

How to Improve Academic Outcomes By Addressing the Transportation Needs of Students

Trellis Webinar, February 23, 2022

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Why focus on transportation and higher education?

- Low-income students balance school, work, and family
- Lessons from “Studying on Empty”
- Unexpected expenses
- Evaluation of transportation subsidy offers hope to improve student success
- Opportunity to explore options with your local transit agency

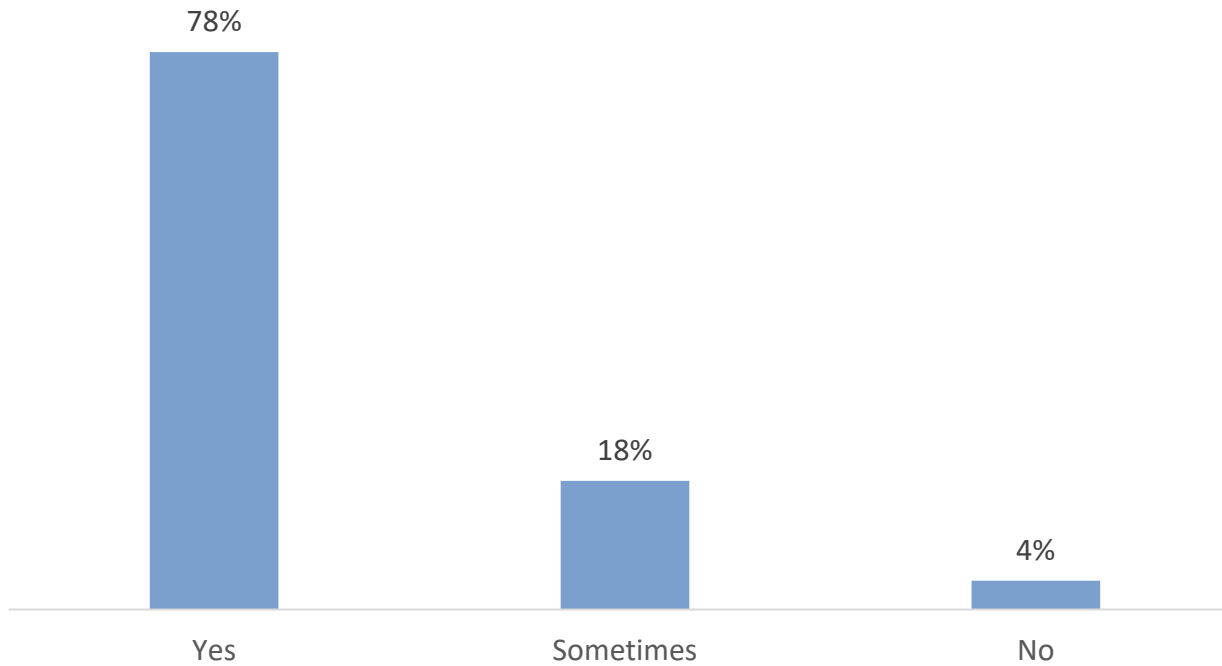
Student Financial Wellness Survey

- Survey launched on October 25, 2021
- Open for three weeks
- 104 total institutions participated

Survey Metrics		
	4-year Institutions	2-year Institutions
Survey Population	212,390 students	500,155 students
Responses	19,497 students	44,254 students
Response Rate	9.2%	8.8%
Completion Rate	78%	79%
Median Time Spent	13 minutes	14 minutes

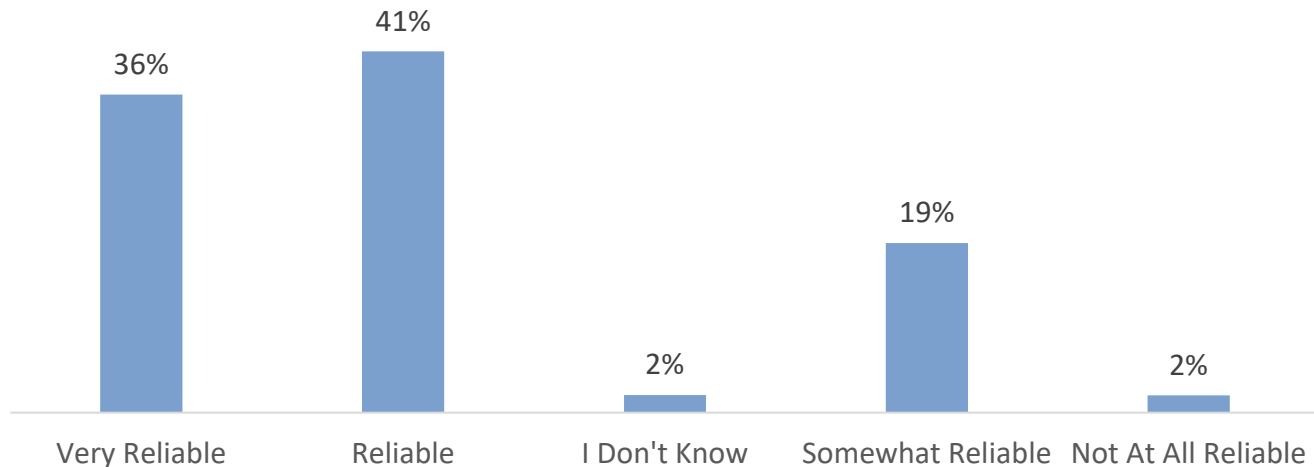
Do you have a car? (Q109)

Q109: Do you have a car?



How reliable would you say your car is? (Q110)

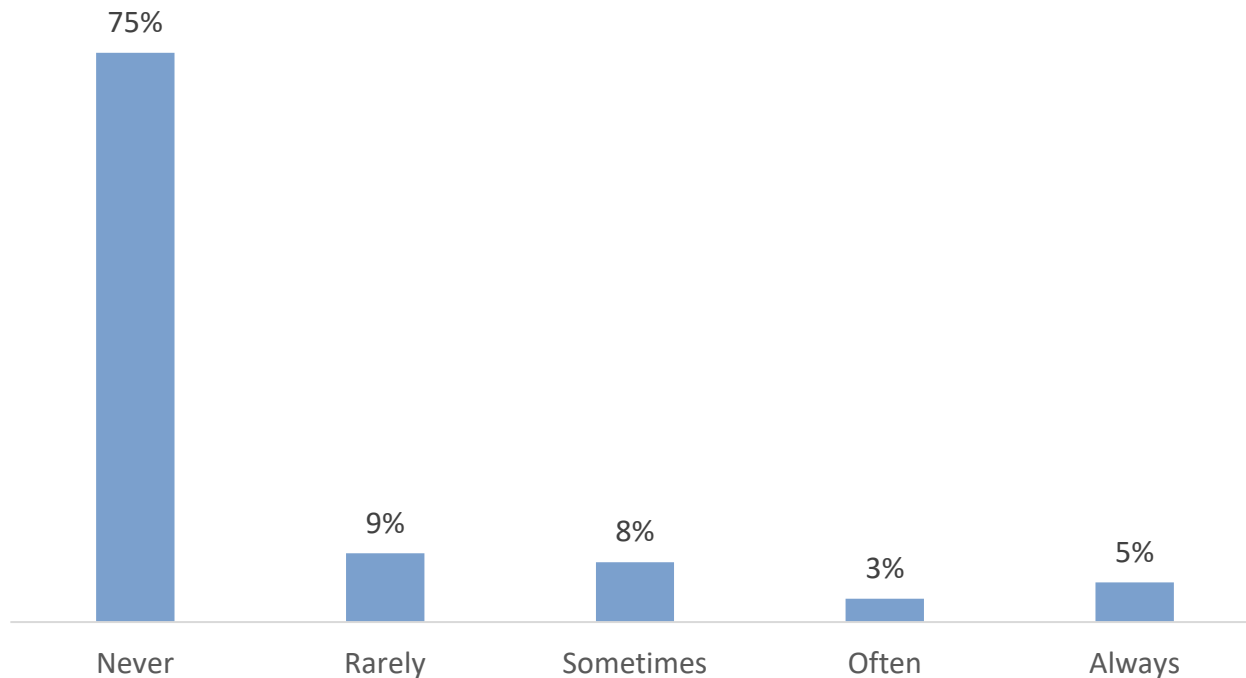
Q110: How reliable would you say your car is?*



*Of those who said they have a car

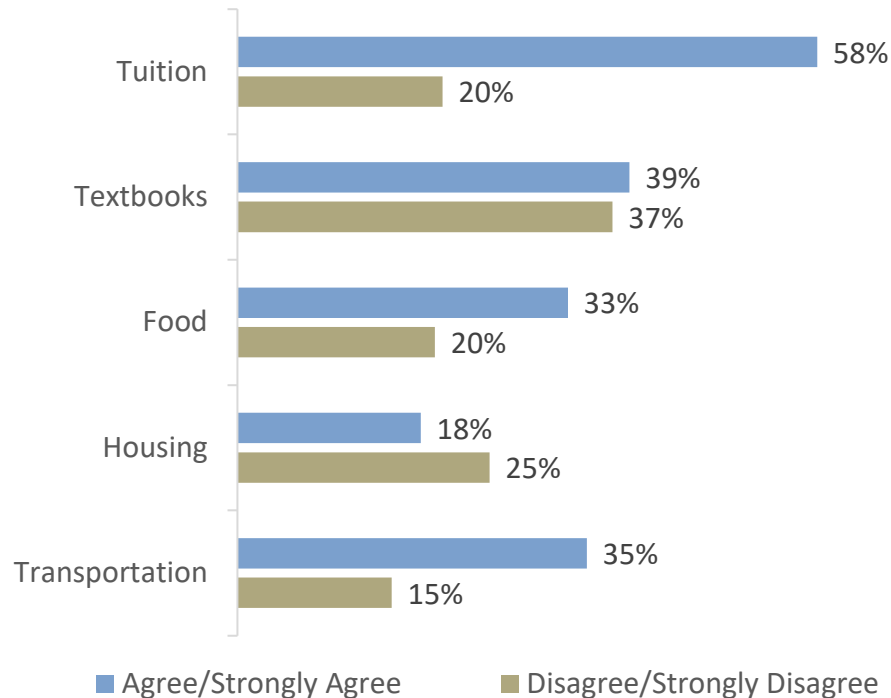
Do you use public transportation to get to school? (Q111)

Q111: Do you use public transportation to get to school?



To what extent do you agree or disagree that your school makes the following item – transportation -- more affordable?(Q9)

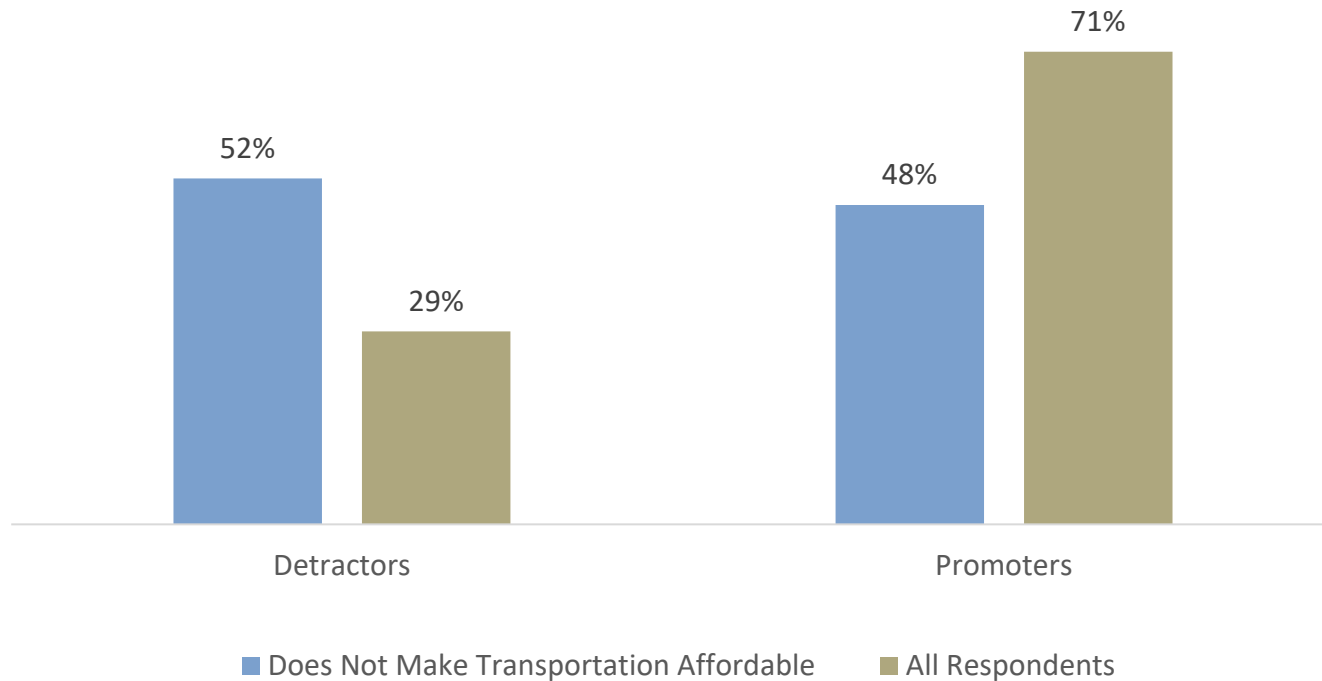
Q6-10: To what extent do you agree or disagree that your school makes the following items more affordable?*



*Percentage indicate respondents who chose at least one of the above choices

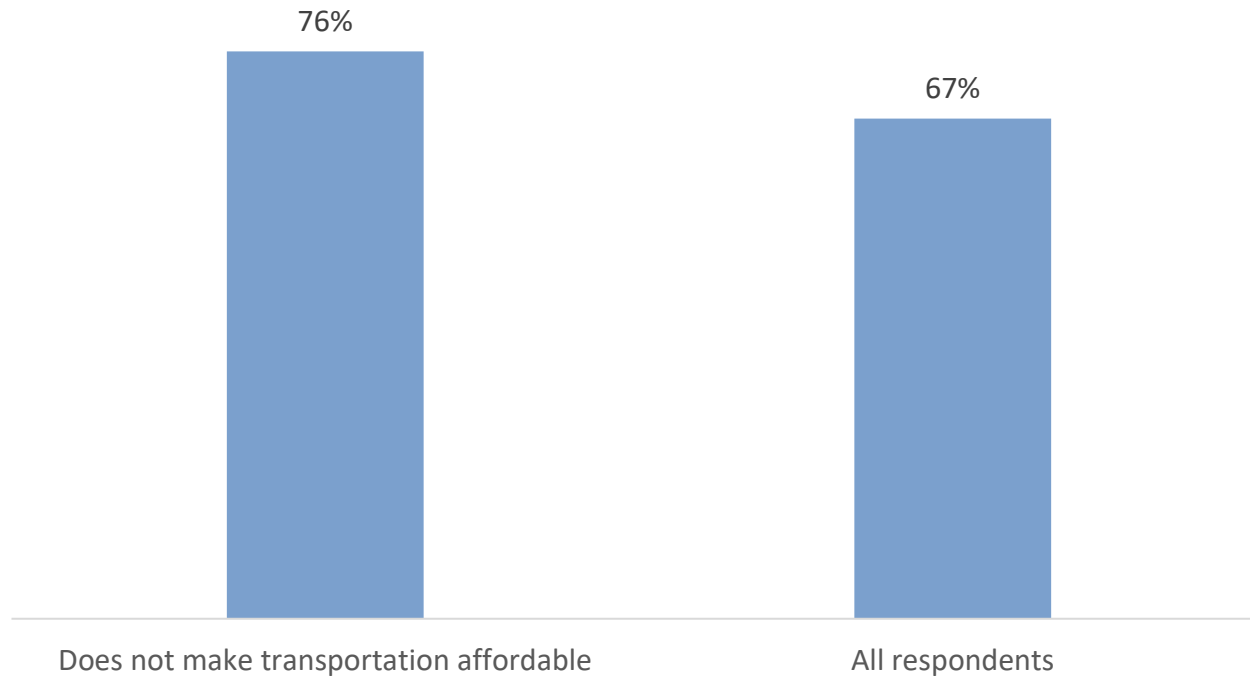
Net Promoter Score by perception of transportation affordability

Net Promoter Categories by Perception of Transportation Affordability



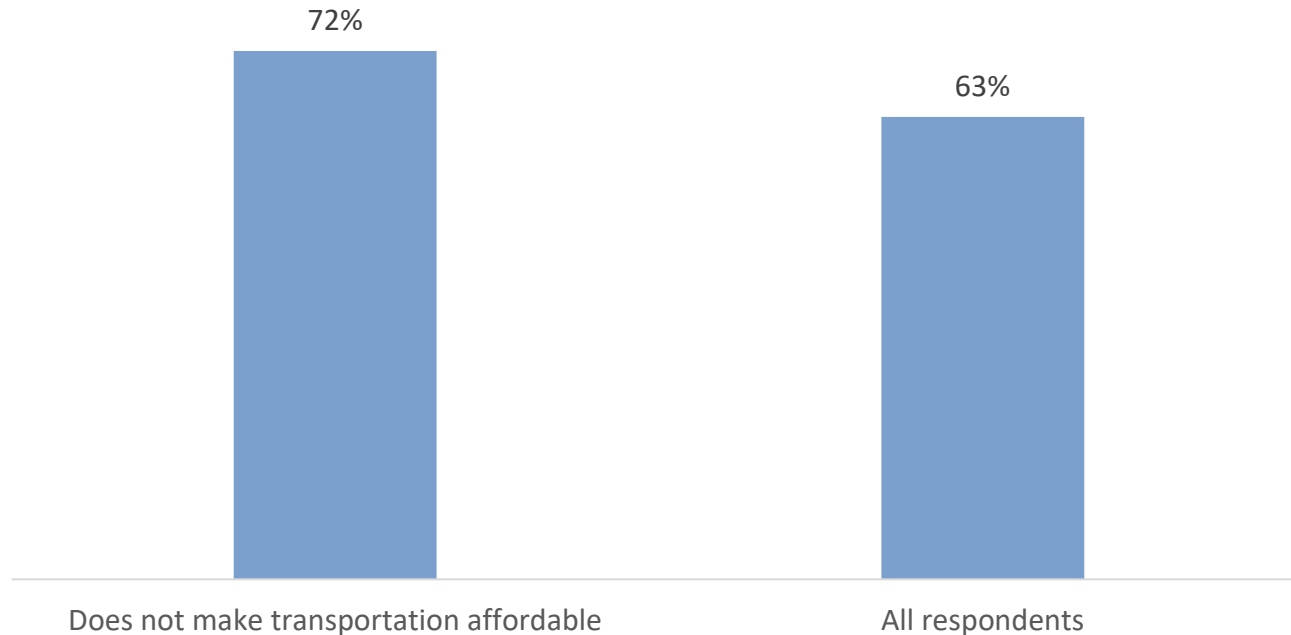
Percentage of respondents who would have trouble getting \$500 in an emergency, by perception of transportation affordability

Percentage of respondents who would have trouble getting \$500 in an emergency, by perception of transportation affordability



Percentage of respondents with any basic needs insecurity, by perception of transportation affordability

Percentage of respondents with any basic needs insecurity, by perception of transportation affordability



Which types of students are more likely to say that their school **does not** make transportation affordable?

- Students who consider themselves to be workers who attend school vs. students who work
- Students who work 40 or more hours per week
- Students who have either somewhat reliable cars or unreliable cars

Which types of students are more likely to say that their school **makes** transportation affordable?

- Students who sometimes, often, or always used public transportation

Impact of the Rio Hondo U-Pass on Student Academic Outcomes

Janelle R. Clay & Jessa L. Valentine
DVP-PRAXIS LTD

Study Background

- **Purpose:** To examine the impact of transportation supports (U-Pass) on the academic outcomes for community college students.
- **Context:** Established in 2016 in Los Angeles as a partnership between LA Metro and participating colleges and universities, the U-Pass provides college students with discounted transit fares. At Rio Hondo College, the U-Pass is part of the college's broader student transit program (GO RIO).
- **Research questions:**
 - What are the characteristics of students who receive a U-Pass, and how do they differ from students who do not receive a U-Pass?
 - Do students who receive the U-Pass have greater success in terms of course completion, credit accumulation, semester-to-semester retention, and credential completion compared to students who do not receive the U-Pass?

Rio Hondo College

- Commuter college situated within the southeast section of Los Angeles County
- More than 19,000 students enrolled (as of Fall 2019)
- Hispanic-serving institution - Hispanic students represent more than 80% of student body
- Approximately 90% of students receive some form of financial aid



U-Pass at Rio Hondo

- First available at Rio Hondo in Fall 2016
- Between Fall 2016 and Spring 2019, 3,686 Rio Hondo students received a U-Pass, representing approximately 10% of total student enrollment during this time period.
- U-Pass uptake greatest in fall terms - more than three-quarters of U-Pass recipients received U-Pass in the first fall term in which they appear in the data (2,791)

Study Design

Analytic Sample

- Students who enroll in Fall 2016, Fall 2017, or Fall 2018 terms (N=28,463)

Treatment

- Receipt of U-Pass in first fall term (N=2,791)

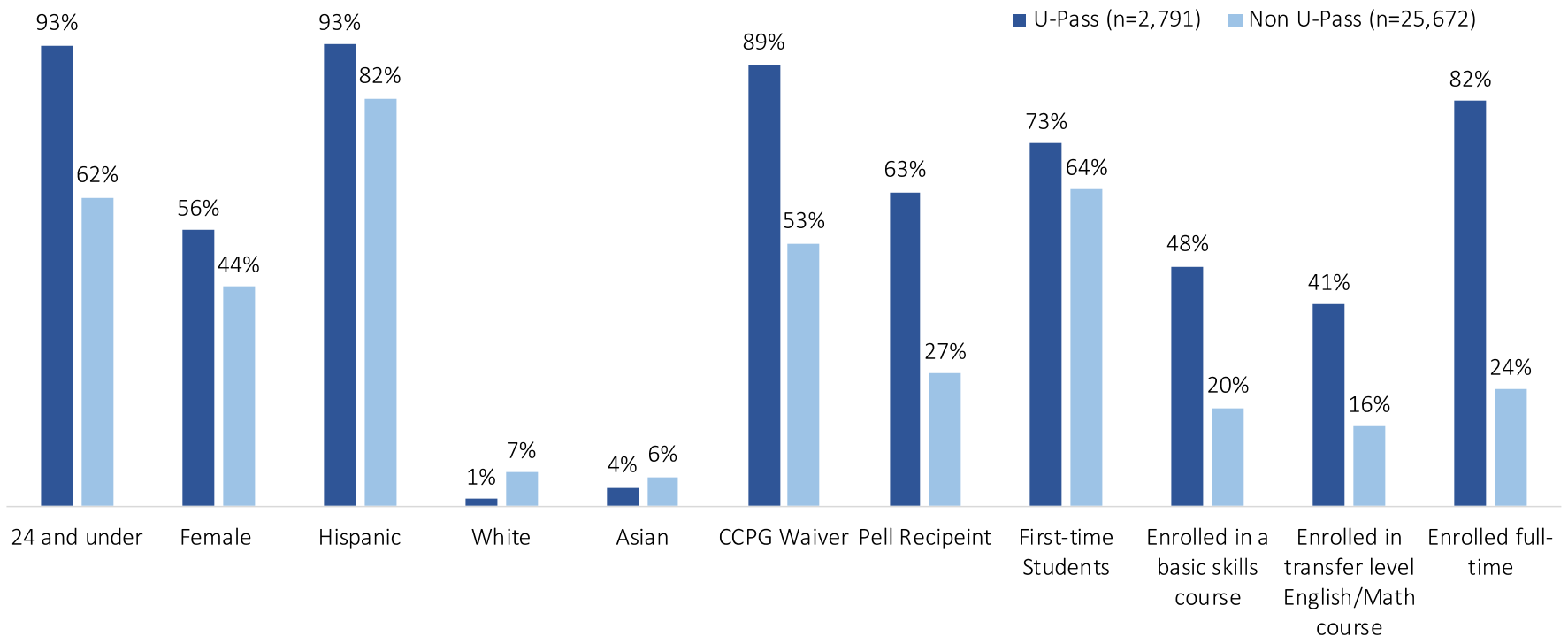
Outcomes

- Retention
- Credit accumulation
- Credential completion

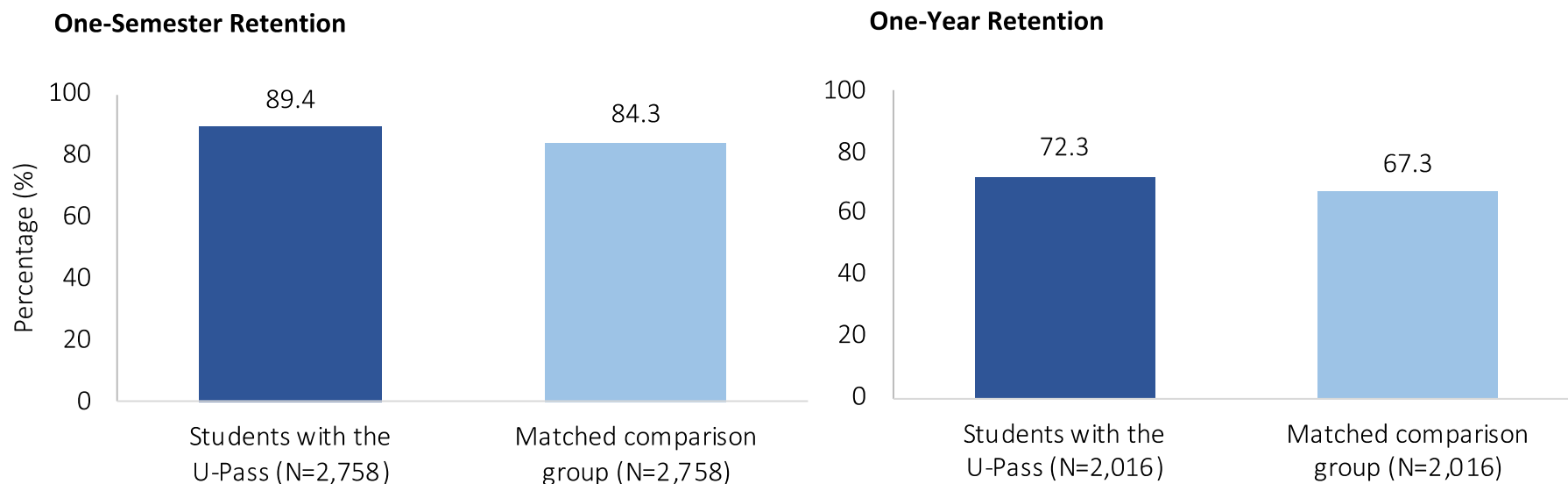
(Through Spring 2019)

Analytic Method: Propensity Score Matching

Characteristics of Students Receiving the U-Pass



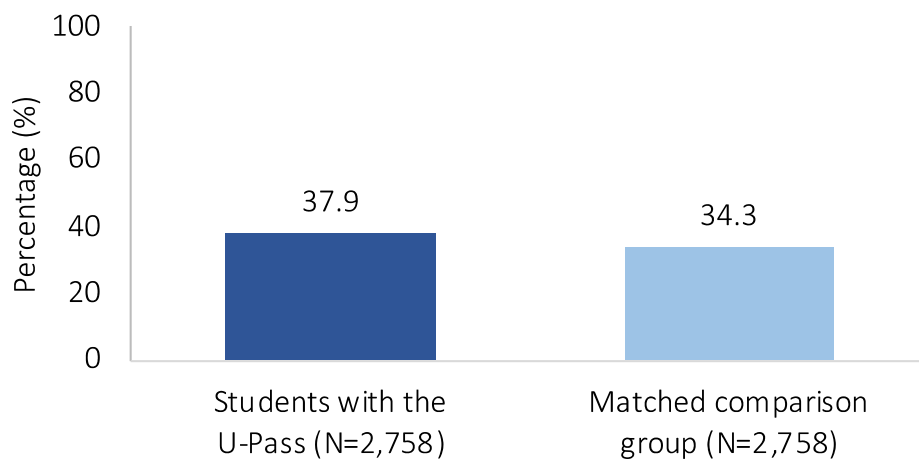
Results: Student Retention



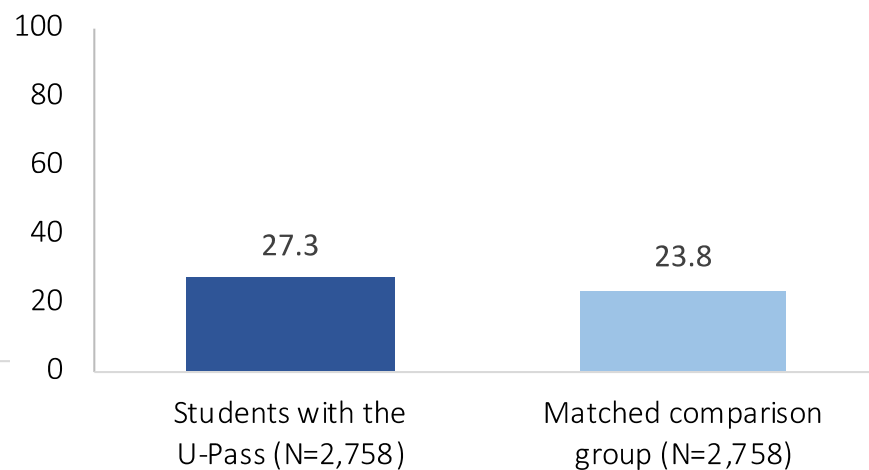
* Differences in outcomes between groups are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Results: Credit Completion

Earned 12 or more credits - Term One

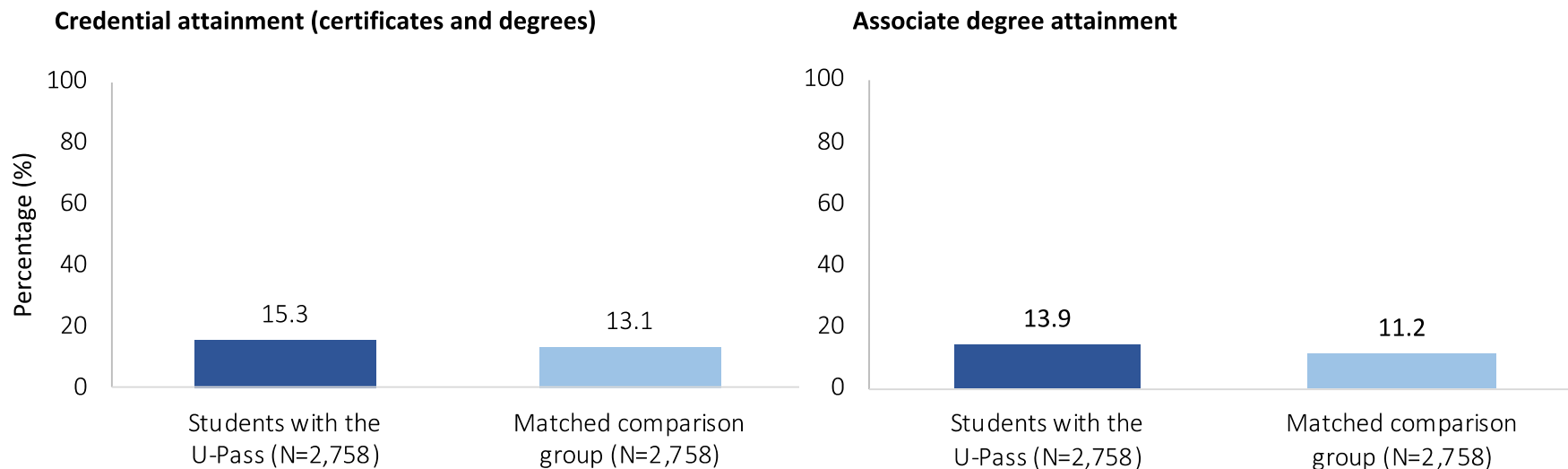


Earned 24 or more credits - Year One



* Differences in outcomes between groups are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Results: Credential & Degree Completion



* Differences in outcomes between groups are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Exploring Heterogeneous Treatment Effects

- Impacts of U-Pass are consistent across student characteristics
- U-Pass receipt is correlated with positive academic outcomes for students regardless of gender, academic preparation, or enrollment status
- For example, focusing on one-year retention outcome
 - Full-time U-Pass students are 6 percentage points more likely to be retained compared to full-time non-U-Pass students
 - Part-time U-Pass students are 7.5 percentage points more likely to be retained compared to part-time non-U-Pass students

Takeaways

- Reduced public transit fares appear to be an effective strategy to support students and improve academic outcomes
- Transportation supports are correlated with positive academic outcomes for students regardless of gender, academic preparation, or enrollment status
- Need for additional research as well as continued efforts to ensure students are aware of transit supports available to them

SELECTED TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES FOR MINORITY SERVING INSTITUTIONS

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

Chris Zeilinger

Assistant Director

Community Transportation Association of America

Washington DC



A Variety of Strategies to Address Students' Transportation Needs

- Campus transit restricted to students/staff
- College/University-operated public transit
- Dedicated/semi-dedicated transportation services provided in coordination with local transit
- Provision of transit passes for student/staff use of local transit

Standing Rock Transit is operated by Sitting Bull College as the public transit system for the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.



“Closed-Door” Campus Transit

Many colleges and universities operate bus service restricted to students and staff that connects campus facilities, housing, and important off-campus locations.

Advantages include:

- College/University has high degree of control & flexibility
- Users often perceive greater sense of safety & security

Disadvantages include:

- Academic institution has to bear all, or nearly all, the costs (some costs may be offset from collection of student fees)



Morgan State University's "BEARtransit" operates a half-dozen bus routes on and around campus for its ID-holding students and staff

College-Operated Public Transit

Some colleges and universities, including a few minority-serving institutions, are a primary provider of public transit service in their city, county or region.

Advantages include:

- Federal transit funding may cover around 50 percent of operating costs, and may cover 80 percent of vehicle acquisition or other capital costs

Disadvantages may include:

- Accountability to entire community, not just campus community
- Significant degree of transit-specific regulatory requirements and federal/state oversight

Mississippi Valley State University's Mass Transit provides local public transit across a 5-county area of rural Mississippi, plus commuter services linking the campus with larger nearby cities.



Campus Transit - Public Transit Partnerships

Some colleges & universities operate “open-door” public transit programs that are integrated or interconnected with local public transit.

Advantages include:

- Access to federal transit funds
- Efficiencies of resource-sharing

Disadvantages include:

- Potential administrative complexity
- Challenging reporting and oversight arrangements



South Texas College’s “JagExpress,” UT Rio Grande Valley’s “Vaquero Express,” and the regional Valley Metro public transit system collaborate to provide seamless transit connecting STC’s 5 campuses, UT RGV’s 3 campuses, and the surrounding area.

Transit Pass Programs

Numerous public transit systems will provide unlimited-use transit passes for participating colleges' students. These typically are financed through student fees or other contractual arrangements between the transit system and the academic institution.

Advantages include:

- Simplicity, as the college has minimal administrative role and no operational responsibility

Disadvantages include:

- Transit services are dictated wholly by the transit agency, regardless of campus-related transit needs
- Transit agency typically requires bulk transfer of funds, with little to no reporting or accountability to academic institution.



Via Metro provides its U-Pass to students at many San Antonio-area colleges, including more than a half-dozen Hispanic-Serving Institutions

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Thank you!

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