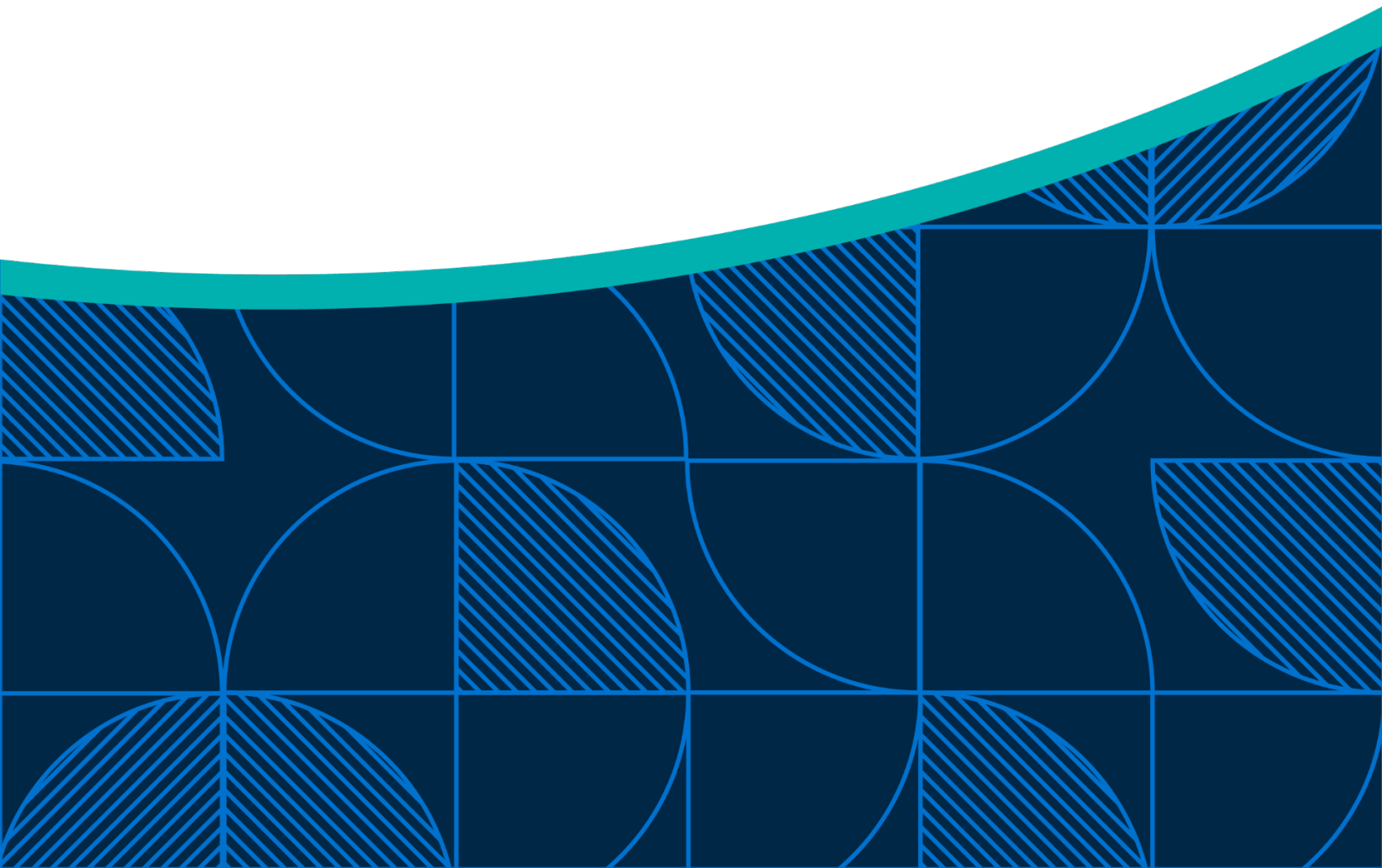




DEANS ADVISORY SERVICES

The Voice of the Dean

EAB's Inaugural Survey of Research University Deans



Deans Advisory Services

Legal Caveat

EAB Global, Inc. ("EAB") has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to partners. This report relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and EAB cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. In addition, neither EAB nor any of its affiliates (each, an "EAB Organization") is in the business of giving legal, accounting, or other professional advice, and its reports should not be construed as professional advice. In particular, partners should not rely on any legal commentary in this report as a basis for action, or assume that any tactics described herein would be permitted by applicable law or appropriate for a given partner's situation. Partners are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. No EAB Organization or any of its respective officers, directors, employees, or agents shall be liable for any claims, liabilities, or expenses relating to (a) any errors or omissions in this report, whether caused by any EAB Organization, or any of their respective employees or agents, or sources or other third parties, (b) any recommendation by any EAB Organization, or (c) failure of partner and its employees and agents to abide by the terms set forth herein.

EAB is a registered trademark of EAB Global, Inc. in the United States and other countries. Partners are not permitted to use these trademarks, or any other trademark, product name, service name, trade name, and logo of any EAB Organization without prior written consent of EAB. Other trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos used within these pages are the property of their respective holders. Use of other company trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos or images of the same does not necessarily constitute (a) an endorsement by such company of an EAB Organization and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by an EAB Organization. No EAB Organization is affiliated with any such company.

IMPORTANT: Please read the following.

EAB has prepared this report for the exclusive use of its partners. Each partner acknowledges and agrees that this report and the information contained herein (collectively, the "Report") are confidential and proprietary to EAB. By accepting delivery of this Report, each partner agrees to abide by the terms as stated herein, including the following:

1. All right, title, and interest in and to this Report is owned by an EAB Organization. Except as stated herein, no right, license, permission, or interest of any kind in this Report is intended to be given, transferred to, or acquired by a partner. Each partner is authorized to use this Report only to the extent expressly authorized herein.
2. Each partner shall not sell, license, republish, distribute, or post online or otherwise this Report, in part or in whole. Each partner shall not disseminate or permit the use of, and shall take reasonable precautions to prevent such dissemination or use of, this Report by (a) any of its employees and agents (except as stated below), or (b) any third party.
3. Each partner may make this Report available solely to those of its employees and agents who (a) are registered for the workshop or program of which this Report is a part, (b) require access to this Report in order to learn from the information described herein, and (c) agree not to disclose this Report to other employees or agents or any third party. Each partner shall use, and shall ensure that its employees and agents use, this Report for its internal use only. Each partner may make a limited number of copies, solely as adequate for use by its employees and agents in accordance with the terms herein.
4. Each partner shall not remove from this Report any confidential markings, copyright notices, and/or other similar indicia herein.
5. Each partner is responsible for any breach of its obligations as stated herein by any of its employees or agents.
6. If a partner is unwilling to abide by any of the foregoing obligations, then such partner shall promptly return this Report and all copies thereof to EAB.

Table of Contents

About This Survey	4
Executive Summary	5
Survey Discussion	6
Deans Advisory Services	14

About This Survey

Methodology

The 2024 Voice of the Dean Survey was distributed online from April 1, 2024, to May 1, 2024.

44 deans across four disciplinary groups completed the survey.

The survey gathered information about respondents':

- Personal experience and outlook
- Key issues and current priorities
- Perspective on the role
- Pressing questions for peers
- Advice to peers and new colleagues

Profile of Respondents

Discipline

Arts & Sciences	Business	Engineering	Heath Sciences and Nursing
30%	36%	14%	20%

Institution's Research Activity

R1	R2	U15
66%	23%	11%

Time in Current Role

<1 year	1-3 years	4-6 years	7-9 years	10+ years
18%	25%	25%	23%	9%

Times Served as Dean of College

Once	Twice
75%	25%

Executive Summary

The Voice of the Dean Survey was launched in 2024, at the request of deans wishing to glean insight into the experiences and perspectives of their peers. The dean's role is among the most complex and multifaceted in higher education, and this survey aims to provide context and deepen understanding of the dean's role across disciplines and universities in North America.

Deans report high job satisfaction overall and plan to stay in their roles for the next two years. The majority of deans report high job satisfaction (59%) and indicate they wish to remain in their current role for at least the next two years (56%). Many deans chose to share what they find most satisfying about the role, including the opportunity to make an impact on the lives of students and tackle difficult yet rewarding challenges each day.

However, deans report increasing levels of stress and burnout. Despite high job satisfaction, deans face high and growing levels of stress and burnout this year. Half of deans report high levels of burnout, and 76% indicate their burnout has increased since last year. Deans note that talent issues, enrollment declines, and resource constraints all contribute to their mounting stress.

Graduate enrollment was a major concern this academic year. Deans across disciplines indicate that boosting graduate enrollment is an urgent priority for their colleges (65%), and a supermajority (83%) indicate that increasing graduate enrollment will be critical for their college's success in the immediate future. In addition to mounting enrollment pressure, deans also cite low faculty morale and resource constraints that hamper growth or innovation as top concerns of the past academic year.

Deans are prioritizing fundraising, new program development, and strong faculty research output. Although countless initiatives and priorities may cross a dean's desk, 88% of deans agree that fundraising is top-of-mind and critical to their college's success. Furthermore, deans are curious to hear how their peers approach fundraising at their colleges. Other major priorities include generating new programs as revenue drivers and supporting strong faculty research output.

We invite readers to explore these themes further over the following pages and use this report to guide discussion about the actions that will help deans navigate the road ahead.

Deans Report High and Steady Job Satisfaction

The first section of the report provides a “pulse check” on the state of the role and the current mindset of university deans. Deans were asked questions assessing their overall job satisfaction, confidence in job performance, levels of burnout, and the change in these metrics since the previous academic year.

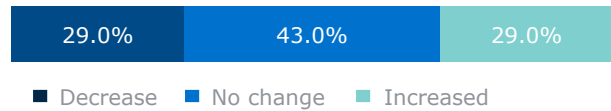
The majority of deans report high job satisfaction

59% of deans surveyed report high job satisfaction this academic year, holding steady from the year prior, as 43% of deans report no change in job satisfaction across the past 12 months. In response to open questions about job satisfaction, deans across all disciplines express enjoyment at executing the mission of their colleges and working with students—an important point of consensus in the discussion around job satisfaction.

How would you rate your **overall job satisfaction** this academic year (2023-2024)?



How has your overall **job satisfaction** **changed** since the previous academic year?



Additionally, many share what they find most satisfying about the deanship



The Impact

“Helping faculty succeed by supporting them and getting others in the university to recognize the value of our college and my faculty.”

“The positive impact I have on others within and outside of my college.”

“The ability to impact the trajectory of students’ lives and their socioeconomic status and migration.”



The Relationships

“Working with faculty to create magic!”

“Engaging with alumni and external stakeholders.”

“The opportunity to help support and shape an academic community comprised of faculty, staff, and students.”



The Challenge

“Overseeing all aspects of the management and administration of the college and playing an integral role in its current expansion.”

“Working with students and finding solutions to systematic problems to support improved student success.”

“Participating in decisions regarding the University’s strategic goals and achieving outcomes.”

Burnout a Risk to Performance and Engagement

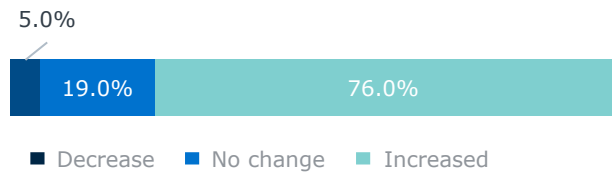
Despite high job satisfaction, more than half of deans report experiencing burnout and 76% report an increase in burnout since last year

While a slight majority (52%) of deans report high burnout this academic year, over three-quarters of deans report an *increase* in burnout since last year. Deans most frequently cite future enrollments, resource constraints, and talent issues as the primary stressors of the role. EAB’s 2024 [State of the Sector](#) research highlights the ramifications of higher education’s most pressing challenges and top trends, three of which significantly impact deans and their work at the college level: worsening public perception of higher education, declining college-going rates, and increasing student readiness challenges.

How would you rate your **overall level of exhaustion or burnout** this academic year (2023-2024)?

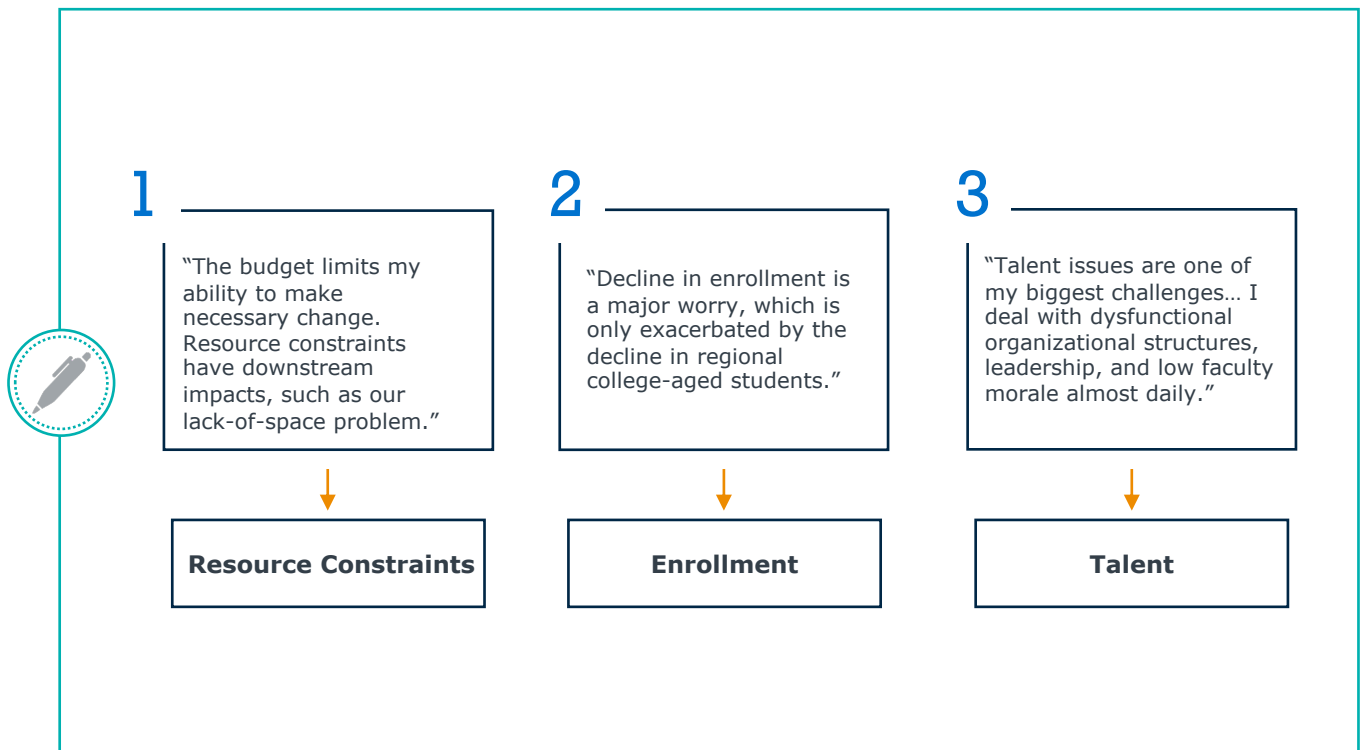


How has your overall **level of exhaustion or burnout changed** since the previous academic year?



Deans identify three main challenges arising from their roles

In leading your college, what **challenges** are most pressing?

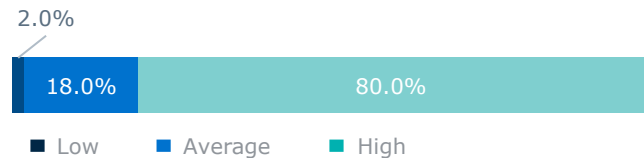


Long-Term Plans Uncertain Despite Job Confidence

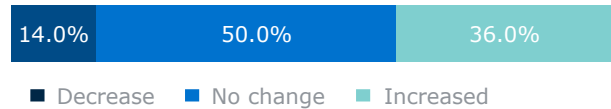
Deans report high levels of job confidence, holding steady from last year

The vast majority of deans (88%) report high confidence in their ability to discharge their responsibilities to the institution, faculty, staff, and students, holding steady from the previous year.

How would you rate your **overall confidence in your job performance** this academic year (2023-2024)?



How has your **overall job confidence changed** since the previous academic year?



To stay or to go?

Although more than half of deans surveyed plan to stay in their current role for the near-term, one-third of deans report wanting to “wait and see” how the current academic year goes before making further career plans.

Which of the following best describes your **plans for the next two years**?



56%

Stay in my role beyond the next two years



33%

See how this academic year goes, then decide



5%

Planning to retire within the next two years



2%

Actively looking for work in another university

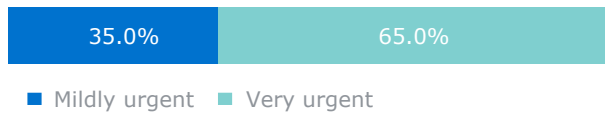
Deans Cite Enrollment and Morale as Top Challenges

This section of the report aggregates quantitative and qualitative data from across the survey, highlighting the three most pressing concerns deans reported this academic year.

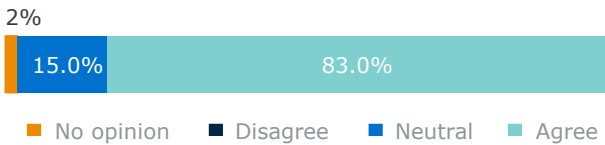
1 Graduate Enrollment

Deans highlight increasing graduate enrollment as an urgent priority. 65% of deans cite graduate enrollment as an urgent priority and 83% of deans agree that boosting graduate enrollment is critical for their college’s future success. Additionally, close to two-thirds of deans report that graduate enrollment as a topical area has increased in importance across the past year. Although undergraduate enrollment remains a concern, and 51% of deans cite undergraduate enrollment as an urgent priority, many deans note their limited ability to inflect change in this area.

*How urgent is it for you to address **graduate** enrollment across the next 12-18 months?*



*To what extent do you agree that increasing **graduate** enrollment is key to the continued success of your college?*



*How has the importance of **graduate** enrollment changed across the past 12 months?*



*How urgent is it for you to address **undergrad** enrollment across the next 12-18 months?*





“My top challenge is the decline in regional college-aged students.”



“We’re competing harder for a shrinking pool of candidates.”

2 Faculty Morale


A majority of deans emphasize the urgency of improving faculty morale and engagement. 63% of respondents believe that raising faculty morale and engagement is very urgent across the next 12-18 months, and 56% of respondents believe addressing faculty morale and engagement has become even more important since the previous academic year.

*How **urgent is it to address faculty morale and engagement** across the next 12-18 months?*




*How has the **importance of improving faculty morale** changed across the past 12 months?*





“I’m struggling with how to improve and maintain faculty and staff morale.”



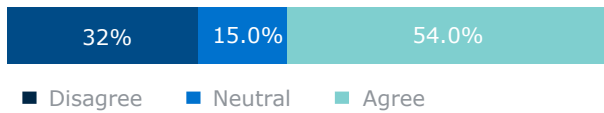
“My goal is to work on longstanding issues that affect faculty and staff engagement.”

Deans Strive for Impact amidst Limited Resources

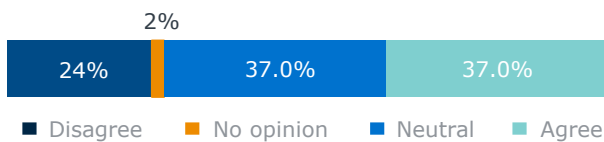
3 Strategic Resource Allocation

Deans express concern over allocating limited resources to ensure greatest strategic impact. A majority of deans (54%) are hungry for guidance on and time to strategize how to best and most efficiently allocate their college’s resources in alignment with their mission and priorities. Balancing the budget is an integral facet of resource allocation, yet only 37% of respondents are concerned about their ability to do so this coming year, while close to two-thirds do not share that concern.

To what extent do you agree your college **would benefit from strategic direction** to guide allocation of resources?




To what extent are you **worried about balancing the budget?**





 “My biggest struggle is finding resources for new programs.”

 “I have the students, but I don’t have the space.”

 “I am constantly brainstorming how to more strategically allocate my already limited resources.”



Not Every Dean Grapples with Political Pressure

Despite newspaper headlines and extensive publicity on the repercussions of increasing political polarization on higher education, deans are evenly divided on the extent to which managing political pressure impacts their work and day-to-day responsibilities. Additionally, deans are evenly split on whether the importance of managing political pressure has increased over the past year, with half stating that managing political pressure has become more important and half reporting no change.

85% of deans report **minimal urgency** in managing the impact of global events on campus

51% of deans reported **no change** in managing political pressure this year compared to last year

49% of deans report that managing political pressure **is more urgent** this year

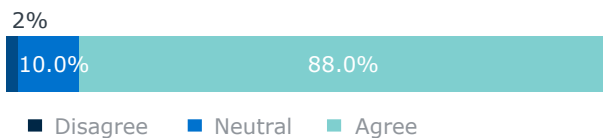
A Supermajority of Deans Cite Advancement and Research Enterprise as Top College Objectives

This section of the report aggregates quantitative and qualitative data from across the survey and highlights the three priority areas where deans are focusing their time, effort, and resources.

1 Fundraising

Fundraising is the most critical priority for deans this academic year. 88% of deans agree that fundraising is a critical component to meeting their college’s strategic objectives. Further, more than half of deans indicate that addressing fundraising for academic initiatives in their college is a very urgent priority, and 56% believe this has increased in importance since last year. Corroborating the importance of advancement, one-third of deans agree that funding is the most significant barrier to making progress on their college’s goals.

*To what extent do you agree that **fundraising is a critical component** of meeting your college’s objectives?*



*How urgent is it to address **fundraising for academic initiatives** in the next 12-18 months?*



University Deans are Keen to Hear from Peers on Implementing Fundraising Best-Practices

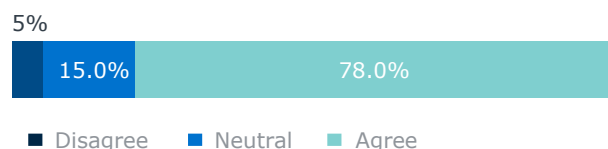


- ▶ “What tools do you use to assist you with fundraising?”
- ▶ “How do you increase major donations to your college?”
- ▶ “How do you successfully expand the donor pipeline?”
- ▶ “What can I start doing today to bolster donations this year?”

2 Producing Faculty Research

Faculty research continues to be a priority for deans. More than three-quarters of deans agree that their faculty understand the importance of their research output to both the college and institution; deans continue to look for ways to support their faculty in this endeavor.

*To what extent do you agree that **faculty know their research is a priority** for the college?*



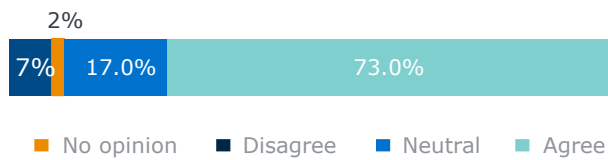
- “Our faculty’s research output is a key indicator of our institution’s vitality and relevance. It attracts top-tier students, secures funding, and enhances our global reputation.”
- “I believe that a robust research culture elevates all aspects of our academic mission.”

Desire for New Program Development Frequently Eclipsed by Resource Limitations

3 New Program Launch & Development of Existing Portfolio

Deans continue to investigate opportunities for new program launch. Nearly three-quarters of deans are interested in launching new programs as a revenue driver, particularly online, specialized, and targeted degree programs. Deans also express interest in refining and polishing their current program offerings. Funding, however, is often a barrier to entry, with one-third of deans agreeing that it impedes their ability to make progress on their college’s top strategic initiatives.

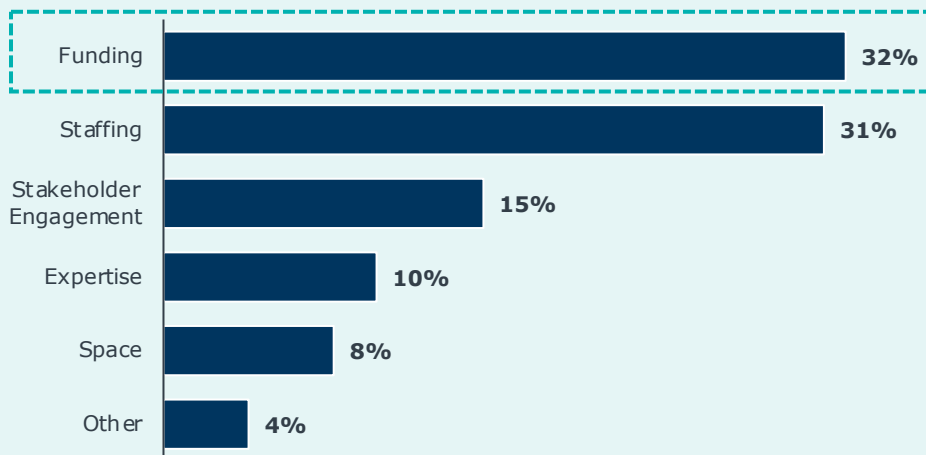
To what extent do you agree that **launching new programs, degrees, or credentials is a priority** for your college?



- “I am interested in launching new online and continuing education programs.”
- “Launching new graduate programs is a major revenue opportunity for my college.”
- “One of my top priorities this year is incenting my faculty to refresh programs and curricula.”

What are the top two **barriers** to making progress on your college’s **most critical priorities**? (select two)

n=84



Deans Appreciate The Urgency of A.I

79% agree that urgency to address A.I in teaching has **increased since last year**

Keep up with the latest A.I trends in higher education:

- ▶ [*4 steps academic leaders must take to integrate A.I tools into pedagogy*](#)
- ▶ [*Compendium of A.I Applications in Higher Ed*](#)

Wise Words for New Deans

What is the **best advice** you can give to a new dean?

1 Take Time to be Strategic

- “Do not let day-to-day minutiae get in the way of implementing strategic goals.”
- “Articulate how everything you do relates to the strategic vision.”
- “Understand the strengths you have to work with inside your college.”
- “Dare to innovate.”

2 Lead By Listening

- “Do a full listening tour with all departments and units in your college.”
- “Spend the time to listen and understand your college.”
- “Listen! Meet people and learn the lay of the land before making major changes.”
- “Take time to listen! Learn and pause continuously.”

3 Invest in Relationships

- “Focus on relationship building.”
- “You need to build buy-in for major changes, so take time to build that trust.”
- “Really get to know the people in your organization. Not just in your college, but the entire university.”
- “Spend time with alumni/donors. Build your advisory board into what will help you.”

4 Set The Tone for a Strong Team

- “Be positive and love what you do, as you set the tone for your team.”
- “Build a supportive team and empower the success of others.”
- “Build an excellent team with strong values and a willingness to have hard discussions.”
- “Take care of people doing good work.”

5 Be Deliberate about Change

- “Don’t move too fast, especially if you’re in a long line of deans. Managers tend to make a lot of changes without seeing what worked previously.”
- “Make changes once you understand the culture.”
- “Know how to listen, but also know when its time for you to make a decision.”
- “Be willing to make hard resource choices and stand behind them through the storm.”

6 Prioritize Self-Care

- “Take care of yourself—everything falls apart if you don’t!”
- “Block time off for yourself to reflect”
- “Find time-life balance”
- “Block time on your calendar for self-care or to catch up on work.”

Introducing Deans Advisory Services

OUR APPROACH

Meeting College-Level Challenges Requires Dedicated Support, Customized Insights, and Implementation Tools

Where We Engage Institutional Leaders

- University Strategy
- Future Visioning and Understanding the Student of Tomorrow
- Facilitated Board and Cabinet Retreats
- Demographics and Enrollment Trends



Partnership for University Deans

- Set compelling and differentiated college-level strategy
- Elevate research excellence within the college
- Develop effective fundraising strategies for college priorities
- Innovate within administrative units and departments
- Program portfolio review
- Professional development for the next generation of faculty, chair, and academic leaders

FOUR PILLARS OF SERVICE FOR DEANS AND COLLEGE LEADERSHIP TEAMS



1

EAB Insights and Actionable Advice to Guide Strategic Decision-Making



2

Peer-to-Peer Events and Networking to Share Learnings and Pressure Test Ideas



3

Executive Briefings and Presentations to Support Internal Case for Change



4

Dedicated Service and Expert Advisors to Accelerate Time-to-Impact

FOCUS ON THE COLLEGE TO MOVE THE NEEDLE ON YOUR INSTITUTION'S FUTURE



Schedule time to speak to an expert

eab.com/advisory-services

“

“We can set direction at the university level, but we won't achieve any of our priorities absent strong leadership from our deans to galvanize the support of our faculty and departments. Our success is the sum of their individual efforts”

Provost
Large Research University

”



202-747-1000 | eab.com

 @eab  @eab_  @WeAreEAB  @eab.life

ABOUT EAB

At EAB, our mission is to make education smarter and our communities stronger. We work with thousands of institutions to drive transformative change through data-driven insights and best-in-class capabilities. From kindergarten to college to career, EAB partners with leaders and practitioners to accelerate progress and drive results across five major areas: enrollment, student success, institutional strategy, data analytics, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). We work with each partner differently, tailoring our portfolio of research, technology, and marketing and enrollment solutions to meet the unique needs of every leadership team, as well as the students and employees they serve. Learn more at eab.com.