Developing Strategic Planning Goals to Address Gaps and Barriers to Student Success

Conference on Student Success
10 November 2022

Portrait of a College, Fall Semester, 2016 OR The Good…

- Small, private, faith-based, "liberal arts," gearing up for SACS-COC in 2019

- Mission to serve the region and serve the church

- Caring, good-hearted, hard-working, faculty and staff

- Associate and Baccalaureate degrees, with fledgling MBA

- Nursing program, the only BSN in the area

- Essentially open admissions, wide range of ACT (12 to 30), mean of 20.1, with the mission of raising standards in the region—economic, educational-- and offering access to opportunities regionally

The Bad,

- Bi-modal student population
- high % athletes, JV and Varsity for the purpose of recruiting, so many just to play a sport
- No "trained" Student Life or Academic Support personnel to serve the student population
- Labor intensive case management, not supportive of student progress, fragmented across various departments and offices
- No research-based acknowledgment or interventions related to first gen (c. 54%), Pell-eligible (c.54%), rural and "distressed" (12 of the 13 service area counties) populations (e.g., grade inflation, high school background, "academic language proficiency")
- Faculty load was 15 hours and 15 hours, no opportunity or money for scholarship

The Ugly!

- No early intervention technology; overall, antiquated technology infrastructure (62% first year students and 60% faculty dissatisfied)
- No technology support for students
- Processes to create data for data-driven decision making, especially for at-risk students, all labor intensive (done by hand), uncoordinated, not tracked nor timely
- Lack of data and thus lack of ANALYSIS of data resulted in a lack of growth in number and types of majors that students, parents, STATE was looking for
- Institution did not have a "culture of assessment" and had not had for at least 15 years
- Personnel across the campus were tired, with a "deficit" mentality

The Results?

- Low retention rates: low to mid 50s
- Low graduation rates: low to mid 30s
- Issues in NCLEX pass rates
- No emphasis on HIPs, student-faculty research
- Concerns about 2019 SACS-COC visit
- Failure to attract students to new majors
- Frustration across the community

How Did We Turn It Around?

How Did We Turn It Around? OR "You can't just cry when you peel that onion!"

- Bottom Line: THINK strategically and let success build upon success

- First, Use SACS' deadlines and focus on assessment as a friend to
  - Develop expertise,
  - hire trained professionals,
  - implement appropriate processes and procedures (e.g., faculty development, new registrar, director of academic advising, AAC&U summer workshops)

SACS-COC visit? not a finding, not a recommendation, clean bill of health

Turn Around…Success Breeds Success

- Second, Title III Grant, $2.02 million
  - add KEY personnel: Director of Student Success, Director of Distance Learning, 3 additional faculty positions
  - add and train all faculty and most staff on Pharos 360, early intervention software (and gift from Olympus)
  - develop three majors (Public Health Ed, Cybersecurity, Computer Information Systems) along with faculty (mentioned above)
  - create smart classrooms across campus
  - provide required training, with compensation, for Pharos 360 and new technology

Ready for COVID, Ready for President Boyd…

- And what would I leave with you?
  - Ask, don't tell.
  - Be humble. If not, you can't get to the core of that onion.
  - Over-communicate, over-include: Include everybody, including the squirrels!
- Your goal: turn that onion into nicely fried onion rings!

COVID Check-In

- The pandemic challenged the Institution and its faculty and staff and demanded that we change and adapt our modes of teaching, programing and interaction with students. Students faced new modes of instruction, stressors, communication styles, and adapted to unfamiliar restrictions on campus that changed the campus climate. Our faculty and staff worked to recognize and respond to these changes and stressors assisting our students transition throughout these years.

- Staff recognized that students were struggling with the pandemic, and a non-anonymous survey was sent (October 2020) to all students.

- We were then able to connect students with specific resources that they indicated they needed help with (technology, finances, academics, etc.), as well as focus programming for the remainder of the Fall semester.

COVID Check-In

- As in the Fall, staff recognized that students were struggling with the pandemic in a variety of ways. Two non-anonymous surveys were sent to all students in early February (225 responses) and again in late March (137 responses). We were then able to connect students with specific resources that they indicated they needed help with (technology, finances, academics, etc.), as well as focus programming for the remainder of the semester.

COVID Check-In: November 2020

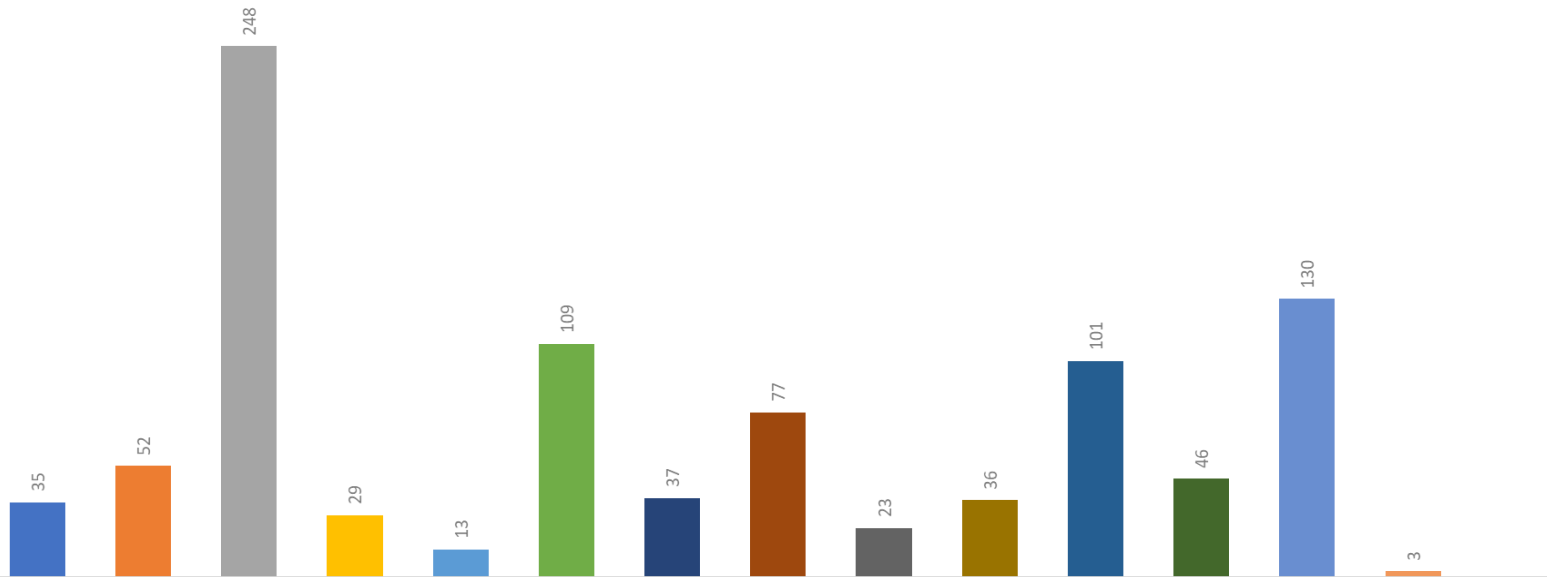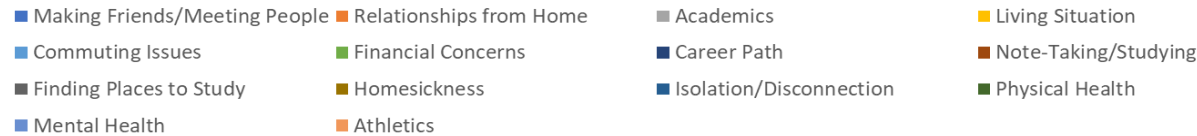PLEASE INDICATE ANY AREAS YOU ARE EXPERIENCING CONCERN/ANXIETY AT THIS TIME.
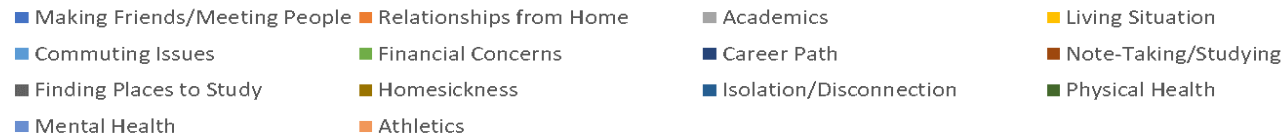
N: 269

- Academics – 271
- Mental Health – 192
- Isolation/Disconnection – 155
- Financial Concerns – 153
- Relationships from Home – 123
- Note-Taking/Studying - 122

COVID Check-In: November 2020

WHAT 3 AREAS CAUSE YOU THE MOST CONCERN/ANXIETY AT THIS TIME?

- Making Friends/Meeting People
- Relationships from Home
- Academics
- Living Situation
- Commuting Issues
- Financial Concerns
- Career Path
- Note-Taking/Studying
- Finding Places to Study
- Homesickness
- Isolation/Disconnection
- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Athletics

Chart values: 35, 52, 248, 29, 13, 109, 37, 77, 23, 36, 101, 46, 130, 3

N: 269

- Academics – 248
- Mental Health – 130
- Financial Concerns – 109
- Isolation/Disconnection – 101
- Note-Taking/Studying - 77
- Relationships from Home – 52

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SOUTHERN

COVID Check-In: November 2020

THINKING ABOUT YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH SPECIFICALLY, ARE YOU EXPERIENCING ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS?

■ Lack of Motivation ■ Trouble Sleeping ■ Irritability ■ Physical Fatigue ■ Hopelessness
■ Absentmindedness ■ Apathy ■ Headaches ■ Appetite Changes ■ Nervousness
■ Difficulty Concentrating ■ Irrational Anger ■ Cynicism ■ Dread ■ Depression

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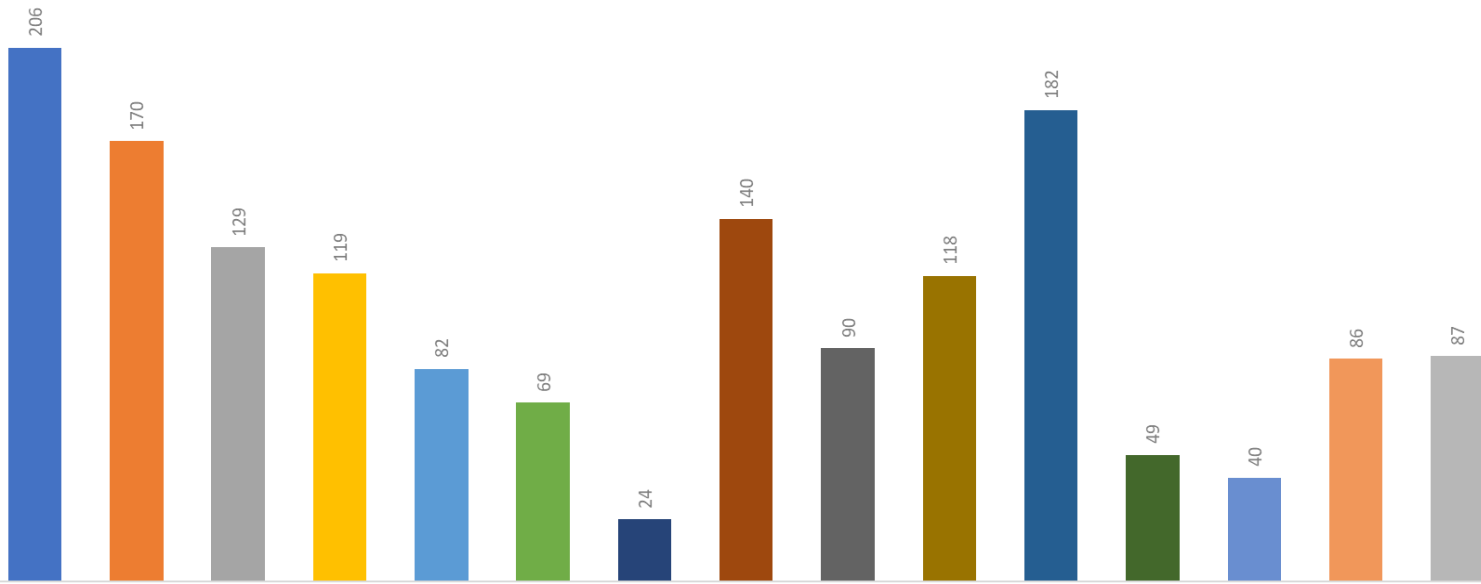
N: 269

- Lack of Motivation – 248
- Difficulty Concentrating – 182
- Trouble Sleeping – 170
- Headaches– 140
- Irritability- 129
- Physical Fatigue– 119

COVID Check-In: November 2020

Have you ever considered dropping out during this semester?

- 30% agreed

- Reasons given included: Stress, Mental Health, Financial, Health, Work load

- What can UTS do to make you more successful?

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TENNESSEE
SOUTHERN

COVID Check-In: November 2020

What can UTS do to make you more successful?

- Financial Aid

- Improved WIFI

- More Computer Lab Space

- More Technicians in IT

- Outdoor Seating

- Study Rooms

- Less restriction with visitation (COVID-restrictions)

- Cheaper Dining commuter options

- More Choices with COVID Restrictions

- More mental health discussions on teams

- More activities

Academics: What can UTS do to make you more successful?

- Be able to have in person meetings with professors

- Be more patient/understanding/flexibility in school work.

- Find a way to do tutoring in person.

- I feel I need patience from professors right now, as academics have seemed to become more condensed and rigorous this semester. We are truly in an exceptional time, and while it is important to maintain the academic rigor, it is also crucial to understand that students are trying their best, which may not look like the typical "best" seen in the past.

- I would suggest basic computer training (possibly through teams) for professors AND students. Cheaper Dining commuter options

- Not having so much online work all in one week

February 2021

PLEASE INDICATE ANY AREAS YOU ARE EXPERIENCING CONCERN/ANXIETY AT THIS TIME.
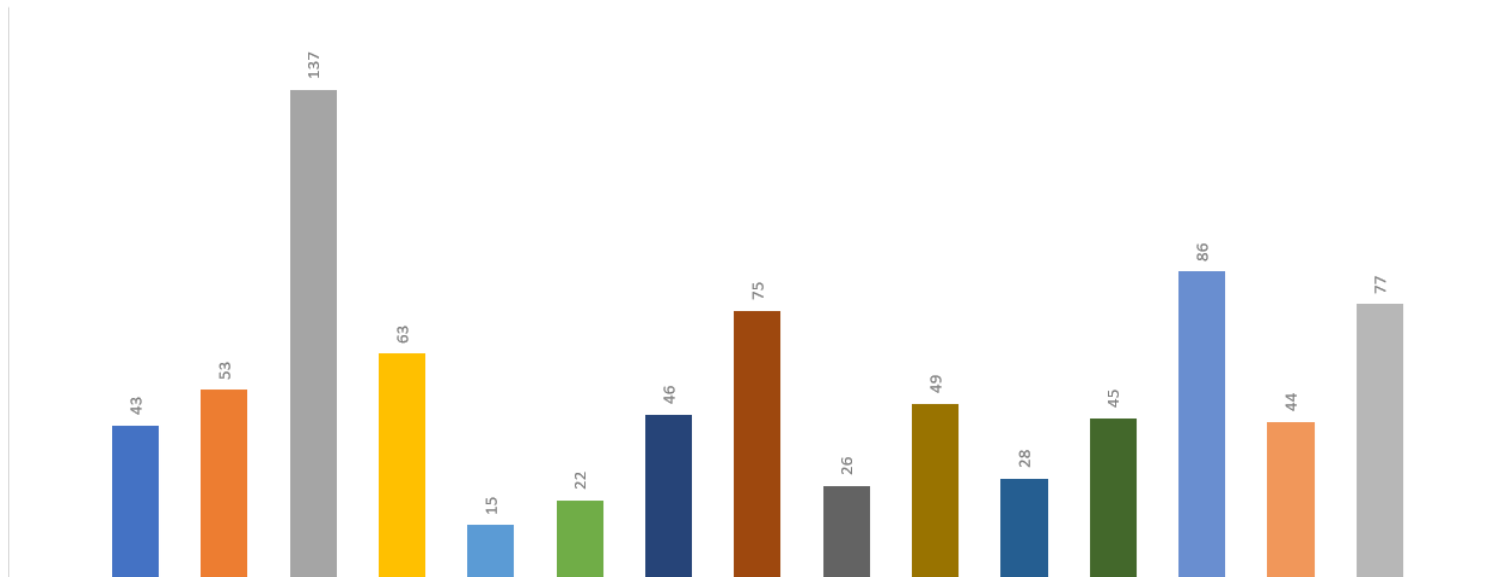
N: 225

- Academics – 137
- Mental Health – 77
- Isolation/Disconnection – 86
- Financial Concerns – 75
- Technology Issues – 63

February 2021

WHAT 3 AREAS CAUSE YOU THE MOST CONCERN/ANXIETY AT THIS TIME?

- Making Friends/Meeting People
- Relationships from Home
- **Academics**
- **Technology Issues**
- Living Situation
- Commuting Issues
- Athletic Issues
- **Financial Concerns**
- Career Path
- Note-Taking/Studying
- Finding Places to Study
- Homesickness
- **Isolation/Disconnection**
- Physical Health
- **Mental Health**

26 25 127 42 9 13 30 57 21 34 16 36 64 27 64

February 2021

Areas of Concern/Anxiety
Percentage of Respondents (n=225)

■ All Areas ■ Top 3

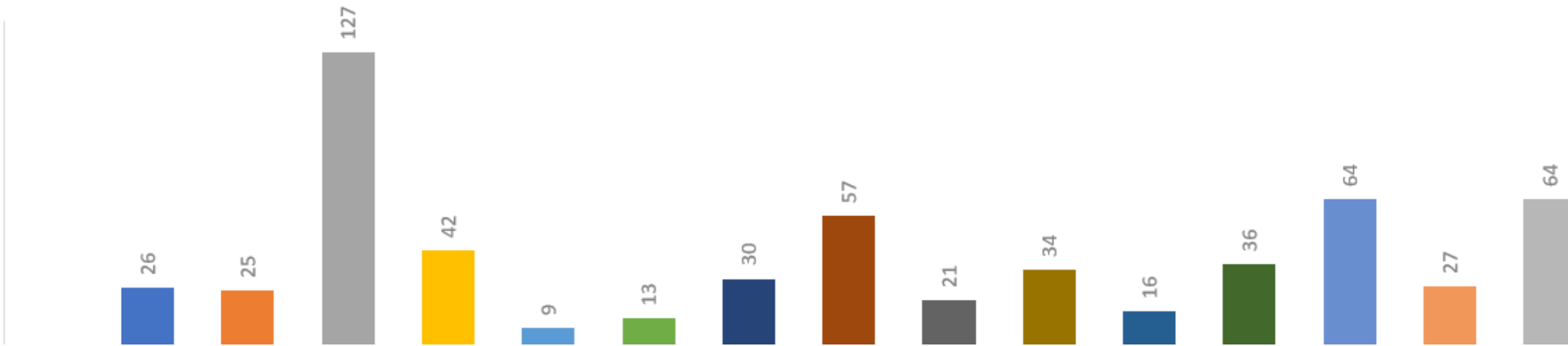|	Making Friends/ Meeting People	Relationsh ips from Home	Academics	Technolog y Issues	Living Situation	Commutin g Issues	Athletic Issues	Financial Concerns	Career Path	Note-Taking/ Studying	Finding Places to Study	Homesick-ness	Isolation/ Disconnec tion	Physical Health	Mental Health
All Areas	19%	24%	61%	28%	7%	10%	20%	33%	12%	22%	12%	20%	38%	20%	34%
Top 3	12%	11%	56%	19%	4%	6%	13%	25%	9%	15%	7%	16%	28%	12%	28%

February 2021

THINKING ABOUT YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH SPECIFICALLY, ARE YOU EXPERIENCING ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS?

Legend:
- Lack of Motivation
- Trouble Sleeping
- Irritability
- Physical Fatigue
- Hopelessness
- Absentmindedness
- Apathy
- Headaches
- Appetite Changes
- Nervousness
- Difficulty Concentrating
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- Depression

Bar values: 122, 82, 47, 51, 24, 17, 7, 60, 37, 45, 62, 6, 8, 29, 33
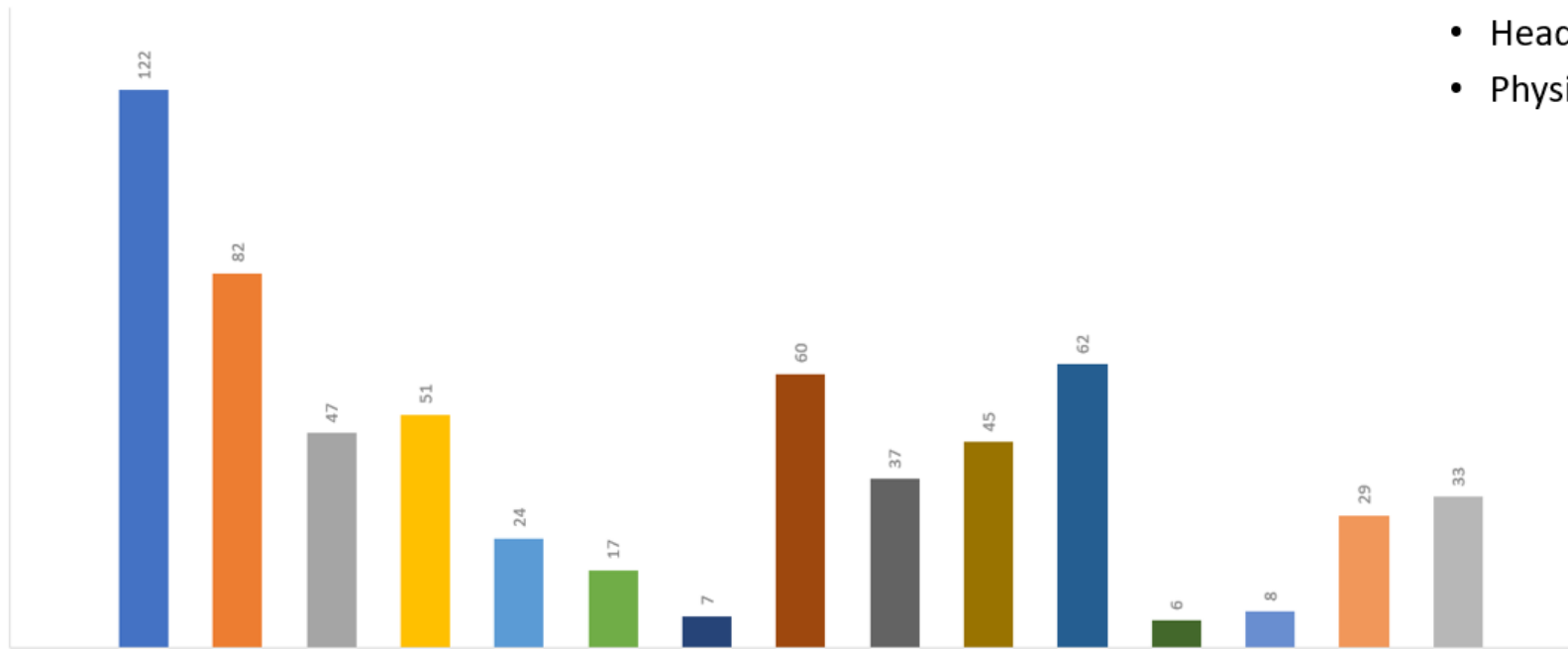
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- Lack of Motivation – 122
- Trouble Sleeping – 82
- Difficulty Concentrating – 62
- Headaches– 60
- Physical Fatigue– 51

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE SOUTHERN

COVID Check-In: February 2021

What can UTS do to make you more successful?

- Financial Aid
- Improved WIFI
- More Computer Lab Space
- Study Rooms/Space
- Less restriction with visitation (COVID-restrictions)
- More Choices with COVID Restrictions
- Mental health support
- More activities
- Check in more on students
- Healthier Food
- More social Activities/Interaction

Academics: What can UTS do to make you more successful?

- Be able to have in person meetings with professors
- Be more patient/understanding/flexibility in school work.
- In person tutoring
- I would suggest basic computer training (possibly through teams) for professors AND students.
- Faculty professional development
- Workload issues - Not having so much online work all in one week
- Record Videos of classes
- Teams and Moodle can cause issues
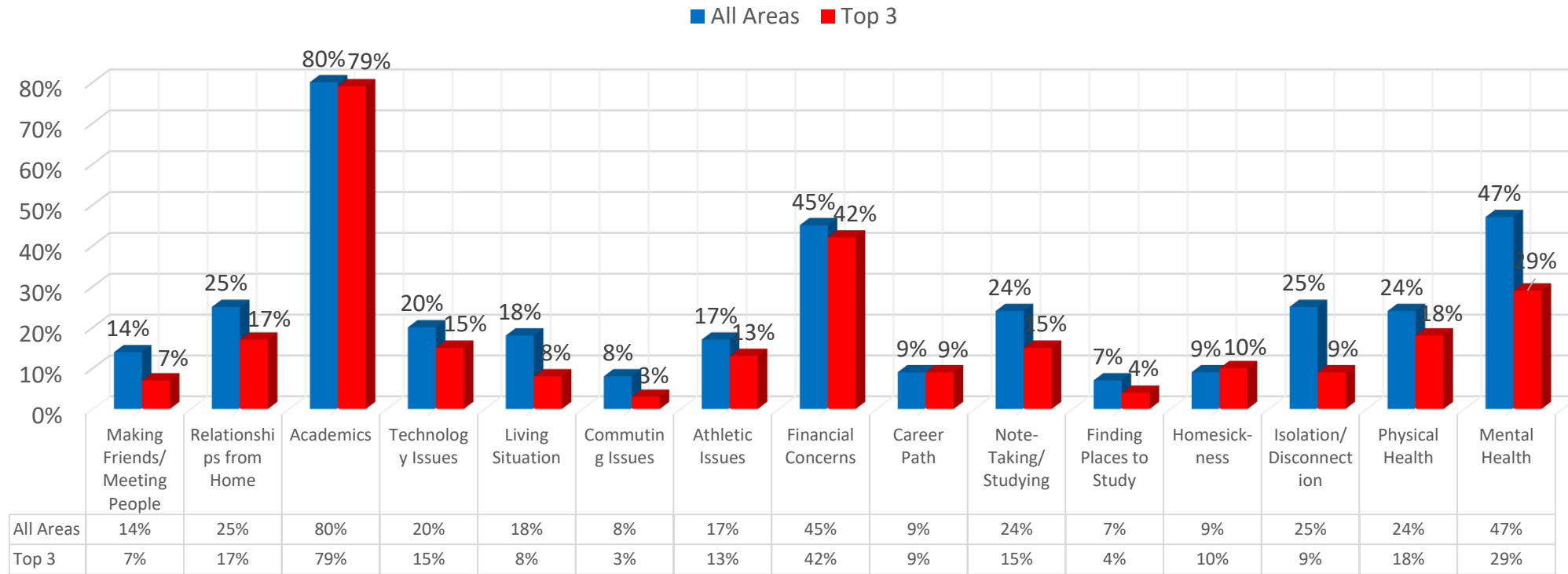
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COVID Check-In: February 2021

Students Responded to based on Area of Concern

- Top 3 Concerns included "Study/Notetaking Skills" - 37 Students
- Top 3 Concerns included "Study Space" - 14 Students
- Top 3 Concerns included "Technology Issues" - 35 Students
- Top 3 Concerns included "Physical Health" - 21 Students
- Top 3 Concerns included "Financial Concerns" - 45 Students
- Top 3 Concerns included "Figuring out my career or picking my major" - 20 Students

March 2021

Areas of Concern/Anxiety
Percentage of Respondents (n=137)

■ All Areas ■ Top 3

	Making Friends/ Meeting People	Relationships from Home	Academics	Technology Issues	Living Situation	Commuting Issues	Athletic Issues	Financial Concerns	Career Path	Note-Taking/ Studying	Finding Places to Study	Homesick-ness	Isolation/ Disconnection	Physical Health	Mental Health
All Areas	14%	25%	80%	20%	18%	8%	17%	45%	9%	24%	7%	9%	25%	24%	47%
Top 3	7%	17%	79%	15%	8%	3%	13%	42%	9%	15%	4%	10%	9%	18%	29%

THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
SOUTHERN

COVID Check-In: March 2021

What can UTS do to make you more successful?

- Financial Aid
- Improved WIFI
- Study Rooms/Space
- Less restriction with visitation (COVID-restrictions)
- More Choices with COVID Restrictions
- Mental health support
- More leniency with activities
- More commuter option in the Dining Hall

Academics: What can UTS do to make you more successful?

- Be able to have more help from professors
- Be more patient/understanding/flexibility in school work.
- Workload issues - Not having so much online work all in one week

Teleological Change Model

- Willing leadership
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Motivating vision and mission
- A long-term orientation
- Rewards
- Creation of support structures

Willing Leadership

- Student Success Coordinator placed on Leadership Council.

- Early alert and case management system placed under Student Success Coordinator.

- Centrality of student success repeated by Chancellor and Provost.

- Required faculty student success trainings.

Collaboration

- Student success workshops offered for high-alert classes.

- Workshops provided to Nursing, Arts and Humanities, and First-Year Experience.

- Athletics trained and connected to student success.

- DFW research performed in connection with Provost's office.

Communication

- Best practices provided at faculty convocation.

- "Stoplight Survey" at 4 weeks.

- Communications to online students.

- Mid-Term communication.

- Final 4-week "Stoplight Survey"

- Academic Coaching

Motivating Vision and Mission

- Student success as an ethical imperative

- Isomorphism

- Proving we "belong"

- Performance funding

A Long-term Orientation

- Data analysis to determine high at-risk populations.

- Analysis provided enrollment management, academic affairs and student affairs.

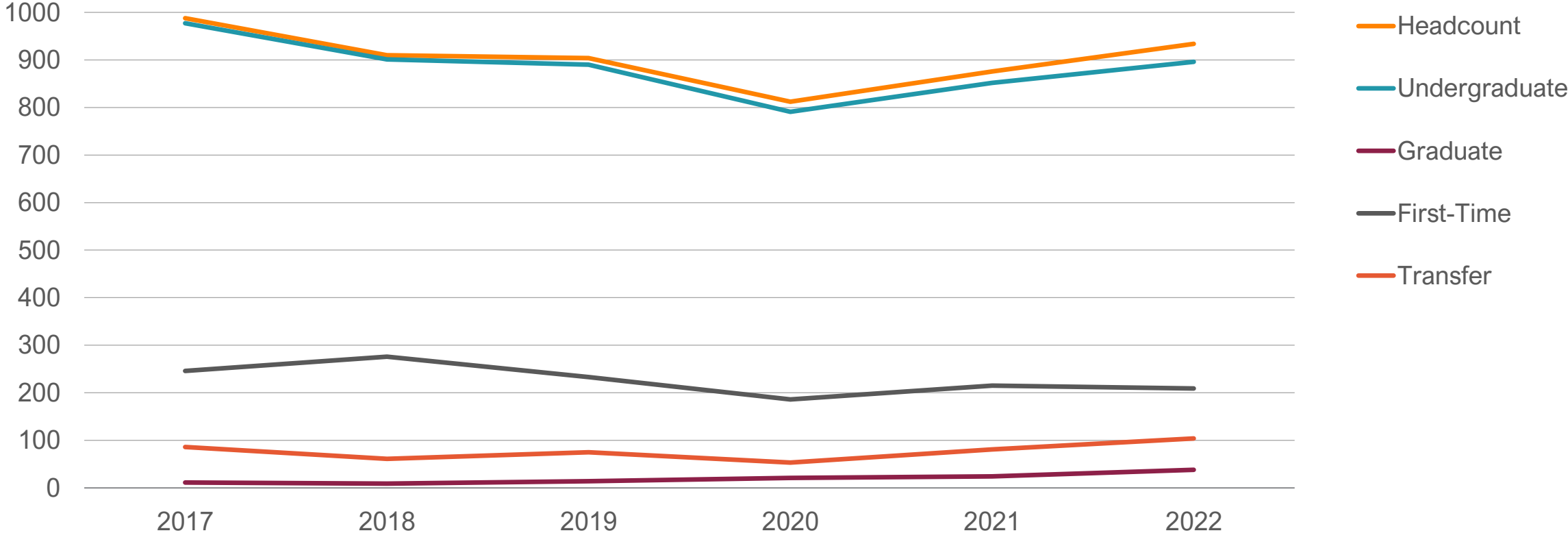- Analysis as catalyst for institutional change.

Rewards

- Positive impact emails.

- Recognition in Leadership Council and during community meetings and convocations.

- Tenure and promotion process.
  - Communication regarding participation performed over official channels.
  - Support of presentations and publications.

UTS Enrollment

ACT and Retention Rates

	Average Incoming ACT	FTFT Fall to Spring	FTFT Fall to Fall	Undergrad Fall to Fall
Fall 2017	20.4	79.3%	51.7%	60.5%
Fall 2018	21.0	85.1%	61.5%	68.5%
Fall 2019	19.7	78.1%	57.1%	68.5%
Fall 2020	19.8	79.5%	54.6%	68.9%
Fall 2021	20.6	87.4%	66.4%	70.8%

NCLEX Pass Rates

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
BSN Graduates	40	14	19	10	15
Test Takers	38	15	20	11	15
First Time Pass Rate	50%	87%	95%	82%	80%