

2021-2022 Evaluation Report

KESSLER
SCHOLARS
COLLABORATIVE

M | CEDER

FIRST-GENERATION
COLLEGE CELEBRATION
#CelebrateFirstGen
#KesslerScholars
FIRST-GENERATION
COLLEGE CELEBRATION
WELCOME
2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kessler Scholars Program 2021-22 Evaluation



The second year of the University of Michigan Center for Education Design, Evaluation, and Research's (CEDER) evaluation of the Kessler Scholars Collaborative focused on understanding student outcomes and informing program development.

1 Program Snapshot

The Kessler Scholars Program model provides holistic, wraparound supports for first-generation and limited-income students throughout their four-year college experience. The Kessler Scholars Collaborative is a network that facilitates organizational learning across partner institutions. In the 2021-22 academic year, six institutions participated in the collaborative, with a total of 381 participating Scholars.

TOTAL
STUDENTS
SERVED

381

NUMBER OF
COLLEGES

6



Cornell University



JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY



S Syracuse University

M UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



2 Student Outcomes

The Kessler Scholars Collaborative has identified six core areas of student development that inform programming. The goal is that when students graduate from college and the Kessler Scholars Program, they have developed competencies across these six program areas:

OUTCOME ONE College Navigation & Academic Skill Development

76%

76% of participating Scholars reported that the first-year seminar gave them the skills they can apply in further years of study.

“I feel more connected within the university. Connected with people I know, and I also am more familiar with different resources that I could access.”

- CORNELL UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

OUTCOME FOUR Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility

85%

85% of Scholars reported that the program helped them develop a greater understanding of cultural and social diversity.

“We would talk about current events, like Black Lives Matter and climate change. I feel like it really allowed us to express our feelings and talk about how we feel.”

- QUEENS COLLEGE SCHOLAR

OUTCOME TWO Wellness and Social Emotional Development

82%

82% of Scholars reported that the program encouraged them to develop a healthy lifestyle.

“It has helped us look after our own wellness because we would have a lot of time management workshops. Kessler staff would always tell us to prioritize mental health.”

- QUEENS COLLEGE SCHOLAR

OUTCOME FIVE Leadership Development

93%

93% of peer mentors agreed that their role provided them with valuable leadership experience.

“[As a peer mentor,] you really felt like you were taking care of the future, the future McGuire Scholars. I valued that leadership position.”

- ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE SCHOLAR

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

92% of Kessler Scholars rated their experience as good or excellent.

OUTCOME THREE Self-Awareness and Identity Development

78%

78% of Scholars reported that the program helped facilitate their self-exploration and personal development.

“It taught me to embrace my first-generation identity more...[we] should be proud that [we] made it this far and Kessler really focused on that.”

- SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

OUTCOME SIX Career and Professional Development

81%

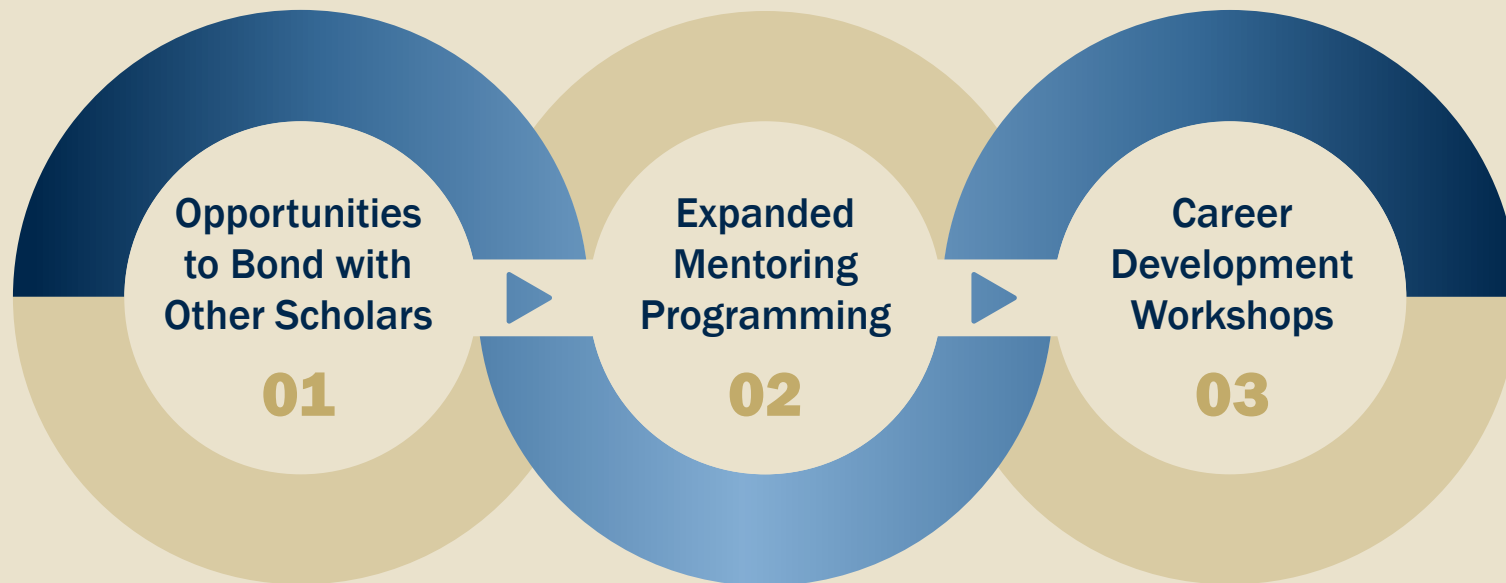
81% of Scholars reported that the program facilitated their academic and career planning.

“I would not have thought to think ahead past my first-year. Going to college, there is a lot to take in, so having an extra advisor making sure I am on the right track was super wonderful.”

- UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SCHOLAR

3 Program Development

The CEDER team worked closely with the six partner institutions throughout the 2021-22 academic year to ensure that evaluation findings were responsive, useful, and directly informed programming.



Students at several institutions expressed a desire for more social events or other opportunities to build community with other Kessler Scholars.

“The one change I would make would be having more options for community service opportunities and more scheduled get togethers with all cohorts.”

Students valued the peer mentoring program and provided ideas for expanded mentoring opportunities.

“I am a peer mentor, and I have freshman mentees. But I still sometimes want somebody, like a junior, as my mentor. So, it's like the cycle repeats...you teach the other person what they need to know for the next year.”

Students shared ideas for expanded career development workshop topics, especially on career development topics.

“More workshops geared towards upperclassmen students, possibly job interview prep, would be very helpful.”



Navigation



Below we outline the 3 navigation icons used throughout the report. These are all actively hyperlinked so you can navigate across sections easily. Your navigation icons can be found in the **top right corner of each page**.



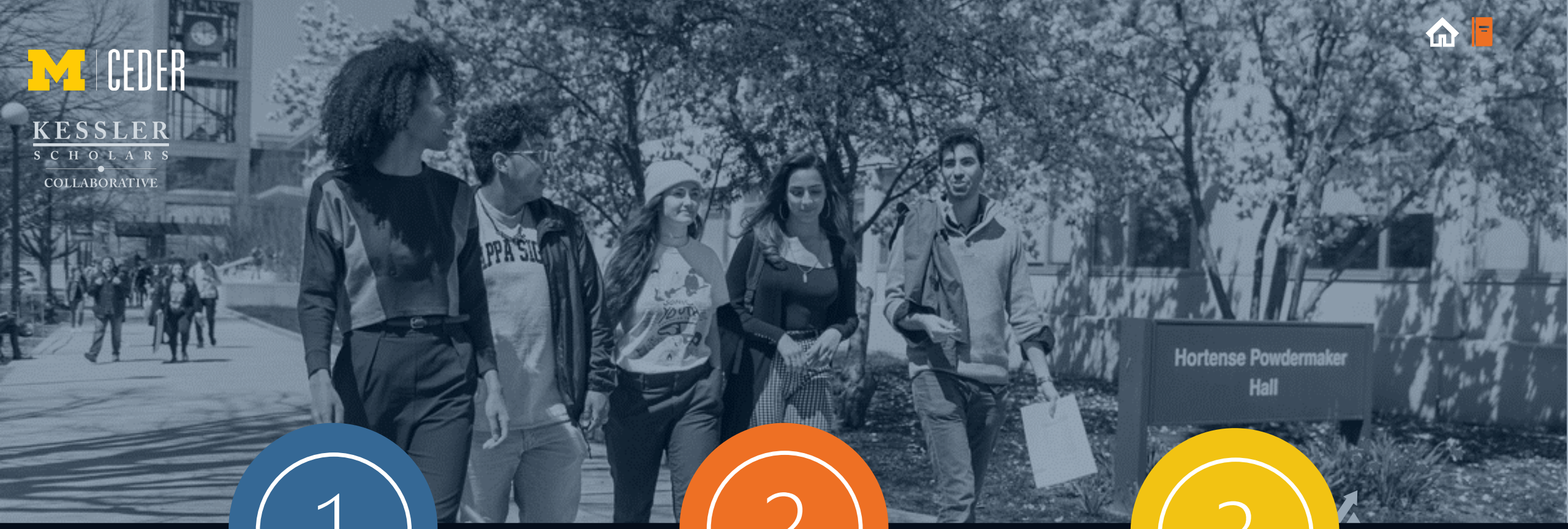
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Select this icon to return to the main table of contents at any time.



Select this icon to return to the section table of contents at any time.



**Program
Snapshot**



**Student
Outcomes**



**Program
Development**

1

Program Snapshot

An overview of the program, the Collaborative, and the partner institutions during the 2021-22 academic year.

a

Kessler Scholars Program

b

Kessler Scholars Collaborative

c

Collaborative-Wide Demographics

d

Institution-Level Demographics



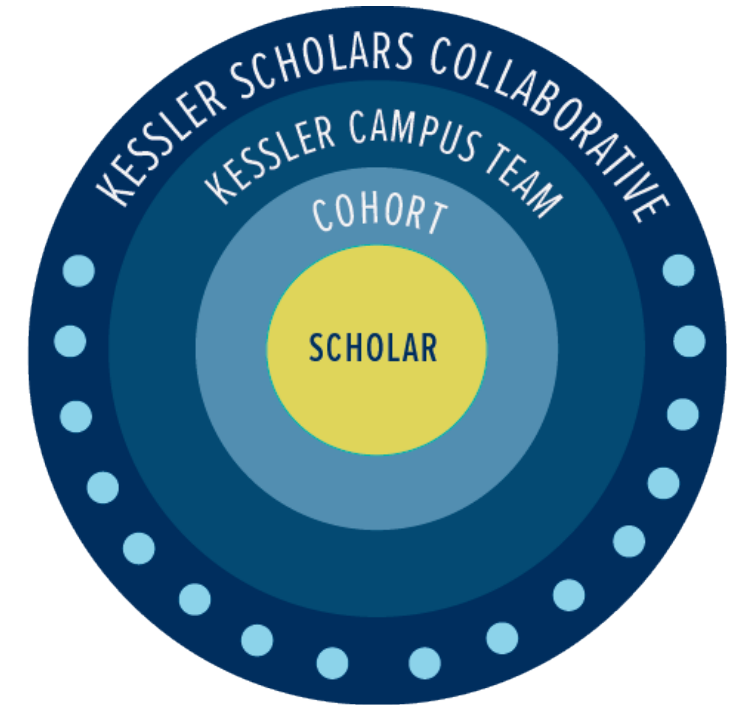
Kessler Scholars Program

The Kessler Scholars Program is designed to provide holistic, wraparound supports for first-generation and limited-income students throughout their four-year college experience. The Program model is

- 1 **High-touch:** Frequent interactions with dedicated Kessler Scholars staff and peer mentoring provide students with the support they need to thrive on campus.
- 2 **Cohort-based:** Students enter college with a built-in community of support, with a cohort that attends classes, workshops, and events together to develop a sense of belonging and shared identity.
- 3 **Asset-focused:** Programs leverage first-generation students' talents and strengths to achieve their academic, professional, and personal goals and elevate their voices and experiences within the broader campus community.

The program has an embedded model, where Scholars are supported by their cohort of first-generation students, as well as by campus-based Kessler Scholars staff teams. The staff teams are supported by central staff at the Kessler Scholars Collaborative.

The Program Model



Kessler Scholars Program

1 Cohort-Based Programming

Description

Cohort meetings provide opportunities for Kessler Scholars who are part of the same graduation cohorts to build community and engage in academic, professional, and personal development activities. Generally held at least twice per semester, these meetings often take the form of workshops or interactive activities that aim to build skills in one or more of the key Kessler learning domains.



Example

Queens College offered an event on allyship for all Scholars, while Johns Hopkins provided a workshop on imposter syndrome.

2 Student Leadership Opportunities

Description

The Kessler Scholars Program believes that student leadership and voice are central to the program's success. Kessler Scholars are encouraged to take on leadership roles within the program as they progress through their college experience. Leadership opportunities include peer mentorship of first-year Scholars and serving on a Student Advisory Board.



Example

St. Francis College holds weekly meetings with advisory board members to develop programming.

3 Individualized One-to-One Meetings

Description

One-on-one meetings between a Kessler Scholars staff member and each Kessler student occur at least once per semester. These meetings are intended to serve as a deliberate, structured meeting designed to provide students with proactive support.



Example

Cornell staff had one-on-one phone conversations with Scholars prior to their Fall 2021 enrollment.

Kessler Scholars Collaborative

The Collaborative is a national network that supports campus-based Kessler Presidential Scholars Programs by providing onboarding guidance, curricular resources, and technical support, as well as facilitating evaluation, assessment, and reporting activities, in partnership with external evaluators. The Collaborative also provides networking opportunities (virtual and in-person) for both students and staff in participating institutions.

Program Working Group

Staff members come together to share promising practices and seek program guidance and support

Cross-Site Student Events

Opportunities for Kessler Scholars to connect and learn together virtual events and workshops

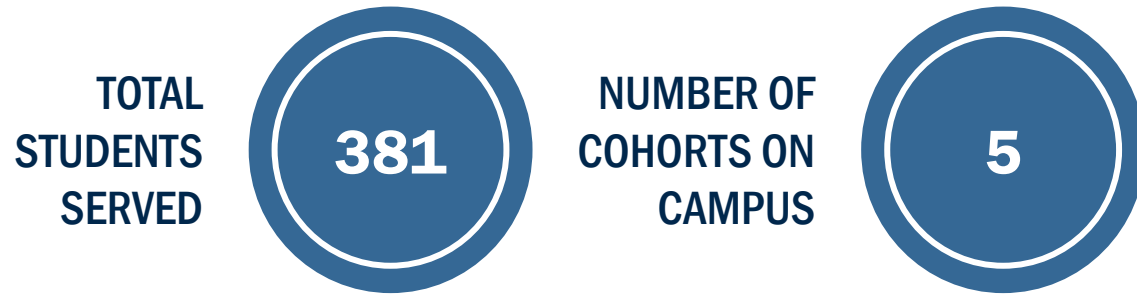
Summer Convening

An annual meeting to build community and generate learning opportunities among campus partners

Evaluation

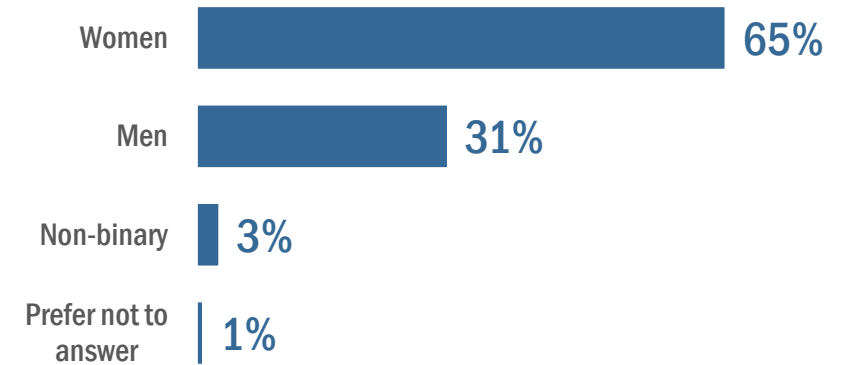
On-going and systematic assessment to inform program improvements and measure outcomes

2021-22 Collaborative-Wide Demographics

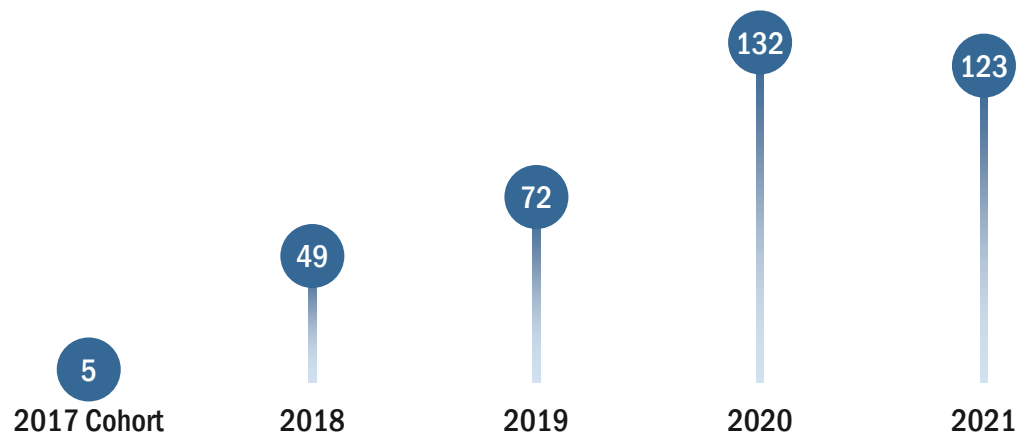


PROPORTION OF STUDENTS BY GENDER (n = 251)

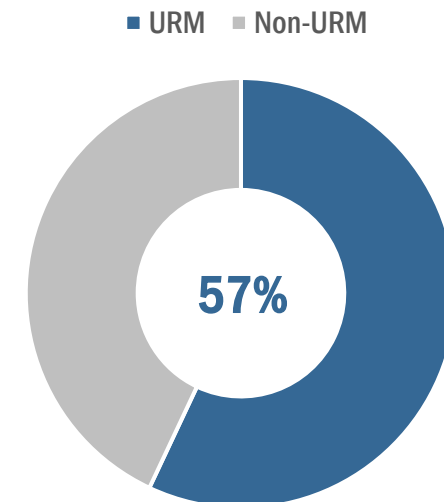
Of students who completed the spring 2022 survey



NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED BY COHORT



URM* STATUS OF STUDENTS (n=245)



*URM stands for underrepresented minority¹

2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics



-   Cornell University
-   JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY
-   QUEENS COLLEGE | CUNY
-   ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE EST. 1859
-   Syracuse University
-   UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics



Cornell University

Program Profile

The Kessler Scholars Program began at Cornell University in 2019. Cornell's Kessler Scholars Program is housed within Student and Campus Life. During the 2021-22 academic year, the Cornell team included:

- Shakima Clency, Associate Dean of Students for Student Empowerment, Director of First-Generation and Low Income-Student Supports
- Nancy Martinsen, Associate Dean of Students and Director of the Asian & Asian American Center
- Courtney Owens, Assistant Director, Multicultural Student Leadership & Empowerment

Cornell At-A-Glance

Cornell University is a mid-sized private nonprofit university in Ithaca, New York. The university is classified as a “most selective” research university.

Quick facts:

- Undergraduate population: 14,741²
- Four-year graduation rate: 95%
- Proportion of Pell Grant-eligible students: 16%

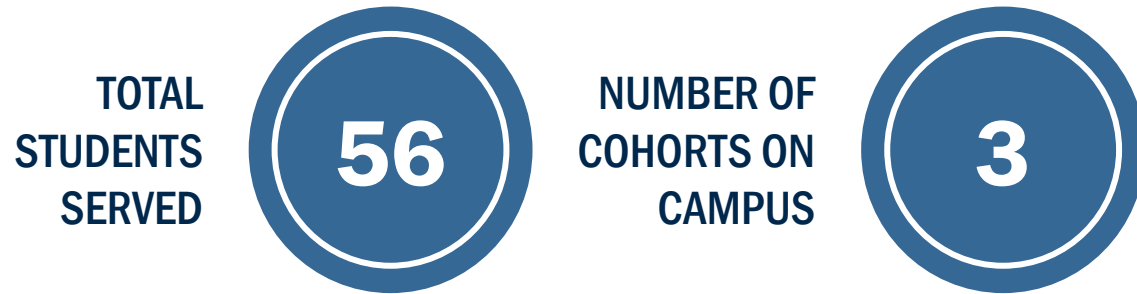


I was part of the first cohort of Kessler Scholars at Cornell University, and I feel like **it's made a huge impact on my college experience.** I feel like it's connected me with other students who have similar experiences, and I had a mentor as a first-year student that was really supportive and a great resource to me.

- CORNELL UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

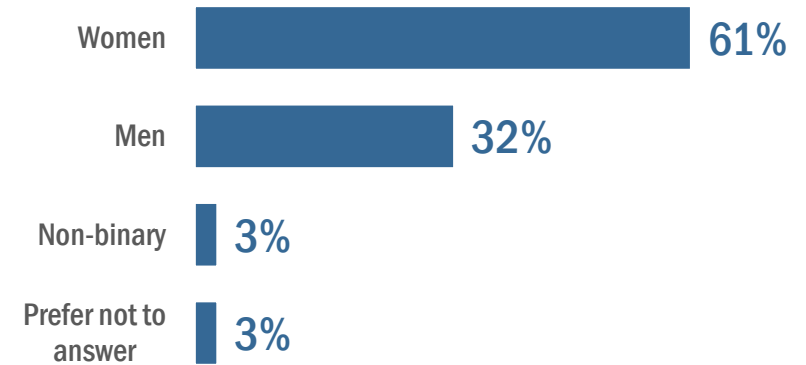


2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics

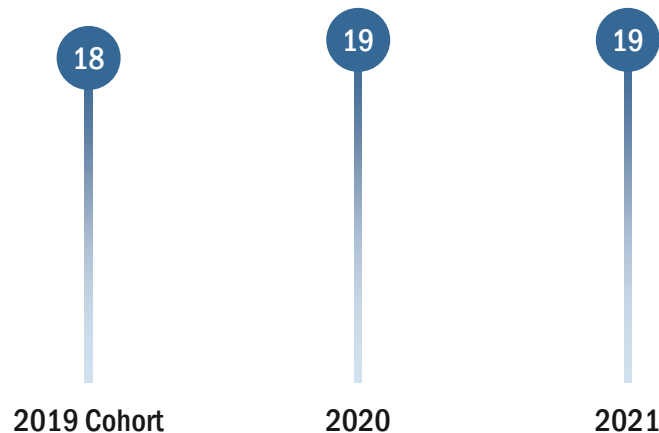


PROPORTION OF STUDENTS BY GENDER (n =31)

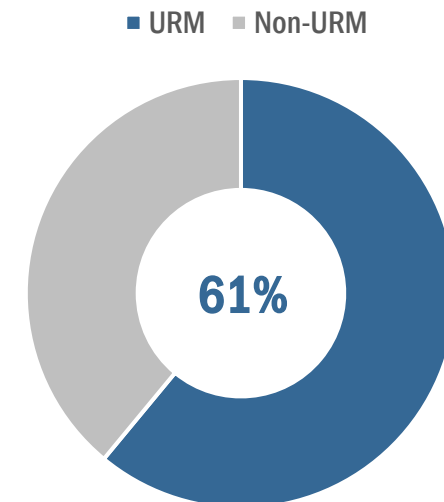
Of students who completed the spring 2022 survey



NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED BY COHORT



URM STATUS OF STUDENTS (n=31)



2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics



Program Profile

The Kessler Scholars Program began at Johns Hopkins University in 2020. All Scholars at Johns Hopkins have declared or anticipate to declare a social science or humanities program. The program is housed within the Center for Student Success within the Student Affairs department. During the 2021-22 academic year, the Cornell team included:

- Stephon Hamell, Director of Scholars and Fellows, Director of the Kessler Scholars
- Brent Fujioka, Assistant Director of Scholars and Fellows
- Katherine Barry, Assistant Director, National Fellowships Program

Johns Hopkins At-A-Glance

Johns Hopkins University is a mid-sized private nonprofit university in Baltimore, Maryland. The university is classified as a most selective research doctoral university.

- Undergraduate population: 5,752²
- Four-year graduation rate: 93%
- Proportion of Pell Grant-eligible students: 18%

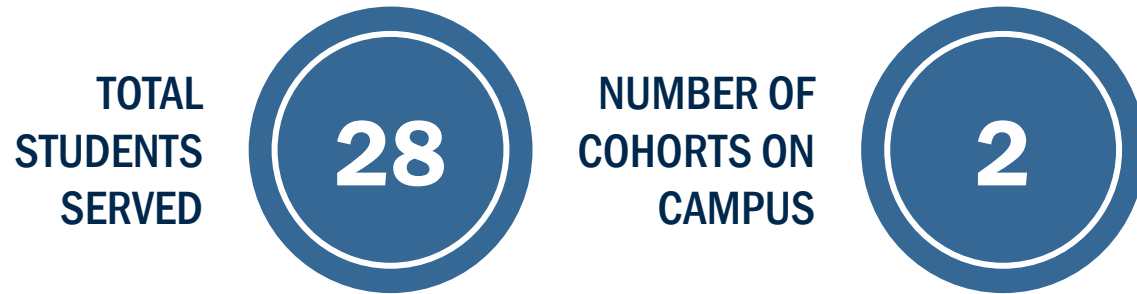


If I ever have a question or if I need any extra help or anything, if I have questions about a specific program, **I can always just walk next door and talk to [the Kessler Scholars staff],** which is really nice.

- JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

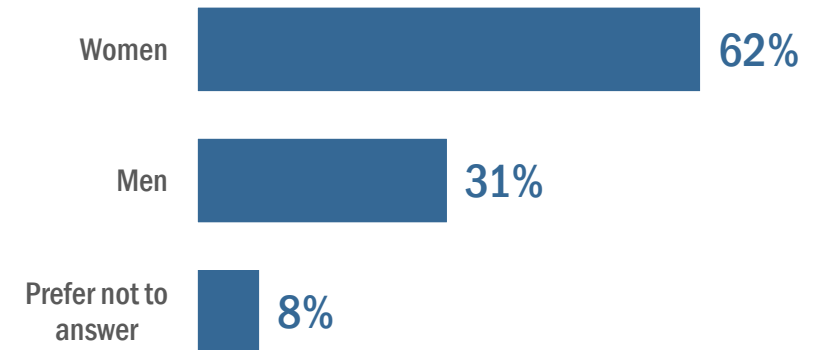


2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics

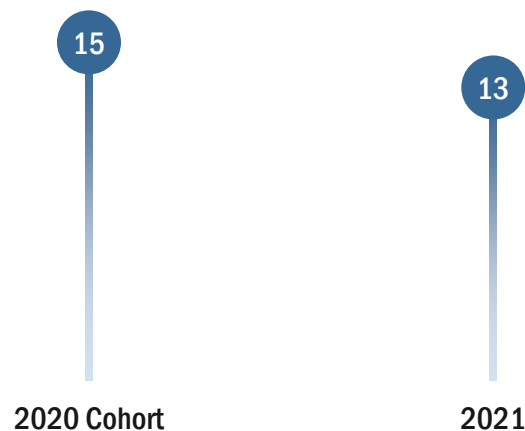


PROPORTION OF STUDENTS BY GENDER (n = 13)

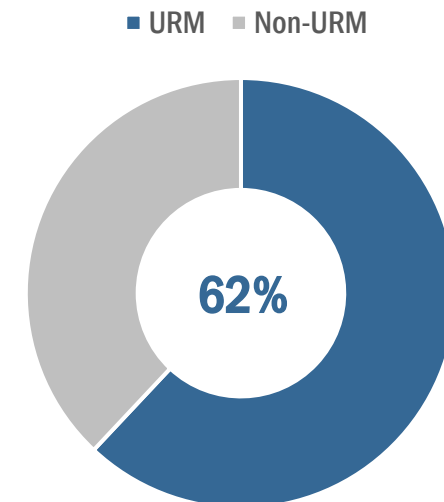
Of students who completed the spring 2022 survey



NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED BY COHORT



URM STATUS OF STUDENTS (n=13)



2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics



Program Profile

The Kessler Scholars Program began at Queens College, CUNY in 2020. Kessler Scholars Program was housed within Honors Programs during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 academic years. During the 2021-22 academic year, the Queens College team included:

- Barbara Simerka, Director of Transfer Honors Program, Professor of Spanish
- Selma Skrijelj, Program Coordinator and Student Success Mentor

Queens At-A-Glance

Queens College is a large public college in Queens, New York. The college is classified as a master's college with a predominantly undergraduate enrollment. Quick facts:

- Undergraduate population: 15,735²
- Four-year graduation rate: 56%
- Proportion of Pell Grant-eligible students: 58%



All the workshops and all the classes, it happens because of the community that Kessler created...without [Kessler Scholars staff] and without all my peers, Kessler wouldn't be what it is...
the people that make up Kessler are the most important part.

- QUEENS COLLEGE SCHOLAR

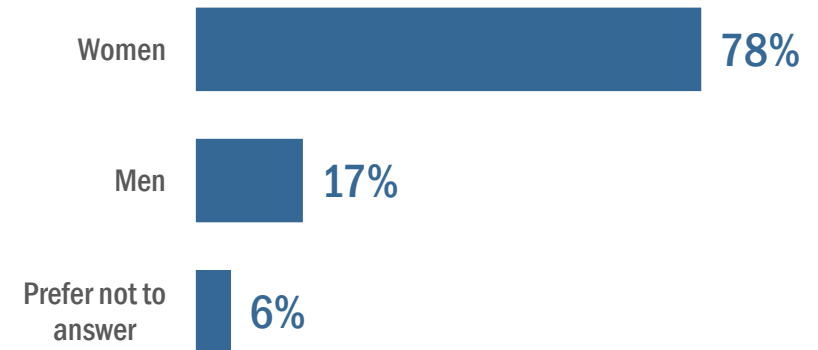


2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics

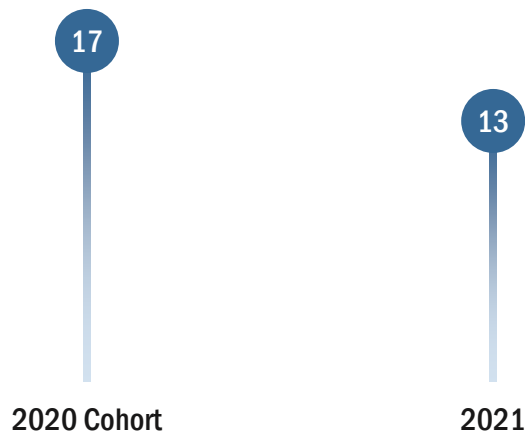


PROPORTION OF STUDENTS BY GENDER (n = 18)

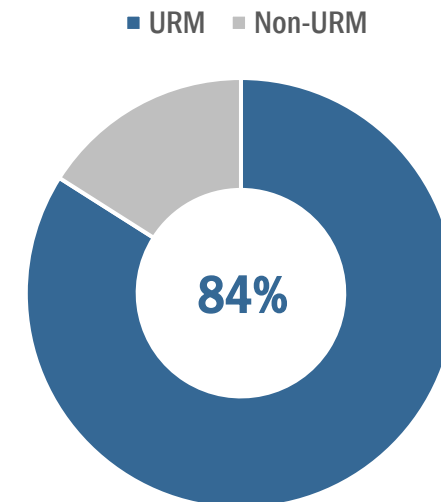
Of students who completed the spring 2022 survey



NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED BY COHORT



URM STATUS OF STUDENTS (n=18)



2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics



Program Profile

The McGuire Scholars Program began at St. Francis College in 2015 and joined the Collaborative in 2020. The program is a part of the Endowed Fellowships Program and resides within the Center for Student Success. During the 2021-22 academic year, the St. Francis team included:

- Anthony Desiderio, Special Program Coordinator/McGuire Scholar Advisor
- Kelsey Ketelsen, Senior Admissions Counselor
- Monica Michalski, AVP of Student Support and Academic Operations

St. Francis At-A-Glance

St. Francis College is a mid-sized private nonprofit university in Brooklyn Heights, New York. It is a primarily non-residential baccalaureate college.

Quick facts:

- Undergraduate population: 2,637²
- Four-year graduation rate: 53%
- Proportion of Pell Grant-eligible students: 52%



I feel that the McGuire Scholars Program has provided me with a community. **At any time, I know that I have a support.** I feel special, not entitled, but just seen, set apart. I can get the help I need.

- ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE SCHOLAR

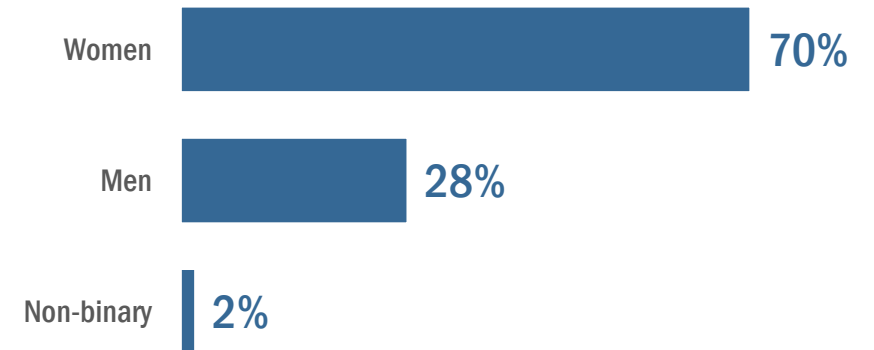


2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics

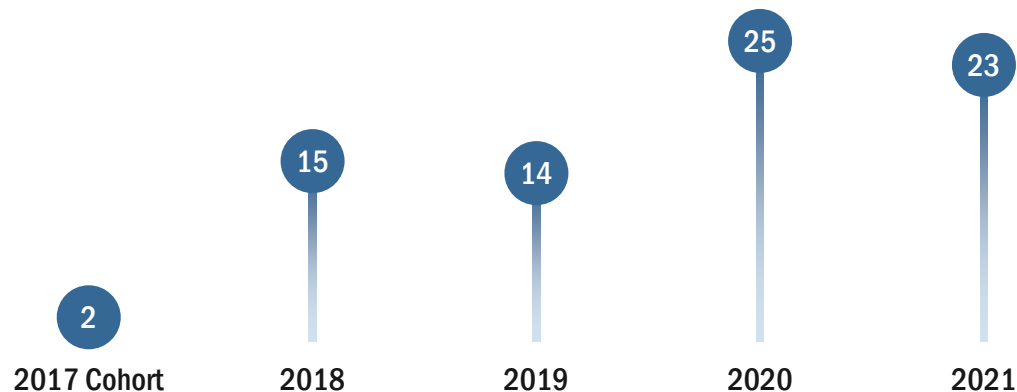


PROPORTION OF STUDENTS BY GENDER (n = 50)

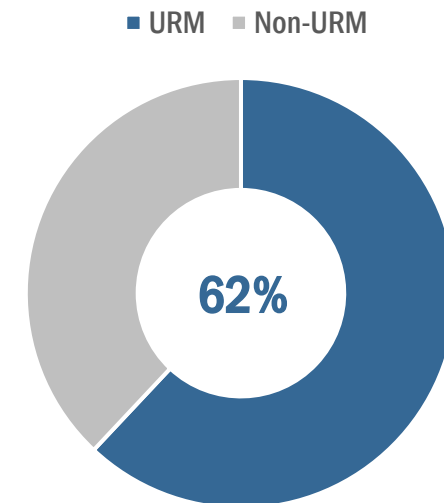
Of students who completed the spring 2022 survey



NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED BY COHORT



URM STATUS OF STUDENTS (n=50)



2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics



Program Profile

The Kessler Scholars Program began at Syracuse University in 2020. The Kessler Program is housed within the Office of Multicultural Affairs within the Division of Enrollment and the Student Experience. During the 2021-22 academic year, the Syracuse University team included:

- Huey Hsiao, Associate Director, Office of Multicultural Affairs
- Victoria Munley, Academic Program Specialist
- Breana Nieves Vergara, Coordinator of Mentoring Programs, Office of Multicultural Affairs

Syracuse At-A-Glance

Syracuse University is a mid-sized private nonprofit university in Syracuse, New York. The university is classified as a more selective doctoral university with very high levels of research activity. Quick facts:

- Undergraduate population: 14,242²
- Four-year graduation rate: 82%
- Proportion of Pell Grant-eligible students: 14%



I feel like Kessler gave me **a sense of community since the first day**. And I think that every first-generation student should have that because it's already hard enough trying to navigate college...I really appreciate Kessler and I think that other first-generation students should have that opportunity.

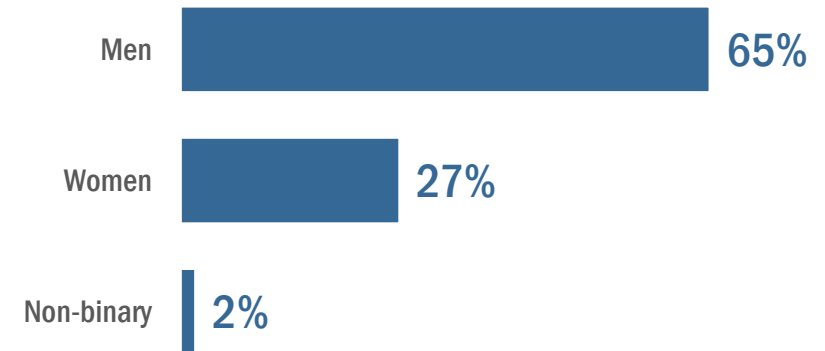
- SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR



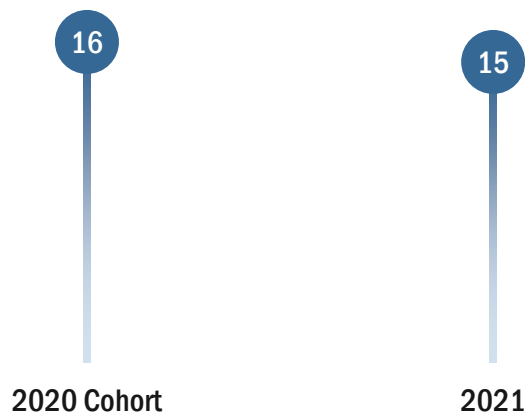
2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics



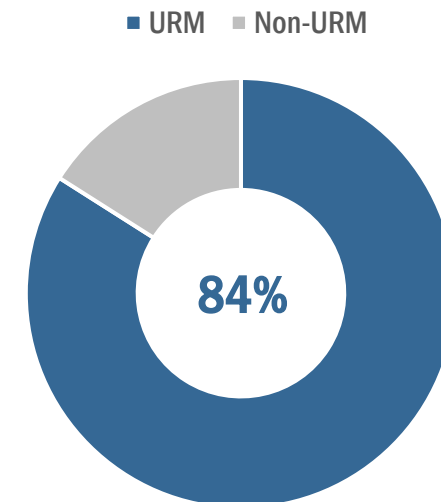
PROPORTION OF STUDENTS BY GENDER (n =26)
Of students who completed the spring 2022 survey



NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED BY COHORT



URM STATUS OF STUDENTS (n=26)



2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics



Program Profile

The Kessler Scholars Program began at the University of Michigan in 2008 as a traditional scholarship award. The scholarship then transitioned to provide cohort-based scholarship programming for students in 2017. The program sits in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. During the 2021-22 academic year, the U-M team included:

- Gail Gibson, Director
- Anna Maria Flores, Associate Director
- Kayla Skinner-Roy, Student Support Coordinator

Michigan At-A-Glance

The University of Michigan is a large, highly selective public university in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Quick facts:

- Undergraduate population: 31,189²
- Four-year graduation rate: 92%
- Proportion of Pell Grant-eligible students: 18%



The Kessler Scholars Program supported me the most by showing me that I am not alone in how I feel as a first-generation college student and offered me support through the adjustment process. The community I found within the Kessler Scholars Program is the **most supportive community I have encountered on campus**, and I was able to meet many like minded people.

- UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SCHOLAR

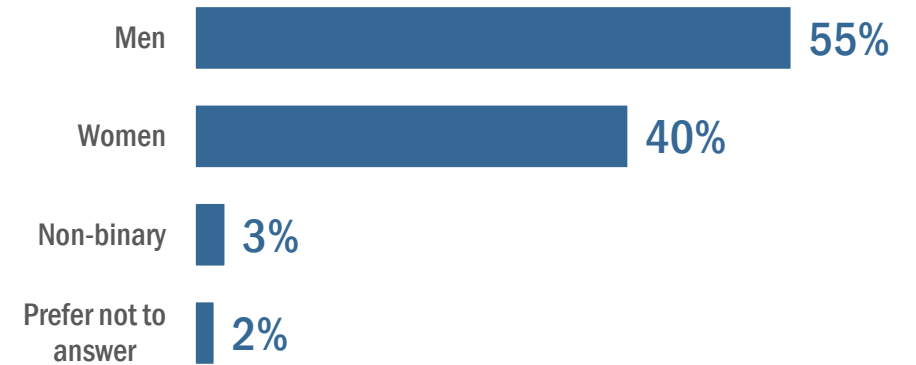


2021-22 Institution Context & Demographics

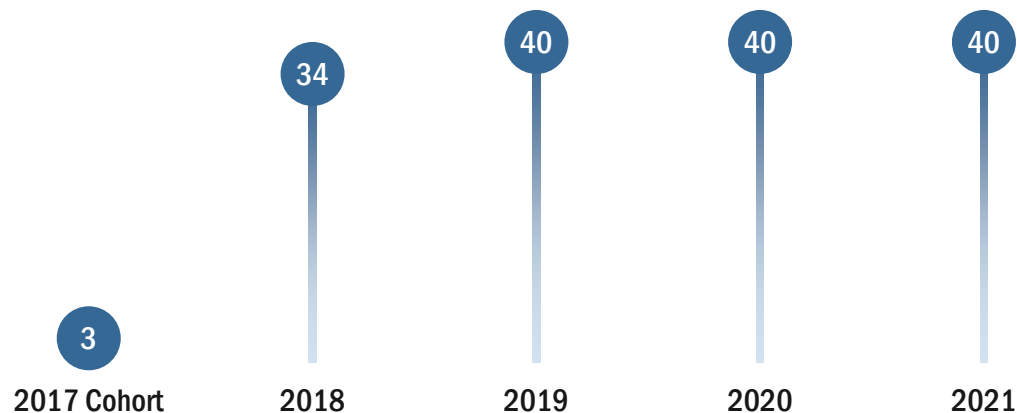


PROPORTION OF STUDENTS BY GENDER (n = 113)

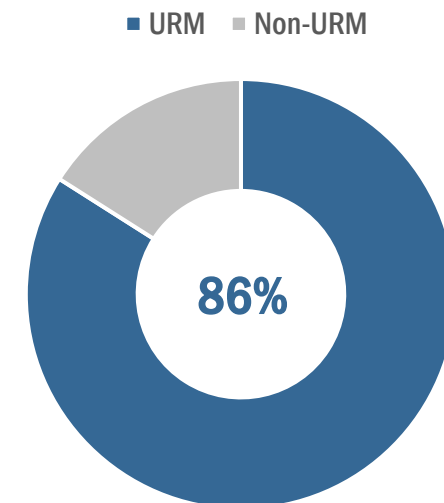
Of students who completed the spring 2022 survey



NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED BY COHORT



URM STATUS OF STUDENTS (n=113)



2

Student Outcomes

2021-22 academic year evaluation measured student outcomes across six domains of student development.



Overview

The Kessler Scholars Collaborative has identified six core areas of student development that inform programming. The goal of the program is for participating students to develop competencies in these areas.

The findings presented relate to the 2021-22 academic year and are drawn from analysis of surveys conducted at the beginning of the 2021 Fall Semester and end of the 2022 Spring Semester, as well as twelve student focus groups conducted in February and March 2022.



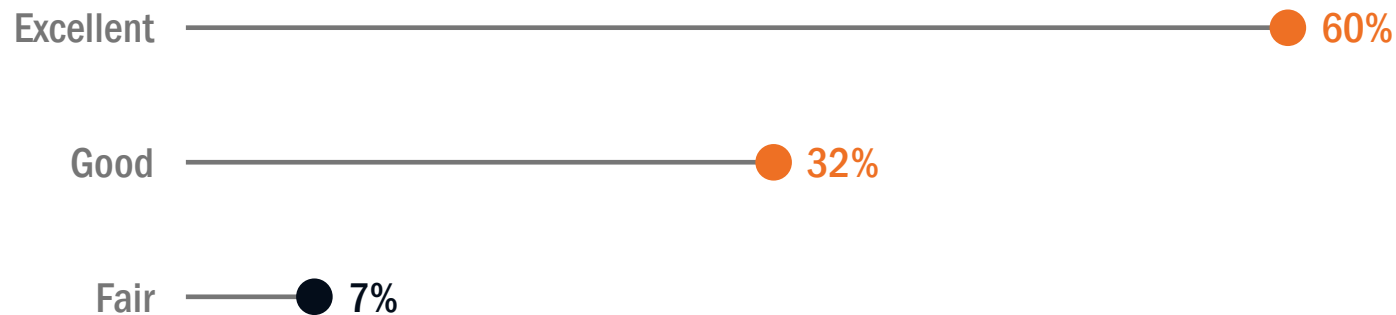
Student Experience

Students' general experience in the Kessler Scholars Program underpins their ability to achieve outcomes in the six program domains.

When discussing student experience, we describe the general quality of experience—including how positive or negative it has been—as well as students' sense of belonging and mattering within their institution and the program.

PROGRAM SATISFACTION

In total, **92%** of Kessler Scholars rated their experience as **good or excellent**. (n=255)



Scholars who participated in focus groups described the **Kessler Scholars Program** as...

“a **security** blanket”

“people you can **rely** on”

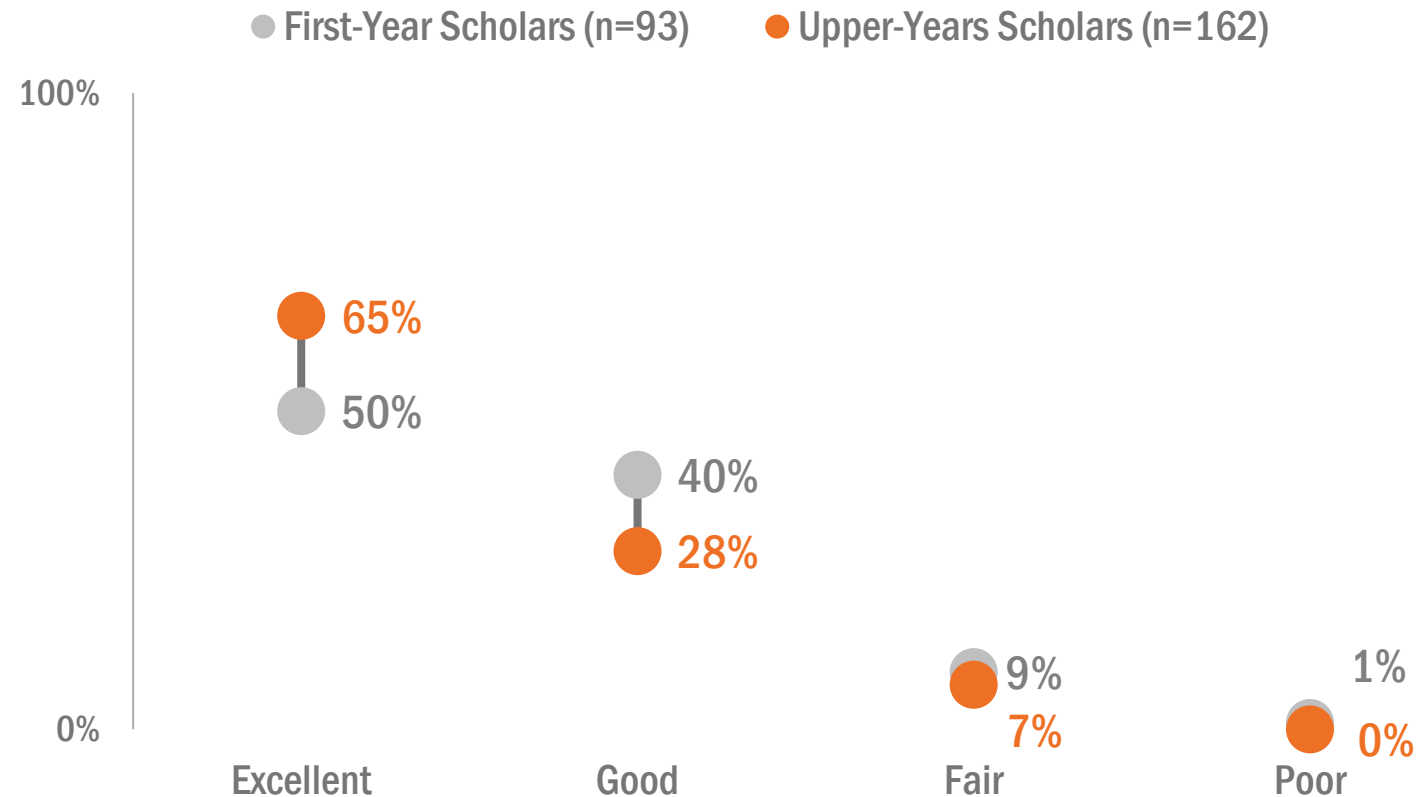
“a **support** group”

“a **family**”

Student Experience

PROGRAM SATISFACTION

A greater percentage of **upper-years Scholars** rated their experience with the program as **excellent** compared with first-year Scholars.



Student Experience

SENSE OF BELONGING & COMMUNITY

Scholars who participated in focus groups in February and March 2022 frequently said that the Kessler Scholars Program provides them with a community. The community of other Kessler Scholars, Kessler Scholars staff, peer mentors, and Kessler Scholars alumni is interconnected with other student outcomes. Students described how the community makes them feel supported and like they belong on campus. Additionally, Scholars described how the community helps them navigate college, connects them to resources, including mental health and academic support, and provides a chance to develop leadership skills.



That community is really what makes Kessler Program so amazing. I personally don't think I would've found that **community** and that family-like atmosphere if it wasn't for that program...and it helped to **motivate me to keep going**.

- QUEENS COLLEGE SCHOLAR

For me, I feel like my entire experience at St. Francis College would've been completely different if I never was a part of the McGuire family. The very first person I met was [McGuire Scholars staff], and I've known him ever since. I think it really means a lot to me that someone who's been around the entire time has reminded me that **I'm not alone** during my difficult times here.

- ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE SCHOLAR



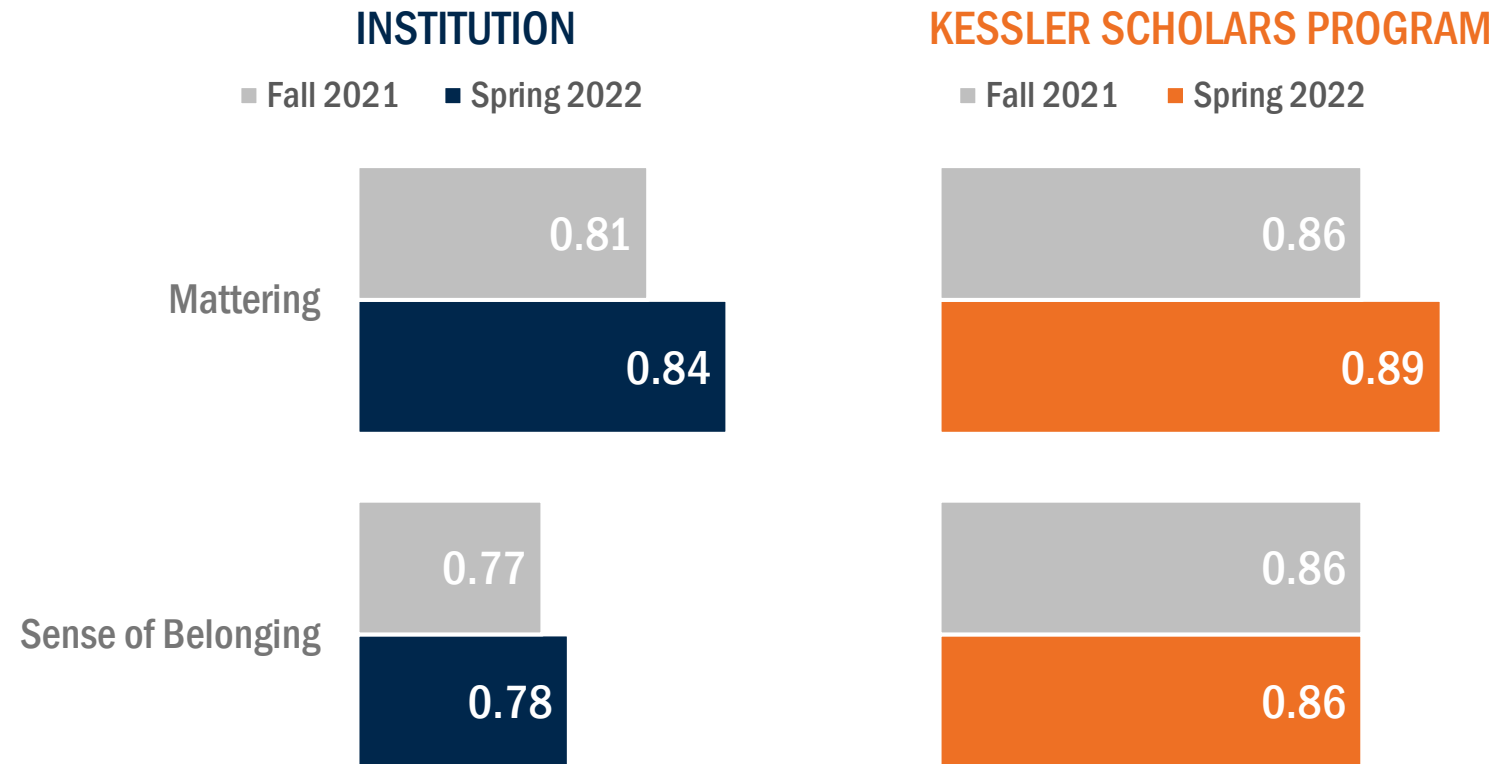
I come from a low socioeconomic background, which I find that a lot of the other Kessler Scholars also share that identity with me. It was nice to have a community where I felt like I could look to my left and right and I knew at least **somebody would share a similar experience**. Sometimes when I am on campus and interacting with some of the more wealthy students, there's just a disconnect in understanding of how you interact with the world. So having that community of people that were more **in tune with my identity** and my personal experience was really helpful.”

- UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SCHOLAR

Student Experience

SENSE OF BELONGING & MATTERING

Scholars' average sense of belonging and mattering to their institution **increased** from the fall 2021 to the spring 2022 surveys. (n = 227)



“

With the community that you build with the Kessler Program, and obviously with your mentors and Kessler staff, you get a **sense of a small family**.

- SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

”

1 College Navigation and Academic Skill Development

The Kessler Scholars Program aims to improve students' ability to navigate collegiate structures and processes and manage academic demands. The findings below represent a qualitative analysis of 2022 Scholar focus group and survey responses.

● First-Year Experience

Kessler Scholars described the ways the Kessler Scholars Program supported their first-year college transition by providing a supportive community, connecting them to resources on campus, introducing them to other first-generation, low-income students.

“ It let me know I'm not alone in this. It gave me great friends and even better **people to lean on** when trouble comes or when I truly need help.

- SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

● College Navigation

Consistently across all institutions, students described how the program helped them navigate college and supported their transition to college in their freshman year. Much of this was associated with the support of their Kessler Scholars staff and peers as well as connections to resources across campus.

“ The Kessler Scholars Program was helpful in giving me support and resources regarding my major choice and future plans. Kessler Scholars also provided me with a lot of **information on campus resources** and support that are available to me.

- JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

● Academic Skill Development

Discussion of academic skill development varied within and across institutions. Some students said they gained academic skills through participating in the program, while others did not report experiencing academic growth as a result of participating in the program.

“ I don't think there's much they can do for us academically [other] than just **point us in the right direction**, which they've done. There are so many resources, and I've used a lot of them, so I've done pretty well school-wise because of that.

- UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SCHOLAR

1 College Navigation and Academic Skill Development



[The first-year seminar] really helped **build up my confidence** for participation in class, because it made me realize that whatever I had to say was important. Those discussions really did help bring out my ideas and the things I had to say and made me realize that **my voice matters.**

- QUEENS COLLEGE SCHOLAR

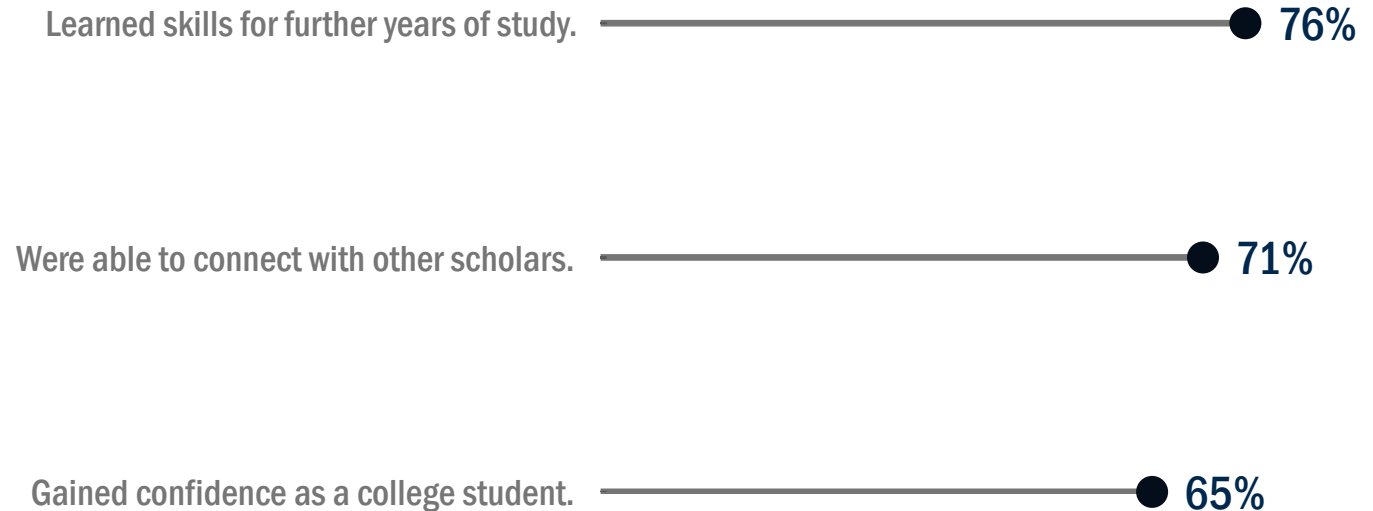


The Kessler Scholars Program supports first-year students in their transition to college, with peer mentoring offered to first-years at all institutions, and a first-year seminar offered at three institutions.

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

Most Scholars who participated in a first-year seminar agreed that it was a **valuable experience.** (n=62)

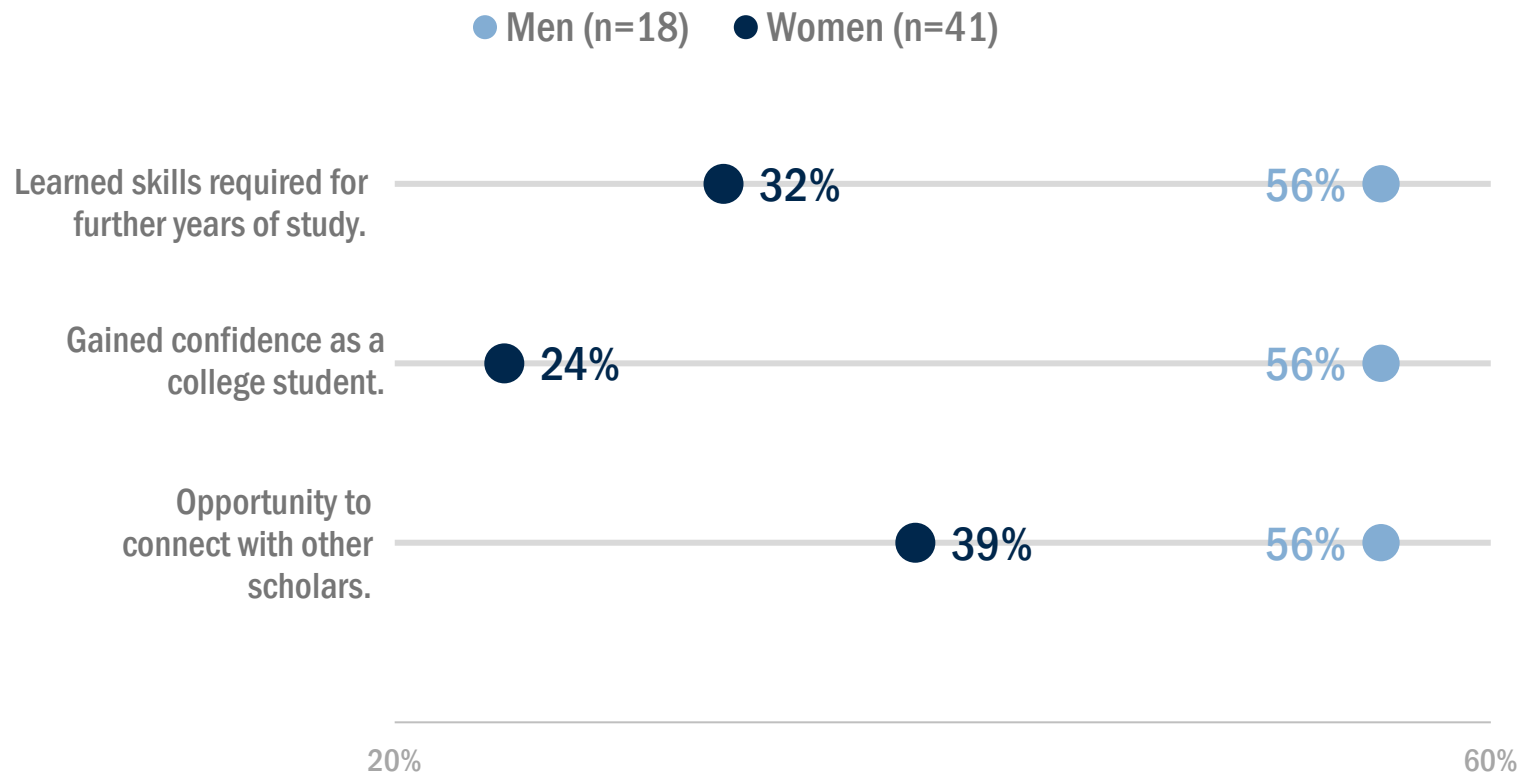
SCHOLARS REPORTED THAT AS A RESULT OF THE FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR THEY...



1 College Navigation and Academic Skill Development

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

Proportionally **more men** than women reported that, where offered, the first-year seminar was a **valuable experience**.



1 College Navigation and Academic Skill Development

EXPERIENCE WITH PEER MENTORS

Scholars who participated in focus groups described positive experiences with the peer mentoring component of the Kessler Scholars Program. Students described how their peer mentors helped them navigate college, connect to resources, and provided advice about navigating the college experience, both socially and academically. Some Scholars formed friendships with their peer mentors.

Scholars described the importance of having someone who understands their experience and discussed connecting with peer mentors over shared identities and interests, including being first-generation, low-income students or sharing similar academic majors.

Experiences with peer mentoring varied, with a couple of students expressing they did not feel as close to their peer mentor as compared to other students in their cohort.

“ I had a mentor, and it was really helpful just in terms of having conversations about specific similar struggles that you were going through [...] Knowing that **somebody else has had this experience** and they were able to get through it, and they can offer me resources and advice on how to do the same things.

- CORNELL UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

The most valuable aspect of the peer mentoring program was being able to **ask for advice** from a student with more experience than you and gaining insight into their knowledge.

- JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR



1 College Navigation and Academic Skill Development



My peer mentor has helped guide me a lot, tell me about things I didn't know, and just give me advice. And so that has made a big impact on my experience, and it's helped me a lot.

- UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SCHOLAR

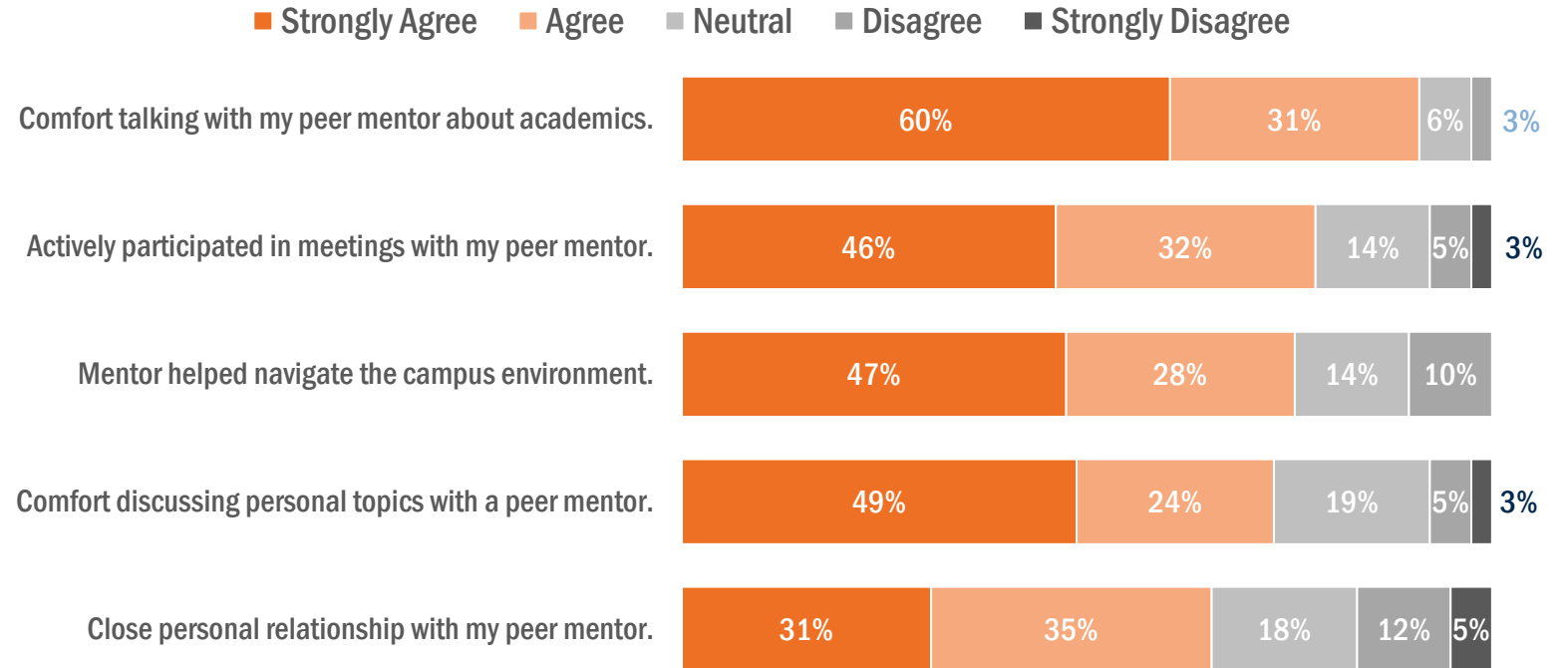


All six partner institutions offered peer mentorship opportunities for first-year Scholars.

EXPERIENCE WITH PEER MENTORS

Mentees reported forming **close relationships** with and receiving **high levels of support** from their mentors. (n=24)

SCHOLARS RATED THEIR LEVEL OF AGREEMENT WITH THE FOLLOWING:

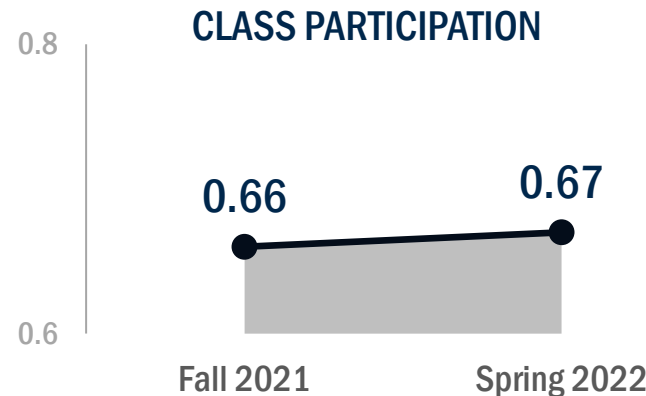
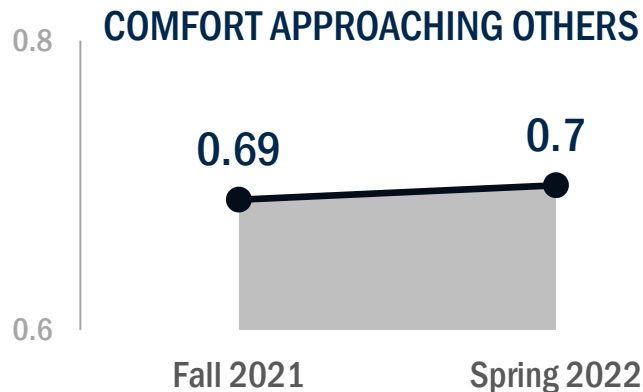
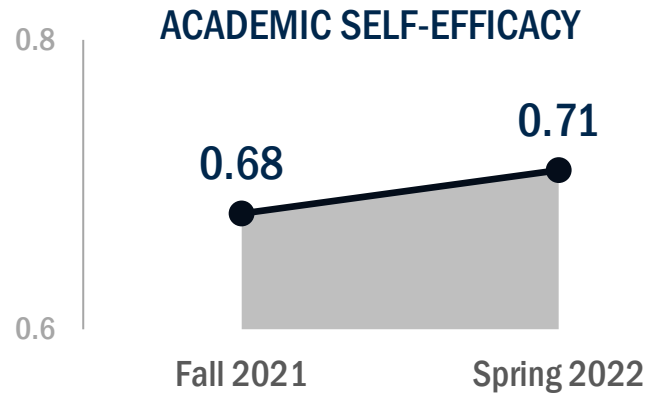


1 College Navigation and Academic Skill Development

Academic self-efficacy refers to a person's belief that they can successfully complete certain tasks. The fall 2021 and spring 2022 surveys asked Scholars to rate their perception of self-efficacy in certain school-based tasks at the beginning and end of the academic year.

ACADEMIC & SOCIAL SELF-EFFICACY

Scholars reported a **small increase** across all measured areas of self-efficacy. (n=227)



“

As an individual, I am a very isolated person. But with the McGuire Scholarship Program, I feel like it has pushed me to ask for help and to **not hesitate to reach out** whenever I need help or connect with other [St. Francis College Scholars] or speak to them. So it's been really helpful in helping me **come out of my comfort zone** and getting to know people and feel connected to them.

- ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE SCHOLAR

”

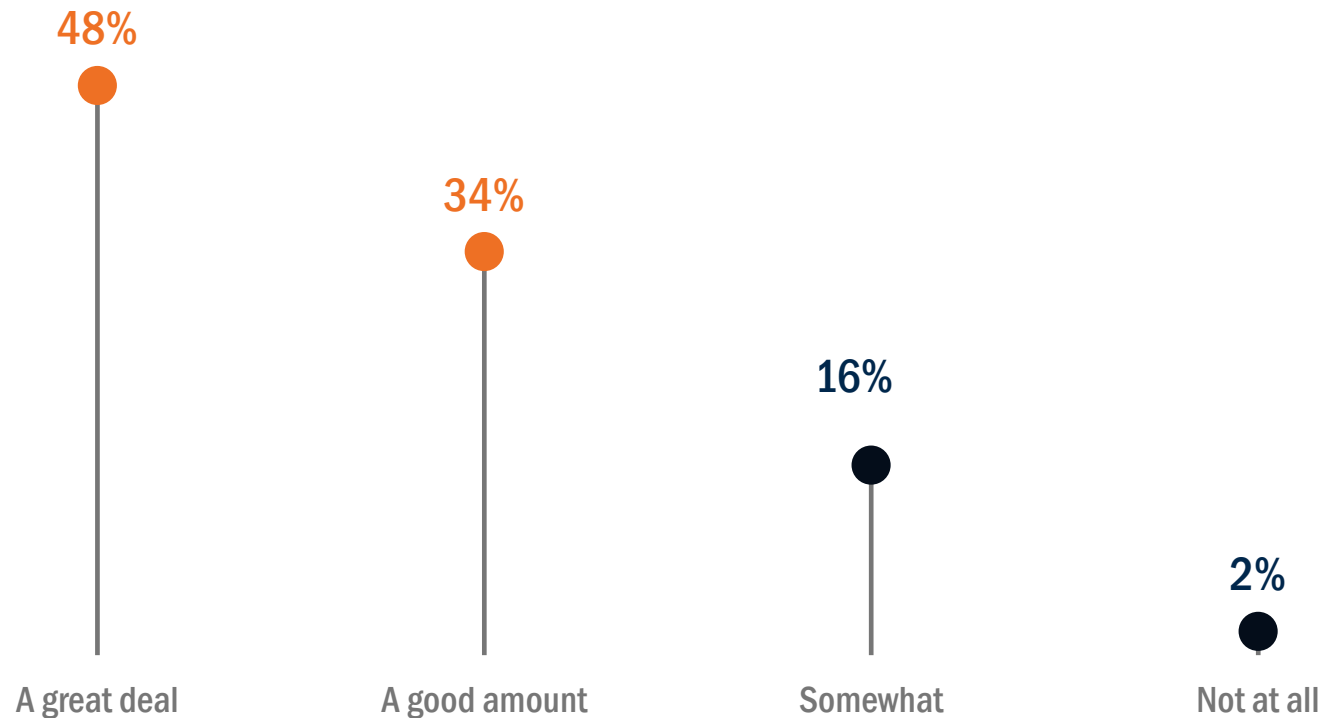
② Wellness and Social Emotional Development

The Kessler Scholars Program provides programming focused on increasing students' physical and emotional well-being and forming and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships.

In student focus groups, discussion of wellness and social emotional development varied across institutions. Some Scholars described how wellness programming and connections to mental health resources helped them focus on their mental health and wellness. Other students said that programming where they gained practical tools were particularly valuable.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

82% of Scholars reported that the program encouraged developing a **healthy lifestyle** for overall personal **wellness**. (n=254)



3 Self-Awareness and Identity Development

The Kessler Scholars Program provides programming aimed at fostering personal growth and students' abilities to articulate their values, beliefs, and strengths. The findings below represent a qualitative analysis of focus group and survey responses.

Increased Confidence and Asking for Help

Across all institutions, students described how the Kessler Scholars Program increased their confidence, their ability to speak up for themselves, and their comfort in asking for help.

“ I'm really shy, but then [the program] really helped me to get **out of my comfort zone**.

- QUEENS COLLEGE SCHOLAR

Personally, I feel **more confident** after joining Kessler.

- QUEENS COLLEGE SCHOLAR

Developing a First-Generation Identity

Some students shared that being a part of the program increased their pride in their first-generation identity, while others said that their participation did not change the way they viewed their identity.

“ I hold that identity really, really close to my heart. And I'm really, really **proud to be a first-gen student**. And I think most of us in Kessler are. I think Kessler has definitely shown us how to be proud if we weren't already proud of it.

- UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SCHOLAR

Shared Identities for Stronger Community

Students described how shared experiences and backgrounds, as well as a culture that supports vulnerability, allows them to connect with others in the program and build a strong community.

“ I feel like outside of the Kessler Scholars Program, I don't really know anyone from a similar background. It's really nice knowing that there's a **group of other students** here at Cornell who are also first-generation college students.

- CORNELL UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

3 Self-Awareness and Identity Development

SELF-EXPLORATION & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

78% of Scholars reported that the program helped facilitate their **self-exploration and personal development.** (n=253)



“

I'm someone who I don't know what I want do or what's my favorite subject, and I feel like having Kessler and all the mentors...they assure me, they're like, "Oh, it's okay. You can explore." And somebody to just **instill that confidence** in you that everything is okay and **you're still figuring it out**, I feel like I take that with me to different aspects of my life and I have a lot more confidence.

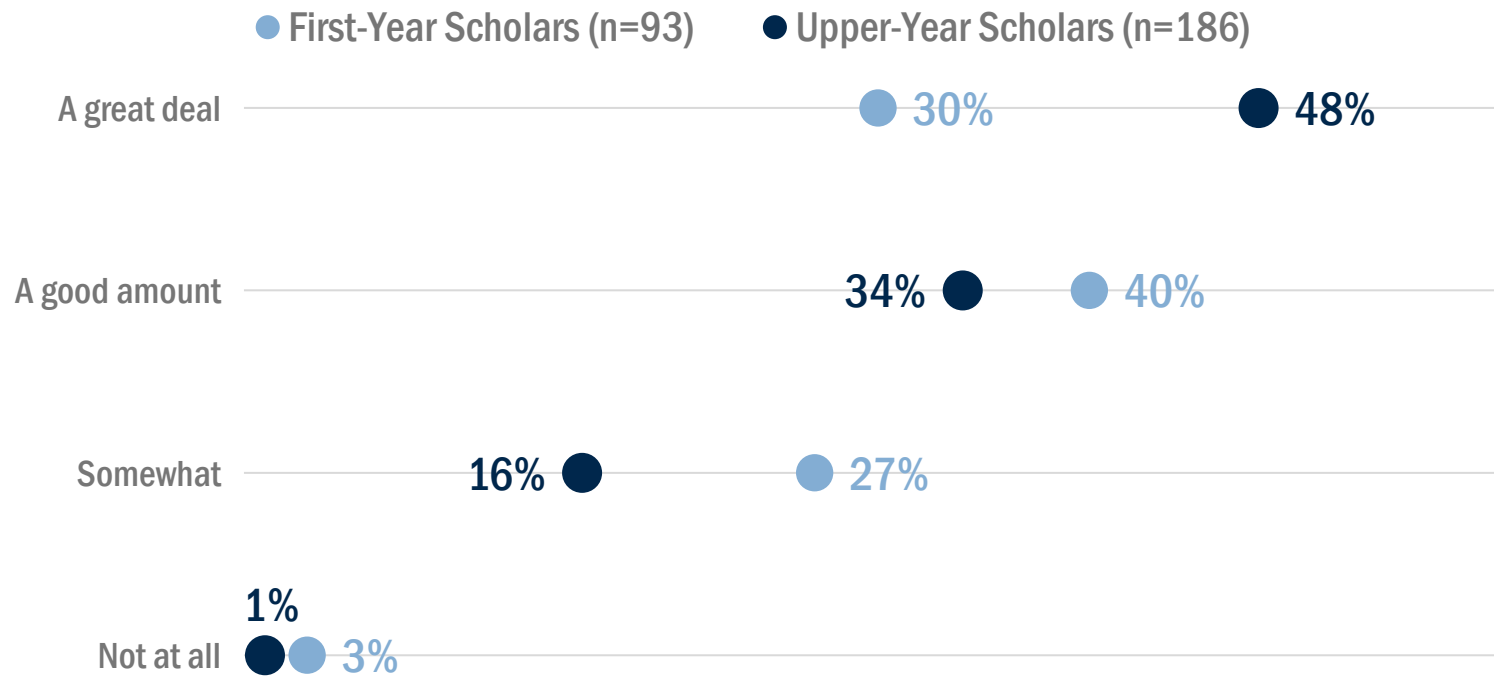
- QUEENS COLLEGE SCHOLAR

”

3 Self-Awareness and Identity Development

PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

A **greater proportion of upper-year Scholars** than first-year Scholars reported that the program facilitated their self-exploration and personal development **a great deal**.



4 Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility

The Kessler Scholars Program provides programming that cultivates students' civic, social, and empathic values, and commitment to service with and for others.

In focus groups, Scholars did not discuss civic engagement as often as other programming, though some students described how a volunteering requirement increased their commitment to serving the surrounding community. Between the fall 2021 and spring 2022 surveys there were no overall changes in reported civic engagement.



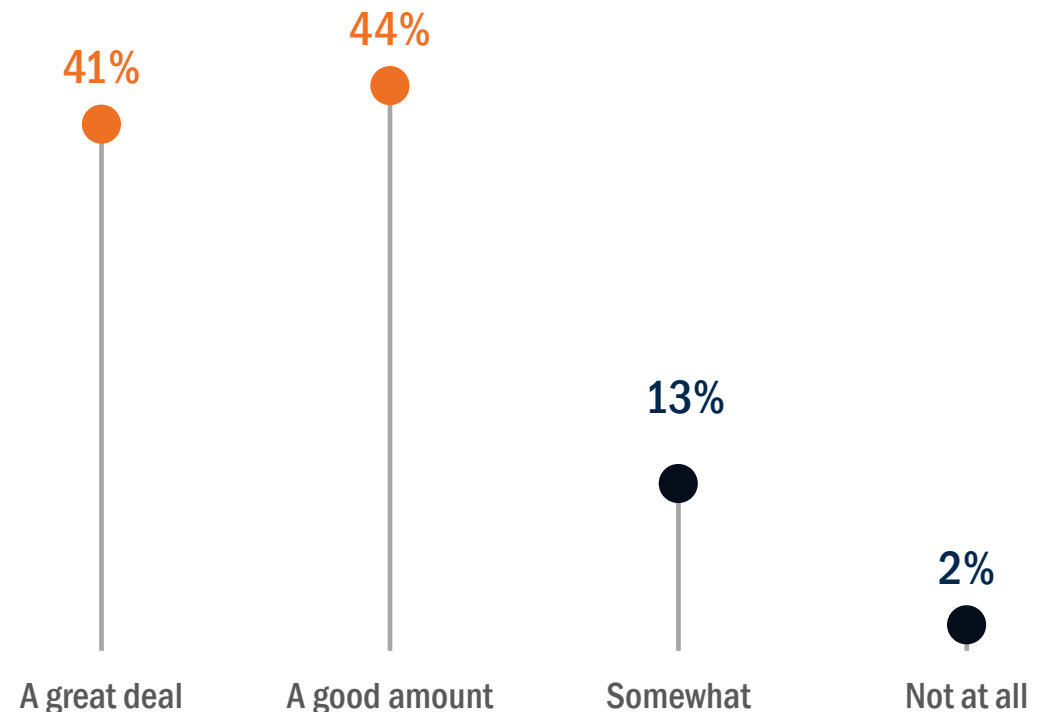
Pandemic Impact

Due to safety-related limitations to in-person programming that continued into the 2021-22 academic year, participating institutions were limited in their ability to offer civic engagement programming.

In focus groups, some students discussed how the pandemic made it difficult to find a location to fulfill their community service requirement.

CULTURAL & SOCIAL DIVERSITY

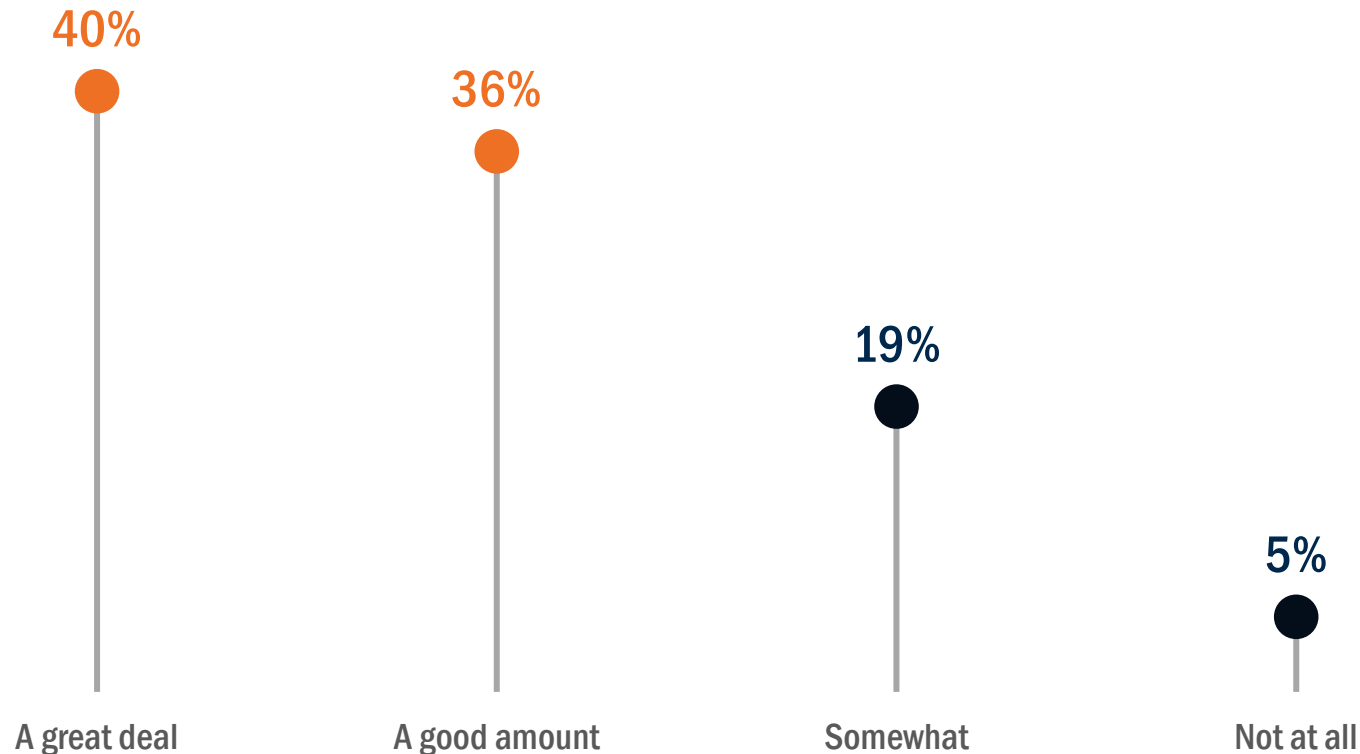
Nearly all Scholars reported that the program helped them have a **greater understanding** of cultural or social diversity. (n=253)



4 Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility

DISCUSSING SOCIAL ISSUES

76% of Scholars reported that the program helped them have **honest discussions** on racial and social issues. (n=255)



“

And we would also talk about current events, like Black Lives Matter and climate change and everything. And I feel like it really allowed us to **express our feelings** and talk about how we feel about these current issues.

- QUEENS COLLEGE SCHOLAR,
in reference to first-year seminar

”

5 Leadership Development

The Kessler Scholars Program provides programming that enables students to cultivate leadership skills and apply leadership practices through student-led activities. The findings below represent a qualitative analysis of focus group and survey responses.

Within the program

All institutions offer opportunities for students to serve as peer mentors to first-year students. During the 2021-22 academic year, three institutions also convened student advisory boards to provide greater student voice in program decisions.

Within and across institutions, Kessler Scholars provided mixed responses as to whether the program supported their leadership development. When students described leadership development, it was often through serving as a peer mentor or on an advisory board. Some students did not think the program had helped them develop leadership skills.

Leaders in their Families

Across institutions, students described being role models in their families for siblings, cousins, or nieces and nephews and being a resource for those pursuing college.

Beyond the program

The evaluation explored which leadership opportunities Scholars engaged in beyond the scope of Kessler Scholars programming.

Scholars described engagement in a range of leadership opportunities beyond the Kessler Scholars Program.



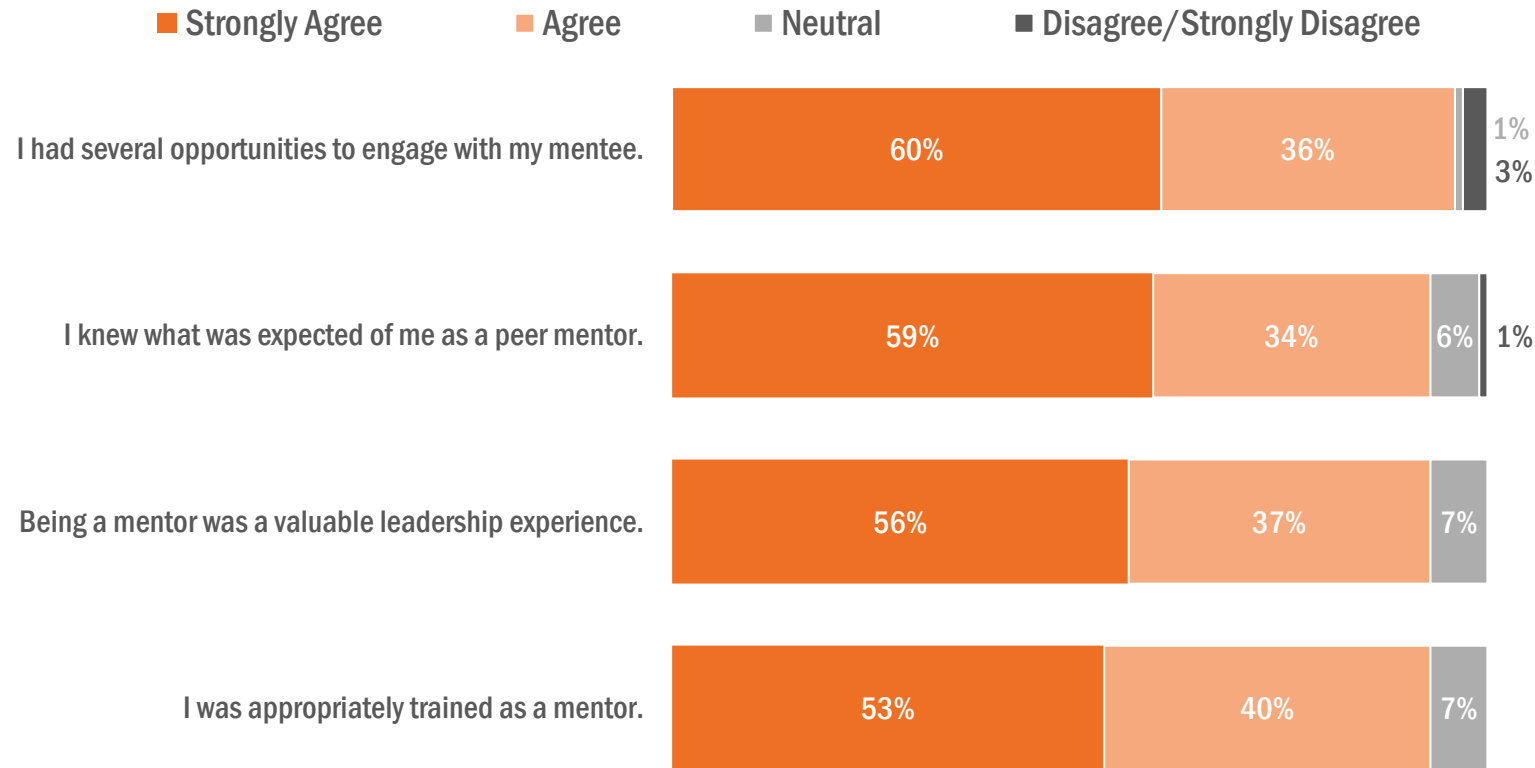
Examples

- Academic organizations, honor societies, and pre-professional organizations
- Multicultural organizations
- Service or advocacy organizations
- Creative and performing arts organizations
- Sports and recreation organizations

5 Leadership Development

PEER MENTOR EXPERIENCE

Nearly all peer mentors agreed that they were **well prepared** and had a **valuable experience**. (n=68)



Both having a mentor, but also **being a mentor** has been a really **rewarding experience** for me and something that I've really loved to do.

- CORNELL UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

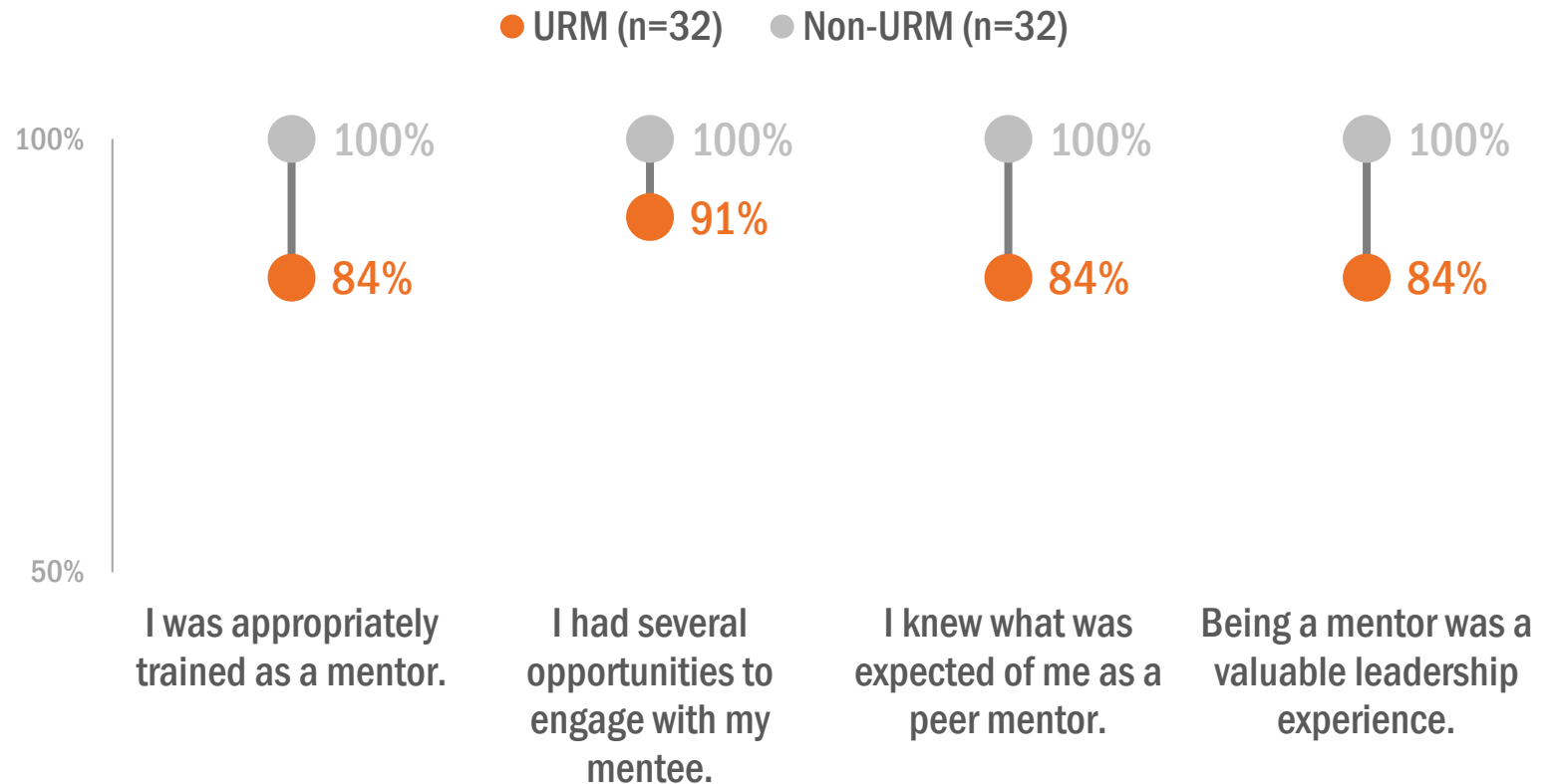


5 Leadership Development



PEER MENTOR EXPERIENCE

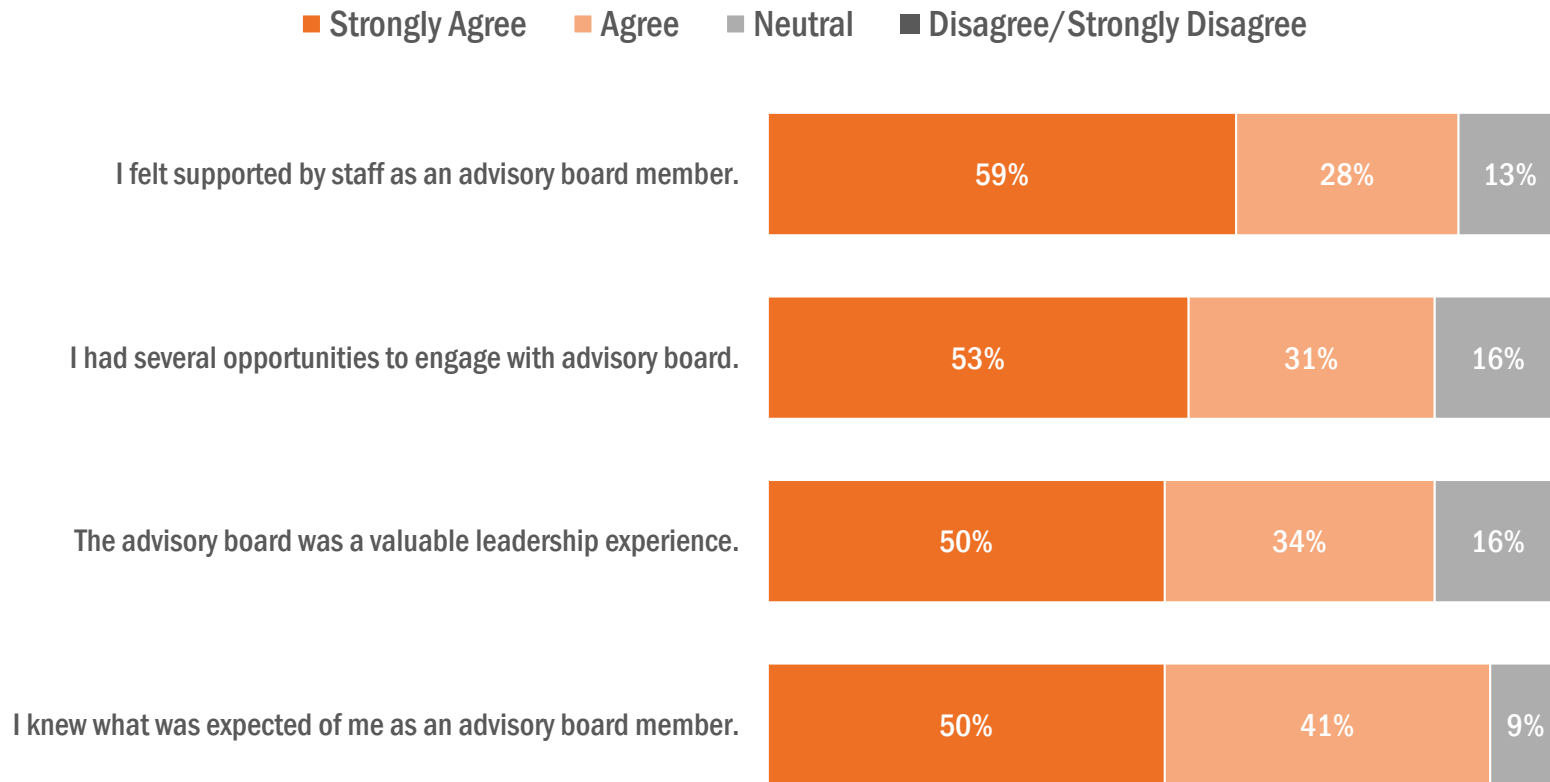
A **smaller percentage of URM** peer mentors agreed that they were appropriately trained and had a positive experience as a peer mentor.



5 Leadership Development

ADVISORY BOARD EXPERIENCE

Advisory board members tended to **strongly agree** that that they were **well prepared** and had a **valuable experience**. (n=32)



That board itself has helped produce different **leadership and professional abilities** in myself that I plan to carry with me in my career, from presenting to event coordination to directly working with my own peers in my cohort and Kessler Scholars at large.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
SCHOLAR



6 Career and Professional Development

The Kessler Scholars Program provides programming that aims to cultivate skills and experiences that promote students' career aspirations and professional development.

During focus groups, Scholars at all institutions described career and professional development outcomes. The type of outcome varied by institution. Examples include writing resumes, being connected to mentors in their career fields, or learning about new opportunities related to their interests. Students also described feeling more confident in exploring and pursuing career aspirations.



I would not have thought to think ahead past my first-year for my future plans and career goals. Going to college, there is a lot to take in, so **having an extra advisor** making sure I am on the right track was super **wonderful**.

- JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR

[The Kessler Scholars staff] put me in contact with a woman who is also African American, just like me. So, I felt it was very comforting too to talk to her about "what struggles did she go along with in her career path?" I feel it **really helped me to not feel alone**.

- SCHOLAR, school not named to avoid identifying student

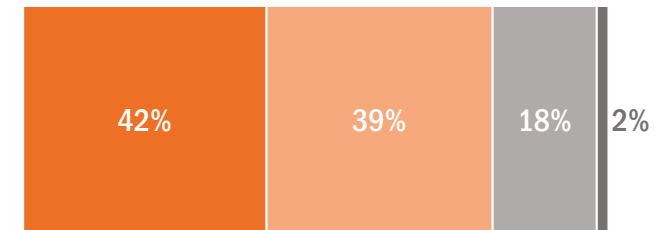
PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

Nearly all Scholars reported that the program facilitated their **academic and career planning**.

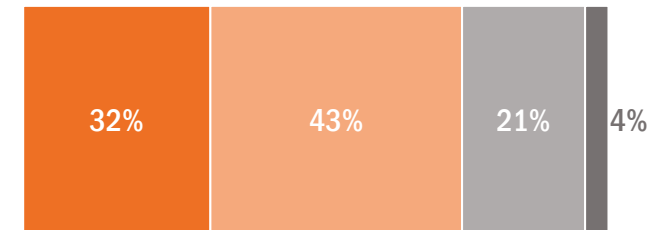
■ A great deal ■ A good amount ■ Somewhat ■ Not at all

To what extent did the program..

Help facilitate academic exploration and planning (n=254)



Help facilitate career exploration and planning (n=252)



6 Career and Professional Development



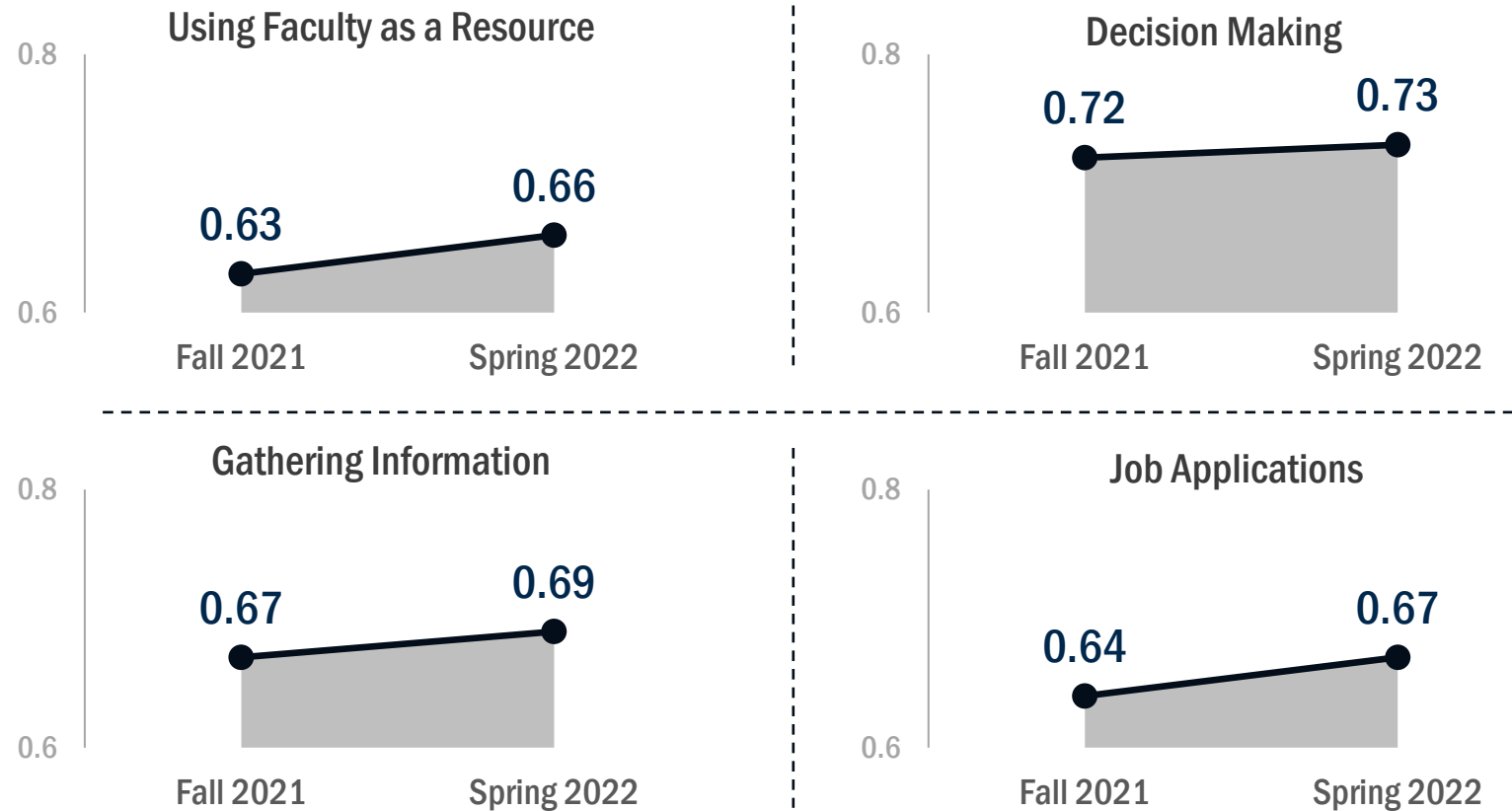
I usually don't take opportunities to apply for internships because I always get discouraged. But then [the Kessler Scholars staff] really helped me to **set up my resume** and my recommendation letter, and really helped me to **practice my interviewing skills**. So that really changed so much for me.

- QUEENS COLLEGE SCHOLAR



CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

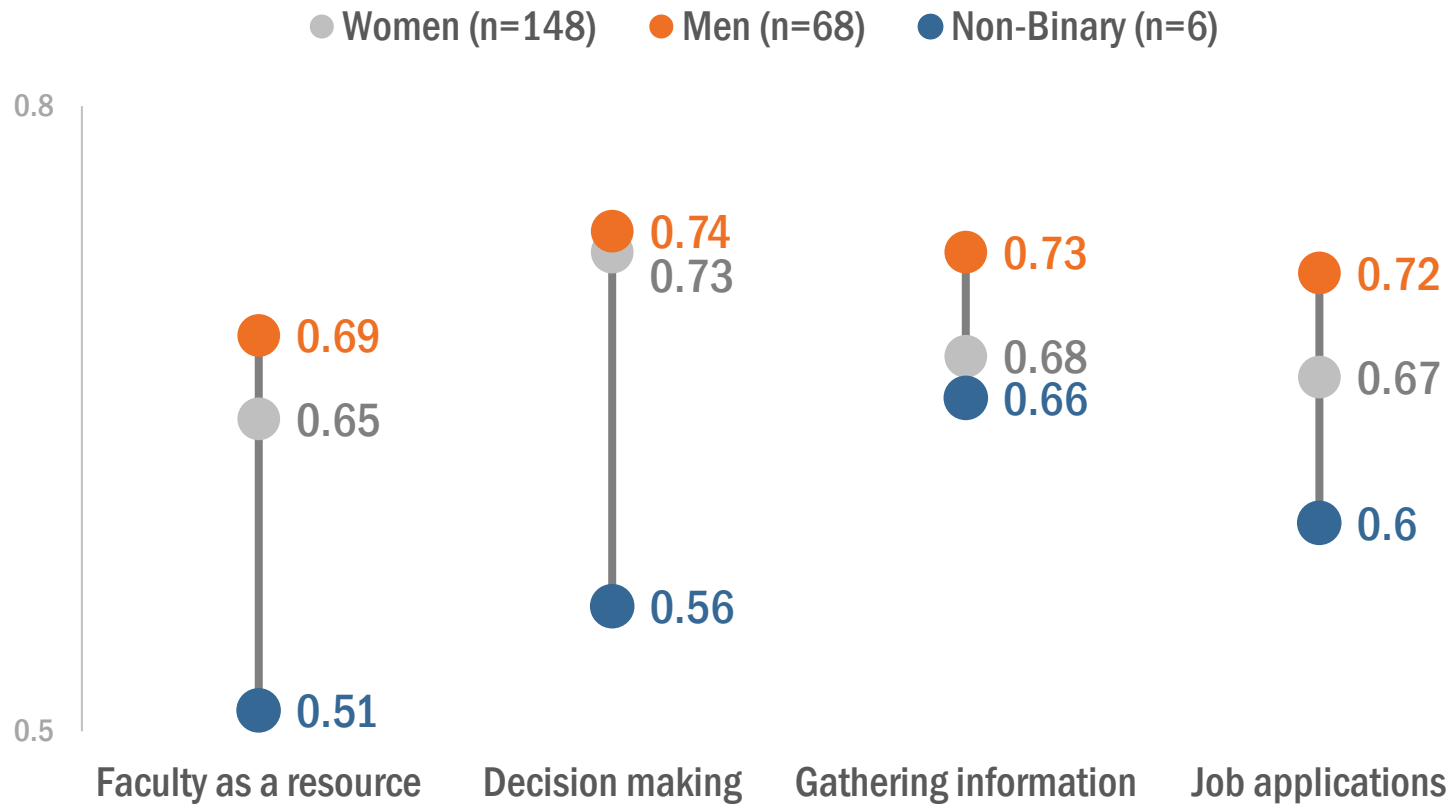
Scholars reported a **small increase** in all measured areas of **career and professional development** between the fall 2021 and spring 2022 surveys. (n=227)



6 Career and Professional Development

CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Men reported the **highest levels of confidence** across all measured areas of career and professional development.



6 Career and Professional Development

GRADUATING SENIORS

In the 2021-22 academic year, two institutions have graduating seniors: the University of Michigan and St. Francis College. In the spring 2022 survey, graduating seniors described how the Kessler Scholars Program prepared them for post-college plans by helping them

- Develop **confidence** in themselves and their career paths,
- Strengthen their **leadership** and **professional skills**, and
- Provide tangible support with **graduate program applications** or **resumes**.

Some graduating seniors said that they would like more opportunities to connect with alumni in their career fields of interest or more workshops to learn about post-graduation pathways, such as graduate school or less traditional pathways.

“ The Kessler Scholars Program has **been there for me along my entire journey through college**, giving me limitless opportunities and support to reach the goals I set for myself and being there to inspire my own passions for mentorship and leadership. In my decision to pursue my plans after graduating, the Kessler Scholars Program has been there to help me when I questioned my own interests and doubted my abilities to succeed in what I was doing. I took the lessons I learned and advice I received about my identity as a first-generation college student pursuing **goals my family and I never before thought were possible** and made the most of the opportunities thrown my way.

- UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SCHOLAR

6 Career and Professional Development



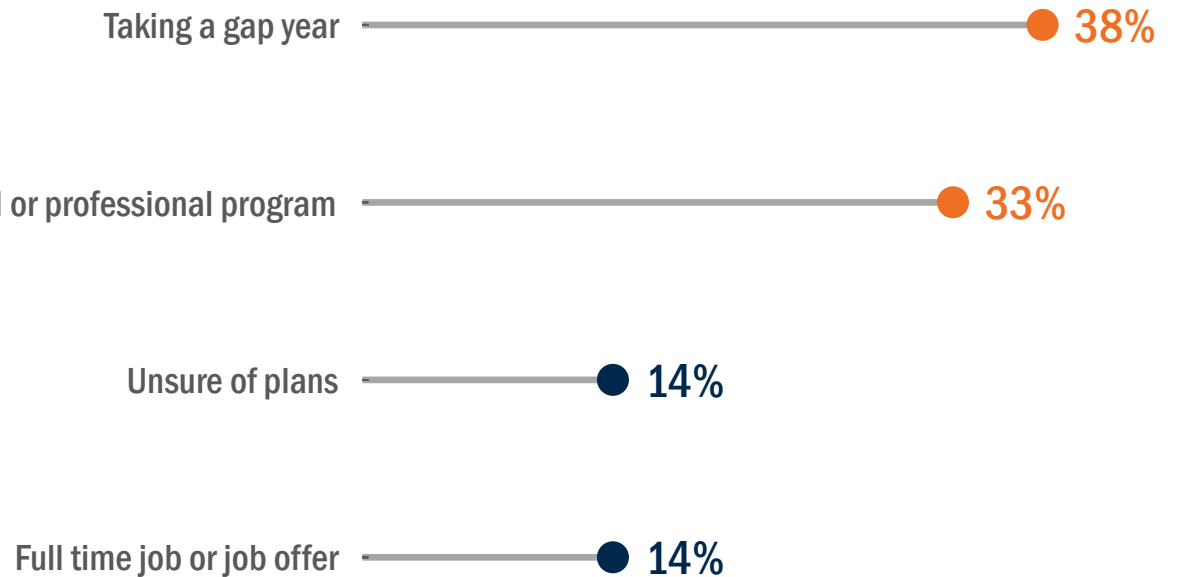
I feel the program has prepared me with **leadership skills** that I can implement into my future plans. It has also provided me with the **confidence to do what I want to do** with my career and life.

- ST. FRANCIS COLLEGE SCHOLAR



POST-GRADUATION PLANS

38% of graduating seniors plan to take a **gap year** upon graduating, and **33%** plan on continuing their **formal education**. (n=21)



High-Impact Practices

The Kessler Scholars Program has set a target for ninety percent of Scholars to complete at least one High-Impact Practice³ before they graduate.

All Scholars were asked about their participation or intent to participate in High-Impact Practices in the spring 2022 survey.

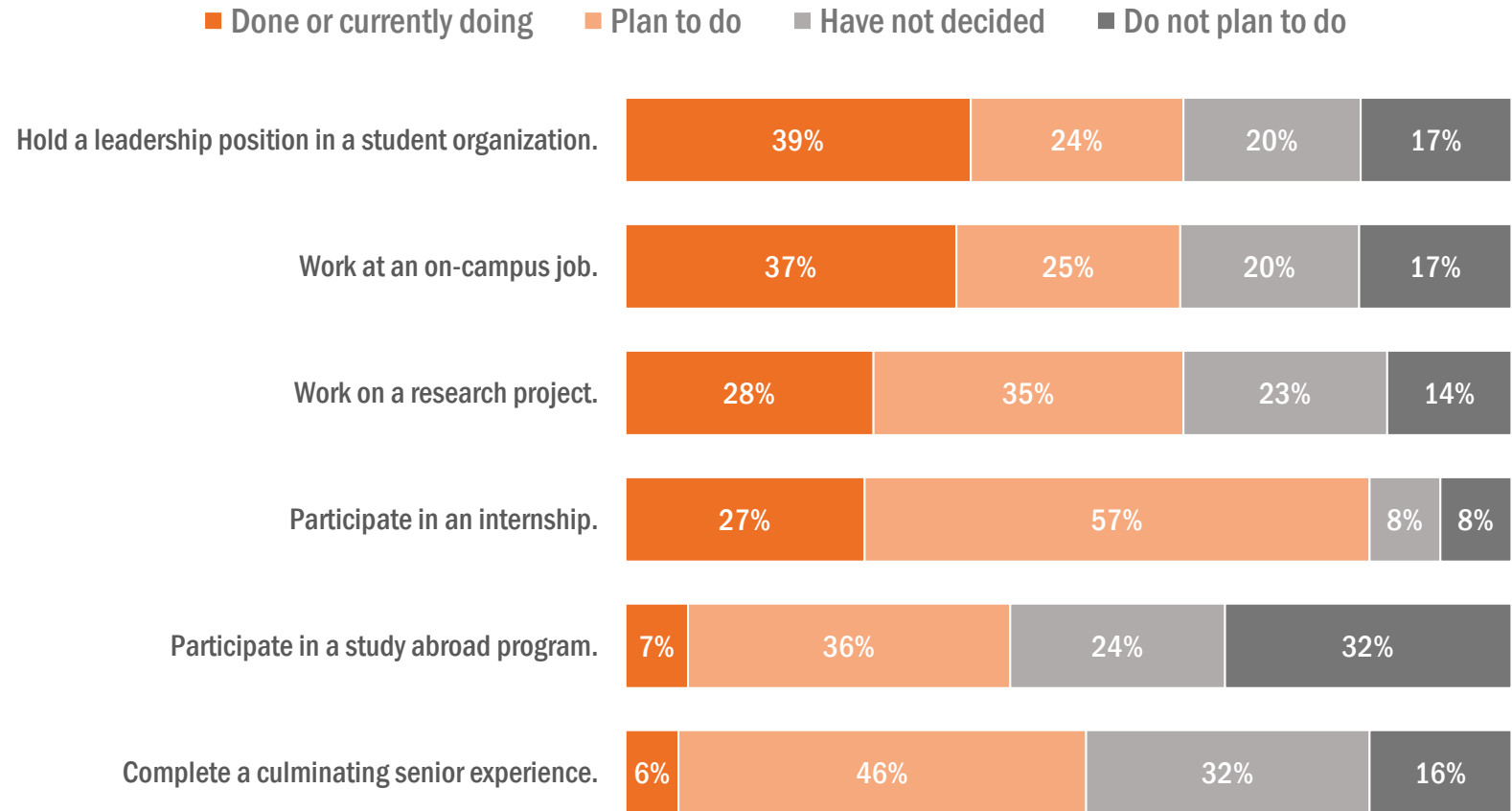


High-Impact Practices?

High-Impact Practices are teaching and learning practices associated with significant educational benefits for participants, especially for historically underserved students.

These practices cut across the Kessler Scholars Collaborative domains of programming.

The **most common** High-Impact Practice that Scholars participated in was holding a **leadership position at a student organization.** (n=254)



3

Program Development

The 2021-22 evaluation focused in large part on informing the development of programming.

a

Institution-Level Program Feedback

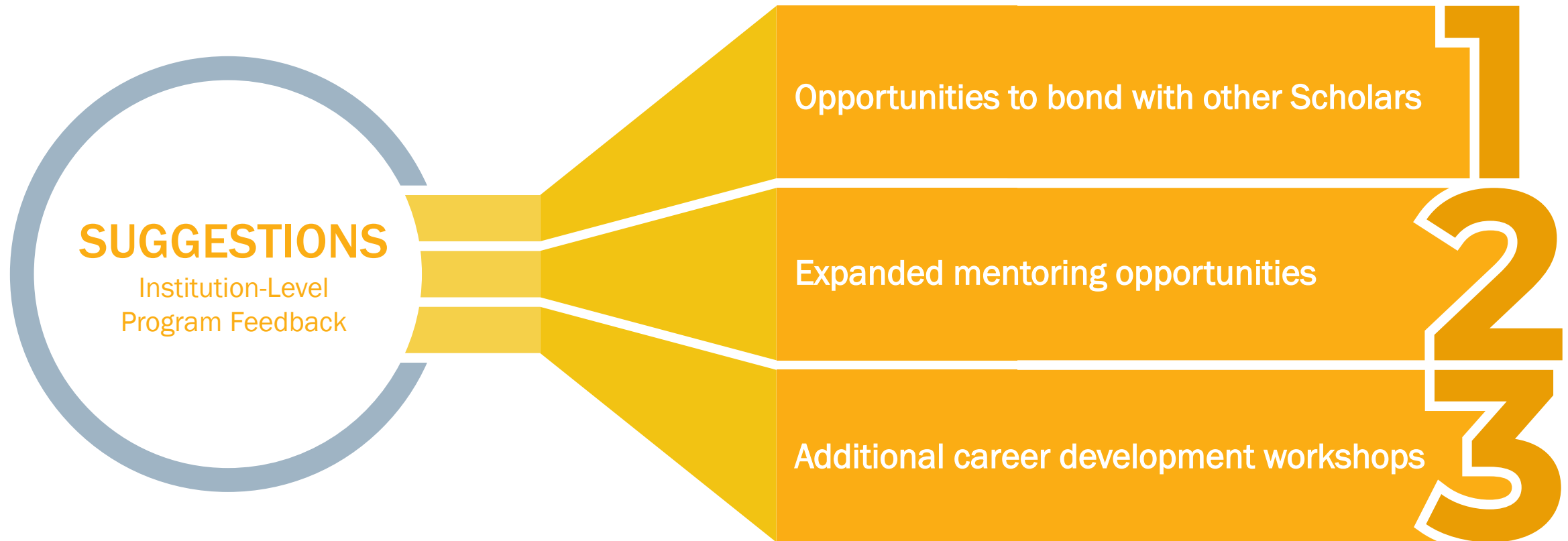
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Collaborative-Level Program Feedback



Institution-Level Program Feedback

The CEDER team worked closely with the six partner institutions throughout the 2021-22 academic year to ensure that evaluation findings are responsive, useful, and directly inform programming. Our program development reporting has included data interpretation meetings and institution-level case studies and analytic memos. In this report, we provide some examples of institution-level feedback that was more consistent between participating sites. Many of these findings are drawn from analysis of student focus group data, open-ended survey responses, and interviews with staff leads at each institution.



Institution-Level Program Feedback

1 Opportunities to Bond with Other Scholars

Students at several institutions expressed a desire for more social events or other opportunities to build community with other Kessler Scholars.

- **Social events:** Suggestions focused on more informal social events, such as movie nights or dinners. One Scholar described being interested in *“more events without an itinerary.”* Another Scholar suggested that student advisory boards could plan and lead some of these gatherings.
- **Cohort-specific activities:** Many Scholars wanted more opportunities to connect to their cohort, such as through cohort dinners.
- **Interactive or small group activities:** Some Scholars described wanting more opportunities to interact with their peers during Kessler Scholars events or the freshmen seminar class. One student suggested small group activities as a way to connect more deeply with other Scholars.

“

I think it would kind of be nice if they would do more either interactive things during the seminar, or if they have **more events that are catered towards just your cohort**, so you can get to know each other and actually form this connection with this community.

“

The one change I would make would be having more options for community service opportunities and **more scheduled get to togethers** with all cohorts.

“

The one change I would make is **more in-person events** where we could all come together as a community.

Institution-Level Program Feedback



② Expanded Mentoring Programming

Students valued the peer mentoring program for first-years and provided ideas for expanded mentoring opportunities. These ideas included

- **Alumni mentorship** for career and professional development;
- **Upper-year mentors** to mentor students serving as peer mentors for first-years;
- **Financial support** for mentor-mentee activities; and
- **A structure to support** first-year students who experience challenges with their peer mentor (e.g., difficulty contacting a mentor).

“ I am a peer mentor, and I have freshman mentees. But I still **sometimes want somebody, like a junior, as my mentor**. So, it's like the cycle repeats...you teach the other person what they need to know for the next year.

“ After like a handful of meetings, **[my peer mentor] just stopped reaching out...**And I wasn't really sure who I should have gone to in that situation. And it was not a great feeling to see other people around me have great relationships with peer mentors that I was lacking.

Institution-Level Program Feedback

3 Additional Career Development Workshops

Across institutions, Scholars described how valuable their experience at program events and workshops had been. Scholars shared ideas for other workshop topics, especially on career development topics. Ideas included

- Workshops targeted towards specific **post-college pathways**, such as graduate programs or service programs like Peace Corps;
- **Financial literacy** workshops;
- **Job interview** preparation; and
- **Networking** opportunities, especially with alumni.

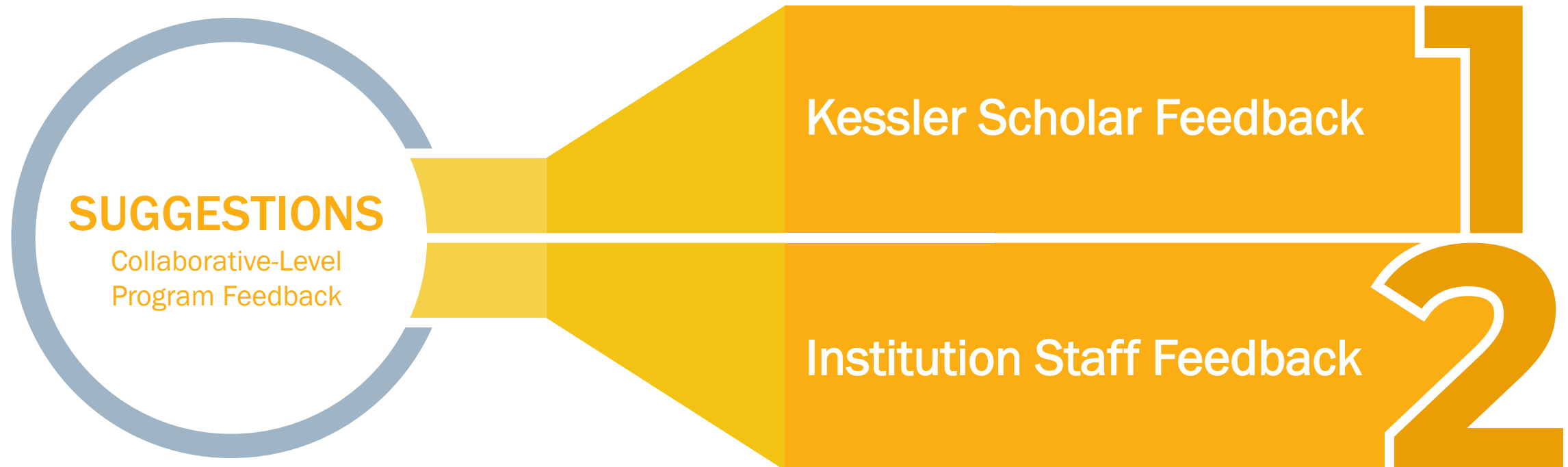
Students also suggested that there could be more opportunities for **interactive components** in institution-level and Collaborative-wide workshops and events.

Some suggested creating new **peer-support opportunities** to put career development skills into practice, such as reviewing each others' resumes.



Collaborative-Level Program Feedback

CEDER gathered recommendations for the development of Collaborative-wide programming during qualitative data collection activities. These included individual interviews with lead staff at each participating institution, focus groups with students at each institution, and open-response questions in the spring 2022 survey. Here we present our synthesis of feedback from Scholars and institution staff to inform the development of the Collaborative.



Collaborative-Level Program Feedback

① Kessler Scholar Feedback

Feedback from Scholars focused largely on ideas and practical considerations for events with Scholars from other institutions.

Perceived Benefits for Scholars

Across all six institutions and all cohort years, Kessler Scholars expressed interest in connecting with Scholars at other colleges and universities within the Kessler Collaborative.

The most commonly perceived benefits of cross-Collaborative engagement were

- Building a social and professional **network**,
- Meeting students with **similar backgrounds** or shared **career interests**, and
- Sharing experiences, **giving and receiving advice** with other Scholars.

Suggestions for Events

Scholars at all institutions brainstormed ideas for possible cross-Collaborative events, as well as other opportunities for the Collaborative to engage and support Kessler Scholars. Student suggestions included

- Kessler Scholars **retreat or conference**,
- Social or **networking** events,
- Virtual events with opportunities to **connect with other Scholars**, such as in small-group breakout rooms, and
- **Funding opportunities** for graduate school test preparation or unpaid internship experiences.

Considerations for Events

The students shared the following considerations about making cross-site engagement opportunities meaningful and accessible.

- **In-person events**: Scholars showed more enthusiasm around in-person engagement opportunities.
- **Affordability**: Scholars discussed the importance of events being affordable or financially supported by the program.
- **Timing**: Scholars discussed avoiding scheduling events around midterms or finals, suggesting spring or summer as times for in-person opportunities.

Collaborative-Level Program Feedback

② Institution Staff Feedback

The CEDER team gathered data from the lead staff member at each institution to inform recommendations for the development of Collaborative programming.



Staff Experience

All institution staff were positive about their experiences in the Kessler Scholars Collaborative. Site leads expressed the Collaborative provided a **supportive learning community**.

They described how the Collaborative offered a valuable space for staff to seek **advice**, form **strategic alliances**, gain **moral support**, and share with **near-peers** at other institutions.

Staff leads at each site recognized the differences between institutions (as related to resources, staffing structure, student identities) but generally did not feel like that prevented the learning that stems from the Collaborative.



Collaborative-Level Program Feedback



I think having different perspectives, but all like-minded interest is so helpful because it helps us **elevate each other** within the Collaborative response.

-INSTITUTION STAFF MEMBER



INSTITUTION STAFF FEEDBACK, CONT.

When thinking about the future of the Collaborative, institution staff offered the following suggestions.

Onboarding new site leads: Given staff transitions and the addition of new sites, some mentioned the need to consider how new site leads are onboarded to the Collaborative, in particular thinking about how to share past knowledge.

Preserving informal, organic interactions: A majority of site leads expressed appreciation for informal knowledge sharing between sites. Some staff suggested ways to continue this learning as the Collaborative continues to grow. A few ideas included smaller regional meetings or subcommittees based on particular program components, like peer mentoring.

Future opportunities for students: All site leads described excitement around opportunities for students to engage in the wider Collaborative community. These ideas included:

- Opportunities for students to meet students from other Kessler sites, such as a summer convening, a Collaborative student advisory board, or a research symposium;
- Opportunities for students to meet staff from other Kessler sites; and
- Connecting students to other institutions for graduate school or job and internship opportunities.

Future opportunities for staff: Some site leads shared ideas about opportunities for site leads, such as connecting staff to National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) memberships or creating space for staff to share their approach and work.

Endnotes

¹ The CEDER team adopts the University of San Francisco's working definition of an underrepresented minority (URM) as someone whose racial or ethnic makeup is from one of the following:

- African American / Black
- Asian: Filipino, Hmong, or Vietnamese only
- Hispanic / Latinx
- Native American / Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander
- Two or more races, when one or more are from the preceding racial and ethnic categories in this list.

University of San Fransisco. (n.d.). Underrepresented Minority Definition. Retrieved June 27, 2022, from <https://diversity.ucsf.edu/programs-resources/urm-definition>.

² U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). College Scorecard. Retrieved May 30, 2022, from <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/>

³ Kuh, G. D. (2008). High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

2021-2022

Evaluation Report



The Center for Education Design, Evaluation, and Research (CEDER) advances equity and excellence in education by providing access to high-quality design, evaluation, and research services through collaborations with university, school, and community partners.

Our evaluation vision is to empower equitable and innovative education solutions through collaborations with partners that leverage data, communicate value, and drive improvement.

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