

# Academic Integrity across Physician Assistant Programs in the United States



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# Introduction



# Introduction



- **Academic integrity**
  - Adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty <sup>1</sup>
  - A commitment even in face of adversity , to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility <sup>2</sup>
  - Universities and institutions should strive to uphold academic integrity especially when educating physician assistants who will eventually be responsible for the care of others

# Introduction



- **Academic dishonesty/academic misconduct**
  - Used interchangeably
  - Unethical behaviors students may take part in during their academic studies <sup>3</sup>
  - Faculty and students may both participate either knowingly or unknowingly
  - Takes on many forms<sup>4</sup>
    - ✦ Traditional techniques
    - ✦ High tech techniques
    - ✦ Clinical setting techniques

# Introduction



- Students must develop their morals and uphold academic integrity otherwise there will be a disconnect between academic performance and real ability <sup>5</sup>

# Introduction



- **Honor code**
  - A written document stating that students are expected to exhibit behaviors that epitomize academic, professional and personal integrity

# Introduction



- What are the standards of academic integrity?
- How can educators instill academic integrity in students?
- How is academic integrity upheld?
- Are there universally accepted consequences of violations of academic integrity?

# Objective



- The purpose of this study was to describe how academic integrity is addressed in physician assistant programs across the United States

# Methods



# Methods



- Local IRB approval
- Descriptive survey developed dividing questions into demographic information and academic integrity information
- Survey tool was distributed via LimeSurvey<sup>©</sup> to all PA programs in the United States that were accredited and provisionally accredited
- LimeSurvey<sup>©</sup> was used for statistical analysis
- Microsoft Excel<sup>©</sup> was used for all charts

# Results



# Results



- 171 surveys distributed
- 64.32% response rate
- Demographic data was consistent with 2010-2011 PAEA 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Report<sup>6</sup>

# Geographic Location



## PAEA 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Report

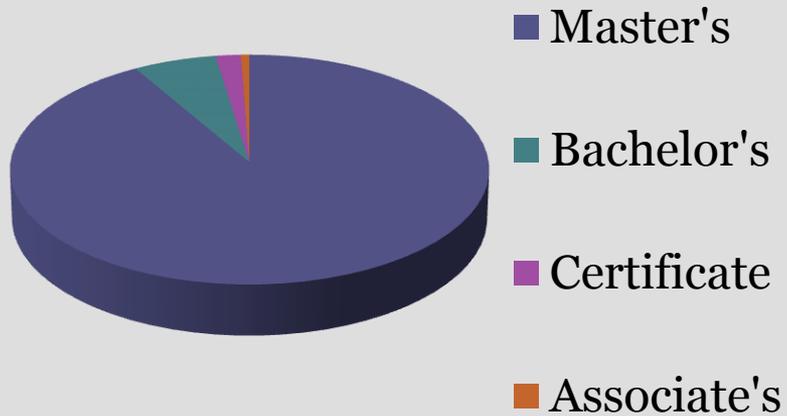
| Consortium | Percent |
|------------|---------|
| Southeast  | 22%     |
| Northeast  | 21.4%   |
| Midwest    | 19%     |
| West       | 13.7%   |
| East       | 13.7%   |
| Heartland  | 10.1%   |

## Survey Results

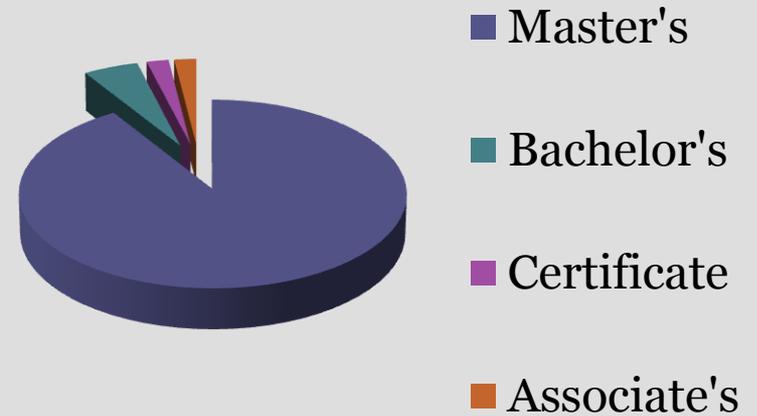
| Consortium | Percent |
|------------|---------|
| Southeast  | 17.82%  |
| Northeast  | 30.69%  |
| Midwest    | 20.79%  |
| West       | 14.85%  |
| East       | 7.92%   |
| Heartland  | 7.92%   |

# Credentials Awarded

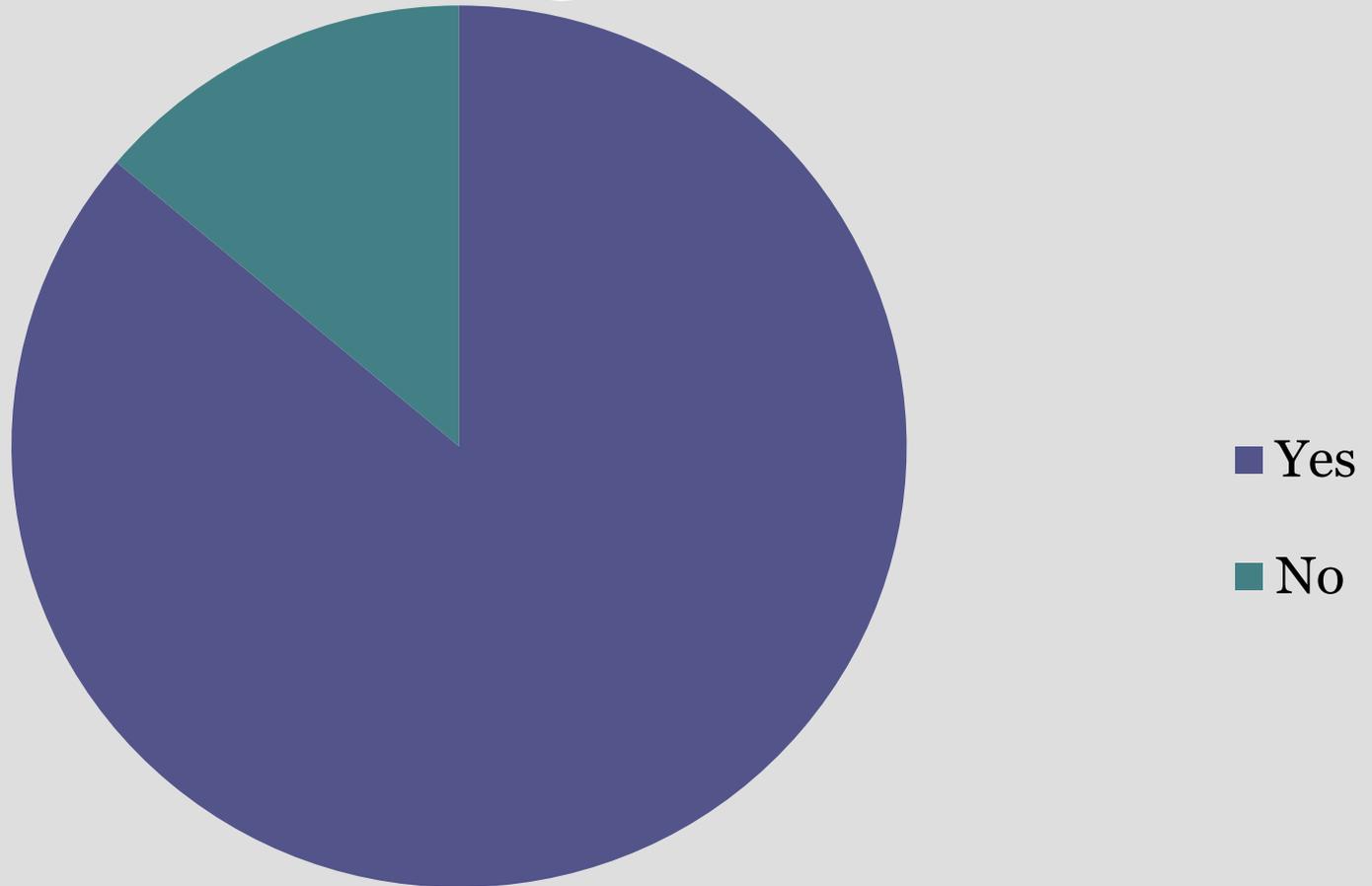
## PAEA 27th Report



## Survey Results



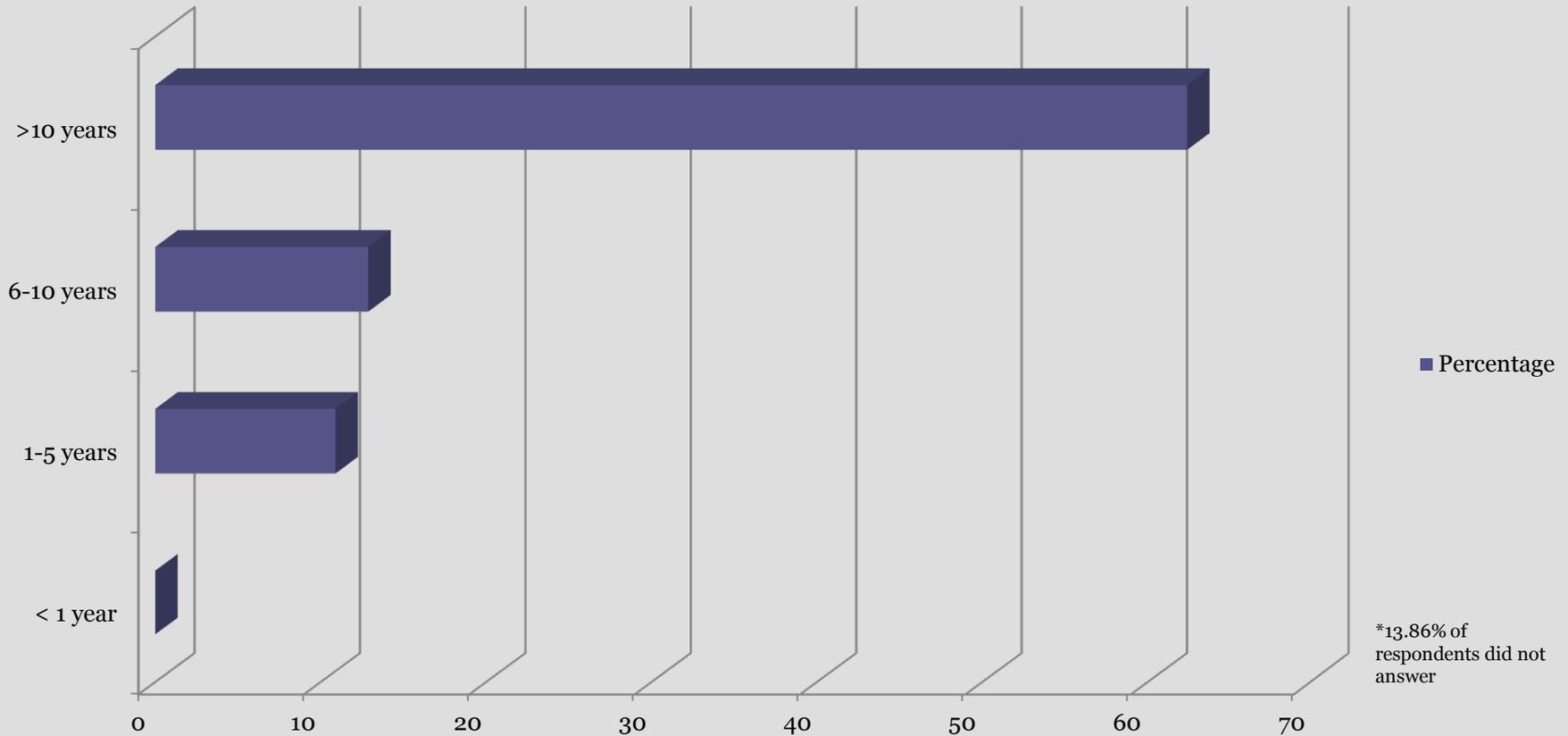
# Does your institution have an honor code?



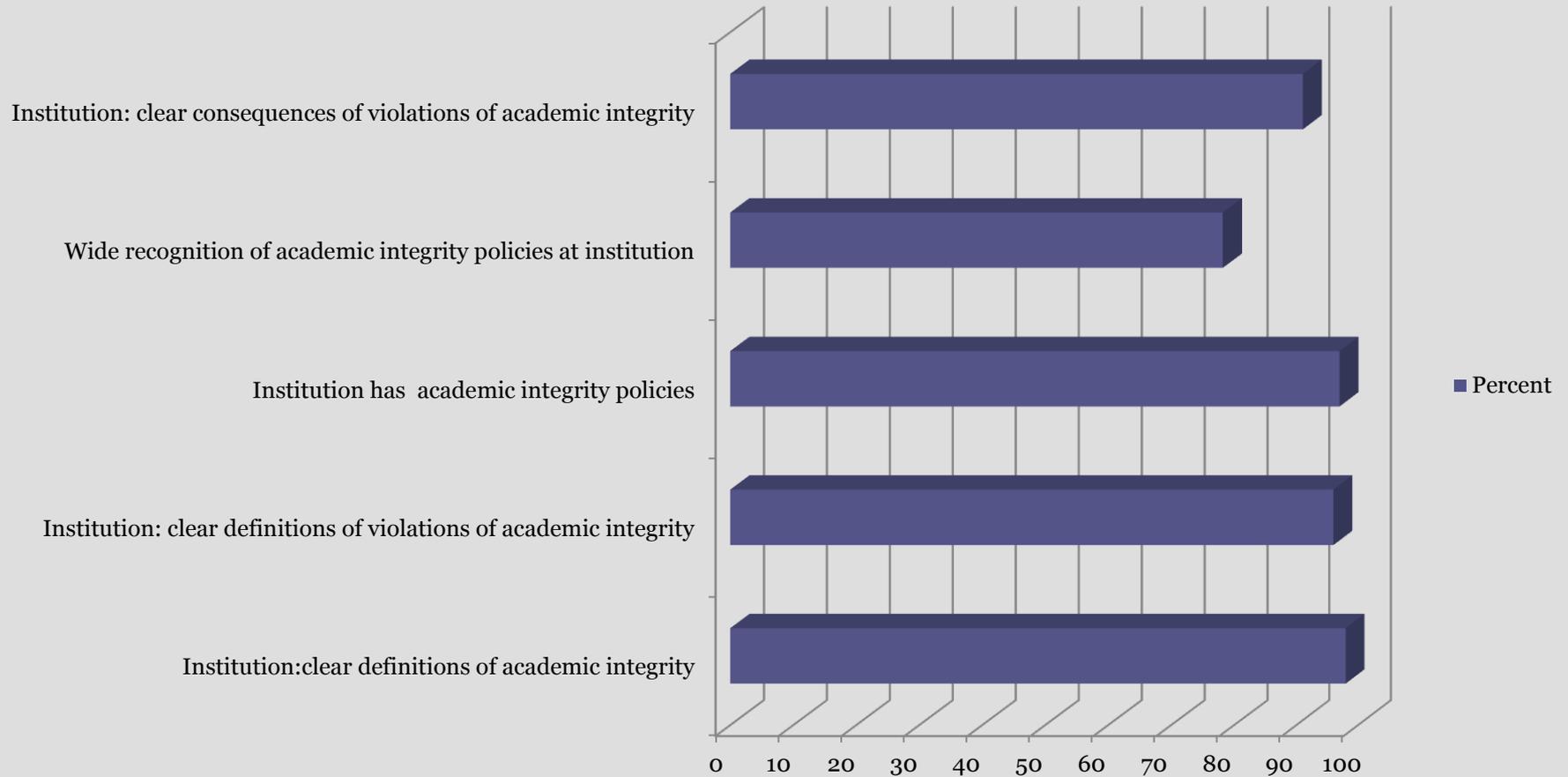
# How long has the honor code been in place?



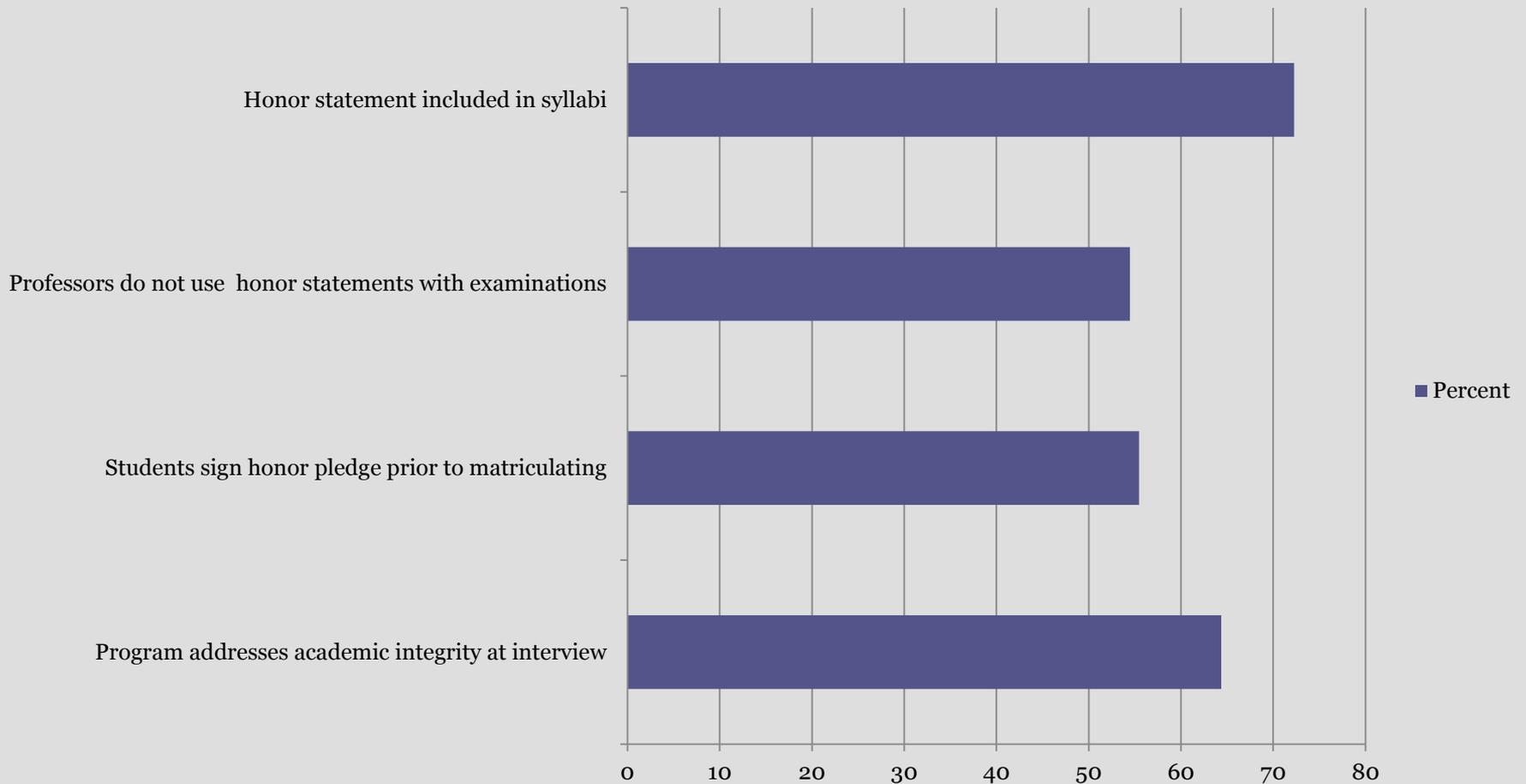
## Length of Time Honor Code is in Place\*



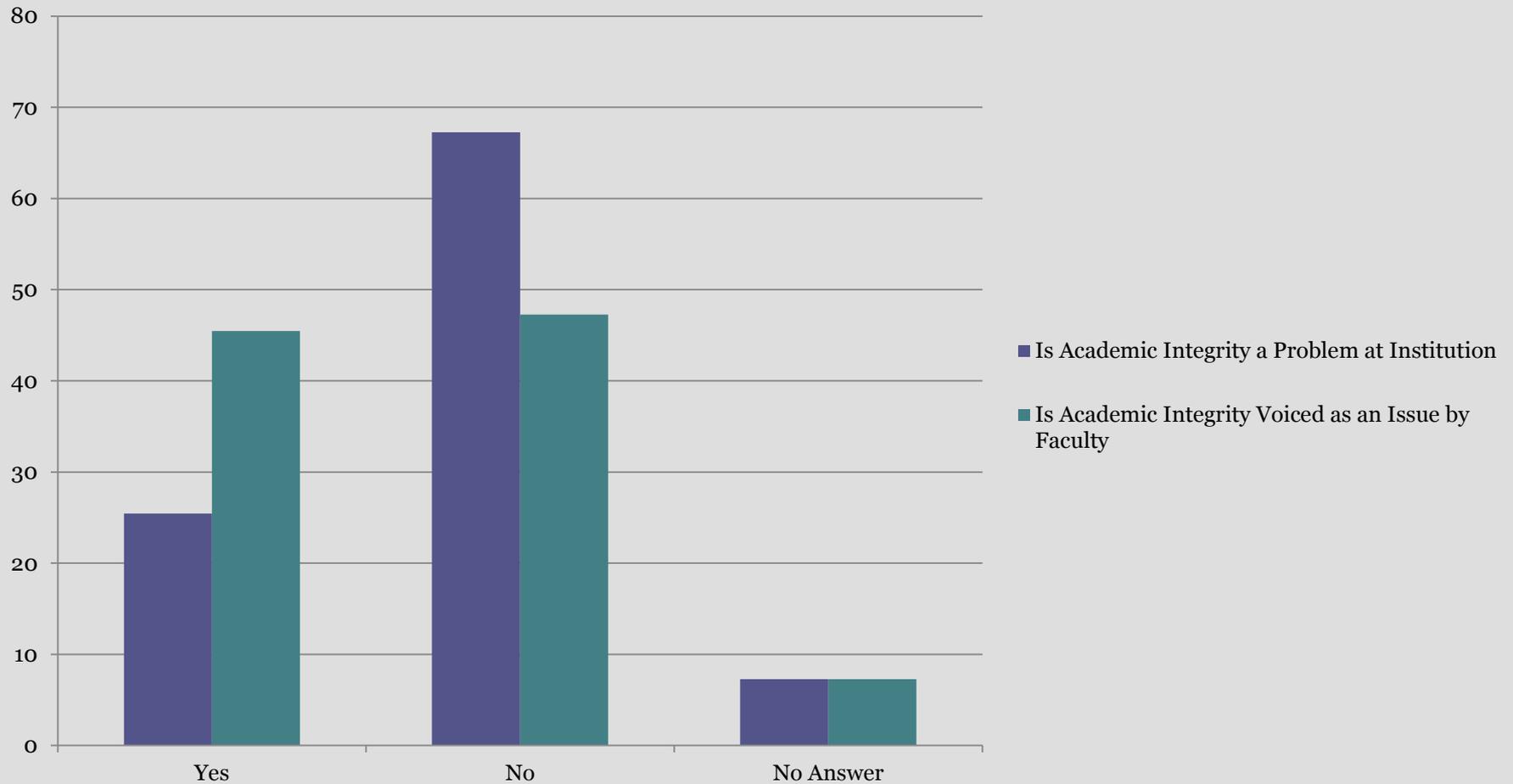
# Academic Integrity at Institutions



# Academic Integrity at PA Program



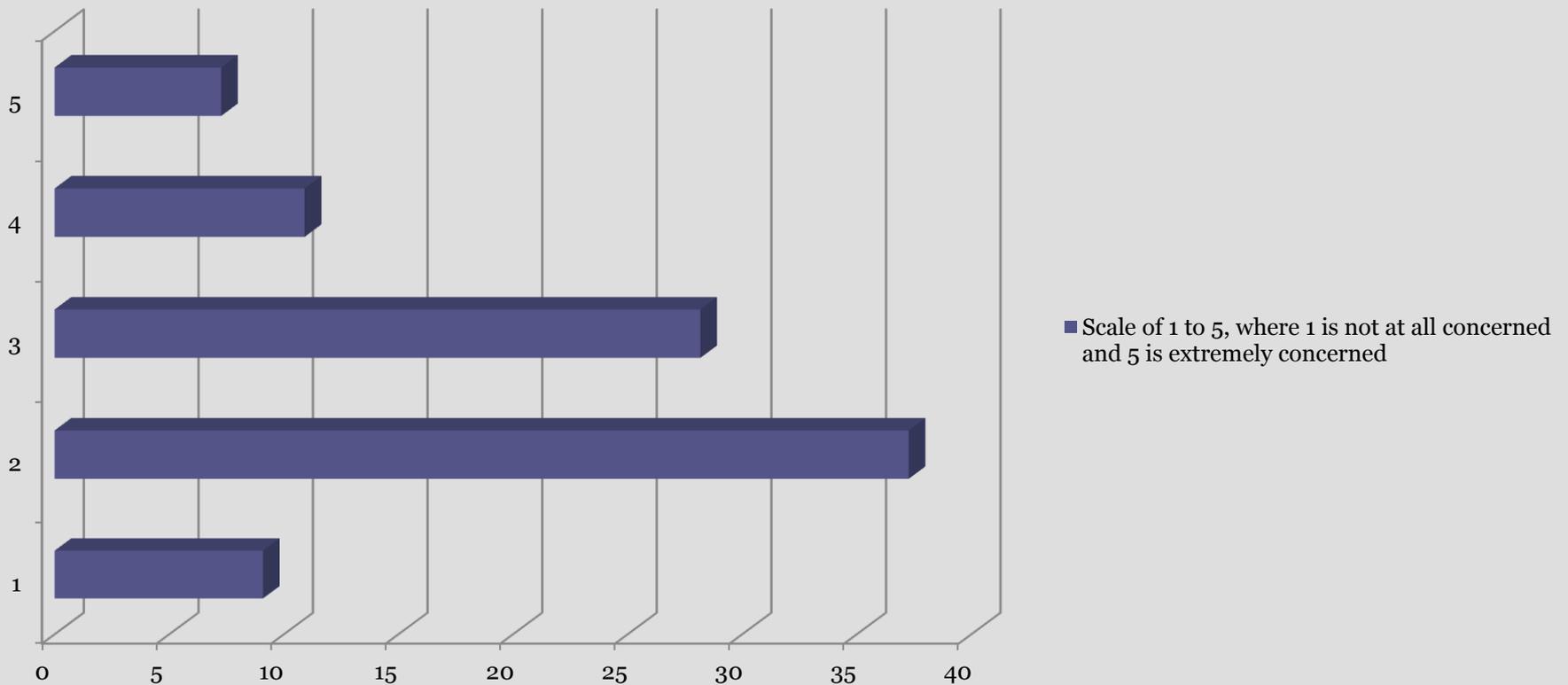
# Is Academic Integrity a Problem at Institutions?



# To What Extent Are Respondents Concerned?



**To what extent are you concerned about integrity in your program?**



# Discussion



# Institution and Program



- Majority responded that at their institution:
  - Clear definitions of academic integrity
  - Clear definitions of violations of academic integrity
  - Academic integrity policies in place **and** recognized campus wide
- Majority of programs have honor code in place

# Yet.....



- Significant portion of programs do not address academic integrity prior to matriculation
- Significant portion of programs do not require students to sign honor statements
- Some programs do not use honor statements in their syllabi
- Significant portion of programs do not use honor statements as part of individual exams

## In addition.....



- Faculty voice that academic integrity is an issue and problem at their institution
- Nearly 20% of respondents said they were greatly concerned about academic integrity at their program

# Recommendations



- Address academic integrity in the admissions process
  - Question applicant about history of violations of academic integrity
  - Question applicant about disciplinary actions due to academic integrity
  - Case scenarios can be used in the interview process
    - ✦ Even if applicant is unsure how to answer, this can be used as a teachable moment

# Recommendations



- **All programs should adopt an honor code<sup>7,8,9</sup>**
  - Students agree to uphold honor and integrity in their didactic and clinical academic endeavors
  - Should include examples of violations of academic integrity
  - Many examples available in the literature
- **Course syllabi should have standard honor statements**
  - Continuity and standardization of statements will show a united position that the program faculty take against academic integrity

# Recommendations



- Honor statements should be utilized on all examinations throughout the curriculum
- Clear policies on testing should be included in syllabi and reiterated to students prior to administering an exam<sup>9,10</sup>
- Specific policies on use of technology, calculators, scratch paper, food, personal items, etc. should be delineated

# Recommendations



- Faculty should act as role models<sup>9</sup>
  - New faculty should be oriented to academic integrity, their institutions policies and procedures, as well as the program's processes
- Students should be oriented to academic integrity
- Faculty should establish consequences of violations of academic integrity

# Recommendations



- **Invest in technology**
  - Testing software
  - Antiplagiarism software
- **Creation of centrally located PA national integrity center**
  - Possibly housed within one of the national PA organizations
  - Could provide resources on academic integrity and professionalism
  - Could develop orientations/webinars on standards of academic integrity for students and faculty

# References



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