

OSA and ASWOU Survey Report

Joint Task Force on Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education, WOU Site Visit, Tuesday, April 26th, 2022

A survey campaign was run jointly by the Oregon Student Association (OSA) and the Associated Students of Western Oregon University (ASWOU) in February 2021 in order to gather data on the experiences and obstacles faced by WOU students from historically underserved populations. Students were asked a series of questions based on focuses laid out by the Student Voice Bill (HB 2590, 2021) and the Joint Taskforce for Student Success for Underrepresented Students in Higher Education; these areas were access, retention, graduation, and entry into the workforce. This was designed to discern what issues are the most impactful and wide reaching for students. They were also asked to self-identify as members of various minority groups. These groups were enumerated in the bill (LGBTQ+ student, student of color, rural student, low-income student, disabled student, undocumented student, student formerly in the foster system) as well as other underrepresented minority groups included at the discretion of ASWOU (student parent, student with a GED or other high school equivalency, non-traditional student, non-native English speaking student, student veteran, and formerly incarcerated student).

1. Do you feel safe on campus as a member of an underrepresented minority group? Why or why not? What would help change that?
2. Do you have difficulty meeting your basic needs (food, housing, etc.) as a student? Why or why not? What would help change that?
3. Do you have difficulty paying for tuition or textbooks? Why or why not? What would help change that?
4. Do you feel supported academically as a student and as a member of a historically underrepresented minority group? Why or why not? What would help change that?
5. Do you feel valued at WOU?
6. What are things that your school's administration or the state government could do to help you and people from your community improve their access to higher education? (In terms of affordability, admissions, graduation rates, retention of students, and job placement)
Do you feel that faculty and administration are respectful of your culture and identities?
7. Do you think that WOU's faculty mirrors the student population?
8. Are you currently aware of WOU's financial decisions and how that affects your degree path?
9. How do you feel about the way WOU is handling COVID-19?
10. Do you have any concerns about WOU?

Data:

In total, 122 survey responses were recorded, giving a sample of approximately 3% of WOU's student body population. Some students only gave feedback for improvement and did not mention their own experiences. Percentages will be based on the total number of students who gave clear indications for their own experiences to each question. Only demographics that consisted of greater than 5% of total survey respondents

(greater than 10 respondents) were included and analyzed to account for statistical significance; for that reason, student veterans, undocumented students, formerly incarcerated students, students with a GED or other high school equivalency, and students formerly in the foster system were left out of the final analysis due to an inability to analyze the data of these communities in a statistically significant way. Their responses, however, were included in overall responses and totals encompassing the entire data set.

The results found that a large majority of students felt both safe and supported at WOU. However, affordability continues to be a large issue for students, with over half of students indicating that they had difficulty affording both basic needs and attendance costs. Both students who had their basic needs met and those who had difficulty meeting their basic needs showed a high rate of utilization of campus resources to meet their needs, showing the effectiveness of these resources. For cost of university attendance, the high rate of tuition was one of the largest factors making this difficult for students to reach, with many students unable to qualify for financial aid due to the jobs they had to work to afford both cost of attendance and rent. Textbooks, however, seemed to be a common thread among the respondents; many indicated that their exorbitant cost not included in tuition or financial aid packages, low utility in classes, and low reutilization rate made them a much-dreaded quarterly cost that could be out of reach for many students.

When asked how access could be improved for students from historically marginalized communities, the vast majority of those surveyed indicated that working on greater affordability would be the best way to help these students. Additionally, accessibility models for classes (e.g., greater and cheaper online/asynchronous course options) was mentioned as a way to help many different students, including rural students, working students, and disabled students. Increasing the diversity of the faculty and staff, providing more basic needs resources for students, biweekly pay for on-campus jobs, higher on-campus wages, more resources for non-traditional students who often quit their jobs to go back to school, more and better bridge programs for first-generation students from underrepresented groups, and more financial aid support for students from marginalized communities were also among the things students mentioned that would increase access to education for people from their communities. However, among students from all communities, affordability was by far the most mentioned theme that prevented them and people from their community from accessing higher education.

Below are the proportions of the survey respondents who self-identified as a member of the indicated community whose responses were analyzed in the survey:

Underrepresented Community	% of Participants
Students of Color	46%
LGBTQ+ Students	30.3%
Low Income Students	59%
Disabled Students	14%
Non-Traditional Students	15.6%
Non-Native English Speakers	10.7%
Rural Students	15.6%

Question 1: Safety

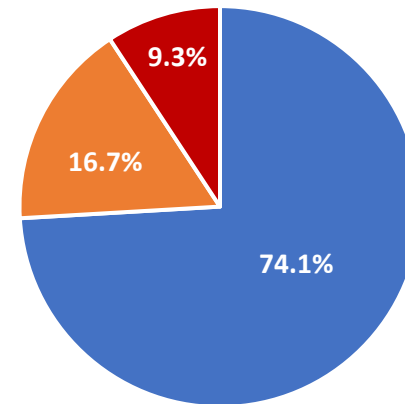
The majority of students felt safe on campus, with nearly three-quarters of students feeling safe on campus and over nine in ten students feeling at least somewhat safe.

Members of certain groups tend to feel much less safe on campus, with around 10% less students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and low-income students feeling safe than white students, cisgender and heterosexual students, and middle- or high-income students respectively. Additionally, students for whom English is not their native language feel disproportionately less safe on campus than their native English speaker counterparts. Among the mentioned reasons for this lack of safety were underrepresentation, microaggressions and discriminatory behavior and statements from those on campus, and obstacles to institutional resources for undocumented students.

Most of the respondents who mentioned qualifications to their feelings of safety on campus had concerns about underrepresentation of people of diverse backgrounds, both on campus and in the larger Monmouth community.

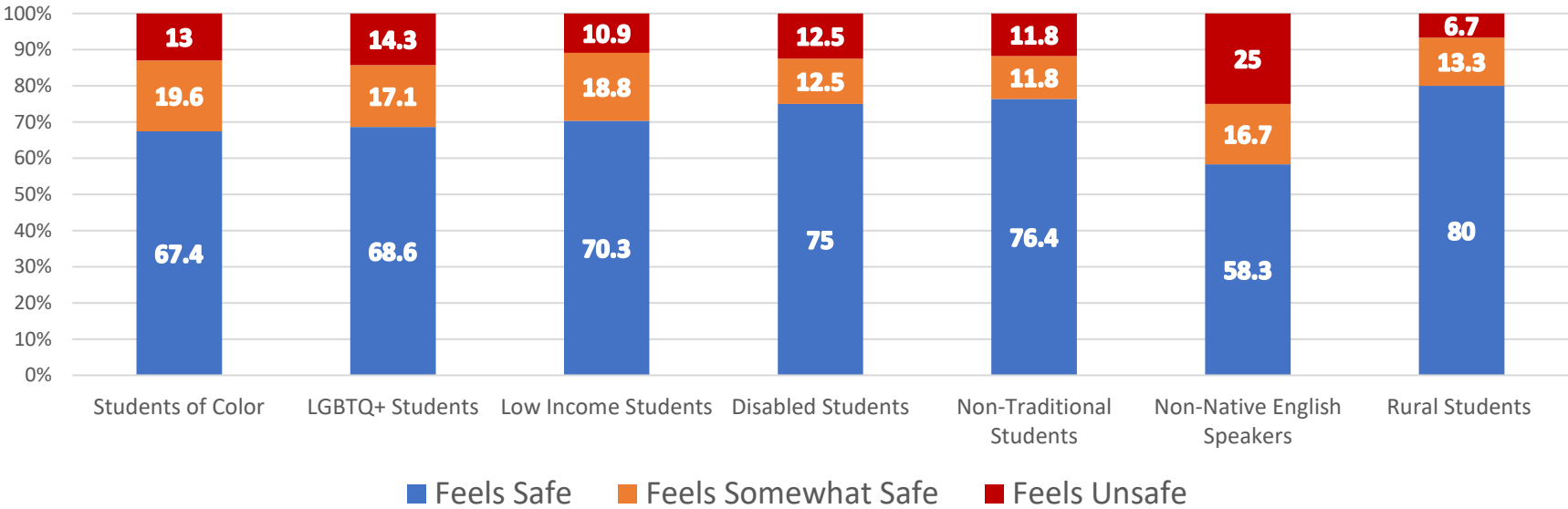
Notably, COVID-19 was not mentioned in survey responses for this question, but the issue was raised with another question later in the survey, so pandemic-related concerns were not a topic that was covered by this question specifically.

Safety on Campus



■ Safe ■ Somewhat Safe ■ Not Safe

Safety on Campus



Community	Students of Color	White Students	LGBTQ+ Students	Cisgender Heterosexual Students	Disabled Students	Non-Disabled Students
Feels Safe	67.4%	79%	68.6%	76.7%	75%	73.9%
Feels Somewhat Safe	19.6%	14.5%	17.1%	16.4%	12.5%	17.4%
Feels Unsafe	13.0%	6.5%	14.3%	6.8%	12.5%	8.7%

Community	Low-Income Students	Middle- and High- Income Students	Non-Traditional Students	Traditional Students	Rural Students	Urban Students	Non-Native English Speaker	Native English Speaker
Feels Safe	70.3%	79.5%	76.5%	73.6%	80.0%	73.1%	58.3%	76.0%
Feels Somewhat Safe	18.8%	13.6%	11.8%	17.6%	13.3%	17.2%	16.7%	16.7%
Feels Unsafe	10.9%	6.8%	11.8%	8.8%	6.7%	9.7%	25.0%	7.3%

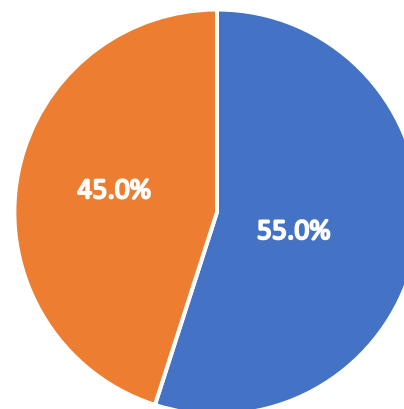
Question 2: Ability to meet basic needs

Over half of students surveyed were not able to meet at least some of their basic needs (housing, food, childcare products, menstrual products, health care, and technology items).

Most of the identity groups surveyed indicated that majorities were able to meet their basic needs, a better trend than the group of surveyed students at large. However, low-income students, disabled students, and especially non-traditional students indicated a much more challenging time meeting their basic needs than other survey participants, with over seven in nine non-traditional students indicating difficulties meeting their basic needs. Students surveyed who did not encounter many difficulties in meeting their basic needs typically have their costs covered by scholarships, grants, on-campus jobs, or family assistance.

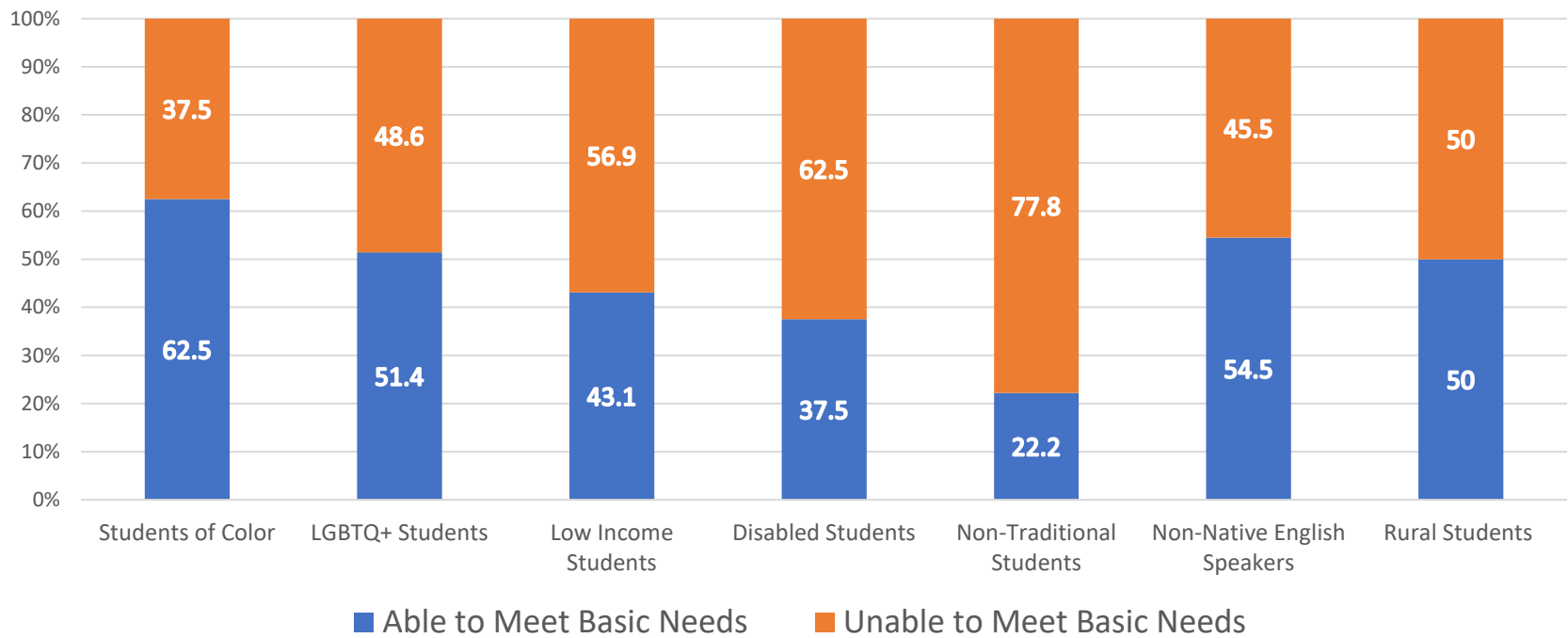
Many respondents also indicated they were unable to take enough credits to qualify for financial aid because of the number of hours they needed to work to afford food, housing, and tuition. Affordable access to housing close to campus, affordable access to food, high gas prices for commuters, limited on-campus or local job opportunities, and the lack of resources for undocumented students who need support are common issues mentioned by respondents as barriers to having their basic needs met. Access to food on campus (food that meets students' dietary restrictions, using meal plan money at more locations, quality of food options on campus, and living in a food desert with limited options) was specifically mentioned as a barrier to basic needs security. Most students who indicated difficulty meeting their basic needs said that often, they had to choose between paying for tuition and paying for rent and food, and students who are working part-time (less than 30 hours per week) often still indicate that they are either unable or have difficulties meeting their basic needs. Students often indicate that working enough to pay for both tuition and basic needs keeps them from being able to dedicate enough of their time and effort to school to be successful.

Ability to Meet Basic Needs



■ Afford Basic Needs ■ Can't Afford Basic Needs

Ability to Meet Basic Needs



Community	Students of Color	White Students	LGBTQ+ Students	Cisgender Heterosexual Students	Disabled Students	Non-Disabled Students
Able to Meet Basic Needs	62.5%	49.2%	51.4%	56.6%	37.5%	57.9%
Unable to Meet Basic Needs	37.5%	50.8%	48.6%	43.4%	62.5%	42.1%

Community	Low-Income Students	Middle- and High-Income Students	Non-Traditional Students	Traditional Students	Rural Students	Urban Students	Non-Native English Speaker	Native English Speaker
Unable to Meet Basic Needs	43.1%	71.7%	22.2%	61.3%	54.5%	55.8%	54.5%	55.0%
Unable to Meet Basic Needs	56.9%	28.3%	77.8%	38.7%	45.5%	44.2%	45.5%	45.0%

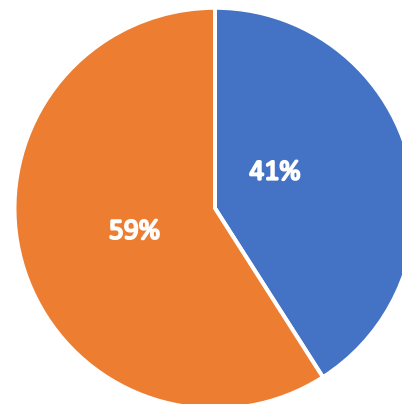
Question 3: Ability to cover costs of university attendance

Nearly three in five students surveyed encountered difficulties in paying for college (tuition, fees, textbooks, and transportation).

There are large discrepancies between students of color, disabled students, low-income students, non-traditional students, and students who are non-native English speakers when compared to white students, non-disabled students, middle- and upper-income students, traditional students, and students who are native English speakers when it comes to affordability. Students surveyed who did not encounter many difficulties in paying for college typically have their costs covered by scholarships, grants, loans, on-campus jobs, or family assistance.

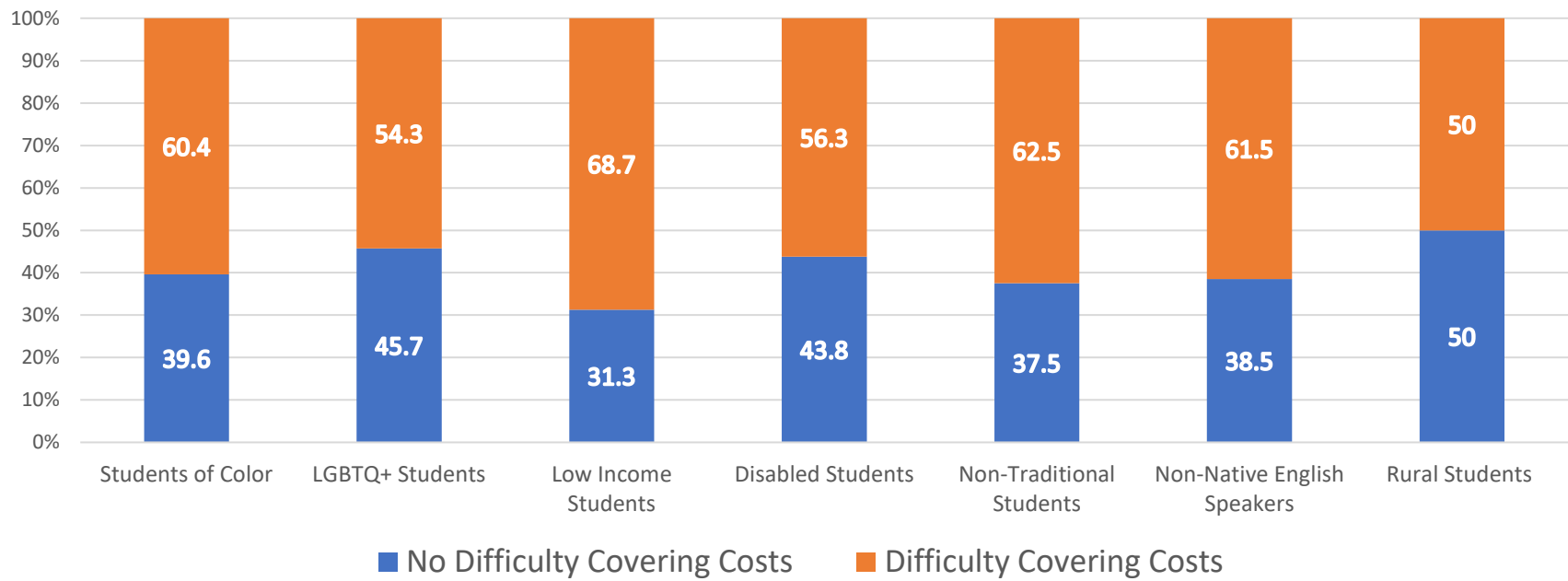
No single group is disproportionately affected by the affordability of university attendance. The increasing cost of textbooks, the required purchase of superfluous class materials, not enough opportunities for financial aid/scholarships, high online course fees, and high basic needs costs (specifically rent) necessitating full-time work that disqualifies students from receiving financial aid are cited as the main obstacles for respondents in covering the cost of university attendance. In addition, undocumented students uniformly mention the lack of access to federal financial aid programs as an enormous obstacle in achieving financial stability, while non-traditional students mention the lack of access to financial aid to offset tuition costs due to being disqualified based on household income as their most significant barrier to affordability. Most respondents specifically mention the high cost and low utility of textbooks and high tuition costs as being large hurdles to overcome, especially for students who receive financial aid only covering tuition. However, despite tuition being a larger cost than textbooks, textbooks are more often mentioned as a barrier to affordability for students.

Difficulty Covering Costs of Tuition and Textbooks



■ No Difficulty Covering Costs ■ Difficulty Covering Costs

Difficulty Covering Costs of Tuition and Textbooks



Community	Students of Color	White Students	LGBTQ+ Students	Cisgender Heterosexual Students	Disabled Students	Non-Disabled Students
No Difficulty Covering Costs	39.6%	52.4%	45.7%	46.9%	37.5%	47.0%
Difficulty Covering Costs	60.4%	47.6%	54.3%	53.1%	62.5%	53.0%

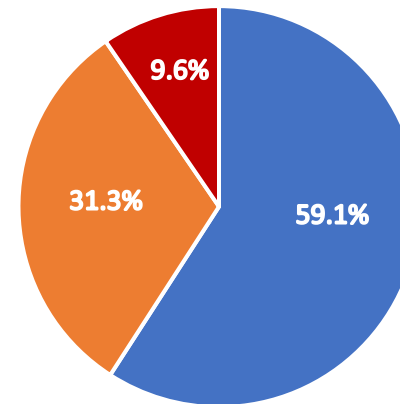
Community	Low-Income Students	Middle- and High- Income Students	Non-Traditional Students	Traditional Students	Rural Students	Urban Students	Non-Native English Speaker	Native English Speaker
Unable to Meet Basic Needs	31.3%	67.3%	37.5%	48.0%	50%	45.9%	38.5%	47.6%
Unable to Meet Basic Needs	68.7%	32.7%	62.5%	52.0%	50%	54.1%	61.5%	52.4%

Question 4: Academic support

Over nine in ten students felt at least somewhat supported academically by WOU, with nearly three in five of students surveyed feeling very supported.

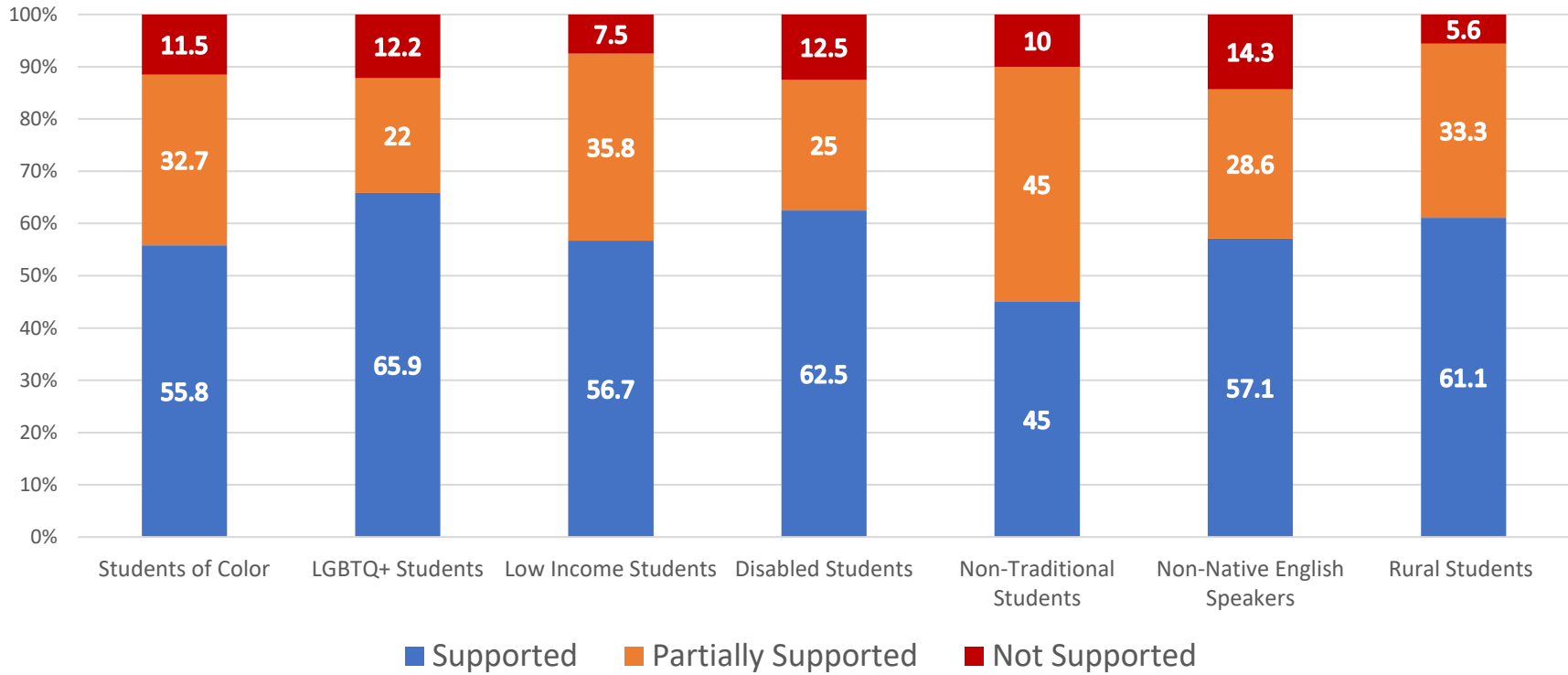
Non-traditional students had the most qualifications around their feelings of support, with difficulties navigating university systems, not being connected with university resources and student groups, and non-academic support (such as advising, networking, technology, and access to class materials) being less than what is desired as the most common barriers to being fully supported by the university. Most students who feel qualifications about academic support or do not feel supported mention low prioritization of creating professional networks and labor market entry preparation, low faculty and staff diversity, difficulties getting accommodations for non-physical disabilities (e.g. autism, ADHD, dyslexia, etc.), and low awareness of on-campus resources as issues they have faced.

Level of Academic Support



■ Supported ■ Partially Supported ■ Does Not Feel Supported

Overall Level of Academic Support



Community	Students of Color	White Students	LGBTQ+ Students	Cisgender Heterosexual Students	Disabled Students	Non-Disabled Students
Supported	55.8%	61.9%	65.9%	58.2%	62.5%	58.6%
Partially Supported	32.7%	30.2%	22%	34.2%	25%	32.3%
Not Supported	11.5%	7.9%	12.2%	9.3%	12.5%	9.1%

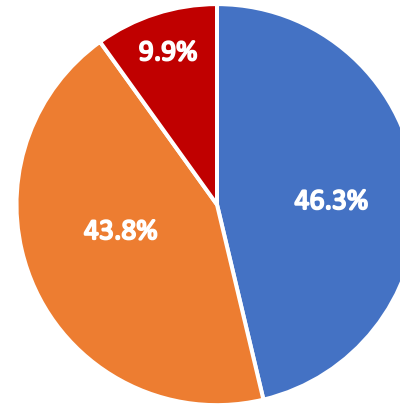
Community	Low-Income Students	Middle- and High- Income Students	Non-Traditional Students	Traditional Students	Rural Students	Urban Students	Non-Native English Speaker	Native English Speaker
Supported	56.7%	62.5%	45%	62.9%	61.1%	58.8%	57.1%	60.2%
Partially Supported	35.8%	25%	45%	27.8%	33.3%	30.9%	28.6%	31.1%
Not Supported	7.5%	12.5%	10%	9.3%	5.6%	10.3%	14.3%	8.7%

Question 5: Being valued on campus

Over nine in ten students felt at least somewhat valued by the university. However, around half of those students only feel somewhat valued.

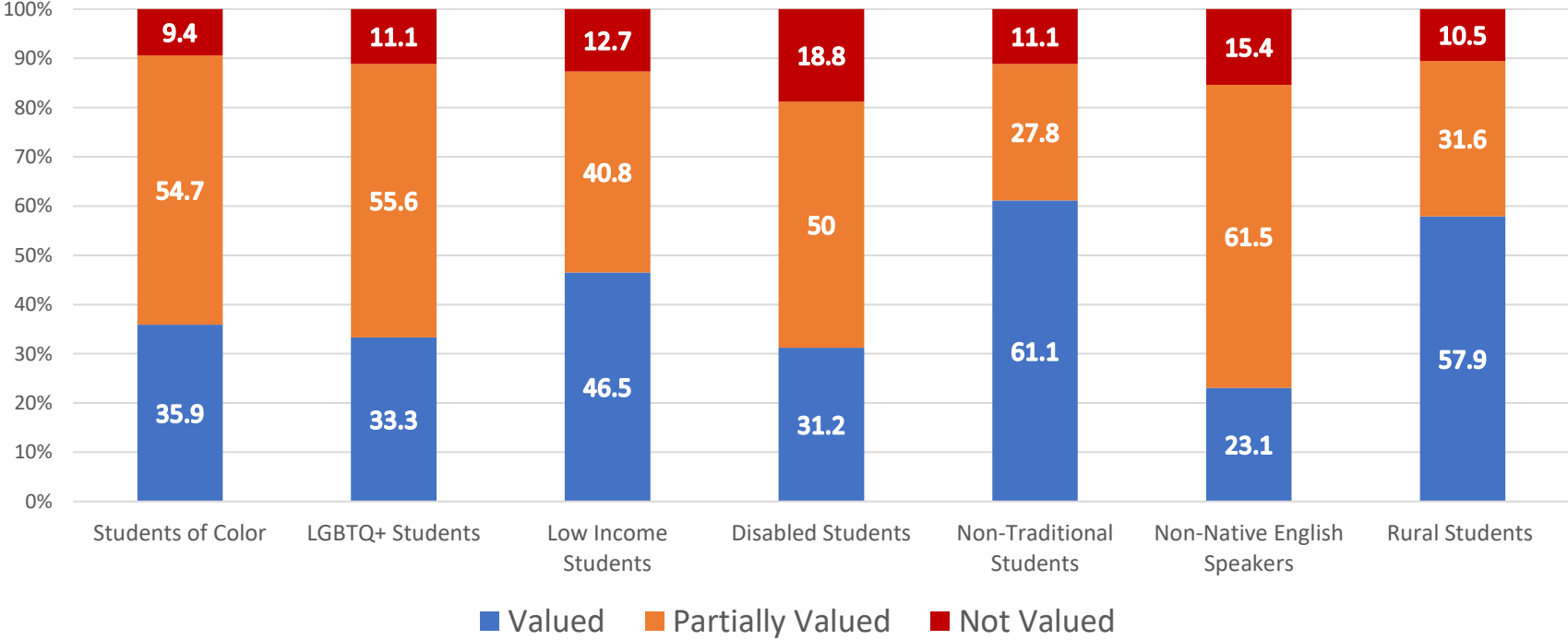
Students who come from more visible minority groups (students of color, LGBTQ+ students, students who are not native English speakers, and disabled students) are much more likely to feel somewhat valued by WOU. Interestingly, however, students of color and LGBTQ+ are also much less likely to indicate that they feel unvalued by the university, indicating mixed feelings about WOU's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and existing as a visible member of a historically marginalized group on campus. Disabled students and students who are non-native English speakers are nearly twice as likely to feel unvalued by WOU as opposed to non-disabled students and students who are native English speakers, indicating a perceived lack of accessibility for and underserving of those groups. Items specifically mentioned to improve this would be improved disability accommodations in classes such as asynchronous class options and greater availability of class materials, better diagnosis options for non-physical disabilities through student health services, and more services for non-native English speakers, such as Spanish-speaking counselors, advisors, and therapists.

Level of Value



■ Valued ■ Partially Valued ■ Not Valued

Level of Value



Community	Students of Color	White Students	LGBTQ+ Students	Cisgender Heterosexual Students	Disabled Students	Non-Disabled Students
Valued	35.9%	37.8%	33.3%	36.4%	31.2%	34.7%
Partially Valued	54.7%	24.4%	55.6%	27.3%	50%	30.6%
Not Valued	9.4%	37.8%	11.1%	36.4%	18.8%	34.7%

Community	Low-Income Students	Middle- and High-Income Students	Non-Traditional Students	Traditional Students	Rural Students	Urban Students	Non-Native English Speaker	Native English Speaker
Valued	46.5%	32.9%	61.1%	32.6%	57.9%	32.8%	23.1%	35.1%
Partially Valued	40.8%	34.3%	27.8%	34.8%	31.6%	34.4%	61.5%	29.8%
Not Valued	12.7%	32.9%	11.1%	32.6%	10.5%	32.8%	15.4%	35.1%