

DISCOVERY ACTIVITIES, FUNDING, AND CLIMATE SURVEY ANALYSIS

Prepared for Western Michigan University

April 2015

In the following report, Hanover Research analyzes the results of the Discovery Activities, Funding, and Climate Survey administered to faculty members at Western Michigan University. Specifically, this report analyzes respondents' experience with external funding proposals and awards, perceptions of the quality of OVPR's discovery supports, and the services they need for this work.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary and Key Findings	3
INTRODUCTION	3
KEY FINDINGS	3
Section I: Experience with External Funding	5
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	5
FIGURES	7
Section II: Support for Discovery Activities	19
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	19
FIGURES	20
Section III: Preferences for Discovery Supports	29
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	29
FIGURES	30
Section IV: Demographic Information	33
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	33
FIGURES	33

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

In this document, Hanover Research provides analysis from the Discovery Activities, Funding, and Climate survey administered by Hanover Research to faculty at Western Michigan University. In partnership with the Western Michigan University (WMU) Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR), Hanover Research developed and administered a survey designed to measure faculty perceptions of the discovery process at WMU. Survey respondents provided information about their experience with external funding proposals and awards, the OVPR services they use or need to support this work, and their perceptions of the quality of discovery supports the provided by OVPR. The survey received 273 partial and complete responses.

This report comprises four sections and includes one supplemental file:

- **Section I: Experience with External Funding** presents faculty's experience with external funding proposals and awards, as well as challenges they face during the process of seeking external funding opportunities.
- **Section II: Support for Discovery Activities** presents respondents' perception towards the quality of discovery supports provided by OVPR.
- **Section III: Preferences for Discovery Supports** discusses respondents' preferences for supports in discovery activities.
- **Section IV: Demographic Information** presents the demographic information of survey respondents.

This report is accompanied by one supplemental excel file:

- **Supplement – Crosstabs:** provides full tabulations of the survey results overall and by various segmentations, as well as verbatim open-ended responses.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Faculty report receiving mixed messages from the leadership about the importance of discovery activities at WMU.** Just over one-third of respondents indicate that they received a “strong and consistent message” from departmental leadership regarding the importance of discovery activities for *all staff members* (34 percent), and just 22 percent received a “strong and consistent message” from senior University leadership. Further, respondents report low levels of interaction with departmental leadership regarding their discovery activities, with just 8 percent of respondents reporting discussing their discovery activities with chairs and unit directors weekly.
- **Overall, a majority of faculty members feel that the experience of seeking external funding is challenging (87 percent).** Faculty members often consider this work

challenging due to the lack of time to prepare proposals (57 percent) and to pursue discovery activities (56 percent). Nonetheless, faculty members typically recognize the importance of seeking external funding. Twenty-seven percent of respondents note that they “muscle through it” because they need external funding to continue with their work, and 21 percent find the experience of applying for external funding stimulating.

- **Many faculty members are not aware of several of the resources OVPR has available.** Further, respondents with less experience in submitting and writing proposals are *more likely* to be unaware of funding identification resources available to them. Consequently, faculty members often feel that there are not enough funding opportunities available to support work in their field.
- **Faculty members tend to seek discovery supports from their colleagues over departmental leadership.** Respondents are most likely to have weekly discussions about their discovery activities with colleagues. Further, respondents indicate that the most useful and common resources for developing proposals are their colleagues. These findings suggest that there is a strong culture of support among peers when it comes to developing external funding proposals.
- **Most faculty members feel that OVPR is helpful in providing assistance with submitting external funding proposals (57 percent).** However, faculty members are less likely to rely on OVPR for proposal development assistance (29 percent), and just 24 percent of respondents feel that OVPR’s proposal writing assistance service is useful. Therefore, OVPR could potentially do more to provide expert, targeted support for this stage of the discovery process.
- **Faculty indicated that they would benefit the most from assistance related to funding identification (69 percent) and budget development (67 percent)** when asked to select the types of assistance that would be most useful in support of their discovery activities. Many respondents also expressed their needs for additional support staff, facilities, and equipment in order to better conduct discovery activities.

SECTION I: EXPERIENCE WITH EXTERNAL FUNDING

This section presents faculty's experience with external funding proposals and awards, as well as challenges they face during the process of seeking external funding opportunities.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

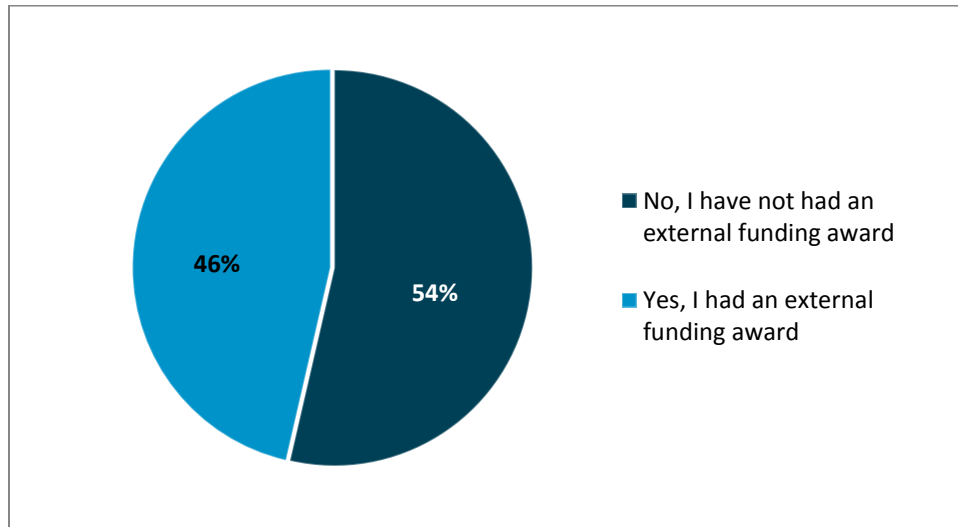
- **While most respondents have not had a funding award, professors are more likely to have had an external funding award relative to associate and assistant professors.** Overall, 54 percent of respondents indicate that they have not had an external funding award. However, over 71 percent of professors report having had an external funding award while just 16 percent of assistant professors indicate that they have had an external funding award. Among respondents who have had an external funding award, fewer than 20 percent collaborated with someone outside of WMU for their most recent projects (Figure 1.1, Figure 1.2, and Figure 1.3).
- **Overall, just over half of the respondents indicate that they are at least somewhat experienced with writing and submitting proposals for external funding (51 percent).** Eleven percent of respondents report having no experience submitting proposals for external funding. Among all departments, respondents from the Engineering department are most likely to be at least somewhat experienced with writing and submitting proposals for external funding awards (81 percent). Seventy-seven percent of respondents who are in a chair, director, or administrative position indicate that they are at least somewhat experienced with external funding proposals while just 27 percent of assistant professors report being at least somewhat experienced with external funding proposals (Figure 1.4, Figure 1.5, and Figure 1.6).
- **A majority of assistant professors indicate that they are currently active in writing and submitting proposals (73 percent),** despite very few having had much experience with writing and submitting proposals. Additionally, some respondents (30 percent) also indicate that they participated directly in proposal development without prior training in this area (Figure 1.7 and Figure 1.8).
- **While most faculty members indicate that they have an individual discovery plan (63 percent), 43 percent do not know whether their department has a discovery plan.** Further, 40 percent of respondents believe that their department does *not* have a discovery plan (Figure 1.9 and Figure 1.10).
- **Faculty report receiving mixed messages about the importance of discovery activities at WMU.** Only 22 percent of respondents indicate that they received a “strong and consistent message” from Senior University leadership regarding the importance of discovery activities for *all* staff members, while 29 percent indicated that they receive a “limited and/or inconsistent” message from University leadership about the importance of discovery activities for *some* staff members.

Large percentages of respondents also report receiving “limited and/or inconsistent” messages about the importance of discovery activities from their departmental and college leadership (40 percent) and faculty peers (43 percent) (Figure 1.12, Figure 1.14, and Figure 1.16).

- **Faculty members also indicate that they received mixed message about the expectations of discovery activities at WMU.** Just 22 percent of respondents report receiving a “strong and consistent” message from faculty peers about *all* faculty, while 29 percent indicate that they received a “limited and/or inconsistent” message about *some* faculty. Further, a large percentage of respondents indicate that they received a “limited and/or inconsistent” message regarding the expectations of discovery activities at WMU from senior university leadership (48 percent) and their departmental and college leadership (45 percent) (Figure 1.13 and Figure 1.15).
- **Respondents report low levels of interaction with chairs and unit directors regarding their discovery activities.** Just 8 percent of respondents report discussing their discovery activities with chairs and unit directors weekly. Forty-eight percent of respondents indicate that they have weekly discussions about their discovery activities with colleagues within or outside MWU. The most cited relevant areas for discovery alignment are education (40 percent) and STEM (28 percent) (Figure 1.18 and Figure 1.19).
- **Overall, a majority of respondents (87 percent) feel that the experience of seeking external funding is challenging.** The most common challenge faced by faculty members is the lack of time in their workload to prepare proposals (57 percent) or to pursue discovery activities (56 percent). Many respondents also note that they believe there are not enough external funding opportunities available for their discovery activities (40 percent) (Figure 1.20 and Figure 1.21).
- **Faculty members generally recognize the importance of seeking external funding.** Twenty-seven percent of respondents note that they “muscle through it” because they need external funding to continue with their work, and 21 percent find the experience of applying for external funding stimulating (Figure 1.22).

FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Have you ever had an external funding award?



*n=194

Figure 1.2: Have you ever had an external funding award? By Position

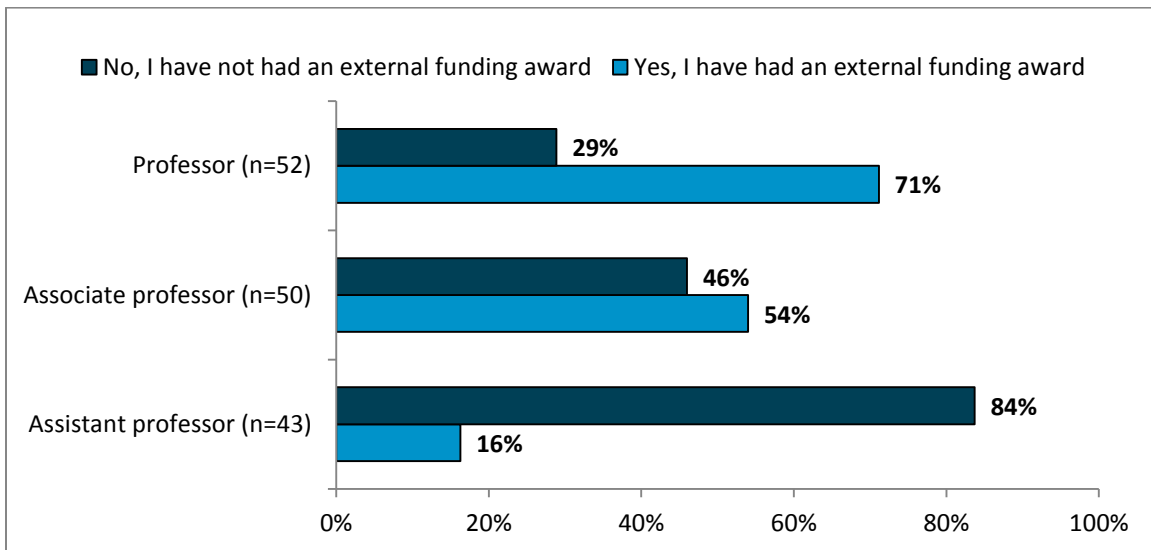
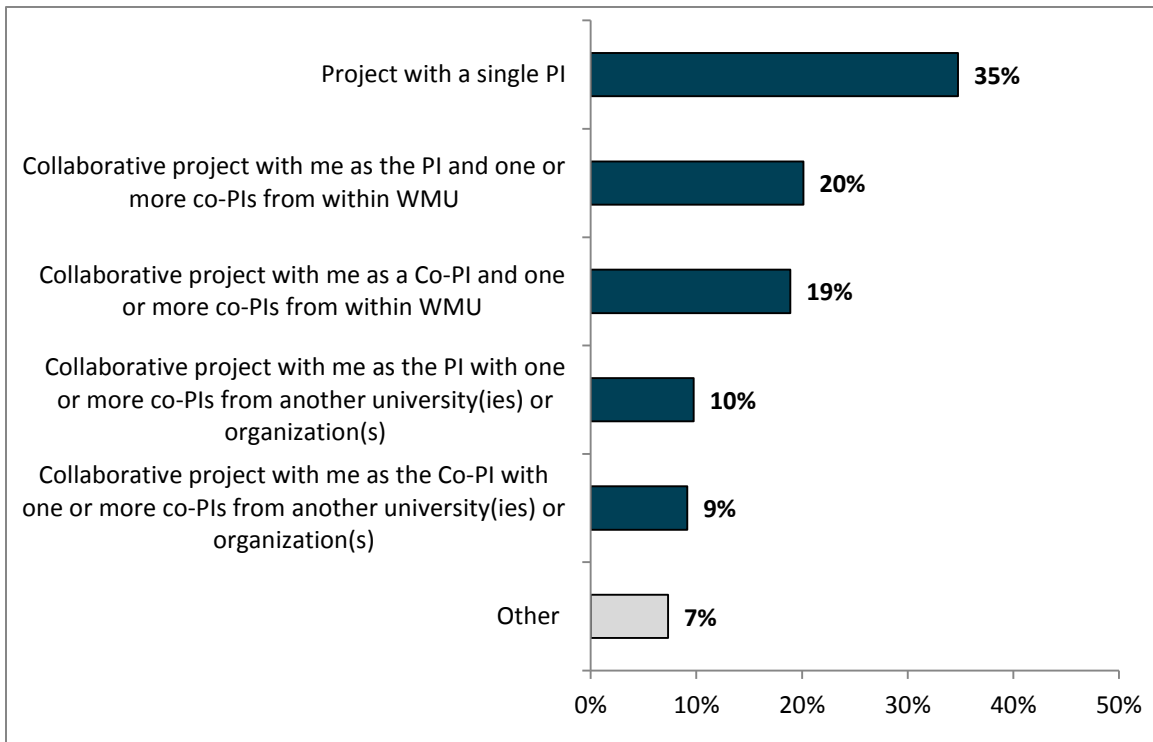
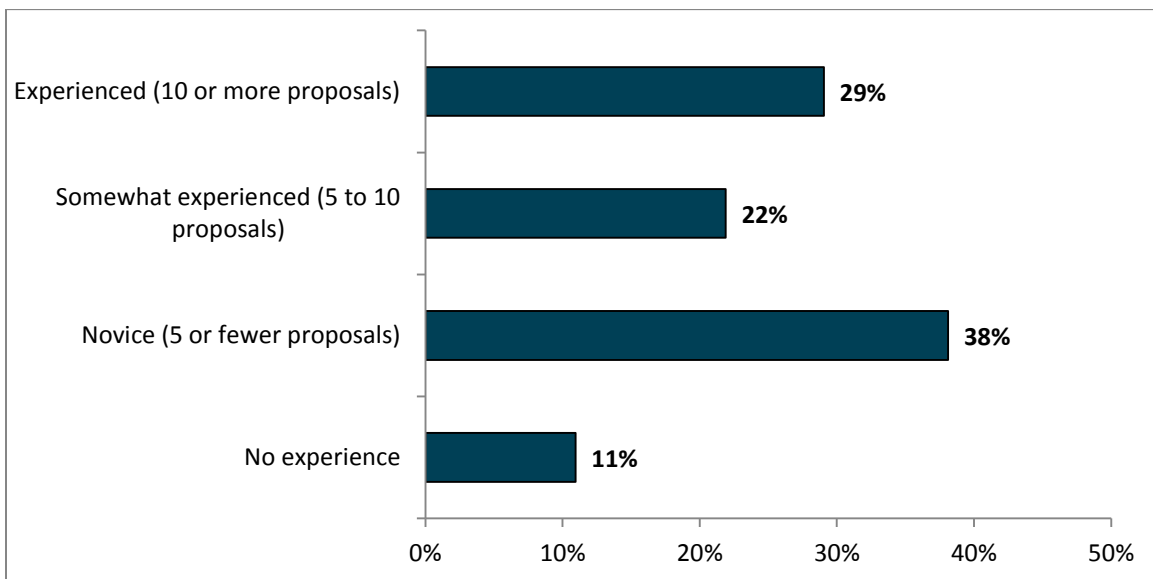


Figure 1.3: Most Recent Project with an External Funding Award



*n=164

Figure 1.4: Experience in Writing and Submitting Proposals for External Funding



*n=265

Figure 1.5: Experience in Writing and Submitting Proposals for External Funding, by Position

% Somewhat Experienced + % Experienced

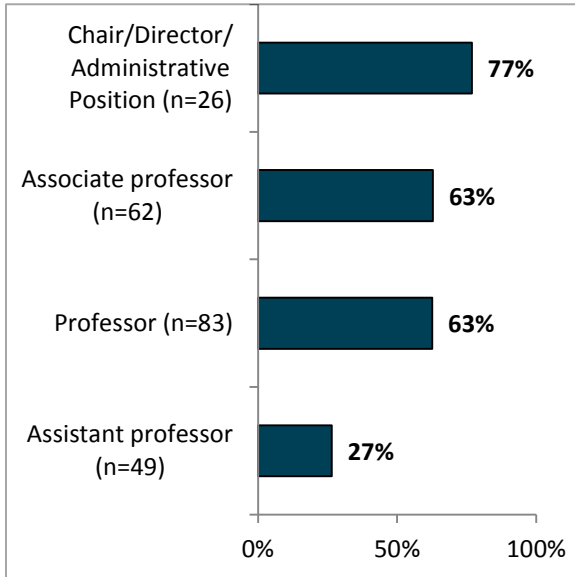


Figure 1.6: Experience in Writing and Submitting Proposals for External Funding, by Discipline

% Somewhat Experienced + % Experienced

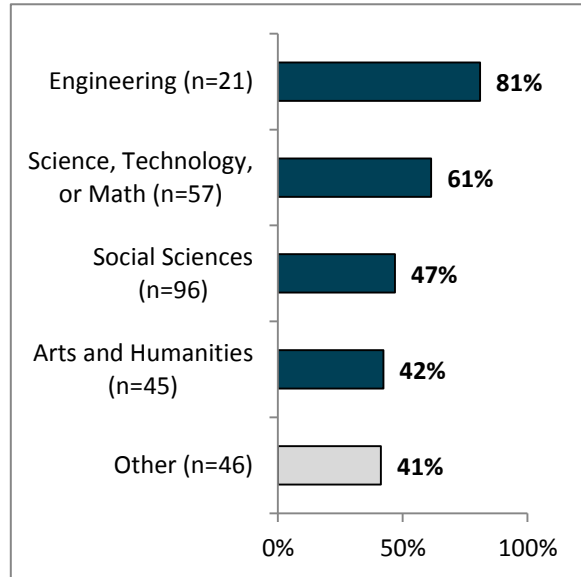


Figure 1.7: Percentage of Respondents Currently Active in Writing and Submitting Proposals for External Funding (Total and Assistant Professor)

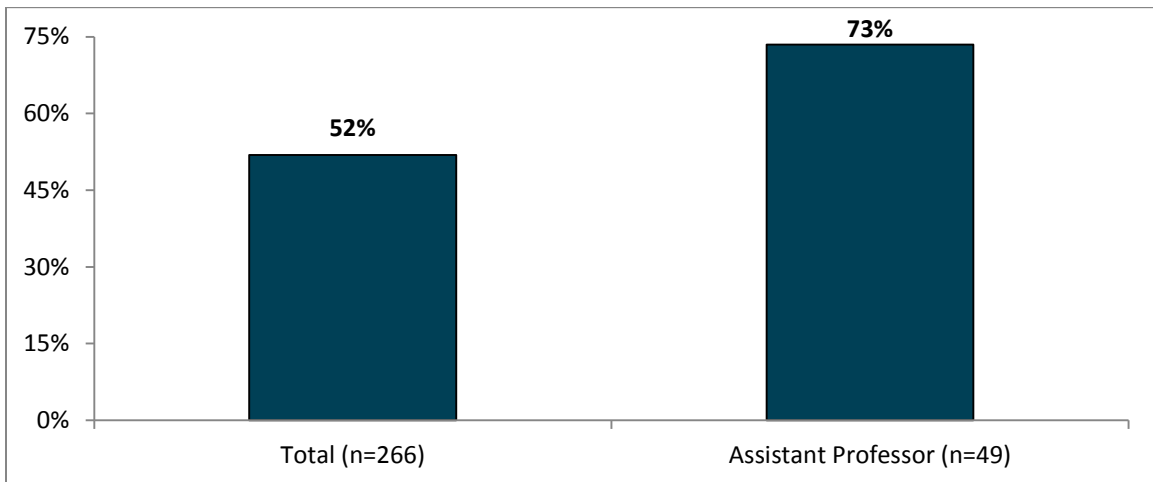
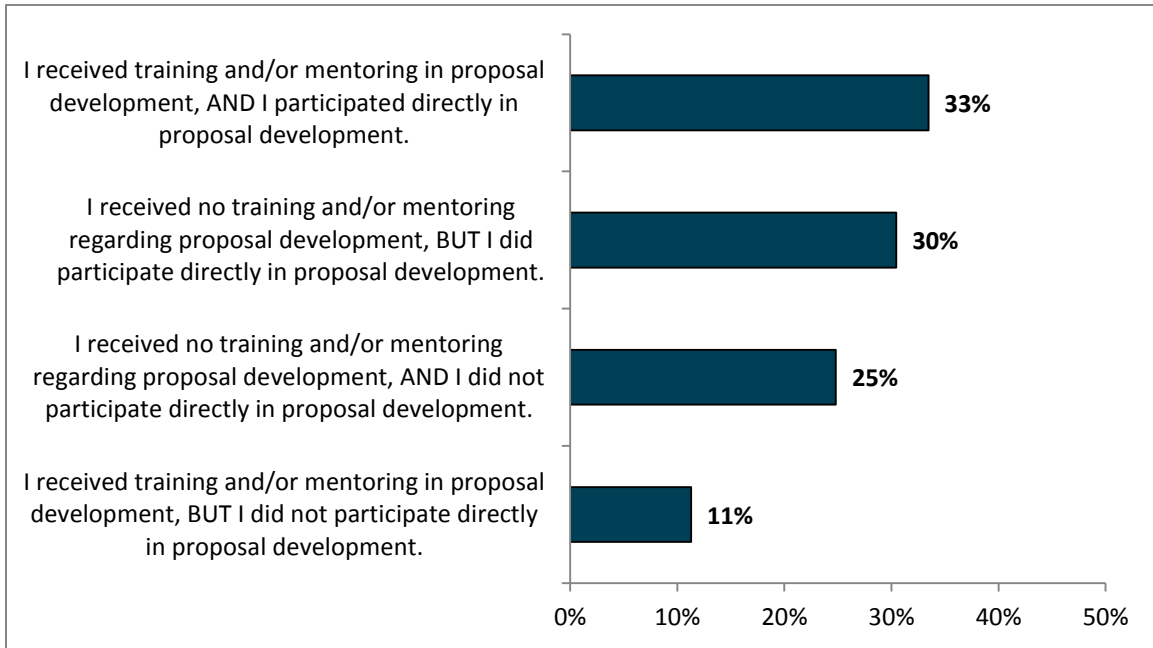
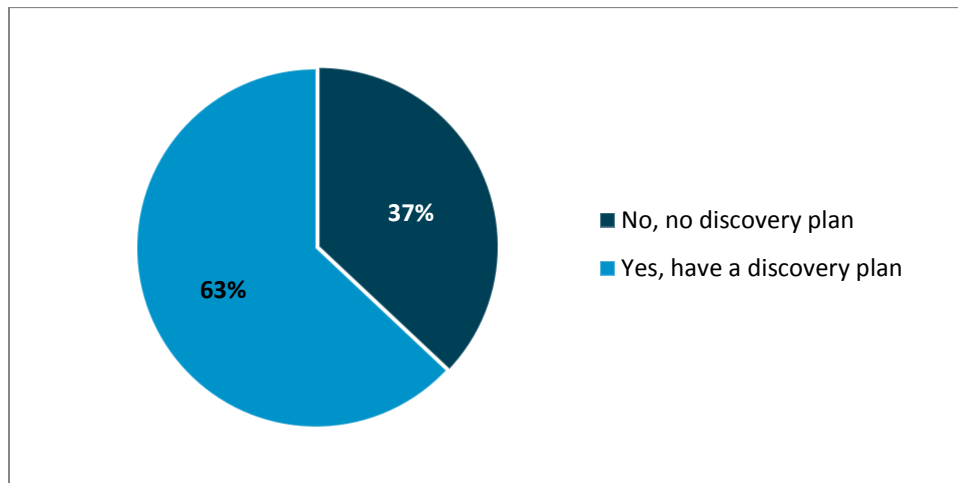


Figure 1.8: Prior Training in Developing External Funding Proposals



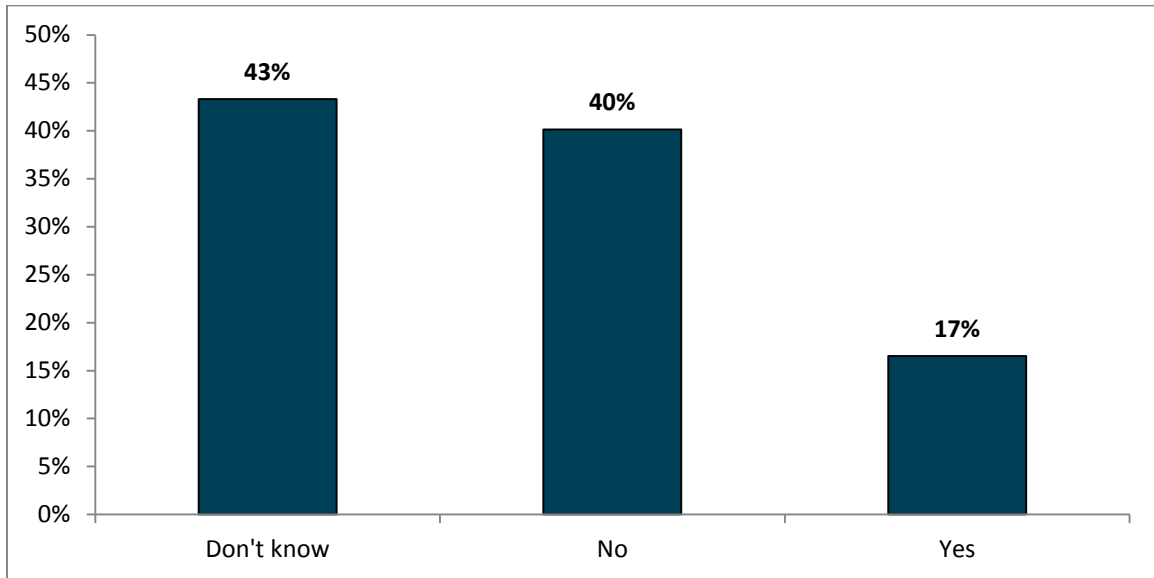
*n=266

Figure 1.9: Do you have an individual discovery plan?



*n=254

Figure 1.10: Does your department or unit have a discovery plan?



*n=254

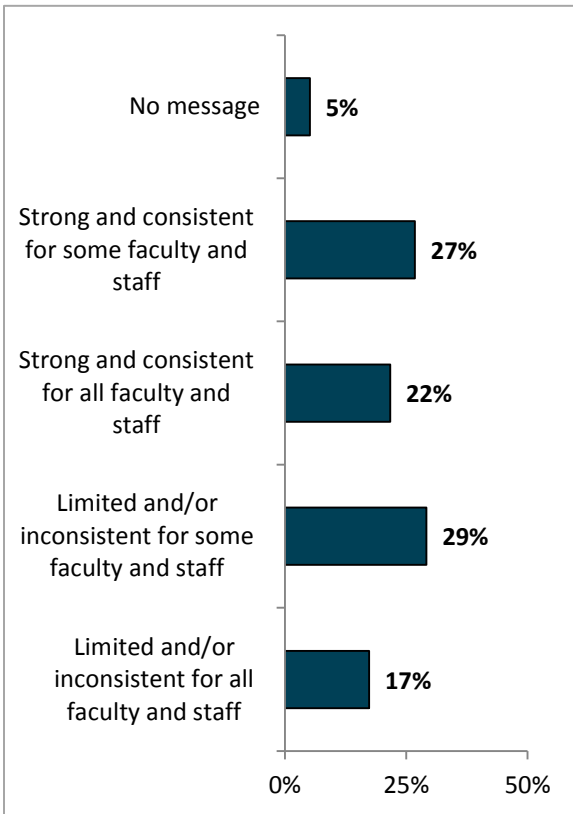
For the purpose of clarity, answer choices from Question 11 to 16 are recoded as shown in Figure 1.11.¹

Figure 1.11: Message Recoding

DESCRIPTION	RECODING
Limited and/or inconsistent message comes and goes that the discovery activities of <u>all faculty and staff</u> are important/ expected.	Limited and/or inconsistent for all faculty and staff
Limited and/or inconsistent message comes and goes that the discovery activities of <u>some faculty and staff</u> are important/ expected.	Limited and/or inconsistent for some faculty and staff
Strong and consistent message that the discovery activities of <u>all faculty and staff</u> are important/ expected.	Strong and consistent for all faculty and staff
Strong and consistent message that the discovery activities of <u>some faculty and staff</u> are important/ expected.	Strong and consistent for some faculty and staff
There is no message about the importance/ expectation of discovery activities at WMU.	No message

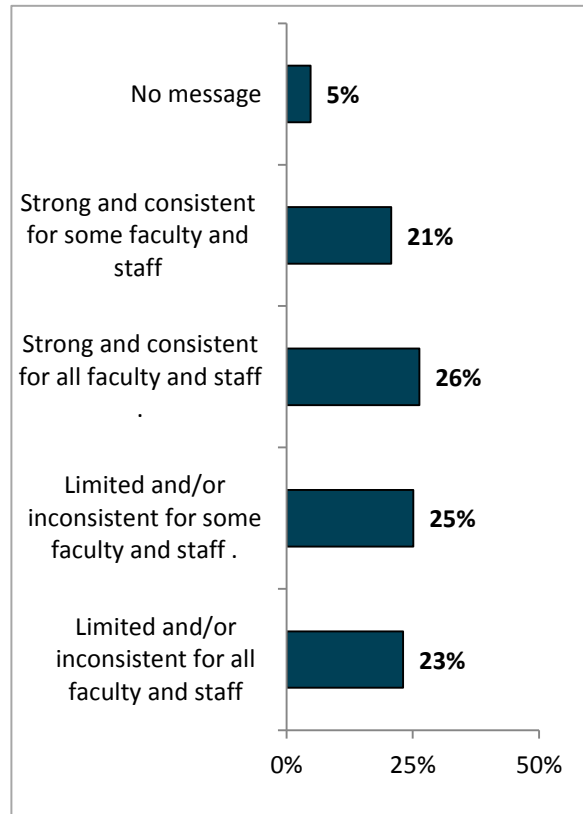
¹ Questions 11 to 13 asked for respondents’ perception of the message about the importance of discovery activities. Questions 14-16 asked for respondents perception of the message about the expectations for discovery activities.

Figure 1.12: Message from senior University leadership about the *importance* of discovery activities



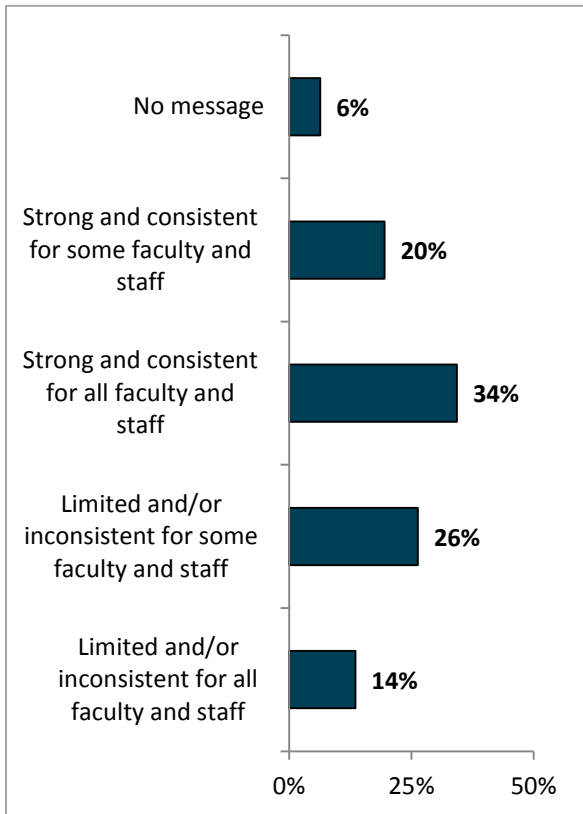
*n=254

Figure 1.13: Message from senior University leadership about the *expectations* of discovery activities



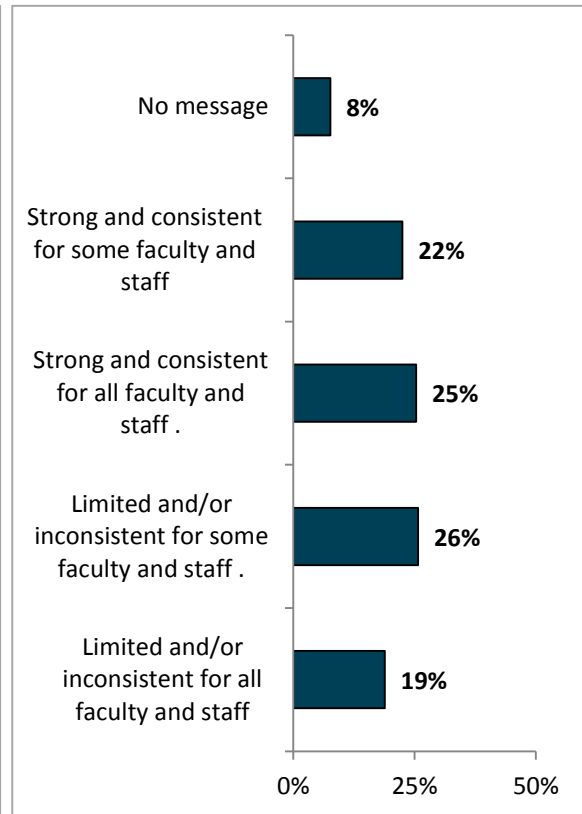
*n=251

Figure 1.14: Message from departmental and college leadership about the *importance* of discovery activities



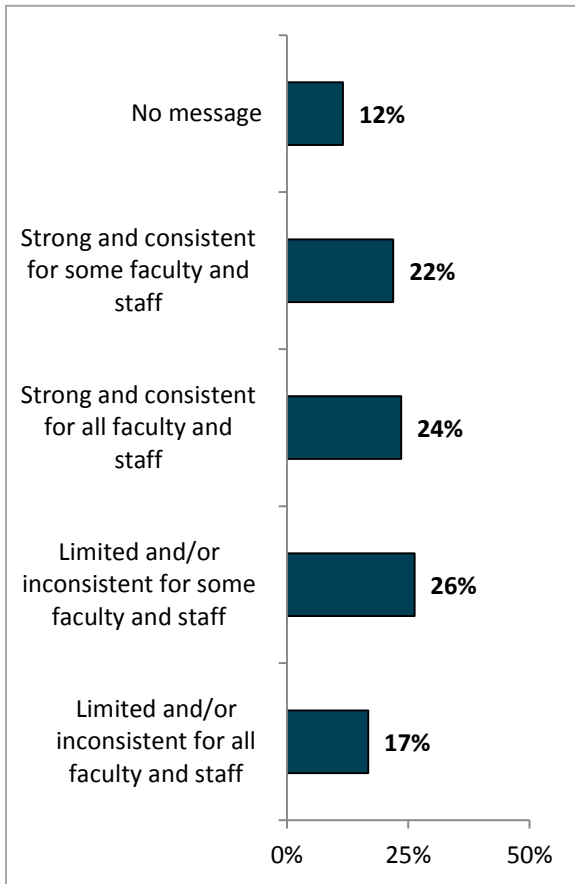
*n=251

Figure 1.15: Message from departmental and college leadership about the *expectations* of discovery activities



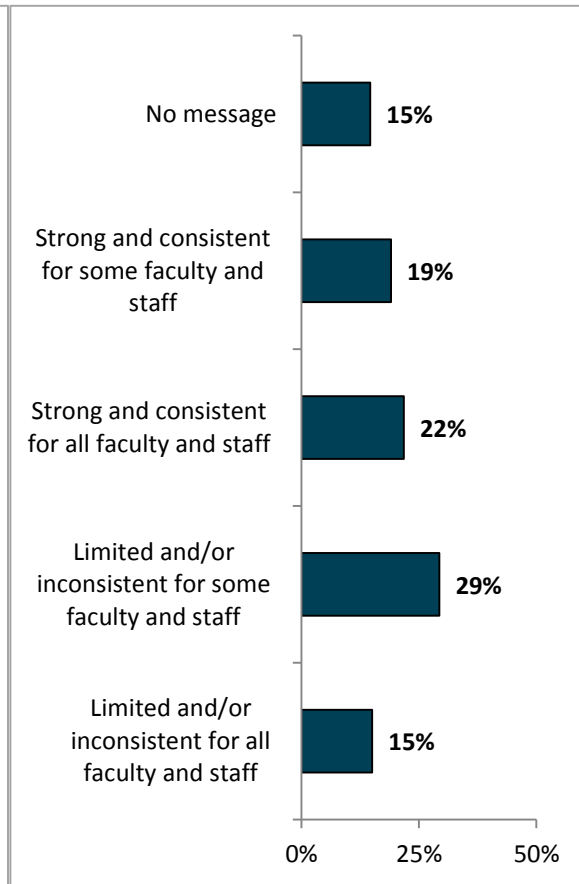
*n=249

Figure 1.16: Message from faculty peers about the *importance* of discovery activities



*n=251

Figure 1.17: Message from faculty peers about the *expectations* of discovery activities



*n=252

Figure 1.18: How often do you discuss your discovery activities with...
% Weekly+ % Several Times a Week

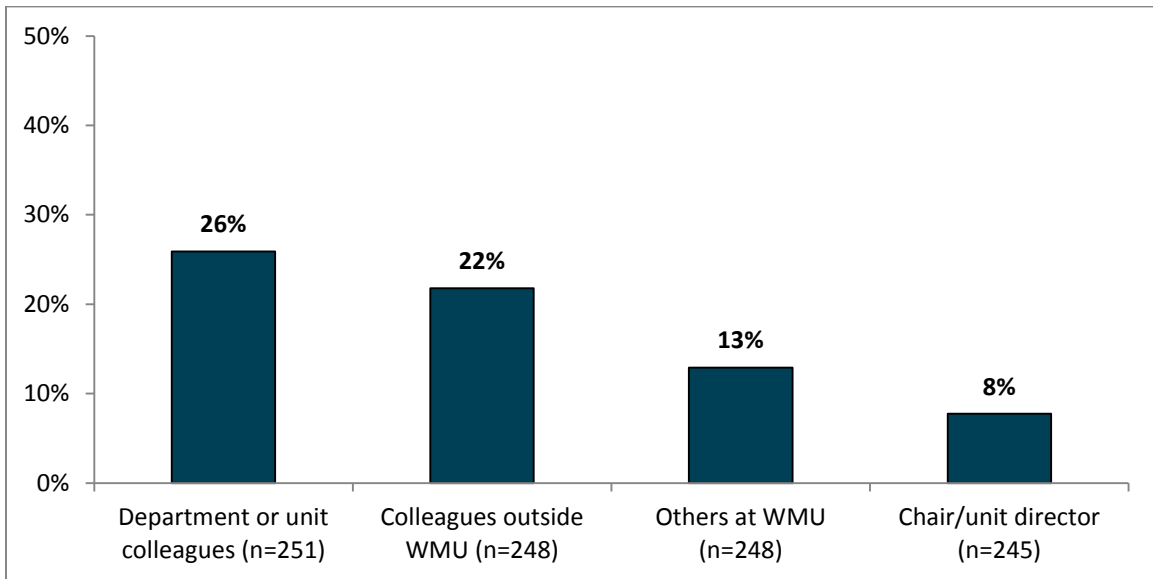
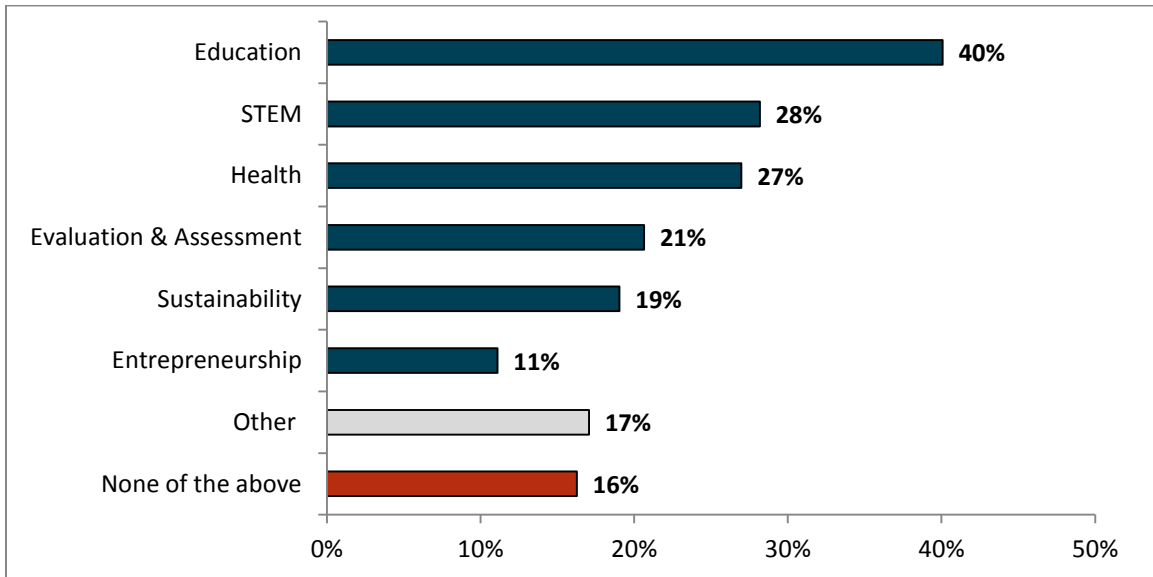


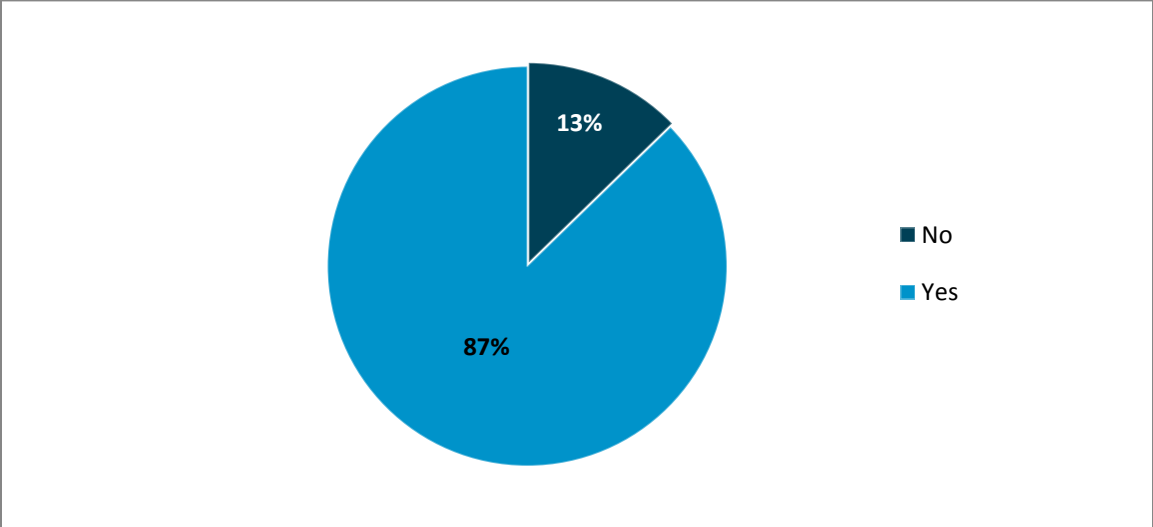
Figure 1.19: Please identify with which of the following you see your work aligning?



*n=252

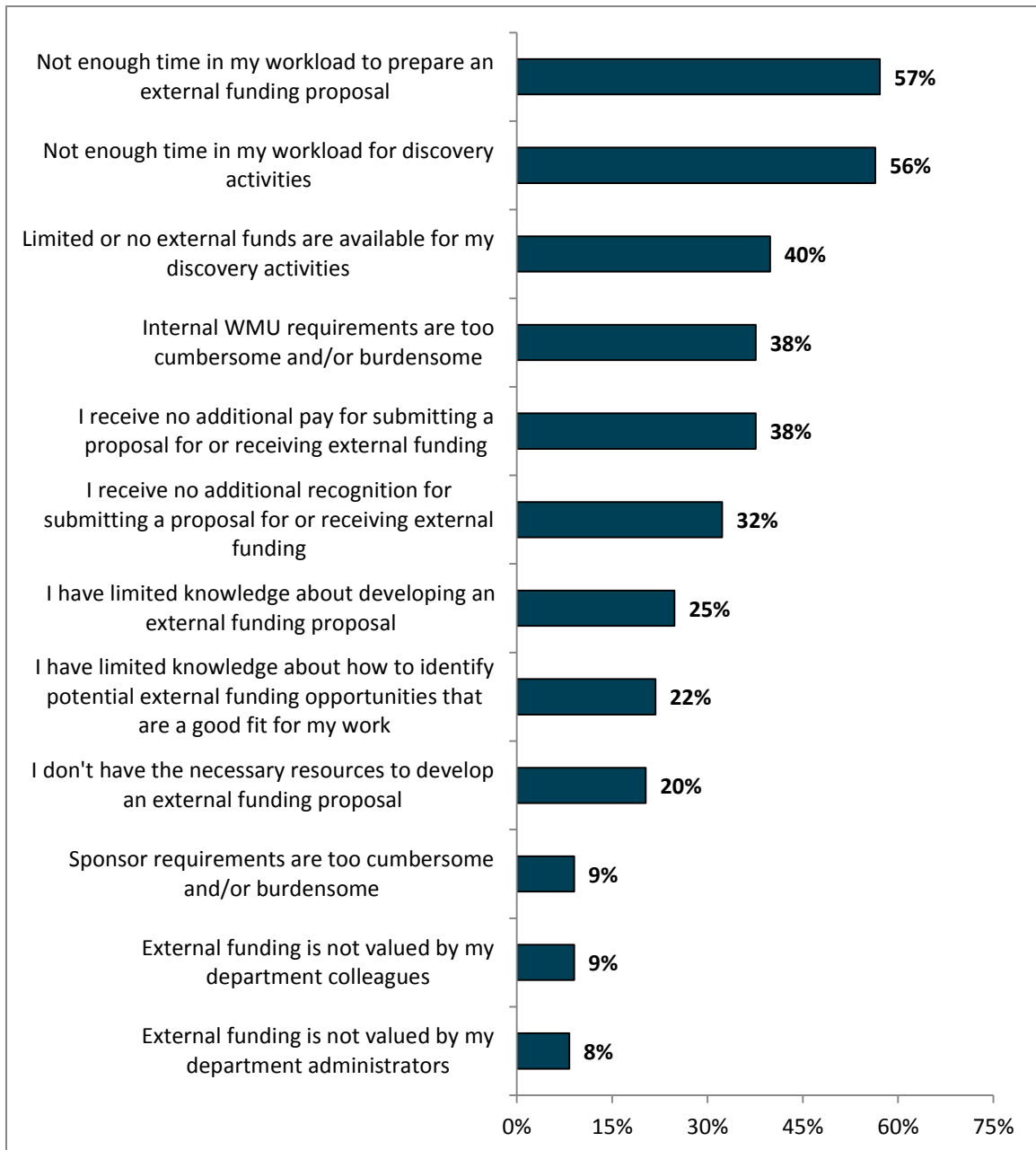
Note: Totals sum to greater than 100 percent, as respondents could select multiple choices.

Figure 1.20: Are there challenges to seeking external funding in support of your discovery activities at WMU?



*n=157

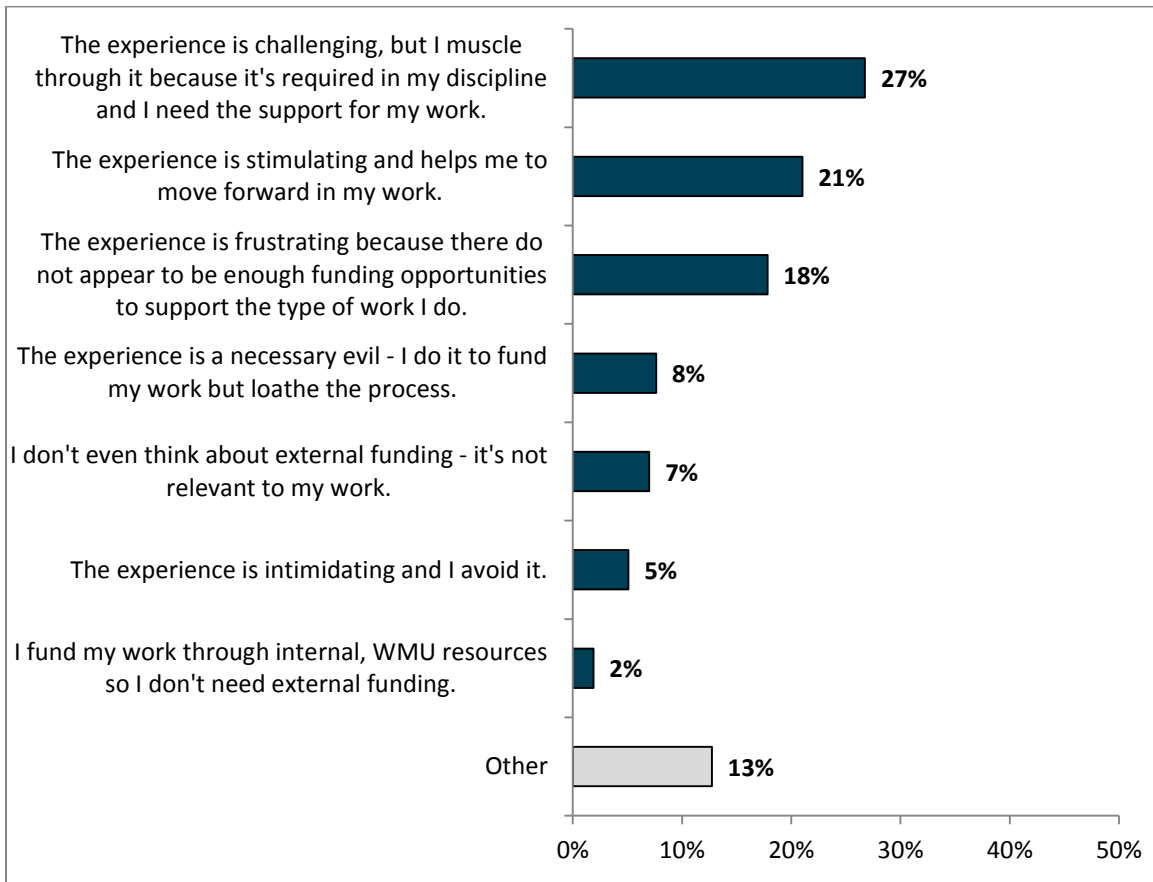
Figure 1.21: Challenges Experienced in Seeking External Funding



*n=133

Note: Totals sum to greater than 100 percent, as respondents could select multiple choices.

Figure 1.22: Which of the following best describes your feelings about external funding proposal development?



*n=157

SECTION II: SUPPORT FOR DISCOVERY ACTIVITIES

This section presents respondents' perception towards the quality of discovery supports provided by OVPR.

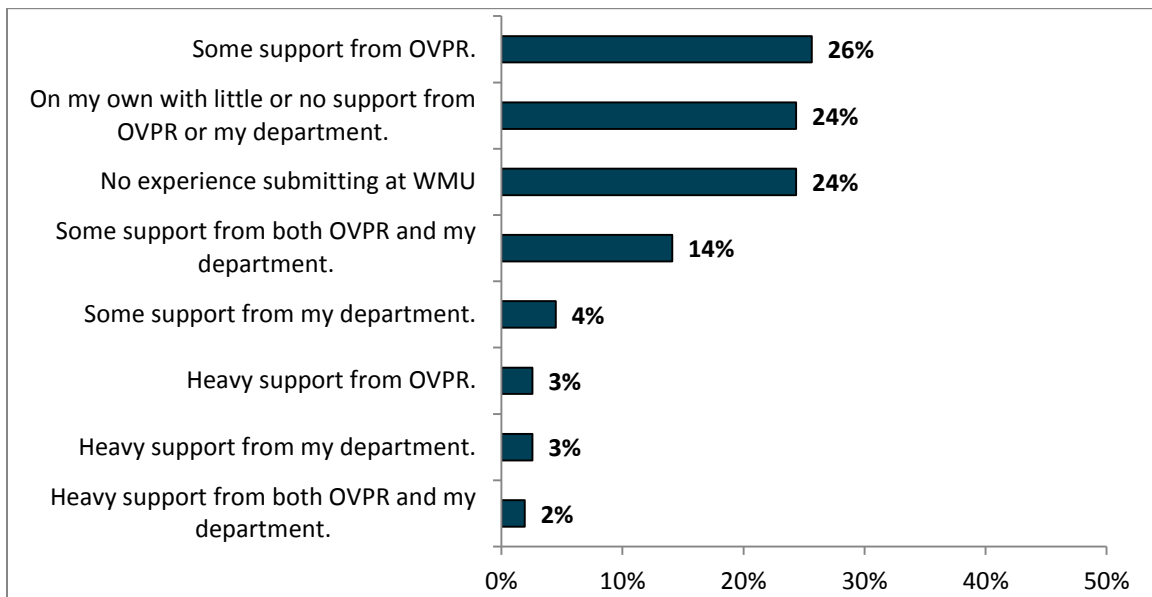
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- **Approximately 45 percent of faculty report receiving at least some support from OVPR when submitting external funding proposals.** However, 24 percent of respondents indicate that they received little or no support from OVPR or their department during the submission process (Figure 2.1).
- **Overall, respondents feel that the most useful resources for identifying external funding opportunities are their colleagues.** Seventy-six percent of respondents indicate that colleagues are “somewhat useful” or “very useful” for identifying external funding opportunities. Further, 46 percent of respondents indicate that they received assistance in finding external funding opportunities from colleagues at other universities and 27 percent from colleagues outside their departments. A large percentage of respondents also feel that the information from professional associations (64 percent) and OVPR officers (51 percent) is useful in identifying external funding opportunities. (Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.5).
- **Many faculty members are not aware of several of the resources OVPR has available.** Further, faculty with less experience in writing and submitting proposals are *more* likely to be unaware of several of the available funding identification resources. For example, 82 percent of novice proposal writers are not aware of the development resources provided by Hanover Research, and 78 percent of them do not know about AACSCU’s Grants Resources Center (Figure 2.7).
- **Respondents tend to rely on their colleagues when developing external funding proposals.** The most cited sources of assistance in proposal development are departmental colleagues and colleagues from other departments or other universities. Moreover, 78 percent of respondents feel that their colleagues are at least somewhat useful for developing external funding proposals. In general, 51 percent of respondents feel that information provided OVPR is useful in proposal development. However, just 24 percent feel that its proposal writing assistance service is useful (Figure 2.3 , Figure 2.8, Figure 2.7, and Figure 2.8).
- **The most common source for support in proposal submission is OVPR.** In fact, over half of the respondents indicate that they have received assistance from OVPR officers when submitting external funding proposals (57 percent). Relatedly, 54 percent of respondents feel that OVPR’s assistance navigating WMU’s proposal submission approval process is at least somewhat useful, and over half of respondents feel that OVPR’s assistance in budget development is at least somewhat useful (55 percent) (Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.8).

- **Most respondents feel that the OVPR website is useful for providing staff contact information (62 percent) and links to specific forms (61 percent).** However, a small majority of respondents indicate that they are not aware of the links to statistical tools on the website (53 percent) (Figure 2.9).
- **The most relevant policy for discovery activities is the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board.** Specifically, 65 percent of respondents indicate that the HSIRB policies apply to their discovery activities. All respondents feel that OVPR is very helpful in supporting their compliance with applicable policies (100 percent each). (Figure 2.10).

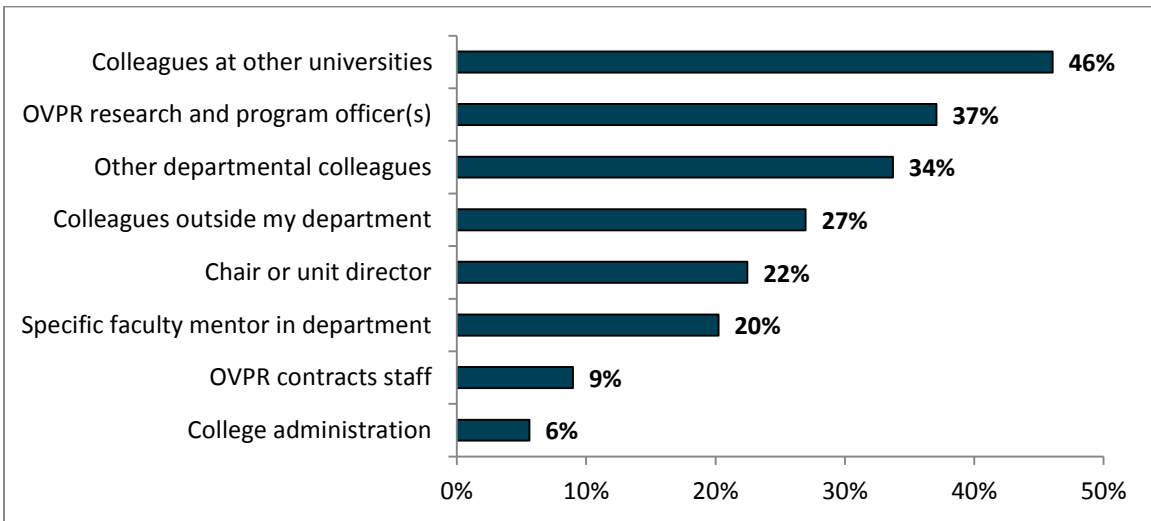
FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Experience Submitting External Funding Proposal(s) at WMU



*n=156

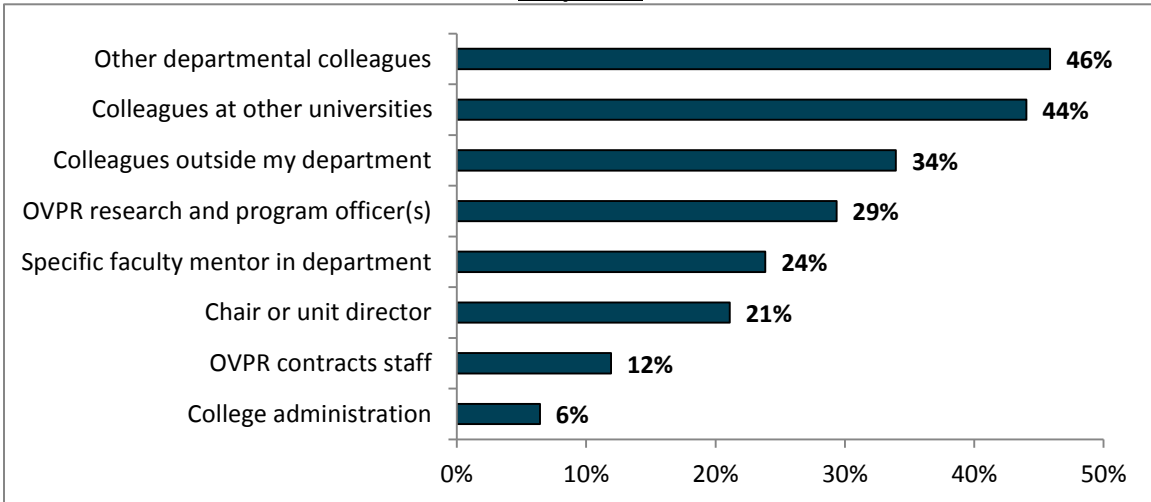
Figure 2.2: Assistance from any of the following Individuals for Support in Finding External Funding Opportunities



*n=89

Note: Totals sum to greater than 100 percent, as respondents could select multiple choices.

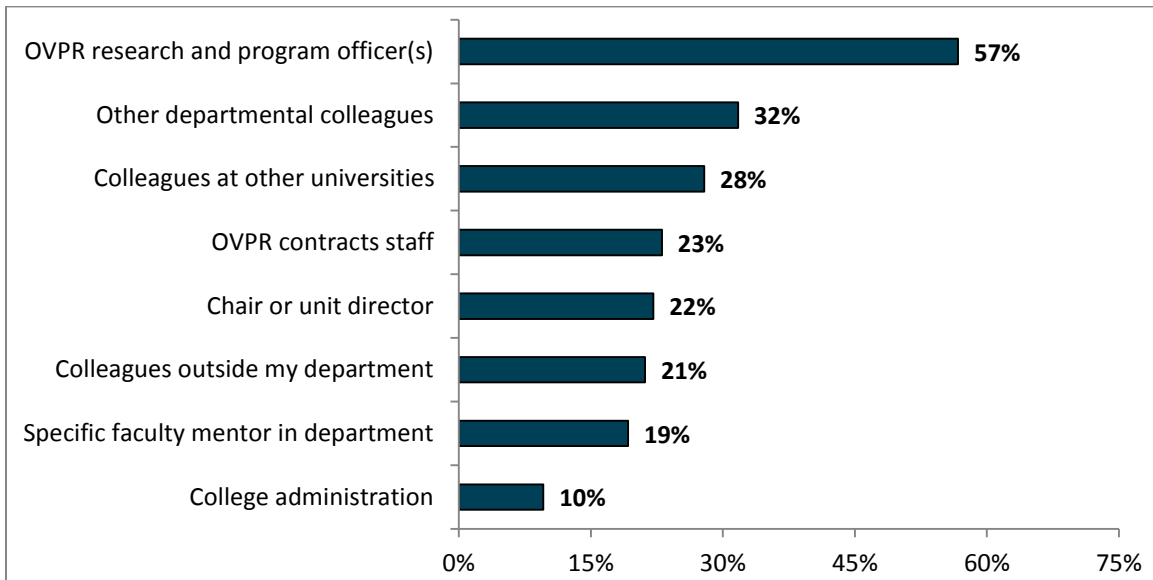
Figure 2.3: Assistance from any of the following Individuals for Support in Developing Proposals



*n=109

Note: Totals sum to greater than 100 percent, as respondents could select multiple choices.

Figure 2.4: Assistance from any of the following Individuals for Support in Submitting Proposals



*n=104

Note: Totals sum to greater than 100 percent, as respondents could select multiple choices.

Figure 2.5: Usefulness of the following Resources for Identifying External Funding Opportunities

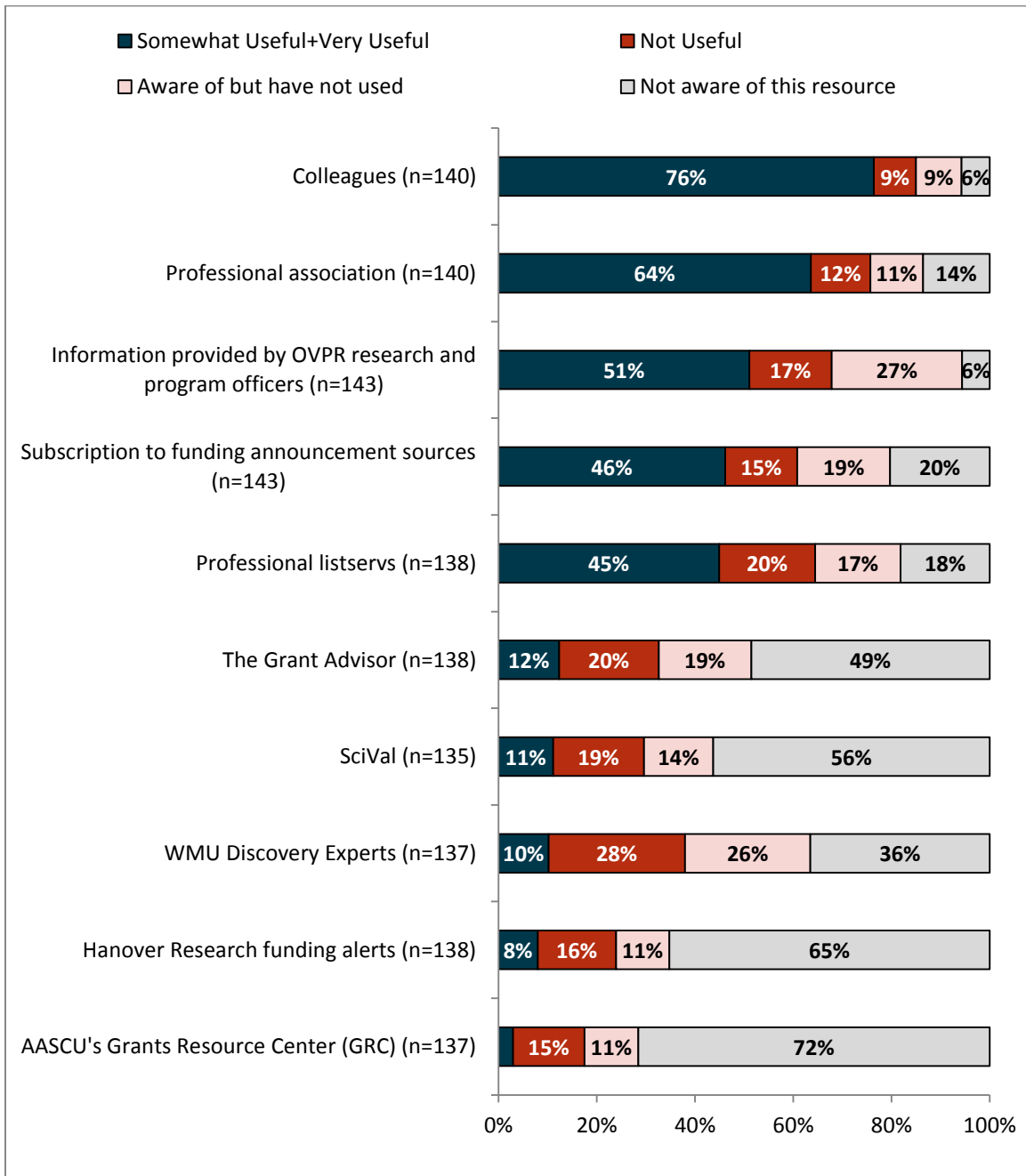


Figure 2.6: Percentage of Respondents Not Aware of the following Supports for Identifying External Funding Opportunities, by External Funding Experience

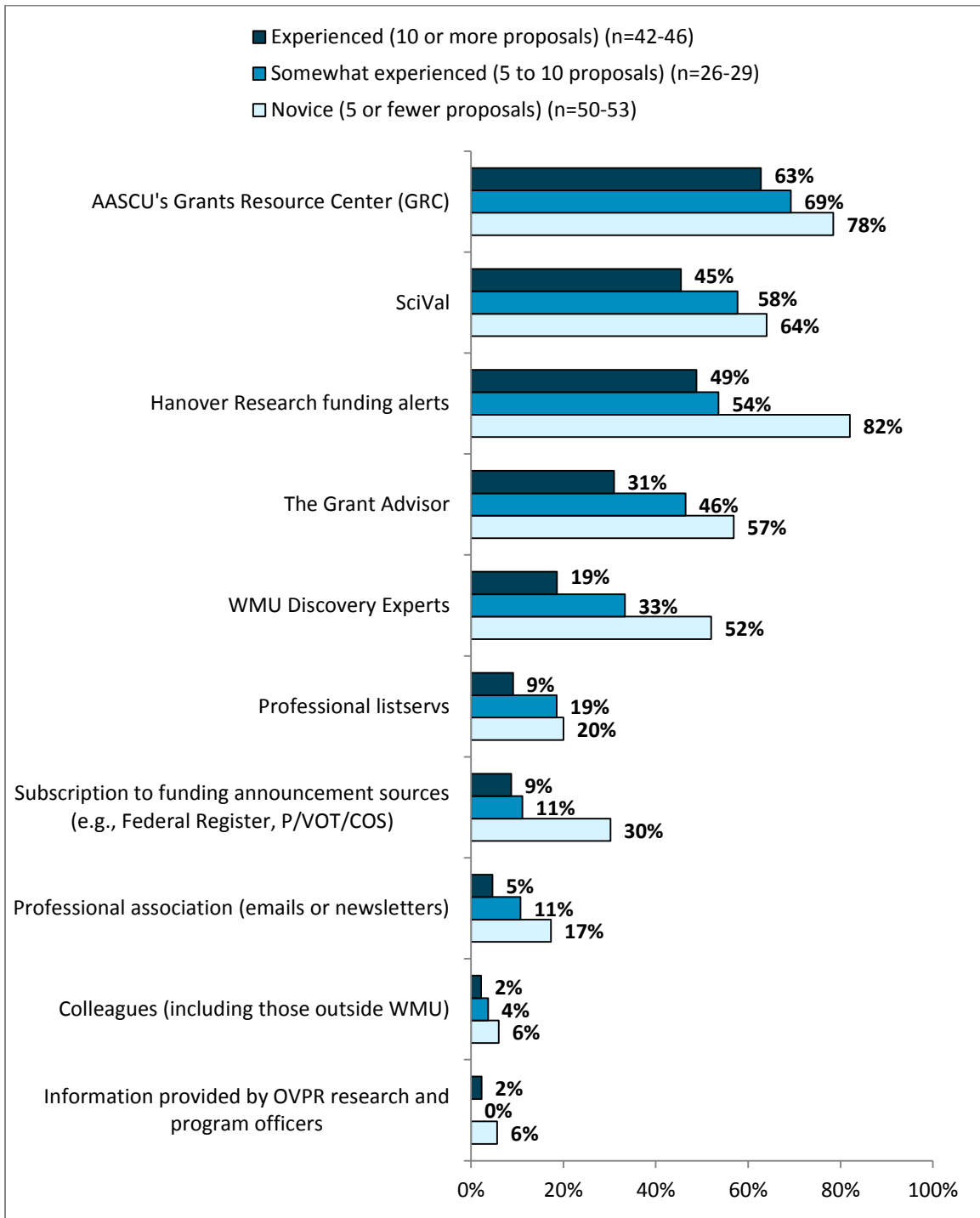


Figure 2.7: Usefulness of the following Resources for Developing External Funding Proposals

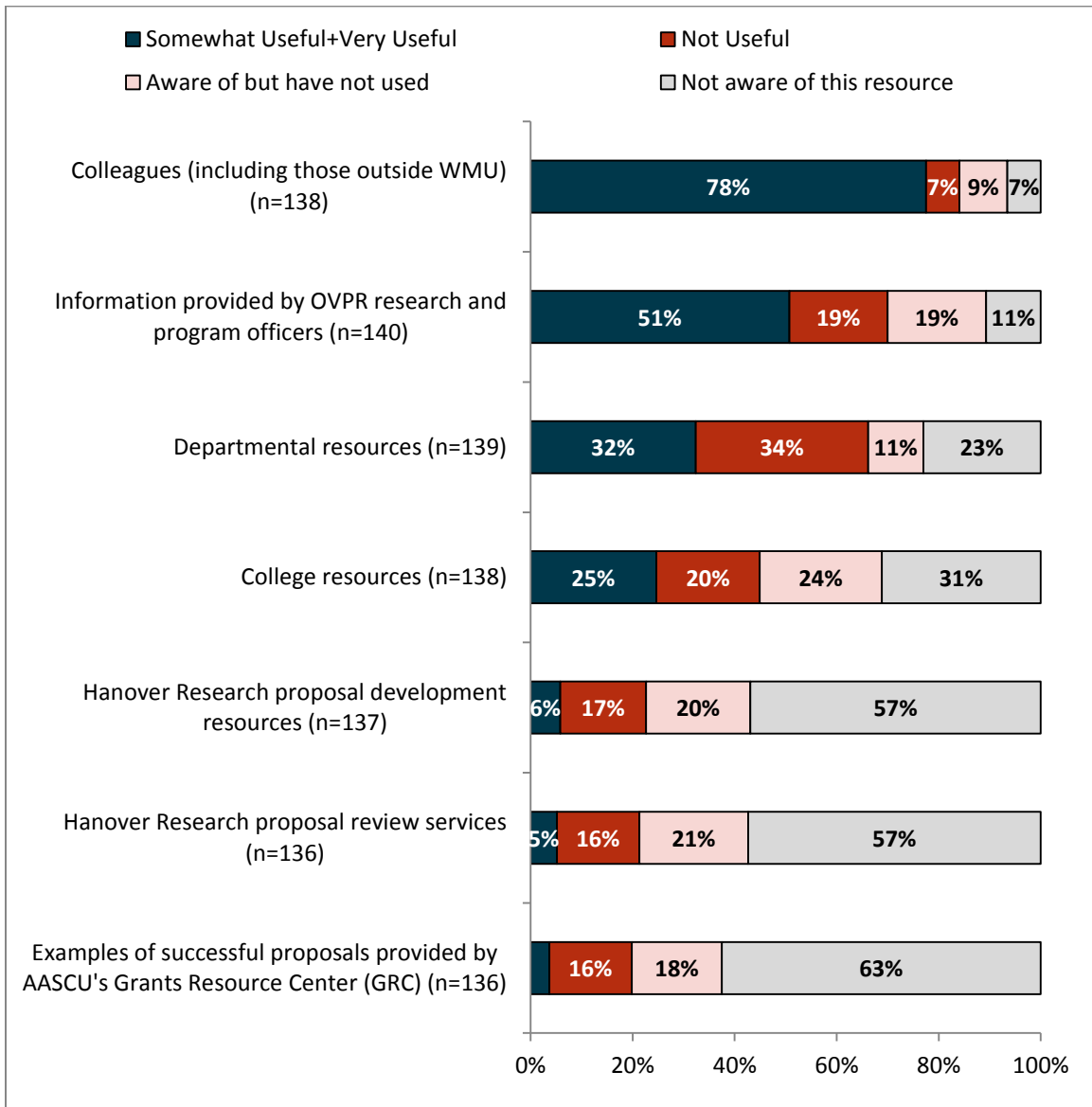


Figure 2.8: Usefulness of the following OVPR Services

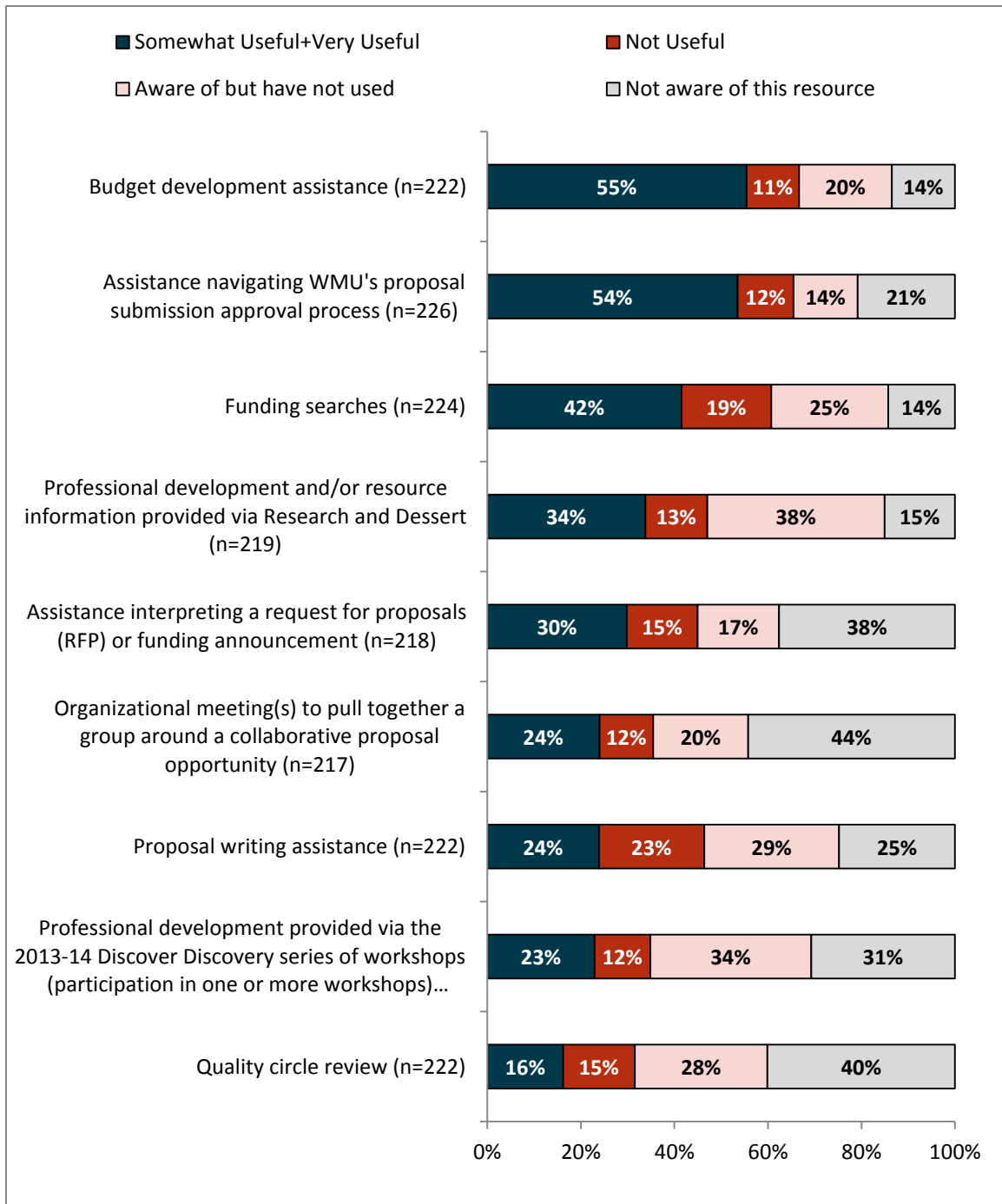


Figure 2.9: Usefulness of the following Features or Information on the OVPR Website

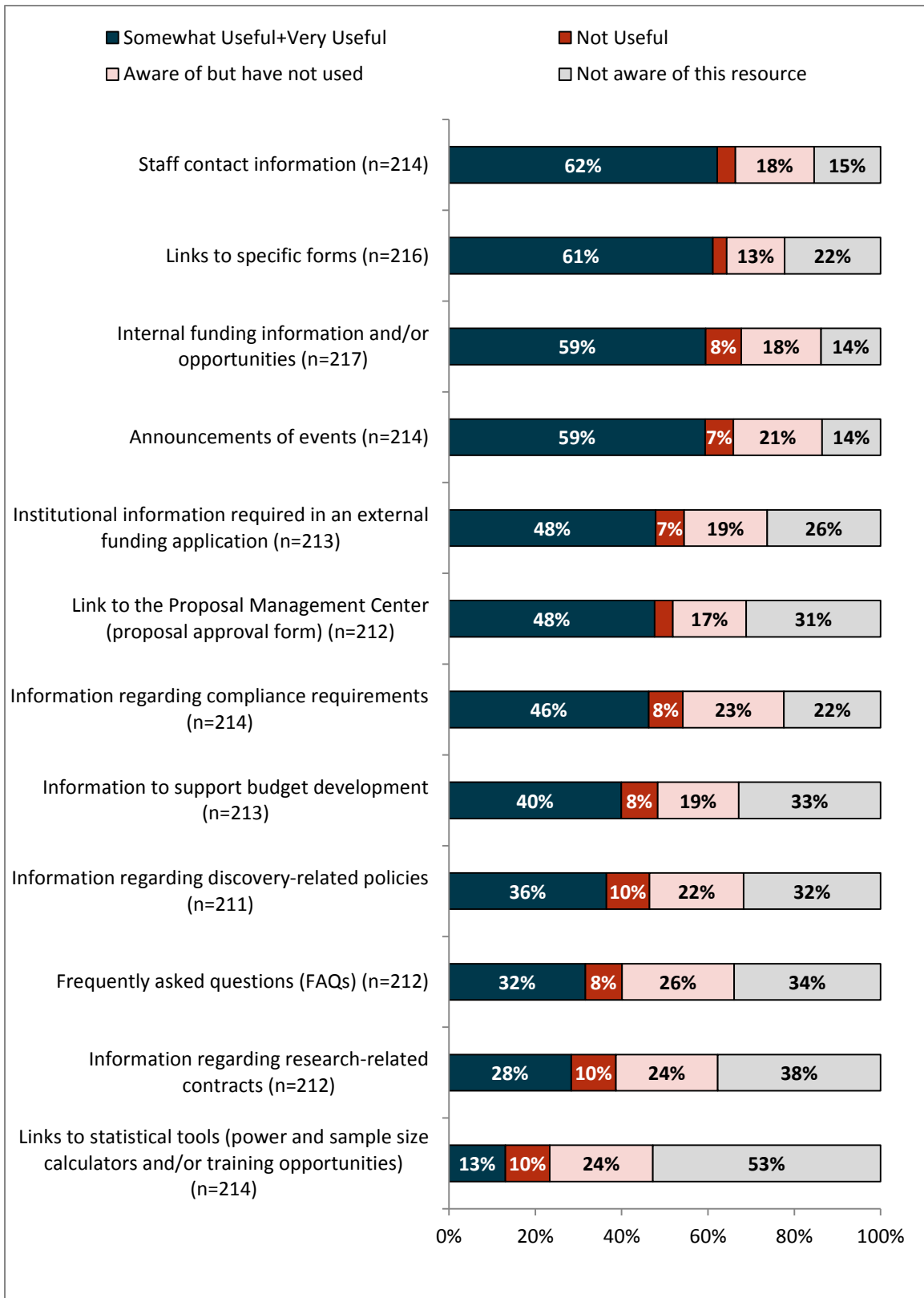
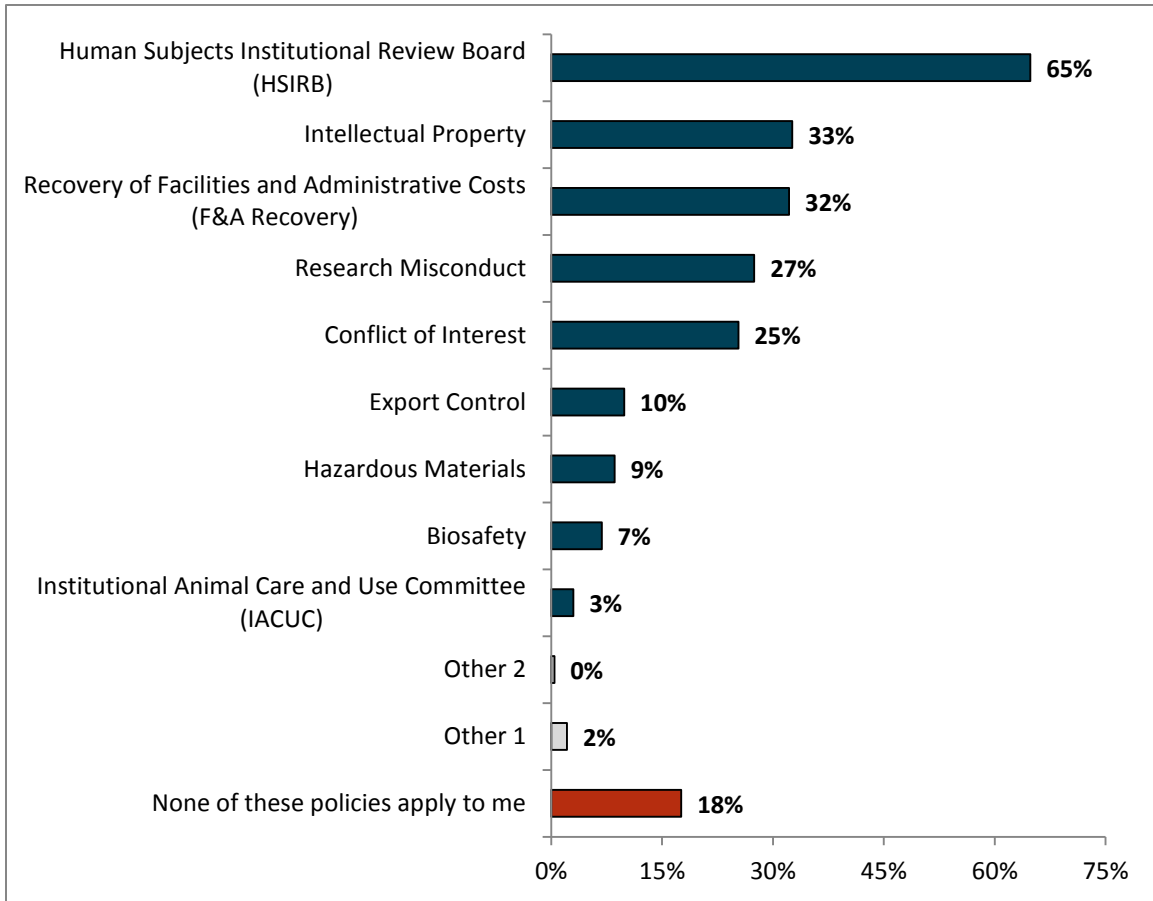


Figure 2.10: Which of the following policies apply to your discovery activities?²



*n=233

Note: Totals sum to greater than 100 percent, as respondents could select multiple choices.

² Respondents who selected any of the listed options in the figure were asked to indicate the degree to which they feel OVPR supports their effort to comply with the following policies. All of the respondents indicate that the OVPR is very helpful in supporting their compliance with each listed policy (100 percent).

SECTION III: PREFERENCES FOR DISCOVERY SUPPORTS

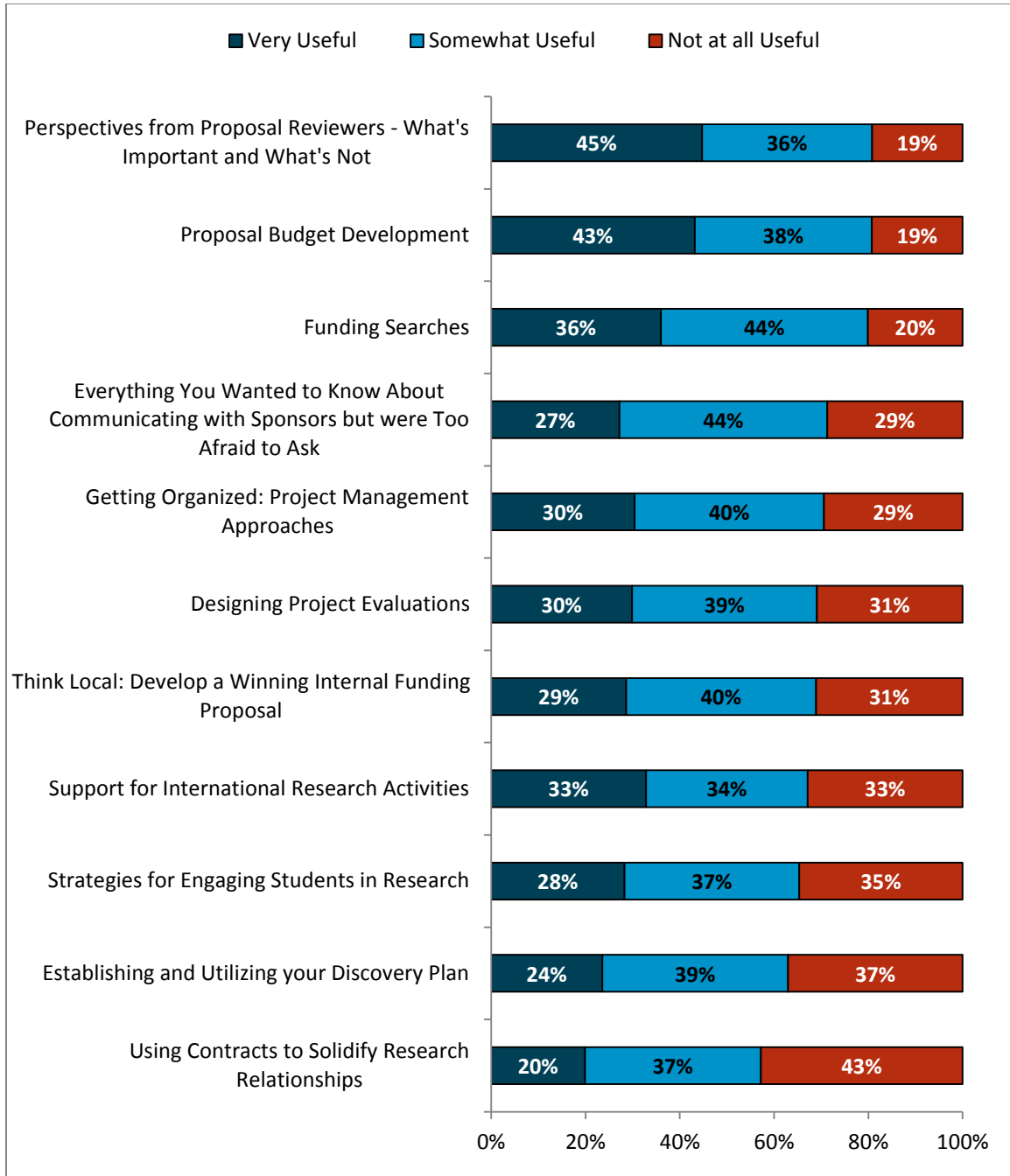
This section discusses respondents' preferences for supports in discovery activities.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- **Respondents generally feel that many of the proposed workshop topics suggested by OVPR would be useful.** Specifically, respondents feel that the most useful topics are presentation of proposal reviewers' perspectives (81 percent), proposal budget development (81 percent) and funding searches (80 percent) (Figure 3.1).
- **Overall, respondents are most interested in receiving assistance from OVPR in identifying funding (69 percent) and developing project budgets (67 percent).** For respondents with no prior experience in proposal writing and submission, developing a discovery plan (63 percent) is also one of their top priorities (Figure 3.2).
- **Many respondents expressed their needs for additional support staff in order to better conduct discovery activities (47 percent).** Some departments also feel that additional facilities and equipment are important. For example, 71 percent of faculty members from the Engineering department indicate that they are in need for additional facilities and equipment. Similarly, a slight majority of faculty members from Science, Technology, or Math departments feel that facilities and equipment are needed (51 percent) (Figure 3.3).
- **The preferred channel to receive information from OVPR is email directly from research officers or other OVPR staff (72 percent).** The least preferred channel is social media, as just 1 percent of respondents indicate that they would prefer this communication platform (Figure 3.4).

FIGURES

Figure 3.1: Please Indicate the Degree to Which You Would Find the following Proposed Workshops Useful in Support of Your Discovery Activities



*n=202-214

Figure 3.2: Preferred Assistances from OVPR, by External Funding Experience

	TOTAL (N=208)	NO EXPERIENCE (N=16)	NOVICE (5 OR FEWER PROPOSALS) (N=80)	SOMEWHAT EXPERIENCED (5 TO 10 PROPOSALS) (N=49)	EXPERIENCED (10 OR MORE PROPOSALS) (N=63)
Identifying funding to support my work	69%	75%	83%	71%	48%
Developing a budget for my project(s)	67%	56%	75%	73%	57%
Submitting my proposal documents to the sponsor	54%	38%	56%	51%	59%
Pre-submission review and feedback	52%	38%	64%	55%	38%
Navigating WMU's internal proposal approval process	48%	38%	55%	49%	40%
Writing proposal narrative	46%	44%	59%	45%	32%
Finding resources to conduct pilot or preliminary studies on which to build my discovery work	45%	44%	51%	31%	49%
Interpreting requests for proposals and/or other sponsor documents	35%	50%	48%	31%	21%
Identifying others willing to collaborate on discovery activities	35%	38%	40%	33%	30%
Developing a discovery plan	34%	63%	40%	41%	13%
Meeting compliance regulations	29%	19%	26%	24%	38%
Understanding procedures to disclose intellectual property	20%	19%	21%	16%	21%
Moving my invention(s) or creation(s) forward in the copyright, patent, and/or commercialization process	15%	6%	21%	4%	19%
Other	4%	19%	0%	2%	8%

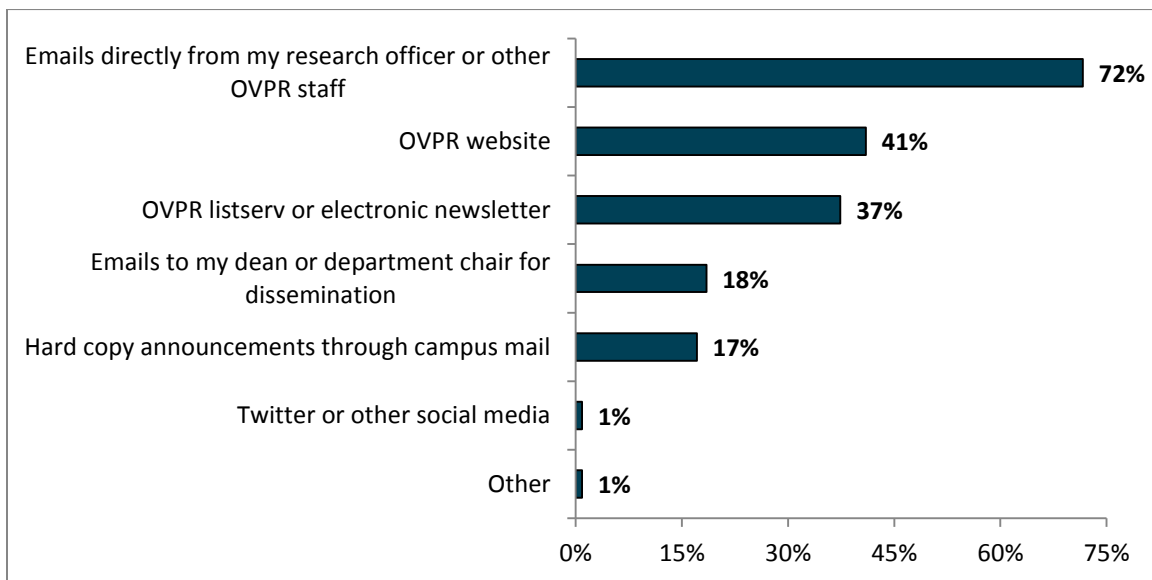
Note: Totals sum to greater than 100 percent, as respondents could select multiple choices.

Figure 3.3: Additional Supports Needed for Discovery Activities, by Discipline

	TOTAL (N=211)	ARTS AND HUMANITIES (N=32)	ENGINEERING (N=21)	SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, OR MATH (N=47)	SOCIAL SCIENCES (N=74)	OTHER (N=37)
Support staff	47%	56%	38%	49%	49%	38%
Facilities and equipment	34%	28%	71%	51%	18%	27%
Engaging graduate students in discovery activities	33%	19%	52%	38%	32%	27%
Faculty collaborators	31%	25%	14%	23%	39%	41%
Qualitative analysis software	27%	16%	0%	17%	42%	32%
Quantitative analysis software	25%	13%	24%	26%	30%	27%
Engaging undergraduate students in discovery activities	21%	25%	33%	23%	16%	19%
Libraries and reference resources	21%	41%	10%	9%	22%	27%
Instrumentation	18%	3%	38%	38%	11%	5%
Office space	17%	28%	5%	9%	23%	11%
Other	16%	25%	10%	15%	15%	14%
Lab space	15%	13%	48%	23%	4%	8%

Note: Totals sum to greater than 100 percent, as respondents could select multiple choices.

Figure 3.4: Preferred Communication Channels to Receive Information from OVPR



*n= 222

Note: Totals sum to greater than 100 percent, as respondents could select multiple choices.

SECTION IV: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

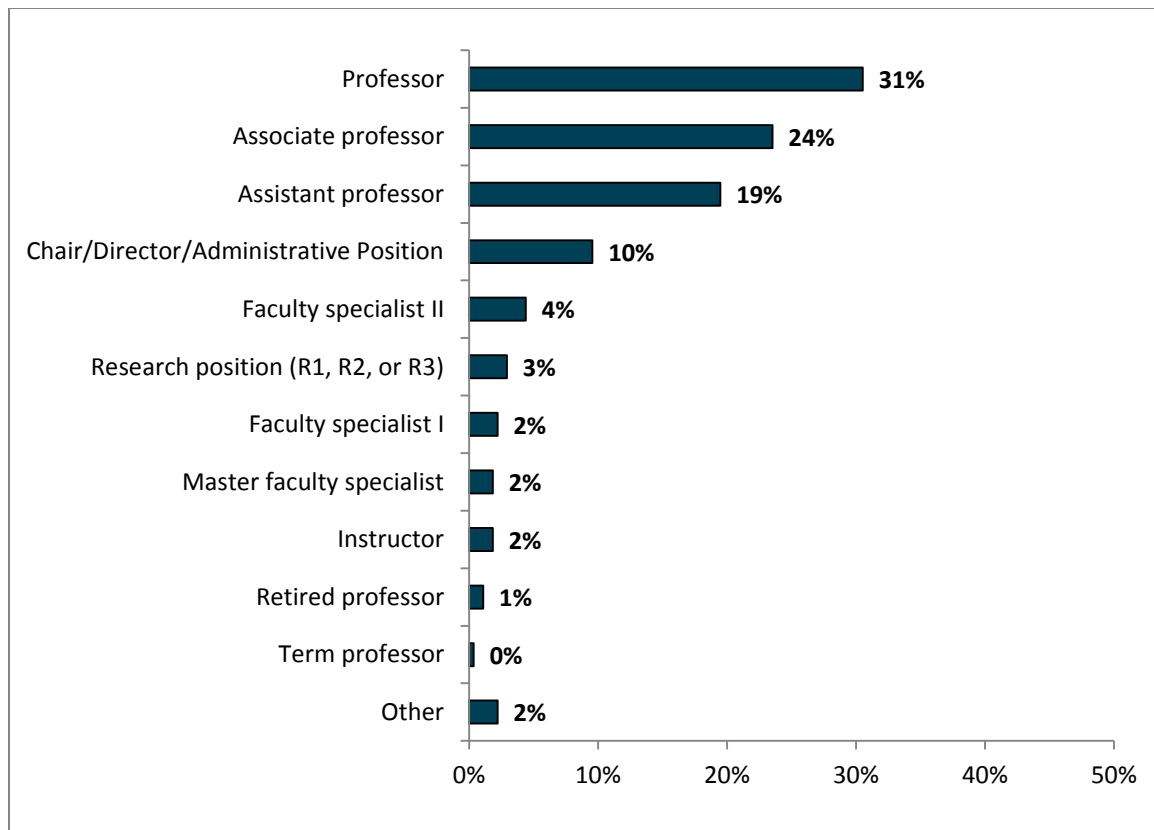
This section presents respondents' demographic information.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- A majority of respondents are assistant professors, associate professors, or professors at WMU (74 percent) (Figure 4.1).
- Over one-third of respondents come from Social Sciences departments (36 percent), and 22 percent come from Science, Technology, or Math departments (Figure 4.2).
- Just over half of respondents indicate that they have served in higher education for more than 14 years (51 percent) (Figure 4.3).

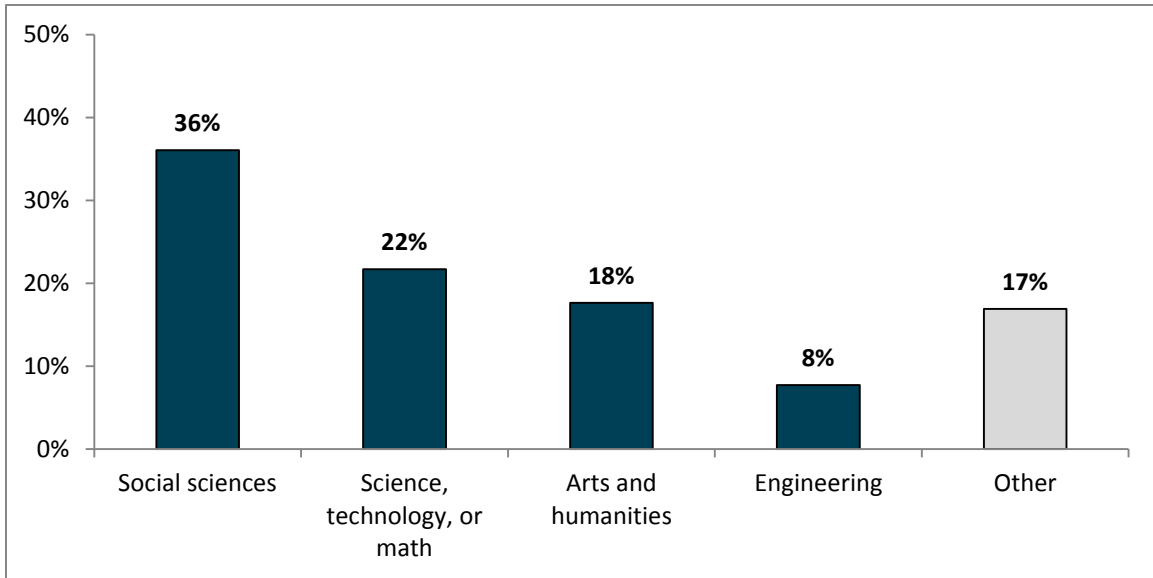
FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Respondents by Positions



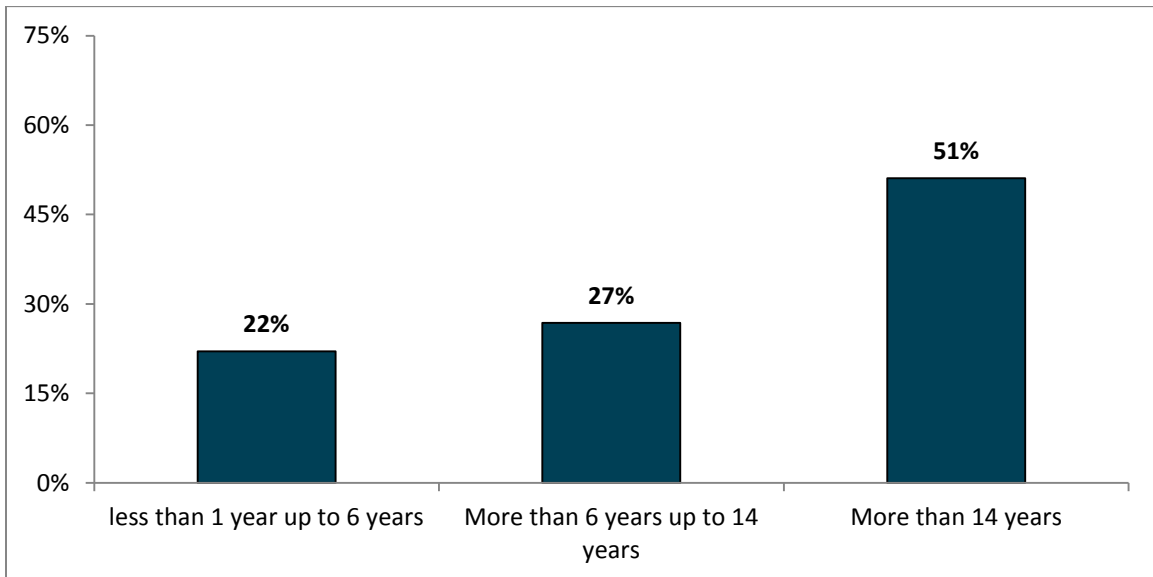
*n=272

Figure 4.2: Respondents by Discipline



*n=272

Figure 4.3: Respondents by Years Served in Higher Education



*n=272

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