

# Pathways

## Benchmarking Survey Results

2019-20

Webinar

February 20, 2020

# AISAP

Educate. Elevate. Empower.

ASSOCIATION OF  
INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOL ADMISSION  
PROFESSIONALS



# AISAP's Pathways Research



Salary & Compensation



Staffing & Office Design



Perceptions & Priorities

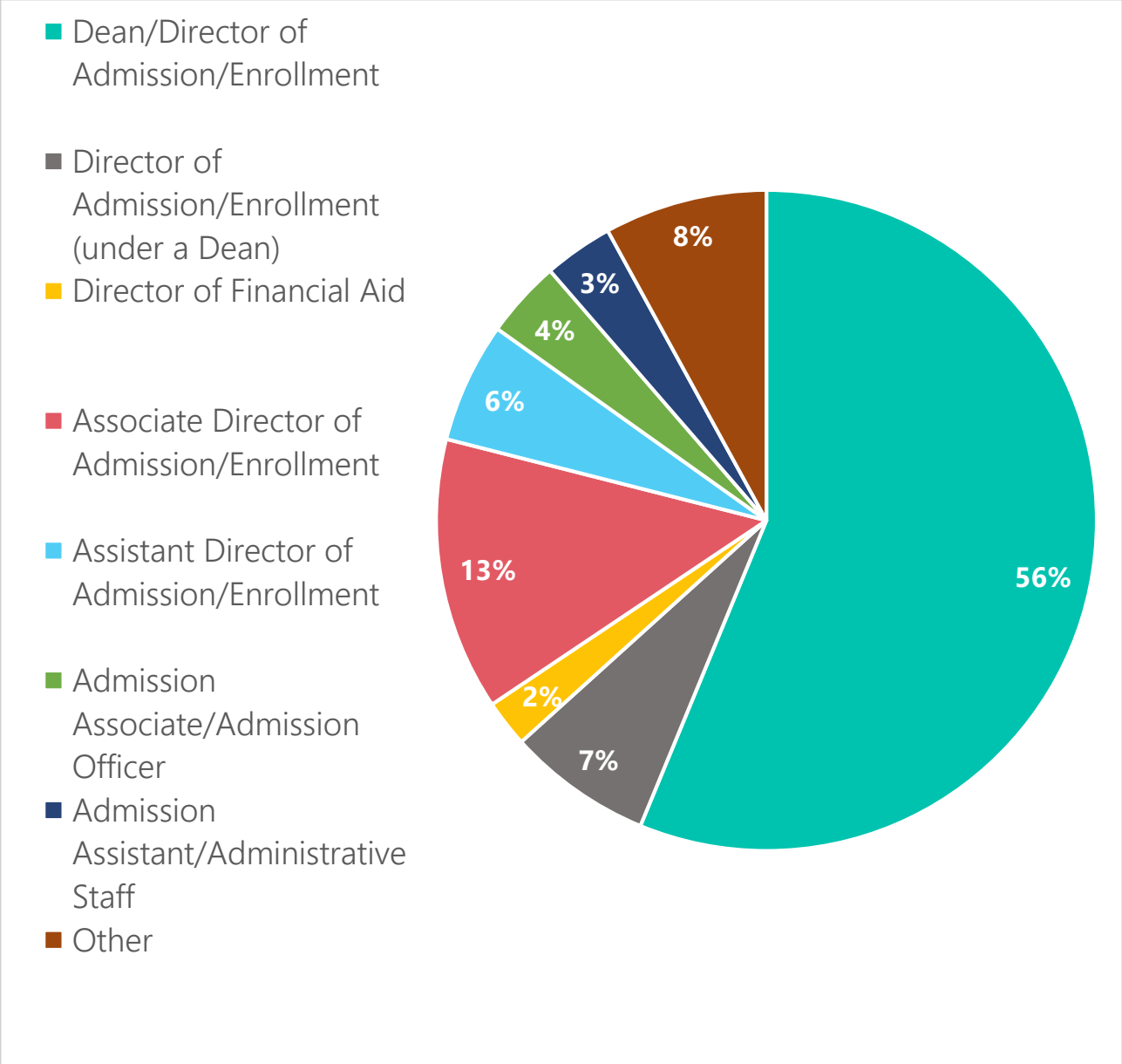
PATHWAYS

PATHWAYS

PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKING FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOOL ADMISSION PROFESSIONALS

- AISAP's Pathways research initiative is the largest collector and distributor of admission professional information in the industry
- This year's survey carries over the previous two years' redesign and focuses on the professional's experience
  - Peer comparisons including salary, job roles, and office environment broken out by school type and job title
  - *What are your concerns for the industry?*
  - *Where is your career taking you?*
  - *How can AISAP support you?*

# Demographics of Survey Respondents



- 560 total respondents
- School demographics:
  - 76% Day schools
  - 41% PK/K-12 schools
    - 23% PK/K-8 schools
  - 84% Co-ed schools
  - 44% Small size: 0-200 applications
    - 38% Medium size: 201-500 applications
- 91% US-based schools



# AISAP's Pathways Research



## Salary & Compensation



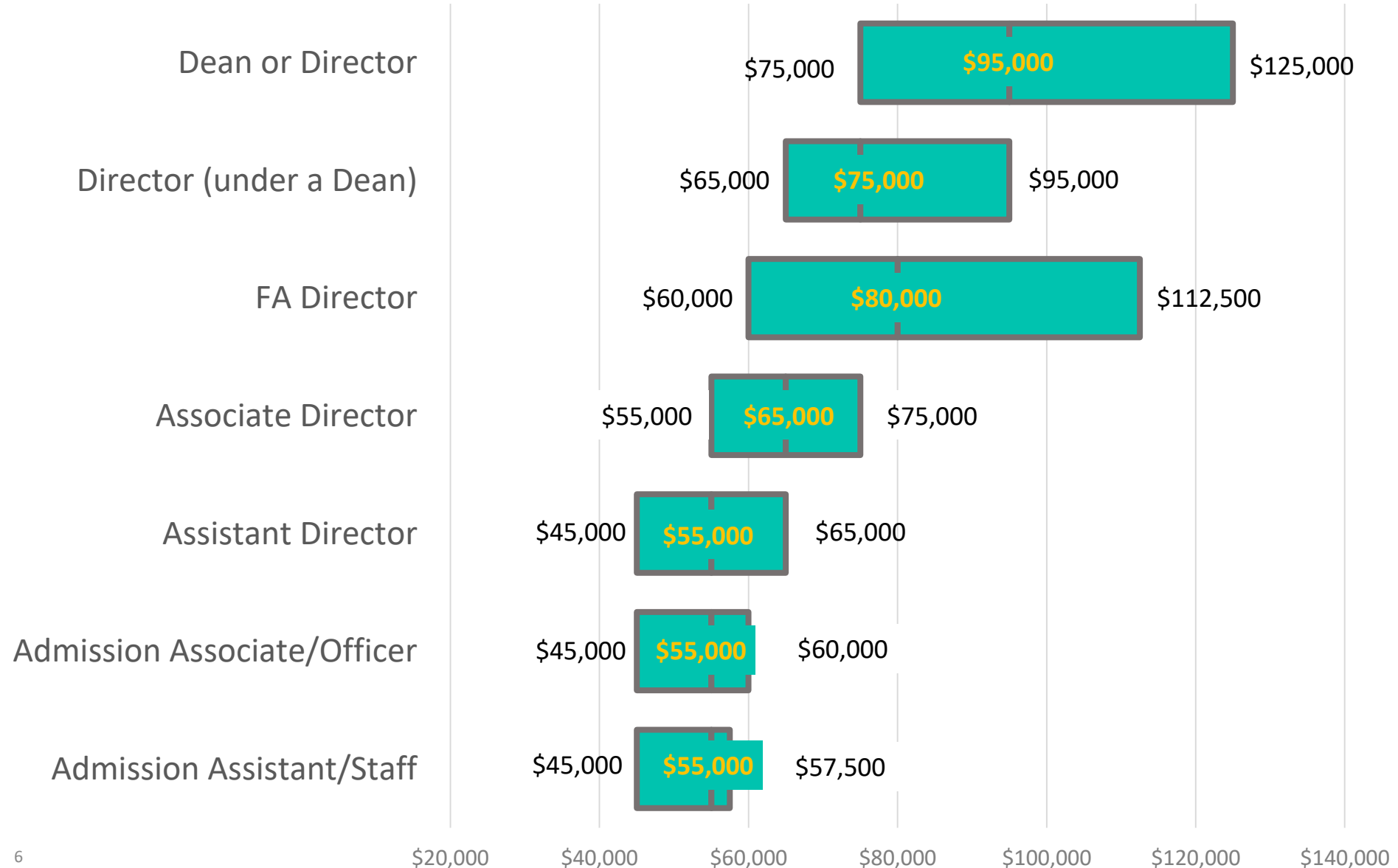
## Staffing & Office Design



## Perceptions & Priorities

# Salary by Position Title

25<sup>th</sup> percentile, median, and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile (n=496)



# Salary by Position Title, by School Type

## Median Salary

<i>Position</i>	Elementary School	Middle-High School	High School	PK/K – 8/9	PK/K - 12
Dean or Director	\$78,000	\$118,000	\$107,000	\$96,000	\$103,000
Director (under a Dean)	-	\$72,000	\$84,000	\$95,000	\$73,000
FA Director	-	\$65,000^	\$55,000^	-	\$106,000
Associate Director	-	\$71,000	\$64,000	\$74,000	\$60,000
Assistant Director	\$50,000^	\$62,000	\$46,000	\$72,000	\$55,000
Admission Associate/ Officer	\$45,000^	\$72,000	-	\$55,000^	\$50,000
Admission Assistant/ Staff	\$45,000^	\$75,000^	\$48,000	\$55,000^	\$53,000

-None available; ^Not significant: less than 3 responses

# Dean/Director Salary, by School Type

## Median Salary

<i>Dean or Director Only</i>	Elementary School	Middle-High School	High School	PK/K – 8/9	PK/K - 12
Day School (n=213)	\$77,500	\$122,000	\$104,500	\$95,000	\$98,500
Boarding School (n=10)	-	-	\$110,000	-	-
Day + Boarding School (n=43)	-	\$109,000	\$107,000	-	\$121,500
Girls Only (n=22)	-	\$116,000	\$100,000	\$115,000 <sup>^</sup>	\$128,000
Boys Only (n=13)	-	-	\$103,000	\$102,000	\$150,000 <sup>^</sup>
Co-ed (n=232)	\$78,000	\$119,000	\$109,000	\$94,000	\$100,500

-None available; <sup>^</sup>Not significant: less than 3 responses



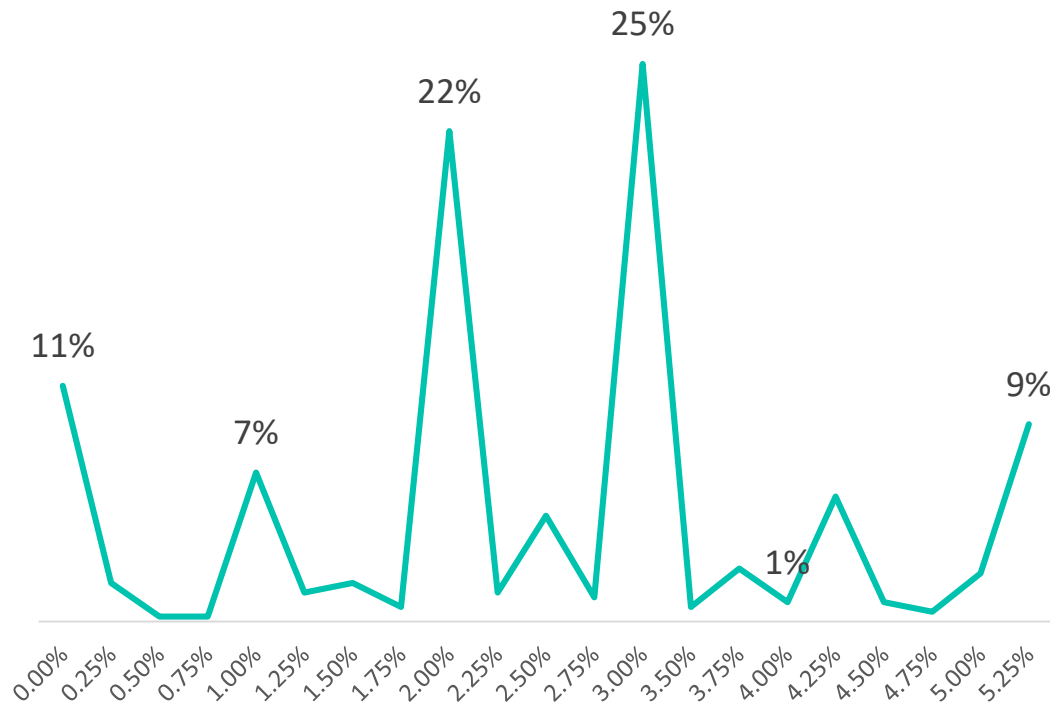
# Salary by Position Title, by School Size

## Median Salary

<i>Position</i>	Small (0-200 Apps)	Medium (201-500 Apps)	Large (501-1000 Apps)	Extra Large (1000+ Apps)
Dean or Director	\$85,000	\$110,000	\$133,000	\$151,000
Director (under a Dean)	\$66,000	\$86,000	\$93,000	\$95,000^
FA Director	\$75,000^	\$83,000	\$100,000	\$105,000^
Associate Director	\$56,000	\$65,000	\$79,000	\$125,000^
Assistant Director	\$45,000	\$59,000	\$61,000	-
Admission Associate/ Officer	\$45,000	\$58,000	\$62,000	-
Admission Assistant/ Staff	\$50,000^	\$48,000	\$60,000	-

-None available; ^Not significant: less than 3 responses

# Annual Salary Increase



<i>Position</i>	<b>Mean Increase</b>
Dean or Director	2.71%
Director (under a Dean)	2.78%
FA Director	2.28%
Associate Director	2.16%
Assistant Director	2.56%
Admission Associate/ Officer	2.23%
Admission Assistant/ Staff	2.35%
Other	2.70%
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.50%</b>

- 55% received a salary increase between 2.0% and 3.0% (inclusive)
- On average, wages increased 2.50% overall this year, in line with last year's 2.52%
  - According to the Department of Labor, the overall Consumer Price Index, or inflation measure, increased by 2.50% in the last calendar year
- Additionally, larger schools had bigger salary increases last year

# Additional Compensation

## Compensation beyond salary is rare

- Overtime: 96% do not receive benefit
- Additional duties (coaching or advising): 87% do not receive benefit
- Bonus: 77% do not receive benefit

## Benefits not available to admission professionals

- Graduate studies subsidized: 57%
- Tuition remission for children: 18%
- Long-term disability: 14%
- Short-term disability: 12%
- Retirement contribution from school: 8%

*There are quite a variety of other benefits that professionals experience as well, such as: meals in the dining hall, support for childcare, vacation that coincides with the student calendar, wellness incentives, and school-paid devices*



# AISAP's Pathways Research



## Salary & Compensation

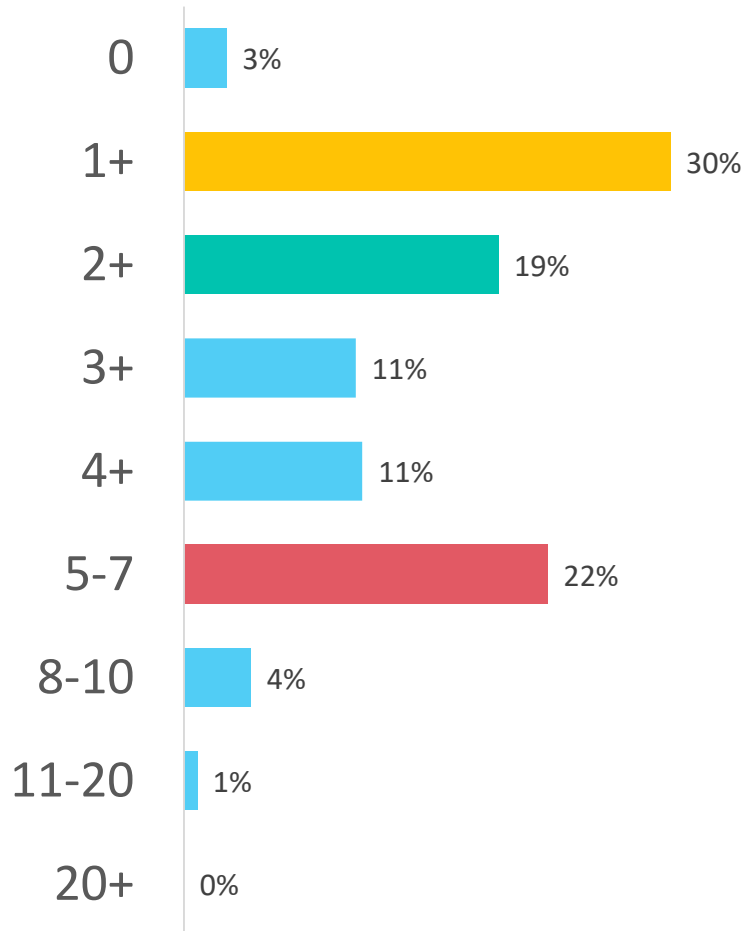


## Staffing & Office Design



## Perceptions & Priorities

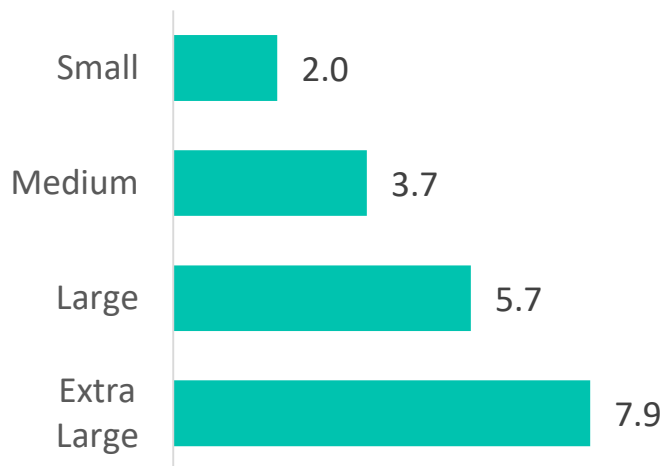
# Admission Office Size and Makeup



- The most common makeup of offices with 1+ is a Director and a part-time Associate/Admission Officer
- Offices made up of 2+ employees most often have a Director and full-time Admission Assistant or Associate/Officer
- Offices with 5-7 employees typically have a Director, 1-2 Assistant Directors, and multiple Admission Associates/Officers

# How Does an Admission Office Staff Itself Properly?

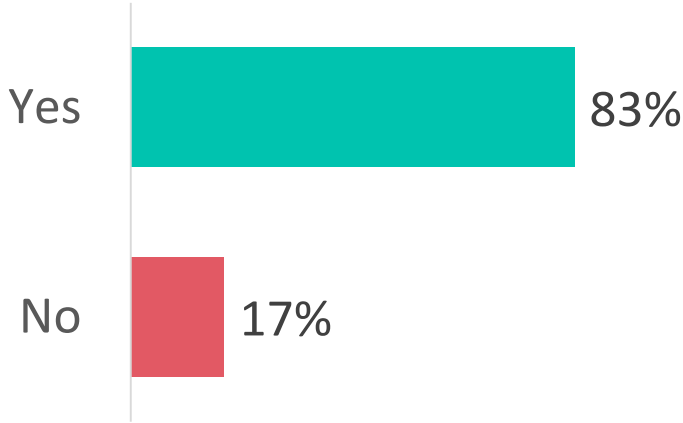
<i>School Size</i>	Mean Size of Office (FTE)
Small (0-200 apps)	2.0
Medium (201-500 apps)	3.7
Large (501-1000 apps)	5.7
Extra Large (1000+ apps)	7.9
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.4</b>



- There is a strong correlation between the overall size of a school's admission office and their number of applications
- **Small:** 54% have 1+ FTE
- **Medium:** 43% have 4-7 FTE
- **Large:** 67% have 5-7 FTE
- **Extra Large:** 50% have 8-10 FTE
- *Can admission offices use this type of information to support their needs for more staff?*

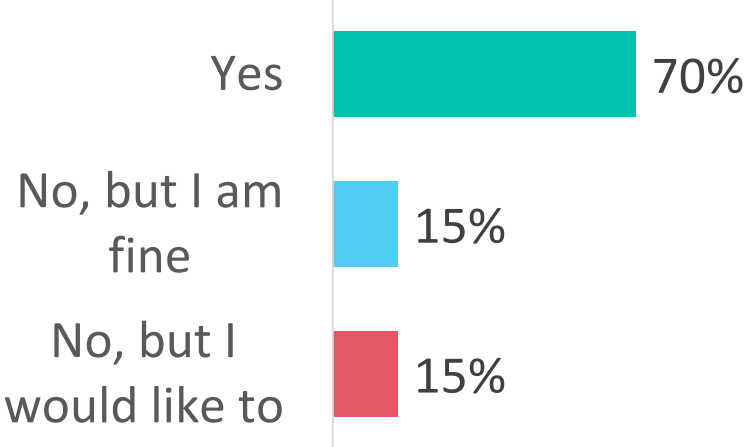
# Dean/Director Involvement in Strategy

As Dean/Director of Admission, do you have a “seat at the table” in regard to serving as a member of the senior administrative team and being part of the highest-level strategic conversations?



*These results are consistent across school size as measured by their application count.*

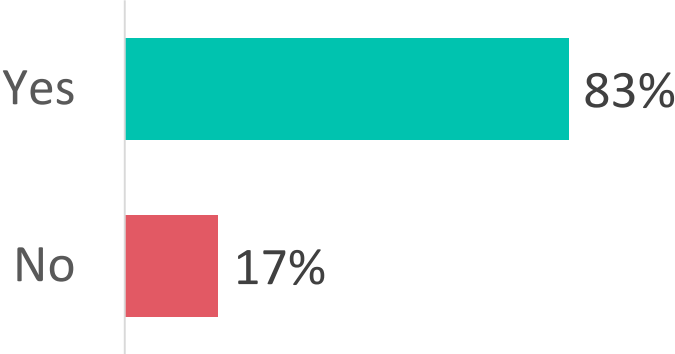
As Dean/Director of Admission, do you attend Trustee meetings and present admission and enrollment data to the Board?



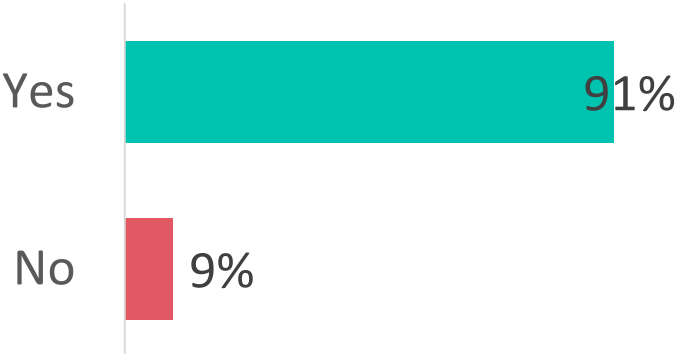
*At the largest schools, 78% of deans/directors present to the Board and the remaining 22% would like to; at the smallest schools, 69% present while 16% do not want to.*

# Planning and Goals

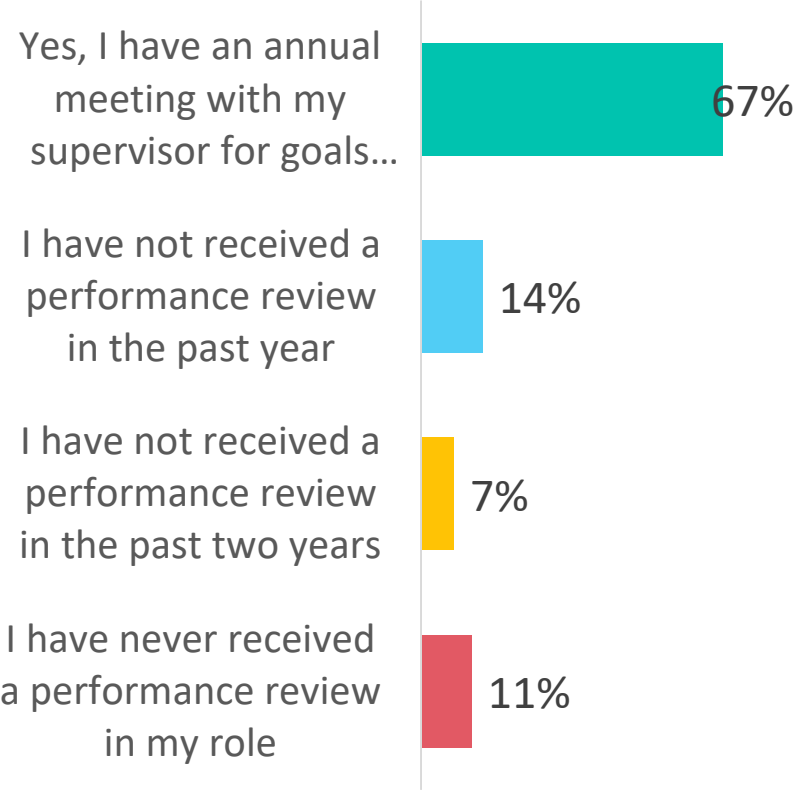
Does your office set annual goals as part of an enrollment plan?



As an admission professional, do you set annual goals?



Do you receive regular feedback through a performance review or meeting with your direct supervisor?





# Admission Office Functions

## Processes that can use improvement

- Retention strategies
- Recruitment of diverse students (ethnic, socio-economic, etc.)
- Parent ambassadors

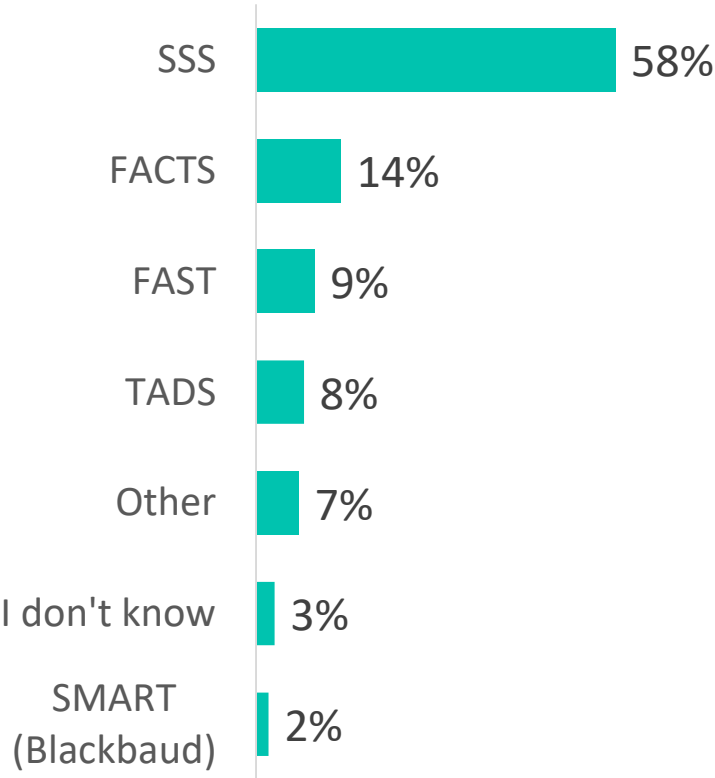
*Across the board, admission professionals shared their desire for **more time**. Admitting that their offices are understaffed, they want to refocus their time on tasks that have the biggest impact long term such as strategic planning and identification of new markets/tactics.*

## Processes working very well/well

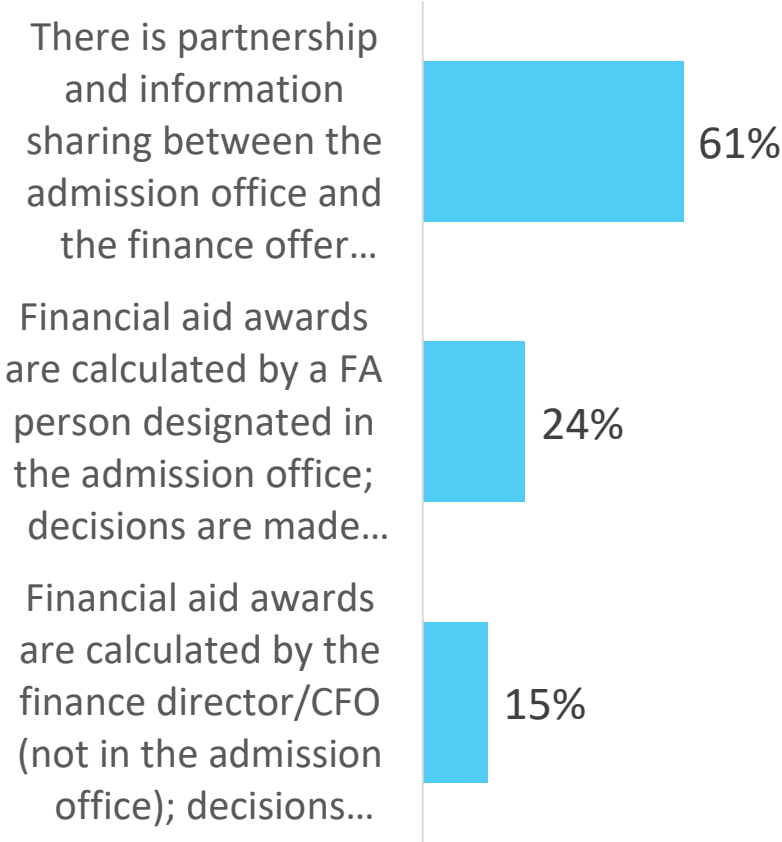
- Application decision-making process
- Collaboration with other necessary offices on campus
- Financial aid process

# Financial Aid Support

What system does your office use to help with the evaluation of the financial need for families?



How are financial aid awards calculated and how are final decisions made at your school?





# AISAP's Pathways Research



## Salary & Compensation



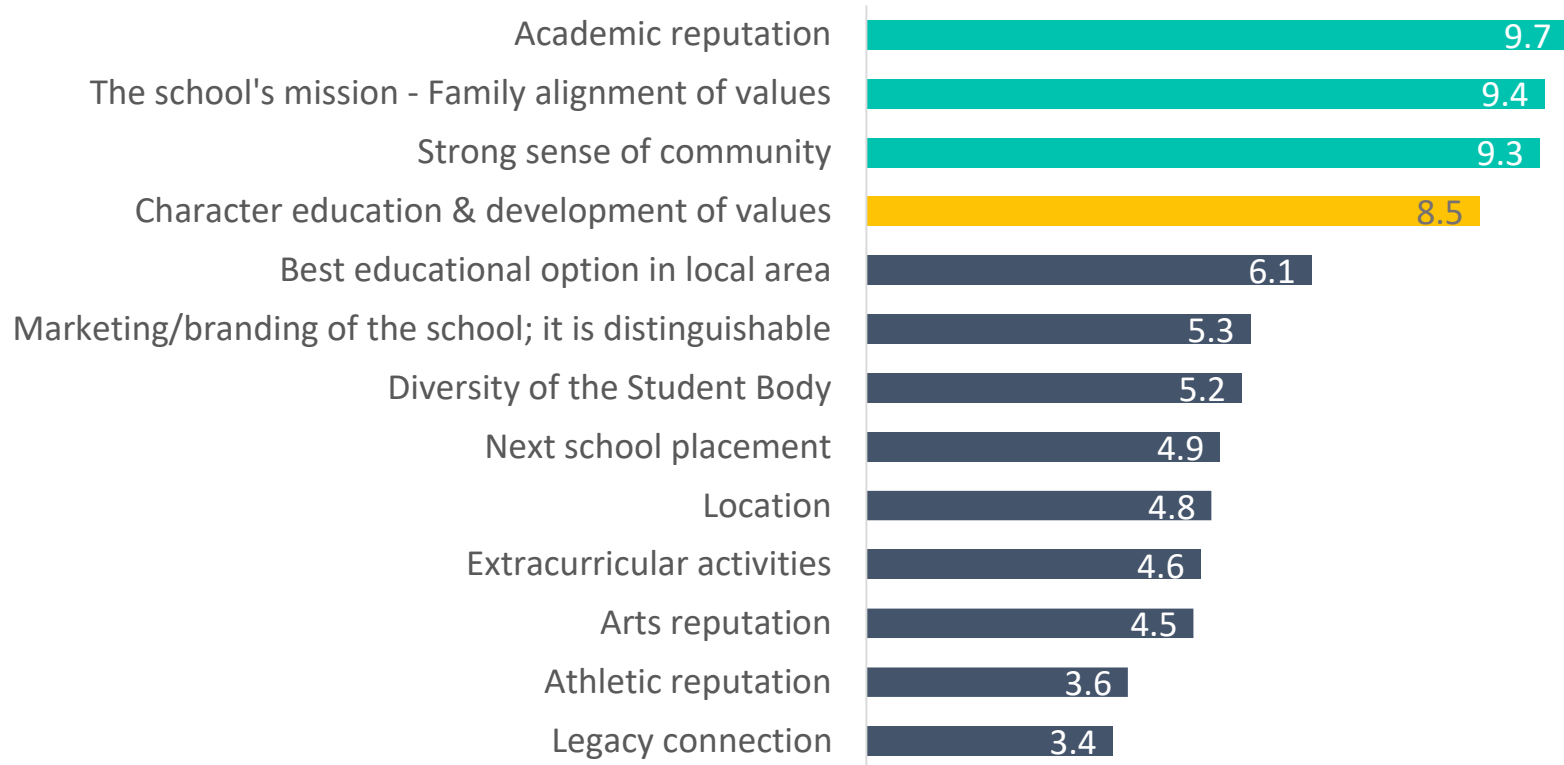
## Staffing & Office Design



## Perceptions & Priorities

# School's Reputation and Perception

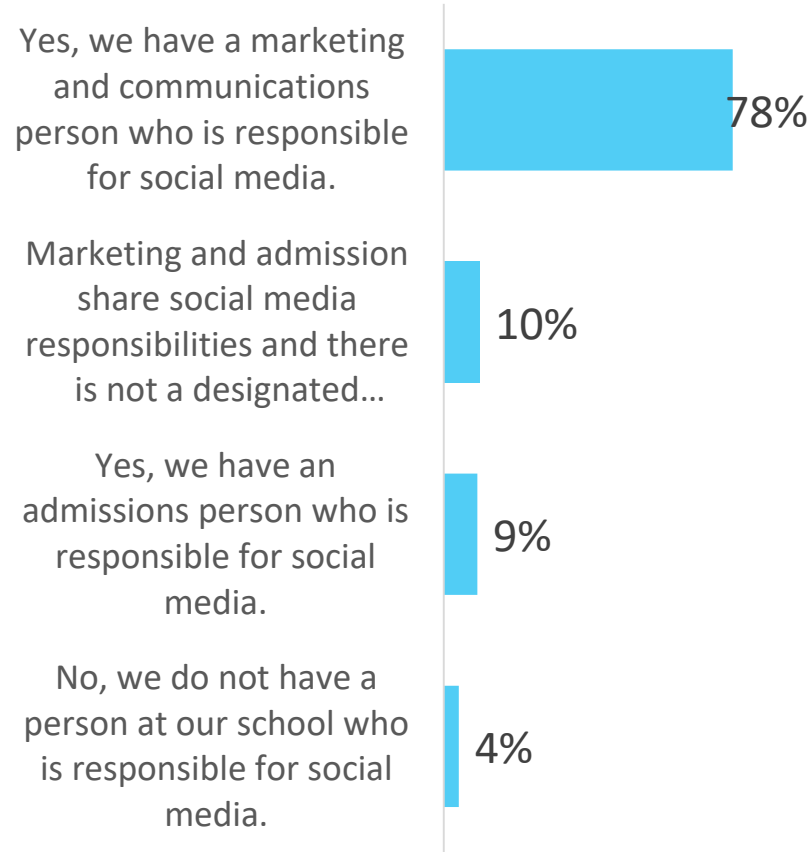
*Why do families choose to enroll at your school?*



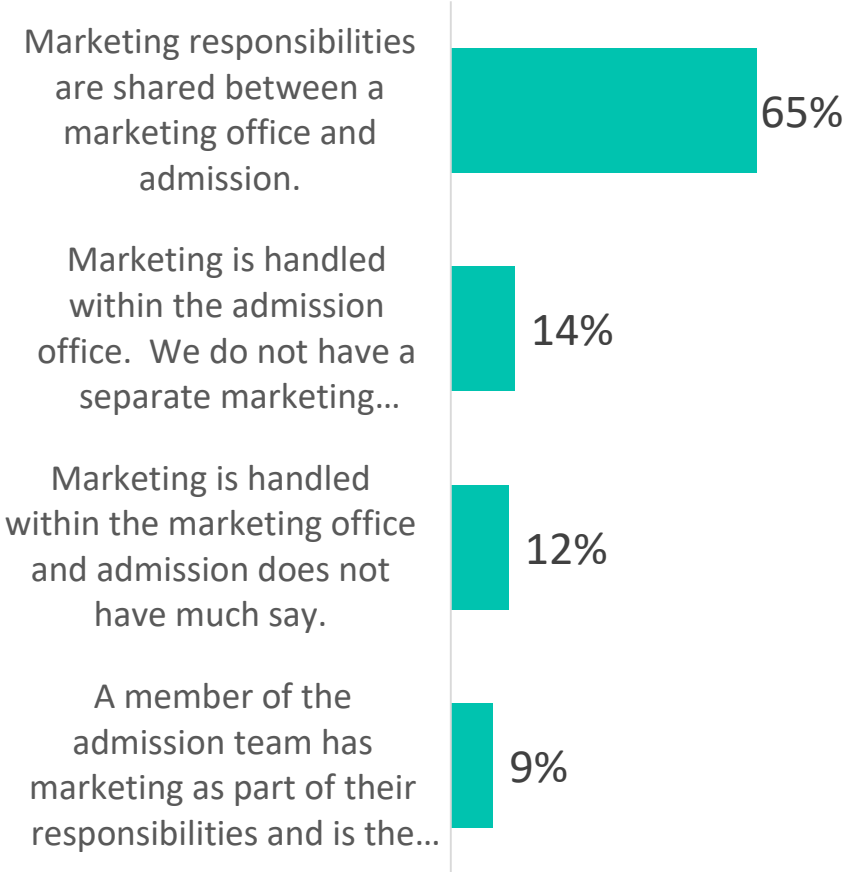
- Academic reputation is more important for PK/K-12 schools than elementary schools
- School's mission is more important at PK/K-8 schools than high schools
- Marketing and branding is more important for elementary schools than all other types of schools

# Marketing and Communications Support

Does your school have a designated person who handles social media and is this person a member of the admission office?



Who is responsible for marketing and marketing decisions? What is the relationship between offices?



# Evolving Responsibilities of Admission

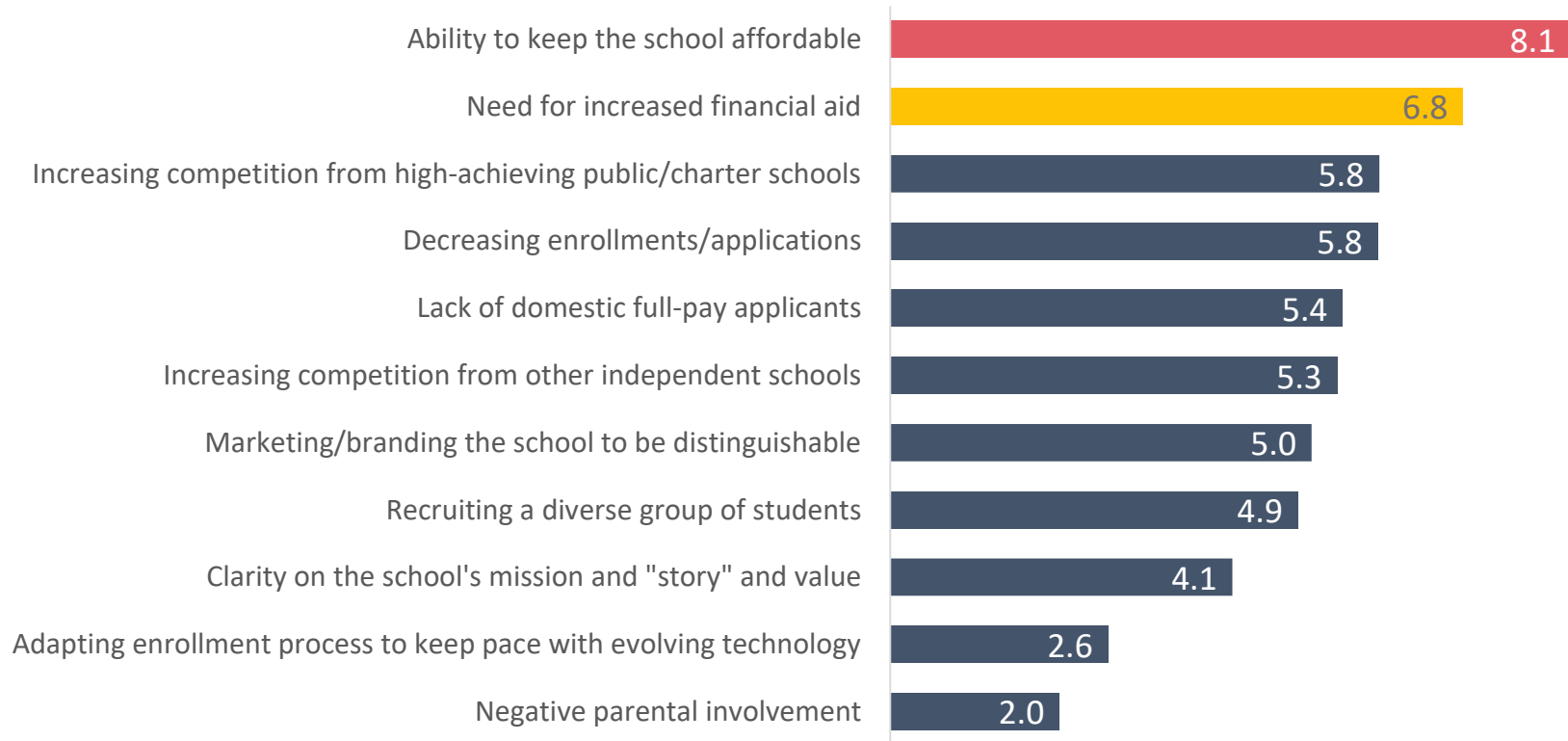
## External Marketing

- Top reasons that families enroll can all be traced back to proper marketing: academic reputation, mission, community, values
- On average, the admission marketing budget for schools last year was \$72,000
  - While there is some differentiation among school size - \$60,000 for small schools and \$105,000 for large schools – the challenge is using it to effectively share your school’s mission and values to potential applicants

## Internal Communications

- Educating and guiding internal stakeholders to support admission
  - “Lack of Board awareness of the realities of enrollment and that a school cannot magically just enroll more students.”
  - “Bring everyone together and to foster institutional “buy-in” around a strategic marketing plan.”
- Forward thinking and adaptability is essential to stay ahead of peers and fend off financial troubles
  - Financial aid and tuition, especially: “Opening up a discussion about the possibility of exploring “tailored tuition” or a more open and clear expectation about financial aid and estimated qualifications.”

# Challenges Facing Admission in Independent Schools



- “The Board of Trustees sets tuition with little input from the Admissions Office...the aggregate increase over several years has me VERY concerned.”
- “Economic inequality [and perception] makes it difficult to attract families that are not in the 1%.”

# Families Have Different Expectations

*Compiled from open responses*

## Challenges

- Applicant pool is changing
  - More families are applying for financial aid, less full pay families in pool, which becomes more expensive, and demographically unbalanced
  - Secondary schools “siphoning off younger grades to fill their middle school”
- Schools trying to reflect needs of today’s students
  - Increased need for “health and wellness resources to support increasingly anxious, unwell” students
  - However, schools that already focused on LD, for example, hurt by larger schools trying to fill this niche for which they’re unprepared
- Families struggling to see value proposition
  - Newer parents have the ability to pay but are valuing other things in their children’s lives, not just private school
  - Additionally, parents are more willing to switch local schools if unhappy
- Mission and business of independent schools needs to evolve
  - The “model” is broken – rising tuition that doesn’t align with wages and unwillingness to sunset programs (and employees) to make it work
  - Need to shift from college preparation to “life preparation” to align with higher education (and parental) expectations



# Takeaways

## What have we learned?

- Salaries and benefits
- Size of admission office aligns with demand and workload
- Costs rising and competition becoming fierce
  - Concerns about *keeping school affordable*
  - Appealing to next generation of parents and sharing the *value proposition*

## AISAP can provide you with the necessary professional development

- How to determine your value and advocate for yourself
- How to identify and focus on your school's distinctiveness
- How to fight for additional marketing funds – and what to do with that opportunity

## Pathways research will continue to evolve

- What else are you interested in? Please let us know how to improve this instrument!

For more information about this research and how you can supplement this analysis based on your school's specific interests and traits, please contact:

[research@aisap.org](mailto:research@aisap.org)

