Understanding and Implementing Effective Emergency Aid Practices

Adult Promise Phase II Convening

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Omari Burnside
Director of Strategic Initiatives

NASPA® | Research and Policy Institute

Why I'm excited to be here…

- East meets West

- New partners in the mission

- Previous work with university systems

- Power of a network

- Timely, relevant, and critical work

What is NASPA?

*NASPA is the leading association for the **advancement, health, and sustainability** of the student affairs profession.*

NASPA addresses common functional areas within student affairs (housing, advising, conduct, assessment) as well as **broad higher education themes** (access, persistence, and degree completion).

Our work provides high-quality professional development, advocacy, and research for **15,000 members** in all 50 states, 25 countries, and 8 U.S. territories.

Today we will cover…

The What

- Emergency Aid 101: Understanding the Basics
  - NASPA's Landscape Analysis of Emergency Aid Programs
  - Project Goals & Method

So What?

- Key Learnings from the National Study

Now What?

- Building and Strengthening Your Emergency Aid Program
  - Critical Needs
  - Campus Capacity Areas
  - State Support

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The What

Emergency Aid 101: Understanding the Basics

NASPA and its partners co-created a working definition for emergency aid

Emergency aid includes <u>one-time</u> **grants**, **loans**, and **completion scholarships** of <u>less than $1,500</u> provided to students facing unexpected financial crisis, as well as **food pantries**, **housing assistance**, and **transportation assistance**.

First, let's make sure we have a shared understanding of the key terms…

Emergency Aid Type	Description
Campus vouchers	Cover materials from the bookstore or meals from the dining hall; few barriers to distribution
Completion scholarships	Cover outstanding balances for students poised to graduate or continue to the next semester
Emergency loans	Address hardship related to the timing of a student's financial aid disbursement
Food pantries	Address food insecurity on campus
Restricted grants	Support students who experience unexpected hardship; typically require that students meet certain academic or other requirements
Unrestricted grants	Support students who experience unexpected hardship; typically awarded without restrictions

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It is also important that we understand what emergency aid **is not**…

Emergency aid is not…

- Part of student's **financial aid package** or award

- Meant to be a **recurring solution** for a student's financial troubles

- The **sliver bullet** for student financial capability

In 2016, NASPA released the *Landscape Analysis of Emergency Aid Programs*

- Conducted with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Primary Goals:
    - Describe the current condition of emergency aid programs across institutional sectors
    - Highlight connections to student outcomes
    - Provide examples of exemplary practice
    - Surface emerging institutions
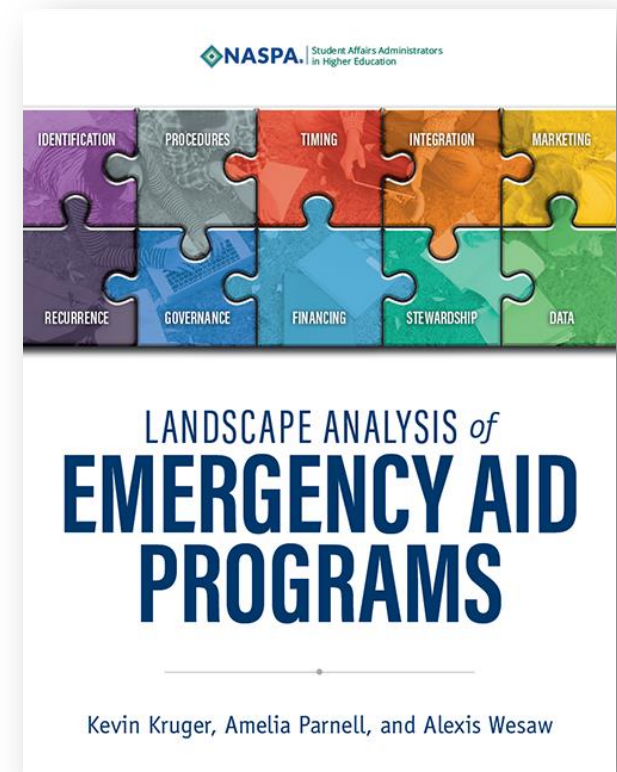
The report highlights results from campus interviews and a national survey

Campus Interviews

October – December 2015

- **20+ institutions** interviewed

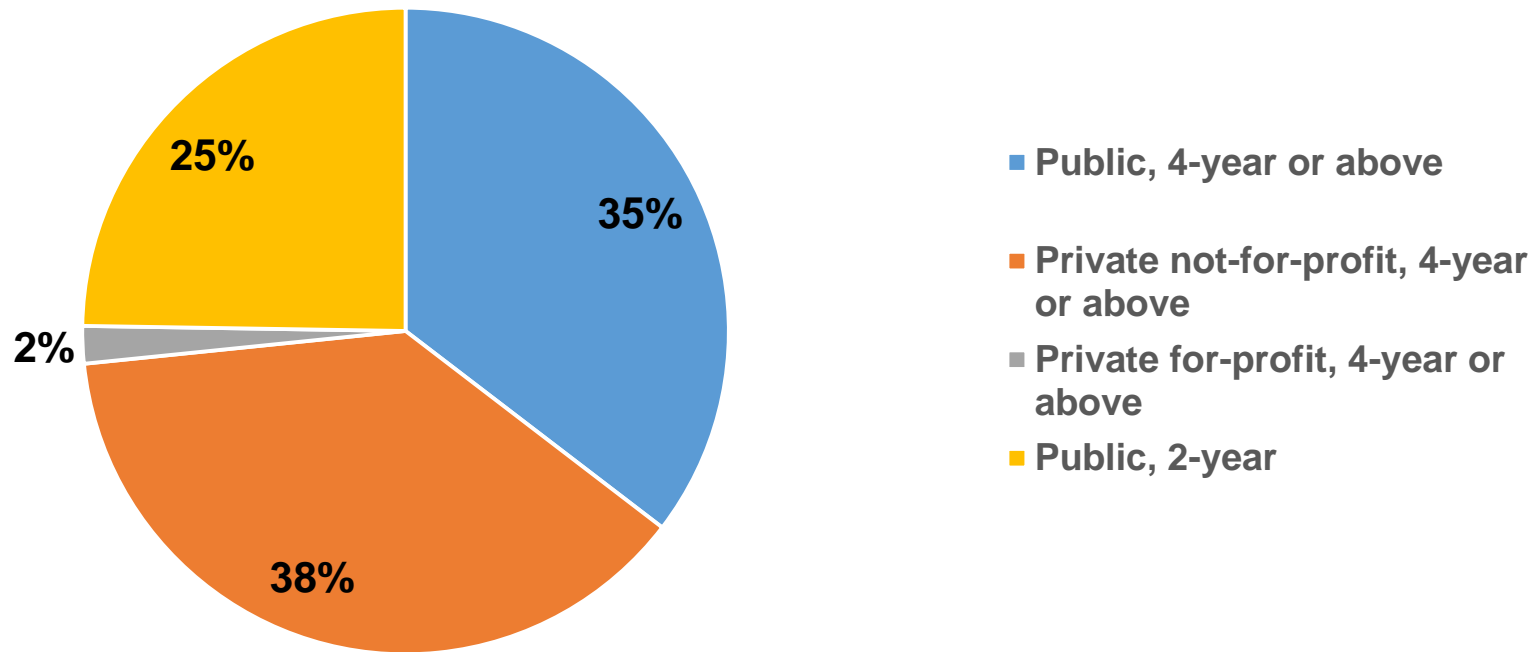- Brought **multiple perspectives** from financial aid, student affairs, development

National Survey

January – March 2016

- **695** institutions responded

- **523** have an existing emergency aid program

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NASPA'S survey received responses from institutions that varied in type…

SECTOR OF RESPONDING INSTITUTIONS

- ■ Public, 4-year or above
- ■ Private not-for-profit, 4-year or above
- ■ Private for-profit, 4-year or above
- ■ Public, 2-year

35%
38%
25%
2%

…and by size

SIZE OF RESPONDING INSTITUTIONS

Legend:
- Under 1,000 — 11%
- 1,000 - 4,999 — 40%
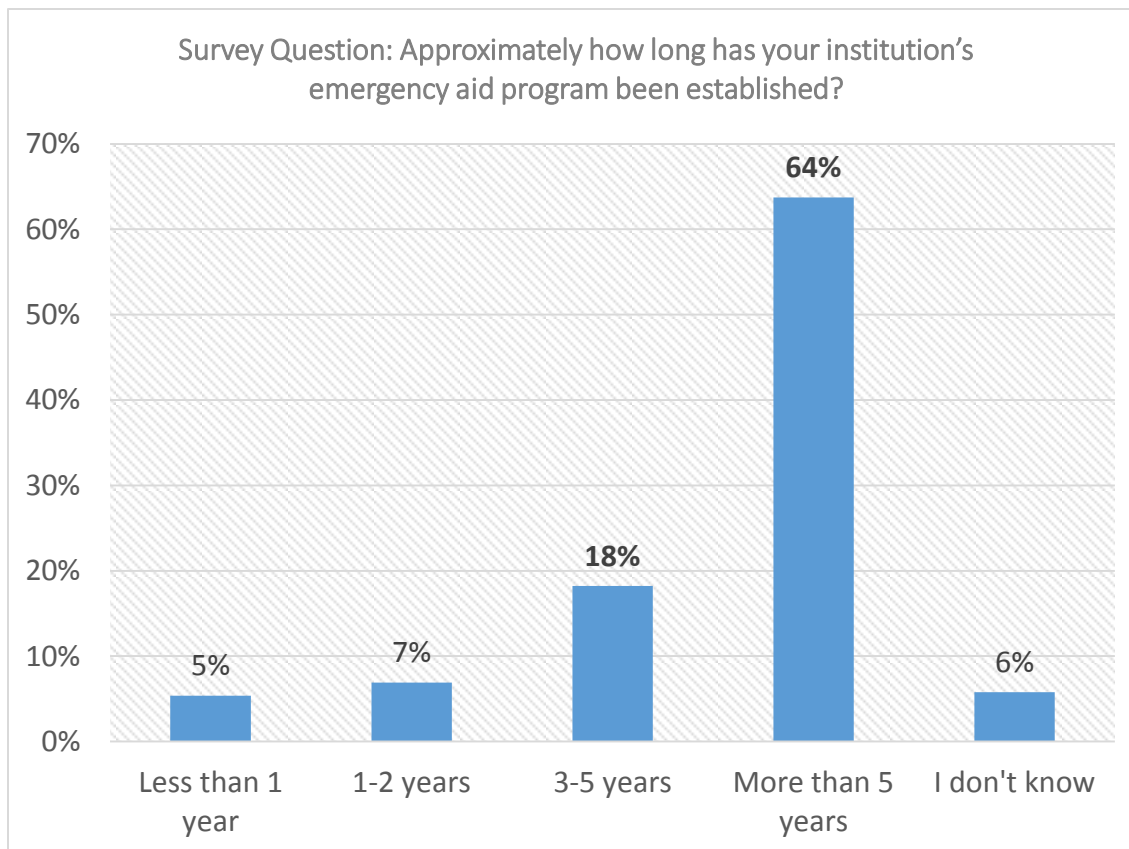- 5,000 - 9,999 — 18%
- 10,000 - 19,999 — 19%
- 20,000 and above — 13%
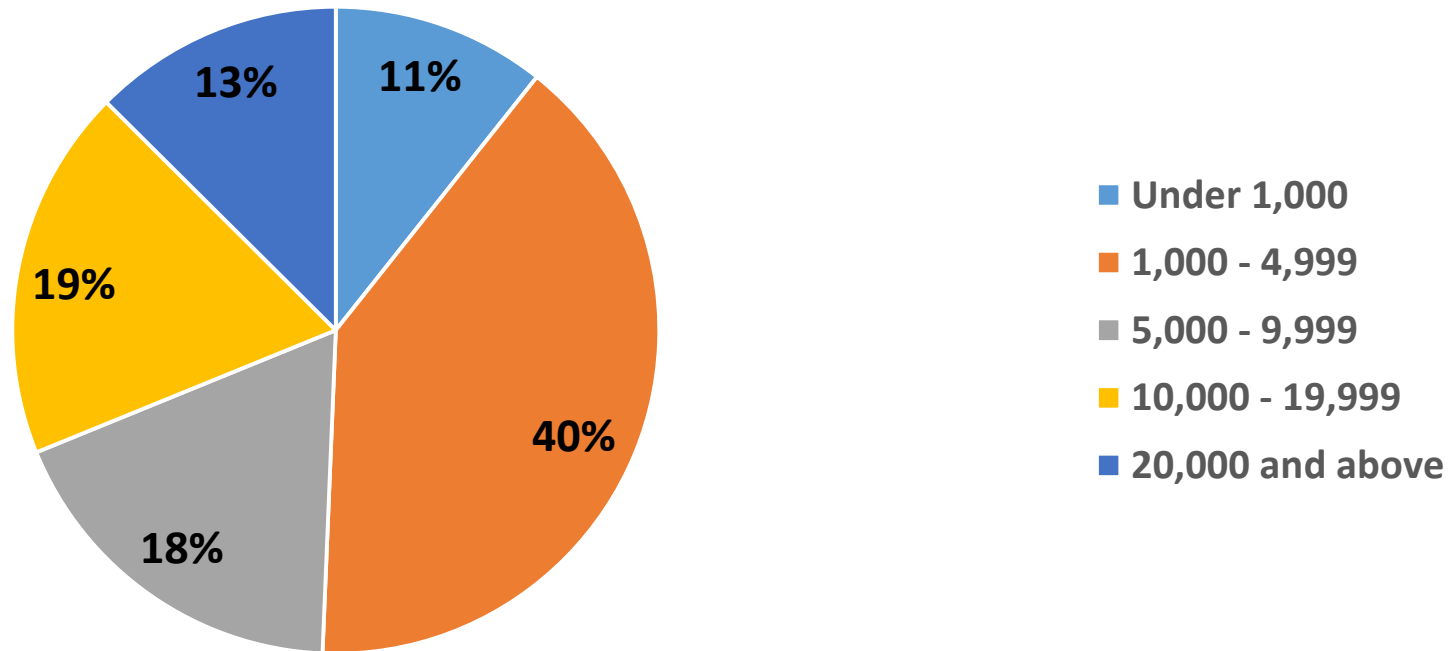
So What?

Key Learnings From the National Study

Learning #1: Emergency aid is not a new student success strategy

Survey Question: Approximately how long has your institution's emergency aid program been established?
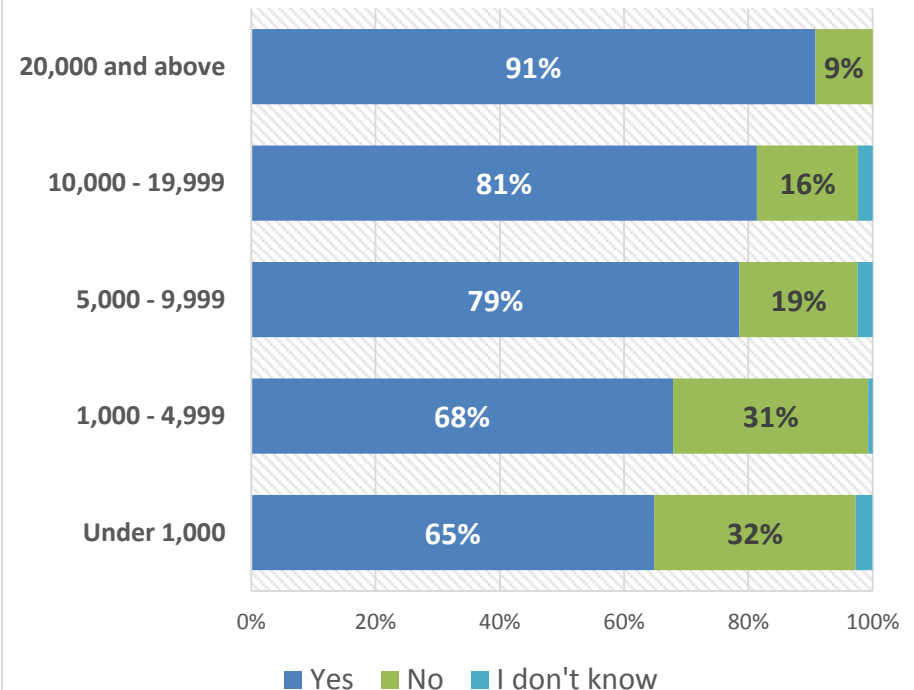

Over **80% of colleges** that have an emergency aid program have had it for **3 or more years**.

Learning #2: Emergency aid is at all types of institutions

Survey Question: Does your institution have an emergency aid program?
(SECTOR BREAKDOWN)

Sector	Yes	No	I don't know
Public, 2-year	70%	27%	
Private for-profit, 4-year or above	38%	54%	
Private not-for-profit, 4-year or above	73%	27%	
Public, 4-year or above	82%	17%	
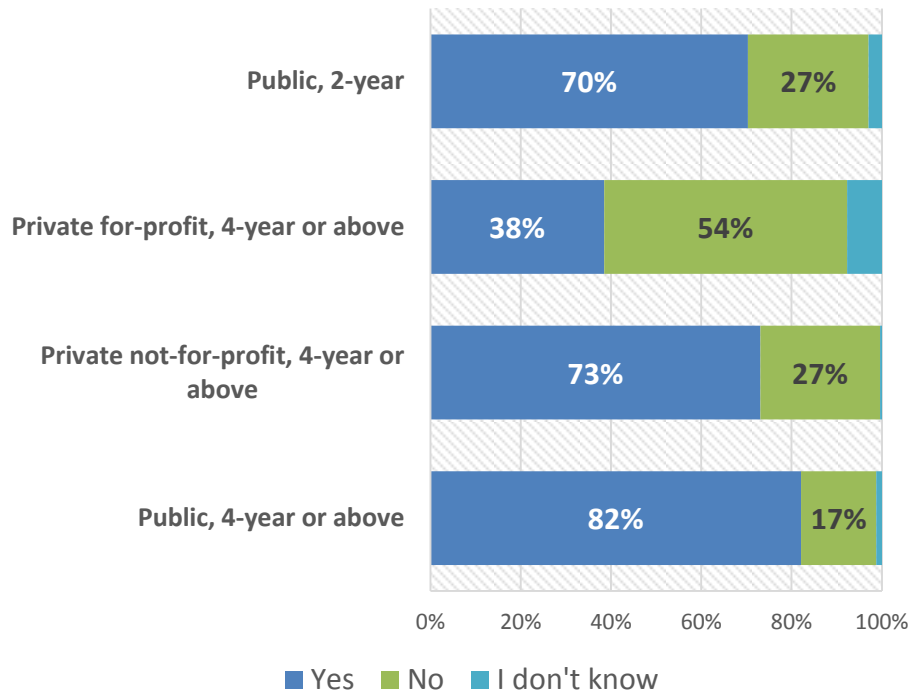
Survey Question: Does your institution have an emergency aid program?
(SIZE BREAKDOWN)

Size	Yes	No	I don't know
20,000 and above	91%	9%	
10,000 - 19,999	81%	16%	
5,000 - 9,999	79%	19%	
1,000 - 4,999	68%	31%	
Under 1,000	65%	32%	

Yes ■ No ■ I don't know

Learning #3: Emergency loans are offered most by campuses

Survey Question: Which types of aid are offered at your institution?

- Completion Scholarships: 33%
- Emergency Loans: 67%
- Restricted Small Grants: 47%
- Unrestricted Small Grants: 54%
- Vouchers: 47%
- Food Pantry: 45%
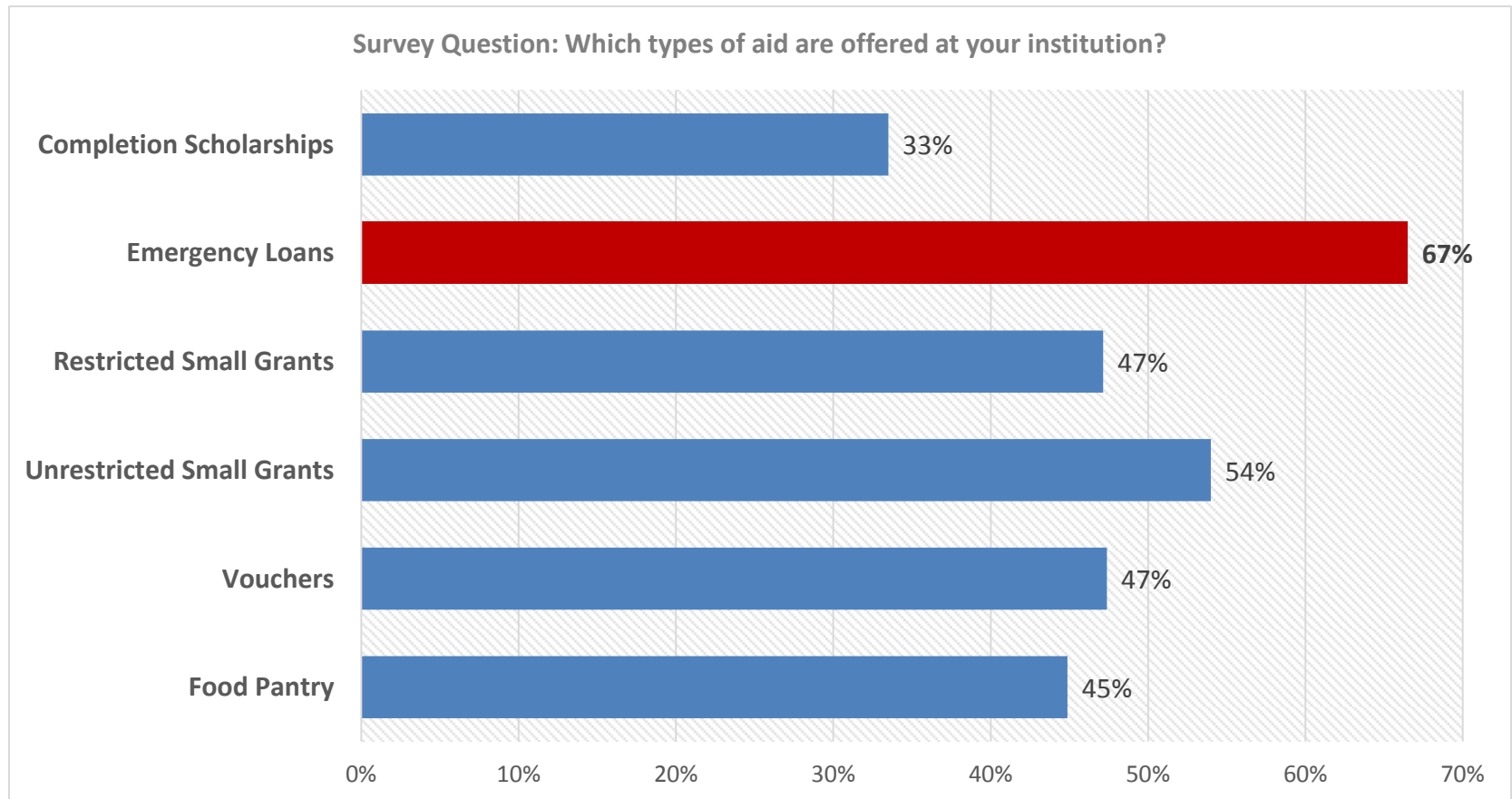
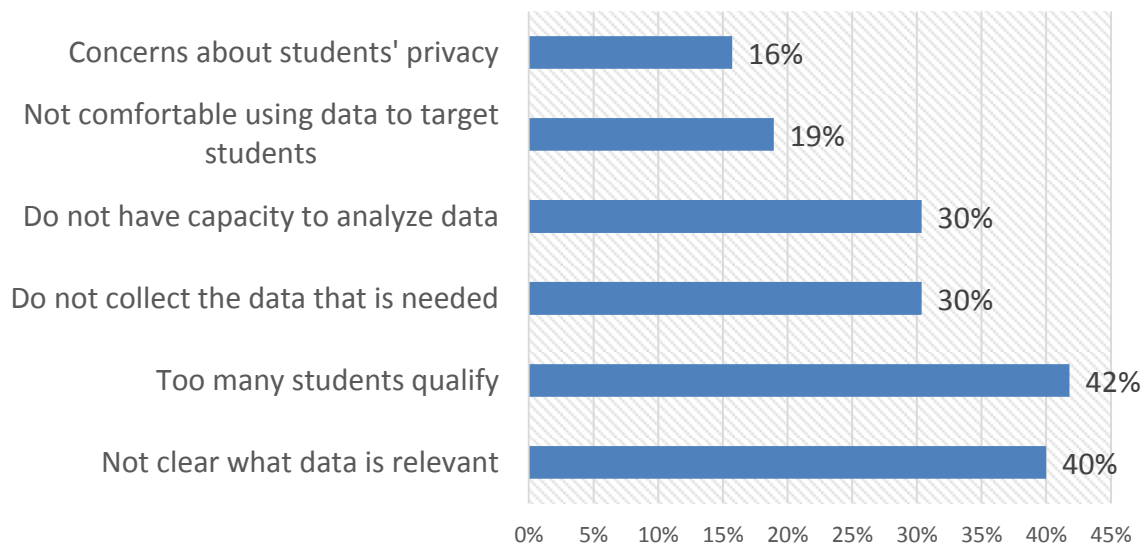# Learning #4: Word of mouth is the primary method for disseminating info for all types of emergency aid

Survey Question: For each type of emergency aid at your institution, which communication channel is the *primary* means of informing students about emergency aid opportunities?

	Institution website	Email or mass communication	Direct, targeted communication	Word of mouth
Food Pantry	16%	21%	11%	34%
Vouchers	12%	11%	16%	38%
Unrestricted Small Grants	12%	4%	17%	44%
Restricted Small Grants	17%	5%	21%	28%
Emergency Loans	27%	7%	10%	39%
Completion Scholarships	9%	6%	24%	25%
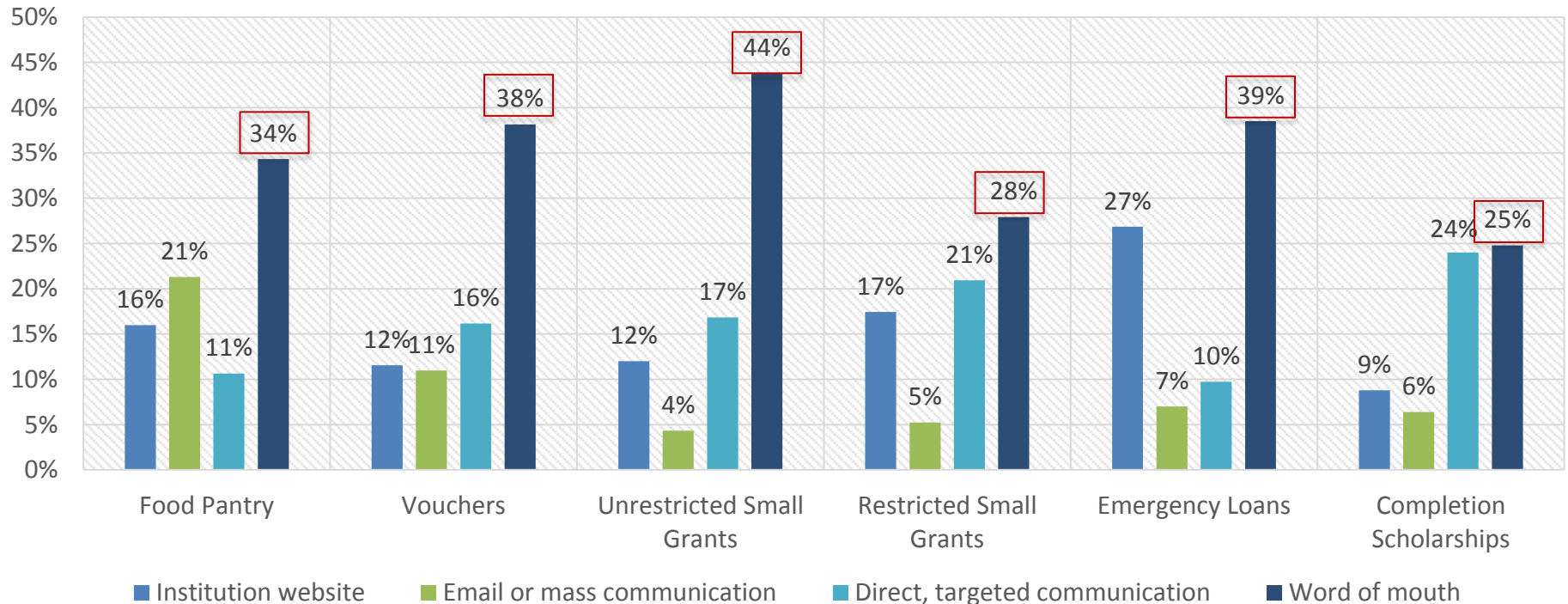
Learning #5: Majority of colleges do **not** use data to proactively identify students who would benefit from emergency aid
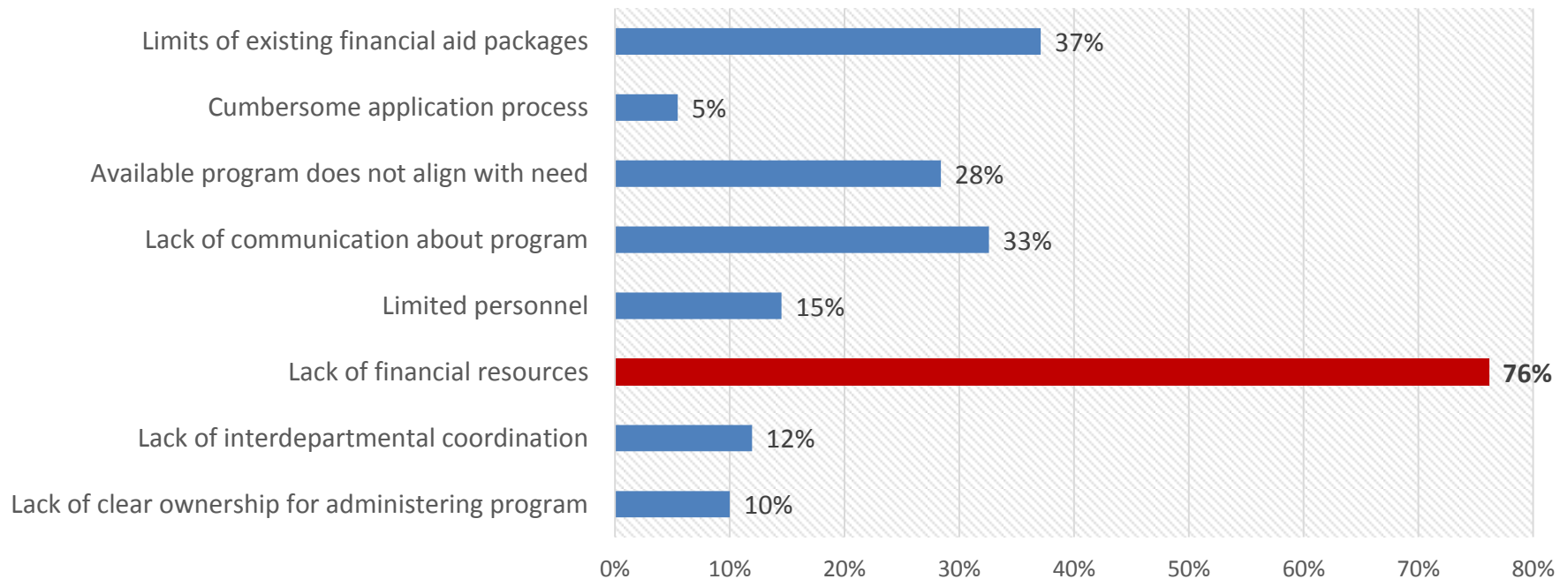
Only 23% of institutions use data to proactively identify students

Survey Question: What prevents your institution from using data to proactively identify students who may benefit from emergency aid.

Category	Percentage
Concerns about students' privacy	16%
Not comfortable using data to target students	19%
Do not have capacity to analyze data	30%
Do not collect the data that is needed	30%
Too many students qualify	42%
Not clear what data is relevant	40%

Learning #6: Financial resources is the leading barrier to serving more students with emergency aid

Survey Question: Which of the following are barriers to serving a greater number of students with emergency aid?

Barrier	Percentage
Limits of existing financial aid packages	37%
Cumbersome application process	5%
Available program does not align with need	28%
Lack of communication about program	33%
Limited personnel	15%
Lack of financial resources	76%
Lack of interdepartmental coordination	12%
Lack of clear ownership for administering program	10%

Learning #7: University foundations and individual donors are the leading sources of emergency aid funds

Over **50%** reported foundations and donors as the source for **grants**; **44% for completion scholarships**; **41% for loans**

The next leading source was the **operating budget**.

No more than **2% of institutions** reported **alumni giving** as the source for any type of emergency aid.

Summary of Key Learnings

1. Emergency aid is not a new student success strategy

2. Emergency aid is at all types of institutions

3. Emergency loans are offered the most by campuses

4. Word of mouth is the primary method for disseminating info for all types of emergency aid

5. Majority of colleges do not use data to proactively identify students who would benefit from emergency aid

6. Financial resources is the leading barrier to serving more students with emergency aid

7. University foundations and individual donors are the leading sources of emergency aid funds

Now What?

Building and Strengthening Your Emergency Aid Program

"A goal without a plan is just a wish."

-Anonymous

Our post-analysis of the survey revealed that there are 5 critical needs

- A **common language** to describe and discuss emergency aid

- More **compliance guidance** for administering emergency grants and loans

- Set of **procedures** to guide the development of new and existing programs

- Better **use of data** to identify students who need aid and assess effect of programs on student success

- More **automated processing**

This means that campuses must build their capacity in several key areas

Capacity	Potential Questions
Leadership	Is there a clear office/ department/ individual responsible for the emergency aid program's implementation and success?
Policy	Does the campus adhere to relevant state and federal guidelines for distributing financial aid?
Institutional Research	To what extent does the campus use data to identify the students who could benefit from the program the most?
Technology	To what extent does the campus leverage technology to receive and process requests in a timely manner?
Sustainability	To what extent does the campus allocate and leverage multiple sources to secure enough funding for the emergency aid program?
Communication	Are various mechanisms used to inform students about emergency aid availability?

When building an emergency aid program you may come across some questions and critiques

1. **Is the delivery of emergency aid outside of the mission of higher education?**

   "Institutions are not social service agencies."

2. **What if students "game the system?"**

   "If a student needs emergency aid, perhaps that means he or she cannot afford to go to college."

3. **Should emergency aid be considered a one-time resource for students?**

   "We should not expect students to build emergency aid into their yearly budget."

Your office can play multiple roles in helping campuses build up their programs

- Leverage your power to **convene**

- Serve as a **policy** advisor

- Provide **tools and resources** to streamline the process and to create continuity among campuses

- Review current **state aid programs** and see which can be used and/or repurposed for emergency aid

- Be a **data** steward!

- Be their **advocate**

Closing Thoughts…

- Emergency aid has the potential to be an **impactful tool** to support retention, persistence, and completion

- A strong emergency aid program requires a campus to effectively **collaborate** between multiple departments/offices

- Use **data** to tell your story, highlight the moral imperative, and to show impact

- Having an emergency aid program is more than just administering funds and resources to students. We must work with students to understand their **unique story** to provide them with the best support possible.

Questions?

Thank You!

Omari Burnside

Director of Strategic Initiatives

NASPA

oburnside@naspa.org

202-719-1197