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Jan 7th, 12:00 AM

### Effective Education, First-Generation Friendly? A study of participation of first-generation students actively presenting a capstone project

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# Effective Education, First-Generation Friendly?



A study on participation of first-generation students actively presenting a capstone project.

Andy Acevedo '23, Josiah Begor '23, Justin Kan '23, Charlie Trey-Masters '23 (Sponsor: Professor Nancy Budwig)

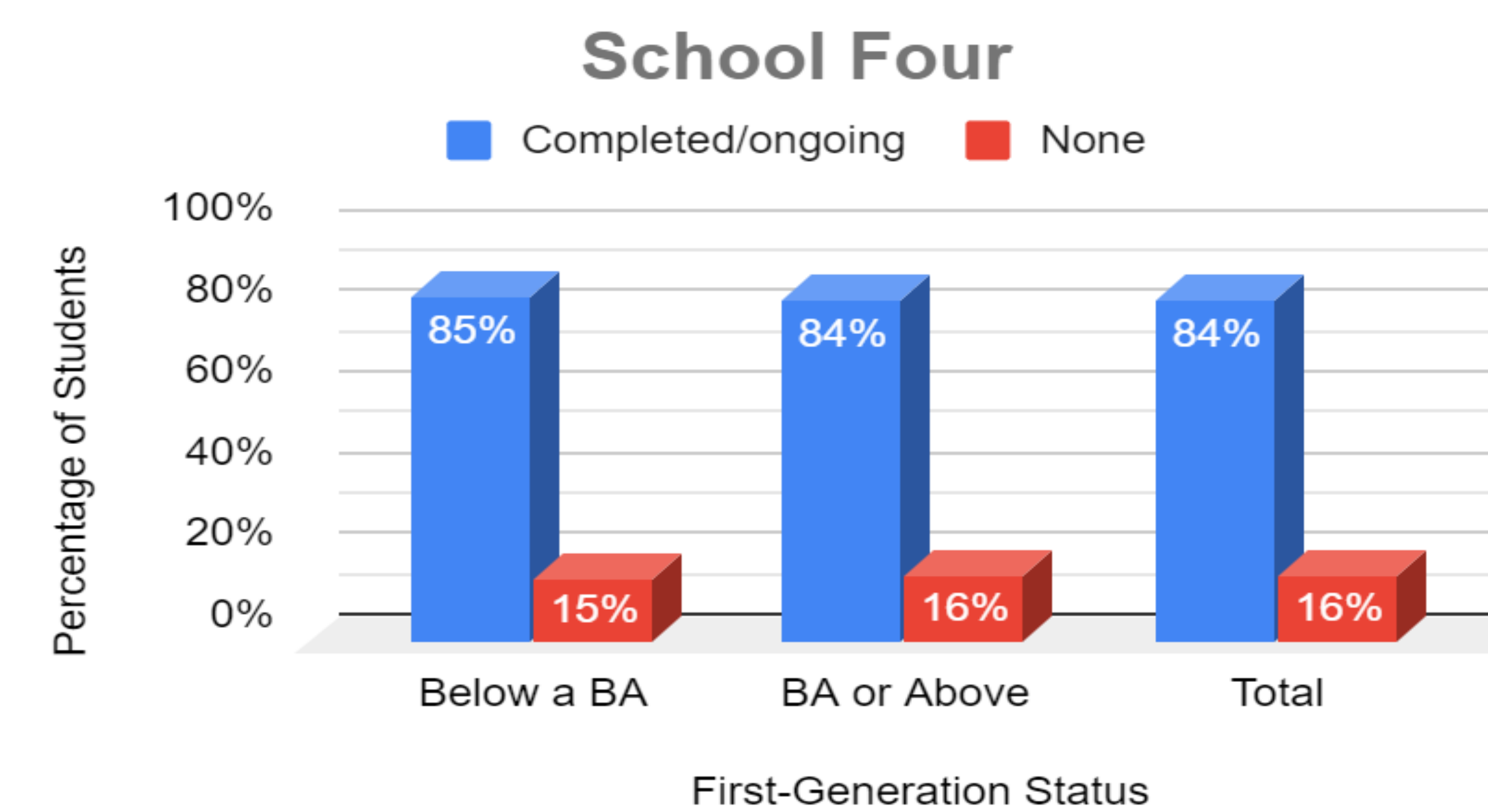
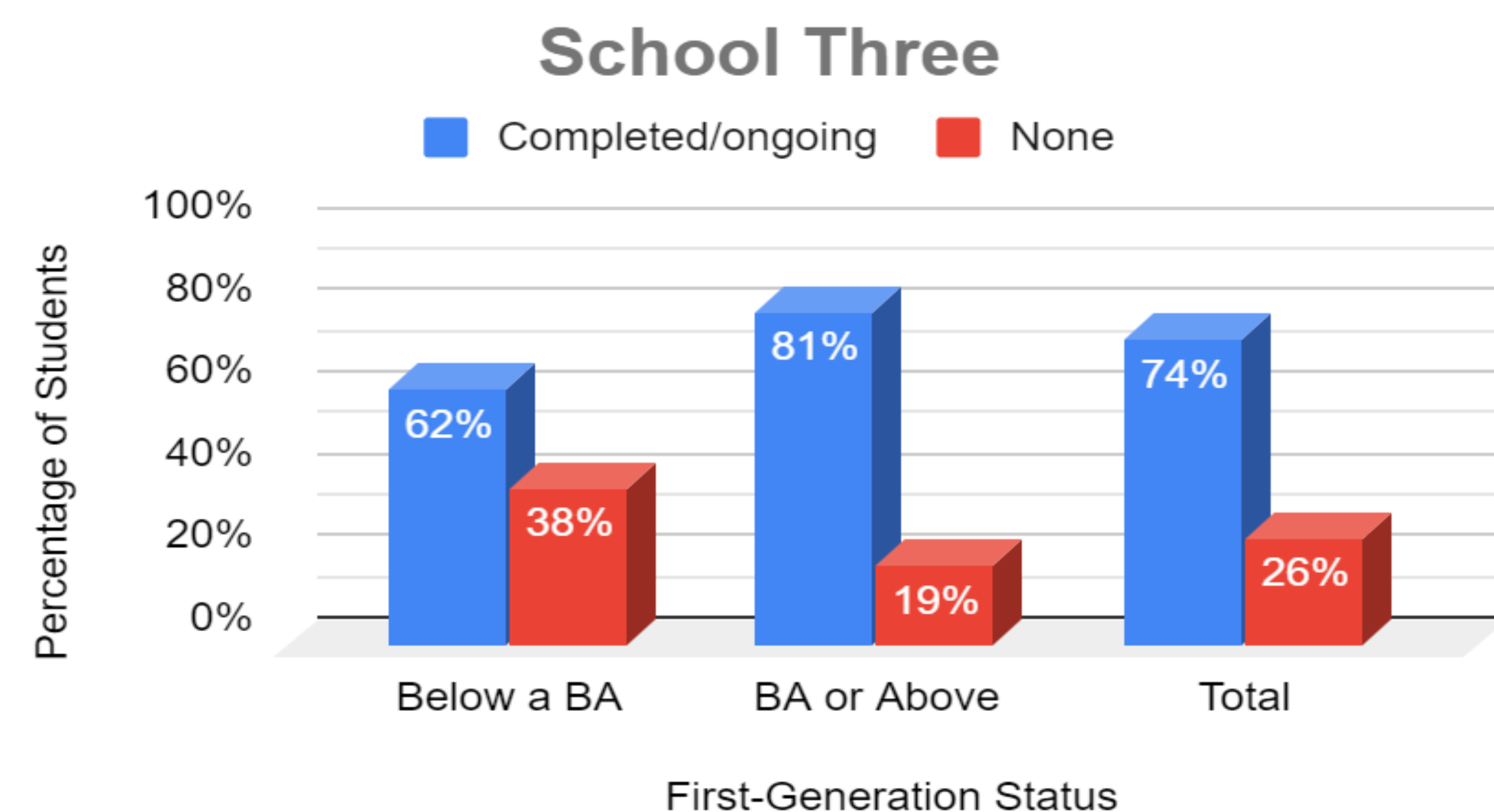
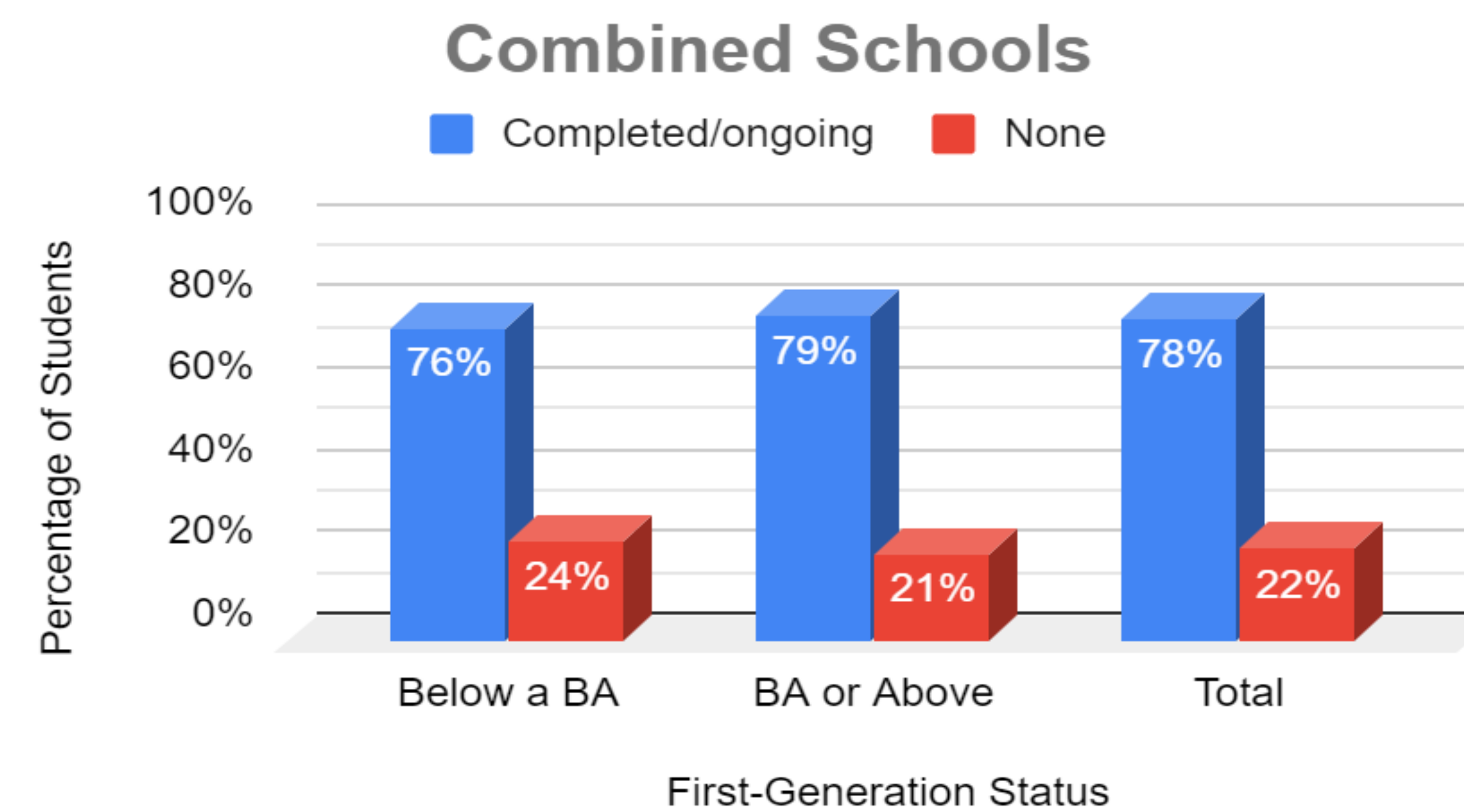
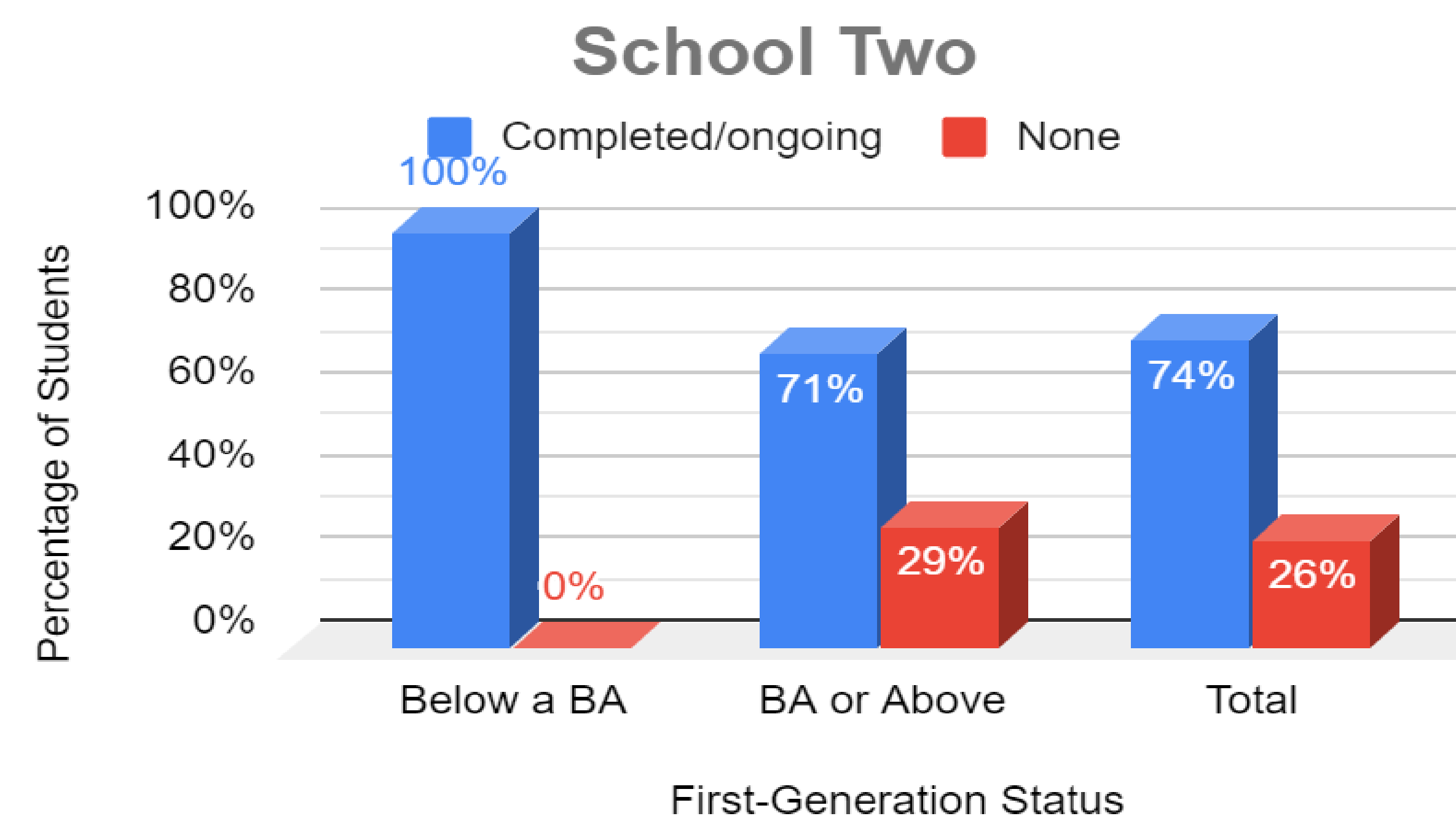
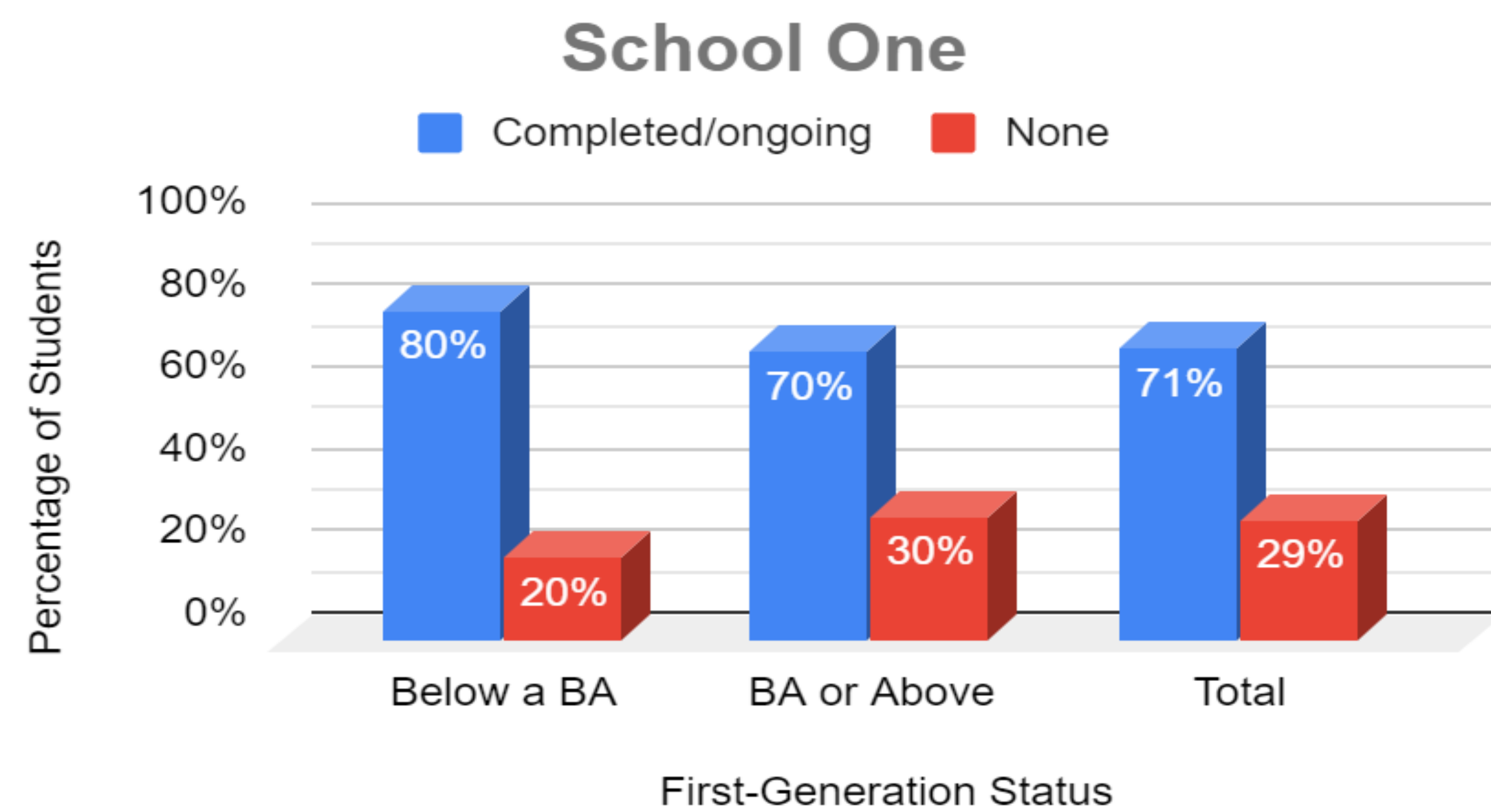
## Introduction

**LEAP Initiative:** The LEAP Initiative is a project advocated by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). It was designed to “align the goals of college learning with the needs of a new global century” (Sandeen, 2012).

**The Study:** This study is part of a larger project based on a consortium of 8 schools that participate in the LEAP Challenge, which takes a close look at "signature work for students", and the participation of students in this kind of work and their presentation of results. We gathered data from seniors of the school, finding which of them conducted and presented long term research projects, along with their demographics.

**Our Focus:** Our study focused specifically on the distribution of First Generation and Non-First-Generation students among the consortium of schools, and any significant data trends within our results.

**Our Question:** Is there an identifiable achievement gap between first-generation/non-first-generation in these participating schools in terms of student research presentation?



**Finding #2:** School 3 is an outlier, as it shows a large disparity between the rates of presentation of research, despite a larger sample size.

## Methods

- **Participants:** 291 seniors from 4 LEAP Challenge schools.
- **Procedure:** Each participant completed an anonymous 12 question survey regarding their involvement in a capstone project and presentation of it.
- **Focus:** We took the raw numbers extracted from the surveys and converted them into percentages and examined the proportions closely for insight. Participants who completed and publicly shared a capstone project, and whether they were first generation college students or not.

## References

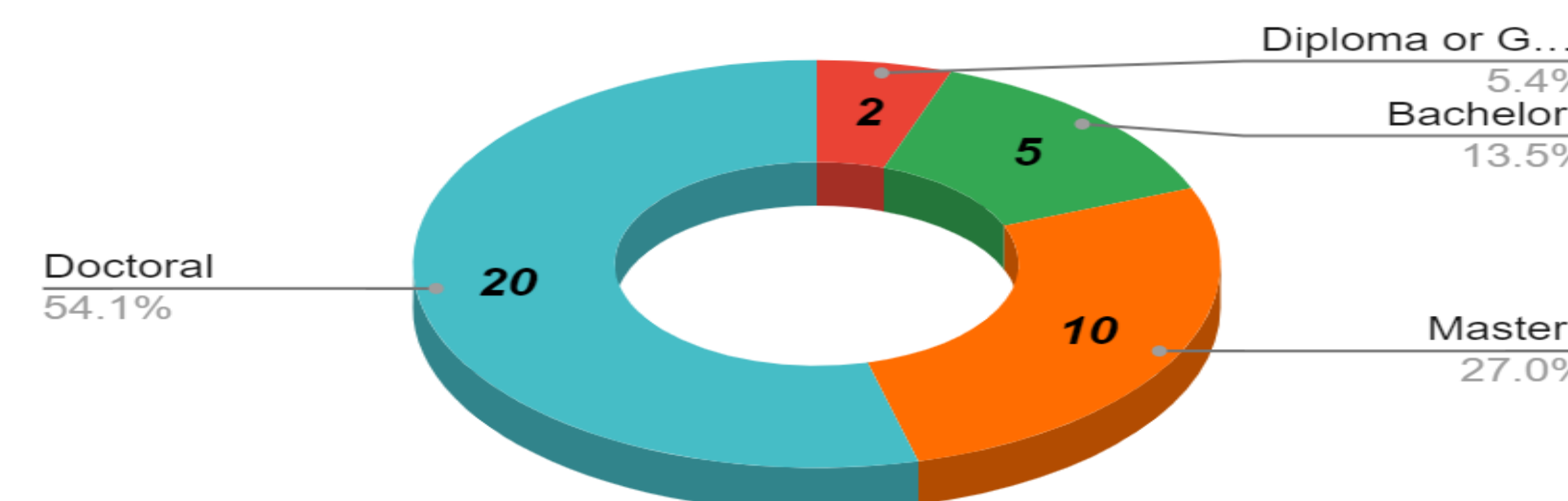
Sandeen, C. (2012). High-Impact Educational Practices: What we can learn from the traditional undergraduate setting. *Continuing Higher Education Review, Volume 76*.

**Finding #1:** There is no significant difference between first-generation and non-first-generation seniors. This suggests that there exists some form of equitable education among the schools.

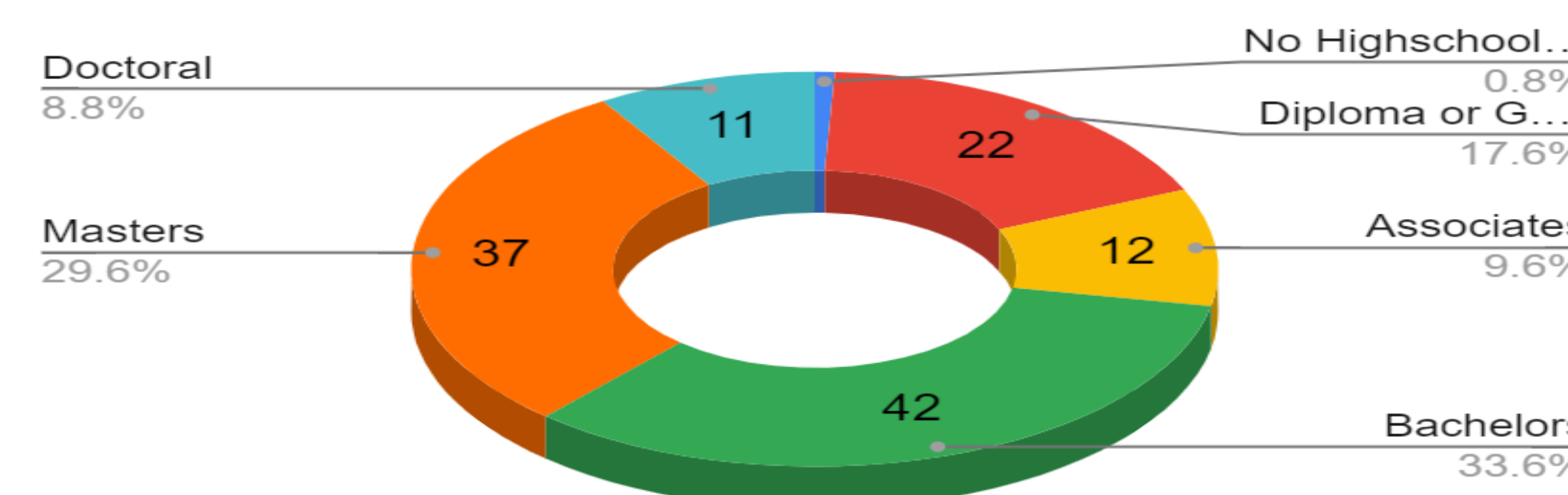
## Discussion

- At first glance, we find no significant difference between the presentation rates of first-generation and non-first-generation students in our combined data. However, when we break down the data into individual schools, we start to see some disparity in some of the schools we studied, while other schools show hints of equitable education opportunities.
- While we trust the legitimacy of the research but it is important to keep in mind the scale of this survey. Due to small sample size this in no ways generalizable to all schools.
- The results of the study fail to take into account other identities that students might carry with them besides the classification of first-generation or non-first-generation. There could be other intersecting identities that influence presentation rates.

School Two Parent Education Level



School Four Parent Education Level



**Finding #3 :** The parent education level of School Two's students reveal that about 75% have a master's degree or higher, while their presentation rates among non-first-generation students is only 71%. Meanwhile, looking at School Four's parent education level, only 40% of them have a master's degree or higher, while boasting 85% participation of both first-gen and non-first-gen students. This argues against the notion that there is an achievement gap.

**This study was conducted in Fall 2019 as part of a Freshman FYI Course.**