



Whiteboard
Advisors

Education Insider

Tech and Policy Perspectives from Higher Education Leaders

May 2017

Why Education Insider?

An Insider look at education trends from leaders in the field



SURVEY INSIDERS



ANALYZE RESULTS



REPORT INSIGHTS



DRIVE ACTION

About Education Insider

Education Insider is a regular report that uses a proprietary model to cut through the noise and provide real-time insights on national education trends, debates, and issues—from a small group of approximately 30-45 experts. Our goal is not statistically valid data, but rather trendspotting and candid opinions from Insiders who have a unique perspective on the education landscape. The views expressed do not necessarily represent the viewpoints of Whiteboard Advisors or any of its employees.

Who Are the Insiders?

For this special edition of *Education Insider*, we sourced insights from influential leaders within a cross-section of public and private four-year institutions, including presidents, provosts, and deans; innovation and technology officers; and the leaders of major coalitions and associations that represent them.

The Education Insider Team

Jeff Selingo is a Senior Advisor at Whiteboard Advisors and co-publisher of *Education Insider*. Selingo is the former Editor-in-Chief of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and is currently a special advisor and professor of practice at Arizona State University and a visiting scholar at Georgia Tech's Center for 21st Century Universities. His work has appeared in *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Slate*. His book *There is Life After College* was published in 2016. He has also written *MOOC U* and the *New York Times* bestseller *College (Un)Bound*.

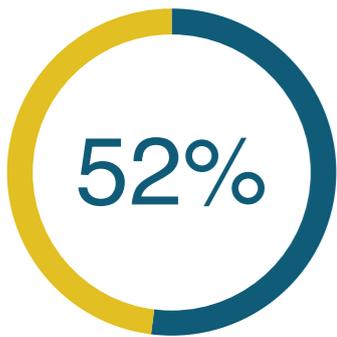
Ben Watsky is Chief of Staff at Whiteboard Advisors and co-publisher of *Education Insider*. He joined the team after serving as a faculty member at King's Academy, an independent boarding school outside Amman, Jordan, where he pioneered a blended online history course and was a featured presenter on edtech at Jordan's first education conference. Ben holds a degree in Cognitive Science from Yale University, where he toured the world singing a cappella with the Whiffenpoofs.

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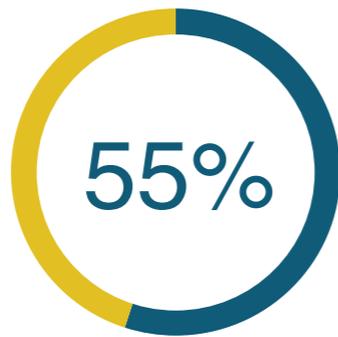
A look at what's ahead

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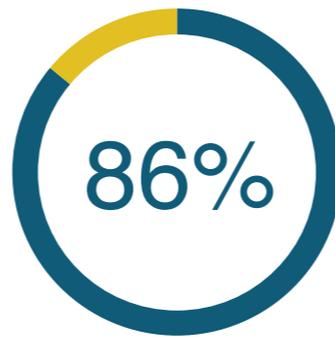
Executive Summary



of Insiders believe that accreditation reform is likely to occur.



do not see nontraditional, unaccredited providers as a threat to accredited institutions.



expect their institutions to expand further outside of traditional degree and certificate programs.



believe that higher ed technology companies are solving the right problems.



believe that online learning will see more expansion than other new models or technologies between now and 2020.

Putting Tech in Perspective

Just a quarter of respondents said that technology was a priority – but twice as many consider it a pain point. Sustainable financial strategy, student retention, and research were the top three priorities for higher education Insiders.

Solutions in Search of a Problem?

Just 15% of Insiders believe that technology companies are solving the right problems in higher education. Insiders were skeptical about technology in general, expressing doubt about the ability of tech companies to understand and address the unique challenges of campuses. They saw online learning, competency-based education, and predictive analytics as the technologies most likely to expand.

Policy Challenges and Opportunities

Nearly nine in ten Insiders think that accreditation reform is needed, but only half believe it is likely. Higher ed leaders expressed concern about the removal of regulations around for-profit institutions, as well as the potential for decreased funding. However, Insiders see opportunities for policy shifts at both federal and state levels, including changes to federal student loan programs, stronger pathways from two-year to four-year institutions, and improvements to workforce development initiatives.

Competitive Pressure?

Insiders aren't worried about the rise of nontraditional providers (e.g., bootcamps, standalone low-cost courses). Insiders do, however, expect their own institutions to expand beyond traditional degree and certificate programs.

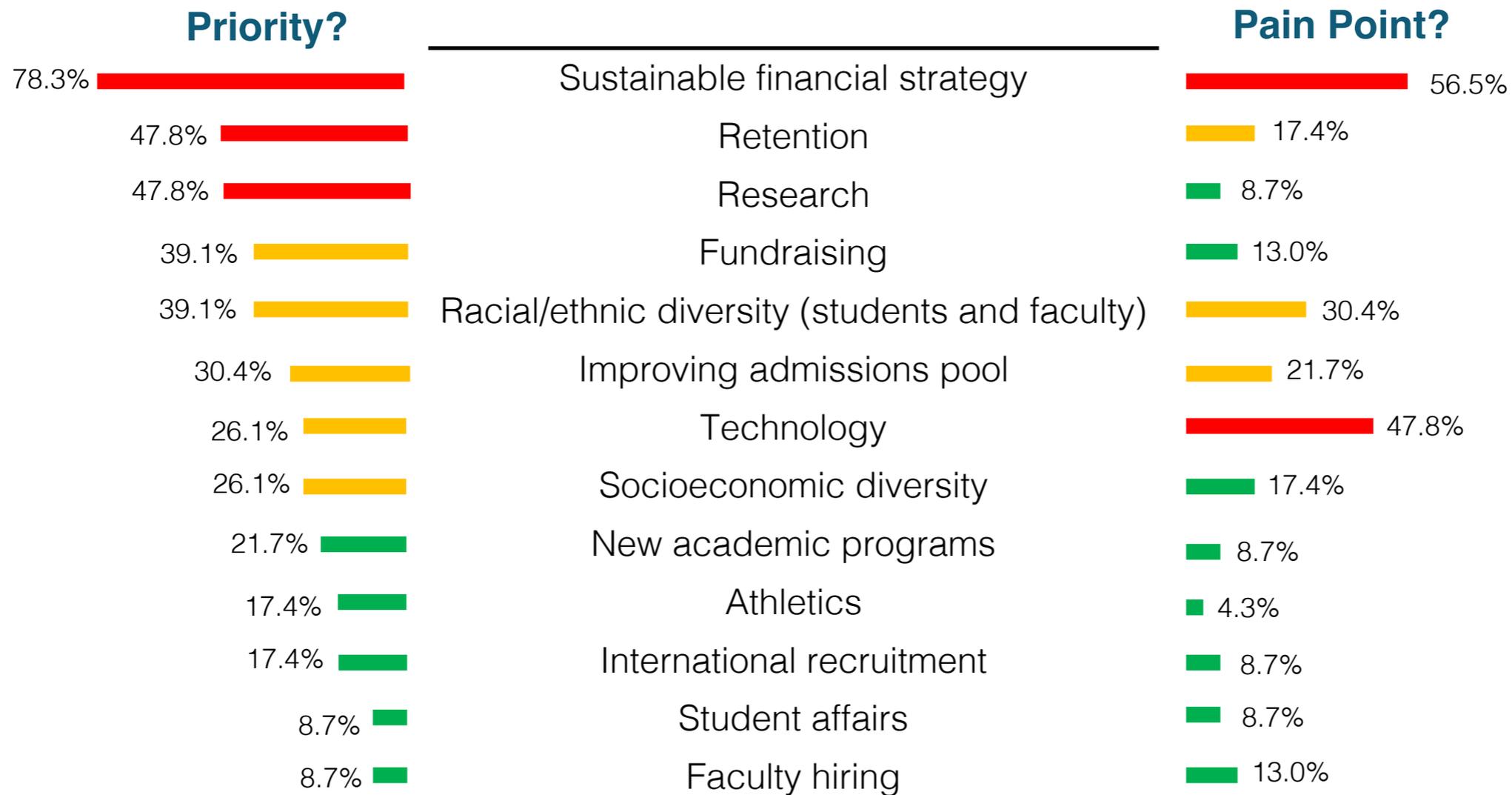
Priorities and Pain Points

Priorities and Pain Points

Q: What do you see as your institution's biggest priorities and pain points?

Insiders Weigh In

Just 25% of higher education Insiders identified technology as a top priority at their institution. Nearly twice as many, however, flagged technology as a pain point. Sustainable financial strategy is top-of-mind for higher education leaders, ranking as both the top priority and the top pain point.



Policy

Policy: Accreditation Reform

Q: How likely is accreditation reform?

Background

Since taking office in January, President Trump has shared few details about his Administration's plans for higher education. However, statements by Trump on the campaign trail have led to [speculation](#) about changes to higher education accreditation.

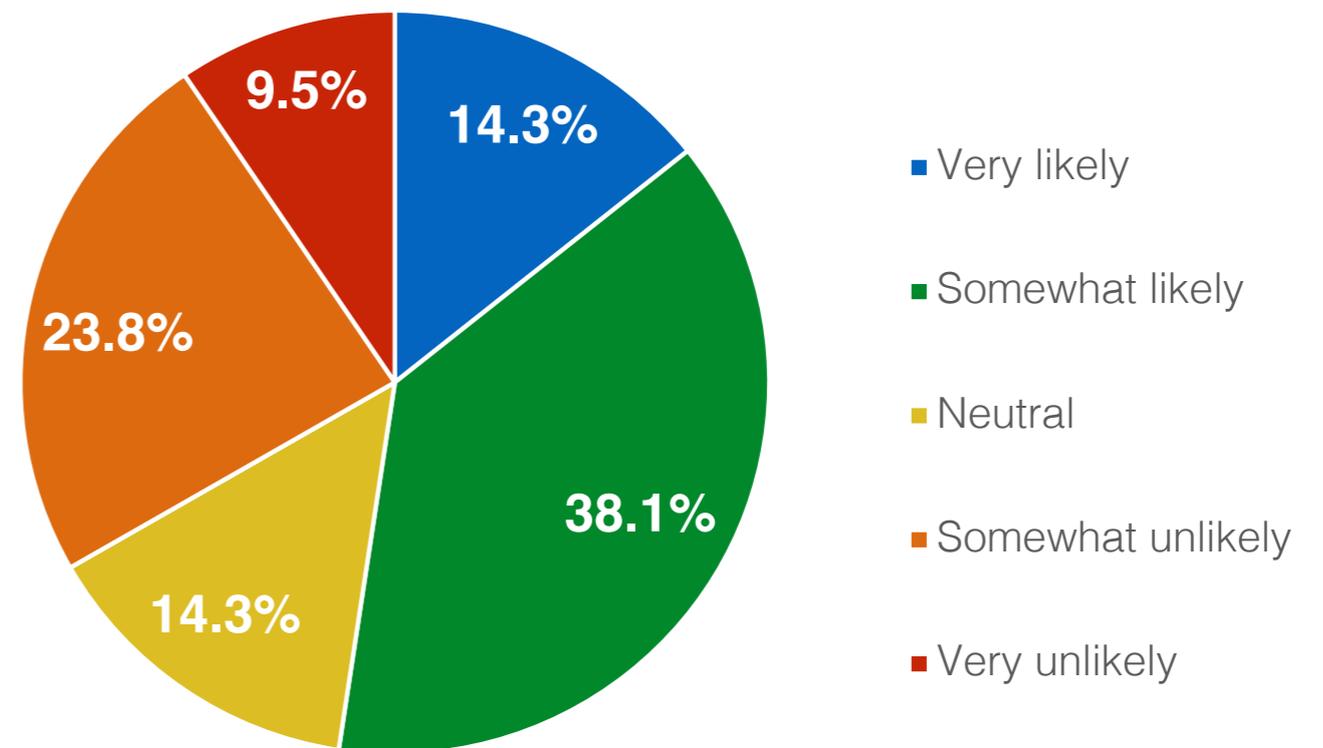
In March, Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Michael Bennet (D-CO) reintroduced the Higher Education Innovation Act, which would create a five-year pilot program allowing unaccredited providers to access federal financial aid.

Insiders Weigh In

More than half of higher education Insiders believe accreditation reform is likely. Only one-third believe it is unlikely, and less than ten percent view it as very unlikely.

By The Numbers

More than half of Insiders believe that accreditation reform is likely to occur.



Policy: Accreditation Reform

Q: Is accreditation reform needed? Why or why not?

Insider Insights

“Too long has a ‘who watches the watchers’ problem persisted.”

“Needs to be more based on educational outcomes and less on outdated measures like seat time.”

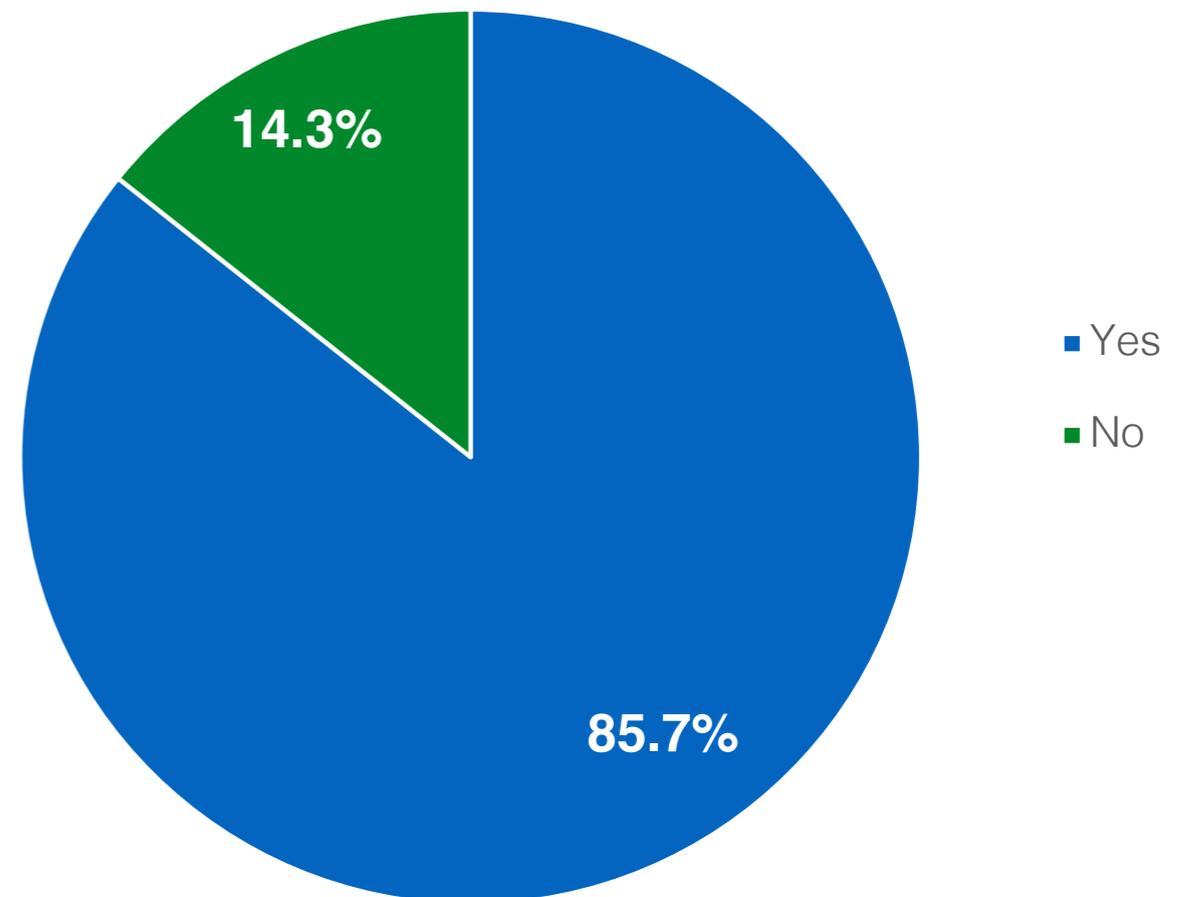
“Too focused on inputs, not outputs. ‘Do you have a process that ensures X’? Check the box to indicate yes and you're done.”

“There need to be some innovative ways of assessing institutions that is less burdensome on the institution.”

“But not in the direction it is likely to take. We need both quality control and a climate of innovation. We are likely to get deregulation to try to improve innovation, but this may lead to a race to the bottom.”

By The Numbers

Nearly nine in ten Insiders believe that accreditation reform is needed.



NOTE: Some comments have been edited for clarity.

Policy: Federal Threats and Opportunities

Insider perspectives on federal policy threats and opportunities (open-ended)

Policy Opportunities

Student Finance Reform

“Reform of lending to recognize the differential earnings potential by discipline with an appropriate set of limits where there is no ROI. This ought to be coupled with a much more explicit set of discussions about education as a public good and some incentives to the states to increase funding to achieve matches from the federal government.”

“One loan, one grant program.”

“Tying aid to student success.”

Changing Accreditation

“Improve accreditation to be more outcomes-driven and support smart financial and strategic decision-making.”

Policy Threats

Loss of Funding

“Dismantling Pell and other aid programs, reducing access to lower socioeconomic ranks.”

“Defunding NIH, NSF, NEH, etc.”

“Cuts to aid programs for low-income students”

Deregulation

“Removal of regulations on for-profit institutions.”

“Deregulation that commodifies degree completion as the only important metric.”

“Deregulation and rise of predatory entities (including nontraditional providers).”

NOTE: Some comments have been edited for clarity.

Q: What do you see as the biggest policy opportunity at the FEDERAL level over the next 5 years?

Q: What do you see as the biggest policy threat at the FEDERAL level over the next 5 years?

Policy: State Threats and Opportunities

Insider perspectives on state policy threats and opportunities (open-ended)

Policy Opportunities

Workforce Development

"Clearer workforce support and redistribution of financial aid to those needing it. States need to move away from supporting the wealthy at the expense of the poor in a misplaced attempt to keep wealthy/high test takers in state, rather than in schools they can afford."

"Partner with higher education to increase job pool."

"Increased funding for targeted higher education programs, mainly around workforce development."

Community College Transfer

"Pathways for transfer between community colleges and universities."

"Resolving cost issues for attendance at higher ed institutions, especially guaranteeing the transition from community college to 4-year, or at least completion of community college with relevant credentialing."

Policy Threats

Loss of Funding

"Base funding for public universities."

"Continued atrophy of state funding along with increased oversight."

"Further defunding and reliance on market pricing at premier institutions to drive less well-prepared students to lower tier and lower priced schools."

"Competition for scarce financial resources."

Other Concerns

"Waning commitment to the arts and humanities."

"Policies that limit diversity in student body."

NOTE: Some comments have been edited for clarity.

Q: What do you see as the biggest policy opportunity at the STATE level over the next 5 years?

Q: What do you see as the biggest policy threat at the STATE level over the next 5 years?

Policy: Best and Worst Ideas

Best Policy Ideas

Equity and Access

“Gain a better understanding of who college students are today, rather who they were in the past. Changing demographics are impacting the way universities function and support students.”

“Increase access to all US socioeconomic levels; make US universities and colleges welcoming to the world.”

Data and Innovation

“Help support better data gathering and sharing for institutions. Improve Pell and other funding mechanisms to support non-traditional students and student paths.”

“Shift focus of policy to outcomes and performance. Create policies that support non-traditional learners. Create policies that support micro-credentials.”

Worst Policy Ideas

The Trouble With “Free College”

“Free college movement to publics (least innovative and often least productive sector).”

“Continue to increase support without accountability.”

Over-regulate...

“Prescription of any kind.”

“Micromanage; too much emphasis on workforce development; reduce the number of international students here.”

...or deregulate.

“Remove regulations on for-profit colleges.”

NOTE: Some comments have been edited for clarity.

Q: What are the BEST (or most effective) things policymakers can do to support higher ed? (open-ended)

Q: What are the WORST (or least effective) things policymakers can do to support higher ed? (open-ended)

Tech and Innovation

Tech and Innovation: The Rise of Non-Traditional Providers

Insiders don't feel competitive pressure from emerging models

Background

Nontraditional, unaccredited educational models – including a fast-growing array of online and accelerated learning providers – have seen explosive growth in recent years, with nearly 18,000 “bootcamp” graduates in 2016 alone. The rise of new providers has raised questions about the future of higher education, and fueled debate about the value of the four-year degree in a rapidly changing economy.

Insiders Weigh In

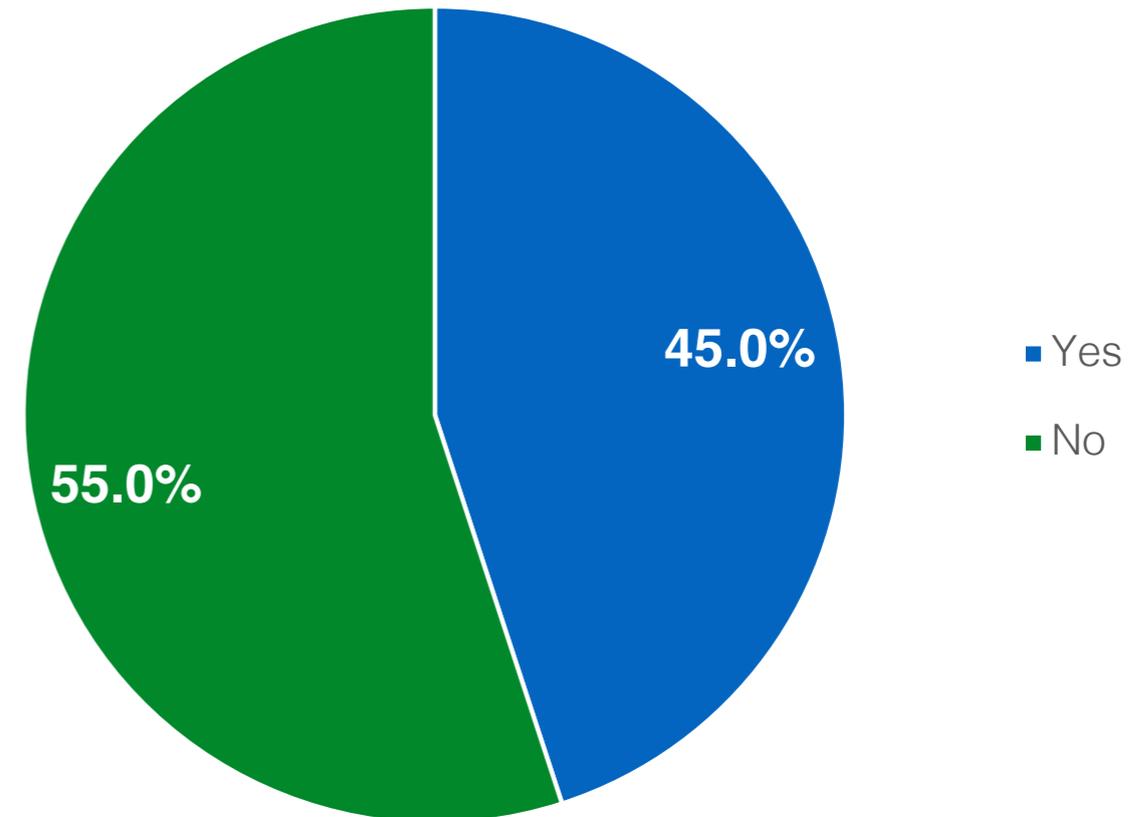
“Institutions must become more nimble in being able to respond to changes in the environment.”

“With an abundance of learning opportunities, the value of real credentialing/accreditation goes up, not down.”

“Right now, they are not particularly effective in job placements. They are going to get better at that and when they do, university students will be likely to interrupt or stop their traditional studies.”

By The Numbers

Do nontraditional, unaccredited providers (e.g., bootcamps, standalone low-cost courses) pose a real threat to accredited institutions? Why or why not?



Tech and Innovation: The Rise of Non-Traditional Providers

Insiders anticipate that their institutions will expand beyond traditional programs

Insiders Weigh In

“We are in the education business and responding the needs of students and employers should be a high priority.”

“We need to provide students value that they can benefit from as they progress to a degree.”

“As a state university we are limited by processes which are not flexible.”

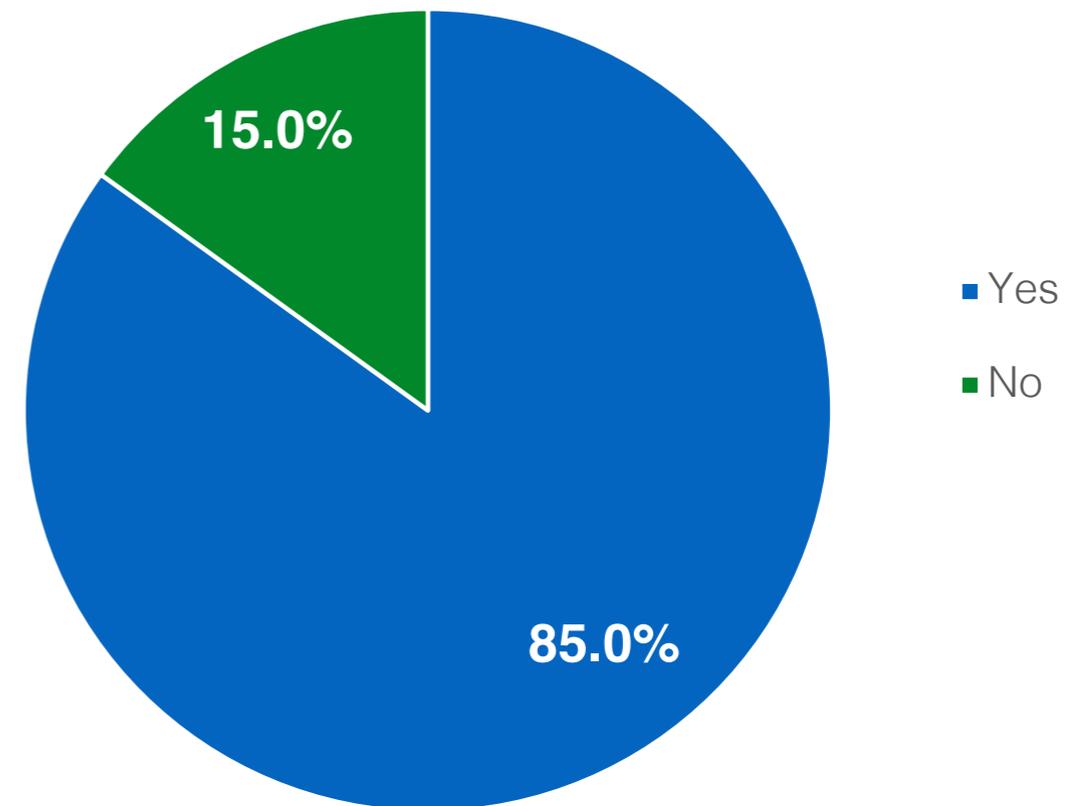
“We are working on micro credentialing.”

“Already doing so.”

“Adapt or die.”

By The Numbers

More than eight in ten Insiders expect that their institution will begin (or continue) to offer alternative programs and credentials.



Q: Do you see your own institution expanding further outside of traditional degree and certificate programs into micro-credentials, bootcamps, and other types of alternative programs and credentials?

Tech and Innovation: Solutions in Search of a Problem?

Q: Are higher education technology companies solving the right problems?

Insiders Weigh In

“Some are, many are not. Building better collaboration and social tools is a real win. Turning education into mere knowledge nuggets, not so much.”

“Very much a chicken-or-egg problem: very difficult to innovate in higher ed, but need technology to innovate at scale.”

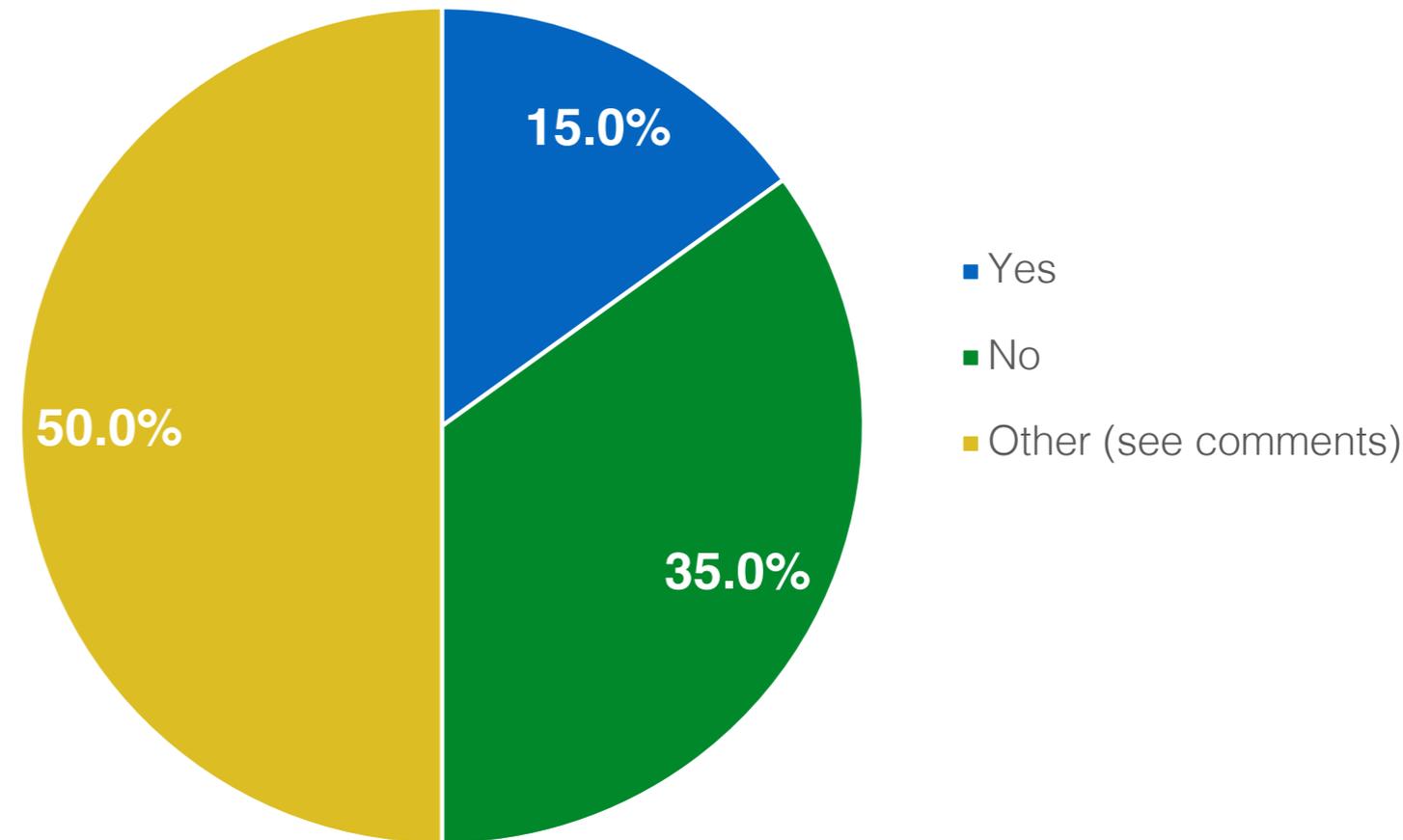
“They are mostly shots in the dark with little more than a profit motive propelling them forward.”

“The higher ed tech companies are more responsive to existing business models. They do not have the patience for longer term investments.”

“Creating technologies that require instructor buy-in is doomed to fail due to the perceived effort needed to adopt. New technologies should learn from best practices in pedagogy and aim to be student-centric.”

By The Numbers

Just fifteen percent of Insiders believe that tech companies are solving the right problems. More than one-third said “no” outright; the remainder offered comments.



Tech and Innovation: New Providers, New Solutions

Insider insights on how tech companies can better address their needs (open-ended)

Where Should Tech Focus?

Listening and Responding

“Not only the platform, but ways in which to make improvements for individuals who are unfamiliar with all the technology.”

“They should learn more about higher ed and figure out what we need rather than telling us what we need and calling us too slow to reform.”

Collecting Better Data

“Funding independent assessment of the effectiveness of the technology to affect change. Ensuring that all data collected at an institution is freely available to the institution.”

“Deep learning analytics and better understanding the needs of the workplace so that they can be translated into actionable learning objectives at schools.”

Tech Companies' Biggest Mistakes

They Don't Get It

“They don't understand higher ed.”

“Not understanding how universities function; our infrastructure and ability to make decisions and implement new technologies typically is more difficult and takes longer than in the private sector.”

“They tend not to understand 1) how learning happens, 2) how higher education works, and 3) what motivates higher ed.”

They're Not Listening

“Not listening to the specific needs of a particular institution and how their solutions can be modified to meet these specific needs.”

“Not understanding the mindset of faculty and showing the innovation as a tool for them.”

Q: What issues should higher education technology companies be paying more attention to?

Q: When you're presented with new solutions or innovations from the private sector, what's the biggest mistake that outside presenters make?

Tech and Innovation: Predictions

Insiders predict which tech categories will see the most growth

Background

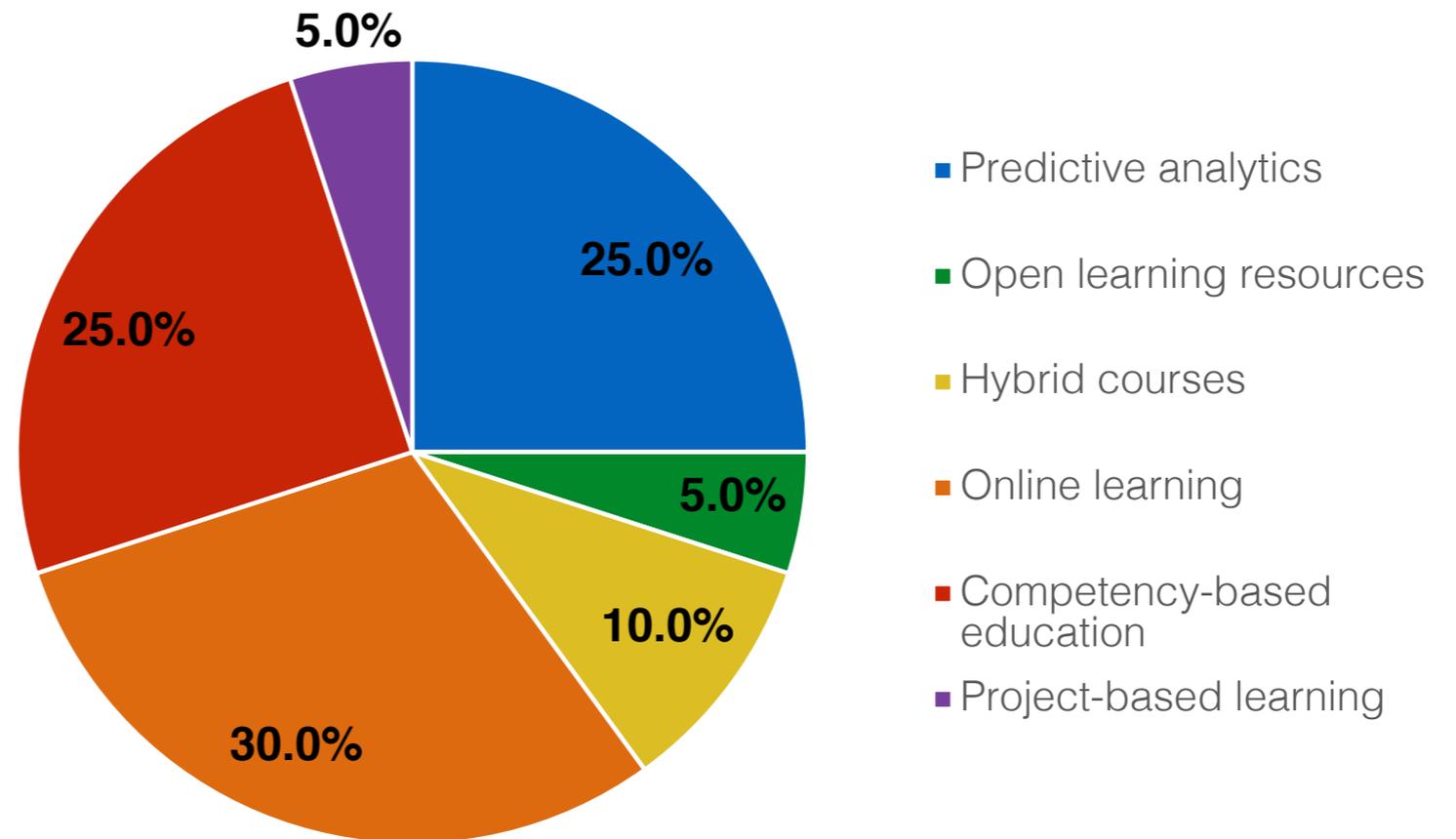
Eduventures [reports](#) that higher education spends \$25 billion per year on technology products and services across the student lifecycle – from enrollment and financial aid to digital courseware to success and retention solutions.

Insiders Weigh In

Insiders anticipate that online learning, competency-based education, and predictive analytics will be the three biggest areas of education technology expansion on college campuses.

By The Numbers

Online learning was Insiders' top choice for expansion, with predictive analytics and competency-based education close behind.



NOTE: Two options were not chosen by any Insider: adaptive learning and flexible degrees.

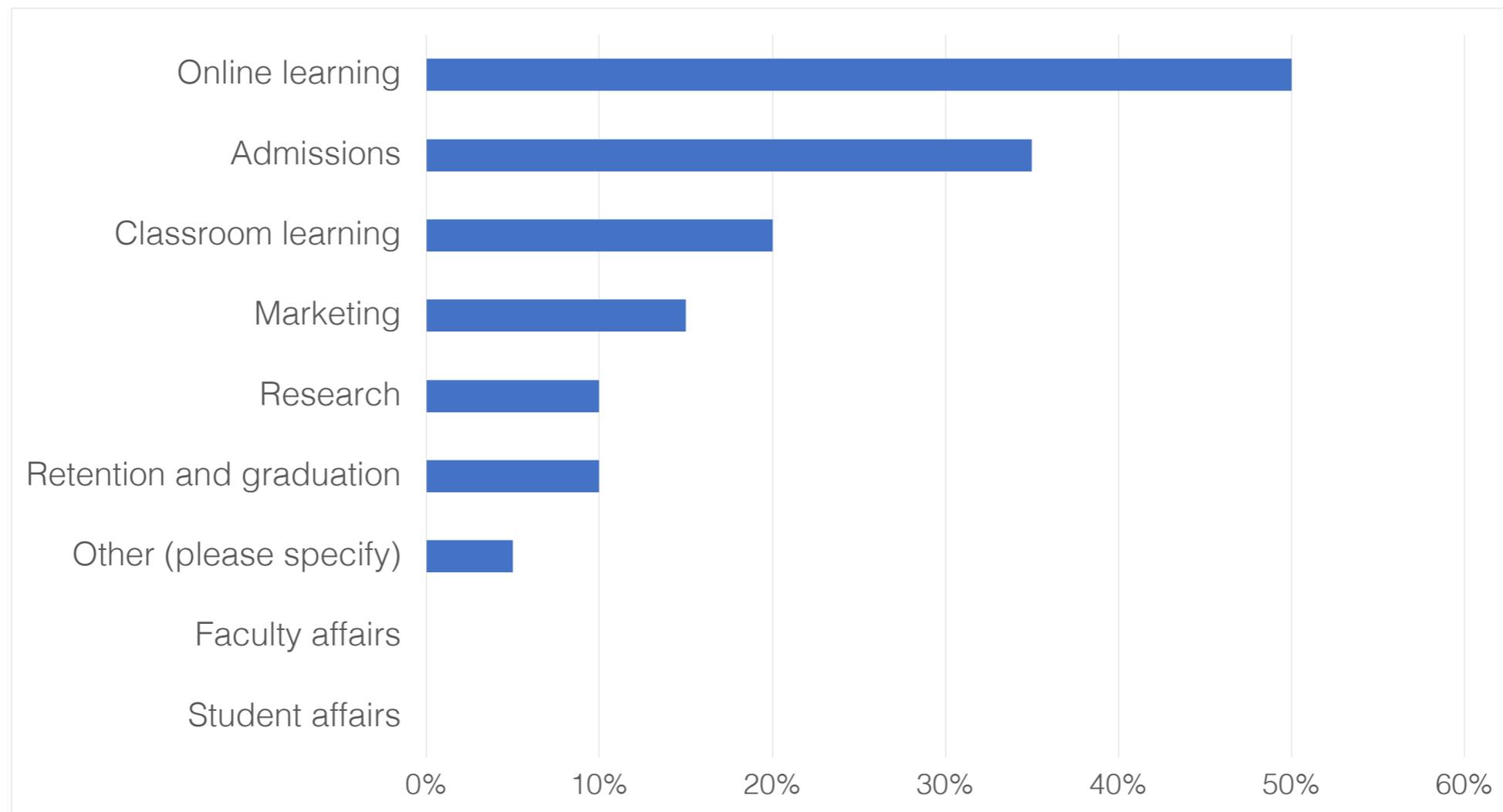
Q: Between now and 2020, what technology platform, software, or innovation will see the most expansion on college campuses?

Tech and Innovation: Impact

Q: In what areas has technology had the biggest impact at your institution?

Insiders Weigh In

Most Insiders have yet to see the impact of technology beyond online learning and admissions. Despite the rise of technologies focused on improving retention and enhancing the student experience (both inside and outside the classroom), less than 20% of institutional leaders chose any of these categories as impact areas.

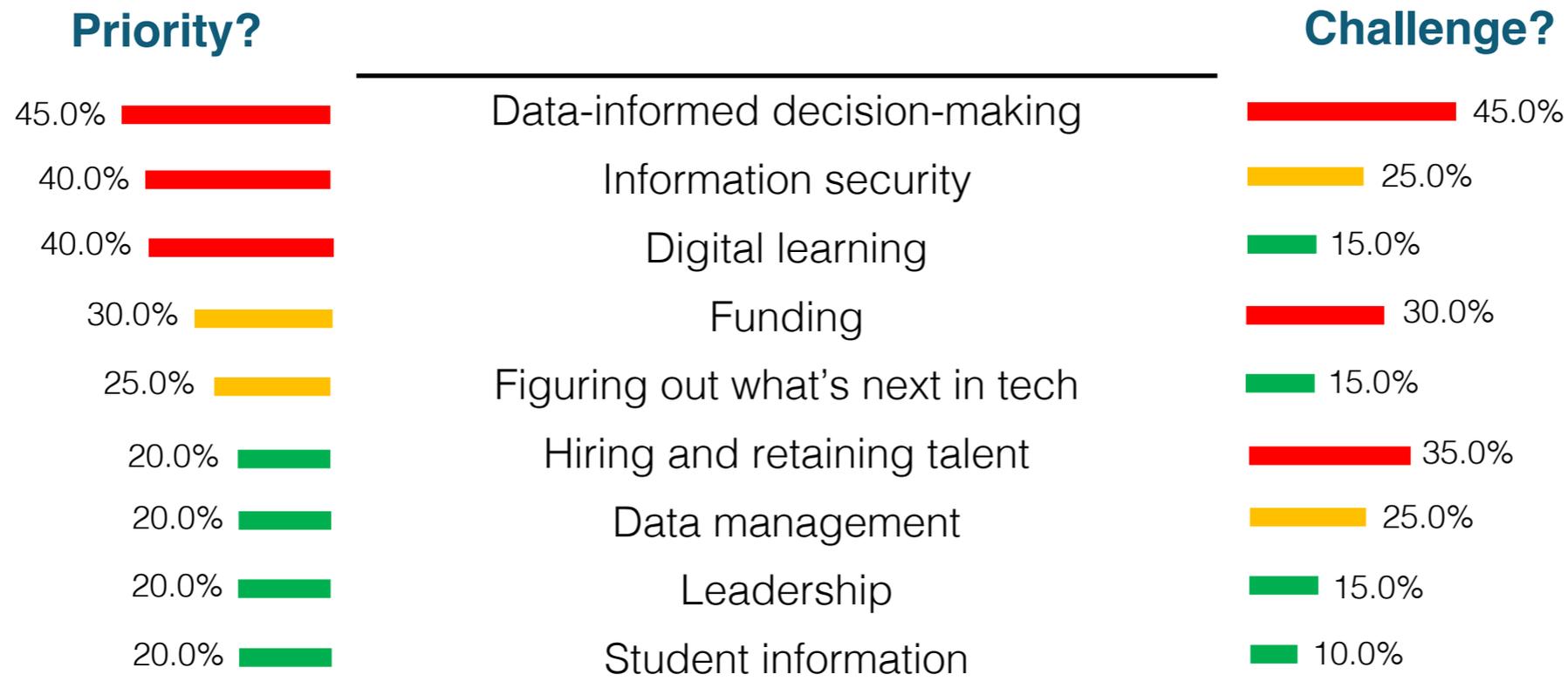


Tech and Innovation: Priorities and Challenges

Q: What are your institution's biggest priorities and challenges when it comes to technology?

Insiders Weigh In

Insider perspectives suggest that institutions struggle to make use of data and face challenges when hiring and retaining talent to manage technology on campus. Investment in improving data-informed decision-making was, however, the top priority for Insiders.





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