

Strengthening the Public Health Infrastructure in New York State: Update on the Activities of the NYS Public Health Workforce Task Force

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NYS Public Health Workforce Task Force

- Members: NYS Dept. of Health (DOH), Local Health Departments (LHDs), state agencies, NY NJ Public Health Training Center, public health schools and programs, and professional and advocacy organizations.
- Mission: To develop and implement a plan of action that will create the systems needed to strengthen and continually improve New York's state and local public health workforce through leadership, recruitment, training and education, and retention.

Background

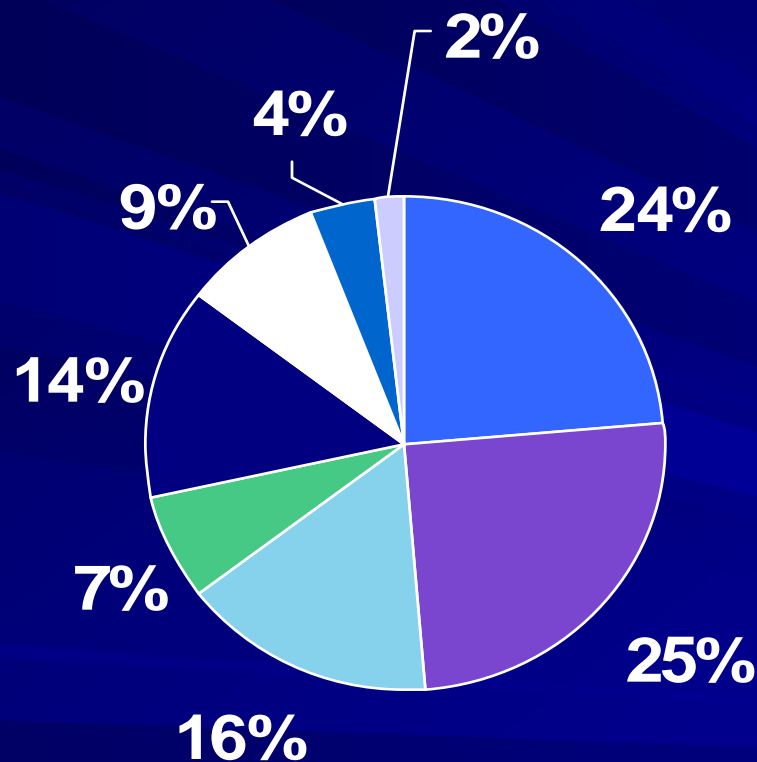
- 2001: NYS Public Health Council appoints Public Health Infrastructure Workgroup to assess state's public health system
- 2003: Workgroup releases report on *Strengthening New York's Public Health System for the 21st Century*
 - Recommends that “a statewide public health training task force be convened”
- 2005: NYS Public Health Workforce Task Force formed
- 2006: Task Force releases *Roadmap* and establishes nine key strategy areas

Background—Data

■ New York State:

- 12,500 public health workers in 58 local health departments (including NYC)
- 4,300 workers at the state health department

Formal Job Titles of LHD Employees (n=1930)



- Nursing
- Support Personnel
- Administration
- Other
- Scientific/Investigation
- Education/Outreach
- Other Clinical (incl. MD)
- Epi/Disease Control

Source: University at Albany School of Public Health
Center for Workforce Studies *Enumeration of the
Local Public Health Workforce in New York: 2006.*

Recruitment

■ Recruitment

- LHDs report difficulty hiring public health nurses, sanitarians and health educators
- The LHD workforce is not as diverse as the population it serves
- Civil Service rules and low salaries make it difficult to compete in the health marketplace

Retention

■ Retention

- Median age of local public health worker is 49, compared to median age of U.S. civilian worker of 40.
- 62% of local public health workers are between the ages of 45 and 64
- Almost 20% of local public health workers report plans to retire within next five years.
- Almost 20% of LHD staff under 34 years of age plan to leave the public health field in next five years
- Public Health Nurses have median age of 50.

Education and Training

■ Education and Training

- Almost one-quarter of public health workers are new to public health.
- The median age of LHD leaders is 57.
- Almost one in five LHD employees have advanced degrees (Master's or higher), but only 2 percent have advanced degrees in public health.
- 19% want to pursue Master's degree, and more than one-third of them are interested a MPH.

Key Strategy Areas

- Strengthen academic/practice partnerships
- Strengthen workplace policies and procedures
- Assess leadership skills
- Define workforce competencies and gaps
- Market public health careers to college age students
- Market public health careers to adults and mid-career professionals
- Locate and advocate for new resources
- Hire staff with right skills and provide career development opportunities
- Implement workforce development programs

Workplace Policies and Hiring

■ Objectives:

- Assure that current policies, practices and operations of state and LHDs support efforts to strengthen the public health workforce.
- Hire staff with the right skills and provide career growth and development opportunities.

■ Strategies:

- Amend job definitions and minimum qualifications to ensure they reflect current and future needs.
- Conduct interviews with LHD HR representatives to investigate needs, concerns and recommendations related to recruitment and retention.
- Research existing barriers and potential strategies.

Workplace Policies and Hiring

■ State Sanitary Code

- NYS DOH revising definitions and minimum qualifications for key public health professionals to ensure they reflect up to date professional job descriptions and qualifications, address training needs and career ladders.

Major recruitment barriers

- **Civil Service regulations and restrictions**
- **Low salaries relative to private sector**
- **Lack of knowledge of public health and careers among younger generation**
- **Union contracts that limit employee promotion, recognition, etc.**

Major retention barriers

- **Lack of recognition opportunities**
- **Lack of opportunity for staff input in LHD functions and processes**
- **Lack of career ladders**
- **Inability to promote based on merit**
- **Aging workforce**
- **Inability to hire on higher steps**

Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Recruitment:

- Use variety of advertising methods
- Promote public sector benefits package
- Raise awareness
- Update job titles and descriptions

Retention:

- Ensure and promote benefits
- Create career ladder opportunities
- Prepare, educate and train
- Offer positive work environment
- Recognize employees

Market Public Health Careers

Objectives

- Increase the number of students who enter public health undergraduate and graduate programs and choose a governmental public health career upon graduation.
- Increase the number of adults and mid-career professionals who choose to enter a governmental public health career.

Enacted Strategies

- Establish a comprehensive web-based clearinghouse of information.
- Conduct a survey of public health students to guide future strategies in supporting the public health pipeline.

Public Health Works! Website

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Public Health Works!

Public Health Works! Honor Roll Members Announced

Commissioner Richard F. Daines and the New York State Department of Health congratulate the **35 members of the 2007 Public Health Works! Honor Roll**. These local health department employees were nominated based on their strong commitment to public health and to improving the health of their communities. The Honor Roll seeks not only to recognize outstanding public health employees but to also raise public awareness of the essential services that public health employees and the public health system provide to all New Yorkers.

- [2007 Honor Roll Members](#)

We encourage you to explore this site to learn more about the many essential services that the public health system and its employees provide and to find out how you can pursue on-the-job training, professional and graduate education and careers in public health.

What is Public Health?

Surveys have found that while citizens know public health is important to them, they aren't always exactly sure what public health is or how it has touched their lives.

If you've ever had a vaccination, assumed the water from your tap is safe, taken your baby to a clinic for a checkup, expected the restaurant you eat in to be clean and safe, been screened for tuberculosis, HIV or a sexually transmitted disease, wondered how to avoid getting Lyme disease, or what to eat to stay healthy, then you've been touched by the efforts of public health employees.

Public health protects and improves communities by preventing epidemics and the spread

Public Health Employee

Public Health Works! Honor Roll Member: Nancy B. Smith

Public Health Nurse, Coordinator of Community Health Services

- [Read more about Nancy B. Smith](#)

Featured Public Health Employee: Dr. Richard F. Daines

Commissioner, Department of Health

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Jamie Farrell-Lizotte

Supervising Public Health Nurse, Dutchess County Health Department



Ms. Farrell-Lizotte has demonstrated leadership and dedication toward improving the health of pregnant and parenting women, infants and children. She has been instrumental in creating successful collaboration with other community agencies to improve Maternal Child Health programs in the community. Within the department, Ms. Farrell-Lizotte has implemented a "First Ninety Days" home visiting program which provides new mothers with education regarding positive parenting skills, shaken baby syndrome, sudden infant death syndrome, and developmental screening for the newborn child.

- Learn more about [Public Health Nurses](#)

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Public Health Nurse

Public health nurses (PHN) comprise the largest group (22%) of public health professionals in New York's local health departments. Public health nurses work with individuals, groups, families and populations to improve the overall health of communities. They help plan and implement public health programs, provide instruction to individuals, families and other groups regarding health issues, arrange for immunizations and health screening, and are involved in helping to contain the spread of disease in communities. A national survey conducted by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) indicates that the supply of public health nurses is declining and employment trends indicate that the decrease will continue.

Qualifications:

Public Health Nurses are required to have a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)

Related links:

- [New York-New Jersey Public Health Training Center Public Health Nurses' Exchange](#)
- [Public Health Nursing Section of the American Public Health Association](#)
- [New York State Nurses Association](#)

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Student Survey

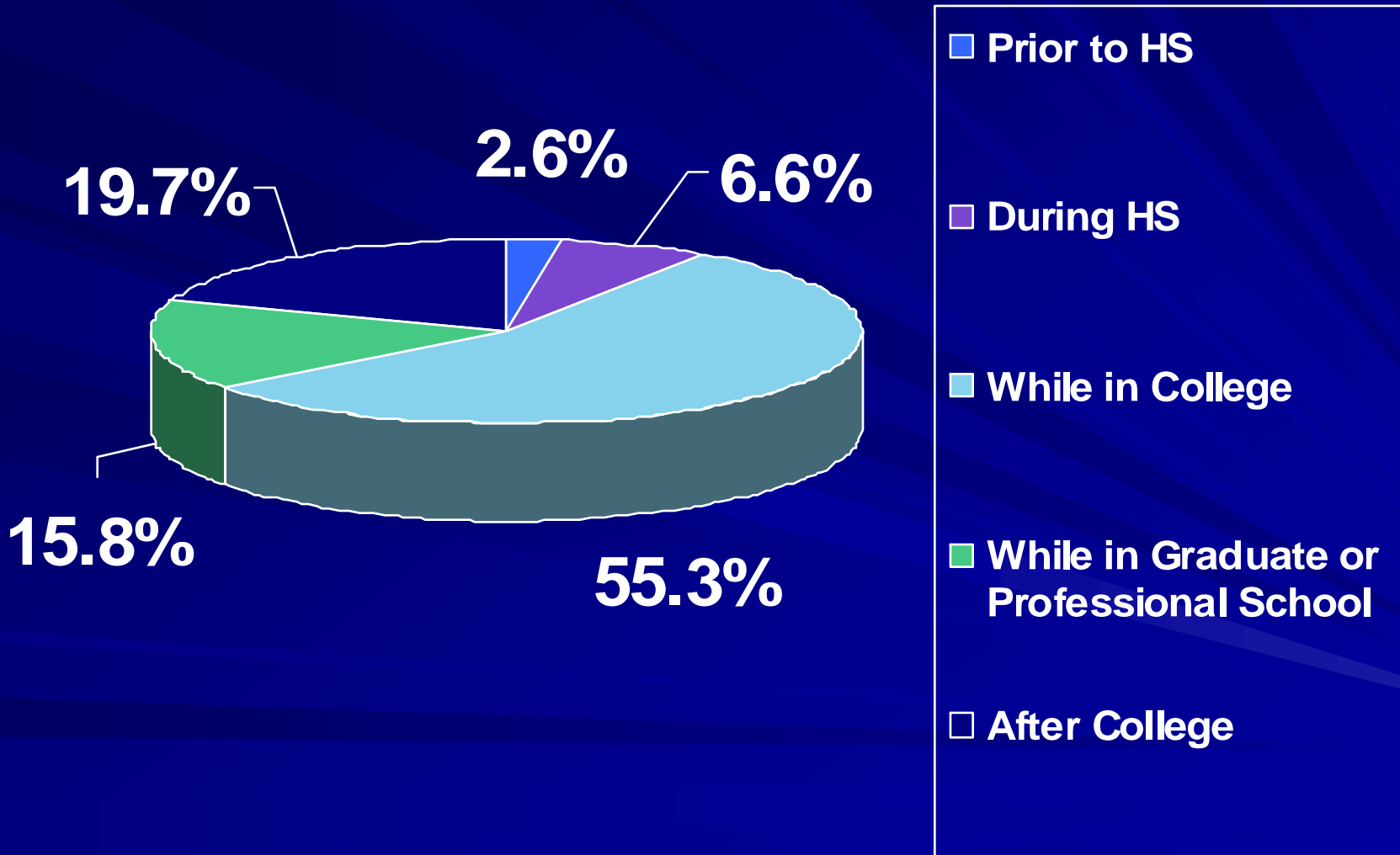
- Evaluate:
 - When, how and why students become interested in public health
 - Barriers
 - Future plans
- Use data to develop tailored outreach/marketing campaigns to increase number and diversity of individuals that pursue public health education and careers.

Student Survey

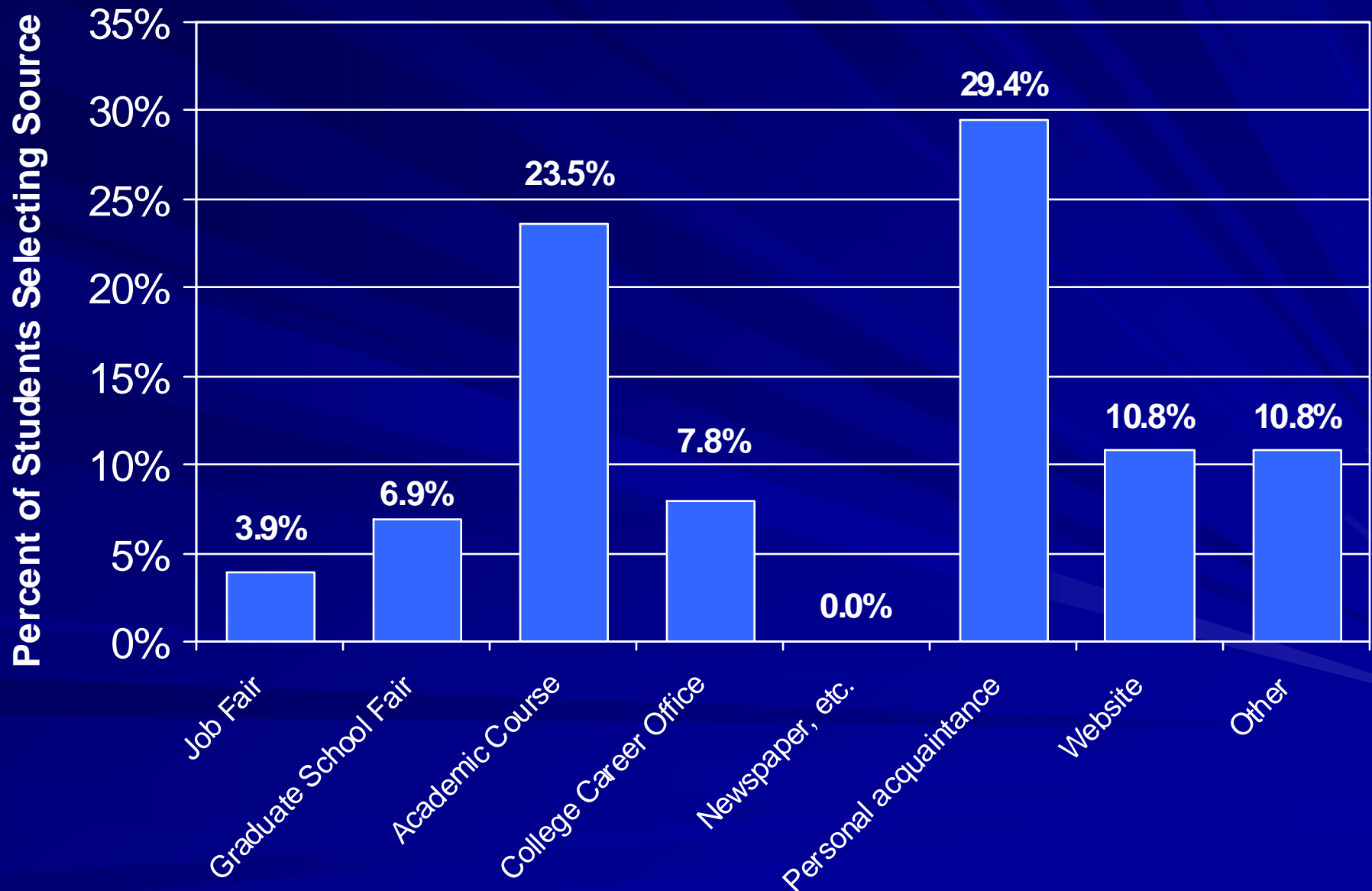
- 13 items plus demographic information
- n = 76 graduate students at the University of Albany School of Public Health
 - 66% female, 21% male, 13% did not specify sex
 - 74% Full-time, 11% Part-time, 16% did not specify their student status.
 - Average age = 28.2 years.

White	46.1%
Black	13.2%
Asian	9.2%
Hispanic	2.6%
Other	6.6%
Not specified	22.4%

When did you become aware of career opportunities in public health?

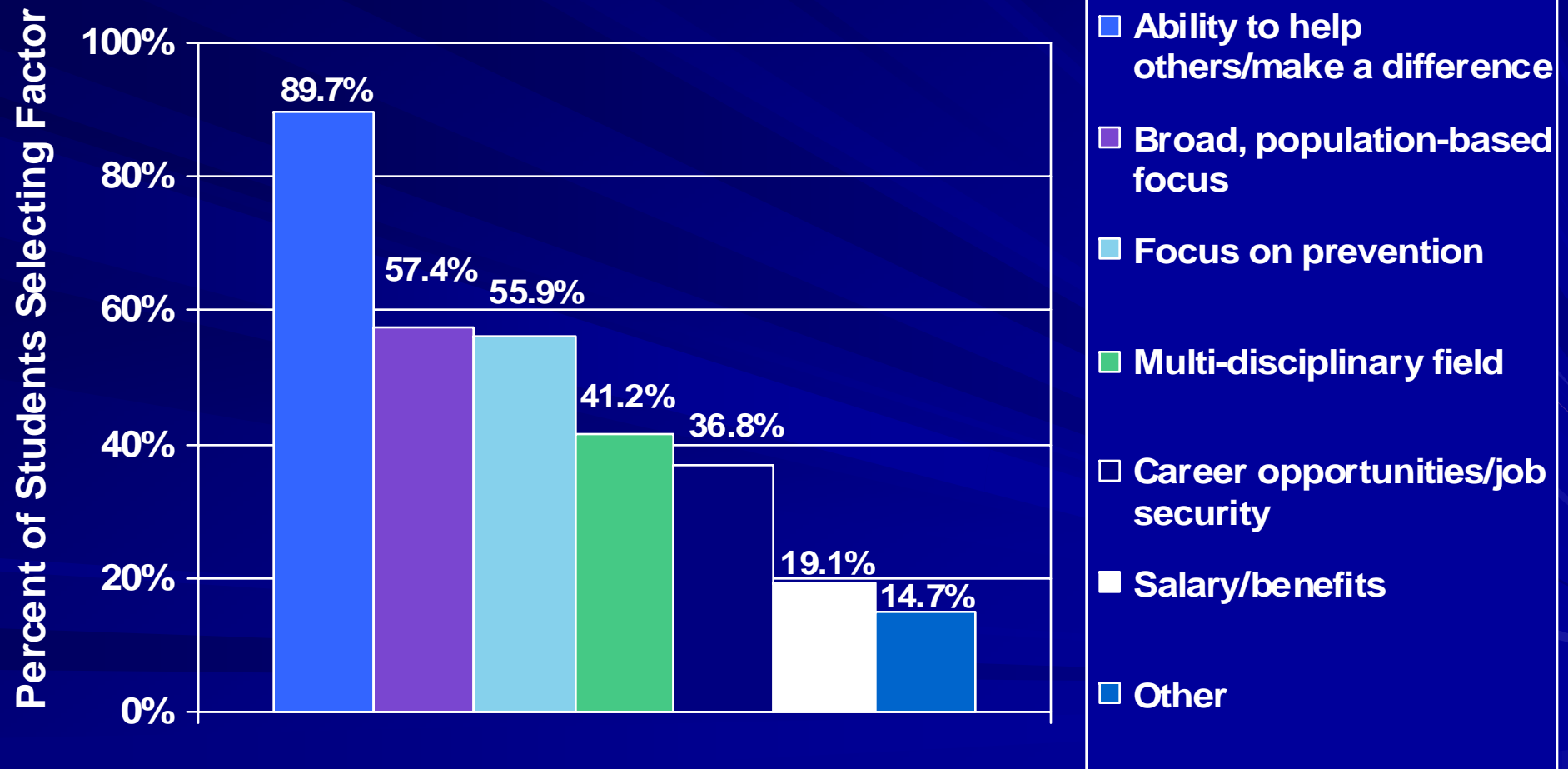


How did you first learn about career opportunities in public health?

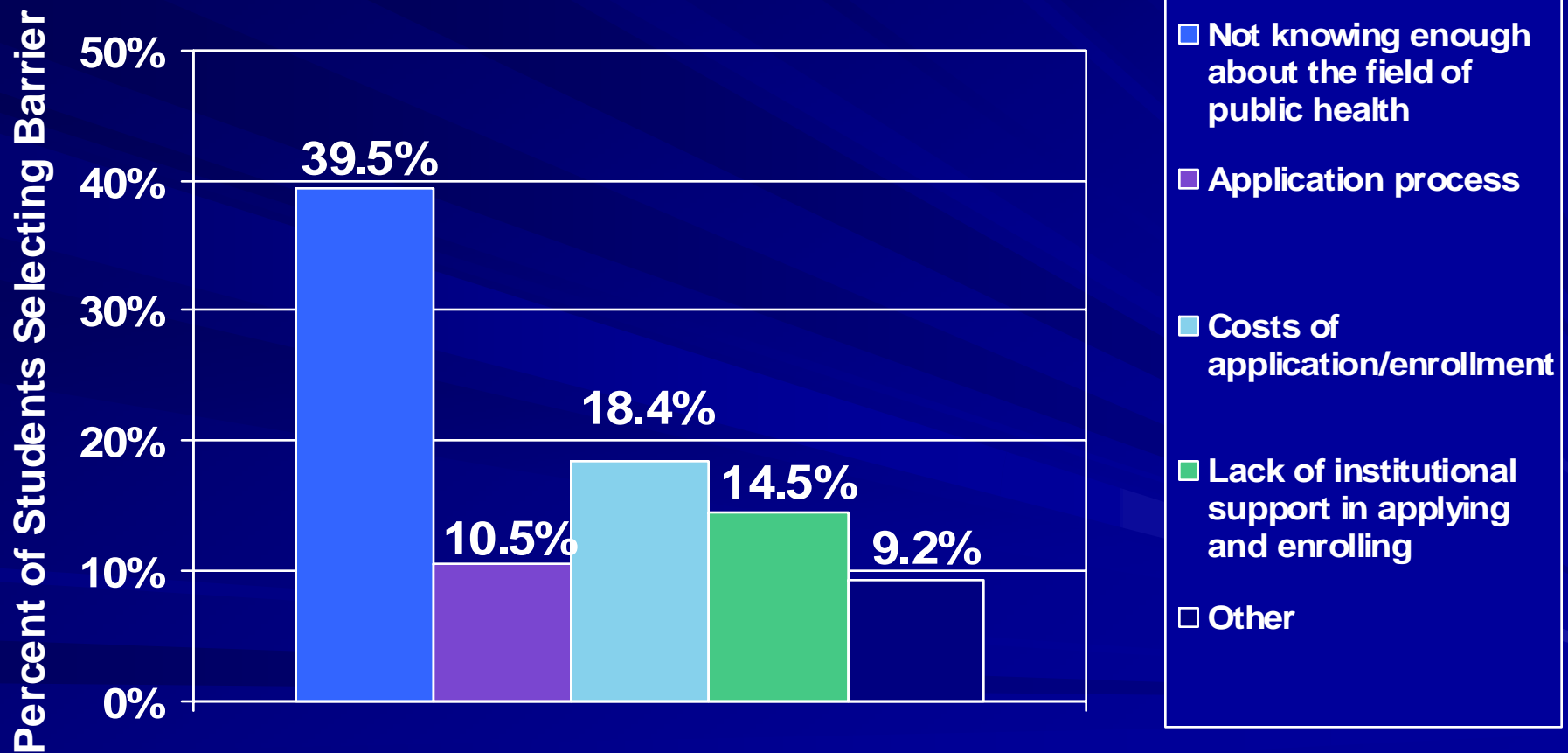


What initially attracted you to the field of public health?

(Students were asked to select "All that apply")

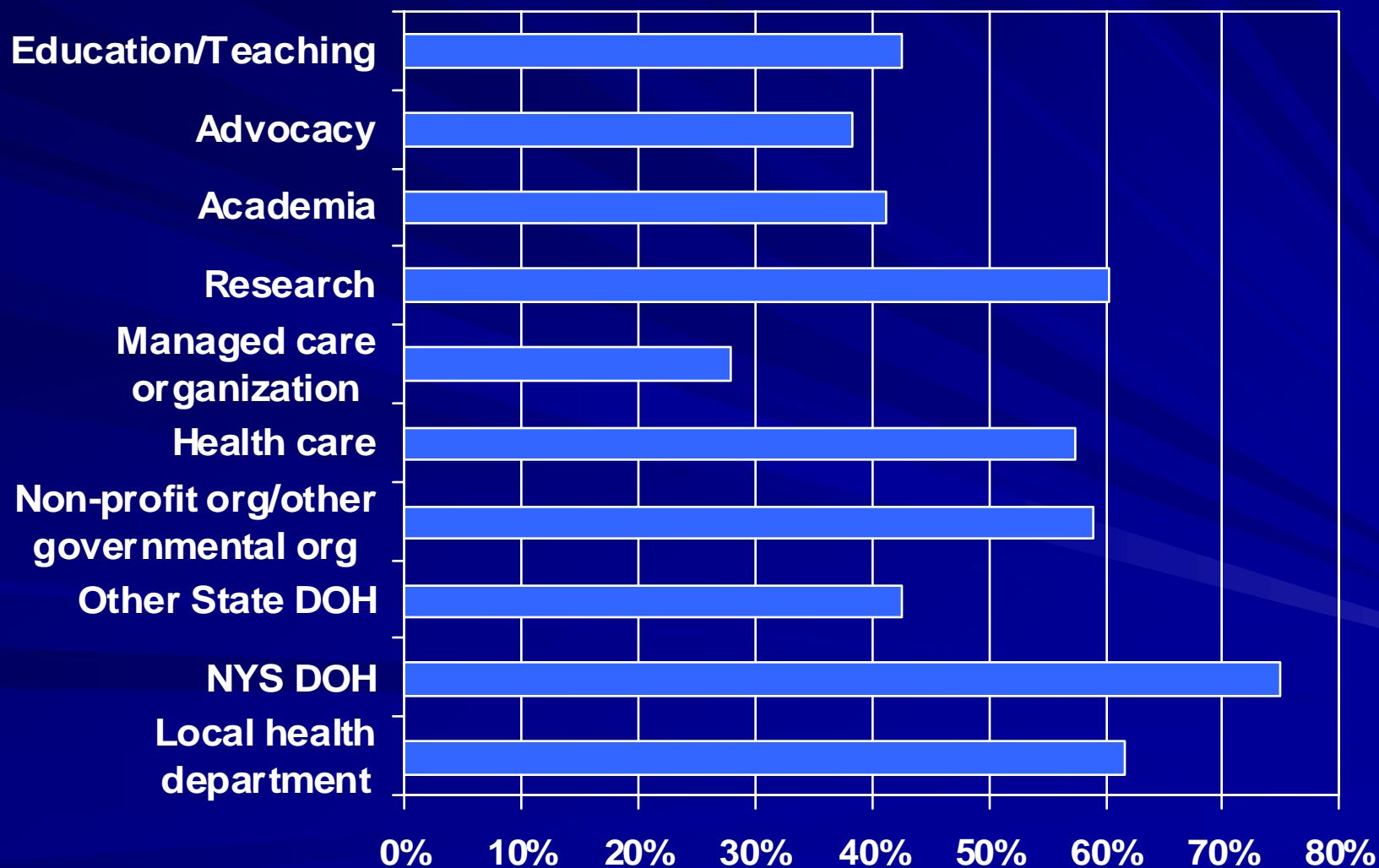


What barriers, if any, did you experience in pursuing and applying to graduate studies in public health?



Would you consider working in any of the following organizations/fields when you graduate?

Percent of Students Interested in Each Field



Conclusions

- Academic-practice partnerships are essential to efforts to strengthen the public health workforce.
- Academic-practice partnerships should include schools of public health PLUS schools that are a significant pipeline for state and local public health workers.
- Marketing efforts should focus on high school and college age students and “mid-career” professionals.
- Marketing efforts should feature “making a difference” and insurance and retirement benefits that come with government service.
- Leveraging resources from partner organizations is essential to this work.

Next Steps

- Refocus nine key strategy areas to smaller set of manageable strategies.
- Share best practices with partners.
- Engage a broader set of colleges and universities into partnership.
- Institutionalize systems change in state and local agencies.
- Seek resources in next budget/legislative session.

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