



Military Prior Learning Assessment Policies and Practices at the Illinois Postsecondary Institutions

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PLA is a set of *well-established, researched, and validated methods* for assessing non-collegiate learning for college credit.

The process allows learners to *demonstrate knowledge and skill* in a particular field or fields and have that learning *evaluated for college credit*.

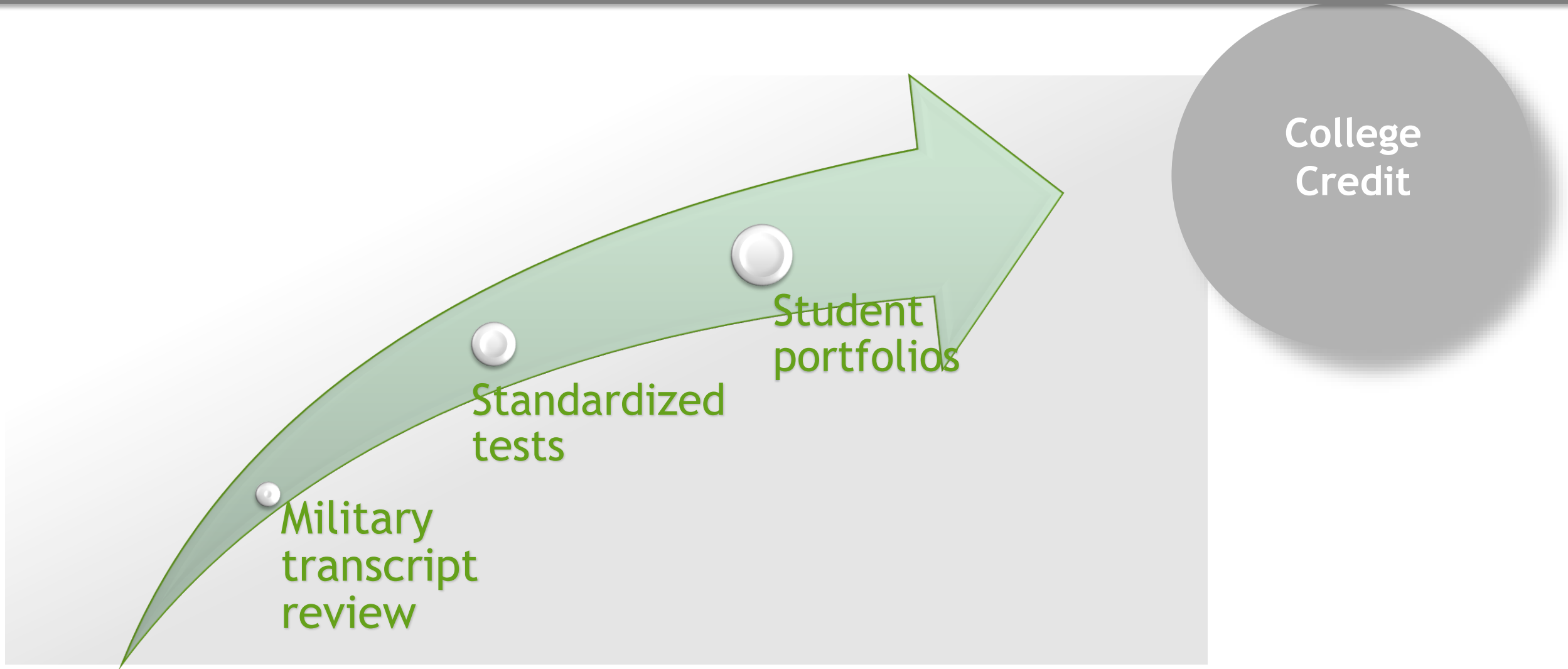
PLA targets adult learners.



Research shows outcomes for adult students with PLA are better than adults with no PLA credit

- Higher GPAs
- Shorter time-to-degree
- Better retention rates
- Better completion rates
- Take more regular courses

Military PLA Takes Many Forms



Military Transcript Review

- A military transcript documents training and coursework completed during military service
- American Council on Education (ACE) Military Evaluations Program evaluates formal military training and Military Occupational Specialties (MOS)
- ACE guidelines are used by many colleges and universities
- Usually no cost for military transcript review, though some institutions may charge a fee for posting credits to a student's transcript

Overview of Military Transcripts

Joint Services Transcript (JST)

- Army
- Navy
- Marines
- Coast Guard

Request a transcript at: <https://jst.doded.mil>

Information Available on JST

Courses Completed

0210C	MC-1606-0010 13-NOV-2009 Terrorism Awareness By Correspondence: Marine Corps Institute Washington, DC Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to identify factors that promote terrorism awareness for all marines. • Credit Is Not Recommended SH NOTE: MCI designates a minimum passing score at 65%. (6/08)(6/08)
3420F	MC-1401-0009 13-NOV-2009 Personal Financial Management by Correspondence: Marine Corps Institute Washington, DC Upon completion of the course, the student will have a broad foundation for the fundamentals of financial planning to include military benefits, identity theft, managing credit, and spending plans. • Personal Finance 3 SH NOTE: MCI designates a minimum passing score at 65%. (2/06)(8/09)

Military course ID (points to 3420F)

Date course taken (points to 13-NOV-2009)

Course title (points to Personal Financial Management by Correspondence)

Course description (points to Upon completion of the course, the student will have a broad foundation for the fundamentals of financial planning to include military benefits, identity theft, managing credit, and spending plans.)

Academic subject in which credit is recommended (points to Personal Finance)

Recommended credit hours (points to 3 SH)

Course level (points to L)

Scan of Policies and Practices at Illinois Institutions

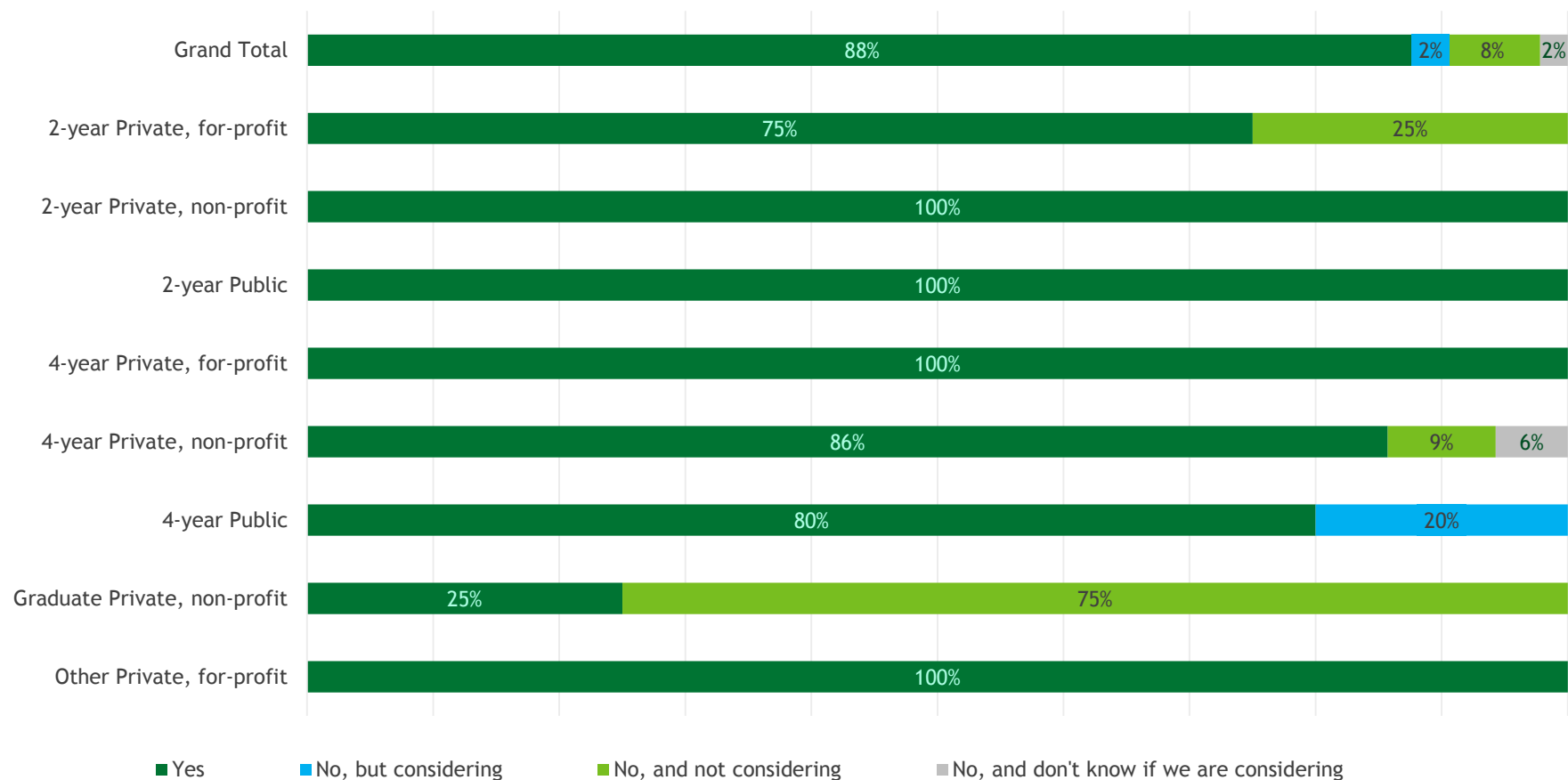


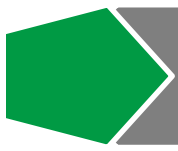
A word cloud of terms related to policies and practices. The words are arranged in a cluster, with some appearing vertically and others horizontally. The words include: Procedure, Strategy, Record, Implement, Dogma, Guiding Principles, Rules, Policy, Practice, Plan, Contract, and Guidelines. The words are in various shades of green and blue, with some having a glowing effect.

CAEL's Partners

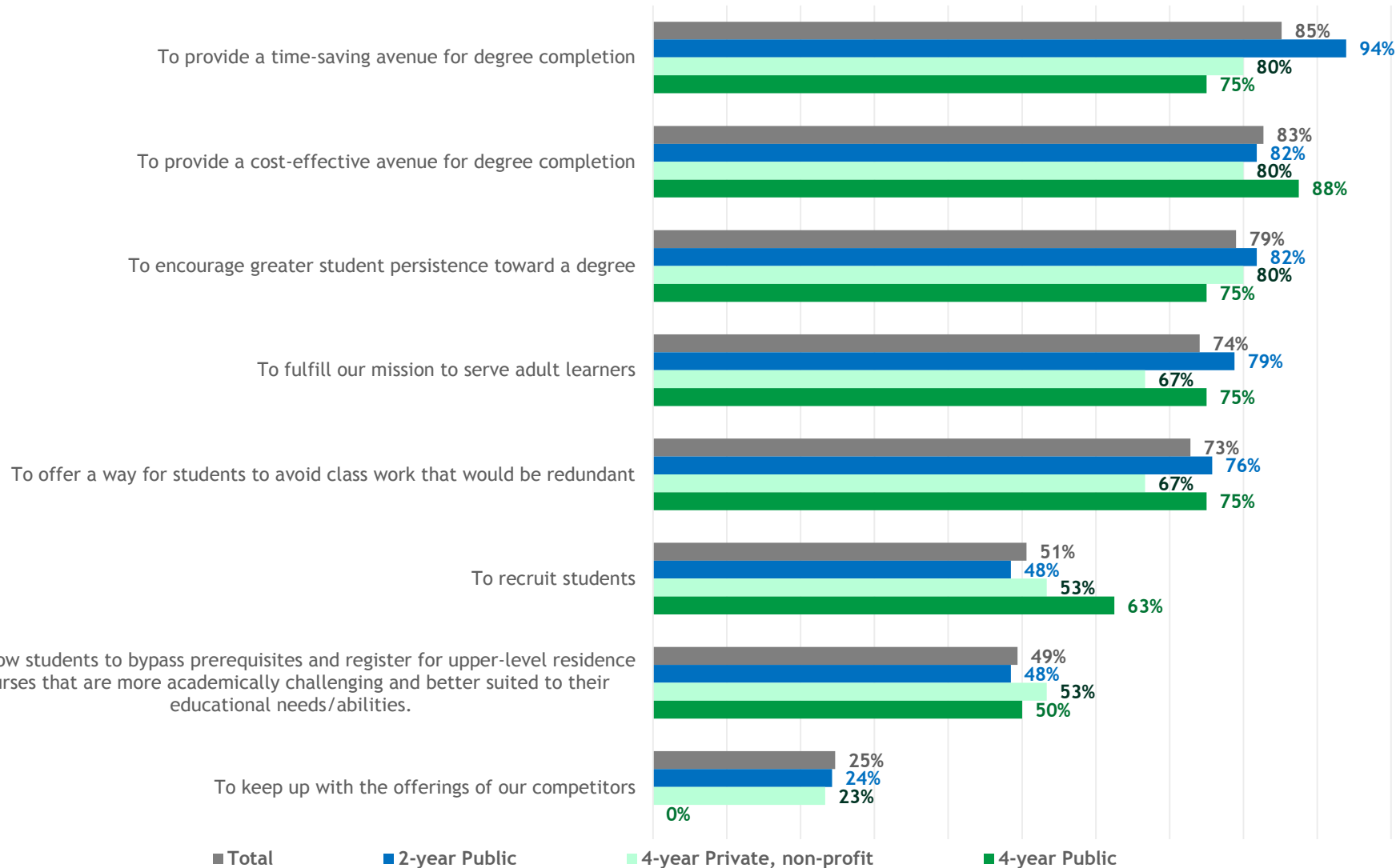


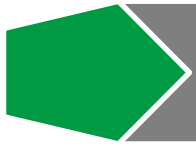
88% of Institutions Surveyed Award Credit for some form of PLA



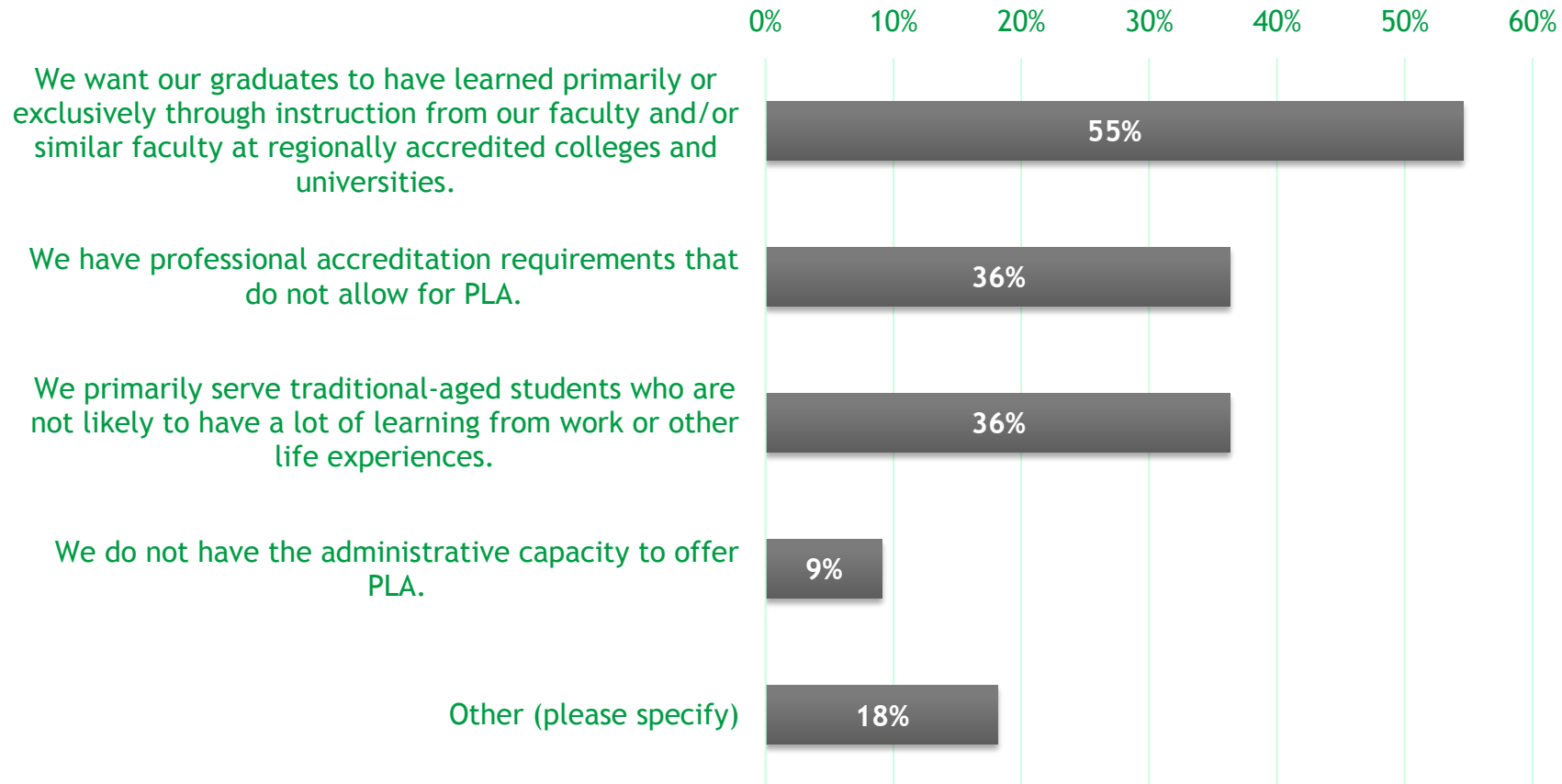


Why Institutions Offer PLA

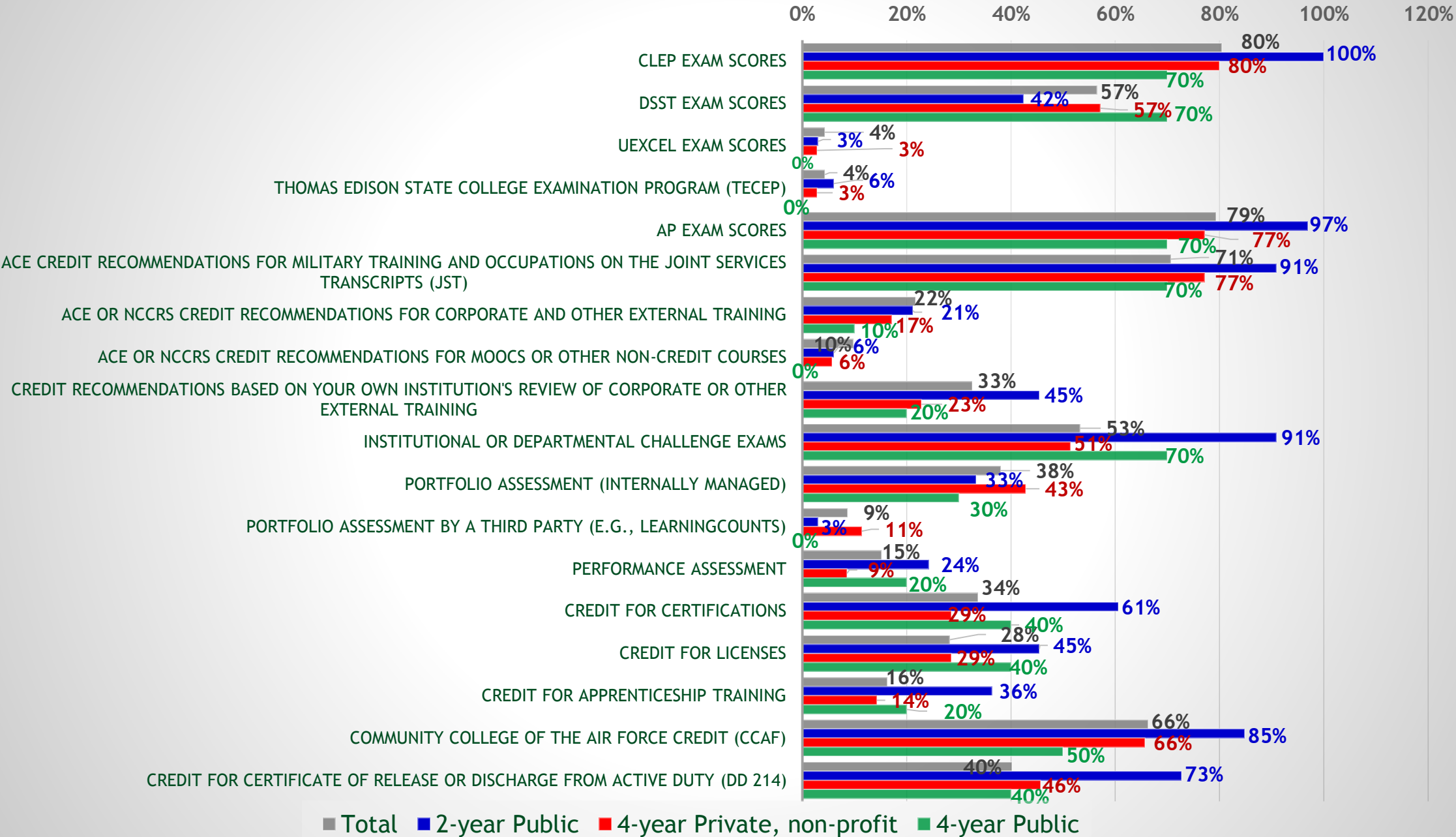




Reasons Institutions Are Not Offering PLA



Most institutions offer a variety of Military PLA options





PLA Credits Limits

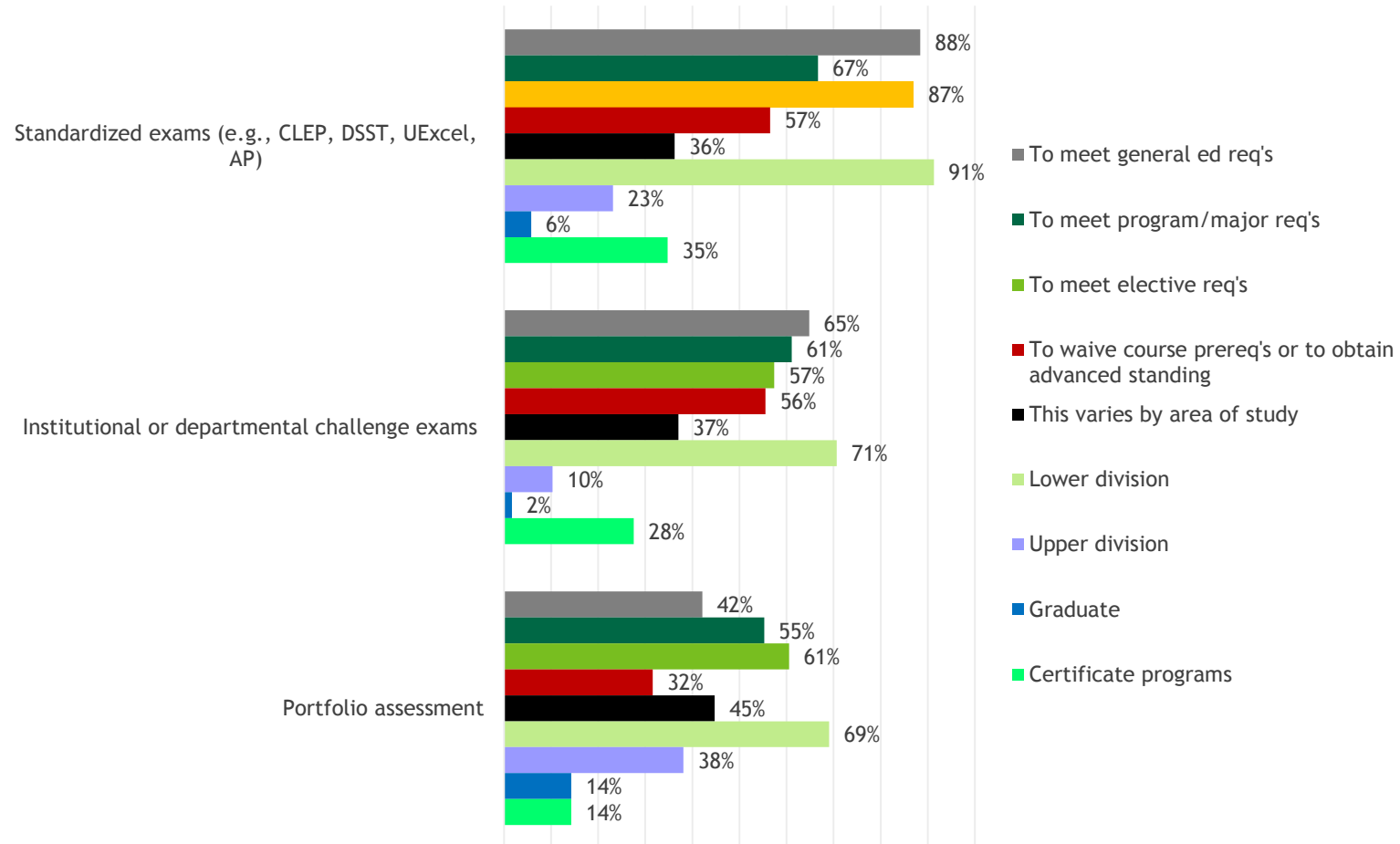
Most institutions set credit limits, though these limits are not consistent across institutions or PLA methods.

90%

Of Illinois institutions surveyed said that they have limits on the number of PLA credits that can count towards a degree

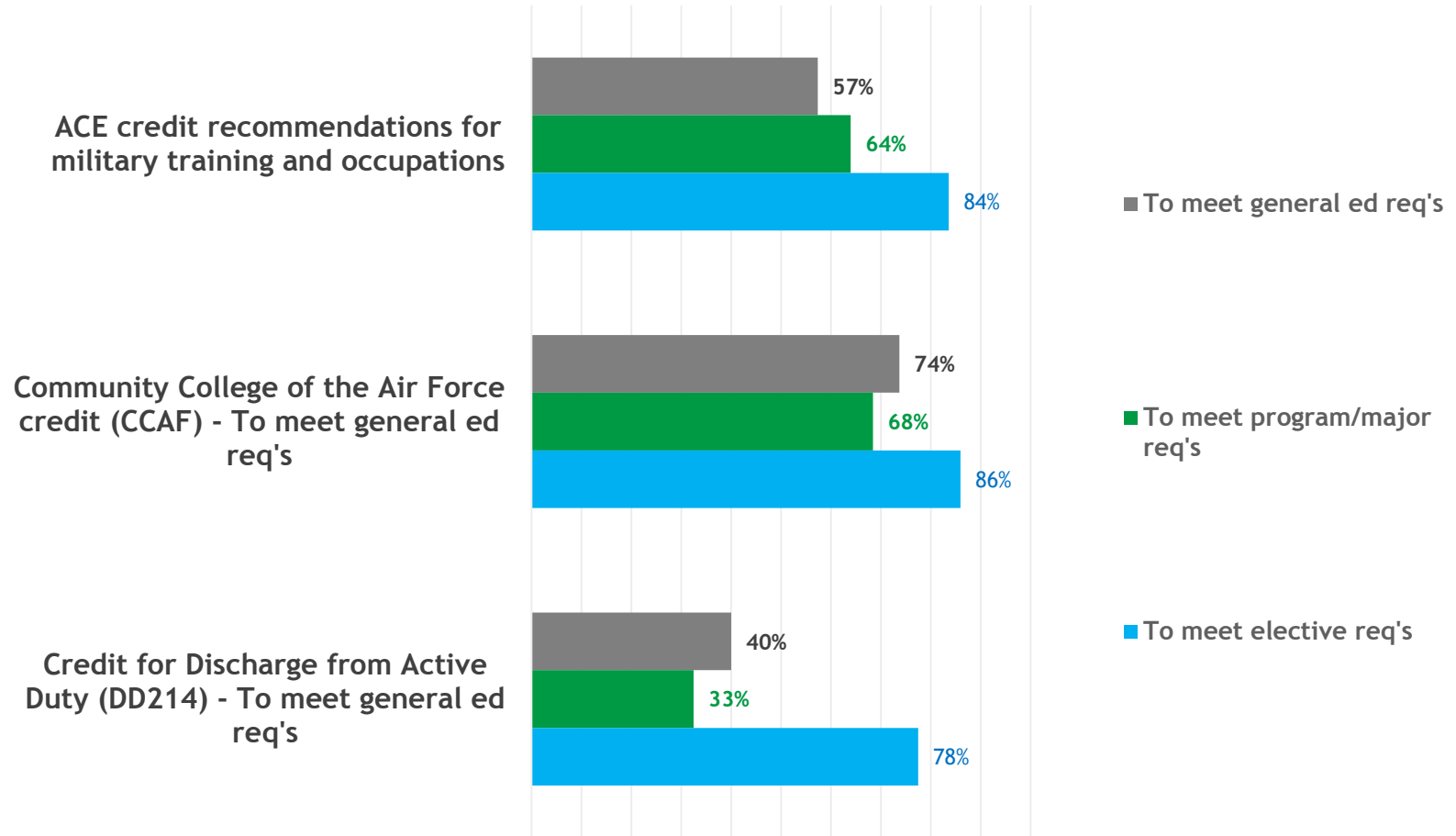


Level of Courses for PLA Credit

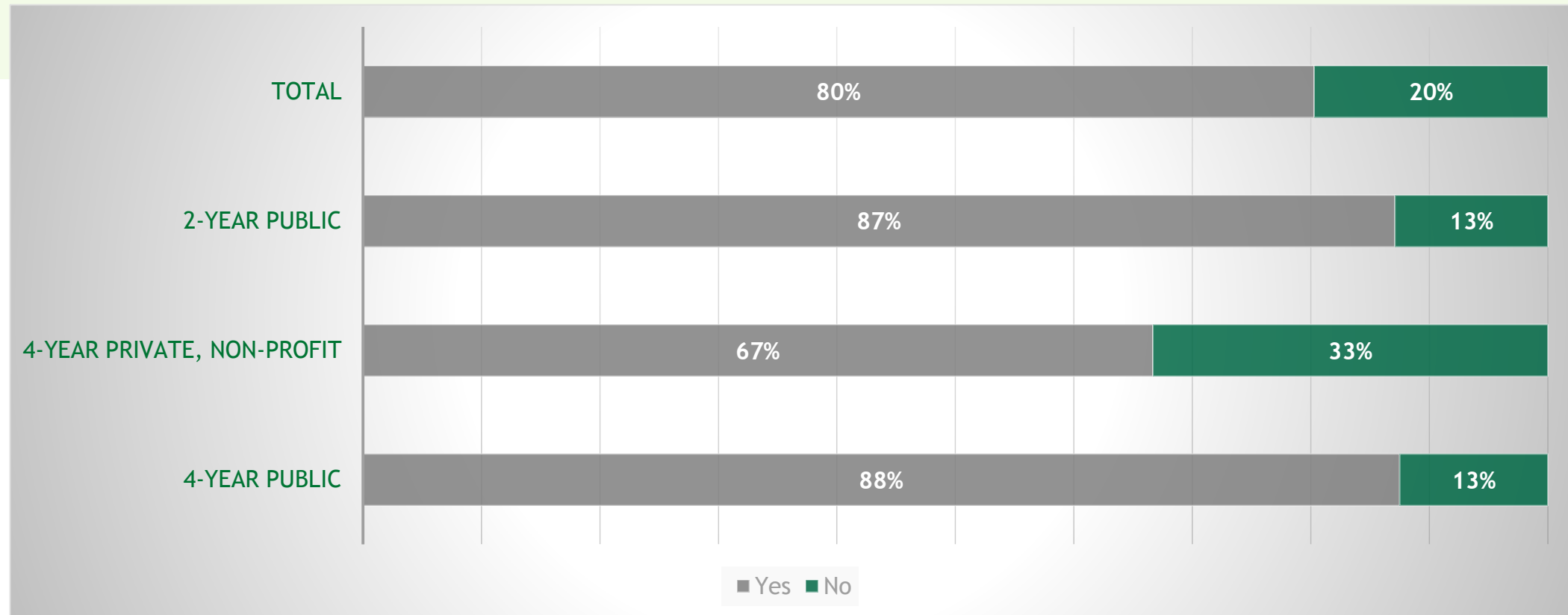


Applying Credit to Degree

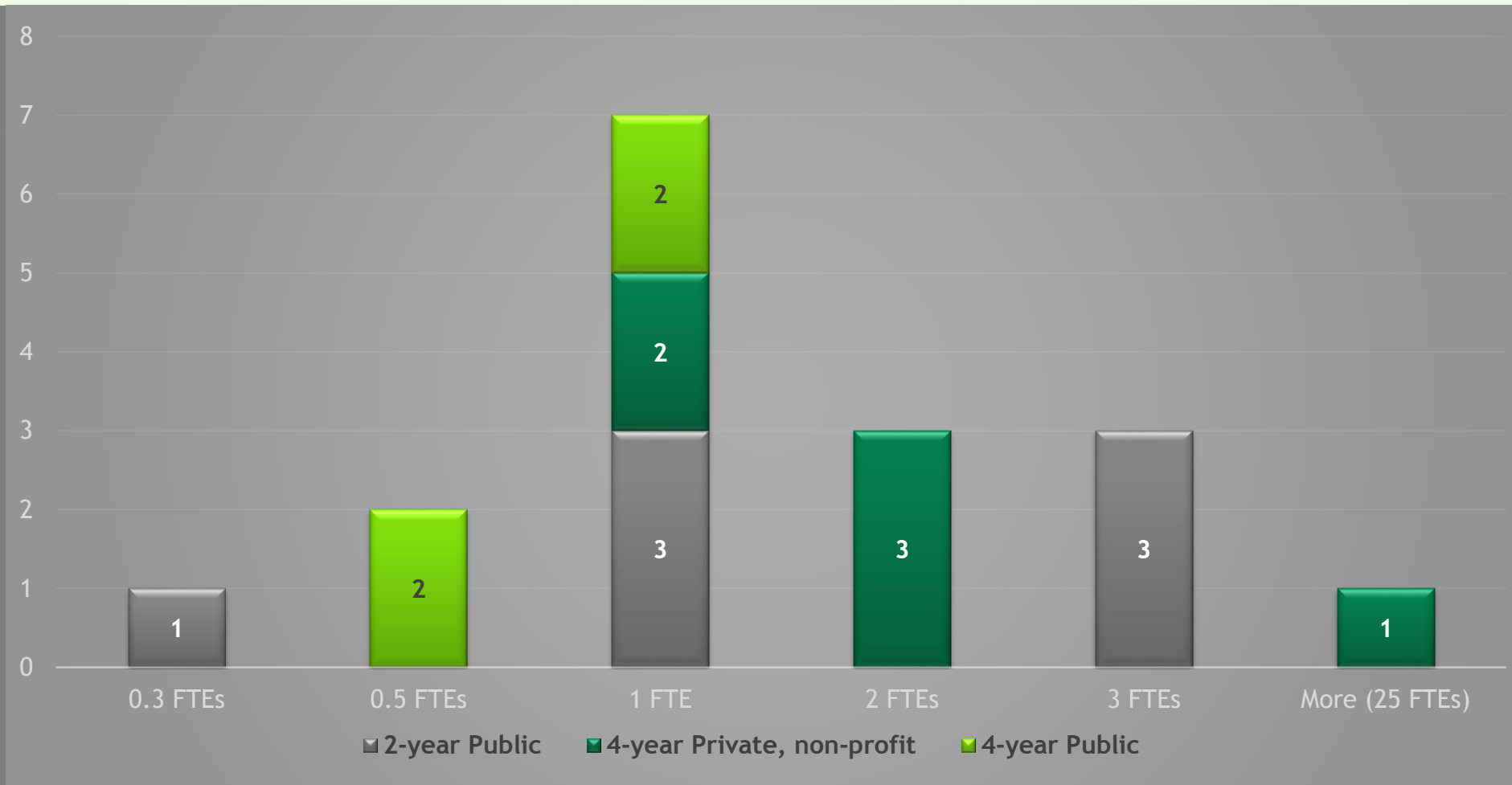
The ways that credit could be applied to a degree plan varied by method



Most institutions have formal PLA policies that are reviewed regularly, although fewer have PLA policies specific to student veterans

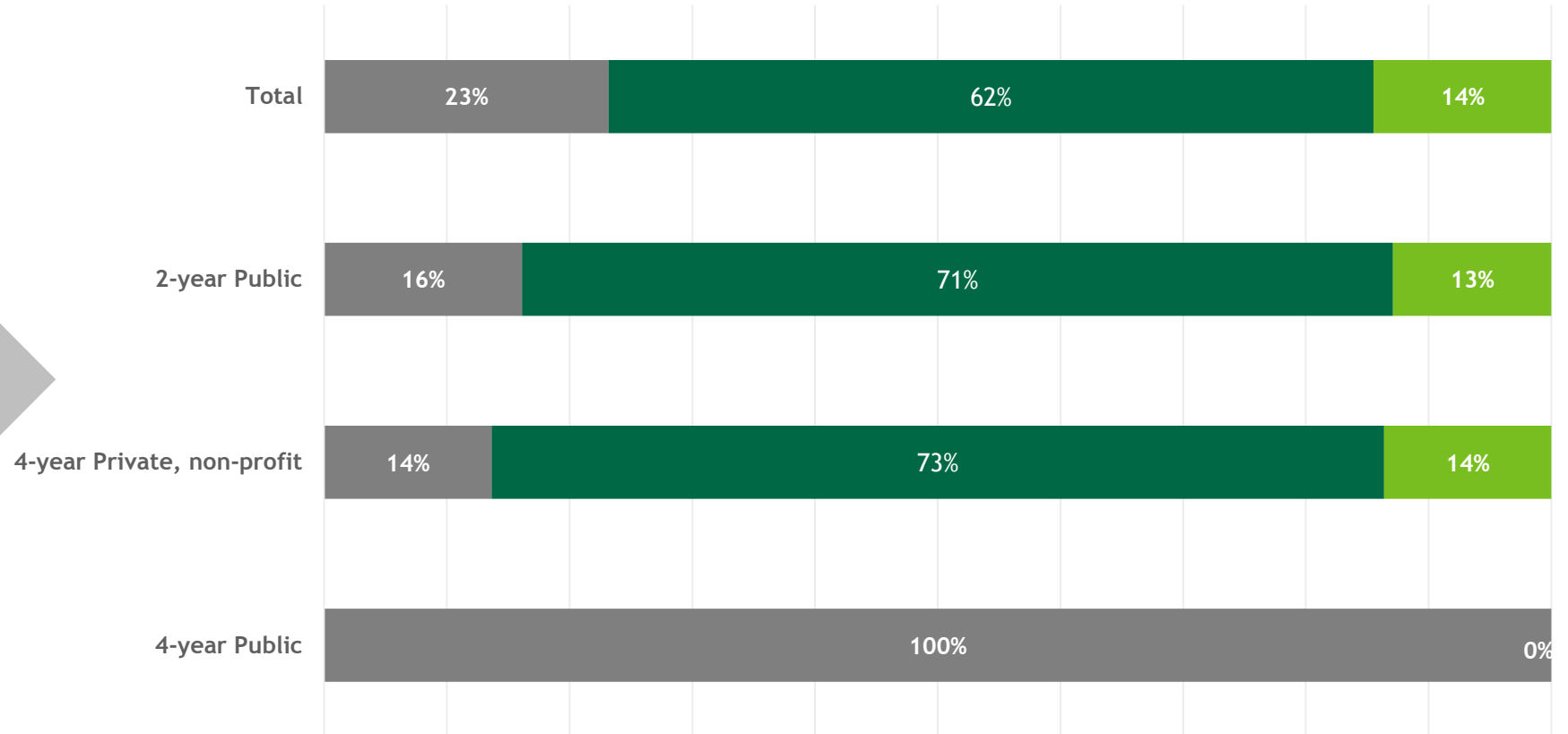


A minority of institutions have staff dedicated to veterans or PLA

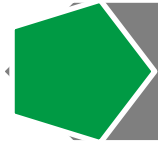


Excess Credits

A number of Institutions handle credit in ways that may be problematic for student financial aid

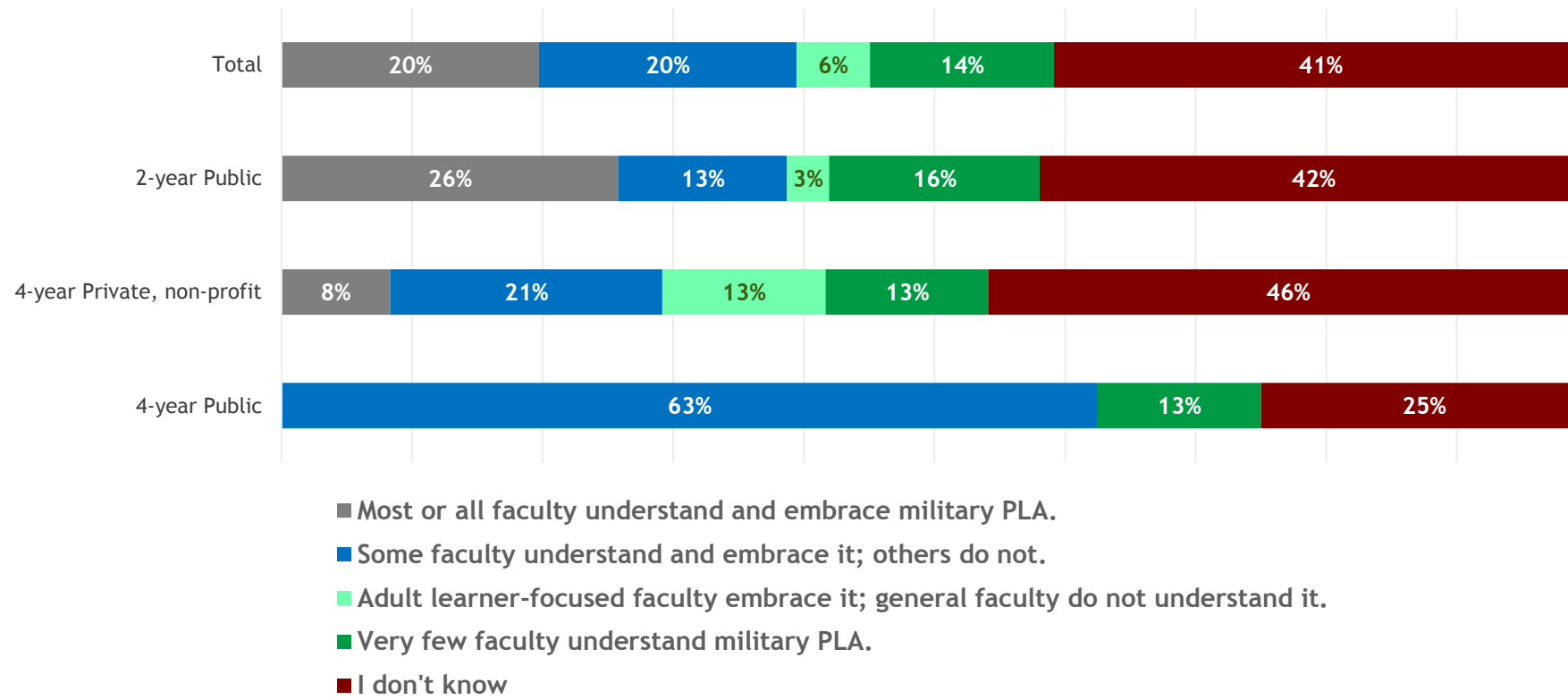


- We post all credits from review of the JST to the student transcript
- We only post credits to the student transcript if they will count toward the degree
- I don't know



Faculty Opinion of PLA

Institutions largely do not know faculty opinion of PLA for military students





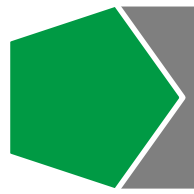
Recommendations for Greater Alignment

- 1. Increase overall access to all PLA methods.** There was considerable variation in the methods of PLA available at each institution, and only 5 of the 17 listed methods were offered by more than half of the participating institutions. This is of particular concern for the four year institutions, which lag behind 2-years in the types of military PLA offerings available to students.
- 2. Adoption of formal policies.** Formal policies for accepting PLA credit should be adopted by all institutions, especially 4-year private, non-profits, which reported the lowest rate of formal policies. In addition, formal policies should be subject to regular review cycles within institutions in order to promote consistency and transparency.
- 3. Dedicated resources for military or veteran PLA.** Half of institutions reported that they have no dedicated resources for military or veteran PLA. These resources are vital for helping military students maximize the credits that are awarded for their training.



Recommendations for Greater Alignment

4. **Training for and dialogue with faculty around PLA and student veterans.** Twenty percent of institutions reported that faculty do not understand military or veteran PLA issues well, and 41% of institutions didn't know how to describe the faculty's views of PLA for military or student veterans. There's a need for more training and dialogue to address concerns and promote acceptance of military PLA.
5. **Policy to protect against transcription of excess credits.** Twenty-three percent of institutions post JST credit as a block whether it is used or not. This is a policy that should be addressed since financial aid rules might prevent students with a large number of excess credit from getting financial aid. All institutions should adopt a policy that protects against excess credits, which can negatively affect financial aid.
6. **Data analysis.** Data analysis is important to understanding the ways in which military students are using PLA and identifying ways in which the institution can further help these students. Forty-one percent of institutions reported that they do no analysis of PLA outcomes, and 31% don't know what is done. Schools should adopt policies and procedures to track comparative outcomes for PLA students, military students, and students in the general population.



Recommendations for Greater Alignment

7. **Application of PLA to the degree plan.** Results of this survey show that PLA is applied to degree plans in a great variety of ways and with a certain level of inconsistency across institutional types. Colleges should adopt policies to carefully consider how PLA credits are applied to the student degree plan.
8. **Carefully consider credit limit policy.** Reported variance in credit limit policies shows that there are huge differences in the number of military or veteran PLA credits that can be brought to different institutions. Institutions should consider the HLC rules governing PLA credit limits when creating these policies, and clearly post this information so that students can access these limits easily.
9. **Advising.** Schools need to ensure that advisors are knowledgeable about PLA, since this seems to be a primary way that PLA options are communicated to students. In addition, there is a need to look at other ways of communicating PLA options to students so that those that are not regular contact with advisors can also be made aware of these options.



Questions?

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