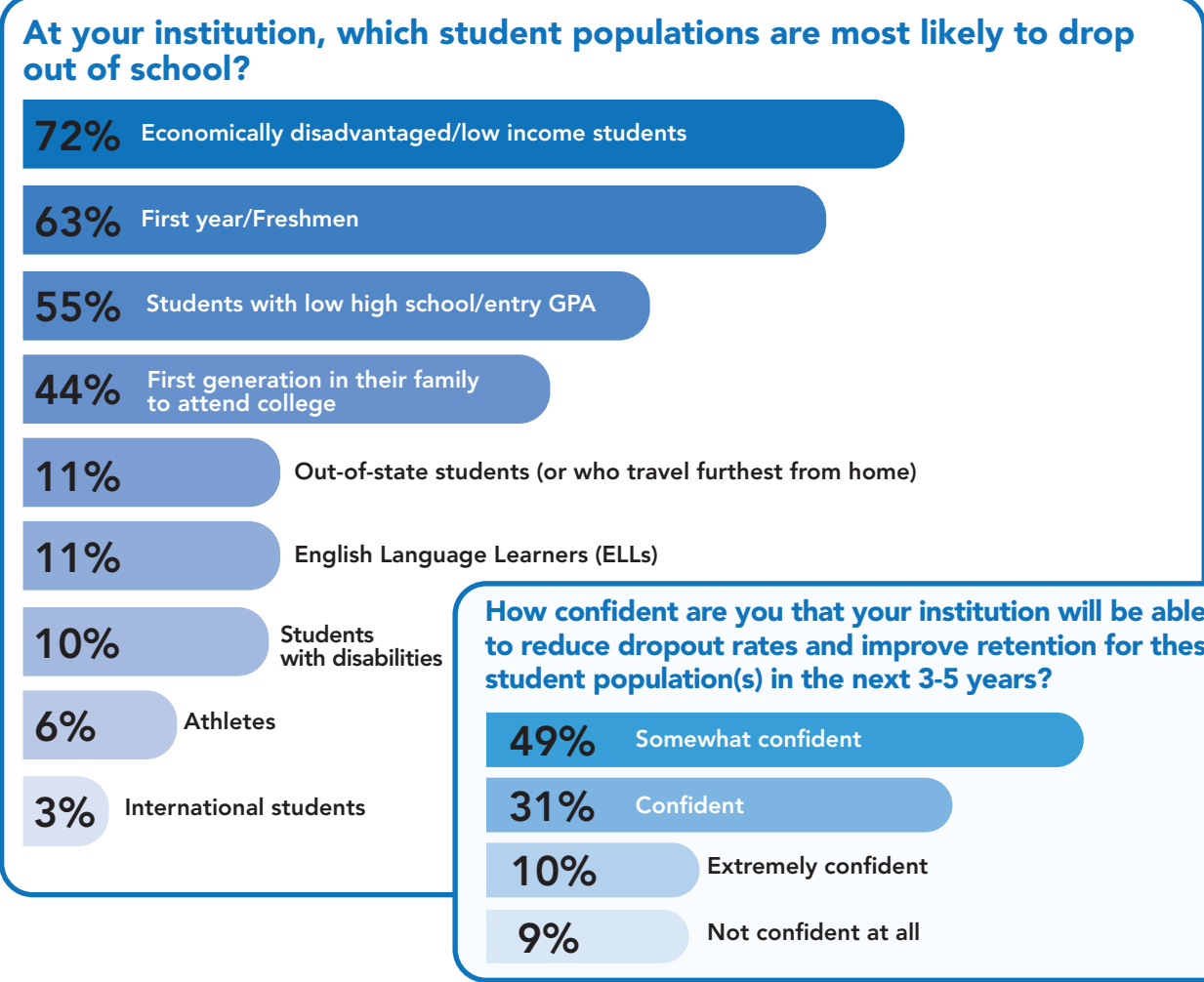


New survey finds many institutions struggle with meeting the needs of vulnerable student populations

Kurzweil Education partnered with University Business (UB) to develop and deploy a survey of higher education leaders around the country, asking them about retention and student success, and how their institutions are meeting the needs of different student populations. It was deployed in October 2020 and nearly 300 higher education leaders participated, from a variety of sizes and types of institution and having more than 17 different job titles or departments.

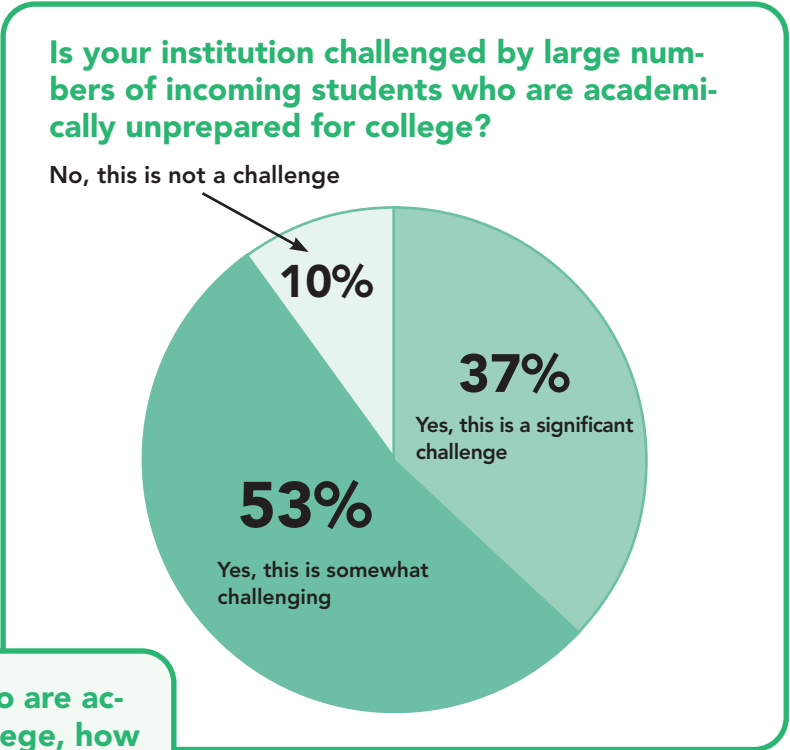
Survey respondents were asked if student retention was a significant challenge for their institution overall. **An overwhelming majority—some 92%—said this was a challenge. 42% described it as a “significant” challenge, while 49% said retention was “somewhat” challenging.** Only 8% said retention was not a challenge for their institution.

The next question presented respondents with a list of types of student populations and asked them to select which ones are most likely to drop out of school at their institutions. The top four answers were leaders by a significant margin: “Economically disadvantaged/low income students,” “First year/Freshman,” “Students with low high school/entry GPA” and “First generation in their family to attend college.”



As a follow up, respondents were then asked how confident they were that their institution would be able to reduce dropout rates and improve retention for the student population(s) they identified, in the next 3-5 years. The leading answer was “Somewhat confident” at 49%, followed by “Confident” at 31%. About even numbers fell on either end of the spectrum, with 9% saying “Not confident at all” and 10% saying they were “Extremely confident.”

Respondents were also asked if their institution was challenged by large numbers of incoming students who are academically unprepared for college. **The vast majority of respondents overall (90%) said this was a challenge, with 53% saying it was “somewhat challenging” and 37% saying this was a “significant challenge” for their institution.** Only 10% said academically unprepared students were not a challenge for them.



As a follow up, the next question asked how confident respondents were that their institution could provide academically unprepared students with the resources they need to succeed. While 22% selected “Very confident,” **a significant majority (59%) said they were only “Somewhat confident” and another 17% said they had a “Low level of confidence.”**

Similarly, respondents were asked how confident they were that their institution could provide English Language Learner (ELL) students or students with learning disabilities or reading difficulties with the resources they need to succeed. Just 18% said they were “Very confident,” while **51% said they were only “Somewhat confident,” some 26% said they had a “Low level of confidence” and 4% said they were “Not confident at all.”**