



Gardner Institute

What Matters Most? For You? Your Campus? Our Country? Build Your Legacy Around Your Answers

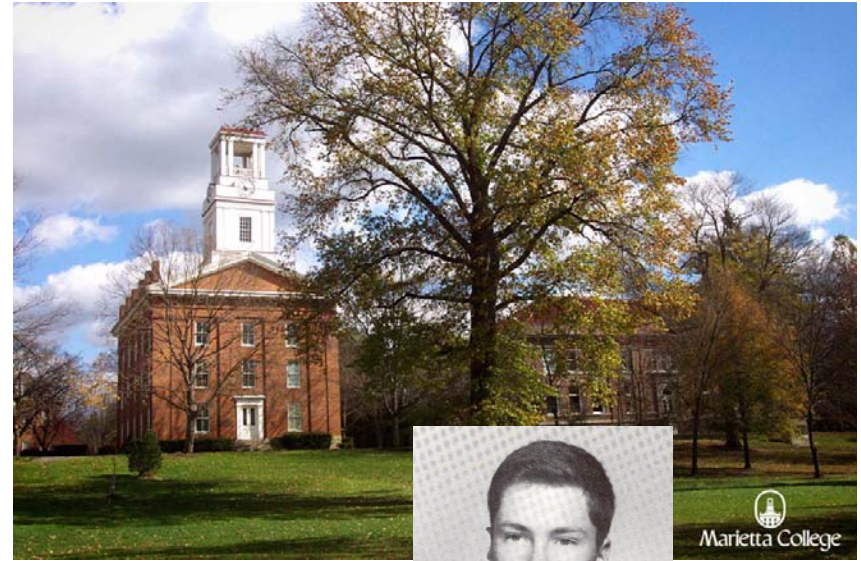
John N. Gardner
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John N. Gardner Institute
For Excellence in Undergraduate Education

National Conference of Academic Deans
University of Central Arkansas
July 19, 2018

jngi.org

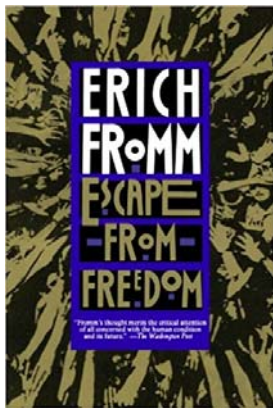
Figuring Out What Matters Most

It all began with...

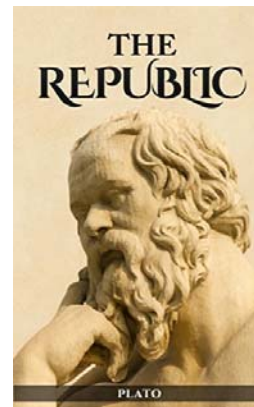
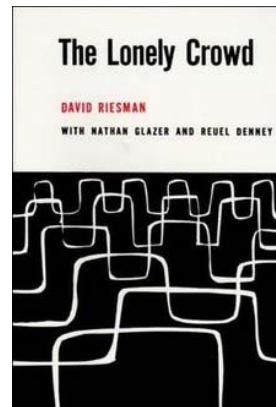


John, Marietta College
1961

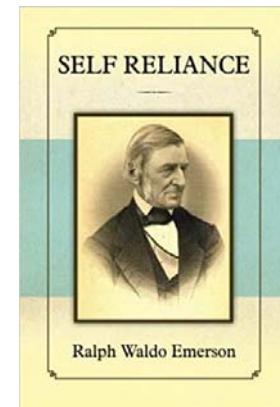
...and some big ideas.



Fall, 1961



Fall, 1963



Fall, 1964

The Most Significant Roles of Academic Deans

- A protector of and advocate for the faculty
- A developer of the institution's most important resource: its faculty
- A driver for attainment of the academic mission and core values
- A guarantor of institutional academic quality
- Powerful advocate for student success
- A leader for integration of academic and student affairs' roles
- A convener for innovation in student success
- A driver for continuous quality improvement

The Most Significant Roles of Academic Deans

- A shaper of faculty rewards' systems
- The primary leader who keeps the CAO out of trouble
- The leader who hires department chairs who hire and lead the faculty
- A change agent
- An academic resource allocator

What Matters Most?

...for You?

- Intrinsic satisfaction/gratification
- Still being a scholar
- Not totally giving up my research
- Continuing my own learning
- Continuing my teaching, albeit at a reduced level
- Collegiality
- Pursuing innovation

...for You?

- Maintaining as many elements of my former relationships with faculty colleagues as possible
- Getting along with my CAO and CEO
- The relentless chase for continuing improvement
- Raising money
- Improving quality
- Encouraging use of digital learning

...for You?

- Hiring the next generation of faculty
- Sponsoring new leaders - advancing younger leaders
- Advancing my own career - upward mobility
- Improving my compensation
- Keeping up with the impact of technology
- Preserving the academy from the corporatization of everything

...for You?

- Improving the opportunities for equity for all
- Helping the underprepared
- Strengthening the liberal arts
- Improving the practice of assessment and using it for decision making
- Finding time for my loved ones
- Raising my children successfully
- Being a good partner/spouse

...for You?

- Having some time for community engagement
- Serving my country
- Pursuing my mission
- Making my campus a little better than I found it
- Building and leaving my legacy

Oh my!

Do you have choices?!



What's missing?

...Your Campus?

- Strengthening quality
- Recruiting and retaining more students
- Expanding equity opportunities and outcomes
- Improving your marketplace niches
- Scaling innovations such as High Impact Practices
- Improving your use of assessment for presentation to regional and specialized accreditors

...Your Campus?

- Revisiting general education
- Adapting to changing demographics
- Making the case for the value of higher education
- Aligning your institution with efforts to strengthen democratic institutions
- Increasing norms and practices that yield a culture of civility

...Your Campus?

- Facilitating dialogues that address and bridge divisiveness
- Teaching students critical thinking skills to help them differentiate facts from “fake news”
- Helping meet labor force needs
- And strengthening national security

Again, so many choices!



What's missing?

...Our Country?

- Higher education as the principal means of upward social mobility
- The role of the military/industrial/higher education complex
- The role of higher education as part of the social safety net
- The campus as a laboratory for the celebration of diversity and discourse around differing points of view

...Our Country?

- Higher education as the educational foundation of our democracy
- The engine for fulfilling our labor force needs (coupled with immigration!)
- The need for a research driven source of innovation and invention for the improvement of quality of life
- The mainstay of national security

What's missing?

...So, Where Does This Leave You?

- Doing what you can in your sphere of influence at any given time and role
- You can't do everything
- How you combine what you are told to do, expected to do, want to do?
- You are better prepared because of your intelligence, educational preparation, and experience to make good choices

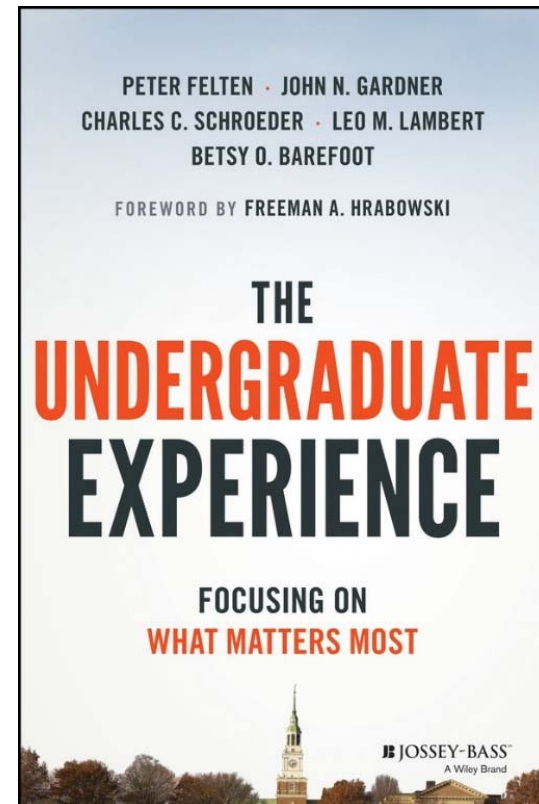
So, Where Does This Leave You?
You have to choose (locus of control)...
And/or events and people
will choose for you!

(Note: Challenge of staying out of other peoples' meetings!)

...So, What Matters Most? Your Legacy

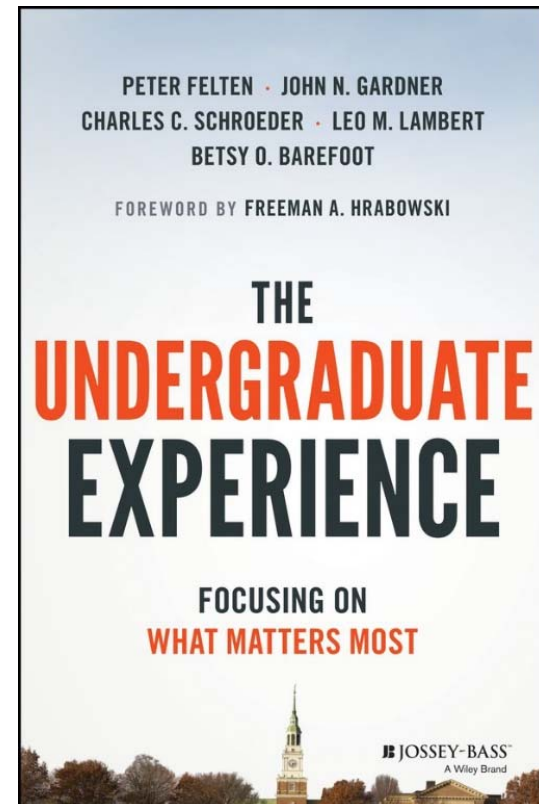
- Is more than an intellectual question
- But it is also an intellectual question
- You can only have so many priorities
- And if you stay focused on them – from position to position – from institution to institution – they will be your legacy
- What do you want your legacy issues to be?

Let's look at a
recent book about
"What Matters Most"



Six Organizing Themes

- Learning
- Relationships
- Expectations
- Alignment
- Improvement
- Leadership



The Precursor:
Transforming a Campus
(Keller, 2004)

Elon University



Learning



- The primary theme; the core of what higher education is all about
- Learning from all corners of the campus environment
- Learning from what we say, but especially from what we do
- Learning especially from other students

How Does Your Own Work Connect to Student Learning?

- What proportion of your time is focused on student learning?
- Is your time consumed with other concerns?
- What do you want students to learn, especially in the first year?
- At your institution, how can you use high-impact practices to enhance student learning?

Relationships



- Comfortable for some; uncomfortable for others
- The link between relationships and learning
- Is building relationships an intentional part of your campus culture
- Are your high-impact practices helping to build relationships?

Expectations



- Expectations affect behavior
- How to set, and help students meet, high expectations
- What is the role of admissions reps, coaches in setting expectations?
- What is the role of faculty?
- Convocations?
- Common readings?
- Or orientation and other official rituals

Alignment



- Alignment: moving in the same direction toward a common goal.
- How are colleges and universities hampered by misalignment?

Misalignment in Action

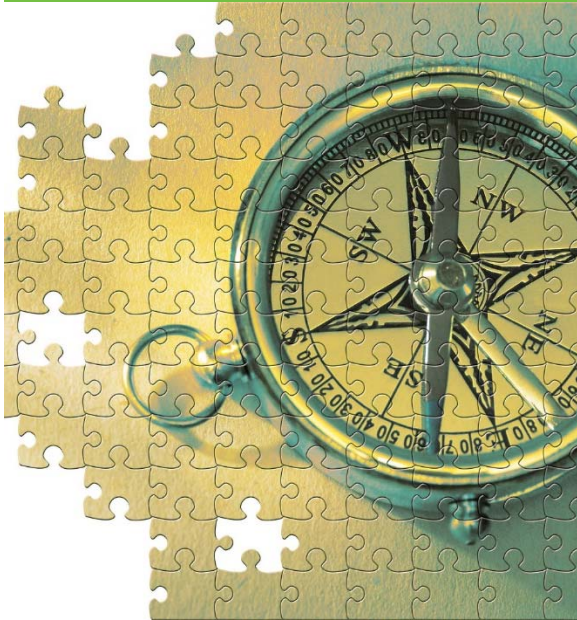
- \$\$\$ spent on student retention programs, but ...
- Admitting students who have little to no chance of success and then doing little for them
- Failing to offer and/or require high impact practices
- Putting more emphasis on recruiting students than retaining them

Improvement



- A “mom and apple pie” theme
- The condition of “positive restlessness.”
- What serves as a catalyst for assessment/improvement?
- Which practices/experiences/courses at your institution are most effective, and how do you know?

Leadership



- The primary factor that set Elon's transformation in motion
- Cultivating academic leadership at all levels
- What characteristics do you desire and need in academic leaders?
- How can leadership become part of your high-impact practices?

What else matters most?

John's Top 6

1. Paying more attention to the most important purposes of higher education
2. Corporatization of the Academy
3. Retreat from equity focus
4. Transfer students (the other first-year students)
5. The Faculty
6. The preserver of inequitable outcomes – the gateway course phenomena

1. Paying more attention to the most important purposes of higher education

- What are those purposes?
- How can we introduce them to our students?
- How society sees our purpose(s) as preparing students for employment but not so much for how we are living.
- The need for critical thinkers—those who can detect “fake news” and reject its influence. How do academic deans encourage/facilitate this?

2. Corporatization of the Academy

- Huge influx of the for-profit providers of so-called “solutions” to the student success challenges.
- Where is our own vision, creativity, problem solving abilities?
- Why must we increasingly outsource more and more of our student success efforts to the for-profit corporation?
- Presidents losing patience. Under huge pressure to improve metrics around their outcomes.
- We are just as gullible as other American consumers and are being sold very expensive solutions

3. Retreat from equity focus

- More and more we are paying attention to those who have money and privilege.
- Our policies are often rewarding that privilege.
- Leading to re-segregation of many of America's campuses.
- What are you going to do today as an academic dean to advance equity?

4. Transfer students (the other first-year students)

- Still low status even though a primary function of four-year public universities has become to educate transfers
- Transfer is the most common route to the BA—especially for low income and minority students
- Overly narrow definition of “transfer”
- Deplorable rates of transfer completers
- Key problem is vesting authority in EM instead of VPAA

Transfer students (the other first-year students)

- key problem is vesting authority in EM instead of VPAA
- need an overall academic advocate and ombudsperson
- need a comprehensive plan for transfer student success (e.g. Foundations of Excellence Transfer Focus)

5. The Faculty

- Feeling very threatened
- Analogy to health care revolution beginning in 80's.
- Seeing whole liberal arts majors being cut
- A new role for the first-year seminar: saving faculty jobs!
- Get your faculty more engaged in student success work instead of outsourcing it to SA and for –profit providers.
- Pay more attention to your faculty

6. The preserver of inequitable outcomes – the gateway course phenomena

- Last bastion of student success work.
- We have gone in every other direction
- But we have been afraid of the faculty—why? We think, misguidedly, that leaving them alone is a form of respect. We also don't want them voting no confidence. And our CAO's who want to be presidents don't want them voting no confidence either.
- We have an extraordinary tolerance for failure.

Early Lessons from Gateways to Completion[®]

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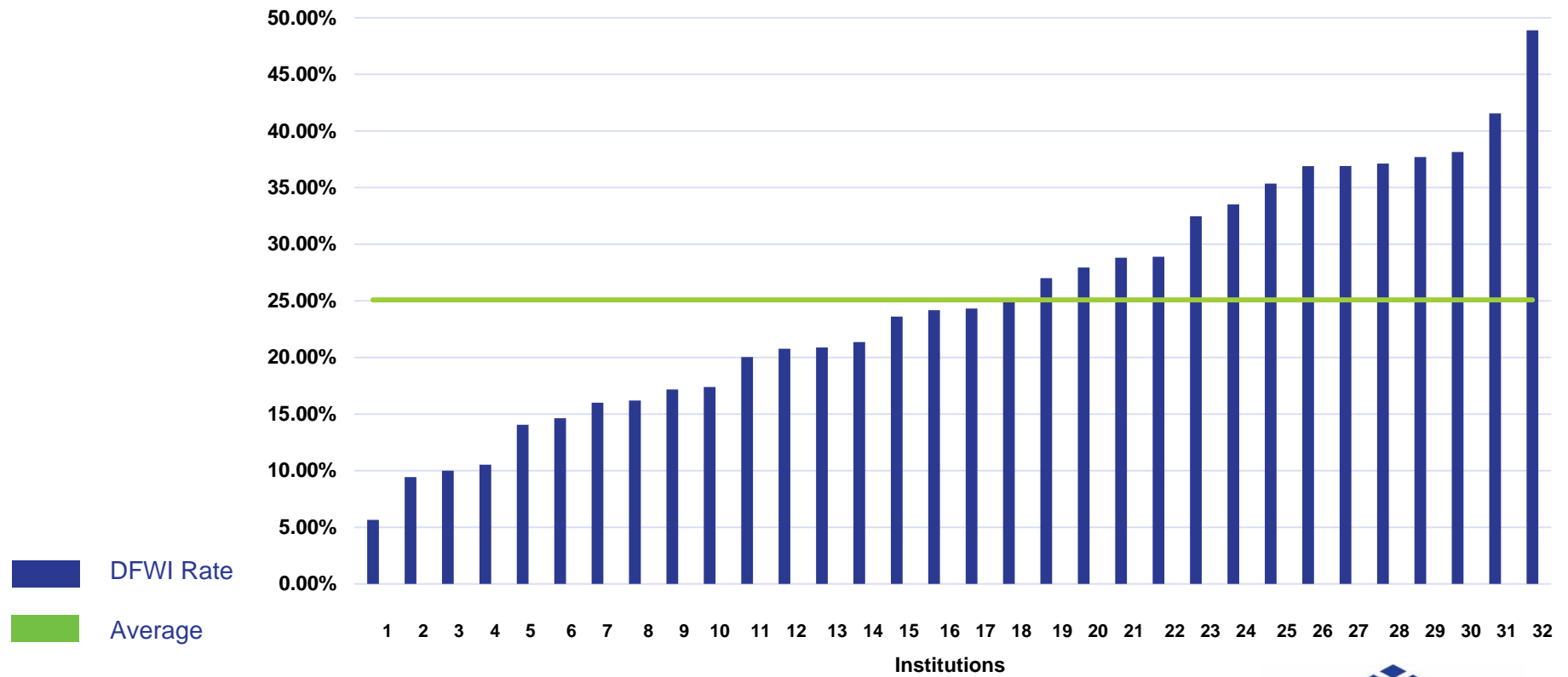


Gardner Institute

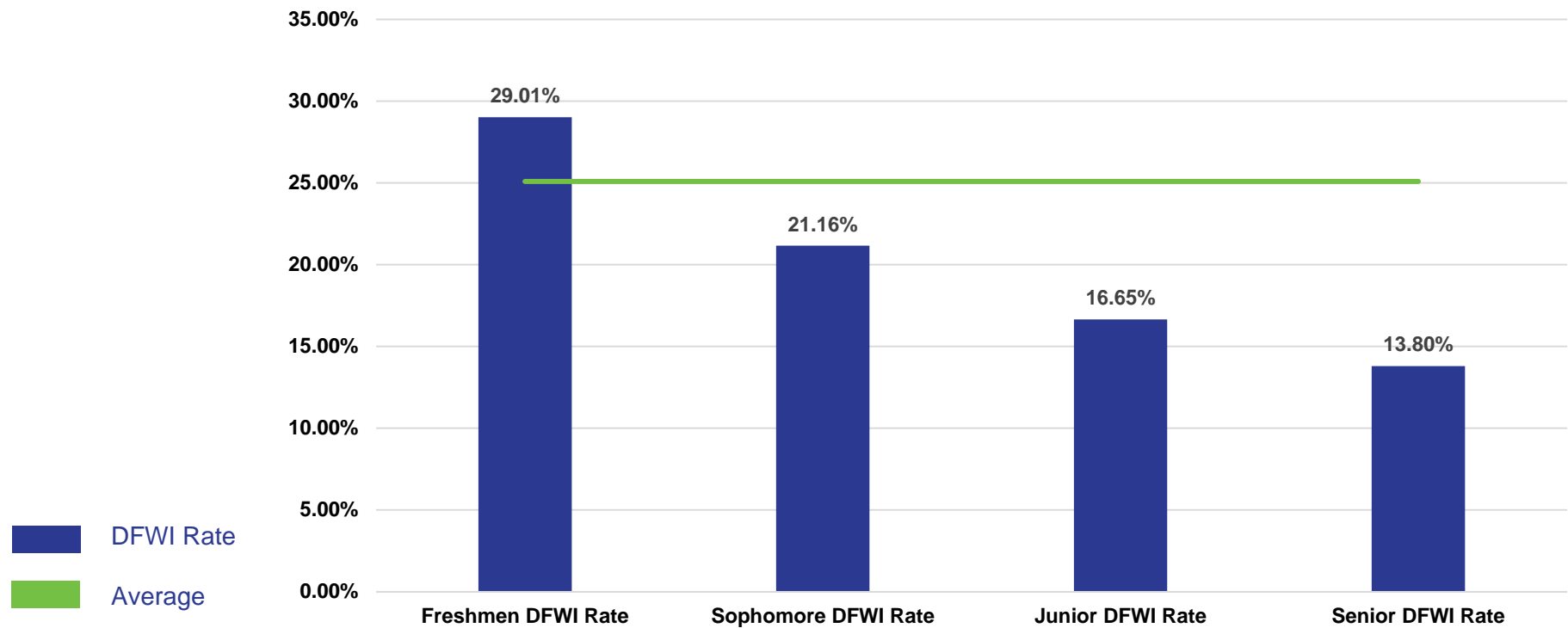
The Data – U.S. History Survey Courses

- 32 institutions
- Average DFWI Rate = 25.5%
- Range of 5.66% - 48.89%

U.S. Survey Courses: U.S. History DFWI Rate by Institution



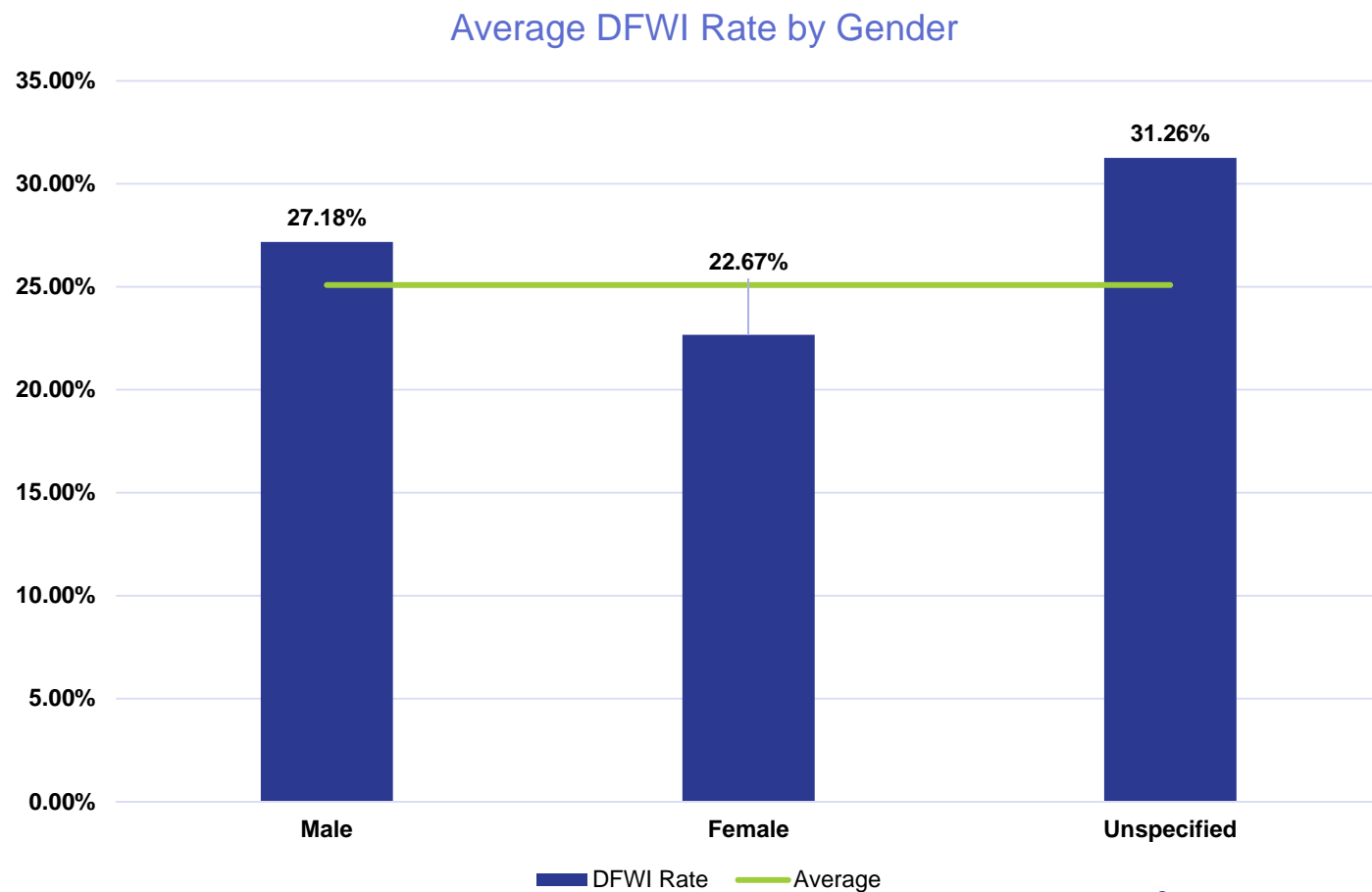
U.S. Survey Courses: Average DFWI Rate by Classification



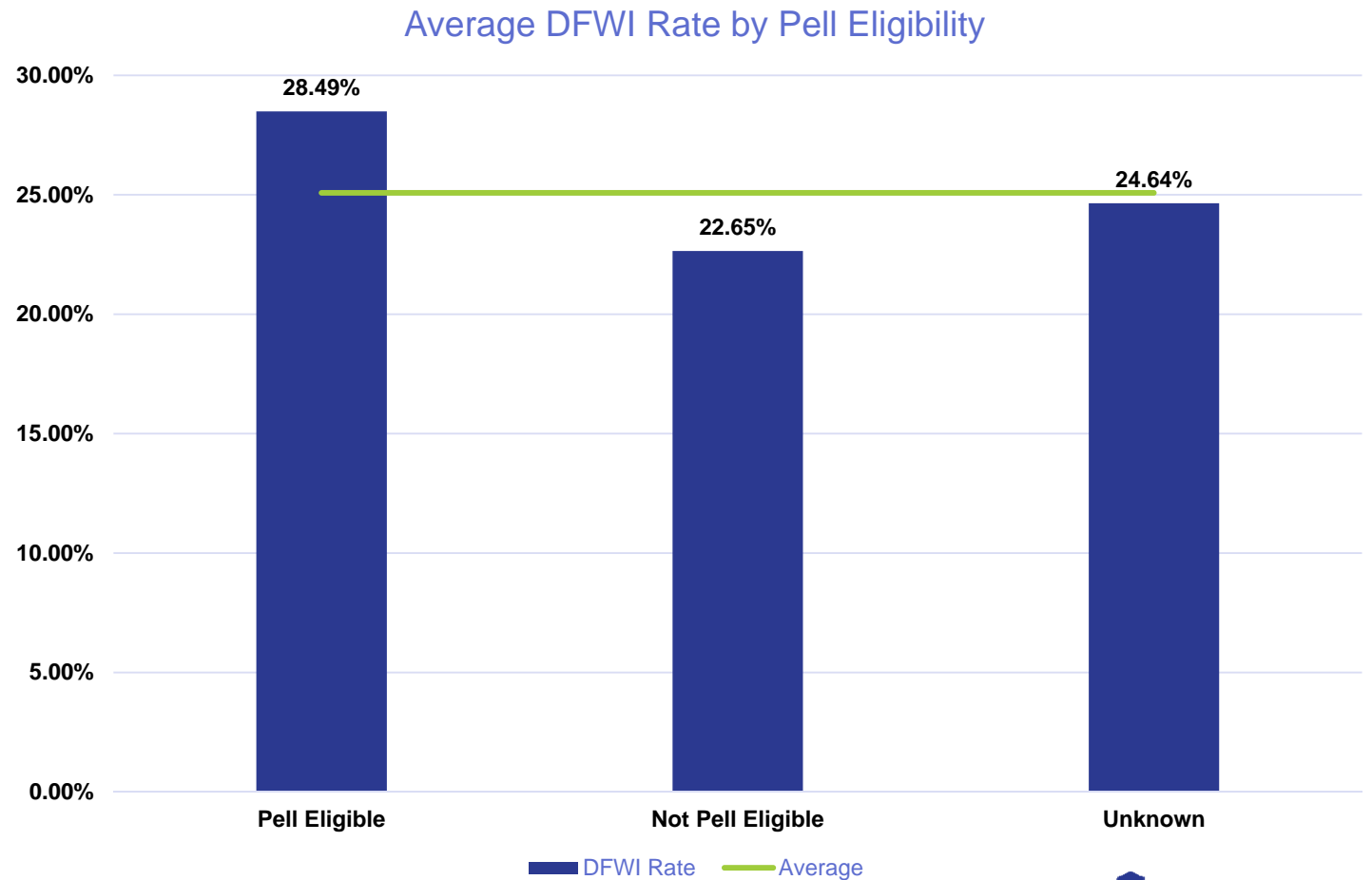
Gender, Income and First-Generation Status Matter



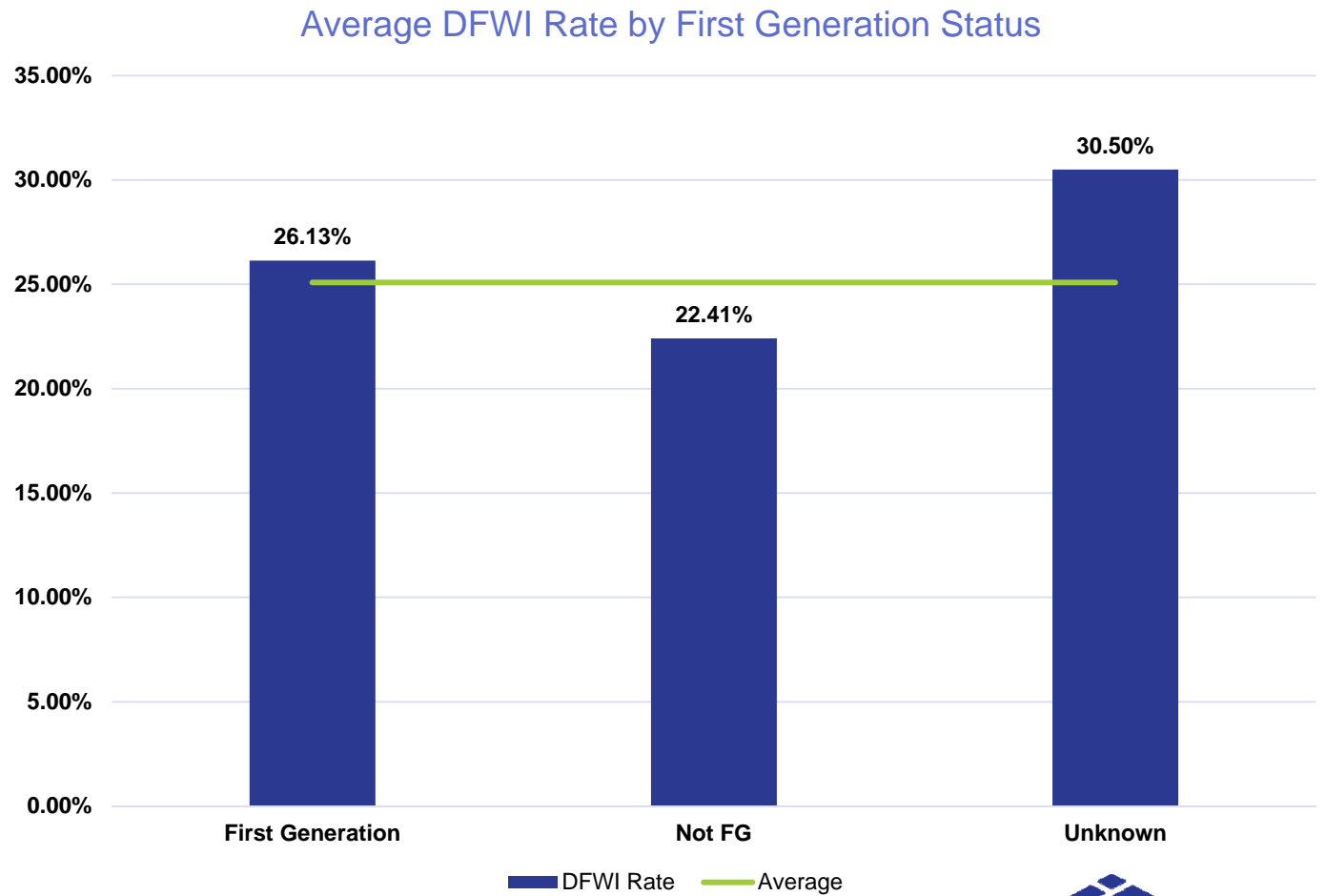
The Data – U.S. Survey Courses (Gender)



The Data – U.S. Survey Courses (Income)



The Data – U.S. Survey Courses (First Generation)

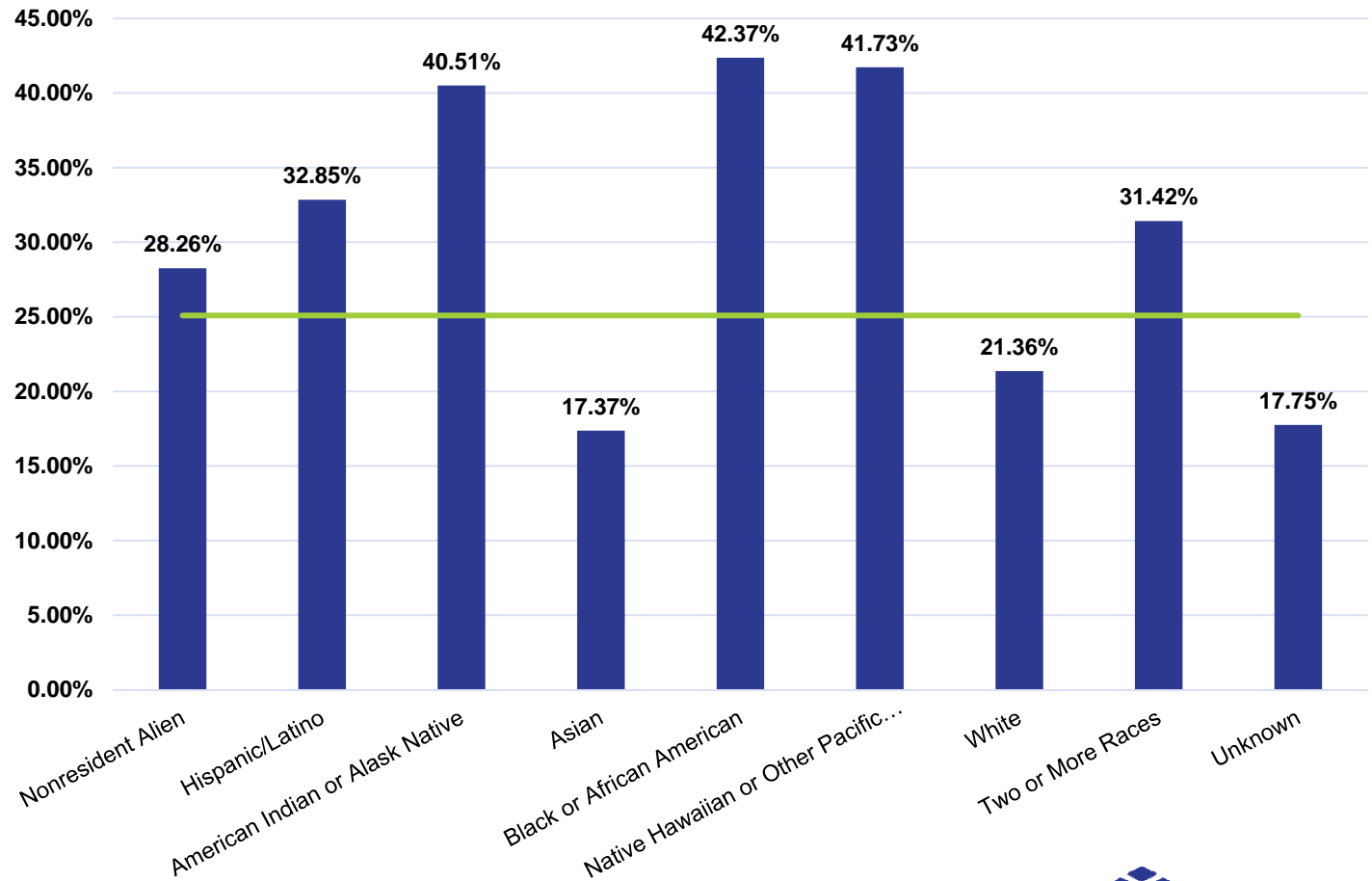


Race and Ethnicity Matter



History

Average DFWI Rate by Ethnicity and Race



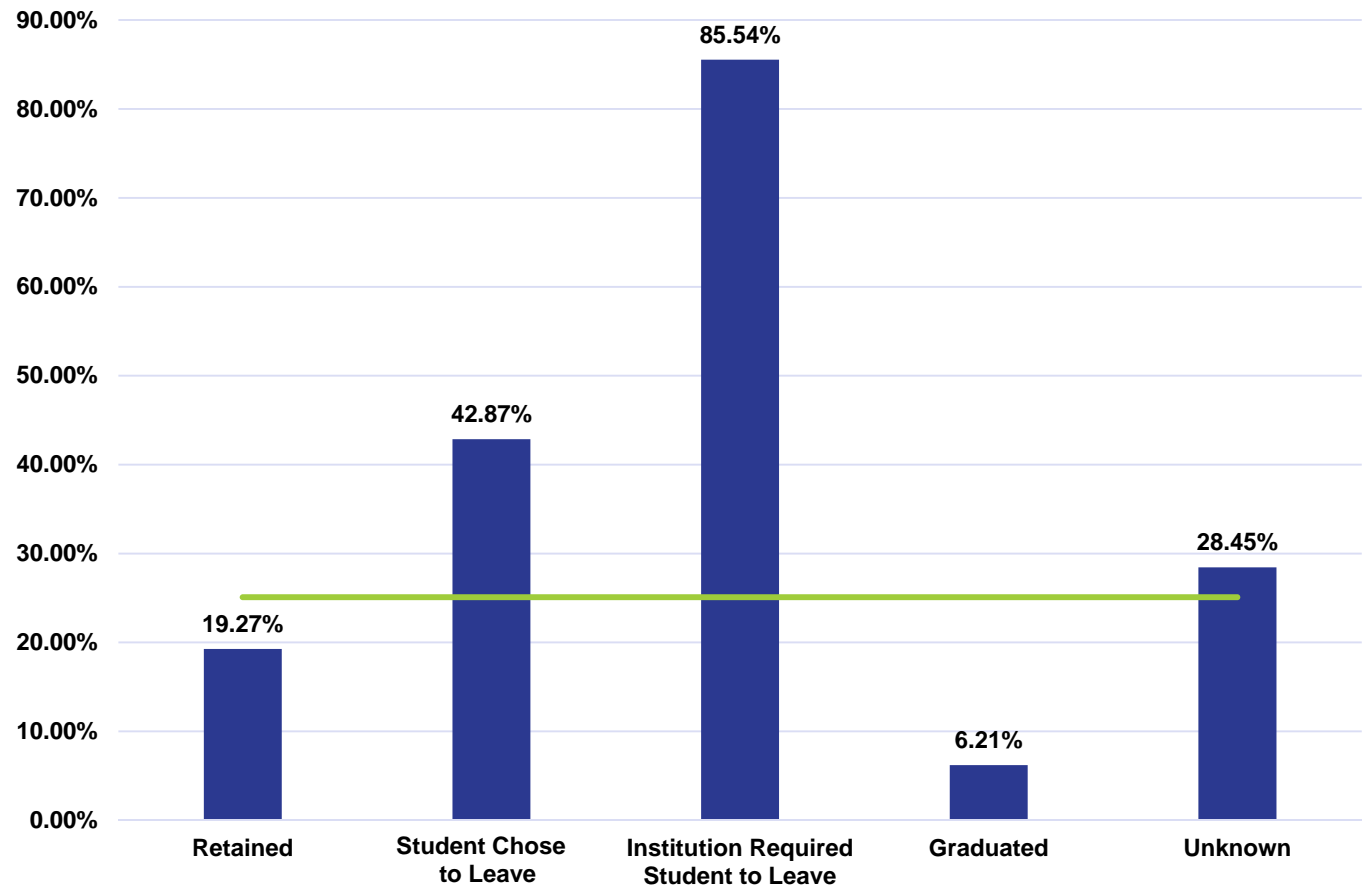
DFWI Rate
Average

Once again,
gateway course
performance is a
DIRECT predictor
of retention

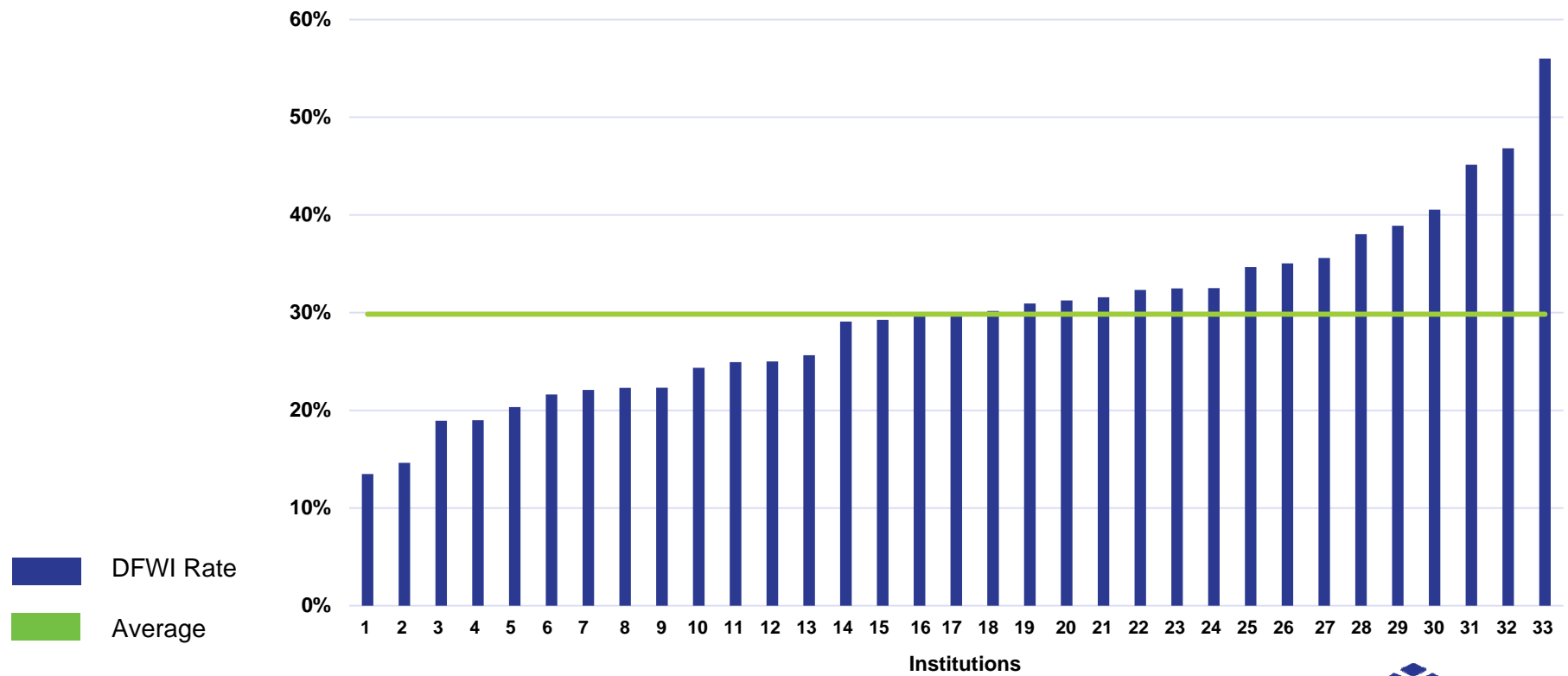


History

Average DFWI Rate by Retention Status



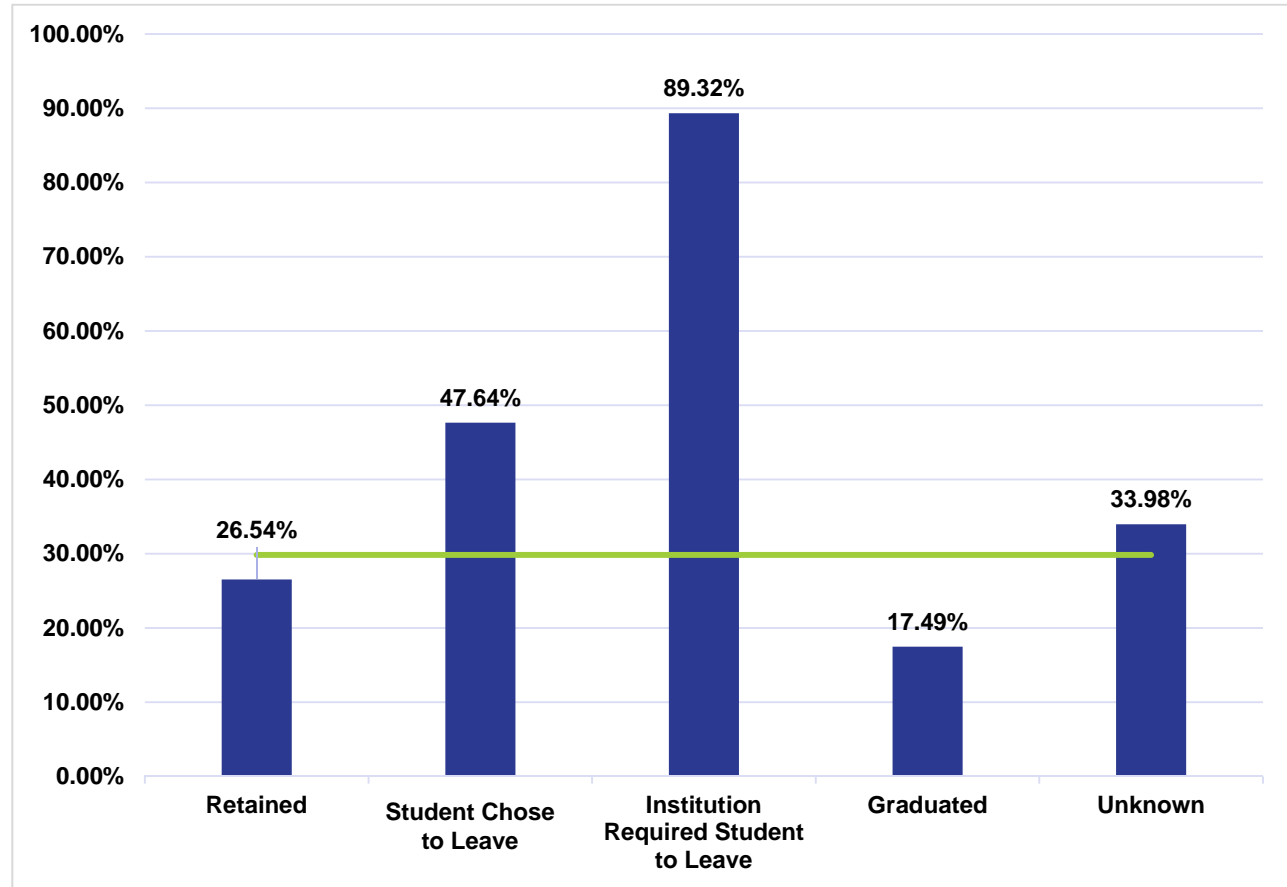
Biology Introductory/General Biology DFWI Rate by Institution



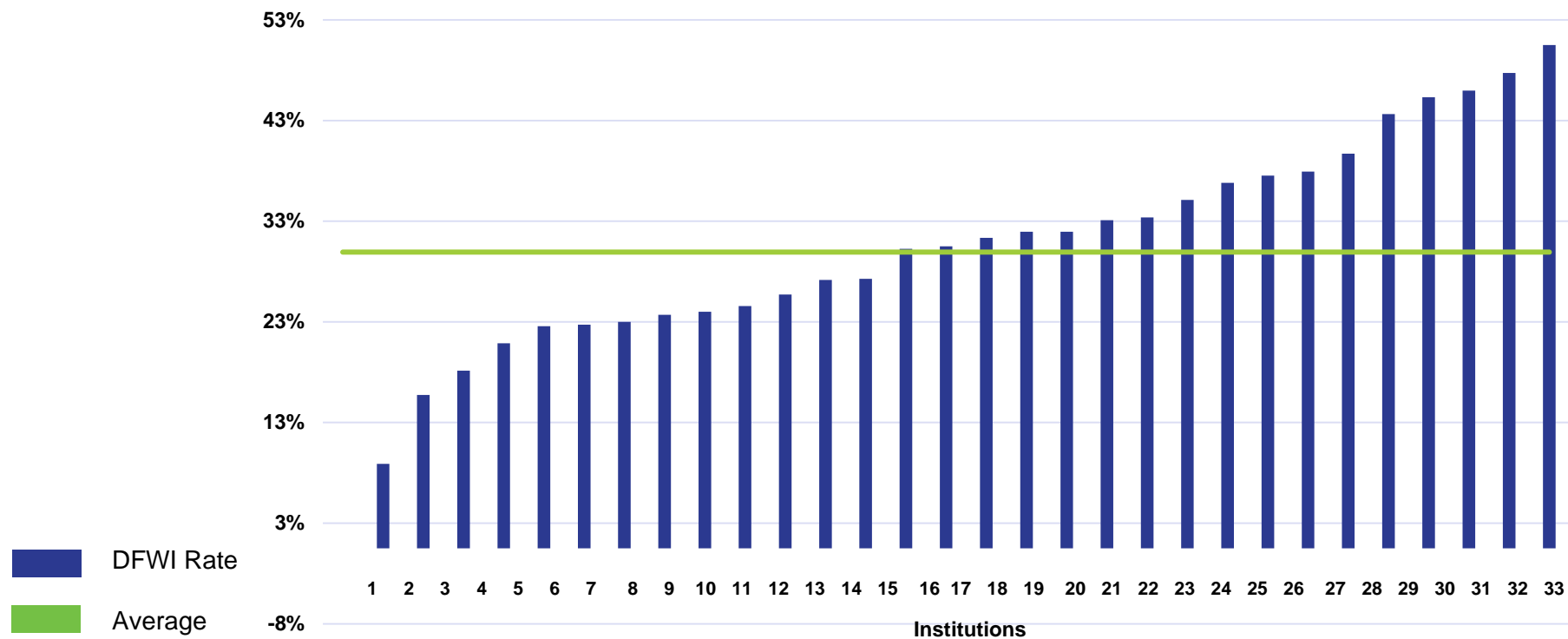
Biology

Average Biology DFWI Rate by Retention Status

- DFWI Rate
- Average



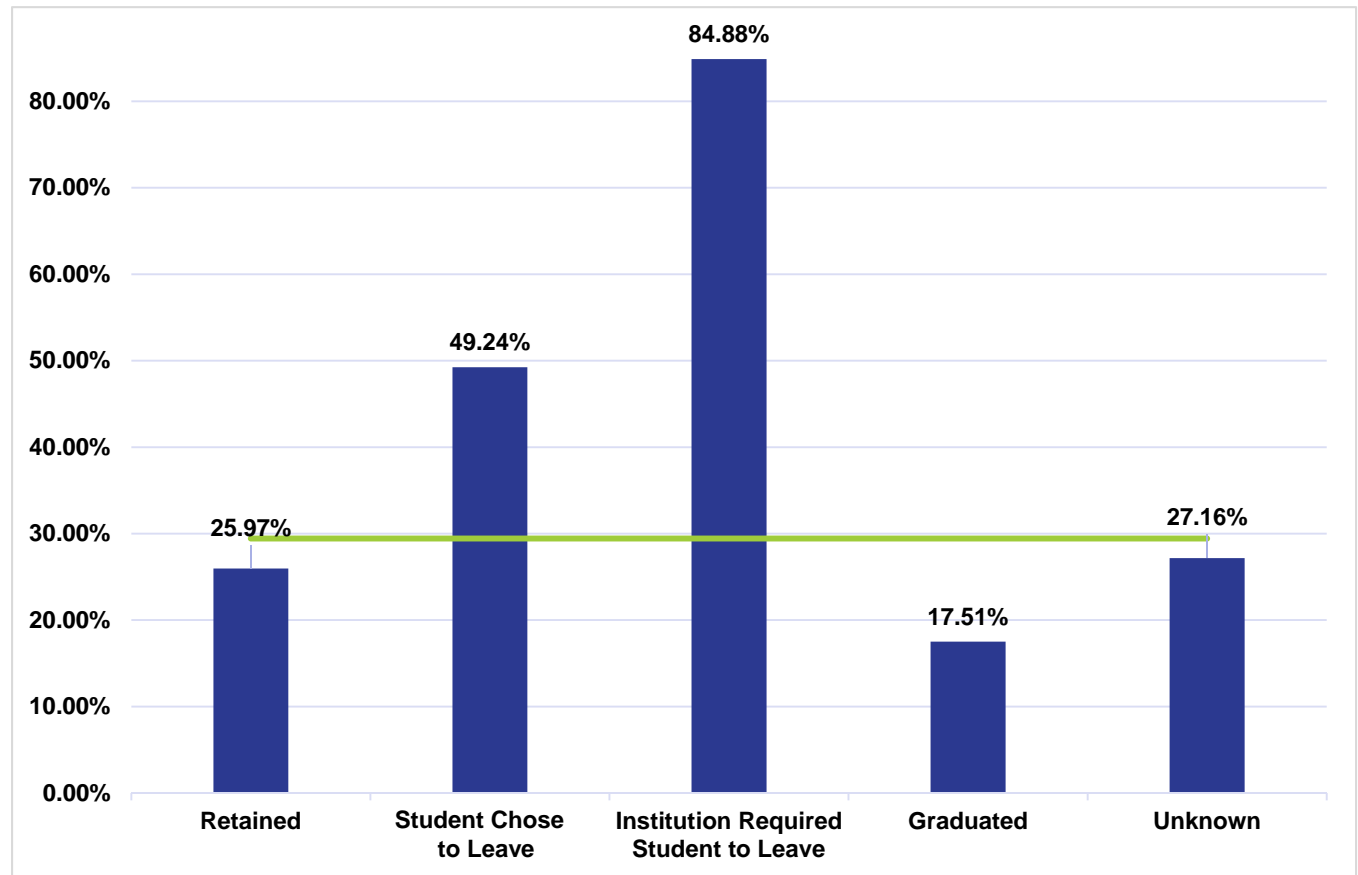
Chemistry Introductory/General Chemistry DFWI Rate by Institution



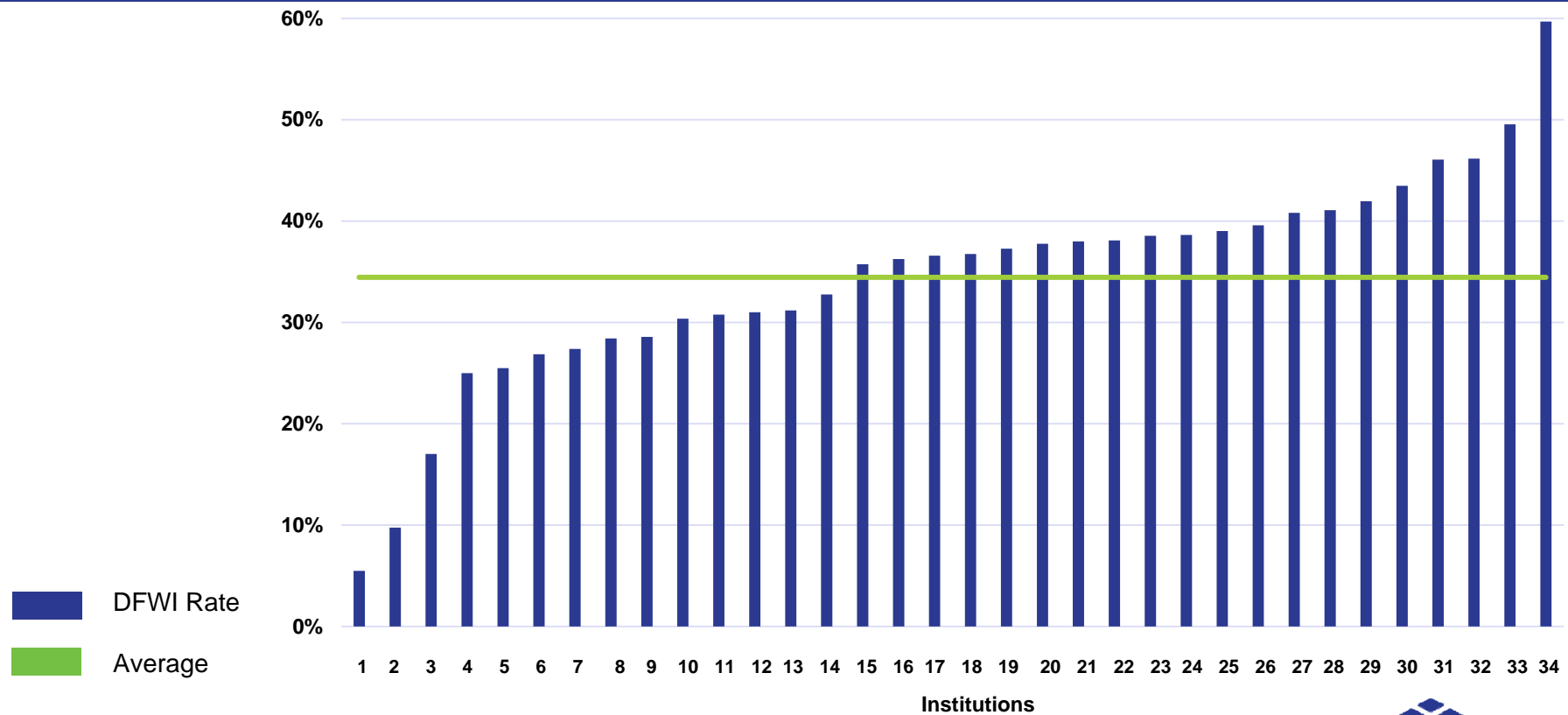
Chemistry

Average Chemistry DFWI Rate by Retention Status

■ DFWI Rate
■ Average



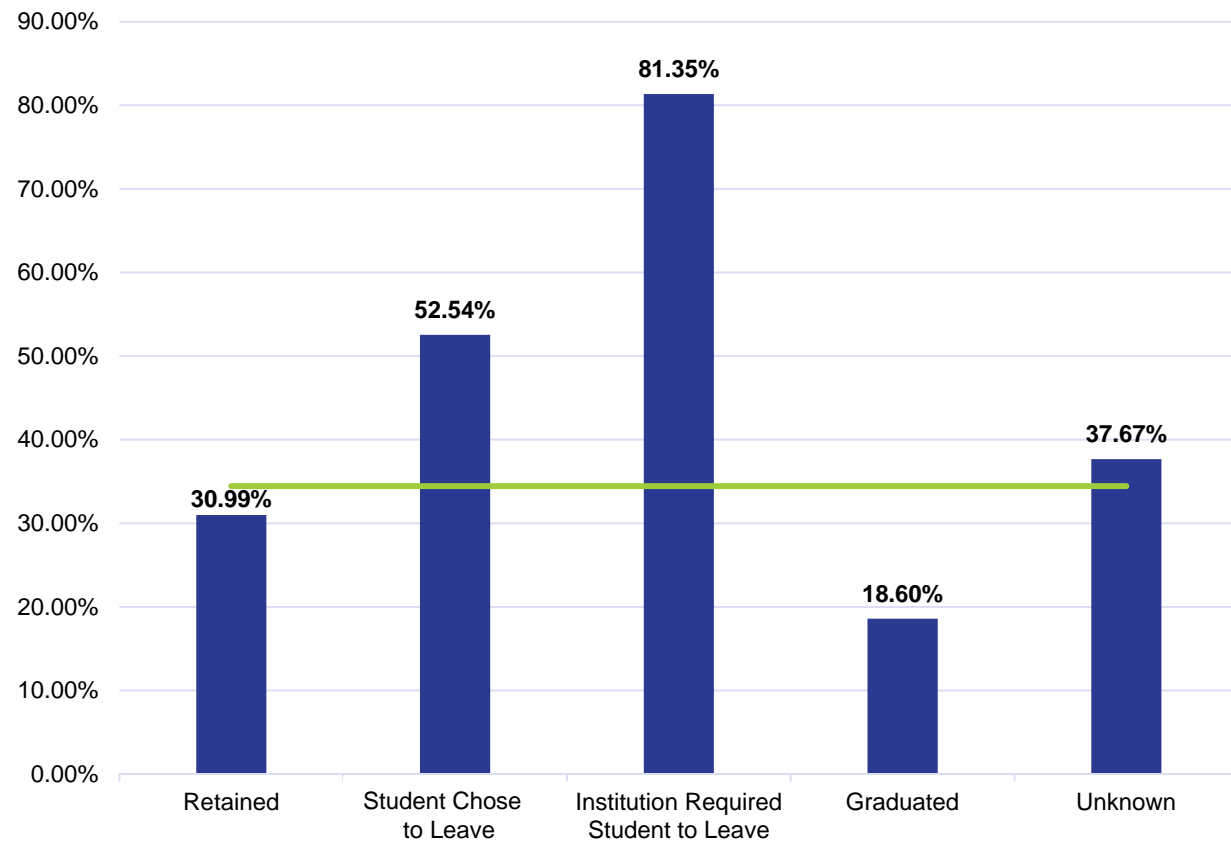
Math-College Algebra Average Algebra DFWI Rate by Institution



Math – College Algebra

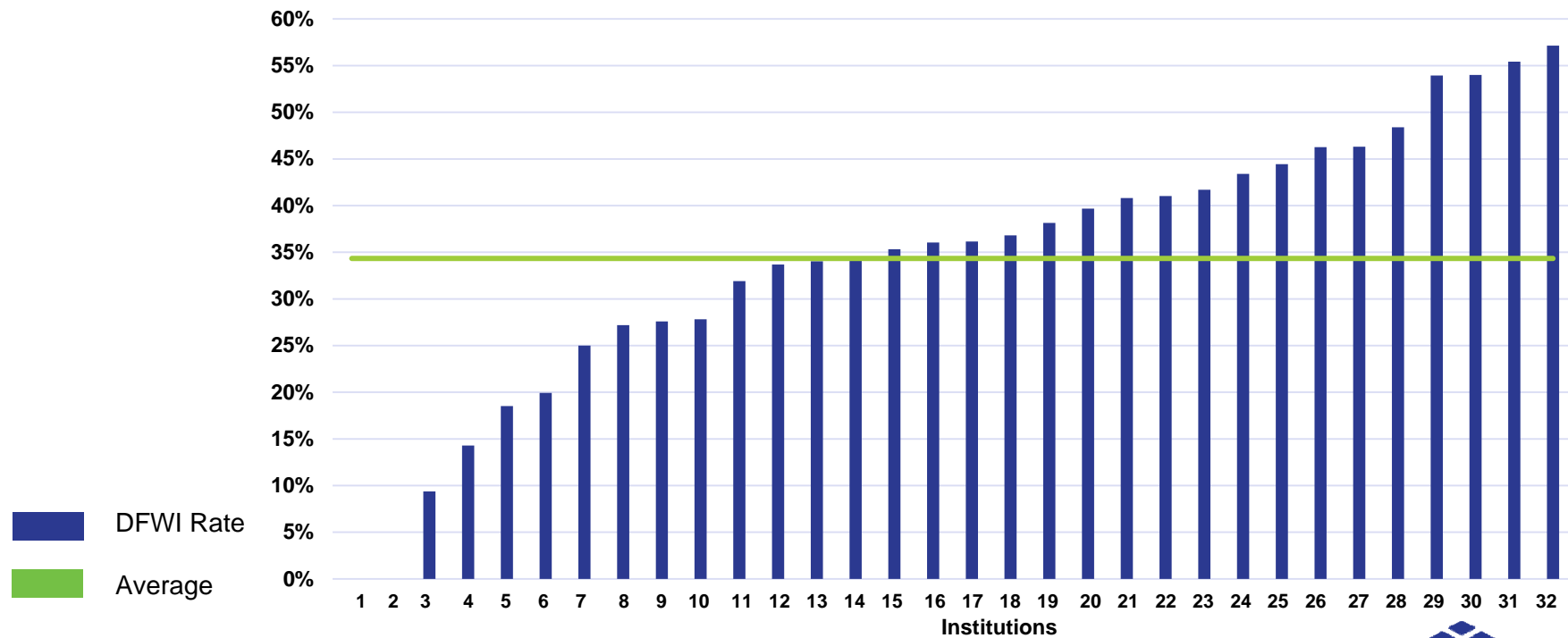
Average Algebra
DFWI Rate by
Retention Status

■ DFWI Rate
■ Average



Math-Introductory Calculus

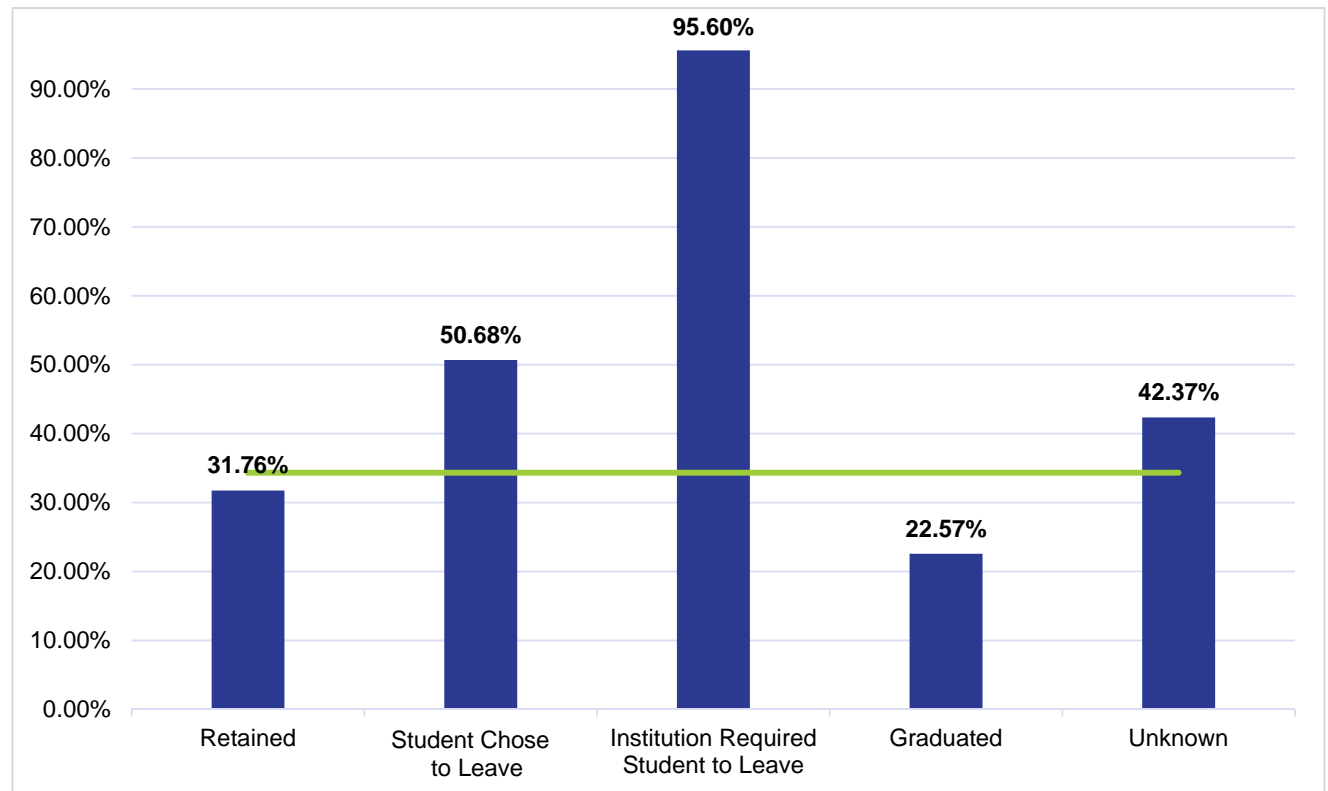
Average Calculus DFWI Rate by Institution



Math – Introductory Calculus

Average Calculus DFWI Rate by Retention Status

■ DFWI Rate
■ Average



What might explain these outcomes?

- Under preparedness
- Poor high schools
- Poverty
- First gen - lack of cultural capital
- Student employment
- Immaturity
- Lack of study habits
- Learning disabilities
- Physical/emotional health problems
- Alcohol/drug use
- Refusal to seek assistance
- Motivational deficits
- Insufficient “grit”/ resilience

What roles do WE play in student failure?

- Historic low status of gateway courses
- Marginalizing, outsourcing of the faculty
- Not a matter of faculty focus/discussion
- Not a priority of deans and department chairs
- Faculty/collegiate academic Darwinian culture
- Belief that failure is inevitable, appropriate

So, what can you do?

Make reducing gateway course failure rates a higher priority in your...

- Course
- Department
- School/College
- College/University

Declare war on gateway course failure rates!

How?

- Start talking about gateway courses at all levels
- Stop being so tolerant of failure
- Collect the data
- Analyze the data
- Share the data
- Discuss the implications of the data
- Focus on the importance of the faculty

How?

- Appeal to the collective conscience of the faculty – it's all about social justice
- Identify the early adopters
- Create coalitions of the willing
- Target high status change agent leaders
- Conduct rigorous self-studies of high failure rate courses
- Redesign these courses
- Offer redesigned courses

How?

- Reward faculty risk takers and innovators
- Assess the courses
- Refine the courses
- Take a look at Gateways to Completion[®]

Faculty are fundamental.
(But it is more than the faculty)

It takes a whole village.



This is not about blaming
faculty – or anyone.

This is about a vision for
shared responsibility.



The Factors You Control

- Policies
- Who teaches
- Assessment and evaluation procedures
- Faculty development
- Faculty rewards systems
- Orientation
- Raising student expectations
- Preparation for placement procedures
- Placement enforcement
- Academic advising
- Classroom facilities
- Technology utilization
- Technology support
- Academic support for students
- Rethinking academic support and role of peer leaders
- Appropriate prerequisites
- Curricular structures (e.g. learning communities)
- Use of Predictive Analytics

Big Pieces of the Conundrum

- General Education
- Pedagogy
- Roles of faculty
- Academic support
- Rethinking role of mathematics
- Peer leaders
- Enhancing the first-year seminar
- Integrating academic and student affairs
- The new profession of “Student Success”
- The use of predictive analytics

Some Closing Thoughts/Questions About Legacy

- Whether or not you are intentional about it, you are building a legacy
- So how do these ideas connect to your own more important thoughts about building your legacy?
- How does being an academic dean advance this course of your personal history?

Some Closing Thoughts/Questions About Legacy

- You need a comprehensive plan for student success.
- Then you need to execute it to a high degree.
- The future for preserving our democracy can be influenced by what you do when you get back home.
- You have more ability and opportunity to influence equitable outcomes than anyone at your institution.

Some Closing Thoughts/Questions About Legacy

- Your power of advocacy is enormous.
- Many of your faculty are looking for leaders with a combination of vision, unselfishness and social justice values who will follow you almost anywhere.

Contact

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