Non-Degree Credentials: Defining and Assessing Quality

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Agenda

- Definitions of *microcredentials*

- Discussion of how best to assess quality

- Results from *CGS Graduate Certificate Survey*

- Contextualizing the results with participant activity

Microcredentials: Definition(s) and Use(s)

- For our practical purposes here, we will use the simple definition of *microcredentials as educational credentials (both non-credit and for-credit) that are shorter than a degree*. (Northeastern University Report: *Getting Started with Microcredentials: A Primer for Higher Education Leaders*)

- Our talk today will also focus primarily on microcredentials as standalone offerings for/to new students
  - Should still be designed to enable later stacking or conversion into credit toward a degree

This area is new and rapidly changing

Certificate program enrollment, Spring 2023
N=196
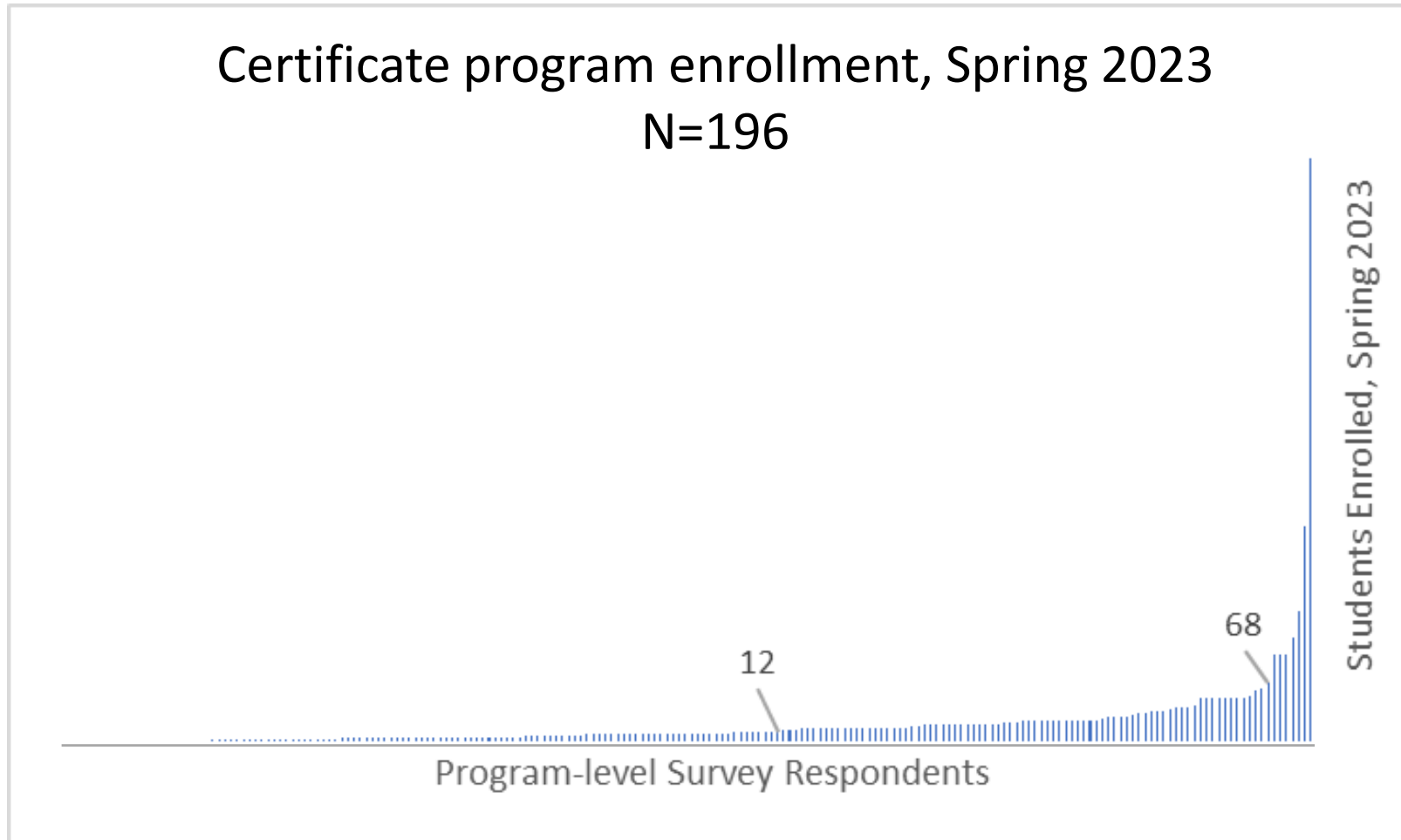
Program Review and Quality Assurance

How often does institution review the quality and content of graduate certificate offerings?
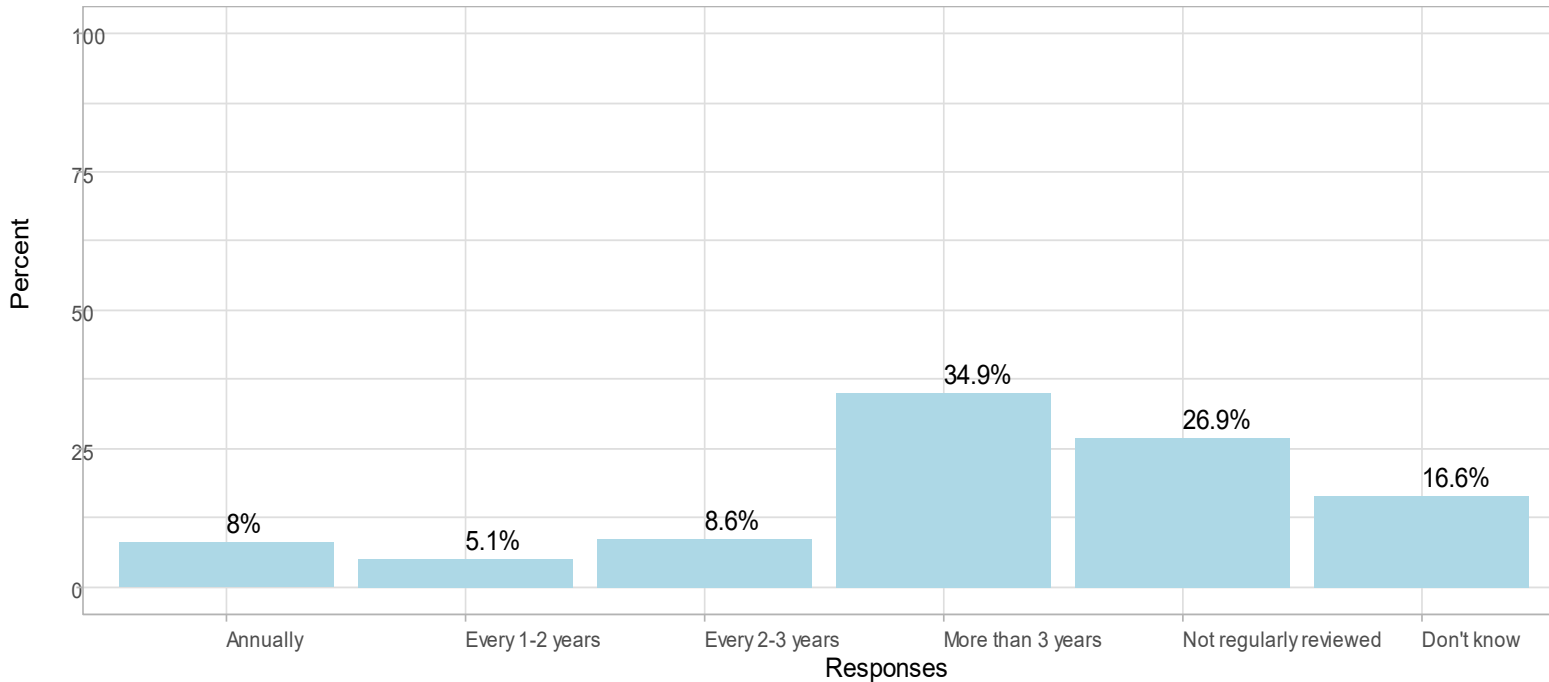
Data points that are used to evaluate the curriculum and the quality of certificates:

- Student learning outcomes assessment (16.7%)
- Size of enrollment (15.9%)
- Faculty qualifications (13.7%)
- Completion rates (11.9%)
- Career outcomes (6.5%)
- Employer satisfaction (2.3%)

Source: 2023 CGS Graduate Certificate Survey – Dean Survey, Items 20 and 22.

Quality in context: local and regional career and employment factors in designing successful microcredentials

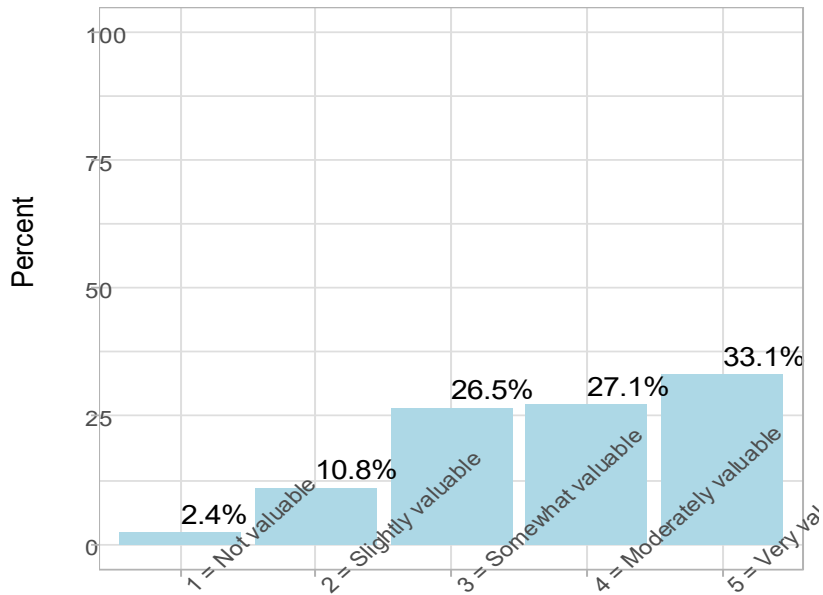# Re-Orienting Data Used to Design and Evaluate Microcredentials

- Consider re-prioritizing the data points used to evaluate microcredentials: shift from more university/faculty centered evaluation to student employment outcome/employer centered evaluation

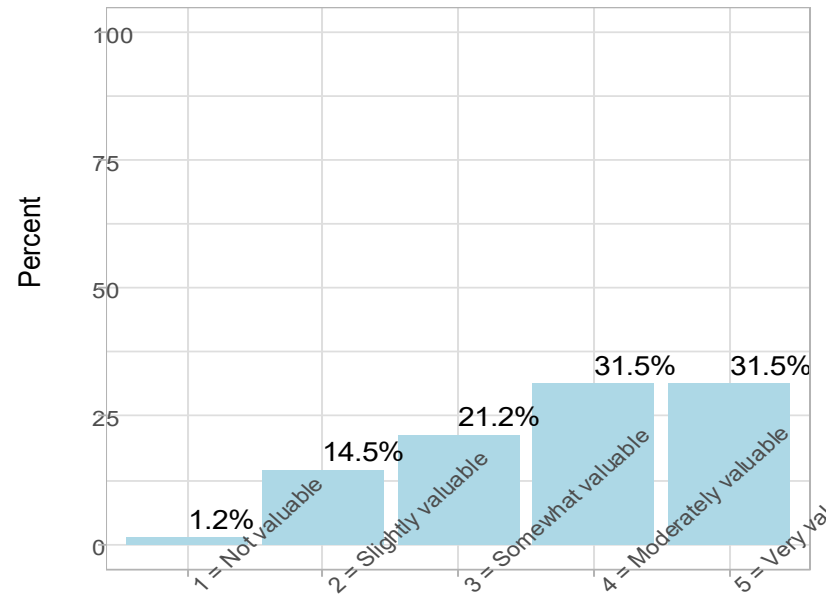**Data points that are used to evaluate the curriculum and the quality of certificates:**

- Career outcomes (6.5%)
- Employer satisfaction (2.3%)
- Student learning outcomes assessment (16.7%)
- Size of enrollment (15.9%)
- Faculty qualifications (13.7%)
- Completion rates (11.9%)

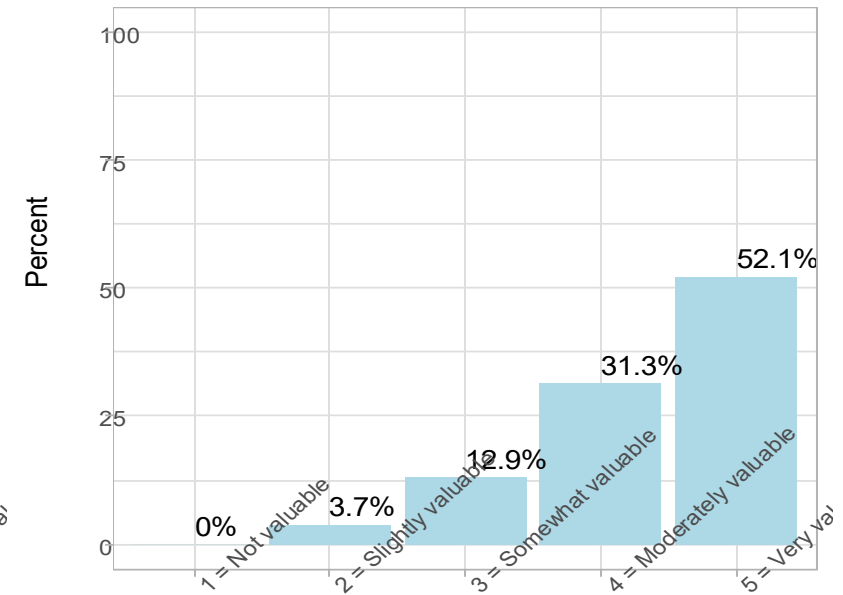# Graduate Certificate is Seen as Valuable for Job Retaining and Reskilling

How valuable do you believe graduate certificates will be over the next decade in…?

Providing pathway into grad...

Response	Percent
1 = Not valuable	2.4%
2 = Slightly valuable	10.8%
3 = Somewhat valuable	26.5%
4 = Moderately valuable	27.1%
5 = Very valuable	33.1%

Just in time training for entry

Response	Percent
1 = Not valuable	1.2%
2 = Slightly valuable	14.5%
3 = Somewhat valuable	21.2%
4 = Moderately valuable	31.5%
5 = Very valuable	31.5%

Job retraining and reskilling

Response	Percent
1 = Not valuable	0%
2 = Slightly valuable	3.7%
3 = Somewhat valuable	12.9%
4 = Moderately valuable	31.3%
5 = Very valuable	52.1%

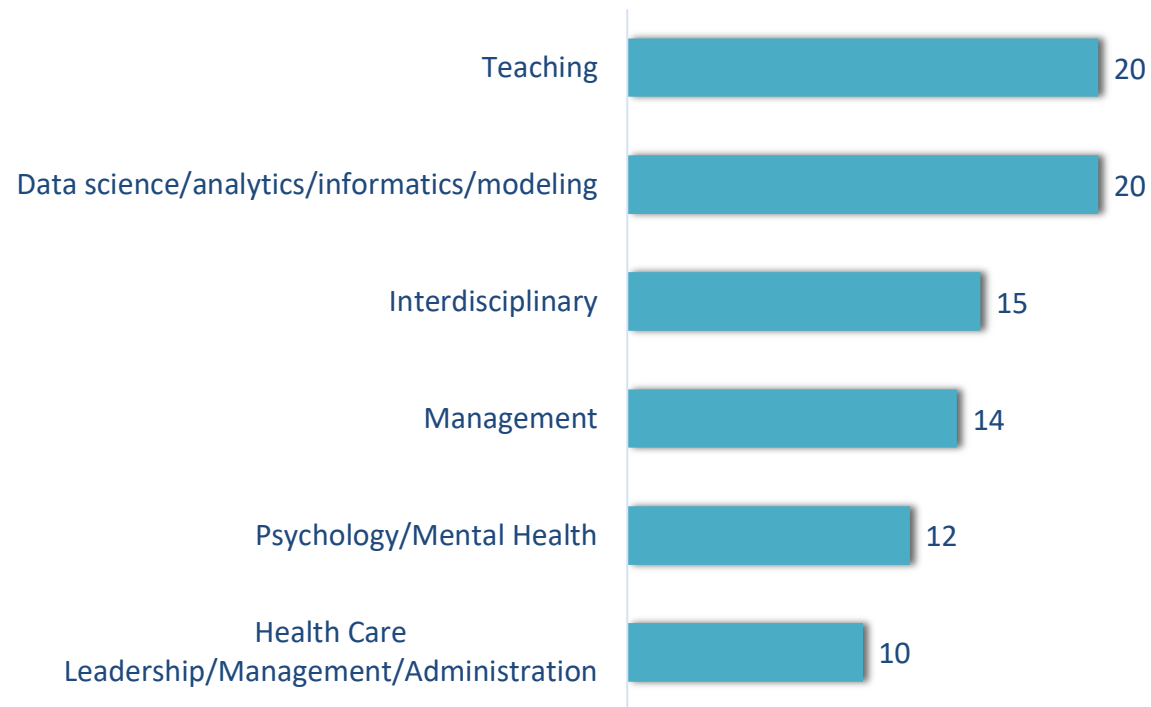CGS COUNCIL OF GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Local and Regional Design based on Demand:

Re-prioritizing how to evaluate microcredentials means designing backward to what students and employers most want and need
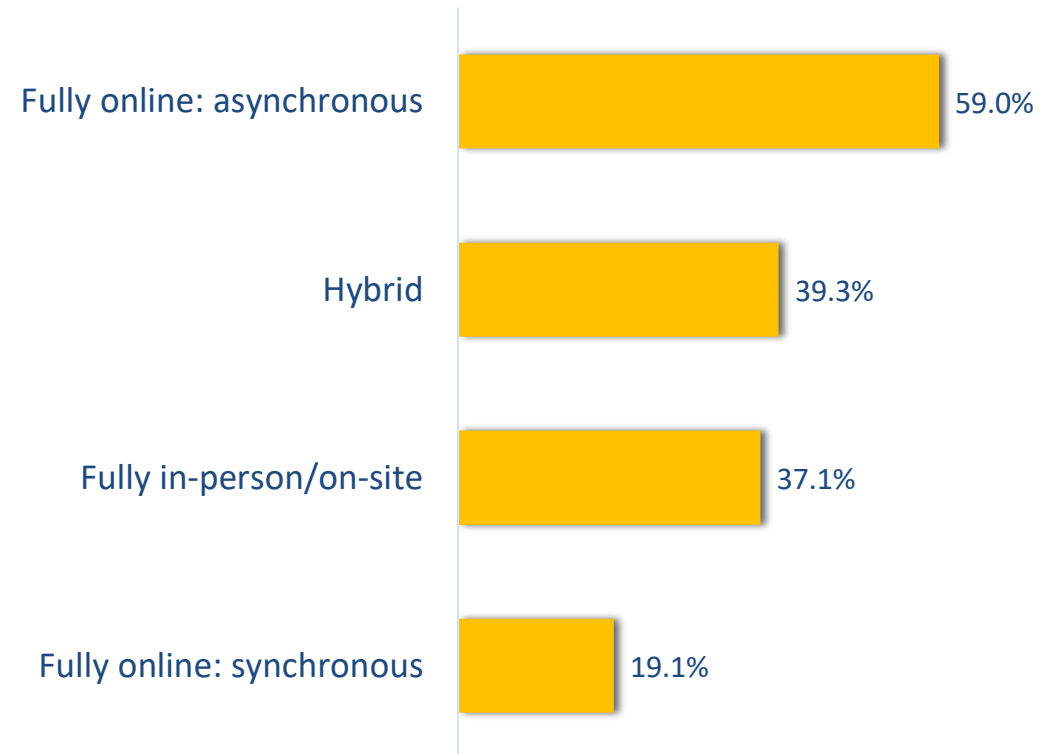
- Requires regular collaboration with employers
- Requires knowledge of local/state/regional workforce challenges/shortages
- Consider the workforce needs that can be met by your institution's strengths
- Focus on most in-demand workforce needs may provide funding streams for prospective students to enroll in and complete microcredentials
  - Employers pay
  - State/local government funds
  - Partnerships with industry for paid internships, employer-designed course projects, hiring interviews post-completion

Most common fields and delivery models of certificates

Top five certificate type categories

Category	Value
Teaching	20
Data science/analytics/informatics/modeling	20
Interdisciplinary	15
Management	14
Psychology/Mental Health	12
Health Care Leadership/Management/Administration	10

Certificate Program Delivery Models

Model	Percent
Fully online: asynchronous	59.0%
Hybrid	39.3%
Fully in-person/on-site	37.1%
Fully online: synchronous	19.1%

Source: 2023 CGS Graduate Certificate Survey – Program Survey, Items 3.

What do employers think about certificates?
A sneak peek at the 2023 NACE *Recruiting Benchmarks Survey*

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)
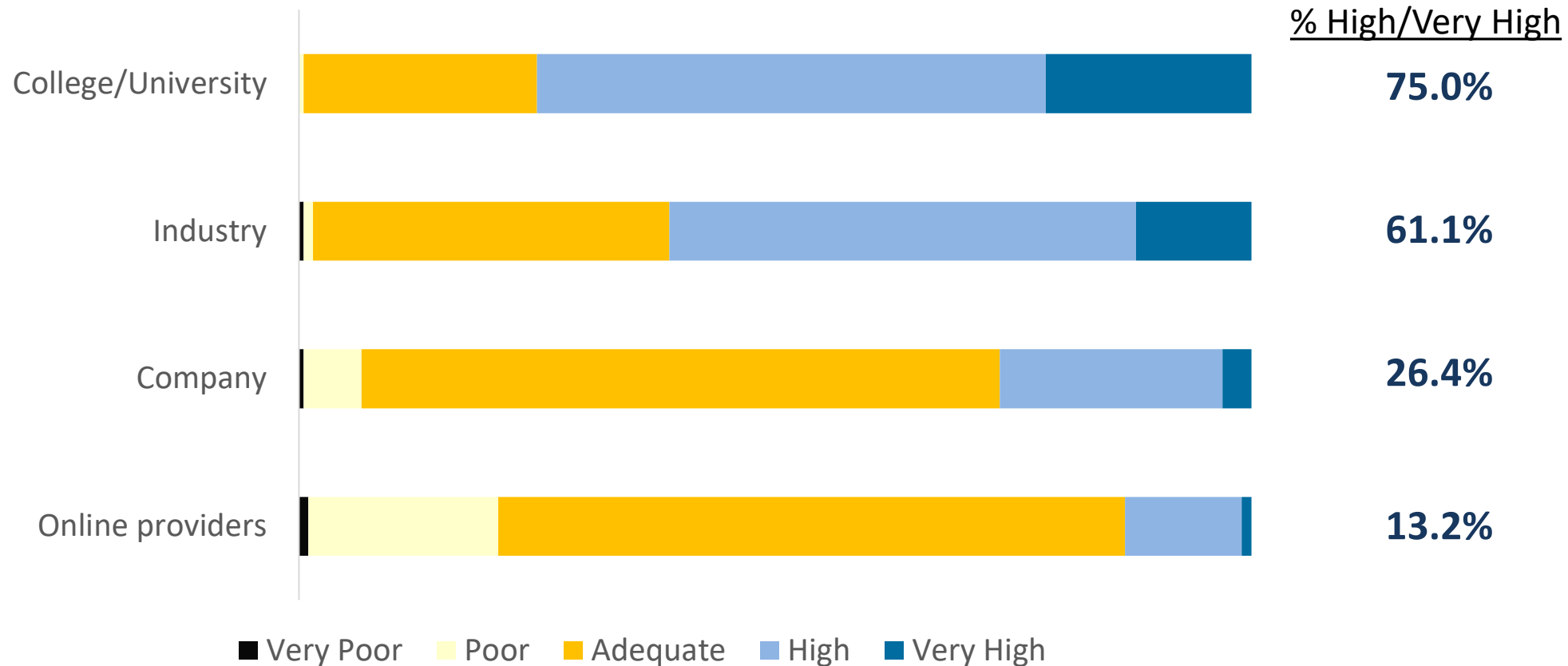*2023 Recruiting Benchmarks Survey*

Fielded in the Spring of 2023

Employer responses = 339

Survey invitees tend to skew to larger companies

Source: (NACE, 2023, Recruiting Benchmarks)

Higher education & industry/associations are seen as being of higher quality than others.
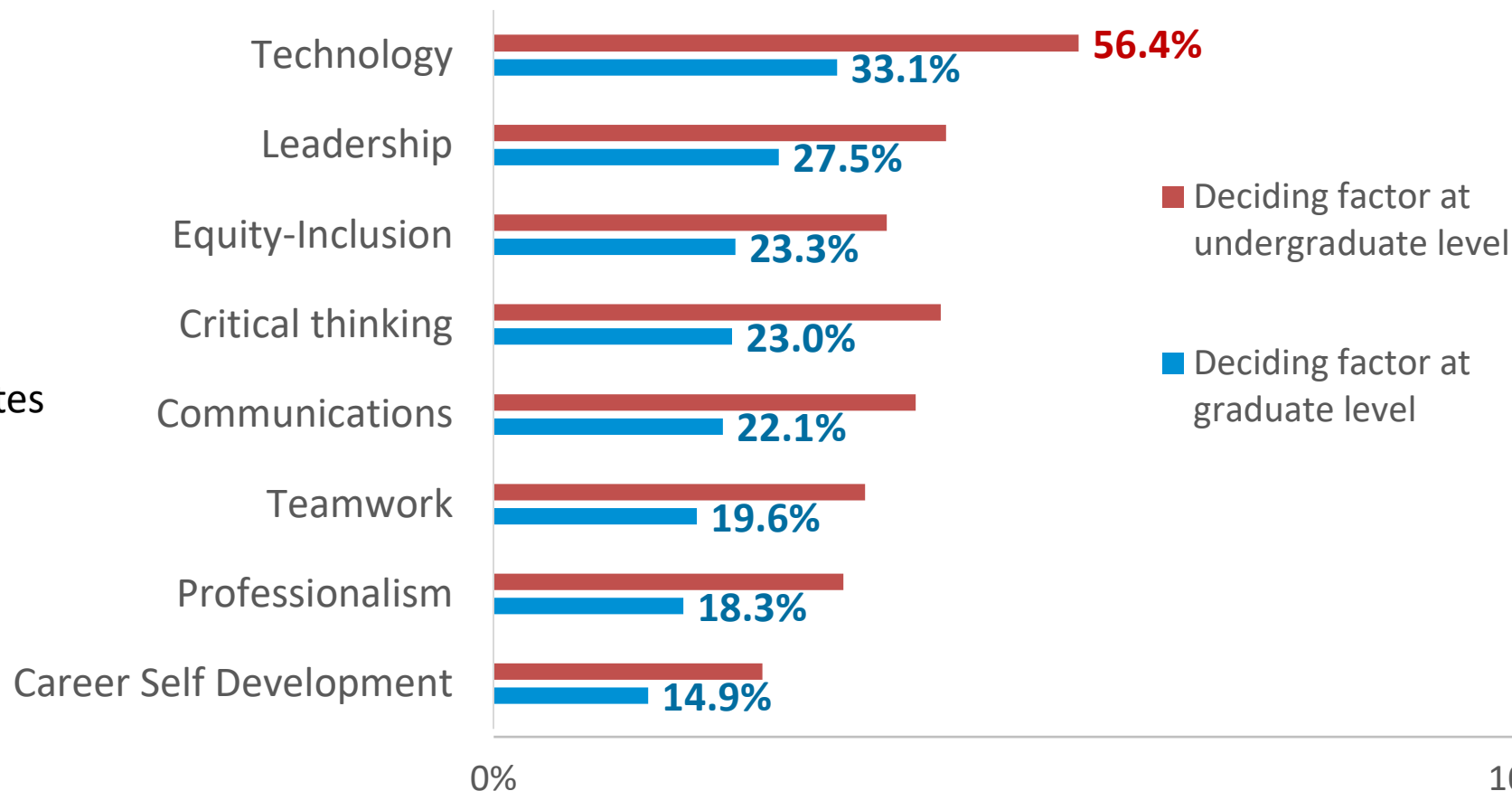

% High/Very High

Category	% High/Very High
College/University	75.0%
Industry	61.1%
Company	26.4%
Online providers	13.2%

Legend: Very Poor, Poor, Adequate, High, Very High

Source: (NACE, 2023, Recruiting Benchmarks)

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Re-Emphasizing Local/State/Regional Context(s)

- National survey data from NACE and others, as noted, skews toward larger employers, many of which may not have a local/state/regional presence in our respective markets
  - Survey your local/state/regional employers; work with regional Economic Development Corps and Chambers of Commerce to distribute and encourage engagement with survey
  - Collaborate with EDCs and CoCs members on identifying most pressing needs
    - What content is most needed?
    - What delivery method would be most productive and beneficial, given local/state/regional context(s), including technology access?

Participant Activity

- Identify the workforce needs in your university's service region and the employers and state/local government agencies that could advise you regarding desired knowledge/skills for their current or prospective employees.
- What steps could you take to engage employers with faculty to develop microcredentials to meet those desired knowledge/skills?
- How might you work with employers to support funding for students to pursue these microcredentials?
- How will you assess the quality of these microcredentials in terms of...
    - employer satisfaction
    - student career outcomes

Report Out and Discussion

Keep the conversation going....

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