SOCIETY FOR EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

2026 SEE Benchmarking Survey Results

Emily Carpenter
Marianna Savoca
Bill Heinrich
Adam Pilipshen

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https://www.societyforee.org/exl-benchmark-survey

The Big Why

The Society for Experiential Education initiated this survey in 2025 as no benchmarking survey of experiential education existed.

This 2nd iteration was developed with respondent feedback from version 1.0.

We hope that this survey prompts members to speak with colleagues at their benchmark / aspirant schools to discover synergies and support each other!

140 usable responses from 74 institutions

156
responses collected

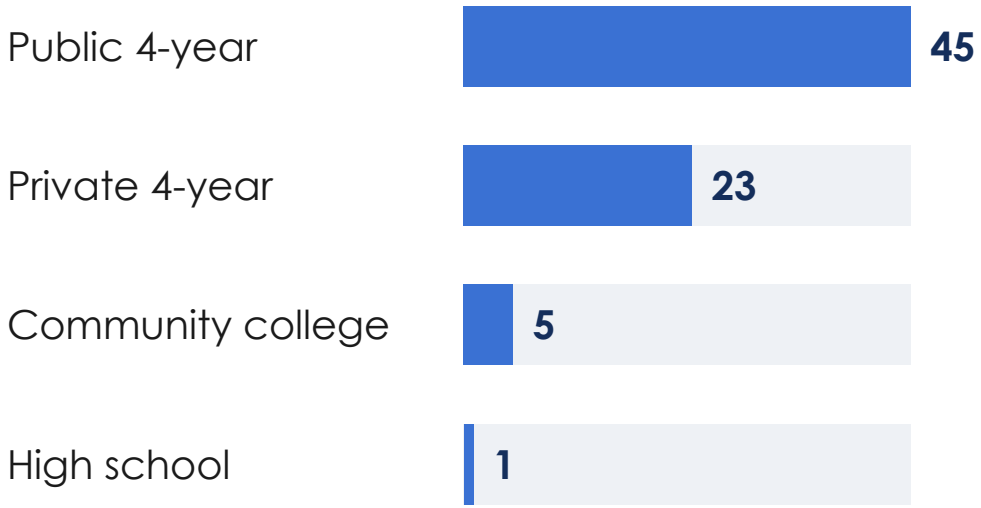
140
in the analytic sample

85
completed the survey

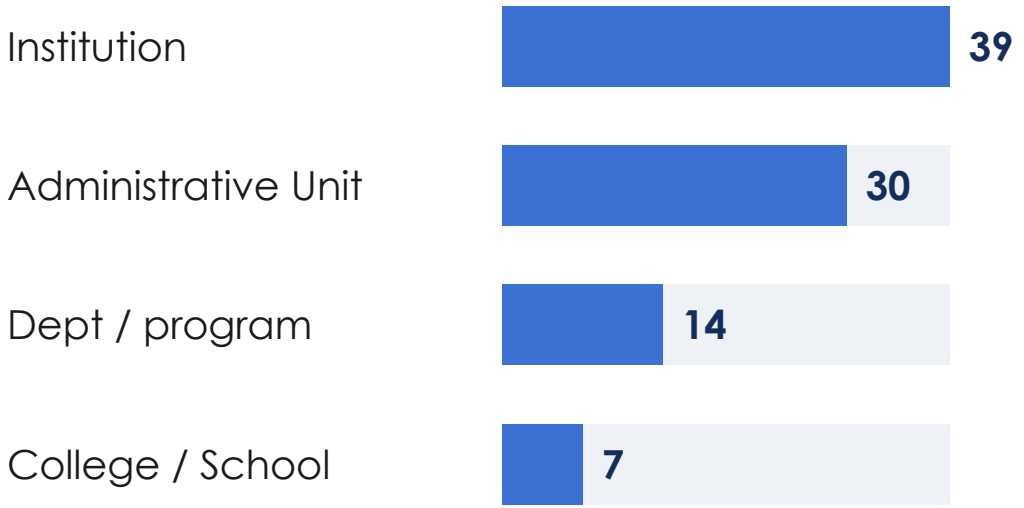
74
institutions represented

39
institution-level responses, one per institution

Institution type



Level of Response



Institutions: n = 74, researcher-reviewed. Levels: 90 unit responses with ExL answers.

Five things we learned

1. **ExL is named almost everywhere.**
   85% of institutions have put something formal in writing; 56% have a framework.

2. **A settled core, variety in the edges.**
   Five experience types are counted by 81–91% of respondents; athletics by only 25%.

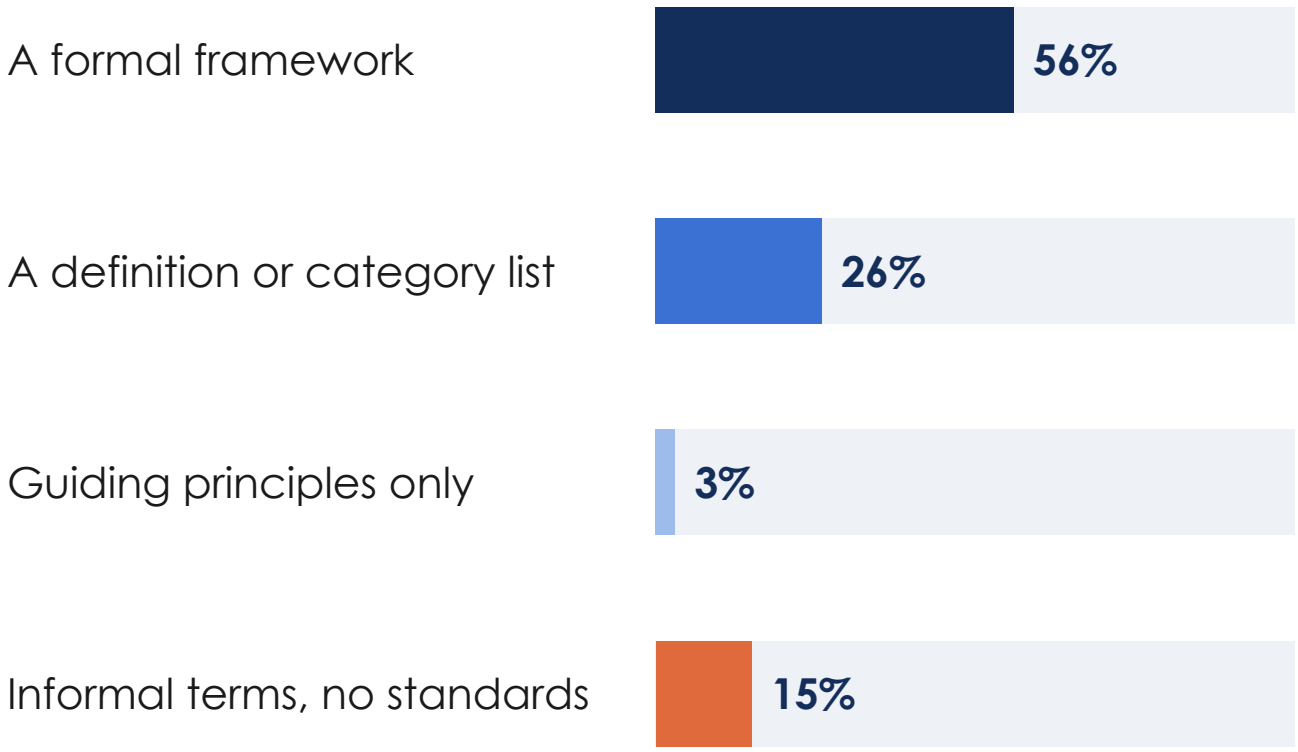
3. **Requirements grow from the bottom up.**
   23% require ExL campus-wide, but 69% have, partly have, or are building a requirement.

4. **Budgets carry ExL; assessment stays individual.**
   Operating budgets are significant for 59%. Student reflections are used by 85%; comparing programs, by 10%.

5. **Next: scale up, and show it works.**
   The top 2026–27 priorities are expanding participation (35%) and tracking and assessment (25%).

85% have put ExL in writing, most often as a framework

The most formal element each institution has



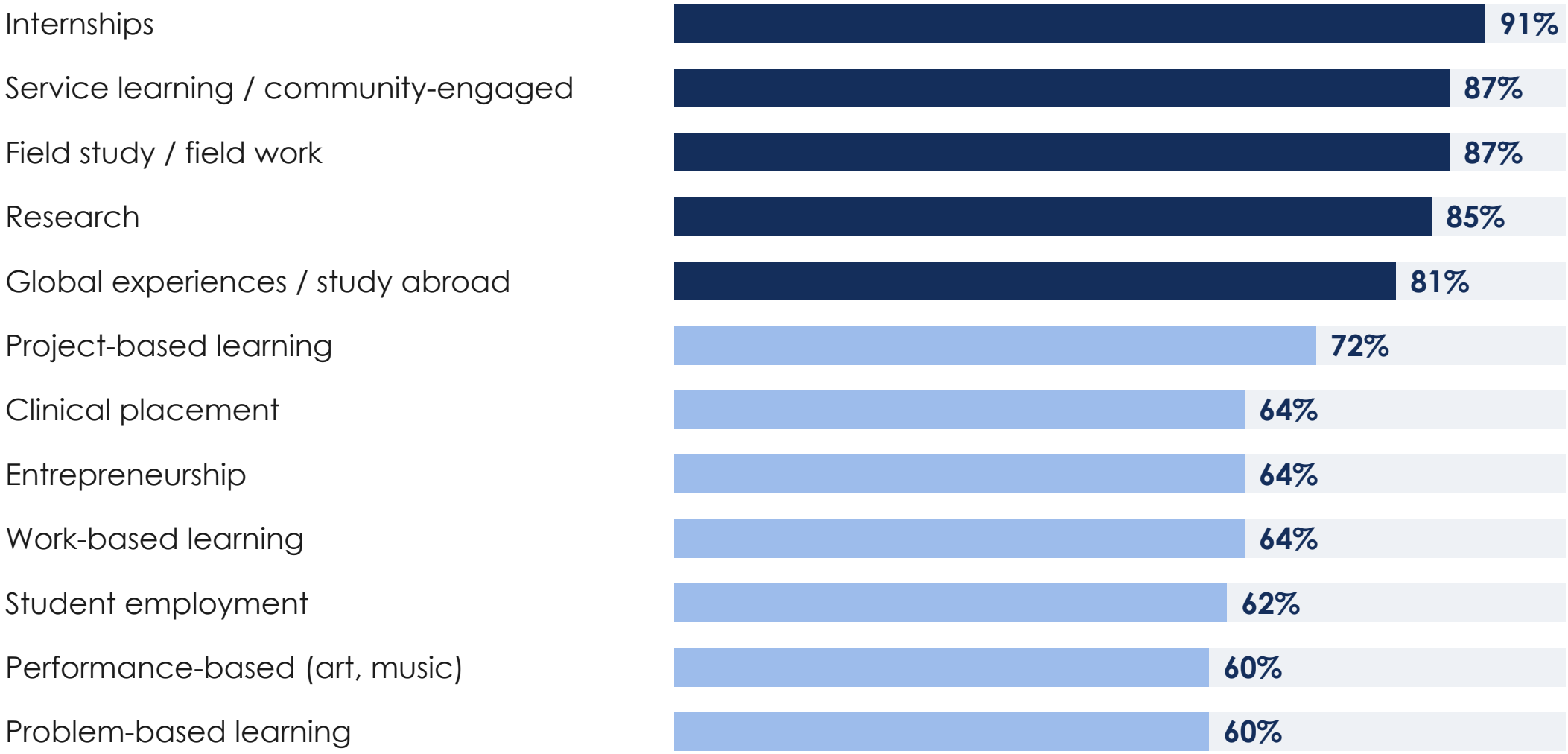
26%
have all four: framework, definition, category list, principles

15%
have none of the four and work from shared vocabulary

0%
didn't know where their institution stood

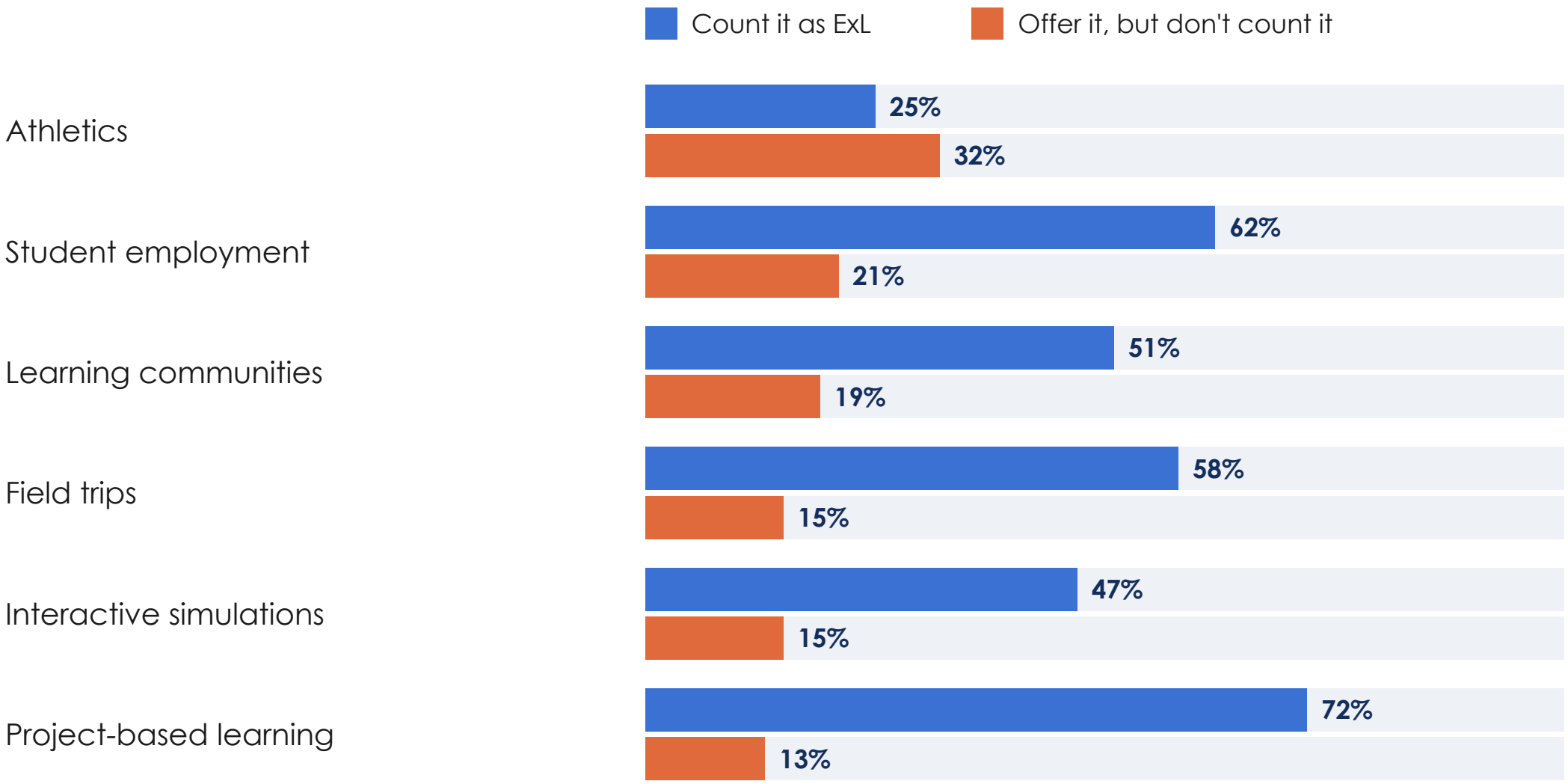
% of institutions. Institution-level responses, n = 39. Each institution placed at its most formal element.

Five experience types are counted as ExL almost everywhere



% of respondents counting each type as ExL. All levels, n = 53. Top 12 of 24 types shown; the five-type core in dark blue.

Beyond the core, what counts is an institutional choice



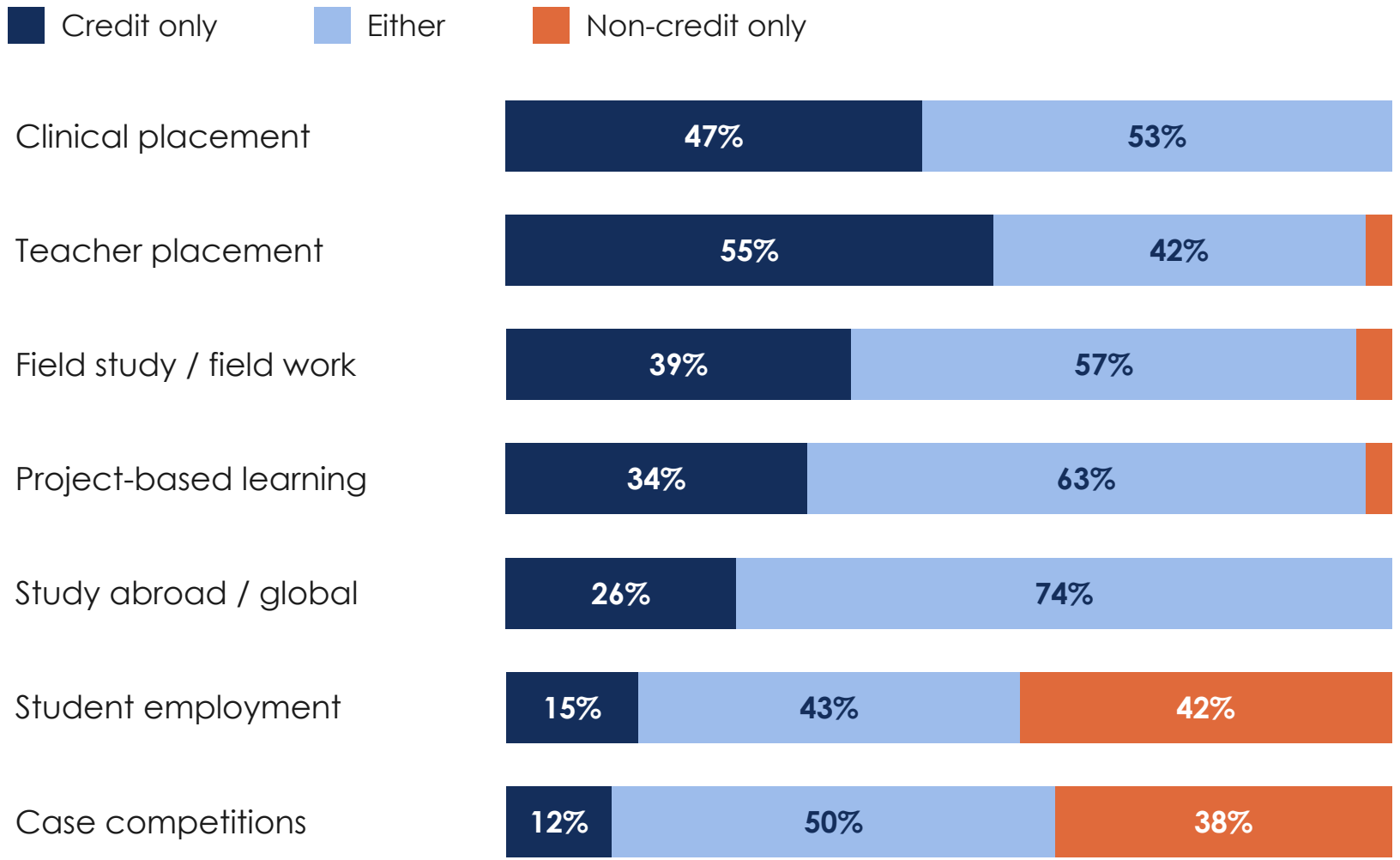
% of respondents. All levels, n = 53. The six types most often offered but not counted.

ExL is credit-flexible

62%
of answers: 'can be either' credit or non-credit

27%
credit-bearing only

11%
non-credit only



% of respondents who count each type, by how it is credited. All levels.

Few require ExL campus-wide, but most are leaning in

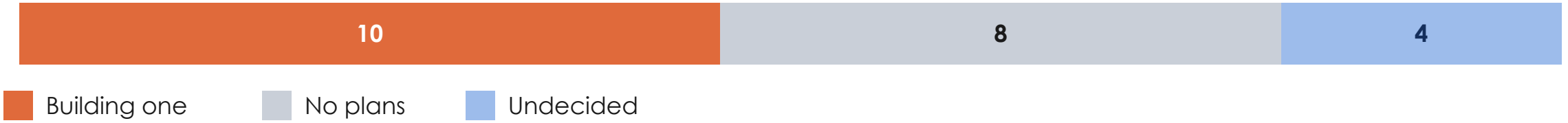
23%
have an ExL graduation requirement

21%
have a partial or program-level requirement

69%
have one, partly have one, or are building one

21%
have none and no plans for one

The 22 institutions without a requirement: will they create one?



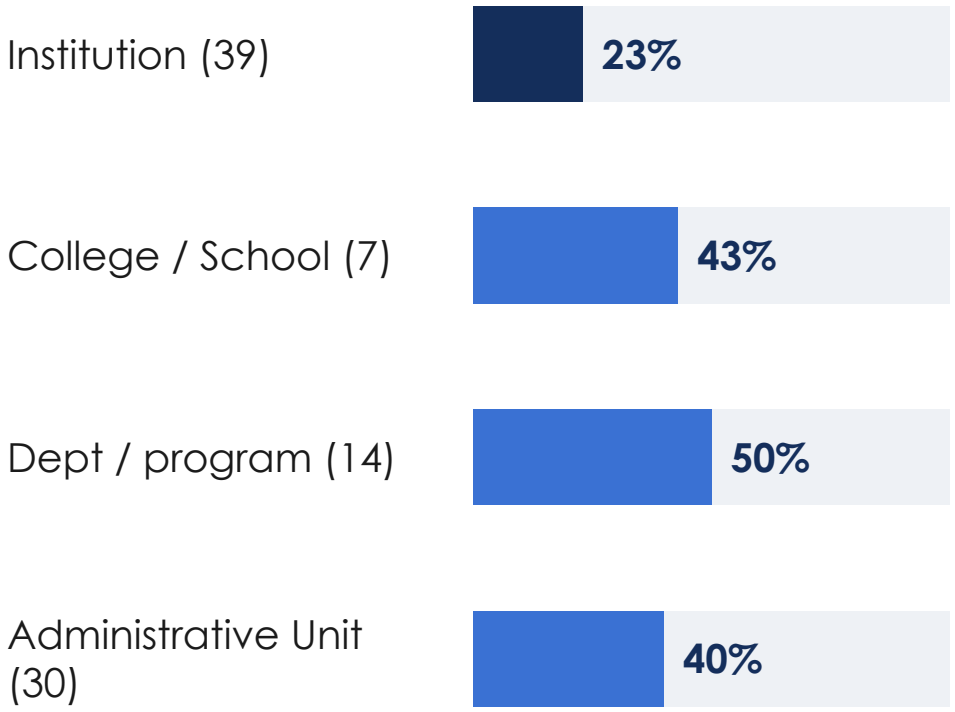
The 9 institutions with a requirement: will they revise it?



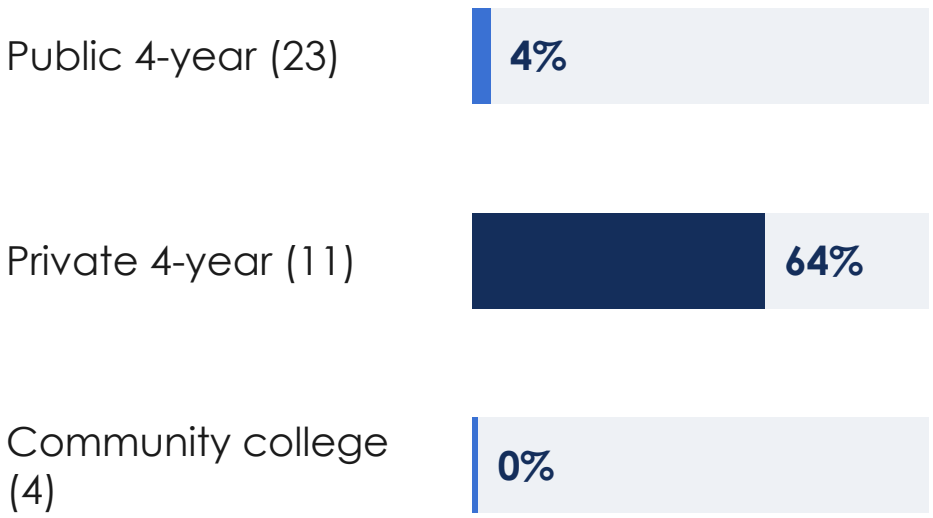
Institution-level responses, n = 39. Lower bars show numbers of institutions.

Requirements live in programs; privates mandate campus-wide

Report a requirement, by level

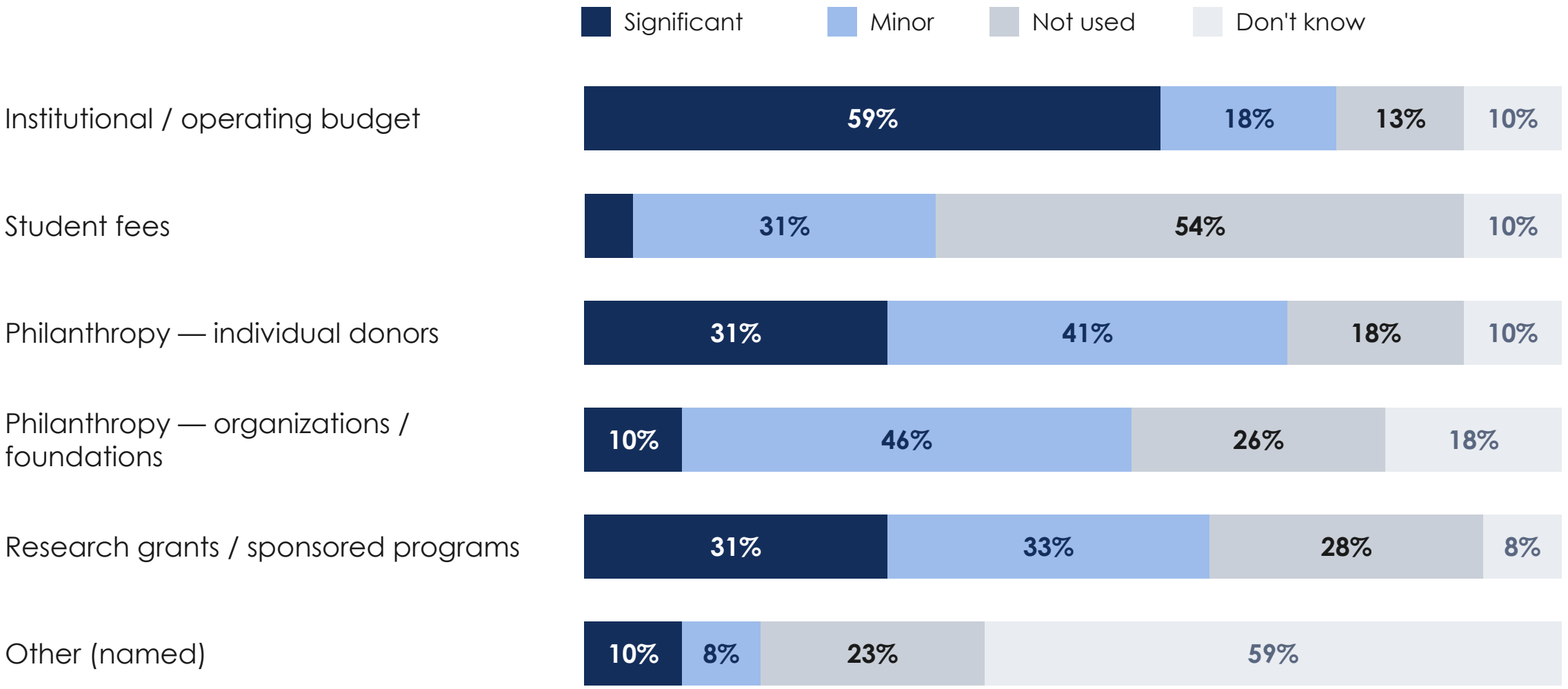


Campus-wide requirement, by type



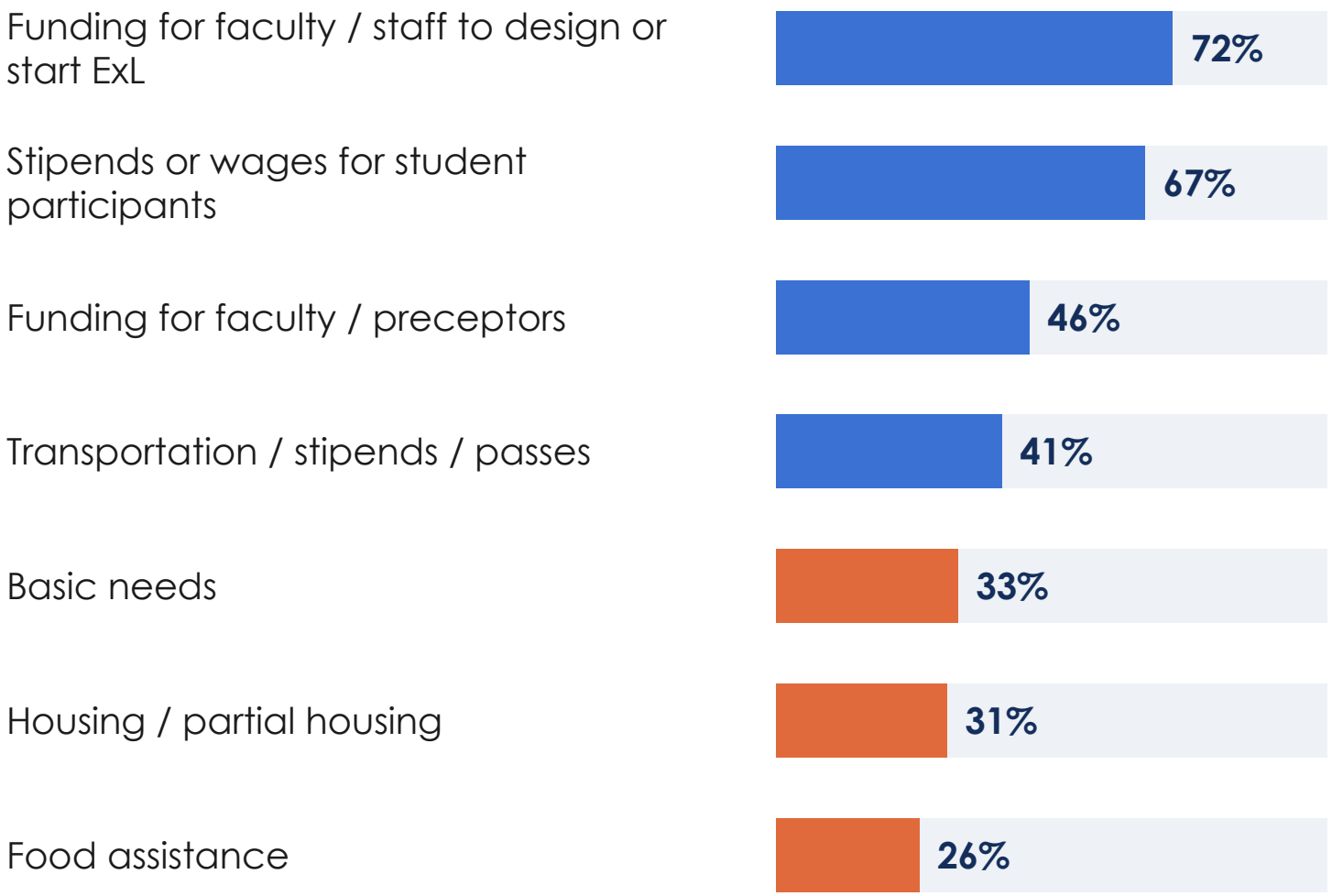
% reporting a requirement; (n) in brackets. Left: all levels. Right: institution-level. Bases under 10 are direction only.

Operating budgets carry ExL; donors and grants come second



% of institutions rating each source. Institution-level responses, n = 39.

Funding favors builders and participants over basic needs

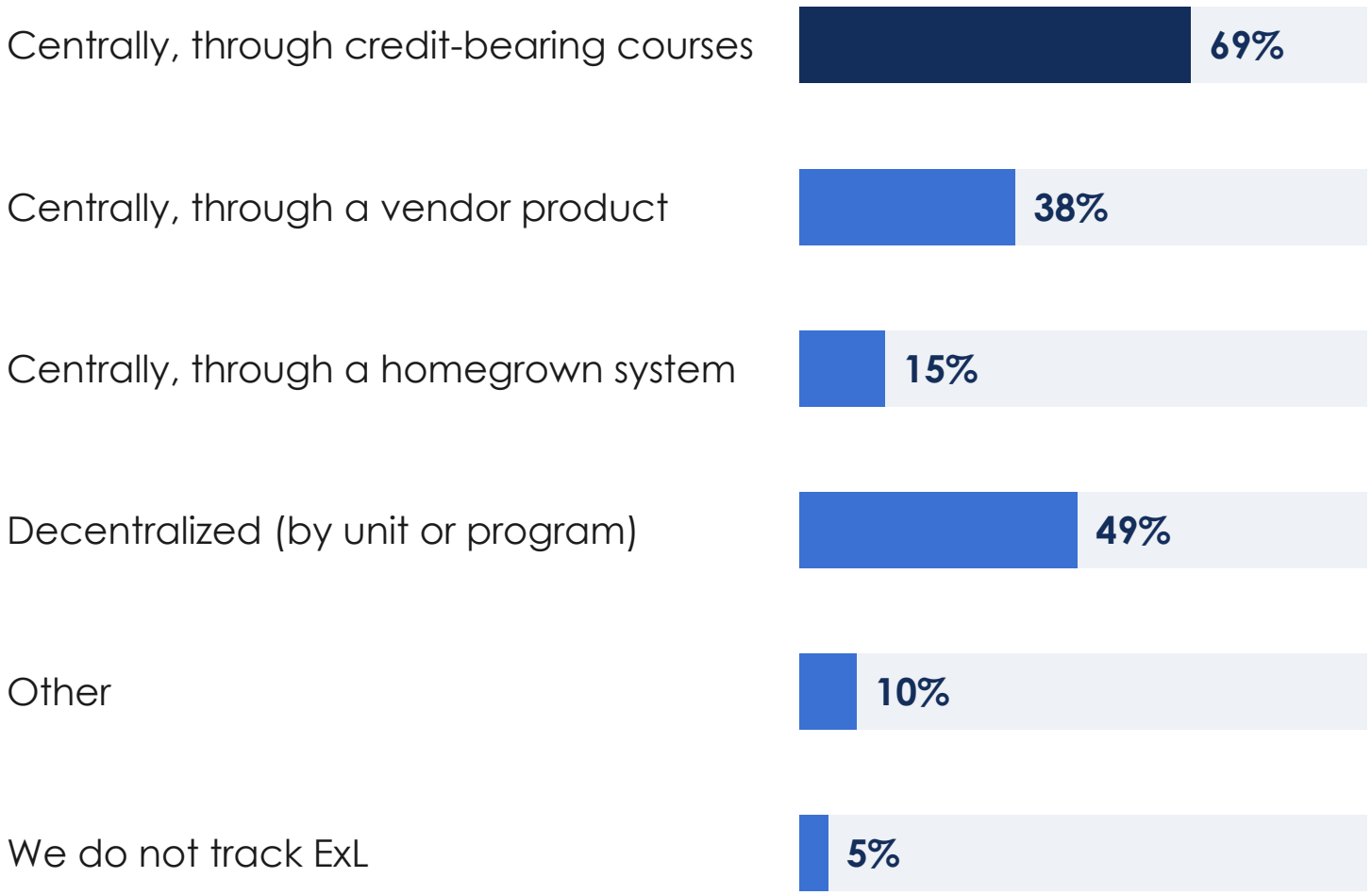


% of institutions providing each support. Institution-level responses, n = 39.

Access and equity

The supports that decide whether lower-income students can take part (basic needs, housing, food) are the least common.

Course enrollment is the main way ExL is tracked

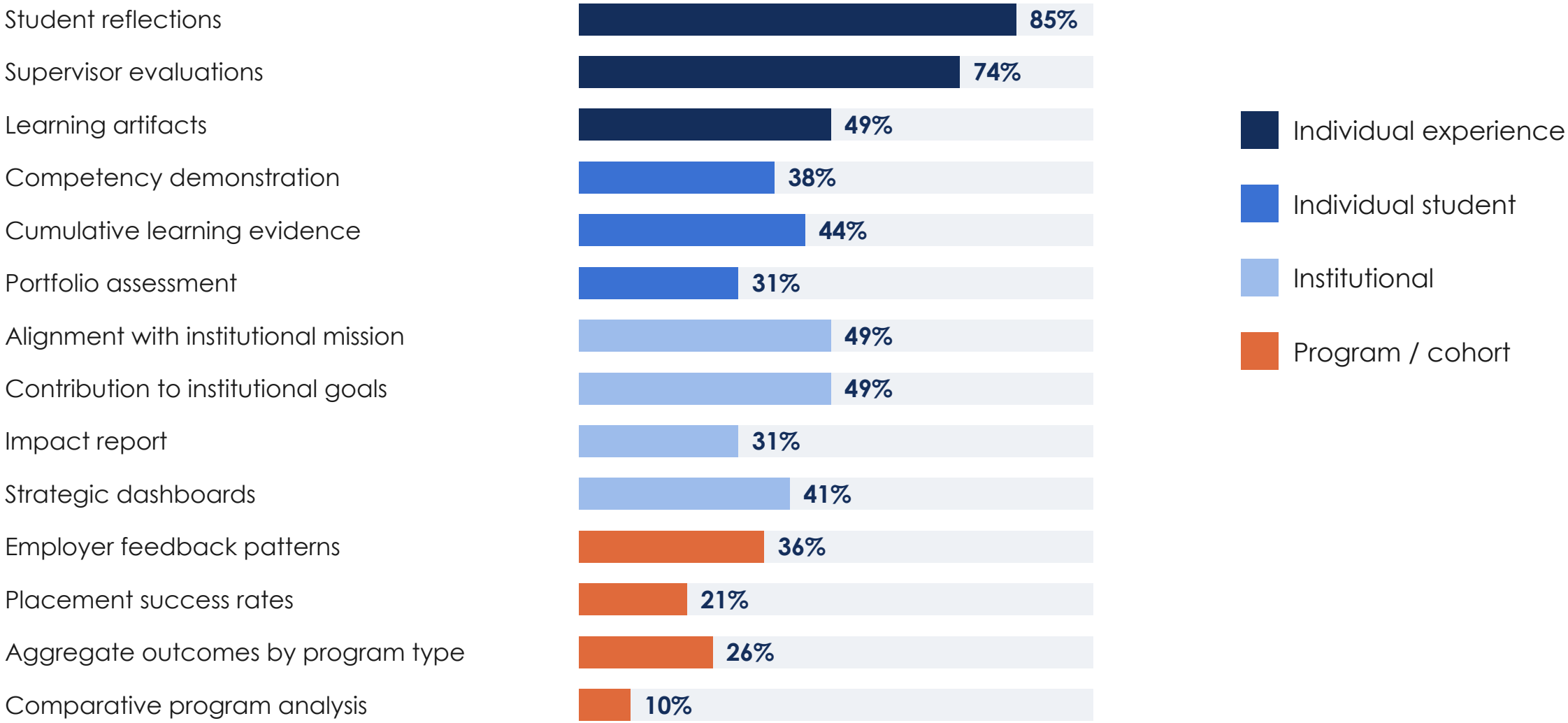


22 of 39
use Handshake, the most common platform

5%
do not track ExL at all

% of institutions; select all that apply. Institution-level responses, n = 39.

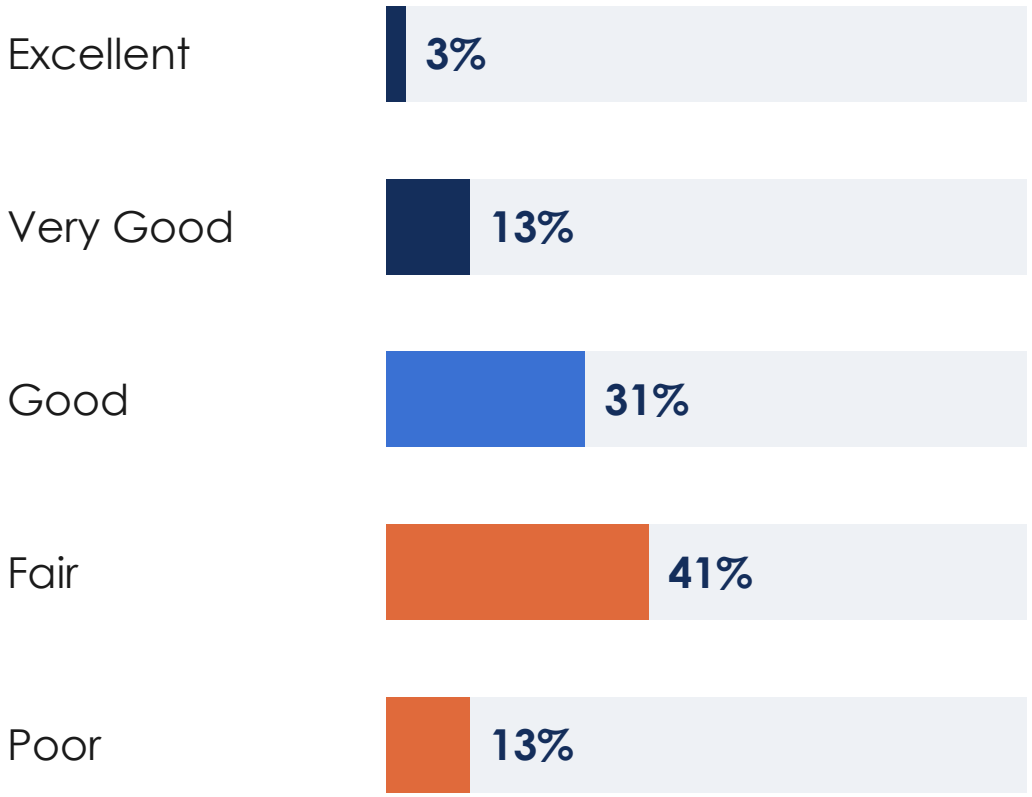
Assessment stays with the individual student



% of institutions using each practice, grouped by what is assessed. Institution-level responses, n = 39.

Few rate their assessment highly, yet most act on it

"How would you describe your ExL assessment?"



59%
act on findings continuously

64%
connect ExL to a career-readiness framework

46%
correlate ExL with student-success measures

28%
issue a co-curricular transcript

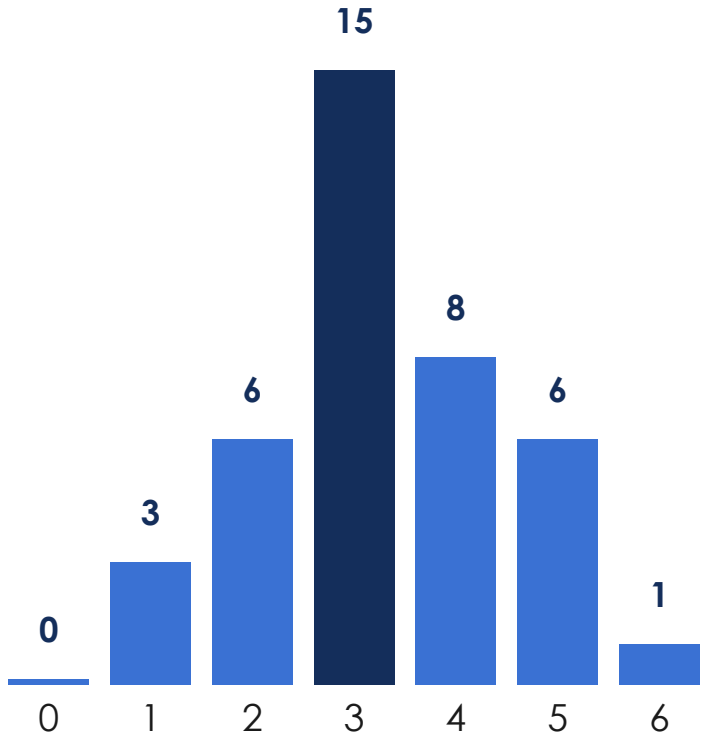
% of institutions. Institution-level responses, n = 39.

Where does your institution sit? *(six markers of a mature ExL system)*

Check the ones your institution has *% = share of institutions*

☐ Dedicated tracking system in use	**87%**
☐ Defined framework or definition	**85%**
☐ Institutional budget is a significant funding source	**59%**
☐ Correlates ExL participation with student-success measures	**46%**
☐ ExL graduation requirement	**23%**
☐ Student-facing transcript or acknowledgement	**28%**

Institutions by score



Typical: 3 of 6. 38% have 4 or more.

Institution-level responses, n = 39. Score = number of the six markers an institution has.

2025 to 2026: a stable core and a better instrument

Measure	2025	2026	How to read it
No ExL graduation requirement	**60%**	**56%**	Stable: still the most common answer
Has a requirement	**27%**	**23% (+21% partial)**	Stable; 2026 separates partial ones
Does not track ExL at all	**6%**	**5%**	Tracking near-universal both years
Top assessment self-rating	**5%**	**3%**	Few at the top (scales differ)
Skipped the career-readiness item	**45%**	**0%**	The new instrument closes the gap

Also stable: the core of what counts as ExL. **Not safe to trend:** assessment quality and funding levels.

2025: completed responses answering each item. 2026: institution-level responses, n = 39.

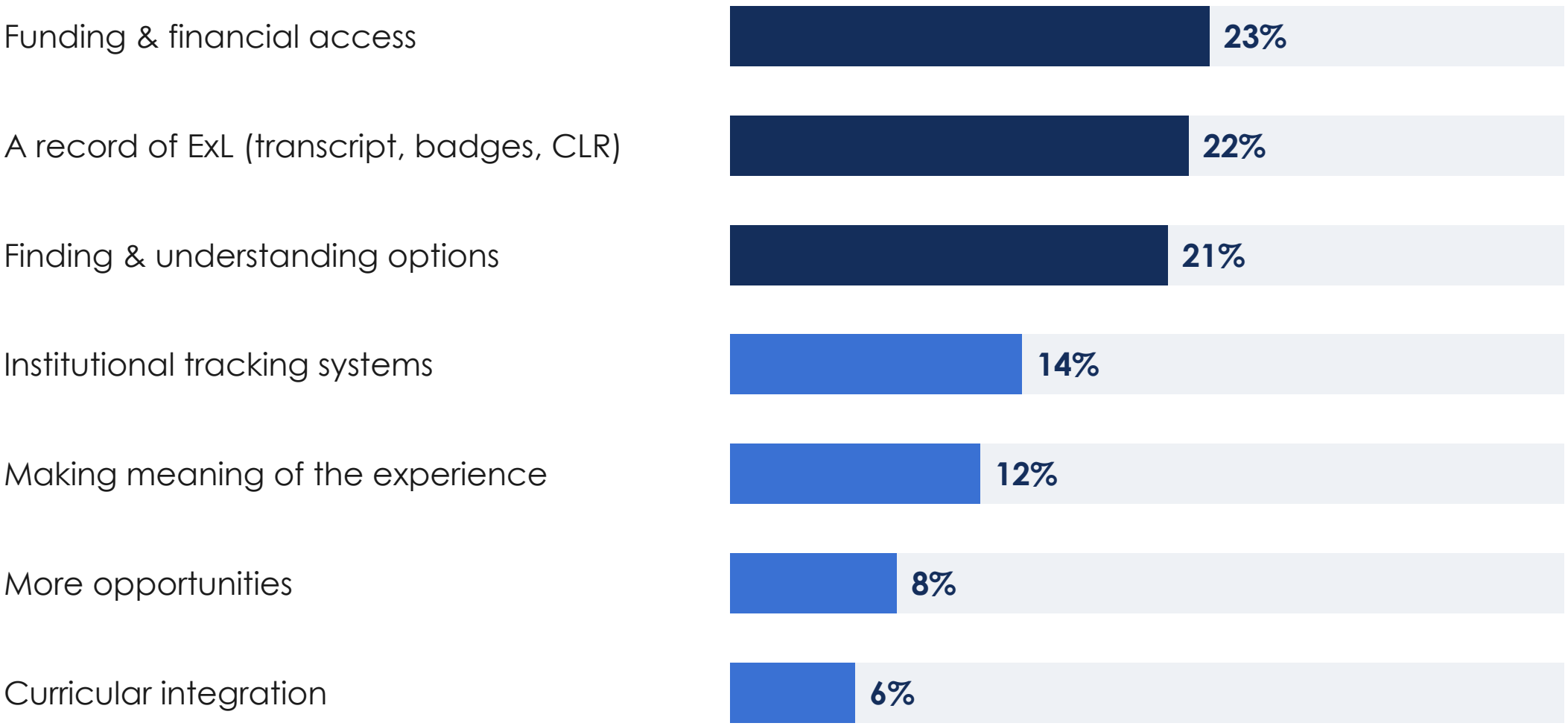
Next year: scale up, and show it works *(top priority for 2026–27, by level)*

	All levels n = 88	Institution n = 39	College / School n = 7*	Dept / Program n = 13	Admin Unit n = 29
Expanding participation & embedding ExL	**35%**	**46%**	*29%*	**23%**	**28%**
Tracking, assessment & evidence	**25%**	**33%**	*0%*	**0%**	**31%**
Securing & protecting funding	**14%**	**13%**	*57%*	**15%**	**3%**
Building infrastructure & systems	**14%**	**23%**	*14%*	**8%**	**3%**
Connecting ExL to careers	**9%**	**5%**	*14%*	**23%**	**7%**
Coordination & processes	**7%**	**3%**	*0%*	**0%**	**17%**

Scale comes first overall. Tracking and evidence is an institution and administrative-unit priority; no college or department named it. Colleges and schools put funding first (4 of 7).

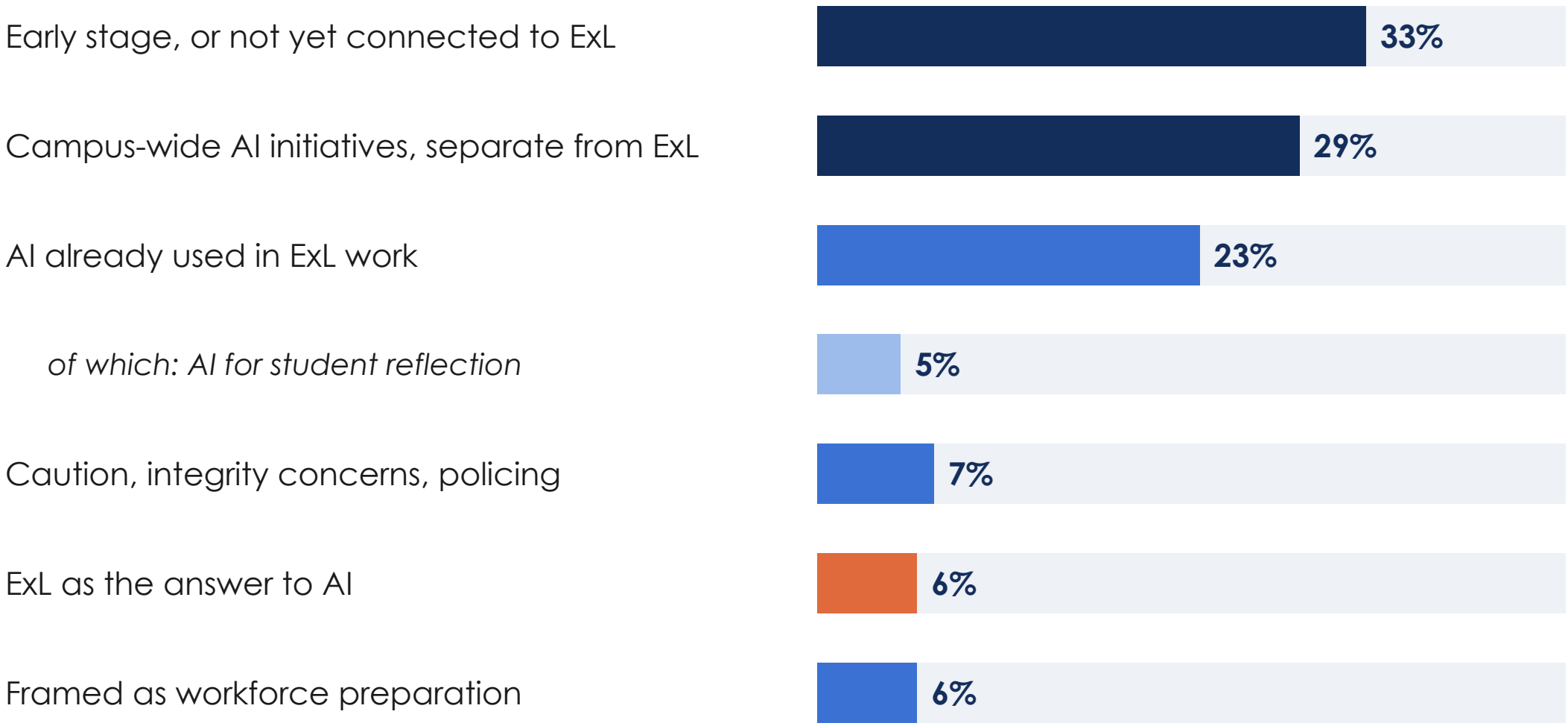
*% of answers at each level naming the theme; an answer can name several. *Fewer than 10 answers: direction only.*

Students need funding, a record, and help finding ExL



% of answers naming each theme; an answer can name several. All levels, n = 78 answers.

AI is a campus conversation that hasn't reached ExL yet



% of respondents naming each theme. n = 83 respondents at 71 institutions.

In their words

"Doubling number of students participating by 27-28."

TOP PRIORITY · INSTITUTION

"Right now, we only track the rostered requirement, yet students engage in non-rostered experiences and we are not capturing them. We need a way to capture all experiences, both rostered and not."

WHAT STUDENTS NEED · INSTITUTION

"a competency badge of some sort, since ExL doesn't appear on transcripts"

WHAT STUDENTS NEED · COLLEGE / SCHOOL

"Leaning into ExL as a combatant to AI. Having students engage in hands-on learning supports their ability to AI proof the material in some important ways."

AI AND EXL

Your turn: questions to take back to campus

Define

Could a student on your campus say what counts as ExL, and where would they find out?

Require

If ExL were required tomorrow, which unit would own it, and who couldn't complete it?

Fund & access

Which students can't afford unpaid, travel-based or time-heavy ExL? What would change that?

Track & assess

Can you show which ExL programs work, not just what one student learned?

Benchmark

How many of the six markers did you check? Which one would you add next?

Share

Where was your institution an outlier, and who on your campus needs to see it?

Acknowledgements



Thank you to **Stony Brook University** for its generous contribution of professional expertise and essential technical and staffing support. We are particularly indebted to **Dr. Adam Pilipshen, Assistant Director of Assessment, Evaluation, & Research** for his expertise in survey design, methodological structuring, and advanced statistical analysis, which provided a depth and rigor to this research that will carry us forward for years to come.

Participating Institutions

Abilene Christian University
Alfred University
Antioch University
Augusta University
Babson College
Baruch College
Binghamton University
Bismarck State College
Borough of Manhattan Community College
Boston University
Carnegie Mellon University
Clemson University
College of DuPage
Cornell University
Delaware Valley University
Denison University
Dominica State College
Durham College
Elon University
Farmingdale State College
Georgetown University
Hampden-Sydney College
Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy
Indiana University Indianapolis
Jackson State University
Kansas State University
Learning Ecosystem Partners
Loyola University Chicago
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
McGill University
McMaster University
Metropolitan State University of Denver
Michigan State University
Minnesota State University Mankato
Minnesota State University Moorhead
Morehead State University
Mount Holyoke College
Mount St. Joseph University
Muhlenberg College
Nazareth University
New Jersey Institute of Technology
New York Institute of Technology
North Carolina State University
North Idaho College
Northwestern College (IA)
Northwestern Michigan College
Ontario Tech University
Owens Community College
Penn State University
Presbyterian College
Purdue University
Queens College/CUNY
Rowan College at Burlington County
Santa Clara University
Southern New Hampshire University
St. Johns River State College
Stony Brook University
SUNY Brockport
SUNY Buffalo State
SUNY College at Cortland
SUNY New Paltz
SUNY Oswego
Syracuse University
Tarleton State University
Texas A&M University-Texarkana
Texas State University
The College of New Jersey
The University of Alabama
The University of Oklahoma
The University of Tampa
The University of Texas at Austin
Trinity University
Universidad de La Sabana
University at Buffalo
University at Buffalo School of Management
University of Alberta
University of Calgary
University of California, Davis
University of California San Diego
University of Cincinnati
University of Dayton
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Houston
University of Idaho
University of Lethbridge
University of Miami Herbert Business School
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
University of New Hampshire
University of North Florida
University of Rochester
University of South Carolina
University of Texas at Arlington
University of Texas School of Public Health San Antonio
University of Toronto
University of Victoria
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
University of Wisconsin-Parkside
Utah Valley University
Vanderbilt University
Virginia Tech
Wellesley College
William & Mary

Appendix *(the original slides)*

The original slides, unchanged, for reference and questions.

Responses & Methodology

156 responses collected > 140 analytic sample > 85 full responses representing 74 distinct institutions

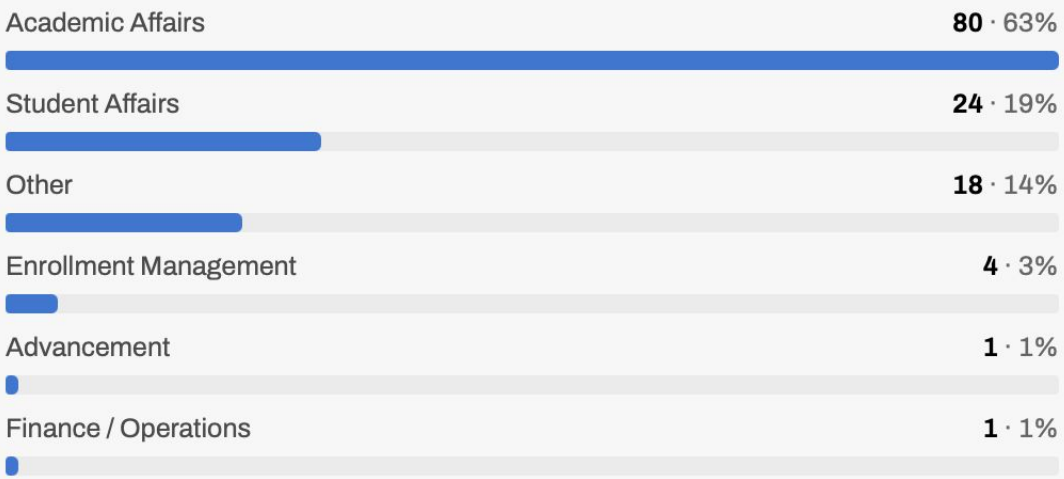
PRIMARY ROLE

n = 128



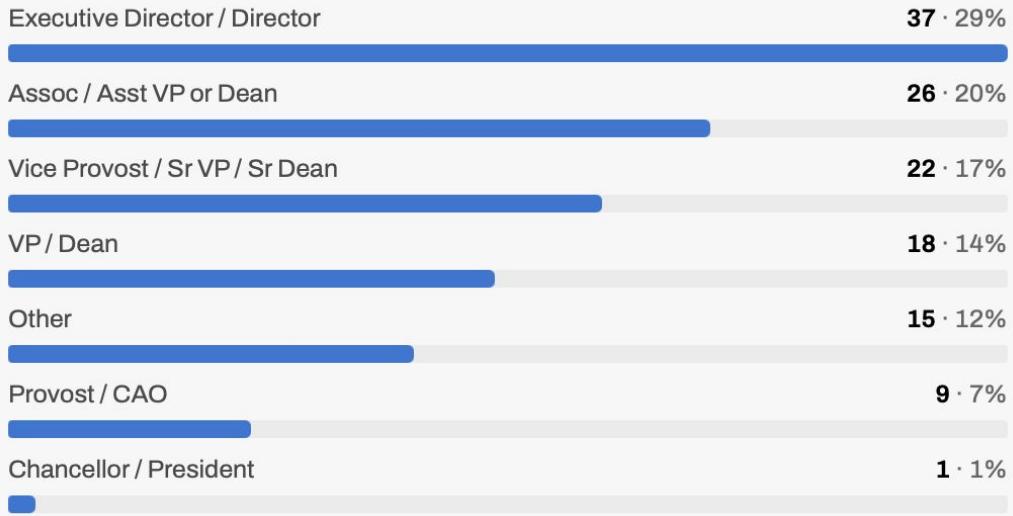
WHERE THE ROLE SITS

Position area · n = 128



REPORTS TO

n = 128



SHARE OF ROLE SPENT ON EXL

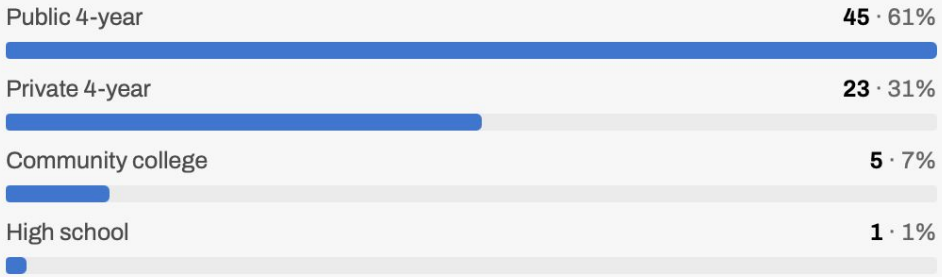
n = 128



Institutions

INSTITUTION TYPE

Researcher-reviewed · institutions · n = 74



COUNTRY

Researcher-reviewed · institutions · n = 74



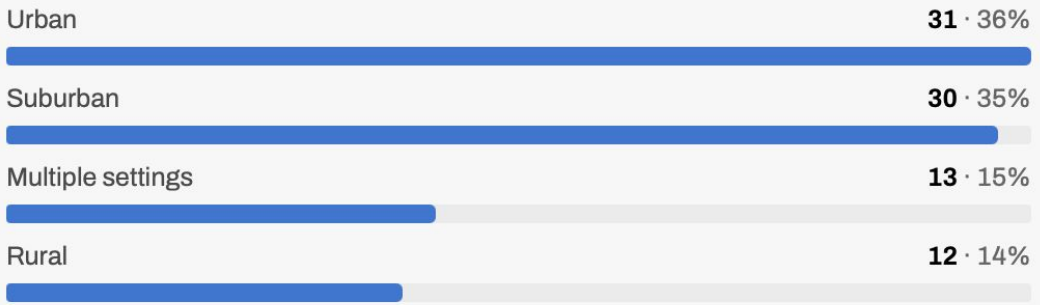
PART OF A SYSTEM OR NETWORK

n = 86



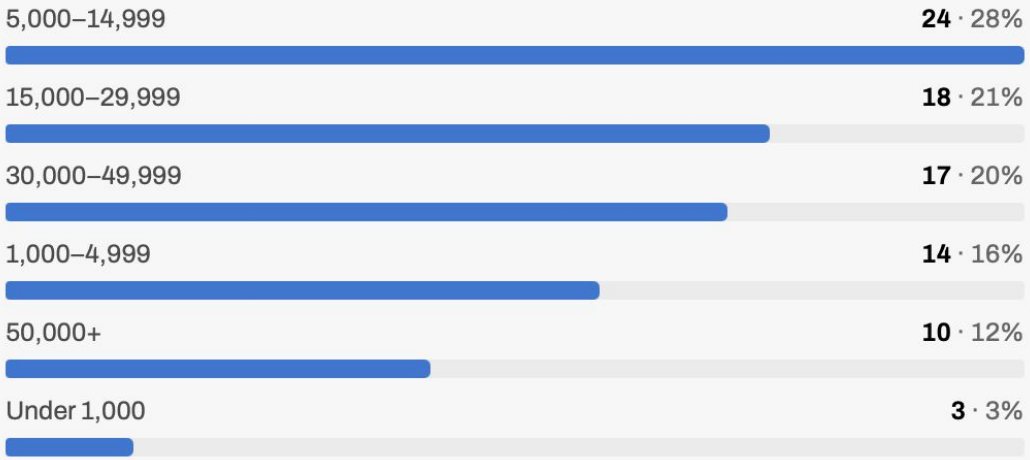
CAMPUS SETTING

n = 86



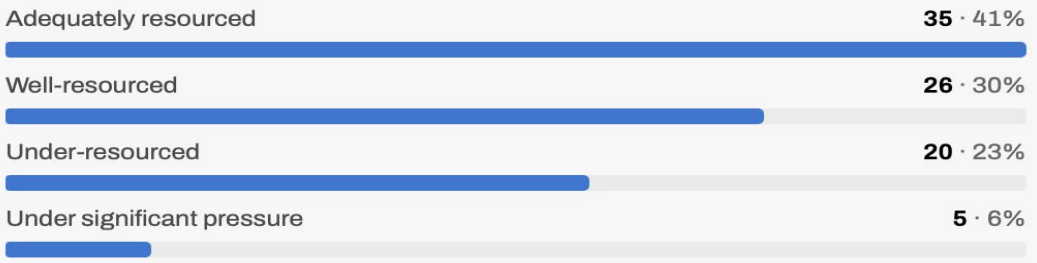
ENROLLMENT SIZE

Total students · n = 86



FINANCIAL HEALTH

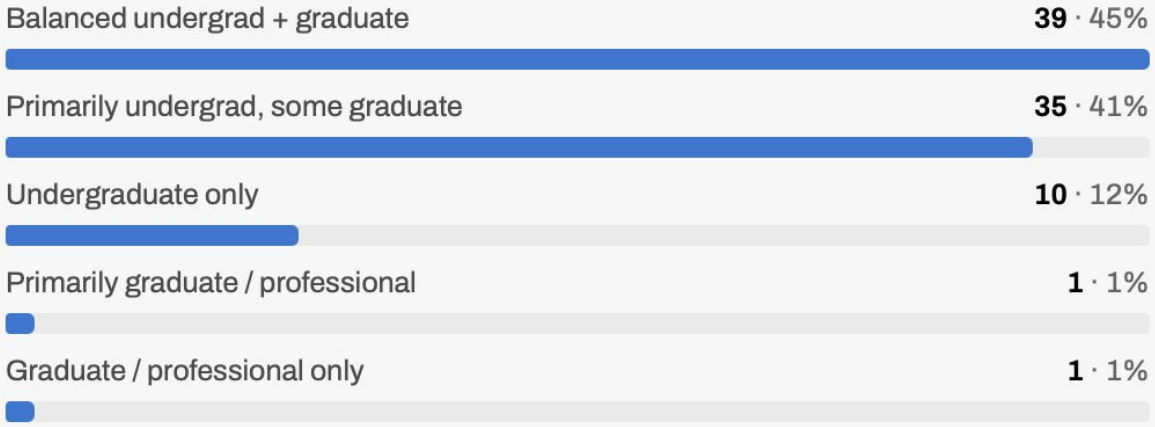
Self-described · n = 86



Institutions

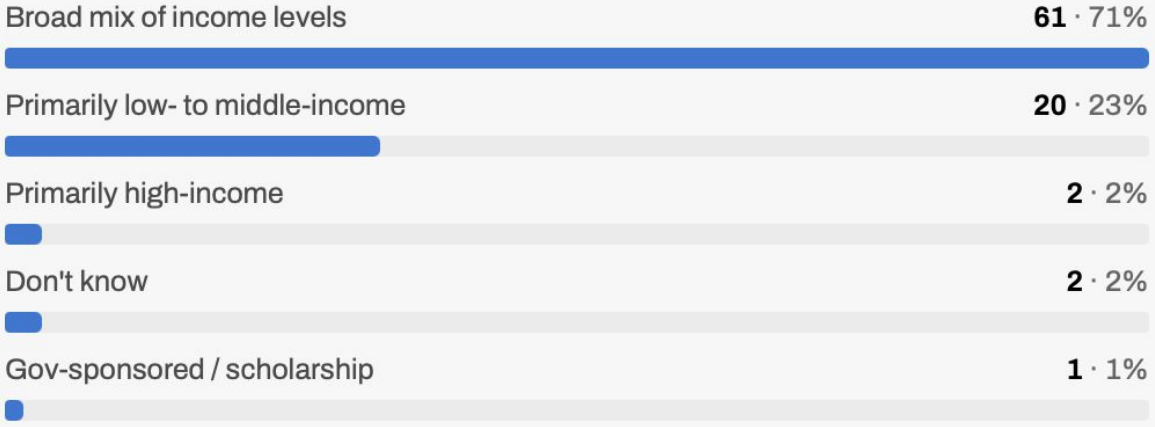
ACADEMIC FOCUS

n = 86



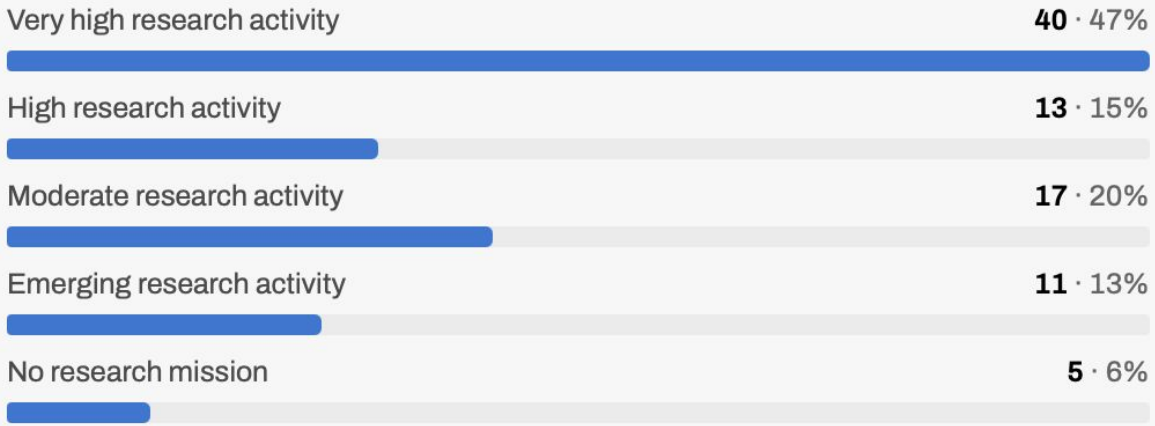
STUDENT SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

Self-described · n = 86



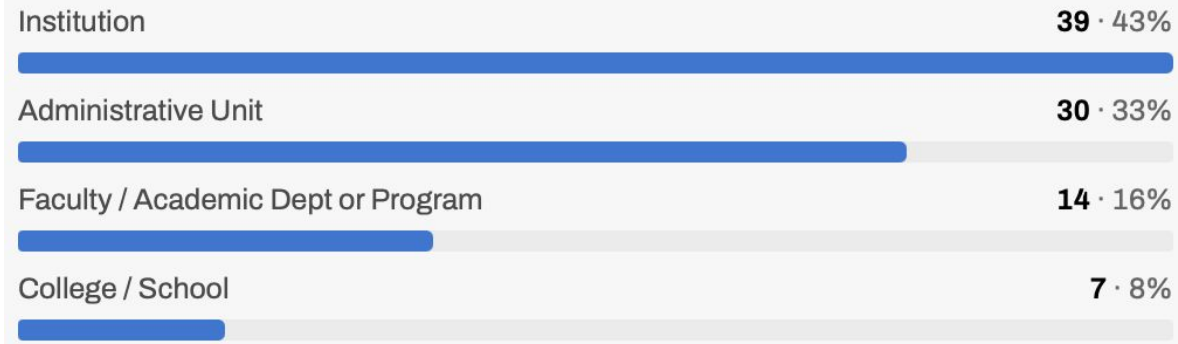
RESEARCH ACTIVITY

Self-described · n = 86



LEVELS WITH ACTUAL ANSWERS

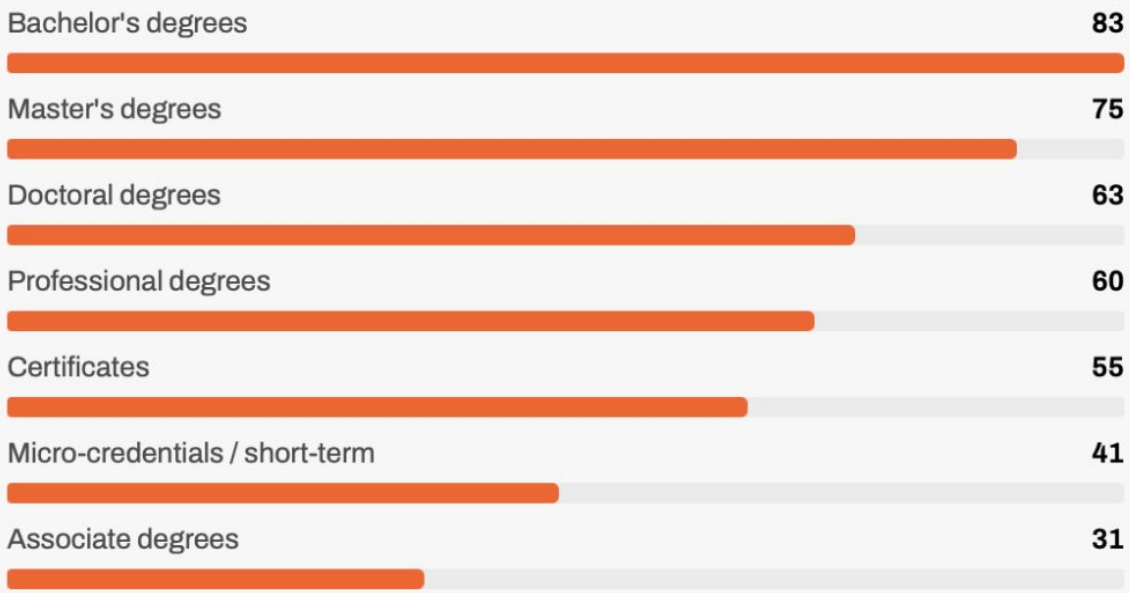
After review · ≥1 ExL item answered · one institution-level response per institution



Institutions

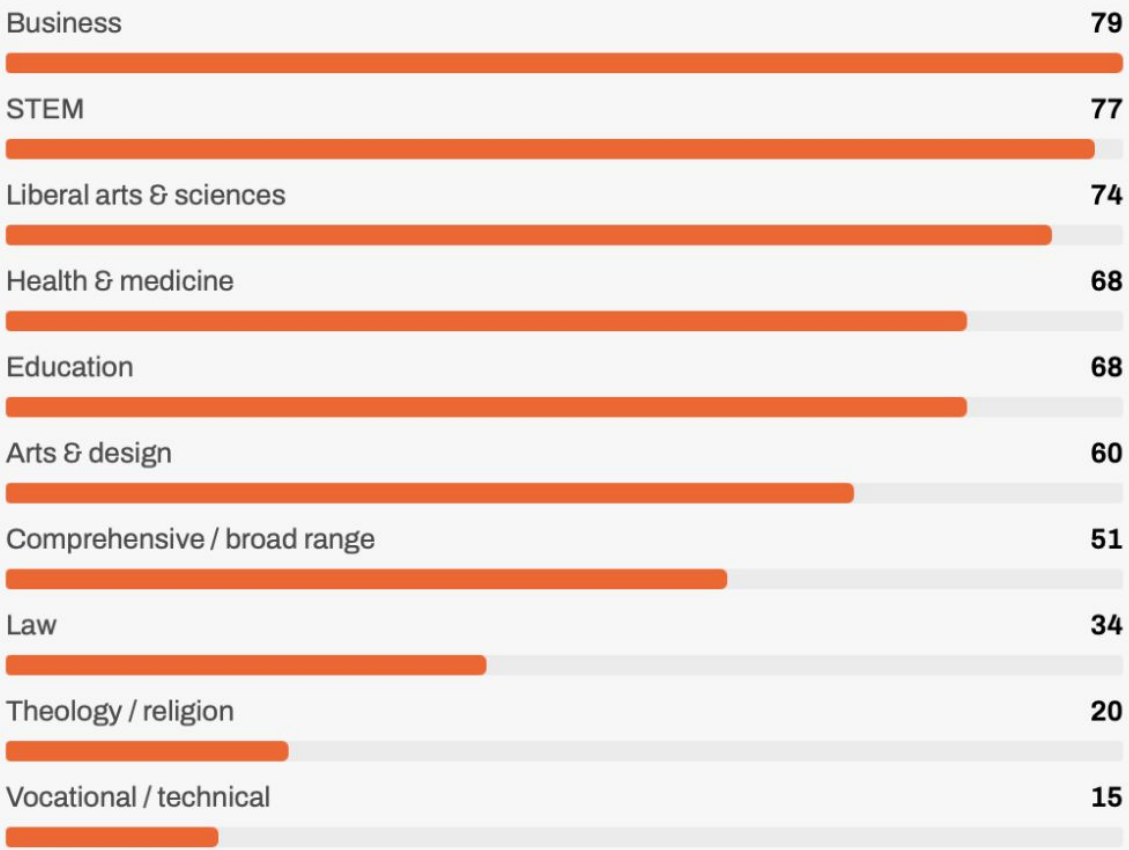
CREDENTIAL LEVELS AWARDED

Multi-select · n = 86



BROAD FIELDS SERVED

Multi-select · n = 86



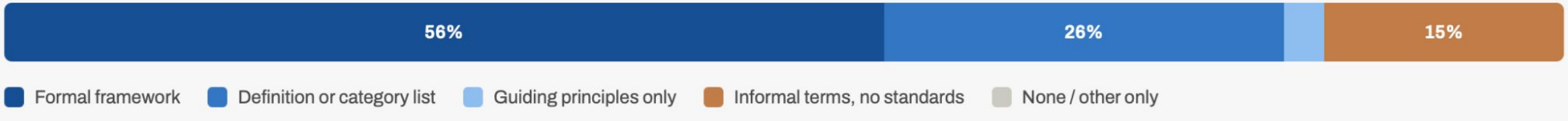
The Formality Ladder

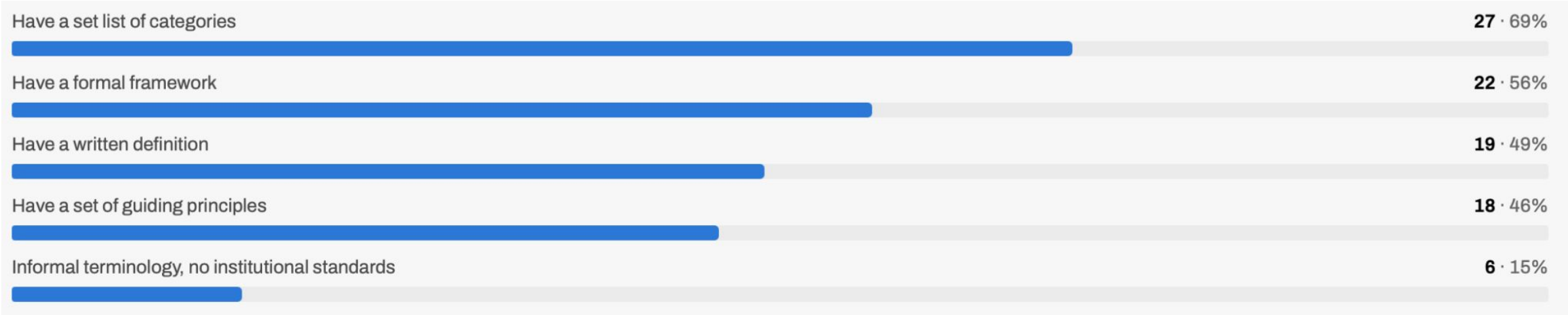
85%
have at least one formal element

56%
have a formal framework

15%
run on informal terms, no standards

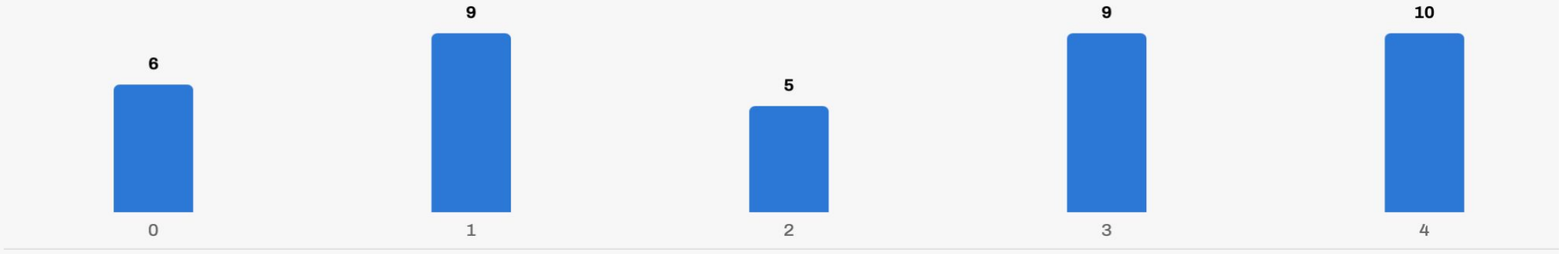
0%
said "I don't know"

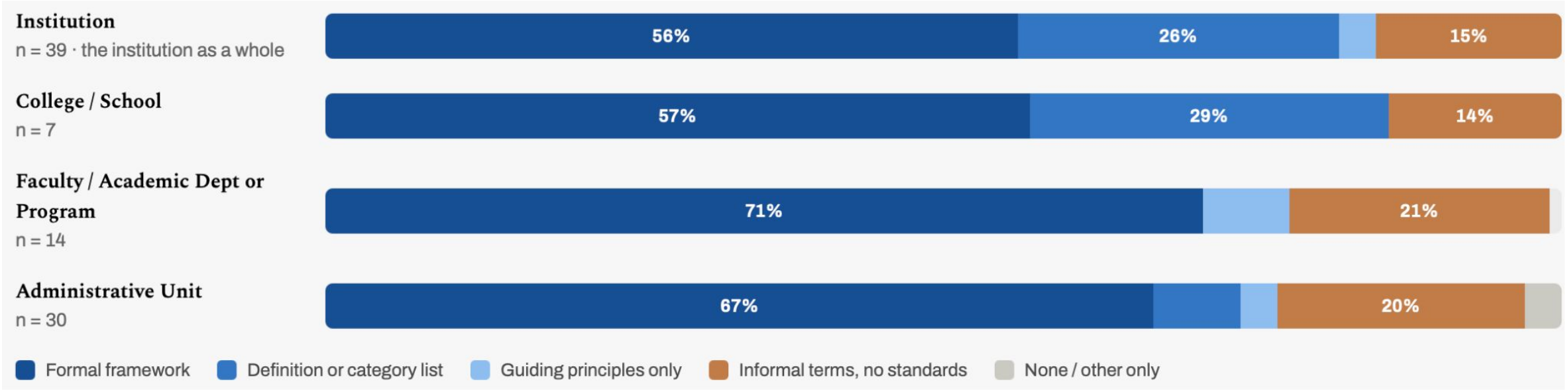




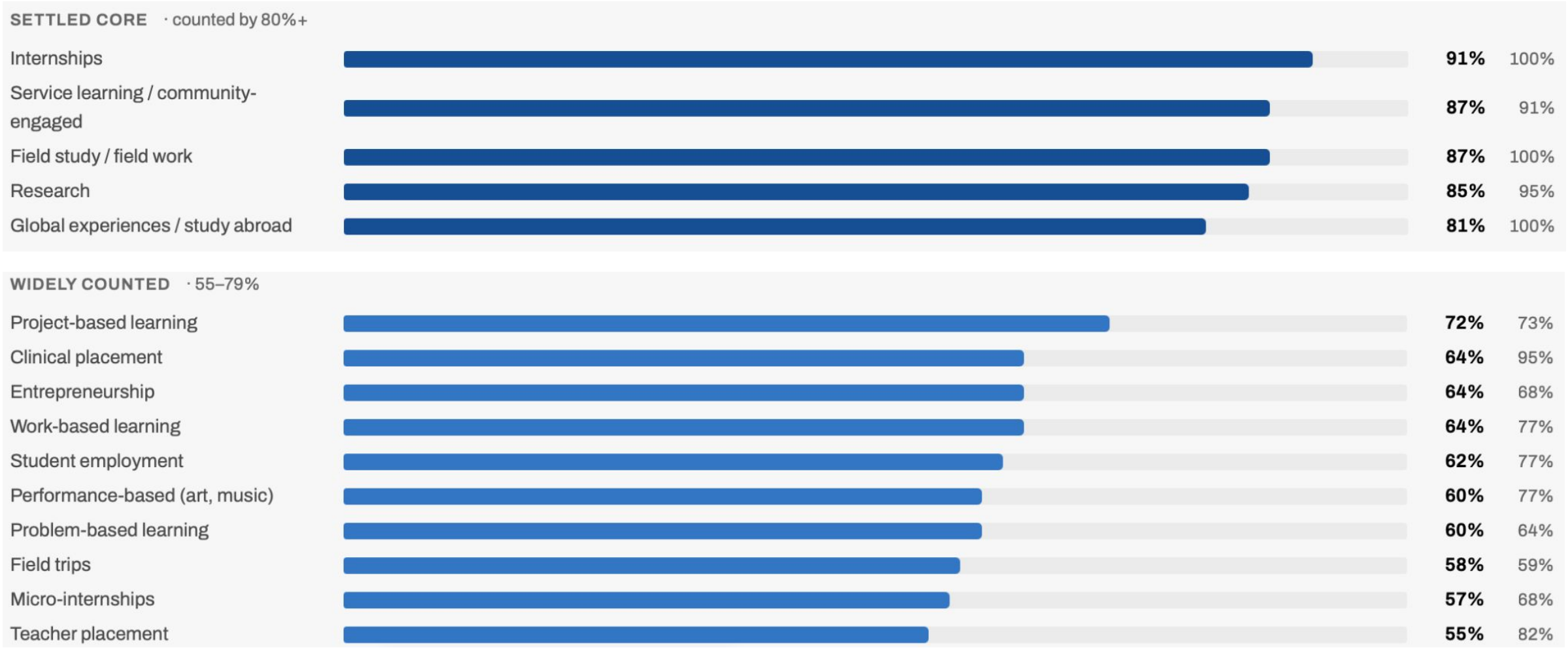
The Formality Ladder

Count of the four formal elements: Framework, Definition, Category List, Guiding Principles

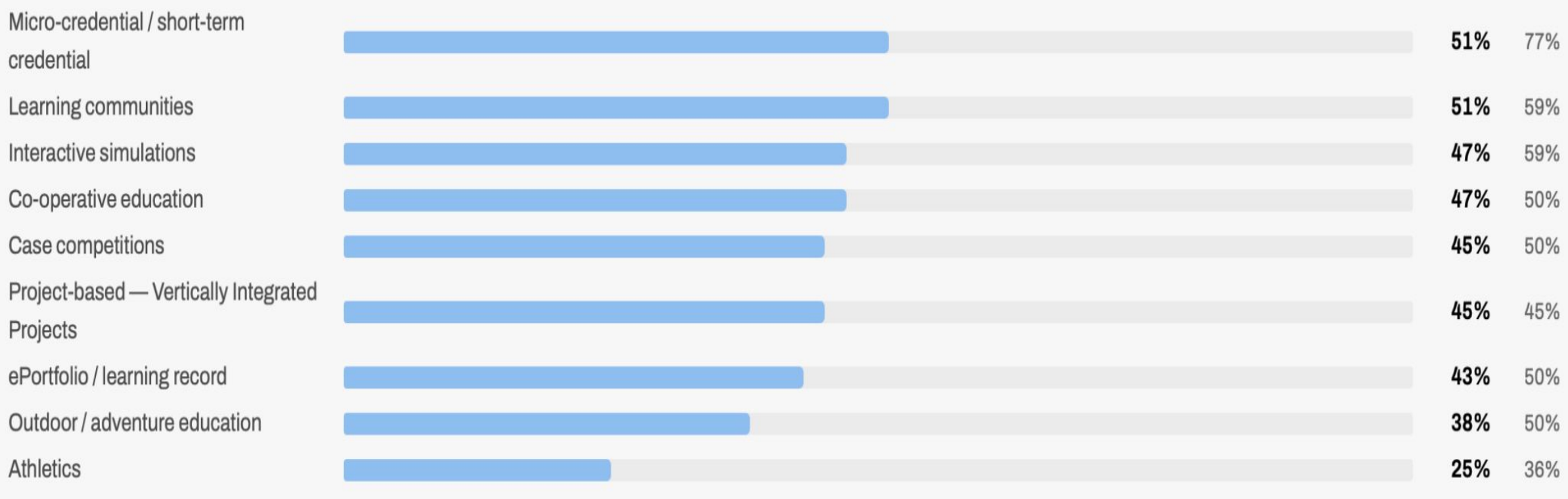




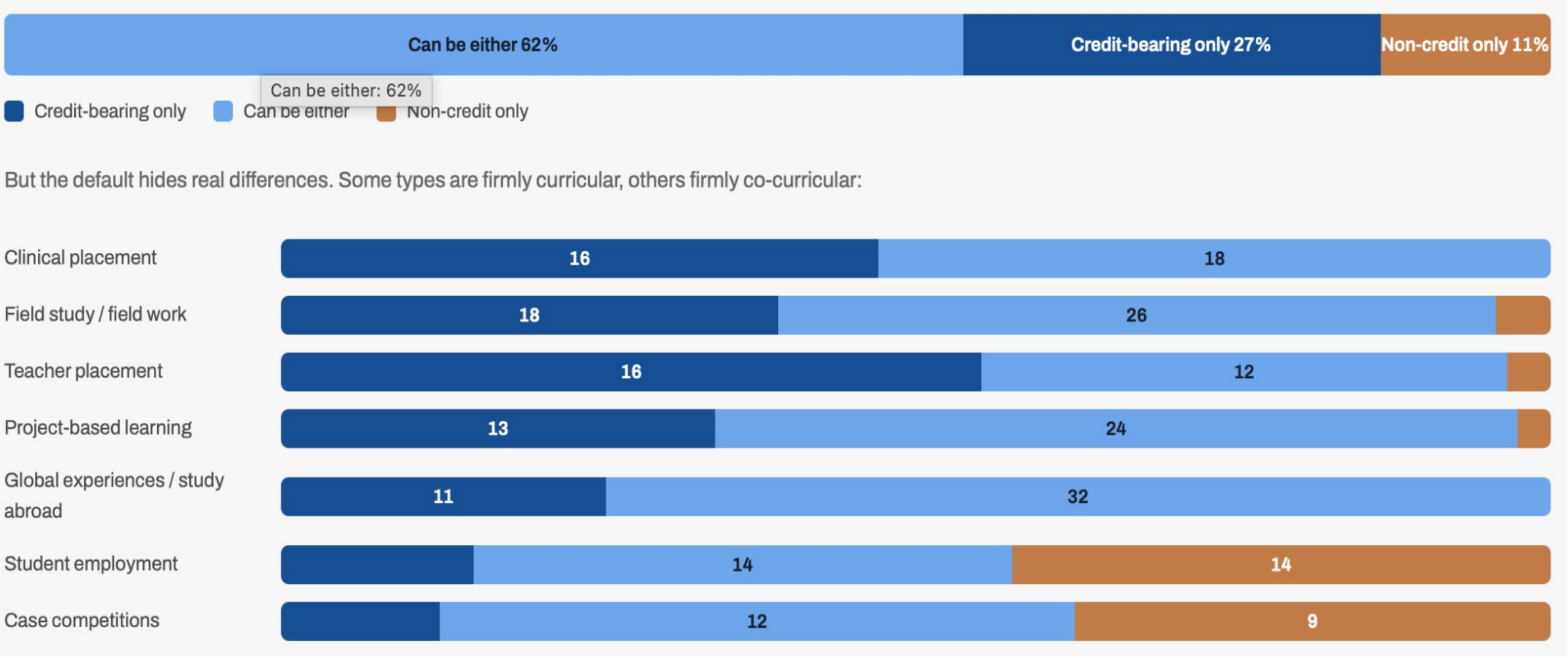
What counts as ExL > widely accepted



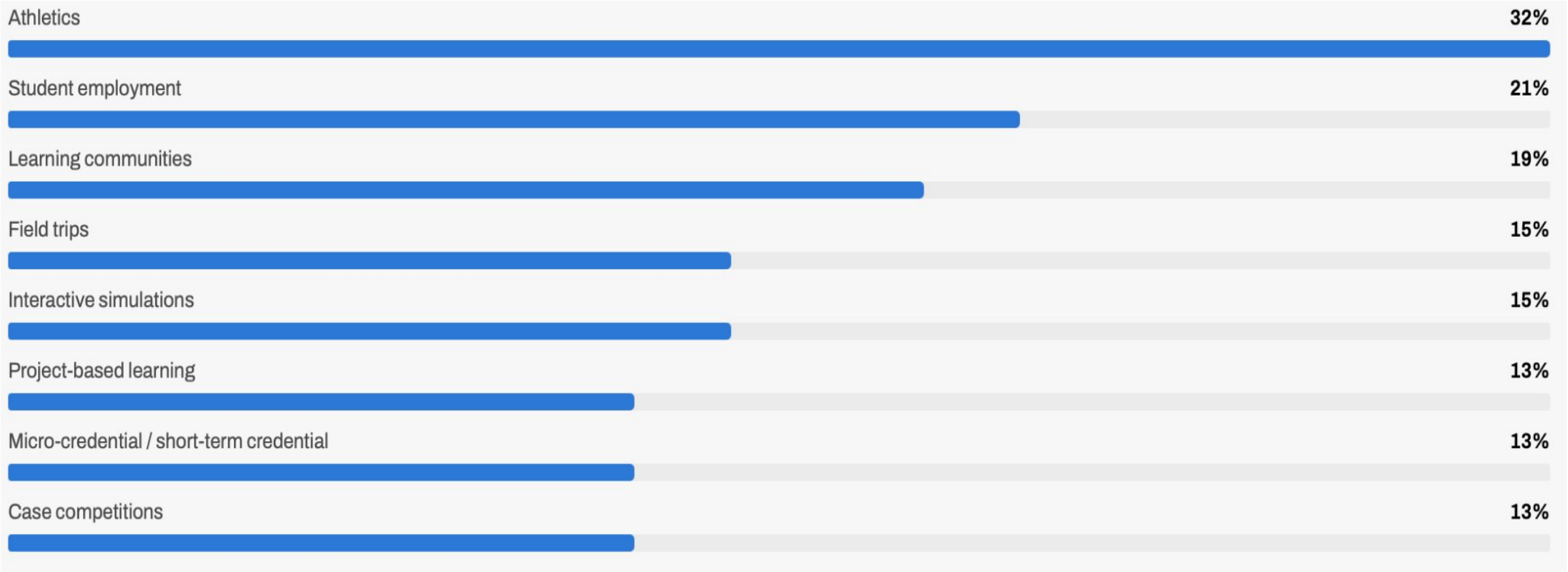
What counts as ExL > institutional choice



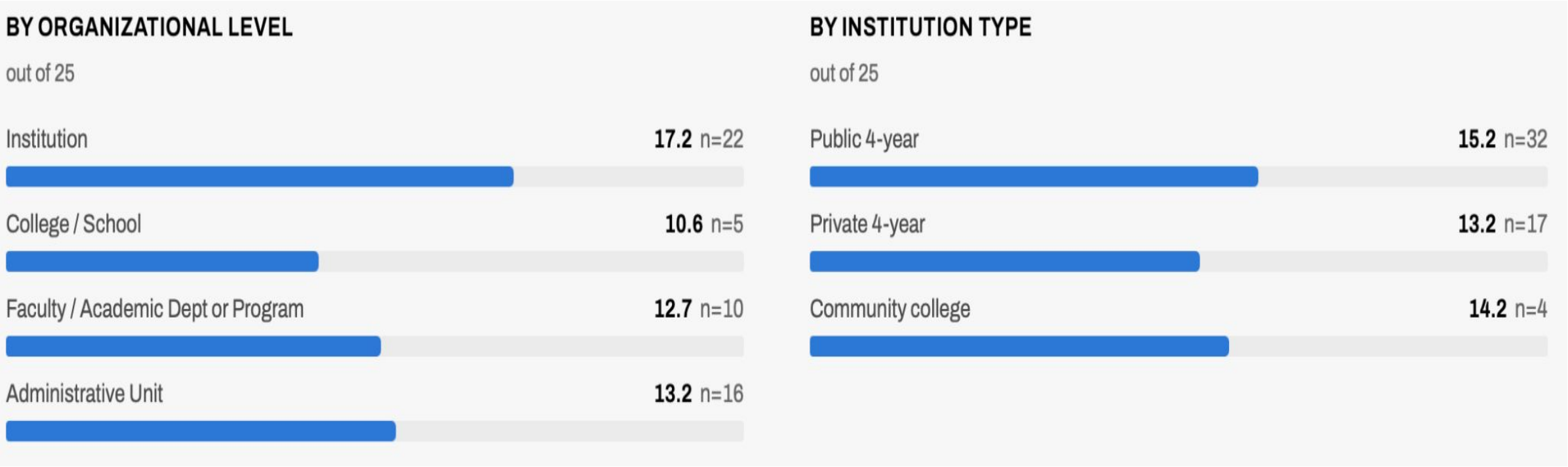
Credit or No-Credit



Offered but not counted as ExL

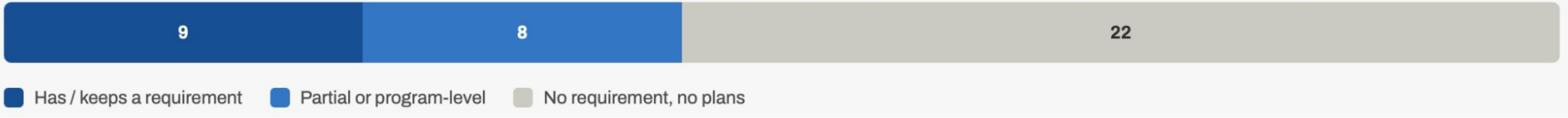


Who is reporting?



Is it required?

23%	21%	56%	21%
have an ExL graduation requirement	partial or program-level requirement	no requirement	no requirement *and* no plans for one



Among the 22 without a requirement
will they create one?

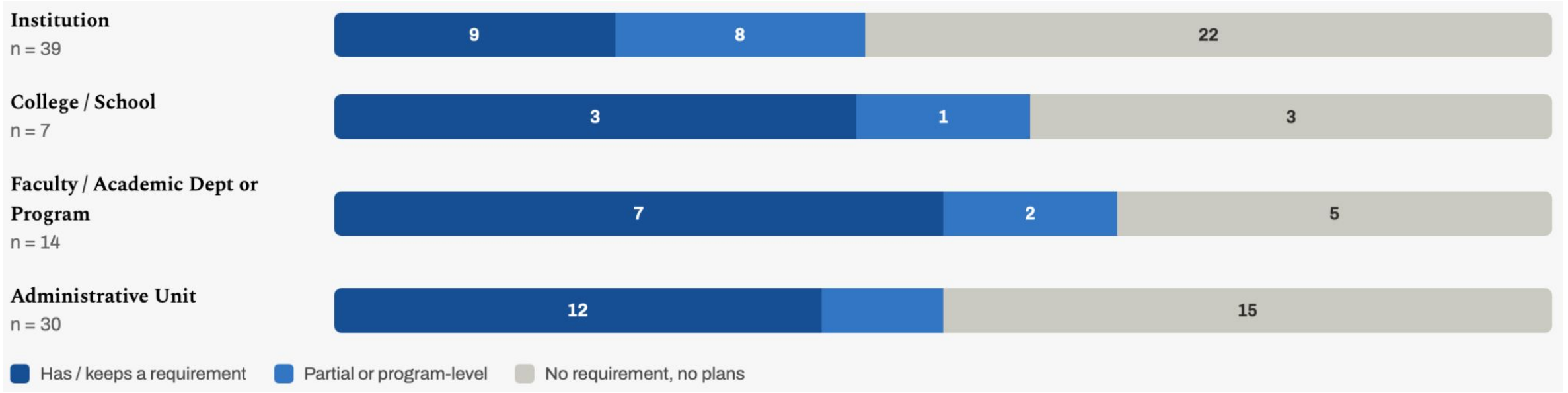


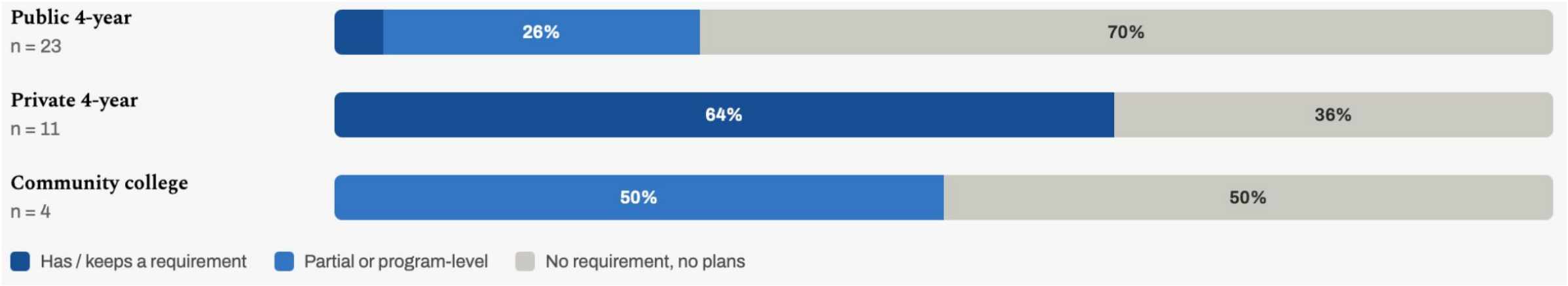
Among the 9 with a requirement
will they revise it?



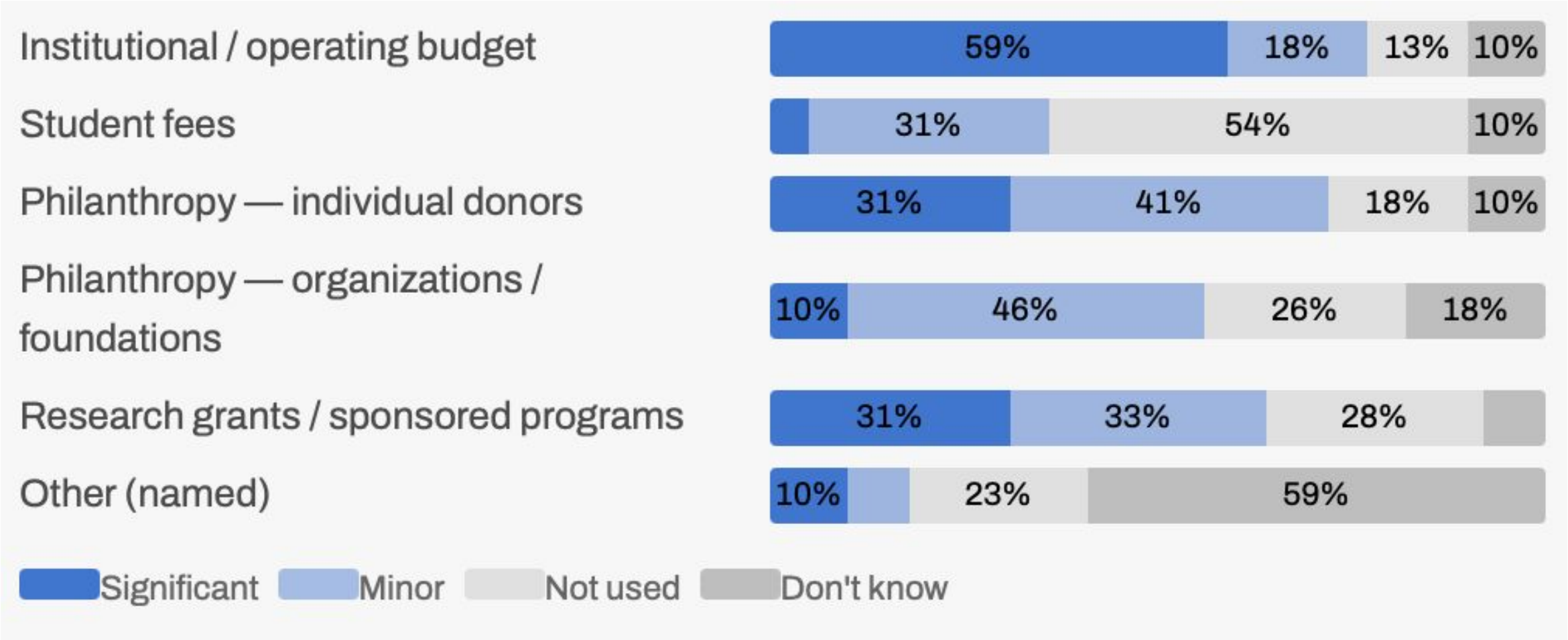


Where requirements live

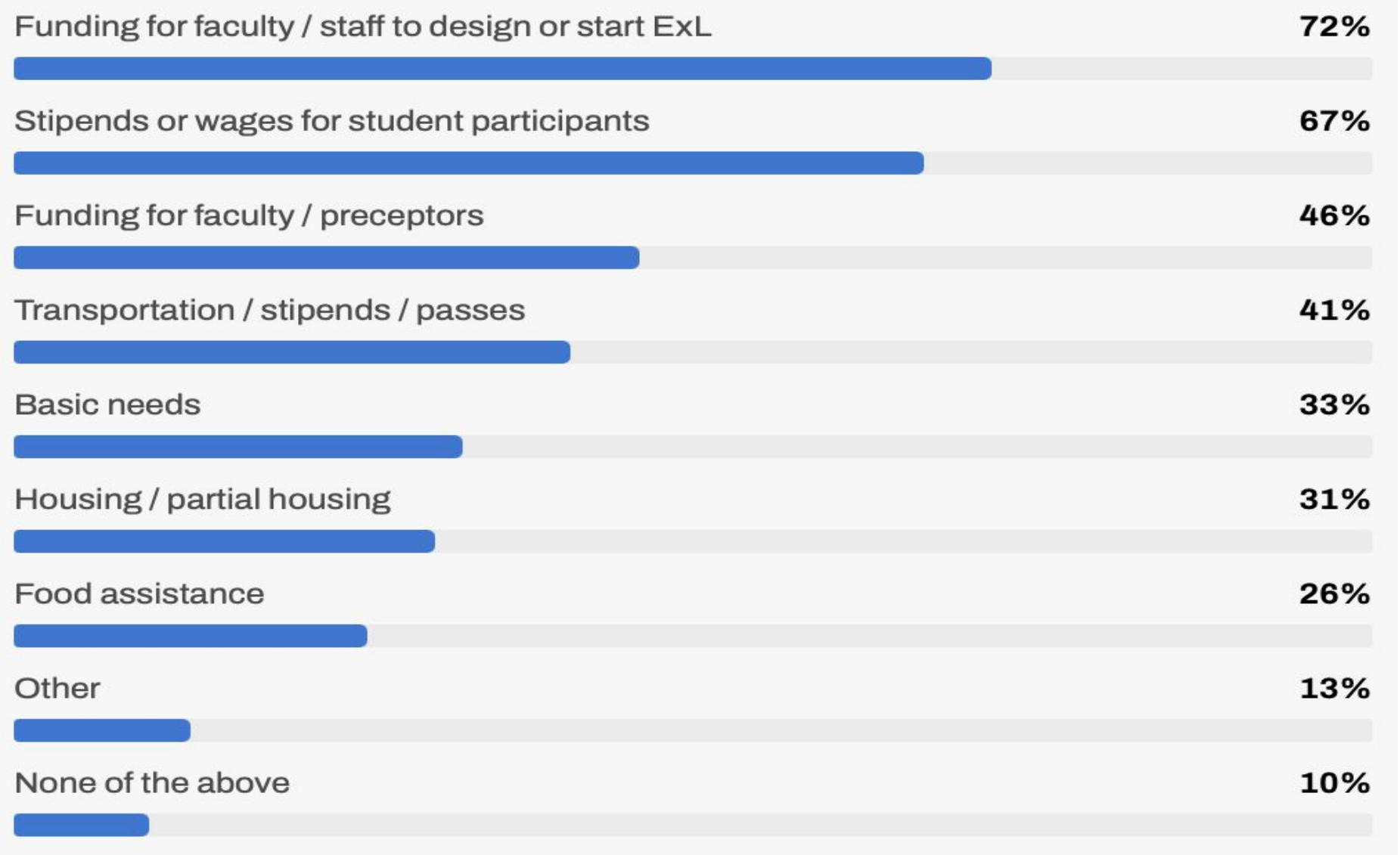




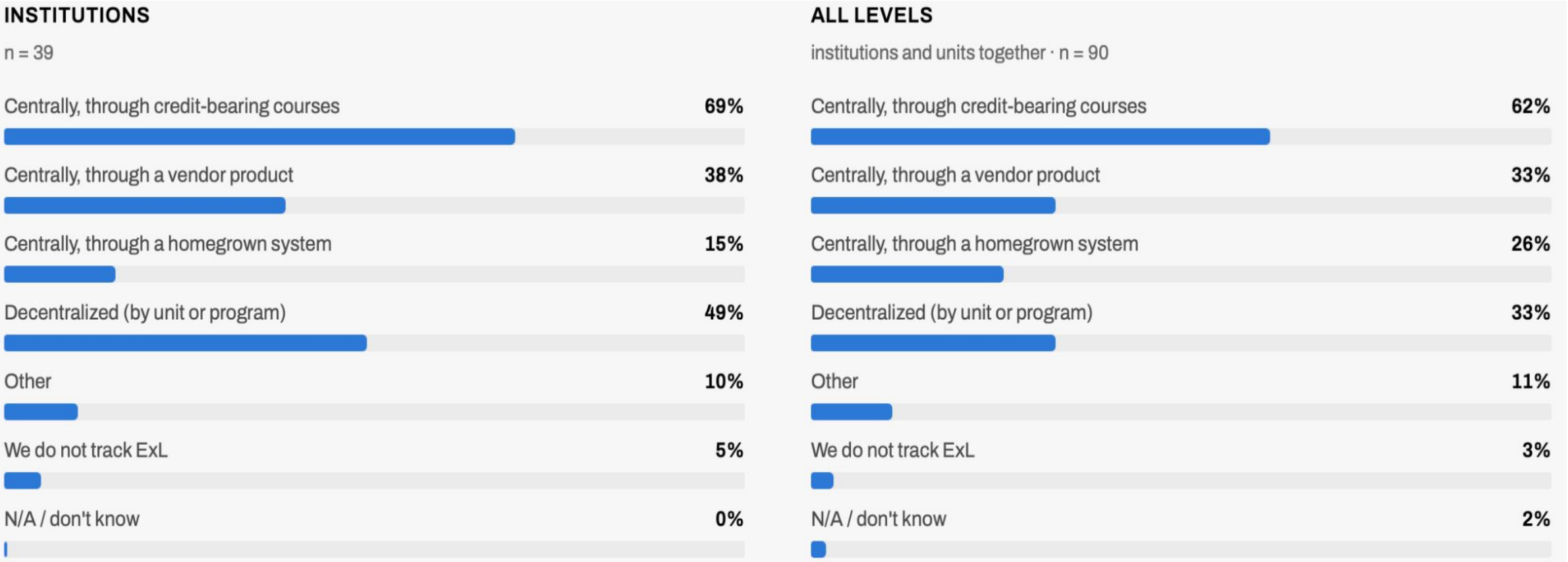
Funding Sources



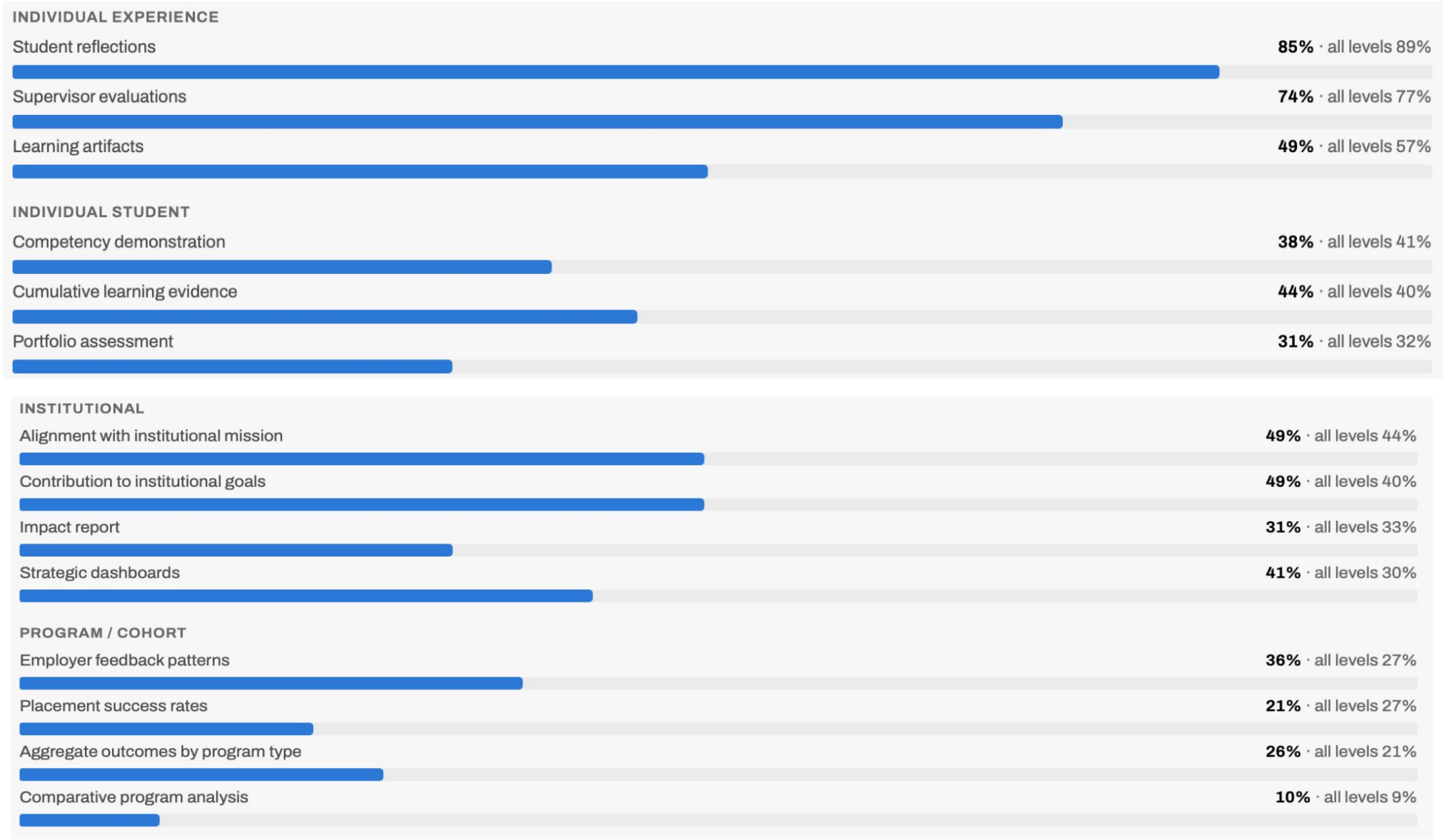
Funding for….


Funding for faculty / staff to design or start ExL
72%
Stipends or wages for student participants
67%
Funding for faculty / preceptors
46%
Transportation / stipends / passes
41%
Basic needs
33%
Housing / partial housing
31%
Food assistance
26%
Other
13%
None of the above
10%

How is ExL Tracked?



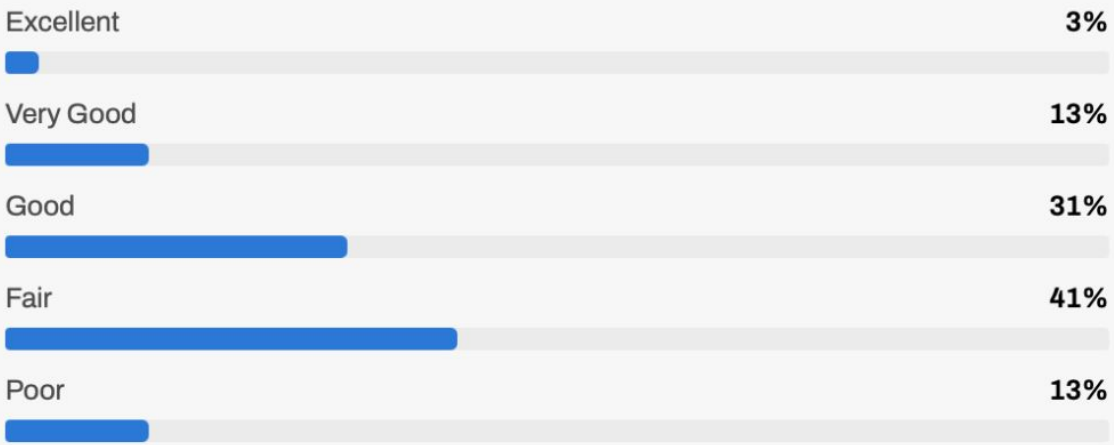
How is ExL Assessed?



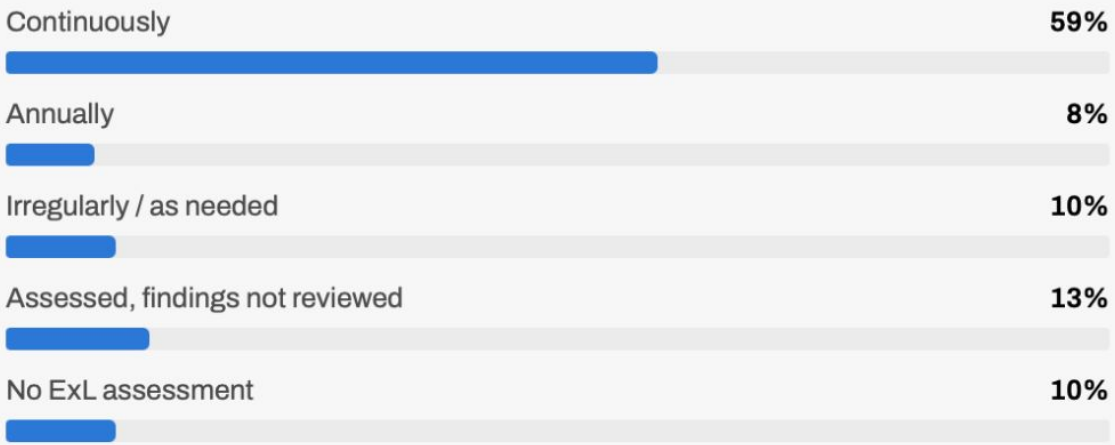
What happens to the results?

"HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE EXL ASSESSMENT?"

self-rating



"HOW OFTEN DO YOU ACT ON THE FINDINGS?"



64%
formally connect ExL to a career-readiness framework

46%
correlate ExL with student-success measures

28%
issue a student-facing co-curricular transcript

From 2025 > 2026

- **Stable ExL Core.** A small set of experiences: Internships, research, service learning, study abroad were counted as ExL by nearly every respondent.
- **No across-the-board requirement.** Most respondents still report no across-the-board ExL requirement.
- **Tracking is now standard** in some form.
- **Assessment of ExL** has much room for improvement.
- We have a **better survey instrument and deeper analysis** moving forward!

Top Priorities *(themes from write-in responses)*

- Expanding participation and embedding ExL across the curriculum
- Improving tracking, assessment, and evidence of impact
- Securing sustainable funding and capacity
- Strengthening institutional coordination and processes
- Connecting ExL to careers and student success
- Increasing visibility, engagement, and faculty support
- Developing more/greater external partnerships