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# Symposium for the Marketing of Higher Education

Using Market Research to Determine  
Alumni Satisfaction  
and Foster Alumni Involvement  
at Widener University

November 16, 2004

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# Widener University-Maguire Associates

**Linda S. Durant**

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Widener University

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Assistant Vice President of Government,  
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Widener University

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Executive Vice President  
Maguire Associates, Inc.



# Presentation Outline

- About Widener
- Timeline
- Characteristics of the alumni base
- Research Goals
  - To measure the satisfaction of alumni with their experience at the institution
  - To test messages and activities for their effectiveness in bringing alumni closer to the institution and motivating them to give
- Institutional Response
  - Improvement of the educational experience for future alumni
  - Development of stronger messages to connect with alumni
- Questions & Clarifications



# About Widener University

<b>Founded:</b>	1821
<b>Control:</b>	Independent
<b>Classification:</b>	Doctoral/Research-Intensive
<b>Enrollment:</b>	7,000 (Approximate Headcount)
<b>Operating Budget:</b>	\$126 million
<b>Endowment:</b>	\$43 million (as of June 30, 2004)
<b>Degrees Awarded:</b>	Associates, Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate
<b>Academic Units:</b>	Arts & Sciences, Engineering, Business Administration, Nursing, Hospitality Management, Human Service Professions, Law, and University College
<b>Campuses:</b>	Chester (Main), Harrisburg, and Exton, Pennsylvania; and Wilmington, Delaware

## Mission:

As a leading metropolitan university, we achieve our mission at Widener by creating a learning environment where curricula are connected to societal issues through civic engagement. **We lead** by providing a unique combination of liberal arts and professional education in a challenging, scholarly, and culturally diverse academic community. **We engage** our students through dynamic teaching, active scholarship, personal attention, and experiential learning. **We inspire** our students to be citizens of character who demonstrate professional and civic leadership. **We contribute** to the vitality and well-being of the communities we serve.



# Event Timeline

## Summer 2002

New President—Dr. James T. Harris III—Assumes Office  
With Two Priority Mandates From Board of Trustees:  
(1) Increase Resources; and (2) Raise Profile

## Fall 2002

Launched Inclusive Two-Year Strategic Planning Process  
Conducted Comprehensive Advancement Audit  
Consolidated Advancement Functions Under One VP

## Spring 2003

Strategic Planning SWOT Task Forces Results Presented

## Summer 2003

Arrival of Vice President Durant  
Issued RFP for Market Research

## Fall 2003

Retained Maguire Associates and Initiated Research

## Spring 2004

Strategic Planning Process Completed, Plan Approved by Board  
Final Market Research Results Presented





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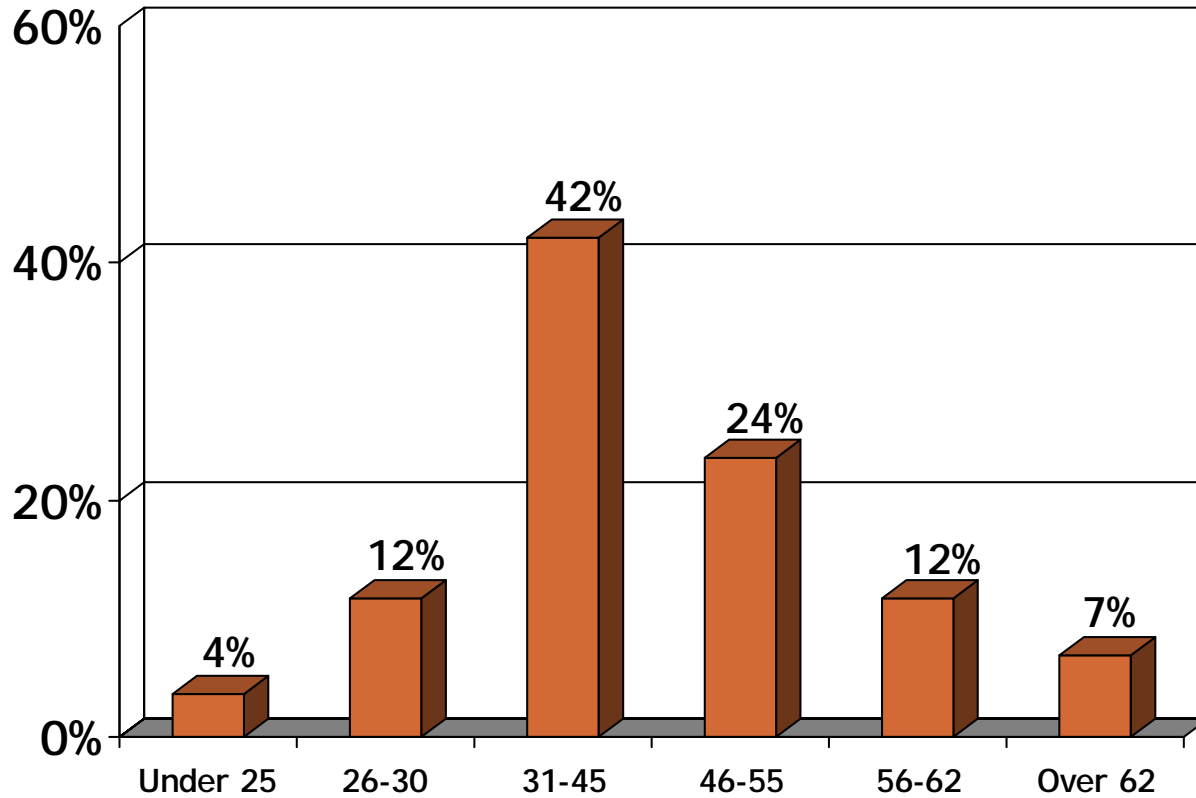
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# Characteristics of Widener Alumni Base

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# Age of Alumni



# Ethnicity

- White/Caucasian (90%)
- Black/African-American/Afro-Caribbean (4%)
- Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (1%)
- Puerto Rican/Mexican American/Chicano/  
Latino/Other Hispanic (1%)
- Other (<1%)
- Prefer not to report (4%)



# Highest Education Achieved

- Associate's degree (1%)
- Bachelor's degree (36%)
- Master's degree (33%)
- Professional degree (25%)
- Doctorate (5%)
- Other (1%)



# Program Attended

- Undergraduate – Associate's (2%)
- Undergraduate – Bachelor's (58%)
- Law School (24%)
- Graduate or other professional program (other than law; 25%)
- Certificate/continuing education or other non-degree program(<2%)



# Activities at Widener

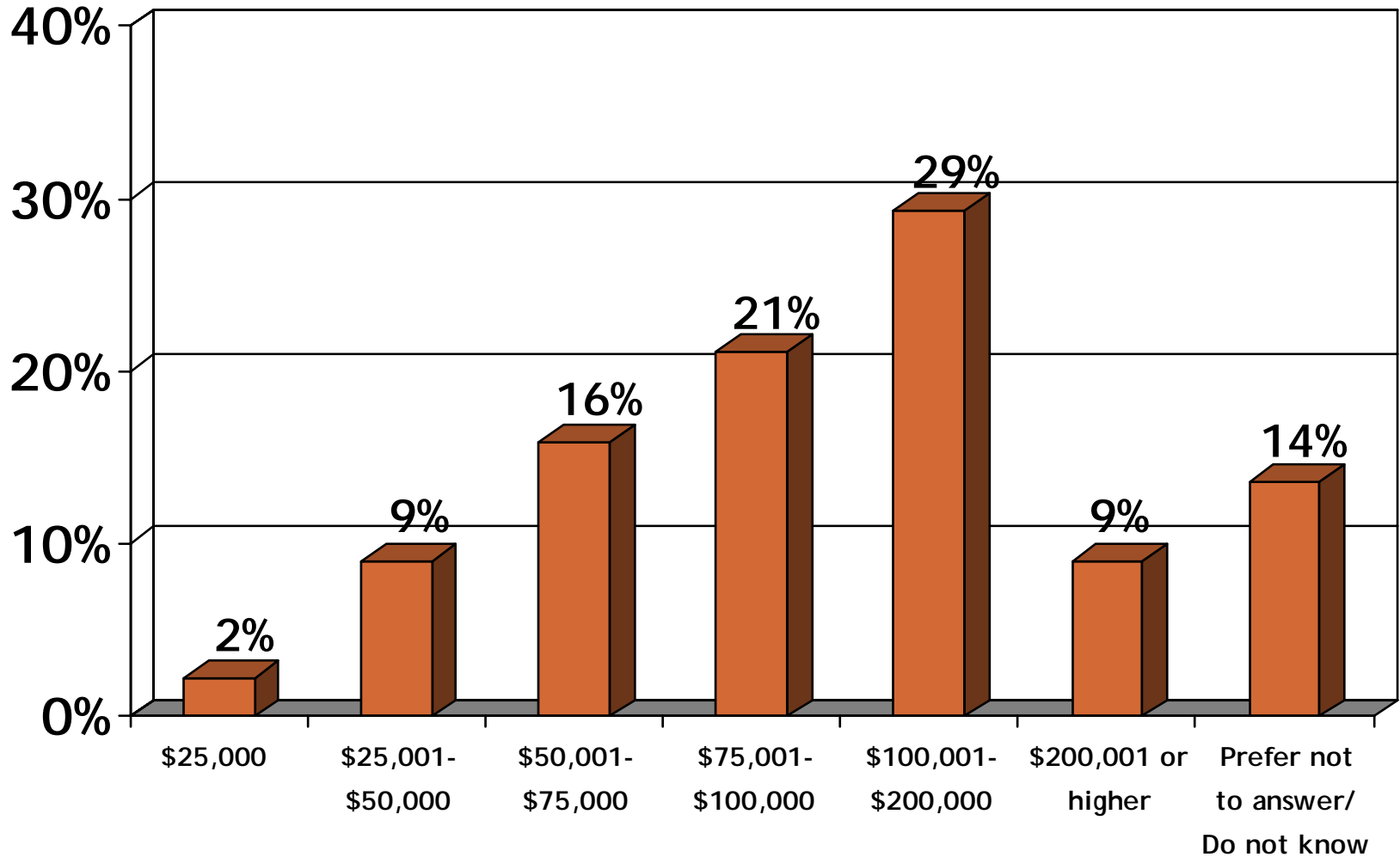
- Fraternity or sorority (22%)
- Intramural athletics (22%)
- Academic clubs (21%)
- Community service (20%)
- Varsity athletics (17%)
- Student government (12%)
- Military science (Corps of Cadets, ROTC; 10%)
- Student newspaper/publications (10%)
- Performing arts (e.g., theatre, dance, music, etc.; 5%)



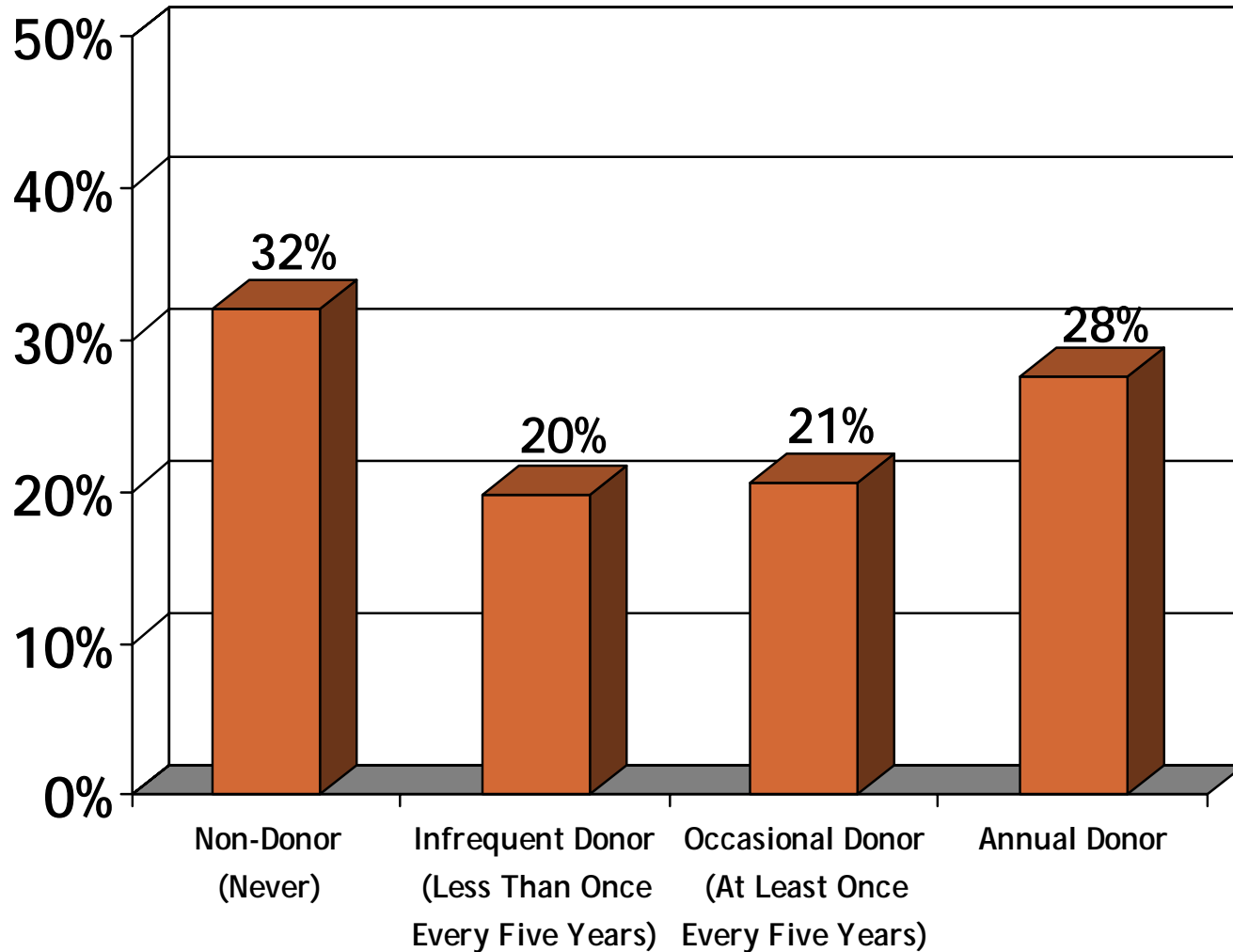
# Current Field of Work or Life Experience

- Business/Commerce (28%)
- Law/Legal (19%)
- Medicine/Health Care (12%)
- Education (10%)
- Computer/Technical (7%)
- Retired (7%)
- Government (5%)
- Social Service (2%)
- At home caring for family (2%)
- All other fields or work (<2% each)

# Income



# Frequency of Donation



# Non-Donor Profile

- Younger women
- Least satisfied with their Widener experience and most critical of Widener on quality of many characteristics
- More likely to see Widener as a poor investment and not improving



# Annual Donor Profile

- Older males
- More likely to be a donor if retired
- Higher income





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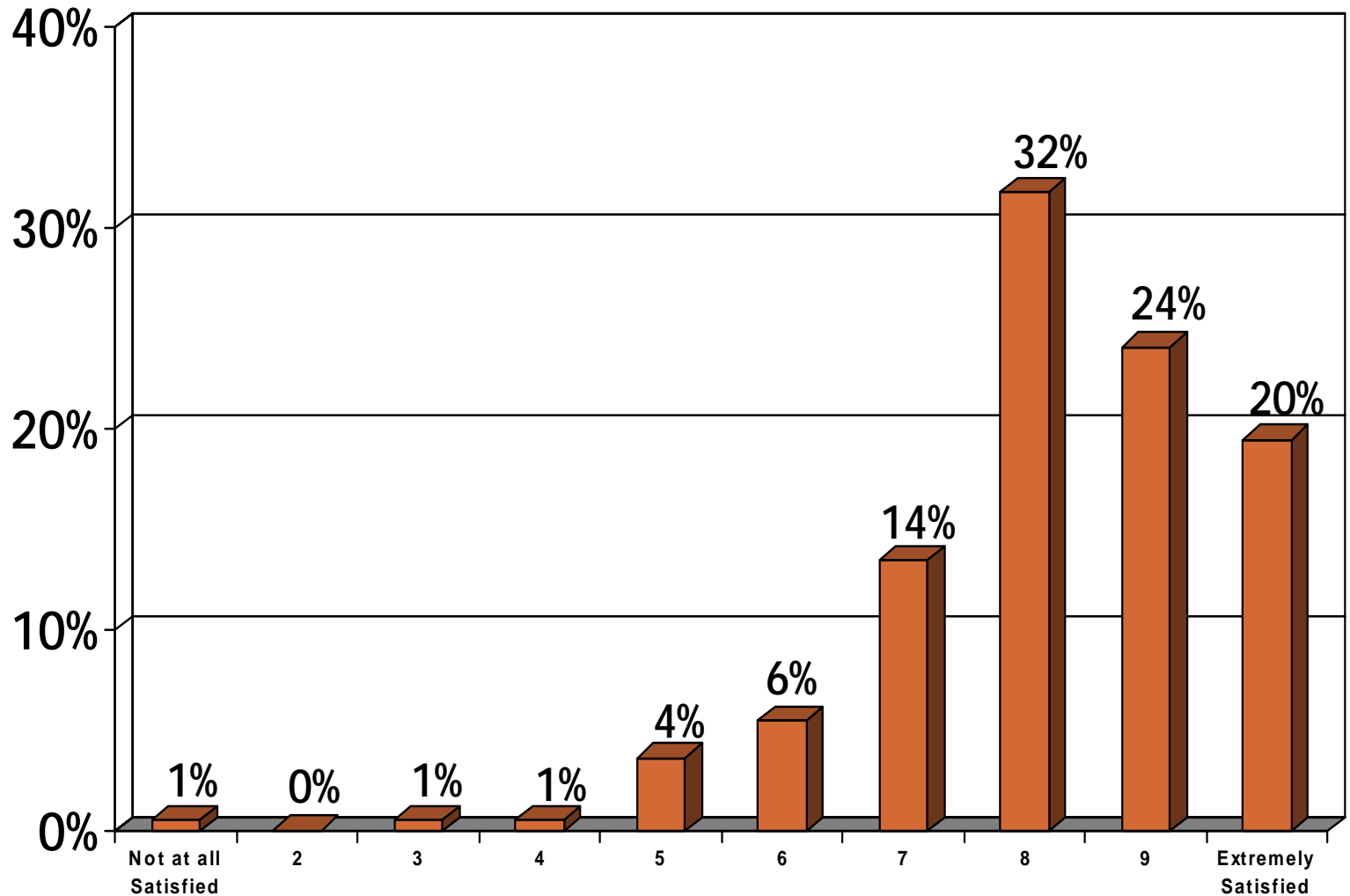
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## Research Goal:

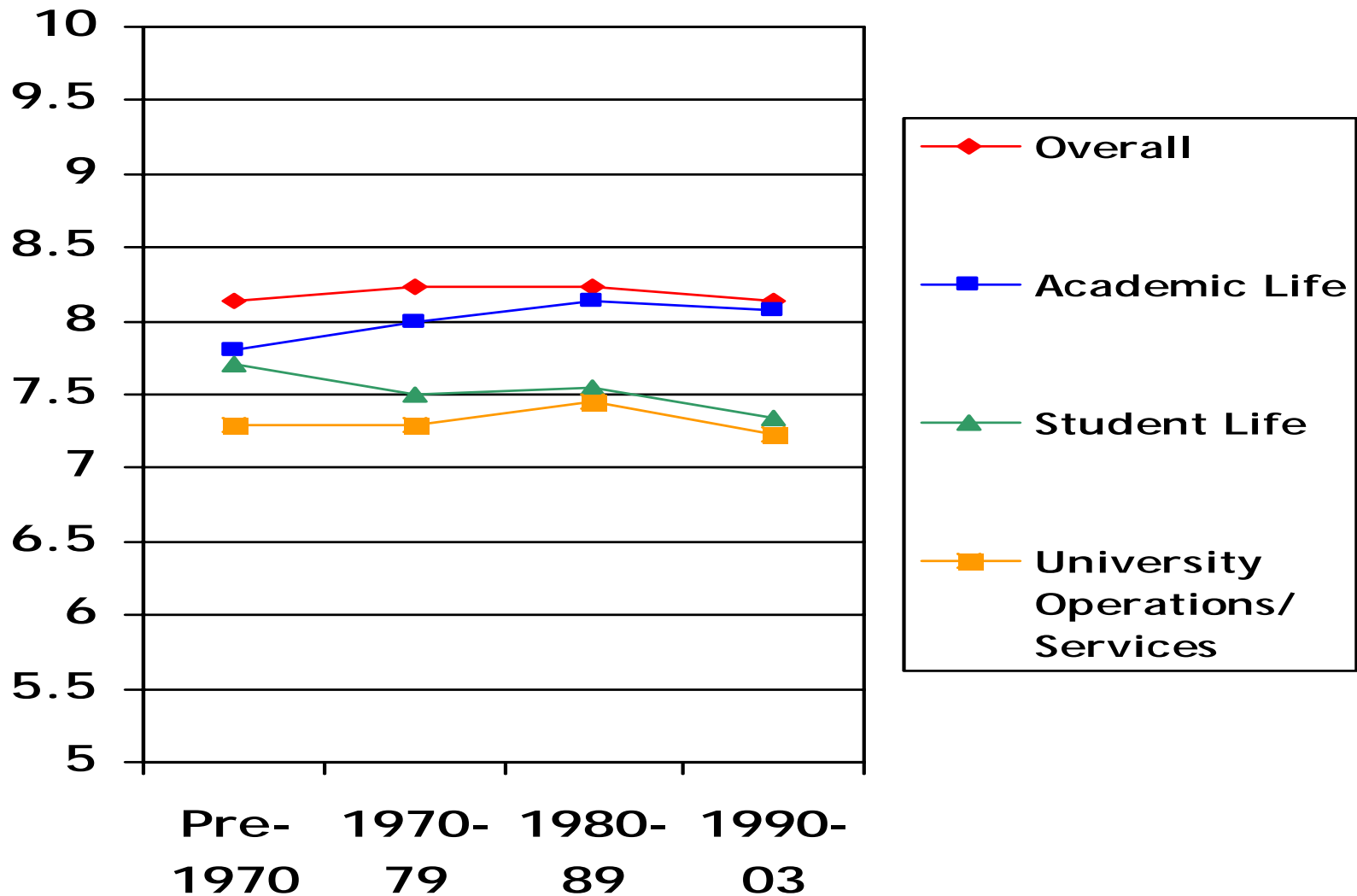
**To Measure the Satisfaction of  
Alumni with their Experience at  
Widener**

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# Satisfaction with Bachelor's Degree Experience at Widener

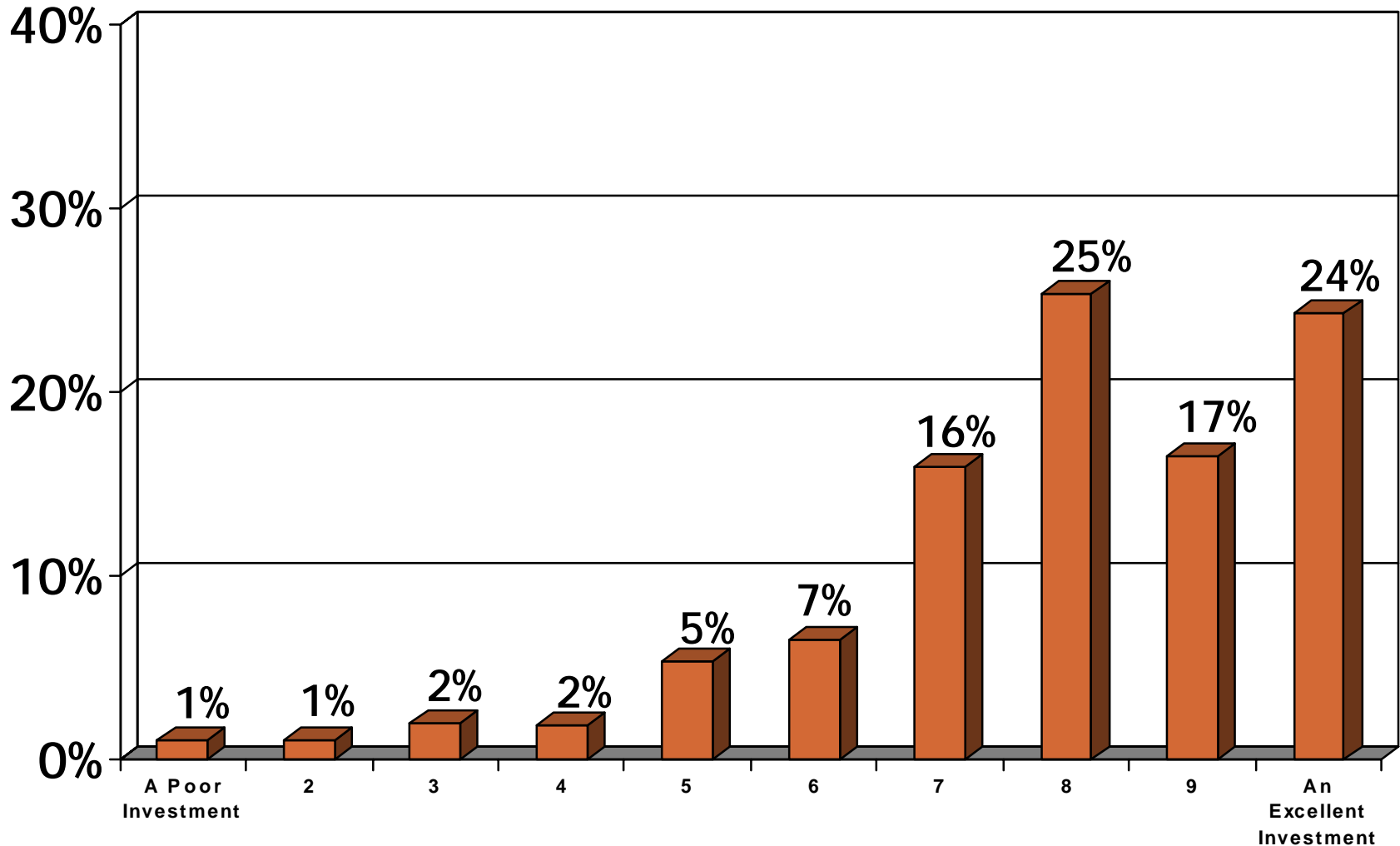


# Undergraduate Satisfaction By Graduation Year

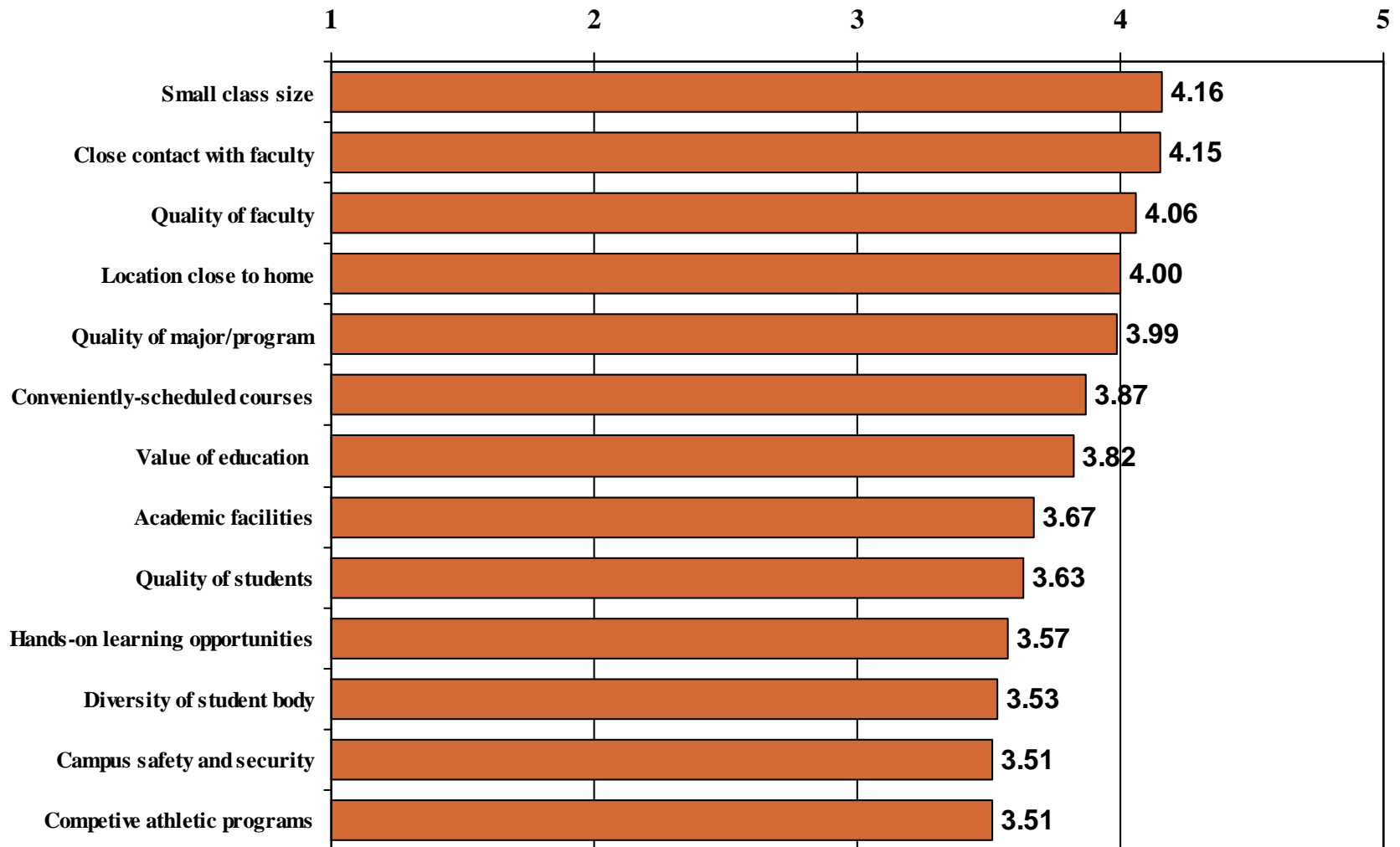


Scale: 1 (Not at all Satisfied) to 10 (Extremely Satisfied)

# Quality of the Investment



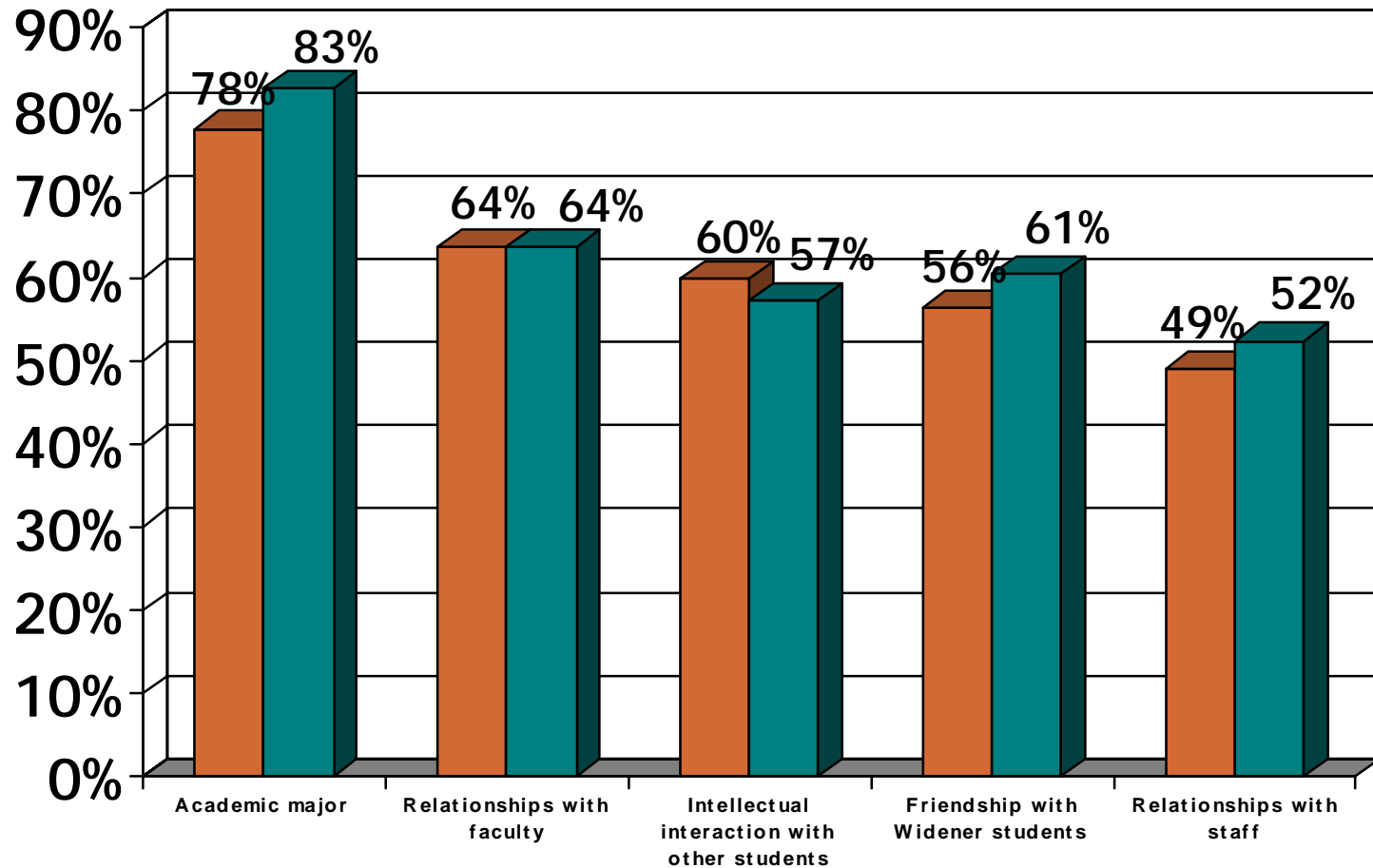
# Widener's Quality Ratings



Scale: 1 (Very Low Quality) to 5 (Very High Quality)

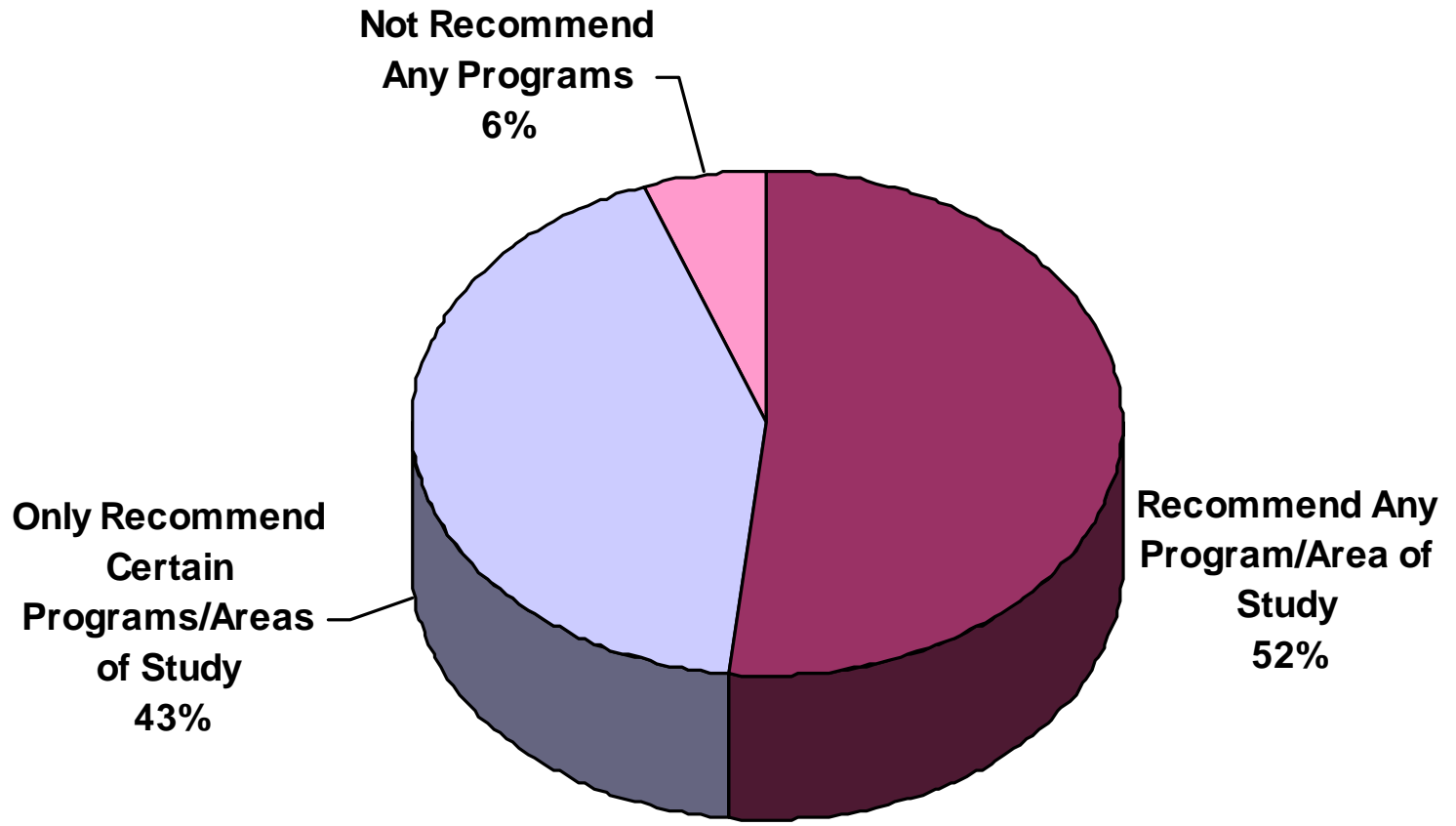
# Widener Contribution to Professional Development (endorsing at '4' or '5')

Overall Bachelor's Only



Scale: 1 (Did Not Contribute at All) to 5 (Contributed Substantially)

# Willingness to Recommend Widener





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## Institutional Response:

**Make Institutional Improvements to  
Increase the Satisfaction of Future  
Widener Alumni**

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# Institutional Improvements to Increase the Satisfaction of Future Alumni

## Report Recommendations:

- ✓ Improve key facilities identified as most lacking
- ✓ Expose more students to career services programs
- ✓ Improve overall social life experience of students
- ✓ Strengthen self awareness regarding student and academic program quality
- ✓ Determine and implement strategies for addressing concerns about surrounding neighborhoods of main campus



# Improve Key Facilities

- Reorganized capital improvement priorities:
  - Extensive dining hall upgrade,
  - Residential facilities upgrades,
  - New science & engineering facility,
  - Campus beautification,
  - New wellness/recreation center, and
  - New residential facilities.
  
- Set up ITS audit.



# Enhance Career Services Programs

- Re-organized career advising and planning services (CAPS) into University Advancement.
- Developed enhanced student-alumni engagements by career areas.
- Created new partnerships with internship & co-operative education programs.



# Improve Overall Social Life Experience

President appointed *Continuous Process Improvement Committee*

President Harris's Charge:

“Examine every facet of the Freshman Year Experience, inside and outside the classroom, and make recommendations to the President how to streamline processes and improve the overall experience.”

Chair:

Dr. Savas Özatalay

International Business Process Consultant and Six Sigma Expert  
Professor of Management and Acting Dean, Widener School of  
Business Administration



# Improve Overall Social Life Experience

- Changed leadership in key areas.
- Re-organized student life division.
- Increased resources and programming.
- Consolidated enrollment services.
- Developed “one-stop shop” concept.
- Implemented customer service training.
- Developed retail/business opportunities adjacent to main campus.



# Address Concerns About Surrounding Neighborhoods of Main Campus

- Enhanced overall civic engagement activities.
- Provided leadership training for citizens and developed neighboring community groups.
- Established Presidential Service Corps.
- Invested significantly in security infrastructure and personnel.





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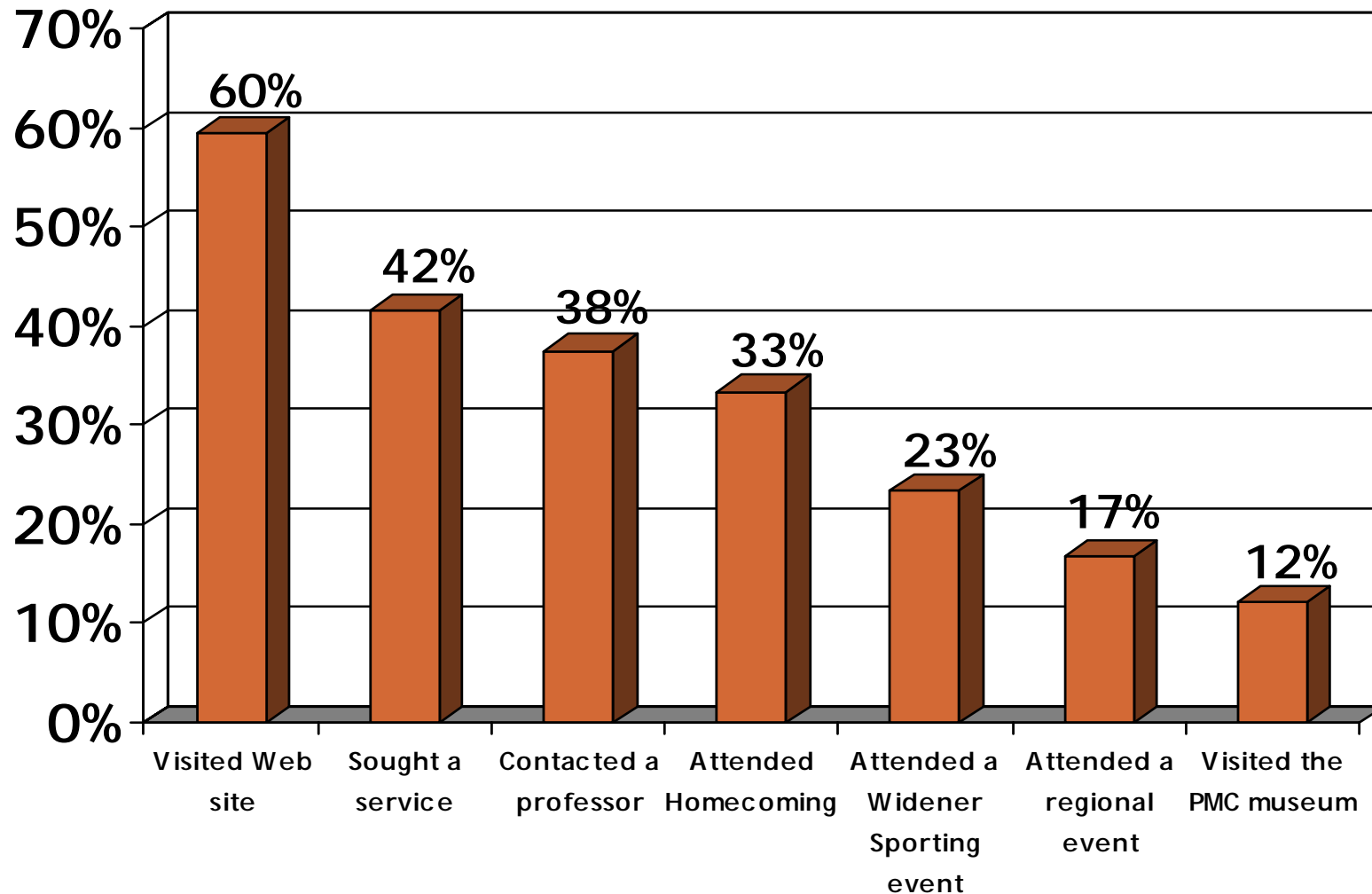
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## Research Goal:

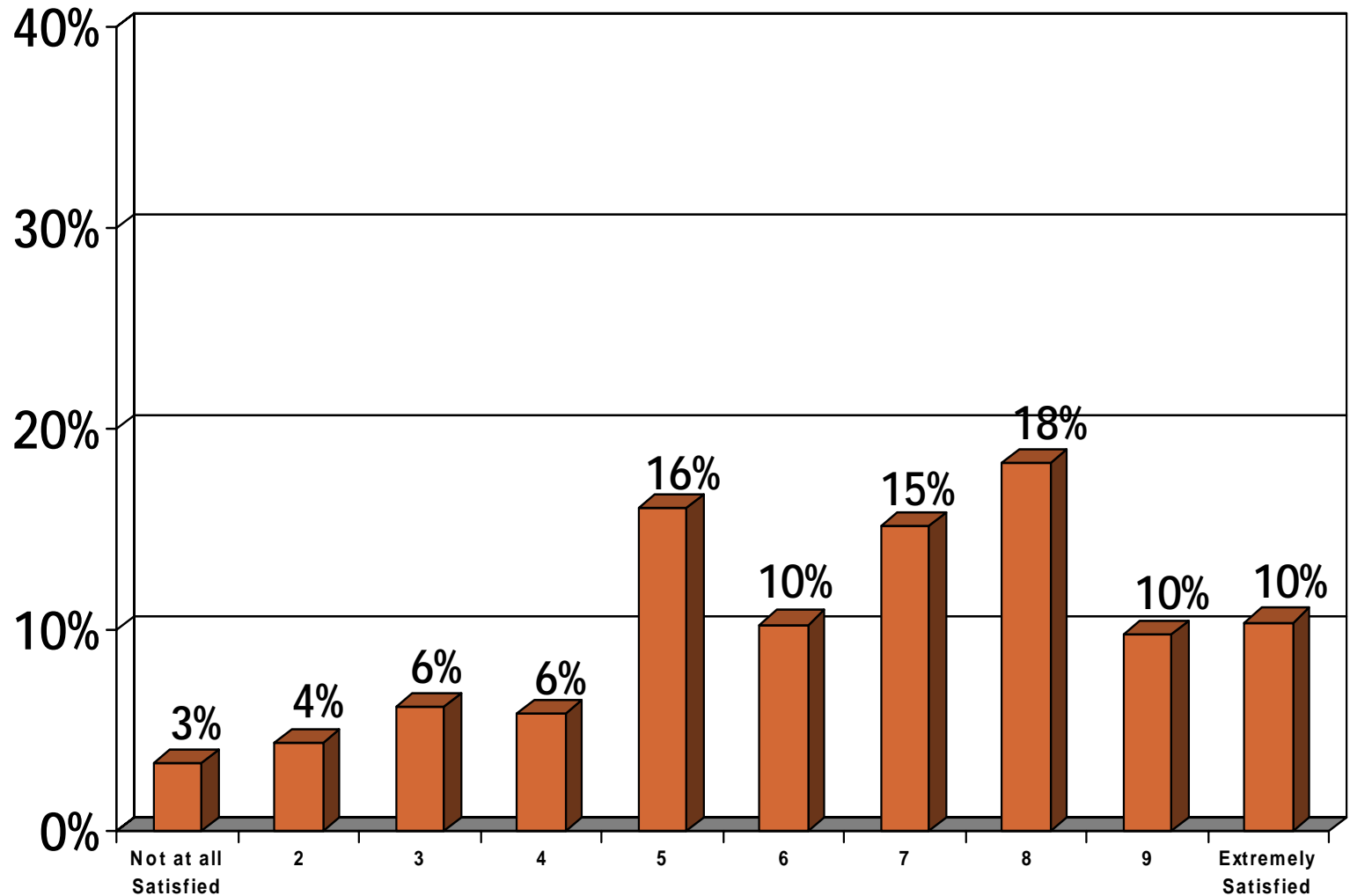
To test messages and activities for their effectiveness in bringing alumni closer to Widener and motivating them to give.

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# Modes of Interaction with Widener



# Satisfaction with Level of Contact about Widener Activities



# Agreement Statements - Percentage of Overall Alumni who Agree (Percentage of those endorsing a '5' or '6' or '7' on 7-point scale)

- Widener's **low student-to-faculty ratio** (currently 12 to 1 for undergraduates) affords students the opportunity to receive the personalized education they deserve. (75%)
- Widener is a **career-focused university**, offering majors in a variety of disciplines at the undergraduate and graduate/professional levels. (71%)
- **Faculty members** at Widener **create personal relationships with students**, foster their intellectual and personal growth, and prepare them for the professional world. (69%)

\*1 = Very Strongly Disagree and 7 = Very Strongly Agree

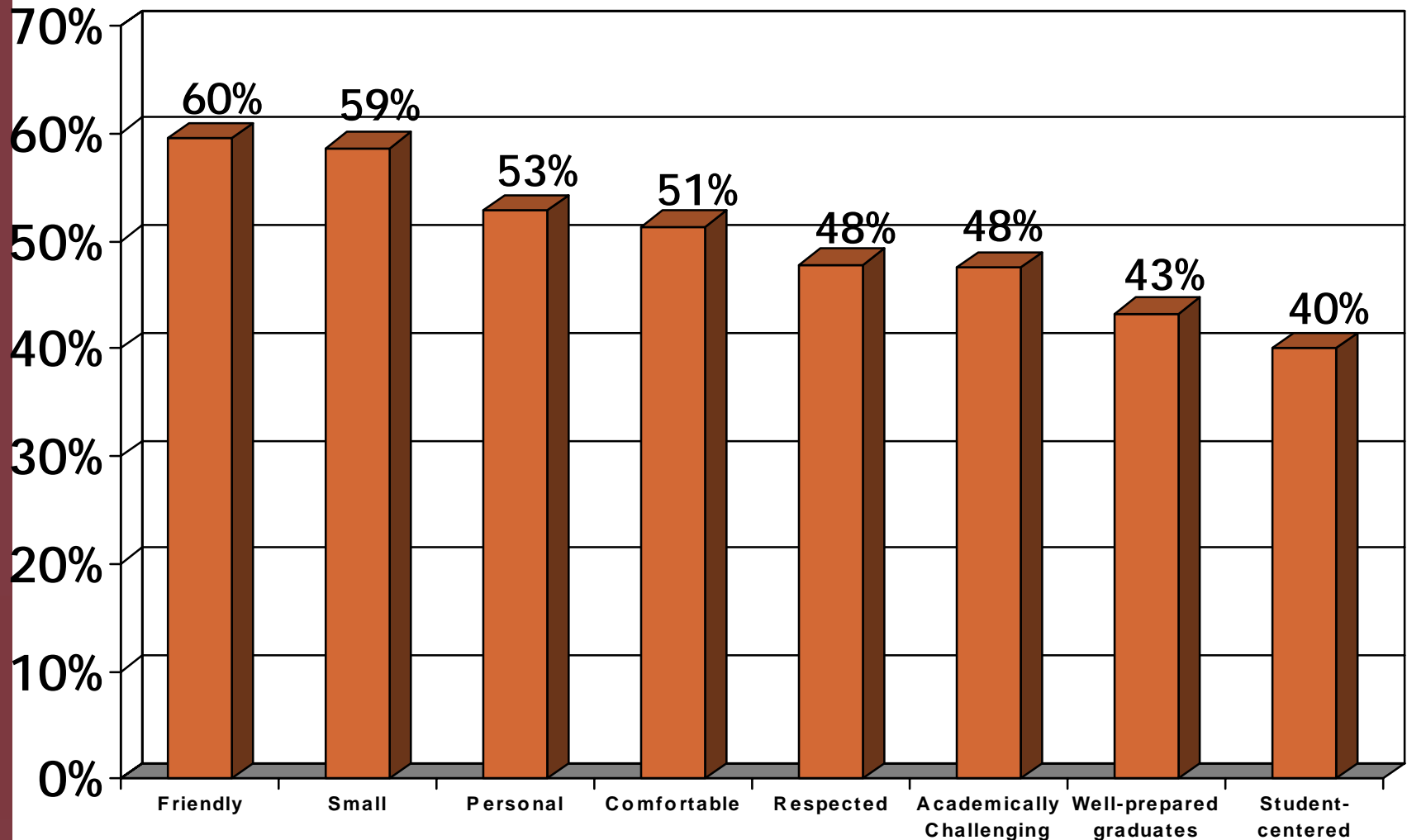


# Agreement Statements - Percentage of Overall Alumni Who Agree

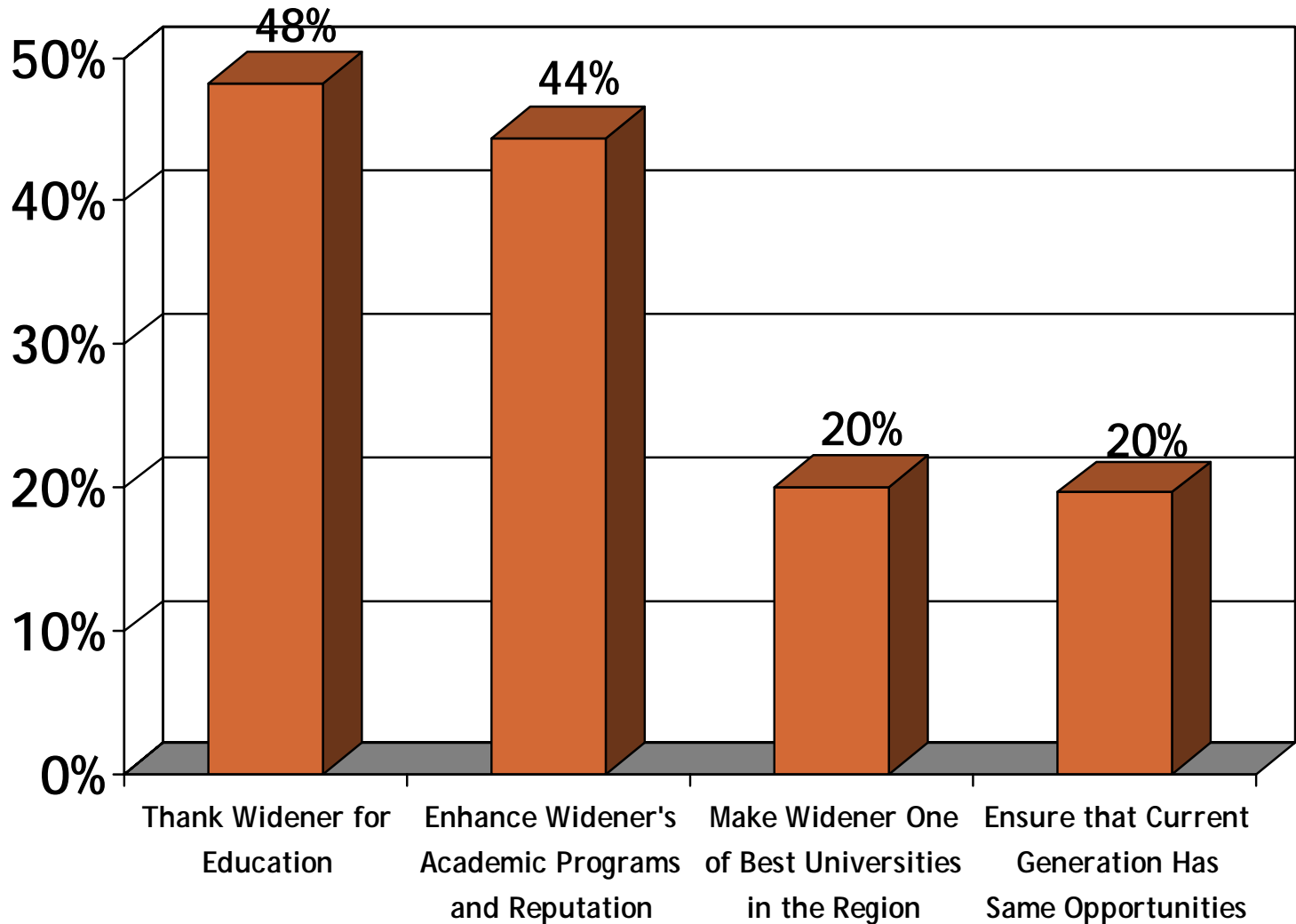
- Widener offers an **impressive diversity of academic opportunities on the Chester Campus** (e.g., liberal arts, science, engineering, business, nursing, education). (64%)
- **“Widener takes your education personally”** is a **good description** of what is distinctive about the university. (60%)
- Widener has a **strong tradition of preparing** both undergraduate and graduate **students for careers immediately following graduation**. (58%)



# Words Closely Associated with Widener - High Associations



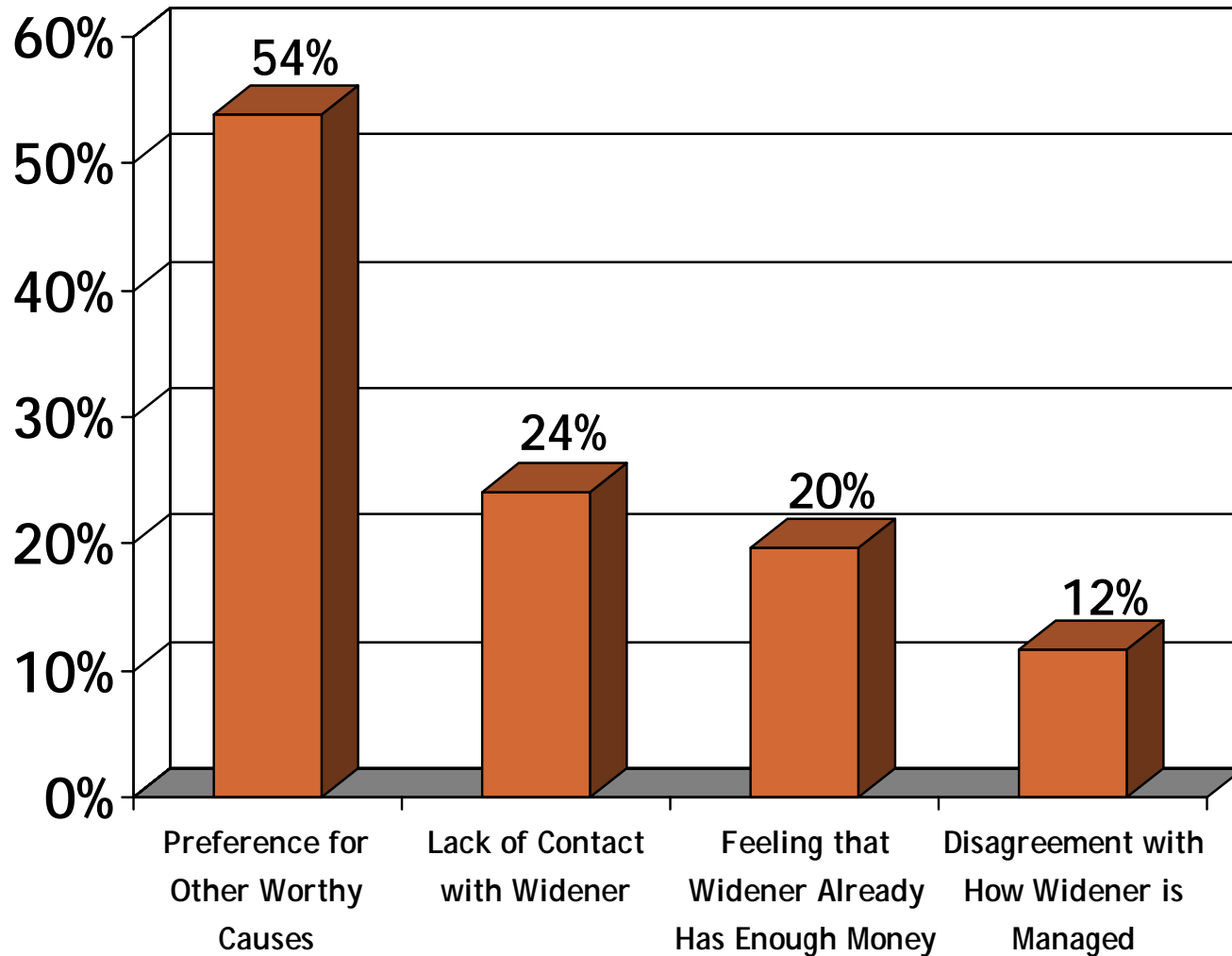
# Reasons for Donation



\*\*\*Select Top Two from List of Nine

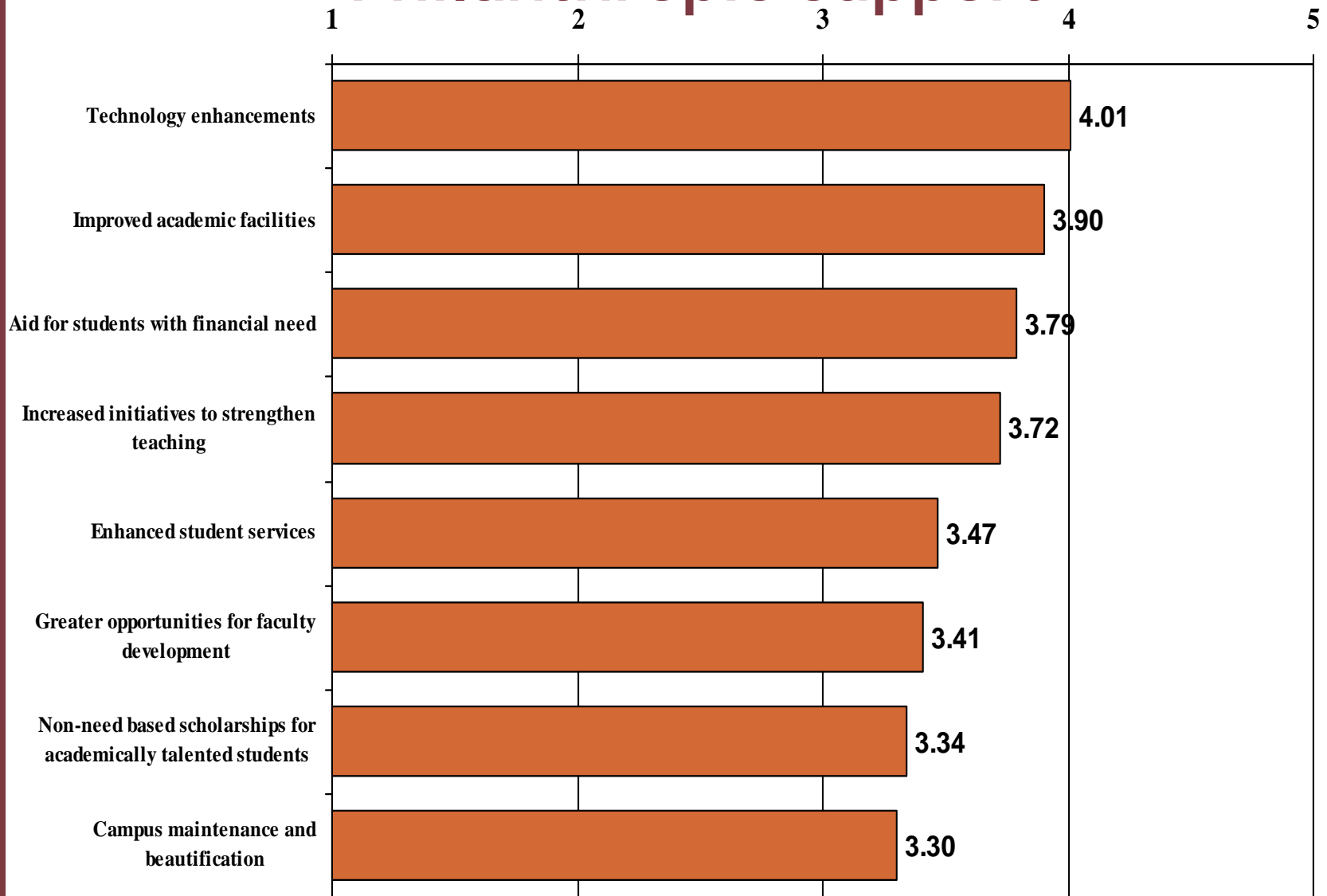


# Reasons for Not Making Financial Contributions



\*\*\*Select Top Two from List of Eight

# Importance of Areas Related to Philanthropic Support



Scale: 1 (Not at All Important) to 5 (Very Important)



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# Widener University Response:

## Development of Stronger Messages to Connect With Alumni

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# Communication Strategies

- Driving in as many alumni as possible to the University's Web site.
- Establishing connections with alumni primarily through their academic ties.
- Relating Widener success stories to alumni.



# Key Messages

- Used the central messaging themes as the foundation of alumni communications.
- Targeted communications to audiences to enhance cultivation and giving to the university.



# Alumni Communications

- Increased the frequency of communications with alumni.
- Focused on the most recent graduates to build a future alumni base.



# Branding Implementation

- Used research to support and inform branding consultant.
- Developed a branding and communication plan.
- Integrated public relations, marketing and advertising (web, alumni magazine, recruitment materials).
- Focused on common messages and vocabulary.
- Created a logo, seal, colors, and tagline.

# Questions...Now or Later

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*“ The more you know,  
the more luck you will have.”*  
**Chinese Proverb**

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