



# Expectations of Families with Young Adults with ID for Postsecondary Education

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# Whom am I?



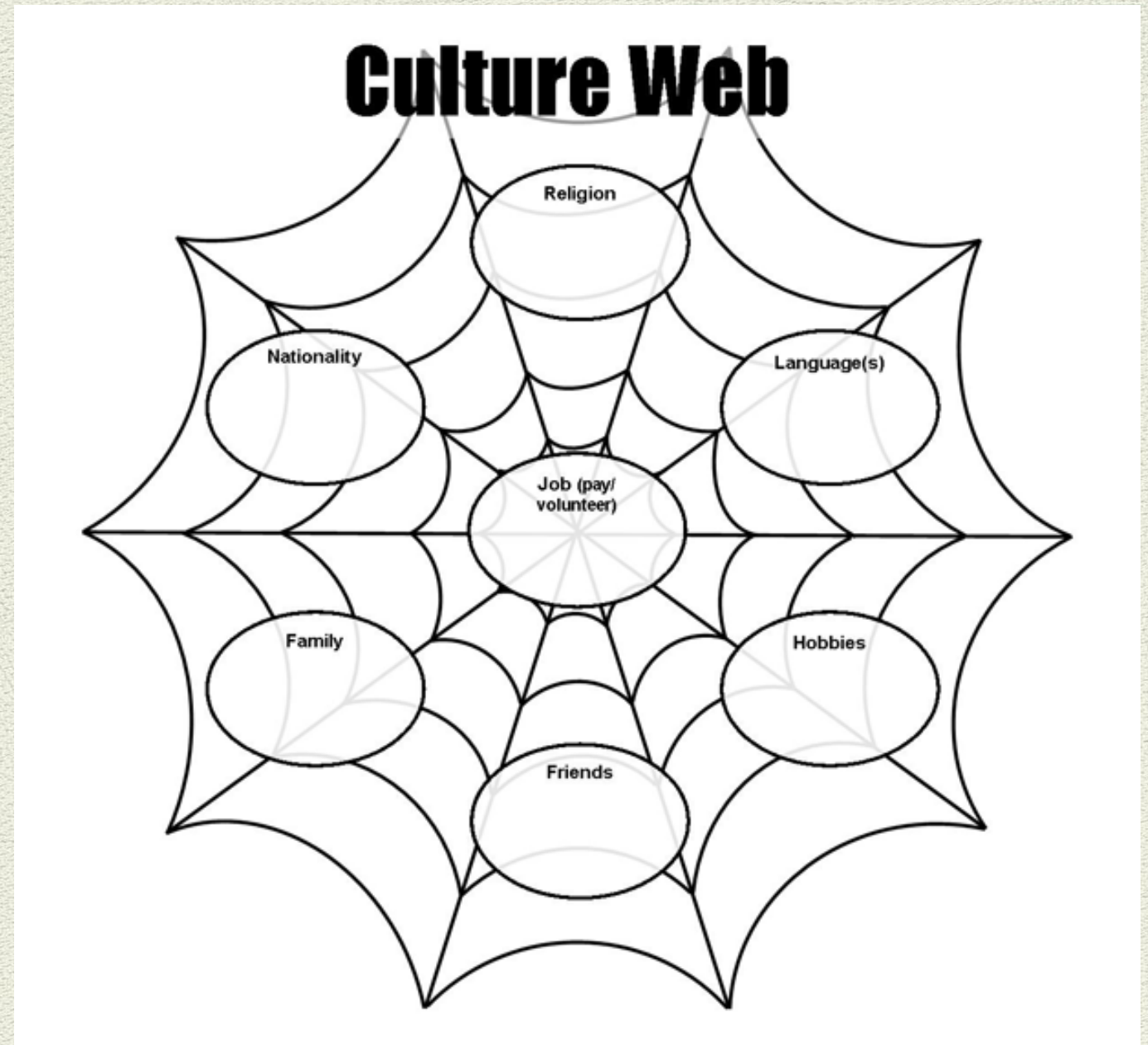
- ◆ M.A., Special Education Secondary Transition
- ◆ M.S., Non-Profit Leadership
- ◆ Community Supports Specialist @ Virginia's UCEDD (Virginia Commonwealth University)  
([www.partnership.vcu.edu](http://www.partnership.vcu.edu))
- ◆ Past President, Parent to Parent USA
- ◆ Parent, 22 yr old daughter with significant physical, intellectual and sensory disabilities



What is the biggest factor that influences parent decision-making and expectations?



....Cultural traditions, norms, and beliefs



The next biggest factor is...other parents



# What do we know...

- ◆ In general, high parental expectations lead to high academic achievement by their child
- ◆ For students without disabilities, parental expectations are strong predictors of students planning for college
- ◆ The passage of Higher Education Opportunity Act increased access for students with ID in college



# This got us to thinking...

- ◆ How did parental expectations for their son or daughter with ID to go to college grow;
- ◆ What factors contributed to this experience; and
- ◆ What advice would these parents have for educators, community agency personnel, college administrators, and for other parents





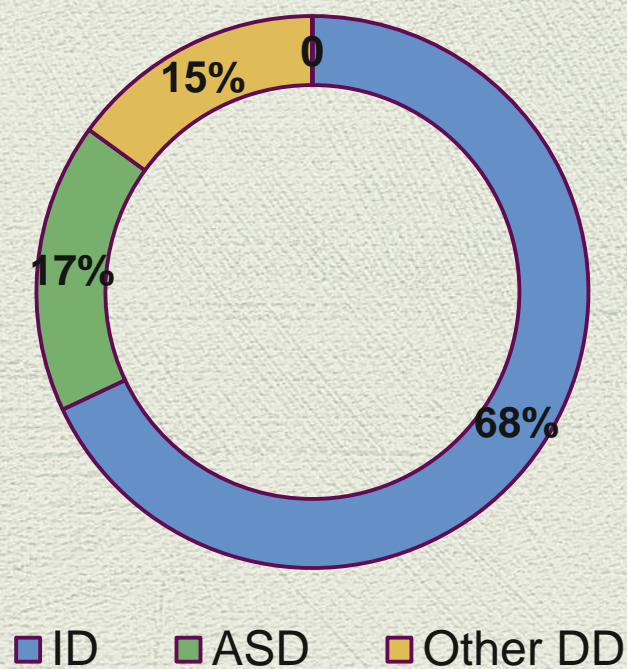
# ACE-IT in College Study

- ◆ Conducted in March 2014 and again in March 2016
  - ◆ utilizing on-line survey; open and close ended questions
- ◆ Domains included
  - ◆ PSE influences; PSE expectations; advice for parents, educators personnel and college administrators; demographics
- ◆ Expectations defined
  - ◆ as hopes, beliefs and assumptions

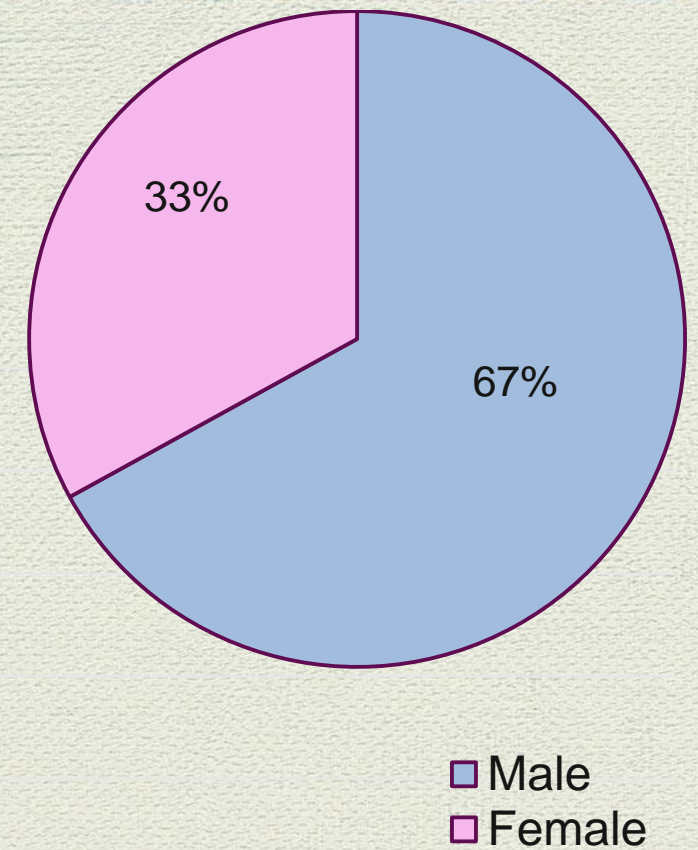


# ACE-IT in College students

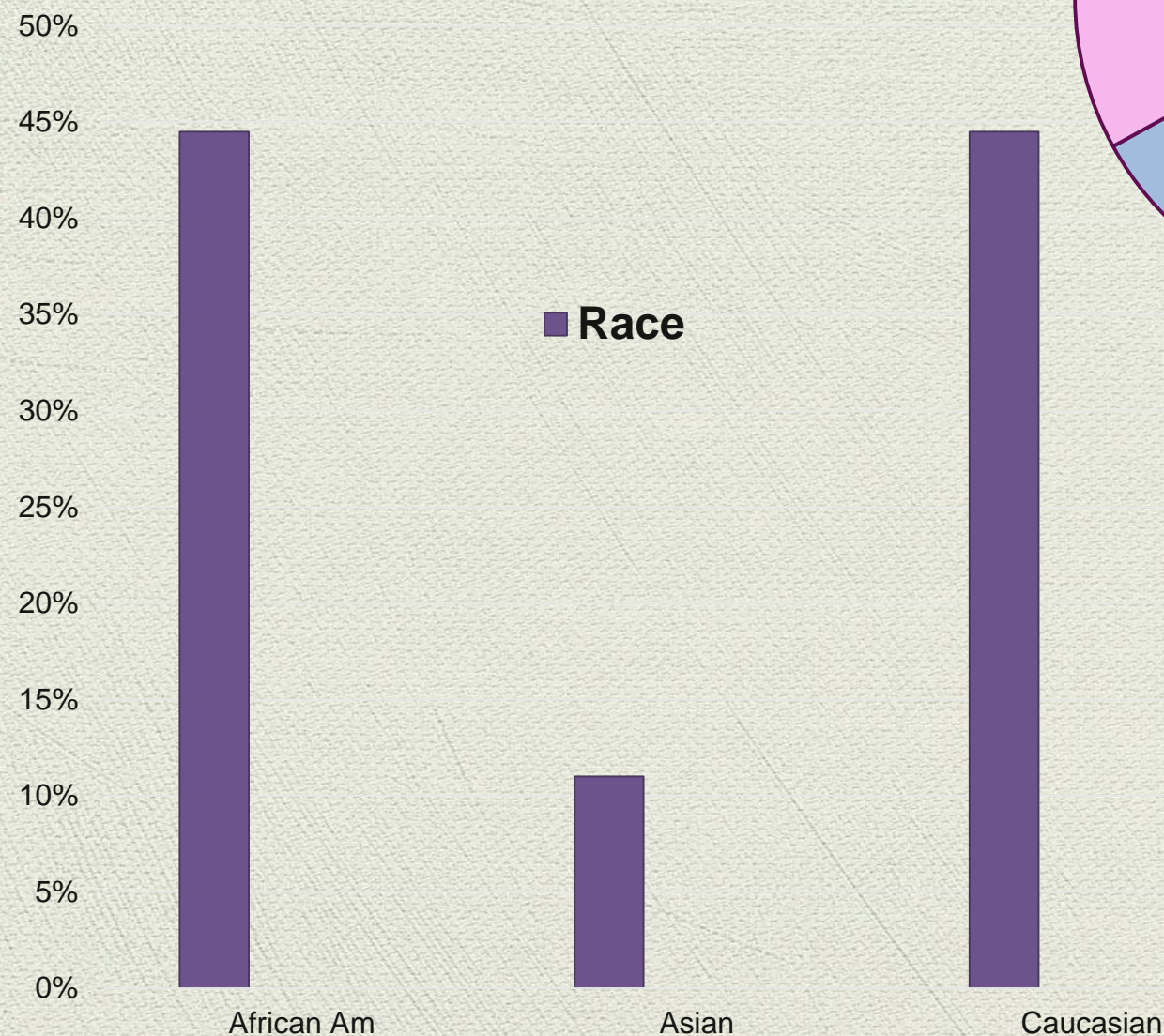
Disability



Gender



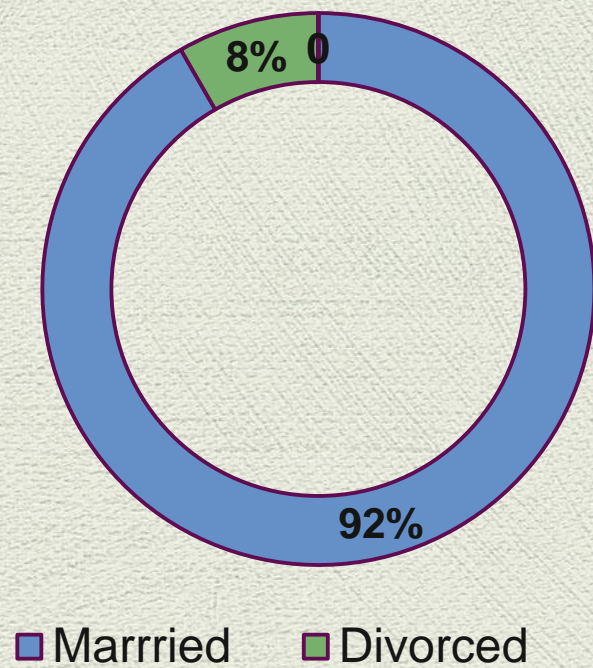
Race



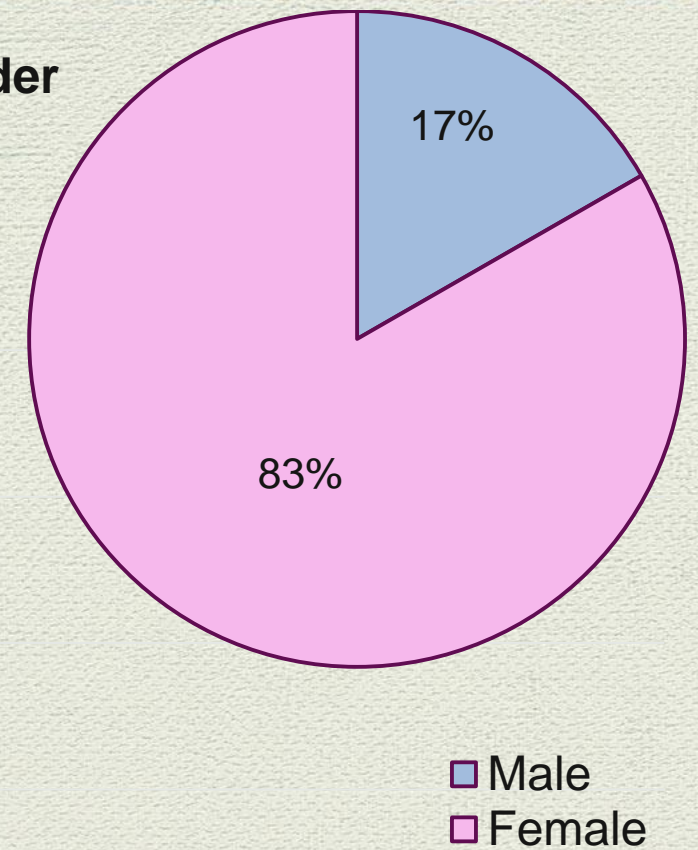


# Survey Participants

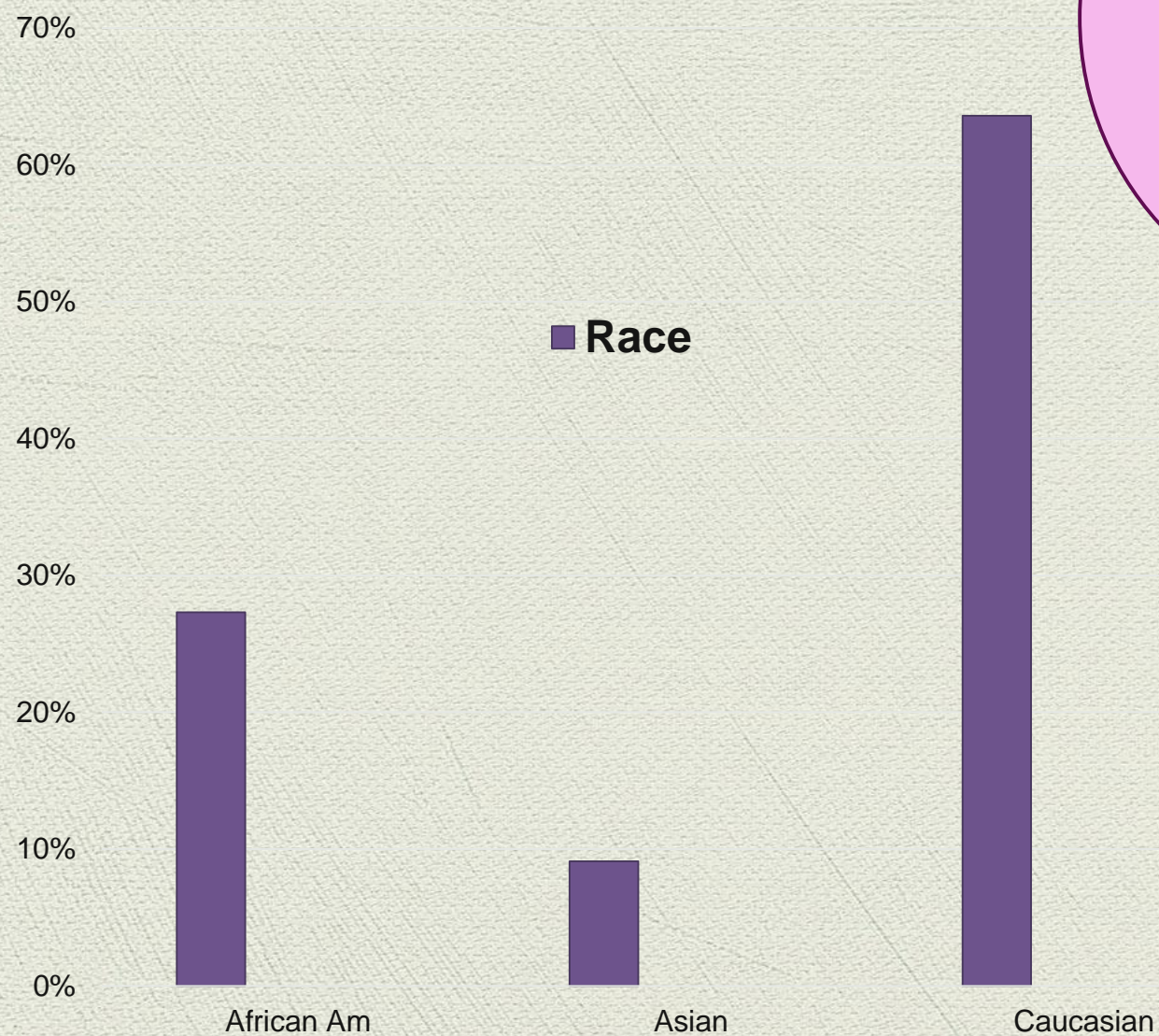
**Marital Status**



**Gender**



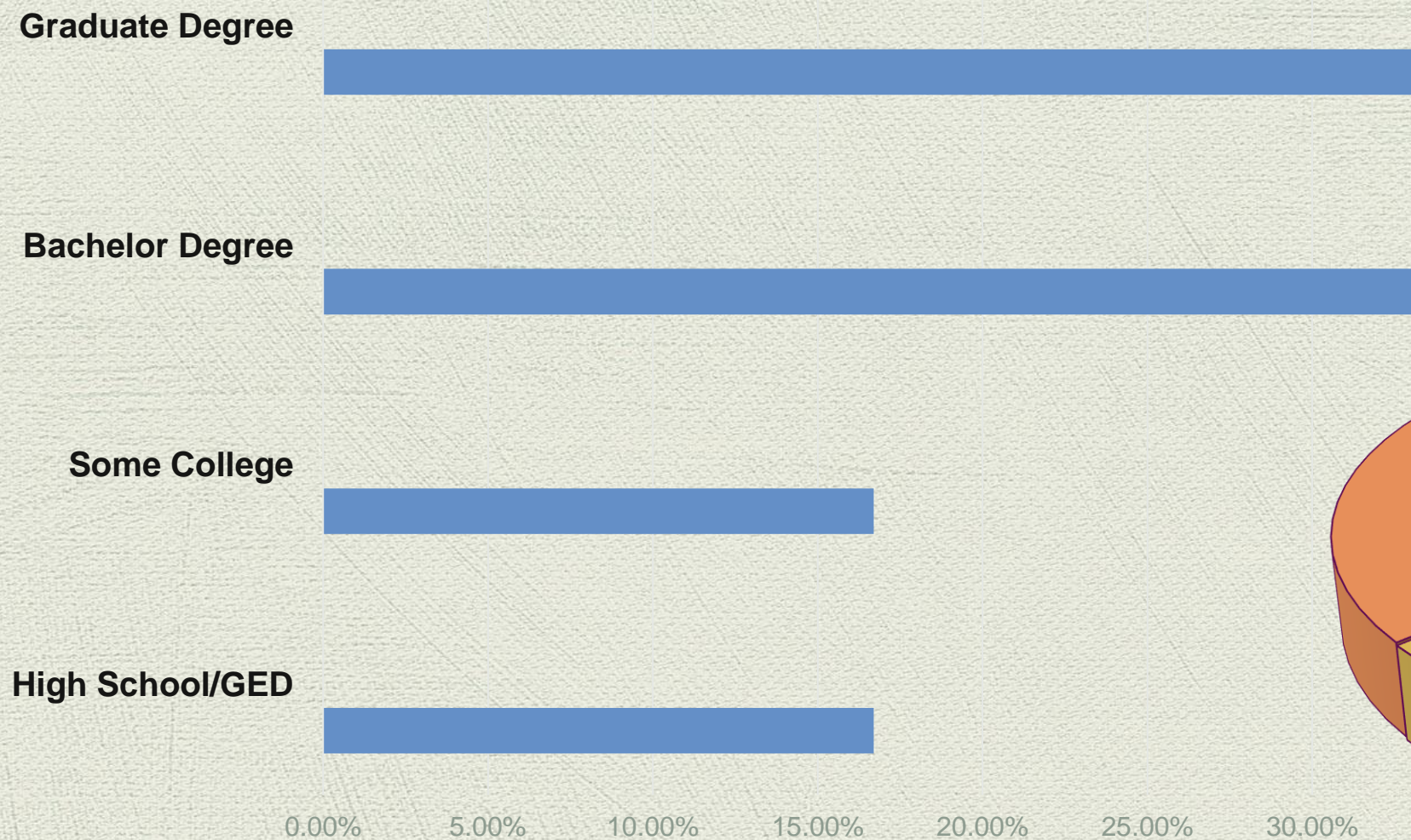
**Race**



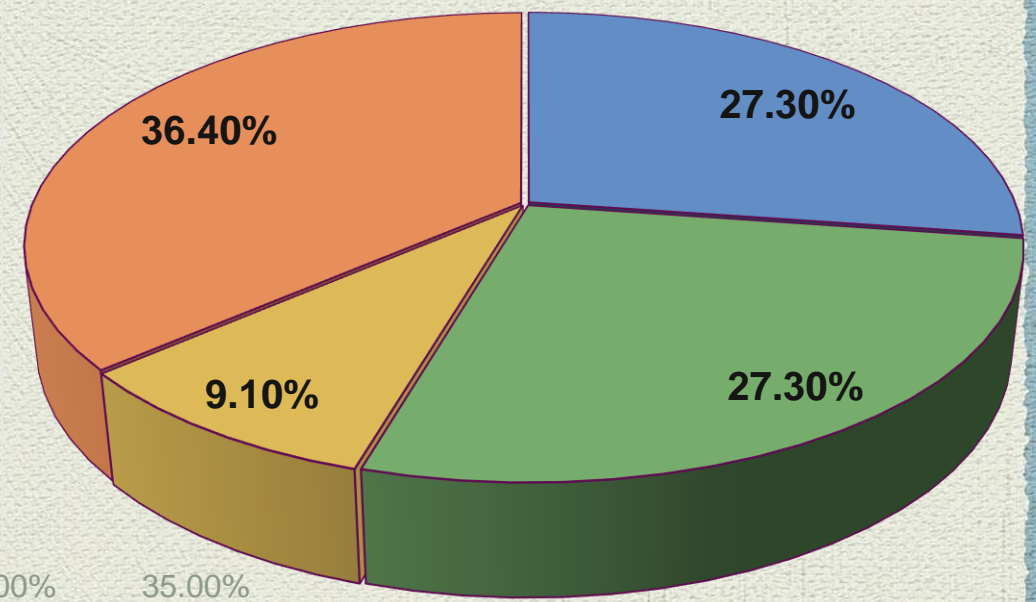


# Survey Participants

**Education Level**



**Income**



■ \$50,000-\$74,999  
■ \$75,000-\$99,999

**Residence:**

City (16.7%)      Suburban (58.3%)      Rural (25%)



# Findings...

- ◆ 50% of parents responded that they had specific expectations that their child with ID would go to college
- ◆ 75% of parents reported that their son/daughter did NOT have college listed as an IEP goal



The Importance  
of not  
Underestimating  
Abilities

The Importance  
of  
Parents being  
Connected to  
the Community

The Importance  
of the  
College  
Experience

Three themes emerged...



# The importance of not underestimating abilities



*“Cultivate in them a ‘you can do it’ spirit.”*

*“Don’t dwell on what you think your child can  
not do, focus on what they do.”*



# The importance of parents being connected to the community

*“XXX spoke at our local Arc  
chapter meeting and shared  
information about  
ACE-IT in College.”*



*“Actively get a presence in special  
needs organizations.”*



# The importance of the college experience



*“College gives the opportunity for your son/daughter to grow in so many ways – socially, emotionally, and in just plain old practical ways of living.”*



# Parents recommend...

- Information on PSE programs for students with ID be shared by colleges and universities with local school divisions
- Teachers, transition specialists and guidance counselors be trained on PSE opportunities for students with ID
- Discussions take place at IEP meetings beginning in elementary school of the expectations of college as a transition outcome
- Parents are connected to family organizations in the community for emotional, informational, and systems navigational support



# Parents also recommend...

If the goal is for every student to learn, improving ACCESS to college for EVERYONE is a must

- ◆ Students with disabilities are successful in college when they have access to
  - ◆ technology
  - ◆ appropriate supports
  - ◆ faculty who have training in UDL



# Finding the Balance: Family Engagement Policies & Practices among Postsecondary Education Programs



# Traditional Parent Engagement

- ◆ University settings typically have minimal parent engagement
- ◆ Special education ideally promotes significant parent engagement
- ◆ Program staff usually represent one or both of these traditions
- ◆ These are conflicting processes → represent great opportunities to re-shape post-secondary parent engagement



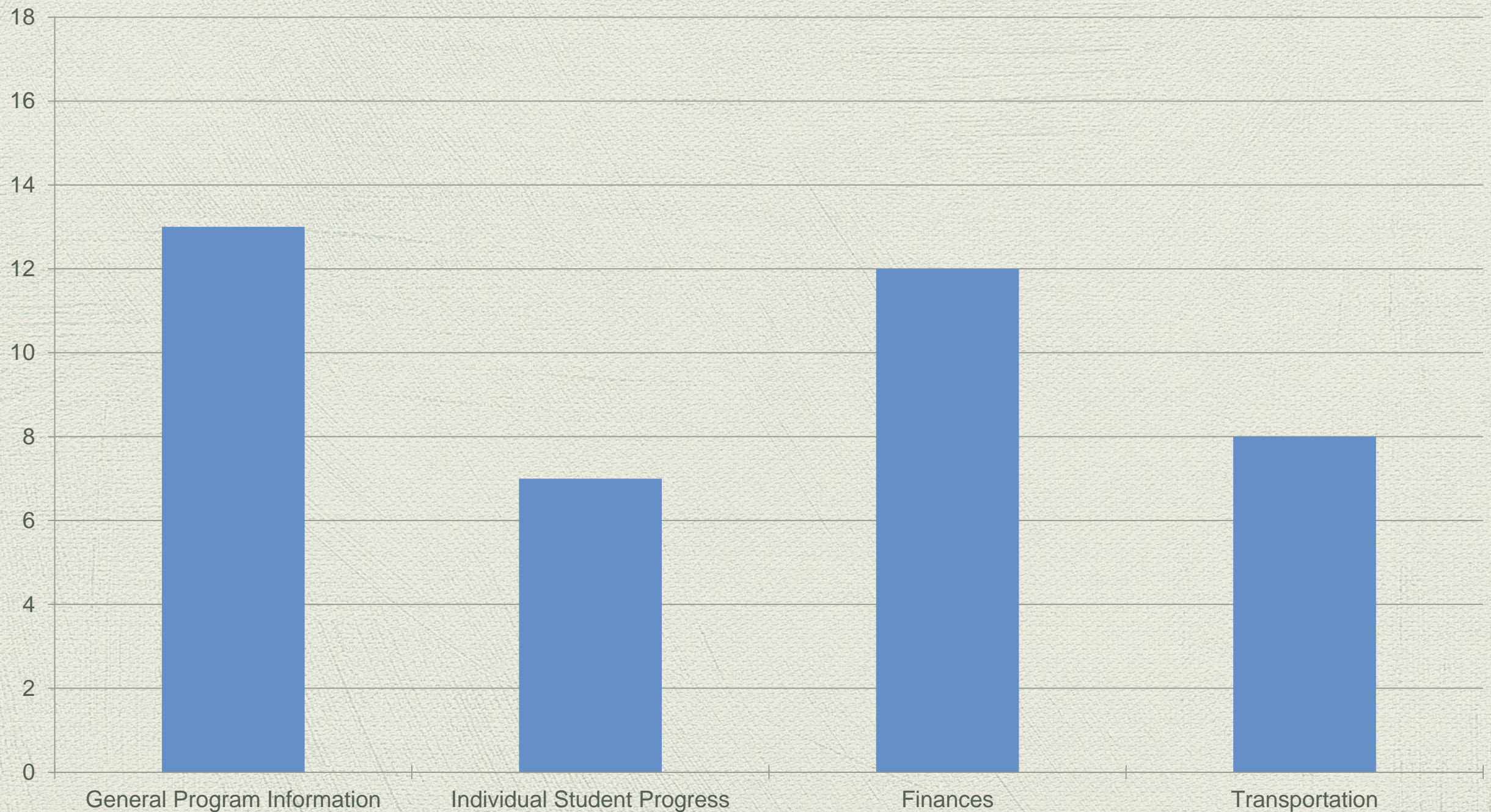


# Background on survey

- ◆ Survey developed through TPSID Special Interest Group on Family Engagement with support from Pacer Center
- ◆ 17 PSEs were surveyed
- Sample includes 4-year colleges/universities (n=15) and community colleges (n=2); Program locations range from urban (n=10), suburban (n=6), and rural (n=1). Includes residential (n=7) and non-residential (n=10)

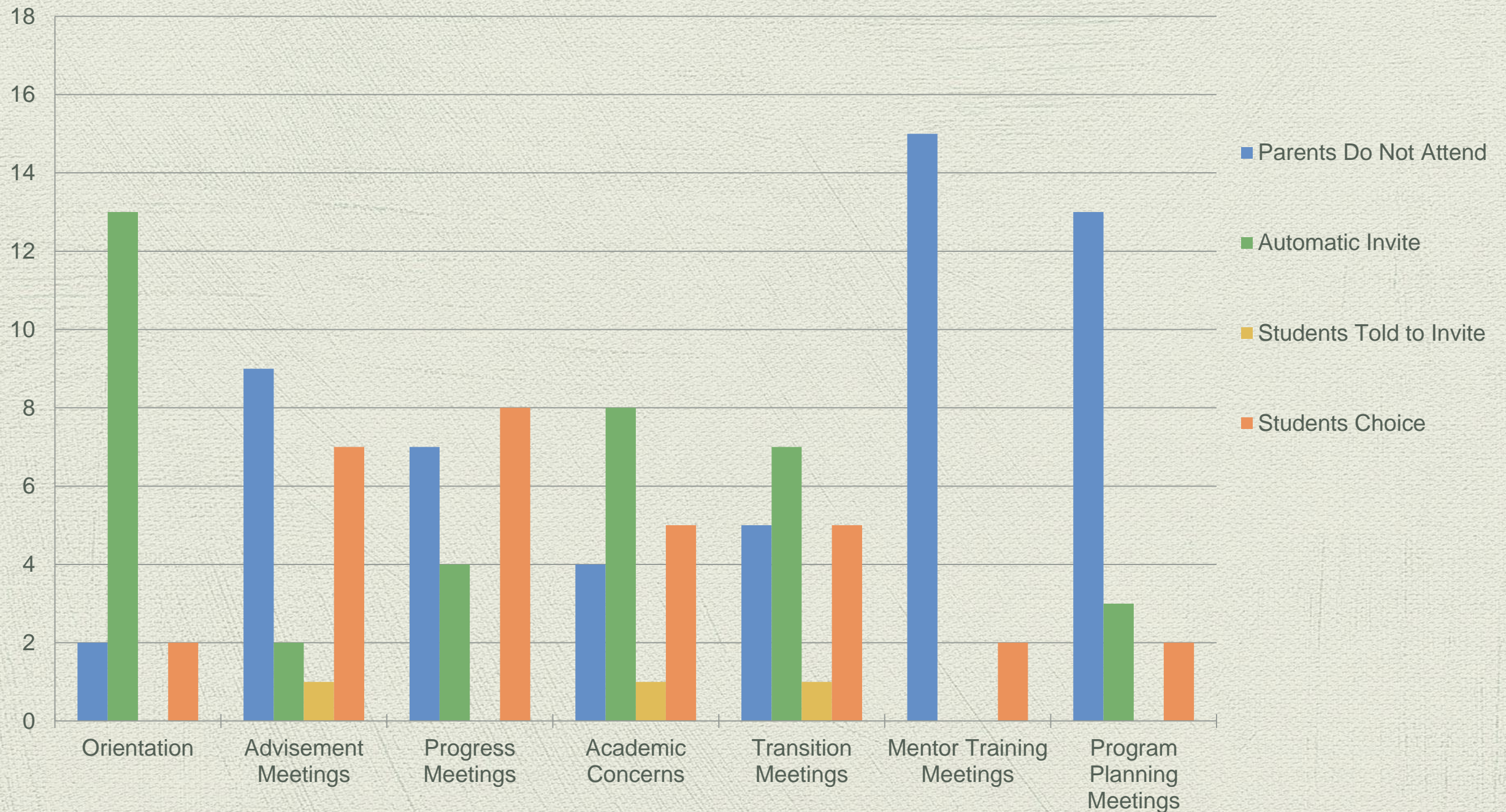


# Communication Directly with Families/Support Systems without Students



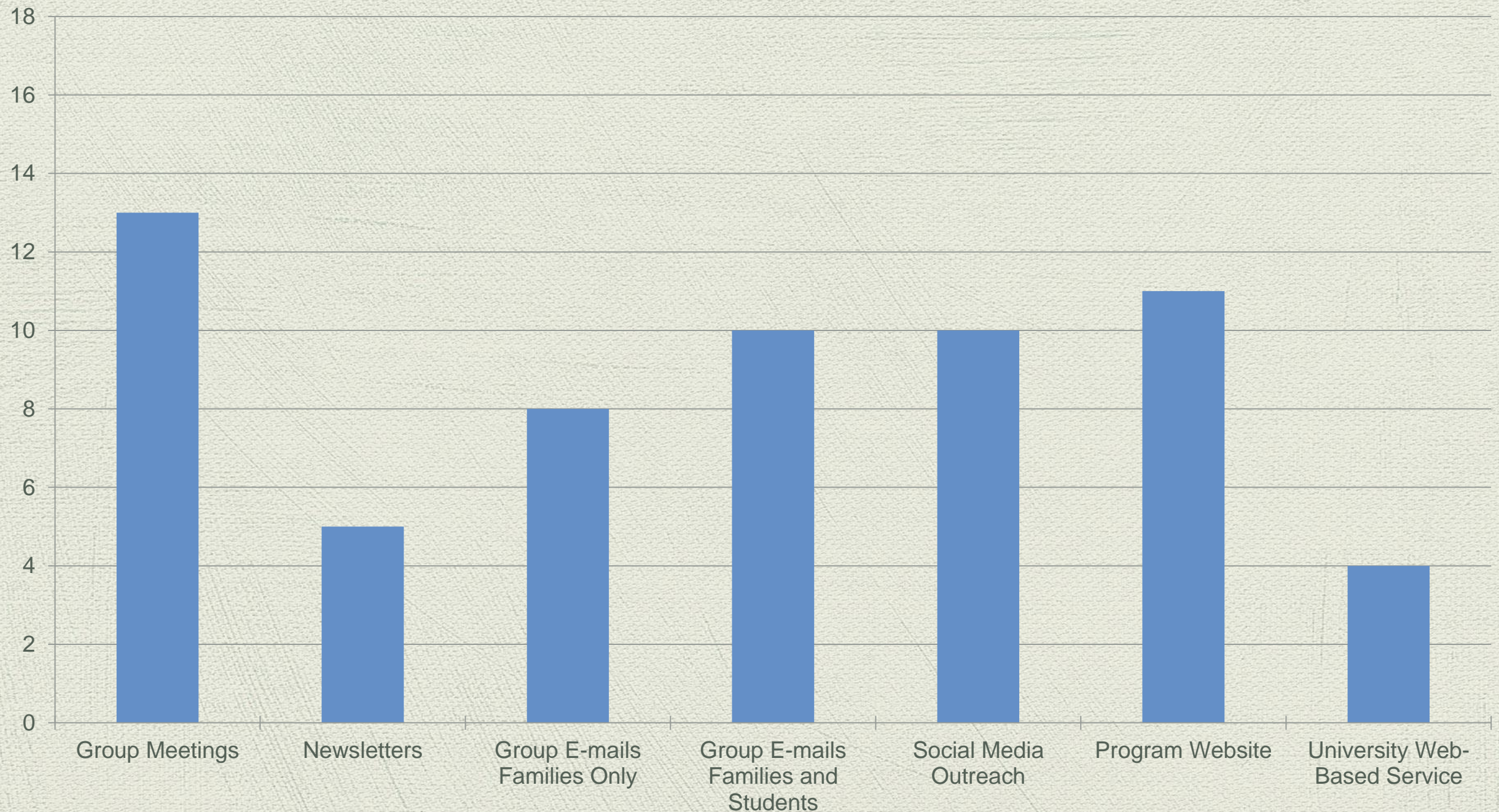


# How are Parents Invited and Engaged



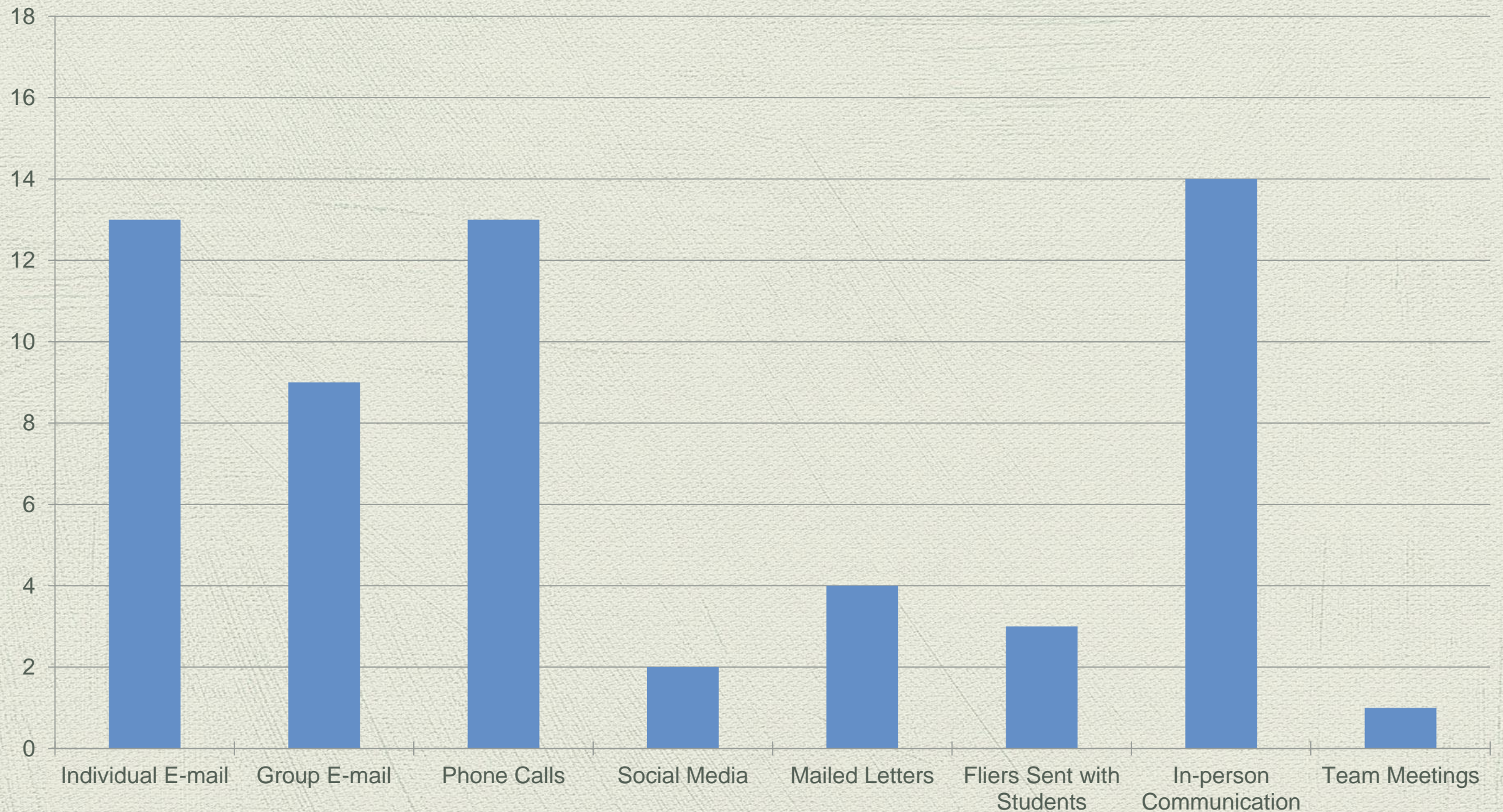


# Methods for Engaging & Supporting Families



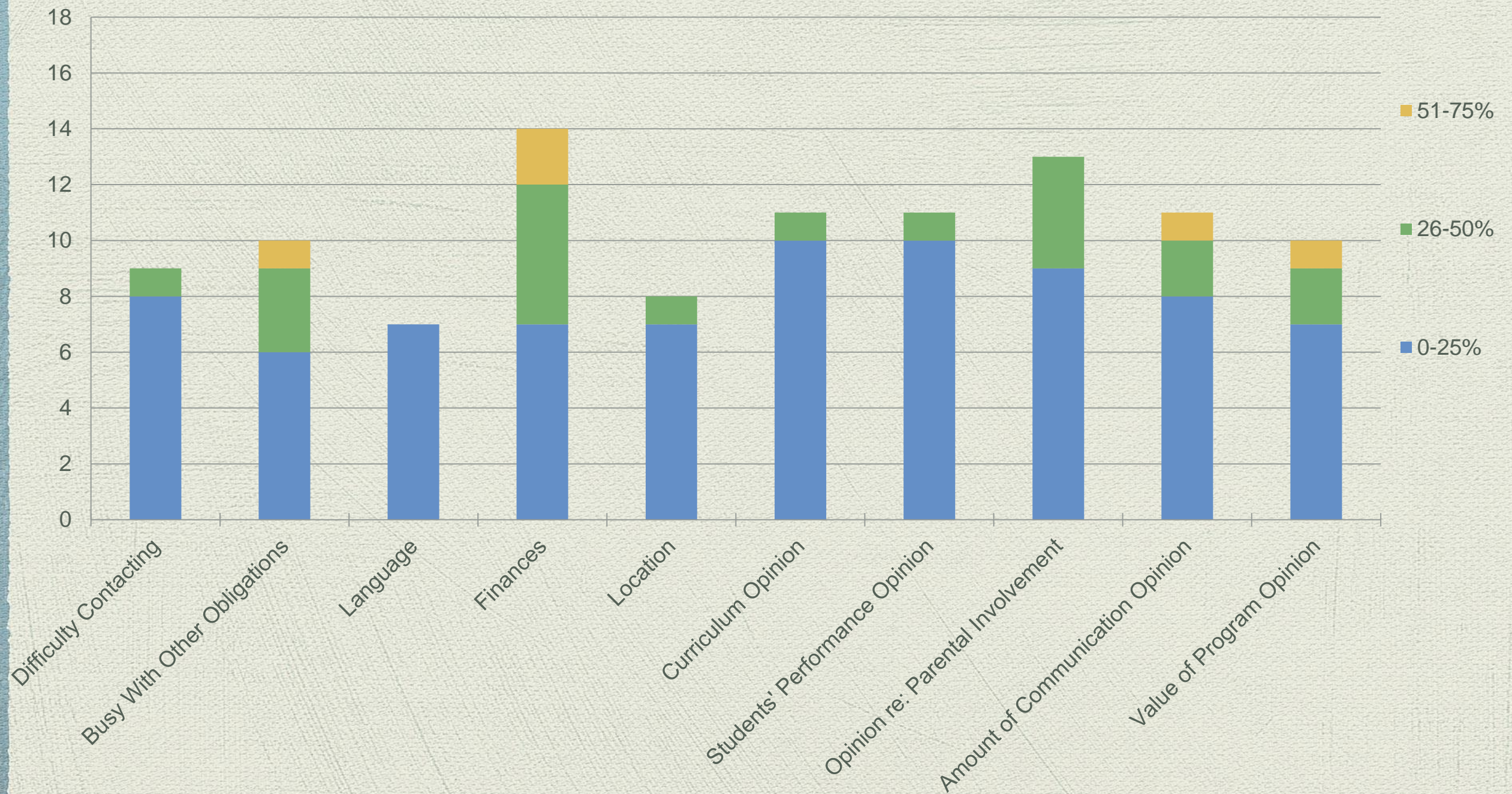


# Effective Strategies for Engaging Families





# Challenges to Parent Engagement





# Strategies for Effectively Engaging Families

- Work to earn their trust – make yourself available, especially initially when anxiety is higher

Find opportunities for them to learn about the program

- Set clear and consistent policies and standards for engagement
  - Communication
  - Participation in meetings regarding student
  - Reiteration of when families will always be notified
- Consideration of a “Memorandum of Understanding” with families



# Strategies for Effectively Engaging Families

Offer access to program information

- ◆ Orientation and open house events
- ◆ General resources (e.g., newsletters)
- ◆ GREAT opportunity to model student engagement and independence
- ◆ Offer supports specifically for families
  - ◆ Separate and/or connected to other university programs for parents (e.g., support/education groups and trainings)
  - ◆ Heads-up notifications on major happenings in program/university





# Including Students in Family Engagement

- Some students may want families more or less involved
- Thinking through and communicating preferences
- Helping students to develop leadership skills through self-led meetings, etc.
- Support in developing communication strategies





# A reciprocal relationship



- Families bring valuable information to the team
- Find ways for their voices to be heard about their student and the overall program
  - Have them share experiences that have worked well in the past
  - Model how their opinions and ideas can/should be considered during person-centered planning process
- Inclusion in program evaluation process
- Sitting on advisory councils
- Create leadership opportunities for facilitating and extending university activities