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An Investigation of IUPUI Student Financial Barriers

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**By the Numbers:
Understanding IUPUI
Student Financial
Barriers**

Definition of Unmet Financial Need

The National Common Data Set provides a framework for calculating a student's academic year financial need that is "met" by different sources of financial support. **Unmet Need** is the portion of a student's academic year financial need that exceeds these forms of financial support.

Calculation Example

Cost of Attendance (COA)

1. Tuition/fees, housing/meals, books/supplies, travel, and personal expenses = \$24,000

Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

1. A FAFSA-driven expectation of family financial support - \$10,000

Gift Aid

1. Scholarships, grants, etc. from federal, state, IUPUI, and private sources - \$1,000

Self-Help Aid

1. Subsidized federal loans and federal work study earnings - \$8,000

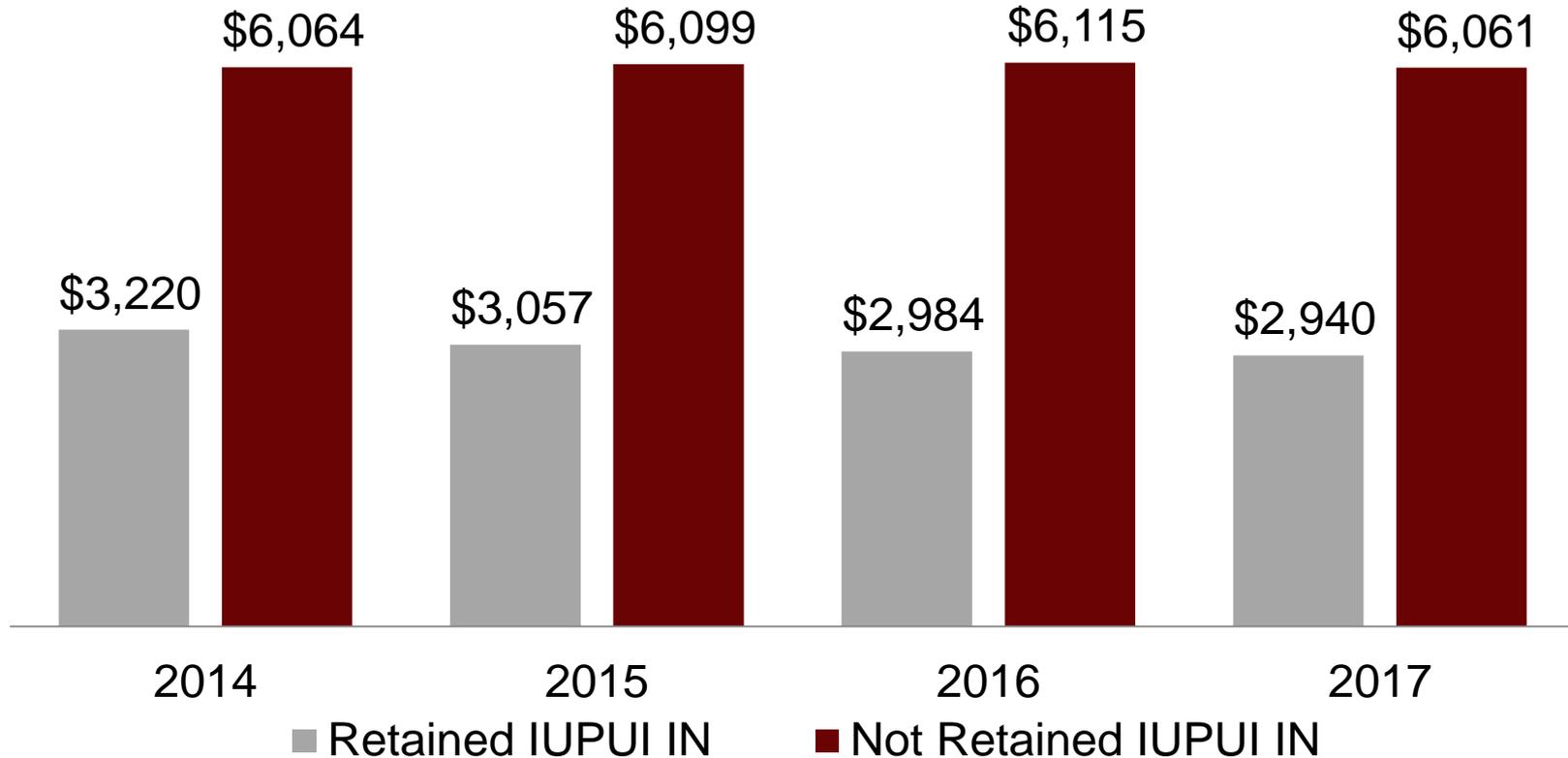
Difference is **Unmet Need** = \$5,000*

* Students must take out unsubsidized loans, private loans, or work to support unmet need



Annual Unmet Financial Need and One-Year Retention First-Time Beginners

Total Unmet Financial Need Academic Year Common Dataset Definition



Retained and Not Retained Ns (2014=2123;1000), (2015=2183; 948), (2016=2319; 997), (2017=2270; 1086)



Unmet Financial Need Fall Semester Fall 2017 IUPUI Indianapolis Beginners	N	Retention Rate at IUPUI
No FAFSA on file	395	68%
No Unmet Financial Need (FAFSA on file)	1,262	75%
\$1 to \$1000 Unmet Need	230	76%
\$1001 to \$2000 Unmet Need	169	72%
\$2001 to \$3000 Unmet Need	174	74%
\$3001 to \$4000 Unmet Need	186	68%
\$4001 to \$5000 Unmet Need	217	72%
\$5001 to \$6000 Unmet Need	174	68%
\$6001 to \$7000 Unmet Need	127	73%
\$7001 to \$8000 Unmet Need	106	71%
\$8001 to \$9000 Unmet Need	117	56%
\$9001 to \$10,000 Unmet Need	85	64%
More Than \$10,000 Unmet Need	578	40%
Grand Total	3,820	67%

*** 1,013 beginners with unmet need > \$6K**



Unmet Financial Need Academic Year Fall 2017 IUPUI Indianapolis	N	% of All
No FAFSA on file	4158	21%
No Unmet Financial Need (FAFSA on file)	5069	26%
\$1 to \$1000 Unmet Need	948	5%
\$1001 to \$2000 Unmet Need	727	4%
\$2001 to \$3000 Unmet Need	682	4%
\$3001 to \$4000 Unmet Need	758	4%
\$4001 to \$5000 Unmet Need	849	4%
\$5001 to \$6000 Unmet Need	704	4%
\$6001 to \$7000 Unmet Need	772	4%
\$7001 to \$8000 Unmet Need	616	3%
\$8001 to \$9000 Unmet Need	642	3%
\$9001 to \$10,000 Unmet Need	479	2%
More Than \$10,000 Unmet Need	3067	16%
Grand Total	19471	100%



Financial Barriers to Success: Understanding Students Experiences

(full report posted <https://irds.iupui.edu/>
under Students – Student Surveys)

Purpose of Investigation

1. Gather in-depth information about IUPUI students' experiences and to enhance understanding about what academic, social, and financial barriers students have faced during their college career.
2. Ideally, IUPUI campus leaders and administrators use results to inform decisions about what resources are needed to ensure the success of all students, particularly those that may have difficulty affording college.



Methodology

1. A mixed-method approach was deployed in an effort to capture students' in-depth perceptions.
2. Gathered information from a broad representation of under resourced undergraduate students at IUPUI.
3. Conducted a series of six focus groups and subsequently administered an online Qualtrics-based survey to under resourced students.
4. Results were content analyzed to identify major themes.
5. Major themes were supported by actual examples of students' statements.
6. Methodology allowed for a trustworthy representation of students' experiences while at IUPUI.
7. Trained members of the Office of Institutional Research and Decision Support (IRDS) and Division of Student Affairs facilitated the student focus groups. The same protocol was used for the online survey instrument and the focus groups. The study was IRB approved # 1807459185.



Recruitment

1. Students were asked to voluntarily participate in a research study of IUPUI student experiences and perceptions of barriers and financial support.
2. We selected students that received State, Federal, or Institutional financial aid or were part of a scholarship program such as Diversity Enrichment and Achievement Program (DEAP), Twenty First Century Scholars, Diversity Scholars Program, Student Support Services, and the Nina Mason Pulliam Scholars. The focus groups specifically focused on intact groups that were part of scholarship programs for under resourced students.
3. Students were entered into a drawing to win one of four \$100 Amazon gift cards as an incentive for participating.



Participants

1. A total of 16 students participated in one of six focus groups over a two week period.
2. A sample of 3300 undergraduate students who were Pell Eligible and had over \$6000 of unmet financial aid.
3. A total of 373 respondents agreed to participate in the survey (response rate = 12%).



Participants

Focus Group

Ethnicity

- African American 44%,
- White 22%
- Latinx 17%
- International 17%

Other Characteristics

- Women 67%
- LGBTQ+ 11%
- Federal Pell Grant 17%
- First Generation 12%

Following Groups were Represented

- DEAP 11%
- Diversity Sch. Program 12%
- TFCS 1 student
- Student Support Services 1 student
- Veterans 1 student

Age

- 18-19 20%
- 20-22 20%
- 23-25 40%
- Above 25 20%

Online Questionnaire

Ethnicity

- White 44%
- African American 14%
- Latinx 7%
- Asian 4%
- Multiracial 3%
- Other 2%

Other Characteristics

- Women 76%
- Federal Pell Grant 33%
- First Generation 22%
- Transfer student 21%
- LGBTQ+ 5%
- Students with Disability 3%

Following Groups were Represented

- TFCS 7%
- DEAP 3%
- Veterans 2%
- Student Support Services 1%
- Diversity Sch. Programs 1%

Age

- 18-19 26%
- 20-22 28%
- 23-25 14%
- Above 25 32%



Major Findings

1. Majority of students feel sense of belonging and get community from scholarship programs, student clubs/organizations, and classroom settings. Nontraditional students tend to have many external commitments and get community from classrooms.
2. Under-resourced students struggle to pay for college.
3. Multiple strategies used to pay for college (scholarships, loans, working on and off campus, and family help).
4. Most students work in addition to having scholarships and loans.
5. Students expressed debt/loan aversion.
6. Students struggle to pay for textbooks.
7. Students struggle for find affordable housing (close to campus is expensive and off-campus students struggle with transportation and parking).



Students' Voices



Sense of Belonging

- “If you wanted to be involved it could be a little scary your first couple times but those events are always super welcoming. The people that work them are always really nice. The people that attend are always just like you, wanting more people to meet and get to know. So I think that IUPUI actually does an excellent job with that.”
- “My classes are interesting and my professors are nice and they teach well. I live on-campus and have had a good experience so far. I am still getting comfortable with campus, but I am learning more about it every day and becoming familiar with the area.”
- “ I have been able to meet many close friends.”
- “I (get community) in classes as I'm doing okay but when it comes to making friends and being involved it could probably be better.”
- “I do feel a sense of belonging here because you quickly make friends and recognize familiar faces in classes throughout your major.”
- “International peer mentoring has been a big help getting oriented with college environment and making new friends.”



Financial Struggles

- “My experience here has been good so far. I’m just worrying how to pay the rest of my bursar bill, which is stressful.”
- “Parking is expensive and takes a chunk of money that could be used for other things.”
- “Not enough financial education in the beginning (Freshmen year).”
- “Everything is extremely expensive everywhere. I can’t even afford to eat on campus.”
- “Definitely financial. I don’t feel like the school caters to older students very well.”
- “I pay outstate tuition so that is a strain on my family and me.”
- “I recently have faced a financial barrier. I did not receive enough aid to cover my tuition, unlike in the past years. I had to take on student loans.”
- “I have dealt with financial barriers at IUPUI because it has been difficult balancing paying for school and housing and then my school work.”
- “I’m working about 10-20 hours a week right down here at the fitness center so, but it’s just difficult cause I have exams and homework. I don’t get no sleep at night which makes me not want to go to math class in the morning so I don’t go.”
- “Since I am a DACA student, there is more like options now for them. I don’t have any scholarships and I’m not technically a citizen. There’s are not a lot of opportunity and if we do, it has to be private. They’re really competitive, all the DACA students are fighting for them. So currently, the past three years, my parents have been paying for my college tuition.”



Strategies and approaches to pay for college and college-related expenses

- “Mainly loans and what that didn’t cover I was working and now I’m living off of the money I had saved up. It is all loans and the help of the Pew Grants and a couple scholarships too.”
- “I took out my subsidized loan and unsubsidized loan. Still didn’t cover though because I had to get the parking pass, which is \$897. So, I’m still stuck with the bill so I took out two loans.”
- “I’m one of the Nina Mason scholars and it us an AMAZING program. I mean they do pay all of your bills pretty much.”
- “I think college is expensive. Even though I have a scholarship... paying to live and eat and trying to juggle it all is tough. I have to work to pay bills, but I want to have school my primary focus and then it’s like I want an internship. Can I FIND a paid internship and still manage to pay my bills? And without going into massive debt? Financial stuff.”



Textbooks

- “I have rented or bought pre-owned textbooks instead of buying new textbooks.”
- “Using the rental option to have a lower cost even if it’s a text I would have wanted to keep as a resource, bought used.”
- “I started renting them off of Chegg or Amazon.”
- “I will try to not buy them from the bookstore because they’re more expensive and I’ll try to search and hunt online, and if I can find them I will take out loans to pay for those books. If I can’t, then I’ll try to find somebody that has been in the program before, because they could just lend me their book or something like that. Um, or try to get together with somebody that’s in the class, but sometimes that uh doesn’t always work so, I have to get it on my own.”
- “There are some textbooks that are just like out of my budget so t I’m not buying the textbooks. That doesn’t sound like a great strategy but it’s like am I EATING the first month of school or am I having this textbook
- “After buying all of my textbooks and then going to class and the professors tell you to buy them but then, they never really use them so I was like “Wow! I’m not buying textbooks ever again because I wasted so much money on them.”
- “... that can be a determining factor for people that they’re debating two electives and one has 500 dollars in books the other has 20 dollars in books.. I know which one I’d take.”



Transportation

- “Find a more affordable way to commute to campus. Lower parking pass costs, have a bus run more often around Indy for IUPUI students, more bike lanes for a safer commute. I currently ride my bike to class instead of paying for gas and a parking pass, but I am often almost hit by a car on a daily basis. It is very scary at times.”
- “My car is finally paid off this year. When it wasn’t paid off, I struggled keeping it from getting repossessed (which did happen once, and I was able to borrow money to get it back). Now that it’s paid off, I just have to keep gas in it which is hard because it’s not a fuel efficient vehicle. I don’t drive anywhere except to childcare, work, and school. I don’t ever have money to fill my tank, but I definitely take advantage of when gas is cheaper and get as much fuel as I can.”

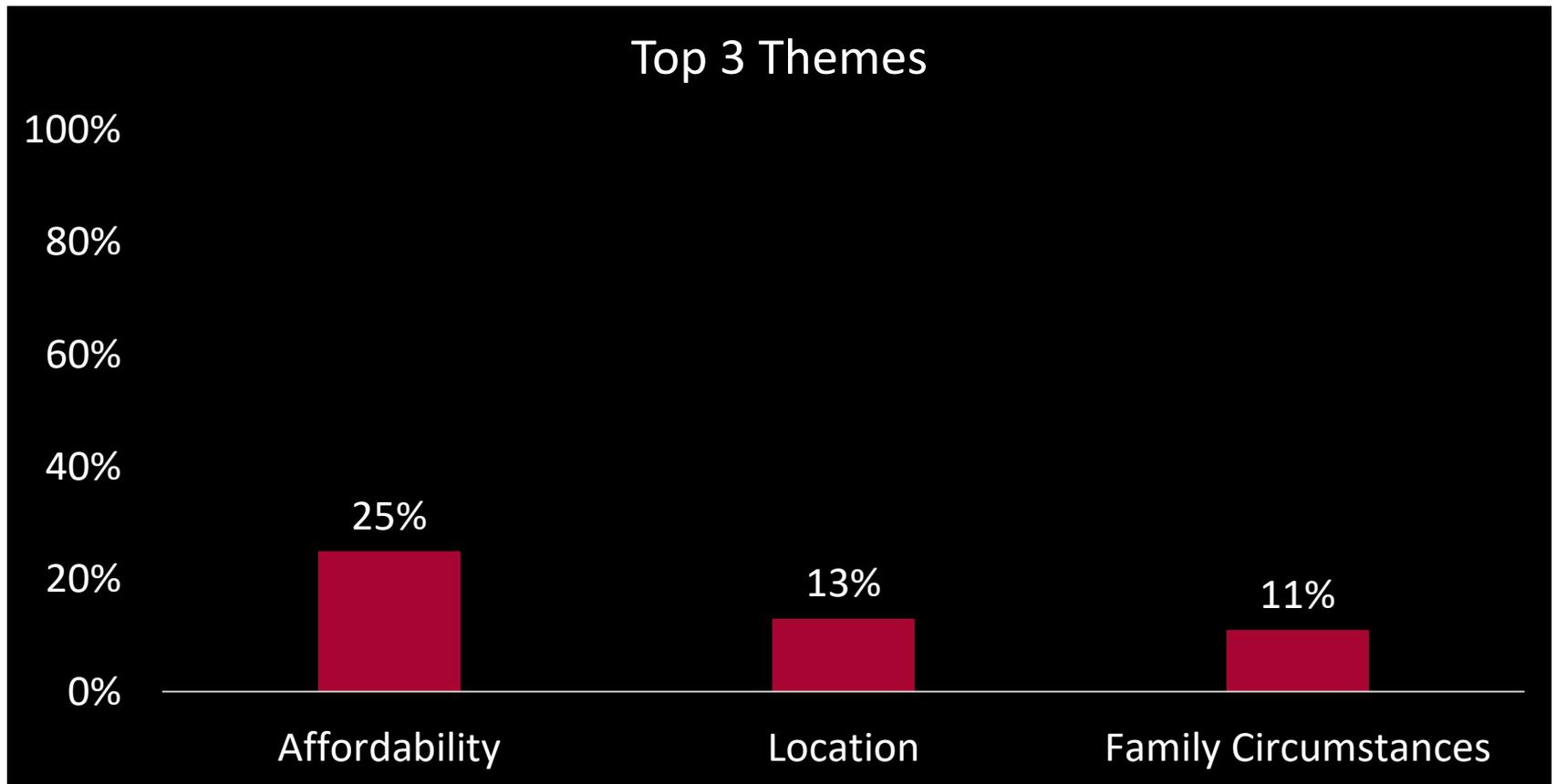


Affordable Housing

- “I wanted to live at least near campus, but it’s expensive and I have a car so I might as well drive it. It’s less convenient but still cheaper.”
- “I commute to school and traffic is challenging sometimes. Finding somewhere to park....it’s terrible. I will have to leave almost an hour and half earlier than usual and I live 10 minutes from here. Also my car isn’t the best but it will get from point a to point b. But last year, I had a lot of issues with it and I didn’t have the money to pay to fix my car and other stuff. So, there were two classes I couldn’t go to because I didn’t have a way to.”
- “Close commute to campus.”
- “Cheaper rent living further outside of Indianapolis.”
- “The close proximity to campus so I wouldn't have to deal with traffic or a lot of gas money. Also, parking sucks and parking passes are expensive.”



Factors Affecting Housing Choice



Food/Nutrition

- “I still struggle with my eating habits, but this has been a pattern of my life. I try to eat at least one, sometimes two meals a day, but it’s tough when packing in course loads of the semester and working full time.”
- “I just don't eat sometimes.”
- “Food pantry on campus helps here.”
- “So far, I have made a great use of the Paws Pantry at the IUPUI campus center.”
- “I have gone to stores that sell food cheaper, I have also gone to food pantries. We had SNAP before, but in trying to get my husband legalized we have stopped using it. My mother also helps in any way that she can with lending us some money until my husband gets paid and we pay her back.”



Working Off Campus and On

Off-Campus

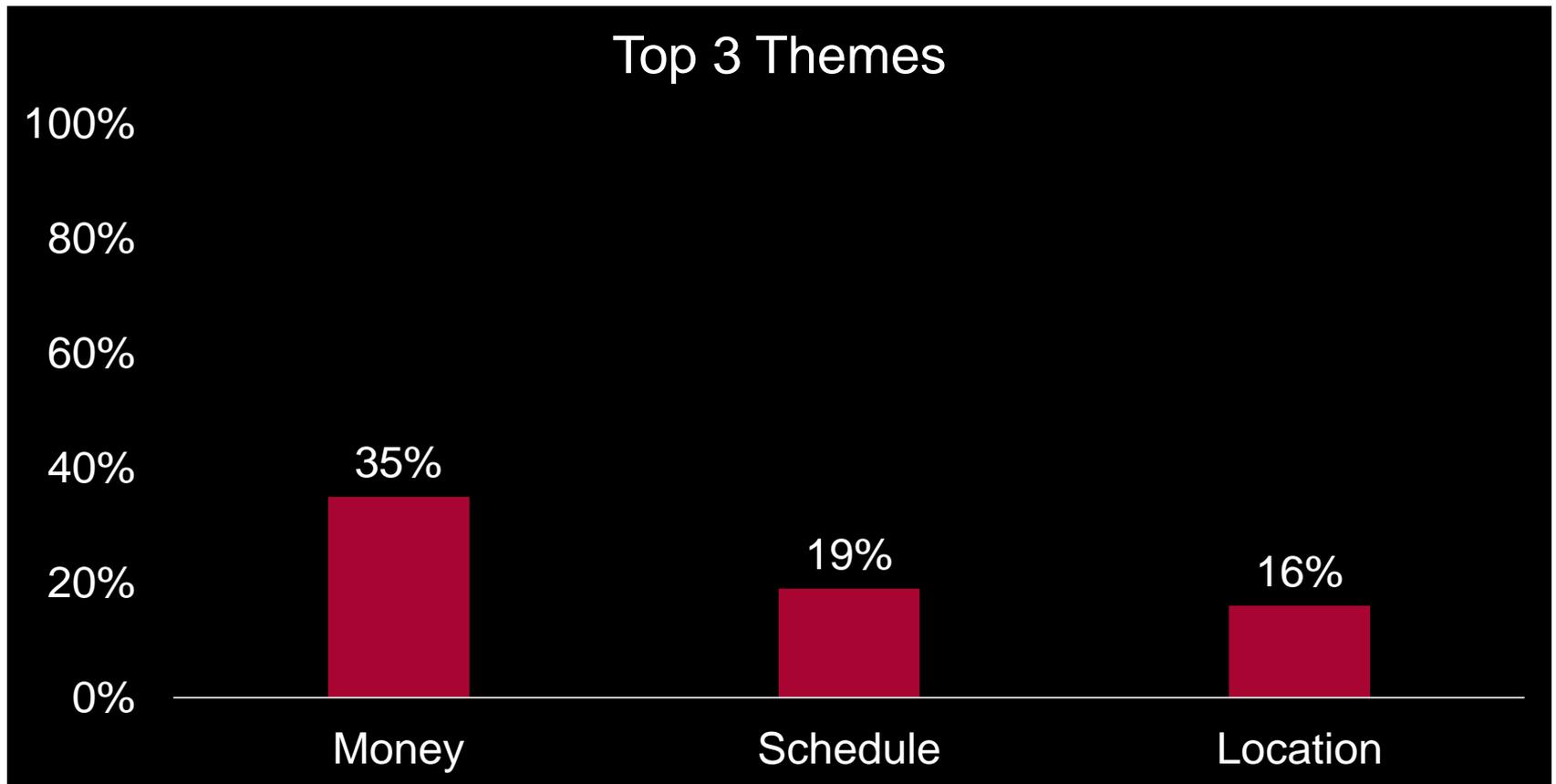
- “I stayed off campus because I already had a job that was close to home and did not see the point in getting a job around here.”
- “Hourly pay rate is increased by 2 fold off campus.”
- “My off-campus job allows me to work more abundant and flexible hours than my on-campus job.”

On-Campus

- “I don't have a car so it is just easier and I have more flexibility with my schedule working on campus.”
- “I am planning on working on campus as I know they will respect my hours because school comes first.”



Factors in Deciding on or Off Campus Work

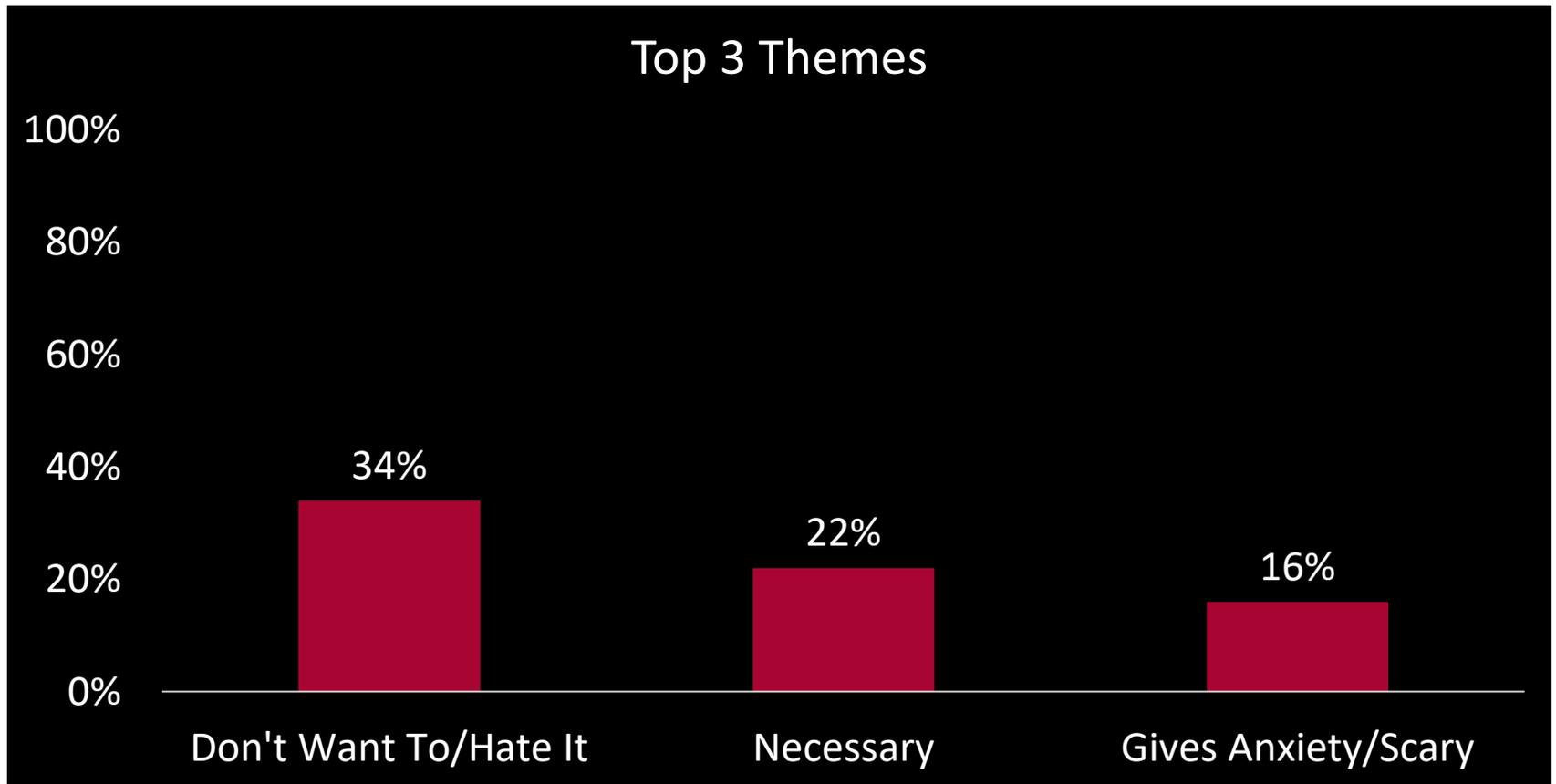


Debt/Loan Aversion

1. “I would rather avoid taking a loan simply because it costs more than actually paying it out. So if I had a choice between taking a loan and taking a gap year, I would probably just take the gap year.”
2. “It’s pretty terrifying. My goal is to try and get enough scholarships so that they’re minimal, and so that interest is minimal but if it’s what you have to do it’s what you have to do. I would really like to get the whole experience and like study abroad. They actually have so many scholarships for studying abroad so, that doesn’t even seem like it’s going to be a huge deal.”
3. “I don’t want to take any loans just because I don’t want to be in debt. So my parents told me at least you can make that happen, just stay away as long as possible. And I can’t even take them. But if I could, I would.”
4. “Also when taking out loans...know what type of loans they should take...my mentors always advised me ... you know it’s, it’s not free money...if you think it’s free money then have some leftover but you’re going to have to pay more in interest...so take only what you need and mostly, going for government loan like I had a Perkins loan and someone will have a really good idea that taking out private loans just really bad. It’s good for emergency purposes but in the long time it is going to screw you up real bad.”



Factors Affecting Taking Out Loans



Ten Recommendations from Student Experience Council Financial Strategies Taskforce



Regarding Cost Issues...

1. Tuition and Fees: Offer more flexible payment plan options and evaluate the assessment of extra fees that may unfairly penalize under resourced students
2. Housing and Meals: Explore more affordable campus housing strategies and consider ways to make campus food plans more affordable and tiered
3. Books and Supplies: Promote ways to lower the costs of textbooks through Open Education Resources (OER)
4. Transportation: Consider whether the costs of student parking could be reduced or tiered and take a new look at public transportation infrastructure



Regarding Resource Issues...

5. Devote more resources to need-based scholarships and grants
6. Devote more resources for emergency situations (food, shelter, basic needs)
7. Consider ways to offer students higher pay for on-campus jobs

Regarding Financial Education...

8. Develop more intrusive, early, and ongoing financial education planning and communication
9. Improve financial education efforts before enrollment, noting that low income nonresident students are a special time consuming concern
10. Expand the services of the student advocate's office to connect needy students with available IUPUI and community resources



Build on Strengths

- It is positive that IUPUI offers many opportunities for students to develop community via peer mentoring programs, student clubs and organizations, and that many scholarship programs have a community component that helps students feel a sense of belonging to IUPUI, other students, and staff/ faculty members.
- Many nontraditional students derive sense of community from classroom settings; instructors should consider this fact and develop opportunities for students to engage with one another and interact.
- IUPUI has dedicated and caring faculty and staff that want to focus on the success of under-resourced students



Questions, Feedback, Ideas

