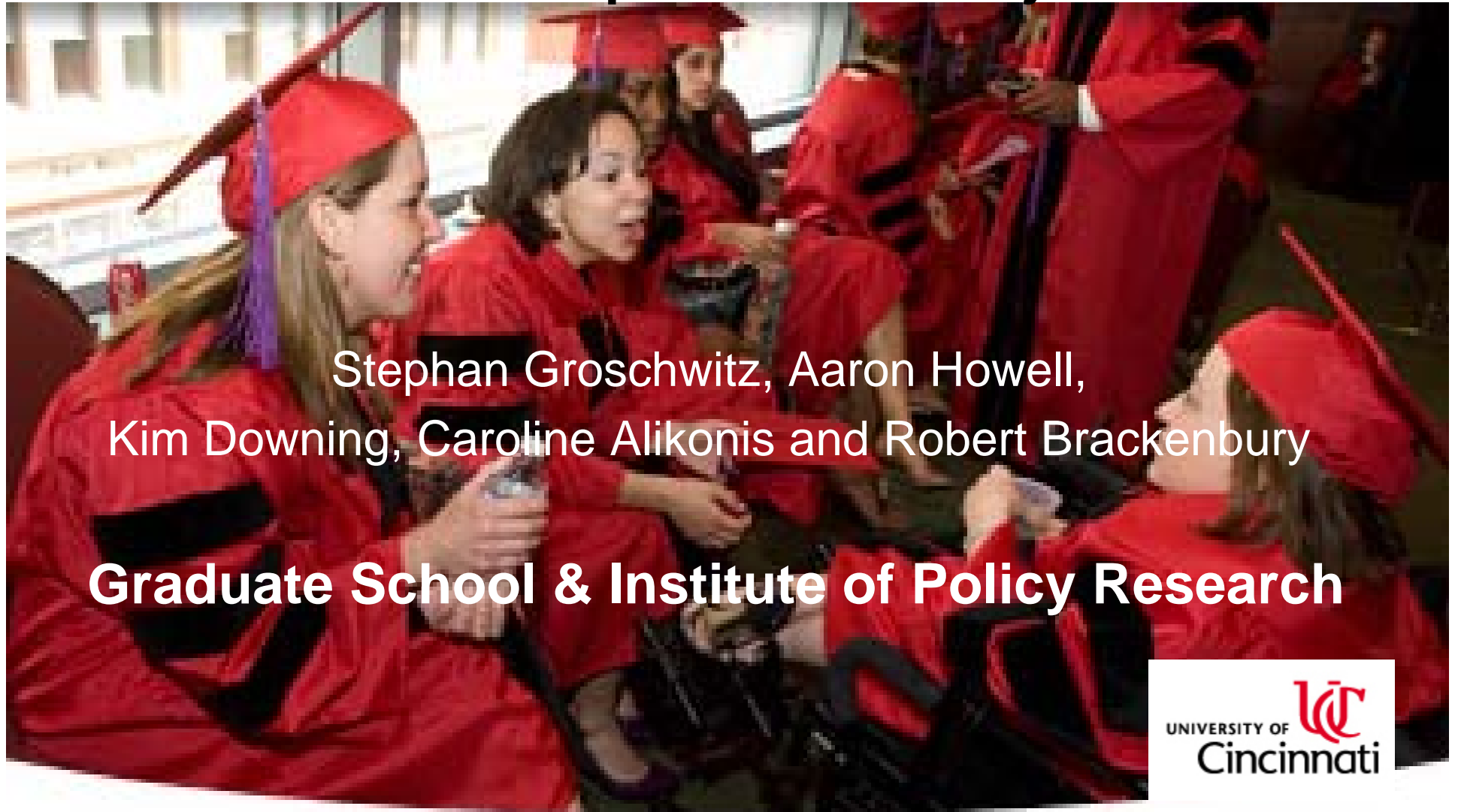


PhD Completion Project



Stephan Groschwitz, Aaron Howell,
Kim Downing, Caroline Alikonis and Robert Brackenbury

Graduate School & Institute of Policy Research

University of Cincinnati PhD Completion Project

Two Components

- Data Collection, Analysis and Dissemination
- Students Expectations and Experiences: Longitudinal Study



Longitudinal Study Characteristics

- Fall 2005 incoming Ph.D. students in 27 UC Doctoral Programs
- A cohort of 164 students in the study
- Students surveyed once per year until they exit their program (leave or complete)
- Students notified by e-mail to complete surveys via a dedicated Web site

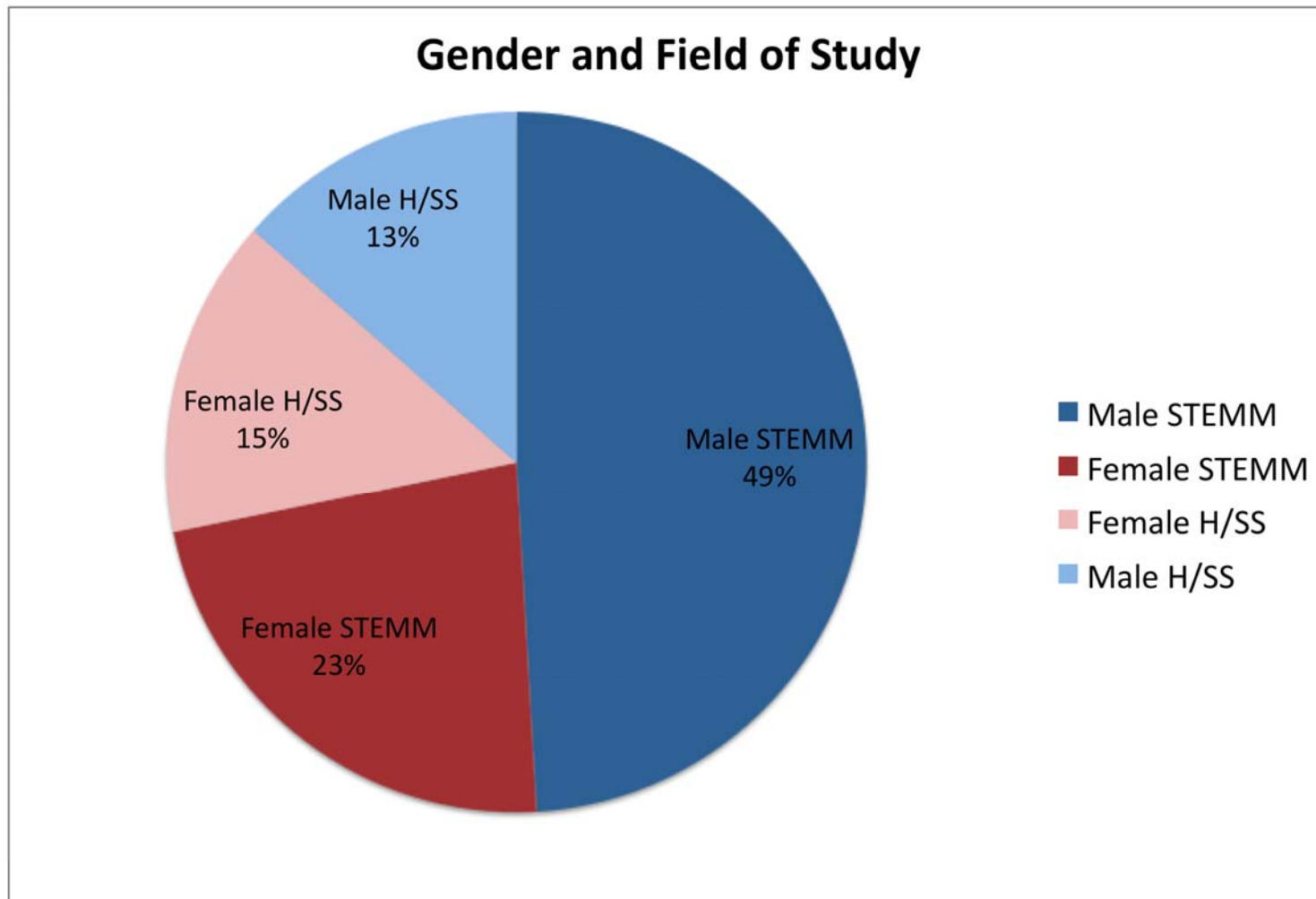
Doctoral Programs in Study (27 programs)

- Chemistry
- College of Business
- College of Engineering
- College of Medicine
- College of Nursing
- Communication Sciences and Disorders
- Criminal Justice
- English and Comparative Literature
- Geology
- Physics
- Psychology
- Sociology

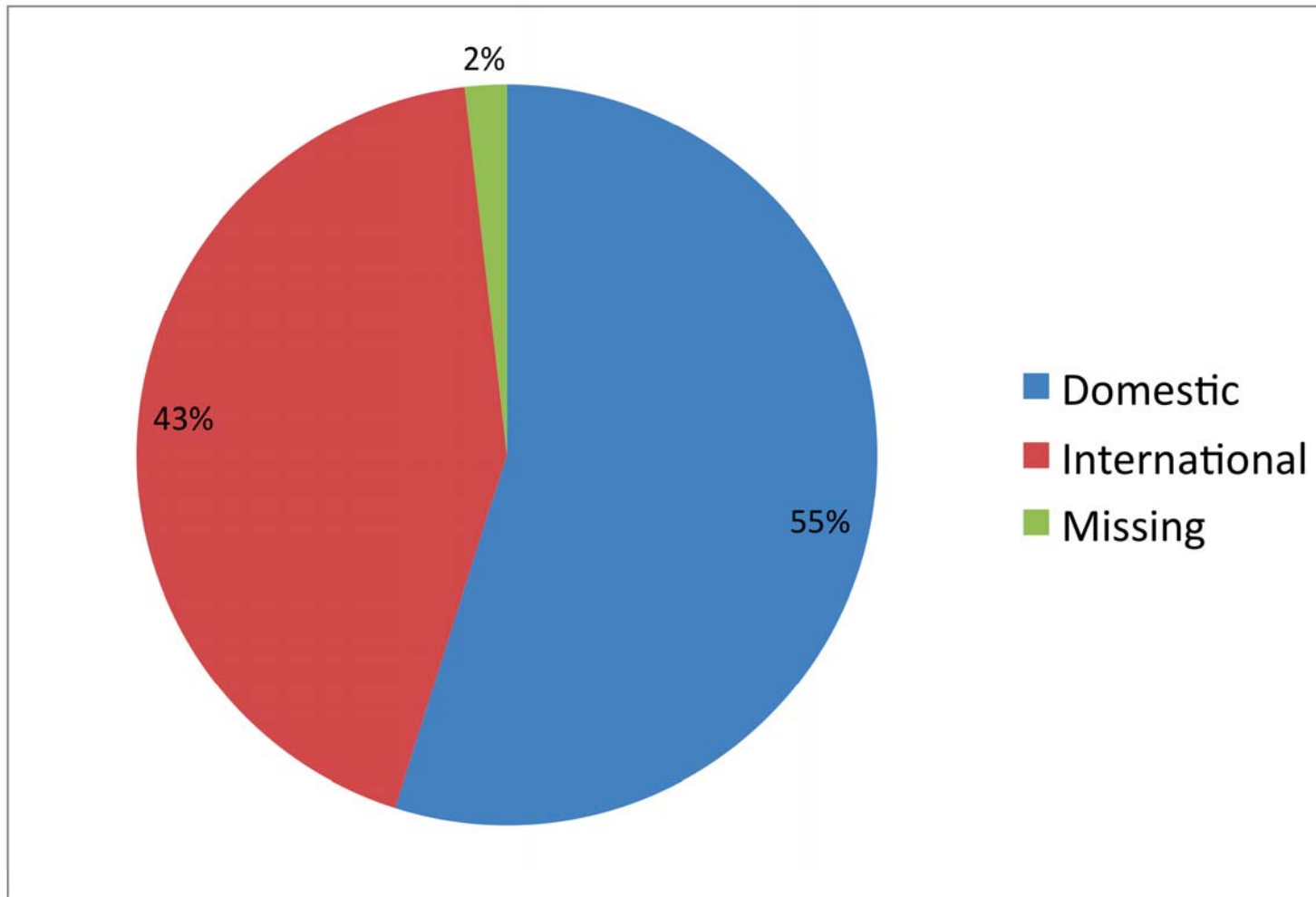
Longitudinal Study

- Survey Topics Each Year
 - Expectations of graduate program, program curriculum, advising/mentoring, resources and graduate environment.
 - Important factors in completing a degree.
 - Career aspirations.
- Specific Topics
 - Year 1: Reasons considering doctoral program; Reasons choosing UC.
 - Year 2: Reasons for not continuing.
 - Year 3: Progress in program -- qualifying exams; dissertation.
 - Year 4: Experience and expectations; experience of non-continuing students; advising.

Cohort Characteristics

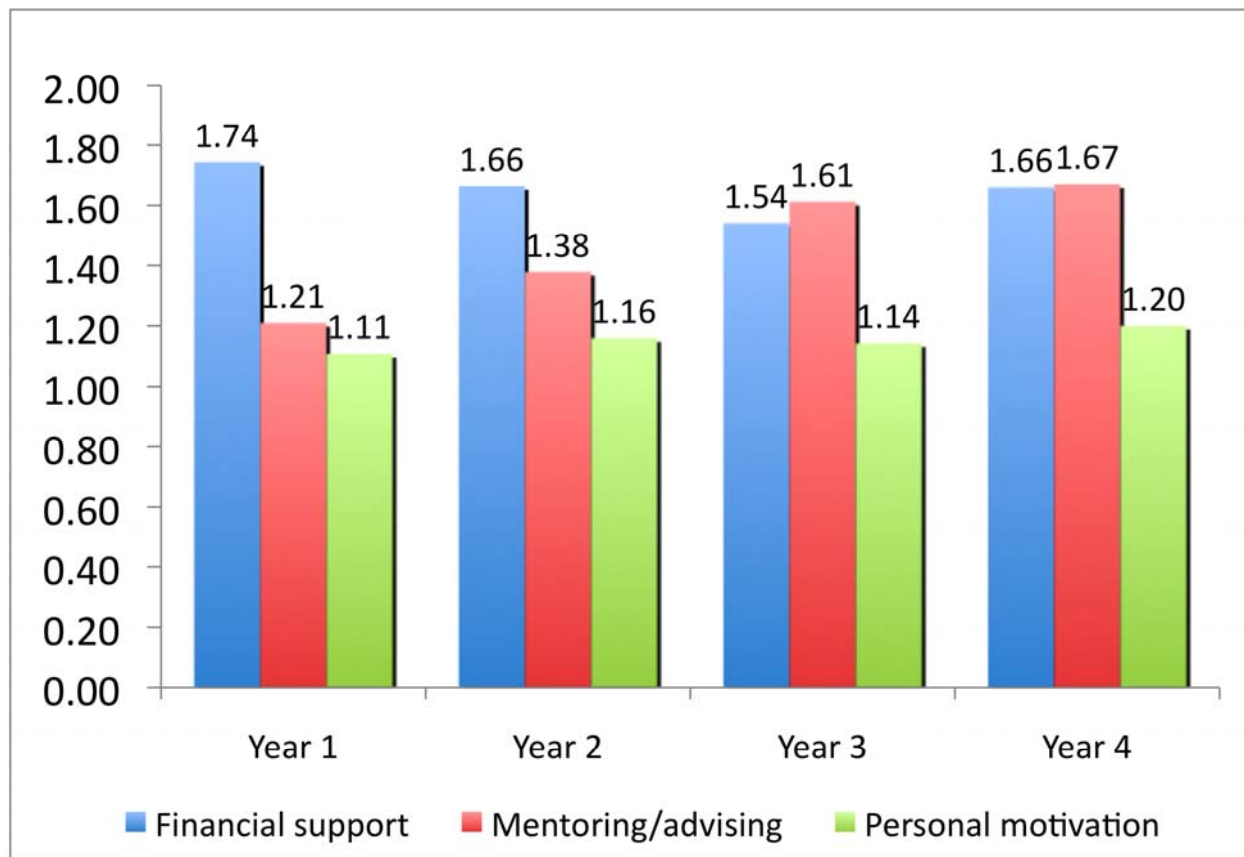


Cohort Characteristics: International Students



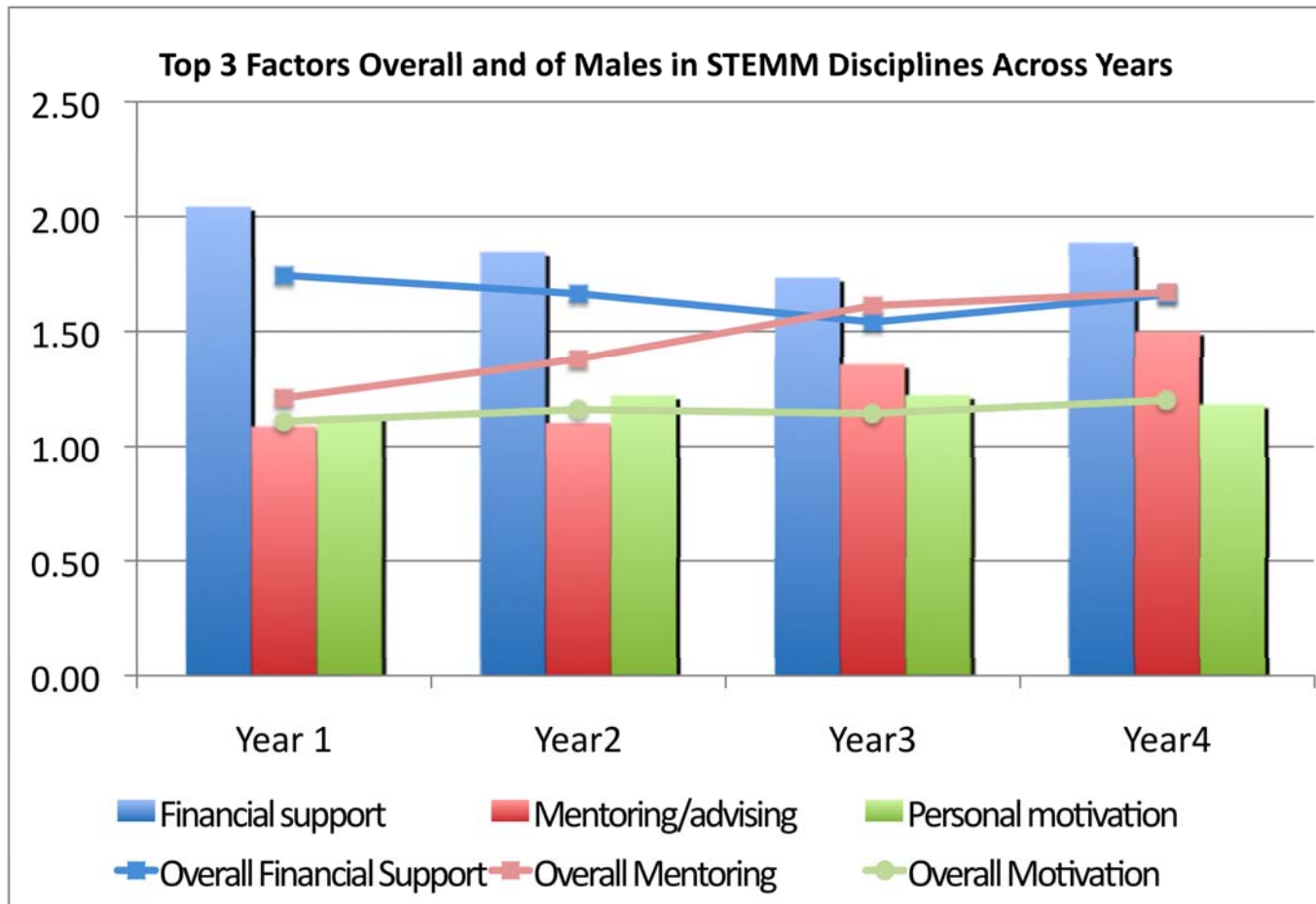
Importance of factors in ability to complete doctoral degree

(Scored ranking all three “most important” responses)



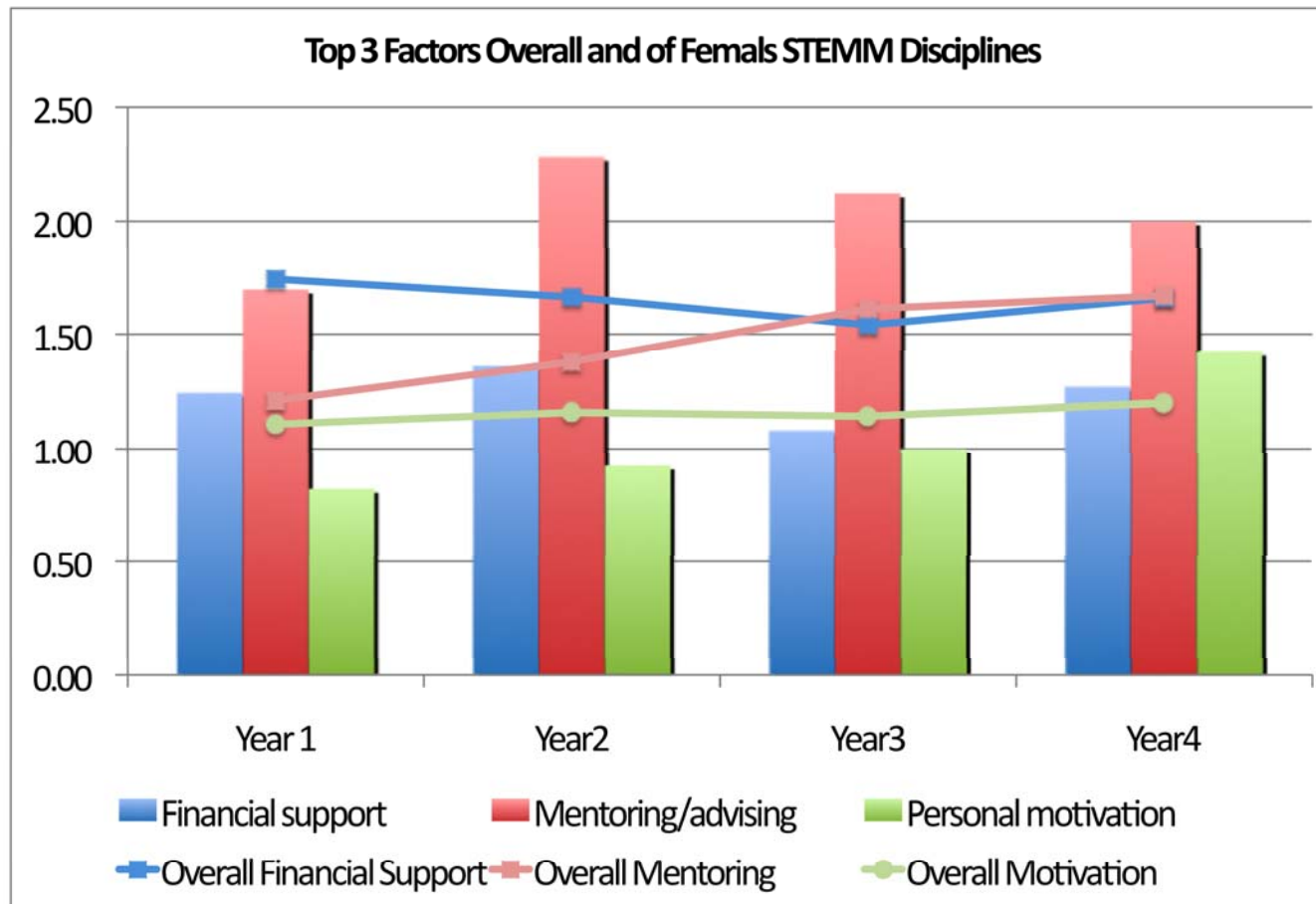
Importance of factors in ability to complete

(Scored ranking all three “most important” responses)



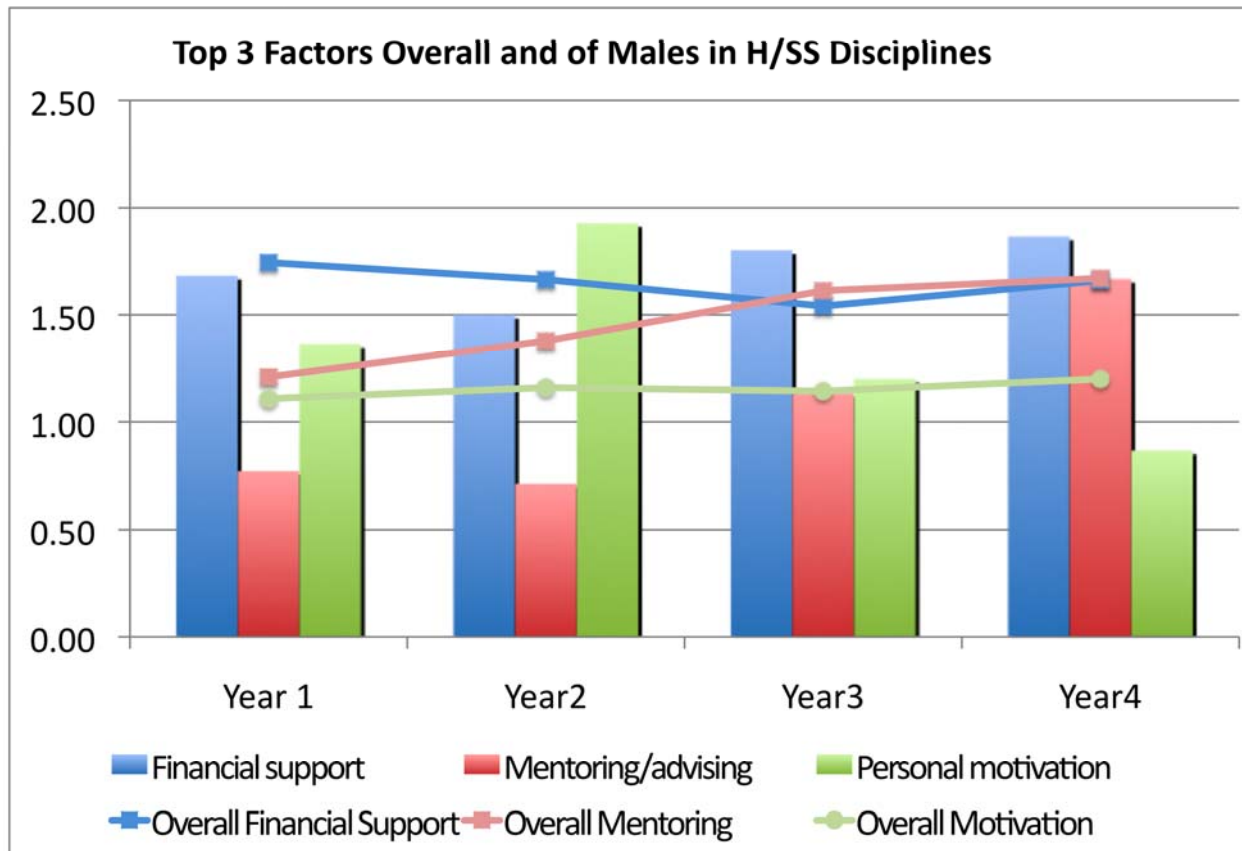
Importance of factors in ability to complete

(Scored ranking all three “most important” responses)



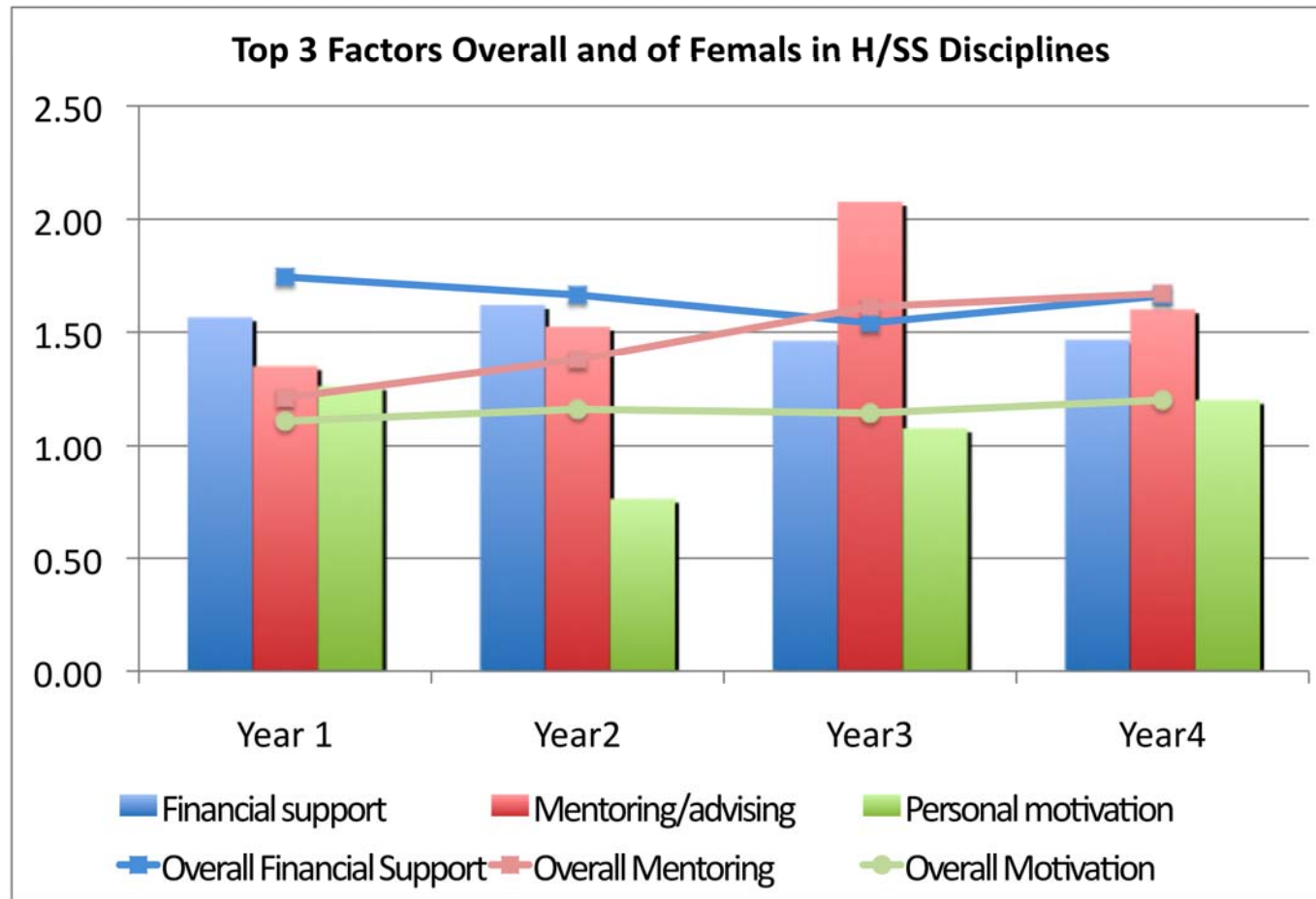
Importance of factors in ability to complete

(Scored ranking all three “most important” responses)



Importance of factors in ability to complete

(Scored ranking all three “most important” responses)





Summary

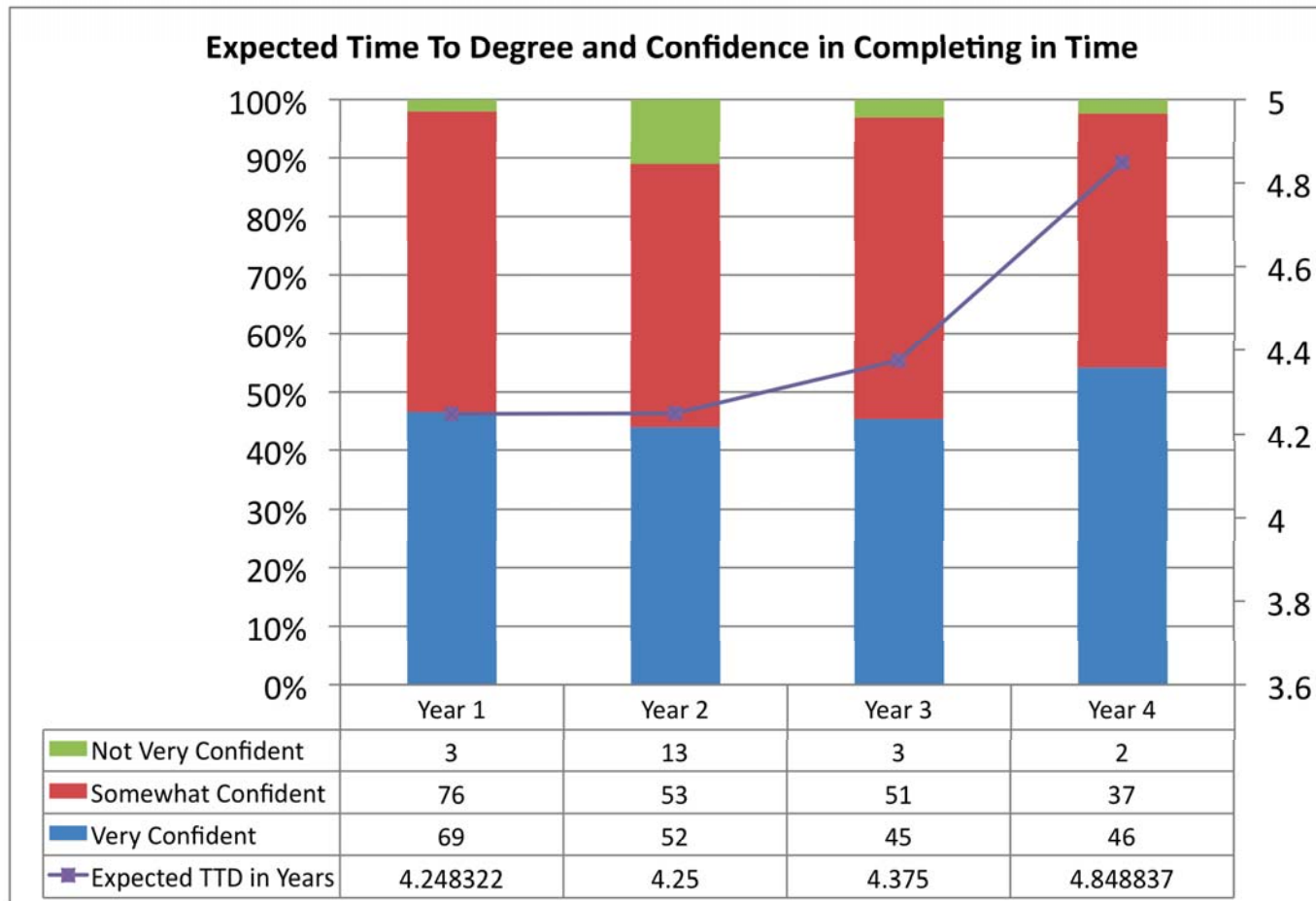
- Four distinct patterns across STEMM and H/SS disciplines and Gender
 - Male STEMM students:
 - Above average importance of financial support. Below average importance of mentoring and advising in the first year give way to more importance in mentoring and less in financial support. Still, ‘typical’ pattern of financial first, mentoring second, motivation third prevails
 - Female STEMM students
 - Value mentoring and advising well above average, and financial support well below average from year 1 on. The importance of mentoring even increases over time. By year 4 personal motivation draws for second most important factor with financial support.



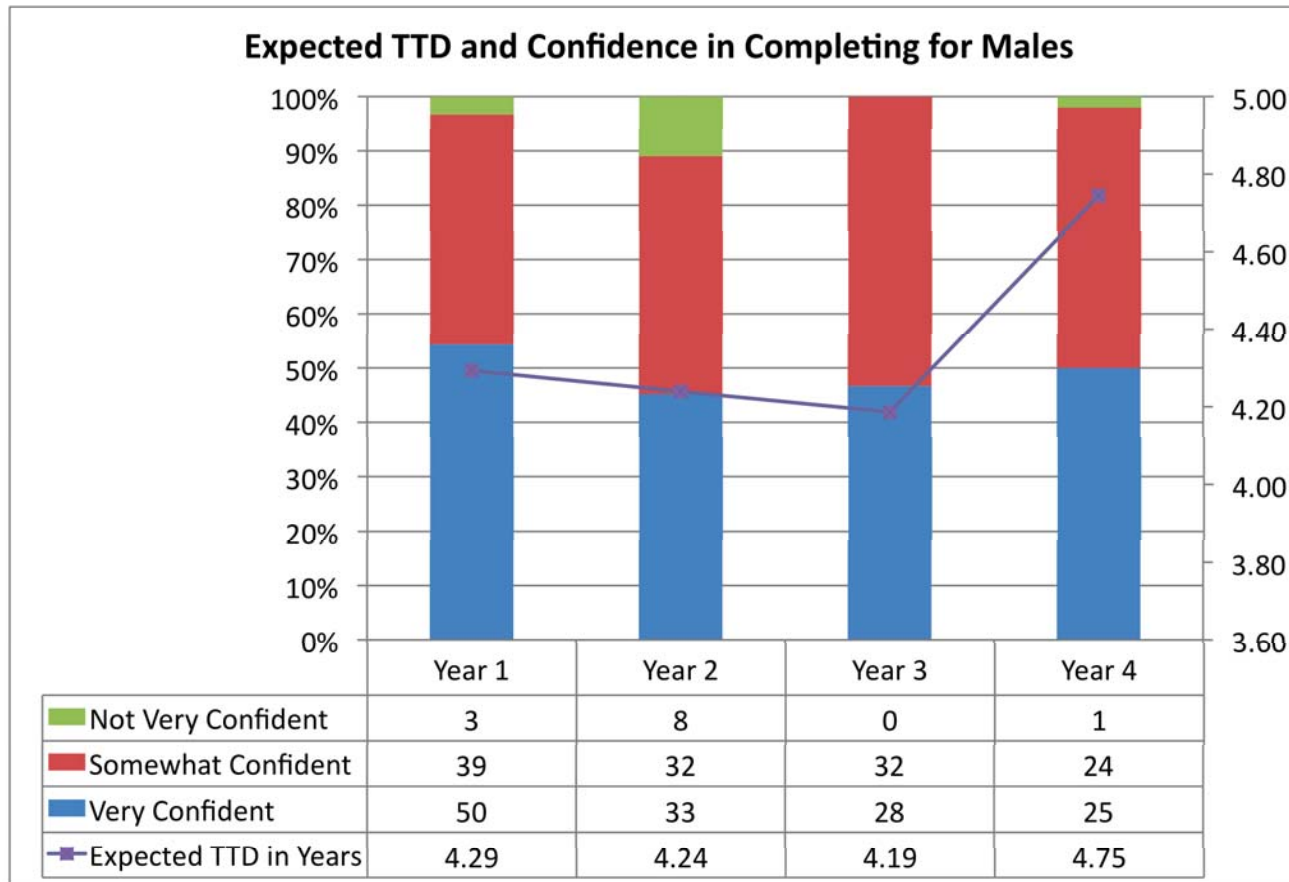
Summary

- Male H/SS students:
 - Financial support is roughly on par with the average. In the first year, mentoring and advising is seen as less important than the average, and personal motivation as notably more so. This pattern increases in year two, after which it reverses in favor of a much higher ranking of mentoring and advising, and a decreased importance of personal motivation.
- Female H/SS students:
 - Average pattern of financial support, mentoring, and motivation in year 1 shows increase in the importance of mentoring well above the average.

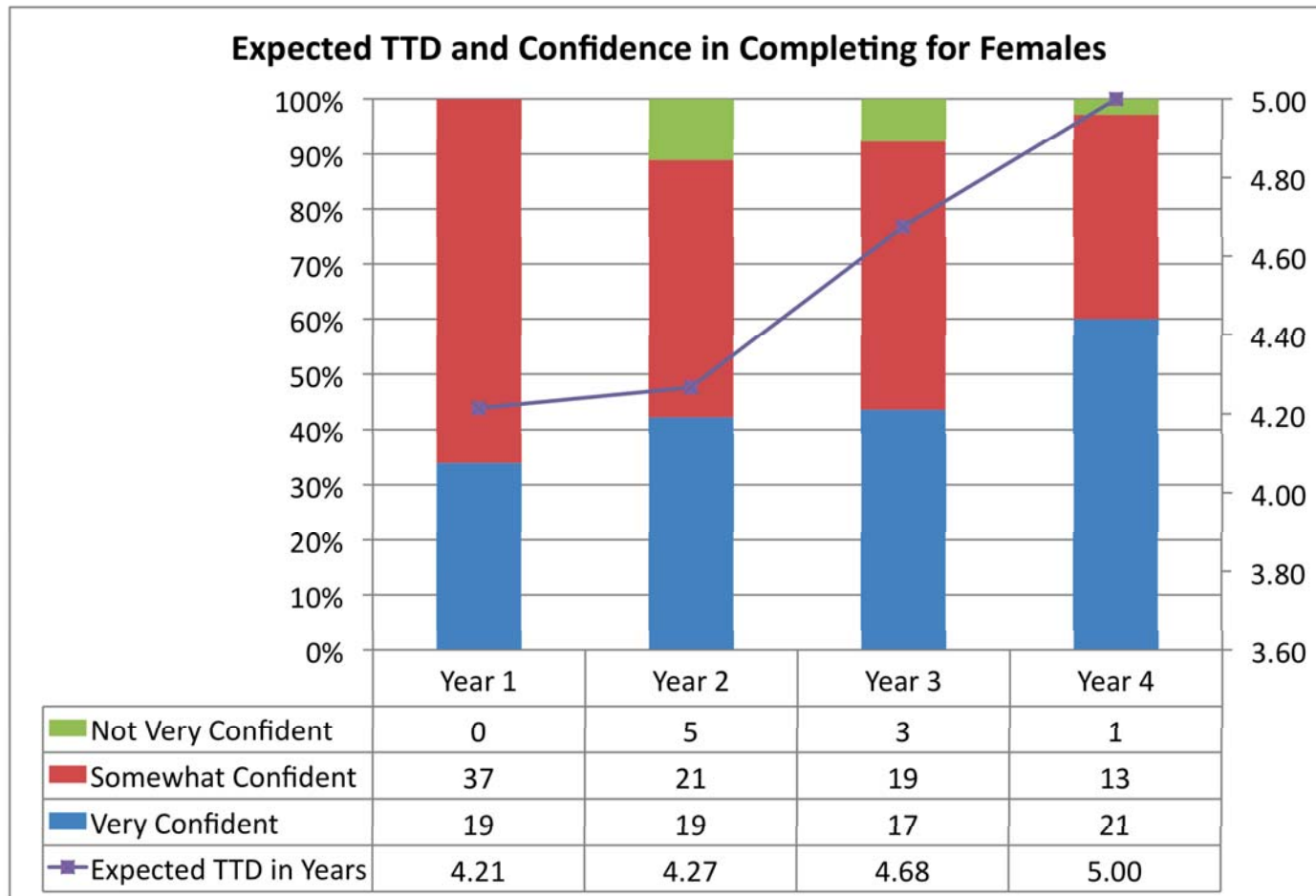
Confidence in completing degree within self-reported time frame



Confidence in completing degree within self-reported time frame



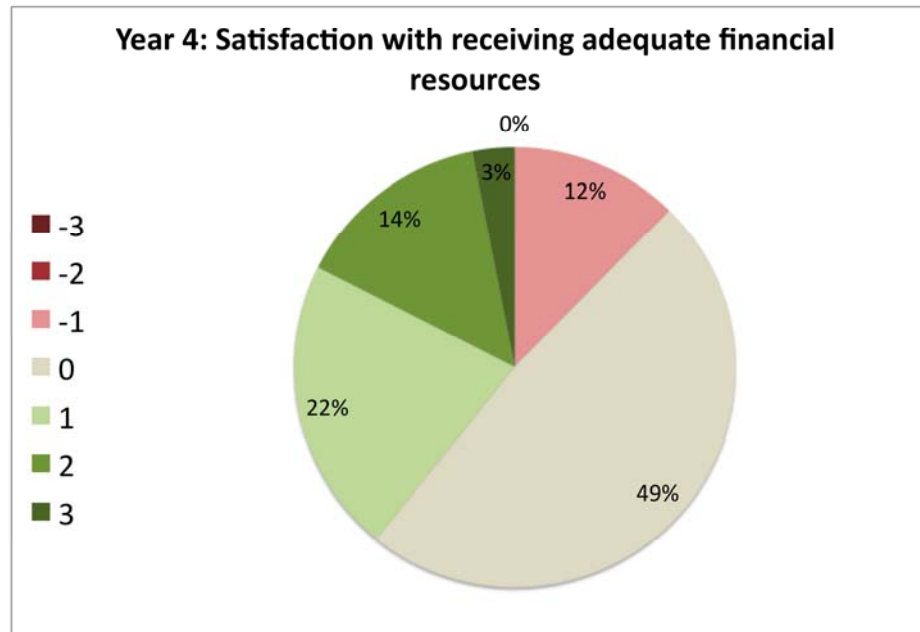
Confidence in completing degree within self-reported time frame



Expectations & Experiences with Program

- New questions in Years 3 & 4 asked about *experience* with some aspects of program, not just *expectations*
 - Four questions on Graduate Environment/Integration in Program
 - Five questions on Advising/Mentoring regarding exams and dissertation research
- Subtract expectation from experience for a 'satisfaction' score
 - Positive value means experience exceeds expectations, negative score means experience does not meet expectations

Satisfaction with Financial Support

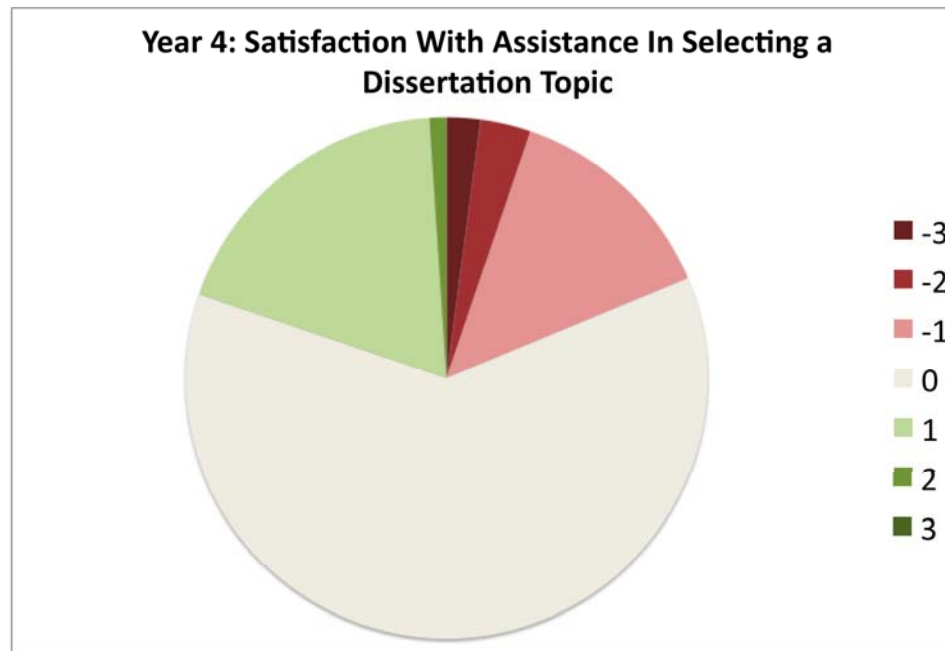


Shades of **red** indicate experiences not meeting expectations to varying degrees, **green** indicates experiences exceeding expectations, and **white** indicates experiences meeting expectations.

Factors contributing to attrition...

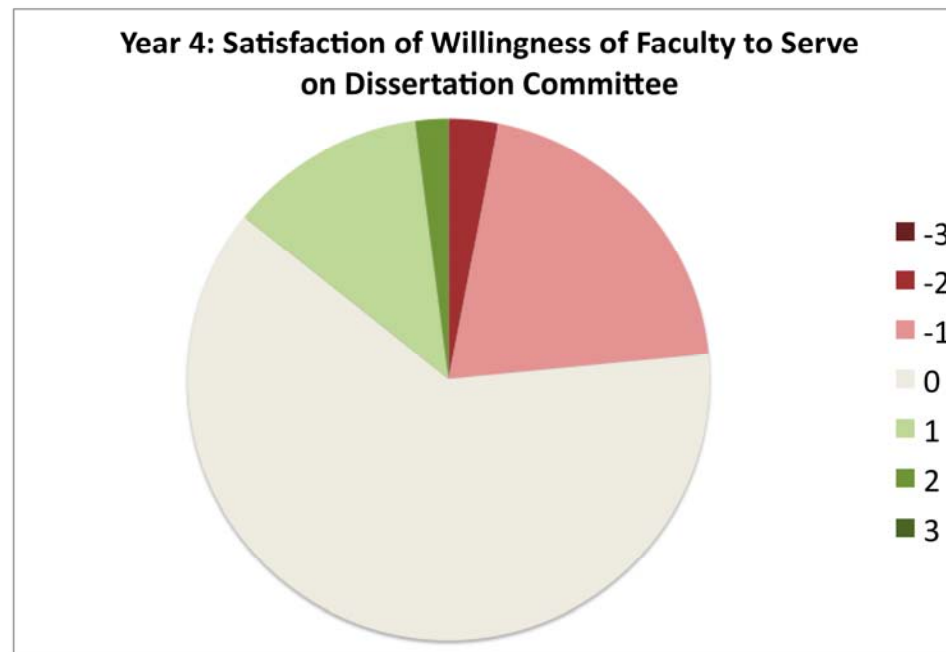
- As Fall 2009, at least 34 students did not continue in their program
- Main factors contributing to attrition:
 - Personal motivation
 - Mentoring/advising
 - Program quality
- Comments included:
 - Career opportunity/advancement
 - Mentor/advisor left
 - **Financial support**
 - Did not fit in program
 - Program tailored for academic career path
 - Uncertainty about future
 - Program too competitive, too much stress

Satisfaction with Mentoring/Advising



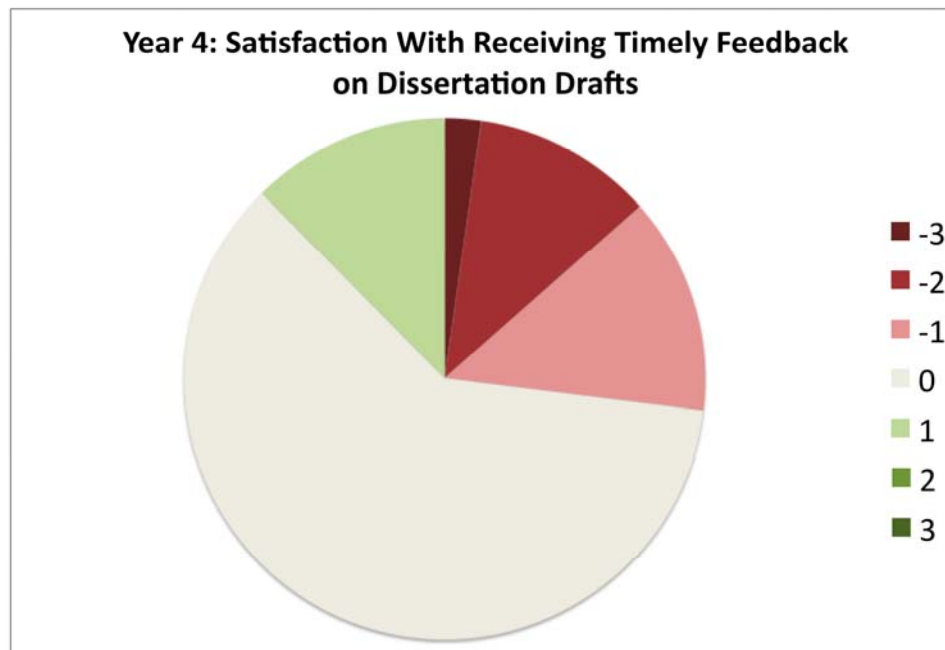
Shades of **red** indicate experiences not meeting expectations to varying degrees, **green** indicates experiences exceeding expectations, and **white** indicates experiences meeting expectations.

Satisfaction with Mentoring/Advising



Shades of **red** indicate experiences not meeting expectations to varying degrees, **green** indicates experiences exceeding expectations, and **white** indicates experiences meeting expectations.

Satisfaction with Mentoring/Advising



Shades of **red** indicate experiences not meeting expectations to varying degrees, **green** indicates experiences exceeding expectations, and **white** indicates experiences meeting expectations.



Interventions

Raising Awareness on Completion

- PhD completion data part of annual GRAAD report
- Annual individual discussion with deans
- Spring forum with GPDs on PhD completion
- Annually reported to Graduate Council & Graduate Faculty

Assessment

- Metric in Graduate Program Review



Interventions

Enhancement of Learning Opportunities

- Established Graduate Student Professional Development Center
- Appointed Faculty Director of Center

Support Activities

- Women's Graduate Student Association
- Mentoring for Male African-American Doctoral Students

Financial Resources

- Leverage Enhanced Assistantship Budget
- Advocate for Two-Year Assistantship Budget

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Council of Graduate Schools for:

- Funding for Phase I and Phase II
- Raising awareness of doctoral completion