

Enhancing Accessibility Empowering Marginalized Students to Utilize Academic Support Services

Walaeddine Hounane
Healthcare Studies

INTRODUCTION

The Center for Accessible Academic Resources (CAAR), located in the Frederick E. Berry Library on North Campus is dedicated to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for everyone at Salem State University. CAAR's goal is to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities, both in the classroom and throughout campus. CAAR provides tutoring, supplemental instruction, and specialized assistance for students, equipping them with the resources and support they need to reach their academic goals and thrive.

INTERNSHIP PROJECT OBJECTIVE

- Explore the challenges marginalized students face in accessing academic resources.
- Provide recommendations to improve accessibility and utilization.
- Spread awareness and educate students about the accommodations and services that CAAR can provide for all students.

RELATED LITERATURE

“An inclusive university environment can be fostered by ensuring that there are Native Americans faculty or staff members who can serve as role models and mentors, a diverse student body that includes Native Americans students as potential role models of academic success, class discussions and learning activities that include Native American topics and culture with all students being encouraged to write or present on related topics, and presentations of Native American art and other creative endeavors and recognition of Native American events on campus.” (Chee et al, 2019, p. 67)

“When disability is discussed, it is usually focused on basic disability-related accommodations such as interpreting, captions, or a ramp. However, as Dolmage points out, the issue is that “accommodations are accommodations: they cannot promise anything like actual, real access”. Accommodations are also individualized rather than a systemic approach to access. Staying in the accommodation mindset maintains the disconnect from disability as diversity.” (Saia, 2023, p. 794)

MATERIALS & METHODS

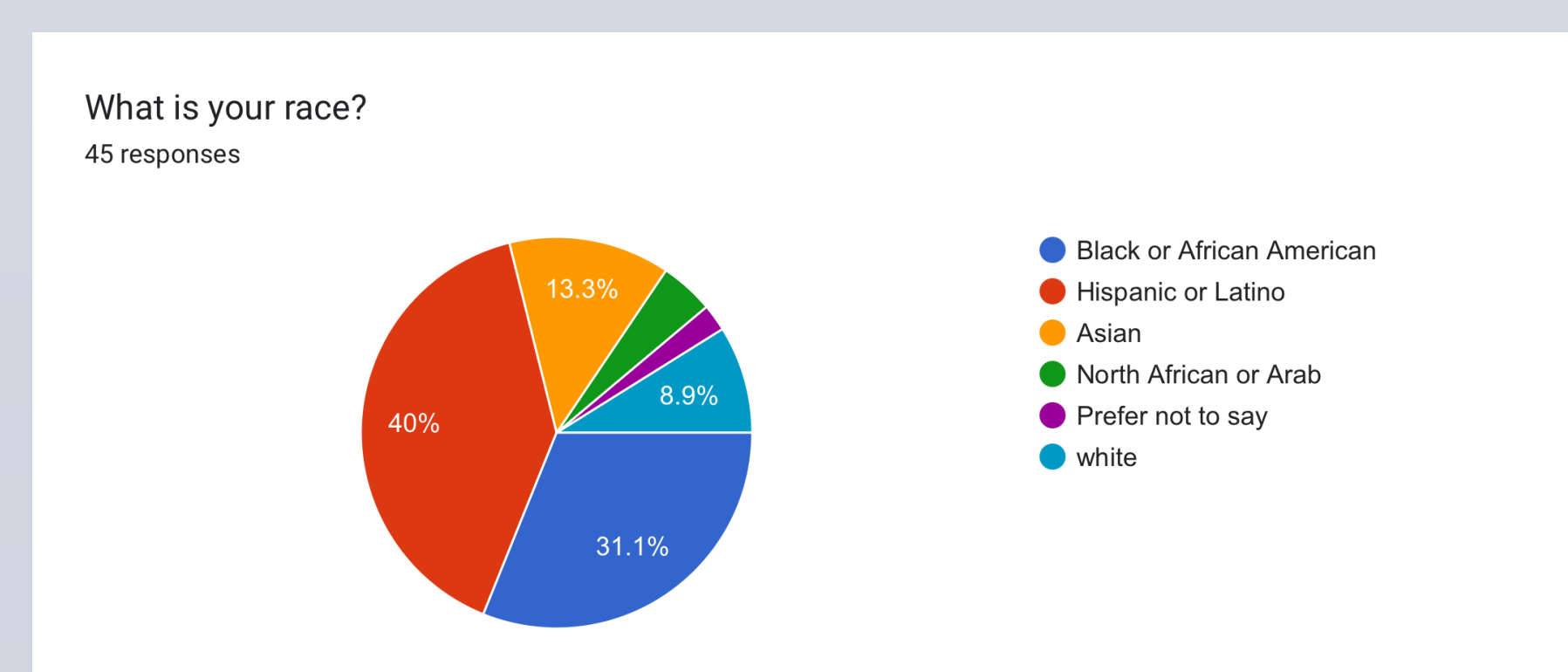
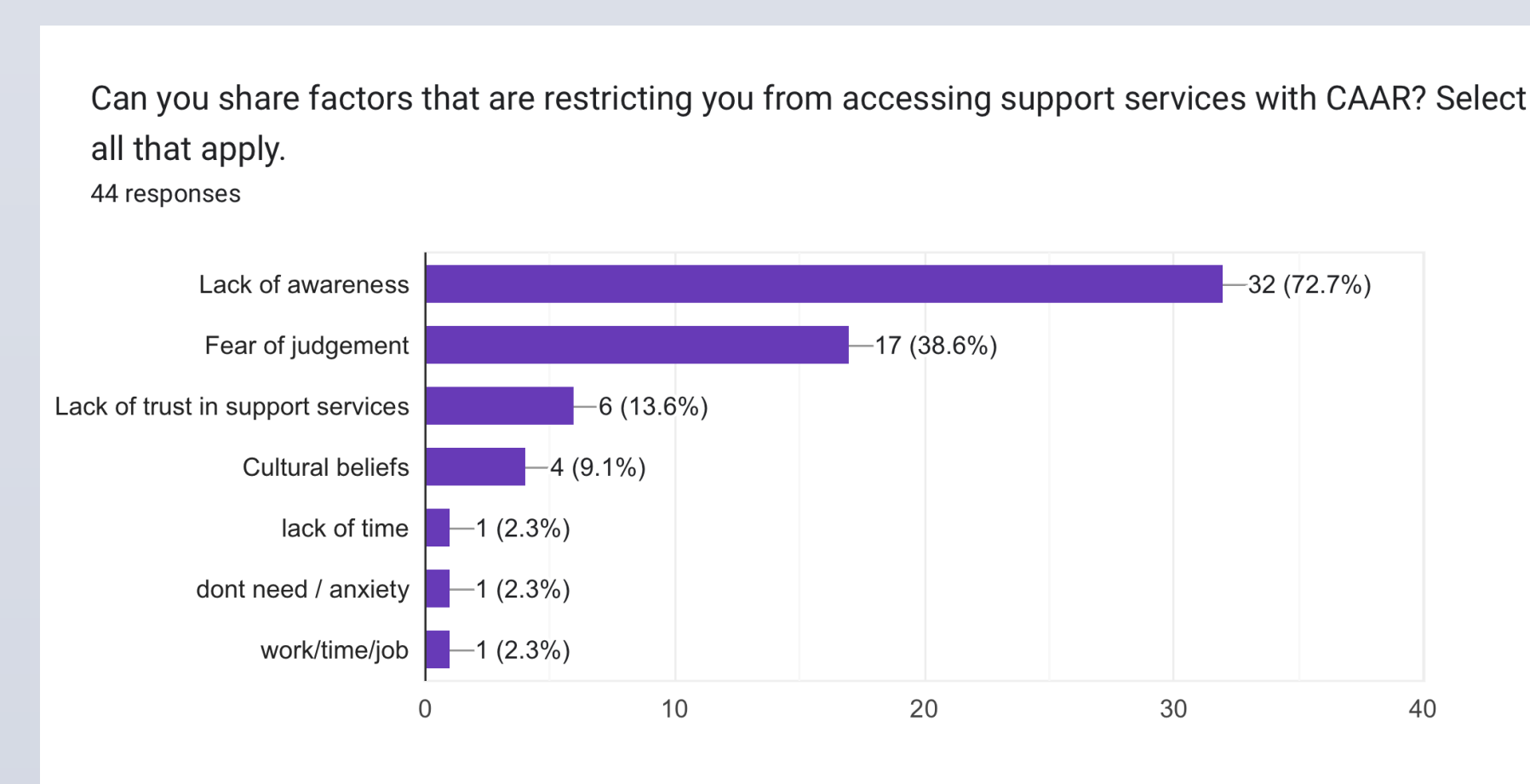
- To spread awareness of CAAR and receive student feedback the following steps were taken:
Survey Creation
- Formulated a 10 question survey addressing student awareness and usage of support services
- Utilized Google forms to design and format the survey
- Survey Distribution
- Organized two tabling events, one on North Campus in the Library and one on Central Campus at Starbucks. Surveys were offered both on paper and electronically via QR code

In order to provide an engaging tabling event we provided the following materials:

- Office Postcards
- Salem State gear such as a water bottle, sweatshirt and campus stickers providing a giveaway opportunity
- Printed QR code with the opportunity for individuals to register, meet CAAR staff and upload documentations to receive accommodations



RESULTS



CONCLUSIONS

- The tabling events on both North and South Campus were successful in raising awareness about the CAAR Center while also collecting meaningful feedback from students. By engaging with students in high-traffic areas, we were able to connect with a diverse group and gain insight into why some may not be using the center. Through conversations and surveys, students shared common barriers such as lack of awareness, fear of judgment, or cultural perceptions around seeking support. These in-person interactions not only increased the center's visibility but also provided valuable data to help address these concerns. Overall, the events effectively combined outreach and research to strengthen student support services.



REFERENCES

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