

# **NC Study Group Financial Aid Feedback**

# Survey and Feedback Context

- Survey was sent to the financial aid director (or equivalent role) at:
  - 58 community colleges
  - 16 universities
- 52 survey respondents
  - 40 from North Carolina Community Colleges (68% response rate)
  - 12 from University of North Carolina System (75% response rate)

# Financial Aid Survey Feedback: Key Takeaways

## **Awareness and Communication**

- Respondents agree that the aid programs are overly-complex and difficult for students and families to understand. Respondents were also unclear about where students might be able to find program information.
- Many respondents suggested simplifying some program components (e.g., ELS pro-rating) and clarifying others (e.g., CCG Full-time Plus) to help communicating with students about the programs less difficult.

## **Transparency:**

- Generally, respondents do not feel they are able to tell students how much aid they will receive from a particular program.
- Respondents offered suggestions to help them better determine how much aid a student will receive, including simplifying the program methodologies and awarding funds earlier so institutions can begin their packaging earlier.

## **Student Success:**

- There is general uncertainty regarding CCG, UNC NBG, and ELS's role in promoting student success (improving retention and graduation rates).
- Many community college respondents suggested helping students understand the programs (e.g., clarifying Full-time Plus) as a way to improve graduation rates.

## **Adult Learners**

- There seems to be appetite from respondents, both from the community colleges and UNC, to serve more adult students through the aid programs.
- Respondents from community colleges indicated this as an area for improvement specifically for CCG and ELS specifically, but respondents across both sectors indicated this generally for the state's need-based aid programs.

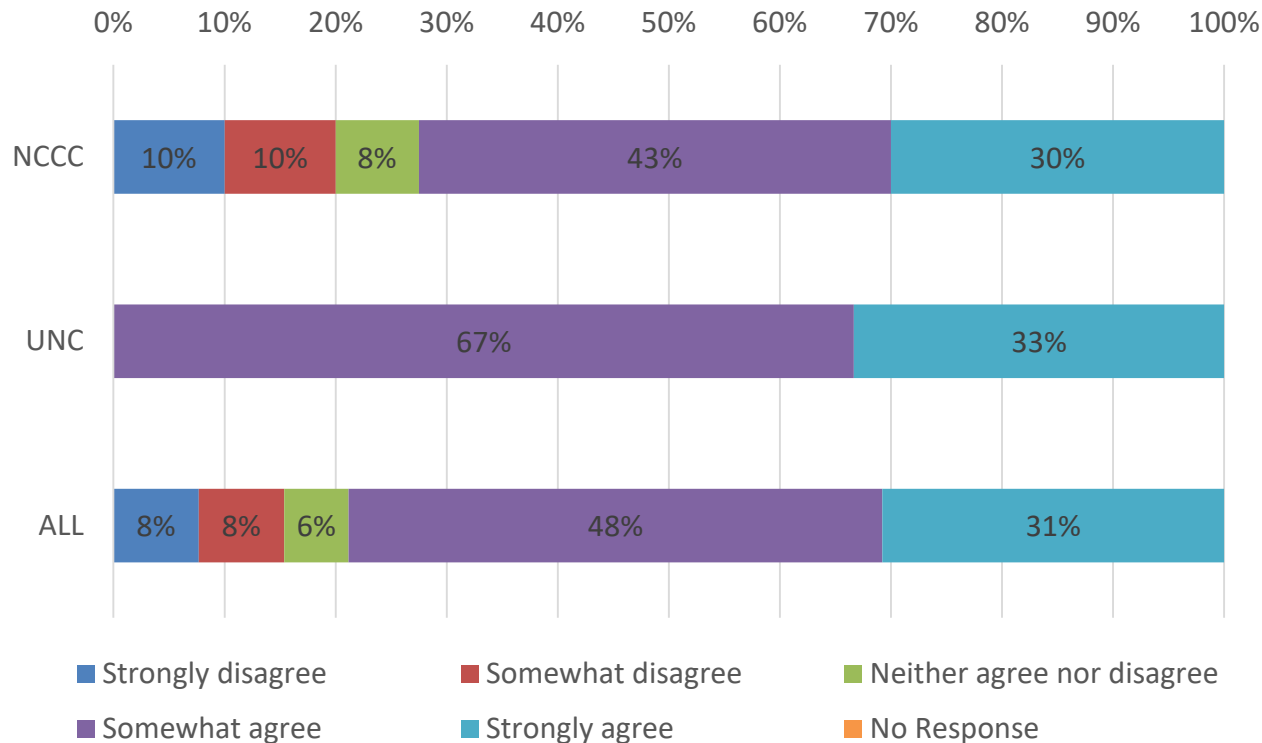
# General State Aid Feedback

# Overall, respondents agree that North Carolina's aid program are meeting a distinct need.

## Key Points:

- Nearly 80 percent of respondents feel aid programs fills a distinct need.
- Community college respondents were more likely to disagree (20% strongly or somewhat disagreed) than respondents from UNC (100% somewhat agree or strongly agree) that each of the state's aid programs fulfills a distinct need.

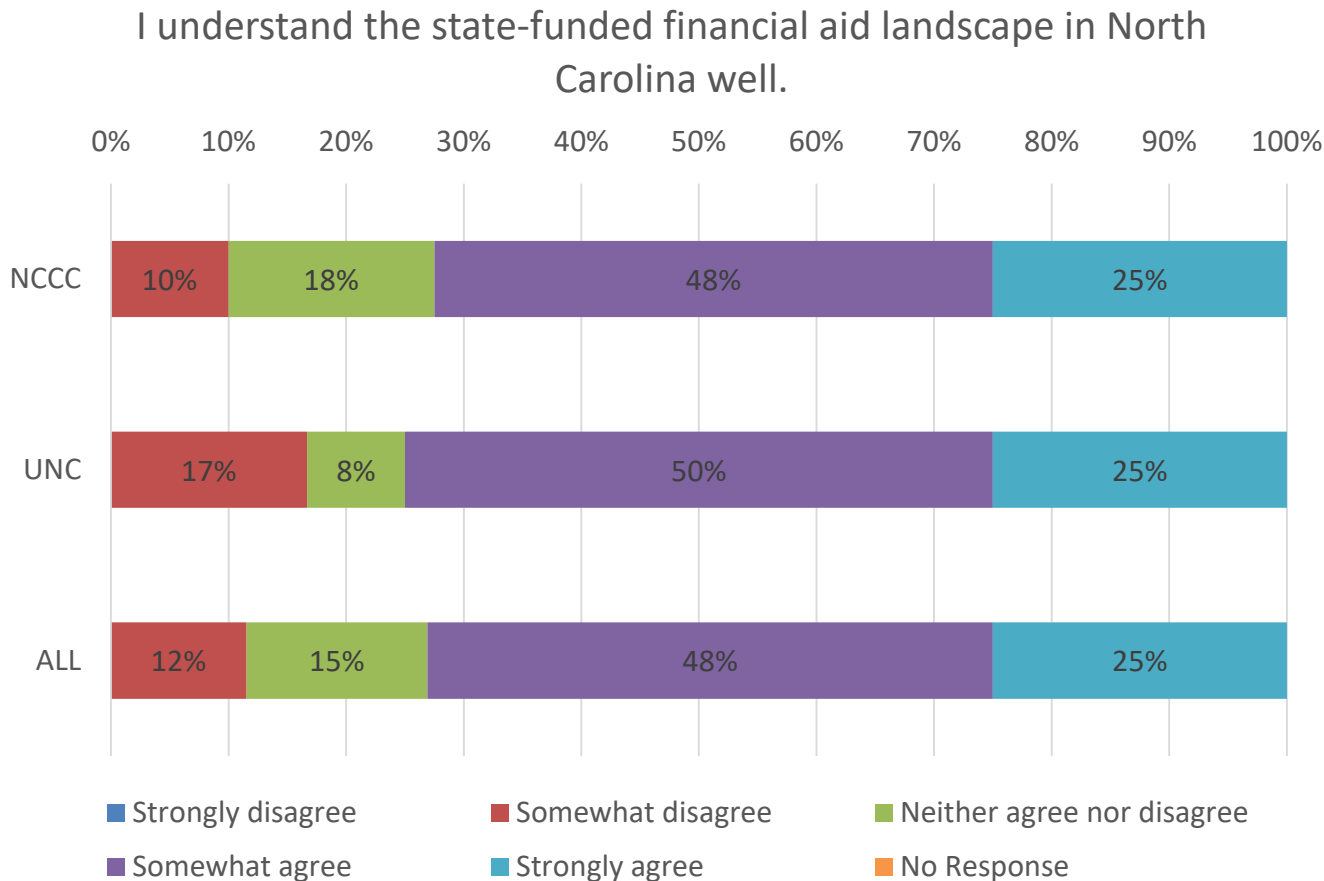
Each of North Carolina's scholarship/ grant program fulfills a distinct need.



# Respondents also agreed that they have an understanding of the state financial aid landscape.

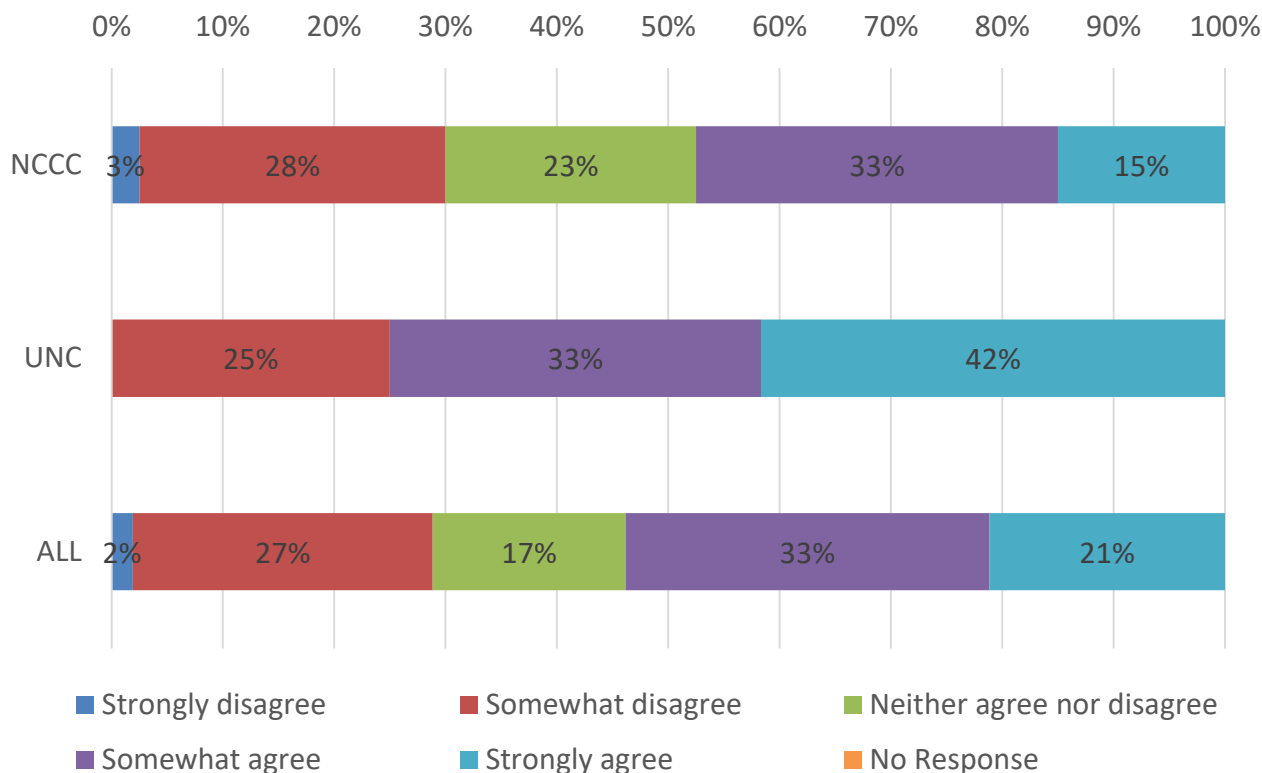
## Key Points:

- Nearly 75 percent of respondents feel they understood the state financial aid landscape.
- These numbers were consistent across both community college and UNC respondents.



# However, despite that understanding, respondents tend to agree that the state-funded aid programs are overly-complex.

North Carolina's state-funded scholarship/ grant programs are overly complex.

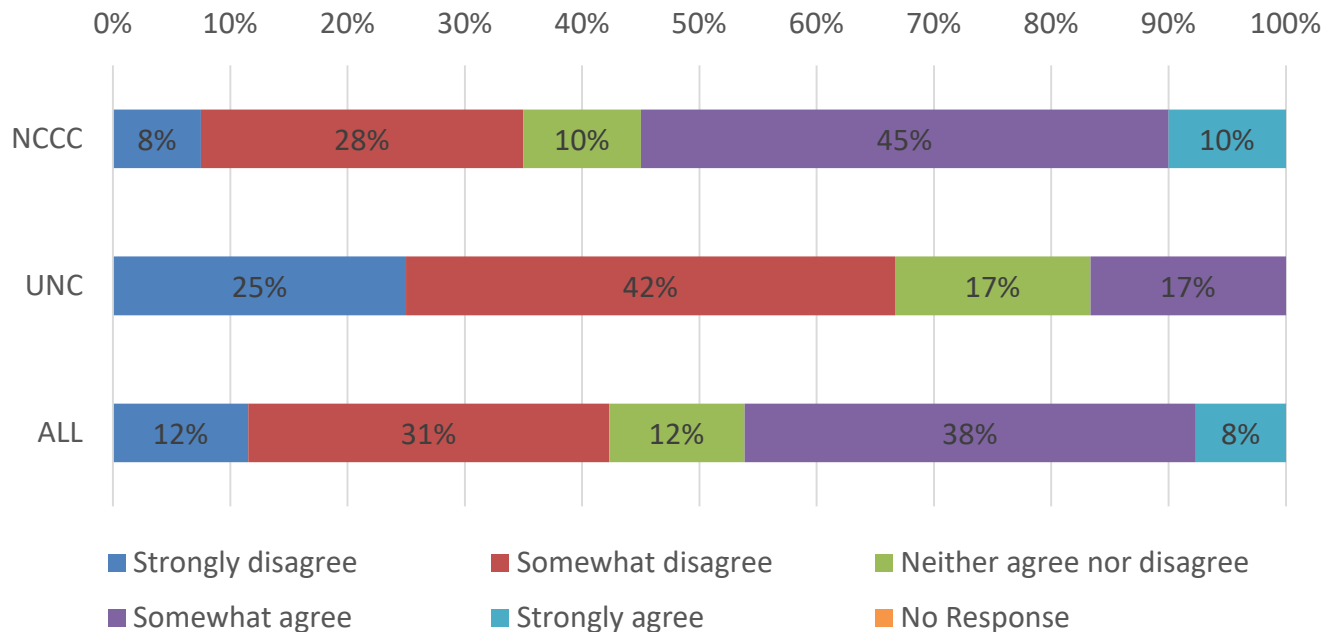


## Key Points:

- Over 50 percent of respondents feel aid programs are overly complex.
- Respondents from the UNC were more likely to feel the programs are complex (75 percent) compared to respondents from the community college system (48 percent agreed or strongly agreed).

# There was mixed feedback from respondents at NCCC and UNC institutions regarding whether the need-based aid programs effectively fill the financial needs of students when combined with federal and institutional aid.

Combined with federal and institutional aid, North Carolina's need-based programs effectively fill the financial needs of students.



## Key Points:

- 46 percent of respondents agreed that aid programs meet financial needs of students.
- Community college respondents were more likely (55 percent) to feel student financial needs were met than respondents from UNC institutions where nearly 70 percent disagreed that programs are meeting students' financial needs.





# What is working well in North Carolina's state financial aid system?

## Most frequent responses

- Portal/interface system works well.
- College Foundation of North Carolina (CFNC)
  - Certification, staff support and communication, administration of aid,
- Award levels are meeting students' needs



# If you were able to make one change to North Carolina's state need-based aid programs, what would it be?

## Most frequent responses

- More funding/ serving more students
- Simplification
  - Consolidation, less overlap across programs, better communications so students and families better understand the programs.

## Additional responses

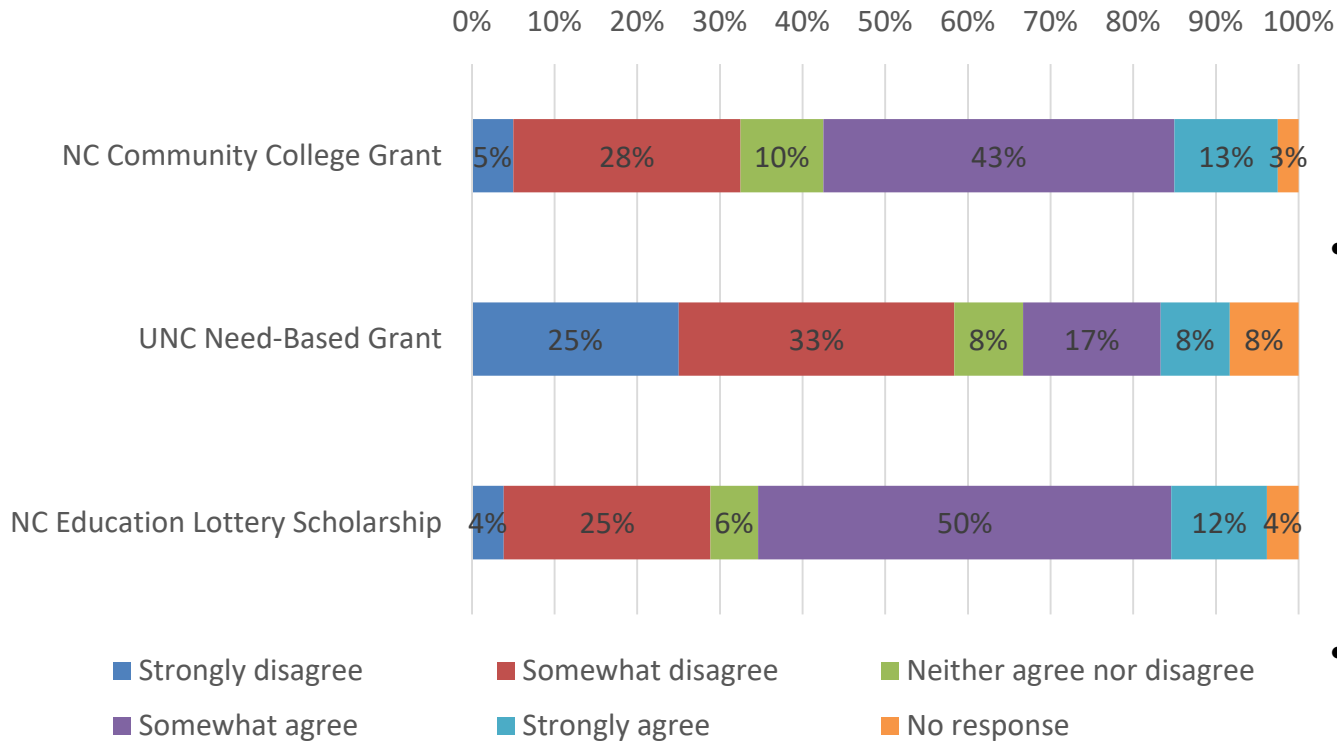
- Summer aid
- Aid to independent and adult students

# Program-Specific Feedback

# Differences exist in how respondents felt respective programs are designed. CC respondents were more likely to think CCG is well designed, while UNC respondents were more likely to think the UNC NBG is not well designed.

## Key Points:

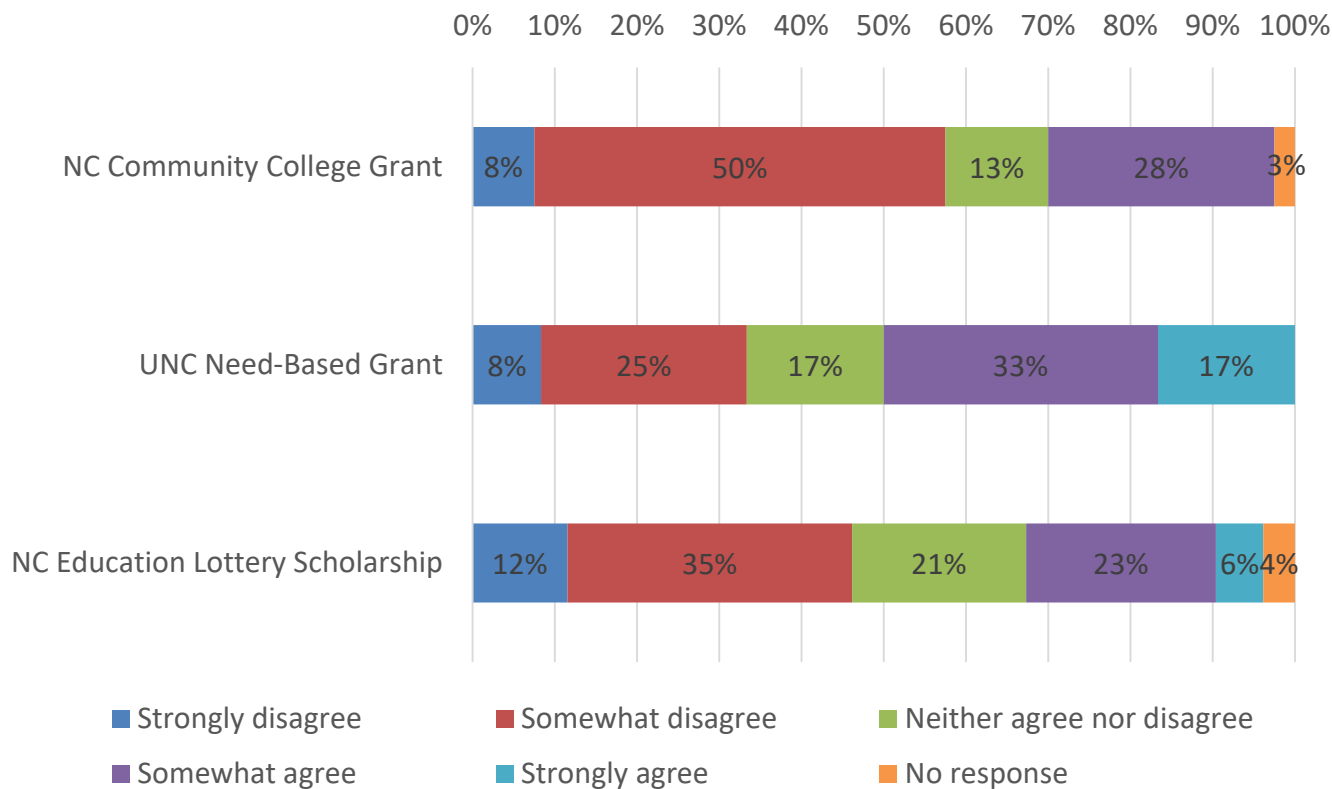
The program is well designed.



- 56 percent of community college respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the CCG is well designed.
- Only 25 percent of UNC respondents felt the UNC NBG is well designed; with nearly 60 percent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.
- Generally respondents (62 percent) felt the ELS is well designed.

# UNC respondents were more likely to feel that the UNC NBG program is not meeting the financial needs of students compared to how community college respondents felt about the CCG.

The program is NOT meeting the financial needs of its recipients even with federal and institutional aid combined.

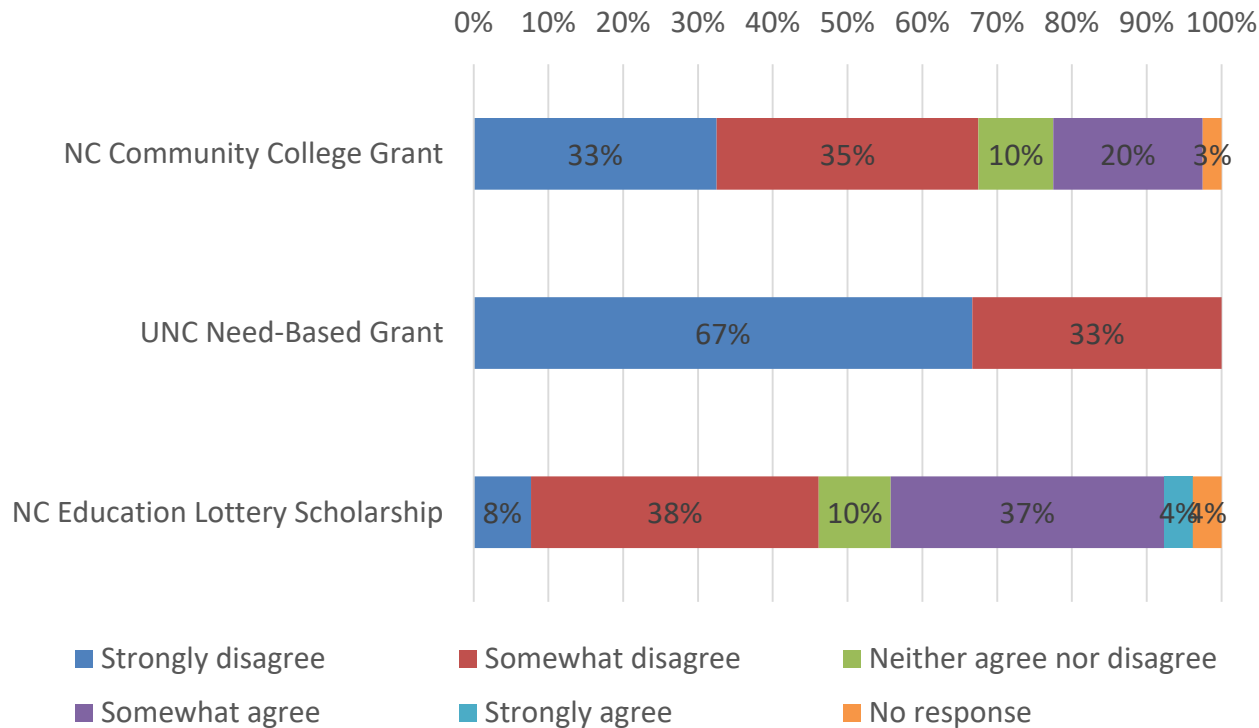


## Key Points:

- Only 28 percent of community college respondents feel the CCG is not meeting financial needs of students, compared to 50 percent of UNC respondents feeling the UNC NBG does not meet financial needs of students.
- 29 percent of respondents believe the ELS does not meet needs of students, though more were unsure or did not respond.

# Respondents generally do not think programs are easy for students to understand.

The program is easy for students to understand.

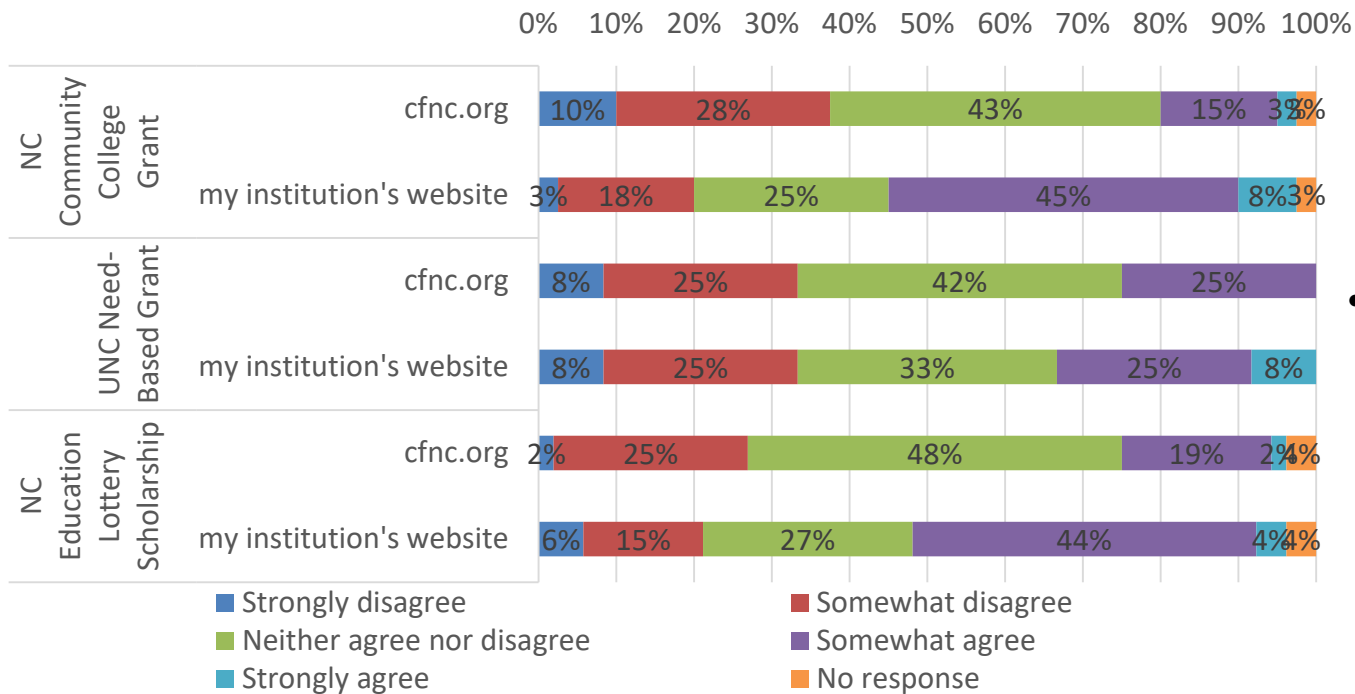


## Key Points:

- Respondents from the UNC universally agreed that the UNC NBG is not easy for students to understand.
- Over two-thirds of community college respondents felt CCG is not easy to understand.
- Nearly 50 percent of respondents feel the ELS is not easy to understand.

# UNC respondents were more unsure of where students can access information about UNC NBG. Community College respondents felt more students are able to find information on CCG through institutions websites compared to cnfc.org.

Most students (more than half) who communicate with my financial aid office about the program have been able to find information on this program through...

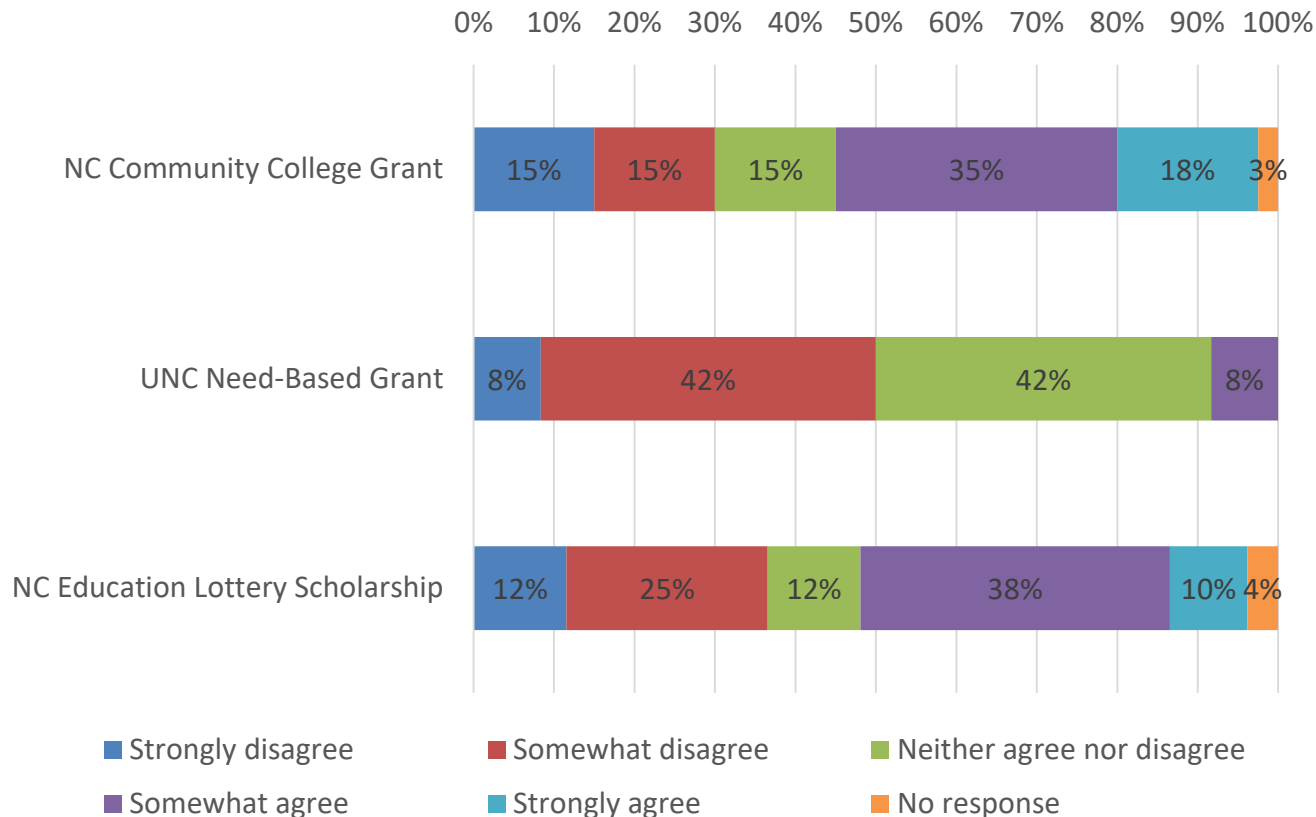


## Key Points:

- Over 50 percent of community college respondents feel students can find information about CCG through their institution's website. Only 33% of them indicated this for cnfc.org.
- Thirty-three percent of UNC respondents feel students can find information about UNC NBG through their institution's website. Only 25 percent of them indicated this for cnfc.org.

# Community college respondents were much more likely to feel the CCG is serving adult students than were UNC respondents regarding the UNC NBG.

The program is serving adult students as well as more traditional aged students.



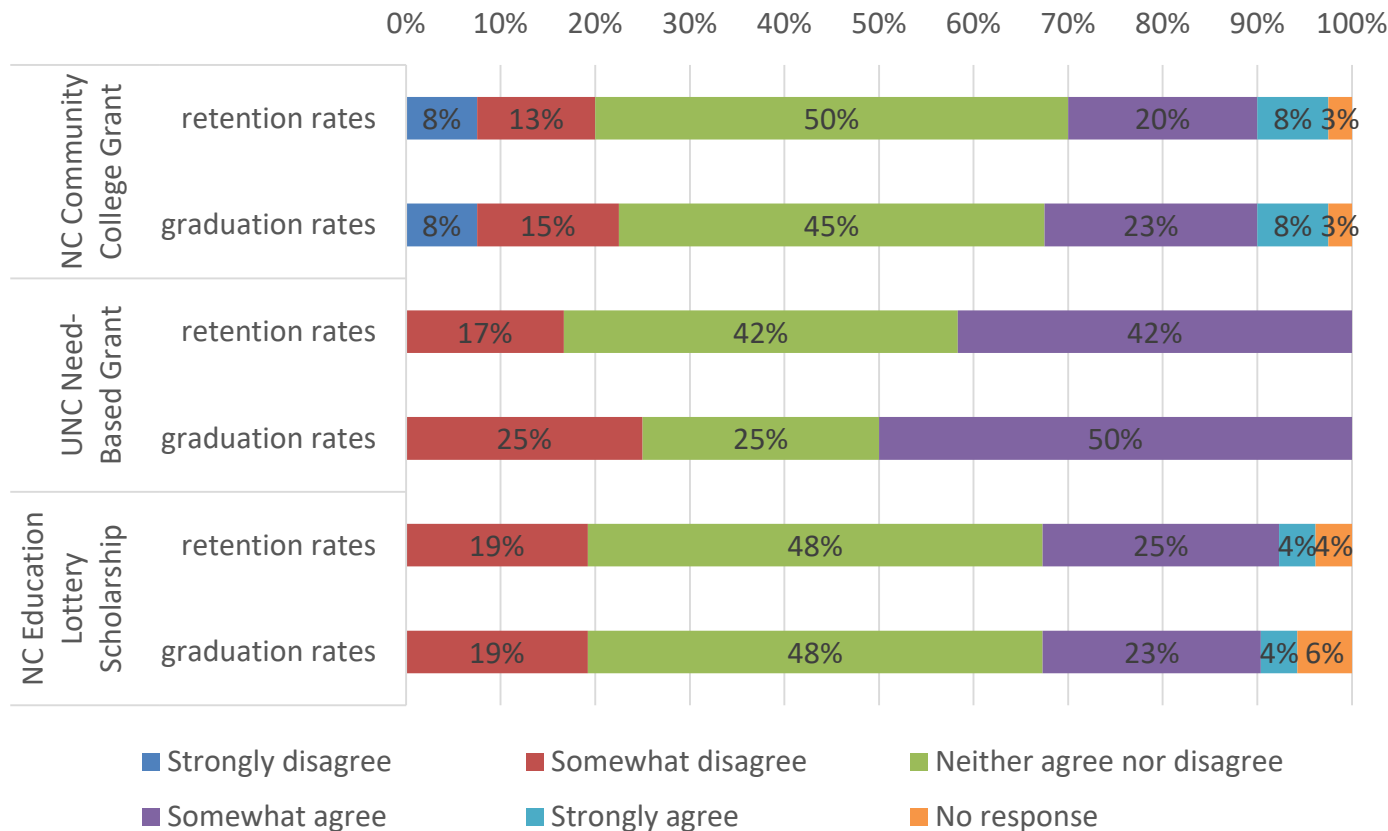
## Key Points:

- Over 50 percent of community college respondents feel the CCG program is serving adult students as well as more traditional aged students.
- Only 8 percent of UNC respondents feel the UNC NBG serves adults.
- Nearly half respondents feel the ELS supports adults.



Several respondents were not sure (neither agreed nor disagreed) with the role financial aid programs play in supporting student success (raises retention and graduation rates). However, UNC respondents were more likely to feel the UNC NBG supports student success compared to community college respondents regarding the CCG.

The program is helping to raise retention/graduation rates at my institution.

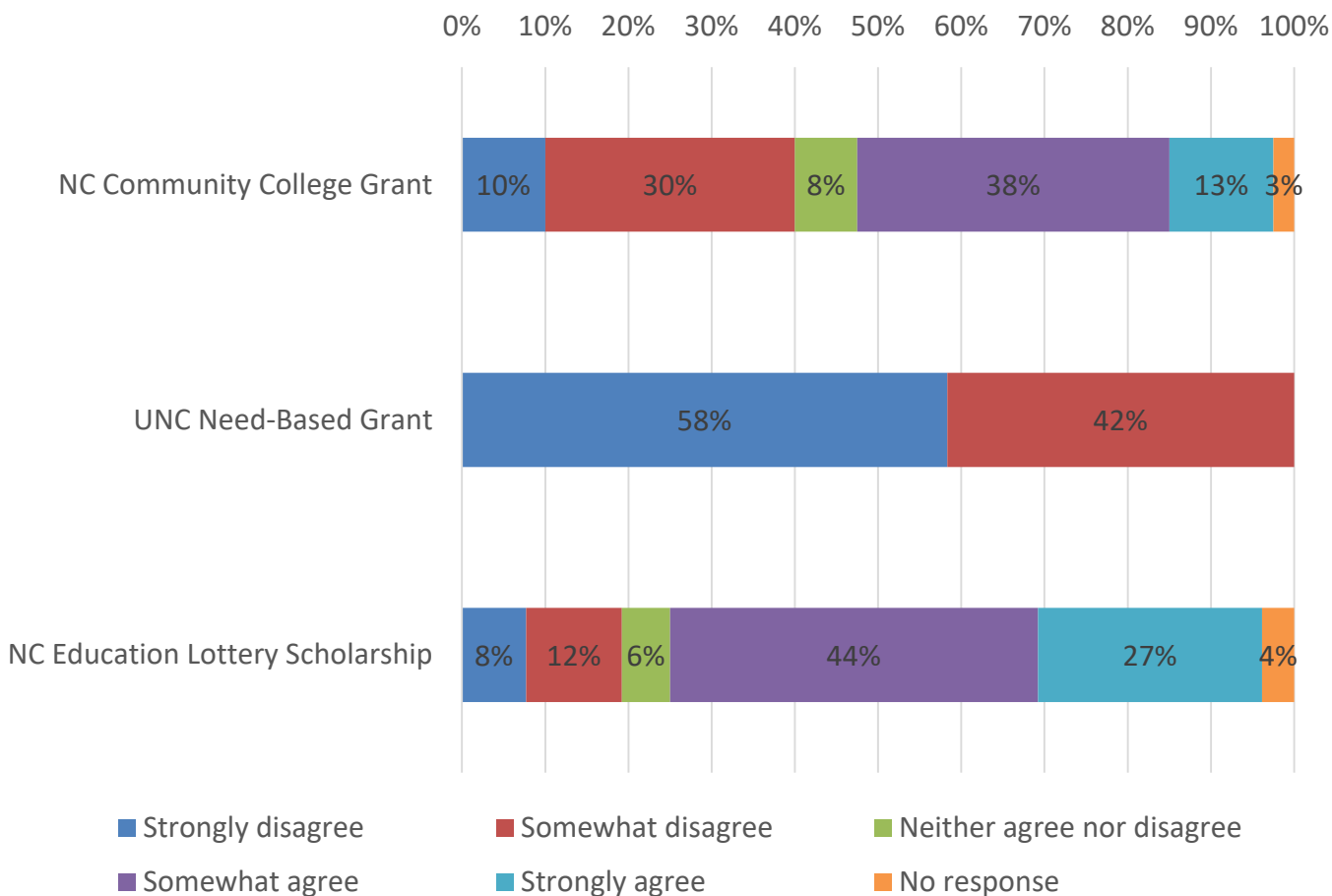


Key Points:

- Nearly half of UNC respondents felt the UNC NBG supports student success.
- Fewer than 1/3 of community college respondents feel the CCG helps to raise graduation or retention rates.
- Similarly, few respondents felt the ELS plays a role in supporting higher retention or graduation rates for students.

There is wide variability across programs regarding financial aid offices' confidence in their ability to communicate to students how much aid they will receive from the program. In fact, 100 percent of UNC respondents felt they could NOT tell students how much aid they would receive from the UNC NBG.

I am able to tell my students with confidence how much aid they will receive from this program.

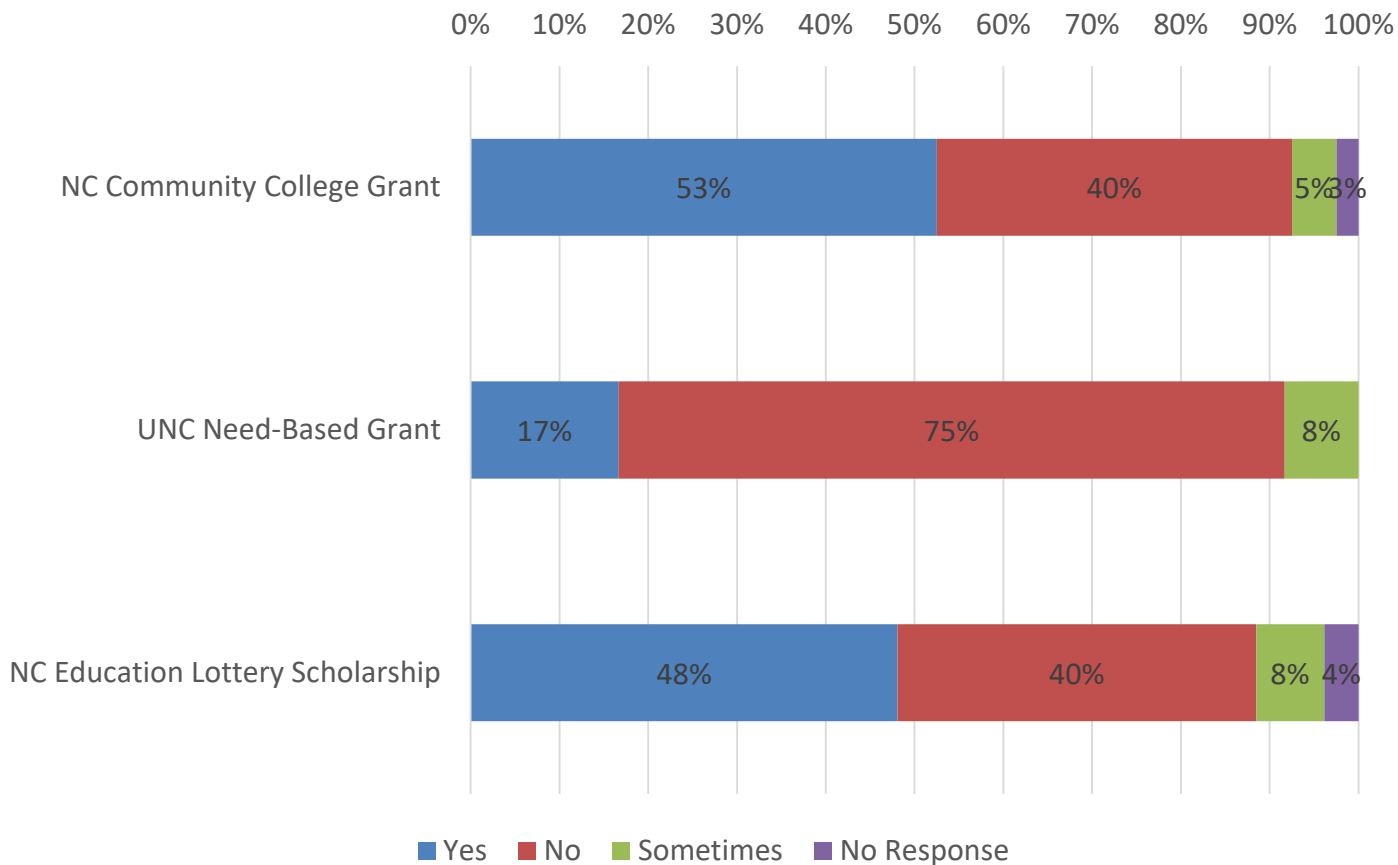


Key Points:

- About 50 percent of CC respondents felt confidence in ability to tell students how much aid they would receive from the CCG.
- There appears to be more transparency in the ELS, with over 70 percent of respondents feeling they could tell students how much funding they would receive through the program.

# Community college respondents indicated that they communicate to students estimated amounts of aid from CCG at higher rates than do UNC institutions regarding the UNC NBG.

My financial aid office includes estimated amounts of aid from this program when we send out communications to students with information about the financial aid package they are receiving.



## Key Points:

- Over 50 percent of CC respondents indicated they communicate aid amounts as a component of the financial aid package.
- Only 17 percent of UNC respondents indicated this for the UNC NBG.
- About 50 percent of respondents include of aid amounts from the ELS as a component of the aid package.

# What are the strengths and opportunities for improvement of the programs?

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESPONSES

	Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
NC Community College Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fills gaps for students who are not eligible for Pell/federal funding</b></li> <li>• Assists with affordability</li> <li>• Helps students who are working but still have significant need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Confusion for students regarding the 15 credit full time requirement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some respondents recommended removing the full-time plus aspect</li> <li>• Others recommended more communications around the benefits of 15 credits so students better understand the award structure</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Serving nontraditional students</li> </ul>
UNC Need-Based Grant Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps fill the gap of unmet need</li> <li>• Targeted to the correct EFC group</li> <li>• Communication to schools when awards have been determined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should use the federal methodology for determining need (e.g., Pell chart)</li> <li>• Earlier awarding of funds</li> </ul>
NC Education Lottery Scholarship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fills gaps for students with partial Pell.</b></li> <li>• Well advertised</li> <li>• Sound methodology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Confusion for students regarding how the award is pro-rated</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some respondents recommended pro-rating similar to other aid programs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expanding eligibility beyond \$5K EFC</li> <li>• Year-round funding</li> <li>• Support for part-time adult students</li> </ul>

**Bolded items correspond to most frequent responses.**



# Thank You

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