

FEMINIST INQUIRIES:

A FEMINIST FINANCIAL AID REAPPROPRIATION REPORT FOR

RUTGERS

Kristy Echie

December 13, 2023

**IWL Policy Tracks: Grassroots Activism and
Organizing & Law and Advocacy**



The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women's Leadership's website at <http://iwl.rutgers.edu>.

GOAL STATEMENT

RESEARCH

Black-white disparity in student loan debt more than triples after graduation

Judith Scott-Clayton and Jing Li
October 20, 2016



September 11, 2019

Flagships Fail on Financial Equity

Most public flagship universities are failing to meet the financial needs of low- and middle-income students, a report finds, and are overly subsidizing wealthier students.

By [Madeline St. Amour](#)

'SEGREGATION FOREVER'?:

The Continued Underrepresentation of Black and Latino Undergraduates at the Nation's 101 Most Selective Public Colleges and Universities

Through survey design, dissemination, and analysis my project examines the implications of student debt among a select group of undergraduate women at Rutgers-New Brunswick to demonstrate the institution's need to improve its financial aid resources to support its underserved students.

The Feminist Financial Aid Reappropriation Report For Rutgers is a lobbying tactic to persuade the University to implement more robust financial aid services that would alleviate systematic economic hardships facing women and minorities.

MY SURVEY

Thank you for opening this link. I am Kristy Echie, a second-year Leadership Scholar, and my social action project looks at student debt and the impact it has on students. I am hoping you can help me by filling out this survey, which is **exclusively for IWL Leadership Scholars to fill out. I am hoping for 100% participation.** This brief 15-20 minute survey includes a mixture of open-ended and multiple-choice questions. Please do not share the survey link with anyone, and please begin and complete the survey in one setting. All of your responses will be anonymous, and the survey will be live until Nov 17, 2023 at 11:30 PM. Thank you so much in advance for supporting my SAP in this way!



30/37 responses from IWL Leadership Scholars:

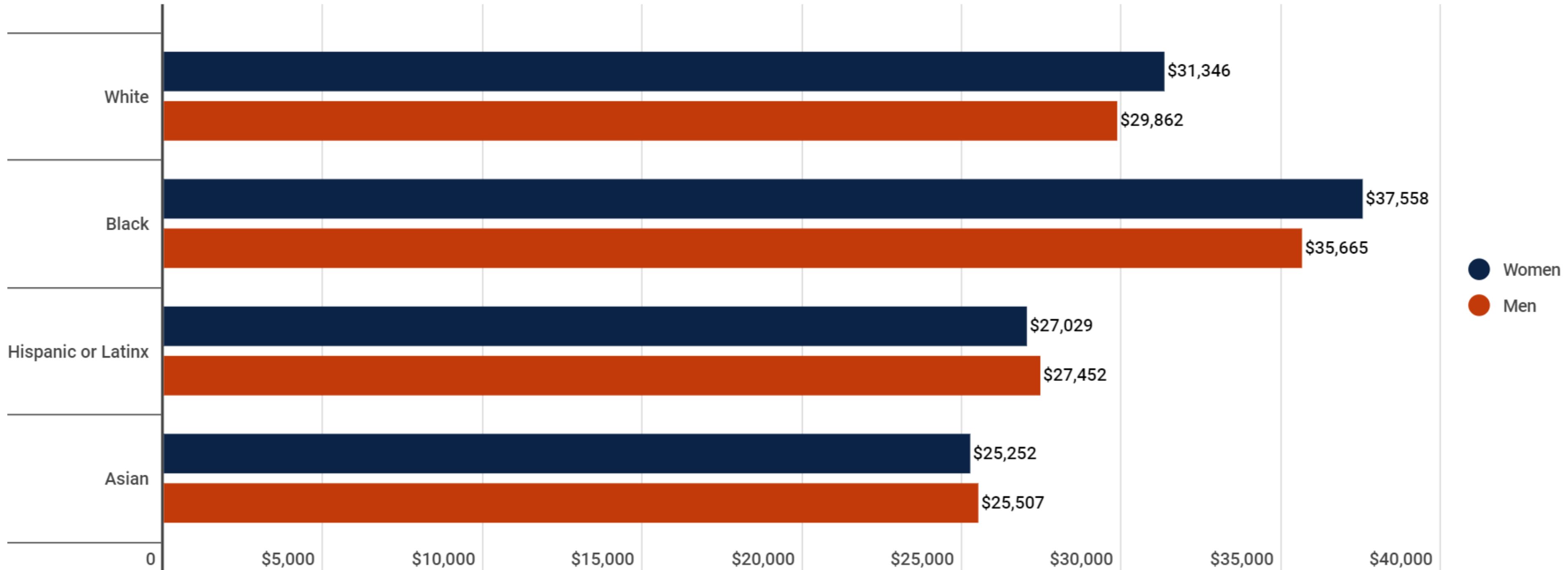
- 4 – Black/African American
 - 12 – Asian
 - 2 – American Indian/Alaska Native
 - 1 – Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 - 16 – White
- including
- 7 – Hispanic/Latino
 - 23 – Not Hispanic/Latino
 - 9 – first-generation college students
 - 21 – not first-generation students

THE ISSUE

- Women earning a bachelor's degree graduate owing an average of \$2,700 more than their male peers (AAUW)
- Women take about two years longer than men to repay student loans (AAUW)
- Women college students borrow at higher rates, have greater cumulative debt, and experience higher levels of financial anxiety than men (Mayers)



Mean Total Borrowed by Gender and Race/Ethnicity



Note: Analysis excludes those who borrowed no money to finance their educations

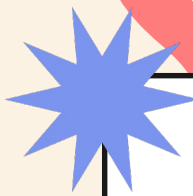
Source: AAUW analysis of U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, B&B:17 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study



DEBT, GENDER & FINANCE CAPITALISM

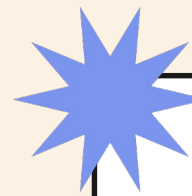
"Financialization is a political strategy, a shift in the modality of the exploitation of female work, from indirect, under the supervision of the male wage earner, to direct, under the control of capital through banks. This means that while in the past, women were exploited by capital as producers of labor power (the real product of domestic work) presently they are exploited primarily through the jobs they must take on to reproduce themselves and their children and pay their debts" (Federici)

PROJECT SCOPE



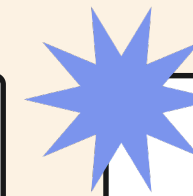
RESEARCH

What role do higher education institutions play in reproducing student debt?



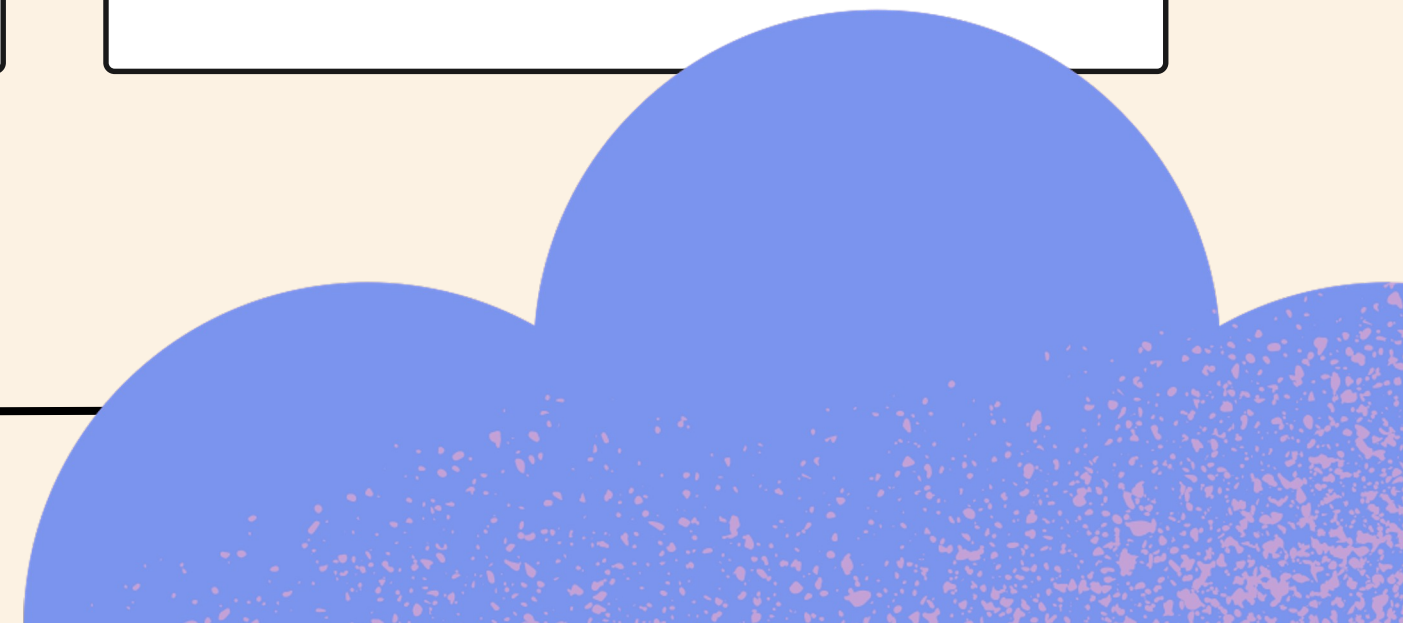
COMMUNITY MAPPING

What interventions Rutgers have to mitigate student debt? What work are they currently doing?



ADVOCACY

What financial aid services do women at Rutgers need?





TIMELINE



SPRING 2023

- Research on how student debt impacts women
- Project proposal to secure IWL funding

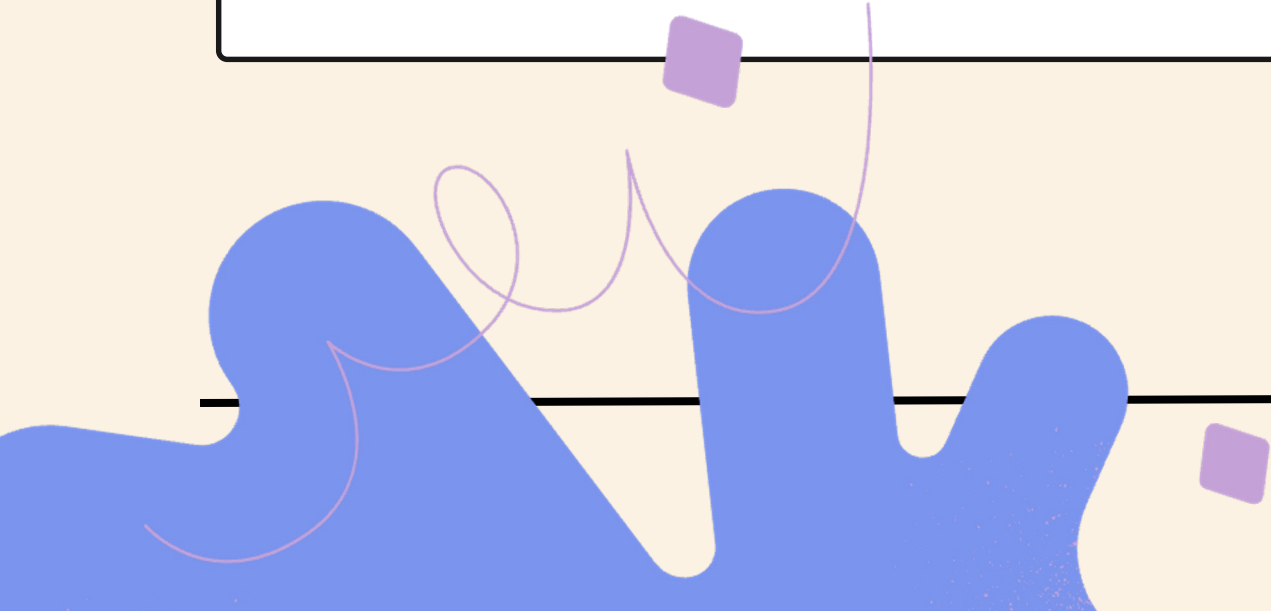



FALL 2023

- Research on student debt advocacy methods
- Create and distribute survey among IWL Leadership Scholars
- Work with University stakeholders to address student debt



SPRING 2024

- Share survey responses with University stakeholders
 - Advocate for gender-based solutions towards student debt
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HOW DO WOMEN AT RUTGERS IDENTIFY WITH STUDENT DEBT?

“As a woman, my desire to be independent economically after receiving my degree has increased my anxiety surrounding my loan repayment”

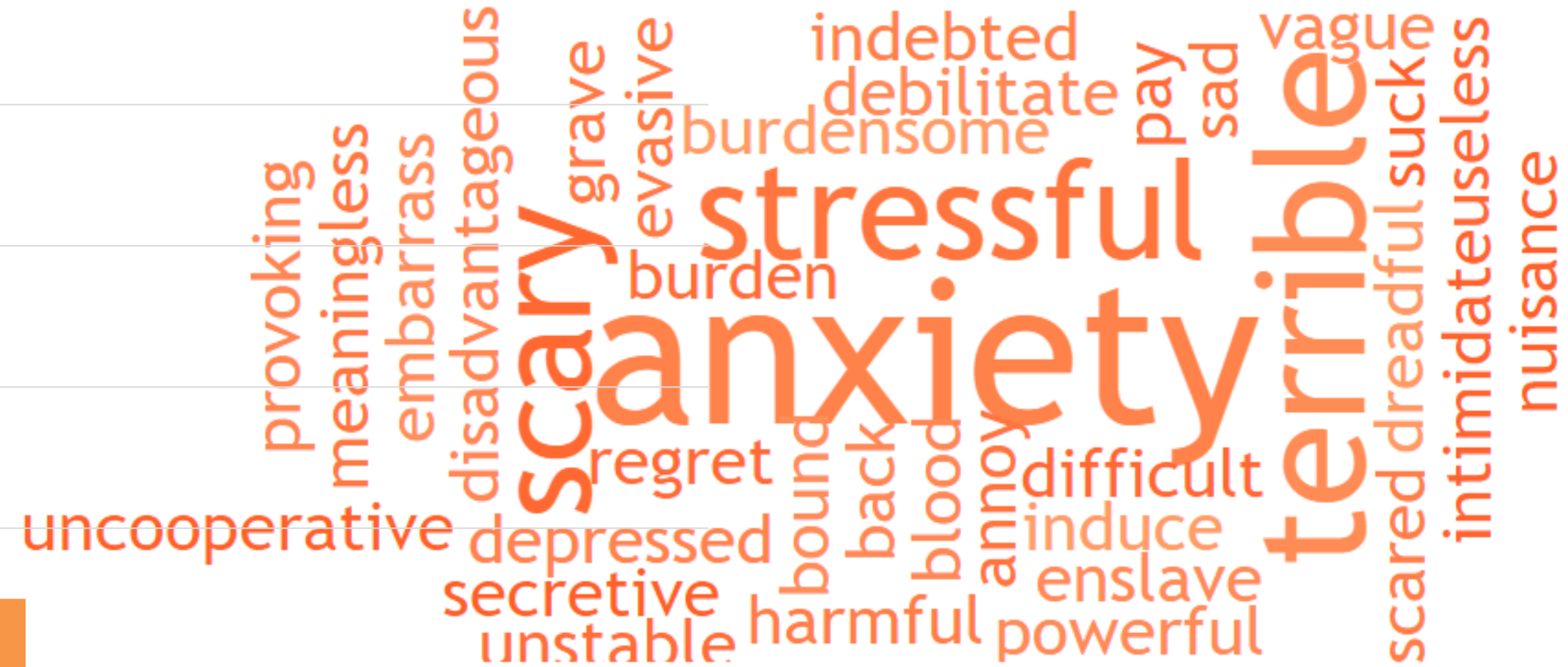
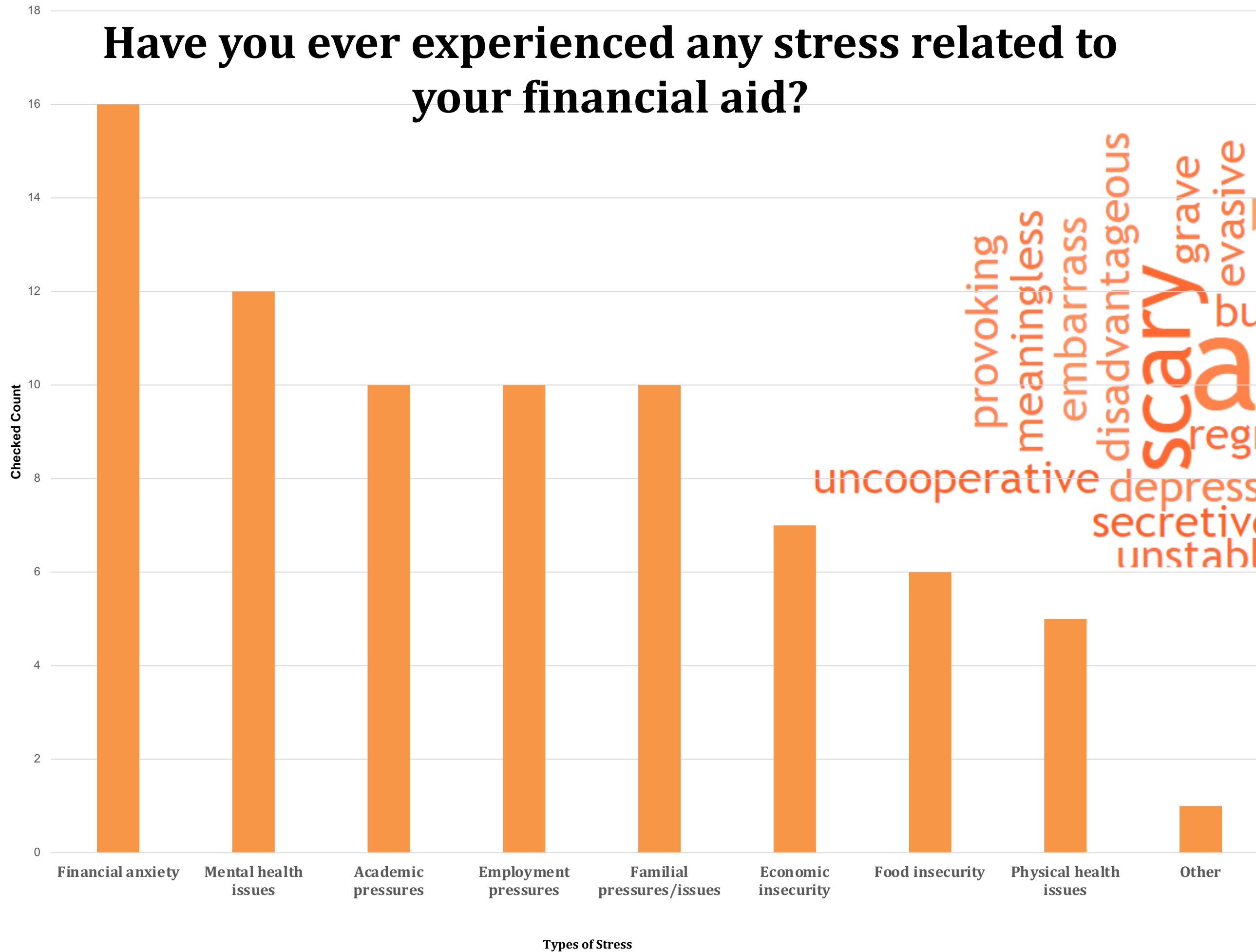
“Coming from a Latino background with family that are all immigrants, with no background in college, finances, anything like that, it feels like borrowing is not something voluntarily. It is something I must do in order to get an education so it brings the journey to education feel a bit more stressful than necessary”

“As a first generation student, it makes me depressed that I can not seek answers from my mother because she also does not know anything about FAFSA. In many sections of my life I feel helpless, having to fend for myself, and figure it out on my own”

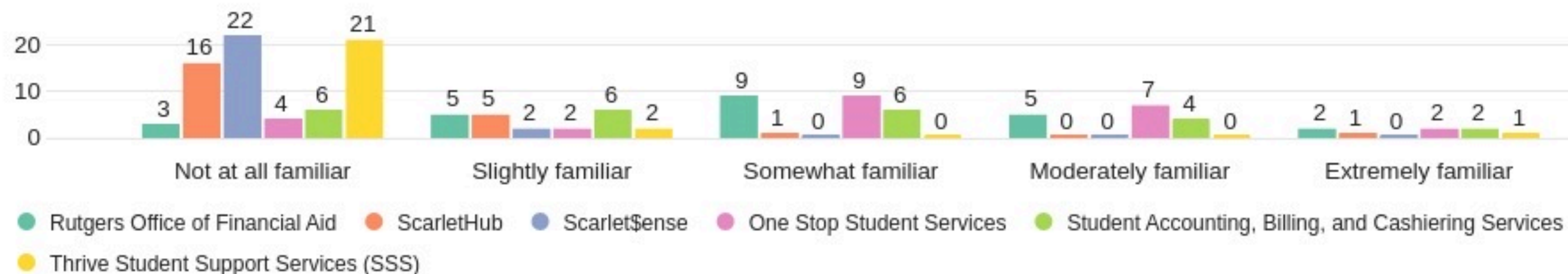
“I think that growing up in a relatively affluent and predominantly white neighborhood, especially attending high school in such a neighborhood, influenced my perception of debt because I was the only person I knew who was borrowing and working to get through college when I was 17. I think this made it harder to understand the severity of student debt, and I didn't allow myself the freedom to take time off to work and/or explore my other options because of this pressure to attend college right away”

“As a black woman who comes from a single-parent household, I am constantly reminded that I do not have the financial means to live as comfortably as I want to. Borrowing student loans just adds to the financial anxiety of not obtaining the success that I imagine for myself because I have debt”

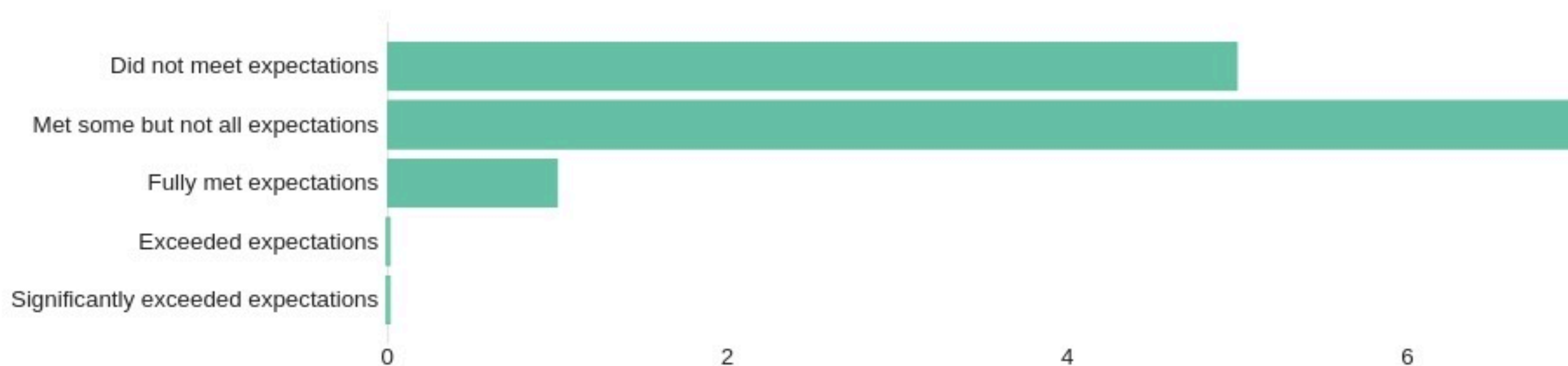
Have you ever experienced any stress related to your financial aid?



How familiar are you with the following financial aid resources offered at Rutgers?



In your experience, how would you describe the overall support surrounding Rutgers financial aid resources, including helpfulness, relativity, accessibility, and convenience?



“MORE STAFF AT ONE STOP. LARGER BUDGET FOR MERIT-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS”

“less bureaucracy”

“The main issue is that there is no physical office for financial aid so there's no one to actually talk to, and when you call one stop you get redirected to 15 other places. So you can't actually ask for advice even if you wanted to, and if you do get a hold of someone they're basically like 'yeah if you want to go to college you take out student loans. that's the reality'”

WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE ABOUT RUTGERS FINANCIAL AID RESOURCES TO BETTER FIT YOUR NEEDS/EXPECTATIONS?

“Rutgers needs to do a better job at providing aid, along with providing students with the proper descriptions and eligibility of all the scholarships, grants, aid, etc. they can receive”

“I would change how unwilling Rutgers is at giving aid, knowing that their students will take out thousands of dollars in loans and expecting that to be their reality instead of giving them more financial aid”

“The whole system just needs to be better and they need to communicate better with students. The term bills are always messed up and it takes weeks to fix and they don't contact you in the meantime”

“I would have these resources be promoted more. As a freshman, it is already intimidating to set foot on a college campus that accommodates thousands of students. We are bombarded with so much information and the most important resources that apply to financial aid get lost amidst this information stream. There should be larger promoting of scholarships, fellowships, and grants because these are things that many students have interest in”

“have information be more accessible”

PARTNERSHIPS

“With shifting demographics and evolving student needs, higher education is at a crossroads. Institutions like Rutgers–New Brunswick can’t just be braced for change, they must create it in order to thrive in the 21st century.”

Chancellor Francine Conway

Chapter 5 | Enhancing Student Retention: Financial Aid Policies and Procedures

Many factors contribute to student retention and a sense of belonging on campus. Although retention is often associated with academic success, financial considerations also affect retention, and many students who withdraw from the university cite financial issues as a factor. Thus, this chapter considers modifications to financial aid policies and procedures that will enhance student retention.

I. Charges and Expected Outcomes

Charges

- Leverage existing financial resources and explore new models, including associated policies and practices impacting registration and retention to help students graduate on time and with minimal debt.

Expected Outcomes

- A plan for financial models that enable students to successfully complete their undergraduate careers.
- A plan to develop retention and registration policies and practices that ensure student retention and success.

II. Introduction and Context

Financial aid plays an integral role in Rutgers–New Brunswick’s mission to keep quality education within reach of academically qualified students. Access and affordability are paramount in the pursuit of higher



ACADEMIC MASTER PLAN

Discovery Advantage



PRELIMINARY REPORT

September
2023



SCHOLARLY
LEADERSHIP



INNOVATIVE
RESEARCH



STUDENT
SUCCESS




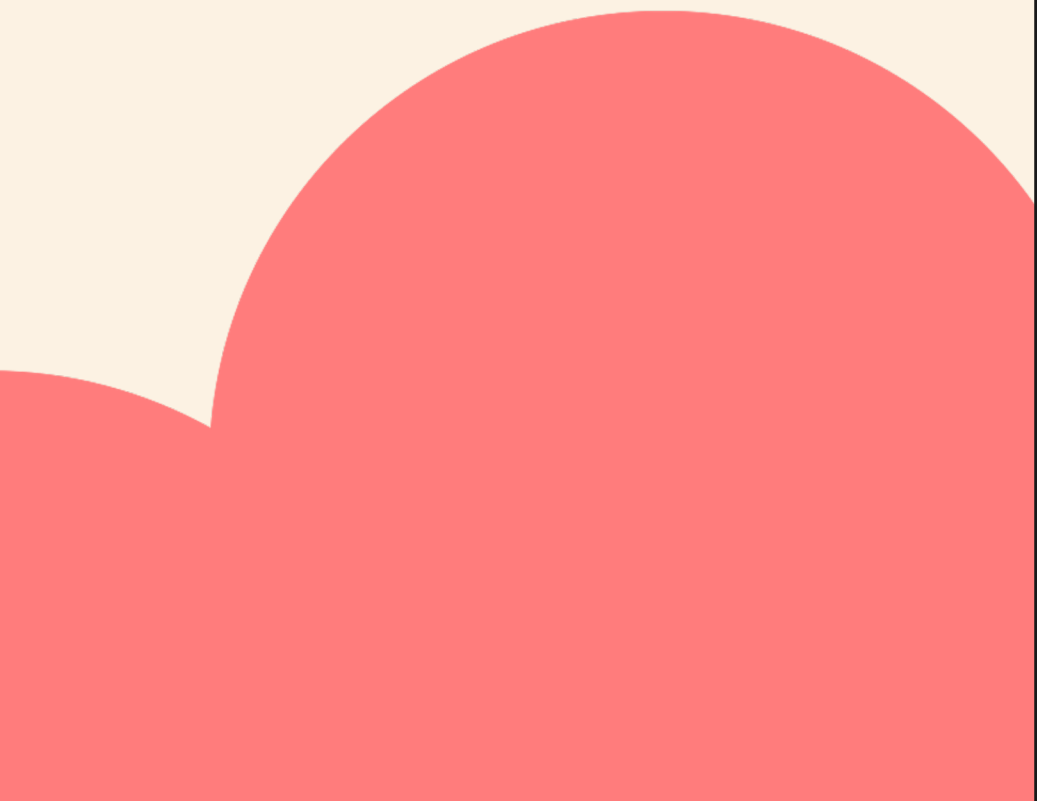
COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT



FEMINIST

LEADERSHIP



- Uses a gendered lens to consider the way debt has been constructed and is reproduced
 - Examines student debt while paying attention to systems that disadvantage certain groups
 - Survey participation gave women agency through their identities and generated collective action
- 

INSIGHTS GAINED

- Adaptability
- Identifying social issues at their root causes
- Understanding (student) debt trends requires feminist economic theory
 - **Community asset mapping:** Working in tandem with a community's strengths and weakness towards a cause

PROJECT

IMPACT

CURRENT

- Inspire students to think about financial literacy
- Introduce feminist economic theory
- Encourage student debt activism

FUTURE

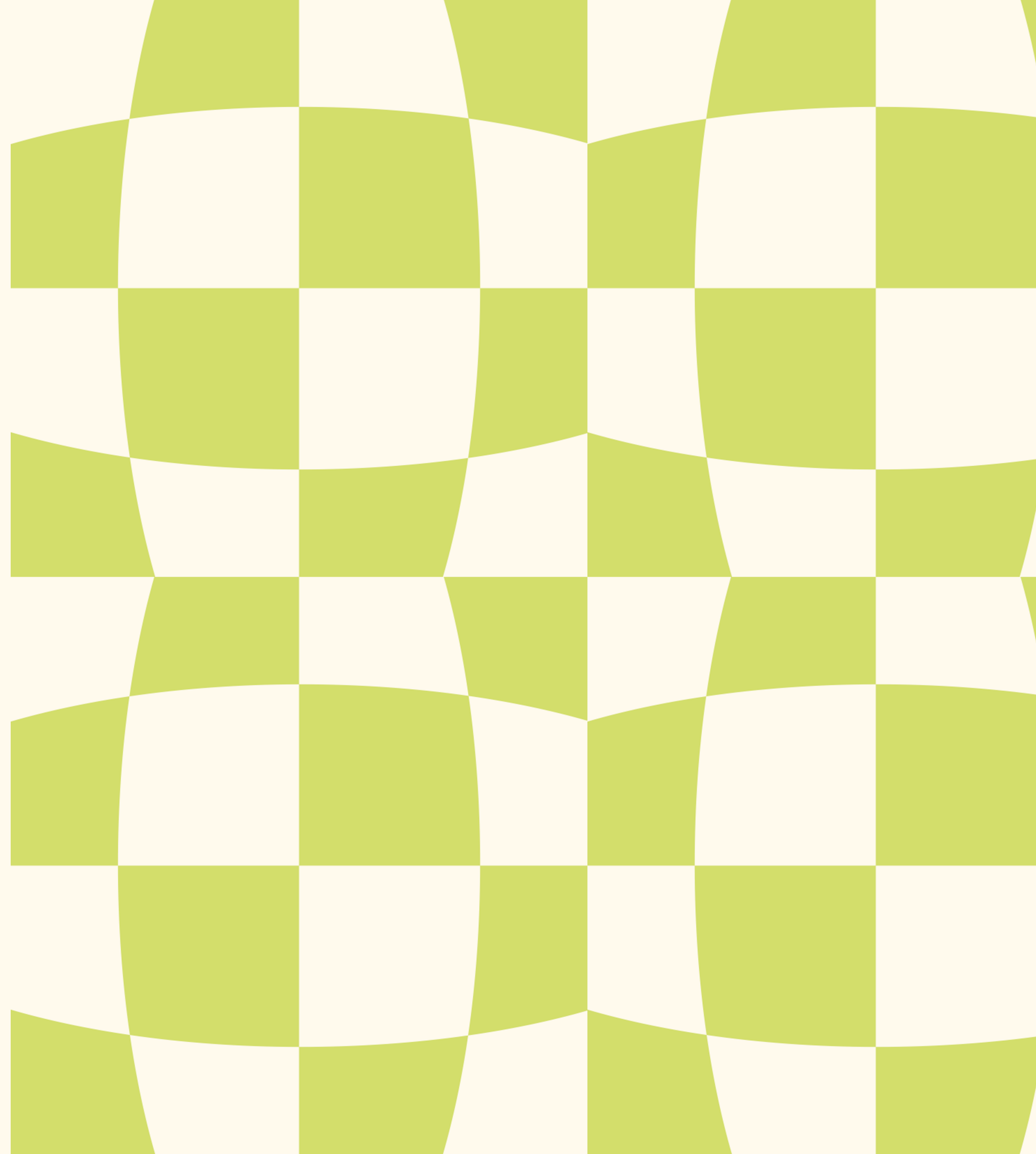
- Inspire students to get involved with university planning
- Generate gender-based initiatives at Rutgers-New Brunswick

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CREDITS



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HAPPY DESIGNING!

