

Affiliates

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Exploring Student Perceptions of Empowerment

At a Post-Secondary Level in Online and Blended Learning Environments

Objective

The purpose of this study was to explore post-secondary students' perceptions of empowerment in online or blended learning environments.

Methodology

Participants who were approached in this study were enrolled in their first cohort and in a Business Program. Participants were invited to participate through surveys and interviews. Interviews were conducted by the Research Assistants, with the goal to alleviate traditional power dynamics between students and professors.

Introduction

Prior research demonstrates that there is a distinct connection between centring a student's learning needs and promoting student empowerment in the classroom, with a student's success in their courses (Guo & Hoben, 2020). A large shift in early 2020, as a result of the pandemic, resulted in the majority of classes at post-secondary institutions moving to online platforms. Prior research largely explored empowerment at primary and secondary levels, and at in-person environments. This project sought to explore what are post-secondary students' perceptions of empowerment who are participating in on-line or blended learning environments?



Analysis

When reflecting on their perceptions of empowerment in post-secondary education, participants consistently reflected on consistent themes they attributed to a higher perception of empowerment. These themes included:

- Difference between blended learning and entirely online education environment.
- International Student Experience
- Educational Environment
- Access to Technology and Resources
- Ability to Develop Relationships with Peers
- Professor Ability to Meet Learners Needs and Foster a Supportive Environment
- Flexibility in Course Requirements

Results

Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection, most participants indicated that they felt empowerment was centered in their education and in the course. Most students agreed that the instructor was equipped to facilitate empowerment, and that the evaluations supported their long-term goals.

The results from qualitative data collection methods provided more insight to what motivated students and what supported empowerment. Students identified that a blended learning environment was more conducive to their perceptions of empowerment. Additional factors that impacted their perceptions of empowerment included:

- Environment
- Development of Relationships
- Access to Technology and Resources

Conclusions

1. Participants' reflected a learning environment that supported their ability to develop relationships promoted a sense of empowerment. This found that blended learning environments that balanced online learning and in-person learning supported this over exclusively online learning.
2. Participants' reflected that their perception of empowerment was impacted by access to technology, financial barriers, and hidden curriculms.
3. Participants' reflected that their sense of empowerment was impacted by the level of support provided by the instructor. They found that instructors who were able to connect with students, provide hands on support, flexibility in the course, use a variety of teaching methods, and supported students ability to make decisions independently led to a higher perception of empowerment.

Related Literature

Brown, M., & Kiriakidis, P. (2007). Student Empowerment In An Online Program. *College Teaching Methods & Styles Journal*, 47-54. Retrieved from <https://www.clutejournals.com/index.php/CTMS/article/view/5586/5669>

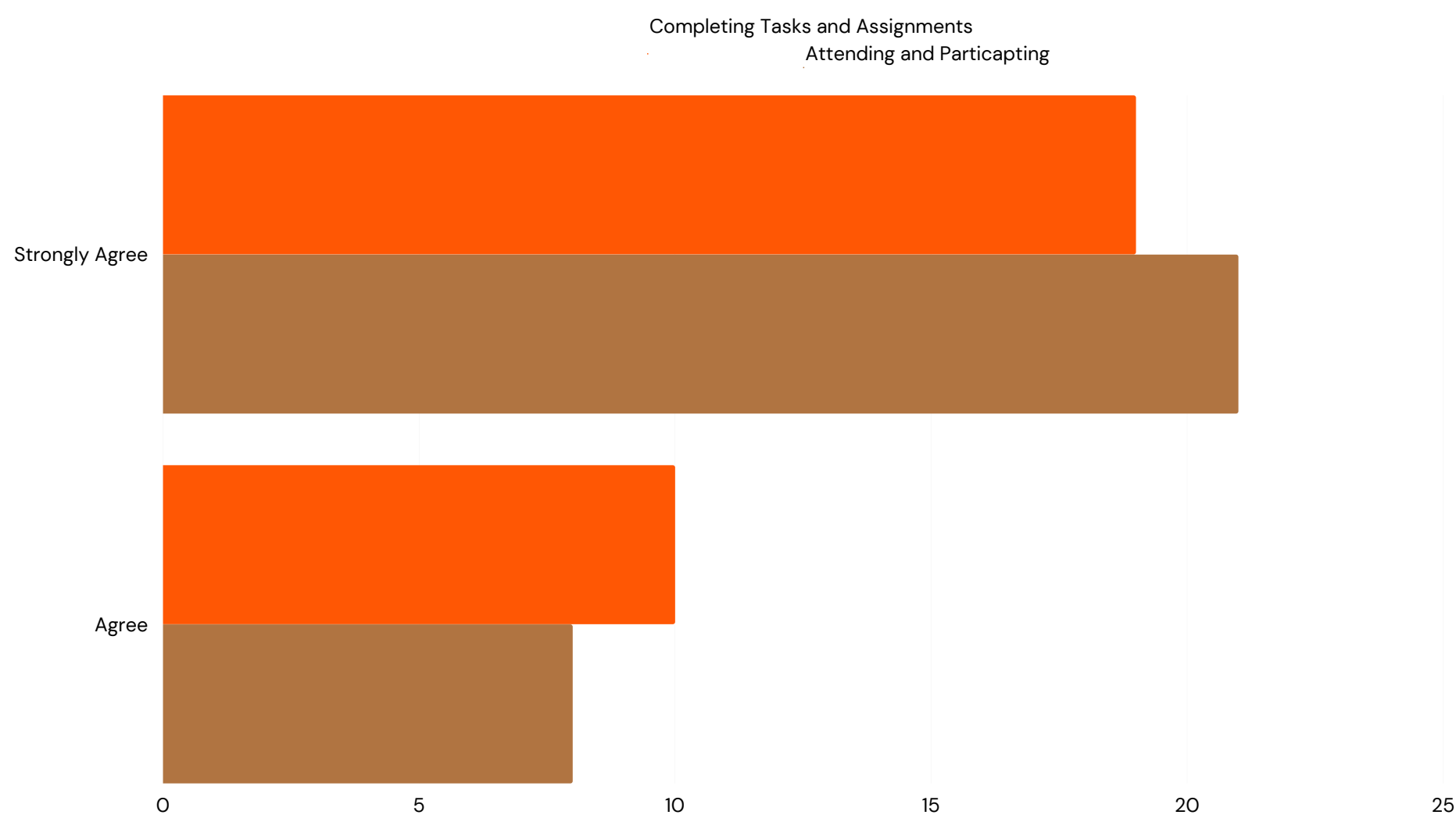
Frymier, A. B., Shulman, G. M., & Marian, H. (1996). The Development of a Learner Empowerment Measure. *Communication Education*, 183-199.

Guo, F., & Hoben, J. L. (2020). The Impact of Student Empowerment and Engagement on Teaching in Higher Education: A Comparative Investigation of Canadian and Chinese Post-Secondary Settings. In Mukadam, & A. A., *Student Empowerment in Higher Education. Reflecting on Teaching Practice and Learner Engagement* (pp. 153-165). Logos Verlag Berlin GmbH.

Guzelderli, A. (2019). A Survey Study On Student's Sense of Empowerment In An English Preparatory Program At A State University. Middle East Technical University.

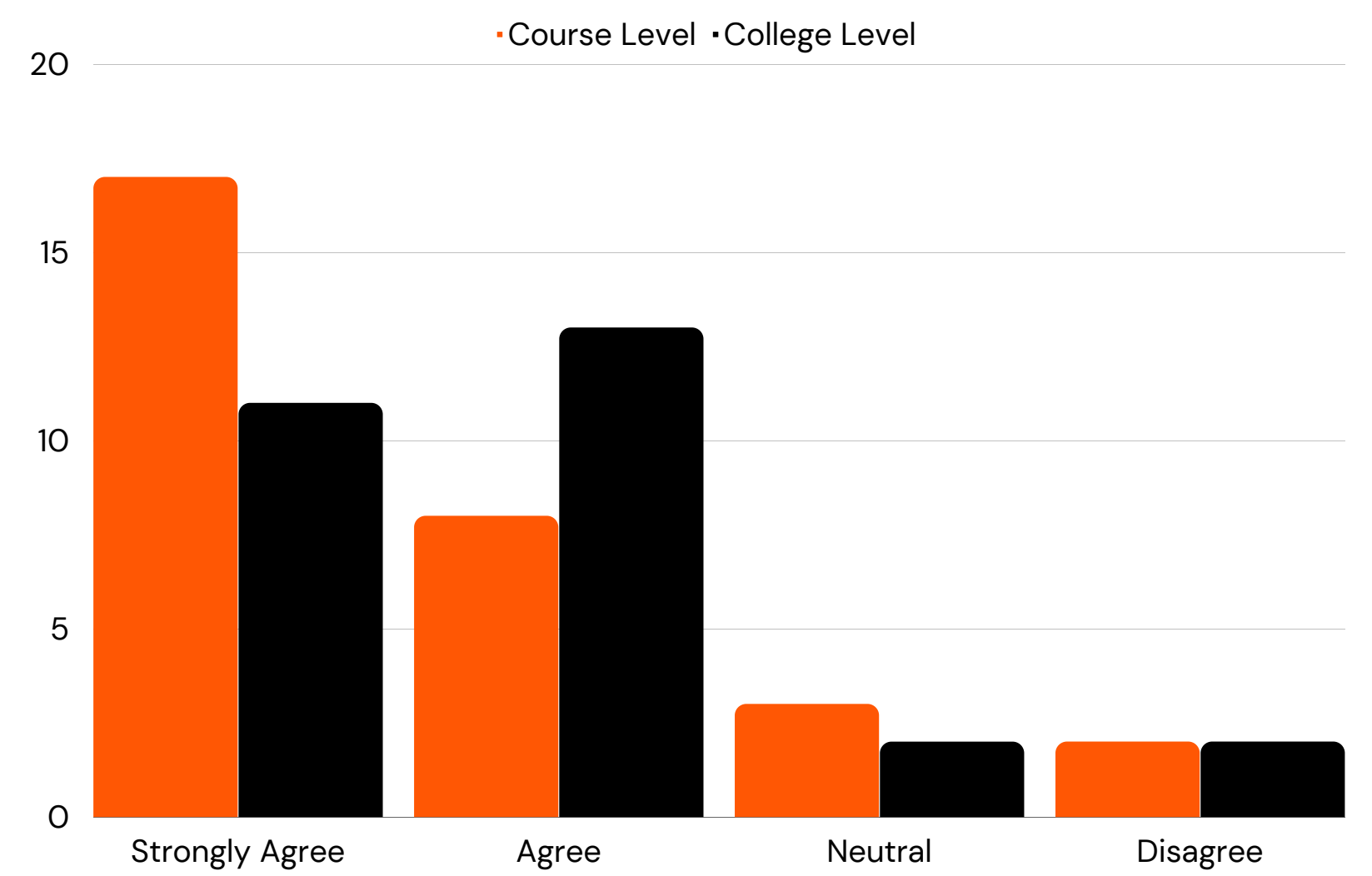
Results

PERCEPTION OF CONTROL AND AUTONOMY IN COMPLETING TASKS AND ASSIGNMENTS

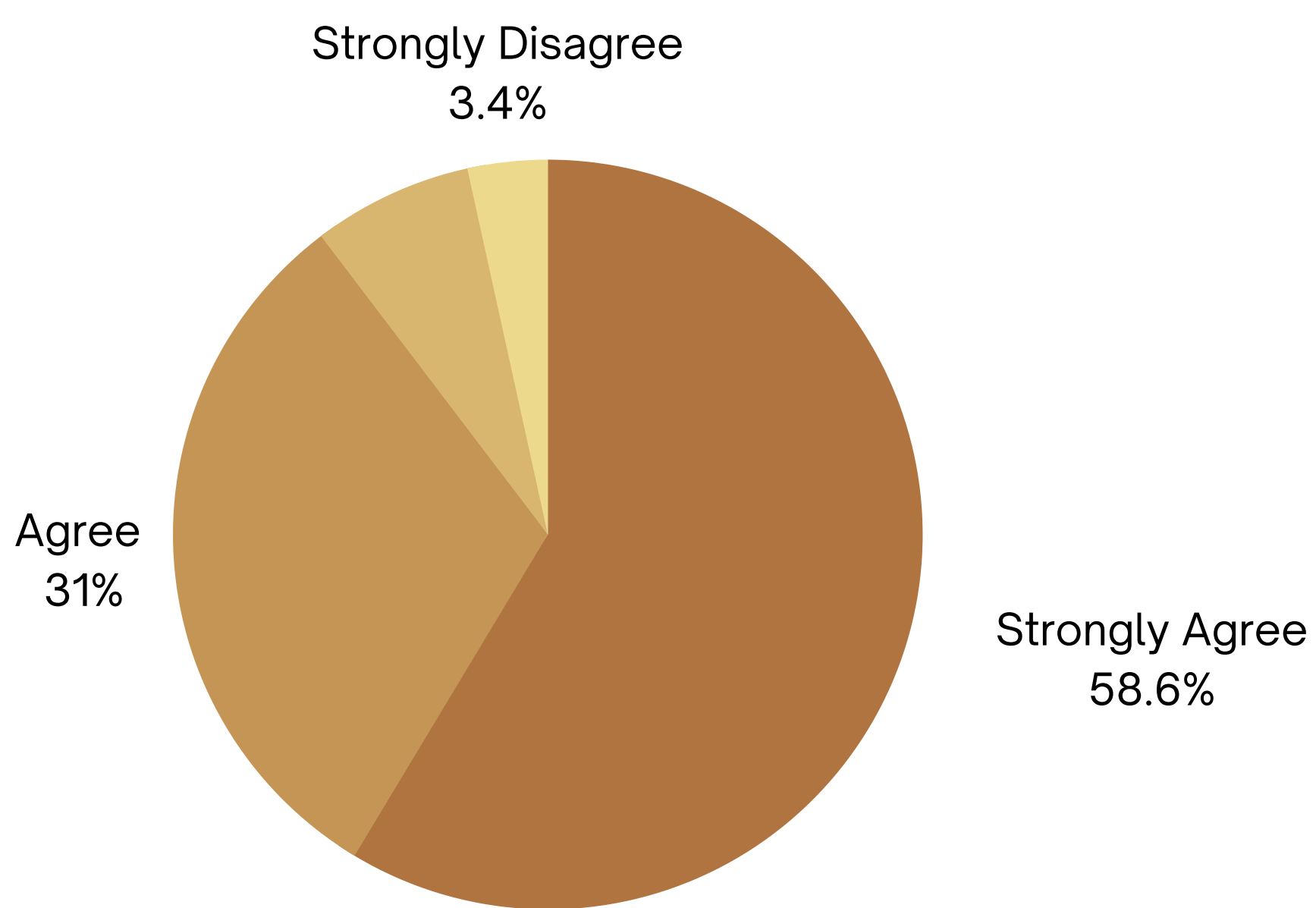


THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS INDICATED THAT THEY AGREED THEY FELT CONTROL AND AUTONOMY IN COMPLETING TASKS AND ASSIGNMENTS AS WELL AS ATTENDING AND PARTICIPATING IN COURSE

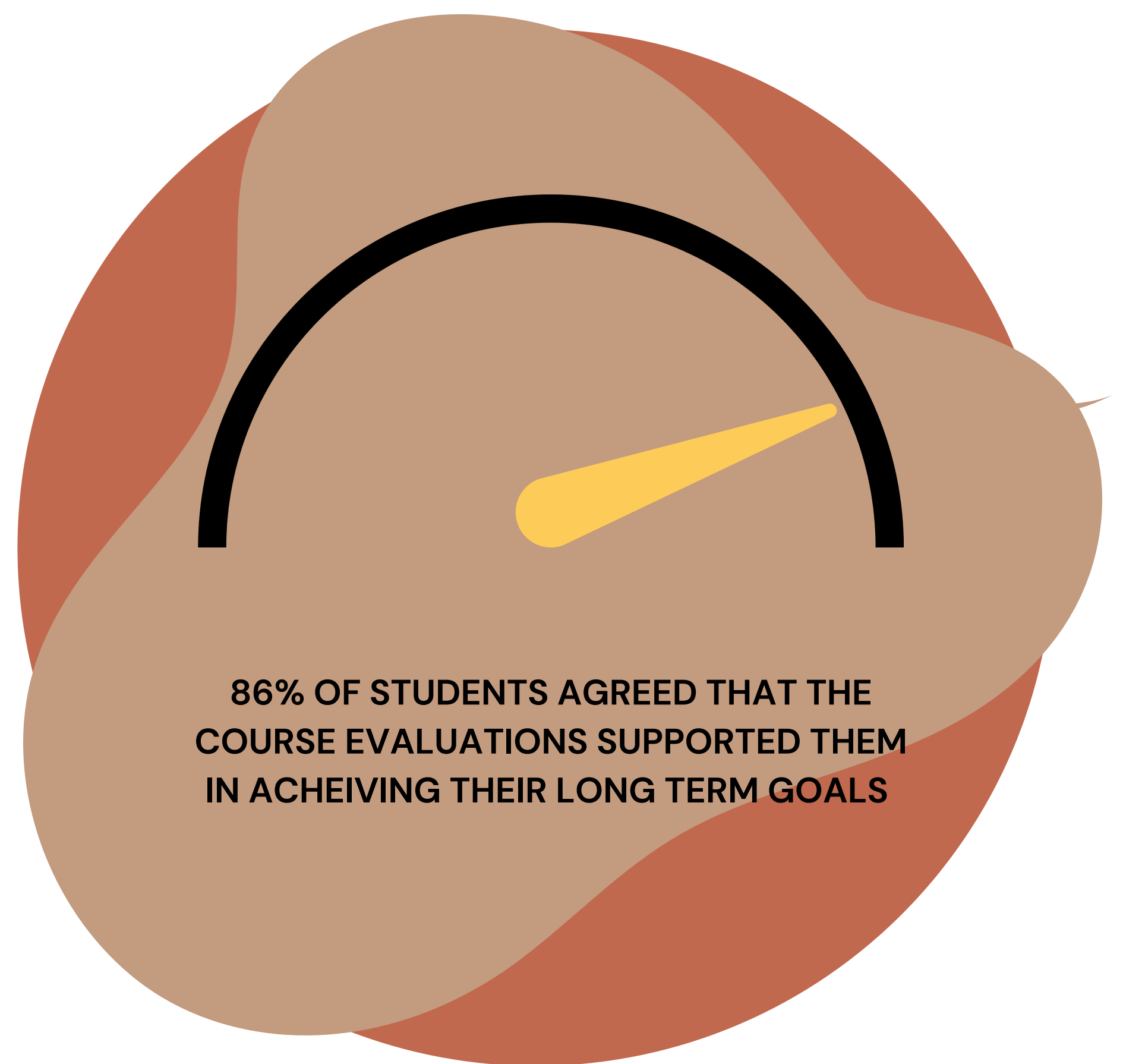
STUDENTS PERCEPTION OF EMPOWERMENT CENTERED IN EDUCATION



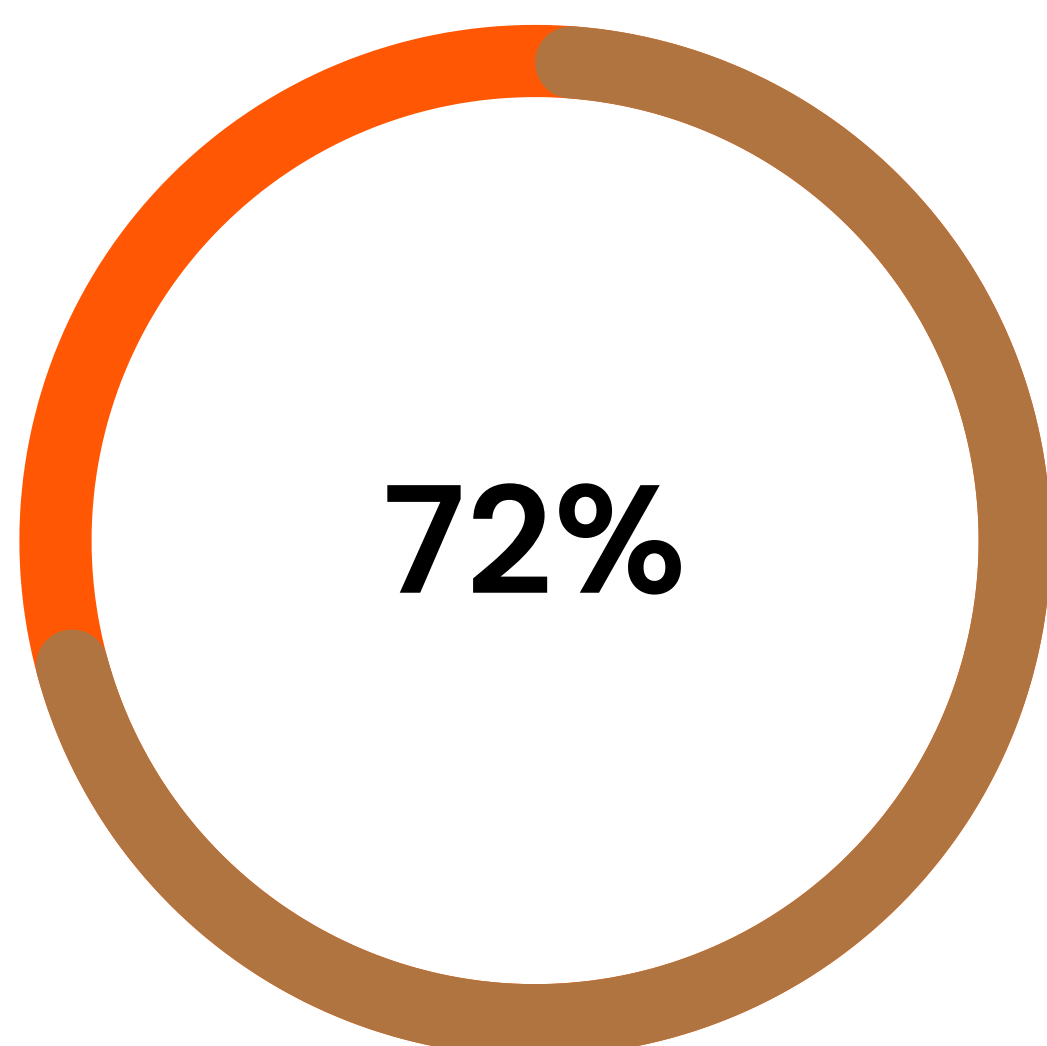
THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS INDICATED THAT THEY STRONGLY AGREED THEY FELT EMPOWERED AT IN THEIR COURSES. PARTICIPANTS SHIFTED THEIR RESPONSE TO "AGREE" WHEN REFLECTING ON THEIR SENSE OF EMPOWERMENT AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL. A MINORITY OF STUDENTS FELT NEUTRAL ON THE TOPIC OR FELT THERE WAS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT



THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS INDICATED THAT THEY AGREED THAT INSTRUCTORS WERE EQUIPED TO FACILITATE EMPOWERMENT IN THE COURSE. AT LEAST 10% OF RESPONDANTS INDICATED THAT THERE WAS POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THIS AREA.



STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF MOTIVATION IN ATTENDING AND PARTICIPATING IN THEIR COURSE



THE MAJORITY OF STUDENTS INDICATED THAT THEY FELT MOTIVATED TO ATTEND AND PARTICIPATE IN CLASS, AND TO COMPLETE TASKS AND ASSIGNMENTS

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF MOTIVATION TOWARDS COMPLETING TASKS AND ASSIGNMENTS

