Fall 2021 Cohort First Time Freshman Experience of First-Year Survey

Summer 2022

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Introduction & Purpose of the Study

For the past several years, the First-Year Experience (FYE) program has conducted a telephone survey at the close of the academic year with freshman cohorts: fall 2019 and fall 2020 (Yoo, G., Moskowitz, N., Paredes Centeno, B., & Shindledecker, E., 2021).

During summer 2022, a team of student researchers along with the FYE faculty director conducted telephone surveys with the first-time freshman (FTF) cohort who arrived in fall 2021.

The original impetus for the research was to assess the remote learning needs for first year students during COVID and therefore, be better equipped to support our students transition into the second year.

Although COVID conditions are different today, asking first year students about their experiences at the end of the academic year continues. Students who feel seen, heard, and valued are more likely to experience a true sense of belonging and therefore have better educational outcomes. SF State's longstanding ethic of care for our campus community was a value imbedded in this project and a central value held for all the researchers involved.

Goals of the Study

Hear experiences of fall 2021 first year students

Assess their plans to register in fall 2022

Identify student need across support services at SF State

Provide advising support for students to maximize retention for all students.

Methodology: Telephone Survey

Fall 2021 first time freshman (FTF) cohort = 3,147

The survey instrument consisted of 15 items that fall into the following areas:
Positive and challenging experiences of first year
- Sense of belonging
- Intent to register
- Interest in and use of campus resources
- Preferred course and co-curricular modalities

Between June 5 and June 30 trained student researchers made three attempts to contact students: two telephone calls followed by one text. A total of 1,125 (out of 3,147 = 36% response rate) students were contacted via telephone calls. To improve the response rate, a Qualtrics survey with the same questions was emailed (on July 7) to students who did not complete the survey via telephone. We received 139 responses in Qualtrics.

The total response rate was 40%
(1,125 Knack + 139 Qualtrics = 1,264/3,147)

Summary of Findings

What aspect of being a first-year student at SF State was positive for you?

Students were asked an open-ended question to share their most positive experiences during their first year. Qualitative responses are shared in this report. The following themes were identified along with the distribution of responses for each theme.
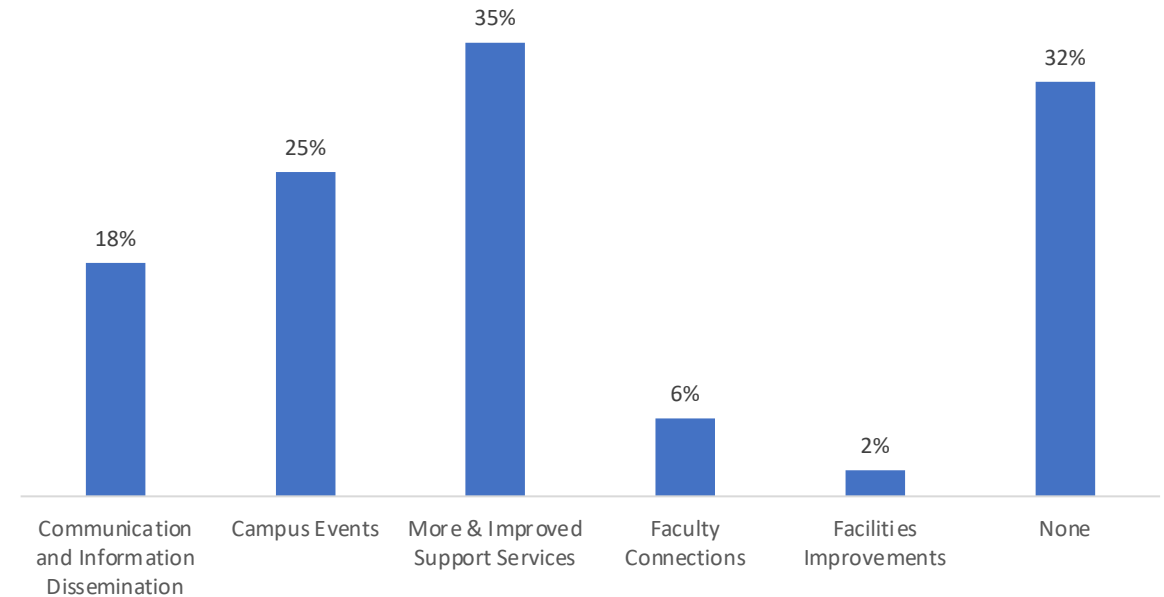
Overall Findings: Students expressed feeling supported by the myriad support services outside of the classroom and across campus. The positive impacts that faculty had on students' experiences was meaningful and appreciated by students. The fall 2021 cohort viewed supportive professors at 31% and supportive staff and programs at 37%. These results differ slightly from the fall 2020 cohort who reported supportive professors at 48% and supportive staff and programs at 14%.
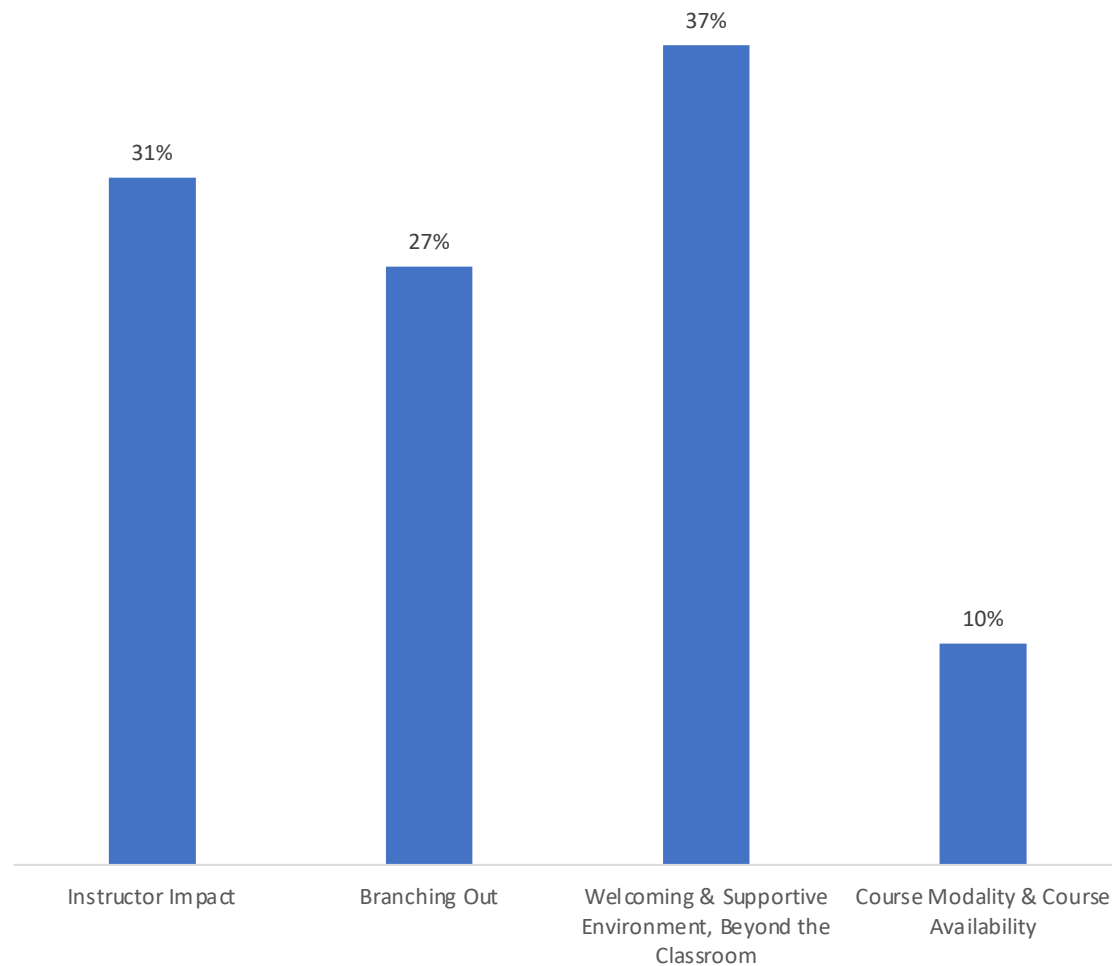
In what ways did you want or need more or different support? In what ways could SF State have supported you better?

Students were asked an open-ended question to share ways in which they want/need more support. Qualitative responses are shared below. The following themes were identified along with the distribution of responses for each theme.

Overall Findings: The desire for more and improved support services was most frequently in reference to mental health and tutoring support yet numerous campus supports were identified and are included below in the qualitative comments. Identifying in-person campus events was also repeatedly mentioned along with the need to disseminate information better. Compared to the fall 2020 data, the inability to access resources/more and improved support services increased from 16% to 35%.
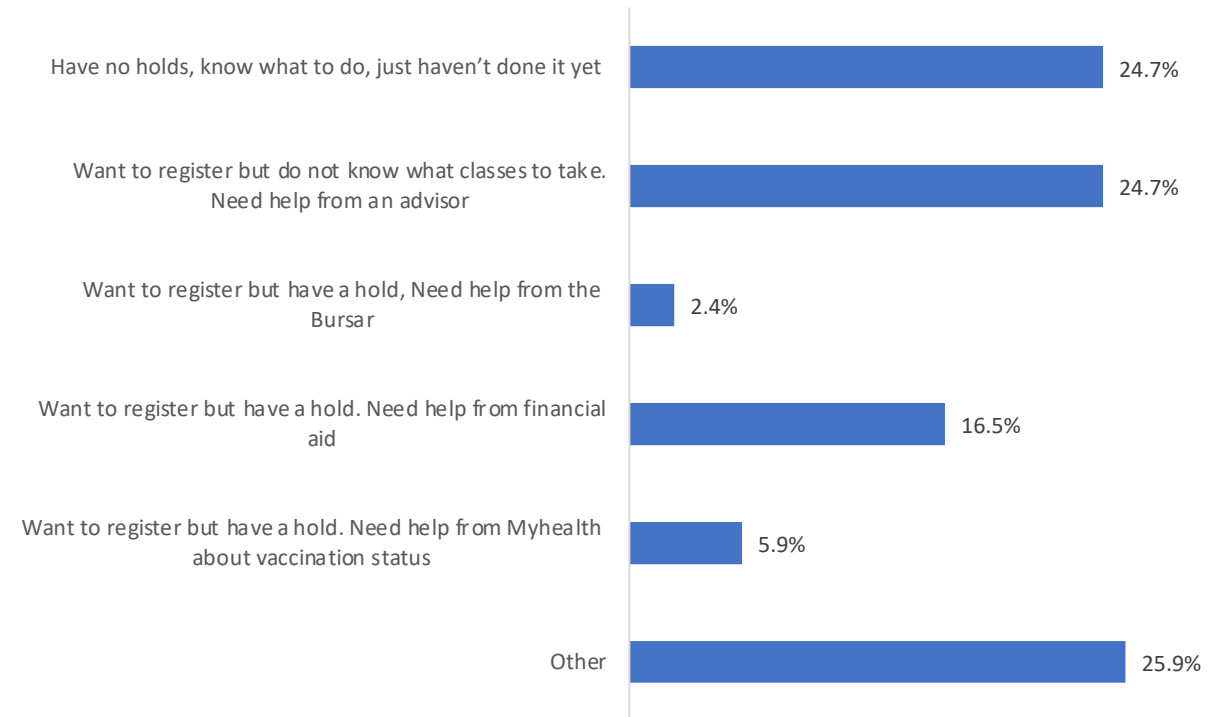

Theme	Percentage
Communication and Information Dissemination	18%
Campus Events	25%
More & Improved Support Services	35%
Faculty Connections	6%
Facilities Improvements	2%
None	32%

Do you plan on taking classes at SFSU in fall 2022?

Finding: A total of 70.5% of student respondents has already registered, while 9% were planning on registering but had not yet done so. For the latter group, they were asked in a subsequent question if they wanted advising support. Those who responded in the affirmative were contacted by advisor for follow up support. When comparing fall 2020 and fall 2021 data, the students who reported "yes" to the intent to enroll question were 86% and 70.5%, respectively. The students who reported "no" to the intent to enroll question were 6% and 12.7%, respectively.
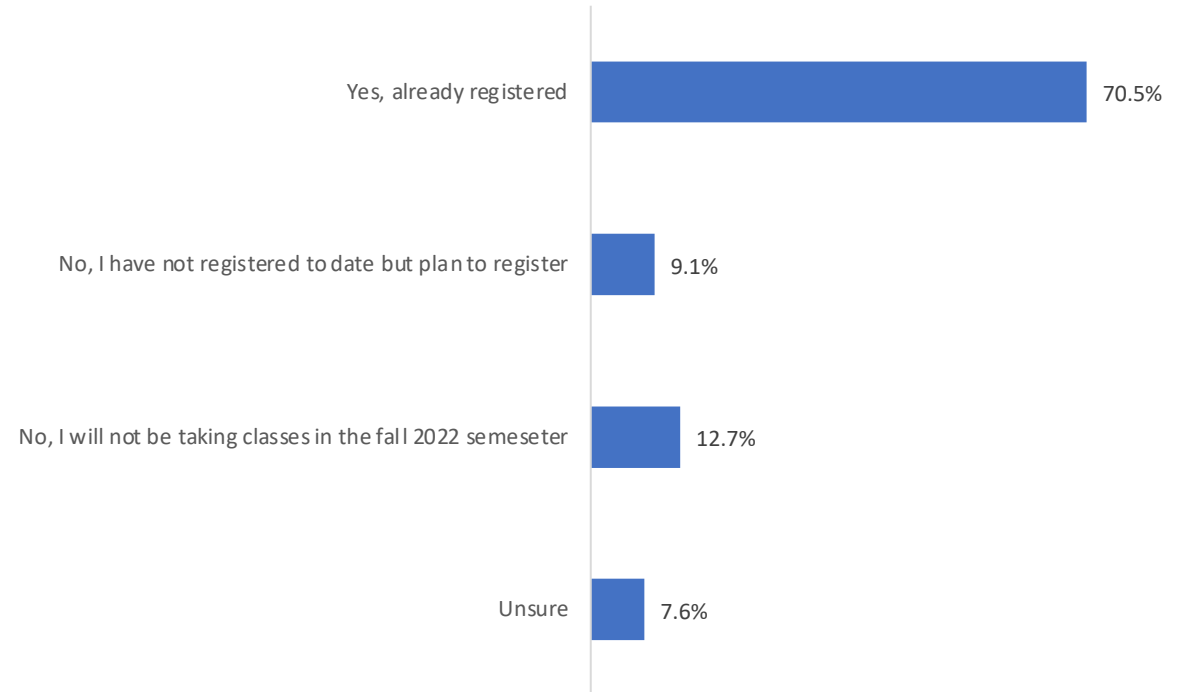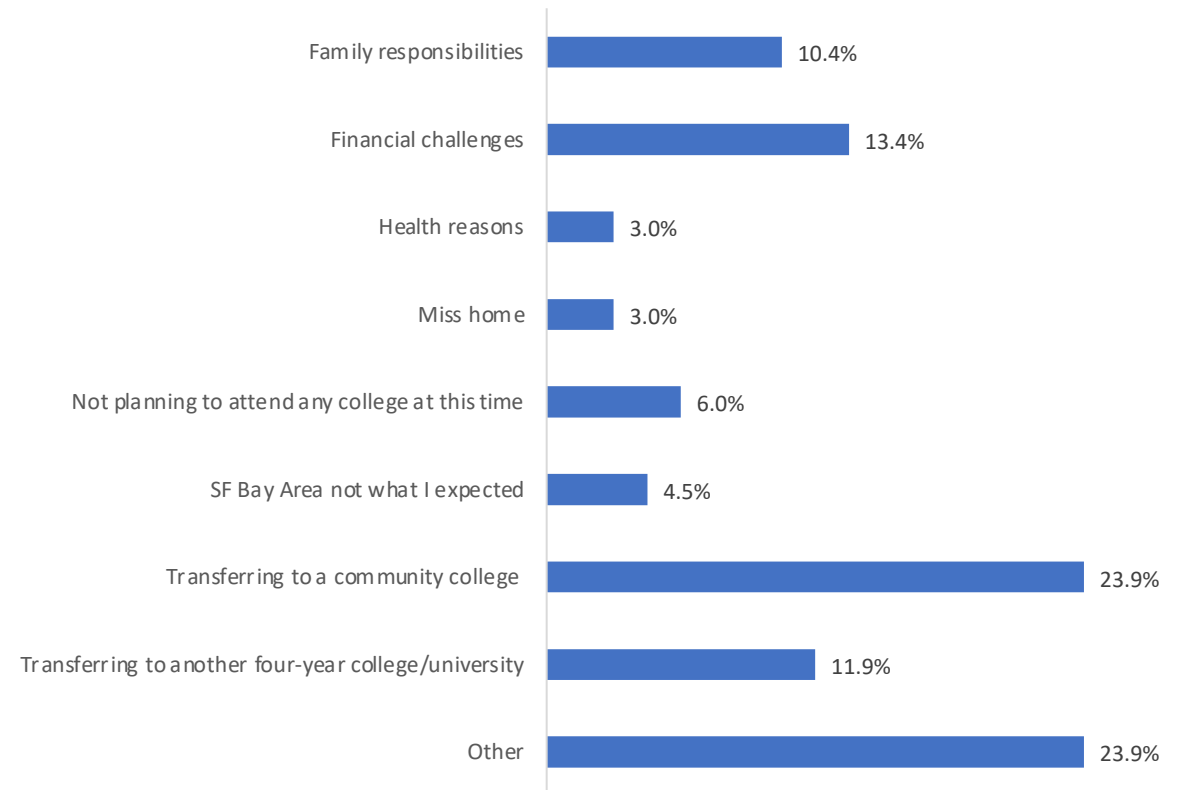
For students who had not yet registered at the time of the study, we asked: Is there a way we can support you so that you register for fall classes?

Finding: The students who responded "Want to register...but need help from an advisor" were recorded and the FYE faculty director shared with the list with the UAC for follow up. Most students who responded to "Other" stated that they were still deciding on whether they would return to campus. The other two main reasons shared were uncertainty around housing and amount of financial aid award.

| Response	Percent
Have no holds, know what to do, just haven't done it yet	24.7%
Want to register but do not know what classes to take. Need help from an advisor	24.7%
Want to register but have a hold, Need help from the Bursar	2.4%
Want to register but have a hold. Need help from financial aid	16.5%
Want to register but have a hold. Need help from Myhealth about vaccination status	5.9%
Other	25.9%

Can you please share reasons why you cannot register for fall classes?

Finding: As shown 23.9% of students plan to transfer to a community college while an equal number of students identified other reasons for not registering for fall 2022 classes. Those reasons include in order of most frequently occurring responses: difficult commute; need to take a break; need to attend to work/life balance; and the expensive cost of housing.

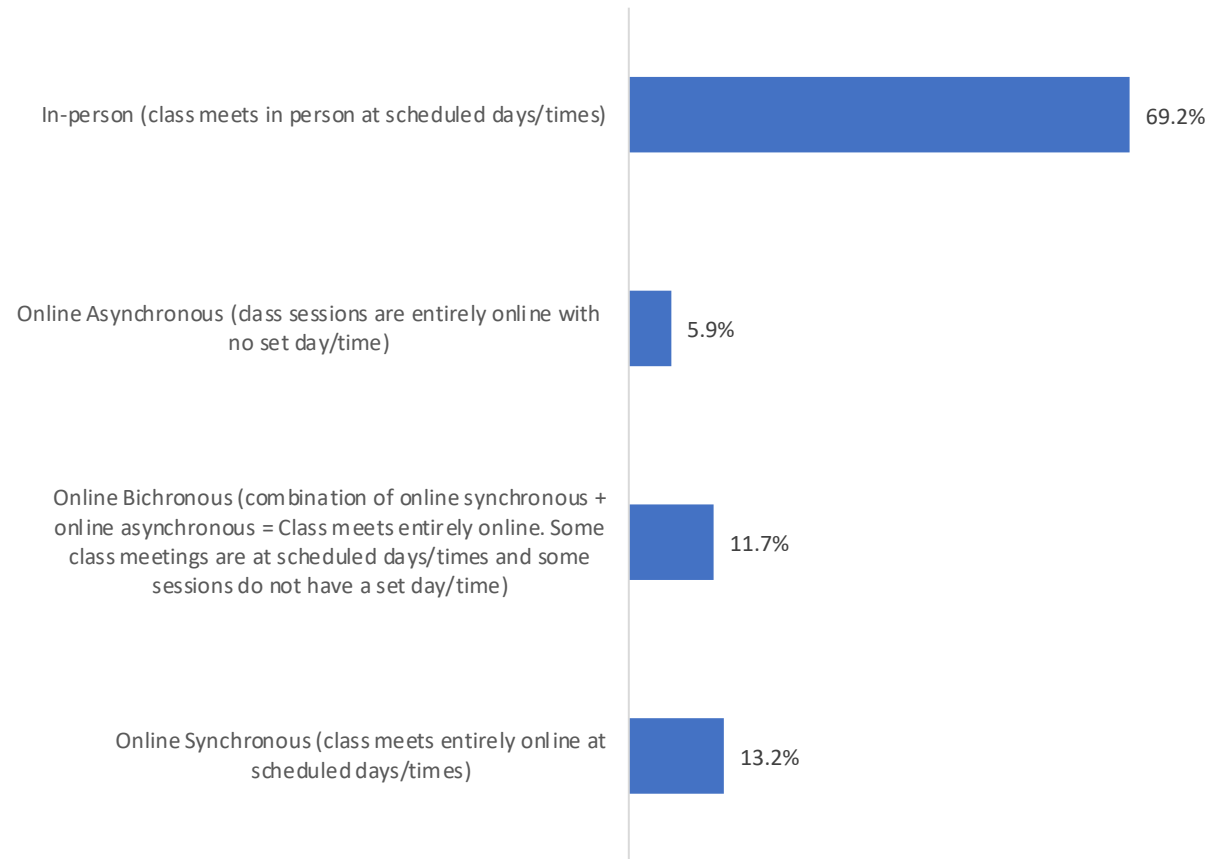| Category	Percentage
Family responsibilities	10.4%
Financial challenges	13.4%
Health reasons	3.0%
Miss home	3.0%
Not planning to attend any college at this time	6.0%
SF Bay Area not what I expected	4.5%
Transferring to a community college	23.9%
Transferring to another four-year college/university	11.9%
Other	23.9%

For students who had already registered at time of interview, we asked: Since you have already registered for fall, did you get all of the classes you need?

Finding: The overwhelming majority of students were able to register for classes and secured the classes they need (84%). For the students who stated "Some, but not all" the most common experience shared is that they were waitlisted for one, or more, courses or they are waiting to make changes to their schedule and plan to complete their registration at a later date. In comparison to fall 2020, students report improvements in getting all the classes they need from 68% of fall 2020 cohort to 84% with the fall 2021 cohort.

Response	Percentage
Yes	84.26%
Some, but not all	11.09%
No	4.65%
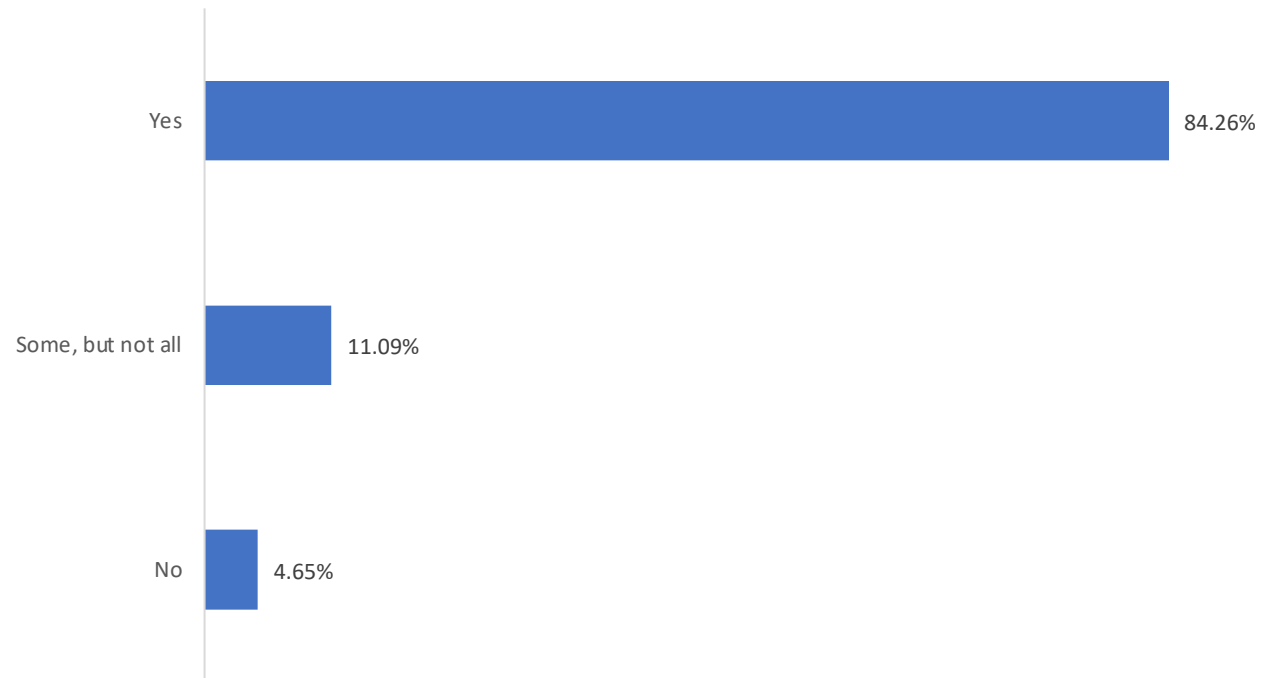
What was your preferred modality for classes (that worked best for your learning) during this past academic year 2021-2022?

Finding: Preferred modality of classes was overwhelming in person (69%) and that percentage increased significantly from the fall 2020 cohort who reported 33% prefer in person courses. Changing COVID conditions impact this question, yet we see that during summer 2022, most students desire in person courses.

In-person (class meets in person at scheduled days/times) — 69.2%

Online Asynchronous (class sessions are entirely online with no set day/time) — 5.9%

Online Bichronous (combination of online synchronous + online asynchronous = Class meets entirely online. Some class meetings are at scheduled days/times and some sessions do not have a set day/time) — 11.7%

Online Synchronous (class meets entirely online at scheduled days/times) — 13.2%
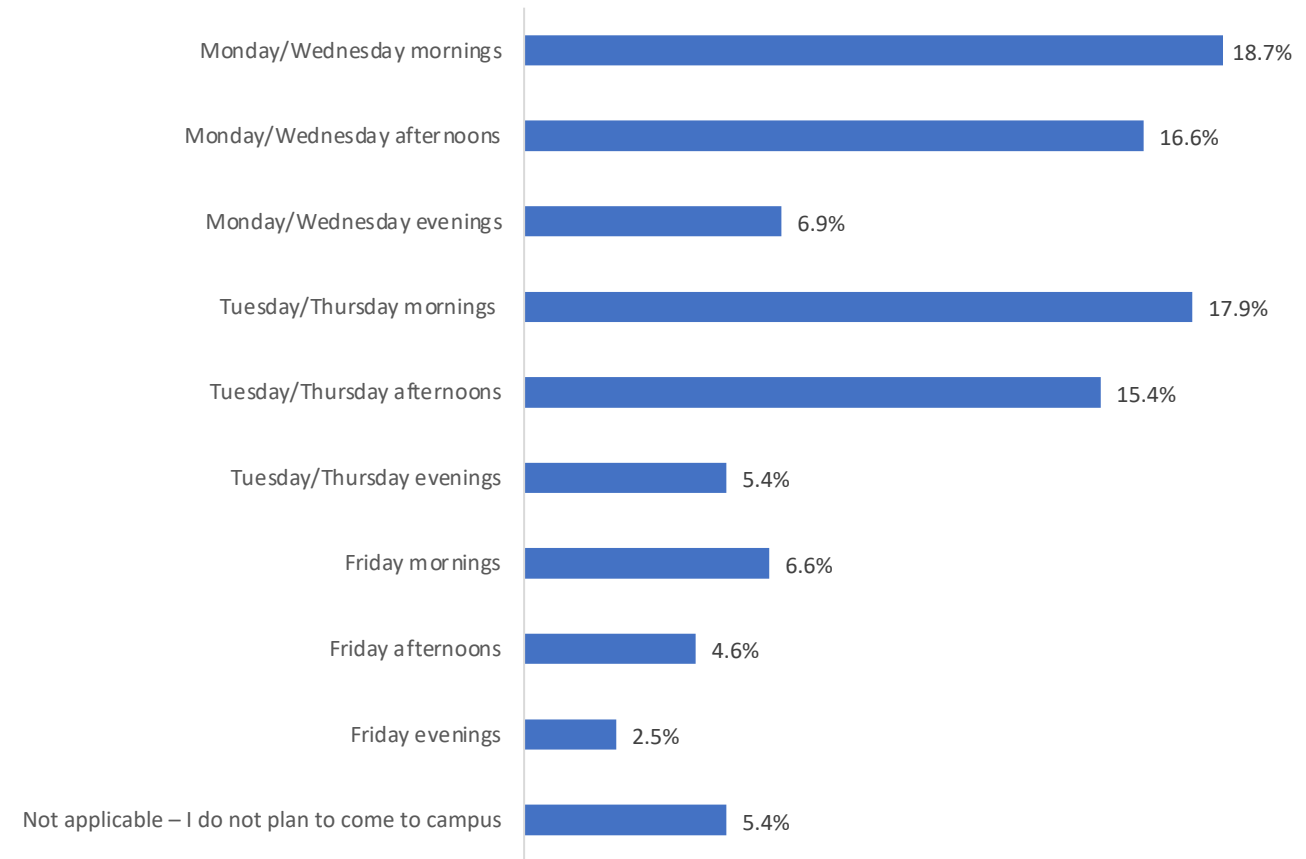
During the fall 2022 semester, would you prefer attending extracurricular events (i.e., social events, career services events, advising workshops) that are:

Finding: Half of student respondents prefer in person extracurricular events with a combination of in-person and online as a second preference. Few students (5.5%) prefer online. Fall 2020 data report the following: in person (53%); In person and online (38%); and online (10%). Again, COVID conditions likely explain why we see increasing comfort with in-person/hybrid and decreasing desire for online opportunities.
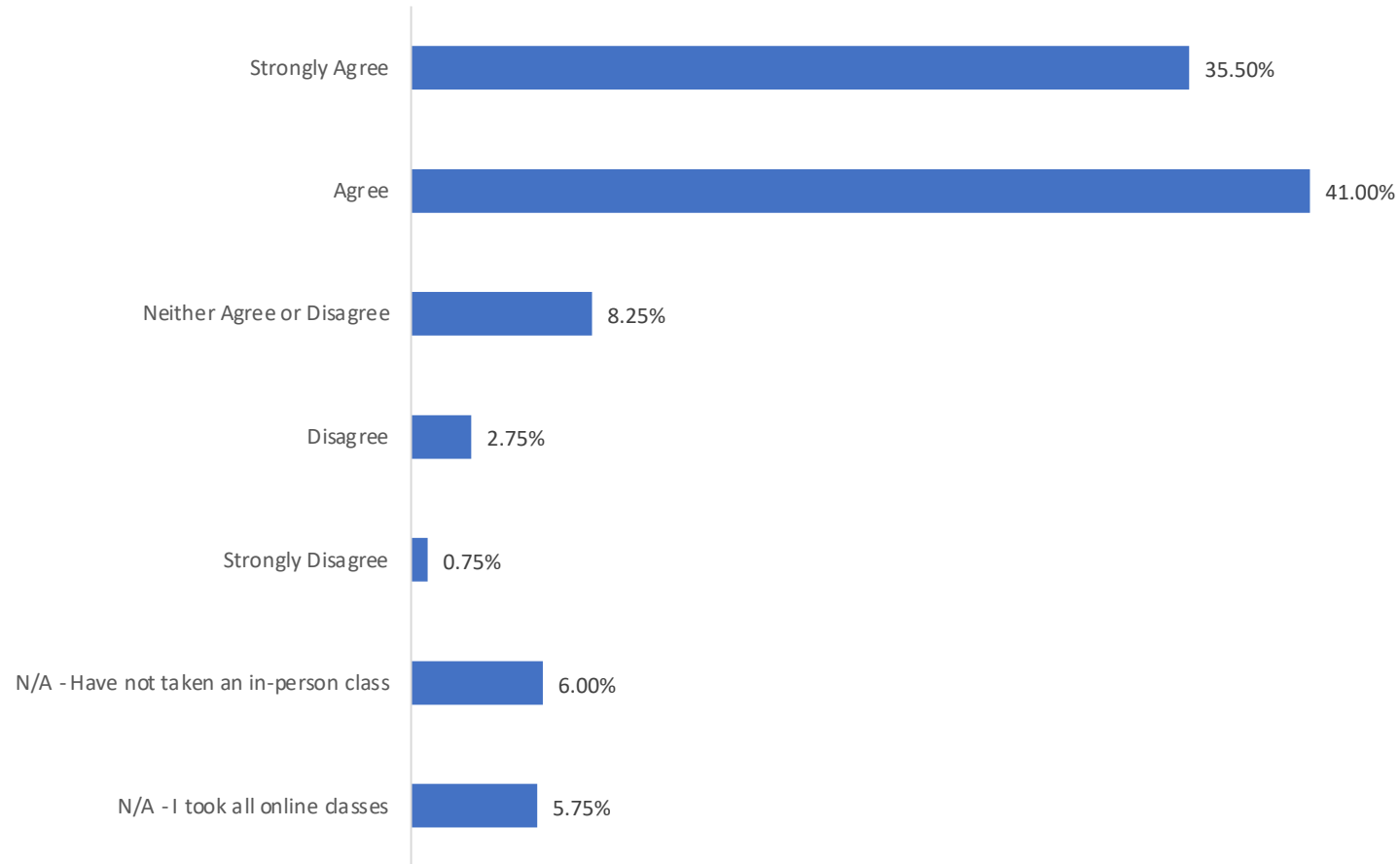
Online/Remote — 5.5%

In-person/Face to face — 50.0%

Combination of both — 44.5%
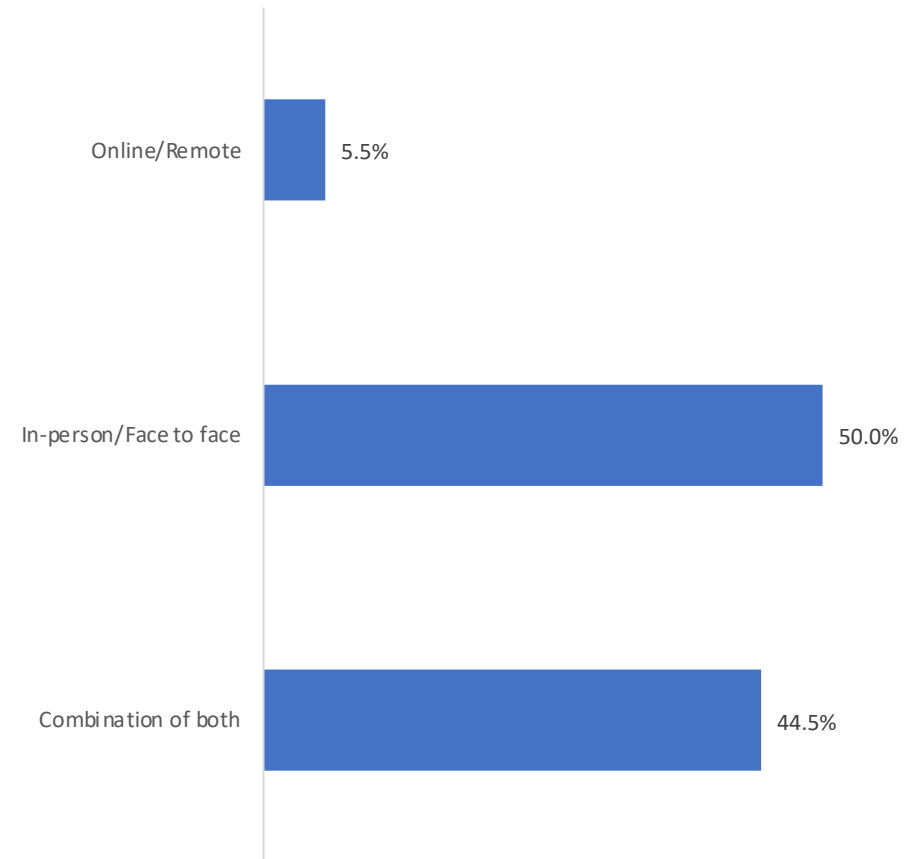
# What days and times do you think you will be on-campus most in the fall?

Finding: Monday and Wednesday mornings, along with Tuesday and Thursday mornings were slightly more preferred than M/W and T/TH afternoons. Taken together, morning and afternoon classes were preferred over evening courses. These findings mirror results from the fall 2020 cohort who also report M/W mornings as most preferred (21%) followed by T/TH morning (19%). M/W and T/TH afternoons were next in preference for fall 2020 cohort with evenings as the least preferred.

Category	Percentage
Monday/Wednesday mornings	18.7%
Monday/Wednesday afternoons	16.6%
Monday/Wednesday evenings	6.9%
Tuesday/Thursday mornings	17.9%
Tuesday/Thursday afternoons	15.4%
Tuesday/Thursday evenings	5.4%
Friday mornings	6.6%
Friday afternoons	4.6%
Friday evenings	2.5%
Not applicable – I do not plan to come to campus	5.4%

I found a community/felt connected to others at SF State in a _virtual_ modality.
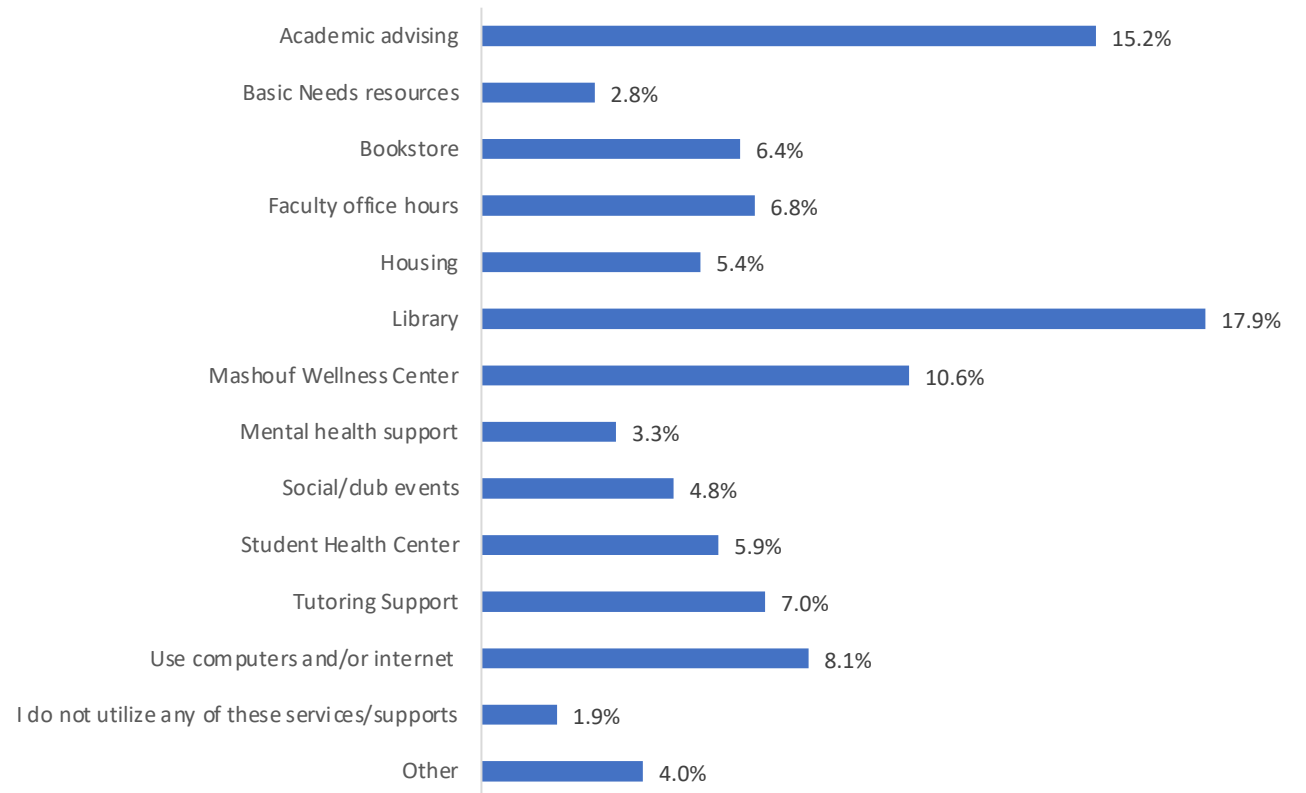
I found a community/felt connected to others at SF State taking _in person_ classes.
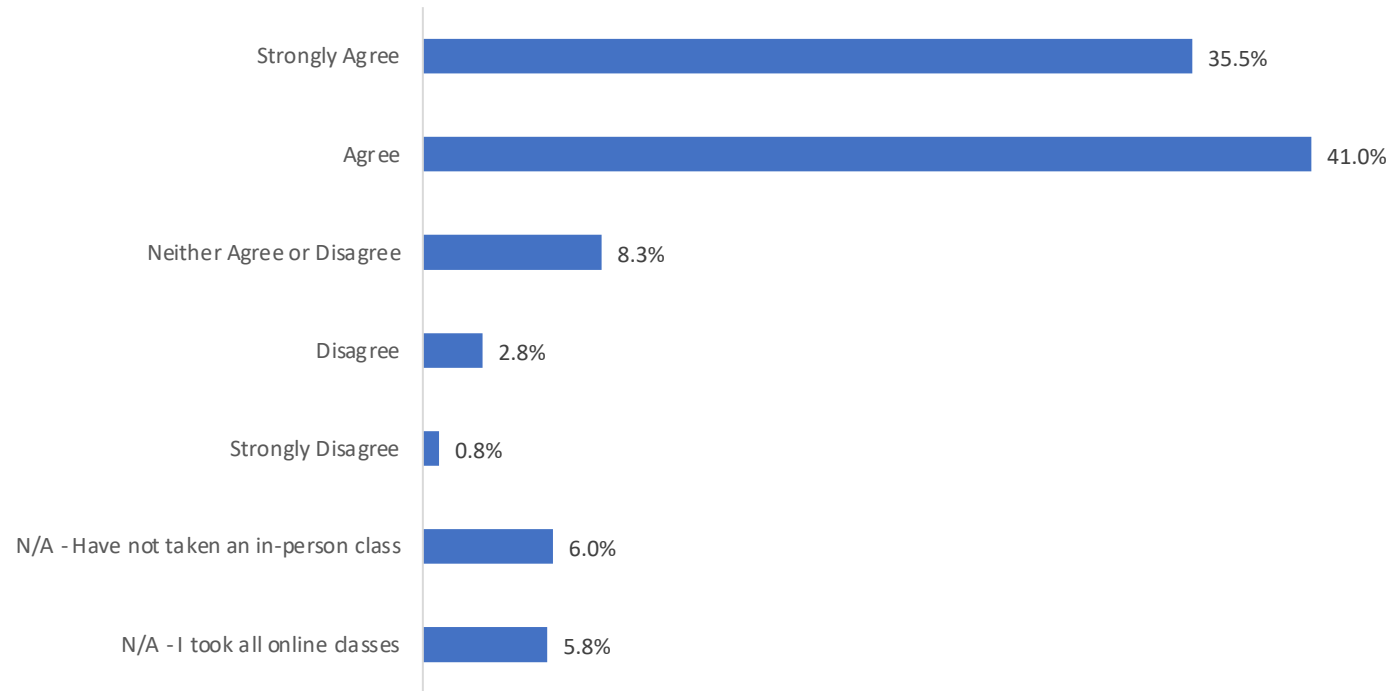
Finding: Whether students took courses in the virtual or in person format, the majority agree they were able to find community and felt connected. SF State has made significant progress in supporting students' feelings of connectedness. Fifty four percent of the fall 2020 cohort reported "strongly agree" or "agree" to feeling connected in a virtual modality compared to 76.5% above. The number of students who "strongly disagree" or "disagree" with feeling connected in the virtual environment markedly improved as well from 21% fall 2020 cohort to 3.5% fall 2021 cohort.
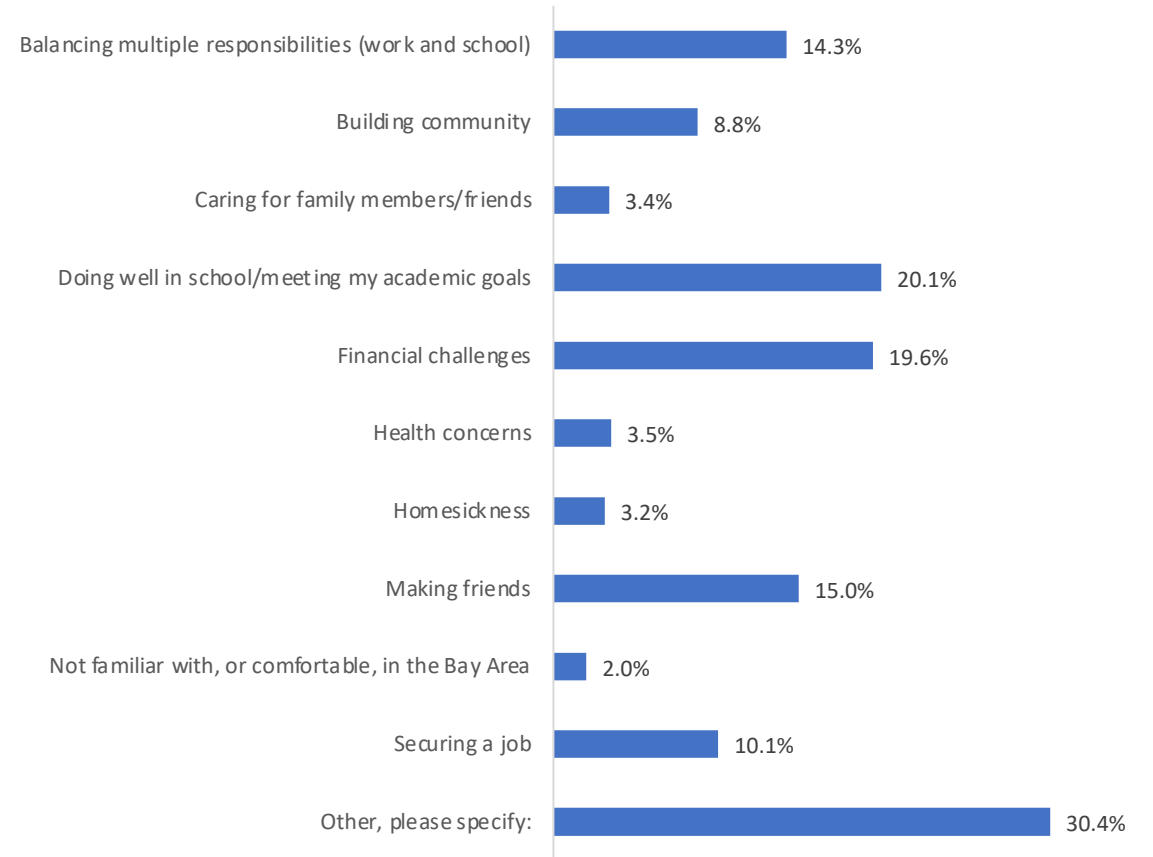
What resources/supports, beyond your classes, do you utilize when you come to campus?

Finding: Usage of the library was the most commonly occurring response, followed by advising needs. The "Other" category included the following resources: to meet Metro or EOP program; utilize services in the Cesar Chavez Student Center; Career Services and Leadership Development; and Disability Program and Resource Center. The three most frequent responses about why students come to campus beyond classes for the fall 2020 cohort were: library (12%); advising (10%); and tutoring (10%).

Academic advising	15.2%
Basic Needs resources	2.8%
Bookstore	6.4%
Faculty office hours	6.8%
Housing	5.4%
Library	17.9%
Mashouf Wellness Center	10.6%
Mental health support	3.3%
Social/club events	4.8%
Student Health Center	5.9%
Tutoring Support	7.0%
Use computers and/or internet	8.1%
I do not utilize any of these services/supports	1.9%
Other	4.0%

As you prepare to enter your second year of college, do you have any concerns?

Finding: Meeting academic goals, financial concerns, making friends, and balancing life demands with school rose as top concerns for students. The most common responses in the "Other" categories include (in order of most frequently expressed concern to least expressed concern): Housing problems, which include the lack of availability and high cost; seeking counseling support but was not able to get it; the need for online courses; and desire for tutoring support but concerned could not get resource.

Concern	Percentage
Balancing multiple responsibilities (work and school)	14.3%
Building community	8.8%
Caring for family members/friends	3.4%
Doing well in school/meeting my academic goals	20.1%
Financial challenges	19.6%
Health concerns	3.5%
Homesickness	3.2%
Making friends	15.0%
Not familiar with, or comfortable, in the Bay Area	2.0%
Securing a job	10.1%
Other, please specify:	30.4%

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Improving communication
- Improving communication about existing resources on campus is critical. Although units across campus regularly send emails about various support services, students report a lack of awareness about the vast supports.
- Explore text messaging as another form of communication.
- Track communications to FTF throughout the year.
- Explore centralized communications so students expect emails from a unit, or a group of units as opposed to disparate emails that lack coordination.

Tapping faculty/classroom as a source of support around messaging and services
- Given that faculty have close and consistent contact with students, providing resources to faculty about all campus resources seems efficient and ideally productive.
- Two strategies to assist in this effort could be: Create a comprehensive 'Resources for Students' template for faculty to include in their syllabi; and explore possibilities using Canvas as a means of centralized communications.

First Year Success
- Expand AU 101 (one unit course taken during first year, ideally first semester) with a focus on skills and strategies for success, provide a thorough description of all campus resources both academic supports and co-curricular, and partner with units across campus to strengthen the curriculum.

Housing
- Given the high cost of living, students need additional housing support. Timely information about housing could assist students in making time sensitive decisions about acceptance.

Access to the Library
- Explore expansion of library hours.