

STATE OF HIGHER ED

# Website & Marketing Technology



In partnership with:



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## About This Study

For years we've watched as brands across all industries have responded to digital disruption, becoming increasingly agile, responsive, and, well — digital. Brands who had yet to fully embrace this shift and develop their digital strategies were left vulnerable as the pandemic upended our world. While there has been some rebalancing of this equilibrium, digital-first brands are best poised to meet the moment — especially in higher education.

As a result, we've become increasingly focused on the university web presence and digital ecosystem as a platform for brand and marketing engagement. Senior marketing and communications professionals regularly ask us for insights about what marketing technology platforms, or combinations of technology platforms, will give them the edge they need to run a high performing and efficient marketing operation. That's exactly where this research study comes in...

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...we believe that having definitive answers to those questions is critically important in our practice, and for the industry at large. Higher education marketers and web technologists need a resource that indexes trends and provides a model for how to mature their internal practices. That's precisely why we've launched this new study on the State of Higher Education Website & Marketing Technology.

In partnership with Pantheon and Siteimprove, we surveyed 170 senior-level higher education marketing and technology professionals at 4-year nonprofit institutions across the country. These respondents represent a proportional cross section of central administration and college-level units which allowed us to produce the most detailed picture of website and marketing technology available to our industry. This study explores trends in content management systems, web development operations, analytics, CRM resourcing, and organizational reporting structures.

Our intention is to replicate this study annually as the benchmark for website and marketing technology and hope our insights and recommendations will be shared with institutional leadership to help build more mature, digital-first higher education brands across the country.

**We hope you will reach out with any questions or insights — we're here for the conversation.**



**Bob Rafferty**  
Vice President, Creative & Digital  
SimpsonScarborough

# Profile of Respondents

**170 martech leaders**  
 working at 4-year non-profit  
 colleges and universities in the  
 US participated in this survey

## What is your primary reporting line?

Marketing and Communications	61%
Information Technology	31%
Other (Please specify)	8%

## Which of the following best describes your job title?

C-suite	18%
VP/AVP	21%
Director-level	62%

## Institution Size

1,000 – 4,999	25%
10,000 – 19,999	22%
20,000 and above	29%
5,000 – 9,999	16%
Under 1,000	7%

## Public or Private

Private	58%
Public	42%

## Which of the following best describes you?

A representative of the central administration	77%
A representative from a college or sub-unit	23%

## Geographic Region

Far West AK CA HI NV OR WA	13%
Great Lakes IL IN MI OH WI	21%
Mid East DE DC MD NJ NY PA	18%
New England CT ME MA NH RI VT	10%
Plains IA KS MN MO NE ND SD	7%
Rocky Mountains CO ID MT UT WY	4%
Southeast AL AR FL GA KY LA MS NC SC TN VA WV	22%
Southwest AZ NM OK TX	5%

# Executive Summary

# The State of Higher Ed Website & Marketing Technology

The state of higher education website & marketing technology is ... well, frankly — all over the place.

Overall, higher education marketers lack the financial resources and human capital needed to leverage their institution's most critical marketing asset—its website— and deploy sophisticated, integrated marketing technology to achieve their strategic goals. And while higher ed marcom generally lags behind other industries when it comes to marketing maturity, the greater disparity arguably lies within the industry itself.

But the purpose of this study isn't just to benchmark the industry's current state—it's to provide the insight and instruction necessary to help the industry advance to its desired state. As a result, we'll outline the primary characteristics that define a mature martech organization.

## First, a few key takeaways:

- Most institutions lack a cohesive website & marketing technology strategy
  - Only 35% of institutions have integrated their CRM with their CMS
    - Worth noting: In our 2019 CMO Study, 32% of institutions had reported this integration, while 35% said they planned to within the next year.
  - While 94% have a CRM capable of email marketing, 90% of institutions continue to use third-party email platforms like MailChimp & Constant Contact
  - Less than 50% have well-defined accessibility standards
- On the upside, we are seeing strong evidence within some segments of respondents for modernization and new approaches
  - 84% of respondents are happy and committed to their CMS solution
  - 72% of respondents have deployed cloud hosting
  - 44% state their website is part of the institution's strategic plan
  - 58% are focused on modernizing their user experience in their next edu redesign

# The State of Higher Ed Website & Marketing Technology

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As we dug through the data, we kept thinking we'd eventually discover the prototypical profile of a mature & well-resourced website and martech operation, but in all of our analysis, that never happened.

Instead, we found something we think is even more interesting: there isn't a prototypical institution type. We find that comforting because it means that, with the right leadership, digital acumen, marketing acuity, and resources, *any* institution can raise their level of organizational maturity and achieve success.

We must also underscore sophisticated & resourced — those two are inextricably related. More resources in and of themselves cannot overcome a lack of organizational & leadership sophistication. Nor can the most sophisticated leadership achieve success absent of meaningful resources. You must have both to succeed.

To that end, we found four commonalities that mature martech organizations have in common:

- I. They measure
- II. They iterate
- III. They integrate
- IV. And, overwhelmingly — they report into Central MarCom

# The State of Higher Ed Website & Marketing Technology

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## So, what does this all mean — and why is it important?

Digital disruption accelerated as a result of the pandemic, and while that doesn't mean that everything needs to be online or that every experience presented virtually, institutions must position themselves as digital-first brands in order to stay relevant to a population of digital natives. That's put increased pressure on the need to be agile and market 'in the moment', creating highly personalized digital experiences and enabling micro-communities. Data strategies underpin all of these digital strategies—they're the first domino in the sequence. MarTech stacks can be incredible leverage points, but only to the extent that the underlying infrastructure allows. If there is no process for data hygiene or a fundamental lack of data integration, that leverage point becomes little more than an expensive (and shiny) object.

Similarly, the breadth and depth of reporting & analytics—including the number of KPIs measured and the frequency with which they are measured—are an excellent proxy for resourcing. Most organizations understand the importance of collecting the right data and creating processes that involve regular analysis and reporting in order to continually iterate.

In other words, marketing sophistication is not only a measure of how informed staff is—it's a process measurement: "It's about the rate of improvement over time." Organizations that are focused on continual improvement are the ones that make substantive advances over time, but this is often little more than an intelligent system of continually measuring and iterating over time.

**The reason we belabor this point is that testing, measuring, analyzing, and reporting are often analogous to well-resourced teams.** While these steps are mission critical, they're often viewed as superfluous to busy, under-resourced teams. The goal then is not just to improve resourcing but improve resourcing to enable systems of continual assessment.

# MarTech Maturity Model

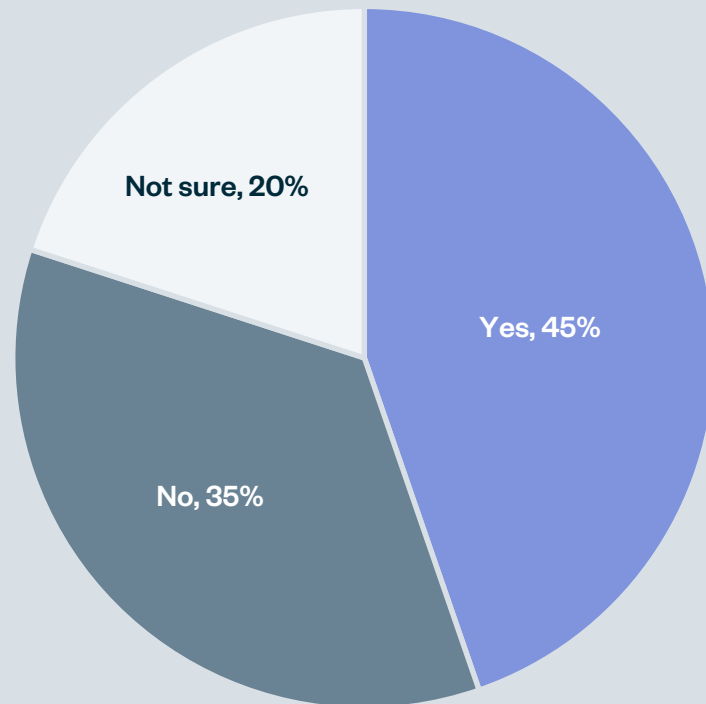


# Measure

## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Measure

Do you have metrics established that you use for key performance indicators (KPIs) for your website?



### Of those martech organizations with established KPIs...

- More than 3x as likely to be **utilizing tools for UX optimization** (30% vs 9%)
- More than 4x as likely to be **utilizing tools for SEO optimization** (30% vs 7%)
- More than 40% more likely to be **utilizing tools for assessing website performance** (89% vs 62%)
- More than 20% more likely to be **utilizing tools for maintaining/assessing accessibility** (86% vs 70%)
- 80% more likely to report **iterative design & development** (54% to 30%)
- 44% more likely to report an **iterative content strategy** (59% to 41%)
- Nearly 60% as likely to regularly (weekly/monthly/quarterly) **report analytics** (89% to 56%)
- Nearly 60% more likely to **use analytics to inform content strategy** (86% to 54%)
- Nearly 50% more likely to **use analytics to inform development** (66% to 45%)

MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Measure

**“We are very happy with their CMS solution”**

50%

Operations  
WITH established  
website KPIs

28%

Operations  
WITHOUT established  
website KPIs

Operations with established KPIs for their website are happier with their CMS.

Established KPIs focuses the team on issues that are greater than the underlying CMS. When content, design, and user experience outcomes are measured and operations are built to improve them, the CMS becomes a secondary issue.

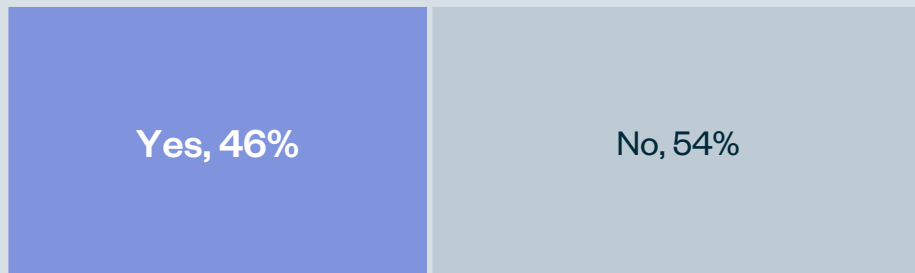
**Even with established KPIs, only 50% of respondents are “very happy” with their CMS.** This indicates there is room in the technology market for an improved higher-education-specific CMS or more custom implementations of an open-source solution, like Drupal or WordPress.

## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

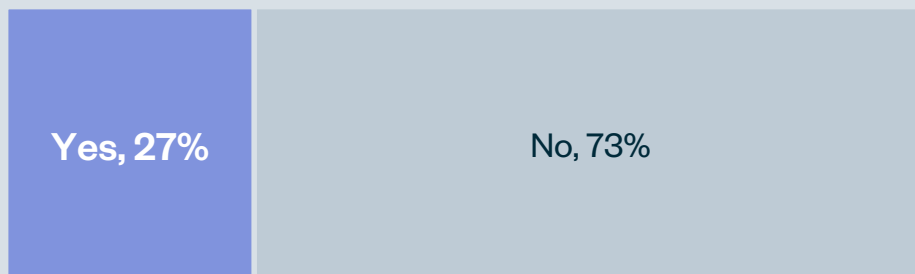
# Measure

### Integrate CMS and CRM

#### Have established website KPIs



#### Does NOT have established website KPIs



Organizations with established KPIs are more likely to integrate their CMS and CRM.

**Even of those with established KPIs, less than 50% indicated they have integration between their CMS and the CRM.** This is the greatest opportunity for improvement across the industry.

Higher education marketers need the ability to correlate activity on their website with enrollment and advancement leads. Greater connectivity allows for deeper UX optimization, content personalization, and greater quantification on the value of known leads.

## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Measure

### Frequency of assessing website performance

#### Have established website KPIs

At least  
quarterly,  
75%

#### Does NOT have established website KPIs

At least  
quarterly,  
53%

Organizations with established KPIs are 41% more likely to report on their performance.

Institutions with established website KPIs are assessing website performance more frequently than those without them.

But this begs the question — of those institutions who don't have established KPIs, what are they assessing without established metrics?

And how actionable are those assessments?

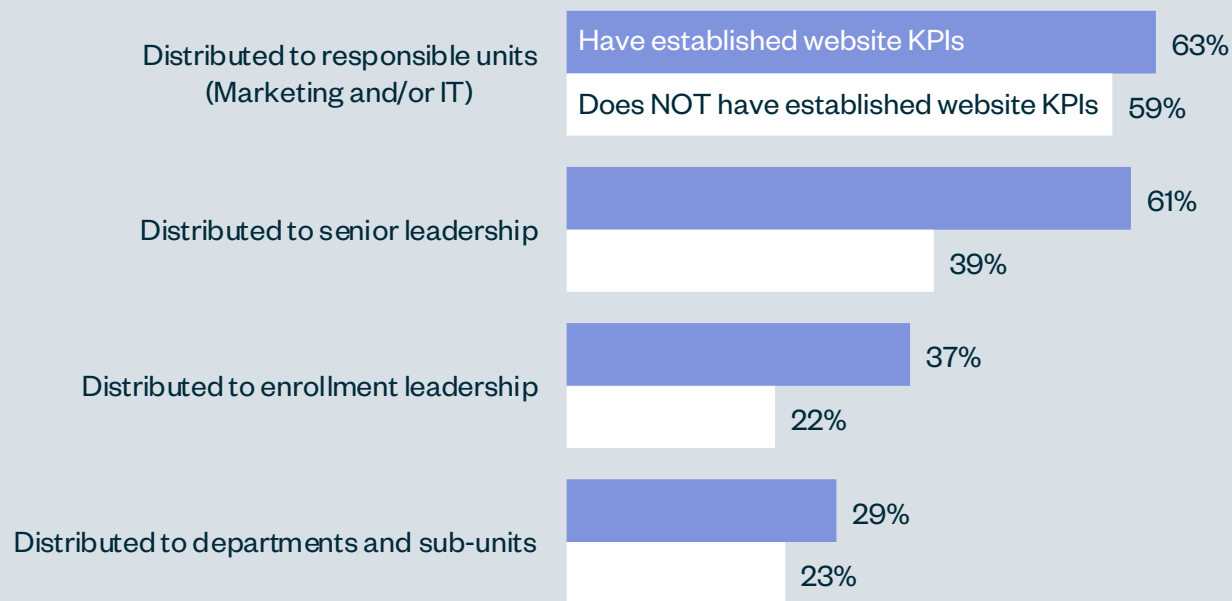
33% of respondents who do not have established KPIs report assessing web performance less frequently than annually

## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Measure

Mature marketing offices are discussing performance with senior leadership regularly.

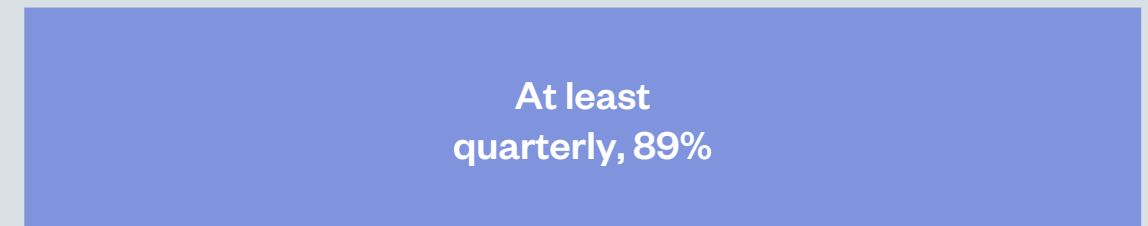
### Reporting Distribution



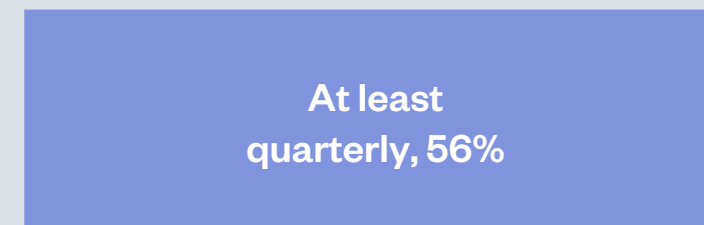
Established KPIs lead to more frequent reporting that demonstrate change over time.

### Reporting Frequency

#### Have established website KPIs



#### Does NOT have established website KPIs

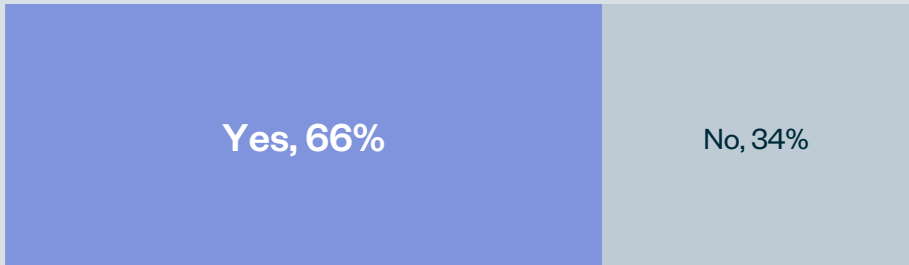


## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

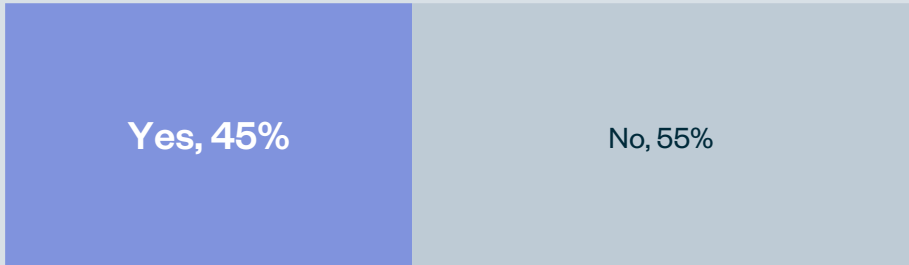
# Measure

### Use analytics insights to inform design and development roadmaps

Have established website KPIs



Does NOT have established website KPIs



When KPIs are established, they are used to inform design and development roadmaps 66% of the time.

As marketing and communications operations mature, the use of data to inform development and design decisions is significant.

Utilizing data sources to measure user experience naturally leads to more targeted design and development roadmaps that solve the goal of the end user or improve the technical performance of the website.

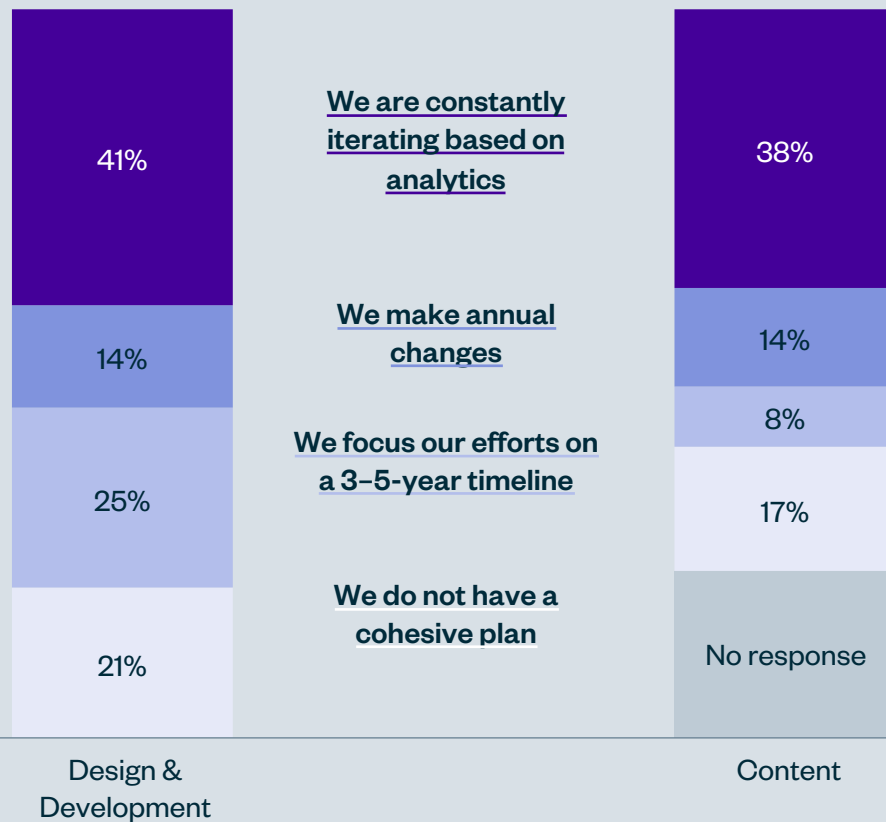
# Iterate



## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Iterate

Approach to maintaining and enhancing your website design & development / content?



Operations who are constantly iterating both their website's design/development AND content are...

- More than twice as likely to be **utilizing tools for UX optimization** (29% vs 14%)
- More likely to be **utilizing tools for A/B testing** (39% vs 16%)
- Nearly 150% more likely to be **utilizing tools for SEO optimization** (29% vs 12%)
- Nearly twice as likely to **have established website KPIs** (61% vs 31%)
- More than three times as likely to **combine web & CRM analytics** (44% to 14%)
- **They're also much more likely to be collaborative with other units in regard to the primary website —**
  - 121% more likely to say website is a cohesive property with a unified strategy (49% to 22%)
  - 34% more likely to say website is part of our institution's strategic plan (61% to 45%)
  - 42% more likely to say they collaborate with units across campus for content and development needs (83% to 61%)
  - 52% more likely to say they collaborate with units across campus to set their website's strategy (41% to 27%)

MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Iterate

Operations that constantly iterate website design and content are happier with their CMS.

“We are very happy with our CMS solution”

49%

Operations constantly iterating website design AND content

27%

Operations NOT constantly iterating website design AND content

Operations that have done a redesign in the last two years are happier with their CMS.

## Last Website Redesign

Operations constantly iterating website design AND content



Operations NOT constantly iterating website design AND content



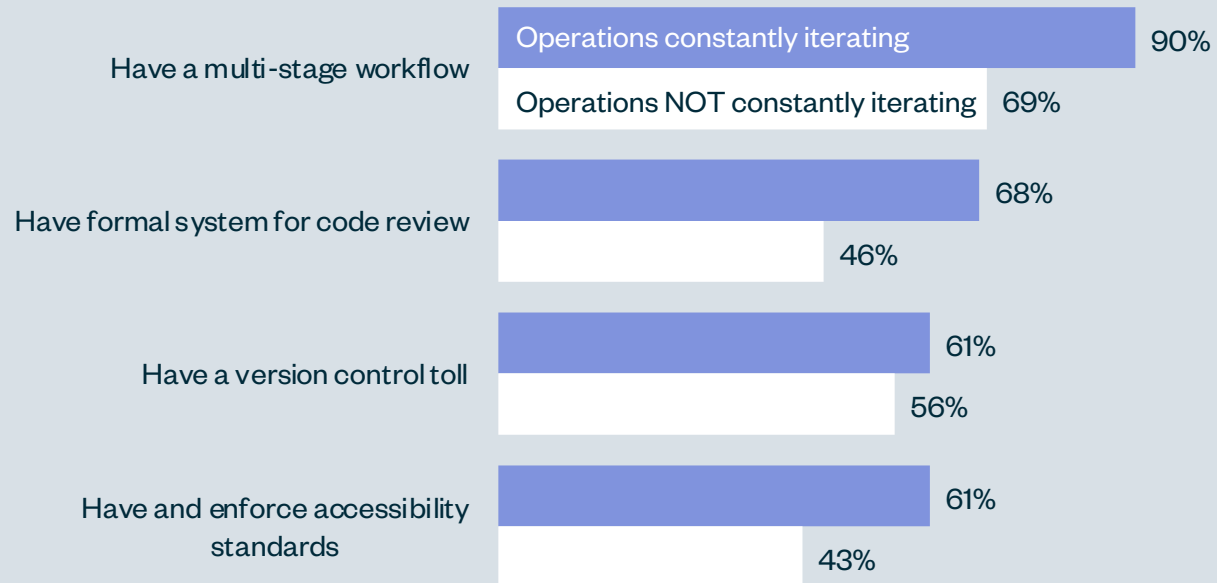
Institutions constantly iterating on design & content are more likely to have completed a redesign in the past 2 years

## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Iterate

Operations that are constantly iterating have more sophisticated development practices.

### Use of quality control tools & processes



Operations that are constantly iterating on design and content assess their website performance more frequently.

### Frequency of assessing website performance

#### Operations constantly iterating website design AND content



#### Operations NOT constantly iterating website design AND content



← 29% of institutions not iterating on design & content report assessing web performance less frequently than annually

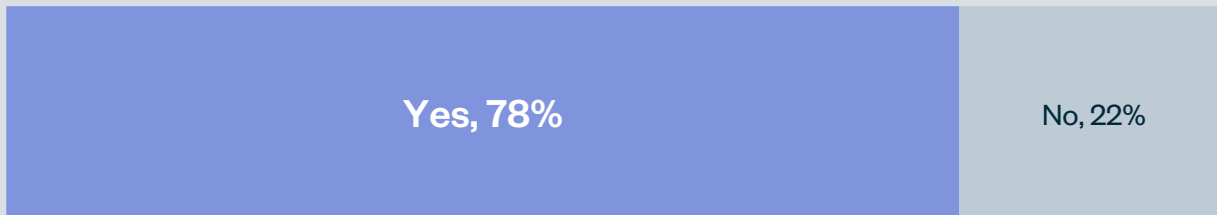
## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Iterate

Operations that constantly iterate are more likely to use analytics to inform their strategy.

### Use analytics insights to make decisions about content strategy

Operations constantly iterating website design AND content



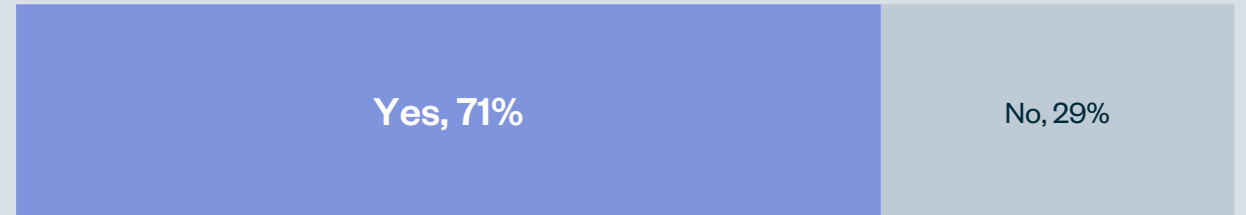
Operations NOT constantly iterating website design AND content



Operations that constantly iterate are more likely to use analytics to inform both design and development.

### Use analytics insights to inform design and development roadmaps

Operations constantly iterating website design AND content



Operations NOT constantly iterating website design AND content

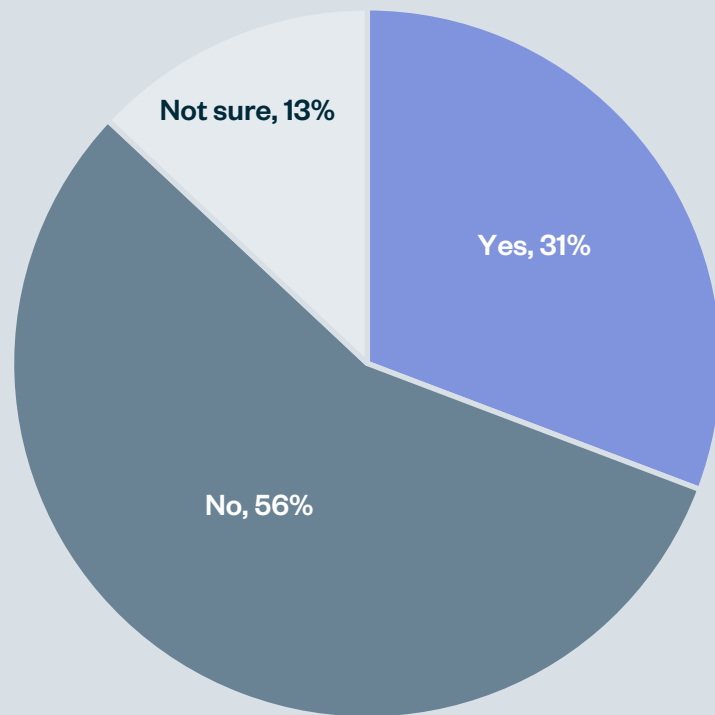


# Integrate

MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Integrate

Do you combine your website analytics with your CRM analytics?



## Operations who combine website analytics with CRM analytics are...

- More than twice as likely to be **utilizing tools for UX optimization** (29% vs 14%)
- More than twice as likely to be **utilizing tools for SEO optimization** (29% vs 13%)
- 20% more likely to be **utilizing tools for assessing website performance** (85% vs 70%)
- 6x more likely to **report marcom than IT** (79% to 13%)
- 25% more likely to **report on analytics at least quarterly** (83% vs 66%)

MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Integrate

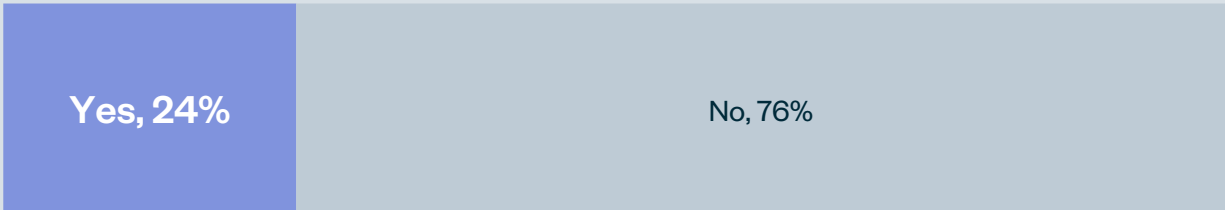
Operations with an established pattern of iterating web design and content are more likely to integrate CMS and CRM.

### Integrate CMS and CRM

Operations constantly iterating website design AND content



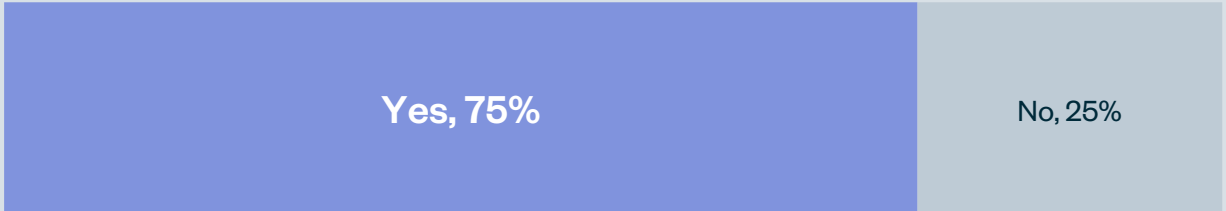
Operations NOT constantly iterating website design AND content



Operations who integrate CRM and website analytics are more likely to have established KPIs that are used for decision making.

### Have established website KPIs

Operations constantly iterating website design AND content



Operations NOT constantly iterating website design AND content

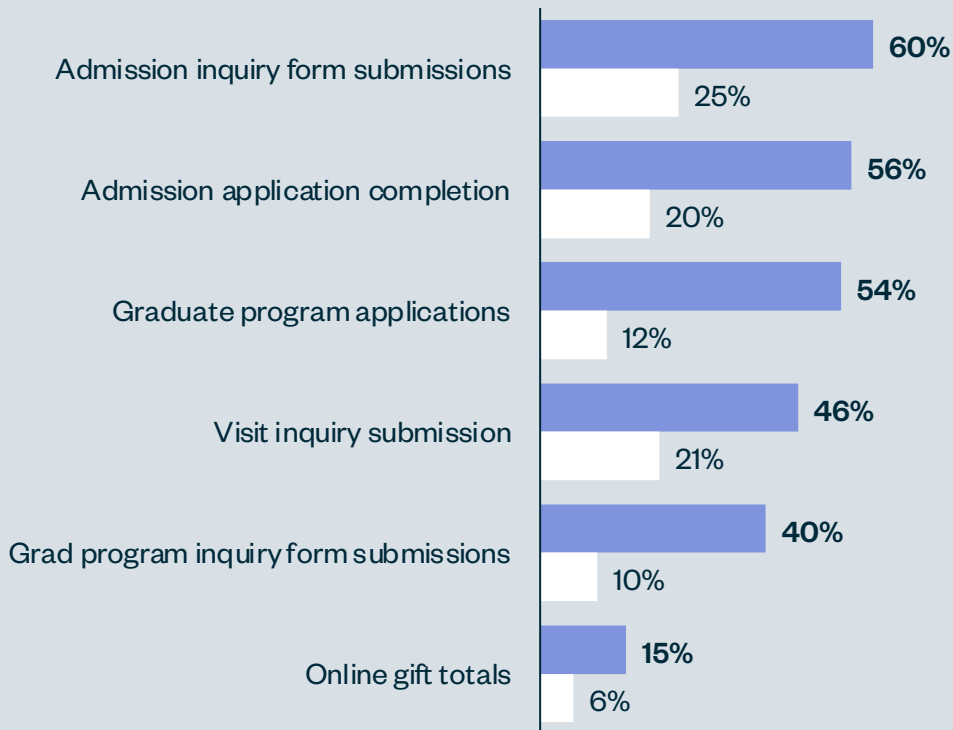


## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Integrate

### KPIs Measured

■ Integrate website analytics & CRM analytics  
□ Does NOT integrate website analytics & CRM analytics



Institutions integrating web & CRM analytics are significantly more likely to be assessing KPIs correlated to institutional goals rather than just optimizing web performance measures.

This is not surprising, but it is alarming to see the discrepancies as significant as they are. This serves as a prime example for the inextricable relationship between marketing maturity — measuring strategic institutional goals — and resourcing — having data integration between CRM & CMS.

Ultimately, this enables the institution to measure marketing performance in relationship to strategic goals and desired outcomes. We believe these sorts of assessments are table stakes for mature marketing operations and only begin to scratch the surface of the power of these martech platforms.



MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Integrate

Operations using analytics to inform content strategy are more likely to integrate web and CRM analytics.

### Use analytics insights to make decisions about content strategy

Integrate website analytics & CRM analytics



Does NOT integrate website analytics & CRM analytics



Operations using analytics to inform design and development are more likely to integrate web and CRM analytics.

### Use analytics insights to inform design and development roadmaps

Integrate website analytics & CRM analytics



Does NOT integrate website analytics & CRM analytics

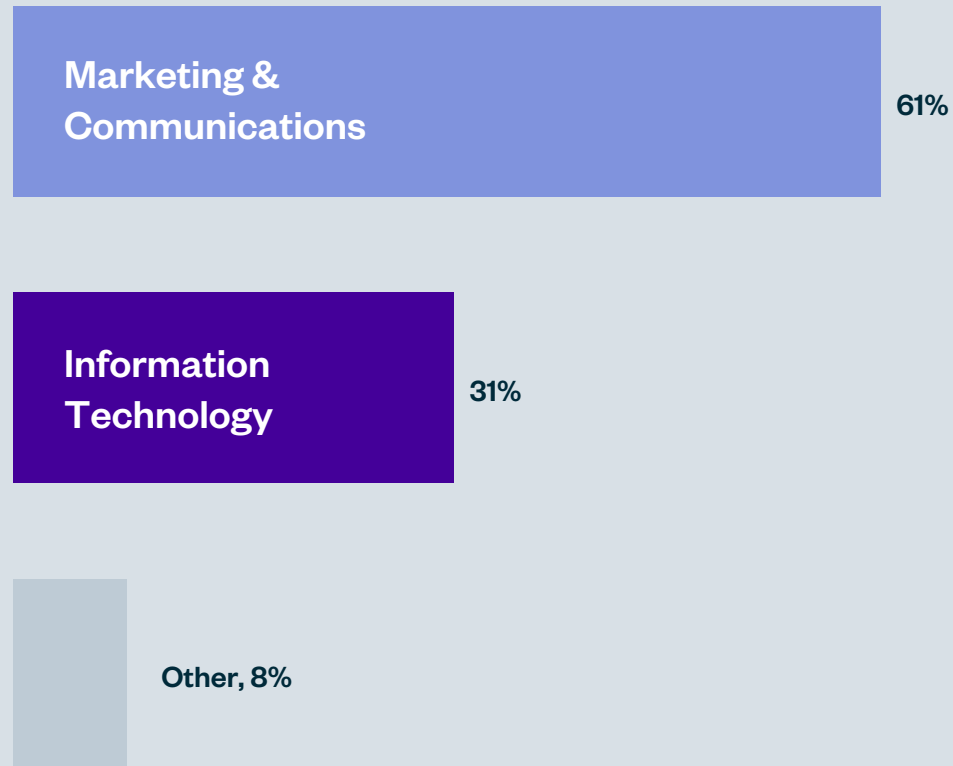


# Report Into Central MarCom

## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Report Into MarCom

What is your primary reporting line?



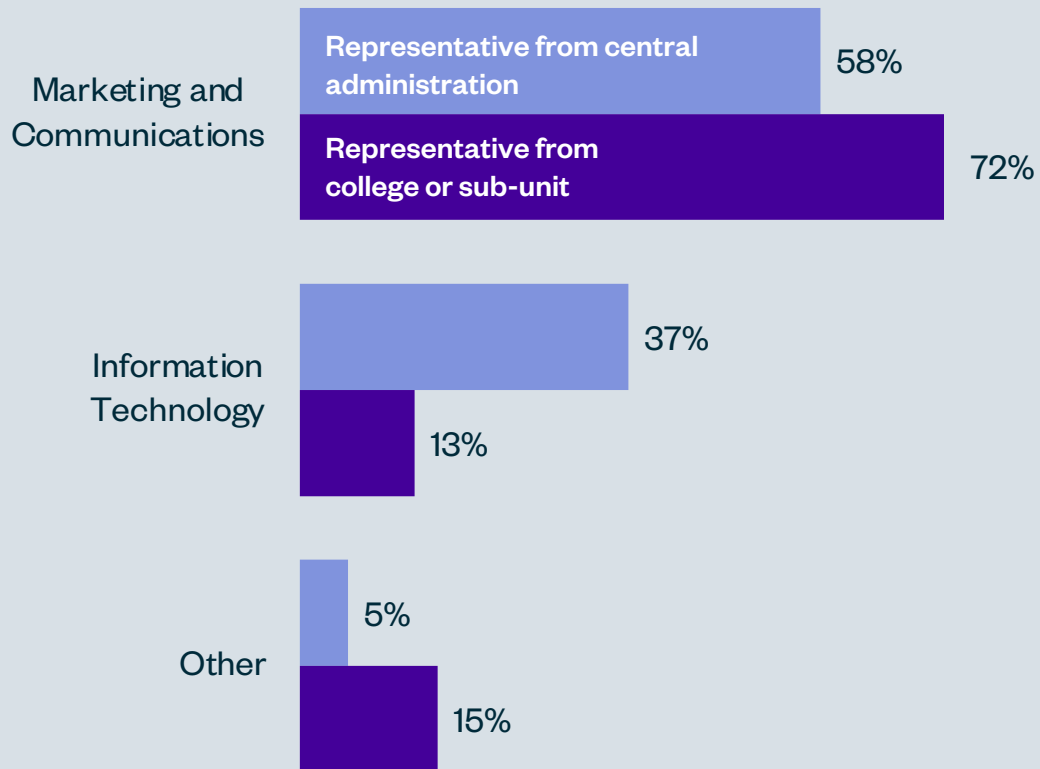
Operations that report into marcom are more likely to...

- **MEASURE** More than 2x more likely to have established KPIs for their website (58% vs. 24%)
- **INTEGRATE** More than 2x more likely to combine website analytics with CRM analytics (40% vs. 17%)
- More likely to be **utilizing tools for UX optimization** (26% vs 6%)
- More likely to be **utilizing tools for SEO optimization** (26% vs 5%)
- More likely to be **utilizing tools for assessing website performance** (86% vs 56%)
- More likely to be **utilizing tools for maintaining/assessing accessibility** (83% vs 68%)
- **Use more tools for:** UX/SEO optimization, assessing web performance, maintaining accessibility standards, paid media, and analytics reporting
- **Assessing website performance at least quarterly** (69% vs. 50%)

## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Report Into MarCom

### Primary Reporting Line

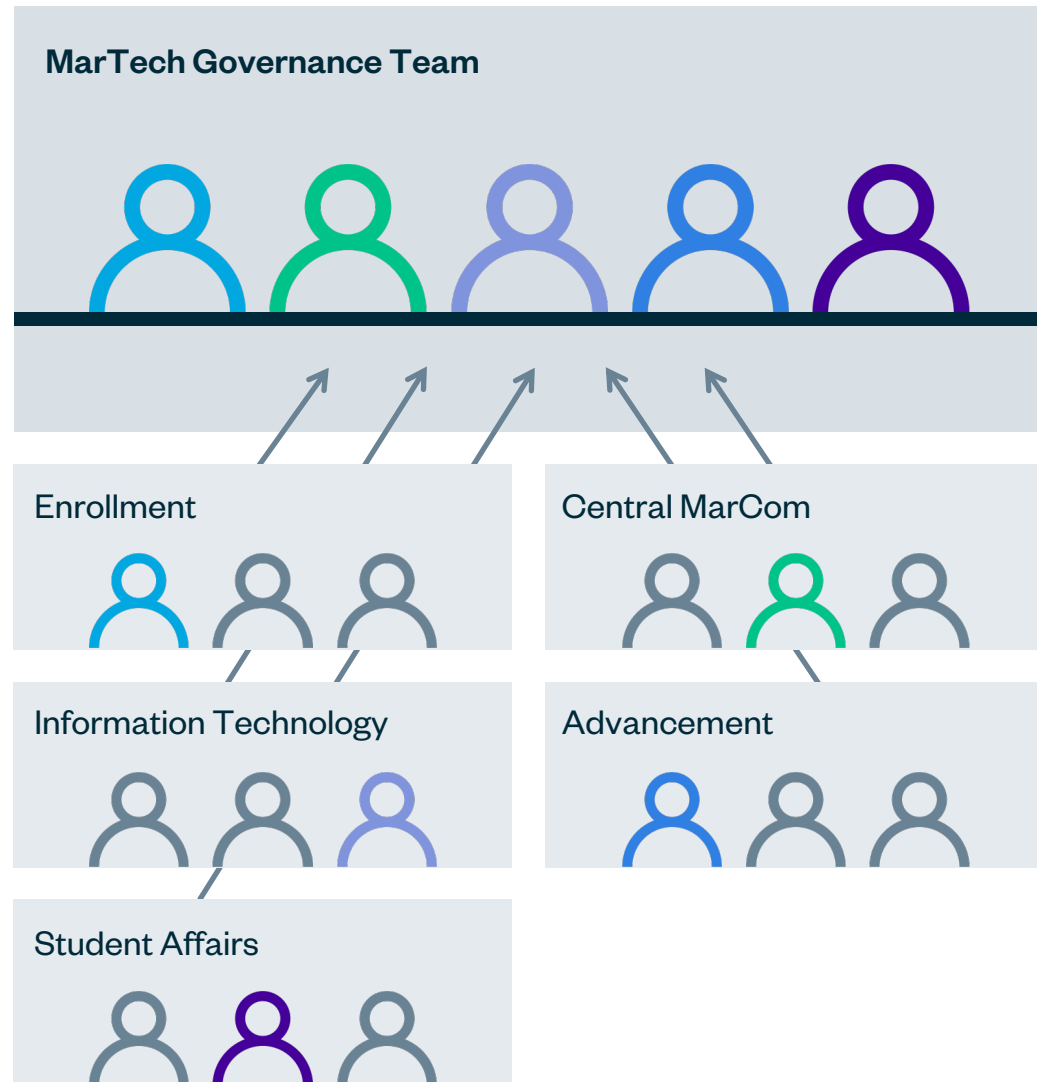


This study confirms what we are seeing in similar higher education marketing studies — a two decade-long shift in ownership transfer from IT to Marketing. Marketing and communication teams are focused on the website as a platform for storytelling, lead generation, and brand engagement.

Digital-first branding, marketing, and communications are leading enrollment and advancement efforts across the country. Aligning the website's primary ownership within marketing and communication teams supports those goals and leads to more coordinated outcomes.

## MARTECH MATURITY MODEL

# Report Into MarCom / A better model for collaboration



The final trait that mature martech organizations have in common is that they report into central marcom.

That's not to say all of these resources should necessarily **live** within central marcom, but it does provide insight into how marketing has become a central strategic driver organizationally. We believe this is only going to increase in the years to come.

This shouldn't be surprising. This discussion began with articulating the inextricable link between marketing maturity & resources — but that requires having the right people at the table, equipped with the right tools and the resources to deploy them, within a collaborative and empowered organizational structure fully supported by institutional leadership.

Lofty goals? Or a necessary sign of the times?

Consider this: according to a recent study from Gartner, 25% of all Fortune 500 companies will combine their marketing, sales, and customer service functions into a single department by 2023. Suffice it to say, organizational structure that fosters collaboration and empowers decision-making is more critical now than ever.

# Survey Findings

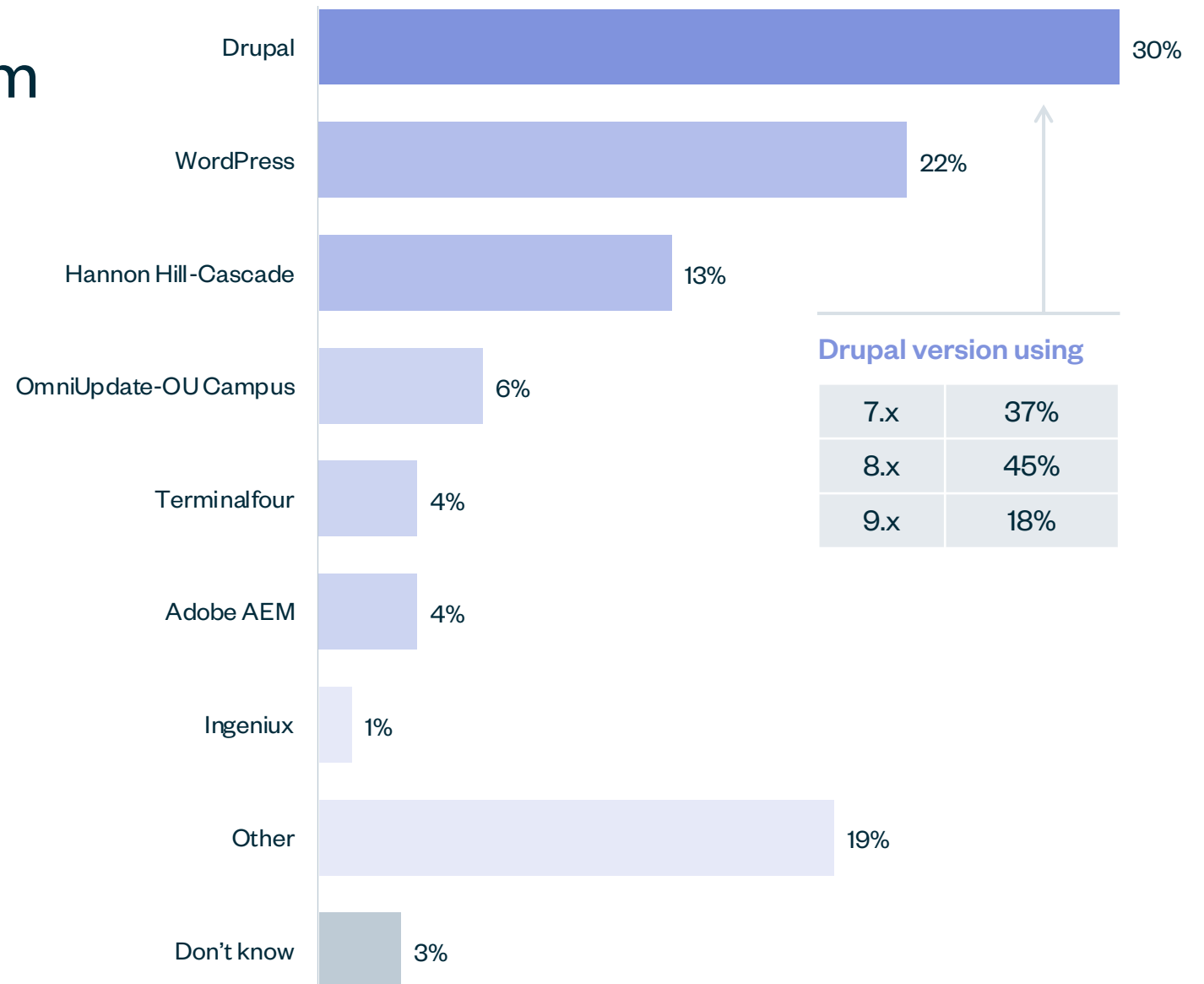
# Content Management Systems and Hosting

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND HOSTING

# Which Content Management System (CMS) is used for your primary institutional website? (select one)

The content management system a university deploys is the most critical part of their digital ecosystem. The CMS needs to be flexible enough to conform to the needs of the organizational structure. It also needs to be supported by either a committed network of developers or a support contract to ensure future innovation is possible and data security is maintained.

Our survey is consistent with other industry data about which CMS platforms are most popular.





CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND HOSTING

# How satisfied are you with your current CMS?

WordPress users are more likely to say they are working through issues. All Drupal users who indicated they are unhappy with their CMS are using an older version of Drupal (7.x or 8.x).

**CMS Satisfaction:**

**Drupal vs. WordPress**

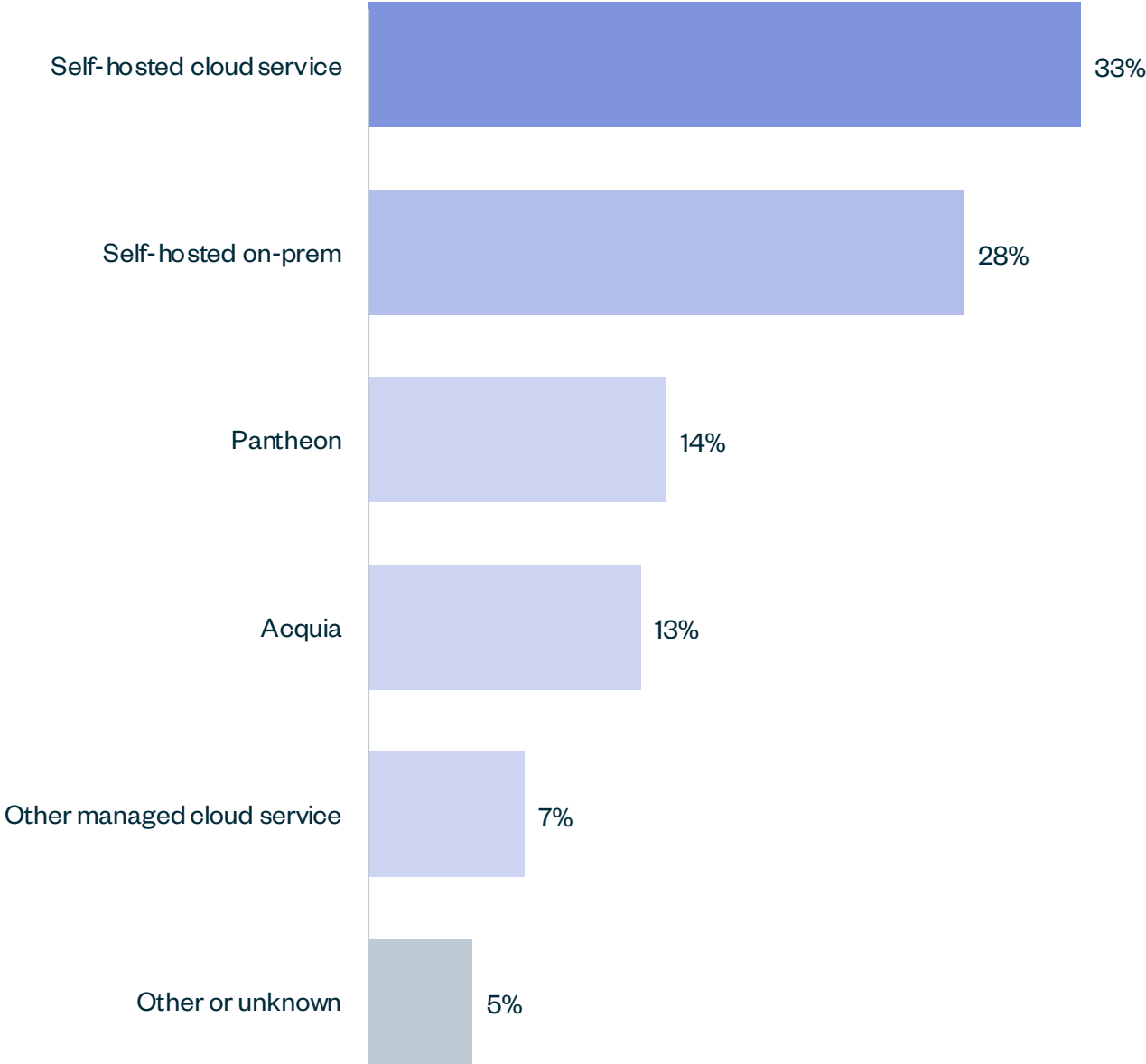
	Drupal	WordPress
We're very happy with our solution	49%	25%
There are issues that we are working through but are committed to our current solution	35%	58%
We are unhappy with our current CMS, but have not started exploring other options	2%	8%
We are unhappy with our current CMS and are actively exploring new CMS options	14%	8%



CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND HOSTING

# What solution do you use for hosting? (select one)

Over the last several years there has been a significant shift from on-prem hosting to cloud hosting. Managed platform services like Pantheon and Acquia have 27% of the market share, while cloud services make up 68% of all hosting from our respondents.



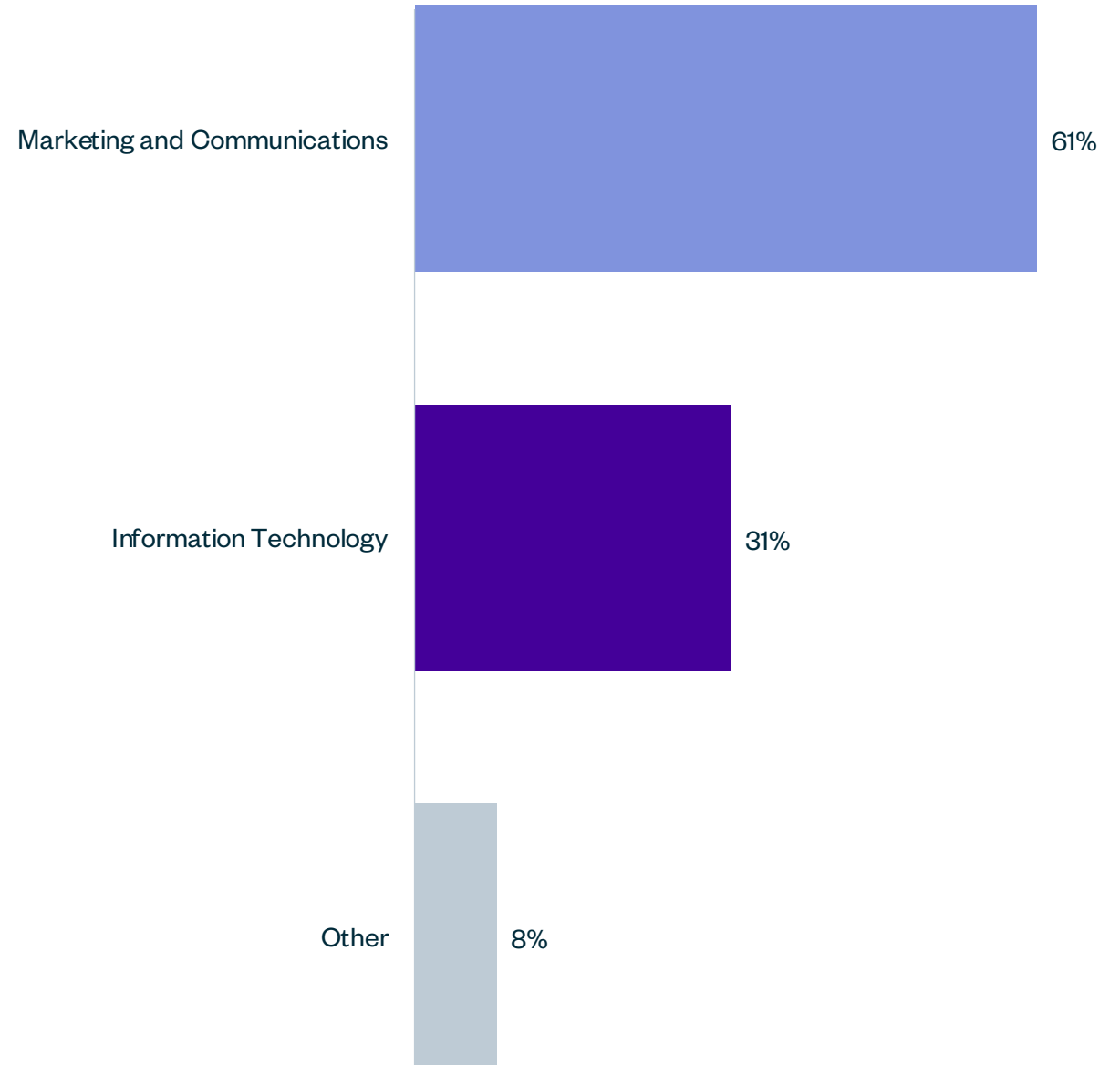
# Governance and Reporting Structures

## GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING STRUCTURES

# What is your primary reporting line?

Martech organizations that report into marcom are more likely to...

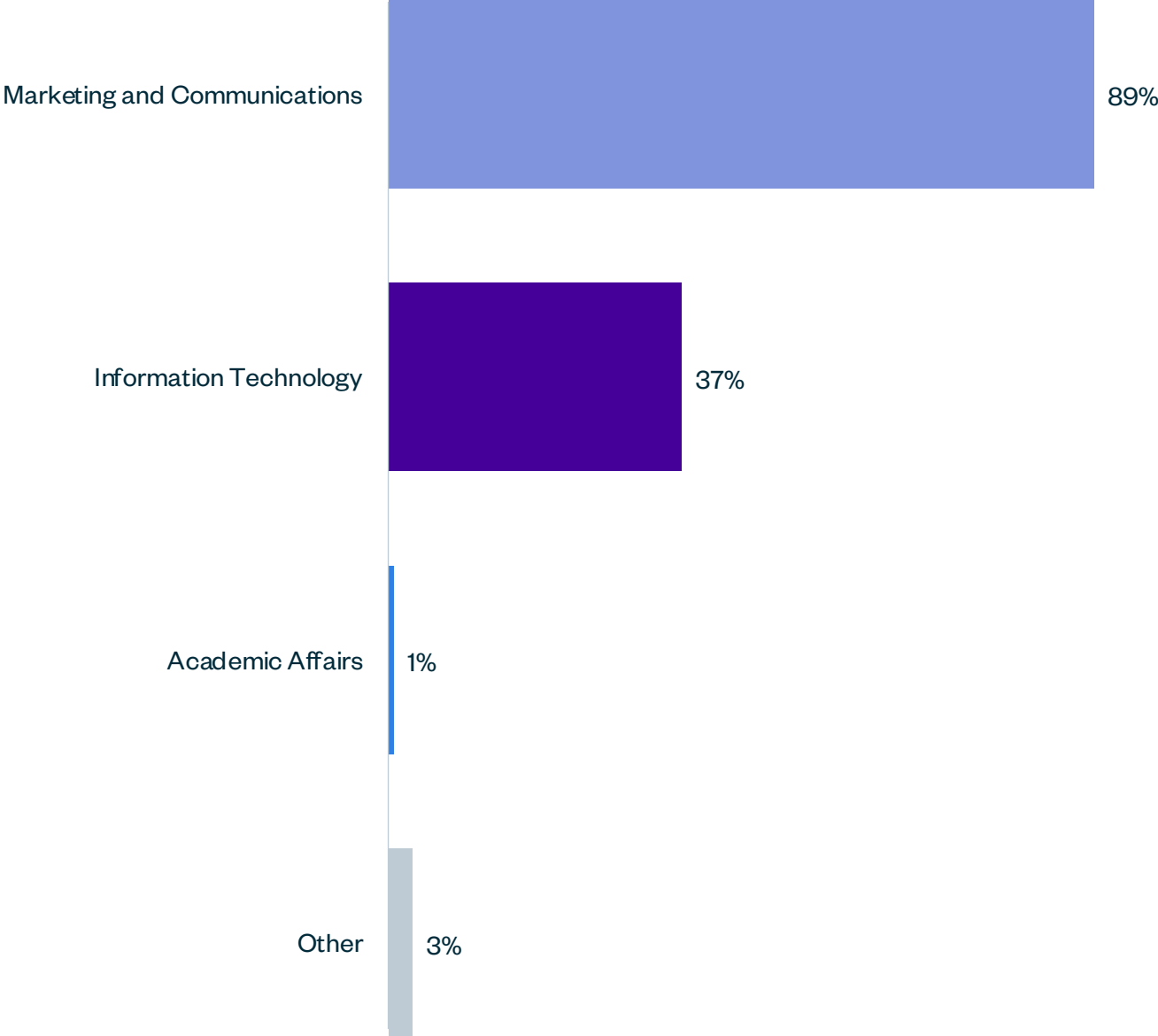
- **MEASURE** More than 2x more likely to have established KPIs for their website (58% vs. 24%)
- **INTEGRATE** More than 2x more likely to combine website analytics with CRM analytics (40% vs. 17%)
- **Use more tools for:** UX/SEO optimization, assessing web performance, maintaining accessibility standards, paid media, and analytics reporting



GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING STRUCTURES

# Which department owns the primary university web presence? (select all that apply)

While marketing and communication is the primary ownership, 29% of respondents indicated there is shared ownership between more than one department.



GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING STRUCTURES

# Representatives of college or sub-unit, which areas of responsibility describe your current governance model?

(select all that apply)

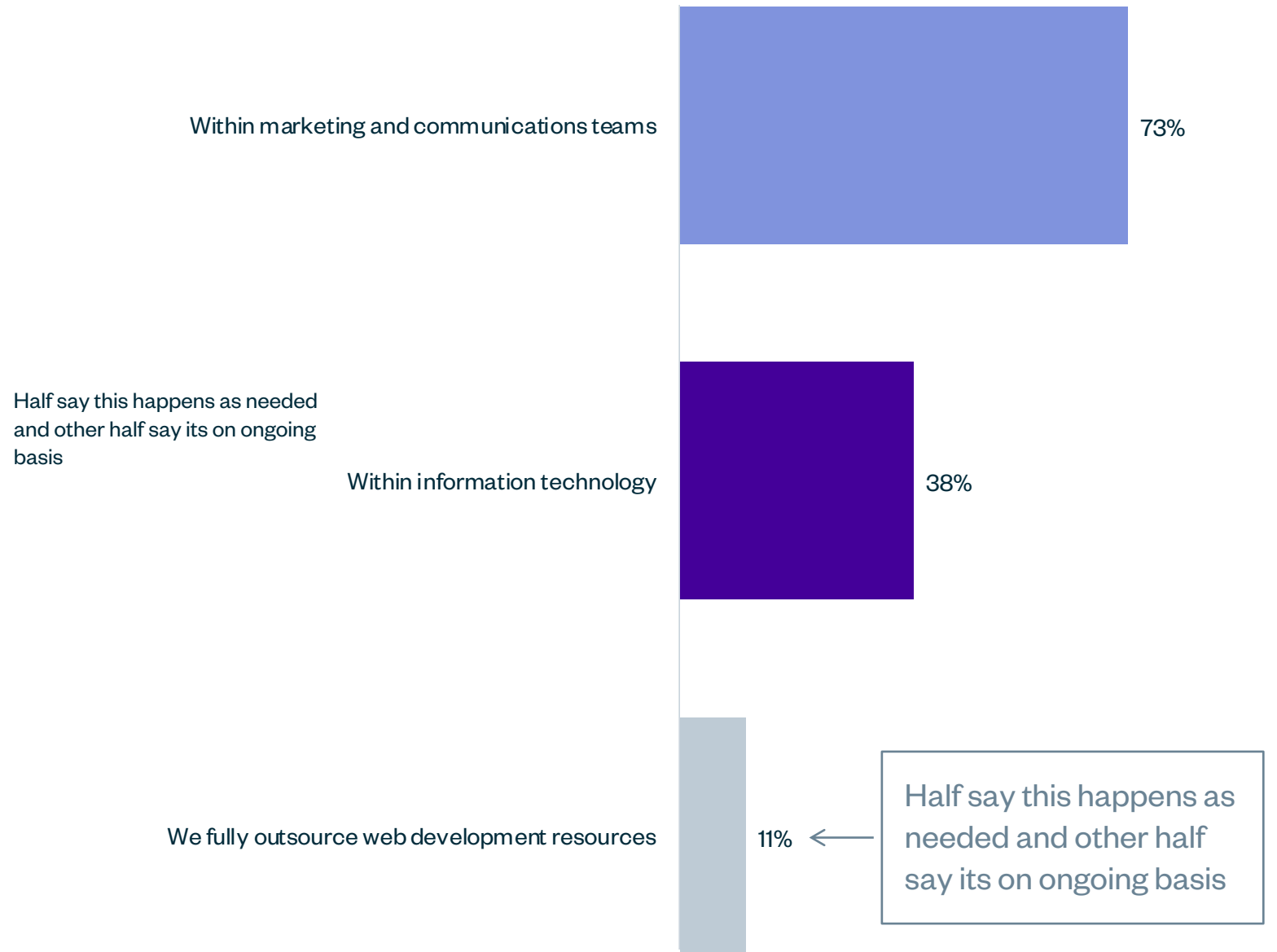
There are varying degrees of ownership within different governance models. 92% of respondents from college or sub-units (not central administration) said they manage content independently.



GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING STRUCTURES

# Representatives of college or sub-unit, which of the following best describes where your web development resources are primarily located? (select all that apply)

Historically, web development resources have been placed in I.T. or located in a central team. Our survey shows a shift toward centralizing those resources within marketing and communications.



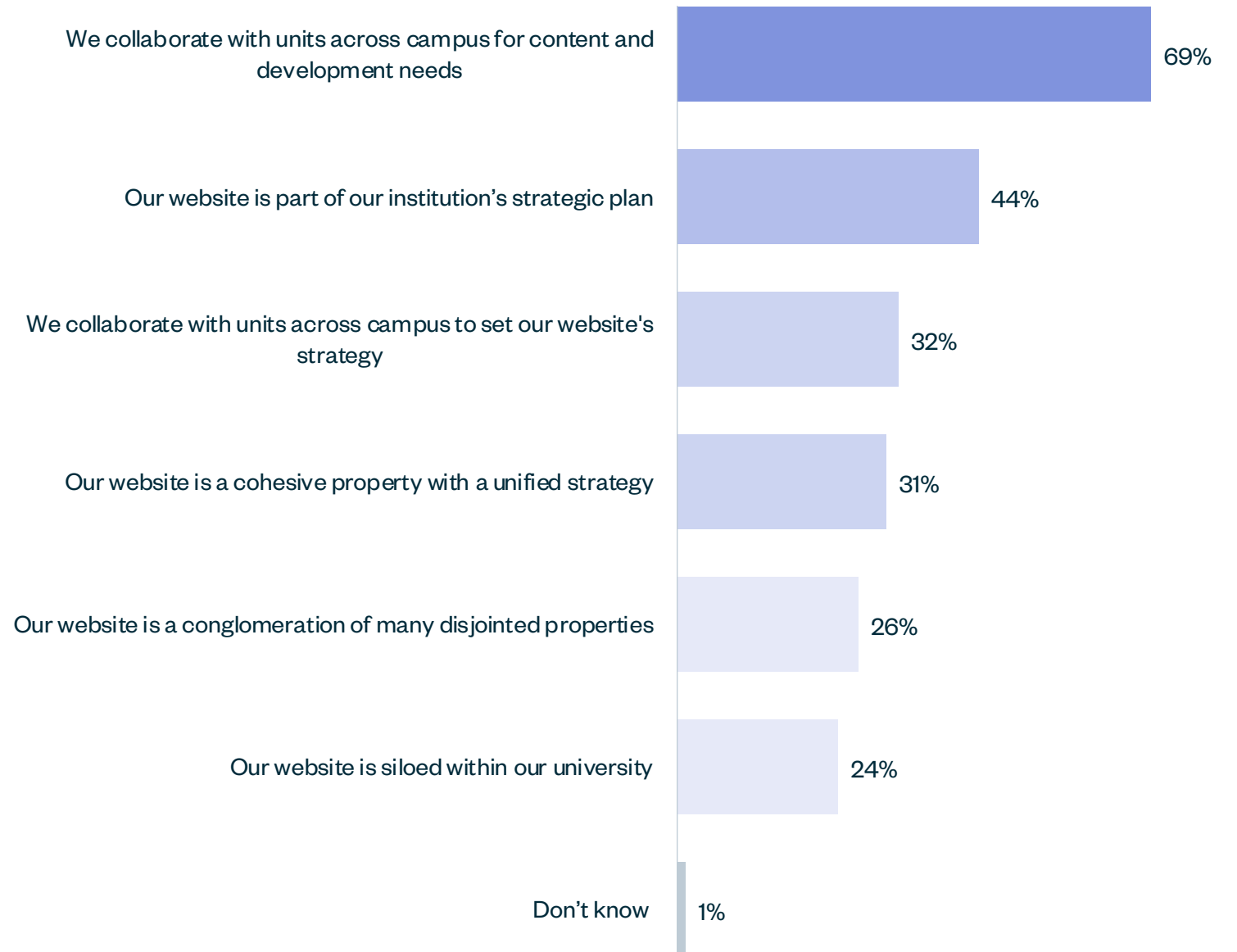
## GOVERNANCE AND REPORTING STRUCTURES

# How would you describe your collaboration with other units across campus regarding your primary website? (select all that apply)

Collaborating on content and development is high among all survey respondents, however strategic decision making is concentrated 68% of the time.

Less than 50% of respondents report that the website is part of the institutions strategic plan. As the most visible and accessible asset owned by the institution, there is a need to elevate its importance across senior leadership.

Only 26% of respondents report their website is a conglomeration of many disjointed properties. This is a strong signal of more collaboration across the edu.



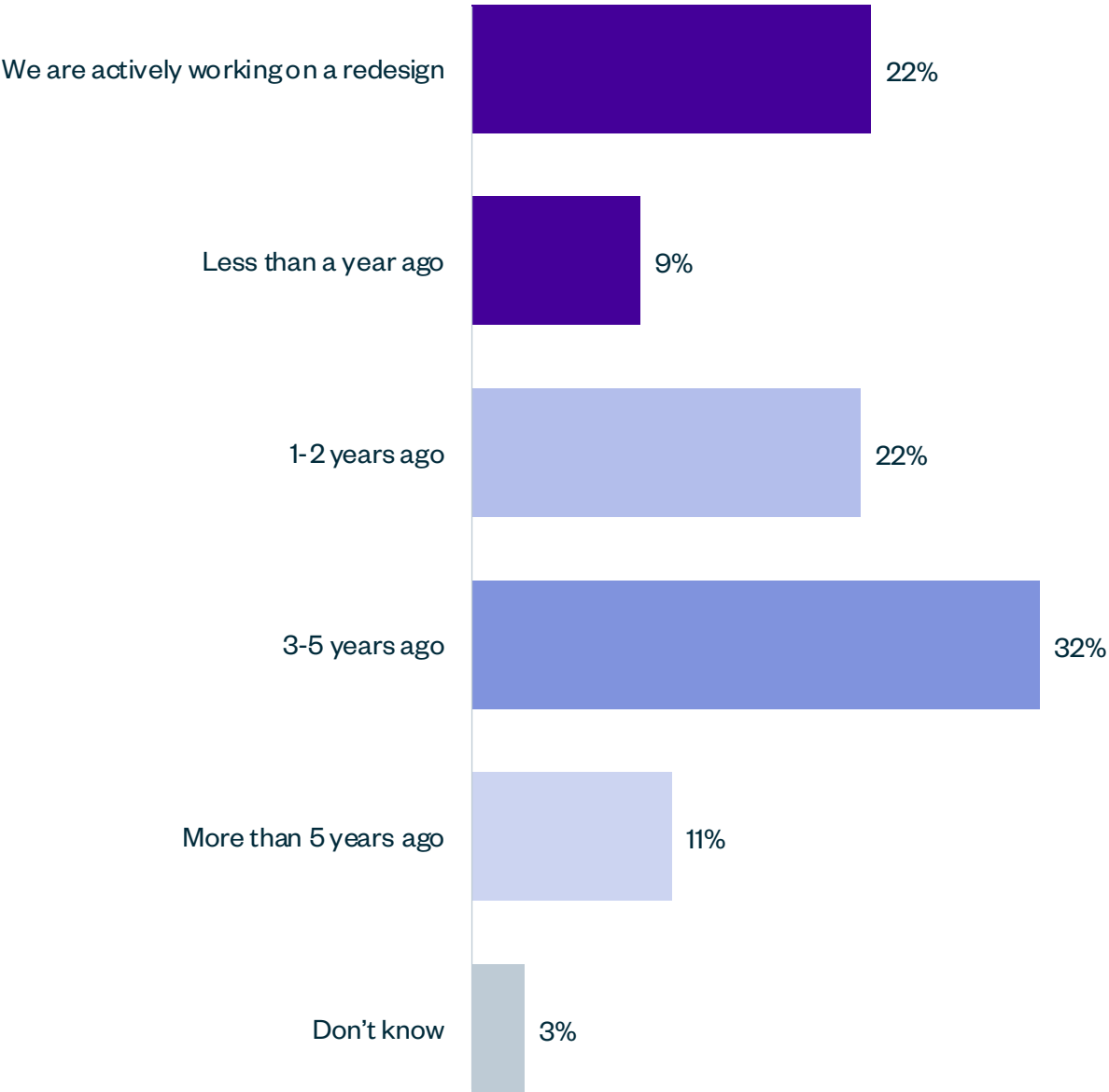


# Redesigning the EDU

REDESIGNING THE EDU

# How long ago did you complete a comprehensive redesign of your website?

Nearly 30% of respondents report they are actively working on or have completed a redesign within the last year. At first consideration this appears to be a positive trend, however, the bottom 46% of respondents have not done a redesign in more than three years signaling a polarization of investment in the edu.



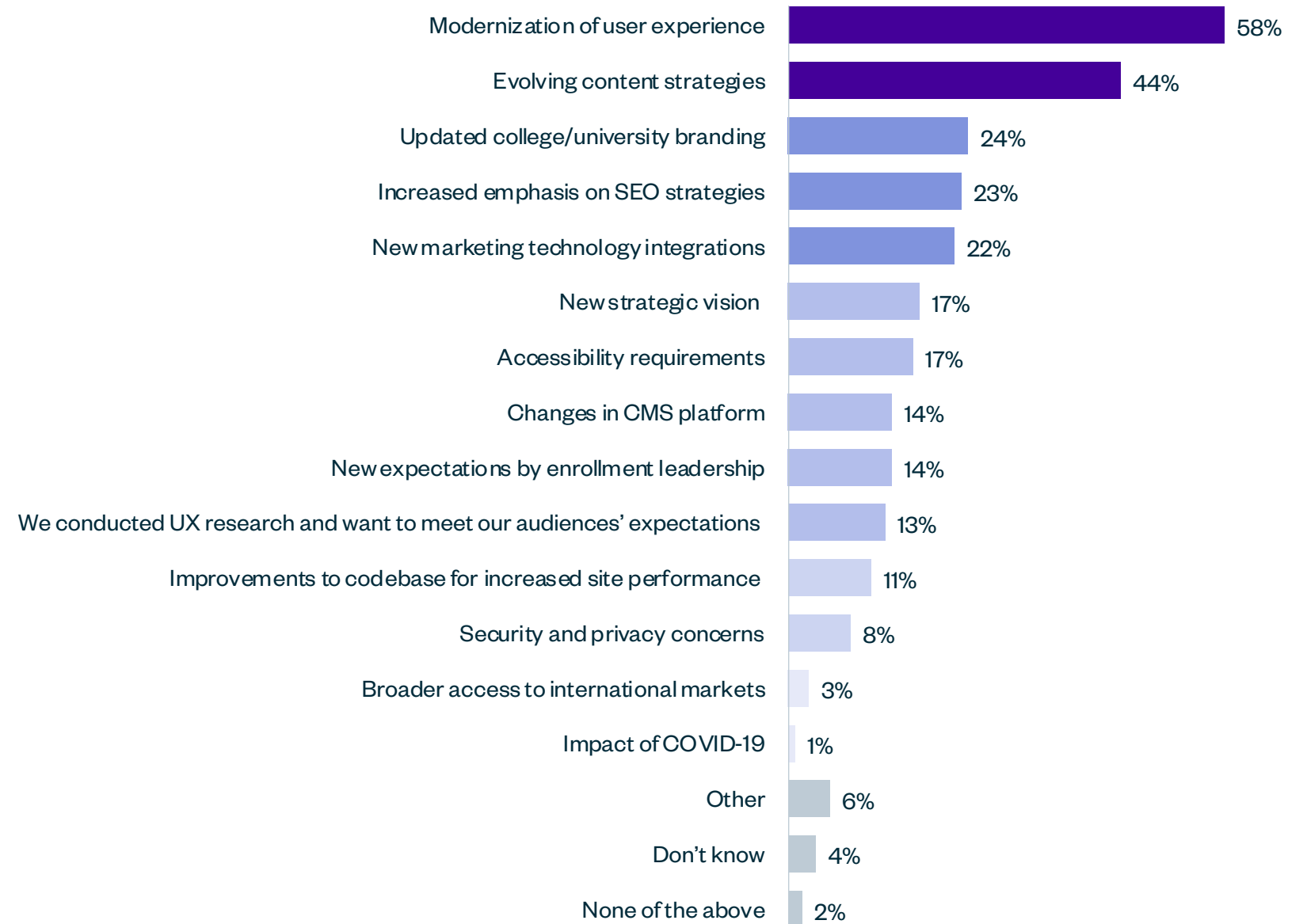
## REDESIGNING THE EDU

# What are the top three drivers for your next website redesign?

(Only asked if last web redesign = one or more years ago)

The most common drivers of redesigns are UX modernization, content strategy, SEO performance, and marketing technology integrations. CMS, data security, and other technical factors are important, but less critical drivers of the redesign.

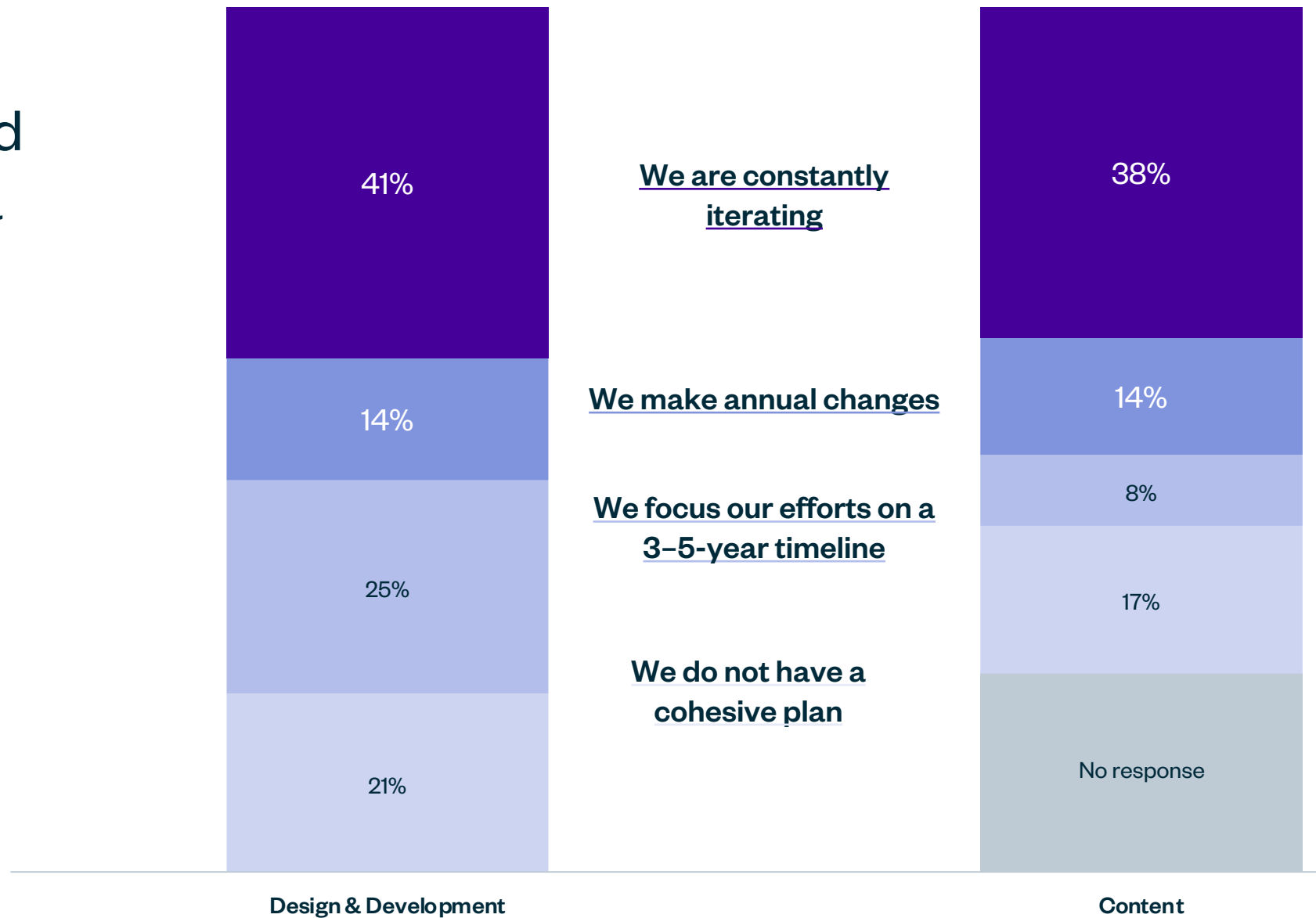
Take note: with 46% of respondents reporting a redesign timeline of greater than three years, there is a significant divide between modern UX and marketing technology integrations.



## REDESIGNING THE EDU

# Which statement best describes your approach to maintaining and enhancing your website design & development / content?

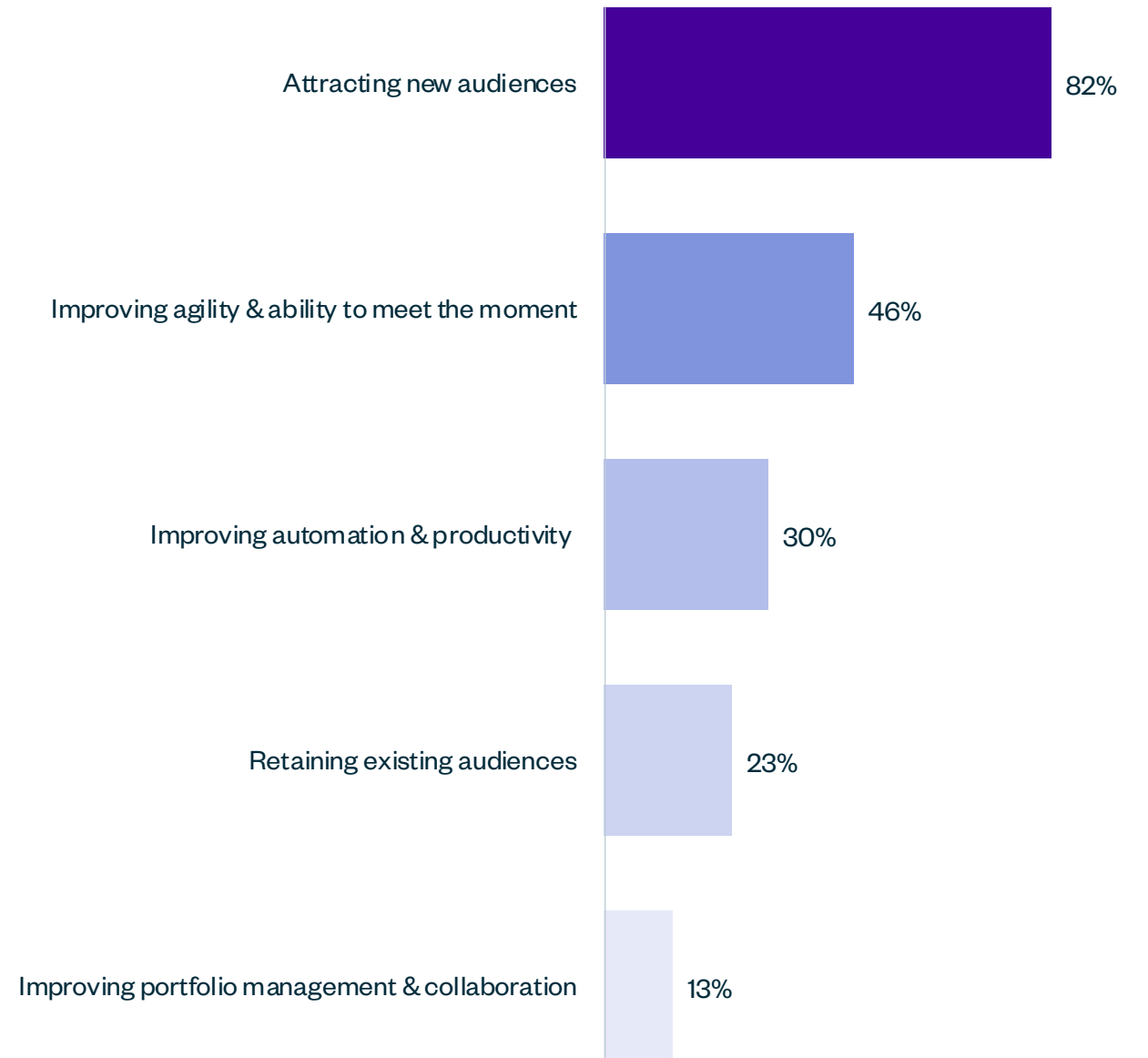
- 52% updating content at least annually
- 55% updating design and development at least annually
- 24% of respondents say they are constantly iterating both website design/development and content
- 31% aren't updating content or design at least annually



## REDESIGNING THE EDU

# Please select the two most important goals for your digital properties:

The overwhelming number of respondents are focused on attracting new audiences and improving agility within the digital properties. The edu is being asked to work harder at recruiting new students of all types and provide a level of flexibility for leadership to quickly change tactics as data provides more clarity on user behavior.

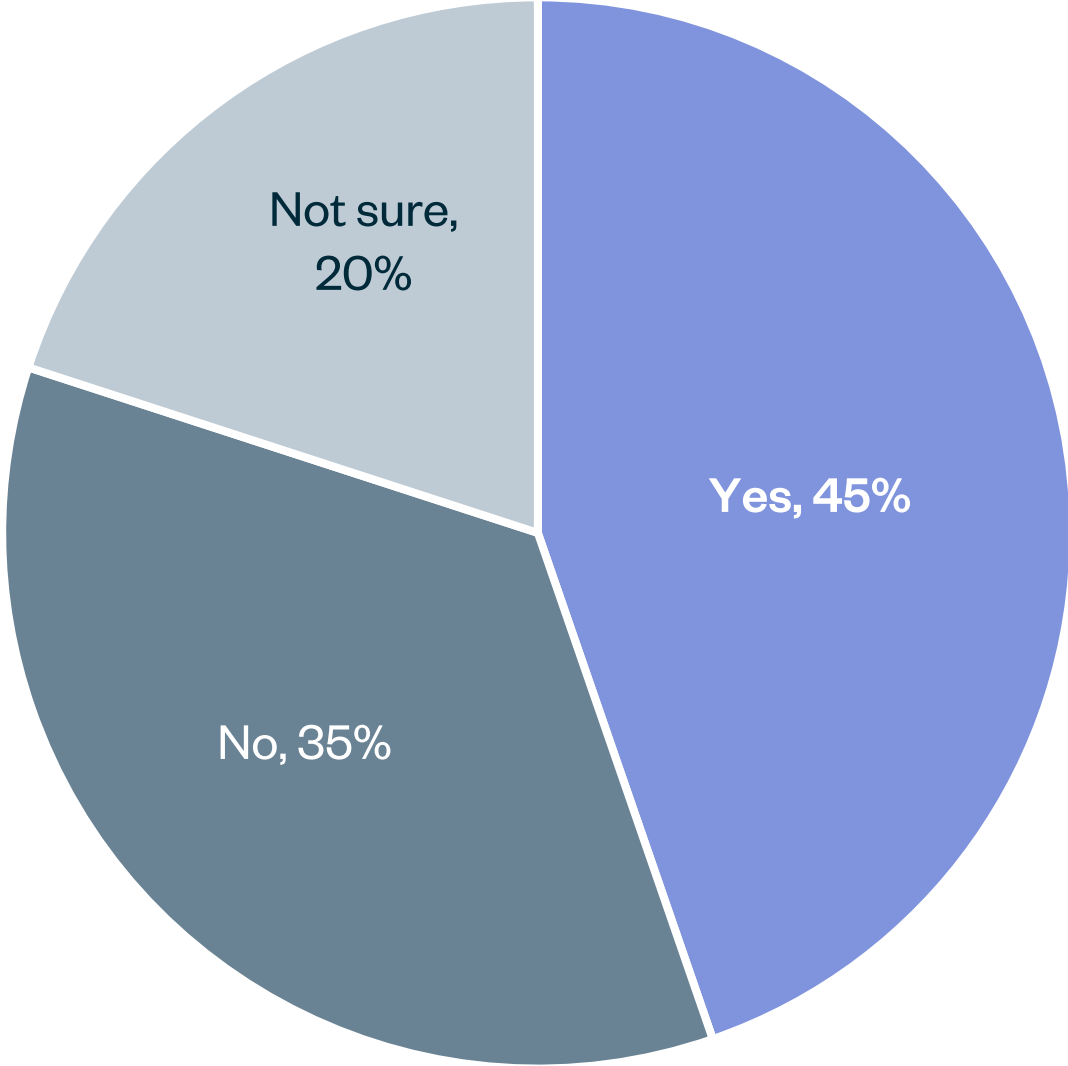


# Analytics and Reporting

ANALYTICS AND REPORTING

# Do you have metrics established that you use for key performance indicators (KPIs) for your website?

Establishing KPIs and building strategies that enhance their performance is a key attribute of a mature organization. Less than 50% of survey respondents indicated having KPIs for their intuitional website.



ANALYTICS AND REPORTING

# What KPIs do you measure?

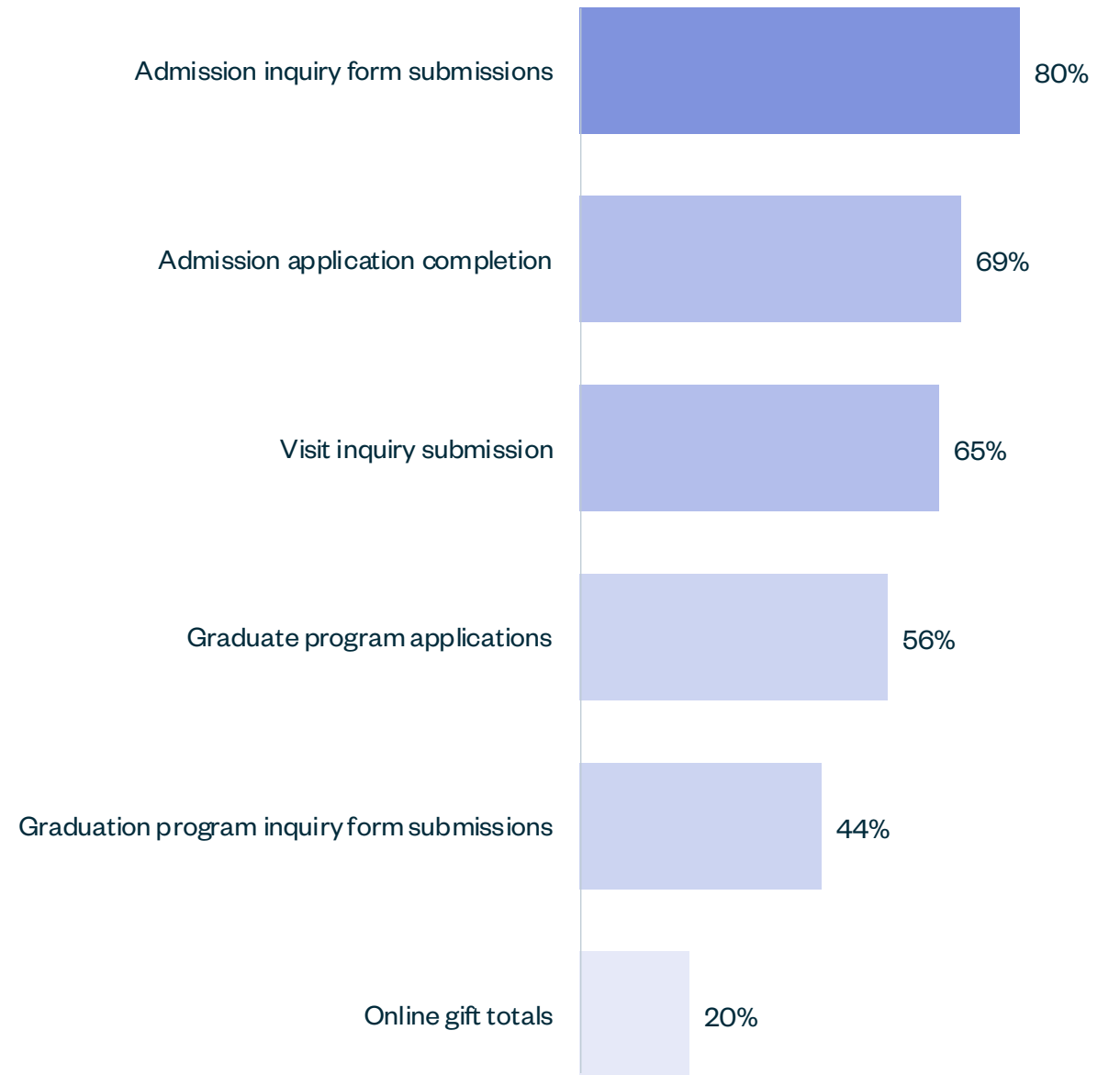
(select all that apply)

Nearly every higher education website has clear calls to action to apply, inquire, and visit. It's no surprise that these are the most commonly measured KPIs.

Take note: Make a gift is also a common call to action across the edu but very little measurement is done. This raises the question of whether this call to action should be as prominent as we observe it to be.

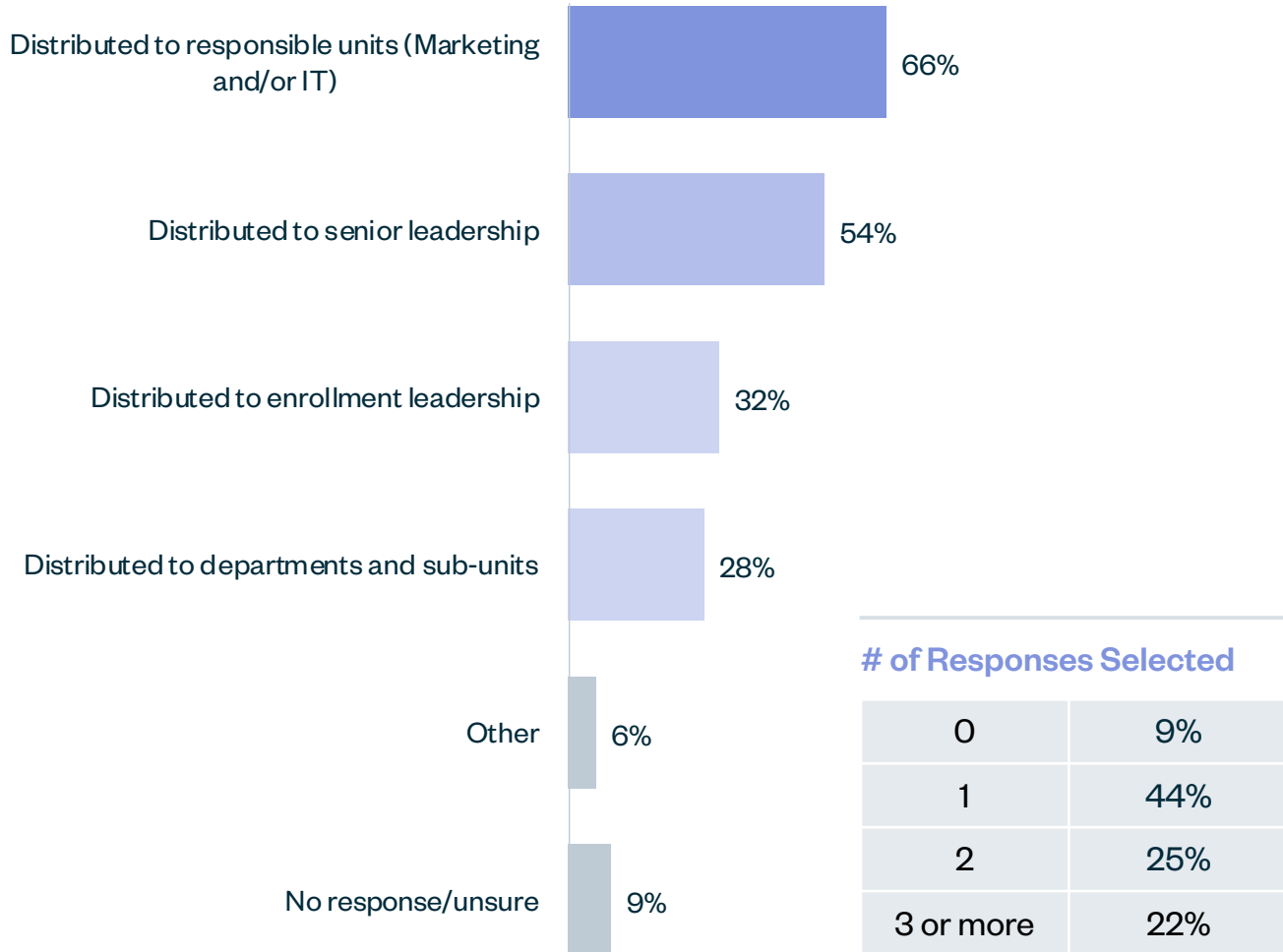
# of Responses Selected

0	4%
1	11%
2 or 3	29%
4 or 5	45%
6 or more	12%

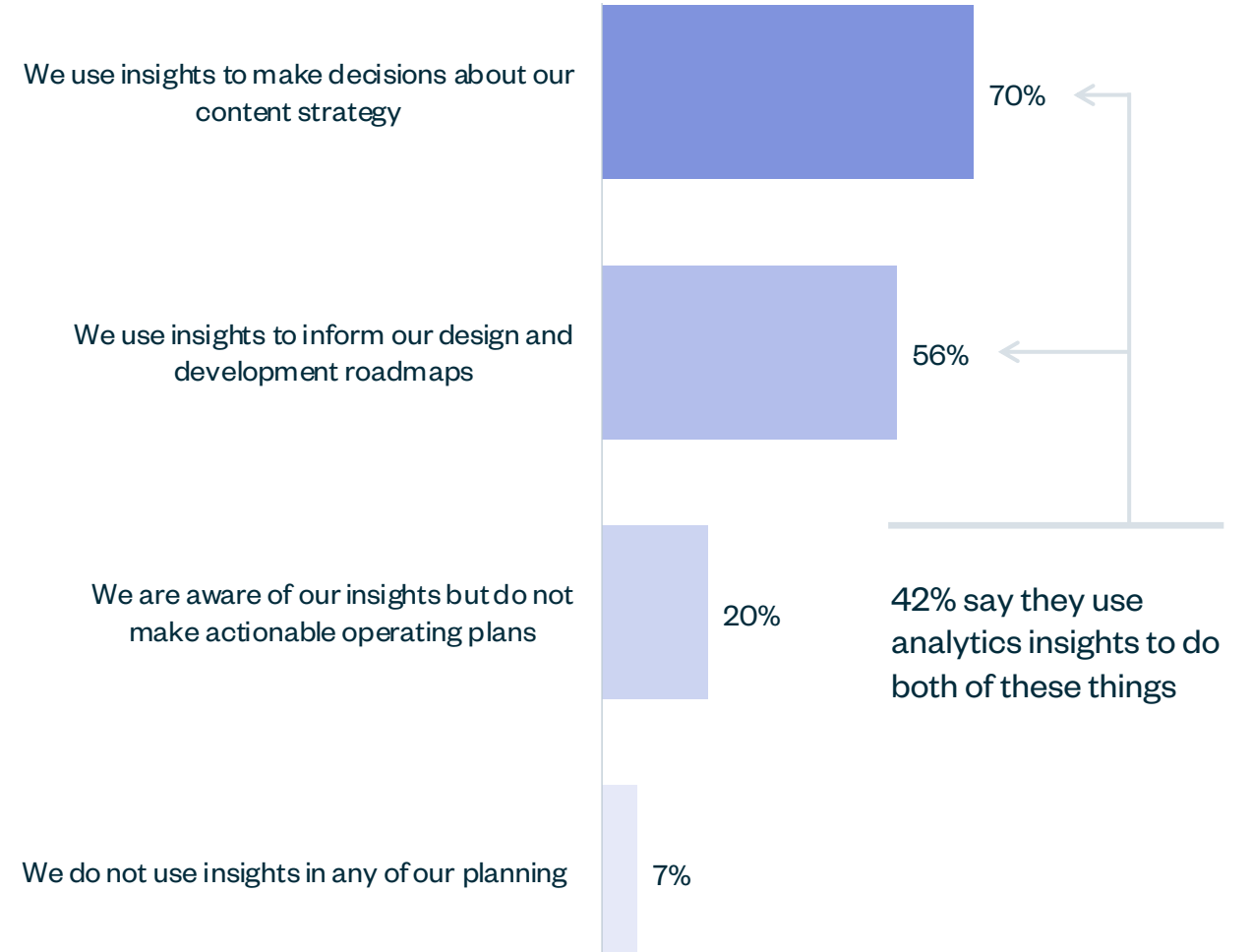




### Which of the following best describes your reporting distribution? (select all that apply)



### Which of the following best describes how you are utilizing your analytics insights? (select all that apply)



ANALYTICS AND REPORTING

# Which of the following tools do you use to gather analytics?

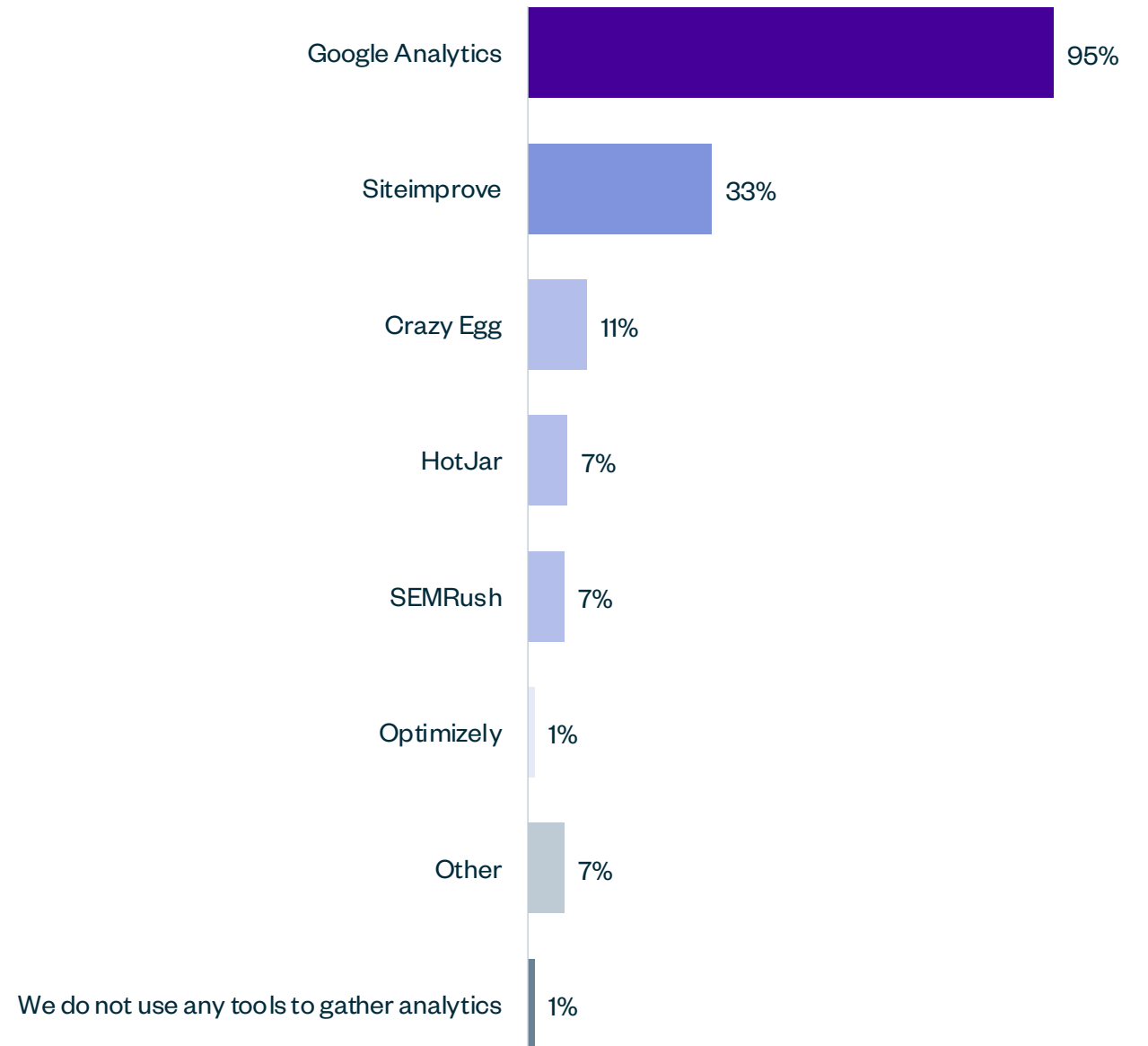
(select all that apply)

Google Analytics and Siteimprove are the most common analytics platforms in use across higher education websites.

There is a significant opportunity to utilize additional platforms to measure and evaluate user experience and SEO effectiveness. Likely, most institutions are uninformed about the value of these type of analytics platform and how they can be used to refine and optimize the user experience.

# of Responses Selected

0	2%
1	53%
2	32%
3 or more	14%



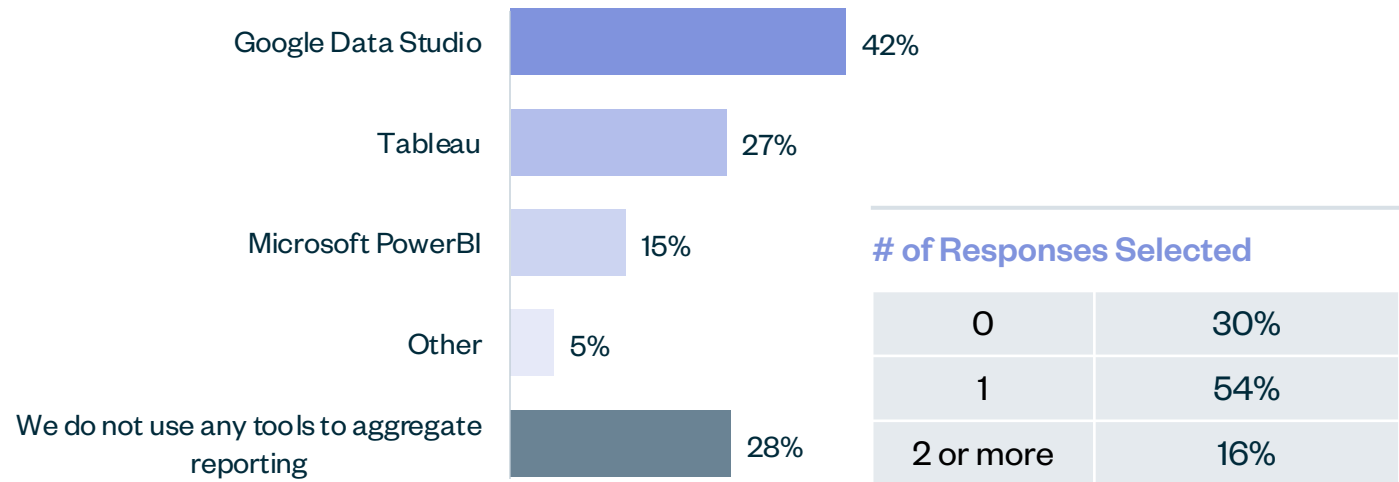
## ANALYTICS AND REPORTING

More than 75% of respondents indicate they report on their analytics quarterly, monthly, or weekly. This is a strong indicator of the role reporting is playing across the organization in decision making.

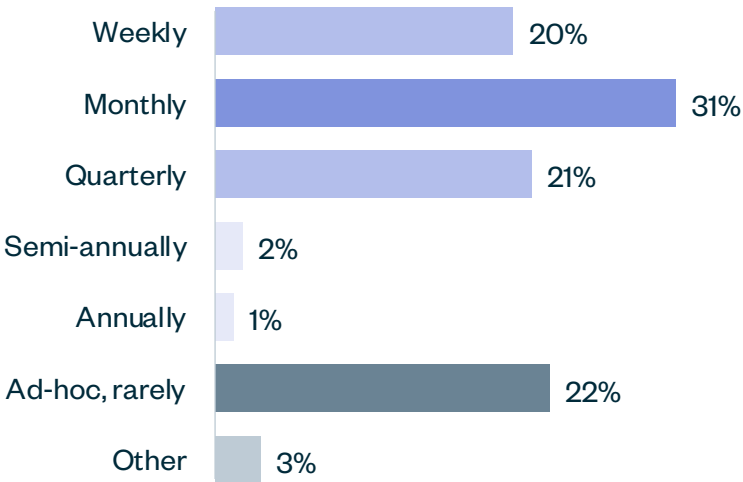
The utilization of visualization platforms for reporting is a trend we will follow closely in the years ahead.

### Which of the following tools do you use to aggregate your reporting?

(select all that apply)



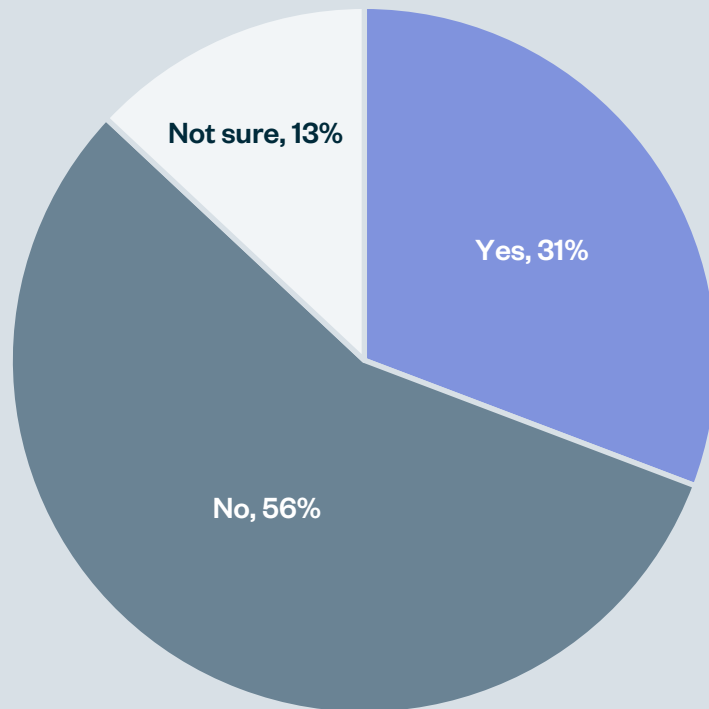
### Which of the following best describes your analytics reporting frequency?



## ANALYTICS AND REPORTING

# Institutions who combine website and CRM analytics are more high functioning.

Do you combine your website analytics with your CRM analytics?



Institutions that combine website analytics with CRM analytics are more likely to:

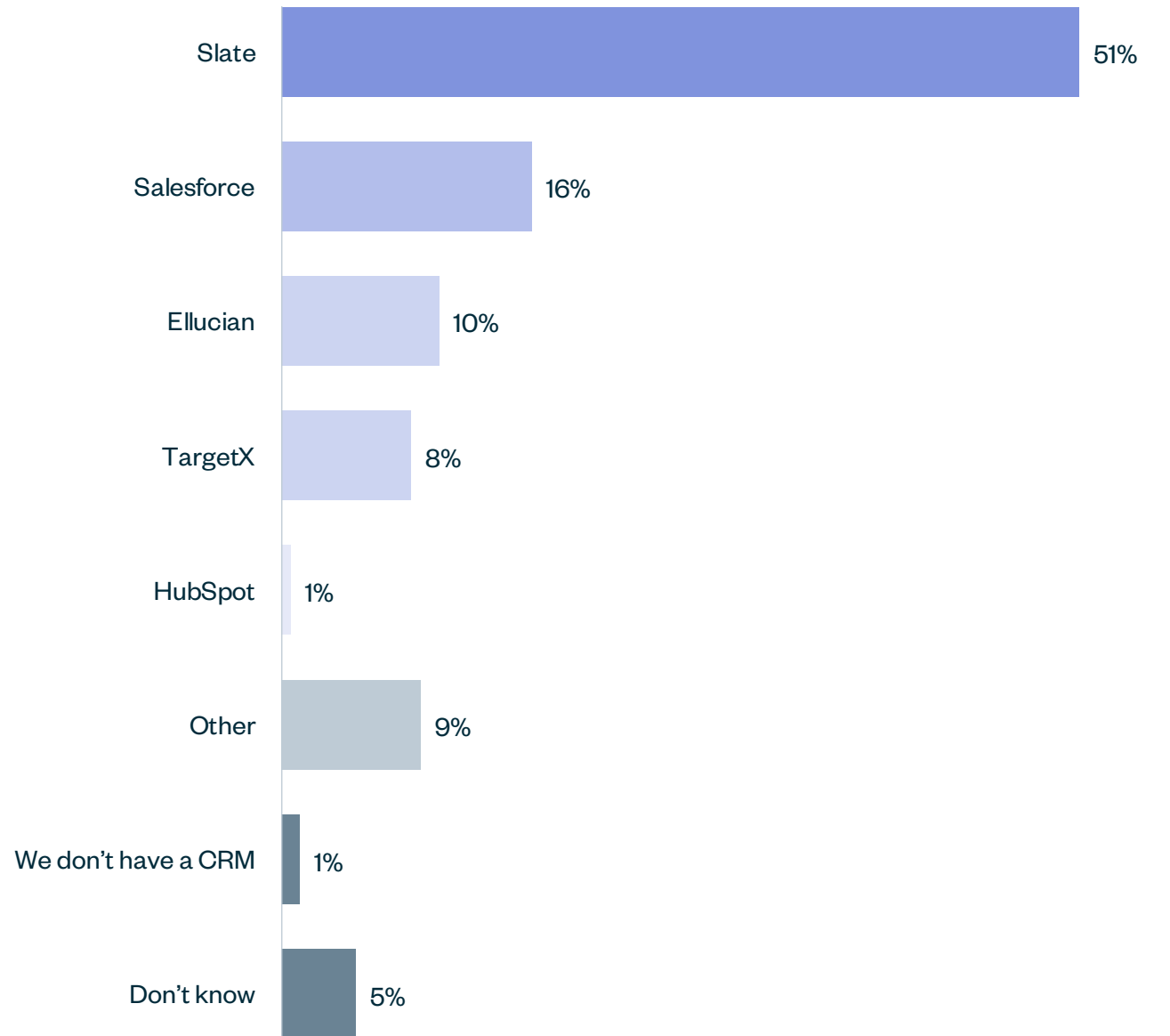
- Say they are constantly **iterating our design and development resources based on analytics** (58% vs 33%)
- Say they are constantly **iterating our content resources based on analytics** (54% vs 32%)
- Say they **integrate CRM & CMS** (60% vs. 24%)
- Have **established KPIs** (75% vs. 32%)
- **Report analytics at least monthly** (60% vs 46%)
- **Use more tools for:** UX/SEO optimization, paid media, and analytics reporting
- **Use fewer email marketing services outside of their CRM**

# Marketing Technology Integration

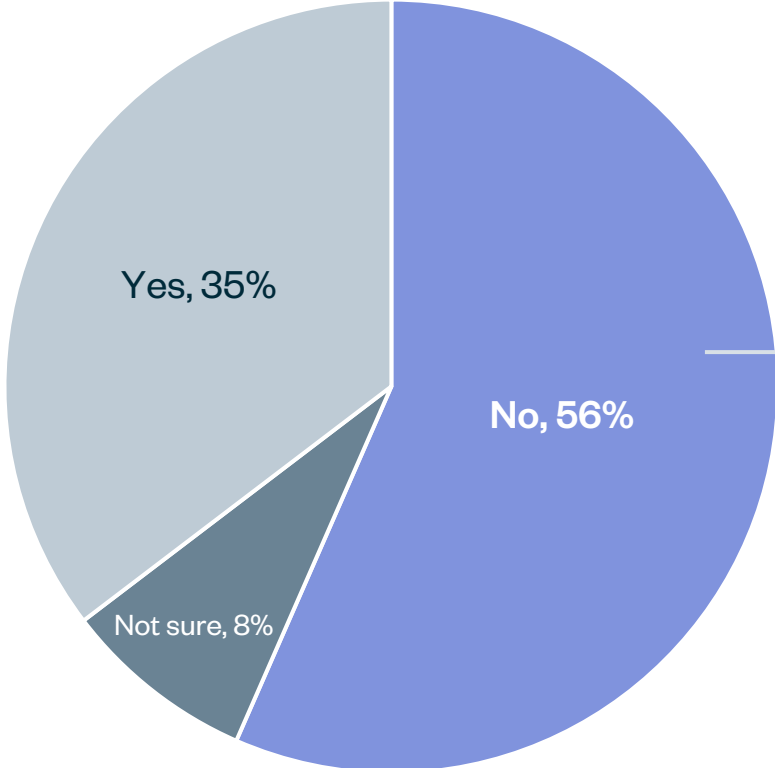
MARKETING TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

# What Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) does your institution use to manage inquiries for admission? (select one)

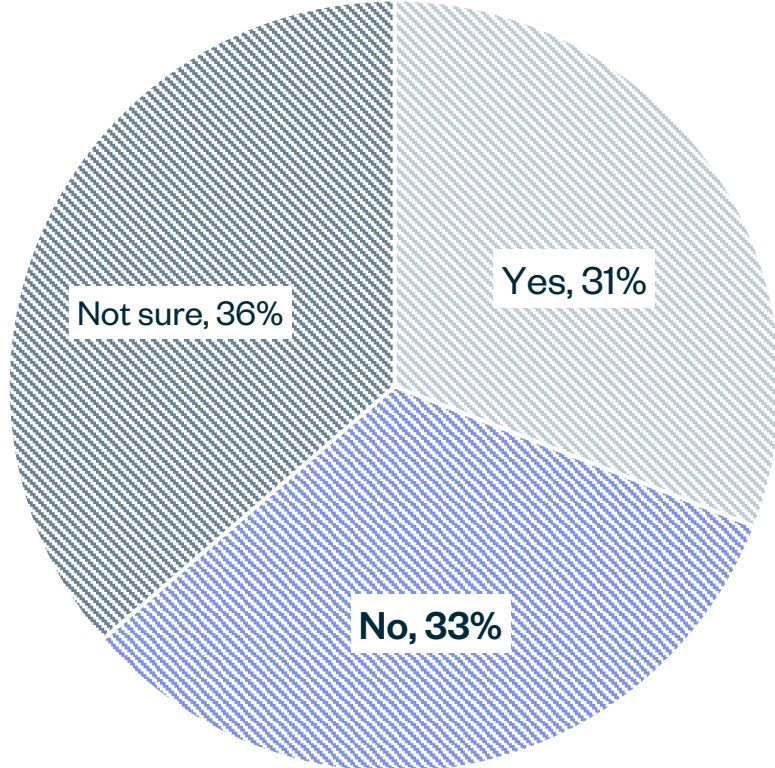
Nearly every institution has a CRM and Slate has continued to grow its share of market. The integration between CRM and CMS is a trend we will watch closely in the coming years and platforms evolve and market share changes. Only 35% of respondents report integration.



Do you integrate your CMS with your CRM for data collection and personalized content across your website?



Do you plan on integrating your CMS with your CRM in the next 12 months?



45% say they aren't currently integrated and don't plan to in the next 12 months

30% of those who aren't currently integrated say they plan to in next 12 months

MARKETING TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

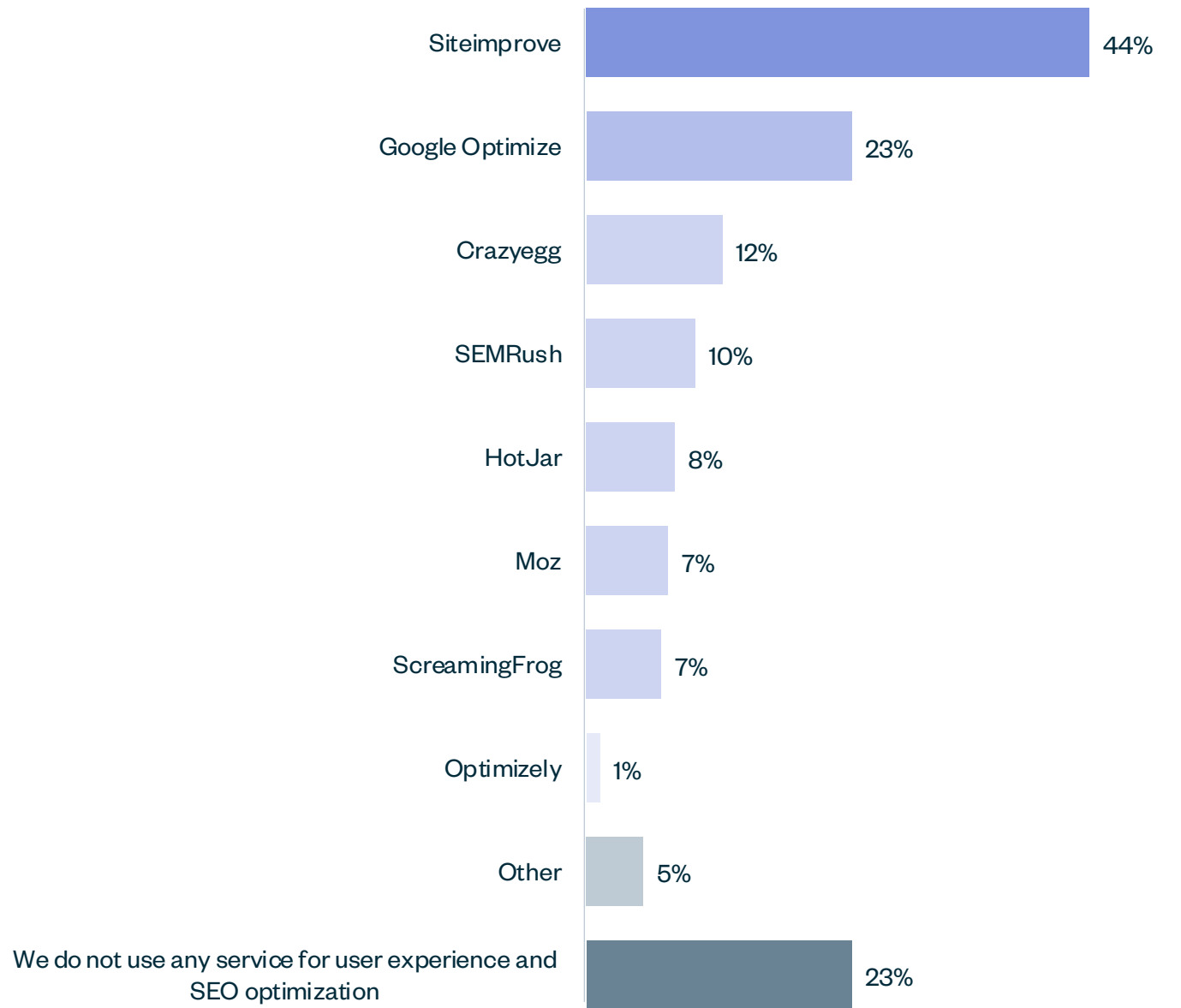
# Which of the following services do you use for user experience and SEO optimization?

(select all that apply)

Siteimprove and Google are the primary platforms used by higher education to evaluate UX and SEO. The smaller platforms listed in our survey have high market share outside higher education and will likely gain market share in the years to come.

# of Responses Selected

0	25%
1	47%
2 or more	28%





MARKETING TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

# Outside of your CRM, which of the following services do you use for email marketing?

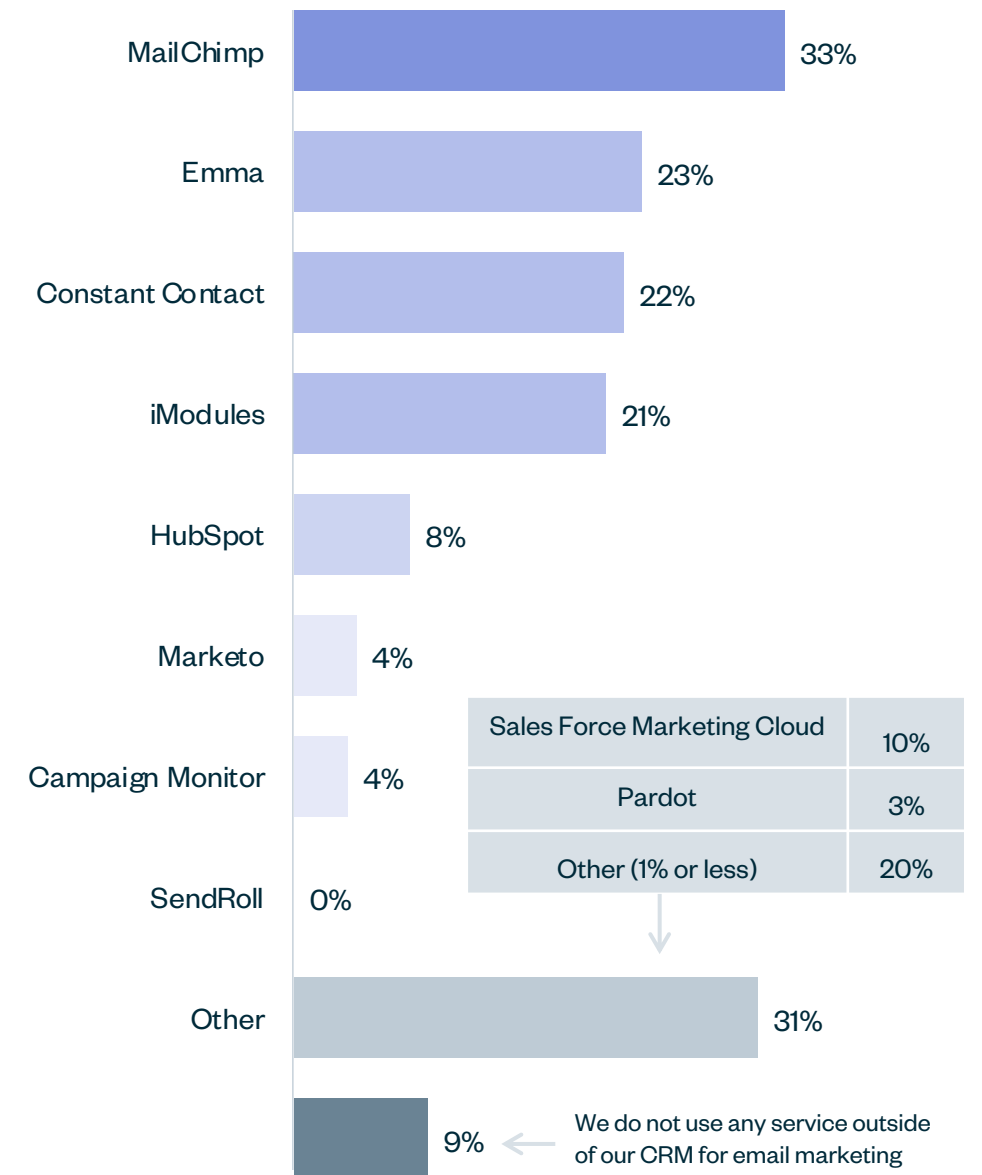
(select all that apply)

Take note: many institutions report using more than one platform for email marketing. Most sophisticated marketing operations will utilize their CRM for all email marketing to build stronger data connections to track customer engagement. Higher education likely has legacy systems and operations that contribute to this ad hoc style of email marketing management.

# of Response Selections

0	10%	3	7%
1	54%	4	4%
2	25%	5	1%

- 90% using at least one other email marketing service
- 36% use 2 or more in addition to CRM



MARKETING TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

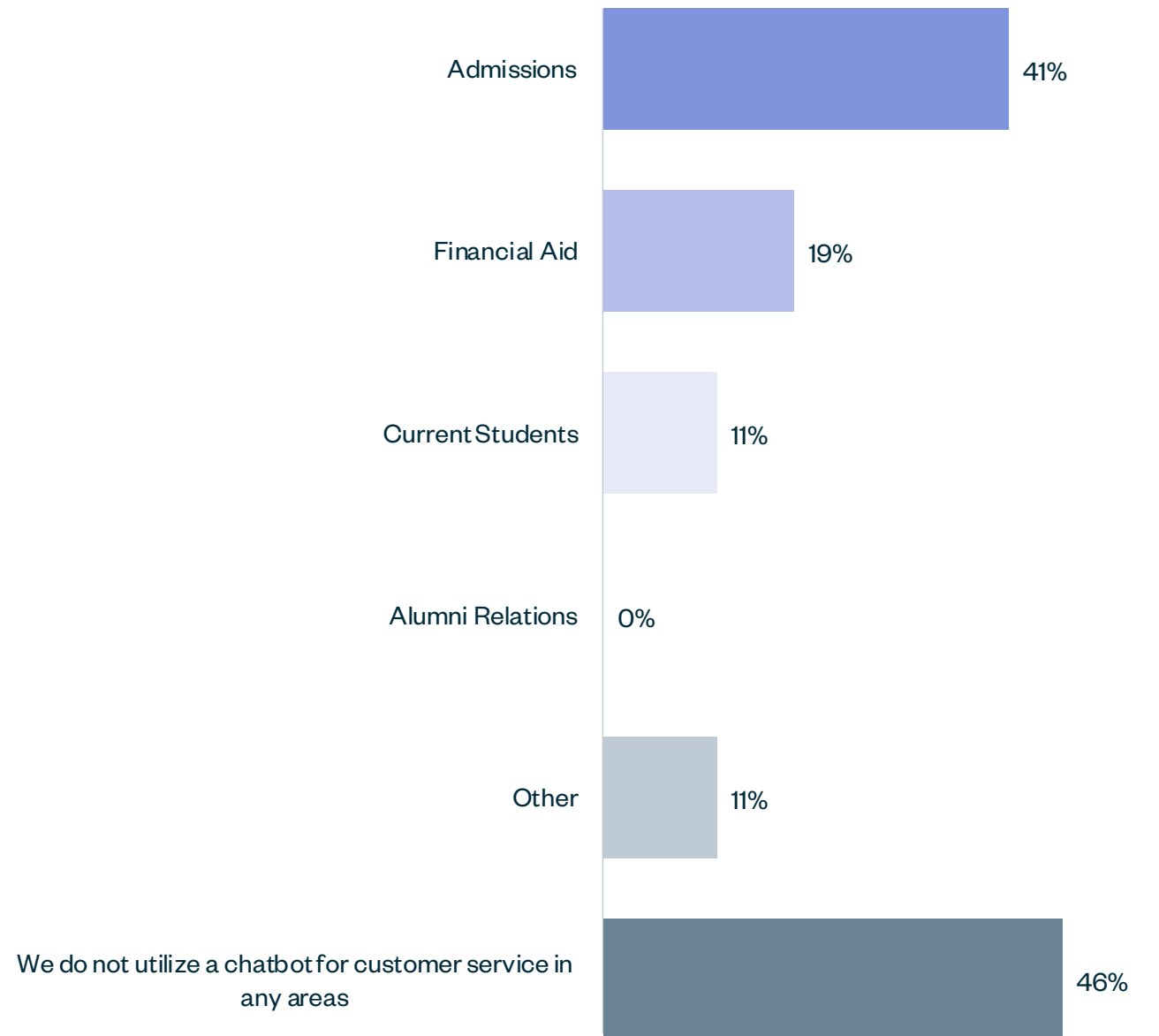
# In which of the following areas do you utilize a chatbot for customer service?

(select all that apply)

54% of respondents report utilizing chatbots on their website.

# of Responses Selected

0	47%
1	32%
2	15%
3 or more	6%



MARKETING TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

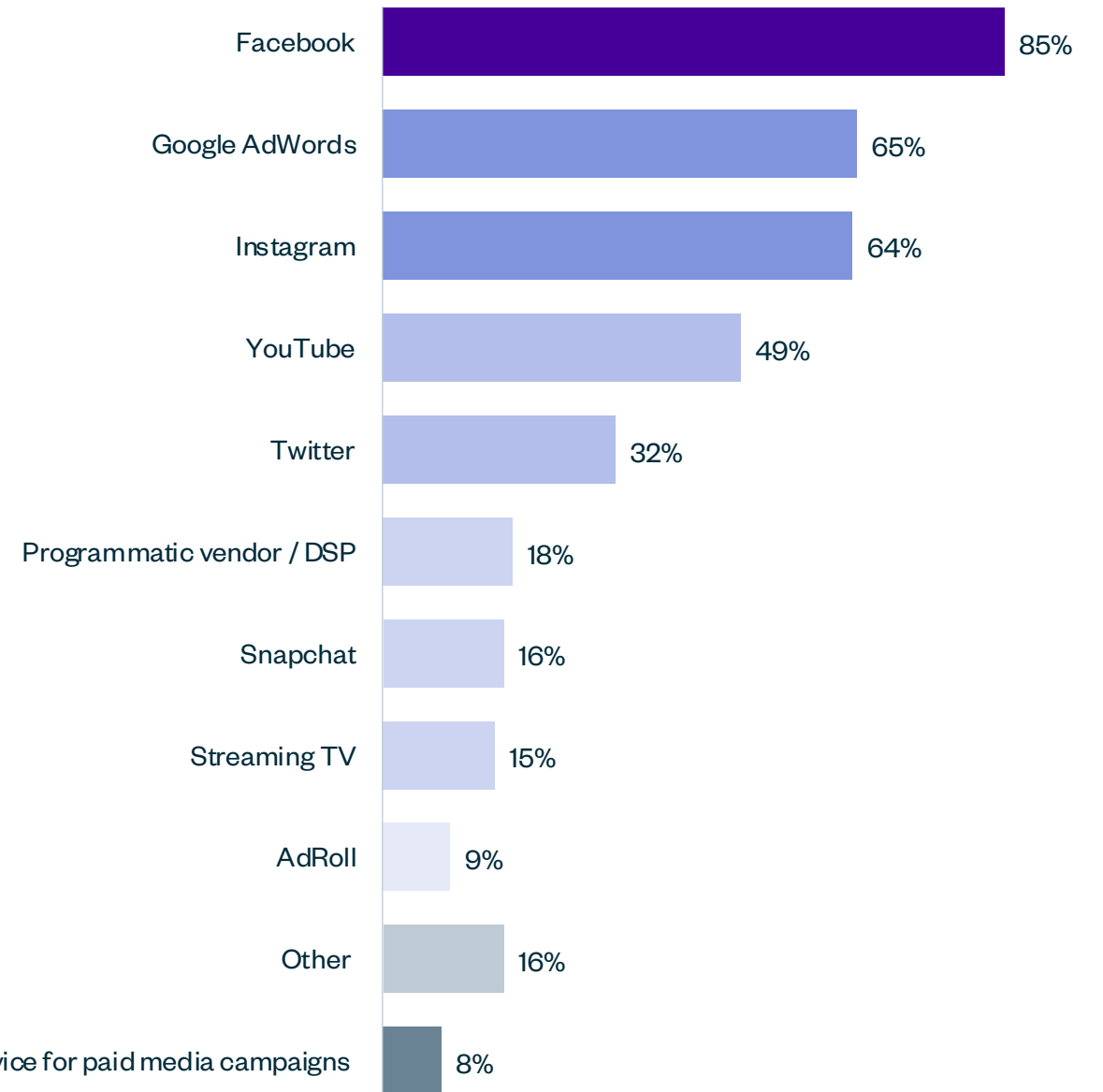
# Which of the following services do you use for paid media campaigns?

(select all that apply)

92% of respondents report using at least one platform for paid media.

# of Responses Selected

0	11%
1	8%
2 or 3	27%
4 or 5	34%
6 or more	19%



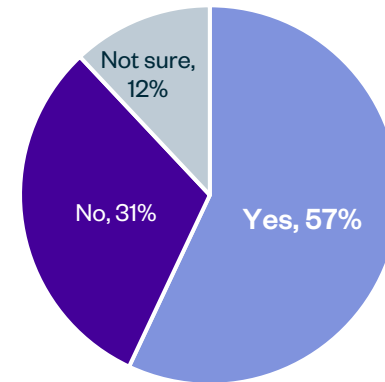
# Dev Ops

## DEV OPS

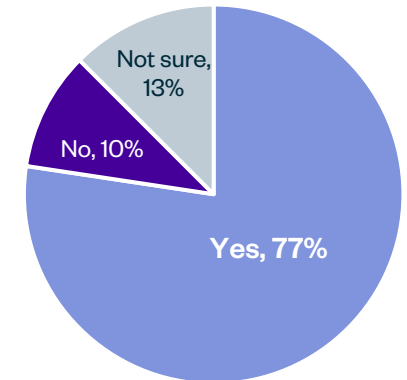
# To test site/code updates without impacting the live website, do you have a...

Development operations are maturing across the industry. Multi-stage workflows are a critical part of development operations that assure stability for the content management system. With over half of the respondents reporting formal code review process and version control, there is room for even more maturity in this area.

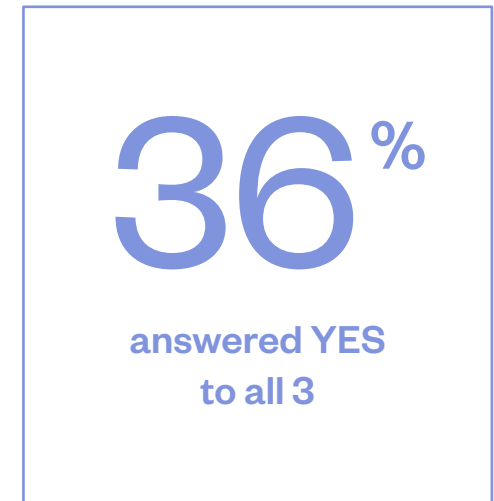
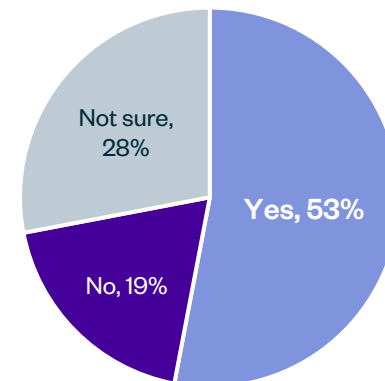
...formal system for code review before an update is pushed live?



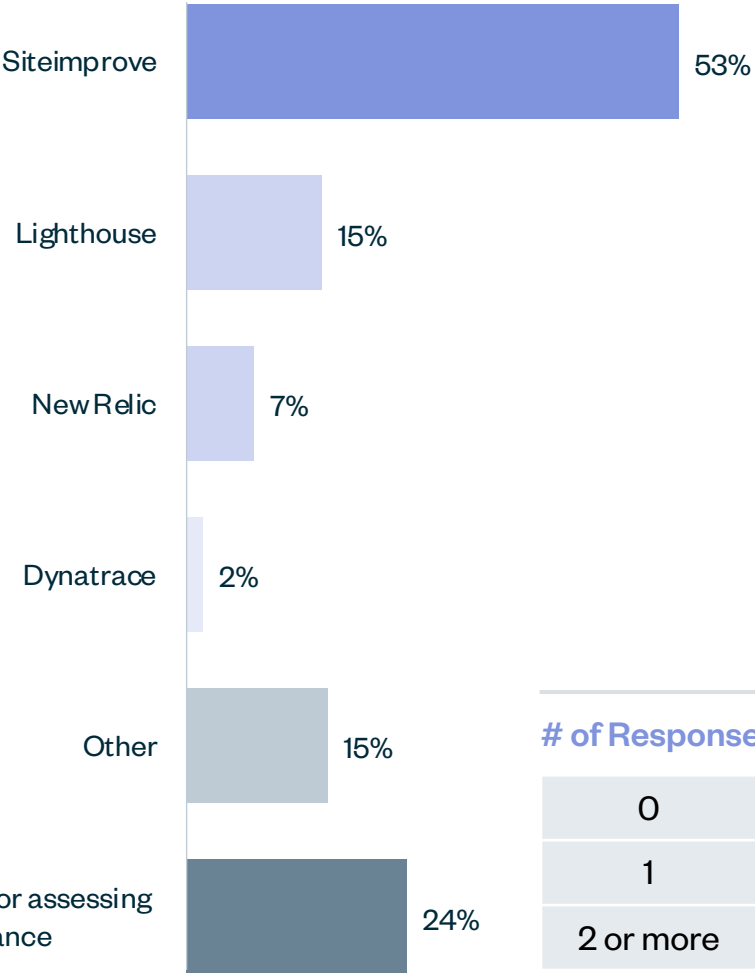
...multi-stage workflow with different environments?



...version control tool, such as GIT, for managing your codebase?



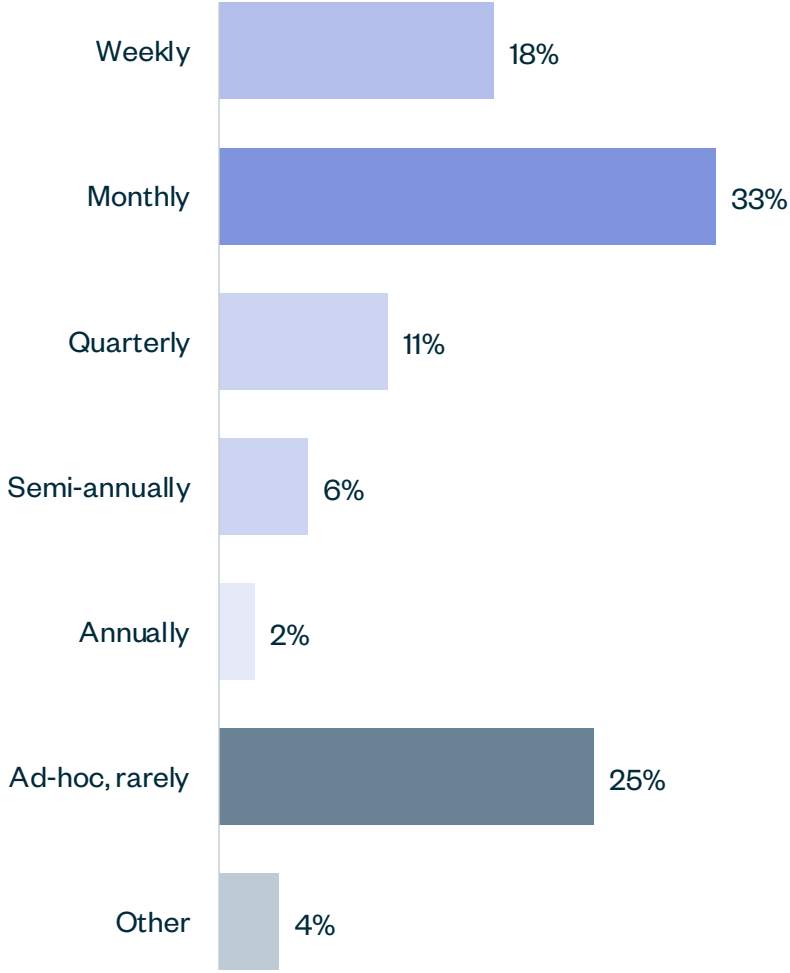
### Which of the following do you use for assessing website performance? (select all that apply)



# of Responses Selected

0	26%
1	62%
2 or more	12%

### How often do you assess website performance?



MARKETING TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

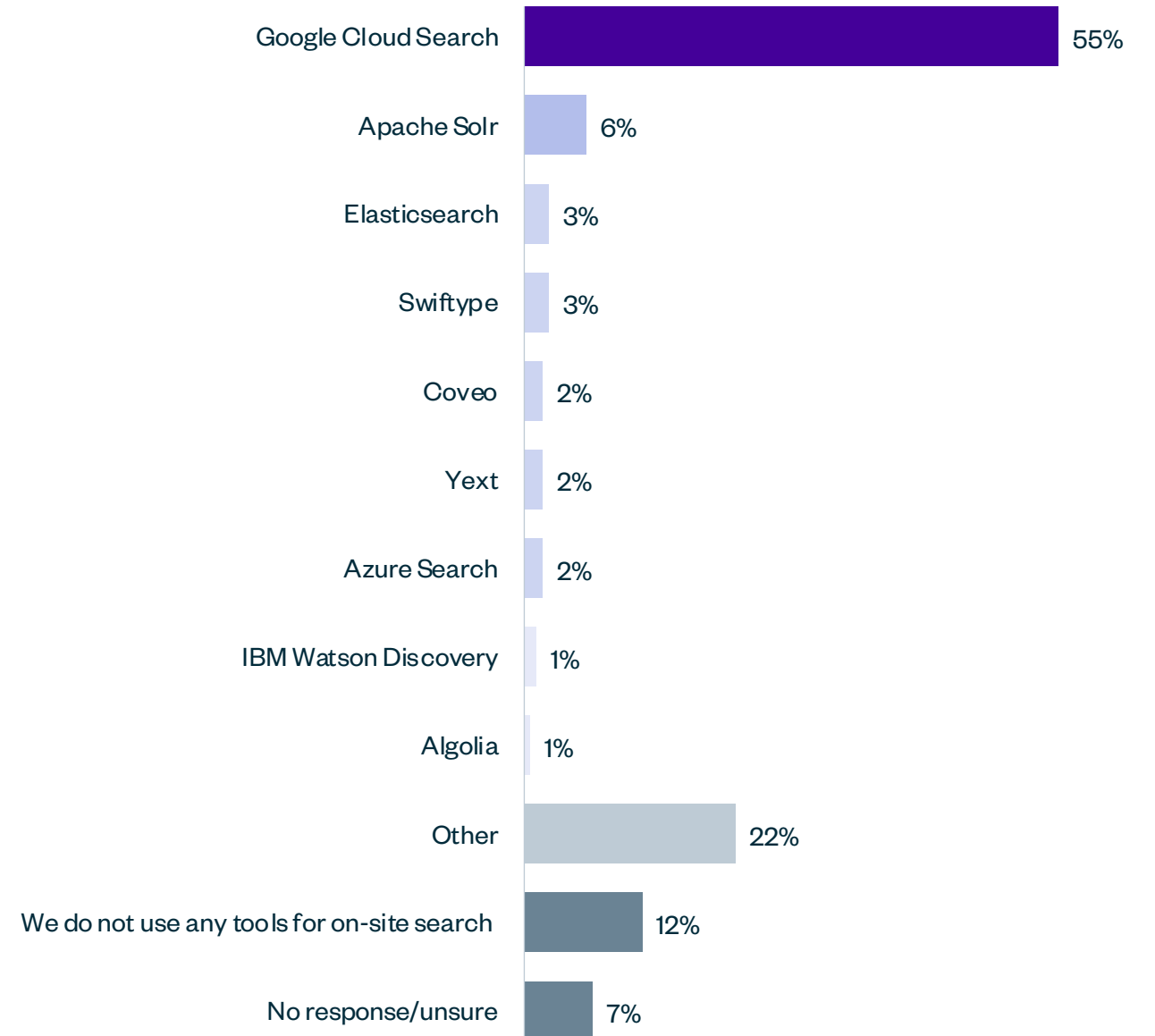
# Which of the following tools do you use for on-site search?

(select all that apply)

Google Cloud Search is the albatross. We expected to see google dominating this space but didn't foresee it taking up this much market share. Take note: just because it is the biggest doesn't mean the other solutions are not competitive. Customizing search results across the EDU is incredibly important and GCS doesn't have much customization compared to some of its competitors.

# of Responses Selected

0	19%
1	75%
2 or more	6%



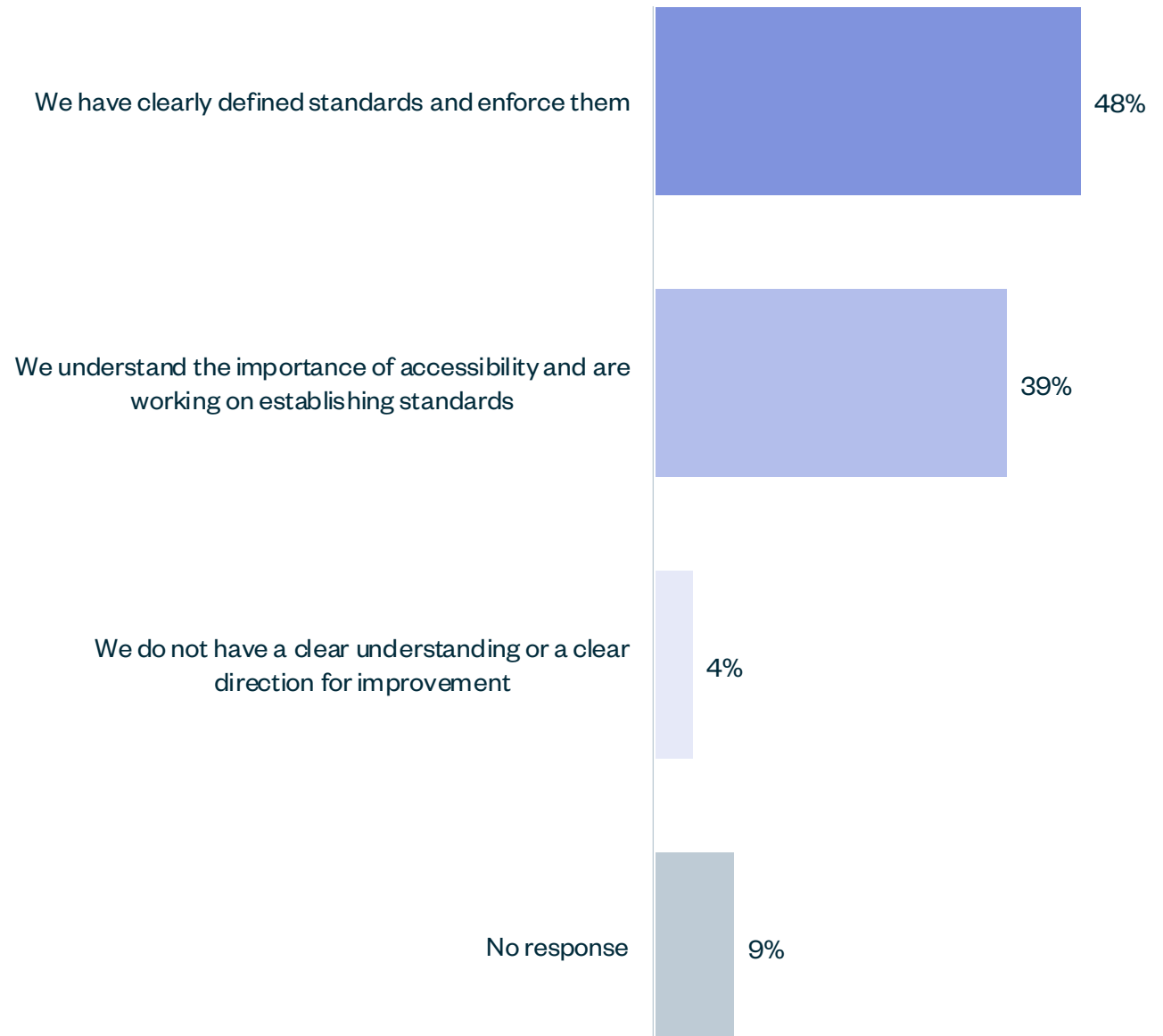
# Accessibility



## ACCESSIBILITY

# Which statement is most similar to your current approach to accessibility?

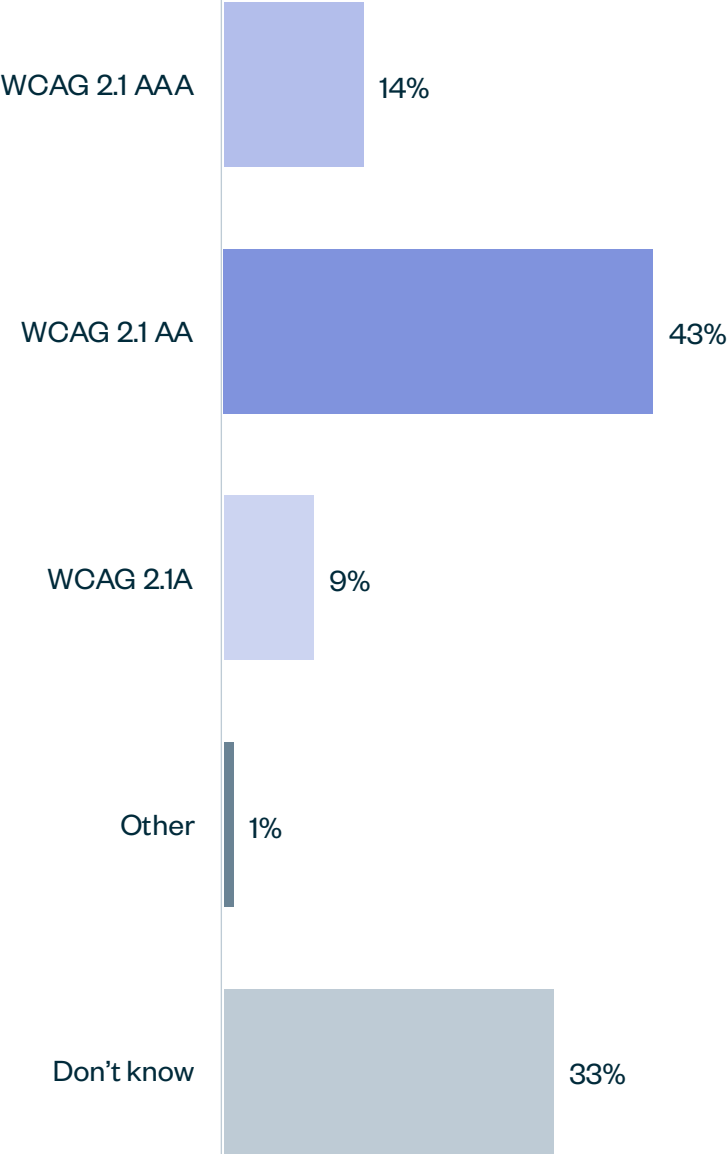
Higher education has moved a long way in its efforts towards greater compliance with accessibility standards. In large part, that was because of pressure from the federal government. That pressure appears to have been effective. Nearly 50% of respondents indicate clearly defined standards. Only 4% report having no definitive standards for accessibility.



ACCESSIBILITY

# Which standard are you working towards achieving?

24% of respondents who say they have clearly defined and enforced standards say they don't know which standards they are working towards achieving. This signals a need for more education across the board about WCAG definitions and the roadmap an organization is taking toward compliance.



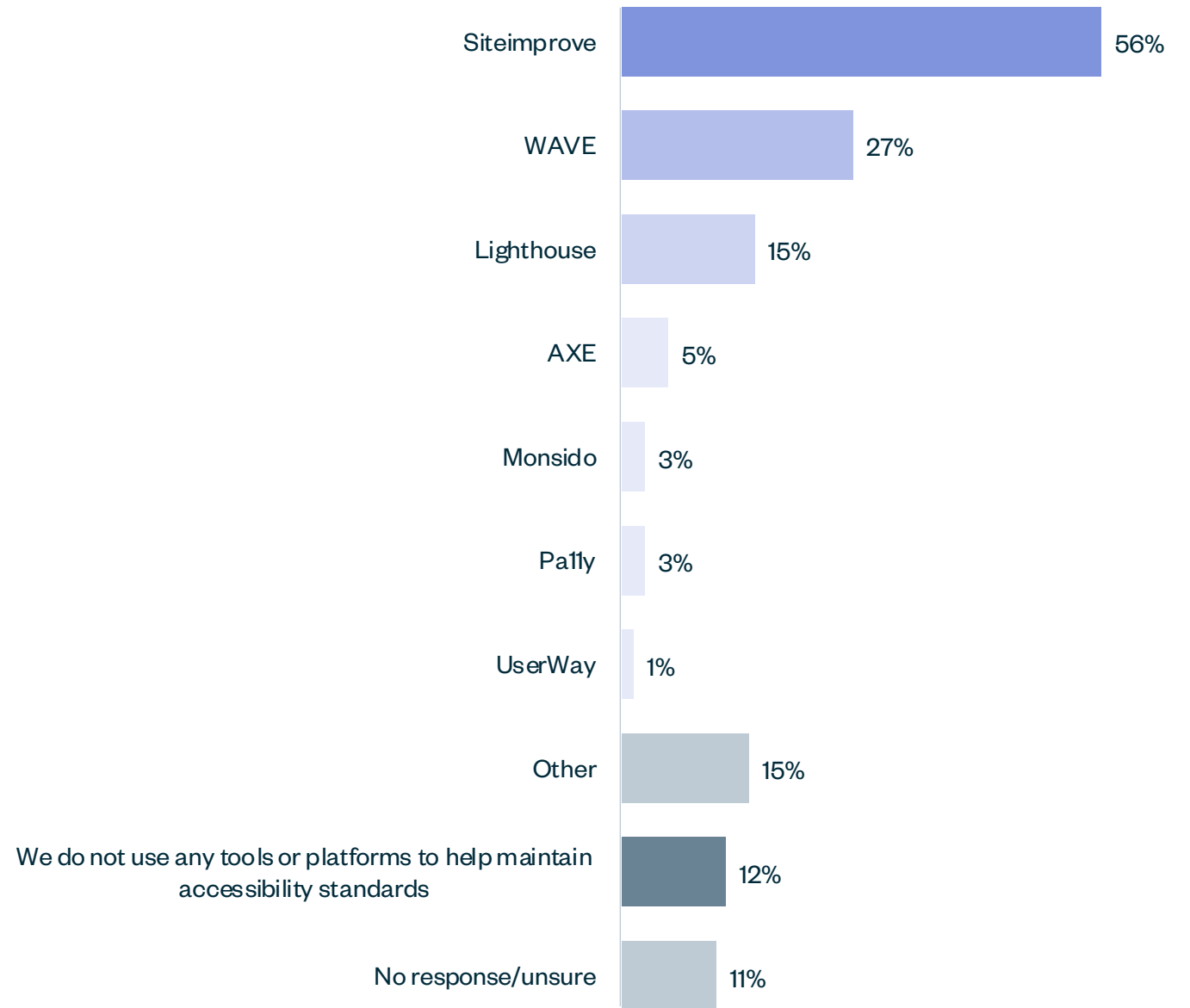
**ACCESSIBILITY**

# Which of the following tools or platforms do you utilize to help maintain and test your accessibility standards? (select all that apply)

There are a mix of tools being used to assess accessibility. 22% of respondents reported using 2 or more tools to evaluate the effectiveness of their implementations. Siteimprove, a co-sponsor of this study, has the largest market share of any tool. Take note: nearly 1 in 4 respondents said they did not use any tools or were unsure what tools they used.

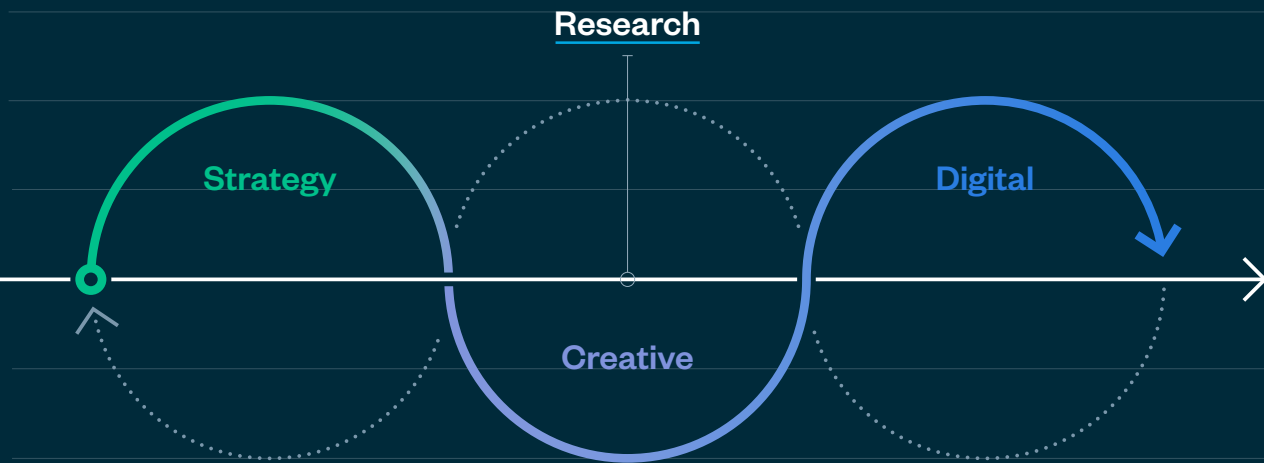
**# of Responses Selected**

0	23%
1	55%
2	15%
3 or more	7%



# Appendix

# SimpsonScarborough is a full-service marketing agency exclusively for higher ed.



## Our Services

### Research

- Brand and messaging
- Strategic planning
- Recruitment
- Alumni engagement
- Fundraising
- Image and perception
- Creative testing
- Conjoint analysis
- TURF analysis
- Discrete choice analysis
- Segmentation
- Max differential
- Factor analysis
- Surveys
- In-depth interviews
- Focus groups

### Strategy

- Brand positioning and platform development
- Message creation and mapping
- Data-driven personas
- Competitor analysis
- Brand assessments
- Brand launch planning
- Content strategy development

### Creative

- Brand campaigns
- Enrollment campaigns
- Capital campaigns
- Live mascot branding
- Visual identity
- Logo development
- Motion graphics
- Television spots
- Aerial drone
- Guidelines
- Advertising
- Marketing collateral
- Content development
- Video & radio
- Documentary video
- Episodic video
- Virtual reality
- Web, digital, and social
- Search engine optimization
- Experiential & environmentals
- Training & workshops
- Brand anthem video
- Animation

### Digital

- Content strategy
- Website design
- SEO strategy
- Analytics review
- Custom CMS builds
- Digital viewbooks
- Email marketing
- Drupal
- WordPress
- Terminal4
- Cascade
- Custom applications
- Touchscreen displays

### Media & Marketing

- Demographic, geographic, and audience research
- Competitive analysis
- Multi-year institutional marketing plans
- Media planning, strategy, & integrated plan development
- Channel strategy
- Digital audio, native, paid search/SEM, programmatic, SEO, social, video, OTT
- Broadcast TV, radio, shared mail, print
- Media negotiation, contracting, and traffic
- Data & technology discovery
- Interactive dashboards
- Brand health metrics & scorecards Data integrations
- Scenario planning and ROI calculators

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SimpsonScarborough is a full-service research, branding, and marketing agency, and higher education's premier data-driven partner.

As champions and stewards of colleges and universities, we provide higher ed brands the confidence of rigorous and comprehensive research — the cornerstone of our work — informed strategy, inspired creative, and human-centered digital. The trusting relationships we've formed and the campuses and communities we've brought together are among our most valuable assets.

Individually, we've held nearly every job in the industry and hail from every part of the country; we have three offices strategically placed in Alexandria, Virginia, Columbus, Ohio, and Oakland, California. Most of all, we're proud, professional students — curious by nature and compassionate by choice, constantly putting in the hard and smart work to shape the industry we love and the brands that shape our world.

On behalf of our Alexandria, Oakland, and Columbus offices,

Thank you.



SimpsonScarborough is a woman-owned firm.

[simpsonscarborough.com](https://simpsonscarborough.com) →