

Retention Differences by Demographics- Discovery through Non-returning Student Survey

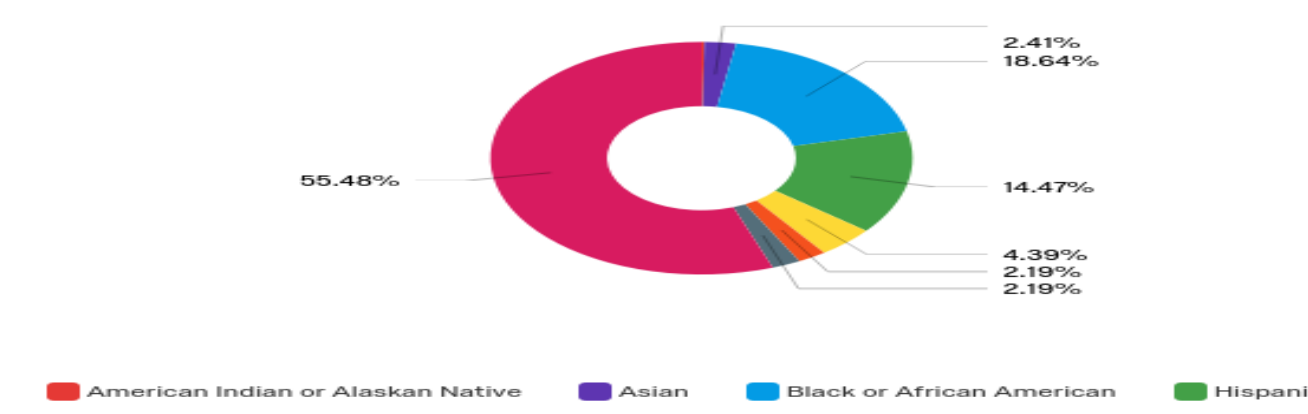
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Introduction and Background

Student retention is an important measure of student success, as it contributes to students' timely graduation. Identifying students who persist from semester to semester and understanding the reasons why they drop out, stop out, or transfer, can help institutions sharpen recruiting efforts, refine marketing methods, and identify needed improvements in student services and in teaching/ learning processes (Heverly, 1999). Non-returning students are those who leave the university before successfully completing a degree program. The purpose of this study was to examine responses of non returning students based on demographics for Spring 2017 and Fall 2017.



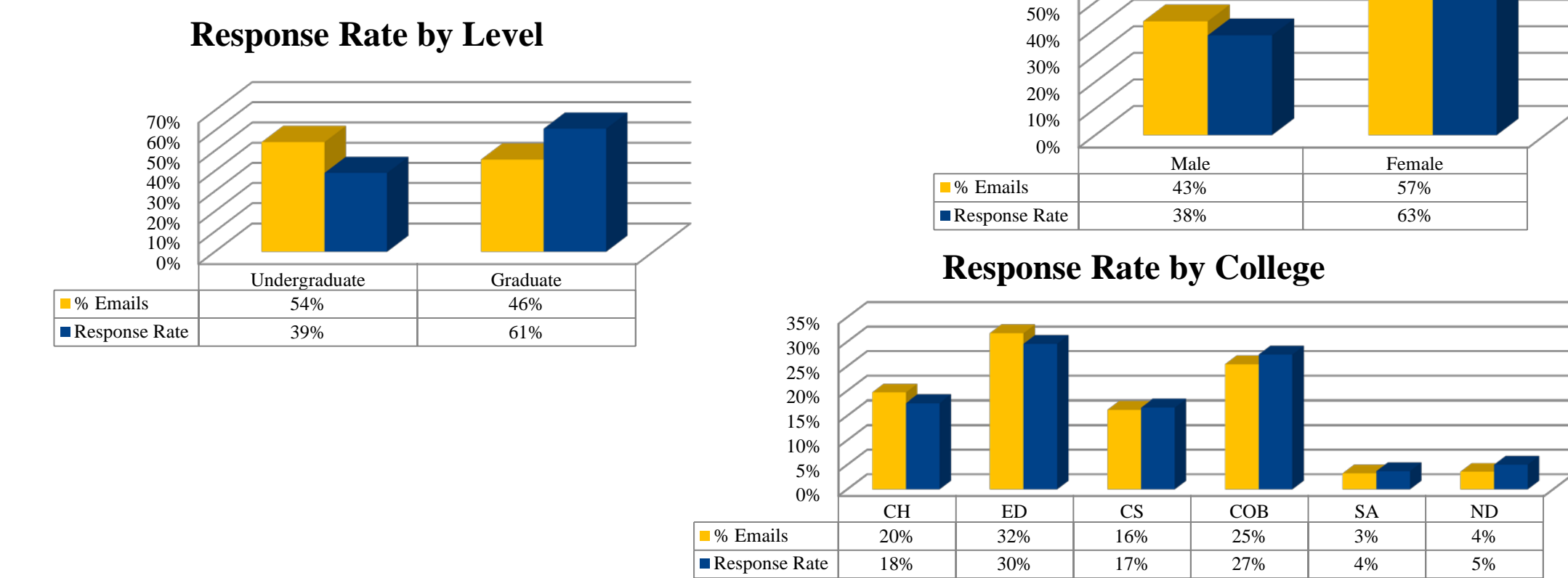
Research Questions:

- 1) What are the non-returning reasons among students by colleges and by gender?
- 2) Was there any difference of students' perception of connection with TAMUC campus by college, gender or level?
- 3) Was there any difference of students' perception of preparedness of success academically by college, gender or level?
- 4) Was there difference of students' perception of overall satisfaction with A&M-Commerce by college, gender or level?

Methodology

Students, who were enrolled in fall 2016 and spring 2017 but not in spring 2017 and fall 2017, respectively, were asked to complete a web based survey which consisted of 37 open and closed-ended questions assessing commonly cited reasons for students early departure. Out of 3536 non-returning students surveyed, 456 responded to the survey, for a response rate of 13% as of 09/28/2017. The response was recorded using Qualtrics and then utilized to make data driven decisions.

Results

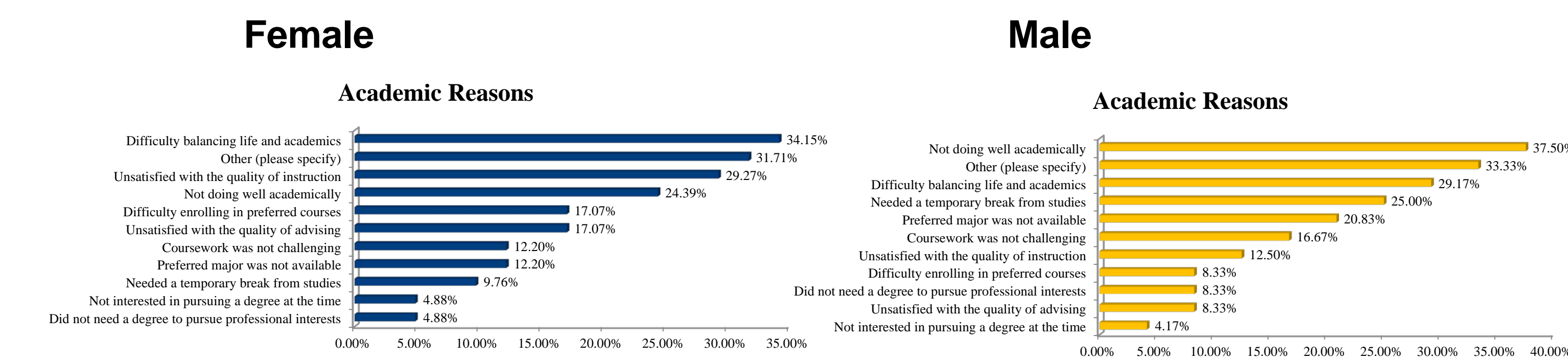


The above graphs show a comparison in response rate based on gender, level and college. The maximum response rate is recorded from Non Degree seeking students(5%). Females responded more than the males (63%). By drilling down to level, graduate students have higher response rate compared to undergraduate students (61%). The current study returned valuable information which helps to better understand whether and why non-returning students transferred to a different school. This research endeavor can assist A&M-Commerce in making evidence-based improvements in academic programs and services provided to students with the intention to improve retention rates. By looking closer at the quantitative data, it was observed that top reasons for not returning were as follows:

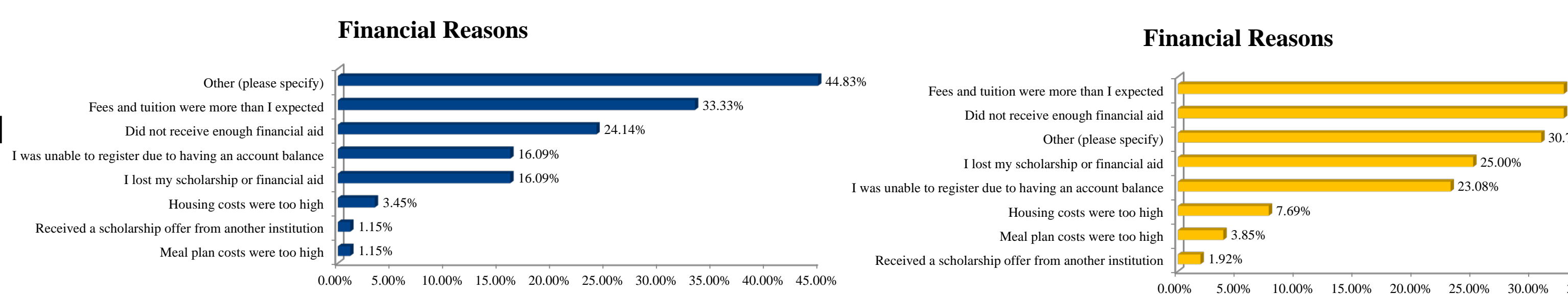
- 1) Job and Financial reasons
- 2) Personal and Family reasons
- 3) University-related reasons
- 4) Academic reasons

By Gender

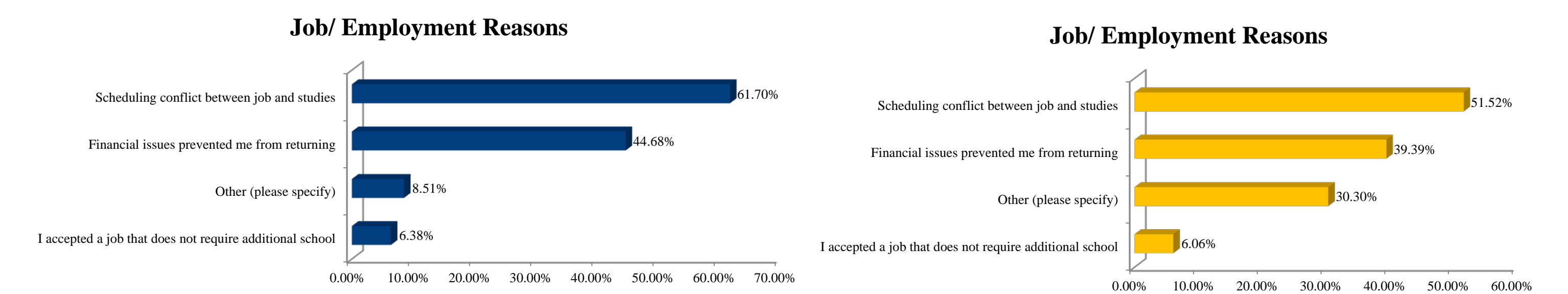
Demographic difference showed differences in student's opinion. Graphical representation below shows the comparison between male and female responses for not returning to A&M-Commerce.



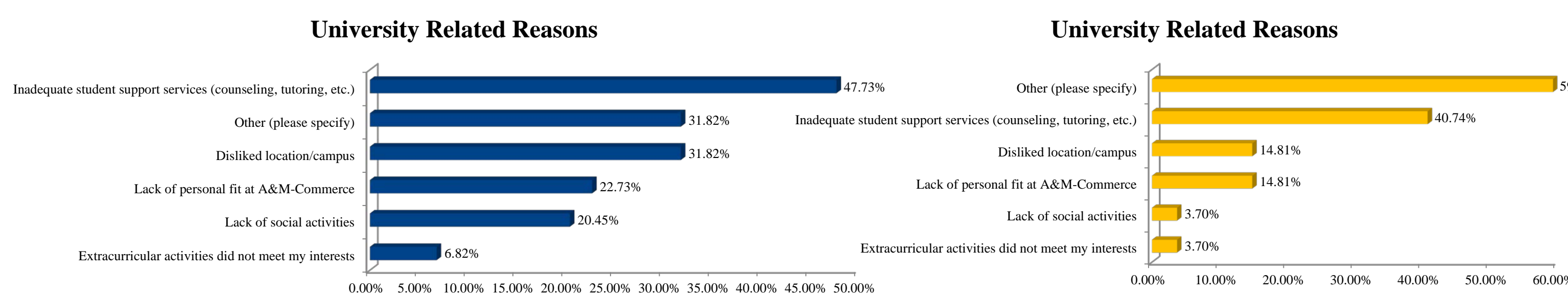
For 34% of the female population at A&M-Commerce, think difficulty in balancing life and academics and unsatisfactory quality of instruction (29%) form the top academic related reasons to not return. However, the male population think that they are not doing well on academic front (38%).



Both male and females (33%) think that the fees and tuition were more than they expected. Additionally, the male respondents (33%) said that they did not receive enough financial aid and hence did not return to A&M-Commerce.



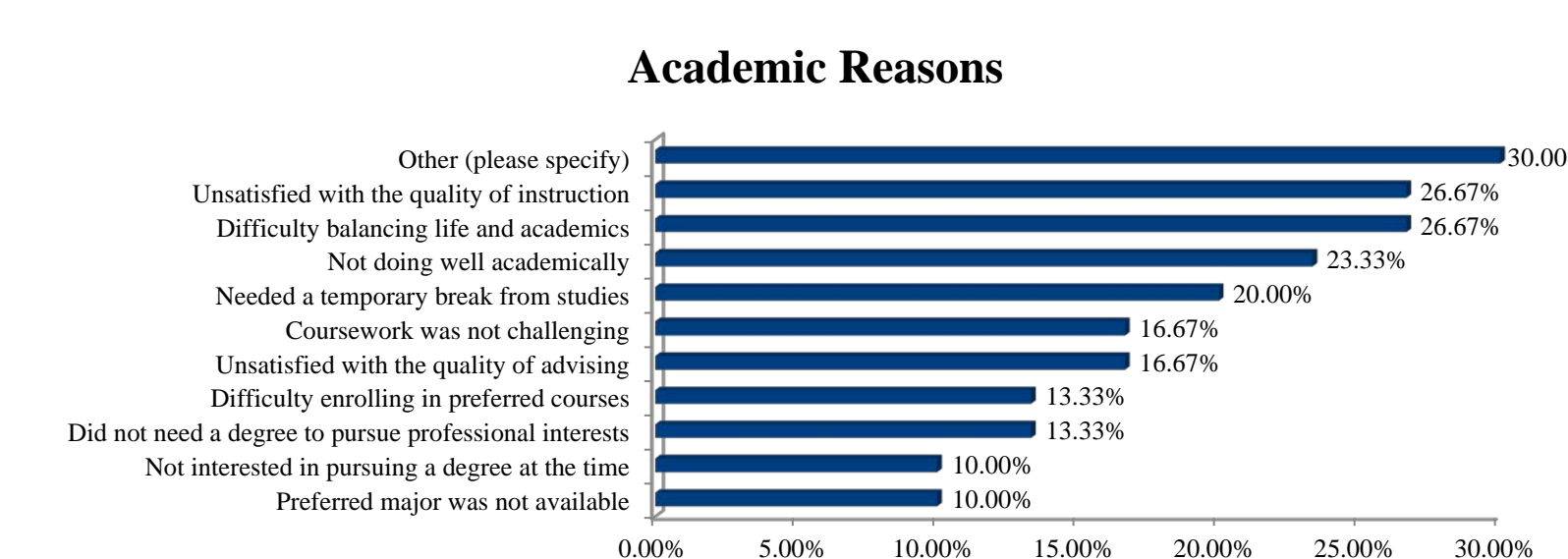
When it comes to Job/ Employment related reasons, both males and females have the same opinion. They think that scheduling conflict between job, studies and financial issues prevented them from returning to A&M-Commerce (51%)



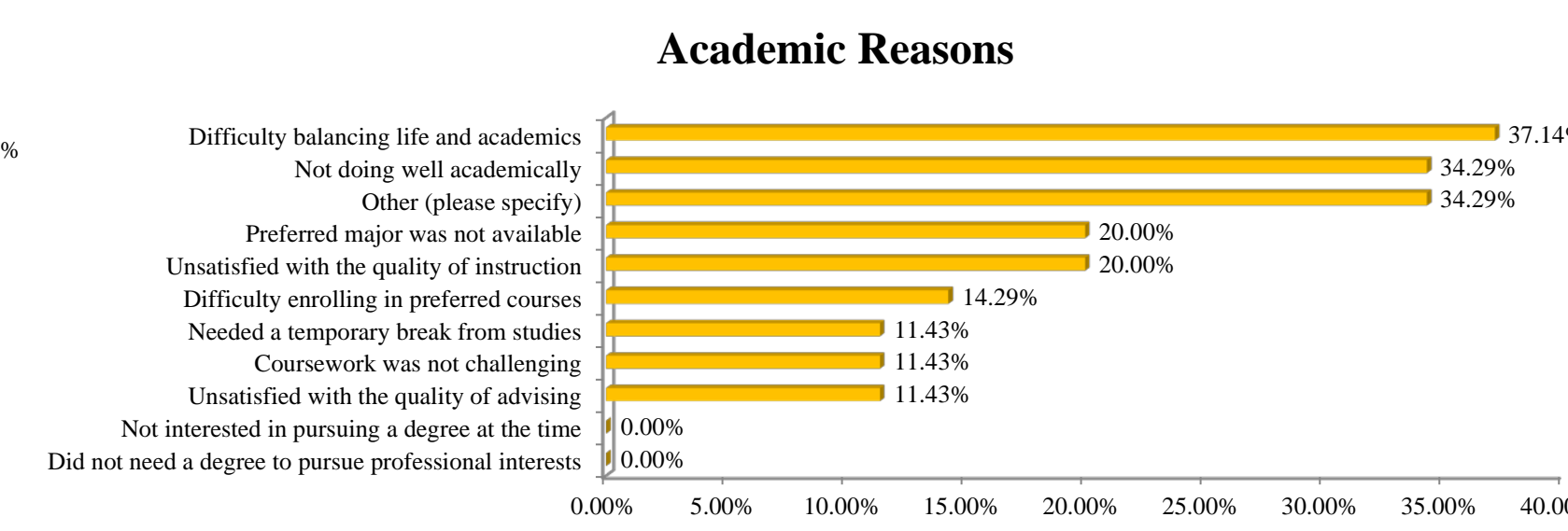
The top university related reasons for the female and male population to not return was inadequate student support services (counseling, tutoring, etc.) Moreover, 32% of the females disliked the location/campus and 15% of males think that lack of personal fit at A&M-Commerce is the reason not returning.

By College

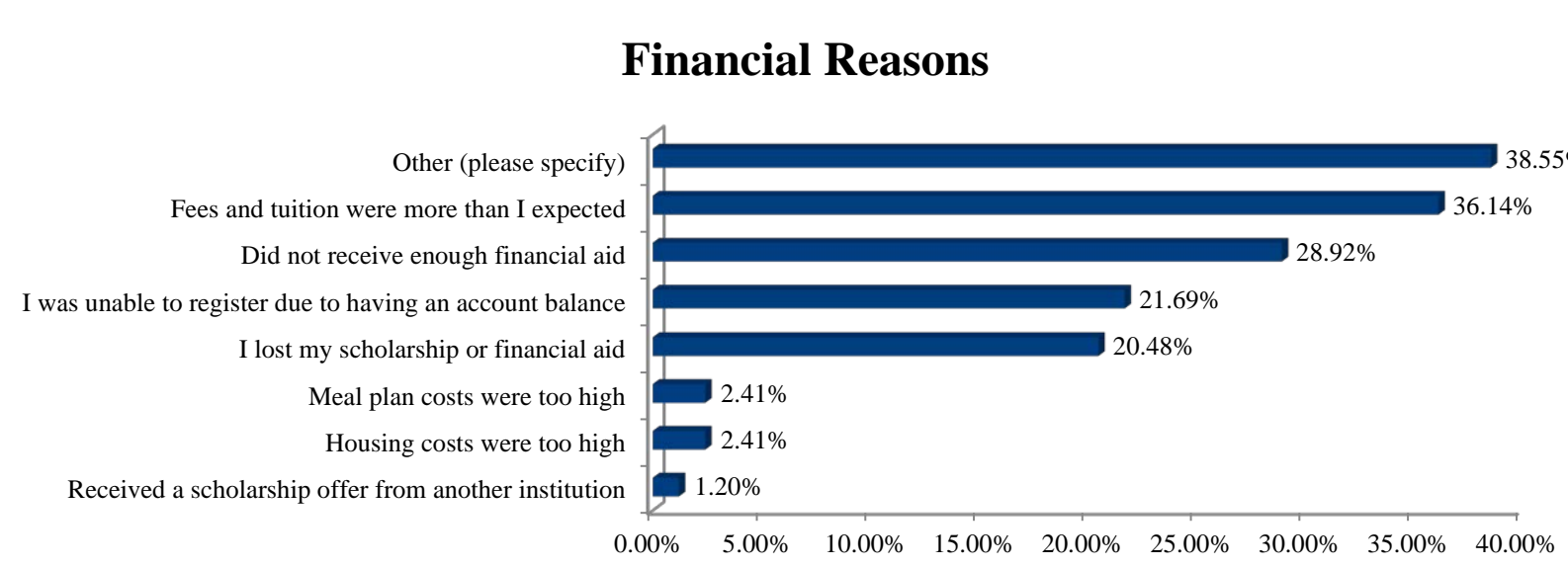
CS, COB, SA, ND



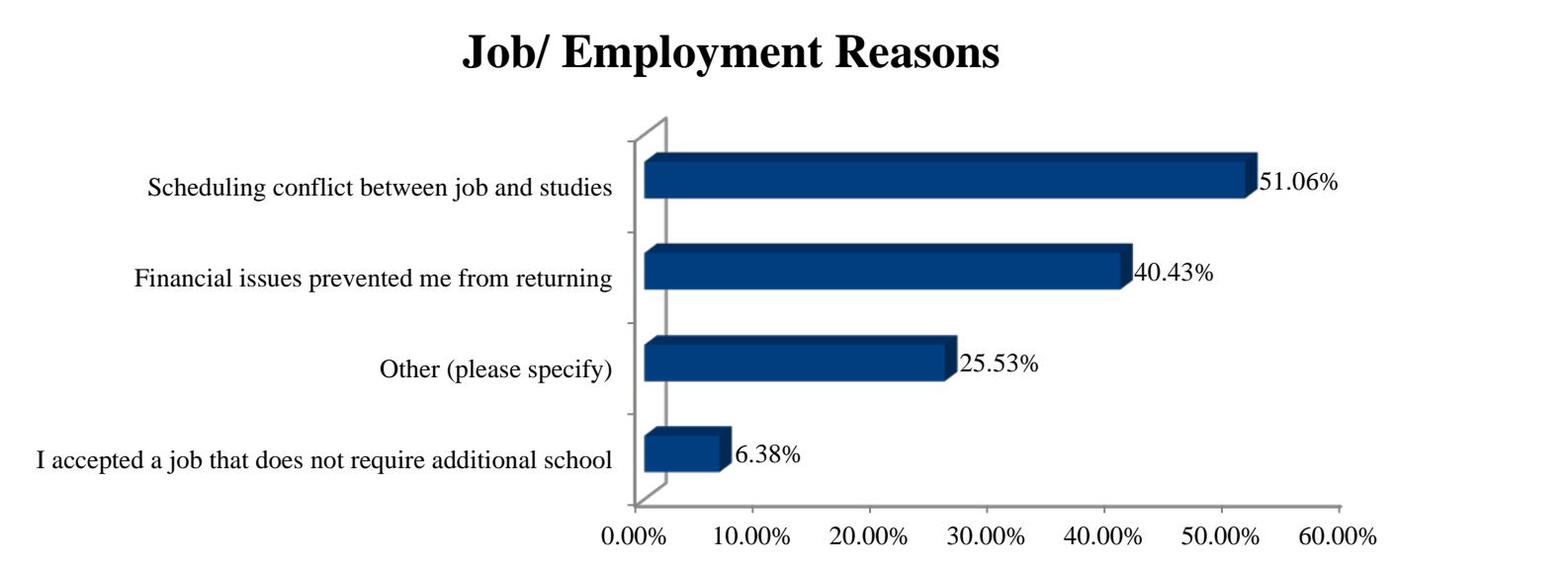
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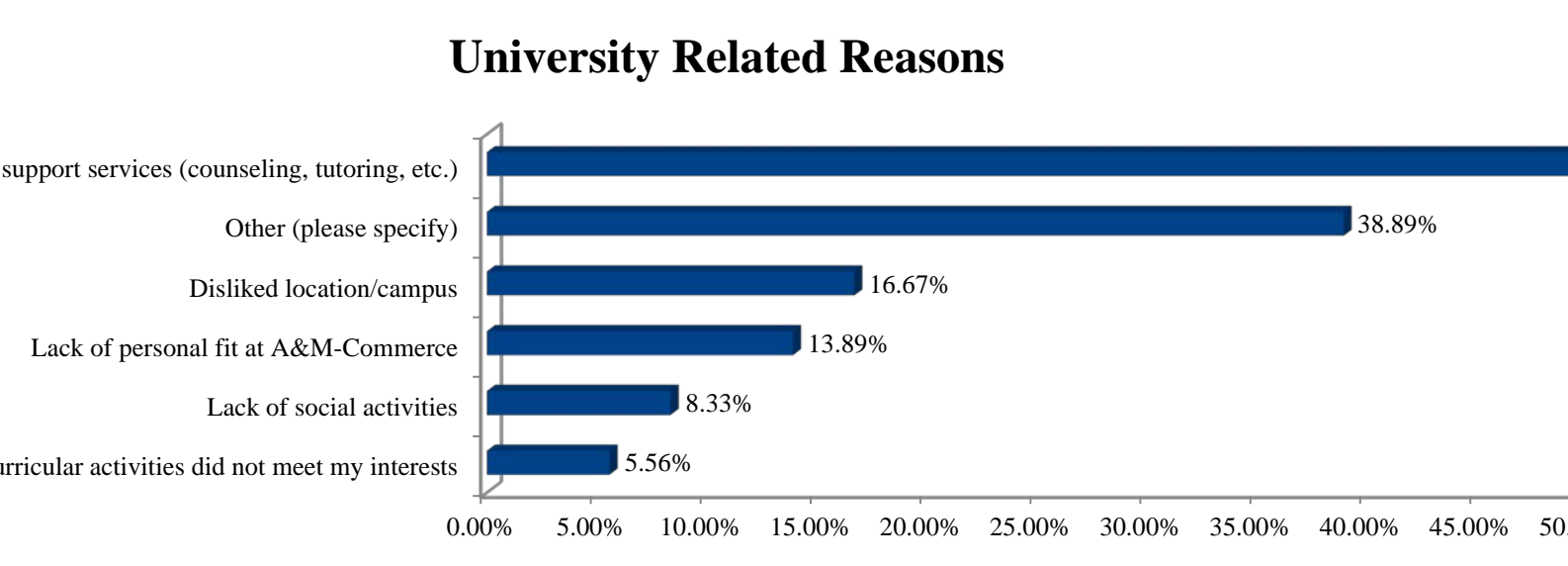
Colleges with low response rate stated that difficulty in balancing life and academics was the most important reason to not return to A&M-Commerce (37%). However, students from colleges with high response rate agreed that they were unsatisfied with the quality of instruction at A&M-Commerce (27%) along with some other reasons for not returning.



Both groups recorded reasons other than the mentioned answer choices to be important financial reasons to not return. Additionally, they even agreed that fees and tuition were more that they expected as the second most important reasons to not return (36% & 29% respectively)



When students were asked what are the job or employment reasons to not return, the students from COB, CS, SA, ND stated that they had scheduling conflict between job and studies (51%). Similarly, students from other college felt the same (67%)



When it comes to university related reasons for students non return, it can be seen that both the group of students think that there was inadequate student support services such as tutoring and counselling (50% & 46% respectively). Also, students from College of Humanities and Education additionally has other reasons over and above the answer choices (46%)

Analysis

Descriptive by Gender				Descriptive by College			
How connected did you feel to A&M-Commerce when you were enrolled there (take into account your friends, a roommate, a family member, a sports team, an extracurricular club, etc.)?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	How connected did you feel to A&M-Commerce when you were enrolled there (take into account your friends, a roommate, a family member, a sports team, an extracurricular club, etc.)?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Male	158	2.22	0.952	CH	89	2.01	1.003
Female	178	2.15	0.938	CS	96	2.15	0.827
Total	336	2.18	0.945	ED	17	2.00	0.787
				SA	112	2.16	0.890
				ND	19	1.89	0.991
				COB	17	2.15	0.928
				CS	96	2.11	0.936
				CH	89	2.11	0.936
				ED	17	2.11	0.781
				SA	112	2.11	0.936
				ND	19	1.83	0.955
				Total	336	2.18	0.931
				CH	89	2.11	0.831
				CS	96	2.11	0.936
				ED	17	2.00	0.787
				SA	112	2.11	1.121
				ND	19	1.78	0.862
				Total	336	2.11	0.931
				Total	336	2.11	0.931

Descriptive by Level				ANOVA by Level					
How connected did you feel to A&M-Commerce when you were enrolled there (take into account your friends, a roommate, a family member, a sports team, an extracurricular club, etc.)?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Undergrad	153	2.20	0.933	3.43	2	1.715	4.008	0.024	
Graduate	225	2.07	0.968	121.542	170	0.715			
Total	378	2.13	0.958	124.976	172				
				Between Groups	9.728	2	4.864	11.010	0.000
				Within Groups	118.026	170	0.694		
				Total	127.754	172			
				Between Groups	5.516	2	2.758	6.043	0.003
				Within Groups	113.012	170	0.664		
				Total	118.528	172			

Conclusion:

The result of these findings were passed on to the department heads in order to take necessary action about department specific issues. Financial Policy Changes such as scholarship awards diversification, financial aid process evaluation and one time debt/loan wash initiative are in progress. The survey help in gaining meaningful insights which were in line with the "We Care" initiative. Moreover, findings were passed on to the department heads in order to take necessary action about program specific issues. Action items such as increase in course section caps, adding more course sections, allocation of resources towards maximum utilization of classrooms in order to incorporate new class schedules, and also the utilization of retention funds for financial assistance were initialized. Recent implication included a new wait list process to enroll for classes beginning Spring 2018. For example, the College of Business informed students that if they find a class that is full, and would still like to register, they will be added to the class waiting list. When the wait list reaches 15 students, the specific department would be notified and a new section will be created. Post that, the department would review the wait list and make necessary adjustments to accommodate the students. In the view of hurricane Harvey, the counselling center at Texas A&M-Commerce conducted "Hurricane Harvey Impact session" to support, accommodate and provide resources during the time of crisis.