

RESEARCH BRIEF

**Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) 2019:
Special Focus Module – Guided Pathways**

The Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) is an annual, nationwide survey conducted by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE) in Austin, Texas. The goal of the survey is to explore institutional practices and new students' experiences in the earliest weeks of college. The information collected helps colleges better understand students' early college experiences, assist in identifying early obstacles to student progress, and improve college practices in ways that can increase student success in the first year of college.

In addition to the main survey, survey participants received a special focus module, which included 12 additional survey items related to **guided pathways**. This Brief presents results from the guided pathways module.

Key Findings

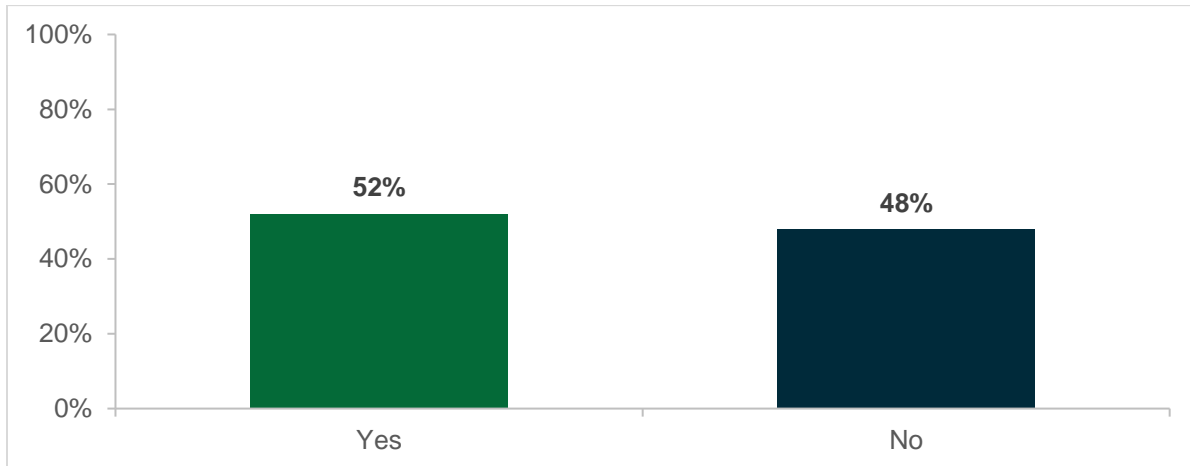
- Over half (52 percent) of surveyed students at NOVA said they were required to meet with an advisor prior to registering for their first semester of classes. However, one-third said they did not meet with an advisor prior to registration.
- Many respondents (41 percent) entered NOVA with an idea about the program, major, or pathway they wanted to pursue. However, a majority of respondents (56 percent) indicated they did not discuss with a NOVA staff person the career opportunities available to them in their intended academic program, major, or pathway.
- While 40 percent of respondents said they discussed with NOVA staff how long it would take to complete their credentials, only 26 percent discussed the total cost of completing their intended degree or certificate program.
- Less than half of surveyed students indicated they discussed with NOVA staff which of their NOVA credits would transfer (40 percent) and/or the overall process of transferring to a four-year institution (38 percent).
- A majority of surveyed NOVA students (67 percent) indicated NOVA required them to follow an academic plan that specified which courses they should take. However, only 37 percent of respondents said they were aware of the process of changing their program or major.

Summary of Results

Question 1: Were you required to meet (in person or online) with an academic advisor before registering for classes this academic term at this college?

Slightly more than half of respondents (52 percent) indicated that they were required to meet with an academic advisor at NOVA prior to registering for classes for the Fall 2019 term. (Figure 1)

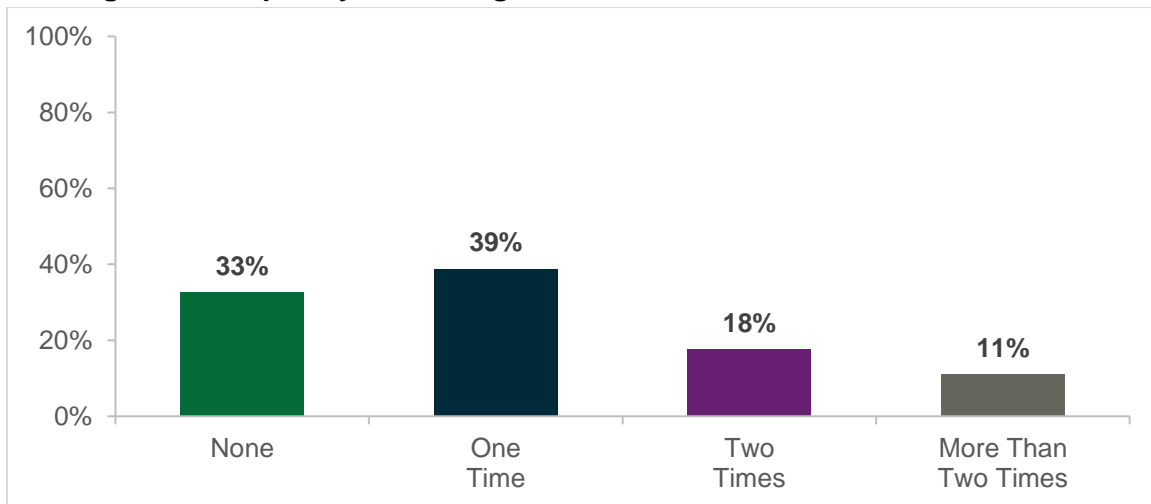
Figure 1. Required Meeting with Academic Advisor: SENSE Fall 2019



Question 2: During this academic term at this college, how many times have you met (in person or online) with an academic advisor?

A plurality of respondents (39 percent) indicated they met with an academic advisor once during the Fall 2019 term. An additional 29 percent said they met with an academic advisor two or more times during that term. However, one-third of respondents indicated they had not met with an academic advisor at NOVA for the Fall 2019 term. (Figure 2)

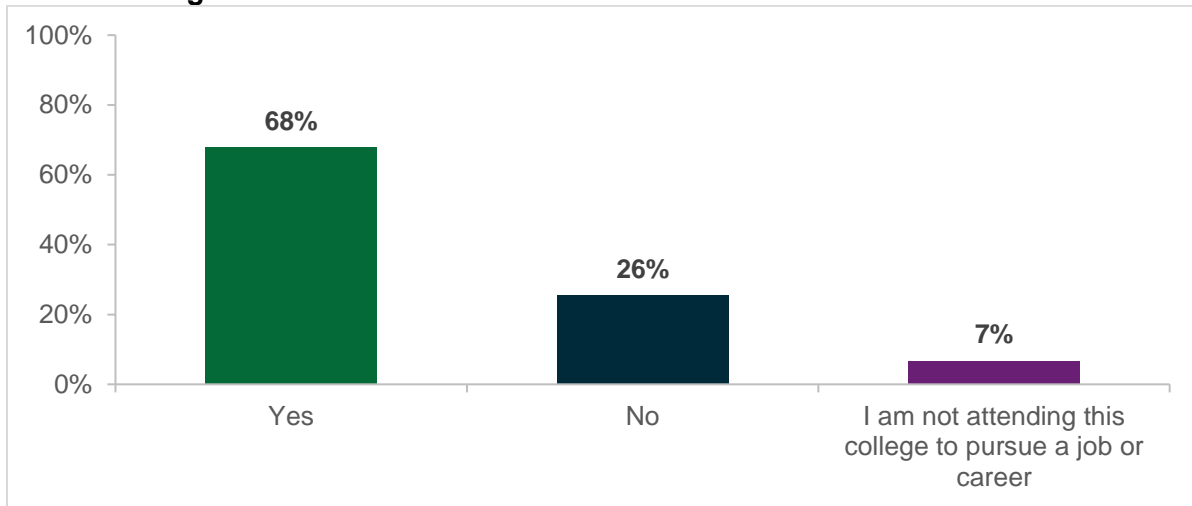
Figure 2. Frequency of Meeting with Academic Advisor: SENSE Fall 2019



Question 3: Prior to registering for classes your first academic term at this college, had you decided on a job or career that you wanted to pursue?

Prior to registering for classes, more than two-thirds (68 percent) of respondents indicated they had already decided on a job or career to pursue. However, 26 percent of respondents did not know which career path they wanted to pursue when they first enrolled at NOVA. (Figure 3)

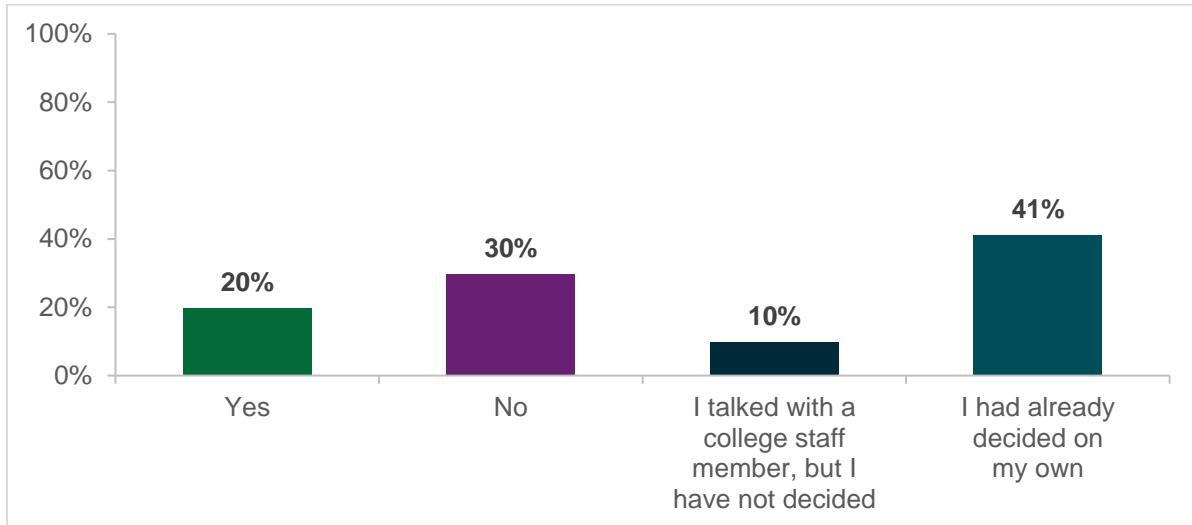
Figure 3. Decided On Job or Career to Pursue: SENSE Fall 2019



Question 4: Did a staff member at this college help you decide on a program, major, or pathway of study?

A plurality of respondents (41 percent) had already decided on a program, major, or pathway of study on their own when they first enrolled at NOVA. Twenty percent of respondents said a NOVA staff member helped them decide, and 10 percent said they spoke with a College staff member about programs, majors, and/or pathways but had not yet decided. However, a substantial number of students—30 percent—said they did not receive help from a NOVA staff member regarding choosing a program, major, and/or pathway of study. (Figure 4)

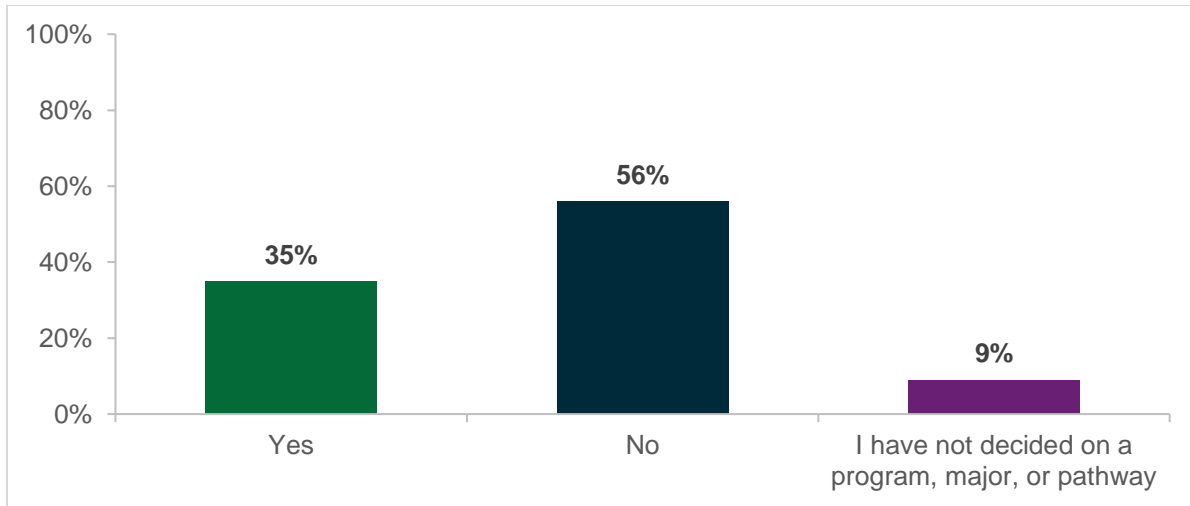
Figure 4. Staff Member Helped Determine Program, Major, or Pathway: SENSE Fall 2019



Question 5: Has a staff member at this college talked with you about the types of jobs your program, major, or pathway of study might lead to?

More than half of respondents (56 percent) said that a NOVA staff member did not discuss with them the types of career opportunities available to students who pursue their intended program, major, or pathway of study. (Figure 5)

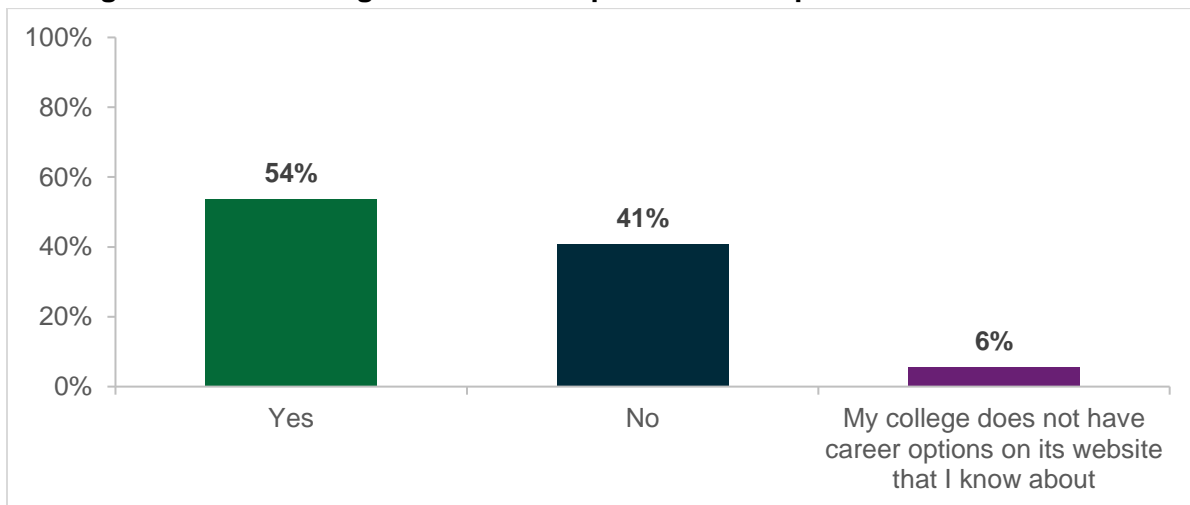
Figure 5. Staff Member Discussed Career Opportunities with Student: SENSE Fall 2019



Question 6: Have you used this college's website to explore career options?

Over half of respondents (54 percent) indicated they used the NOVA website to explore career opportunities. However, a substantial number of respondents (41 percent) said they did not use the resources on the NOVA website, and six percent said they were unaware of any such information on the website. (Figure 6)

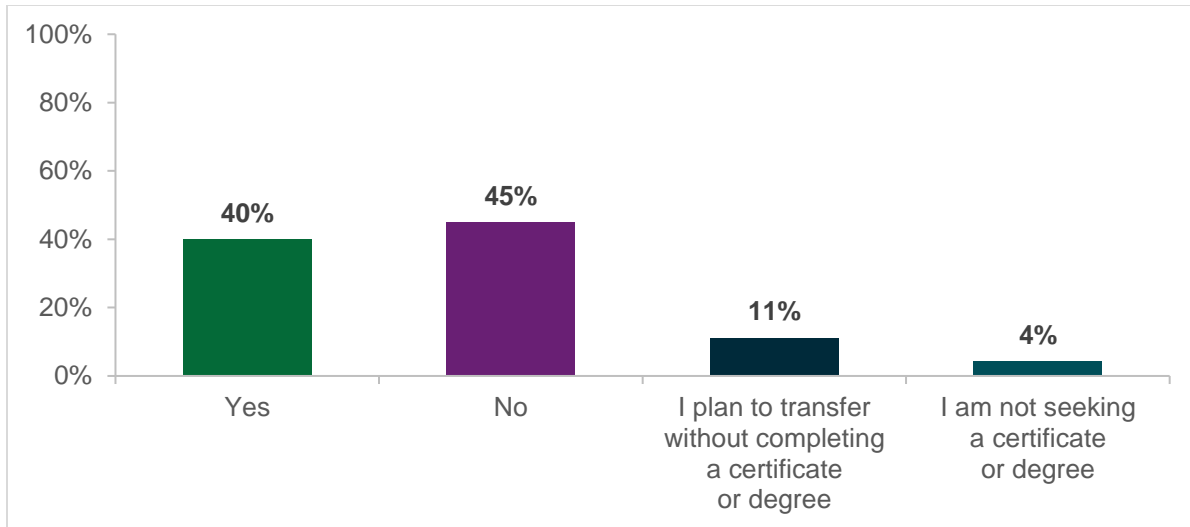
Figure 6. Used College Website to Explore Career Options: SENSE Fall 2019



Question 7: Has a staff member at this college talked with you about how long it will take to complete your certificate or degree?

A plurality of respondents (45 percent) indicated that a staff member did not discuss with them how long it would take to complete their intended certificate or degree program. However, 40 percent of respondents said they did have this conversation with NOVA staff. (Figure 7)

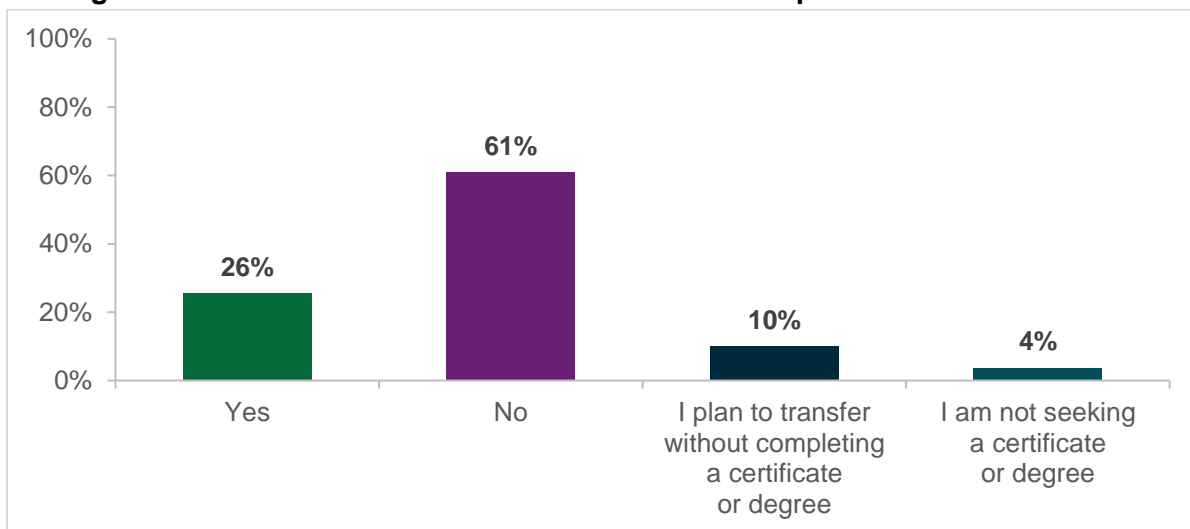
Figure 7. Staff Member Discussed Length of Time to Completion: SENSE Fall 2019



Question 8: Has a staff member at this college talked with you about the total cost to complete your certificate or degree?

More than half of respondents (61 percent) indicated that a staff member did not discuss with them the total cost of completing a certificate or degree at NOVA. In fact, only one-in-five students (26 percent) said they had this conversation with a NOVA staff member. (Figure 8)

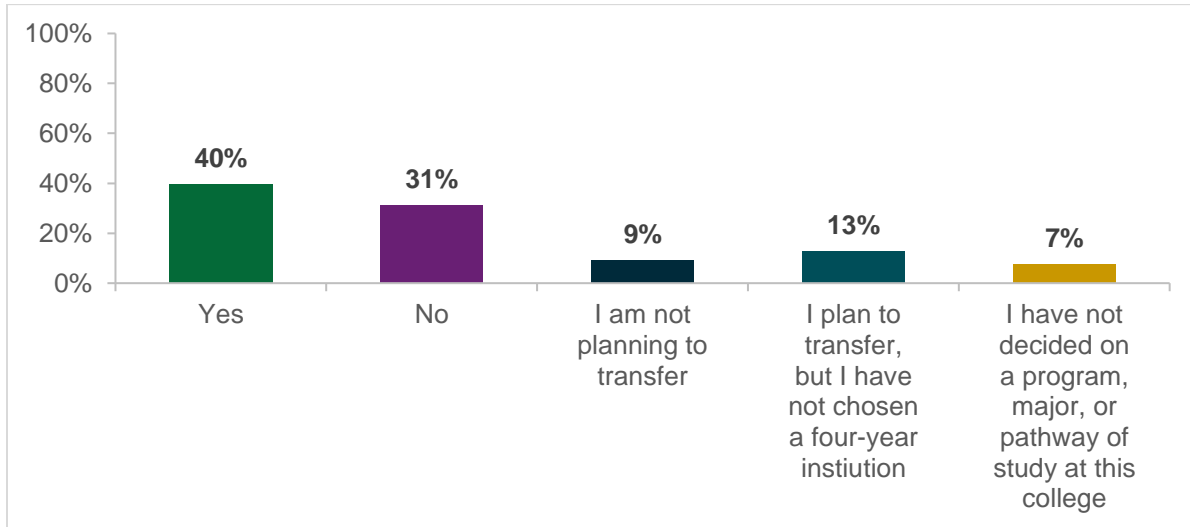
Figure 8. Staff Member Discussed Total Cost to Completion: SENSE Fall 2019



Question 9: Has a staff member at this college talked with you about which credits will transfer toward your intended program or major at the four-year institution of your choice?

A plurality of respondents (40 percent) indicated that a NOVA staff member discussed with them credits that would transfer to their intended transfer institution. However, 31 percent of respondents said they did not discuss transfer credits with a staff member. An additional 13 percent of respondents said they intended to transfer but had not yet chosen a four-year institution. (Figure 9)

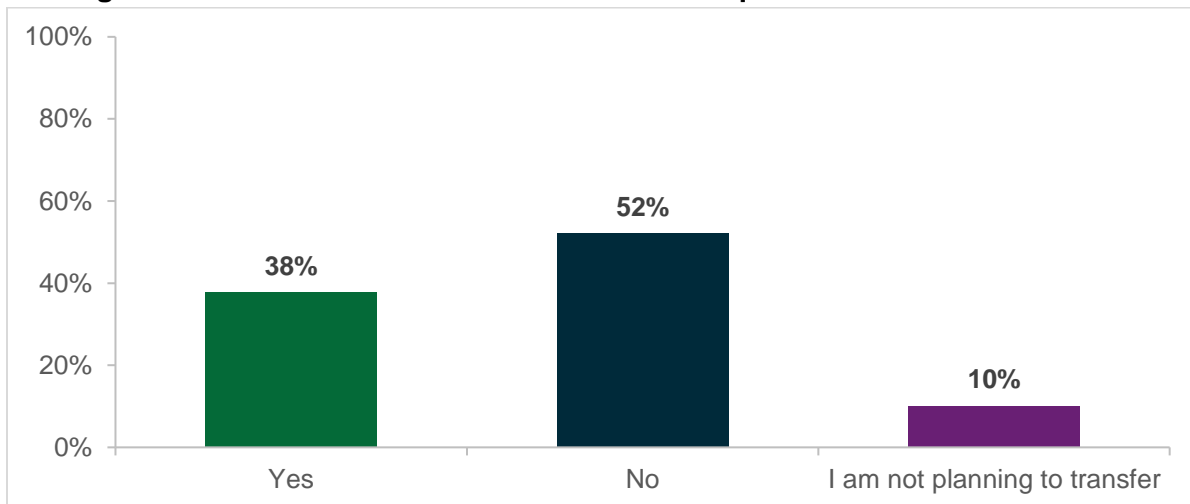
Figure 9. Staff Member Discussed Transfer Credits: SENSE Fall 2019



Question 10: Has a staff member at this college talked with you about the overall process for transferring to a four-year institution (application, financial aid)?

More than half of respondents (52 percent) indicated that they did not discuss with a staff member the process for transferring from NOVA to a four-year institution. However, nearly 40 percent of respondents said they did discuss transfer requirements with a NOVA staff member. (Figure 10)

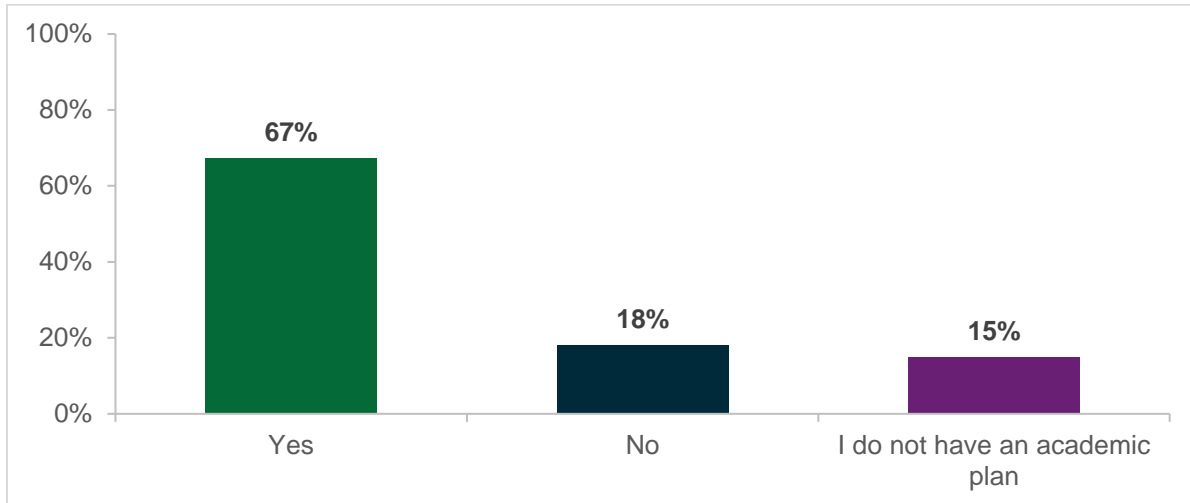
Figure 10. Staff Member Discussed Transfer Requirements: SENSE Fall 2019



Question 11: At this college, are you required to follow an academic plan that specifies which courses you are required to take?

Of surveyed students, two-thirds (67 percent) indicated that they were required to follow an academic plan that specified which courses they were required to take at NOVA. However, nearly one-fifth of respondents (18 percent) said they were not required to follow an academic plan at NOVA, and 15 percent said they did not have an academic plan. (Figure 11)

Figure 11. College Requires an Academic Plan: SENSE Fall 2019



Question 12: If you were interested in changing your program, major, or pathway of study at this college, do you know how to go about doing this?

Of surveyed respondents, a majority (64 percent) said they either did not know or were not sure how to go about changing their program, major, or pathway of study. Only 37 percent of respondents indicated that they were familiar with this process. (Figure 12)

Figure 12. Knowledge about Changing Program, Major, or Pathway: SENSE Fall 2019

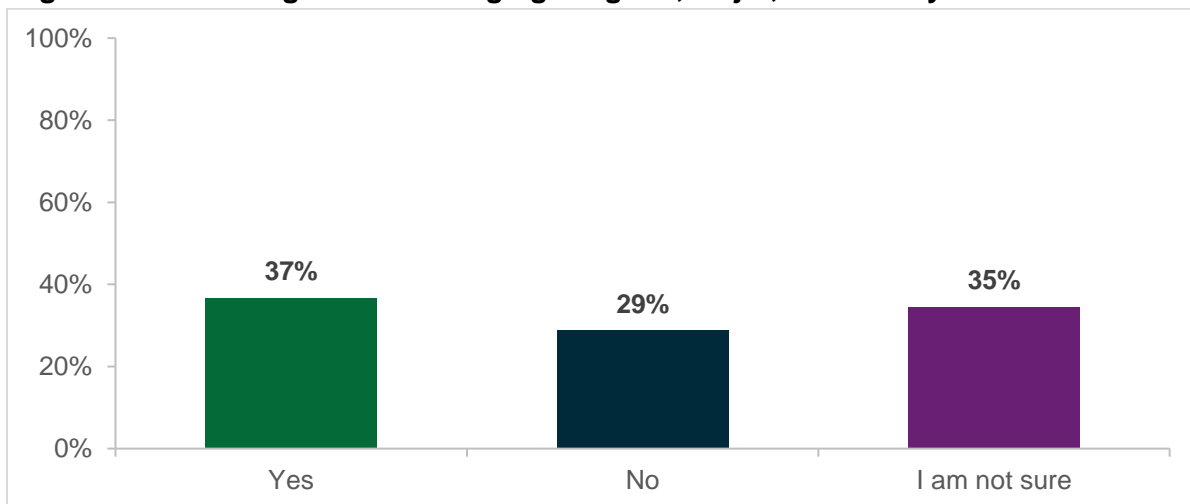


Table 1. SENSE 2019 Special Focus Module: Guided Pathways – Questions and Responses

Question	Response	#	%
1: Were you required to meet (in person or online) with an academic advisor before registering for classes this academic term at this college?	Yes	493	52.1
	No	453	47.9
	Total	945	100.0
2: During this academic term at this college, how many times have you met (in person or online) with an academic advisor?	None	315	32.6
	1 Time	376	38.8
	2 Times	170	17.6
	More Than 2 Times	106	11.0
	Total	967	100.0
3: Prior to registering for classes your first academic term at this college, had you decided on a job or career that you wanted to pursue?	Yes	647	67.9
	No	243	25.5
	Not Attending to Pursue	64	6.7
	Total	953	100.0
4: Did a staff member at this college help you decide on a program, major, or pathway of study?	Yes	190	19.6
	No	287	29.6
	Already Decided	397	41.0
	Have Not Decided	95	9.8
	Total	968	100.0
5: Has a staff member at this college talked with you about the types of jobs your program, major, or pathway of study might lead to?	Yes	322	35.0
	No	516	56.0
	Have Not Decided	83	9.0
	Total	922	100.0
6: Have you used this college's website to explore career options?	Yes	499	53.6
	No	380	40.8
	Website Options Unknown	53	5.6
	Total	931	100.0
7: Has a staff member at this college talked with you about how long it will take to complete your certificate or degree?	Yes	384	40.0
	No	430	44.8
	Plan to Transfer w/o C/D	106	11.1
	Not Seeking C/D	39	4.1
	Total	960	100.0
8: Has a staff member at this college talked with you about the total cost to complete your certificate or degree?	Yes	243	25.5
	No	580	60.9
	Plan to Transfer w/o C/D	95	10.0
	Not Seeking C/D	35	3.7
	Total	953	100.0
9: Has a staff member at this college talked with you about which credits will transfer toward your intended program or major at the four-year institution of your choice?	Yes	381	39.5
	No	301	31.2
	Not Planning to Transfer	88	9.1
	Have Not Chosen 4-Year	123	12.8
	Have Not Decided Program	71	7.4
	Total	964	100.0
10: Has a staff member at this college talked with you about the overall process for transferring to a four-year institution (application, financial aid)?	Yes	340	37.8
	No	469	52.1
	Not Planning to Transfer	91	10.1
	Total	900	100.0
11: At this college, are you required to follow an academic plan that specifies which courses you are required to take?	Yes	639	67.2
	No	172	18.1
	No Academic Plan	140	14.8
	Total	952	100.0
12: If you were interested in changing your program, major, or pathway of study at this college, do you know how to go about doing this?	Yes	347	36.7
	No	273	28.8
	Not Sure	326	34.5
	Total	945	100.0