



# Use of and Access to Data: Opinions on Institutional Data Practices

Results of the AACRAO-ACE November 2017 60-Second Survey

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This research has been made possible in part by AACRAO's underwriters.

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## Introduction

This month's 60-Second survey (Appendix A) was a partnership between the American Council on Education (ACE) and AACRAO. Colleges and universities have invested in the use of data analytics to improve student outcomes, close attainment gaps, and improve organizational performance. As environmental conditions continue to evolve, the pressure to do so in more cohesive and sophisticated ways will grow. For institutional leaders to facilitate the modernization of campus data infrastructures they need a more holistic understanding of the opportunities and challenges in doing so.

Both AACRAO and ACE are interested in gaining an understanding of the perceptions of data quality, and the current state of data use across institutions and position types. ACE's [Center for Policy Research and Strategy](#) (CPRS) is developing its [portfolio of work](#) on the modernization of analytics functions and the use of data to promote transformational change. This work will include engaging the broader higher education community in a dialogue about the opportunities and challenges in doing so. The survey received responses from 878 individuals representing 759 institutions and several combinations of control, size and type (Appendix B) and countries (Appendix C).

Similar to other 60-Second survey reports, this represents an overview of the data and not a statistical analysis. Some of the position sample sizes are small and as such, limit how much we can generalize about the experiences and opinions of those positions. However, there does appear to be an indication from the descriptive data that a statistical analysis could provide further insight if a larger data set were collected. It is our aim to approach other membership organizations to replicate this survey. The further intent is that it serve as a starting point for a better understanding of data and data use environment in higher education.

## Key Findings

- Two-thirds of the institutions with more than one person completing the survey submitted responses that differed from each other – that is, the respondents have different opinions and experiences with their institution's data quality and use.
- Opinions about data use and quality varied by position title.
- In the aggregate, benchmarking data, external student outcome data and student engagement data are used by more than half.
- Respondents representing different position types have different opinions about the type of data used by the institution. These differences could be a reflection on how the question was worded. We asked about data use in the business unit and separate units in the institution may use discrete sets of data.
- Almost two-thirds rate their data as “Excellent” or “Good”



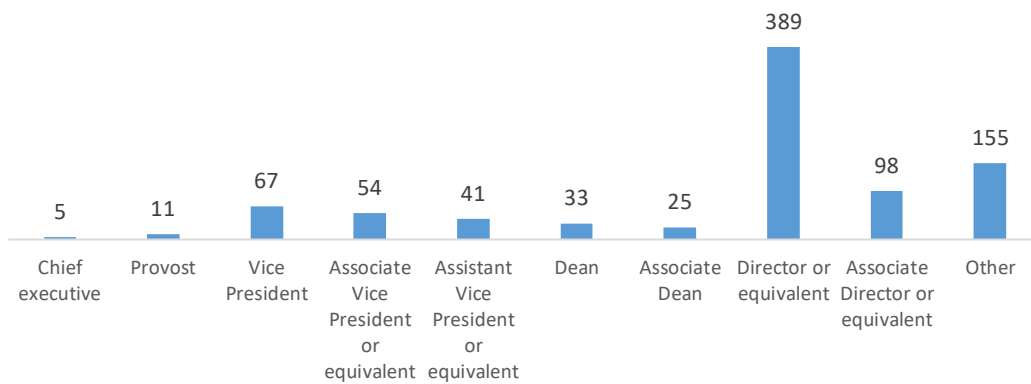
- Less than one quarter indicate that data is “Difficult to access” or “Very difficult to access”
- Most are of the opinion that data created in one unit are available to other units and vice-versa.
- Data use is reported as “Widespread” or “Very widespread” for one-third, yet nearly nine-in-ten see the need for data use to be “Very widespread” or “Widespread” at their institution.
- Most senior executives are viewed as either “Supportive” or “Very supportive” of the use of data to inform decision making.
- Data use for informed decision making is viewed as effective by most.
- The following response choices were selected by more than half of respondents as ways to improve the effective use of data in the future:
  - Ensure that data are timely, accurate, relevant, and accessible.
  - Provide education, training and resources to support the widespread use of data.
  - Connect data from different functions (e.g., student, personnel, financial, and facilities records).

The remainder of this report contains figures summarizing the aggregate results and disaggregated results by position title. Questions regarding this or any other AACRAO research should be directed to Wendy Kilgore, AACRAO Director of Research, at [wendyk@aacrao.org](mailto:wendyk@aacrao.org). To learn more about ACE’s Center for Policy Research and Strategy please contact Jonathan Gagliardi at [jgagliardi@acenet.edu](mailto:jgagliardi@acenet.edu).

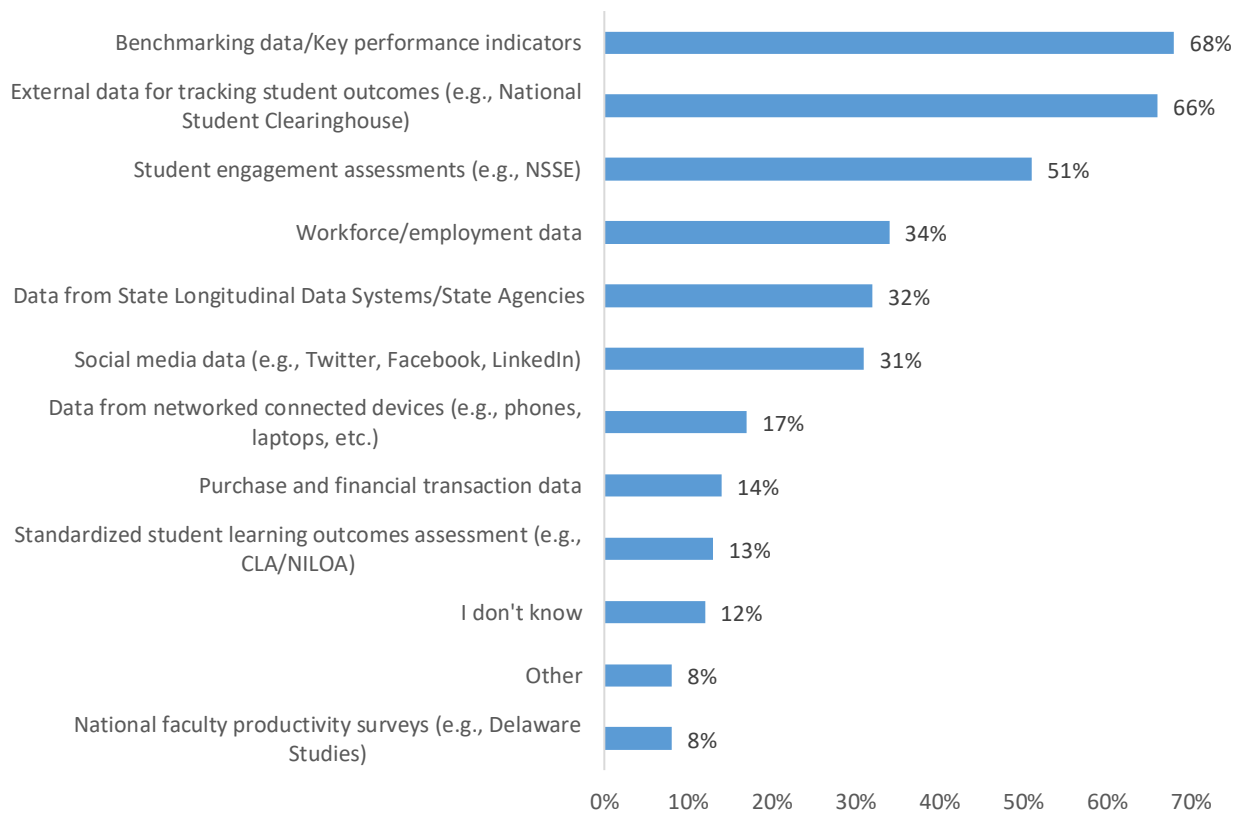


## Results

Count of Respondents by Position Title



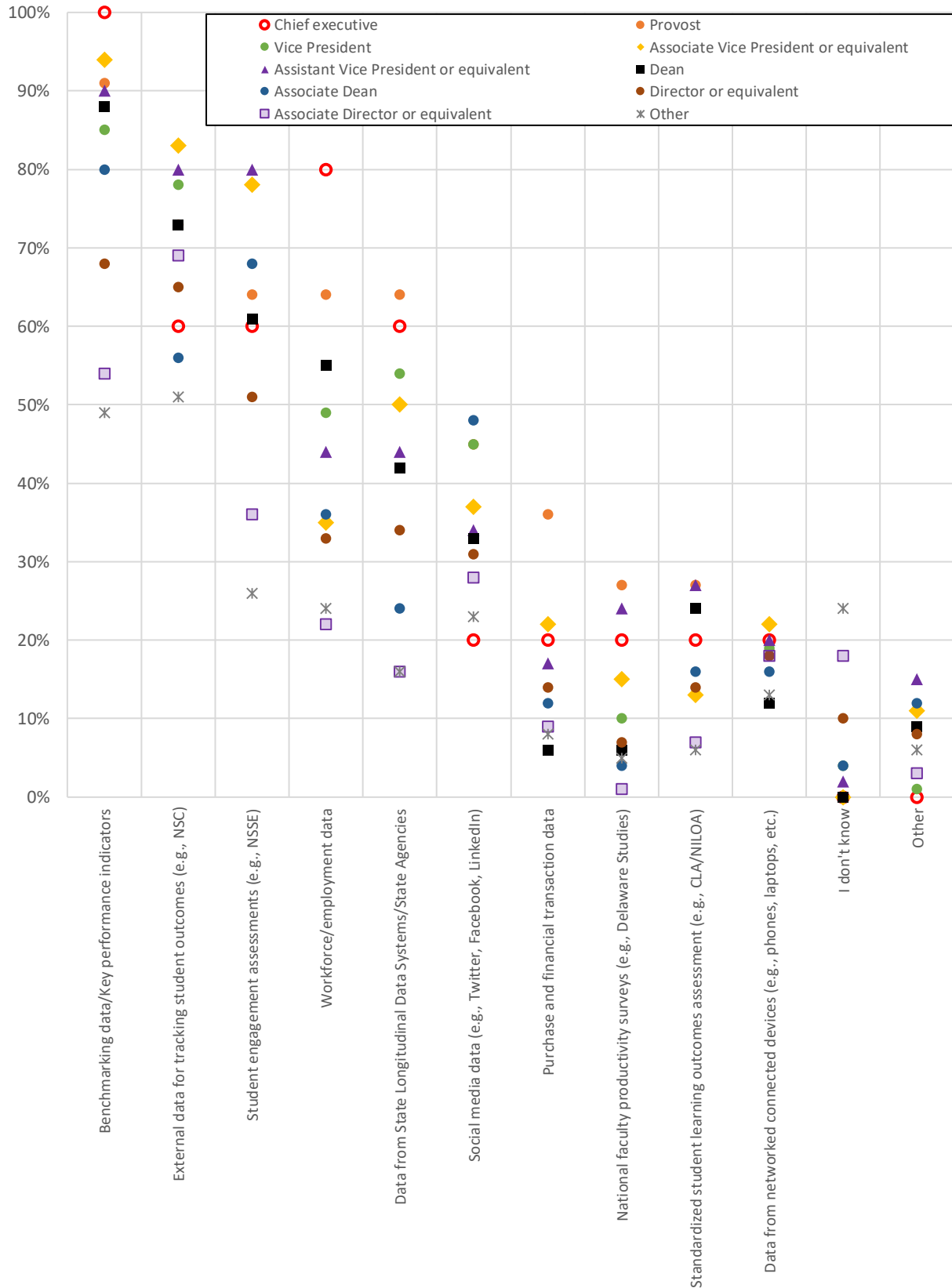
Types of Data Used in Unit (All That Apply)\*



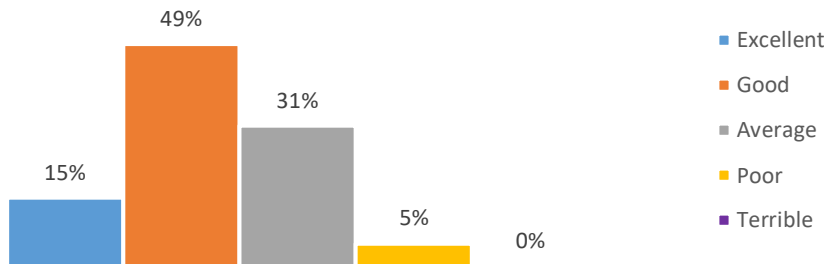
\* Other data sources provided by respondents are listed in Appendix D



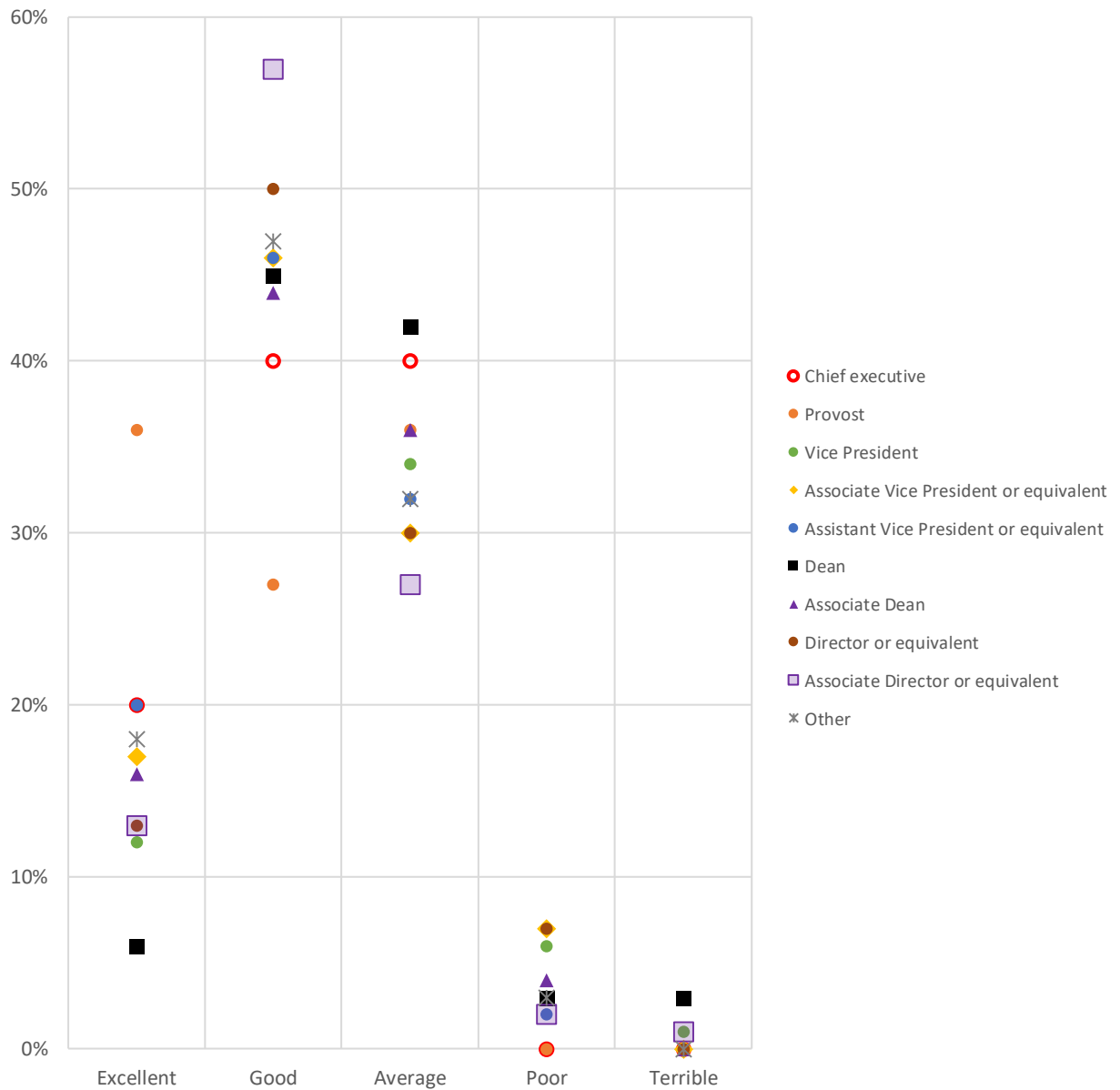
Types of Data Used in Unit (All That Apply) by Respondent Title



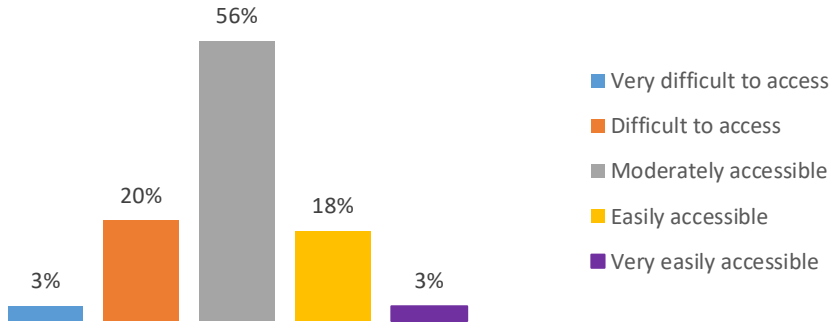
### Quality of Institutional Data



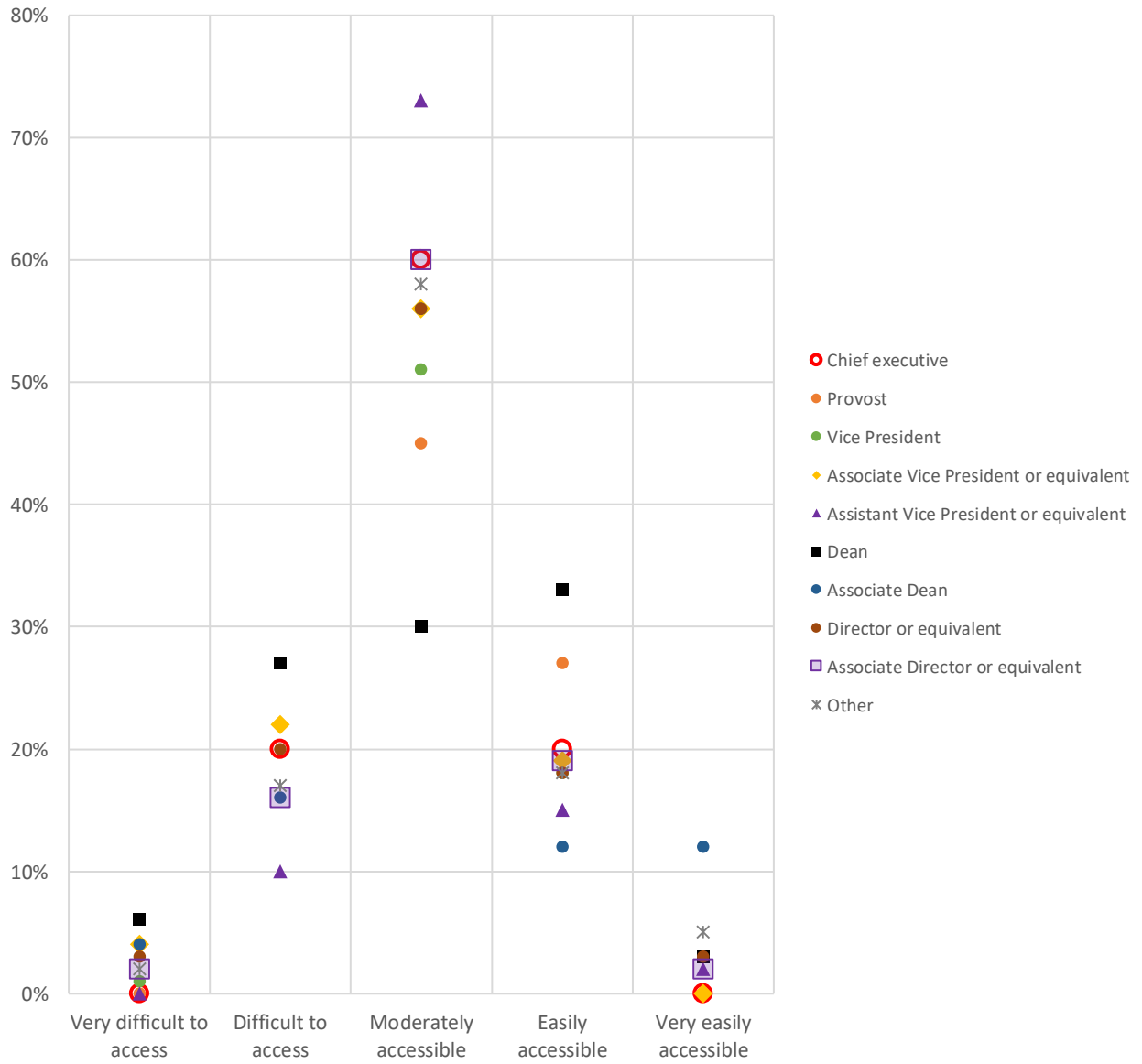
### Quality of Institutional Data by Respondent Title



### Accessibility of Institutional Data

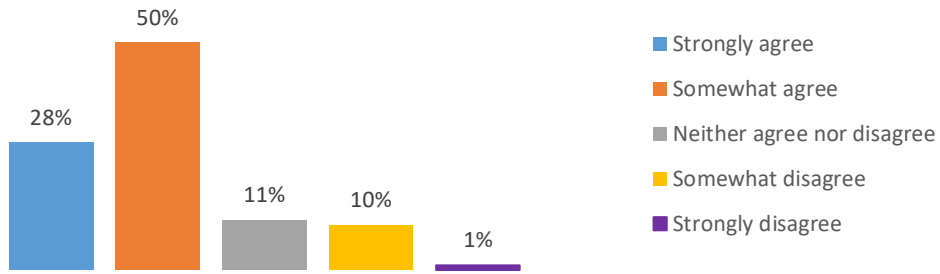


### Accessibility of Institutional Data by Respondent Title

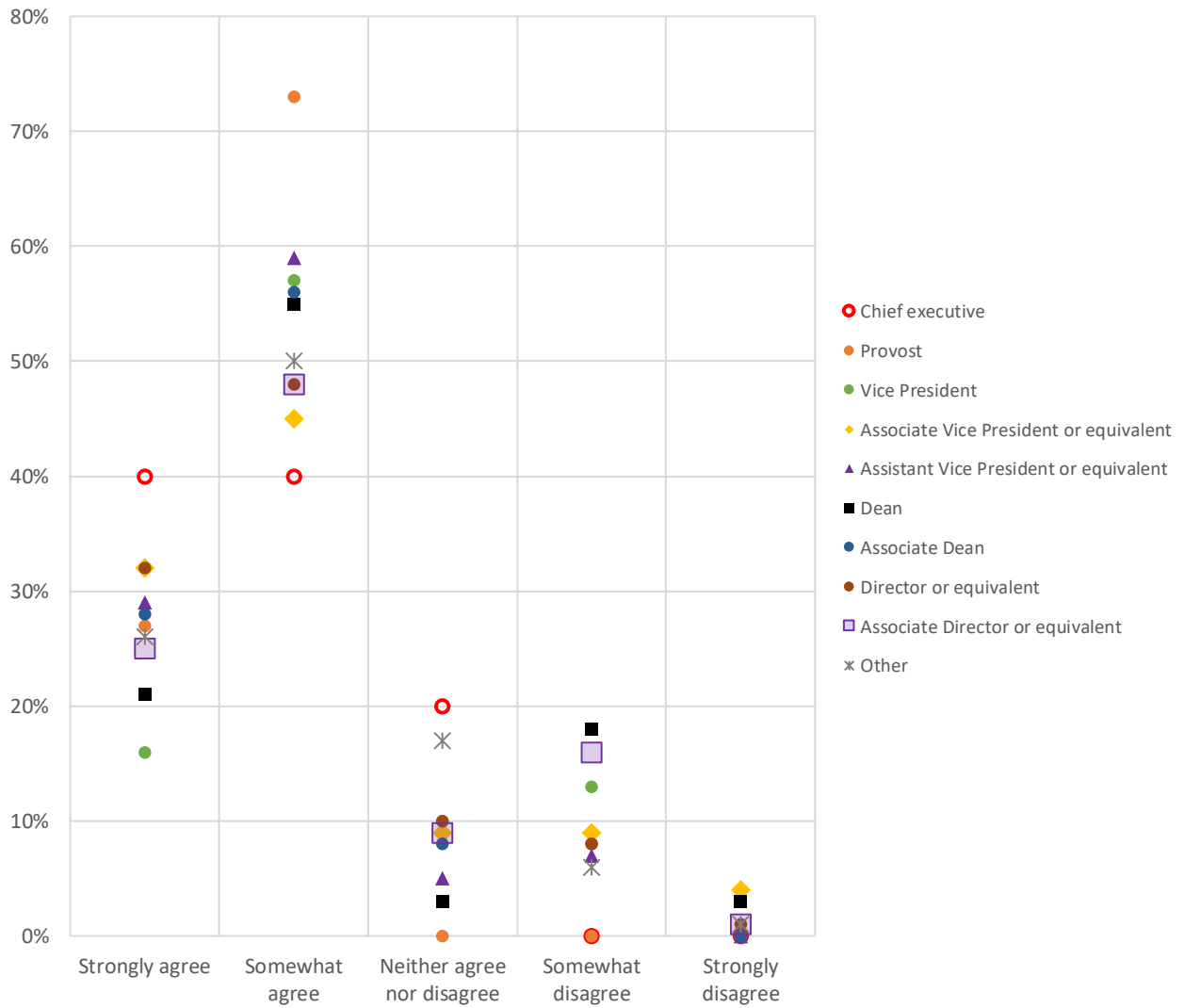




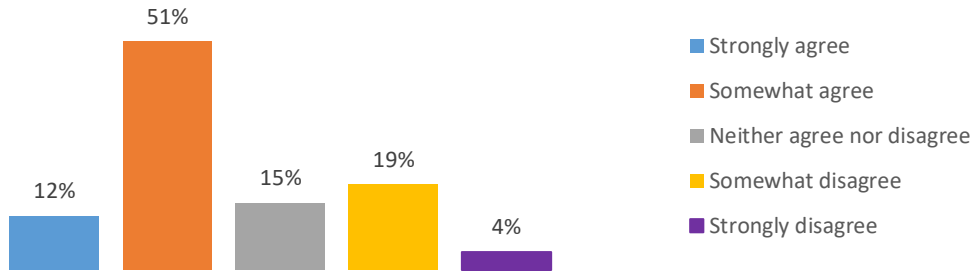
### Data Produced and Housed w/in Unit/Department are Accessible to Different Divisions



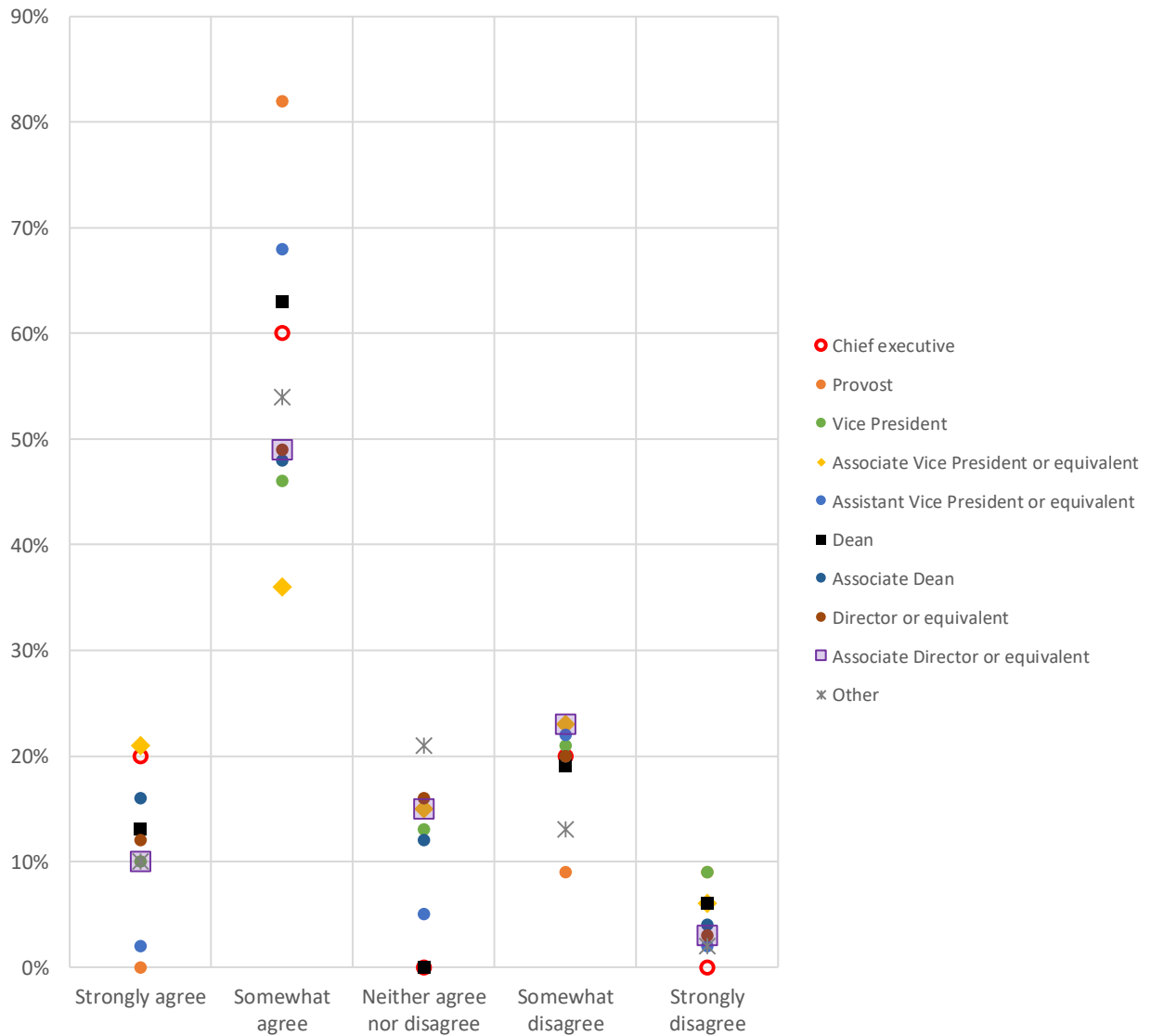
### Data Produced and Housed w/in Unit/Department are Accessible to Different Divisions by Respondent Title



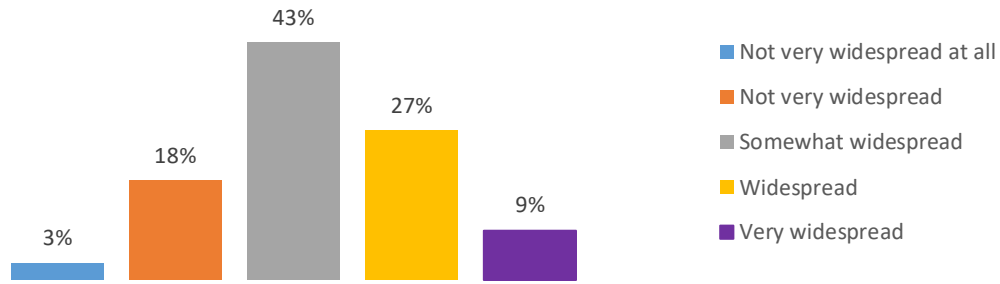
### Data Produced and Housed in Different Divisions are Made Accessible to My Unit/Department



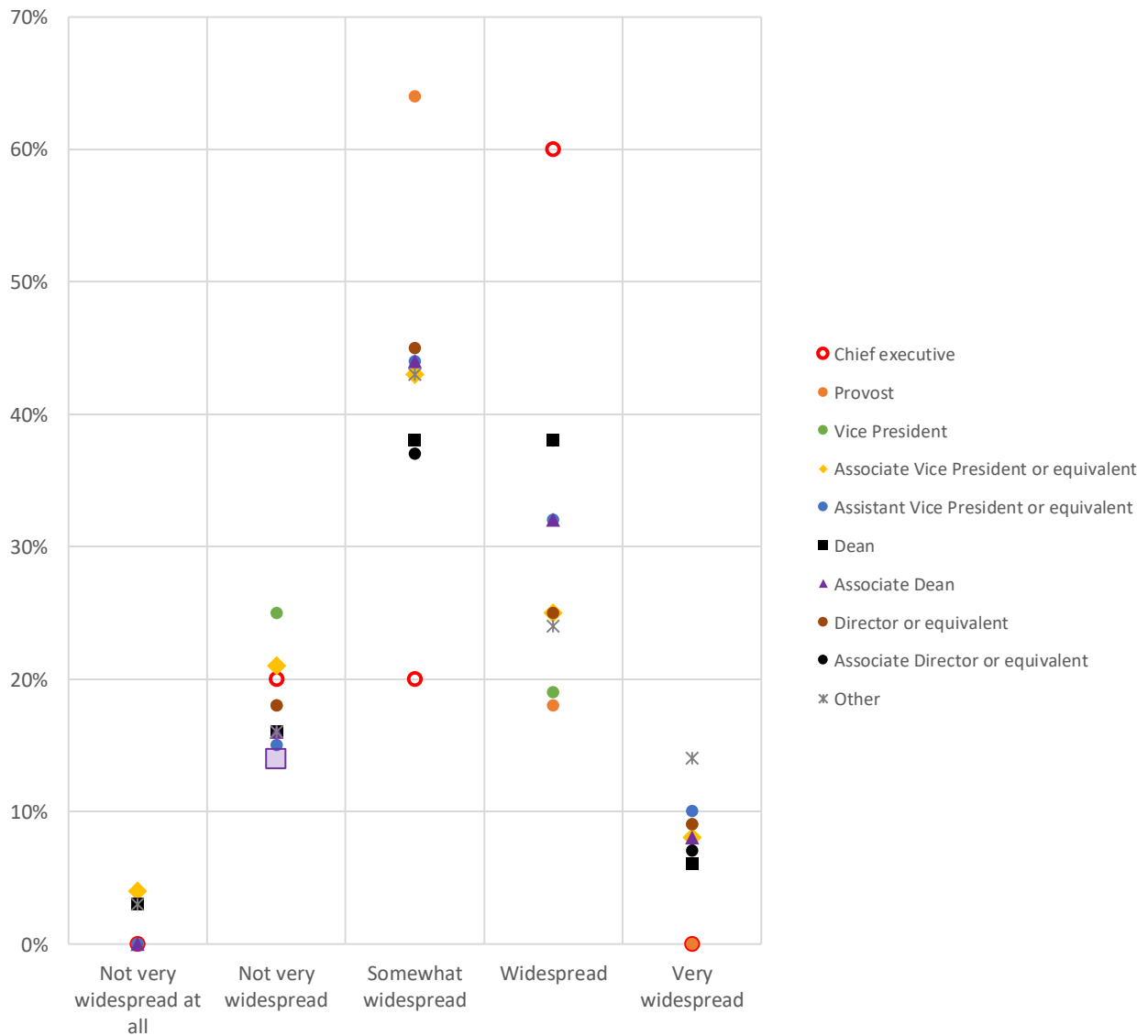
### Data Produced and Housed in Different Divisions are Made Accessible to My Unit/Department by Respondent Title



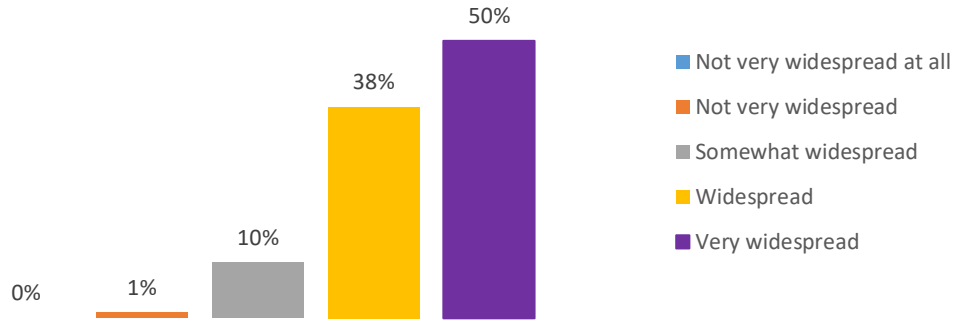
## How Widespread is the Use of Data Across Your Institution



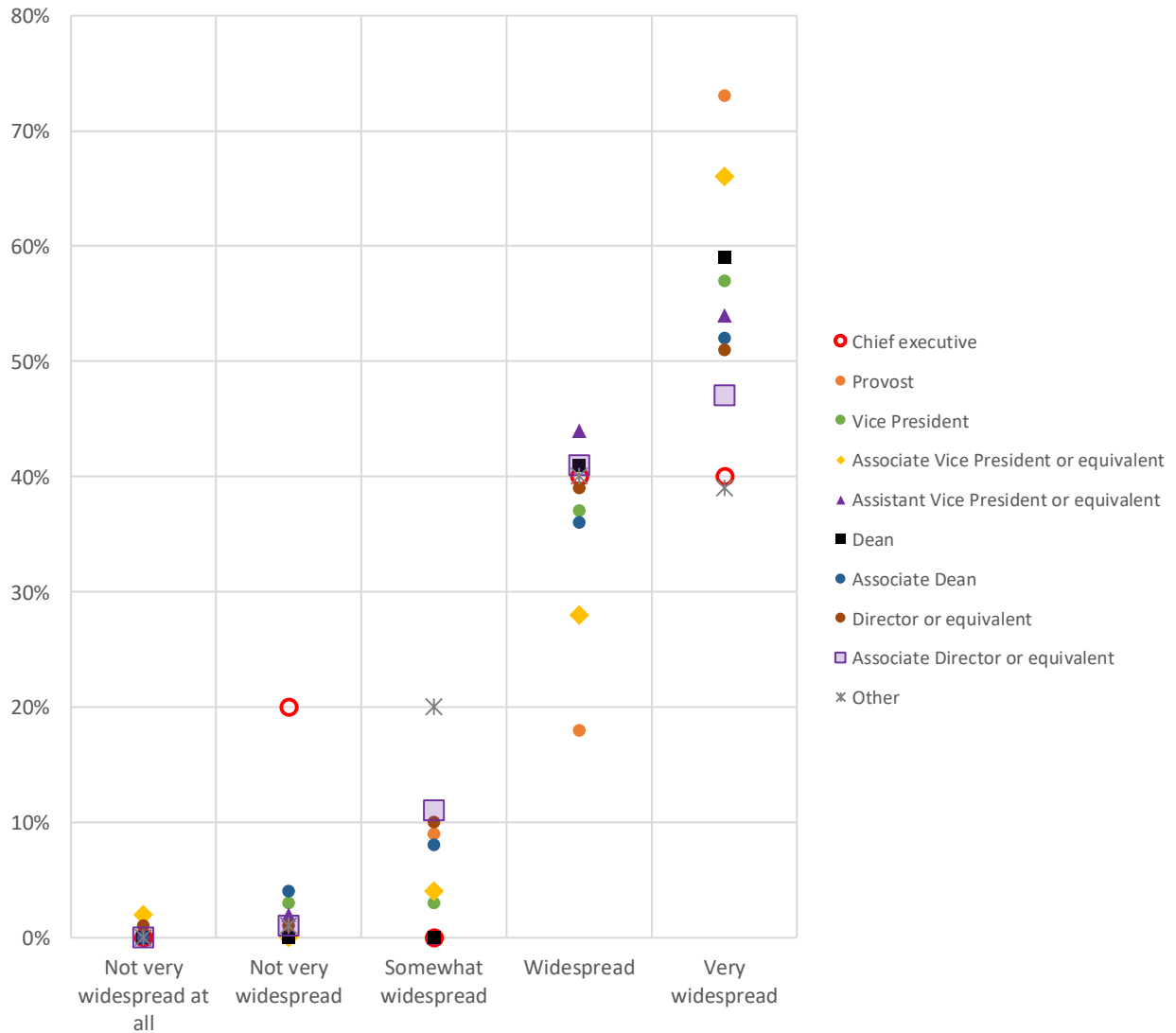
## How Widespread is the Use of Data Across Your Institution by Respondent Title



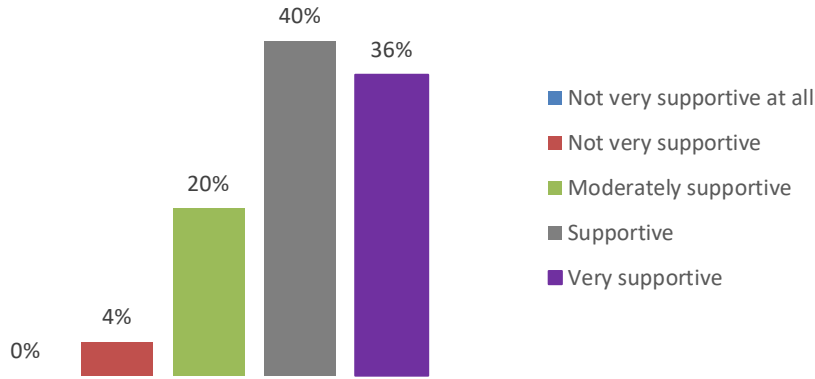
## How Widespread Should Data Use be Across Your Institution?



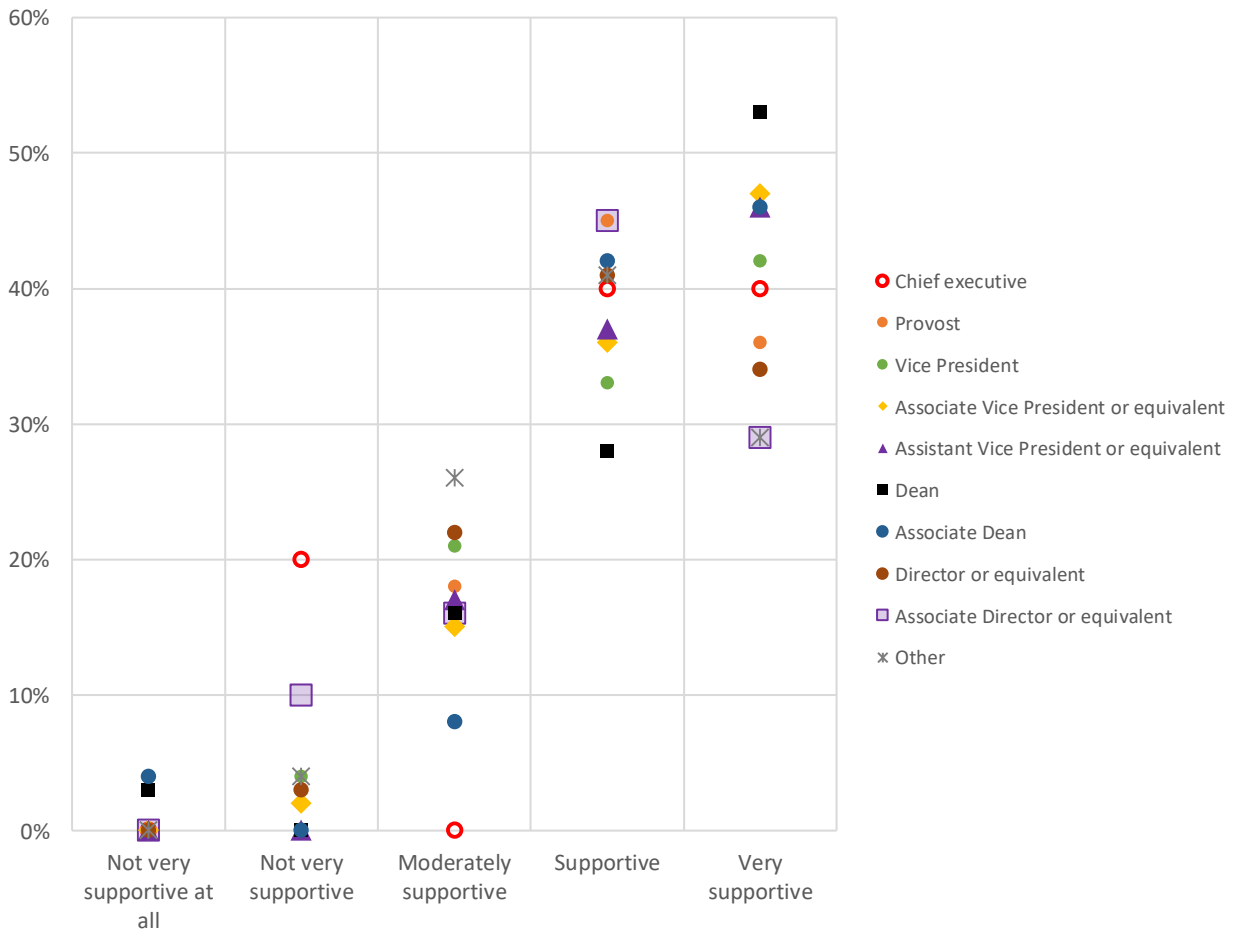
## How Widespread Should Data Use be Across Your Institution? by Respondent Title



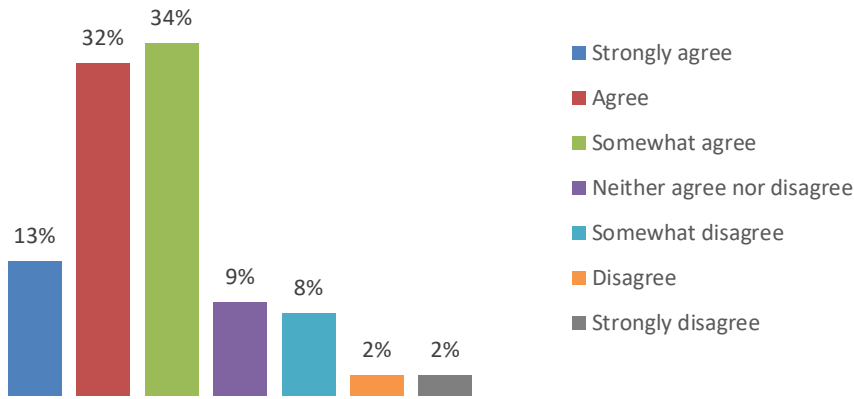
To What Extent Do Senior Executives (e.g., the president, cabinet, and deans) Support and Promote the Use of Data to Inform Decision Making?



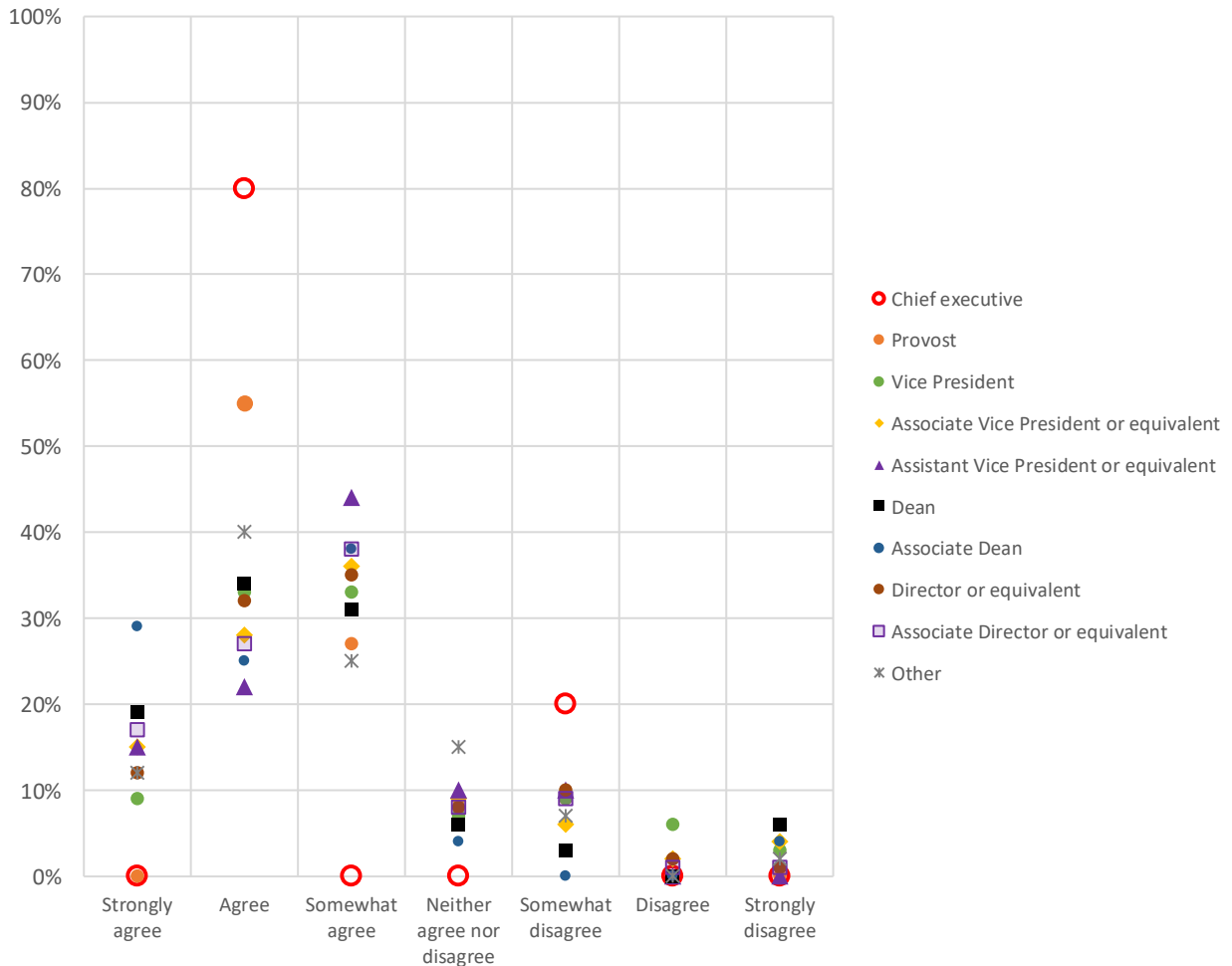
To What Extent Do Senior Executives (e.g., the president, cabinet, and deans) Support and Promote the Use of Data to Inform Decision Making? by Respondent Title



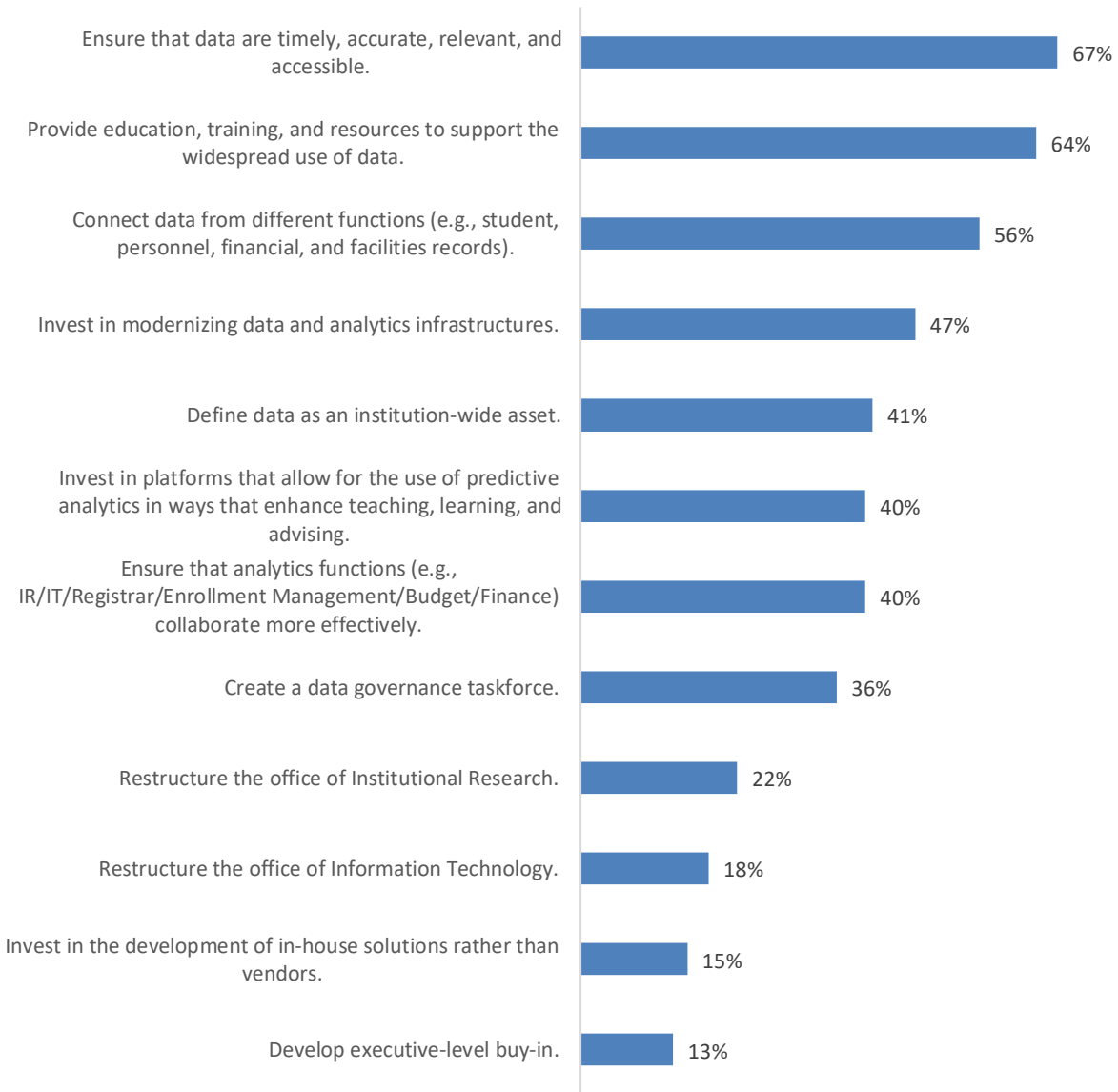
### My Institution Uses Data to Inform Decision Marketing and Improve Performance Effectively



### My Institution Uses Data to Inform Decision Marketing and Improve Performance Effectively by Respondent Title



## What Can Your Institution do to Improve Its Ability to Effectively Use Data in the Future (All that apply)



What Can Your Institution do to Improve Its Ability to Effectively Use Data in the Future (All that apply) by Respondent Title





## Appendix A: AACRAO November 2017 60-Second Survey

Thank you again for your willingness to complete this survey. As a reminder, it is about four minutes long rather than the usual 60-seconds.

**Please choose the types of data your unit uses (choose all that apply):**

- Benchmarking data/Key performance indicators
- National faculty productivity surveys (e.g., Delaware Studies)
- External data for tracking student outcomes (e.g., National Student Clearinghouse)
- Student engagement assessments (e.g., NSSE)
- Standardized student learning outcomes assessment (e.g., CLA/NILOA)
- Workforce/employment data
- Data from State Longitudinal Data Systems/State Agencies
- Social media data (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Purchase and financial transaction data
- Data from networked connected devices (e.g., phones, laptops, etc.)
- I don't know
- Other. Please describe. \_\_\_\_\_

**Please select the position title that most closely matches yours.**

- Associate Director or equivalent
- Director or equivalent
- Assistant Vice President or equivalent
- Associate Vice President or equivalent
- Vice President
- Provost
- Associate Dean
- Dean
- Chief executive
- Other

**Current State of Data Use at Your Institution**

**Please rate the quality of your institution's data:**

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Terrible

**Please rate the accessibility of your institution's data:**

- Very difficult to access
- Difficult to access
- Moderately accessible
- Easily accessible
- Very easily accessible



**The data produced and housed within my unit/department are made accessible to different divisions.**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

**The data produced and housed in different divisions are made accessible to my unit/department.**

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Currently, how widespread is data use across your institution?**

- Not very widespread at all
- Not very widespread
- Somewhat widespread
- Widespread
- Very widespread

**How widespread should data use be across your institution?**

- Not very widespread at all
- Not very widespread
- Somewhat widespread
- Widespread
- Very widespread

**To what extent do senior executives (e.g., the president, cabinet, and deans) support and promote the use of data to inform decision making?**

- Not very supportive at all
- Not very supportive
- Moderately supportive
- Supportive
- Very supportive

**My institution uses data to inform decision making and improve performance effectively.**

**Strongly agree**

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**What are the top (3) challenges your institution needs to overcome in order to use data more effectively? (Please select only three)**

- Questions about data quality/mistrust of data.
- The lack of a data governance framework.
- Inability to use data in a cohesive manner.
- Data remain disconnected across different functions (e.g., student, personnel, financial, and facilities records).
- Data are not seen as an institution-wide asset.



- Widespread education, training, and/or skill gaps exist.
- Resource limitations (e.g., insufficient staff, outmoded equipment/software/computing solutions).
- Lack of buy-in from executive leadership.
- Improperly structured office of Institutional Research.
- Improperly structured office of Information Technology.
- External vendors of limited value take up too many resources.
- Analytics functions (e.g., IR/IT/Registrar/Enrollment Management/Budget/Finance) do not collaborate effectively.
- Unintended consequences of more sophisticated analysis (e.g., limiting access, promoting gaps in attainment, ethical uses of data).

**How should data use and analytics be structured at your institution?**

- Data use and analytics should be highly centralized within one unit that is well resourced to fulfill requests and create business intelligence on behalf of the entire community.
- Data use and analytics should be moderately centralized within a handful of units that fulfill requests and create business intelligence on behalf of the entire community.
- Data use and analytics should be highly diffused across the entire campus community, and resources, tools, and training should be provided by a strategic unit or cluster of units.

**What can your institution do to improve its ability to effectively use data in the future (Choose all that apply)?**

- Ensure that data are timely, accurate, relevant, and accessible.
- Create a data governance taskforce.
- Connect data from different functions (e.g., student, personnel, financial, and facilities records).
- Define data as an institution-wide asset.
- Provide education, training, and resources to support the widespread use of data.
- Invest in modernizing data and analytics infrastructures.
- Develop executive-level buy-in.
- Restructure the office of Institutional Research.
- Restructure the office of Information Technology.
- Invest in the development of in-house solutions rather than vendors.
- Ensure that analytics functions (e.g., IR/IT/Registrar/Enrollment Management/Budget/Finance) collaborate more effectively.
- Invest in platforms that allow for the use of predictive analytics in ways that enhance teaching, learning, and advising.

This is the end of the survey. Clicking the next arrow will complete the survey. Thank you.



## Appendix B: Unduplicated Respondent Count by Institution Control, Type, Size and Control

| Control, Type and Size                             | Count      |
|--|------------|
| <b>Public</b>                                      | <b>393</b> |
| <b>Lower Division Only</b>                         | <b>125</b> |
| Under 1,000  | 13         |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 29         |
| 2,500 - 4,999                                      | 29         |
| 5,000 - 9,999                                      | 36         |
| 10,000 - 19,999                                    | 17         |
| 20,000+  | 1          |
| <b>Undergraduate</b>                               | <b>31</b>  |
| Under 1,000  | 3          |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 12         |
| 2,500 - 4,999                                      | 7          |
| 5,000 - 9,999                                      | 3          |
| 10,000 - 19,999                                    | 5          |
| 20,000+  | 1          |
| <b>Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional</b> | <b>229</b> |
| Under 1,000  | 4          |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 9          |
| 2,500 - 4,999                                      | 29         |
| 5,000 - 9,999                                      | 62         |
| 10,000 - 19,999                                    | 54         |
| 20,000+  | 71         |
| <b>Graduate and/or professional</b>                | <b>5</b>   |
| Under 1,000  | 2          |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 2          |
| 10,000 - 19,999                                    | 1          |
| <b>Other</b>                                       | <b>3</b>   |
| Under 1,000  | 2          |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 1          |
| <b>Private, not-for-profit</b>                     | <b>314</b> |
| <b>Lower Division Only</b>                         | <b>7</b>   |
| Under 1,000  | 5          |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 1          |
| 20,000+  | 1          |
| <b>Undergraduate</b>                               | <b>68</b>  |
| Under 1,000  | 26         |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 33         |
| 2,500 - 4,999                                      | 7          |
| 20,000+  | 2          |
| <b>Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional</b> | <b>222</b> |
| Under 1,000  | 38         |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 57         |
| 2,500 - 4,999                                      | 61         |
| 5,000 - 9,999                                      | 39         |
| 10,000 - 19,999                                    | 20         |
| 20,000+  | 7          |



|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Graduate and/or professional</b>                | <b>16</b>  |
| Under 1,000  | 12         |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 3          |
| 2,500 - 4,999                                      | 1          |
| <b>Other</b>                                       | <b>1</b>   |
| 5,000 - 9,999                                      | 1          |
| <b>Private, proprietary</b>                        | <b>31</b>  |
| <b>Lower Division Only</b>                         | <b>6</b>   |
| Under 1,000  | 4          |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 1          |
| 2,500 - 4,999                                      | 1          |
| <b>Undergraduate</b>                               | <b>6</b>   |
| Under 1,000  | 4          |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 2          |
| <b>Undergraduate, graduate and/or professional</b> | <b>13</b>  |
| Under 1,000  | 6          |
| 1,000 - 2,499                                      | 3          |
| 10,000 - 19,999                                    | 2          |
| 20,000+  | 2          |
| <b>Graduate and/or professional</b>                | <b>5</b>   |
| Under 1,000  | 5          |
| <b>Other</b>                                       | <b>1</b>   |
| Under 1,000  | 1          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                                 | <b>738</b> |



## Appendix C: Unduplicated Respondent Country, State/Province

| Country, State/Province     | Count      |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| <b>Armenia</b>              | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>Bolivia</b>              | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>Canada</b>               | <b>25</b>  |
| AB                          | 6          |
| BC                          | 5          |
| MB                          | 1          |
| NS                          | 2          |
| ON                          | 7          |
| QC                          | 2          |
| SK                          | 2          |
| <b>Costa Rica</b>           | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>Cote d'Ivoire</b>        | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>Egypt</b>                | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>Italy</b>                | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>Jamaica</b>              | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>Lebanon</b>              | <b>2</b>   |
| <b>Mexico</b>               | <b>2</b>   |
| <b>Netherlands Antilles</b> | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>Qatar</b>                | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>Saudi Arabia</b>         | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>Singapore</b>            | <b>1</b>   |
| <b>United Arab Emirates</b> | <b>2</b>   |
| <b>United States</b>        | <b>696</b> |
| AK                          | 1          |
| AL                          | 6          |
| AR                          | 12         |
| AZ                          | 10         |
| BC                          | 1          |
| CA                          | 51         |
| CO                          | 16         |
| CT                          | 4          |
| DC                          | 3          |
| DE                          | 1          |
| FL                          | 20         |
| GA                          | 19         |
| IA                          | 17         |
| ID                          | 7          |
| IL                          | 33         |
| IN                          | 13         |
| KS                          | 11         |
| KY                          | 11         |
| LA                          | 8          |
| MA                          | 27         |
| MD                          | 14         |
| ME                          | 2          |
| MI                          | 20         |
| MN                          | 21         |



|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| MO                 | 13         |
| MP                 | 1          |
| MS                 | 3          |
| MT                 | 7          |
| NC                 | 20         |
| ND                 | 4          |
| NE                 | 7          |
| NH                 | 2          |
| NJ                 | 16         |
| NM                 | 6          |
| NV                 | 2          |
| NY                 | 50         |
| OH                 | 24         |
| OK                 | 9          |
| OR                 | 13         |
| PA                 | 47         |
| PR                 | 4          |
| RI                 | 4          |
| SC                 | 8          |
| SD                 | 5          |
| TN                 | 14         |
| TX                 | 41         |
| UT                 | 7          |
| VA                 | 22         |
| VT                 | 3          |
| WA                 | 15         |
| WI                 | 15         |
| WV                 | 5          |
| WY                 | 1          |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>738</b> |



## Appendix D: Other Data Sources

|   |
|---|
| ACT/College Board data  |
| Admissions related data   |
| Annual student satisfaction survey  |
| At Risk Retention Data  |
| Attendance and course-level student success data  |
| Banner and Degree Works usage analytics; web page analytics   |
| CCSSE   |
| click through rates from social media and internet data analytics   |
| Comparison data from year to year   |
| CUSC  |
| Data for classroom usage, student registration behavior,  |
| Data from our Student Information System (SIS), which includes admissions, enrollment, financial aid data |
| Exit and non-attendance surveys   |
| FEE Results   |
| Home grown surveys  |
| In house surveys  |
| In house surveys and data   |
| In-house Corporate Data Warehouse   |
| Institutional Research data   |
| Institutional Research  |
| Internal data   |
| Internal data   |
| Internal data registrations, grading, withdrawals, etc.   |
| Internal data: enrollment data, space utilization data, grad data,  |
| Internal Reports  |
| Internal reports from faculty through central advising office   |
| Internally generated data   |
| Internally generated reports  |
| IPEDS   |
| IPEDS, Council of Independent Colleges  |
| IPEDS; CUPA; Internal reports, surveys  |
| Live Production Data from our Student Management System   |
| Longitudinal student information system data  |
| Marketplace data  |
| Noel-Levitz SSI   |
| Online Catalog metrics; Faculty consensus metrics   |





|  |
|--|
| Our own designed assessments   |
| Our unit doesn't, but our IR office Delaware, Clearinghouse, and some others probably              |
| Performance data from the student information system   |
| Rankings data/scores for ranking metrics   |
| Requests from various campus offices   |
| Self-administered surveys... lots of them  |
| SIS data   |
| SIS data for: enrollment, retention, impact of aid, graduation, predictive analytics, etc.         |
| SIS System   |
| Student academic history data  |
| Student Information System, Third-Party Vendor   |
| Student Information System-Empower   |
| Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (in-house)  |
| Student Records data (academics)   |
| Students performance indicators (SIS); Students requests for service (CRM); Quality service survey |
| Transactional data on registration, internal survey data   |
| Web and CRM analytics  |
| Website traffic  |
| Work with other departments that collect data  |

