Educational Partner - Research Spotlight

3005 - Examining the Landscape of Transfer Programs: Results from the National Survey of Transfer Student Initiatives

Matriculation Trends and Issues, Transition Programs and Services

Promoting a smooth transition for transfer students requires an understanding of how transfer programs are structured and the implications these initiatives have for students' transitions. This session will feature evidence from the inaugural administration of the National Survey of Transfer Student Initiatives, which captured information about institutional priorities and practices related to supporting transfer/transfer-intending students and campus wide initiatives regarding transfer.

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Results from the National Survey of Transfer Student Initiatives

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National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students
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Agenda

1. Overview of transfer and transitions

2. Presentation of findings from NSTSI

3. Discussion of practices, trends, and innovations among transfer student initiatives and opportunities and obstacles associated with support

Why Attend to Transitions?

- Great attention given to the challenges of entering higher education (e.g., Yorke 1999, Tinto, 2000; Nutt et al 2005).

- Poor transition can lead to negative student experience, failing and withdrawing (Upcraft & Gardner et. al.,1989)

- Efforts to plug leaks in the academic pipeline began with an attention to transition points, including throughout the transfer pipeline

Transfer Transitions

- Institutional neglect of transfer students is common (Tobolowsky & Cox, 2012)

- Transfer students face:
  - Issues associated with transfer and applicability of credits
  - Forging social and academic connections
  - Navigating campus culture
  - Maintaining motivation and focus toward academic goals

Transfer Transitions

- Common institutional strategies:
  - Supplemental instruction
  - Transfer orientation
  - Recruitment
  - Developmental education
  - Learning communities
  - Advising
  - Peer mentors
  - Assessment

Transfer Transitions

- Common systemic strategies associated with transfer:
  - Transfer centers
  - Articulation agreements
  - Partnerships
  - Course alignment
  - Dual, or concurrent, enrollment
  - Tuition guarantee

Pause and Reflect

1. What transfer initiatives do you have on your campus? What are the objectives for these programs?

2. How are your institution's policies, programs, and practices for student success shaping transfer students' expectations and transitions?

2021 National Survey of Transfer Student Initiatives (NSTSI)

- Institution-/program-level survey

- Online instrument
  - General info about institutional attention to transfer and transfer-intending students
  - Extended modules on academic advising, orientation, and college student/transfer student success courses

- NSTSI is part of a larger mixed-methods project
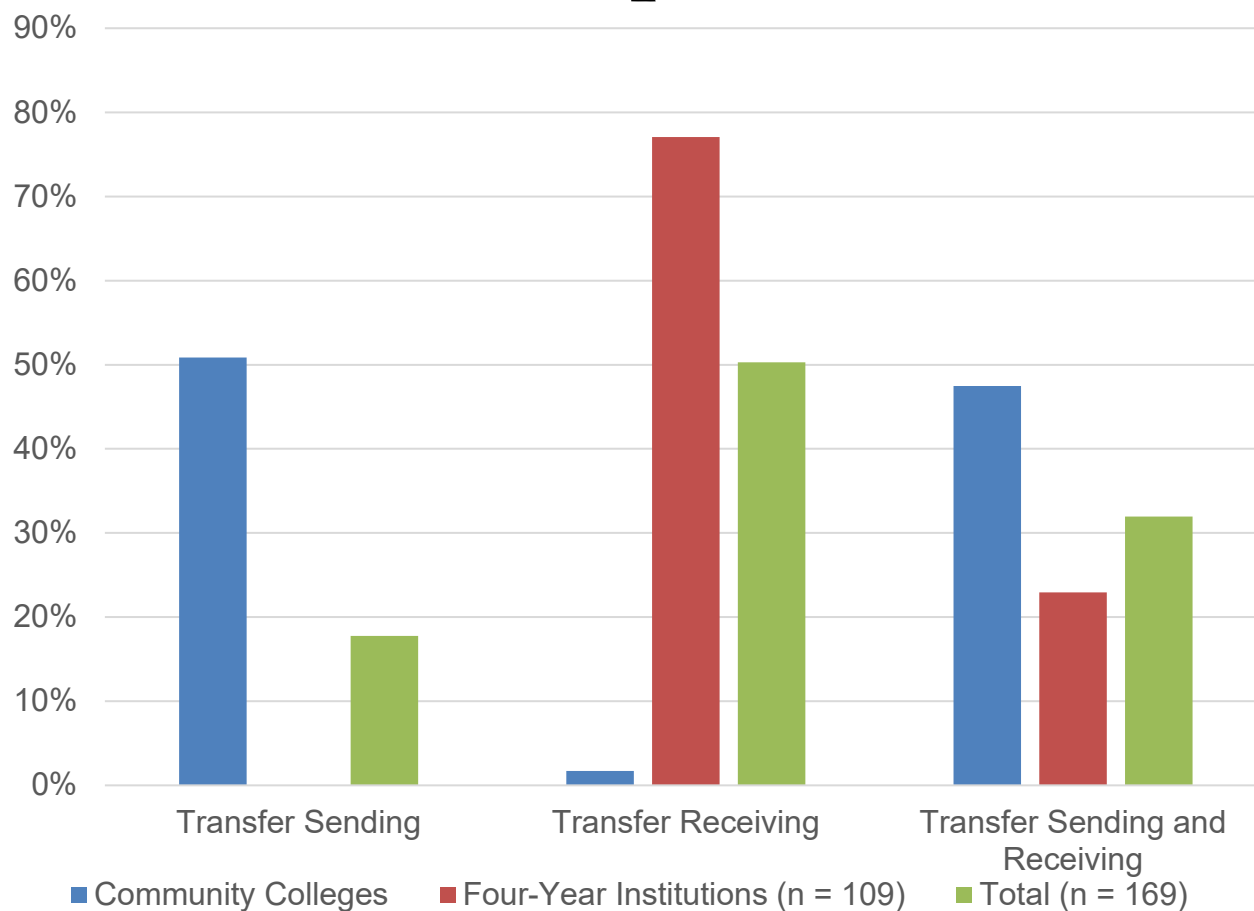 - Interviews with transfer personnel will be conducted in Spring 2022

2021 NSTSI Objectives

- Objectives:
  - To determine what academic and social support services institutions offer to transfer and transfer-intending students
  - To understand the most prevalent and salient transfer-specific issues institutional agents report transfers face
  - To explore the role that transfer programs play in students' transitions
  - To understand the ways in which institutions do or do not promote a transfer receptive culture (Jain et al., 2011)

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Overview of the 2021 NSTSI: Sample

- 169 campuses participated, including 110 4-year institutions and 59 community colleges
  - Private four-year institutions overrepresented
  - Majority of the sample (55.6%) are institutions with enrollment of <1,000 or 1,000-4,999
  - MSIs underrepresented
    - 1 HBCU
    - 22 HSIs

- 110 institutions reported offering at least one transfer initiative

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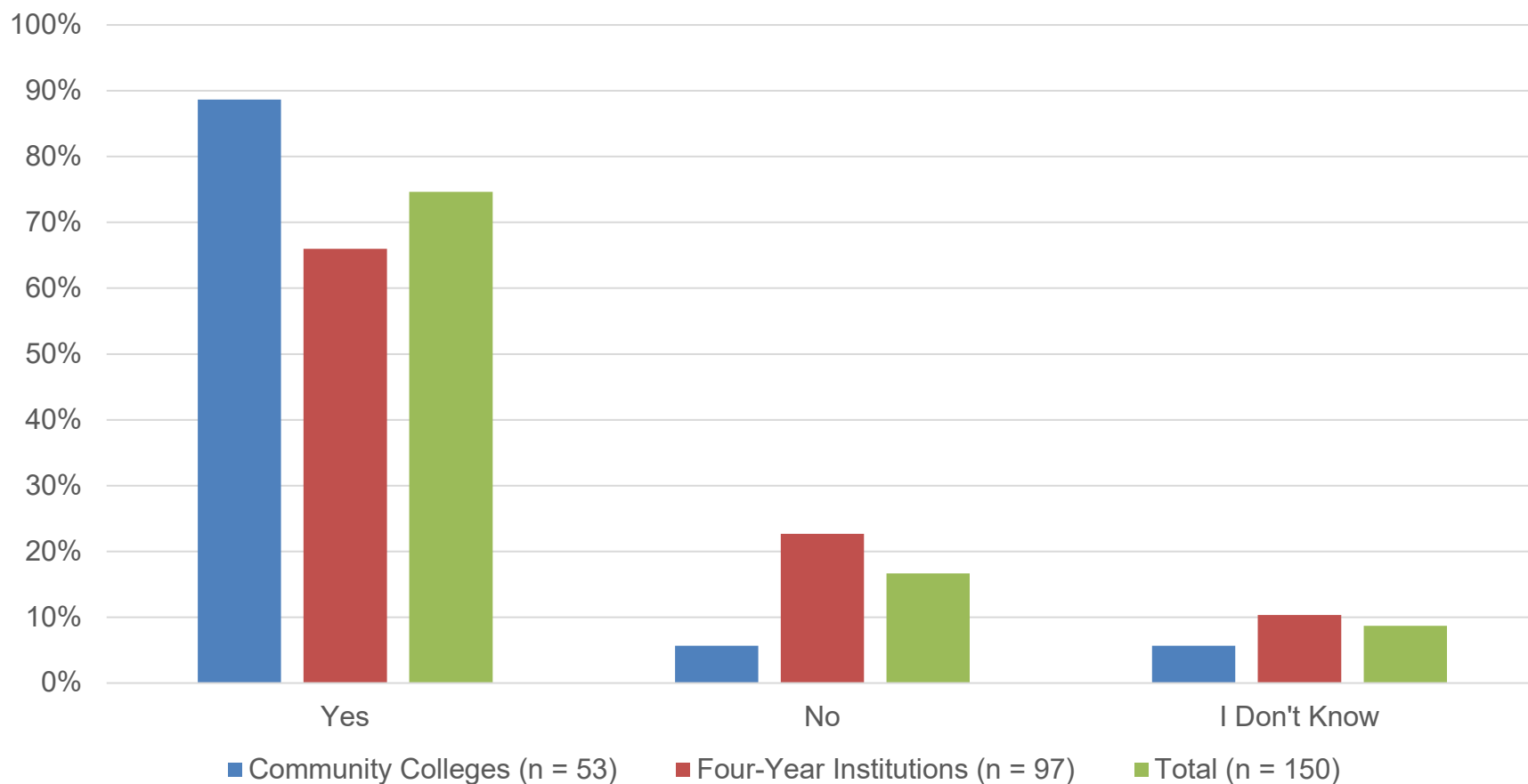# Results from 2021 NSTSI: Institutional Descriptions

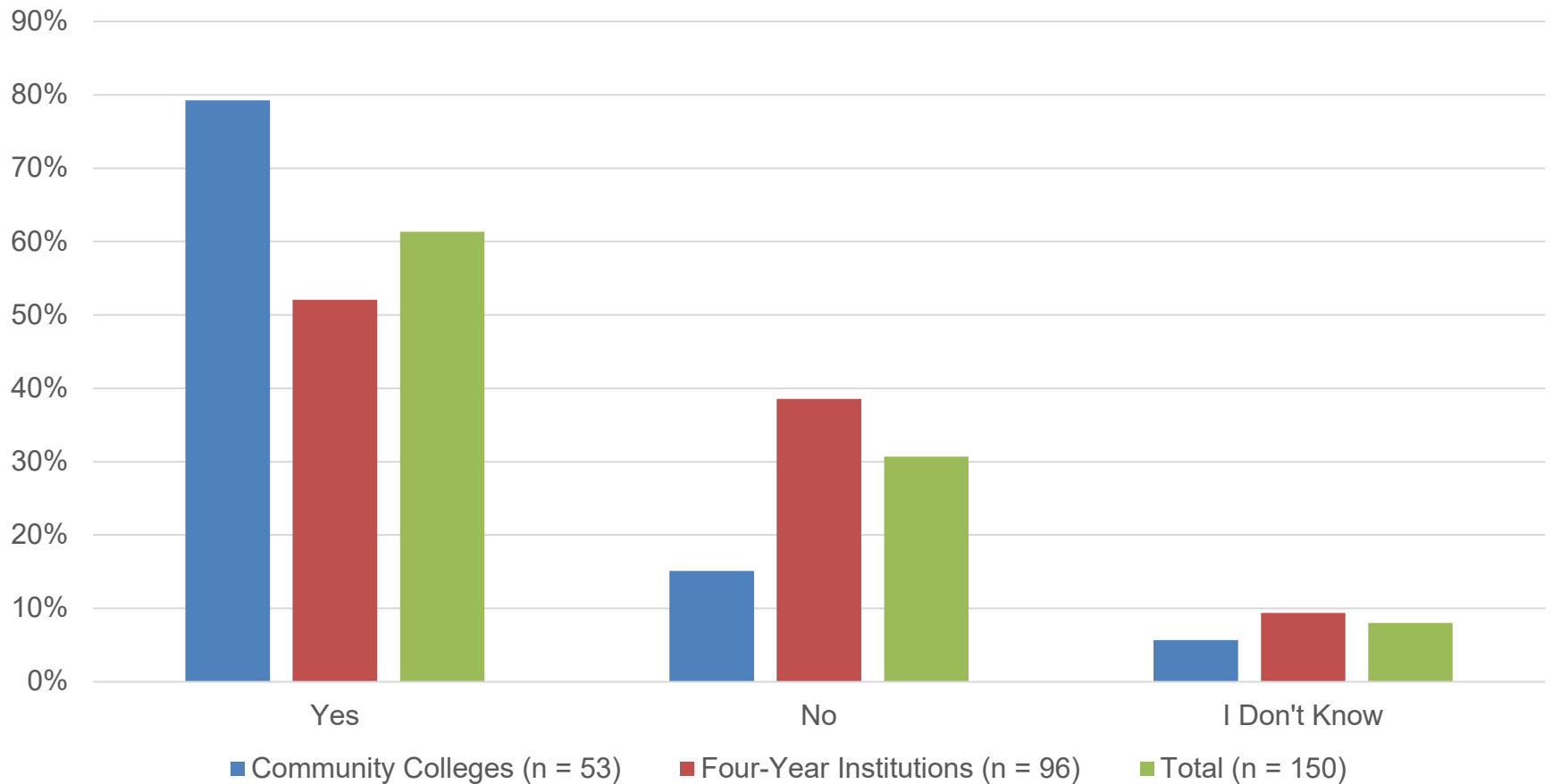# Results from 2021 NSTSI: Institutional Descriptions

- Discuss:
  - What does it mean to be a transfer sending institution?
    - Transfer receiving?
    - Both receiving and sending?

Results from 2021 NSTSI: Transfers in Institutional Strategic Plans

Results from 2021 NSTSI: Equity and Transfer

Transfers Represent Diverse Backgrounds and Experiences

- "Transfer students are not a homogeneous population...when you disaggregate the data, you find there are different sub-groups, so one must consider tailoring resource support to different student needs...it is not one-size fits all."

    – Associate Provost, four-year institution

Pause and Reflect

- Discuss:
  - Does your institution have specific goals associated with equity and transfer?
    - If so, what are these?
    - If not, what goals would you create?

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Results from 2021 NSTSI: Initiatives for Transfer
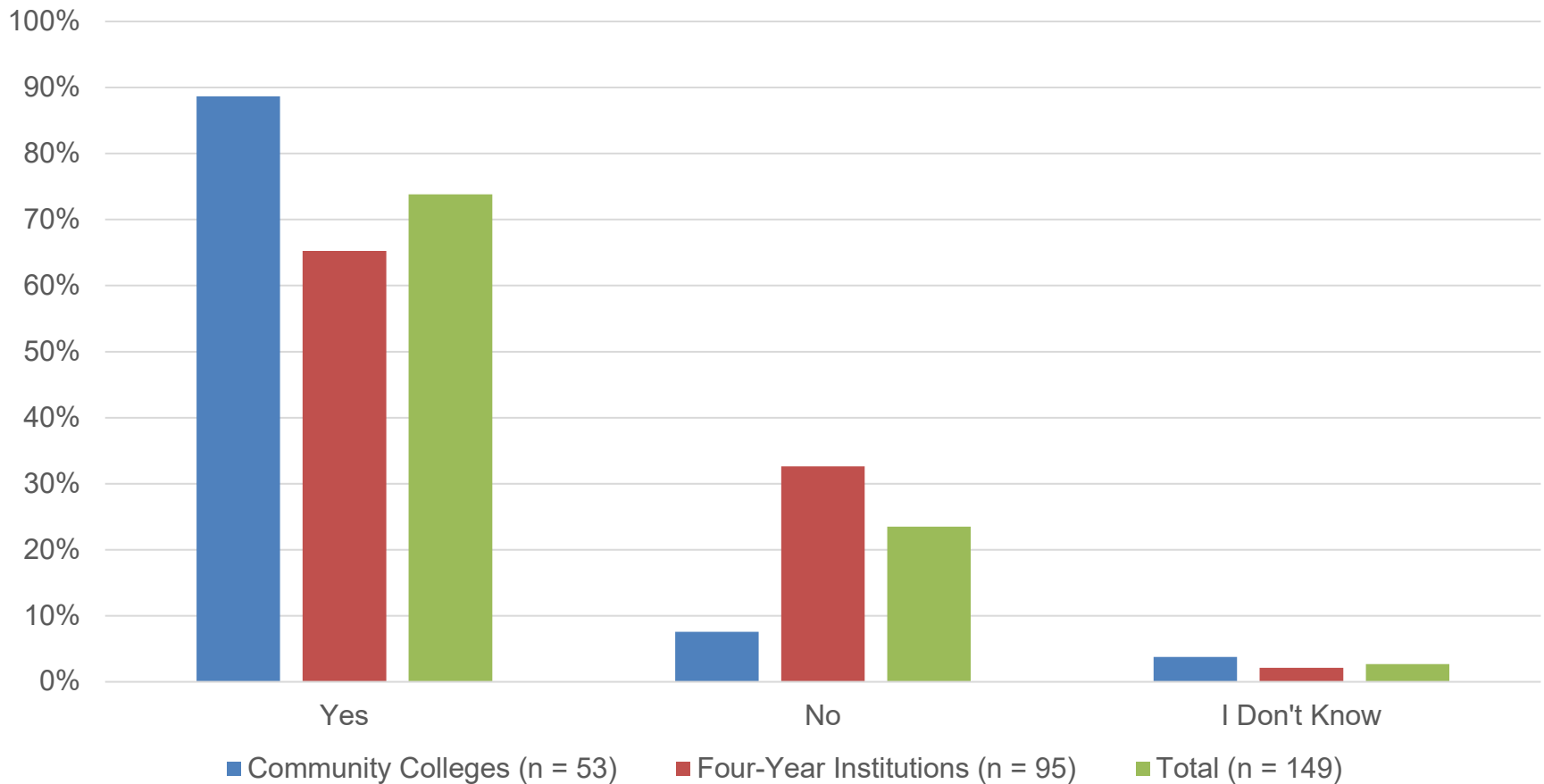
Results from 2021 NSTSI: Reasons for Not Offering Transfer Initiatives

Reason	Overall % (n = 38)
Lack of expertise	18.42
Lack of funding	36.84
Lack of staff or faculty buy-in	28.95
Limited time	34.21
Not an institutional priority	34.21
Not a large enough population of transfer/transfer-intending students	36.84

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Insufficient Human Resources
Not a Priority

- "We face challenges recruiting faculty to work on cross-institutional and state-level work related to course development and curricular pathways due to constraints on faculty's time and efforts."
  - Participant at a transfer-receiving four-year
- "Faculty mindset around supporting transfer students and creating transfer-friendly policies is lacking. Senior leadership would love to grow transfer support and student-facing staff would love to see transfer support increase, but faculty barrier is very real."
  - Participant at a transfer receiving four-year

Results from 2021 NSTSI: Transfer Initiatives

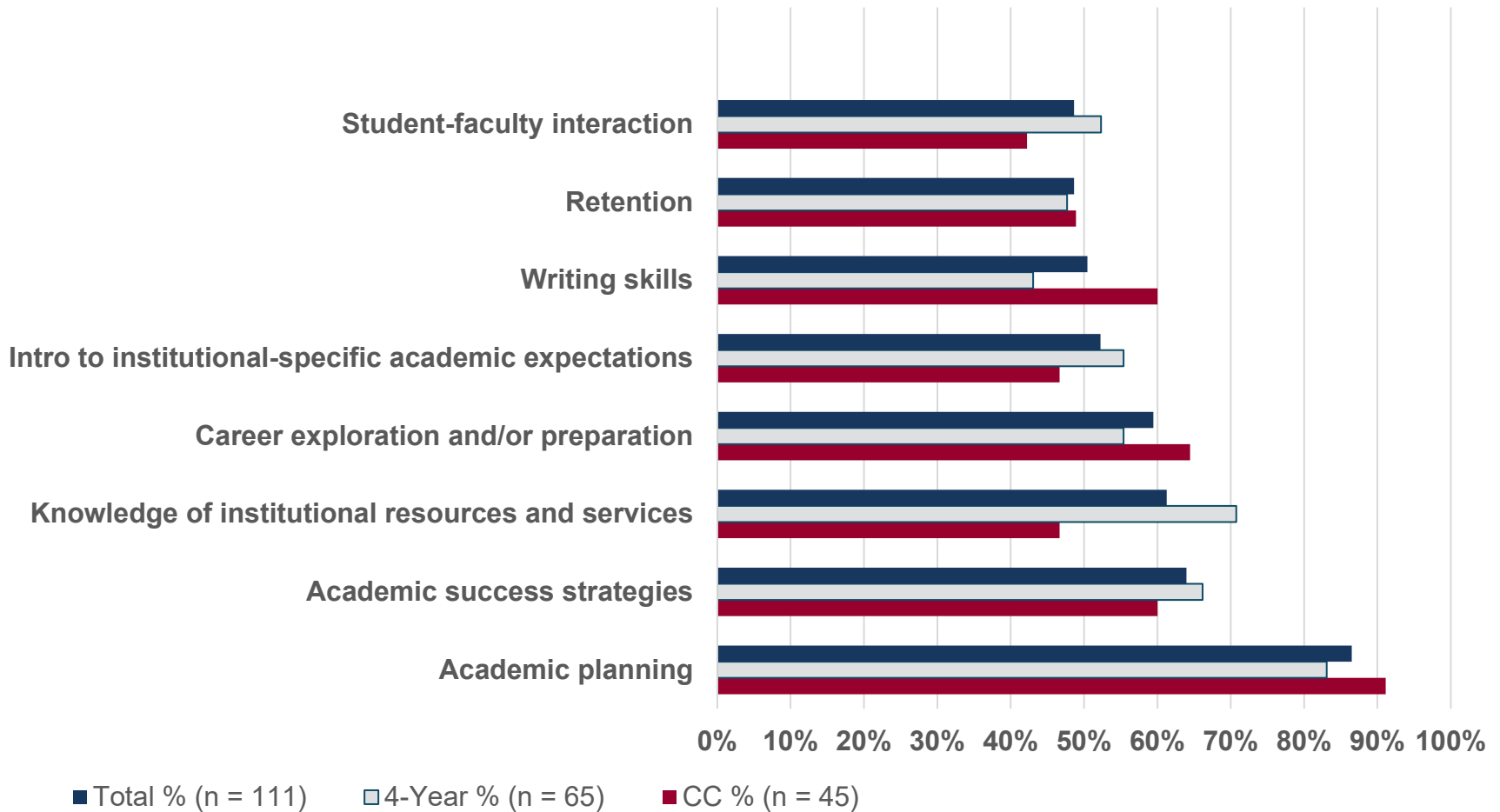| Transfer-Specific Initiatives	CC (n = 44)	4-Year (n = 65)	Overall % (n = 111)
Guided pathways	84.09	47.69	62.16
Financial aid	63.64	67.69	65.77
Institution-wide orientation	52.27	76.92	66.67
Standardized policies for awarding of transfer credit	59.09	73.85	67.57
Academic program maps	75.56	61.54	67.57
Informational sessions about navigating transfer	81.82	64.62	71.17
Articulation and/or admissions agreements	93.18	84.62	87.39
Academic advising	91.11	89.23	90.09

Financial Aid Issues

- "[The greatest issue facing transfers is] lack of scholarships for part-time transfer students."
  - Participant at a transfer-receiving four-year
- "Scholarships/aid is probably the biggest resource issue we have with respect to transfer-in students."
  - Participant at a transfer-receiving four-year
- "4-year schools do not understand the community college student. They don't do enough on financial aid (showing the student they can afford the school)."
  - Participant at a transfer-sending community college

Transfer Credit Barriers

- "Academic plans of study not designed with transfer students in mind."
  - Participant at a transfer-receiving four-year

- "Our individualized, interdisciplinary outcomes-based approach to degree planning in major, minor and general education provides great flexibility for transfer students -- especially for maximizing credit transfer and prior learning assessment -- but the lack of traditional structure can be confusing to students transferring from more traditional institutions."
  - Participant at a transfer-receiving four-year

- "So much transfer credit that we cannot accept it all per our accreditor which requires at least 1 year taken at degree-granting institution."
  - Participant at a transfer-receiving four-year

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Results from 2021 NSTSI: Objectives Used to Meet Initiatives

Chart showing objectives with bars for Total % (n = 111), 4-Year % (n = 65), and CC % (n = 45):

- Student-faculty interaction
- Retention
- Writing skills
- Intro to institutional-specific academic expectations
- Career exploration and/or preparation
- Knowledge of institutional resources and services
- Academic success strategies
- Academic planning

X-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Legend: ■ Total % (n = 111)   ▫ 4-Year % (n = 65)   ■ CC % (n = 45)

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Transfer Sense of Belonging

- "Our mid-academic year transfer students (those coming in January) often struggle because they missed out on the social connections that often occur in the fall semester. They see other peers seemingly already settled at the university and feel lost and unsure of how or who to ask for help."
  - Participant at a transfer-receiving four-year

Results from 2021 NSTSI

- Transfer receptive culture:
  - "Institutional commitment by a four-year college or university to provide the support needed for students to transfer successfully—that is, to navigate the community college, take the appropriate coursework, apply, enroll, and successfully earn a baccalaureate degree in a timely manner" (Jain et al., 2011)

Results from 2021 NSTSI

- Elements of transfer receptive culture (Jain et al., 2011):
    - Pretransfer:
        1. Establish the transfer of students, especially nontraditional, first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students, as a high institutional priority that ensures stable accessibility, retention, and graduation
        2. Provide outreach and resources that focus on the specific needs of transfer students while complimenting the community college mission of transfer

Results from 2021 NSTSI

- Elements of transfer receptive culture (Jain et al., 2011):
  - Post-transfer:
    - 3. Offer financial and academic support through distinct opportunities for nontraditional-reentry transfer students where they are stimulated to achieve at high academic levels
    - 4. Acknowledge the lived experiences that students bring and the intersectionality between community and family; and
    - 4. Create an appropriate and organic framework from which to assess, evaluate, and enhance transfer-receptive programs and initiatives that can lead to further scholarship on transfer students

Results from 2021 NSTSI: Administrative Issues

	High Commitment	Low Commitment
Highest reported	Intra-institutional coordination (45.50)	Inadequate staffing (65.62)
Lowest reported	Lack of institutional commitment (29.04)	Lack of information about transfers' needs (45.58)

Results from 2021 NSTSI:
Student Issues

	High Commitment	Low Commitment
Highest reported	Financial aid (51.99)	Social connections and sense of belonging (54.45)
Lowest reported	Academic advising (32.04)	Basic needs insecurity (39.17)

Results from 2021 NSTSI

- Questions for discussion:
  - Which of these issues do you see on your campus?
  - How has COVID impacted the issues that you see on your campus?
  - How has short- and long-term planning efforts been impacted?

Questions?

Thank you!

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