

**METHODS AND MODELS FOR
PROMOTING STUDENT PERSISTENCE
THE EMERGING NATIONAL PICTURE**

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Grappling With Questions



The limitations of current theories and research on student persistence provide the backdrop

- How and to what extent do institutions organize themselves to promote student persistence?
- What policies and practices do institutions enact to try to enhance student persistence?

Focal Points of Our Inquiry: Actionable Implications



- Understanding the role of campus policies and practices
- Identifying actionable practices and policies
- Providing useful benchmarks of normative and effective policies and practices

Utility of Benchmarking



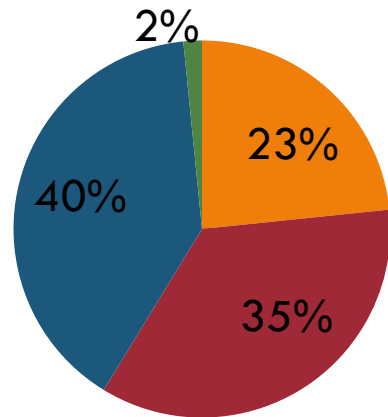
- The empirical base for understanding how practices and policies affect student persistence is still developing
- In the meantime, comparative data are an important resource for institutions
 - ▣ Recommendations from institutional policy makers

Survey of Institutional Retention Practices

2009
Survey of
4-year
institutions
nationwide

- Web-based administration
 - ▣ 1,484 institutions surveyed
 - ▣ Response rate of 30% (ca. 442 responding institutions)
- Findings focus on
 - ▣ Coordination of retention efforts
 - ▣ Actionable institutional policies/practices
 - Orientation
 - Academic advising
 - Early warning
 - Faculty-student interaction
 - Research and assessment

Institutional Characteristics



■ Research ■ Masters ■ Baccalaureate ■ Other

□ Mean SAT (Critical Reading & Math) scores:

- 978 (25th percentile)
- 1196 (75th percentile)

- Mean scores on select variables
 - Fall-to-fall retention rate for first-time 1st year students 75.73% (national mean =72.65%)
 - 40% of the institutions have a requirement for full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking students to live on campus
- Median revenue figures
 - Instructional expenses per FTE \$5,802
 - Tuition and fee revenues \$4,846/per FTE
 - Total revenue \$49,588,399

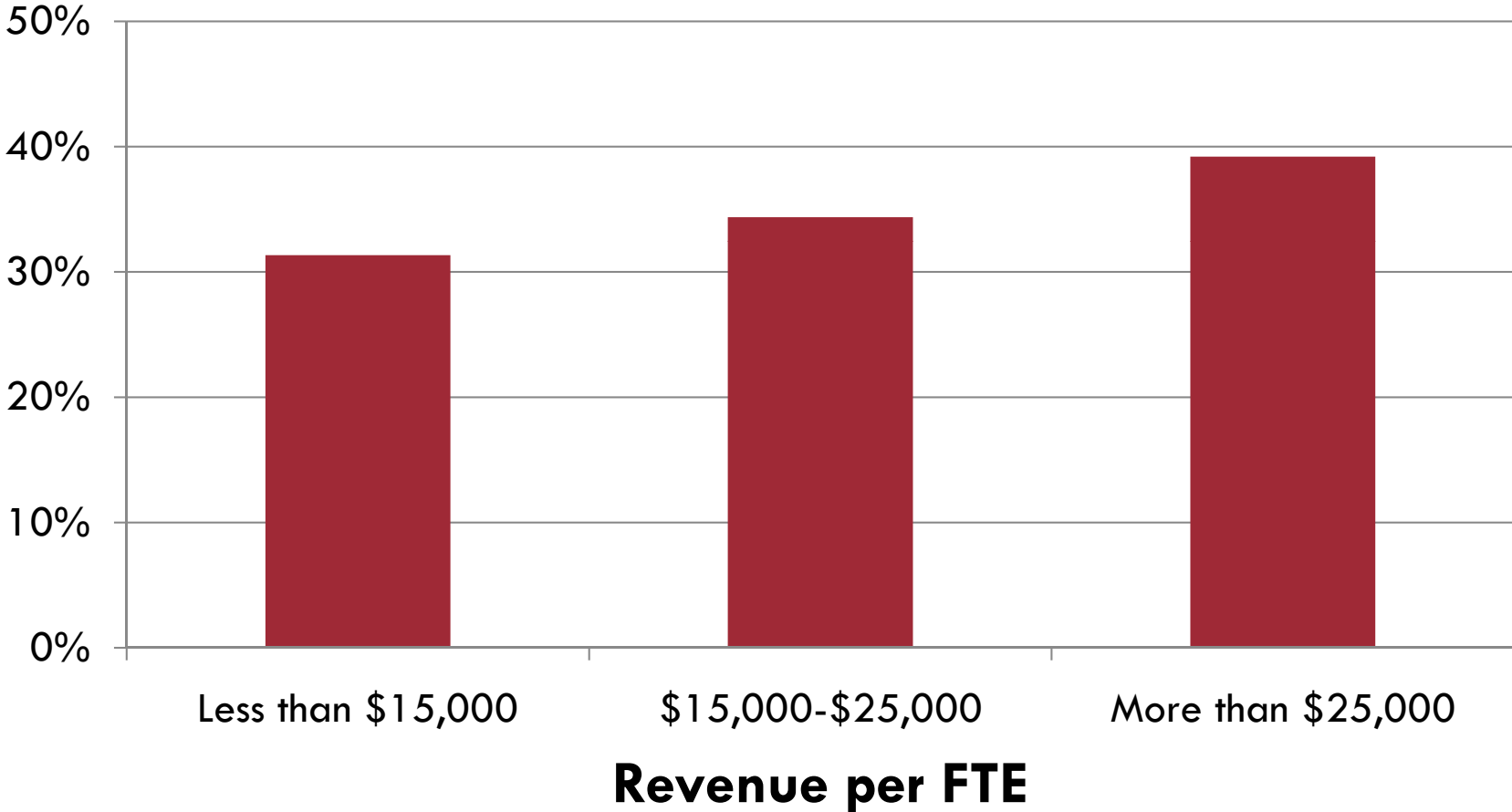
Coordination of Retention Efforts: Structures in Place

- 74 % reported having a retention coordinator
 - Based on two definitions
 - “an administrator charged with coordinating efforts”
 - “an administrator acting as a central resource”
 - most reported that the position entails both functions
 - Mean FTE reported for the position was .35
 - 66% reported retention coordinator has at least some **authority to implement** new initiatives
 - 32% reported retention coordinator has at least some **authority to fund** new initiatives
- 63% have a retention committee
- 27% report coordinating retention program to a great extent

Percentage FTE Devoted to Retention Coordination at Institutions with Retention Coordinators



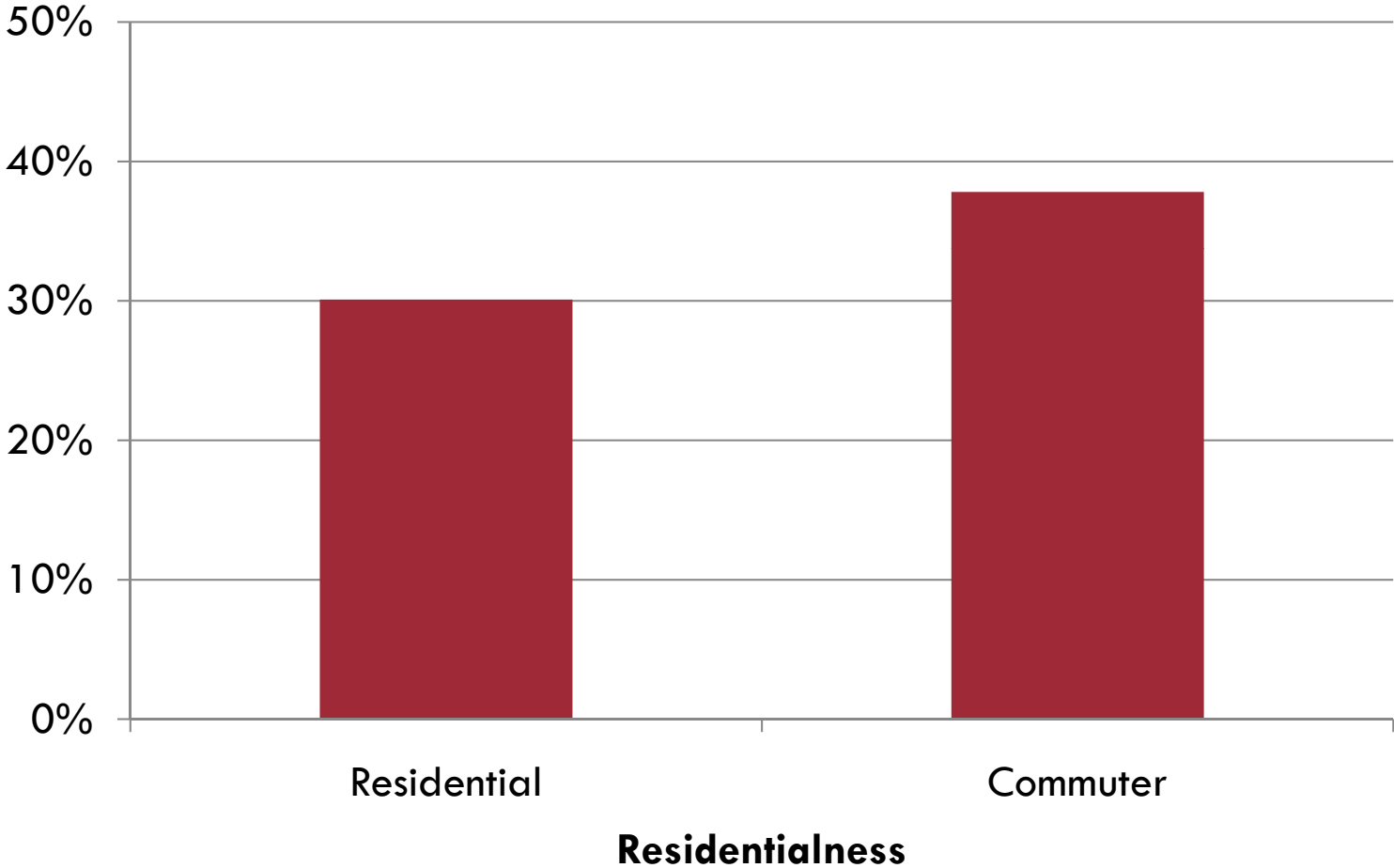
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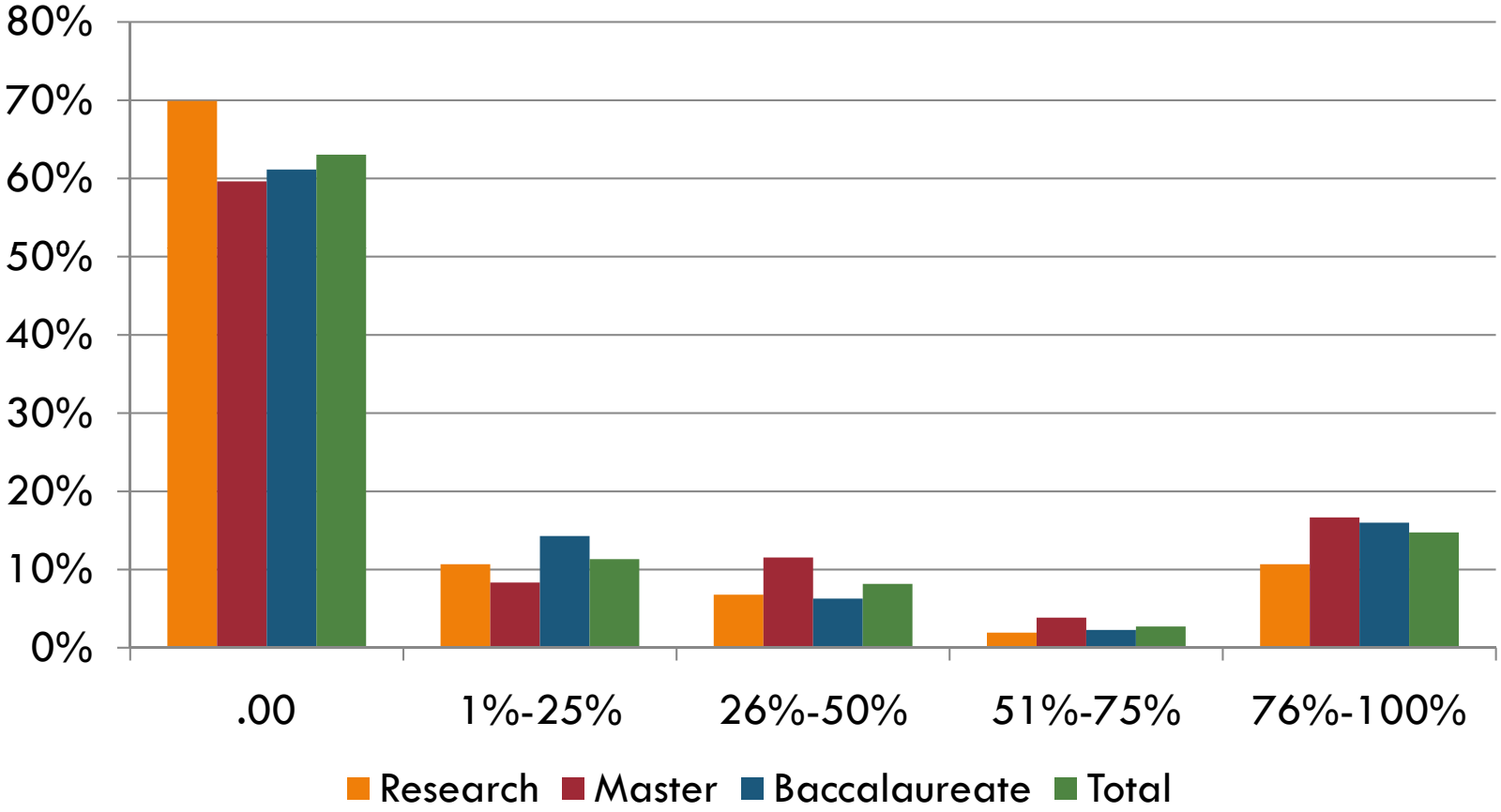
Percentage FTE Devoted to Retention Coordination at Institutions with Retention Coordinators (continued)



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Percentage FTE Devoted to the “Retention Coordinator” Role

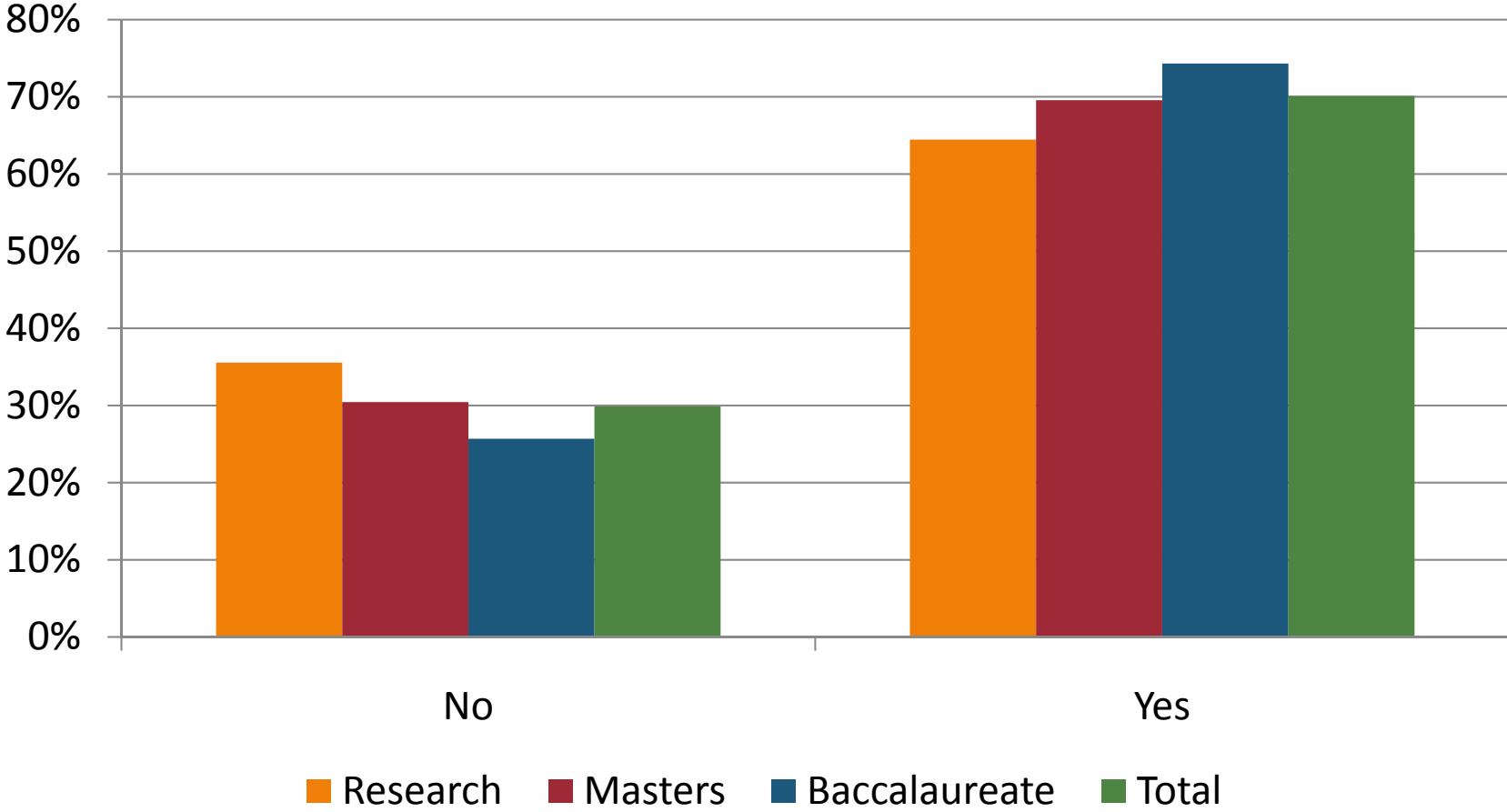


Orientation



- 76% report that more than three-quarters of first-year students participated in entire orientation program
 - 90% report that more than half participated in entire orientation program
- Orientation program entails a mean of 3.94 days for entering first-year students
- 44% report having an orientation program that extends through the first semester of classes

Percentage of Schools that Collected Midterm Grade Information for First-Year Students in 2007-2008



Policies for Early Warning



- 70% report they collect **midterm grade** information for first-year students
- 68% report they ask faculty to complete **early alert** forms for first-year students
- 53% report they regularly flag specific courses with high percentages of **Ds, Fs, or Withdrawals**
- 46% report they offer voluntary weekly sessions to deepen student learning in courses with traditionally high D, F, & W rates

Policies for Faculty Interaction

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- 69% report that more than half of 100-level classes were taught by full-time faculty
- 66% report average class size for courses primarily taken by 1st year students is between **1-30 students**

However...

- 78% report that incentives for full-time faculty to teach first-year classes were **nonexistent or small**

Academic Advising

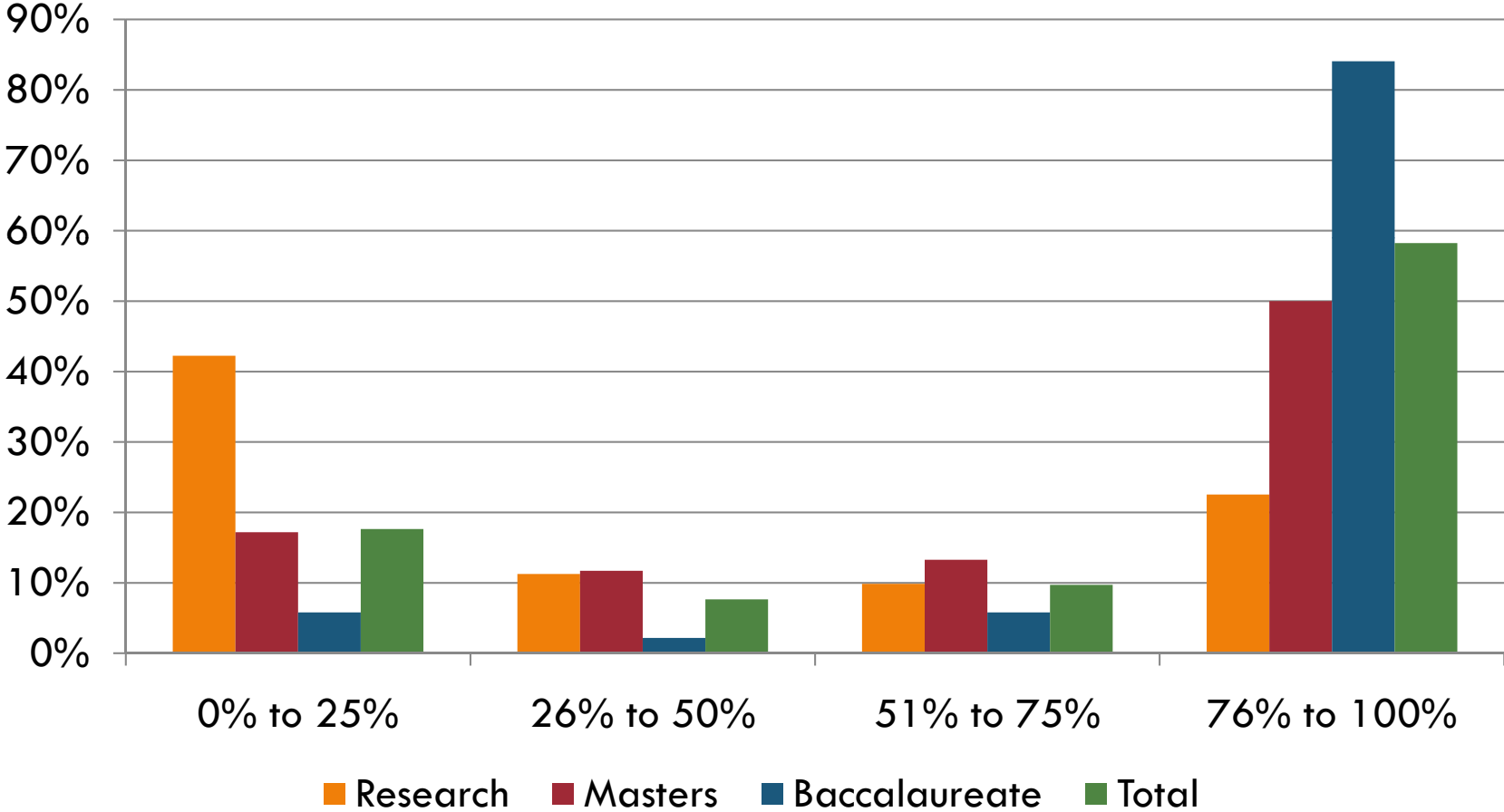
Advising Practices

- 83% require first-year students to meet with an academic advisor at least once per term
- 93% report that full-time faculty act as academic advisors to undergraduates

Advising Roles

- 58% estimate that more than three-quarters of their first-year students were **advised by full-time faculty**
- 34% estimate that more than three-quarters of first-year students were **advised by professional advisors**

Proportion of 1st Year Students Advised by Full-Time Faculty in the 2007-2008



Implications



- Institutions are, in fact, organizing for retention
 However,...
- Resources (e.g., FTE, funding and programming authority) devoted to the enterprise may not be equal to the task
 - Differences in structures across institutional type
 - Research institutions rely on professional advisors more than faculty for advising first-year students
 - Research institutions show a lower FTE for retention coordinator positions and emphasize committee efforts v. stronger coordination

Concluding Remarks



- Results may reflect the early stages of coordination and/or of institutional recognition that organization is needed
- Federal and state agencies are increasingly focused on outcomes, so the organizing trend is likely to continue
- Economic factors causing families to consider "value" may also contribute to the continuance of the trend
- The need for longitudinal research
 - ▣ To determine if these patterns hold over time
 - ▣ To tie the retention factors noted in the study to actual retention results

Discussion Question

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- What do these patterns suggest about the genuine commitment of colleges and universities to encourage student persistence and graduation?

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Presentation available via download at
<http://pas.indiana.edu/cb/resources.cfm>

Reports

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□ Survey 2006

- Pilot report, *How Colleges Organize Themselves to Increase Student Persistence: Four-Year Institutions*, available at www.collegeboard.com/retention

□ Survey 2009

- Report coming in winter 2010