

# Barriers to Access Care and Utilization of Student Health Services

## Introduction

### Background

College health plays a vital role in student retention and academic progression. Student Health Services (SHS) provides timely access to care that is cost-effective, equitable, and uniquely tailored to students needs (American College Health Association [ACHA], 2016). Additionally, the Institute of Medicine (IOM, 2001) describes six dimensions of health care quality: safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, equitable.

Therefore, the overall goal of this project is to improve the quality, efficiency, and timeliness of care through expanding the scope of practice in SHS by implementing Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) services. The first step in meeting this goal was to understand the health care needs of the student population via an assessment.

### Problem

- Harding University (HU) SHS functions under a restricted scope of practice causing delays in care, decreases utilization of SHS, high referral rate (65%) to other local medical clinics and emergency room (10%), and increased health care costs for students.
- Proper data collection and evaluation had not been conducted to understand the health care needs of students and their perceived barriers to access care and utilization of SHS.

### Purpose

- Conduct a health needs assessment of HU graduate and undergraduate students to identify perceived barriers to access care and utilization of SHS to inform practice changes.

## Methods

### Project Design

- A 21-question health needs assessment utilizing a RedCap web-based survey. The survey was modeled after the ACHA National College Health Assessment Survey II Spring 2021 and the survey utilized by Ellis-Bosold (2013) and tailored to the specific student population at HU. Prospective participants were sent two recruitment emails to their university email over a two-week period starting March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022 utilizing RedCap survey link. Recruitment e-mails provided a brief explanation of the survey topic and informed consent.

### Participants

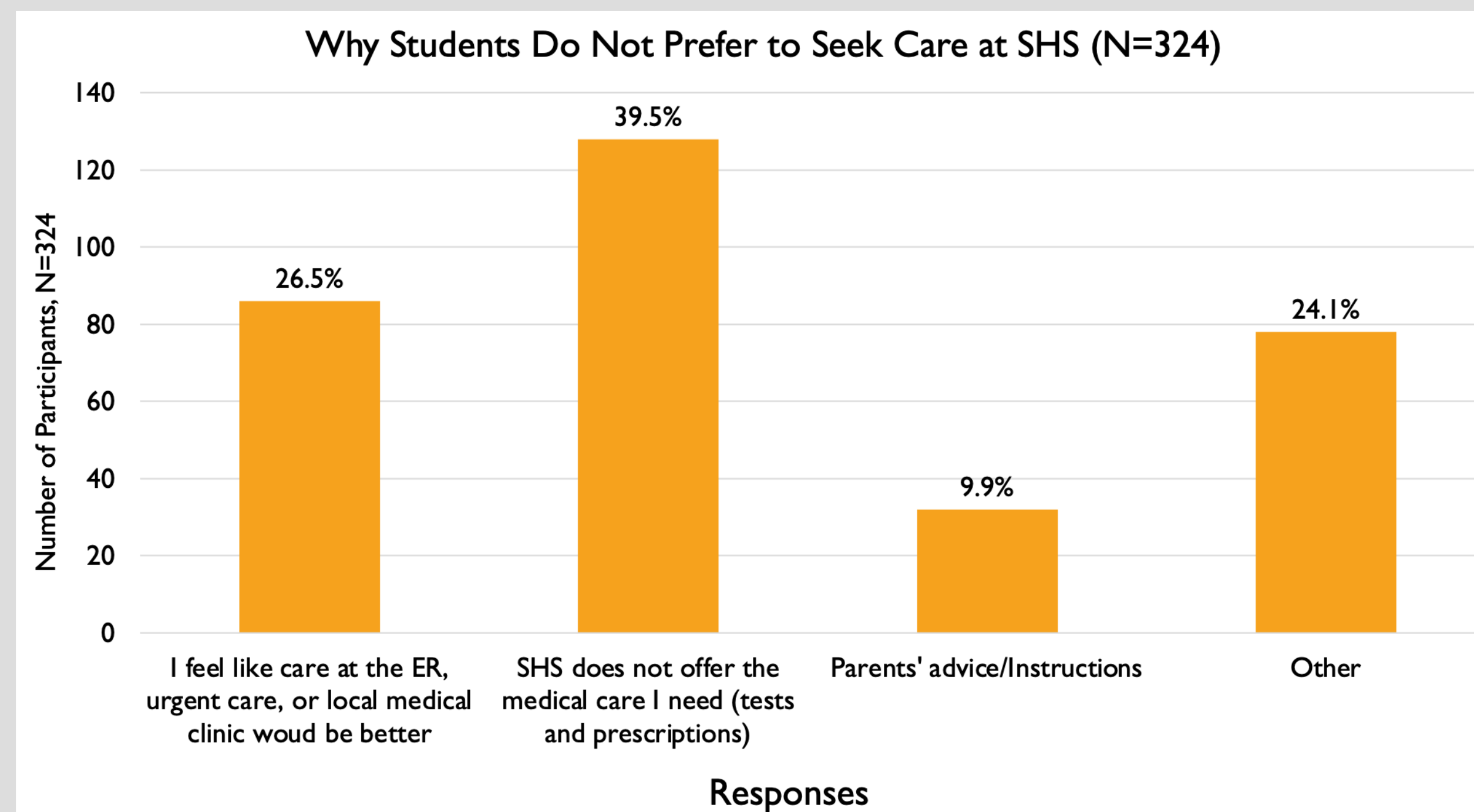
- HU undergraduate and graduate students

### Setting

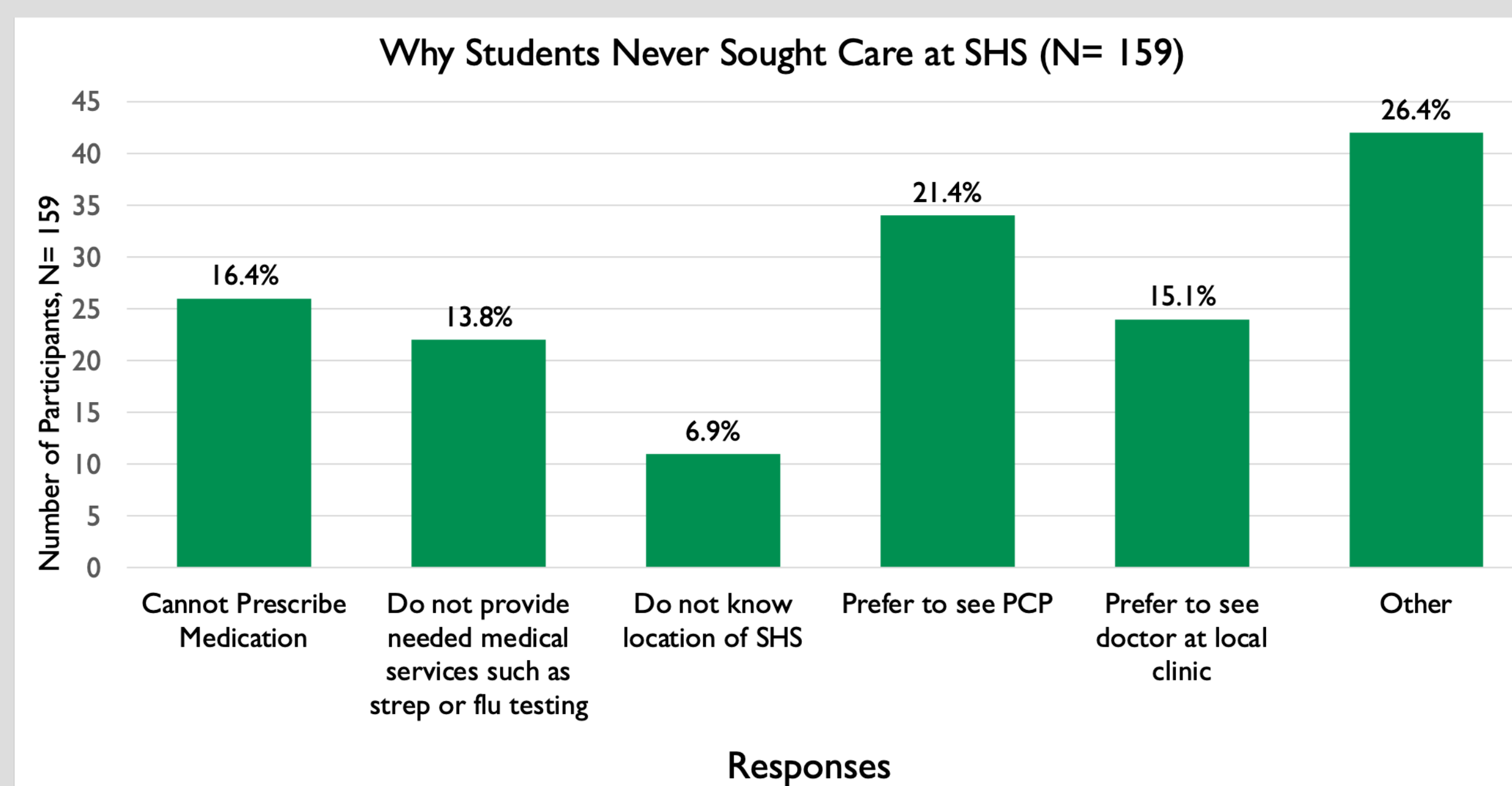
- HU SHS located in Searcy, Arkansas. Students have no direct health care costs to utilize clinic services. Staff includes 1 director who is a family nurse practitioner (FNP) currently restricted to a registered nurse (RN) scope of practice, 4 RNs, and 1 administrative assistant.

### Measures

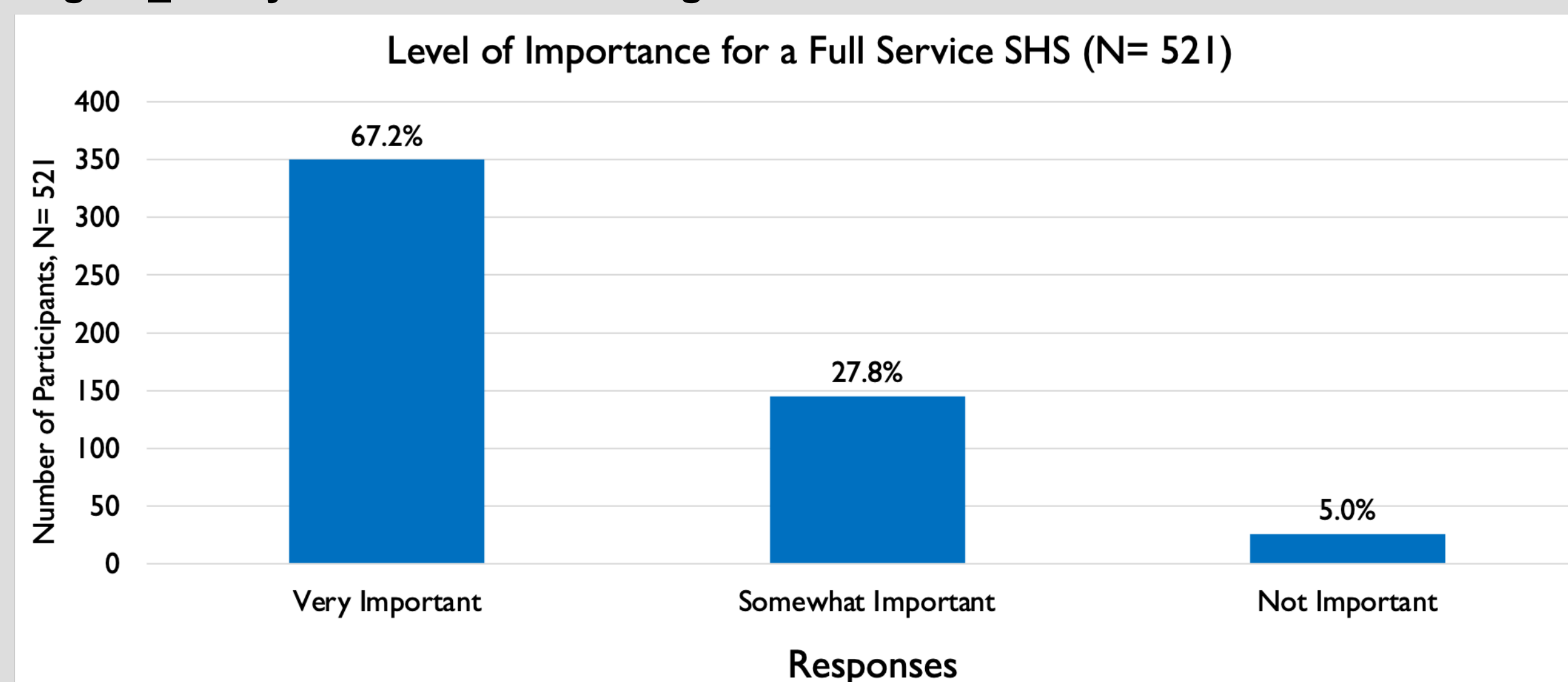
- Identify current perceptions of students' own health
- Identify perceived barriers to accessing care and utilization of SHS
- Identify importance of on-campus full-service student health center



Figure\_1. Why Students Do Not Prefer to Seek Care at SHS



Figure\_2. Why Students Never Sought Care at SHS



Figure\_3. Level of Importance for a Full Service SHS

## Results

A total of 526 students responded to the survey. The majority of respondents were Caucasian freshman females who lived on-campus and were from out-of-state. When asked how they would describe their overall health (N=526), 160 (30.4%) students chose "Excellent," 326 (62%) chose "Good," and 30 (5.7%) chose "Poor." To focus on the most relevant information regarding this project, results from questions 9, 15, and 16 are highlighted in this presentation and depicted in Figures 1, 2, and 3. Additionally, question 17 of the survey (N= 522) reflects the importance of having a full-service clinic on campus; 465 (89.1%) chose "Yes" they would use SHS if full services were offered.

- Figure 1:** 128 (39.5%) of students prefer not to seek care at SHS because the clinic does not offer the medical care they need such as prescriptions and strep and flu tests (N=324).
- Figure 2:** for students who never sought care at SHS (N=159), 26 (16.4%) chose "Cannot prescribe medication" and 22 (13.8%) chose "Do not provide needed medical services."
- Figure 3:** 350 (67.2%) of students chose "Very Important" when asked how important having a full-service clinic on campus (N=521).

## Implications for Practice

The results of the survey support the need for a full-service student health clinic on campus. The most common perceived barriers to accessing care and utilization of SHS are the lack of provider services with the ability to order tests such as strep and flu tests and prescribe medication.

The survey allowed for a health needs assessment of HU's student body and shows clear evidence that a full-service clinic on campus is of high importance to the majority of respondents.

Providing timely access to high quality, cost-efficient care is of the utmost importance to student health and well-being and academic success (ACHA, 2016). Expanding the scope of practice of HU SHS will allow for this goal to be met; the survey results help to inform this practice change.

## References

- American College Health Association. (2016). *Framework for a comprehensive college health program*. [https://www.acha.org/documents/Resources/Framework\\_for\\_a\\_Comprehensive\\_College\\_Health\\_Program.pdf](https://www.acha.org/documents/Resources/Framework_for_a_Comprehensive_College_Health_Program.pdf)
- Ellis-Bosold, C. (2013). A needs assessment: a study of perceived need for student health services by Chinese international students. *College Student Journal*, 47(1), 155–168. [https://go-gale-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=tel\\_a\\_vanderbilt&id=GALE|A345882736&v=2.1&it=r](https://go-gale-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=tel_a_vanderbilt&id=GALE|A345882736&v=2.1&it=r)
- Institute of Medicine. (2001). *Crossing the quality chasm: a new health system for the 21st century*/Committee on Quality Health Care in America. National Academy Press. <https://web-s-ebscobost-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook?sid=80d03a5e-1c0e-4138-9dfc-d0044ac14bbf%40redis&vid=0&format=EB>