

Skills to Succeed: A Questionnaire Developed to Measure Self-Advocacy Skills Before and After Intervention in University Students

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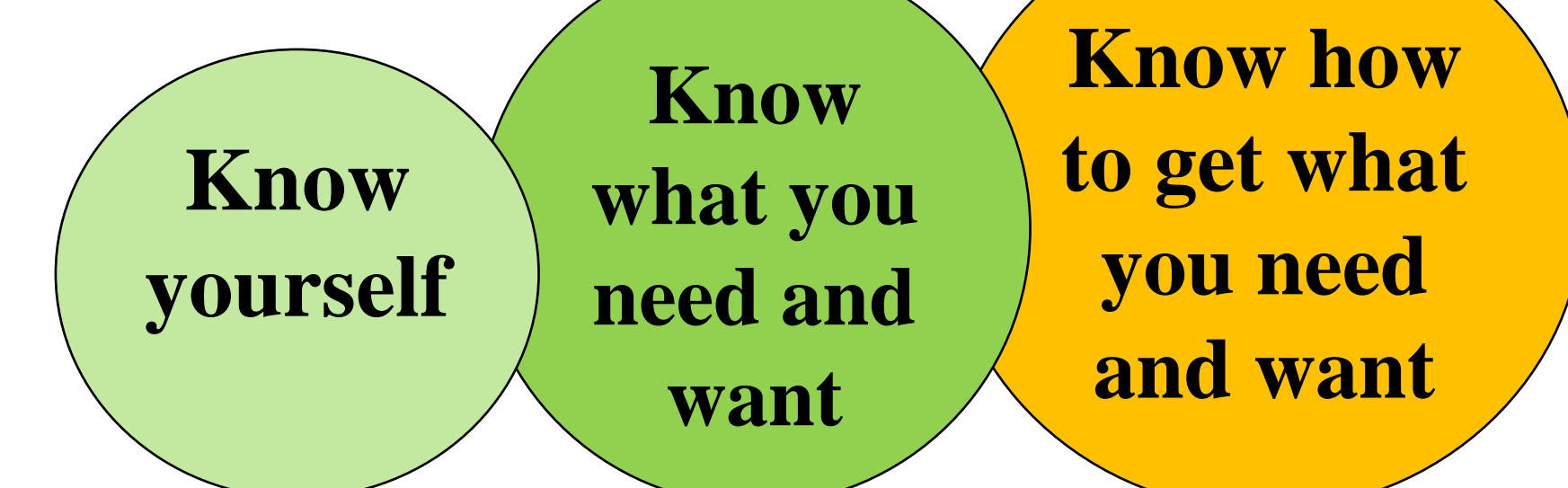
PURPOSE

- ▶ The first purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a self-advocacy (SA) questionnaire given to sophomore students enrolled in the Key Plus Learning Community at Colorado State University (CSU).
- ▶ The second purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of an SA intervention delivered to these students.

INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Enrollment in post-secondary education by students who are racial/ethnic minorities, the first-generation to attend college, and have disabilities has increased^{2,3}, yet these students continue to be retained at lower rates than their peers^{4,5}.
- ▶ Non-academic skills such as goal setting, self-confidence, and social support are a critical piece of student success⁶. Many of these skills can be summarized as part of student SA.
- ▶ Previous SA interventions involving students with disabilities and students of racial minorities indicate positive change after intervention^{7,8,9}.
- ▶ There currently are no instruments to measure the SA skills of students in post-secondary education. Developing a tool will provide researchers and university personnel with a better ability to anticipate students who may have difficulty with persistence in education.

SELF-ADVOCACY:



RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are the questions developed for the student questionnaire sensitive to change in students' perceived level of SA?
- 2) Are there students representing diverse groups and do they respond differently to SA questions?

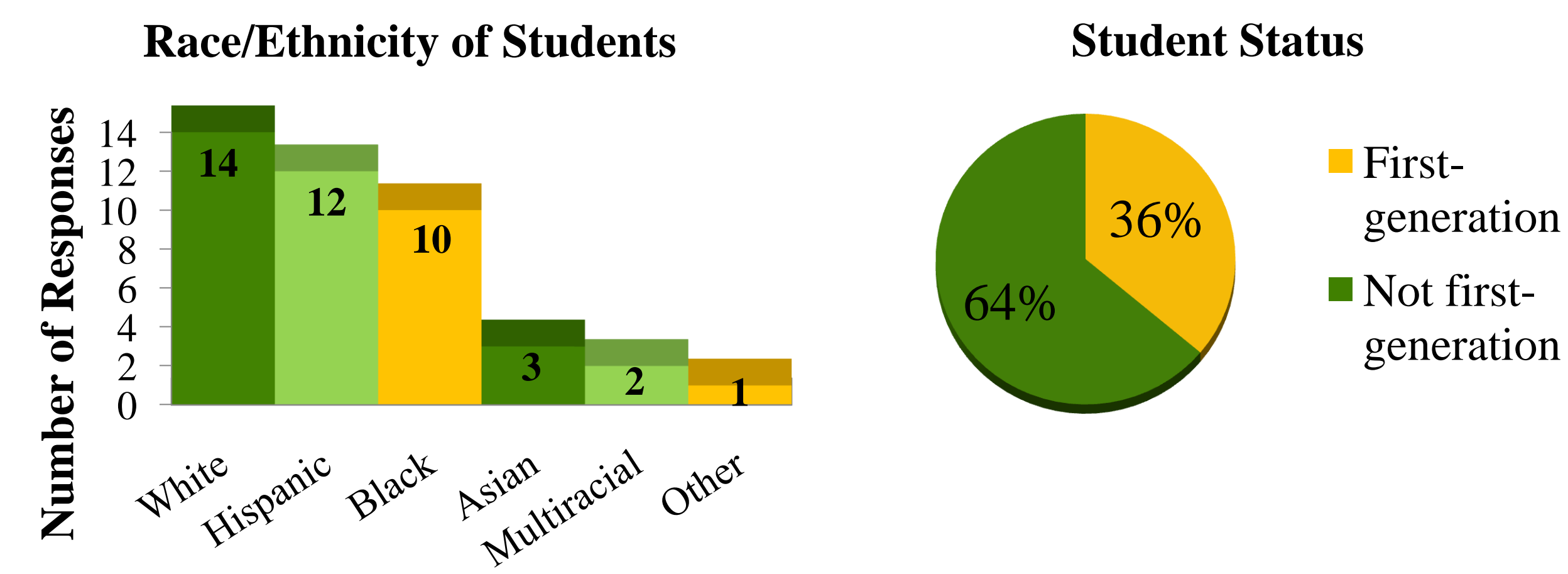
MATERIALS

QUESTIONNAIRE: Student pre- and post- SA questionnaires were developed by the ACCESS research team. Both questionnaires contained a demographics section and 32 Likert scale question. Of the 32 Likert questions 30 had an 11 point scale with 1 being “totally false” and 10 being “totally true.” The pre-questionnaire had one open-ended question while the post-questionnaire had seven.

INTERVENTION: ACCESS project team members instructed five Key Plus Learning Community staff in activities and methods to promote student SA skills. The staff members facilitated SA development activities during three student community meetings.

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS: A convenience sample of 36 traditionally aged, sophomore students who were participants in the Key Plus Learning Community at CSU was obtained during fall semester 2009. Female students represented 66.7% ($N = 24$) of the participants. No students reported a disability on the pre-questionnaire, but two reported (6.3%) on the post-questionnaire.



PROCEDURE: The pre-questionnaire was completed before the first week of school. All students read an informed consent form approved by the IRB, and were given a monetary compensation of \$5 cash.

▶ Questionnaires were reviewed by ACCESS project team members, and recommendations were given to Key Plus Learning Community to tailor the SA intervention to target areas of lower skills performance reported by students.

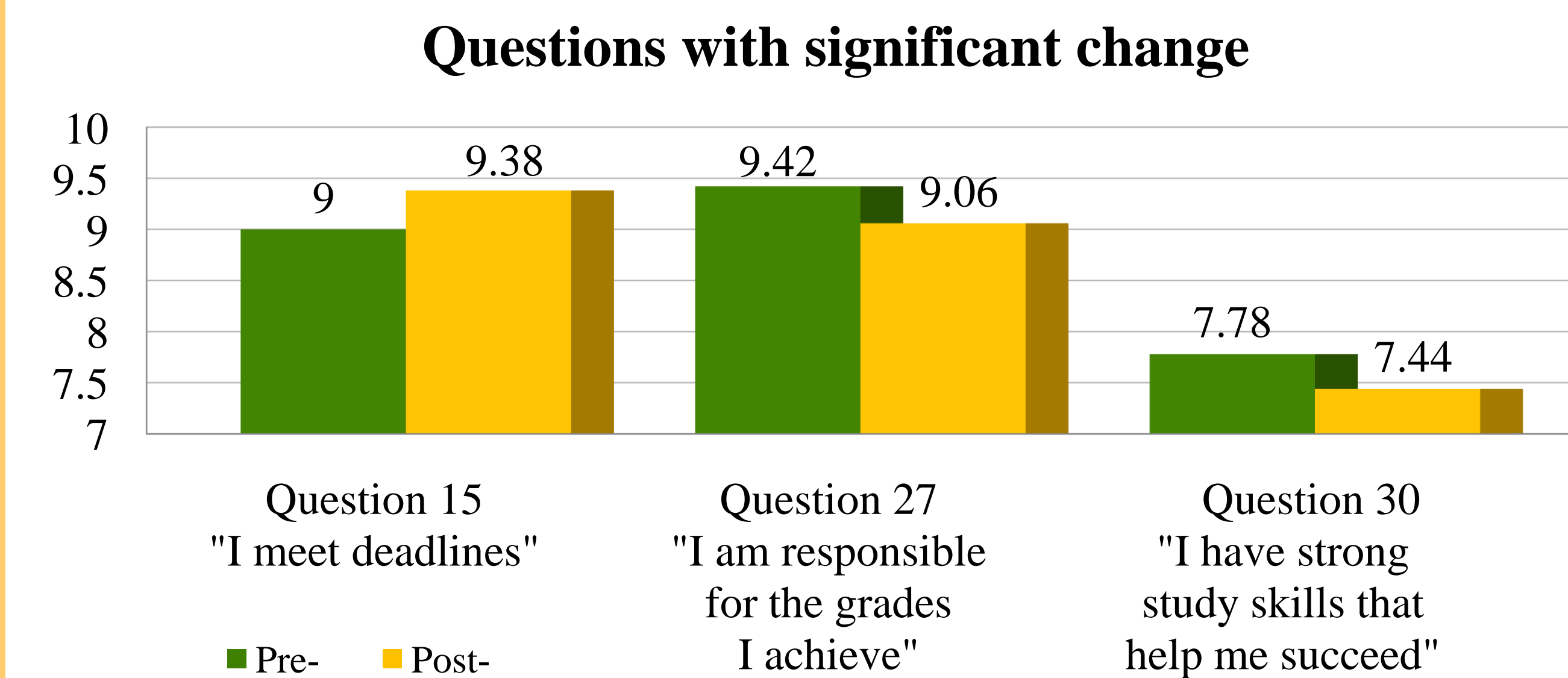
▶ At the end of fall semester, 32 students completed a post-questionnaire with additional open-ended questions regarding their self-advocacy experiences. Again, students received \$5 compensation.

DATA ANALYSIS: Student quantitative and qualitative responses were entered into the data analysis programs SPSS 18.0 and ATLAS.ti 6.0 respectively. Descriptive statistics and paired t -tests were used to answer question one. Independent samples t -tests and qualitative analysis was used to answer question two. Family wise $\alpha = .05$.

RESULTS

QUESTION 1:

- ▶ A question was considered to be free from ceiling effect if it did not significantly violate skewness and if it had an upper bound limit ($M + 1SD$) of equal to or less than 9.75 out of 10. On the pre-questionnaire, 15 out of 30 questions met the criteria to be free from ceiling effect, and on the post-questionnaire, 17 out of 30 questions met the same criteria.
- ▶ Paired t -test indicated significant change following intervention in three questions. Question 15 had positive change ($t(31) = 2.63, p = .013, d = 0.47$), and questions 27 ($t(31) = -2.68, p = .012, d = -0.37$) and 30 ($t(31) = -2.24, p = .032, d = 0.30$) had negative change.

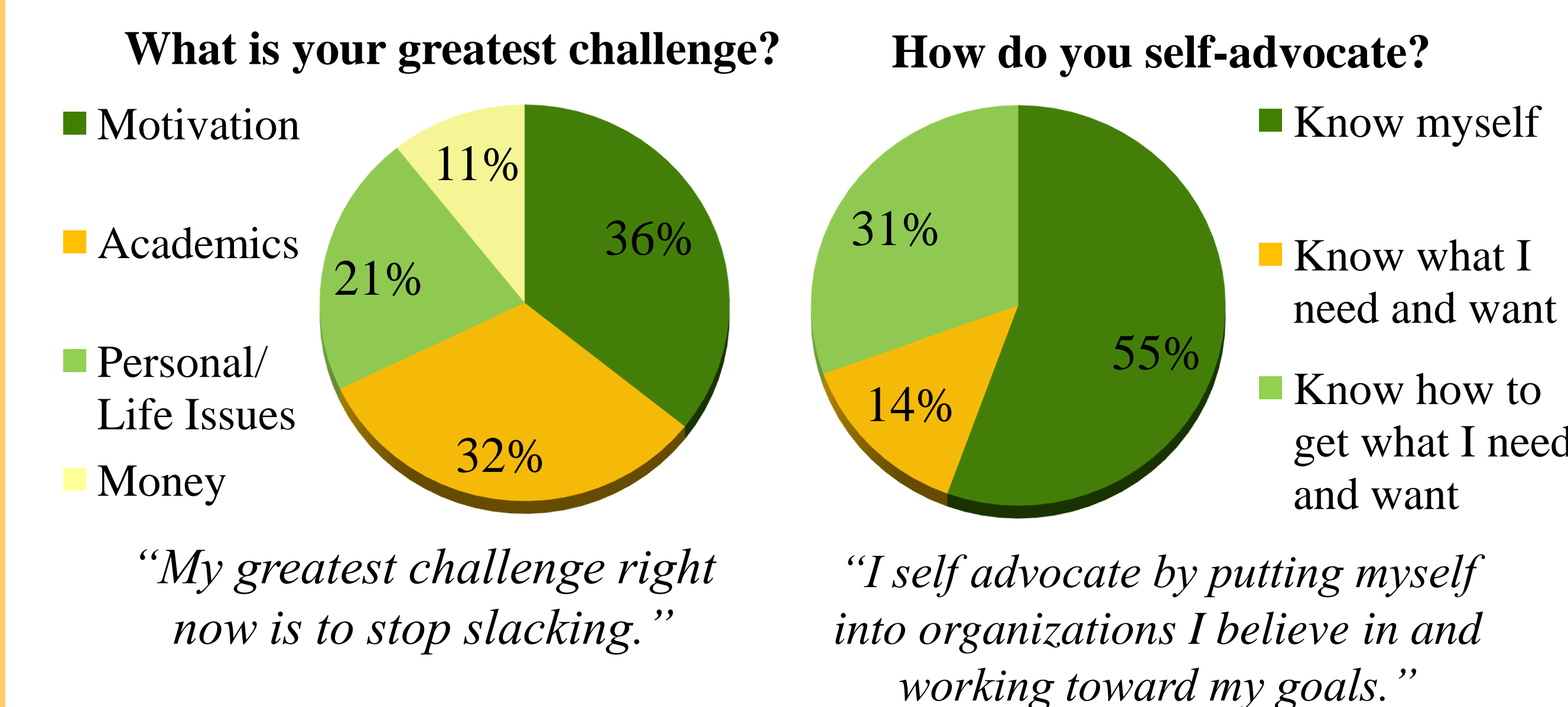


QUESTION 2:

Independent t-tests significant by race							
Statement	Race	N	M	SD	t	df	p
"I have a meaningful vision for my future"	Asian	3	6.67	1.53	-2.199	34	.035
	Non Asian	33	8.21	1.14			
	Hispanic	12	8.75	.87			
"I am responsible for the grades I achieve"	Non Hispanic	24	7.75	1.26	3.758 ^a	32.8 ^a	.001
	Hispanic	12	9.83	.39			
"I know how to work through a difficult time in my personal life"	Non Hispanic	24	9.21	1.22	2.295 ^a	30.7 ^a	.029
	Hispanic	12	9.83	.39			

^a The t and df were adjusted due to unequal variances

QUALITATIVE DATA THEMES:



CONCLUSION

- ▶ Literature supports that sophomore students often report a decrease in self-efficacy related to their academic experience as they measure their ability or chance for academic success¹⁰.
- ▶ The motivation to attend college is different from the motivation to persist in college¹⁰. Sophomore students may be experiencing a conflict between the motivation that brought them to CSU and the motivation to continue through challenges.
- ▶ When students were asked to describe how they self-advocate, the majority of students (55%) chose a skill relating to “knowing themselves”. Though this is an important part of SA, future intervention should foster the development of the next two levels of SA development.
- ▶ Due to the exploratory nature of this study Bonferroni's correction was not made, and results need to be interpreted with caution.
- ▶ Limitations include having a small sample size and no control group.

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