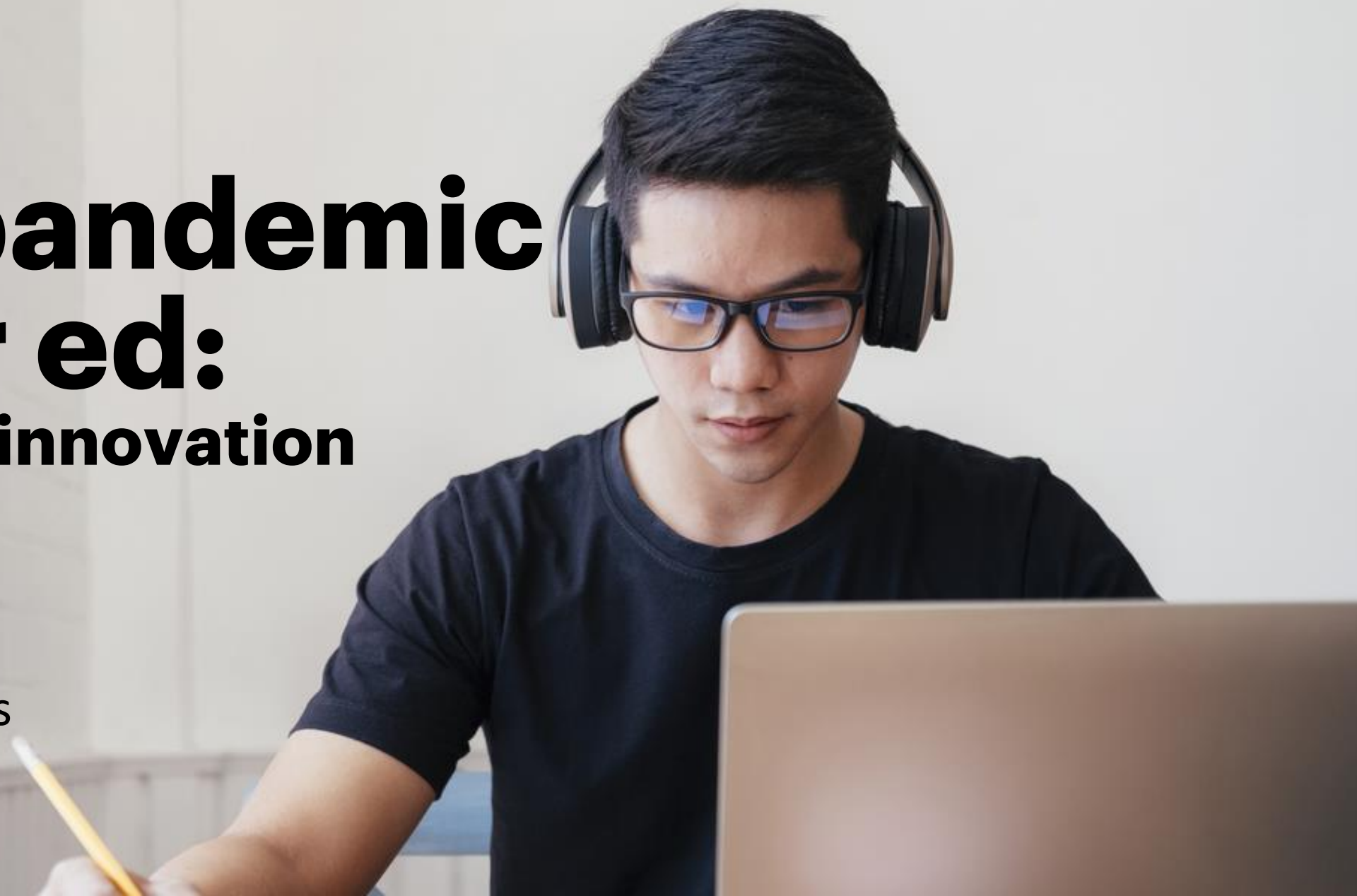




Post-pandemic higher ed: ushering in innovation

An interview series
February 2021



Nearly 50% of college and university presidents anticipate making difficult, but transformational, changes in their institutions in the next 12 months

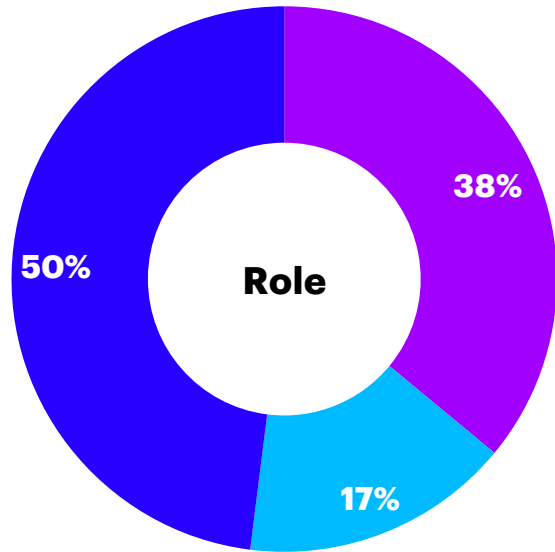
According to recent Inside Higher Ed surveys.

Changes might include lasting shifts in the program portfolio or even sharing administrative services with other institutions.

We embarked on an interview series with institutional leaders July – September 2020 to learn more about what lies behind these numbers.

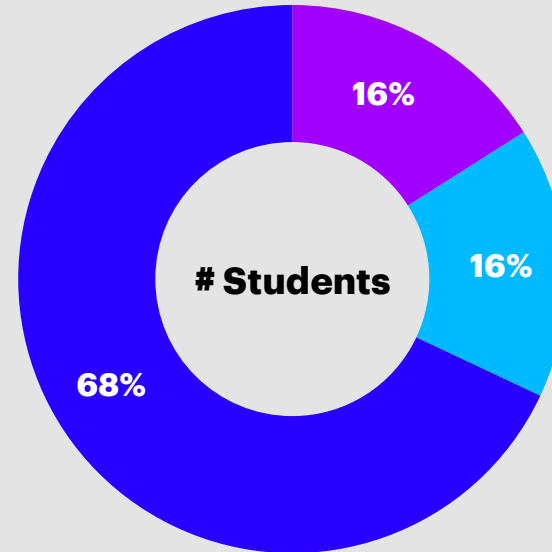
We also conducted a survey of higher education employees that included insights into their perspectives on the post-pandemic workplace.

We talked to leaders...

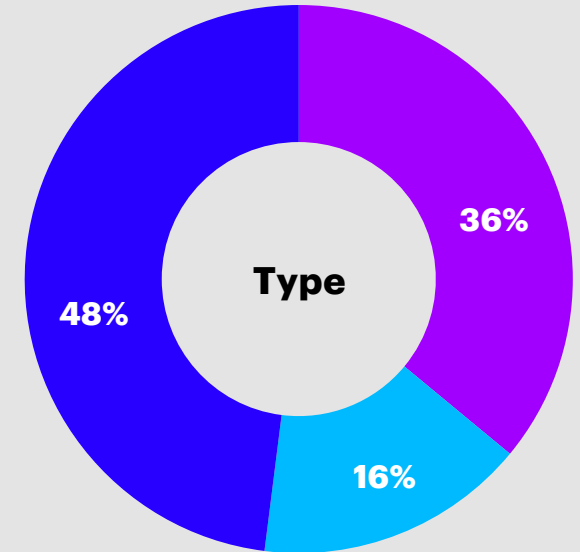


VP of Enrollment, Innovation, Other
President
CFO/COO/VP Finance

...at institutions of diverse sizes and types across the nation



<5k
5-15k
>15k



Public
System Office
Private

Note: Information on the workforce survey methodology can be found at our full publication, [Public service as a career of choice](#). Results in this document pertain to the US higher education subsegment of that survey

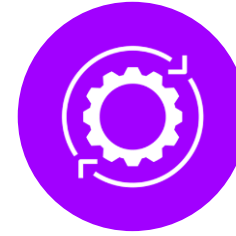
We set out to understand...



...permanent
changes
to education
delivery



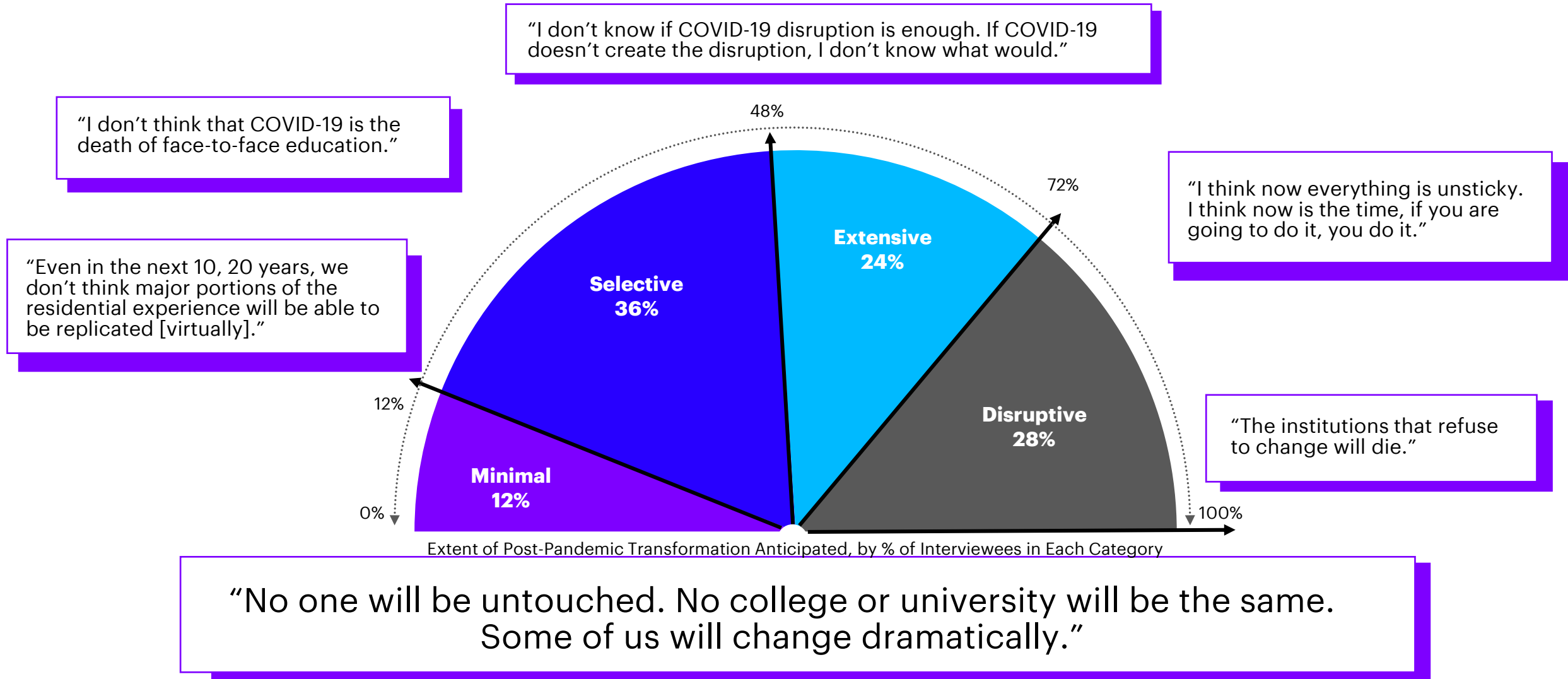
...evolving
approaches
to serving and
engaging
students



...the
transformation
of operating
models

...in a post-pandemic world

Interviewees predicted a wide spectrum of transformation



Enriched education delivery

Quality of education will be enriched for both traditional and non-traditional students as necessity spurs innovation in education delivery.

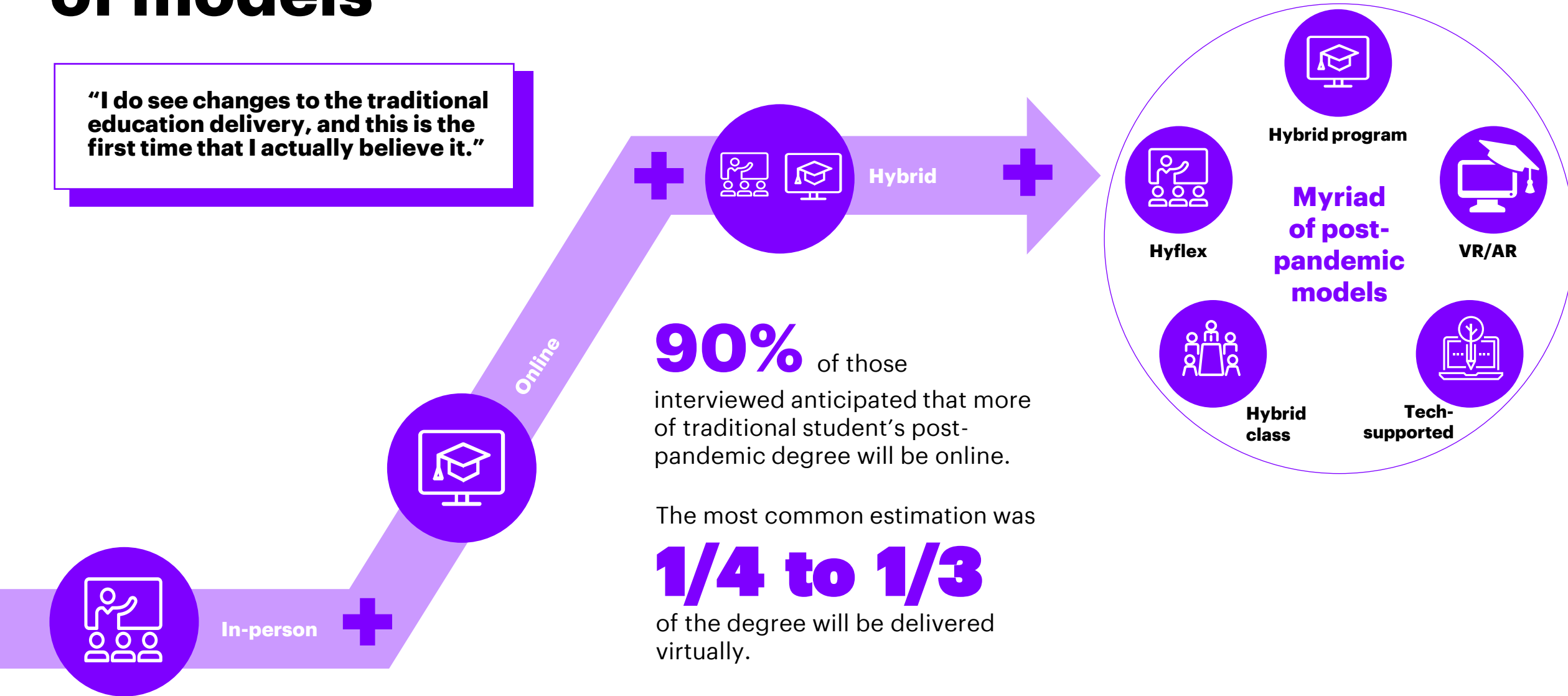
The result will be more varied, tech-enabled and tailored education to meet the needs of different student segments across their lifetimes.



“How you receive your education has been impacted by COVID-19 for generations.”

Education delivery will explode into a myriad of models

"I do see changes to the traditional education delivery, and this is the first time that I actually believe it."



Tech-enabled faculty are championing this innovation explosion

Teaching & learning centers internal to institutions have taken on the enormous task of upskilling faculty through the pandemic.



90%

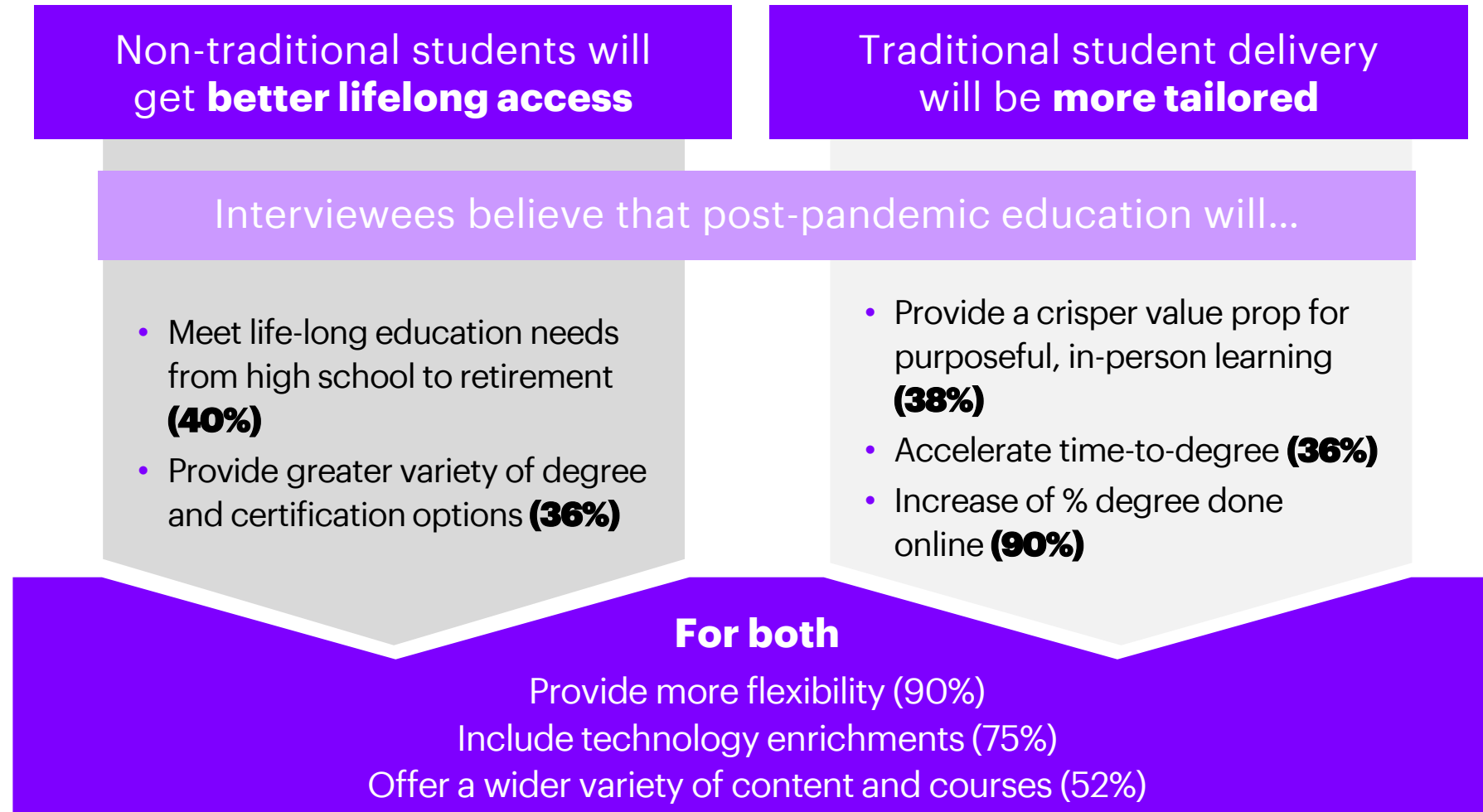
of interviewees said that **faculty are now more open / more innovative** in approaches to leveraging technology.

“Maybe 20% of the faculty...had interacted with the [teaching and learning] center before COVID-19. And now it's 100%. That has changed our DNA.”

“It’s taking down the walls of fear of being able to deliver it for the first time.”

“Now [technology has] become more than a tool. It’s become a fundamental change in the delivery of pedagogy.”

Education will be enriched for both traditional and non-traditional students in different ways



Supporting and engaging students

Post-pandemic student support will be more purposeful, as COVID-19 has illuminated where exactly the immense value of in-person student experiences lie – and where it is preferable for student support services to be delivered virtually.



“Our students want to be here... they still want to be in person or on campus.”

“Students see in-person [administration] as **annoying rather than a concept of high quality [service].”**

COVID-19 has illuminated where in-person student interactions are needed – and where they are not.



Clubs & affinity groups



Greek life / residence life



Graduation



Sports

Socialize and build community in-person
In-person is preferred for social activities involving groups and/or un-curated interactions among peers.



Academic advising / tutoring



Mental health / tele-health



Student administration services



Career services

Provide 1:1 support remotely
Where convenience and privacy are prioritized, such as personal or administrative support interactions with institutional employees, virtual delivery is preferred



COVID-19 has clarified the value for in-person delivery of student activities...



Clubs & affinity groups



Greek life / residence life



Graduation



Sports



"It's really hard to do student organizations virtually."

"There is a real thirst for in-person interaction."

"The biggest complaint I'm hearing now is – 'great my student's there... but there's zero for her to do. And how does she get engaged?'"



**...and illuminated
how student
support can be
improved through
virtual delivery**



Academic advising / tutoring



Mental health / tele-health



Student administration services



Career services

"Career services can be done online. And there are some students who don't want to come in to do it and would prefer to do it through their computer."

"We're using the technology and seeing a growth in participation. That's amazing."

"Students are actually working at their records between 11pm and 2am....its an opportunity for us to have 24-hr very flexible time."

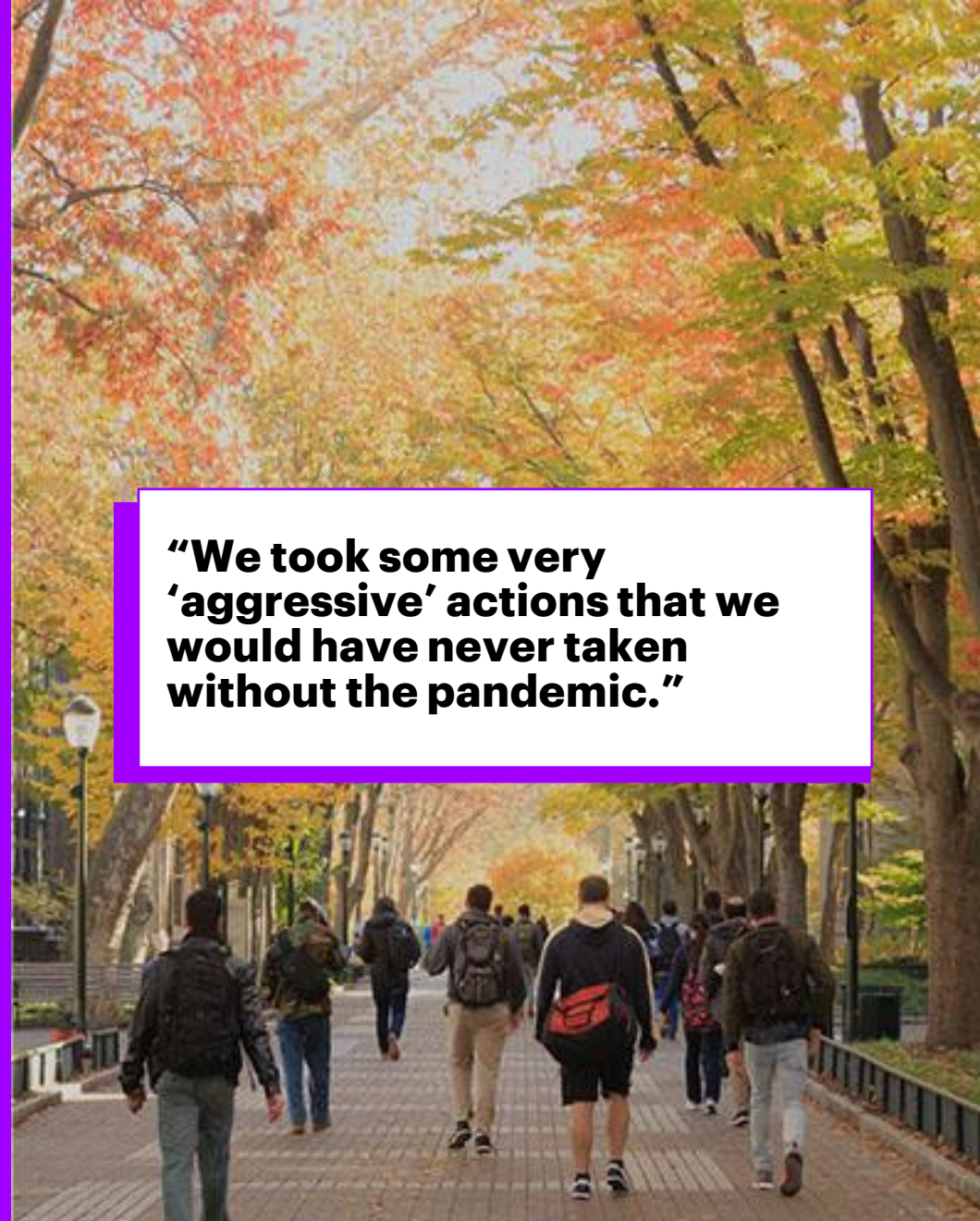


Transformed ways of operating

Institutions have been spurred into exploring new ways of operating, from automation to shared services and outsourcing.

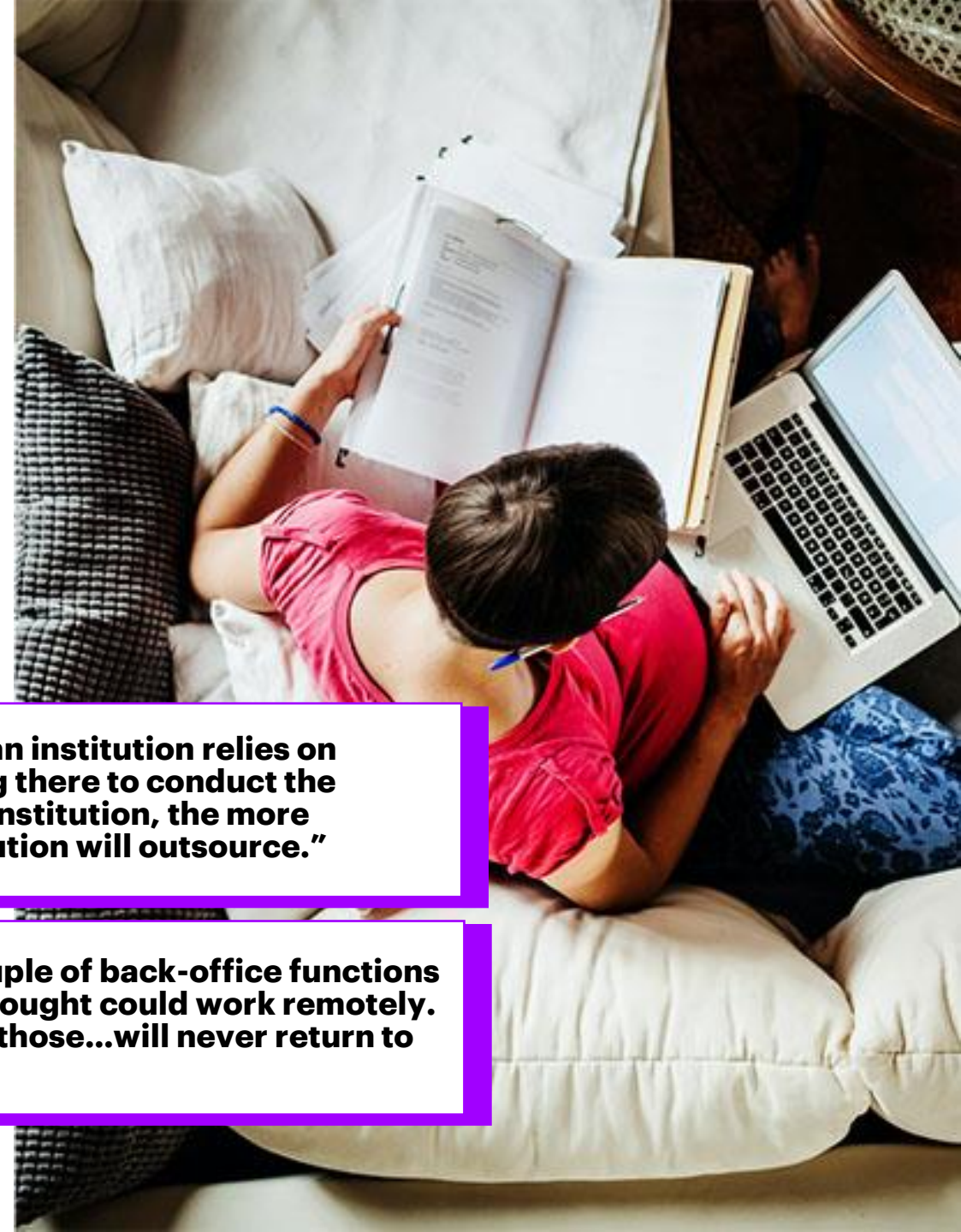
A more permanently remote administrative workforce and IT modernization are removing barriers to change.

“We took some very ‘aggressive’ actions that we would have never taken without the pandemic.”



Remote work is here to stay, helping to evaporate one hurdle to administrative transformation

All interviewees expected more staff to be more remote more often, with the most frequent response being that **20% of staff may not come back in person.**



“We are kind of amazed at how well [the back office] is working virtually...We really don’t need to be there physically.”

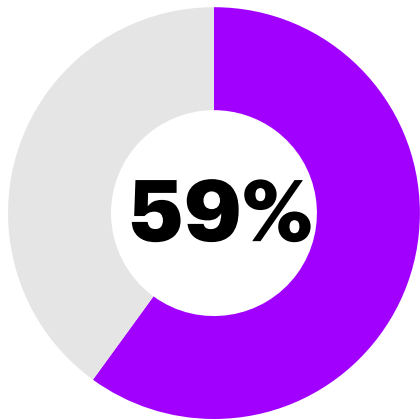
“The more that an institution relies on people not being there to conduct the business of the institution, the more likely that institution will outsource.”

“We hear the ‘I walk down the hall and I sit with so-and-so’ [as an objection to shared services]. Now they definitely don’t walk down the hall.”

“There are a couple of back-office functions that we never thought could work remotely. And a couple of those...will never return to campus”



Most higher ed employees want to work in a hybrid or remote capacity and believe they can be effective doing so



Believe their job can be completed just as effectively remotely

This rises to 68% for those younger than 35

According to the survey results, the #1 thing higher ed institutions can do to create an attractive career option is to offer flexible/part-time working arrangements

73%

want to increase how much they work remotely

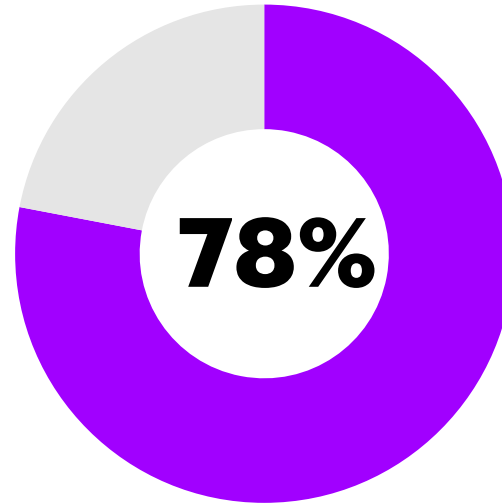
23%

Do not expect their role to revert back to being office based

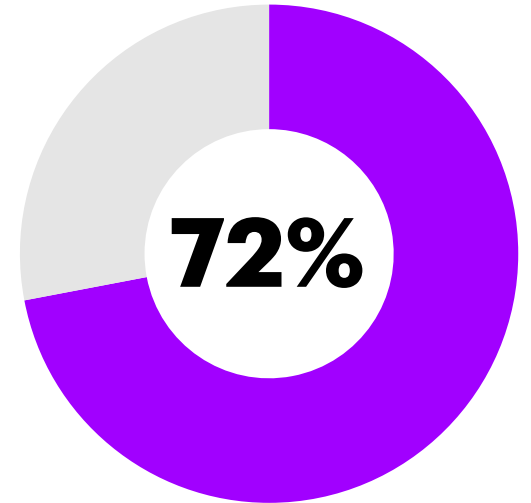




Institutions are therefore encouraging this remote work trend



say their institution encourages and supports remote work



say their institution is making investments for remote work

This is especially true for institutions with 1k-10k employees

Process automation and standardization is the first step

All interviewees who discussed the topic thought automation was critical to their future transformation plans. Of those, **60% cited modern technology as a driver of the automation potential.**

“My goal is to be highly standardized so it doesn’t matter who is doing the function or where they reside.”

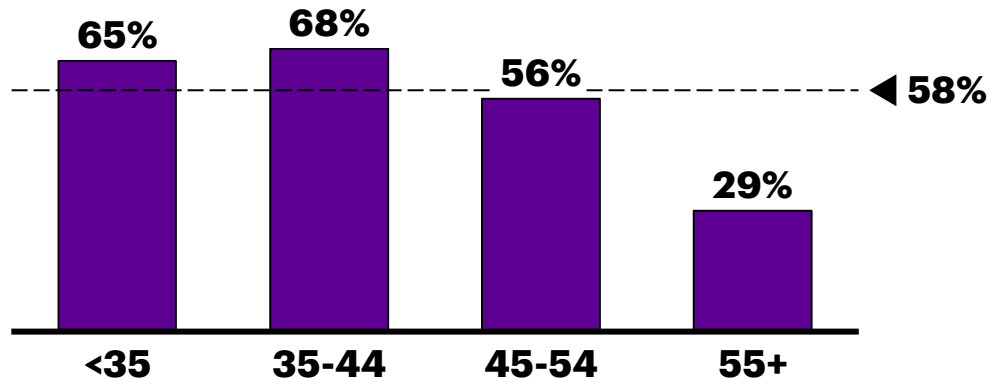
“Let’s get rid of work and standardize what you can’t get rid of.”

“If it can be automated, most people don’t feel very engaged in that kind of [work].”

“There will be tremendous workload reduction through automation.”



Automation is taking hold, and employees, particularly those mid-career or younger, are becoming more comfortable



% surveyed who say they are more comfortable with machines doing routine tasks (by age group)

83%

of mid-sized institutions say the use of automation at their institution has increased

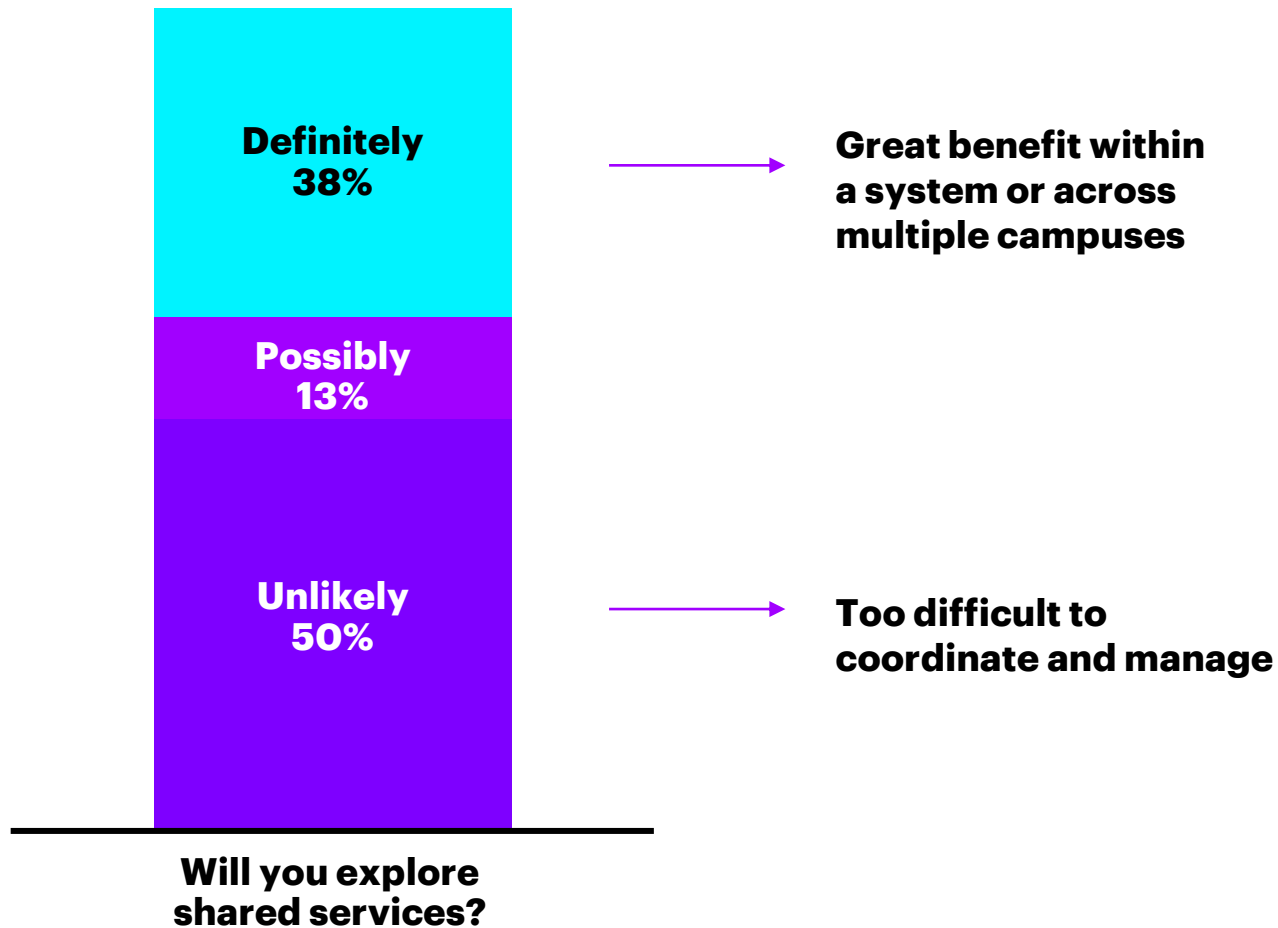
65%

of those surveyed say automation of routine tasks has freed up time to focus on more important work.

63%

Say their institution has announced an increase in investment for automation

Attitudes toward shared services are polarized, with traction centered at the system or multi-campus level

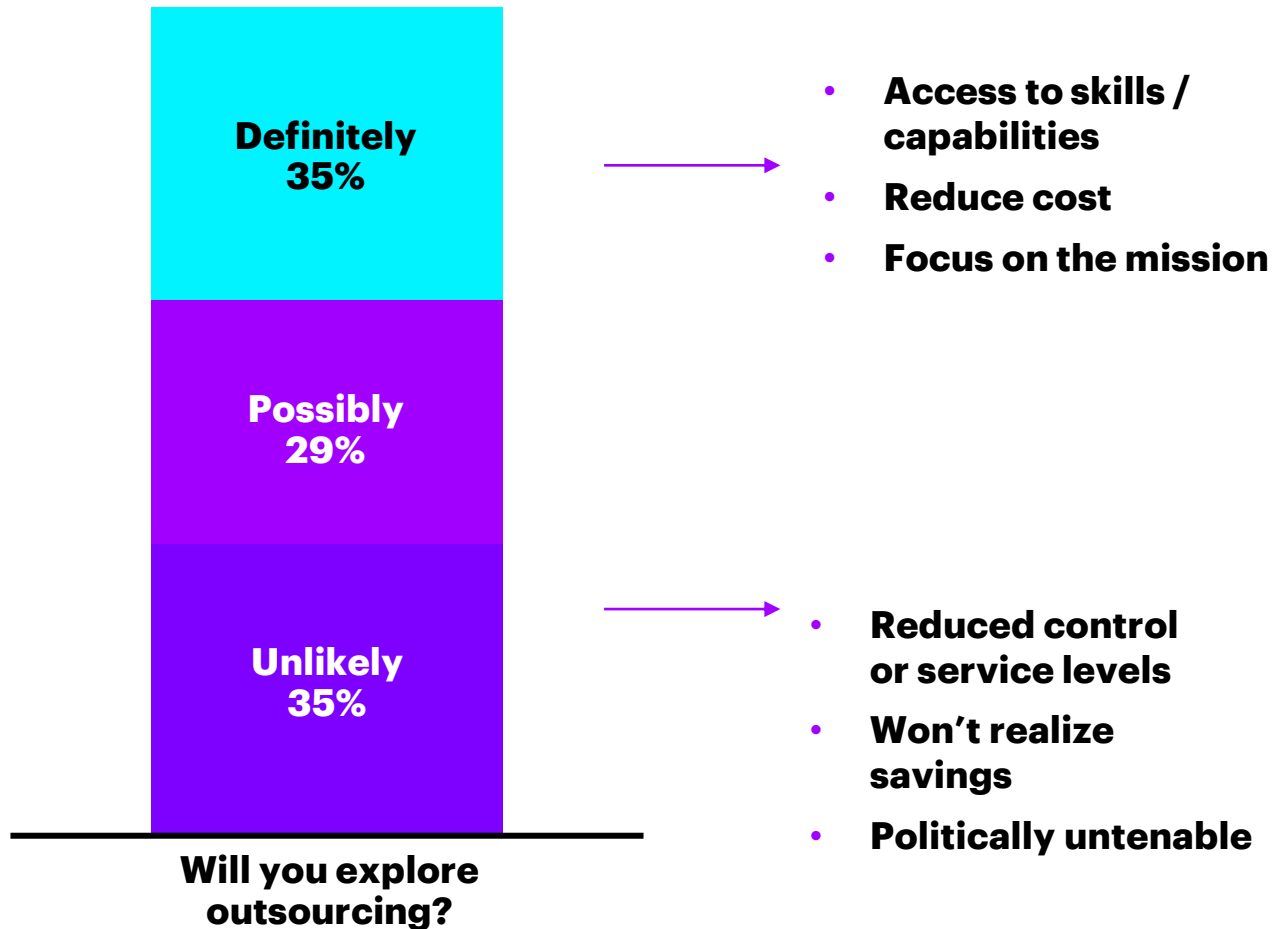


"If you are trying to convince people to leverage a shared service for anything, you better be able to deliver at a high level of quality."

"Outsourcing will be more common than shared services."

"Our focus has got to be on getting the work out of the system, not on trying to force a shared services model."

There is a mixed attitude toward outsourcing's ability to provide service, quality, and value



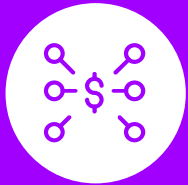
"I'm going to find a vendor to outsource that to or a technology I can automate it with. And we're just going to keep our attention on what's really our mission and core."

"In a heavily unionized organization, the term outsourcing is sort of the third rail."

**How can institutions
navigate through this
transformation to thrive in
a post-pandemic era?**

Accenture's education offerings look beyond fall and equip colleges and universities to thrive in a post-pandemic world

Financial sustainability & operating model



Workforce of the Future

- Health organization

Zero Based Reboot of Financial Structure

- Large private research institution

Shared Services

- Public university system

Institution trust



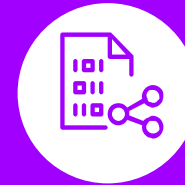
Branding and Institutional Marketing

- Exclusively online institution

Social Media Sentiment

- Accenture's Student Sentiment Study

Safety & security



Contact Tracing, Monitoring, Tracking and Managing and Vaccine Management

- Various states and counties

Capacity / Density Management

- Large private research institution

Cybersecurity

- Large private research institution

Academic programs & student experience



Program Portfolio Reboot

- Large private institution

Enrolment Analytics & Recruitment Website Assessment

- Private special-focus institution

Digital Student Engagement Platform

- Large private research institution

Contact Us



Jonathan Fry
Managing Director
North America Education Lead
jonathan.a.fry@accenture.com



Samantha Fisher
Managing Director
Education Strategy Lead
samantha.fisher@accenture.com

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