



Partners for Rural Impact

Demystifying College Speaking the Same Language



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**Do you know your
acronyms!**

Family Strengths



What Do We Believe?

- Families love their children
- Families want the best for their children
- Families are capable of supporting their children's education
- Families have strengths



Principles of Strengths-Based Family Engagement

- Focus on family strengths, not deficits.
- Promote two-way communication.
- Build trust and relationships over time.
- Honor and respect families' expertise on their children.



Our turn!

Helpful tips from college admission



Recent Surveys Show:

- Parents value student voice/opinions.
- Parents value safety (this includes safety of expression and community belonging).
- Parents are concerned about educational accessibility and individualization.
- Parents are concerned about political influence on education (not sure if this means they think there is too much, or if the changes the current admin are appropriate).
- As of 2024 the majority of parents agree that college education is beneficial.



RESPECT

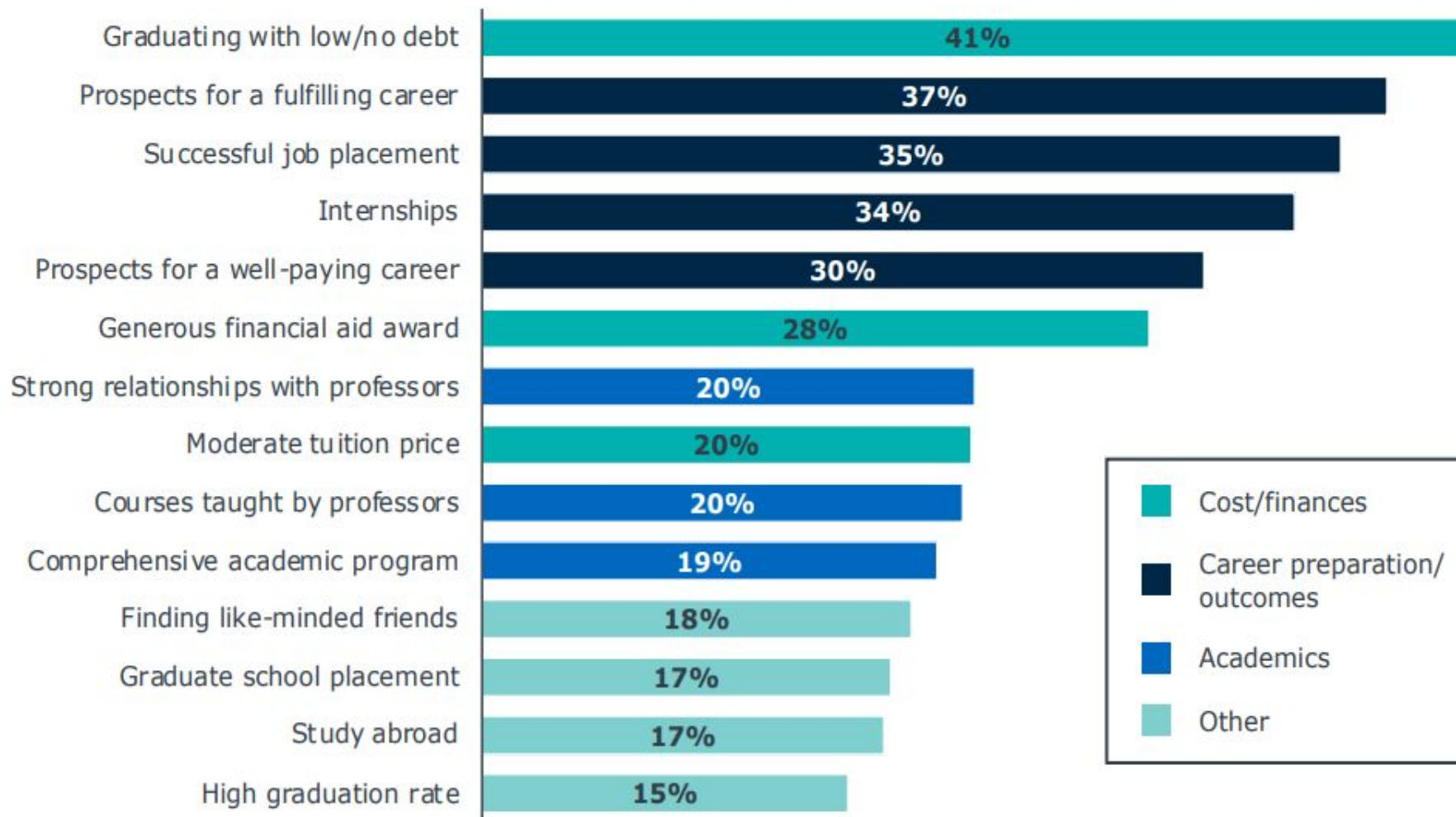
KINDNESS

HONESTY



While Low/No Debt Is the Top Indicator of Value, Career-Related Factors Closely Follow

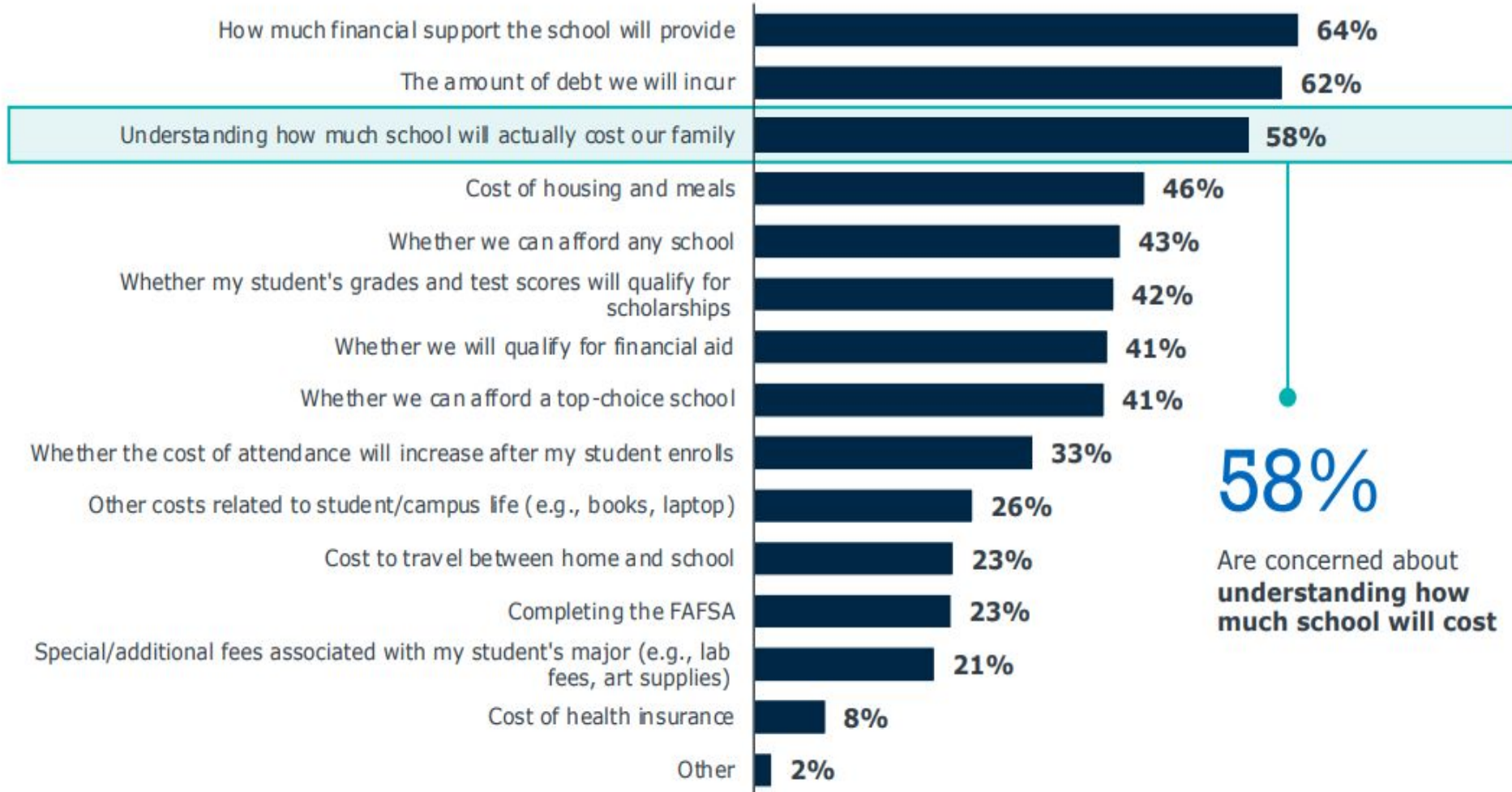
Q. What characteristics best represent the value of higher education for your student?, Responses $\geq 15\%$; n = 1,524



Understanding Cost Remains a Major Source of Anxiety

Q: What concerns do you have about the cost of your student's education?

Asked of parents who indicated concern about college costs or the amount of debt they may incur; n = 1,063



Avoiding pitfalls

FAFSA



Updates to the 2026-2027 FAFSA



FAFSA - Personal Circumstances

5 Student Personal Circumstances [See Notes page 21.]

Select all that apply.

- The student is currently serving on active duty in the U.S. armed forces for purposes other than training.
- The student is a veteran of the U.S. armed forces.
- The student has children or other people (excluding their spouse) who live with the student and receive more than half of their support from the student now and between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026.
- At any time since the student turned 13, they were an orphan (no living biological or adoptive parent).
- At any time since the student turned 13, they were a ward of the court.
- At any time since the student turned 13, they were in foster care.
- The student is or was a legally emancipated minor, as determined by a court in their state of residence.
- The student is or was in a legal guardianship with someone other than their parent or stepparent, as determined by a court in their state of residence.
- None of these apply.



FAFSA - Unaccompanied and Homeless

6 Student Homelessness

[See Notes page 21.]

At any time on or after July 1, 2024, was the student unaccompanied and either (1) homeless or (2) self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?

Yes No

If the answer is "Yes," did any of the following determine the student was homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?

Select all that apply.

- | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Director or designee of an emergency or transitional shelter, street outreach program, homeless youth drop-in center, or other program serving those experiencing homelessness | <input type="checkbox"/> The student's high school or school district homeless liaison or designee | <input type="checkbox"/> Director or designee of a project supported by a federal TRIO or GEAR UP program grant | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial aid administrator (FAA) | <input type="checkbox"/> None of these apply |
|---|--|---|--|--|



FAFSA - Unusual Circumstances

7 Student Unusual Circumstances

► See "Can I skip any questions?", on page 4.

Do unusual circumstances prevent the student from contacting their parents or would contacting their parents pose a risk to the student? *This information will help us evaluate the student's ability to pay for school.* Yes No

A student may be experiencing unusual circumstances if they:

- Left home due to an abusive or threatening environment;
- Are abandoned by or estranged from their parents;
- Have refugee or asylee status and are separated from their parents, or their parents are displaced in a foreign country;
- Are a victim of human trafficking;
- Are incarcerated, or their parents are incarcerated, and contact with the parents would pose a risk to the student; or
- Are otherwise unable to contact or locate their parents.

If the student does not have a safe, stable place to live because of such circumstances, they may be considered a homeless youth and should review the answer to question 6 about being unaccompanied and homeless.



A Family's Guide to College



Stick it to us!

