



Academic Affairs Organizational Benchmarking Survey

Key Findings from the 2021 Survey of College
and University Chief Academic Officers

Academic Affairs

Academic Affairs

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Executive Summary

Provosts' Portfolios Often Complex, Cumbersome, and Capacious

"Too many single units doing overlapping things, colleges and non-college units included"

"Too many meetings, too many people, too little bandwidth, entrenched siloes"

"Turf battles are a challenge... no one wants to think about students first and have form follow function"

"How do I maintain boundaries while also encouraging collaboration?"

"Too many reports leads to 'bottlenecks' in my office, because leaders wait on me for decisions"

The above responses to open-ended prompts in our 2021 survey of chief academic officers are emblematic of the organizational dynamics within the modern academy. Respondents often described their roles as both exceedingly broad and deep—requiring a degree of flexibility matched by few roles inside or out of higher education.

In response to growing interest among provosts in norms and emerging trends associated with academic affairs units—perhaps accelerated by the financial strain brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on higher education revenues—EAB launched a survey to provide much-needed insight into the size, scope, and processes in place at colleges and universities across North America. The survey asked respondents to describe the following:

- The number of direct reports to the provost, including both academic deans and administrators overseeing units such as undergraduate education, libraries, IT, and international programs
- Functions reporting directly to the provost and desired changes to the functional portfolio (*what should and shouldn't report to you?*)
- Meeting and check-in periodicity with reports—both collectively and individually
- Desired changes to the academic affairs office and/or organization of academic units

Survey Methodology

EAB's Academic Affairs Organizational Benchmarking Survey was administered to an initial cohort of chief academic officers at colleges and universities across early 2021, receiving a total of 191 responses at the time of this report's publication.

A detailed demographic breakdown of survey respondents and institutional type is included in the Appendix, p. 49-50.

Custom benchmarking reports highlighting individual responses against the appropriate institutional segment are available to EAB partners who participate in the survey; chief academic officers who have not yet participated may obtain a link to our dedicated survey portal by contacting their EAB Strategic Leader.

Executive Summary (cont.)

Key Survey Findings and Highlights

While the size and scope of academic affairs offices differ across institutional type (these differences are shown for each question in the survey in the following report), our analysis allows a glimpse into the 'typical' context for the average provost at a four-year college or university in the US or Canada.

In 2021, the Typical Provost...

- **Has between 11-15 direct reports.** Only 27% of respondents have 10 or fewer reports, and 40% have *more* than 15 reports. Unsurprisingly, smaller offices are more common at private baccalaureate institutions, and larger offices are more common at public research institutions (which tend to have more academic deans overseeing schools and colleges).
- **Has 1.37 non-academic dean reports for every one academic dean** (overseeing an academic unit with faculty lines). Variation in comprehensiveness again drives institutional differences, with baccalaureate institutions reporting fewer academic dean reports than master's and research-intensive institutions.
- **Feels they have too many direct reports.** A small majority (51%) agreed with the statement "I have too many direct reports," while only 12% felt they could take on additional reports. Provosts at private master's institutions felt most strongly that their organizational charts are too large, with 63% selecting "too many"--this despite their having only 1-5 academic deans on average, and only 14% reporting more than 15 total reports.
- **Directly oversees libraries, faculty affairs, graduate education, the registrar, institutional research, undergraduate studies, academic resource planning, an office for student success, and a center for teaching and learning.** These units directly report to at least 50% of respondents.
- **Does *not* oversee admissions, career services, IT (Information Technology), financial aid, military affairs, community engagement, DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion), marketing and communications, or museums.** These units directly report to fewer than 20% of respondents.
- **Considers institutional ownership of DEI and IT the least organizationally appropriate (when they report to the provost), and is most likely to desire oversight of the registrar and academic resource planning (when they do *not* report to the provost).** DEI is typically considered an institution-wide priority and responsibility, and IT more commonly reports to the chief business officer or president. Provosts who do not currently manage the registrar or academic planning and budgeting are likely to experience challenges related to course assignment, scheduling, and HR issues that are critical to their performance.
- **Meets with academic deans once every two weeks as a group, and once a month individually; meets with non-academic dean (administrative) reports once a month as a group and once a month individually.** A quarter (23%) of respondents noted that they never meet with all reports as a full group, but the plurality (34%) meet with all reports together about once a month.
- **Has already made changes to their organizational structure and is considering additional realignment.** 76% report having already made changes to reporting lines, and 66% are at least considering new changes, primarily to streamline workflow and foster greater collaboration between units. Respondents were less likely to cite cost reduction or the resolution of interpersonal conflict as motivations for change.

Executive Summary (cont.)

Recommendations for Organizational Redesign

When is a Problem Truly *Organizational* in Nature? And When is Reorganization Worth the Effort?

Many problems that initially seem to be organizational problems are *not* actually rooted in reporting lines or structures. As one former provost remarked in an interview with our research team, “My advice to a new provost would be to hire well. If you hire the right people, they’ll figure out how to collaborate and solve problems without having to re-organize who reports to who.” Relatedly, many organizational models, titles, and processes are highly personality-dependent and deeply contextualized within the idiosyncratic history of that institution.

Re-organization also brings with it several trade-offs that should be understood. New offices, titles, protocols, policies, and people take significant time and energy to adapt to. Change fatigue can create cynicism or even resistance, where frequent re-examination of reporting lines has taken place or where, as in recent years, teams have already been grappling with significant external and internal disruptions. Finally, an executive impulse to clarify ‘ownership’ can go too far—organizations can end up with dozens of ‘czar’ appointments with topical mandates, but little control over execution in their areas and a tendency to resort to lowest-common-denominator solutions to challenges that benefit from decentralized specialization. Simply put, re-organization should be approached carefully, and done when there are clearly identified organizational problems that can’t be easily addressed within current structures or with adjusted individual incentives.

Here are six common signs of organizational strain within administrative units:

- 1. A need for many *ad hoc* meetings to solve problems, and/or with significant redirection by managers.** Standing meetings and check-ins rarely result in progress, and the provost spends significant time tracking down information or standing up new ‘task force’ structures.
- 2. Uncertainty about decision-making authority.** Direct reports delay or deflect decisions out of a desire for consensus or ‘air cover.’ Reports give differing accounts of historical policies or practices, often tied to individual leaders in place.
- 3. Delayed or unresolved to-dos, meeting time spent on basic re-education or explanation.** Check-ins and standing meetings rarely end with clear outcomes or assigned responsibilities, and team members have become accustomed to live, unstructured debate. Key information is missing in most meetings that would enable real-time resolution of issues.
- 4. Mismatch between title/office and actual responsibility.** Reports have taken on many responsibilities outside their job description over time. Noticeable, unintended inequities exist in managerial span and workload among reports.
- 5. Significant institutional knowledge required to accomplish tasks.** New hires take 6-12+ months to learn how to obtain information and resources necessary to perform their roles successfully; informal power gravitates toward most tenured internal staff.
- 6. Duplication and/or internal competition across units.** Reports feel greater pressure to advocate against others for resources than to collaborate. Most executive decisions require multiple leaders to negotiate or share staff time.

Executive Summary (cont.)

Considerations for Reorganizing Academic Affairs Units

Four Considerations for Rethinking Your Office Structure:

- 1. Functional alignment:** Does this area (or these areas) benefit from shared oversight by the same individual and by the chief academic officer in particular? How critical is regular coordination and collaboration with the provost's other direct reports, including academic deans? This applies similarly to the portfolios of the provost's reports—in considering the managerial span of an associate vice chancellor or associate provost, it's important to align the areas under their oversight with these considerations in mind.
 - For example, it's common for responsibilities relating to academic technology or academic advising to live in many places across a university. Many attempts at reorganizing shared administrative services in recent years are aimed at creating greater coordination in these spaces, both to create a clear strategic 'owner' for a strategic priority and reduce unnecessary duplication or redundancy.
 - Conversely, it's common for academic affairs leaders to report having a 'grab bag' of responsibilities, relatively unrelated to one another but needing attention within the provost's span of control. These roles aren't necessarily a result of poor organizational design, as it's natural for individual responsibilities to evolve over time as staff come and go, tasks are matched with personal skill sets and interests, and administrations attempt to "do more with less." However, a high level of heterogeneity within an organizational unit multiplies managerial complexity without adding a great deal of value—these portfolios should be periodically examined and realigned to better group activities that relate closely to one another.

- 2. Institutional priorities:** Areas may be elevated, consolidated, or reorganized according to their strategic importance to institutional needs. Where an institution and its leadership team have identified clear gaps between current performance and their aspirations, they might conclude that the current managerial structure relating to those gaps is not likely get them from point A to point B. Direct attention from the chief academic officer can help to signal the strategic importance of an area while enabling greater coordination with senior academic leaders and access to resources.
 - For example, many provosts have created senior oversight roles relating to student success, experiential learning, online learning, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in recent years following strategic planning efforts that identified these as critical areas for quantifiable improvement. Without a central owner, however, progress in these areas can often fall into a collective action problem trap, often characterized by the management adage, "If it's everyone's responsibility, it's no one's responsibility." The staff and resources involved in improving performance may live within separate academic units or remain dispersed administratively, but a central coordination role can help to ensure their efforts are aligned, tracked, and understood at the university level.

Executive Summary (cont.)

Considerations for Reorganizing Academic Affairs Units

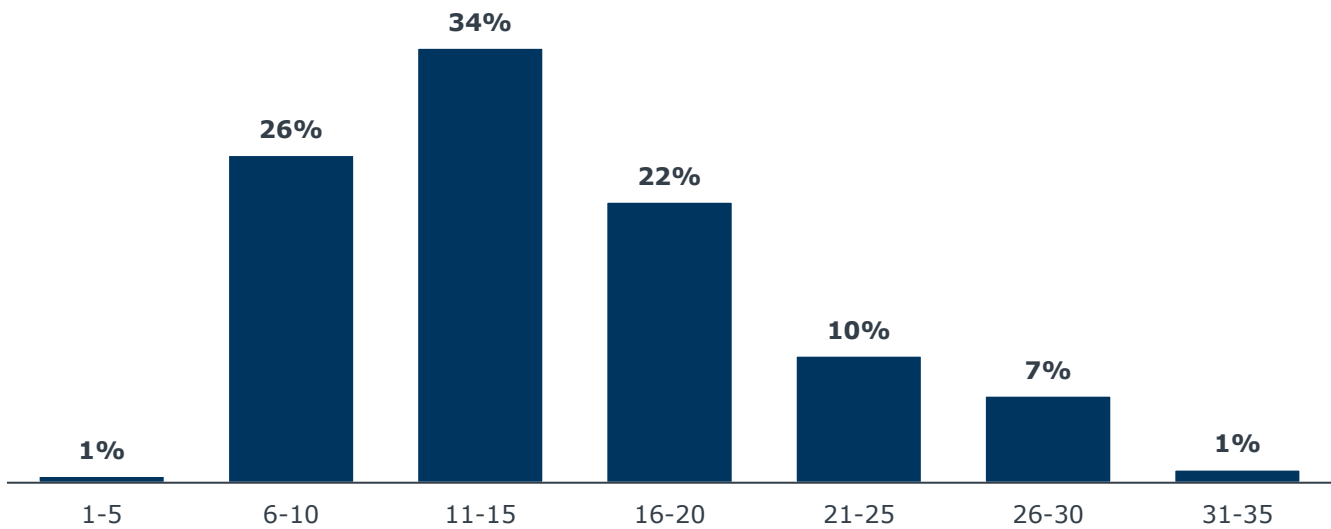
- 3. Strategic altitude:** Where is the need for management in this area on a spectrum of strategic vs. tactical considerations? How much time is spent explaining details and operational information to the provost, vs. engaging the provost and their team in decision-making? Is the provost able to quickly guide urgent decisions and assist with long-term plans? In an ideal organization, understanding that provosts and their reports bring different past experiences and expertise to the table, the provost's leadership team operates at a similar strategic altitude, allowing for delegation where tactical detail is needed, and a sense of shared ownership over the unit's key goals and decisions among the members of the team.

- 4. Individual priorities:** Every provost needs to balance competing demands in a constrained budget of time—developing and managing individual leaders, providing feedback, making decisions, thinking/reading/processing, convening teams and individual contributors, participating and leading in cabinet discussions—the list is nearly endless. The relative weights assigned to each of a provost's time blocks depends on the factors above, in addition to that individual's personal work style and the urgency of the issue at hand. A leader with past experience in budget model redesign may take an active role in architecting their new institution's approach to resource allocation and view distributed ownership or delegation in that area as ineffective. Another leader may focus instead on stakeholder engagement—spending significant time in consultation with alumni, board members, faculty members, and students. Both can be effective, as long as the areas where they're spending less time are sufficiently tended to.

Total Number of Direct Reports to the Provost

Most provosts, and majorities from all segments except public research institutions, have 15 or fewer total direct reports. By contrast, more than half of public research university provosts have 16 or more total direct reports, with that largest offices including 25+ direct reports. Private research university provosts are less likely to have such large offices, most likely because of fewer academic deans overseeing a significant number of colleges and schools as compared to their public counterparts. By contrast (and unsurprisingly), baccalaureate and master's institutions report the smallest academic affairs units.

Total # of Direct Reports to the Provost, By %



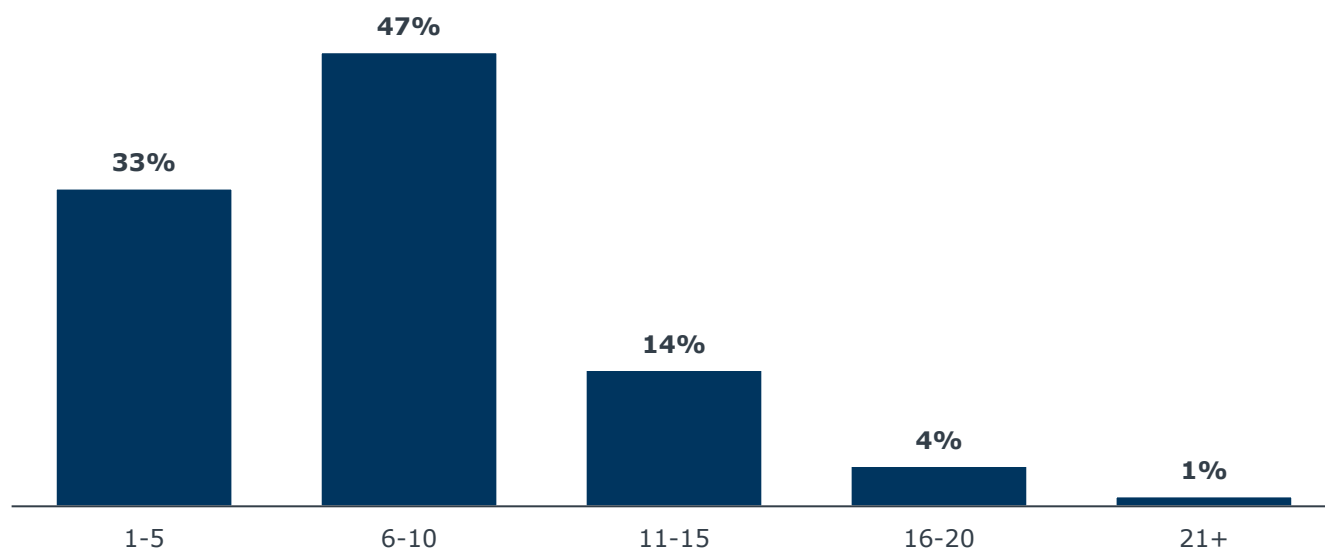
How many direct reports do you have, including both those who oversee academic units and those who do not, but <i>excluding</i> administrative assistants?	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35
Public Baccalaureate (n=11)	0%	36%	45%	9%	9%	0%	0%
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	5%	41%	18%	27%	5%	5%	0%
Public Master's (n=32)	0%	31%	28%	28%	9%	3%	0%
Private Master's (n=43)	0%	33%	53%	7%	2%	5%	0%
Public Research (n=52)	0%	10%	19%	27%	25%	15%	4%
Private Research (n=31)	0%	23%	45%	29%	0%	3%	0%
Grand Total	1%	26%	34%	22%	10%	7%	1%

1) N=191

Total Number of Academic Dean Direct Reports

Public research institutions are more likely to have more academic deans – more than 1/3 have at least 11. By contrast, half of private baccalaureates, more than half of public baccalaureates, and more than half of private master’s have five or fewer academic deans. Close to 40% of provosts at private research universities have only 1-5 academic dean reports. This is potentially driven by a smaller sample of R1 and R2 institutions among private university provosts in our sample, as compared to Doctoral / Professional universities by basic Carnegie Classification. This mirrors the sector—only 37 of the 133 universities designed as R1 research institutions in the US, for example, are private.

Total Number of Direct Reports Who Oversee Academic Units, By %



How many of your direct reports oversee academic units (i.e. deans, division heads, or chairs at the highest level of academic organization)?	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Public Baccalaureate (n=11)	55%	36%	9%	0%	0%
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	50%	23%	14%	14%	0%
Public Master’s (n=32)	22%	69%	6%	3%	0%
Private Master’s (n=43)	56%	40%	2%	2%	0%
Public Research (n=52)	8%	50%	31%	6%	4%
Private Research (n=31)	35%	52%	13%	0%	0%
Grand Total	33%	47%	14%	4%	1%

1) N=190

Ratio Between Non-Academic to Academic Reports

Below we analyze the average ratio between reports to the provost that do not directly oversee faculties to those who do, to understand the prevalence of vice, assistant, and associate provost roles, for example, compared to academic deans.

The average provost in our sample has 1.37 non-academic direct reports for each academic dean direct report; we could therefore expect a provost overseeing 10 academic deans to have approximately 13 non-decanal leaders reporting to them.

This varies noticeably by segment. As noted previously, public research institutions are more likely to have more academic deans, and their average ratio between non-academic to academic direct reports is lower than for all other segments. In every other segment, the typical provost has more non-decanal reports than academic deans. That effect is most pronounced at public baccalaureate institutions, which report 1.78 non-academic reports for each academic dean.

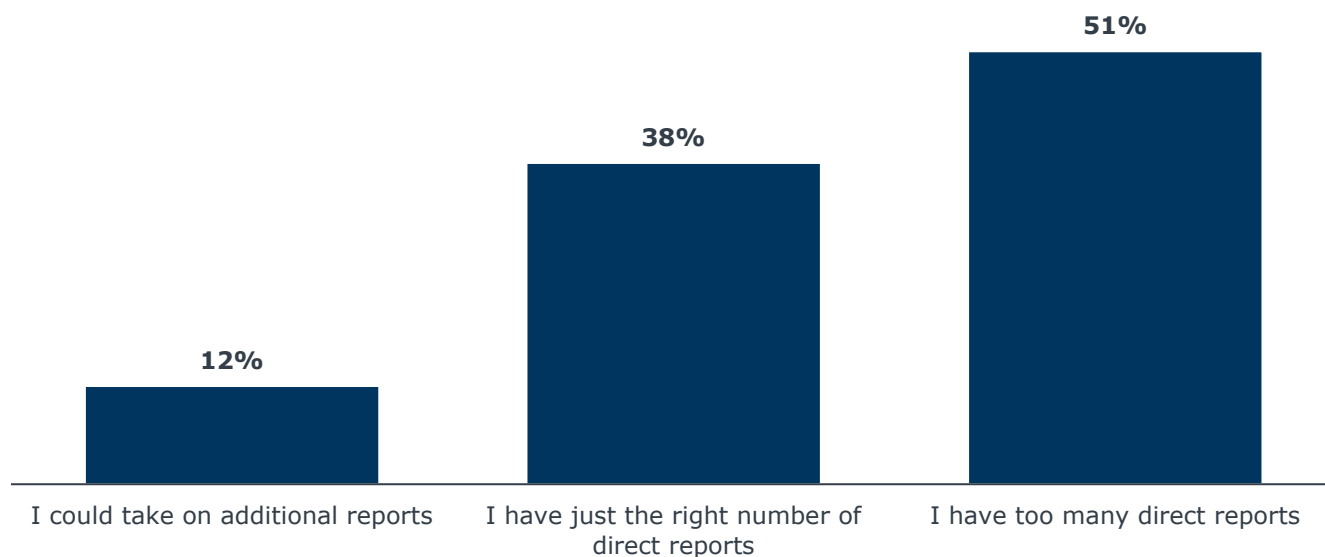
	Average ratio between non-academic to academic direct reports
Public Baccalaureate (n=11)	1.78
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	1.61
Public Master's (n=32)	1.2
Private Master's (n=43)	1.6
Public Research (n=52)	0.96
Private Research (n=31)	1.36
Grand Total	1.37

Opinions About Current Number of Reports

A small majority of provosts feel they have too many direct reports; private master’s provosts lead the way, with nearly 2/3 expressing this view. However, 80% of public baccalaureate provosts feel they either have just the right number or could take on more.

In their qualitative responses, provosts say having too many direct reports is their greatest organizational challenge. Specifically, having so many direct reports can be stressful and makes it difficult for provosts to effectively do their job while meeting the needs of their direct reports. At times, this can lead to bottlenecks, where direct reports are waiting for the provost to make important decisions before proceeding.

Opinion About Current Number of Direct Reports



Which of the following best reflects your opinion about the current number of direct reports you have, in terms of your managerial capacity/bandwidth?	I could take on additional reports	I have just the right number of direct reports	I have too many direct reports
Public Baccalaureate (n=10)	36%	45%	18%
Private Baccalaureate (n=21)	9%	41%	50%
Public Master’s (n=32)	13%	38%	50%
Private Master’s (n=39)	9%	28%	63%
Public Research (n=53)	12%	42%	46%
Private Research (n=28)	6%	39%	55%
Grand Total	12%	38%	51%

1) N=191

Opinions About Current Number of Reports

Additional Analysis

Which of the following best reflects your opinion about the current number of direct reports you have, in terms of your managerial capacity/bandwidth?	I could take on additional reports	I have just the right number of direct reports	I have too many direct reports
≤ 2 years as provost at current institution (n=98)	14%	36%	50%
3 to 5 years as provost at current institution (n=59)	8%	39%	53%
≥ 6 years as provost at current institution (n=34)	9%	41%	50%
Grand Total	12%	38%	51%

Which of the following best reflects your opinion about the current number of direct reports you have, in terms of your managerial capacity/bandwidth?	I could take on additional reports	I have just the right number of direct reports	I have too many direct reports
<2,000 undergrads (n=51)	18%	39%	43%
2,000-4,999 undergrads (n=58)	10%	29%	60%
5,000-14,999 undergrads (n=37)	8%	35%	57%
15,000+ undergrads (n=45)	9%	49%	42%
Grand Total	12%	38%	51%

Notably, provosts from institutions with 2,000-4,999 undergraduates are more likely than those from larger institutions to say they have too many direct reports. Provosts from the largest institutions are actually slightly more likely to say they have the right number of direct reports than that they have too many.

While a complete explanation for the above would require further investigation, one potential driver may be the ratio of non-academic reports to academic deans outlined on page 10, and the likelihood of large, public research institutions to have a roughly equivalent number of non-academic and decanal reports compared to typically smaller, private counterparts, which reported more non-academic reports per dean. This could cause provosts at smaller, private institutions to feel that too much time is spent managing central administrative functions.

Alternatively, provosts at larger institutions may be more likely to have deputy or vice provost reports who oversee several administrative functions, helping to relieve the chief academic officer's schedule.

Time in seat does not appear to significantly impact a provost's perception of having too many or too few direct reports.

How Many Direct Reports is Too Many?

Few Comparators to Provosts in Managerial Span and Complexity

There is no clear consensus on the optimal number of direct reports a manager or executive ought to oversee, though commentators and management consulting firms like McKinsey & Company have proposed broad ranges and guidelines determined by the type of management needed.

“

“Throughout the 20th century, many organizations chased the notion of finding and using one ideal universal “span of control”—the magic number of employees a manager could oversee to achieve optimal effectiveness and efficiency. However, over decades of supporting the world’s leading organizations in their redesign experiences, McKinsey has found that there is no magic number that fits all types of managers and the work that they do. In fact, chasing one single number can actually reduce effectiveness.”

McKinsey & Company

How to identify the right ‘spans of control’ for your organization

”

McKinsey has identified five predominant manager “archetypes,” each with a suggested managerial span, based on dimensions of time allocation (how much time is the manager spending on their own work, vs. managing the work of others?), process standardization (how standard / formally structured is the work process?), work variety (how similar or different is the work of individual direct reports?), and team skills required (how much experience and training do team members’ jobs require? How independent are the direct reports?).

- 1. Player / Coach:** Significant individual responsibilities, often without standardized processes; heterogeneous work activities across team; self-sufficiency requires extensive experience (e.g., a functional vice president). 3-5 direct reports.
- 2. Coach:** Substantial level of individual responsibility and has leadership from others for direct execution; process guidelines exist; reports typically do more than one type of work (e.g., a customer analytics manager in a marketing group). 6-7 direct reports.
- 3. Supervisor:** Moderate level of individual responsibility and has leadership from others for direct execution; standard work process exists, with some variation across team; self-sufficiency can be achieved within 6 months (e.g., a Senior Vice President of Finance). 8-10 direct reports.
- 4. Facilitator:** Limited individual delivery expectations, mostly managing others; work is mostly standardized and teams are similar; self-sufficiency achieved quickly or reports have skills prior to starting position (e.g., a finance manager at a large bank). 11-15 direct reports.
- 5. Coordinator:** Spends nearly all their time managing day-to-day work; reports do the same essential work and the position requires little to no new skills upon entering the role (e.g., a call center manager). 15+ direct reports.

Source: “How to identify the right ‘spans of control’ for your organization,” McKinsey & Company, December 2017.

Unpacking the Provost Role

Balancing Functional Alignment with Institutional and Individual Priorities

Using McKinsey’s considerations of role complexity and task homogeneity within the organization, one can immediately notice the disconnect between the complexity of a chief academic officer’s position and the typical managerial span encountered at most colleges and universities. Provosts are most likely to fall somewhere between the first three managerial archetypes (Player/coach, when very active in creating and executing institutional strategy; supervisor when assuming a more a passive stance toward institutional change; coach when expectations or personal preferences are somewhere in-between).

This range of responsibilities would place the suggested managerial span between 3 and 10 direct reports. Provosts assuming a predominantly supervisory role (perhaps at a strongly decentralized institution, an institution with collective bargaining agreements that substantially constrain the role of central administration, or where the individual leadership dynamics within the presidential cabinet tend to limit the provost’s agency) are more likely to remain effective with a larger team, whereas those seeking a more entrepreneurial or strategic role likely need to limit managerial responsibilities to allow for the requisite individual contributions.

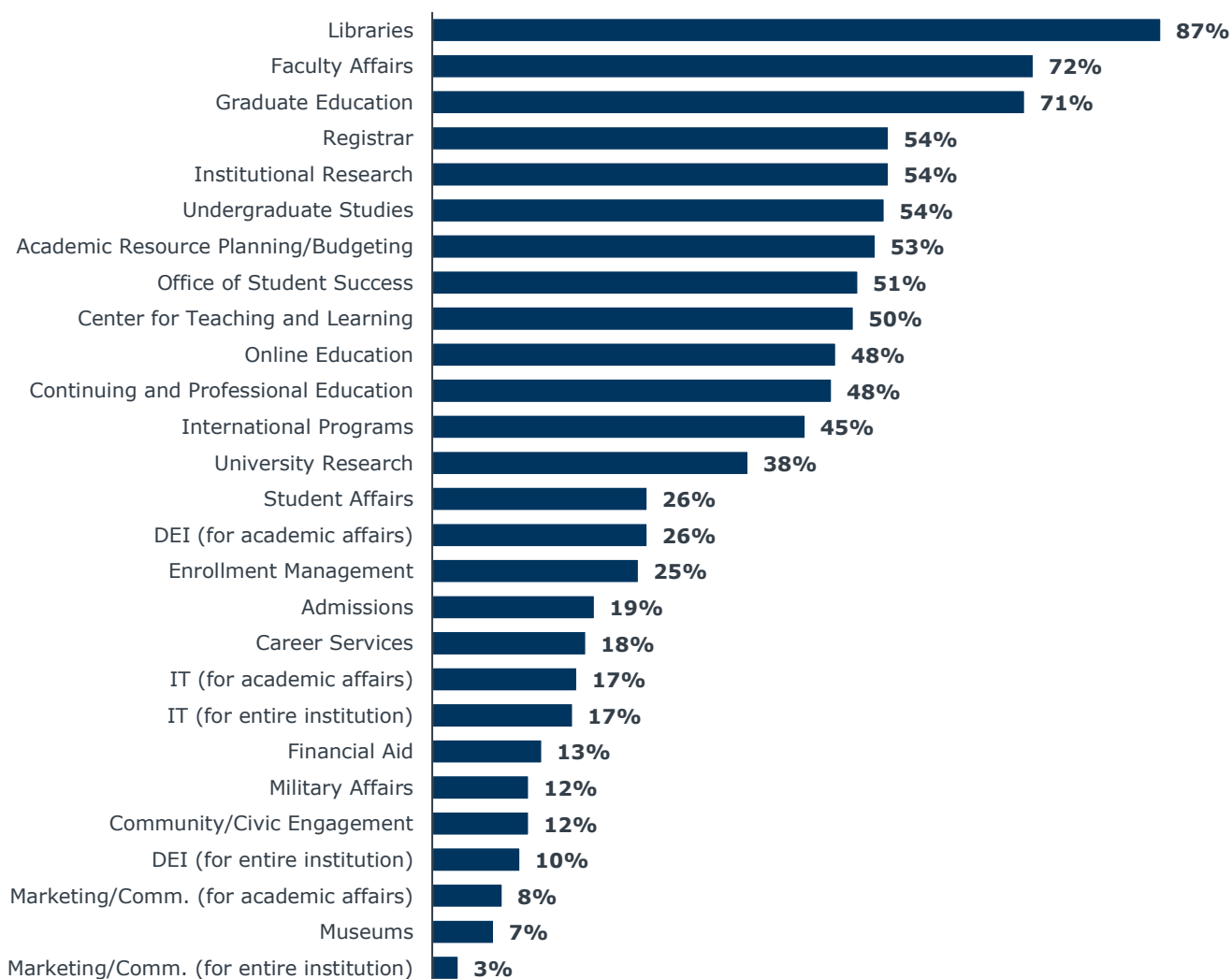
It should be noted that all reports are not equal, with respect to the amount of oversight needed by the provost, the amount of time required for consultation, the centrality of regular coordination with other functions, or the need for individual support and mentorship by the provost. In this sense, **using only a number to characterize the sustainability of one’s managerial span is overly blunt.** Our analysis of peer academic affairs units separates academic deans directly overseeing faculty from central academic affairs staff, for example, to separate two important, but distinct questions: (1) How many colleges and schools should we have—and how might those be organized? Vs. (2) How many central academic affairs staff should we have—and how ought they be organized? This survey and report are concerned with the second question, as the organization of individual academic units and disciplines would imply both greater exploration of disciplinary boundaries (largely an academic and intellectual terrain) and far more institutional idiosyncrasies in departmental size, mission, and enrollment.

Functions Reporting Directly to the Provost

The most common non-faculty functions in provost reporting lines include libraries, faculty affairs, and graduate education, with the registrar, institutional research, undergraduate studies, academic planning and budgeting, student success, and teaching and learning centers appearing in over half of sample reporting structures as well. By contrast, marketing and communications, museums, and institutional diversity offices were the least likely functions to appear in direct reporting lines, with 10% of provosts or fewer noting direct oversight.

Clear segment differences emerge for several of these functions, which are displayed on the following pages. For example, provosts at public institutions are far more likely than those at private institutions to oversee enrollment management, as it is typically a direct presidential report at more tuition-driven institutions.

Offices That Report Directly to Provosts

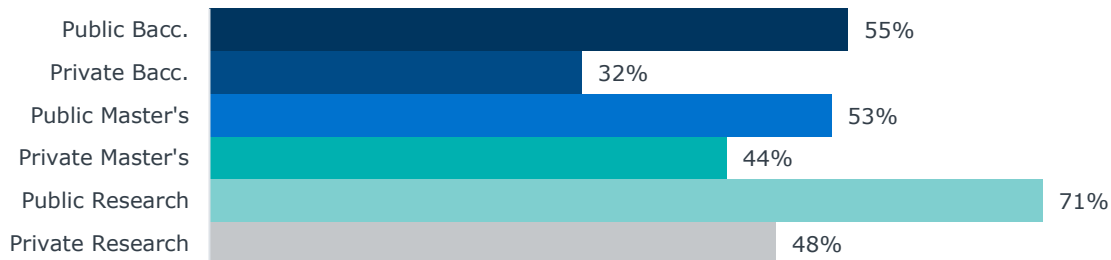


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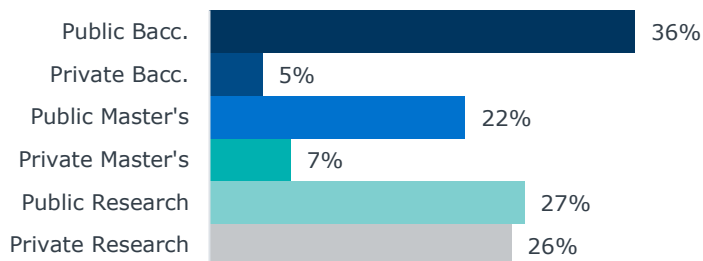
Offices That Report Directly to the Provost

By Segment, in Alphabetical Order

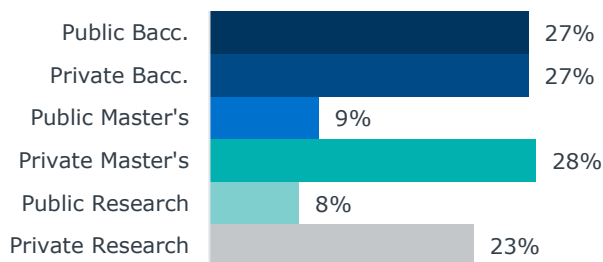
Academic Resource Planning/Budgeting



Admissions



Career Services



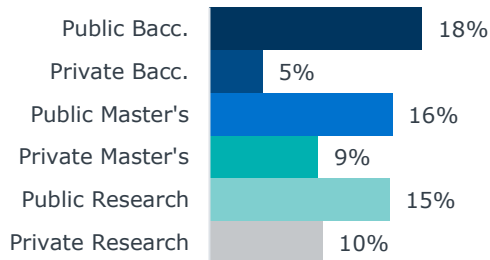
Center for Teaching and Learning



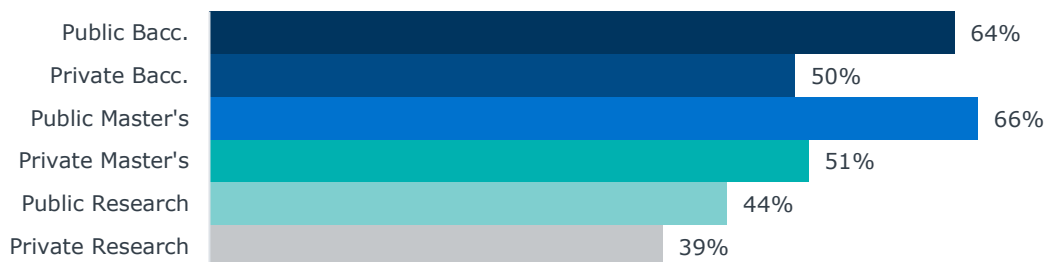
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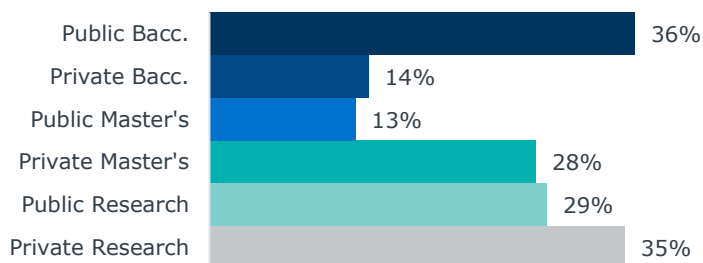
Community/Civic Engagement



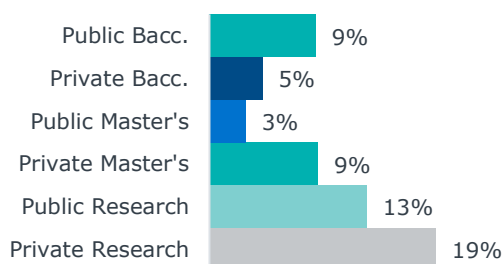
Continuing and Professional Education



DEI (for academic affairs)



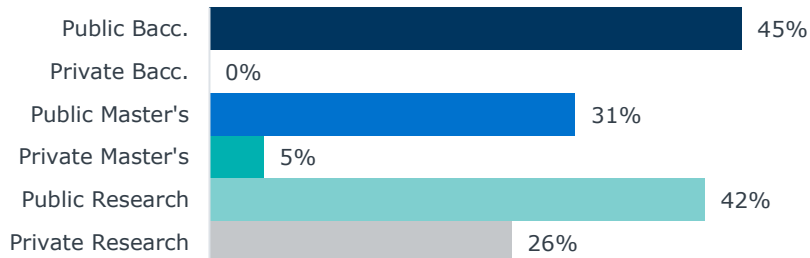
DEI (for entire institution)



Offices That Report Directly to the Provost

By Segment, in Alphabetical Order

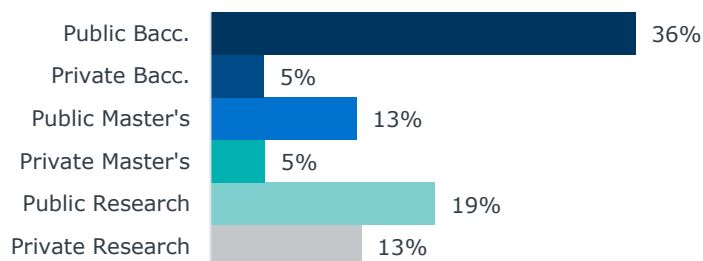
Enrollment Management



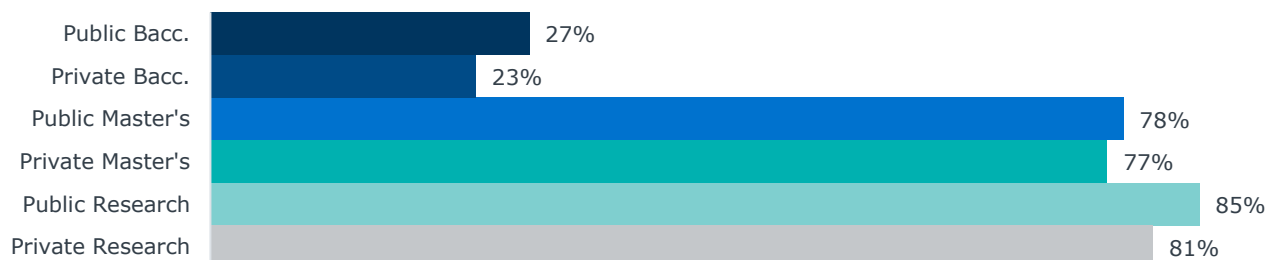
Faculty Affairs



Financial Aid



Graduate Education



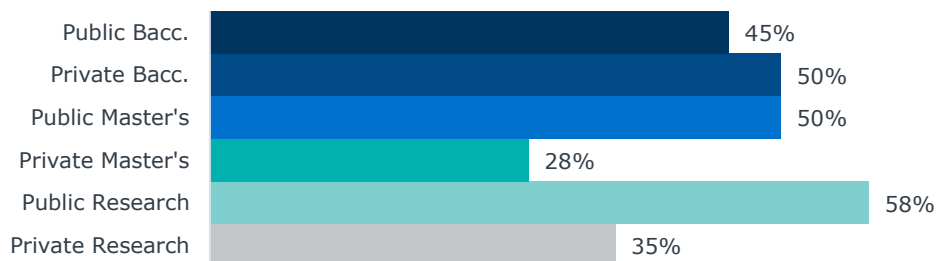
Offices That Report Directly to the Provost

By Segment, in Alphabetical Order

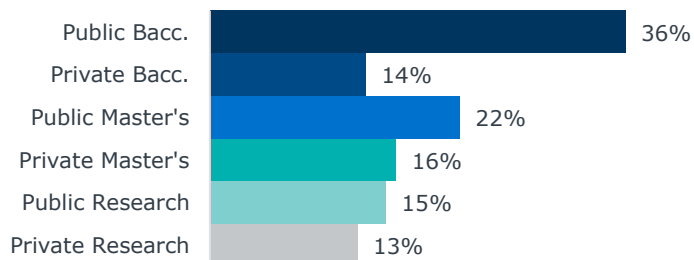
Institutional Research



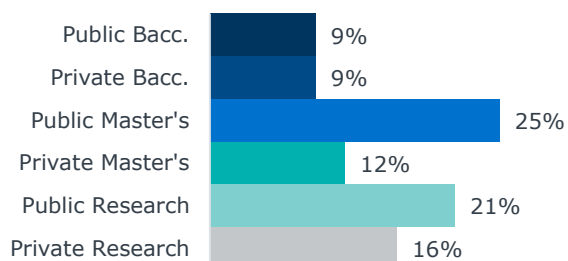
International Programs



IT (for academic affairs)



IT (for entire institution)



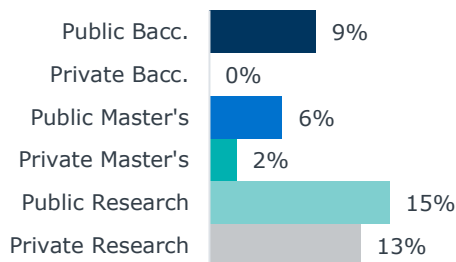
Offices That Report Directly to the Provost

By Segment, in Alphabetical Order

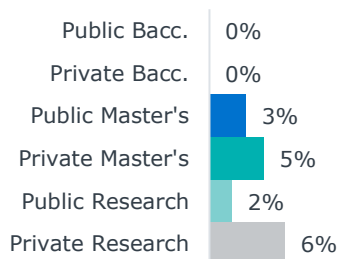
Libraries



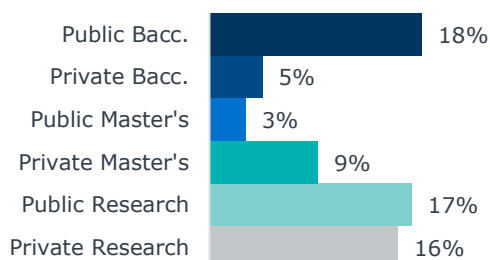
MarComm (for academic affairs)



MarComm (for entire institution)



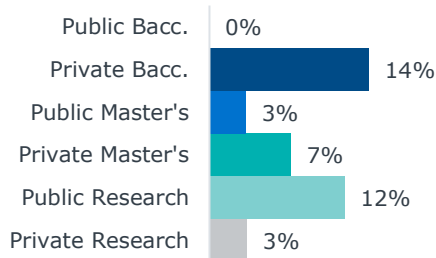
Military Affairs



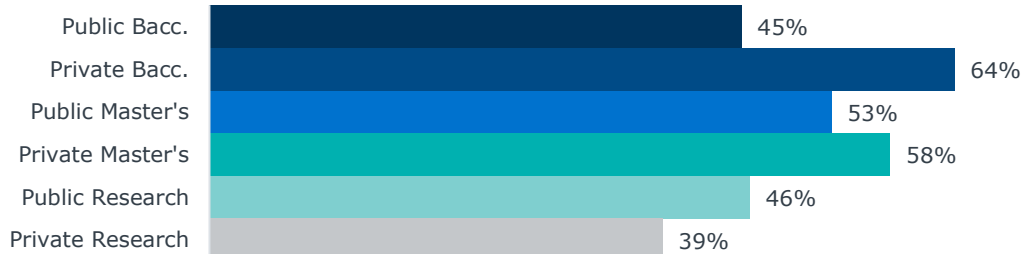
Offices That Report Directly to the Provost

By Segment, in Alphabetical Order

Museums



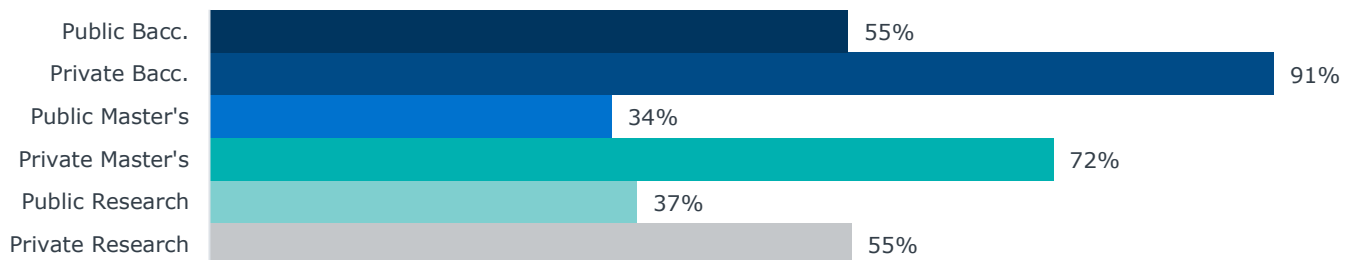
Office of Student Success



Online Education



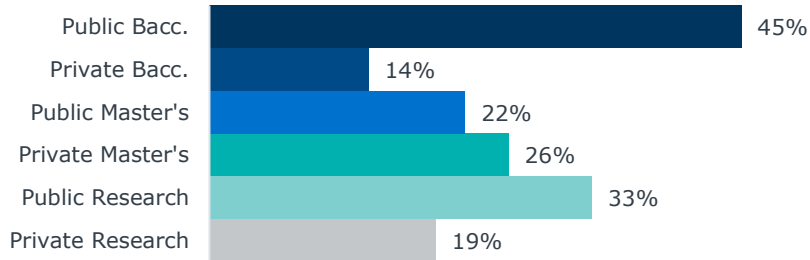
Registrar



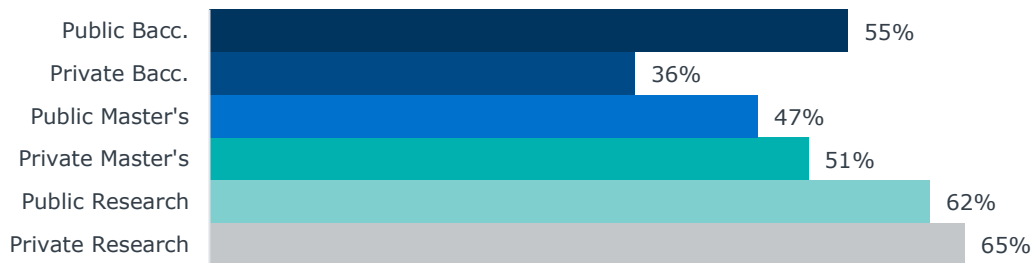
Offices That Report Directly to the Provost

By Segment, in Alphabetical Order

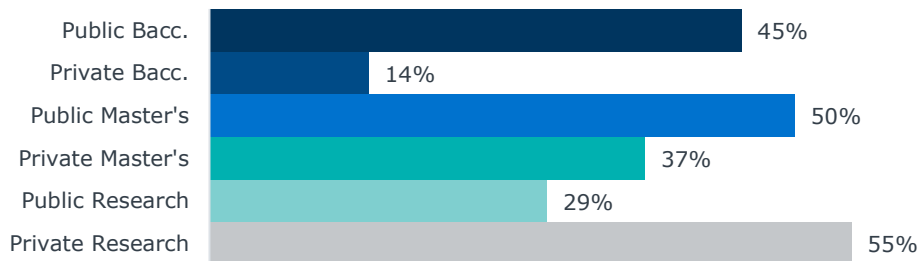
Student Affairs



Undergraduate Studies



University Research



Provost Preferences on Functional Reports

For the most part, provosts feel that the offices that most commonly report to them – such as libraries, faculty affairs, and graduate education – should continue to report to them. Among the functions reporting to provosts, institutional diversity, institutional IT, and career services are the most commonly described as out of place, though even for these rarer functions, only a minority (17-25%) of provosts currently overseeing them expressed a desire to change the reporting structure. This suggests a reticence to relinquish control of these important functions individually, even as they are far less common in prevalence in the larger sector.

*Functions Provosts Would Prefer **Not** to Directly Manage*



Note on n size for each function:
The number of respondents who saw each option is based on the number who reported having direct oversight of the function

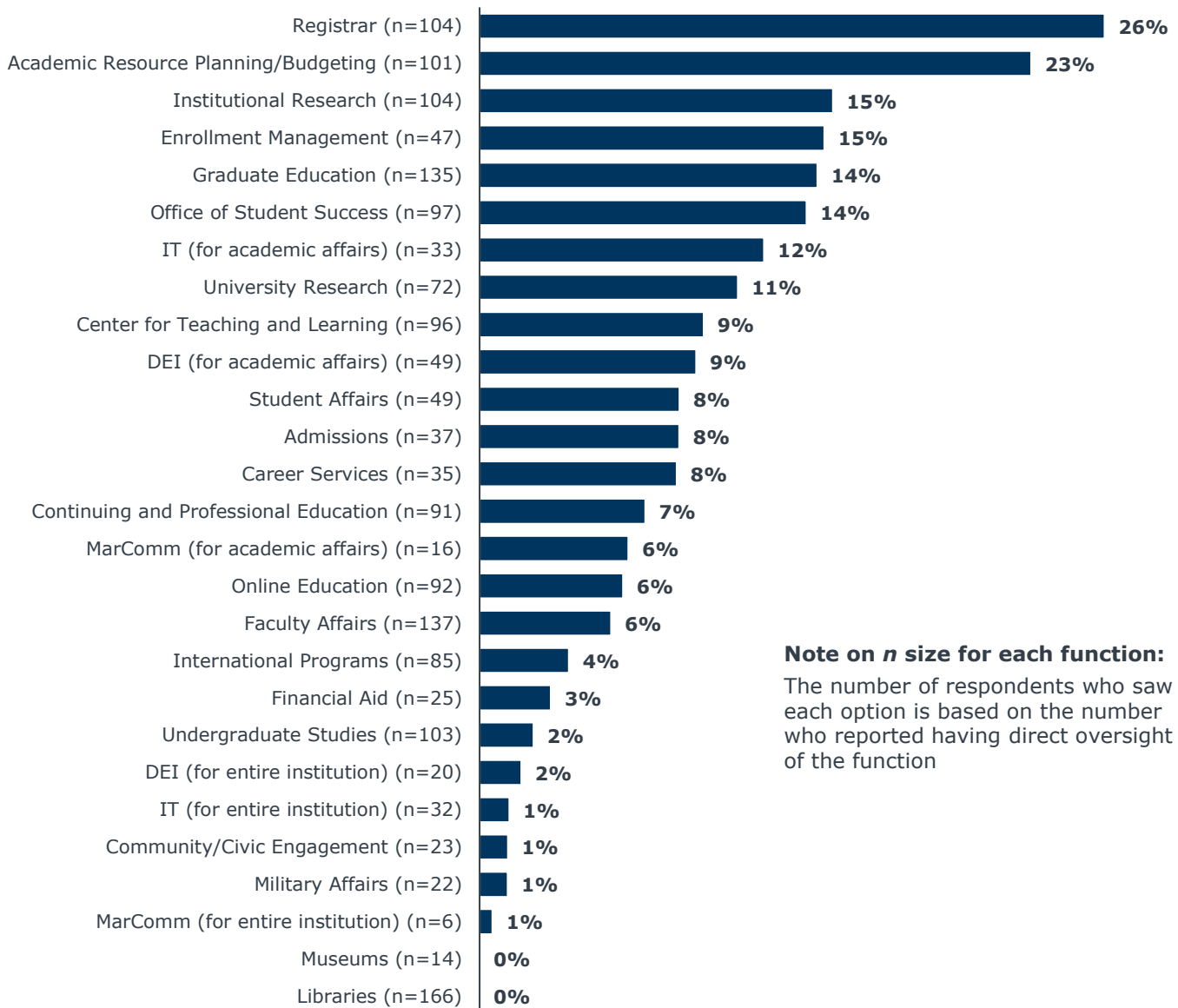
1) Respondents only selected among functions they currently oversee

Provost Preferences on Functional Reports, cont.

We also asked respondents to indicate which functions currently **outside** of their portfolios they would prefer to directly oversee. Again, no one function garnered affirmative responses from more than 26% of the eligible sample, suggesting general satisfaction with functional portfolios.

Among the most commonly sought-after functions, for those who do not currently oversee them, are the registrar, academic resource planning / budgeting, and enrollment management, suggesting a desire among some provosts for greater influence over student credit hour production, schedule and workload optimization, and classroom management.

Functions Provosts Would Prefer to Directly Oversee



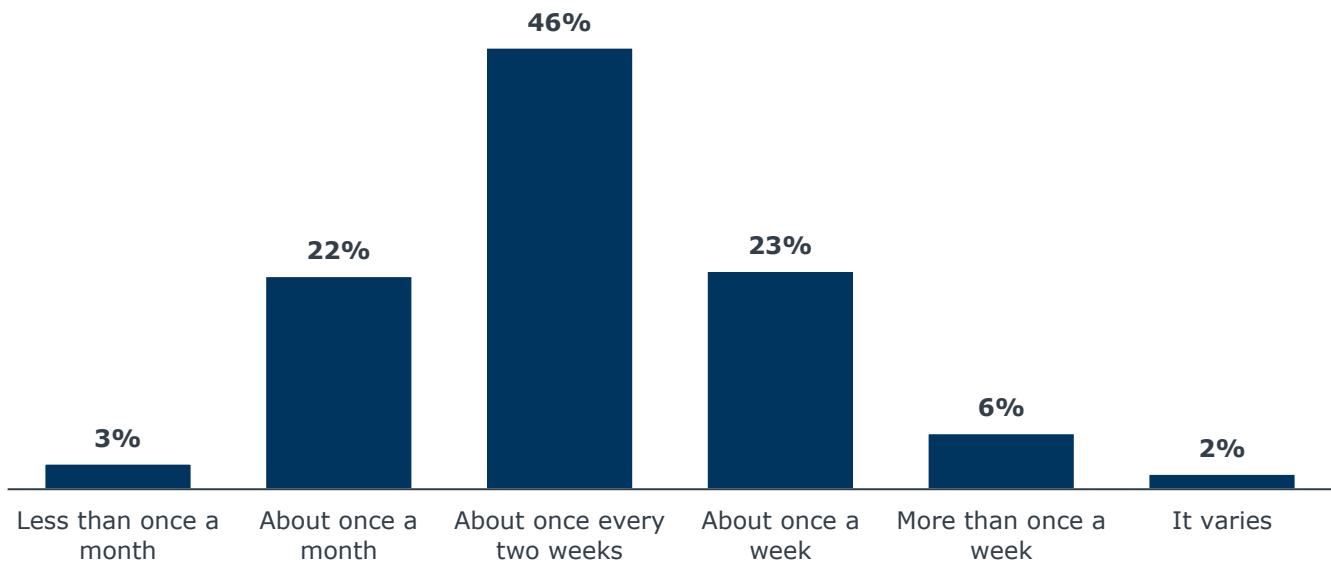
Note on n size for each function:
The number of respondents who saw each option is based on the number who reported having direct oversight of the function

1) Respondents only selected among functions they do not currently oversee

Meeting Frequency: Academic Deans Together

Provosts from all segments are most likely to meet with their academic dean direct reports as a full group every two weeks, though nearly one-fourth meet once a week and the same number meet once a month.

Meeting Frequency With Academic Deans As A Full Group



How often do you meet with your direct reports who oversee academic units as a full group?	Less than once a month	About once a month	About once every two weeks	About once a week	More than once a week	It varies
Public Baccalaureate (n=11)	0%	9%	55%	18%	18%	0%
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	5%	27%	41%	23%	5%	0%
Public Master's (n=32)	0%	13%	44%	38%	0%	6%
Private Master's (n=43)	5%	28%	44%	19%	5%	0%
Public Research (n=52)	4%	23%	54%	15%	4%	0%
Private Research (n=31)	0%	23%	35%	26%	13%	3%
Grand Total	3%	22%	46%	23%	6%	2%

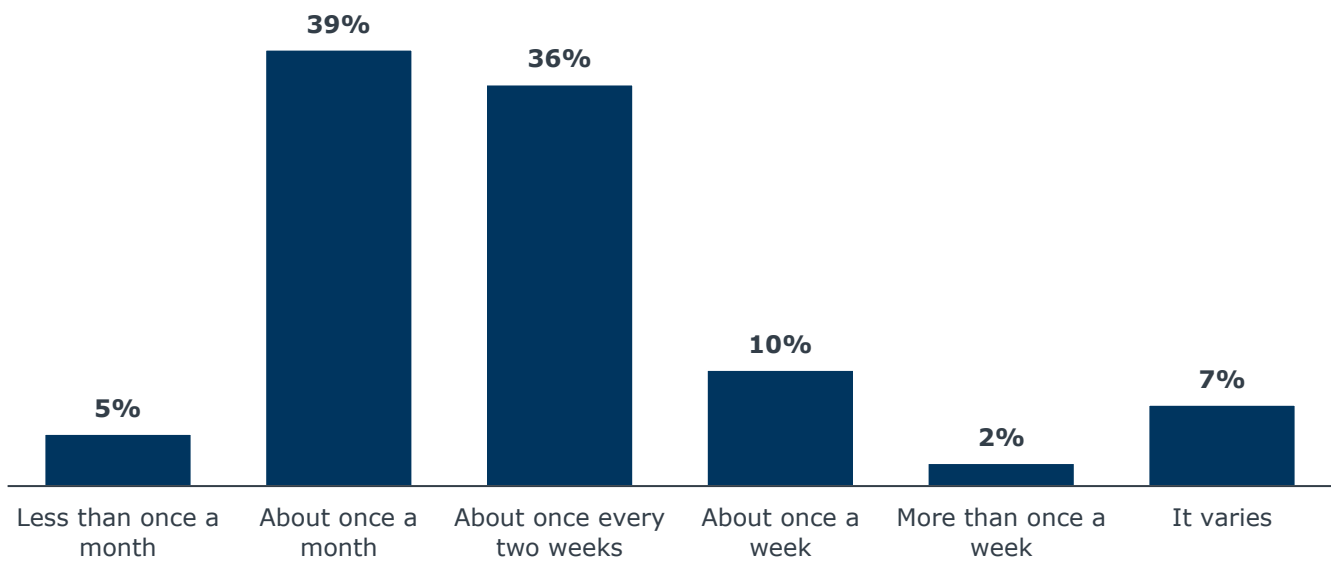
1) N=191

Meeting Frequency: Academic Deans Individually

Provosts typically meet with deans one-on-one either monthly or twice a month.

Likely because they tend to have more academic dean direct reports, provosts at public research institutions tend to meet with these direct reports individually less frequently than provosts from other segments – nearly 3 out of 4 meet individually once a month or less. As we saw on the previous page, however, public research provosts meet with their academic deans *as a group* at about the same frequency as other provosts, since this does not require extra meetings.

Meeting Frequency With Academic Deans Individually



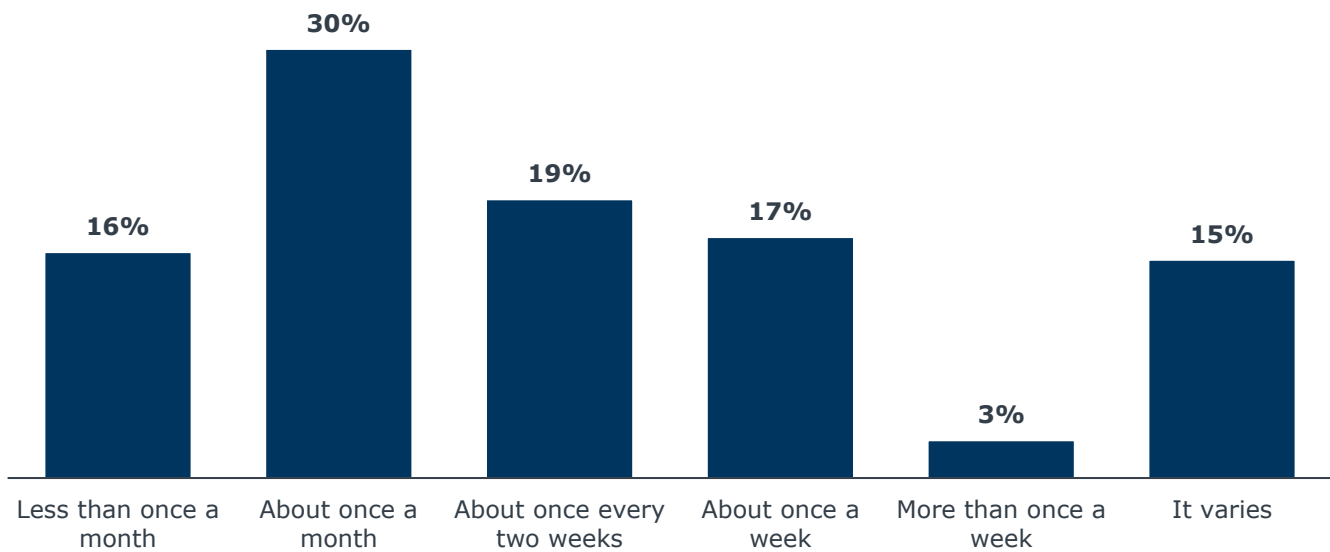
How often do you meet with your direct reports who oversee academic units individually?	Less than once a month	About once a month	About once every two weeks	About once a week	More than once a week	It varies
Public Baccalaureate (n=11)	0%	36%	27%	27%	0%	9%
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	5%	23%	32%	18%	5%	18%
Public Master's (n=32)	6%	38%	44%	3%	0%	9%
Private Master's (n=43)	2%	23%	56%	12%	2%	5%
Public Research (n=52)	10%	62%	17%	2%	2%	8%
Private Research (n=31)	0%	39%	39%	19%	3%	0%
Grand Total	5%	39%	36%	10%	2%	7%

1) N=191

Meeting Frequency: Non-Academic Reports Together

There is greater variation in typical practice with respect to non-academic reports; nearly 1/3 of provosts meet with them as a group once a month, with the remainder of respondents split equally between the four next most common options (less than monthly, twice a month, once a week, or “it varies”).

Meeting Frequency With Non-Academic Reports As A Full Group



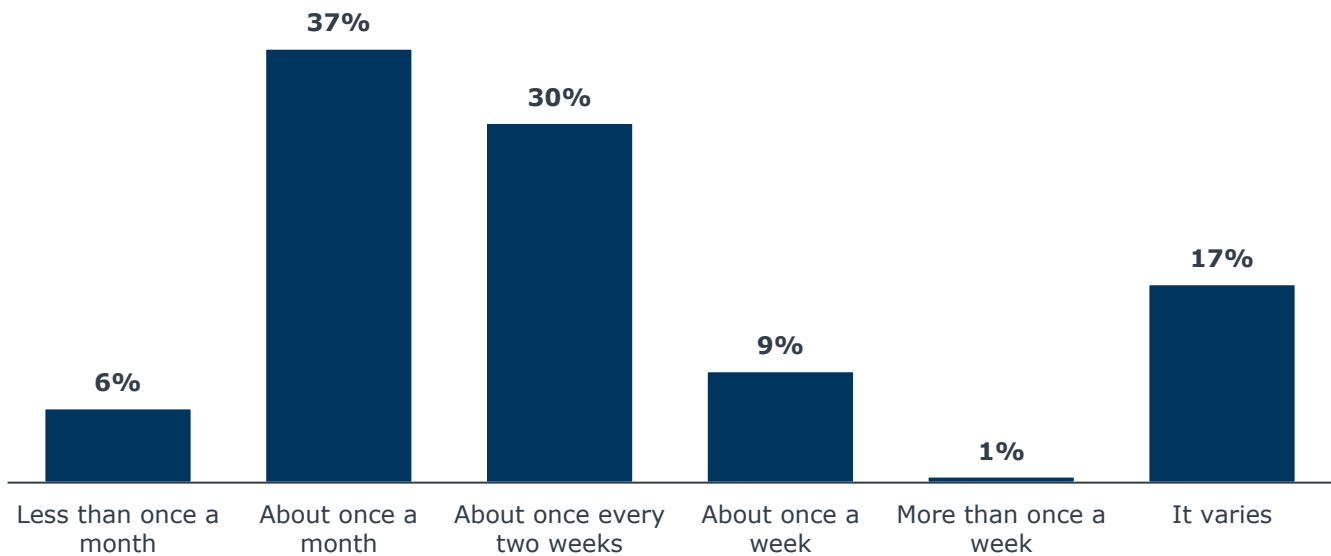
How often do you meet with your direct reports who do not oversee academic units as a full group?	Less than once a month	About once a month	About once every two weeks	About once a week	More than once a week	It varies
Public Baccalaureate (n=10)	0%	50%	10%	30%	0%	10%
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	18%	23%	23%	14%	0%	23%
Public Master's (n=32)	25%	28%	16%	13%	3%	16%
Private Master's (n=43)	19%	37%	19%	9%	0%	16%
Public Research (n=52)	8%	31%	23%	21%	6%	12%
Private Research (n=31)	19%	19%	19%	23%	3%	16%
Grand Total	16%	30%	19%	17%	3%	15%

1) N=190

Meeting Frequency: Non-Academic Reports Individually

Provosts from research institutions tend to meet with non-academic direct reports individually less frequently – more than half meet once a month or less. Two-thirds of private baccalaureate provosts meet with their non-academic direct reports individually once every two weeks.

Meeting Frequency With Non-Academic Reports Individually



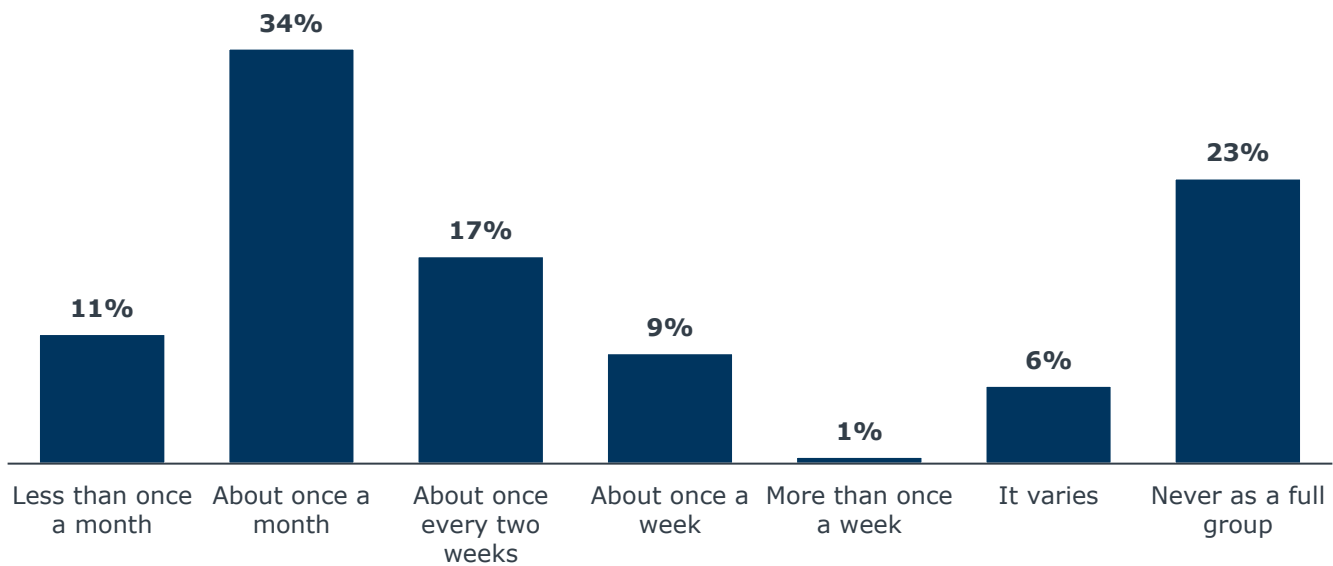
How often do you meet with your direct reports who do not oversee academic units individually?	Less than once a month	About once a month	About once every two weeks	About once a week	More than once a week	It varies
Public Baccalaureate (n=11)	0%	18%	27%	36%	0%	18%
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	0%	14%	68%	5%	0%	14%
Public Master's (n=32)	13%	34%	25%	3%	0%	25%
Private Master's (n=43)	5%	28%	40%	7%	2%	19%
Public Research (n=52)	10%	46%	15%	10%	0%	19%
Private Research (n=31)	3%	58%	23%	13%	0%	3%
Grand Total	6%	37%	30%	9%	1%	17%

1) N=191

Meeting Frequency: All Reports Together

One out of four provosts never meet with all their direct reports as a full group, which is just as common an approach (interestingly) at private baccalaureate institutions as at public research institutions. The most common meeting frequency for all segments, however, is once a month. These 'all-hands' meetings can be useful for fostering collaboration and alignment across functions, as well as for building a team culture between academic deans and administrative leaders.

Meeting Frequency With All Direct Reports As A Full Group



How often do you meet with all your direct reports together as a full group?	Less than once a month	About once a month	About once every two weeks	About once a week	More than once a week	It varies	Never as a full group
Public Baccalaureate (n=11)	9%	45%	0%	18%	9%	9%	9%
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	14%	36%	9%	9%	0%	5%	27%
Public Master's (n=32)	16%	34%	22%	6%	0%	6%	16%
Private Master's (n=43)	12%	28%	16%	7%	0%	5%	33%
Public Research (n=52)	10%	29%	19%	13%	0%	6%	23%
Private Research (n=30)	3%	43%	20%	3%	0%	10%	20%
Grand Total	11%	34%	17%	9%	1%	6%	23%

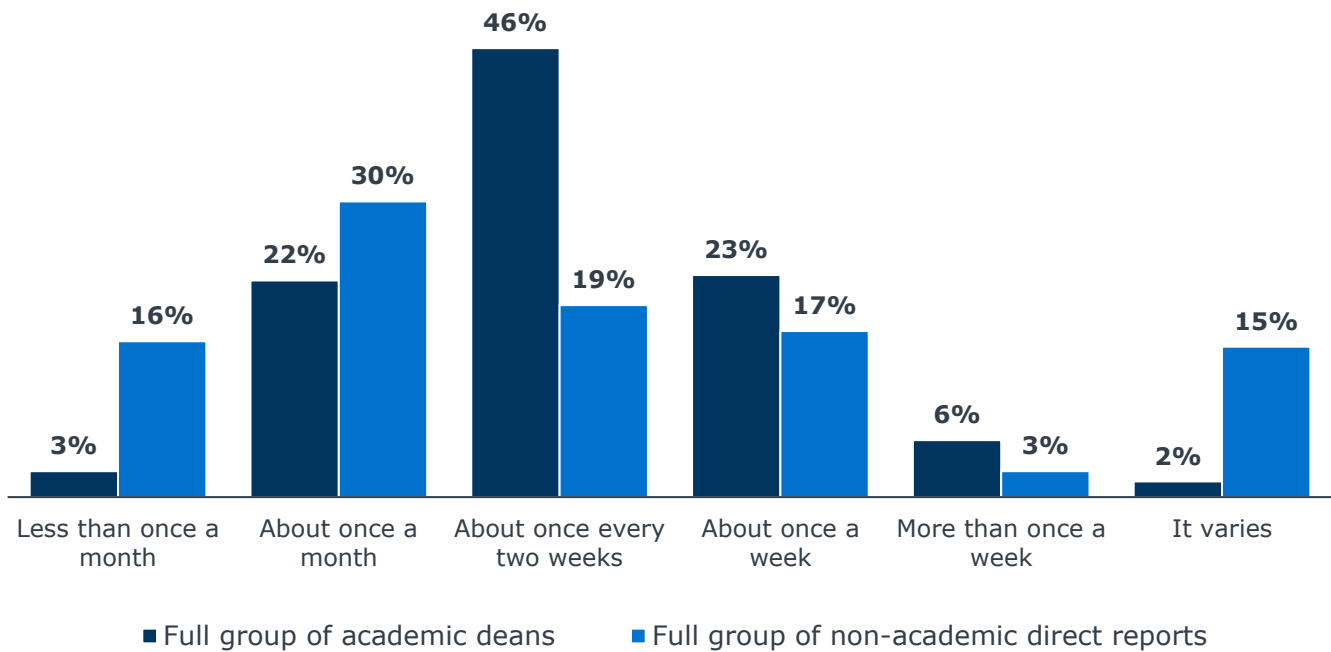
1) N=190

Meeting Frequency: Academic vs. Non-Academic Together

Comparing meeting frequency with both academic and non-academic reports, it appears that provosts tend to meet with their academic deans as a full group more frequently than they meet with their non-academic direct reports as a full group.

The largest differences appear in the “once every two weeks” category—where provosts were much more likely to report regular dean meetings, and in the “less than once a month” category, where provosts were more likely to report relatively rare full-group meetings with non-academic reports.

Meeting Frequency: Academic Deans vs. Non-Academic Reports As A Full Group

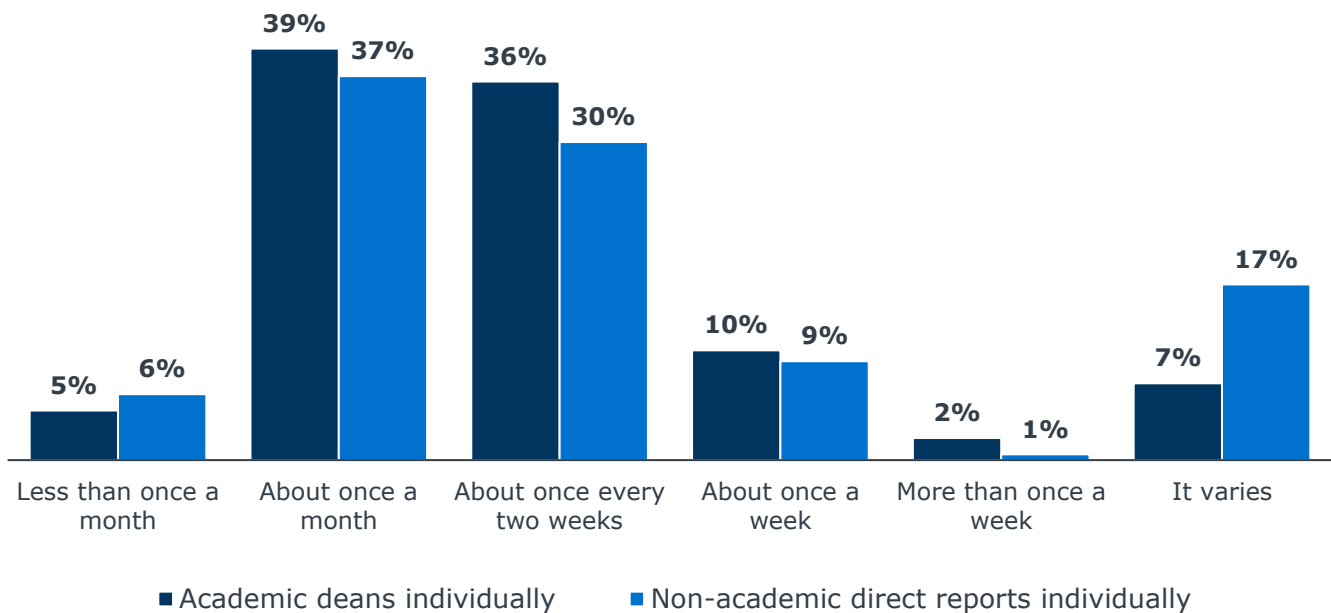


Meeting Frequency: Academic vs. Non-Academic Individually

Provosts tend to meet with their academic deans and non-academic direct reports individually at nearly the same frequency.

In their qualitative responses, many provosts lamented the large number of meetings they must attend; specifically, provosts say they must spend too much of their time on details and not enough on big-picture strategic decisions. A provost with 25+ reports, for example, can spend nearly half of a 40-hour work week in individual check-ins with direct reports, to say nothing of the numerous cabinet and cross-functional leadership meetings required of their position.

Meeting Frequency: Academic Deans vs. Non-Academic Reports Individually



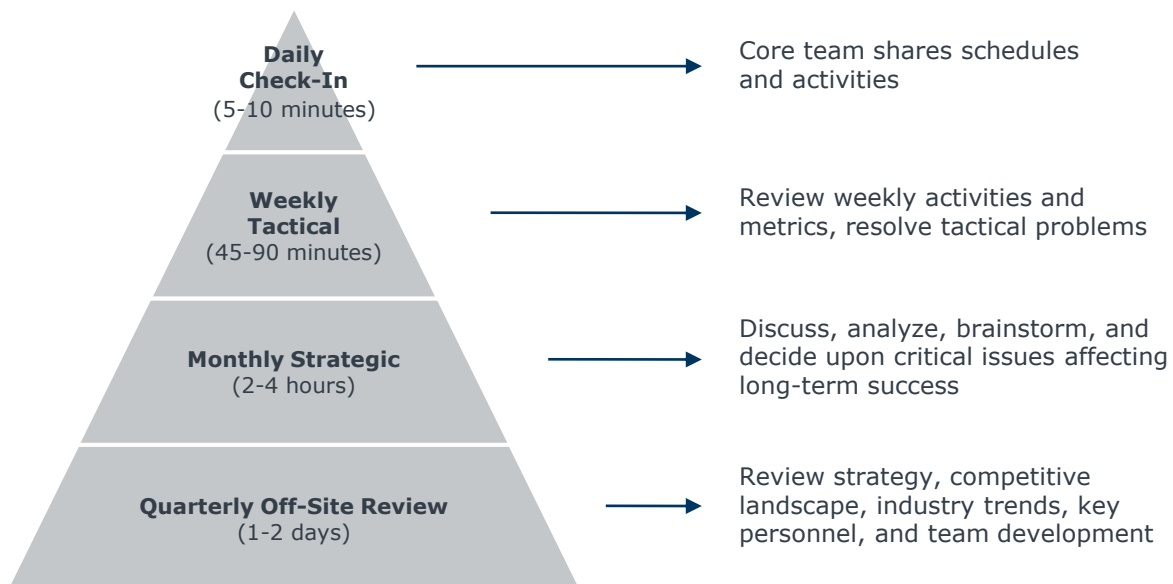
1) N=191

A Framework for Rethinking Leadership Meetings

Ensuring Scarce Discussion Time is Spent Strategically

Patrick Lencioni's well-known book, *Death by Meeting*, follows an executive team plagued by all-too-familiar challenges associated with standing meetings. Attendees find routine "what are you working on" sharing sessions boring ("Could this be an email?"), and when thorny issues arise, discussion is shut down to ensure agendas stay on track, and to prevent the psychological tension inherent in debating strategic questions at the highest level, with budgets and reputations on the line. Lencioni argues that it's those thorny issues that require the most attention at a senior level, and proposes a taxonomy of executive meeting patterns that matches meeting structure to substance. Short, informal check-ins for routine updates, and lengthy, focused working sessions for real strategic work.

Consider Patrick Lencioni's "Four Types of Meetings"



Keys to Success

Daily Check-In: Don't sit down, keep it administrative, and don't cancel even if some can't be there.

Weekly Tactical: Don't set the agenda until after initial reporting, and postpone strategic discussions.

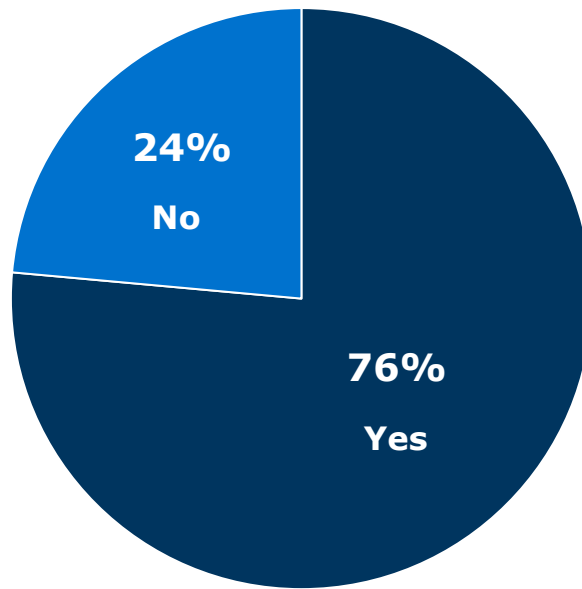
Monthly Strategic: Focus on a strategic topic, prepare in advance, and fully embrace conflict.

Quarterly Off-Site Review: Get out of the office, focus on work, limit social activities, and don't over-structure or over-burden the schedule.

Previous Changes to Academic Affairs Office Structure

A significant majority of provosts (70-90%) from all segments except public baccalaureates have already made changes to their academic affairs office structures. Nearly all provosts who have been at their institutions for at least six years have made changes, and two-thirds of provosts who have been at their institutions for two years or fewer have already made changes.

Percent Who Have Made Changes to their Academic Affairs Office Structure



Have you made changes to the academic affairs office structure (within the academic affairs unit) at your institution in your time as provost?	Yes	No
Public Baccalaureate (n=11)	45%	55%
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	82%	18%
Public Master's (n=32)	88%	12%
Private Master's (n=43)	70%	30%
Public Research (n=52)	71%	29%
Private Research (n=31)	90%	10%
Grand Total	76%	24%

1) N=191

Previous Changes to Academic Affairs Office Structure

Additional Analysis

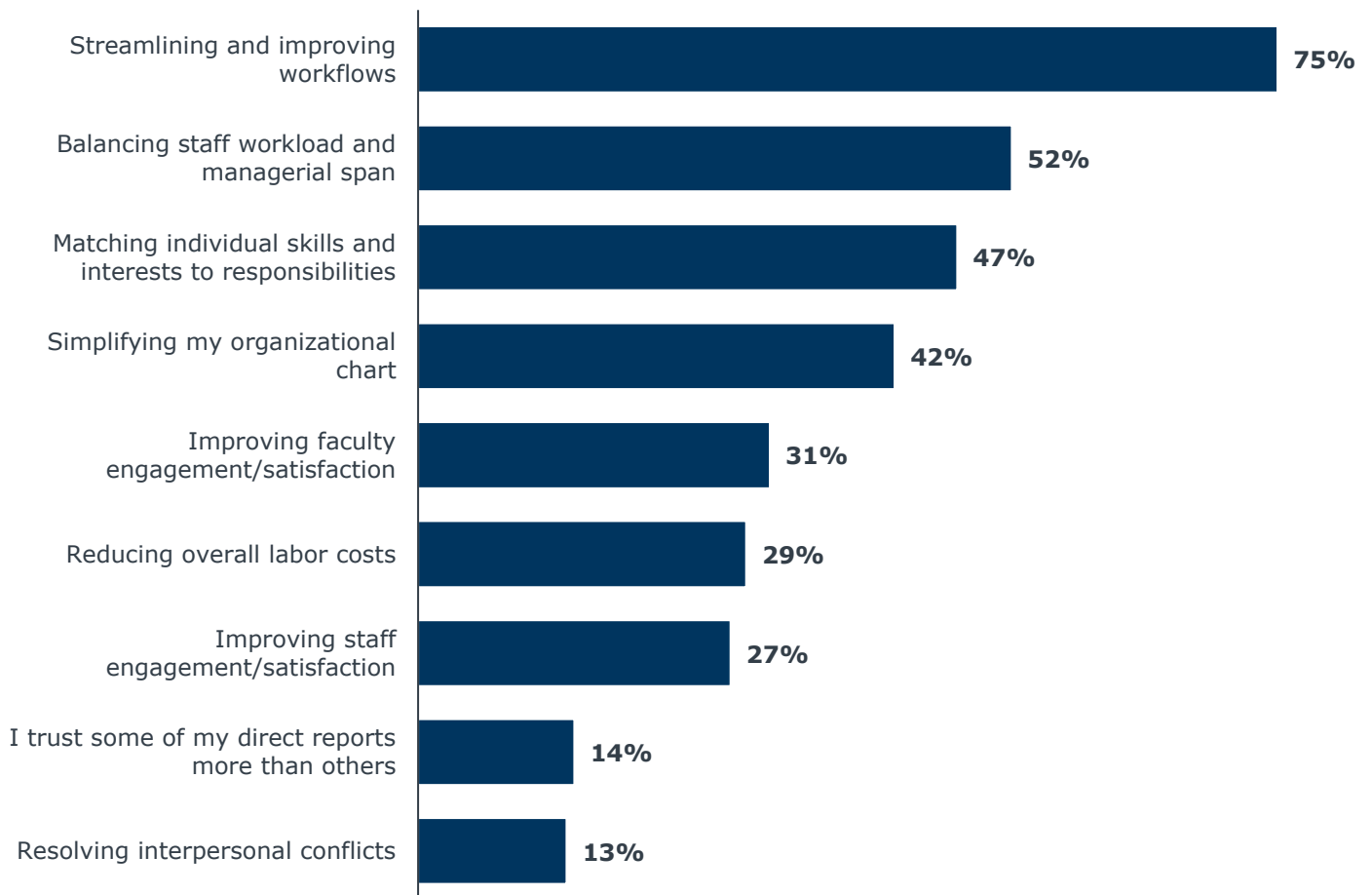
Have you made changes to the academic affairs office structure (within the academic affairs unit) at your institution in your time as provost?	Yes	No
≤2 years as provost at current institution (n=98)	64%	36%
3 to 5 years as provost at current institution (n=59)	86%	14%
≥6 years as provost at current institution (n=34)	94%	6%
Grand Total	76%	24%

Have you made changes to the academic affairs office structure (within the academic affairs unit) at your institution in your time as provost?	Yes	No
<2,000 undergrads (n=51)	73%	27%
2,000-4,999 undergrads (n=58)	81%	19%
5,000-14,999 undergrads (n=37)	76%	24%
15,000+ undergrads (n=45)	76%	24%
Grand Total	76%	24%

Reasons for Changes to Academic Affairs Office Structure

Of those who have made changes to their academic affairs office structure, 3/4 have done so in order to streamline and improve workflows; issues around trust and resolving interpersonal conflicts, on the other hand, do not factor into decisions very often, though political and personal factors are often cited anecdotally by provosts as critical organizational dynamics. This is especially common in explaining inherited or historical reporting structures, which are often perceived as being driven by the previous provost or presidential preferences.

*Reasons Provosts Have Made Changes to their Academic Affairs Office Structure
(Provosts Who Responded Yes to Previous Question)*



Reasons for Changes to Academic Affairs Office Structure

By Segment

	Streamlining and improving workflows	Balancing staff workload and managerial span	Matching individual skills and interests to responsibilities
Public Baccalaureate (n=5)	60%	80%	60%
Private Baccalaureate (n=18)	89%	61%	61%
Public Master's (n=28)	64%	50%	39%
Private Master's (n=30)	73%	47%	43%
Public Research (n=37)	78%	49%	43%
Private Research (n=28)	79%	54%	54%
Grand Total	75%	52%	47%

	Simplifying my org chart	Improving faculty engagement/satisfaction	Reducing overall labor costs
Public Baccalaureate (n=5)	20%	40%	0%
Private Baccalaureate (n=18)	22%	22%	22%
Public Master's (n=28)	36%	25%	25%
Private Master's (n=30)	50%	30%	50%
Public Research (n=37)	46%	32%	27%
Private Research (n=28)	50%	39%	21%
Grand Total	42%	31%	29%

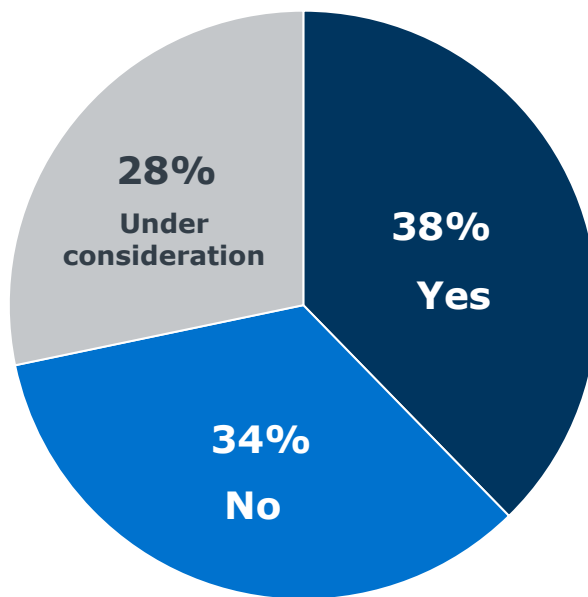
	Improving staff engagement/satisfaction	I trust some of my direct reports more than others	Resolving interpersonal conflicts
Public Baccalaureate (n=5)	20%	0%	0%
Private Baccalaureate (n=18)	17%	22%	17%
Public Master's (n=28)	32%	7%	14%
Private Master's (n=30)	30%	17%	13%
Public Research (n=37)	30%	16%	16%
Private Research (n=28)	25%	11%	7%
Grand Total	27%	14%	13%

1) Response options listed in order of frequency of mention in previous question

Planning Changes to Academic Affairs Office Structure

Newer provosts and those from small and medium-sized institutions are more likely to be planning changes to their academic affairs office structures. In addition, private baccalaureate provosts are more sure that they are going to make changes; by contrast a larger percent of public baccalaureate, public master's, and private master's provosts are considering changes but have not yet made a decision.

Percent Who Are Planning Changes to their Academic Affairs Office Structure



Are you planning changes to the academic affairs office structure at your institution?	Yes	No	Under consideration, but I have not yet made a decision
Public Baccalaureate (n=11)	36%	27%	36%
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	59%	32%	9%
Public Master's (n=32)	22%	41%	38%
Private Master's (n=43)	33%	30%	37%
Public Research (n=52)	37%	37%	27%
Private Research (n=31)	48%	32%	19%
Grand Total	38%	34%	28%

1) N=191

Planning Changes to Academic Affairs Office Structure

Additional Analysis

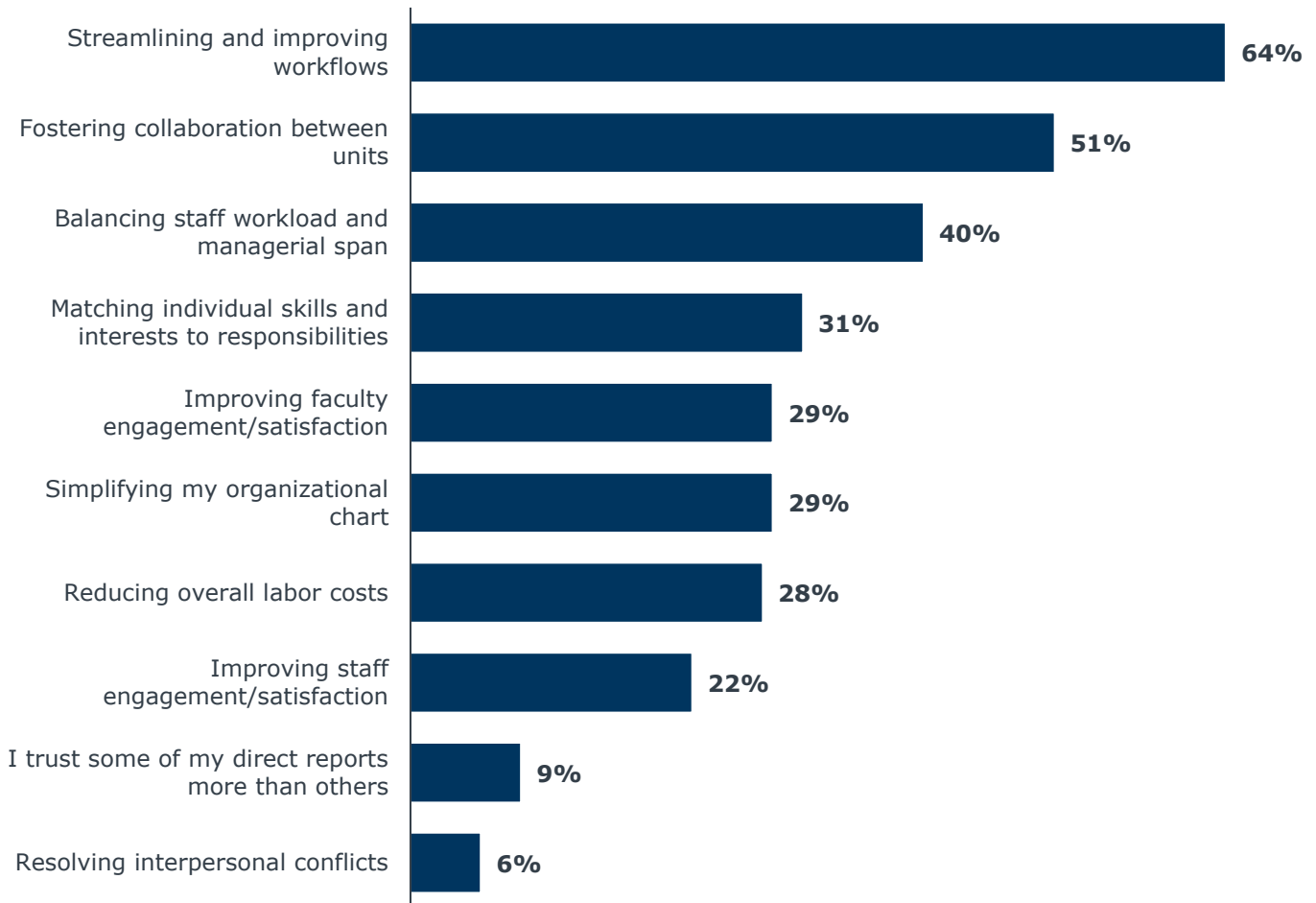
Are you planning changes to the academic affairs office structure at your institution?	Yes	No	Under consideration, but I have not yet made a decision
≤2 years at current institution (n=94)	44%	25%	32%
3 to 5 years at current institution (n=58)	32%	47%	20%
≥6 years at current institution (n=31)	29%	38%	32%
Grand Total	38%	34%	28%

Are you planning changes to the academic affairs office structure at your institution?	Yes	No	Under consideration, but I have not yet made a decision
<2,000 undergrads (n=49)	45%	35%	20%
2,000-4,999 undergrads (n=54)	40%	31%	29%
5,000-14,999 undergrads (n=35)	43%	35%	22%
15,000+ undergrads (n=45)	22%	36%	42%
Grand Total	38%	34%	28%

Reasons for Changes to Academic Affairs Office Structure

Most provosts who are planning changes to their academic affairs office structure are doing so in order to streamline and improve workflows, foster collaboration between units, and balance workload and managerial span across their direct reports. Personal and interpersonal issues are least commonly cited as motivations.

*Reasons Provosts Are Planning Changes to their Academic Affairs Office Structure
(Provosts Who Responded Yes or Under Consideration to Previous Question)*



Reasons for Changes to Academic Affairs Office Structure

By Segment

	Streamlining and improving workflows	Fostering collaboration between units	Balancing staff workload and managerial span	Matching individual skills and interests to responsibilities
Public Baccalaureate (n=8)	75%	63%	13%	50%
Private Baccalaureate (n=15)	60%	60%	47%	27%
Public Master's (n=19)	58%	53%	53%	37%
Private Master's (n=30)	57%	27%	40%	27%
Public Research (n=33)	67%	61%	52%	30%
Private Research (n=21)	76%	57%	19%	29%
Grand Total	64%	51%	40%	31%

	Improving faculty engagement/satisfaction	Simplifying my org chart	Reducing overall labor costs
Public Baccalaureate (n=8)	25%	25%	13%
Private Baccalaureate (n=15)	40%	33%	20%
Public Master's (n=19)	21%	26%	37%
Private Master's (n=30)	20%	30%	37%
Public Research (n=33)	45%	36%	27%
Private Research (n=21)	14%	14%	19%
Grand Total	29%	29%	28%

	Improving staff engagement/satisfaction	I trust some of my direct reports more than others	Resolving interpersonal conflicts
Public Baccalaureate (n=8)	13%	13%	13%
Private Baccalaureate (n=15)	13%	20%	7%
Public Master's (n=19)	16%	5%	5%
Private Master's (n=30)	23%	17%	3%
Public Research (n=33)	33%	3%	6%
Private Research (n=21)	19%	0%	5%
Grand Total	22%	9%	6%

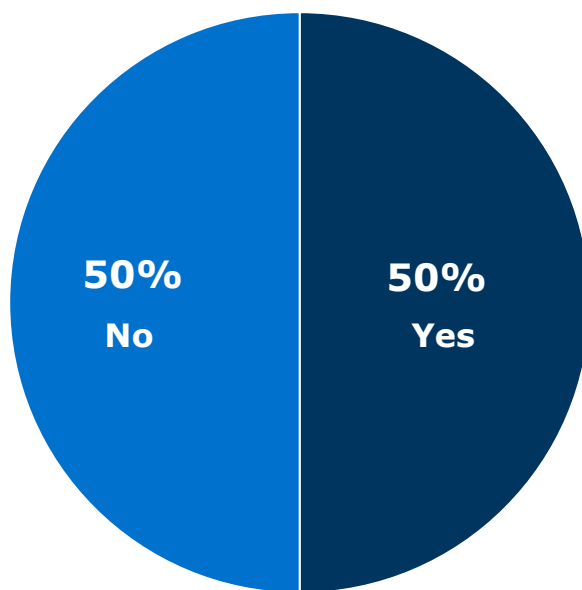
1) Response options listed in order of frequency of mention in previous question

Changes to Academic Unit Structure

Half of provosts have made changes to the structure of academic units at the highest level (typically colleges or faculties of major disciplinary groups such as arts and sciences, engineering, or medicine). Provosts at private institutions or those with smaller enrollments are more likely to have made changes, perhaps because of greater volatility in enrollment and tuition-related revenues and a higher likelihood of a historical focus on the arts and humanities, which have been experiencing stagnating or declining enrollments in many regions.

Unsurprisingly, more experienced provosts are much more likely to have made changes than their less experienced peers.

Percent Who Have Made Changes to their Academic Unit Structure



Have you made changes to the academic unit structure (departments, schools, colleges, etc.) at your institution in your time as provost?	Yes	No
Public Baccalaureate (n=10)	20%	80%
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	41%	59%
Public Master's (n=32)	44%	56%
Private Master's (n=43)	63%	37%
Public Research (n=52)	44%	56%
Private Research (n=31)	65%	35%
Grand Total	50%	50%

1) N=190

Changes to Academic Unit Structure

Additional Analysis

Have you made changes to the academic unit structure (departments, schools, colleges, etc.) at your institution in your time as provost?	Yes	No
≤2 years as provost at current institution (n=97)	37%	63%
3 to 5 years as provost at current institution (n=59)	63%	37%
≥6 years as provost at current institution (n=34)	65%	35%
Grand Total	50%	50%

Have you made changes to the academic unit structure (departments, schools, colleges, etc.) at your institution in your time as provost?	Yes	No
<2,000 undergrads (n=51)	59%	41%
2,000-4,999 undergrads (n=58)	55%	45%
5,000-14,999 undergrads (n=37)	43%	57%
15,000+ undergrads (n=44)	39%	61%
Grand Total	50%	50%

Reasons for Changes to Academic Unit Structure

More than half of provosts cite streamlining and improving workflows in their decision to make changes to the structure of academic units, with related 'rightsizing' considerations cited often as well (adjusting to enrollments, responding to external market changes). Most (52%) also wanted to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration between previously separate departments.

While four in ten provosts cite balancing staff workload and managerial span in their decision to make changes to their non-academic reporting lines, only one out of four say that is a reason for changes to their academic unit structure.

*Reasons Provosts Have Made Changes to their Academic Unit Structure
(Provosts Who Responded Yes to Previous Question)*



Reasons for Changes to Academic Unit Structure

By Segment

	Streamlining and improving workflows	Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration	Adjusting to student enrollments	Responding to external market changes
Public Baccalaureate (n=2)	50%	50%	50%	0%
Private Baccalaureate (n=9)	67%	44%	56%	22%
Public Master's (n=14)	43%	43%	64%	21%
Private Master's (n=27)	56%	41%	41%	44%
Public Research (n=23)	57%	65%	26%	39%
Private Research (n=20)	60%	55%	30%	45%
Grand Total	58%	52%	41%	38%

	Reducing overall labor costs	Improving faculty engagement/satisfaction	Simplifying my org chart	Balancing staff workload and managerial span
Public Baccalaureate (n=2)	0%	0%	50%	50%
Private Baccalaureate (n=9)	44%	33%	67%	22%
Public Master's (n=14)	43%	21%	21%	14%
Private Master's (n=27)	37%	30%	19%	26%
Public Research (n=23)	26%	48%	22%	13%
Private Research (n=20)	30%	40%	20%	40%
Grand Total	36%	35%	25%	25%

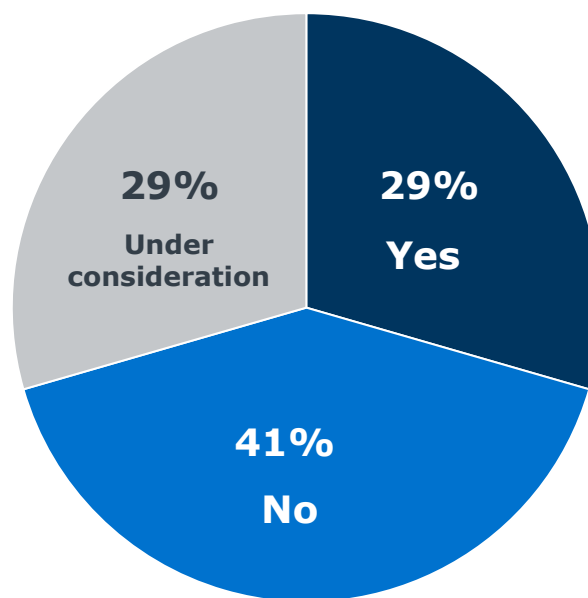
	Improving staff engagement/satisfaction	Resolving interpersonal conflicts	I trust some of my direct reports more than others
Public Baccalaureate (n=2)	0%	0%	0%
Private Baccalaureate (n=9)	0%	0%	11%
Public Master's (n=14)	7%	14%	7%
Private Master's (n=27)	15%	11%	7%
Public Research (n=23)	4%	4%	4%
Private Research (n=20)	25%	15%	0%
Grand Total	12%	9%	5%

1) Response options listed in order of frequency of mention in previous question

Planning Changes to Academic Unit Structure

A majority (nearly 60%) of provosts are either considering or planning changes to academic unit structure, which is notable given that roughly half of respondents indicated that they had not done so in the past. Those at institutions with smaller enrollments are more likely to desire changes, most likely due to shifts in demand and tightening budgets. Some provosts at baccalaureate institutions directly oversee academic department heads or chairs, making changes to unit structure more feasible.

Percent Who Are Planning Changes to their Academic Unit Structure



Are you planning changes to the academic unit structure (departments, schools, colleges, etc.) at your institution?	Yes	No	Under consideration, but I have not yet made a decision
Public Baccalaureate (n=11)	27%	55%	18%
Private Baccalaureate (n=22)	36%	36%	27%
Public Master's (n=32)	22%	47%	31%
Private Master's (n=43)	33%	33%	35%
Public Research (n=52)	27%	42%	31%
Private Research (n=30)	33%	43%	23%
Grand Total	29%	41%	29%

1) N=190

Planning Changes to Academic Unit Structure

Additional Analysis

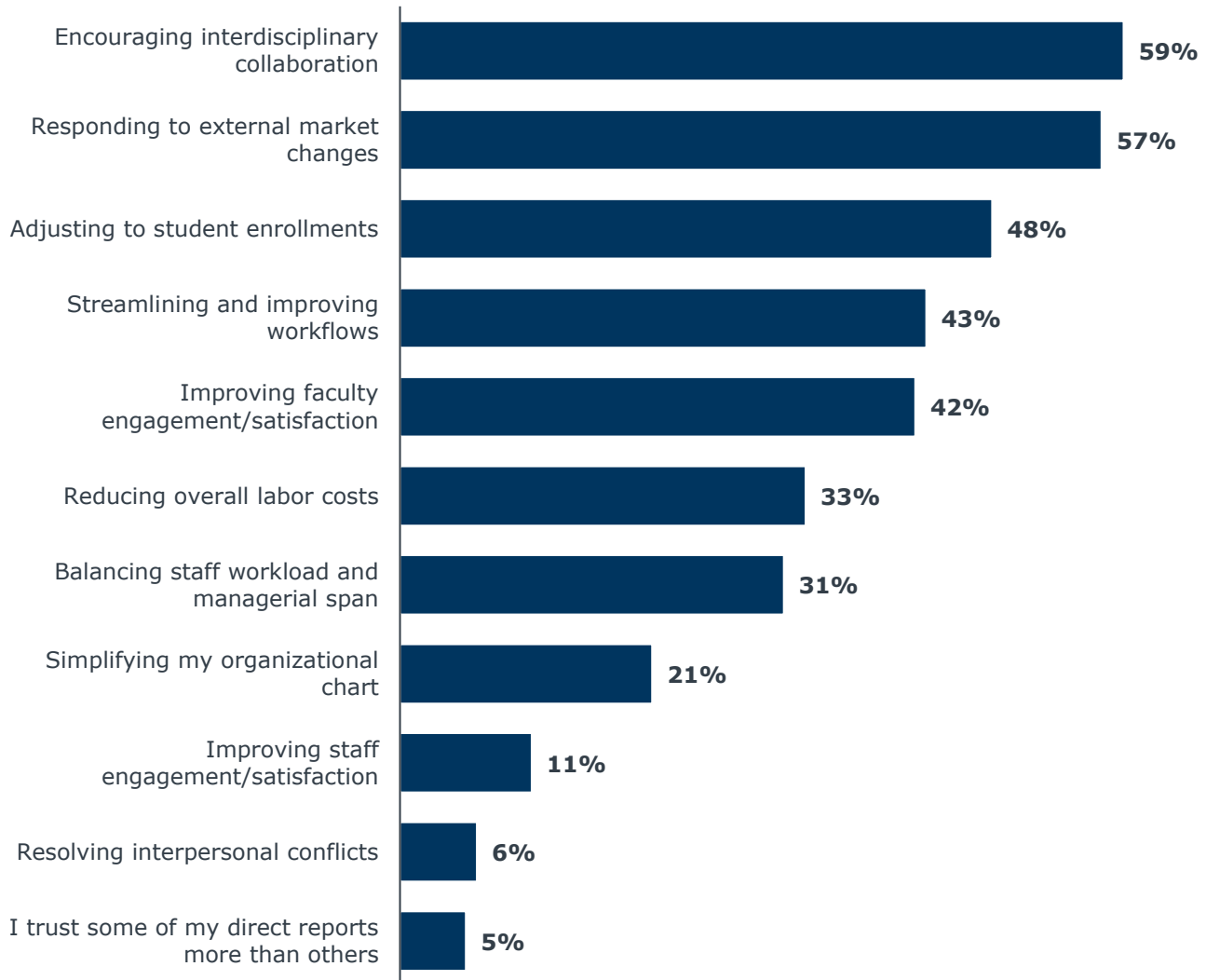
Are you planning changes to the academic unit structure (departments, schools, colleges, etc.) at your institution?	Yes	No	Under consideration, but I have not yet made a decision
≤2 years as provost at current institution (n=98)	27%	37%	37%
3 to 5 years as provost at current institution (n=58)	36%	43%	21%
≥6 years as provost at current institution (n=34)	26%	50%	24%
Grand Total	29%	41%	29%

Are you planning changes to the academic unit structure (departments, schools, colleges, etc.) at your institution?	Yes	No	Under consideration, but I have not yet made a decision
<2,000 undergrads (n=50)	42%	36%	22%
2,000-4,999 undergrads (n=58)	26%	33%	41%
5,000-14,999 undergrads (n=37)	30%	43%	27%
15,000+ undergrads (n=45)	20%	56%	24%
Grand Total	29%	41%	29%

Reasons for Changes to Academic Unit Structure

Provosts are planning changes to their academic unit structures mainly to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, respond to external market changes and enrollment shifts, and streamline and improve workflows. Again, personal and interpersonal justifications are less commonly reported.

*Reasons Provosts Are Planning Changes to their Academic Unit Structure
(Provosts Who Responded Yes or Under Consideration to Previous Question)*



Reasons for Changes to Academic Unit Structure

By Segment

	Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration	Responding to external market changes	Adjusting to student enrollments	Streamlining and improving workflows
Public Baccalaureate (n=5)	60%	40%	60%	60%
Private Baccalaureate (n=14)	57%	50%	50%	29%
Public Master's (n=17)	41%	41%	35%	41%
Private Master's (n=29)	48%	48%	34%	34%
Public Research (n=30)	73%	73%	63%	60%
Private Research (n=17)	71%	71%	53%	35%
Grand Total	59%	57%	48%	43%

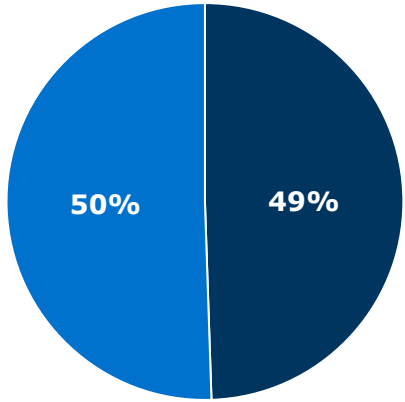
	Improving faculty engagement/satisfaction	Reducing overall labor costs	Balancing staff workload and managerial span	Simplifying my org chart
Public Baccalaureate (n=5)	20%	0%	60%	0%
Private Baccalaureate (n=14)	64%	21%	43%	14%
Public Master's (n=17)	29%	35%	35%	12%
Private Master's (n=29)	38%	34%	31%	28%
Public Research (n=30)	57%	47%	20%	27%
Private Research (n=17)	24%	24%	29%	18%
Grand Total	42%	33%	31%	21%

	Improving staff engagement/satisfaction	Resolving interpersonal conflicts	I trust some of my direct reports more than others
Public Baccalaureate (n=5)	20%	20%	20%
Private Baccalaureate (n=14)	7%	7%	7%
Public Master's (n=17)	0%	6%	0%
Private Master's (n=29)	7%	3%	14%
Public Research (n=30)	20%	10%	0%
Private Research (n=17)	12%	0%	0%
Grand Total	11%	6%	5%

1) Response options listed in order of frequency of mention in previous question

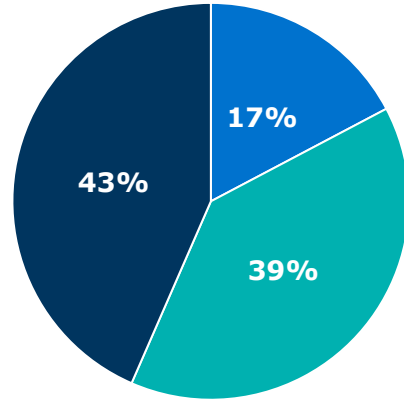
Appendix: Profile of Survey Respondents

Institutional segment



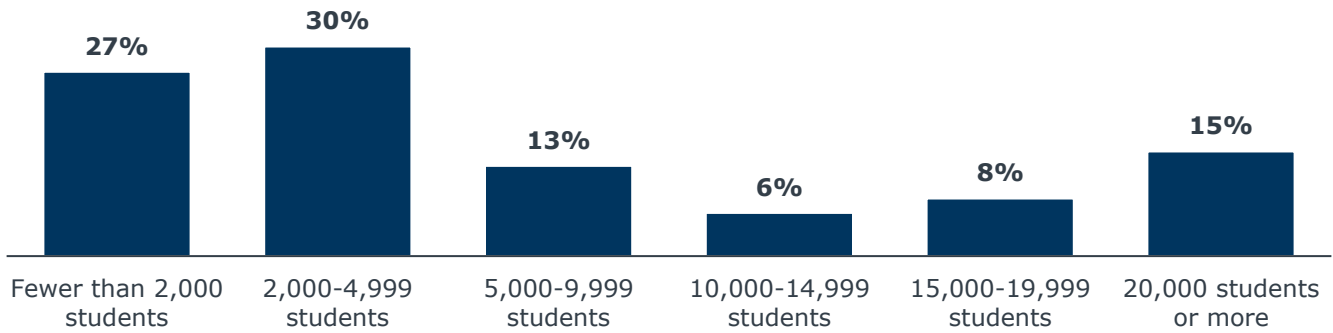
■ Public, 4-year ■ Private, 4-year

Carnegie Classification

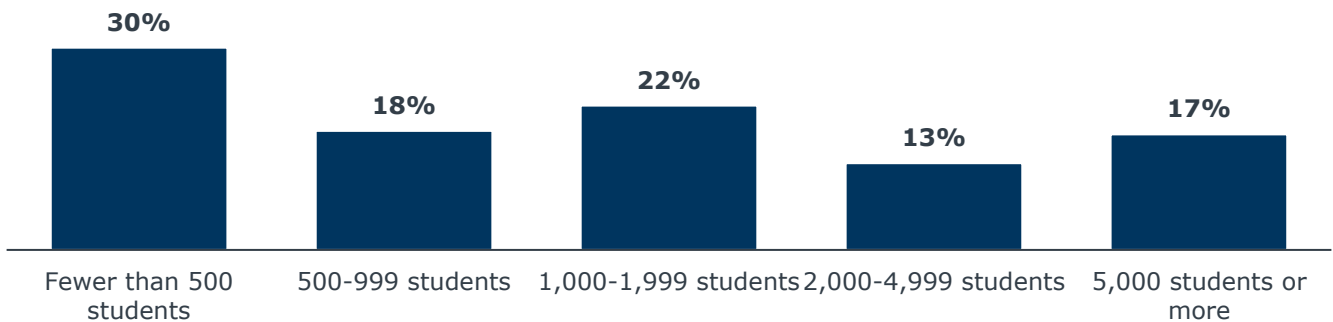


■ Baccalaureate ■ Master's ■ Research

Number of Undergraduate Students



Number of Graduate Students

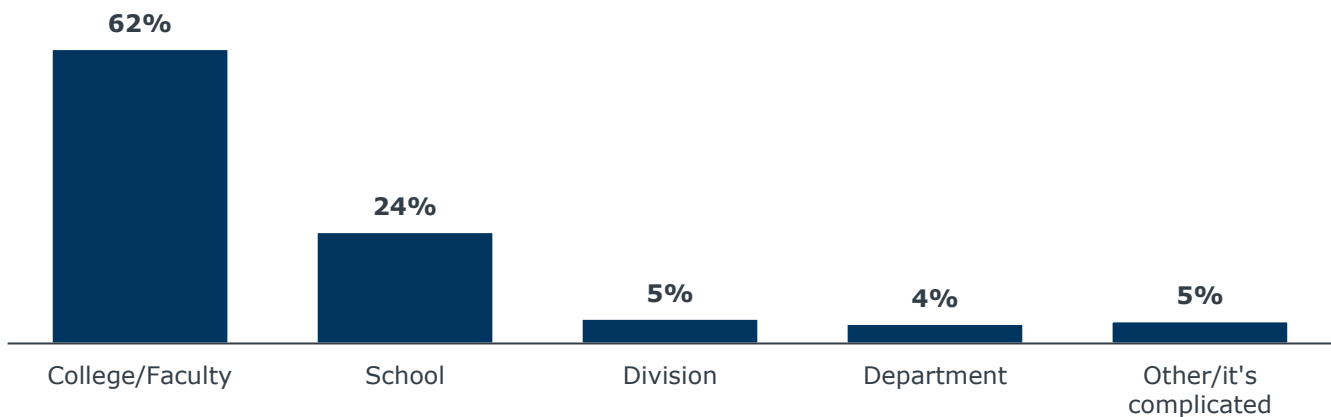


1) N=185-191

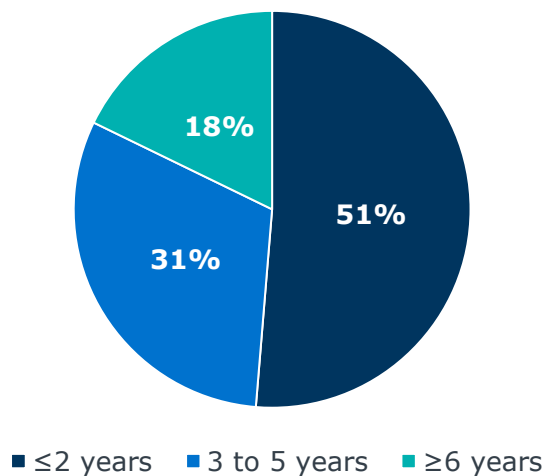
Appendix: Profile of Survey Respondents (cont.)

Most survey respondents indicated that the highest level of academic organization on their campus was the college or faculty level (Canadian institutions typically use 'faculty' to describe the largest disciplinary groupings of academic departments). A small subset of institutions (~10%) reported direct oversight of divisions or departments, which is more common at smaller baccalaureate institutions.

Highest level of academic organization at your institution



Years as provost at current institution



A majority of respondents have been provosts for less than 2 years, with only 18% indicating that they have been in their current position for more than 6 years.

While this distribution of time-in-seat may be influenced by sampling bias (newer provosts may take greater interest in the topic of organizational change, given the challenges of acclimating to a new, complex portfolio), the prevalence of new-to-role provosts is noteworthy on its own. High turnover rates and frequent 'interim' designations often contribute to challenging organizational dynamics within academic affairs, and it could be hypothesized that the complexity of the typical provost portfolio contributes to turnover.



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