

Promoting Educational Equity for Native American NDSU students: Needs assessment results

RAMONA DANIELSON, PHD

NDSU'S ANNUAL FACULTY & ACADEMIC STAFF CONFERENCE

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NDSU Land Acknowledgement

https://www.ndsu.edu/inclusioncouncil/native_american_initiatives/

We collectively acknowledge that we gather at NDSU, a land grant institution, on the traditional lands of the Oceti Sakowin (Dakota, Lakota, Nakoda) and Anishinaabe Peoples in addition to many diverse Indigenous Peoples still connected to these lands. We honor with gratitude Mother Earth and the Indigenous Peoples who have walked with her throughout generations. We will continue to learn how to live in unity with Mother Earth and build strong, mutually beneficial, trusting relationships with Indigenous Peoples of our region.



Beyond Land Acknowledgment
<https://nativegov.org/beyond-land-acknowledgment/>



Native American students in higher education

- ▶ Tribal students are likely to experience repeated misrepresentation and/or tokenism in classrooms.
- ▶ There are few indigenous faculty or staff to seek out for support or mentoring.
- ▶ Graduation rate gap between tribal and white students is large.
- ▶ The mainstream educational contexts of most colleges and universities today do not meet the needs of Tribal students.

Native American students at NDSU

- ▶ 8.8% of children 0-18 in ND in 2021 were Native American “alone”
- ▶ Less than 1% of NDSU’s enrollment from 2014-2019
 - ▶ ~250 Indigenous students AY2021-2022 (identifying “alone” or in combination)
- ▶ Graduation rates among cohorts has been persistently low

Table 1: Enrollment, retention, and graduation history at NDSU for American Indian/Alaskan Native (AI/AN) students						
Enrollment	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019
AI/AN	0.74%	0.76%	0.82%	0.71%	0.67%	0.66%
Retention	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	
AI/AN	53.8%	78.9%	57.1%	20.0%	87.5%	
Graduation	2009 cohort	2010 cohort	2011 cohort	2012 cohort	2013 cohort	
AI/AN	36.4%	36.4%	27.3%	37.5%	25.0%	

USDA New Beginnings > Grant 1 Goal: To create an institutional framework that will not only offer Tribal students the opportunities of higher education, but provide a holistic support system to ensure their success.

- ▶ Objective 1: Assessment of Native American student needs, internal deficits in awareness, support structure
- ▶ Objective 2: Attract and recruit tribal students
- ▶ Objective 3: Increase tribal students' retention, persistence, graduation and success rate
- ▶ Objective 4: Disseminate and promote program to tribal stakeholders

USDA New Beginnings > Grant 2 Goal: To increase the enrollment, retention, and graduation and address the post-secondary needs of a growing population of Tribal learners from both rural and urban settings

- ▶ Objective 1: Increase enrollment, retention, graduation of Tribal students
- ▶ Objective 2: Develop institutional environment to support Tribal student retention, and graduation
- ▶ Objective 3: Create an inclusive, welcoming, educated, and responsive campus community
- ▶ Objective 4: Develop a comprehensive Tribal Students Care Team Advising/Coaching Model



Internal Needs Assessment Methodology: Primary Data Collection and Secondary Analysis

- ▶ 4 parts to needs assessment primary data collection:

NDSU IRB approval as “Exempt” (Category 2)

- ▶ Survey of Native American NDSU students, N=35 (out of ~250)
- ▶ Survey of NDSU Faculty, Staff, and Administrators, N=315 (shared with whole listserv)
- ▶ Key informant interviews, N=5
- ▶ ND Native American Essential Understandings Training Evaluation: May 2021, N=20; April 2022, N=30

- ▶ Secondary analysis

- ▶ Annotated bibliographies
- ▶ Scan of Native American services at other institutions
- ▶ Secondary data analysis
- ▶ Asset mapping

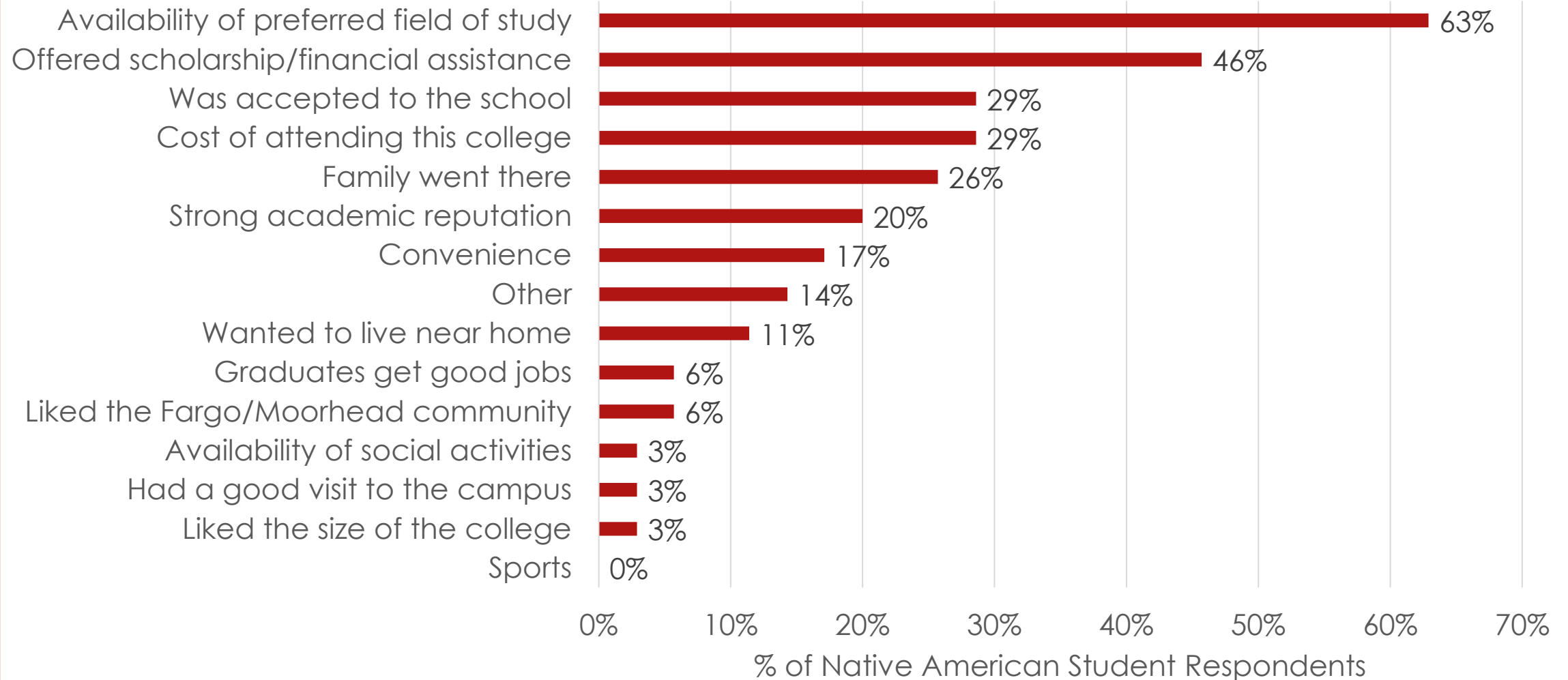


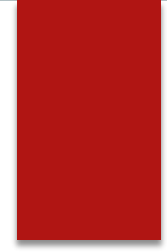
What survey asked about

- ▶ Reasons for choosing NDSU
- ▶ Thoughts of leaving NDSU
- ▶ Top 3 factors for helping NDSU Native American students graduate
- ▶ What NDSU Native American students say can help them be successful in higher education
- ▶ FSA's thoughts on reasons Native American students started at NDSU but did not graduate
- ▶ Rating of knowledge of FSA and general student body about Native American topics
- ▶ What Native American students wished the FSA and NDSU student body would know
- ▶ What FSA wished they knew
- ▶ Experiences with racism

Students: Reasons for Choosing NDSU

Native American NDSU Students' Reasons for Choosing NDSU



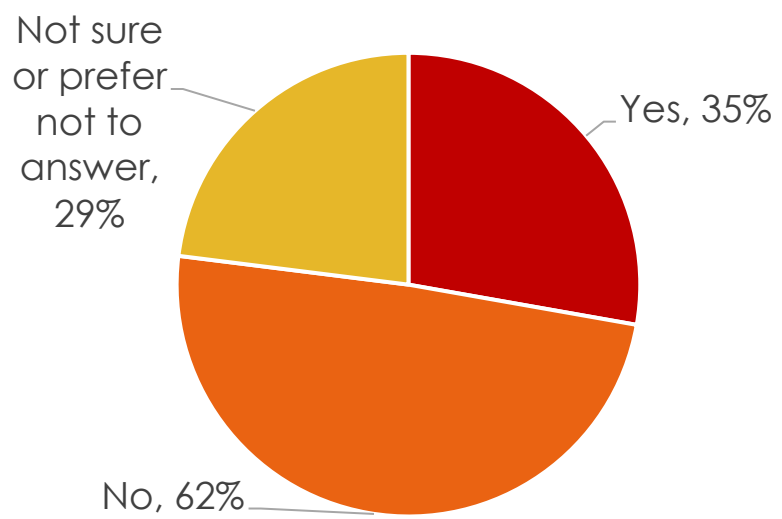


Students: Thoughts of Leaving NDSU

“I truthfully feel no anger against the general population here. It's just that they have lacked the experience to encounter diversity much in their lives.”

“School's lack of accountability and action was a major red flag that minorities aren't accepted here.”

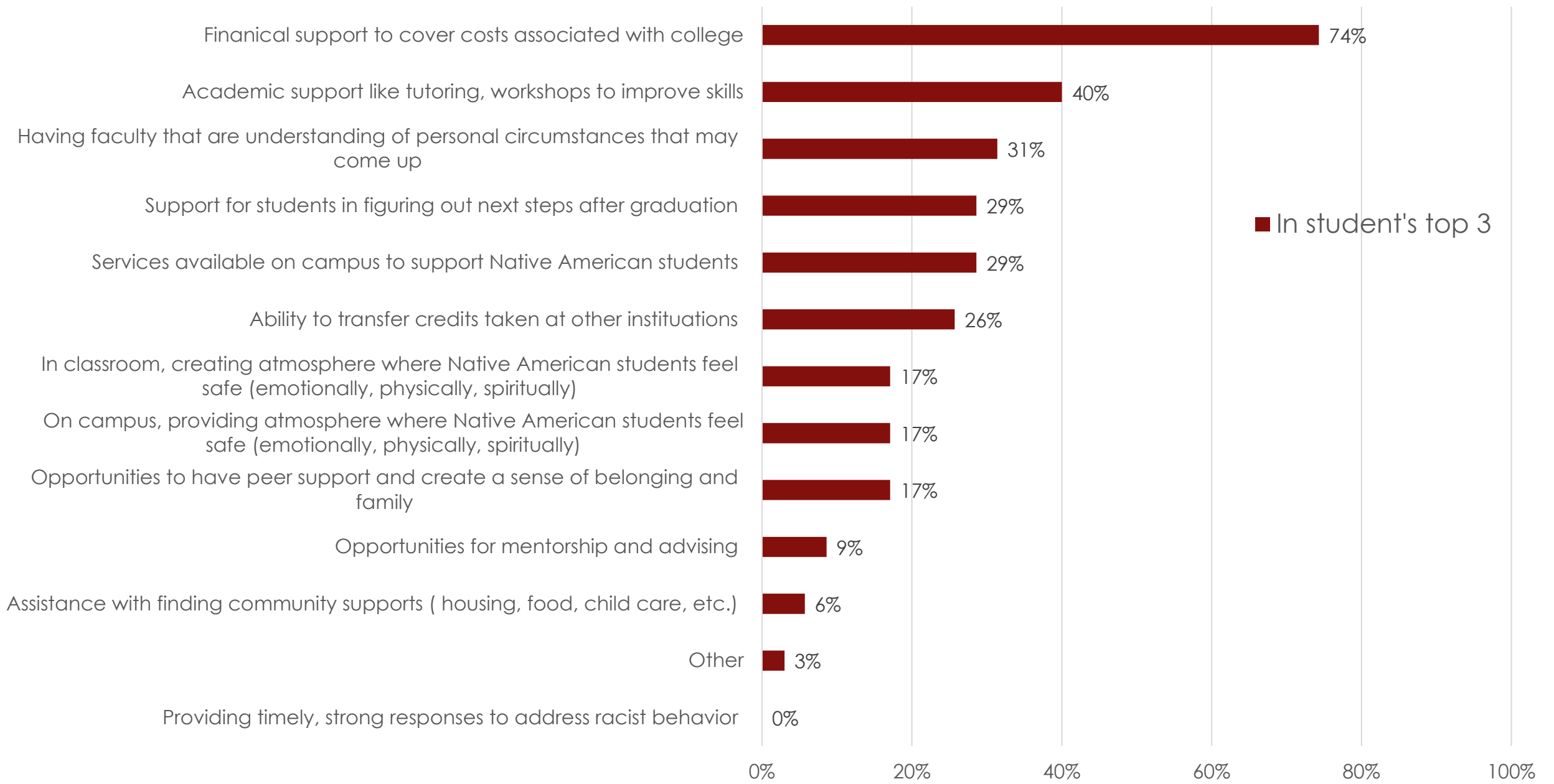
Whether student has thought about leaving NDSU



Financial obstacles, lack of support from advisor and/or professors, cultural insensitivity, racism, lack of diversity, campus climate

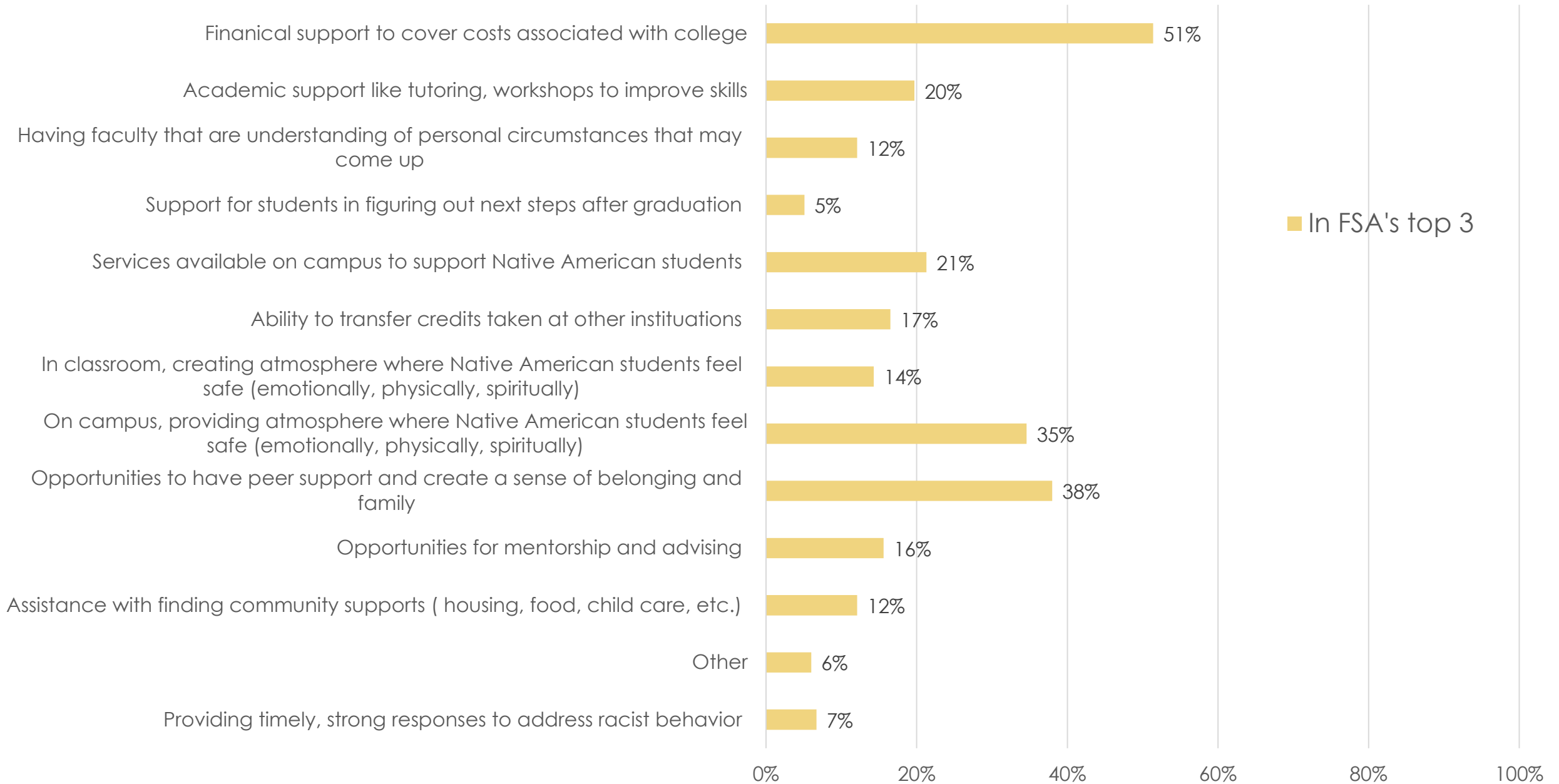


Factors Ranked as "Top 3 Factors" for Helping Native American NDSU Students Graduate: Native American Student Respondents

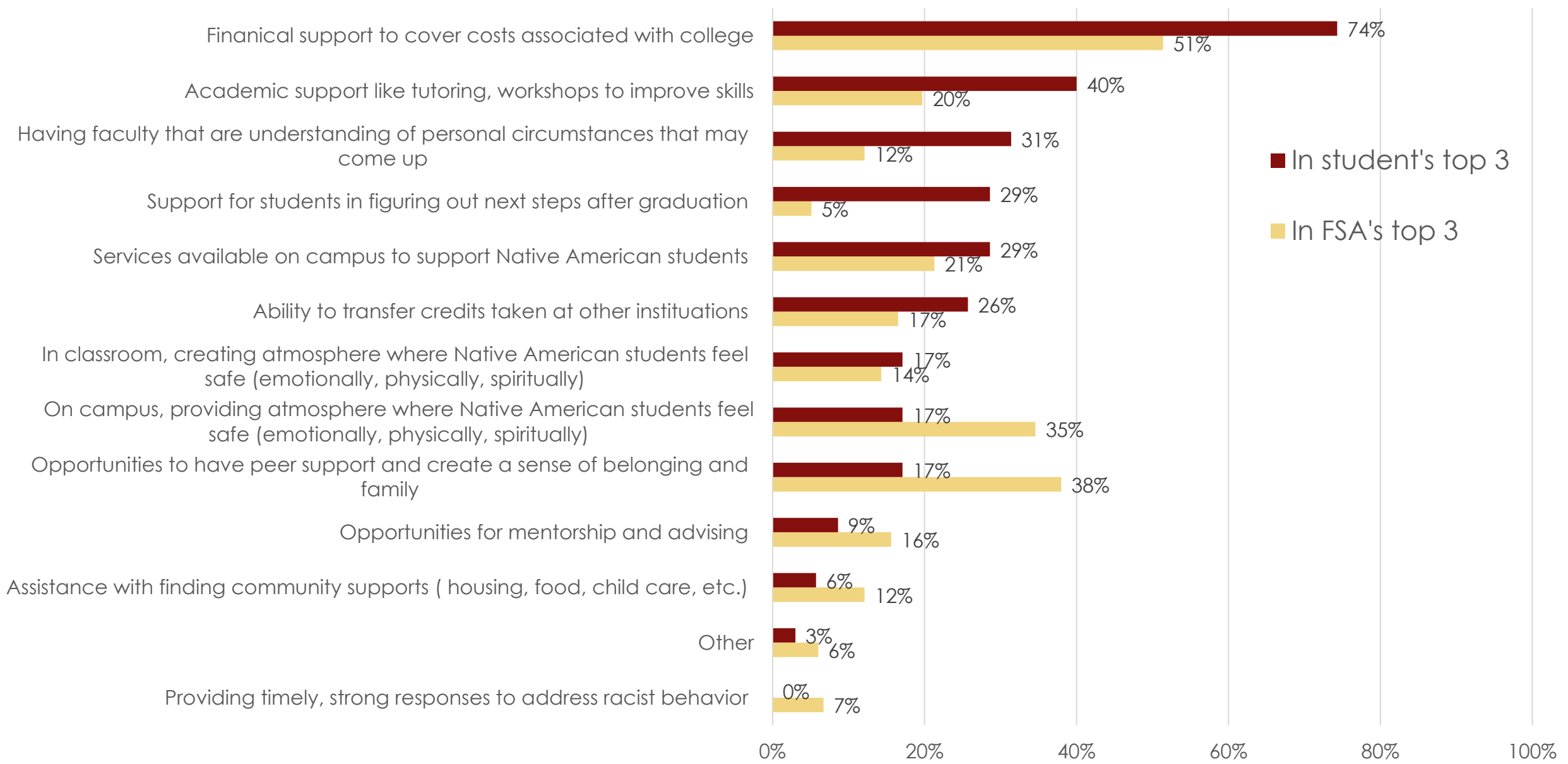





Factors Ranked as "Top 3 Factors" for Helping Native American NDSU Students Graduate: Faculty, Staff, Administration (FSA) Respondents



Comparison of Factors Ranked as "Top 3 Factors" for Helping Native American NDSU Students Graduate: Native American Student Respondents and Faculty, Staff, Administration (FSA) Respondents





“I needed to be completely online for my program because I have a family to support and needed to be able to find a flexible schedule. My adviser and instructors ... have been wonderful in providing great online experiences and working with me as an online student.”

“Joining student organizations has really helped me blossom into the person I am today and has made my college experience immensely more enjoyable.”

Students: What helps them be successful



- ▶ Having professors who are understanding and knowledgeable about meeting their needs academically and personally
- ▶ Having the ability to focus on school without having to stress about money
- ▶ Creating study habits, such as completing homework and time management
- ▶ Having mentorship, extracurricular, and leadership opportunities
- ▶ Feeling safe

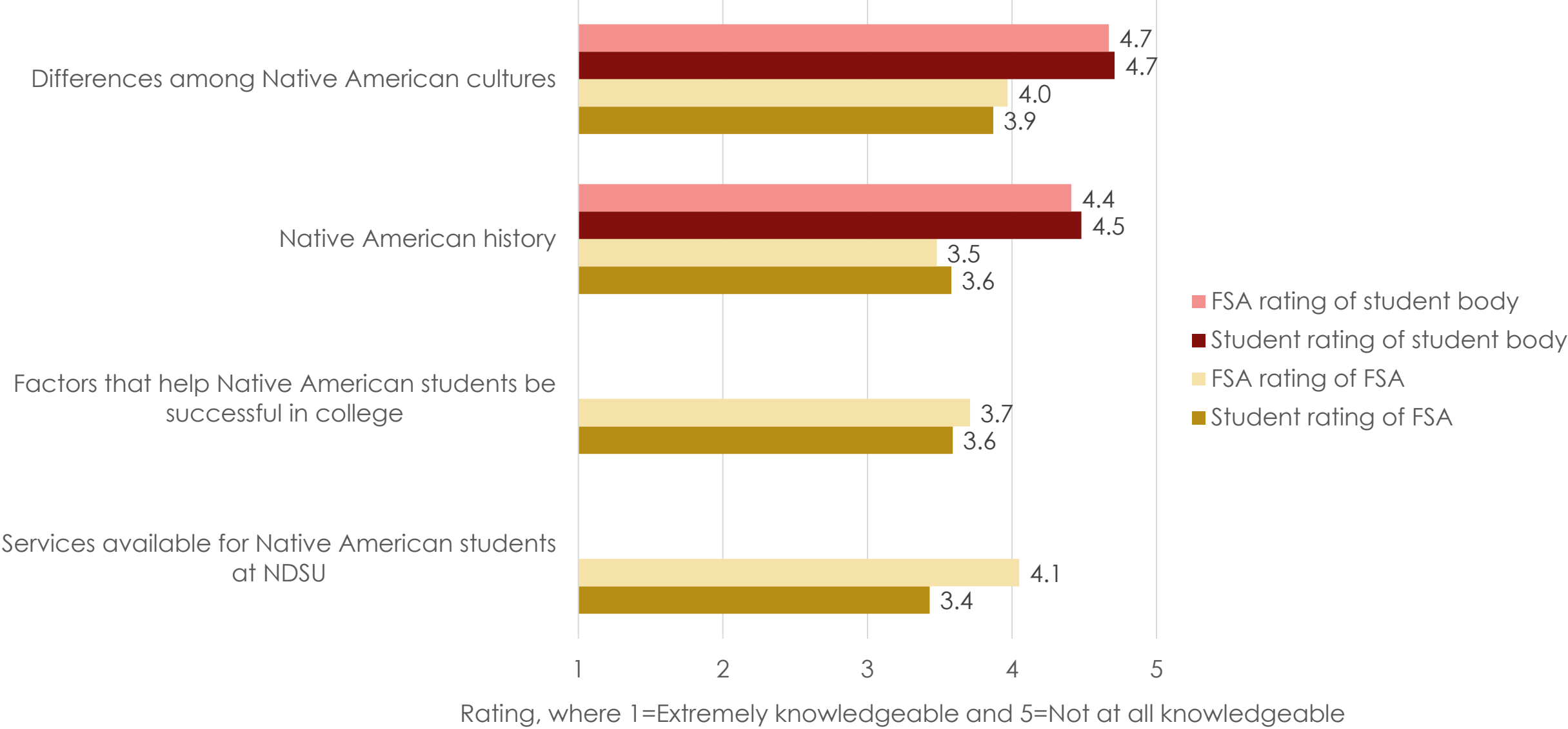


FSA ideas on reasons for Native American students starting and not graduating from NDSU

- ▶ Unwelcoming campus culture
- ▶ “The feeling of isolation or disconnect from their culture, family, people, ceremonies, homelands.”
- ▶ “Lack of community support, lack of faculty/administrative understanding of cultural background, values, and heritage”
- ▶ Financial issues
- ▶ “Money has been a big factor for some of my students. I recall one Native American woman who held a full-time job, had four children, and had difficulty making it to class because she was so tired.”
- ▶ The need for affordable childcare
- ▶ Racism that is found/brought up on campus and the campus/classroom hostility that comes with it.

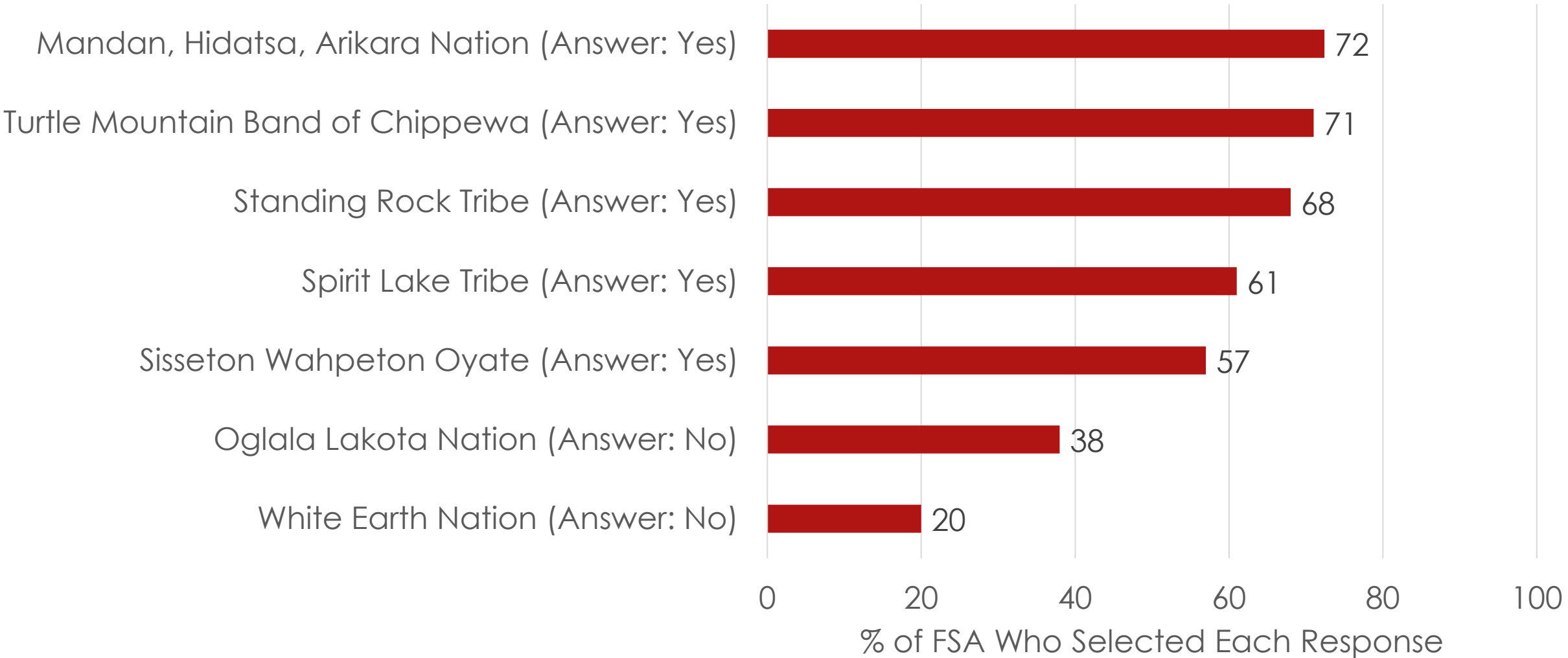



Comparison of Rating of Knowledge Among FSA and Student Body: Native American Student and FSA Respondents





Among FSA: Which Tribal Nations share geography with the state of North Dakota?





What Native American students wished the FSA and NDSU student body would know

- ▶ Knowing the history and how it can change from Tribe to Tribe
- ▶ “Our learning styles are very different from westernized learning and it is very hard to adjust to this way of learning.”
- ▶ To be recognized as a person, not just a number on campus. “I feel overall the administrators, faculty, and staff should try to get to know each individual for who they are and what is important to them and how they can meet in the middle.”
- ▶ More awareness of why something is culturally insensitive
 - ▶ A student explained she walked into the NDSU Bookstore on Halloween and the student worker was dressed as a “Native American princess.”
- ▶ “Understanding the generational trauma that may accompany an Indigenous student and trying to overcome those challenges.”

Question: What do you wish you knew about Native American history and cultures?

Some quotes from FSA respondents:

"Differences in Native American cultures, more about their values and traditions, what their communities need now."

"Focus on positive things happening for Native Americans, not learning about Native Americans like everything is 'history'."

"It would be interesting to hear from Native American students' perspective how the culture of the university is different from the culture they know or even perhaps expected prior to coming to NDSU. It would be good to hear from their experience where the disconnects are."

"More about tribal governance and spirituality."

"Importance of heritage and culture to Native American identity, differences between facts and myths about Native American history, willingness to learn from Native Americans."

"Better understanding of sovereignty and its implications."

"I wish more people understood the cultural genocide that happened to Native Americans and generational trauma most students deal with because of it."

"Why so many fall victim to drug, alcohol, physical abuse."

"Why Native Americans are diagnosed with Type II diabetes at such a higher rate."

"I wish I knew how to honor cultural differences better- especially as I consider how to approach the content in my courses. I'm in education- so being aware of how to be responsive to Native American student needs at both the post-secondary and secondary level (preparing our graduates to teach Native American students) is important to me."

"Having a better understanding of what Native Americans feel are the barriers they face in order to attend college and to graduate. Do they feel a college education is really important and why?"

"More about the differences and any traditions that could be incorporated on campus."

"How important open and trusting relationships are within the history and culture, and how one goes about developing those relationships."

"What are some strategies for becoming a better ally or friend to Native American students?"

"More about some influential Native American people from our area."

"Personal relationships would be extremely helpful to get a real grasp of their culture."

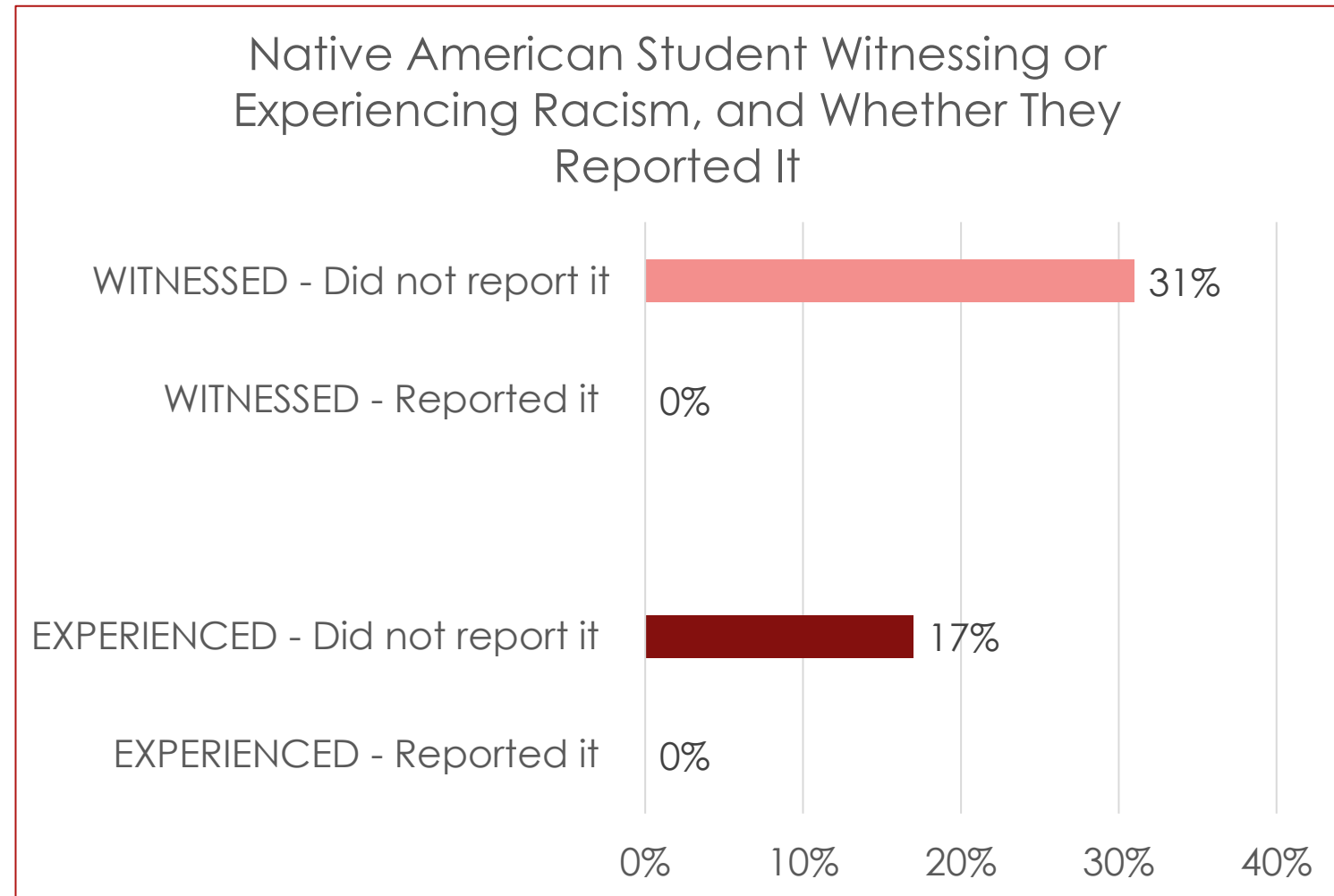
"Any information is welcome."

"I want to know what they wish I knew!"

“In my undergraduate journey, one of my professors referred to Native Americans as savages and spoke as if we no longer existed. Some students assumed that Native Americans lived in Tipis and that our schooling is free. Our schooling is not free at all and we work very hard to find funding and competitive scholarships.”

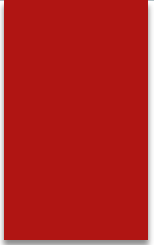
No students indicated they had reported the experiences.

Native American Students: Experiences with Racism

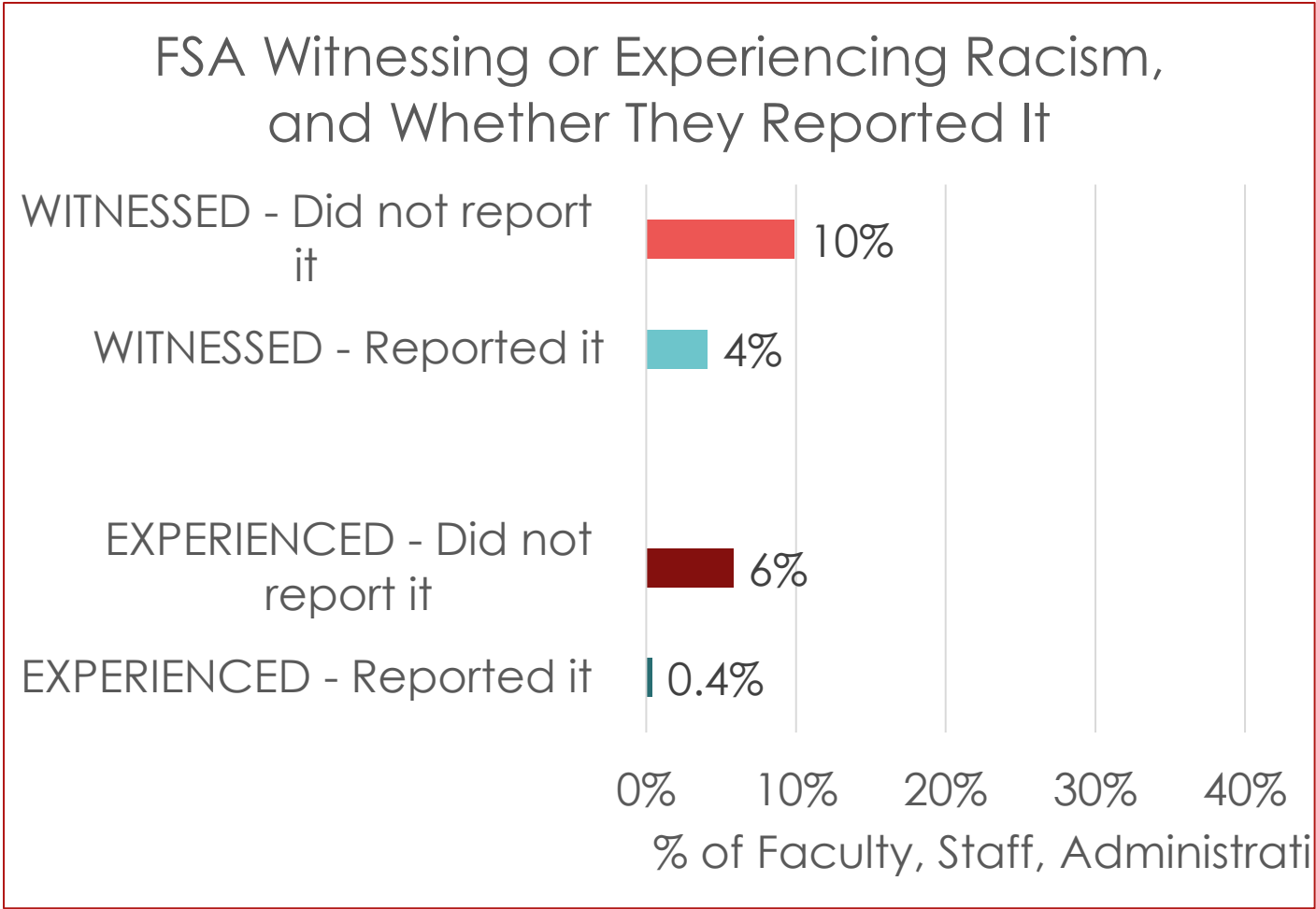




FSA: Experiences with Racism



Among the 14% of FSA who had witnessed racism, 10% did not report it and 4% did report it. Among the 6% who had experienced racism, less than 1% had reported it.



Key Takeaways from Surveys

- ▶ Faculty, staff, and administrators and Native American students at NDSU are in agreement that levels of knowledge about Native American cultures is low
- ▶ Financial and academic supports are important to Native American students, as well as figuring out next steps after graduation; having faculty that are understanding of personal circumstances is also important
- ▶ 1 in 3 students had witnessed racism at NDSU, and many students indicated it is a factor in whether they have considered leaving NDSU; they did not include the university's response to racism as one of the top 3 factors to help them graduate and generally do not feel that reporting incidents they have experienced or witnessed is worth the effort



Key Informant Interviews: Preliminary Themes

- ▶ NDSU's strengths for recruiting
 - ▶ Location, near reservations
- ▶ NDSU's weaknesses in recruiting
 - ▶ Lacking presence at tribal colleges (e.g., booths at events); Providing support in extracurricular activities (i.e. basketball games)
 - ▶ Ignorance and hindering of indigenous practices (e.g., tobacco, gifts of food)
- ▶ What helps Native American students be successful at NDSU
 - ▶ Fostering relationships, Open communication
 - ▶ Support – the little things (i.e. help with syllabi)
- ▶ Reasons Native American students change majors at NDSU
 - ▶ Decreased awareness and accessibility of supportive resources (i.e. tutoring)
 - ▶ Enter in a STEM program, struggle with a course (i.e. math); Transition to an 'easier' program
- ▶ Reasons Native American students leave NDSU
 - ▶ Insufficient support; Little to no acknowledgment

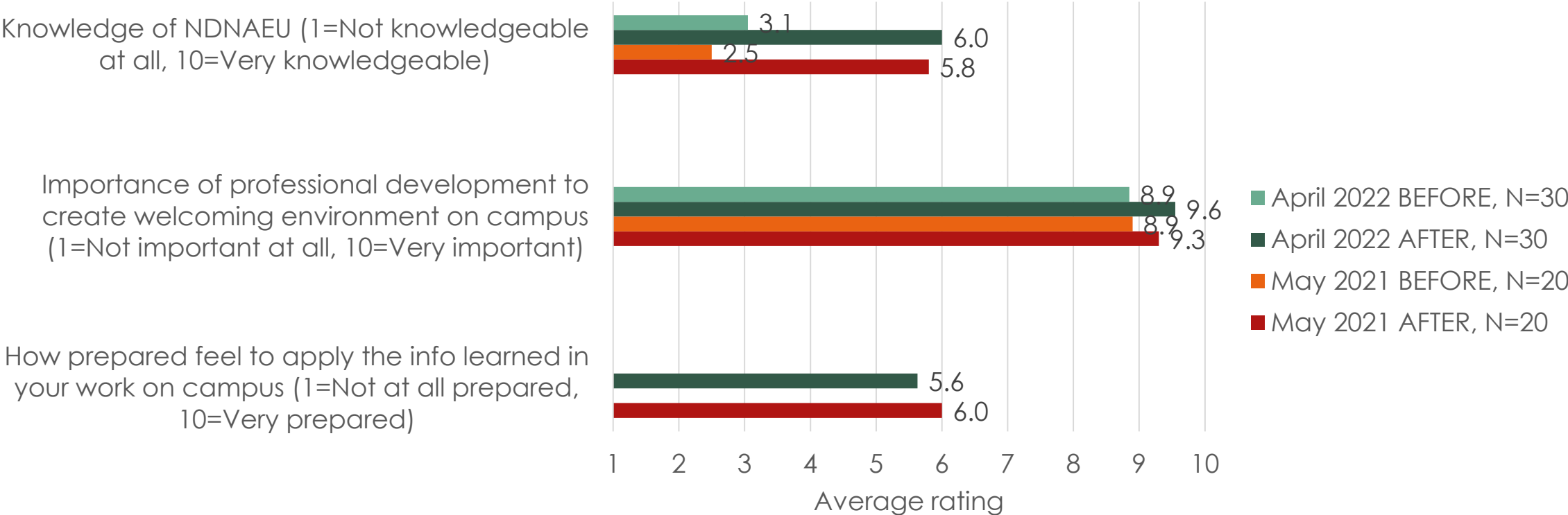
Key Informant Interviews: Preliminary Themes cont.

- ▶ What key informant wishes faculty, staff, and administrators knew to help Native American students accomplish goals of graduating
 - ▶ Communication; Building relationships, trust
 - ▶ 'Indigenizing' the university, curriculum
 - ▶ Disconnect between teaching styles and Indigenous ways of knowing/learning; More engaged, hands-on learning is the wave of the future
 - ▶ Targeting Native American students for recruitment
 - ▶ What's being offered at NDSU for Native American students?; What infrastructure is in place at NDSU for Native American students?
- ▶ Additional comments
 - ▶ Decreasing privilege protection; Truth and reconciliation
 - ▶ President of the university visiting local reservations
 - ▶ Building strong connections – invite elders into classrooms



ND Native American Essential Understandings Training Evaluation Results

Knowledge, Importance, Application





2021 Training Participant Comments

- ▶ “Action steps would be to reach out to members of tribal nation faculty and staff and students to hold yourself accountable for inclusion in your own community.”
- ▶ “I don’t think a non-Native educator should teach about Native culture (lack of deep cultural knowledge), but the materials in the website can be useful at least to start a class discussion... I will try to invite Native scholars/educators as speakers in my classes (not sure if funding to do so is available, though).”
- ▶ “The importance of impactful, respectful, and collaborative group work that focuses on the good of the group, not just getting one's self a good grade, is vital to helping our Native students succeed.”
- ▶ “I wish [the training] were a day long.”



2022 Training Participant Comments

- ▶ “During small group conversations - encouraged by the thoughts shared that there are sincere and talented people working at NDSU who care about making the campus a more inclusive and welcoming place.”
- ▶ “I appreciated seeing so many interested people from different units on campus. We should leverage that and solidify people's interest and commitments.”
- ▶ “I am new to the state, but have worked collaboratively with Native American colleagues and communities, so the ND component was very valuable..”
- ▶ “I came in with interest but little understanding. I feel we need to make NDSU welcoming and comforting and respectful of the cultural differences. This training opened the door to that. I will need to use the tools available to enhance my work here.”

Secondary Data: Survey results about design of a Native American Student Lounge

- ▶ Proposed location in Memorial Union
- ▶ Data collected March 2021, N=21
- ▶ Most respondents said they would use the space at least weekly (71%)
- ▶ Key themes and takeaways:
 - ▶ Will foster a sense of community
 - ▶ Activities, organizations, meetings, social events
 - ▶ Should serve purposes of a gathering space and a study area
 - ▶ Include a kitchenette, phone chargers
 - ▶ Warm tones, mix of individual/group spaces, make it feel 'homey', relaxing
 - ▶ Want to see representation and support of local Indigenous people
 - ▶ Indigenous art, student/alumni work, tribal flags, words in multiple Indigenous languages

Quote from student survey:

“Give back the Native American Center! It was a safe place and provided a sense of community for those experiencing culture shock. I think this would be a great contribution since NDSU recently recognized that the institution was built on tribal lands that were stolen.”



Secondary Data: Elevating Native American College Students' Sense of Belonging in Higher Education

- ▶ Recommendations for student affairs practitioners to support Native American college students' sense of belonging in higher education:
 - ▶ Encouragement of developing a warm and welcoming campus climate BIPOC students and students from lower SES
 - ▶ Providing adequate study spaces to students at hours convenient to their busy schedules
 - ▶ Integrating the curricular and co-curricular domains for students (e.g., providing space and hospitality to a Native American cultural group)
 - ▶ Staying connected or helping develop new connections with their cultural traditions

Other Institutions with Native Student Success Programming

- ▶ University of Alaska, Fairbanks
 - ▶ Alaska Native Success Initiative
 - ▶ <https://alaska.edu/pres/aknativesuccess/>
- ▶ Arizona State University
 - ▶ American Indian Student Support Services
 - ▶ <https://universitycollege.asu.edu/student-support/aiss>
- ▶ University of Arizona
 - ▶ Native American Student Affairs
 - ▶ <https://nasa.arizona.edu/>
- ▶ University of Manitoba
 - ▶ Indigenous Community at UM
 - ▶ <https://umanitoba.ca/indigenous/>
- ▶ Colorado State University
 - ▶ Native American Cultural Center (NACC)
 - ▶ <https://nacc.colostate.edu/>

EXTERNAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Interviews and focus groups conducted
 - Tribal College students
 - Extension staff
 - Tribal College key personnel
 - Virtual, Spring 2021
- NDSU and Tribal IRB approval
- Focus on existing and potential transfer students
 - Not incoming freshman or high school students
- Recruitment relied on existing contacts and relationships
 - NDSU Extension connections across state and with Tribal Colleges that share geography with ND

Preliminary Findings: Services and Support

- Proximity to home/family
- Assistance with application process, scholarships
- Housing that is appropriate and affordable
- Childcare plays a role in cost, housing, and help from family
- Cultural Representation – Trainings, Faculty, Student Body
- Training requirements, NA representation – ***“an hour-long training is not training”***
- Culturally appropriate mental and physical health and wellness services
- Affordability
- Tuition, scholarships, assistance for housing/childcare
- ***“[I can] attend the local Tribal College for \$1400 and live at home.”***



Preliminary Findings: Awareness of NDSU

- Good reputation
- Multiple examples of UND programs and services

Next Steps:

- Dissemination plan
- Connection to Tribal Initiatives Director on NDSU campus
- Systems for recruitment and awareness
- New Beginnings USDA grant application
- Training for NDSU faculty, staff, and students