



MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION
ON HIGHER EDUCATION

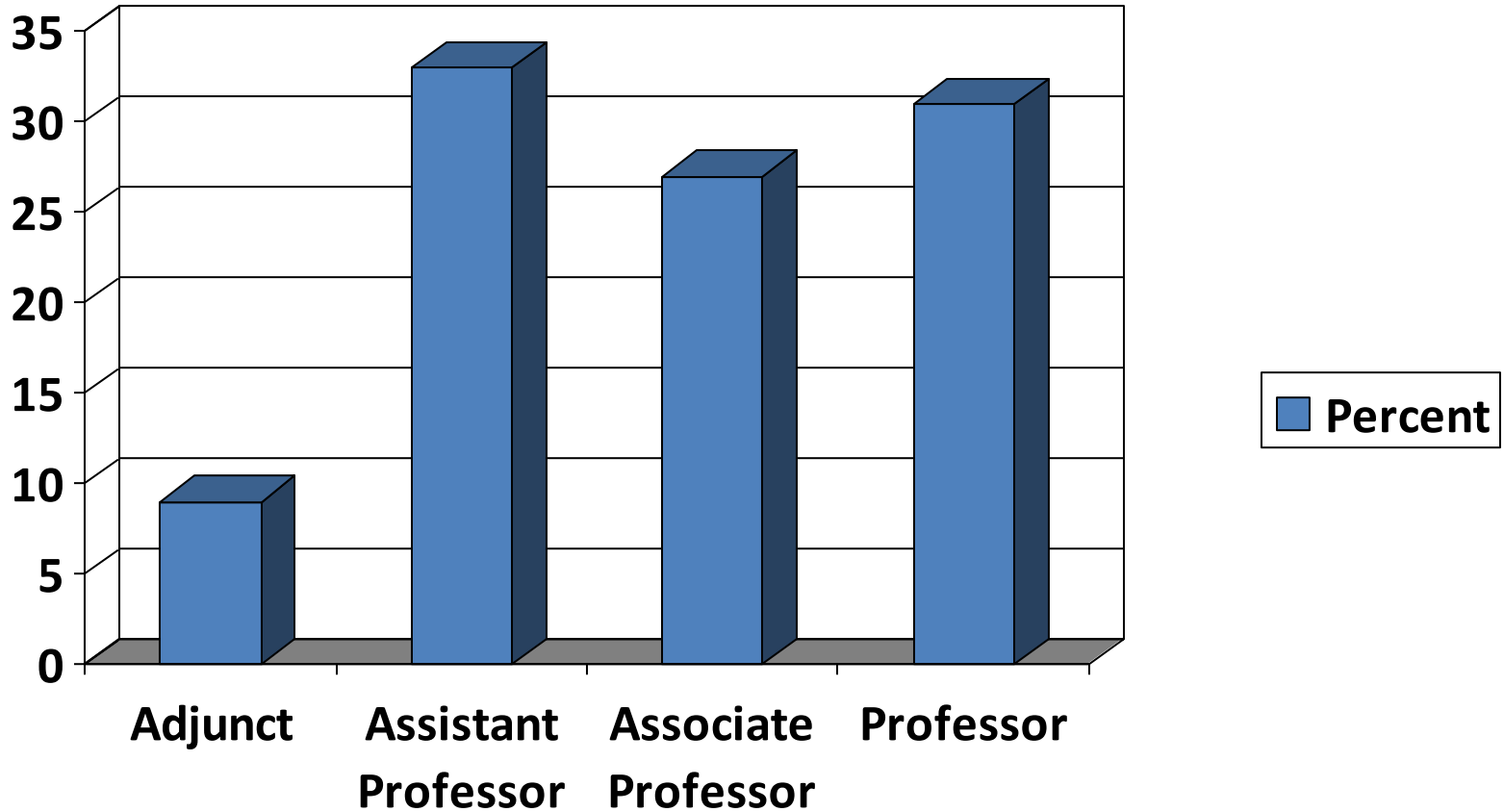


MSCHE Standard 14 Self Study Working Committee on Assessment of Student Learning

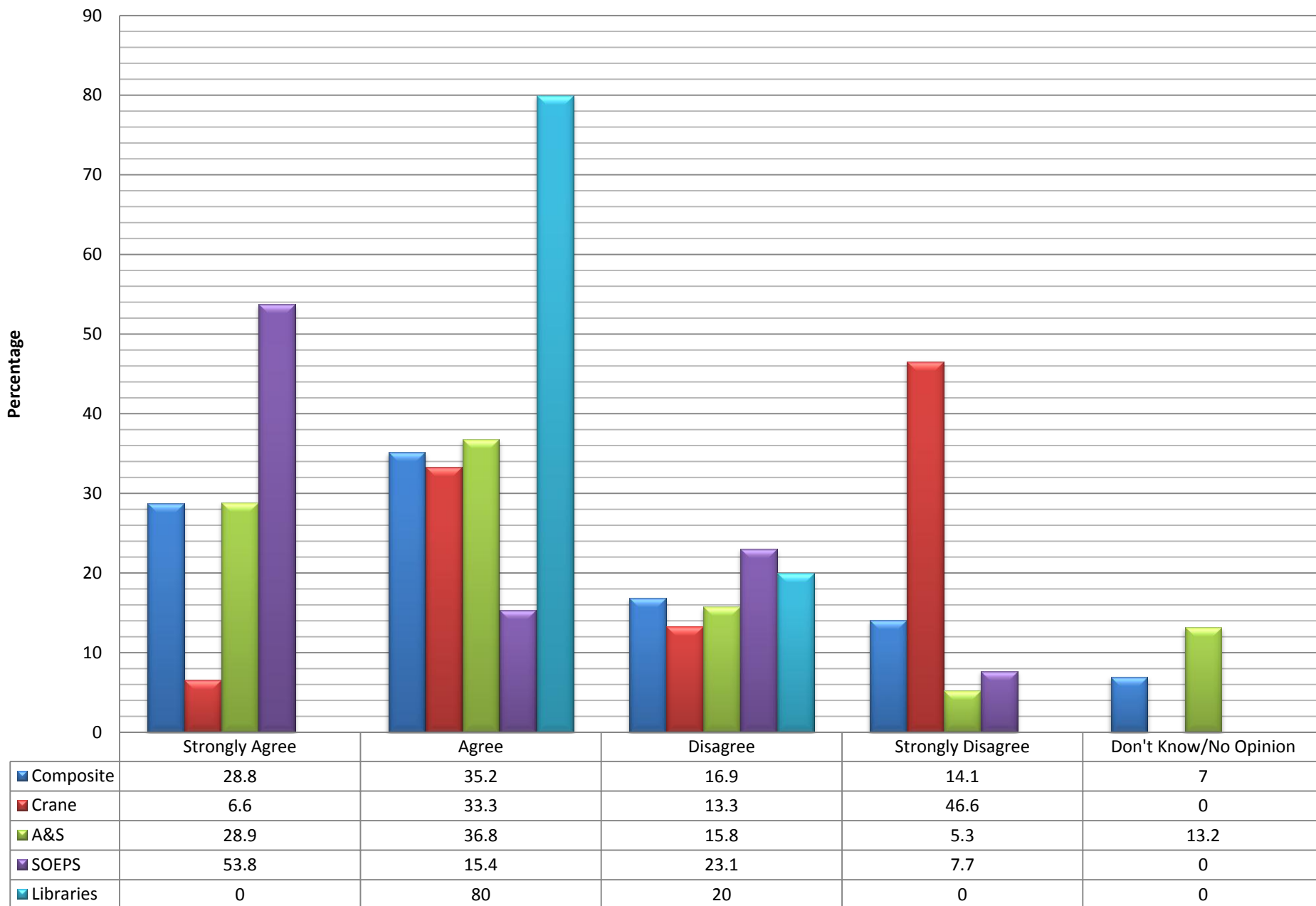
Data from Faculty Survey n=105
Findings and Recommendations
Presented to the CAAC
Wednesday, December 15th, 2010

Compiled by
The Office of Institutional Effectiveness

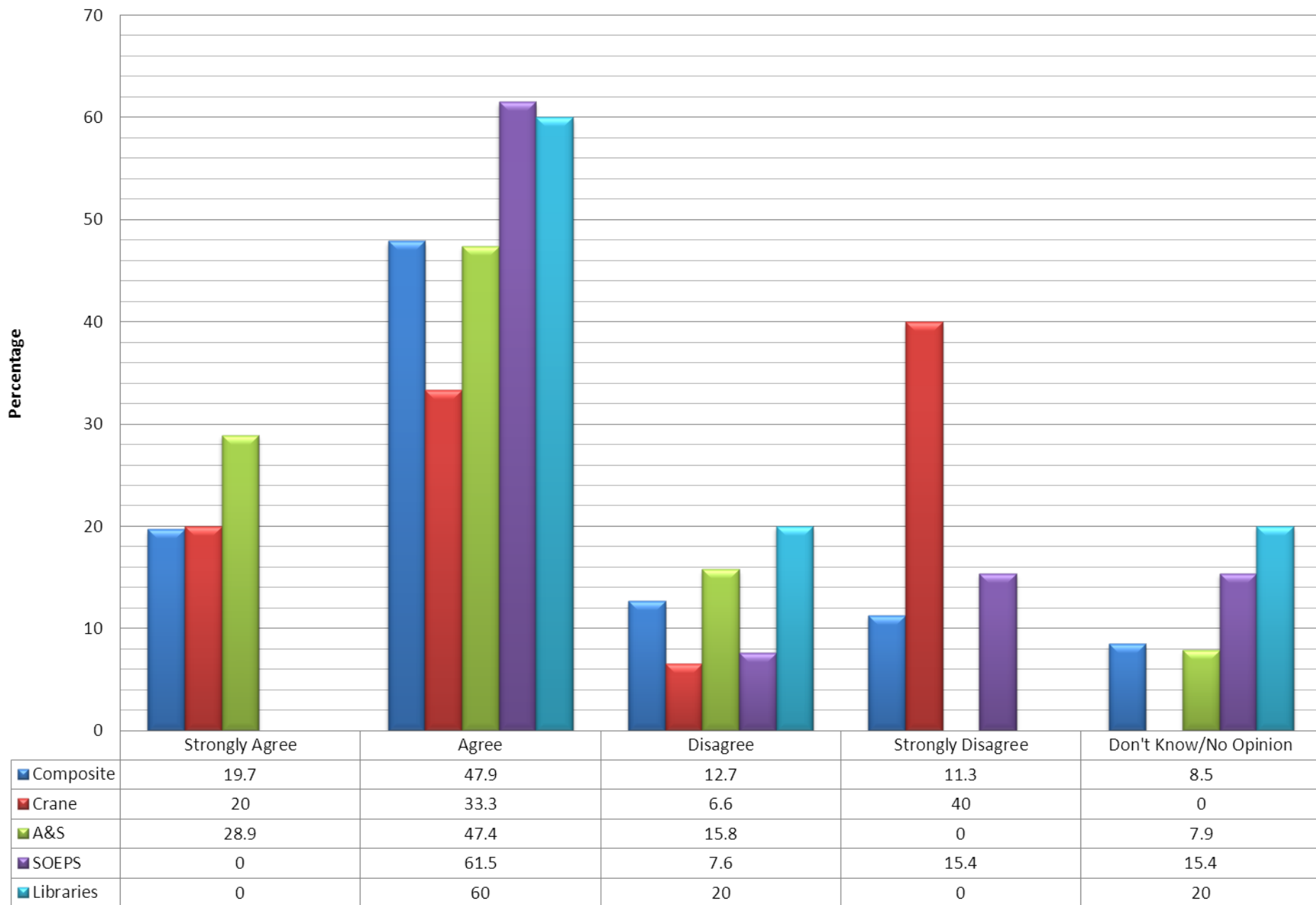
1. Please indicate your faculty rank? (n=105)



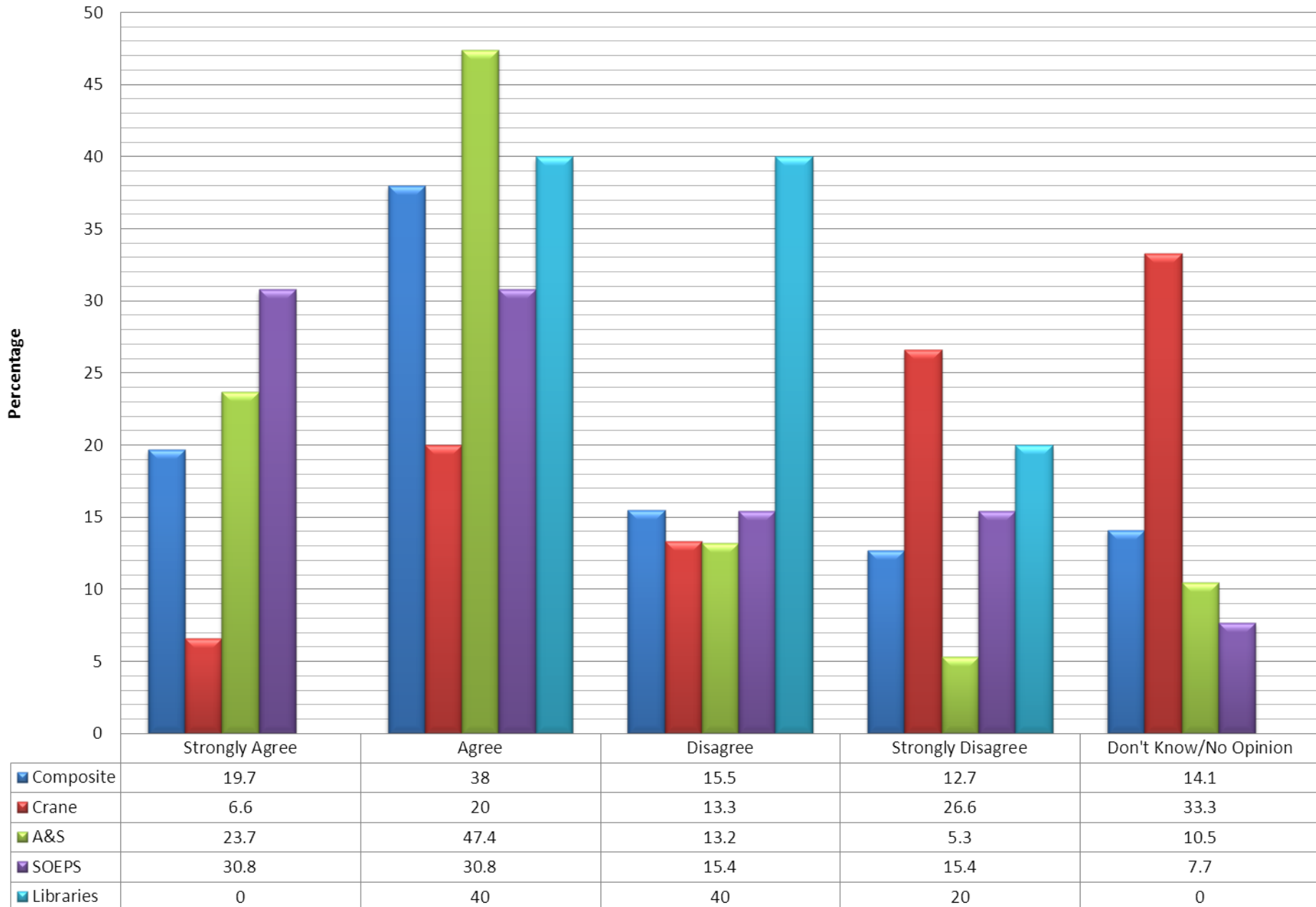
2a. Faculty in my department/program regularly discusses the process and outcomes of student learning assessment in meetings and/or retreats



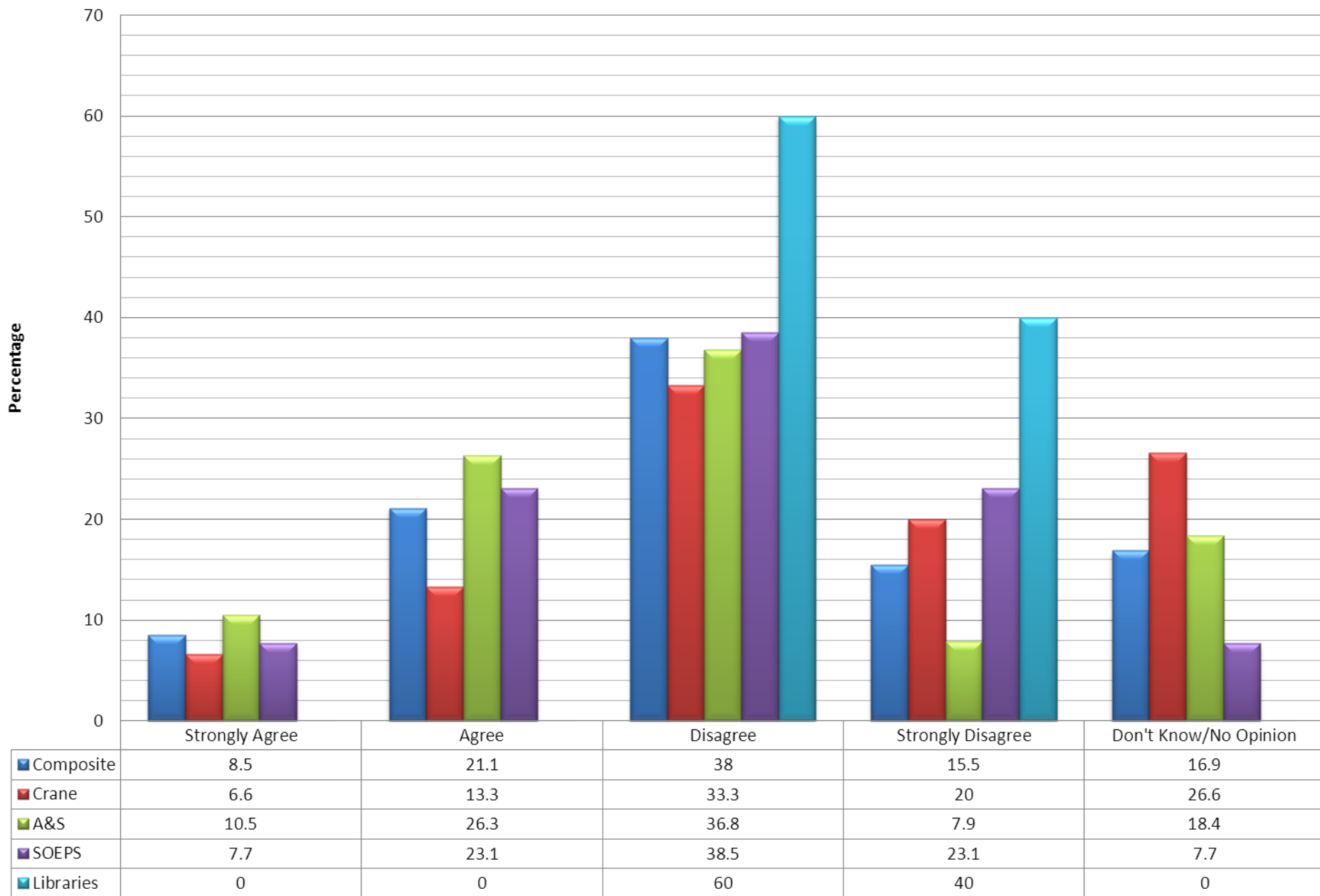
2b. Faculty in my department/program regularly discusses the process and outcomes of student learning assessment in informal settings



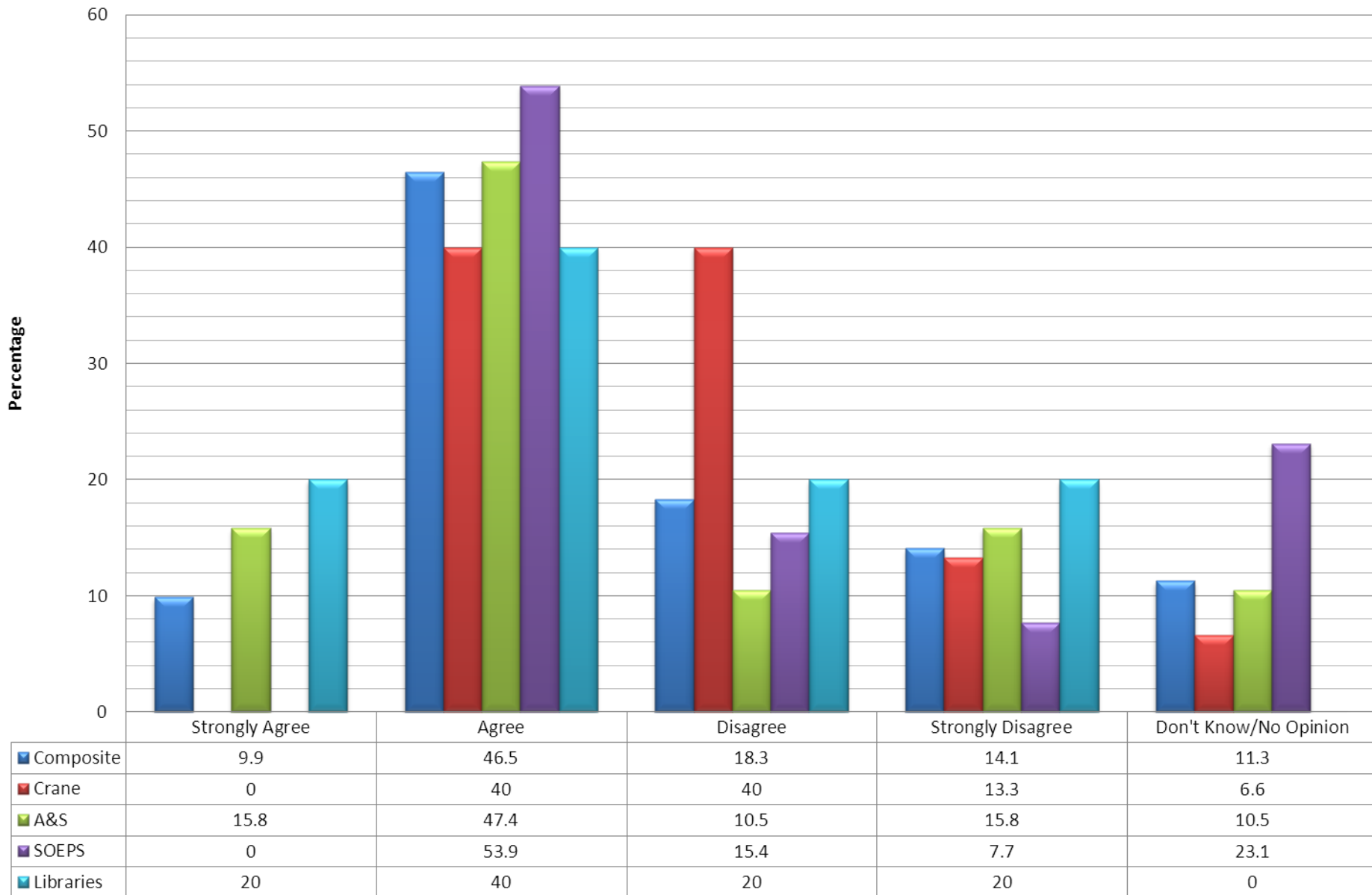
2c. Faculty in my department/program are aware of how SUNY Potsdam defines “effective assessment of student learning.”



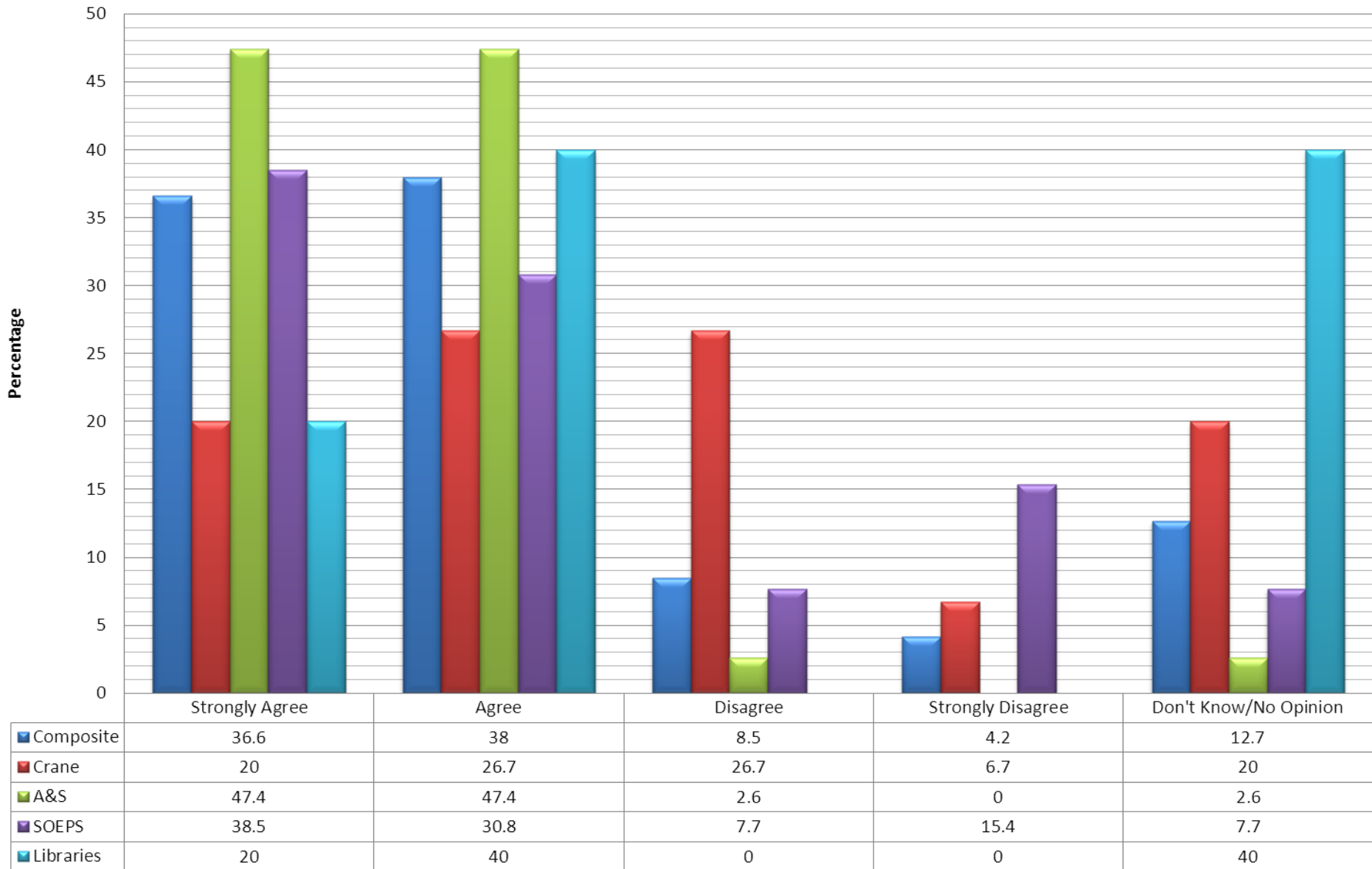
2d. At SUNY Potsdam, “best practices” in the assessment of student learning are shared widely across departments/ programs and schools.



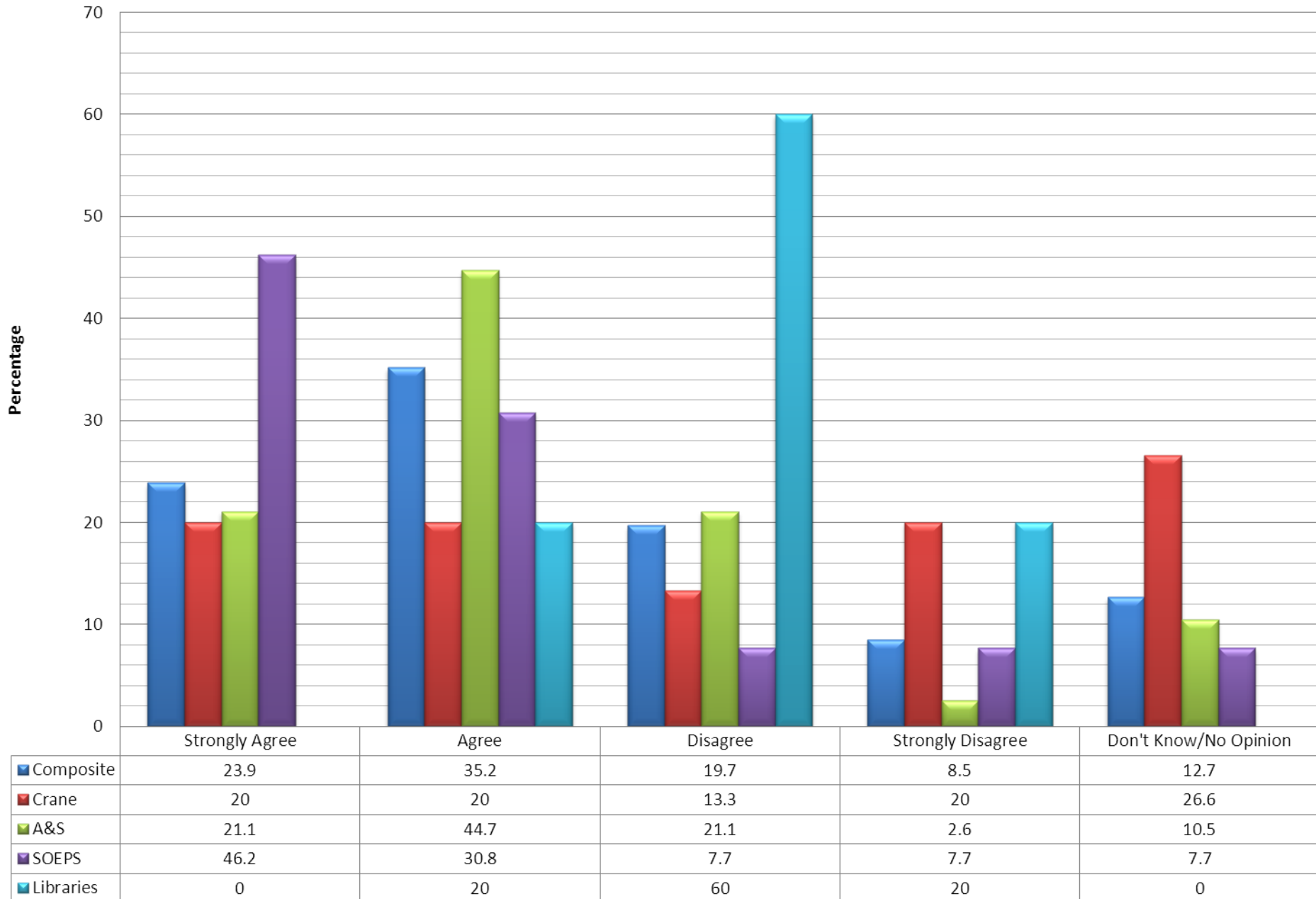
2e. At SUNY Potsdam, resources and professional development opportunities are available to adequately train faculty in the process of effective assessment of student learning.



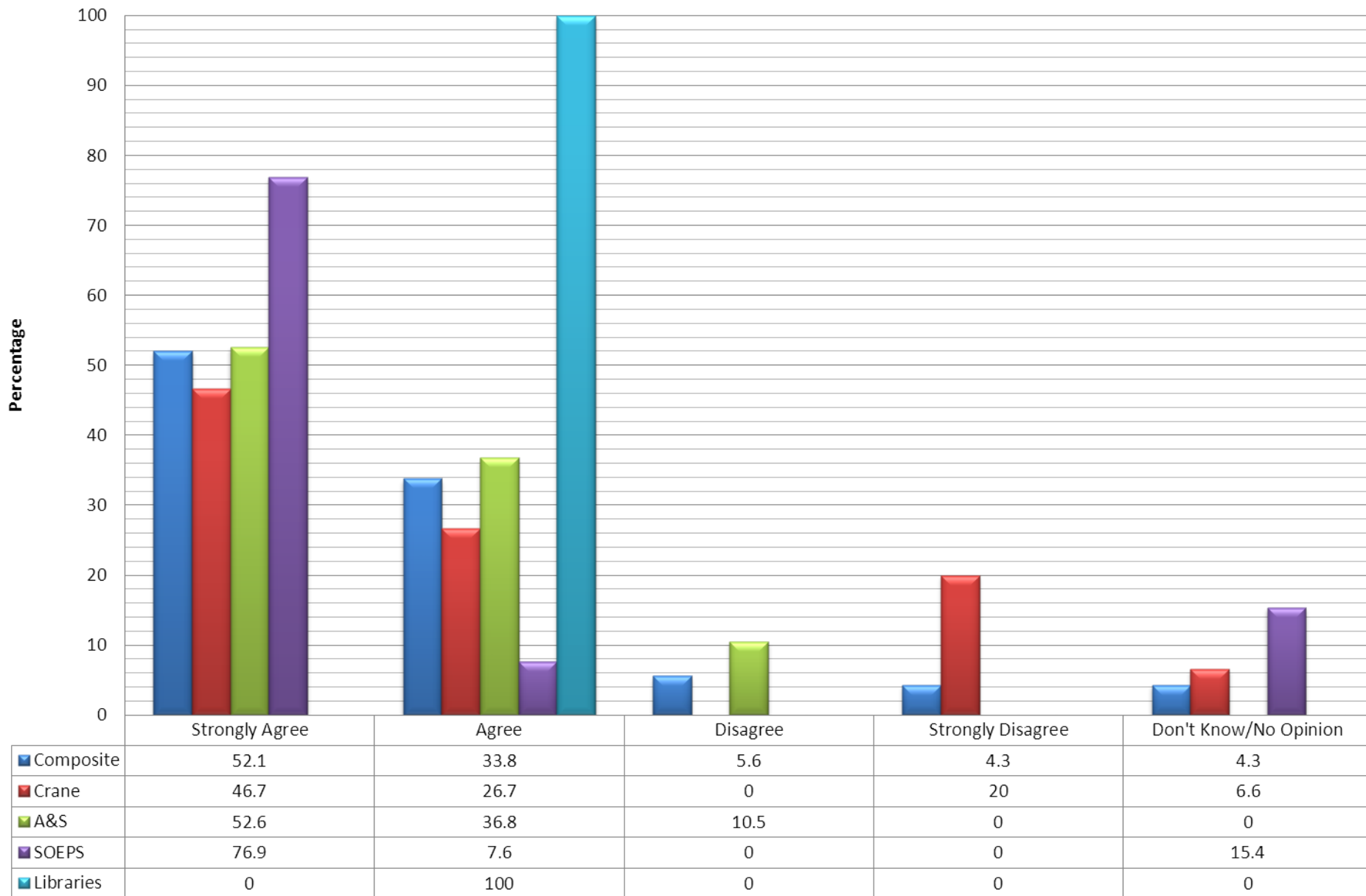
2f. In my department/program, course learning outcomes are aligned with departmental outcomes and both are aligned with the college's Mission Statement or The Potsdam Graduate.



2g. In my department/program, expectations about how student learning is assessed are made clear to current and prospective students.



2h. Based on student assessment data, I make changes to my courses or curriculum delivery in a way that I think will improve student achievement of learning outcomes.



3. If I had one request for something that would assist me in the process of assessing student learning outcomes it would be:

- **Time:** “Release time from teaching to have the time to adapt assessments based on outcomes and the effective assessment of student learning.”
- **Sharing of Best Practices/Professional Development:** “Teaching Circles or some other type of opportunity to engage with others about best practices and effective student assessment tools they have used.”
- **Technology:** “program or software to get the data from the assessment.”
- **Make Assessment of Student Learning Go Away:** “This program is unnecessary. It smacks of k-12! It also seems inconsistent with the college learning environment. So my request would be to discontinue it.”

The Working Group for Standard 14

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning
Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

Research Question #1

1. By what measures can SUNY Potsdam demonstrate its progress in making the assessment of student learning “an integral part of the life of the institution”?

- To what extent have its effort to implement assessment of student learning outcomes (SLOs) been effective?
- Does the institution define the “effective” assessment of student learning appropriately?
- What evidence demonstrates that the practice of assessment has created (or is creating) a culture of assessment?
- What evidence demonstrates that the assessment of student learning is communicated to college leadership and is used for planning, goal setting, and resource allocation?

Key Findings & Recommendations:

1. Assessment of student learning is becoming “an integral part of the life of the institution”.

- The discussion of the process of student learning outcomes assessment is happening on a departmental/program level for most departments, both in formal and informal settings.
 - **Evidence:** Standard 14 Faculty Survey, Interviews with Administration; MSCHE rubric analysis.
- Similarly, almost all faculty report using assessment data to make changes to their courses and/or curricula delivery.
 - **Evidence:** Standard 14 Faculty Survey; Interviews with Administration; MSCHE rubric analysis.
- While both the discussion of and use of assessment data are uneven across departments, programs, and schools, the data does suggest a culture of Student Learning Outcome assessment is taking hold within some departments and that culture is developing across the campus.
 - **Evidence:** Standard 14 Faculty Survey; Interviews with Administration; MSCHE rubric analysis;

Recommendation:

- That administration continue to give priority to the allocation of resources for the purpose of promoting and sustaining a culture of assessment.

Research Question #2

2. How well are Department/Program Assessment Plans and activities linked to the overall mission and goals of the College?

- **To what extent are department/ program SLOs linked to college outcomes as defined by the Mission Statement and to key goals and planning documents?**
- **How well does the Potsdam Graduate document serve as a desired compilation of outcomes for the assessment of student learning campus-wide?**

Key Findings & Recommendations:

2. All assessment plans are linked to College, Schools, and Department/Program mission statements or the Potsdam graduate as required.

- While the majority of assessment plans identify a clear link to one of the relevant mission statements and/or the Potsdam Graduate, it is unclear how the various mission statements and the Potsdam Graduate are linked to each other.
 - **Evidence:** Standard 14 Faculty Survey; Interviews with Administration; MSCHE rubric analysis; Dept./Program Assessment Plans; Potsdam Graduate, College Mission Statement; SOE Conceptual Framework; Crane School Mission Statement, Departmental Mission Statements.

Recommendation:

- Create a taskforce to rework and contemporize *The Potsdam Graduate* as the operationalization of the *College Mission Statement*. If possible this reworking would reconcile all of the various mission statements emphasizing the connections between them and how they inform pedagogy.

Research Question #3

3. Have sufficient measures been taken to support professional development necessary to create effective assessment programs and to inculcate a culture of assessment across the campus?

- **Have the opportunities for professional development been commensurate with the needs of faculty?**
- **Have appropriate resources been allocated to support the assessment of student learning?**
- **To what extent has the implementation of assessment programs changed faculty workloads and/or the ways faculty work?**
- **What evidence demonstrates that the “best practices” in the assessment of student learning are highlighted, and that the best practices, from a variety of disciplines, showcased?**

Key Findings & Recommendations:

3. While there have been many opportunities for professional development in Student Learning Outcome assessment, additional measures are necessary to create effective assessment programs in all areas and to build upon the developing culture of assessment campus-wide.

- In general, faculty indicate that they need more time to assess Student Learning Outcomes effectively and to utilize the results for beneficial curricular change.
 - Faculty workloads have been impacted by implementation of Student Learning Outcomes assessment.
 - Faculty feel there is neither enough time nor support to coordinate assessment of Student Learning Outcomes within the department.
 - Faculty feel there is not enough time to develop course plans that reflect an emphasis on specific learning objectives and the implementation of assessment plans.
 - It would seem that while there are resources for faculty for professional development related to assessment, what Faculty really require is release time to work on learning outcomes assessment activities.
- **Evidence:** Standard 14 Faculty Survey; Interviews with Administration and Union; MSCHE rubric analysis.

Key Findings & Recommendations:

- Because departments and schools are at varying stages in the process of implementing assessment of student learning outcomes, professional development needs are quite diverse.
 - **Evidence:** Standard 14 Faculty Survey; Interviews with Administration and Union; MSCHE rubric analysis.
- Data indicate that there is little or no sharing of best assessment practices across schools and departments.
 - Best practices exist, but are not necessarily shared between the schools and libraries.
 - There is no sharing of best practices system wide.
 - There is a need and desire for sharing of best practices across departments, as they relate to the assessment of Student Learning Outcomes.
 - Some faculty question the value of assessment processes and outcomes.
 - **Evidence:** Standard 14 Faculty Survey; Interviews with Deans; MSCHE rubric analysis; Department or Program Assessment Plans, Reports and Action Plans; MSCHE Rubric.

Key Findings & Recommendations:

Recommendations:

- Work creatively towards a reduced teaching load recognizing that this would increase time available for the process of assessment of student learning.
- The administration is encouraged to be creative in finding ways to support release time for assessment coordinators and for faculty to spend time in the development of assessment resources.
- Continue to provide a variety of professional development opportunities for faculty to meet the needs across schools, departments, and courses.
- Develop specific activities and events to highlight best practices in effective assessment of student learning.

Research Question #4

4. How is the knowledge generated by the assessment of student learning shared across the college community so as to inform decision making?

- **What evidence demonstrates that the assessment of student learning informs department and program decision-making, particularly regarding program and curriculum development?**
- **What evidence demonstrates that the assessment of student learning, regarding both processes and outcomes, are transparent to all stakeholders, including current and prospective students?**

Key Findings & Recommendations:

4. Communication and transparency related to the process of assessing student learning outcomes is available but there is limited evidence that these data are valued and used.

- There are no formal processes for the communication of the results of assessment of student learning outcomes to senior administration for planning, goal setting, policy making and resource allocation.
- All Departments and Programs have published an *Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes Plan* for their majors on the SUNY Potsdam website which is available to current and prospective students.
- An analysis of syllabi reveals that the vast majority of the syllabi communicate expected student learning outcomes to students, however there is a range of clarity and measurability in these student learning outcomes.
- There remains some mistrust of the uses of assessment data by faculty.
 - **Evidence:** Standard 14 Faculty Survey; Interviews with Deans; MSCHE rubric analysis; Director of Academic Assessment; Dept./Program Assessment Plans; MSCHE Rubric; Course Syllabi randomly selected from each School.

Key Findings & Recommendations:

Recommendation:

- That a sub-committee of the *College Academic Assessment Committee* include an annual meta-evaluation of *Department/Program Assessment of Student Learning Reports and Action Plans* as part of the College-Wide Planning, Budget & Assessment Cycle flow chart for consideration by senior administration for planning, goal setting, policy making and resource allocation.