



# California State University Channel Islands

## *Report: Survey of Stakeholders*

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# Objectives

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- I. Gather internal and external opinions of California State University Channel Islands (CSUCI).
- II. Assess perceptions of CSUCI on various qualities and attributes and compare these perceptions with what prospective students are seeking in a college.
- III. Identify areas in which perception can and should improve to strengthen the CSUCI brand.
- IV. Analyze responses across all groups to determine consistent themes, providing direction on shared language for CSUCI's identity and how to communicate that in the future.

# Methodology

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# Methodology

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We worked with the CSUCI team to conduct an online survey of the following audiences:

- Internal Audiences
  - Current students
  - Faculty, staff, and administrators
  - Alumni
  - Parents of current students
- External Audiences
  - Prospective students\*
  - Counselors and educators
  - Workforce partners

ADV created all survey questionnaires with input, feedback, and recommendations from several CSUCI faculty, staff, and administrators.

\* The sample of prospective students consisted of CSUCI's own inquiries and applicants. We focus on this group intentionally as these are the students CSUCI is most likely to attract to the University and therefore influence with messaging and brand positioning. These students are also able to provide *informed* opinions of CSUCI that prospective students unfamiliar with the University could not.

# Methodology

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CSUCI distributed the survey by email to current students and all employees.

ADV administered the survey to all other audiences.

- All alumni with email addresses on file with the University received the survey.
- The sample of parents of current students was compiled through registries provided by the office for residence life.

Reminders were sent to all audiences to bolster response.

Current students, prospective students, and counselors were incentivized to take the survey with the promise that 400 total would be randomly-selected to receive a \$15 Amazon gift card. ADV managed the selection and distribution of incentives.

# Methodology

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Fieldwork took place between April 27 and May 12, 2022.

Response to the survey was strong overall; details of respondent counts in the table below:

Audience	Complete	Partial	Total
Current students	659	269	928
Faculty, staff, and administrators	214	132	346
Alumni	72	65	137
Parents of current students	49	41	90
<b><i>Internal Total</i></b>	<b>994</b>	<b>507</b>	<b>1,501</b>
Prospective students	320	104	424
Counselors	38	9	47

# SECTION I: Prospective Students

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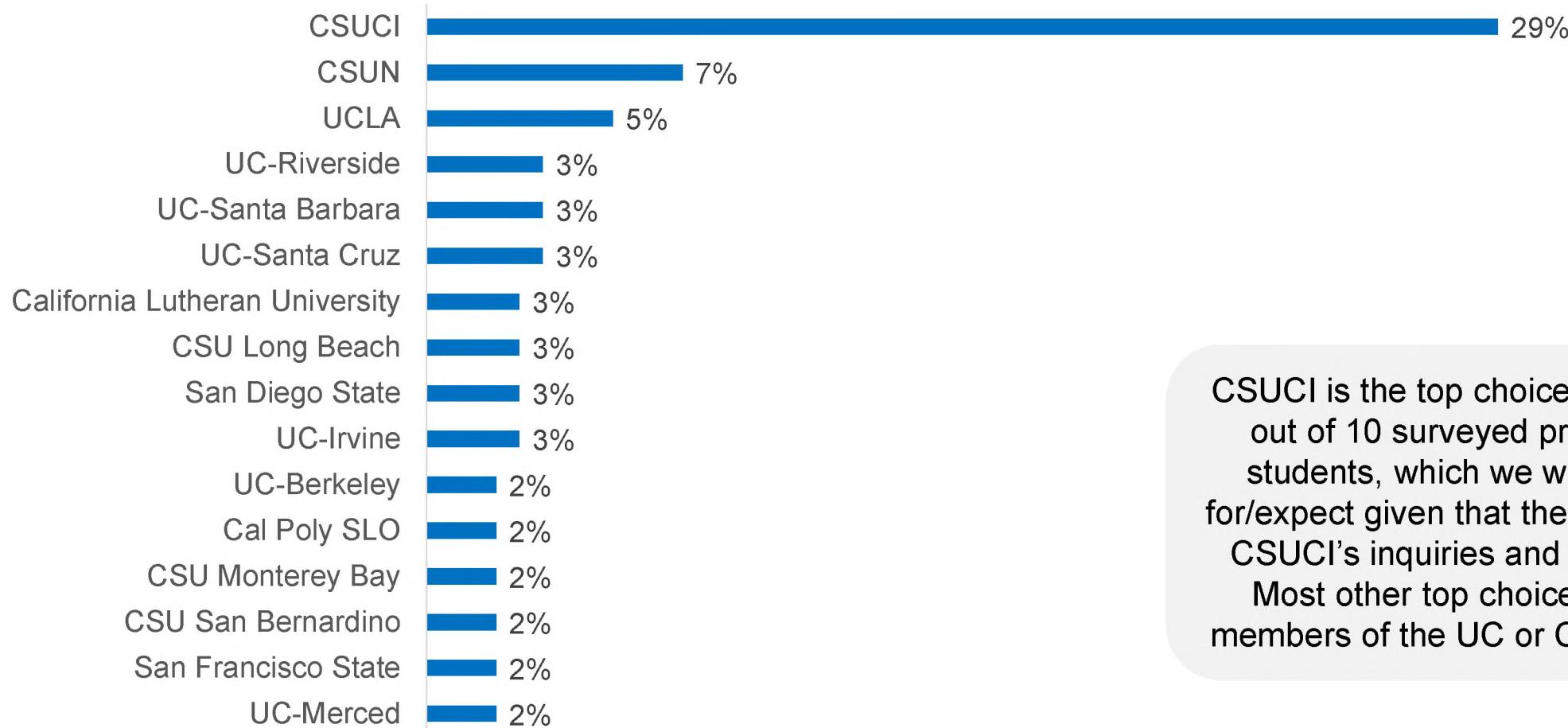
# Select Audience Characteristics

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# Top Choice College or University

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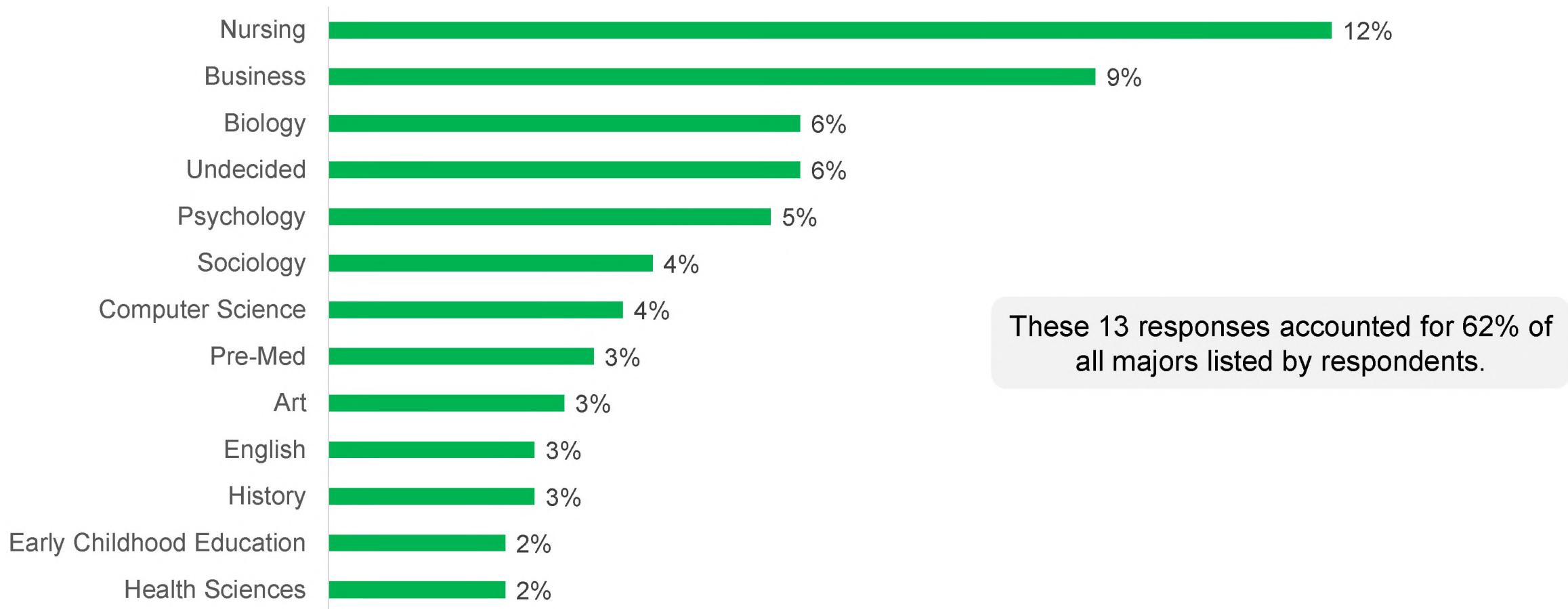
CSUCI is the top choice for nearly 3 out of 10 surveyed prospective students, which we would hope for/expect given that the sample was CSUCI's inquiries and applicants. Most other top choices include members of the UC or CSU system.

n=396

Q. *What is your top-choice college or university at this time?*

# Intended Major

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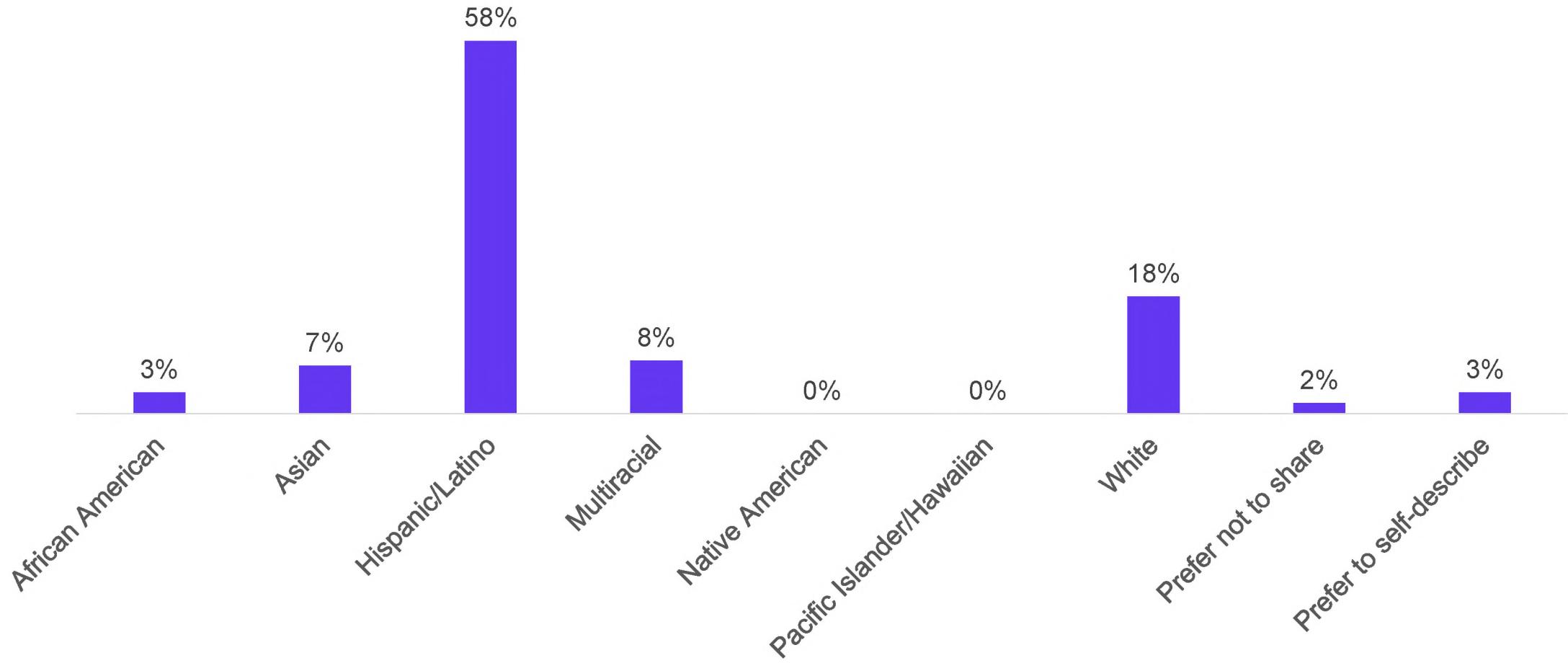


n=396

Q. *What major(s) do you plan to study?*

# Race and Ethnicity

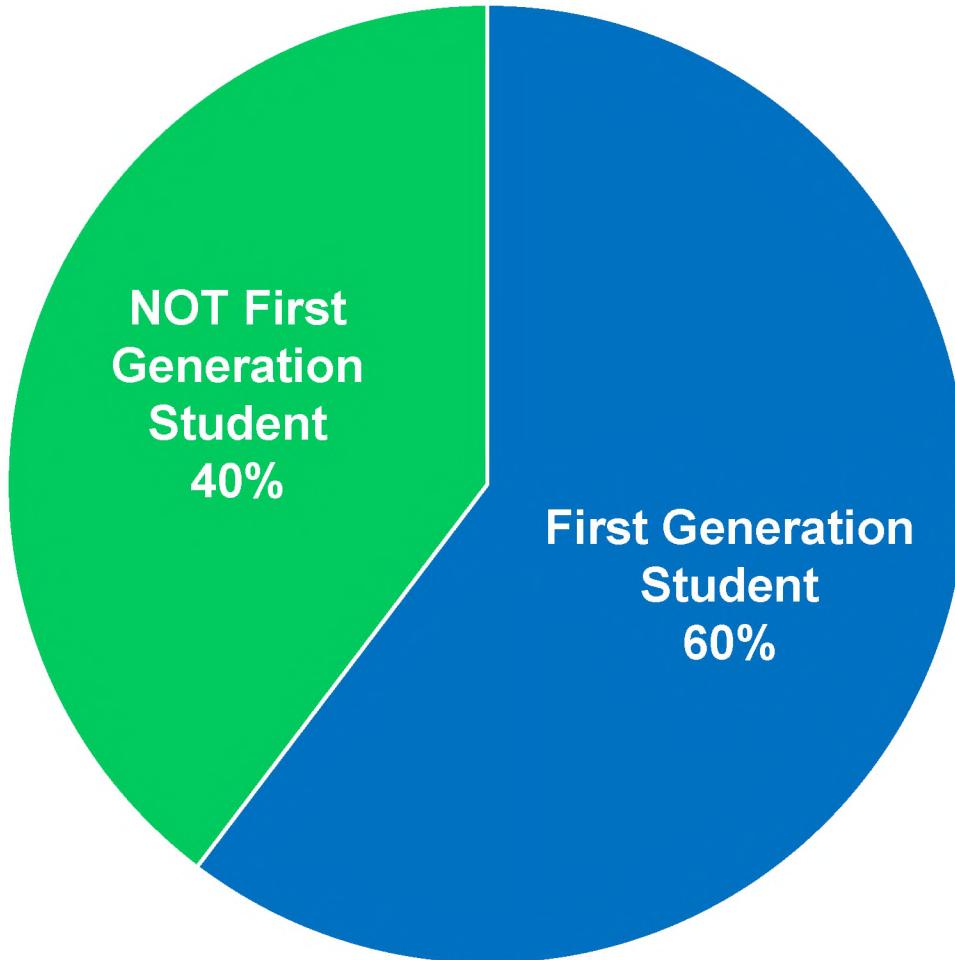
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$n=386$

# First Generation Students

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*n=386*

# Priorities for Prospective Students

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# Priorities

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We began the survey by asking prospective students to rate the importance of 20 college attributes. This list was compiled based on characteristics that are typical top considerations for prospective students as well as themes from our conversations with CSUCI students, faculty, staff, and administrators as distinguishing traits of the University.

- Participants used a five-point scale to rate for importance (1-Not at all important; 5-Very important).

The results in the table on the following page show that CSUCI's prospective students prioritize ***graduates' outcomes*** and the ***quality of their major*** above all else. This is notable for several reasons:

1. Prospective students (and their families) have become increasingly focused on how a university prepares its students for careers. This heightened emphasis on the "return" element of return on investment has come about after decades of rising college costs, mounting student debt, and a feeling that colleges and universities were not sufficiently leading their students to jobs.
2. At the same time, there has been a greater focus on not just where a student chooses to study, but *what* they choose to study. Not all majors lead to jobs equally. Therefore, students have become more discerning consumers about the field they pursue and the university's strengths in that area. In our experience with related surveys, we have seen the importance of one's intended major rise consistently year after year.

*(discussion continued after the table on the following page)*

	Attribute	Rating (out of 5.00)
Top Priorities	Graduates get good jobs in their field	4.72
	Quality of my major	4.71
	Safety of the campus and surrounding community	4.68
	Hands-on learning opportunities	4.68
	Quality of faculty as teachers and mentors	4.65
	Putting students first	4.62
	Overall value of the education - the balance between quality and cost	4.60
Secondary Priorities	Cost of attendance	4.57
	Quality of academic advising	4.46
	Internship opportunities	4.39
	Overall academic reputation	4.37
	Employers value a degree from the university	4.24
	Opportunities for students to do research	4.24
	Offering smaller classes for more personal attention	4.21
	Sense of community	4.16
	Location in a desirable city, town, or area	4.11
	Diversity of the student body	4.08
	Diversity of faculty and staff	4.03
	Active student life with clubs, events, traditions, etc.	3.86
	Things to do off campus for fun and entertainment	3.72

# Priorities (cont.)

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The **safety of the campus and surrounding community** appears uncommonly high on this list, perhaps reflective of where some students currently live or simply the importance in this region of being in an area that is safe and comfortable.

Other academic qualities such as **opportunities for hands-on learning** and the **quality of faculty as teachers and mentors** are also top priorities.

Collectively, we find high importance assigned to all elements of return on investment – i.e., the quality of the education for the price paid and what it leads to.

Notably, most of these characteristics are quite important to CSUCI's prospective students. Even the lowest-rated qualities related to student life still garnered average ratings in the high 3's on a five-point scale.

# Ideal College Environment

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In addition to the attributes that are important to prospective students, we also wanted to know about the type of college environment they're looking for.

We presented prospective students with a list of 25 words and phrases that could describe a college's culture or atmosphere. Each participant selected up to 5 options that are most important to them.

Results on the following page show that aspects of the university's community are highly important, such as being ***supportive***, ***friendly***, and ***welcoming***.

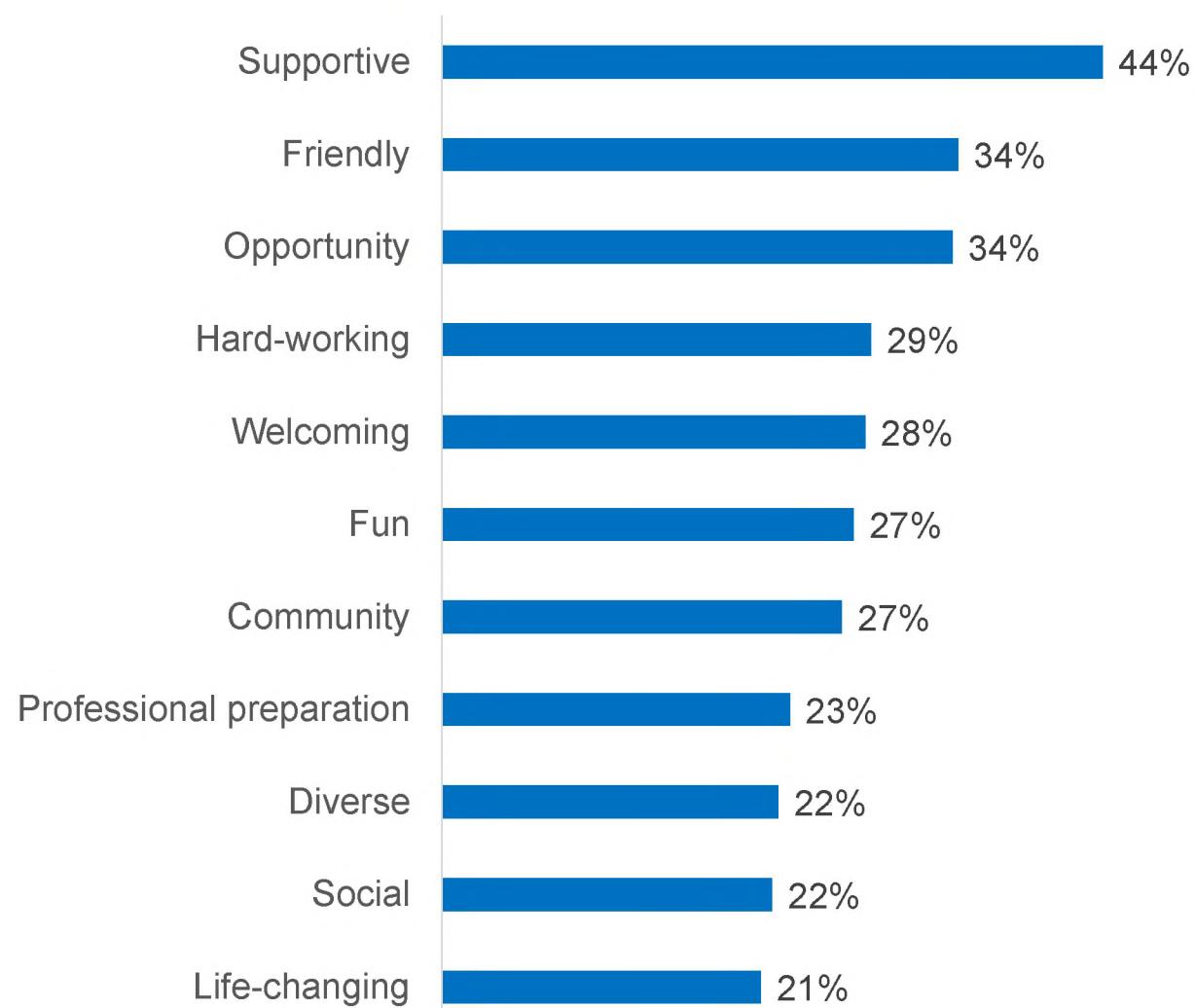
Prospective students also have an element of practicality as they expect the culture of the university to be ***hard-working*** and value ***professional preparation***.

There is also an appreciation for the non-academic aspects of college too as prospective students seek a ***fun*** and ***social*** atmosphere.

Additionally, given that so many of CSUCI's students would be the first in their families to graduate from college, there is a focus on the ***opportunity*** and ***life-changing*** nature of college. This level of priority assigned to these qualities is high in our experience, suggesting they are disproportionately important to CSUCI's prospective students.

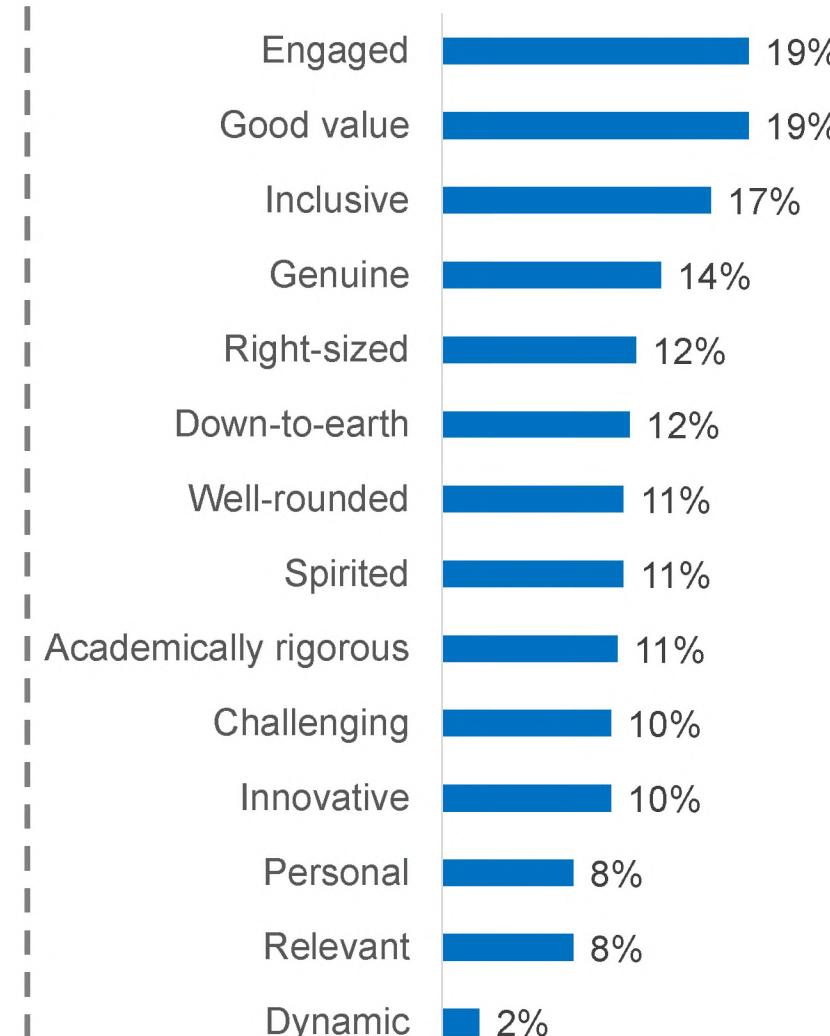
## Most Important

*Selected by at least 20%*



## Less Important

*Selected by less than 20%*



*n=386*

*Q. Which of the following qualities are most important to you when it comes to the college environment you're seeking?*

# Learning about Colleges and Website Priorities

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# Resources to Learn About Colleges

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We also sought to better understand the channels of information prospective students use to learn about colleges and universities.

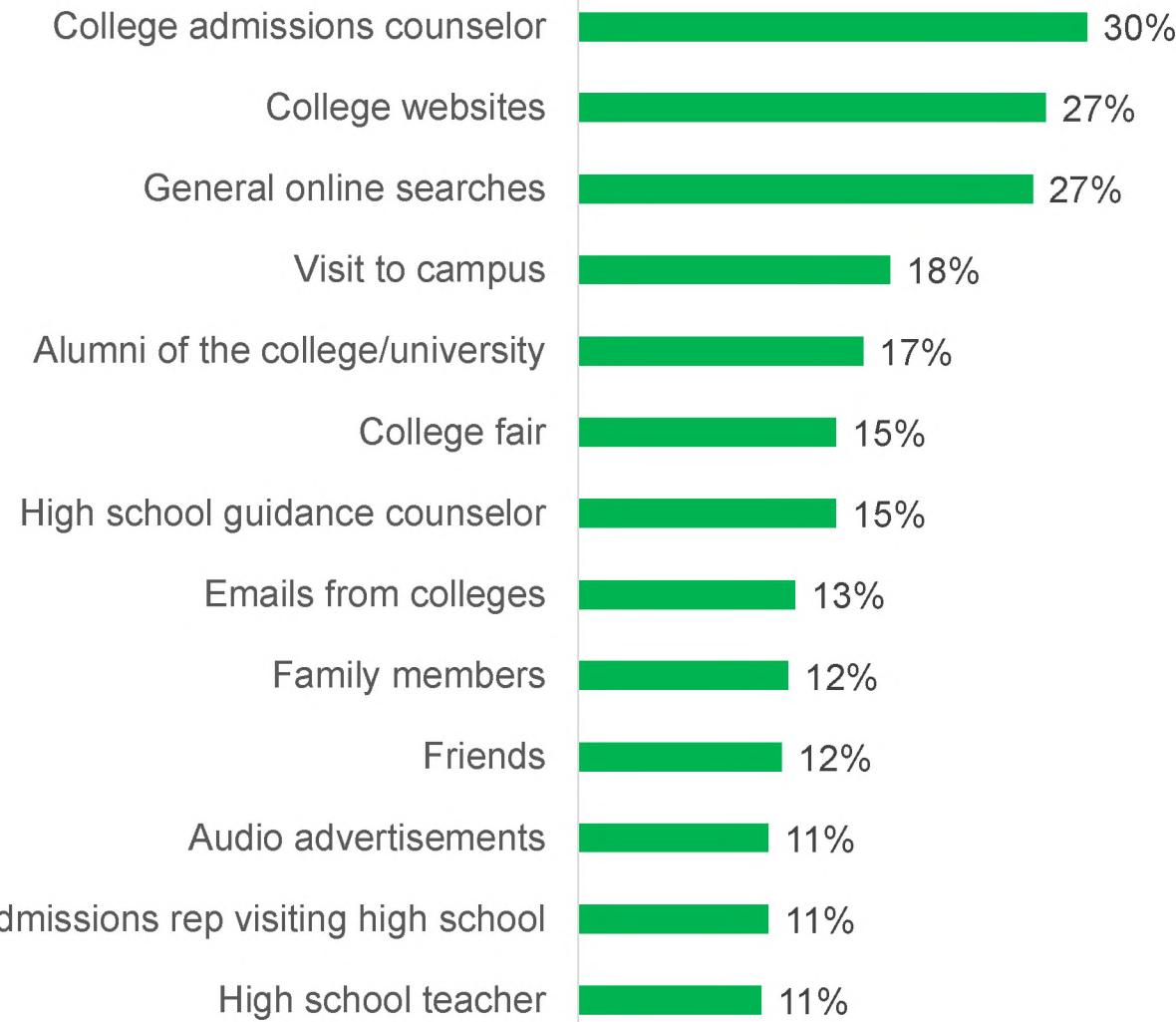
The charts on the following page show three top sources of information: **college admissions counselors**, **college websites**, and **general online searches**.

This demonstrates that while much of the college search and application process is online, the overall experience is still quite human. CSUCI's Admissions staff must represent the University well in every interaction they have with prospective students and their families.

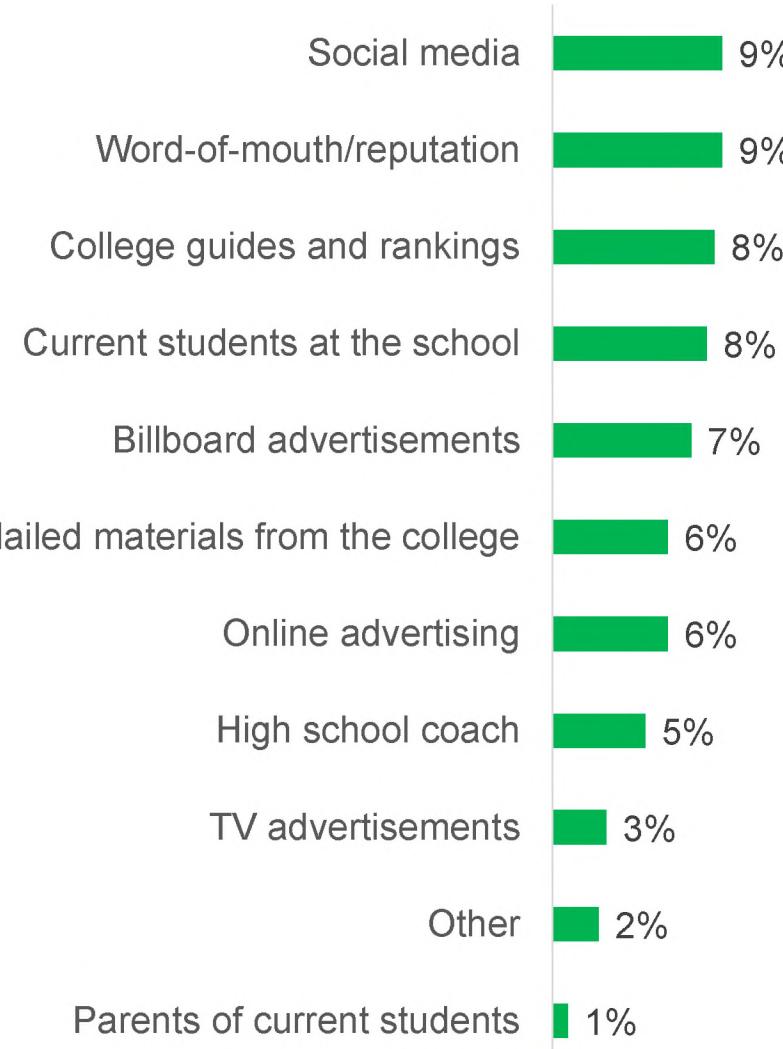
CSUCI's website is also an incredibly important source of information. It is the digital front door of the University and must reflect well on the institution. As discussed later in this report, there are several ways in which the CSUCI website can and should be improved for stronger content, better storytelling, and a more compelling creative representation of the University.

*(discussion continued after the chart on the following page)*

**Most Helpful**  
*Selected by at least 10%*



**Less Helpful**  
*Selected by less than 10%*



*n=386 Q. What people, resources, or tools have been most helpful for you in collecting information about colleges and universities?*

# Resources to Learn About Colleges (cont.)

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It is notable that ***alumni of the college/university*** appears fifth on this list, right after visits to campus. This is not typical in our experience and implies that CSUCI's prospective students are looking to their older siblings, other relatives, friends, etc. for insights into the colleges they're considering.

This networked-relationships approach to collecting information is an asset for CSUCI because, as we will show later, CSUCI's alumni are strong advocates for the University and therefore can be brand ambassadors for you with prospective students.

In other years, we might expect ***visit to campus*** and ***high school guidance counselor*** to be more highly-used resources. However, the pandemic has inevitably affected students' ability to do regular campus tours. Further, with so much of the past two years being online, students may not have engaged with their guidance counselors as regularly or as meaningfully as they would have otherwise.

# College Website Information

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We also sought to gain insight into prospective students' website journeys by determining the topics most important to them when browsing a college website.

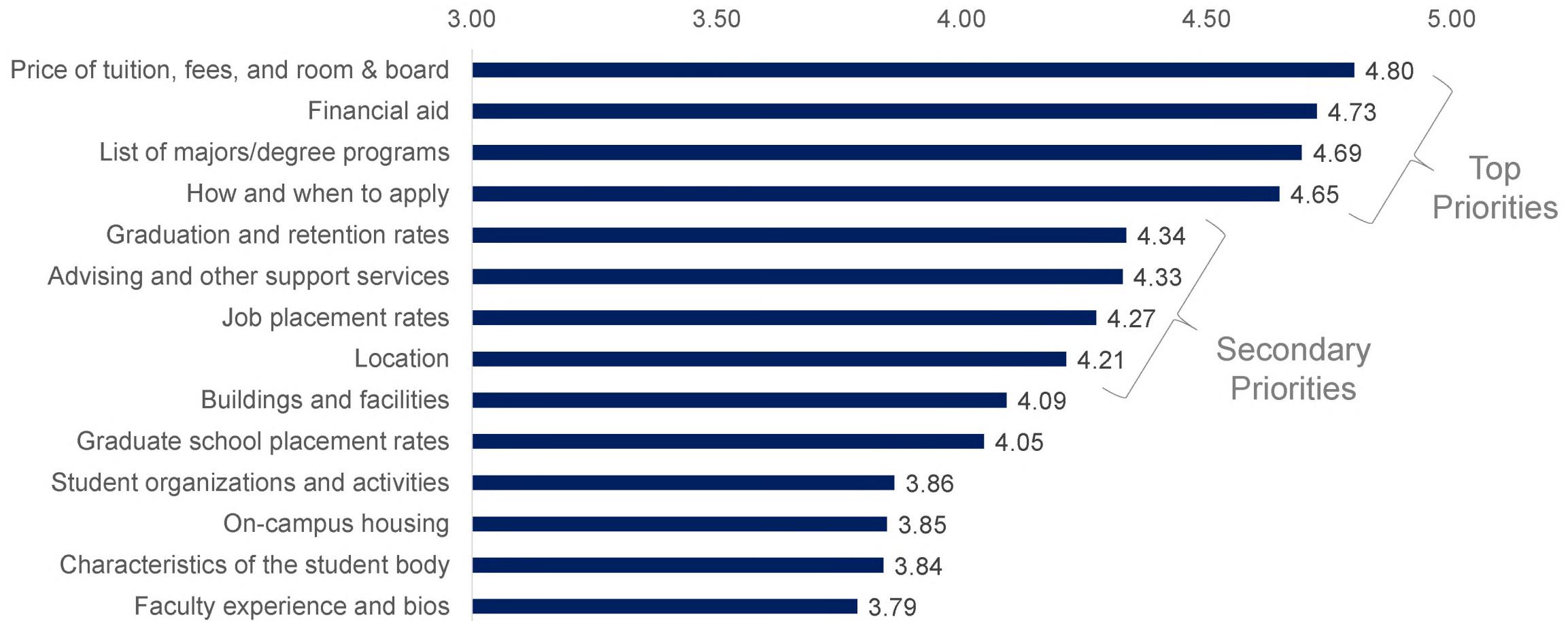
The chart on the following page shows a set of top priorities focusing on ***price, financial aid, majors offered***, and practical information about the ***application process***.

These are logical and expected priorities for prospective students.

Perhaps more interesting is the secondary priorities, which include ***retention and graduation rates, advising, and job placement rates***.

These are notable because they rarely receive prominent placement in most college websites today.

# College Website Information



n=386

Q. When looking at a college's website, how important is the following information to you? (5-point scale)

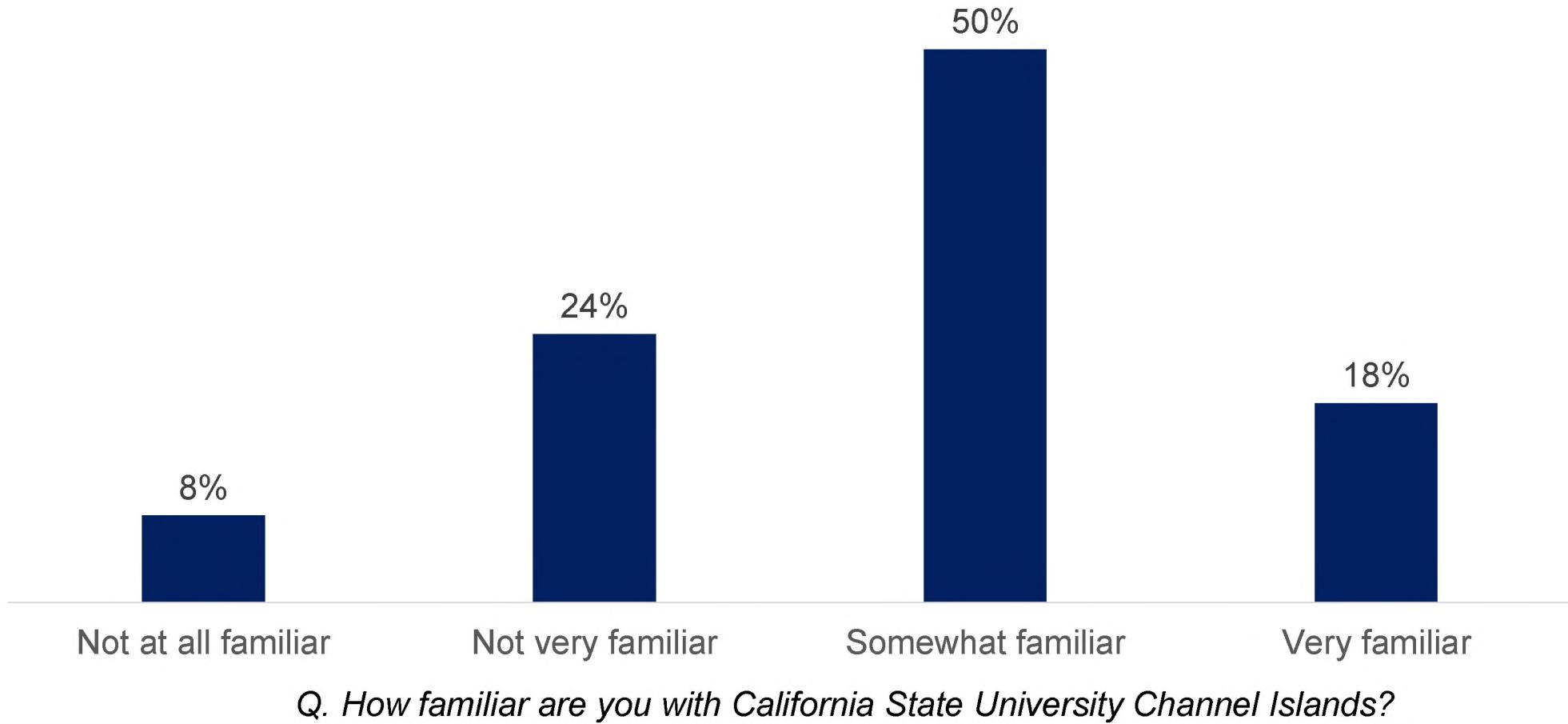
# Perceptions of CSUCI

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# Two of our three prospective students are somewhat or very familiar with CSUCI

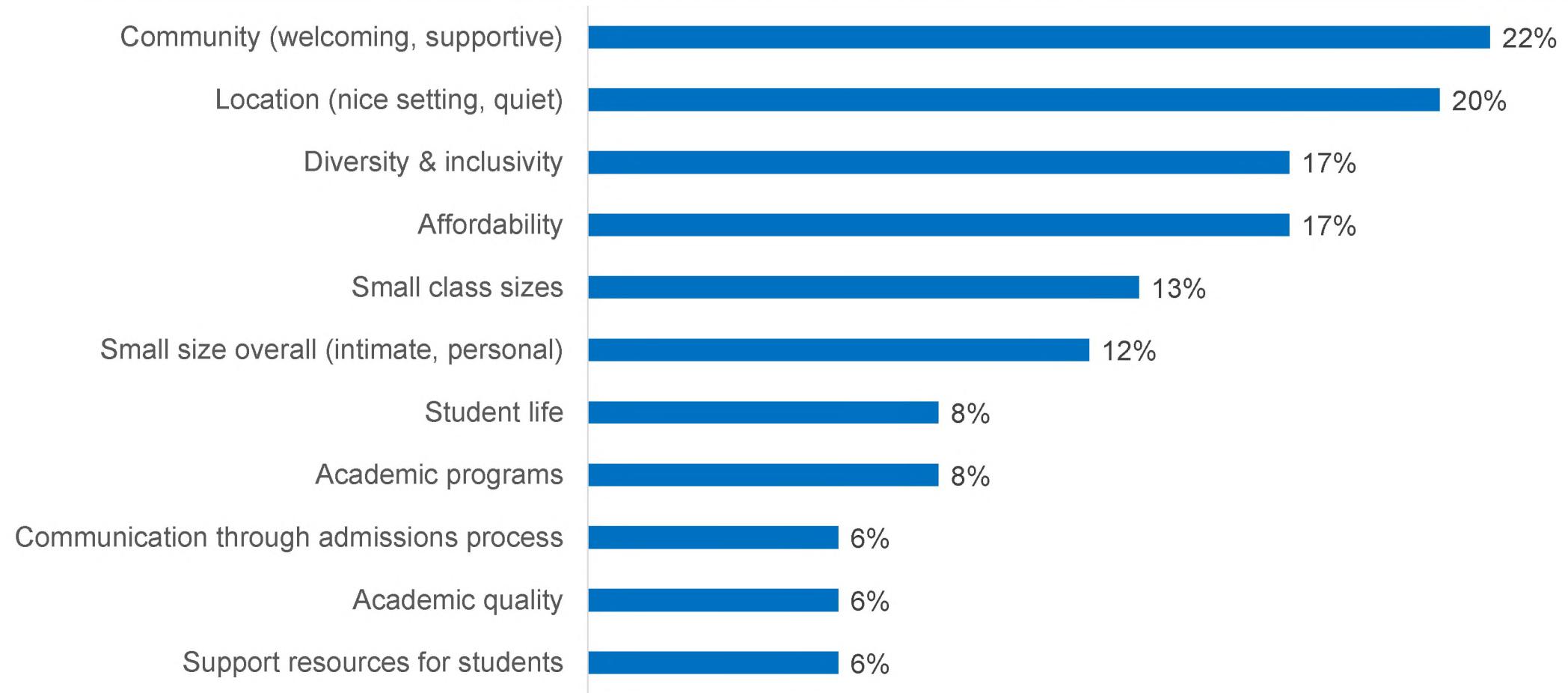
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*n=386*

# Top perceived strengths are CSUCI's community, location, diversity, and affordability

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n=204

Q. *What would you say are CSUCI's strengths? (open-ended)*

# CSUCI's Strengths | Verbatim Responses

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*Close proximity, diverse culture, social and friendly environment*

*It's a very diverse and unique school whose environment is somewhat inclusive. I admire that the school is very communicative and I also think it's extremely underrated!*

*Liberal arts style, well rounded, more affordable, nearby to me, has programs that I like, seems fun to go to*

*They are so friendly!*

*CSUCI is a very good chance for me to succeed and everything in this school will help any and all students.*

*Great reputation for putting students first and smaller classes where students can have more access to the professors.*

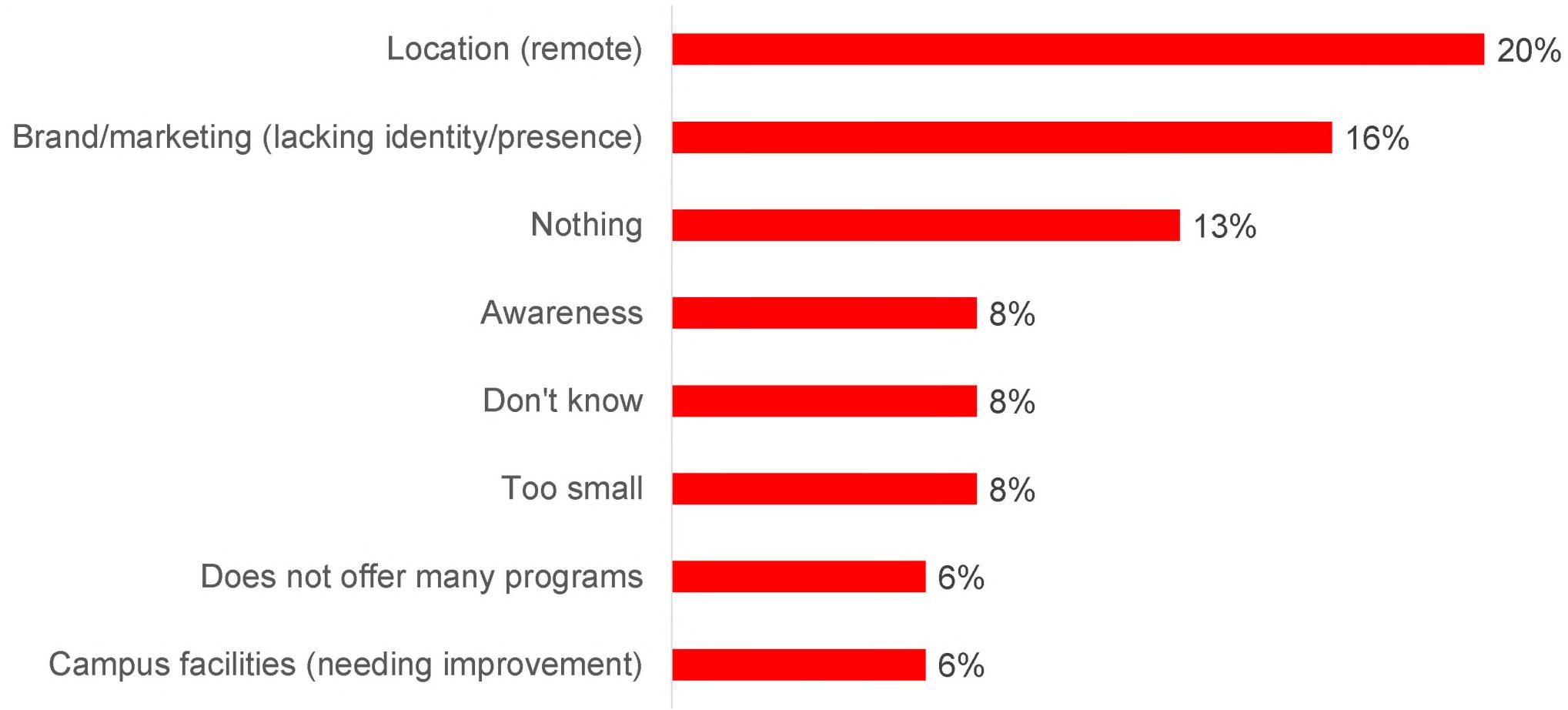
*Super interesting location, smallish school, beautiful campus, Research station in Channel Islands, variety of majors, awesome new library, great birding habit/breeding bell's Vireos/Bucketloads of Hummingbirds, awesome plaza*

*The diversity, they seem to want to help their students.*

Q. *What would you say are CSUCI's strengths? (open-ended)*

# Most-frequently mentioned weaknesses are location and lacking a clear identity

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n=189

Q. *What would you say are CSUCI's weaknesses? (open-ended)*

# CSUCI's Weaknesses | Verbatim Responses

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*does not stand out in a list*

*General surrounding area is expensive*

*Hard to get appointments  
with academic advisors*

*It is kind of in the middle of nowhere  
and the campus can look deserted.*

*The lack of academic quality you feel. Not as  
much fame as other California schools.*

*I think they can do more to advertise their  
institution and somewhat be more appealing to  
people who want to attend college! A great school  
who really appeals to students is CSUDH*

*No real social life or sense of community*

Q. *What would you say are CSUCI's weaknesses? (open-ended)*

# Perceptions of CSUCI

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Just as we previously asked prospective students to rate the importance of 20 college characteristics, we also asked them to rate CSUCI on those characteristics using a five-point scale.

The results in the table on the following page show that CSUCI's prospective students rate the University quite favorably overall on these characteristics. Even the lowest-rated attribute garnered an average rating of 3.75/5.00.

Highest-rated qualities include offering ***smaller classes for personal attention, diversity, safety***, and the ***quality of faculty***. It is encouraging to see several aspects of the academic experience at CSUCI toward the top of this list.

Secondary strengths cover a variety of academic-, cost-, and community-related qualities.

	Attribute	Rating (out of 5.00)
Top Strengths	Offering smaller classes for more personal attention	4.35
	Diversity of the student body	4.28
	Safety of the campus and surrounding community	4.27
	Quality of faculty as teachers and mentors	4.24
Secondary Strengths	Overall value of the education - the balance between quality and cost	4.21
	Putting students first	4.20
	Opportunities for students to do research	4.18
	Hands-on learning opportunities	4.17
	Quality of academic advising	4.16
	Quality of my major	4.15
	Diversity of faculty and staff	4.13
	Sense of community	4.13
	Internship opportunities	4.11
	Active student life with clubs, events, traditions, etc.	4.11
	Cost of attendance	4.10
	Overall academic reputation	3.97
	Graduates get good jobs in their field	3.95
	Employers value a degree from CSUCI	3.83
	Location in a desirable city, town, or area	3.82
	Things to do off campus for fun and entertainment	3.75

# Perceptions of CSUCI (*cont.*)

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While these results are positive overall, two things are notable as areas for improvement:

1. While perceptions of CSUCI on these characteristics are quite positive, perceptions could and should be stronger. These are, after all, CSUCI's inquiries and applicants and they know the University quite well by this point in the admissions process. We would therefore hope to see higher ratings for you in areas where CSUCI excels.
2. The lowest-rated qualities relate to graduates' job outcomes and student life. Weak perceptions of CSUCI in these areas are not isolated to prospective students alone. They are consistent themes throughout the research results from other audiences as well and therefore indicate areas in clear need of improvement (discussed throughout later sections of the report).

# Comparing Importance and Perception

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With an understanding of how important these characteristics are to CSUCI's prospective students as well as how they perceive CSUCI on them, we can compare results to see where perceptions are strong and where they should be improved.

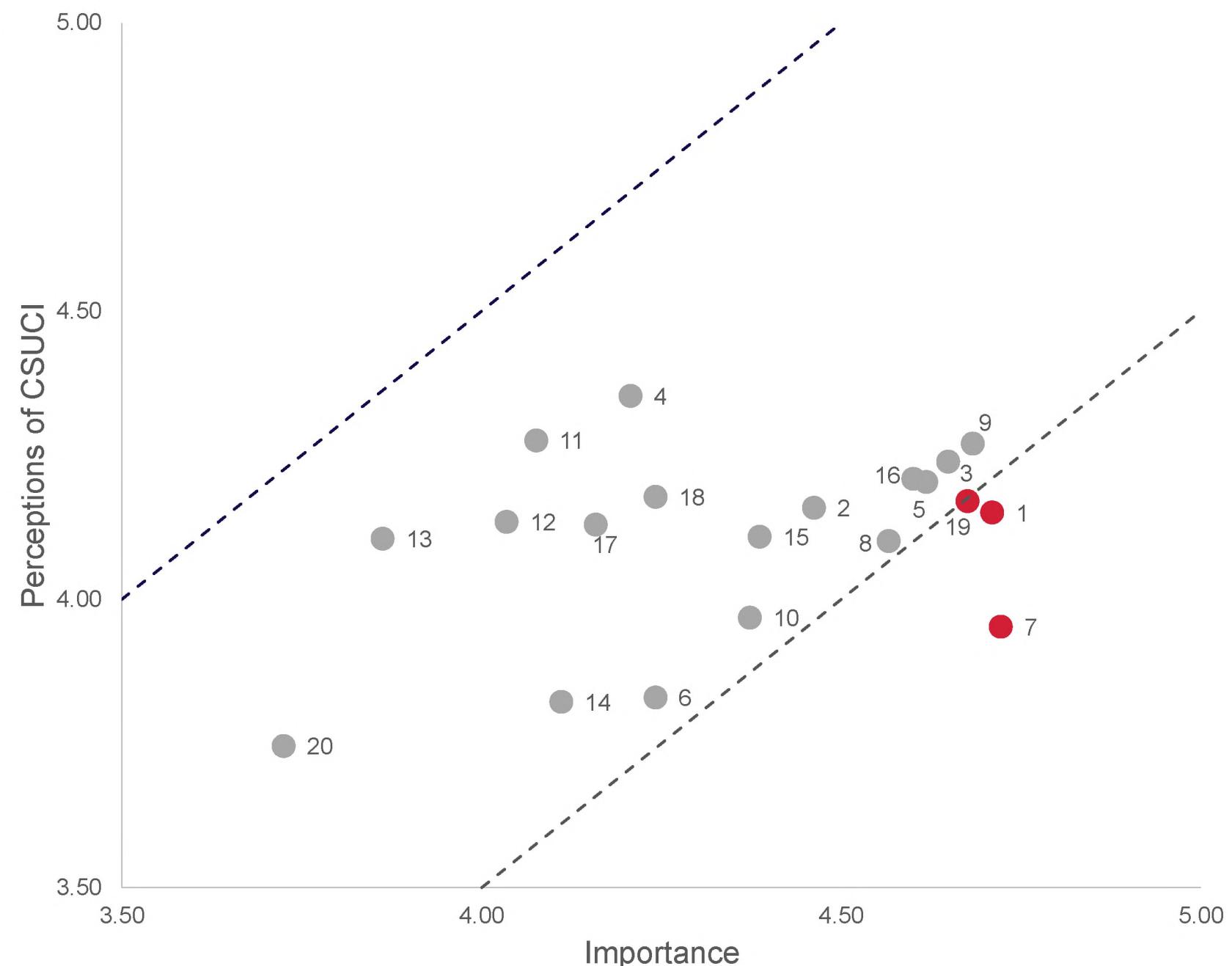
The chart on the following page plots importance (x-axis) and perceptions of CSUCI (y-axis).

Results show a general alignment between these two dimensions – i.e., perceptions of CSUCI tend to be stronger on qualities that are more important (as exhibited by the general movement of the plotted points from the lower left to the upper right).

There are, however, some important characteristics with low ratings for CSUCI, such as ***graduates get good jobs in their fields***, the ***quality of a student's intended major***, and ***hands-on learning opportunities***.

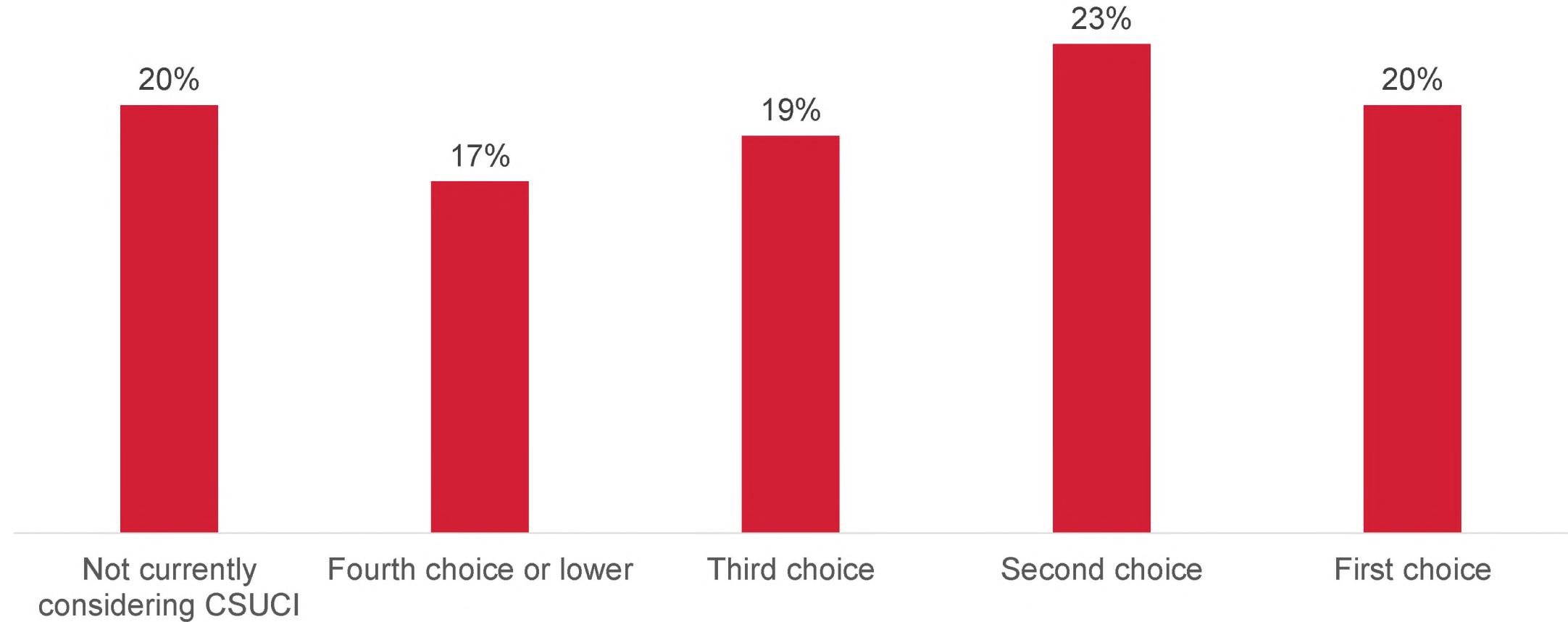
For the latter two qualities, perceptions of CSUCI are not weak, *per se*, but they should be stronger given how important they are to your prospective students.

#	Attribute
1	Quality of my major
2	Quality of academic advising
3	Quality of faculty as teachers and mentors
4	Offering smaller classes for personal attention
5	Putting students first
6	Employers value a degree from the university
7	Graduates get good jobs in their field
8	Cost of attendance
9	Safety of campus & community
10	Overall academic reputation
11	Diversity of the student body
12	Diversity of faculty and staff
13	Active student life
14	Location in a desirable city, town, or area
15	Internship opportunities
16	Overall value of the education
17	Sense of community
18	Opportunities for students to do research
19	Hands-on learning opportunities
20	Things to do off campus for fun



# CSUCI ranked as the first choice for 1 in 5 prospective students; 63% rank CSUCI in their top 3

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*n=198*

*Q. Where does California State University Channel Islands currently rank among the schools you're considering?*

# SECTION II: Counselors

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# A Note on Sample Size

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The surveyable sample for counselors was quite small in comparison to the sample for other audiences.

As a result, the number of respondents is relatively low (46) and results cannot be generalized to the broader population of counselors in your region.

Although findings are directional, it is helpful to have the insights directly from counselors as they are a critical influencer audience.

# Location

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All counselors who responded to the survey work in California.

The counties they work in include:

- Los Angeles County (8)
- Ventura County (8)
- Contra Costa County (6)
- Santa Clara County (5)
- San Diego County (4)
- Alameda County (3)
- Sacramento, San Joaquin, Santa Barbara, and Sonoma Counties (1)

# Priorities

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# Priorities

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As with prospective students and all other audiences to come, we asked counselors to rate the importance of various college characteristics.

Their responses—represented in the table on the following page—show that counselors prioritize many of the same qualities as their advisees.

They value all components of the return on investment equation – they seek a ***high-quality education*** for their students in the fields they plan to pursue, ***strong outcomes for graduates***, and a ***competitive cost of attendance*** that heightens the ***value*** proposition of the education.

Given their roles as counselors, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that they also value how much a college ***puts its students first*** and offers high-quality ***academic advising***.

	Attribute	Rating (out of 5.00)
Top Priorities	Quality of academic programs	4.69
	Graduates get good jobs in their field	4.67
	Overall value of the education - the balance between quality and cost	4.67
	Cost of attendance	4.64
	Putting students first	4.59
	Safety of the campus and surrounding community	4.59
	Overall academic reputation	4.56
	Quality of academic advising	4.51
	Quality of faculty as teachers and mentors	4.51
	Hands-on learning opportunities	4.49
Secondary Priorities	Internship opportunities	4.38
	Employers value a degree from the university	4.36
	Sense of community	4.36
	Active student life with clubs, events, traditions, etc.	4.33
	Offering smaller classes for more personal attention	4.26
	Location in a desirable city, town, or area	4.18
	Diversity of the student body	4.13
	Opportunities for students to do research	4.00
	Things to do off campus for fun and entertainment	3.97
	Diversity of faculty and staff	3.77

# Ideal College Environment for Their Students

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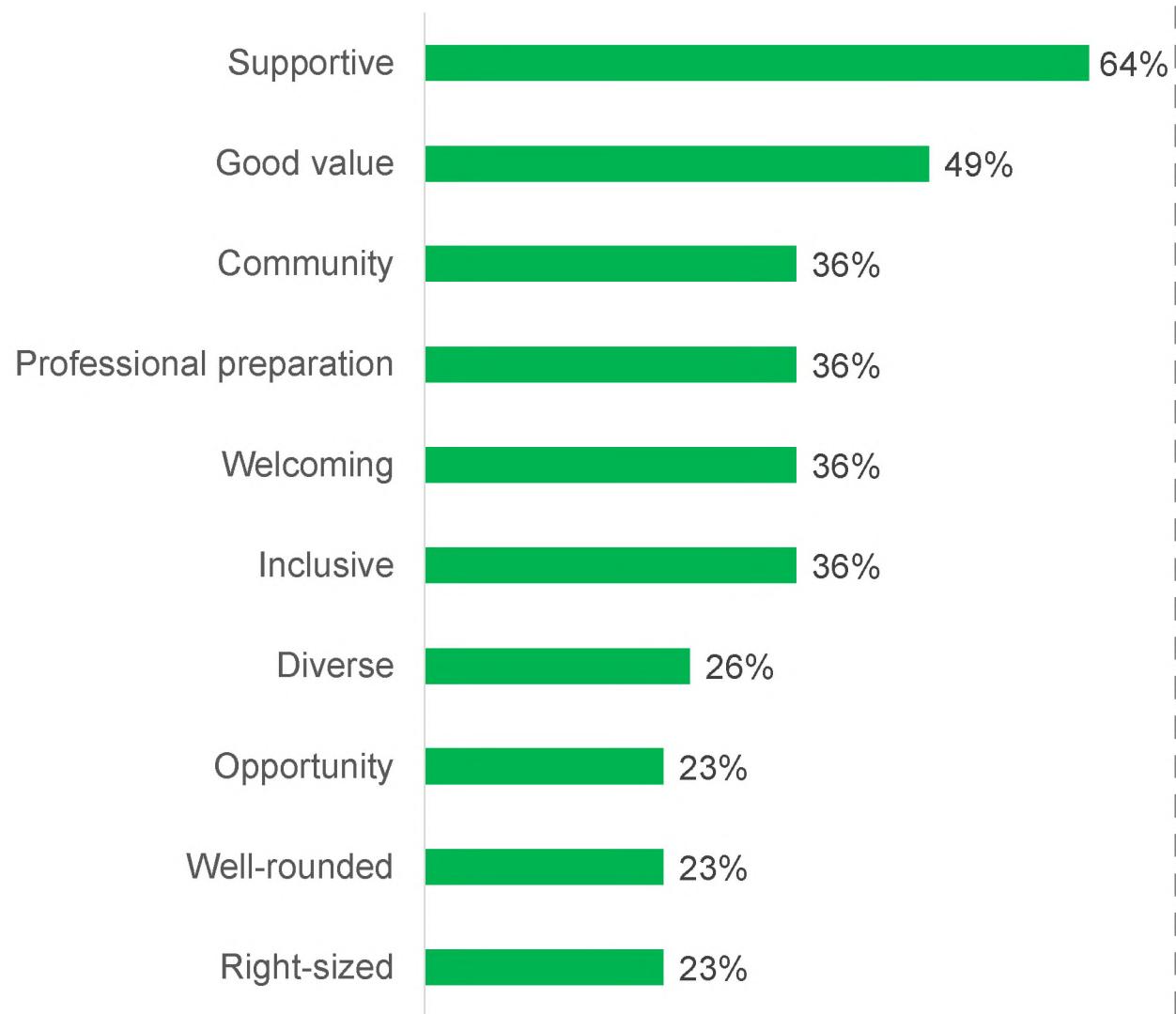
When it comes to the college environment they seek for their advisees, counselors exhibit both a desire for a strong community and a sense of practicality.

Top selections from counselors (see following page) include several aspects of a college community, including being ***supportive, welcoming, inclusive, and diverse***.

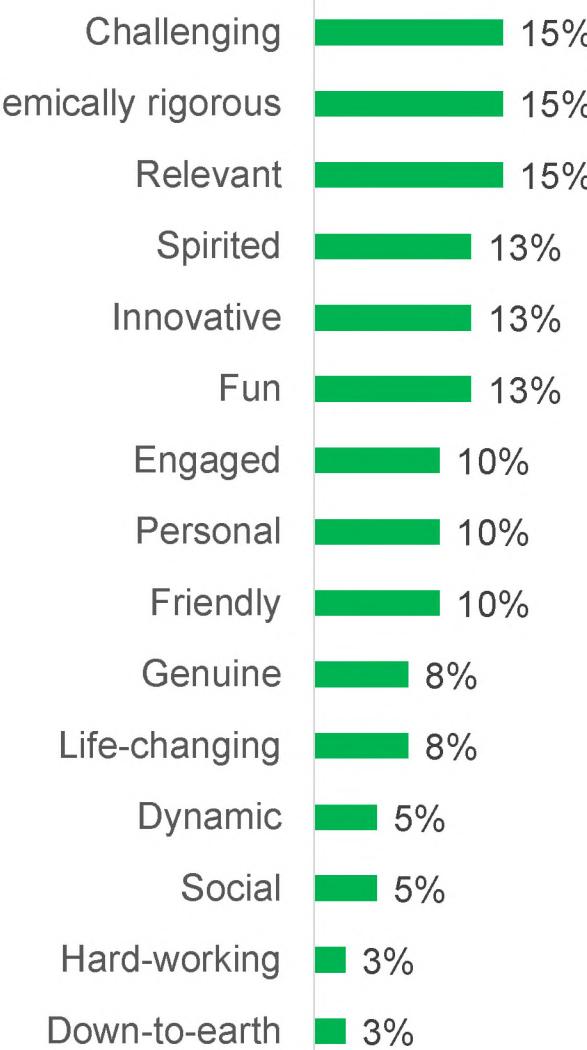
Even more so than students themselves, counselors value practical elements of a college choice and seek an environment that provides ***good value and professional preparation***.

For their part, students are more likely than their counselors to seek a college environment that could be described as ***friendly, social, fun, hard-working, and full of opportunity***.

**Most Important**  
*Selected by at least 20%*



**Less Important**  
*Selected by less than 20%*



*n=43*

*Q. As a counselor/advisor, which of the following qualities would you most like to see in a college environment for your advisees?*

# Collecting Information about Colleges

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# Collecting Information about Colleges

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As those who are often responsible for suggesting specific universities for students to consider, counselors play a critical matchmaking role between student and institution.

Doing this well requires an accurate and up-to-date understanding of the universities their students are considering.

We asked counselors what they find to be most helpful in collecting information about colleges.

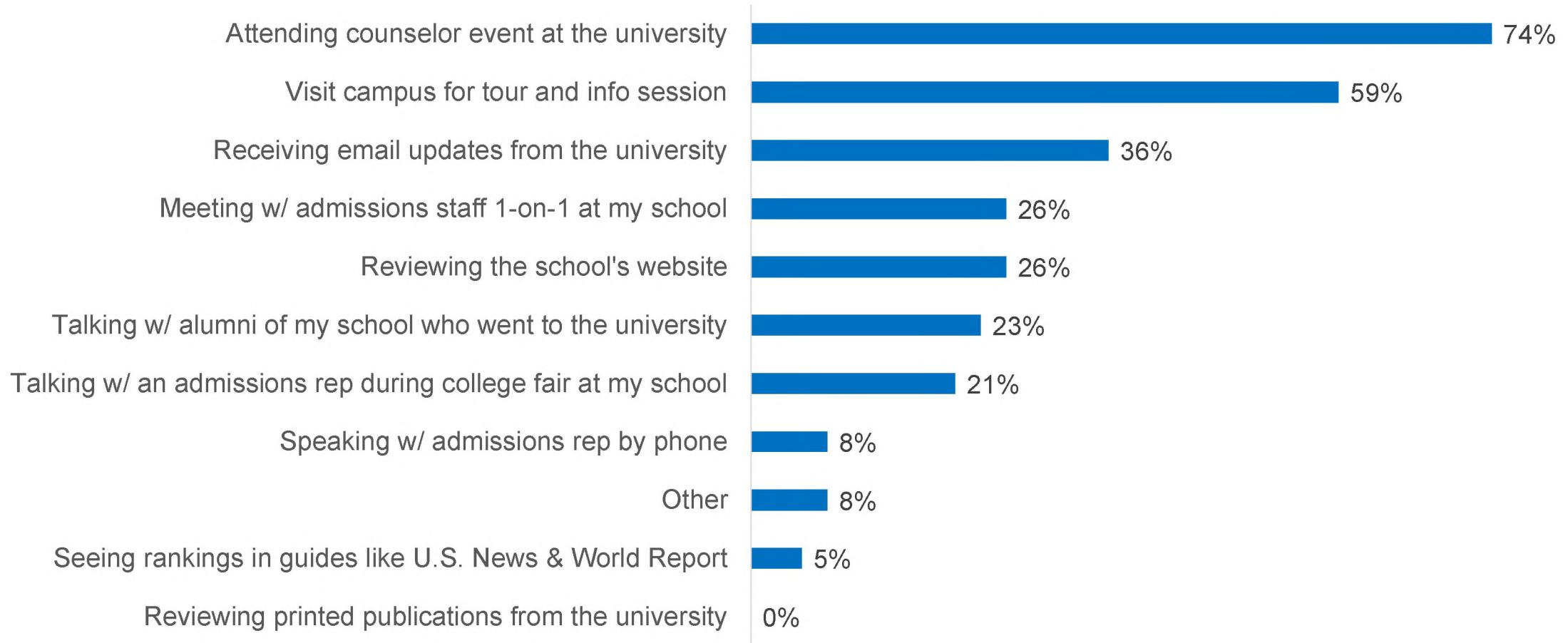
The results on the following page show that in-person visits to campus are most valuable, whether part of a counselor event or a typical information session and tour.

Additionally, one-third of counselors say it is very helpful to regularly receive email updates from the colleges their students are considering.

**Although we do not know the extent to which CSUCI is currently engaging counselors, any effort that can be made to bring them to campus to get to know the university firsthand will be beneficial in ensuring they can confidently point students to CSUCI in the future.**

# Collecting Information about Colleges

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N=40

Q. *What is most helpful for you in getting an accurate and up-to-date understanding of a college or university?*

# Half currently receive updates from CSUCI; most of those who don't would like to

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**50%**

*Currently receive information  
from CSUCI to stay up-to-date  
on the University*

**92%**

*Of those who do not currently  
receive information say that  
would be helpful*

Q. *Do you receive information and updates from CSUCI?*  
Q. *Would that be helpful for you in your work with students?*

N=30

# Perceptions of CSUCI

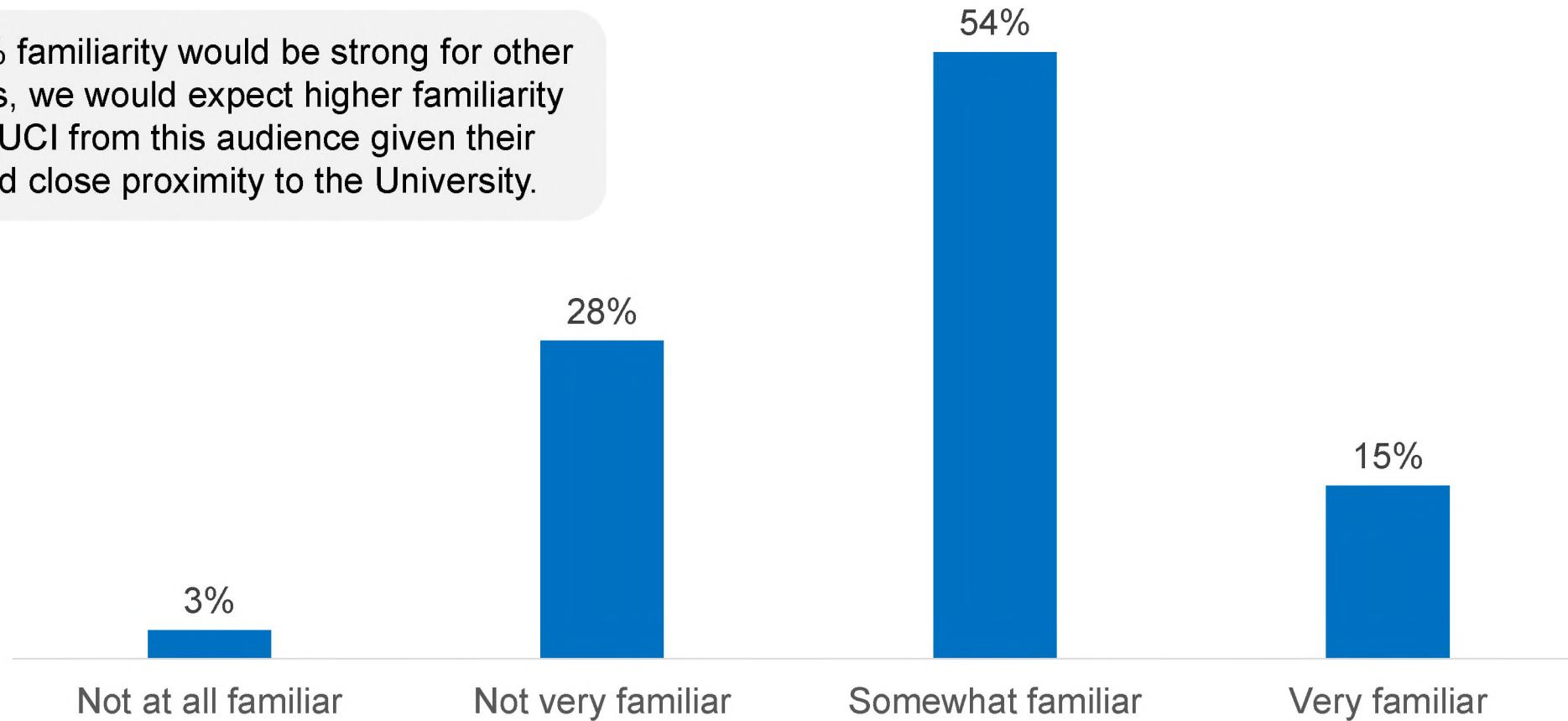
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# 7 in 10 counselors are familiar with CSUCI

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While 70% familiarity would be strong for other audiences, we would expect higher familiarity with CSUCI from this audience given their roles and close proximity to the University.



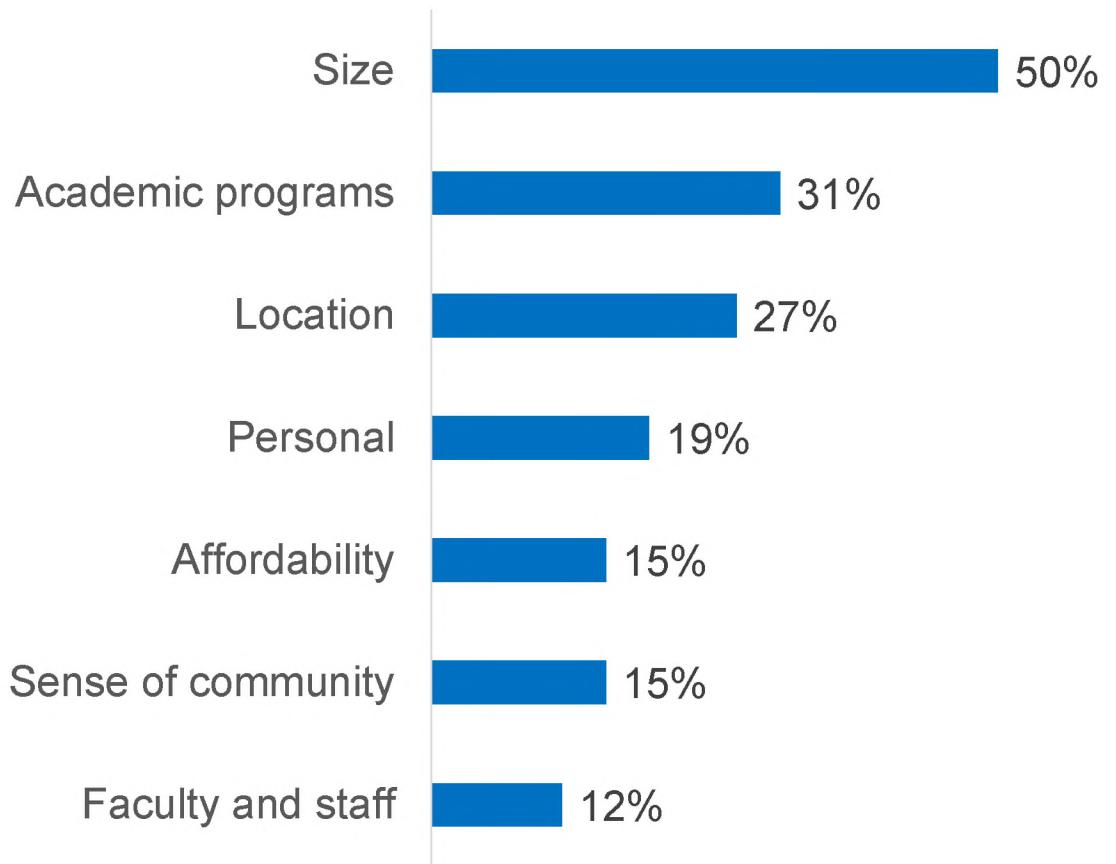
N=40

*Q. How familiar are you with California State University Channel Islands?*

# CSUCI's Strengths

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Responses to this open-ended question show that counselors see CSUCI's size as a key strength – a more intimate size than many other CSU institutions means more personal attention and a closer community.



N=26

Q. *What would you say are CSUCI's strengths as a university?*

# CSUCI's Strengths | Verbatim Responses

---

*beautiful campus, inclusive community*

*Size, pre-professional programming, ability to improve a student's trajectory*

*Small class size, strong in biotechnology and business*

*size; community location; attention to students*

*small classes, student-centered, engaged faculty*

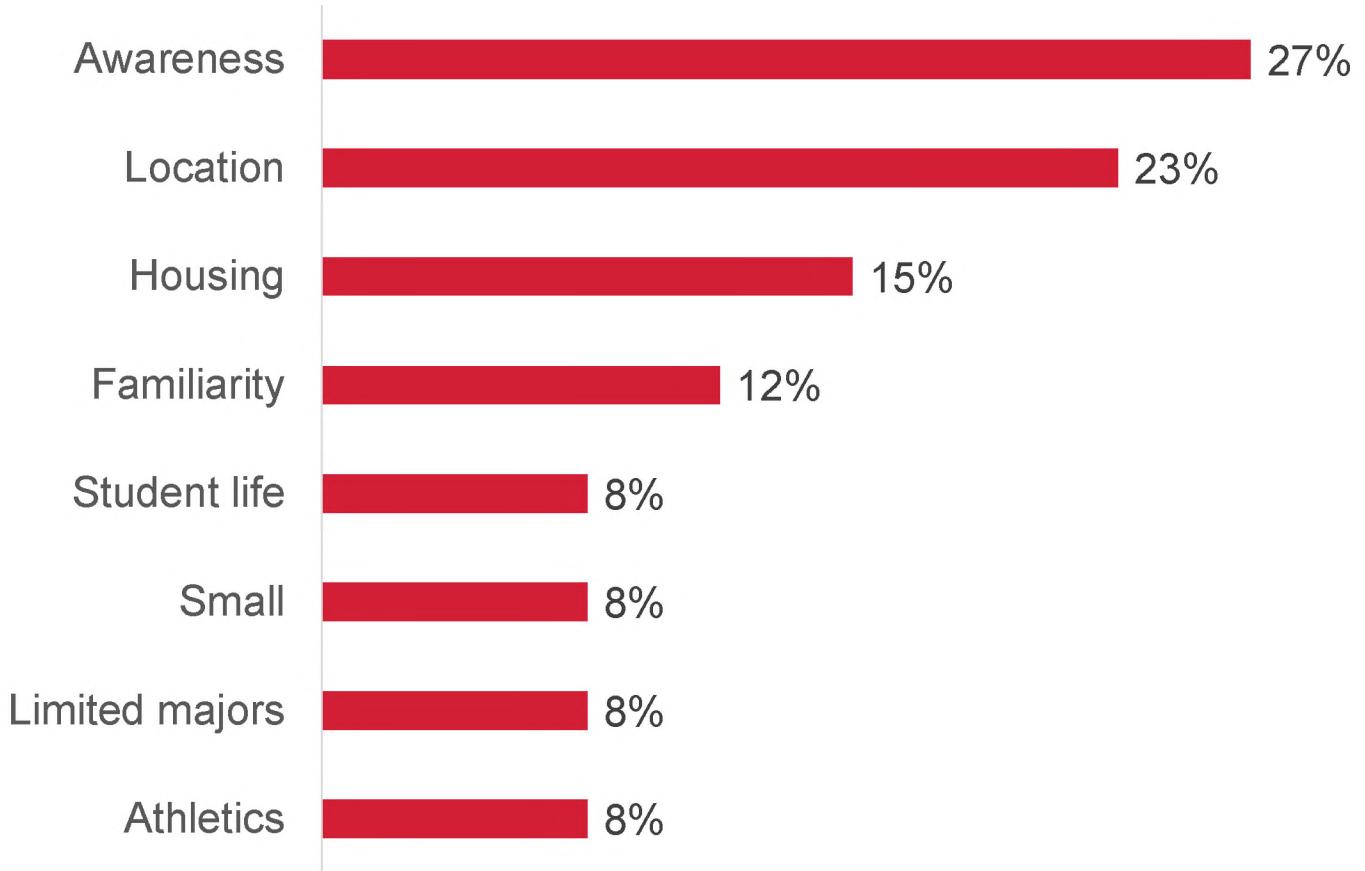
Q. *What would you say are CSUCI's strengths as a university?*

# Perceived Weaknesses

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Like prospective students, some counselors see CSUCI's location as a challenge. For them (and, by extension, some of their advisees), CSUCI is a farther distance than other CSU institutions and does not have access to the same amenities.

Awareness was also cited by 1 in 4 counselors – they note that their students simply aren't aware of CSUCI as an option.



Q. *What are CSUCI's weaknesses?*

# CSUCI's Weaknesses | Verbatim Responses

---

*Commuter school/lack of vibrant campus life*

*Do not get the word out about the school*

*doesn't have a well-known reputation  
except for nursing program*

*FALSE reputation of being "lower tier"*

*Lack of majors including Kinesiology, Film  
Production and Engineering to name a few.*

*location may feel too isolated for some students*

*Still new and establishing its name to the public*

Q. *What are CSUCI's weaknesses?*

# Perceptions of CSUCI

---

We asked those who were familiar with CSUCI to rate the University on the set of characteristics they had previously rated on importance.

Results in the table on the following page show that counselors think very highly of CSUCI on a variety of qualities, particularly when it comes to the cost and value of a CSUCI education.

Top strengths include the ***overall value of the education, safety, cost of attendance, and small classes for personal attention.***

Qualities with weaker ratings relate to what students do outside of class, both on campus and in the surrounding area. Echoing concerns from prospective students, counselors see student life and student engagement as an area for improvement at CSUCI.

	Attribute	Rating (out of 5.00)
Top Strengths	Overall value of the education - the balance between quality and cost	4.64
	Safety of the campus and surrounding community	4.56
	Cost of attendance	4.48
	Offering smaller classes for more personal attention	4.43
Secondary Strengths	Graduates get good jobs in their field	4.30
	Hands-on learning opportunities	4.25
	Quality of faculty as teachers and mentors	4.18
	Quality of academic programs	4.17
	Employers value a degree from CSUCI	4.15
	Diversity of the student body	4.11
	Quality of academic advising	4.00
	Putting students first	4.00
	Sense of community	4.00
	Internship opportunities	3.89
	Diversity of faculty and staff	3.88
	Opportunities for students to do research	3.75
	Overall academic reputation	3.70
	Active student life with clubs, events, traditions, etc.	3.69
	Location in a desirable city, town, or area	3.64
	Things to do off campus for fun and entertainment	3.00

# High percentages of counselors responded with “don’t know”; thus, several opportunities for CSUCI to create perceptions among counselors

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*Q. Please rate CSUCI on these qualities.  
(% of participants responding “don’t know”)*

# Comparing Importance and Perception

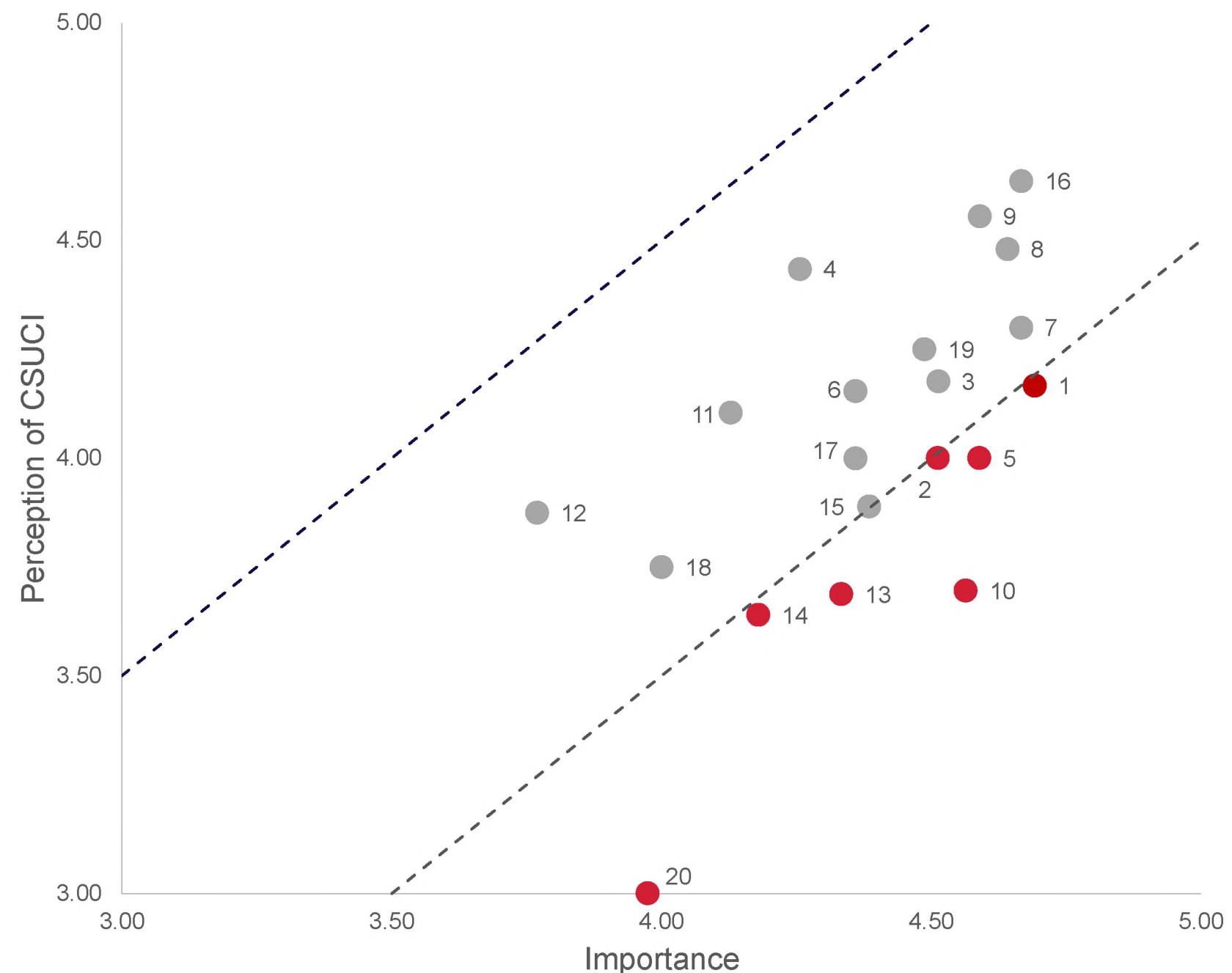
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In the chart on the following page we have compared the importance counselors assign to these characteristics and counselors' perceptions of CSUCI.

The comparison shows that there is an overall alignment between importance and perception – i.e., the more important a characteristic is, the more positively they view CSUCI.

There are, however, several notable exceptions, particularly for qualities related to academics (quality of individual majors, academic advising, academic reputation) and student life (things to do on- or off-campus, location in a desirable area).

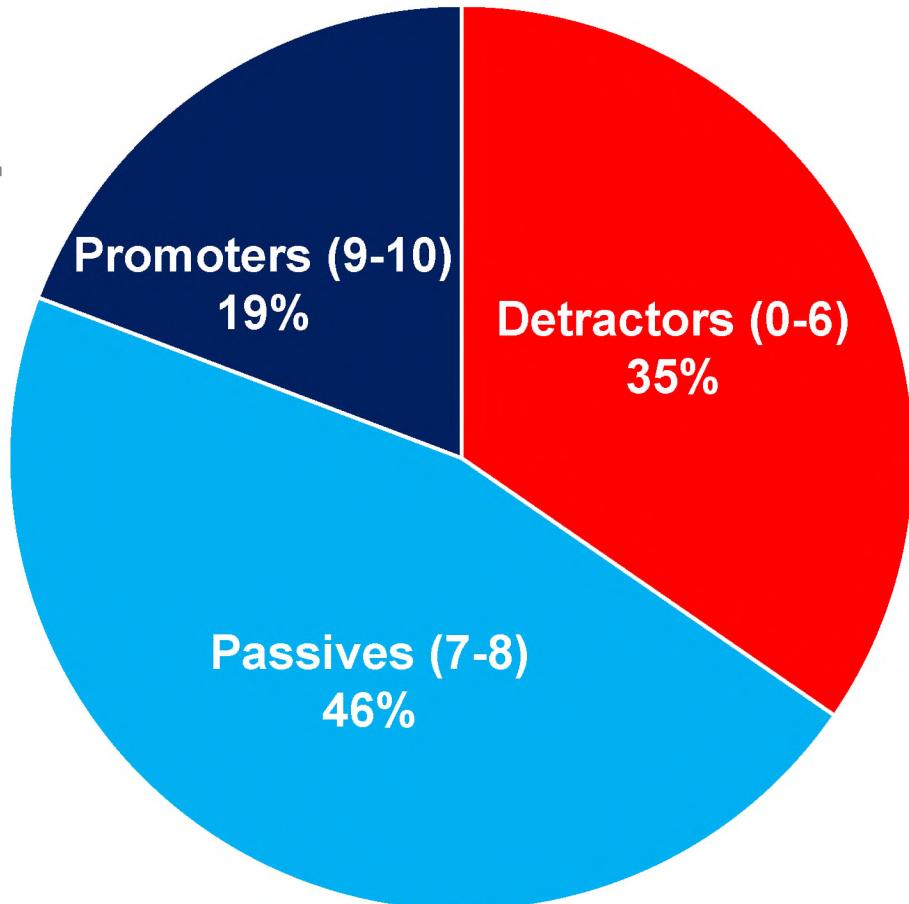
#	Attribute
1	Quality of my major
2	Quality of academic advising
3	Quality of faculty as teachers and mentors
4	Offering smaller classes for personal attention
5	Putting students first
6	Employers value a degree from the university
7	Graduates get good jobs in their field
8	Cost of attendance
9	Safety of campus & community
10	Overall academic reputation
11	Diversity of the student body
12	Diversity of faculty and staff
13	Active student life
14	Location in a desirable city, town, or area
15	Internship opportunities
16	Overall value of the education
17	Sense of community
18	Opportunities for students to do research
19	Hands-on learning opportunities
20	Things to do off campus for fun



# Room for improvement in the likelihood that counselors recommend CSUCI to their advisees

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NPS: -15.4



*Q. How likely are you to recommend CSUCI to one of your advisees?*

In our experience, some counselors are reluctant to say they would be very likely to recommend a certain university to their advisees. This audience, after all, believes strongly in the “goodness of fit” between a student and college and therefore could not say definitively if they would recommend a specific university.

Nevertheless, the percentage of counselors who would be very likely to recommend CSUCI is low and we would like to see this increase in the future as counselors become more aware of the University and the value you bring to your students.

# Opinions of CSUCI have improved over time

---

Asked how their opinions of CSUCI have changed over time, **50% of the 26 respondents said they now have a higher opinion of CSUCI than in the past** while the remaining 50% said there has been no change in their opinion.

It is encouraging to see opinions of CSUCI improving among this influencer audience.

Counselors' opinions have improved as a result of simply learning more about CSUCI and the University's efforts to increase its number of academic programs, as evidenced in the verbatim comments included below:

*My opinion has improved after interactions with faculty and feedback from students about research/strength of faculty*

*CSUCI has had intentional growth and added new programs like mechatronics*

*I have more information & exposure*

*CSUCI has an expanding list of majors, and I learned about its small class sizes and strong faculty*

*The university continues to improve and expand in positive ways.*

# SECTION III: CSUCI Internal Audiences

ADM MARKET RESEARCH  
& CONSULTING

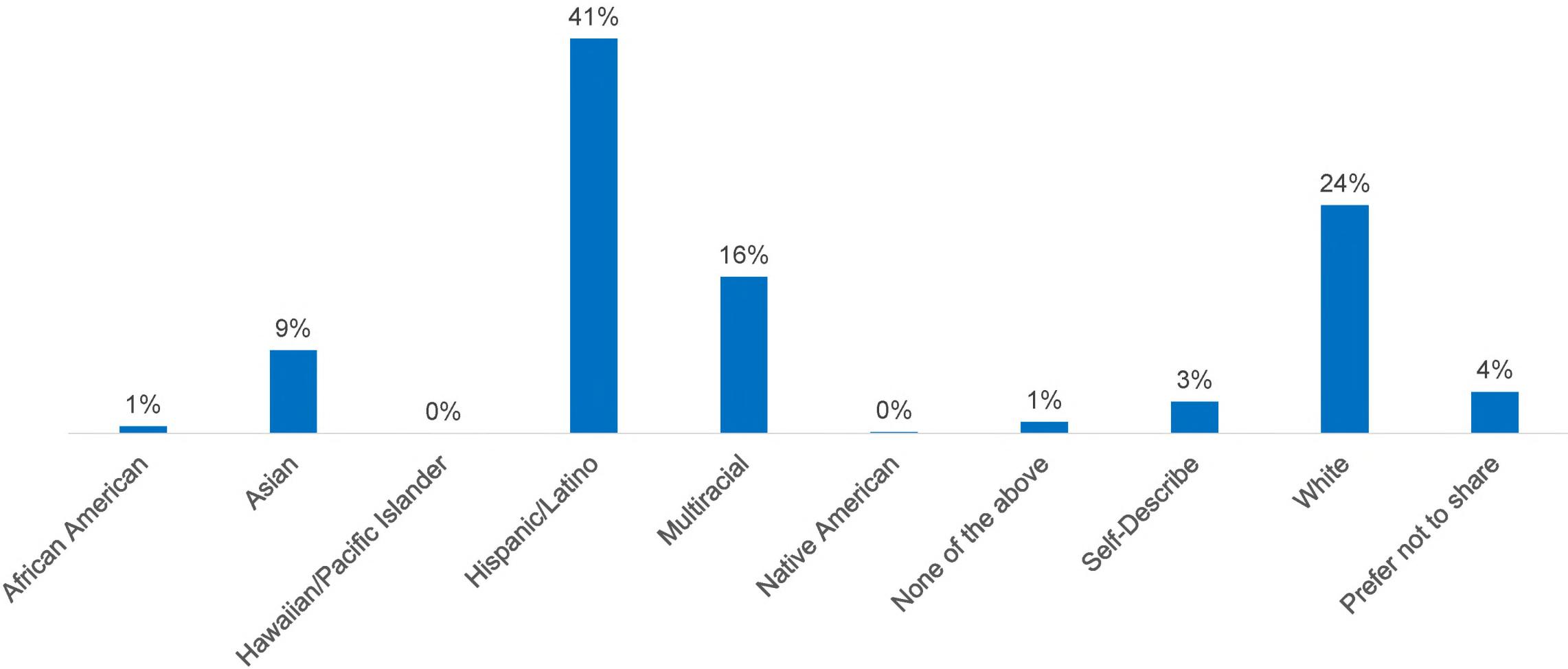
# Select Audience Characteristics

ADV

MARKET RESEARCH  
& CONSULTING

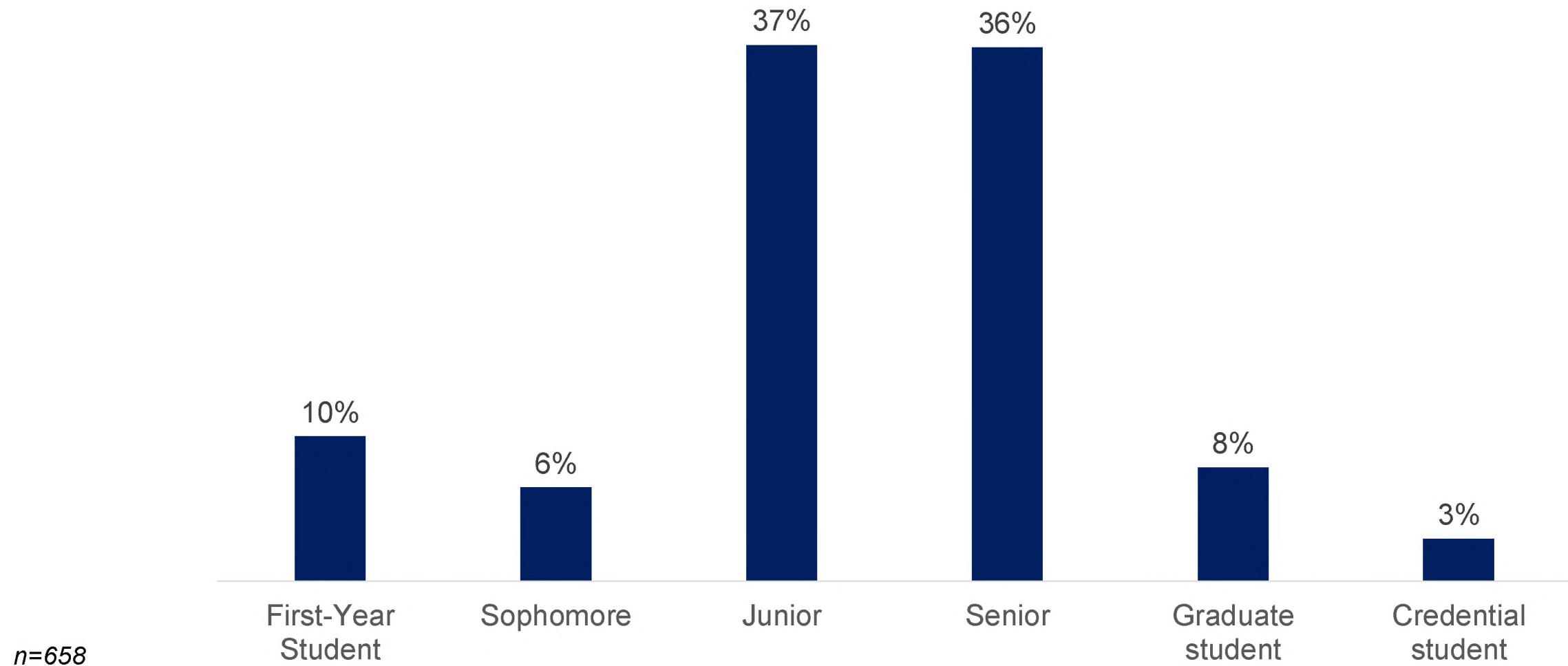
# Current Students | Race and Ethnicity

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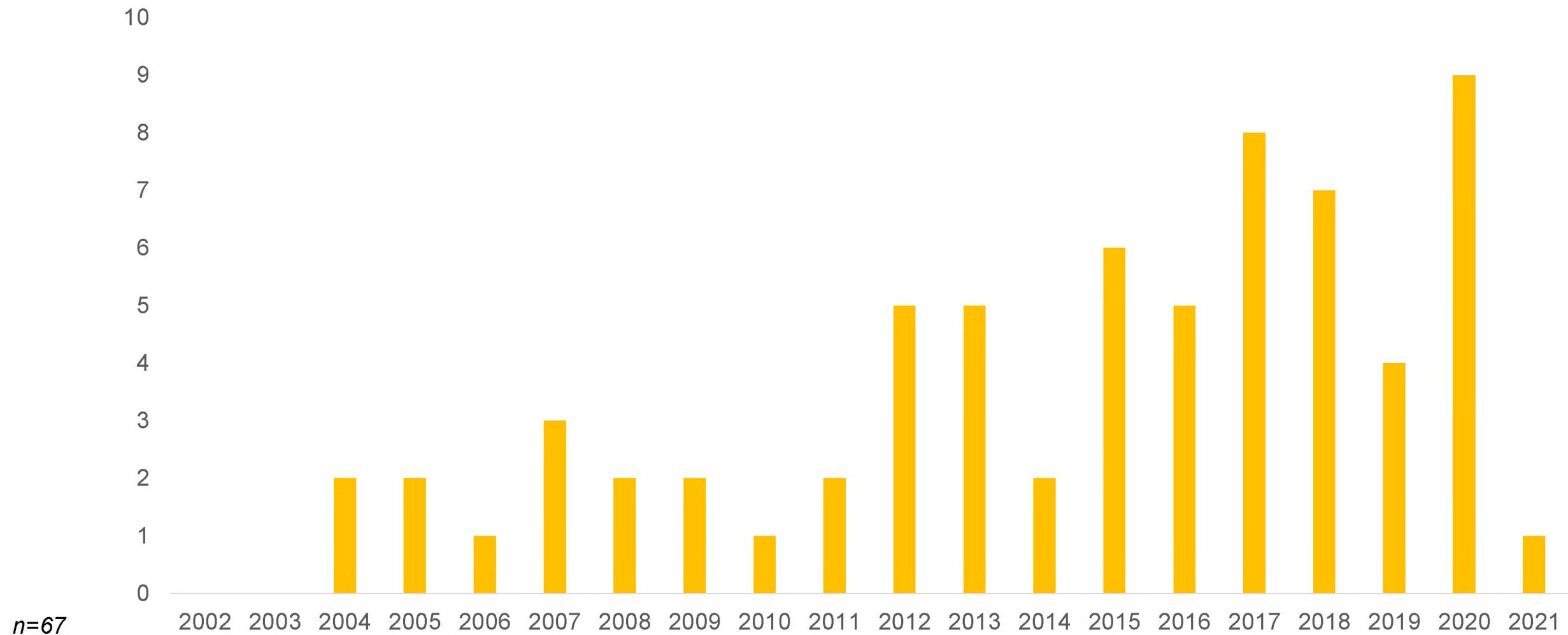
# Current Students | Class Year

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# Alumni | Graduation Year

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n=67

# Perceptions of CSUCI

ADV

MARKET RESEARCH  
& CONSULTING

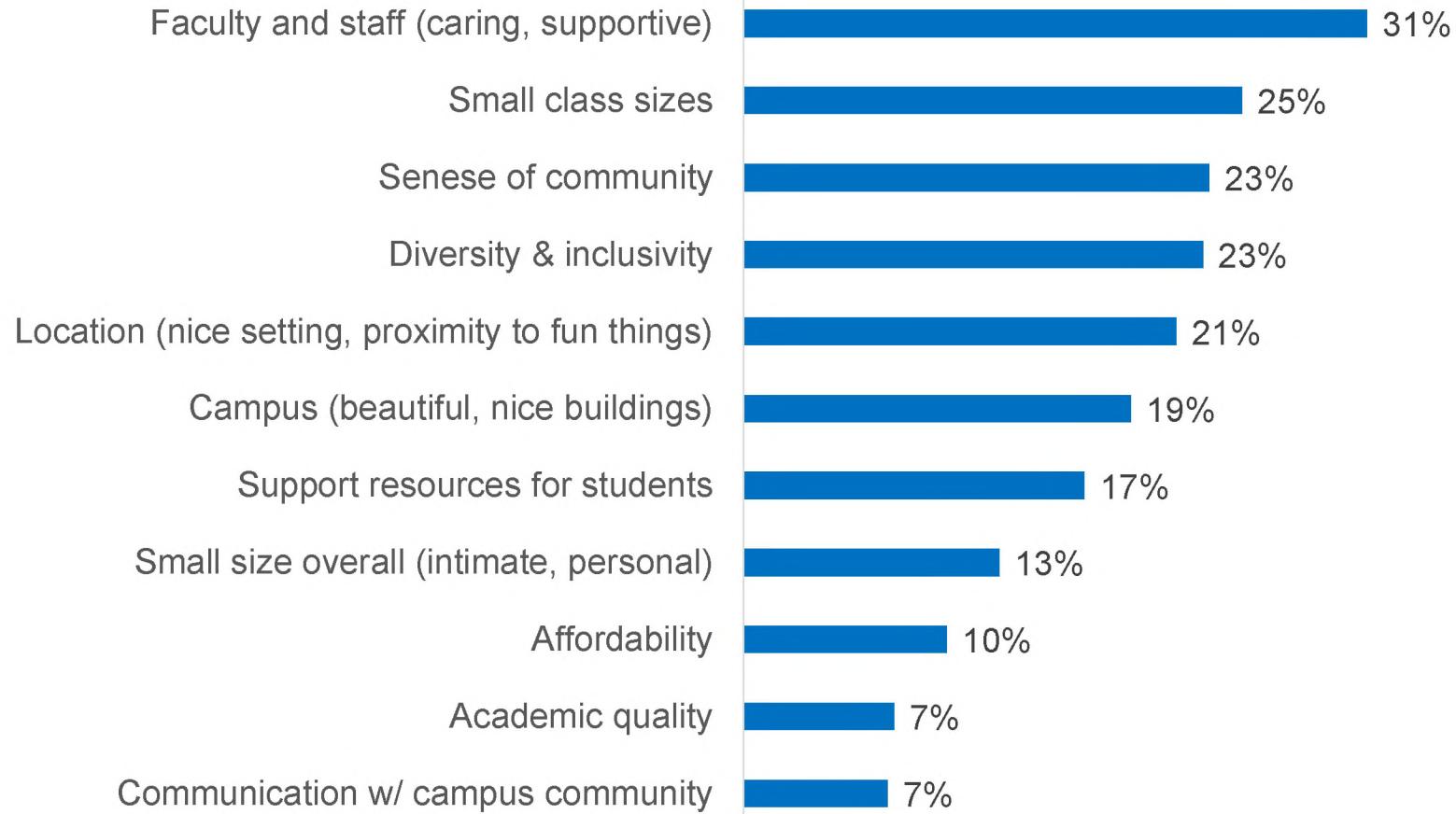
# CSUCI's Strengths

---

We began the survey with an open-ended question on CSUCI's strengths.

It is common in such open-ended questions for respondents to provide simple one-word answers. Not so with CSUCI's audiences.

Respondents wrote at length about what they see as the strengths of the University with top mentions citing the caring and supportive nature of CSUCI's faculty and staff, smaller classes for personal attention, a strong sense of community, and a commitment to diversity and inclusion.



# CSUCI's Strengths | Verbatim Responses

---

*1) we are still small enough to provide individualized attention to our students 2) we prepare our students for the next phase (workforce, graduate school, being active participants in their community and our society) 3) we are working on bring in the right people for the jobs and work on our diversity that reflects our student body – Faculty*

*Beautiful campus, excellent professors, calm non-party atmosphere – Student*

*Commitment to inclusion and diversity, excellence of faculty, relationships with and use of community resources/entities such as Channel Islands National Park – Student*

*Instructors, price compared to other schools, ease of online access for classes – Student*

*Responsive to social issues and needs of the students, inclusive of the students when making decisions, and a great CAPS service – Staff*

*Small classes, lots of help readily available for those who seek it, I had a variety of professors who provided information from different points of view. – Alumni*

*Q. What are CSUCI's top three greatest strengths as a university?*

# Ways CSUCI Can Improve

---

Ideas for ways that CSUCI can improve are quite varied – even the most frequently mentioned quality, student life, was cited by only 12% of respondents.

Note that student life was mentioned as an opportunity for improvement for both residential and commuter students – i.e., it is not solely an issue among commuter students who often feel less connected to campus life than residential students.



Q. *What can CSUCI improve upon?*

N=300

# CSUCI's Areas for Improvement | Verbatim Responses

---

*Academic excellence. We never tout this. We talk about class size, how easy it is to get into CI, how cheap it is, number of 1st-gen students, etc. But what about the academics? Why are they not at the forefront? Also: we need to market the university better. People have not heard of us beyond Ventura County. – Faculty*

*Brand identity - how do we make CI a student's 1st choice, not their 4th choice – Staff*

*Define its value propositions so that prospective, admitted, and enrolled students better understand its mission and purpose. – Faculty*

*Add more online classes!! The pandemic is really hard on some people, and it makes me want to transfer schools if I can't have online classes anymore! – Student*

*Events and Extracurricular activities, awareness/involvement/engagement/invitation of campus activities, parking, food, sports, anything fun, opportunities to bring students together other than class, even a popular area on campus. – Student*

*better communication from admin to students – Student*

*Getting students who commute to school become more involved and feel like they are a part of the CI community. – Student*

*Q. What can CSUCI improve upon?*

# Perceptions of CSUCI

---

We then asked each respondent to rate CSUCI on a set of characteristics using a five-point scale (1-Very poor; 5-Very good). This is the same set of characteristics we also showed to prospective students and counselors.

Average ratings of CSUCI across all students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents show top strengths to be offering ***smaller classes for more personal attention*** and the ***safety of the campus and surrounding community***.

Secondary strengths include academic traits such as the ***quality of faculty as teachers and mentors*** and the ***quality of a student's major***.

The only quality with a considerably lower rating than all others is ***things to do off-campus for fun and entertainment***. Second from the bottom is an ***active student life with clubs, events, transitions, etc.*** These are consistent with open-ended comments shown earlier stating that CSUCI can improve on student life.

**Collectively, these ratings for CSUCI are modestly strong. We would hope to see stronger perceptions of the University on factors relating to academics, outcomes, student life, and cost/value.**

	Attribute	Rating (out of 5.00)
Top Strengths	Offering smaller classes for more personal attention	4.44
	Safety of the campus and surrounding community	4.37
Secondary Strengths	Quality of faculty as teachers and mentors	4.17
	Diversity of the student body	4.11
Secondary Strengths	Quality of my major/department	4.11
	Putting students first	4.01
	Hands-on learning opportunities	3.99
	Opportunities for students to do research	3.97
	Diversity of faculty and staff	3.97
	Overall value of the education - the balance between quality and cost	3.96
	Location in a desirable city, town, or area	3.93
	Overall academic reputation	3.82
	Cost of attendance	3.81
	Quality of academic advising	3.78
	Sense of community	3.78
	Employers value a degree from CSUCI	3.70
	Graduates get good jobs in their field	3.67
	Internship opportunities	3.63
	Active student life with clubs, events, traditions, etc.	3.46
	Things to do off-campus for fun and entertainment	3.11

# Perceptions of CSUCI | Differences by Audience

---

In most cases, CSUCI's stakeholder groups agree on which characteristics are CSUCI's strengths and which are opportunities for improvement – i.e., qualities perceived to be strengths to one group tend to be perceived as strengths by another.

There are, however, many differences in *the degree* to which a group feels a certain quality is a strength or weakness for CSUCI.

The table on the following page shows average perceptions ratings for CSUCI by audience group with statistically significant differences noted – significantly higher ratings are highlighted in **blue**, significantly lower ratings in **red**.

*(discussion continued after the tables on the following two pages)*

Attribute	Students	Faculty & Staff	Alumni	Parents
Offering smaller classes for more personal attention	4.45	4.32	4.54	4.56
Safety of the campus and surrounding community	4.32	4.52 <sup>A,C</sup>	4.28	4.51
Quality of faculty as teachers and mentors	4.19	4.08	4.35 <sup>B,D</sup>	3.98
Diversity of the student body	4.17 <sup>B,D</sup>	4.00	4.07	3.88
Quality of my major/department	4.14 <sup>B</sup>	3.89	4.34 <sup>B</sup>	4.06
Putting students first	4.02	4.05	3.99	3.73
Hands-on learning opportunities	4.01	3.92	4.00	3.98
Opportunities for students to do research	4.05 <sup>B,C,D</sup>	3.86	3.77	3.71
Diversity of faculty and staff	4.05 <sup>B</sup>	3.62	4.18 <sup>B</sup>	4.00 <sup>B</sup>
Overall value of the education - the balance between quality and cost	3.96	3.95	4.03	3.88
Location in a desirable city, town, or area	3.87	4.03 <sup>A</sup>	4.01	4.19 <sup>A</sup>
Overall academic reputation	3.99	3.29	3.75	3.83
Cost of attendance	3.75	4.04	3.87	3.68
Quality of academic advising	3.85 <sup>B</sup>	3.60	3.68 <sup>B</sup>	3.57 <sup>B</sup>
Sense of community	3.88 <sup>B</sup>	3.43	3.92	3.79
Employers value a degree from CSUCI	3.86 <sup>B,C</sup>	3.33	3.57	3.61
Graduates get good jobs in their field	3.81	3.40	3.48	3.75
Internship opportunities	3.77 <sup>B,C</sup>	3.27	3.31	3.41
Active student life with clubs, events, traditions, etc.	3.57 <sup>B,D</sup>	3.16	3.45	3.13
Things to do off-campus for fun and entertainment	3.23 <sup>B</sup>	2.75	3.05 <sup>B</sup>	3.25 <sup>B</sup>

# Perceptions of CSUCI | Differences by Audience

---

Faculty and staff tend to be more critical of CSUCI than other stakeholders. This is uncommon in our experience. While faculty and staff are often a discerning group and have intimate knowledge of the institution, we find that they tend to have more positive opinions than students.

Faculty and staff have particularly low ratings for CSUCI on outcomes-related measures such as *graduates finding jobs*, *employers valuing a CSUCI degree*, and *internship opportunities* as well as CSUCI's *overall academic reputation* and *student life*.

For their part, students are often a very critical voice; however, these results show that students tend to have more positive opinions of CSUCI than others.

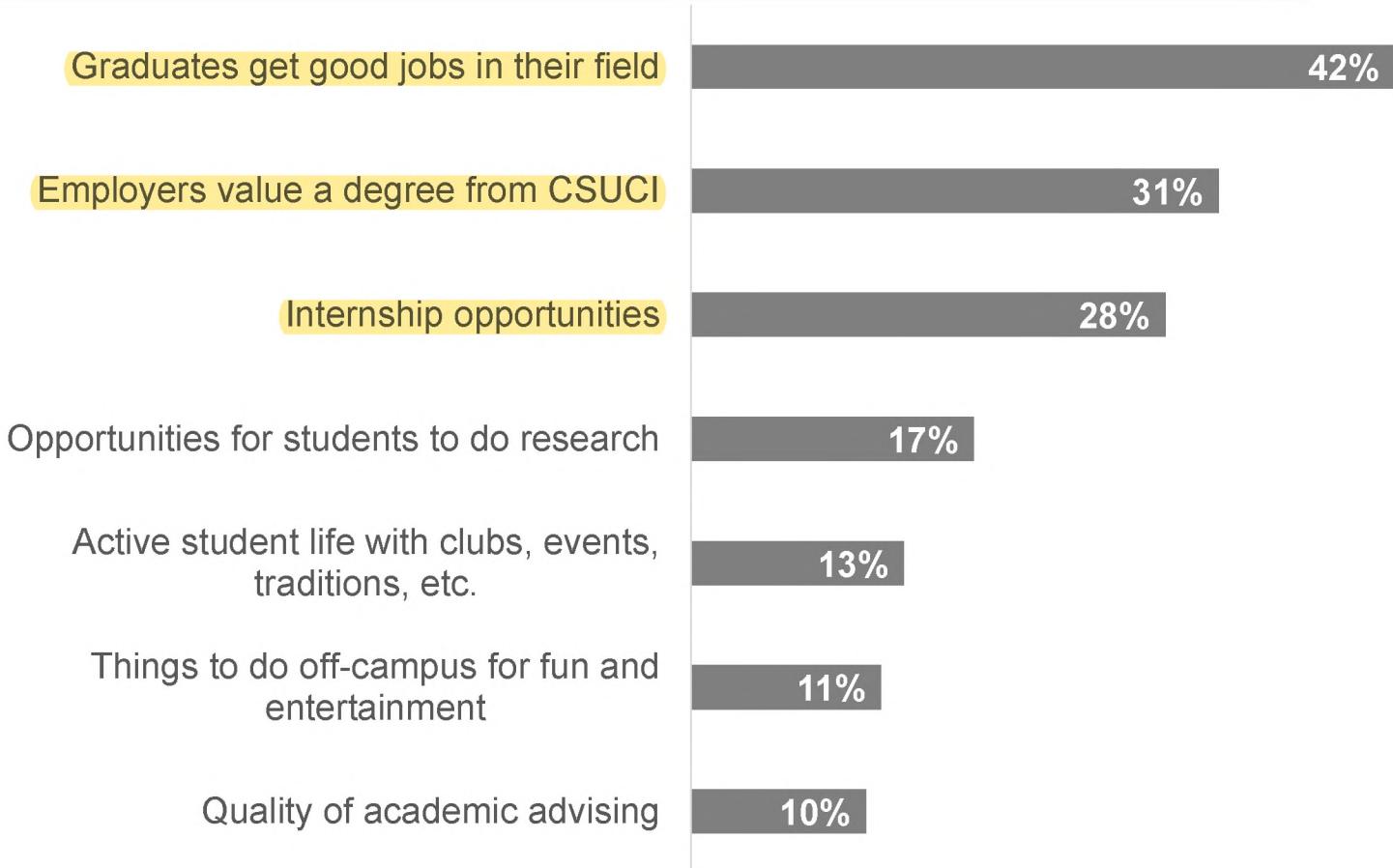
**Building CSUCI's brand should be both internal and external. You must strengthen opinion of the University among those who should be your champions (i.e., students, faculty, staff, alumni, etc.). This will create stronger advocates for the CSUCI brand who can in turn assist in enrollment efforts with external audiences.**

# Perceptions of CSUCI | “Don’t Know” Responses

Additionally, it is valuable to examine how many stakeholders cannot provide an informed opinion of CSUCI on these qualities.

The chart at right shows the percentage of respondents who replied with “don’t know” to rating CSUCI on these attributes.

Notably, the three qualities with the highest rate of “don’t know” responses relate to outcomes for CSUCI graduates, indicating that **there is a stronger story to be told about how CSUCI prepares its students for their careers.**



*Q. Please rate CSUCI on each of the qualities.  
(% of respondents reporting “don’t know”)*

# Comparing Internal Perceptions with External Priorities

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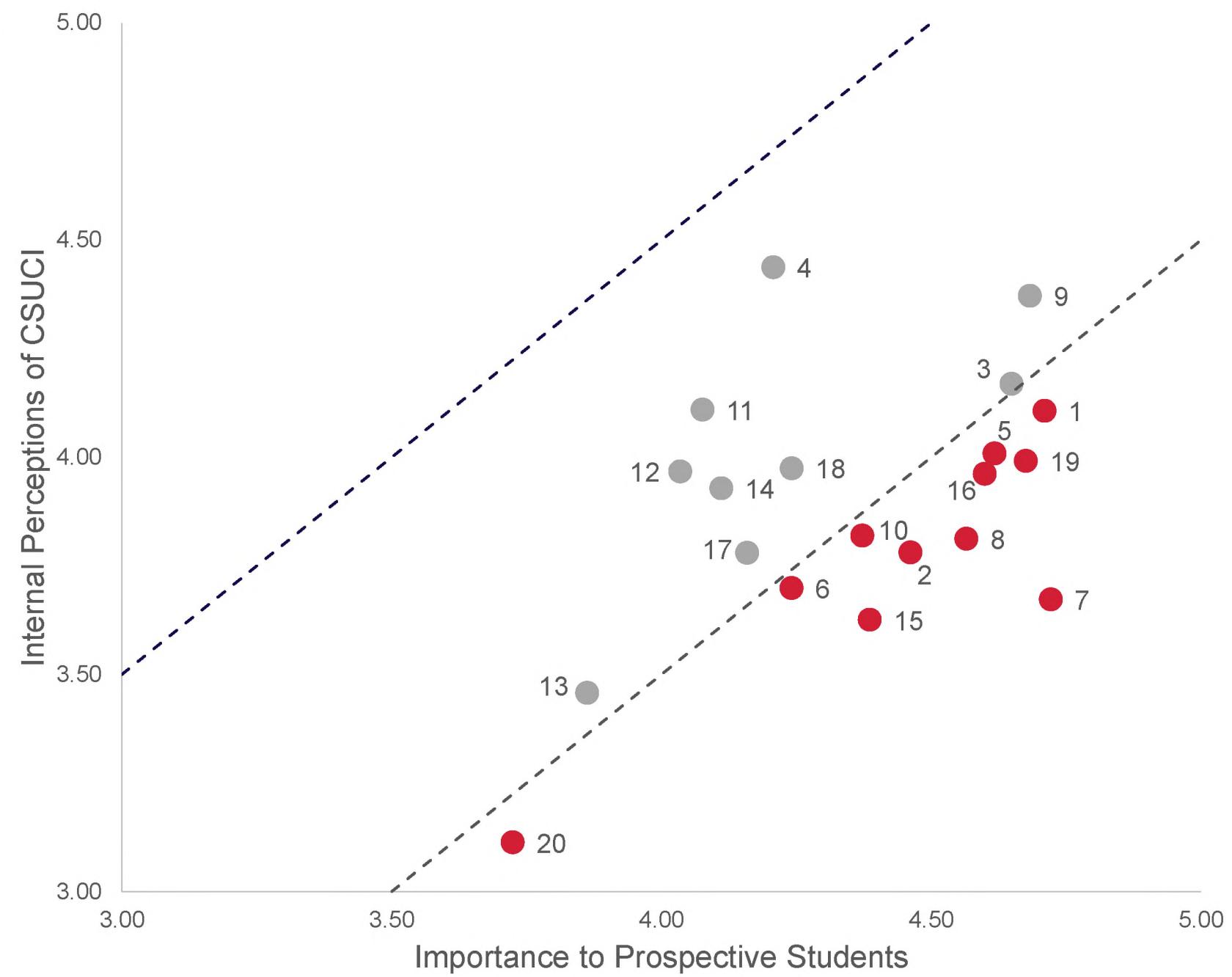
As shown previously, we asked prospective students to rate these same characteristics based on how important they are to them in the college search and application process.

By comparing that data with the information shown throughout the previous pages, we can see how CSUCI performs on prospective students' priorities according to the people who know CSUCI best.

The chart on the following page shows the importance of each characteristic according to prospective students (x-axis) and perceptions of CSUCI on that quality according to current students, faculty and staff, alumni, and parents (y-axis).

*(discussion continued after the chart and table on the following page)*

#	Attribute
1	Quality of my major
2	Quality of academic advising
3	Quality of faculty as teachers and mentors
4	Offering smaller classes for personal attention
5	Putting students first
6	Employers value a degree from the university
7	Graduates get good jobs in their field
8	Cost of attendance
9	Safety of campus & community
10	Overall academic reputation
11	Diversity of the student body
12	Diversity of faculty and staff
13	Active student life
14	Location in a desirable city, town, or area
15	Internship opportunities
16	Overall value of the education
17	Sense of community
18	Opportunities for students to do research
19	Hands-on learning opportunities
20	Things to do off campus for fun



# Comparing Internal Perceptions with External Priorities (cont.)

---

The results on the preceding page show that there are many areas in which internal perceptions of CSUCI can be improved.

Several of these are related to broader topics such as:

- **Outcomes** (internship opportunities, graduates find good jobs, employers value a degree from CSUCI)
- **Academics** (quality of my major, academic reputation)
- **Student Support** (academic advising, putting students first)
- **Affordability** (cost of attendance, value of the education)

Several of these attributes are highly important to prospective students. These are the areas to focus on when improving perceptions in this new chapter for the University.

# Areas for Improving CSUCI's Reputation

---

We then asked all respondents to rank the top five ways in which they would like to see CSUCI's reputation improve in the future.

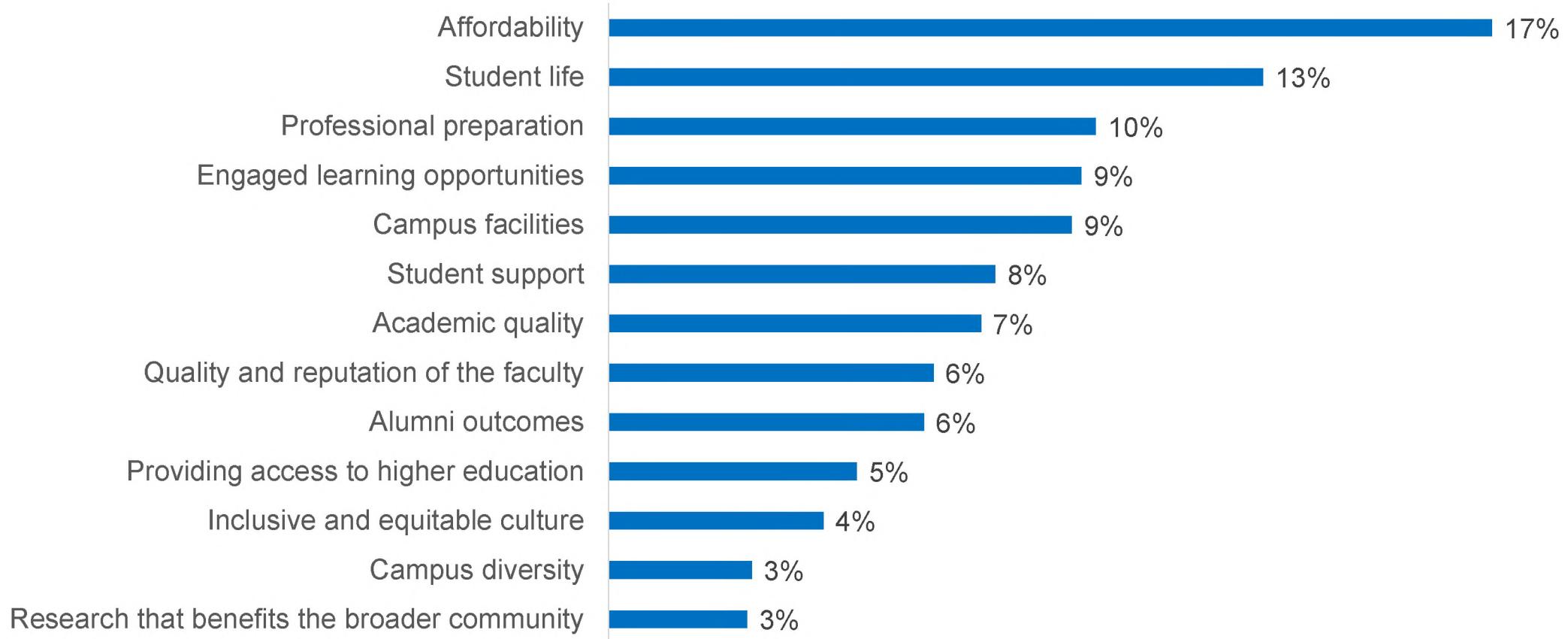
The chart on the following page shows that a reputation for ***affordability*** rises above all others.

However, this was largely driven by students and alumni, the former accounting for the majority of all respondents to the survey.

In subsequent pages we show and discuss how your various audiences differ in how they would like CSUCI's reputation to improve.

# Areas for Improving CSUCI's Reputation

---



Q. *In what areas would you most like to see CSUCI's reputation improve?*  
(% ranked as first choice)

N=1,069

# Improving CSUCI's Reputation | Differences by Audience

---

The table on the following page shows the percentage of respondents from each stakeholder group ranking the attribute as their first choice for areas CSUCI should improve its reputation in the future.

Current students and alumni agree that they would like to see CSUCI improve its reputation for ***affordability, student life, and professional preparation***.

Faculty and staff, on the other hand, want CSUCI to have a stronger reputation on ***academic quality and campus facilities***. And faculty and staff also want to see CSUCI have a stronger reputation for professional preparation.

While we see differences in *degree of priority* between these attributes, most agree that CSUCI should have a stronger reputation in the top-ranked items listed above.

# Top priorities for your audiences amount to ROI

Attribute	Students	Faculty & Staff	Alumni	Parents
Affordability	21%	5%	18%	11%
Student life	15%	8%	11%	9%
Professional preparation	9%	10%	14%	9%
Engaged learning opportunities	8%	9%	11%	17%
Campus facilities	8%	13%	7%	6%
Student support	8%	4%	5%	21%
Academic quality	5%	16%	7%	8%
Quality and reputation of the faculty	6%	8%	4%	4%
Alumni outcomes	6%	7%	11%	2%
Providing access to higher education	5%	4%	4%	4%
Inclusive and equitable culture	3%	9%	4%	0%
Campus diversity	2%	4%	0%	8%
Research that benefits the broader community	3%	2%	5%	2%

Top-Ranked Item  
2<sup>nd</sup>-Ranked Item  
3<sup>rd</sup>-Ranked Item

Q. *In what areas would you most like to see CSUCI's reputation improve?  
(% ranked as first choice)*

# Words and Phrases to Describe CSUCI

---

Respondents were then asked to rank the top five words or phrases they would use to describe CSUCI.

The list of 25 possible selections was created based on words currently used in existing messaging, mentioned during our interviews, or seen as aspirational qualities for the University's future.

The charts on the following slides show that six words were selected most frequently: **welcoming, right-sized, friendly, good value, diverse, and down-to-earth**. Combined, these six words accounted for 52% of all first-choice rankings.

These six words characterize CSUCI in terms of its community. There are mentions of size, openness, inclusivity, and attitude. Importantly, many people also feel that CSUCI delivers good value to its students.

## Top Descriptors for CSUCI

Ranked 1<sup>st</sup> by 4% or more

Welcoming 13%

Right-sized 10%

Friendly 9%

Good value 7%

Diverse 7%

Down-to-earth 7%

Community 5%

Inclusive 5%

Supportive 5%

Personal 4%

Opportunity 4%

## Less Common Descriptors for CSUCI

Ranked 1<sup>st</sup> by less than 4%

Hard-working 3%

Well-rounded 3%

Genuine 3%

Challenging 2%

Engaged 2%

Life-changing 2%

Professional preparation 2%

Innovative 2%

Academically rigorous 1%

Dynamic 1%

Fun 1%

Spirited 1%

Social 1%

Relevant 1%

# Words and Phrases to Describe CSUCI | Preferences by Audience

---

Listed below are the top five words and phrases chosen by each audience to describe CSUCI:

## Current Students

*Welcoming* (13%)

*Friendly* (10%)

*Right-Sized* (8%)

*Diverse* (7%)

*Down-to-Earth* (7%)

## Faculty and Staff

*Good Value* (16%)

*Welcoming* (14%)

*Right-Sized* (12%)

*Hard-Working* (7%)

*Friendly* (6%)

## Alumni

*Right-Sized* (14%)

*Welcoming* (9%)

*Down-to-Earth* (9%)

*Opportunity* (7%)

*Hard-Working* (6%)

## Parents

*Right-Sized* (29%)

*Welcoming* (14%)

*Good Value* (10%)

*Community* (8%)

*Diverse* (6%)

# Comparing Importance and Association with CSUCI

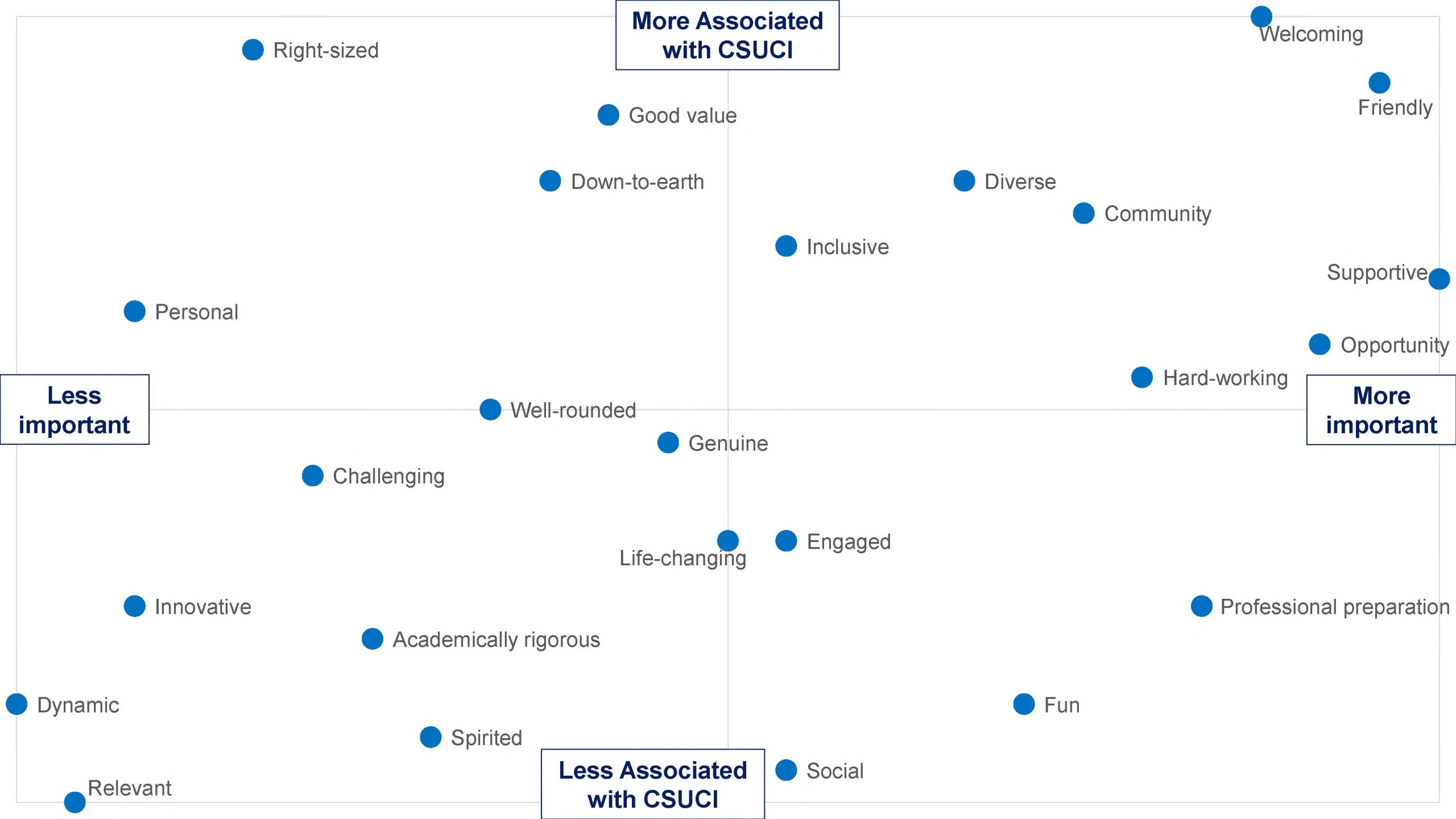
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In the same way we asked internal audiences about how strongly these terms are associated with CSUCI, we also asked prospective students how important they are to them in the college environment they're seeking.

By comparing results on these two dimensions, we can see how certain words or phrases are likely to resonate with CSUCI's target audiences.

The chart on the following slide compares results for all 25 words and phrases on these two dimensions: (1) importance to prospective students (x-axis); and (2) association with CSUCI according to internal audiences(y-axis).

*(discussion continued after the chart on the following page)*



# Comparing Importance and Association with CSUCI (cont.)

---

In many cases, there is agreement between what is important to prospective students and what is (or is not) characteristic of CSUCI. Terms in the upper right quadrant show what is both important to target audiences and associated with CSUCI, any of which focus on aspects of community (***supportive, welcoming, friendly, community, diverse***).

The lower left quadrant contains terms that are less important and less characteristic of CSUCI, including words such as ***dynamic, relevant, spirited, innovative, and academically rigorous***.

It is important to clarify here that just because something doesn't appear toward the top of one of these dimensions does not mean that it's not important or not characteristic of CSUCI. Rather, *it is just not as important or as characteristic of CSUCI as other terms.*

*(discussion continued on the following page)*

# Comparing Importance and Association with CSUCI (cont.)

---

The lower right quadrant is an important focus area as this points to qualities that are important to your prospective students but not strongly associated with CSUCI.

This quadrant includes ***professional preparation, fun, engaged, and social***.

These terms tell a story consistent with earlier findings showing that perceptions of CSUCI's student life and outcomes are relatively low or unknown. It is important, therefore, for CSUCI to improve perceptions on student engagement and fun as well as how the University intentionally prepares students for their careers.

In turn, there are also several terms in the upper left quadrant that shows qualities highly characteristic of CSUCI but less important to prospective students, including ***right-sized*** and ***personal (good value and down-to-earth)*** are also in this quadrant but quite close to the middle of the "importance" dimension). Our interpretation of these results is that CSUCI can and should continue to promote the University in terms of its size and personal qualities but that they should be secondary to qualities that are more important to your prospective students.

# Net Promoter Score Explained

---

The next question in the survey assessed CSUCI's Net Promoter Score (NPS).

The NPS is a measure of brand strength and advocacy that asks respondents whether they would recommend a product or service to another consumer.

In this case, we asked respondents how likely they would be to recommend CSUCI to someone considering college on a 0-10 scale.

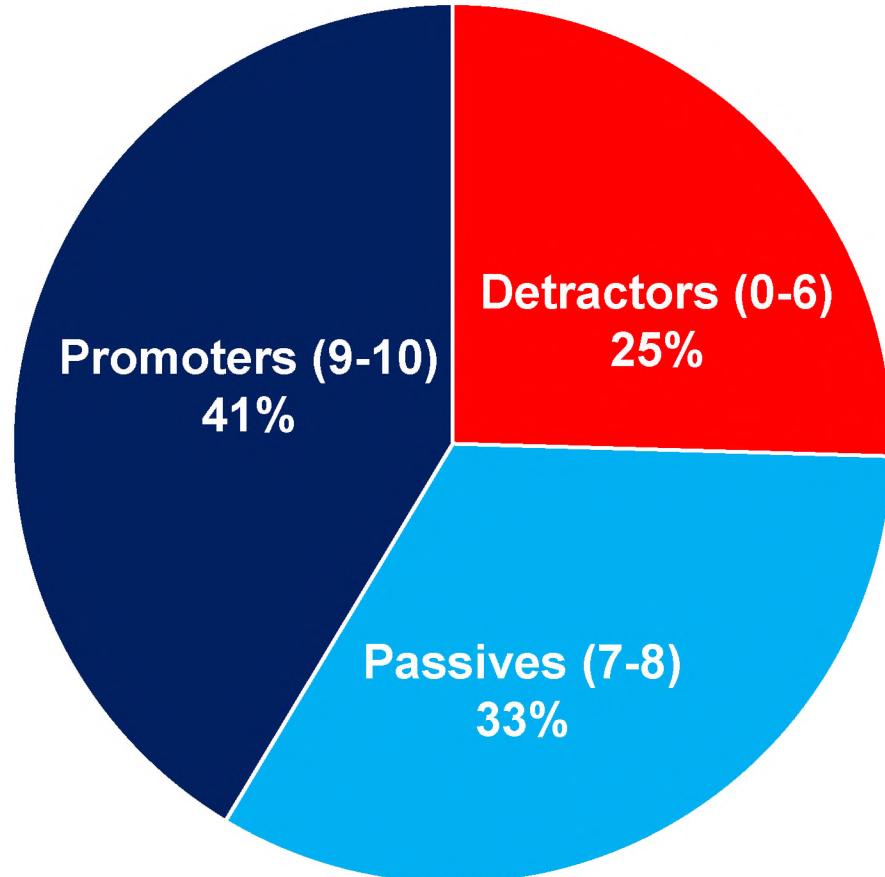
To interpret NPS results (see chart on following slide), you categorize responses into the following:

- Detractors (0-6)
- Passives (7-8)
- Promoters (9-10)

A brand's Net Promoter Score is then calculated by subtracting the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters (therefore, NPS scores range from -100 to +100).

# CSUCI has a stellar Net Promoter Score

NPS: +15.9



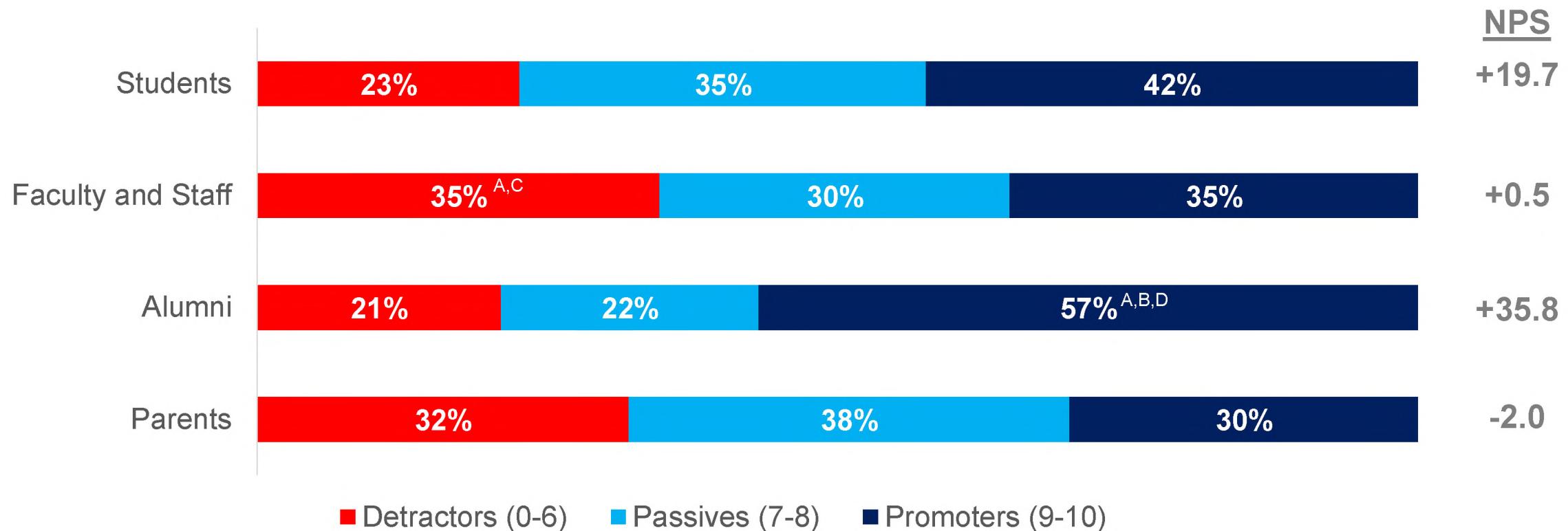
CSUCI has a positive Net Promoter Score (+15.9), which is among the highest we have seen in our experience surveying these audiences at universities around the country.

It is obvious from earlier results that CSUCI audiences would like to see the University improve in several important ways. But even so, they appreciate the University and most would be likely to recommend you to others.

n=1,049

Q. How likely are you to recommend CSUCI to someone considering college?

# Alumni are most likely to recommend CSUCI; faculty, staff, and parents less likely



Students, n=699

Faculty and Staff, n=219

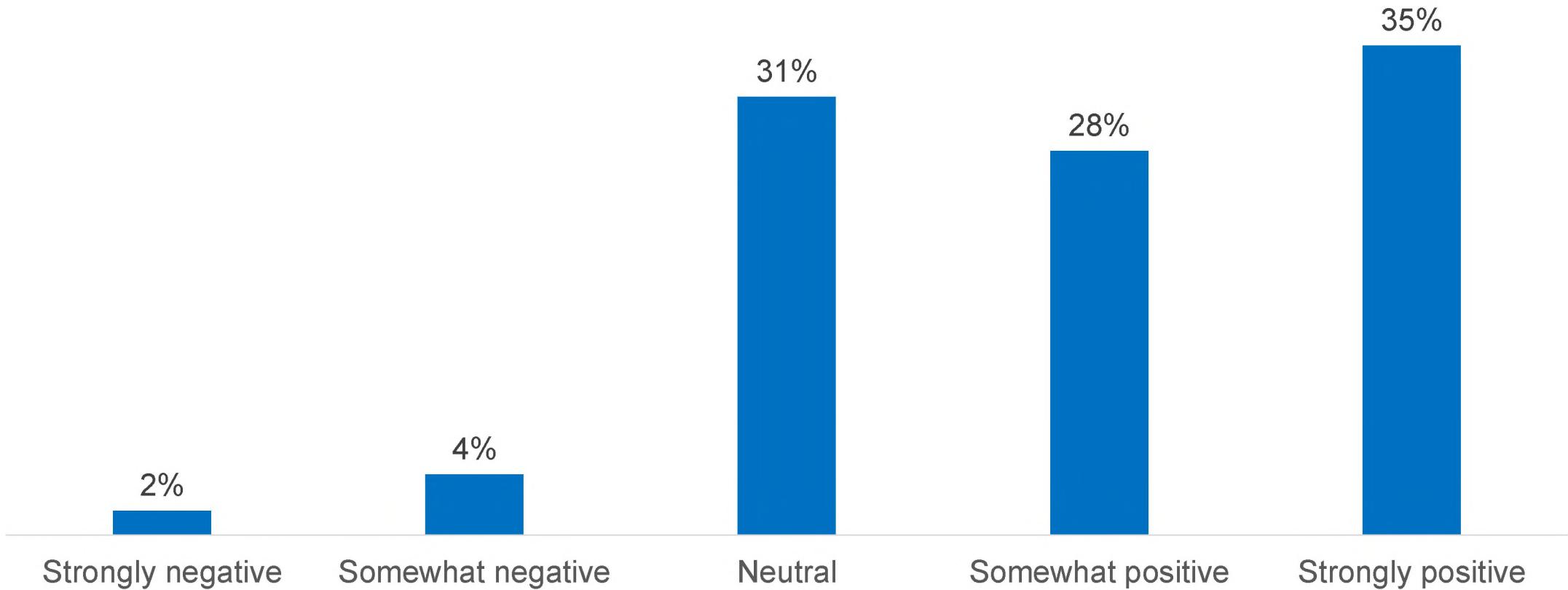
Alumni, n=81

Parents, n=50

Q. How likely are you to recommend CSUCI to someone considering college?

# Most stakeholders feel positively about “Channel Your Potential” and “Channel Your Success”

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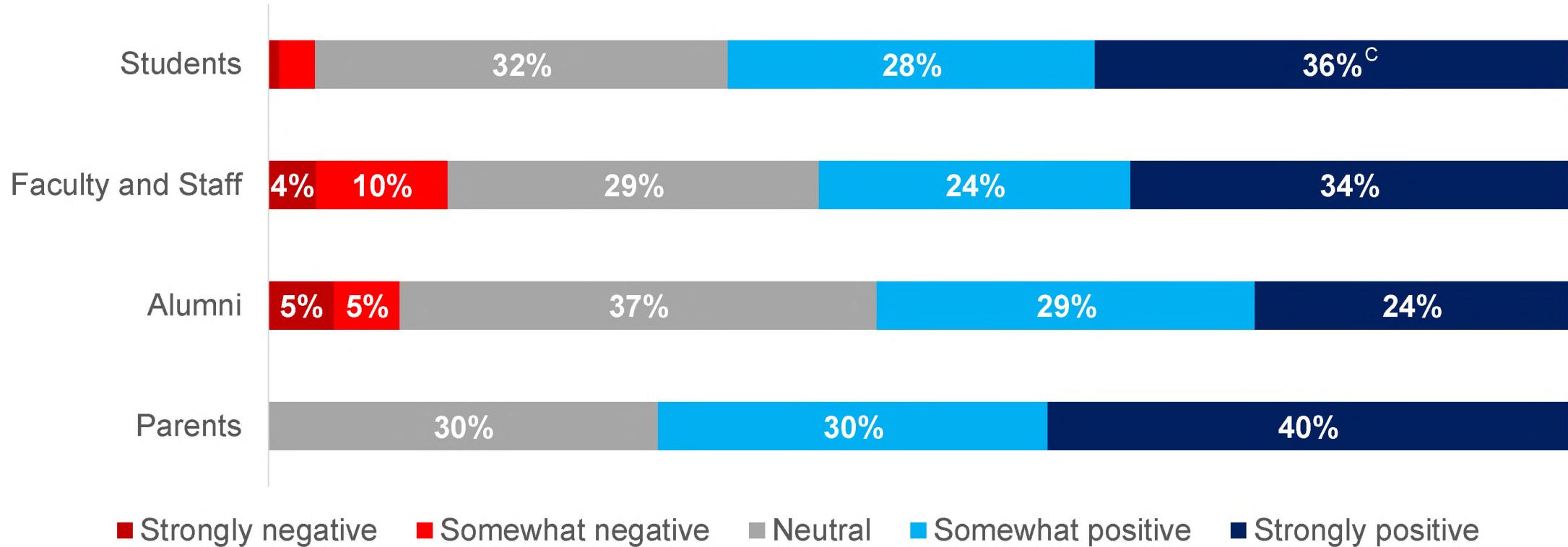


*Q. When it comes to the CSUCI taglines, what is your opinion of “Channel Your Potential” and “Channel Your Success”?*

*N=1,036*

# Majority of all audiences likes “Channel Your \_\_\_\_\_” though alumni are more likely to be neutral than others

---



Students, n=690

Faculty and Staff, n=217

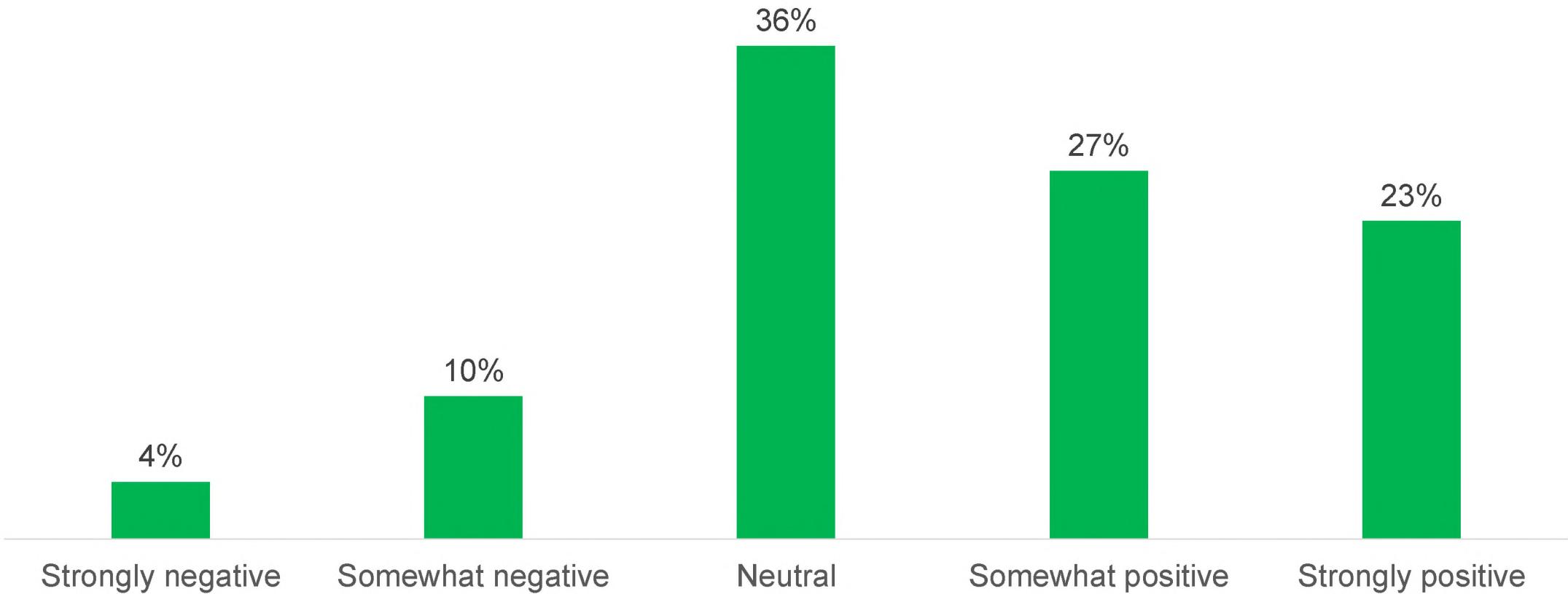
Alumni, n=79

Parents, n=50

Q. When it comes to the CSUCI taglines, what is your opinion of “Channel Your Potential” and “Channel Your Success”?

# Stakeholders are less positive about the idea of “reimagining higher education...”

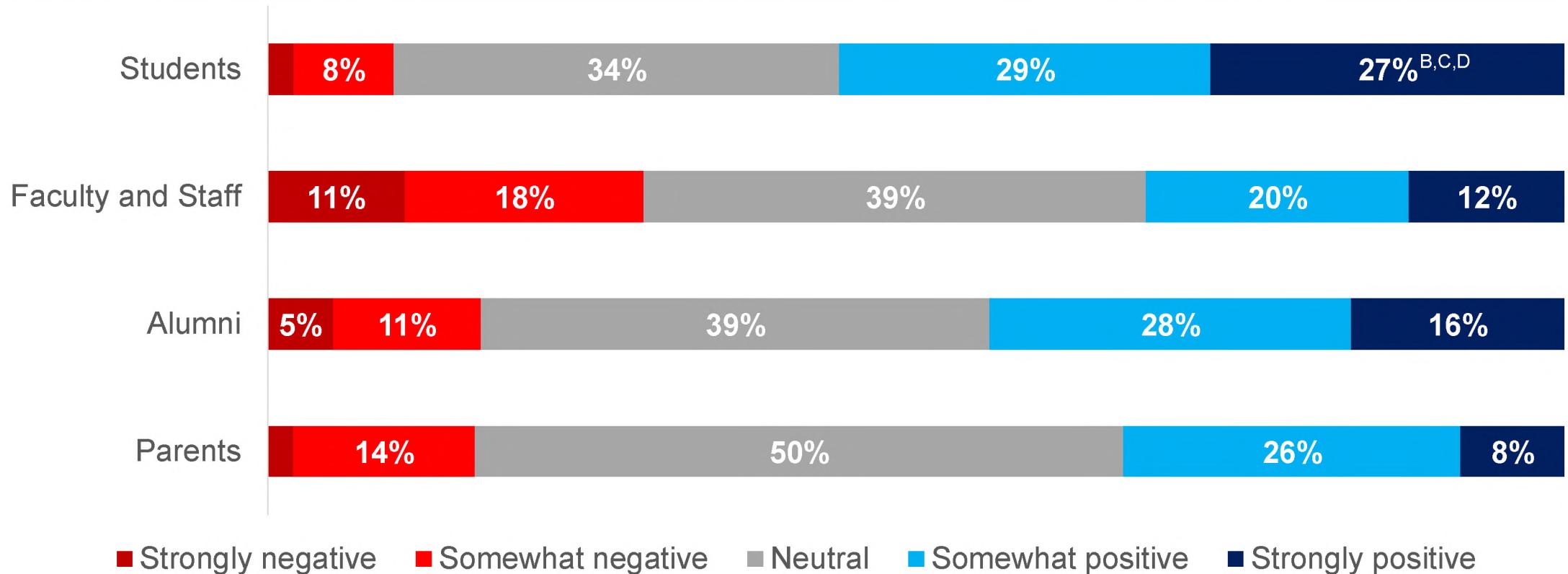
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*Q. What is your opinion of the CSUCI idea of “Reimagining Higher Education for a New Era and Generation”?*

*N=1,035*

# Students more likely than others to like “reimagining higher education...”; faculty and staff least likely



Students, n=689

Faculty and Staff, n=217

Alumni, n=79

Parents, n=50

Q. *What is your opinion of the CSUCI idea of “Reimagining Higher Education for a New Era and Generation”?*

# CSUCI Website

ADV

MARKET RESEARCH  
& CONSULTING

# Statements About the Current Website

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To assist CSUCI in your upcoming initiative to refresh the University's website, we asked several questions about how stakeholders use the site today and their perceptions of it.

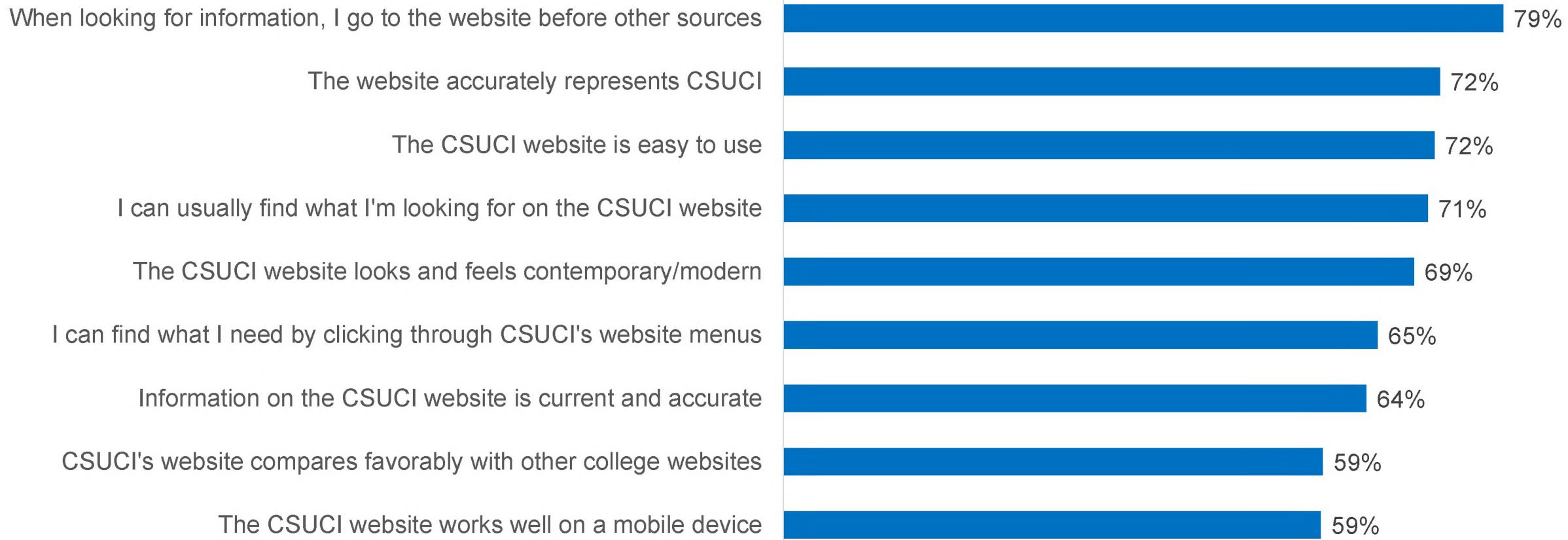
The chart on the following page shows the percentage of respondents who agree with a series of positive statements about the CSUCI website.

Results are fine – not particularly strong or particularly weak, and they indicate several ways in which CSUCI's website can be better.

Specifically, we would hope to see more favorable opinions of the site regarding ***how well it works on a mobile device***, the ***accuracy of information***, ***navigation***, and ***overall look and feel***.

# Findings point to several ways for CSUCI's website to improve

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*Q. Please state how much you agree or disagree with these statements about the CSUCI website.  
(% reporting "slightly agree" or "strongly agree")*

# Information and Resources Sought

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We also inquired about how stakeholders use the CSUCI website – i.e., what are the resources and information they use the website for?

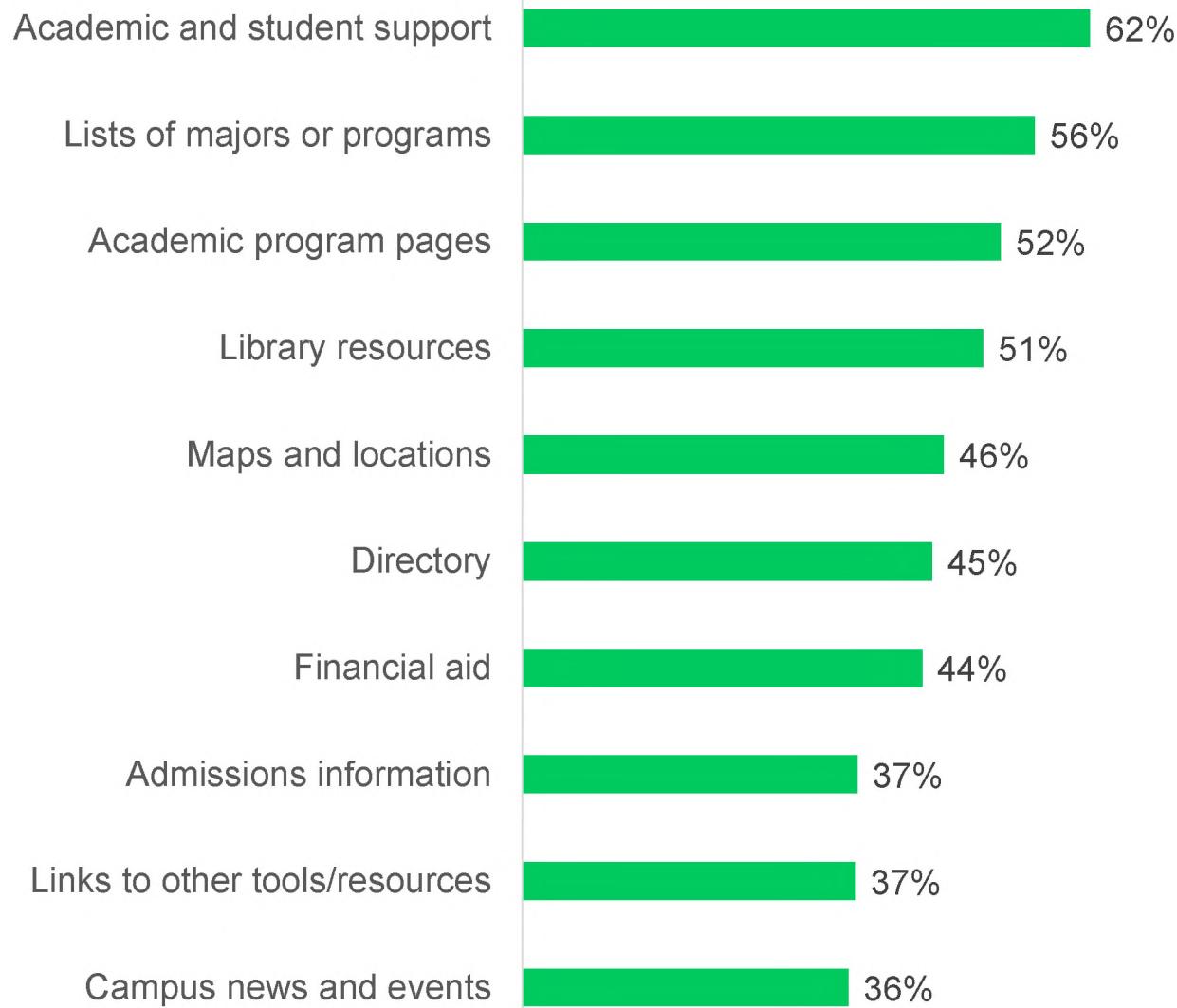
Results on the following page show that internal users of the site look for information on ***academic and student support*** as well as ***information about CSUCI's academic programs*** (either lists of programs available or more detailed information on program pages).

The page following results for all respondents shows top priorities by sub-group.

- Each sub-group uses the website for different purposes, though there are natural areas of overlap.
- Students and parents, for instance, both want to know information about academic programs, student support, and financial aid. Parents, however, are considerably more interested in information about housing and dining than others.
- Faculty and staff use the website to find information to enable their day-to-day operations, such as using the directory to find contact information for colleagues, using the campus map to navigate campus, and finding help for technical issues.

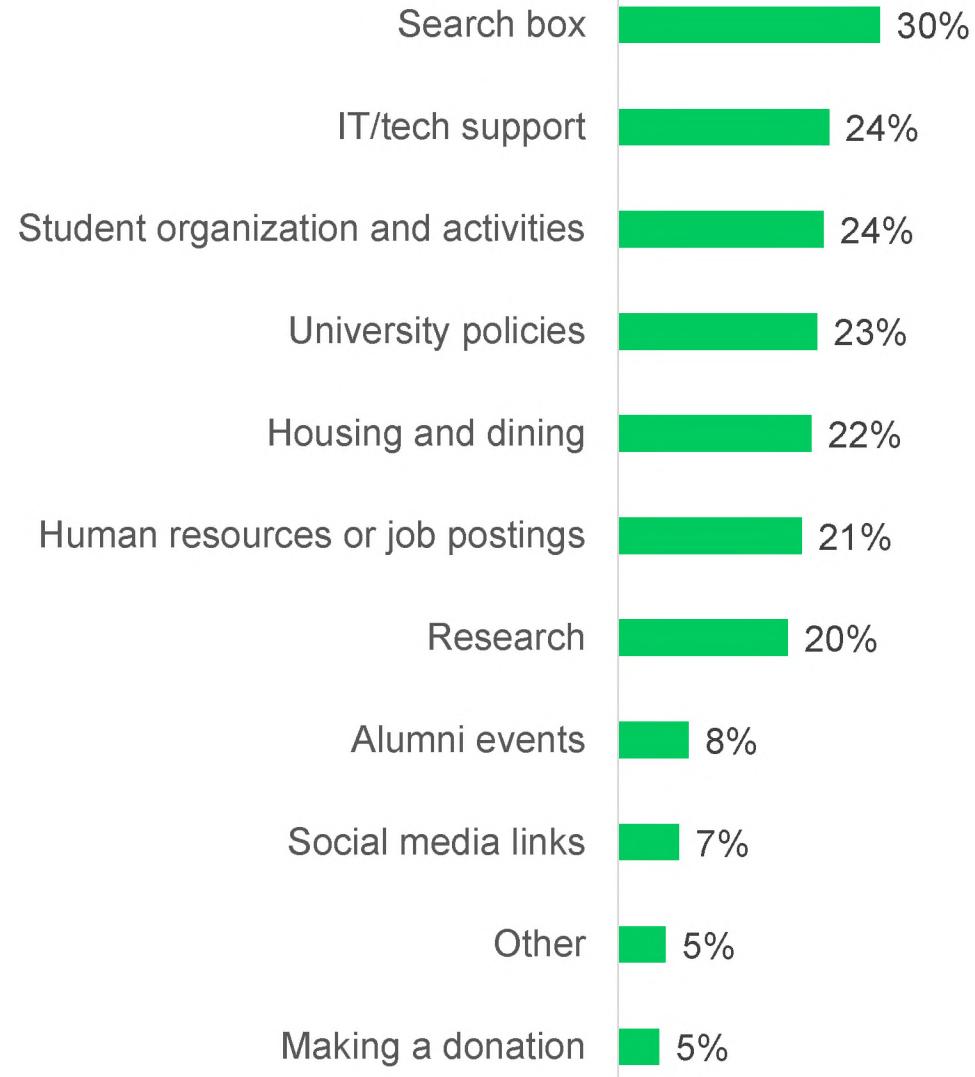
## Most Used

*Selected by at least 1/3 of respondents*



## Less Used

*Selected by less than 1/3 of respondents*



*Q. What kinds of information or resources do you use the CSUCI website to find? Select all that apply.*

# Information and Resources Sought | Top Selections by Audience

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Listed below are the top five things sought on the CSUCI website by each audience:

## Current Students

*Academic and student support (69%)*  
*Lists of majors or programs (64%)*  
*Library resources (59%)*  
*Financial aid (55%)*  
*Academic program pages (53%)*

## Faculty and Staff

*Directory (78%)*  
*Maps and locations (62%)*  
*IT/tech support (59%)*  
*University policies (54%)*  
*Academic program pages (53%)*

## Alumni

*Academic program pages (57%)*  
*Lists of majors or programs (50%)*  
*Academic and student support (47%)*  
*Alumni events (42%)*  
*Admissions information (37%)*

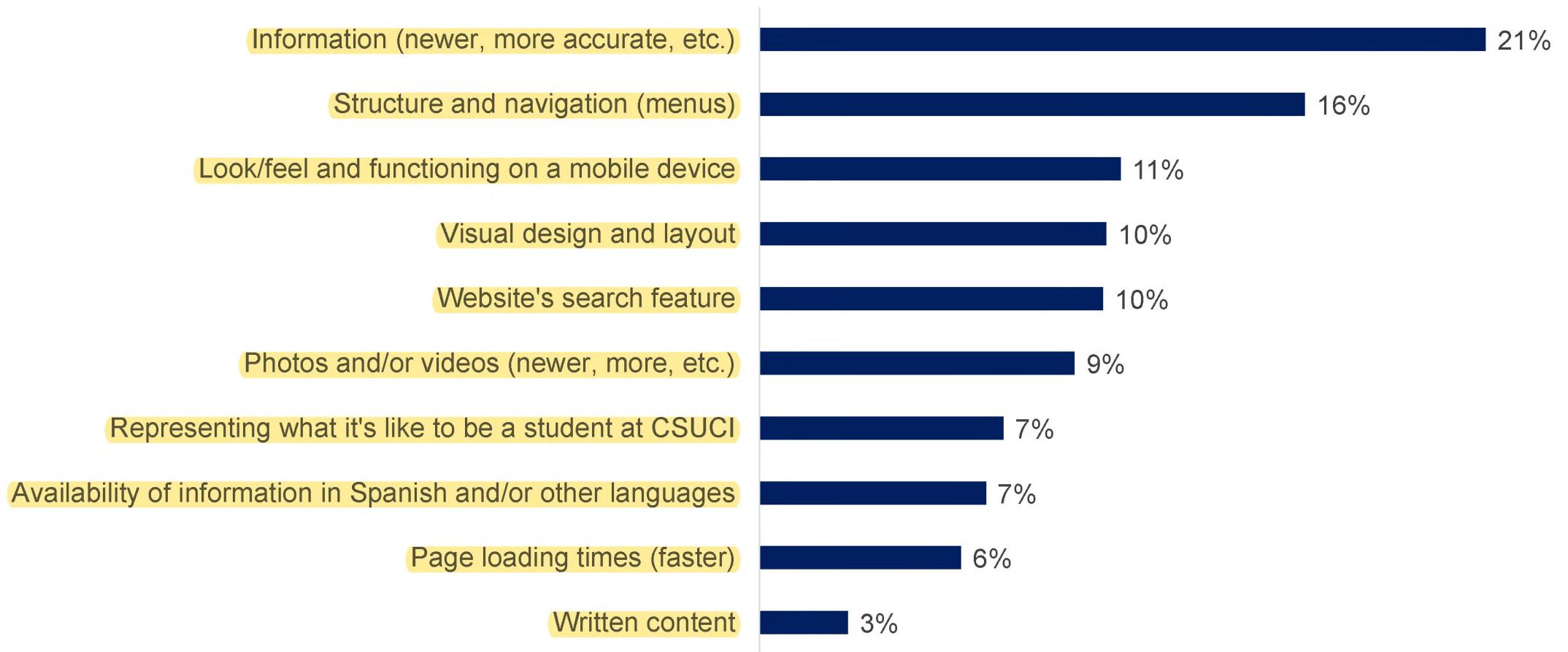
## Parents

*Housing and dining (63%)*  
*Academic and student support (57%)*  
*Financial aid (43%)*  
*Academic program pages (41%)*  
*Lists of majors or programs (37%)*

Q. *What kinds of information or resources do you use the CSUCI website to find? Select all that apply.*

# Top improvement for the website: newer and more accurate information

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Q. *What are the most important ways in which CSUCI could improve its website?*

N=960

# Some variation between audiences but most agree on the need for newer and more accurate information

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Attribute	Students	Faculty & Staff	Alumni	Parents
Information (newer, more accurate, etc.)	18%	34%	11%	26%
Structure and navigation (menus)	17%	16%	17%	2%
Look/feel and functioning on a mobile device	13%	4%	2%	7%
Visual design and layout	9%	15%	9%	7%
Website's search feature	10%	10%	8%	14%
Photos and/or videos (newer, more, etc.)	9%	6%	23%	16%
Representing what it's like to be a student at CSUCI	8%	4%	0%	16%
Availability of information in Spanish and/or other languages	7%	6%	6%	5%
Page loading times (faster)	7%	1%	15%	5%
Written content	2%	3%	9%	2%

Q. *What are the most important ways in which CSUCI could improve its website?*

# Questions for Current Students and Parents

ADV

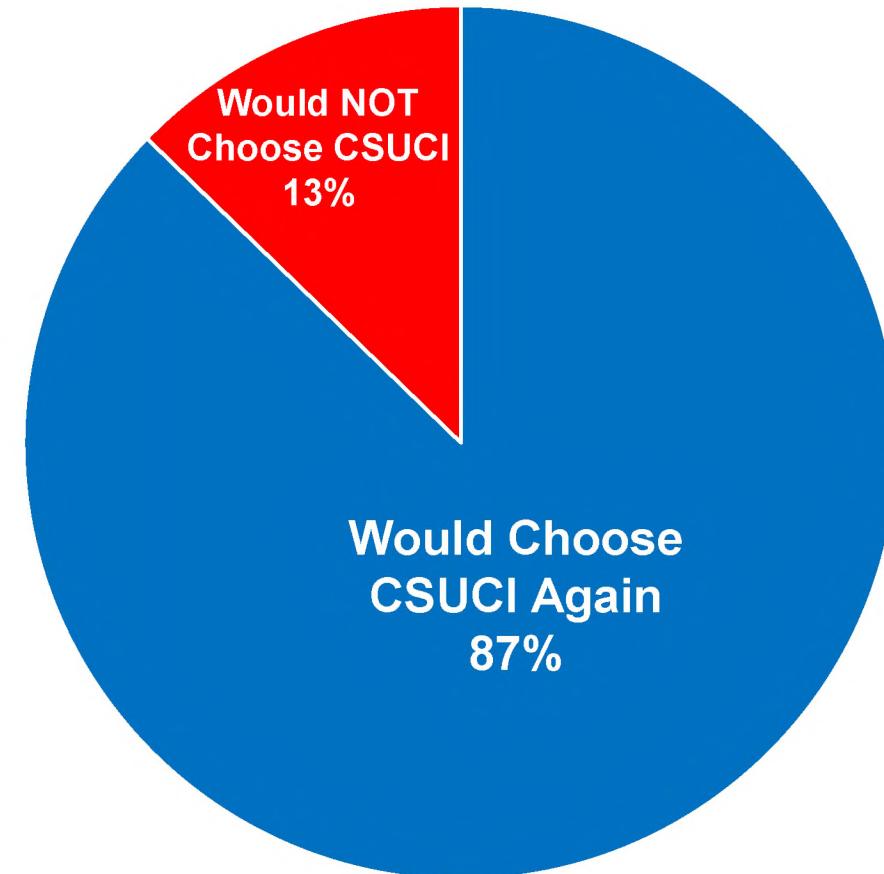
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# An impressive 87% of students would choose CSUCI again if given the chance

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It is very encouraging to see that 87% of students would choose CSUCI again if given the chance to do it over.

This is among the best results we have ever seen for this question and speaks to a high level of satisfaction and pride among CSUCI students.

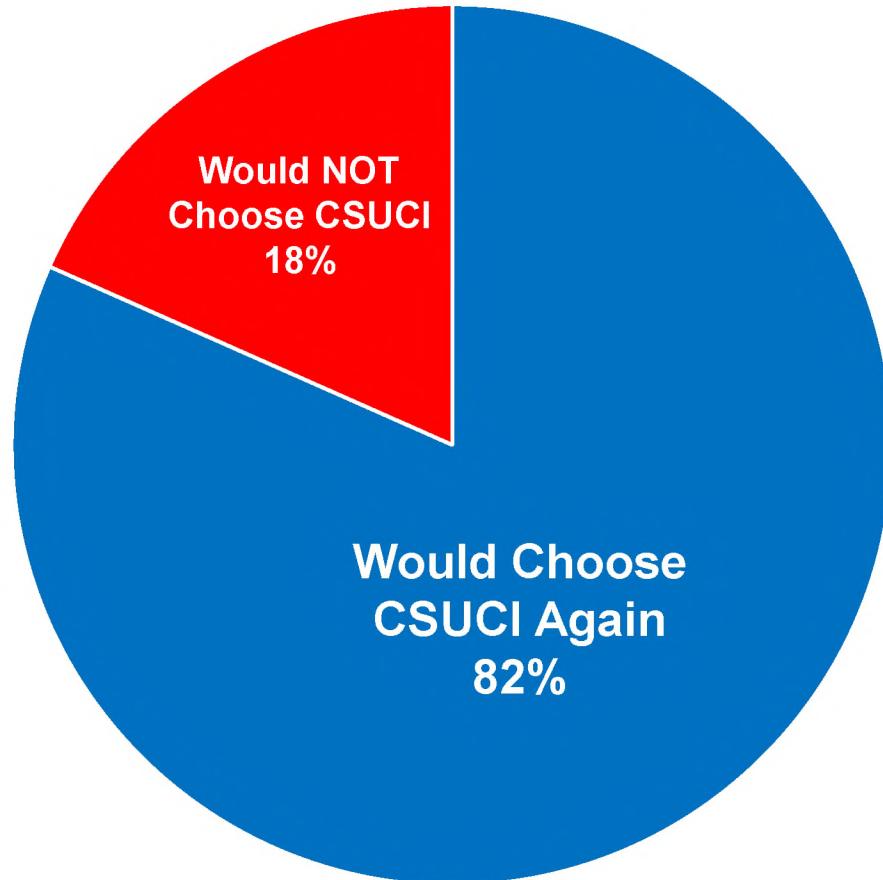


Q. *If you had to do it over, would you still choose to attend CSUCI?*

N=659

A similar proportion of parents would want their kids to choose CSUCI again if given the chance

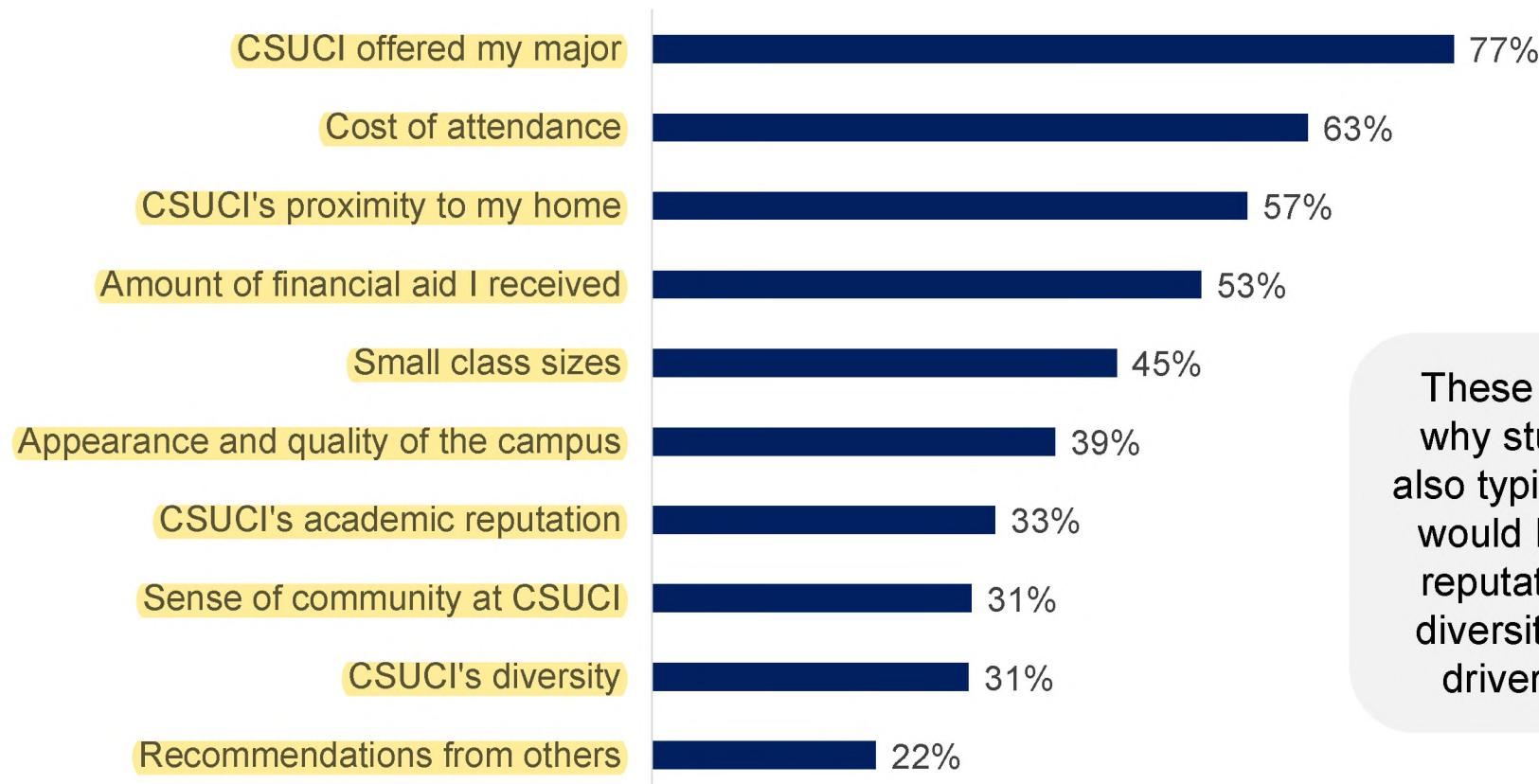
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Q. *If given the chance to do it over, would you still want your child to choose CSUCI?*

N=49

# Program, cost, and proximity to home are top reasons why students chose CSUCI

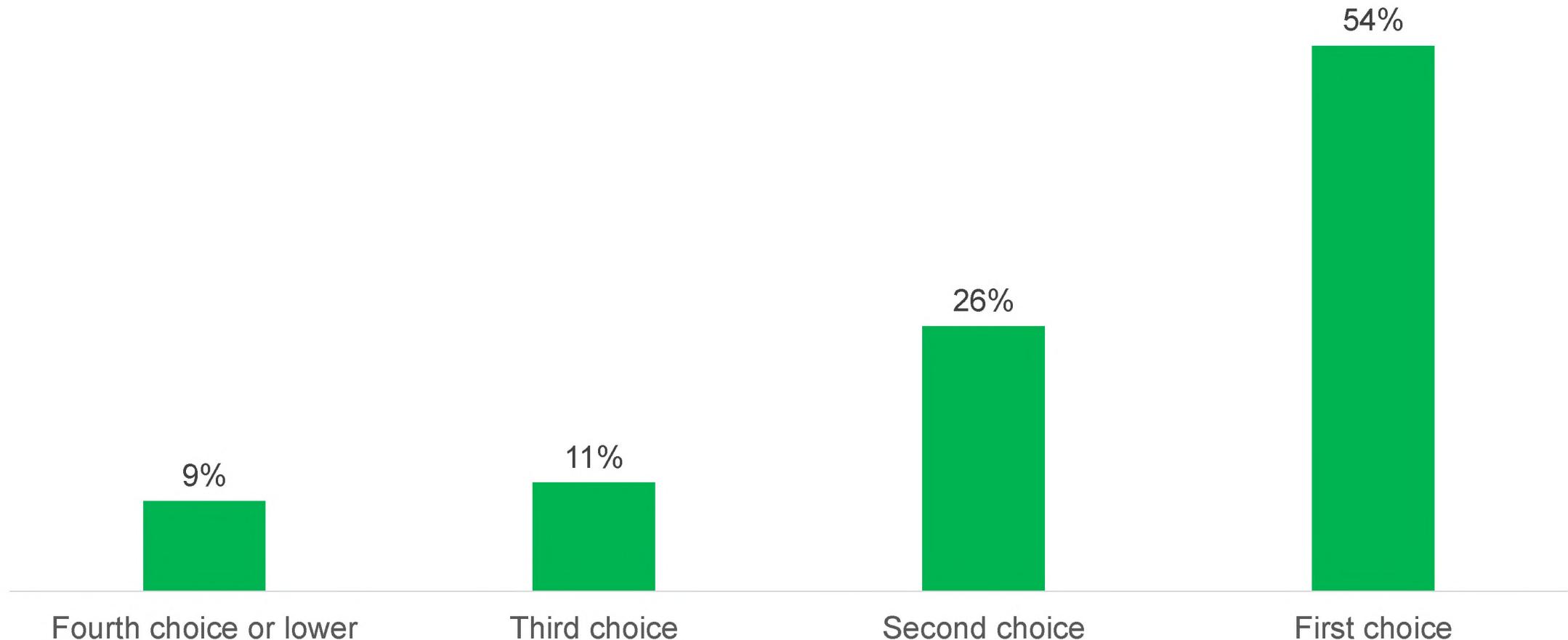


These are logical and expected reasons why students choose CSUCI. These are also typical in our experience. However, we would hope to see brand assets such as reputation, smaller class sizes, facilities, diversity, and other qualities are stronger drivers of student choice in the future.

*Q. How important were each of the following in your decision to enroll at CSUCI?  
(% responding “very important”)*

# CSUCI was the first choice for more than half (54%) of current students

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N=659

Q. *Where did CSUCI rank on your list when you were considering your college options?*

# CSUN is clearly CSUCI's closest competitor with nearly half of students also considering CSUN

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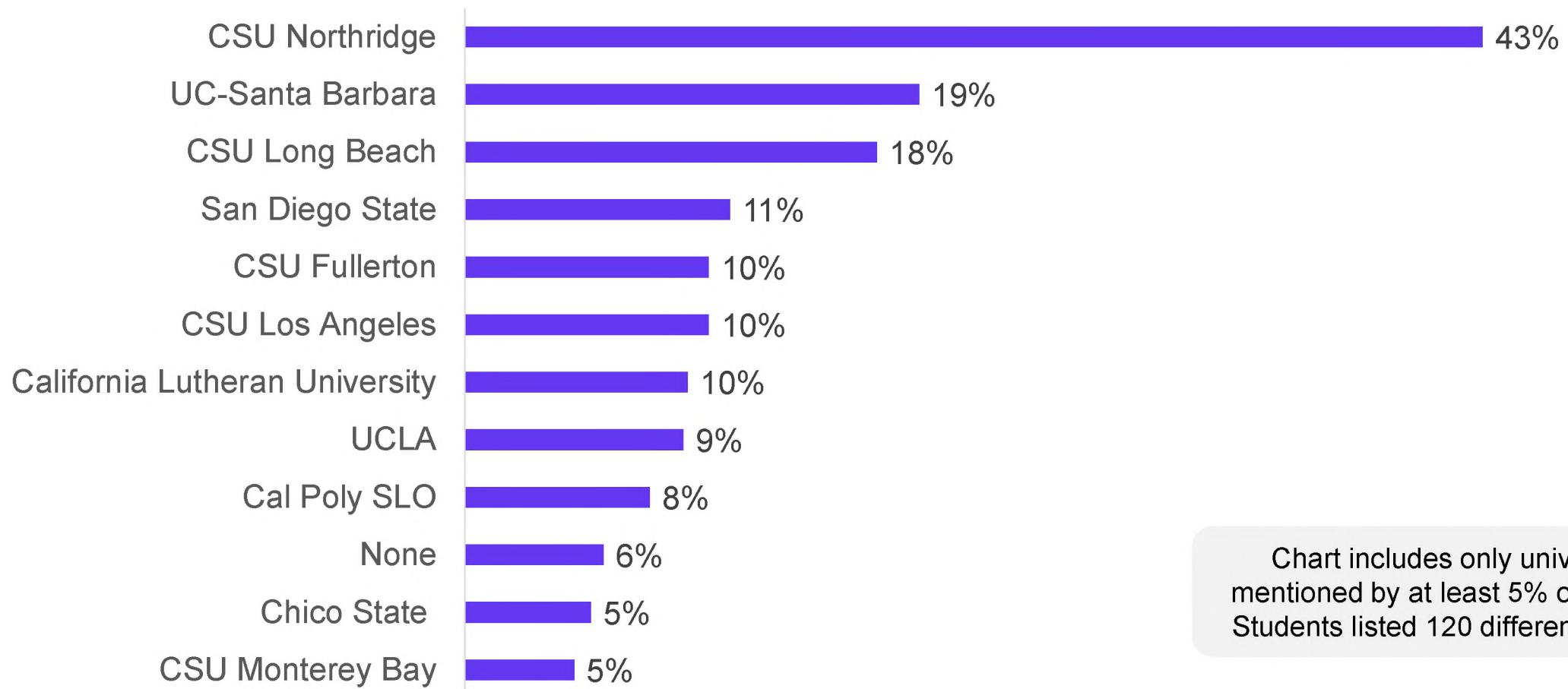
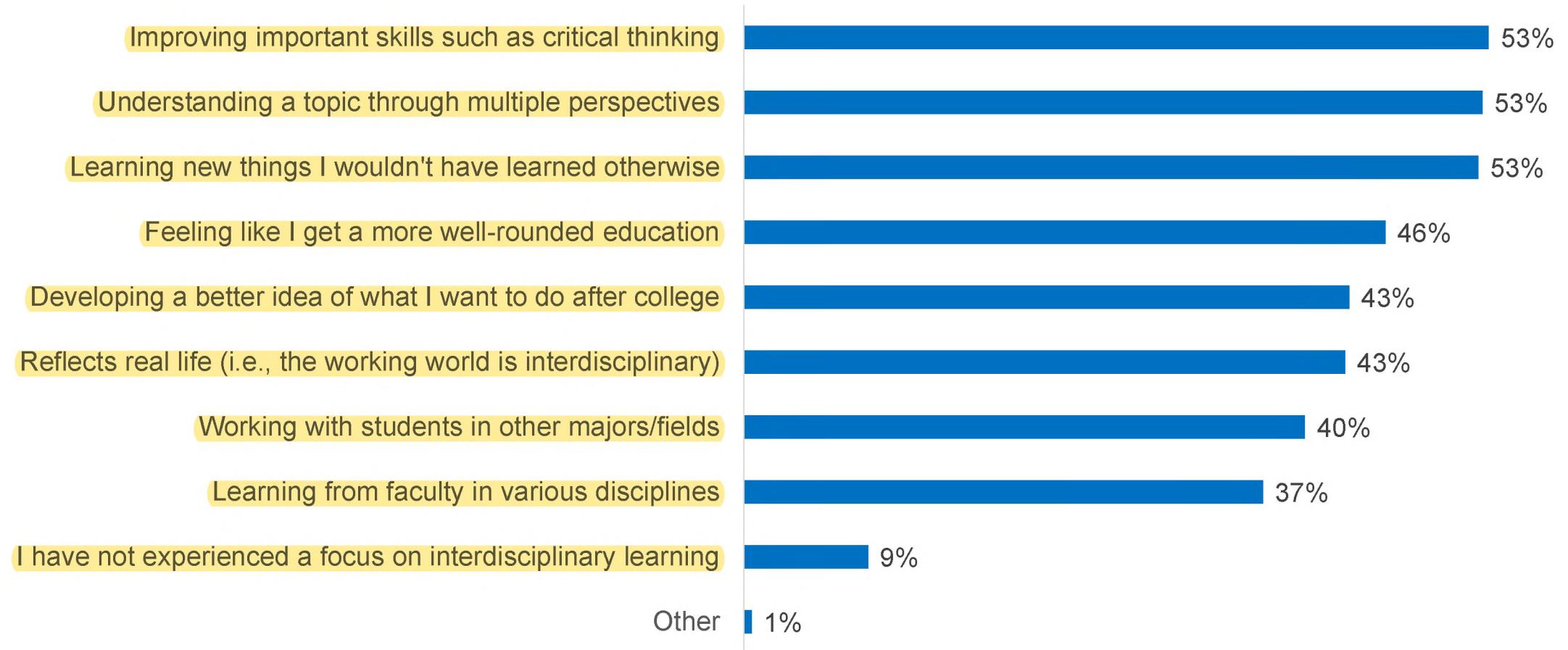


Chart includes only universities mentioned by at least 5% of students.  
Students listed 120 different colleges.

Q. *What other colleges did you seriously consider? List up to 3.*

# Students feel they receive many benefits from CSUCI's focus on interdisciplinary learning



N=660

Q. In your experience at CSUCI, what have been the biggest benefits of the University's focus on interdisciplinary learning?

# Multiple communication channels needed to reach students, email most preferred

In most cases students prefer to receive information by email. Social media is also a helpful source for learning about events on campus or information about extracurricular clubs and organizations. About half of all students also prefer to be notified about important deadlines by text message.

Collectively, these results indicate that effectively communicating with current students may require a “swiss cheese” approach – no single channel will reach all students, but layering communication across multiple channels can hope to reach as many as possible.

Attribute	Email	CSUCI's News Center	Social Media	Text Message	Ekhobot
Events happening on campus	66%	27%	48%	31%	31%
University-related news and updates	75%	29%	33%	30%	26%
Information about important deadlines	81%	20%	32%	53%	36%
Information about class schedules and the academic calendar	84%	22%	27%	41%	30%
Information about extracurricular clubs and organizations	65%	29%	49%	27%	24%

N=660

*Q. How would you prefer to learn about these types of information?*

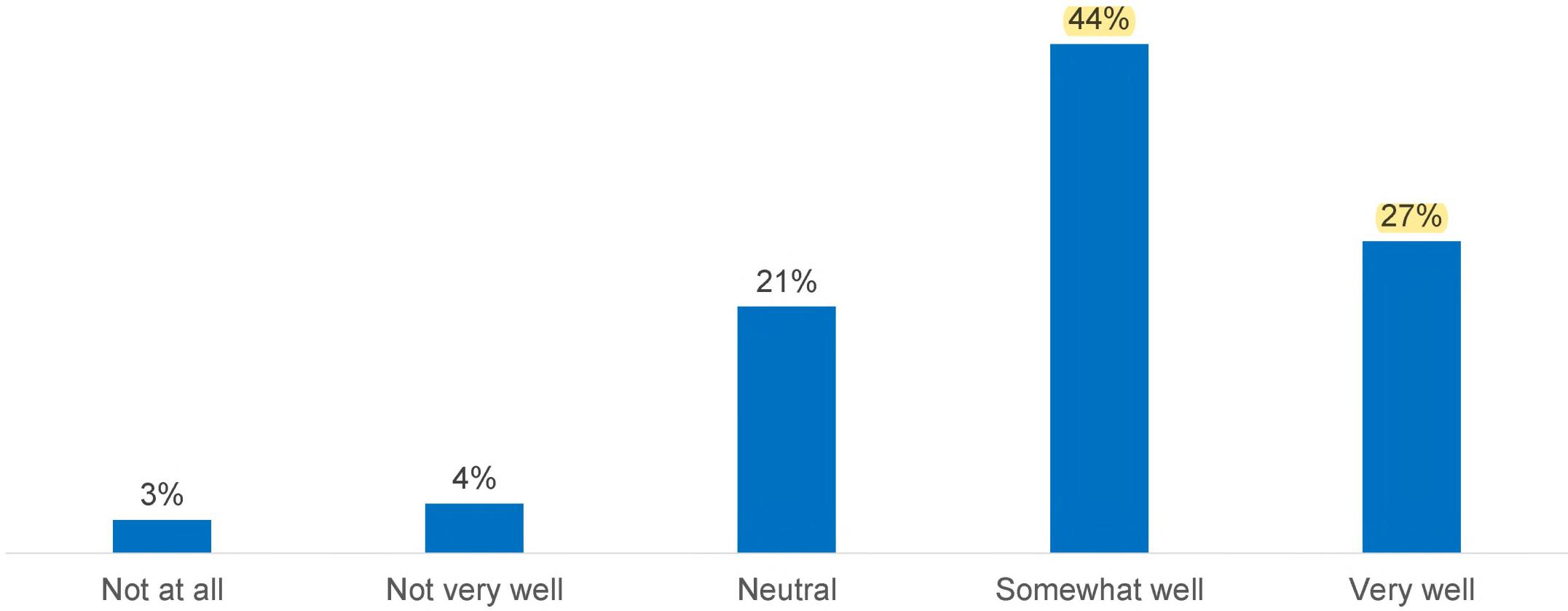
# Questions for Alumni

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# Most alumni believe CSUCI has prepared them well for their careers

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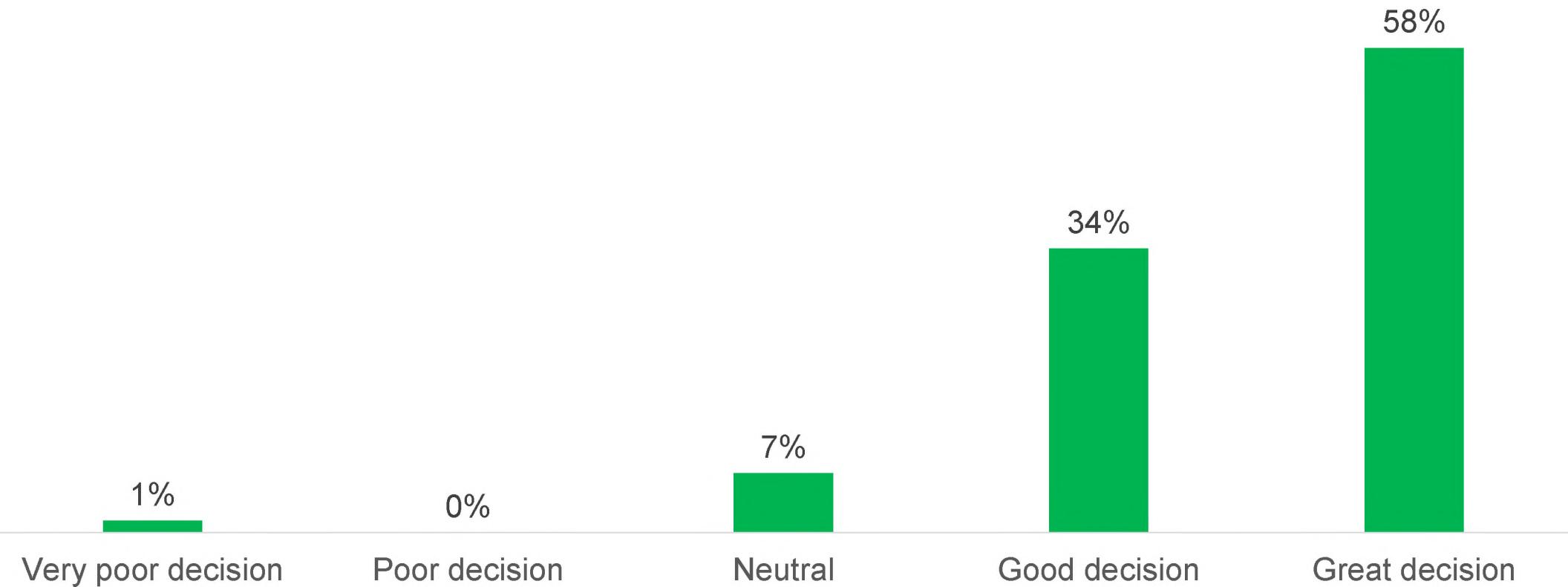


N=70

Q. How well did CSUCI prepare you for your career?

Alumni are pleased with their CSUCI experience – 92% say it was a good or great decision to attend

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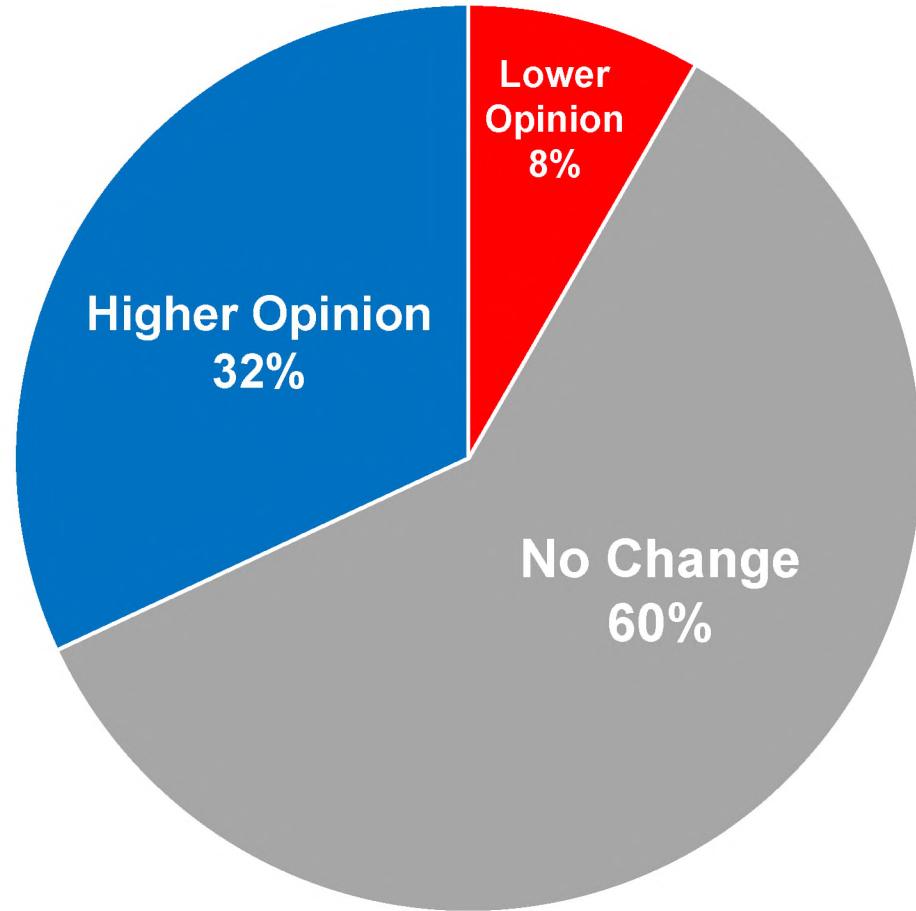


N=71

*Q. How would you rate your decision to attend CSUCI?*

On net, opinions of CSUCI are more likely to have improved since alumni graduated

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Q. *How has your opinion of CSUCI changed since you graduated?*

N=72

# Higher Opinion of CSUCI | Verbatim Responses

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There were too few responses to this open-ended follow-up question to draw meaningful conclusions about why certain alumni have more positive opinions of CSUCI today than when they graduated. Some key themes of the responses: appreciating what CSUCI did for them, having a better perspective on how good their experience was relative to others, good positioning for career and graduate school success, and appreciating the continued growth at the University since they graduated.

*The continued dedication to student and campus advancement.*

*Hindsight is always 20/20. I think it was a great opportunity for me and it really set me on a nice start into the world*

*I can appreciate my time at CSUCI more now as I reflect on how prepared I was to enter my field. I also have fond memories of my times on campus*

*I see many current students and alumni making positive impacts in the community*

*My experience was great. I came for the beauty and left with great experiences*

*It set me up for success in grad school and beyond, the research I did was foundational to research I've continued to do professionally, the faculty left lifelong impacts on me, the curriculum is still relevant, the experiences with diverse students and faculty were formative*

Q. *Why is your opinion of CSUCI **higher** today?*

# Lower Opinion of CSUCI | Verbatim Responses

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Reasons for having a **more negative opinion of CSUCI** now tend to be specific to the individual's experience and/or reflective of their political views. There are far too few responses to this question to extrapolate trends, but you can see in some of the comments below why certain individuals have a lower opinion of CSUCI now.

*It is more radical now.*

*campus closures and mask/vaccine policies*

*That one teacher that taught pretty much the only courses I needed in order to graduate.*

*Newest Vaccine mandate.*

Q. *Why is your opinion of CSUCI lower today?*

# Section IV: Summary and Implications

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# Summary & Implications

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## CSUCI MUST IMPROVE PERCEPTIONS OF OUTCOMES

Rarely have we seen internal audiences of a university so uncertain of outcomes and success as we do with CSUCI. Coupled with the importance of this topic to prospective students, CSUCI must substantially invest in the element of outcomes in your brand promotion.

This said, you first must be sure that you *offer* exceptional career success planning with intentional guidance and provable graduate success in most if not all academic fields.

In short, promotion about strong outcomes starts with ensuring CSUCI first delivers something special.

Elements of outcomes to evaluate include how CSUCI students are prepared for careers including internship opportunities, your success with and commitment to professionally-oriented programs, and graduate success stories that are real-time and authentic (as a young institution, CSUCI need not worry about CEOs and Presidents but that your alumni are true working practitioners).

Improving your outcomes reputation will better define CSUCI's brand with a topic that audiences want, need, and seek, as they consider your value proposition in terms of true ROI.

# Summary & Implications

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## INVESTING IN STUDENT LIFE IS A SECONDARY BUT NECESSARY PRIORITY

Student life was among the lowest-rated (if not *the* lowest-rated) quality for CSUCI by both internal and external audiences. Your stakeholders and target audiences feel there is not a great deal of extracurricular engagement tying them to the University. This becomes a problem when it impacts retention and/or the likelihood that a student would recommend CSUCI to someone considering their college options. The latter is more likely than the former, but both are potential concerns of inactive student life.

CSUCI must invest in ways to engage residential and commuter students with on-campus fun.

One notable benefit of rich on-campus student life: students may still wish there was more to do off-campus in the local area but it won't be as important when they have great things to do on-campus.

Finally, we term this as “secondary but necessary” intentionally. It is secondary because student life-related qualities are less important to your audiences than more substantive aspects of the university experience. At the same time, however, it is a building block element of a full college experience. Robust student life is necessary and expected, but CSUCI should focus first in investing in outcomes and academic quality.

# Summary & Implications

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## LOCATION IS BOTH AN ASSET AND A CHALLENGE

Closely connected to feelings about student life are feelings about the University's location. Your location is Camarillo is "quiet" and "calm" to some while being "sleepy" and "boring" to others.

Communicating about institutional location can be difficult, with rules pointing to more "don't's" than "do's." Do not, for instance, apologize for your location like so many colleges and universities do around the country. Further, do not try to exaggerate or misrepresent aspects of your location. You are not, for instance, in a large metropolitan city and pretending otherwise will be off-putting when students learn the truth.

The reality is that location is an asset for you and indivisible from who you are. It creates (or, at the very least, contributes to) the calm/focused/relaxed campus atmosphere students, faculty, and staff enjoy.

Your location also allows access to meaningful resources like the Santa Rosa Island Research Station, the benefits of which would be appreciated by prospective students, families, and counselors *if they were made aware of them.*

Recognize what your location allows for (and what it does not) and focus on its benefits for students.

# Summary & Implications

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## ELEVATE THE CONFIDENCE OF THE NARRATIVE

Based on these findings, CSUCI might be defined in this way:

***CSUCI is a fine affordable and convenient university for students who want a supportive and welcoming environment.***

While inherently acceptable due to the high support of stakeholders, this statement sheds light on two major issues.

First, “affordable and convenient” is a common community college position, not that of a CSU, especially one with the potential of defining and building a strong brand after only 20 years. This doesn’t mean you need to become prestigious, challenging, or highly-selective, but being a choice based on cost/convenience is something to build upon, not simply own.

Another note - *Channel Your Potential* is a sound tagline and the support for it is laudable, but it is ultimately “comfortable” and reinforces a community college pathways narrative more than a robust, compelling CSU.

# Summary & Implications

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## ELEVATE THE CONFIDENCE OF THE NARRATIVE, cont.

Similarly, an environment defined as supportive and welcoming is the undergirding for something more substantive. Relationships at CSUCI should be defined as more than “friendly.”

They are intentional connections that tie your students to the community and prepare them for success after graduation.

From intentional academic advising and career guidance to strong faculty/student research initiatives and CSUCI making a difference to Camarillo, California, and the world, relationships are part of the fabric of what makes CSUCI the university it is today.

Therefore, there is a need for CSUCI to find a more confident and complete tone in its brand messaging ahead. It first must be based on an authentic representation of the University today but with a tone and tenor that paves the way for a believable path to the next phase of the University’s life.

# Summary & Implications

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## ELEVATE THE CONFIDENCE OF THE NARRATIVE, cont.

To this end, we reiterate that this isn't about flagship swagger or polytechnic bravado (we're talking confidence, not arrogance).

Rather, this is something more holistic about said "potential" that establishes that CSUCI has a more powerful role in the world.

This should retain the current best-fit student while attracting more types of individuals who currently dismiss CSUCI as only the local affordable option.

Your narrative will excite your prospective students by inviting them to participate in the growth and development of this special university.

# Summary & Implications

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## CSUCI IS A SAFE PLACE FOR STUDENTS – BUT BE CAUTIOUS

Connected to CSUCI's strong sense of community is the perception that your campus is believed to be a very safe place to live and learn.

The safety of the campus and surrounding community is seen as one of CSUCI's strongest characteristics by both internal and external audiences. This feeling is created through CSUCI's self-contained campus and its location within Camarillo (i.e., beautiful setting in a historic site).

Safety is important (especially to parents of prospective students) and is therefore a brand asset for CSUCI. But safety should not receive outsized attention in marketing and communications – promoting safety too heavily can have the opposite impact of recalling concerns about why a university is emphasizing safety or become problematic when something bad happens (promoting safety can appear to be a guarantee).

Build on safety-related framing such as your idyllic campus, pace of life, and strong sense of relationships and community to foster word-of-mouth that will further instill notions of safety among prospective students and parents – without using the word.

# Summary & Implications

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## **COUNSELORS NEED TO BE BETTER ENGAGED WITH YOU**

As advocates and influencers, counselors have an important role for CSUCI.

Brand-building ahead must include a concerted post-pandemic effort to engage them in learning about and then advocating for CSUCI.

Our research indicated there is an opportunity with this audience as many are not yet familiar with you and those who are familiar have more to learn about CSUCI's academic and outcomes. There is, therefore, good potential to build a strong identity with them.

Among the goals in improving this relationship to consider is an effort to become established as the regional resource for many societal topics that matter to guidance counselors as well as regional youth and their families. This can't simply be about recruiting more students – you have the ability and responsibility to stand for something more.

# Summary & Implications

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## **BRAND BUILDING IS BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL – START INTERNALLY**

Any efforts of improving brand perceptions of CSUCI must start with students, faculty, and staff who are important word-of-mouth brand ambassadors.

They live your world every day, and since the majority of stakeholders are happy and supportive of CSUCI (per these research results), any enhancements to both the student experience in practice and in messaging must first pass their muster.

Without internal support and buy-in to any brand initiatives, external-facing marketing will fall flat.

Note that of these internal audiences (students, faculty, staff, alumni), current students are the top priority. Making sure they continue to be the strongest advocates possible for CSUCI will be important.

# Summary & Implications

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## CSUCI HAS INCREDIBLY STRONG BRAND ADVOCATES

Not to be lost among the ways in which CSUCI can improve its brand is the fact that your stakeholders love the University and would advocate for you to others.

Rarely have we ever seen such strong results among current students, faculty, staff, and alumni on likelihood to recommend the University to others.

Further, an astounding 87% of students would choose CSUCI again if given the chance, an incredibly high loyalty rate in our experience.

There is no question they want to see CSUCI improve in ways big and small, but they are also satisfied with their experience with you and want to see the University continue to grow in this next chapter.

# Summary & Implications

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## WHERE DOES CSUCI GO FROM HERE?

The most important question for CSUCI is:

*Who do we want to be?*

As you consider the answer, know that every substantive decision made is a signal for the CSUCI brand. And every brand decision creates polarity – it draws the people who are attracted to you and repels those who aren't.

Polarity is important as you cannot be all things to all people and in a competitive higher education environment, brands that stand for something stand out.

Answering the question above and articulating that answer to the market is the foundation of CSUCI's brand.

# Summary & Implications

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## BEYOND OUR RESEARCH, HOW DOES CSUCI ANSWER THAT QUESTION?

How you arrive at the answer of identity is nearly as important to your future as defining the answer itself.

This is the beginning of a new chapter for CSUCI. Twenty years of history, a decade of enrollment growth followed by two years of challenge, emerging from a two-year pandemic, and excitement and trust in President Yao makes this an ideal time to determine the path forward. Looking ahead while respecting the past is critical.

Our research involved your community in defining your brand, and the findings and recommendations should be shared appropriately.

Considering your past institutional trust issues, involving them through information (transparency) and being clear about your leadership's response to take subsequent action is not only the right thing to do but especially for CSUCI the smart way forward.

**ADV**

MARKET RESEARCH  
& CONSULTING

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