

# State of Continuing Education 2024

Research by Modern Campus in partnership  
with UPCEA, the EvolLLution, and CAUCE

This year's data and insights



## State of Continuing Education 2024

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# Executive Summary

The 2024 State of Continuing Education study focused on institutions' online and professional continuing education units program offerings, institutional support and capabilities, institutional integration and innovation, and continuing education collaboration and integration within the larger institution. Successful collaboration between academic institutions and their online and professional continuing education units is essential for their sustained success, fostering open communication, and knowledge sharing. However, the 2024 State of Continuing Education survey reveals a number of challenges, with a notable percentage of respondents expressing dissatisfaction with institutional leadership's efforts, highlighting potential missed opportunities for lifelong learning support. Addressing these challenges can lead to a more harmonious collaboration, fostering a shared commitment to modernization and innovation, ultimately enhancing institutional impact and sustainability in the evolving education landscape.

As seen in previous years, nearly half of survey participants do not know enrollment numbers for their online and professional continuing education units for 2022-2023 (48%), 2021-2022 (47%), and 2020-2021 (46%) enrollment periods.

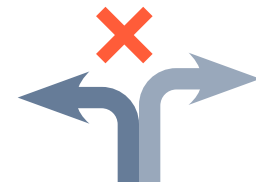


Over three-quarters (78%) of participants said that efficient course, section, and certificate creation/management is one of the most important elements to achieve their PCO unit's business goals, followed by an easy shopping cart experience for students (64%), and custom pricing and discount options (52%).

The percentage of respondents agreeing that they have support and buy-in from senior academic leadership to scale and expand PCO courses and programs has increased year over year, from 66% in 2022, to 81% in 2024. Additionally, the percentage of respondents that agree that their PCO unit has the appropriate amount of staff required to execute the institution's goals for the unit has more than doubled from 2023 (22%) to 2024 (45%).

The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement that their PCO unit has the appropriate amount of staff required to execute their institution's goals for the unit more than doubled from 2023 (22%) to 2024 (45%). The percentage of respondents agreeing that they have support and buy-in from senior academic leadership to scale and expand PCO courses and programs has increased year over year.

In the current survey, 29% of respondents strongly agreed (6%) or agreed (23%) that it was easy for members of their institution to access real-time enrollment data for PCO students, which is lower than both 2023 (34%) and 2022 (35%) data.



Despite the fact that 54% of respondents agree that their PCO unit is the most academically innovative unit at their institution, 61% disagree that their PCO unit is seen as academically equal to other academic units at their institution.

# State of Continuing Education, 2024

## Motivation for the Research

The EvoLLLution, an online publication founded by Modern Campus and focused on transformative higher education, has been conducting an annual study on the state of continuing education since 2020. Beginning in 2022, UPCEA and The EvoLLLution began partnering on the survey, with the Canadian Association for University Continuing Education (CAUCE) joining in 2023. Each iteration of the study revealed the multitude of on-going challenges continuing education professionals face, as well as the emerging opportunities. To continue to generate longitudinal data, the 2024 study centered on online and professional continuing education unit program offerings, institutional support and capabilities, and continuing education collaboration and integration. However, to better understand the technological and academic capacities of PCO units, the 2024 study also included questions related to institutional integration and innovation.

## Survey Methodology

UPCEA, The EvoLLLution, and CAUCE partnered to identify online and professional continuing education unit program offerings and enrollments, institutional support and capabilities, and to assess continuing education collaboration and integration. As colleges and universities adapt to the gig economy and the expansion of alternative credentials, institutional systems and structures must be evaluated to ensure that higher education institutions are remaining competitive and attracting the next generation of adult learners. Member institutions of UPCEA, The EvoLLLution, and CAUCE were contacted and invited to participate, with precautions taken to ensure that institutions were approached by only one organization. The survey took place from January 18th to February 7th, 2024; 197 institutions participated, of which 136 completed the entire survey.

SECTION 1

# Institutional and Respondent Demographics

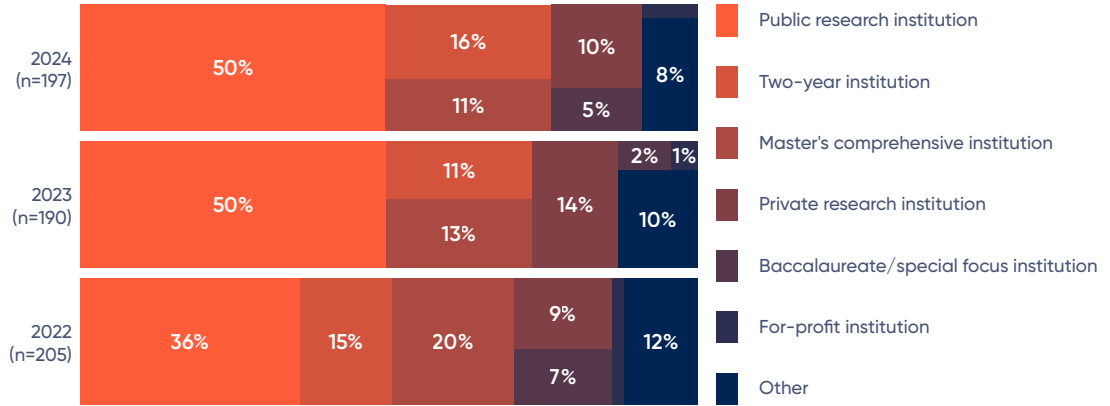


Figure 1: Type of Institution

The most common institution type in the survey is public research institutions (50%), followed by two-year institutions (16%), and master’s comprehensive institutions (11%). Eight percent are grouped into the “Other” category; examples include a Canadian technical and trades college, polytechnic institutions, and community colleges, among others.

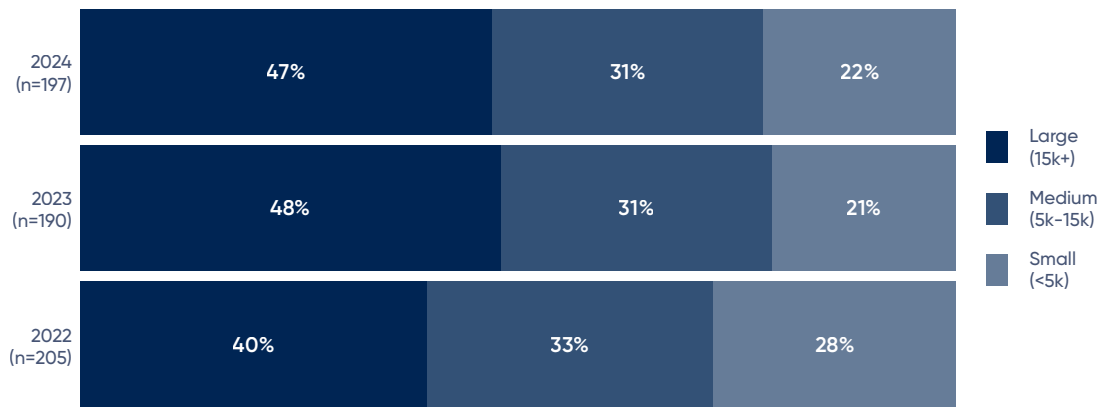
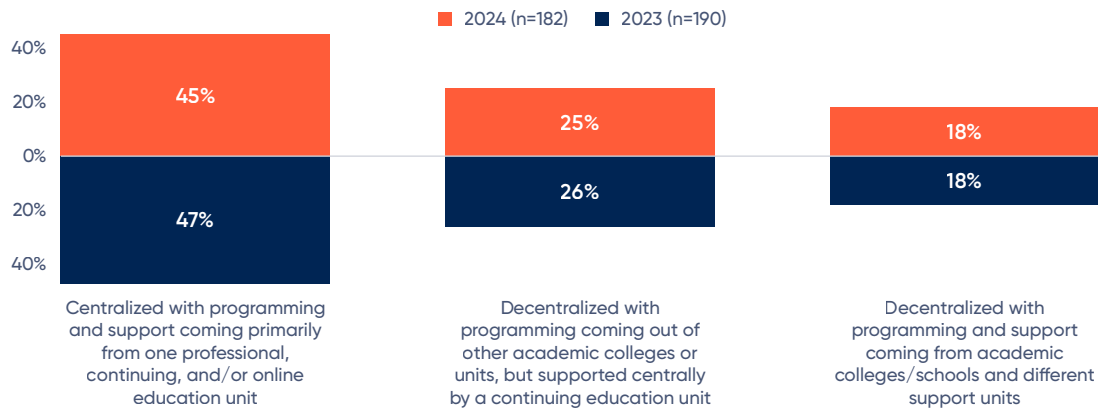


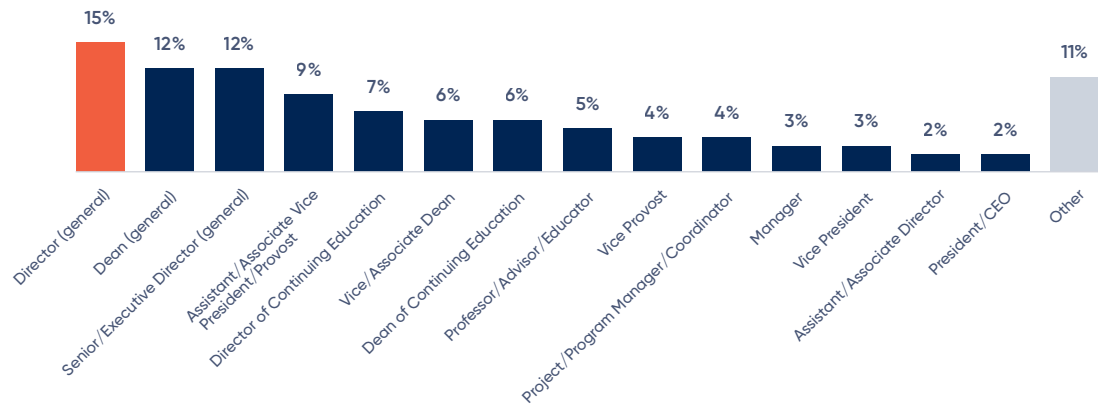
Figure 2: Institution Size

Forty-seven percent of participating institutions had more than 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students in 2022-2023, 31% had 5,000 to 15,000, and 22% fewer than 5,000.



**Figure 3: Which of the following statements best describes your professional, continuing, or online (PCO) unit?**

Forty-five percent of PCO units are centralized with programming and support coming primarily from one professional, continuing, and/or online education unit; 25% are decentralized with programming coming out of other academic colleges or units, but supported centrally by a continuing education unit; and 18% are decentralized with programming and support coming from academic colleges/schools and different support units. The percentages are similar to those in the 2023 survey.



**Figure 4: (2024) What is your title? (n=182)**

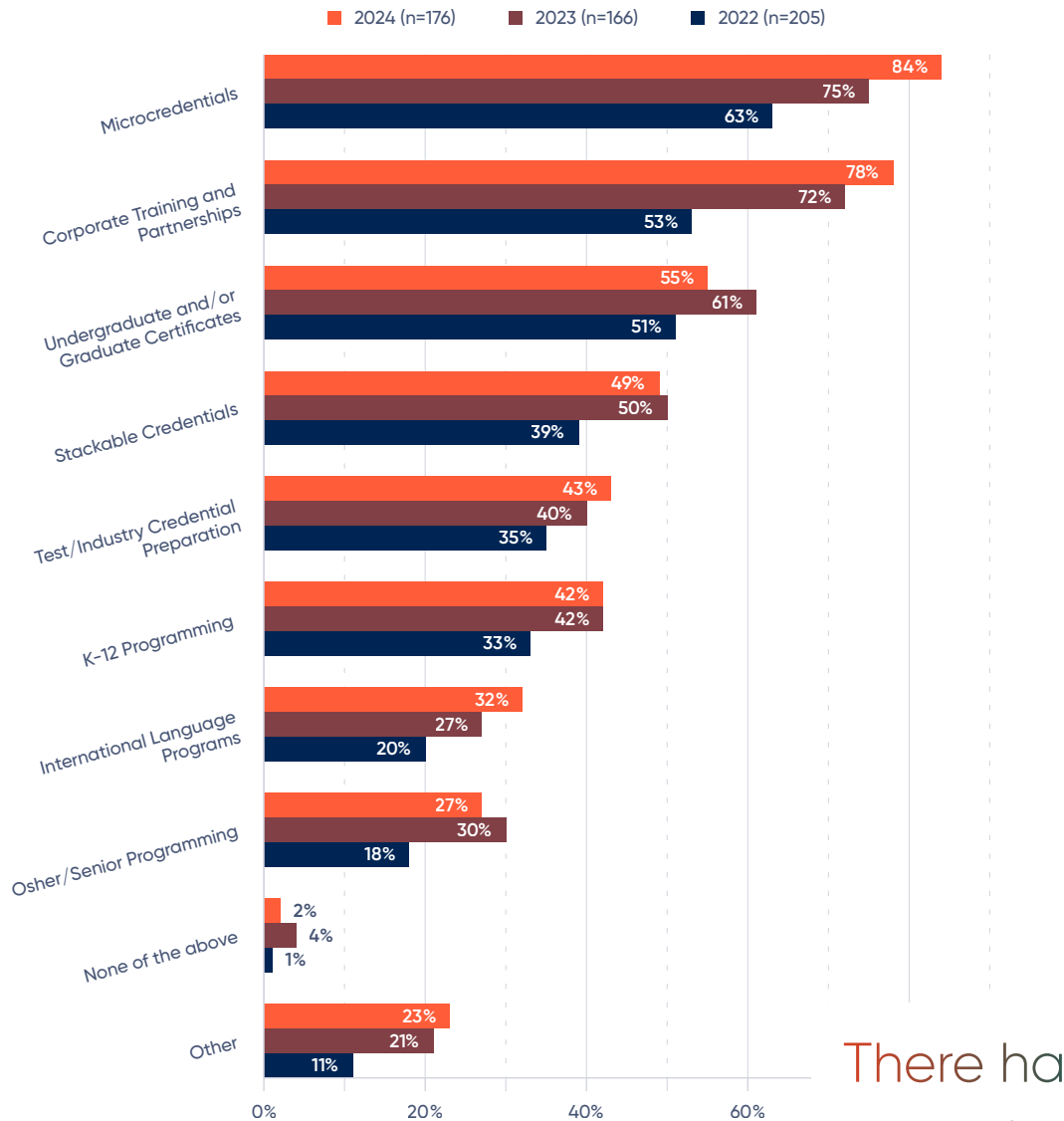
The most common titles of 2024 survey respondents are Director (general) (15%), followed by Dean (general) (12%), Senior/ Executive Director (general) (also 12%), Assistant/ Associate Vice President/ Provost (9%), and Director of Continuing Education (7%). Responses that were mentioned fewer than three times were included in the "Other" category and included Analyst, Developer, and Administrative Assistant, among others.





SECTION 2

# Program Offerings and Enrollments



**Figure 5: Programs or Credentials Offered by PCO Unit**

Participants were asked what programs or credentials are offered at their PCO units. In 2024, 84% offer microcredentials, 78% offer corporate training and partnerships, and 55% undergraduate and/or graduate certificates. The percentage of PCO units offering microcredentials, corporate training and partnerships, tech/industry credential preparation, and international language programs has increased each year.

There has been a notable increase in microcredential and corporate training programs year over year.

The percentage of PCO units serving various audiences has increased each year.

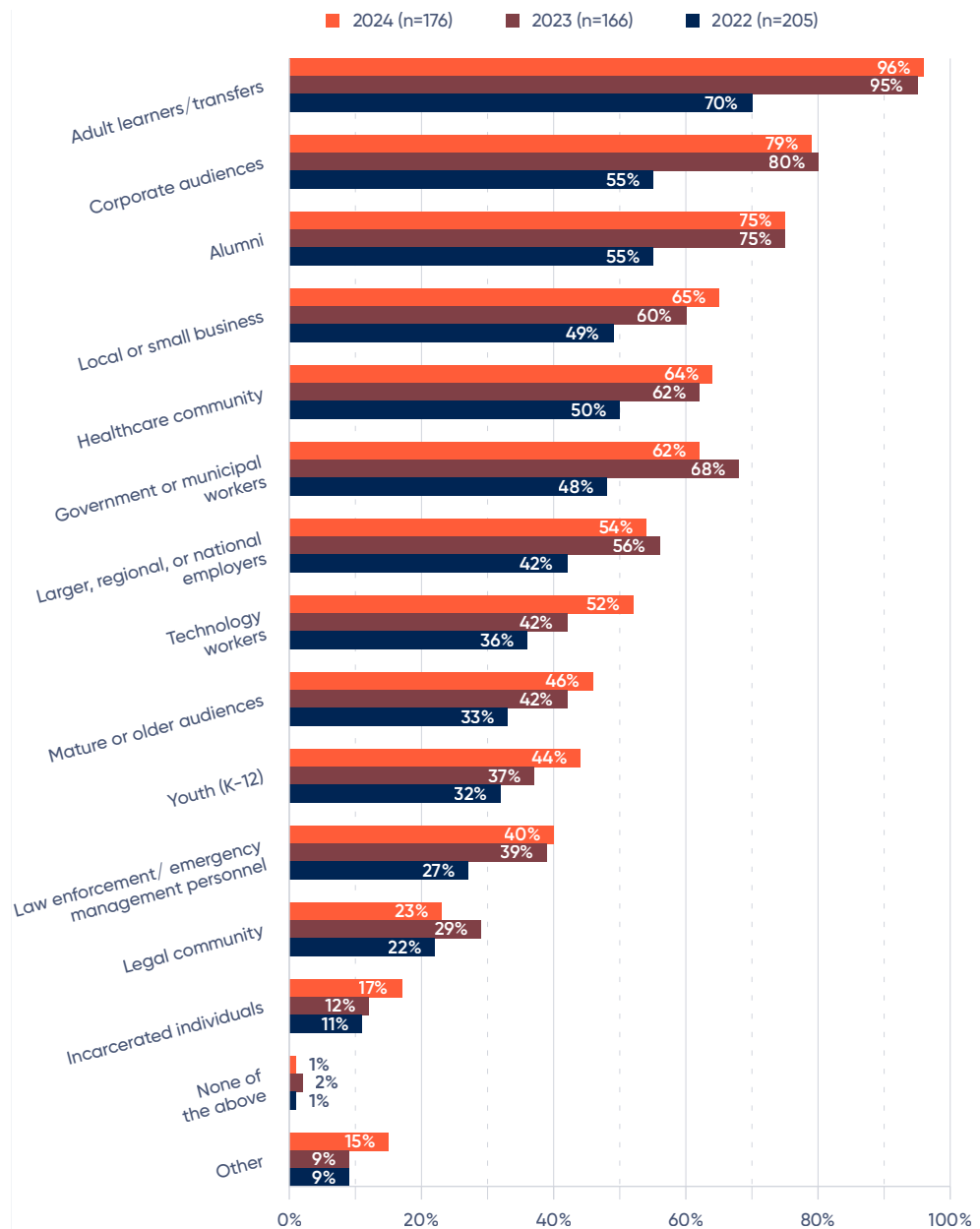
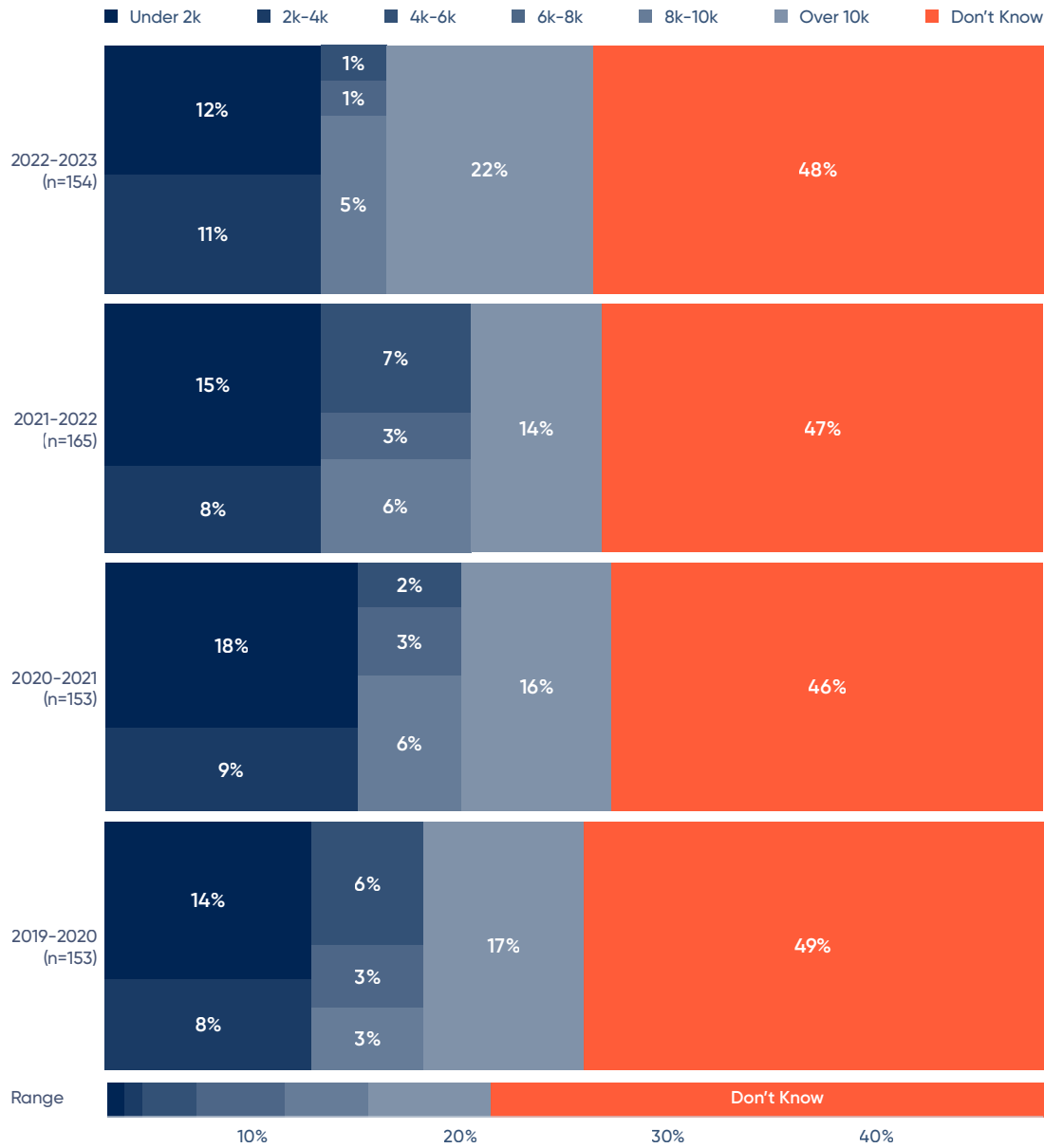


Figure 6: Audiences Served by PCO Unit

Participants were asked what audiences their PCO unit programs serve. Adult learners/transfers (96%), corporate audiences (79%), alumni (75%), and local or small businesses (65%) were listed as their main audiences in 2024. The percentage of PCO units serving adult learners/transfers, local or small business, the healthcare community, technology workers, youth (K-12), law enforcement or emergency management personnel, and incarcerated individuals has increased each year.

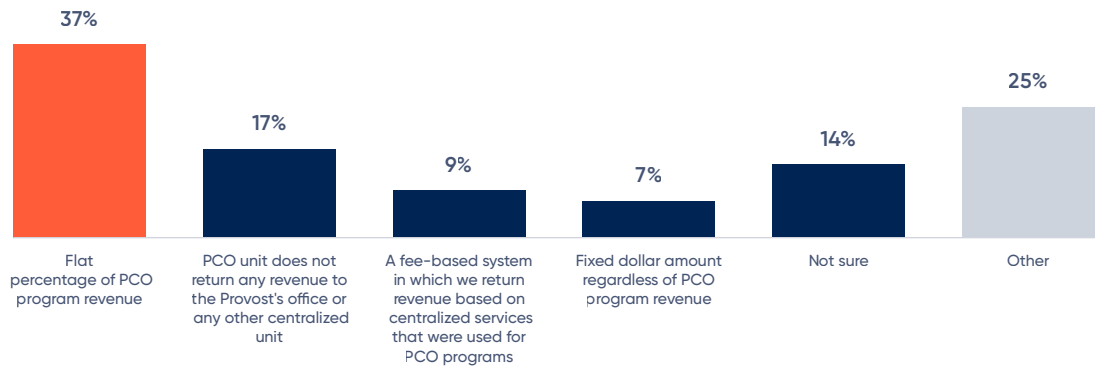


**Figure 7: PCO Unit Enrollments**

From July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, institutions had an average PCO unit enrollment of 17,570, with a median of 8,550. Twenty-two percent had over 10,000 enrollments, 11% between 2,000 and 3,999 enrollments, and 12% under 2,000. Average enrollments in 2022-2023 were greater than in 2021-2022 (12,047) and 2020-2021 (16,384). Approximately half of respondents in all four surveys did not know their enrollment numbers.

In the 2024 survey, 2 respondents used headcount data, rather than enrollment data, and were not included in the figure.

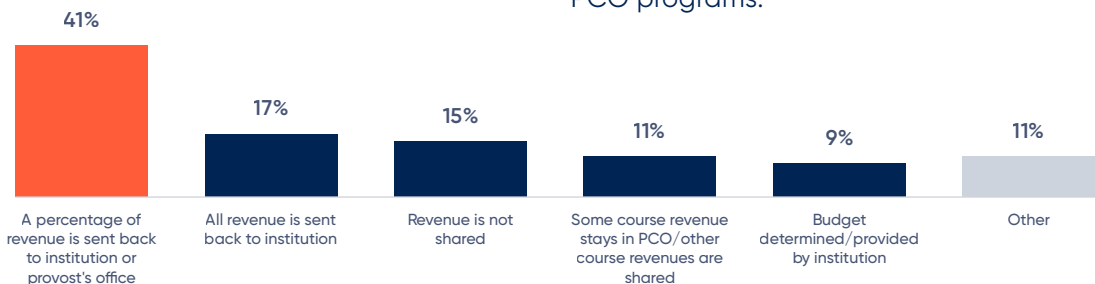
About half of all respondents did not know their enrollment numbers.



**Figure 8: (2024) Which of the following best describes how much revenue is sent to the Provost's office or another centralized unit, if any? Please select all that apply. (n=150)**

A third of PCO units send a flat revenue percentage to the Provost's office.

Participants were asked how much revenue is sent to the Provost's office or another centralized unit, if any. Thirty-seven percent send a flat percentage of PCO program revenue, 17% said their PCO unit does not return any revenue to the Provost's office or any other centralized unit, and 9% use a fee-based system in which they return revenue based on centralized services that were used for PCO programs.



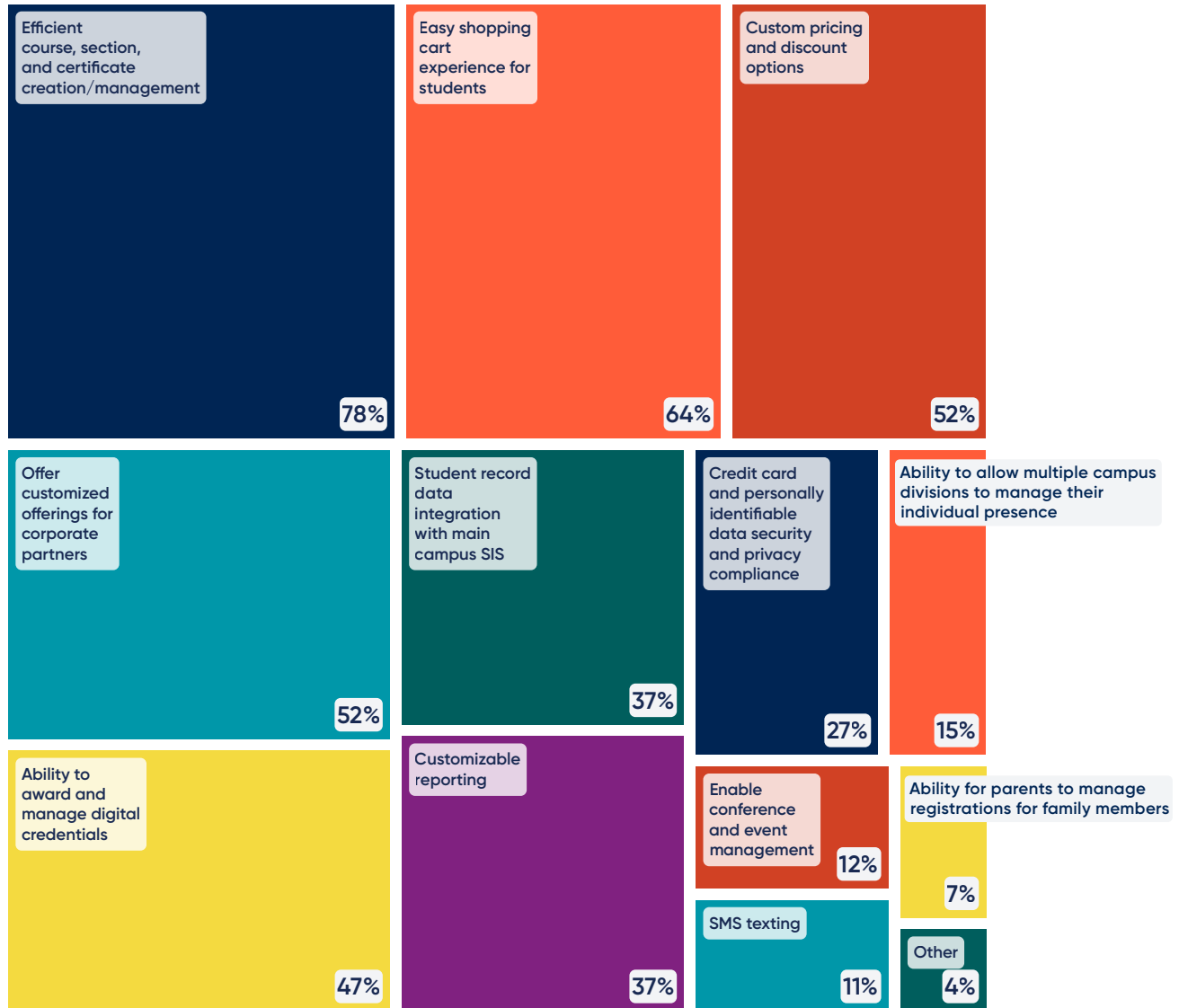
**Figure 9: (2024) Optional: Please expand upon your PCO unit's financial structure (n=54)**

When asked to expand upon their PCO unit's financial structure, 41% of respondents said a percentage of revenue is sent back to the institution/provost's office, 17% said all revenue is sent back to the institution, 15% said revenue is not shared, and 11% said some course

revenue stays in the PCO unit while other course revenues are shared. Responses mentioned only once were placed in the "Other" category which included sending a percentage of revenue back to the county, being primarily grant-funded, and being in start-up mode, among others.

SECTION 3

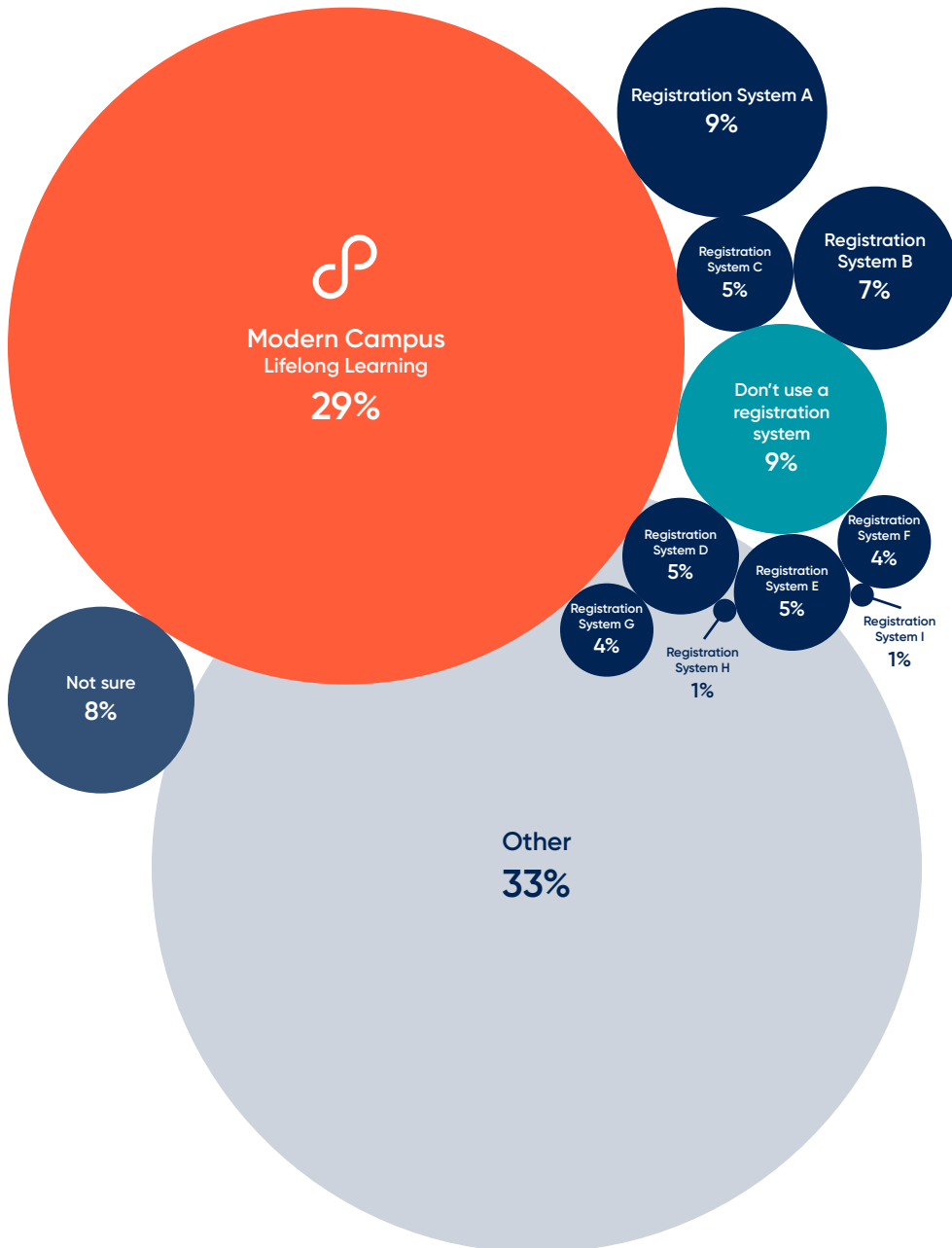
# Institutional Support and Capabilities



**Figure 10: (2024) When thinking about essential elements that are required to achieve the business goals of your PCO unit, which of the following are the most important? Please select no more than five. (n=145)**

Over three-quarters (78%) of participants said that efficient course, section, and certificate creation/management is among the most important elements to achieve their PCO unit’s business goals, followed by an easy shopping cart experience for students (64%), custom pricing and discount options (52%), and offering customized offerings for corporate partners (52%).

The most common registration system is Modern Campus



**Figure 11: (2024) Registration Systems Used to Manage PCO Unit Programming (Anonymized) (n=144)**

Above is an anonymized list of registration systems. The most common registration system respondents use to manage PCO unit programs is Modern Campus (29%), while 9% don't use a registration system. It is important to note that registration systems were anonymized based upon their 2024 rank and are not directly comparable to 2023 data.

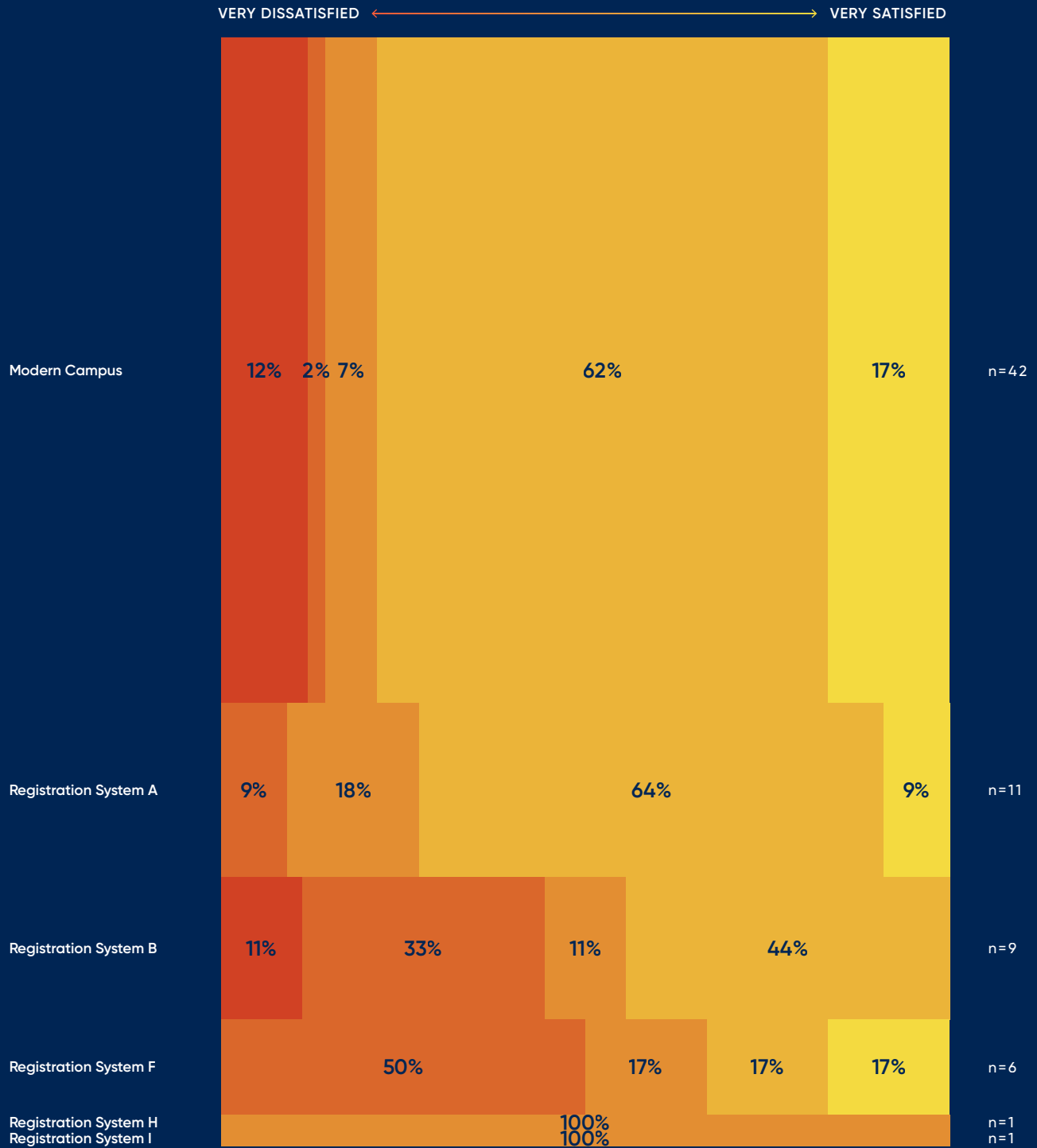
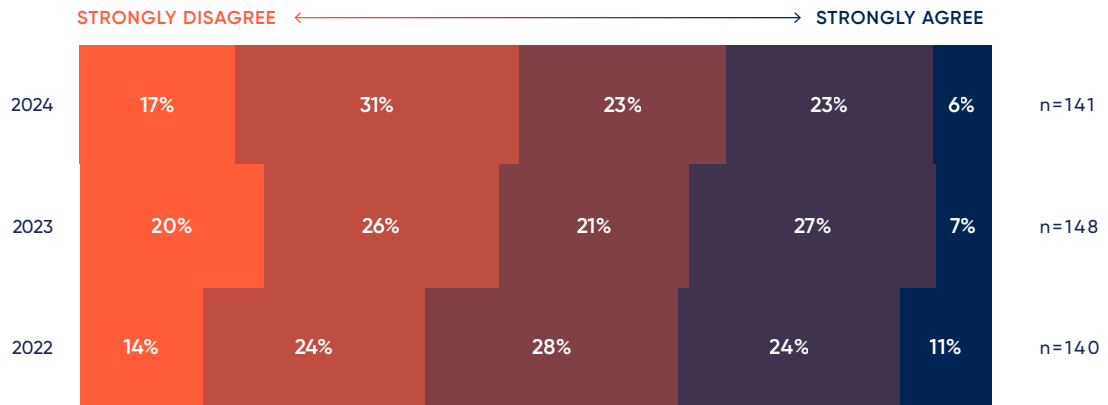


Figure 12: (2024) How satisfied are you with the registration system(s) you use to manage your PCO unit’s programs? (Anonymized)

Modern Campus had the greatest percentage of respondents very or somewhat satisfied (79%).

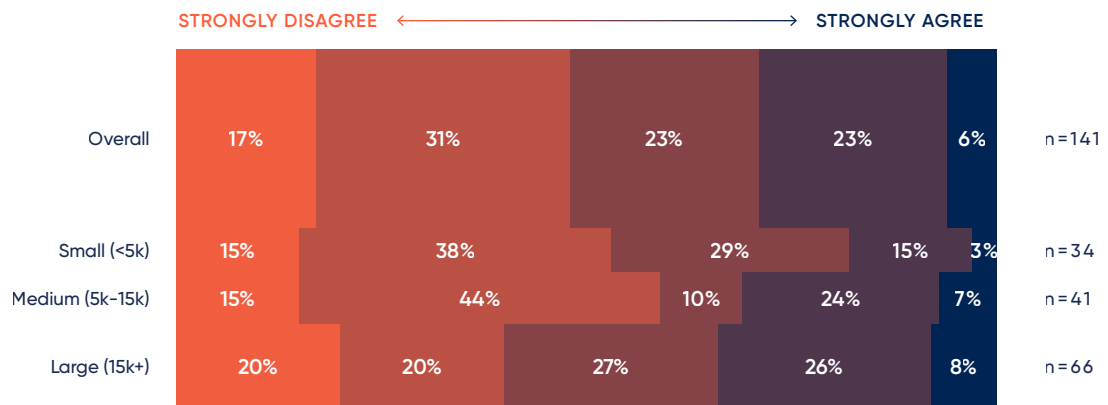


**Figure 13: Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: It is easy for members of my institution to access real-time enrollment data for PCO students.**

Despite increasing support from institutional leadership...

...to scale and expand PCO offerings, the ease of access to real-time enrollment data for PCO students continues to decrease. In 2024, 29% of respondents strongly agree (6%) or agree (23%) that it is easy for members of their

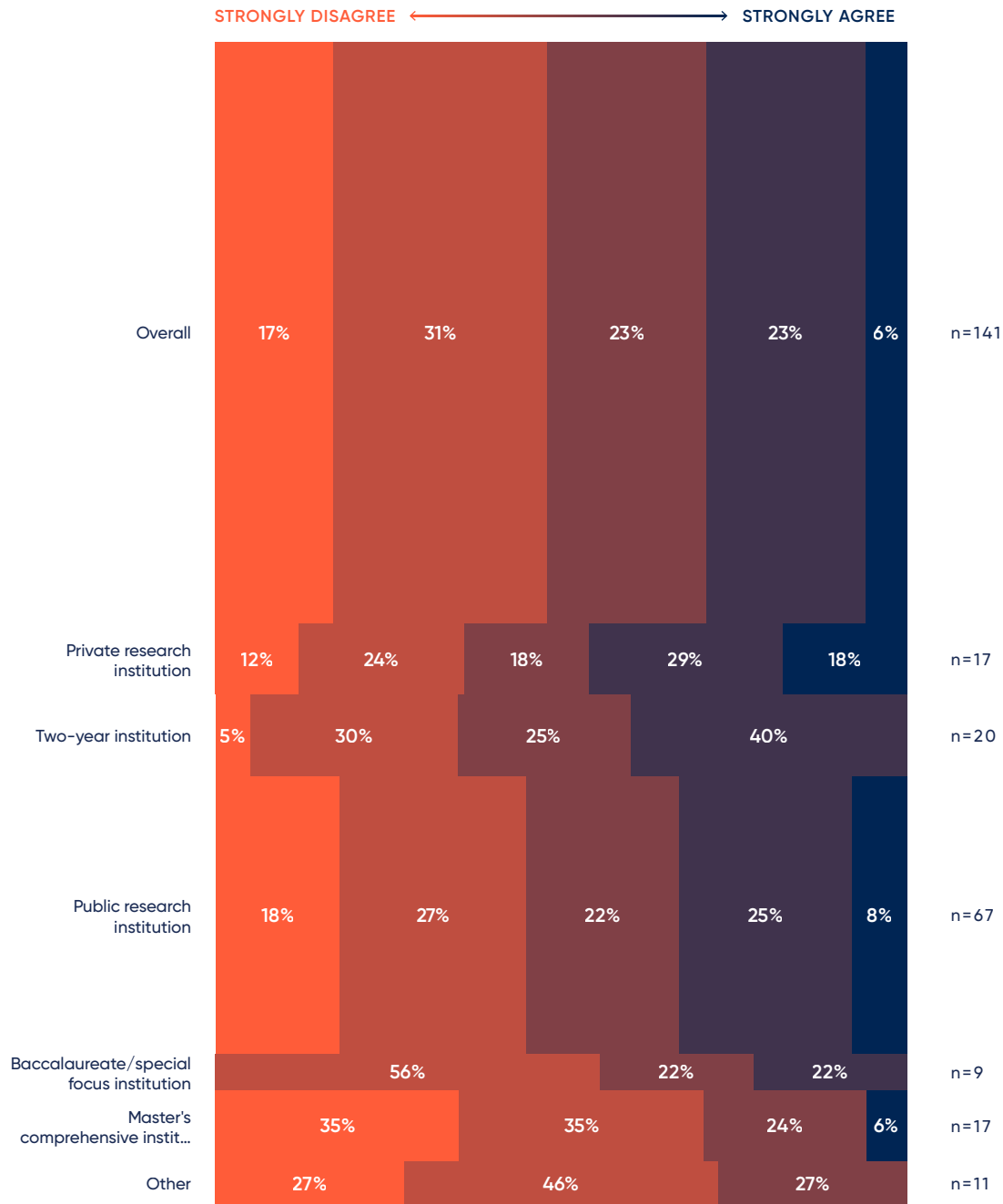
institution to access real-time enrollment data for PCO students, lower than both 2023 (34%) and 2022 (35%). However, nearly half (48%) of 2024 respondents disagree (31%) or strongly disagree (17%) with the statement.



**Figure 14: (2024) Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: It is easy for members of my institution to access real-time enrollment data for PCO students – By Institution Size**

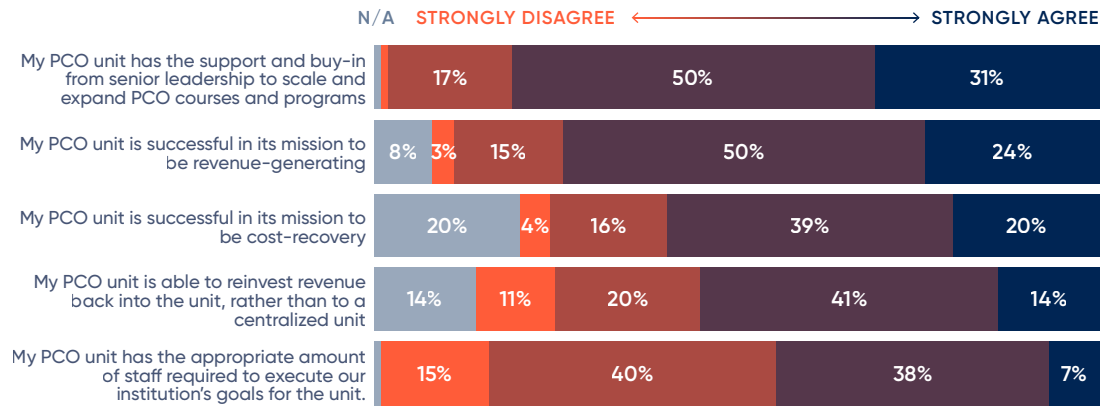
Individuals from large institutions were more likely to agree or strongly agree that it is easy for their members to access real-time enrollment data for PCO students (34%), compared to medium (31%) and small (18%) institutions.





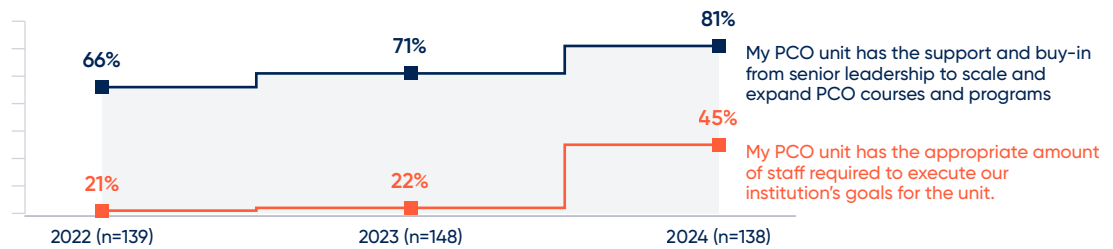
**Figure 15: (2024) Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: It is easy for members of my institution to access real-time enrollment data for PCO students – By Institution Type**

Participants from private research institutions were the most likely to strongly agree or agree it is easy for members of their institution to access real-time enrollment data for PCO students (37%) while those from master’s comprehensive institutions disagree or strongly disagree (70%).



**Figure 16: (2024) Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=138)**

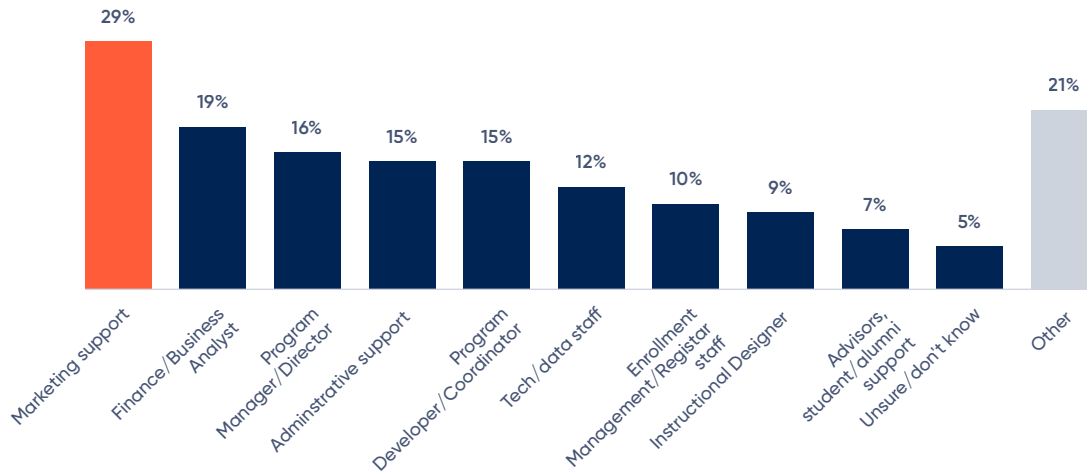
Eighty-one percent of participants strongly agree or agree that their PCO unit has the support and buy-in from senior leadership to scale and expand PCO courses and programs, 74% strongly agree or agree that their PCO unit is successful in its mission to be revenue-generating, and 74% strongly agree or agree that their PCO unit is successful in its mission to be cost-recovery. A greater percentage of respondents disagree than agree that they have the appropriate amount of staff required to execute the institution’s goals for the unit.



**Figure 17: Efficacy of PCO Units Over Time – Combined Percentage of Strongly Agree and Agree**

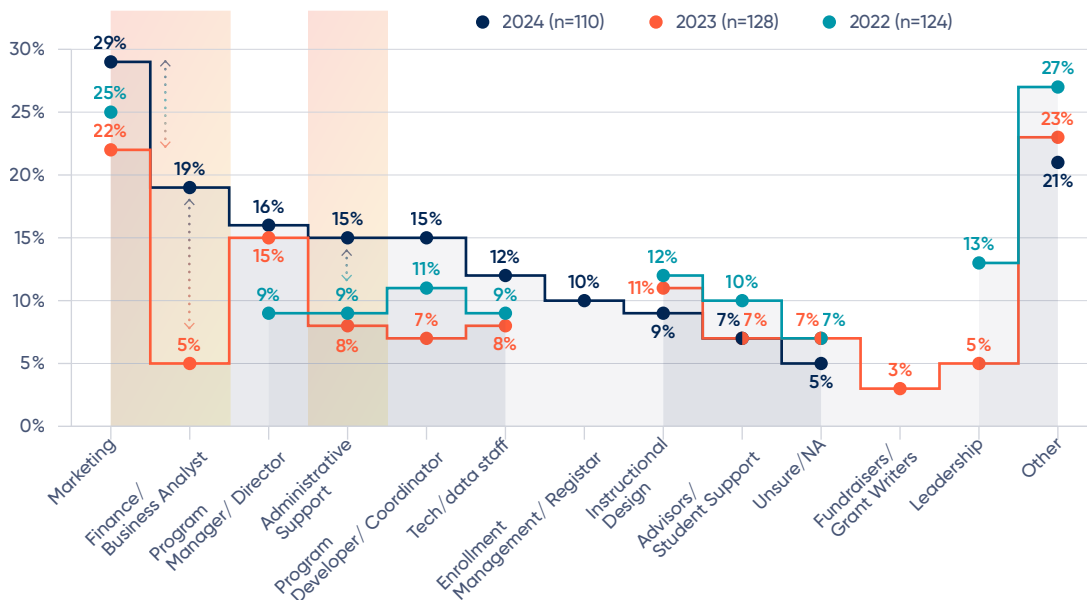
Support and buy-in from senior leadership has increased YOY

The percentage of respondents who agreed with the statement that their PCO unit has the appropriate amount of staff required to execute our institution’s goals for the unit more than doubled from 2023 (22%) to 2024 (45%). The percentage of respondents agreeing that they have support and buy-in from senior academic leadership to scale and expand PCO courses and programs has increased year over year. Other categories were not asked in 2023.



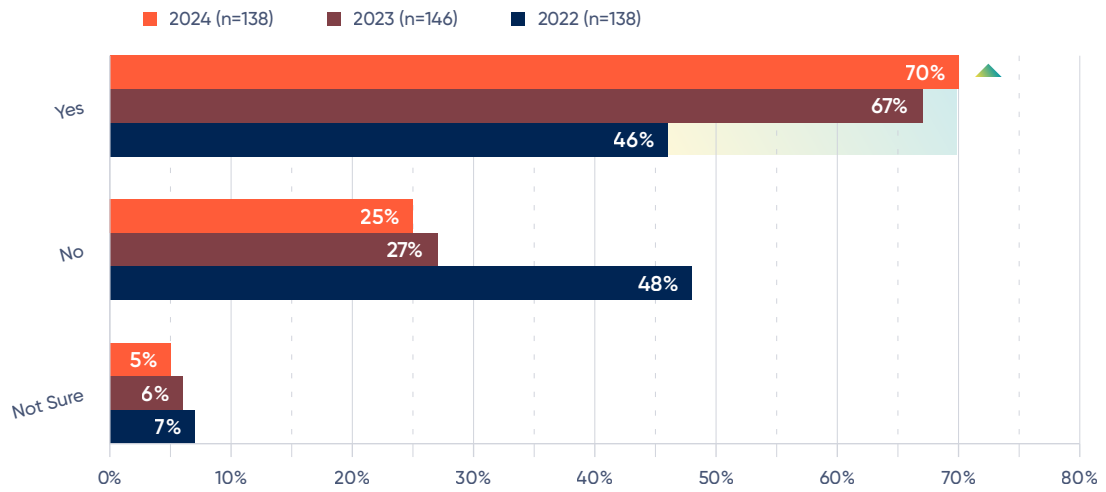
**Figure 18: (2024) Positions Currently Lacking within PCO Unit**

Twenty-nine percent of institutions currently lack marketing support positions within their PCO units, followed by finance/business analysts (19%), program managers/directors (16%), administrative support (15%), and program developers/coordinators (15%). Positions mentioned fewer than four times were placed in the “Other” category which included human resource specialists, recruiters, and learning specialists, among others.



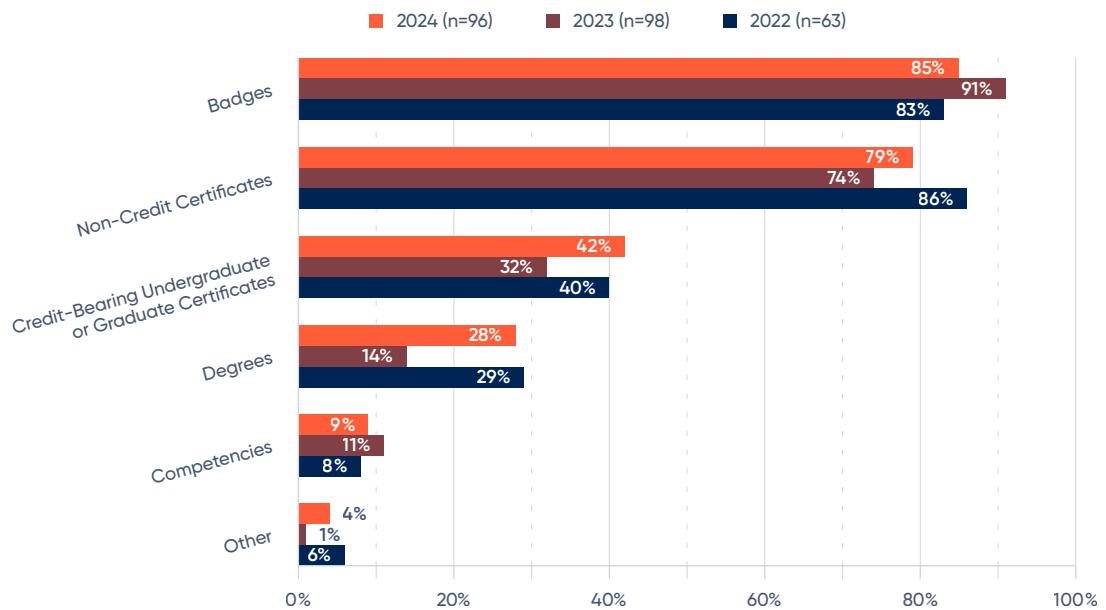
**Figure 19: Positions Currently Lacking within PCO Unit Over Time**

An increasing percentage of PCO units are lacking positions related to marketing, finance/business analysts, and administrative support, among other areas.



**Figure 20: Does Your PCO Unit Offer Digital Credentials?**

The percentage of institutions offering digital credentials continues to increase. Seventy percent of 2024 survey respondents' PCO units offer digital credentials compared to 67% in 2023, and just 46% in 2022.

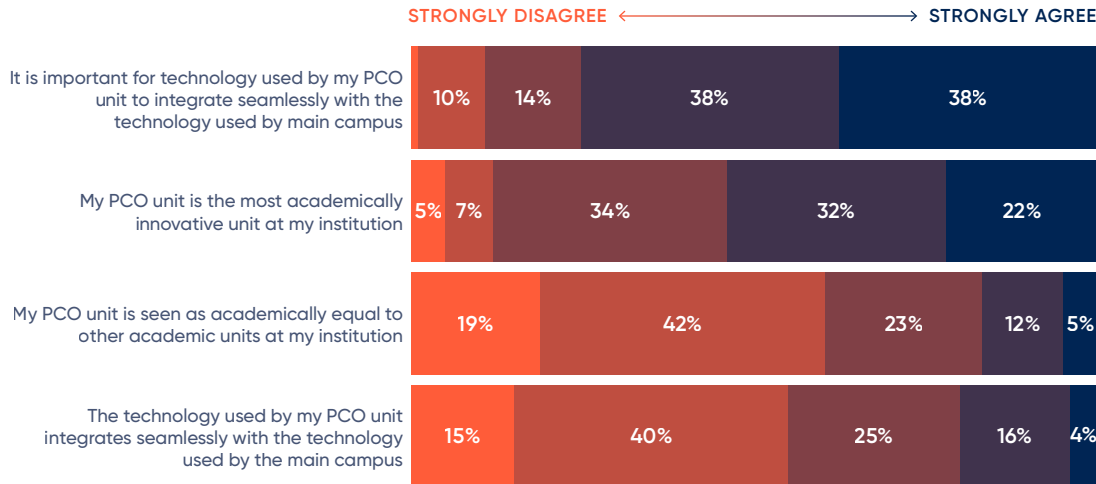


**Figure 21: Type(s) of Digital Credentials Offered**

Of the units that offer digital credentials, the most common types in 2024 are badges (85%), non-credit certificates (79%), and credit-bearing undergraduate or graduate certificates (42%).

SECTION 4

# Technology Integration and Academic Innovation



**Figure 22: (2024) Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=137)**

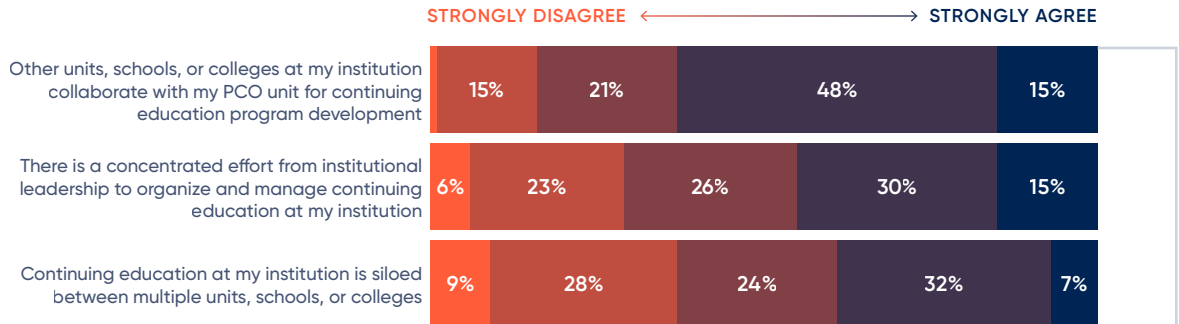
Over three-quarters (76%) of participants strongly agree or agree that it is important for technology used by their PCO unit to integrate seamlessly with the technology used by their main campus, but 55% disagree or strongly disagree that this is taking place. Fifty-four percent strongly agree or agree that their PCO unit is the most academically innovative unit at their institution while 61% disagree or strongly disagree that their PCO unit is seen as academically equal to other academic units at their institution.



The majority of participants believe that it is important for the technology used by their PCO unit to seamlessly integrate with the technology used by their main campus. However, more than half of them disagree that this integration is actually taking place.

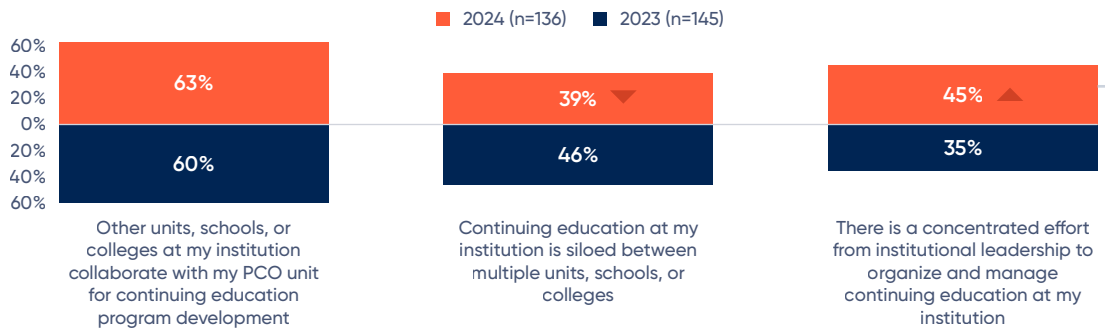
SECTION 5

# Continuing Education Collaboration and Integration



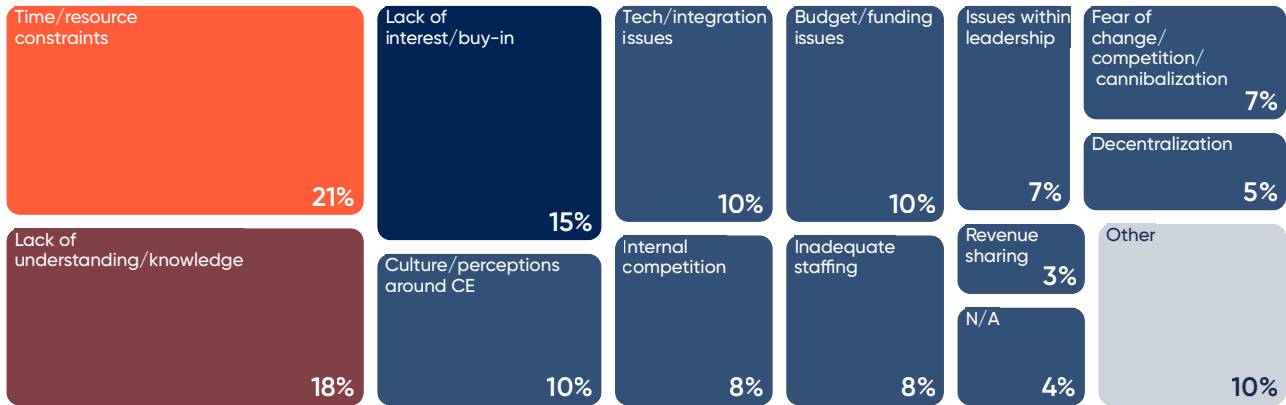
**Figure 23: (2024) Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=136)**

Sixty-three percent of 2024 survey participants strongly agree or agree that other units, schools, or colleges at their institution collaborate with their PCO unit for continuing education program development, while 45% strongly agree or agree that there is a concentrated effort from institutional leadership to organize and manage continuing education at their institution. Although 39% strongly agree or agree that continuing education is siloed between multiple units, schools, or colleges, 37% disagree or strongly disagree that this is the case.



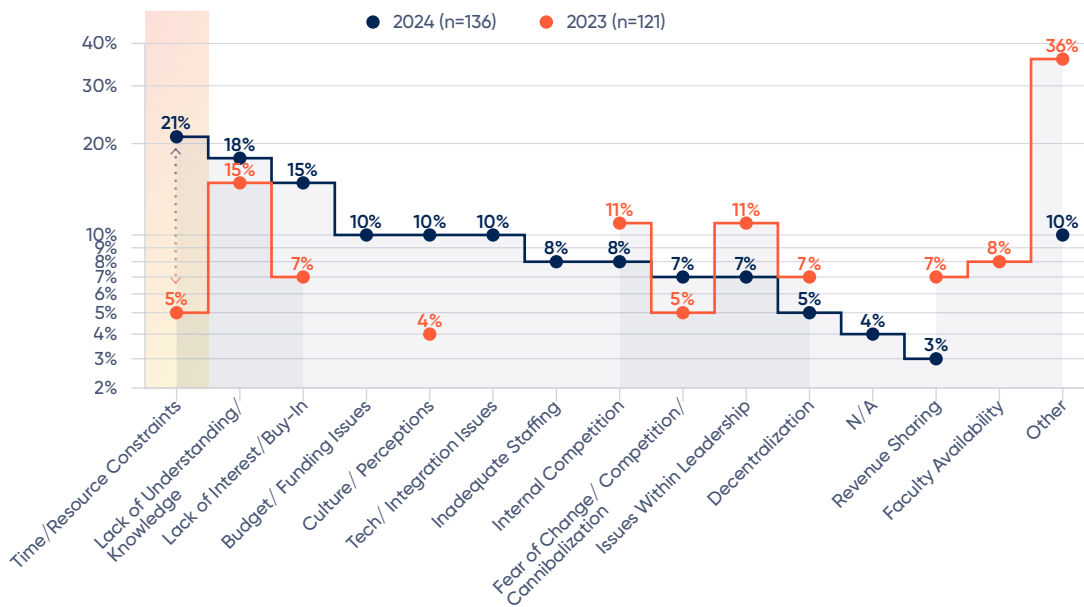
**Figure 24: Continuing Education Collaboration and Integration Over Time – Combined Percentage of Strongly Agree and Agree**

From 2023 to 2024, the percentage of respondents who agree there is a concentrated effort from institutional leadership to organize and manage continuing education at their institution increased by 10%, while the percentage who feel continuing education is siloed decreased 7%.



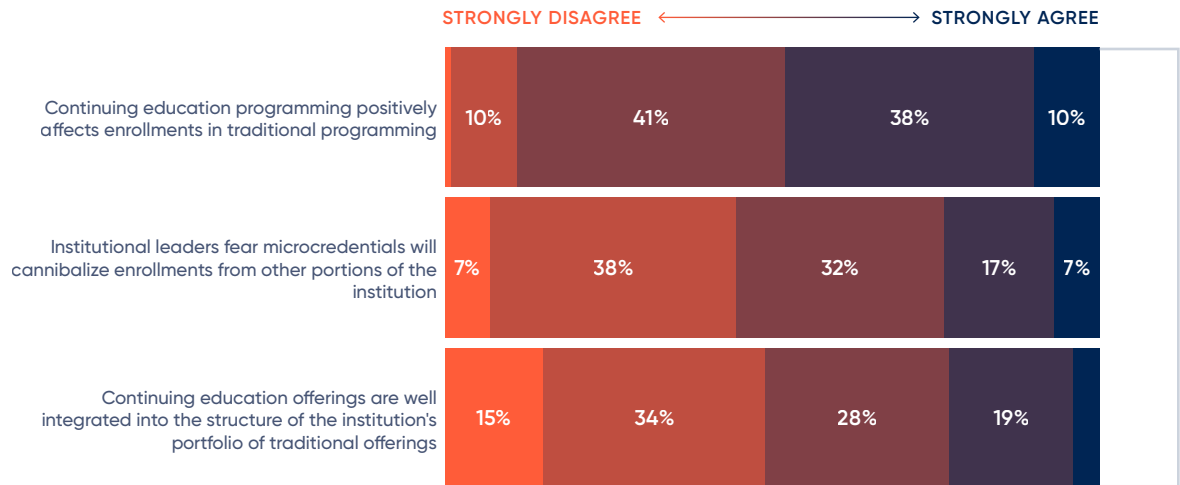
**Figure 25: (2024) What do you see as the greatest challenges for collaborating with and connecting other parts of your institution for continuing education programming? (n=136)**

When asked their greatest challenge for collaborating with and connecting to other parts of their institution for continuing education programming, 21% of 2024 survey respondents cited time/resource constraints, 18% a lack of understanding/knowledge, and 15% a lack of interest/buy-in. Responses mentioned fewer than four times were placed in the “Other” category and included a lack of marketing/advertising, not having a strategic plan, and a lack of incentive, among others.



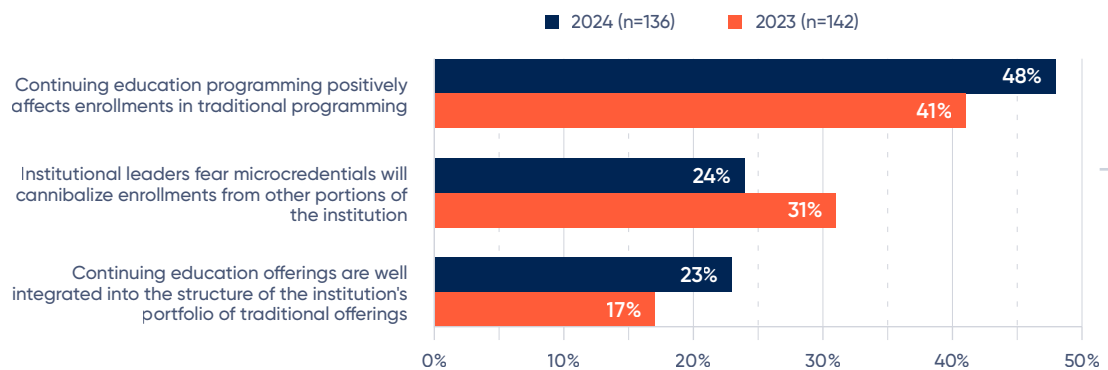
**Figure 26: Challenges in Collaboration and Integration Over Time**

Just over a fifth (21%) of respondents in 2024 cited time or resource constraints as the greatest challenge, more than four times the percentage who cited this in 2023 (5%).



**Figure 27: (2024) Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements (n=136)**

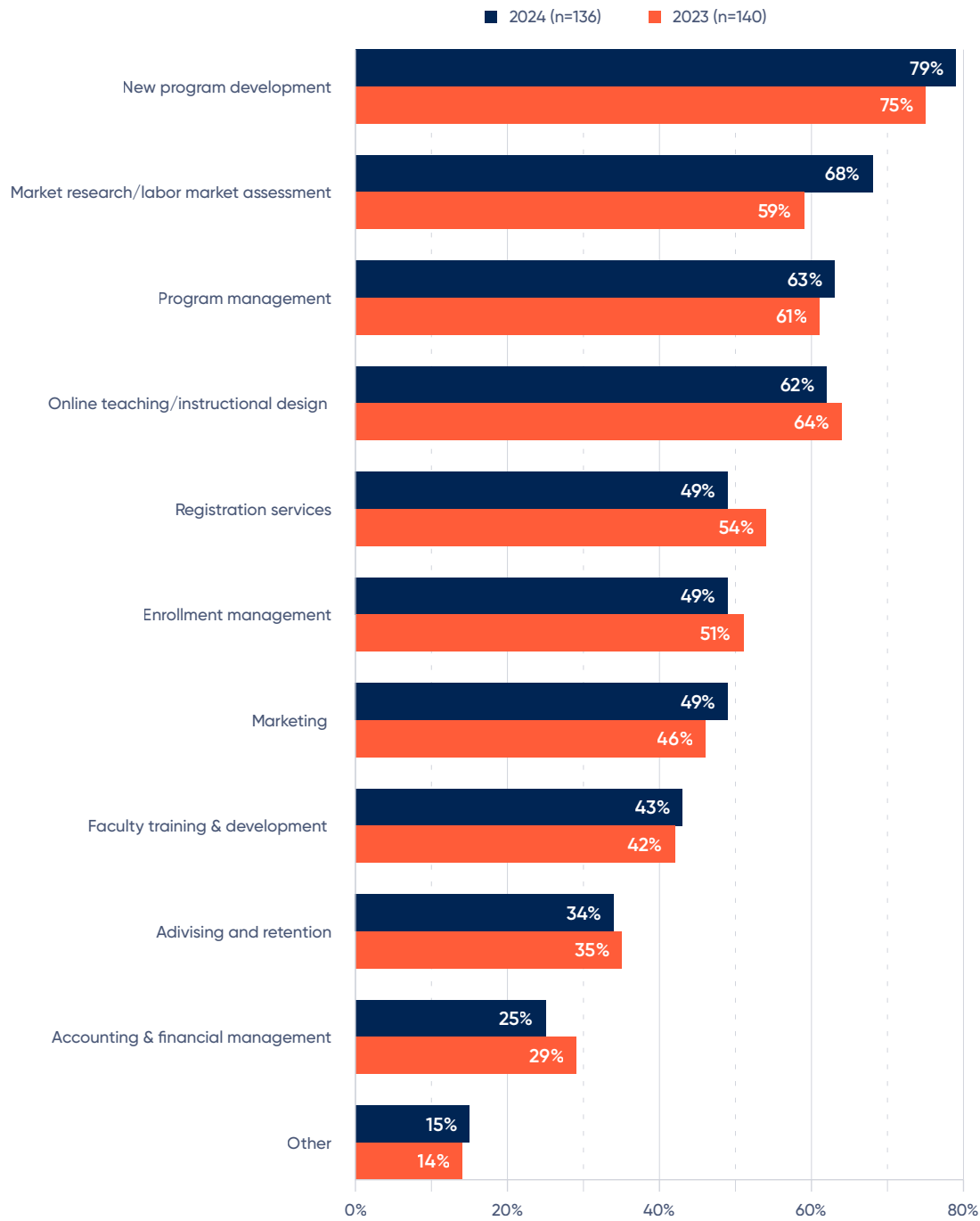
Nearly half (48%) of current survey participants strongly agree or agree that continuing education programming positively affects enrollments in traditional programming. Nearly half (49%) disagree or strongly disagree that continuing education offerings are well integrated into the structure of the institution’s portfolio of traditional offerings, and 45% disagree or strongly disagree that institutional leaders fear microcredentials will cannibalize enrollments from other portions of the institution.



**Figure 28: Collaboration and Integration with Traditional Programming Over Time – Combined Percentage of Strongly Agree and Agree**

From 2023 to 2024 there was an increase in respondents who agreed that continuing education programming positively affects enrollments in traditional programming (7% increase) and that continuing education offerings are well integrated into the structure of traditional offerings. Fears around microcredentials cannibalizing enrollments decreased.





**Figure 29: (2024) What roles or functions should a PCO unit deliver as an academic support unit for the broader institution?**

When asked what roles or functions a PCO unit should deliver as an academic support unit for the broader institution, 79% cited new program development, 68% market research/labor market research, and 63% program management, all higher rates than 2023 data.

# Impact on Higher Education

**Within the online and professional continuing education space, the winds of change are blowing, and momentum is building.**

The 2024 State of Continuing Education identified a number of positive trends that are having considerable impact on how professional, continuing, and online (PCO) education units function, the role online and professional continuing education programming plays within the larger ecosystem of institutions, and the perception of those programs. One of the most reassuring findings of the study was that the percentage of respondents agreeing that they have support and buy-in from senior academic leadership to scale and expand PCO courses and programs has increased year over year, reaching 81% in 2024, a 15% increase from 2022.

While this support from leadership has manifested in multiple ways, it is most profoundly apparent in staffing.

Leaders are beginning to show action and not just words as the percentage of respondents who agreed their PCO unit has the appropriate amount of staff required to execute the institution's goals for the unit doubled from 22% in 2023 to 45% in 2024. While there is still considerable room for improvement, and resource constraints are still a major challenge, this is an encouraging development. Leaders

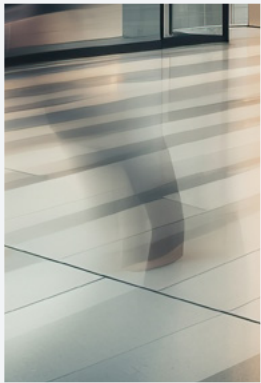
also recognize that to expand and scale PCO courses and programs there needs to be more efficient organization of continuing education. In 2024, 45% of respondents agree that there is a concentrated effort from institutional leadership to organize and manage continuing education at their institution, a 10% increase from 2023. This is also reflected in the fact respondents who said continuing education at their institution is siloed between multiple units has decreased by 7%.





The benefits of this paradigm shift among leadership also impacted the perception of continuing education offerings. From 2023 to 2024 there was an increase in respondents who agreed that continuing education programming positively affects enrollments in traditional programming (41% to 48%) and that continuing education offerings are well integrated into the structure of traditional offerings (17% to 23%). Additionally, fears around microcredentials cannibalizing enrollments from other portions of the institution decreased from 31% in 2023 to 24% in 2024. While the gains made over the last two years should be well-received, there is still significant progress that must be made.

## Despite increasing support from institutional leadership, the ease of access to real-time enrollment data for PCO students continues to decrease.



In 2024, 29% of respondents agreed that it is easy for members of their institution to access this real-time data, lower than in both 2023 (34%) and 2022 (35%). Additionally, while more than three-quarters (76%) of participants agree that it is important for technology used by their PCO unit to integrate seamlessly with that used by their main campus, over half (55%) disagreed that this essential function is taking place at their institution. Despite the fact that 54% agree that their PCO unit is the most academically innovative unit at their institution, 61% disagree that their PCO unit is seen as academically equal to other academic units at their institution.

These shortcomings could be explained, at least in part, by the fact that PCO units have long existed on the fringes of the institution, not receiving the same recognition or resources as other established academic units. Furthermore, technology designed for traditional students may not have the ability, or may lack the internal champion required, to meet the needs of non-traditional learners. However, these results also underscore a unique opportunity for institutions to revitalize their strategy and culture by innovating alongside their respective PCO units. Resolving the challenges related to integration and improving the perception of academic equality can pave the way for a more cohesive collaboration, nurturing a joint dedication to advancing online and professional continuing education.



# About Collaborators

## About UPCEA

UPCEA is the online and professional education association. Our members continuously reinvent higher education, positively impacting millions of lives. We proudly lead and support them through cutting edge research, professional development, networking and mentorship, conferences and seminars, and stakeholder advocacy. Our collaborative, entrepreneurial community brings together decision makers and influencers in education, industry, research, and policy interested in improving educational access and outcomes. Visit [www.upcea.edu](http://www.upcea.edu)

## About CAUCE

CAUCE is a professional association of deans, directors, senior administrative personnel and practitioners whose professional careers are in university continuing education in Canada. Serving nearly 50 university continuing education units across the country, CAUCE is dedicated to supporting the success of its members in serving professional and adult learners and diverse learning communities. Through its annual conference, webinars, research, and community of practice networks, it fosters best practices in lifelong teaching and learning, flexible learning models, and university-community engagement. CAUCE strengthens the impact of universities through excellence in continuing education. Visit: <https://cauce-aepuc.ca>

## About Modern Campus

Modern Campus empowers 1,700+ higher education institutions to attract, engage, and retain learners for life with software solutions that enable a modern student experience. The Modern Campus learner-to-earner lifecycle platform powers solutions for web content management, conversational text messaging, catalog and curriculum management, career pathways, student engagement and development, and non-traditional student management. The result: innovative institutions engage their modern learners for life, while providing modern administrators with the tools needed to streamline workflows and drive high efficiency. Learn how Modern Campus is leading the modern learner-to-earner movement at [moderncampus.com](https://moderncampus.com) and follow us on LinkedIn.

## About The EvoLLLution

The EvoLLLution is an online publication focused on the transforming higher education industry. Publishing articles and interviews by higher education leaders on the evolving postsecondary space since 2011, The EvoLLLution was founded by Modern Campus to create an open environment for higher education's most innovative thought leaders to come together and set out a new vision for what the industry can be. Visit [evoLLLution.com](https://evoLLLution.com)

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