

# TIME FOR CLASS

2026

## The AI Tipping Point:

From Monitoring Students to Engaging Them



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
FRAMING THE CHALLENGE: AI MAKES DISENGAGEMENT EASIER, BUT NOT INEVITABLE .....	5
FRAMING THE SOLUTION: AI INTEGRATION RESULTS IN BETTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT COMPARED TO RESTRICTION .....	6
CALL TO ACTION: FOR INSTITUTIONS .....	7
CALL TO ACTION: FOR SOLUTION PROVIDERS .....	8
<b>MAINTAINING HUMAN CONNECTION IN DIGITAL LEARNING</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>LEADING WITH EFFECTIVE AI STRATEGY</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>REDESIGNING ASSESSMENT TO EFFECTIVELY RESPOND TO AI</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>PREPARING STUDENTS FOR WORKFORCE REALITIES</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>FUTURE DIRECTION</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>APPENDIX</b> .....	<b>27</b>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	28
ABOUT TYTON PARTNERS .....	28
EXAMPLES ARE NOT ENDORSEMENTS .....	28
CITING THIS RESOURCE .....	28

## INTRODUCTION

The day-to-day work of teaching and learning looks fundamentally different in 2026 than when Tyton Partners first launched Time for Class a decade ago. While higher education's core goals remain familiar – improving outcomes, personalizing learning, and preparing students for meaningful careers – AI is reshaping how institutions pursue them. This moment represents a tipping point, and the direction we tip matters.

The signs of transformation are material. 47% of faculty and 61% of administrators say their roles have fundamentally changed because of AI, or will within three years. GenAI use has reached its highest point since Spring 2023 with 43% of administrators, 32% of students, and 25% of faculty using daily. AI is now showing up in how student work is assessed, not only in policy documents or integrity tools. The question is no longer whether to adapt, but which way to tip: toward integration or restriction. The data indicates clearly that faculty who lean into AI as part of the learning experience see better student engagement. Integrating faculty (defined as those utilizing AI to re-design assessments) report a statistically significant 10+ percentage point advantage on attendance challenges – a signal that when students are invested in how they learn, they show up.

For faculty, the bar for success is shifting from how well can you teach to how well can you motivate. Faculty now spend an average of 34 hours per week on course-related work, with only six of those hours spent delivering instruction<sup>1</sup>. Increasingly, instructors are working behind the scenes to create new content, redesign assessments, grade those assessments, and analyze student data. Still, for an early cohort of “Integrators” (24% of sample) adopting innovative and AI-friendly assessments, the time investment is paying off. Faculty who integrate AI this way place weight on AI assessments in their grading rubric (22%), see more student engagement, and have more positive perceptions of their digital tools.

For students, the promise of AI lies in reducing workload anxiety and strengthening career skills. For two consecutive years, students have reported that their #1 classroom challenge has been feeling overwhelmed about academic workload and a growing number are turning to AI platforms like ChatGPT when struggling with course concepts (35% this year compared to 4% in 2023). Students also increasingly recognize the need to develop AI skills for future careers, with 56% of students saying this is needed in 2026 compared to 48% last year.

These dynamics are creating strain across the campus experience, but also opportunity. First-mover administrators with AI policies in place are refining them to strengthen instructional design support. Faculty are experimenting with how to preserve meaningful learning as GenAI use grows. Students are building workforce-aligned AI skills.

Time for Class 2026 explores how institutions are responding to this moment of transition. Through large-scale surveys fielded to higher education administrators, faculty, and students<sup>2</sup>, this report spotlights emerging innovations in both the classroom and the boardroom that are enabling institutions to respond to AI-driven disruption.

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1. Total faculty time spent on course-related work has increased from an average of 32 hours last year

## FRAMING THE CHALLENGE: AI MAKES DISENGAGEMENT EASIER, BUT NOT INEVITABLE

### Instructors and students continue to seek more human interaction to drive engagement

- 65% of instructors primarily teach face-to-face this year, though 73% say face-to-face learning is the most effective modality for student outcomes.
- Students still largely prefer learning that incorporates some F2F option, whether that is fully face-to-face (31%) or blended/hybrid (60%).
- The majority of students still turn to instructors and peers for help when they are struggling in a course (76%), though more students (35%) are turning to AI as a primary support tool than at any point in the last four years .

### AI adoption without intention risks amplifying a disconnected feeling across the campus experience

- In line with increases in AI use, faculty concerns about student cheating have grown consistently across the last three years, from 36% reporting as a challenge in 2024 to 55% reporting in 2026.
- Meanwhile, for the third year in a row, students continue to report mental health/wellness as their top life challenge (37%) with correlative impact on workload anxiety and low motivation in their major.
- Year over year, students continue to rely on AI more to supplement peer and faculty support; 49% indicate they would continue to use AI tools even if banned by their institution.
- Adoption policies that focus on integration rather than compliance tend to garner more faculty buy-in. Faculty at institutions with permissive AI policies are more likely to indicate their policy is effective compared to faculty at institutions that have banned AI use entirely.

### AI advancements and changes to entry-level jobs are intensifying pressure on institutions to rethink workforce readiness

- Faculty and Admin define workforce readiness as professional skills (e.g., critical thinking and communication), whereas students define readiness as real-world applications (e.g., internships, industry/job connections)<sup>3</sup>.
- This mismatch has created a 10-percentage-point gap between students and administrators, with 60% of students feeling their courses prepare them for the workforce compared with 70% of administrators.
- There is an even larger gap between students and faculty about getting real-world experience in their courses. 63% of faculty say they are implementing real-world projects, but only 26% of students report having participated in a real-world project through a course.

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2. Surveys collected the following response counts: Administrators (n=312), Instructors (1,566), and Students (1,528). Additional detail on respondent demographic breakdown is included in the Appendix

3. For their part, employers are giving diverging signals about what they seek in an entry-level college graduate. According to Strada's [recent research](#) on entry-level hiring, critical thinking and communication are tied for the more important skills for entry-level hires. At the same time, NACE [reports](#) that entry-level jobs requiring AI skills have nearly tripled since Fall 2025

## FRAMING THE SOLUTION: AI INTEGRATION RESULTS IN BETTER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT COMPARED TO RESTRICTION

### Meaningful assessment redesign is needed; an emerging cohort of “Integrator” faculty provide a template for progress

- Assessment design is the #1 way faculty are redesigning their teaching approach because of AI. Assessment (47%) and academic integrity practices (44%) are being redesigned at a more aggressive rate than content development (33%), student communication (14%), and instruction personalization (13%).
- Of the 1 in 2 faculty who are redesigning assessments, half are finding success leaning into dynamic assessment methods such as oral exams, iterative assignments with drafts/feedback, and student critiquing of AI output. The other half are reverting back to in-class exams and/or blue books, solving for academic honesty, but not student engagement.
- The innovative re-designers reflect an emerging segment of “Integrator” faculty, while the faculty reverting to proctored blue book exams are “Defenders.” Integrator faculty report a statistically significant 10+ percentage point advantage on attendance challenges compared to their Defender counterparts.

### The gap between AI policy and practice remains acute, but first-mover institutions are identifying effective methods

- 32% of administrators indicate their institution has rolled out an institution-wide AI policy, up slightly from 2025 (27%) and from 2024 (24%).
- Within institutions that have a central policy, only 44% of admin and 22% of faculty believe it’s effective.
- Faculty at institutions that have banned AI use entirely are least likely to say their policy is effective (13%) compared to institutions that have set policy around integrating AI use into assignments (30%).
- First-mover institutions with a policy in place (32%) are focusing on pace of change, rather than compliance. Of this segment, 89% are willing to invest more in faculty-facing AI functions.

### Career-connected learning should be woven into both curricular and extra-curricular life, extending well beyond the career center

- Only 12% of administrators indicate career-connected learning is being implemented across all undergraduate departments, most report fragmented implementation across some departments (47%) or some courses (33%).
- The faculty who prioritize workforce preparation as a top priority when designing their course (19% of faculty), are spending more time advising students on career interests (2.6 hours on average) and are highly likely to believe students need to know how to use AI tools for future jobs (81% agree).

## CALL TO ACTION: FOR INSTITUTIONS

### Administrators: Institutional AI strategy is as much about change management as it is about technology investment

- Institutions should approach AI adoption as a cultural and organizational challenge, not simply a technology initiative. Effective strategies begin by clearly articulating why AI matters for teaching, student success, and workforce preparation before defining how it will be implemented. Institutions should anchor AI efforts to a small set of clear, actionable goals that faculty and staff can easily understand, repeat, and apply.

“*The AI policies that institutions are writing are like essays. That leaves a lot of room for interpretation. **Less is more.**”*  
- Instructional Designer and Faculty Lecturer, 4-year institution”

- Institutions should also treat AI literacy as a core learning outcome. Today, only 10% of administrators agree their institutions measure student AI literacy, though 42% expect to do so within three years. AI fluency should be embedded across curriculum, co-curricular experiences, and assessment. Early leaders such as [Ohio State University](#) and the [SUNY system](#) provide examples of how to define AI as a fluency initiative and a public good initiative (respectively). To follow these leads, institutions can define what AI fluency means for their graduates and establish measurable competencies tied to ethical use, critical evaluation, and applied problem-solving.

### Faculty: Don't wait for permission – AI is already in your colleagues' rubrics

- Faculty know AI requires new assessments but often lack a starting point. Institutions should encourage instructors to begin with familiar methods, such as project-based learning and oral assessments, before scaling to more advanced approaches. Learn from the 24% of faculty already using innovative project- and group-based assessments, and offer peer exemplars and instructional design support to the 23% reverting to blue books. Integrators also model how to weight AI use in rubrics, with 22% of their grading tied to AI-incorporated assessments.
- With cheating concerns remaining the top instructional challenge for three consecutive years, institutions are more likely to gain faculty buy-in when redesign efforts focus on improving engagement rather than policing misconduct.

“*Why would students cheat if the assignment is **something they care about or have pride in?**”*  
-Professor at ASU and Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Brookings, Dr. Punya Mishra”

### All: Prepare for the AI “[jobpocalypse](#)” by embedding career-connected learning across the institution

- As AI reshapes work and accelerates skill demand, institutions will need stronger systems for monitoring labor market trends and translating insights into program and curriculum design. This requires investment in labor market analytics and employer partnerships, and in the staff best positioned to interpret those signals and act on them. Institutions that connect workforce trends to academic programming more quickly will be better positioned to maintain relevance and student confidence.

- At the same time, workforce preparation can no longer sit primarily within the career center. Institutions should scale career-connected learning directly into the curriculum through market-aligned case studies and simulations. Faculty professional development should focus on embedding the career preparation activities students most want: mapping their major to a career path (38%), preparing for internships/co-ops (37%), and completing real-world projects (31%).

## **CALL TO ACTION: FOR SOLUTION PROVIDERS**

### **Invest in institutional AI partnerships before the market consolidates**

- Providers have a significant window of opportunity to establish themselves as strategic AI partners before institutional behaviors and vendor relationships calcify. With only 32% of administrators reporting that their institution has an AI policy in place, a majority of institutions (55%) are still in the early stages of defining governance, implementation, and procurement strategies.
- Substantial need exists not only for AI tools, but also for policy development, implementation support, and change management services. Institutions that have an AI policy in place already provide a clear roadmap: 89% say they are willing to invest more in faculty-facing AI functions, they are less likely to have AI integrity concerns compared to peers, and they are more likely to measure AI literacy as an outcome.

### **Help institutions reduce the risks associated with shadow AI use**

- Shadow AI adoption is already widespread across higher education. Roughly a third of students (37%) and a quarter of faculty (26%) report paying for AI tools out of pocket. This creates growing concern around data privacy, and also relegates the use of the technology to personal productivity at the expense of collaboration and higher level engagement. Providers with trusted institutional relationships and strong enterprise-grade AI capabilities have an opportunity to position themselves as partners that reduce exposure.

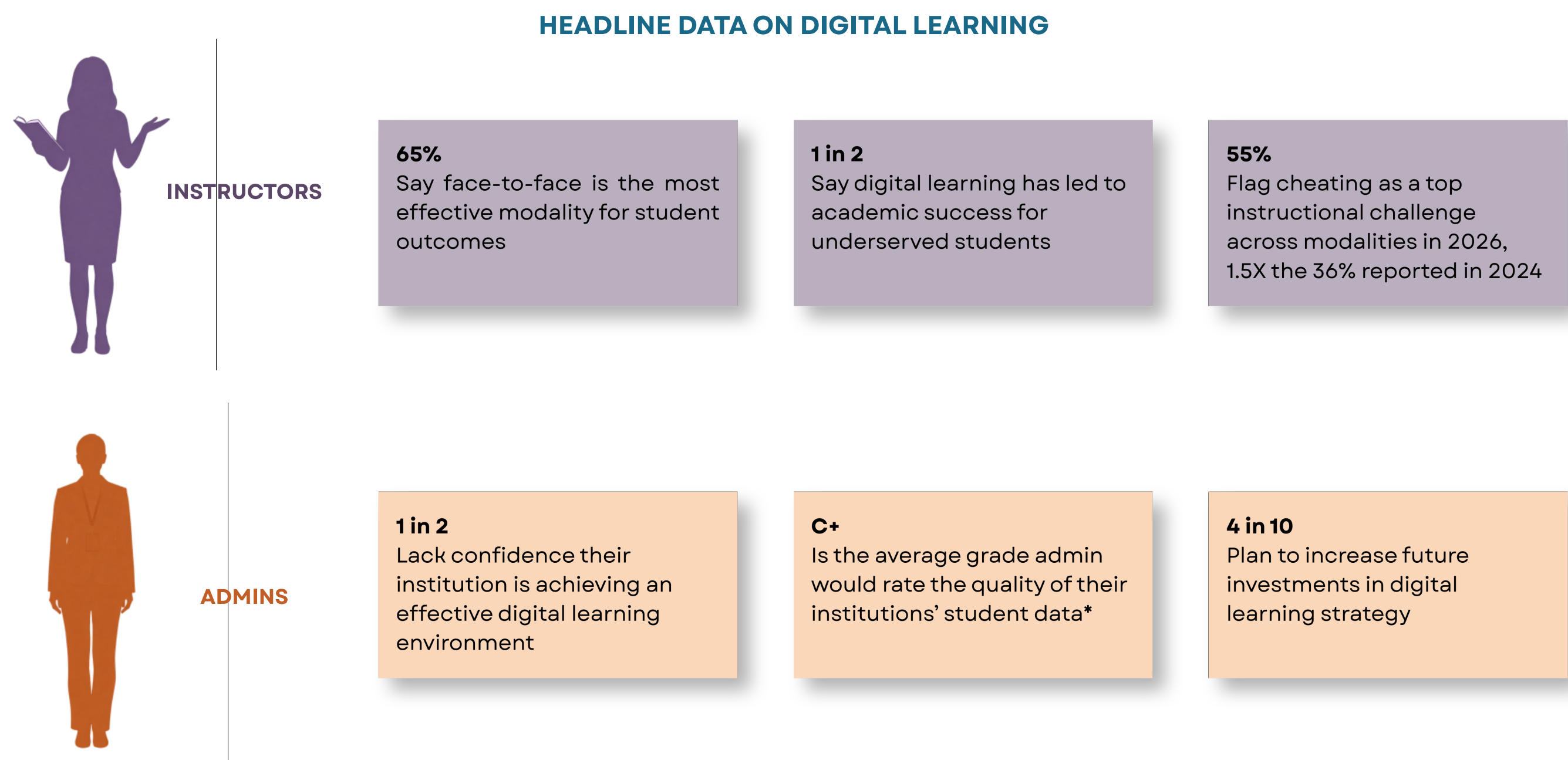
### **Translate labor signals into usable curriculum inputs**

- Solution providers can help institutions operationalize career-connected learning at scale. Faculty are struggling to translate workforce trends into classroom practice or clearly articulate how coursework connects to real-world application. Providers can support this work by helping faculty map courses to skills students can communicate on resumes, while also offering AI-enabled tools that generate market-aligned assignments.
- At the same time, technology platforms must prioritize user experience and outcomes transparency for institutional leaders. With only 11% of administrators indicating their institution adopts any work-based learning platforms focused on in-class learning, there remains significant opportunity for providers who can deliver measurable outcomes.

# MAINTAINING HUMAN CONNECTION IN DIGITAL LEARNING

Digital learning remains long on promise and short on execution, as 2026 data shows administrators and faculty still in the midst of operationalizing their aspirations

Figure 1

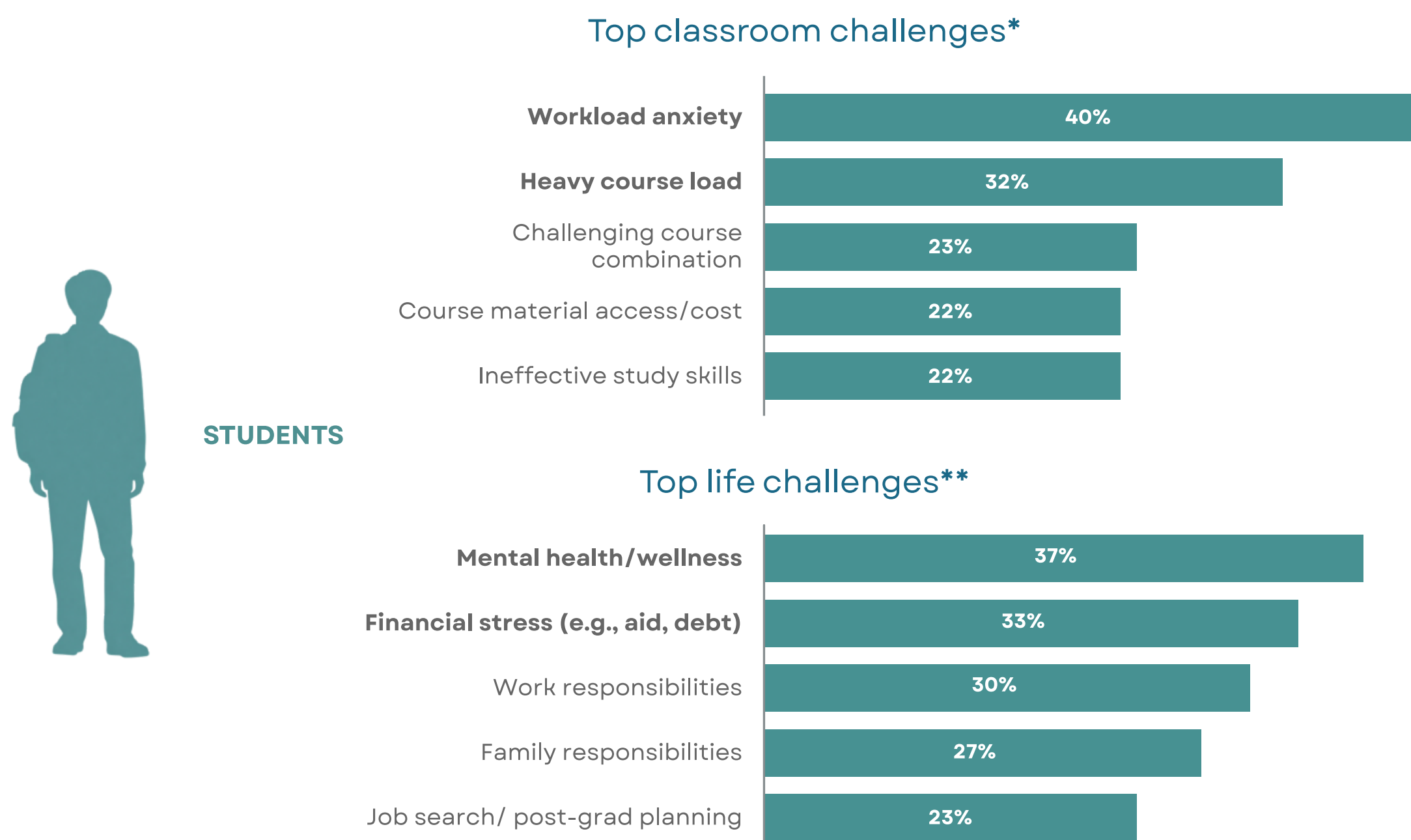


Notes: \*In 2025, admin also graded the quality of their institutions' student data as a C+  
Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

## As students struggle with mental wellness and workload anxiety, digital learning should seek to center, not replace, human relationships

As higher education enters its fourth consecutive year of post-pandemic recalibration, student mental health has emerged as a persistent and defining challenge. For three years, students have identified mental wellness as their #1 life concern, though only 20% of students who faced mental health challenges this year accessed counseling through their institution. Mental health is a compounding factor; students who struggle with it are statistically more likely to also struggle with workload anxiety and low motivation in their major.

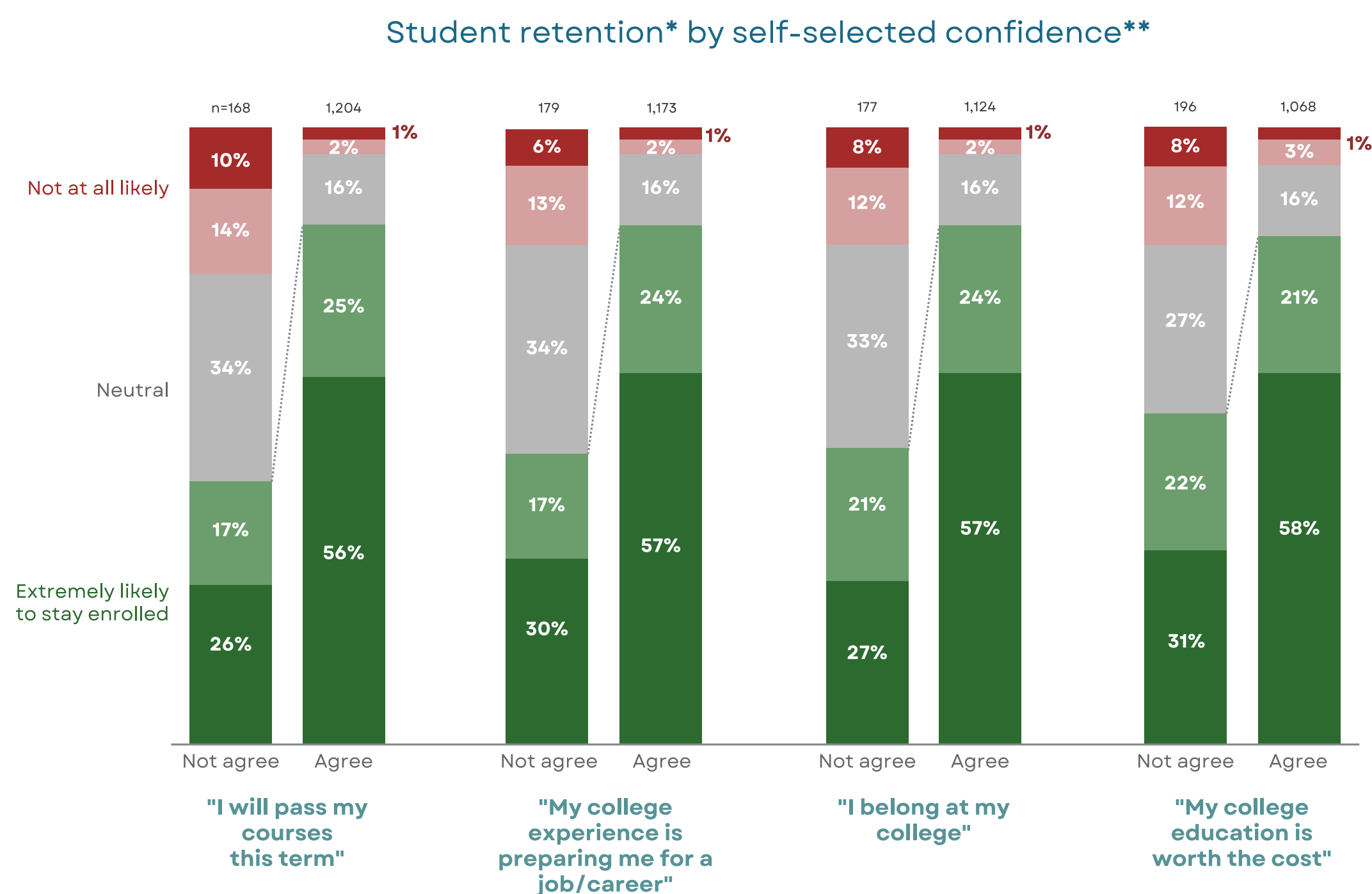
Figure 2



Notes: \*Survey question: "What was most challenging for you in the classroom this past term? Select top three.", n=1,809; \*\*Survey question: "What was most challenging for you outside of the classroom this past term? Select top three.", n=1,809  
Sources: Listening to Learners 2026, Tyton Partners analysis

Against this backdrop, the human relationships at the heart of learning matter more than ever. Students who feel they "belong at my college" are 33 percentage points more likely to stay enrolled at their institution next term. As AI enables greater workload efficiencies, the value of digital learning at institutions will increasingly center on the ability to connect and engage, not just teach. Connection looks like intentional activities and assignments that build belonging, as well as individual student outreach prompted by data signals that students are struggling.

Figure 3



Notes: \*Survey question: "How likely are you to stay enrolled at your college/university next term?", n=1,809 \*\*Survey question: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?", n=1,809  
Sources: Listening to Learners 2026, Tyton Partners analysis

## As admin and faculty work to solve immediate problems around AI-enabled cheating, institutions risk obscuring underlying student stress and disengagement

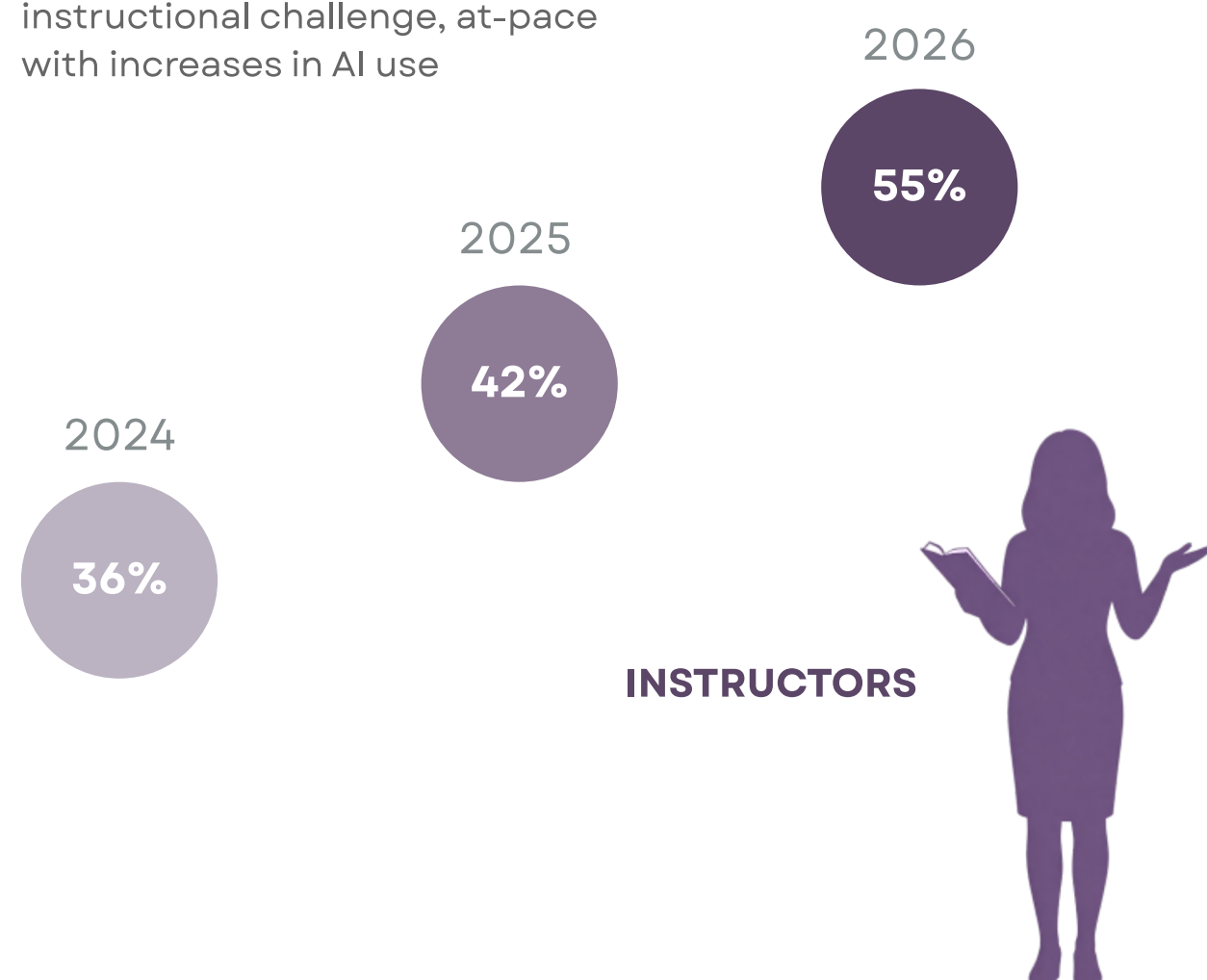
Faculty remain the most direct and meaningful point of human contact in the student experience. AI is a powerful tool that can create more time for faculty to spend connecting with students. However, in the current moment, AI risks disrupting those connections as faculty grapple with the day-to-day challenge of preventing cheating, which is at its highest level in three years according to faculty.

Administrators and solution providers have an opportunity to help faculty refocus on the practices that build belonging and engagement. AI-driven cheating and declining attendance are symptoms of a deeper problem: students aren't finding meaning in what they're learning. Through this lens, attendance becomes a proxy for engagement, a way for students to vote with their feet. Solution providers can help by sharing metrics on disengagement and by connecting coursework to real-world cases that establish relevance.

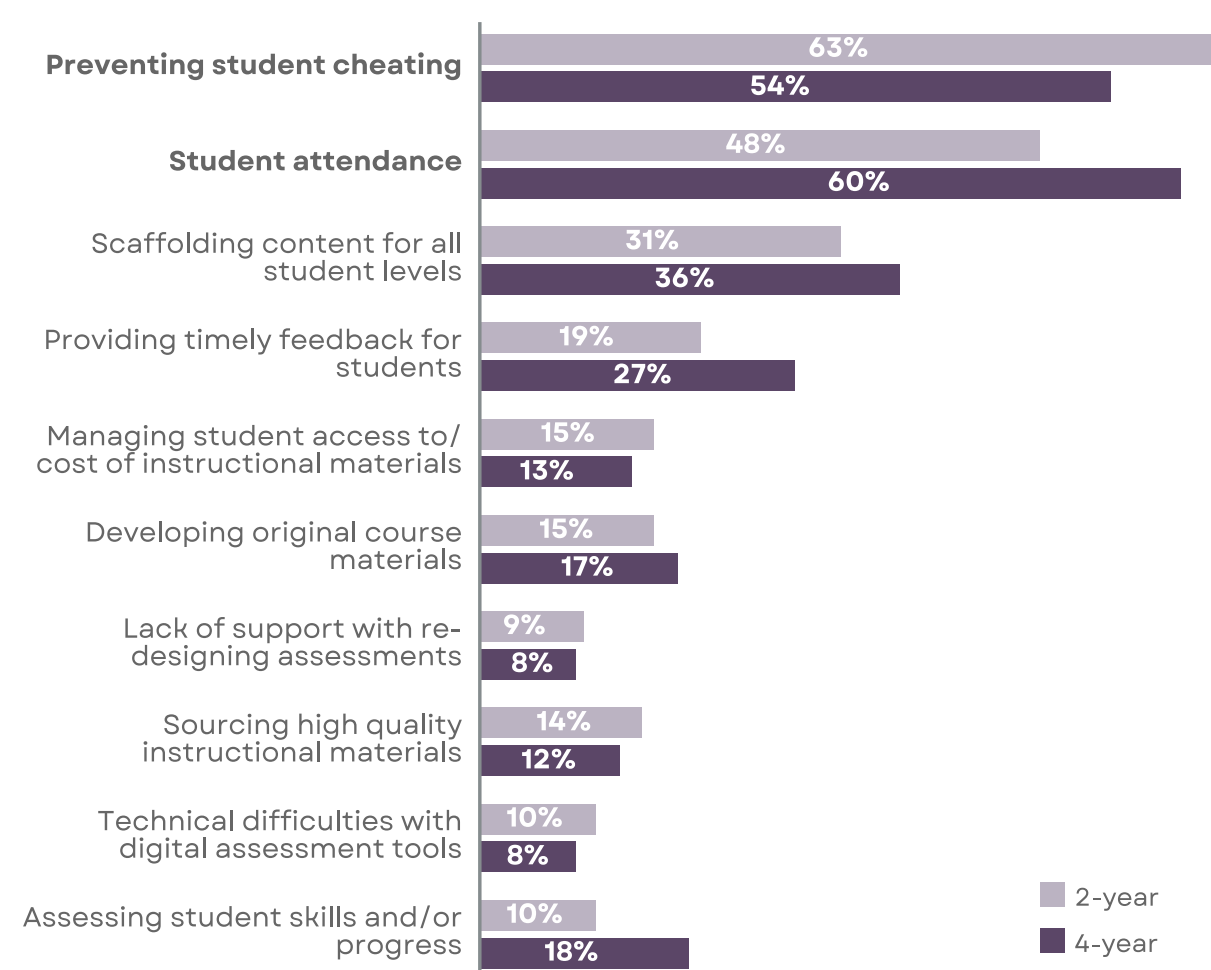
Figure 4

### Preventing student cheating

Has accelerated as a top instructional challenge, at-pace with increases in AI use



### Top instructional challenges faced by instructors\*



Notes: \*Survey question: "Which of the following are your greatest instructional challenges? Select top three.", 2-yr n=217, 4-yr n=1,336  
Sources: Time for Class 2024-2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

## Enabling good faculty practice starts upstream of the classroom: institutions that demonstrate they care about instructor wellbeing support faculty to focus on student connection

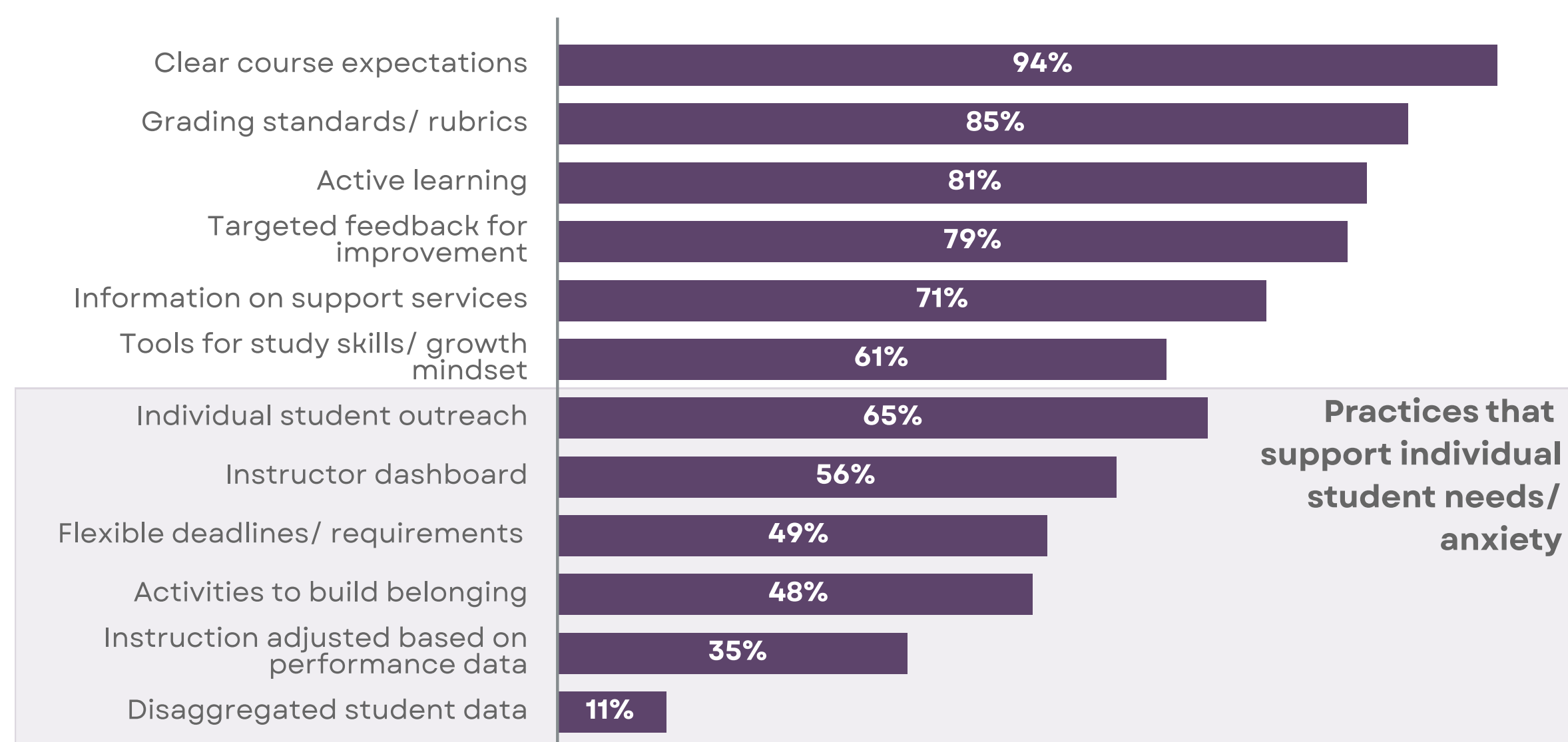
Faculty themselves need to feel supported in order to support students. Yet the data reveal a troubling gap: while 74% of faculty report being satisfied overall with their career as an instructor, only 50% feel that their institution genuinely cares about their health and wellbeing. This disconnect is not just a morale issue. Faculty who feel under-cared for by their institutions are nearly twice as likely to report that AI has significantly increased their

overall workload (55%) compared to faculty who feel supported (31%). The institutions least attentive to faculty wellbeing are also the ones where AI adoption is most fraught.

Institutions can signal genuine care from leadership, by reducing the AI workload tax through vetted tools, facilitated peer communities, and shared responsibility for academic integrity. By investing in the PD, tools, and systems that make faculty more efficient, institutions and solution providers can free up faculty time to focus on practices that support individual student needs.

Figure 5

### Teaching practices used often/ in every course by instructors\*



Notes: \*Survey question: "How often do you use the following teaching practices in classrooms?," n=1,543  
Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

### Administrators recognize their data infrastructure gap and are signaling intent to invest, opening the door for solution providers to partner

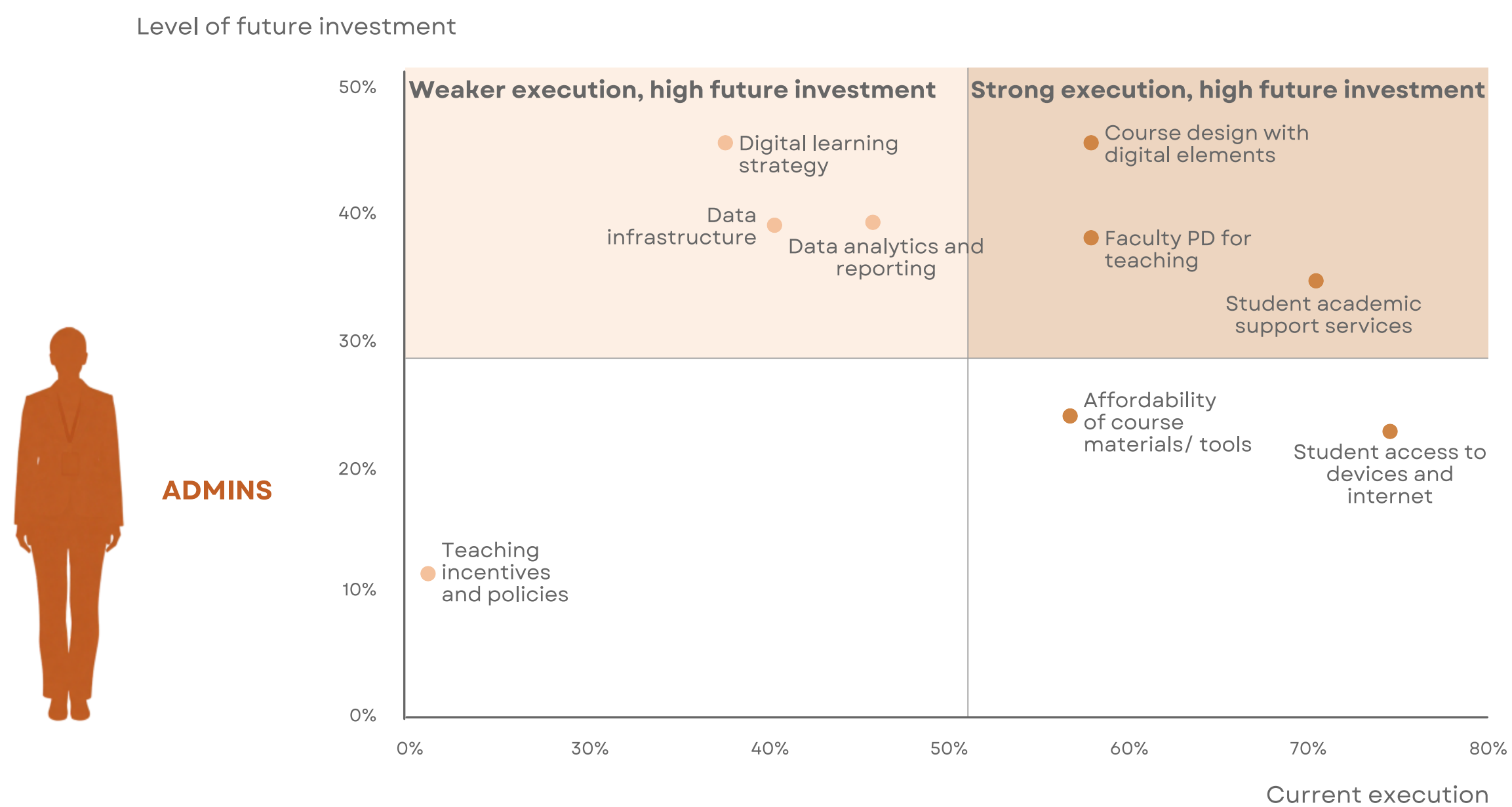
Administrators' assessment of their own data systems – a C+ this year<sup>4</sup> – reflects a recognition that data infrastructure is a strategic investment priority. Data systems are increasingly understood as the operational foundation for administrator's three digital learning growth objectives: expanding access, increasing retention, and growing enrollment.

For small institutions, the challenge of data collection and organization is particularly acute. Faculty at institutions with fewer than 1,000 students are more likely to lack data on student engagement with course content (50%) than their peers (32%). As one American Government faculty member at an institution with <1,000 students shared, "There is an assumption that there is heavy data collection at colleges...I am not aware of any systematic way in which we measure [the impact of digital learning]."

4. Administrators were asked to grade the quality of their institution's student data as it resides in systems that relate to teaching and learning on an A through F scale. The average C+ this year is the same as Spring 2025.

Figure 6

Areas of digital learning\* administrators are prioritizing for investment\*\*



Notes: \*Survey question: "How well is your institution executing in the following areas that support digital learning?"; n=303, Graph shows percentages of those who selected 4 and 5; \*\*Survey question: "How will investment in each of the following areas that support digital learning change for your institution in the next three academic years (through 2028-2029)?"; n= 303, Graph shows percentages of those who selected investments will increase  
Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

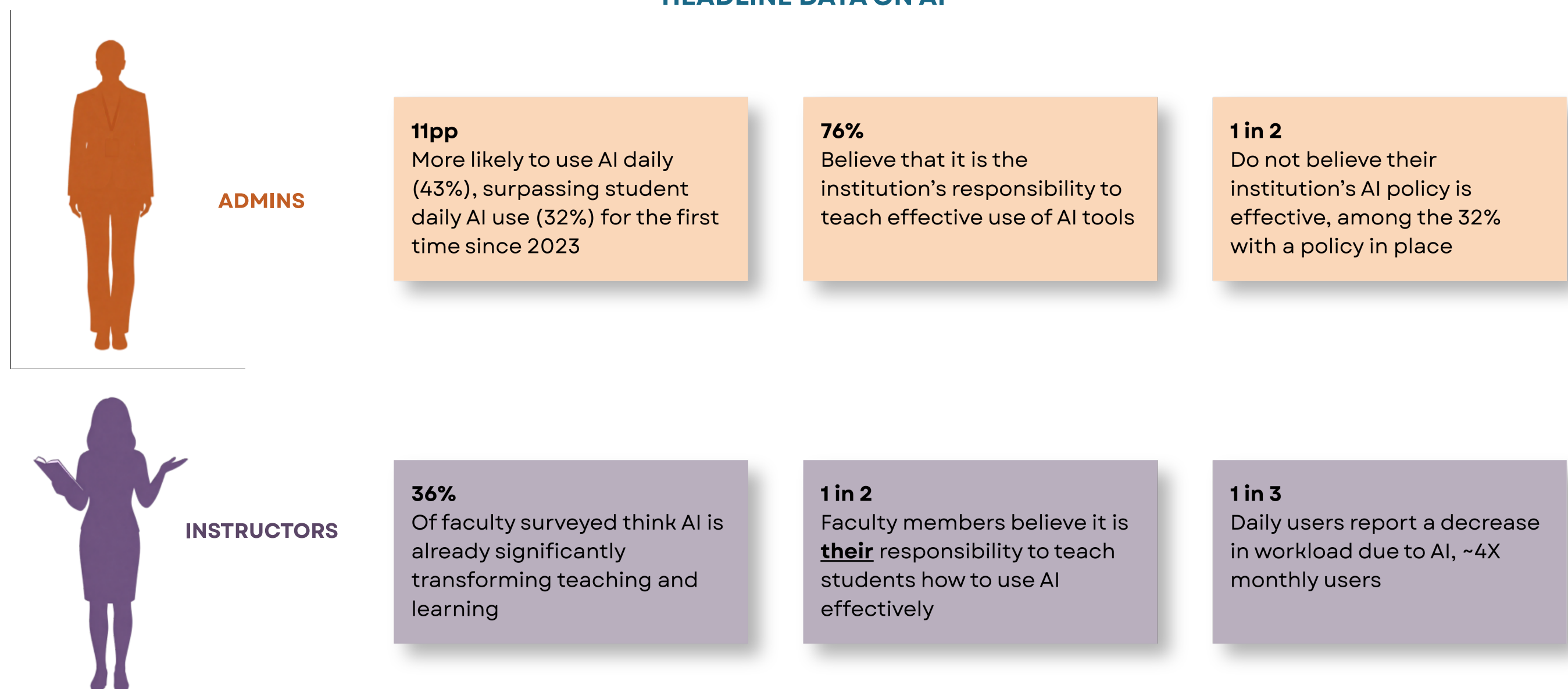
The implications of increased investment in data infrastructure and analytics are positive for solution providers. With students citing mental health as their top concern for the third consecutive year, demand is accelerating for platforms that surface wellness indicators and trigger timely interventions. Providers positioned to convert institutional data into actionable insight address two priorities at once: enabling the faculty-student connection that differentiates digital learning, and advancing the retention and enrollment metrics against which administrators are measured.

# LEADING WITH EFFECTIVE AI STRATEGY

Individual AI adoption is accelerating across all institutional stakeholders, with 2026 data showing a significant runway for institutions to put in place effective AI policy

Figure 7

## HEADLINE DATA ON AI



Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

**Personal AI use has now become table stakes; the next frontier is depth of use, quality of policy, and the institutional will to move from compliance to capability**

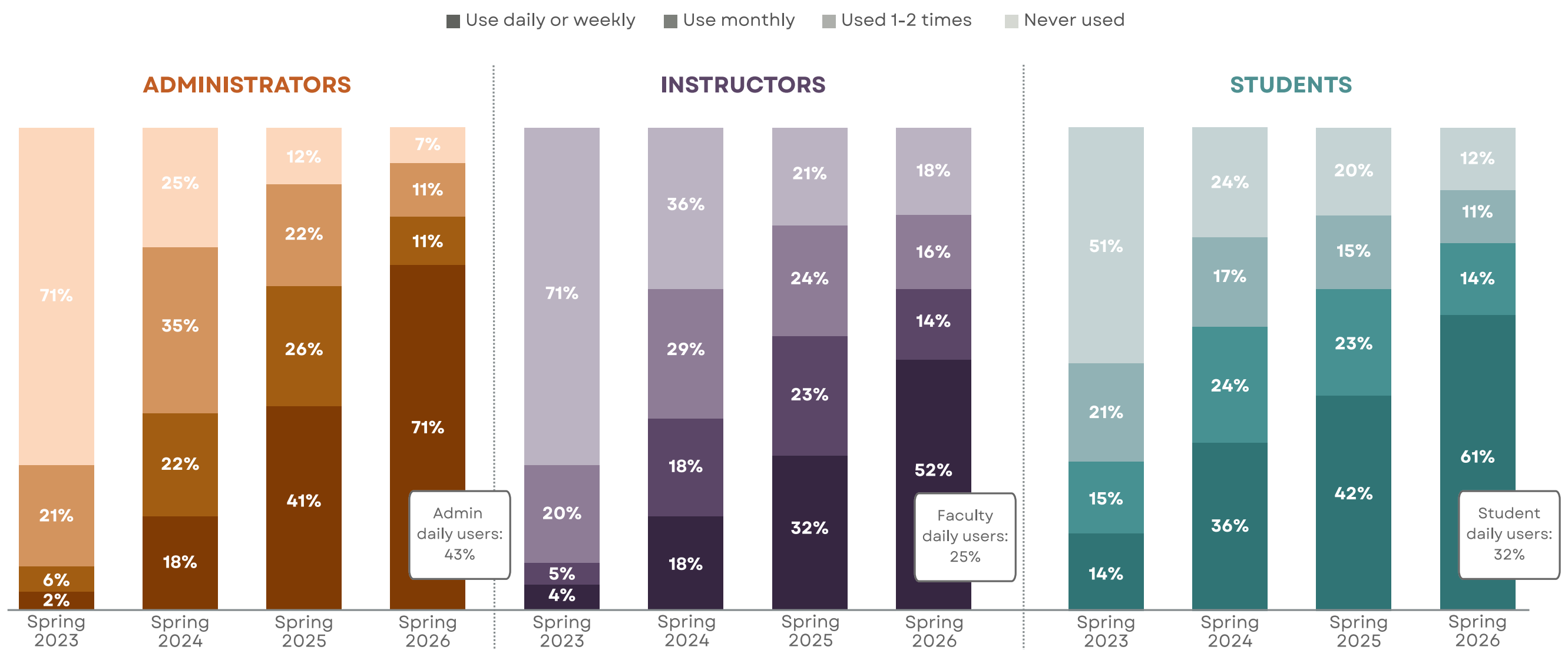
This year marks a turning point in individual AI adoption. For the first time, more than half of all administrators, faculty, and students are using AI on at least a weekly basis<sup>5</sup>. Paid AI usage also rose year-over-year across all three groups, with administrators (19% to 34%), faculty (15% to 24%), and students (29% to 39%) increasingly putting their own money behind the tools.

5. Agentic AI is on the horizon. Most students use agentic AI daily (54%), compared to Admin (32%) and faculty (29%)

Figure 8

Time series of GenAI usage frequency\*

Among all administrator, instructor, and student respondents

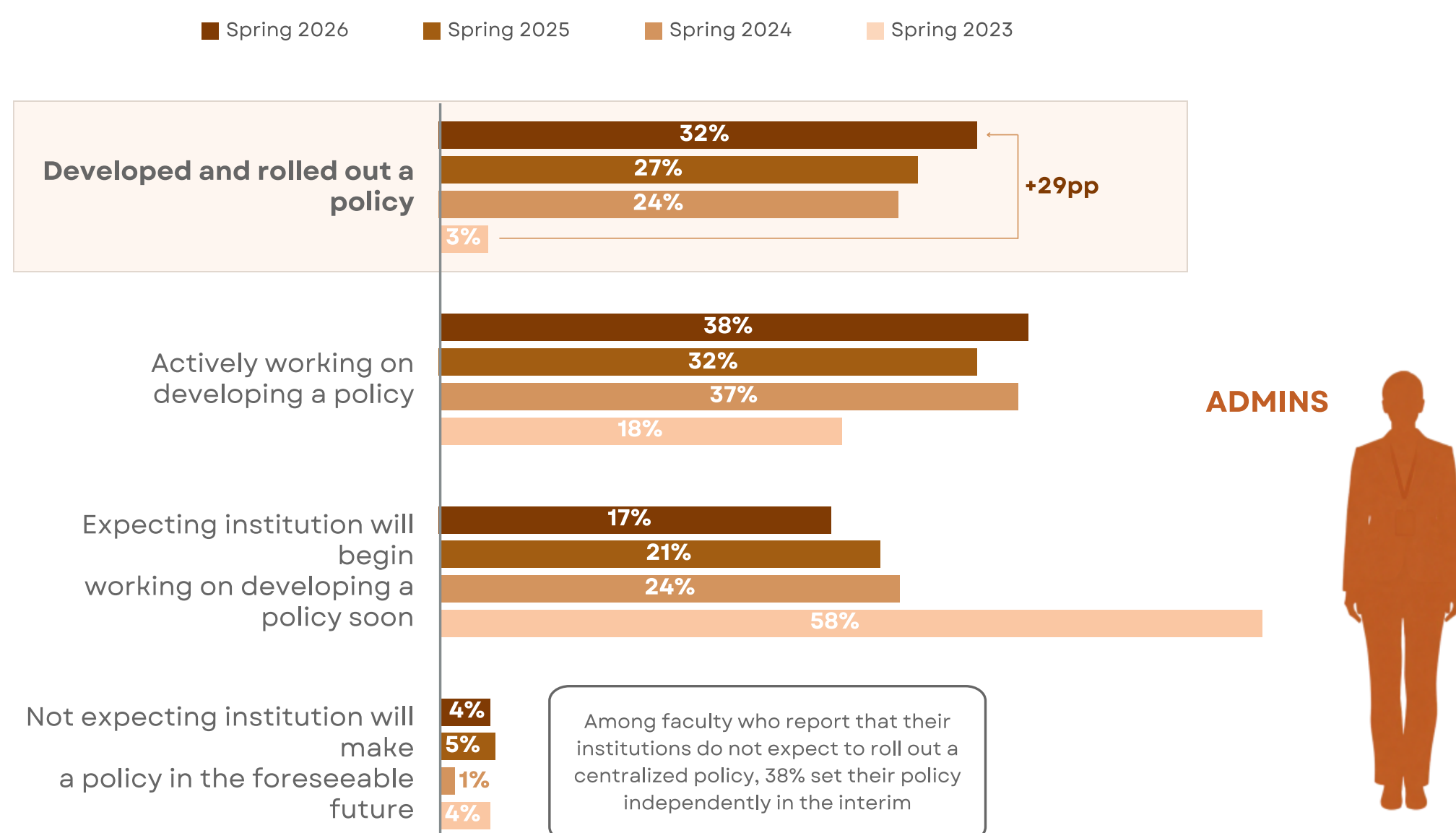


Notes: \*Survey questions: "Which of the following best describes your own use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Bard/Gemini) for work?", Instructor n (Spring 2026) = 1,556, Administrator n (Spring 2026) = 303, Student n (Spring 2026) = 1,809, Instructor n (Spring 2025) = 1,572, Administrator n (Spring 2025) = 311, Student n (Spring 2025) = 1,529, Instructor n (Spring 2024) = 1,827, Administrator n (Spring 2024) = 316, Student n (Spring 2024) = 1,526; "Which of the following best describes your own use of generative AI writing tools (e.g., ChatGPT)?" instructor n (Fall 2023) = 1,601, instructor n (Fall 2023) = 1,001; "Which of the following best describes your own use of generative AI writing tools (e.g., ChatGPT)?" Instructor n (Spring 2023) = 1,748, Administrator n (Spring 2023) = 306, Student n (Spring 2023) = 1,809  
Sources: Time for Class 2023-2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

With individual use cases beginning to cement, restrictive AI approaches are running into challenges. For the 54% of institutions working on or about to work on a central policy, focus should be on permissive use cases that help students integrate AI into assignments. The data reveals why: faculty who ban AI entirely report the lowest policy effectiveness ratings, with only 13% finding their approach effective, compared to 30% among faculty who integrate AI into assignments.

Figure 9

Institutional AI policy current status according to administrators\*



Notes: \*Survey question: "Has your institution developed an institution-wide formal policy with respect to generative AI writing tools like ChatGPT?", Administrator n=301 (2026), Administrator n=305 (2025), Administrator n=233 (2024), Administrator n=168 (2023), 'Don't know' responses are hidden  
Sources: Time for Class 2023-2023-2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners interviews and analysis

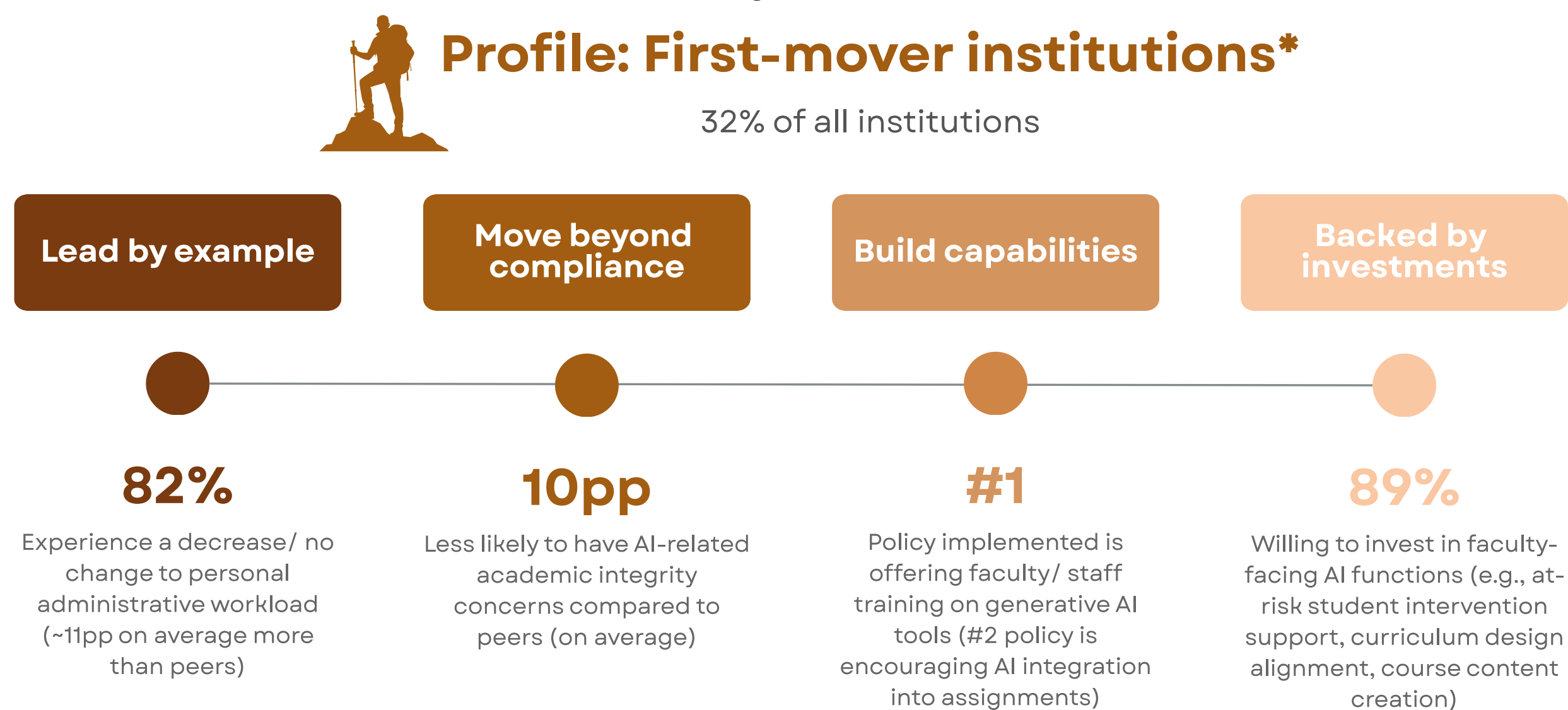
Policies also work better when they are structured to empower rather than dissuade. As one faculty member at a public, 4-year institution shared, “A general policy is nice, but it should also empower course coordinators and unit leads to make decisions. They need to be able to provide discipline-level guidance.”

### First-Mover institutions develop AI policies that define the “why” and leave flexibility on the “how”

Institutions are more effective when they believe in AI’s potential, support redesigned practice, and encourage hands on experimentation. First-Mover institutions – those with a centralized AI policy in place – have fewer academic integrity concerns and are willing to put investment behind faculty-facing AI tools.

Flexible policies that define principles rather than restrict usage tend to be received well. Guidance from practitioner groups like the [MLA-CCCC joint task force](#) recommends the starting place for policy should be repeatable and consistent messaging that faculty can build on in their own classroom and students can remember. As one Instructional Designer at Ohio State University put it, “The AI policies that institutions are writing are like essays. That leaves a lot of room for interpretation. Less is more.”

Figure 10



Notes: \*Survey question: “Where are policies regarding the use of generative AI tools like ChatGPT primarily being made at your institution?”, n=90; first-movers are institutions with an existing AI policy in place at the institutional level  
Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

Even with a meaningful portion of First-Mover institutions putting policy in place, there is still room for solution providers to help bridge the gap between policy design and in-classroom practice. Just 23% of faculty at institutions with an AI policy believe it is effective<sup>6</sup> compared to a more optimistic 44% of administrators. Providers have a significant opportunity to work with institutions to evolve their policy, infrastructure, and implementation as AI technology advances.

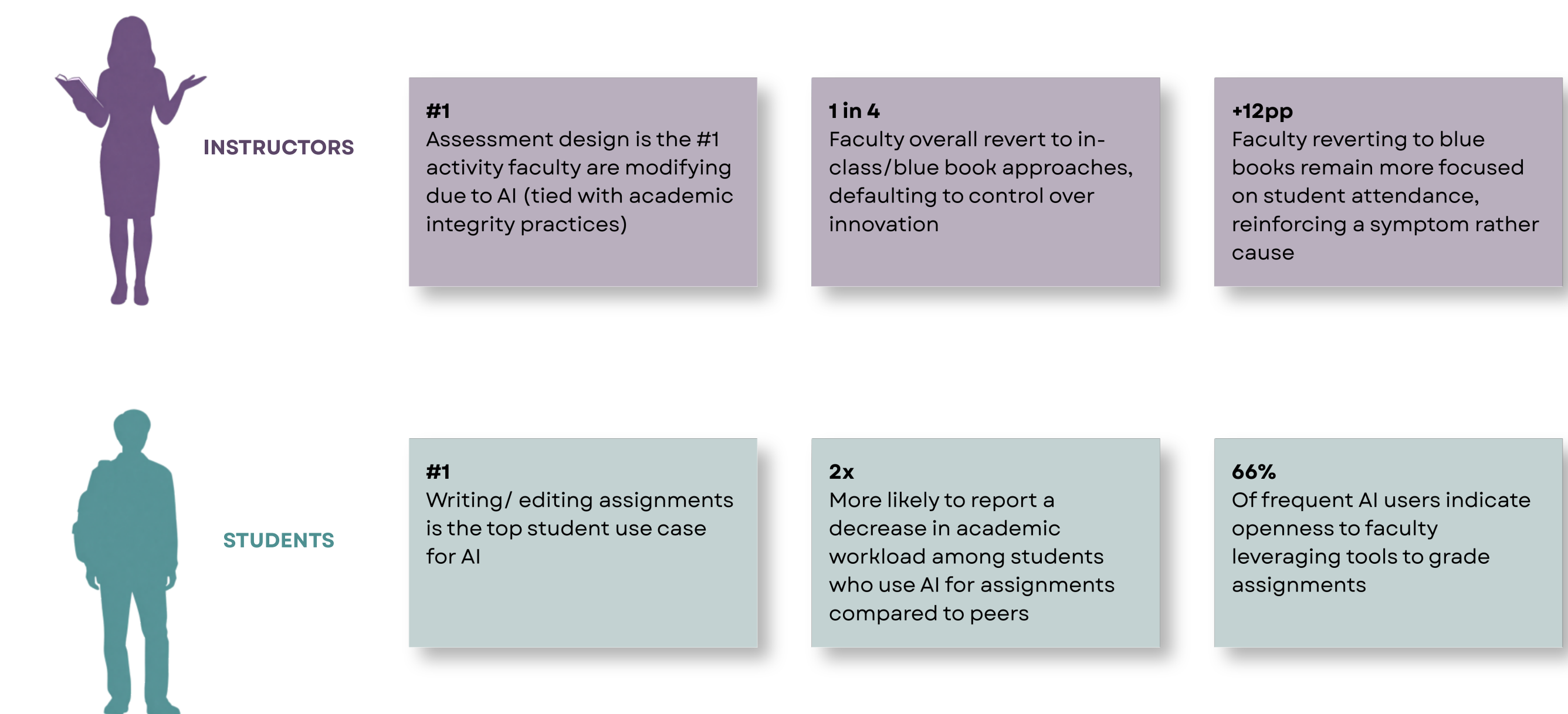
6. Limited faculty belief in the effectiveness of their institutions’ AI policy is consistent across institution size and type suggesting effective policy is not necessarily dependent on scale of resources, but on underlying strategy tied to institutional context.

# REDESIGNING ASSESSMENT TO EFFECTIVELY RESPOND TO AI

Assessment has become the frontline of AI's impact in higher education, differentiating faculty who innovate from those who default to proctored control

Figure 11

## HEADLINE DATA ON AI IN ASSESSMENT



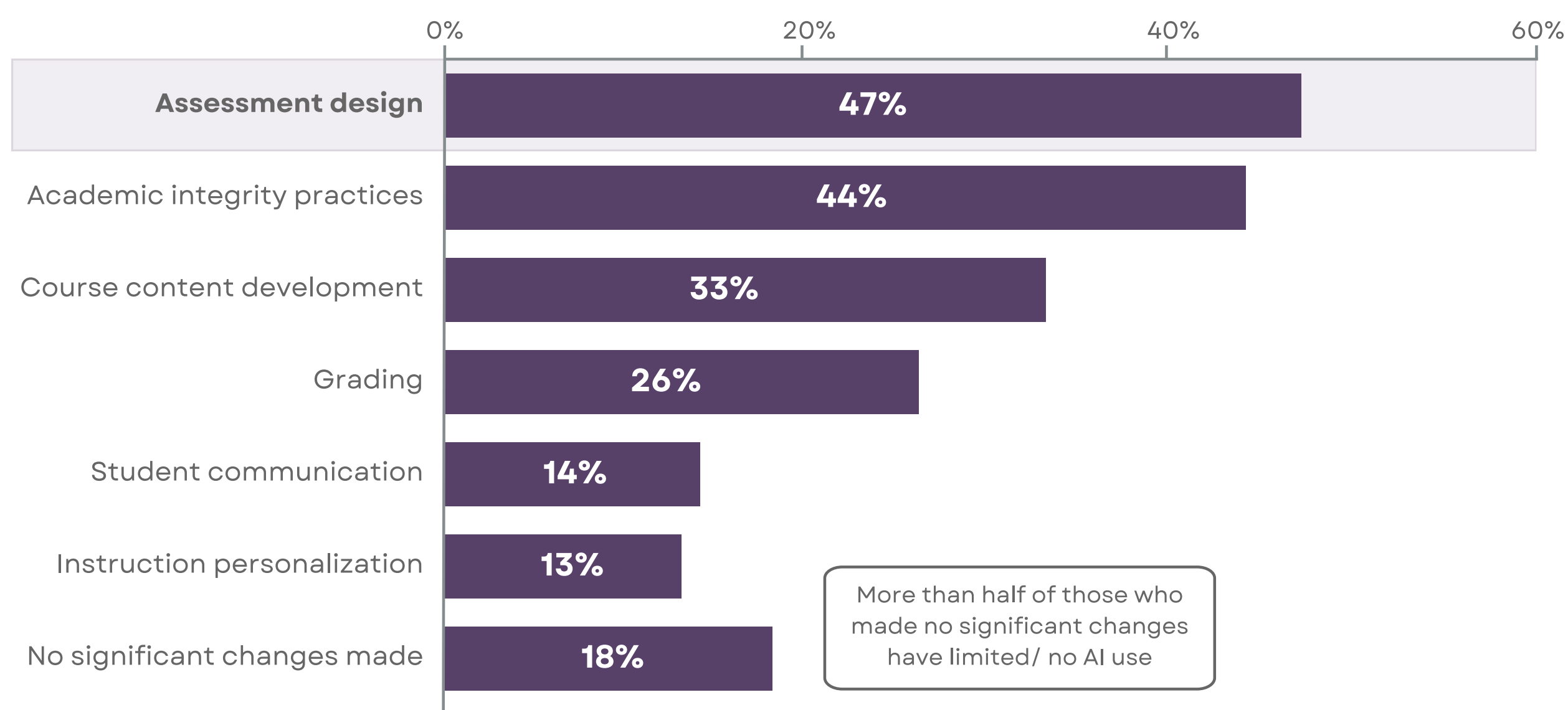
Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Listening to Learners 2026 Survey, Tyton Partners analysis

**Faculty are modifying assessment design more than any other teaching practice in response to AI; with nearly half redesigning, faculty are reaching a tipping point**

1 in 2 faculty are significantly modifying their assessment and academic integrity approaches in response to AI. The decision to redesign is partly an existential one. 47% of all faculty say their role as an instructor has fundamentally changed already – or will in the next 3 years – because of AI. Those who are redesigning assessment are even more likely to believe the transformation has come (44%) compared to those not redesigning (25%).

Figure 12

## Teaching practices significantly modified by instructors due to AI\*



Notes: \*Survey question: "What parts of your teaching approach have you significantly modified because of AI? Select all that apply.", Faculty n=1,513, 'Data analysis', and 'Course management' stems are hidden to low n  
Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

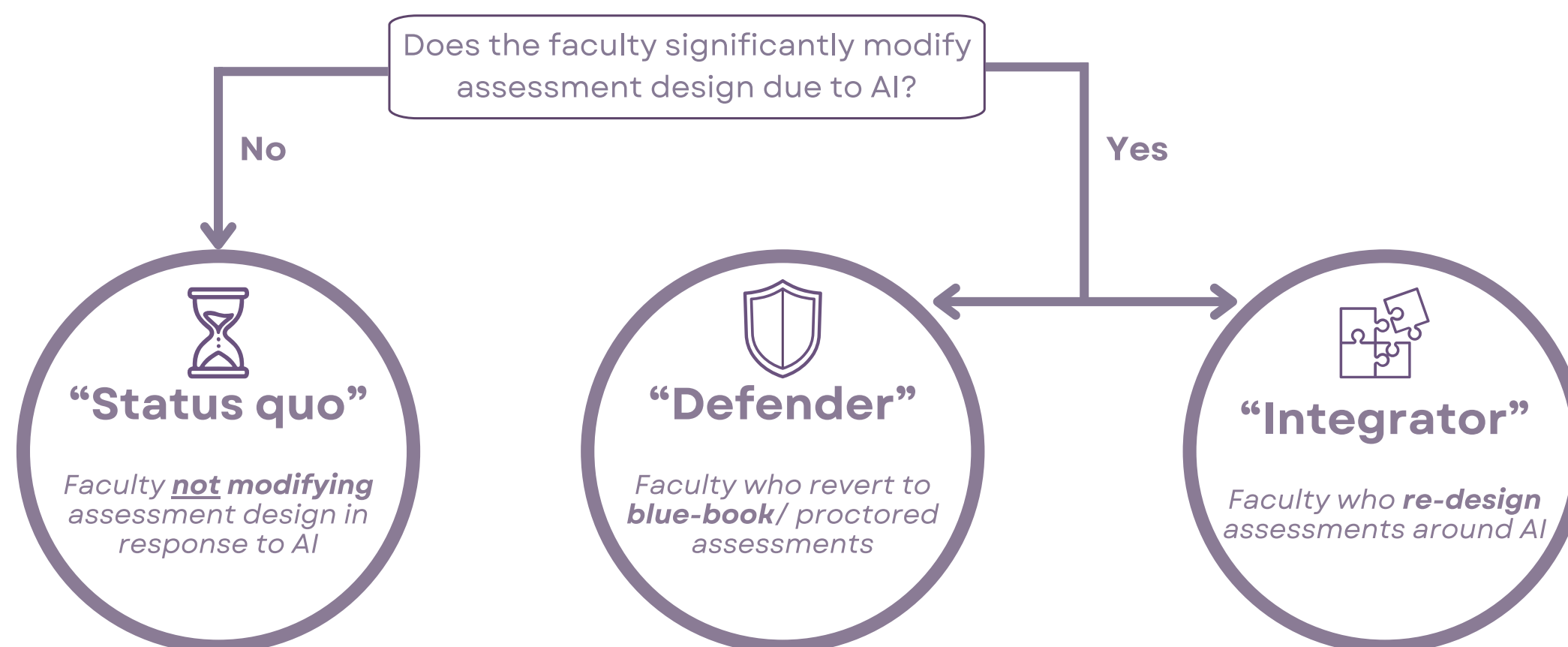
### Faculty have split into three segments in response to AI-driven pressure; "Integrators" are turning that pressure into measurable engagement gains

Faculty have divided into three distinct assessment personas: the Status Quo (54%) who are not modifying assessment design, Defenders (23%) who revert to in-class proctored formats like blue books, and Integrators (24%) who redesign assessments around AI. Integrators indicate significant student engagement gains and should be leveraged in institutions as peer influencers on their Defender and Status Quo colleagues.

Integrators rate their institution's digital learning environment as very effective, while Defenders cluster around neutral ratings. Integrators also show evidence of using digital tools more successfully. Integrators rate their LMS digital assessment functionality at an NPS of 24, while Defenders rate theirs at a -18, a -42-point spread. Defenders' approaches deliver the temporary benefit of reduced academic dishonesty, while Integrators' project-based redesigns deliver the deeper, long-term benefit of student engagement.

Figure 13

Overview of Instructor assessment segments\*



Note: \*Status quo n=835, Defender n=358, Integrator n=367  
Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

Figure 14

Details on Instructor assessment segments

	<b>"Status quo"</b>	<b>"Defender"</b>	<b>"Integrator"</b>
<b>Characteristics</b>			
% of sample	<b>54%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>24%</b>
Frequency of AI use	<b>Minimal/ no use</b>	<b>Some use</b>	<b>Daily</b>
Primary AI policy implemented	<b>AI use allowed with disclosure</b>	<b>Assessment changes to reduce use of AI</b>	<b>AI use allowed with disclosure</b>
<b>Key assessment details</b>			
Main assessments implemented due to AI	<i>N/A</i>	<b>In-class/ blue book assessments</b>	<b>Project-based assessments</b>
Common AI assessment design tools	<i>N/A</i>	<b>Not likely to use AI tools</b>	<b>ChatGPT, Gemini</b>
Primary digital assessment tool use (NPS)	<b>LMS (-6)</b>	<b>LMS (-18)</b>	<b>LMS (+24)</b>
Primary benefit of redesign	<i>N/A</i>	<b>Reduced shortcuts/ dishonesty</b>	<b>Student engagement</b>

Notes: \*34% of Integrators selected 'AI use allowed with disclosure of use' while 69% of Defenders selected 'Assessment changes to reduce use of AI'; \*\*Survey question: "Which of the following providers do you use in your course(s) to support the design and delivery of assessments? Select all that apply."  
Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

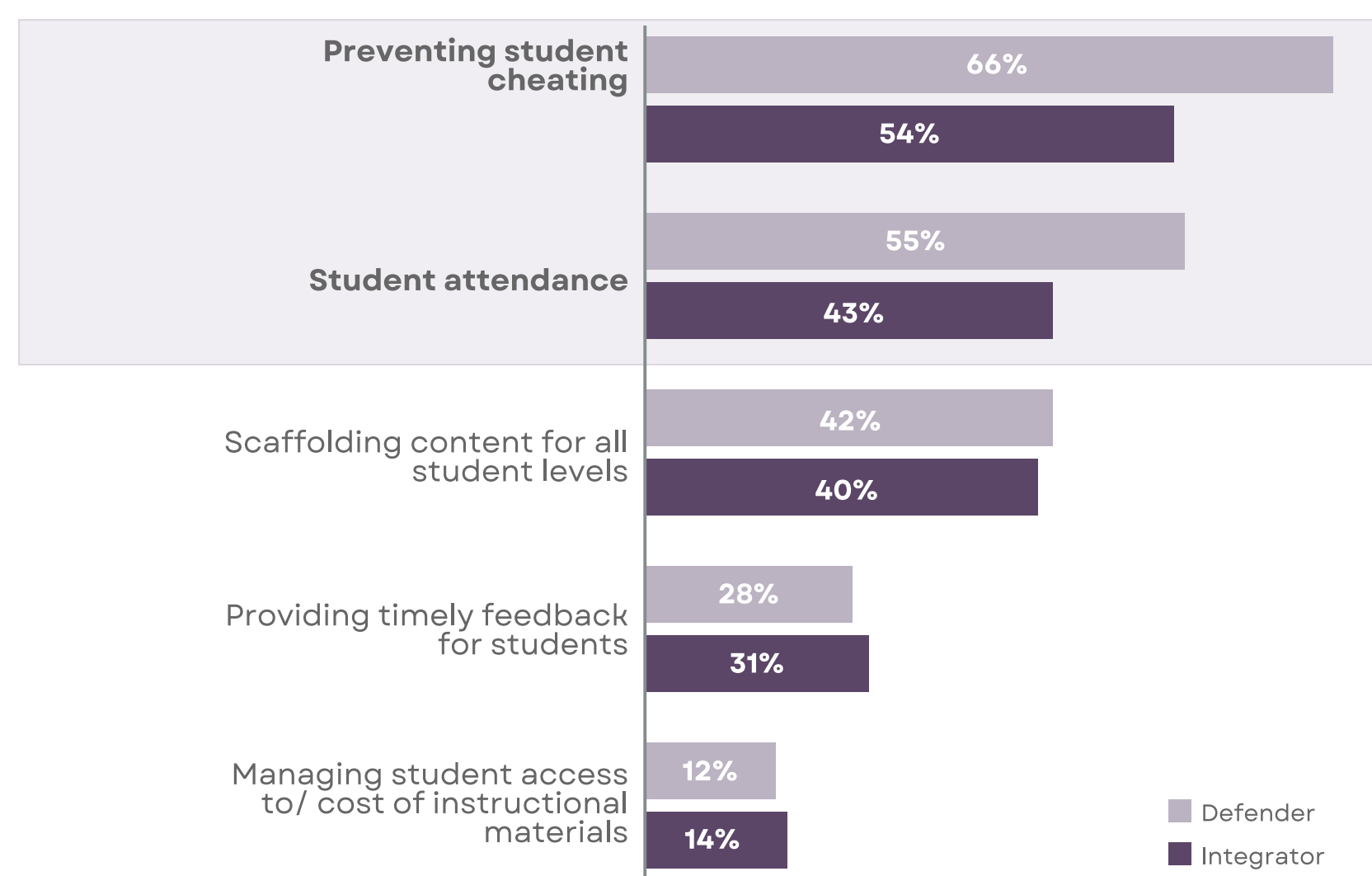
Of course, adopting new assessment approaches in response to AI is just a first step. Designing those assessments in a way that meaningfully engages students and measures critical thinking is another. As one faculty member at a public, 4-year university shared, "Digital learning is highly variable. Students can use AI responsibly, or they can use it to 'get answers' without thinking themselves. Instruction needs to focus on helping students see the value in mastery-oriented help seeking." Effective assessments preserve both the productive struggle and create space for human connection and peer-to-peer learning, whether through iterative AI drafts, group projects, or oral presentations.

## Integrators are less likely to cite cheating and attendance as top challenges, suggesting permissive design drives engagement

Integrators are already seeing the payoff of redesigned assessments. They are significantly less likely than Defenders to cite preventing student cheating or student attendance as top instructional challenges. Evidence that AI-permissive redesign reduces friction and boosts engagement. Institutions should build on this momentum by shifting assessment redesign away from compliance-oriented approaches and toward AI-enabled learning experiences that preserve the productive struggle such as group- and project-based assignments, and oral exams.

Figure 15

### Top five instructional challenges faced by instructors\* By assessment personas



Notes: \*Survey question: "Which of the following are your greatest instructional challenges? Select top three.", Integrators n=367, Defenders n=368; Difference between integrators and defenders for top challenges are statistically significant (preventing student challenge: p=0.003, student attendance: p=0.002)  
Sources: Time for Class 2024-2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

Even with early evidence of success, redesign isn't frictionless. For 1 in 3 faculty, grading time remains a top challenge to redesigning assessments. New formats require building rubrics, calibrating weights, and delivering consistent evaluation and feedback – work that intensifies when the goal shifts from scoring outputs to measuring how students think. Integrator faculty are navigating this trade-off by selectively layering AI-incorporated assessments into their gradebooks, assigning them an average weight of 22% of the overall course grade, with most of that weight going to project-based, group-based, and oral assessments that reward reasoning over production.

*“Re-thinking assessments in terms of learning outcomes  
**shifts the emphasis from producing to reasoning.**  
“ Measurement becomes about how well students deal with  
vague problems and use AI to help solve them.”  
-Faculty member at a 4-year, private institution*

Providers who help faculty build rubrics for these newer assessment types can shift more of the grade weight onto AI-incorporated work and accelerate redesign. Courseware providers may have a clear right to play as auto-graded assignments are the #1 use case of courseware among all faculty (70%), followed by student engagement with materials (49%).

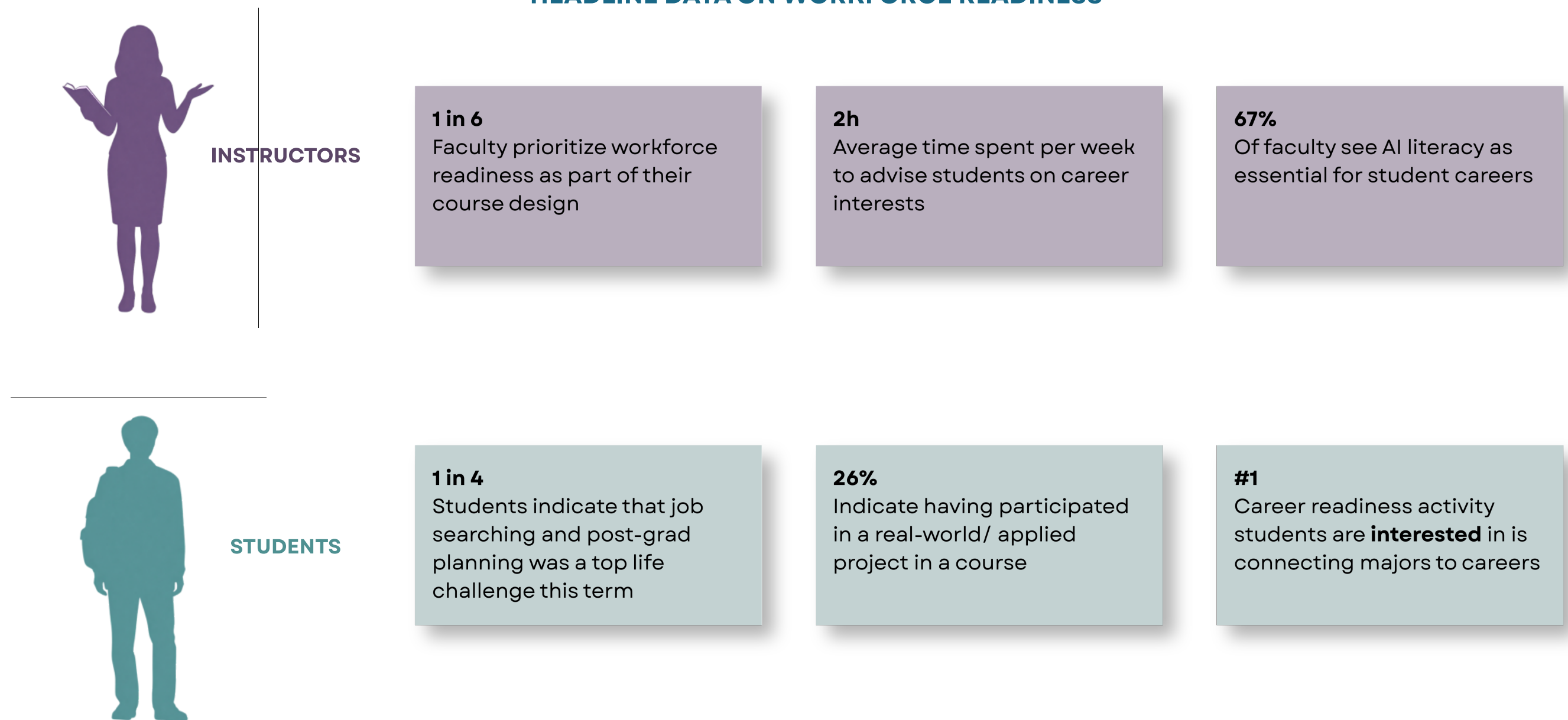
Institutions, for their part, should shift assessment redesign efforts away from solely compliance-oriented approaches and toward AI-enabled learning experiences that better reflect real-world application. Supporting faculty with professional development and instructional design resources will be critical as a growing cohort of instructors moves from AI resistance toward deeper classroom integration. Faculty that have participated in course redesign training use ~2x more assessment approaches compared to untrained peers.

# PREPARING STUDENTS FOR WORKFORCE REALITIES

**1 in 5 faculty are prioritizing workforce readiness in courses, reflecting opportunity to hasten the pace of integration to keep up with industry change**

Figure 16

## HEADLINE DATA ON WORKFORCE READINESS

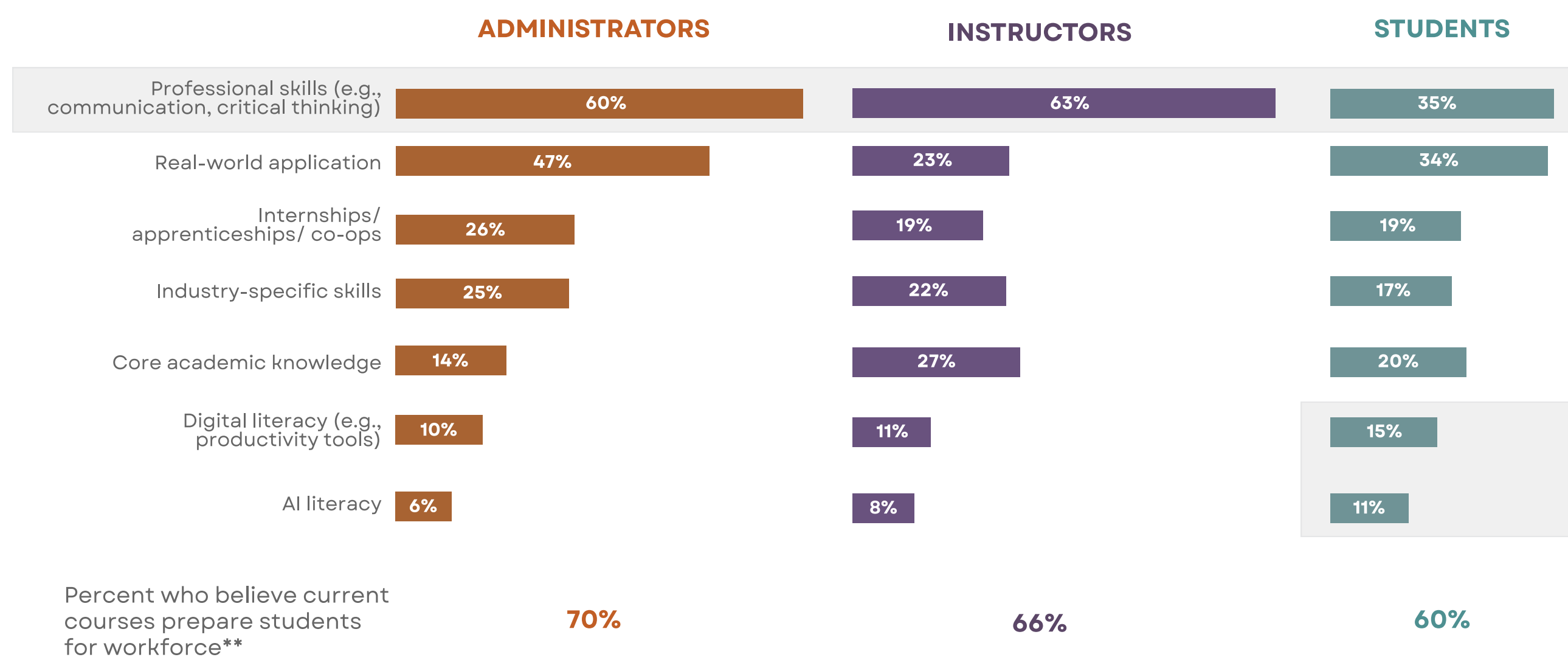


Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Listening to Learners 2026 Survey, Tyton Partners analysis

## Stakeholders align on need for professional skills, but a 10pp gap between student and admin perceptions of workforce effectiveness reveals remaining disconnect

Students do not agree with admin and faculty about defining workforce readiness. Admin/faculty believe readiness is professional skills such as critical thinking, whereas students prioritize digital and AI literacy as well. This difference leads to disagreement about how well courses prepare students. Both admin and faculty are more optimistic than students about the effectiveness of embedded career-connected learning.

Figure 17  
Definition of workforce readiness\*



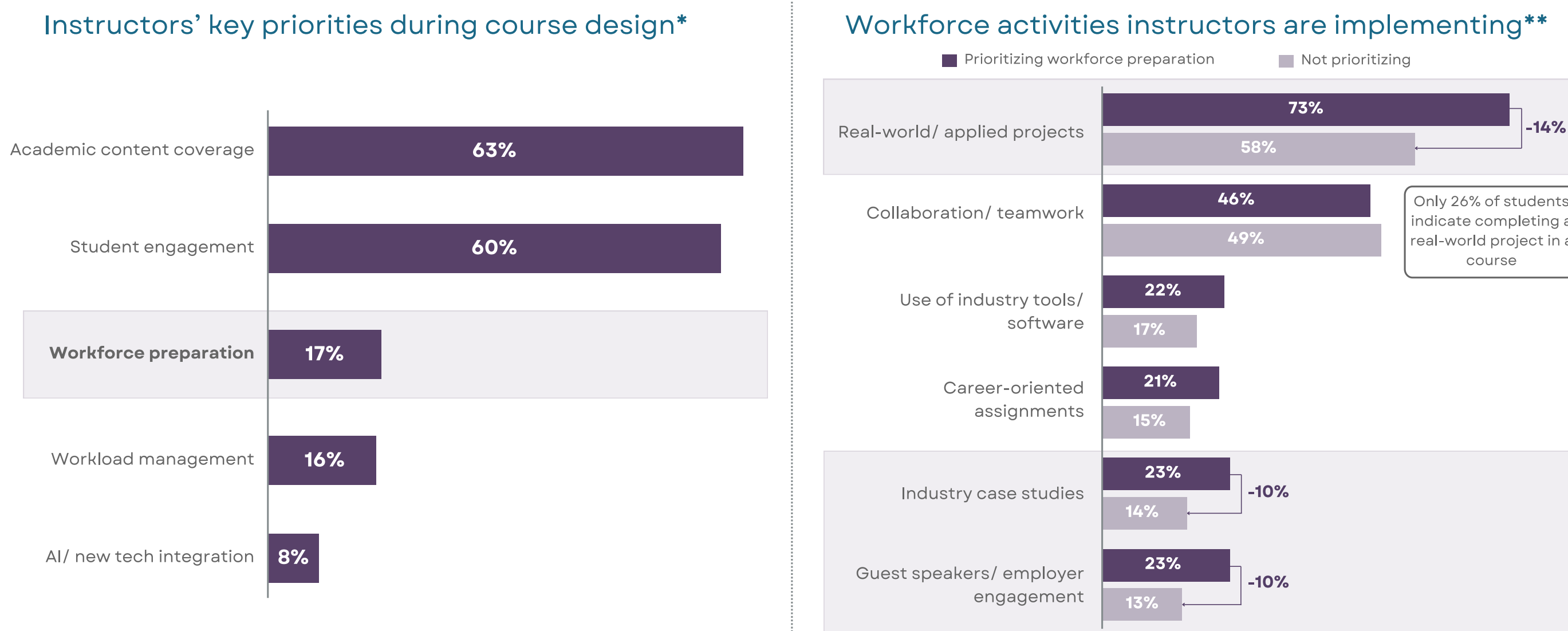
Notes: \*Survey question: "Which best defines "workforce readiness" for students today? Select up to two.", Faculty n=1,560, Admin n=299, Student n=1,809; \*\*"How well do you believe current courses at your institution prepare students for the workforce?"  
Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Listening to Learners 2026 Survey, Tyton Partners analysis

## There is significant opportunity for career-connected learning stakeholders and platforms to focus on classroom-based application

92% of institutions have implemented career-connected learning in some form, yet only 12% have scaled it across all departments, and those that have are disproportionately small institutions (<1,000 enrollment). Scale also varies by discipline. Health sciences faculty are most confident their courses are preparing students for the workforce (84%), STEM faculty are the least (63%).

Because workforce preparation isn't strategically scaled across most institutions, only 17% of faculty say it's a top priority when designing their courses. The faculty who do prioritize it tend to include real-world projects, industry case studies, and employer engagement. But students often don't notice these efforts. 61% of faculty say they assign real-world projects, yet only 26% of students indicated having completed one.

Figure 18

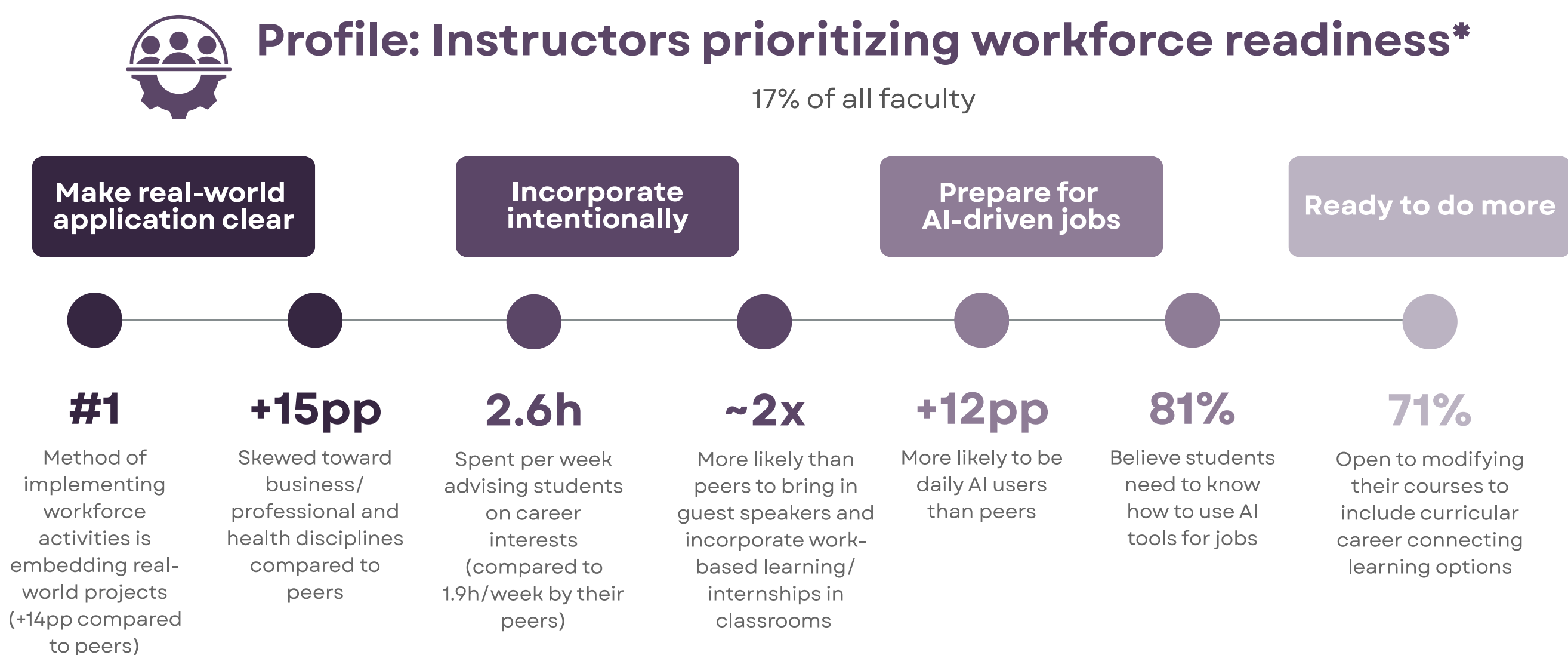


Notes: \*Survey question: "When designing/ updating your course, what do you prioritize most? Select up to two.", Faculty n=1,396; \*\*Survey question: "What are the primary ways you currently incorporate workforce-related skills into your courses? Select up to three.", WF priority n=260, WF non-priority n=1,300  
Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

## The 17% of faculty spearheading in-classroom workforce readiness are focused on preparing students for AI-driven jobs

The 17% of faculty prioritizing workforce preparation in course design are delivering a meaningfully different student experience. They spend 2.6 hours per week advising students on career interests compared to 1.9 hours for peers, and are roughly twice as likely to bring in guest speakers and embed work-based learning in the classroom. They are also 12 percentage points more likely to be daily AI users and 81% believe students need AI literacy for future jobs.

Figure 19



Notes: \*Survey questions: "When designing/ updating your course, what do you prioritize most? Select up to two.", n=260, focuses on those who prioritize workforce readiness in course design  
Sources: Time for Class 2026 Surveys, Tyton Partners analysis

While there is clear intent and active practice among the 17% of faculty who prioritize workforce readiness in course design, the infrastructure supporting faculty to implement in-class work-based learning is lagging. Administrators, who historically have been the decision makers for these tools, report an average NPS of -14 for in-classroom tools<sup>7</sup>, and fewer than 11% of admin report any work-based learning in-class platforms are adopted at their institution. Providers can lower the barrier for adoption through more intuitive design, clear skills translation, and real-world application. Relevance needs to be clear not just for faculty, but also for the students who are looking to turn classroom learning into clear, industry skills.

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7. Platforms tested in the Time for Class survey include: Braven, Forage, Podium Education, Riipen, and Suitable

## FUTURE DIRECTION

### **The role of faculty is being redefined in real time, from instructor to orchestrator**

Higher education has crossed a threshold. The question is no longer whether AI will reshape teaching and learning – a clear majority of administrators and a near-majority of faculty already say it has – but how institutions will respond to a transformation already in motion. The work of being a faculty member has shifted from delivering instruction to orchestrating it: relatively less time at the front of the classroom, more time designing assessment, interpreting student data, and motivating students who increasingly turn to chatbots before they turn to office hours. Students, for their part, are using AI to manage the mental and academic load they have named as their top challenge for three years running, and they are doing so with or without institutional sanction.

### **Permissive, integration-focused AI approaches drive engagement while restrictive ones provide a temporary stopgap on cheating concerns**

The next few years will bring a higher education landscape organized around AI excellence rather than AI experimentation. The promise of personalized learning that defined the post-COVID digital era will resurface in a new form, this time powered by agentic AI capable of acting on student data rather than simply surfacing it. Restrictive AI policies will be increasingly untenable as the gap between what institutions permit and what students do widens. Faculty workload will bifurcate: instructors who are resistant to AI will likely spend more time on detection and proctoring, while faculty who integrate AI will have redesigned their assessments and can reclaim time for the human work of advising and engagement. The blue book revival happening today will likely be a transitional response, ultimately replaced by project-based, iterative, and applied assessments that make cheating less appealing because the work itself becomes more engaging.

### **The window for providers and institutions to shape AI's role in higher education is open now, but predicted to close in the next 3 years**

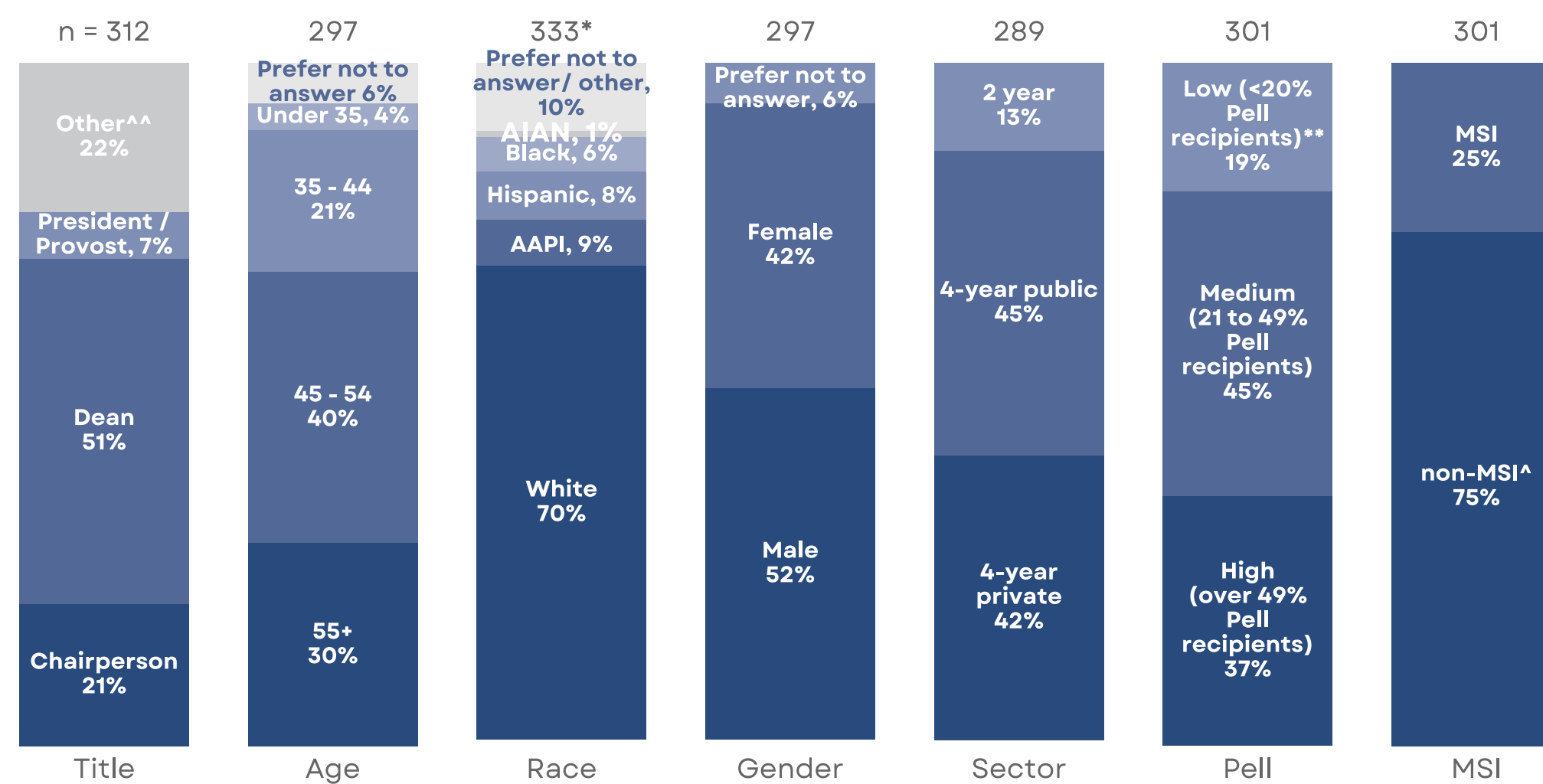
The institutions and providers that thrive in this next phase will be the ones that treat AI as an infrastructure decision. With 78% of faculty and 86% of admin believing AI will transform teaching and learning within the next three years, the time is now. First-mover institutions have already made this pivot, refining their early policies into instructional design support and committing capital to faculty-facing AI capabilities. Solution providers face a closing window to position themselves as strategic partners on policy, change management, and enterprise-grade AI tools before institutional relationships harden around early movers. As AI adoption rates continue to climb, institutions that use this moment of transition to rebuild the human core of higher education will be the ones securing long-term viability.

# APPENDIX

*Time for Class (T4C) 2026* is a series of national, longitudinal surveys of more than 3,000 higher education administrators, instructors, and students. The survey is designed to measure the evolving nature of digital teaching and learning at higher education institutions across the United States to increase affordability, accessibility, and quality for students.

In April and May of 2026, administrators, instructors, and students received online surveys ranging from approximately 15 to 45 minutes, depending on their individual roles. We collected responses from more than 300 administrators and 1,500 instructors at over 750 unique postsecondary institutions, as well as approximately 1,500 students from two- and four-year private and public institutions. Data from the Time for Class surveys has been weighted throughout this report to be representative of national distribution by institution type.

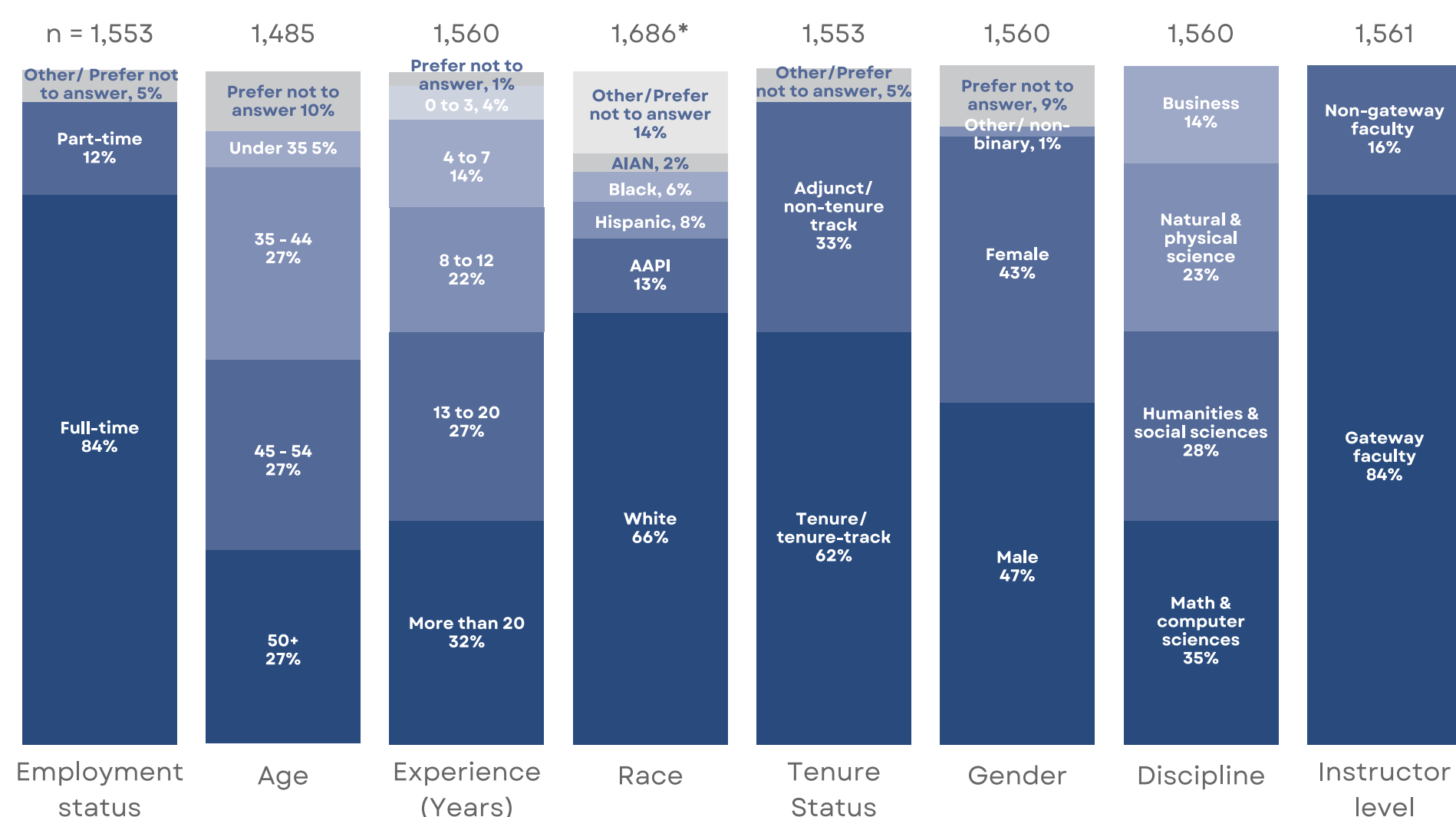
**Figure 20**  
Overview of administrator survey respondents



Notes: \*Number exceeds total n because respondents could select more than one option, AIAN stands for American Indian / Alaskan Native background, AAPI stands for Asian American or Pacific Islander background; \*\*Includes those without sufficient data (24 respondents); ^Includes those without sufficient data (22 respondents); ^^"Other" titles include title such as CIO, IT Director, Career Services Director, Student Support Director  
Sources: Time for Class Administrator Survey 2026, NCES, Tyton Partners analysis

**Figure 21**

Overview of instructor survey respondents



Note: \*Number exceeds total n because respondents could select more than one option, AIAN stands for American Indian / Alaskan Native background, AAPI stands for Asian American or Pacific Islander background  
Sources: Time for Class Instructor Survey 2026, NCES, Tyton Partners analysis

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We used ChatGPT-5.5 and Claude Opus 4.7 to refine sentence structure and improve clarity during manuscript preparation. The authors verified all content to ensure accuracy.

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