

Bridging the Financial Resource Gap



For University of
Utah Administration
& Leadership

SCI 3900/HONOR 3990 Student Project Spring '23

Students Need Help Navigating Financial Resources

In a recent survey*, ~60% of students (79/132) agreed that applying for financial aid was difficult because they felt they did not have the time to fill out applications.

From our research and interviews, the University of Utah has adequate resources for students.

We found that survey respondents were not fully aware of the resources available to them to properly navigate a complex financial aid landscape.

What Can Be Done?

After interviewing the Financial Aid and Scholarships Office, potential solutions include:

Annual Financial Aid Orientation – Currently, an overview of financial resources on campus is included the freshman-year orientation. An expansion to a required annual check-in could boost awareness and use of these key resources by students.

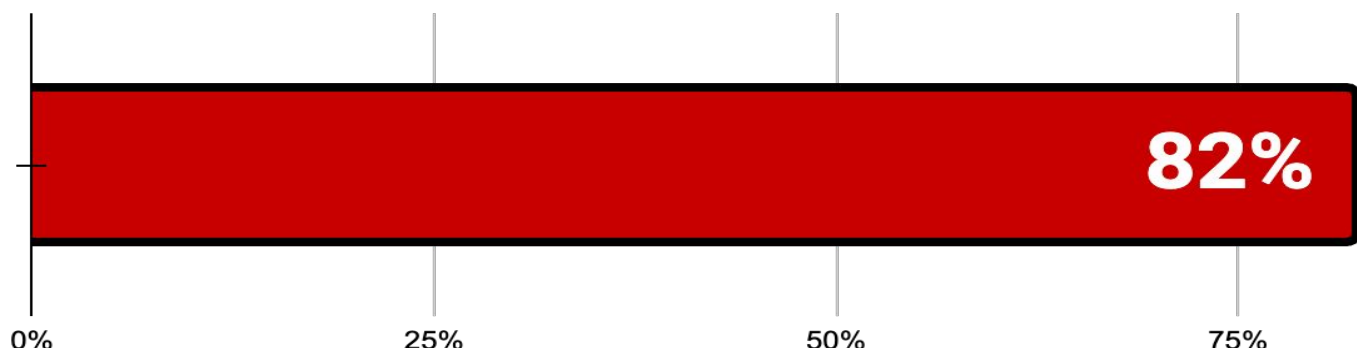
Establish a Team Dedicated to Promoting Resources – This team does not have to be large, but having people actively promoting resources will help create awareness on campus of what resources are available and how to access them.

Investments in Advertising the Financial Aid and Scholarships Office – Both online and its physical location. Currently, its presence is not well-known by the student body, making it difficult for many of them to seek help.

* Anonymous survey conducted as part of this SCI 3900/HONOR 3990 project. Details and results at the end of this document

Students Need Help Finding Scholarship Opportunities

In a recent survey*, more than 82% of students (109/132) were not satisfied with the ease-of-use of the scholarship website. They also struggled to find scholarships applicable to them.

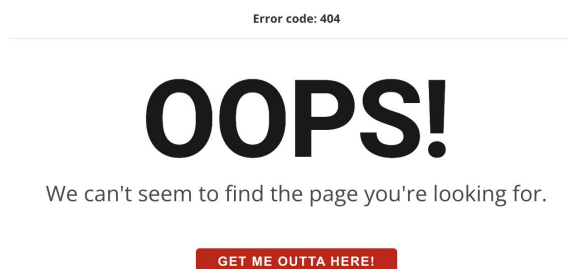


What Can Be Done?

Search Filter Update – The filtering system for scholarships gives many options to filter by, yet it is difficult to apply the filters. Improved filtering functionality would make searching for relevant scholarships much easier.

Include need based Scholarships – On the scholarship website, the link to need based scholarships is broken. This information would be useful.

Actual Screenshot



Departmental Resources – Student often don't think of scholarships at the college and department levels. These should be advertised more broadly -- an option being during lectures, or by providing easy-to-post links for Canvas sites.

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Students Struggle to Connect With Professors

In a recent survey*, ~62% of students (82/132) agreed or **STRONGLY agreed** that applying for financial aid was difficult because they felt they did not know their professors well enough to ask for letters of recommendations.

We found that surveyed students perceive professors as unapproachable.

What Needs To Be Done?

Non Overlapping Times – Many students work or have overlapping classes making it difficult for them to find times that correspond to office hours for professors. Varying times and increasing flexibility with online options of office hours will help students be able to visit them.

Perception of Competition – Large student to faculty ratios result in students spending more time waiting for their turn to talk to faculty resulting in higher attrition. A centralized and updated webpage of all office hours of professors may help students find alternative faculty to talk to or, a centralized scheduling system for students to arrange times to meet with faculty.

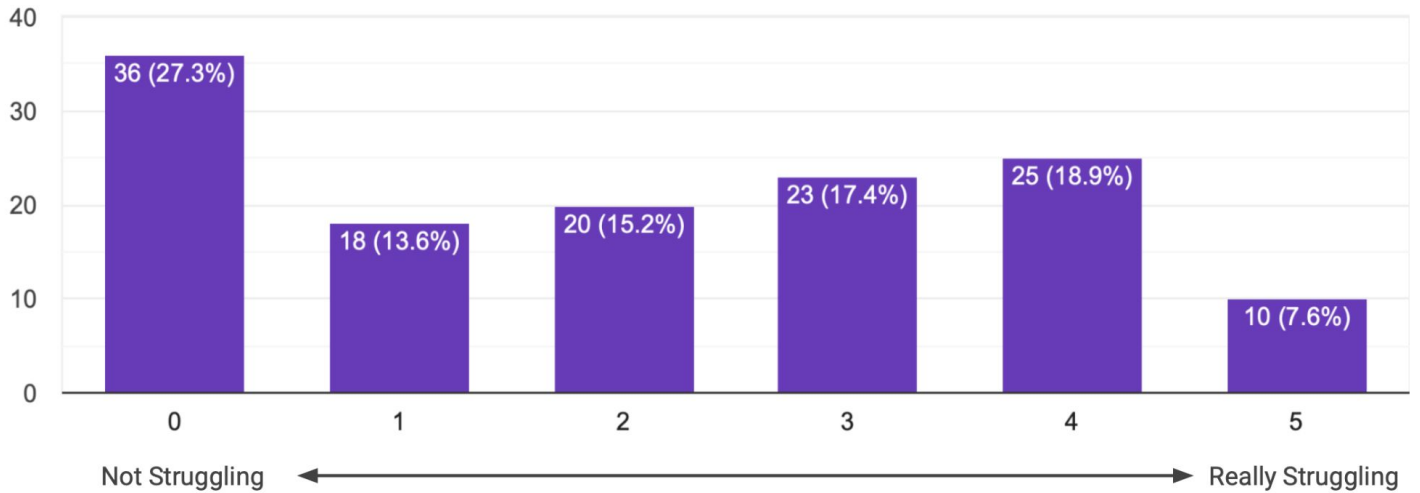
Unanimously, students want the process of talking to faculty to be easier and more streamlined.

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Survey Results

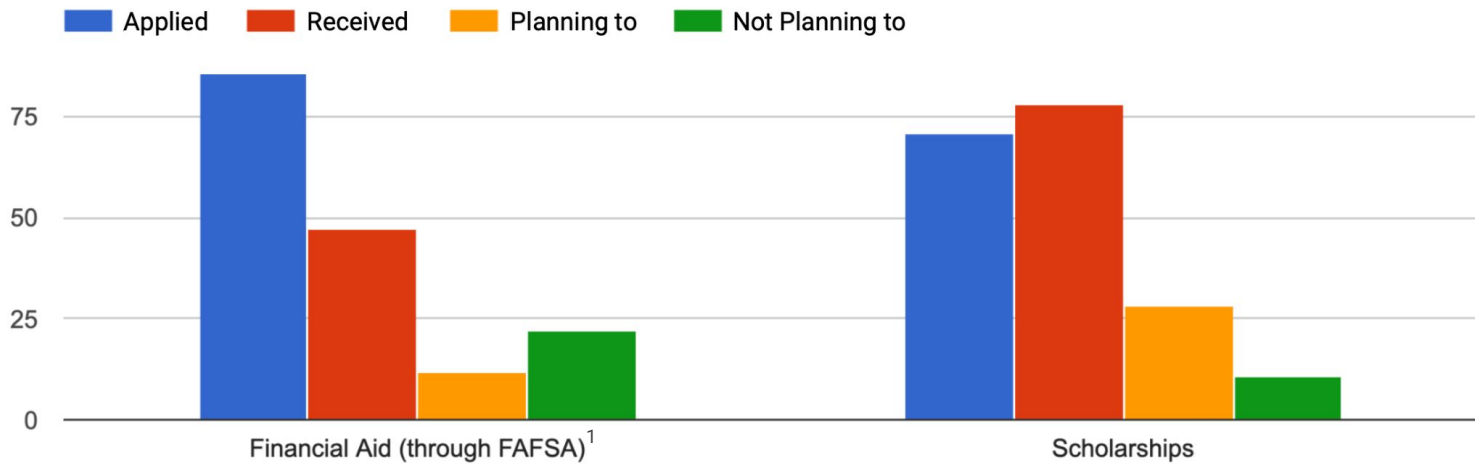
How much are you struggling financially to pay for school?

132 responses



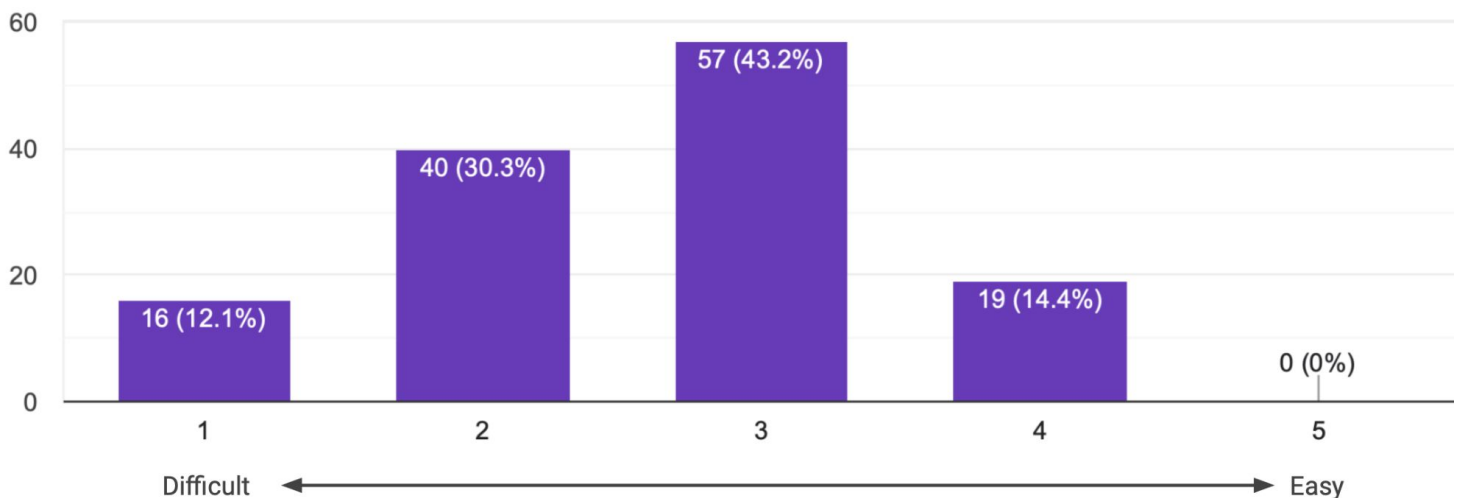
What types of financial aid did you pursue?

132 responses



How would you rate the process of applying to aid?

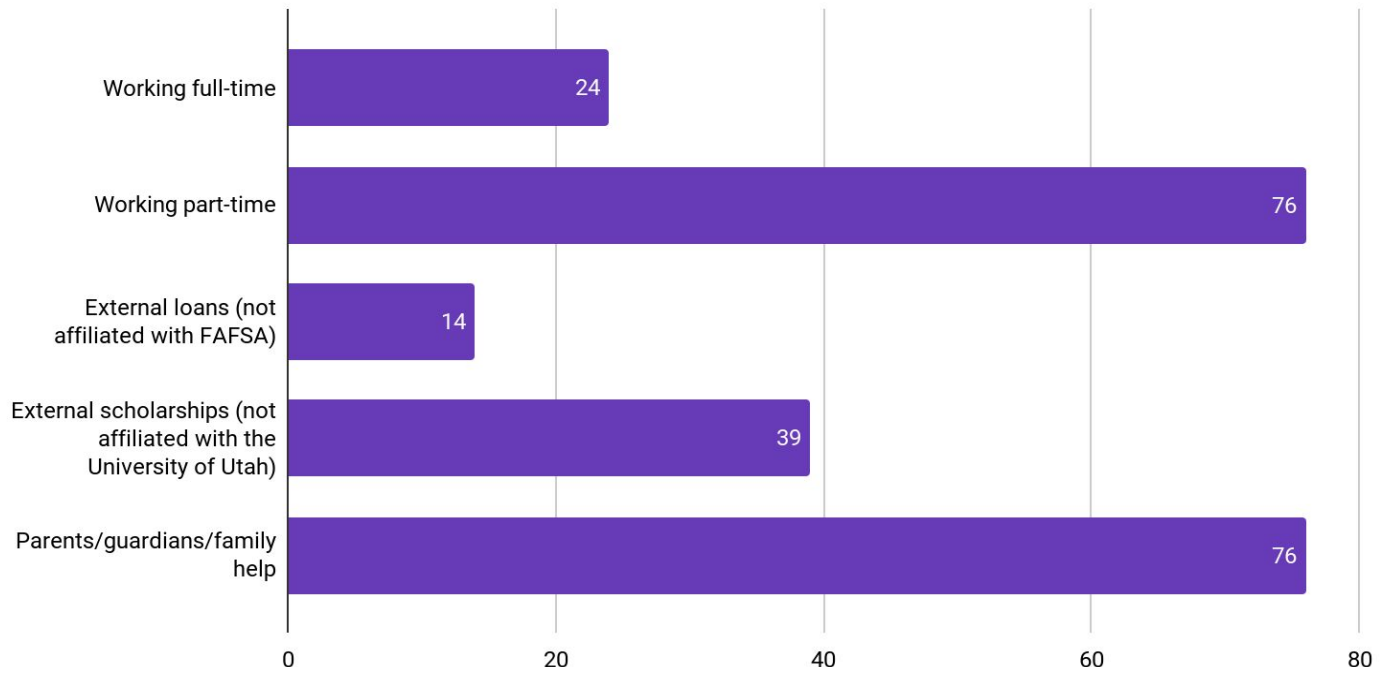
132 responses



Survey Results

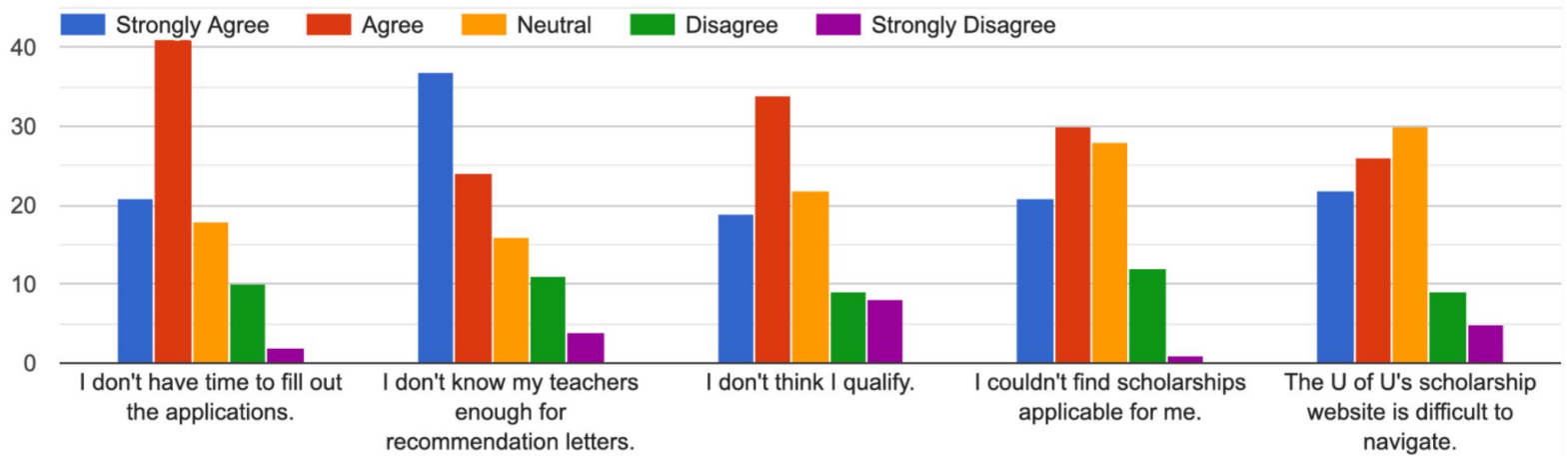
What other ways (besides FAFSA and scholarships) are you paying for college?

132 Responses



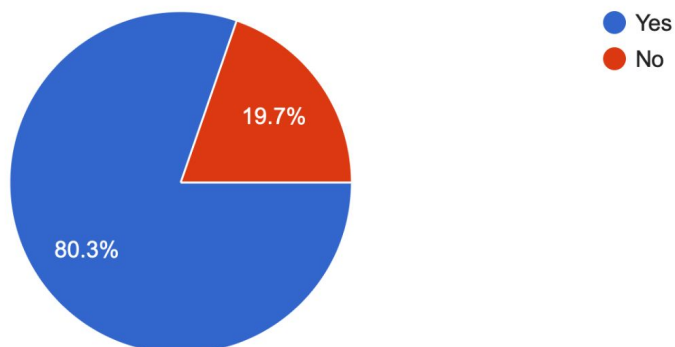
What made applying for financial aid difficult?

132 responses



Is your major in the College of Science or the College of Engineering?

132 responses



1. Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the form you need to fill out to get any financial aid from the federal government