



Center for
Consumer
Advocacy

School Counselors and College Financial Fit

Kevin Fudge
**American Student
Assistance**
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What Do We Mean By 'Financial Fit'?

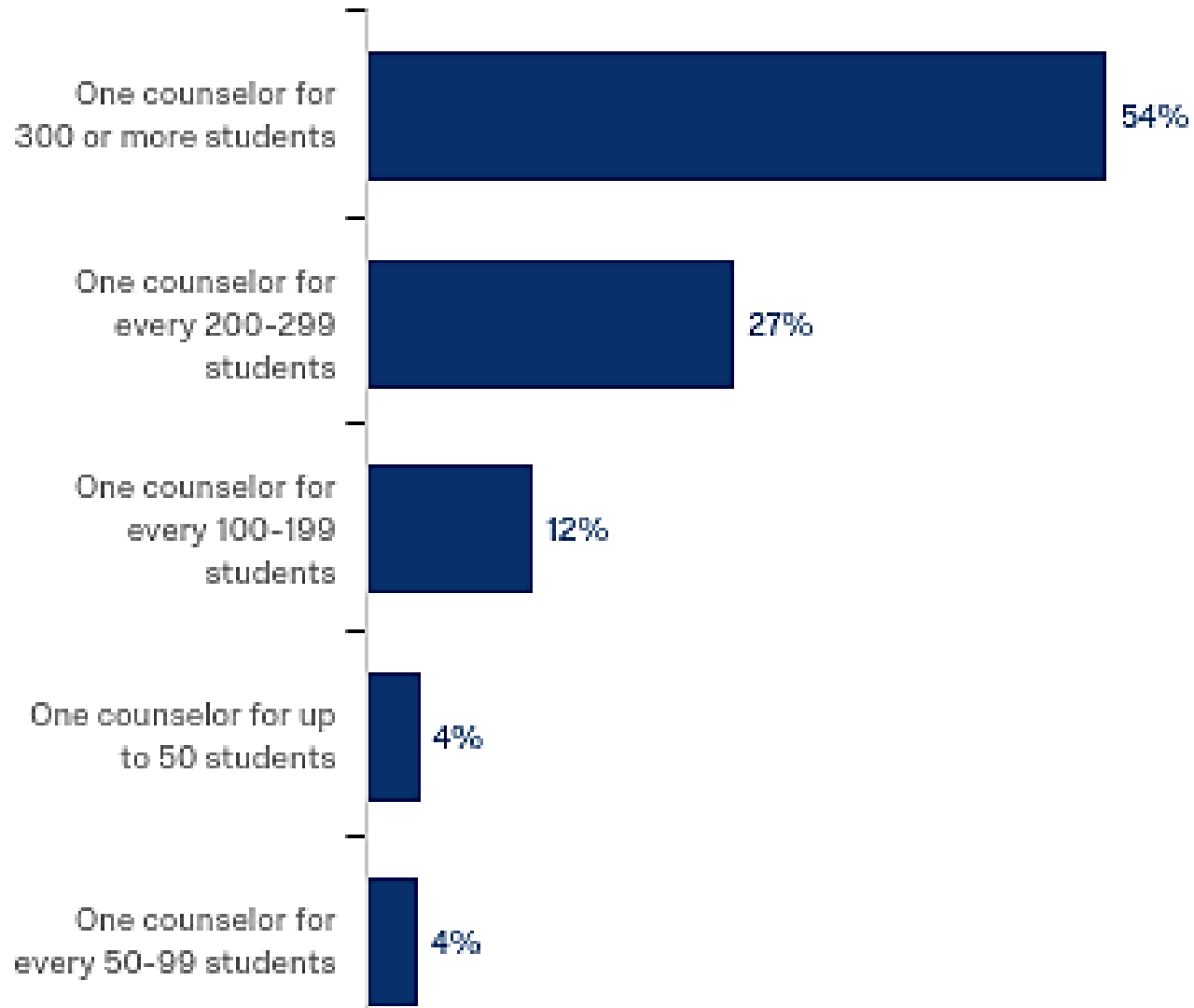
- “Financial fit” *by no means* implies that a student should always opt for the cheapest higher education institution and avoid borrowing at all costs
- It is taking steps to minimize risk so investment in higher education pays off in the end rather than leaves students in a worse financial position than before they attended



Key Findings

- **54%** have 300+ students to 1 counselor ratios at their schools
- **92%** say it is their responsibility to discuss college affordability with their students
- Only **55%** of counselors had formal training on financial aid and only **21%** on student debt
- Counselors weigh **academic** fit more than **financial** fit when discussing college options with students

ASCA Recommends 250 to 1 Ratio





Survey Results

About 90% = Finances Major Concern

Q. How much of a concern are finances and financing post secondary education to the students that you counsel?

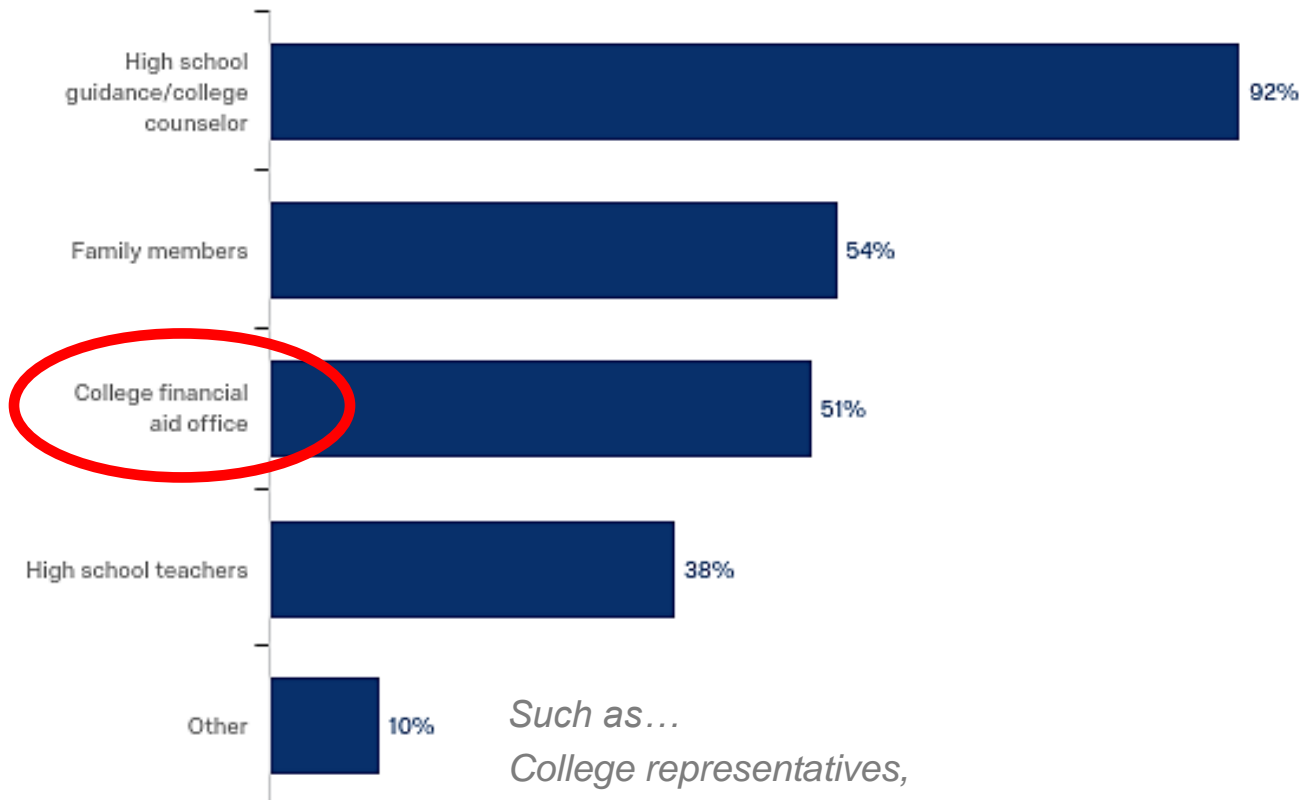


Finances are a bigger concern for students at public schools compared to private

	Public	Private
A major concern	89% (n=793)	75% (n=55)
A minor concern	11% (n=97)	23% (n=17)

51% Hold Colleges Responsible

Q. Including yourself, who has a responsibility at your school to talk to students about college affordability?

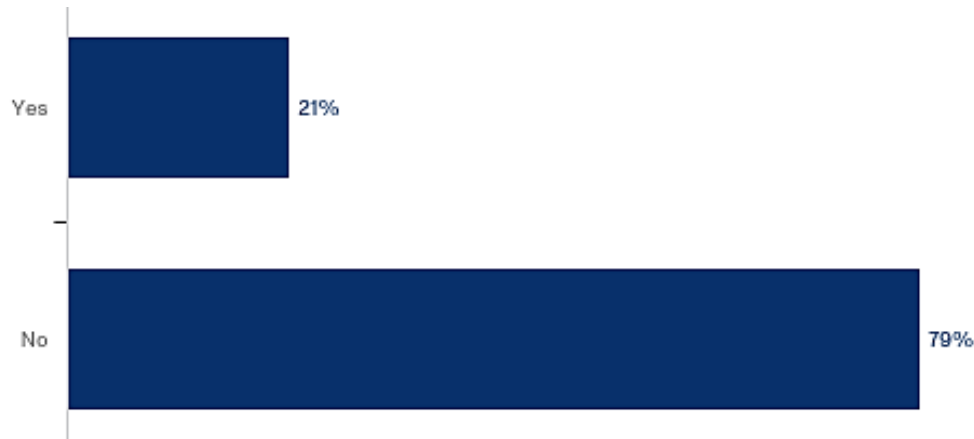


*Such as...
College representatives,
College advisors,
Career counselors*

Limited Training on Debt & Fin Aid

Q. Have you had any training or formal education to handle questions on...

...student debt?

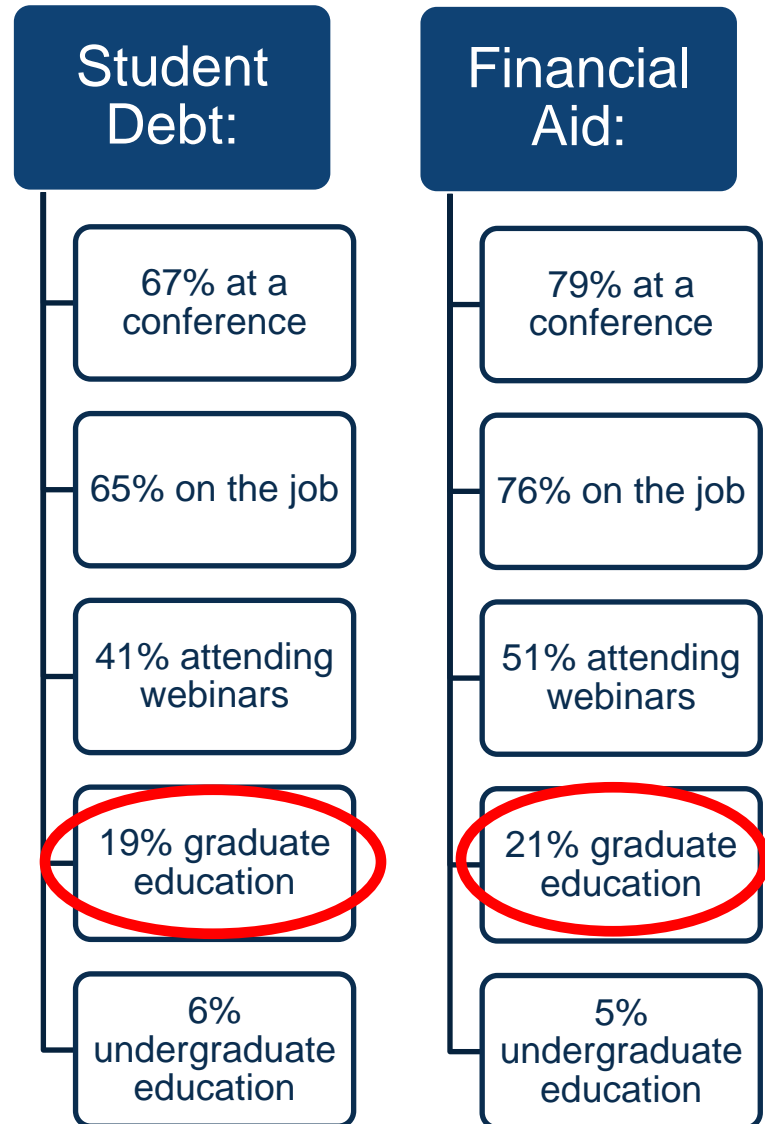


...financial aid?



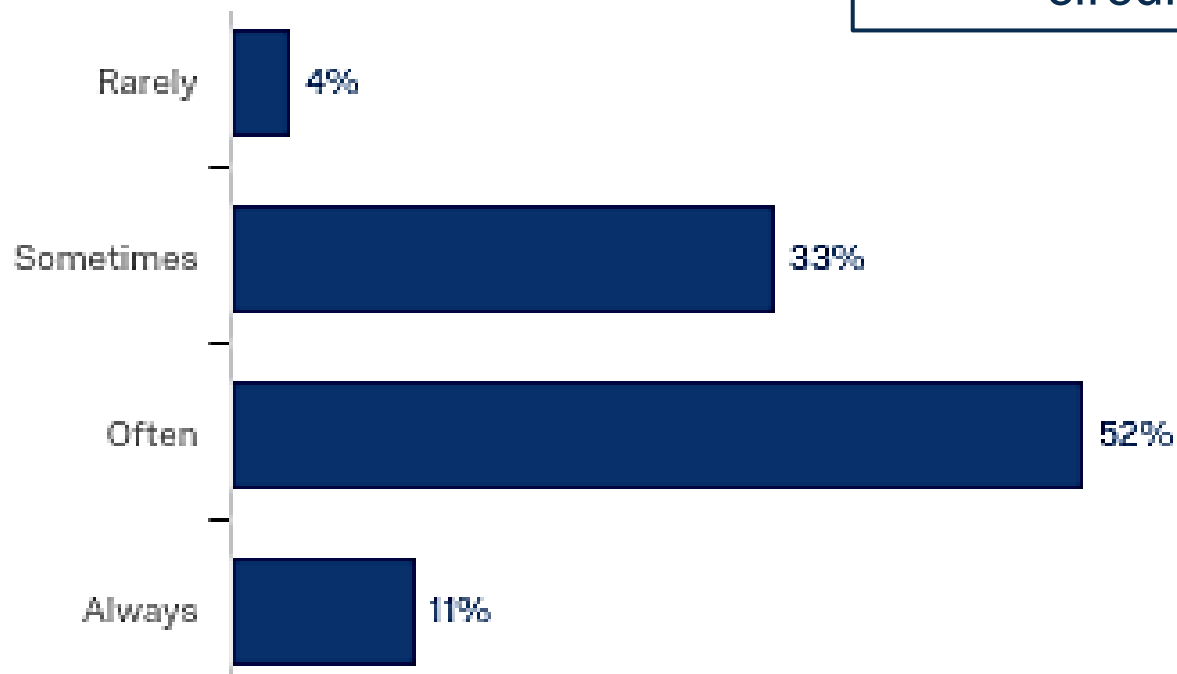
Are Graduate Programs Keeping Up?

Q. Which of the following better describes training or formal education you received to handle these questions?



Majority Aware of Students' Finances

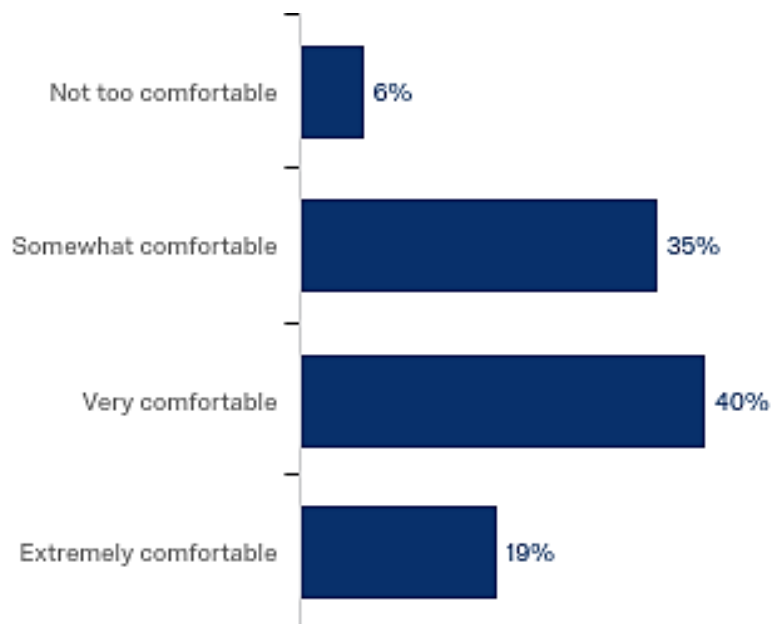
Q. When you talk to students during the college planning process, how often are you aware of their financial circumstances?



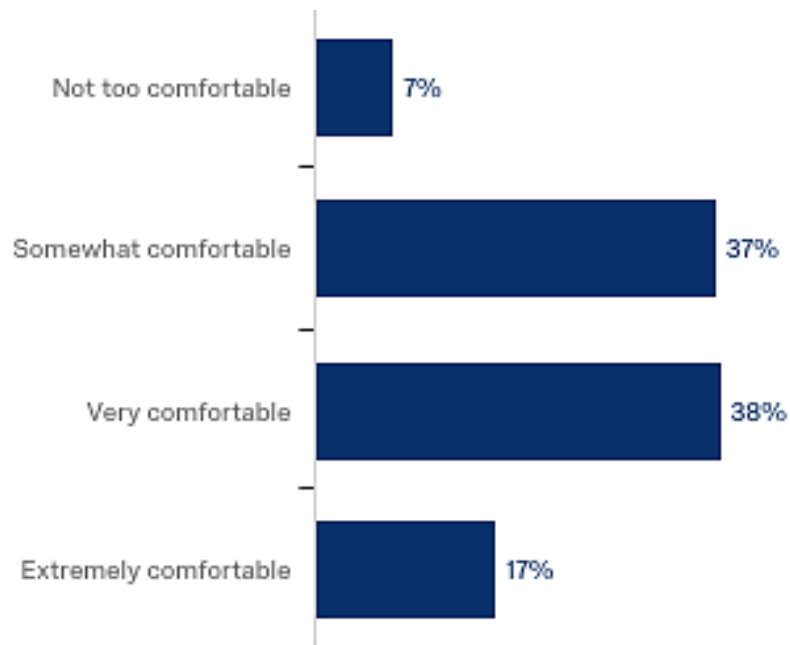
Despite Awareness; Reluctance

Q. How comfortable are you speaking about the *financial aid* application process...

...with Students



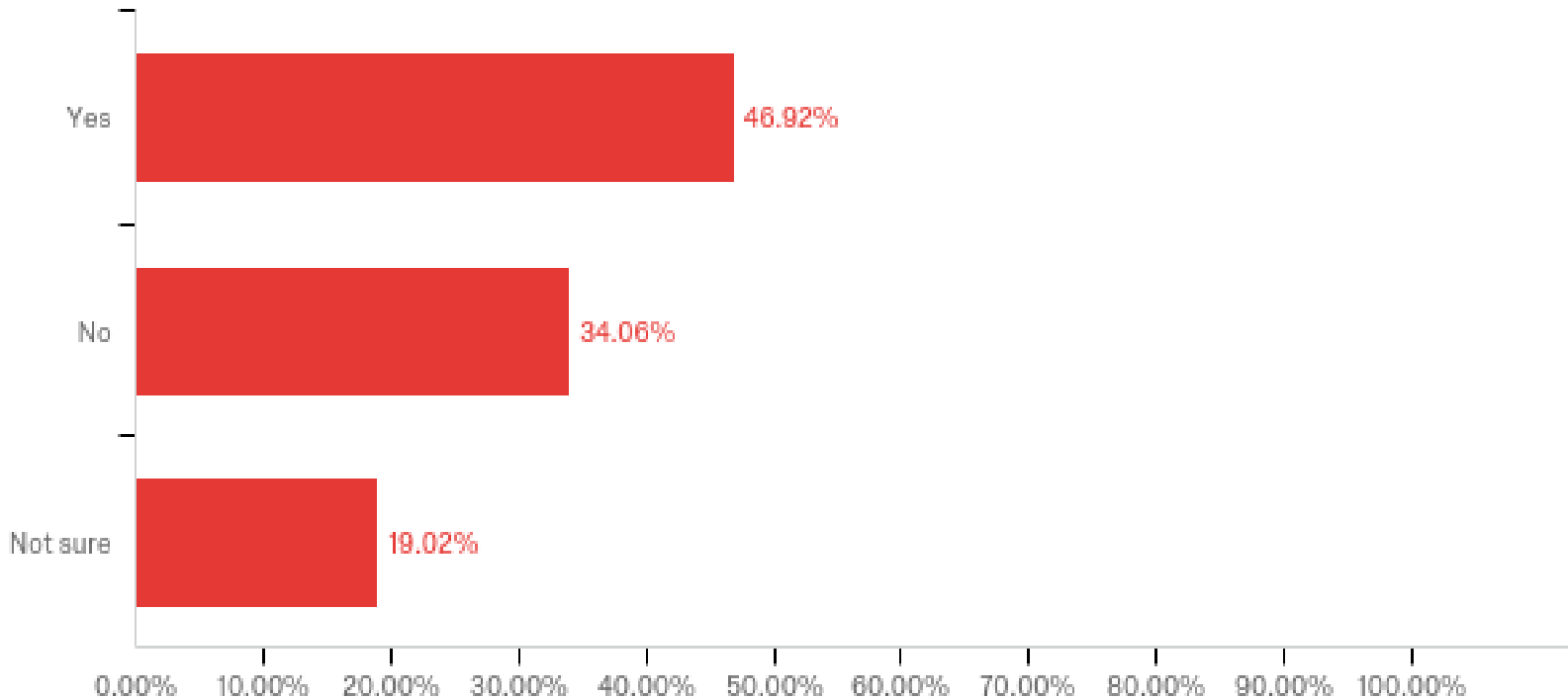
...with Parents



90% comfortable speaking about the college admissions process; 60% comfortable speaking about financial aid (55% parents)

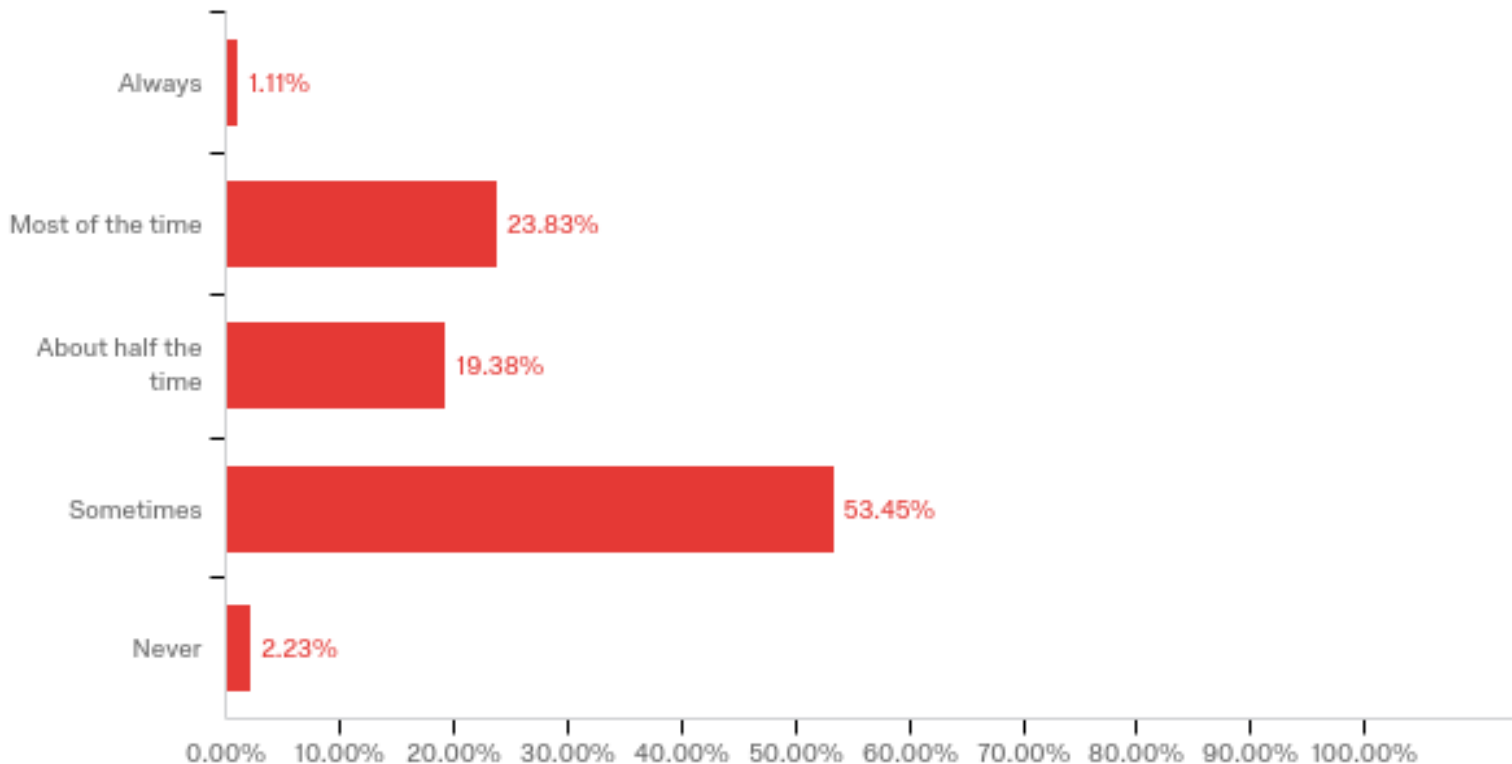
Almost 50% See PLUS Included

Q. Have you ever seen a Parent PLUS loan included in a student's financial aid award letter?



Almost 25% See It 'Most Of The Time'

Q. How often do you see a Parent PLUS loan included in a student's financial aid award letter?



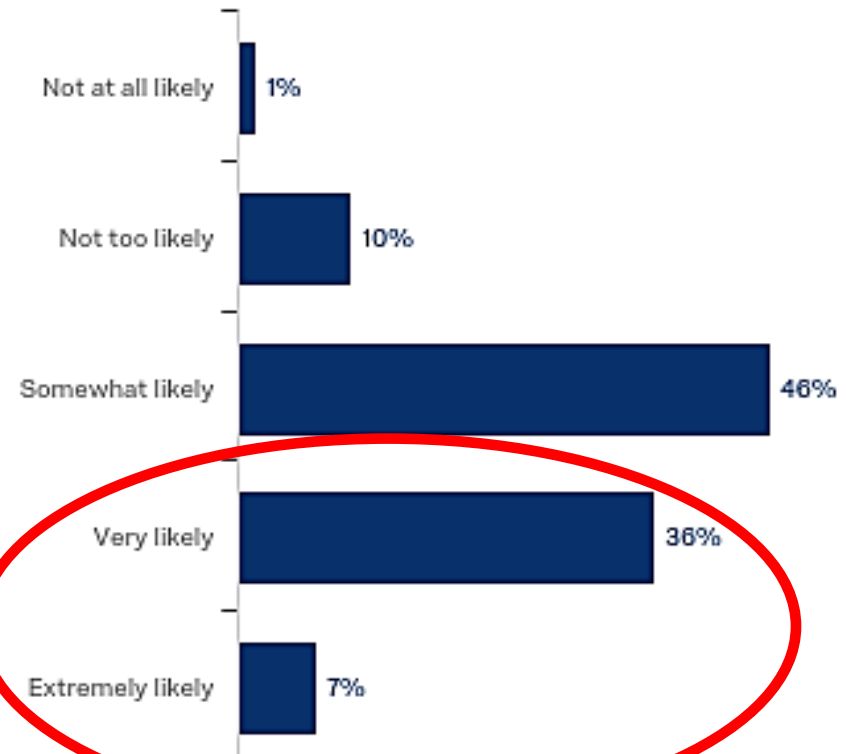
Academic More Weight Financial

Q. How likely are you to discourage a student from attending a certain school due to...

...Insufficient Financial Aid

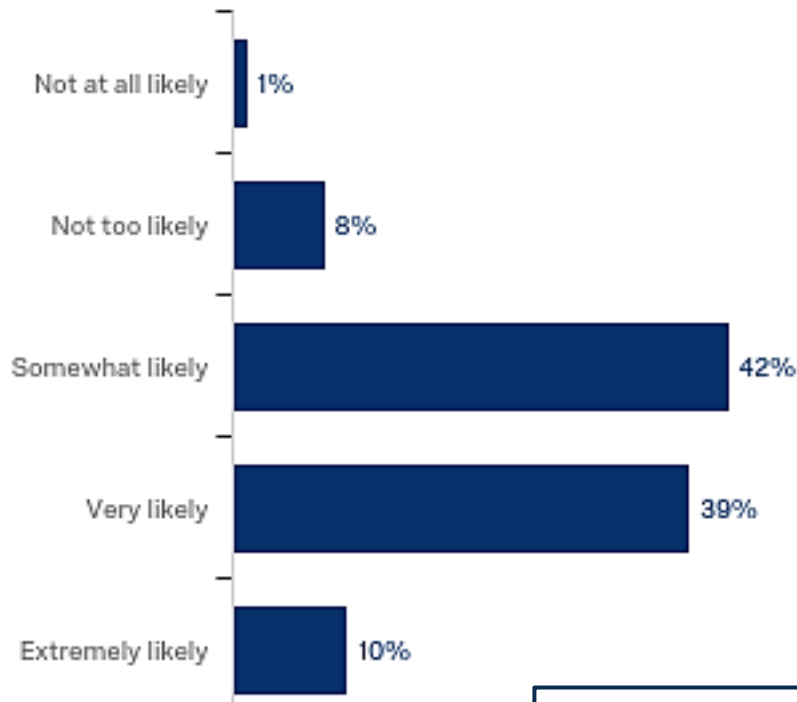


...Poor Academic Fit



Counselors Encouraging Transfer

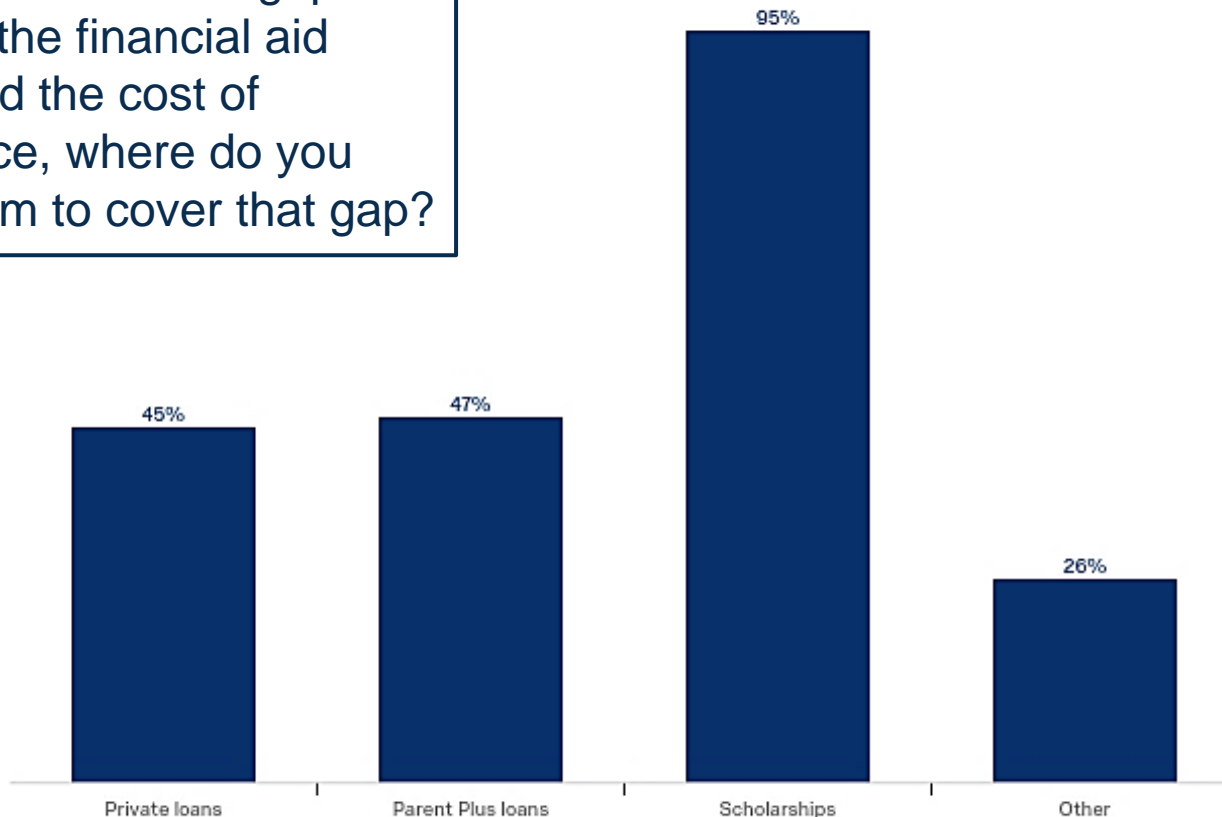
Q. How likely are you to encourage a student to attend a 2-year college prior to attending a 4-year college in order to save money?



Public school counselors are **10% more likely** to encourage a 2-year college over a 4-year, compared to private school counselors

Can Scholarships Really Bridge Gap?

Q. If students have a gap between the financial aid award and the cost of attendance, where do you direct them to cover that gap?



such as...

work study,

part-time jobs,

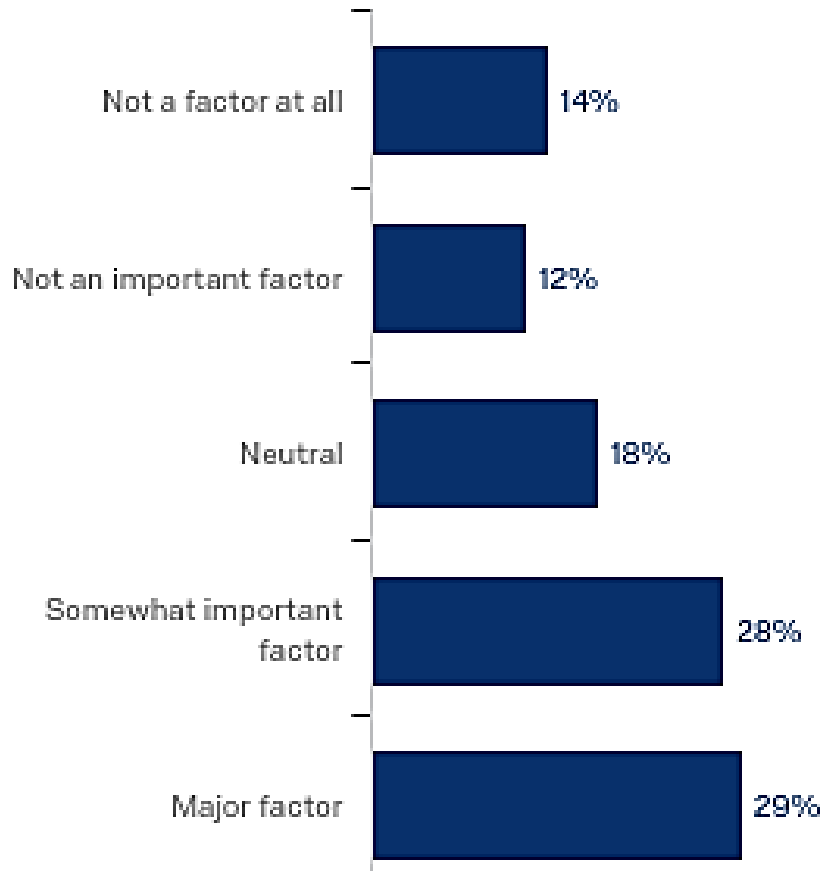
contacting college financial aid office,

considering other colleges



The Counselors' Schooling Experience

Almost 60% = Finances Big Factor



Q. How big a factor was the issue of finances/financial aid in your choice of college?

Also, **66% of respondents** took on student loans to fund their college education

Only 17% Identified Average Debt

Q. What would you guess is the average student loan debt for recent bachelor degree recipients?



Average student loan debt for the class of 2016 was
\$37,172

Questions To Consider

- What happens if high schools measure success by **average debt of graduates** instead of percentage accepted at 4-year colleges?
- How do counselors balance student **aspirations** with economic reality – especially for ‘middle achievers’ who aren’t in contention for valedictorian?



Conclusions and Next Steps

- Counselors need the following to be most effective:
 1. **Resources** to reduce caseloads for more time with each student;
 2. **Training** to confidently talk w/ students/families about complexities of college planning & financing;
 3. **Flexibility** and **support** from administrators to try new ways of helping students explore all their post-high school options to ensure they can achieve a postsecondary education that is the right academic and financial fit

Thank You Austin, For NICK FOLE!





Contact

Kevin Fudge

(978) 314-4989 (direct)

kfudge@asa.org

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/kevinfudge>

<http://www.asa.org/advocacy>