

PROJECT WILDCAT – A POWERFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Personal Transformation and Growth through Experiential Learning in the Wilderness

Learning Outcomes

Personal Development

- Articulate at least three ways that Project Wildcat assisted in their transition to Northwestern.
- Reflect on what they learned about themselves and how the Project Wildcat experience contributed to that learning.
- Describe how the wilderness setting of Project Wildcat influenced what they learned about themselves and others.

Interpersonal Competence

- Report increased confidence in their ability to function effectively as a member of a team, make decisions autonomously, and propose ideas to a group.
- Demonstrate the ability to work with people from different backgrounds to accomplish a common goal.

Cognitive and Practical Skills

- Identify at least two University resources that they learned about during Project Wildcat and describe how they utilized those resources during their first year at Northwestern.

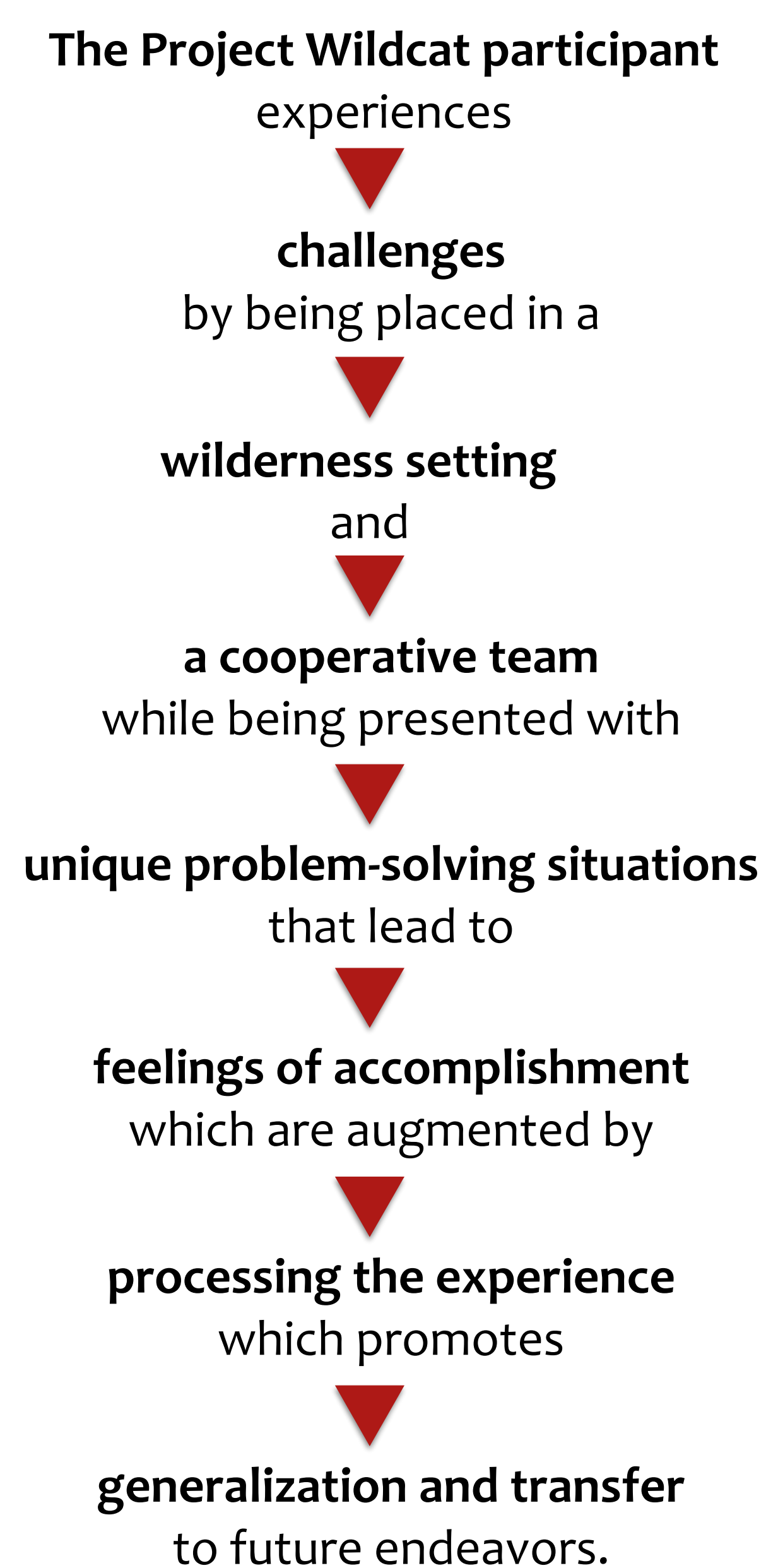
Program Design and Strategies

Project Wildcat is a week-long wilderness backpacking trip for new students designed to facilitate the transition to life at Northwestern.

- Mentorship from Upperclassmen
- Wilderness
- Open Supportive Culture
- Experiential Learning

The Adventure-Based Learning Process¹

1: Adapted from Nadler and Luckner, 1992, Processing the Adventure Experience.



Assessment Numbers	2011	2012	2013	Total
Participants	167	169	171	507
Post-Trip Survey			165	165
6-Week Questionnaire	117	82	114	313
8-Month Focus Groups			14	14

Answers from 8-month focus groups & 6-week questionnaires

“During Wildcat Welcome I learned how to be a college student, the technical stuff. During Project Wildcat I learned how to be a person and be me.”

“It has pushed me to do stuff that I haven’t done before so that maybe I’ll find a new hobby or interest – so I don’t say to myself, ‘I wish I should’ve’, but instead ‘Yeah, I did.’”

“It gave me an idea of the person I wanted to be. I learned that I don’t have to try to be like everyone else, I’ve accepted who I am.”

“I’ve learned that it’s better to try things and maybe fail... than to not try at all.”

“I learned how to open myself up to people who aren’t like me... and to be open to their perspective and listen to them.”

“Life stories really helped us get beyond judging each other by their appearance or how someone talks.”

“[Life stories] showed me that everyone at Northwestern had a unique and interesting backstory and it convinced me to get to know people on a deeper level here.”

“I’ve had tons of conversations with my counselors on campus, having that mentor is really nice.”

“During life stories one member of our group talked about depression and that led to a discussion about CAPS and student to student support.”

“It taught me what a team really is. In the past I had always thought about team effort in athletic sport... competing. On PWild it was about trying to achieve goals for mutual benefit.”

“At first I was competing to be the biggest leader in the group. Then we realized that we had to work together as leaders to get the team going and then we developed a friendship out of that.”

“We learned how to learn on our own, without someone just telling us what to do.”

“Literally a life changing experience. I fully credit PWild for giving me the confidence to apply for a club I thought I had no shot at getting in, and I ended up getting in!”

“PWild changed my whole perspective about college and, I guess in some ways, about life too. It gave me the confidence I needed to start over somewhere new and to really branch out more than I ever had before.”

“PWild was the greatest week of my life by far.”

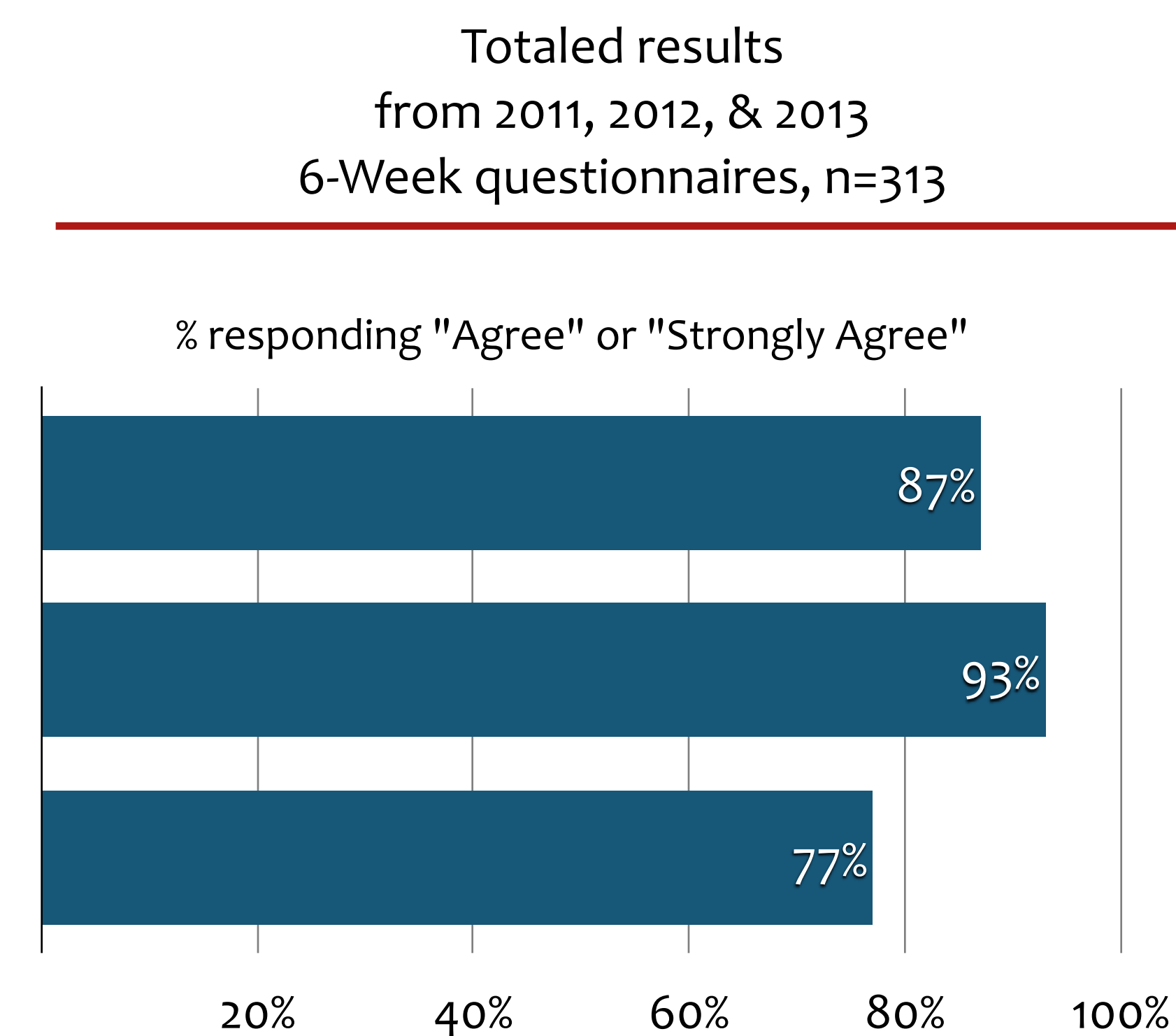
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

As a result of participating in Project Wildcat,...

I am more confident in myself.

I am more likely to be open to and learn from new experiences.

I am more likely to view any failure as a rich learning opportunity.



INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE

As a result of participating in Project Wildcat,...

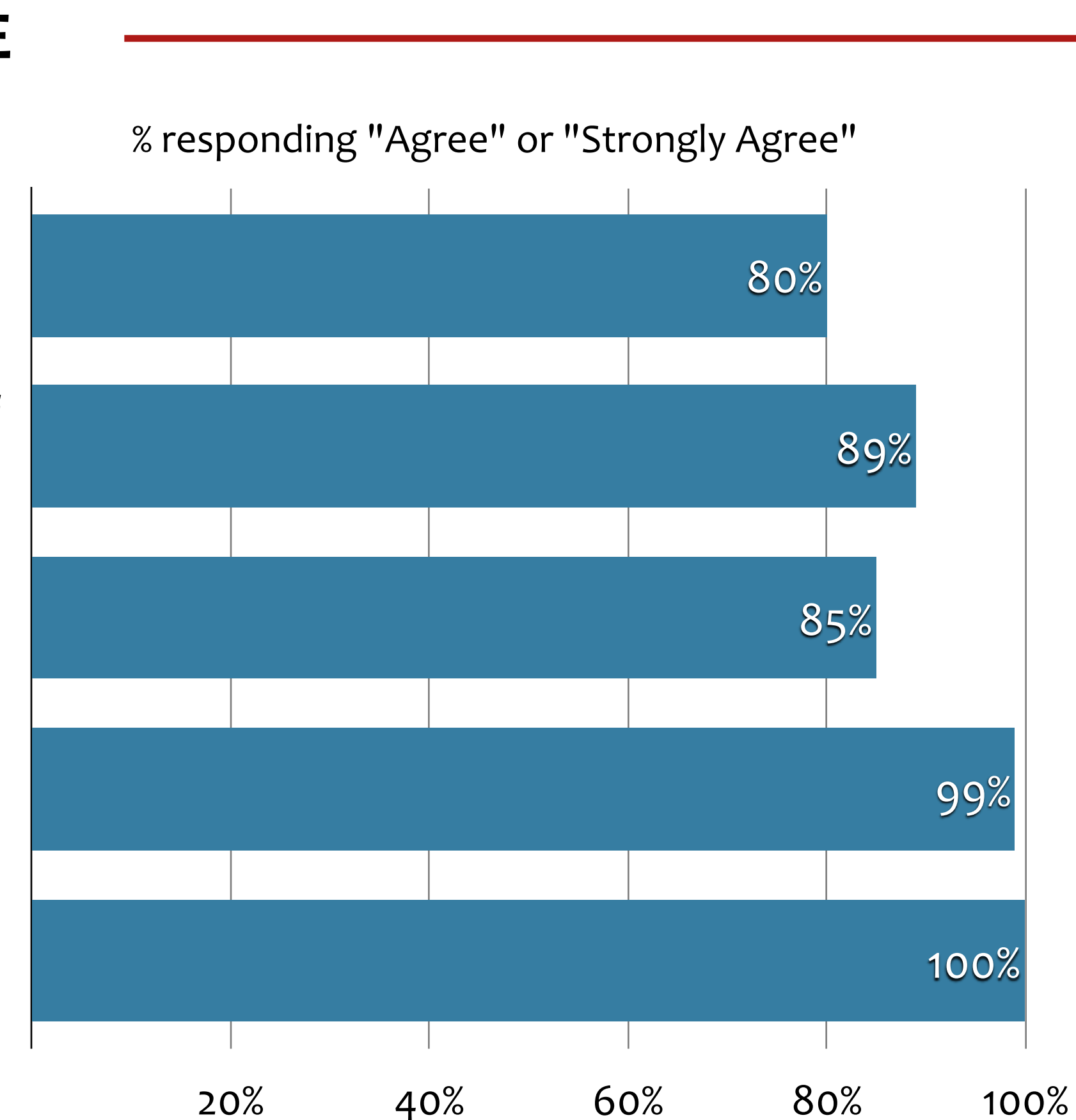
I am better able to evaluate ideas of others with consideration and without bias.

I better understand the importance of developing a support network.

My understanding of diverse perspectives improved.

I met people I would otherwise not have met.

I met individuals with different interests from my own.

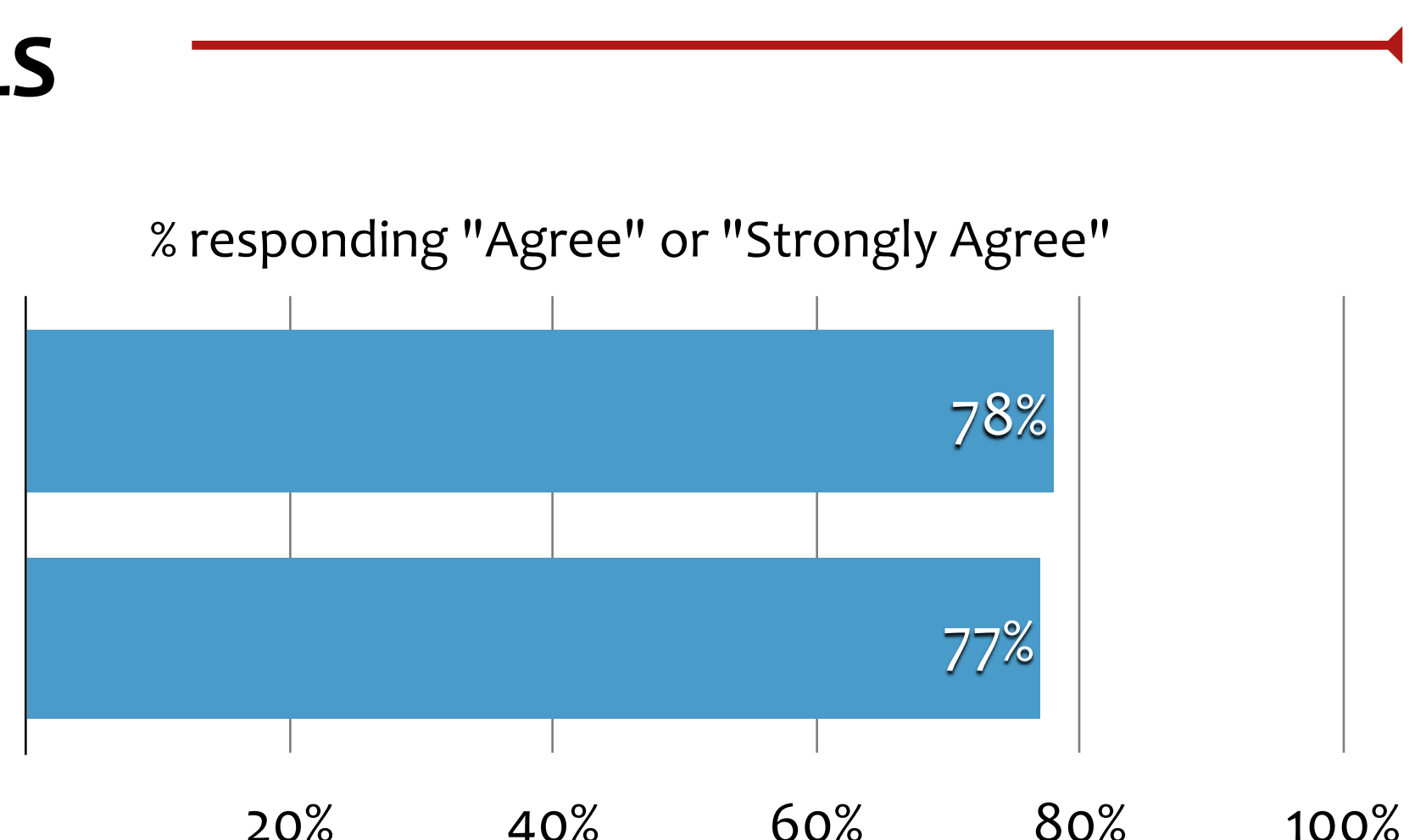


COGNITIVE AND PRACTICAL SKILLS

As a result of participating in Project Wildcat,...

I am better able to propose ideas to a group with confidence.

I am better able to make decisions autonomously.



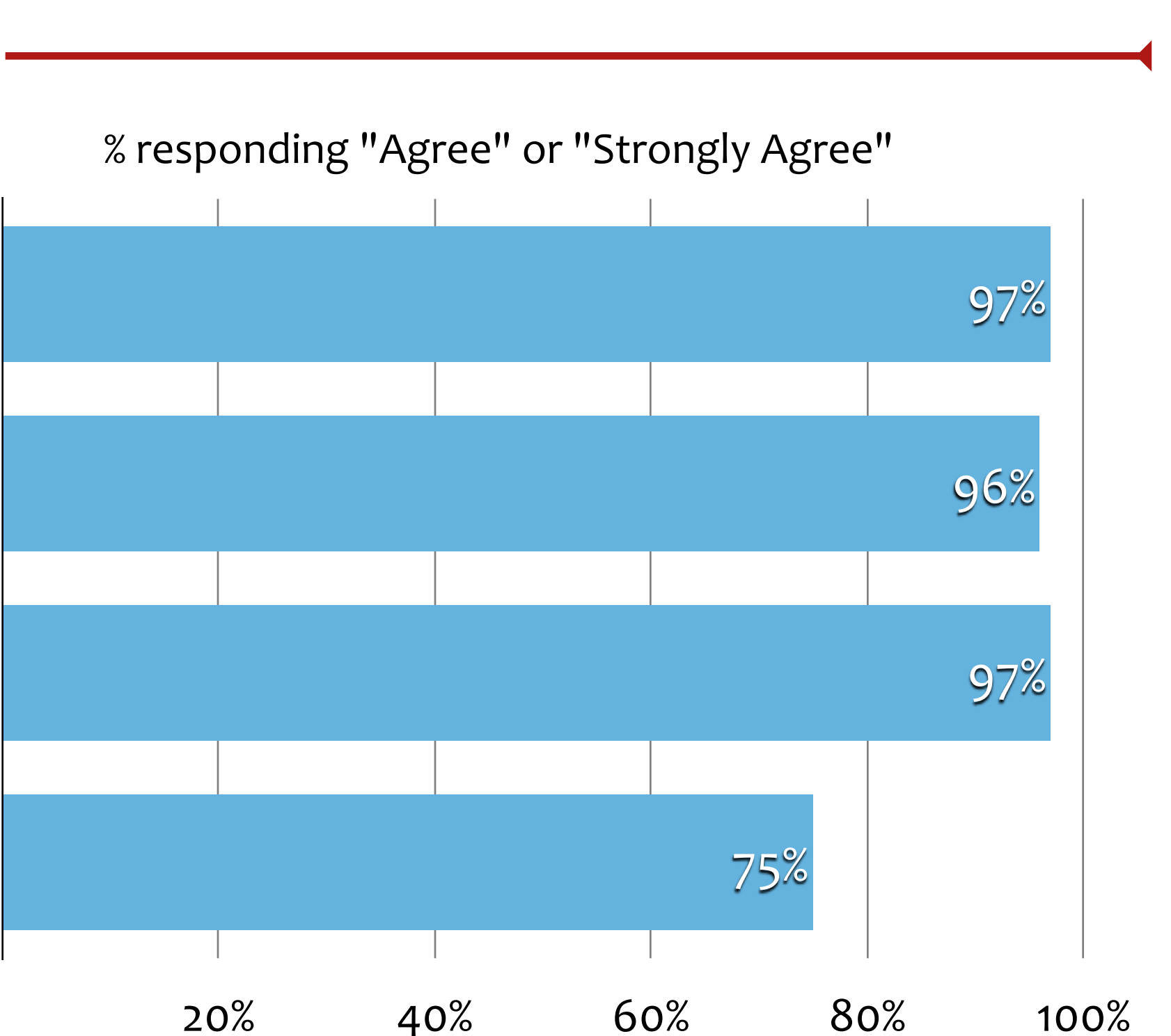
TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

Project Wildcat helped ease my transition from home to college.

Project Wildcat helped me feel a part of the Northwestern community.

Project Wildcat increased my sense of excitement about being a Northwestern.

As a result of participating in Project Wildcat, I have become involved in additional campus activities.



Future Research

Draft specific learning outcomes to match program mission – done

Draft new questionnaires to better fit learning outcomes – in progress

Post-trip survey

Post-trip focus groups

3-month online questionnaire

8-month focus groups