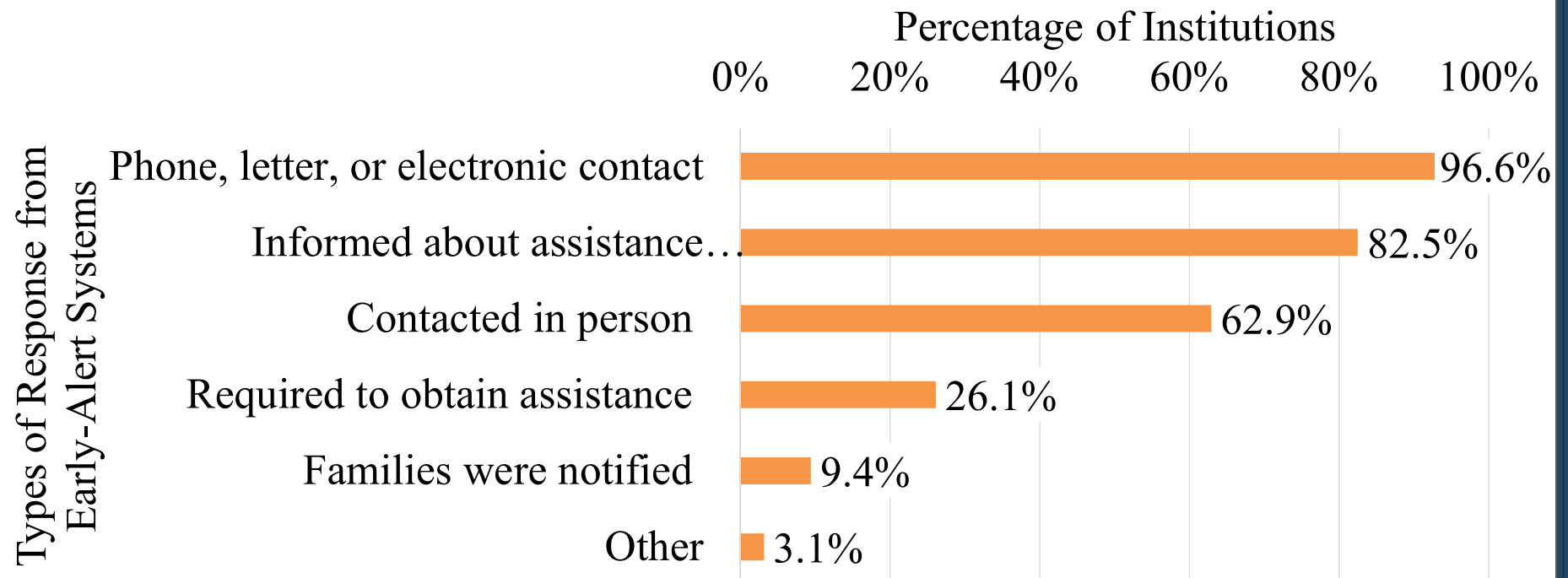| | Low | Medium | High |
|---|---|---|---|
| Two-year | 26.7% | 18.3% | 42.2% |
| Four-year | 13.2% | 18.3% | 58.0% |

Return on Investment

# Contact

- Email
- Letter (*does anyone even use these anymore?*)
- Phone
- Face-to-face
- Social media

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# Type of Response



Percentage of Institutions

Types of Response from Early-Alert Systems

| Type of Response | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Phone, letter, or electronic contact | 96.6% |
| Informed about assistance… | 82.5% |
| Contacted in person | 62.9% |
| Required to obtain assistance | 26.1% |
| Families were notified | 9.4% |
| Other | 3.1% |

# Approach

Passive → Active → Intrusive

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# Causes

- Proximal
  - What are the immediate signs
- Distal
  - What are the factors behind the immediate signs
- Tips to get to the root cause
  - Ask 5 "Whys"
  - Build relationships of trust

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# Nature of the Message

- Negative
  - Punitive

- Positive
  - Motivational

- Informative
  - Just the facts, ma'am

# Student Reaction

If students perceive early warnings as a reprimand rather than an opportunity to get help, they may ignore the signals or avoid efforts of college personnel to contact them (Karp, 2014)
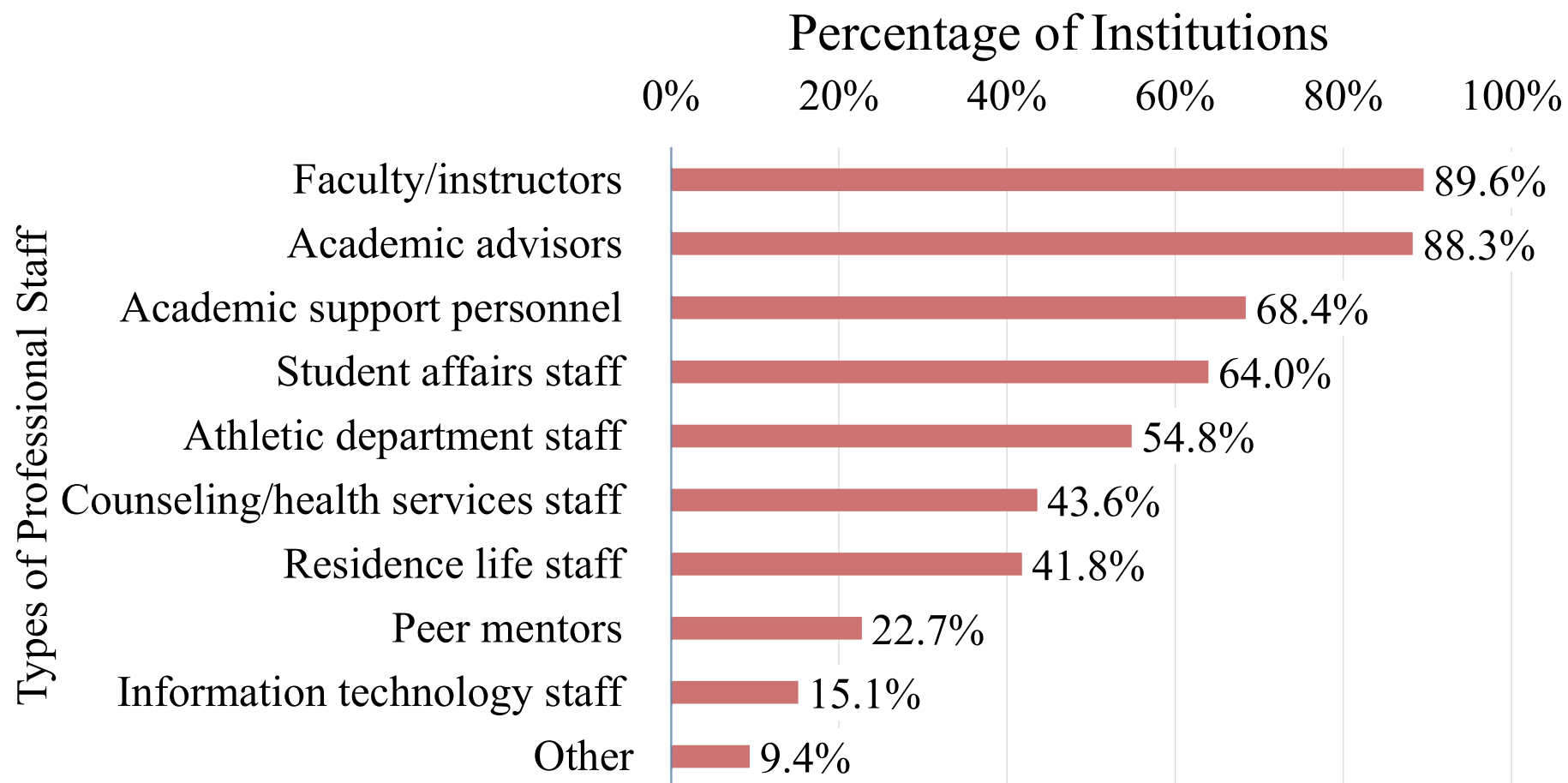
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# No "Perfect" Professional Home

- On Campus

- In the Professional Organizations
  - NODA
  - FYE
  - NACADA



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# Collaboration and Communication

- Who is involved?
- Who should be involved?
- What systems exist to allow communication

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Advising | Student Success Centers | Housing |
| Financial Aid | Emergency Aid Programs | Peer Mentors |
| First-Year Seminars | Gateway Courses | Orientation |
| Writing Intensive Courses | Career Centers | Counseling |

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Percentage of Institutions

Types of Professional Staff

| Type | Percentage |
|------|-----------|
| Faculty/instructors | 89.6% |
| Academic advisors | 88.3% |
| Academic support personnel | 68.4% |
| Student affairs staff | 64.0% |
| Athletic department staff | 54.8% |
| Counseling/health services staff | 43.6% |
| Residence life staff | 41.8% |
| Peer mentors | 22.7% |
| Information technology staff | 15.1% |
| Other | 9.4% |

# Research & Best Practices

- Limited

- Single Institution Studies

- Accessibility/Ease of Use for Practitioners

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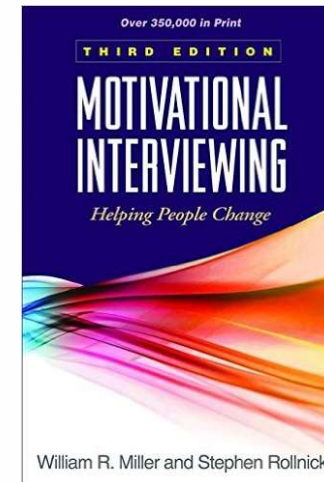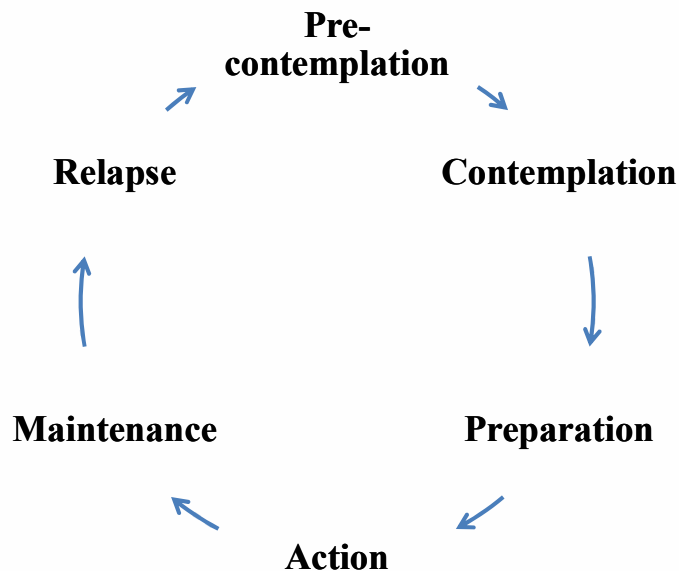UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
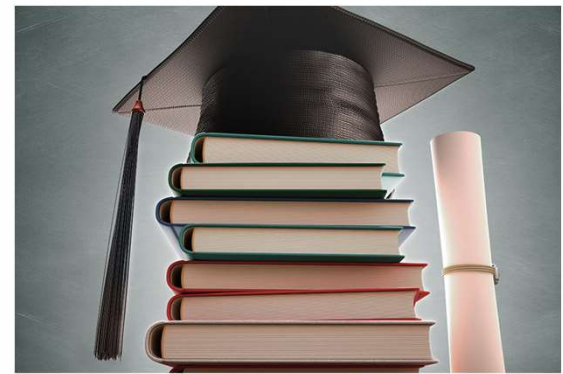
# Help Seeking

- An important developmental skill

- Unique among learning strategies

# Transtheoretical Model (TTM) of Intentional Human Behavior Change

**Pre-contemplation**

**Relapse**

**Contemplation**

**Maintenance**

**Preparation**

**Action**

Over 350,000 in Print

THIRD EDITION

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

*Helping People Change*

William R. Miller and Stephen Rollnick

(Miller and Rollnik, 2012)

# Intrusive Advising



- Action-oriented model

- Identification of students at "crisis points"

- Connections to resources when most appropriate

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(Earl, 1987)

# 3 Postulates of Intrusive Advising

1. Faculty and staff can be trained to identify students who need assistance

2. Students <u>DO</u> respond to direct contact in which their concerns are identified and help is offered

3. *Deficiencies* in a student's "fit" can be treated

(Earl, 1987)

# Types of Precontemplators

**Reluctant**

- Lack of knowledge/do not want to consider change

**Rebellious**

- Aware of the problem
- Often invested in the problem/problem behavior
- Invested in making their own decisions – "don't tell me what to do"

**Resigned**

- Lack of energy or investment
- Given up on the possibility of change
- Overwhelmed by the problem

**Rationalizing**

- Appears to have all the answers
- Not considering change because of personal risk
- May believe their problems are someone else's fault

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(Miller and Rollnik, 2012)

# Choice Architecture

**Poor Choices**

- Inexperienced

- Poorly Informed

- Slow or Infrequent Feedback

**Good Choices**

- Experience

- Good information

- Prompt Feedback

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(Thaler and Sunstein, 2009)

# Advisors' Role in Early Intervention

- Leverage exiting relationships
- Design interventions absent faculty "red flags"
- Rely on data housed in campus advising technologies

# Advisors Interventions

- Minimum Credit Hour Enrollment
- University Mandate Compliance
- Non-Registered Students
- ???

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# Implications

- Monitor all students and not just those that enter at-risk
- High-touch, high-impact interventions model care promised in admissions and orientation
- Leverage advisors as students' primary points of contact
- Advisor initiated intervention does not require institutional buy-in