FIRST2 NETWORK CHANGE IDEA EXPERIENCE
Academic and Student Support Services at WVU Tech:
Centering Student Voice (Preliminary findings)

FIRST2 NETWORK

West Virginia University INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

NEED

- This project was part of the collaboration between WVU Tech and the First2 Network on a needs assessment report for an S-STEM planning grant.
- Fall 2024 Interviews with academic and student support personnel revealed concerns that existing support programs are underutilized.
- Staff members expressed uncertainty about why students are not engaging with available services, despite significant institutional investment.

OBJECTIVES

Overarching Goal: By identifying the perceived needs in academic and student support services, we can help into reducing DFW rates, improve grades, and overall retention of students in STEM which are shared goals of the S-STEM program and First2 Network.

The objective of the survey was to gather opinions surrounding the campus culture and the services our small campus provides for STEM students.

SUMMARY

The objective of this project was to gather student feedback on the academic and student support services offered at WVU Tech, with a particular focus on the needs of STEM students. Through a campus-wide survey, students identified key areas where current services could be improved. The most frequently mentioned themes included a need for extended tutoring hours and greater availability, increased staffing for high-demand STEM courses, and better awareness of available resources. Students also expressed interest in enhanced peer mentorship opportunities, more accessible and user-friendly support platforms, and stronger faculty involvement in academic support efforts. The insights gained from this survey will inform future **Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)** cycles that align with driver 1 (**Academics**) and 2 (**Fit**) to pilot and refine targeted improvements. By addressing these shortcomings, WVU Tech aims to improve academic success, reduce dropout rates, and increase retention among STEM students.

Suggestions from surveys

Availability & Hours-Frequent mentions of "more availability," "additional hours," and a desire for evening support (6–7 pm).

Advertising & Awareness-Calls for "more outreach," "visibility," "advertisement," and innovative promotion strategies (e.g., TikTok, banners).

Accessibility of Information-Requests for easier online access and clearer explanations about what services are offered and how to use them.

Faculty Involvement-Suggestions that professors participate in tutoring services.

STEM-Specific Support-Desire for tutoring in each STEM class.

METHODS

IRB Protocol #2405980562 National Science Foundation DUE 4/2023 V2.0

Pre-survey workshop
- Meeting with First2 Institutional team and leadership to trial run the survey to improve survey question quality.
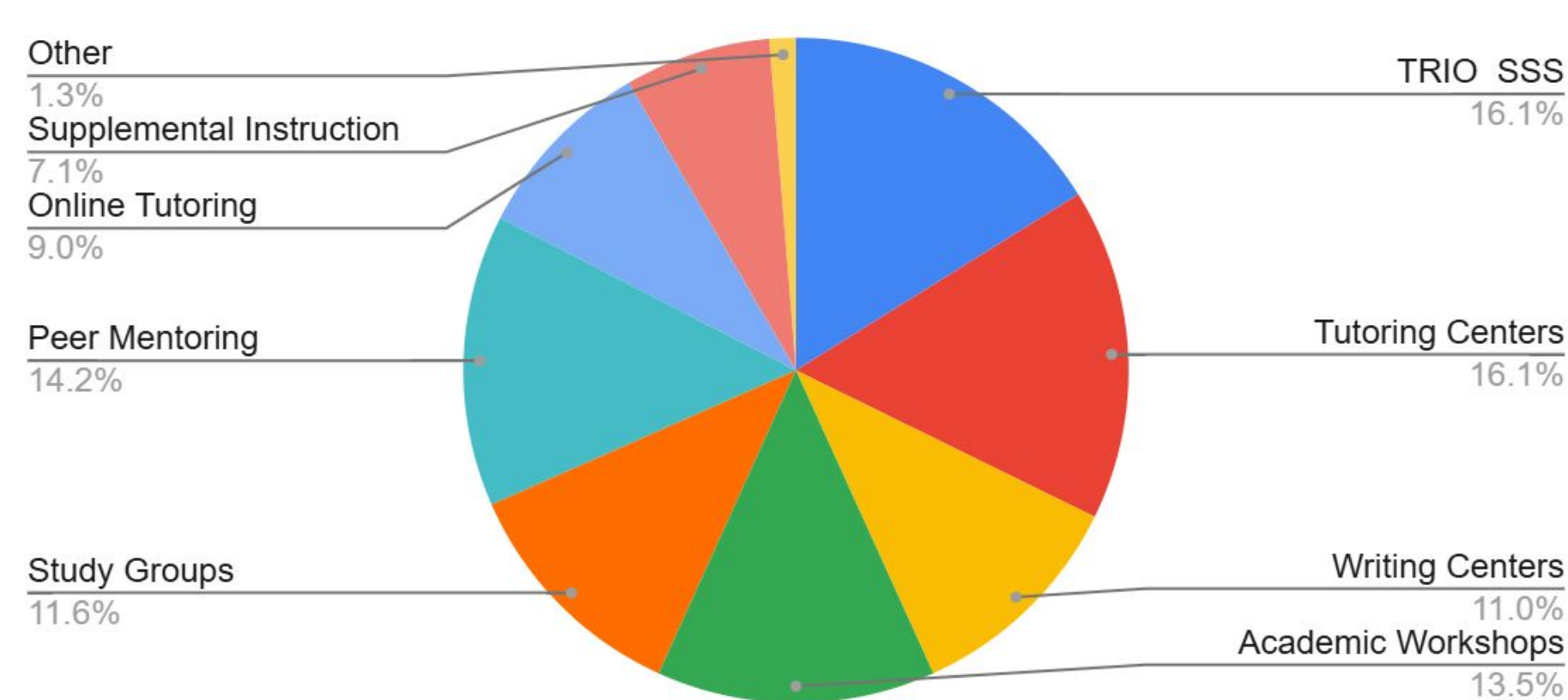- Plan how surveys will be disseminated on campus

Mid semester workshop
- Dissemination plan was re-visited
- Data was analyzed based on the number of responses
- The survey was deployed in Spring 2025 to determine whether students shared these perceptions and to uncover any misalignments between student needs and current offerings
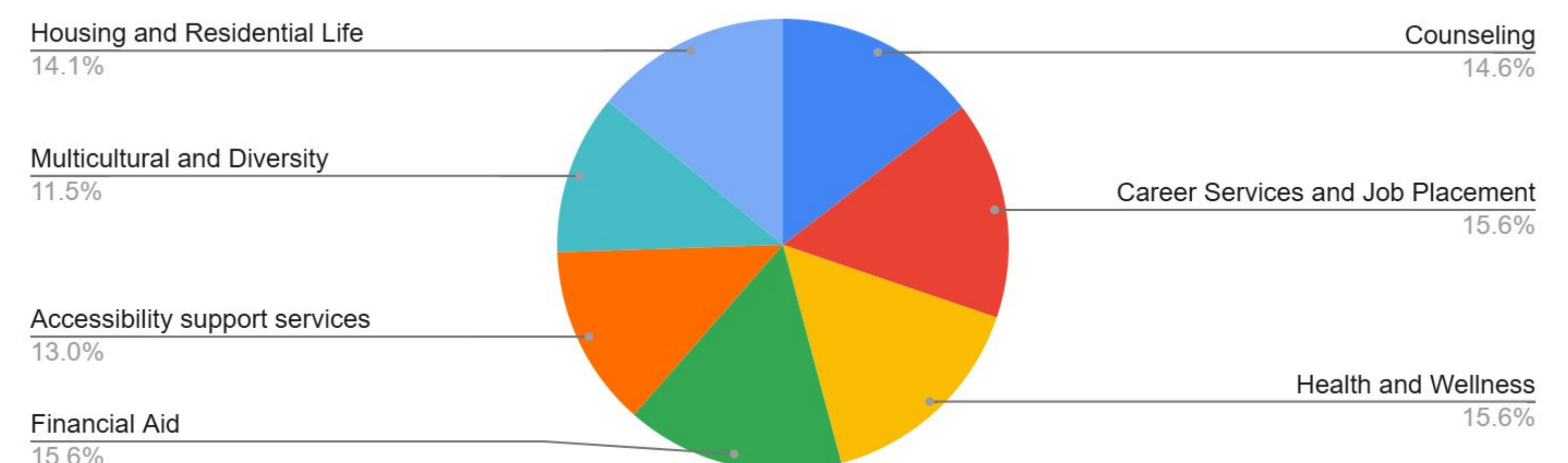
Response rates statistics		
N as of May 2025	First gen	Pell Eligible
41	17%	48%

FINDINGS

What types of academic support services does your institution offer? — TRIO SSS 16.1%, Tutoring Centers 16.1%, Writing Centers 11.0%, Academic Workshops 13.5%, Study Groups 11.6%, Peer Mentoring 14.2%, Online Tutoring 9.0%, Supplemental Instruction 7.1%, Other 1.3%

What types of academic support services does your institution offer? — Counseling 14.6%, Career Services and Job Placement 15.6%, Health and Wellness 15.6%, Financial Aid 15.6%, Accessibility support services 13.0%, Multicultural and Diversity 11.5%, Housing and Residential Life 14.1%
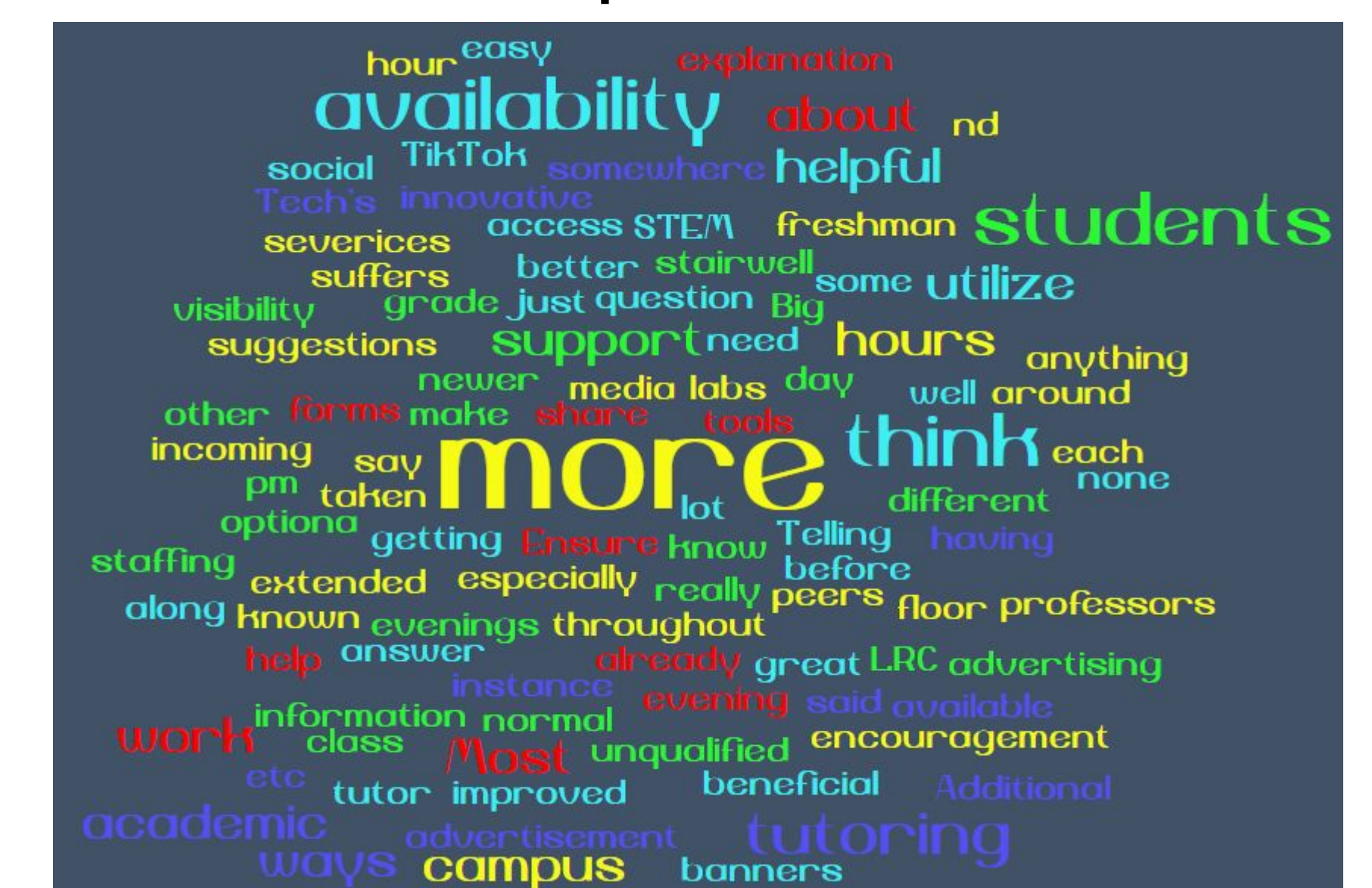

How frequently are these academic and student support services utilized by you at your institution?
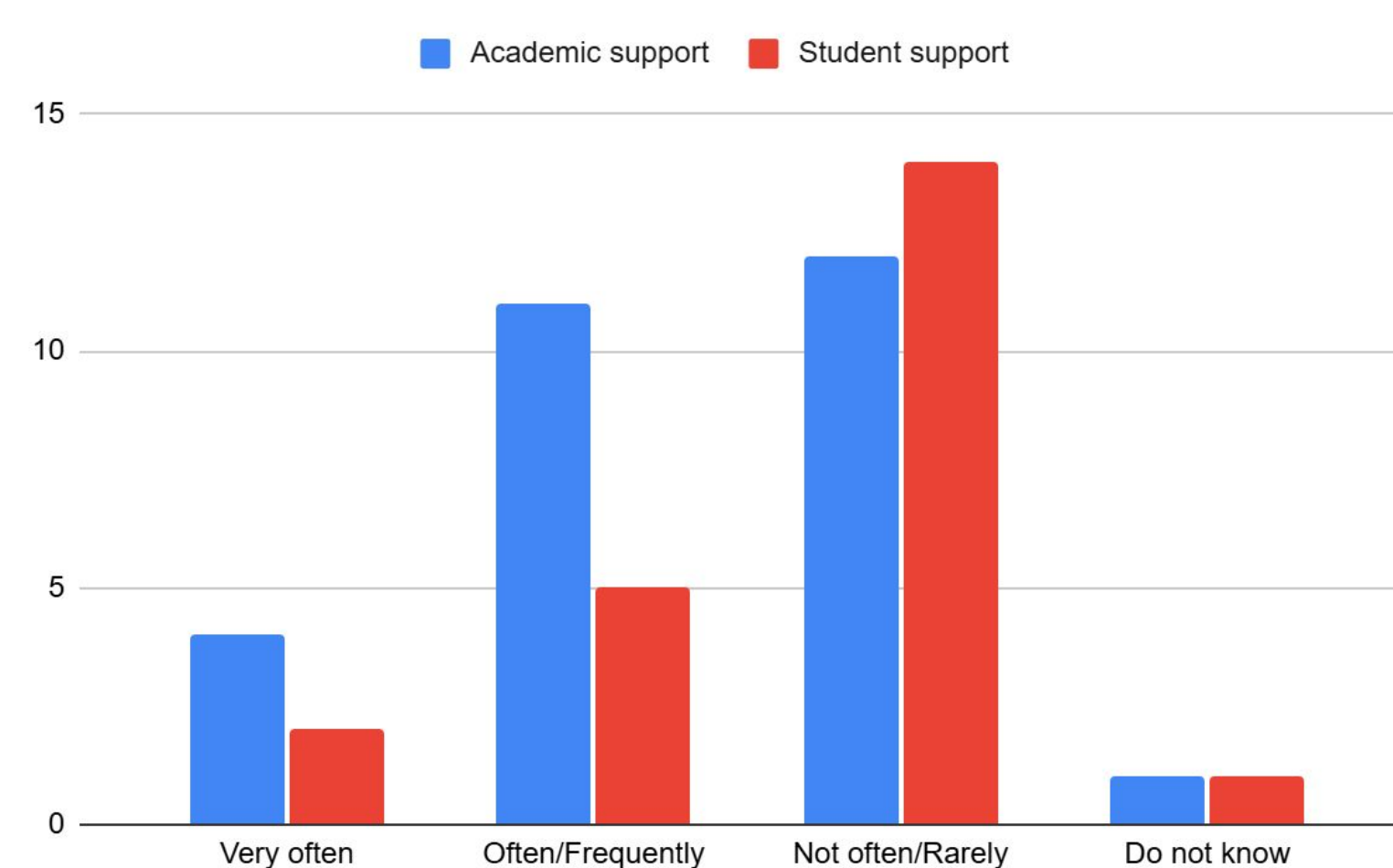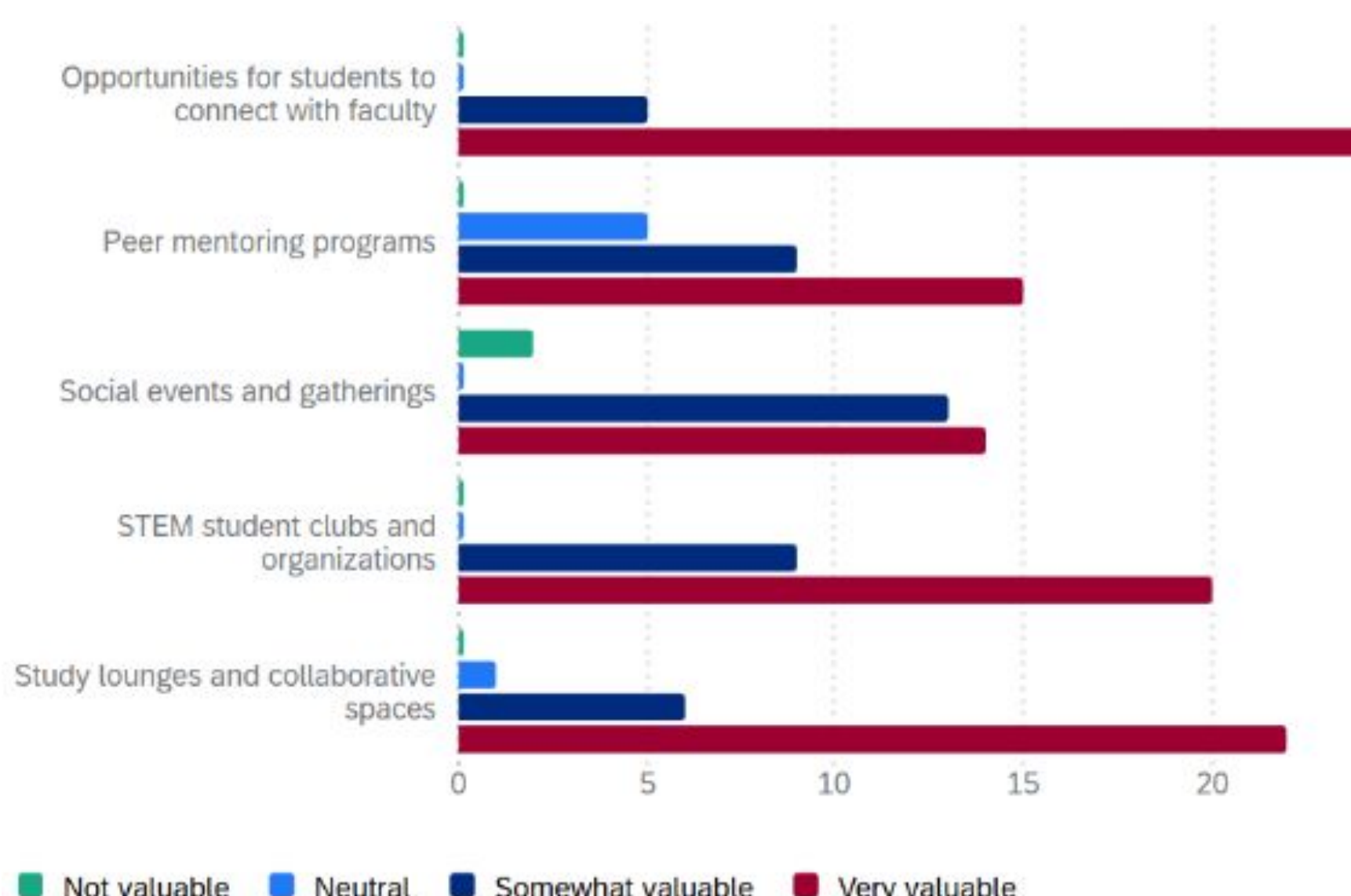

What are the main challenges students face in accessing academic and support services?
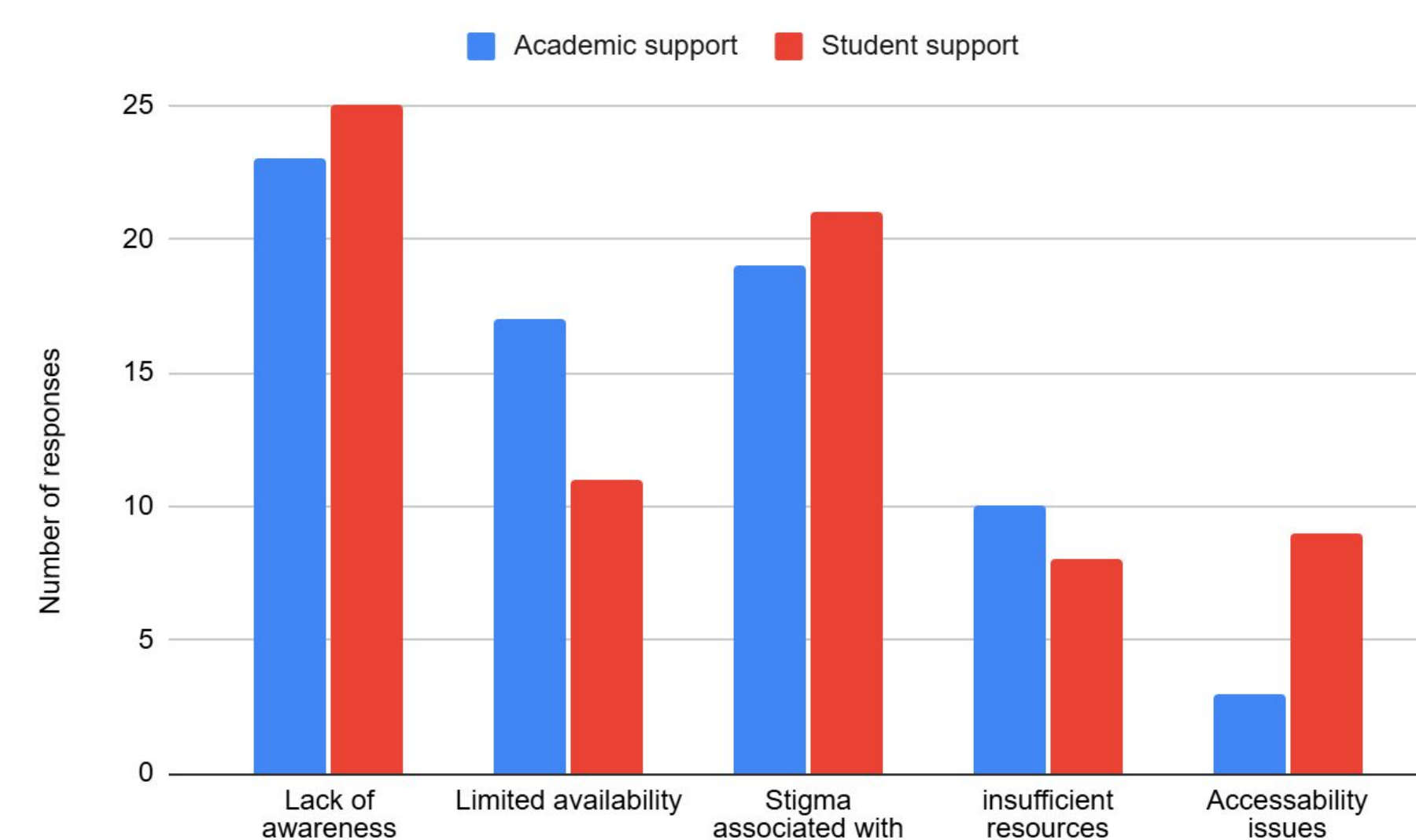
Word cloud with comments on suggestions for improvement

Which would you find more valuable?

TIPS FOR OTHER INSTITUTIONAL TEAMS
- Leverage the First2 Network club, student directors and institutional teams to collaborate in needs assessment reports for grant work.
- Goals strongly align among groups
- Feeds into PDSA work and systems change on campuses

- Students underuse resources but overall find them useful.
- Understanding students' perspectives provides evidence-based direction for improving outreach, delivery, and content of support services.
- The results help prioritize student-informed strategies to boost awareness, accessibility, and effectiveness of academic support, particularly in STEM.

Nevaeh Wooding
Biology major WVU Tech
Student director