Academic Support Area: August 2 Focus Groups

The August 2nd, Academic Support area focus group session was part of the visioning process for YSU's Academic Master Plan (AMP). The main goal was to gather insights from various support areas across the campus to identify and prioritize key themes for enhancing academic support and institutional effectiveness.

The insights from this session have since been used to inform the structure and focus areas within the AMP, ensuring alignment between institutional support functions and the strategic goals of student success, academic excellence, and operational sustainability.

Not surprisingly, the themes from this focus session align with many of the disucssions held with the academic departments and the data set that was collected through the faculty surveys distributed in September.

Prioritization of Focus Areas:
Ranked based on the number of mentions in the focus groups.

1. Student Success and Retention
2. Communication and Awareness
3. Advising
4. Student Engagement and Belonging
5. Mental Health Support
6. Technology
7. Operational Effectiveness
8. Research
9. Safety and Well-being

Participants:

- Academic Senate
- Community Engagement
- Maag Library
- General Education
- Student Success
- Student Experience
- Belonging, Empowerment, Engagement
- Student Counseling Services
- Dean of Students
- Teaching & Learning
- IT
- Research Services

"Better communication between departments could streamline our efforts and prevent overlaps."

"Streamlining administrative processes would allow us to focus more on student-facing initiatives."

"We need more campus-wide events and activities that build community and engagement."

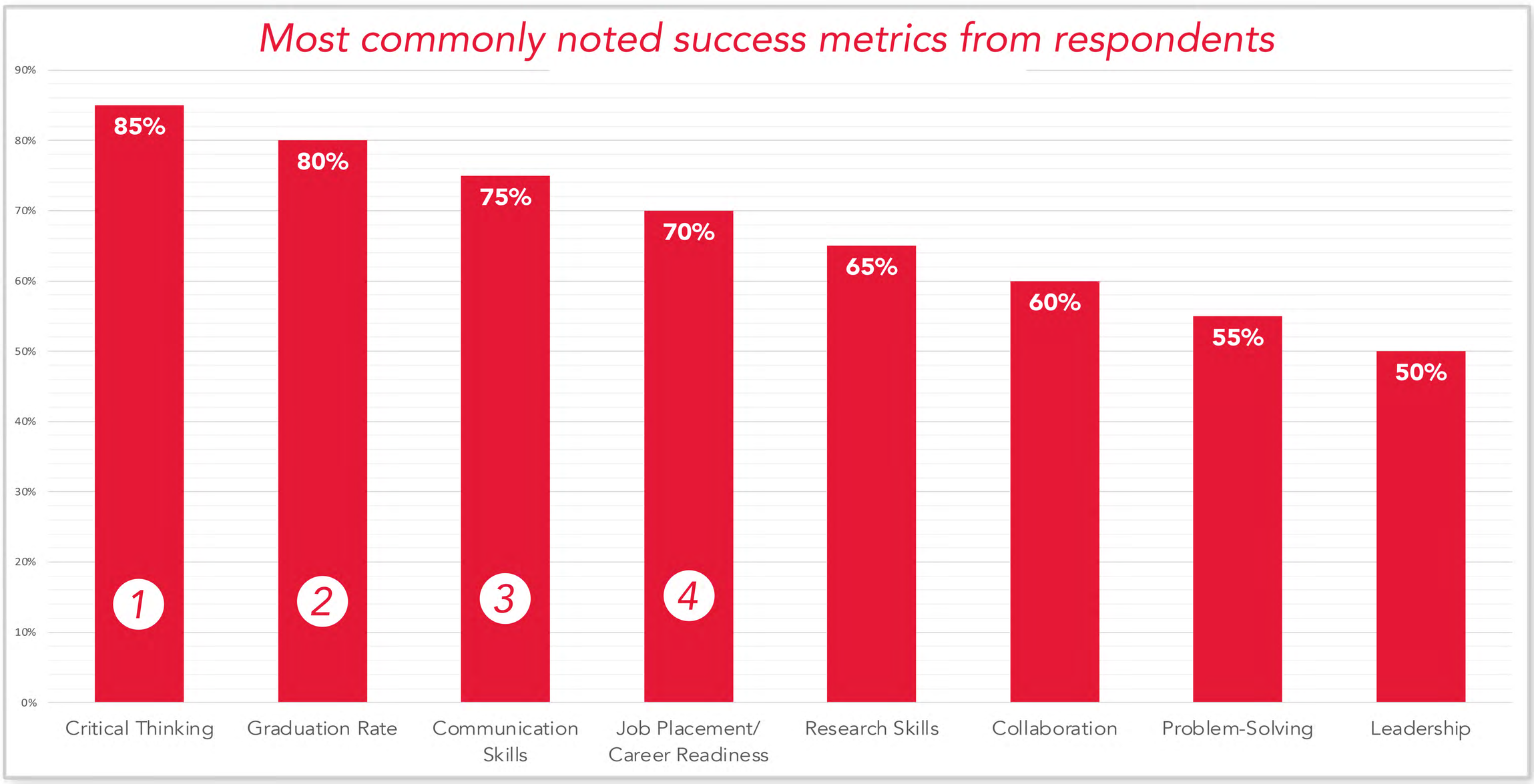
"It's not just about academic success; students need support systems for their well-being."

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
Office of Academic Affairs

Give Feedback

Pre-Department Meetings: Survey Results

The Office of Academic Affairs visited all 18 academic departments across campus to hear what they think should be included in the Academic Master Plan. Prior to those meetings, a survey was distributed to prioritize student success metrics that are considered to be success indicators for their programs.



1

"Critical thinking is a fundamental skill. We emphasize it throughout our curriculum because it's essential for both academic success and lifelong learning."

2

"We measure program success by our graduation rate because it reflects students' perseverance and ability to complete the program successfully."

3

"We find that students who can articulate their thoughts, engage in discussions, and present their work confidently are the ones who stand out."

4

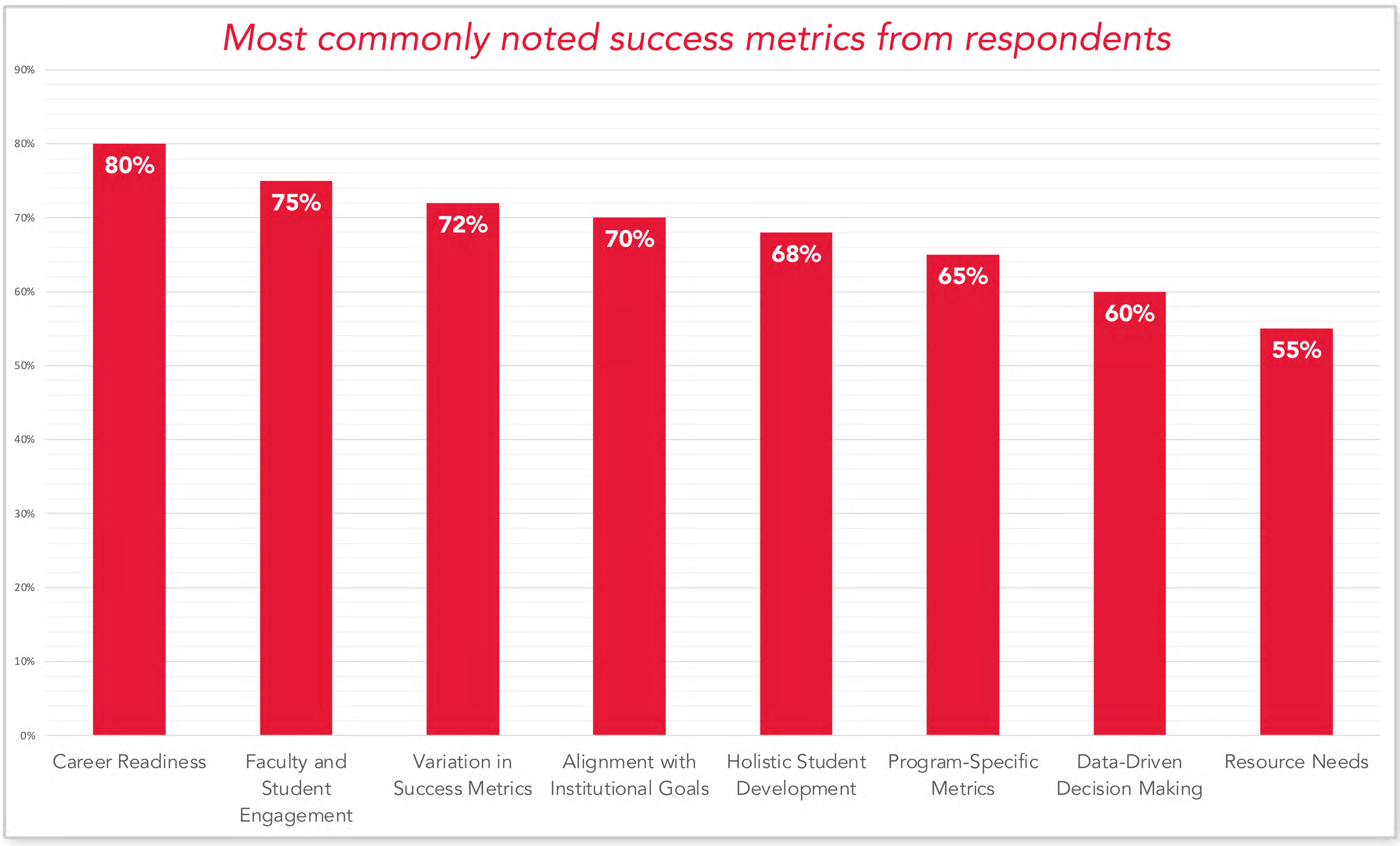
"Career readiness is not just about technical knowledge; it's about helping students become adaptable and employable in a fast-changing job market."

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
Office *of* Academic Affairs

Give Feedback

Assessing Program Success Indicators & Metrics

In our first of four surveys distributed to faculty on campus gathered faculty insights on key success measures for academic programs. Its purpose was to collect data on which metrics best reflect program effectiveness and student achievement. Survey 1 results underscored career readiness and faculty-student engagement as the most valued metrics for program success. Faculty emphasized that preparing students for career pathways and fostering meaningful mentorship are critical indicators of program effectiveness.



"Our program's primary goal is to ensure students graduate with practical skills and industry knowledge, ready to enter their chosen careers immediately."

"The level of student success we see is directly linked to the quality of faculty advising and mentorship."

"Each discipline has its own unique way of defining success. For us, research output and community impact are the most important metrics."

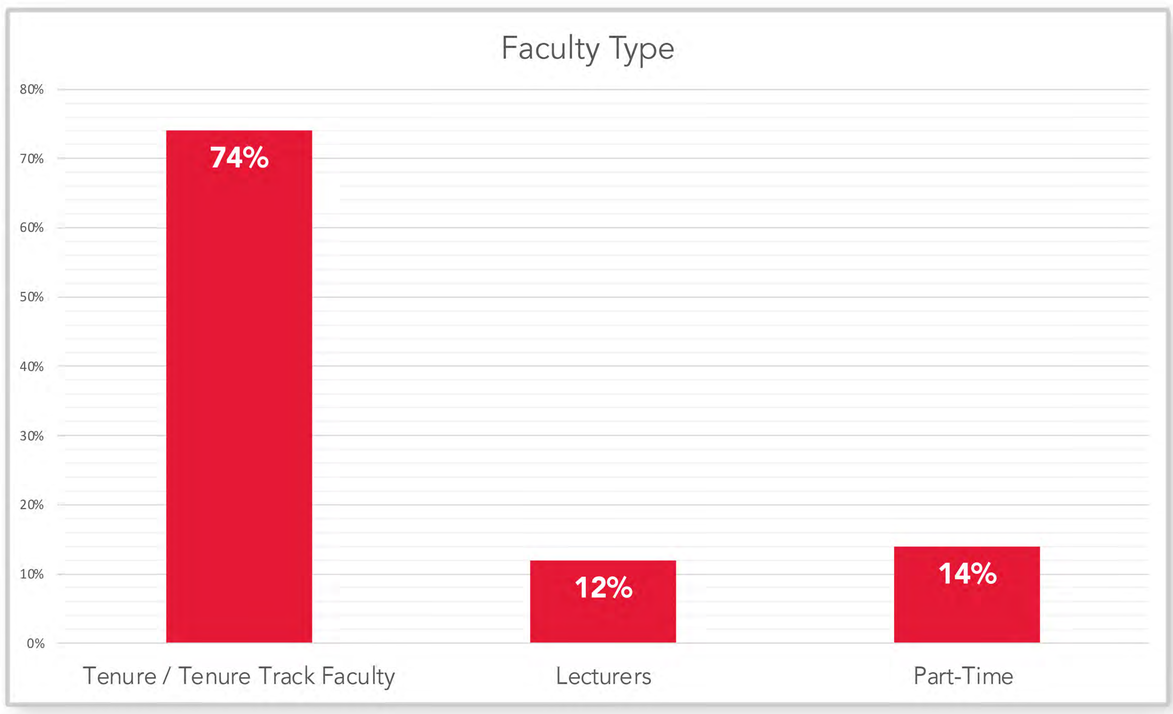
"It's not just about academics. We focus on developing leadership and communication skills that will serve students in their careers."

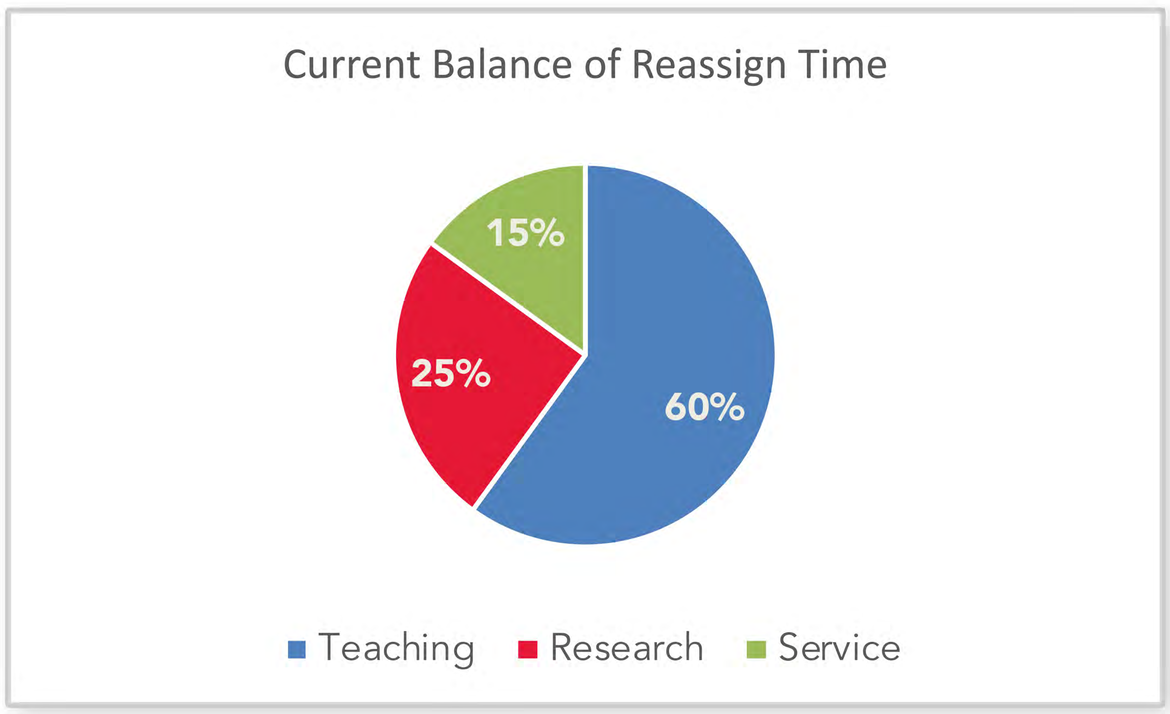
YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
Office of Academic Affairs

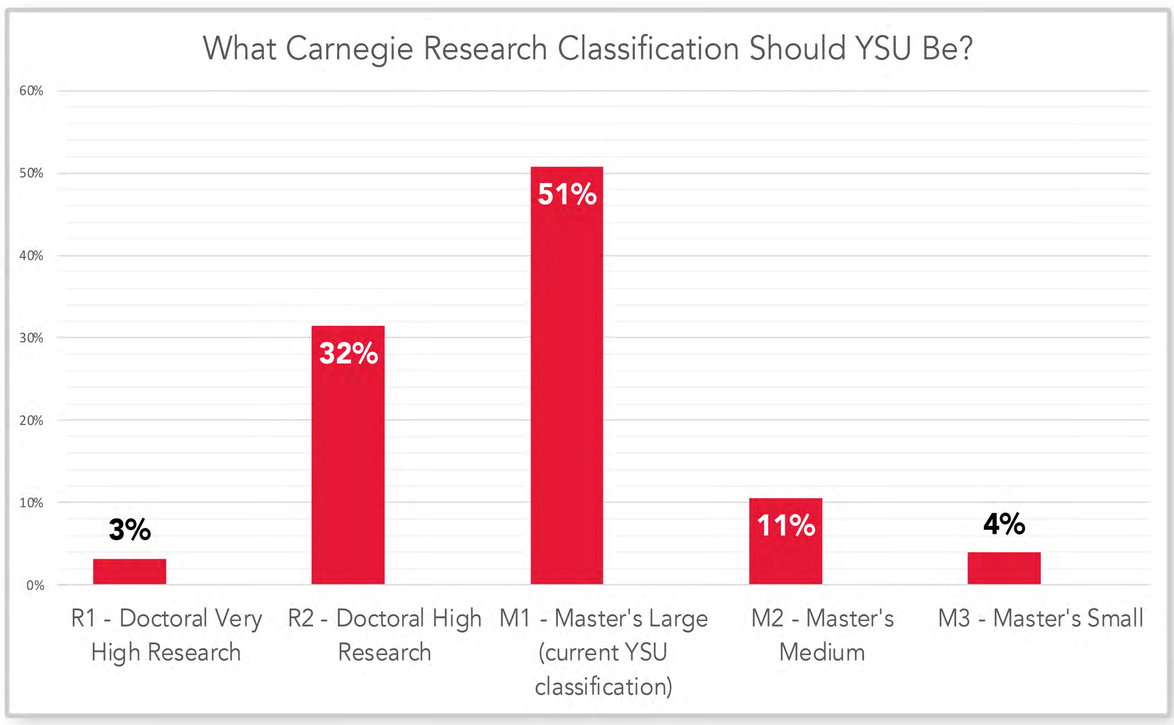
Give Feedback

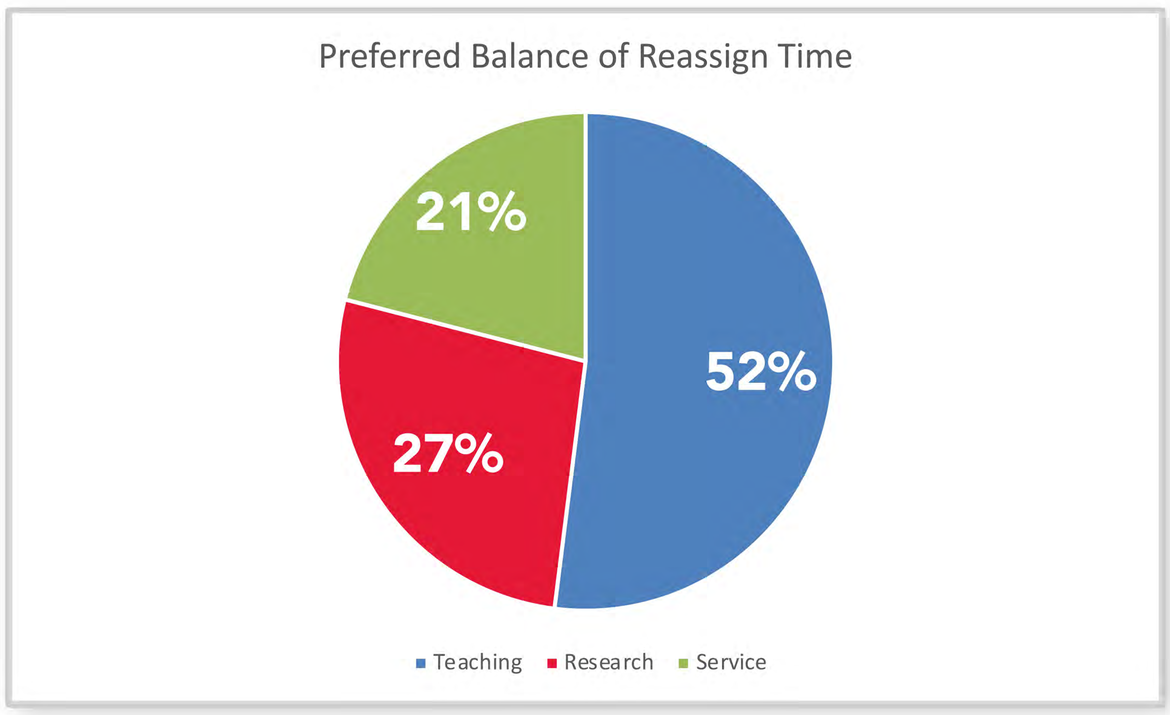
Teaching, Research, and Service

Survey 2 focused on the topic of reassigned time for faculty, specifically exploring how it impacts their balance between research and teaching responsibilities. Faculty responses reflected a strong appreciation for reassigned time, noting that it enables them to dedicate focused periods to research projects, pursue scholarly work, and contribute to the university's research profile. However, many faculty expressed concerns about the need for a clearer return on investment (ROI) in terms of measurable outcomes from reassigned time. Some suggested setting structured expectations or productivity metrics tied to reassigned time to ensure accountability while preserving the flexibility needed for high-quality research.









"Reassigned time is essential for writing grant proposals and securing funding. Without it, balancing research and teaching is a significant challenge."

"To stay current in my field, I need uninterrupted time for research and publications, which reassigned time makes possible."

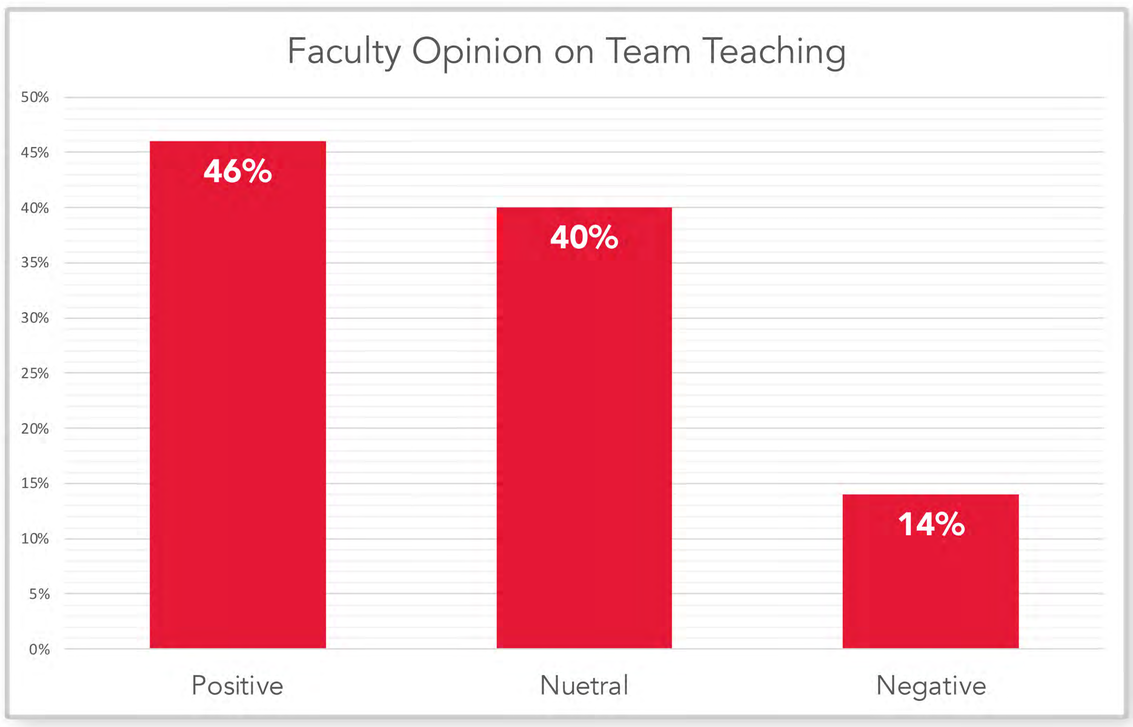
"It's not just about academics. We focus on developing leadership and communication skills that will serve students in their careers."

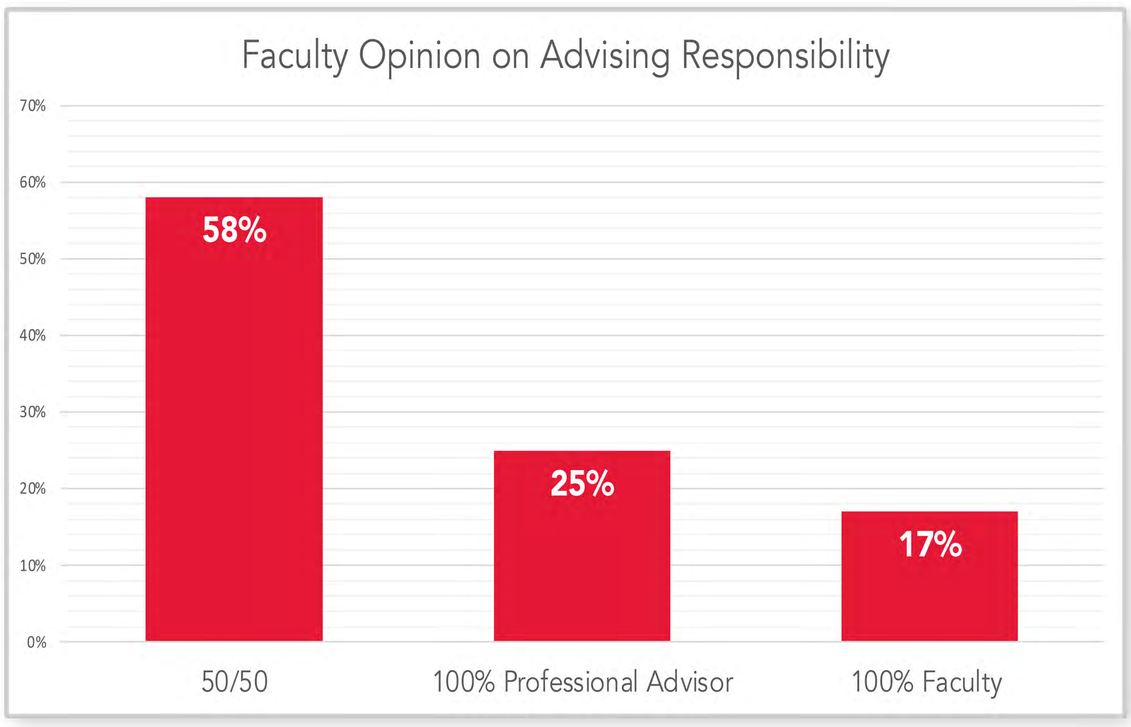
YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
Office *of* Academic Affairs

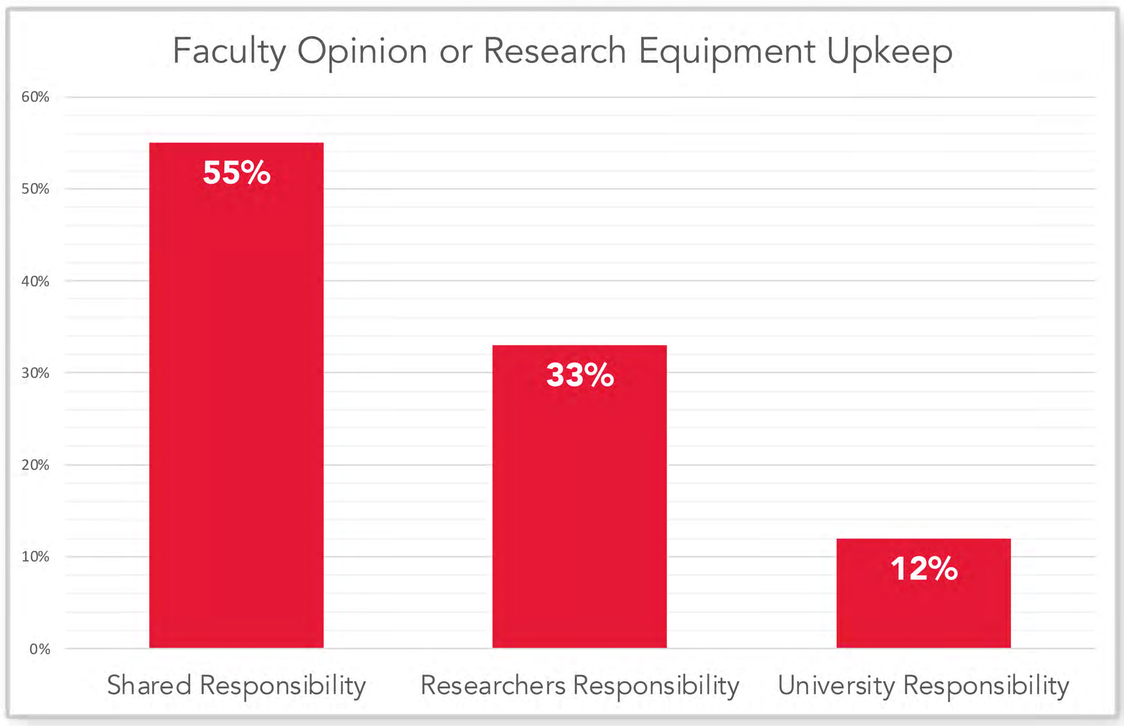
Give Feedback

Enhancing Collaboration, Workload, and Innovation

Survey 3, which centered on enhancing collaboration, managing workload, and fostering innovation, revealed a strong faculty preference for shared responsibilities and collaborative efforts across departments. Faculty expressed that a collective approach is essential for optimizing both teaching and support roles, especially in areas like team teaching, advising, and equipment upkeep. Faculty clearly expressed that collaboration, rather than isolated effort, leads to a more supportive environment, reduces individual burdens, and encourages innovative practices. This input suggests that moving forward, policies focusing on shared duties and structured team roles would align well with faculty preferences for workload management and innovation support.







"Effective advising is crucial for student success. It's not just about course selection; it's about guiding students through their academic and career paths."

"Team teaching allows us to bring multiple perspectives into the classroom, enriching the learning experience for students and enabling faculty collaboration."

"Outdated equipment can hinder student learning and prevent us from delivering an up-to-date education. Regular maintenance is essential to stay competitive."

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
Office of Academic Affairs

Give Feedback