



michigan community college association

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

# Exploring the Impact of Career Counseling on Student Success

September 26, 2024

MCCA Student Success Summit

# Student Success Project Team & Advisor

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# Problem Statement

Many students enter community college with unclear career and academic plans. Research demonstrates that effective career and academic guidance has a positive impact on degree completion, transfer, and labor market outcomes. However, emerging research also shows that many colleges lack a cohesive approach to career counseling services. Our project focuses on the question: How can community colleges implement an effective career counseling model to promote student success?



# Agenda of Presentation

- Importance of career counseling to student success
- Current state of career counseling
  - Service Models
  - Student Use
- Barriers to developing effective career counseling
- Our recommendations for a career counseling model



# COMMUNITY COLLEGE 3.0

- Clear picture of job market
  - Deter students from going into a dying industry
  - Regional impact
    - Is there a regional demand? If not, is student willing to relocate?
    - Does job pay enough for cost of living in the area?
- Are we providing the right training developing the right skillset for students to be successful in their career?
- Are we providing the student with industry connections?

COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE

**3.0**

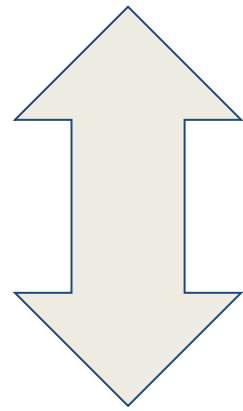
**Post-College  
Success**

**Completion**

**Access**

# Importance of Career Counseling to Student Success

**Increase in retention and graduation rates** (Valencia- completion rate has increased by 44% over the last four years; Clayton et al., 2019)

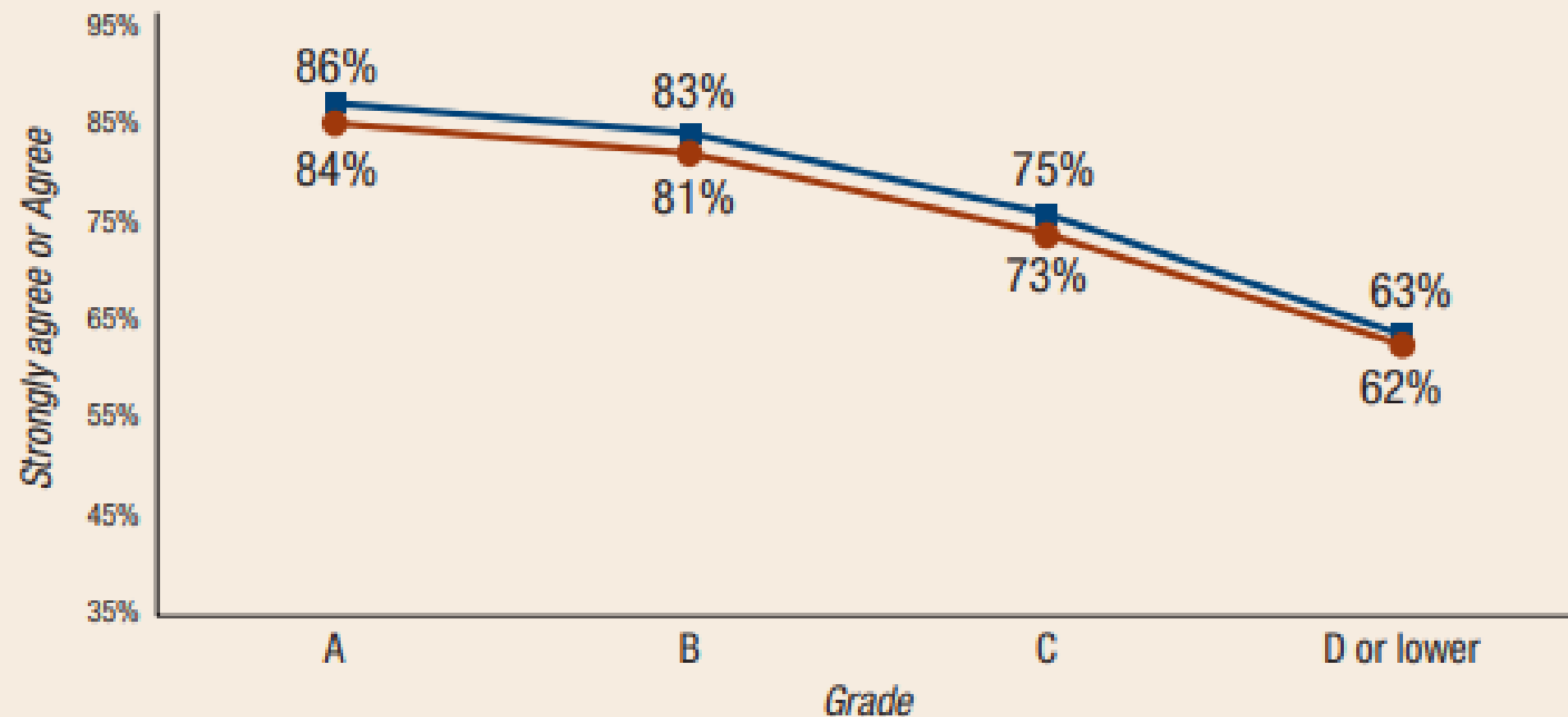


**Increase student motivation to learn by assisting students in developing a vocational identity** (Clayton, 2019), an “end-goal” to their studies (Kitchen, 2021; Mann Levesque, 2018), and **career self-efficacy** (Kitchen, 2021)





## Relevance of Academic Experience



■ This college is preparing me for what I plan to do in life. (N=77,006)

● I understand how my academic work is preparing me for the career field in which I am interested. (N=76,476)

Source: 2018 CCSSE data



Source: Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2019). A mind at work: Maximizing the relationship between mindset and student success. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, Program in Higher Education Leadership.



# Importance of Career Counseling to Student Success

Other important positive impacts:

- Faster completion (Aspen Foundation, 2011)
- Realistic expectations on academic and financial commitment (Aspen Foundation, 2011; Clayton et al., 2019)
  - *Allows students to weigh their options*
  - *Provides financial transparency*
  - *Creates a transfer plan if applicable*
- Understanding job demand and earning potential (Aspen Foundation, 2011)
  - *Community Impact*
  - *Opportunity to form partnerships with local businesses*
  - *Motivation for completion*

# Importance of Career Counseling to Student Success

## The College

- Increased completion and retention rates
- College alignment to labor market
- Potential for innovative curriculum development

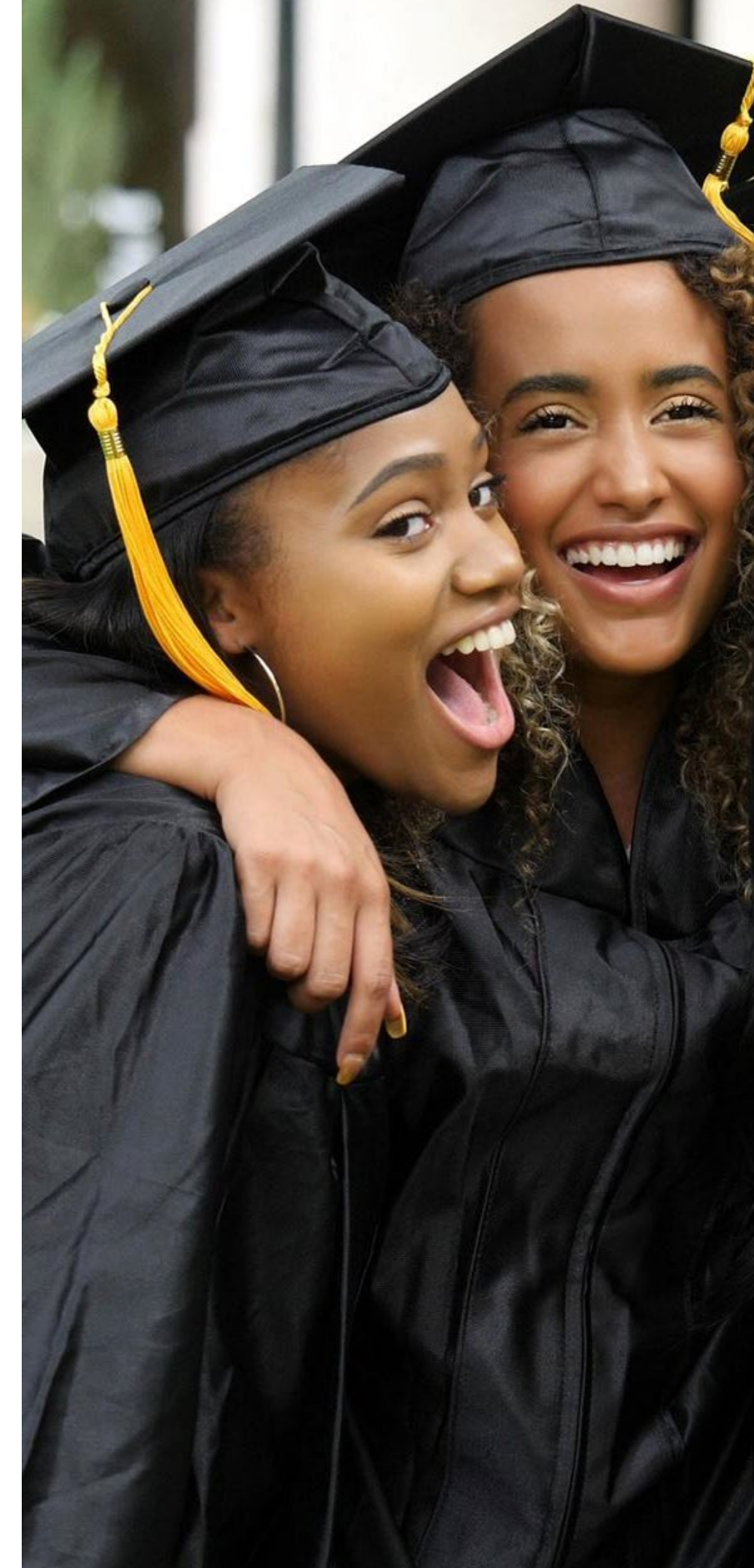
## The Community

- Employment partnerships
- Employees with the necessary skills to aid the community
- Talent pipeline

# Current state of career counseling: Service models

Despite its potential to improve student success, research illustrates limitations to current career counseling service models (The Career Leadership Collective, 2021; Chronicles of Higher Education Forum, Career Services at the Center, 2024):

- Patchwork of career services, not systematically integrated across campuses
- Uneven access or service quality
- Stand-alone services, “Center-based”
- Resume workshop-focused



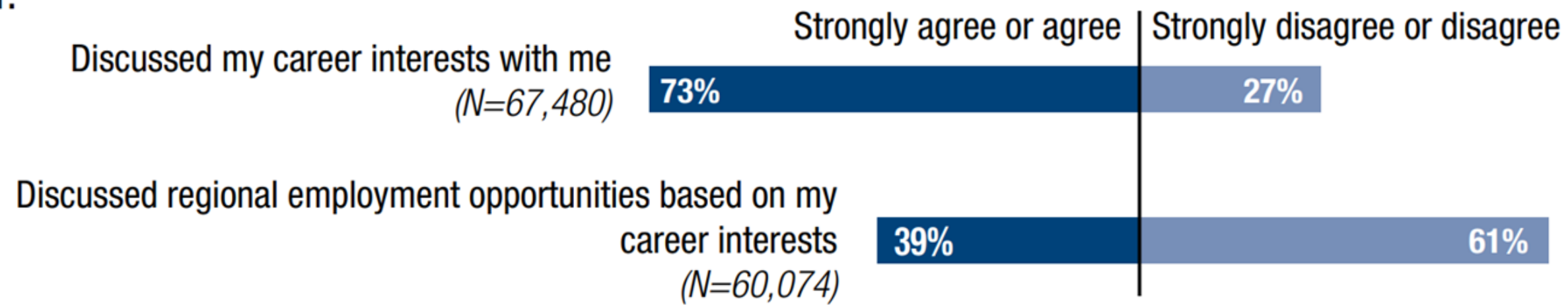
# Current state of career counseling: Student Use

Student use of career services (The Career Leadership Collective, 2021; Chronicles of Higher Education Forum, Career Services at the Center, 2024):

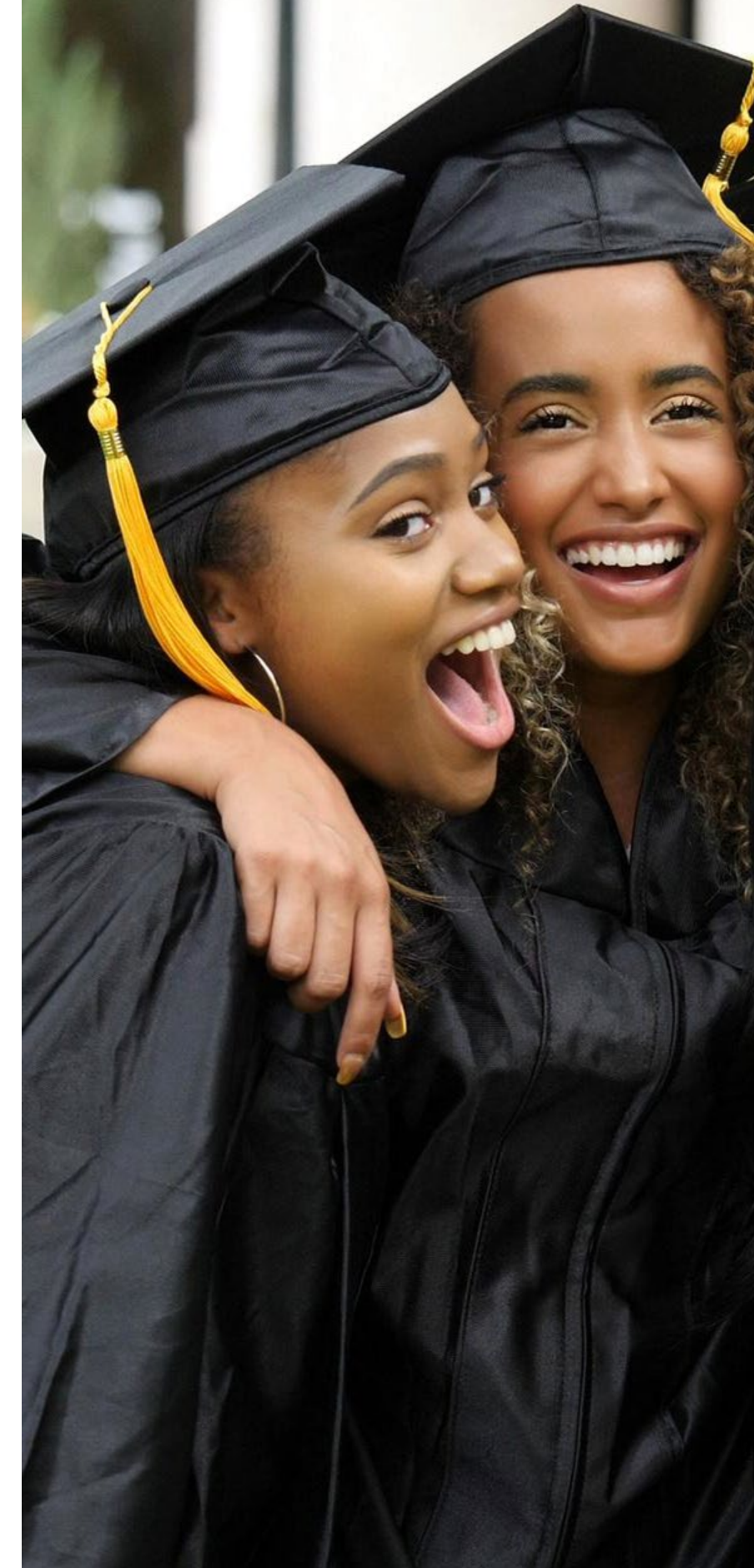
- Uneven: underserved students less likely to use official services
- Receive career advice from a variety of sources, often outside of official career centers or career education programs
  - Advisors
  - Counselors
  - Faculty (first-year courses)
  - Other students

# Current state of career counseling: Student Use

## An advisor:



Source: 2017 CCSSE returning student data



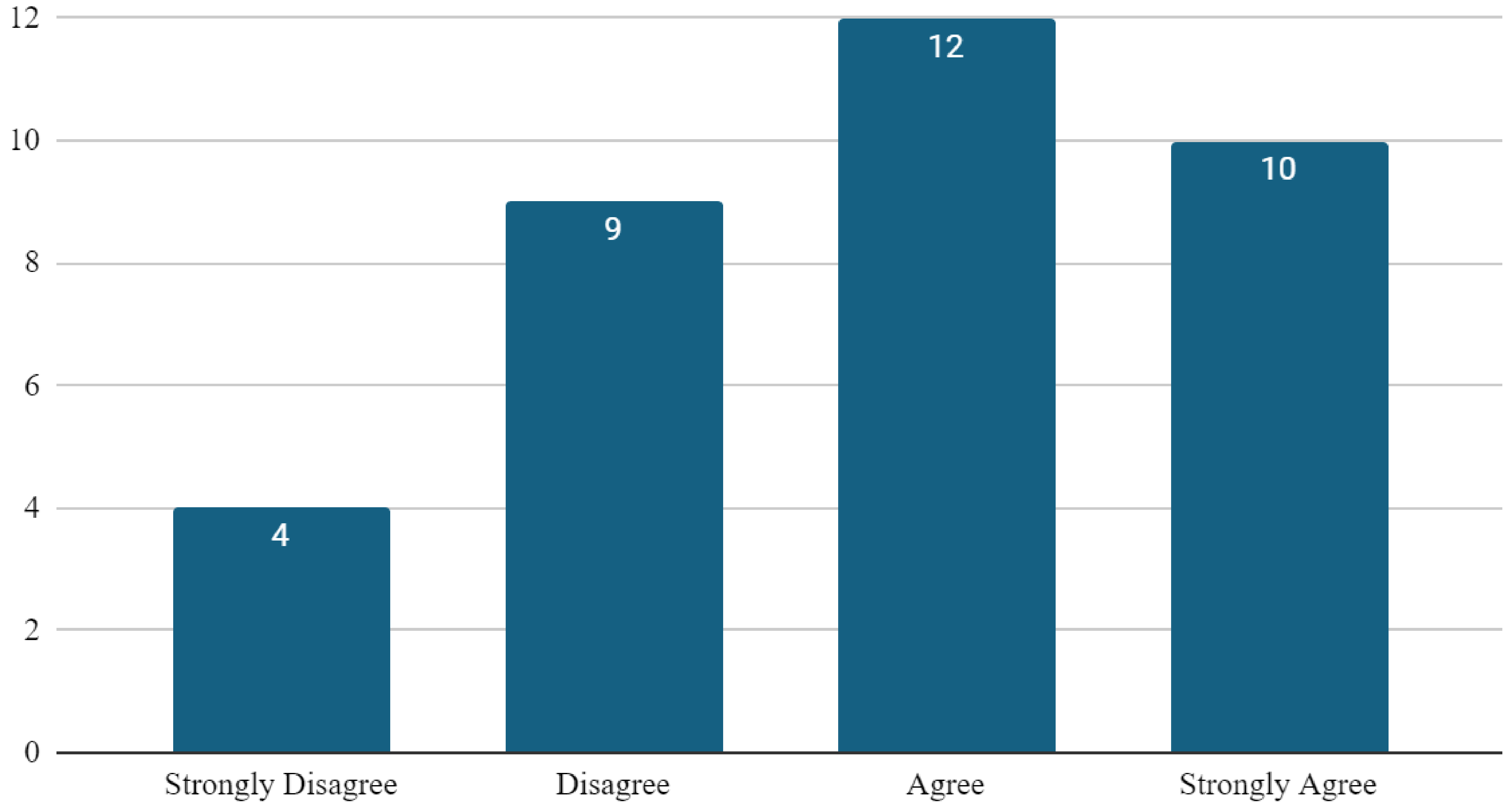
Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2018). Show me the way: The power of advising in community colleges. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy, Program in Higher Education Leadership  
[https://www.ccsse.org/nr2018/show\\_me\\_the\\_way.pdf](https://www.ccsse.org/nr2018/show_me_the_way.pdf)

# Our Survey

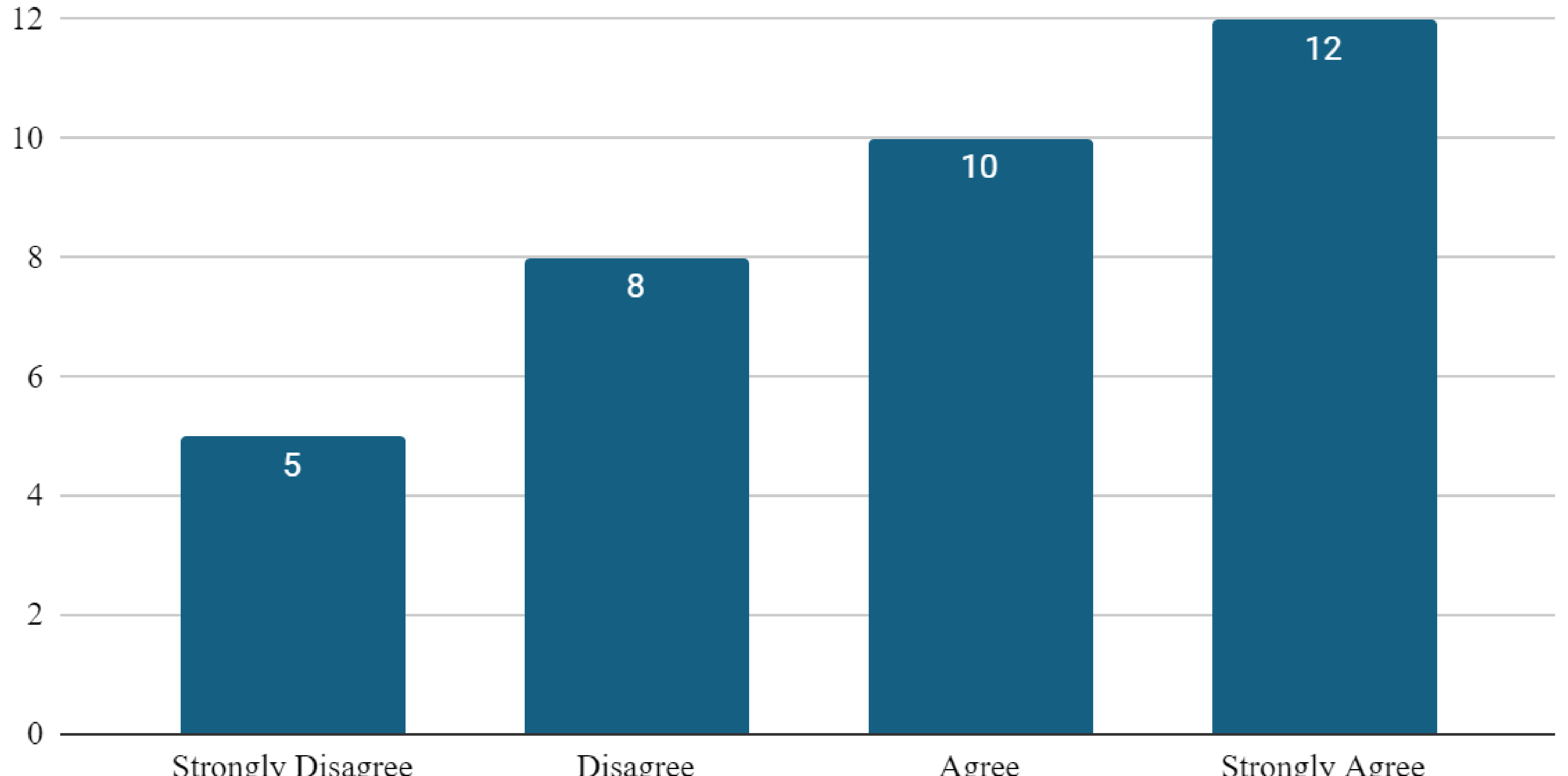
- 14 Questions
- Goal: Gain a general understanding of community college students and career guidance
- Survey distributed at West Shore Community College and Gogebic Community College
- n=51, n=35 (with dual enrolled students removed)



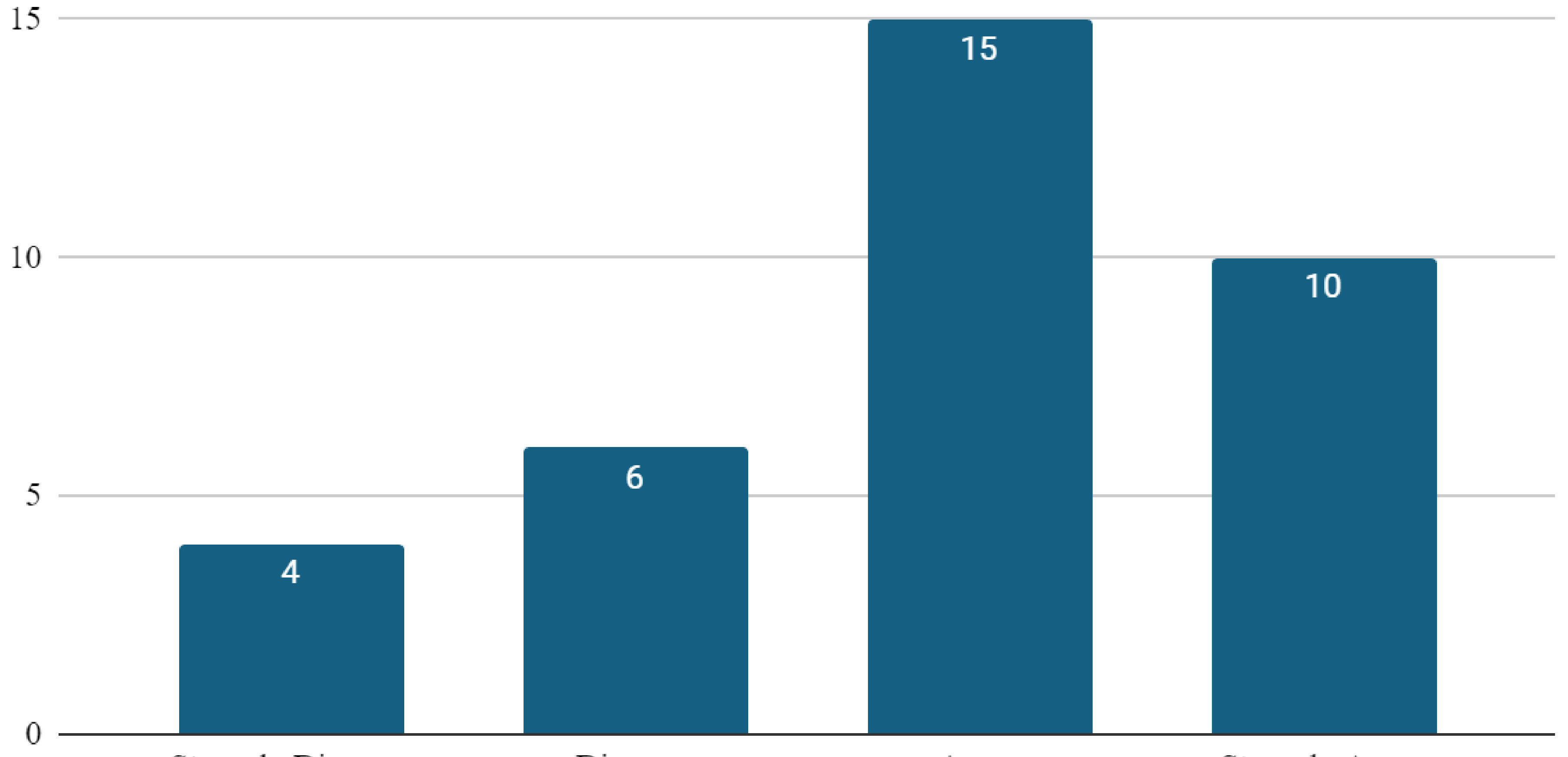
# I know the future earning potential of my career.



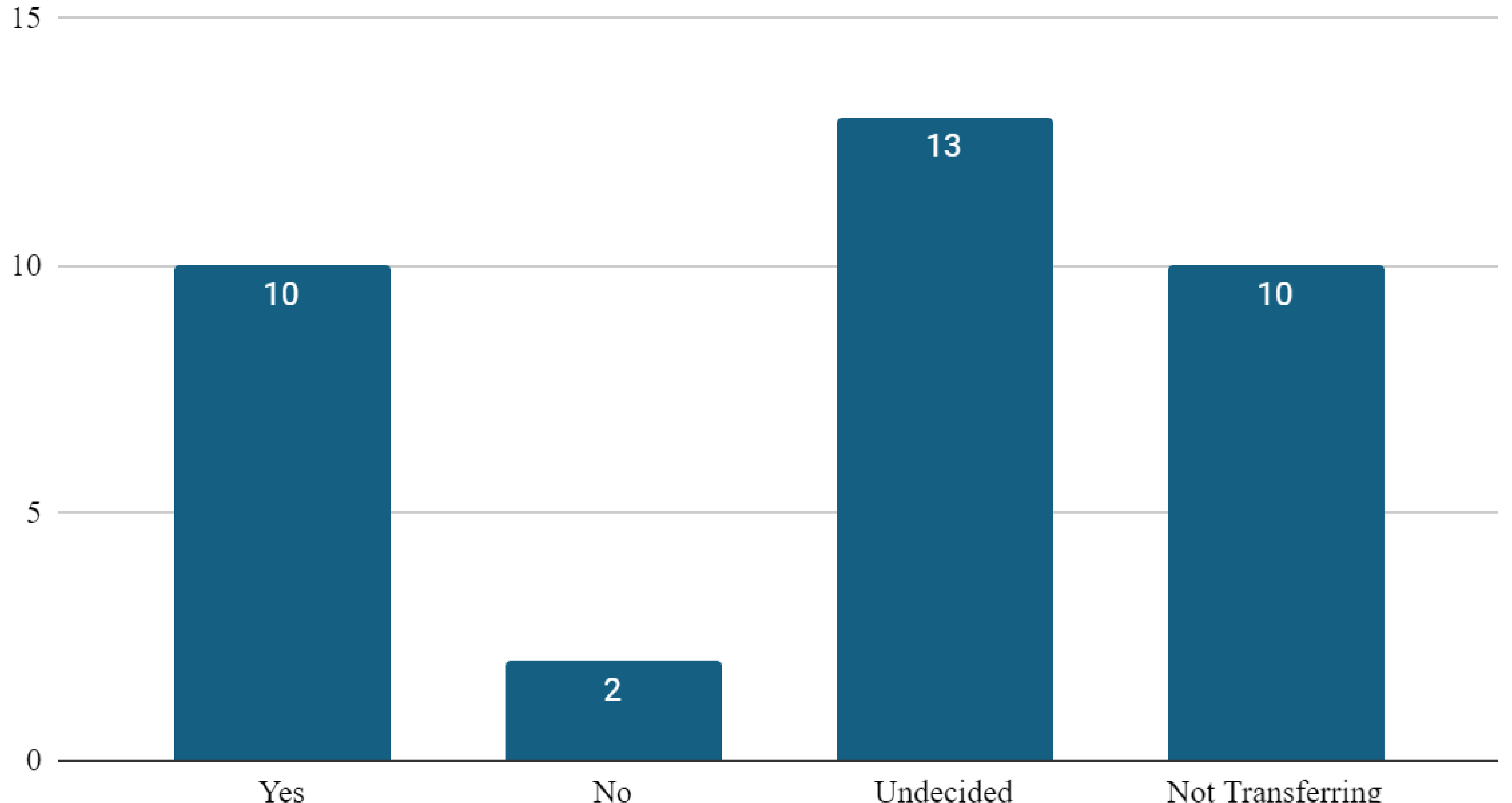
I am aware of the labor market outlook (i.e., whether there is demand for my intended job) for my chosen career.



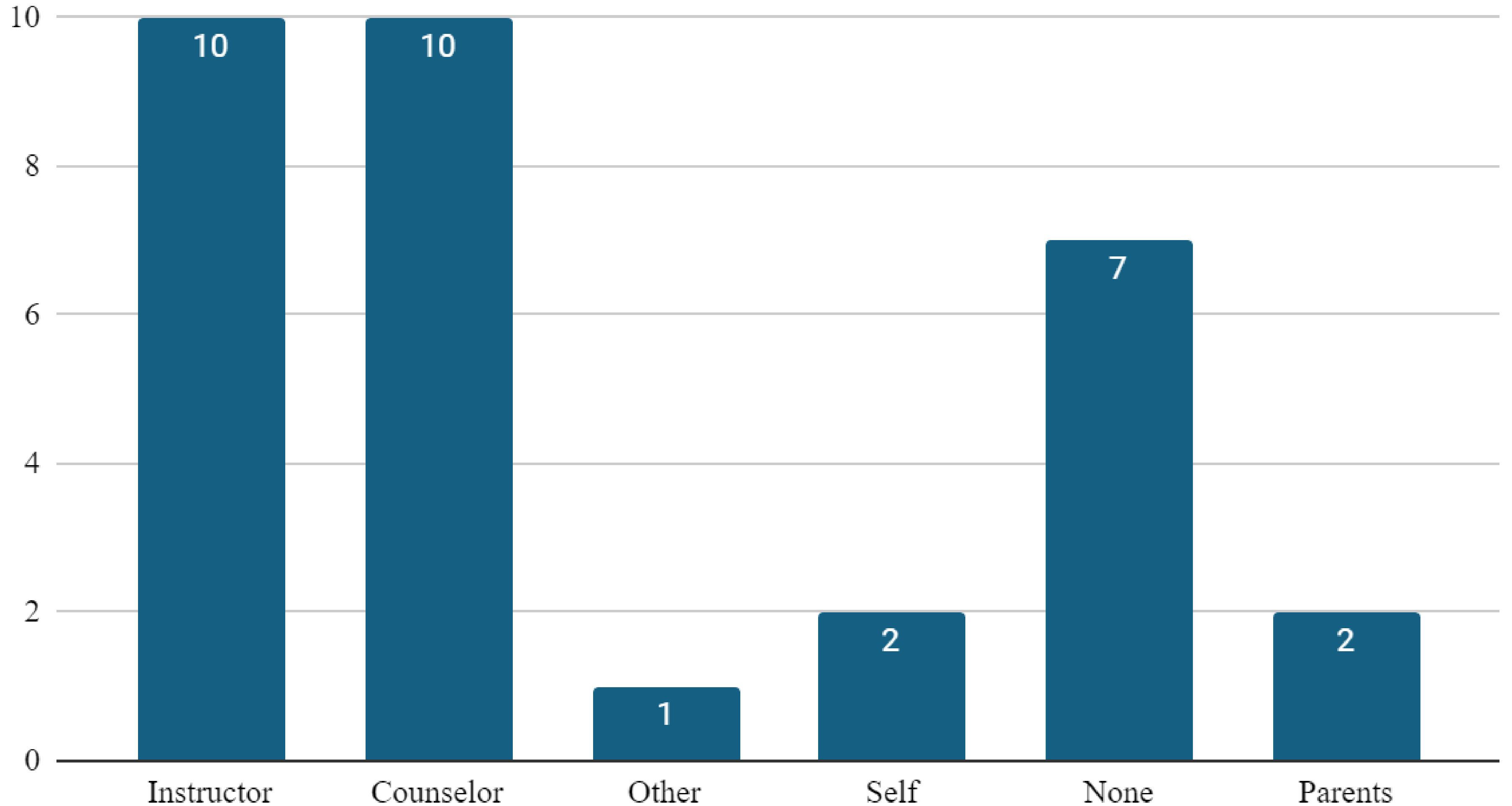
I have talked to someone at the college (i.e., a professor, advisor) about my career goals.



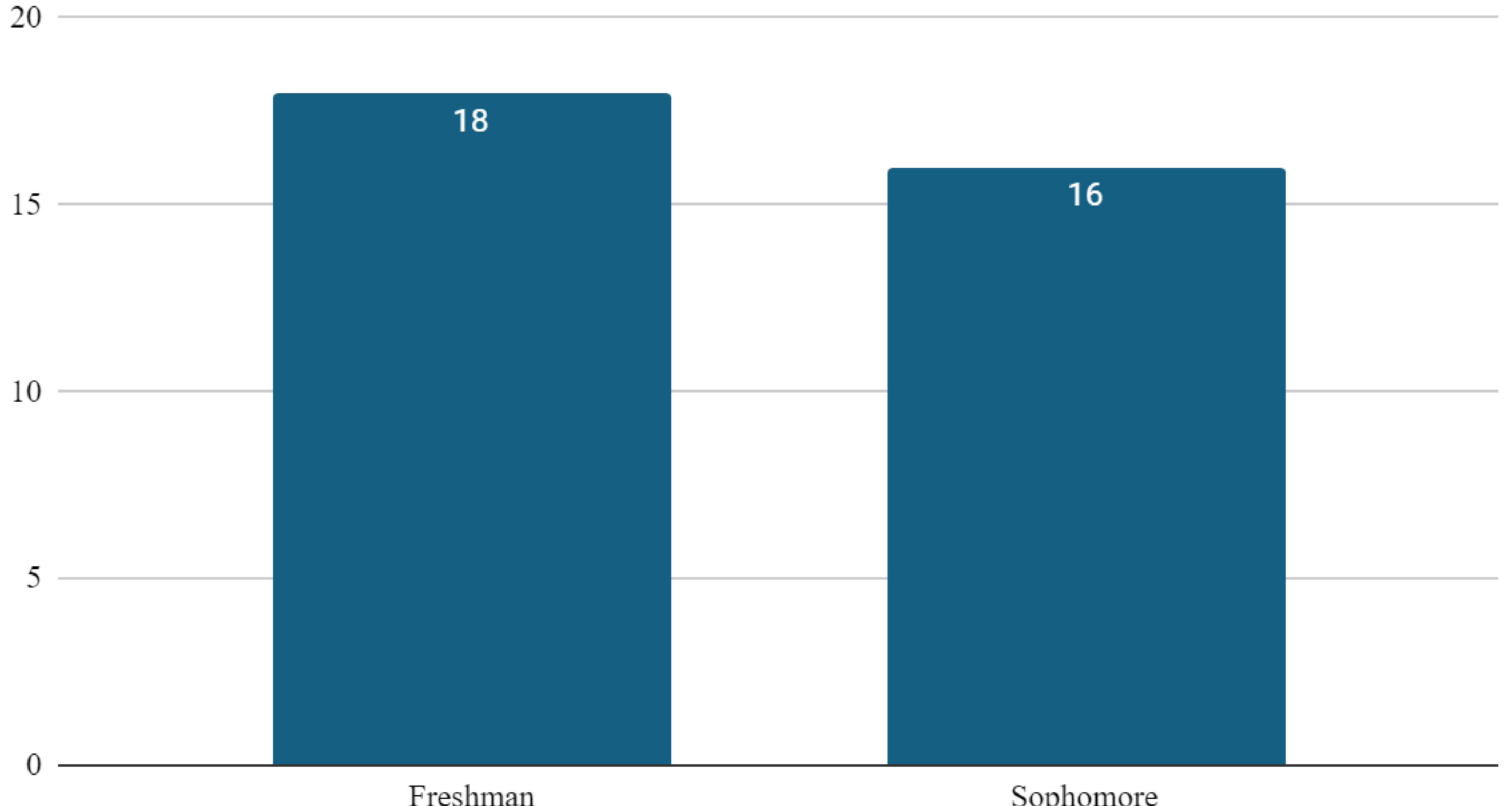
I know where I want to transfer to finish my degree.



# Who has helped guide you in defining your career goals?



# Year of Study



# Barriers to developing effective career counseling

- Resources
  - Financial: Hard sell to get stakeholder to agree to allocate funds
  - Staffing: Limited staff, training, turnover
  - Space: Where would center, if that was decided, be housed?
- Prioritizing in light of other important initiatives
  - Enrollment
  - Retention
  - Completion
- Limited research
- Resistance to change

# Recommendation 1: Team and Strategic Plan

- Form a cross-functional working group of faculty and staff that would:
  - assess the current inequities in success related to career engagement
  - create a strategic plan to integrate career advising across campus to eliminate equity gaps
- Consider the following stakeholders in team formation:
  - Student Services
  - Deans or Vice-Presidents
  - Faculty Members
  - Students



## Recommendation 2: Build Enthusiasm for an Ecosystem Approach

- Move away from career services centers and toward an **Ecosystem Approach** (Chronicles of Higher Education Forum, Career Services at the Center, 2024).
- An Ecosystem Approach involves the integration of career services through:
  - Advising
  - Co-curricular Activities
  - Courses, especially 1st year general education/survey courses
  - Orientation
  - Program advisors

# Recommendation 3: Consider the three stages of career identity development

When developing your ecosystem approach to career counseling, strategically incorporate initiatives addressing the three stages of student career development (The Career Leadership Collective, 2021).

## Stage 1: Explore and Learn

- High school-CC collaboration around career exploration
- Orientation activities focused on career exploration
- Advising with career guidance activities
- Career exploration in first year courses
- First year seminars

## Stage 2: Plan and Experience

- Program-specific Advisors
- Service Learning
- Job shadowing
- Student career projects
- Mentorship programs

## Stage 3: Launch and Experience

- Internships
- Networking opportunities
- Partnerships with local universities
- Community partnerships for local employment pathways and curriculum development

# Questions?

Thank you for listening to our presentation!



# References

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