

# **Mental Health Awareness, Need and Use of Counseling Services for International Students**



HIGHER EDUCATION DIVERSITY SUMMIT

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**Arkansas Tech University**



HIGHER EDUCATION DIVERSITY SUMMIT

## **AGENDA**

**Who we are**

**Why we are here**

**What we did**

**What you have done**

**What all of us can do**

# Who we are



- Xiaohan "Linda" Du
- 2<sup>nd</sup>-year graduate student of College Student Personnel
- Graduate Assistant of Academic Affairs
- B.S. in Biology Biomedical Option, 2011-2014
- Passion in the functional area of International Student Programs and Services



- Xuelin "Shirley" Shao
- 1st-year graduate student of College Student Personnel
- Graduate Assistant of Graduate College
- M.A. in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), 2013-2015
- Passion to further in the field of multiculturalism after being a Teaching Assistant working with international students

# Why we are here





TED Speaker

TED Attendee

## Kelly McGonigal

Health psychologist

 [Website: KellyMcGonigal.com](http://KellyMcGonigal.com)

 [Twitter: @kellymcgonigal](https://twitter.com/kellymcgonigal)

Translate academic research into practical strategies  
for health, happiness and personal success.

# Why we are here

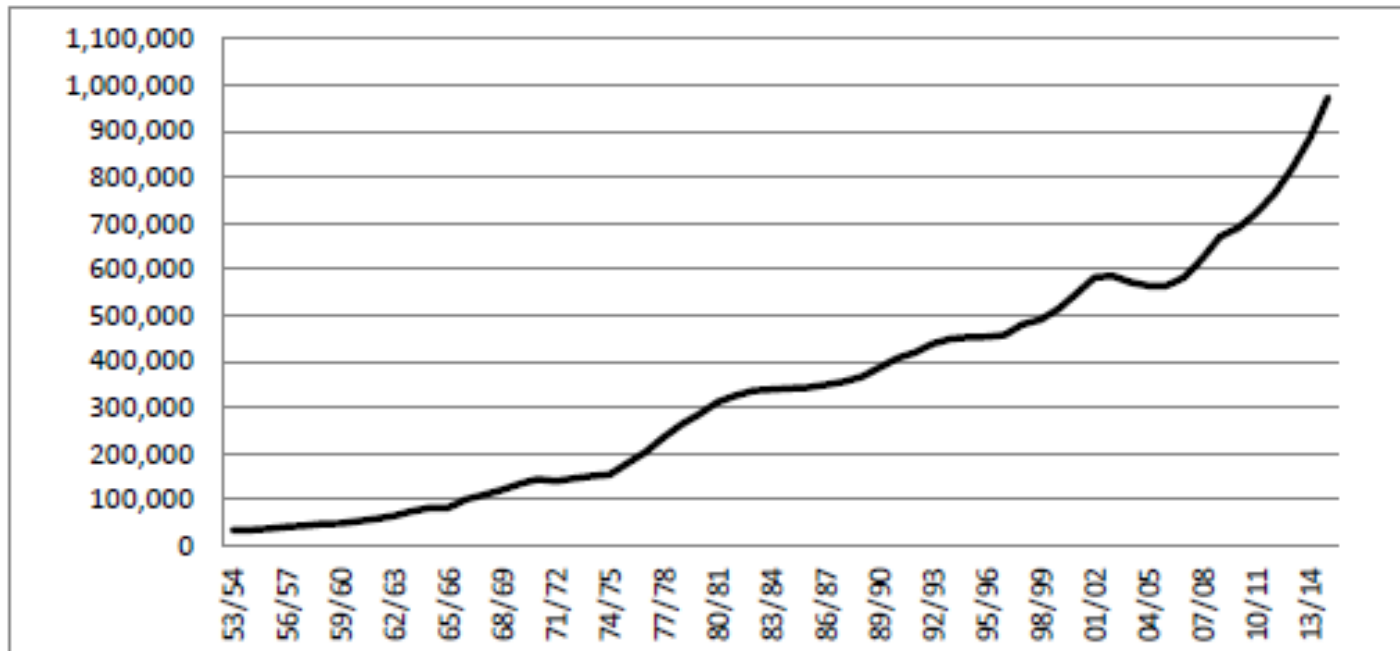
## Learning Outcomes

- Participants will be able to identify characteristics of international students.
- Participants will be able to understand the use of counseling services for international students.
- Participants will be able to demonstrate research skills.
- Participants will be able to generalize an action plan of the topic.
- Participants will be able to apply implications into practice.



# International students in the U.S.

In 2014-2015 academic year, the number of international students in the U.S. increased by 10.0% to a record high of **974,926** students.



# International students by state

## ARKANSAS

### Benefits from International Students

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION	\$164.1 million
JOBS SUPPORTED	1,411
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ENROLLED	5,918



Arkansas Tech University has 406 international students from 38 countries in spring 2016.

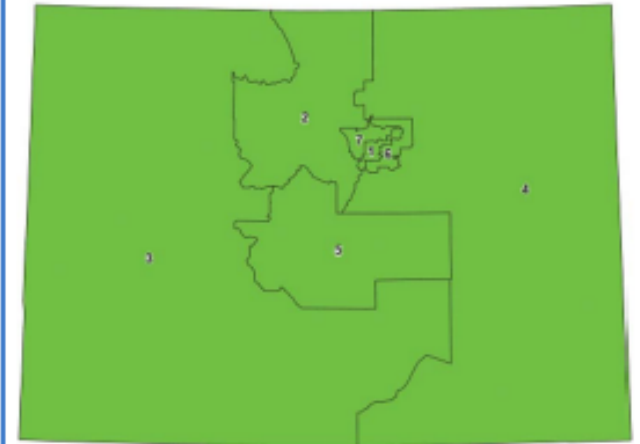


# International students by state

## COLORADO

### Benefits from International Students

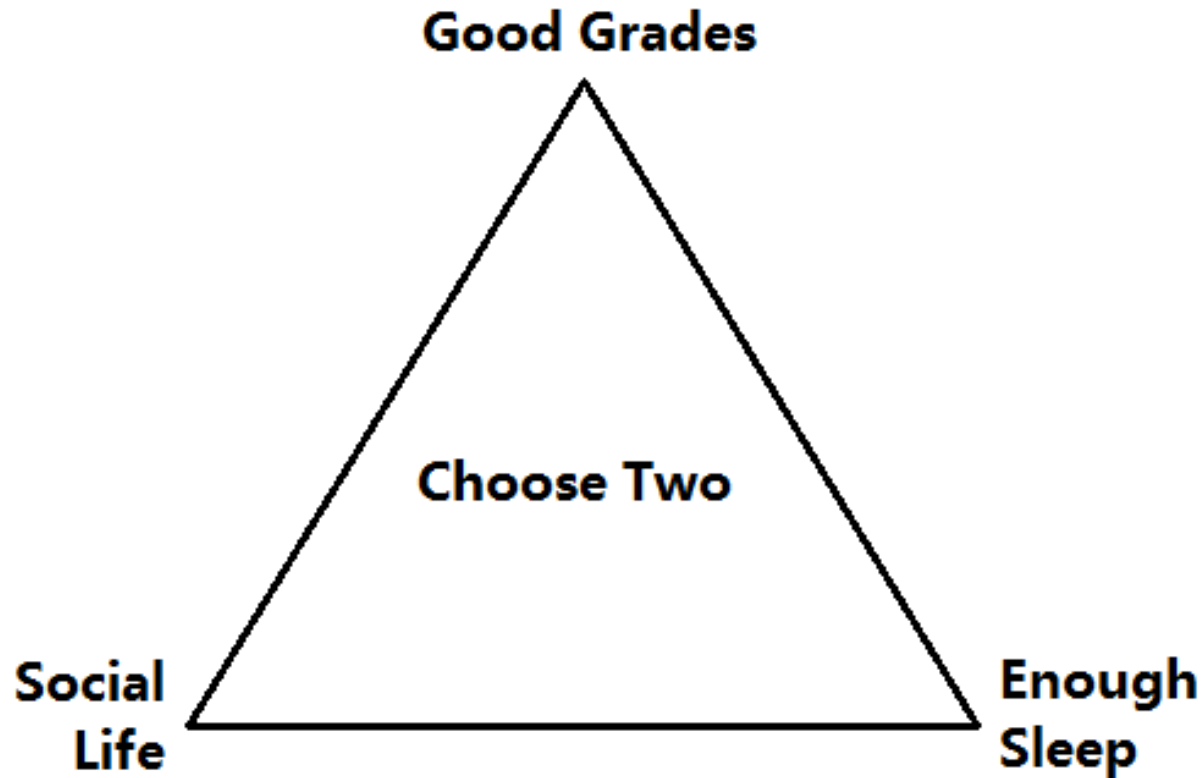
FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION	\$352.0 million
JOBS SUPPORTED	5,043
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ENROLLED	10,800



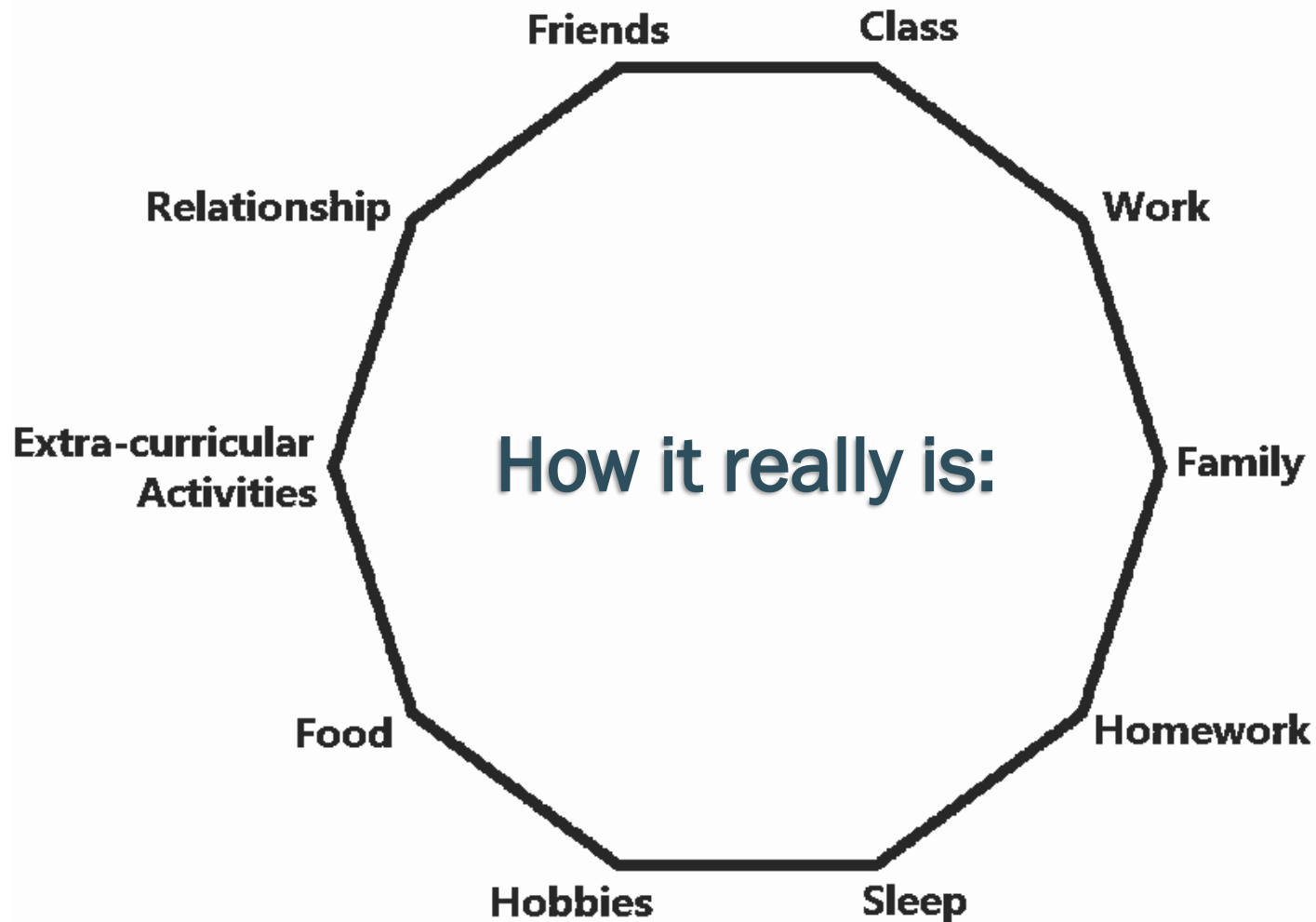


# What college is really about...

How people think it is ...

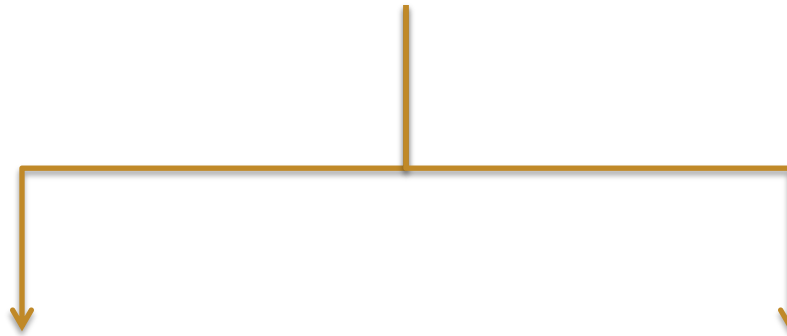


# What college is really about...



# Be an international student

Anyone has studied abroad  
for over three months?



Yes!

Please share one most  
challenging thing.

No.

Let's experience once!



# Challenges for international students

General living adjustment

Academic adjustment

Sociocultural adjustment

Personal psychological adjustment

# International student mental health

- There is mounting evidence that international students are experiencing great stress and psychological problems.
- When problems arise, international students typically process it by themselves first, and then approach friends, family, or professors.
- Moreover, a number of authors have suggested that within the first six months of study in a foreign country, international students' stress can reach crisis levels.

Chalungsooth & Schneller, 2011; Chen & Lewis, 2011



# What we did

- To assess the mental health awareness, need and use of Counseling Services for international students at Arkansas Tech University, we designed and conducted a self-reported, cross-sectional, mix-method survey and sent it to all 406 registered international students in the spring semester of 2016 through an email invitation for them to participate.
- By doing this research, we hope to assess ATU international student mental health status, increase their awareness of mental health, and better meet their need on utilizing the counseling services.



# Survey Instrument

- Demographics
- Awareness & Need
- Use & Satisfaction
- Factors & Comment
- We paid particular attention to not using the term of mental health in the survey so that participants would not be afraid or over-sensitive of the topic due to personal or cultural understanding.
- The survey was anonymous and gave participants the option not to disclose any information if they did not want to.

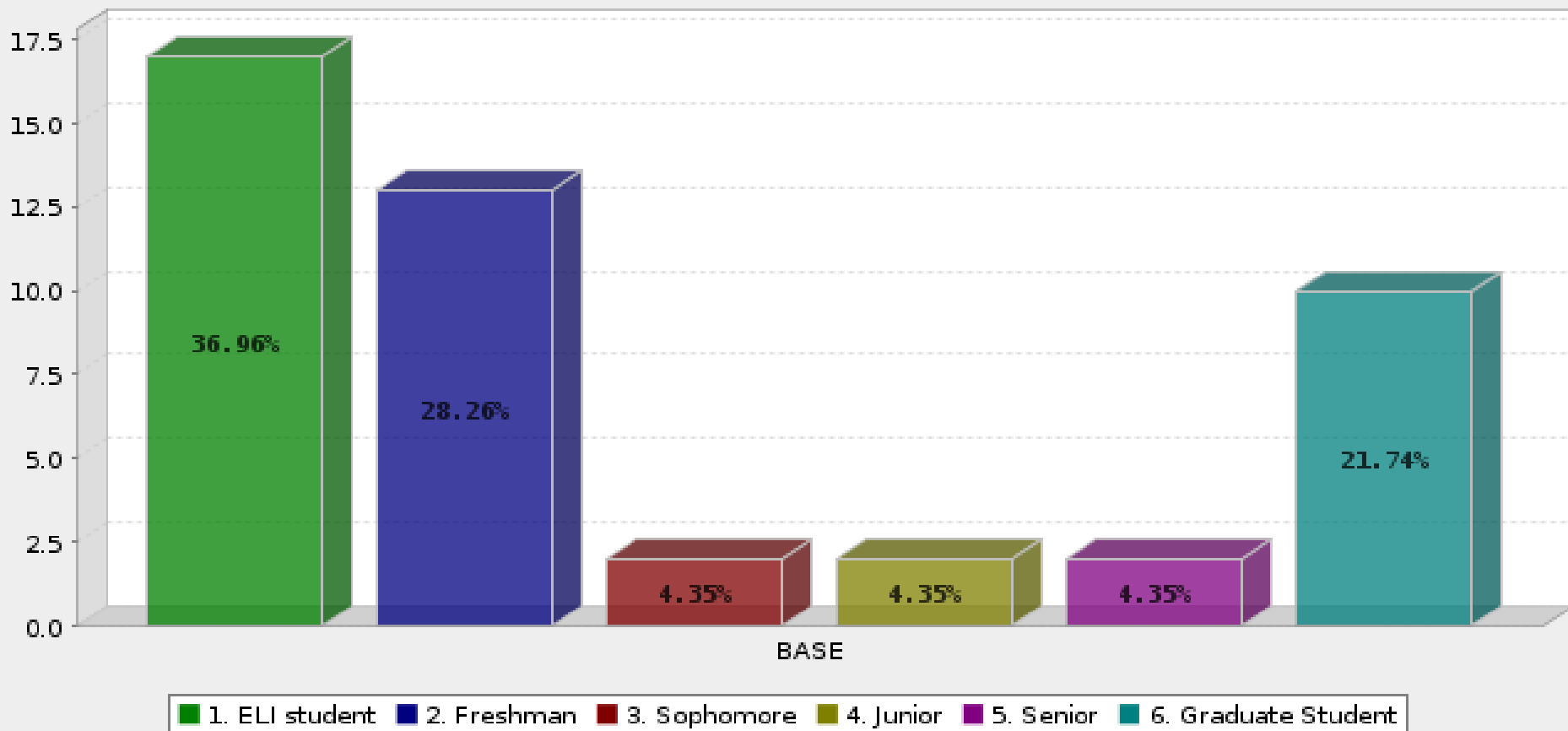




# Results

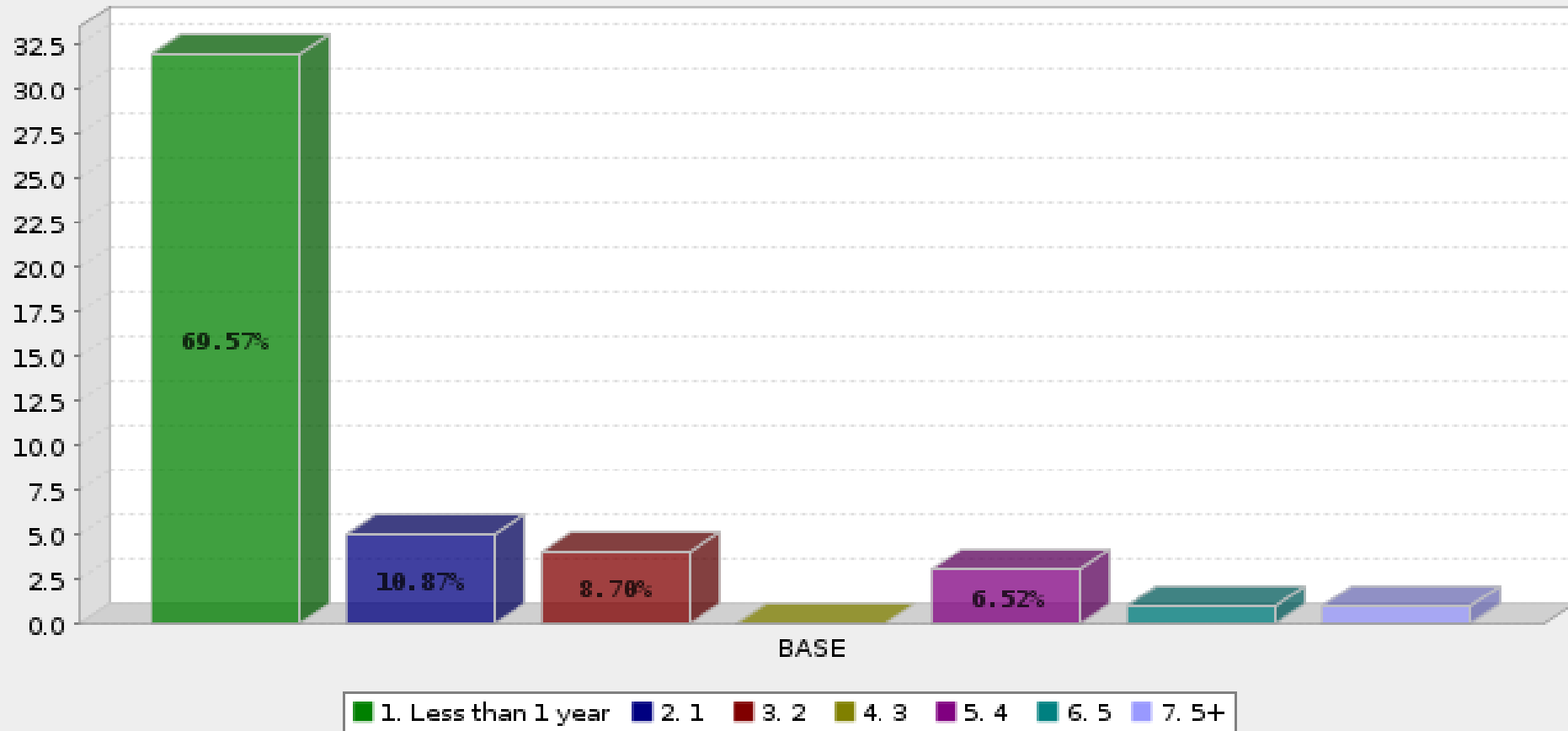
- A total of 46 completed responses were received by the survey expiration date, representing an 11.3% response rate.
- Demographics (Table 1)
- Awareness & Need (Table 2)
- Use & Satisfaction (Table 3)
- Factors & Comment (Table 4)

# Demographics



Classification (n=49)

# Demographics



Length of study at ATU (year)

# Demographics

## Age Range

18-20	37.0%
21-23	23.9%
24-26	23.9%
>27	15.2%

## Gender

Man	32.6%
Female	65.2%
Transgender	0.0%
Not to disclose	2.2%

## Nationality

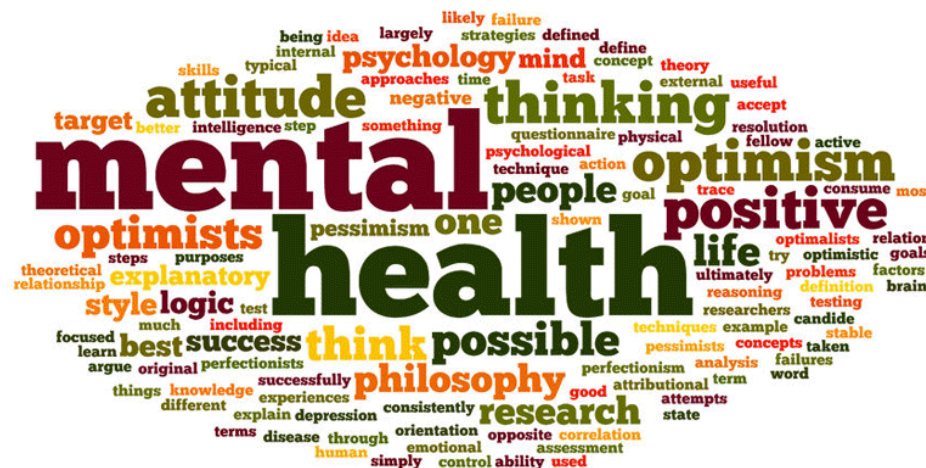
China	34.8%
Saudi Arabia	33.3%
Nigeria	7.6%
Nepal	4.5%
India	3.0%
Other*	16.8%

\*Other countries include Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Dominica, Japan, Kuwait, Nepal, South Korea, Tanzania, and four not to indicate.

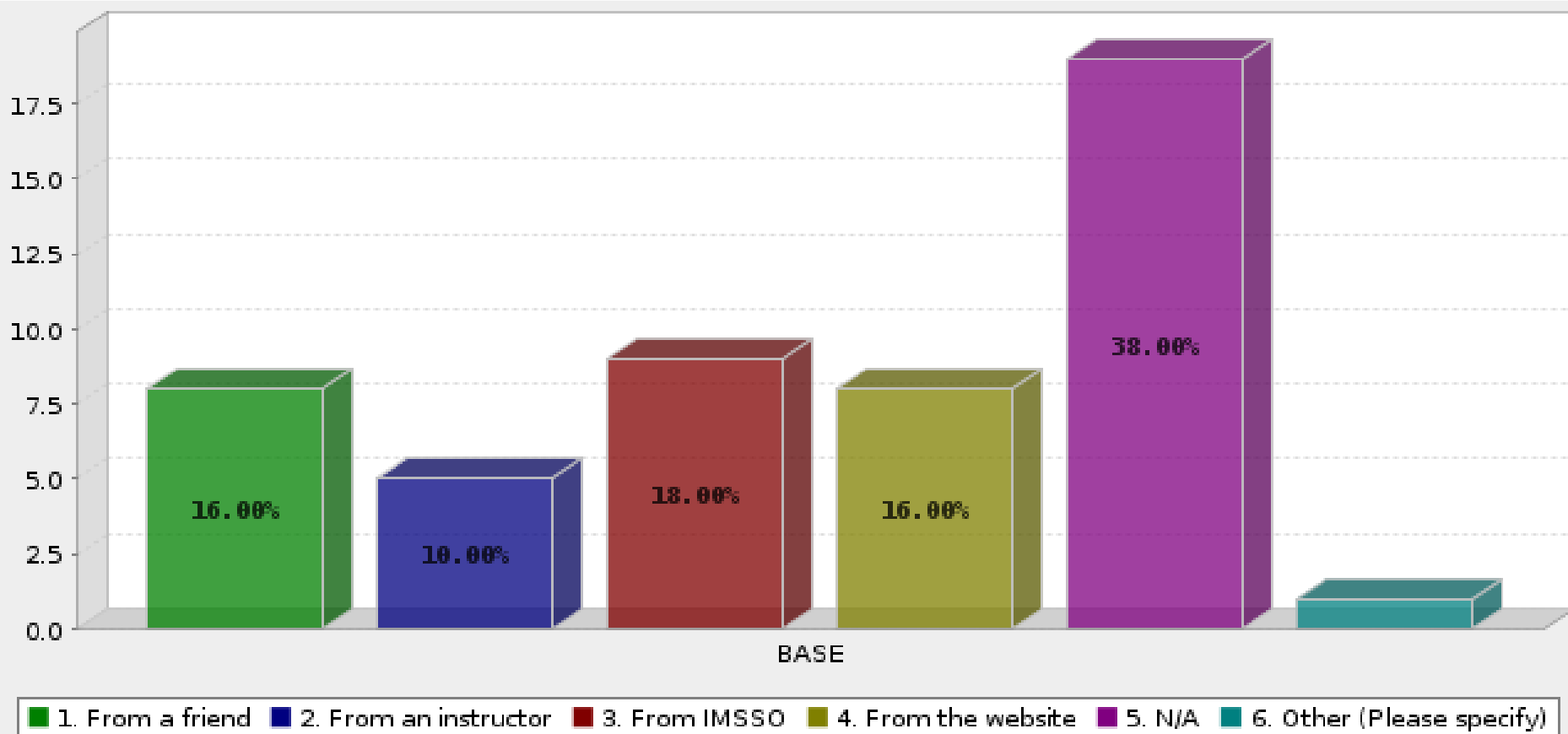


# Awareness & Need

- ❖ 50% of respondents reported the knowledge of the counseling services available on campus, and the other 50% did not know before filling out the survey.
- ❖ 50% of respondents have recently experienced stress-related problems. 41.3% of respondents did not.



# Awareness & Need



Means of knowing about Counseling Services

# Awareness & Need

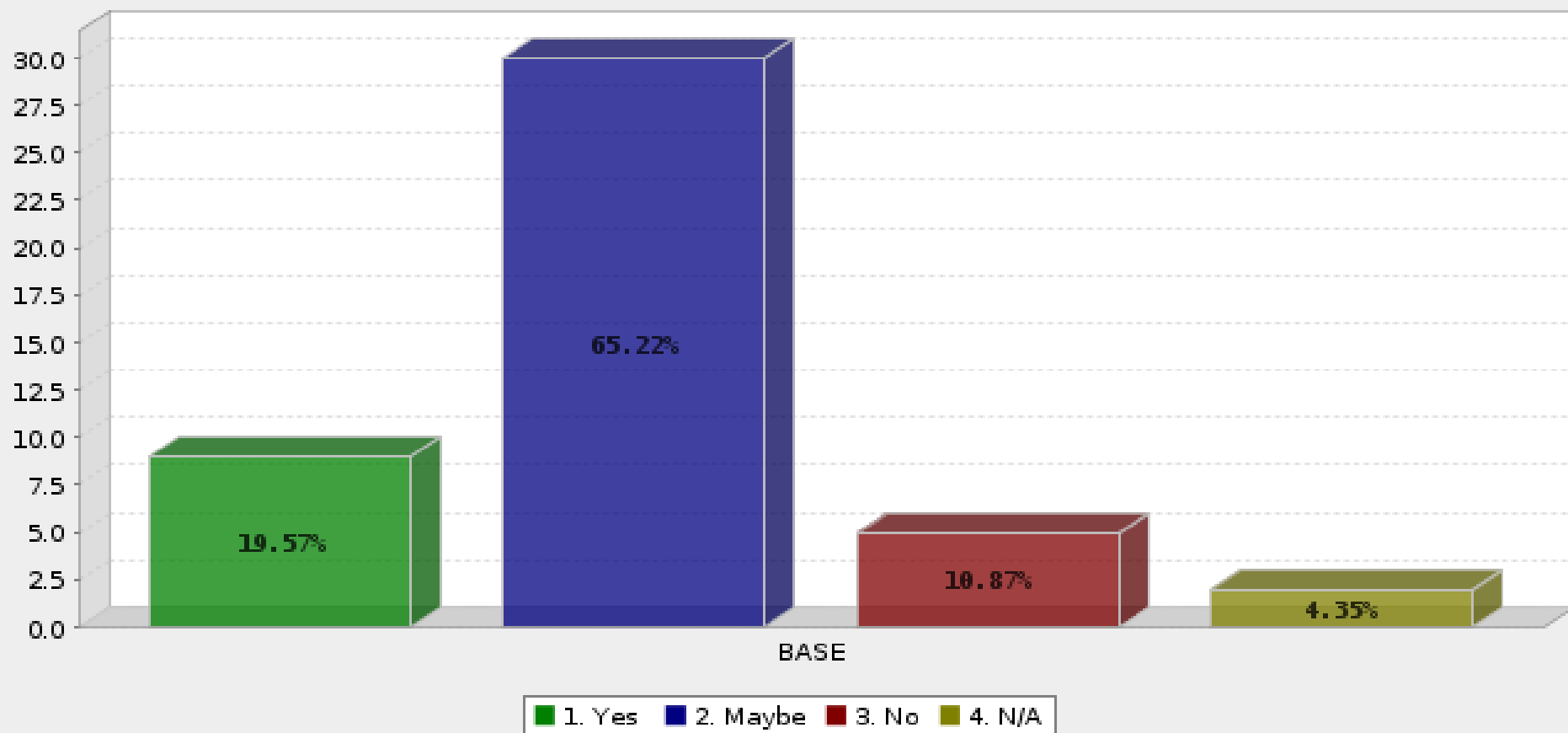
## Stress-related Problems

Stress	18.7%
Homesickness	16.5%
Relationships	12.4%
Loneliness	11.3%
Financial concerns	11.3%
Academic concerns	11.3%
Anxiety	7.2%
Cultural shock	4.1%
Depression	3.1%
Other	4.1%

Words from a college counselor:  
"90% of cases come directly from students themselves. The number one issue is anxiety mainly due to relationship problems."

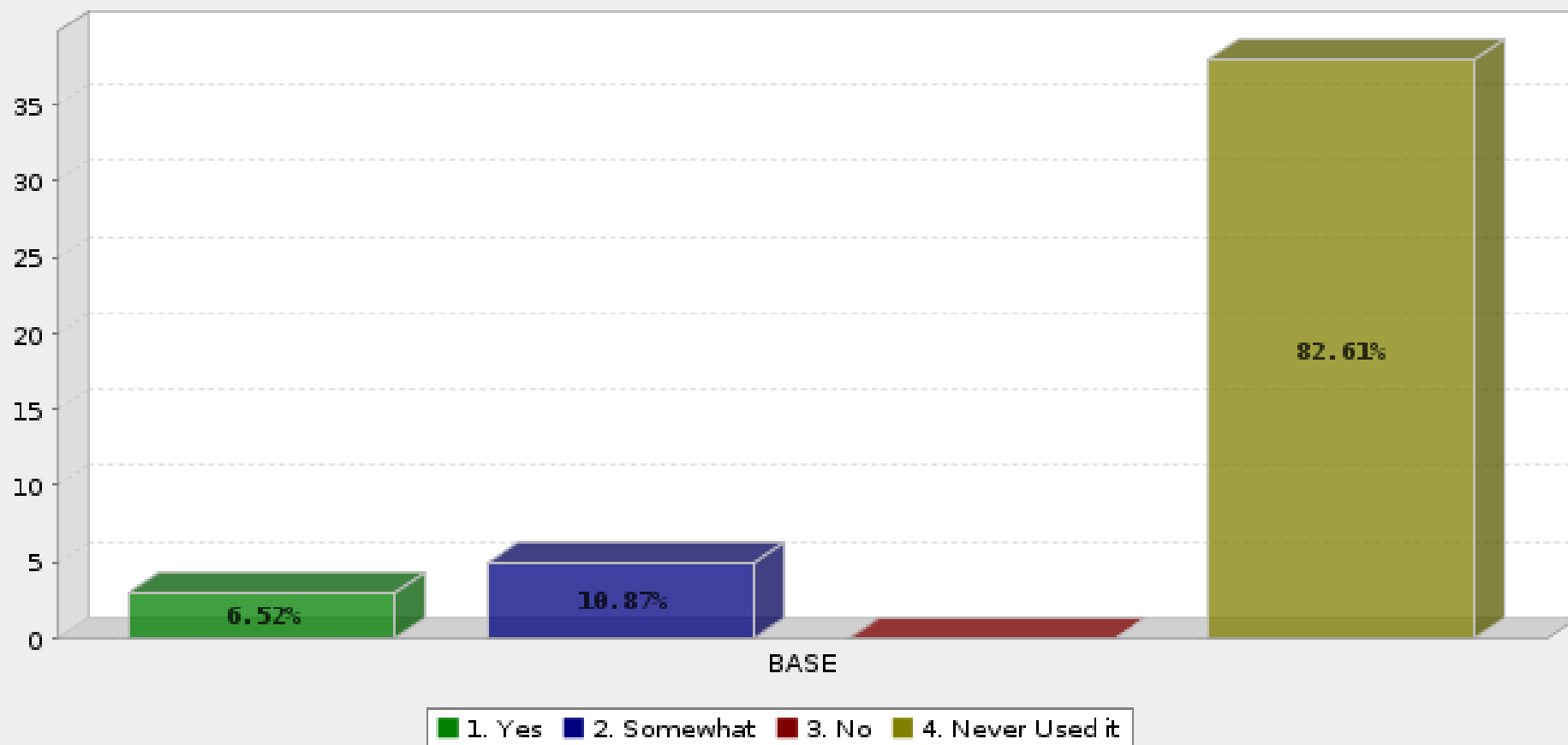


# Use & Satisfaction



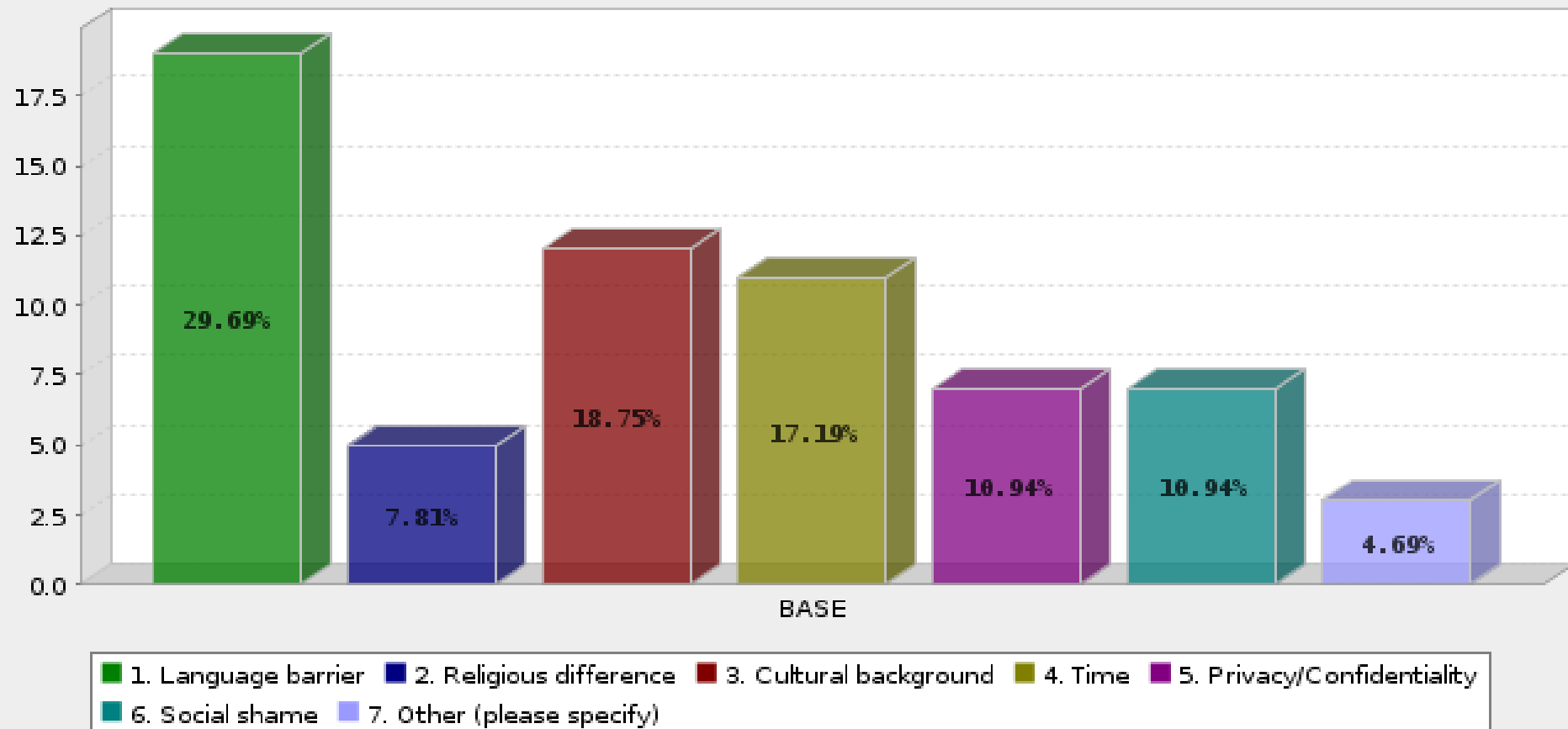
Willingness of utilizing the counseling services

# Use & Satisfaction



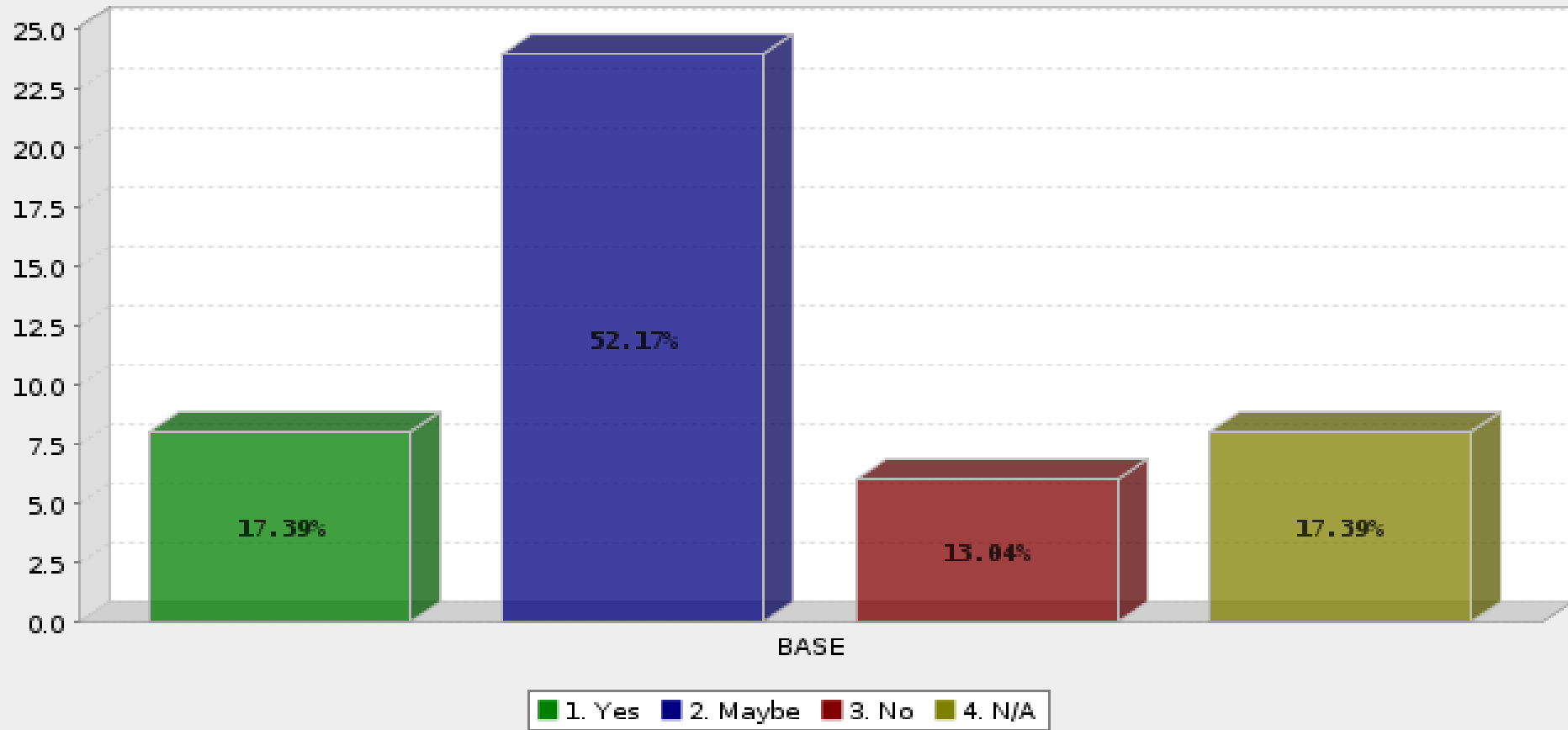
If you have used the counseling services, were you satisfied?

# Factors & Comment



Concerns with using the counseling services

# Factors & Comment



If the counseling services can provide an interpreter/translator, will you be more comfortable using the counseling services?

# Factors & Comment

“The interpreter can help with the language barrier, but that means more people know my things even they have signed the confidential contract.”

“It’s not in our culture to use counseling services. There are social implications attached. We talk with family, friends and share our concerns.”

“Sometimes it is necessary to get some counseling related to our exams anxiety and depression related to our life/exams/jobs.”

“I hope the Counseling Services can host some fun events rather than workshops to help students reduce stress and maintain a better mental health status.”



# Implications

1. Raise attention among faculty, staff, and other related personnel to pay more attention to international student mental health since international students are such underrepresented student group on campus.



# Implications

2. More innovative and diverse approaches can be developed and utilized to better promote the knowledge of counseling services among international students.

- Web link
- Orientation Resource Book
- International Student Support Group





# Implications

3. Develop strategies to make international students feel more comfortable with sharing their mental health concerns with the counselor, even in the presence of an interpreter if they choose, and have strong confidence in the multicultural and professional competency of counselors.



# Implications

**4. International Office can collaborate with the Counseling Services in developing informational materials in different languages to promote the awareness of mental health and the utilization of counseling services by international students.**



# Limitations

- Language barrier: the content of the survey and introductory email were both in English.
- Poor representation of participants: upper-level undergraduate international students were missing in data collection.



# Suggestions

- Obtain the perspective from the counseling services staff who can offer different, meaningful insight to the research.
- Use multiple approaches to collect and analyze data.
- Translating the survey to different languages may encourage a better response rate.
- Compare different variables for additional statistics analysis.



# What you have done

What has your institution or yourself done to help international students with mental health issues?

What are some other challenges or achievements ?



# What all of us can do

- Educate faculty, student affairs staff, and counselors with characteristics of international students and a multicultural scope of advising/counseling.
- Encourage international students to seek counseling services. Do not attempt to fulfill the role of counselor. If needed, offer to help make appointment.
- Action Checklist. See handout.



# What all of us can do

Would you please share this video?

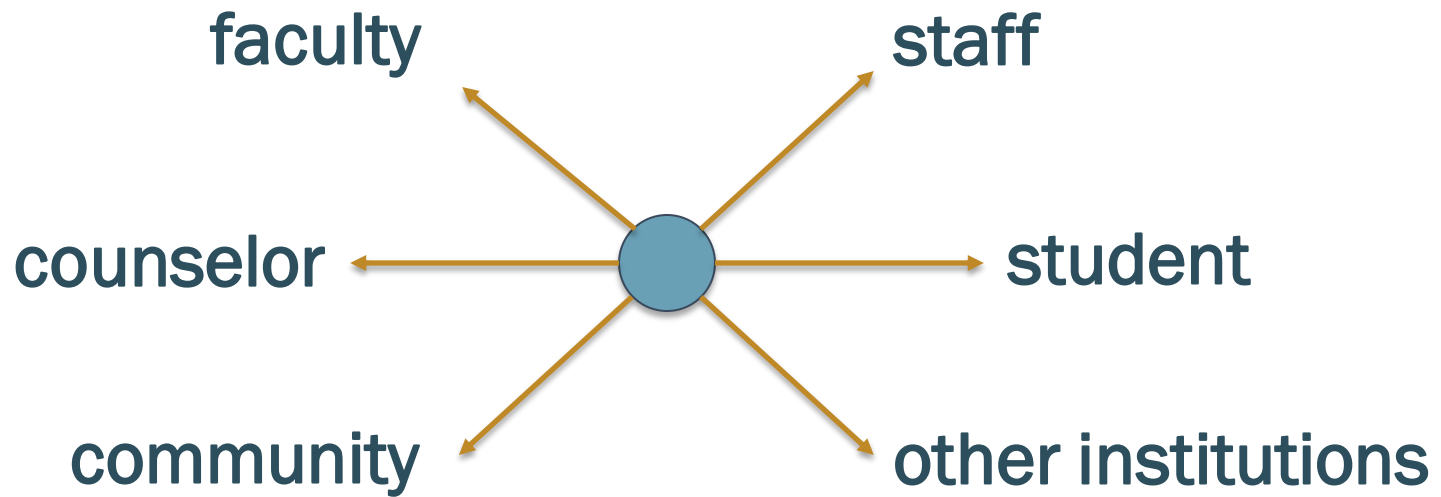


**Mental Health Awareness for International Students**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfCWUX9gnDc>



# What all of us can do



# References

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# Questions & Comments

# Thank You!



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Email us for any question or comment!

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