

2026

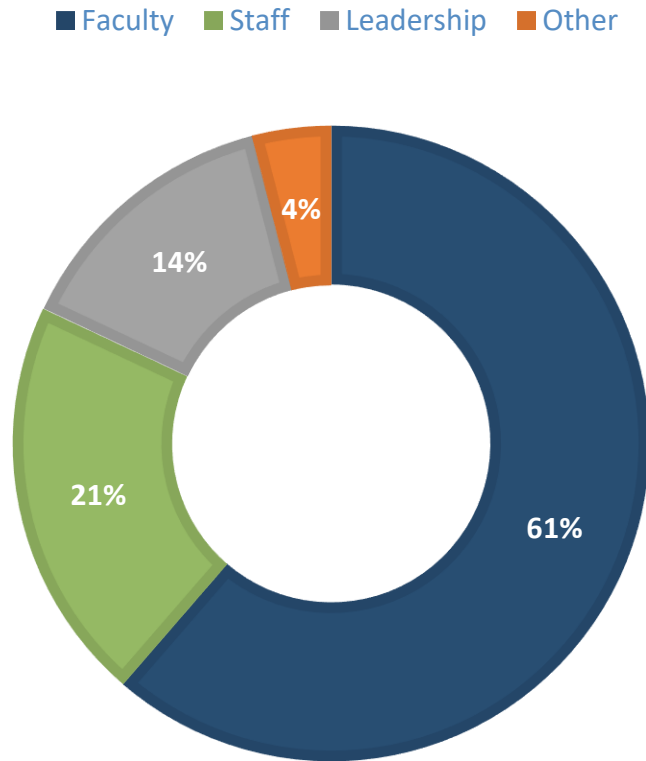
Experiential Learning Benchmark Survey

Innovations • Challenges • Best Practices



Survey Participants

OVERALL



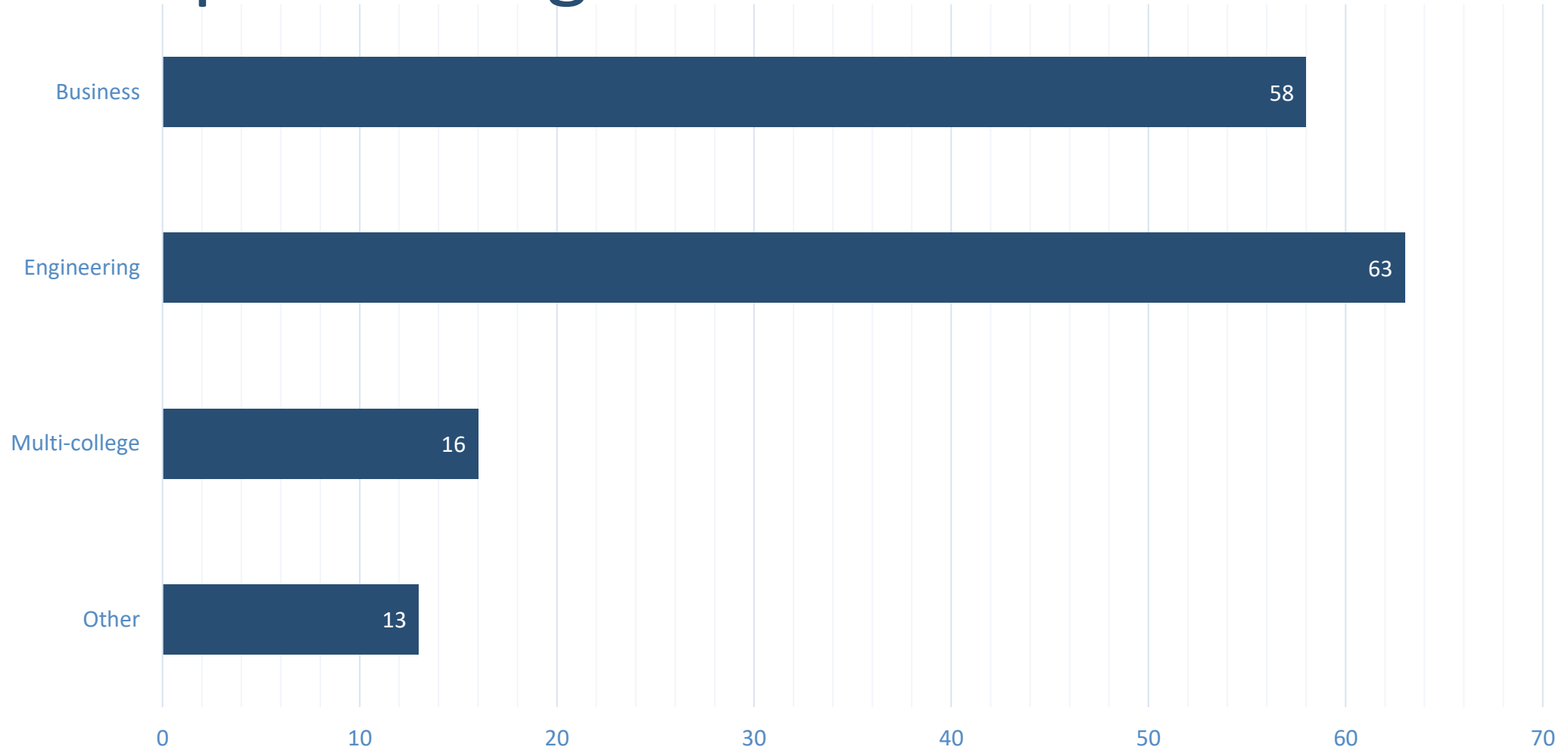
150

Participants

90%

Directly Involved with
Experiential

Participant Backgrounds



Key Advice Shared

1. Get Institutional Support and Dedicated Staffing and Structure

- The most common piece of advice was to not let this be a solo or ad-hoc effort. Respondents repeatedly said to get institutional buy-in and resourcing: "have someone in charge of experiential learning," "this cannot be a go-it-alone strategy," build a dedicated center rather than relying on individual faculty, invest in staff for business development, and ensure faculty workload/teaching-load credit reflects the effort ("recognized as a 1.5 min. for teaching loads"). Several warned that without a program owner, the work "falls on individuals" and knowledge is lost when they leave.

2. Clear Expectations Up Front with Clients and Students

- Scope projects carefully and communicate expectations early to avoid mismatches. Under-promise, over-deliver and define project objectives up front to protect program reputation and reduce scope creep.

3. Process-based Relationship Building with Industry and Alumni

- Develop a process for maintaining contact with industry partners and leverage alumni, not as a one-time ask, but as an ongoing and long-term investment.

Biggest Challenges Reported

1. Sourcing Enough (good) Projects

- Roughly 1/3rd of respondents named this directly with specific challenges like finding high quality projects, aligning projects to the academic calendar and meeting scaled-up project volume needs. A few responses noted it's getting harder with companies more hesitant to share data or take on student projects because of confidentiality/IP concerns or AI reducing their perceived need for student help.

2. Faculty/Staff Capacity, Funding, and Resources

- Not having enough people, time, money, or physical space to support growing project volume: "program growth creating significant resource constraints," being "soft funded" and needing fee-paying clients just to cover staff time, running out of prototyping space, and faculty not being incentivized/rewarded for the extra effort experiential projects require.

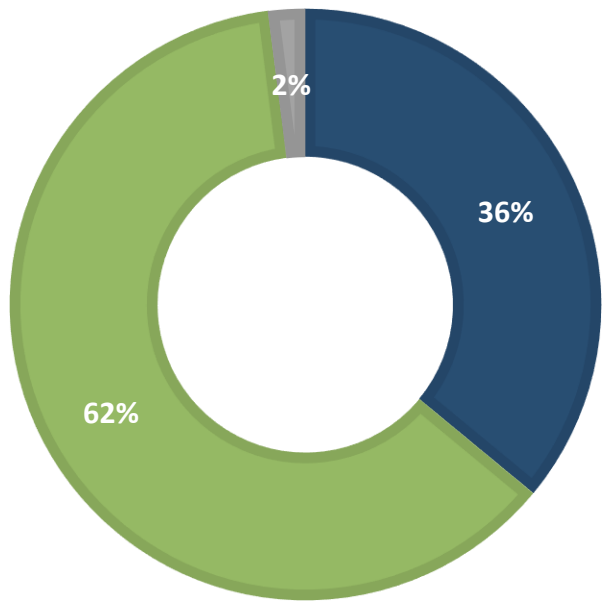
3. Managing Project Fit, Quality, and Team Dynamics

- Matching project scope to learning outcomes, uneven student effort, and team-dynamics issues. Inconsistent grading across faculty, and the general difficulty that "every project is different."

Are Live Clients Involved?

ALL DISCIPLINES

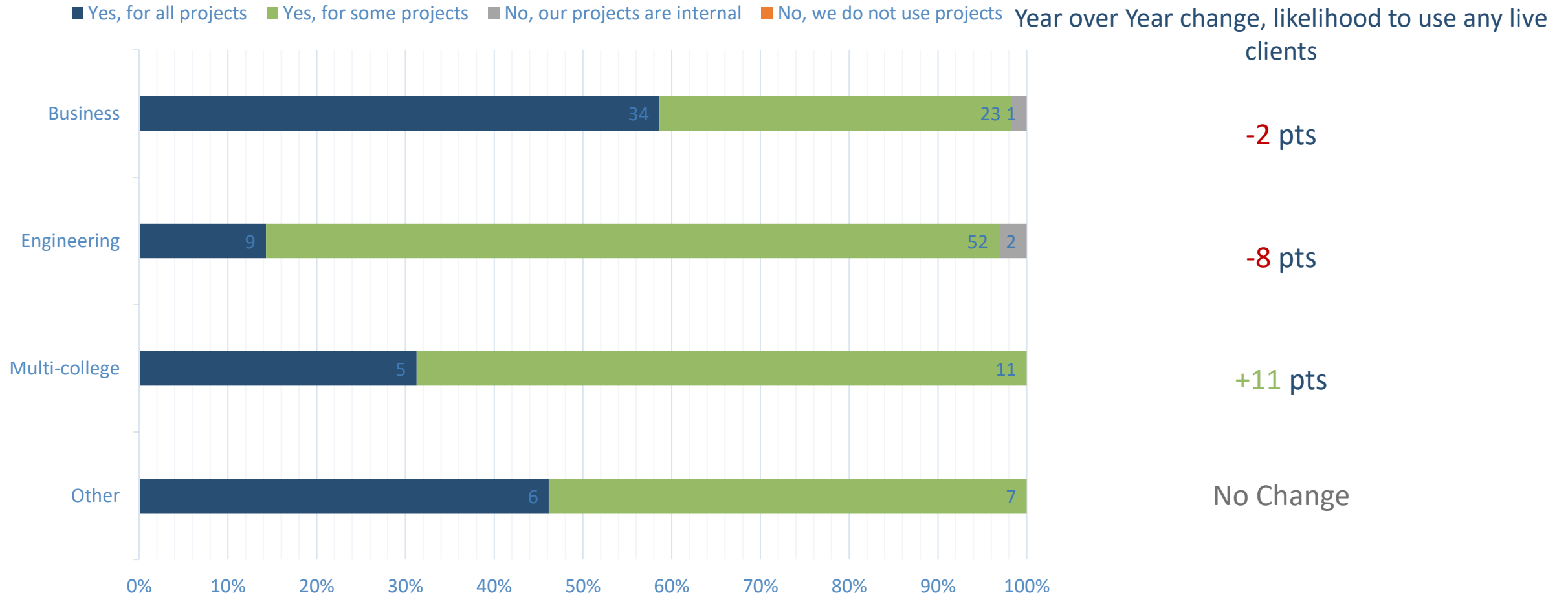
- Yes, for all projects
- Yes, for some projects
- No, our projects are internal
- No, we do not use projects



n: 150



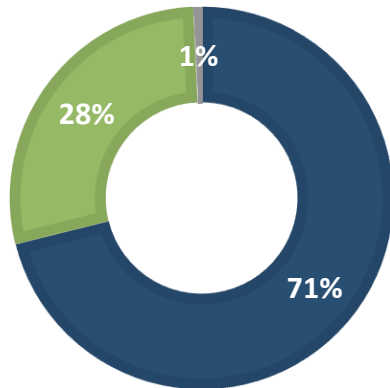
Live Client Involvement by Discipline



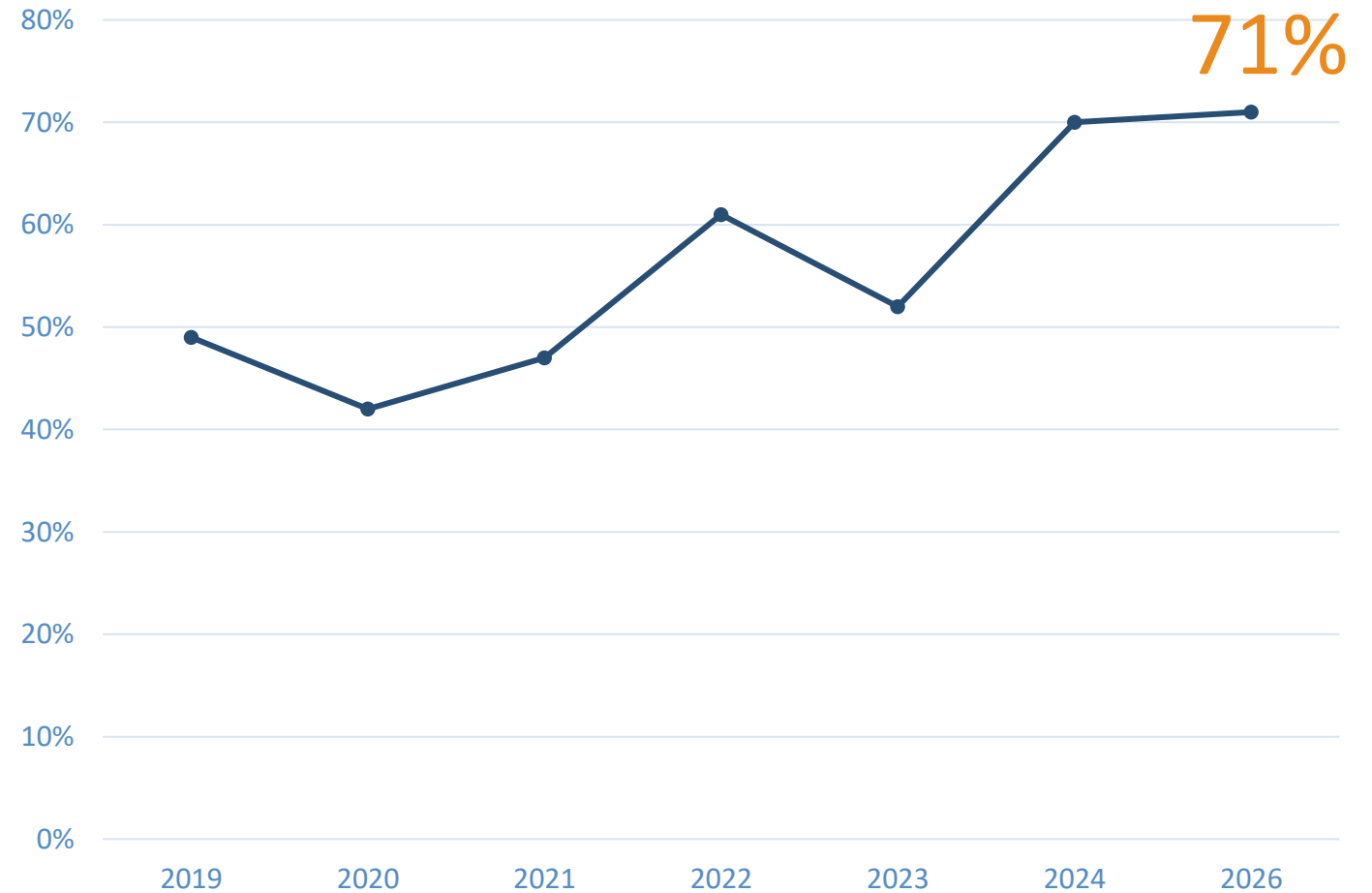
Experiential Project-based Learning Requirement Trendline

ALL DISCIPLINES

■ Yes ■ No, elective or co-curricular only ■ No PBL Programs



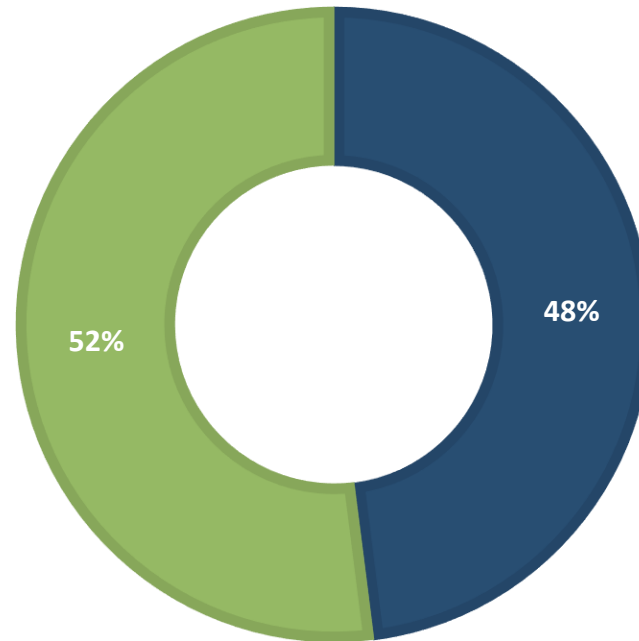
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Are Your Projects One Term or Longer?

ALL DISCIPLINES

■ One term ■ Two or more terms

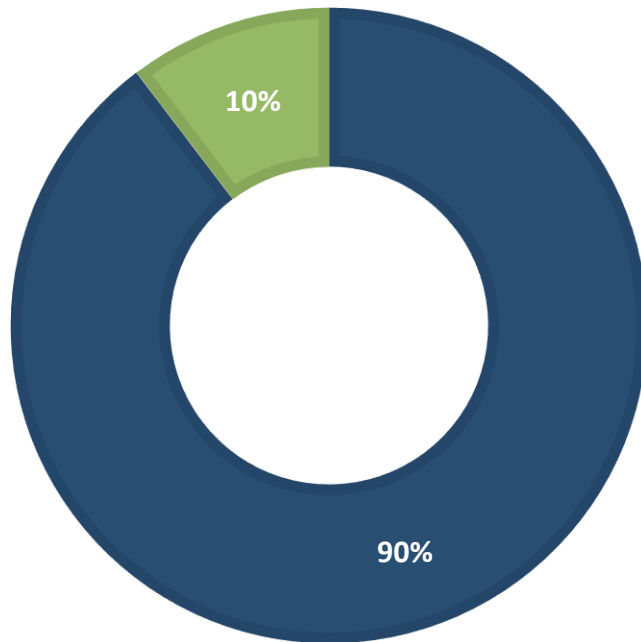


n: 150

Are Your Projects One Term or Longer?

BUSINESS

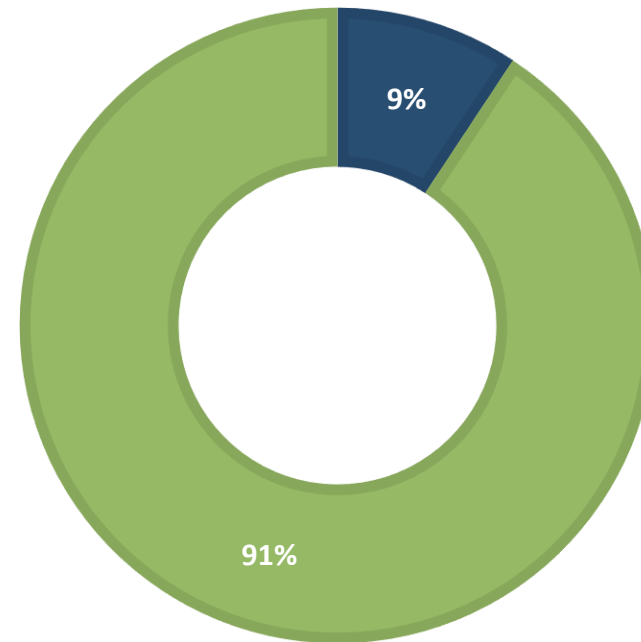
■ One term ■ Two or more terms



n: 56

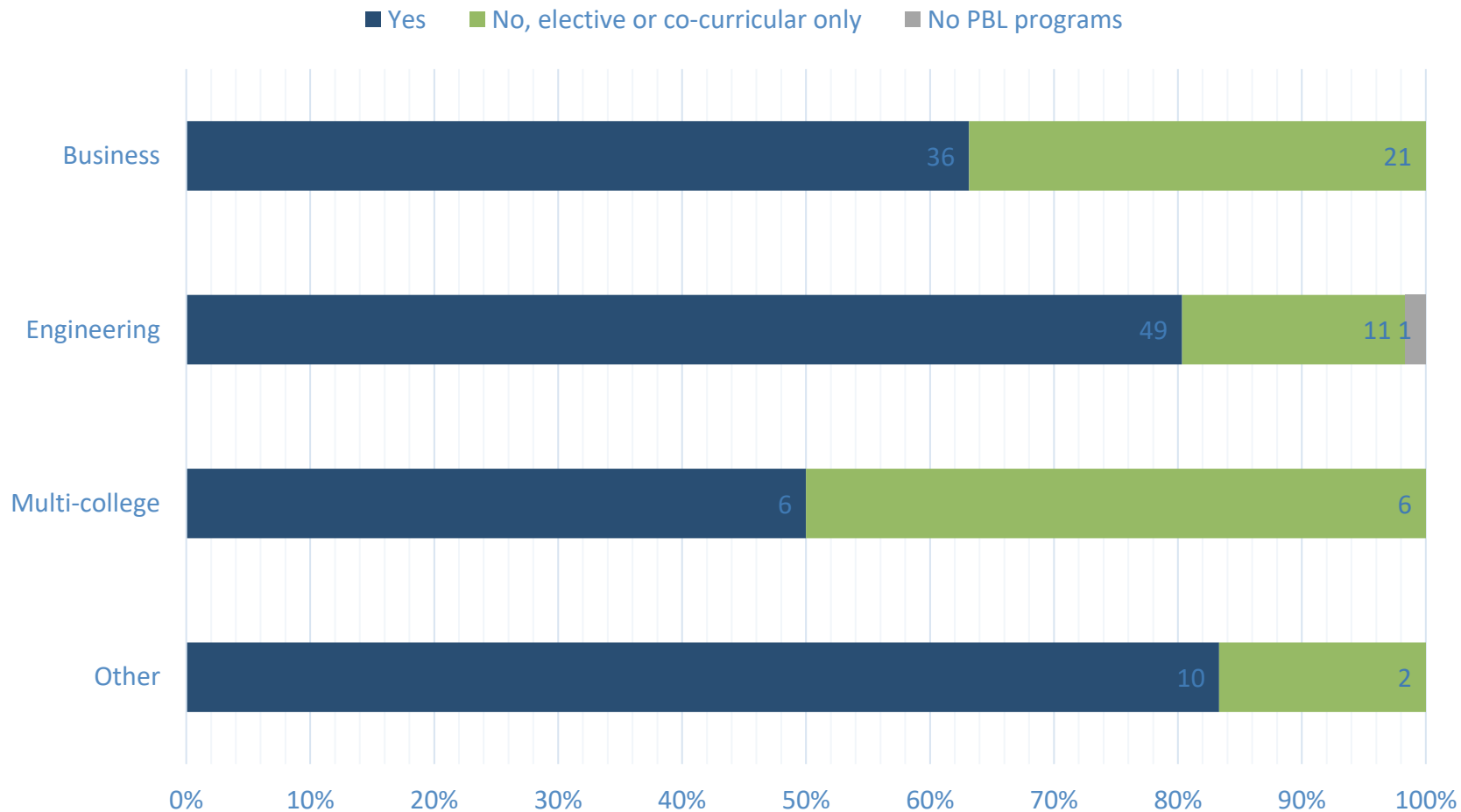
ENGINEERING

■ One term ■ Two or more terms



n: 63

Required Experiential PBL Program by Discipline



Year over Year

-1 pts

Business programs requiring
PBL

+4 pts

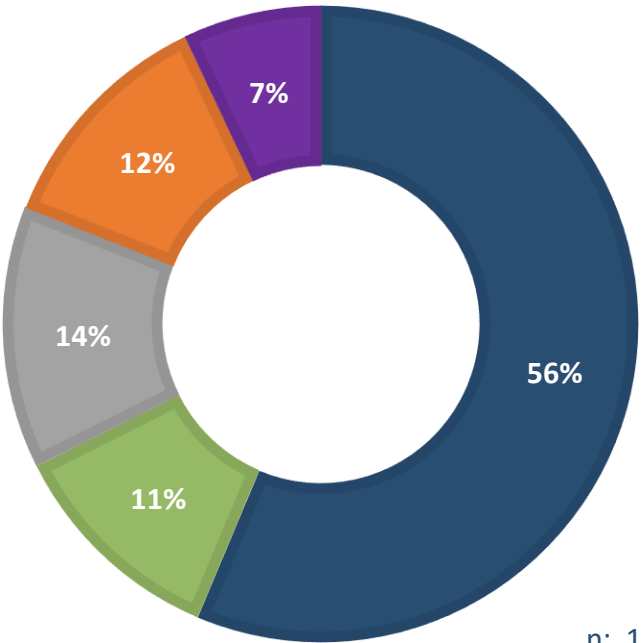
Engineering programs
requiring PBL

Stable after years of growth

Project Fees: How Much Do Programs Charge?

ALL DISCIPLINES

■ No fee ■ Yes, <\$5,000 ■ Yes, \$5,001 - \$10,000 ■ Yes, \$10,001 - \$20,000 ■ Yes, >\$20,000



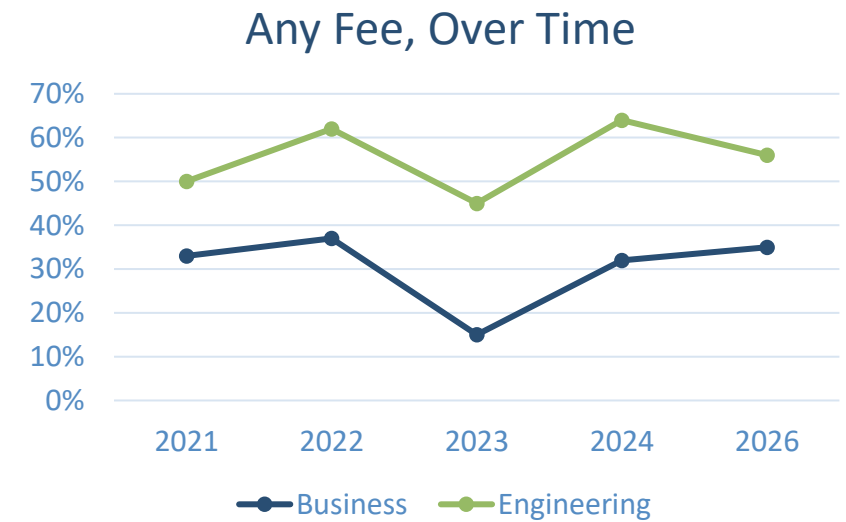
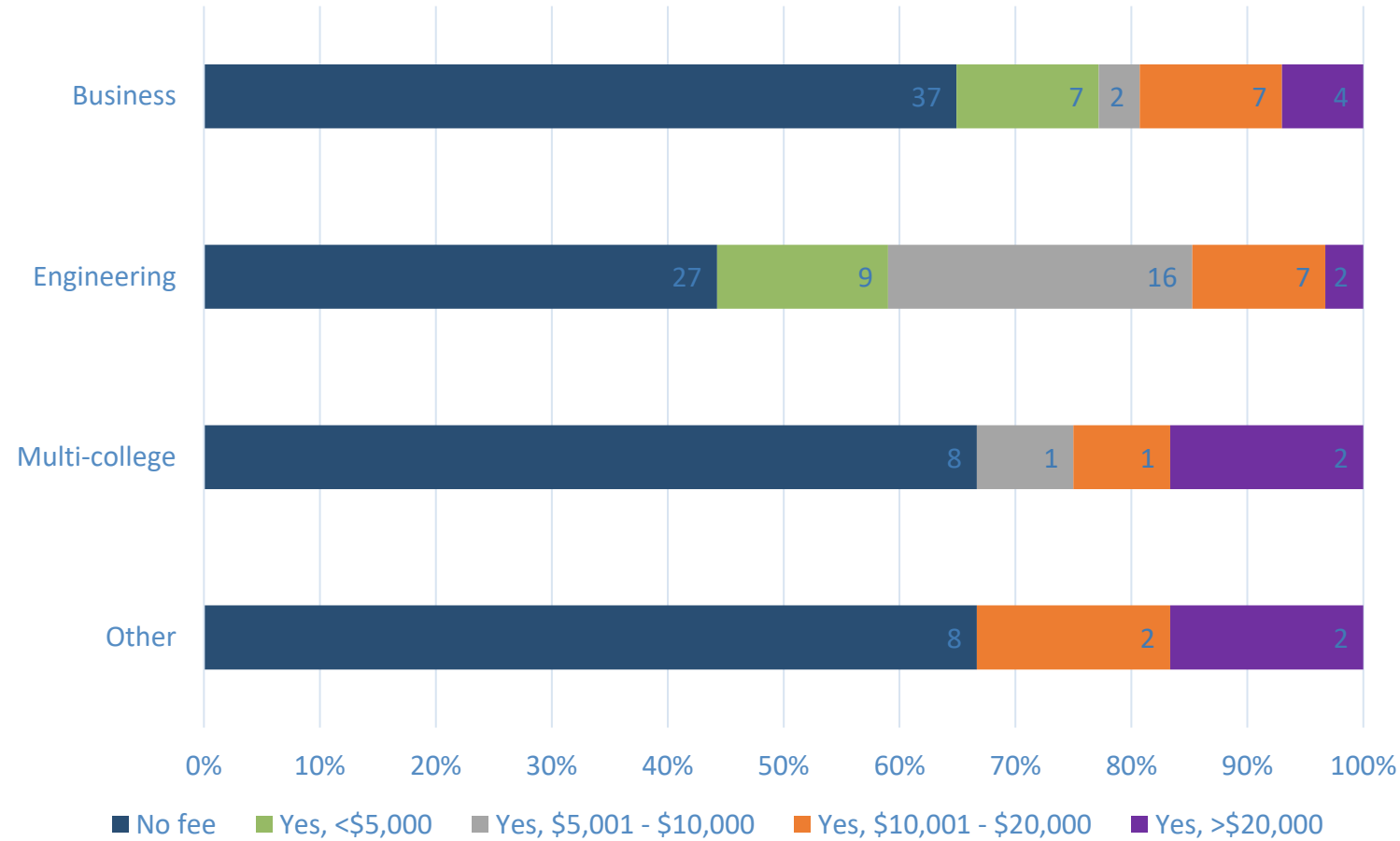
Charging a Fee				
2021*	2022*	2023	2024	2026
37%	49%	22%	54%	44%

*Question previously included materials-only reimbursement



EduSourced now includes a feature to collect optional project gifts to support programs that do not charge a fee.

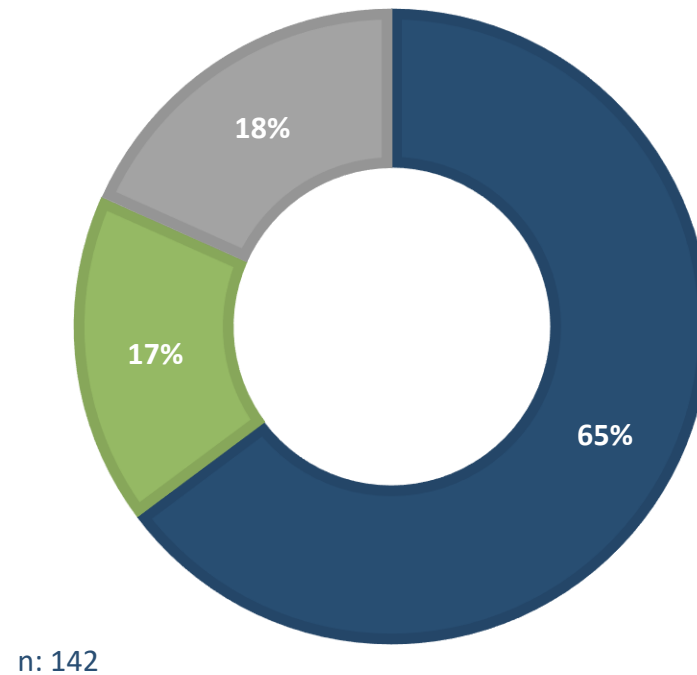
Project Fees by Discipline



Does Your Program Include Multidisciplinary Projects?

ALL DISCIPLINES

■ Yes, within the college ■ Yes, across colleges ■ No

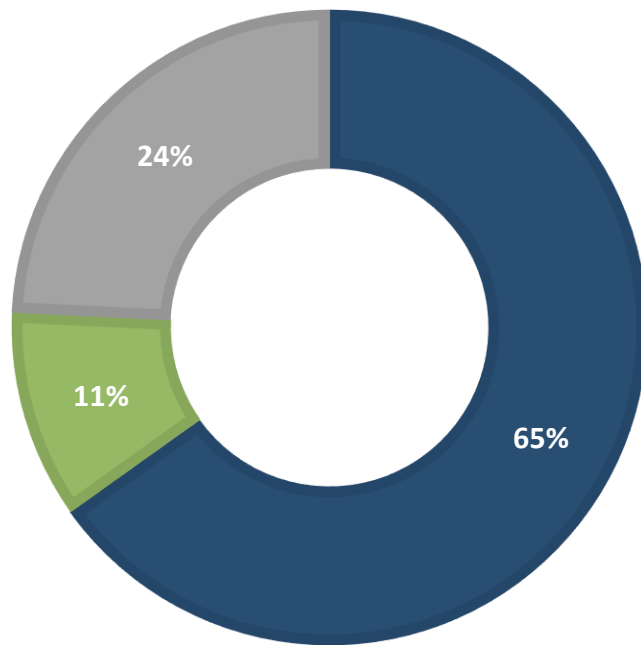


▲ Multidisciplinary projects +11 points from 2024

Multidisciplinary Projects by Discipline

ENGINEERING

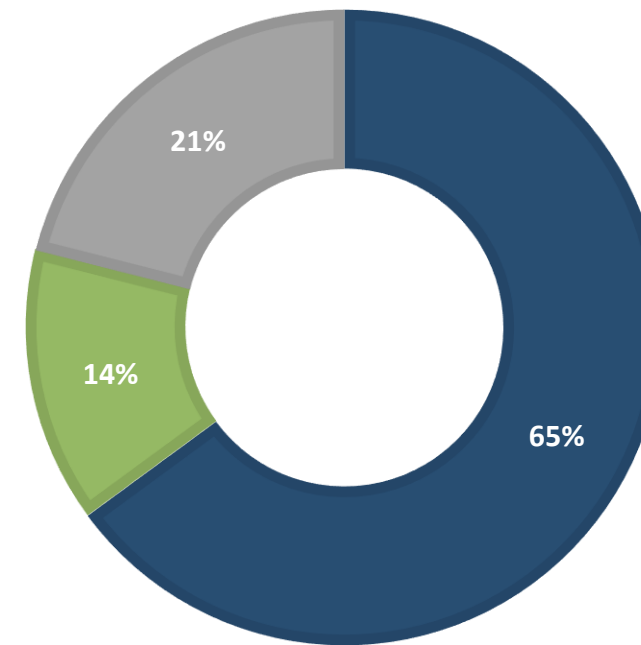
■ Yes, within the college ■ Yes, across colleges ■ No



n: 61

BUSINESS

■ Yes, within the college ■ Yes, across colleges ■ No



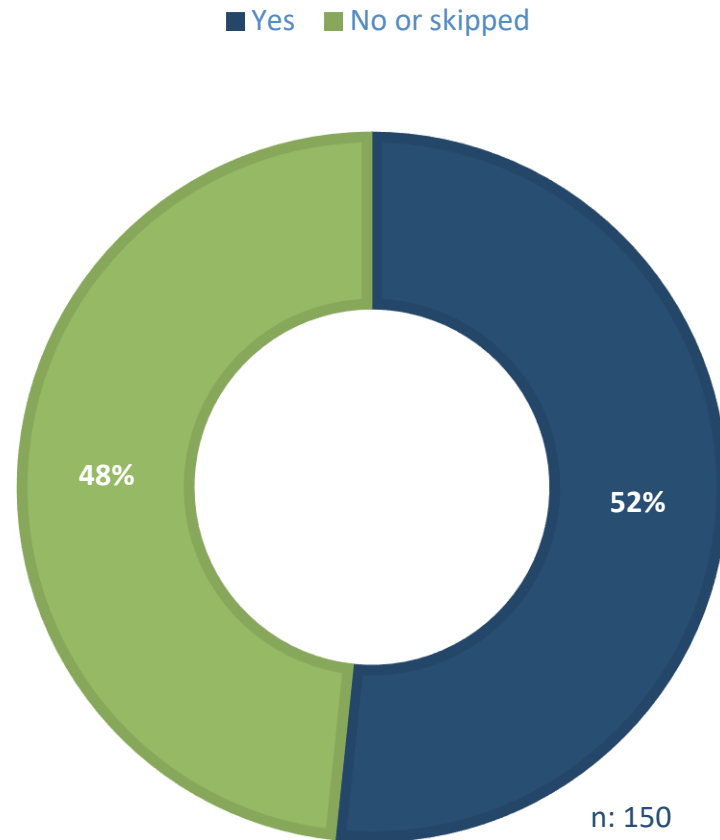
n: 57

Trend: Increase

↑ Engineering: +3 pts

↑ Business: +29 pts

Any Exciting Innovations or New Components?



Trend: stable with no material change year over year



Experiential Learning Innovations

1. AI Implications

- The most prominent theme: programs are moving from AI as a taboo/oversight issue to actively requiring or teaching it, creating AI use guidance and even AI as a dedicated learning component. Notably, AI was also mentioned as posing challenges elsewhere in this survey.

2. Breaking Down Silos

- A recurring push toward multidisciplinary and cross-academic year collaboration. Includes new joint-discipline pilot programs, "vertical integration" assignments spanning sophomores through seniors, and student teams that mix majors. Respondents frame this as better mirroring how real project teams work.

3. Authentic Professional Experience

- Several programs are redesigning the student experience to feel less like a class and more like employment. Team credit cards, project budgets, and performance evaluations create a more authentic professional experience.



EduSourced Data

18.8%

Of projects in EduSourced for this period
include a mentor

Formal Director or Office of Experiential Learning

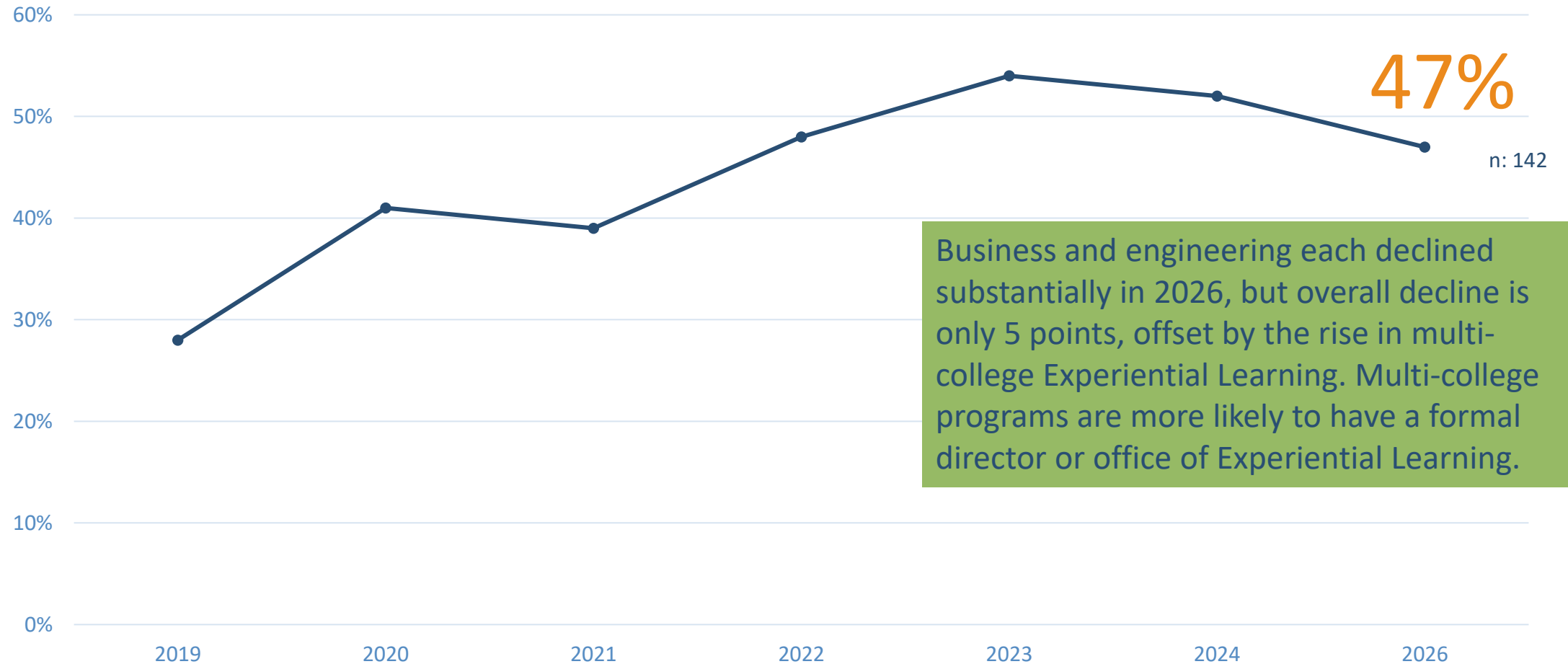
Business
44%

Multi-college
92%

Engineering
38%

Overall
47%
n: 142

Formal Director or Office of Experiential Trendline



Experiential Learning Projects Source Popularity

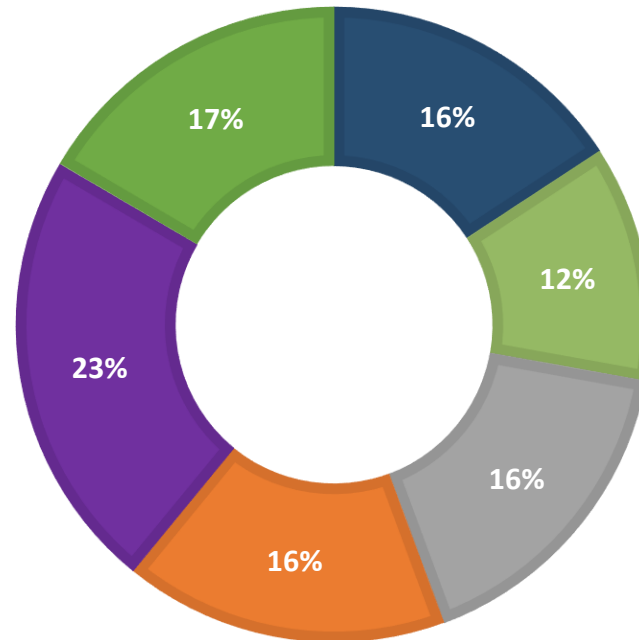
- 1: Faculty referred  2
- 2: Alumni  1
- 3: Unsolicited inbound  1
- 4: Office of Experiential Learning  2
- 5: Student referred  1
- 6: Career office  1
- 7: Third-party project sourcing service (no change)

n: 120

Annual Project Count Within Your College (not university-wide)

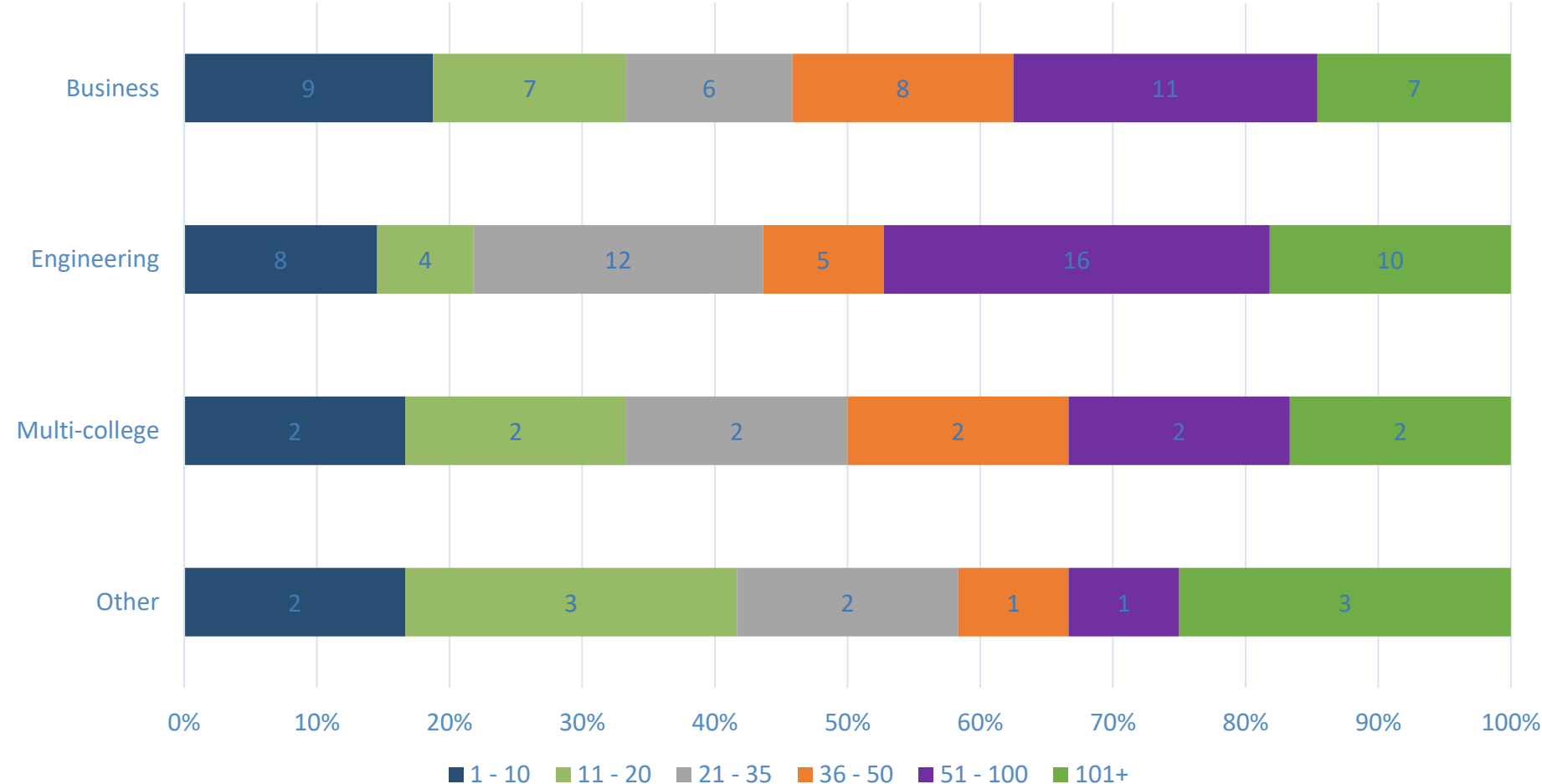
ALL DISCIPLINES

■ 1 - 10 ■ 11 - 20 ■ 21 - 35 ■ 36 - 50 ■ 51 - 100 ■ 101+



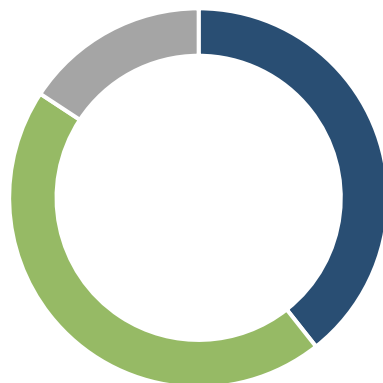
n: 127

Annual Project Count Within Your College (not university-wide) by Discipline



NDA Usage

Overall (including “Other”)

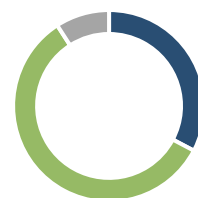


■ Yes as a standard procedure ■ Yes if the client insists ■ No

n: 127

16% of programs, across all disciplines, will not use an NDA, even if a client insists (up from 6% in 2024)

Engineering



■ Yes as a standard procedure
■ Yes if the client insists
■ No

Business



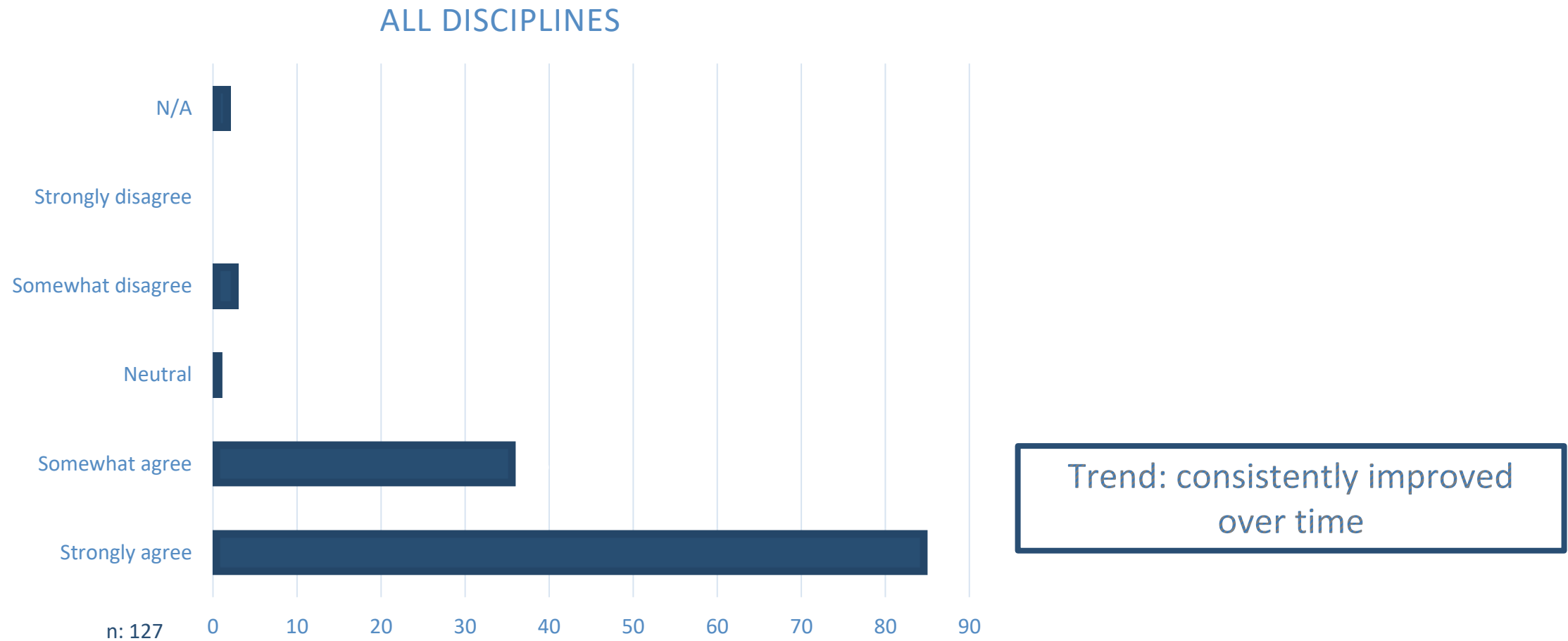
■ Yes as a standard procedure
■ Yes if the client insists
■ No

Multi-college



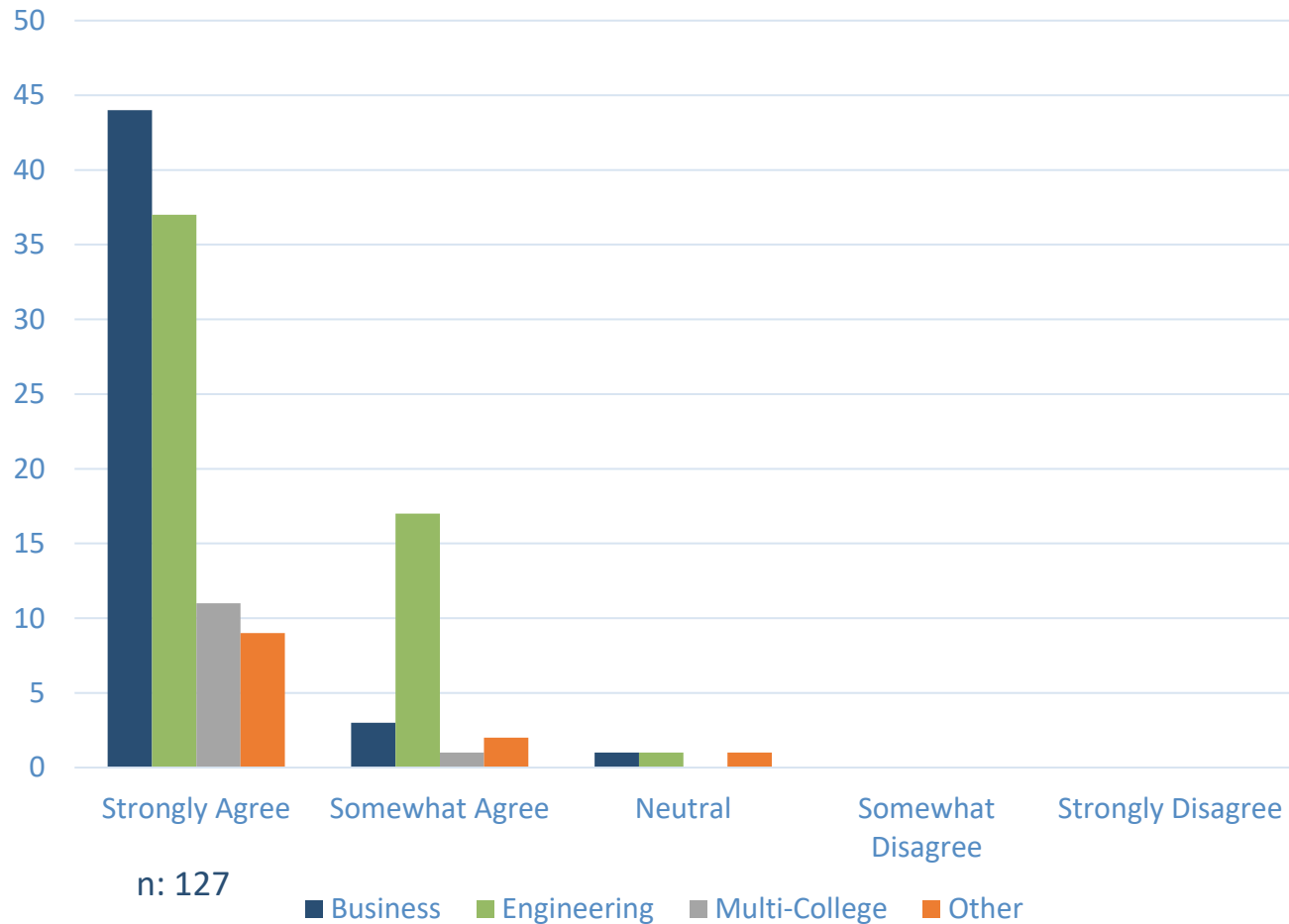
■ Yes as a standard procedure
■ Yes if the client insists
■ No

You Feel Your Program Sets Clear Expectations with Project Sponsors



Project-based Learning and Career Prep

You Believe Industry Projects in the Classroom are
Critical to a Student's Career Preparation.



How Strongly Do You Feel Industry Projects Help
with their First Job?

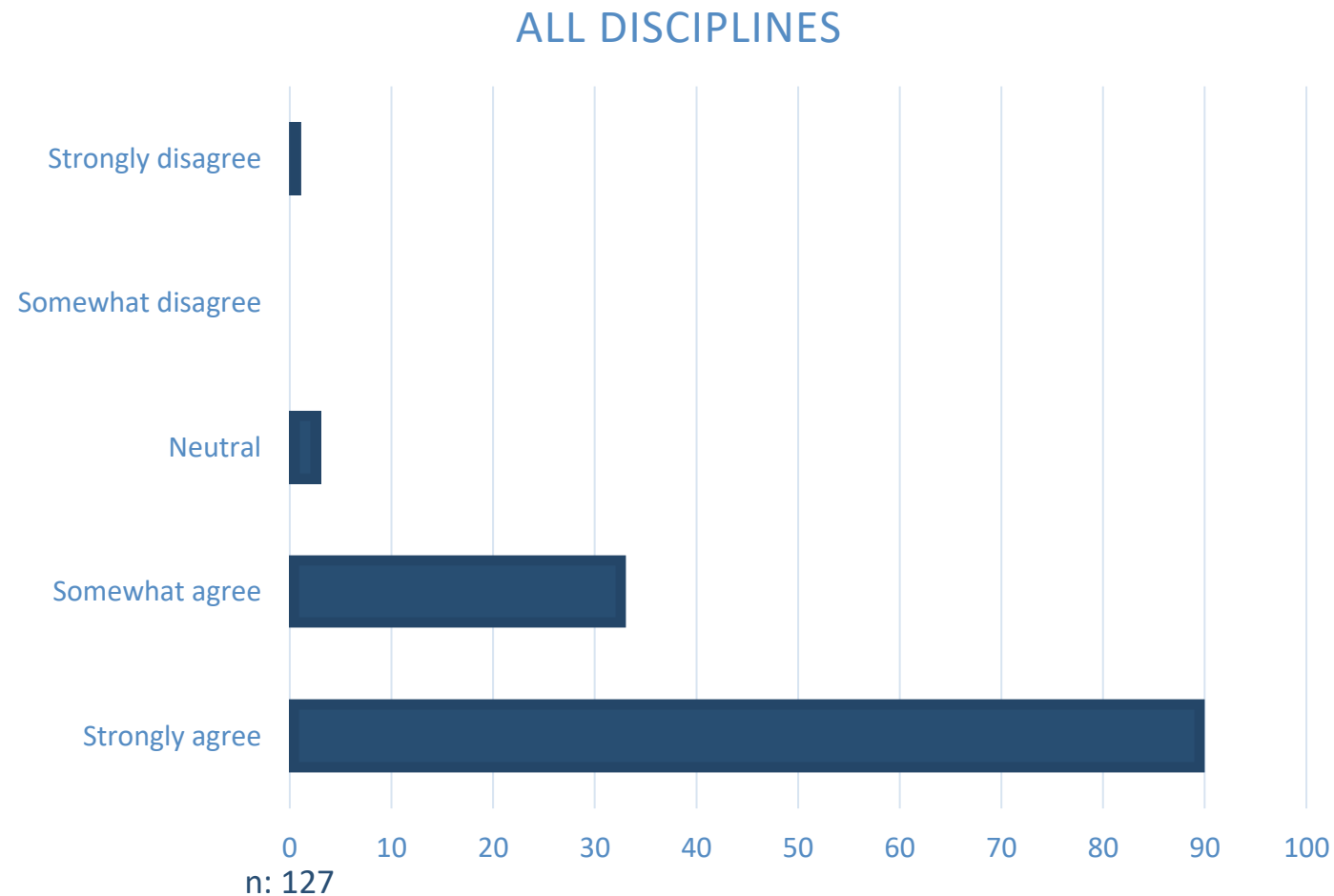
2.69/3 Weighted Average



First Recorded Drop

n: 127

Share Your Confidence Level that Project-based Experiential Learning is Important for Career Readiness Alongside Adoption of AI in Our Economy

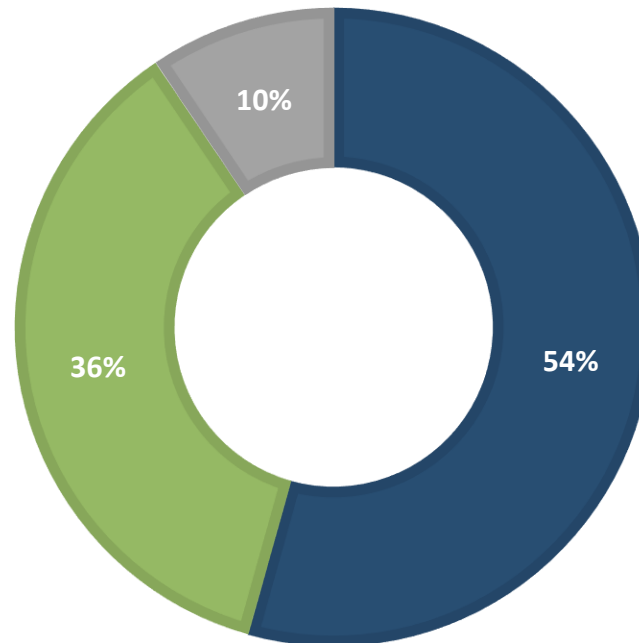


Live project-based learning is viewed as a direct answer to the changing workforce needs

Does Your Program Measure Learning Outcomes?

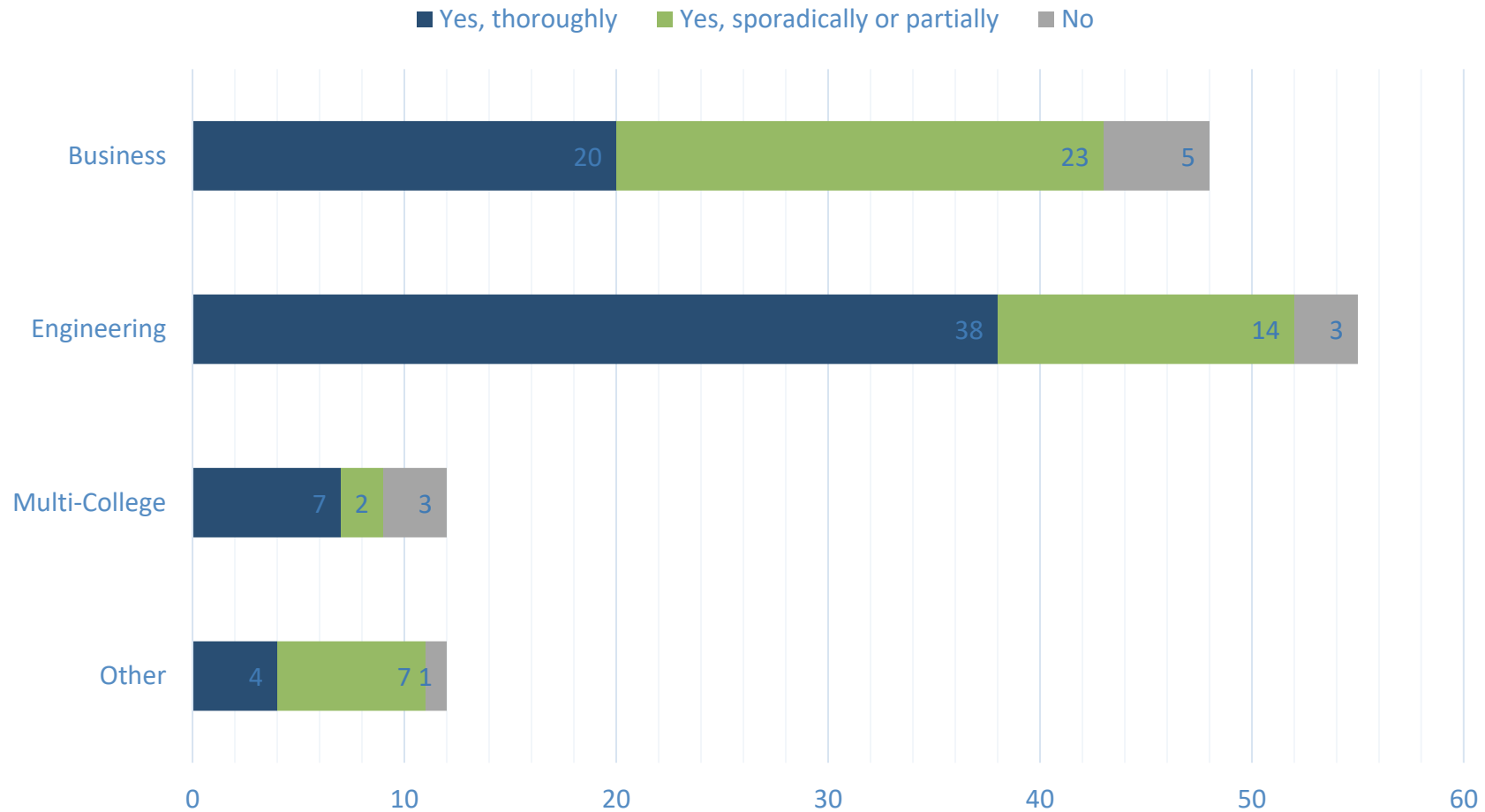
ALL DISCIPLINES

■ Yes, thoroughly ■ Yes, sporadically or partially ■ No



n: 127

Does Your Program Measure Learning Outcomes? By Discipline

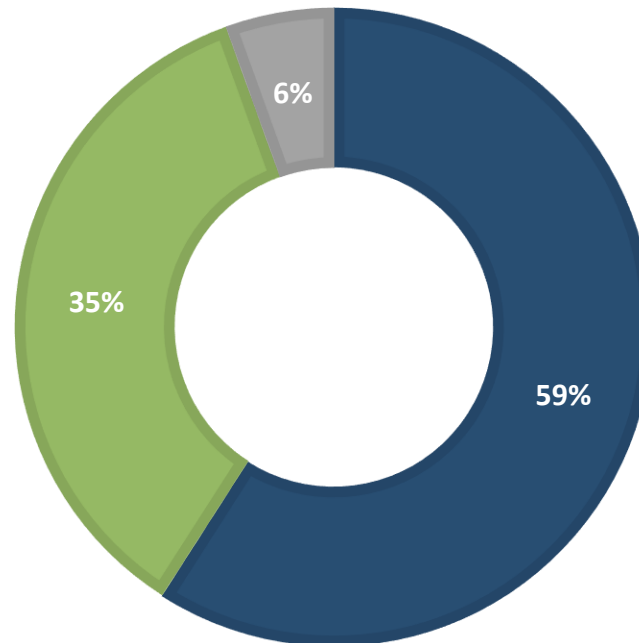


n: 127

Does Your Program Maintain Records of Past Projects, Clients and Student Participation?

ALL DISCIPLINES

■ Yes, thoroughly ■ Yes, sporadically or partially ■ No



n: 127

Does Your Program Maintain Records of Past Projects, Clients and Student Participation? By Discipline

