



Career Readiness and Workplace Success of Former Peer Leaders

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What is PAL?

The **Peer Assisted Learning (PAL)** program offers peer-led workshops supporting 17 high-DFW STEM courses. Students voluntarily enroll in a 1-unit credit/no credit course where they work in groups on worksheets written by course faculty.

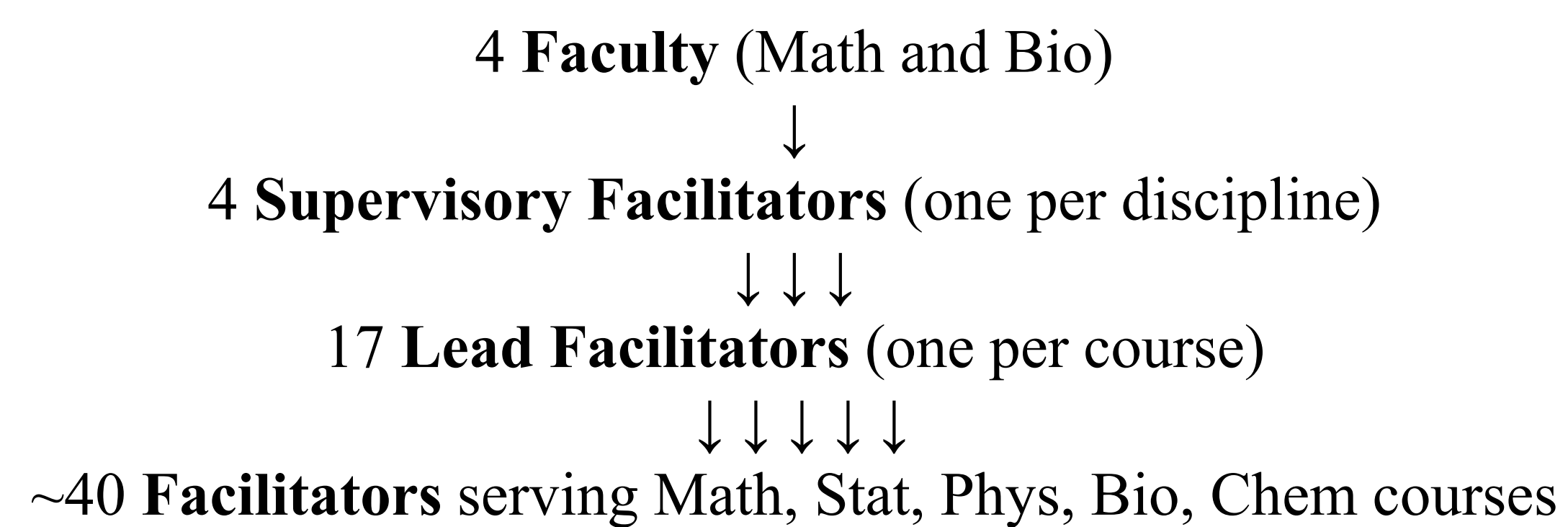
Workshops are led by PAL Facilitators: students who have recently succeeded in the course. Facilitators follow the Peer-Led Team Learning (PLTL) model, and *do not teach, tutor, or even confirm answers*. They ensure all students are participating and ask leading questions to get groups unstuck when needed.

Propensity score matching analysis (n=10,333) shows students opting in enjoy an average **23% bump in course grade**.



Tiered Leadership

Experienced Facilitators can apply for advanced positions:



Bonus Opportunities

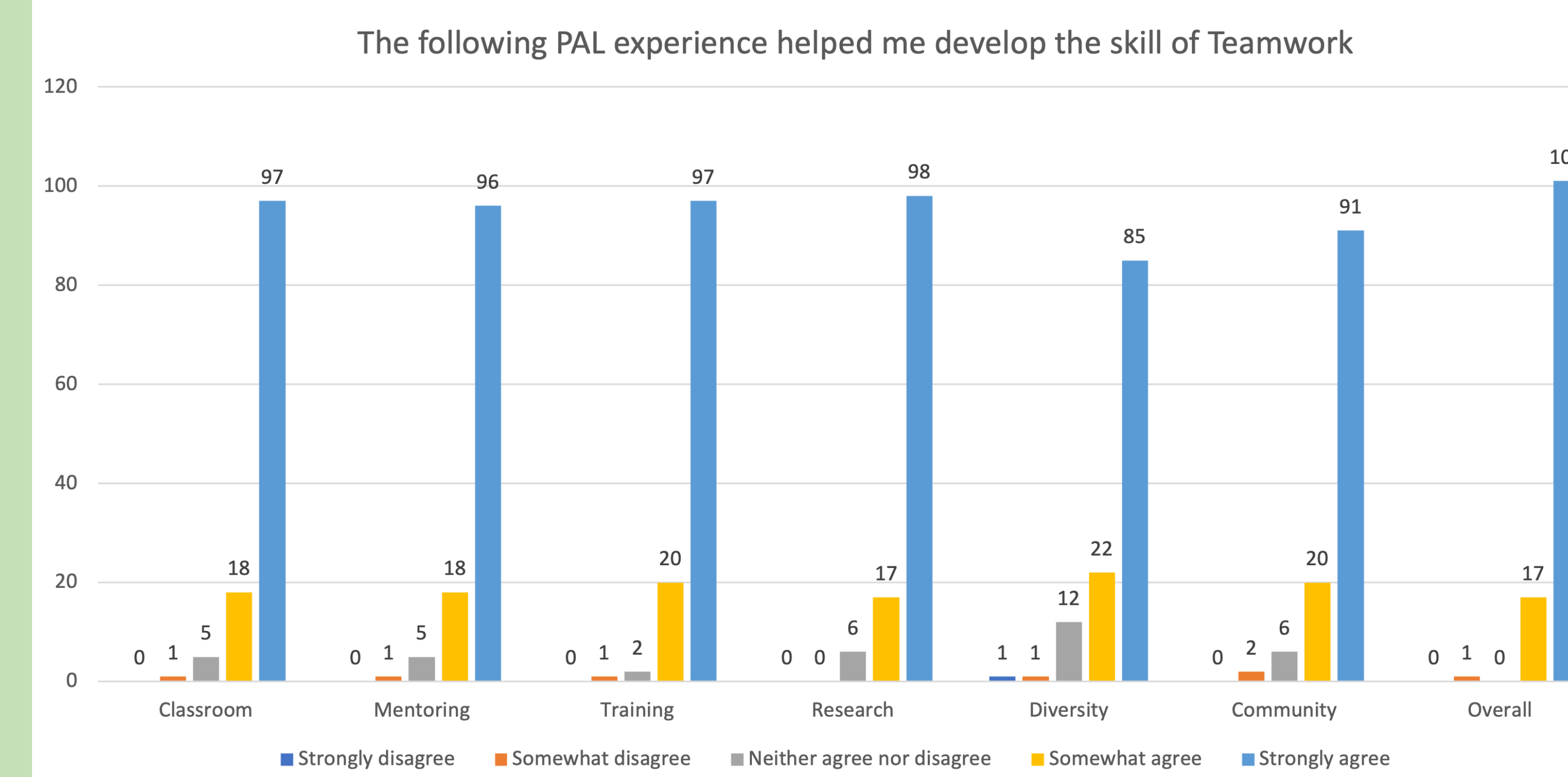
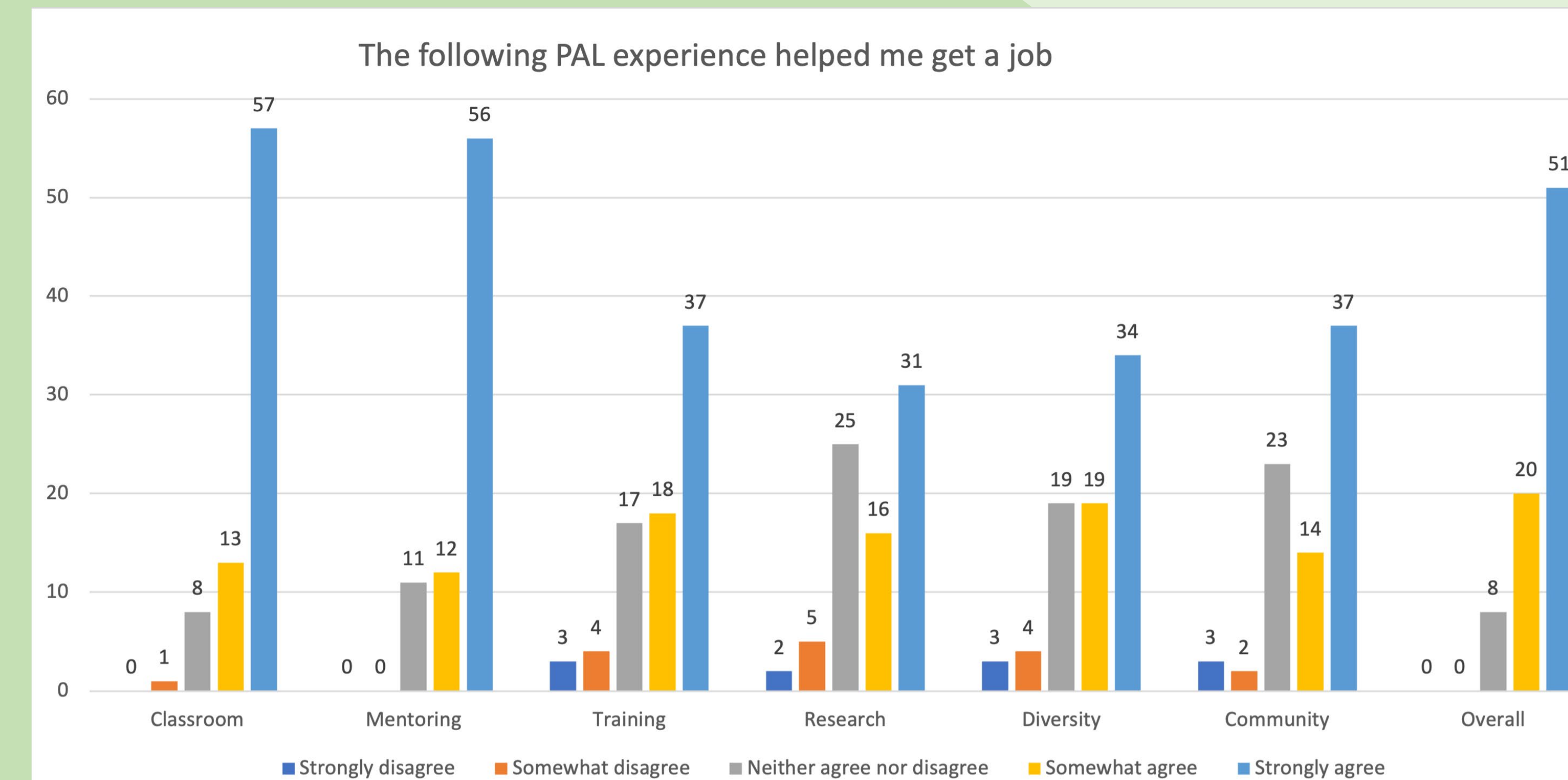
- **Cultural Competency Ambassadors (CCA)**. The CCA team designs and leads interactive trainings on cultural competency for all Facilitators, including a Cultural Fair. They often present this work at conferences.
- **Leadership Development Team (LDT)**. The LDT designs and leads interactive trainings on workplace skills like teamwork and communication. They have hosted mock interviews and visits from local community colleges.
- **Research Activity Discussion (RAD)**. The RAD group analyzes literature on peer-led pedagogy and works with faculty to study the PAL program. For example, they developed the Third Space box on this poster!

Methods

- Survey sent to 373 “PALumni”: Facilitators who graduated between 2012 and 2024
 - Received **158 responses**, mean/median grad year 2020
- Focus on **8 “Career Readiness Competencies”** identified by National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE):
 - *Self-development, Communication, Critical Thinking, Equity, Leadership, Professionalism, Teamwork, Technology*
- Asked how **6 specific PAL experiences** helped develop each of these 8 skills:
 - *Running own classroom, Mentoring students, Trainings, Research projects, Diversity of other Facilitators, PAL community*

Results

- **90%** say PAL helped them **get a job**
- **94%** say PAL helped them be **successful in their job**
- **100%** say PAL helped develop the skill of **Leadership**; **99%** the skill of **Teamwork**; **97%** the skills of **Communication, Critical Thinking, and Career Development**
- **<1%** unemployed; **75%** careers in STEM; **44%** earned graduate degree
- Avg salary = \$78,732
- Complete results: www.csus.edu/PAL



Lead Facilitators

Results broken out by Lead Facilitators (n=66) & non-Lead Facilitators (n=46).



As Lead I took on more responsibilities that have helped me till this day and will continue to help me in my professional journey as well as my personal life.
 -Former Lead Facilitator

Third Space

A **third space** is a place other than your home or your school/job where you have community and feel comfortable being yourself.

- **88%** of Facilitators say PAL served as a third space for them (n=121).
- Qualitative analysis of responses (n=87) to the statement "Please describe how PAL served as a third space for you" identified the following themes:
 - *Felt Valued and Supported*
 - *Judgement Free Zone*
 - *Personal and Professional Growth*
 - *Rewarding Experience*
 - *Socially Enriching and Engaging*
 - *Space for Genuine Connection*



References and Acknowledgments

Akhavan et al., *Advances in Peer-Led Learning*, 2024
 Shanbrom & Krauel, *in review*, 2025
 Shanbrom et al., *Journal of College Science Teaching*, 2023
www.csus.edu/PAL
www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/

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