AUG 2023

GALVANIZING EARLY COLLEGE PRACTITIONERS IN ILLINOIS

In Collaboration With:

Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships
Est. 2014

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

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Galvanizing Early College Practitioners in Illinois:

An Exploration of Potential Member Retention and Recruitment Strategies for the Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (ILACEP)

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August 08, 2023

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About The Author

Alauna Shante McGee is a woman of faith, Brendia's baby, Amari's mom, and a trusted confidant to many. Before acceptance into the Leadership and Learning in Organizations doctoral program at Vanderbilt University (Peabody College), she was already an accomplished three-time graduate of Illinois State University with degrees in Business Administration (B.S.), Management and Organizational Leadership (B.S.), and Communication (M.S.).

Alauna is a sought-after public speaker, consultant, mentor, problem-solving strategist, and conscientious leader. She uses her platform, **Alauna Speaks**, to disrupt the status quo and patterns of systemic oppression to evoke equity-minded practices in academia, induce innovative strategies for sustainable improvement initiatives, and leverage levity to help transcend challenging times. She also launched a mentorship program, the **Paragon PACT**, through which she facilitates a network conducive to the personal and professional ascension of women of color in need of a support system that provides safety and encourages authenticity.

Having further expanded her knowledge base and skill set by completing this doctoral study, Alauna looks forward to exercising her prowess as a practitioner-scholar in pursuing other existing and emergent endeavors. So, stay tuned…

Acknowledgments

"[22]Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. [23]They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness."
– Lamentations 3:22-23 (New International Version)

First and foremost, I must thank God for saving and sustaining me through it all! Next, I must thank my mom and "mini" for your unwavering support and dedication toward helping me achieve this lifelong goal; your unconditional love is heaven-sent! To the "Triumphant 12", the vanguards of the McGee legacy, I am keenly aware of all the ways you hoisted me upon your shoulders so I could see better and go further; I'm forever grateful. To my Queen-Sistahs and Paragon PACT women, what an honor to journey through life with each of you – your friendship is fuel for me! To my "Auntie" Melba, one of the best spiritual advisors/prayer warriors/mentors ever, thank you for always being a soft and safe place for me to land. To my host of other family and friends that are too numerous to name, thank you for your affirming sentiments and well wishes along the way.

To my incredible advisor, Dr. Lacey Hartigan, thank you for pushing me forward and pulling me back in all the right ways at all the right times. You could teach a master class on providing students with an appropriate balance of challenge and support. I feel very blessed to be a beneficiary of your dedication to helping students succeed! Thank you for helping me cross this finish line – intact!

Last but certainly not least, thank you to the Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (ILACEP) leaders for your commitment to early college practitioners and for welcoming me as an *honorary* board member throughout our partnership process.

Executive Summary

Organization Context

Illinois enacted the Dual Credit Quality Act (DCQA or "The Act") in 2010. The Act mandates concurrent enrollment partnerships between community colleges and high schools. Through those partnerships, high school students can take college courses to earn both high school and college credit - dual credit. The DCQA is imperative legislation for decreasing time-to-degree completion, reducing overall college-related costs, and providing more minoritized students access to higher education.

As the Act accelerated the demand for dual credit opportunities across Illinois, it also catalyzed the need for an official concurrent enrollment network of practitioners working to meet its mandates. Founded in 2014 as a state chapter of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), the Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (ILACEP) rose to the occasion. ILACEP is a professional association for those interested in advancing dual credit opportunities and outcomes for high school students in Illinois.

Problem In Practice

ILACEP membership is open to all secondary and postsecondary schools in Illinois and other interested organizations. However, its membership trend illuminated an inconsistent pattern over the last seven years. A closer look at its member database revealed room for growth among its ideal member organizations.

As of the 2022-23 academic year, ILACEP member organizations were: two universities, two other interested organizations, 22 high school districts, and 26 community colleges. Since the DCQA mandates partnerships between community colleges and high schools for dual credit opportunities, those entities are the ideal ILACEP member organizations and the target respondents for this study. Consider that Illinois has 48 community colleges and 96 high school districts. Given this, there are early college practitioners from 46% of community colleges and 77% of high school districts who either did not renew their ILACEP membership or were never ILACEP members. While non-members lack easy access to pertinent information ILACEP provides, they may also have insight and expertise that could strengthen the ILACEP network.

ILACEP is the only professional association in Illinois ***for*** early college practitioners ***led by*** early college practitioners. ILACEP leaders desire to create and sustain a more expansive concurrent enrollment network to:

1. foster strong partnerships between secondary and postsecondary schools,
2. provide professional development opportunities for practitioners and allies,
3. disseminate important concurrent enrollment accreditation information, and
4. advocate for better state legislation alongside other practitioners and allies in Illinois.

Conceptual Frame

I leveraged the prior works of scholars in the field to create a conceptual framework that helped me investigate my problem in practice and provide useful recommendations to my partner organization. I based my framework on the following key assertions from the literature:

- providing valuable membership benefits is essential for professional association success and survival (Karen, 2015; Phillips & Leahy, 2012),
- professional associations should conduct a membership value study to uncover their membership motivators (or drivers) in terms of the benefits they offer (Jacobs, 2014),
- members are more likely to renew their professional association membership and recruit others when they experience member benefits they value and expect (Ki & Wang, 2016; Markova et al., 2013).

Conceptual Model

Given the literature, I worked with ILACEP leaders to compose this list of membership benefits:

ILACEP Membership Benefits	***Professional Development:*** learning and sharing new practices, procedures, and policies
	Professional Networking: meeting and communicating directly with other practitioners in the field
	State Listserv Access: viewing and sharing information most pertinent to Illinois policies and programs via email
	Safe Spaces: freely sharing concerns or challenges and asking questions
	Advocacy: being part of a united collective advocating for better statewide legislative policies

Then, I designed a survey to capture member perceptions of the ILACEP membership benefits they experienced, valued, and expected.

Research Questions

1. Which benefits have members experienced most?
2. Which benefits did members value most?
3. What discrepancies existed, if any, between valued and experienced benefits results?
4. What additional association benefits (beyond the list used in this study) did members expect?

Secondary Questions

Do results differ by these professional demographics:

- Member role?
- Organization Type?
- Involvement Level *(in the field)?*
- Years of Experience *(in the field)?*

Relevant Results

Finding 1: More respondents experienced ***professional development*** **(85%)** and ***professional networking*** **(81%)** than state listserv access (60%), safe spaces (52%), and advocacy (48%).

1a: Finding one was true among all professional demographic groups ***except respondents with over ten years of experience in the field*** who also reported ***safe spaces*** as a most-experienced benefit (*equal to professional development*).

Finding 2: More respondents valued ***professional development*** **(87%)** and ***professional networking*** **(89%)** than state listserv access (78%), safe spaces (78%), and advocacy (80%).

2a: Finding two was true among all professional demographic groups ***except:***

- ***leaders*** who also valued ***safe spaces*** *(equal to professional development and professional networking)****,***
- ***high school respondents*** who also valued ***advocacy*** *(equal to professional development)*, and
- ***respondents with over ten years of experience in the field*** who unanimously reported ***professional networking***, ***state listserv access***, and ***advocacy*** as the most-valued benefits – a completely different result than the other groups.

Finding 3: The percentage of respondents who valued ***all five ILACEP membership benefits*** used in this study was higher than those who experienced each benefit, representing a discrepancy between valued and experienced benefits.

3a: Differing discrepancies existed between valued and experienced ILACEP membership benefits ***for every professional demographic group***. However, the following groups had discrepancies for ***all five benefits****,* just like finding three***: (1) general members, (2) community college respondents, (3) respondents not highly involved in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes, and (4) respondents with less than five years of experience in the field***.*

Additionally, leaders were the only group with just one discrepancy (***safe spaces***); respondents not highly involved in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes was the only group with considerable discrepancies for ***all five benefits*** and had the largest discrepancy among all groups for ***professional development***, ***professional networking***, and ***safe spaces***; respondents with less than five years of experience in the field had the largest discrepancy for ***advocacy***; respondents with over ten years of experience in the field had the largest discrepancy for ***state listserv access***.

Finding 4: Respondents did not suggest any unique additional membership benefits. Instead, based on how ILACEP leaders defined each benefit, all except one of the open-ended entries connected to the existing ILACEP membership benefits used in this study.

Recommendations

1. Increase awareness of current membership benefits.

- ✓ Fully explain the current list of membership benefits and all they entail.
- ✓ Explicitly market membership benefits in various ways *(e.g., website, infographics, flyers, postcards, unofficial conversations, official conference presentations, etc.)*.

2. Delegate [some] member retention and recruitment efforts.

- ✓ Invite satisfied members to be brand ambassadors who:
  - write or record testimonials to be shared on the website or via social media,
  - connect with certain members to help keep them engaged in ILACEP activities,
  - seek to understand and address member uncertainty about membership renewal,
  - contact former members to uncover why they opted not to renew their membership and provide updated information about membership benefits, and
  - recruit prospective members who may be less familiar or unfamiliar with ILACEP membership benefits.

3. Enhance the member intake process to collect more information.

- ✓ Send a welcome email prompting new and returning members to complete a questionnaire to provide a combination of personal *(e.g., age range, race/ethnicity, etc.)* and professional demographics *(e.g., position title, years of experience, level of involvement in the field, staff size, etc.)*.
- ✓ Create a better database that can be filtered by individual or multiple demographics collected in the questionnaire to help:
  - further discussions among leaders about ways to serve its member base,
  - identify the type or number of necessary brand ambassadors, and
  - create customized communication and tailored events for more targeted member retention and recruitment efforts.

4. Assess activities connected to current ILACEP membership benefits.

- ✓ Evaluate the quantity and quality of opportunities for members to experience benefits.
- ✓ Revisit ILACEP's overall mission to ensure alignment with membership benefits.
- ✓ Maintain a member-centric approach by routinely requesting, analyzing, and incorporating member feedback following activities/events.

5. Solicit more qualitative feedback consistently – formally and informally.

- ✓ Ask open-ended questions (*e.g.,* "*What do you expect from ILACEP membership*?") during the enhanced member intake process previously recommended.
- ✓ Disseminate post-event surveys using a mixed-methods approach that encourages members to explain numerical responses via open-ended text boxes.
- ✓ Host [virtual] focus groups for all general members and by member demographics.
- ✓ Have more casual conversations with members to discern their perceptions of ILACEP membership benefits.

Organization Context

The Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (ILACEP) is a professional association for practitioners interested in advancing concurrent enrollment opportunities and outcomes for high school students in Illinois. Concurrent enrollment opportunities allow students to take college courses in high school. Upon course completion, students earn high school and college credit concurrently – or dual credit. Founded in 2014 as a chapter of the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP), ILACEP's mission is to serve as the nexus for early college practitioners in Illinois. According to its bylaws, an elected board of directors leads all ILACEP efforts. The leadership positions are as follows:

- President – 2-year term
- Past president – 1-year term
- President-elect – 2-year term
- Secretary – 1-year term
- Treasurer – 2-year term
- Membership chairperson – 1-year term
- Communication chairperson – 1-year term
- Professional development chairperson – 2-year term
- Government relations chairperson – 1-year term
- Secondary education representatives (3) – 2-year term

ILACEP leaders are not compensated; therefore, most perform their ILACEP duties in addition to their demanding "day" jobs. Also, most current leaders did not have expertise or prior experience related to their ILACEP position before being elected. They all said they answered the call to serve when no one else could. The leaders meet monthly to discuss routine operations,

strategize about how to handle emergent issues, plan details for webinars and annual in-person conferences, outline messaging for their member email listserv, and suggest website updates.

ILACEP membership is open to all secondary and postsecondary schools in Illinois and other interested organizations. The application process is simple, only requiring basic information, such as name, email address, and institution name (see Appendix A). Once organizations pay membership dues of $100, an unlimited number of people from those organizations can participate in ILACEP-sponsored events and get access to the email listserv. ILACEP accepts new members and renewals on a rolling basis between June 1 and July 30 annually.

Illinois enacted the Dual Credit Quality Act[1] (DCQA or "The Act") in 2010, which mandates concurrent enrollment partnerships between community colleges and high schools. The DQCA is imperative legislation for decreasing time-to-degree completion, reducing college-related costs, and providing more minoritized students access to higher education. The DCQA accelerated the demand for dual credit opportunities across Illinois. The Act also catalyzed the need for an official concurrent enrollment network of practitioners working and, in some instances, struggling to meet its mandates. Since the DCQA requires community colleges to partner with high schools to offer dual credit courses, practitioners from those two entities are ideal ILACEP members. With a more expansive network, ILACEP hopes to collaborate with its members to (1) foster strong partnerships between secondary and postsecondary schools, (2) provide professional development opportunities to practitioners and allies, (3) disseminate important concurrent enrollment accreditation information, and (4) advocate for better state legislation alongside other practitioners and allies in Illinois.

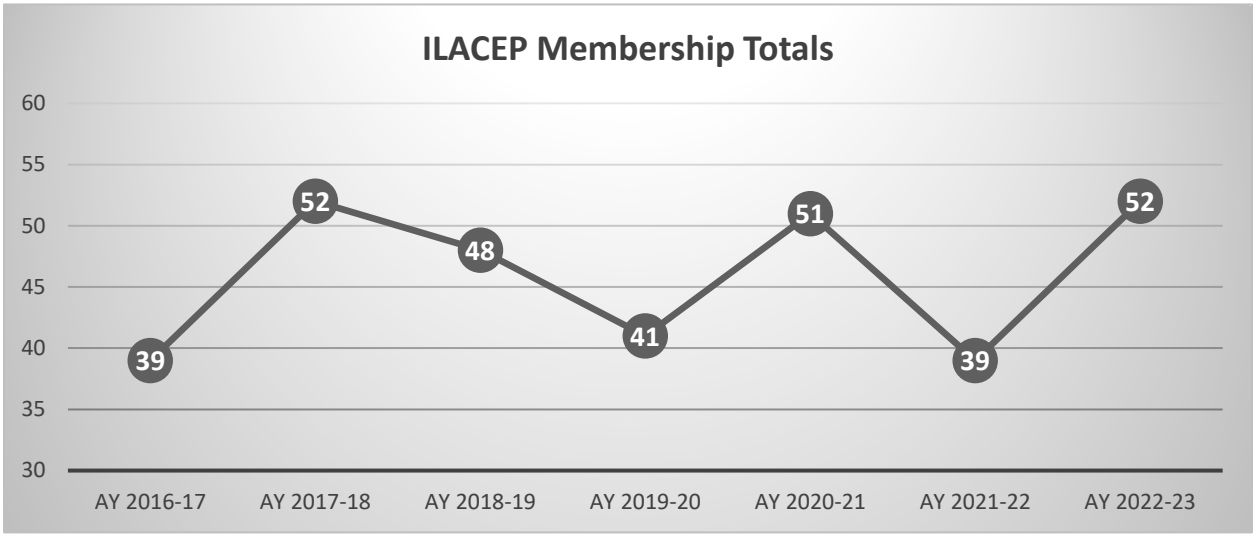
[1] https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=3117&ChapterID=18

Problem In Practice

ILACEP membership records illuminated an inconsistent pattern over the last seven years (see Figure 1), with membership numbers peaking in academic year 2017-2018 and again in 2022-2023.

Figure 1

Number of ILACEP Member Organizations per Academic Year (AY) over Seven Years



While overall membership appears to trend upward as of academic year 2022-2023, a closer examination of their membership records revealed room for growth among its ideal member organizations: community colleges and high schools. Of the 52 AY 2022-2023 ILACEP members, two are universities, two are other interested organizations, 22 represent high school districts, and 26 are community colleges. According to the Illinois Community College Board[2] (ICCB), Illinois has 48 public community colleges. Additionally, Illinois has 96 high school districts, according to the Illinois State Board of Education[3] (ISBE). Given that information, 46%

[2] http://www2.iccb.org/iccb/system-information/
[3] https://www.isbe.net/Documents/2021-Annual-Report.pdf

of public community colleges and 77% of high school districts in Illinois either have never been ILACEP members or decided not to renew their membership.

ILACEP is the only professional association in Illinois ***for*** early college practitioners ***led by*** early college practitioners. Any non-members lack easy access to valuable information ILACEP provides through its communication channels and events. However, non-members may also have valuable insight and expertise that could strengthen the ILACEP network. ILACEP leaders have discussed this phenomenon at length and believe that many organizations have not joined ILACEP or renewed their membership for the following reasons:

- payment issues due to cumbersome bureaucratic processes at their organizations,
- lack of perceived value in the content provided through the ILACEP network or in belonging to a professional network,
- inadequate communication about membership benefits and timelines,
- limited capacity to commit to other organizations, and
- organizational turnover without succession plans.

ILACEP leaders have attempted to mitigate some of these issues by publicizing ILACEP during conferences they attend as members or presenters, reaching out to non-member community colleges via email or phone, offering annual free membership drawings for one new and returning organization, and sending their quarterly informational newsletter to current and past members. Now, they are interested in a study to explore potential factors impacting member retention and recruitment officially.

Literature Review

Given my project's organizational context and problem in practice, I sought literature on member retention and recruitment efforts specifically concerning professional associations. In

search of relevant scholarly articles, my primary search terms were "professional associations," "professional association membership benefits," "professional organizations," "professional association leadership," "organization member recruitment and retention," and "concurrent enrollment networks" via Google Scholar, Vanderbilt's Jean and Alexander Heard Libraries database, and the ERIC Institute of Education Sciences database.

The information I found during my preliminary search led to subsequent searches using the following terms: "voluntary organizations," "social exchange theory," social identity theory," "professional identity," and "organizational identification." I also reviewed public membership information on the websites of ILACEP, NACEP, and other NACEP-affiliated state chapters. Finally, I reviewed the websites of related organizations, such as the Northern Illinois University P-20 Network, Early College Network, College in High School Alliance, and Stand for Children Illinois.

Although my search unearthed many avenues to explore related to professional association membership, information about various membership benefits, organizational identification, leadership considerations, and communication practices proved to be the most promising. However, it seemed most prudent to begin by identifying some of the intricacies involved with professional associations in general; then proceed with connecting pertinent literature about the abovementioned topics.

Association Attributes

Professional associations (*also called professional organizations*) can be local, regional, or national networks that foster connections between practitioners in a particular field. Professional associations are conduits for disseminating valuable information between practitioners across organizations. They often attract members with claims of exclusive access to

knowledge and expertise. Professional associations are uniquely positioned to advance best practices in their respective fields, create guidelines for appropriate policies (e.g., codes of ethics), and advocate for the greater good (Bruhn, 2001; Greenwood et al., 2002). In this way, they can effectively legitimize occupations and associated practitioners in the eyes of others within and outside their respective fields (Greggs-McQuilkin, 2005; Schein, 1968).

Another important function of professional associations is that they can catalyze or bolster professional identification. Bennetta (2010) suggests that participating in a professional association is an integral part of the process for individuals seeking to better define their professional self. Professional identification can be defined as the extent that individuals feel they identify with important characteristics of practitioners in a particular field (Bennetta, 2010; Markova et al., 2013; Phillips & Leahy, 2012). In that regard, professional identification is closely related to social identity theory (SIT). SIT proposes that people classify themselves and others according to various categories and affiliations, thereby creating in-groups and out-groups that can be a source of pride for some people (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Markova et al., 2013; Phillips & Leahy, 2012). So, the degree to which a person believes affiliation with a professional association is desirable may have implications for how fast they develop their professional identity within a field or if it ever happens at all.

For all their utility, professional associations are not without challenging attributes that threaten their success and survival. First, many are voluntary organizations that professionals can choose to join and participate in or not (Markova et al., 2013). Members are expected to freely volunteer their resources (e.g., time, energy, expertise) and pay for association membership and ancillary benefits to sustain the association (Knoke, 1981; Wollenbaek, 2009). Additionally, attracting the right leaders willing and able to dedicate their resources and expertise to advance

the association's mission, most often for free, while working full-time jobs and managing personal responsibilities also poses a significant challenge. Therefore, leaders and members alike may be subject to volunteer overload, causing them to be more selective about how they expend their resources (Nesbit & Gazley, 2011). Finally, most professional associations rely solely on membership dues and a la carte purchases for their funding (Jacobs, 2014). Subsequently, declining membership is doubly problematic for professional associations because it often means a reduction in benefits provided to members when they may need to expand services to attract and retain members (Phillips & Leahy, 2012).

Membership Motives

Member Benefits & Perceptions

People join and remain in professional associations for many reasons, with membership benefits among the most compelling reasons. When applied in this context, social exchange theory (SET) infers that people weigh the costs and benefits when considering or reconsidering membership; therefore, it is essential for professional associations to offer membership benefits people value (Jacobs, 2014; Markova et al., 2013; Phillips & Leahy, 2012). Literature reveals that people value a variety of membership benefits, such as (1) the esteem of simply being associated with other practitioners in their profession, (2) access to exclusive information through networking opportunities (e.g., annual conferences or regular convenings), (3) professional development opportunities, (4) potential career advancement, (5) chances to advocate for advancements in the field individually and collectively (Jacobs, 2014; Karen, 2015; Ki & Wang, 2016; Markova et al., 2013; Stackpole, 2015). Given this, professional associations interested in attracting and retaining members should carefully consider what benefits to provide and seek to understand member perceptions of those benefits to assess value.

Two studies that explored member perceptions of tangible benefits (e.g., professional development, professional networking, access to key resources) using a random sample of thousands of professional association members provided rich insight for member retention and recruitment efforts. One study focused on initial membership and renewal decisions connected to membership benefits (Markova et al., 2013); the other focused on member intent to renew and recommend membership to others (Ki & Wang, 2016). A foundational tenet of both studies is Lawler's theory of satisfaction, defined as "the lack of discrepancy between experience and expectations" (Lawler, 1971, as cited in Markova et al., 2013, p. 501). Using Likert scales, the studies captured members' expectations, perceptions of value, and satisfaction levels concerning professional association membership benefits. Key findings included:

- member satisfaction with benefits predicted member retention, such that professional associations who offer benefits that meet or exceed member expectations should reasonably expect membership renewals (Markova et al., 2013);
- when member perceptions of benefits were positive, they expressed intent to renew membership and recommend membership to others (Ki & Wang, 2016);
- when members reported being satisfied with benefits, they were more likely to express their intent to renew and recommend membership (Ki & Wang, 2016);
- member perceptions of benefits influenced their level of satisfaction with those benefits and impacted their intent to renew and recommend membership (Ki & Wang, 2016).

Ultimately, these findings support the notion that a good recruitment strategy for attracting new members could be making a more concerted effort to retain current members who may willingly become ambassadors for their respective professional associations.

Mission & Organizational Identification

Since professional associations are organizations of choice, they must distinguish themselves from other viable options in meaningful ways. Subsequently, another compelling motive for professional association membership is whether its mission is salient to prospective

and current members. Not only does an organization's mission communicate its purpose or reason for existence, but it is also a principal motivating factor for initial membership and continued commitment to the organization (Stackpole, 2015). Given that sentiment, professional association membership is as much about having a mission that inspires practitioners and endears them to the organization as providing tangible benefits. Additionally, an organization's mission serves as a symbolic benefit for members and is crucial for an organization's identity and organizational identification. Organizational identification can be defined as the extent to which an individual identifies with the values or attributes associated with an organization at large (Albert et al., 2000; He & Brown, 2013; Markova et al., 2013). Organization identification is linked to SIT but extends beyond an individual's ability to develop a professional identity through professional association membership.

> By internalizing the group or organizational identity as a (partial) definition of self, the individual gains a sense of meaningfulness and connection. Identity and identification explain one means by which individuals act on behalf of the group or the organization. Thus, theories of identity and identification are infused with motivation and feeling. They help to explain the direction and persistence of individual and more collective behaviors. (Albert et al., 2000, p. 14)

It is worth highlighting the affective aspect that can be useful for member retention and recruitment efforts for professional associations – meaning professional associations should carefully curate experiences for their members to elicit an emotional connection to the organization, which serves the purpose of inducing organizational identification (Dorsey, 2015). This is important because organizational identification shifts the narrative about professional association membership away from people asking what the association can do for them toward

the potential of what members can accomplish as a collective through the professional association platform. In this regard, using its mission as an anchor for organizational identification is beneficial to both members and the association, especially if advocacy opportunities as a group are available and embraced as a part of membership.

Other Membership Considerations

Leadership Matters

A particularly noteworthy phenomenon related to member retention and recruitment for professional associations is the impact of constant turnover in leadership (Engle, 2015). Like many other organizations, most professional associations set term limits for their leadership positions. Leadership changes can present opportunities for fresh ideas to sustain and expand an organization's membership base. However, short terms may not be long enough for leaders to acclimate to the position, assess the membership climate, and implement changes, if necessary. "One of the ways leaders ensure the integrity of an organization's efforts and its mission is to conduct a regular audit of the organization's products and services to examine both their value and their alignment with organizational mission" (Stackpole, 2015, p. 21). Hence, one of the first undertakings for incoming professional association leaders should be to spend ample time reassessing the relevance of the mission they inherited from predecessors.

Since professional association leaders should view members as customers when paying dues is a condition of membership, leaders must skillfully balance acts of serving and selling (Dorsey, 2015; Jacobs, 2014; Markova et al., 2013; Stackpole, 2015). To do so, professional association leaders should routinely (1) ask members what they want or need and (2) attempt to foresee and fulfill needs on the horizon that members have not discovered for themselves (Jacobs, 2014; Karen, 2015). However, when seeking to serve its existing membership base and

attract prospective members, professional association leaders should ensure that membership benefits stem from its mission to avoid "mission creep" – that is, offering a buffet of benefits that do not align with their mission (Dorsey, 2015; Jacobs, 2014; Karen, 2015, p. 285; Stackpole, 2015). Mission and membership benefits should ultimately serve as complementary agents for member recruitment and retention efforts. To develop effective strategies to retain and recruit members, professional association leaders must prioritize addressing tensions between membership benefits, mission, and member expectations.

Finally, professional association leaders should be the best purveyors of their organization's overall brand (Catano et al., 2001; Dorsey, 2015; Jacobs, 2014; Karen, 2015; Stackpole, 2015). Organizational branding is most noted in the literature related to for-profit sectors and is often confused with marketing. Marketing encompasses activities (i.e., printed materials, electronic communication, web-based content, commercials/infomercials) involved with promoting an organization, products, and services, whereas a significant focal point of branding is understanding and managing how people feel about an organization based on their experiences (Dorsey, 2015; Quash, 2015; Swaminathan et al., 2020; Thomson et al., 2005). With that in mind, professional association leaders can explore captivating branding opportunities by making more emotional appeals to their membership base, ideally connected to their mission and membership benefits. Yet, professional association leaders should not feel like they bear the burden of branding alone. Instead, they should invite members to help co-create a positive narrative about the organization's mission and benefits by sharing their experiences with others in multifaceted ways, especially considering technological advancements (Dorsey, 2015; Swaminathan et al., 2020). Professional association leaders should consider branding to humanize their efforts to coalesce more practitioners.

Communication Practices

Prospective and current professional association members will not likely automatically understand the organization's mission and membership benefits independently. The organization's job is to communicate the mission and benefits explicitly and effectively. Intentionally marketing mission and membership benefits through electronic and print mediums is necessary for helping people decide to join a professional association and renew membership (Quash, 2015), but that is only the genesis of the communication process. In addition to establishing communication practices that send clear messages to their target audience(s), professional associations should provide many opportunities for feedback from prospective, current, and former members (Jacobs, 2014; Karen, 2015). In this regard, professional associations should seek to receive as much information from their membership base as it sends.

Professional associations should go beyond collecting basic contact information about members (e.g., name, organization, phone number, and email address) toward a more robust membership database and member profiles with information that may indicate what members want or need from association membership early on (Engle, 2015; Jacobs, 2014; Karen, 2015). Professional associations that capture a wider array of demographic information, for example, will better understand diversity among their member base, or lack thereof. Moreover, professional associations must realize member needs, expectations, and desires are diverse and can change over time (Karen, 2015; Markova et al., 2013; Nesbit & Gazley, 2011). "Being able to slice and dice your membership data and take a targeted approach to serving and engaging your members is quite an advantage over seeing your membership data as one amorphous blob of information" (Karen, 2015, p. 286). Professional associations open to members from different organizations, at varying stages in their careers, or who occupy various positions can use

customized communication to make meaningful connections based on the benefits each member values and expects. A comprehensive member database allows for more targeted member retention and recruitment based on who is present – and absent.

Conceptual Frame

I leveraged the prior works of scholars in the field to create a conceptual framework that helped me investigate my problem in practice and provide useful recommendations to my partner organization. I created a framework (see Figure 2) based on the following assertions:

- providing valuable membership benefits is an essential component for the success and survival of professional associations (Karen, 2015; Phillips & Leahy, 2012),
- professional associations should conduct a membership value study to uncover their membership motivators (or drivers) in terms of the benefits they offer (Jacobs, 2014),
- members are more likely to renew their professional association membership and recruit others when they experience member benefits they value and expect (Ki & Wang, 2016; Markova et al., 2013).

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework Model

To date, ILACEP has only sought member feedback via post-event surveys. Those surveys were designed to get information about member experiences connected to specific events after-the-fact. This study takes a more holistic approach to capturing members' perceptions of ILACEP membership benefits instead of isolating feedback for individual events.

Research Questions

My literature review and conceptual framework were the impetus for the following primary research questions:

- **RQ1:** Which association membership benefits have members experienced most?
- **RQ2:** Which association membership benefits did members value most?
- **RQ3:** What discrepancies exist, if any, between valued and experienced results for association membership benefits?
- **RQ4:** What additional association membership benefits did members expect?

Additionally, I set out to uncover if results for each primary research question differed by member role (leaders vs. general members), organization type (high schools vs. community colleges), involvement level (highly involved in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes vs. not highly involved), and years of experience in the field (less than five years vs. five to ten years vs. over ten years).

Project Design

Since ILACEP did not have a clearly defined list of membership benefits, I worked with ILACEP leaders to make one. The resulting membership benefits list included: (1) professional development, (2) professional networking, (3) state listserv access, (4) safe spaces, and (5) advocacy. Guided by these areas, I designed a web-based survey using Qualtrics XM to collect the desired information about member perceptions, with those benefits as the centerpiece.

Participant Recruitment

After the ILACEP Communication Chairperson provided the most current membership database, I used Qualtrics XM to send personalized initial recruitment emails with traceable survey links to everyone identified as the primary contact person for each member organization. (see Appendix B). I scheduled an automatic reminder email to the people Qualtrics XM

identified as non-completers after three days. Additionally, I recruited more participants at the ILACEP Summit – an annual, in-person convening of current and prospective members – by placing handouts with a QR code linked to the survey on each table in the main conference meeting room. The ILACEP Communications Chairperson also added the survey URL to the website's homepage in case participants could not access the survey via the QR code. I hoped to attain survey responses from at least one individual at half of the 48 ideal ILACEP member organizations – 22 high school districts and 26 community colleges.

Data Collection Instrument

I created the survey in consultation with ILACEP leaders and invited their feedback on multiple occasions before its dissemination. During that process, they provided affirmations, corrections, and suggestions for questions and answer options. Initially, the survey only included membership status options for general, committee, and leadership team members since I designed this project as a members-only study. After our discussions, I added membership status options for (1) prospective members who may visit the website or attend the annual convening and (2) people who were uncertain about their membership status because they were unsure if their organization paid membership dues. Additionally, I added a "Not Applicable" option to the experienced membership benefits question for new members with limited exposure to ILACEP membership benefits.

Furthermore, I included branching formulas in the survey, which Qualtrics XM calls "skip logic," so the survey diverted to the subsequent questions most pertinent to each participant based on prior responses. To begin, the first question required a response but provided a "prefer not to answer" option for participants to select and proceed. All remaining questions were optional. However, participants had to click a pop-up message to confirm their intent to continue

past unanswered questions, which helped ensure participants did not accidentally skip any questions.

The first section of the survey consisted of professional demographic questions, including organization type, level of involvement in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes, years of experience in the field, and ILACEP membership status (see Appendix C). Since ILACEP membership is open to various organizations, the first question asked participants to identify their organization type (i.e., secondary schools/districts, two-year postsecondary schools, four-year postsecondary schools, and others). Based on the response to this question, the survey routed participants to subsequent demographic questions or a pre-populated organization list based on the most current membership data available. Participants could add the name of their organization if not listed. Next, participants indicated their years of experience in the field by choosing between categorical options ranging from less than one year to over 20 years. Then, the survey prompted participants to indicate their level of involvement in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes as low, medium, high, or other. Finally, the survey prompted participants to indicate their membership status as a general member, committee member, leadership team member, prospective member, or uncertain. The final questions for participants were based on their selected membership status. Participants who did not respond to the membership status prompt saw all remaining questions.

The concluding section of the survey invited participants to respond to questions about specific ILACEP membership benefits (see Figure 3), accompanied by brief definitions of each benefit to ensure participants shared a common understanding when responding.

Figure 3

ILACEP Membership Benefits List

ILACEP Membership Benefits	***Professional Development***: learning and sharing new practices, procedures, and policies
	Professional Networking: meeting and communicating directly with other practitioners in the field
	State Listserv Access: viewing and sharing information most pertinent to Illinois policies and programs via email
	Safe Spaces: freely sharing concerns or challenges and asking questions
	Advocacy: being part of a united collective advocating for better statewide legislative policies

The survey asked participants for their perceptions of the abovementioned membership benefits through these questions (see Appendix D):

- Have you experienced the following ILACEP membership benefits?
- How valuable are the following ILACEP membership benefits?
- What other ILACEP membership benefits would you expect or desire?

Data Analysis

I collected 72 survey responses from individuals over two weeks. I began my analysis by reviewing the data collected to determine if all responses were viable. Since I was most interested in the perceptions of **current** ILACEP members for this study, I first double-checked the member status entries using the most recent membership database. As a result, I corrected the member status entry of ten respondents as follows. I updated:

- five uncertain entries to general members,
- one uncertain entry to a prospective member,

- two general member entries to prospective members, and
- two prospective member entries to general members.

After removing any incomplete, non-member submissions, and respondents not from ideal ILACEP member organizations (n = 16), 56 remaining respondents fit the criteria for inclusion (see Table 1), representing 34 of the 48 ideal ILACEP member organizations – a 71% response rate.

Table 1

Study Respondents Based on Member Role and Organization Type.

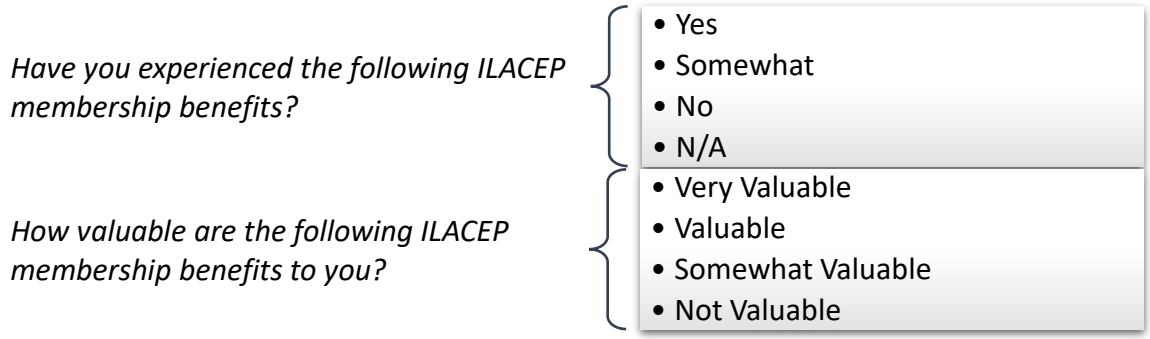
Target Respondents	High Schools	Community Colleges	Total
General Members	17	27	**44**
Leaders	5	7	**12**
Total	**22**	**34**	**56**

To answer my primary research questions, I reviewed the overall data from the target respondents for each survey question without controlling for distinct professional demographics. In doing so, I discovered 53 responses to the question asking what membership benefits respondents have experienced, 55 responses to the question asking what membership benefits respondents valued, and nine respondents answered the open-ended question about other expected membership benefits.

Although I examined the percentage of responses for each answer option for the experienced (see Appendix E) and valued benefits (see Appendix F) questions, I based my findings solely on respondents who definitively answered *Yes* and *Very Valuable or Valuable*, respectively (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

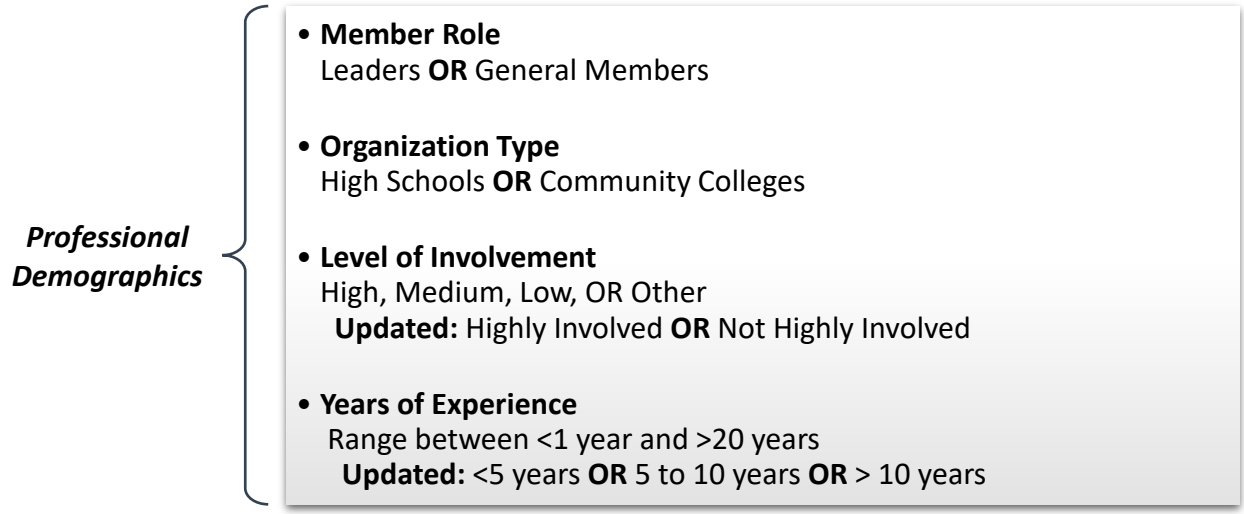
Survey Questions & Answer Options for Experienced & Valued ILACEP Membership Benefits



Then, I initially separated those results by each answer option for the professional demographics requested on the survey. However, due to the variation in group sizes for some of my groups, I collapsed some answer options for involvement level and years of experience to make fewer groups with a greater number of respondents in each. Any groups I combined were substantively similar such that I would not expect their responses to the survey questions to differ in a meaningful way. I used the updated groups (see Figure 5) to answer my secondary research questions regarding whether results differed by professional demographic groups.

Figure 5

Professional Demographic Categories & Groups



Next, I compared results to detect discrepancies between valued and experienced benefits (in terms of percentages of respondents) overall and by the professional demographic groups in Figure 5. More specifically, I looked for instances when the percentage of respondents who indicated they valued ILACEP membership benefits was higher than those who indicated they *actually* experienced those benefits. To that end, I classified those discrepancies as ***nominal*** when the difference between the percentage of respondents who valued and experienced a benefit was less than ten percent and ***considerable*** when ten percent or greater. Additionally, I conducted two-tailed z-tests using 0.05 as the level of significance to detect statistically significant differences between the percentages of:

- all respondents who reported valued and experienced benefits
- respondents who reported valued and experienced benefits across comparison groups based on the professional demographics groupings outlined in Figure 5

Finally, I examined the nine respondents' qualitative responses about other expected membership benefits. I created a table noting apparent themes, such as similar responses, responses that appeared to be influenced by professional demographics, or responses connected to the list of ILACEP membership benefits used in the survey.

Findings

Analyzing survey results, I gathered insight into member perceptions of the list of ILACEP membership benefits used for this study. Moreover, examining the data by professional demographics illuminated nuances concerning ILACEP membership benefits for and between particular groups. Those nuances were consistent with literature suggesting that professional association members could have different desires and expectations based on individual factors (Karen, 2015; Markova et al., 2013; Nesbit & Gazley, 2011). What follows are descriptions of

what the data revealed regarding the ILACEP membership benefits current members have experienced, valued, and expected, organized by my research questions.

#1 | Most-Experienced Benefits

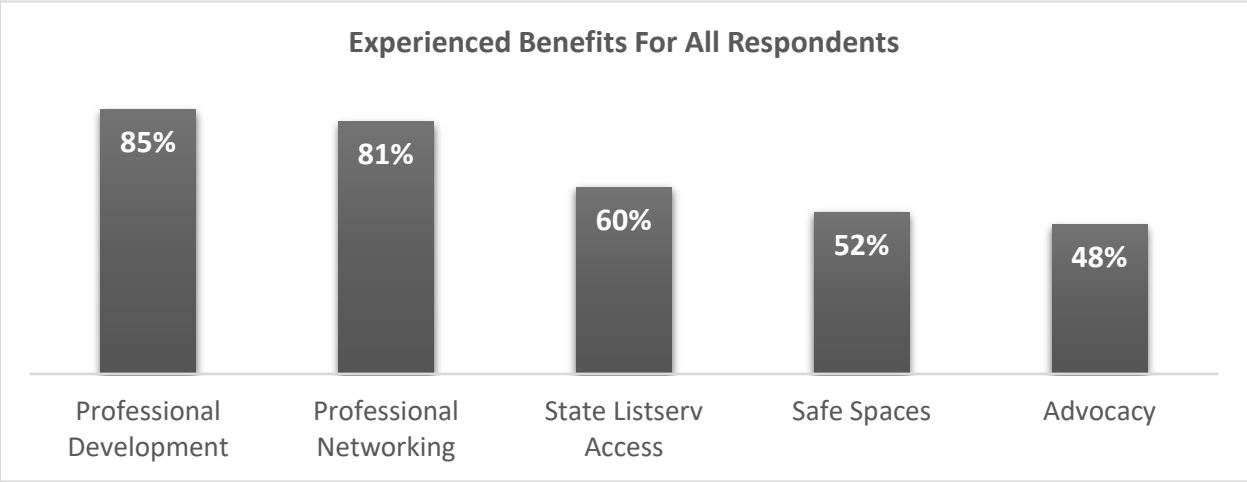
RQ1: Which association membership benefits have members experienced most?

Finding 1: Overall, professional development and professional networking were the most-experienced membership benefits among all five ILACEP membership benefits.

Respondents (n = 53) reported that they experienced benefits related to professional development and professional networking more than state listserv access, safe spaces, and advocacy (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Percentages of All Respondents who Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits



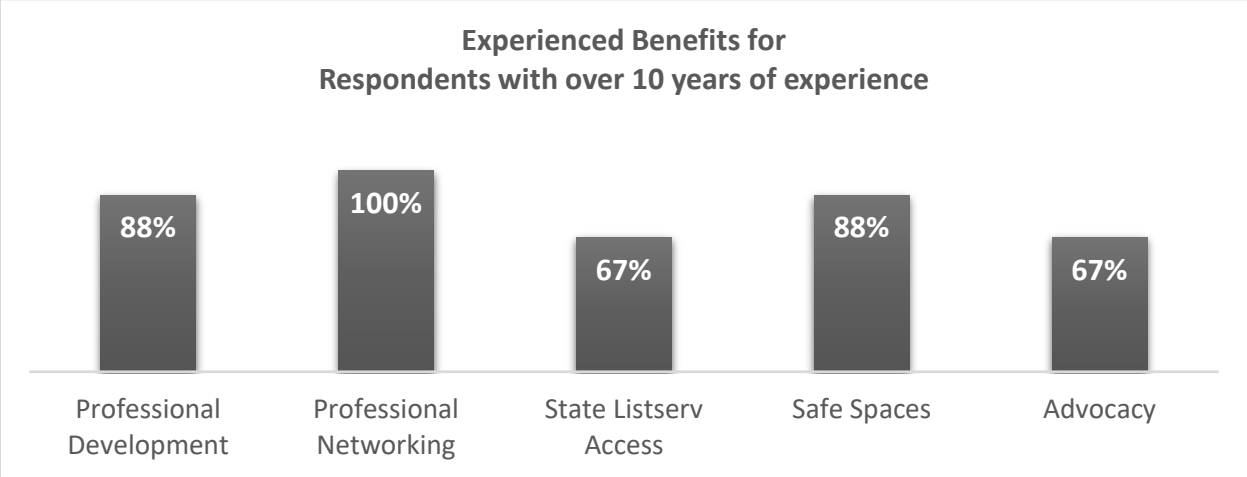
RQ1a. Do the most-experienced benefits differ by member role, organization type, involvement level, or years of experience?

Finding 1a: Professional development and professional networking were the most-experienced benefits for each professional demographic group ***except for respondents with over ten years of experience in the field.***

Respondents across member roles, organization types, involvement levels, and with ten years or less experience in the field reported that they most experienced professional development and professional networking benefits (see Appendix G). However, respondents with over ten years of experience in the field (n = 8) also reported ***safe spaces*** as a most-experienced benefit, equal to professional development (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Percentages of Respondents with over Ten Years of Experience Who Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits



#2 | Most-Valued Benefits

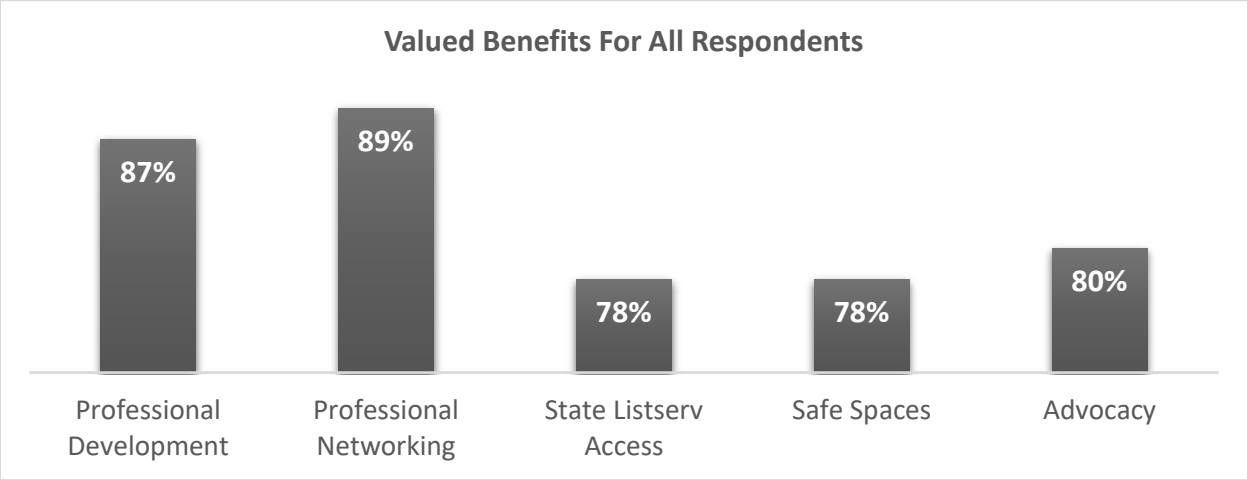
RQ2: Which association membership benefits did members value most?

Finding 2: Overall, professional development and professional networking were the most-valued membership benefits among all five ILACEP membership benefits.

Respondents (n = 55) reported that they valued benefits related to professional development and professional networking more than state listserv access, safe spaces, and advocacy (see Figure 8). This result was consistent with the most-experienced benefits in finding one.

Figure 8

Percentages of All Respondents Who Valued ILACEP Membership Benefits



RQ2a. Do the most-valued benefits differ by member role, organization type, involvement level, or years of experience?

*Finding 2a: Professional development and professional networking were the most-valued benefits for each professional demographic group except for **leaders, high school respondents, and respondents with over ten years of experience**.*

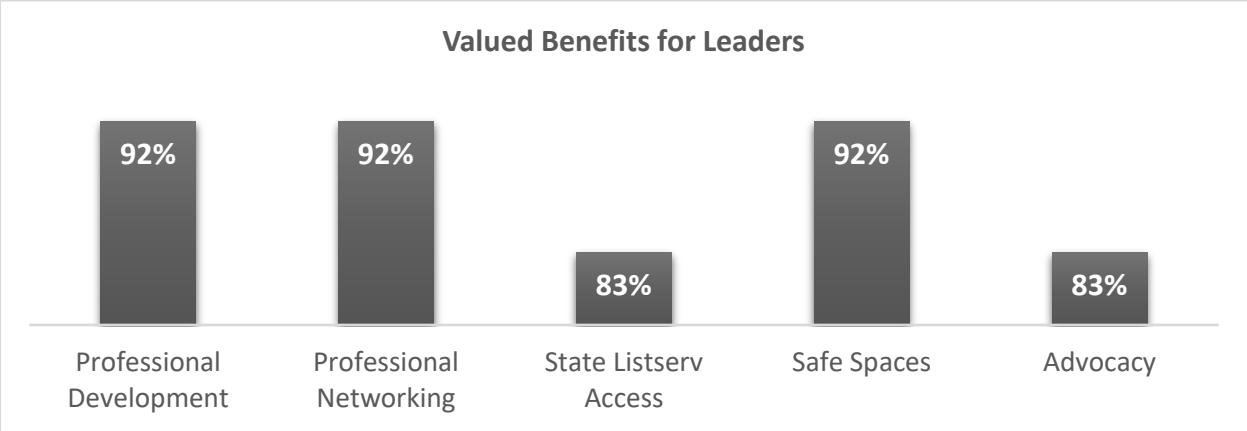
Respondents from the following professional demographic groups reported that they most valued professional development and professional networking: general members, community

colleges, across involvement levels, and with ten years or less experience in the field (see Appendix H).

However, ILACEP leaders (n = 12) reported ***safe spaces*** as a most-valued benefit, equal to professional development and professional networking (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

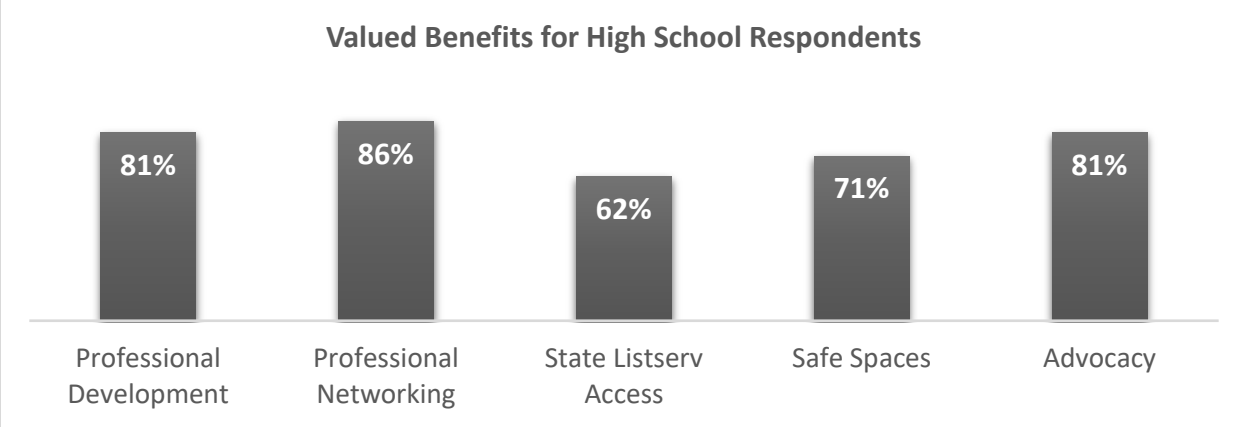
Percentages of Leaders Who Valued ILACEP Membership Benefits



Respondents from high schools (n = 21) reported ***advocacy*** as a most-valued benefit, equal to professional development (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

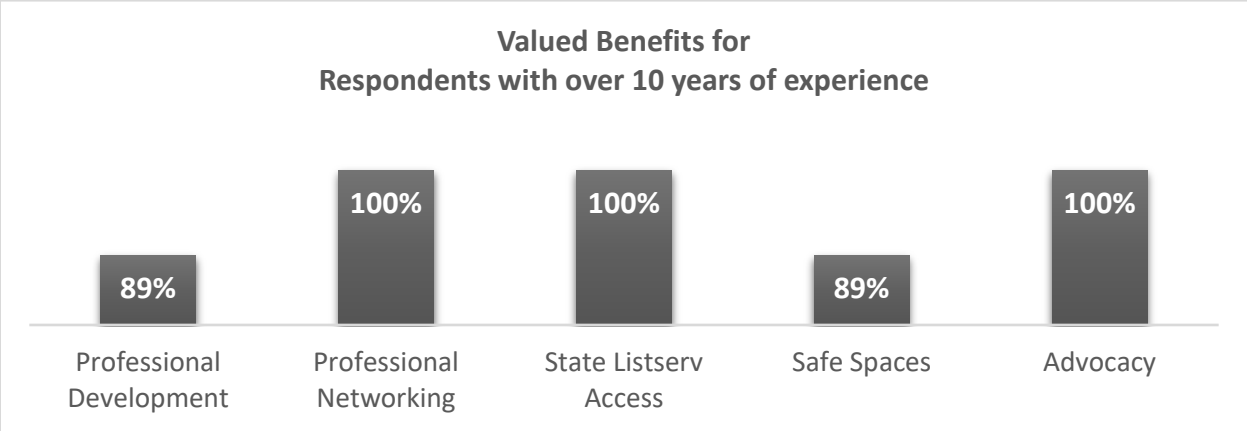
Percentages of High School Respondents Who Valued ILACEP Membership Benefits



Respondents with over ten years of experience in the field (n = 9) unanimously reported ***professional networking***, ***state listserv access***, and ***advocacy*** as most-valued benefits – a completely different result than the other professional demographic groups (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Percentages of Respondents with Over Ten Years Of Experience Who Valued ILACEP Membership Benefits



#3 | Valued vs. Experienced Benefits Discrepancies

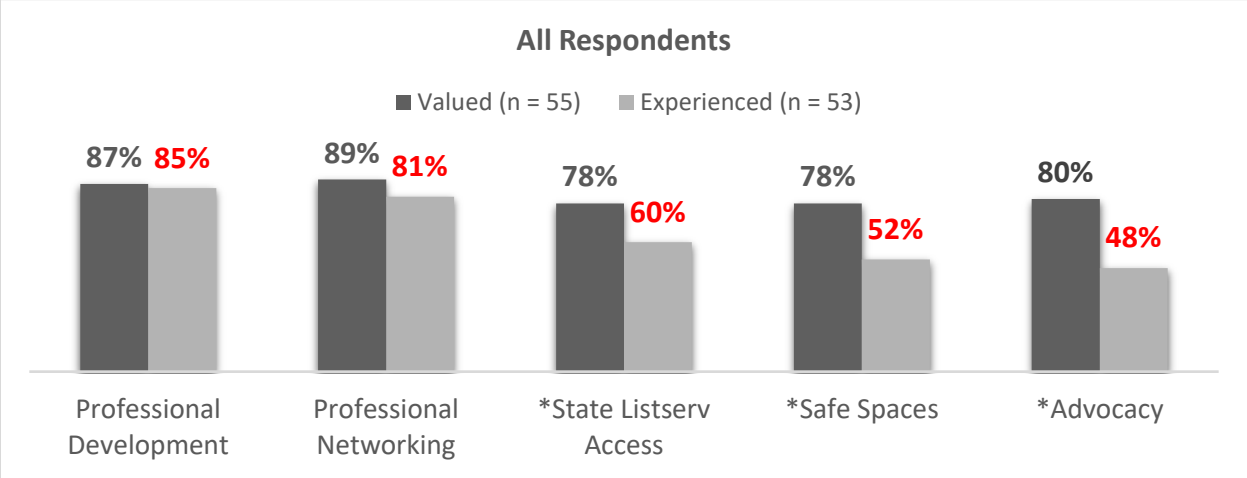
RQ3: What discrepancies exist, if any, between valued and experienced results?

Finding 3: *The percentage of respondents who valued* ***all five ILACEP benefits*** *used in this study was higher than those who experienced each benefit,* ***representing a discrepancy between valued and experienced benefits.***

Nominal discrepancies existed between the percentages of respondents who valued and experienced ***professional development*** (87% and 85%, respectively) and ***professional networking*** (89% and 81%)***.*** Considerable discrepancies existed for ***state listserv access*** (78% and 60%, respectively), ***safe spaces*** (78% and 52%), and ***advocacy*** (80% and 48%). (see Figure 12)

Figure 12

Comparison of Percentages of All Respondents Who Valued & Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits



Note. Red text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit is lower than that of respondents who valued that benefit.

*p < .05, two-tailed.

RQ3a: What discrepancies exist, if any, between valued and experienced results for association membership benefits by member role, organization type, involvement level, and years of experience?

Finding 3a: The percentage of respondents who valued ***all five ILACEP benefits*** *used in this study was also higher than those who experienced each benefit, just like finding three, for the following professional demographic groups:* ***(1) general members (see Figure 14), (2) community colleges (see Figure 16), (3) respondents not highly involved in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes (see Figure 18), and (4) respondents with less than five years of experience. (see Figure 19)****.*

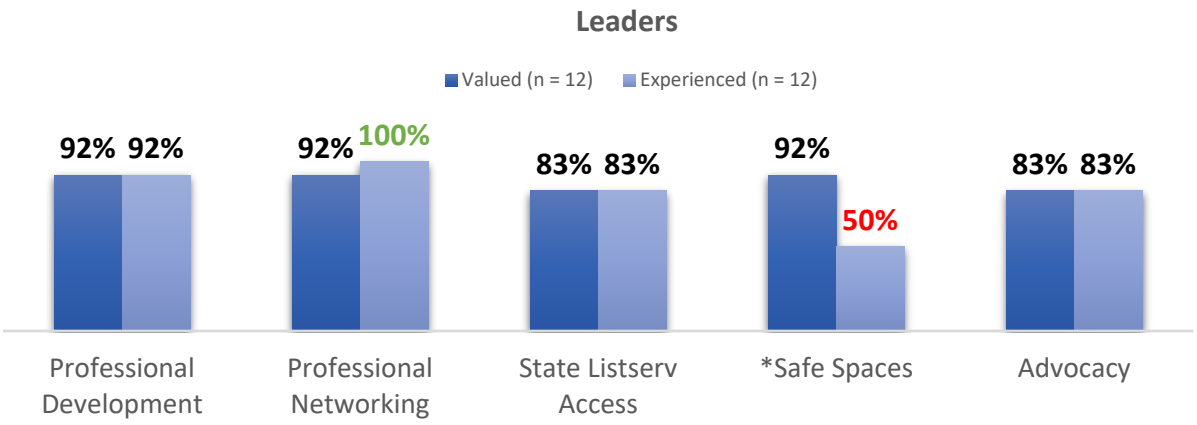
Differing discrepancies existed between comparison groups within each respective professional demographic categories: leaders vs. general members, high school vs. community college respondents, respondents highly involved in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes vs. those not highly involved, respondents with less than five years of experience vs. respondents with between five to ten years of experience vs. respondents with over ten years of experience in the field.

By Member Role

For leaders, ***safe spaces*** was the only discrepancy between the percentages of respondents who valued and experienced that benefit; the discrepancy was considerable (92% and 50%, respectively). No discrepancies existed for ***professional development***, ***state listserv access***, and ***advocacy***. The percentage of leaders who experienced ***professional networking*** exceeded those who valued that benefit (100% and 92%, respectively). (see Figure 13)

Figure 13

Comparison of Percentages of Leaders Who Valued & Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits

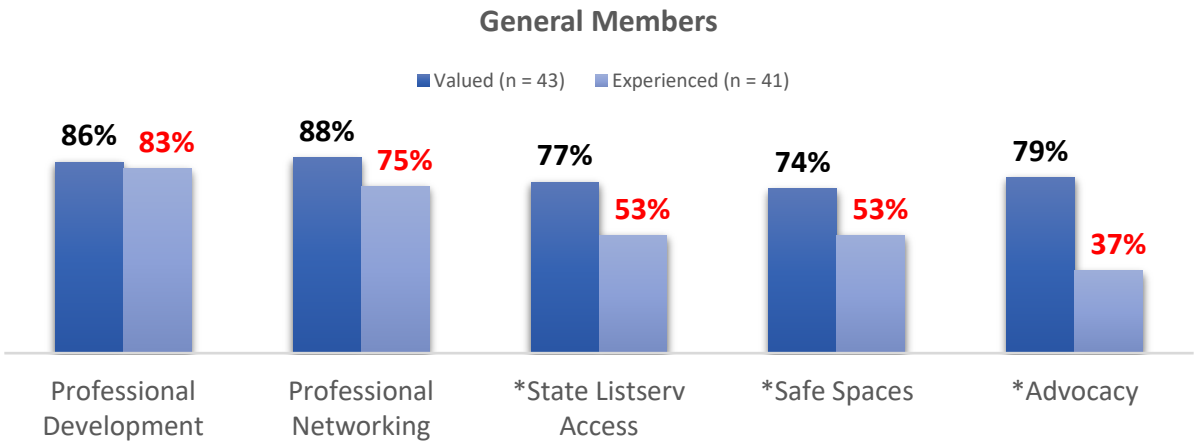


Note. Red text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit is lower than that of respondents who valued that benefit. Green text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit exceeded that of respondents who valued that benefit. *p < .05, two-tailed.

Whereas, for general members, discrepancies existed between the percentages of respondents who valued and experienced ***all five benefits***. A nominal discrepancy existed for ***professional development*** (86% and 83%, respectively). Considerable discrepancies existed for ***professional networking*** (88% and 75%, respectively), ***state listserv access*** (77% and 53%), ***safe spaces*** (74% and 53%), and ***advocacy*** (79% and 37%). (see Figure 14)

Figure 14

Comparison of Percentages of General Members Who Valued & Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits



Note. Red text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit is lower than that of respondents who valued that benefit.

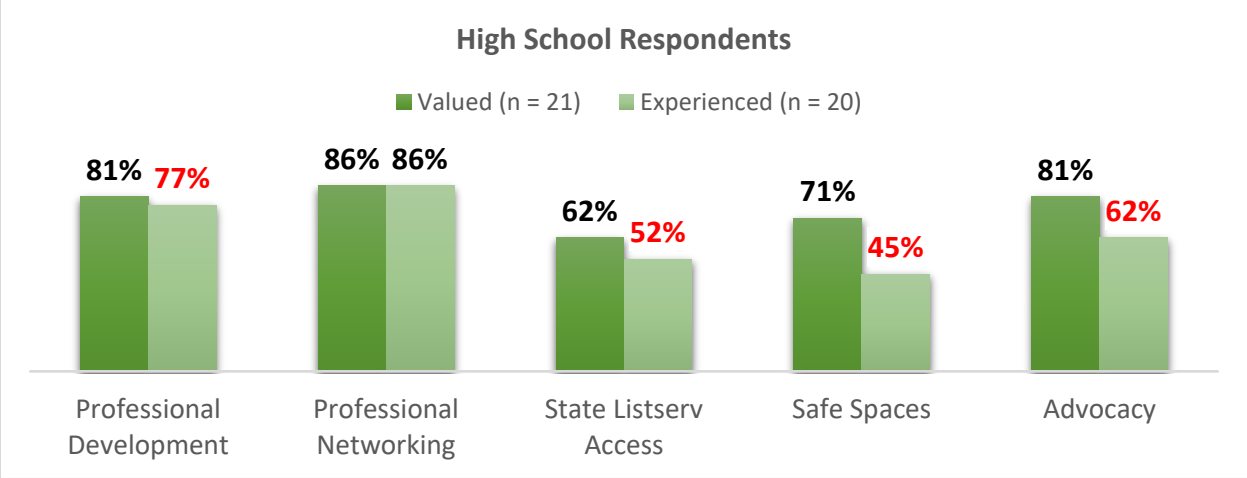
*p < .05, two-tailed.

By Organization Type

For high school respondents, discrepancies existed between the percentages of respondents who valued and experienced ***professional development, state listserv access, safe spaces,*** and ***advocacy.*** A nominal discrepancy existed for ***professional development*** (81% and 77%, respectively). Considerable discrepancies existed for ***state listserv access*** (62% and 52%, respectively), ***safe spaces*** (71% and 45%), and ***advocacy*** (81% and 62%). No discrepancy existed for ***professional networking***. (see Figure 15)

Figure 15

Comparison of Percentages of High School Respondents Who Valued & Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits

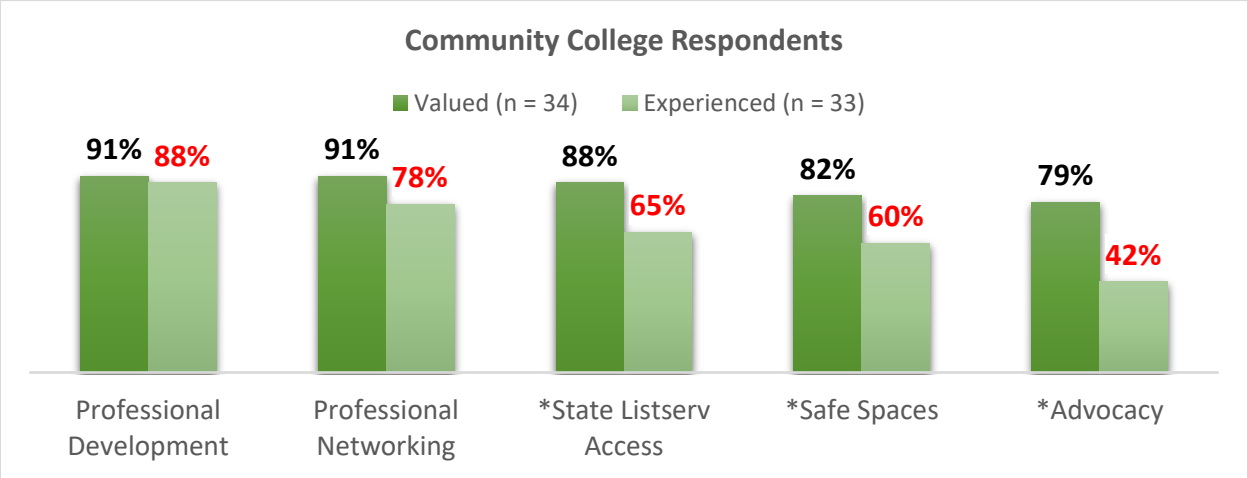


Note. Red text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit is lower than that of respondents who valued that benefit.

However, for community college respondents, discrepancies existed between the percentages of respondents who valued and experienced ***all five benefits.*** A nominal discrepancy existed for ***professional development*** (91% and 88%, respectively). Considerable discrepancies existed for ***professional networking*** (91% and 78%, respectively), ***state listserv access*** (88% and 65%), ***safe spaces*** (82% and 60%), and ***advocacy*** (79% and 42%). (see Figure 16)

Figure 16

Comparison of Percentages of Community College Respondents Who Valued & Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits



Note. Red text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit is lower than that of respondents who valued that benefit.

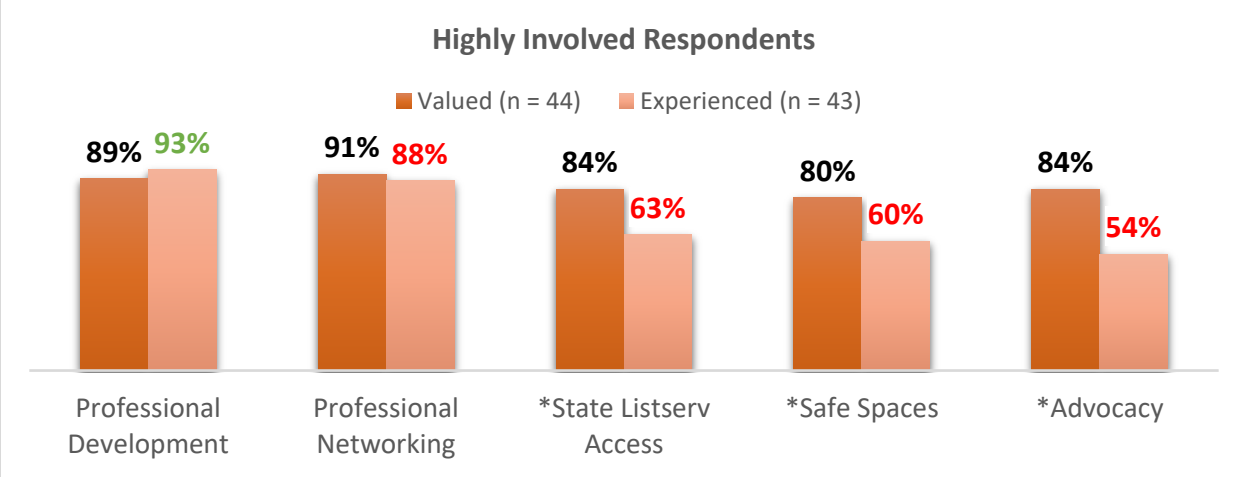
*p < .05, two-tailed.

By Involvement Level

For respondents highly involved in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes, discrepancies existed between the percentages of respondents who valued and experienced ***professional networking, state listserv access, safe spaces,*** and ***advocacy***. A nominal discrepancy existed for ***professional networking*** (91% and 88%, respectively). Considerable discrepancies existed for ***state listserv access*** (84% and 63%, respectively), ***safe spaces*** (80% and 60%), and ***advocacy*** (84% and 54%). Additionally, the percentage of highly involved respondents who experienced ***professional development*** exceeded those who valued that benefit (93% and 89%, respectively). (see Figure 17)

Figure 17

Comparison of Percentages of Highly-Involved Respondents Who Valued & Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits

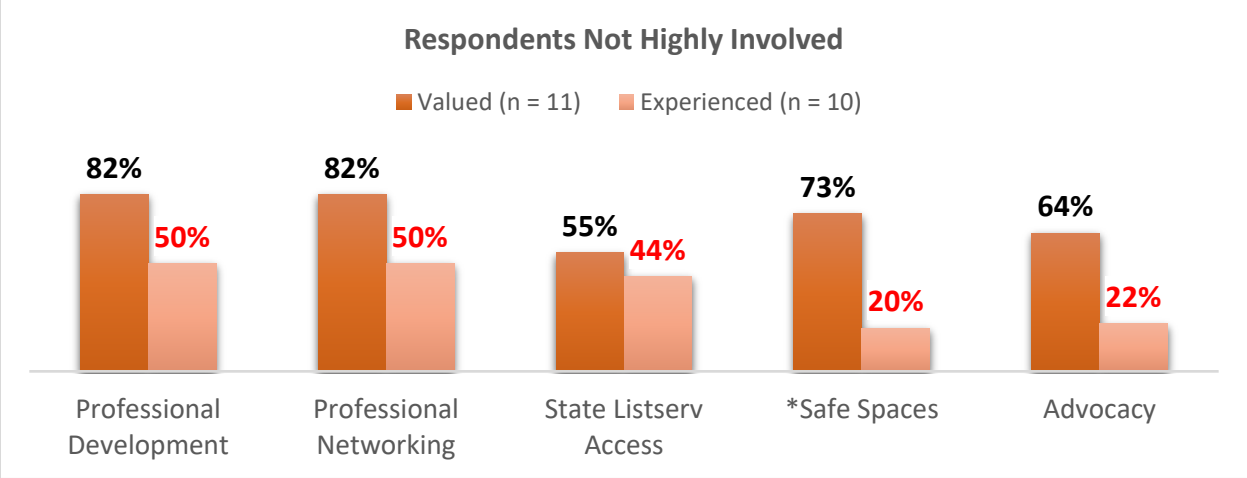


Note. Red text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit is lower than that of respondents who valued that benefit. Green text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit exceeded that of respondents who valued that benefit. *p < .05, two-tailed.

However, for respondents not highly involved in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes, considerable discrepancies existed between percentages of respondents who valued and experienced ***all five benefits***: ***professional development*** (82% and 50%, respectively) and ***professional networking*** (82% and 50%), ***state listserv access*** (55% and 44%), ***safe spaces*** (73% and 20%), and ***advocacy*** (64% and 22%) – the only group with such a result. (Figure 18) Moreover, this group had the largest discrepancy among all professional demographic groups for ***professional development***, ***professional networking***, and ***safe spaces*** (see Appendix I).

Figure 18

Comparison of Percentages of Respondents Not Highly Involved Who Valued & Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits



Note. Red text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit is lower than that of respondents who valued that benefit.

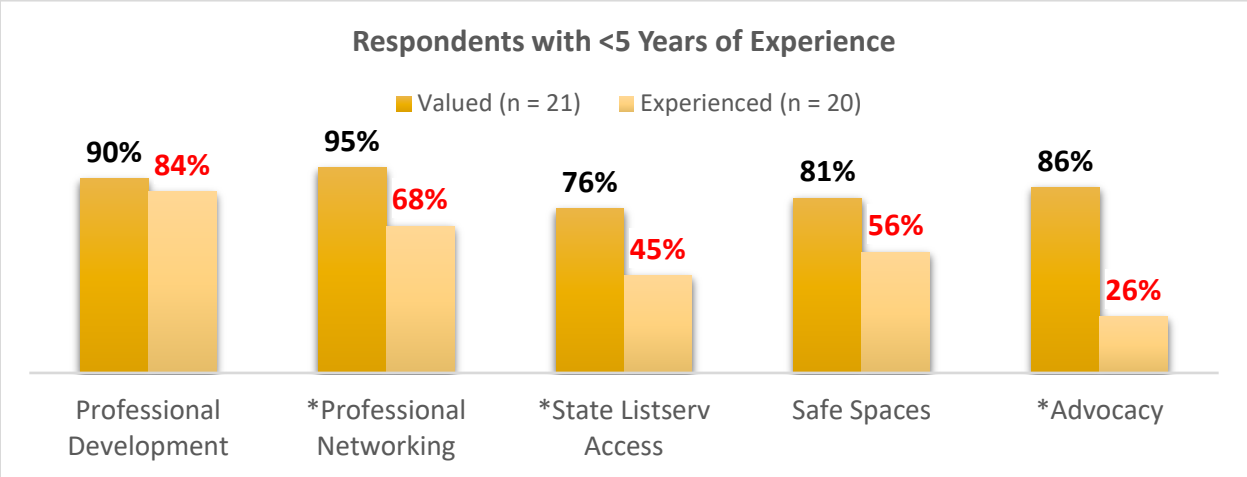
*p < .05, two-tailed.

By Years of Experience

For respondents with less than five years of experience in the field, discrepancies existed between percentages of respondents who valued and experienced ***all five benefits.*** A nominal discrepancy existed for ***professional development*** (90% and 84%, respectively). Considerable discrepancies existed for ***professional networking*** (95% and 68%, respectively), ***state listserv access*** (76% and 45%), ***safe spaces*** (81% and 56%), and ***advocacy*** (86% and 26%). (see Figure 19) Moreover, this group had the largest discrepancy among all professional demographic groups for ***advocacy*** (see Appendix I).

Figure 19

Comparison of Percentages of Respondents with Less Than Five Years of Experience Who Valued & Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits



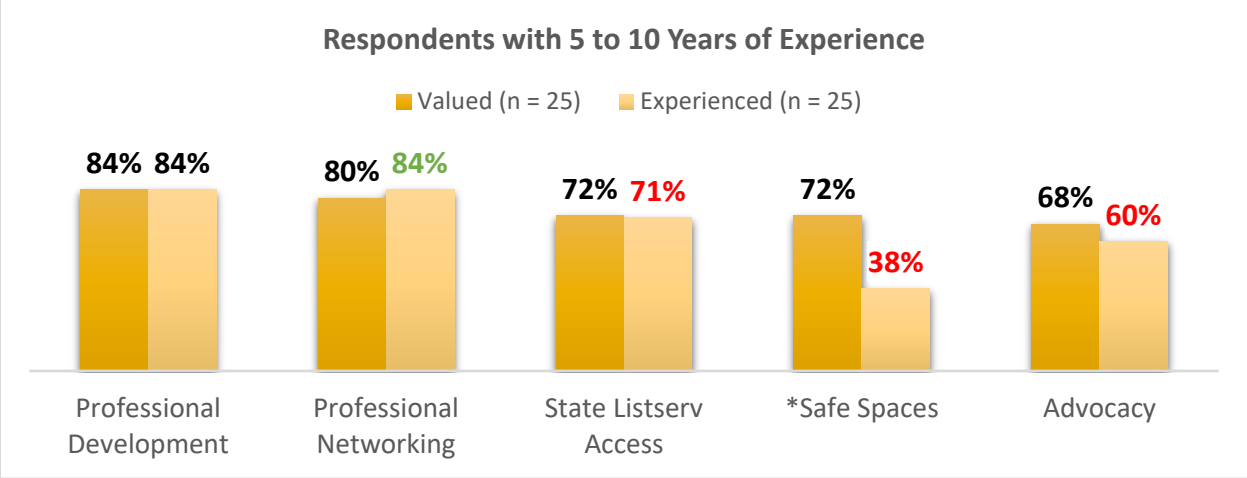
Note. Red text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit is lower than that of respondents who valued that benefit.

*p < .05, two-tailed.

For respondents with five to ten years of experience in the field, discrepancies existed between percentages of respondents who valued and experienced ***state listserv access***, ***safe spaces***, and ***advocacy.*** Nominal discrepancies existed for ***state listserv access*** (72% and 71%, respectively) and ***advocacy*** (68% and 60%). A considerable discrepancy existed for ***safe spaces*** (72% and 38%, respectively). No discrepancy existed for ***professional development***. The percentage of respondents with five to ten years of experience who experienced ***professional networking*** exceeded those who valued that benefit (84% and 80%, respectively). (see Figure 20)

Figure 20

Comparison of Percentages of Respondents with Five to Ten Years of Experience Who Valued & Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits

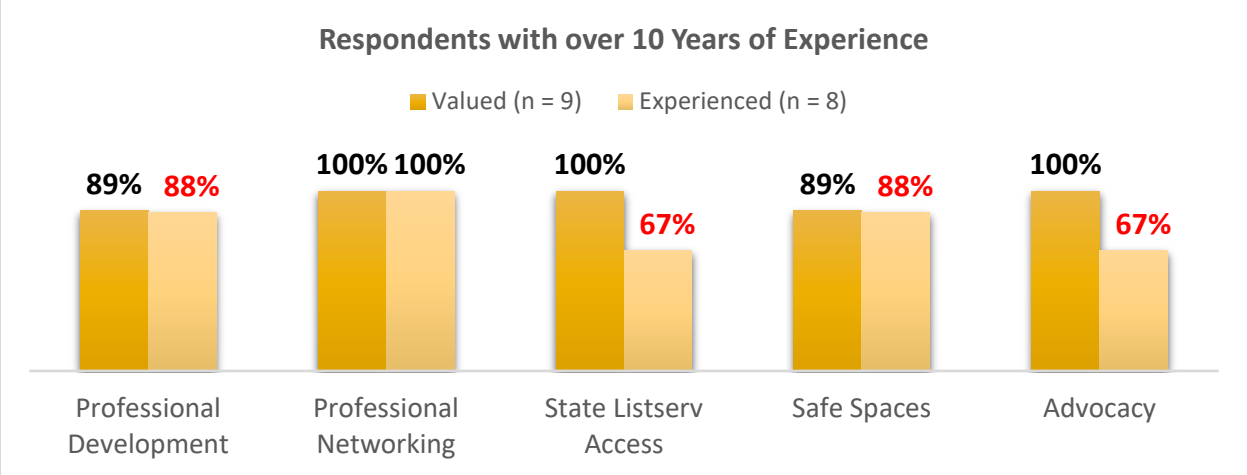


Note. Red text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit is lower than that of respondents who valued that benefit. Green text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit exceeded that of respondents who valued that benefit. *p < .05, two-tailed.

Lastly, for respondents with over ten years of experience in the field, discrepancies existed between percentages of respondents who valued and experienced ***professional development***, ***state listserv access***, ***safe spaces***, and ***advocacy***. Nominal discrepancies existed for ***professional development*** (89% and 88%, respectively) and ***safe spaces*** (89% and 88%). Considerable discrepancies existed for ***state listserv access*** (100% and 67%, respectively) and ***advocacy*** (100% and 67%). No discrepancy existed for ***professional networking***. (see Figure 21) Moreover, this group had the largest discrepancy among all professional demographic groups for ***state listserv access*** (see Appendix I).

Figure 21

Comparison of Percentages of Respondents with Over Ten Years of Experience Who Valued & Experienced ILACEP Membership Benefits



Note. Red text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit is lower than that of respondents who valued that benefit.

*p < .05, two-tailed.

#4 | Additional Expected Benefits

RQ 4: What additional association membership benefits do members expect?

Respondents (n = 9) did not suggest any unique additional membership benefits. Instead, based on the definitions of each benefit, I connected all except one entry to the list of ILACEP membership benefits used in this study (see Table 2). When considering the brief descriptions of those membership benefits (see Figure 3), I denoted the entries connected to:

- ***professional development*** that alluded to help with best practices, procedures, or policies;
- ***professional networking*** that alluded to discussions between practitioners; one explicitly indicated ***safe spaces***;
- ***state listserv access*** that alluded to information-sharing ideas; and
- ***advocacy*** that alluded to information about or issues with state legislation.

Table 2

Respondent Entries for Other Expected ILACEP Membership Benefits

Respondent Entries (n = 9)	Professional Development	Professional Networking	State Listserv Access	Safe Spaces	Advocacy
Help for beginners	★				
More meetings about college policies and procedures	★				
More collaboration on best practices	★				
Discussions about best practices with practitioners	★	★			
Separate safe spaces based on organization type		★		★	
Separate meetings and information-sharing avenues based on geographic location		★	★		
A way to share resources			★		
Info about state legislation			★		★
More highlights of good work or achievements			★		
Support for dual credit teacher credentialing					★
Student summit					

Note. Star icons denote a connection to the ILACEP membership benefit in the column header. [a]*Italicized* entries denote affiliation with certain professional demographic(s). [b]**Bolded** entries denote similar responses by different respondents.

Recommendations

#1 | Increase awareness of current membership benefits.

Before this study, ILACEP did not have a clearly defined list of membership benefits; therefore, they had never overtly publicized one. I worked with leaders to create the list and survey for this study, but general members saw the list of ILACEP benefits for the first while taking the survey. Furthermore, finding four, where members essentially listed features of current ILACEP benefits, illustrates why ILACEP leaders should make more concerted efforts to increase awareness of ILACEP membership benefits. They should (1) explain the current benefits and what they entail and (2) explicitly market membership benefits by:

- updating their website to include a dedicated section for information about membership benefits;
- creating infographics, flyers, and postcards showcasing membership benefits, using a service like Canva or contracting with a graphic designer; and
- making membership benefits a central component of all member retention and recruitment efforts (e.g., listserv emails, unofficial word-of-mouth occasions, official presentation opportunities, etc.).

ILACEP Membership and Communications Committee Chairpersons could accomplish the recommended tasks together. Then, leaders or members who regularly attend conferences that provide opportunities to share information about ILACEP could refer people to the website and distribute hardcopy marketing materials highlighting membership benefits to other conference attendees. ILACEP could also mail flyers or postcards to prospective members and post infographics about its membership benefits on social media.

Prior professional association membership literature suggests that practitioners engage in cost-benefit analyses when considering or reconsidering professional association membership (Phillips & Leahy, 2012) and are most attracted to associations where they believe they will

experience benefits they value (Jacobs, 2014; Markova et al., 2013). To aid current and prospective members in decision-making concerning professional association membership, ILACEP must intentionally market its membership benefits in myriad ways (Quash, 2015) instead of relying on members to intuitively infer information about membership benefits.

#2 | Delegate [some] member retention and recruitment efforts.

Even though not as many general members reported that they experienced the five ILACEP membership benefits used in this study as those who valued them (see Figure 14), a more optimistic view of the data shows there are a lot of current general members - across all organization types, levels of involvement in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes, and years of experience in the field - who have experienced the current ILACEP membership benefits. For instance, converting the percentages of general members who reported that they experienced each benefit yielded the following duplicated headcounts: 34 for professional development, 31 for professional networking, 22 for state listserv access, 22 for safe spaces, and 15 for advocacy.

Given the data, I recommend that ILACEP leaders invite satisfied general members to serve as ILACEP brand ambassadors, willing to share their positive experiences regarding membership benefits with others by:

- writing or recording personal testimonials to be posted on the ILACEP website or via social media;
- staying connected with specific members to help keep them engaged in ILACEP activities throughout the academic year;
- seeking to understand and address any member uncertainty about membership renewal;
- contacting former members to uncover why they opted not to renew their membership and share updated information about ILACEP membership benefits; and

- recruiting prospective members who may be less familiar or unfamiliar with ILACEP membership benefits.

The ILACEP bylaws mention a membership committee, which the leaders acknowledge has not been well-publicized as a volunteer opportunity for general members; thus, it remains understaffed and underutilized. Perhaps ILACEP can revive that committee by re-branding its membership committee volunteers as brand ambassadors. If successful, ILACEP leaders get much-needed help evangelizing early college practitioners across Illinois, and ILACEP brand ambassadors can feel like they are positively impacting the association. Hearing praise regarding the association from general members as peers could prove more effective since prospective members may expect ILACEP leaders to speak well of the association because of their position and the need for membership dues to sustain it.

Professional association members who experience membership benefits that meet their expectations are more likely to renew their membership and recruit others (Ki & Wang, 2016; Markova et al., 2013). Moreover, the literature clarifies that branding is about how people feel based on their experiences and what they share with others about their experiences, taking into account that word of mouth is still one of the most effective methods of recruitment (Dorsey, 2015; Quash, 2015; Swaminathan et al., 2020; Thomson et al., 2005). While professional association leaders should lead the charge for member retention and recruitment efforts, that responsibility should not rest solely with them (Dorsey, 2015; Swaminathan et al., 2020). Essentially, ILACEP's success and survival depends as much on contributions from its members as its leaders.

#3 | Enhance the member intake process to collect more information.

The current ILACEP member database only contains basic information collected on the membership application (see Appendix A): contact names, organization names, and email

addresses. Obtaining more information about members for this study, then separating the data by particular professional demographics unearthed distinctions otherwise hidden in the overall data and conspicuously absent from the database. For instance, finding three revealed that respondents not highly involved in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes was the only professional demographic group with considerable discrepancies between the percentages of respondents who valued and experienced every ILACEP membership benefit used in this study (Figure 18). Since they paid membership dues and volunteered their time to take the survey for this study, ILACEP leaders should want to know who they are and who or what compelled them to join ILACEP.

To gain a better understanding of who their members are and their expectations, I recommend that ILACEP add a phase to their member intake process to include a questionnaire asking members to provide a combination of personal (e.g., age range, race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and professional demographics (e.g., years of experience in the field, position title, level of involvement in the field, staff size, etc.). The new phase should occur ***after*** ILACEP receives a membership application and dues. Then, the ILACEP Membership Committee Chairperson can use information from the questionnaire to create a database easily filtered by individual or multiple attributes based on available demographic data. This new phase should bolster the following:

- discussions about emergent efforts for serving their member base as it changes annually;
- customization of communication protocols based on relevant member attributes; and
- insight into the need for events tailored towards particular member groups.

The ILACEP Membership Chairperson could also use the new and improved membership database to help inform the number or type of brand ambassadors necessary to

connect with members based on specific attributes to keep their finger on the pulse of member needs. For instance, consider the following:

- practitioners from certain organization types may desire to connect more with ILACEP ambassadors from the same organization types to discuss similar procedures, opportunities, or challenges;
- practitioners may connect better with ILACEP ambassadors from the same geographic areas who readily understand any special regional issues they face; and
- practitioners just entering the field may need to be connected with more seasoned ILACEP ambassadors who could even serve as mentors.

In short, professional associations that create and maintain a comprehensive membership database can more quickly discern cues early on about what members may need based on discriminant characteristics (Engle, 2015; Jacobs, 2014; Karen, 2015). If ILACEP leaders learn more about their members at the outset, maybe they can make more informed decisions about targeted member retention and recruitment strategies based on who is present in its member database and who is absent.

#4 | Assess activities connected to current ILACEP membership benefits.

Overall, finding three indicated that many respondents valued the ILACEP membership benefits used in this study; however, a lower percentage of respondents indicated that they actually experienced each benefit (see Figure 12). Furthermore, that finding remained true when the data was separated exclusively by (1) general members (see Figure 14), (2) community college respondents (see Figure 16), (3) respondents not highly involved in day-to-day concurrent enrollment processes (see Figure 18), and (4) respondents with less than five years of experience in the field (see Figure 19). In short, members appear to highly value the current list of ILACEP membership benefits; it was their experiences – or lack thereof – connected to those benefits that left much to be desired.

Given the data, I recommend that ILACEP critically assess activities connected to its current membership benefits by:

- evaluating the quantity and quality of opportunities for members to fully experience each benefit;
- revisiting its overall mission to ensure alignment with membership benefits; and
- maintaining a member-centric approach by routinely requesting and analyzing member feedback following ILACEP-sponsored activities and events.

This recommendation requires engagement from every ILACEP leader, especially since they all have unique perspectives that could help avoid short-sighted decision-making. One element ILACEP leaders could consider is how or if ILACEP brand ambassadors should be involved in the assessment processes; if they choose to have brand ambassadors. Should ambassadors be included in the discussions, or should they help inform those discussions by providing their insights in other ways? With or without brand ambassadors, professional association leaders should routinely gauge member perceptions concerning their experiences by providing copious opportunities for them to share their insights freely (Jacobs, 2014; Karen, 2015); while understanding that member needs or desires may change over time (Karen, 2015; Markova et al., 2013; Nesbit & Gazley, 2011). However, in their quest to serve members, leaders must resist the urge to stretch themselves and the association's resources too thin by attempting to respond to every whim of its membership base, especially if their desires do not align with the association's overall mission (Dorsey, 2015; Jacobs, 2014; Karen, 2015; Stackpole, 2015). To develop successful recruitment and retention strategies, ILACEP leaders must prioritize addressing tensions between membership benefits, mission, and member expectations.

#5 | Solicit more qualitative feedback consistently – formally and informally.

Findings one and two revealed professional development and professional networking as the most-experienced (see Figure 6) and most-valued (Figure 8) ILACEP membership benefits overall. However, what about state listserv access, safe spaces, and advocacy? Why were there usually considerable discrepancies between the respondents who valued and experienced those benefits overall and across professional demographic groups (see Appendix I)? What does it mean when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit exceeded those who valued that benefit? Most of this study's data was quantitative, but numbers only tell part of the story; numbers are mere indicators and guidance for directions to pursue further explanations. Consider the nine respondents who answered the qualitative question and provided context concerning current ILACEP membership benefits not apparent from close-ended questions.

Given the data and since perception is highly subjective, I recommend that ILACEP solicit more qualitative data from members consistently by:

- asking open-ended questions (e.g., What do you expect from ILACEP membership?) via the enhanced member intake process previously recommended shortly after members join or rejoin when they may be more amenable to providing detailed information about their needs and expectations;
- disseminating post-event surveys using a mixed-methods approach that encourages members to explain any numerical responses via open-ended text boxes;
- hosting [virtual] focus groups periodically for general members and by member demographics to listen and note practitioner feedback in real-time; and
- having more casual conversations with members to ask them about their ILACEP experiences and expectations.

Exceptional professional associations commit to data-driven strategies that include formal, informal, quantitative, and qualitative research (American Society of Association Executives, 2016). Important context remains a mystery without the qualitative aspect, leaving

leaders to speculate about what members truly mean, need, and want. Going beyond Likert scale options by including substantive, qualitative prompts can help professional associations create better member profiles that readily elucidate what members expect from membership and how they expect to experience it (Jacobs, 2014). Yes - analyzing qualitative data can be time-consuming! Yet, together, ILACEP leaders can learn to leverage it to enhance membership benefits in ways that lead to member retention and, by extension, new member recruitment as satisfied members become official or unofficial ILACEP brand ambassadors. Of course, obtaining and analyzing qualitative data is only half the process. Following through on qualitative feedback in a way that makes members feel like providing it was worth their time is essential.

Conclusion

ILACEP leaders commissioned this study to gain insight into member perceptions of ILACEP membership benefits to improve member retention and recruitment efforts potentially. Overall, this study helped highlight professional development and professional networking as primary ILACEP membership drivers. This study also provided a gap analysis that illuminated discrepancies between the ILACEP benefits members indicated they valued compared to what they experienced. However, related to member experiences, one of the limitations of this study is the omission of a question about (1) the number of ILACEP-sponsored activities and (2) the type(s) of activities they participated in during the academic year. While the survey provided an off-ramp for respondents to choose "Not Applicable" if they felt they had limited experiences connected to ILACEP membership benefits, selecting that option was at the respondents' discretion.

Additionally, any further research exploring this subject matter should attempt to collect pertinent personal and professional demographic information from respondents, then conduct a cross-analysis of the data using multiple demographics to capture the intersections between members' personal and professional identities. Moreover, analyzing the data by different geographic regions within the state could provide other context cues regarding member perceptions and expectations of ILACEP membership benefits.

As ILACEP approaches ten years as the only professional association in Illinois for early college practitioners led by early college practitioners, this study offers a springboard its leaders can use when considering ways to create and sustain a more expansive concurrent enrollment network in Illinois. In doing so, ILACEP can make better strides toward fulfilling its priorities of fostering strong partnerships between secondary and postsecondary schools, providing professional development opportunities for practitioners and allies, disseminating important concurrent enrollment accreditation information, and advocating for better legislation alongside other practitioners and allies. Ultimately, I hope this study is instrumental in galvanizing more early college practitioners across Illinois to collaborate, innovate, and advocate concerning dual credit opportunities for ***all*** high school students in Illinois.

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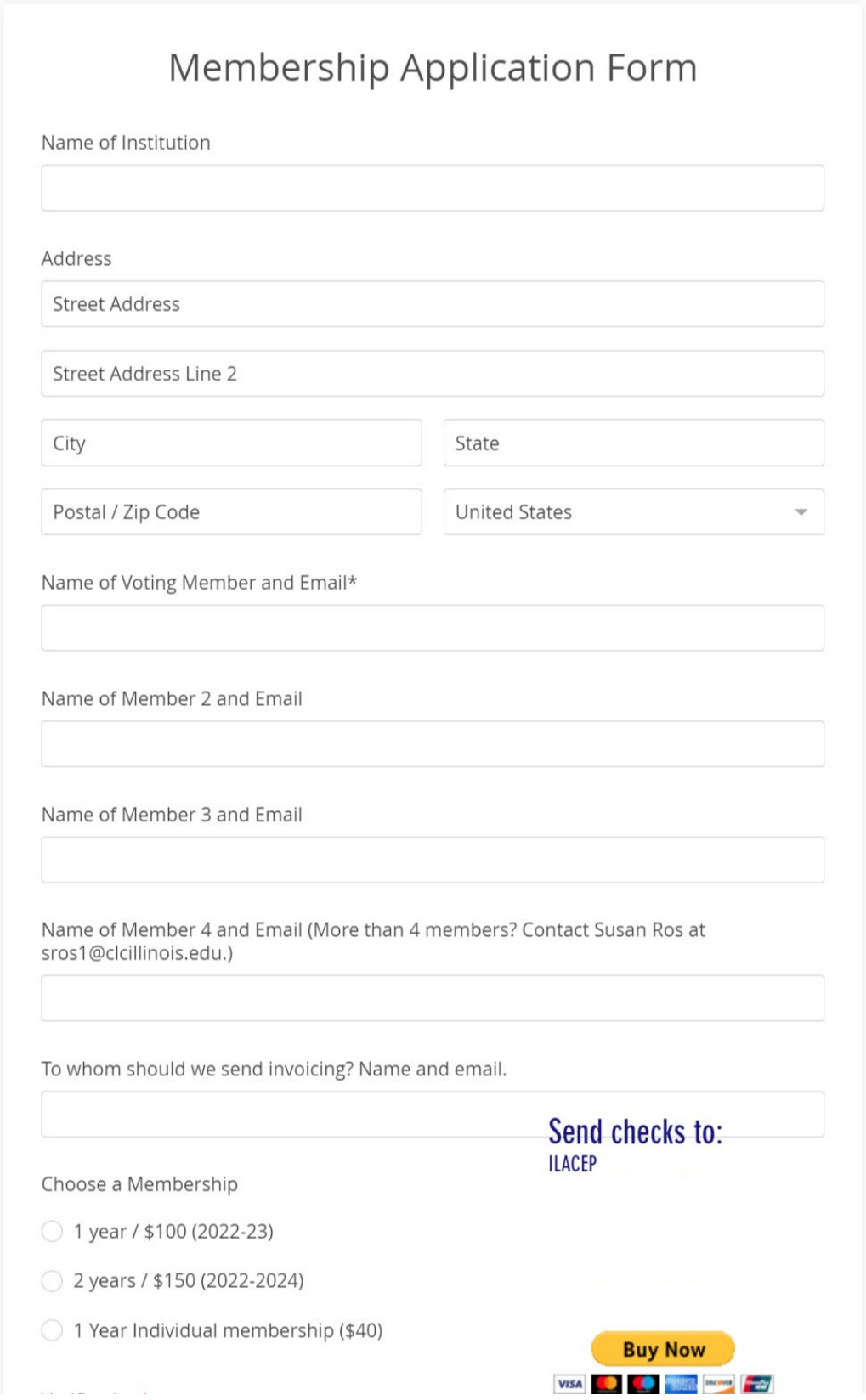
Appendix A: ILACEP Membership Application



Membership Application Form

Name of Institution

Address

Street Address

Street Address Line 2

City

State

Postal / Zip Code

United States

Name of Voting Member and Email*

Name of Member 2 and Email

Name of Member 3 and Email

Name of Member 4 and Email (More than 4 members? Contact Susan Ros at sros1@clcillinois.edu.)

To whom should we send invoicing? Name and email.

Send checks to:
ILACEP

Choose a Membership

- 1 year / $100 (2022-23)
- 2 years / $150 (2022-2024)
- 1 Year Individual membership ($40)

Buy Now

Appendix B: Recruitment Email

Dear [Participant Name],

As part of my doctoral studies at Vanderbilt University, I am working with the Illinois Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (ILACEP) leadership team to better understand your perceptions of the benefits of ILACEP membership through a web-based survey. While completing the survey is voluntary, it is an opportunity to share your insight about the ILACEP membership benefits you value, have experienced, and expect. Completing the survey should take approximately 5 minutes or less. Are you ready to let your voice be heard? Take the survey today.

If you have concerns about the validity of this email, feel free to contact [redacted], ILACEP president, via email at [redacted] or [redacted], ILACEP president-elect, via email at [redacted].

For answers to questions about this project, please contact the Principal Investigator, Alauna McGee, via email at alauna.s.mcgee@vanderbilt.edu or my faculty advisor, Dr. Lacey Hartigan at lacey.hartigan@vanderbilt.edu.

Thanks in advance for your time!

Sincerely,

Alauna S. McGee
Doctoral Candidate, Leadership & Learning in Organizations
Peabody College | Vanderbilt University
alauna.s.mcgee@vanderbilt.edu

Appendix C: Survey Design – Part I

Q1. Please select your organization type from the list below.

- ○ Secondary (High Schools; School Districts; Career-Technical Education Centers)
- ○ 2-Year Postsecondary (Community Colleges & Technical Education Colleges)
- ○ 4-year Postsecondary (Colleges & Universities)
- ○ Other
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Q2. How long have you been working in or connected to concurrent enrollment/dual credit programs?

- ○ < 1 year
- ○ 1 - 2+ years
- ○ 3 - 4+ years
- ○ 5 - 7+ years
- ○ 8 - 10 years
- ○ 10+ years
- ○ 15+ years
- ○ 20+ years

Q3. What is your level of involvement with concurrent enrollment/dual credit programs?

- ○ **High:** very involved in the day-to-day concurrent enrollment/dual credit processes and decision-making.
- ○ **Medium:** moderately involved in concurrent enrollment/dual credit processes routinely or occasionally.
- ○ **Low:** not involved in day-to-day concurrent enrollment/dual credit processes; may supervise those who manage day-to-day processes.
- ○ **Other:** interested or involved in concurrent enrollment/dual credit programs in a different capacity.

Q4. Which ILACEP membership status best represents you?

- ○ **General Member**: not on an ILACEP Committee or the Board of Directors.
- ○ **Committee Member:** on the ILACEP Professional Development committee.
- ○ **Leadership Team Member**: ILACEP Board Members Only
- ○ **Prospective**: not currently an ILACEP member.
- ○ **Uncertain**

Appendix D: Survey Design – Part II

Q5. Have you **experienced** the following ILACEP membership benefits?

	Yes	Somewhat	No	Not Applicable
Professional Development: learning or sharing new practices, procedures, and policies	○	○	○	○
Professional Networking: meeting and communicating directly with other practitioners	○	○	○	○
State Listserv Access: viewing and sharing information most pertinent to Illinois policies & programs via email	○	○	○	○
Safe Spaces: freely sharing concerns or challenges and asking questions	○	○	○	○
Advocacy: being part of a united collective and advocating for better state-level legislative policies	○	○	○	○

Q6. How **valuable** are the following ILACEP membership benefits to you?

	Not Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Valuable	Very Valuable
Professional Development: learning or sharing new practices, procedures, and policies	○	○	○	○
Professional Networking: meeting and communicating directly with other practitioners	○	○	○	○
State Listserv Access: viewing and sharing information most pertinent to Illinois policies & programs via email	○	○	○	○
Safe Spaces: freely sharing concerns or challenges and asking questions	○	○	○	○
Advocacy: being part of a united collective and advocating for better state-level legislative policies	○	○	○	○

Q7. What other ILACEP membership benefits would you **expect or desire**?

[ ]

Appendix E: Experienced Benefits Percentage Data Tables

Overall (n = 53)	*Yes*	*Somewhat*	*No*
Professional Development	85%	10%	6%
Professional Networking	81%	15%	4%
State Listserv Access	60%	24%	16%
Safe Spaces	52%	36%	12%
Advocacy	48%	30%	22%

By Member Status	*Answer Options*	*Leaders (n=12)*	*General Members (n=41)*
Professional Development	Yes	92%	83%
	Somewhat	8%	10%
	No	0%	8%
Professional Networking	Yes	100%	75%
	Somewhat	0%	20%
	No	0%	5%
State Listserv Access	Yes	83%	53%
	Somewhat	17%	26%
	No	0%	21%
Safe Spaces	Yes	50%	53%
	Somewhat	50%	32%
	No	0%	16%
Advocacy	Yes	83%	37%
	Somewhat	17%	34%
	No	0%	29%

By Organization Type	*Answer Options*	*High Schools (n=20)*	*Community Colleges (n=33)*
Professional Development	Yes	77%	88%
	Somewhat	14%	9%
	No	9%	3%
Professional Networking	Yes	86%	78%
	Somewhat	9%	19%
	No	5%	3%
State Listserv Access	Yes	52%	65%
	Somewhat	29%	23%
	No	19%	13%
Safe Spaces	Yes	45%	60%
	Somewhat	45%	27%
	No	9%	13%
Advocacy	Yes	62%	42%
	Somewhat	19%	35%
	No	19%	23%

By Involvement Level	*Answer Options*	*Highly Involved (n=43)*	*Not Highly Involved (n=10)*
Professional Development	Yes	93%	50%
	Somewhat	5%	30%
	No	2%	20%
Professional Networking	Yes	88%	50%
	Somewhat	10%	40%
	No	2%	10%
State Listserv Access	Yes	63%	44%
	Somewhat	24%	22%
	No	12%	33%
Safe Spaces	Yes	60%	20%
	Somewhat	33%	50%
	No	8%	30%
Advocacy	Yes	54%	22%
	Somewhat	32%	22%
	No	15%	56%

By Years of Experience	*Answer Options*	*<5 years n = 20*	*5 to 10 years n = 25*	*>10 years n = 8*
Professional Development	Yes	84%	84%	88%
	Somewhat	11%	12%	0%
	No	5%	4%	13%
Professional Networking	Yes	68%	84%	100%
	Somewhat	26%	12%	0%
	No	5%	4%	0%
State Listserv Access	Yes	45%	71%	67%
	Somewhat	30%	17%	33%
	No	25%	13%	0%
Safe Spaces	Yes	56%	38%	88%
	Somewhat	22%	54%	13%
	No	22%	8%	0%
Advocacy	Yes	26%	60%	67%
	Somewhat	37%	24%	33%
	No	37%	16%	0%

Appendix F: Valued Benefits Percentage Data Tables

Overall (n = 55)	*Valuable/Very Valuable*	*Somewhat Valuable*	*Not Valuable*
Professional Development	87%	11%	2%
Professional Networking	89%	7%	4%
State Listserv Access	78%	22%	0%
Safe Spaces	78%	18%	4%
Advocacy	80%	13%	7%

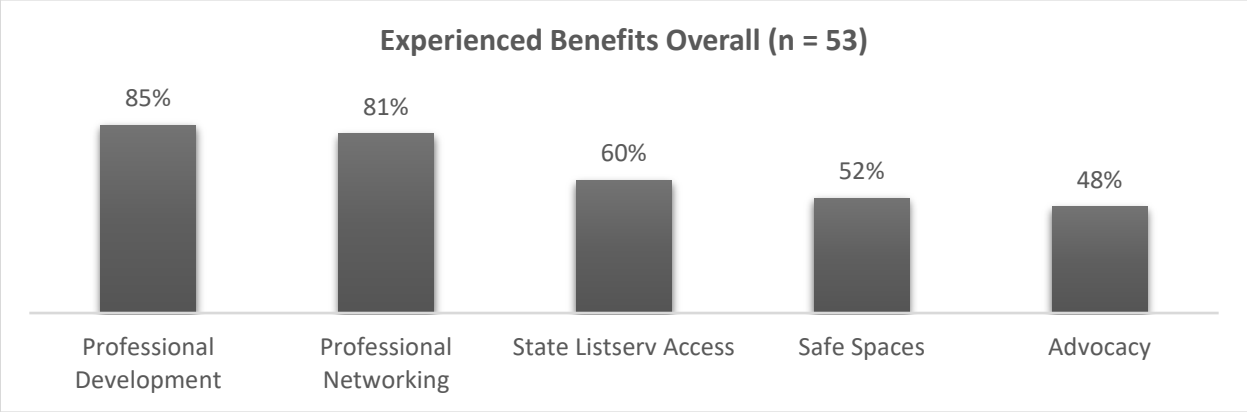
By Member Status	*Answer Options*	*Leaders (n=12)*	*General Members (n=43)*
Professional Development	Valuable/Very Valuable	92%	86%
	Somewhat Valuable	8%	12%
	Not Valuable	0%	2%
Professional Networking	Valuable/Very Valuable	92%	88%
	Somewhat Valuable	0%	9%
	Not Valuable	8%	2%
State Listserv Access	Valuable/Very Valuable	83%	77%
	Somewhat Valuable	17%	23%
	Not Valuable	0%	0%
Safe Spaces	Valuable/Very Valuable	92%	74%
	Somewhat Valuable	8%	21%
	Not Valuable	0%	5%
Advocacy	Valuable/Very Valuable	83%	79%
	Somewhat Valuable	8%	14%
	Not Valuable	8%	7%

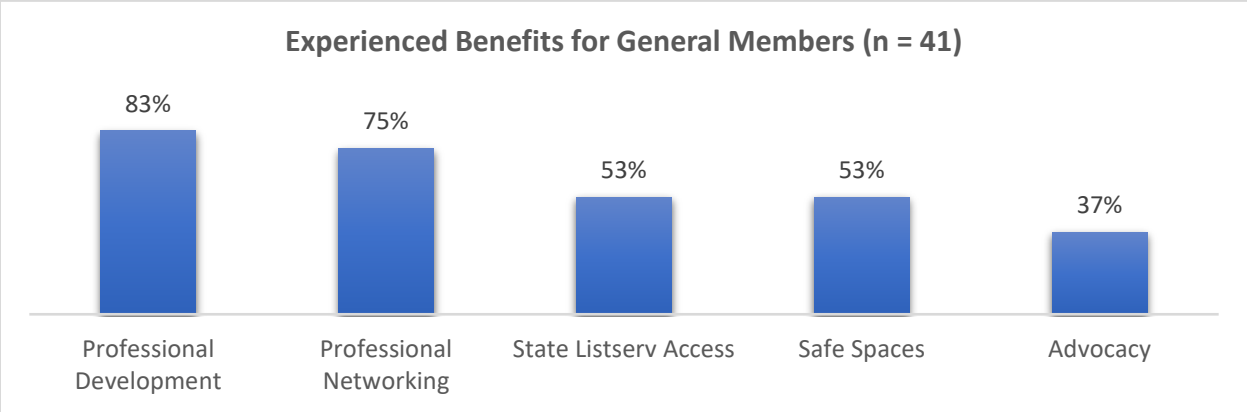
By Organization Type	*Answer Options*	*High Schools (n=21)*	*Community Colleges (n=34)*
Professional Development	Valuable/Very Valuable	81%	91%
	Somewhat Valuable	14%	9%
	Not Valuable	5%	0%
Professional Networking	Valuable/Very Valuable	86%	91%
	Somewhat Valuable	5%	9%
	Not Valuable	10%	0%
State Listserv Access	Valuable/Very Valuable	62%	88%
	Somewhat Valuable	38%	12%
	Not Valuable	0%	0%
Safe Spaces	Valuable/Very Valuable	71%	82%
	Somewhat Valuable	29%	12%
	Not Valuable	0%	6%
Advocacy	Valuable/Very Valuable	81%	79%
	Somewhat Valuable	14%	12%
	Not Valuable	5%	9%

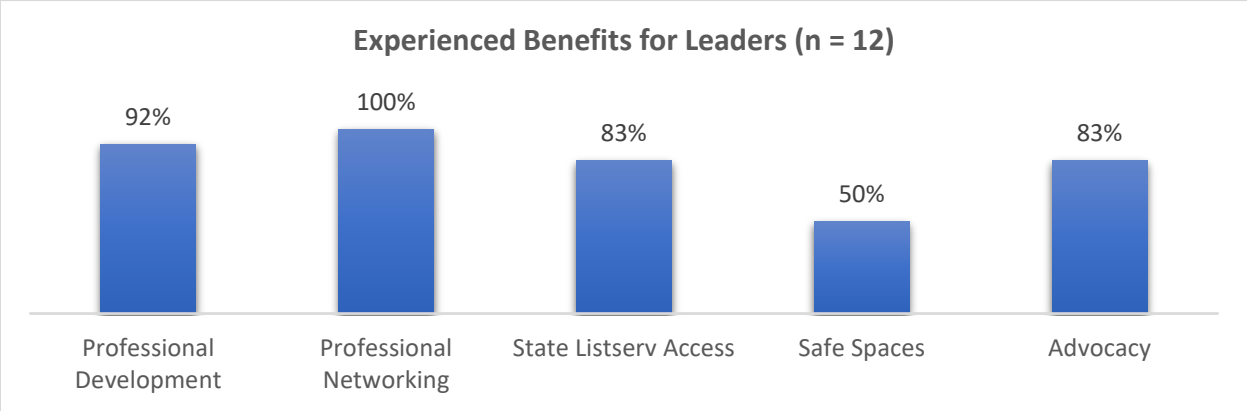
By Involvement Level	*Answer Options*	*Highly Involved (n=44)*	*Not Highly Involved (n=11)*
Professional Development	Valuable/Very Valuable	89%	82%
	Somewhat Valuable	9%	18%
	Not Valuable	2%	0%
Professional Networking	Valuable/Very Valuable	91%	82%
	Somewhat Valuable	7%	9%
	Not Valuable	2%	9%
State Listserv Access	Valuable/Very Valuable	84%	55%
	Somewhat Valuable	16%	45%
	Not Valuable	0%	0%
Safe Spaces	Valuable/Very Valuable	80%	73%
	Somewhat Valuable	18%	18%
	Not Valuable	2%	9%
Advocacy	Valuable/Very Valuable	84%	64%
	Somewhat Valuable	11%	18%
	Not Valuable	5%	18%

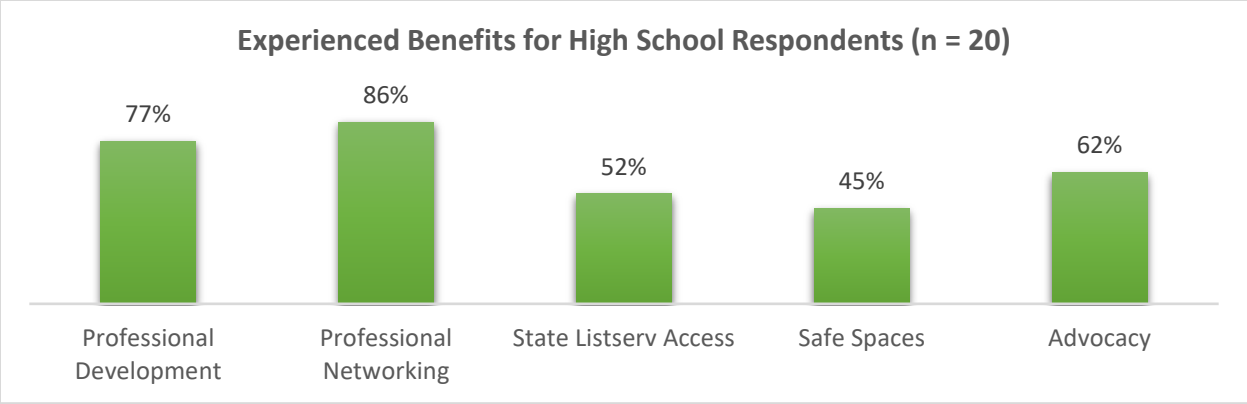
By Years of Experience	*Answer Options*	*<5 years n = 21*	*5 to 10 years n = 25*	*>10 years n = 9*
Professional Development	Valuable/Very Valuable	90%	84%	89%
	Somewhat Valuable	10%	12%	11%
	Not Valuable	0%	4%	0%
Professional Networking	Valuable/Very Valuable	95%	80%	100%
	Somewhat Valuable	5%	12%	0%
	Not Valuable	0%	8%	0%
State Listserv Access	Valuable/Very Valuable	76%	72%	100%
	Somewhat Valuable	24%	28%	0%
	Not Valuable	0%	0%	0%
Safe Spaces	Valuable/Very Valuable	81%	72%	89%
	Somewhat Valuable	14%	24%	11%
	Not Valuable	5%	4%	0%
Advocacy	Valuable/Very Valuable	86%	68%	100%
	Somewhat Valuable	10%	20%	0%
	Not Valuable	5%	12%	0%

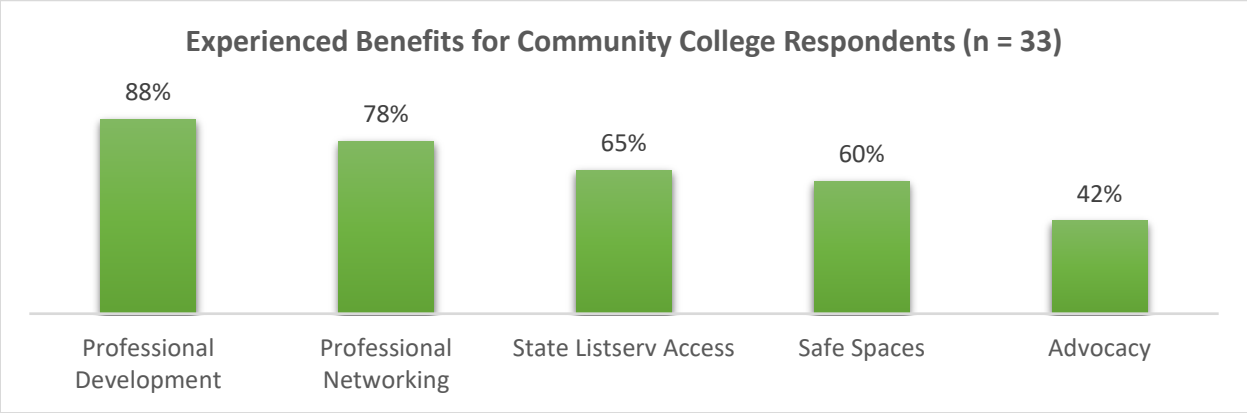
Appendix G: Experienced Benefits Graphs [All]

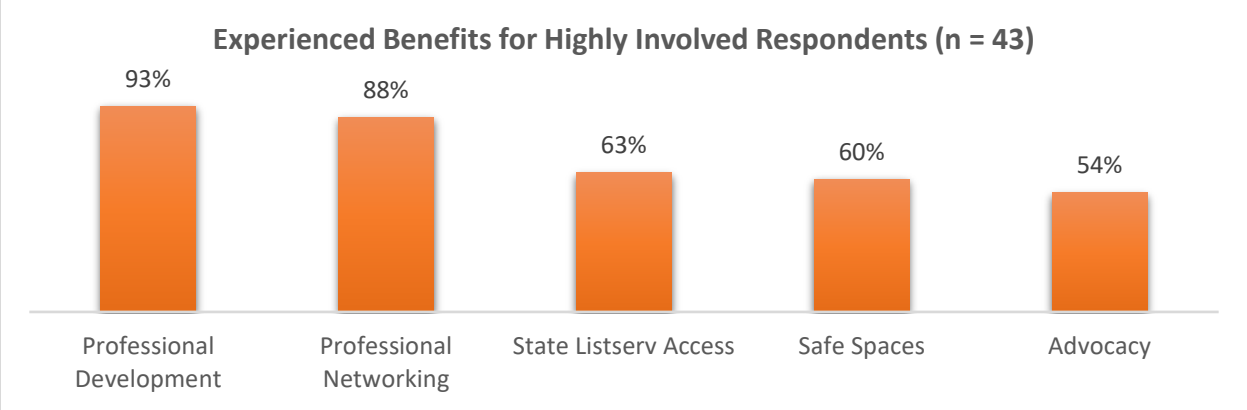


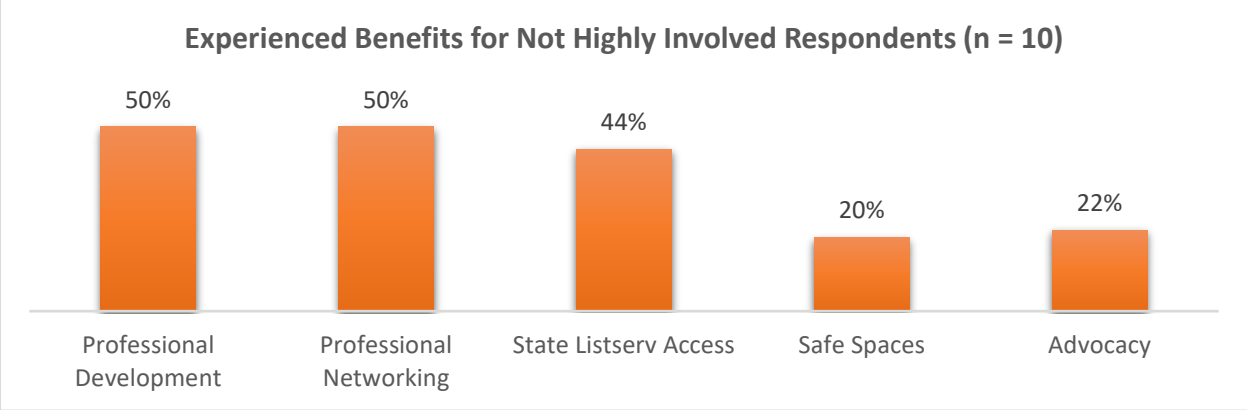


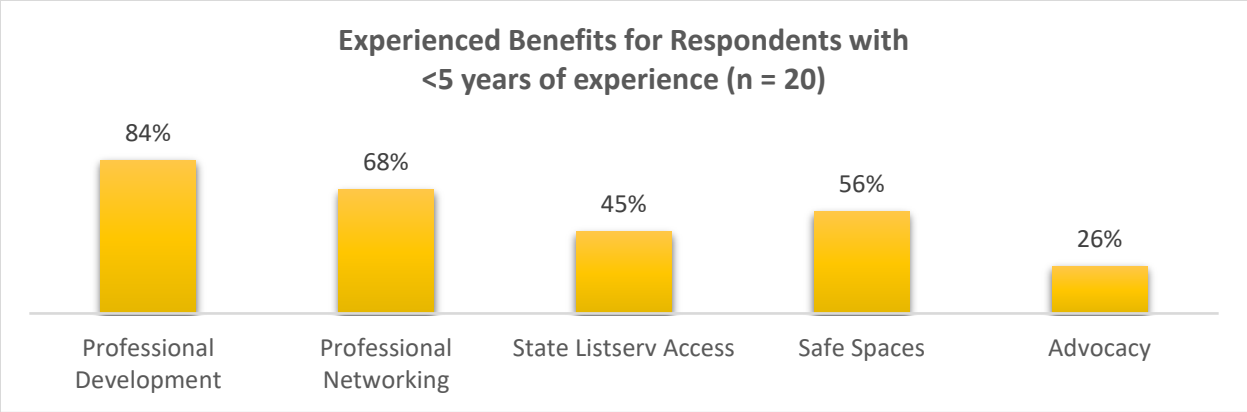


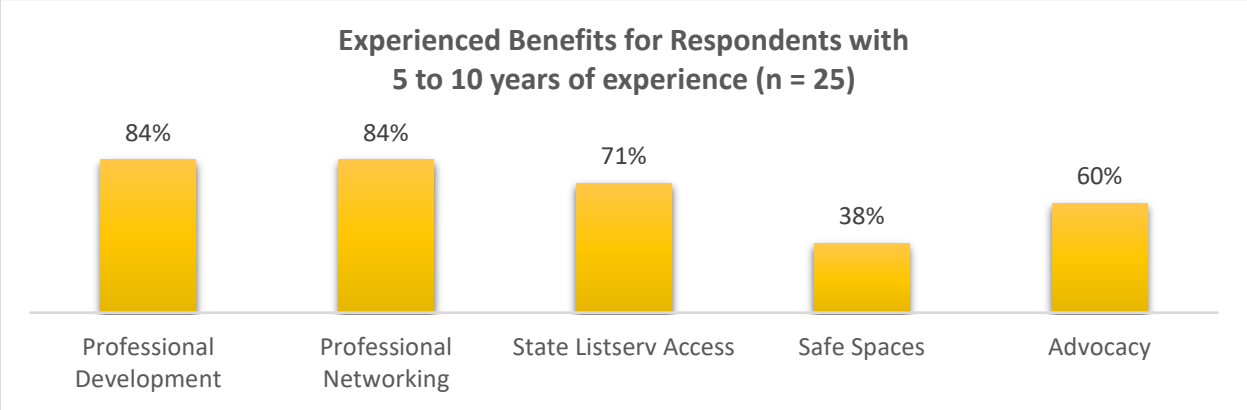

Experienced Benefits for High School Respondents (n = 20)
77%
86%
52%
45%
62%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy

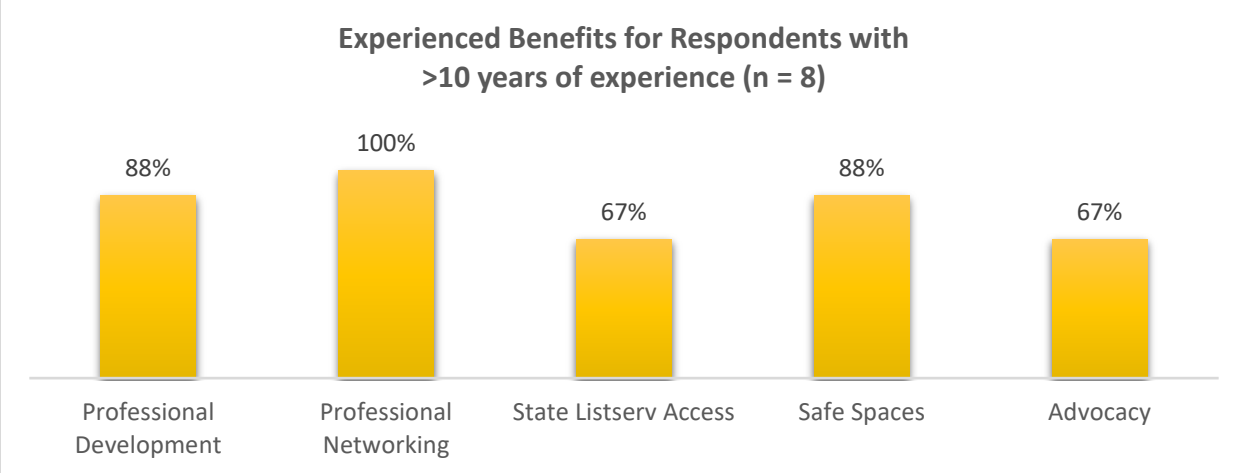

Experienced Benefits for Community College Respondents (n = 33)
88%
78%
65%
60%
42%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy


Experienced Benefits for Highly Involved Respondents (n = 43)
93%
88%
63%
60%
54%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy

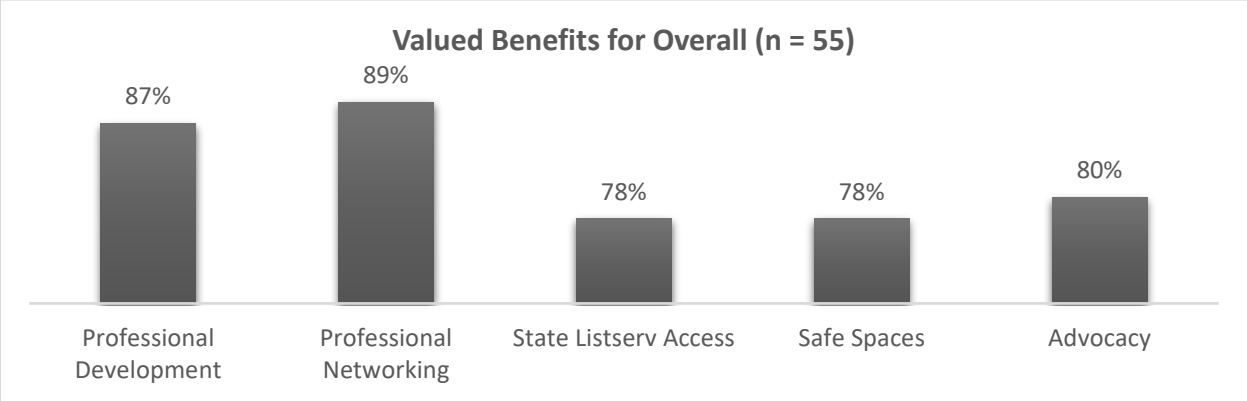

Experienced Benefits for Not Highly Involved Respondents (n = 10)
50%
50%
44%
20%
22%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy

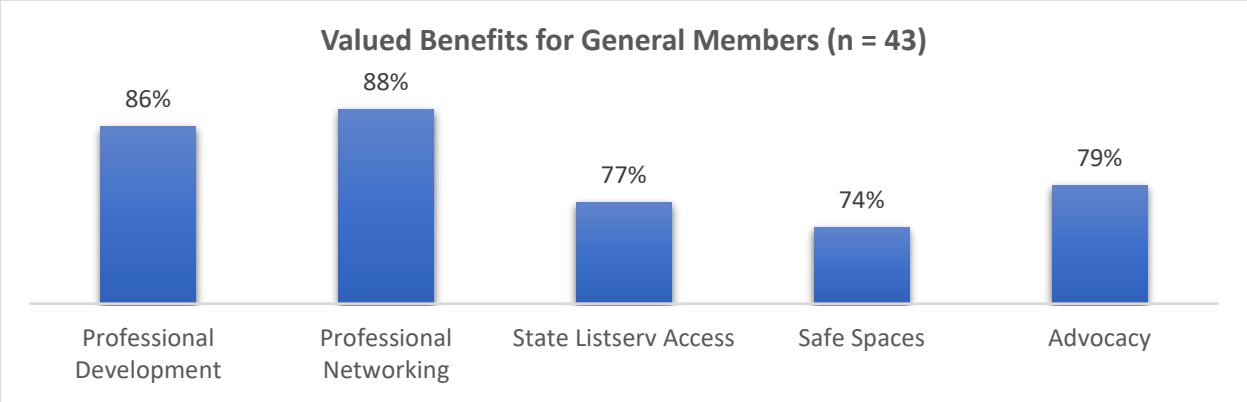

Experienced Benefits for Respondents with
<5 years of experience (n = 20)
84%
68%
45%
56%
26%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy

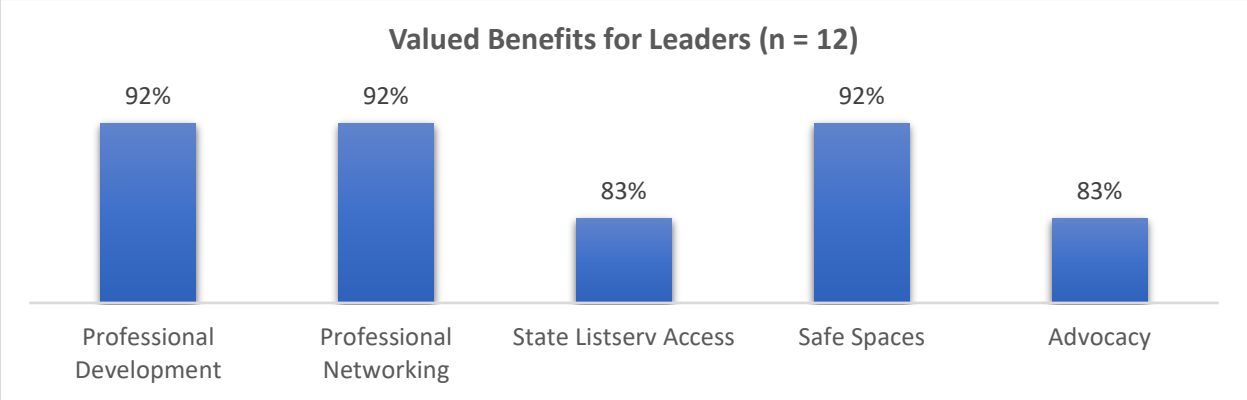

Experienced Benefits for Respondents with
5 to 10 years of experience (n = 25)
84%
84%
71%
38%
60%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy

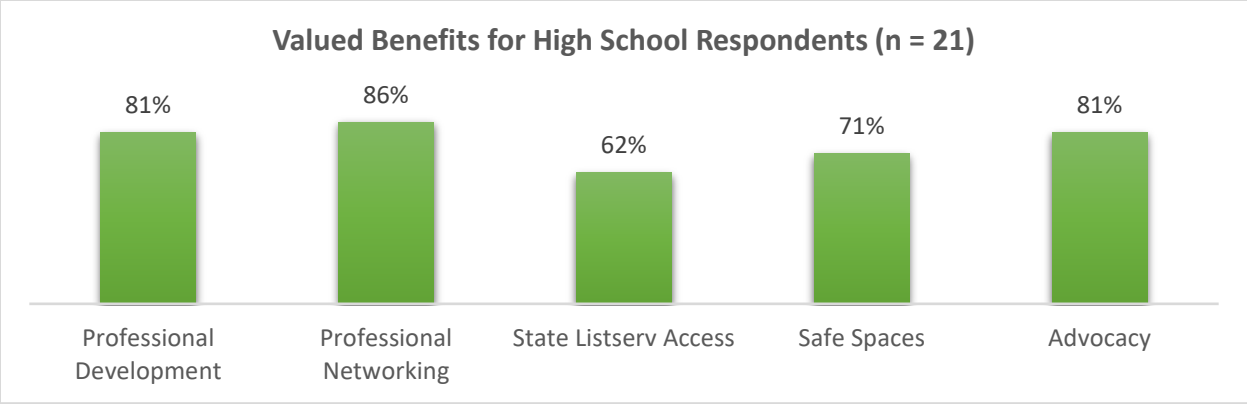

Experienced Benefits for Respondents with
>10 years of experience (n = 8)
88%
100%
67%
88%
67%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy

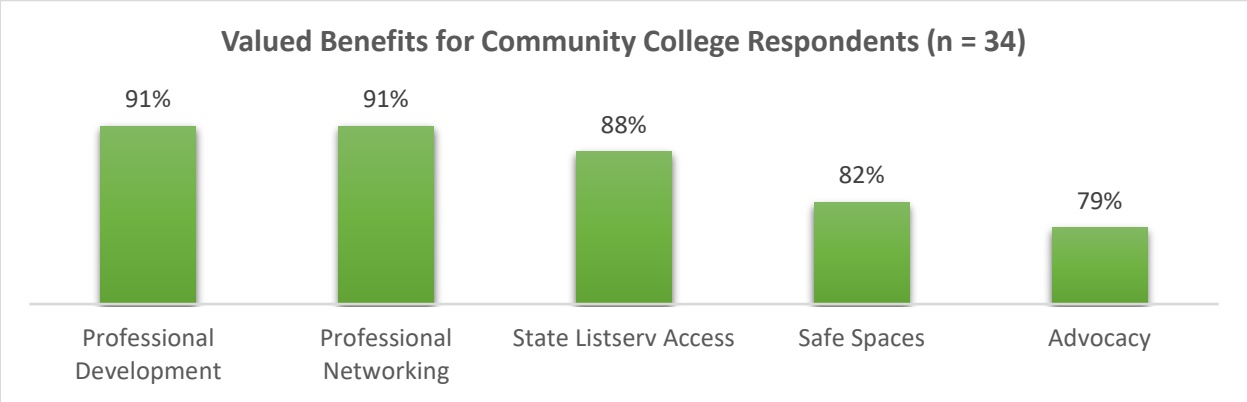
Appendix H: Valued Benefits Graphs [All]

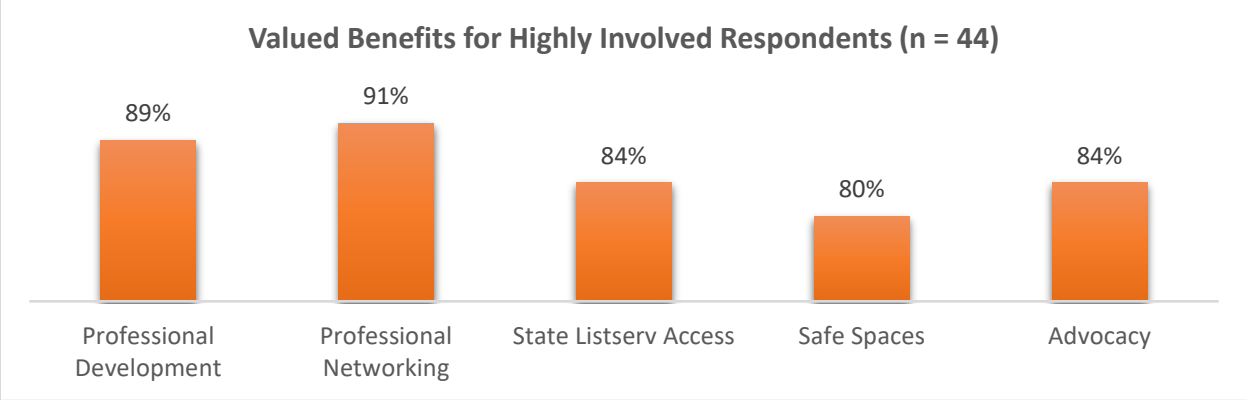


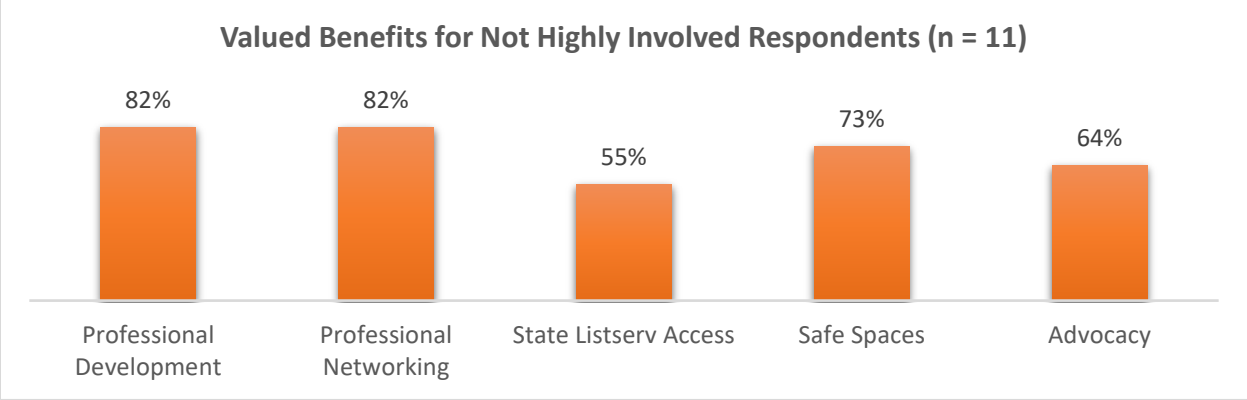


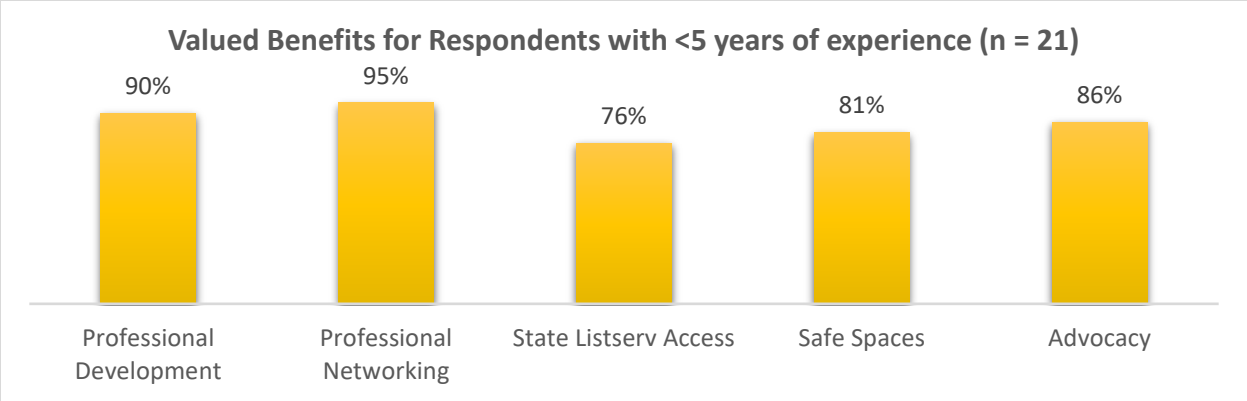


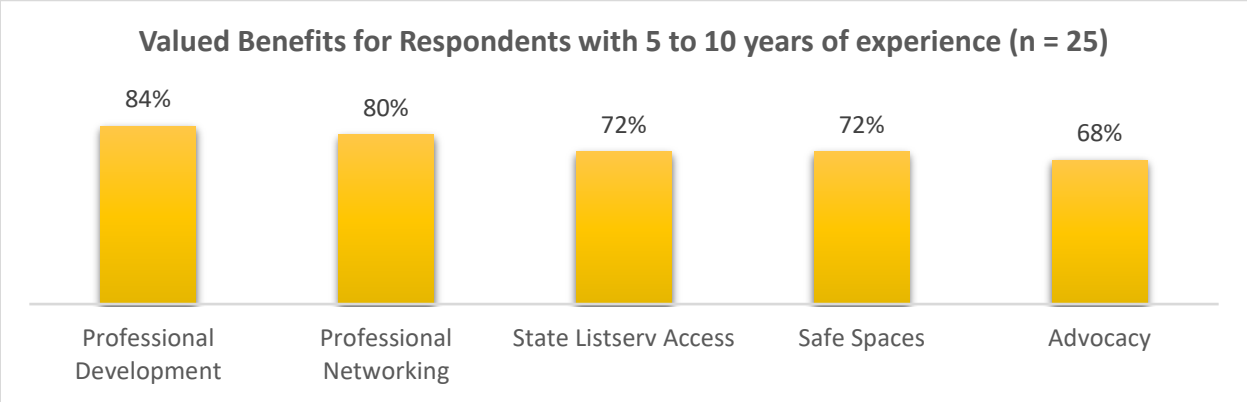

Valued Benefits for High School Respondents (n = 21)
81%
86%
62%
71%
81%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy

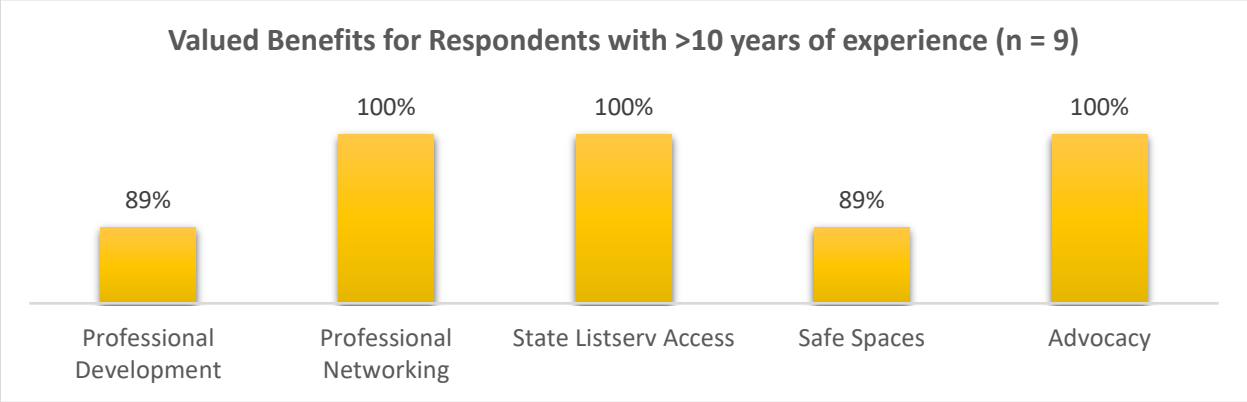

Valued Benefits for Community College Respondents (n = 34)
91%
91%
88%
82%
79%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy


Valued Benefits for Highly Involved Respondents (n = 44)
89%
91%
84%
80%
84%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy


Valued Benefits for Not Highly Involved Respondents (n = 11)
82%
82%
55%
73%
64%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy


Valued Benefits for Respondents with <5 years of experience (n = 21)
90%
95%
76%
81%
86%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy


Valued Benefits for Respondents with 5 to 10 years of experience (n = 25)
84%
80%
72%
72%
68%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy

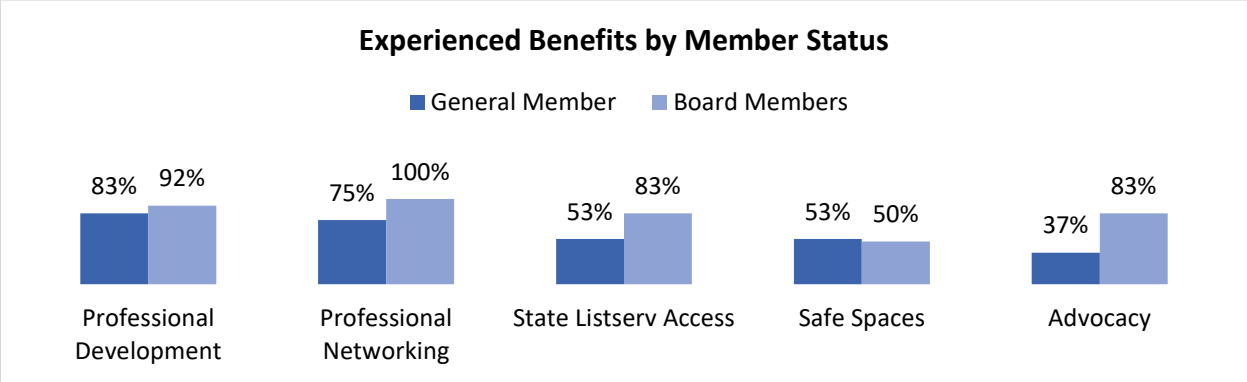

Valued Benefits for Respondents with >10 years of experience (n = 9)
89%
100%
100%
89%
100%
Professional Development
Professional Networking
State Listserv Access
Safe Spaces
Advocacy

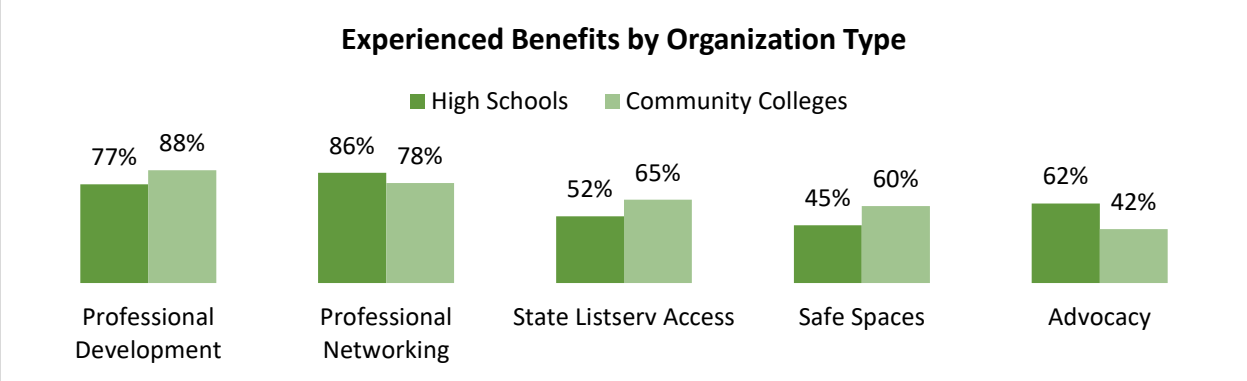
Appendix I: Valued & Experienced Percentage Discrepancy Chart

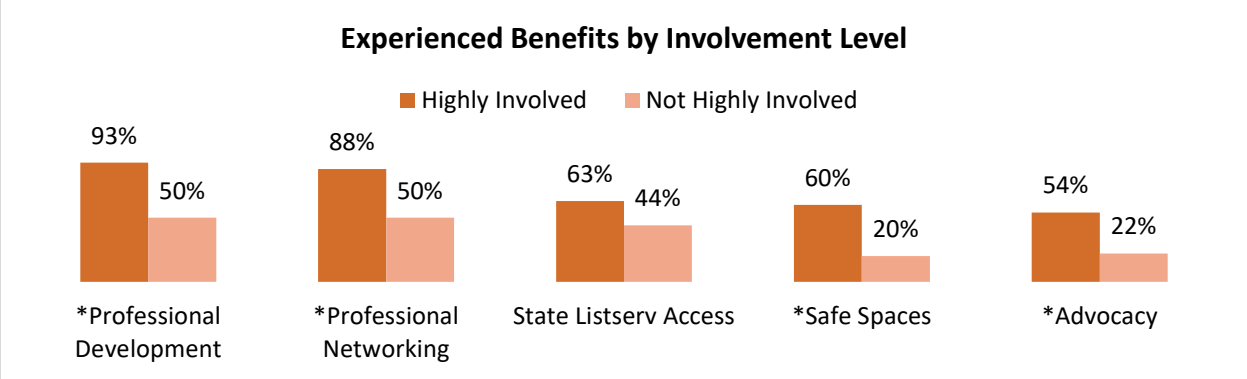
Demographic Groups	Professional Development	Professional Networking	State Listserv Access	Safe Spaces	Advocacy
Overall*	-2%	-8%	-18%	-26%	-32%
Leaders	N/A	+8%	N/A	-42%	N/A
General Members*	-3%	-13%	-24%	-21%	-42%
High Schools	-4%	N/A	-10%	-26%	-19%
Community Colleges*	-3%	-13%	-23%	-22%	-37%
Highly Involved	+4%	3%	-21%	-20%	-30%
Not Highly Involved*	-32%	-32%	-11%	-53%	-42%
<5 years of experience*	-6%	-27%	-31%	-25%	-60%
5 to 10 years of experience	N/A	+4%	-1%	-34%	-8%
>10 years of experience	-1%	N/A	-33%	-1%	-33%

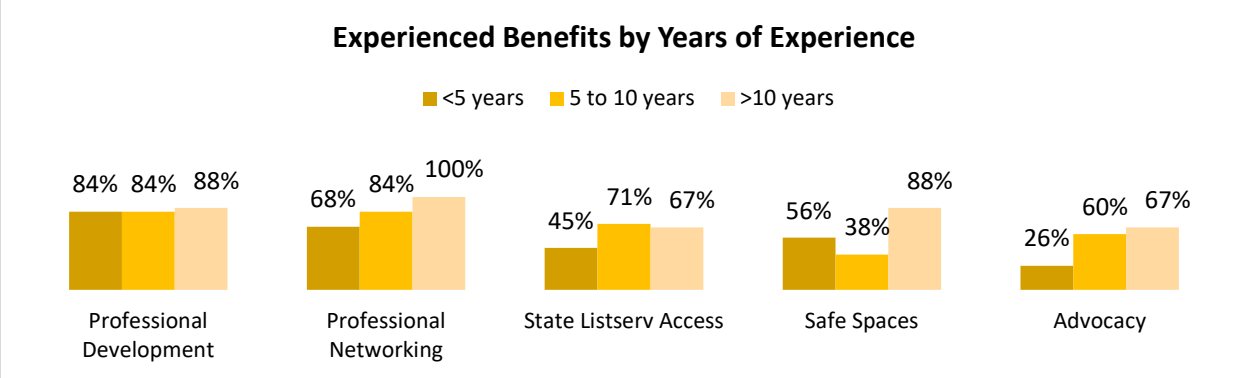
Note. This chart shows the differences between the percentages of respondents who valued and experienced each benefit overall and per professional demographic group. Red text denotes the largest discrepancies between valued and experienced percentages. Green text denotes when the percentage of respondents who experienced a benefit exceeded those who valued it. N/A denotes when the percentages of respondents who valued and experienced a benefit were equal. An asterisk (*) denotes the professional demographic groups where discrepancies existed for all five benefits.

Appendix J: Experienced Benefits Graphs for Comparison Groups

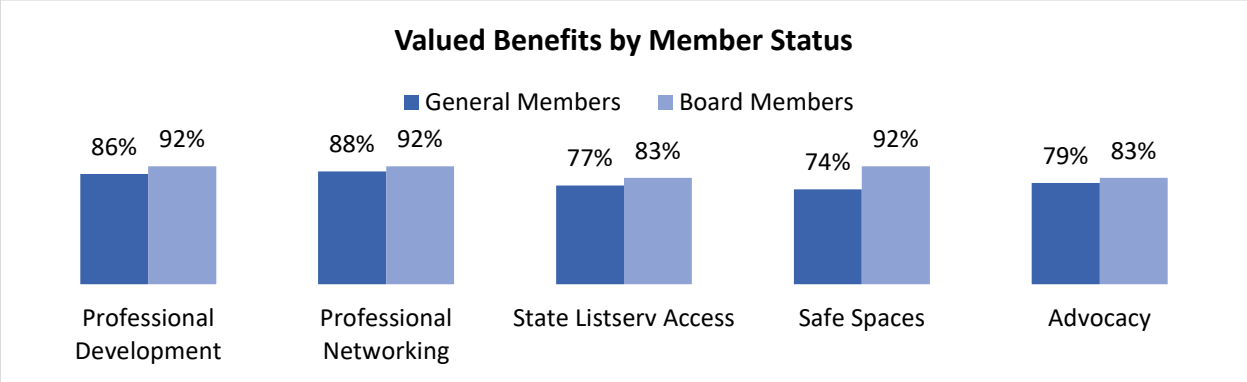


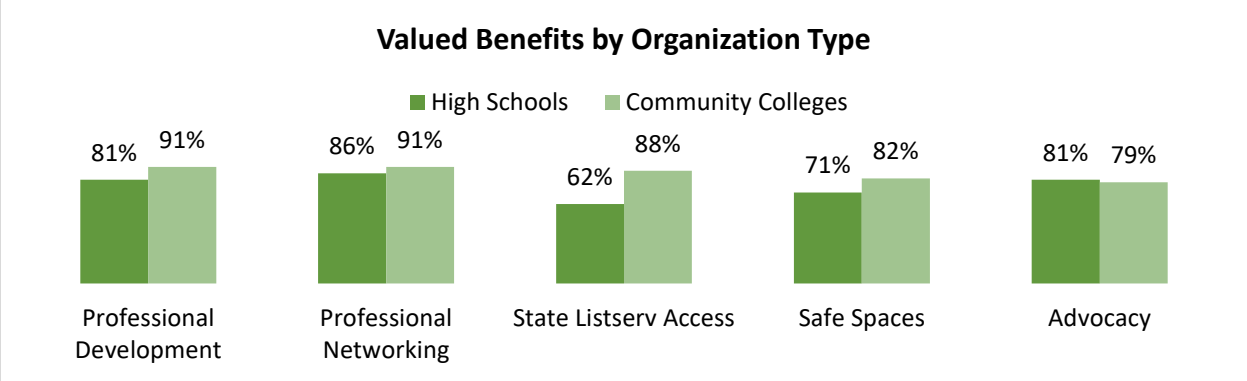


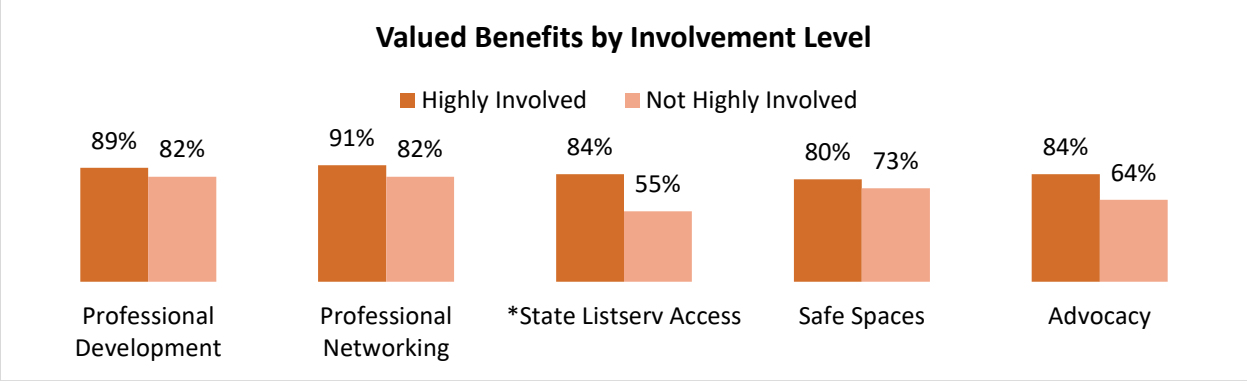


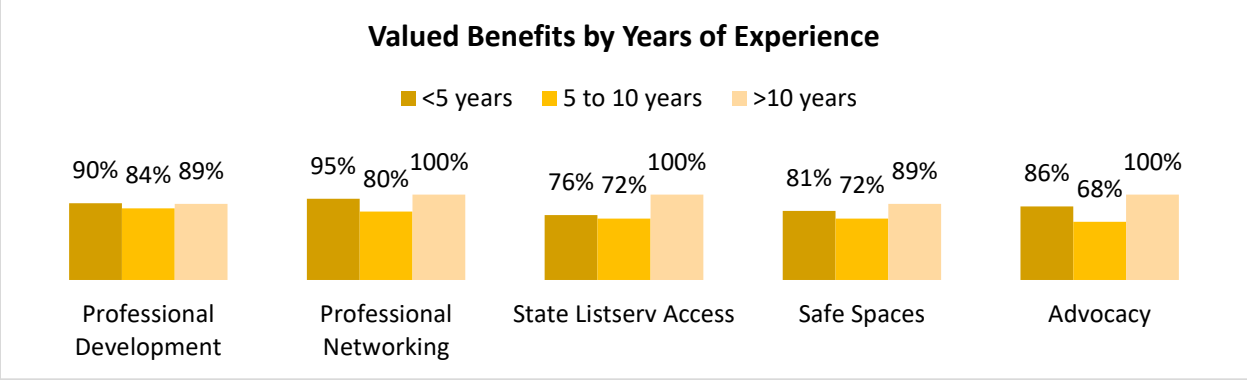


Appendix K: Valued Benefits Graphs for Comparison Groups









Appendix L: Experienced Benefits Means Data Tables

Overall (n = 53)	*Mean*	*CI*
Professional Development	2.79	[2.64, 2.93]
Professional Networking	2.77	[2.63, 2.91]
State Listserv Access	2.44	[2.24, 2.64]
Safe Spaces	2.40	[2.21, 2.59]
Advocacy	2.26	[2.04, 2.48]

3-point Score Scale	
1	No
2	Somewhat
3	Yes

By Member Status	*General Members (n = 41)*		*Leaders (n = 12)*	
	Mean	*CI*	*Mean*	*CI*
Professional Development	2.75	[2.57, 2.93]	2.92	[2.75, 3.08]
Professional Networking	2.70	[2.53, 2.87]	3.00	N/A
State Listserv Access	2.32	[2.07, 2.56]	2.83	[2.61, 3.05]
Safe Spaces	2.37	[2.14, 2.60]	2.50	[2.20, 2.80]
Advocacy	2.08	[1.83, 2.33]	2.83	[2.61, 3.05]

By Organization Type	*High Schools (n = 20)*		*Community Colleges (n = 33)*	
	Mean	*CI*	*Mean*	*CI*
Professional Development	2.70	[2.41, 2.99]	2.84	[2.69, 3.00]
Professional Networking	2.80	[2.57, 3.03]	2.75	[2.57, 2.93]
State Listserv Access	2.32	[1.96, 2.68]	2.52	[2.27, 2.77]
Safe Spaces	2.30	[2.01, 2.59]	2.47	[2.21, 2.72]
Advocacy	2.37	[2.00, 2.73]	2.19	[1.92, 2.47]

By Involvement Level	*Highly Involved (n = 43)*		*Not Highly Involved (n = 10)*	
	Mean	*CI*	*Mean*	*CI*
Professional Development	2.90	[2.79, 3.02]	2.30	[1.79, 2.81]
Professional Networking	2.86	[2.73, 2.98]	2.40	[1.97, 2.83]
State Listserv Access	2.51	[2.30, 2.72]	2.11	[1.54, 2.69]
Safe Spaces	2.53	[2.33, 2.72]	1.90	[1.44, 2.36]
Advocacy	2.39	[2.17, 2.61]	1.67	[1.13, 2.20]

By Years of Experience	*<5 years (n = 20)*		*5 to 10 years (n = 25)*		*>10 years (n = 8)*	
	Mean	*CI*	*Mean*	*CI*	*Mean*	*CI*
Professional Development	2.79	[2.55, 3.02]	2.80	[2.60, 3.00]	2.75	[2.26, 3.24]
Professional Networking	2.63	[2.37, 2.89]	2.80	[2.60, 3.00]	3.00	N/A
State Listserv Access	2.20	[1.83, 2.57]	2.58	[2.30, 2.86]	2.67	[2.31, 3.02]
Safe Spaces	2.33	[1.97, 2.70]	2.29	[2.05, 2.54]	2.88	[2.63, 3.12]
Advocacy	1.89	[1.54, 2.25]	2.44	[2.14, 2.74]	2.67	[2.31, 3.02]

Appendix M: Valued Benefits Means Data Tables

Overall (n = 55)	*Mean*	*CI*
Professional Development	2.85	[2.75, 2.96]
Professional Networking	2.85	[2.74, 2.97]
State Listserv Access	2.78	[2.67, 2.89]
Safe Spaces	2.75	[2.61, 2.88]
Advocacy	2.73	[2.57, 2.88]

3-point Score Scale	
1	Not Valuable
2	Somewhat Valuable
3	Valuable/Very Valuable

By Member Status	*General Members (n = 43)*		*Leaders (n = 12)*	
	Mean	*CI*	*Mean*	*CI*
Professional Development	2.84	[2.71, 2.97]	2.92	[2.75, 3.08]
Professional Networking	2.86	[2.74, 2.98]	2.83	[2.51, 3.16]
State Listserv Access	2.77	[2.64, 2.90]	2.83	[2.61, 3.05]
Safe Spaces	2.70	[2.53, 2.86]	2.92	[2.75, 3.08]
Advocacy	2.72	[2.54, 2.90]	2.75	[2.40, 3.10]

By Organization Type	*High Schools (n = 21)*		*Community Colleges (n = 34)*	
	Mean	*CI*	*Mean*	*CI*
Professional Development	2.76	[2.53, 2.99]	2.91	[2.81, 3.01]
Professional Networking	2.76	[2.49, 3.03]	2.91	[2.81, 3.01]
State Listserv Access	2.62	[2.41, 2.83]	2.88	[2.77, 2.99]
Safe Spaces	2.71	[2.52, 2.91]	2.76	[2.58, 2.95]
Advocacy	2.76	[2.53, 2.99]	2.71	[2.49, 2.92]

By Involvement Level	*Highly Involved (n = 44)*		*Not Highly Involved (n = 11)*	
	Mean	*CI*	*Mean*	*CI*
Professional Development	2.86	[2.74, 2.98]	2.82	[2.58, 3.06]
Professional Networking	2.89	[2.77, 3.00]	2.73	[2.35, 3.11]
State Listserv Access	2.84	[2.73, 2.95]	2.55	[2.24, 2.84]
Safe Spaces	2.77	[2.63, 2.91]	2.64	[2.24, 3.03]
Advocacy	2.80	[2.64, 2.95]	2.45	[1.97, 2.94]

By Years of Experience	*<5 years (n = 21)*		*5 to 10 years (n = 25)*		*>10 years (n = 9)*	
	Mean	*CI*	*Mean*	*CI*	*Mean*	*CI*
Professional Development	2.90	[2.78, 3.03]	2.80	[2.60, 3.00]	2.89	[2.67, 3.11]
Professional Networking	2.95	[2.86, 3.05]	2.72	[2.48, 2.96]	3.00	N/A
State Listserv Access	2.76	[2.58, 2.95]	2.72	[2.54, 2.90]	3.00	N/A
Safe Spaces	2.76	[2.53, 2.99]	2.68	[2.46, 2.90]	2.89	[2.67, 3.11]
Advocacy	2.81	[2.59, 3.03]	2.56	[2.28, 2.84]	3.00	N/A

Appendix N: Valued vs. Experienced Means Data Tables

Overall	*Valued (n = 55)*	*Experience (n = 53)*
Professional Development	2.85	2.79
Professional Networking	2.85	2.77
State Listserv Access	2.78	2.44
Safe Spaces	2.75	2.40
Advocacy	2.73	2.26

By Member Status	*General Members*		*Leaders*	
	Valued (n=43)	*Experienced (n=41)*	*Valued (n=12)*	*Experienced (n=12)*
Professional Development	2.84	2.75	2.92	2.92
Professional Networking	2.86	2.70	2.83	3.00
State Listserv Access	2.77	2.32	2.83	2.83
Safe Spaces	2.70	2.37	2.92	2.50
Advocacy	2.72	2.08	2.75	2.83

By Organization Type	*High Schools*		*Community Colleges*	
	Valued (n=21)	*Experienced (n=20)*	*Valued (n=34)*	*Experienced (n=33)*
Professional Development	2.76	2.70	2.91	2.84
Professional Networking	2.76	2.80	2.91	2.75
State Listserv Access	2.62	2.32	2.88	2.52
Safe Spaces	2.71	2.30	2.76	2.47
Advocacy	2.76	2.37	2.71	2.19

By Involvement Level	*Highly Involved*		*Not Highly Involved*	
	Valued (n=44)	*Experienced (n=43)*	*Valued (n=11)*	*Experienced (n=10)*
Professional Development	2.86	2.90	2.82	2.30
Professional Networking	2.89	2.86	2.73	2.40
State Listserv Access	2.84	2.51	2.55	2.11
Safe Spaces	2.77	2.53	2.64	1.90
Advocacy	2.80	2.39	2.45	1.67

By Years of Experience	*<5 years*		*5 to 10 years*		*>10 years*	
	Valued (n=21)	*Experienced (n=20)*	*Valued (n=25)*	*Experienced (n=25)*	*Valued (n=9)*	*Experienced (n=8)*
Professional Development	2.90	2.79	2.80	2.80	2.89	2.75
Professional Networking	2.95	2.63	2.72	2.80	3.00	3.00
State Listserv Access	2.76	2.20	2.72	2.58	3.00	2.67
Safe Spaces	2.76	2.33	2.68	2.29	2.89	2.88
Advocacy	2.81	1.89	2.56	2.44	3.00	2.67