

High School
Students &
Counselors
Identify Need:

CollegeACCESS INITIATIVE



UNITED WAY
of TULARE COUNTY

COLLEGE ATTAINMENT IN TULARE COUNTY

AN IMPERATIVE FOR IMPROVEMENT

CONTENTS

- FOCUS CONVERSATION RESULTS
- RESOURCE MAPPING RESULTS
- COUNSELOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY RESULTS

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

- ALPAUGH JR-SR HIGH SCHOOL
- STRATHMORE HIGH SCHOOL
- TULARE WESTERN HIGH SCHOOL

“ Education
is the most powerful
weapon which you can use
to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela



| WWW.UNITEDWAYTC.ORG |



UNITED WAY of TULARE COUNTY

TABLE of CONTENTS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	PAGE 1
OBJECTIVE	PAGE 1
DEMOGRAPHICS	PAGE 1
METHOD	PAGES 1 & 2
KEY FINDINGS	PAGE 2
STUDENT FOCUS CONVERSTATION RESULTS	PAGES 3-8
COLLEGE MOTIVATION	PAGE 3
COLLEGE CONCERNS	PAGE 3
COMMUNICATION	PAGE 4
SERVICES & PROGRAMS	PAGE 5
AWARENESS & REPUTATION	PAGE 5
EQUITY	PAGE 6
COMMUNICATION	PAGES 7-8
EFFECTIVE SUPPORT	PAGE 8
COMMUNITY MAPPING RESULTS-STUDENT SURVEYS	PAGES 9-13
DROP-OUT PREVENTION	PAGE 9
COLLEGE NIGHT	PAGE 10
THE PELL GRANT	PAGE 10
THE CAL GRANT	PAGE 11
THE DREAM ACT	PAGE 12
STUDENT LOANS	PAGE 12
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION	PAGE 13
COUNSELOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SURVEY RESULTS	PAGES 14-17
TOPICS OF IMPORTANCE	PAGE 14
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ATTENDANCE	PAGE 14
RANKING CONFERENCES	PAGE 15
CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE	PAGE 16
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS	PAGE 17
REFERENCES	PAGE 18

Executive Summary

The United Way College Access Initiative focuses on increasing the number of students who graduate from high school and who are prepared to succeed in post-secondary education, including vocation. This collaborative approach identifies gaps and connects existing and new investments by public and private partners. The selected program options provide an overarching sustainable structure and leadership dedicated to improving and expanding post-secondary education and vocation readiness.

The primary goal is to develop expertise and resources to enhance college access services and programs in Tulare County. The initiative strives to support students, parents, and schools to create a “college and career readiness culture,” by providing ongoing influence, advocacy, evaluation and active guidance.

On the following pages, you will find what the team has determined as the high school to post-secondary education gaps for Tulare County students. Our ultimate goal is to eliminate these gaps so Tulare County students succeed.

Objective

The objective of this report is to identify resources and increase access between supportive services and students for their transition to post-secondary education or vocation. Those findings are being shared with participating high schools and community partners for actionable response.

Demographics

The three (3) participating schools used to gather data were: Alpaugh Junior-Senior High School (Alpaugh, CA), Strathmore High School (Strathmore, CA), and Tulare Western High School (Tulare, CA).

The city of Alpaugh has a population of 793 (“Alpaugh, California”). Alpaugh has a total student enrollment of 289, with 89 students enrolled at Alpaugh Junior-Senior High School (“California Public School Enrollment-Statewide Report”).

The city of Strathmore has a population of 3,548 (“Strathmore, California”), and a total student enrollment of 1,975. Of those students, 290 are enrolled at Strathmore High School (“California Public School Enrollment-Statewide Report”).

The city of Tulare has a population of 60,127 (“Tulare, California”) with a total student enrollment of 17,695. There are 1,700 students enrolled at Tulare Western High School (“California Public School Enrollment-Statewide Report”).

Method

Three (3) methods were used to gather data for analysis. The first method used a group of 14-24 high school students per focus conversation. Each school participated in at least one (1) focus conversation for a total of five (5) focus conversations. The grades for students ranged from 9th to 12th grade, with students at various academic levels.

Jennie Bautista from the Work Force Investment Board of Tulare County, developed a focus conversation model to help identify the gaps high school students face as they prepare for transition to post-secondary education or vocational training. During the process the facilitator discussed, surveyed, and recorded ten (10) questions regarding existing supports and challenges to students. Students were allowed to write more than one response per question. Each response was then recorded and individually categorized. Each school site had individual results along with comparisons from the other school sites. Follow-up focus conversations were used at Alpaugh Junior-Senior High School and Strathmore High Schools for further investigation and clarification.

The second method used a resource mapping survey. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain the existing educational and community resources available to the students at school or in the community. Every student participating in the focus conversation was given a survey. The survey consisted of 100 questions regarding resources. Each question rated the degree of familiarity with each resource. Each school site had individual results along with comparisons from the other school sites.

The final method used a professional development survey of counselors created by Amy Pimentel. With the understanding we need counselors to have the resources and training necessary to support students' college and career aspirations. Counselors were surveyed to see what types of professional development they found helpful, what topics they desired to learn about, and what they need in order to meet their professional development goals. A Google Doc survey was sent to high school counselors at Alpaugh Junior-Senior High School, Strathmore High School, Tulare Western High School, and various Visalia Unified School District high schools. The survey consisted of seven (7) questions and eight (8) high school counselors responded.

Key Findings

- Counselors need more professional development opportunities to best advise students on college and career planning, including financial aid.
- Students said they did not know who to talk to about financial aid.
- A lower percentage of family members being knowledgeable about programs and activities further substantiates the need to inform family members and involve them in college and career conversations.
- Although 62.50% of the counselors surveyed attend 1-3 professional development opportunities per year focused on college and career readiness for students, the remaining 37.50% of counselors attended none.

STUDENTS SAID THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHO TO TALK TO ABOUT FINANCIAL AID, AND THEY DID NOT WANT TO CAUSE STRESS FOR THEIR FAMILIES.

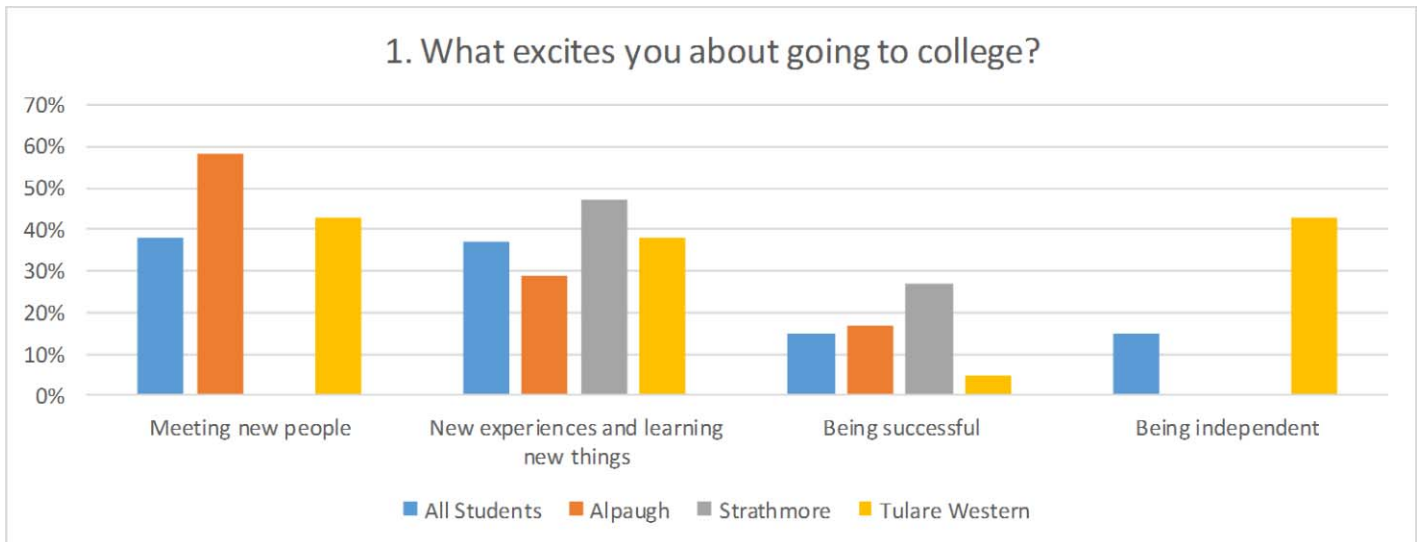


Student Focus Conversation Results-Student Survey

The following graphs compare the top responses across the three schools. Due to the variety of answers, these graphs show the top 2-3 answers per school. To see more detailed information and all answers provided by students, please request the individual school graphs.

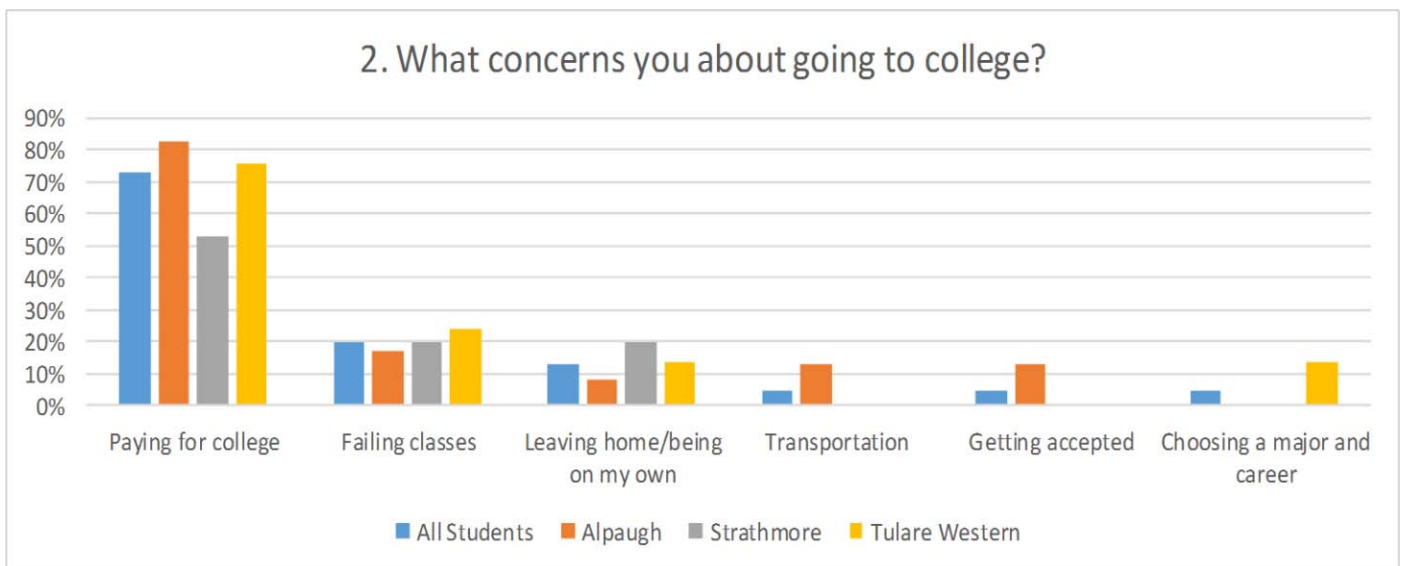
Change

Students are most excited about the experiences of meeting new people, learning new things, and having new experiences. They are ready for growth and change.



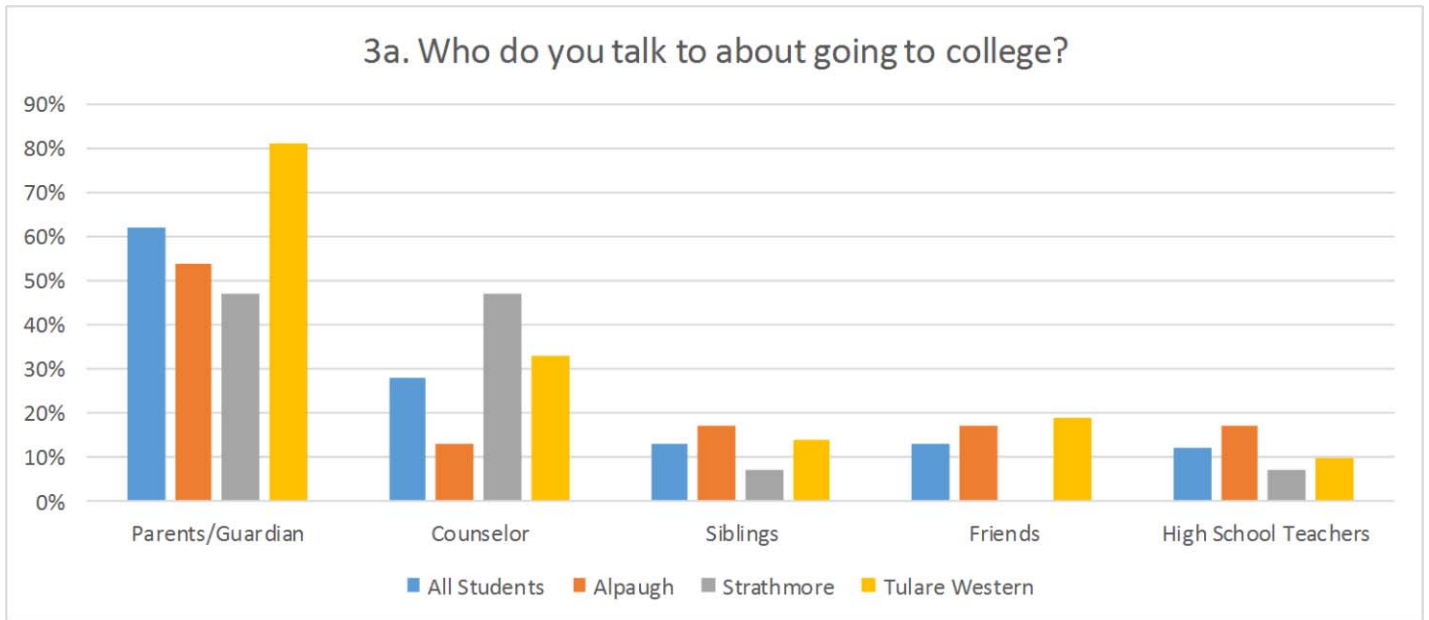
Financial Aid is a major concern

Paying for college and understanding financial aid eligibility, applications, and deadlines is the number one concern for students. In discussions, they stated their concern that paying for college was a major obstacle for them. Many of them felt they weren't going to be able to afford college, which leaves them feeling disconnected and less engaged in high school.

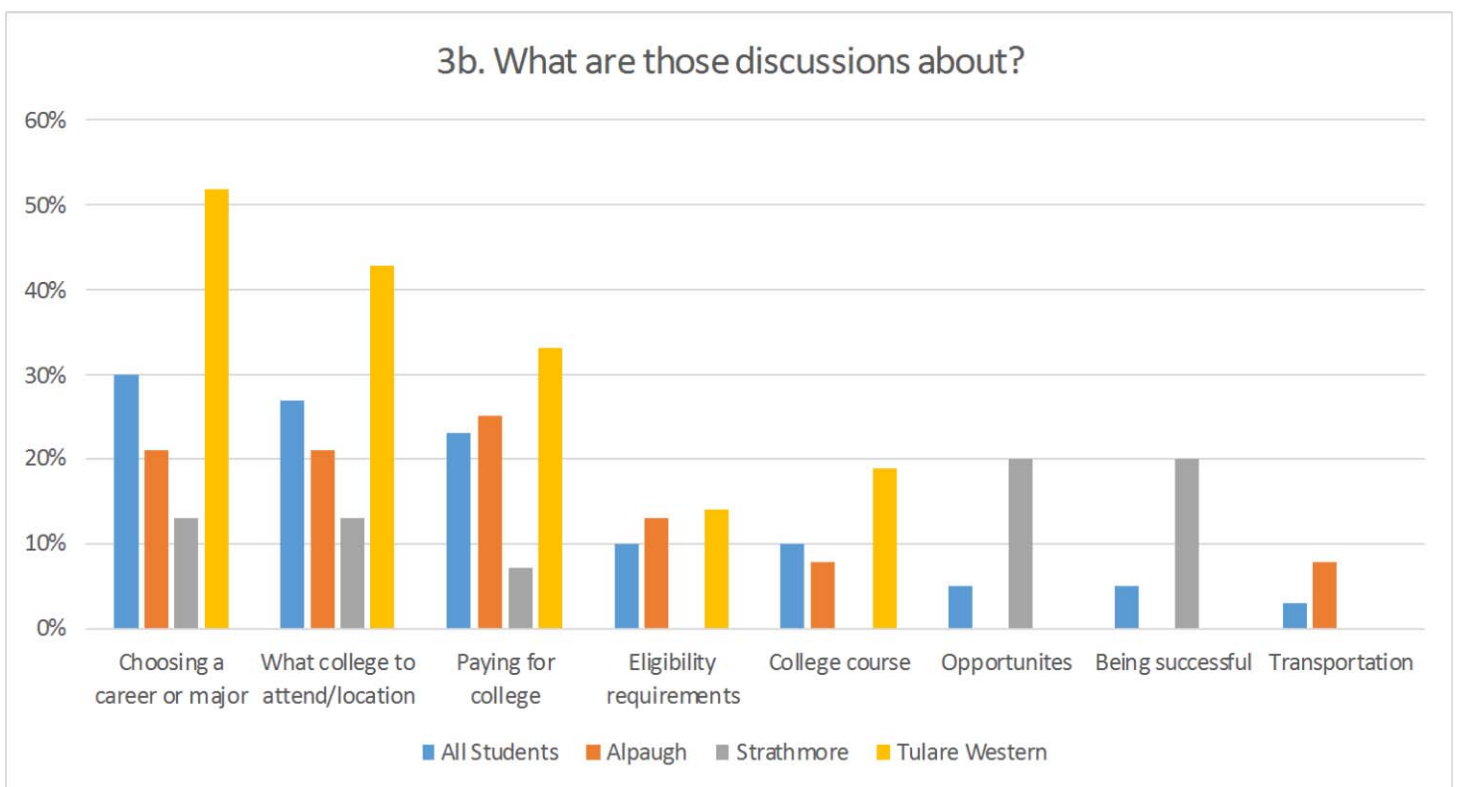


Who to talk to and what to talk about

The fact students are talking to parents and guardians is positive; however, we know those conversations are mostly abstract because of a high number of first-generation college students. Families need more information to support students with the tasks, particularly around financial aid. Concurrently, counselors need more professional development opportunities to best advise students on college and career planning, including financial aid. Students said they didn't know who to talk to about financial aid. They didn't want to cause stress for their families and weren't sure if the school counselor could assist them. Often times, they were unsure what questions to ask and how to start the conversation. This is evident when noting 73% listed paying for college as a concern, yet only 23% listed financial aid as a discussion topic with people in their lives.

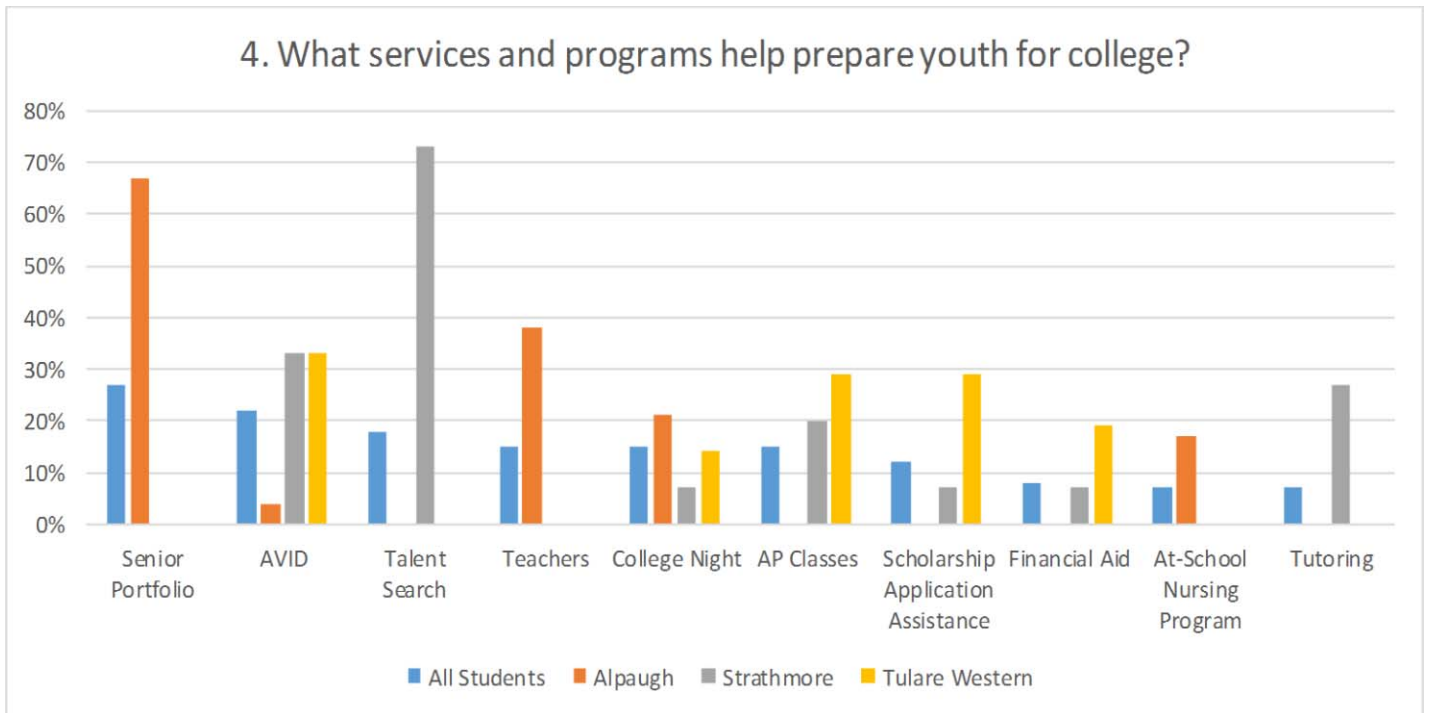


**Alpaugh doesn't have a full-time counselor. The Principal and a part-time counselor share the college counseling tasks. Teachers also support students through the Senior Portfolio requirement.*



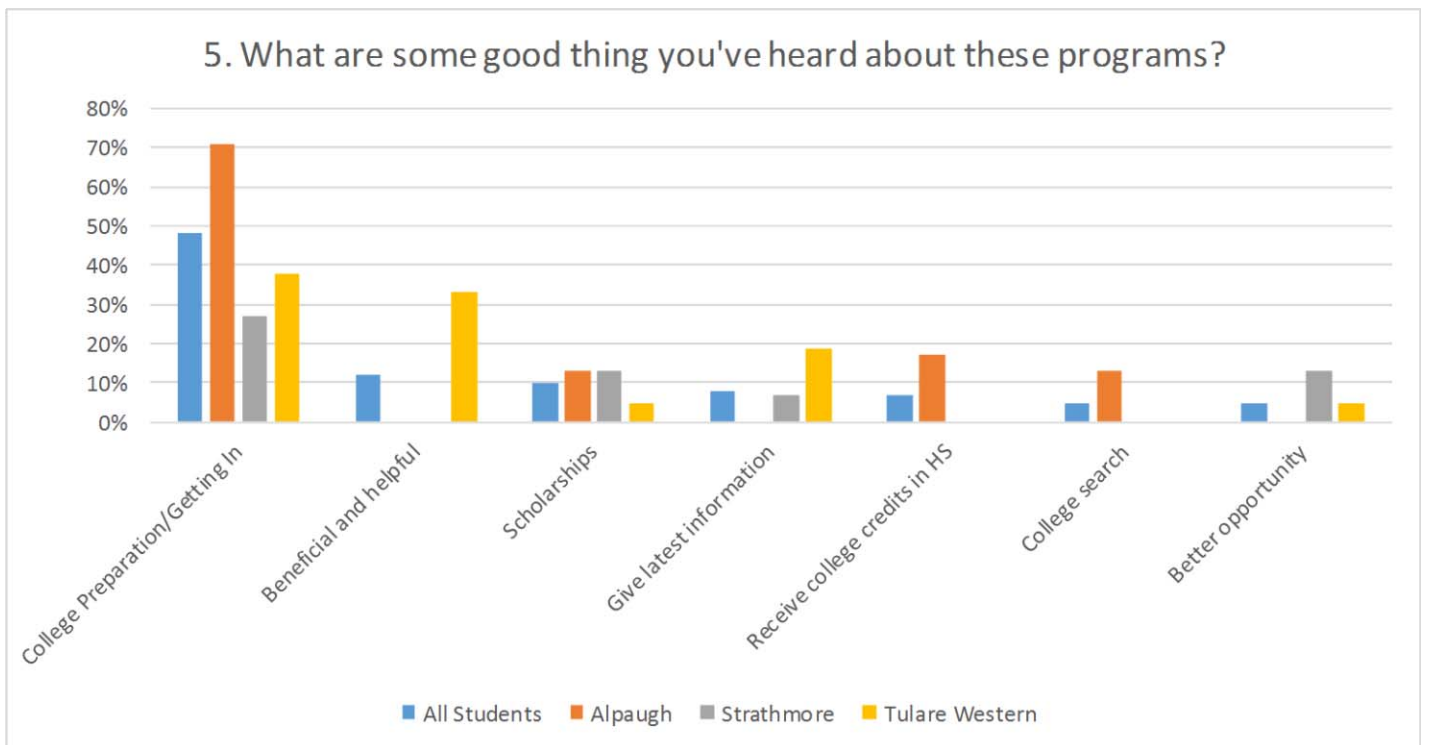
Service Providers and Programs

Not all schools have the same programs and services. The individual school percentages vary depending on what is available at each location.



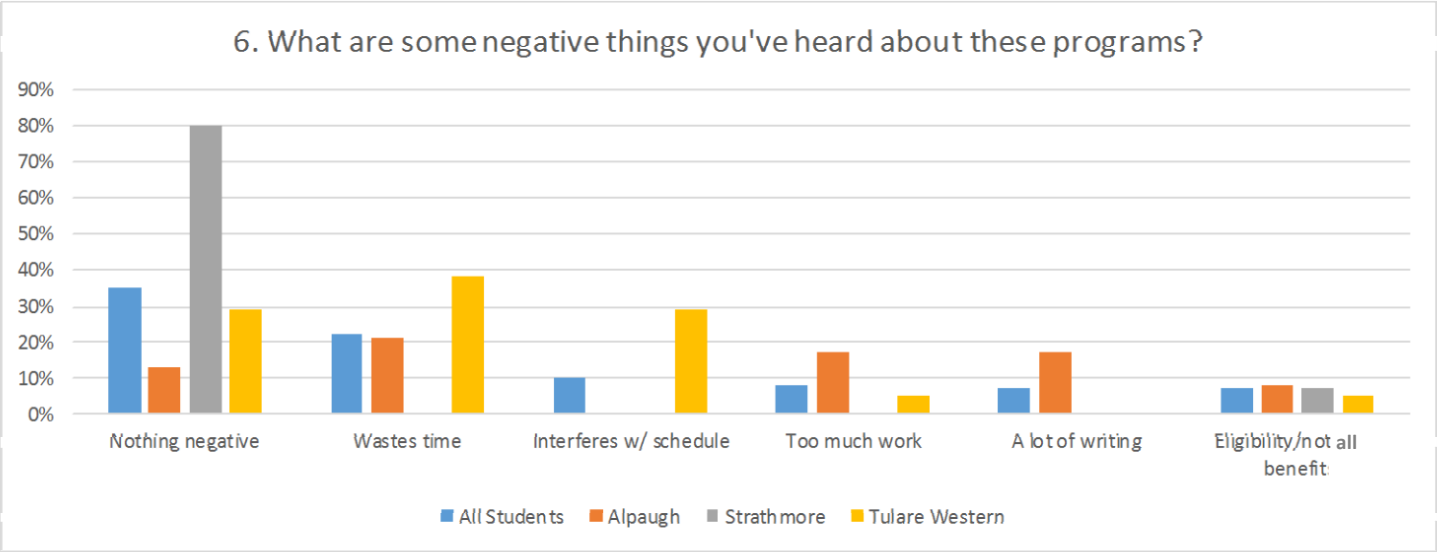
Awareness and reputation

Even if students weren't involved in any of the programs or services available at their school, they have positive things to say.



Equity

About 7% of students wrote down the programs and services are not available to all students. This came up in discussion, as well. While it isn't a top answer given by students, it's one needing further examination. Equity is crucial for a strong college-going culture to ensure all students have post-secondary plans.



EQUITY IS CRUCIAL FOR A STRONG COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE TO ENSURE ALL STUDENTS HAVE POST-SECONDARY PLANS.

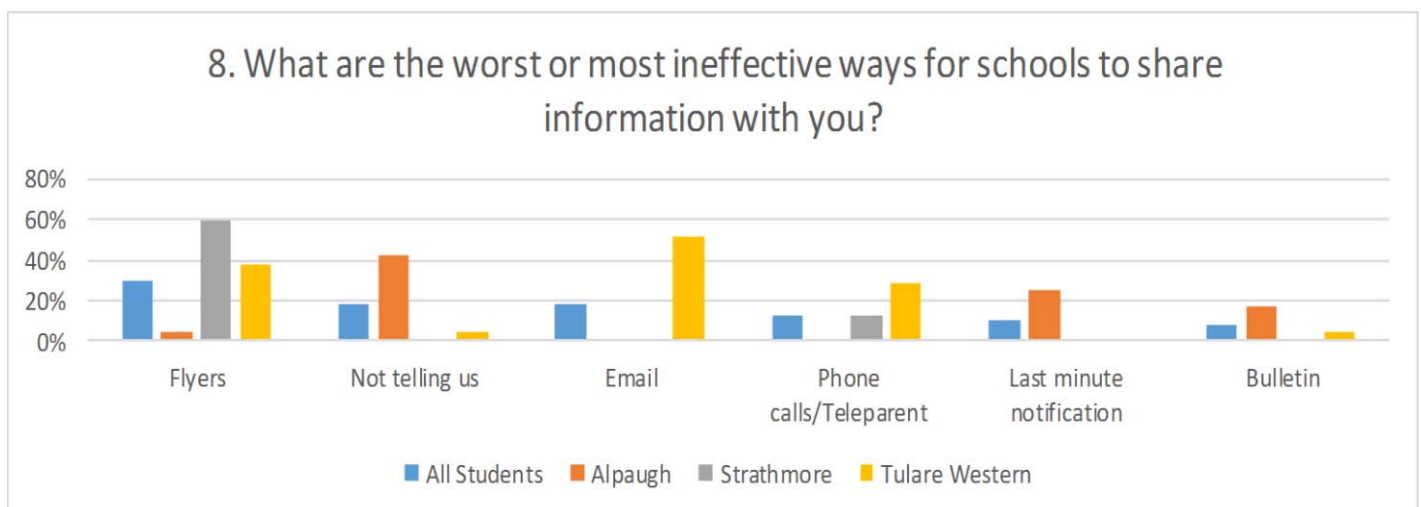
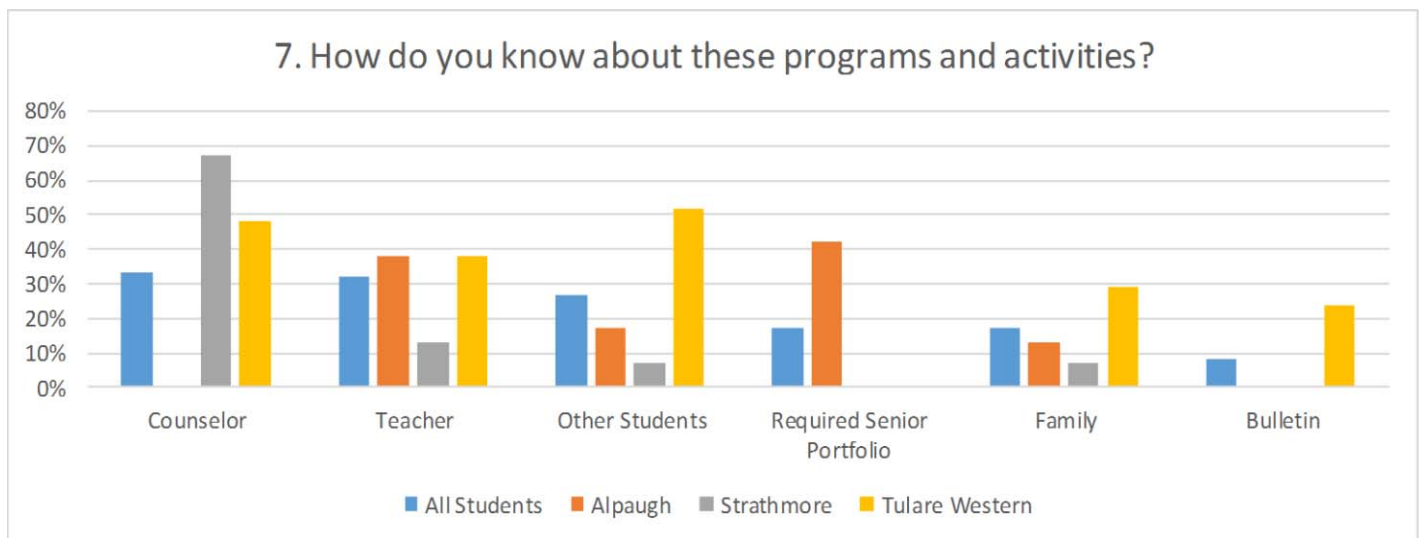


Communication

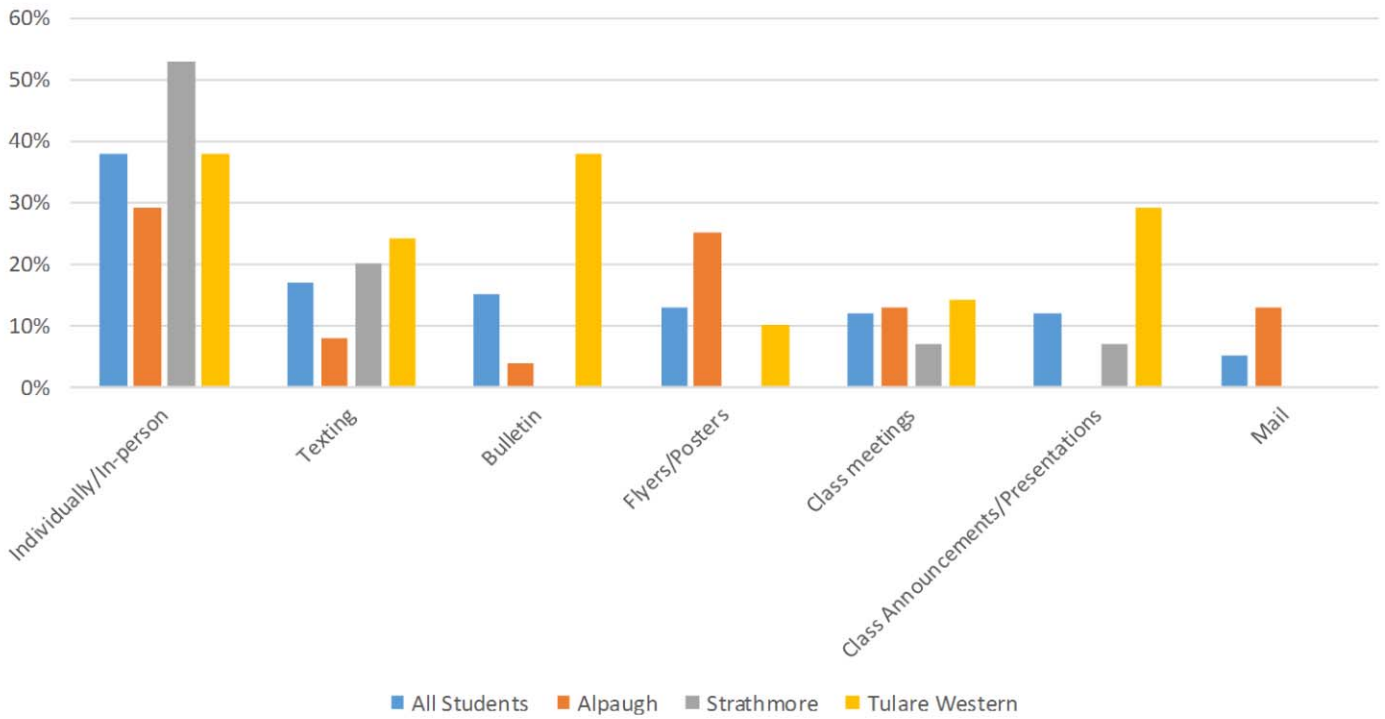
Students' answers regarding hearing about programs and activities from others coincides with their preference to receive information in person and individually.

Teachers and counselors were the number one distributors of information, with other students also being a resource. It's nearly impossible for counselors to call each student into their office individually to share information with them. Teachers are crucial in helping inform students about college and career programs and activities. This is an essential element of a strong college-going culture.

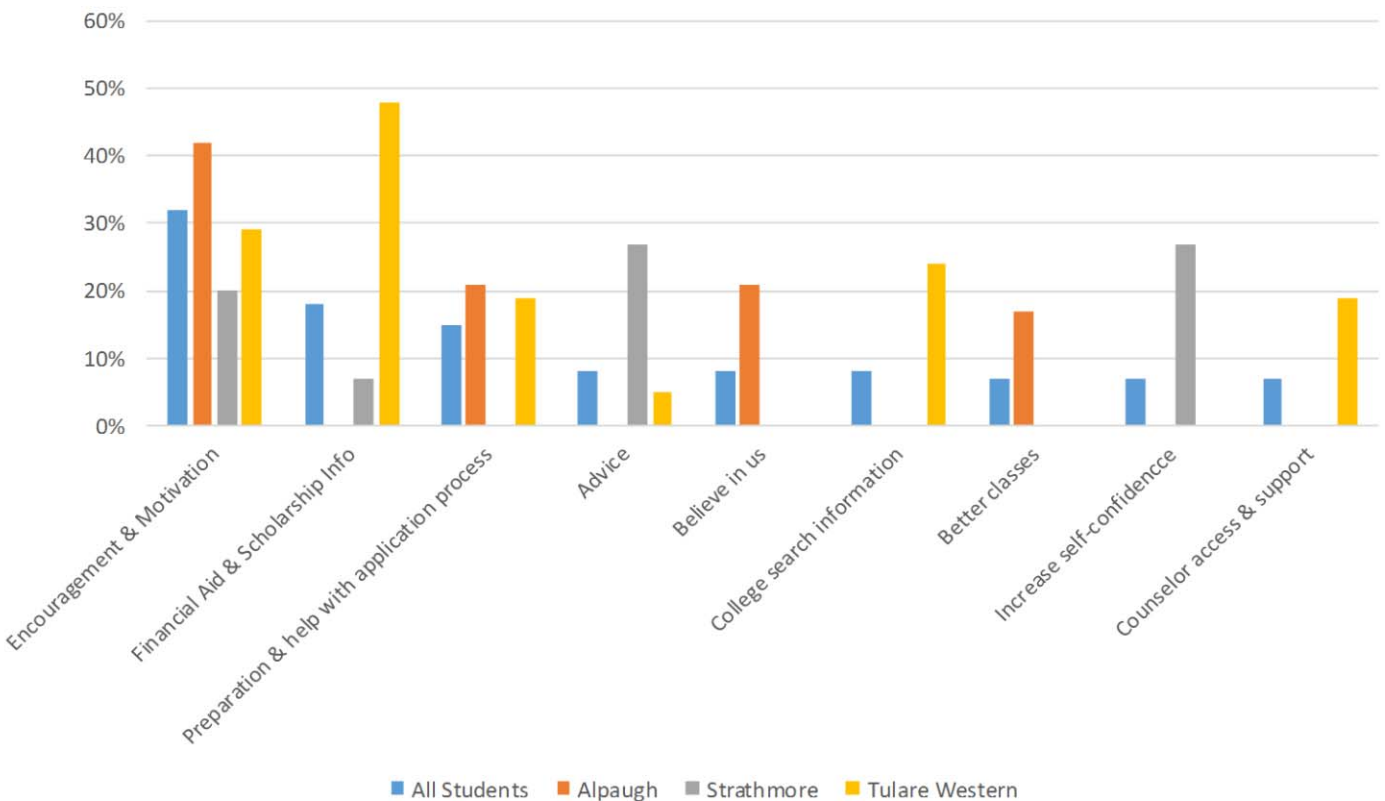
A lower percentage of family members being knowledgeable about programs and activities further substantiates the need to inform family members and involve them in college and career conversations. Chart 3a shows most students talk about college with their parents and guardians, but they don't discuss resources, programs, and activities available to assist students and families.



9. What are the best ways for schools and other partners to share information with you?



10. What support do you need from your school to help you get to college?

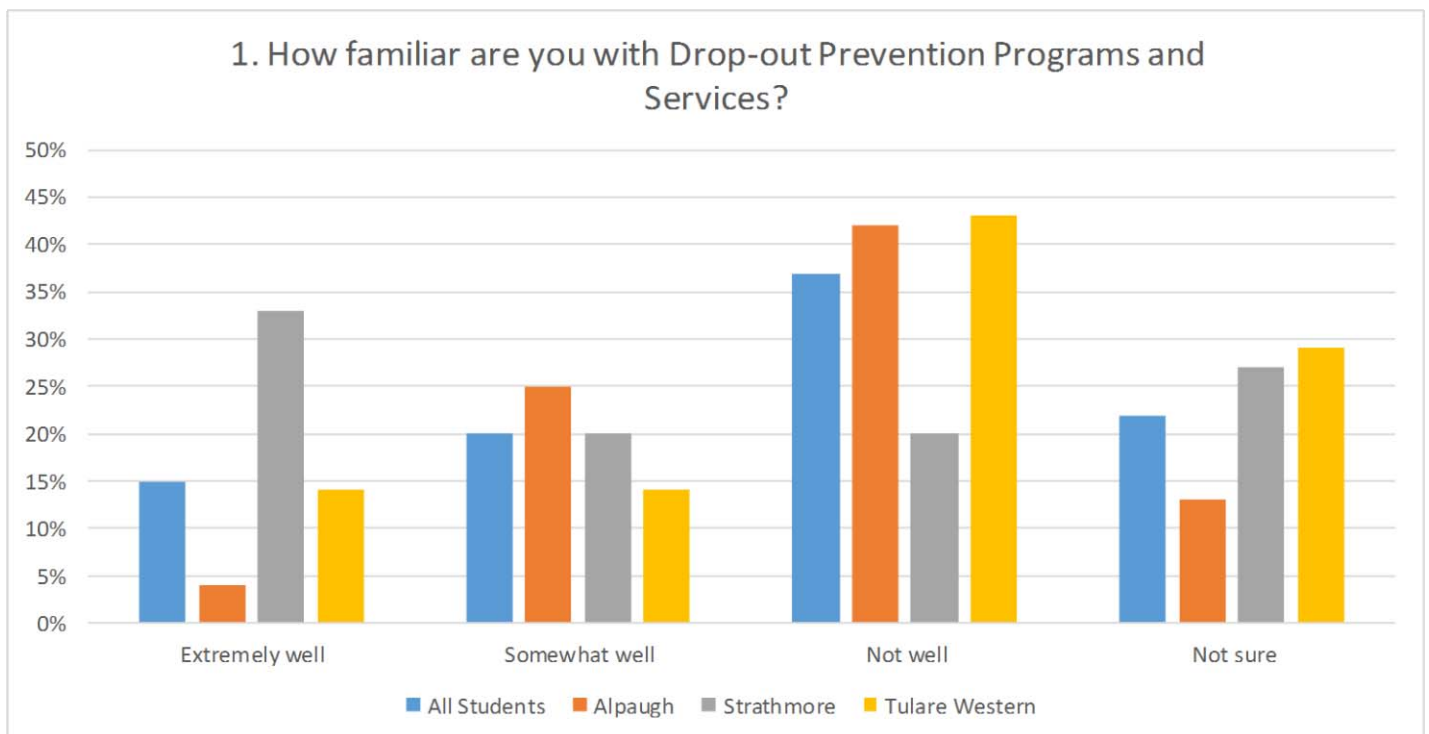




55% OF STUDENTS SURVEYED SAID THE BEST WAY FOR THEIR SCHOOLS TO SHARE INFORMATION WITH THEM WAS EITHER IN-PERSON OR VIA TEXT.

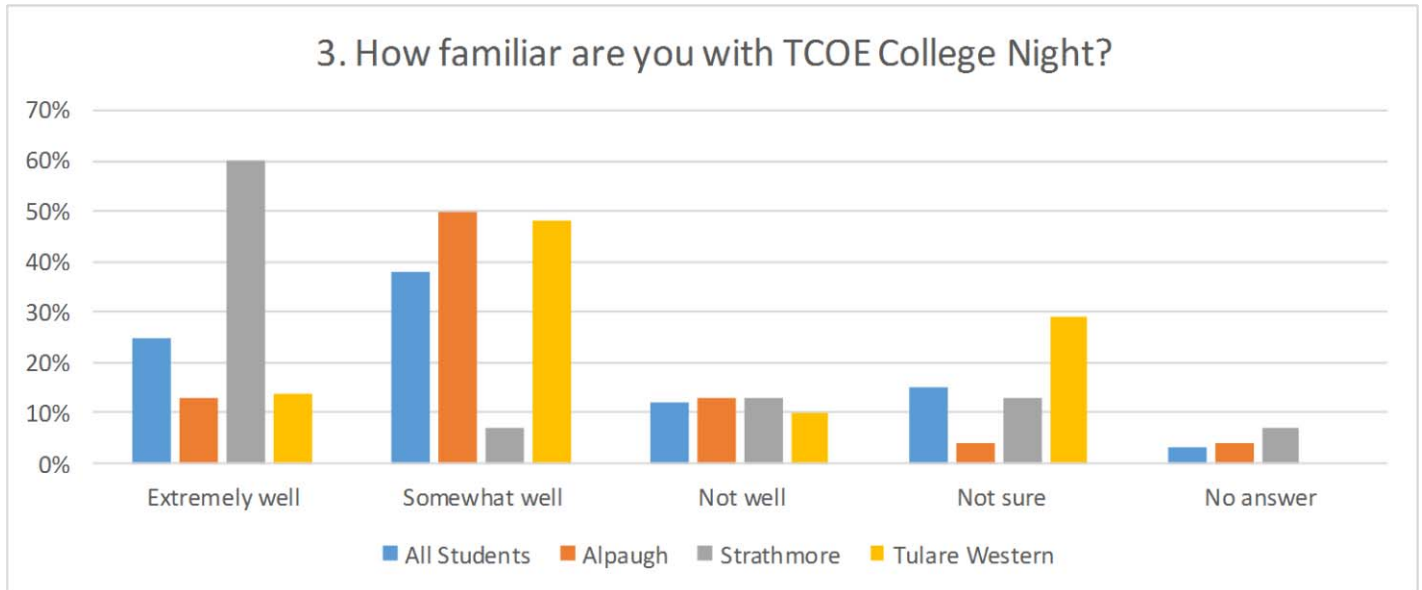
Community Mapping Results-Student Surveys

Students were asked to rate their familiarity with service providers, programs, and requirements to gain admission into college and receive financial aid. The resource mapping survey was given out to each student during each initial focus conversation.



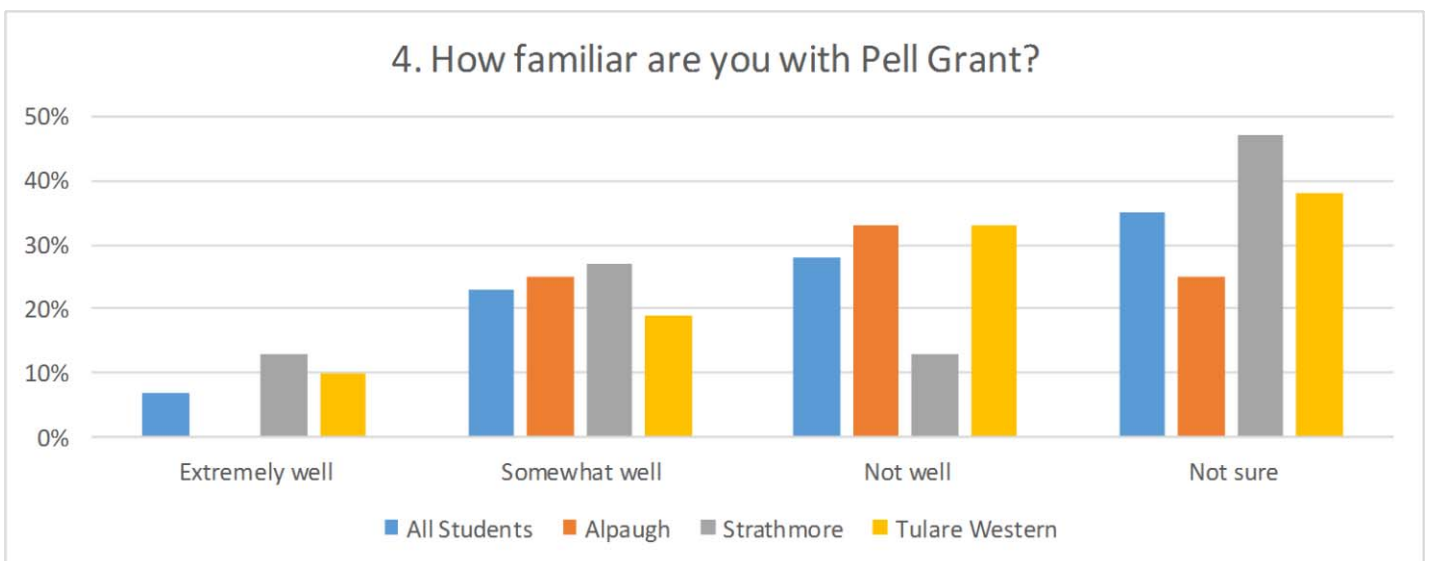
College Night

College Night is hosted by the Tulare County Office of Education (TCOE) every September at the Visalia Convention Center. Many schools provide free bus transportation enabling the students to attend. It's a large event, hosting colleges and universities from across the country, as well as free informational workshops on financial aid, personal statements, and testing.



The Pell Grant

The Pell Grant is a federal grant offered to students based off family income, family size, number of dependents in college, and parent(s)' age. Eligibility is determined by completing a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) each year. The maximum amount a student could receive for the 2014-15 school year was \$5,730.

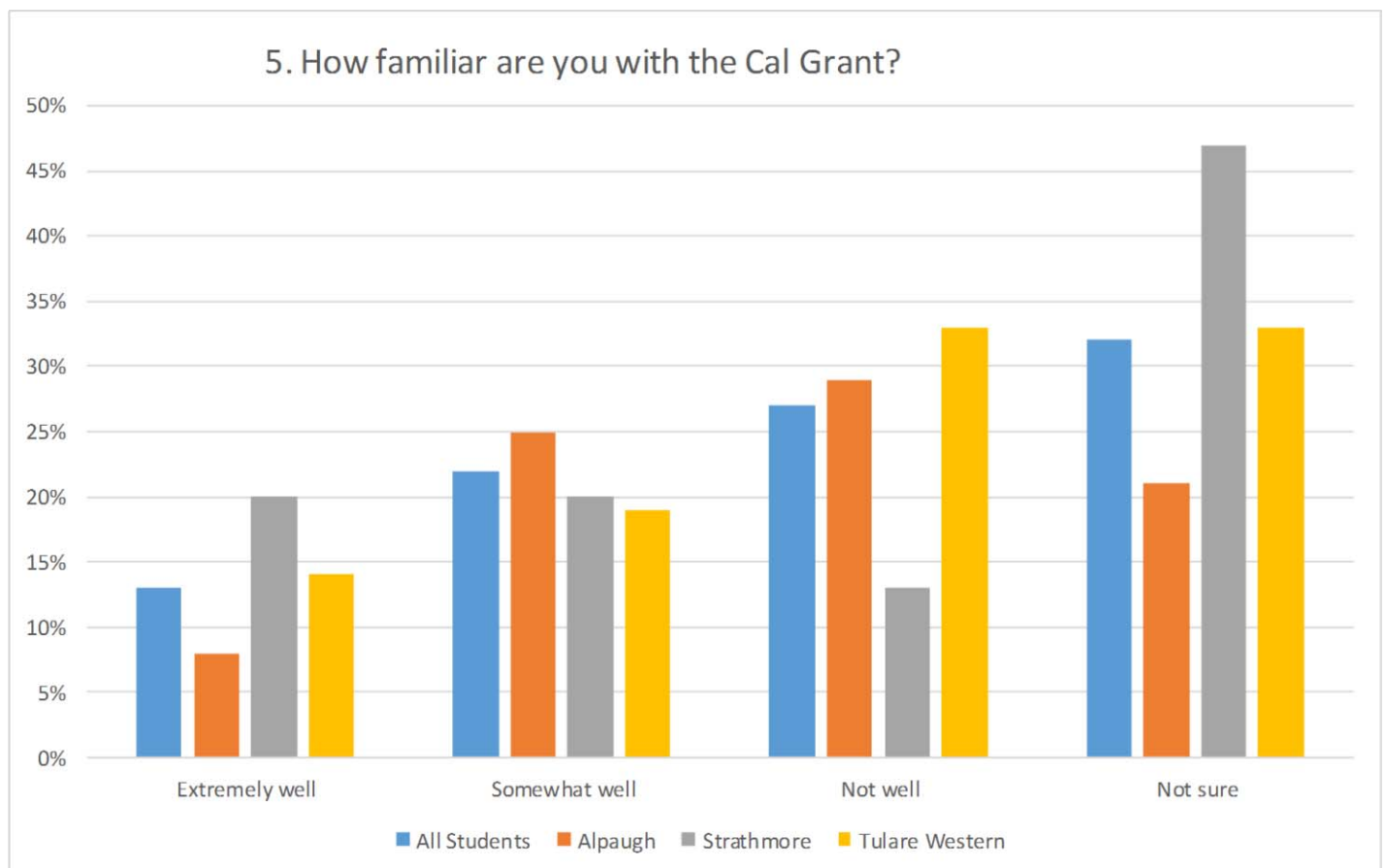


The Cal Grant

The Cal Grant program consists of three types of Cal Grants (A, B, and C) which students could be eligible for. These are need-based grants and eligibility is determined after completing a FAFSA or California Dream Act Application (undocumented students can submit a Dream Act Application), as well as a GPA verification form. Cal Grant A is for tuition at a University of California, California State University, and some private schools.

Students must have a minimum 3.0 GPA at the end of their junior year to be eligible for Cal Grant A. If a student attends a community college first, their reward can be held for up to three (3) years until they transfer to a university. Cal Grant B is for books and living expenses. Cal Grant C is for vocational programs at a community college and some private institutions. Students must have a minimum 2.0 GPA for Cal Grant B and C eligibility. The California Student Aid Commission releases lists every year with eligible and ineligible Cal Grant institutions.

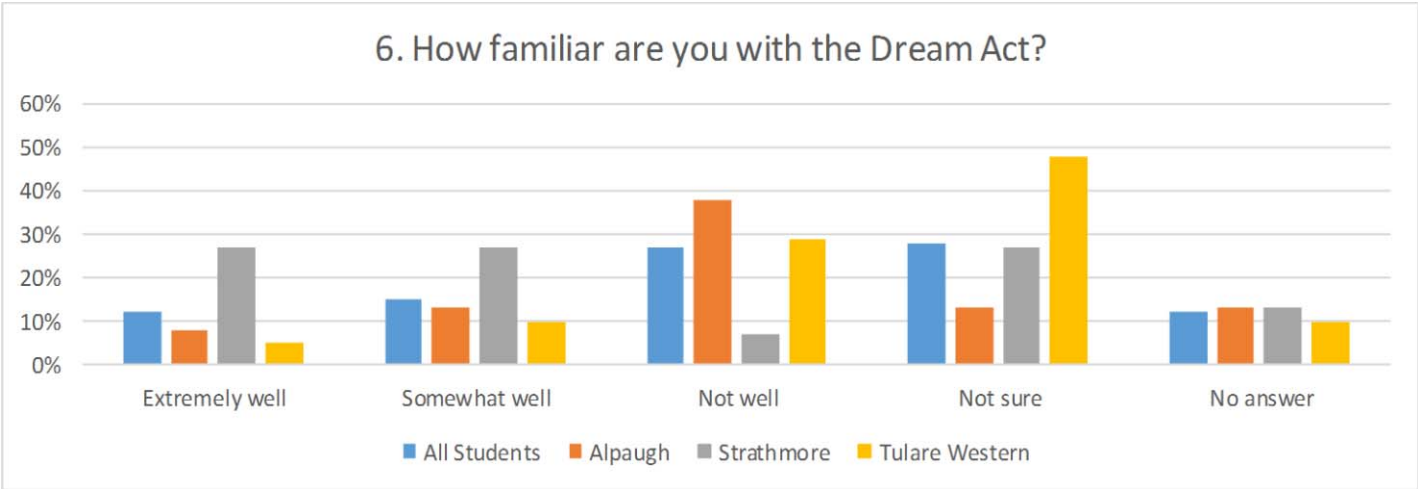
Students must submit their FAFSA or Dream Act Application by March 2nd of every year in order to be eligible for the Cal Grant and Middle Class Scholarship. The Middle Class Scholarship is California's tuition discount program for families who earn up to \$150,000, but do not qualify for the Cal Grant.



The Dream Act

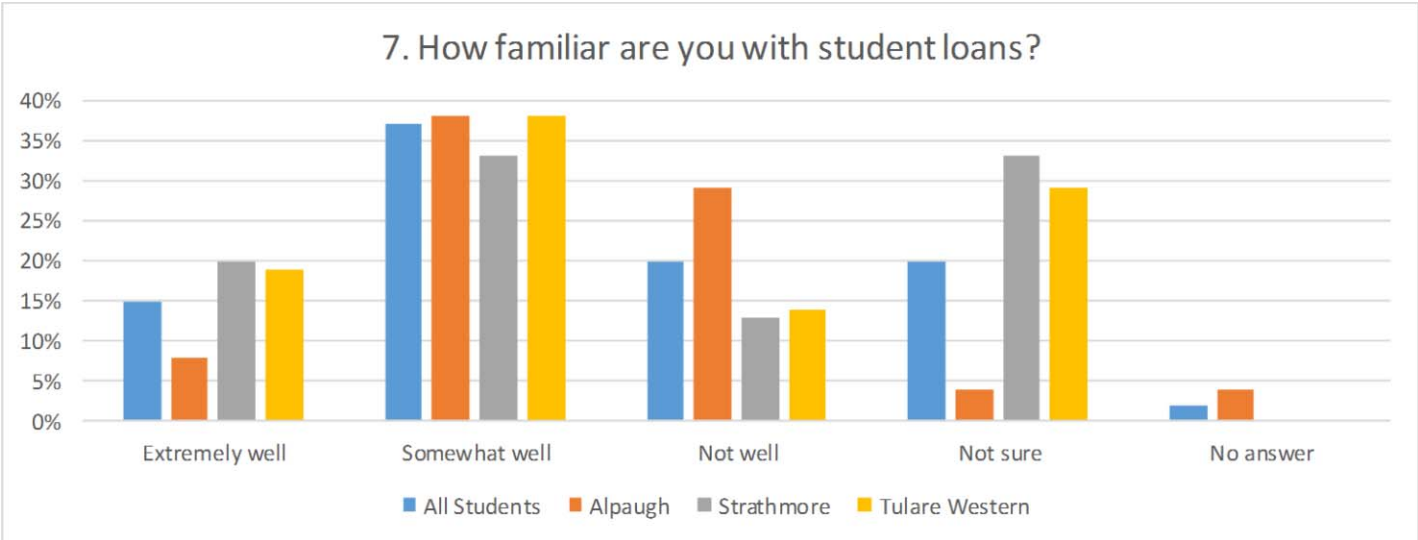
The Dream Act is a combination of four (4) California Assembly bills (AB 540, 130, 131, and 2000) enabling undocumented and documented nonresidents to apply for California State and institution based aid. Students must meet the following requirement:

1. Graduate from a California high school, or will graduate from a California high school;
OR
2. Attend a minimum of three (3) years at a California elementary, middle, or high school and earned credits in California equivalent to three (3) years at a California high school;
3. Seek citizenship or residency if, or when eligible.



Student Loans

Student loans can be issued from the government or through a private bank. The Subsidized Stafford Loan issued by the government doesn't accrue interest while a student is in college, and eligibility is based off income. The Unsubsidized Stafford Loan has no income requirements and interest begins accruing immediately. Parents can also take out PLUS loans. The benefit of a Stafford Loan include more flexible repayment options and loan forgiveness programs. Interest rates are fixed and lower than private bank loans. Many students and families are hesitant to take out student loans.



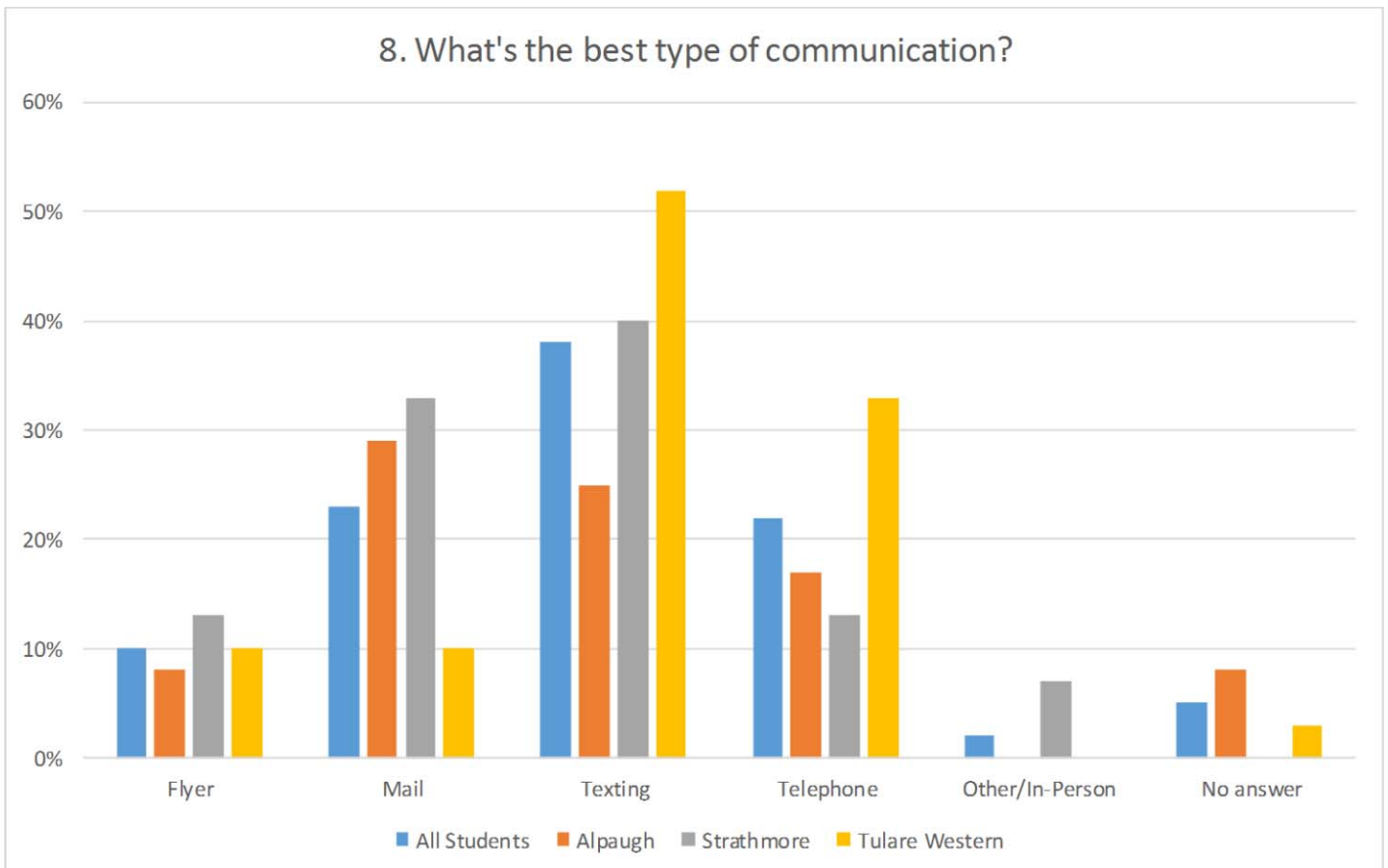
When students talk about going to college, 57% of the discussions are focused on choosing a career or major—or about what college to attend.

Only 23% of discussions about college focus on how to pay for it.

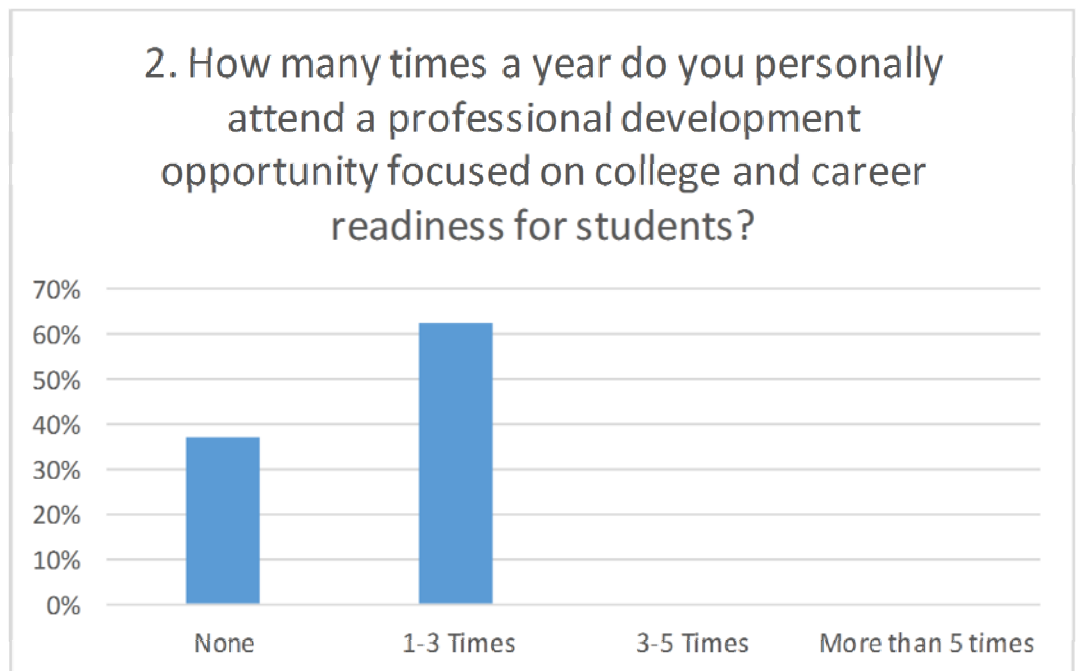
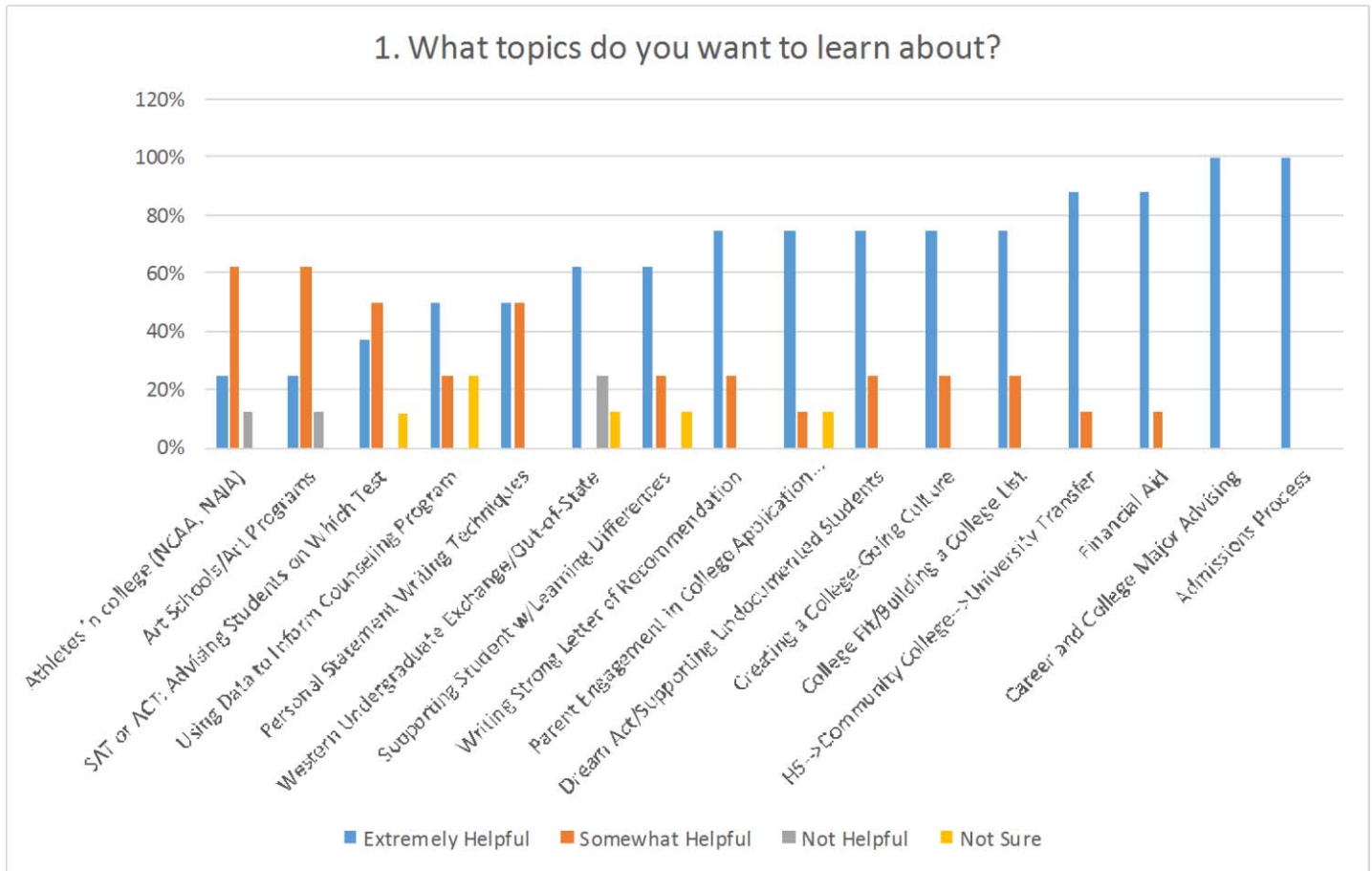


Effective Communication

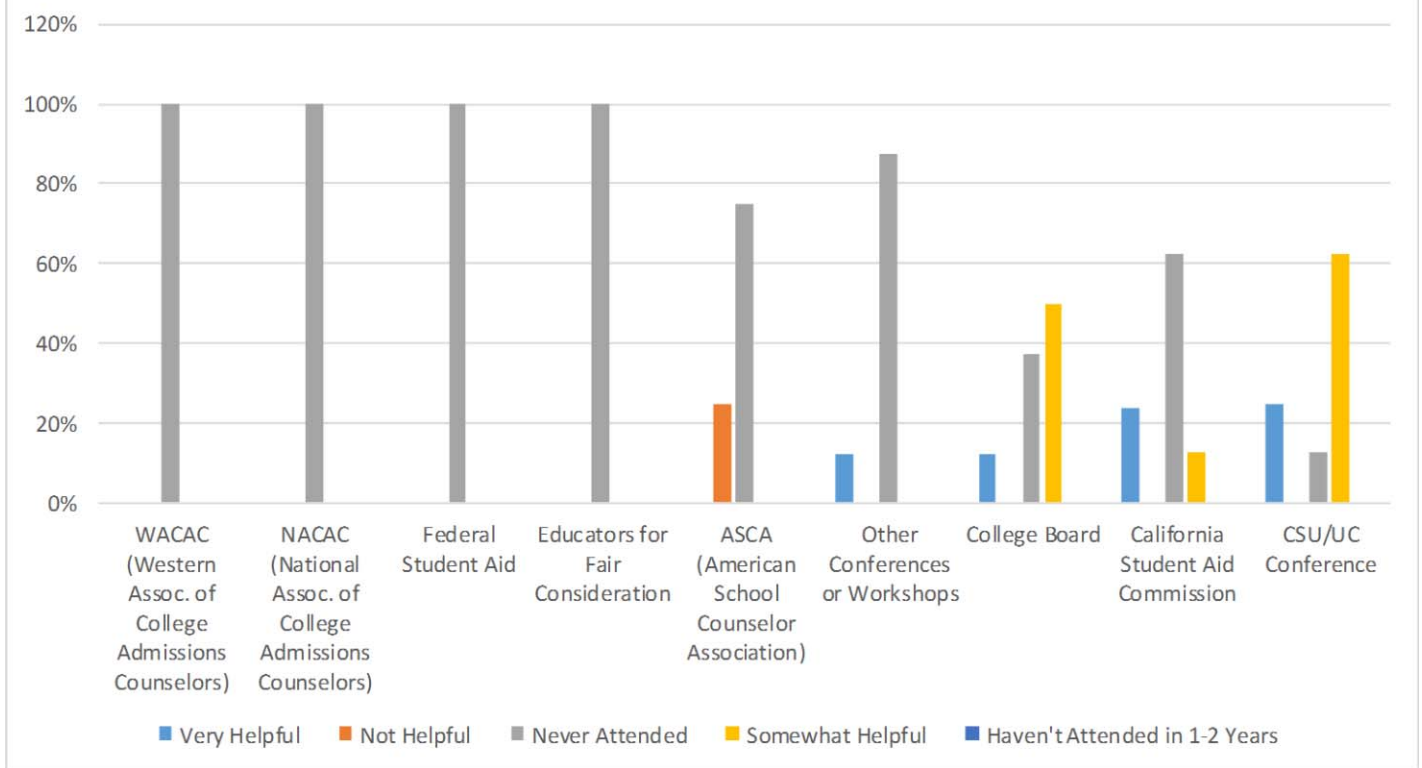
Effective communication is essential to informing students and families about services and programs.



Counselor Professional Development Survey Results



3. Rank the conferences or workshops you have attended in the last 1-2 years



WACAC (Western Association of College Admissions Counselors): Members of WACAC work within colleges and universities, community colleges, public, private and parochial high schools, independent practices and community-based organizations in California and Nevada. Annual conferences bring all of these professionals together for networking and professional development sessions. WACAC is a regional branch of NACAC. There is a cost to attend the multi-day conference, and scholarships are available. Attendees can take advantage of organized local college tours.

NACAC (National Association of College Admissions Counselors): The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), founded in 1937, is an organization of more than 14,000 professionals from around the world dedicated to serving students as they make choices about pursuing post-secondary education. NACAC is the umbrella for WACAC. There is a cost to attend the multi-day conference and an opportunity to attend local college tours.

Federal Student Aid: Representatives provide workshops to educate mentors and counselors on FAFSA updates. No cost to attend.

Educators for Fair Consideration: This is an advocacy organization serving undocumented students and the educators who work with them. They did not hold a 2015 conference, but in previous years the cost to attend was under \$50 and was a one-day event.

ASCA (American School Counselor Association): The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) supports school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, career and social/emotional development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society. ASCA provides professional development, publications and other resources, research and advocacy to professional school counselor around the globe.

College Board: College Board is the creator of the SAT test and Advanced Placement curriculum. They hold free webinars and various workshops throughout the year.

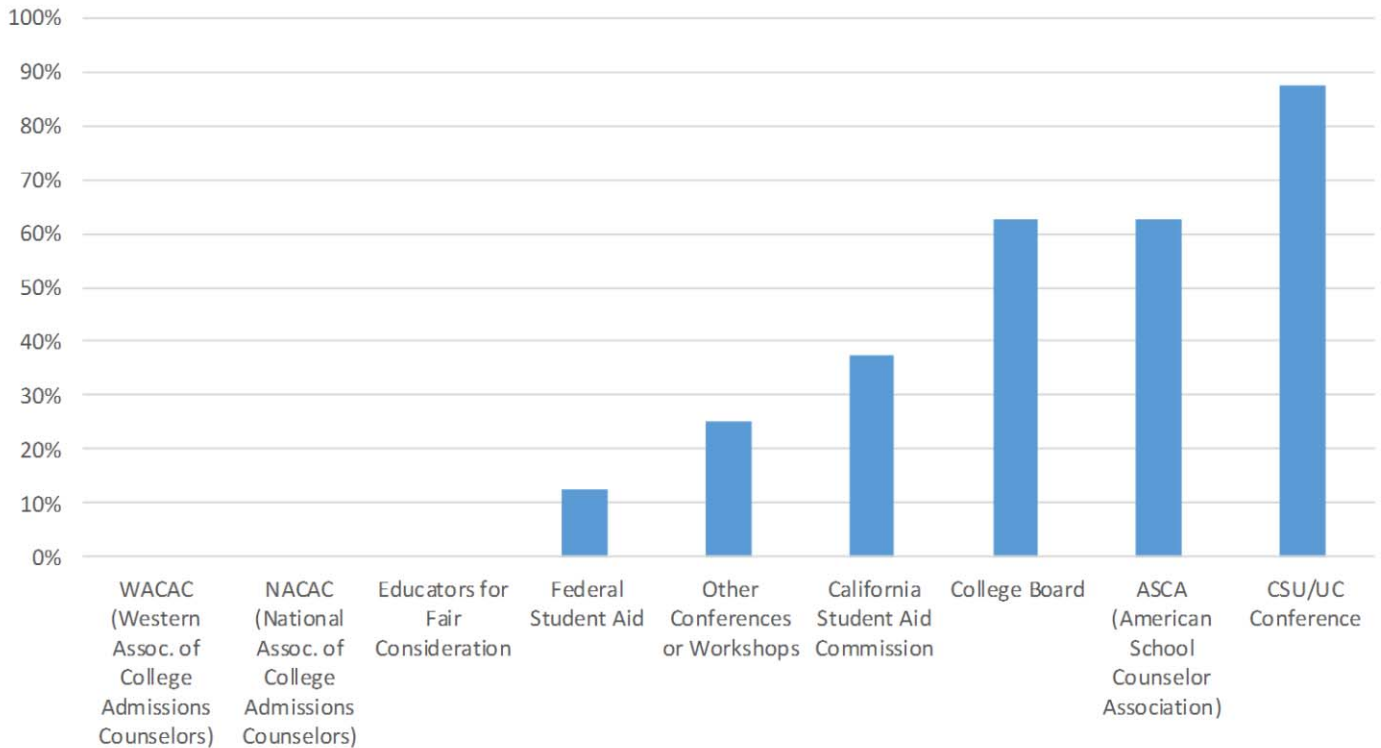
California Student Aid Commission: CSAC hosts free workshops to provide counselors and other educators with updates on California-based aid, including Cal Grants, Middle Class Scholarship, and the Dream Act application.

CSU/UC Conference: Every year there are University of California and California State University conferences. There are a handful of joint conferences around the state. The half-day conference is approximately \$100 to attend, depending on registration date. Sessions include campus presentations, EOP, financial aid, undocumented students, and athletes.

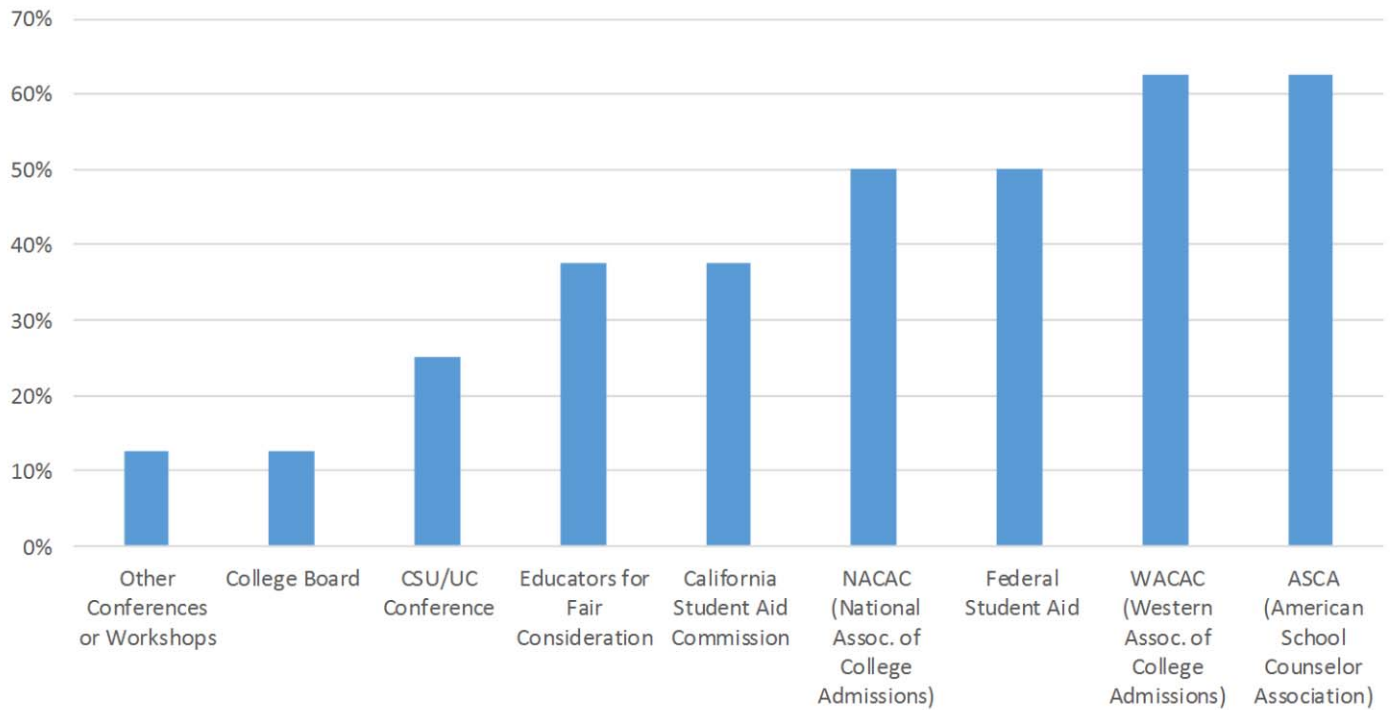


Over 87% of the counselors surveyed would take advantage of professional development conferences and workshops if they were located closer.

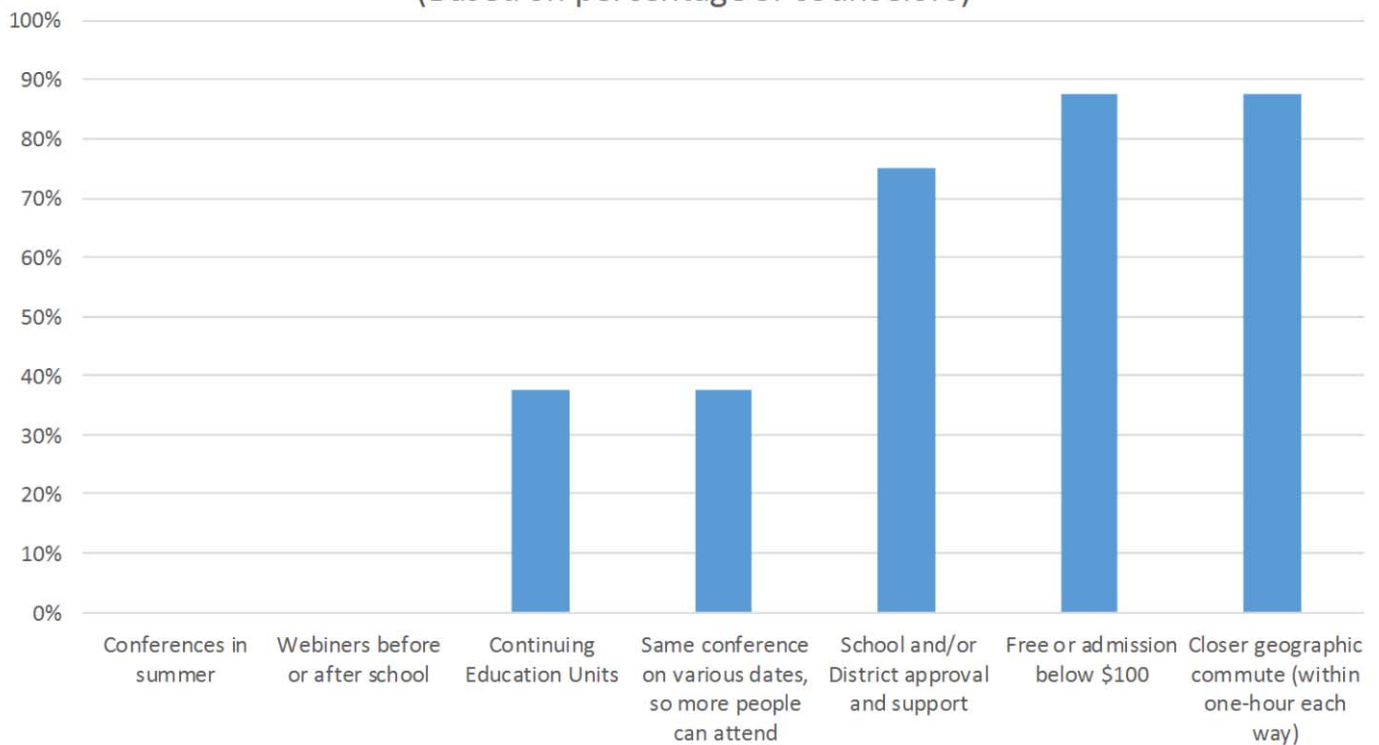
4. Which conferences or workshops have you been able to attend in the last 1-2 years? (Based on percentage of counselors)



5. Which conferences or workshops are you not able to attend but would be helpful in supporting students' college and career goals? (Based on percentage of counselors)



6. What would enable you or your colleagues to take advantage of professional development to support student college and career goals? (Based on percentage of counselors)



In Appreciation

We would like to thank the individuals and entities for their support and dedication to education and this project:

Alpaugh Junior-Senior High School
Amy Pimentel
California State University, Fresno
College of the Sequoias
Community Services Employment Training
David Maciel
Innovate Tulare-Kings
Lumina Foundation
Proteus
Ross Gentry
Strathmore High School
Tulare County Office of Education
Tulare Western High School
United Way of Tulare County
United Way Worldwide
University of California, Merced
Workforce Investment Board of Tulare County

References

Alpaugh, California. Alpaugh, CA. Web. 5 Aug. 2015.

California Public School Enrollment - Statewide Report. *Statewide Enrollment Reports*. Web. 21 May 2015 (Data Source: CDE Dataquest - Enrollment for School Year 2014-15)

Strathmore, California. Strathmore, CA. Web. 5 Aug. 2015.

Tulare, California. Tulare, CA. Web. 5 Aug. 2015.