APPLICATION AND ENROLLMENT PROCESS SURVEY ANALYSIS

Prepared for Southwestern College

January 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HIGHER EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Understand why prospective students choose not to apply or enroll at Southwestern College.

- Identify the types of application and enrollment supports that prospective students need.

- Identify the types of application and enrollment supports that peer institutions provide.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION & SURVEY SAMPLE

- The survey was administered online in November and December 2022 using the Qualtrics platform.

- The analysis includes a total of 53 respondents following data cleaning.

- Only topline results are presented in the report. Results are segmented by student type, enrollment status, and application status in the data supplement.

RESPONDENT QUALIFICATIONS

- Must have started an application to Southwestern College for summer or fall 2021 or spring, summer, or fall 2022.

- Must have either not completed the application to Southwestern College or not have matriculated at Southwestern College.

METHODOLOGY

- Sample sizes vary across questions as some questions only pertain to a subset of respondents.

- Conclusions drawn from a small sample size (n<20) should be interpreted with caution.

- For full aggregate and segmented results, please consult the accompanying data supplement.

- Statistically significant difference (95% confidence level) between groups are noted with an asterisk (*).

- After data collection, Hanover identified and removed low-quality respondents.

- "Don't Know or Not Applicable" responses, and equivalent, are often excluded from the figures and analysis in order to focus on respondents who did express an opinion.

RECOMMENDATIONS & KEY FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider:

- **Increasing the proportion of classes offered online.** Respondents indicate that the availability of online courses was the number one motivation for applying to Southwestern College and the number two factor driving application decisions. Yet, only 7 of the 13 respondents who prioritize the availability of online classes rate Southwestern as good or excellent in this area.

- **Simplifying the Southwestern application process and increasing the availability of one-on-one support to applicants.**
    - Half of respondents report that they had difficulty with the Southwestern application. 20% report that they had trouble understanding the application questions, and 18% think that the application took too long to complete. 16% indicate that they struggled to access the application.
    - At least half of the respondents who needed help would like one-on-one support. The most popular platform is online assistance, but there is also substantial interest in in-person or telephone assistance.

- **Increasing academic advising and enrollment support for newly admitted students.** 69% of respondents report that Southwestern College was among their top choices, their top choice, or the only school to which they applied. Yet none of these respondents matriculated. The top reasons include not knowing what classes they needed to take, not receiving the support that they needed to complete the registration or application process, finding that the classes they wanted/needed were not available, and not being able to afford it.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS & MOTIVATION

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

The most common educational goal is to enroll in an associate degree program with the intention of transferring to a 4-year institution.

- Two-fifths of respondents (40%) plan to obtain an associate degree and transfer to a 4-year institution.

- 15% of respondents are interested in the associate degree alone.

- Other top educational goals include obtaining a certificate (19%) or enrolling in individual credit courses for personal or professional development (17%).

Health and Medical Occupations is the most popular prospective field of study.

- 36% of respondents express interest in Health and Medical Occupations (n=44).

- Other popular fields are Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (16%, n=44), and Business (14%, n=44).

Which of the following best describes your educational goal? (n=53)

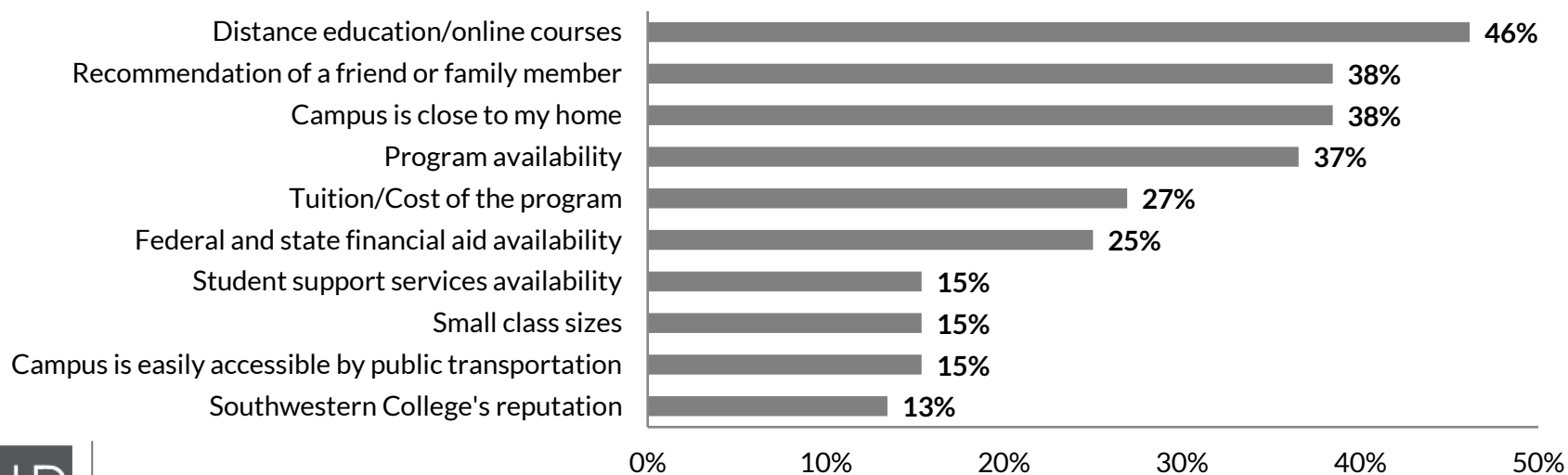| Category	Percent
Associate degree program (intending to transfer to a 4-year institution)	40%
Certificate program	19%
Individual credit course(s) for personal or professional development	17%
Associate degree program (not intending to transfer to a 4-year institution)	15%
Transfer preparation	6%
Noncredit courses	4%
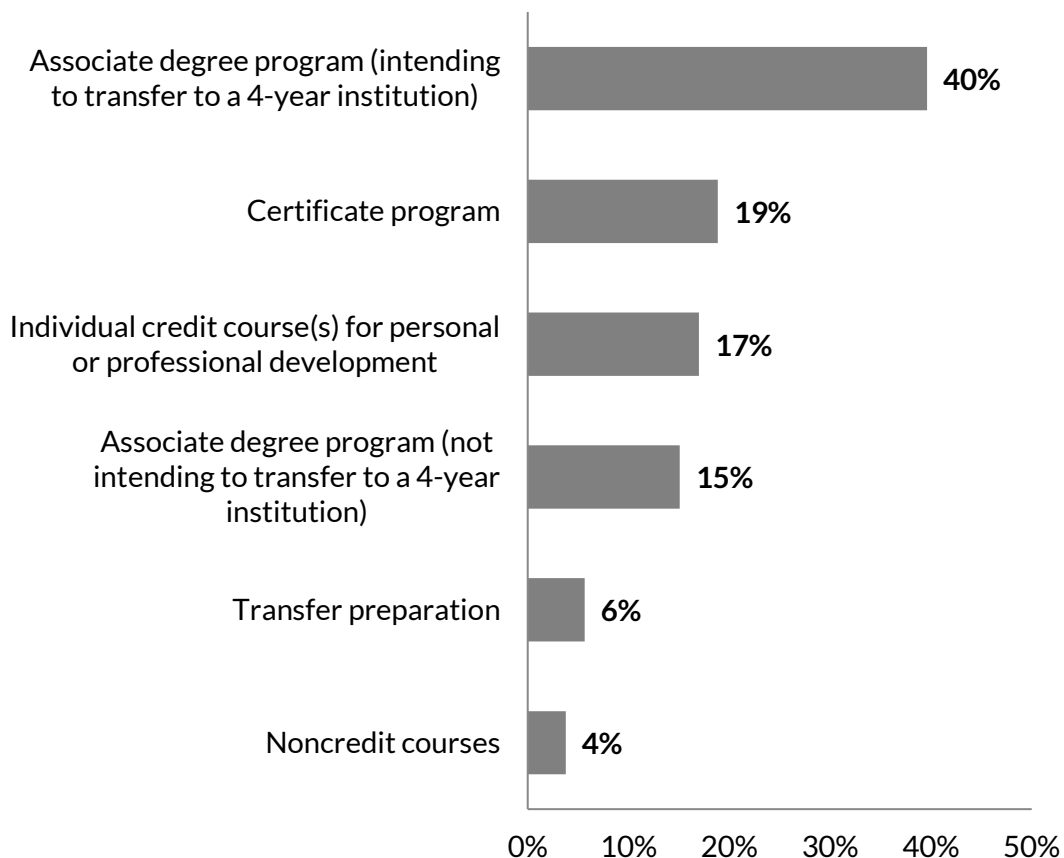
MOTIVATION

The top academic motivations for applying to Southwestern College include the option to take courses online and program availability. 46% of respondents cite distance learning and the availability of online courses as a reason to apply to Southwestern, and 37% cite the availability of a program of interest to them.

Personal motivations to apply to Southwestern include the opinions of friends and family and campus proximity to home. 38% of respondents indicate that they were motivated to apply to Southwestern College by a recommendation from a family member or friend and/or the proximity of the Southwestern campus to home.

More than one-quarter of respondents report that they were motivated to apply to Southwestern for financial reasons. 27% of respondents cite the overall cost of the program, and 25% cite the availability of federal and state financial aid.

Hispanic respondents cite similar motivations, led by recommendation of a friend or family member followed by distance education/online courses, campus is close to my home, and program availability.

Originally, what motivated you to apply to Southwestern College? Please select all that apply. (n=52)

Motivation	Percent
Distance education/online courses	46%
Recommendation of a friend or family member	38%
Campus is close to my home	38%
Program availability	37%
Tuition/Cost of the program	27%
Federal and state financial aid availability	25%
Student support services availability	15%
Small class sizes	15%
Campus is easily accessible by public transportation	15%
Southwestern College's reputation	13%

THE APPLICATION PROCESS
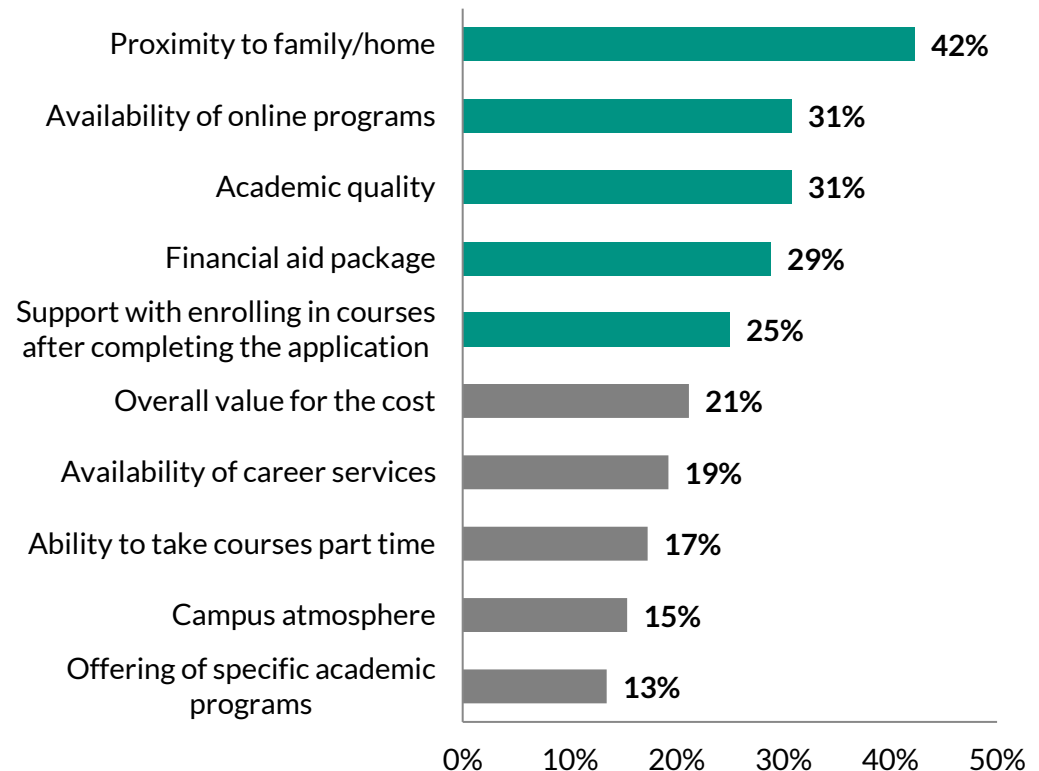
FACTORS DRIVING THE APPLICATION DECISION

Two-thirds or more of respondents who prioritize proximity to family/home, the quality or academics, the financial aid package, and enrollment support rate Southwestern College as good or excellent in these areas.

- **42% of respondents overall and 54% of Hispanic respondents prioritize proximity to family/home**. 14 out of 20 respondents who prioritize proximity to family/home rate Southwestern College as good or excellent in this area.‡

- **31% of respondents overall and 38% of Hispanic respondents are most interested in the quality of the academics.** 10 out of 13 respondents who prioritize academic quality rate Southwestern as good or excellent in this area.

- **One-quarter or more of respondents are most interested in the financial aid package (29%) and support with enrollment (25%).** 9 out of 13 respondents who prioritize the financial aid package rate Southwestern as good or excellent in this area. 6 out of 9 respondents who prioritize support with the enrollment process rate Southwestern as good or excellent in this area.

Fewer respondents who prioritize the availability of online programs rate Southwestern highly in this area. 31% of respondents prioritize the availability of online programs. 7 of the 13 respondents who prioritize availability of online programs rate Southwestern as good or excellent in this area.

Which of the following factors were most important to you when choosing where to apply for college? Please select up to five options. Top 10 Responses† (n=52)

Factor	Percentage
Proximity to family/home	42%
Availability of online programs	31%
Academic quality	31%
Financial aid package	29%
Support with enrolling in courses after completing the application	25%
Overall value for the cost	21%
Availability of career services	19%
Ability to take courses part time	17%
Campus atmosphere	15%
Offering of specific academic programs	13%

†Only the top 10 responses are included in this chart. The full set of responses is available in the data supplement.

‡Only respondents who select a factor as among the top five most important are asked to rate Southwestern on that factor. Due to the small sample size, aggregate statistics are presented in counts.
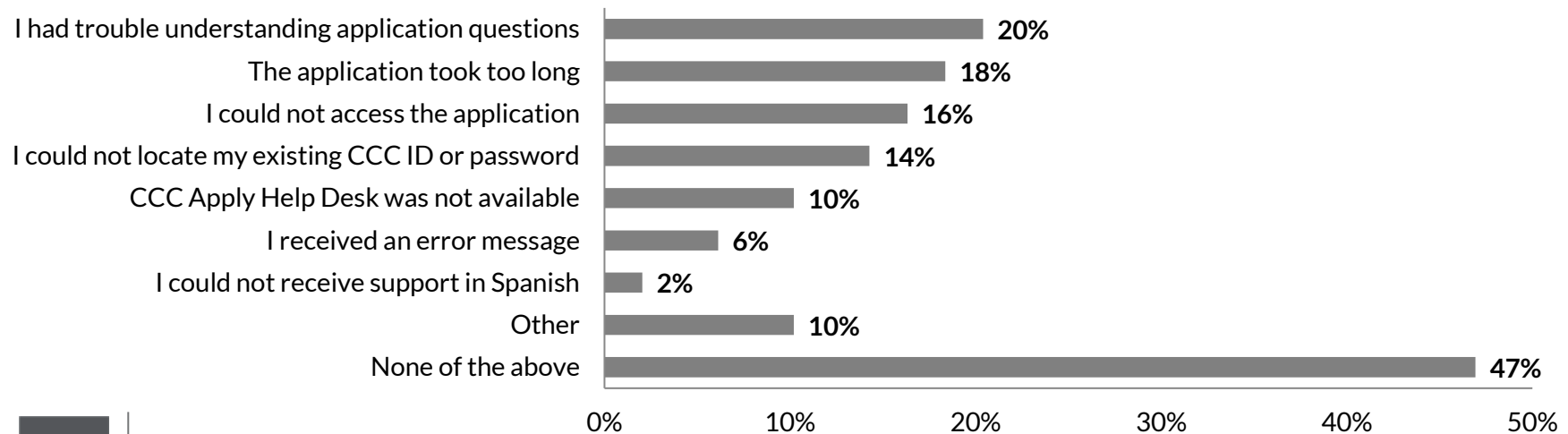
HR | HIGHER EDUCATION

CHALLENGES WITH THE SOUTHWESTERN PROCESS

Approximately half of respondents overall (53%) and Hispanic respondents (50%) report that they experienced some difficulty with the Southwestern College application process. The most common problems were difficulty understanding the application questions, lack of time to complete the application, and accessing the application. One-fifth of respondents (20%) report that they had difficulty understanding the application questions (as compared to 29% of Hispanic respondents);18% of respondents think that the application was too long; and 16% report that they had trouble accessing the application.

Among respondents who experienced difficulty with the application process, at least half think they would benefit from one-on-one support. 50% of these respondents (n=26) expressed interest in online assistance; 42% would like in-person, one-on-one application assistance; and 31% would like telephone assistance. **Just** over one-quarter of respondents who experienced difficulty with the application (27%, n=26) express interest in a step-by-step written guide and/or video.

Hispanic respondents who experienced difficultly are most interested in online assistance, a written step-by-step guide, and in-person, one-on-one assistance. Notably, only 1 of 24 Hispanic respondents requested assistance in Spanish.

Which of the following difficulties did you experience with the Southwestern College application process? Please select all that apply.† (n=49)

Difficulty	Percentage
I had trouble understanding application questions	20%
The application took too long	18%
I could not access the application	16%
I could not locate my existing CCC ID or password	14%
CCC Apply Help Desk was not available	10%
I received an error message	6%
I could not receive support in Spanish	2%
Other	10%
None of the above	47%

HR

HIGHER EDUCATION

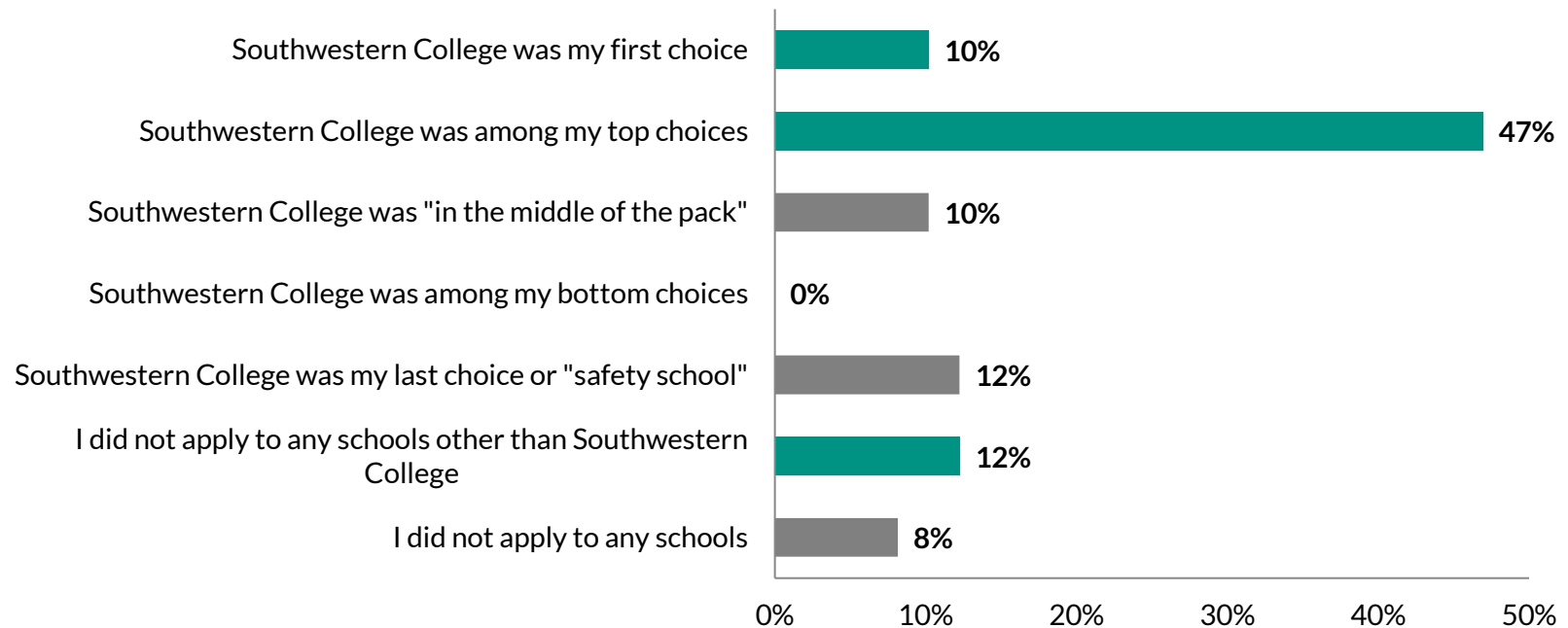†Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents were asked to select all that apply.

COMPETITION

RELATIVE RANKING OF SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE

For 69% of respondents Southwestern College was among their top choices (47%), their top choice (10%), or the only school to which they applied (12%).

Just 12% of respondents report that they considered Southwestern to be a "safety school" or their last choice.

If you applied to somewhere other than Southwestern College, how did Southwestern College rank among all the schools to which you applied?
(n=49)

Category	Percentage
Southwestern College was my first choice	10%
Southwestern College was among my top choices	47%
Southwestern College was "in the middle of the pack"	10%
Southwestern College was among my bottom choices	0%
Southwestern College was my last choice or "safety school"	12%
I did not apply to any schools other than Southwestern College	12%
I did not apply to any schools	8%

Half of respondents who enrolled somewhere (50%, n=28) enrolled at another community college.
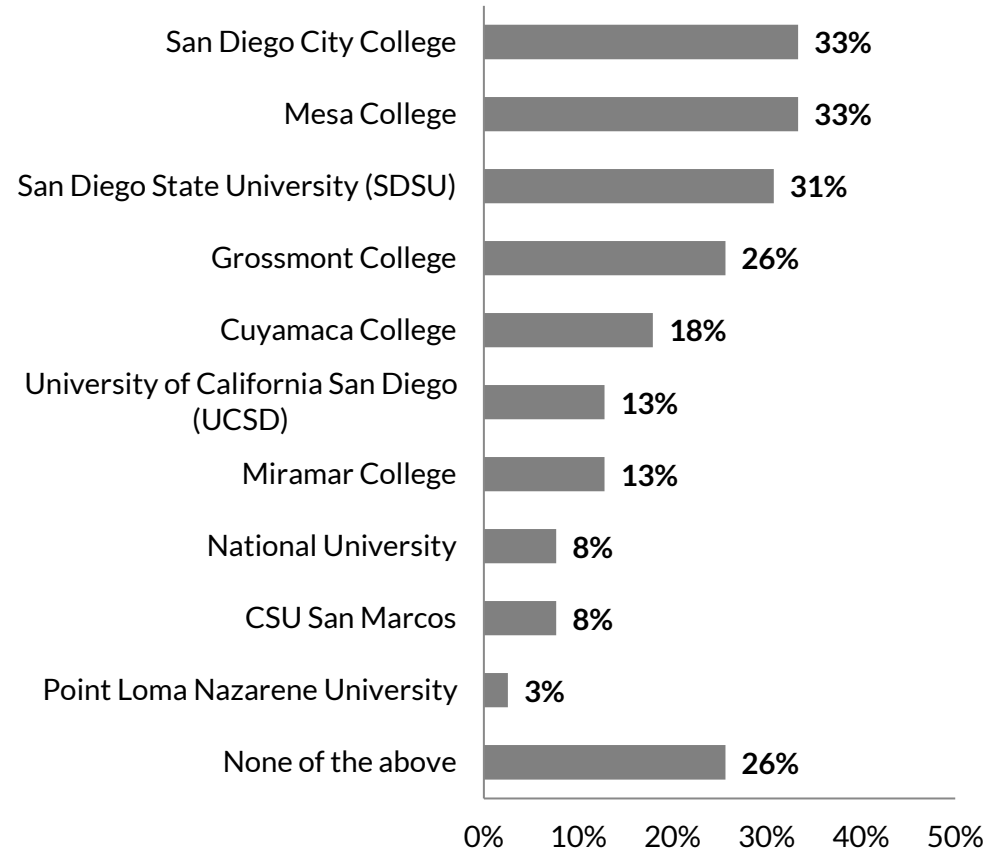
Top community college competitors include San Diego City College, Mesa College, and Grossmont College.

- **One-third of respondents who applied to other institutions applied to San Diego City College (33%) and/or Mesa College (33%).** One-fifth of respondents who enrolled somewhere enrolled at Mesa College (12%, n=26) or San Diego City College (8%, n=26).

- **One-quarter of respondents who applied to other institutions (26%) applied to Grossmont College**. 12% of respondents who enrolled somewhere (n=26) enrolled at Grossmont College.

One-fifth of respondents who enrolled somewhere (21%, n=28) enrolled at a four-year college within the UC or CSU systems.

Southwestern College's top competitor in these systems is San Diego State. 31% of respondents who applied to other institutions report that they applied to San Diego State. 19% of respondents who enrolled somewhere (n=26) enrolled at SDSU.

Did you apply to any of the following institutions? Please select all that apply.† (n=39)

Institution	Percentage
San Diego City College	33%
Mesa College	33%
San Diego State University (SDSU)	31%
Grossmont College	26%
Cuyamaca College	18%
University of California San Diego (UCSD)	13%
Miramar College	13%
National University	8%
CSU San Marcos	8%
Point Loma Nazarene University	3%
None of the above	26%

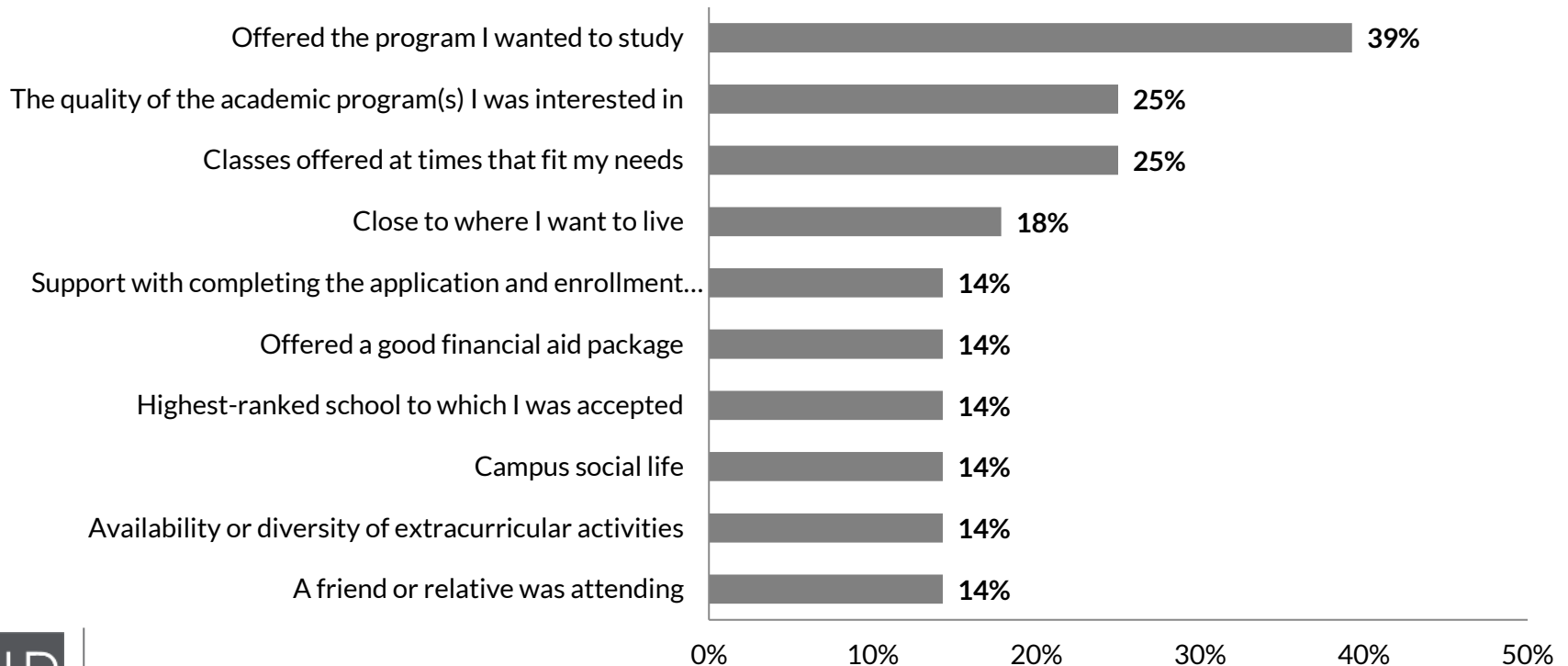†Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents were asked to select all that apply.

THE ENROLLMENT PROCESS

FACTORS DRIVING THE ENROLLMENT DECISION

Academics are the top factors in enrollment decisions. 39% of respondents who enrolled somewhere report that they selected their school because they were offered the program that they wanted, and 25% of respondents who enrolled somewhere report that they were influenced by the quality of the academic program that interested them. These are also the top two decision making factors for Hispanic students enrolling elsewhere.

Convenience factors are also relevant. 25% of respondents who enrolled somewhere indicate that they chose a school with class times that suit their needs, and 18% report that they chose a school that is close to where they want to live.

Why did you decide to enroll at that school? Please select all that apply.
Top 10 Responses† (n=28)

Factor	Percentage
Offered the program I wanted to study	39%
The quality of the academic program(s) I was interested in	25%
Classes offered at times that fit my needs	25%
Close to where I want to live	18%
Support with completing the application and enrollment…	14%
Offered a good financial aid package	14%
Highest-ranked school to which I was accepted	14%
Campus social life	14%
Availability or diversity of extracurricular activities	14%
A friend or relative was attending	14%

HR | HIGHER EDUCATION

†Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondents were asked to select all that apply.
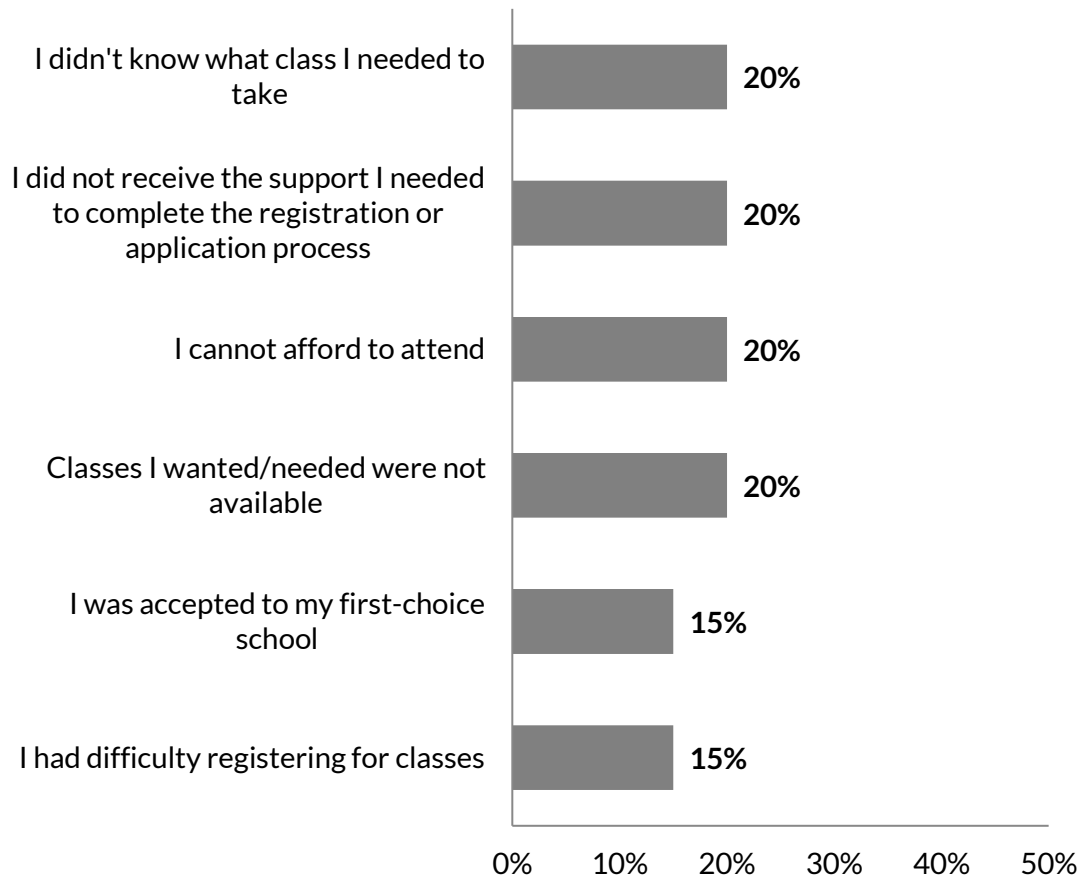
WHY NOT SOUTHWESTERN?

The top reasons respondents who applied to Southwestern College cite for not enrolling at Southwestern include inadequate support, inadequate financial resources, scheduling issues, difficulty registering, and preference for another school.

- **Support**. One fifth of respondents who did not enroll (n=20), indicate that they did not know what classes they needed to take (20%) or that they did not receive the support that they needed to complete the registration or application process (20%). 15% report that they had difficulty registering for classes.

- **Financial Resources**. One-fifth of respondents who did not enroll (20%, n=20) report that they could not afford to attend. Although the sample size is small, affordability is the top reason for Hispanic students choosing not to attend Southwestern.

- **Scheduling Issues**. One-fifth of respondents who did not enroll (20%, n=20) indicate that the classes that they wanted or needed were not available.

Why did you decide to not enroll at Southwestern College? Please select all that apply.
Top Responses†‡ (n=20)

Response	Percentage
I didn't know what class I needed to take	20%
I did not receive the support I needed to complete the registration or application process	20%
I cannot afford to attend	20%
Classes I wanted/needed were not available	20%
I was accepted to my first-choice school	15%
I had difficulty registering for classes	15%

‡Only respondents who applied to Southwestern College were asked this question.
†Only response options selected by at least 15% of respondents are reported in the chart.

HR HIGHER EDUCATION

IMPACT OF COST ON ENROLLMENT

Respondents indicate that the cost of tuition is playing an important role in enrollment decisions.

- 65% of respondents somewhat agree (30%) or strongly agree (35%) that they would attend Southwestern College if they could afford it. Similarly, 59% of Hispanic respondents agree they would attend if more affordable.

- Among respondents who enrolled somewhere (n=26), 62% report that the price of tuition at Southwestern College was at least *moderately influential* in their enrollment decision. 19% report that the price of tuition at Southwestern was *very* or *extremely influential* in their enrollment decision.

There is less consensus on whether tuition is out of line with the educational value that Southwestern provides. Only 35% of respondents somewhat or strongly *agree* that the cost of tuition is too high for the educational value that Southwestern College provides. 30% of respondents somewhat or strongly *disagree* that the cost is too high for the value Southwestern provides.

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

- ■ Strongly Disagree
- ■ Somewhat Disagree
- ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ■ Somewhat Agree
- ■ Strongly Agree

I would attend Southwestern College if I could afford it. (n=40)
8% | 23% | 30% | 35%

The cost of tuition is too high for the educational value Southwestern College provides. (n=37)
14% | 16% | 35% | 24% | 11%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
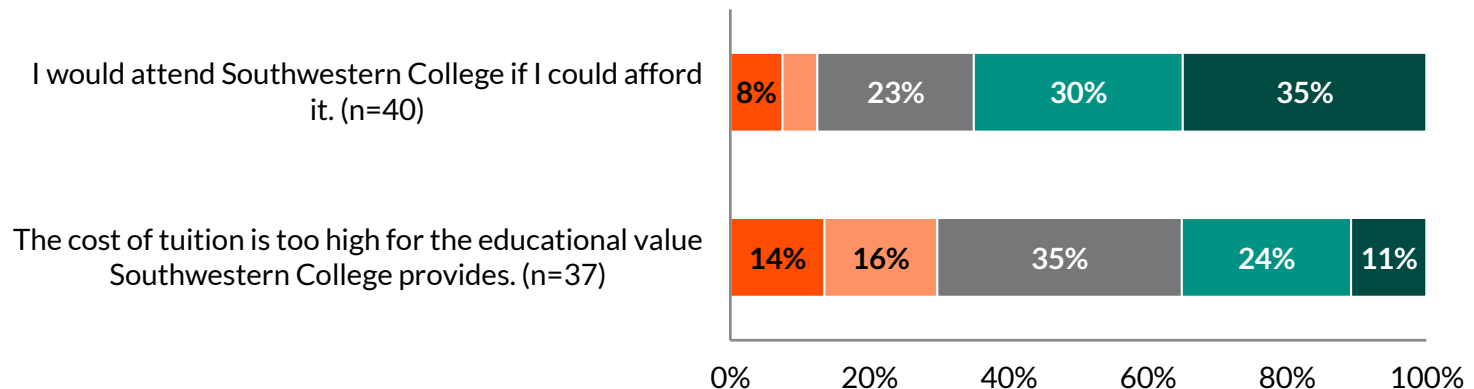
COMPLETING FINANCIAL AID APPLICATIONS

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the most commonly-completed financial aid application, but a substantial minority struggle to complete it.

- Three-fifths of overall respondents (61%, n=46) and more than half of Hispanic respondents (54%, n=14) report that they completed the FAFSA.

- Fewer than half of respondents who completed the FAFSA (44%, n=27) report that the process was *somewhat easy or extremely easy*. One-quarter of respondents who completed the FAFSA (26%, n=27) report that completing the FAFSA was *somewhat difficult or extremely difficult.*

11% of respondents completed the California College Promise Grant application. Fewer than 10% of respondents completed any of the other tested financial aid applications (n=46).

Fewer than one-third of respondents who completed any financial aid application (31%, n=35) requested help from Southwestern College, and assessments of the quality of that support are evenly divided. 6 out of 11 rate the support they received as good or excellent and 5 out of 11 rate the support they received as poor or very poor. While few Hispanic respondents requested support from Southwestern related to financial aid applications, half of those who did rate the support as poor.

How difficult was the application process for the following types of financial aid?

■ Extremely Difficult   ■ Somewhat Difficult   ■ Neither Difficult nor Easy   ■ Somewhat Easy   ■ Extremely Easy

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (n=27): 7% | 19% | 30% | 30% | 15%

HIGHER EDUCATION
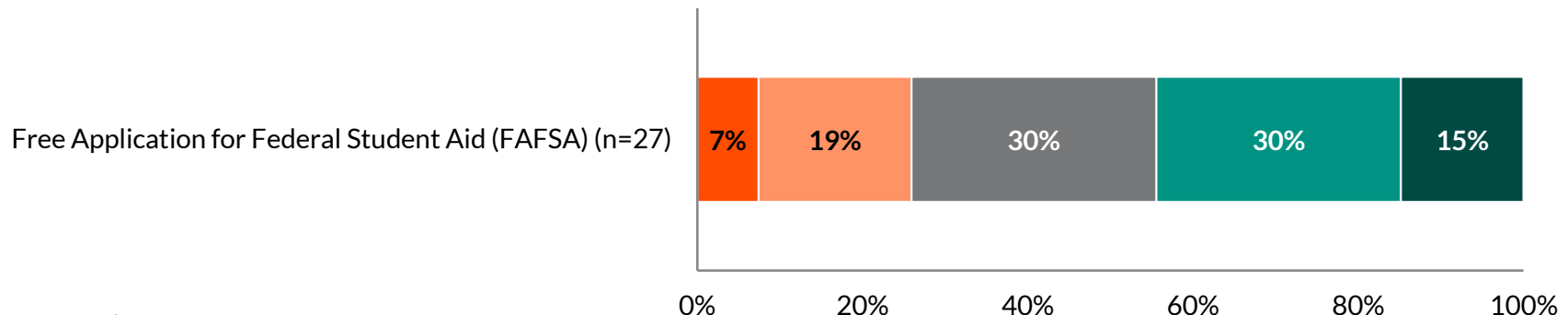
OPEN ENDED RESPONSES

APPLICATION CONFUSION & LACK OF SUPPORT

"The application process was somewhat confusing in the fact that **it took like two weeks to receive the ccc ID and password when in reality I personally think you should have the ability to get the ID from the jump** instead of wait those two weeks especially if people are working and stuff they'll just end up quitting and I also think you should get that information through the phone instead of on email because in email sometimes its harder for the person to locate the file while if you send it through a phone number its just a tap of a finger and on email you dont get the notification that you got it while on phone you do"

"Im still stuck. **I cannot figure out how to use website and cant even get in touch with anyone**. I still need to take placement tests etc! Completely frustrated with the whole process. I havent even been able to get get any classes. I have a lot of financial aid sitting there and I want to use it."

"**Taking the liaisons out of the high schools in the local area, really impacted my application process and my enthusiasm to enroll.** My mother had taught at Otay Ranch High school where I attended a school for 20 years and in that time Southwestern College advisers would be on campus would assist you with the application process, would assist you with financial aid application, and would essentially assist you in making sure that you were ready to go and were supported throughout the whole process and so by the time you graduated, you were already enrolled at Southwestern College and ready to enroll in your classes or set up to startvin the fall, which would have very much encouraged me to want to keep going with my education. Because of Covid, all that fell apart, and **that lack of in person contact and being called out during my school day and having somebody there who was an expert in getting me enrolled and making sure that I knew what I needed to know, and was able to access the services that I needed, touring the campus, finding out about the programs and most of all finishing the application process and being completely ready to start the next semester prior to the end of my senior year wouldve made all the difference**. "

"Well **basically no administrative support services** not good"

"The application process **was quite complex for non credit courses and not easy to navigate**"

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Gender Identity (n=45)

Female	62%
Male	33%
Prefer not to respond	4%

Age (n=45)

19 or less	22%
20 to 24	33%
25 to 29	4%
30 to 34	11%
35 to 39	7%
40 to 59	9%
50 or above	9%
Prefer not to respond	4%

Race/Ethnicity (n=45)

Hispanic or Latin(o/a/x)	53%
Asian	20%
White	16%
Black or African American	13%
Filipino	7%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	7%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2%
Prefer not to respond	4%

First Generation Status (n=45)

Yes	53%
No	42%
I'm not sure	4%

Disability Status (n=44)

No	82%
Yes	11%
Prefer Not to Disclose	7%

Sexual Orientation (n=45)

Straight or Heterosexual	73%
Bisexual	13%
Lesbian	2%
Gay	2%
Prefer not to disclose	9%

Other Identities (n=24)

Employed full-time	42%
Parent/guardian	33%
Housing Insecure	21%
Homeless/Houseless	13%
International student	8%

HR

HIGHER EDUCATION

Thank you.

CONTACT
Amy Kurfist
Senior Research Advisor

E: akurfist@hanoverresearch.com

P: 202-838-1245

🌐 hanoverresearch.com