

Finding Comunidad:

Uplifting our voices to unpack “servingness” at Sacramento State

Welcome

The exhibit features photos and narratives from 16 Latine/x students regarding our perceptions of what it means to attend a Hispanic Serving Institution and how the institution can better support our success. It also features analyses from a survey of undergraduate Latine/x students we've conducted.

**Please walk through this exhibit of our
research project findings!**

What is this project about?

This project explores Latine/x student perceptions of “servingness” at Sacramento State, a Hispanic Serving Institution, and aims to interrogate how university policies, programs and practices support Latine/x student success.

The project is driven by the following research questions:

- How do Latine/x we, as students. perceive Sacramento State, our Hispanic Serving Institution, as serving us?
- How do we, as Latine/x students, define student success?
- How can institutional elements and the campus environment better serve Latine/x students?

What is a Hispanic Serving Institution?

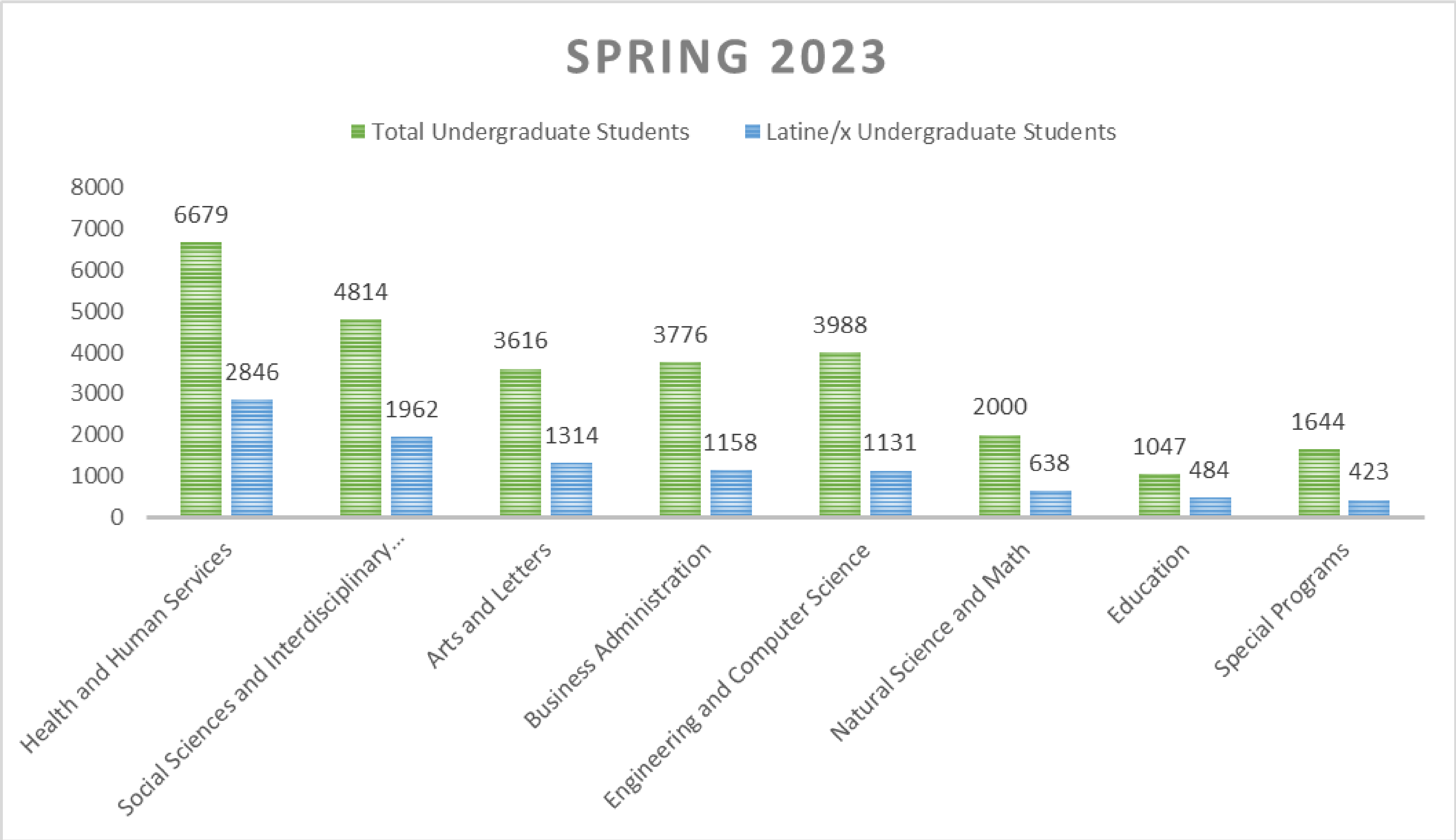
- Designation by the federal government for accredited, degree-granting, nonprofit institutions that enroll at least 25% or more full-time equivalent undergraduate Latinx students
- Opens the door for funding opportunities by the federal government to support the success of Latinx students (Title V, HSI funding)
- Does not provide a guide to institutions on strategies or infrastructures used to support Latinx students.

Our Context: Sac State

Sac State enrolled approximately 27,564 undergraduate students in spring 2023.

Sacramento State was designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution in 2015 and enrolled approximately 9,956 or 36% Latine/x undergraduate students in spring 2023.

Sac State is one of the 23 campuses in the California State University system; 21 of the 23 CSU campuses are HSIs. The CSU system has awarded 63% of the total number of bachelor’s degrees earned by Latine/x students in California



Data Source: Enrollment Dashboard, Institutional Dashboard, Spring 2023

Who are we?

We are a research team composed of Latine/x faculty, a graduate student and undergraduate student co-researchers. We, the student co-researchers, are from various departments on campus; the majority of us are 1st generation and transfer students.

Project Leads



Dr. Amber Gonzalez



Dr. Kevin Ferreira van Leer



Maria G. Razo

Undergraduate student co-researchers

We are from 2 cohorts:



Mariposas con Voces (9)



Songs of the Hummingbird (6)



Alyssa Ballardo



Isboset Ivan Bautista



Valeria Cortez Delgado




Jennifer Beas



Jaqueline Hernandez



Kimberly Herrera



Elias Ibarra



Mary Jiménez



Yeni Meza



Carolina Ramirez Santos



Kenia Ruiz Beaven



Vanessa Sanchez-Ponce



Samantha Secundino



Celene Talavera



Jacky Villalobos

Our Process

Phase 1: Photovoice

Each cohort met every Friday for 3 hours over the course of 1 semester (Spring 2022 or Fall 2022). We began the process by learning about photovoice, ethics and team-building.

Each cohort utilized a **photovoice research methodology**. Each cohort conducted between 7-8 rounds of photovoice. In each round we took photographs in response to specific prompts. For example, we started with the prompt “How does Sac State, a Hispanic Serving Institution, support your success?” We came together, shared our photographs and engaged in critical discussions about the photographs as they related to our project aims. We then determined the next session’s prompt (e.g. What does success look like, When our imposter syndrome is high, why is that happening?).

The Mariposas con Voces cohort generated 161 photos across 8 sessions. The Songs of the Hummingbird 54 photos across 7 sessions.

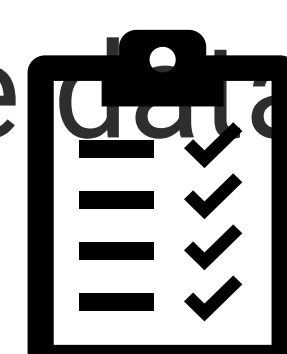
After the 7-8 sessions, we reflected on all the photos and notes from previous sessions to identify cross-cutting themes. We engaged in pile-sorting where we split into smaller groups to sort the photos into thematic piles. Each group presented their thematic groups and we collectively engaged in identifying a final set of themes where we then selected representative photos and wrote narratives describing that theme.

The final themes from each cohort can be found in the exhibit. Each theme poster includes cohort’s logo (as seen on the “who are we” poster) at a bottom corner to identify the cohort to which theme corresponds.

Phase 2: Survey

Drawing from the themes from each cohort, we collectively developed a survey which aims to see how our themes generalize to Latinx undergraduate students at Sac State. This survey expands upon our photovoice themes to provide a deeper look into the role that Sac State can play in serving Latine/x students.

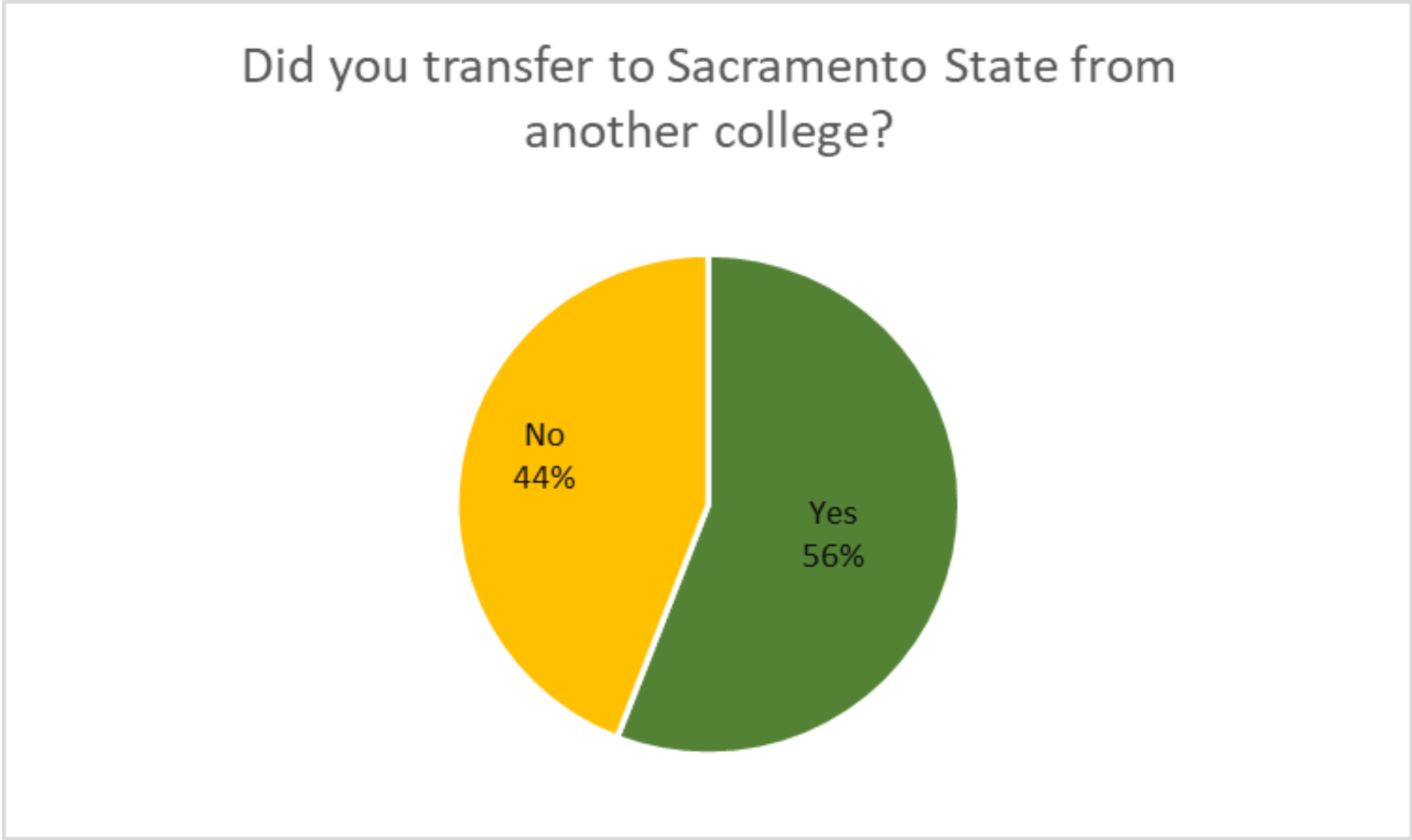
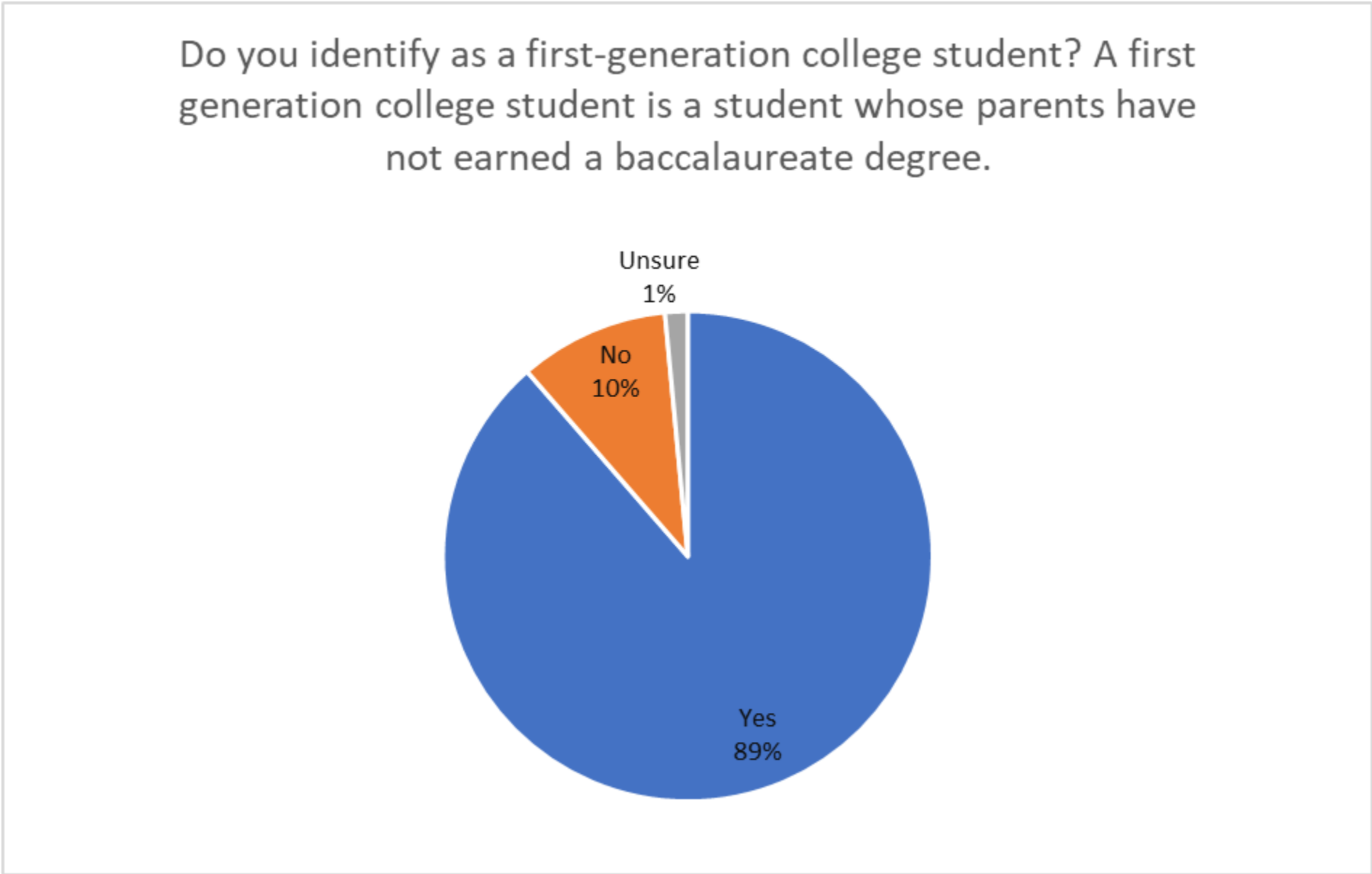
Results from our survey are included throughout the exhibit. Survey results include this small icon next to the data:



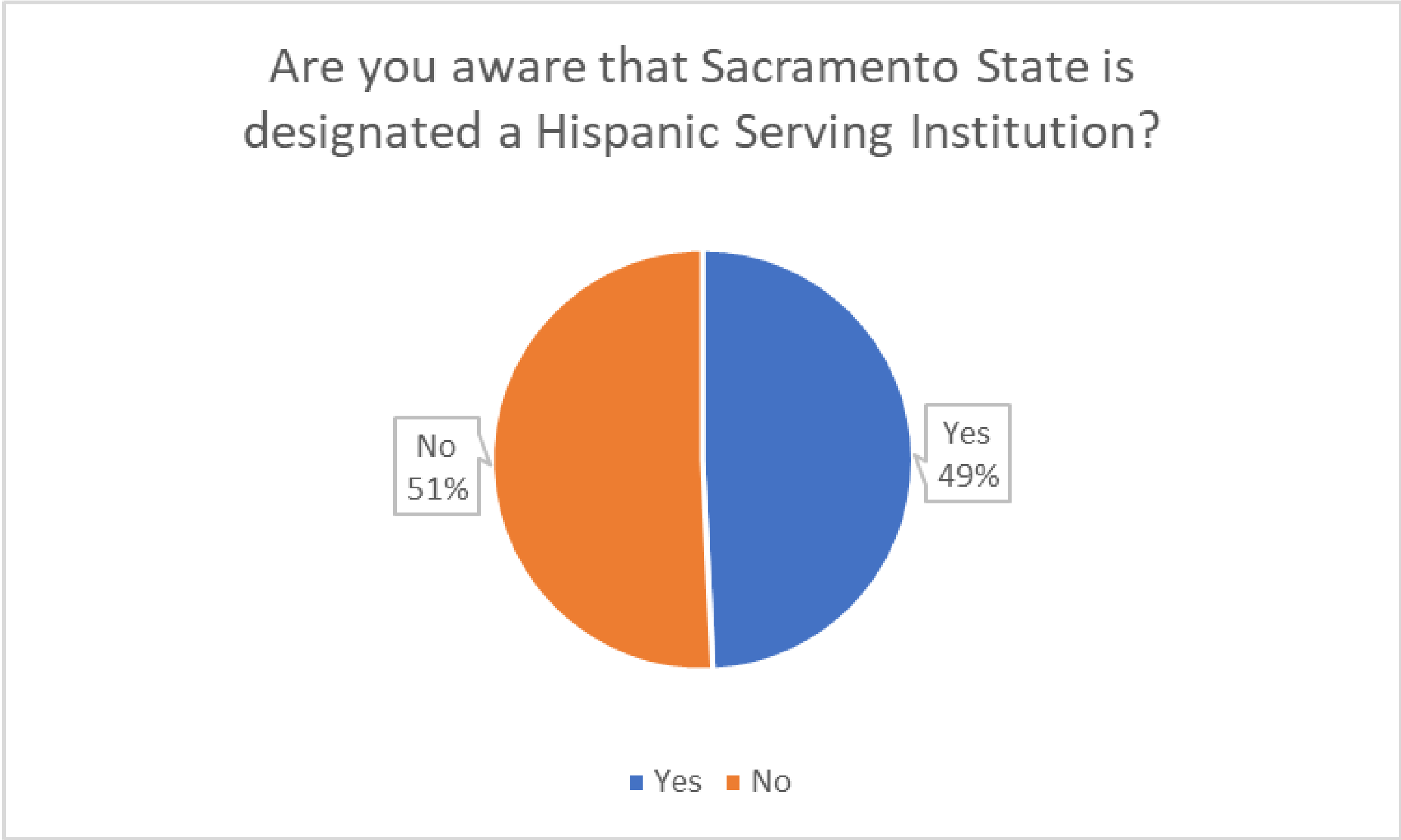
Findings from our survey

Who took our survey:

A total of **383 Latine/x undergraduate students** have completed our survey that examines how undergraduate students who identify as Latine/x perceive Sacramento State, their HSI, as serving them and how this context contributes to their critical holistic student success outcomes.

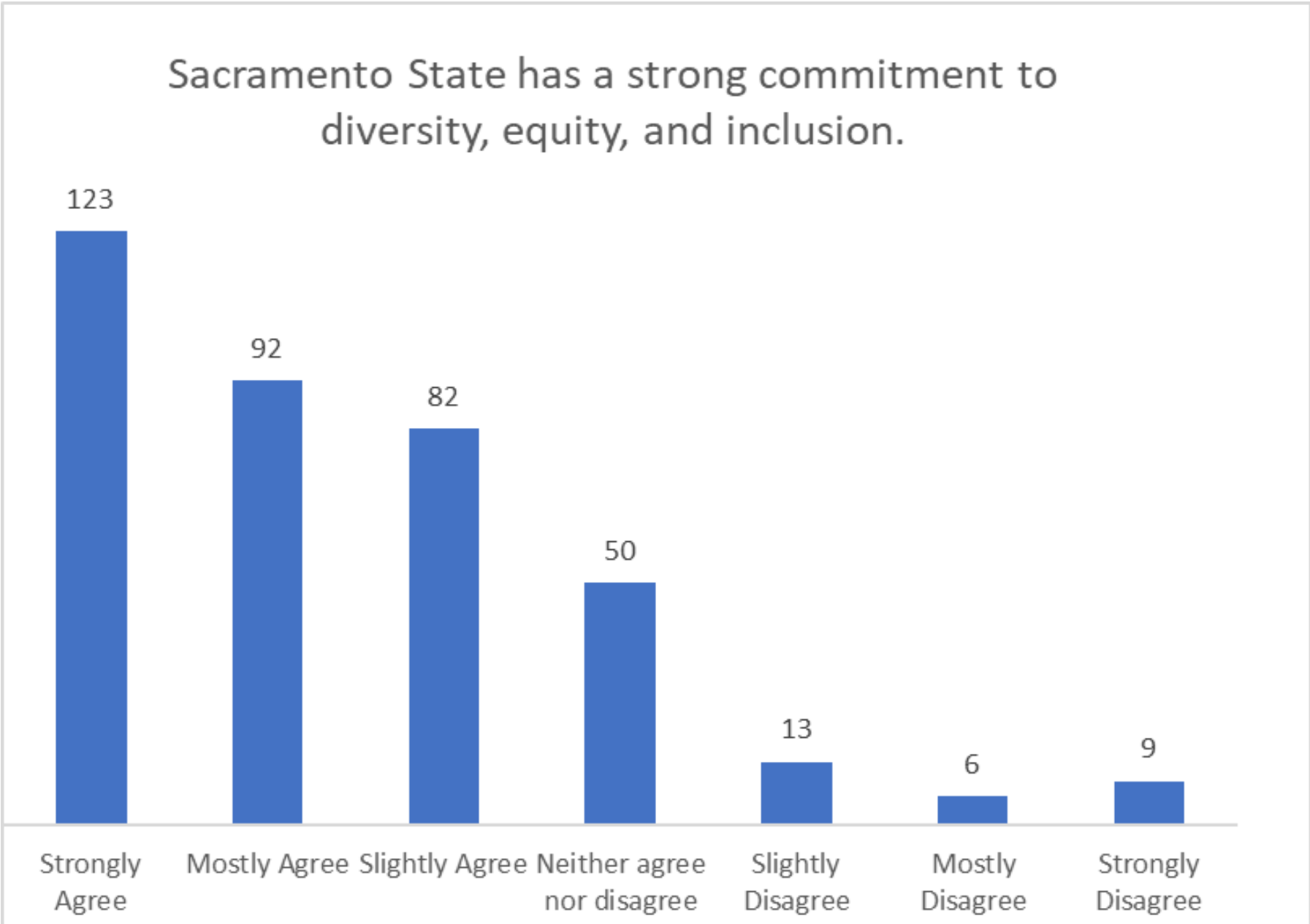


Findings:

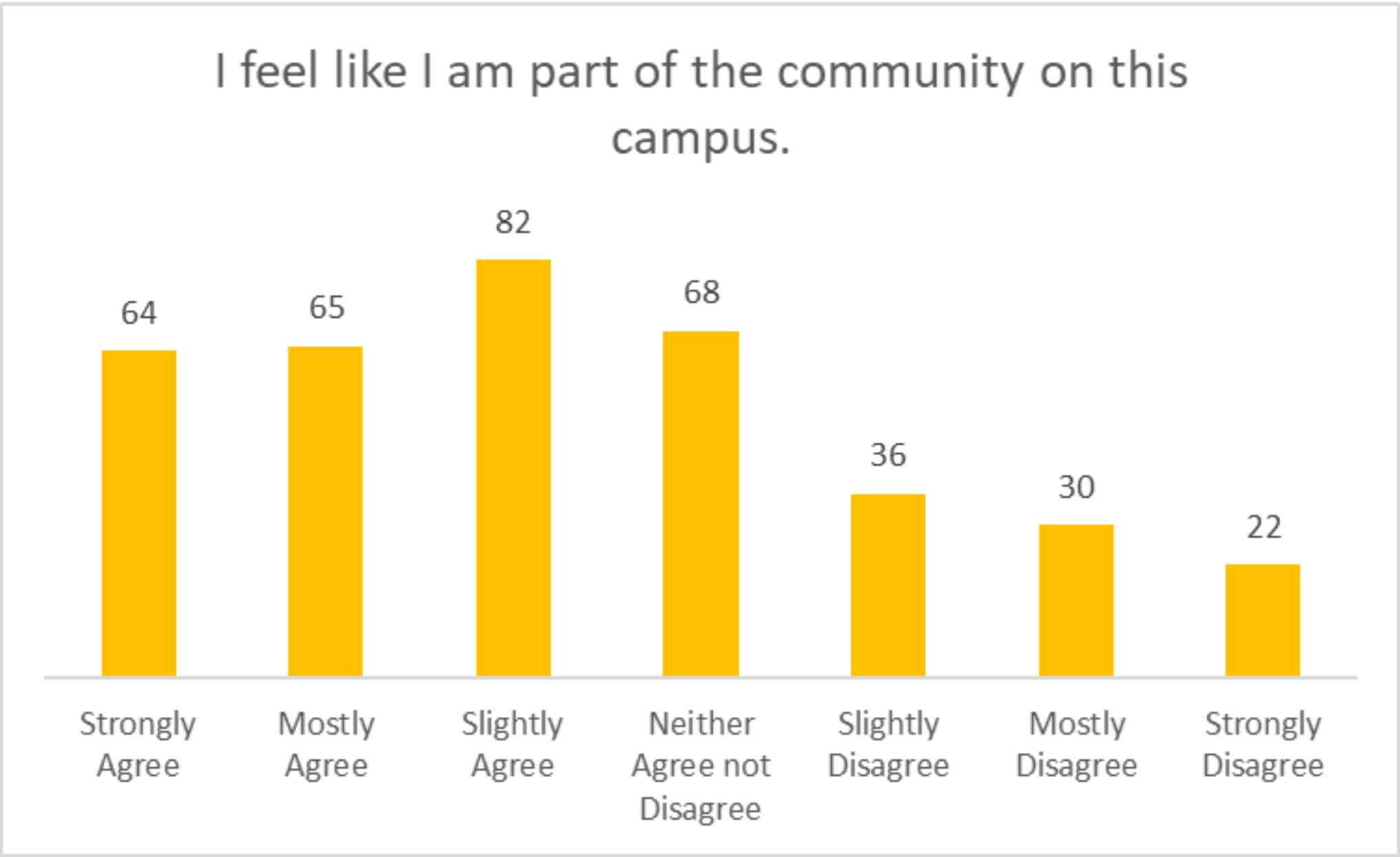


Approximately half of Latine/x student respondents (49.2%; n = 188) are aware that Sacramento State is designated a Hispanic Serving Institution.

Student respondents were asked to rate their agreement from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (7) to the phrases found above each chart regarding their college experiences.



On average, student respondents feel that Sacramento State has a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.43$).



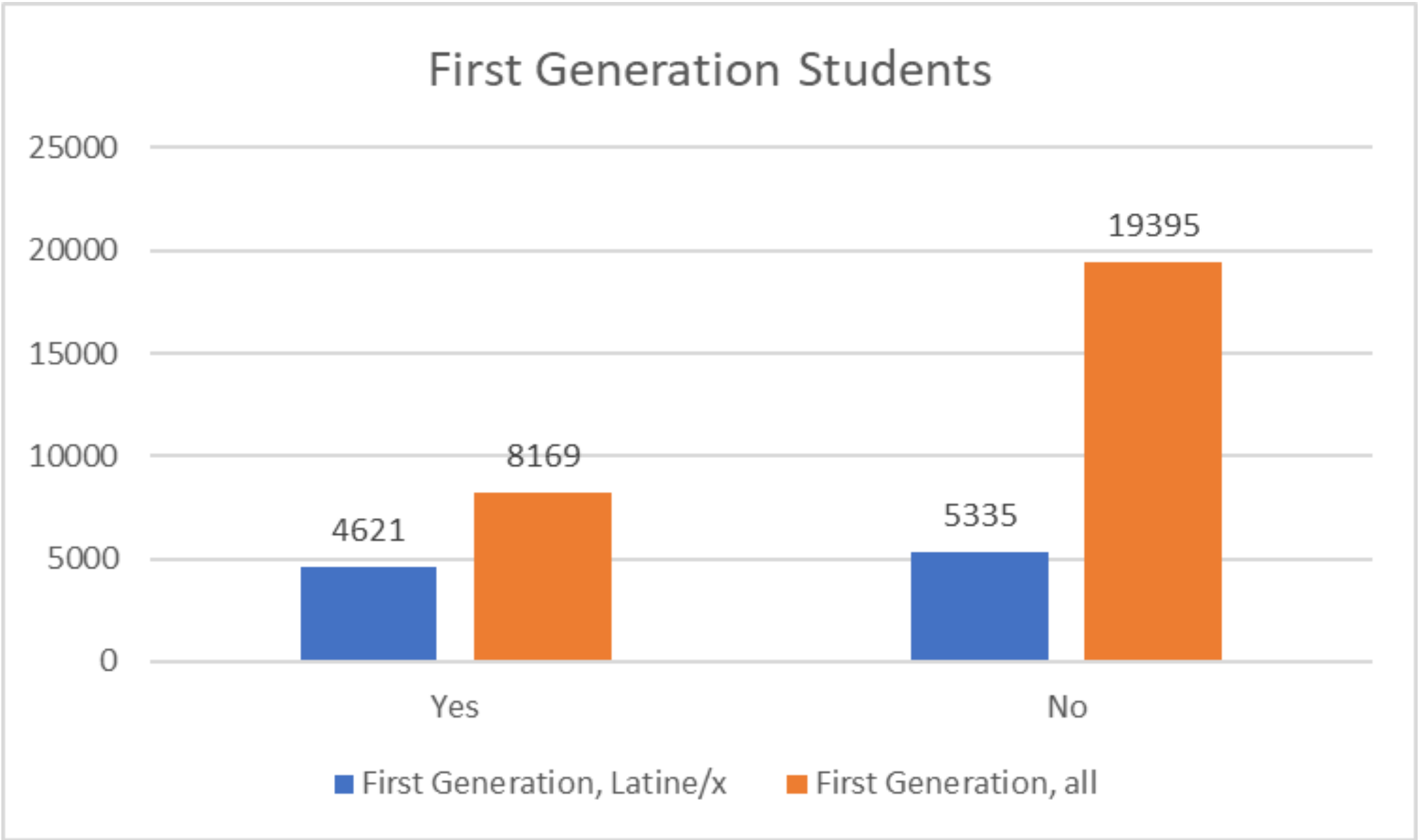
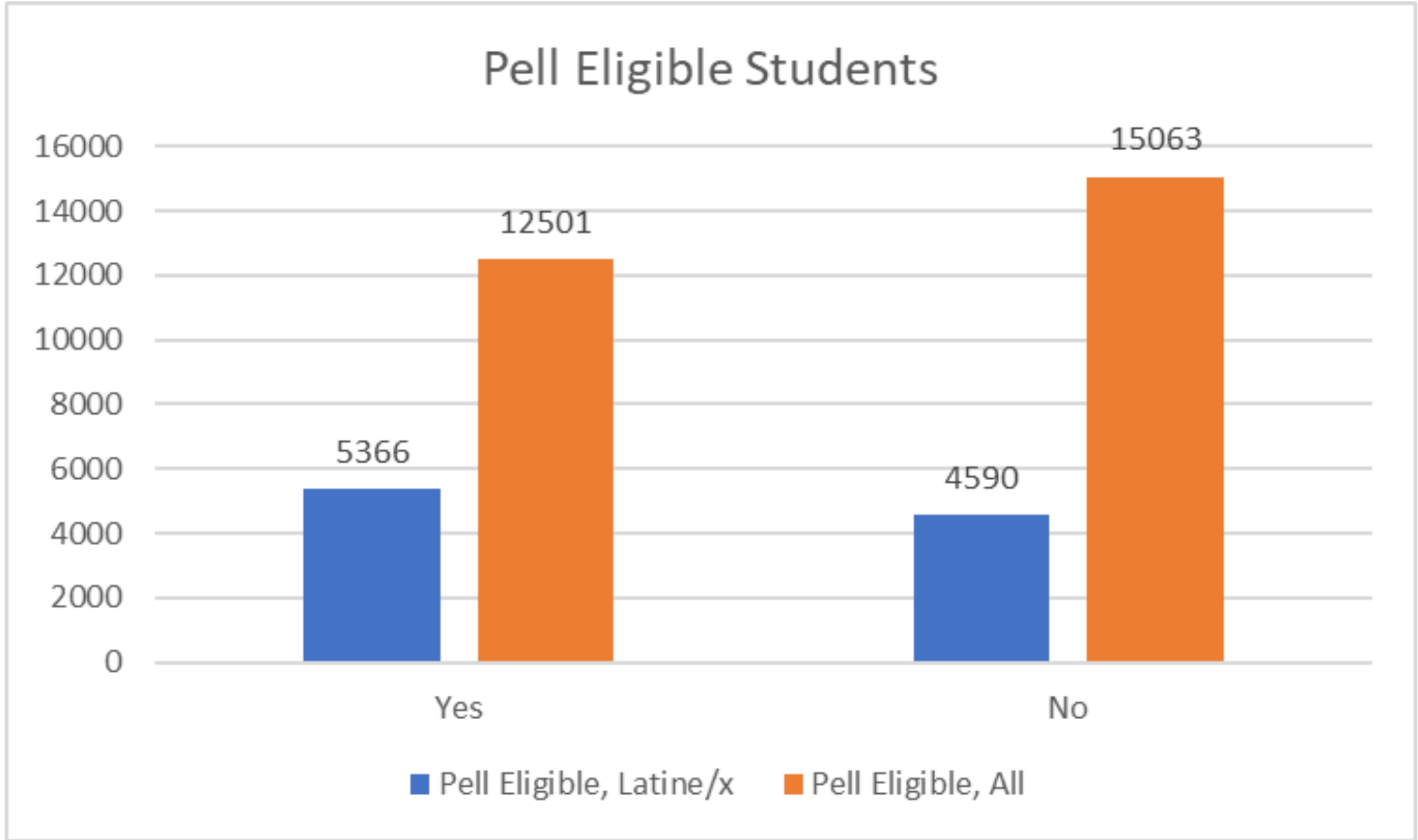
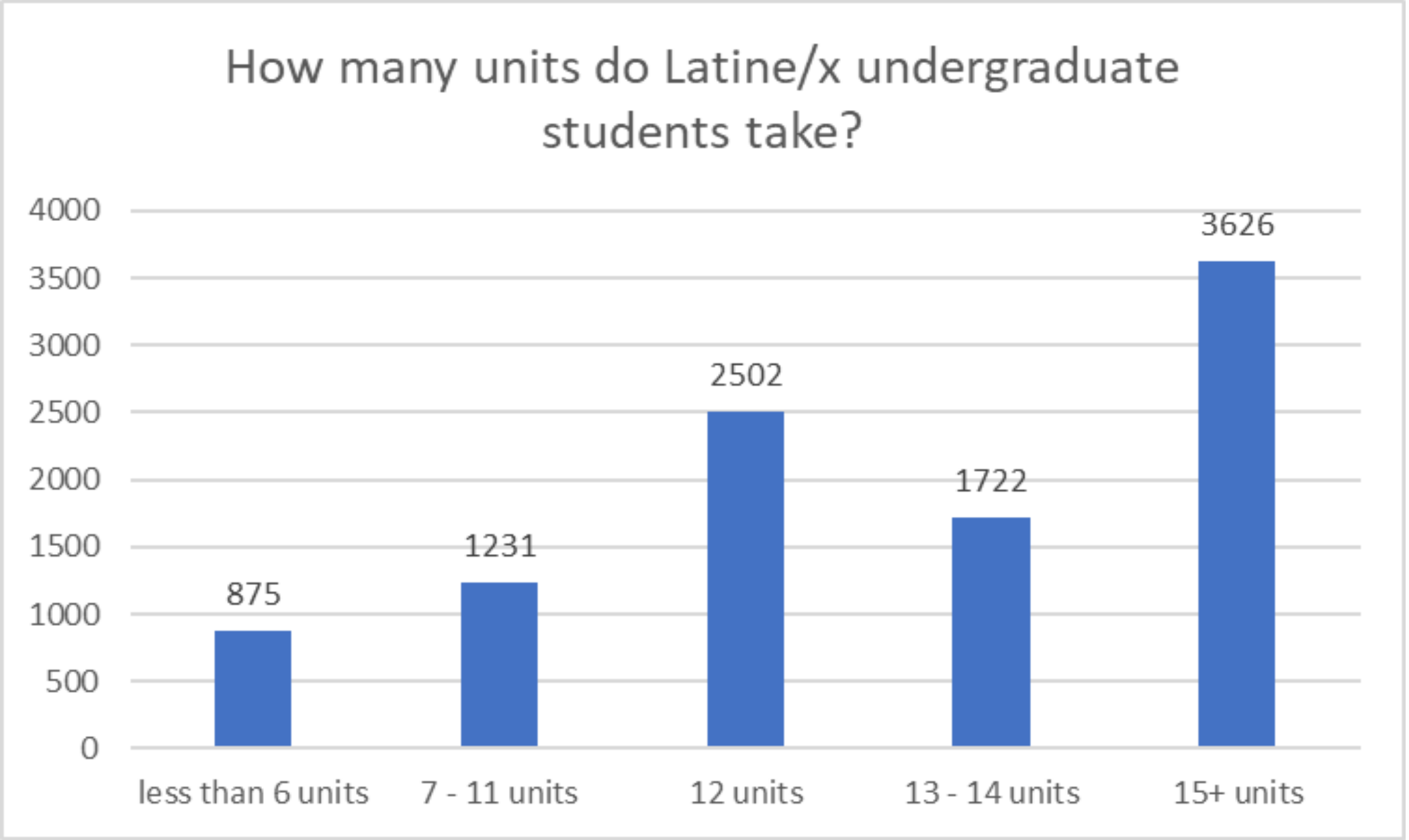
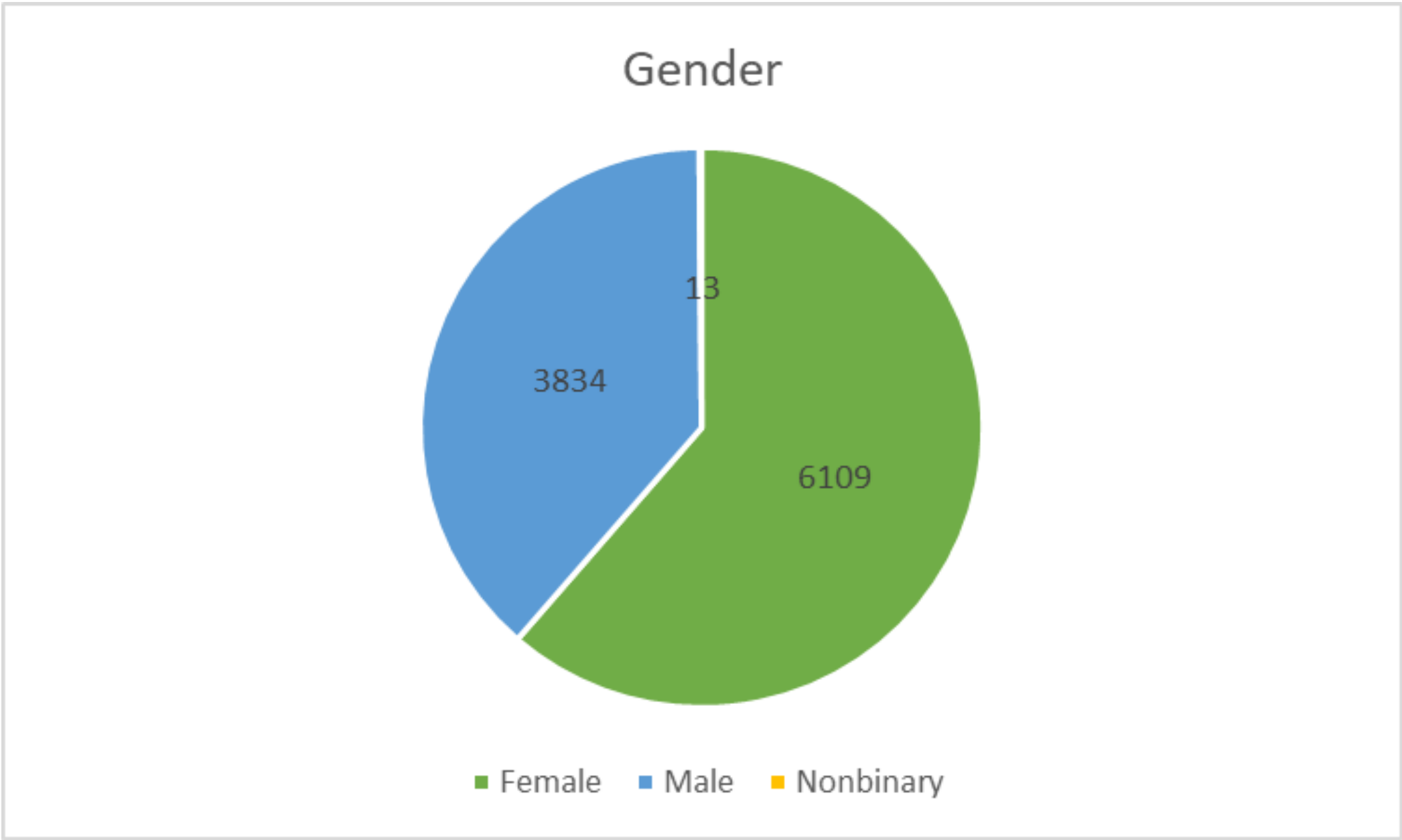
On average, student respondents feel that they are part of the community on this campus ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.74$).



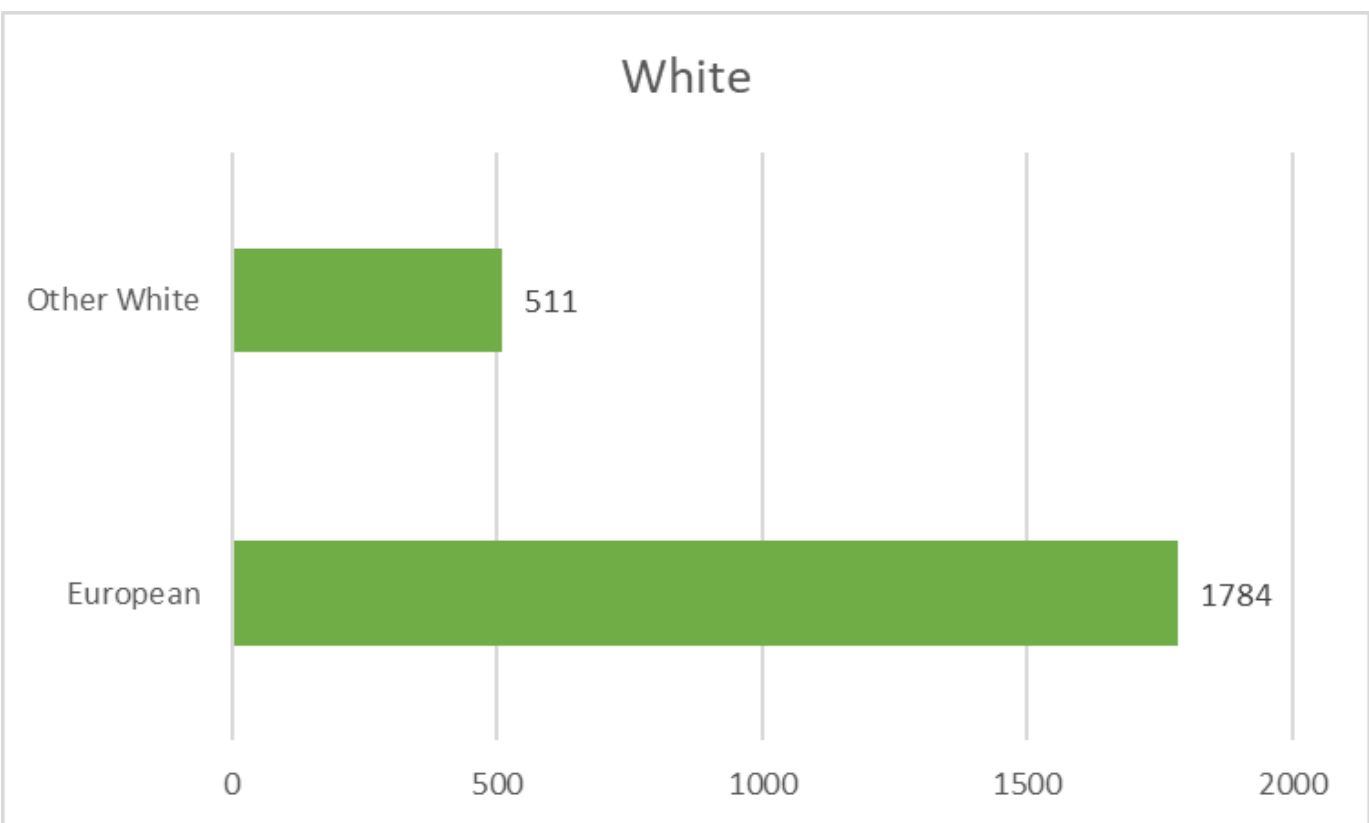
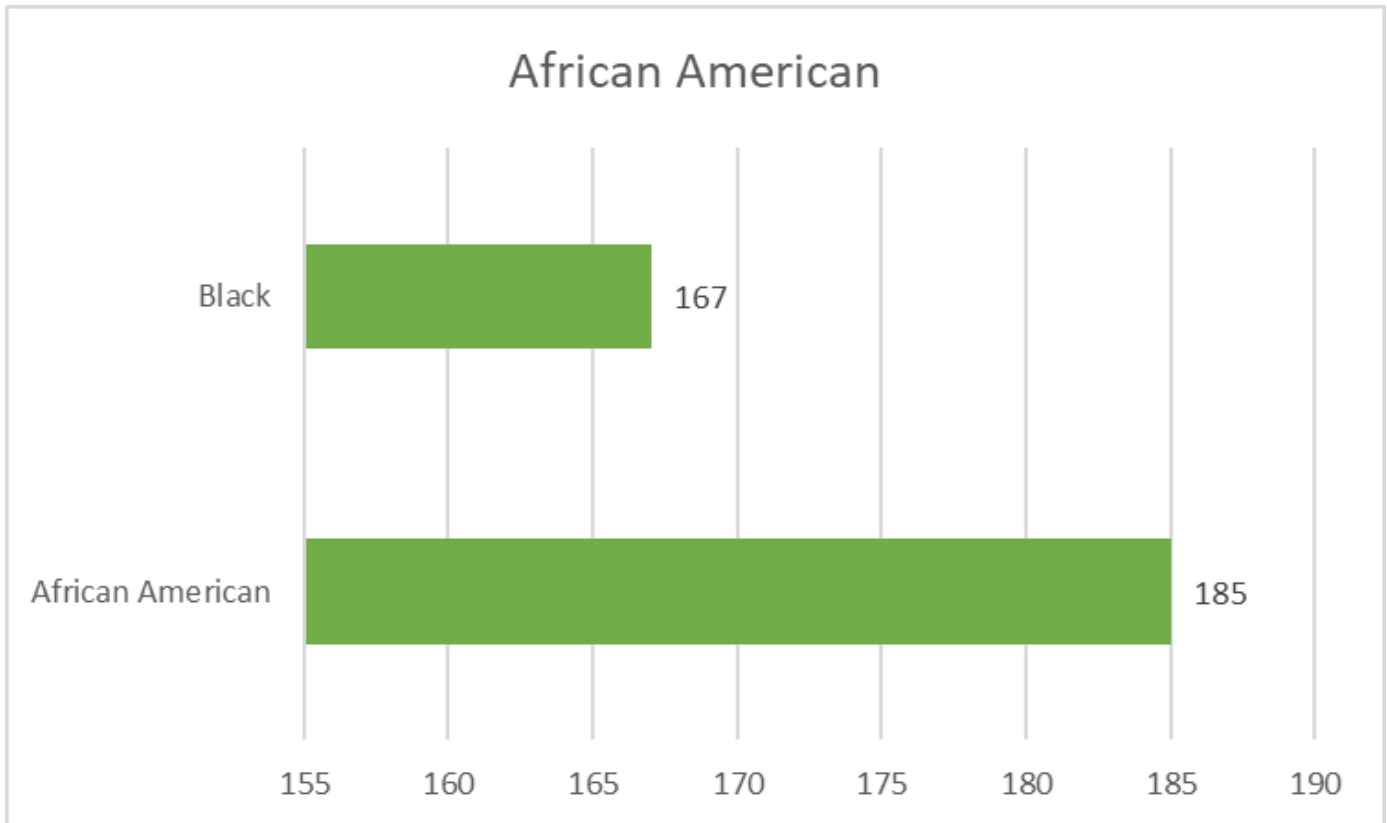
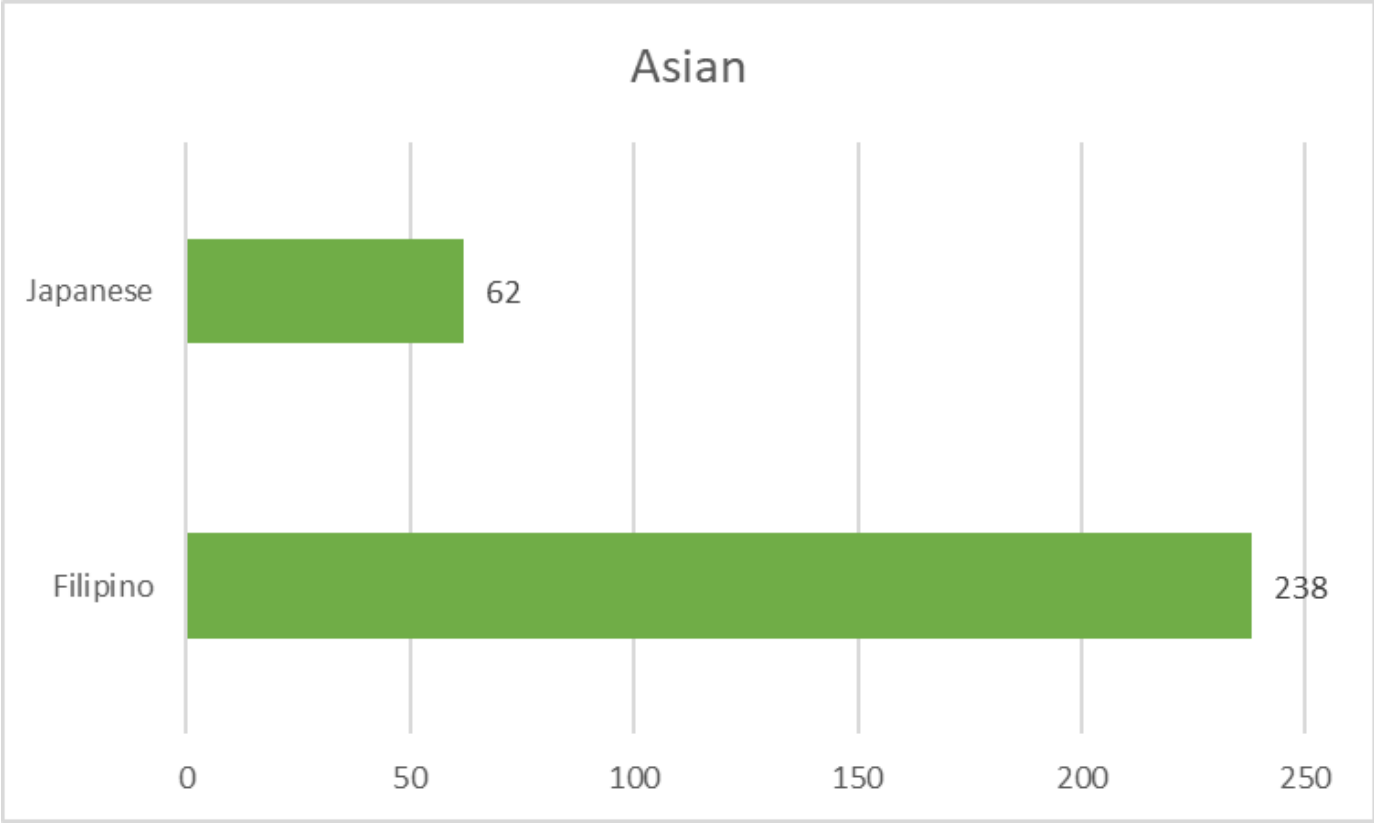
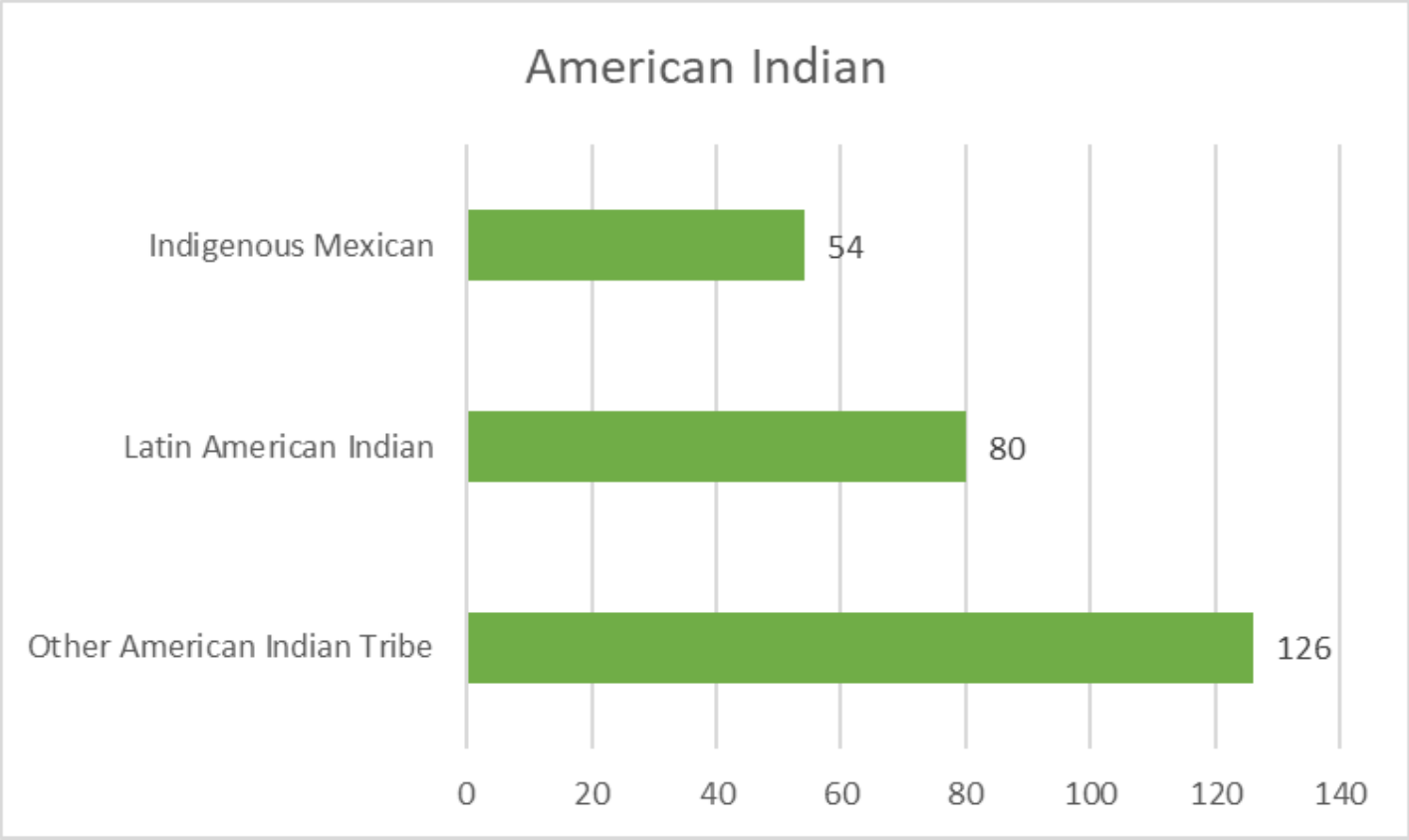
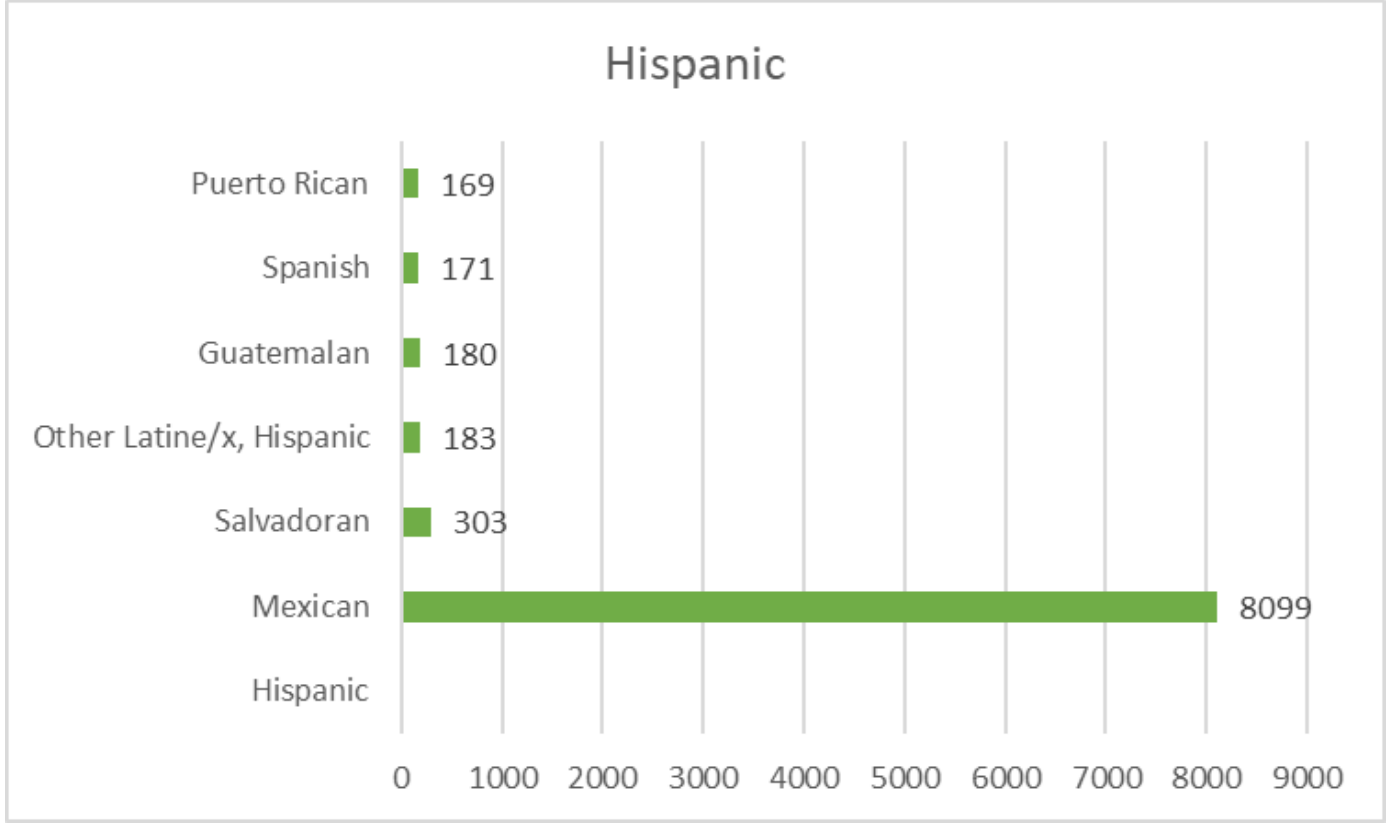
Who are Sacramento State Latine/x Undergraduate Students?

Spring 2023, Institutional Enrollment Dashboards

9,956 Latine/x Undergraduate Students

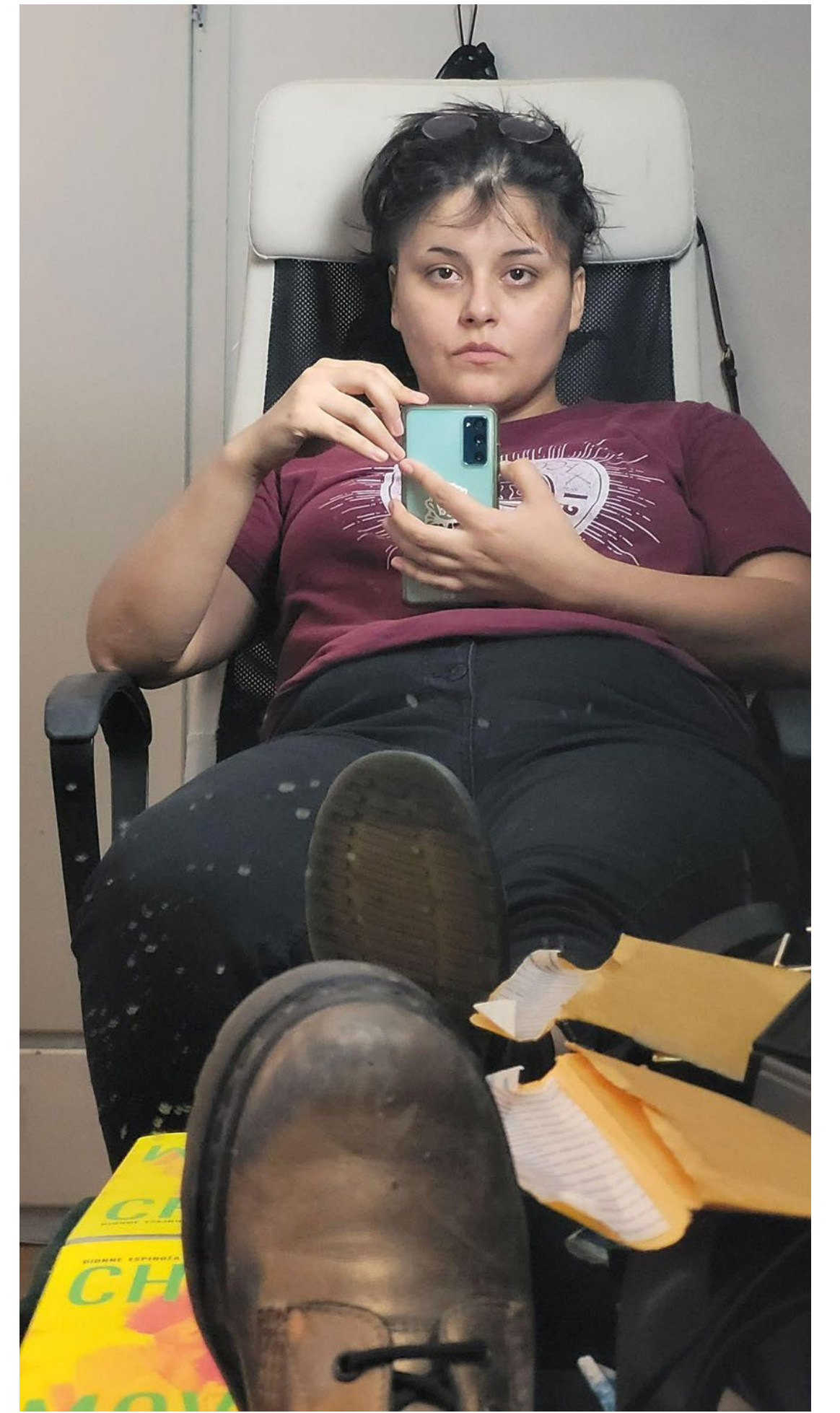
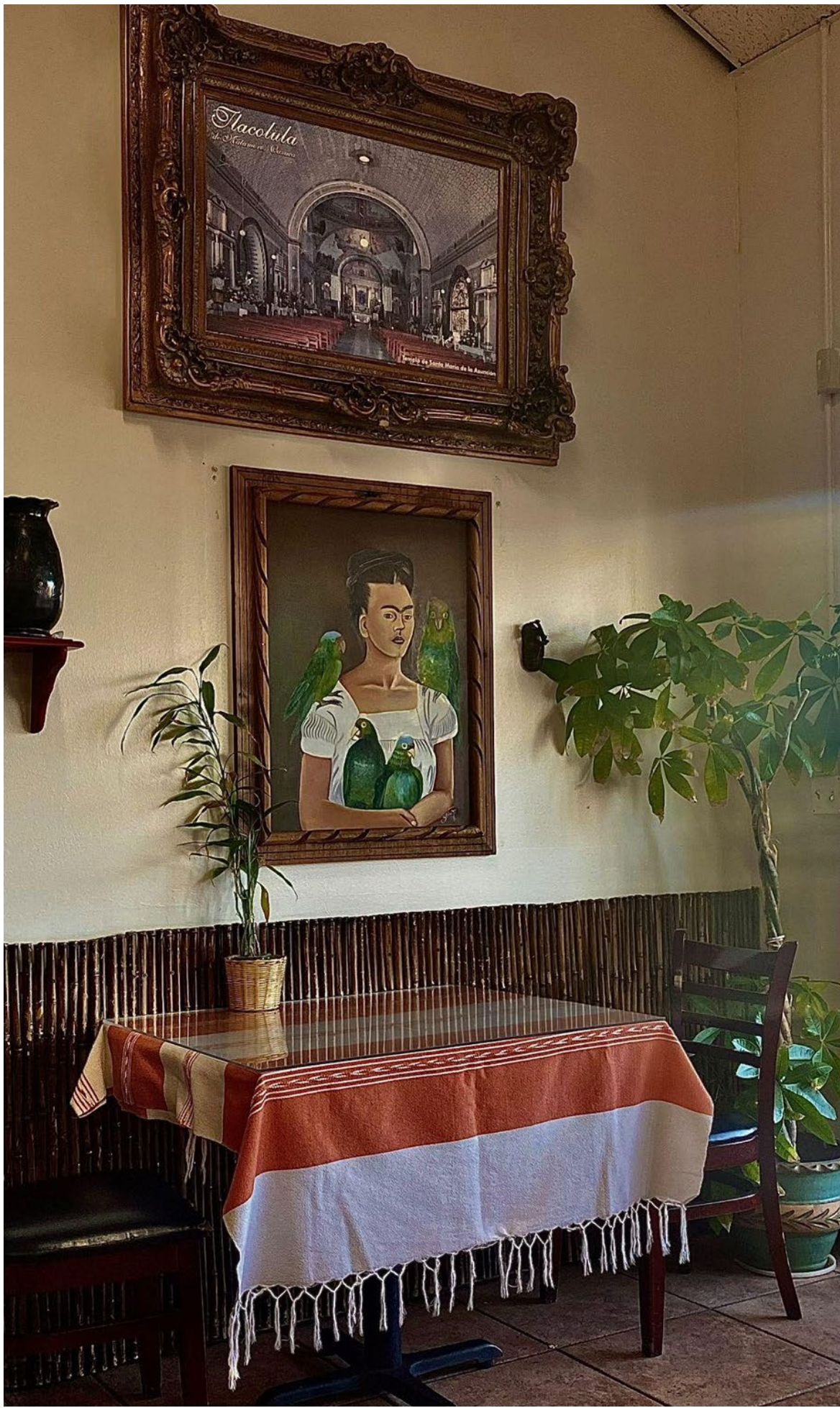


What specific race(s) are Sacramento State Latine/x students?



Data is only presented for an identified race of 1% or more.

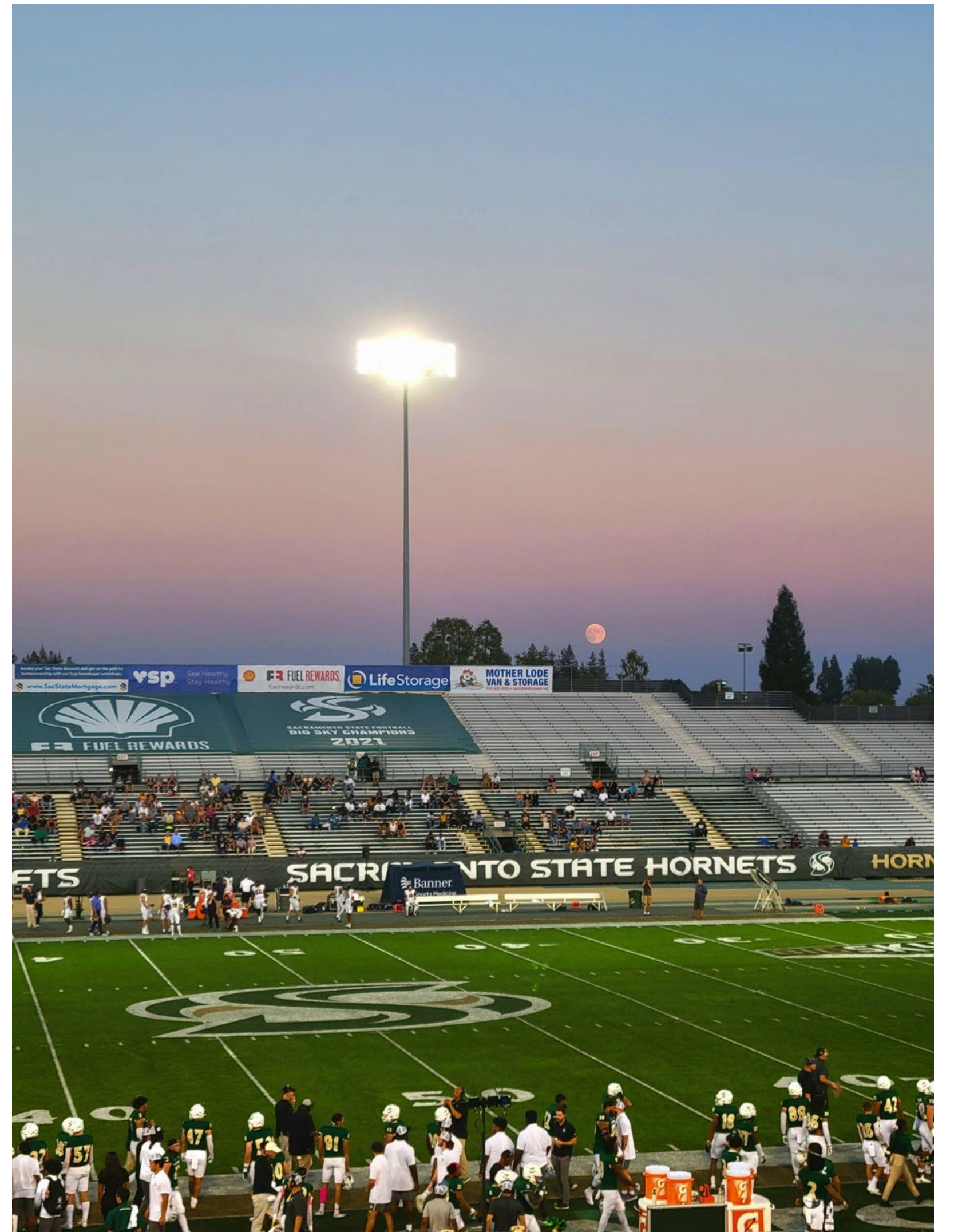
We are more than just students



Yes, we are students but we have other identities and roles that we carry and bring with us. Such as being a mother, athlete, babysitter, family translator. We juggle family, school, and work, among other things. The institution's expectations of what a student is does not match our realities! We take care of ourselves and have many responsibilities. We are individuals who have other things going on outside of school that make us who we are.



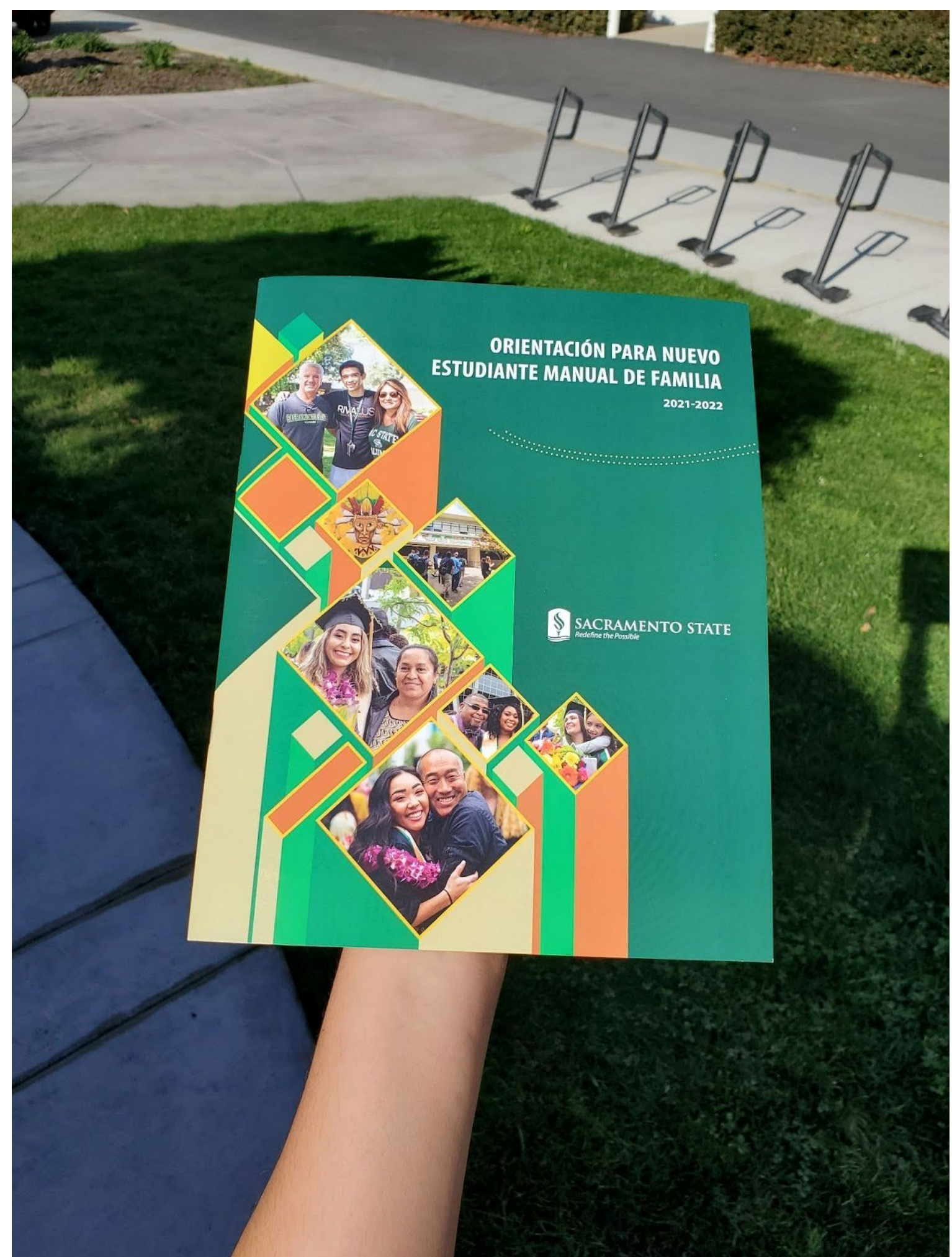
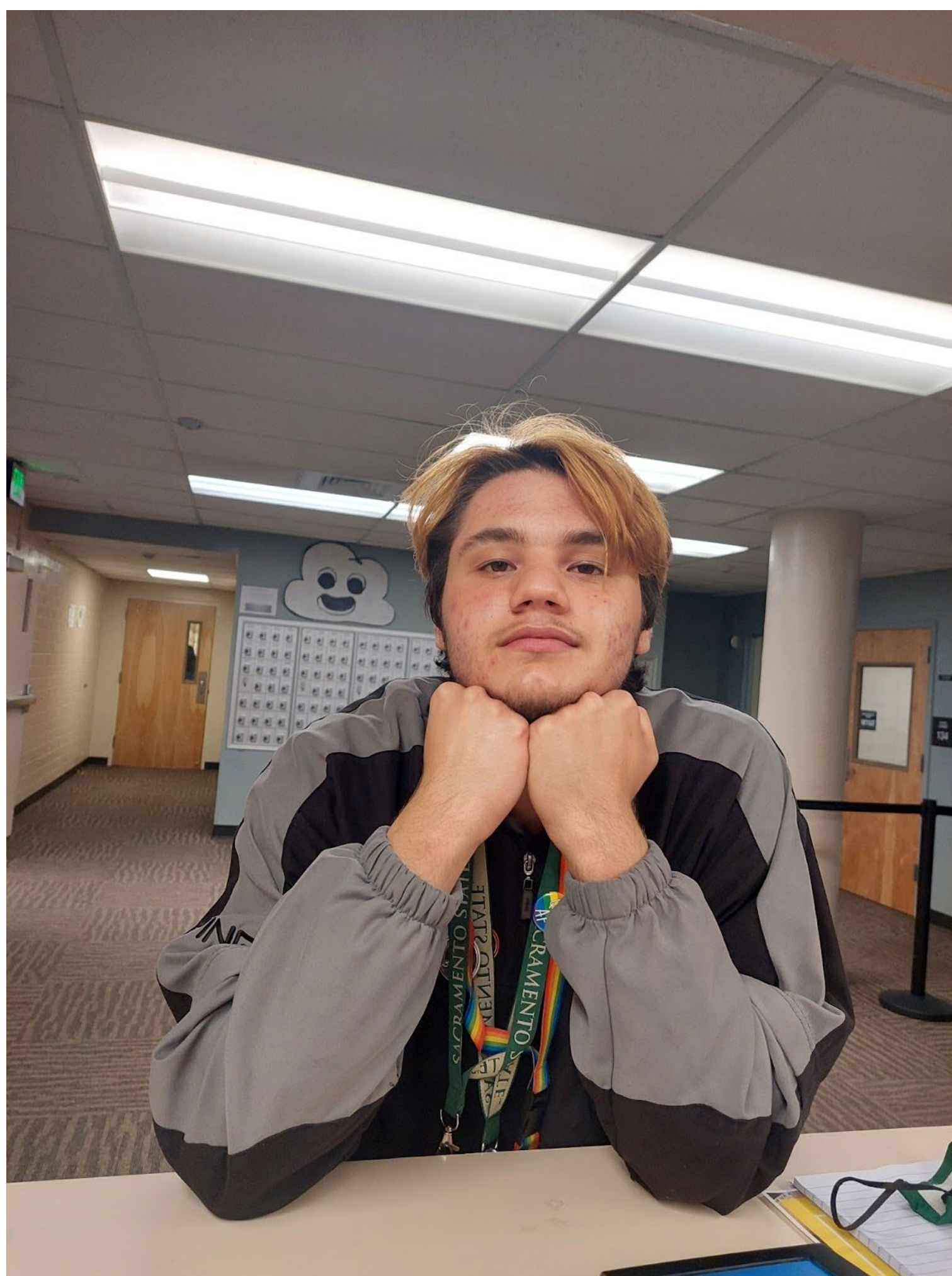
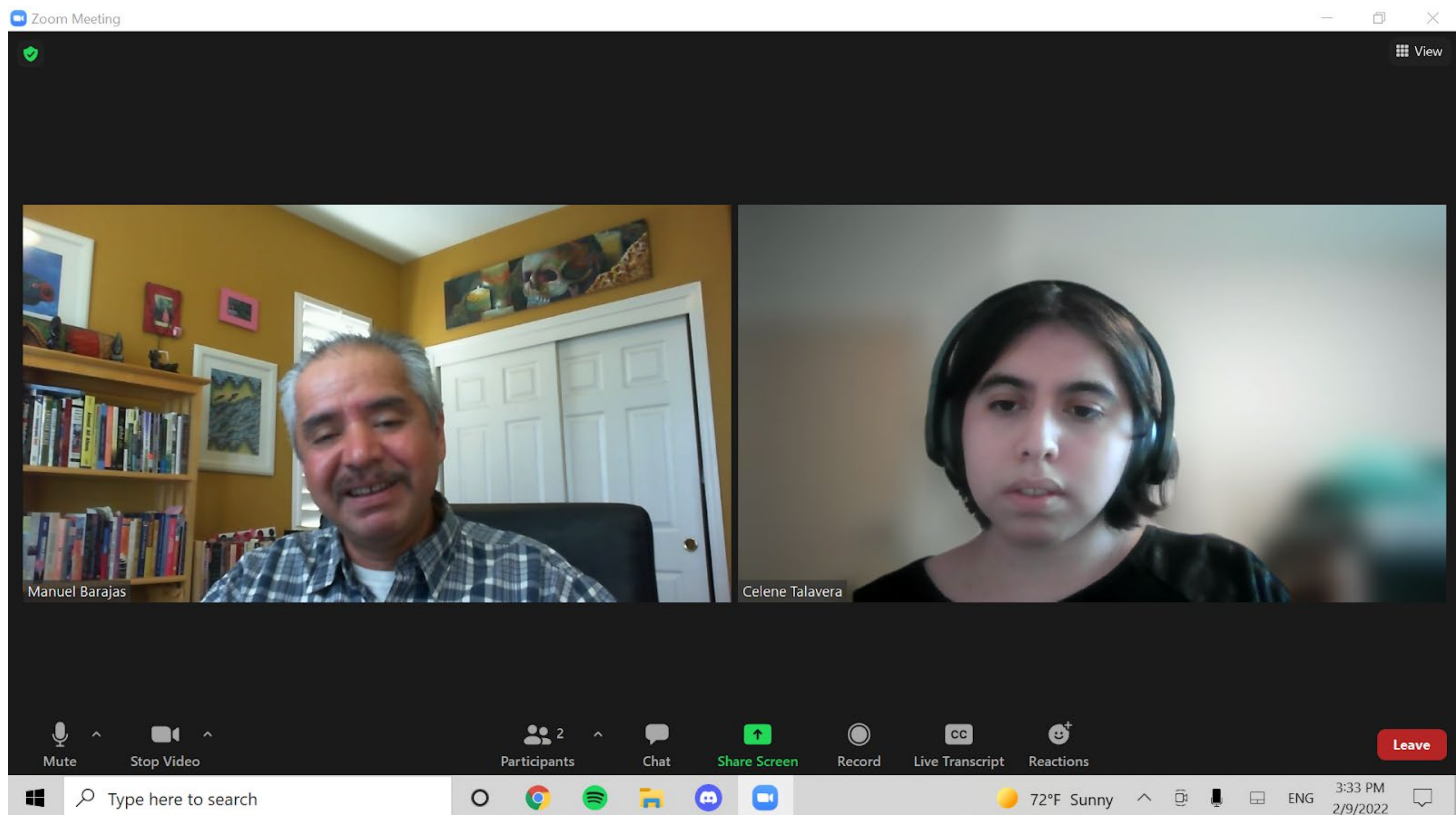
Developing ourselves outside of academics



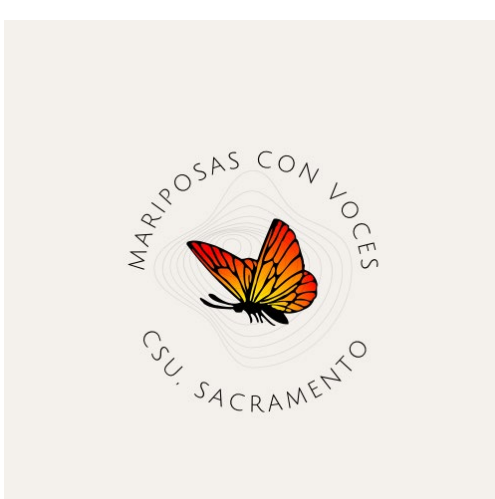
The college experience is a unique journey for every individual. It's not just about academics, but also about discovering and exploring different aspects of ourselves. As we navigate through new experiences, we gain a deeper understanding of who we are and what we want. We make connections with others, learn about different cultures and perspectives, and grow as individuals. Our communities of friends, roommates and family are important to us and keep us sane through our academic journey. The college experience is a time of self-discovery and personal growth, where we learn to embrace our individuality and challenge ourselves to be the best version of ourselves.



Community & Lack of Community

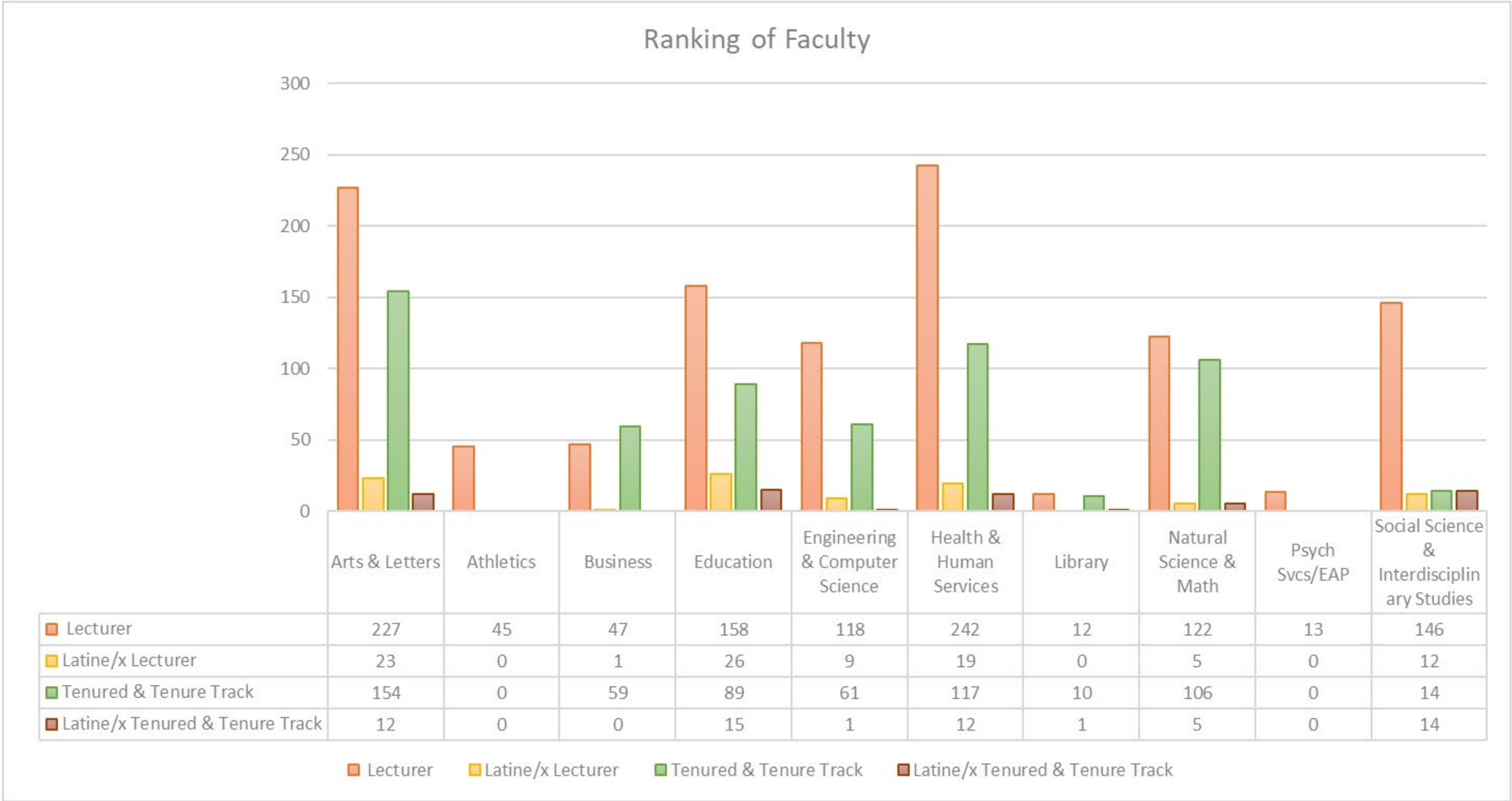
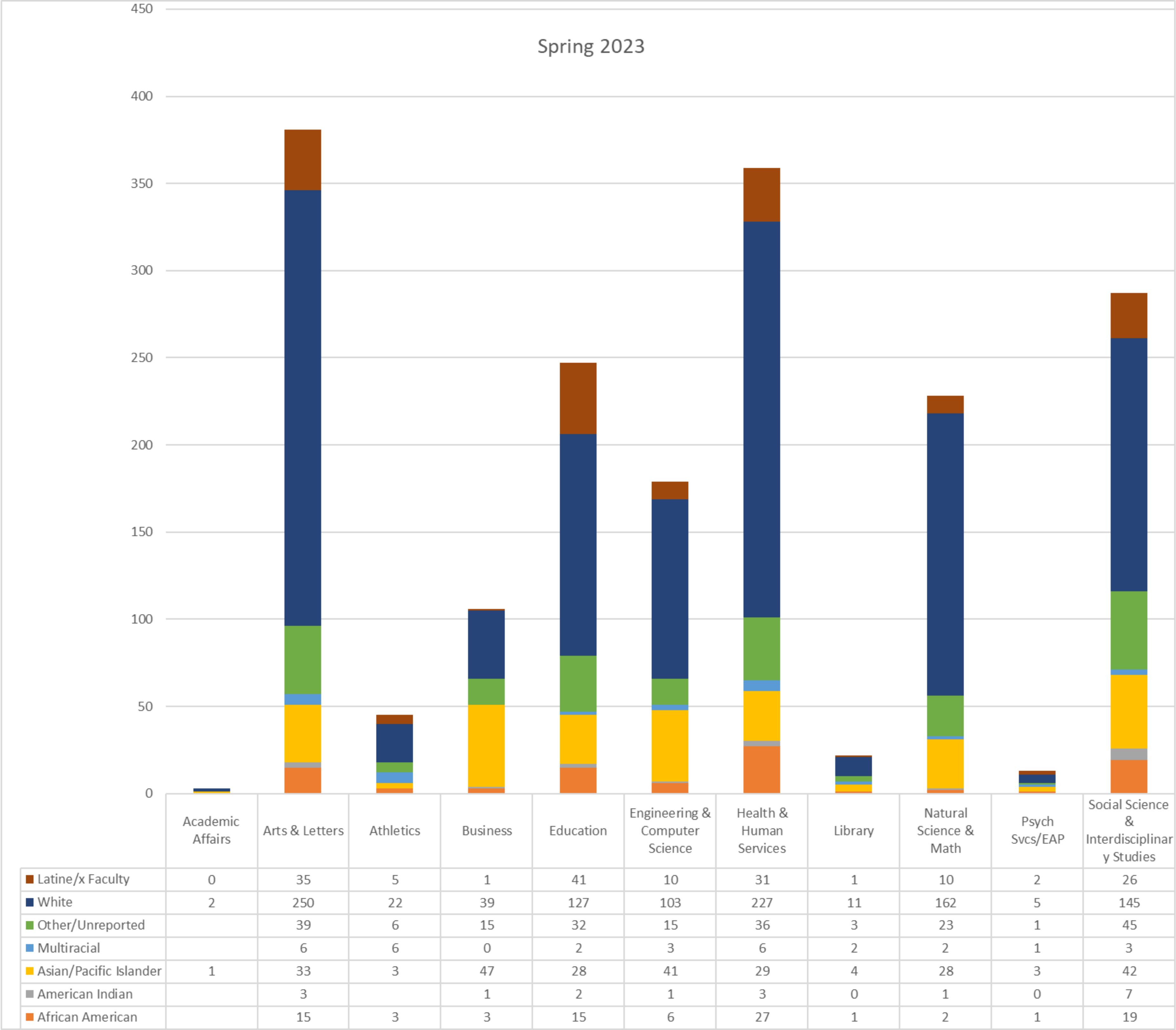


¿En dónde está mi gente? Where are our role models? There are few faculty that look like us and they can only be found in certain majors. We have multiple identities, we are diverse, yet we often label everyone as Mexican American. Few spaces for Latinx LGBTQ folks to be their authentic selves. We are forced to identify as Latinx or else we are nothing, erasing our indigeneity. Our visibility is still lacking when the fact is we have multiple identities. The institution creates many recruitment materials for us but there are few retention resources making us feel that these recruitment materials are all for show. Is the school really trying to support our success? Many of us are getting left behind. You know we are here.



Who Are Sacramento State Faculty?

Spring 2023, Faculty & Staff Demographics Institutional Dashboards

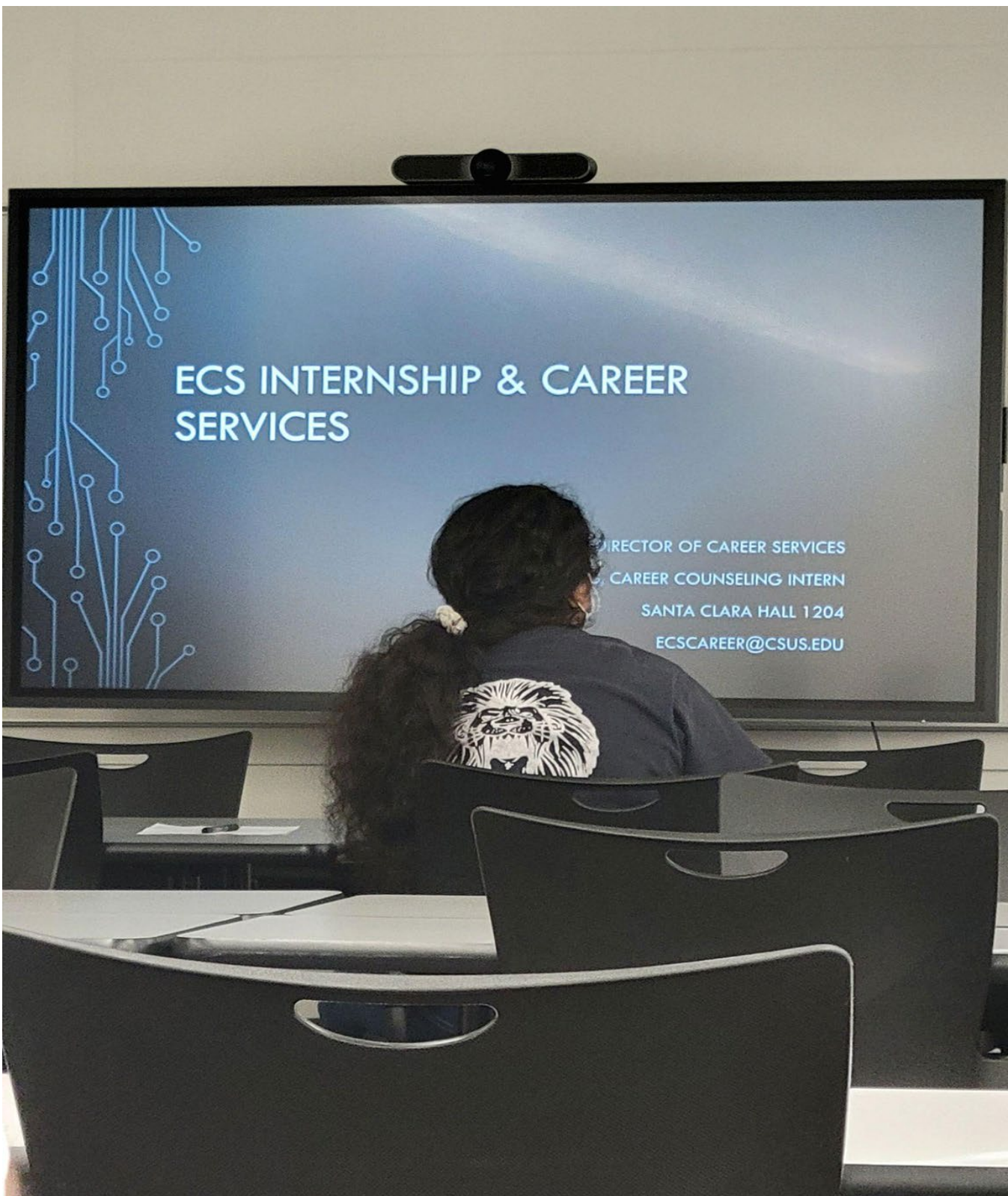


We are not connected through campus space



These three pictures highlight how many of the spaces on campus have resources on campus for students but they are not welcoming or inviting to Latinx students. Leaving the door cracked open, and only partially welcoming our goals and our hardships. There are often obstacles, or shadows, preventing us from reaching the support we need, without the hands reaching back out to us with guidance we need. Many times those that are in charge of supporting us do not understand us and therefore we feel a sense of isolation or lack of connection to the campus.

Where are the resources we pay for?



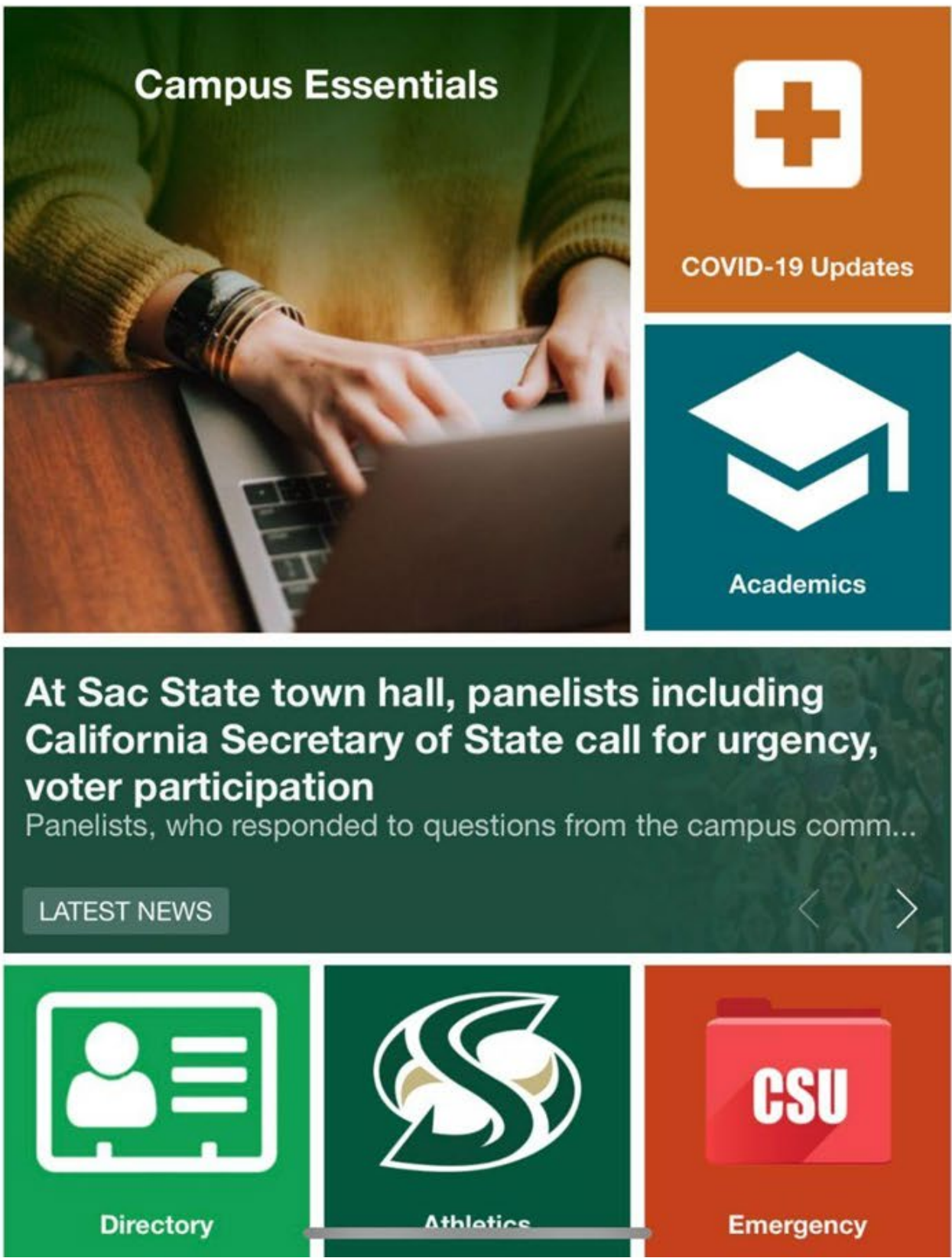
There are many resources here, but students may feel overwhelmed because they do not find what they need or are not aware of opportunities they can take advantage of. This is true regardless of if they are new or have been pursuing academic journey for more time.

Access to resources depends on the following:

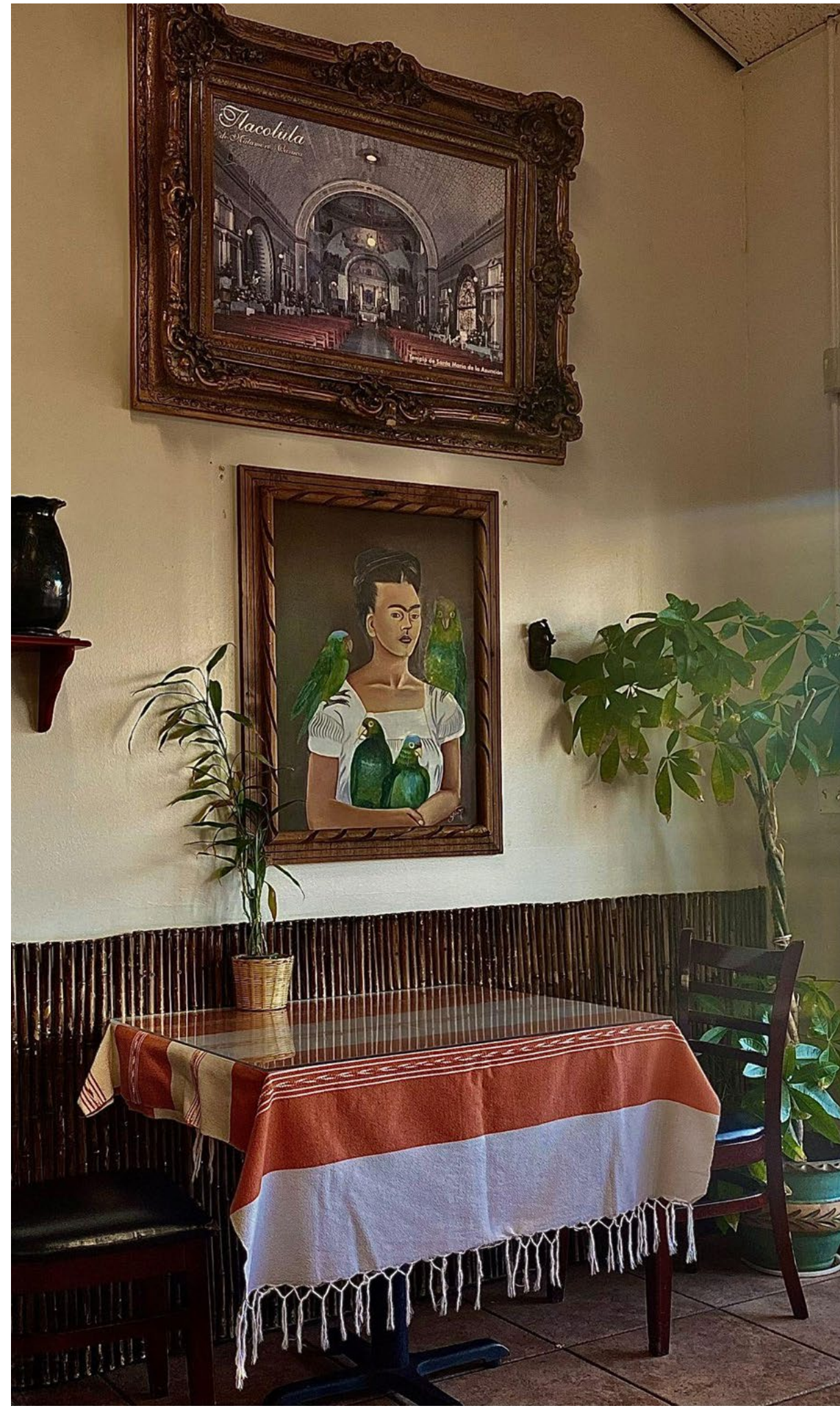
- Student exposure to resources
- Colleges and majors have different resources, such as tutoring or internships.
- Stigma around certain resources, such as counseling services or CARES ASI Food Pantry, sometimes students are afraid to ask.

It can be difficult to use some of the resources because we don't always know how to find them or they are hidden to us. We have the Sac State app, Canvas, and the website - too many places, where do we go to find resources?

Although Sac State offers a lot resources they need to have more exposure so that we can reach and access them.



We need a space to embrace our cultures

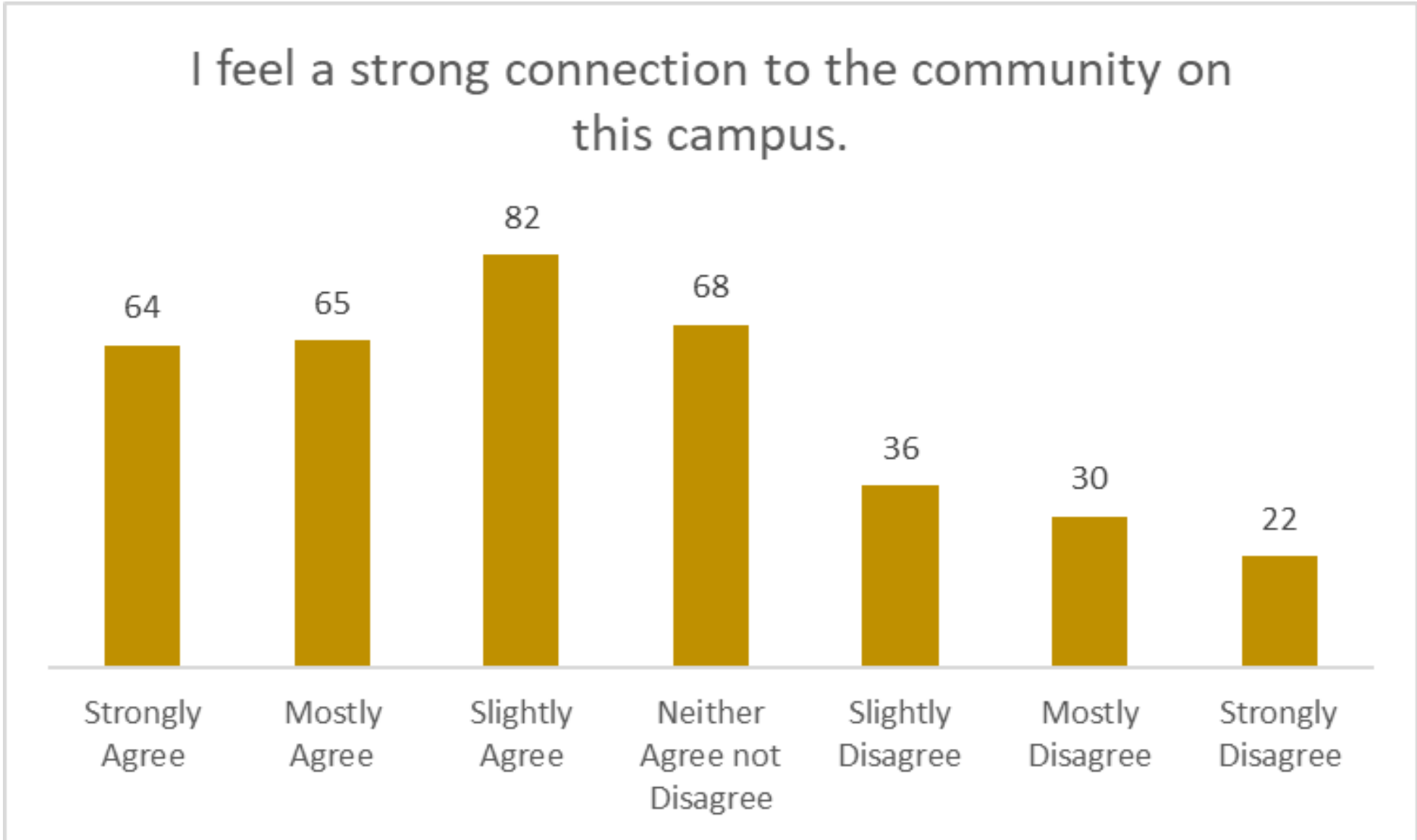


Sac State needs to support Latinx students in helping them connect to each other by providing designated spaces for students to learn about their culture. These spaces need to be more central in location and activities need to happen at them. Having these spaces will create a safe environment to feel comfortable to raise our voice and develop an appreciation of who we are and our culture.

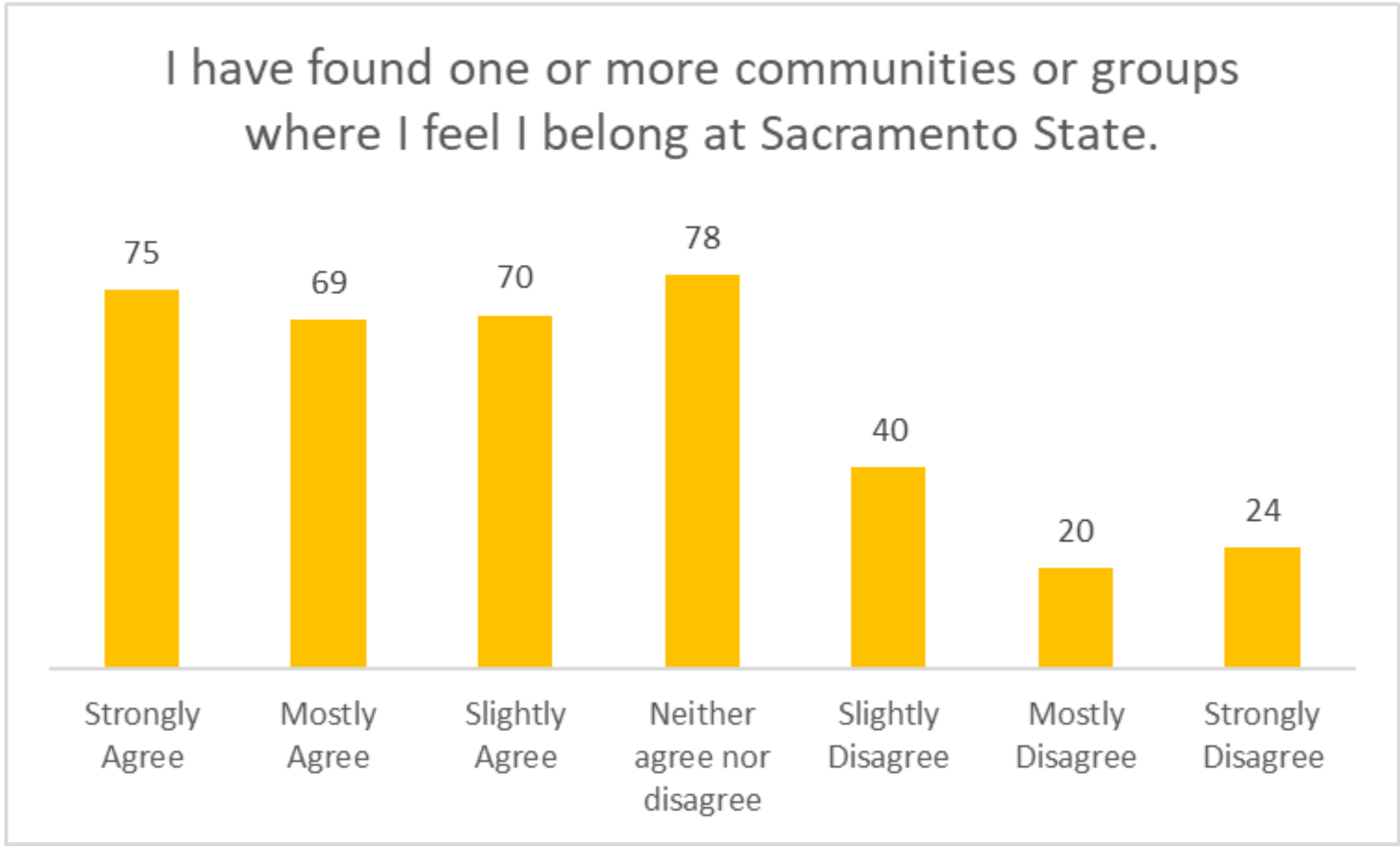


Latine Student Perceptions of Sacramento State Survey Findings

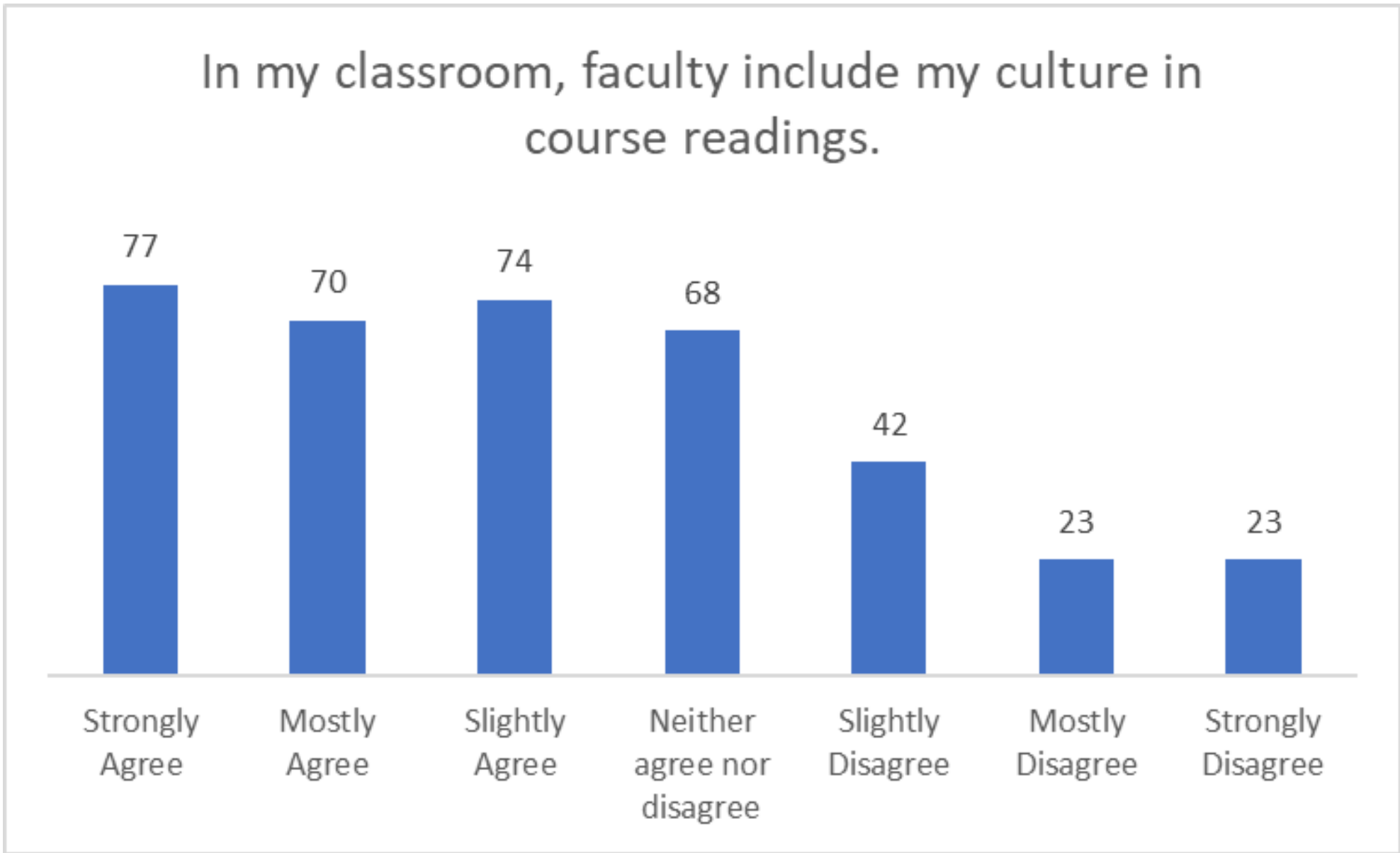
Student respondents were asked to rate their agreement from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (7) to the phrases found above each chart regarding their college experiences.



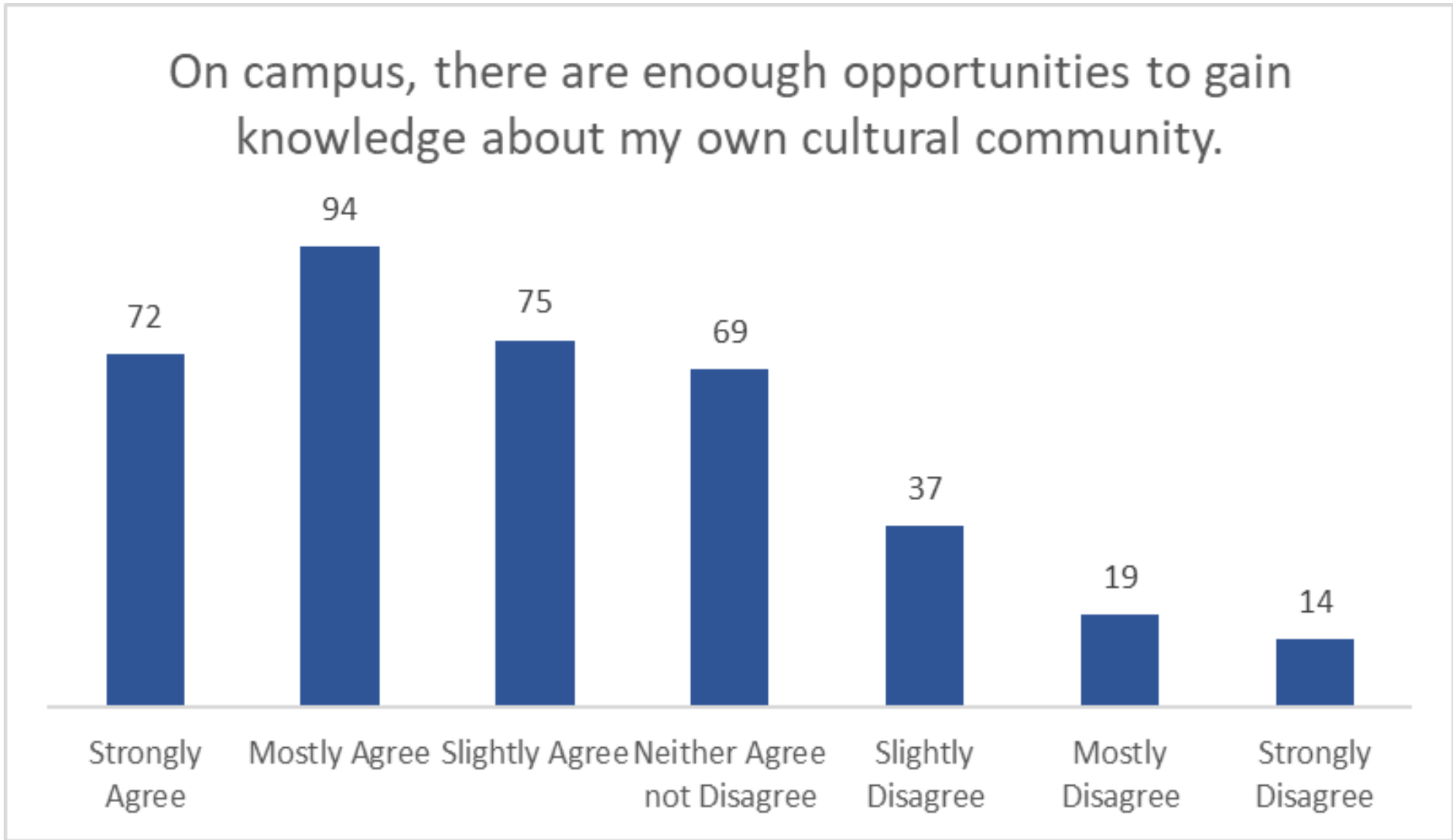
On average, student respondents feel a strong connection to the community on this campus ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.766$).



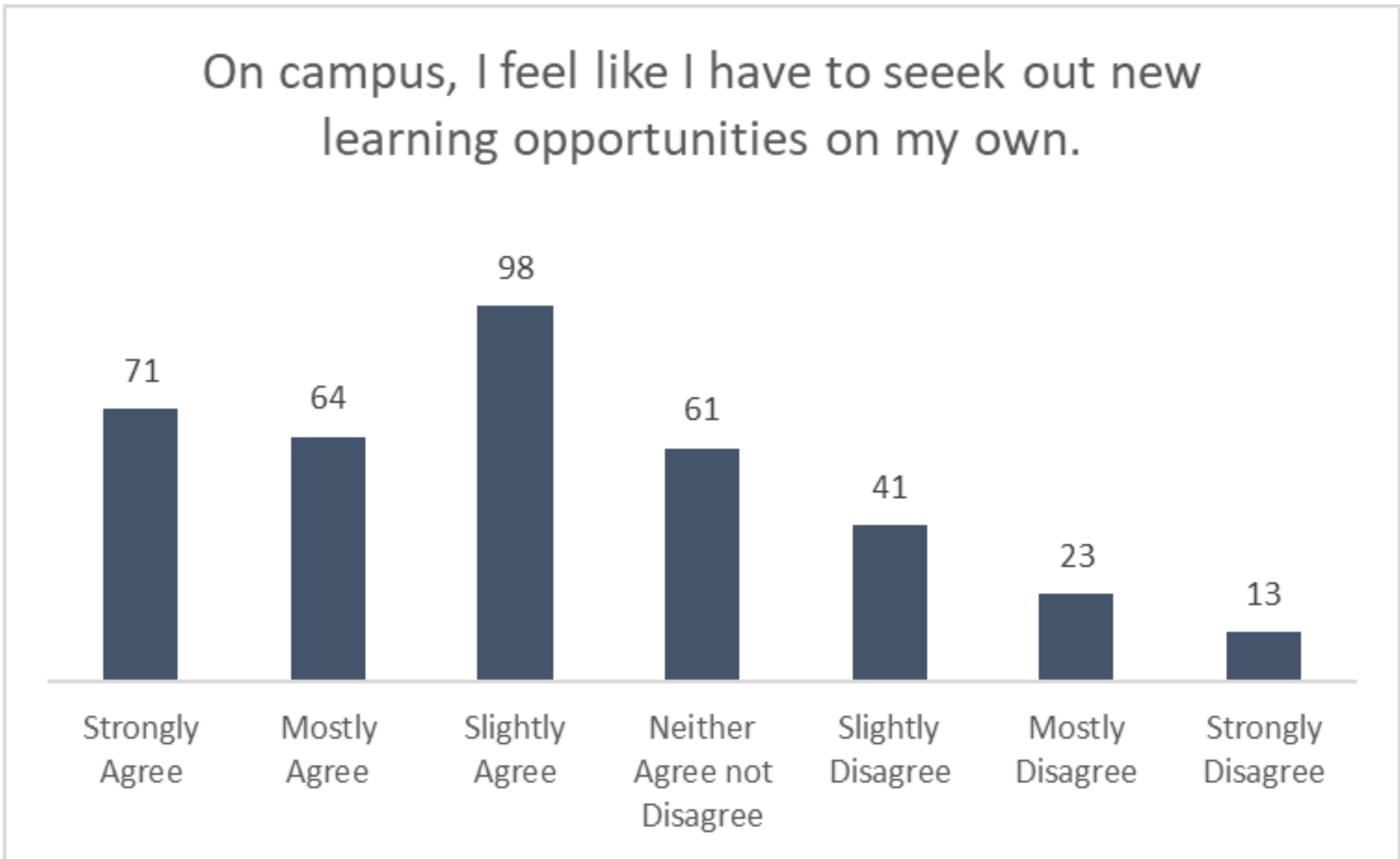
On average, student respondents have found one or more communities or groups where they feel they belong at Sacramento State ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.75$).



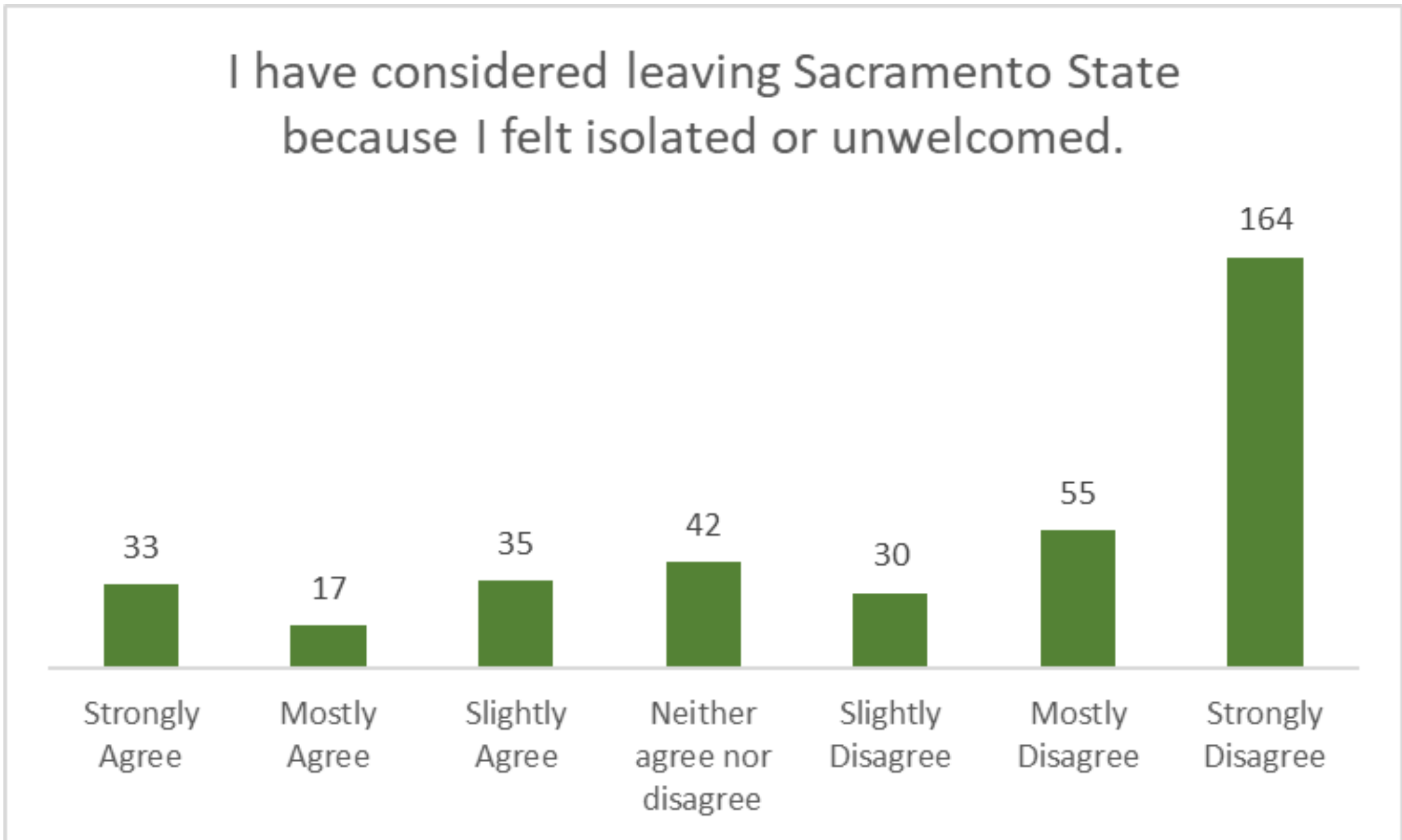
On average, student respondents feel that faculty include their culture in their course readings ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.76$).



On average, student respondents feel that there are enough opportunities to gain knowledge about their own cultural community ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.62$).



On average, student respondents feel like they have to seek out new learning opportunities on their own ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.63$).



On average, student respondents have not considered leaving Sacramento State because they felt isolated or unwelcomed ($M = 5.23$, $SD = 2.04$).



We found our starting point



We are headed in the right direction, taking one step forward but two steps backwards. There are some resources for us but we have to search for them. *El que no busca, no encuentra*. When we begin to use them they disappear with little to no transparency as to why. It's not clear how funding is used to support us because the resources that we do need are not the ones that the university continues to provide. When they remove these resources or hide them, we must ask ourselves, do they want us to succeed? How do we give attention to resources that help us? Let's build more.

Student engagement & leadership is bridging our communities

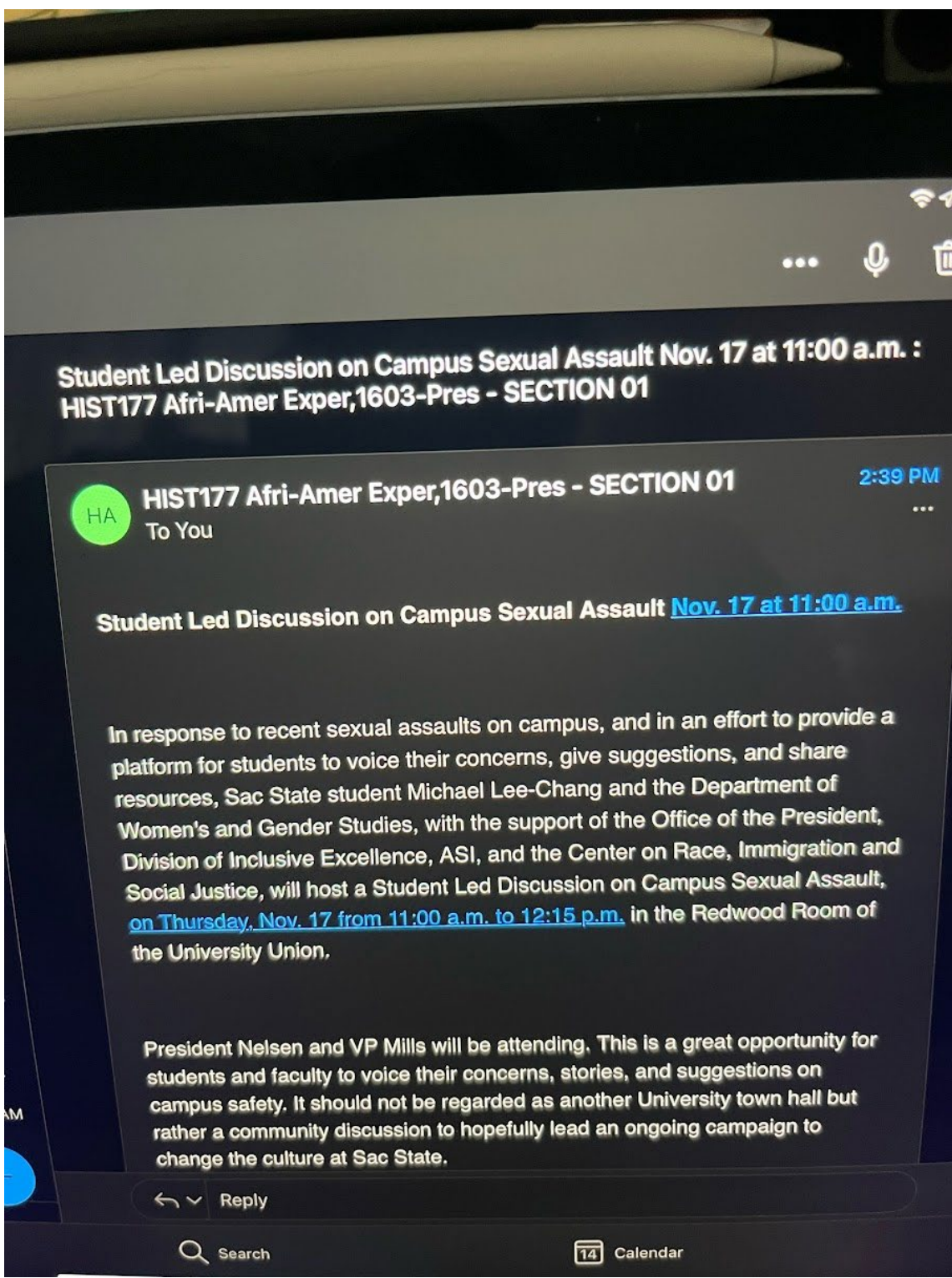
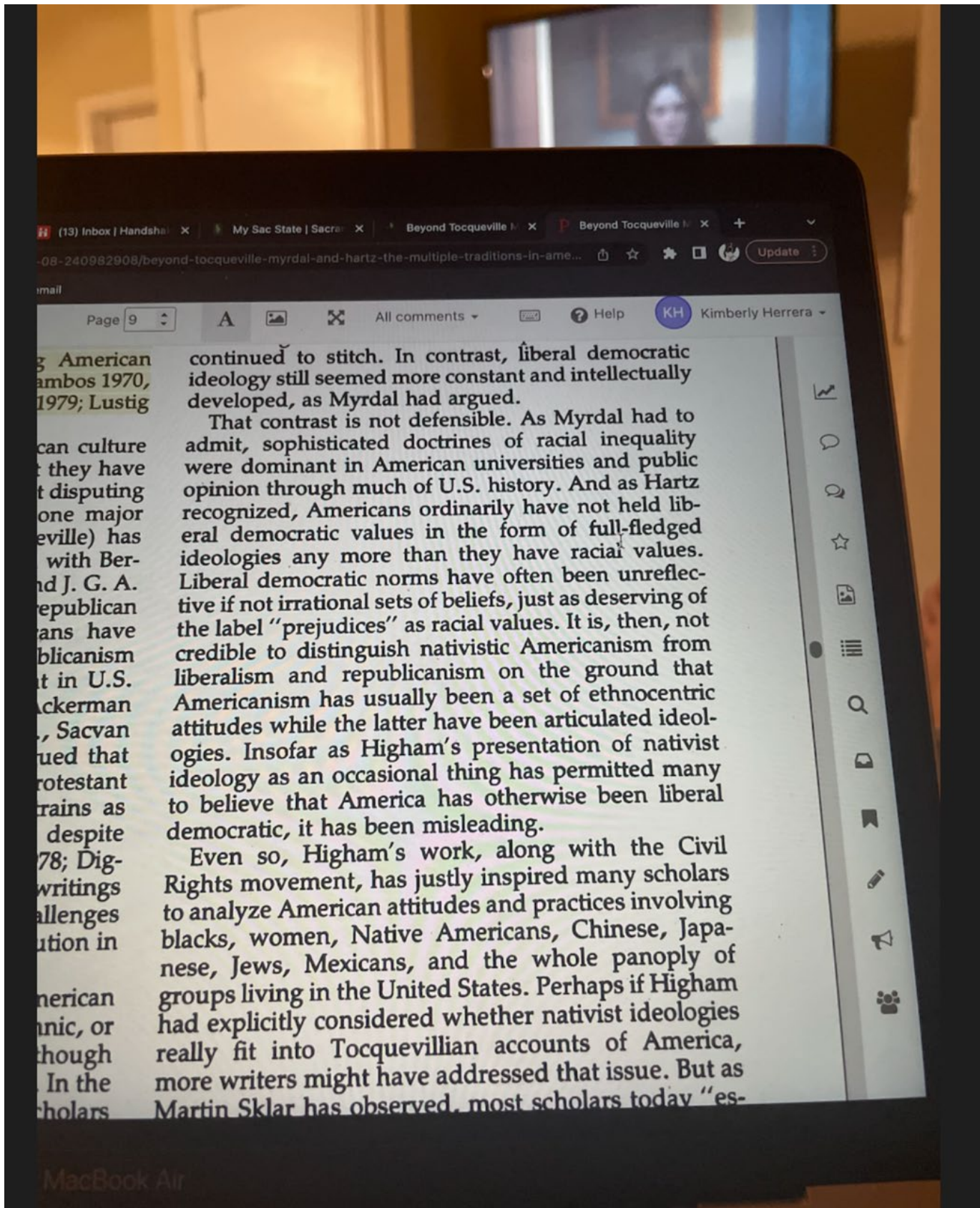
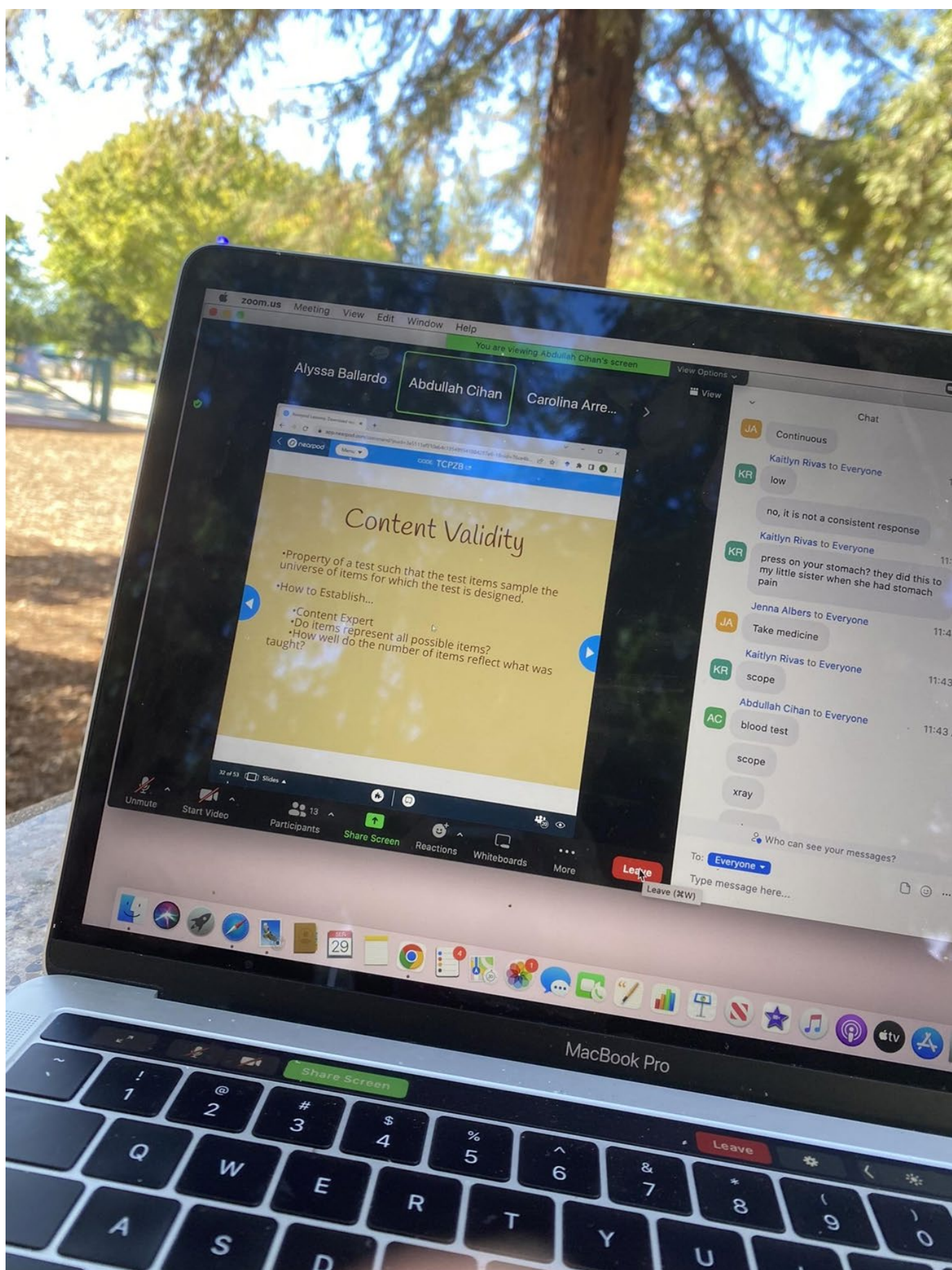


Most leadership for the Latinx community begins with students and they are not institutional. Students' efforts are often leading the initiatives that bridge us. We recognize that these are not institutionalized and get lost across years of students. What does it mean if these student-led organizations that are bridging us are sporadic and not continuous? Help us guide our institution to better serve our community, we want to be part of the conversations of change. Organizations like this show us it is possible to create something permanent.

Improving our classes for student success

Our professors need to not only teach the material for the class but also help students learn about the resources and events on campus. They also need to be provided training on how to more flexible and compassionate towards students needs - recognizing that they are more than a student in their classroom. They need to humanize the learning experience. Our goal is to graduate but unsupportive faculty create barriers that add to the overall difficulty of our academic journey.

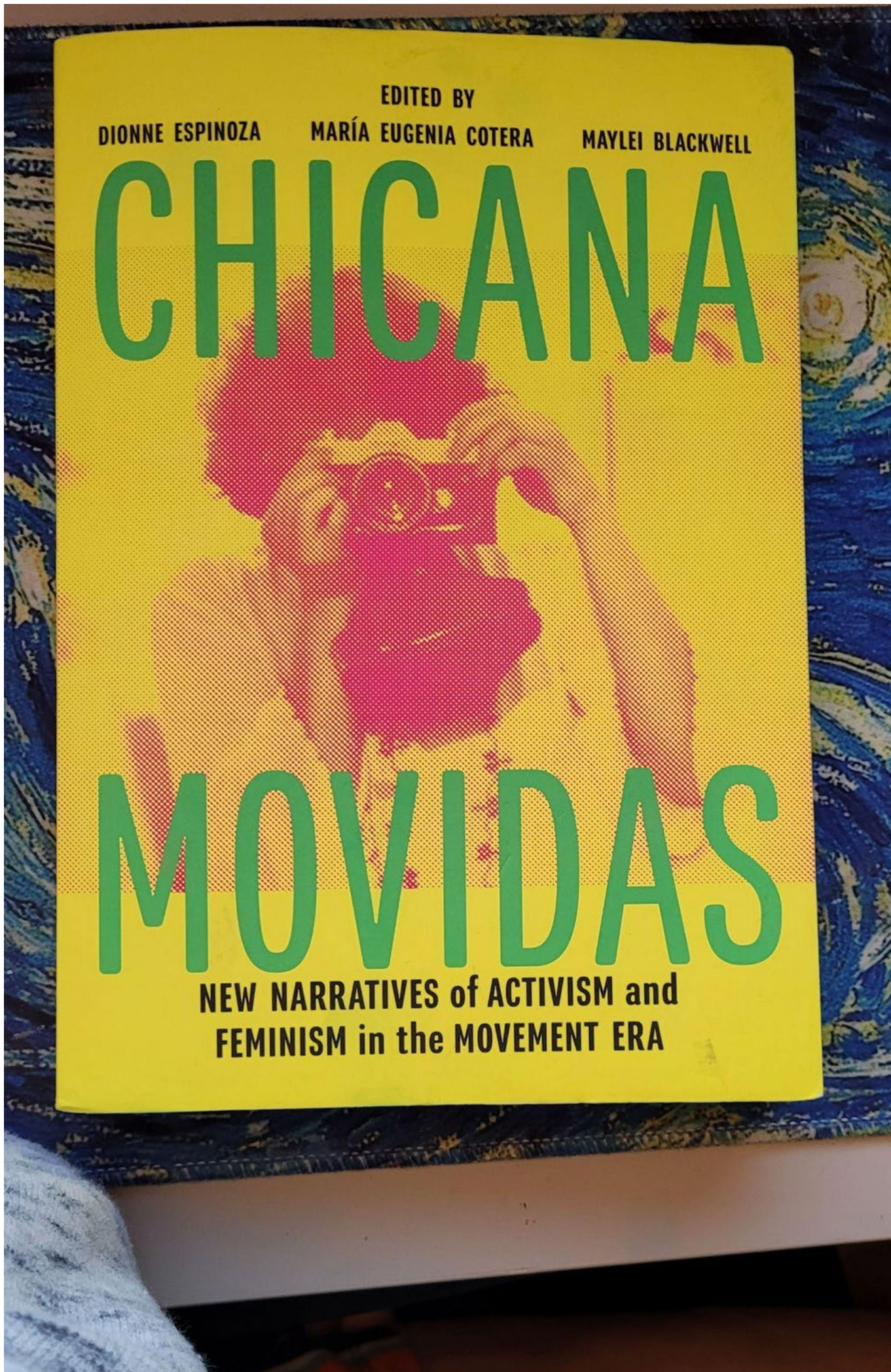
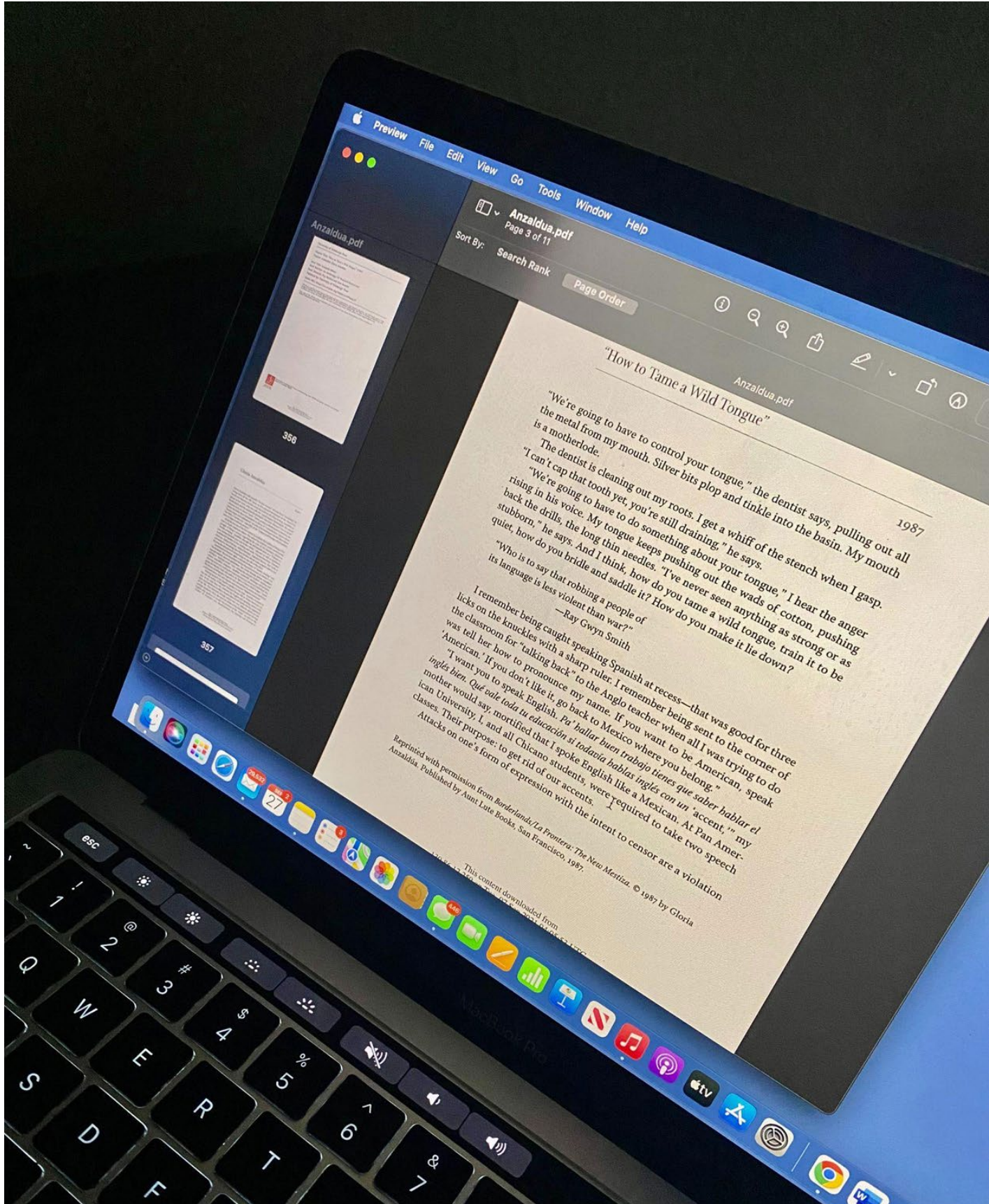
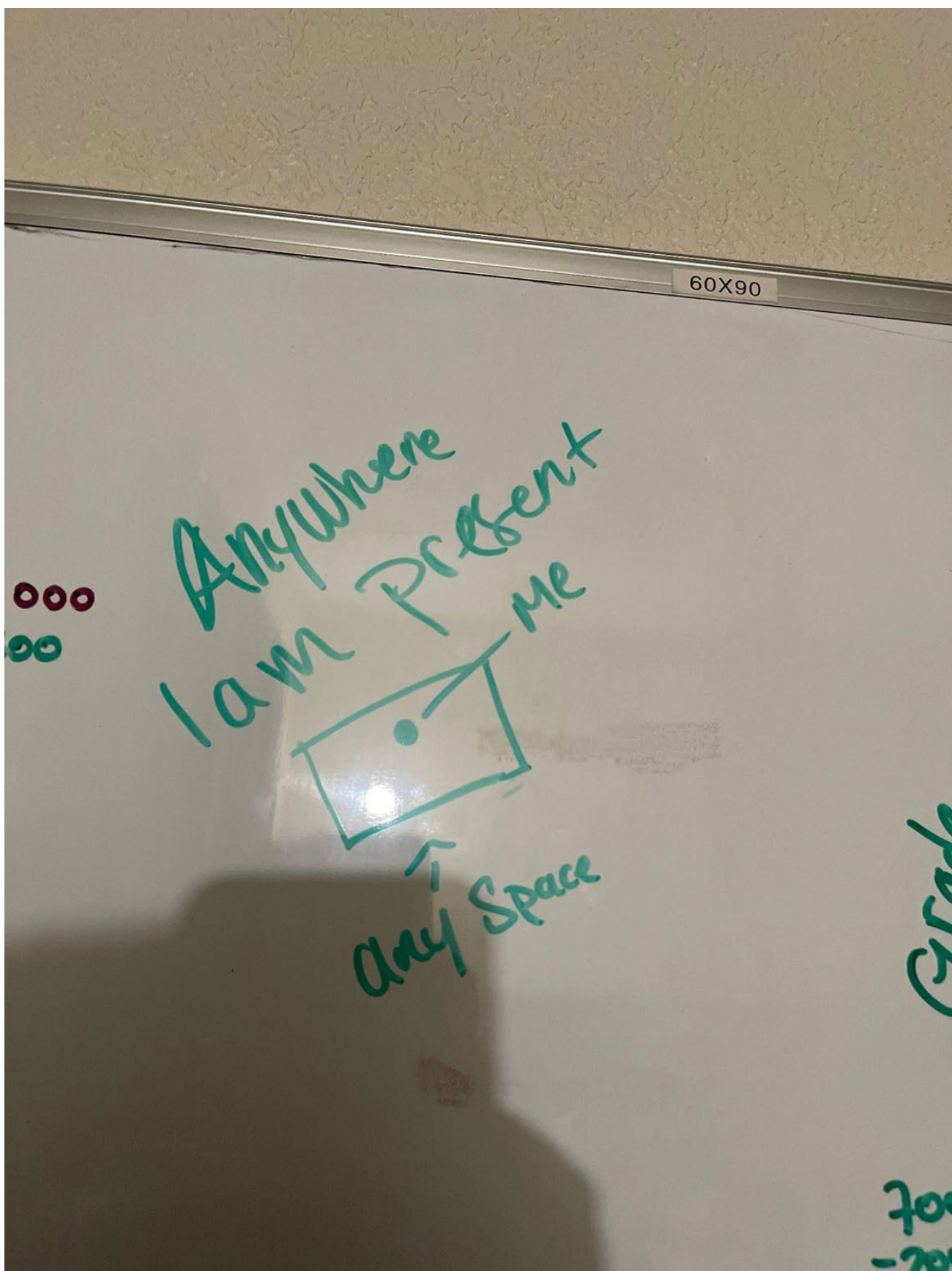
Additionally, classrooms do not serve us. Classrooms do not provide an environment that we can thrive in. Often small desks do not allow for us to use our computers and notepads at the same time and the chairs are uncomfortable. Our classrooms need to have more culture inside of them. We can include the art and beauty that we see outside the classroom, inside, to create a more inspiring environment.



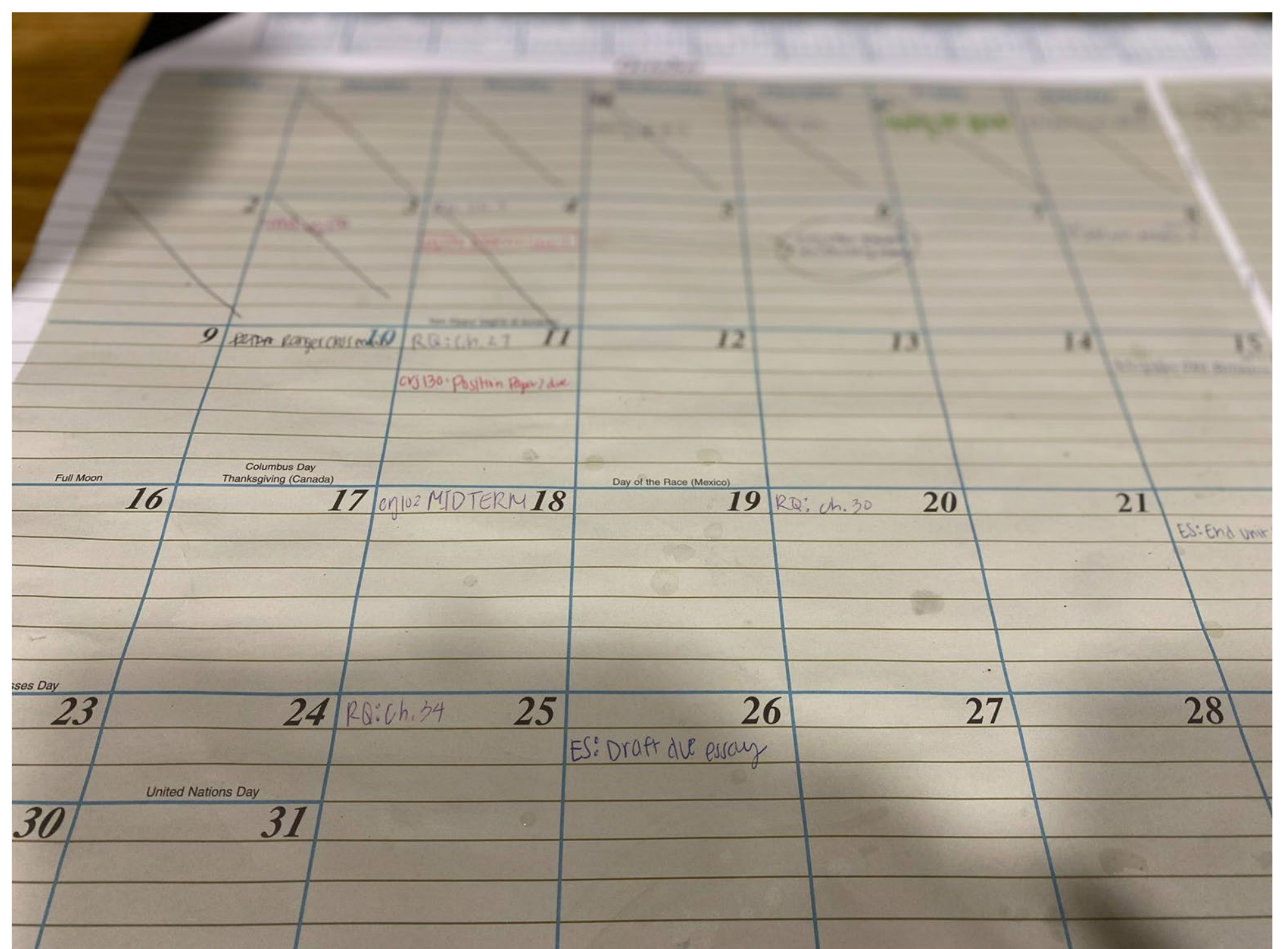
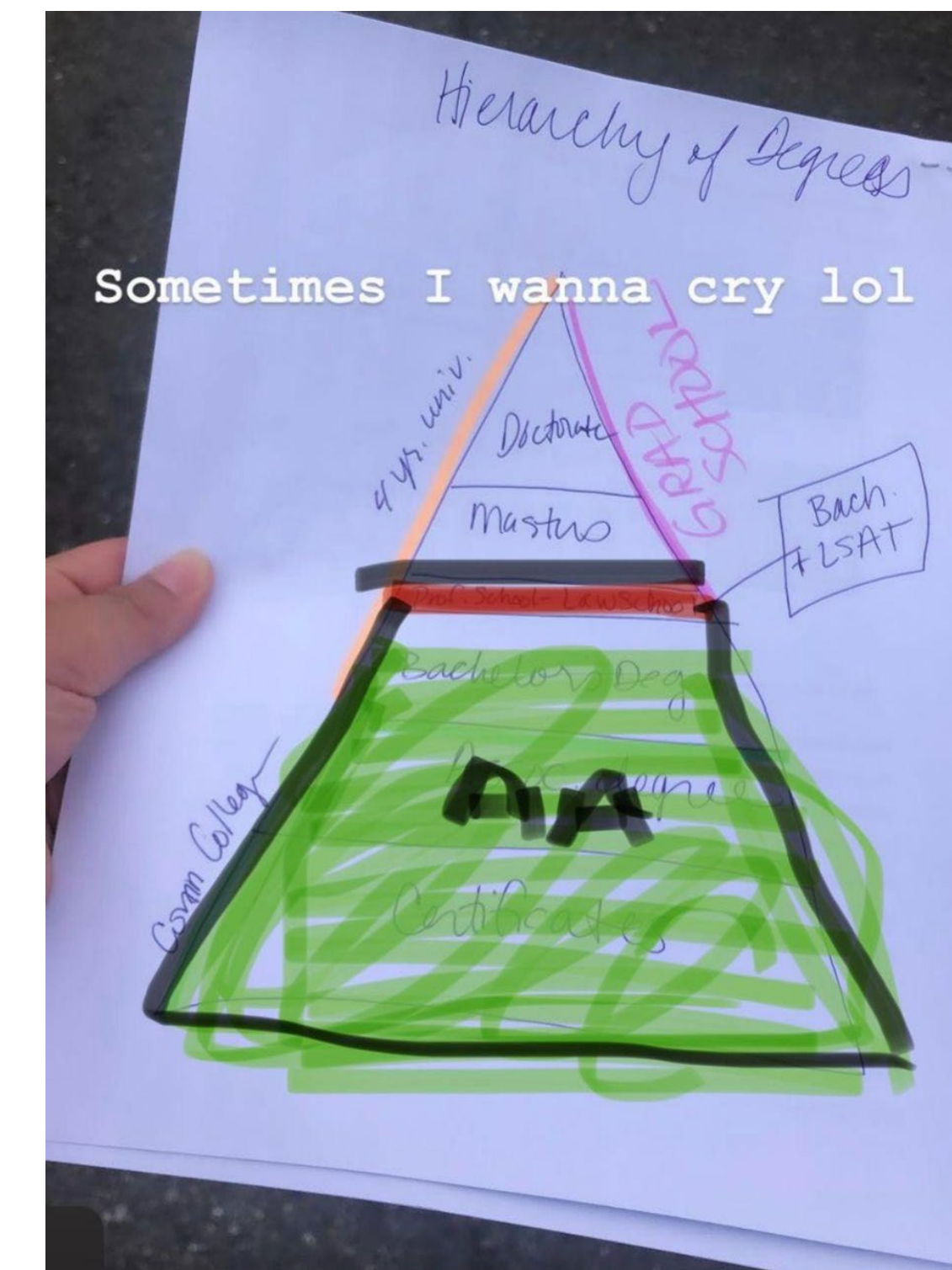
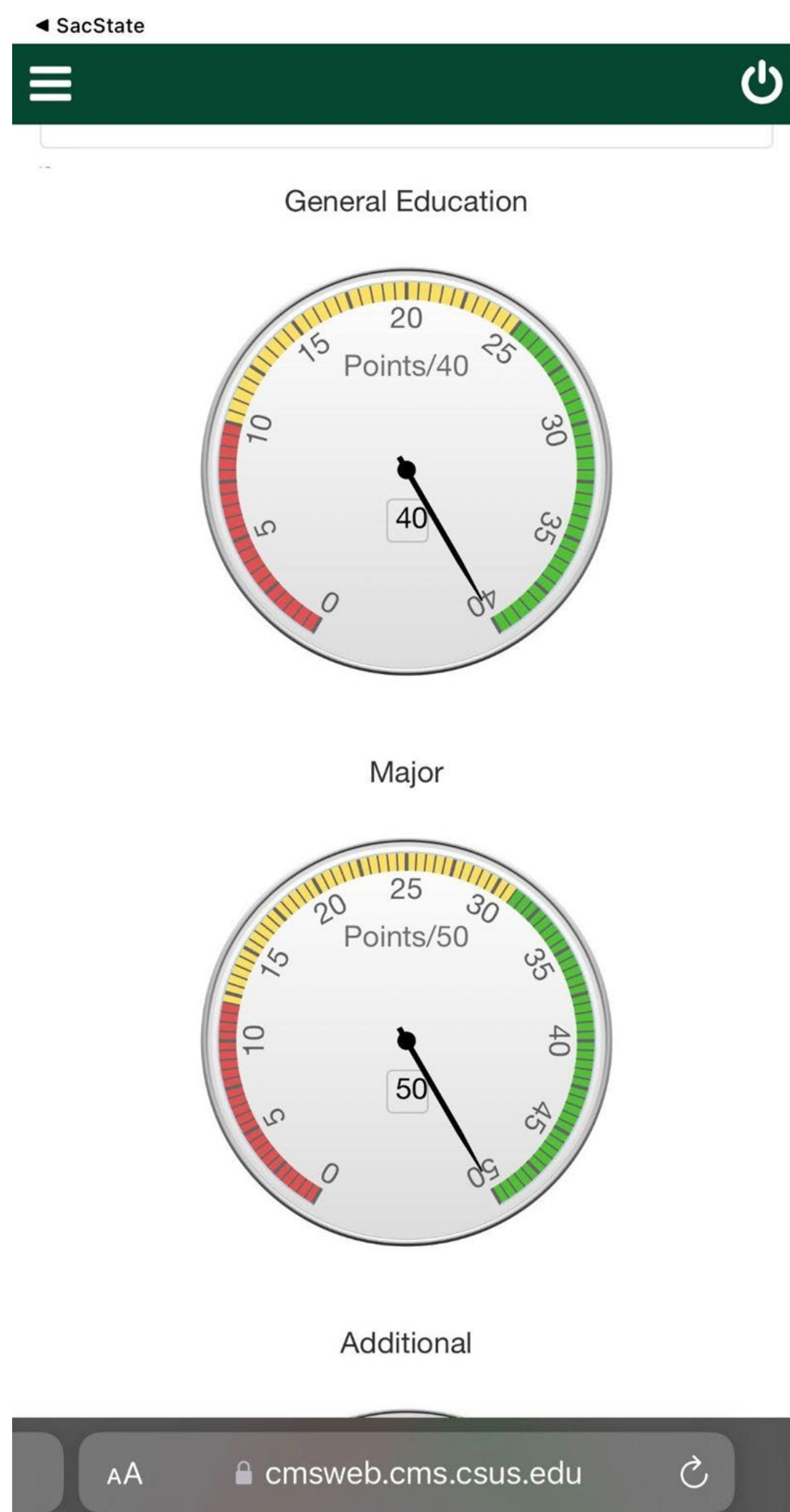
Representation of the Latinx culture is needed in our classroom

We need more representation of our Latinx culture in our classrooms and curriculum. We need more professors who reflect the diversity of our student body and who can bring unique perspectives and cultural knowledge. We need to have more of our culture represented in our curriculum in terms of readings, discussions, and activities. Although many of us have found this happening in Ethnic Studies, we need this all areas.

Professors need to include their students' backgrounds in the issues and topics they teach. We also need for our professors to use language that connects to us and that we can understand. Some of us expressed having a connection to certain professors who worked to create meaningful relationships with us.

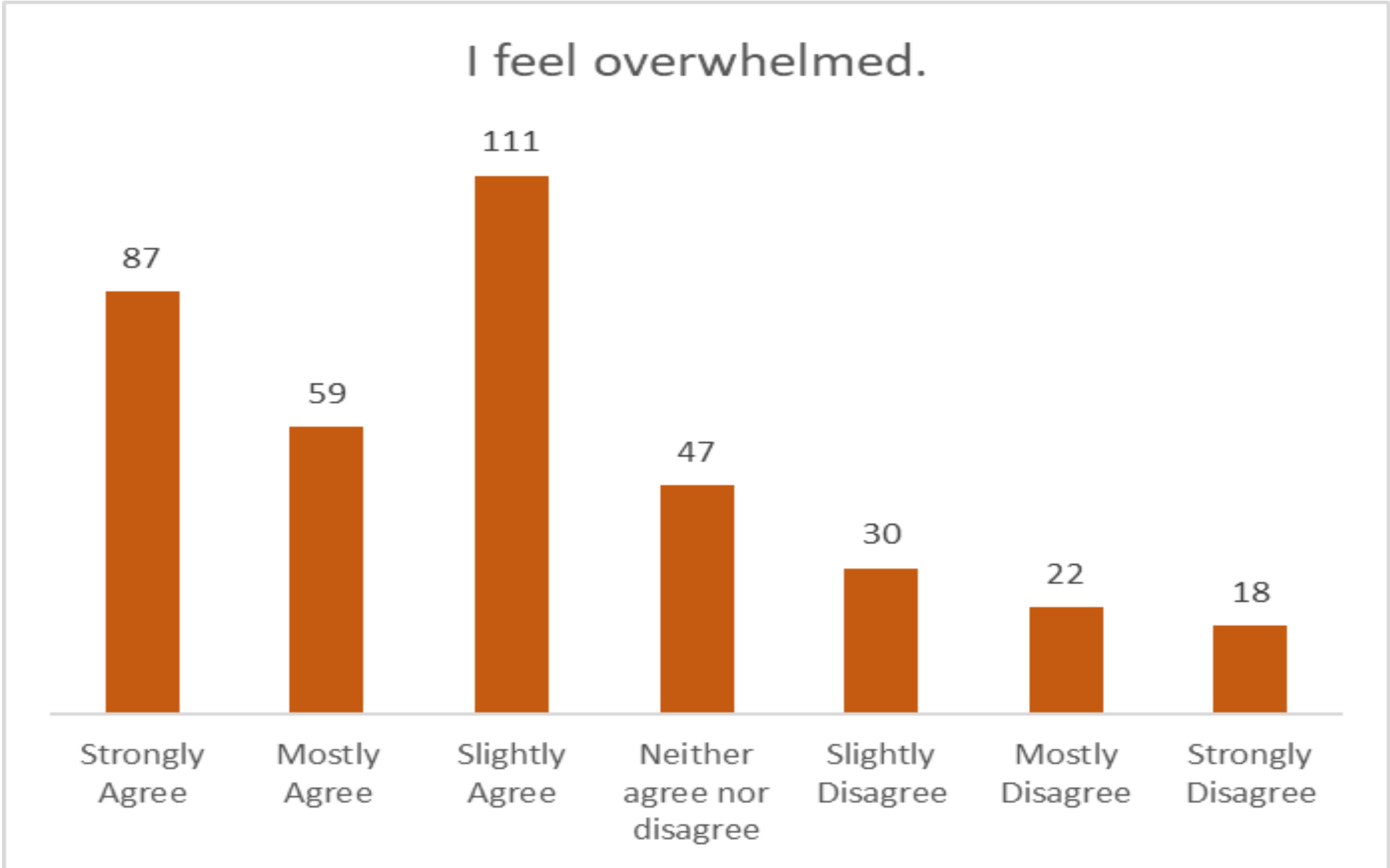


[Culminating Event Posters proposed order 030423.pdf](#)

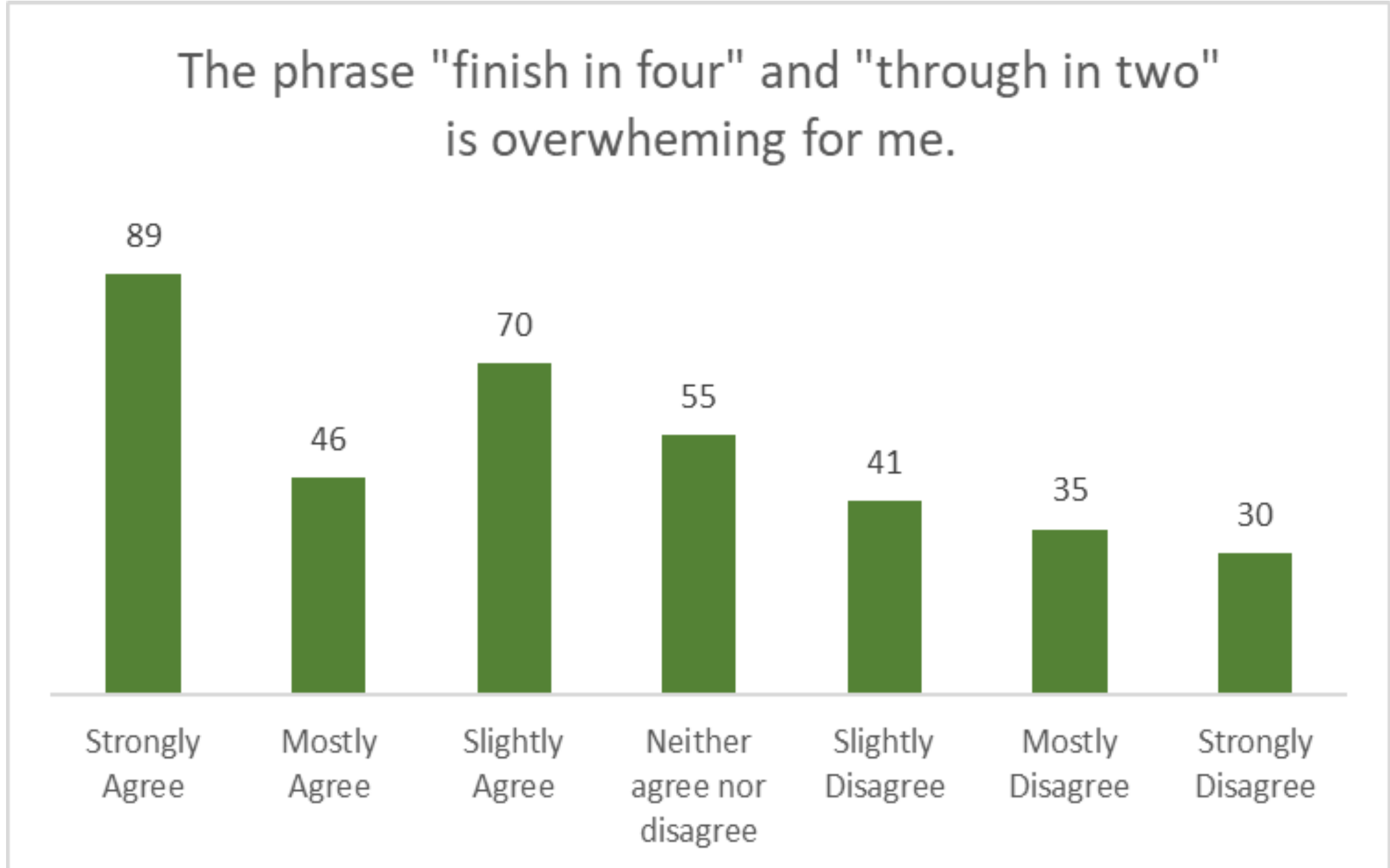


Latine Student Perceptions of Sacramento State Survey Findings

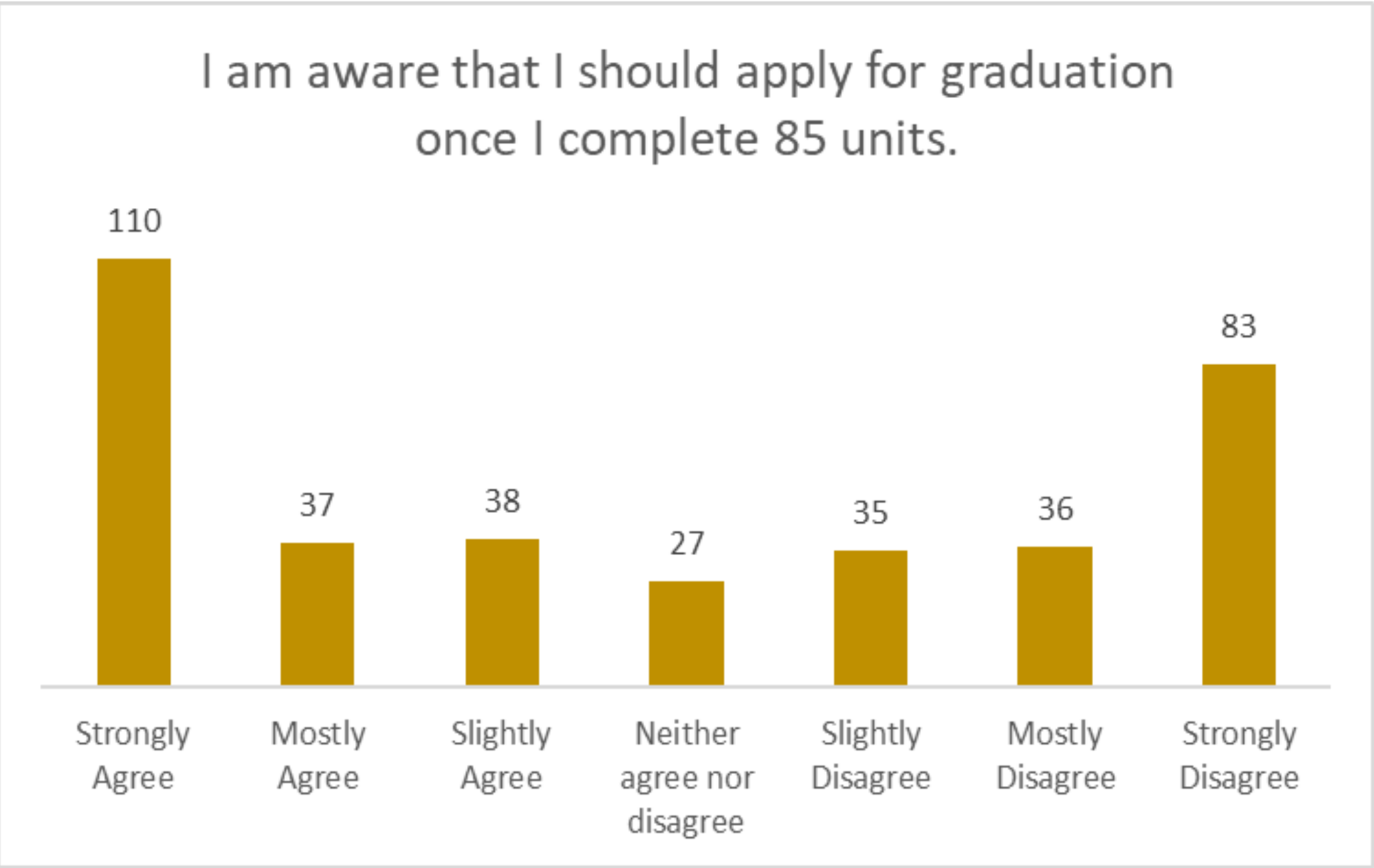
Student respondents were asked to rate their agreement from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (7) to the phrases found above each chart regarding their college experiences.



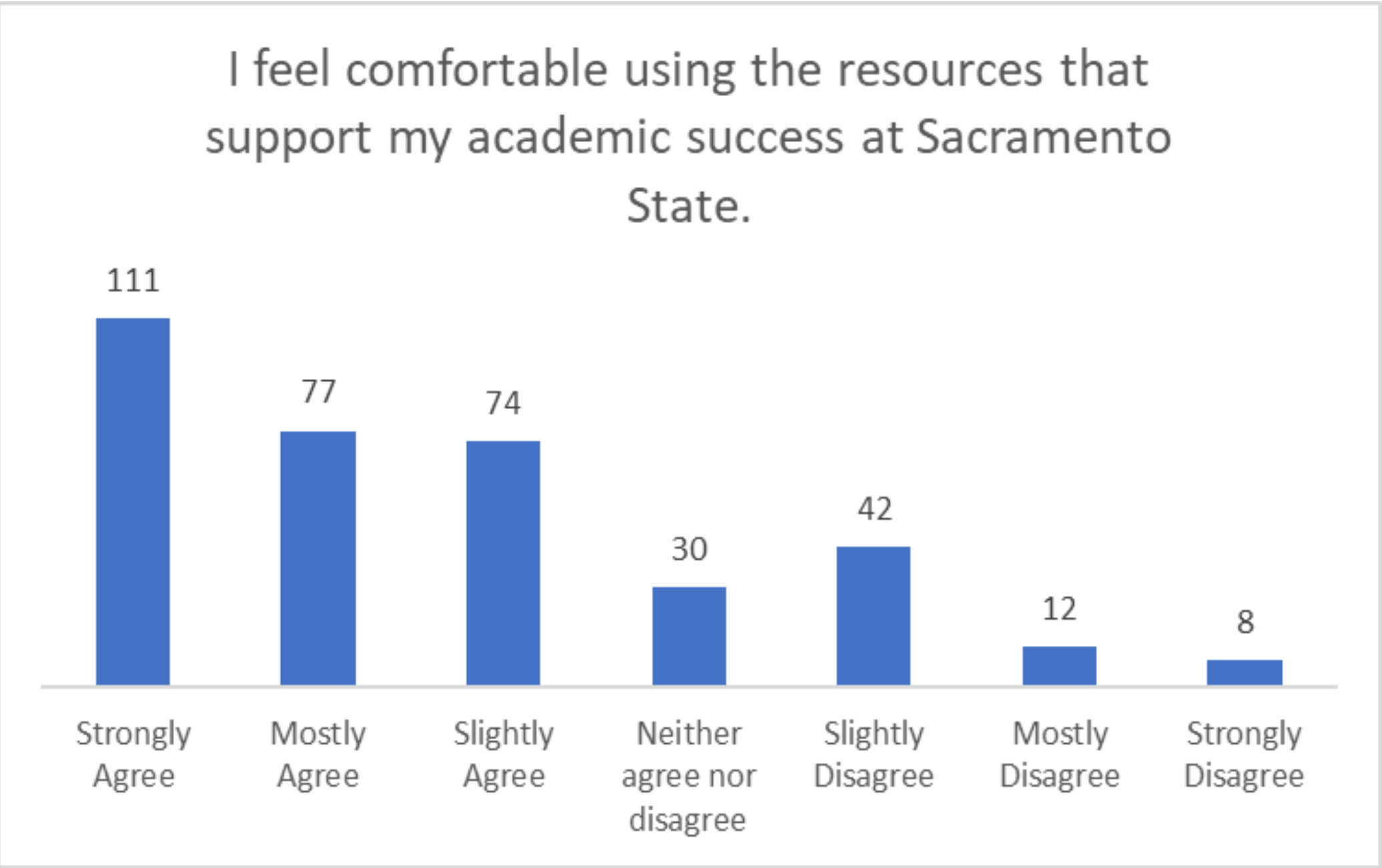
Over 2/3 of our respondents agreed with the statement "I feel overwhelmed" ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.685$).



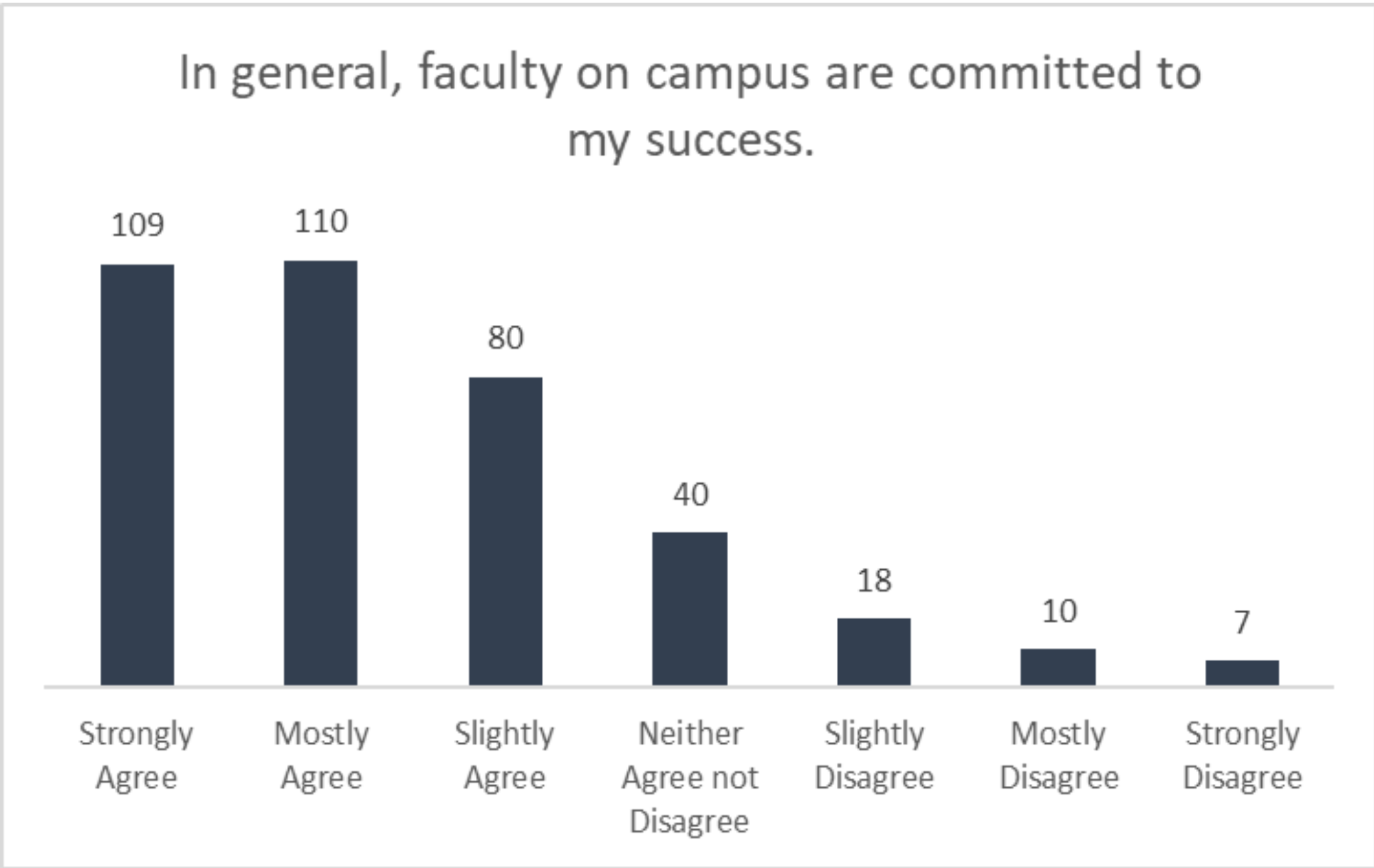
On average, student respondents to Sacramento State's graduation initiative phrases "finish in four" and "through in two" overwhelming ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.933$).



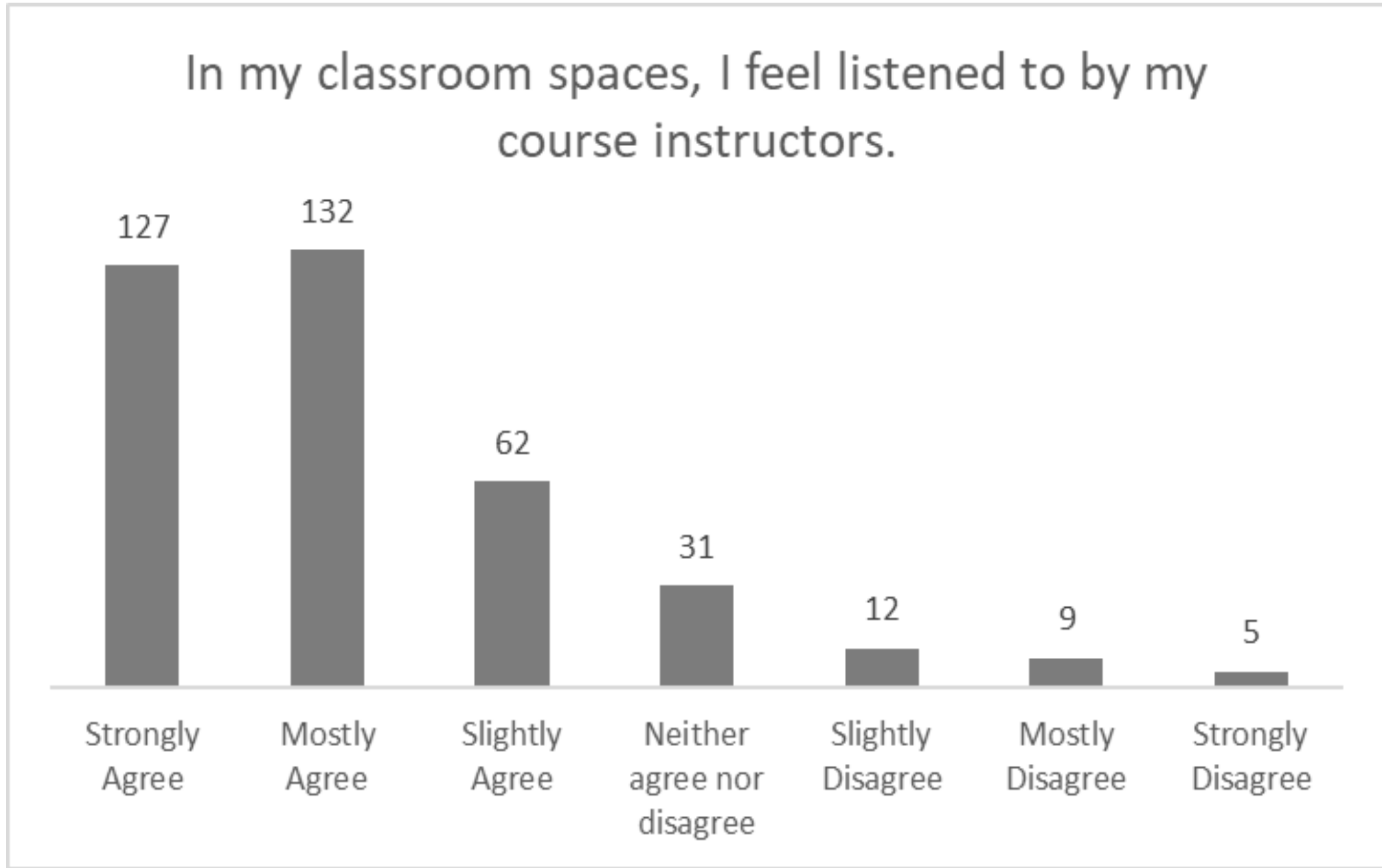
Two out of five student respondents (42%) are unaware that they should apply for graduation once they complete 85 units. This is important because students can get priority registration for their last year if they apply for graduation ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 2.388$).



On average, student respondents feel comfortable using the resources that support their academic success at Sacramento State ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.611$).



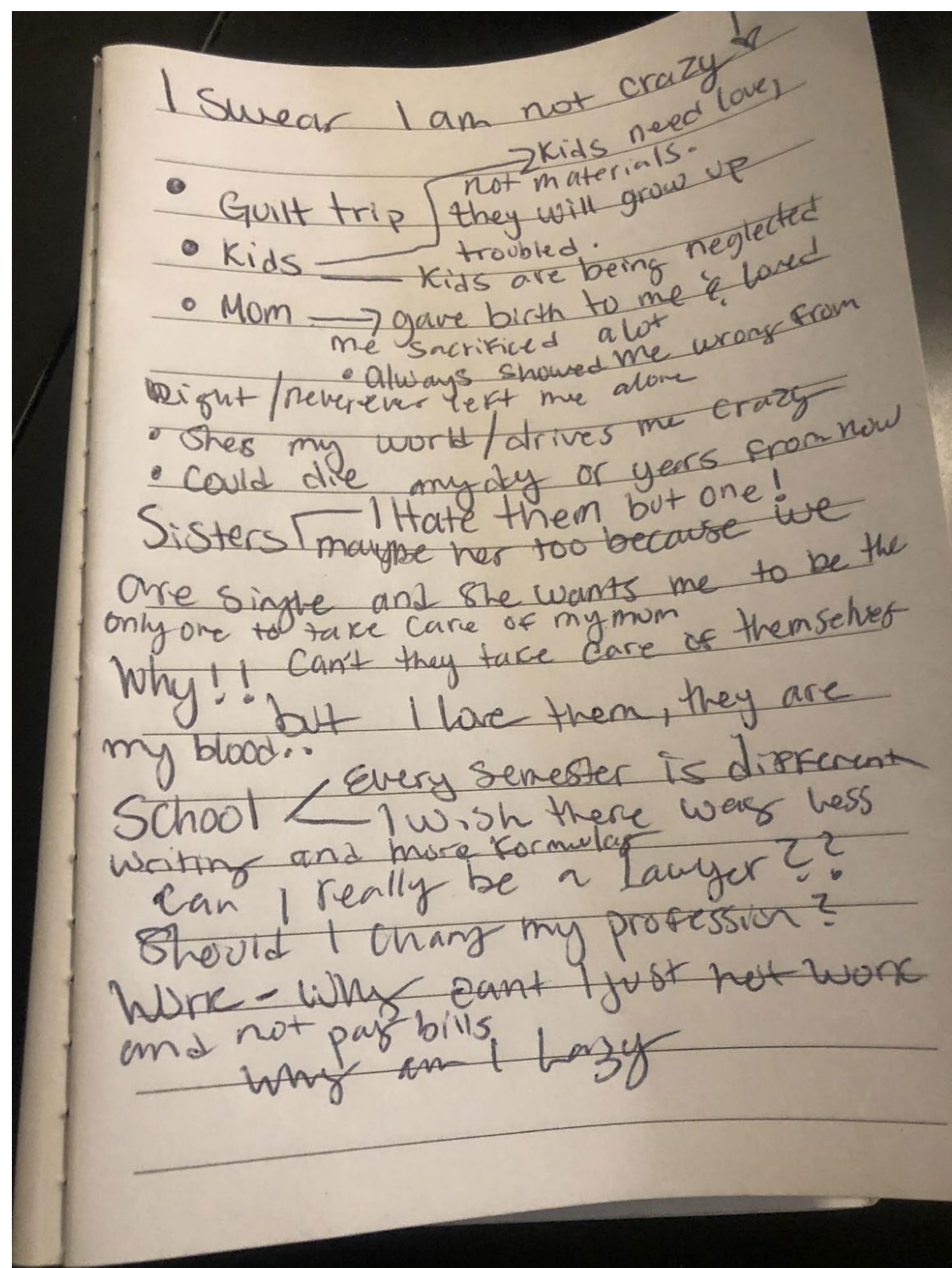
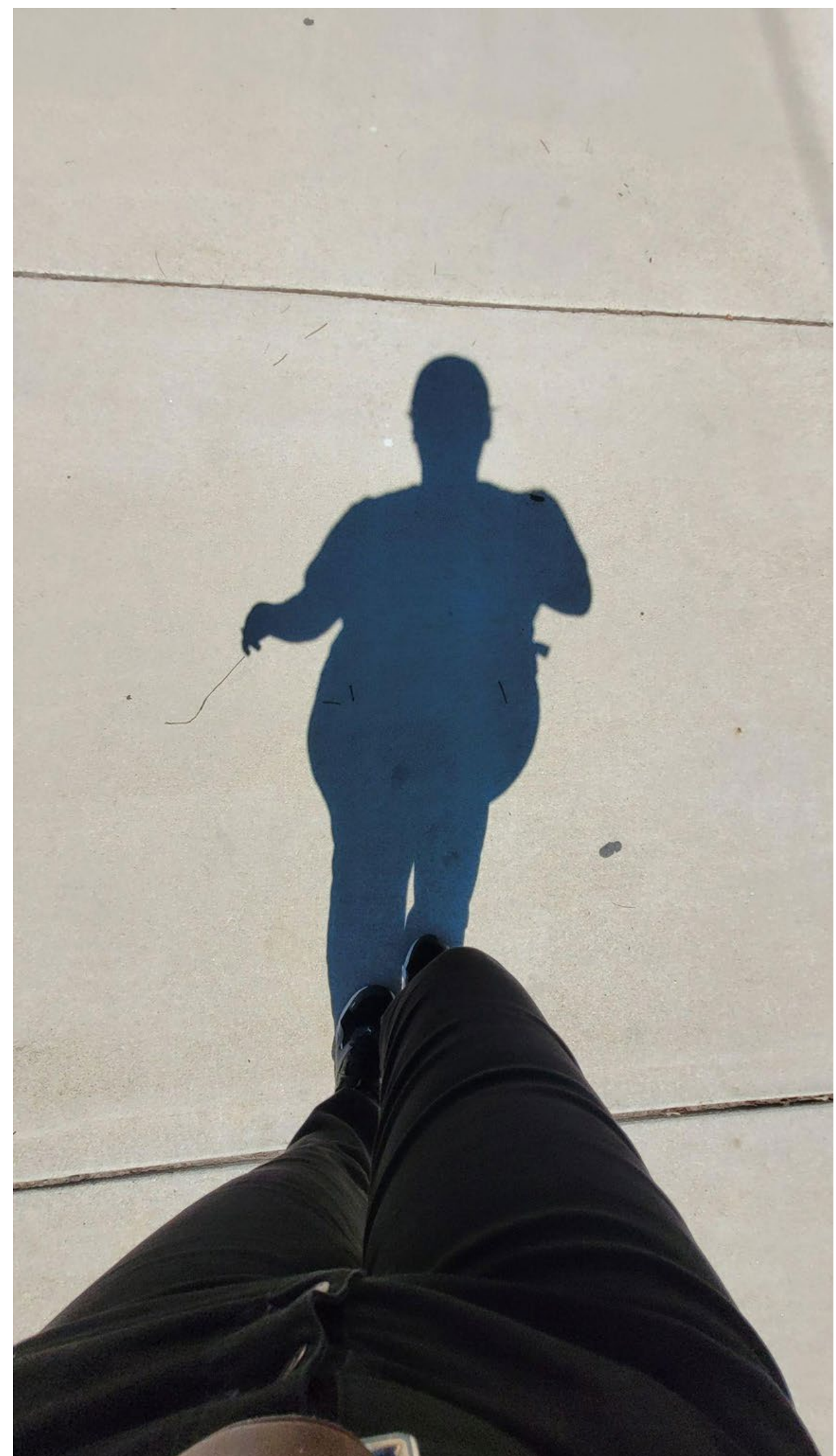
On average, student respondents believe that faculty on campus are committed to their success ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.427$).



On average, student respondents feel listened to by their course instructors ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.33$).



“Ese vive en las nubes” ** They live in the clouds

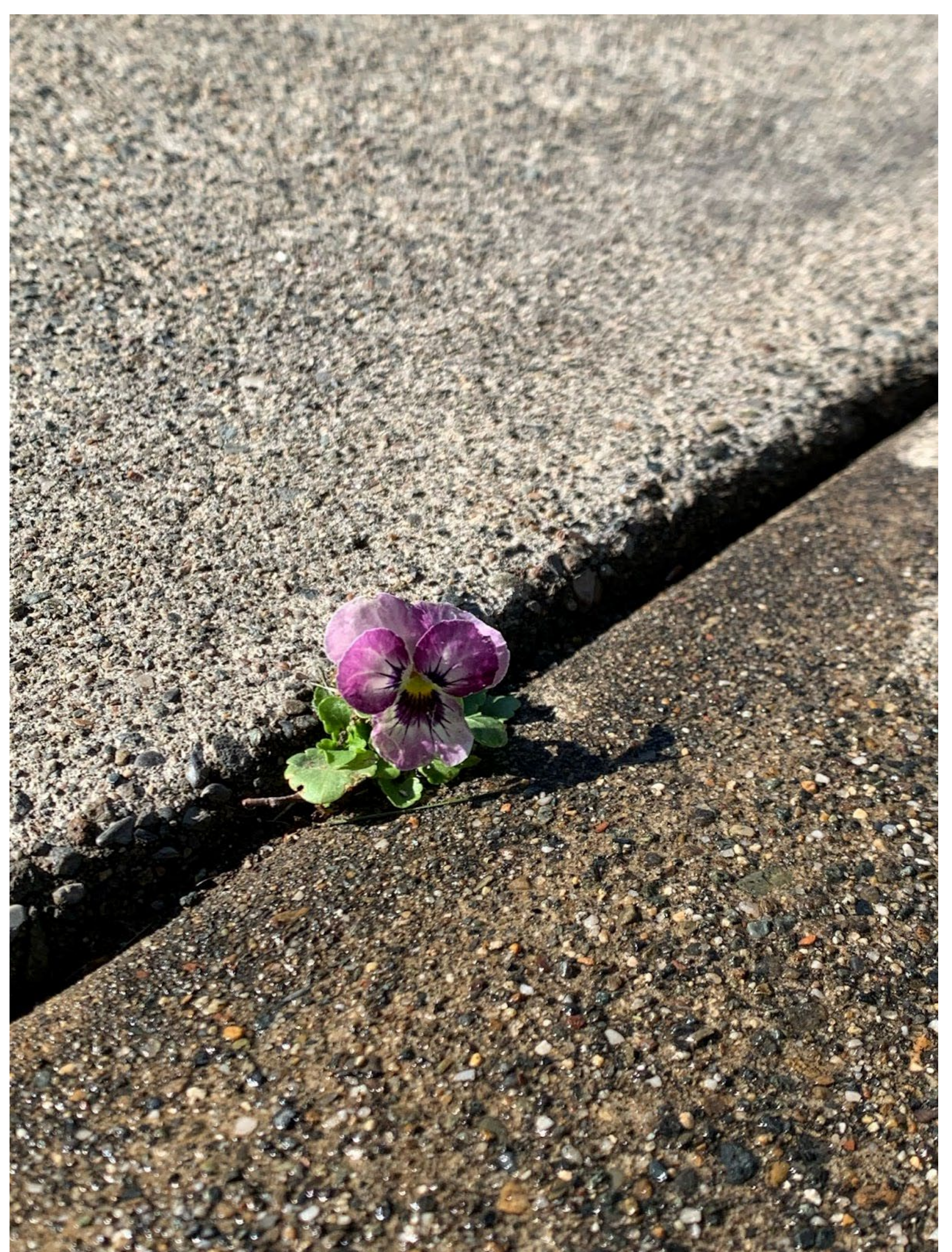


As Latinx students, we may feel pressure to meet certain expectations and not show any emotions. We are told to not be ungrateful. Mental health in the latinx culture is very hidden and not spoken about due to lack of information, education, and knowledge. But this can make it difficult for us to fully understand and express ourselves. We learn to suppress our emotions and this can leave us feeling overwhelmed and lost. We should be allowed to have our feelings validated and not be confined into this stigma.

For all students, mental health is a factor in their education and who they are as an individual. We don't know ourselves just yet, we are in our own shadow.



Empowerment & Perseverance

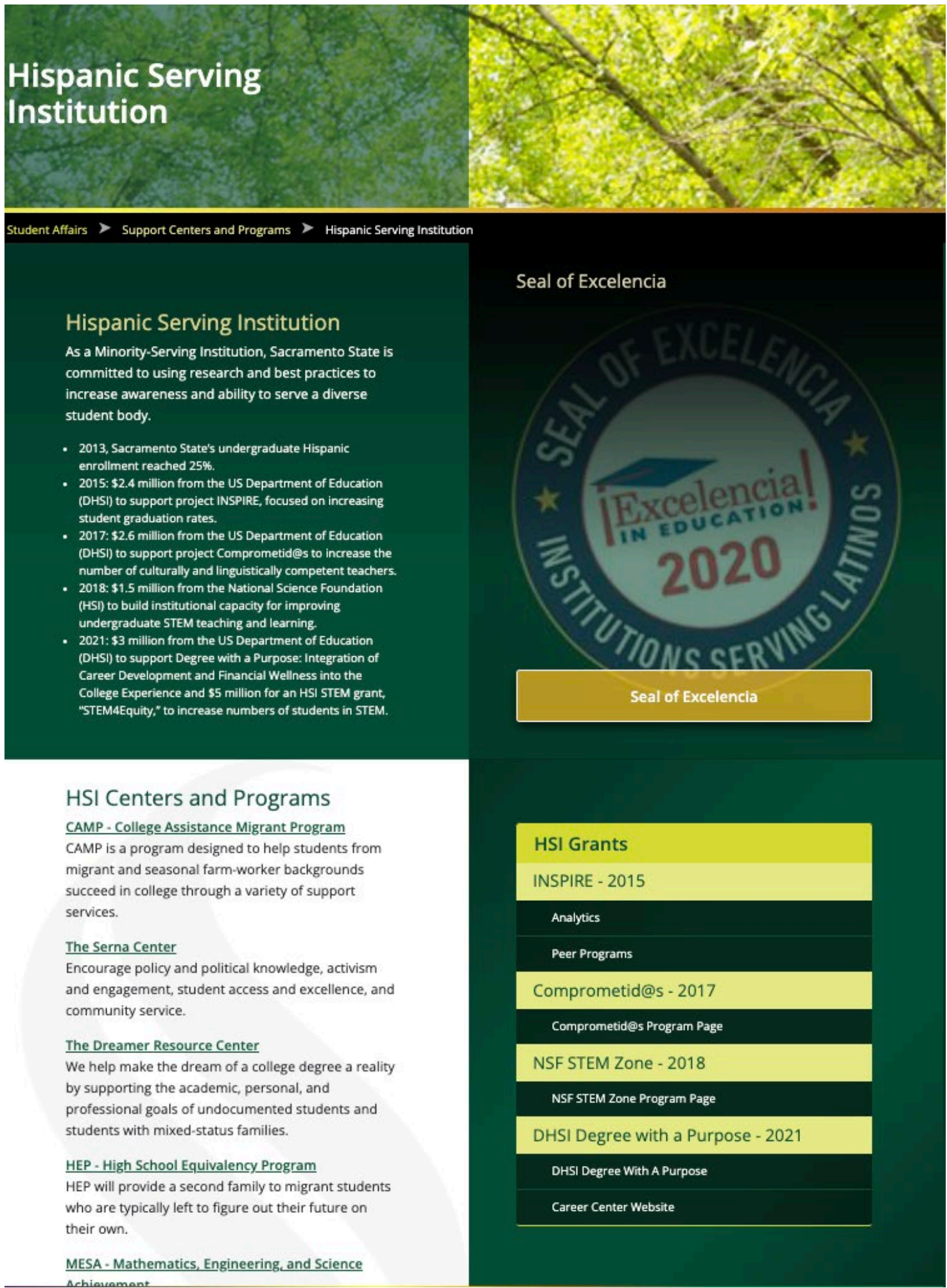


“Empower Latinx/Chicanx Community”: this simple phrase of four words shows the desire and crave students and all members of this community seek. Although the chalk phrase is anonymous and was spontaneously found, it encompasses so many layers, such as empowerment, vulnerability, and potential for change. We become empowered as we connect with each other and become vulnerable. There are voices in our community who also want to be/feel empowered. We acknowledge our community can lift us up but at times we fail to come together.



Perseverance: They tried to bury us but they didn't know that we were seeds. Even in the places that create challenges for us and despite our hardships and the difficulties we face, through the ugly, we persevere on our own.

How they perceive us & what are their assumptions?



We question how others perceive us on campus. You think you know me, but you don't ask me who I am truly. Our foods perceived by others are not ours, authenticity is missing because others speak for us. The Sac State HSI webpage does not represent the diverse Latinx community and appears it is something thrown together with little effort. It is talking about how it serves “Hispanic” students, but they don't show tangible results. The Latinx community needs better representation through the website.

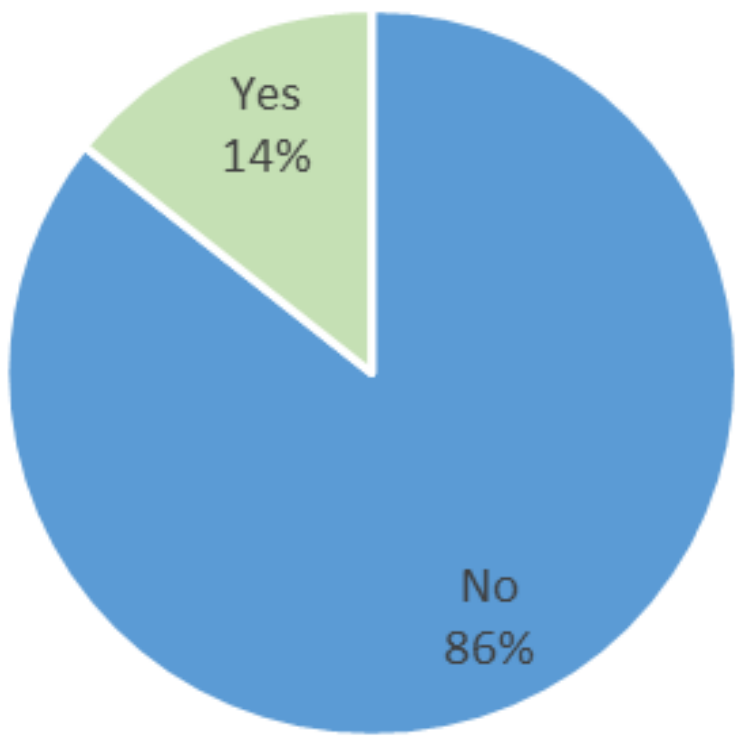
We have been stereotyped, profiled or discriminated against on campus. A dim light has shined upon our true identities, but when you see us on campus, who do you really see?



Latine Student Perceptions of Sacramento State Survey Findings

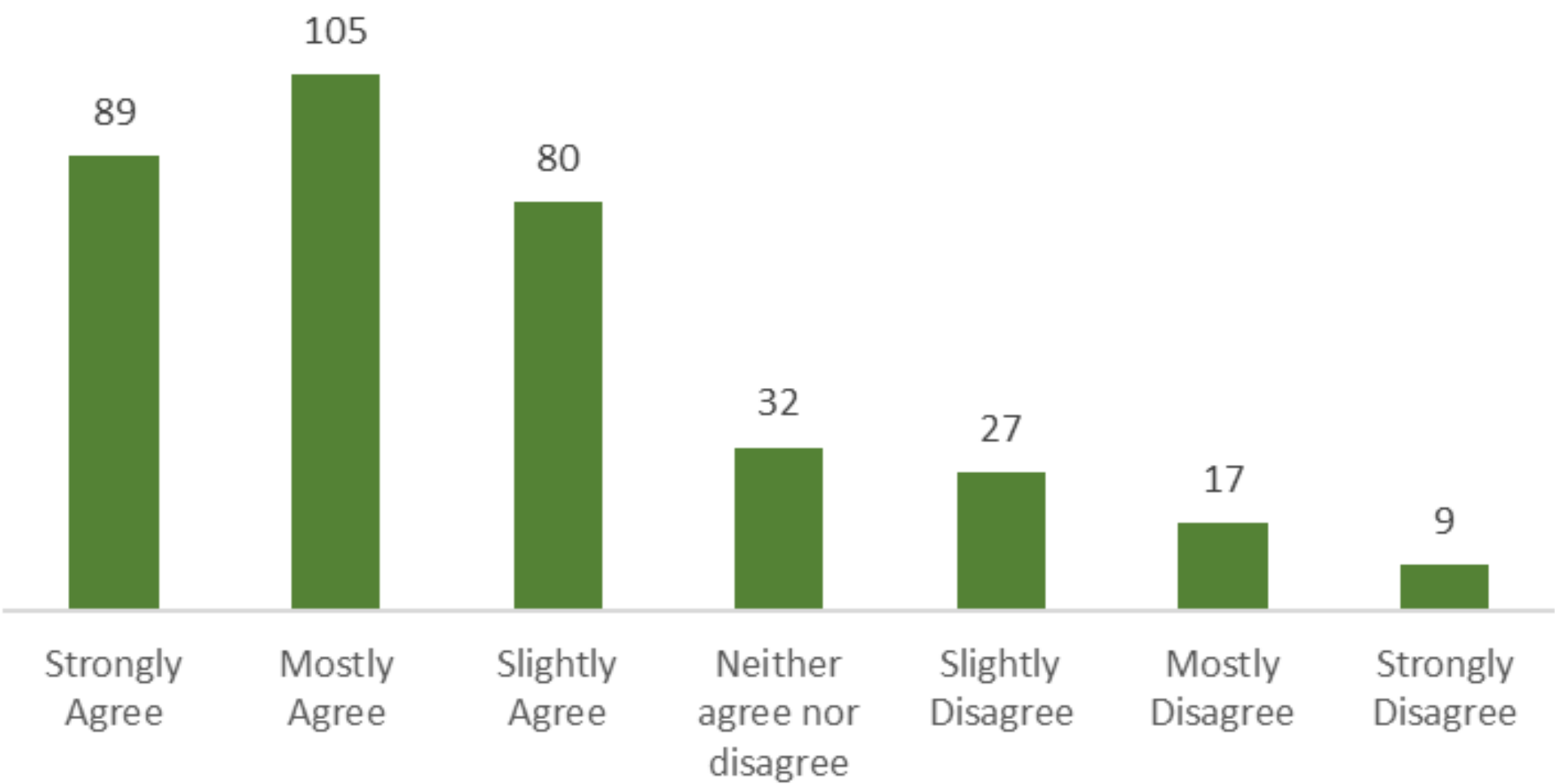
Student respondents were asked to rate their agreement from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (7) to the phrases found above each bar chart regarding their college experiences.

In the past 12 months, have you felt discriminated against at Sacramento State?



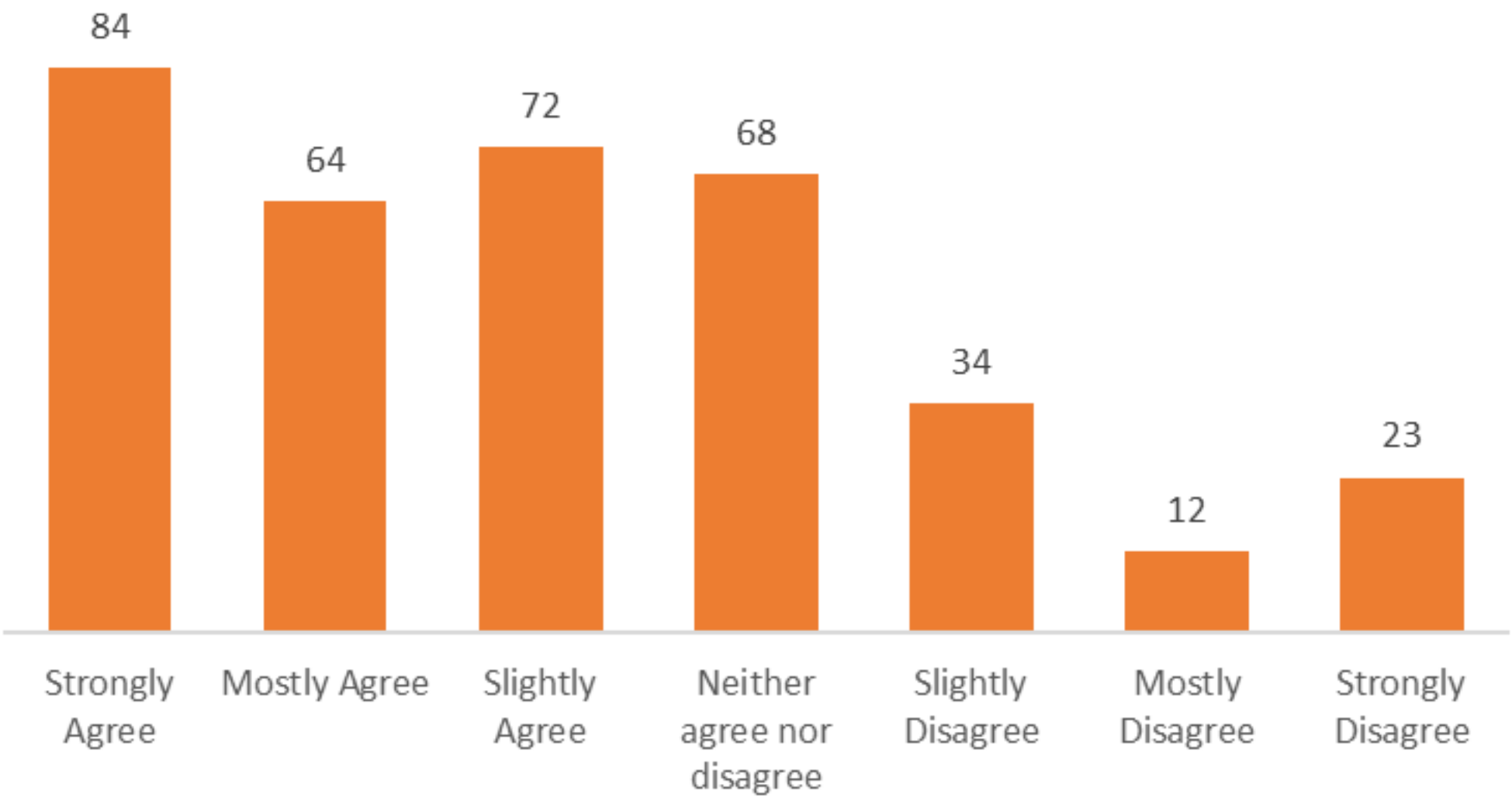
According to survey findings, 14.3% (n = 51) of Latine students reported that they have felt discriminated against at Sacramento State in the past 12 months.

I feel safe on campus.



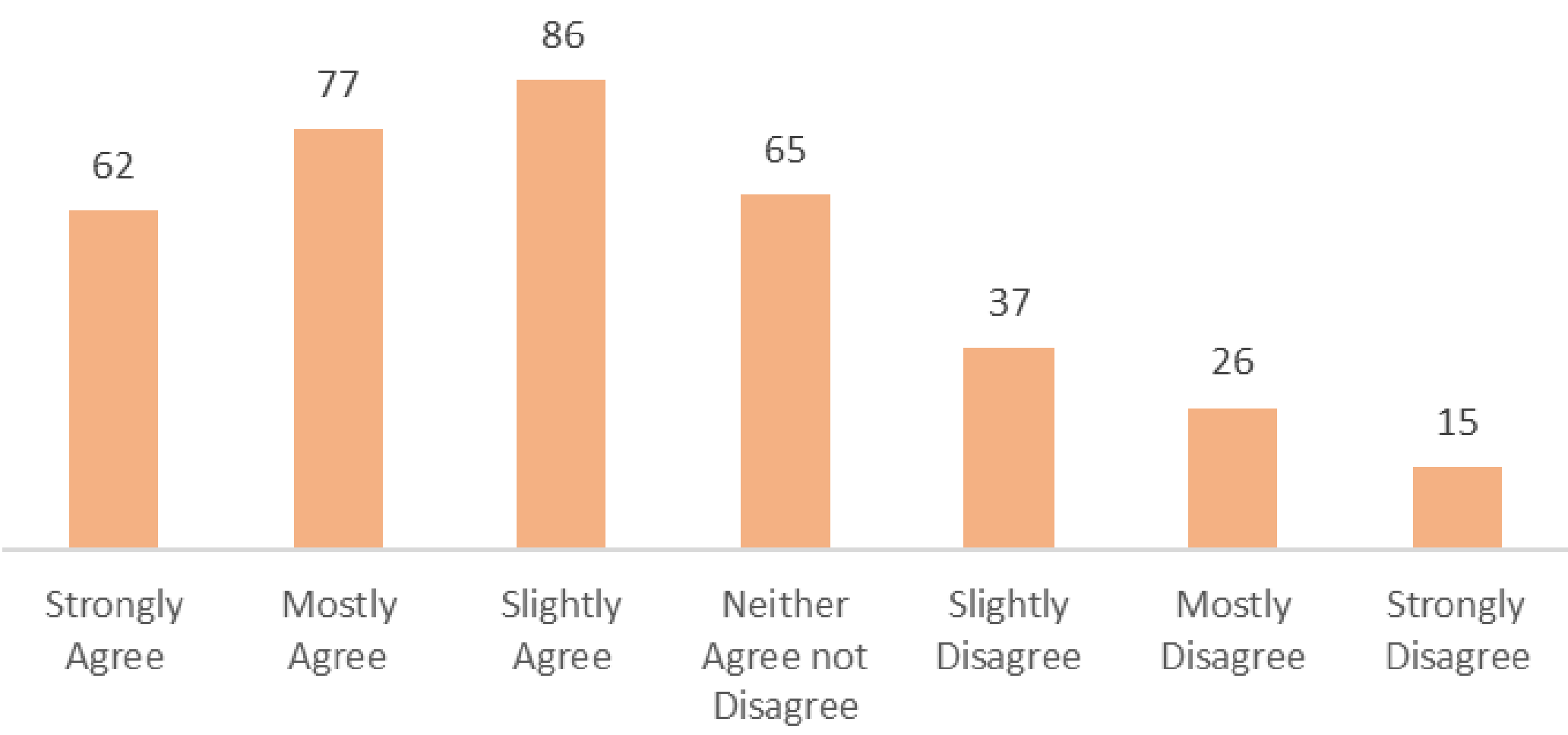
On average, student respondents feel safe on campus ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.55$).

Sacramento State prioritizes my mental health at the same level as my academics.



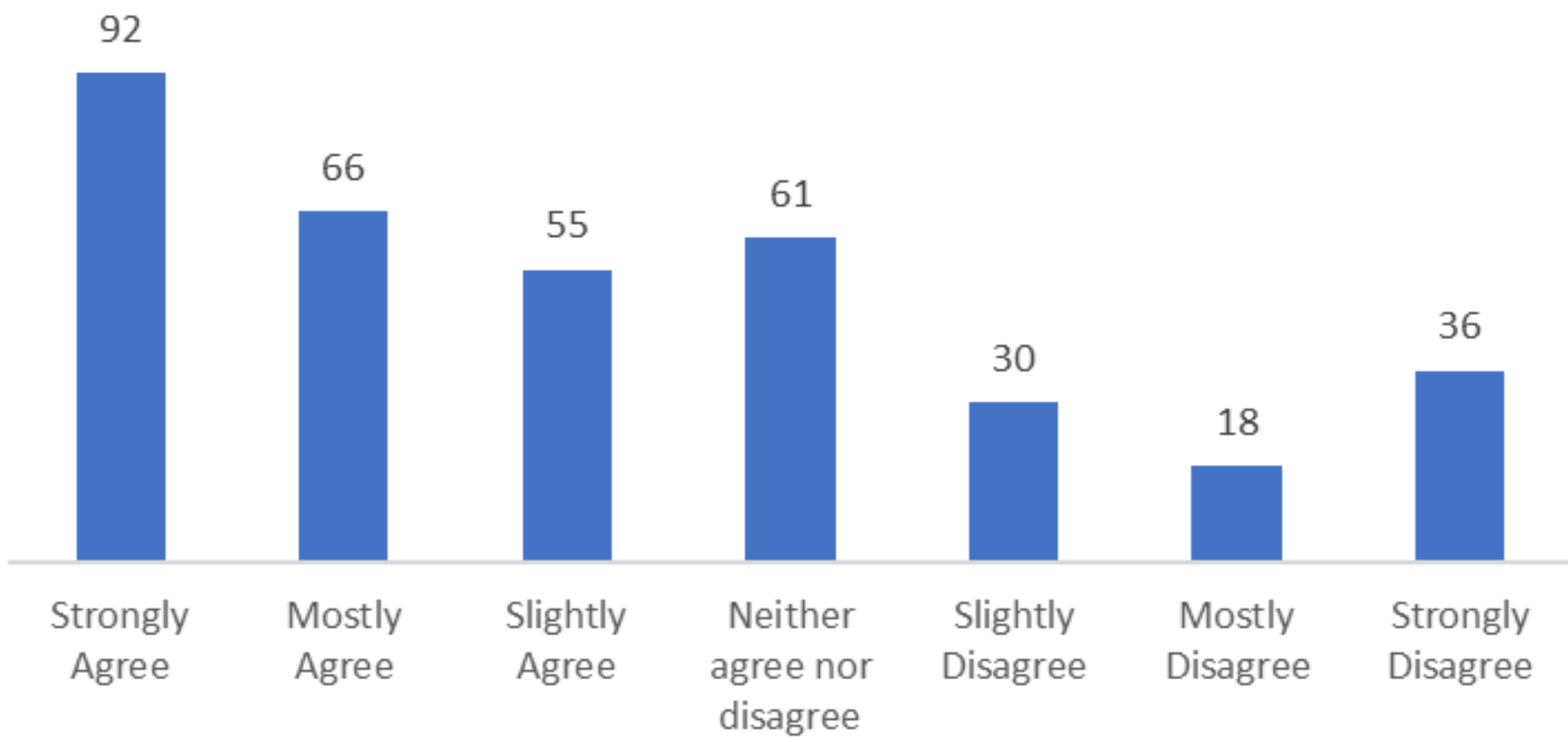
On average, student respondents feels that Sacramento State prioritizes their mental health at the same level as their academics ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.89$).

It is easy to find people on campus who understand my struggles.



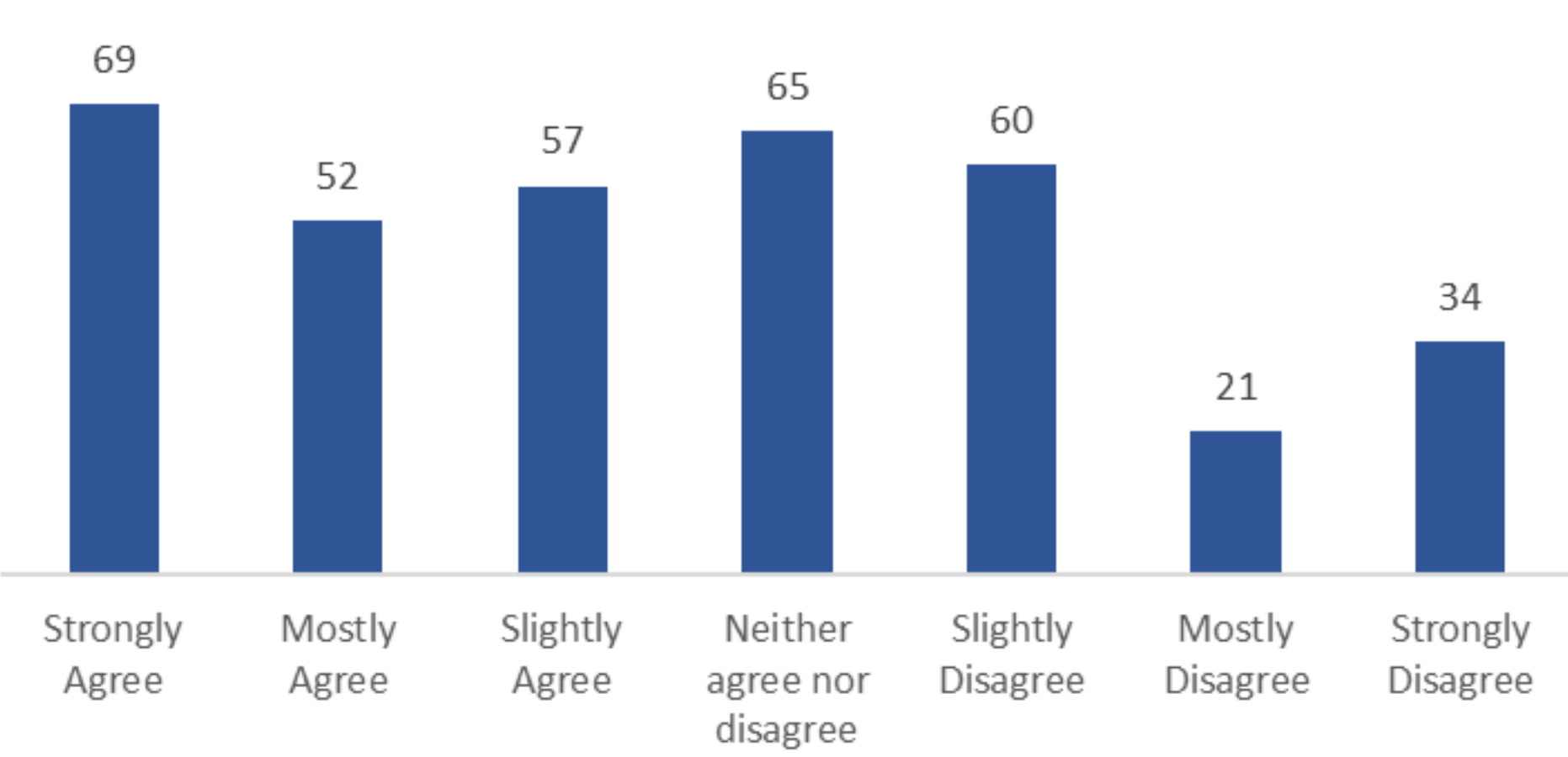
On average, student respondents feels that it is easy to find people on campus who understand their struggles ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.65$).

I feel that Sacramento State addressed the recent sexual assaults on campus in a timely manner.



On average, student respondents feel that Sacramento State addressed the recent sexual assaults on campus in a timely manner ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.94$).

Sacramento State is well lit at night and early in the morning.



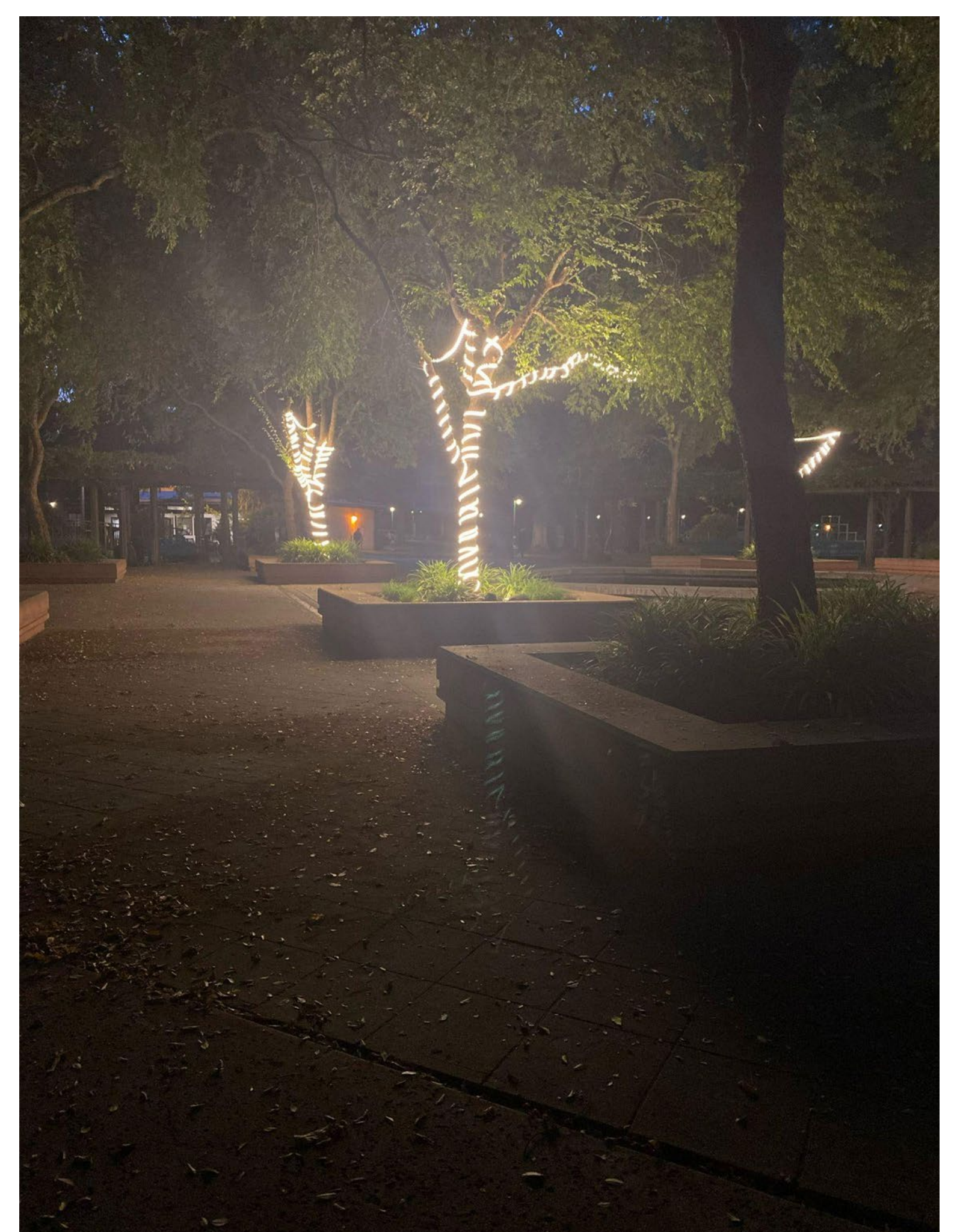
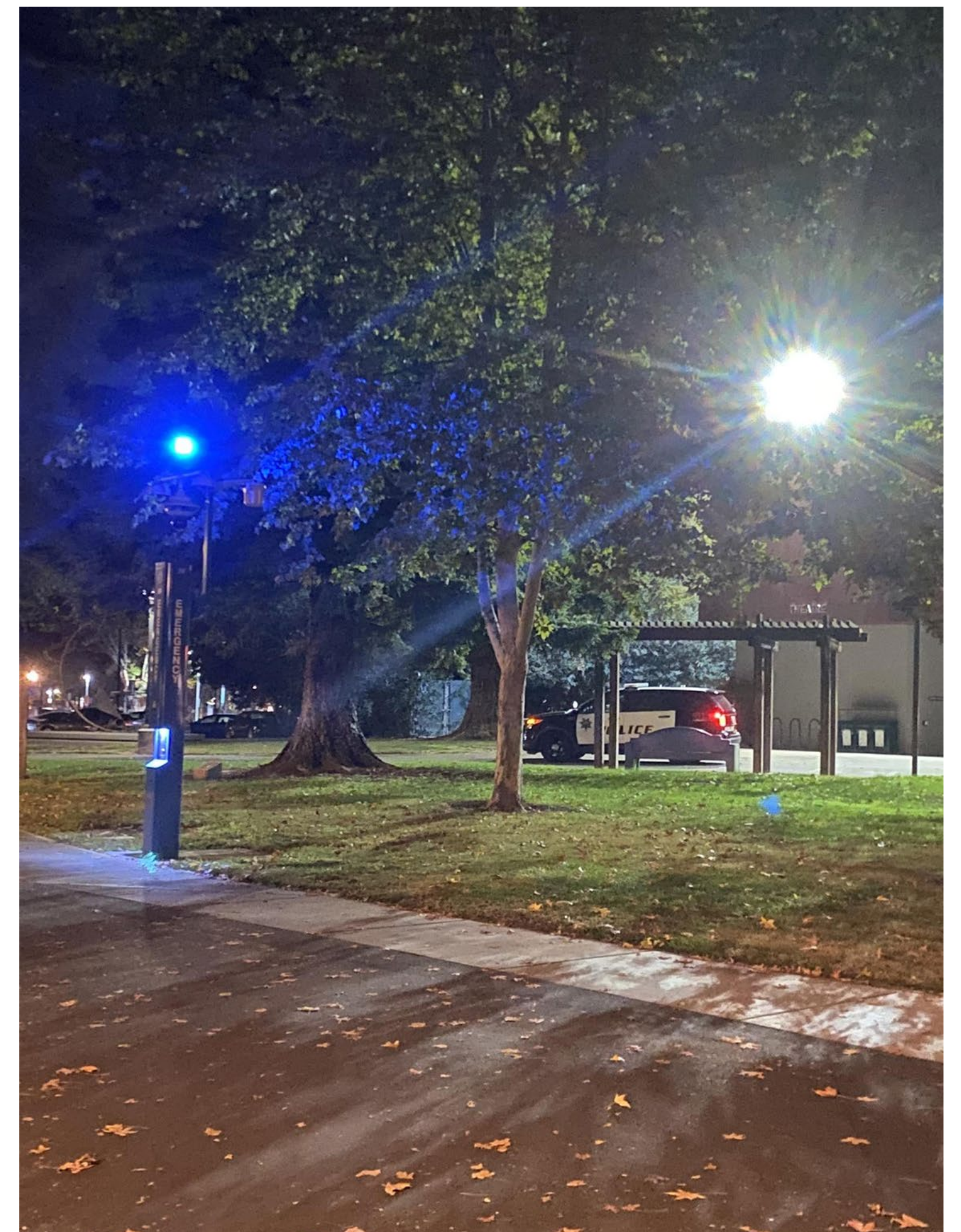
On average, student respondents feel that Sacramento State is well lit at night and early in the morning ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.89$).



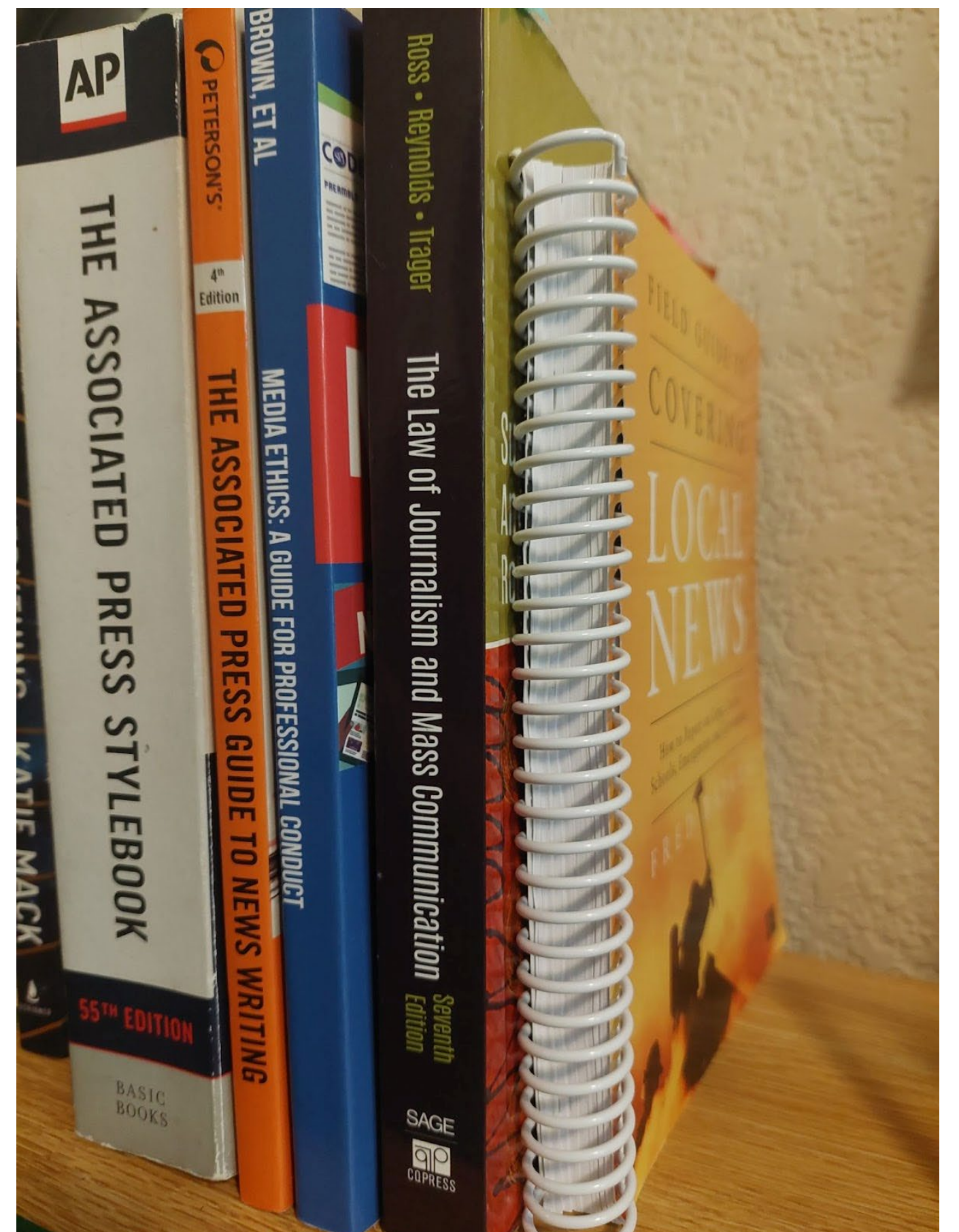
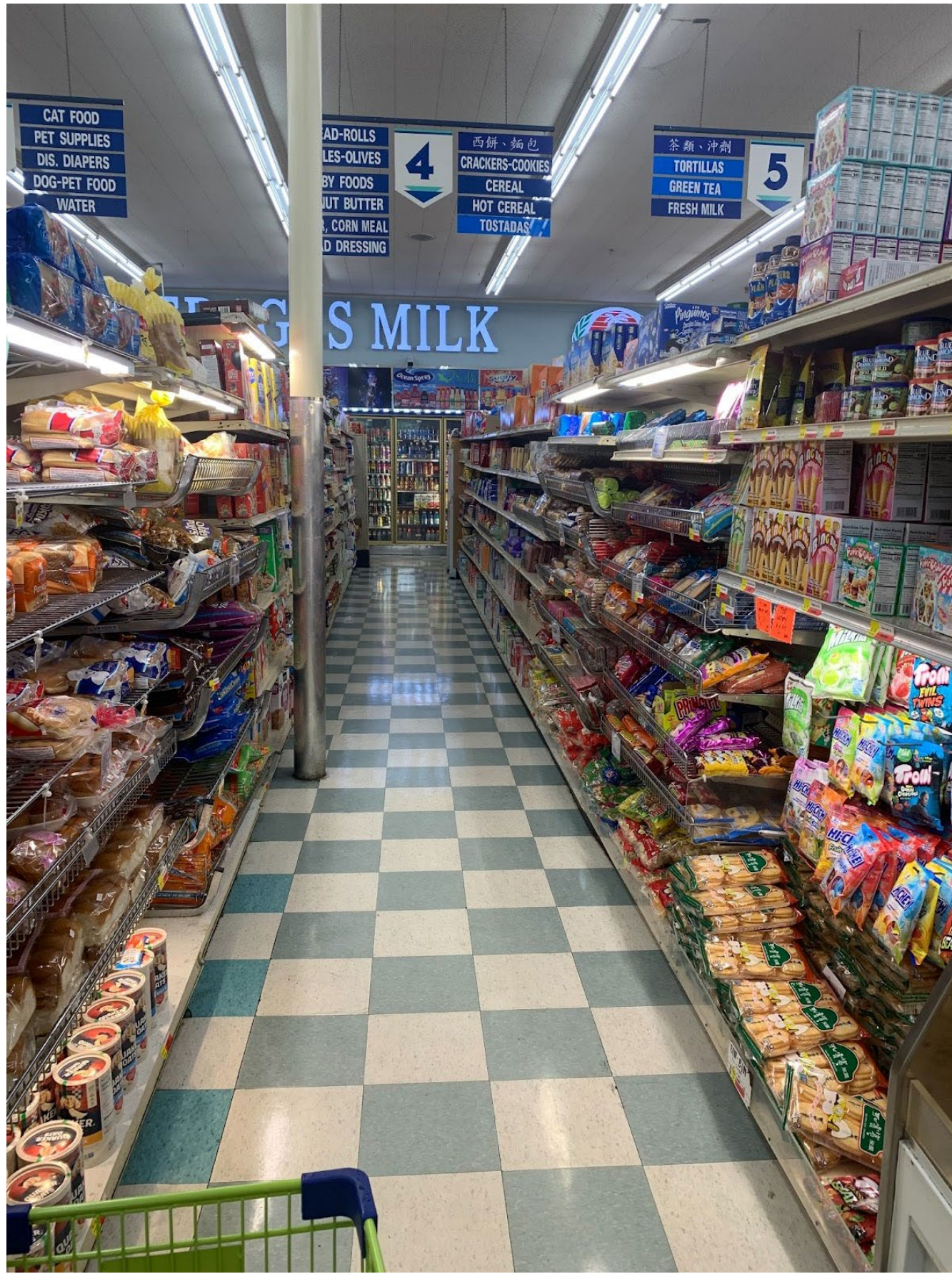
Safety

During the fall of 2022 students initiated a discussion to address the repeated sexual assaults on campus. We worry that if students did not start the conversation the campus would have not acted.

We know there are resources on campus like the emergency poles, and Hornet Safety Escort program. Yet, many of these resources do not go far enough. For example, the Hornet escort service doesn't align with evening class schedules, how can more people be hired? We need more lighting on campus. Why do we need to go through all these forums and emails for change? Where was the prevention? We have seen the campus say they will address these issues but we are worried that actions have not followed the campus discussion. How many more incidents need to occur before we are made to feel safe?



Imposter Phenomenon



Together these six pictures represent the imposter syndrome we feel on campus. Starting from the top left and continuing along the row read the following captions below that describe what we hope for the university and our experience:

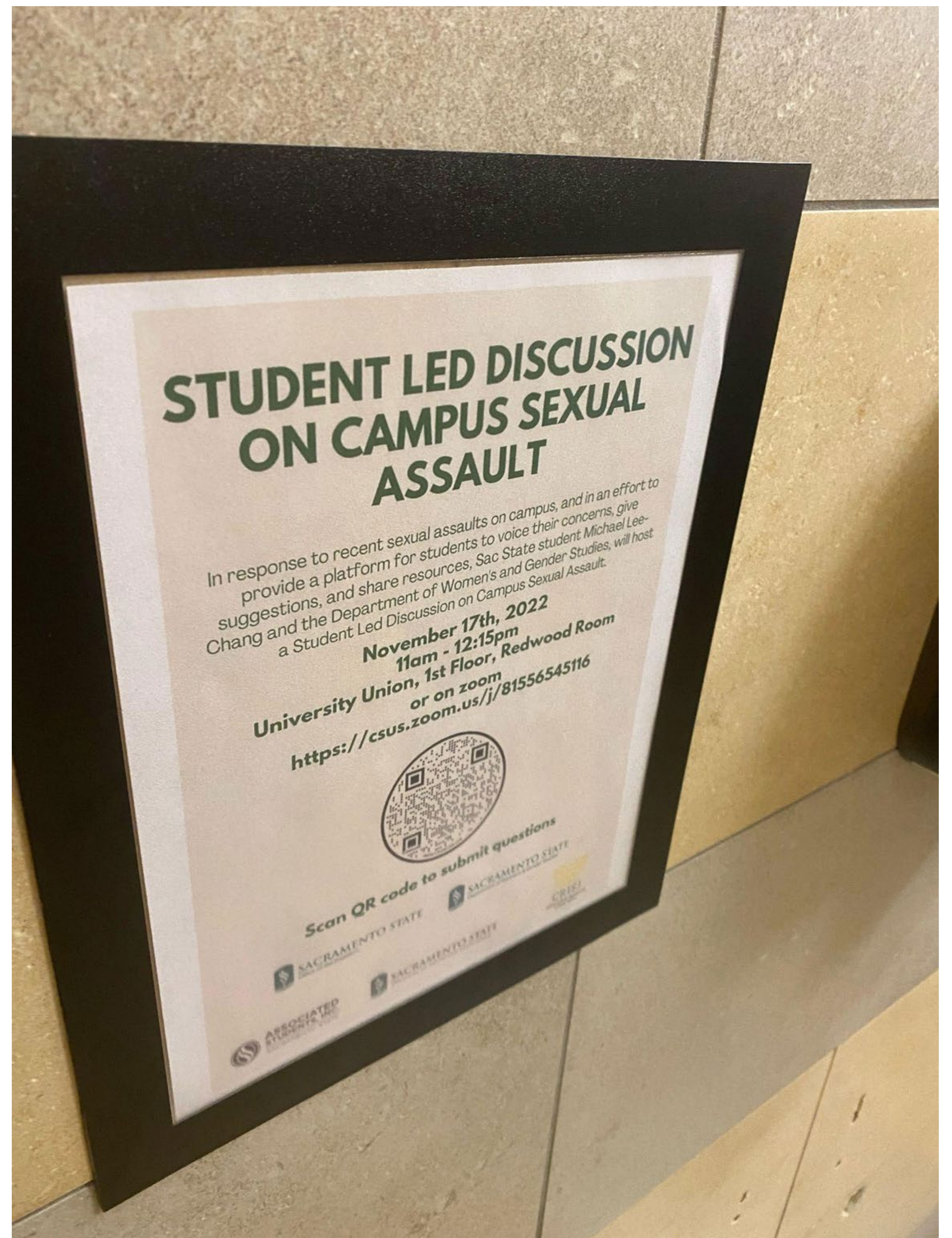
- 1.They see me here without having to knock. Please reach out, interconnectedness
- 2.Feeing included outside of campus places. Stores having products that are Latinx in ways that are blended, fitting in without feeling labeled as separate. The way this grocery store makes us feel like home is what we search for when attending campus.
- 3.Don't feel qualified to be in this academic space but I'm here learning their ways
- 4.Often think about how this is a stop where I need to get off, but I have to keep going
- 5.For them and everyone that came before them and for everyone that comes after.
- 6.At your own pace, in this big space

Great intentions, needs attention



We have found some representation on campus but not enough. We have found representation through artwork on campus, although sometimes the stories behind the artwork are unclear. We worry that some spaces are meant to check the box for diversity and inclusion, but we do not feel that we belong. In the first picture, we see that new spaces are created, but where do Latinx students belong in these spaces? Some of us have experienced being questioned for being in particular spaces or being turned away when asking questions. In the second picture we see a place that was made for all of us, yet it is a place where we do not always feel welcome. The Multicultural center is for students of all cultures but does not seem welcoming from the outside. A place meant for many yet feels hidden and unwelcoming are just two examples of where we have questioned Latinx visibility, but there are many more.

Let our voices be heard!



“Actions speak louder than words,” in the sense that the school has to take action to give us, the students, the voice to speak on these issues. Without making us feel uncomfortable, silenced, unheard, or unseen by creating safe spaces to speak up. These spaces need to be more than just ASI. We also need to know and have opportunities to learn about our rights as students. We have seen how students can make change by coming together on their own. Just imagine how much change we can make with an institution who supports us and provides us with a platform!

