

National College Testing Association
Fall 2013 Membership Survey Results

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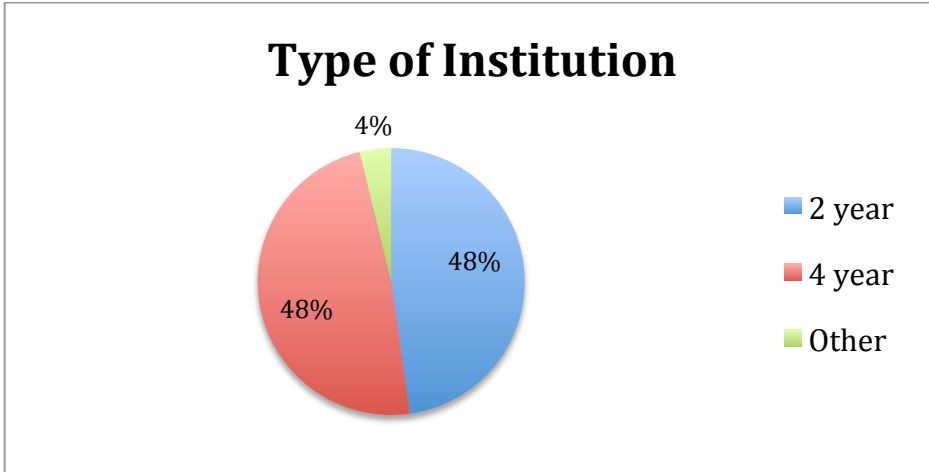
Introduction

The following report summarizes the results of an online survey of the National College Testing Association's membership, conducted between September 9th and October 5th, 2013. A total of 455 respondents answered 46 questions regarding their professional and educational background, involvement with NCTA, and the institutions and offices which they represent. Of these, 446 responses were sufficiently complete and clear for inclusion in the present analysis of this data.

Not every question has been included in this report, as the nature of many of the free-response options necessitates a more in-depth qualitative analysis than would fit in such a summary. A number of questions have been cross-referenced to show correlations, most especially between institution type and other factors. While this report occasionally posits possible causative links between trends, such links are by no means definitive.

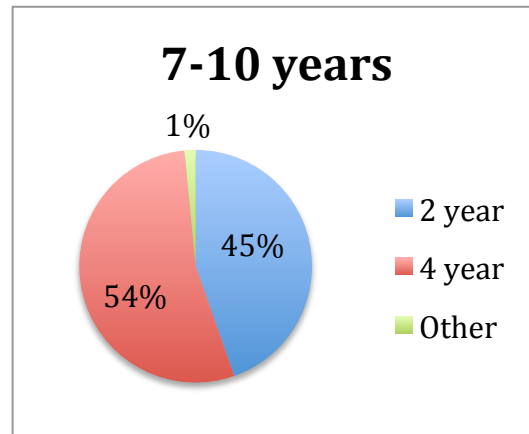
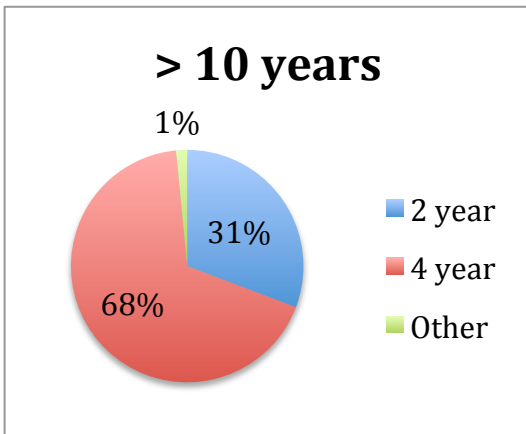
Institutional Composition

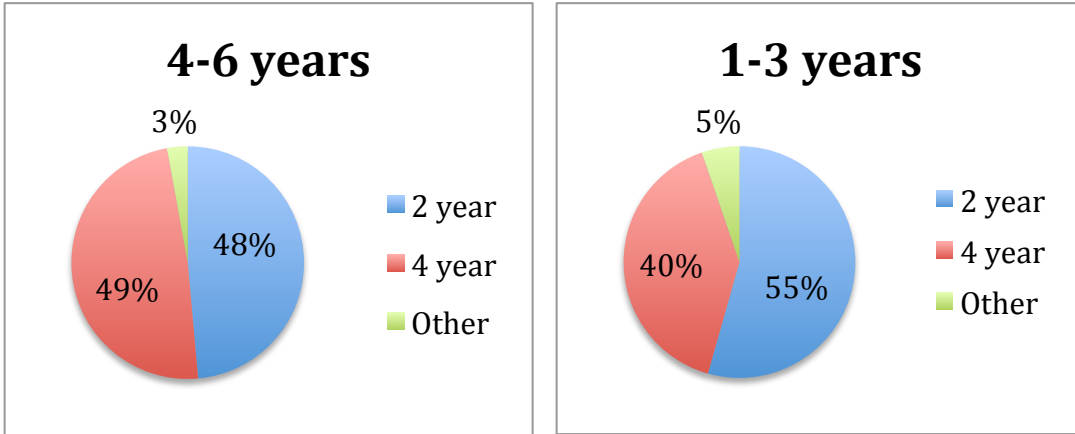
Survey respondents are approximately equally divided between two- and four-year institutions, with a very few respondents from other types of institutions, such as technical colleges.



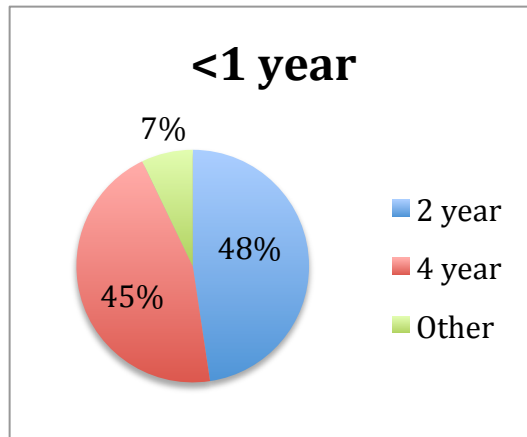
Number of years with NCTA – Institutional Breakdown

Trends in length of time affiliated with NCTA would suggest that a gradual shift is taking place from four-year toward two-year and other institutions. Indeed, as shown below, the percentage of two-year and other institutions increases consistently with each decrease in number of years in NCTA.

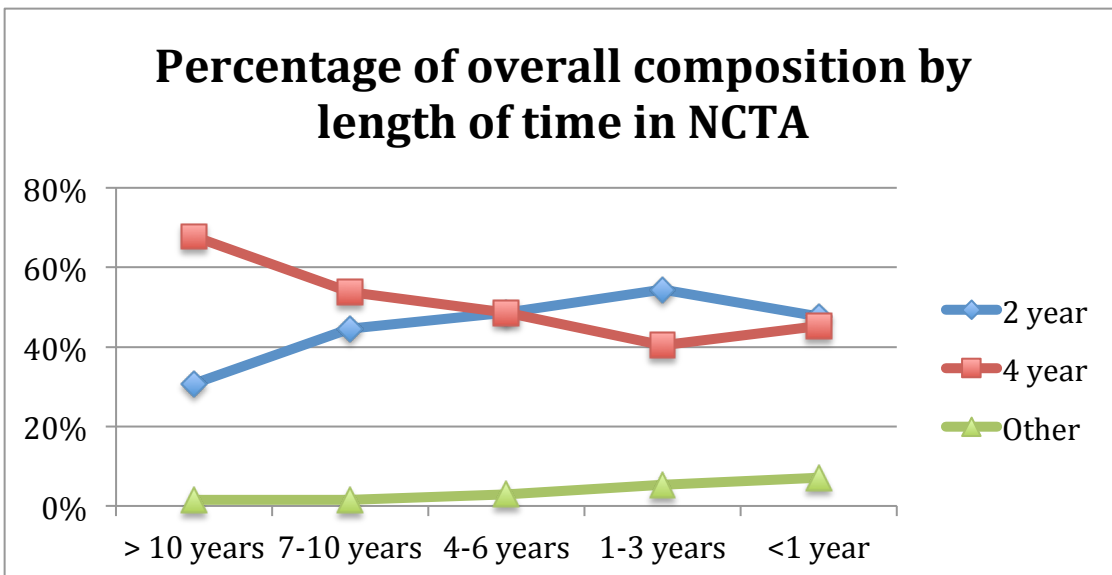




Very new members seem to buck this trend somewhat, as there is a slight decrease in two-year institutional affiliation amongst members who joined less than one year before the date of the survey.

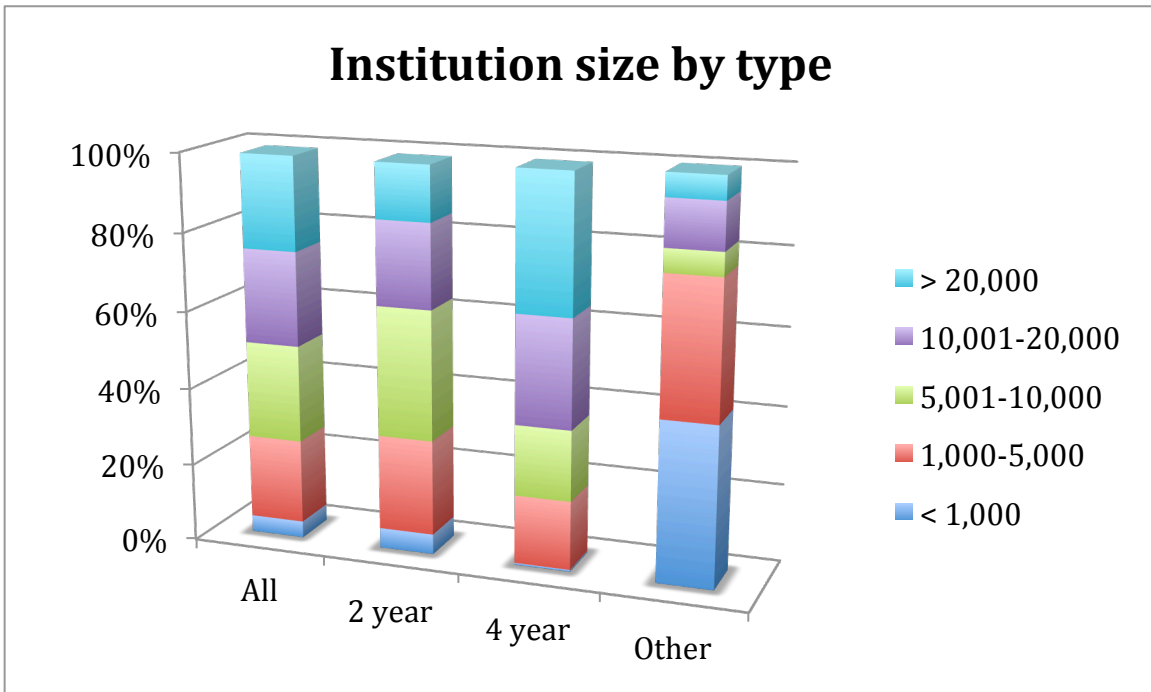


ALTERNATE CHART:



Institution Size

Overall, respondents' home institutions are distributed evenly across the 1,000-5,000 student, 5,001-10,000 student, 10,001-20,000 student, and greater than 20,000 student categories. Four year institutions tend to be the largest of the three institutional types, while "other" institutions are the smallest. Two-year schools fall somewhere in the middle, but skew smaller than the average.

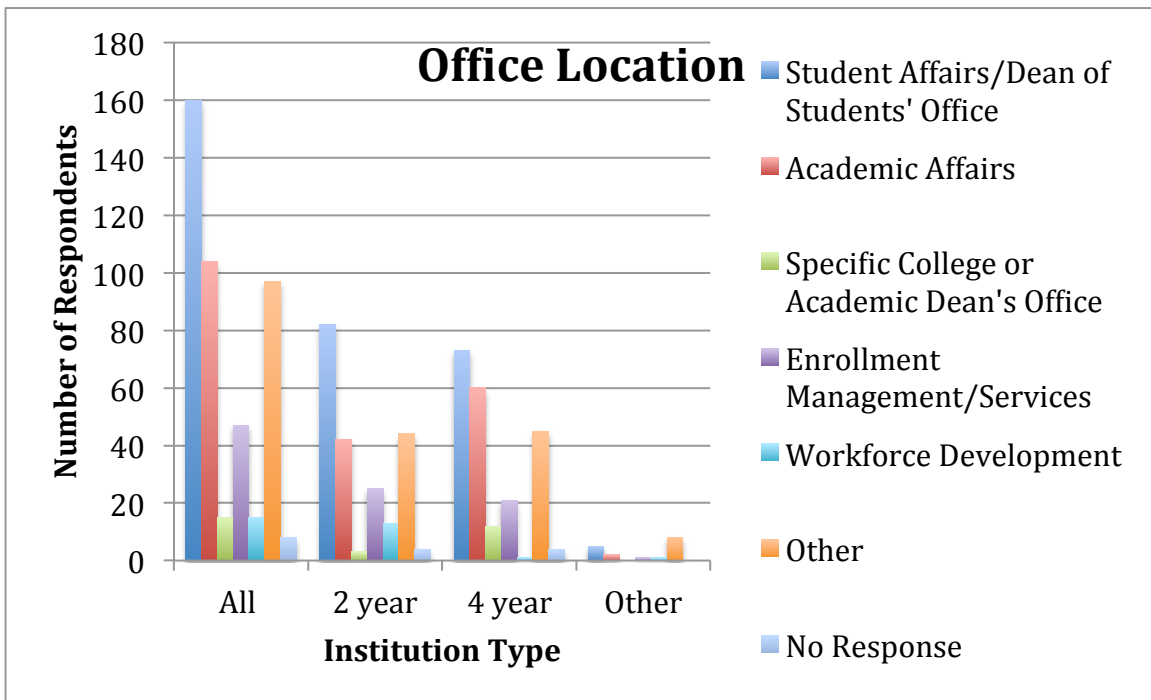


These size disparities may be helpful to bear in mind when considering the differences in budget, staffing, and other office organization factors laid out in the next section.

Office Characteristics

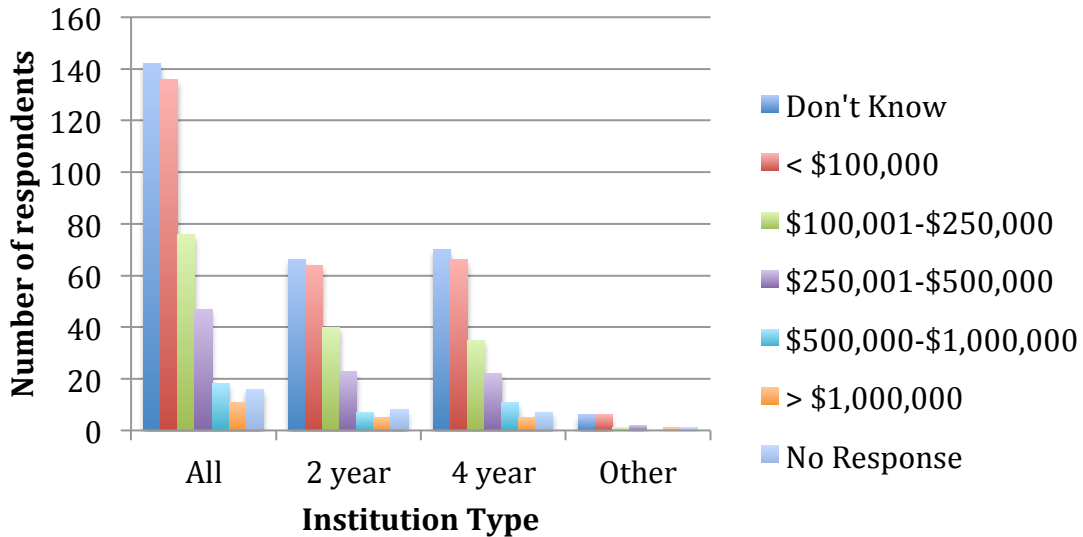
Administration and Budgeting

Most testing offices represented in NCTA are located in either the Student Affairs/Dean of Students' Office, Academic Affairs, or some other department not specified by this survey. Common write-in responses for those locations not listed include the library, the Provost's Office, Student Services, and Adult/Continuing Education.



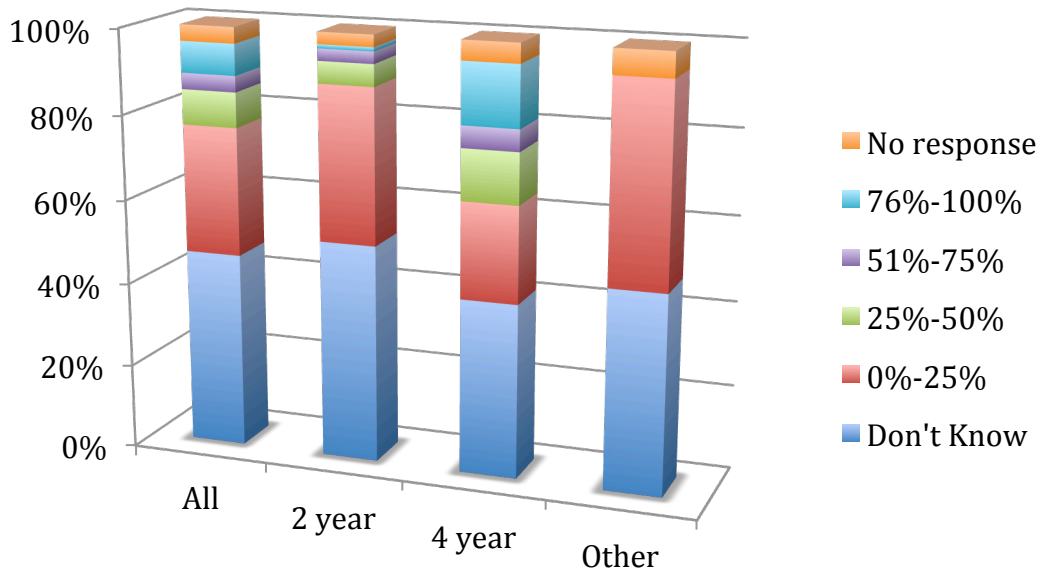
Of those who know their office budgets, approximately half report them at under \$100,000, regardless of institution type. Declining numbers of respondents place their offices in each increasing budget category; we can thus conclude that the average testing office operates on a relatively modest budget.

Approximate Office Budget



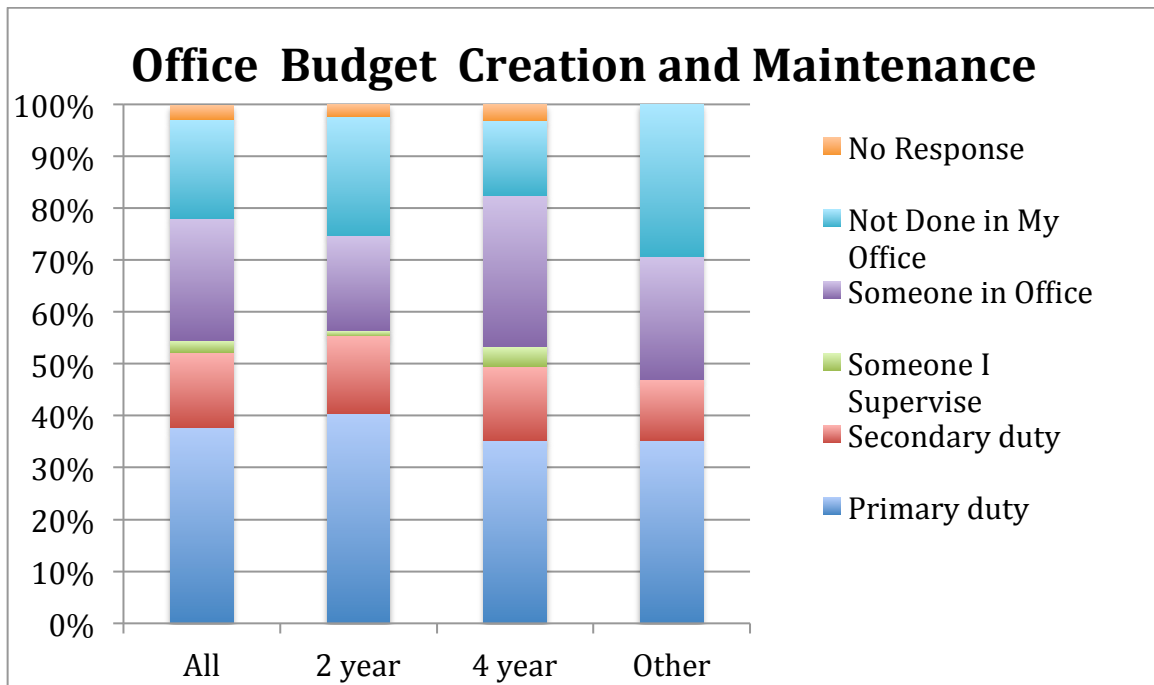
In general, very little of these budgets appear to be revenue-generated. Most respondents either do not know the proportion of their office budget on cost-recovery, or estimate it to be 25% or less. Still, significantly more respondents from four-year than two-year schools (by a factor of 15) report very high levels of cost recovery, in the 76-100% range.

Portion of Budget on Cost Recovery



This discrepancy may be due in part to the higher proportion of four-year schools that offer standardized computer- and paper-based exams, which may contribute to revenue, while purely internal exams do not. (For more on this, see pages 12-13.)

Based on the question of who creates and maintains the office budget, we can also see that budget management is slightly more likely to occur within the office at four year institutions (83%) than two year (75%) or other institutions (71%).



Approximately half of all members have a hand in managing their office’s budget, either as one of their primary or secondary duties, or through supervising the person who handles the budget. In addition, close to 20% report that their office has no control over budgeting; this proportion rises to 23% at two-year institutions and 29% at “other” institutions.

Office Staffing

As might be expected from the relatively modest office budgets discussed on page 7, most offices represented on this survey have a relatively small staff. The tables below give mean, median, minimum, and maximum values for respondents' estimation of numbers of different types of staff in their offices.¹

Total Staff								
	All institutions		Two year		Four year		Other	
	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max
Full-time staff	4.8/3	1/200	3.7/3	1/50	4.8/3.5	1/30	20/3	1/200
	n=431		n=205		n=208		n=15	
Part-time staff	6.4/3	0/85	6.4/4	1/80	6.8/3	0/85	2/2	1/3
	n=293		n=159		n=123		n=11	
Student staff	7/3	0/81	6.5/2	0/75	7.4/4	0/81	2.8/2	1/8
	n=243		n=83		n=155		n=5	

The (sometimes extreme) discrepancy between mean and median values is indicative of the presence of a few outlier offices with a much larger staff than most. The same is true when we consider testing staff:

Testing staff								
	All institutions		Two year		Four year		Other	
	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max
Full time staff	3.2/2	0.5/40	3/2	0.5/40	3.2/2	1/25	5.9/2.5	1/25
	n=431		n=205		n=210		n=16	
Part time staff	5.4/3	0/68	5/3	0/34	6.1/3	0/68	2.3/2	1/4
	n=289		n=160		n=118		n=10	

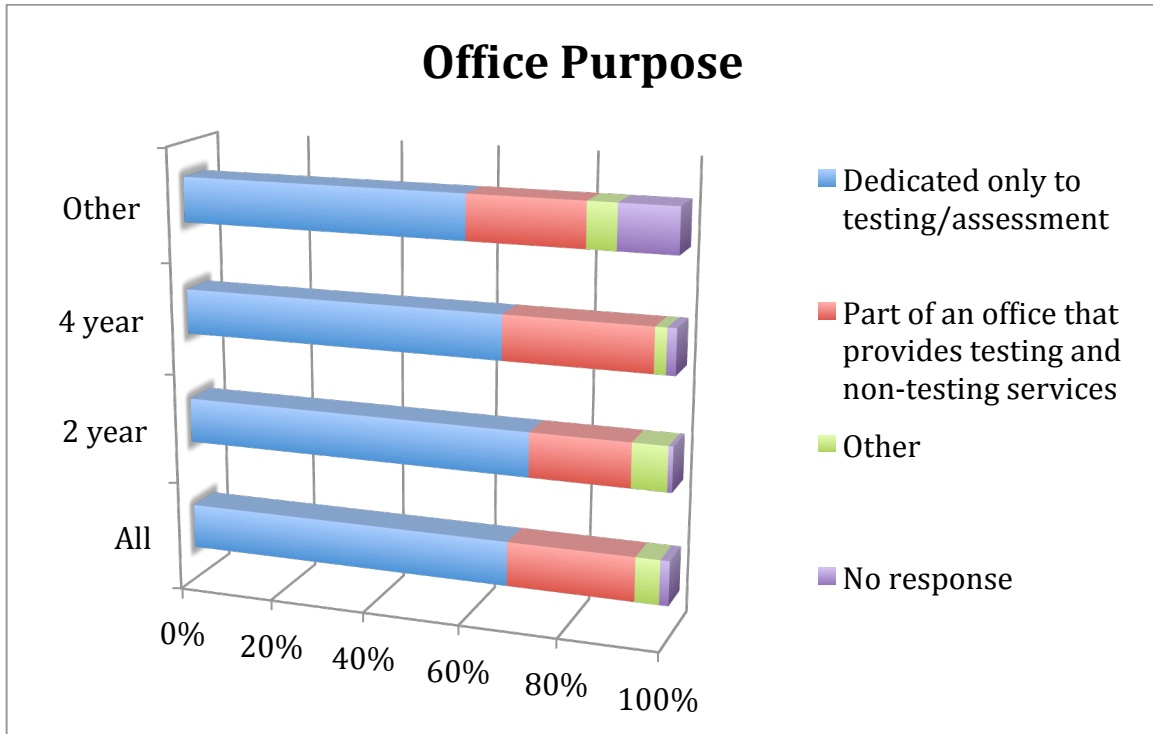
Overall, the average testing office has a total of 18 staff (9 if the median value is used), of whom about half are involved in some way with testing.²

Office Purpose and Services Provided

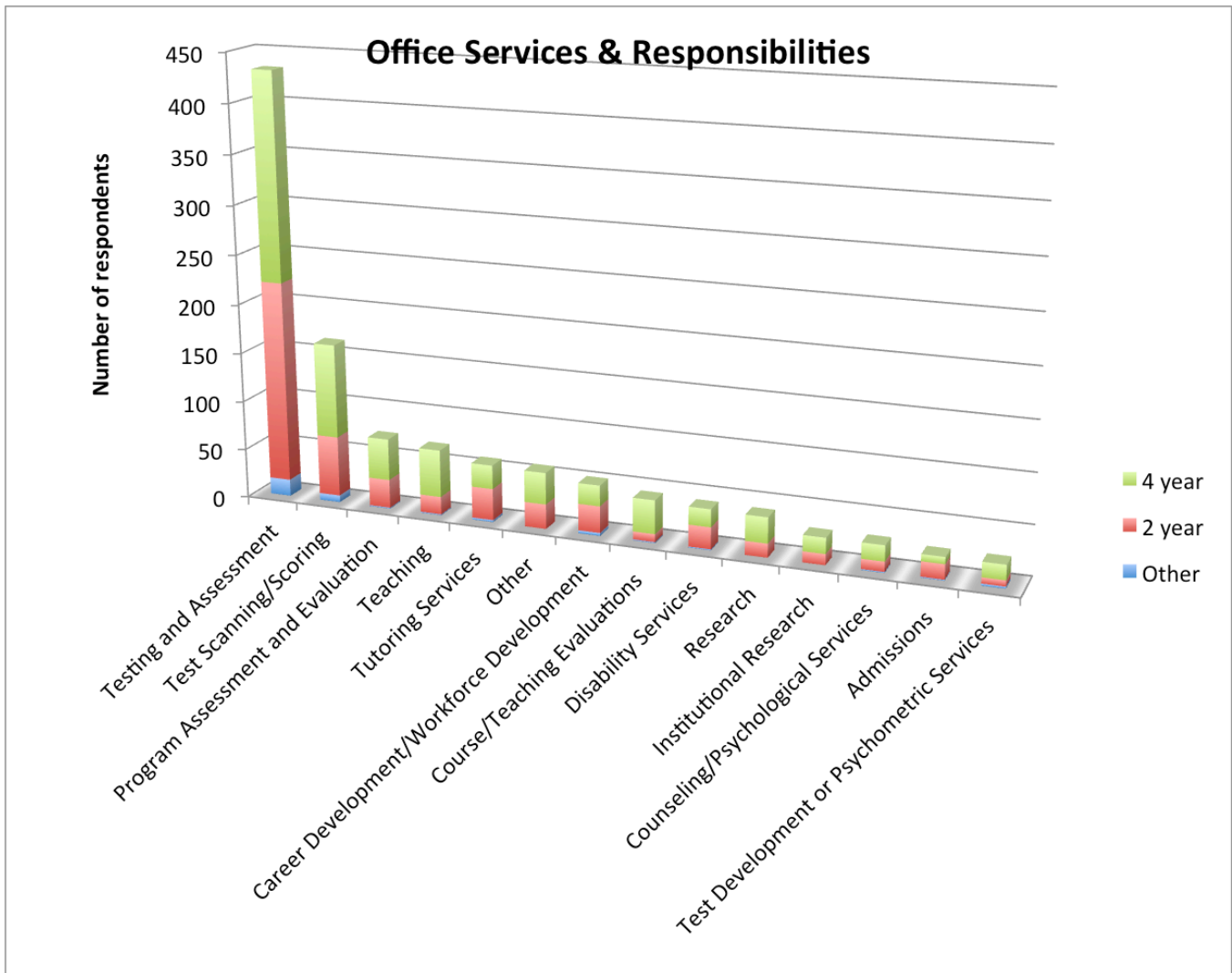
¹ All results have been rounded to two significant figures to correspond with the precision of input values and for ease of display.

² It is important to note that, given the large number of no-response fields in some categories, a number of centers may not employ certain kinds of staff. For the purpose of this analysis, no-response fields have been excluded from the data set

A clear majority of respondents report their offices as devoted solely to testing and assessment, as shown below. Offices at four-year institutions are somewhat more likely to combine testing with other functions (30% of offices, versus 20% for two year schools).



Getting into a more specific breakdown of the services provided by respondents' offices, we see that the most common categories are, predictably, Testing and Assessment and Test Scanning/Scoring.

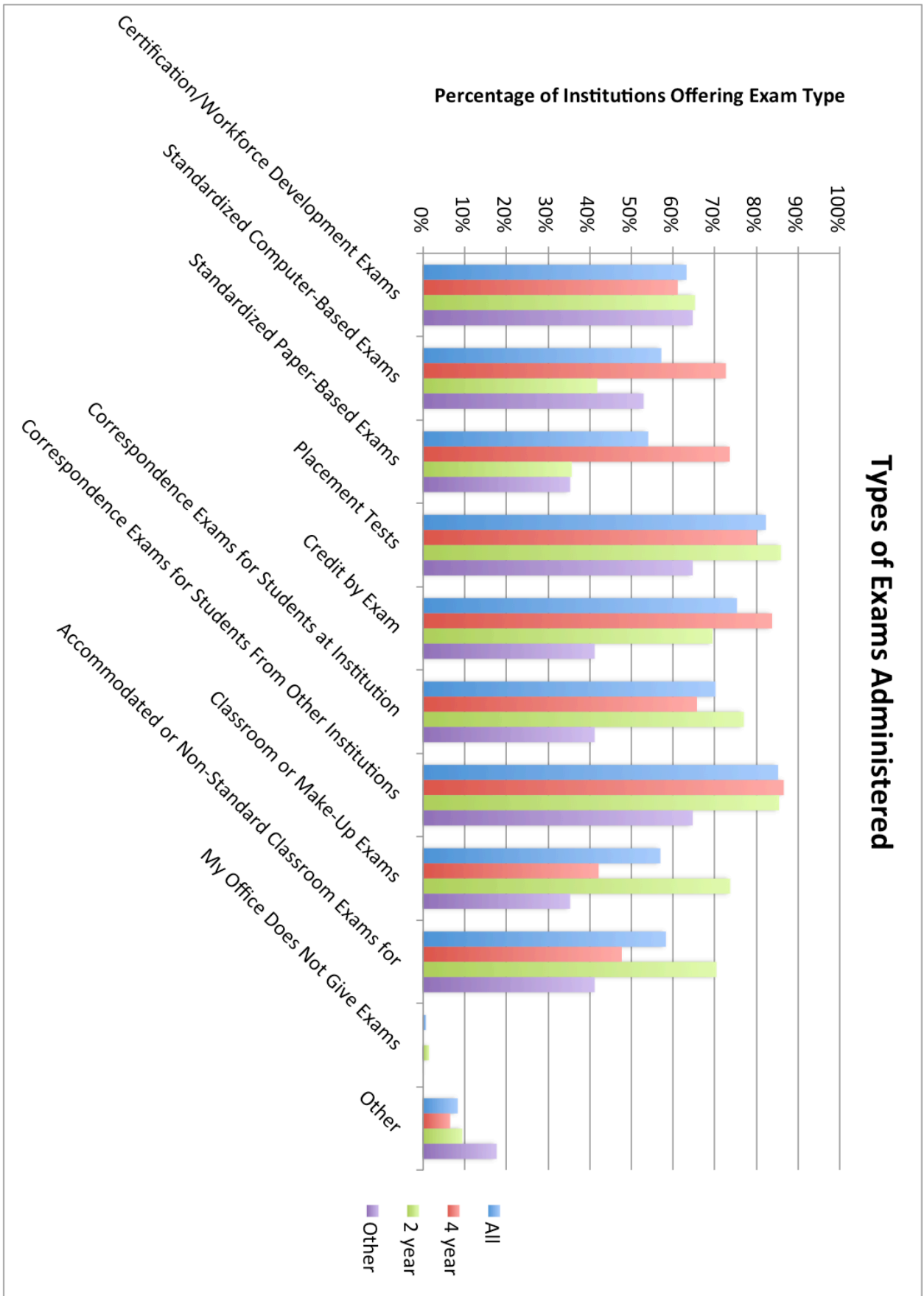


As shown above, offices at four-year institutions are significantly more likely to provide some services, including Teaching, Course/Teaching Evaluations, Test Scoring, Research, and Test Development or Psychometric Services. Two-year institutions, meanwhile, tend to do marginally more Career Development and Tutoring, and significantly more Admissions. Offices at other types of institutions appear to provide fewer services overall, but the sample of this category (17 respondents) is not large enough to be conclusive. No respondent reported that their office was involved with Academic Advising; this category has therefore been omitted from the above graph.

Testing Services and Facilities

While almost all respondents reported that their offices provided some sort of testing services, the types of tests provided vary somewhat from one institution type to another.

Types of Exams Administered



Almost twice as many four-year institutions as two-year give standardized exams (paper- or computer-based). As noted on page 8, this may account for the discrepancy in the revenue-generated proportions of budgets, as these types of tests are more likely to provide cost recovery than internal placement and classroom exams, for instance. Offices at two-year schools, meanwhile, are almost twice as likely as those at four-year institutions to give classroom and accommodated exams. Other exam types listed on this survey are widely offered across the board. Their coverage varies from 61% to 87% of each institutional category, with placement exams and distance education exams for students from other institutions being exceptionally common.

The following table gives some idea of the scale of exams administered, in terms of number of seats, for those respondents who chose to answer this question.

Number of Seats by Institution and Exam Type								
	All institutions		Two year		Four year		Other	
	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max	Mean/ Median	Min/ Max
Computer-based exams	29/23	1.5/184	33/27	3/184	25/16	1.5/150	31/20	8/138
	n=423		n=205		n=206		n=12	
Paper and pencil exams	34/20	1/700	30/22	2/175	40/20	2/700	17/17	1/45
	n=405		n=196		n=195		n=14	
Large-scale standardized paper exams	240/150	1/3000	120/100	1/1000	320/200	3/3000	65/70	23/100
	n=293		n=109		n=176		n=8	

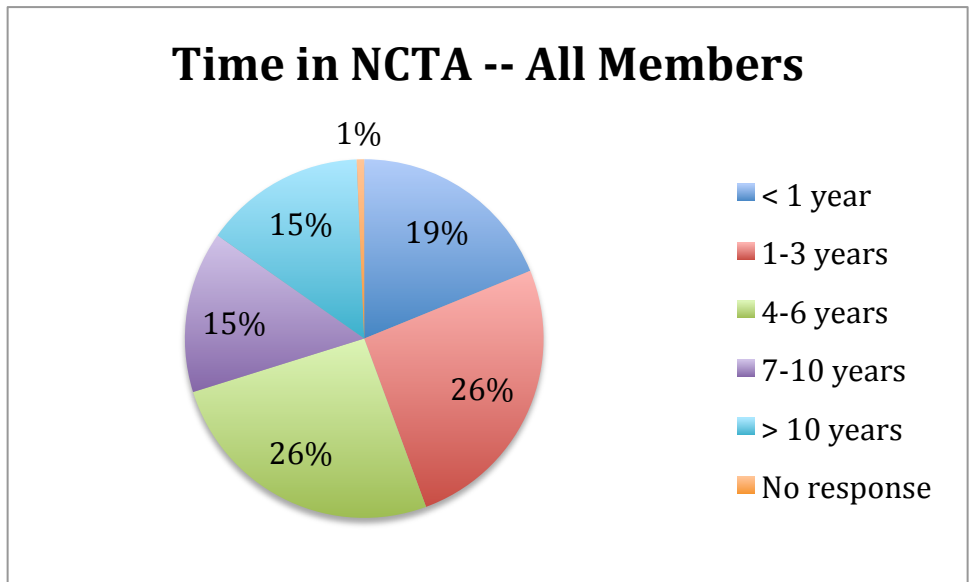
As before, medians have been included to show the degree to which some very large outliers skew the average significantly higher. Predictably, four-year institutions (which tend to be larger overall) have more seats for large-scale standardized paper exams; otherwise, the data is somewhat muddy, especially given a number of problems with the question format as detailed below.

In considering this data, there are several reservations to bear in mind, based on the comments written in by respondents along with their numerical estimates. Firstly, many seem to misinterpret the category “Number of Seats for Paper and Pencil Exams” as referring either to large-scale standardized paper exams, or to average number of paper and pencil tests given per day or per week. Secondly, a number of respondents report using the same work-stations for both computer-based and paper and pencil tests. Finally, not all respondents gave the average number of seats *used* for large-scale exams—some gave the number of seats *available* as “unlimited,” and at least one respondent gave the number of seats *per room*. Future surveys would benefit from more specific questions, including examples of tests in each category and sample answer formats.

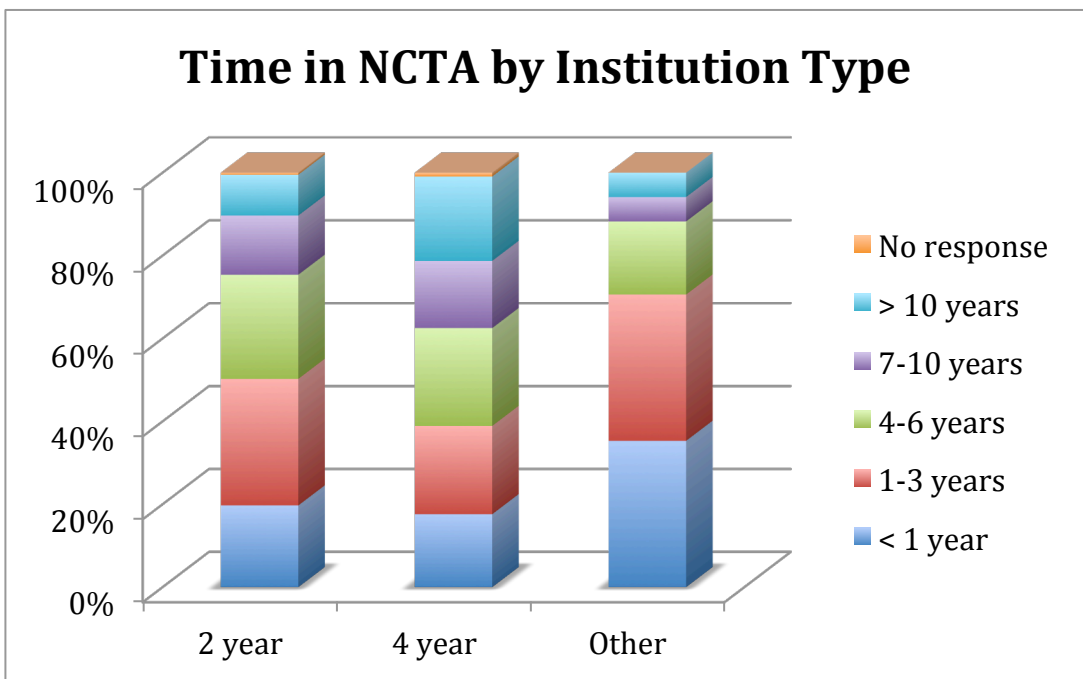
Member Profile

NCTA Membership

The average NCTA member, as profiled by this survey, has been a member for one to six years.

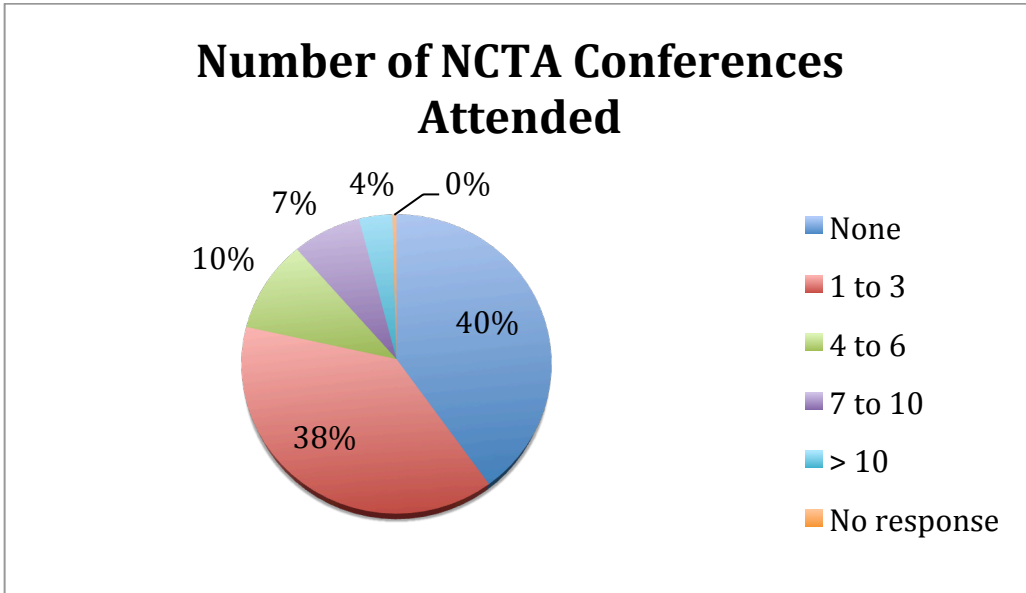


As noted in the analysis of institutional composition by amount of time in NCTA, members from four-year institutions are more likely to have been with NCTA for more than ten years. Those from types other than two- or four-year schools are most likely to have joined in the last year.

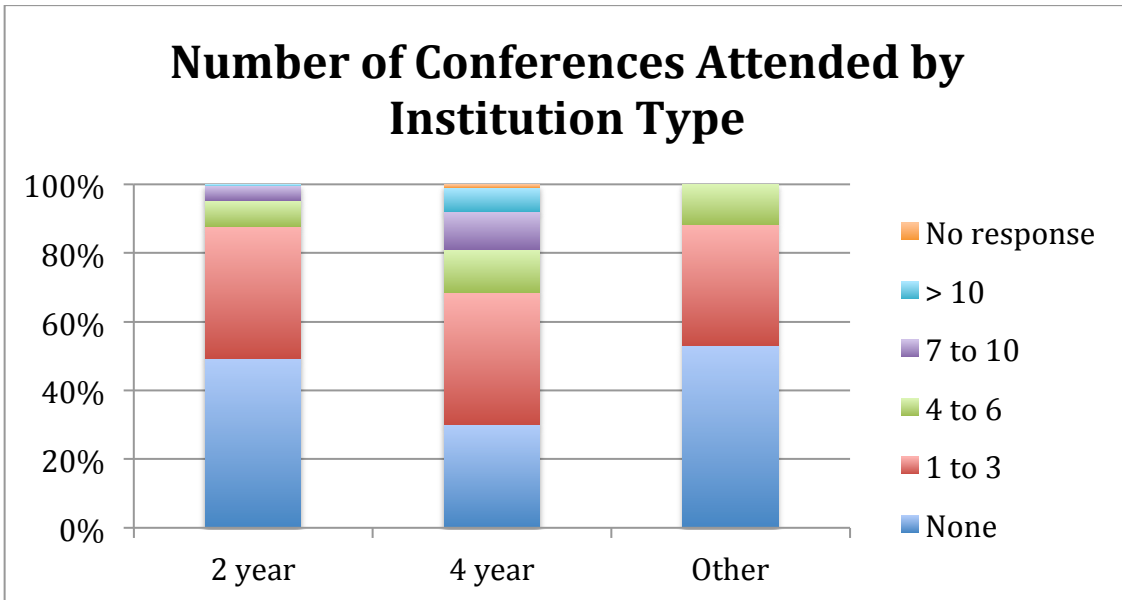


In the

course of their membership, the vast majority of respondents have been to three or fewer conferences, with a sizeable plurality never having attended an NCTA conference.

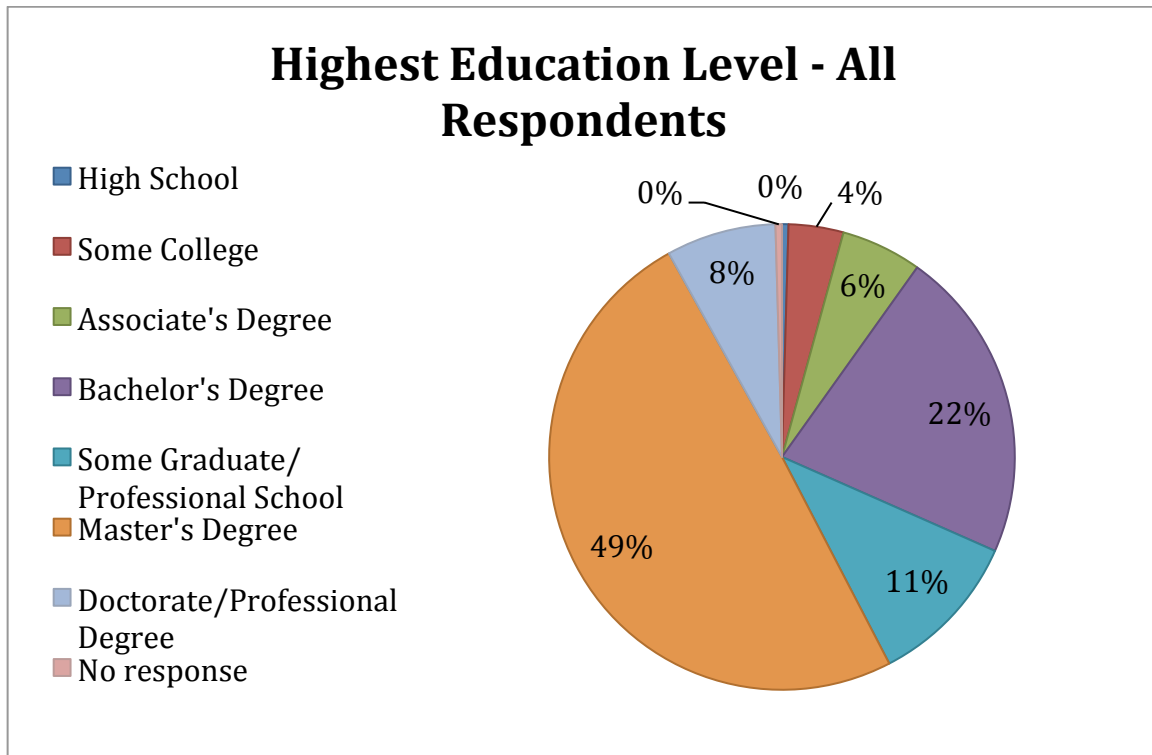


Again, in breaking this down by institution type, some differences emerge. Survey respondents from four-year institutions are the most likely (69%) to have attended at least one conference, a fact likely tied to both longer membership in NCTA and larger office budgets. Members from two-year institutions are significantly less likely to have attended a conference (51%), and less than half of those from other types of institutions (47%) have ever been to one.

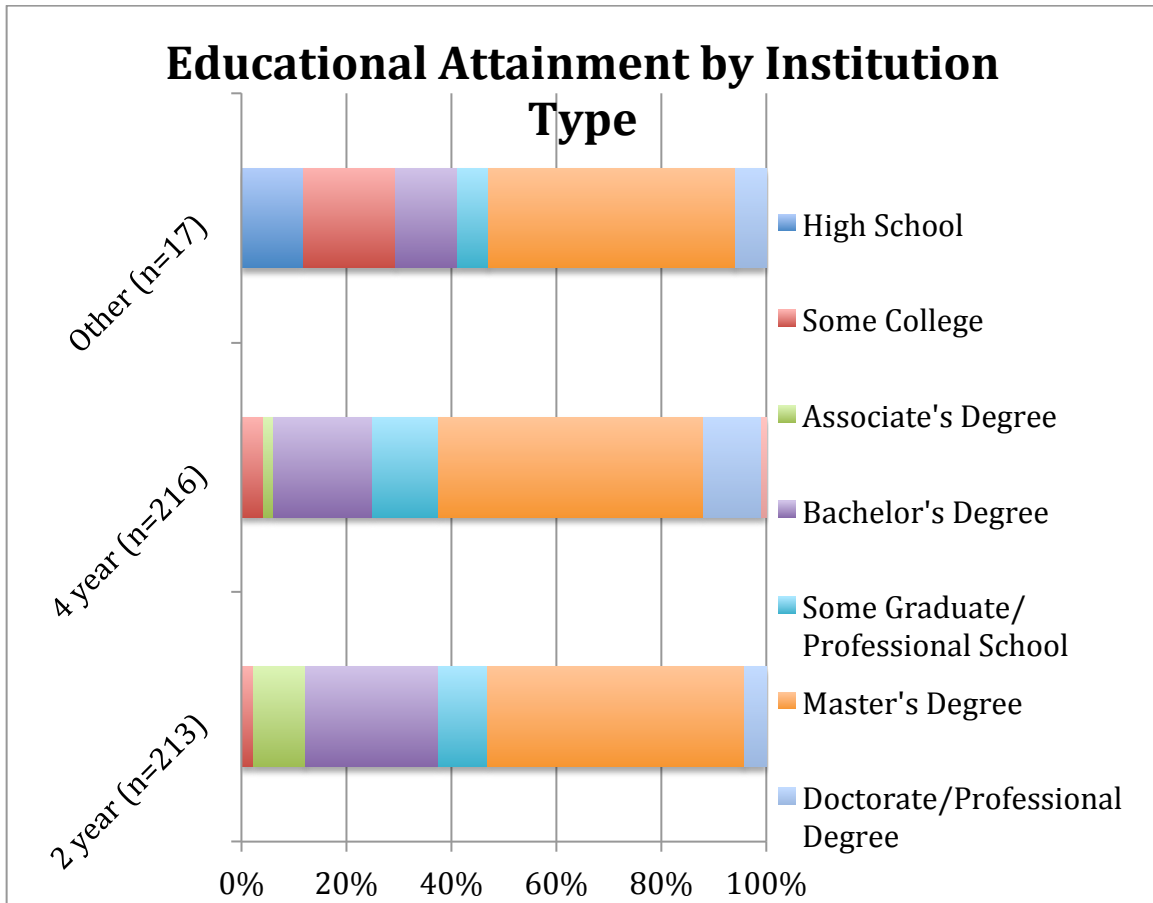


Educational Attainment

The most commonly reported educational level of NCTA members was a Masters degree; half of all survey respondents report this as their highest level of education. Overall, 90% of members report holding at least a Bachelor's Degree; 68% report some level of graduate education.



While this as the most common educational attainment does not vary across institution types, members from four-year schools do appear to have generally higher levels of educational attainment. Only two respondents, both from technical schools (in the “other” category), reported high school as their highest educational achievement.



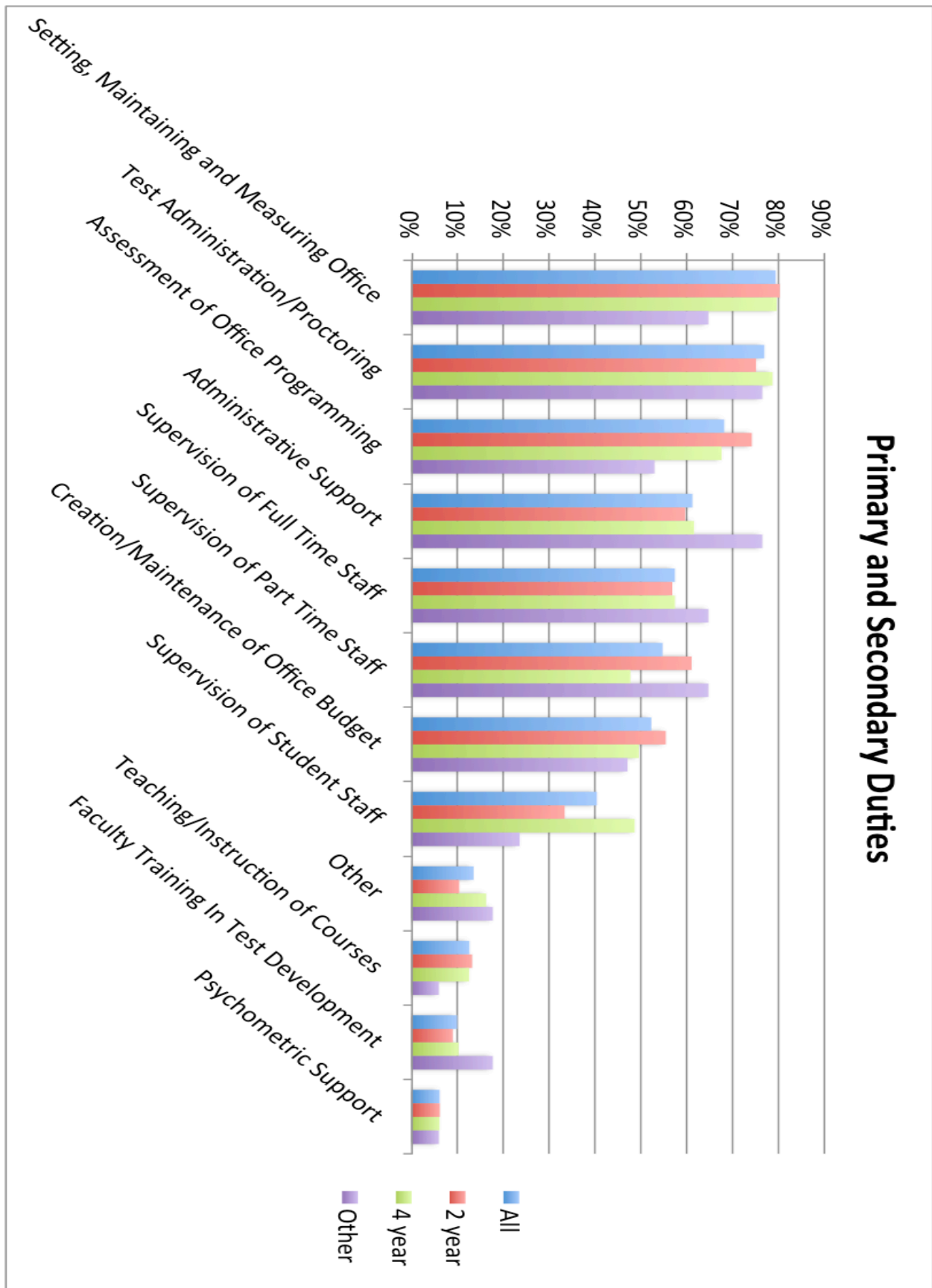
Job Responsibilities

Professionally speaking, NCTA members are responsible for a wide array of tasks. The most common duties (performed by over 50% of members across institutional categories) are:

1. Setting, Maintaining, and Measuring Office Goals/Priorities
2. Test Administration/Proctoring
3. Assessment of Office Programming
4. Administrative Support
5. Supervision of Full-Time Staff

As the following graph shows, while there is some variation as to the prevalence of each task across institution types, few differences are very drastic. The *least* commonly reported were Psychometric Support, Faculty Training in Test Item Creation, Teaching, and Other. The write-in responses for those few who selected this last category were too varied to establish any trends.

Primary and Secondary Duties

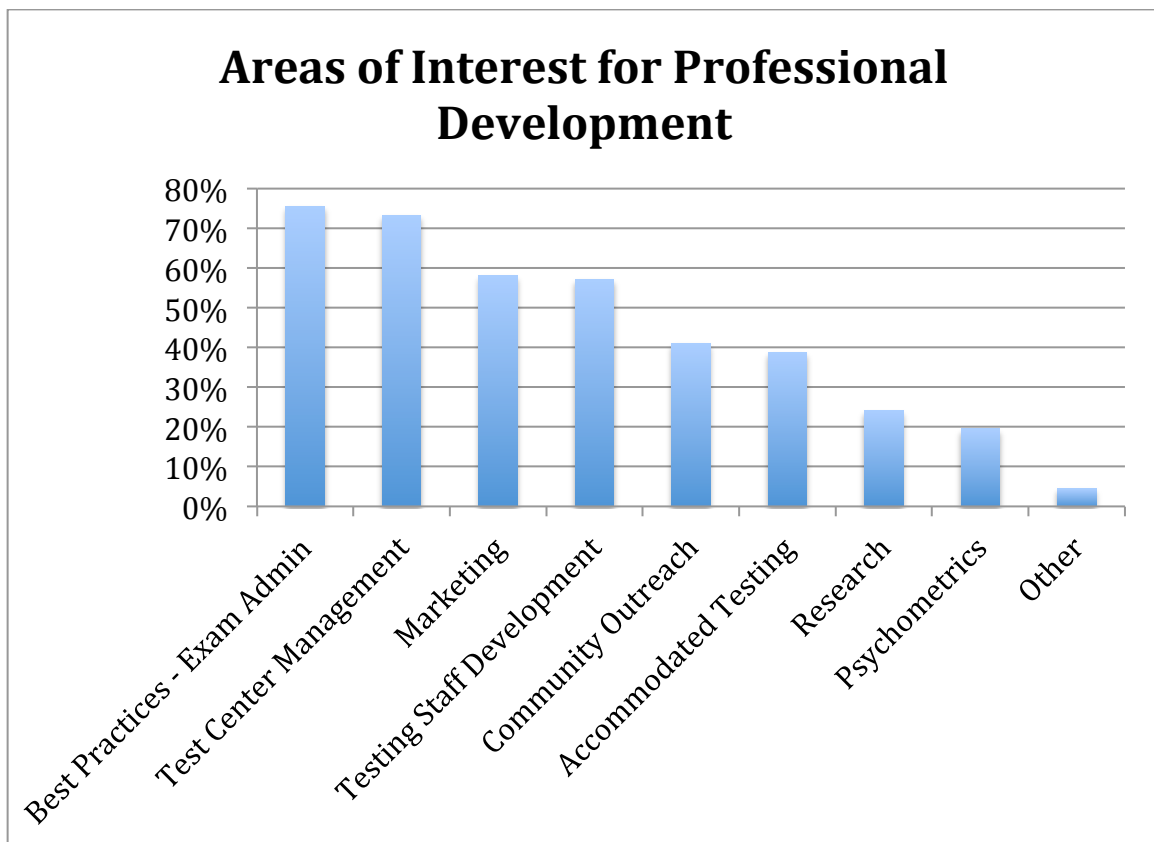


Professional Development Interests

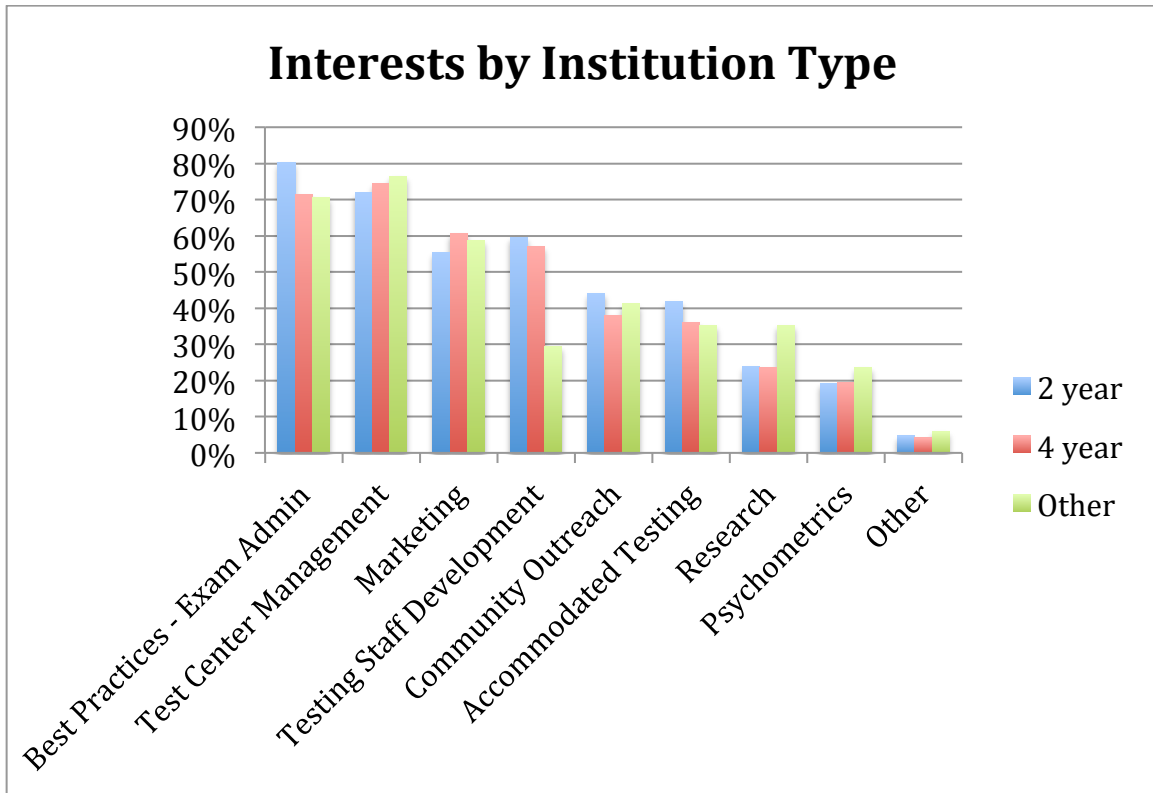
Most areas of professional development proposed for this survey generated at least a moderate level of interest. Overall, they may be ranked as follows:

1. Best Practices in Exam Administration
2. Test Center Management
3. Marketing of Testing Services
4. Testing Staff Hiring, Training, and Development
5. Community Outreach
6. Non-Standard or Accommodated Testing for Students with Disabilities
7. Research
8. Psychometrics
9. Other

As can be seen below, only the last three items evinced relatively low levels of interest overall:



When broken down by institution type, the general order of interests remains the same, although respondents from “other” institutions report much lower interest levels in testing staff development.



Common topics of interest for those who used the write-in field grouped around several themes:

- Testing for distance/online courses
- Use of technology
- Trends in testing & updates to specific tests
- Funding and profit: bringing in profits, adding (for-profit) tests, grant opportunities

These suggestions may be useful as suggestions for future surveys of the membership.

Conclusion

Based on the membership profile, NCTA program development moving forward should assume that a typical member has a Master's degree, has attended zero to three conferences, and is most interested in learning about best practices in exam administration and test center management. Given the large number of members who have never attended a conference, it might be beneficial to focus on providing more opportunities for professional development that do not require travel, such as webinars.

NCTA's even distribution of members across different lengths of membership is indicative of healthy membership growth and retention over time. As the organization continues to grow, membership composition trends suggest a continued shift toward more two-year institutions. It would thus behoove NCTA board members to seek increased representation in leadership for members from two-year schools, and to pay attention to these members' concerns. This could mean, in particular, a shift away from standardized testing as a main focus, along with an increase in accommodated testing.