



## INTRODUCTION

The increasingly diverse landscape of American higher education necessitates strategic, evidence-based approaches to boost student retention. Literature consistently shows that meaningful engagement beyond the classroom contributes to a more impactful and enduring educational experience.

## OBJECTIVE

Identify the barriers and motivations to involvement within the Department of Animal Science, to improve student experience and persistence.

## METHODS

### PARTICIPANTS

Undergraduate students enrolled in Introduction to Animal Science or Introduction to Equine Science

### RESPONSES COLLECTED

Total responses collected:  
N=358

### ELIGIBILITY

Consent to participate in the study  
N=346

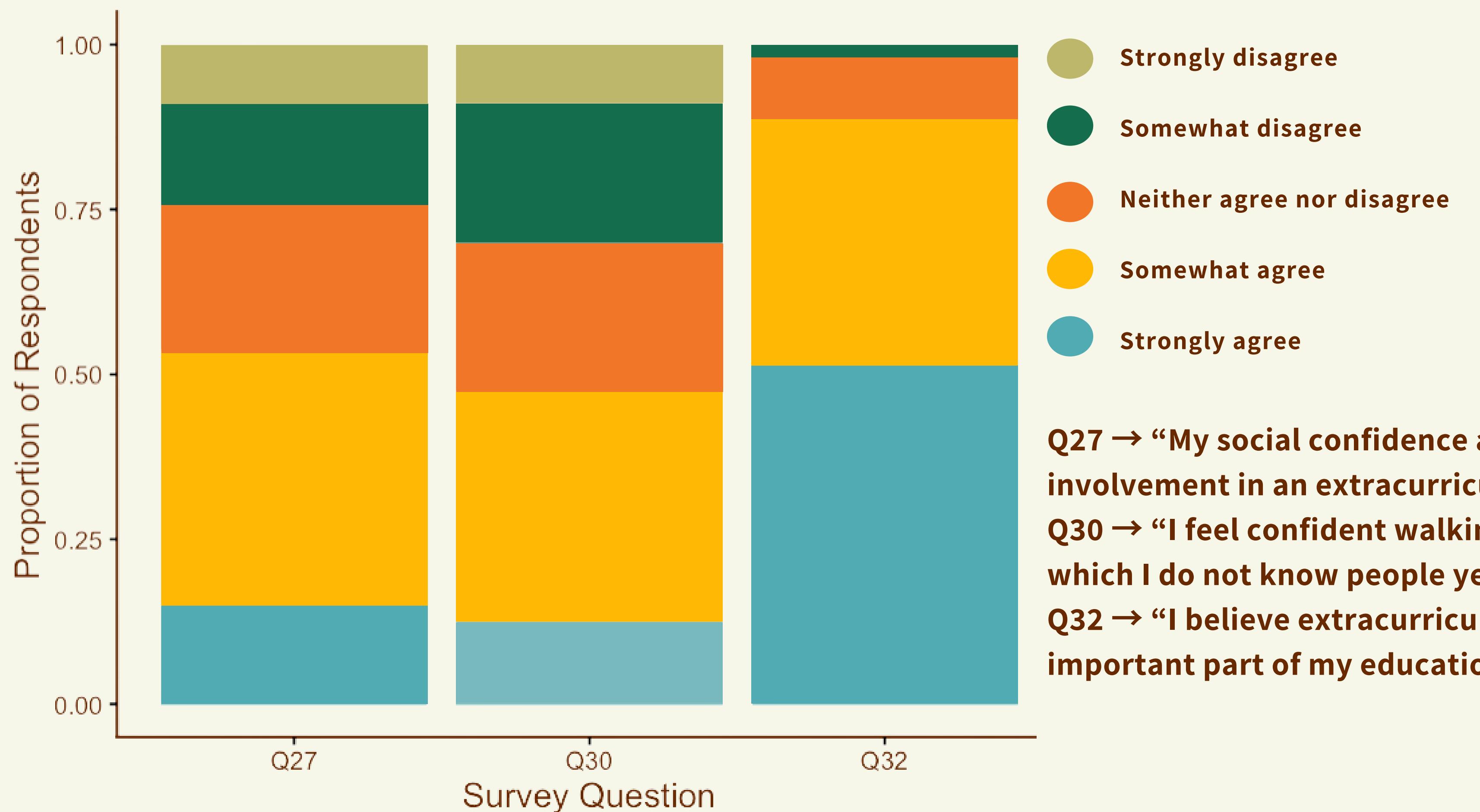
### TOTAL INCLUDED

Completed 75% or more of the survey questions  
N=335

### Survey Structure

- 36-questions administered via Qualtrics
- Student self-reported demographics, academic status, and career goals were collected.
- An additional series of Likert scale questions were employed to measure students' social confidence and their perception of extracurricular involvement as it relates to their overall educational experience.
- All data was analyzed using RStudio.

## Perceived Student Confidence and Importance of Extracurriculars in Education



Q27 → "My social confidence affects my actual involvement in an extracurricular."

Q30 → "I feel confident walking into a situation in which I do not know people yet and interacting."

Q32 → "I believe extracurricular activities are an important part of my education."

## Motivation for Joining Extracurriculars

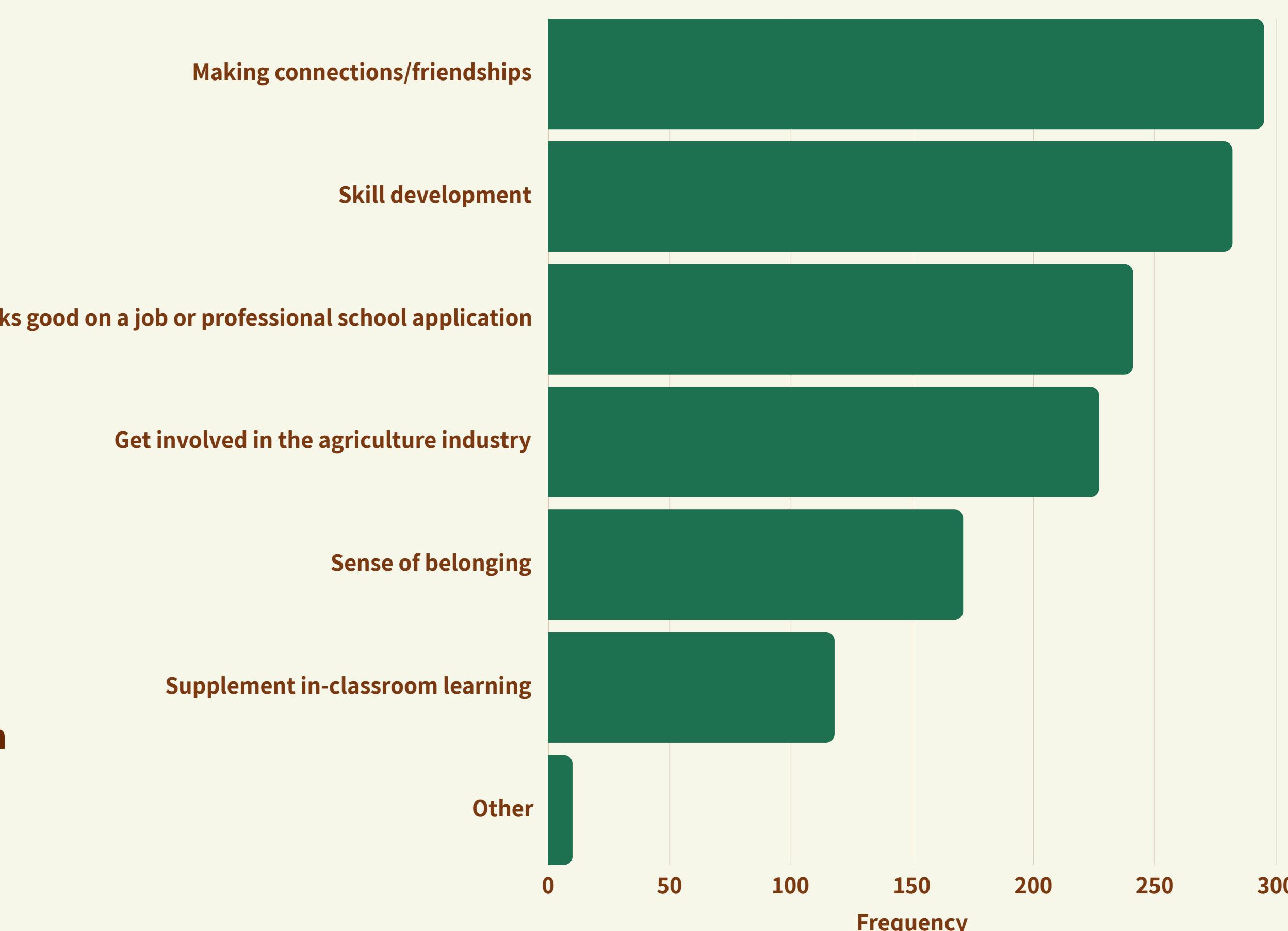


FIGURE 4. SELF REPORTED MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING EXTRACURRICULARS. PARTICIPANTS WERE ABLE TO SELECT MULTIPLE RESPONSES.

75% OF PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED AS "WHITE (A PERSON HAVING ORIGINS IN ANY OF THE ORIGINAL PEOPLES OF EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST, OR NORTH AFRICA)"

30% OF PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED CSU FIRST GENERATION STUDENT (ONE WHOSE PARENTS HAVE NOT COMPLETED A BACHELORS DEGREE)

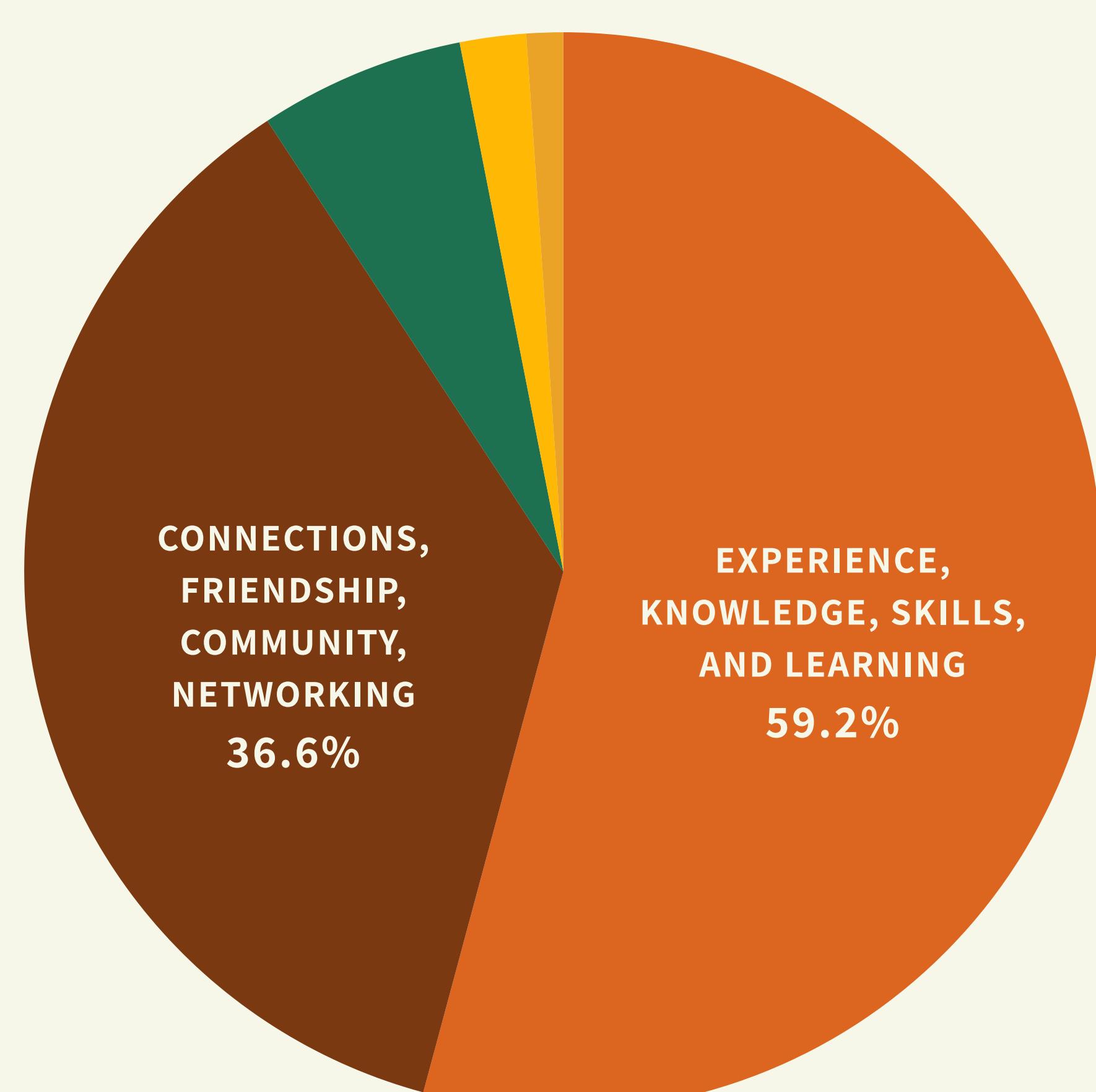
61% OF PARTICIPANTS PREVIOUSLY RESIDED IN A STATE OR COUNTRY OTHER THAN COLORADO

52% OF PARTICIPANTS DID NOT HAVE AN PREVIOUS DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY PRIOR TO CSU



2 in 10 students' households live below the poverty line for Fort Collins

## What Students Want to Gain from Extracurriculars



- Experience, knowledge, skills and learning (59.2%)
- Connections, friendship, community, and networking (36.6%)
- Fun, personal betterment, entertainment (6.2%)
- Prepare for career, looks good on job or professional school application (2.0%)
- Equine specific (1.0%)

FIGURE 2. MAJOR THEMES DRAWN FROM STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE PROMPT, "WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO GAIN BY BEING INVOLVED IN EXTRACURRICULARS?"

## Perceived Barriers to Participation in Extracurriculars



FIGURE 3. SELF REPORTED BARRIERS TO EXTRACURRICULAR PARTICIPATION. FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES CORRESPOND WITH THE SIZE OF THE BUBBLE.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Departmental assessment of the impact and quality of extracurricular offerings to ensure worthwhile student investment.
- Streamline resource access to ensure students, especially those underrepresented, are aware of extracurricular opportunities.
- Redesign core courses to embed research or community-engaged projects, guaranteeing universal high-impact experience participation.
- Cultivate departmental community and culture to facilitate social connections and strengthen student social confidence.