

Bridging the Gap: Engaging Public Health Students and Professional Organizations in Utah

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INTRODUCTION

- A recent Institute of Medicine report stated that the current educational training is not adequately preparing the future public health workforce to address these challenges [1].
- A primary reason is the lack of relationships between academia and public health professionals.
- This study was designed to find a solution to this gap through the utilization of the Utah Public Health Association.
- By following the principles of community-based participatory research, the UPHA Student Caucus created and distributed a survey to all public health students in the state of Utah
- The survey had an increased focus on students completing a graduate-level program.
- The survey, a qualitative instrument, was designed to capture the attitudes and beliefs of current public health students regarding their professional and practical experiences.
- Results from the survey allowed researchers to create a model for a sustainable student organization affiliated with a professional public health organization.
- The researchers hypothesized that through the utilization of the UPHA-SC, public health students will be better connected with professionals, allowing for them to be a more prepared and skilled workforce members.

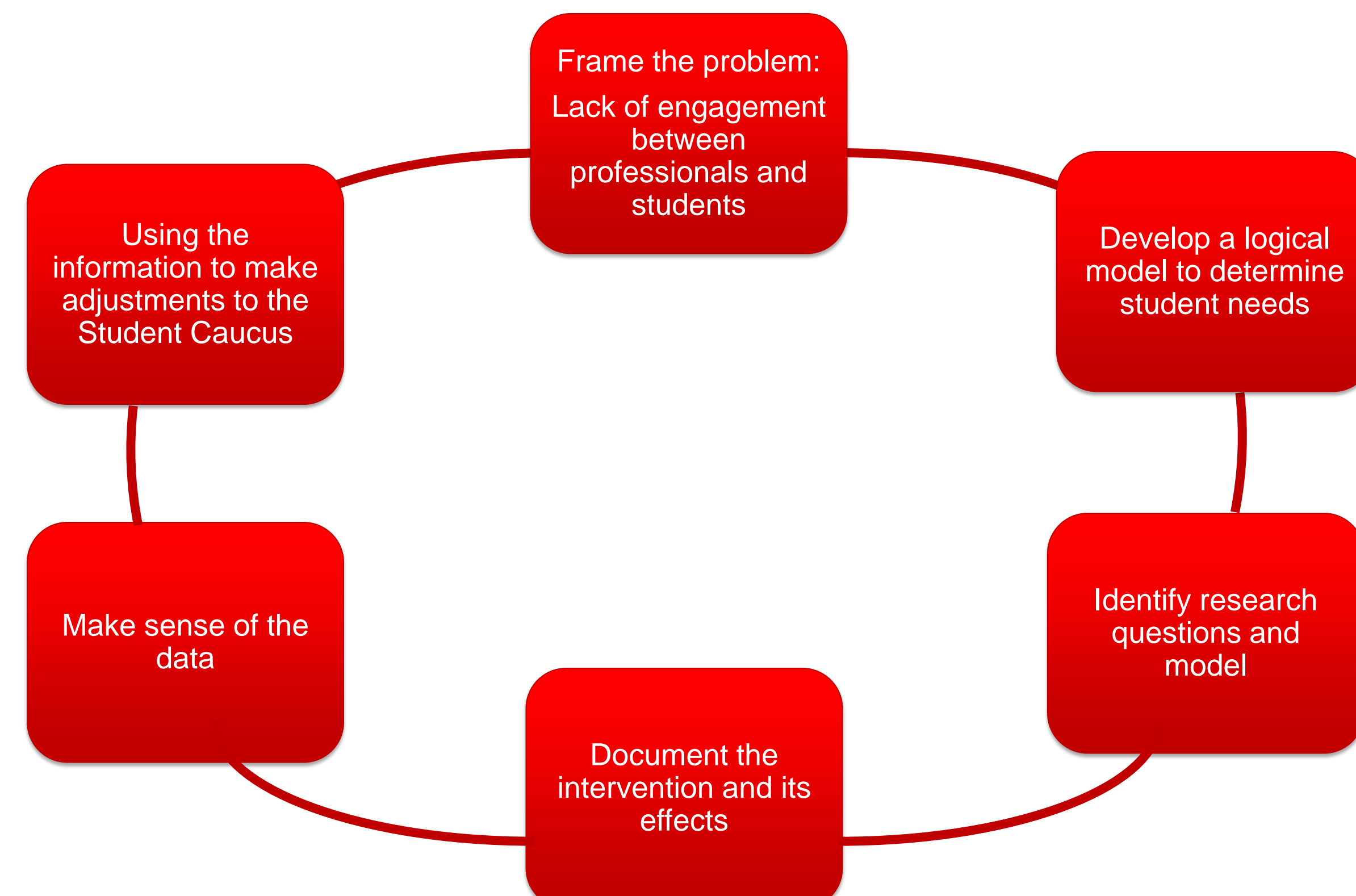
OBJECTIVES

Through the utilization of the Student Caucus of the Utah Public Health Association (UPHA-SC), public health students can become better connected with professionals, allowing for future public health professionals to be more prepared and skilled for the challenges

- Based on the principles of community-based participatory research, design a qualitative survey to capture the attitudes of current public health students in the state of Utah.
- This survey will be distributed to all public health students in the state of Utah, with increased focus on a graduate-level of study. There will be an incentive for participation.
- Using survey responses, create a model for a sustainable student organization affiliated with the UPHA, a professional public health organization and an affiliate of the American Public Health Association (APHA).
- Ensure that this is a repeatable model that can be used by other student organizations in the U.S.

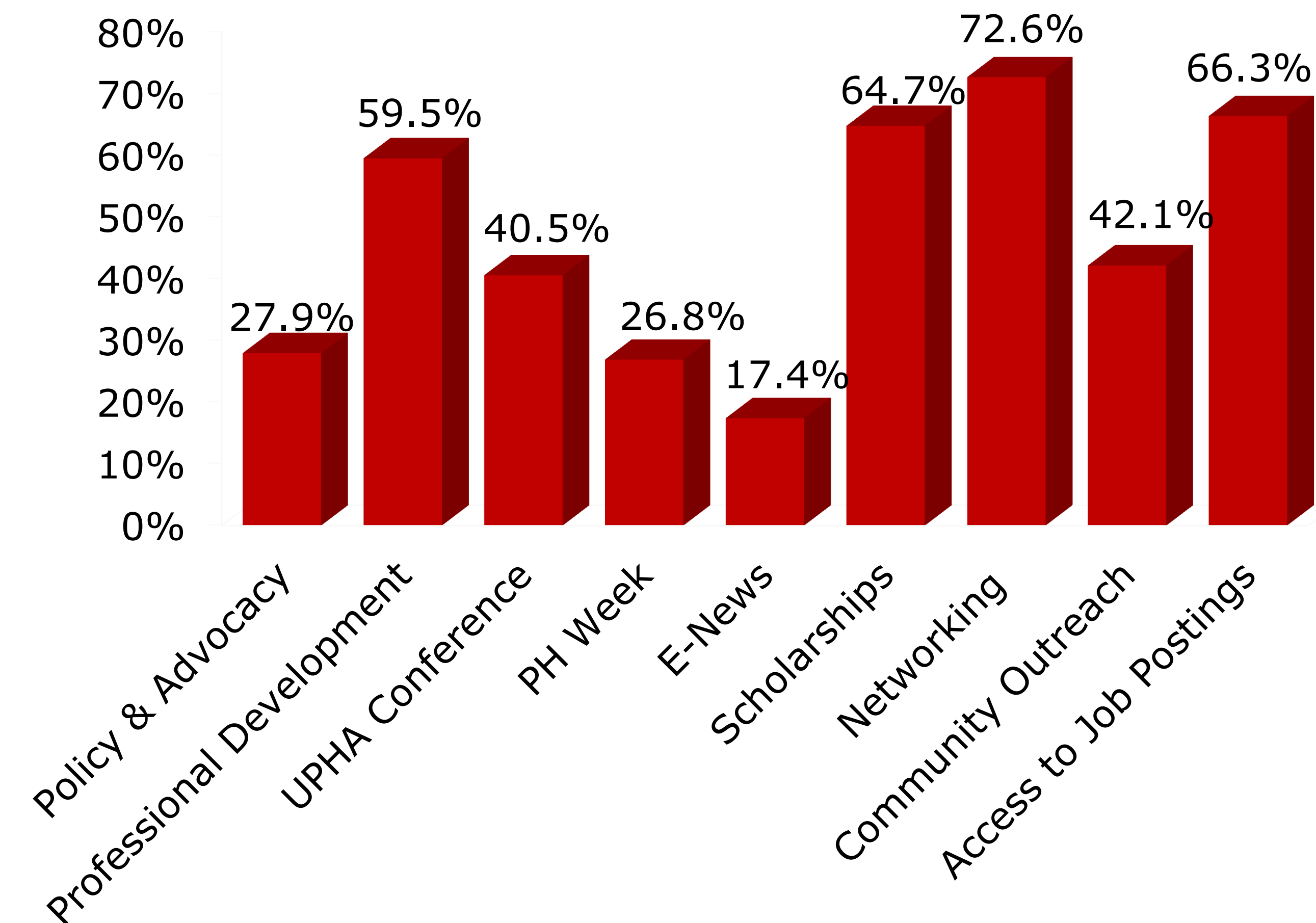
METHODS

- Online, exploratory survey
- Distributed to all public health students in Utah (undergraduate and graduate)
- Designed to capture the attitudes and objectives of students regarding their professional and practical experiences
- Data was analyzed using SAS.

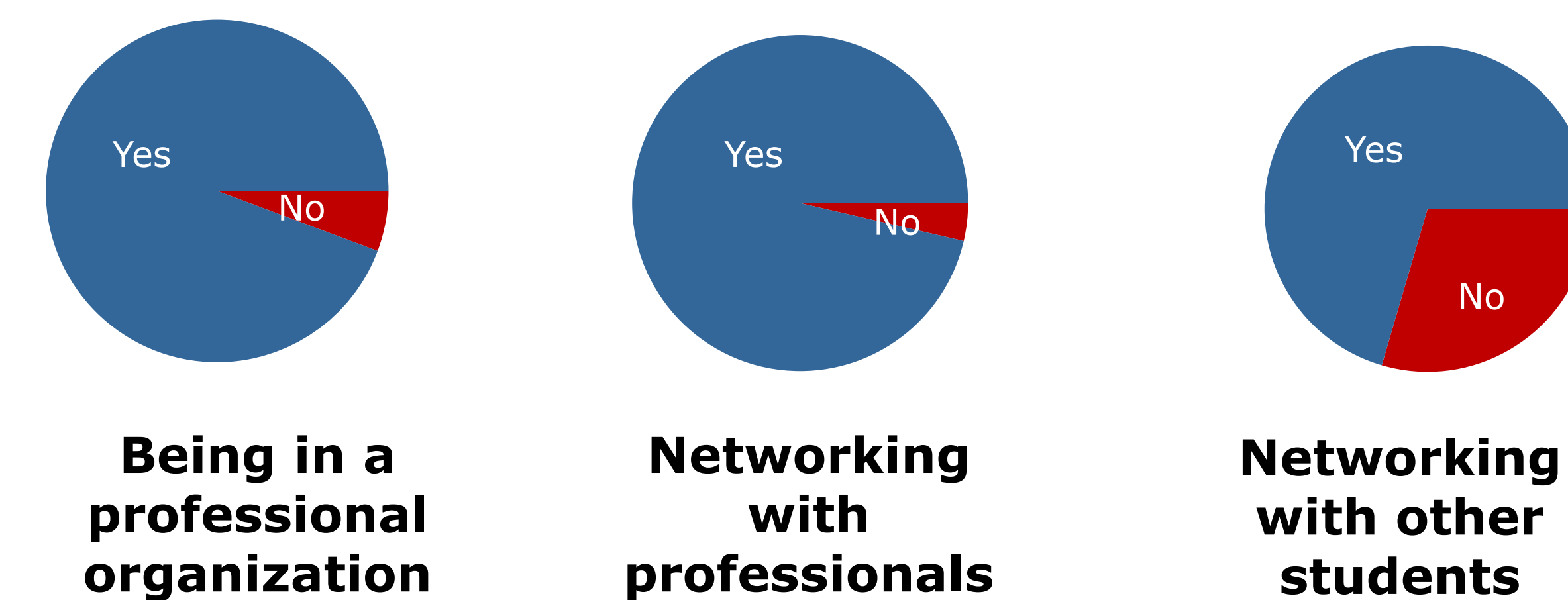


RESULTS

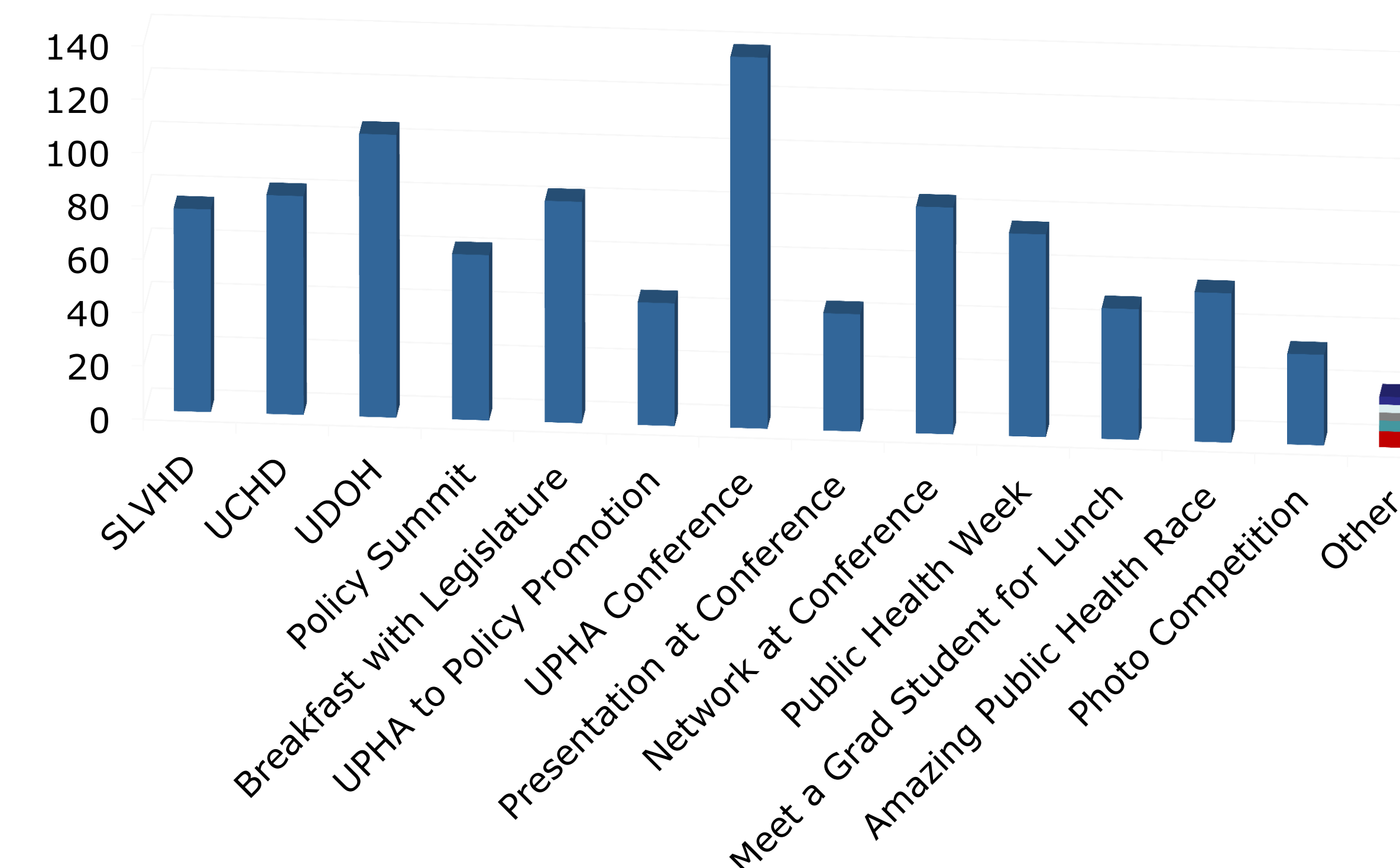
Perception of UPHA Membership Benefits



Which Aspects of UPHA are Beneficial?



Which Activities are of Interest?



Public Health Focus as Predictor of UPHA Membership

Focus	N	OR	95% CI	p
Aging & Public Health	1	1.26	0.05 31.39	0.61
Alcohol, Tobacco & Drugs	9	0.19	0.01 3.30	0.12
Community Health & Policy	30	0.95	0.36 2.51	0.92
Disability	2	0.75	0.04 15.89	0.47
Environmental Health	12	4.32	1.31 14.23	0.01
Epidemiology	23	2.30	0.90 5.89	0.08
Food & Nutrition	22	0.57	0.16 2.04	0.38
Health Administration	24	0.31	0.07 1.39	0.11
HIV/AIDS	5	0.33	0.02 6.15	0.25
Injury & Emergency Health	10	2.72	0.73 10.16	0.12
International Health	36	3.21	1.45 7.07	0.003
Maternal & Child Health	32	1.98	0.85 4.63	0.11
Medical Care	18	0.45	0.10 2.05	0.29
Mental Health	5	6.12	0.99 37.97	0.03
Occupational Health	15	0.25	0.03 2.00	0.16
Oral Health	3	1.94	0.17 21.90	0.59
Reproductive & Sexual Health	1	1.26	0.05 31.39	0.61
Education & Promotion	57	0.28	0.10 0.75	0.008
Statistics	3	0.53	0.03 10.49	0.37
Other: Infectious Disease	3	8.00	0.71 90.57	0.05
Other: Genomics	2	0.7	0.0352 15.9	0.4685

Significant Predictors Adjusted for Other Areas of Interest

Focus	aOR	95% CI
Environmental Health	4.98	1.37 18.12
Epidemiology	2.30	0.81 6.55
International Health	3.66	1.53 8.77
Mental Health	4.13	0.61 27.88
Education & Health Promotion	0.48	0.17 1.40
Other: Infectious Disease	6.06	0.46 79.01

DISCUSSION

- Networking seen as greatest benefit to UPHA membership
- Desire for activities that involve individual time with a professional
- Students focused on Environmental Health, Epidemiology, International Health, Mental Health, or Infectious Disease are less likely to be members
- Students focused on Health Education and Promotion are more likely to be members
- Students are eager for more one-on-one interaction with professionals
- There is a need for mentors willing to teach future professionals
- The health of our communities will only be as strong as the capabilities of its public health workforce

FUTURE AIMS

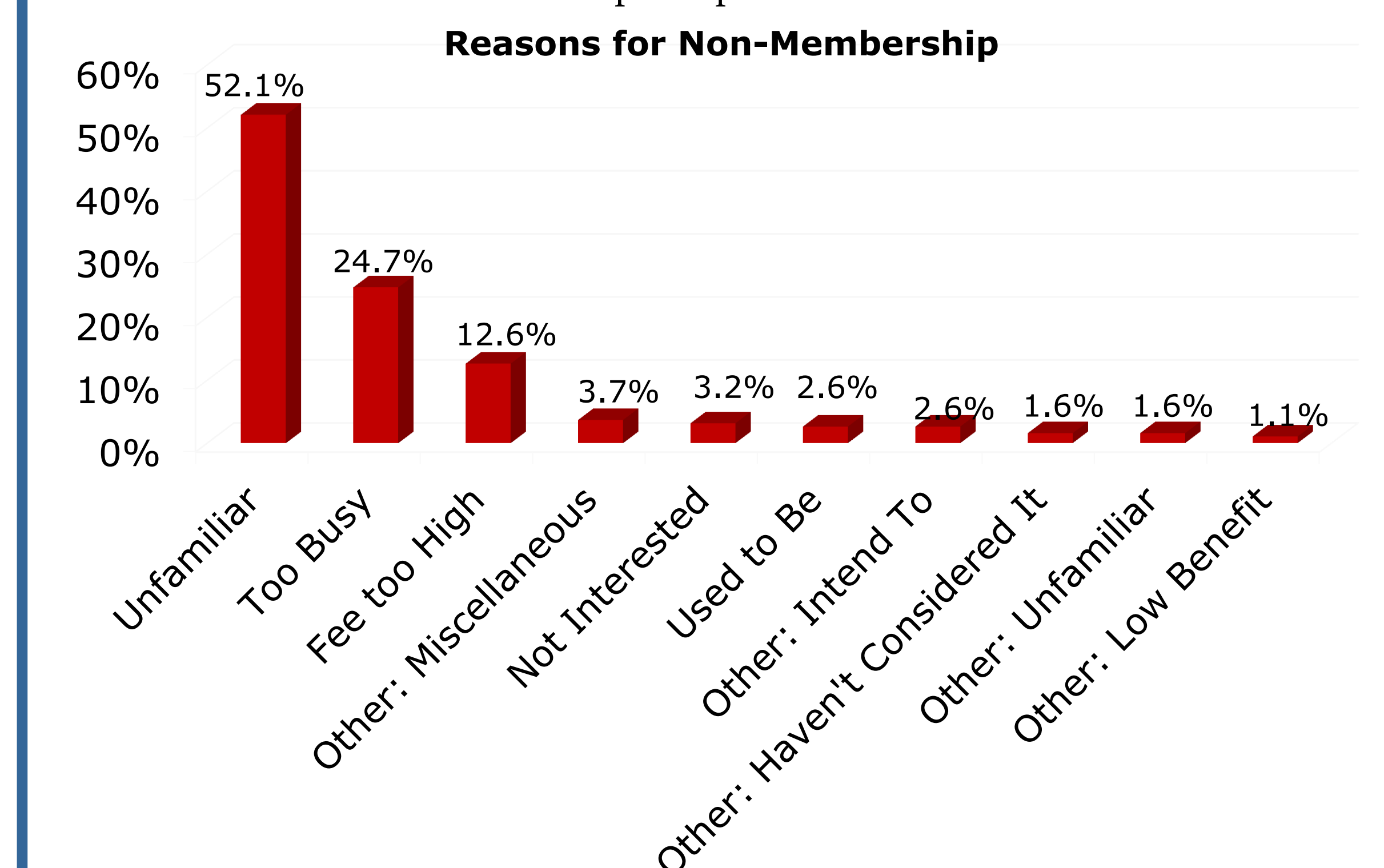
As a result of this survey, we have gained a better understanding of what students hope to gain from UPHA membership and areas in which UPHA could improve its relationships with student members. We hope to achieve the following:

→ Enhance relationships with all universities.

Survey Response by School and Level

Level	School					Total
	Brigham Young University	Utah State University	Westminster College	University of Utah	Utah Valley University	
Undergraduate	14	36	3	2	47	102
Graduate	19	1	13	39	0	72
Doctoral	0	1	0	15	0	16
Total	33	38	16	56	47	190

→ Overcome barriers to student participation



REFERENCES

We would like to express our appreciation to the following individuals for their contributions to this project:

- Meghan Arnold (deceased)
- Stephen Alder, University of Utah
- Darrin Sluga, Utah Public Health Association
- Paul Wightman, Utah Public Health Association

References:

- Gebbie K, Rosenstock L. Who Will Keep The Public Healthy? Educating Public Health Professionals for the 21st Century. IOM Report. 2002 Nov.