2026–27

AACSB Deans Survey

Overview Report

AACSB

With support from:

Risepoint

AACSB Deans Survey
Overview Report 2026–27

Americas
777 South Harbour Island Boulevard, Suite 750
Tampa, Florida 33602-5730 USA
+1 813 769 6500

Europe, Middle East, and Africa
UP Building
Piet Heinkade 55
1019 GM Amsterdam, The Netherlands
+31 20 509 1070

Asia Pacific
331 North Bridge Road
#10-04/05 Odeon Towers
Singapore, 188720
+65 6592 5210

aacsb.edu

© 2026 AACSB International

CONTENTS

1 » About the Survey 4

2 » About the Supporter 5

3 » Who Responded 7

4 » Routes into the Deanship 15

5 » The Current Appointment and Dean Turnover 22

6 » The Work of the Dean 28

7 » Interim Deans 40

8 » Professional Development and Well-Being 43

9 » School Future Readiness 49

10 » About AACSB 58

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Survey Design and Eligibility

The 2026–27 AACSB Deans Survey was open from 17 July 2026 to 24 August 2026. It was sent to the deans and equivalent heads of business schools and units in AACSB's network—1,881 people total. Respondents first confirmed their roles; anyone who did not lead a business school or unit was screened out.

The survey received 558 valid responses, a response rate of 30 percent: 522 from deans and 36 from interim or acting deans. Respondents lead schools in 75 countries and territories.

For further insights, including trends, regional comparisons, and themes from open-ended responses, explore 2026–27 Deans Survey: Findings in Focus.

Interpreting the Findings

The findings reflect the experiences and perspectives of the deans who participated in the survey. They offer insights into this group and should not be assumed to represent all business school deans or institutions.

- **Denominators.** Percentages are based on the respondents who answered the question, not on all 558 respondents. Every table and chart indicates the number of responses (n). Shares may not sum to exactly 100 percent because of rounding.
- **Multiple selections.** Where respondents could choose more than one answer, shares reflect the respondents who answered the question and add up to more than 100 percent. These tables have no row for totals.
- **Routed questions.** Deans and interim deans answered different sets of questions, and some questions were shown only after a particular answer, which is noted throughout the report. Race and ethnicity was asked only of respondents at schools in the United States.
- **Ratings.** Priority, proficiency, desire to develop proficiency, strategic priority, and preparedness are rated on a scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). These are respondents' subjective assessments, not external or objective measures, and may reflect different expectations, experiences, and institutional contexts. Means are shown to two decimal places, but small differences should be interpreted cautiously. Averages may also mask variation among respondents.
- **The gap measure.** For each leadership activity, the gap is the difference between the mean priority and the mean proficiency. A positive gap means priority is rated higher; a negative gap means proficiency or preparedness is rated higher. Gaps can highlight potential areas for development or support but are not objective measures of skill deficiency or institutional weakness. A smaller or negative gap does not necessarily mean an area requires no further attention. For each dimension of business school future readiness, the gap is the difference between the mean strategic priority and the mean preparedness.

AI-assisted tools, guided by prompts and instructions developed by AACSB staff, were used to support the analysis of anonymized, aggregate data. All analyses and written content were reviewed and validated by AACSB staff, who retain full responsibility for the final report.

ABOUT THE SUPPORTER

ABOUT THE SUPPORTER

As a dedicated Sustaining Member of AACSB's Business Education Alliance, Risepoint is proud to support this important research examining trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping business school leadership.

Risepoint is a global education technology company partnering with more than 100 universities across the U.S., U.K., and Asia Pacific, including 57 AACSB-accredited schools. For nearly 20 years, we have helped regional institutions launch and grow affordable, workforce-relevant online programs.

Our integrated products and services support partners from program launch through enrollment, retention, and sustainable growth, expanding access to affordable education that delivers a strong return on investment for learners, employers, and communities.

Learn more at risepoint.com.

WHO RESPONDED

WHO RESPONDED

The first part of this section covers all 558 respondents. The second covers deans only (not interim deans).

All Respondents

> The survey includes responses from 558 business school leaders: 522 deans or equivalent heads and 36 interim or acting deans. Just over half are based in the Americas (52 percent), followed by Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) (29 percent), and Asia Pacific (19 percent). Seven in 10 represent AACSB-accredited schools, and six in 10 represent public institutions. Among schools with available faculty counts, small, medium, and large schools are represented in roughly equal proportions.

Respondents by Role

ROLE	RESPONDENTS	SHARE
Dean (or equivalent head)	522	94%
Interim or acting dean	36	6%
Total	**558**	**100%**

Respondents by Region

REGION	RESPONDENTS	SHARE
Americas	290	52%
EMEA	160	29%
Asia Pacific	108	19%
Total	**558**	**100%**

Respondents by Accreditation Status

ACCREDITATION STATUS	RESPONDENTS	SHARE
AACSB accredited	392	70%
Not accredited	165	30%
Total	**557**	**100%**

Excludes one respondent at a school not eligible for accreditation.

WHO RESPONDED

Respondents by School Size

SCHOOL SIZE	RESPONDENTS	SHARE
Small (up to 35 full-time faculty)	174	34%
Medium (36–74 full-time faculty)	167	32%
Large (75 or more full-time faculty)	174	34%
Total	**515**	**100%**

Excludes 43 respondents at schools where no full-time faculty count was reported.

Respondents by Institutional Control

INSTITUTIONAL CONTROL	RESPONDENTS	SHARE
Public	332	60%
Private	225	40%
Total	**557**	**100%**

Excludes one respondent at an institution classified as neither public nor private.

Deans

Deans are predominantly career academics. Ninety-five percent hold a doctorate, 79 percent of those with a faculty rank are full professors, and 53 percent still actively teach or do research. The most common fields of study are marketing, management, and finance. The median dean is 56 years old, and 34 percent are women. Most deans have spent their careers in one country (58 percent), although 63 percent speak two or more languages fluently.

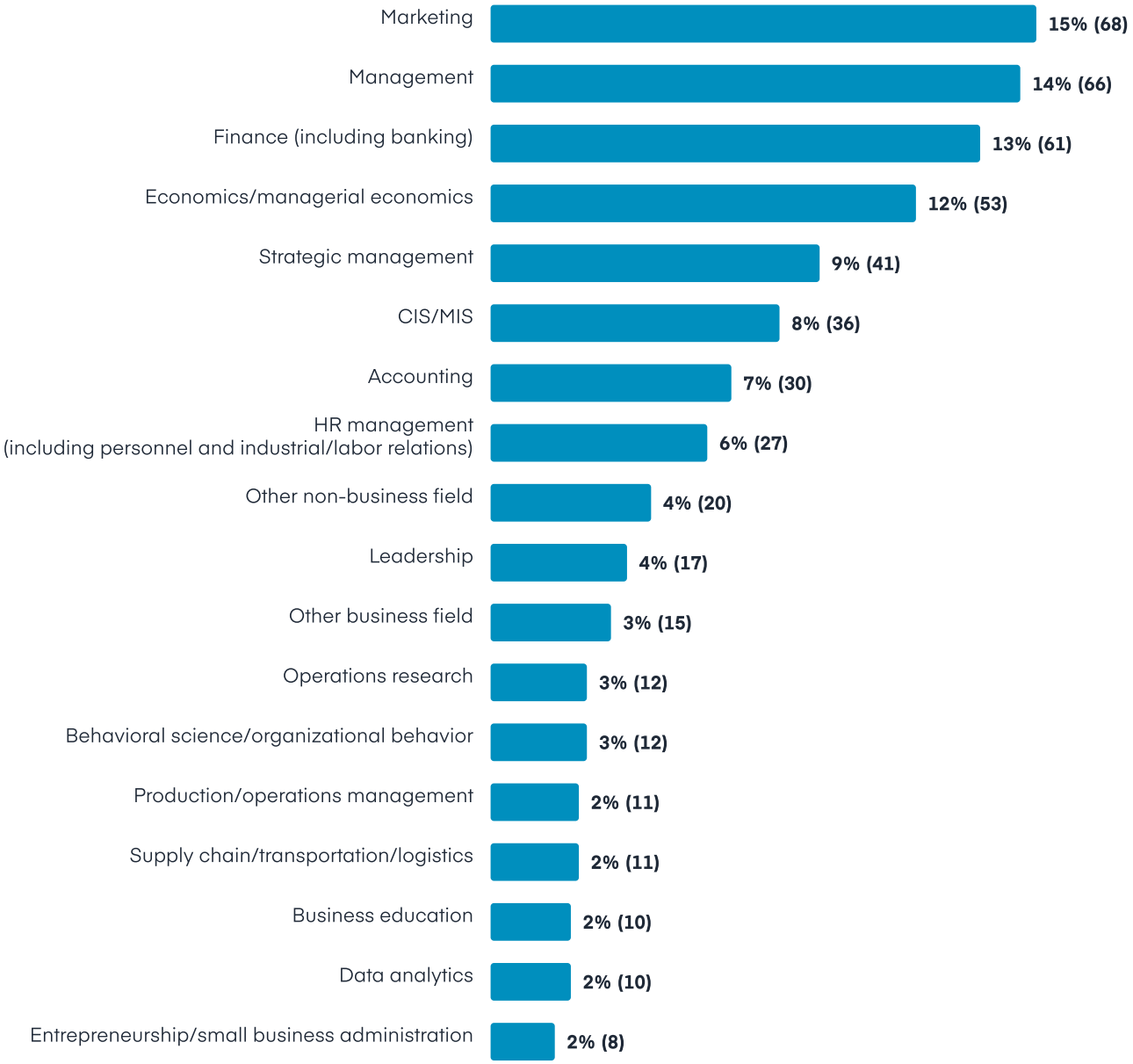
Highest Degree

HIGHEST DEGREE	RESPONDENTS	SHARE
Doctoral	440	95%
Master's	12	3%
Other terminal professional degree	9	2%
Bachelor's	1	0.2%
Total	**462**	**100%**

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

WHO RESPONDED

Primary Academic Focus of Highest Degree (Top 18)



Top 18 of 34 fields named. n=460. Sixty-eight deans named more than one field, so shares add up to more than 100 percent.

WHO RESPONDED

Current Faculty Status

FACULTY STATUS	DEANS	SHARE
I actively teach courses and/or conduct research as a faculty member	244	53%
I hold a faculty appointment or title but do not currently teach and/or conduct research	166	36%
Other	27	6%
I do not hold a faculty appointment or title	20	4%
Total	**457**	**100%**

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Current Faculty Rank

FACULTY RANK	DEANS	SHARE
Full professor	324	79%
Associate professor	65	16%
Other	8	2%
Assistant professor	6	1%
Practitioner/clinical faculty	3	1%
Instructor	3	1%
Total	**409**	**100%**

Asked of deans who hold a faculty appointment or title.

Tenure Status

TENURE STATUS	DEANS	SHARE
Tenured	332	82%
Not applicable (tenure does not exist in my country/institution)	52	13%
Non-tenure track	12	3%
Tenure track	11	3%
Total	**407**	**100%**

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

WHO RESPONDED

Countries or Territories Worked in for at Least One Year

COUNTRIES OR TERRITORIES	DEANS	SHARE
1	255	58%
2	114	26%
3	49	11%
4	12	3%
5	5	1%
6	2	0.5%
7	1	0.2%
10	1	0.2%
Total	**439**	**100%**

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

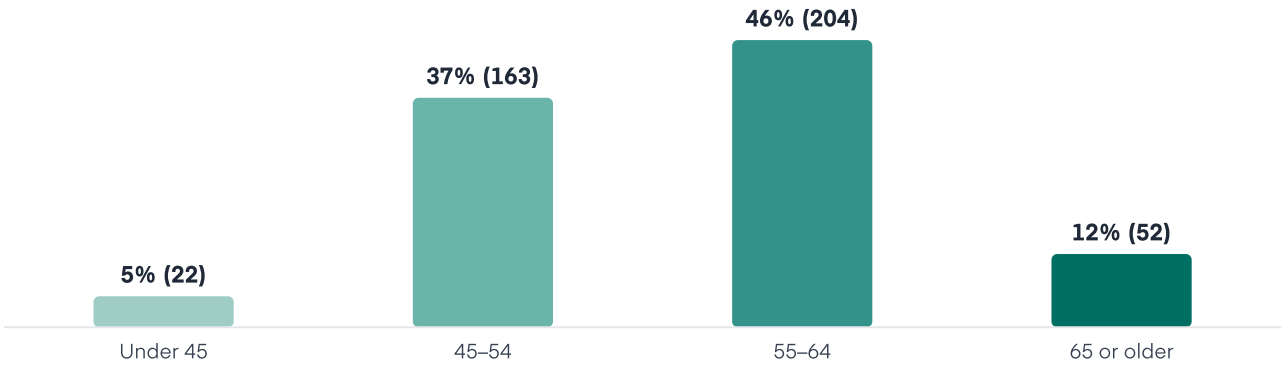
Languages Spoken Fluently

LANGUAGES	DEANS	SHARE
1	168	37%
2	178	39%
3	82	18%
4	18	4%
5	9	2%
6	2	0.4%
Total	**457**	**100%**

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

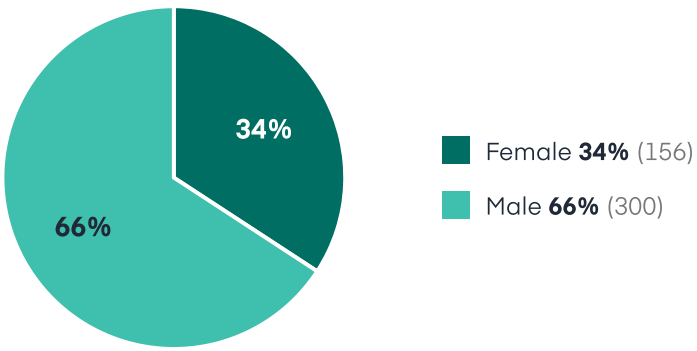
WHO RESPONDED

Age



Age in 2026, from year of birth. n=441; median 56 years, mean 55.9 years.

Gender



Deans who identified as female or male. n=456.

WHO RESPONDED

Race and Ethnicity (U.S. Schools Only)

RACE OR ETHNICITY	DEANS	SHARE
White, non-Hispanic	134	69%
Asian or Pacific Islander	37	19%
Black, non-Hispanic	14	7%
Hispanic	6	3%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	3	2%
Prefer not to say	3	2%
Other	2	1%

Asked only of respondents at schools in the United States. n=195 deans. More than one answer could be selected.

ROUTES INTO THE DEANSHIP

ROUTES INTO THE DEANSHIP

Current and first deanships are reported separately for deans only, although they refer to the same appointment for first-time deans.

> Sixty-seven percent of deans are in their first deanship, and most first deanships go to someone already at the institution. Although almost every dean followed an academic path to their role, 67 percent have also worked outside higher education, with a median of eight years of that experience, and 74 percent of them say it has been very or extremely helpful as dean.

First Appointment as Dean

IS THIS YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT AS DEAN?	DEANS	SHARE
Yes	349	67%
No	173	33%
Total	**522**	**100%**

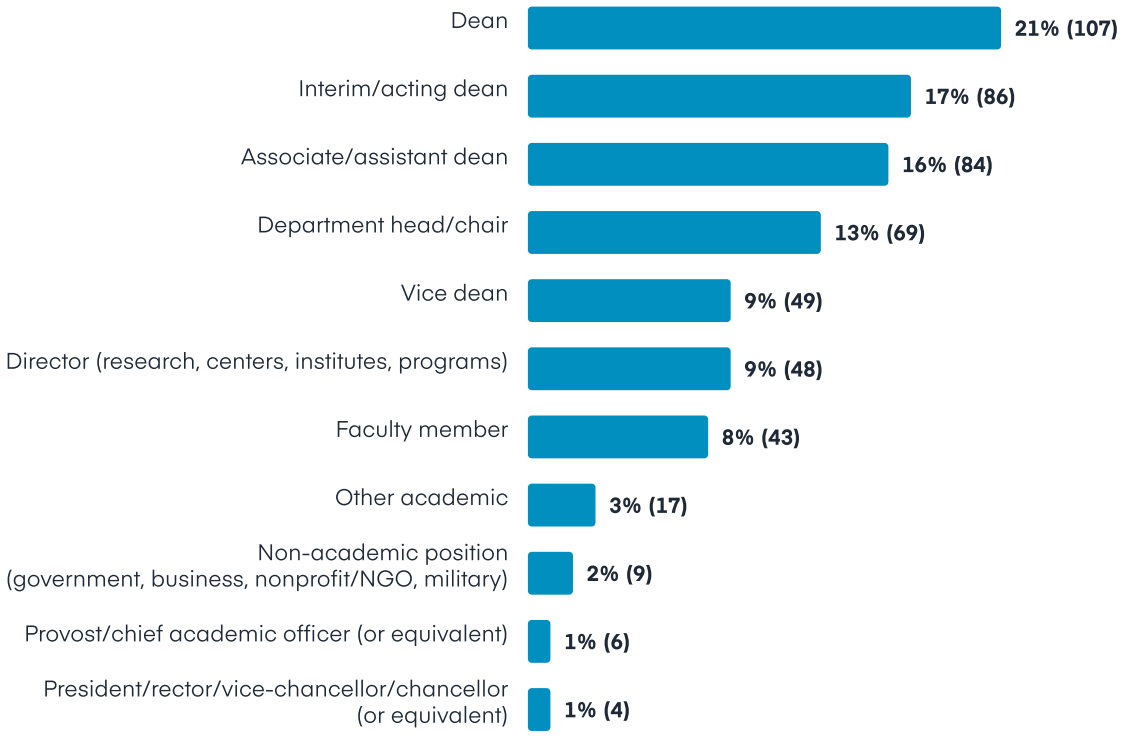
Excludes interim appointments.

ROUTES INTO THE DEANSHIP

Current Deanship

> The most common positions held just before the current deanship are another deanship (21 percent), interim/acting dean (17 percent), and associate/assistant dean (16 percent). Sixty-seven percent of those who entered the role from another position did so at their own institution.

Position Held Immediately Before the Current Deanship



n=522 deans.

Was That Position at the Same Institution?

INSTITUTION	DEANS	SHARE
Same institution	271	67%
Different institution	135	33%
Total	**406**	**100%**

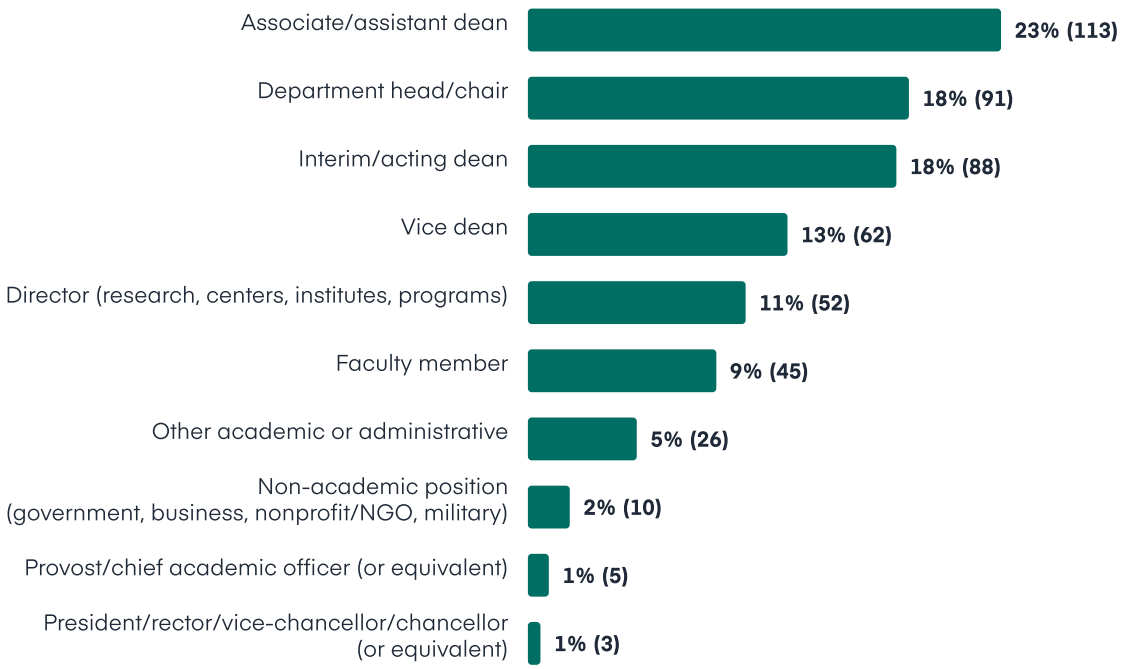
Not asked of deans whose prior position was a deanship or a non-academic position.

ROUTES INTO THE DEANSHIP

First Deanship

> The usual routes to a first deanship are associate/assistant dean (23 percent), department head/chair (18 percent), and interim/acting dean (18 percent). Sixty-seven percent held that position at the same institution, so most first deanships are internal appointments.

Position Held Immediately Before the First Deanship



n=495 deans. Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Was That Position at the Same Institution as the First Deanship?

INSTITUTION	DEANS	SHARE
Same institution	322	67%
Different institution	162	33%
Total	**484**	**100%**

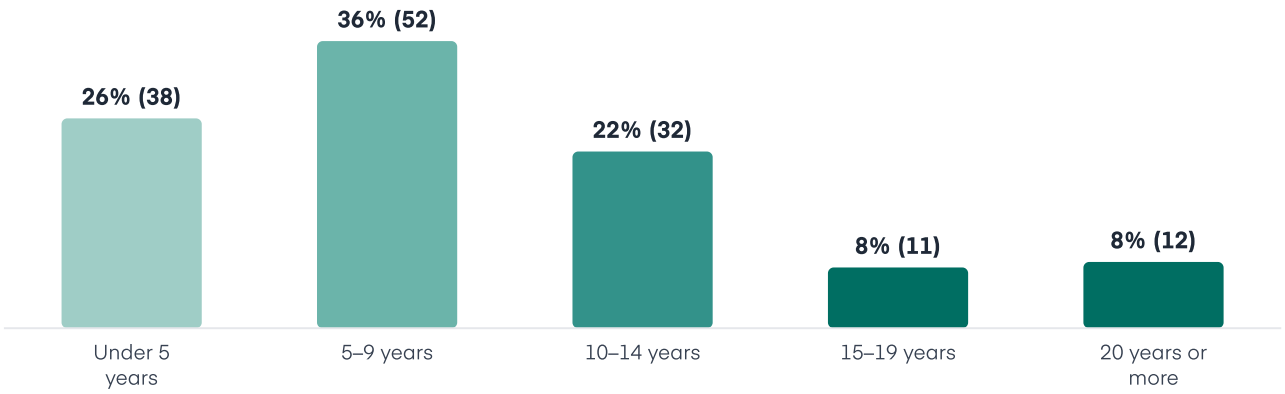
First-time deans (349) answered about the position before their current deanship; deans in a second or later deanship (146) answered about the position before their first deanship.

ROUTES INTO THE DEANSHIP

Deans in a Second or Later Deanship

Deans serving in their second or subsequent deanship began their first deanship a median of eight years ago.

Years Since First Deanship Began



Years from the start of the first deanship (excluding interim) to 2026. n=145; median eight years, mean nine years.

Experience Outside Higher Education

Sixty-seven percent of deans have held a professional position outside higher education, most often a professional or staff role in business or industry (55 percent). Those who have done so value it: 74 percent call that experience very or extremely helpful in their current role.

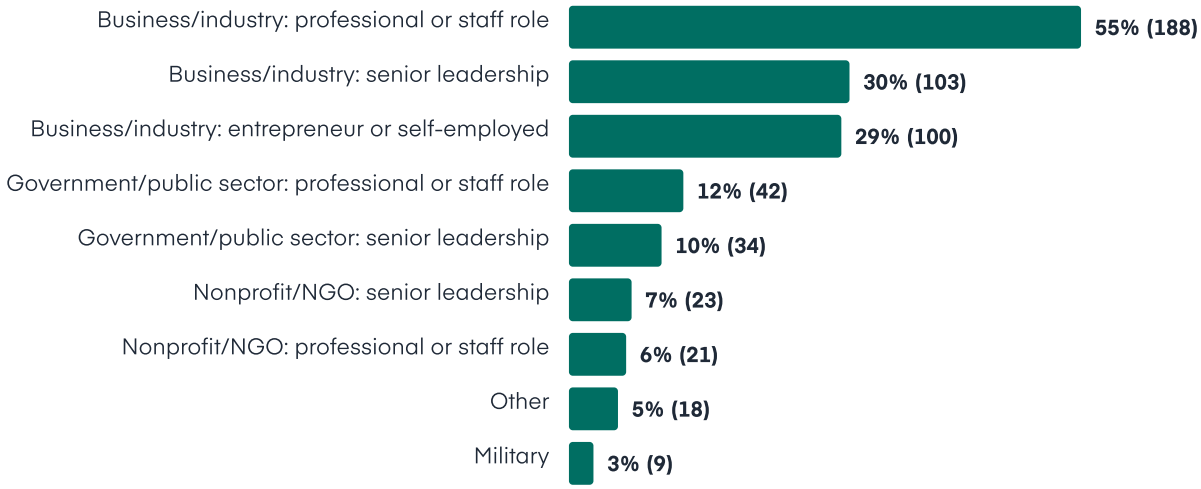
Deans Who Have Held a Professional Position Outside Higher Education

RESPONSE	DEANS	SHARE
Yes	341	67%
No	171	33%
Total	**512**	**100%**

Counts deans whose position immediately before the current deanship was non-academic and deans who report a non-academic position at any point in their career.

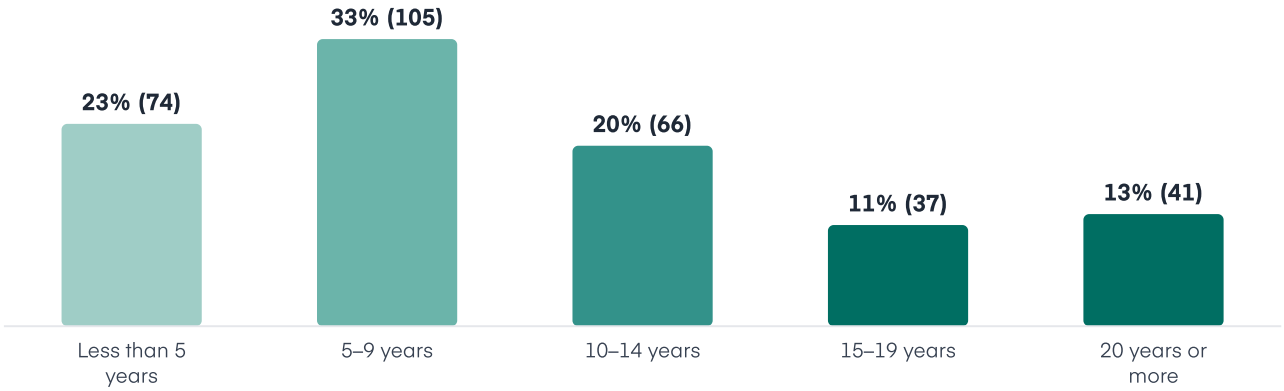
ROUTES INTO THE DEANSHIP

Types of Non-Academic Positions Held



n=339 deans. More than one type could be selected.

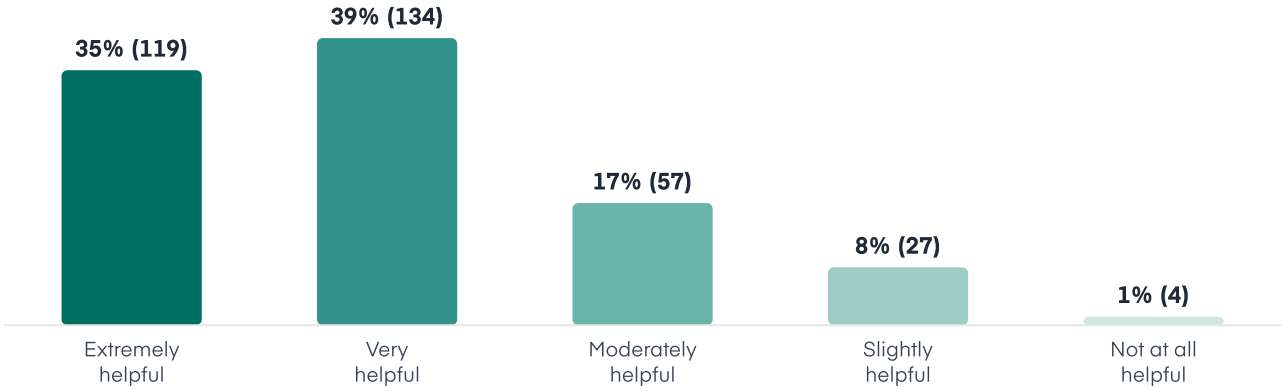
Years of Non-Academic Professional Experience



n=323; median eight years, mean 10 years.

ROUTES INTO THE DEANSHIP

How Helpful Has That Experience Been to the Current Role?



n=341 deans.

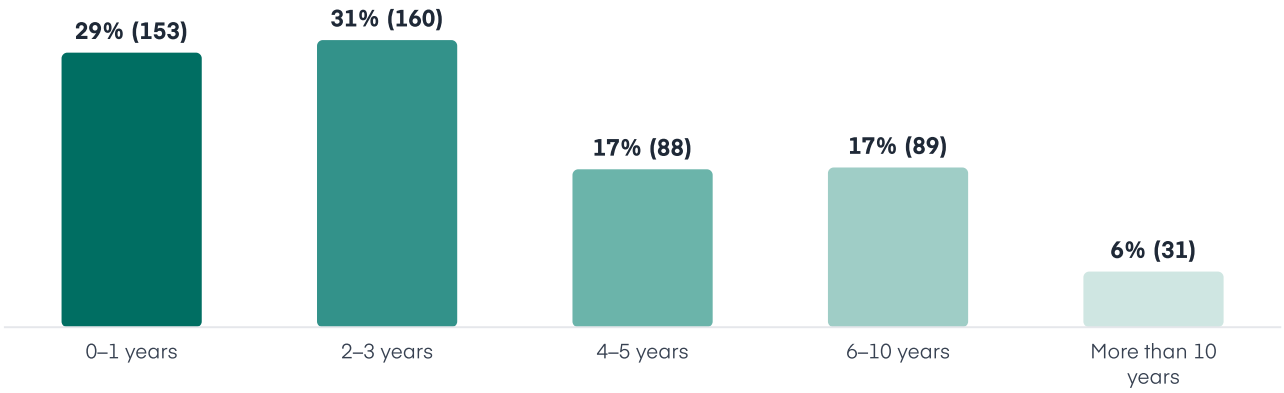
THE CURRENT APPOINTMENT AND DEAN TURNOVER

THE CURRENT APPOINTMENT AND DEAN TURNOVER

Current Appointment

Most deans are relatively early in their current appointments: 60 percent have been in the role for three years or less, with a median tenure of three years. Forty-two percent serve fixed terms averaging five years. The most common route into the role is an invitation or nomination to apply without actively seeking a deanship (26 percent). Just under three in 10 deans (29 percent) are held to an annual fundraising goal.

Years in the Current Deanship



Years from the reported start year to 2026. n=521; median three years, mean 3.9 years.

Does the Deanship Have a Fixed Term?

RESPONSE	DEANS	SHARE
Yes	216	42%
No	303	58%
Total	**519**	**100%**

THE CURRENT APPOINTMENT AND DEAN TURNOVER

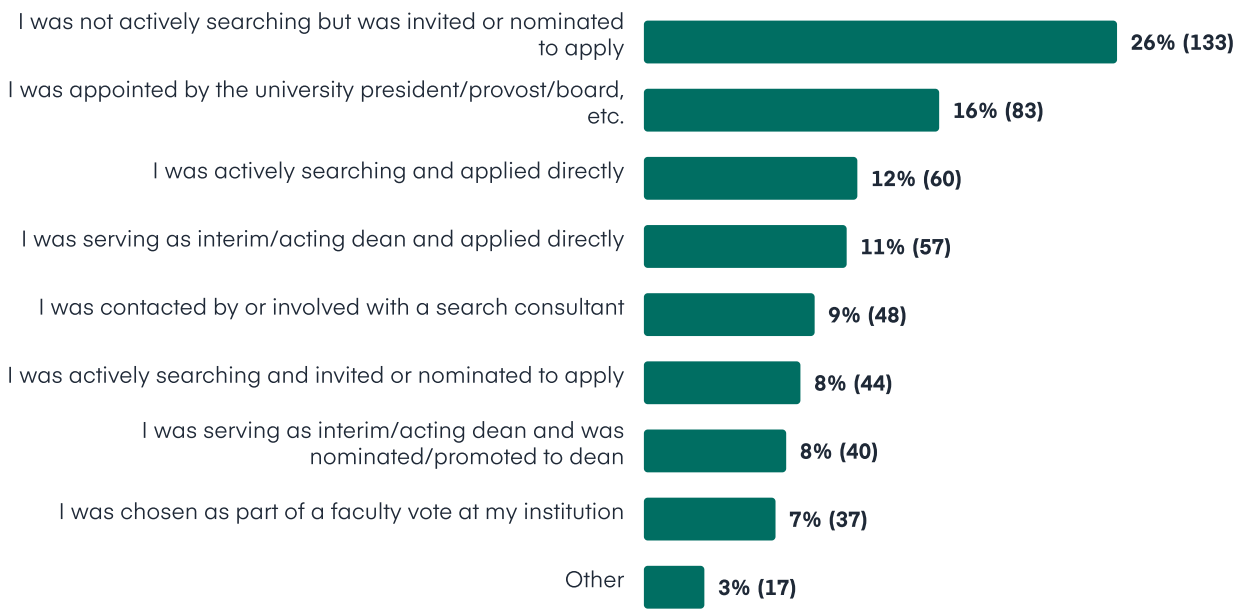
Length of Fixed Term

TERM LENGTH	DEANS	SHARE
1–2 years	13	6%
3 years	37	18%
4 years	47	23%
5 years	72	35%
6–9 years	24	12%
10 years or more	14	7%
Total	**207**	**100%**

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Deans reporting a fixed term who stated its length. n=207; median five years, mean 4.8 years. Where a respondent described several terms, the length of one term is counted; a range is counted at its lower end.

Search Process Leading to the Current Appointment



n=519 deans.

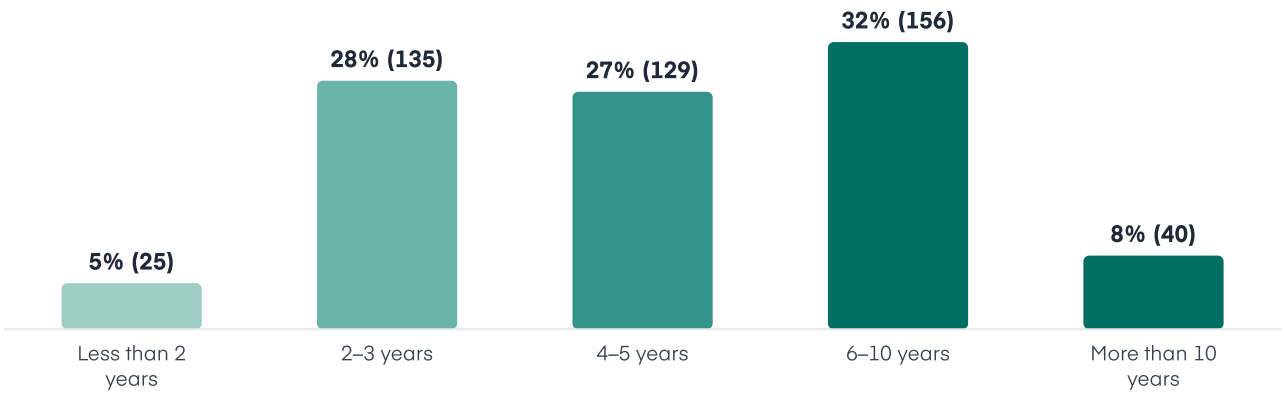
Held Accountable for an Annual Fundraising Goal

RESPONSE	DEANS	SHARE
Yes	134	29%
No	323	71%
Total	**457**	**100%**

The Previous Dean

To better track changes in the length of deanships, the survey asks about respondents' predecessors, whose completed tenures provide a more consistent basis for comparison than current appointments still in progress. Previous deans served a median of five years, with 33 percent serving three years or less. Fourteen percent were asked to step down or were terminated, while 21 percent moved into senior university leadership roles or deanships elsewhere.

Previous Dean's Years in the Position



Previous dean, excluding interim deans. n=485; median five years, mean 5.7 years.

THE CURRENT APPOINTMENT AND DEAN TURNOVER

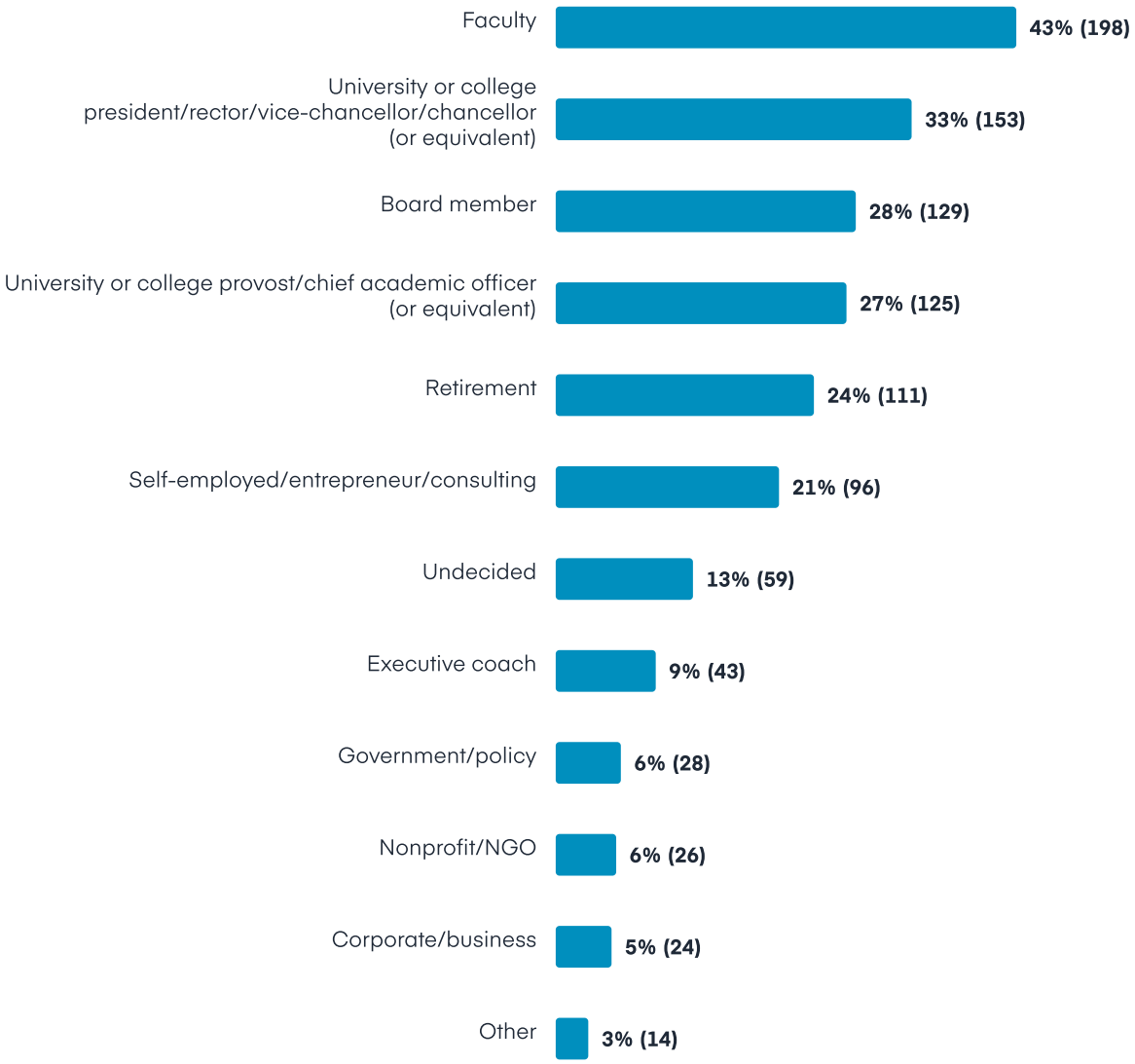
Primary Reason the Previous Dean Left

As reported by the current dean or interim dean, to the best of their knowledge. n=500.

After the Deanship

A return to the faculty is the most popular next step (43 percent), but many deans look upward: 33 percent say they would pursue a presidency and 27 percent a provostship. Twenty-four percent name retirement.

What Deans Would Like to Pursue After the Deanship



n=464 deans. More than one option could be selected.

THE WORK OF THE DEAN

THE WORK OF THE DEAN

This analysis includes 499 deans who rated 49 typical dean activities across eight categories on three dimensions: priority over the next 12 months, current proficiency, and desire to develop proficiency. Each dimension uses a scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). Deans could also select "not applicable"; these responses are excluded from the average rating. The ratings reflect deans' perceptions rather than objective assessments of proficiency. Gaps between priority and proficiency can suggest areas for further support or development but should not be interpreted as measures of skill deficiency. Averages may also mask differences in individual experiences and institutional contexts.

> Strategic planning and goal setting is deans' highest-rated priority for the next 12 months (4.61). AI and emerging technologies in teaching, learning, and research shows the widest gap between priority and self-rated proficiency (1.13 points) and is also the area deans most want to develop. Across 36 of the 49 activities, priority exceeds self-rated proficiency, suggesting development needs across much of the role.

All Activities by Category

> The dean role demands attention on many fronts: 24 of the 49 activities have an average priority rating of 4 or higher. Across all activities, priority averages 3.97, compared with 3.76 for self-rated proficiency and 3.67 for desire to develop proficiency. Deans are most interested in developing their capabilities in AI and emerging technologies in teaching, learning, and research (4.37), digital innovation (4.24), and institutional brand and reputation management (4.09).

1. Strategy, leadership, and governance

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY	PROFICIENCY	GAP	DESIRE	N
Strategic planning and goal setting	4.61	4.27	+0.34	3.88	498
Organizational transformation and change management	4.26	3.98	+0.28	3.96	493
Board governance and alignment	3.62	3.94	–0.32	3.52	454
Succession planning	3.22	3.58	–0.36	3.29	454
Managing relationships with university leadership	4.43	4.27	+0.16	3.70	483
Risk management, legal issues, and organizational compliance	3.58	3.67	–0.09	3.47	489
Crisis management	3.41	3.66	–0.25	3.60	486
Digital innovation	4.35	3.60	+0.75	4.24	489

2. Finance, operations, and infrastructure

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY	PROFICIENCY	GAP	DESIRE	N
Budget management	4.42	4.24	+0.18	3.56	487
Financial sustainability	4.43	4.12	+0.31	3.71	489
Revenue generation and diversification	4.37	3.82	+0.55	4.03	487
Fundraising, philanthropy, and donor relations	3.82	3.29	+0.53	3.90	445
Strategic resource allocation and investment	4.05	3.93	+0.12	3.56	475
Facilities, infrastructure, and capital projects	3.22	3.46	–0.24	3.15	455

3. Academic leadership

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY	PROFICIENCY	GAP	DESIRE	N
Curriculum and program development	4.27	4.34	–0.07	3.59	473
Accreditation and continuous improvement	4.43	4.14	+0.29	3.95	477
Research quality, productivity, and impact	4.16	3.91	+0.25	3.72	473
Research collaborations, centers/institutes, and joint projects	3.83	3.61	+0.22	3.66	466
Grants and external research funding	3.53	3.15	+0.38	3.63	455
AI and emerging technologies in teaching, learning, and research	4.54	3.41	+1.13	4.37	475
Executive education and lifelong learning	3.73	3.58	+0.15	3.69	463
Managing personal research and teaching responsibilities	3.37	3.80	–0.43	3.18	441

4. Faculty and staff leadership

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY	PROFICIENCY	GAP	DESIRE	N
Faculty recruitment and retention	4.17	4.16	+0.01	3.46	473
Promotion and tenure	3.75	4.21	–0.46	3.13	457
Faculty development and workload	4.04	4.05	–0.01	3.47	473
Professional staff recruitment, retention, and development	3.72	3.90	–0.18	3.30	465
Faculty/staff relations and conflict resolution	3.67	3.86	–0.19	3.51	472
Building organizational culture among faculty and staff	4.35	3.95	+0.40	3.98	475

5. Student success and experience

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY	PROFICIENCY	GAP	DESIRE	N
General student recruitment, enrollment, and retention	4.50	3.91	+0.59	3.95	458
Internationalization/international student recruitment and retention	3.69	3.40	+0.29	3.65	452
Student engagement and extracurricular activities	3.90	3.83	+0.07	3.46	452
AI and technology in student recruitment and services	3.93	3.08	+0.85	3.95	444
Student well-being	4.06	3.69	+0.37	3.61	458
Career services and graduate outcomes	4.28	3.73	+0.55	3.92	451

6. External engagement and partnerships

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY	PROFICIENCY	GAP	DESIRE	N
Business, corporate, and employer engagement	4.42	3.82	+0.60	4.04	463
Alumni engagement	4.32	3.68	+0.64	3.97	461
Government relations and public policy engagement	3.35	3.28	+0.07	3.33	439
Academic and scholarly community engagement	3.70	3.82	–0.12	3.33	463
Institutional partnerships and strategic alliances (domestic and international)	3.85	3.60	+0.25	3.63	462
On-campus interdisciplinary collaboration	3.88	3.84	+0.04	3.45	462

7. Reputation and market position

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY	PROFICIENCY	GAP	DESIRE	N
Institutional brand and reputation management	4.45	3.66	+0.79	4.09	452
Personal leadership brand development	3.74	3.61	+0.13	3.77	454
Rankings	3.81	3.30	+0.51	3.84	441
Communications, media relations, and public visibility	4.05	3.51	+0.54	3.88	458
Public speaking engagements	3.52	3.68	–0.16	3.50	452

8. Culture and societal impact

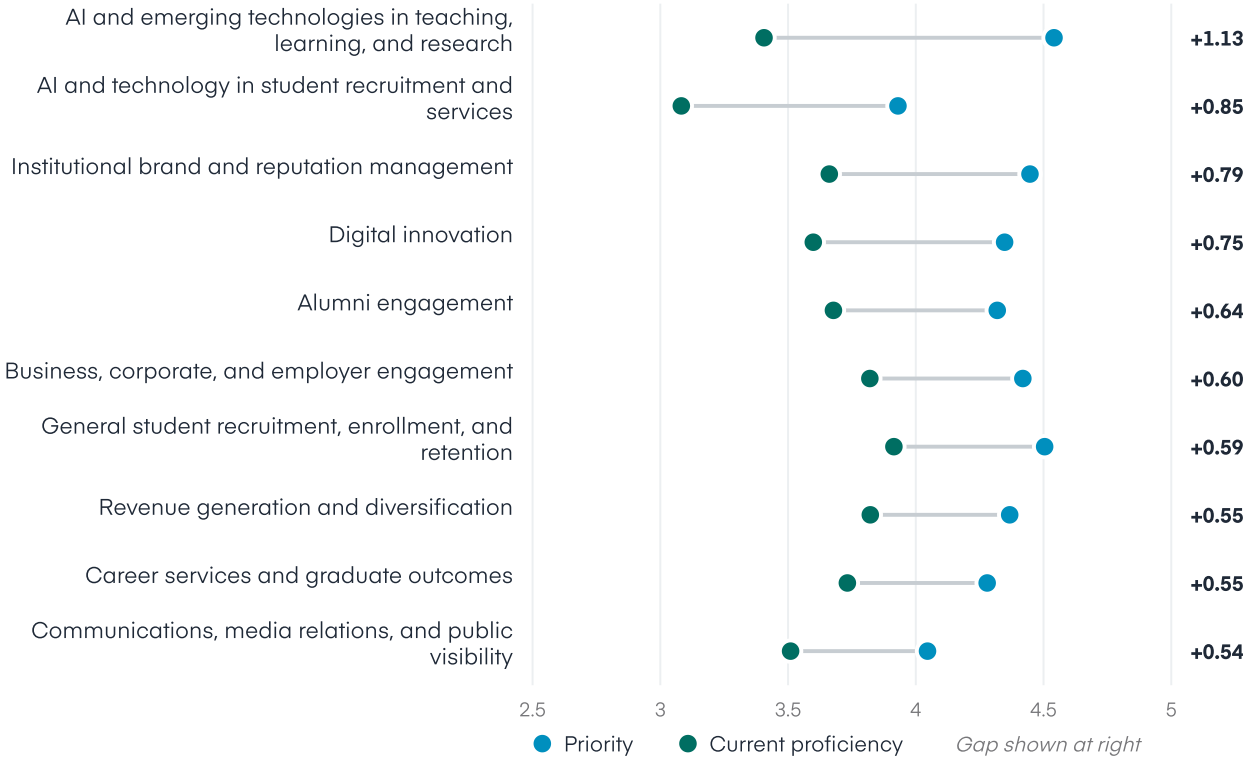
ACTIVITY	PRIORITY	PROFICIENCY	GAP	DESIRE	N
Advancing access and opportunity for underserved communities	3.90	3.62	+0.28	3.59	446
Building an inclusive organizational culture	4.09	3.86	+0.23	3.68	452
Sustainability and environmental, social, governance (ESG) initiatives	3.63	3.50	+0.13	3.45	446
Community/stakeholder engagement	4.13	3.78	+0.35	3.74	458

Means on a 1–5 scale. Gap equals priority minus proficiency. N is the number of deans rating priority.

Largest Priority-Proficiency Gaps

The widest gaps between priority and self-rated proficiency are in AI and emerging technologies in teaching, learning, and research (1.13 points), AI and technology in student recruitment and services (0.85), and institutional brand and reputation management (0.79). Seven of the 10 widest gaps fall within three overarching categories focused on students and external relationships: student success and experience, external engagement and partnerships, and reputation and market position. These gaps occur in areas deans consider especially important: The 10 activities have an average priority rating of 4.32, compared with 3.97 across all 49 activities. Understanding these gaps can help deans focus professional development, peer learning, and institutional support on areas where they face high expectations but feel less equipped to meet them. The gaps reflect deans' individual assessments rather than objective measures of skill.

Top 10 Activities by Priority-Proficiency Gap



The 10 activities with the largest gap, out of 49 total activities. The rating axis is truncated to 2.5–5.0 of the 1–5 scale so differences are legible; no average rating falls outside this axis.

THE WORK OF THE DEAN

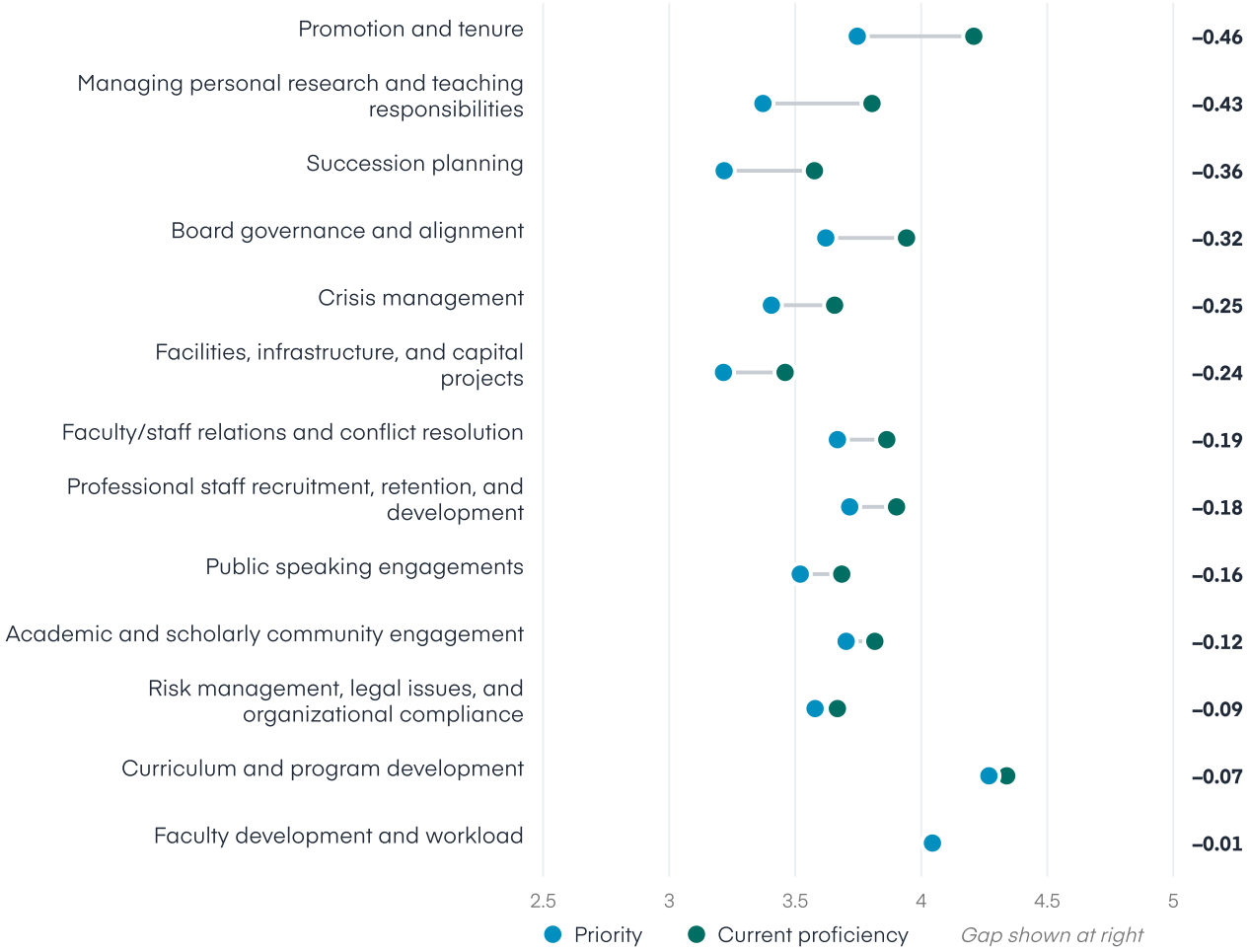
Top 10 Activities by Priority-Proficiency Gap

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY	PROFICIENCY	GAP	DESIRE	N
AI and emerging technologies in teaching, learning, and research	4.54	3.41	+1.13	4.37	475
AI and technology in student recruitment and services	3.93	3.08	+0.85	3.95	444
Institutional brand and reputation management	4.45	3.66	+0.79	4.09	452
Digital innovation	4.35	3.60	+0.75	4.24	489
Alumni engagement	4.32	3.68	+0.64	3.97	461
Business, corporate, and employer engagement	4.42	3.82	+0.60	4.04	463
General student recruitment, enrollment, and retention	4.50	3.91	+0.59	3.95	458
Revenue generation and diversification	4.37	3.82	+0.55	4.03	487
Career services and graduate outcomes	4.28	3.73	+0.55	3.92	451
Communications, media relations, and public visibility	4.05	3.51	+0.54	3.88	458

Where Proficiency Exceeds Priority

Self-rated proficiency exceeds priority in 13 of the 49 activities, with the largest margins in promotion and tenure, managing personal research and teaching responsibilities, and succession planning. These activities generally rank lower among deans' priorities for the coming year, averaging 3.62 compared with 3.97 across all 49 activities.

Activities Where Proficiency Exceeds Priority



All 13 activities with a negative gap, from largest to smallest gap. The rating axis is truncated to 2.5–5.0 of the 1–5 scale so differences are legible; no average rating falls outside this axis.

THE WORK OF THE DEAN

Activities Where Proficiency Exceeds Priority

ACTIVITY	PRIORITY	PROFICIENCY	GAP	DESIRE	N
Promotion and tenure	3.75	4.21	–0.46	3.13	457
Managing personal research and teaching responsibilities	3.37	3.80	–0.43	3.18	441
Succession planning	3.22	3.58	–0.36	3.29	454
Board governance and alignment	3.62	3.94	–0.32	3.52	454
Crisis management	3.41	3.66	–0.25	3.60	486
Facilities, infrastructure, and capital projects	3.22	3.46	–0.24	3.15	455
Faculty/staff relations and conflict resolution	3.67	3.86	–0.19	3.51	472
Professional staff recruitment, retention, and development	3.72	3.90	–0.18	3.30	465
Public speaking engagements	3.52	3.68	–0.16	3.50	452
Academic and scholarly community engagement	3.70	3.82	–0.12	3.33	463
Risk management, legal issues, and organizational compliance	3.58	3.67	–0.09	3.47	489
Curriculum and program development	4.27	4.34	–0.07	3.59	473
Faculty development and workload	4.04	4.05	–0.01	3.47	473

Top 15 Activities by Priority

At least 82 percent of deans rate each of the 15 highest-priority activities as a high or very high priority. These activities represent seven of the eight categories, showing that deans' priorities extend across many aspects of the role.

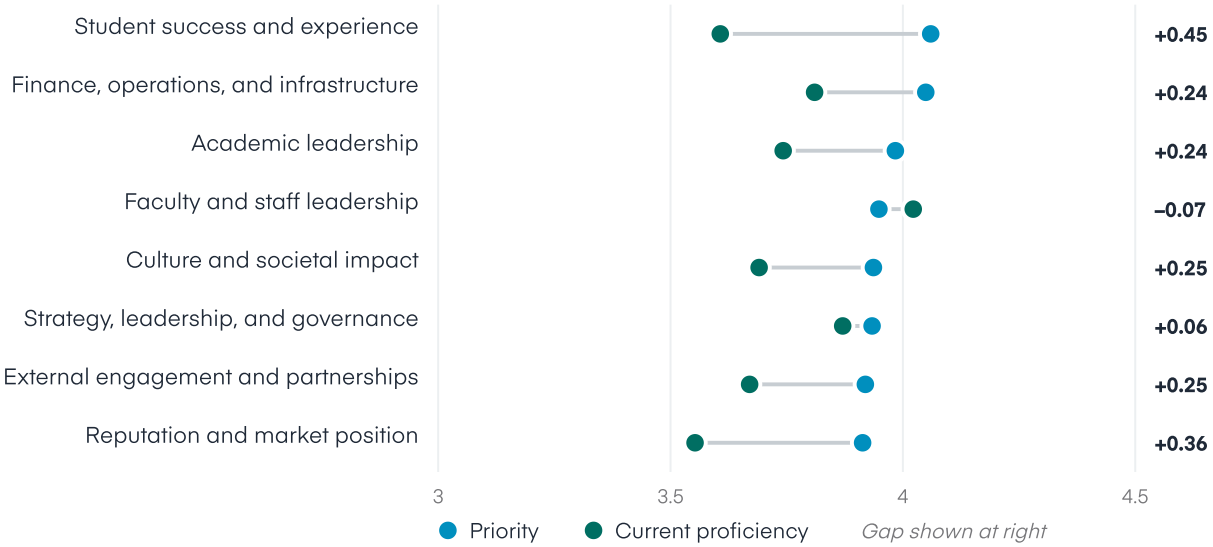
Top 15 Activities by Mean Priority

Mean priority over the next 12 months, with the share of deans rating each activity 4 or 5. n varies for each activity, ranging from 451 to 498. The rating axis is truncated to 4.0–5.0 of the 1–5 scale so differences are legible; no average rating falls outside this axis.

Priority, Proficiency, and Desire by Category

Looking across the eight overarching categories offers a broader view of deans' priorities, strengths, and development interests. Faculty and staff leadership is the only category in which average self-rated proficiency exceeds priority, and it has the highest average proficiency rating (4.02). Student success and experience has the widest gap between priority and proficiency (0.45 points), while reputation and market position draws the strongest interest in further development (3.81).

Priority and Proficiency by Category



Category means are the unweighted average of the activities in each category. The rating axis is truncated to 3.0–4.5 of the 1–5 scale so differences are legible; no average rating falls outside this axis.

THE WORK OF THE DEAN

Priority, Proficiency, and Desire by Category

CATEGORY	ACTIVITIES	PRIORITY	PROFICIENCY	GAP	DESIRE
Student success and experience	6	4.06	3.61	+0.45	3.76
Finance, operations, and infrastructure	6	4.05	3.81	+0.24	3.65
Academic leadership	8	3.98	3.74	+0.24	3.72
Faculty and staff leadership	6	3.95	4.02	–0.07	3.47
Culture and societal impact	4	3.94	3.69	+0.25	3.61
Strategy, leadership, and governance	8	3.93	3.87	+0.06	3.71
External engagement and partnerships	6	3.92	3.67	+0.25	3.63
Reputation and market position	5	3.91	3.55	+0.36	3.81

INTERIM DEANS

INTERIM DEANS

This section focuses on insights shared by the 36 interim or acting deans who participated in the survey. Percentages should be interpreted with the group's size in mind.

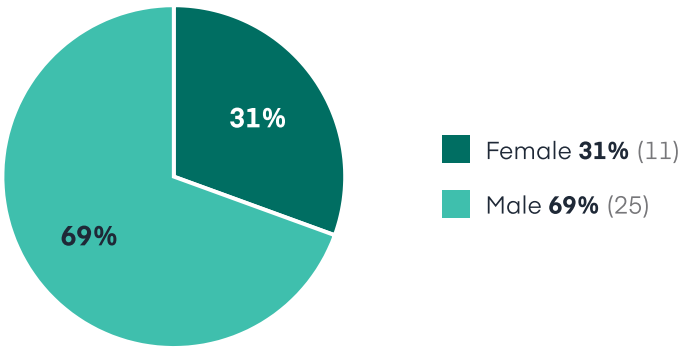
> Most surveyed interim or acting deans are interested in a permanent deanship: 81 percent would consider the role at their current institution or elsewhere. At the time of the survey, they had served a median of eight months, and 67 percent knew when their appointment would end.

Months in the Interim Role

MONTHS	INTERIM DEANS	SHARE
Less than 6 months	15	42%
6–11 months	11	31%
12–23 months	7	19%
24 months or more	3	8%
Total	**36**	**100%**

n=36; median eight months, mean 9.5 months.

Gender



Interim deans who identified as female or male. n=36.

Whether Dean Knows Interim Appointment End Date

RESPONSE	INTERIM DEANS	SHARE
Yes	24	67%
No	12	33%
Total	**36**	**100%**

INTERIM DEANS

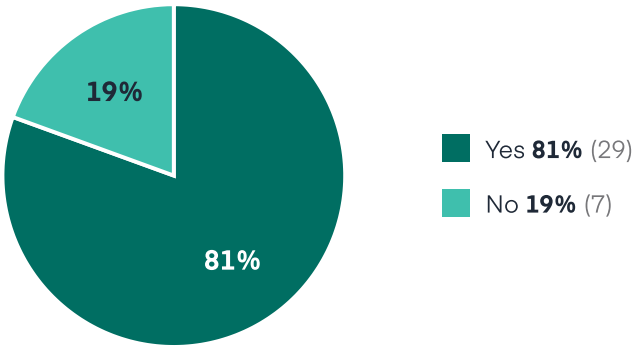
Expected Length of the Interim Appointment

MONTHS	INTERIM DEANS	SHARE
Less than 6 months	5	21%
6–11 months	5	21%
12–23 months	11	46%
24 months or more	3	13%
Total	**24**	**100%**

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

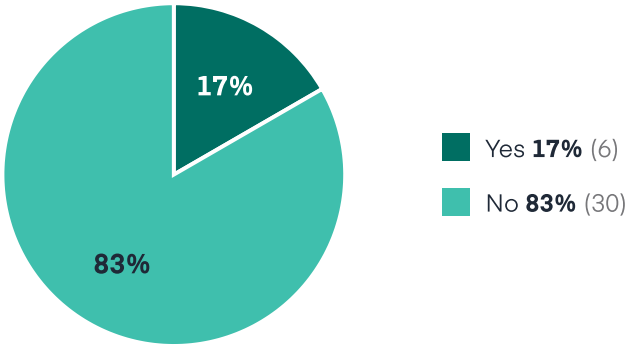
Interim deans who knew how long the appointment would last. n=24; median 12 months, mean 12 months.

Interested in a Permanent Deanship



At the current institution or another. n=36.

Previously Served as Dean



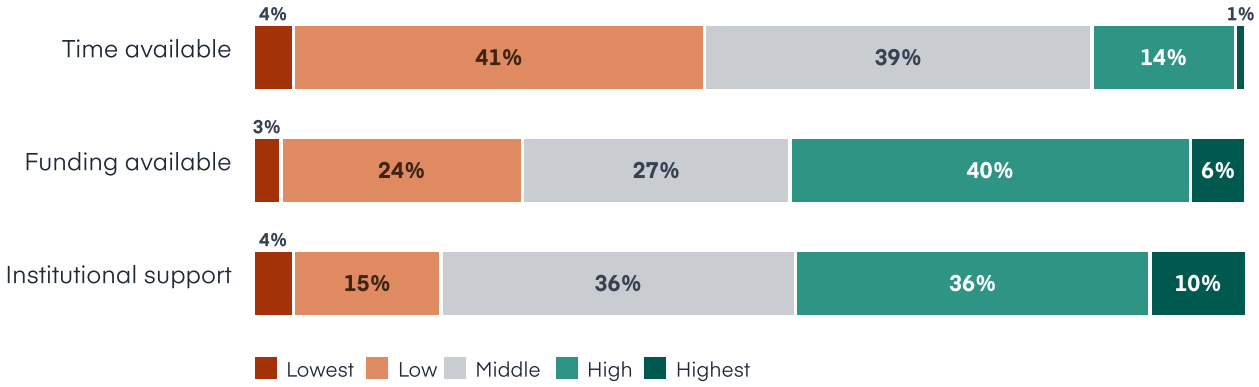
Excludes interim appointments. n=36.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

Time, Funding, and Institutional Support

Both time and available funding constrain deans' professional development, but time is the more widespread barrier: 84 percent report limited, very limited, or no time, compared with 54 percent reporting similarly restricted funding. Even so, 45 percent describe their institution as very or extremely supportive of their development.

Time, Funding, and Support for Professional Development



Each row runs from the least to the most favorable answer; the wording of the answers is in the tables below. Time n=464, funding n=464, support n=465. Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Time Available for Professional Development

RESPONSE	DEANS	SHARE
No time available	19	4%
Very limited time	192	41%
Limited time	181	39%
Adequate time	67	14%
More than adequate time	5	1%
Total	**464**	**100%**

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

Funding Available for Professional Development

RESPONSE	DEANS	SHARE
None	13	3%
Very limited	113	24%
Limited	125	27%
Adequate	187	40%
More than adequate	26	6%
Total	**464**	**100%**

Institutional Support for Professional Development

RESPONSE	DEANS	SHARE
Not at all supportive	19	4%
Slightly supportive	69	15%
Moderately supportive	166	36%
Very supportive	166	36%
Extremely supportive	45	10%
Total	**465**	**100%**

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Areas Where Preparation or Support Would Be Most Valuable

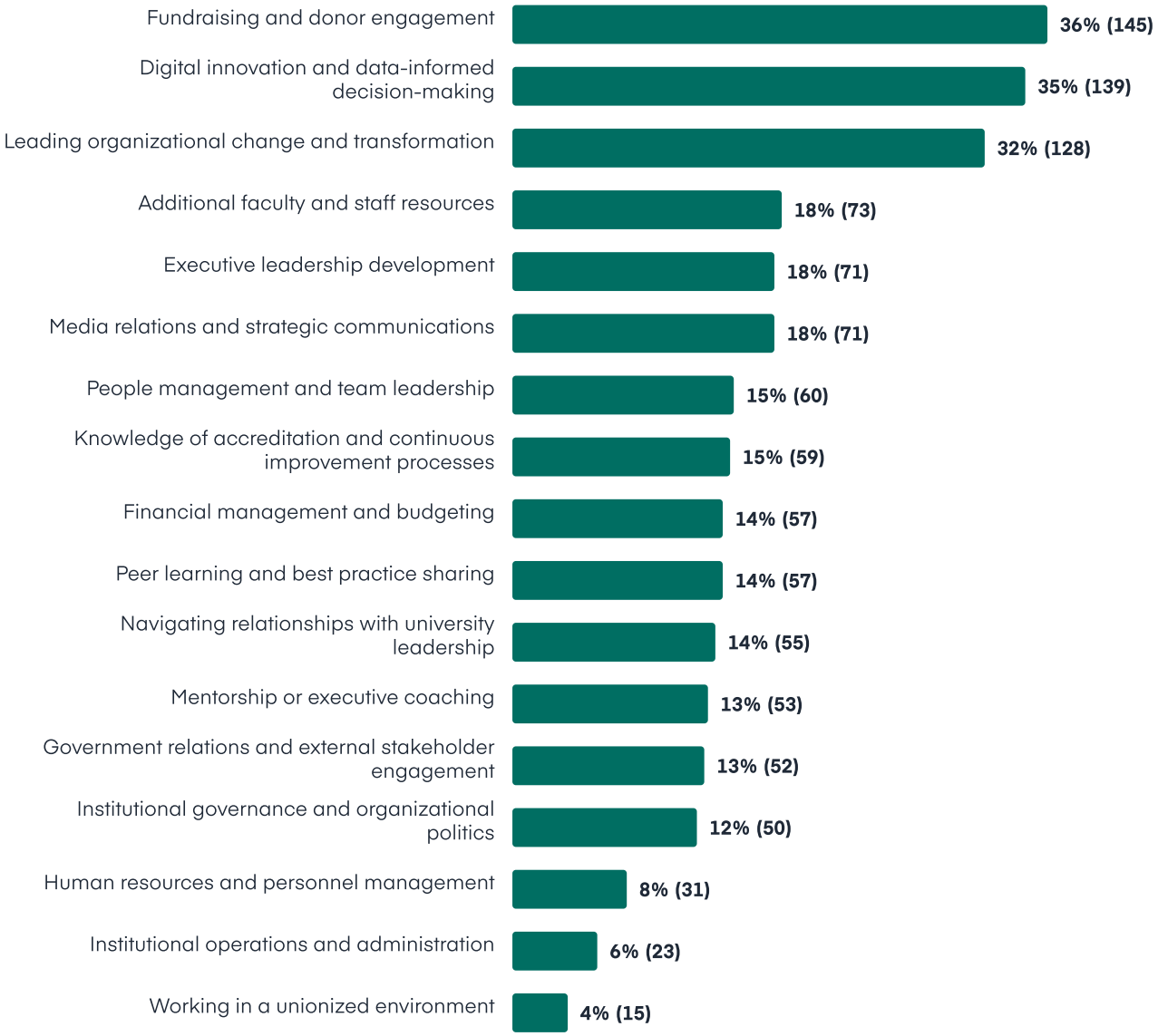
> Fundraising and donor engagement leads deans' development priorities, both when reflecting on what preparation or additional support would have been most valuable as they entered their first deanship (33 percent) and when looking ahead in their current role (36 percent). Digital innovation and data-informed decision-making show the largest increase, rising from 15 percent at entry to 35 percent for future development.

On Becoming Dean

Share of deans choosing each area among their top three, so shares add up to more than 100 percent. "Clear expectations before assuming the role" was offered only for this question. n=457.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

Looking Ahead

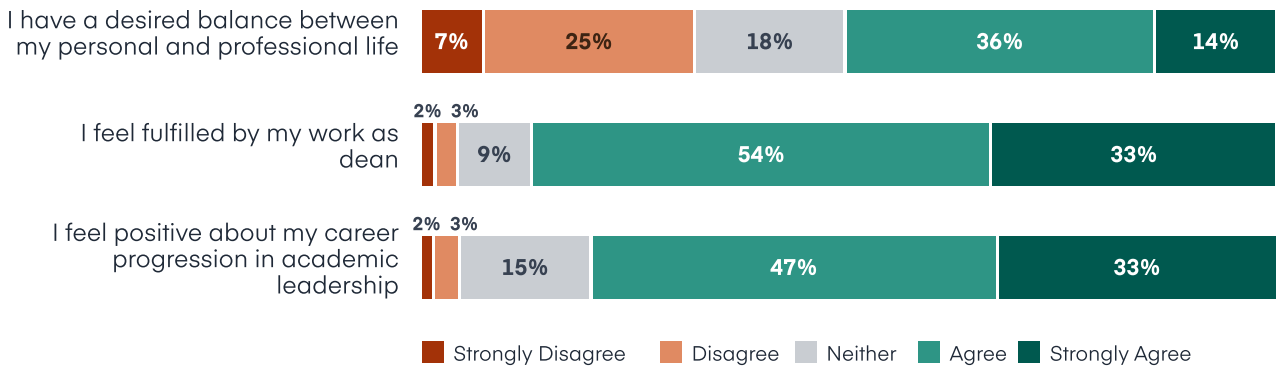


Share of deans choosing each area among their top three, so shares add up to more than 100 percent. n=402.

Work-Life Balance

Most deans find the role fulfilling (87 percent agree) and feel positive about their careers (80 percent). Work-life balance is less assured: half agree they have the balance they want between their personal and professional lives, while 32 percent disagree.

Agreement with Statements About the Role



n=462 deans. Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

SCHOOL FUTURE READINESS

SCHOOL FUTURE READINESS

This section shifts from deans' individual leadership activities to the broader readiness of the institutions they lead. Understanding where deans see their schools as prepared—and where they see further work ahead—helps identify areas that may need strategic attention, investment, or support.

This analysis includes both deans and interim or acting deans. Respondents assessed their school's readiness for the next five years across eight dimensions, rating each dimension's strategic priority and the school's current preparedness on a scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high).

> AI readiness stands out as the greatest area of need, with the lowest preparedness rating across the eight dimensions (2.91) and the widest gap between strategic priority and current preparedness (1.46 points). Priority exceeds preparedness in every dimension, suggesting schools see room to strengthen their readiness across all eight areas.

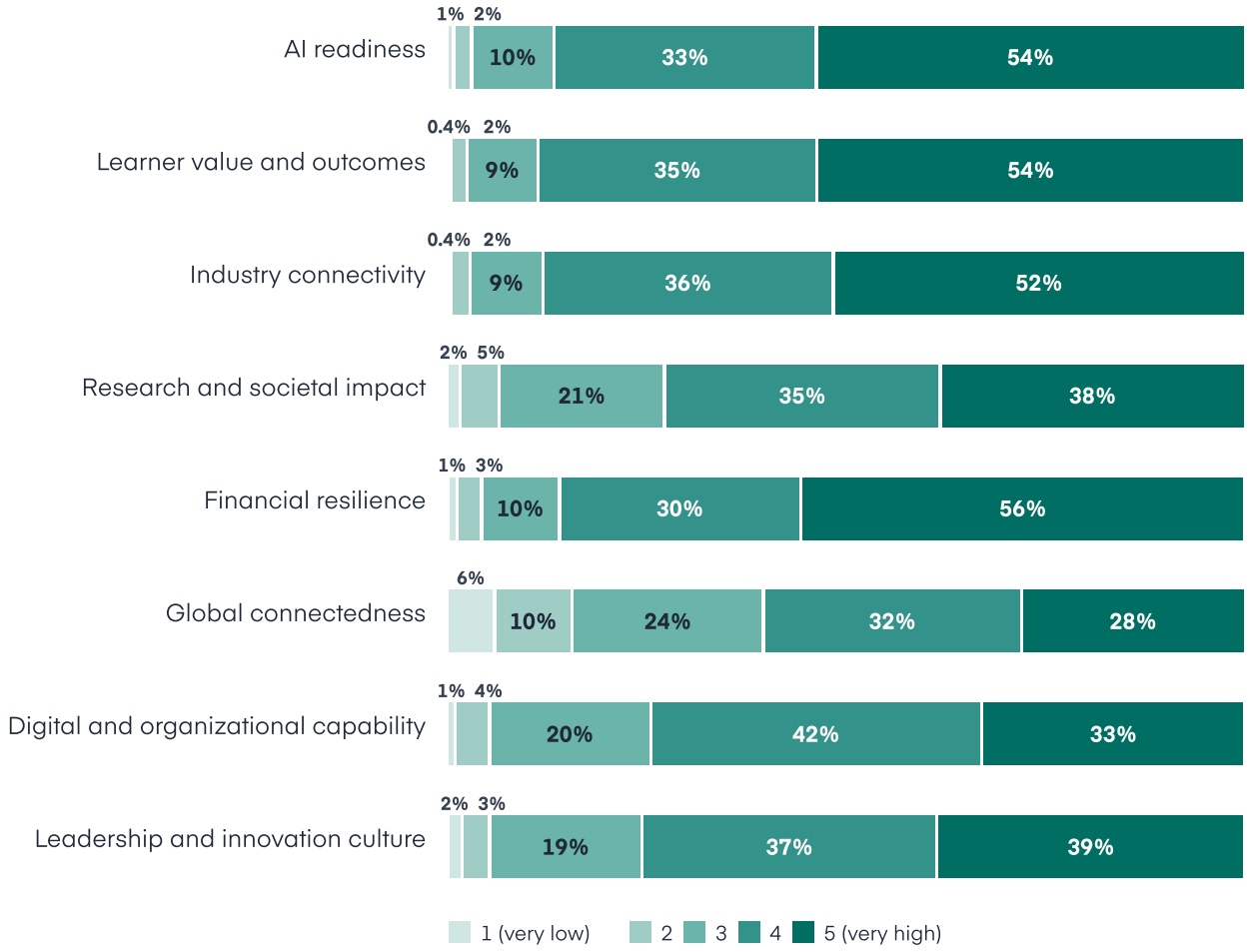
What Each Dimension Covers

DIMENSION	INCLUDES
AI readiness	AI strategy, faculty AI capability, AI embedded in curriculum, AI governance, operational AI adoption
Learner value and outcomes	Graduate employment, salary progression, employer satisfaction, alumni engagement, learner lifetime value
Industry connectivity	Corporate partnerships, internships, executive education engagement, practitioner involvement, advisory boards
Research and societal impact	Research impact beyond citations, policy influence, business adoption, interdisciplinary work, U.N. SDG contributions
Financial resilience	Revenue diversification, reserves, dependency on tuition, philanthropy, operating margin
Global connectedness	International partnerships, student/faculty mobility, joint degrees, global classrooms, regional diversity
Digital and organizational capability	Digital infrastructure, data capability, decision analytics, cybersecurity, operational efficiency
Leadership and innovation culture	Strategic agility, speed of innovation, faculty development, change capability, governance effectiveness

Strategic Priority

All eight dimensions are strategic priorities for most schools, with at least 60 percent of respondents rating each one high or very high. Learner value and outcomes receives the highest average priority rating (4.39), with 54 percent rating it very high. Global connectedness has the lowest average rating (3.67), although it remains a priority for the majority of respondents.

Strategic Priority by Dimension



n ranges from 491 to 493. Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

SCHOOL FUTURE READINESS

Strategic Priority by Dimension

DIMENSION	1 (VERY LOW)	2	3	4	5 (VERY HIGH)	MEAN	N
AI readiness	1%	2%	10%	33%	54%	4.37	493
Learner value and outcomes	0.4%	2%	9%	35%	54%	4.39	492
Industry connectivity	0.4%	2%	9%	36%	52%	4.36	492
Research and societal impact	2%	5%	21%	35%	38%	4.03	492
Financial resilience	1%	3%	10%	30%	56%	4.36	492
Global connectedness	6%	10%	24%	32%	28%	3.67	492
Digital and organizational capability	1%	4%	20%	42%	33%	4.01	491
Leadership and innovation culture	2%	3%	19%	37%	39%	4.07	492

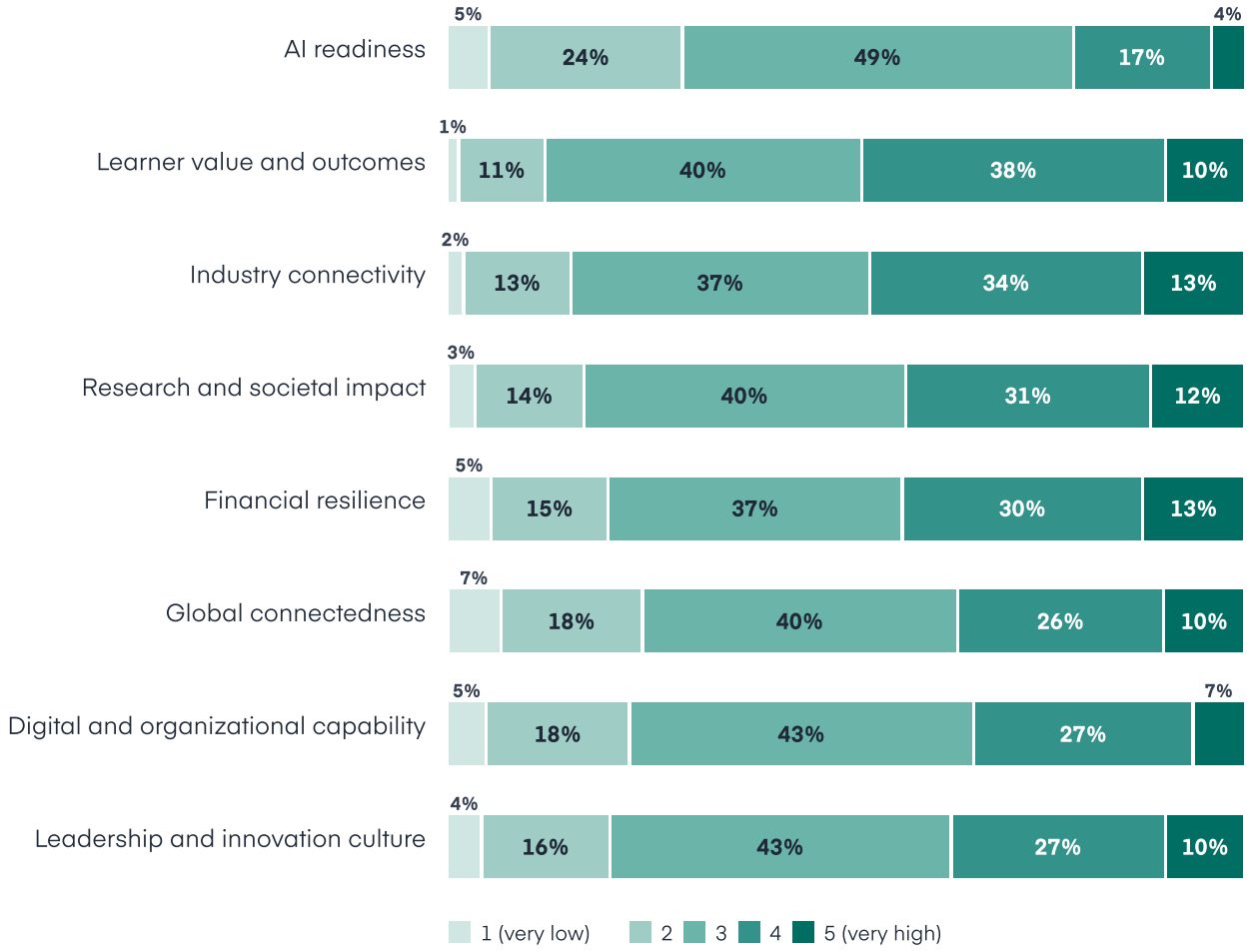
Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

SCHOOL FUTURE READINESS

Current Preparedness

Schools' perceived preparedness falls well short of their priorities. Across all eight dimensions, fewer than half of respondents rate their school's preparedness as high or very high. Schools feel best prepared in learner value and outcomes (3.44). AI readiness is the only dimension with an average preparedness rating below 3 (2.91), with 29 percent of respondents rating their schools' preparedness low or very low.

Current Preparedness by Dimension



n ranges from 491 to 492. Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

SCHOOL FUTURE READINESS

Current Preparedness by Dimension

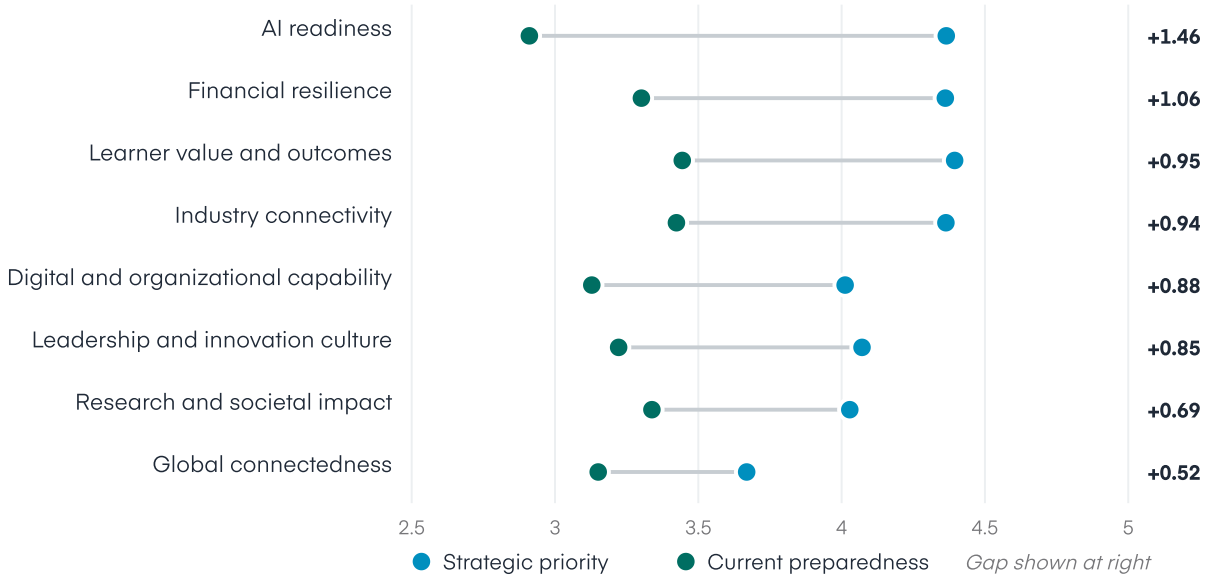
DIMENSION	1 (VERY LOW)	2	3	4	5 (VERY HIGH)	MEAN	N
AI readiness	5%	24%	49%	17%	4%	2.91	492
Learner value and outcomes	1%	11%	40%	38%	10%	3.44	491
Industry connectivity	2%	13%	37%	34%	13%	3.42	491
Research and societal impact	3%	14%	40%	31%	12%	3.34	491
Financial resilience	5%	15%	37%	30%	13%	3.30	491
Global connectedness	7%	18%	40%	26%	10%	3.15	491
Digital and organizational capability	5%	18%	43%	27%	7%	3.13	491
Leadership and innovation culture	4%	16%	43%	27%	10%	3.22	491

Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Priority-Preparedness Gap

The gaps between institutional strategic priority and current preparedness range from 0.52 points for global connectedness to 1.46 points for AI readiness. Financial resilience (1.06) and learner value and outcomes (0.95) show the next widest gaps, highlighting other areas where schools' ambitions most outpace their perceived readiness.

Strategic Priority and Current Preparedness



Ordered by gap. The rating axis is truncated to 2.5–5.0 of the 1–5 scale so differences are legible; no average rating falls outside this axis.

SCHOOL FUTURE READINESS

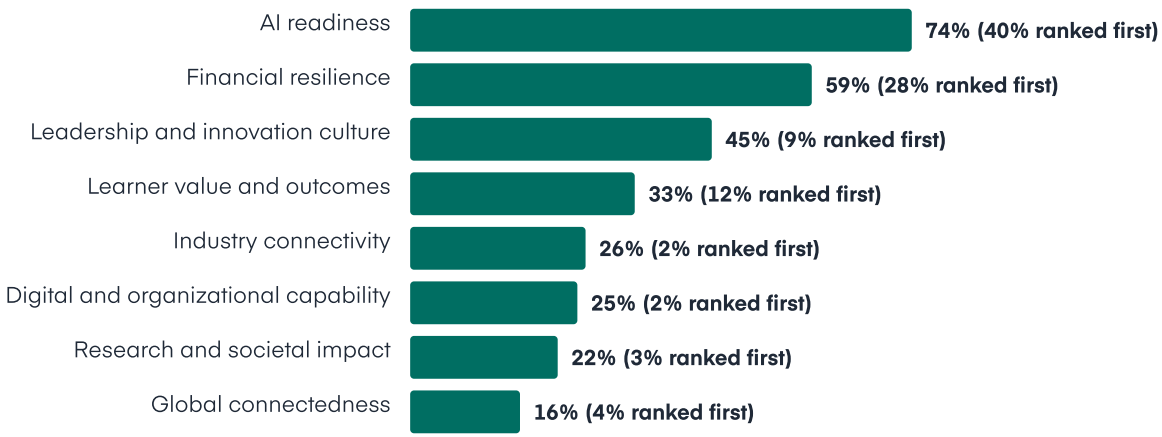
Priority-Preparedness Gap by Dimension

DIMENSION	STRATEGIC PRIORITY	CURRENT PREPAREDNESS	GAP
AI readiness	4.37	2.91	+1.46
Financial resilience	4.36	3.30	+1.06
Learner value and outcomes	4.39	3.44	+0.95
Industry connectivity	4.36	3.42	+0.94
Digital and organizational capability	4.01	3.13	+0.88
Leadership and innovation culture	4.07	3.22	+0.85
Research and societal impact	4.03	3.34	+0.69
Global connectedness	3.67	3.15	+0.52

Greatest Challenges

Respondents were asked to identify and rank the three dimensions posing the greatest challenges for their schools. AI readiness and financial resilience stand out: Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) place AI readiness among their top three, and the two dimensions together account for 68 percent of first-place rankings. Leadership and innovation culture ranks third, appearing in 45 percent of respondents' top three, while global connectedness is the least-selected dimension (16 percent).

Top-Ranked Challenges



Share of the 413 respondents who placed each dimension in their top three, and the share ranking each dimension first.

SCHOOL FUTURE READINESS

Three Top Challenges, by Dimension

DIMENSION	IN TOP THREE	SHARE	RANKED FIRST	SHARE
AI readiness	306	74%	166	40%
Financial resilience	245	59%	114	28%
Leadership and innovation culture	184	45%	39	9%
Learner value and outcomes	137	33%	49	12%
Industry connectivity	107	26%	9	2%
Digital and organizational capability	102	25%	7	2%
Research and societal impact	90	22%	11	3%
Global connectedness	67	16%	18	4%

n=413. Respondents ranked three of the eight dimensions, so top-three shares add up to about 300 percent.

ABOUT AACSB

ABOUT AACSB INTERNATIONAL

Established in 1916, AACSB International (AACSB) connects educators, learners, and businesses to create the next generation of great leaders. With more than 2,000 member organizations and over 1,000 accredited business schools worldwide, AACSB is the world's largest business education network. Through the AACSB Global Standards for Business Education™, accreditation, and thought leadership, AACSB fosters engagement, accelerates innovation, and amplifies impact in business education. Learn more at aacsb.edu.

aacsb.edu

Americas
777 South Harbour Island Boulevard, Suite 750
Tampa, Florida 33602-5730 USA
+1 813 769 6500

Europe, Middle East, and Africa
UP Building
Piet Heinkade 55
1019 GM Amsterdam, The Netherlands
+31 20 509 1070

Asia Pacific
331 North Bridge Road
#10-04/05 Odeon Towers
Singapore, 188720
+65 6592 5210

© 2026 AACSB International