



USM Board Retreat
UMGC
College Park Marriott Hotel and Conference Center
October 11 – 12, 2023

The Student-Centered System: A Value Proposition

Over the past two decades, the students coming to our universities have changed. We are facing a more diverse student body than ever before. Diverse in race, gender, ethnicity, age, sexuality, ability, socioeconomic status; all students are welcome on our campuses. The needs of these students, and their expectations have been shifting dramatically. Moreover, a global pandemic brought into sharp focus inequities in society and pushed universities to deliver instruction, programs, and student services in new ways. Some argue higher education should be more proactive or responsive to these changes and that university programs, services, policies, and structures are not best aligned to meet the needs, challenges, and ambitions of today's students and those of tomorrow's students. Yet among even those who agree with this stance—and certainly among those who feel differently—the push to be more student-centric is met with concerns related to a consumer model of education, resistance to change, costs of more personalized teaching and services, and more.

At the same time, and perhaps consequently, public perception of and confidence in higher education has reached an all-time low. This trend is often explained as a function of politics and less as a result of universities not meeting the expectations of those they serve.

In implementing *Vision 2030*, the new Strategic Plan, the USM put a stake in the ground to be more student centric.

What does it mean to be truly student centered as a university, as a university system, and as a university system board?

Why should we do it?

Where are we now?

How can the USM become a preeminent system for student-centric higher education? As a well-regarded university system, can the USM help strengthen confidence in higher education in Maryland and beyond?

The 2023 Annual BOR retreat will focus on these questions. At the end of the retreat, participants will:

- Refine their conceptualization of what it means to be a student-centric university system
- Understand the connection between public perception of the value of higher education and student-centered environments
- Understand what it means to govern in a student centric manner
- Understand the difference between institution-centric and student-centric
- Understand how the Strategic Plan and the campuses facilitates a student-centered experience

October 11, 2023	
4:00 PM – 4:15 PM <i>General Vessey Ballroom</i>	Welcome Chair Gooden
4:15 PM – 5:30 PM <i>General Vessey Ballroom</i>	<u>WHAT</u> Does It Mean to Be Student-Centric? Student Voices Regent Helal, Regent Parker, and USM Students
5:30 PM – 6:30 PM <i>General Vessey Ballroom</i>	Intersection between the Value of Higher Education and Student-Centered Experience (WHAT and Why?) Matthew Sigelman, BurningGlass Institute
6:30 PM <i>Program Arts Gallery</i>	Reception
7:15 PM <i>Chesapeake Ballroom C</i>	Dinner

October 12, 2023 – General Vessey Ballroom	
7:00 AM – 8:00 AM	Convene to Closed Session
8:00 AM – 8:30 AM	Morning Remarks <u>What</u> Does a Student-Centered System Look Like? Chancellor Perman
8:30 AM – 9:45 AM	<u>WHERE</u> Do We Stand? Public Perception of the USM BVK Research Findings
9:45 – 10:15 AM	<u>WHO</u> are Our Students? Associate Vice Chancellor Muntz <i>Links:</i> USM-Wide and Institution Specific Data Analytics: https://www.usmd.edu/IRIS/
	Break
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM	<u>How</u> to Bolster Vision 2030: A Student-Centric Strategic Plan Senior Vice Chancellor Herbst <i>Strategic Plan Links:</i> Website: https://www.usmd.edu/vision2030/ Plan Summary: https://www.usmd.edu/strategic-plan/USM-Strategic-Plan-Executive-Summary.pdf Full Plan: https://www.usmd.edu/strategic-plan/USM-Strategic-Plan-Vision2030.pdf Implementation Plan: https://www.usmd.edu/vision2030/implementation-plan/
11:30 AM – 12:15 PM	Lunch
12:30 PM – 1:00 PM	Report Out on Vision 2030 ideas

1:00 PM – 1:45 PM	<u>WHAT'S</u> Next? Discussion and Report Out
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Readings:

[The Case for a Student-Centric Campus: Colleges and Universities Must Centre on Student Needs](#)

[The Student-Centered University: Pressures and Challenges Faced by College Presidents and Student-Affairs Leaders](#)

[The Problem with Student-Centered Education](#)

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Matt Sigelman

President

Matt Sigelman is President of the Burning Glass Institute. He has dedicated his career to unlocking new avenues for mobility, opportunity, and equity through skills.

Matt and his team created the field of real-time labor market data, a breakthrough innovation that has transformed the way that policy makers, researchers, employers, education institutions, and workers understand, plan for, and connect with the world of work. By mining billions of job openings and career histories, Matt led Emsi Burning Glass to become a leading authority on the global market for talent, harnessing advanced AI and natural language processing to render data that provide unprecedented granularity on the changing landscape of opportunity for workers.

By tracking demand for tens of thousands of skills across over 30 countries, Matt's work has cracked the genetic code of an increasingly dynamic market, with deep insights that not only chart how work is being redefined but also identify the skills that bridge the gap between people and opportunity. This intelligence is critical in protecting the workforce from obsolescence and in highlighting routes to social mobility even amidst the threat of massive automation-driven displacement.

Before launching the Burning Glass Institute, Matt served as CEO of Emsi Burning Glass for nineteen years and continues to serve as the company's Chairman. Previously, Matt worked at McKinsey & Company and at Capital One. He is also Founder of the [Main Line Classical Academy](#), an elementary school bringing the classical liberal arts curriculum and rigorous study in math and science to the kindergarten level on up and dedicated to the idea that children are never too young to learn great things.

He writes widely on the job market and is consulted frequently by public officials and the global media. Matt holds an AB from Princeton University and an MBA from Harvard.

The Burning Glass Institute

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STATEMENT REGARDING CLOSING A MEETING
OF THE USM BOARD OF REGENTS

Date: October 12, 2023
Time: Approximately 7:00 a.m.
Location: General Vessey Ballroom, College Park Marriott and Conference Center,
University of Maryland Global Campus

STATUTORY AUTHORITY TO CLOSE A SESSION

Md. Code, General Provisions Article §3-305(b):

- (1) To discuss:
 - [] (i) The appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom it has jurisdiction; or
 - [] (ii) Any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals.
- (2) [] To protect the privacy or reputation of individuals with respect to a matter that is not related to public business.
- (3) [] To consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto.
- (4) [] To consider a preliminary matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State.
- (5) [] To consider the investment of public funds.
- (6) [] To consider the marketing of public securities.
- (7) [] To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice on a legal matter.
- (8) [] To consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation.
- (9) [] To conduct collective bargaining negotiations or consider matters that relate to the negotiations.

- (10) To discuss public security, if the public body determines that public discussions would constitute a risk to the public or public security, including:
- (i) the deployment of fire and police services and staff; and
 - (ii) the development and implementation of emergency plans.
- (11) To prepare, administer or grade a scholastic, licensing, or qualifying examination.
- (12) To conduct or discuss an investigative proceeding on actual or possible criminal conduct.
- (13) To comply with a specific constitutional, statutory, or judicially imposed requirement that prevents public disclosures about a particular proceeding or matter.
- (14) Before a contract is awarded or bids are opened, to discuss a matter directly related to a negotiation strategy or the contents of a bid or proposal, if public discussion or disclosure would adversely impact the ability of the public body to participate in the competitive bidding or proposal process.
- (15) To discuss cybersecurity, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to:
- (i) security assessments or deployments relating to information resources technology;
 - (ii) network security information, including information that is:
 1. related to passwords, personal identification numbers, access codes, encryption, or other components of the security system of a governmental entity;
 2. collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental entity to prevent, detect, or investigate criminal activity; or
 3. related to an assessment, made by or for a governmental entity or maintained by a governmental entity, of the vulnerability of a network to criminal activity; or
 - (iii) deployments or implementation of security personnel, critical infrastructure, or security devices.

Md. Code, General Provisions Article §3-103(a)(1)(i):

- Administrative Matters

TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED:

1. USM campus safety

REASON FOR CLOSING:

1. To prevent risk to safety of USM campuses that would result from public discussion of specific campus safety issues, strategies, and planning (§3-305(b)(10)).

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University System of Maryland Discovery Research Report



THE

CON

TEXT

To help provide the foundation for the brand position for the University System of Maryland, we conducted a series of interviews with key stakeholders and quantitative research among key audiences in the state of Maryland and with universities within the system.

Stakeholder Interviews Overview

Stakeholder interviews were conducted to understand the essence and opportunities for USM from those who know the system best and have a vested interest in its success.

Group discussions allowed participants to provide their perspective on the system as it exists today as well as their aspirations for its future.

100+ individuals participated.

- Council of University System Presidents
- Council of University System Staff
- USM Communications Council
- Branding Steering Committee
- USM Executive Team
- Board of Regents
- Representatives from Annapolis
- USM Regional Center Directors
- USM Faculty Executive Committee
- USM HBCU Presidents
- USM Student Council
- USM Foundation Advocacy Committee

Online Surveys

- Online surveys were completed with students and alumni who live in Maryland, across the universities in the system, and with Maryland residents.
- Surveys were completed between March 13 and April 3, 2023.
- Maryland residents are defined as adults aged at least 21, reside within the state, and are representative of the state's adult population in terms of age and gender.

- 1,756 Maryland residents
- 2,496 students
- 3,108 alumni

STUDENT AND ALUMNI BREAKOUTS

The system universities are represented in the student and alumni samples as follows:

	Students		Alumni*	
UofM College Park	868	35%	1,014	33%
UofM Global Campus	282	11%	448	14%
UofM Baltimore County	375	15%	402	13%
UofM Baltimore	122	5%	386	12%
Towson University	378	15%	374	12%
Salisbury University	64	3%	225	7%
University of Baltimore	104	4%	223	7%
Bowie State	66	3%	213	7%
Frostburg State	78	3%	148	5%
Coppin State	73	3%	120	4%
UofM Eastern Shore	59	2%	84	3%
UMCES	11	0.4%	8	0.3%
	(2,496)		(3,108)	

*Alumni may have graduated from multiple universities.

ANALYTIC SEGMENTS

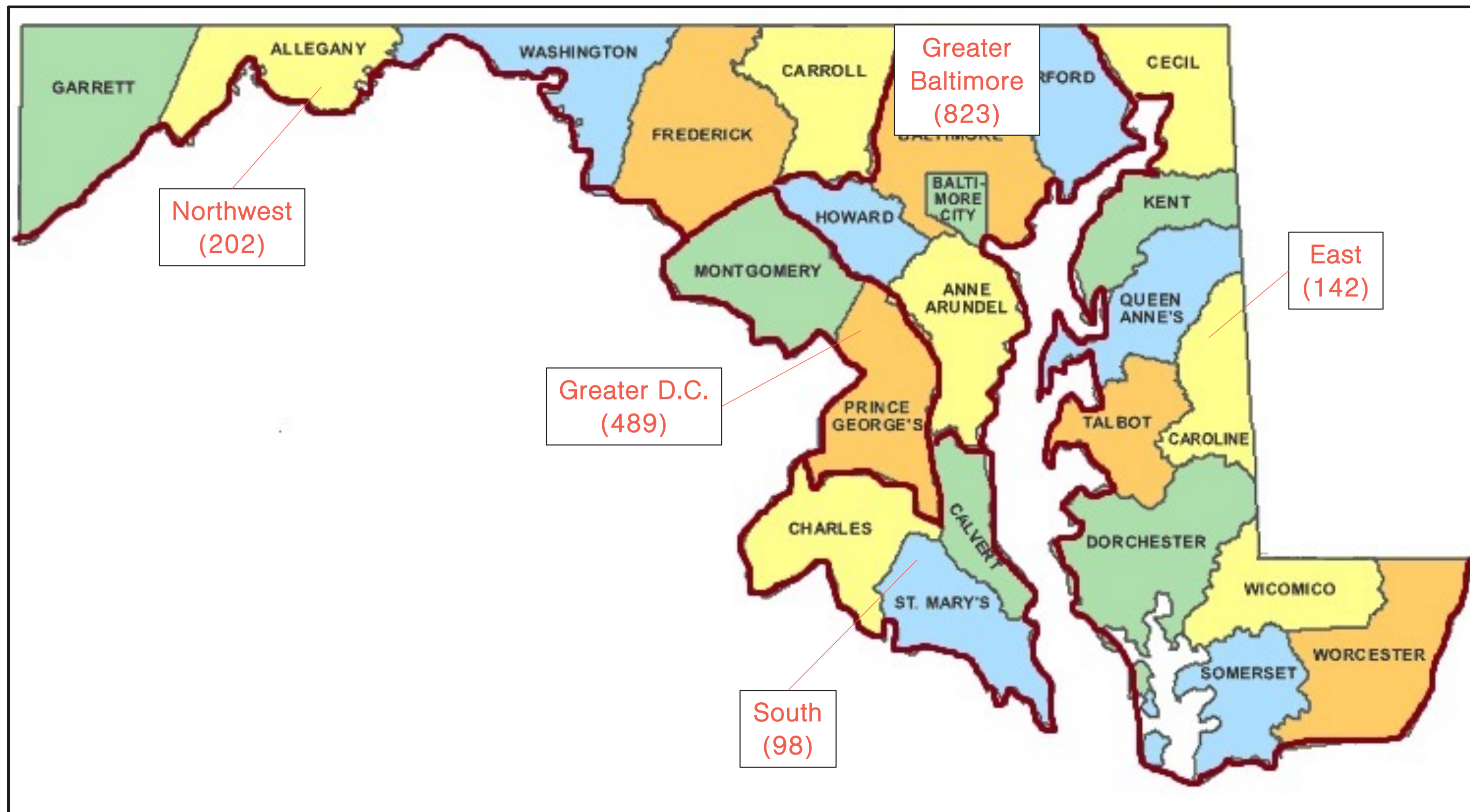
For the purposes of analysis directed at developing brand positioning and determining strategic direction, for the student and alumni analysis universities have been grouped as follows:

	Students	Alumni*
<p>HBCU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bowie State ▪ Coppin State ▪ UofM Eastern Shore 	198	404
<p>Research University</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UofM Baltimore ▪ UofM Baltimore County ▪ UofM College Park ▪ UMCES 	1,376	1,694
<p>Residential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frostburg State ▪ Salisbury ▪ Towson 	520	732
<p>Post-Traditional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UofM Global Campus ▪ University of Baltimore 	386	660

*Alumni may have graduated from multiple universities.

REGIONAL BREAKS

In some instances, the state resident sample is broken out by the following geographies.



KEY FINDINGS

Takeaway #1

We are starting from a position of strength.

Our key audiences are aware of the connection between public higher education and its ability to have a positive impact.

The vast majority of Maryland residents and USM students and alumni recognize the importance of a strong system of public higher education to the state and many understand the impact that a more educated population can have on the community and economy.

Most have a positive overall opinion of the public higher education available in Maryland, and in the quality of education it offers - particularly those residents who place the highest importance on a good system of public higher education.

And when opinions of public higher education in the state have changed in recent years, it has typically been for the better.

Stakeholders identified a direct connection between the vitality of the state and the system.

“Whether it be teachers, psychologists, government employees, environmental preservationists or even firefighters, each of our institutions plays a critical role in developing the talent pipeline for their region.”

“Maryland is the wealthiest state in the country and so many of the successes we’ve had as a state can be tied directly back to this great university system.”

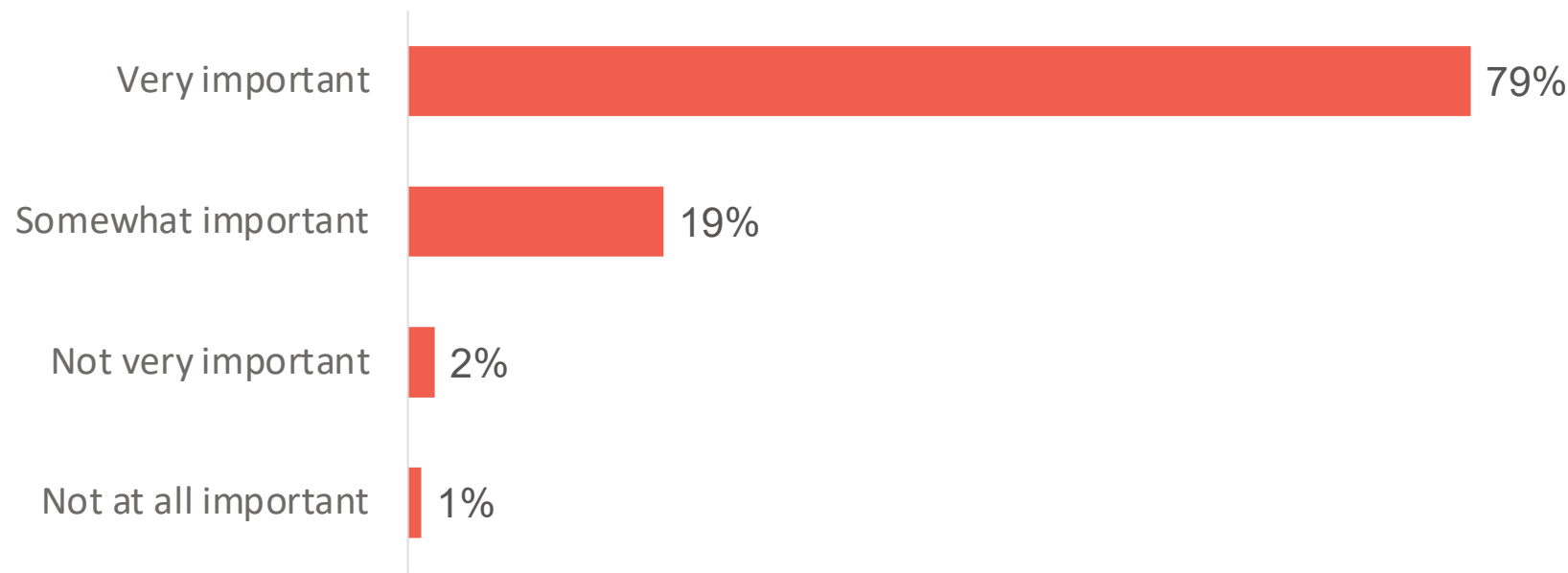
“We are very responsive to regional needs and introduce innovative new programs to drive economic growth.”

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

Most Maryland residents believe a good system of public higher education is very important to the state and those who don't consider it very important typically consider it somewhat important.

The primary reason they consider it important is the belief that it benefits or advances the community or the state's economy. Many also cite that it results in better pay and better employment opportunities and allows residents to further their careers.

Importance of Good Public Higher Education



Why it is Important (Open-ended)

Benefits/advances the community or economy	32%
Leads to better pay/better employment opportunities	23%
Allows people to further careers	19%
Produces talent, provides skills and knowledge	14%
Better quality of life/greater success	13%
Gives equal access to good education	12%
It's more affordable	9%
Education is essential	8%
It's local/keeps people in the state	3%
It attracts people and businesses	3%

Geography

	South	Greater D.C.	Greater Baltimore	North west	East
Very important	69%	83%	78%	75%	80%

Q4. How important do you think having a good system of public higher education is to the state?

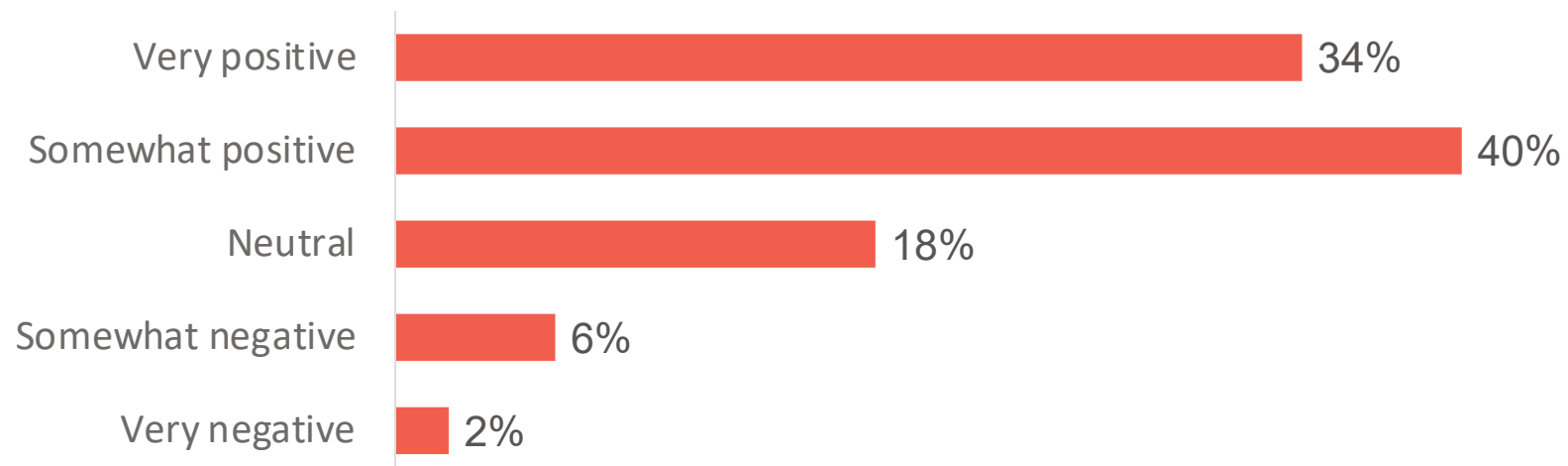
Q5. Why is having a good public higher education system important?

OVERALL OPINION OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MD

Most Maryland residents have a positive opinion of public higher education in the state and fewer than 10% hold a negative opinion.

Positive opinion is driven by the belief that the state offers high quality, prestigious education. They also cite its positive impact on careers and pay level, affordability, the numerous options available and that it provides an opportunity for residents to gain skills and better themselves.

Overall Opinion of Public Higher Education in Maryland



Geography

	South	Greater D.C.	Greater Baltimore	North west	East
Positive	69%	81%	71%	73%	74%

Positive Associations (Open-ended)	
Good schools/quality of education/prestigious	22%
Opens up job opportunities/good careers/good pay	11%
Affordability/lower cost/scholarship opportunities	10%
Lots of options/classes program options	9%
Opportunity to gain skills/knowledge/be well-rounded	9%
Convenience/lots of locations	7%
Professors/faculty/leadership	6%
Accessibility/admission to education	5%
None	11%

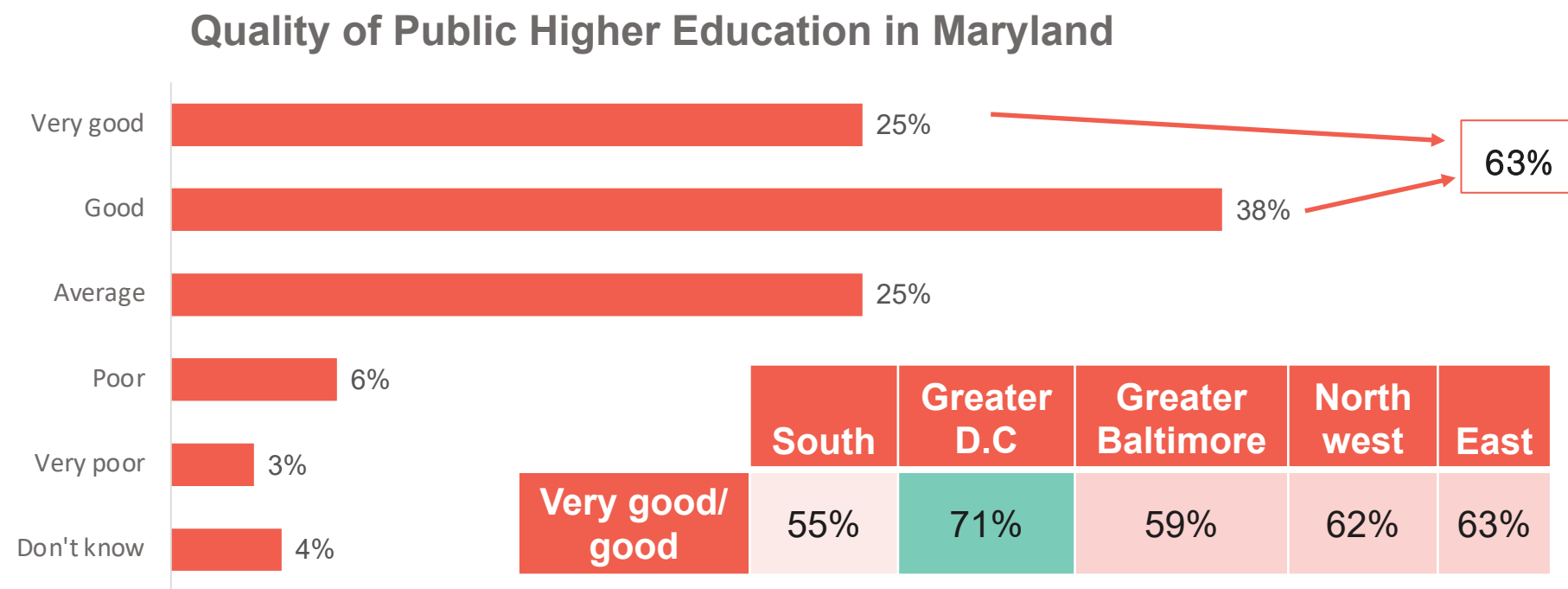
Q6. Is your opinion of public higher education in Maryland generally positive, neutral or negative?

Q7. When you think of public higher education in Maryland, what are the positive associations that come to mind?

OPINION OF QUALITY OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MD

Marylanders are also positive about the *quality* of public higher education available in the state. Almost two-thirds consider it above average and less than 10% consider it poor quality.

Those for whom a good system of public higher education is most important are particularly positive



Consider Having a Good System of Public Higher Ed to be

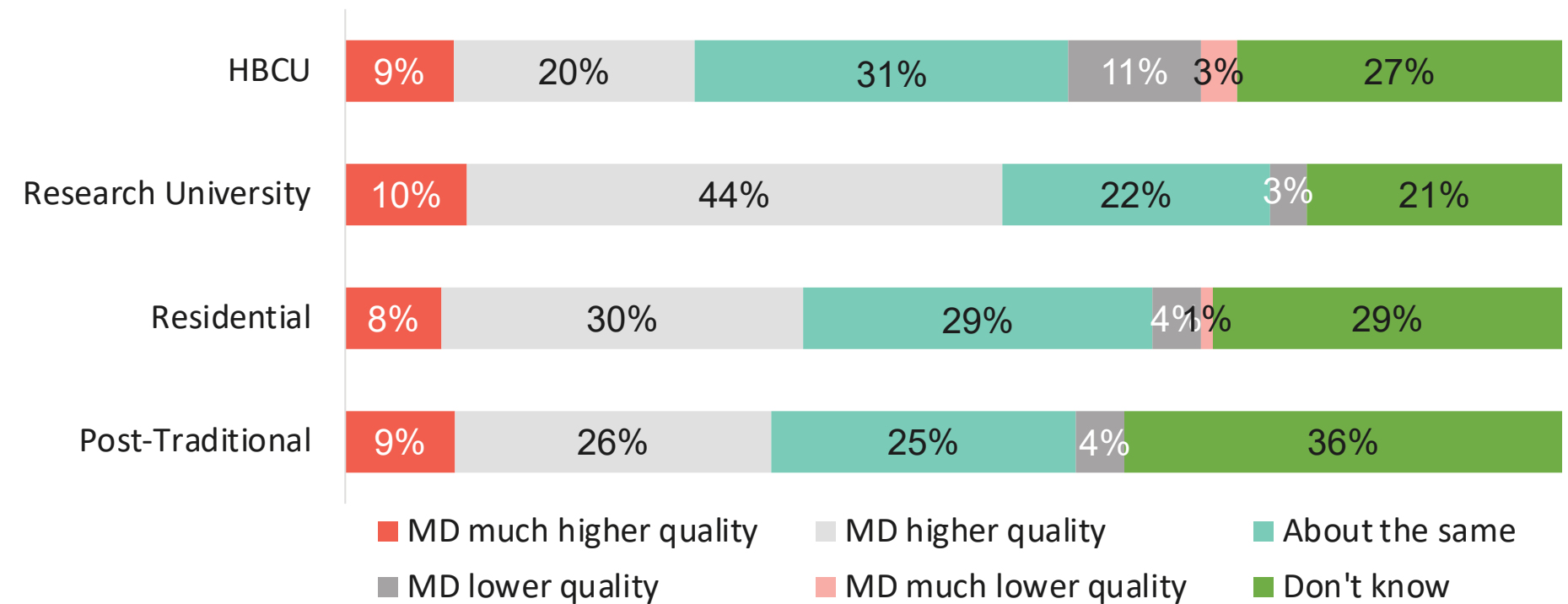
	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Quality of Public Higher Ed in MD is... Very good/good	69%	46%	11%
Average	20%	41%	45%
Poor/Very poor	8%	8%	38%
Don't know	3%	5%	6%

QUALITY OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MD VS OTHER STATES

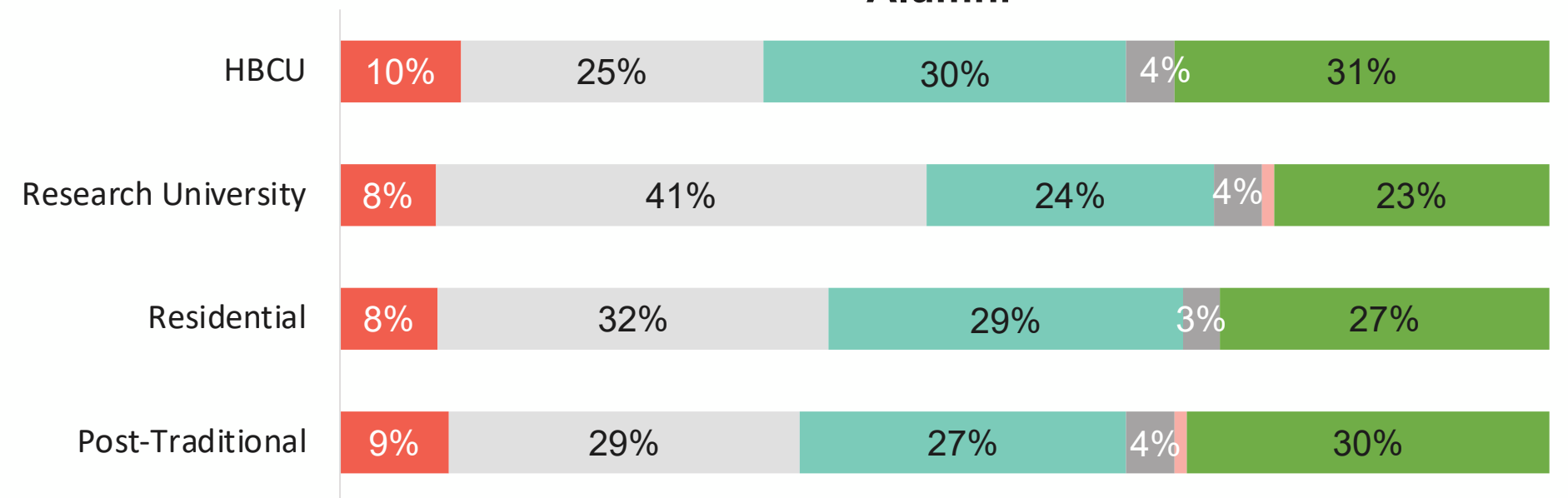
Students and alumni typically compare the quality of public higher education in Maryland favorably with that in other states.

Students and alumni from USM's research universities are particularly positive, those at HBCUs slightly less so.

Quality of Public Higher Education in MD Vs Other States
Students



Alumni



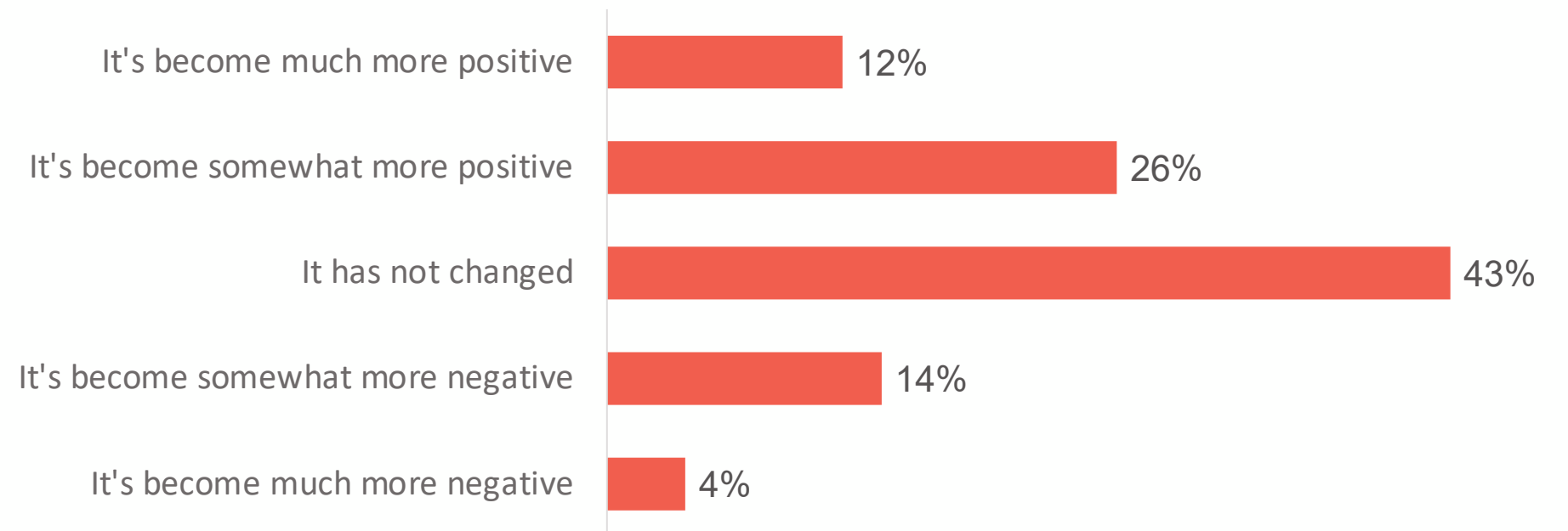
Q19. In your opinion, how does the quality of public higher education available in Maryland compare to that provided by state systems in other states?

CHANGE IN IMPRESSION OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MD

Any recent changes in opinions of public higher education in Maryland tend to be positive.

Those who place most importance on a good system of public higher education are far more likely to say their opinion has become more positive.

Change in Opinion of Public Higher Education in Maryland



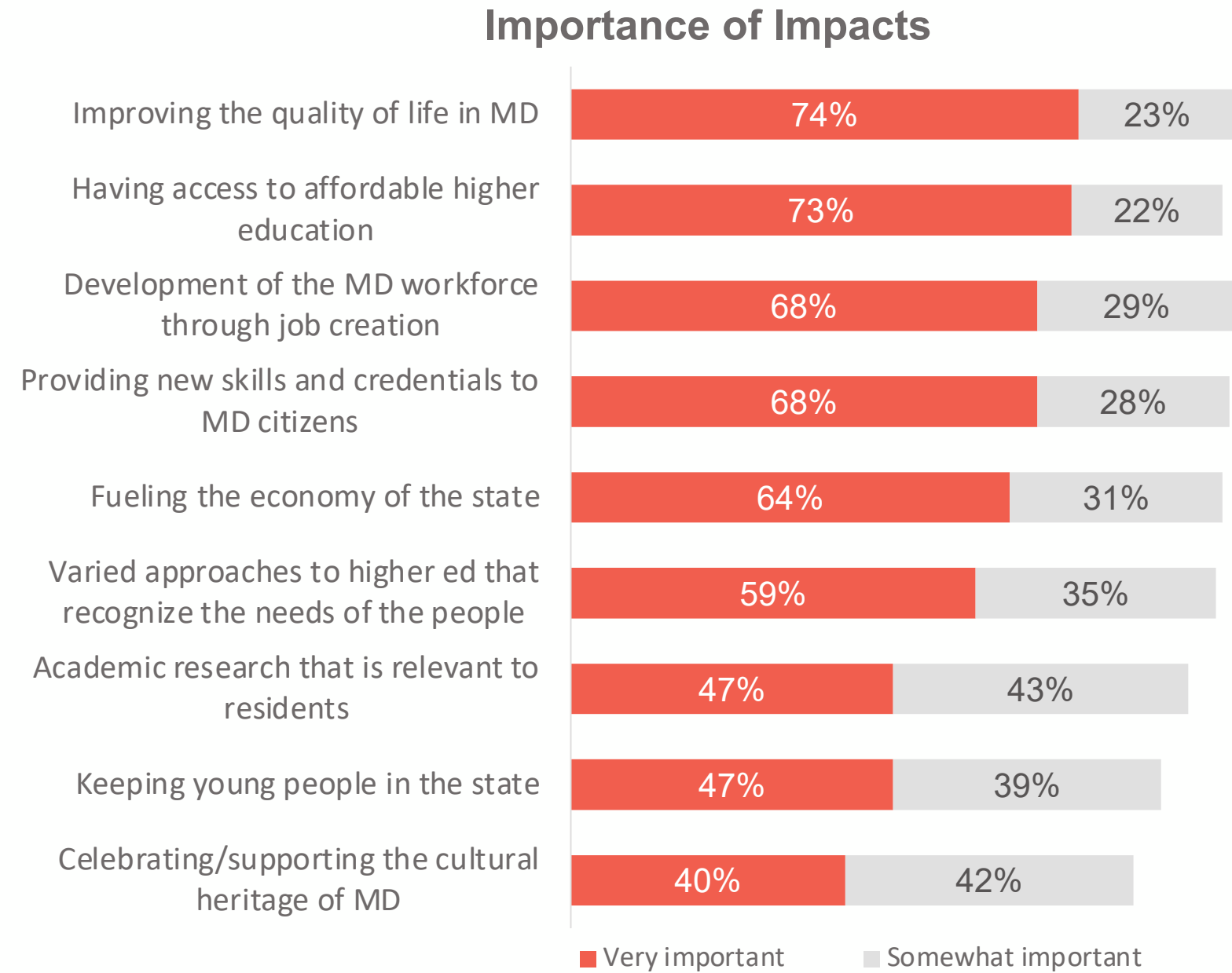
Consider Having a Good System of Public Higher Ed to be

		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Opinion Has Become	More positive	42%	25%	15%
	Not changed	41%	55%	38%
	More negative	17%	20%	47%

Q11. How has your overall opinion of public higher education in Maryland changed over the past few years?

IMPORTANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IMPACTS

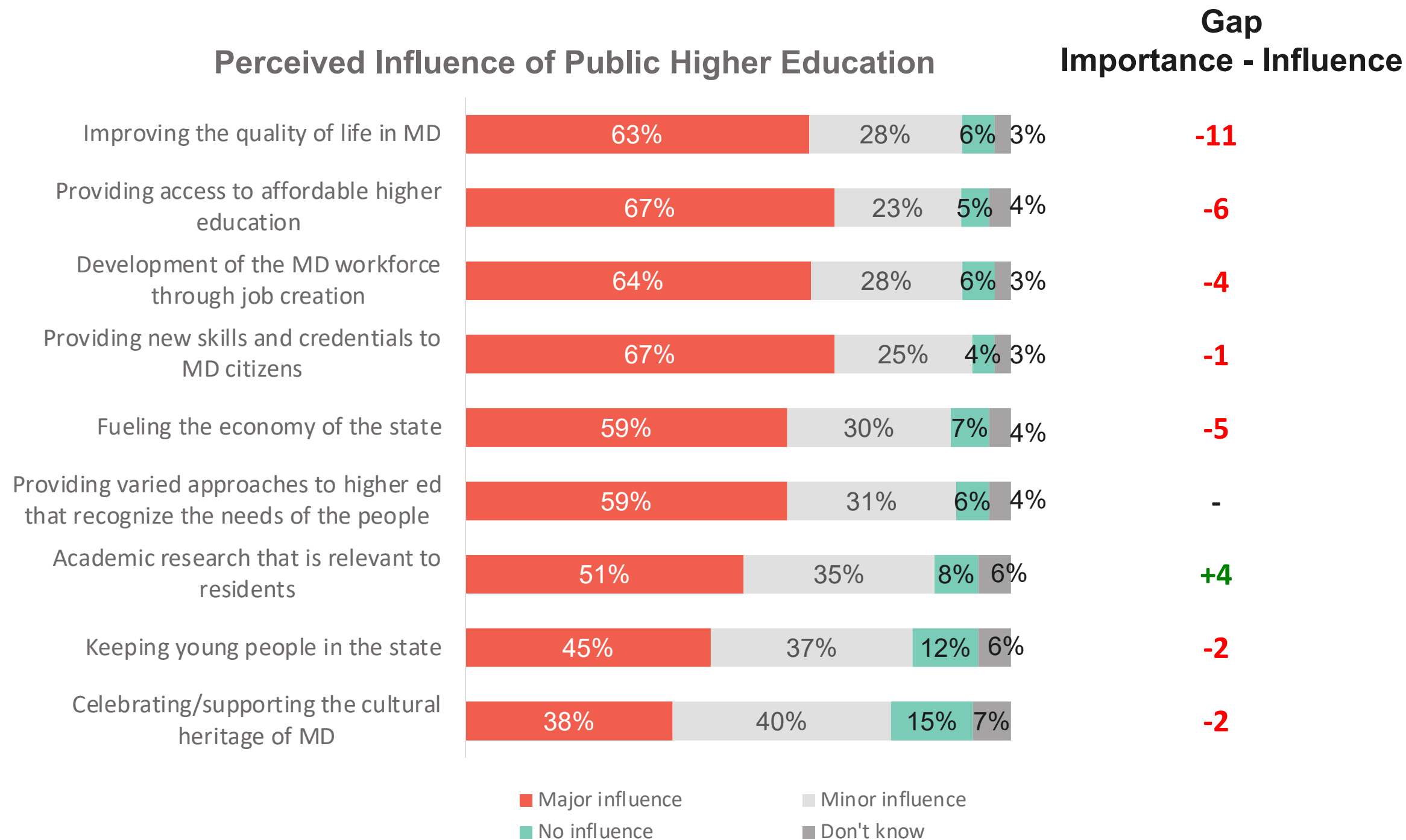
The most important impacts of higher education are perceived to be improvement of quality of life in the state, having access to affordable higher education, the development of the workforce and providing new skills and credentials to those in the state.



Q13. Indicate how important each of the following are to you as a resident of Maryland.

IMPORTANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IMPACTS

Maryland residents have favorable impressions of the influence public higher education can have and those impacts most important to them are the ones on which residents believe it can have the most influence. However, there is a gap between the perceived importance of improving the quality of life in Maryland and the level of influence residents believe the public higher education system can have on it.



Q14. Indicate how much influence you think the state's public higher education system can have on each of the following.

TAKEAWAY #2

While people understand the ROI of public education, issues around perceived access and affordability of the USM still exist.

Despite the awareness and appreciation people have, there is room to move the needle on perceptions of affordability and accessibility of the USM, particularly among those who know us best.

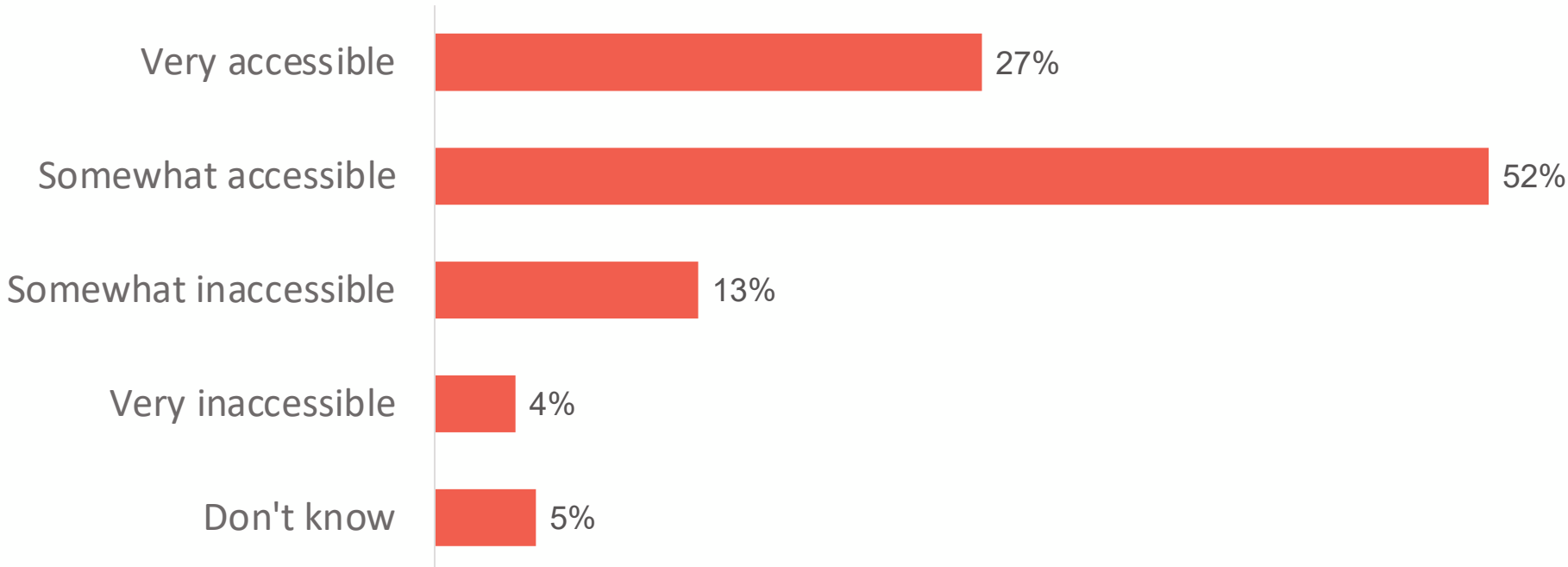
Maryland residents and USM students and alumni are positive about the accessibility of public higher education to those in the state and, again, particularly residents for whom a good system is most important. However, there is opportunity to move opinion from somewhat to *very* accessible.

By no means unique to Maryland, affordability of public higher education in the state is highlighted as an issue. It is the one negative frequently raised on an unaided basis and, when aided, residents do not believe it is any more (or less) affordable than in other states.

ACCESSIBILITY OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MD

Around 75% of Marylanders consider public higher education in the state to be accessible but relatively few consider it *very* accessible.

Accessibility of Public Higher Education in Maryland



Q10. How accessible do you think public higher education is to the people of Maryland? By accessible, we mean available and with options for all residents, regardless of where in the state they live and their background.

ACCESSIBILITY OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MD

Those for whom having a good system of public higher education is most important are the most likely to consider it accessible in the state.

Perceived accessibility does not vary significantly depending on where a person lives in the state.

Consider Having a Good System of Public Higher Ed to be

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Accessibility of Public Higher Ed in MD is... Accessible	81%	73%	53%
Not accessible	16%	19%	36%
Don't know	4%	8%	11%

Geography

	South	Greater D.C.	Greater Baltimore	North west	East
Accessibility of Public Higher Ed in MD is... Accessible	80%	83%	75%	82%	78%
Not accessible	19%	13%	19%	13%	18%
Don't know	1%	4%	6%	5%	4%

Q10. How accessible do you think public higher education is to the people of Maryland? By accessible, we mean available and with options for all residents, regardless of where in the state they live and their background.

NEGATIVE ASSOCIATIONS WITH PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN MARYLAND

Negative associations with the state’s public higher education tend to focus on its affordability.

Negative Associations (Open-ended)	State Residents
Affordability/cost	22%
Lack of discipline/drugs/partying	6%
Quality of facilities	5%
Professors/administrators/underqualified faculty	5%
Lack of student success/low graduation rate	5%
Accessibility/getting admitted	4%
Lack of prestige/poor reputation	4%
None	23%

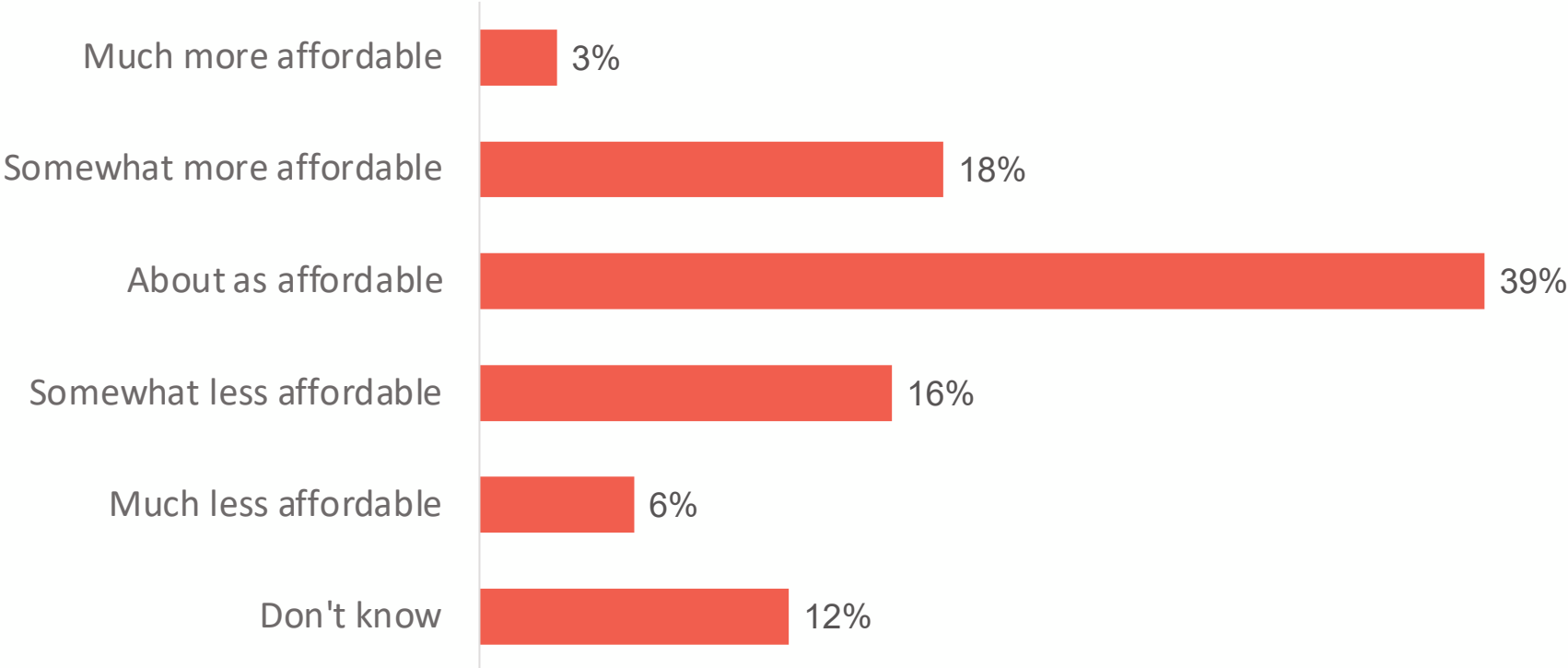
Negative Associations (Open-ended)	Students & Alumni
Affordability/cost	37%
Poor academics/teaching quality	7%
Professors/administrators/underqualified faculty	6%
Accessibility/getting admitted	8%
Lack of funding	7%
Lack of discipline/drugs/partying	5%
Quality of facilities	4%
Ability to transfer credits	4%
None	12%

AFFORDABILITY COMPARED TO OTHER STATES

Overall, public higher education in the state does not have a strong reputation as being any more (or less) affordable than public higher education in other states.

The most common response is that it is about as affordable as in other states and residents are equally likely to consider it more or less affordable.

Affordability Compared to Other States

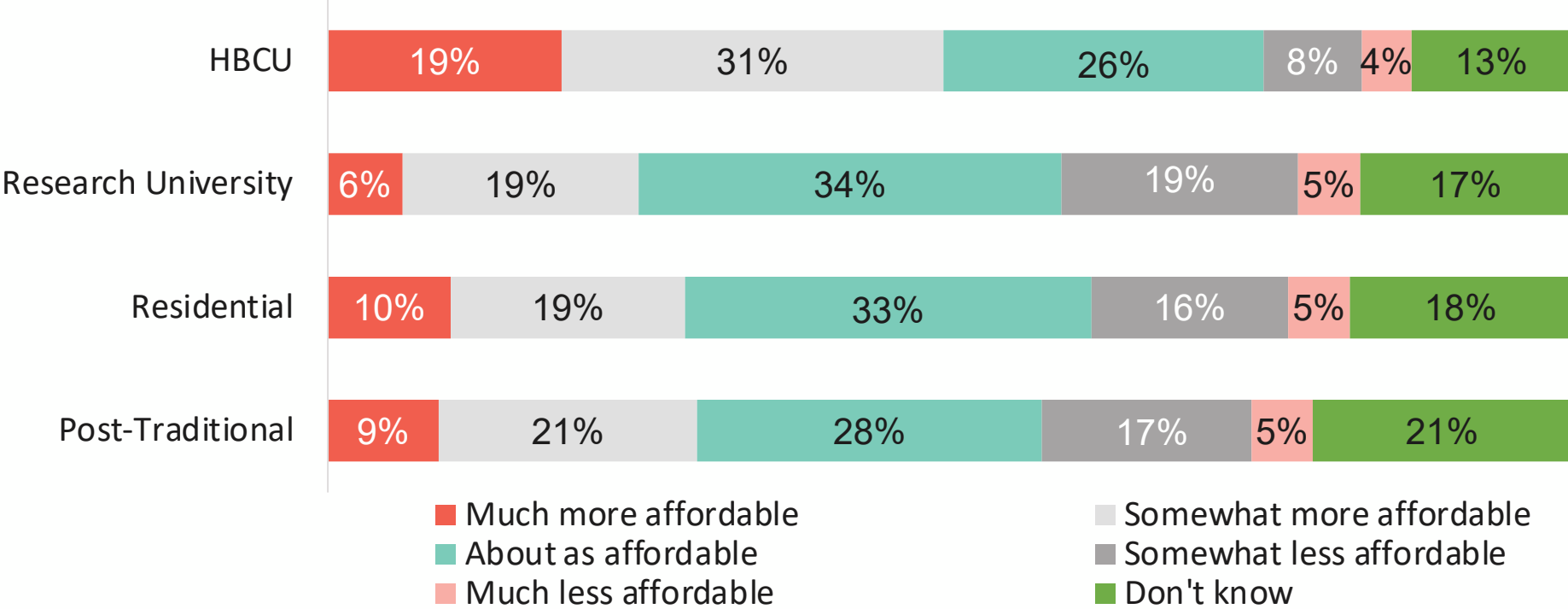


Q12. Compared to other states, how affordable do you think public higher education is in Maryland?

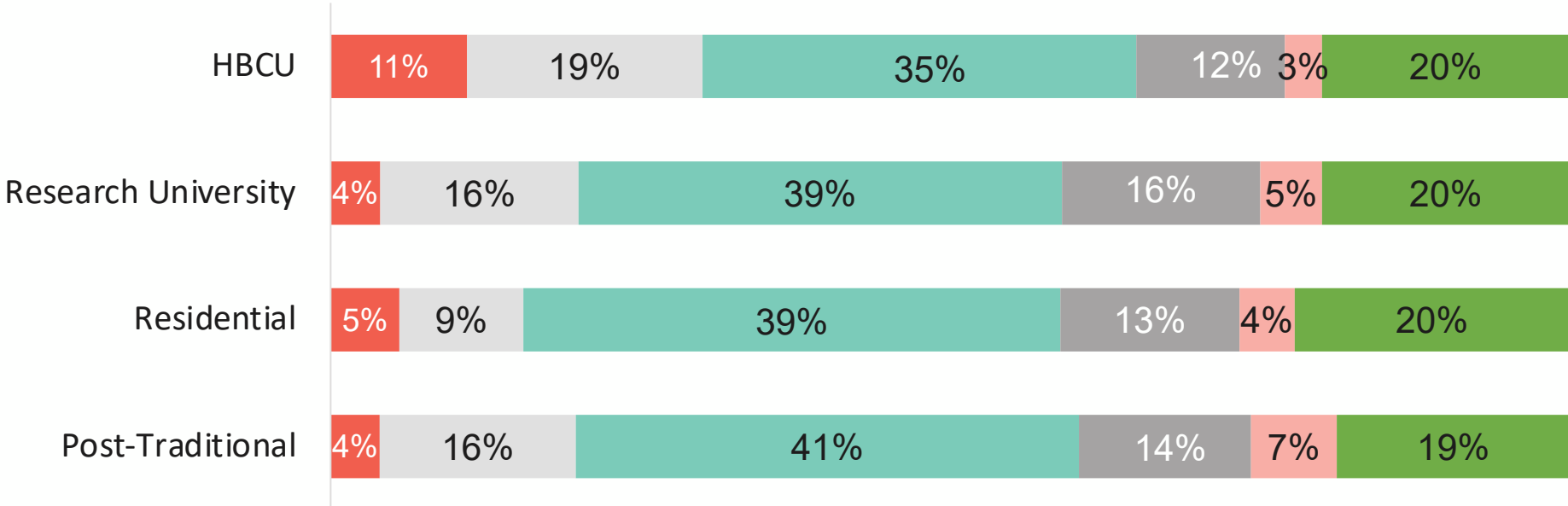
AFFORDABILITY COMPARED TO OTHER STATES

HBCU students and alumni have relatively positive impressions of the affordability of public higher education in the state but those from other universities tend to rate it similar to other states.

Affordability of Public Higher Education in Maryland Students



Alumni



Q24. Compared to other states, how affordable do you think public higher education is in Maryland?

TAKEAWAY #3

USM as an entity remains largely unknown.

While our key audiences appreciate the value of public education in the state, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding of the system itself and what institutions are a part of it.

Only about half the state population and a similar number of students believe they have at least a fairly good understanding of what the USM is. Around one-in-five have never heard of it.

Not surprisingly, in light of limited familiarity with the system, there is also limited understanding of which universities are in it, particularly among residents. The universities most likely to be associated with the system are those with “University of Maryland” in their name.

Alumni are more familiar with the system.

Stakeholders recognized the potential strength that being part of a collaborative entity can bring...

“One of the values we bring to the universities and to the state is managing the tricky balance of letting 12 flowers bloom on their own and finding places where we do better together than apart.”

“Each of our universities recognizes each other’s strengths. To us, successful collaboration is recognizing that collectively, we’re better together.”

But also acknowledged that strength has not been optimized.

“I think if you asked a high school kid in Maryland, they could probably list College Park and Towson, but that might be it. They don’t have sense of the opportunities that reside within this system to get a public education to take advantage of in-state tuition.”

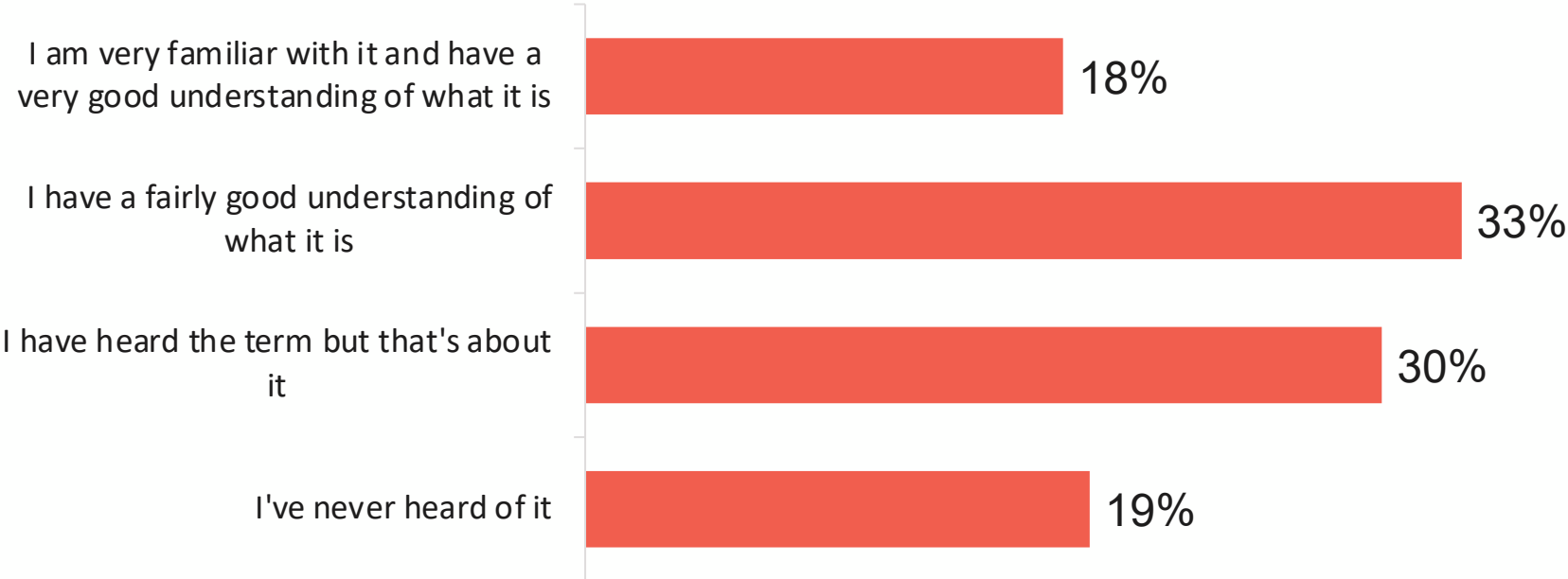
“Our other institutions have come so far in the last decade. You can get a great education at any of them. There are so many solid alternatives to College Park. But for whatever reason, if they don’t get in, they end up looking south instead.”

FAMILIARITY WITH “UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND”

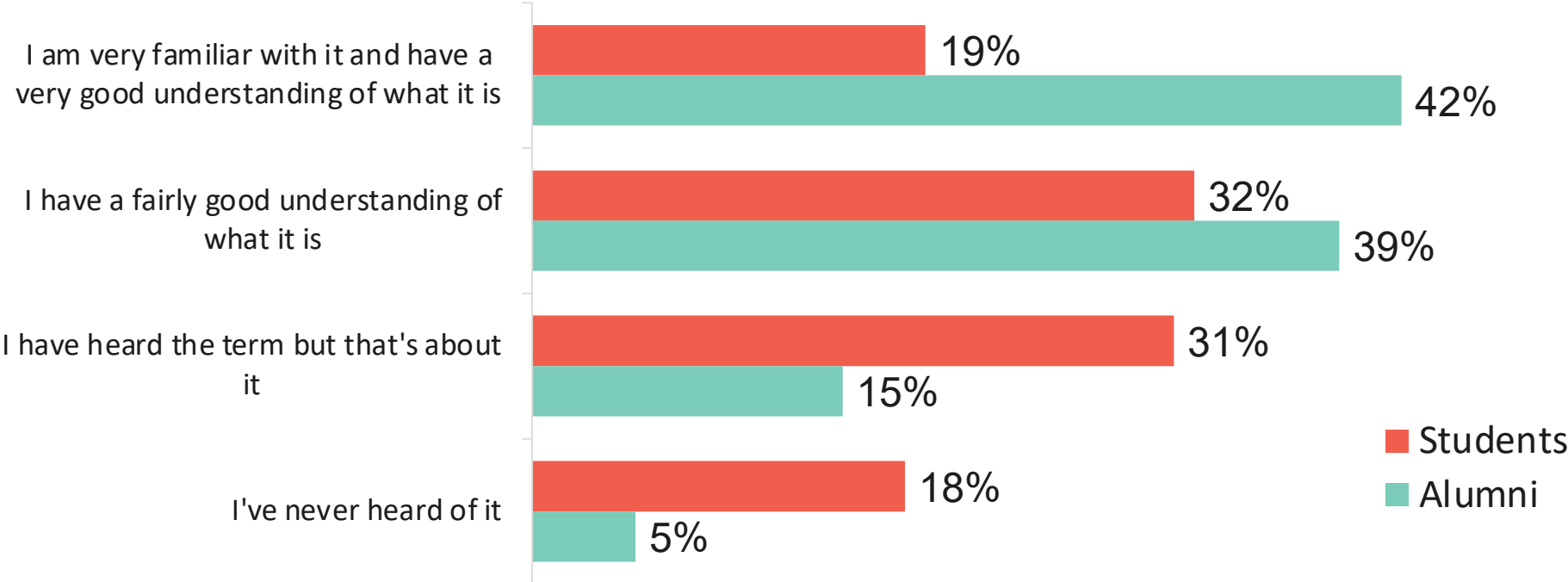
Around half of residents believe they have at least a fairly good understanding of what the University System of Maryland is. One-in-five have not heard of it.

Familiarity is no higher among students, but alumni are far more familiar.

Familiarity with “The University System of Maryland”
State Residents



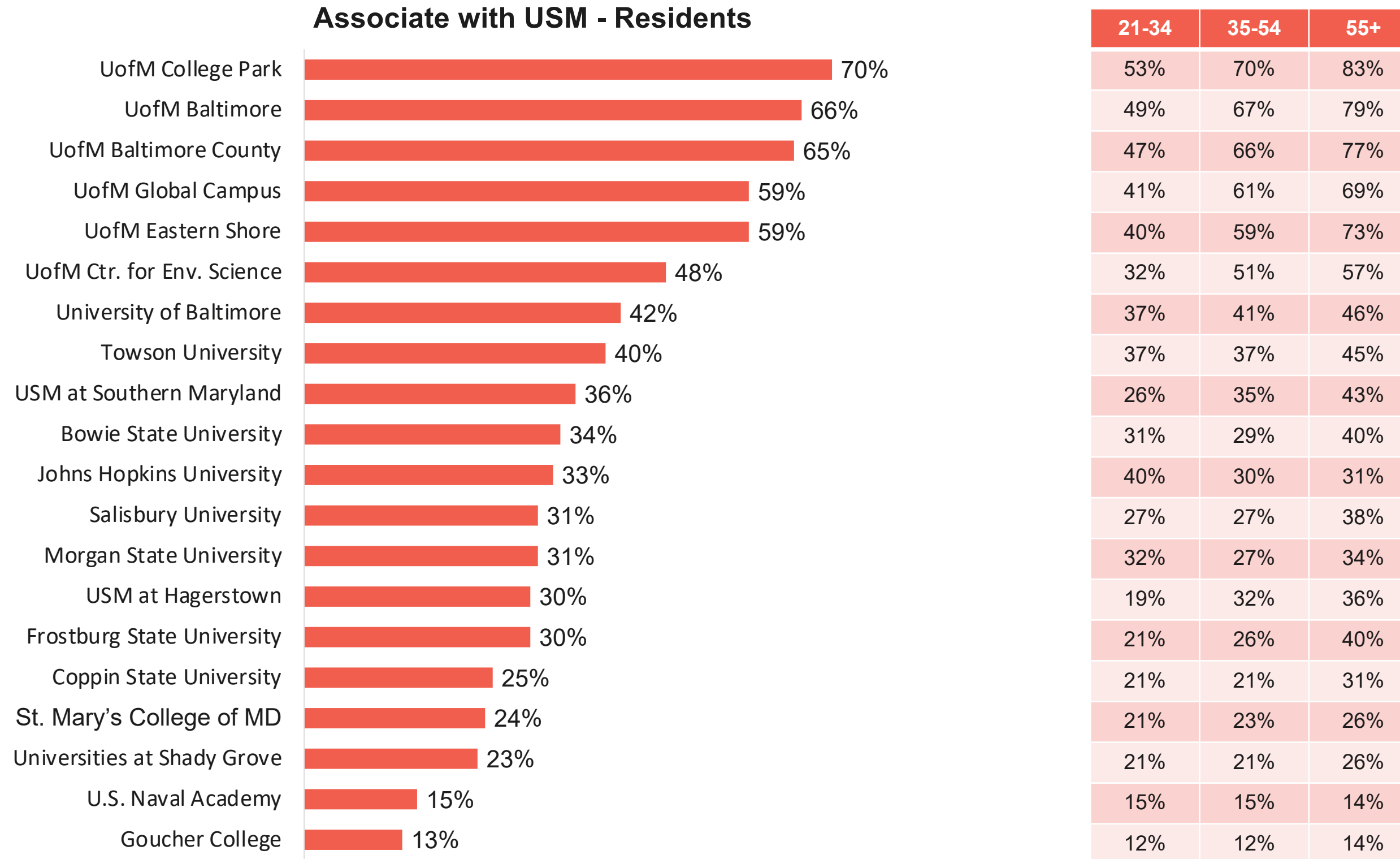
Students and Alumni



Q15./Q26. How would you describe your familiarity with the term, the University System of Maryland?

ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITIES WITH USM

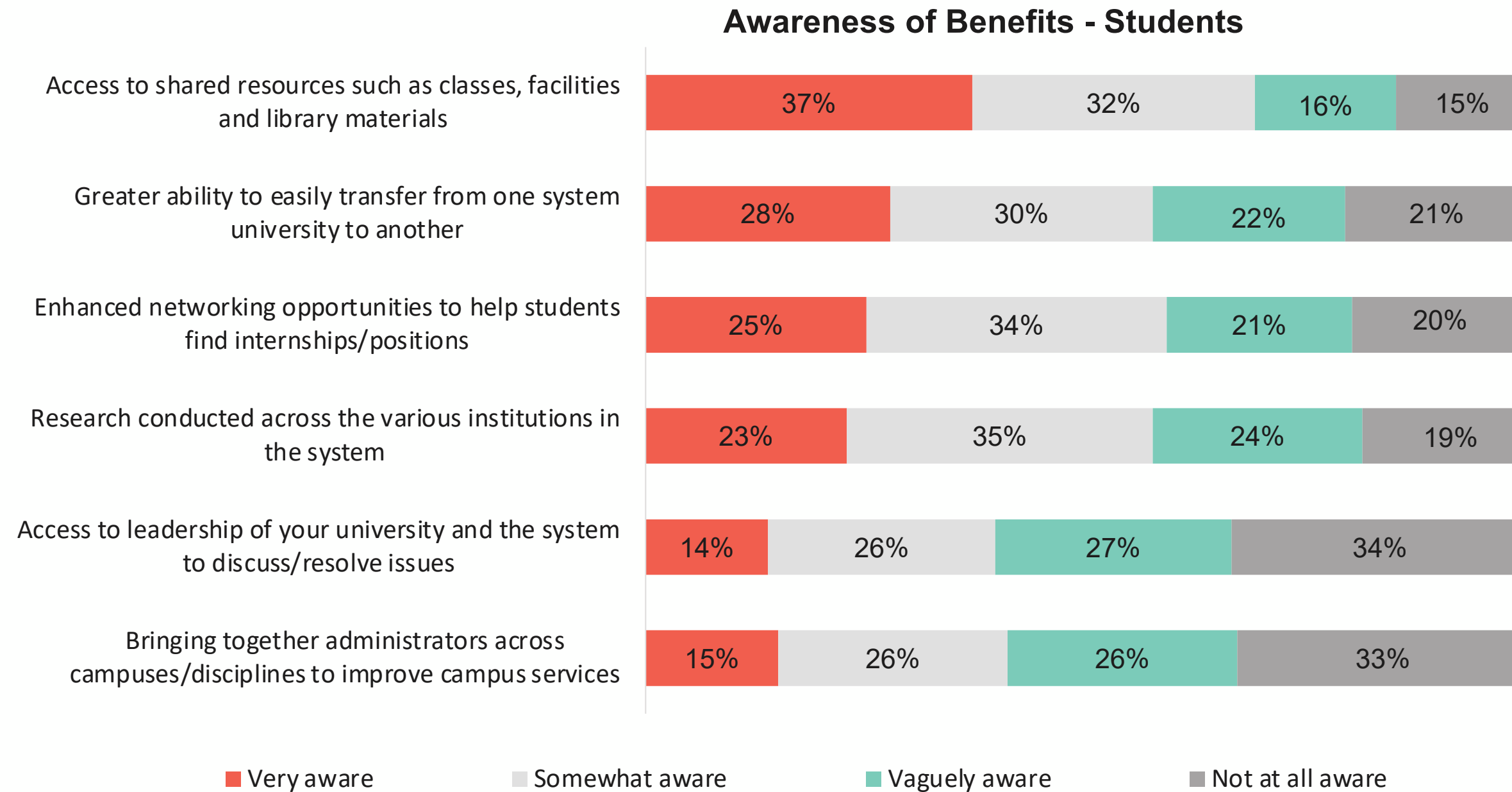
Maryland residents are most likely to associate the UofM universities with the USM. Beyond these, fewer than half can correctly associate any of the USM universities with the system. Older residents are more aware of system universities.



Q18. Which of the following Maryland-located universities, colleges and other educational entities do you think are, or would you expect to be, part of the University System of Maryland? (Asked after giving them a brief description of USM.)

AWARENESS OF UNIVERSITY SYSTEM BENEFITS - STUDENTS

Students are far from being universally aware of the benefits of studying at a university in a system.



Q28. To what extent are you aware of the following benefits of being a student at a university or college that is part of a state's university system of multiple universities?

TAKEAWAY #4 **When exposed to information about the USM positive perceptions increase.**

When our audiences were provided with information about the USM and the institutions that were a part of it, awareness and perception increased.

After being given a brief description of the USM, the information residents want to know about the system relates to what they previously identified as the reasons a good system of public higher education is important:

- How does the USM make higher education more accessible and affordable?
- How does the USM create new jobs?
- How does the USM positively impact the economy?

Being made aware of the universities in the USM enhances residents' already positive impressions of the quality of public higher education in the state.

Positive impressions of the system go beyond the quality of education they associate with it. Most see it as a good investment for the people of the state and feel it offers varied and flexible approaches that reflect the needs of the population.

WHAT RESIDENTS WOULD MOST LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT THE USM

Residents are most interested in understanding how the USM is making education more accessible and affordable to the people of Maryland. Secondarily, they want to know how the system creates new jobs and how it impacts the state economy.

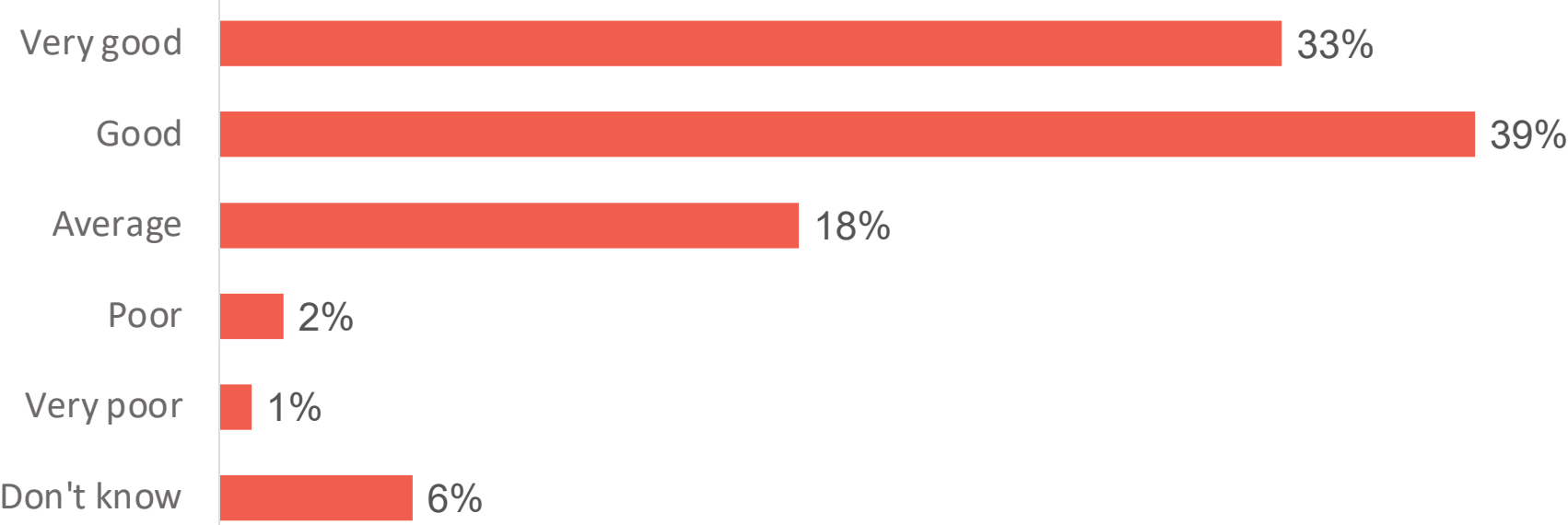
What Would Most Like to Understand About USM - Residents

How the university system is making higher education more accessible and affordable for the people of Maryland	48%
How the system helps to create new jobs in the state	34%
How the system positively impacts the economy of the state of Maryland	31%
The benefits to Maryland residents of having multiple public schools under a single administrative body	26%
Which schools are in the system and the benefits to being part of the system	26%
Research being conducted at the institutions and its impact on the state of Maryland	25%
The system's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion efforts	21%
I don't know much about the USM, but I don't have any interest in learning more	8%
I feel like I have a good understanding of the USM and don't feel like there is anything I want to better understand	6%

OPINION OF QUALITY OF EDUCATION OFFERED BY THE USM

After gaining more knowledge of the schools in the USM, residents' opinion of the quality of education across the system is somewhat more positive than their earlier rating of the quality of public higher education in Maryland.

Quality of Education Across the USM



Quality of Public Higher Education in Maryland



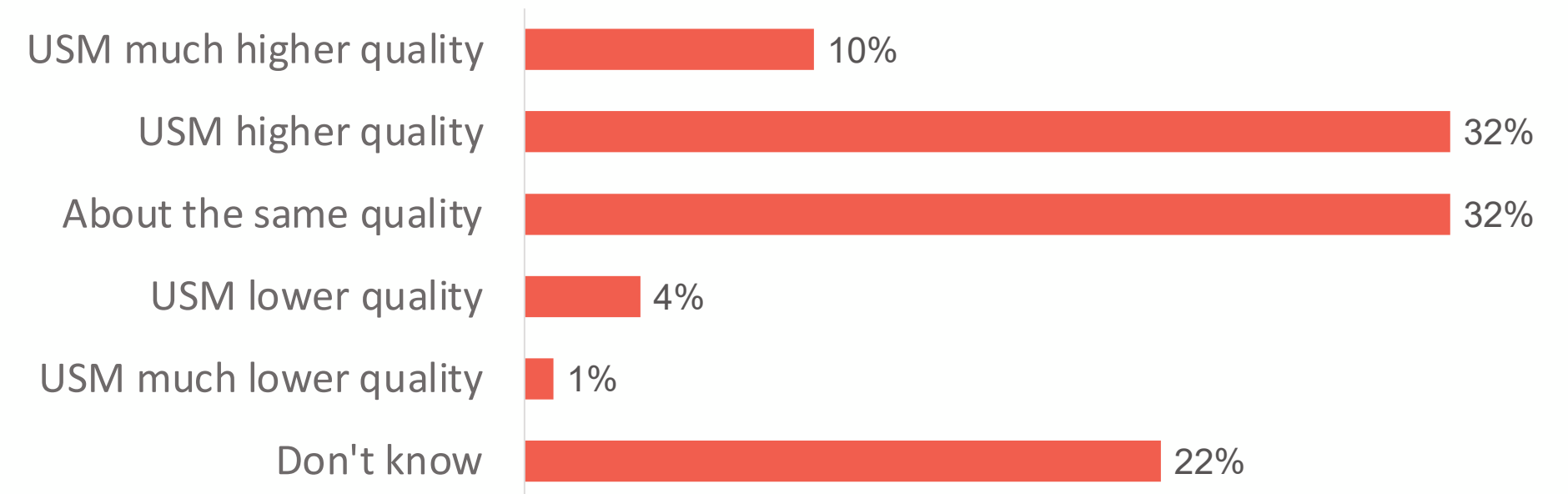
Q20. How would you rate the quality of higher education offered across the University System of Maryland?
Q9. How would you rate the quality of public higher education available in Maryland?

QUALITY OF THE USM COMPARED TO OTHER STATES

Around 40% of residents believe the quality of education offered by the USM is of higher quality than that provided by other states' systems.

One-in-five don't have an opinion, suggesting there is opportunity to grow this belief further.

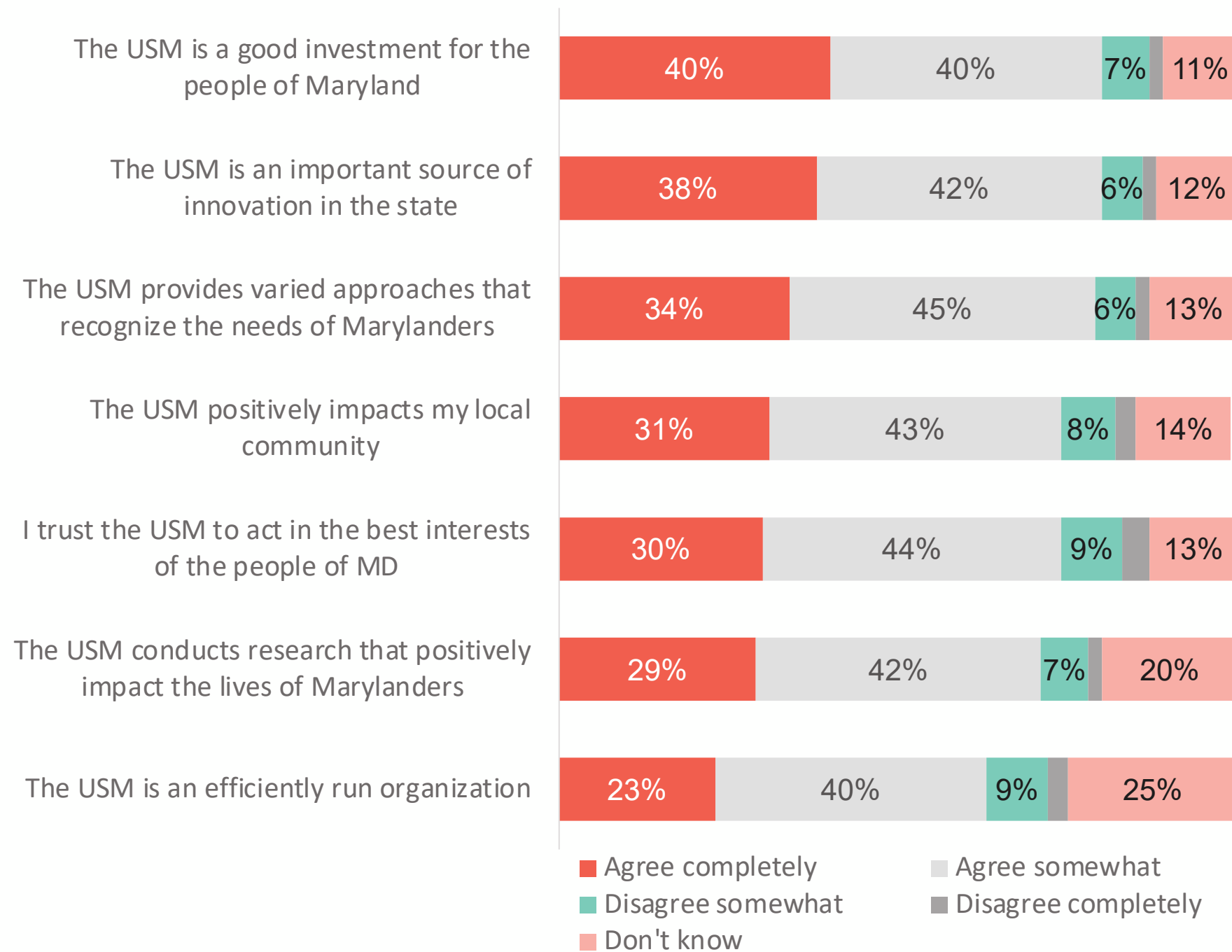
Quality of the USM Compared to Other States



Q21. In your opinion, how does the quality of education offered by the University System of Maryland compare to that provided by state systems in other states

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE USM

Agreement with Statement



State residents have very positive attitudes toward the USM. Around 80% agree it is a good investment for them, is an important source of innovation, and provides varied and flexible approaches that recognize their needs.

Three-fourths also agree it has some impact on their community and acts in the best interests of the people of the state. However, on all of those, the number agreeing strongly has room for growth.

Q24. Based on what you already know about the University System of Maryland or what you have learned in this survey, indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about the USM.

Implications

IMPLICATIONS

There is *less need* to convince residents of the importance of higher education.

There is *more need* to focus on raising awareness of the system and the critical role it plays on impacting the future of the state.

Residents, students and alumni understand the value of public higher education and its impact on the community and the economy and have a positive overall impression of public higher education in the state and the quality of it. And those who consider quality public higher education to be most important have the most positive impression of the quality of public higher education in the state.

IMPLICATIONS

Specifically, there is significant opportunity to tell the stories of how the system harnesses the collective power of all of its universities to move the state of Maryland forward.

There is limited awareness of the entity and the range of universities in it, which means there is a lack of understanding of the system's impact. Particular storytelling opportunities exist in making quality higher education more accessible to state residents, as well as how it positively impacts the creation of new jobs and the state's economy.

For students this extends to a greater understanding of the benefits of attending a system university, which currently has limited recognition.

IMPLICATIONS

As with other states, understanding the true ROI of higher education can be a challenge for some residents. Unlike many other systems with only traditional 4-year models, the USM is uniquely positioned to address this. Regional centers will play a critical role in educating people on the breadth of the offerings within the system.

Perceived affordability of higher education is not specifically a Maryland problem, but it is the most frequent negative reference in relation to public higher education in the state. If the USM can be seen as making public higher education more affordable or of greater value, it will be a compelling message.

IMPLICATIONS

We must connect the dots between the work that the system's universities do and USM's ability to directly impact the quality of life for the people of Maryland.

There is a somewhat of a disconnect in people's minds about public higher education's ability to impact the quality of life for people in the state, so it will be critical that we focus on areas which display the system's future-focused mindset like life-changing research, including things like innovation and its impact on the future of work in the state.

Deloitte.



**The case for a
student-centric campus**

Colleges and universities
must centre on student needs

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Introduction

We're living a period of tremendous upheaval and many sectors, including higher education, are being disrupted. In Canada, institutions are facing increased competition for both domestic and international enrolments, decreasing government funding, a rapidly changing student demographic, increasingly complex student needs, and massive changes in the technology landscape. On top of these challenges, student sentiment of the value of higher education credentials has been waning over the past two decades.¹

Prospective students are questioning the relevance of attending a higher education institution due to increasing costs, inadequate student services, outdated program delivery models, and the relevancy of their programs with respect to future employment opportunities. Furthermore, many of the people who are enrolling are dissatisfied with their experience once they get to campus.

This paper explores these issues in more detail and sets out approaches to become a more student-centric campus.

The case for student-centricity

One of the fundamental challenges is that while student needs and expectations have been shifting dramatically, institutions have not transformed to meet them. Many institutional structures, practices, and policies were designed for a different time. As a result, they are no longer fully aligned with the present-day needs and expectations of students. How can institutions evolve to provide intuitive, impactful support to students? How can they remove barriers and become more proactive than reactive?

Higher education institutions can start by incorporating student-centric principles to support and serve the most important stakeholder on campus: the student. Although the statistics on the previous page demonstrate the severity of the issues institutions are facing, those that act decisively to address them can gain a competitive edge in the sector by attracting and retaining more students. Those that do not will see their enrolment numbers suffer and lose ground in an increasingly competitive landscape.

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate the possibilities that can be realized by reimagining the campus and prioritizing the issues most important to students. To inform our research, Deloitte conducted a student survey to understand students' expectations and sentiments toward the schools they attend. The current landscape has been developing over several years as student expectations and the technology to address them have evolved. The pandemic has accelerated these shifts to an inflection point. Institutions must decide whether they will act now or get left behind in the outdated, institution-centric paradigm.

This document outlines:

- The definition of a student-centric campus and why it is important
- What students have to say about a student-centric campus
- How your institution can become student-centric

Amid all this disruption, higher education institutions have a tremendous opportunity to better serve their students by viewing their efforts through the eyes of their students and transform institutional strategies and policies to better enable student success.



Figure 1 – The case for student centricity



Canadian students are paying more than ever for higher education

- Increases in tuition have outpaced inflation every year since 1982.²
- Between 1990 and 2018, provincial governments' share of university funding has fallen by nearly half while the cost of tuition, adjusted for inflation, has risen 2.7 times.³
- On average, domestic students are now paying more than \$6,500 per year in tuition at universities⁴ and \$4,275 at colleges.⁵



Canadian students indicate dissatisfaction with the education they are receiving

- More than one-third of graduating students do not believe they received good value for their investment.⁶
- One-third of students who leave their studies do so because they did not like their program or did not feel it fit with their interests.⁷



Canadian students' mental health is suffering

- According to the 2019 National College Health Assessment, 23% of respondents felt "overwhelming anxiety" and 21% felt "so depressed that it was difficult to function."⁸
- More than 10% of respondents in the same survey had seriously considered suicide within the last 12 months and 2% had attempted to take their own life.⁹



Canadian students aren't getting the skills they need to succeed in today's job market

- Just under 30% of employers believe they have the digital talent they require and 89% of executives struggle to find candidates with the right mix of soft skills.¹⁰
- 58% of graduating students in Canada did not feel their studies significantly contributed to the skills and knowledge needed for employment.¹¹

What is a student-centric campus?

On a student-centric campus, each step of the student journey is assessed, developed, and supported by answering a fundamental question: **what do students need?**

This becomes the guiding principle that shapes the design of operations, functions, and offerings, from the student's first enquiry to beyond graduation. Redesigning campus experiences around this principle enables institutions to not only better prepare their students for success, but also create competitive advantages, financial sustainability, and improved reputations in the face of disruption and change.

To be truly student-centric, it is crucial to consider all stages of the student journey. There are, of course, linkages across the stages, and institutions will have their own unique approaches based on their current processes and the students they serve.

Moreover, the student journey varies greatly for different student populations. For example, a full-time student enrolling at 18 will have different needs from a mature, part-time student who is balancing study with full-time employment.

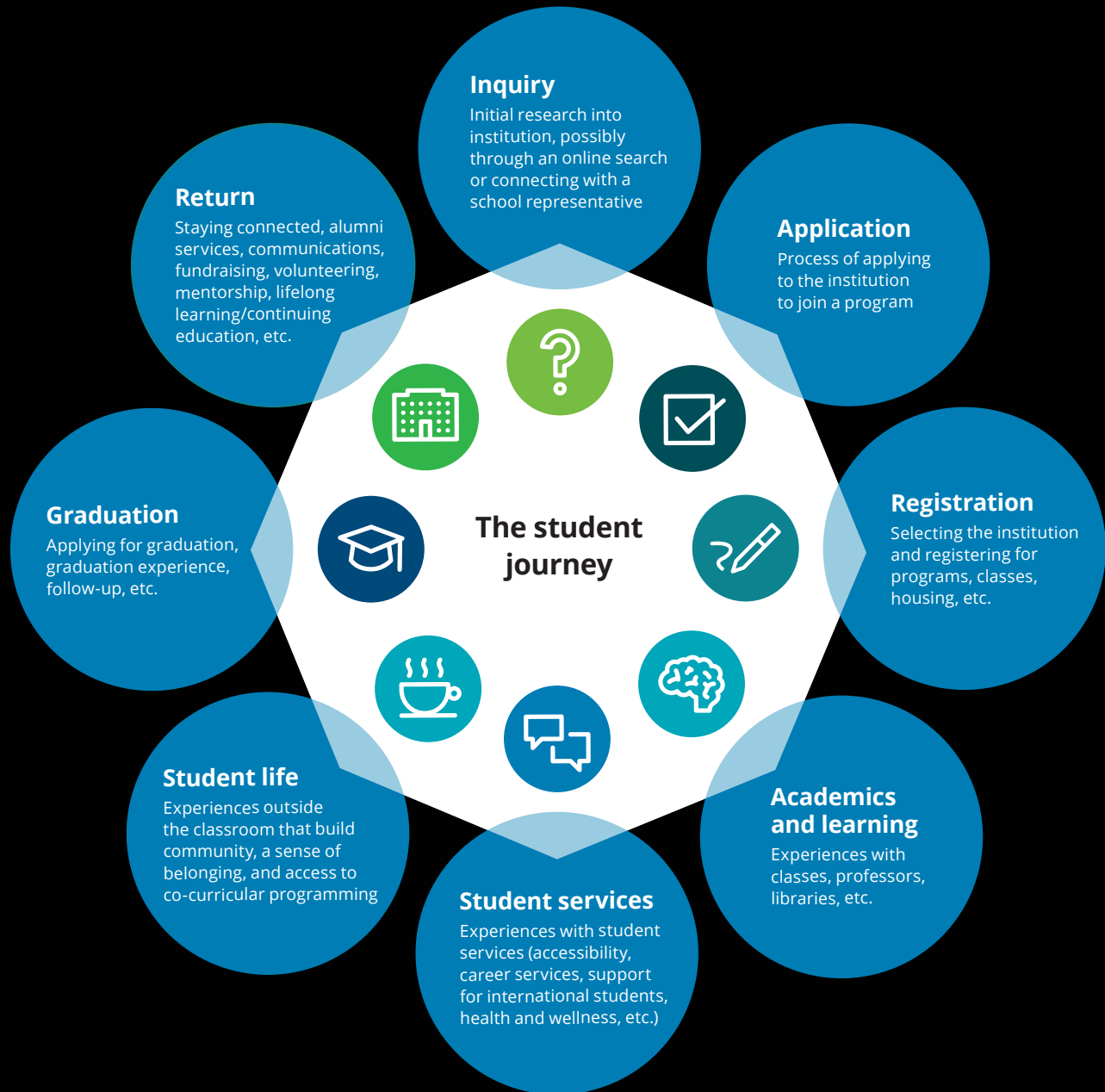
Higher education institutions can no longer make assumptions about who their students are and what they need. Given the diversity of students that institutions serve, understanding their varying needs and what their journeys are has become critical for achieving student-centricity.

Figure 2 – A student-centric campus creates a student experience that delivers:





Figure 3 – Stages of the student journey

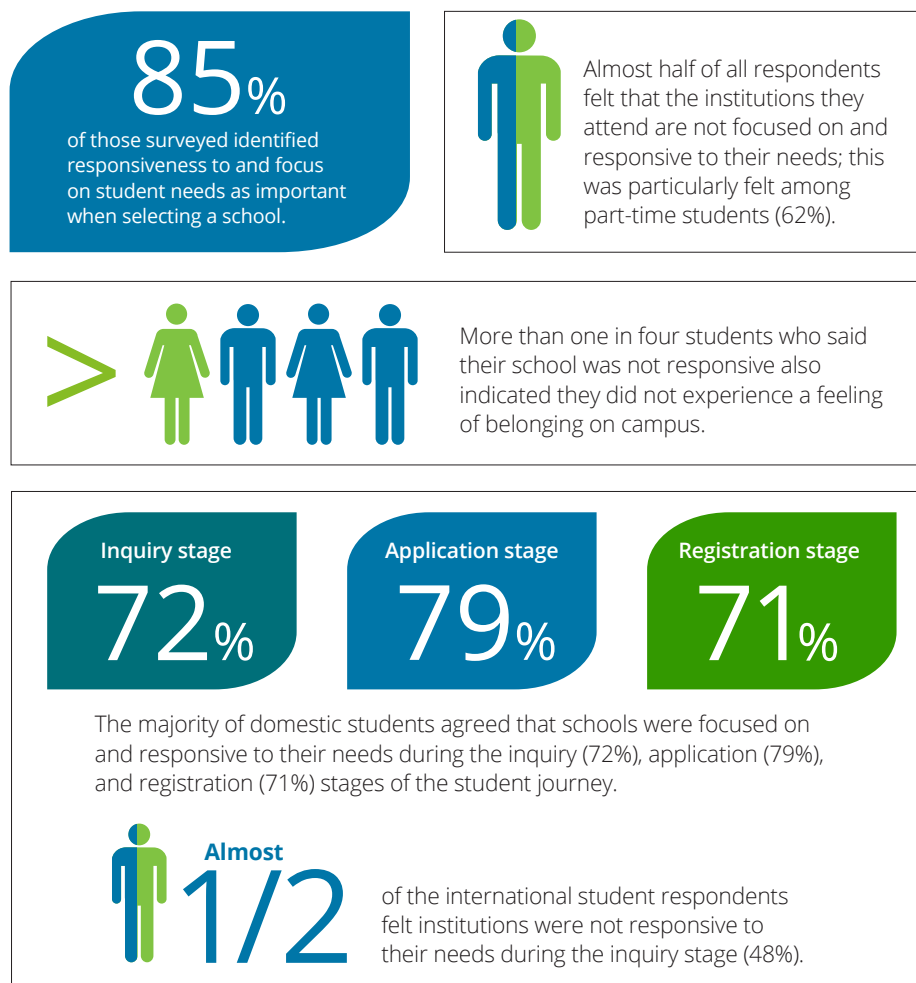


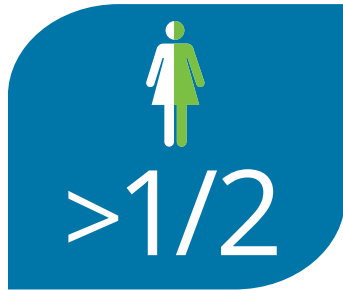
What do students have to say?

An important part of building a student-centric campus is collecting feedback directly from students. To frame the needs of higher education institutions today and explore the case for student-centricity, Deloitte surveyed 230 students in post-secondary institutions across Canada about their experiences and expectations across the student journey, while defining “student-centricity” as a school’s responsiveness to students’ needs.

Here’s what we found:

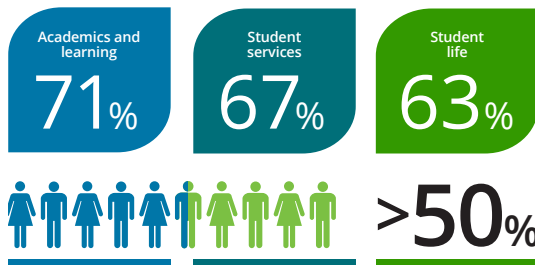
Figure 4
How students currently view the student-centricity of Canadian higher education institutions





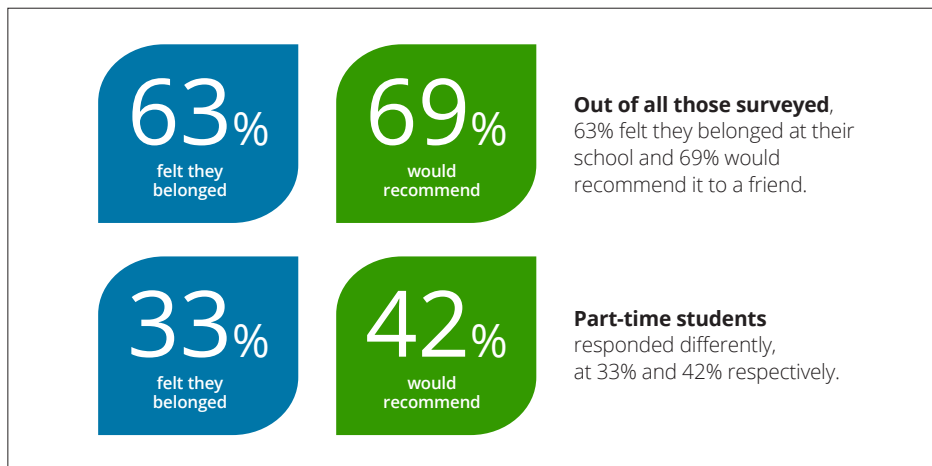
Of the students who indicated that a student-centric campus was important to them, less than half (49%) felt their campus was focused on their needs.

Less than half the respondents agreed that schools were focused on and responsive to their needs during the graduation (43%) and return (39%) stages of the student journey.



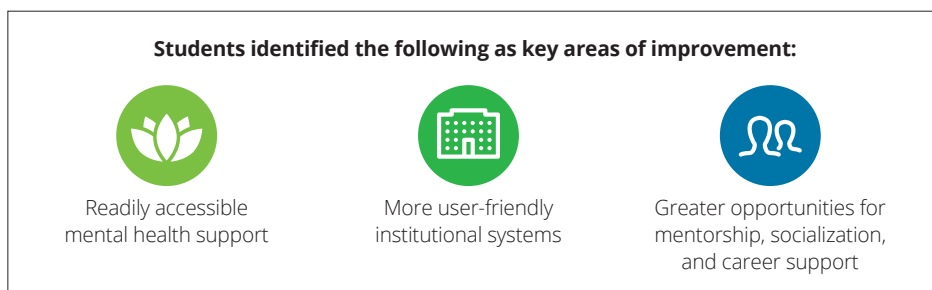
The majority of students agreed that schools were focused on and responsive to their needs in academics and learning (71%), student services (67%), and student life (63%).

More than half of part-time students disagreed on all three fronts.



Out of all those surveyed, 63% felt they belonged at their school and 69% would recommend it to a friend.

Part-time students responded differently, at 33% and 42% respectively.



Key implications for institutions

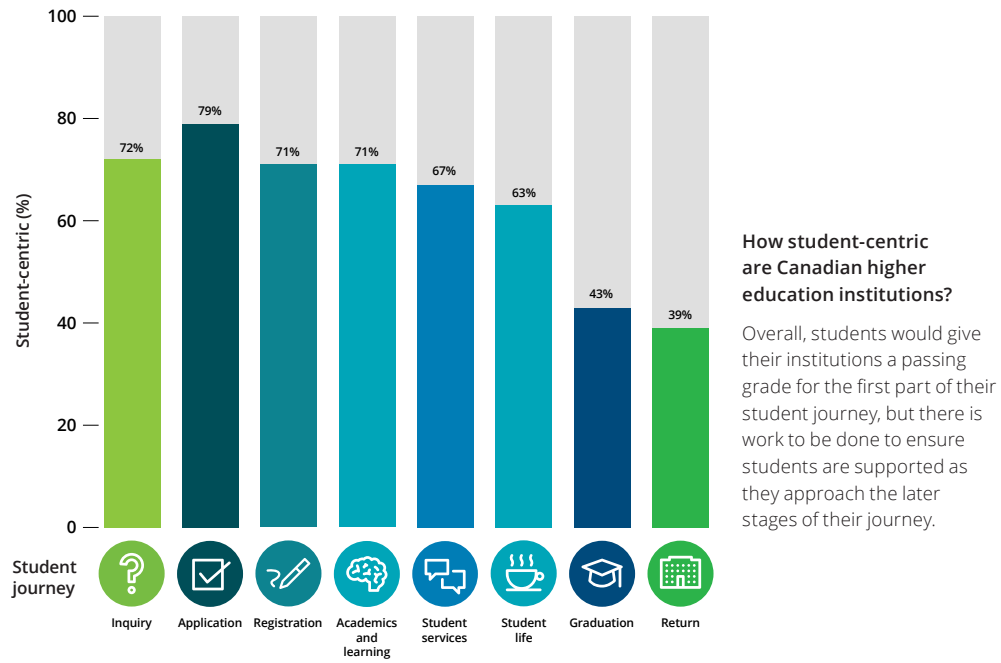
Survey result	Recommended action
Responsiveness is an important factor when students are deciding which school to attend.	Institutions should focus resources and attention on becoming more student-centric. These efforts should be demonstrated through marketing and recruitment in order to attract more students and maintain a competitive funnel.
Institutions are most focused on student needs up until enrolment, and then this focus declines.	Work to become consistently responsive across the student journey to improve the student experience and increase student success.
Part-time students responded less favourably than full-time students on almost all measures.	Institutions need to consider whether their efforts to improve the student experience include focus on part-time and non-traditional learners in addition to full-time learners. As student demographics change, the importance and impact of these learners increases.
Students identified accessibility to mental health support, the need for more user-friendly systems, and greater opportunities for advice and mentorship as key areas for improvement.	Ensure the resources students are offered (health, academic, social, etc.) reflect their desires and needs, and make those resources accessible through user-friendly systems.

More than three out of four Canadian universities reference equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in their institution's strategic and long-term planning documents and 70% have developed or are developing an EDI action plan.¹²

Students want meaningful action and more accountability; as Wisdom Tettey, vice president of the University of Toronto, said,

“Accountability could also come from outside institutions—perhaps via ranking them according to their inclusiveness. I’m hoping that the cost of exclusion will become so high that institutions will be forced to do the right thing.”¹³

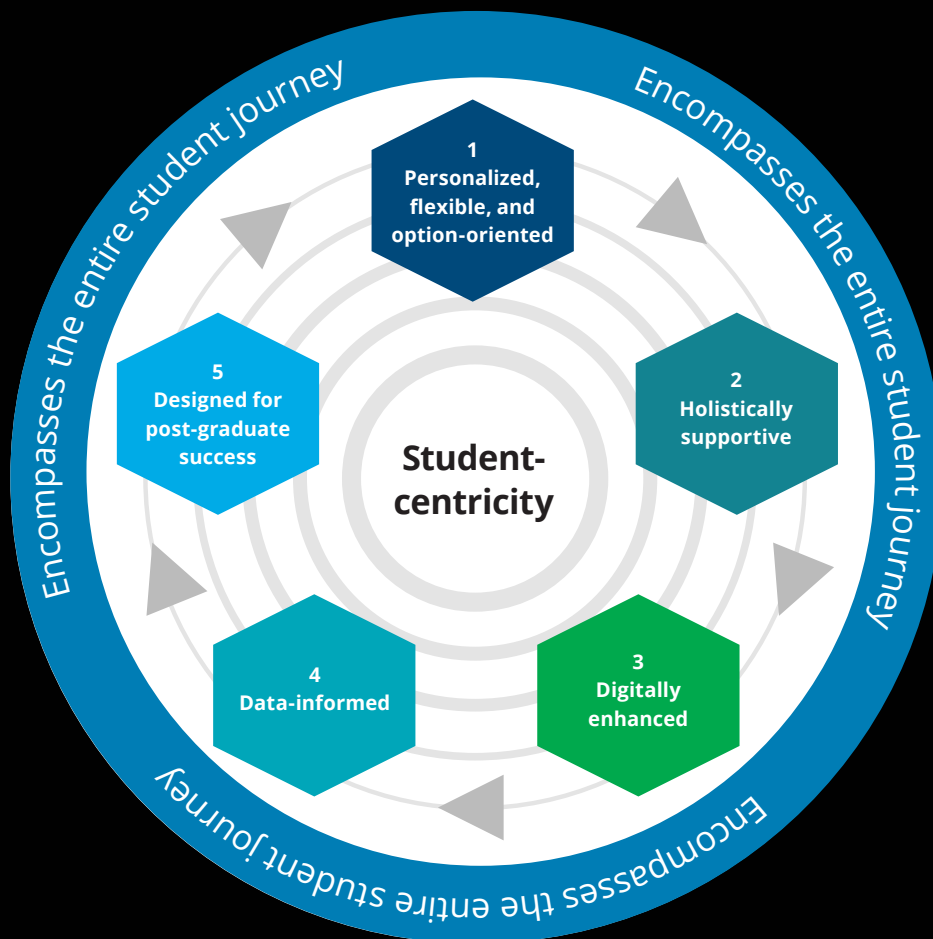
Figure 5 – Percentage of students who agreed that the school they attend is responsive to and focused on their needs for each stage of the student journey



Becoming a student-centric campus

Moving toward student-centricity requires a clear understanding of what it means and what it looks like in action. Deloitte research across the Canadian higher education sector indicates that there are **five key pillars** to achieving this state:

Figure 6 – Becoming a student-centric campus



1 Personalized, flexible, and option-oriented



Student-centric institutions acknowledge that students are diverse in their backgrounds, wants, and needs and, through flexibility and options, provide their students with the ability to tailor their education to support their individual learning and success goals. There are increasing numbers of international, mature, part-time, and upgrading students seeking admission into Canadian higher education institutions; therefore, no single approach to program design and learning models will suffice.

Aiming to be personalized, flexible, and option-oriented pushes institutions to reimagine their current programs and structures and to reframe their policies and systems to provide students with various pathways to success. Instead of determining what a student *should* do within the institution, student-centric institutions provide an open and supportive environment for students to succeed in whatever way they want.

What does this look like in practice?

- **Seneca College** leverages technology to offer a hybrid-flexible model of learning with four types of modules that students can choose from: fully remote online classes; fully in-person classes; hybrid classes, with a predetermined mix of online and in-person sessions; and flexible classes, where students can choose whether they will attend on campus or remotely for each lecture.¹⁴
- **Université du Québec à Montréal** has a new credentials model that offers quicker certifications and allows students to build upon their previous learning, presenting more opportunities for different kinds of learners. Their new 10-course occupational health and safety certificate program, for example, can be taken alone or combined with a major or two other certificates to earn a bachelor's degree.¹⁵
- **Bow Valley College** introduced two new programs in cloud computing and data management analytics that follow the competency-based education (CBE) model. The school assesses incoming students for previously learned skills and creates an individual learning pathway based on the gaps in their education that recognizes work experience and allows students to expand their skills to position themselves in an ever-expanding digital world.¹⁶

- **BCIT, Siemens Canada, and Denesoline Corporation** partnered with the Digital Technology Supercluster to create a virtual, clean-energy training platform for Indigenous communities. Through the program, members of the Łutsël K'é Dene First Nation in the Northwest Territories learn about clean-energy microgrid systems. Drawing on BCIT's experiential learning tools, participants get remote and hands-on learning experiences. Experiential learning experiences like this directly address student expectations that higher education should lead to employment opportunities by preparing students for the workforce.¹⁷

How is this student-centric?

Providing teaching and learning options that fit a learner's unique needs, goals, and lifestyle is key to supporting student success and optimizing the student experience

2 Holistically supportive

A higher education experience is clearly about more than academics and learning. Students are managing new challenges, environments, people, systems—the list goes on and on. As they progress through their learning journeys, it's vital for institutions to support the student's whole self to help them achieve their personal learning and success goals.

A critical component of holistic support is student mental health and well-being. Canadian student survey data continues to show that students feel like they're "getting the runaround" on campus, indicating a fractured experience when it comes to support.¹⁸ To avoid this siloed experience, an integrated, holistic approach to providing services that support students is key to meeting their needs and competing for students in the market. With 17% of graduating students reporting mental health challenges¹⁹, these supports continue to be a priority for students—and they increasingly expect their school to provide them.

What does this look like in practice?

- **Brock University** ranks highly among institutions for mental health supports and works to proactively meet students' needs and reduce barriers to those supports. The school recently launched the My Student Support Program (My SSP) app, which offers students 24/7 access to professional licensed counsellors in five languages and a host of resources, as a pilot project with LifeWorks. Brock also hosts a Wellness Week to shine further light through wellness walks, workshops, and fitness classes that specifically focus on mental and physical well-being.²⁰
- **Confederation College** is exploring approaches to integrating and measuring Indigenous ways of knowing in college classrooms. Phase 1 began in 2007, when the Negahneewin Council gifted the school with a set of seven Indigenous Learning Outcomes (ILOs) to provide all students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, with an understanding of Indigenous worldviews. In 2015, Phase 2 built on the lessons learned, leading to the creation of the Indigenous Knowledge Mobilization Packsack, which was tested in four classrooms and continues to be refined and expanded.²¹

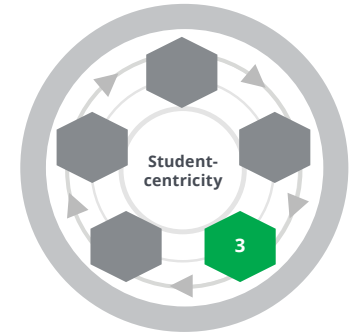


- **McGill University, University of Montreal, Inserm, and Université de Bordeaux** recently published the findings of a project that used artificial intelligence (AI) to identify factors that accurately predict suicidal behaviour in students, opening up new avenues for large-scale screening of students for risk of suicide using short, simple questionnaires in order to refer them to appropriate care.²²
- **Mohawk College, George Brown College, and the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA)** are collaborating to support a new initiative dedicated to the deaf and hard of hearing community across the province. Working together, they will collect and analyze a range of data and use it to enhance employment opportunities and connect with local organizations that have identified labour shortages and want to offer supportive careers.²³

How is this student-centric?

There is demand for increased mental support for students, and for institutions to address the root causes that exacerbate mental health challenges. Being holistically supportive and positioning mental health as a critical component can improve student success.

3 Digitally enhanced



We live in an increasingly digitally enabled world, and the impacts of COVID-19 have forced this shift at an unprecedented rate. Today's students are digital natives and expect positive, personalized, and seamless digital experiences comparable to how they interact and engage in other areas of their lives.

What does this look like in practice?

- **Georgian College** launched a bold digital innovation strategy to improve student learning and service delivery that led to the launch of three pilot projects:
 - College-wide transformation focused on elevating the school's capacity to offer XR (extended reality) to students and employees, including access to a virtual campus
 - Establishing multimedia studios to empower faculty to create original content to enhance teaching and learning
 - A change management process that helps employees understand how to use XR in their work and how it can lower barriers for students who require a modified learning model²⁴
- **College of the North Atlantic (CNA)** partnered with MyCreds to launch a platform that allows students and alumni to access their transcripts and digital credentials virtually. They can also access micro-credential information in a virtual credential wallet. CNA is reportedly the first institution in Atlantic Canada to offer digital credential wallets.²⁵

- **University of Ottawa** partnered with TELUS on an initiative that will transform the campus into a 5G-connected innovation hub, including the creation of two on-campus 5G research labs to immerse students in the world's most advanced digital technology so they can develop important skills for shaping the digital economy of the future.²⁶
- **Concordia University** has launched a collaborative initiative called TEMPO from the faculty of fine arts and the Centre for Teaching and Learning to provide pedagogical and technological support to faculty who teach art and performance online. It offers these instructors access to a range of innovative techniques to design engaging and collaborative online learning experiences, including a virtual gallery space.²⁷

How is this student-centric?

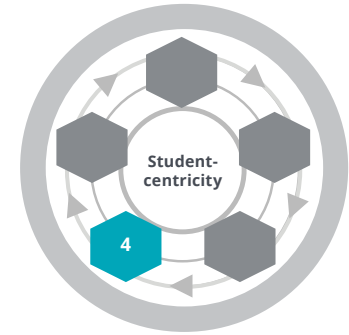
While in-person interactions will remain critical to student success, it is also essential for institutions to enhance and supplement those experiences with the best digital solutions available to improve ease of access to services and ensure they are adaptable and relevant to students.

4 Data-informed

Tapping into available data is a key enabler for understanding students and being able to make evidence-based decisions that lead to improved outcomes. Leveraging student engagement data and predictive analytics presents an exciting opportunity to provide tailored support early on and intervene before challenges lead to problems. Data can also be used to inform customized experiences that fit different students' unique needs.

What does this look like in practice?

- **Mohawk College and the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario** launched a project dedicated to understanding student retention using both descriptive and statistical modelling. This work led to the development of a predictive model for the overall effects of different advising initiatives, and across students at different risk levels in terms of their likelihood of leaving the college before graduating. These assessments enabled a better understanding of students and will help target support initiatives in the future to obtain the greatest possible improvements in student outcomes relative to the costs of these initiatives.²⁸
- **Bow Valley College** is creating a data-informed culture across the institution with a focus on continuous improvement. By using a data mart and analytics tools, the institution is able to identify problems, respond more quickly, and determine the most impactful changes to enhance the learner experience, thereby enabling student-centricity across the learner journey.²⁹
- **University of British Columbia** has a Learning Analytics Project with ongoing development of tool pilots that use the school's underlying technologies (Canvas learning management system, etc.) to investigate how data-informed



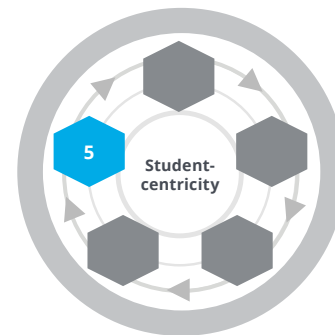
analytics can be used to support students, instructors, and advisors. Foundational to this work is a community engagement plan to empower these stakeholders with data and learning analytics tools to enhance their teaching, learning, student success, and program planning.³⁰

How is this student-centric?

While our institutions have an abundance of student data, many of their core legacy systems of operation (i.e., student information systems) only capture and track campus-centric data and were never designed for shaping and informing student-centric supports. Operationalizing data-informed student success practices that bolster student intervention remains elusive on Canadian campuses, despite many strong use cases available in the United States.^{31, 32}

Collecting the necessary data to improve student outcomes and provide just-in-time analytics to students or those who can support them is key to enabling a data-informed, student-centric campus. This pillar presents the greatest opportunity to create a substantive impact on student-centric support.

5 Designed for post-graduate success



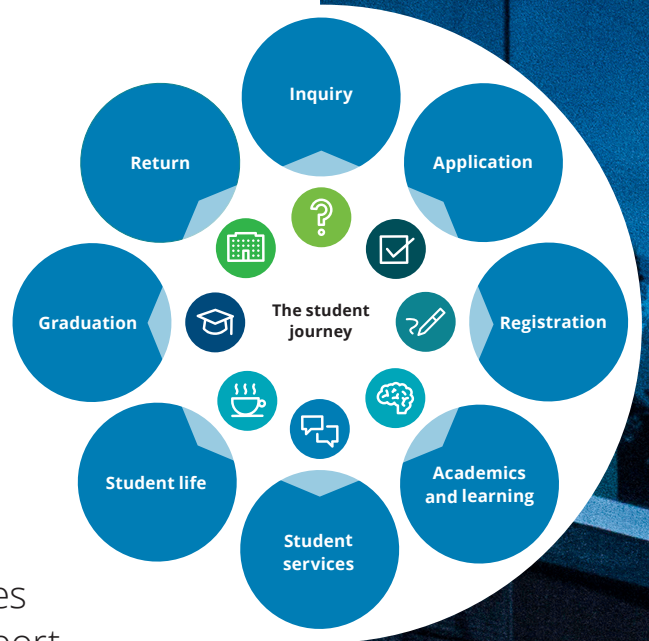
Students are reporting dissatisfaction with the value for money of their education and are less confident that their credentials will lead to their desired career opportunities. In some cases, the sheer time and expense of programs of study create an increased expectation that education will lead to employment. Furthermore, funding is becoming increasingly tied to employment-related outcomes in some provinces. Offering access to career advice and opportunities for research and work-integrated learning are powerful tools for preparing students to achieve their post-graduation objectives.

What does this look like in practice?

- Dalhousie University and University of Toronto** partnered to establish an innovative new model for work-integrated learning, the Creative Destruction Lab—Atlantic. The program matches high-potential startups with experienced business leaders who provide expert mentoring. Students learn how to evaluate, finance, and manage technology businesses through real-world experience.³³
- Collège Communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick and New Brunswick Community College** have announced the launch of a new online skills assessment and development platform to help newcomers to Canada find meaningful employment. In collaboration with other organizations, the platform will assess newcomers' formal training, competencies, and lived experiences against New Brunswick's industry standards to find pathways to employment and fill local vacancies.³⁴
- Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, the University of Saskatchewan, and several First Nations and Métis communities and community members** co-implemented the Oyateki Partnership to improve the experiences of Indigenous youth as they transition through post-secondary education and into the workforce by transforming Saskatchewan's education and employment systems.³⁵
- Lethbridge College** is partnering with Liquid Avatar Technologies (LAT) Inc., a publicly traded global blockchain and financial technology solutions company, to launch a first-of-its-kind, work-integrated learning opportunity for students. LAT is providing 9,000 plots of land in its Aftermath Islands Metaverse, a network of spaces where users can create a virtual world parallel to their physical one. Students will develop skills as they work, play, learn, game, entertain, and earn in the metaverse, and gain a greater understanding of digital space and identity.³⁶

How is this student-centric?

It's no longer enough to think about students' needs only while they are studying. Institutions must also pay attention to helping their students achieve post-graduation success.

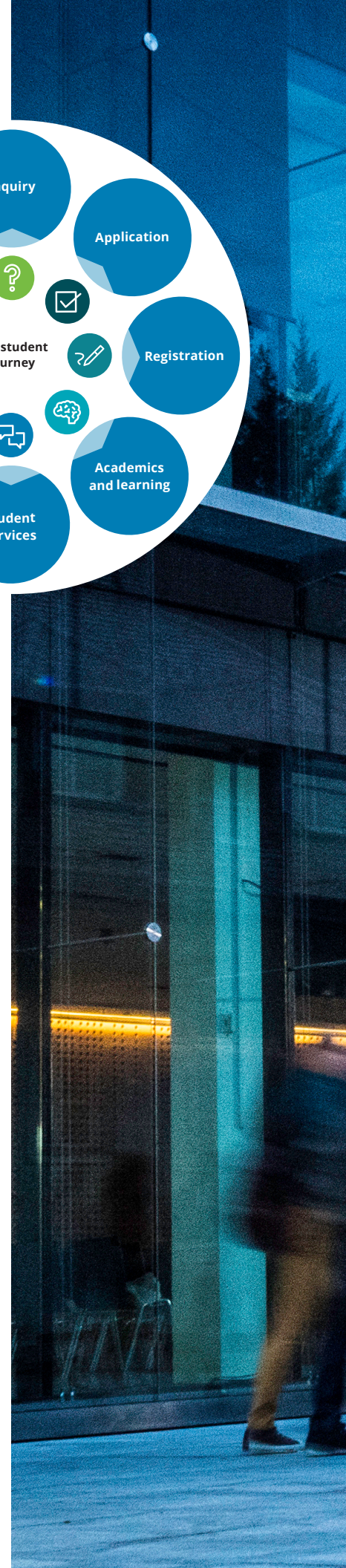


Given their range of needs and all the challenges they can face, it's clear that students need support at all points across their learning journeys.

Institutions have work to do at every step, work that requires purposeful, integrated institutional strategies with commitment and action at all levels— leadership, faculty, staff, administrators, and beyond.³⁷ Successful strategies start with the recognition that “student success does not arise by chance. It requires that institutions commit themselves to intentional, structured, and systematic forms of action.”³⁸

Our survey indicates that students feel institutions are more responsive to their needs in the early stages of the student journey. This is likely a legacy of the attention that has been placed on managing the recruitment process and the competition among institutions for students. Institutions should be reflecting on their relative strengths and weaknesses across the entire student journey to determine how they can make the most impact on both the student experience and their success rates.

Stepping back to consider the bigger picture serves to focus institutions beyond the competitive recruitment phase and encourages greater support for the entire time a student is with them. It allows institutions to reframe the way they develop relationships with their students to ensure their commitment to students' needs reaches well beyond registration and supports fruitful, longer-term connections.





Improving student-centricity

We believe it is essential for institutions that wish to be more student-centric to consider each of the five key pillars for every stage of the student journey. To help them assess where they currently stand, we have developed a maturity model. Any assessment of student-centricity must include student perceptions—institutions can no longer make assumptions about what students want and should consult them at every step.

Figure 7 – How is student-centricity assessed?

To measure student-centricity, each stage of the student journey should be evaluated based on the five key pillars above. They should be considered against three categories: strategy, approach, and results. From this analysis, you will be able to identify future areas for improvement for both the student experience and your success.



Strategy

A clear vision and plan that focuses on improving the student experience and has full leadership support are in place.



Approach

Mature processes that are impacting results and include plans for improvement are in place.

The approach is

- Personalized, flexible, and option-oriented
- Holistically supported
- Digitally enhanced
- Data-informed
- Designed for post-graduate success
- Applied across the entire student journey



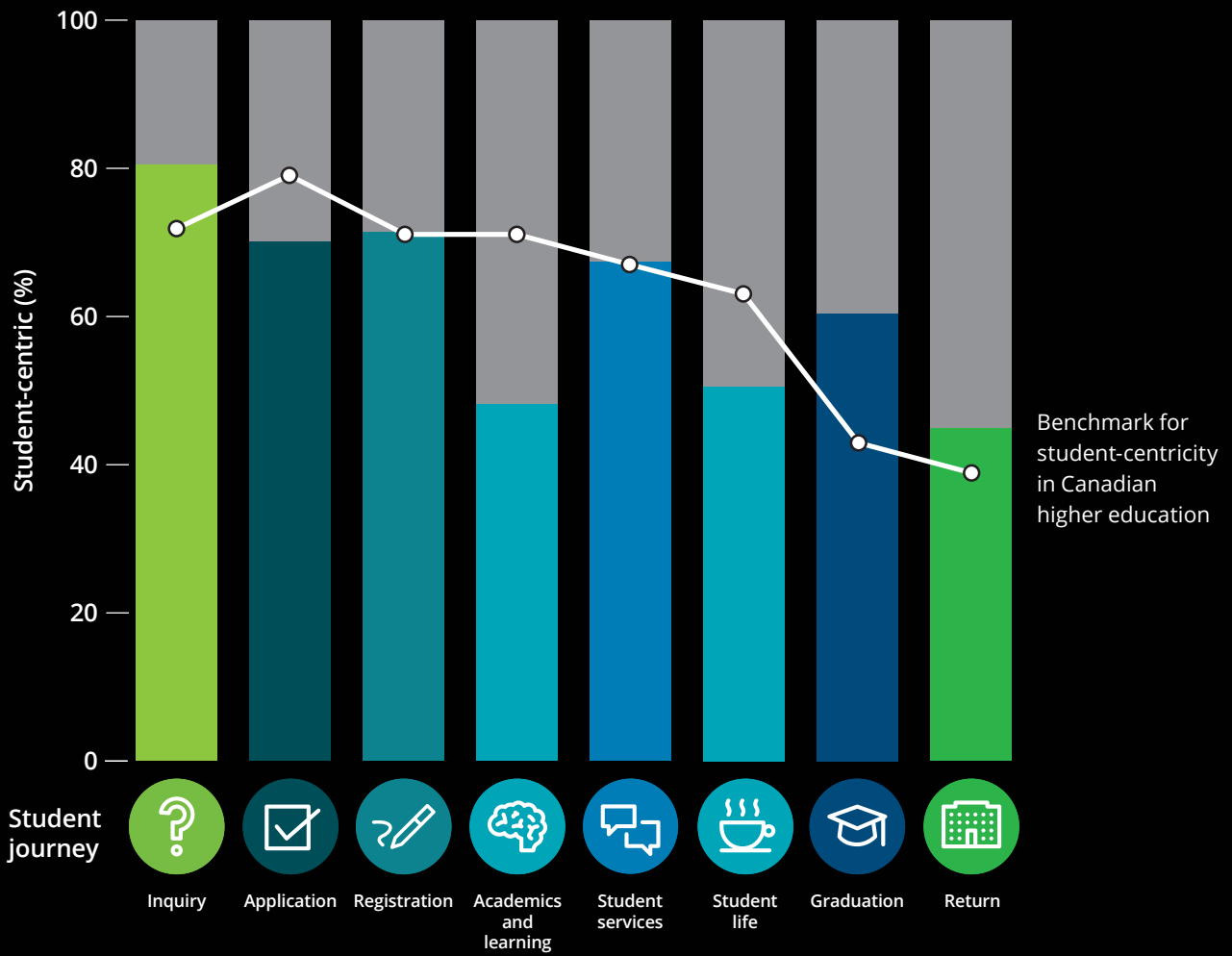
Results

Detailed analytics and evidence that show results are being used to bring about improvement are in place.

Results need to take both success results and student perceptions into consideration.

Figure 8 – This assessment should be taken across the entire student journey. The benchmark for student-centricity indicated below clearly shows that Canadian higher education institutions pay more attention during the application stage and there is much work to be done across the rest of the journey.

Maturity assessment



Human-centred design and moments that matter

Human-centred design (HCD) is an approach to problem-solving that focuses on the human perspective at all steps of the process.

Moments that matter are important milestones in the student journey and can provide insight into areas of momentum and barriers.

To establish institutional objectives that enable student-centricity, institutions need to deepen their understanding of the student experience and reflect on what students really need. To do this, institutions can employ HCD. This approach to problem-solving focuses on the human perspective at all steps of the process. Two key HCD frameworks for higher education are *moments that matter* and *student personas*.

Moments that matter are important milestones in the student journey and can provide insight into areas of momentum or barriers (see examples at right). To go even deeper, institutions can design student personas (see sample persona below), or characterization of a particular student at a moment that matters, and

think about what that student wants, needs, and values. Identifying these moments and considering them through the lens of student personas enables institutions to tailor the best possible experiences for students when they would be most impactful. Connecting these insights to institutional data will help prioritize different elements of the student experience and build processes and objectives from a student-centric perspective.

Figure 9 – Sample student persona

Working-while-learning Wendy

Wendy's story

Working-while-learning Wendy is a working professional who wants to further develop the skills she obtained while completing her marketing diploma at an Ontario college. As she gains in-the-field experience at a local strategic communications firm, Wendy is looking for a bachelor of commerce program that affords her the flexibility to work part time while she completes the degree. Wendy needs a program that offers multiple modalities of learning, hybrid options, and online course formats.

Goals and aspirations

- To earn an undergraduate degree that gives her the skills necessary to further her career
- To find a program that offers the flexibility to work toward the next level while keeping a work schedule
- To access strong networking opportunities for use in her current or future career

Primary challenges

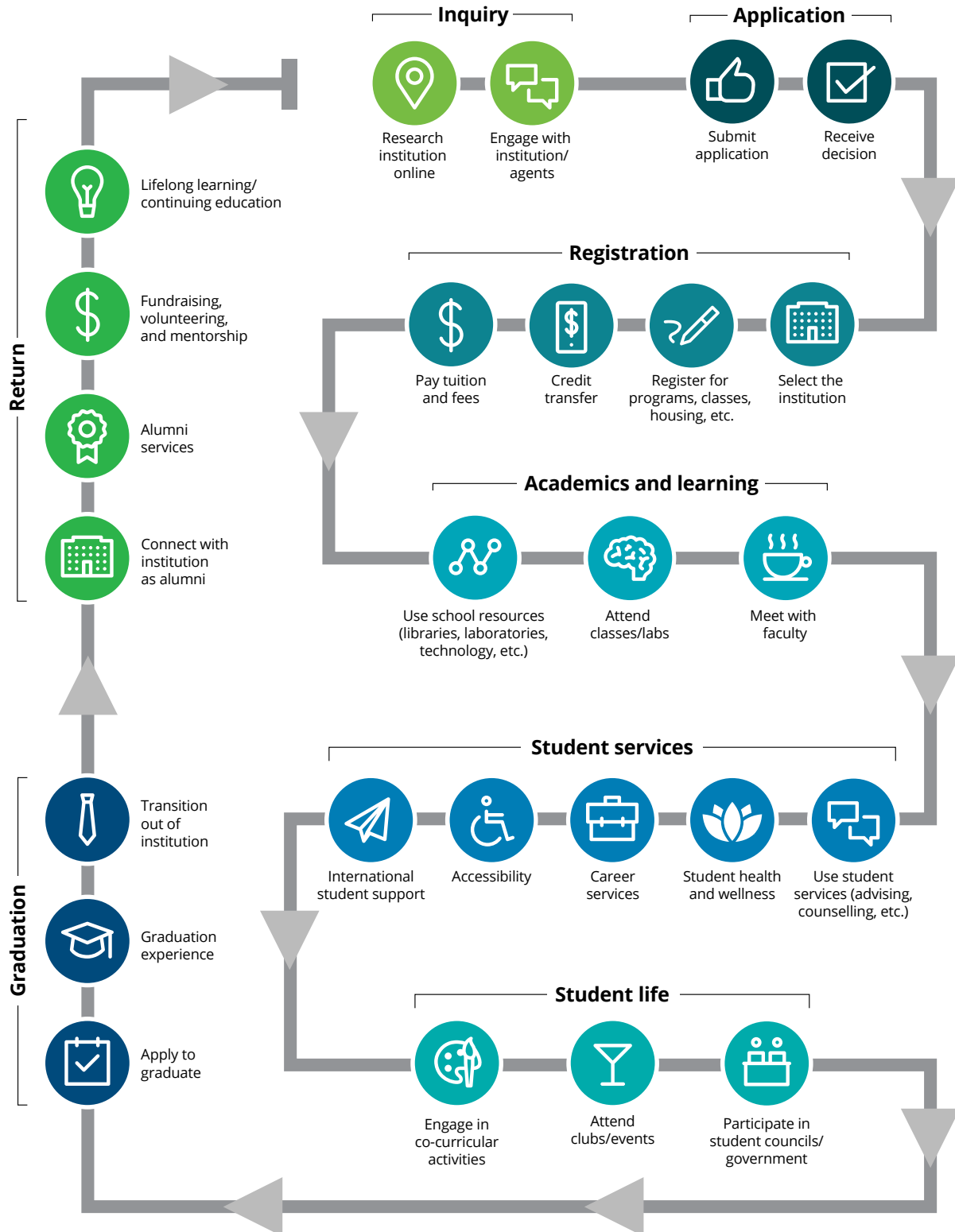
- Integrating the demanding schedule of a university degree into her work and social life
- Navigating the university system, which will differ from her experience obtaining her college diploma



A blue rectangular card representing a student persona. At the top right is a white circular icon containing a silhouette of a woman's head and shoulders. Below the icon, on the left side, are four labels in white uppercase letters: AGE, GENDER, ROLE, and LOCATION. To the right of each label is a white vertical line, followed by the corresponding value in white text: 20-24, Female, Working professional, and Toronto, Canada.

AGE	20-24
GENDER	Female
ROLE	Working professional
LOCATION	Toronto, Canada

Figure 10 - Moments that matter



Conclusion

The case for student-centricity is clear. Our survey of Canadian post-secondary students reveals that more than one in three students don't think they are receiving good value for their investment and one in two don't think their school is sufficiently focused on their needs. There is increased competition for students—and they expect an experience that aligns with what they're used to in their day-to-day lives and provides them with the support they need to be successful.

In higher education, the profile of the student body has become substantively more complex and diversified with different groups having different demands and expectations. Although many institutions have made considerable progress, it is not consistent across all schools and the results vary across stages of the student journey and for different groups of students. Success does not arise by chance, and student-centricity needs to be systemically integrated at each stage of the student journey in a way that is responsive to learners' needs.

All students should be able to expect the same level of support and interest from their institutions regardless of whether they are full-time, part-time, international, mature, or upgrading, and that it will be consistent throughout their experience.

Educational institutions should take the time to consider how truly student-centric they are across all elements of the student journey, and then develop improvement plans to ensure that they can not only be competitive in the marketplace, but also provide an exceptional experience for every student.



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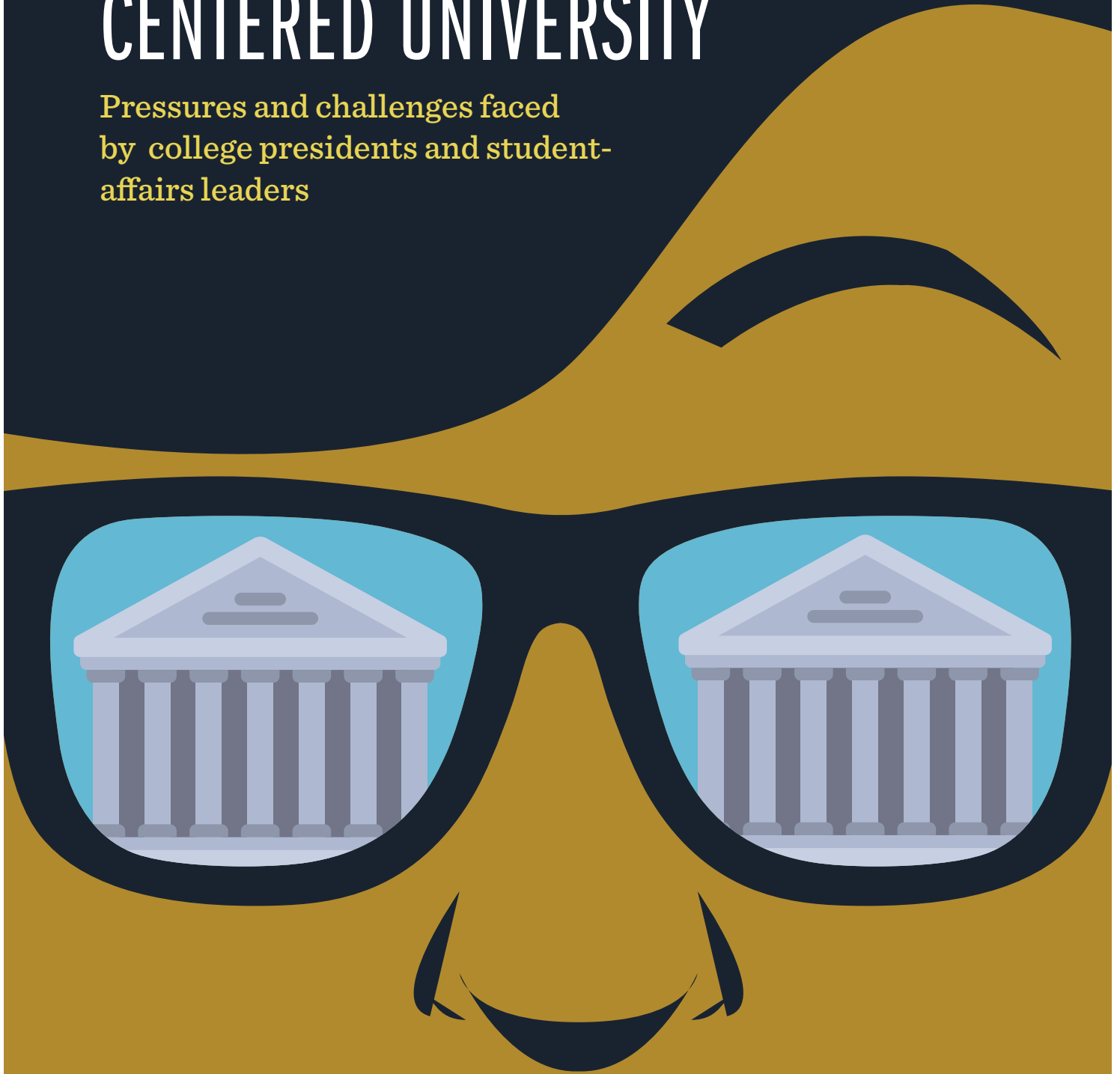
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THE STUDENT-CENTERED UNIVERSITY

Pressures and challenges faced
by college presidents and student-
affairs leaders



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Executive Summary

Higher education is under intense pressure to meet the personal needs, demands, and expectations of an increasingly diverse and complex student population.

More students than ever are struggling with mental-health issues. They're less resilient and more overwhelmed by the demands of college and life. They have an increased passion for social activism. They exhibit diversity in every sense of the word, and they want to be accepted and validated for who they are. Economically disadvantaged students need help getting basic necessities. The more affluent and privileged want nice dorms, good food, and a Starbucks in the library. Parents expect more bang for their bucks.

Colleges must address these outside-the-classroom issues because they affect what is happening inside the classroom—and ultimately impact an institution's effectiveness, retention rates, and marketability.

As a result, colleges are looking to their student-affairs divisions for answers. More and more decisions are being made based on what benefits and satisfies the student. Some colleges tout boldly that they are now, or are transforming into, student-centered institutions. Others choose not to get wrapped up in the catchy label but say that is what they're doing.

As colleges become increasingly concerned about the well-being of students and face more student demands and complaints, higher education is placing a renewed focus on the role of student affairs. On many campuses, the students-affairs divisions are the fastest-growing areas, as colleges add psychological counselors, hire success coaches, and increase their attention to diversity and inclusion.

This report seeks to examine the role of student affairs on campuses today, the issues they face with students, what the leaders of those divisions think of their jobs, and what the next decade holds for their work. It is based on a new survey, conducted by the Huron Consulting Group for The Chronicle of Higher Education, of 112 presidents and student-affairs leaders at two- and four-year, public and private institutions. This survey analysis pulls from expert opinions, *Chronicle* reporting, and previous studies.

Highlights



STUDENT AFFAIRS IS A BIGGER PRIORITY ON CAMPUSES.

An overwhelming majority, 95 percent, of student-affairs departments reported being represented in strategic planning initiatives at their institutions.



SOME TRADITIONAL STUDENT-AFFAIRS AREAS MIGHT GET LESS ATTENTION

Survey respondents generally gave less priority to residential life, campus activities, recreation, and student conduct. They expect less money to go into those areas in the coming year.



STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND DIVERSITY ISSUES WERE THE TOP CONCERNS

Mental health was the No. 1 concern, garnering 66 percent of the responses. Diversity ranked second, with 40 percent.



MANY PRESIDENTS AND STUDENT-AFFAIRS LEADERS CONSIDER THEIR STUDENTS TO BE CUSTOMERS

Nearly half, or 48 percent, said they shared that perspective.



CAMPUS SAFETY WAS A SIGNIFICANT CONCERN FOR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

Thirty-six percent of the presidents were worried about safety, compared to 19 percent of the student-affairs leaders.



SOME STUDENT-AFFAIRS LEADERS ASPIRE TO BECOME COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

One-third of the student-affairs leaders surveyed said they do now or might someday want to be chief executive.



CAREER SERVICES STAND TO RECEIVE MORE ATTENTION

Thirty percent of the respondents believe that more resources will go into efforts to help graduating students find jobs.

Introduction

Patricia A. Whitely is seeing a lot of changes she would not have predicted 20 years ago when she became vice president for student affairs at the University of Miami.

Her department has set up a 24-hour hotline that students can call for support—whether they're stressed out from studying, upset over a breakup, or feeling hopeless. The campus has hired four social workers as case workers to track students who are having a particularly difficult time. It now employs a student advocacy coordinator.

She and her staff are busier than ever—helping students plan celebrations for the Lunar New Year, keeping tabs on the LGBTQ center, attending an annual campus drag show, installing footbaths for Muslim students, and celebrating the 50th anniversary of the United Black Students.

Intramural sports have more than doubled over the past two decades, from 21 to 48. The department has arranged for a dining hall to open three times a week, from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m., for students who want food late night.

Staff members are overseeing construction of a new residence hall, and they're working more closely than ever with faculty.

What Miami's student-affairs department is experiencing is playing out on campus after campus. The role, reach, and impact of the departments are widening as they work harder to give students what they need and want.

The departments are being asked to do more with less. They're constantly dealing with changes in state and federal regulations. They're choosing and balancing priorities.

“The bottom line of all this is to remove obstacles that might keep students from being successful,” says Whitely.

The fear is that if a student isn't engaged on campus, isn't emotionally healthy, isn't feeling accepted, or isn't feeling safe, they won't stick around to graduate.

“The kinds of issues and the complexity of issues on campus today are clearly different than a generation ago—and probably 10 years ago,” says Kevin Kruger, president of NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

The stakes are high for the institutions, for their attractiveness to students, and for their bottom lines—as colleges rely more on tuition revenue to sustain their budgets. These student-driven challenges can no longer be dealt with quietly or slowly because they are often played out on the public stage of social media.

“You start ticking down these issues, and they are really complicated not only by themselves, but in how they merge with the safety and success of students—and the image of the institution,” says Kruger.

Although it can differ from campus to campus, student-affairs departments traditionally have reported to the dean of students, although now more and more are reporting directly to the president. They oversee most everything that happens outside the classroom—student health, campus activities, counseling services, dining halls, career advising, residence halls, and Greek life.

The needs and demands of today’s students in those areas outweigh any that campuses have felt before, higher-education experts say. It is not surprising, given that colleges are a microcosm of what’s happening in society.

Anxiety and depression rank as the top two mental-health conditions on campuses today, according to the 2015 National College Health Assessment. The survey, conducted by the American College Health Association, found that 35 percent of college students felt so depressed in the last 12 months, that it “was difficult to function.” Nearly 10 percent had “seriously considered suicide.” Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students.

What’s behind the campus rise in mental-health issues? Aside from technology, distractions, and life’s pressures putting more stress on everyone, earlier diagnosis and more awareness are key factors, experts say. More parents are seeking mental-health treatment earlier for their children. So students who might not have been successful in high school before are now making it to college.

Many mental illnesses present around ages 18 to 24—prime college age. A college lifestyle of sleep deprivation, binge drinking, and sexual activity doesn’t help. Many students are falling victim to society’s perfectionist culture, thinking they have to be the best, look the best, and do the best. Many don’t seek help because of the stigma or because they don’t

recognize they need help. Untreated mental illness gets worse and puts the students and others on the campus at risk. While colleges do not have a legal obligation to provide mental health services, they do have an “ethical responsibility,” Kruger says.

On the diversity front, as the nation moves closer to becoming a minority-majority population, more first-generation college-goers and students of varying nationalities and socioeconomic levels are coming to campuses. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in the past four decades, the percentage of Hispanic students has increased from 4 to 17 percent; Asian students from 2 to 7 percent; and African-American students from 10 to 14 percent. The percentage of white students has dropped, from 84 to 58 percent.

Today’s students are much more open and outspoken, and they want to be recognized and respected for their individuality in terms of race, color, ethnicity, religious beliefs, political views, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, and physical disabilities.

Student activism is common. Students are just as likely to march or demonstrate for broader social and political issues as they are for a deficiency, injustice, or weakness they perceive on campus.

Experts say the protests of today rival those of past decades—and are amplified by Twitter, Facebook, and cell phone videos. “It kind of looks like the 60’s in terms of social activism, but it’s like social activism on steroids because of social media,” says Kruger.

Archie W. Ervin, vice president for institute diversity at the Georgia Institute of Technology, says the protests are fueled by students’ frustrations and a strong belief that they can bring change.

“It is about the environment on campuses,” says Ervin, who also is president of the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education. “Some aspects of our campuses are not inclusive or supportive of our communities that are making them up.”

Student Affairs in Strategic Planning

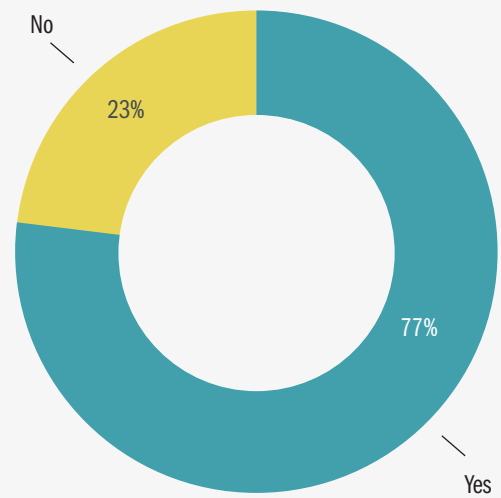
“The efforts are not tucked away inside a student-affairs division,” says Rhonda H. Luckey, vice president for student affairs at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. “We are working as a university in very intentional ways.”

The results of The Chronicle survey indicate that student-affairs divisions are gaining more influence on campuses—and that, for the most part, division leaders feel their presidents understand the pressures they face.

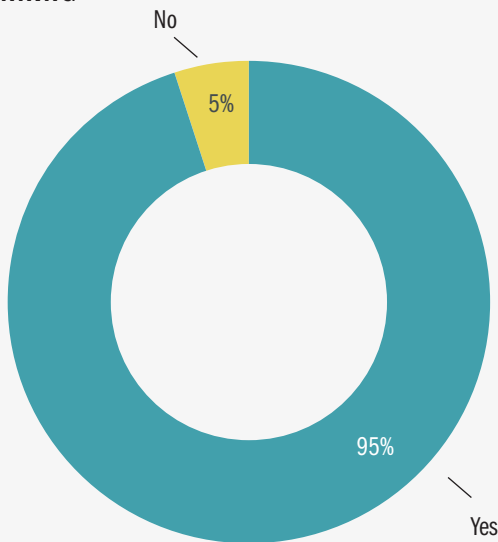
About 77 percent of the leaders said they report directly to the president. An overwhelming majority, 95 percent, reported being represented in strategic planning initiatives.

In fact, in the last five years, that role has increased for most. More than half, 52 percent, said their division is playing an increased role in strategic planning. (See Figures 1, 2, 3.)

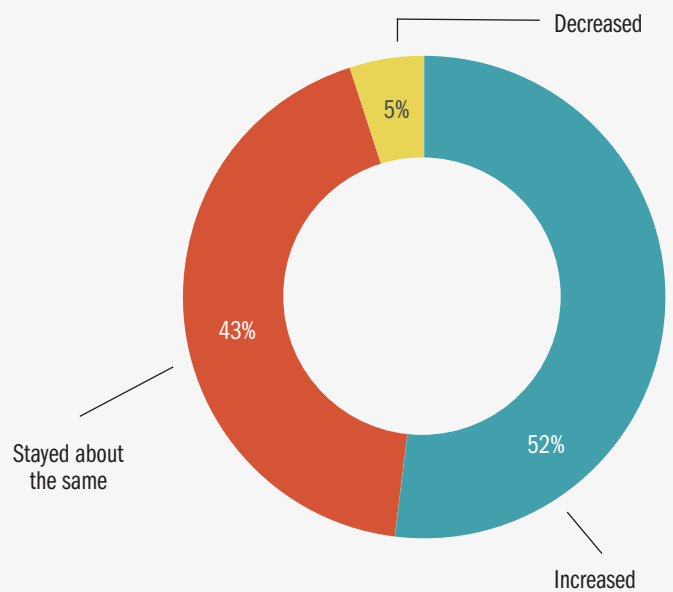
**FIGURE 1
PERCENT OF STUDENT-AFFAIRS
LEADERS WHO REPORT DIRECTLY
TO PRESIDENT**



**FIGURE 2
PERCENT OF STUDENT-AFFAIRS LEADERS
INVOLVED DIRECTLY WITH STRATEGIC
PLANNING**



**FIGURE 3
PERCENT OF STUDENT-AFFAIRS LEADERS WHO
SAY THEIR DIVISION IS PLAYING AN INCREASED
ROLE IN STRATEGIC PLANNING**

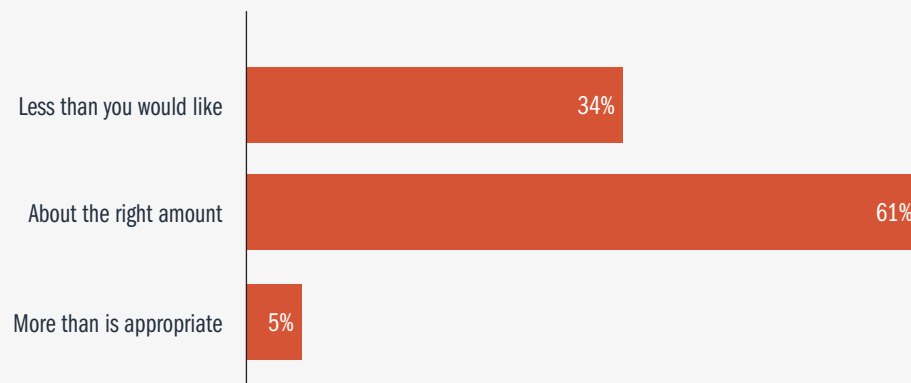


Over the past three years, Indiana University of Pennsylvania has pushed forward on a strategic plan to become a student-centered institution. Student affairs is a key player. They've moved enrollment management into its own department to open up student affairs for other needs. The campus has created a military resource center to support the large proportion of students who have a military connection. In January 2018, the campus plans to open a multicultural center.

"The efforts are not tucked away inside a student-affairs division," says Rhonda H. Luckey, Indiana's vice president for student affairs. "We are working as a university in very intentional ways."

In the survey, the majority of student-affairs leaders were satisfied with how much their president cares about the department's duties. Sixty-one percent described the level of caring as the right amount; 34 percent felt they were receiving less than they would like. (See Figure 4.)

FIGURE 4
STUDENT-AFFAIRS LEADERS' SATISFACTION WITH HOW MUCH THEIR PRESIDENT CARES ABOUT THEIR ISSUES.



In the survey, student-affairs leaders were asked to reply anonymously to the question, "What does your institution's president not understand about your job?" Here is a sampling of responses:

"The frequency of disturbing student incidents, the attitudes of today's students about sex and substances, and the skill and training our staff receive before being hired."

"The spectrum and volume of student complaints and the complexity posed by disability and mental health concerns."

"The amount of time I spend working on policy and rule compliance."

"That we are working with people and not numbers or widgets. We cannot make students do what they do not want to do."

"That we are contributors to the growth and development of students—we are not just service providers."

"The amount of time and energy one incident related to a student takes to assess, monitor, mediate, and resolve."

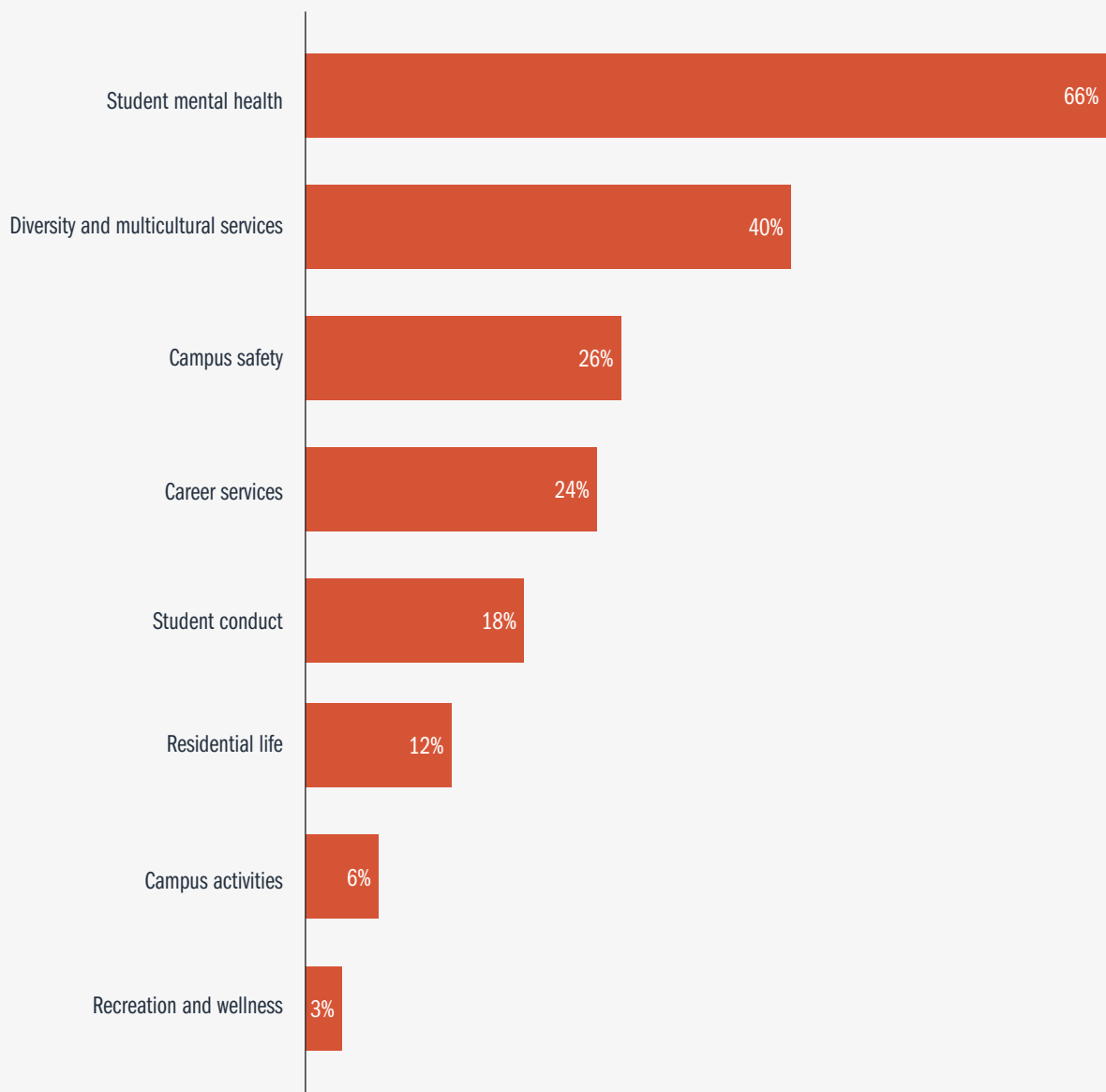
Pressing Concerns

Sixty-six percent identified student mental health as the top issue ... The next most serious concern [was] diversity and multicultural issues.



The survey asked all respondents to identify two major concerns outside the classroom. Overwhelmingly, 66 percent identified student mental health as the top issue. It far outweighed the next most serious concern, diversity and multicultural issues, which 40 percent of the respondents identified. (See Figure 5.)

FIGURE 5
MAJOR CONCERNS OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM



On the mental-health front, many campuses, including Appalachian State, George Washington and Tulane Universities, have been shaken by multiple suicides. Counseling services are stretched thin. Students are being put on waiting lists.

As a result, colleges are contracting with outside providers, making mental health an orientation topic for new students, showing videos on suicide prevention, starting mindfulness initiatives, and setting up kiosks where students can quickly assess their emotional state.

The University of Iowa this past fall hired two new counselors, bringing the total to 22. Officials plan to add another six by next fall. The campus is using an “embedded” approach, by assigning some of the counselors to residence halls, as well as other places.

George Washington University opened a \$3 million health center in 2015. It employs more than 40 counselors and continues to hire more. The university has created peer support groups, an online self-help library, and an online process to identify students who might be struggling emotionally.

Occidental College is making changes where mental health and multicultural diversity intersect. Last year, students demanded that physicians of color be hired “to treat physical and emotional trauma associated with issues of identity.” Within months, Occidental hired an African-American therapist, who has since started a multicultural therapy group.

On the diversity front, students are demanding social change. They’ve staged Black Lives Matter demonstrations. At Boston College, students marched against what they considered the administration’s lack of response to a gay slur. At the University of Missouri, racially charged protests led to the resignations of two top leaders.

When it comes to efforts to build inclusion, more and more student-affairs departments are working with trained diversity officers. Campuses also continue to create dedicated spaces where students can gather with others with whom they identify.

In fall 2016, Miami opened the LGBTQ Student Center. Over the past decade, membership in the campus LGBTQ organization has more than doubled, from 50 to 130. A task force identified the need for the center. “We are visibly saying we are a place that respects you,” Whitely says.

Georgia Tech’s Ervin says efforts toward inclusion must be woven into all aspects of a campus. Currently he is working with the Greek organizations to have them interact more, in an effort to help their diverse memberships find common ground.

“These are not ‘one and done’ things,” Ervin says. “These have to become part of the fabric of the institution.”

When it comes to efforts to build inclusion, more and more student-affairs departments are working with trained diversity officers. Campuses also continue to create dedicated spaces where students can gather with others with whom they identify.

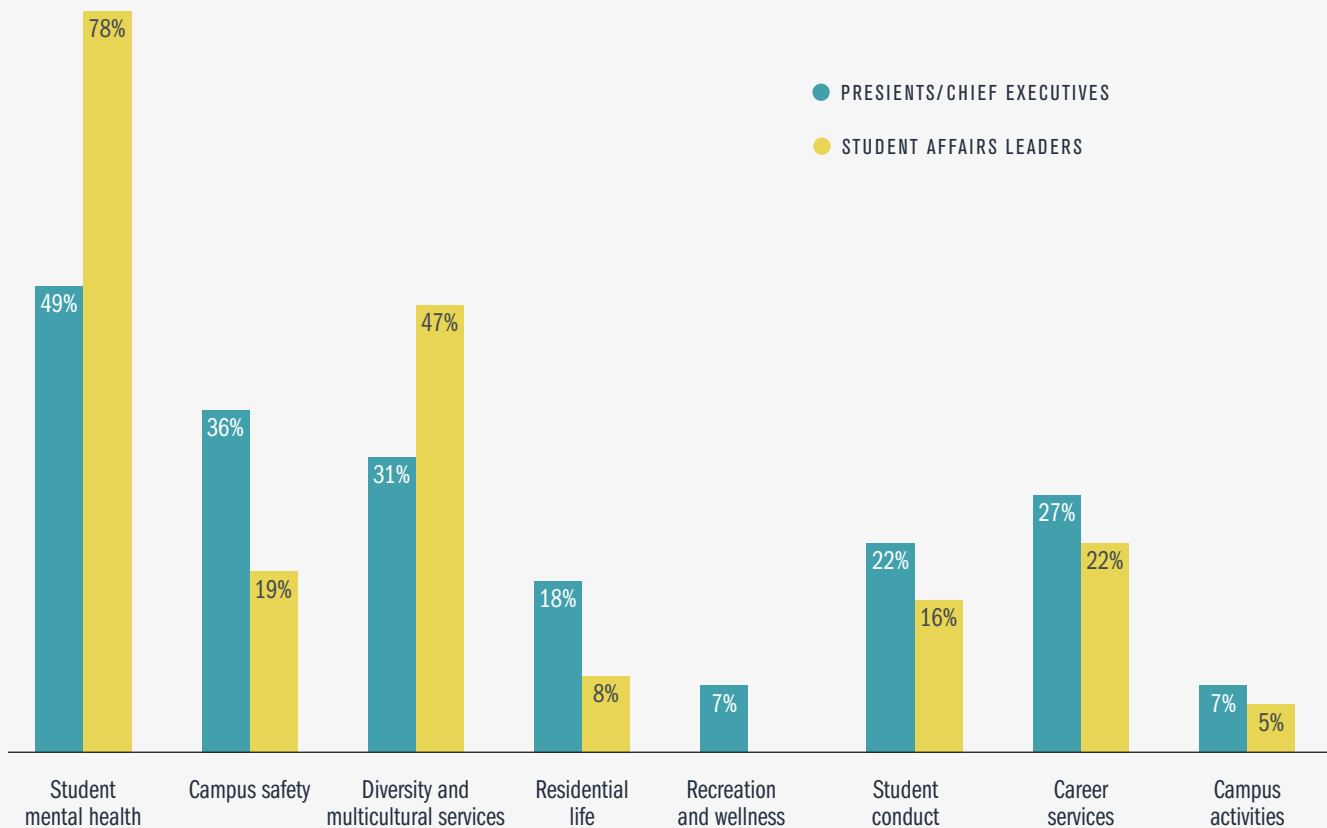
Differences in Perspective

“Safety fits right in there with shelter and food,” says Larry Dietz, president of Illinois State University.



When the survey compared the responses of student-affairs leaders to those of presidents, there were numerous differences. For example, although student mental health ranked as the top concern for both groups, the survey indicated that the issue might be a bigger concern for student affairs. Seventy-eight percent of the student-affairs leaders ranked it as their top priority, compared to 49 percent of the chief executives. Student-affairs leaders also gave more weight to diversity issues. The presidents expressed more concern for residential life, recreation, student conduct, career services, campus activities, and campus safety. In fact, 36 percent of the presidents were worried about campus safety, compared to 19 percent of the student-affairs leaders. (See Figure 6.)

FIGURE 6
TOP CONCERNS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM OF PRESIDENTS AND STUDENT-AFFAIRS LEADERS



In interviews, presidents said that at conferences and meetings, they often discuss concerns over campus shootings, sexual assaults, and how to keep students safe. They say students need to know that they can walk safely on campus and be safe in their dorms, classrooms, and libraries.

“Safety fits right in there with shelter and food,” says Larry Dietz, president of Illinois State University. “It is one of the foundational parts of the Maslow hierarchy. If people don’t feel safe, it is hard to go to a higher point of intellectual capability.”

Putting Money Where Their Worries Are

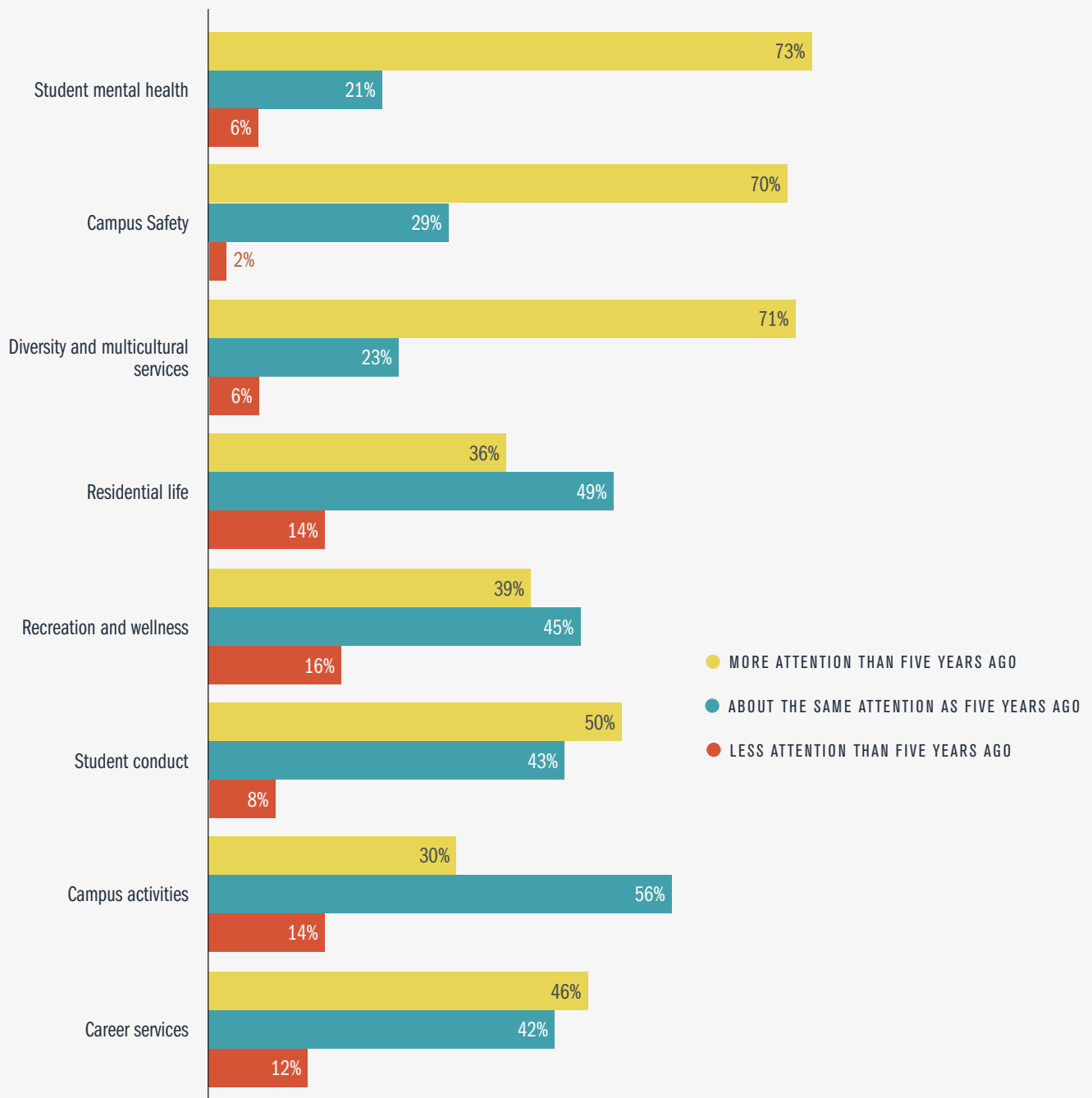
Career services ranked as the third highest priority for spending, at 30 percent, even though it had not been identified as a major worry.



The survey indicates that colleges and universities plan to put more resources into their biggest concerns.

Seventy-three percent of the respondents said that in the past five years, they have been paying greater attention to mental health; 71 percent said diversity; and 70 percent said campus safety. These were the top three areas of increased attention by a wide margin. (See Figure 7.)

FIGURE 7
ATTENTION PAID TO TOP CONCERNS IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS



When asked to predict where more time, money, and staffing will go in the next year, the top responses correlated once again to the primary concerns. Not surprisingly, 36 percent said diversity and 35 percent said mental health.

It is interesting to note, however, that career services ranked as the third highest priority for spending, at 30 percent, even though it had not been identified as a major worry. (See Figure 8.)

In January 2014, Miami opened a new state-of-the-art career center, the result of a \$4 million renovation. It has six interview suites, 360-degree video recording, and videoconferencing. The center is directly tied to student outcomes and reassures parents their children will find jobs.

“We have seen it as a great asset as we recruit students,” Whitely says.

In the survey, respondents said that residential life, campus activities, and recreation will get less time, money, and staffing over the next year. (See Figure 9.) This finding raises the question of whether colleges are becoming so focused on mental health, diversity, and safety that they are pulling back on what some might consider less critical items.

In interviews, college officials said the traditional areas still remain a spending priority. “The students who are coming to us now have never shared a bedroom or bathroom in their entire life,” says Dietz. “They want more than the old dormitories where you just used to eat and sleep.”

FIGURE 8
AREAS RESPONDENTS BELIEVE WILL RECEIVE *INCREASED* RESOURCES IN THE NEXT YEAR

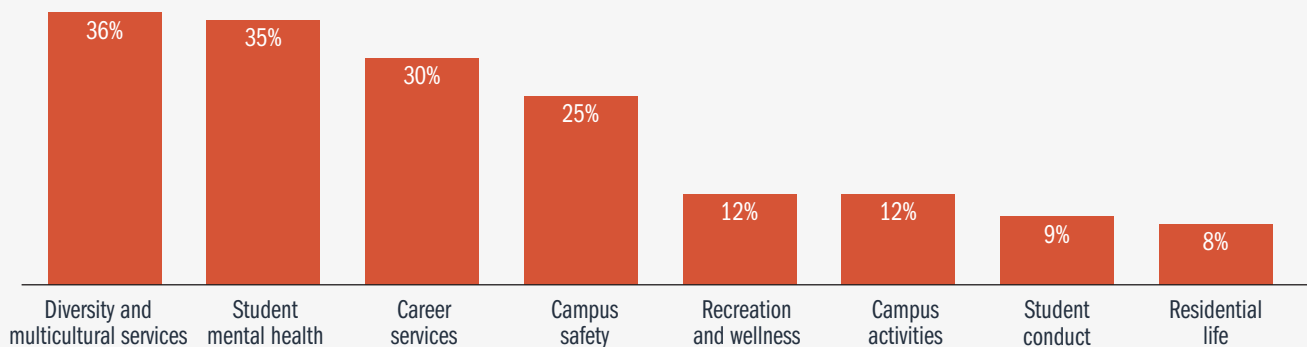
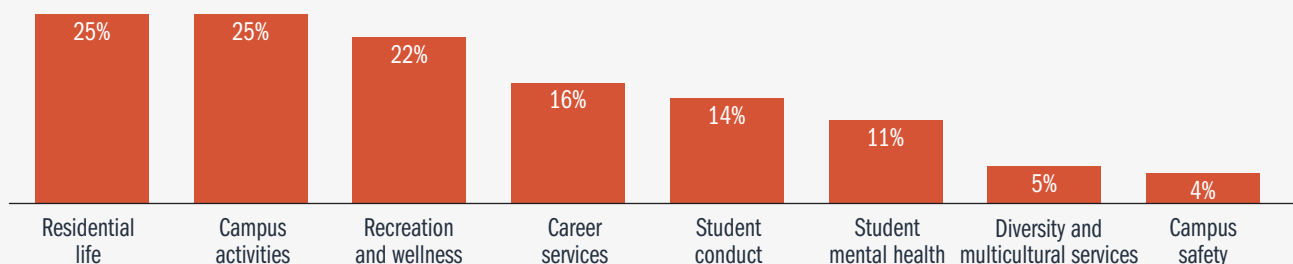


FIGURE 9
AREAS RESPONDENTS BELIEVE WILL RECEIVE *FEWER* RESOURCES IN THE NEXT YEAR



Students as Customers



“The rising cost of education has led to a more instrumental and transactional view of higher education for both students and their families.”

Many colleges are taking a more business-like approach to their marketing strategies—and their lingo. They refer to their students as “customers,” and they strive to provide good customer service. It’s a practice with which many in academe take issue. Professors argue that the practice connotes that students are buying grades and that it could devalue the education process.

In the survey, nearly half, or 48 percent, of the presidents and student-affairs leaders said they consider students to be customers. (See Figure 10.)

About half of the respondents believe that perspective is more common than it was five years ago. (See Figure 11.)

Kruger, of NASPA, predicts the practice will continue to grow. “The rising cost of education has led to a more instrumental and transactional view of higher education for both students and their families,” he says.

FIGURE 10
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO CONSIDER STUDENTS TO BE “CUSTOMERS”

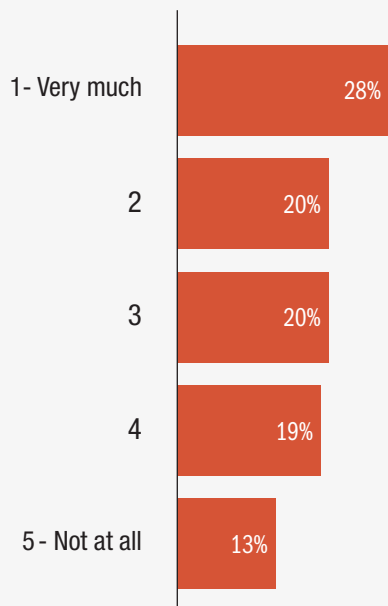
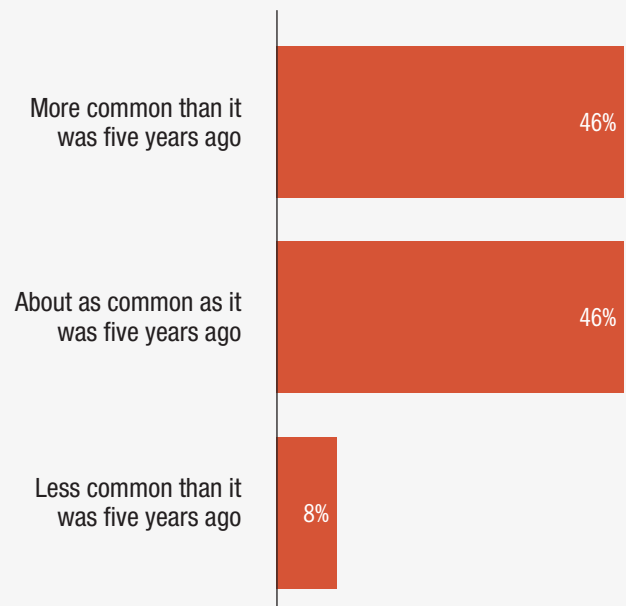


FIGURE 11
PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO SAY CONSIDERING STUDENTS TO BE “CUSTOMERS” IS MORE COMMON THAN FIVE YEARS AGO



Pathway to the Presidency

The student-affairs job ... is not getting any easier. The demands are exhausting emotionally and physically.

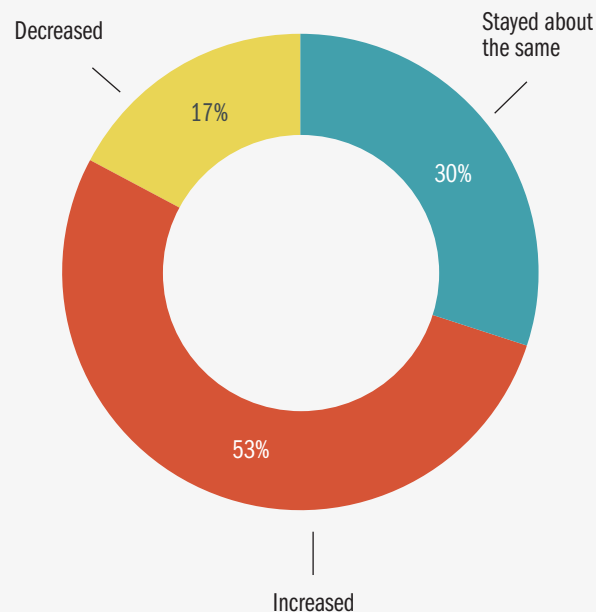


The survey indicates that student-affairs departments are getting bigger. More than half, 53 percent, of respondents said the size of the staff had grown over the past five years. (See Figure 12.)

The job, however, is not getting any easier. The demands are exhausting emotionally and physically, directors say. At Miami, the staff was dealing with too many late-night calls from campus police and residence hall assistants. In August, student affairs added a night shift. Two night managers are now on the campus from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. for emergencies.

“Now our staff doesn’t have to be up all day and all night,” Whitely says. “The jobs at times could lead to burnout, so we need to do everything we can to help our entry-level staff and mid-level staff.”

FIGURE 12
**THE SIZE OF THE STUDENT-AFFAIRS STAFF HAS INCREASED,
ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS**



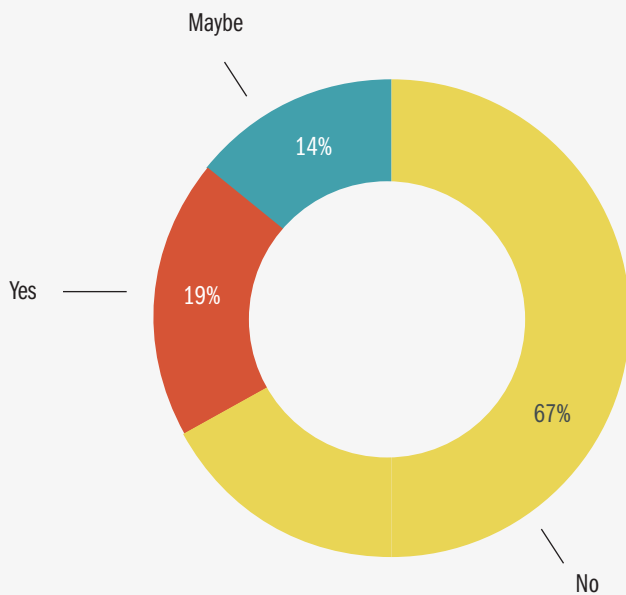
“The complexity of this work rivals the opportunities and challenges faced by a university president on a daily basis.”

While some in higher education argue that college presidents must come from the halls of academe, others say that student affairs is a perfect training ground. In the survey, 19 percent of the division leaders said they aspire to a presidency; 14 percent said they might consider it. (See Figure 13.)

Indeed, a growing number of student-affairs leaders are becoming presidents. Brian O. Hemphill, president of Radford University in Virginia, says his years in student affairs taught him to work with tight budgets, deal with student emergencies, coordinate building projects, engage with the community, and raise money.

“The complexity of this work rivals the opportunities and challenges faced by a university president on a daily basis,” he says.

FIGURE 13
STUDENT-AFFAIRS LEADERS WHO ASPIRE
TO BE PRESIDENT SOMEDAY



Conclusion

The issues facing student-affairs offices have intensified and become more complicated over the past decade.

The departments are being given more priority in strategic, long-term planning. They are taking steps to improve mental-health services. They're creating individualized student centers, hiring diversity officers, and trying to be inclusive and accepting of all forms of diversity. They're working with other departments in a more holistic way than ever before.

Higher-education experts say the complex needs and wants of students won't change any time soon. If anything, they might get more challenging.

Colleges, they say, have to keep chipping away at the obstacles and difficulties students face.

Student-affairs divisions, they predict, will play an even larger role in helping with retention, attainment, and success. Colleges will have to pay particular attention to the economically disadvantaged.

At the same time, the fiscal difficulties colleges face will continue to "bump up against the demographic issues," says Kruger.

He predicts that at some point, colleges will have no choice but to start moving money out of "traditional student affairs functions" and into the more critical ones.

"These will be hard choices, but necessary in the next decade as resources decline, while the issues facing students get more urgent and serious," he says.

Methodology

The results of *The Student-Centered University: Pressures and Challenges Faced by College Presidents and Student Affairs Leaders* are based on the responses of presidents and student-affairs leaders at colleges and universities. Huron Consulting Group, of Chicago, conducted the online survey for The Chronicle. The data collection took place in January 2017. Copyright © 2017.

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The Problem with Student-Centered Education

Student-centered learning is intended to promote a more inclusive environment and to democratize the classroom. It is a broad philosophy, but its fundamental principle is the belief that education should involve a partnership between student and educator. Further, it advocates that education should be personalized to meet students where they are, with curricula design and course structure based on their individualized learning preferences.

Such an approach is increasingly hailed as the gold standard in higher education and is ostensibly well-meaning. It embodies the idea that education, as a route to social mobility and desirable careers, should be accessible to as many people as possible. We have no argument with that view. And there may indeed be some value in student-centered learning if the practical constraints of delivering a personalized education — such as class sizes — are considered, particularly if students' ambitions align with the educational goals that deliver the best opportunity for their long-term growth, development, thinking, and citizenship. But these conditions are not often met in today's marketized mass higher education.

Many will contend that technology and online learning offer a solution to the personalization issue, giving students the ability to self-pace using asynchronous content or dynamic tests that adjust to prior mistakes. However, such hopes are often belied by the messy reality of how students actually engage with such content. As for the issue of education goals, universities have in essence given up trying to tell students what is good for them. Fueled by the shift towards student-centered learning, student satisfaction is widely accepted as the primary indicator of educational success. But this does undergraduates a disservice because student satisfaction bears no necessary relation to true educational objectives.

Take assessment, for example. Students find exams stressful, so we are told to reduce the number of exams. Neither do students like to read, so we are told to assign easier and shorter readings. Students find it hard to concentrate, so we are told to break down lectures into small chunks and intersperse activities in between. Students enjoy media content and are happy to engage with YouTube and social media, so we are told to incorporate more videos and make course material and assessments more creative and interactive. Some students don't like to speak in class, so we are told to make sure there are myriad ways students can participate without having to actually speak.

Such well-meaning educational initiatives — alongside grade inflation, flexible deadlines, warm language in feedback — deny students access to the type of educational experience that universities were designed for. They short-change students by appealing to their immediate wants and feelings rather than their potential for greatness, their capacity for reason, and their fundamental need to leave university better than when they arrived. The student-centered mindset has led to a dumbing-down of curricula and a constant pressure on educators to motivate students, rather than a pressure on students to take ownership of their own success and failure. This is because it appears mostly to have been adopted without a principled questioning of what a university education is for.

The result is that student-centered education leaves undergraduates in a state of constant busyness but also constant worry about the value of these low-stakes endeavors. Students complete more and more simple and straightforward tasks — worksheets, projects, quizzes and so on — without the opportunity to think about what they are doing or learning. It is no wonder they lack motivation: they are denied the life-affirming pride that derives from achieving something genuinely meaningful and built on hard work. And without critical feedback on the work they do undertake, students are not given the necessary guidance they need to improve. In this sense, meeting students where they are keeps them where they are.

A transformative educational experience is supposed to be the point of a university education. Students deserve opportunities for challenge so that they develop the necessary strength of mind and character to meet the myriad challenges they will inevitably face in the higher-stakes contexts of post-university life. Such strengths will also equip them potentially to rise above their personal and social circumstances and pursue the life they want.

If we decide that making courses less intellectually and emotionally demanding equates with making education accessible, that is an unkind assumption. We are in effect saying that students attending university lack the necessary ability to withstand an education that is intellectually and emotionally demanding. Students deserve to be taken seriously and to be seen as capable — both in terms of their capacity to improve and in their capability to find resolve against momentary unhappiness.

The guise of a student-centered education is also, at its core, dishonest. It tells students that they are uniquely skilled and uniquely talented — often touted as “empowering” their individuality. However, unless you are paying for a private tutor, education takes place in groups alongside several — if not several hundred — others. Moreover, in an era of mass higher education, staff-to-student ratios are falling rather than rising. There is no way that an individual educator can tailor lessons or assessments to each individual student’s needs and preferences.

Nor should they. Endorsing the perspective that each student should be treated as unique and offered personalized accommodations would fail to push them to develop a healthier mindset that connects self with surroundings. Specifically, if part of a university education is about preparing students for post-university life, they must begin to recognize that their uniqueness is situated in a shared environment that requires adjusting the self to the situation and not the other way around.

We should not disempower students by telling them to expect the problems they face to be resolved by the people around them recognizing and catering to their needs. Doing so takes away individual agency and results in a sense of entitlement generally not viewed positively by employers, partners, family, friends, or colleagues. We should empower students by motivating self-efficacy and self-regulation, rather than fostering an approach to social life where expectation leads to passivity and victimhood.

Furthermore, the push for a student-centered education seeks to position students as equals in the classroom, such that their individual desires should be given equal weight with the expertise of the educator in determining what occurs in their courses. While designed to promote inclusivity through removing all presence of a privileged voice, such misguided democratization once again harms students. Students need an appreciation and respect for accumulated knowledge, and instilling it does not entail a misuse of power in the classroom. There will always be situations in life where power is shared unequally, but that does not necessarily mean that something unjust is taking place. Yet many educators now encounter students who feel insulted, offended, or threatened when their ideas are disputed or their essays corrected.

Similarly, invoking “lived experience” as the correct lens through which to process information means that subjective opinions are given the same, if not greater, weight as facts and established theory in classroom discourse. A push to see beyond one’s own narrow viewpoint is interpreted as a critique of self, rather than an intellectual exercise designed to promote critical evaluation.

We don’t mean to imply that students should not be given the opportunity to question what they are being taught or to disagree with their instructors. In fact, we encourage this. But it is most beneficial when students are open to learning that their perspective might not be correct and that others, with many years of experience, might know more than they do as novices.

Taking a student seriously is to not pander to their ego or, worse, to falsely flatter them in pursuit of their approval or in fear of their complaints. Taking them seriously means treating them as capable of receiving genuine feedback about their limitations, in an effort to see them improve.

They must be taught how to appropriately and effectively debate controversial topics and engage with those with whom they disagree, working through the discomfort of having their perspectives challenged. Engagement in society sometimes requires individual compromise to larger group goals and the recognition that one's unique position might not always be supported by others. The problem is that students unchallenged in their assumptions about their own uniqueness and value will be ill-equipped to respond appropriately within environments that require this recognition.

We all lose when educators can no longer assist students in developing an understanding of citizenship and respect of expertise. Would any of us want to live in the high-rise building designed by the architect whose professor was told that they could not correct a student's error? Would any of us want medical care from the physician who decided that the best medical school was the one that provided its students with the least rigorous course load?

Increasingly, businesses are saddled with new employees who do not want to do entry-level work, who feel that any negative feedback is insulting, who do not respect the need to put in hard work to move up the hierarchy, and who do not respect the knowledge of those with many more years of work experience. Similarly, managerial training is increasingly becoming an exercise in developing skills to manage employees' self-esteem instead of to develop them through challenge. These situations exist because universities are failing to do their job in providing students with a demanding education that would foster self-motivation and risk-taking.

If the expertise and guidance of an educator were not necessary, students would be able to educate themselves with the myriad resources available today (not least by reading books). Rather than worrying about obfuscating the power dynamics between a lecturer and students, we should embrace the experience, knowledge and range of perspectives that inform educators' practice. We should set the stage for students to accept failure and confront personal shortcomings on a path of continued self-growth, valuing the long-term gains that derive from effortful engagement with what is hard.

It is also important to recognize that part of the shift towards student-centered education is not driven by a desire to promote inclusivity per se but to disguise the desire simply to get students through university. Graduation, not education, is the desired consumer outcome at the myriad “pay-for-a-degree” institutions that compete for the many students whose pursuit of a university education is motivated solely by a perception that it is necessary even to land entry-level jobs, let alone promotions. That perception – promoted by employers and universities alike – leads students to see higher education as a chore: a stumbling block or a checkbox on the way to something else. They are unwilling to put in the necessary work and want the easiest path to recognition.

When students’ behaviors and goals are in conflict with what is necessary for the learning that underlies a transformative education, it is especially important to turn to the educators rather than the students for direction. And even when students have the right goals for their education, it is short-sighted at best to expect them to know how to design and structure curricula, syllabuses, and assessments. At worst, it is cruel. In addition to their deep knowledge of their disciplines, most university educators also have years of experience of developing pedagogical techniques that effectively educate. It is incongruous to expect that students would have more — or more accurate — knowledge of how their educational experience should be structured.

When we adopt a student-centered educational philosophy, irrespective of how well-meaning we may be, we are short-changing students. Rather than succeeding in empowering them, we fail to equip them with the skills to deal with the challenges they will invariably

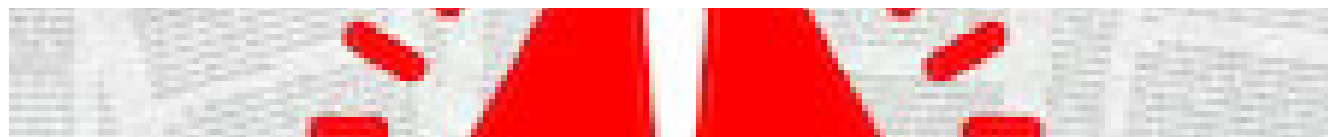
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