

AN EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF COBEC ON BELIZE AND U.S. TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS



COBEC

Consortium for Belize Educational Cooperation

COBEC Winter Conference
February, 2017
Belize

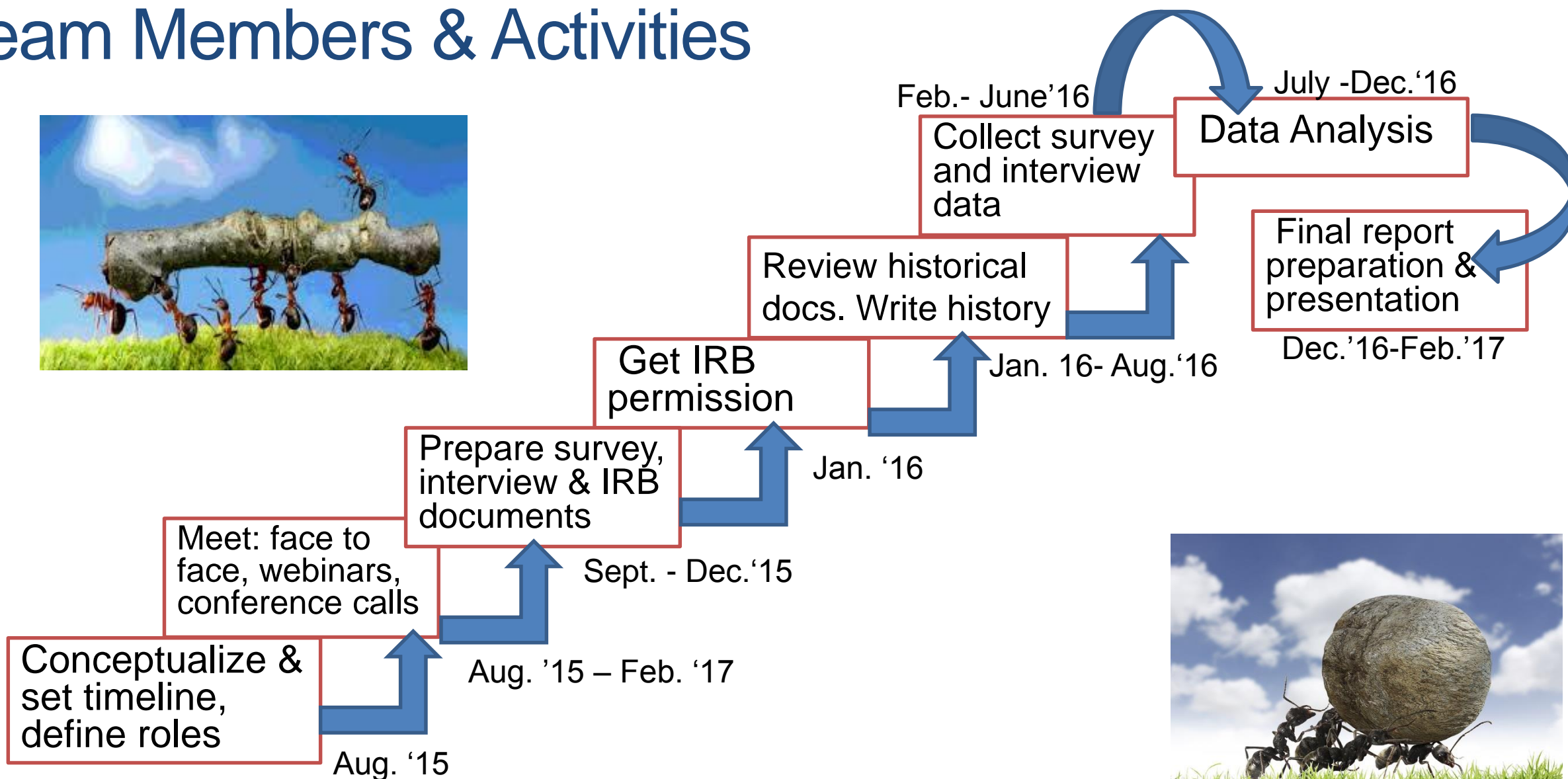
COBEC Evaluation Team

Evaluation Team

- *Eve Aird, Provost, Galen University*
- *Ethel Arzu, Director of Quality Assurance, University of Belize*
- *Deborah Davis, Archivist, Valdosta State University*
- *Betty Flinchum, Emeritus Professor of Education, University of North Florida*
- *Kathaleena Edward Monds, Professor, Albany State University*
- *Emilia Hodge, Director, Graduate International Outreach, University of Florida*
- *Warren Hodge, Associate Professor, University of North Florida*
- *Cynthia Thompson, Assistant Provost, University of Belize*



Team Members & Activities



Outline

- Introduction: the Team, the work, COBEC history
- Methodology
 - Evaluation Purpose, Questions, Plan, Design
 - Data Collection and Analysis
- Results
 - Quantitative – Survey
 - Qualitative - Interviews
- Conclusions & Recommendations

COBEC - MOA

MOA signed by 6 US & 8 BZ institutions in 1989

- **US:** *Ken Wagner, Ferris State (FSU); James McCoy (MSU); Harold Bergsma (NMSU); Donald Hill (TSU); Betty Flinchum (UNF); Tracy Harrington (VSU); John Petersen (WKU)*
- **BZ:** *Hugh O'Brien (BCA); Winifred Swift (BSN); Cynthia Thompson (Teachers' C); Vernon Card (Technical C); Carlos Castillo (CJC); Augustine Flores, (SCEC); Fr. James Murphy, (SJC) & Ernest Raymond (MOE)*

Early COBEC committees

- First committees carried out COBEC's work in early years
 - Articulation/Accreditation
 - Budget/Financing
 - Evaluation/Research/Data Base
 - Faculty/Staff Developmental/Student Exchange Programs

Evaluation Purposes

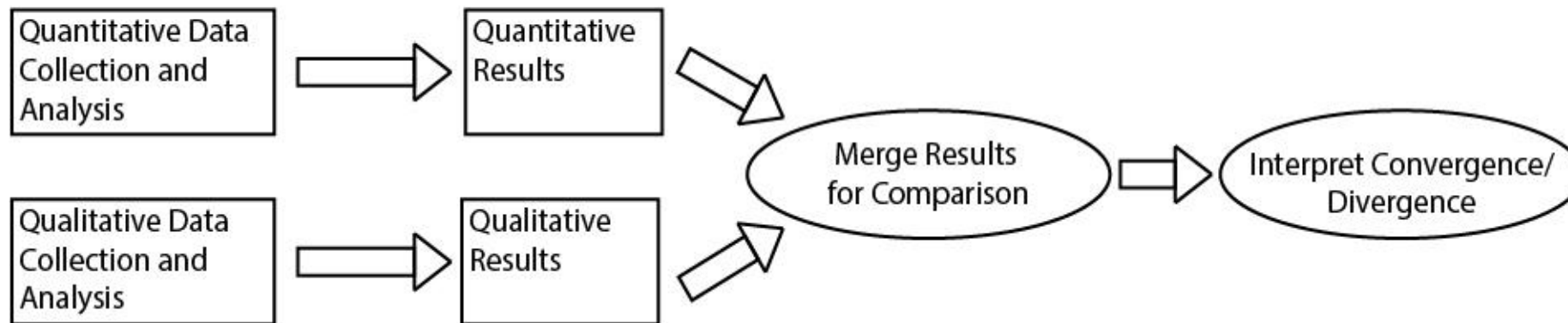
- Document COBECs activities and outcomes in Belize and the US
- Examine the impact of COBEC on Belizean and US higher education institutions and the country of Belize,
- Identify opportunities for further engagement that could expand impact of the Consortium.

COBEC Goals	Evaluation Questions	Data ⁸ Collection
Design, develop and implement collaborative programs and activities that address higher education needs in Belize	To what extent has COBEC designed, developed, and implemented programs and activities to address Belize higher education needs ?	Survey Review of docs.; Interviews of key informants
Contribute to the internationalization of member institutions	What has been the impact of COBEC participation on US and Belize institutions and the country of Belize?	Survey – all member institutions Interviews of key informants
Strengthen the organizational capacity of COBEC as a mechanism for meeting higher ed. needs in Belize and internationalizing member institutions	To what extent has COBEC strengthened its organizational capacity as a mechanism for meeting higher education needs in Belize and the internationalization of member institutions?	Survey Interviews of key informants

Evaluation Design

- *Creswell's (2015) Convergent Design*
- Collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyze the two data sets separately, merge results

Convergent Design



Data collection: Survey (based on COBEC goals)

Section 1: nine items; satisfaction/dissatisfaction with various aspects of COBEC

Section 2: 14 items; agreement/disagreement regarding a range of COBEC's collaborative programs and activities beneficial to US and Belize institutions

Section 3: four items; agreement/disagreement regarding COBEC's contributions to the internationalization of member institutions

Section 4: eight items; agreement/disagreement regarding COBEC's organizational capacity to meet needs in BZ & US Institutions

Section 5: levels of agreement/disagreement regarding COBEC's impact on eight areas of education in Belize and the USA.

Section 6: five open-ended questions

Prepared in Qualtrics, hosted by UF; Three calls sent out to COBEC membership (70) in March, April, May 2016

Data Collection: Interviews

- Protocol included questions based on COBEC's Purpose and Mission statements
- Interviews tape-recorded, transcribed by *Transcribeme!* services, paid for by COBEC.

In the interest of controlling bias:

- Assessment team are COBEC members
- Four team members conducted interviews
- member checks conducted to clarify responses
- peer review conducted with team members
- Established an audit trail

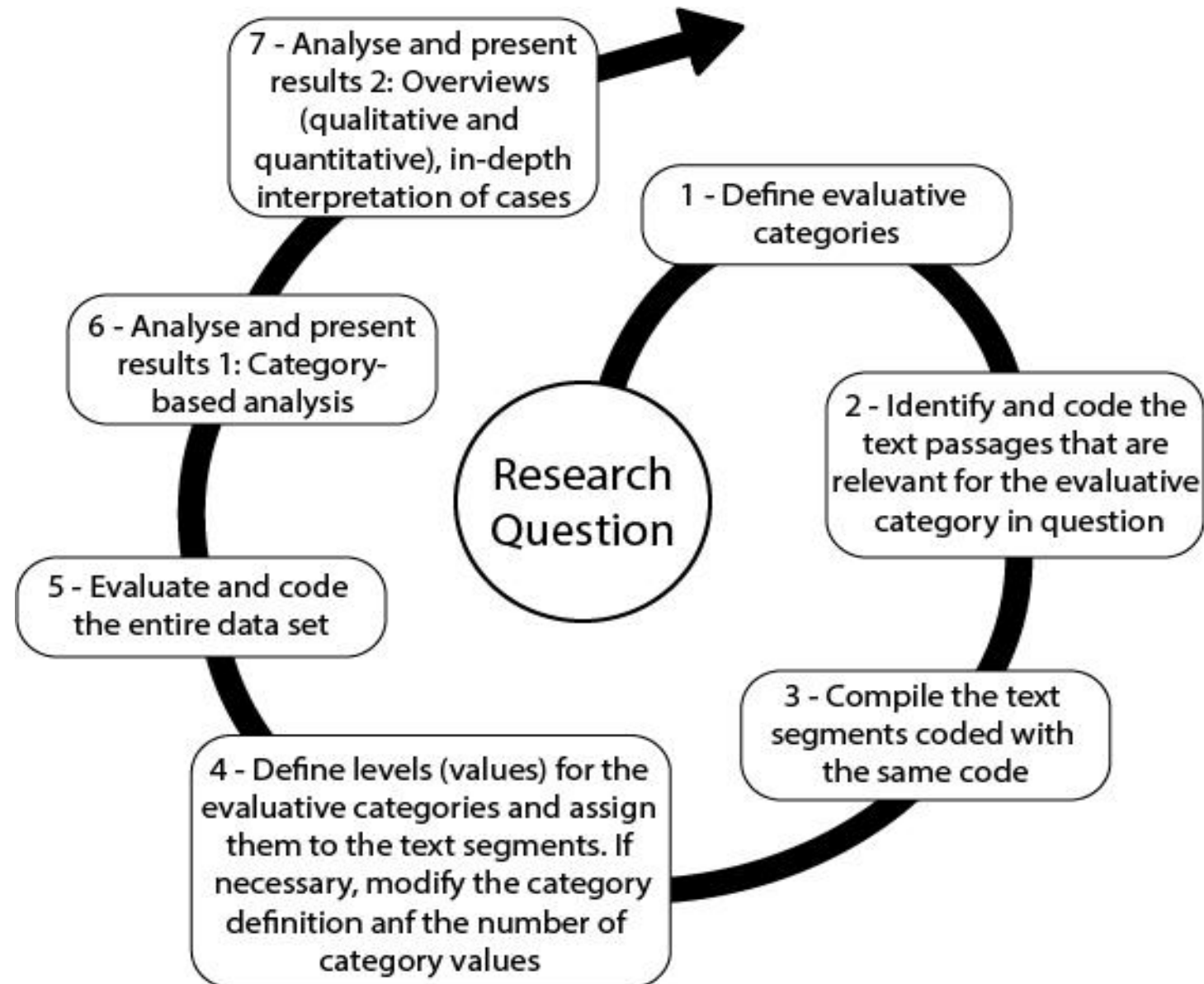
“There is no value-free or bias-free design” (Junesick, 2000).

Survey Data analysis

- Data checking, data reduction, and data cleaning
- Descriptive statistics (including percentages of responses, identifying the most common response- mode)
- Responses to open-ended questions were examined and compared for commonalities and differences between participants from Belize and US institutions.

Data analysis: Interviews

- Verification for Accuracy: Member checks to clarify responses.
- Use of MAXQDA (Version 12, 2016) to store, manage, and assist with the analysis
- Data analyzed using Kuckartz's (2014) Evaluation Qualitative Text Analysis model



Interview participants

Participants	Gender	Country	Yrs. COBEC Member	Position/Role In COBEC
P1	F	US	25	Co-Chair
P2	M	US	25	Co-Chair
P3	M	US	25	Program Planner
P4	M	US	18	Chair
P5	M	US	24	Hosted COBEC Meeting
P6	M	US	20	Treasurer
P7	M	US	20	Program Planner
P8	M	BZ	28	Co-Chair/Member of Various Committees
P9	F	BZ	28	Co-Chair/Secretary
P10	F	BZ	26	Co-Chair/Various Committees
P11	F	BZ	23	Treasurer/Secretary

Archival documents reviewed

- By-laws, articles of incorporation, correspondence between members and officers, grant requests/approvals, meeting information, travel information, records of organizations activities, paperwork for/of proposals, the minutes of meetings, and paperwork that is necessary for running/maintaining a program.
- Eight boxes of documents archived in library at Valdosta state (donated by Dr. Tracy C. Harrington in 2004) accessible at:
<https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/library/depts/archives-and-special-collections/finding-aids/university-archives/ua-22-7.php>
- Other materials: donations to the UNF library by Dr. Pritchey Smith and Dr. Betty Flinchum.

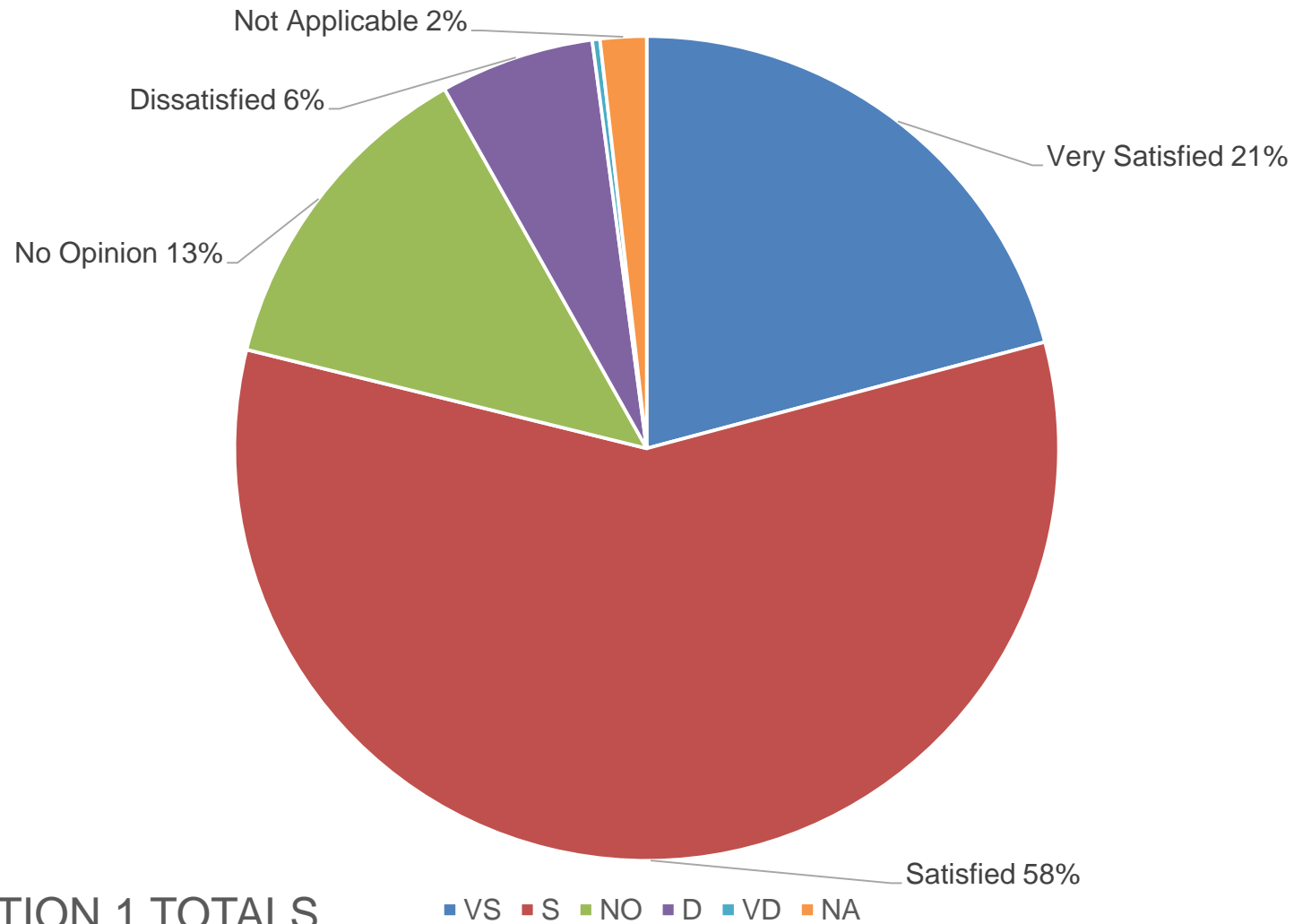
Results - Survey

- 36/70 responses (51% response rate)
- 11 (44%) of the 25 Belizean members; and 25 (56%) of the 45 US members.
- More female (23 or 64%) than male (13 or 36%) respondents
- The majority of respondents between the ages of 56-65 and were affiliated with US four-year Colleges/Universities.
- The majority (25 or 69%) learned about COBEC by talking to colleagues and friends who were members of COBEC

Results: Survey Section 1: *Satisfaction vs. Dissatisfaction* with various aspects of COBEC

- Strongest satisfaction with COBEC's mission (92%), summer and winter conferences (89%), COBEC's purpose (89%), COBEC's goals (86%) and the quality of programs and activities (89%).
- Most dissatisfaction with orientation to COBEC (11%) and effectiveness of the standing committees (11%).
- Section summary overall, 21 % of the responses showed *Very satisfied*; 59% *Satisfied*; 11% *No Opinion*; 6% *Dissatisfied*, and 1% *Very Dissatisfied*, with 2% selecting *Not Applicable*
- Mode: "*Satisfied*"

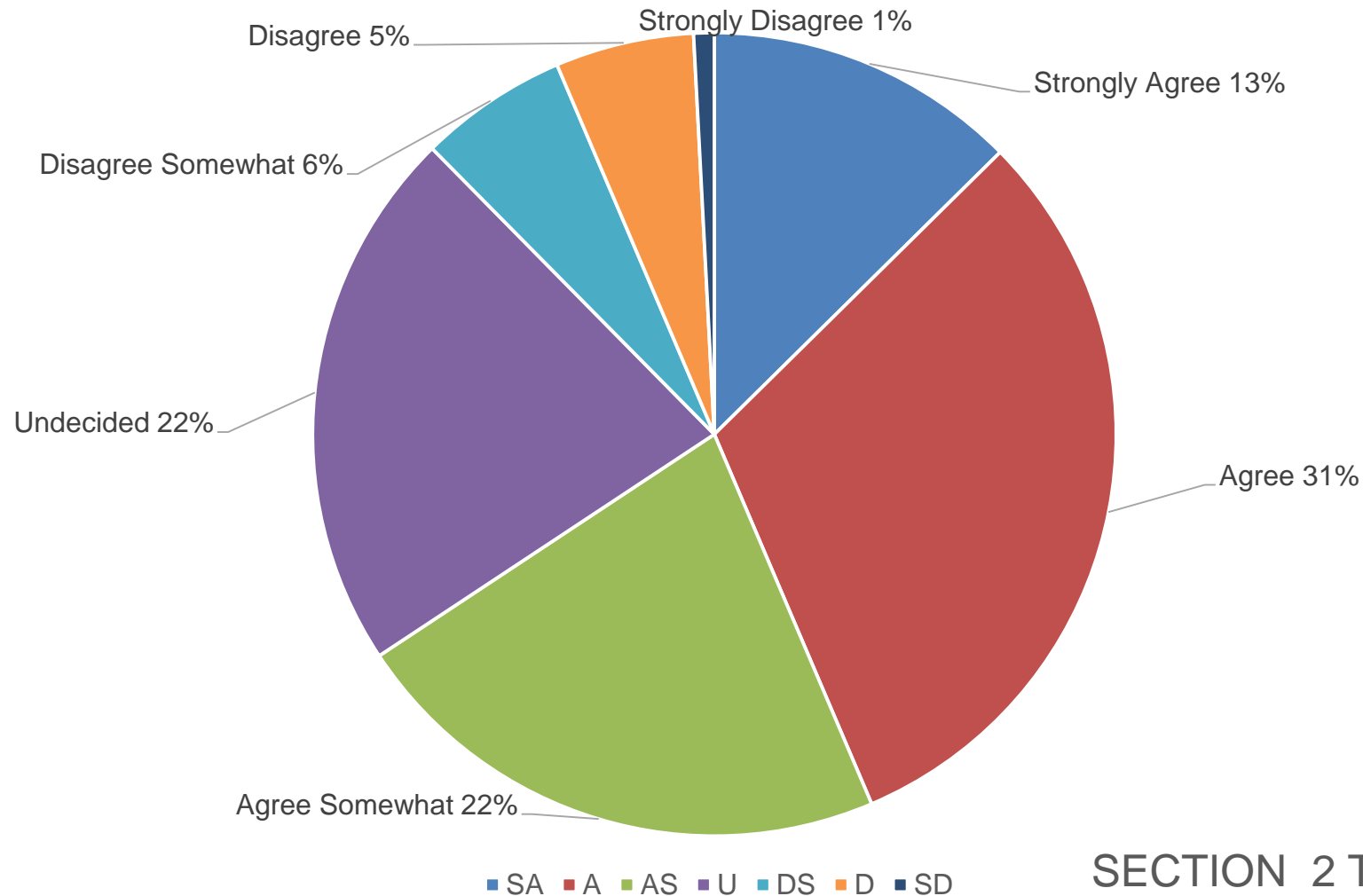
Results: Survey Section 1: *Satisfaction vs. Dissatisfaction* with various aspects of COBEC



Results: Survey Section 2: *Agreement vs. Disagreement* with COBEC's collaborative programs and activities.

- Strongest agreement: COBEC's professional development programs (80%), COBEC's strengthening of collaborations (69%); COBEC's provision of advanced degree training (63%);
- Most disagreement: pursuing of research agenda (24%); organization of a clearinghouse for donations (29%); formal assessment of impact of scholarship support on staff development goals (31%)
- Total responses, 13% strong agreement; 31% in agreement; 22% somewhat in agreement; 22% undecided; 6% somewhat disagreed; 5% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed.
- Mode : "Agree"

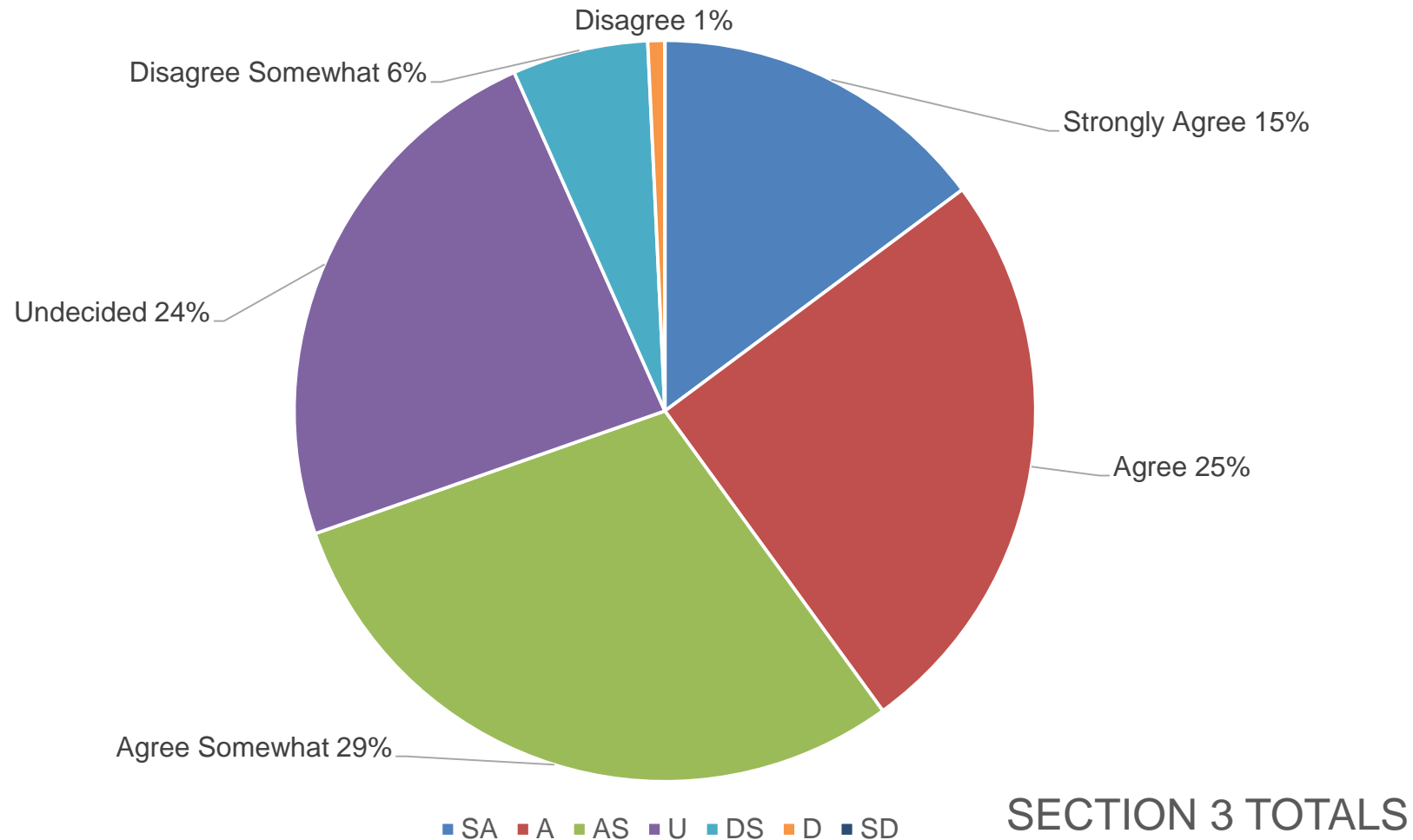
Results: Survey Section 2: *Agreement vs. Disagreement* with COBEC's collaborative programs and activities



Results: Survey Section 3: *Agreement vs. Disagreement* with COBEC's contributions to the internationalization of member institutions.

- Strongest agreement: COBEC's academic exchange programs (45%), COBEC's identification of sources of financial aid for Belizean students (43%); and COBEC's organization of study abroad and other opportunities for students (43%).
- Most disagreement (14%) and indecision (43%) was COBEC's non-Belizean institutions development of programs on aspects of Belizean culture, history, and society, using professional resources available through Belizean member institutions.
- Totals: 14% strong agreement; 24% in agreement; 29% somewhat in agreement; 23% undecided; 6% somewhat disagreed; 1% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed.
- Majority response: "*Agree Somewhat*"

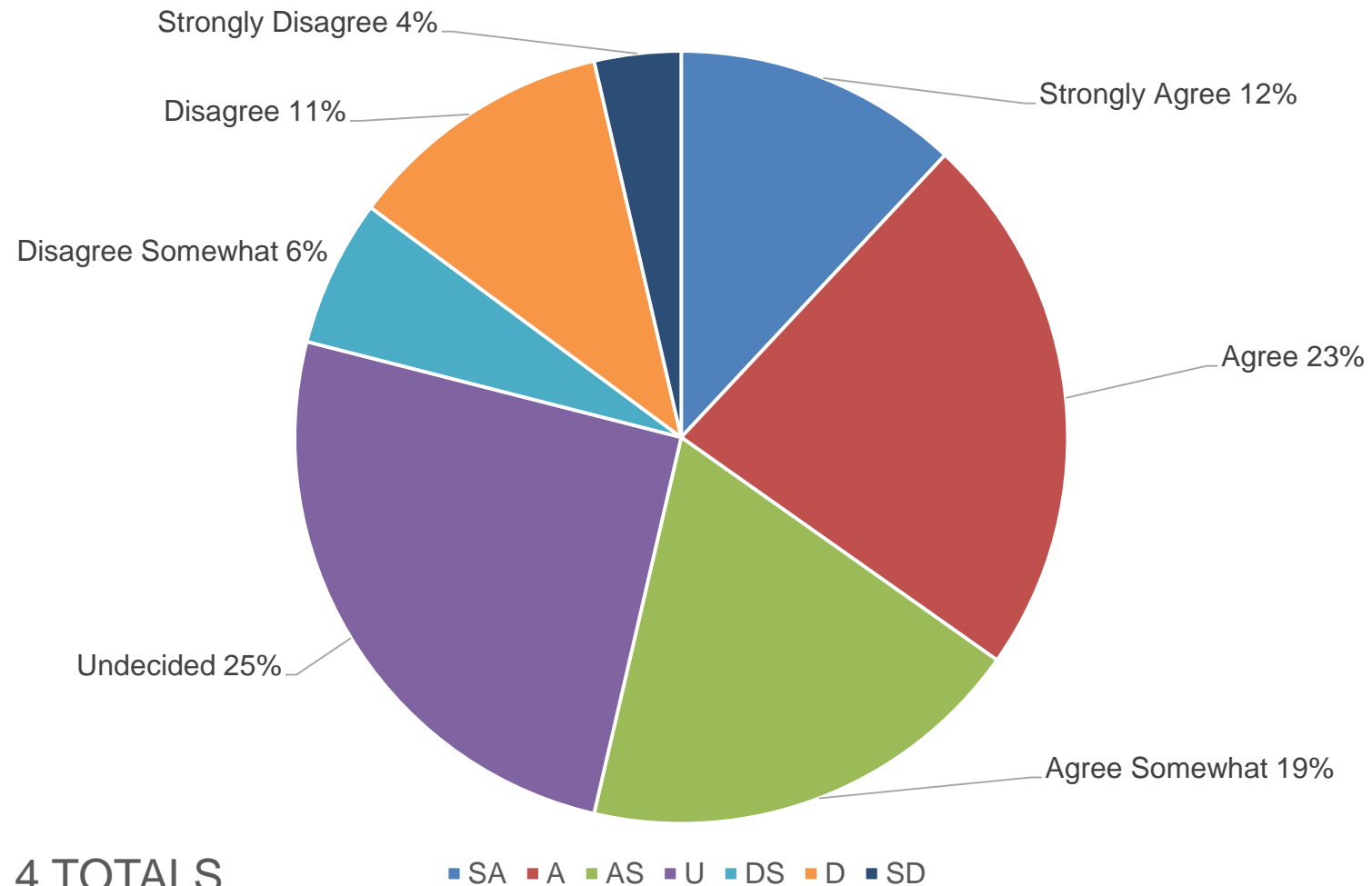
Results: Survey Section 3: *Agreement vs. Disagreement* with COBEC's contributions to the internationalization of member institutions



Results: Survey Section 4: *Agreement vs. Disagreement* with COBEC's contributions to the internationalization of member institutions

- Strongest agreement: COBEC's program for archiving materials (64%); COBEC's communication tools (40%); and increase in membership of two year non-Belizean institutions (36%).
- Most disagreement were with regard to establishment of an entity to facilitate COBEC activities (42%); providing administrative support through creation of a secretariat (37%); and obtaining grant funding for COBEC projects (23%).
- Total responses: 12% strong agreement; 23% in agreement; 19% somewhat in agreement; 25% undecided; 6% somewhat disagreed; 11% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed.
- Mode: "*Undecided*".

Results: Survey Section 4: *Agreement vs. Disagreement* with COBEC's contributions to the internationalization of member institutions



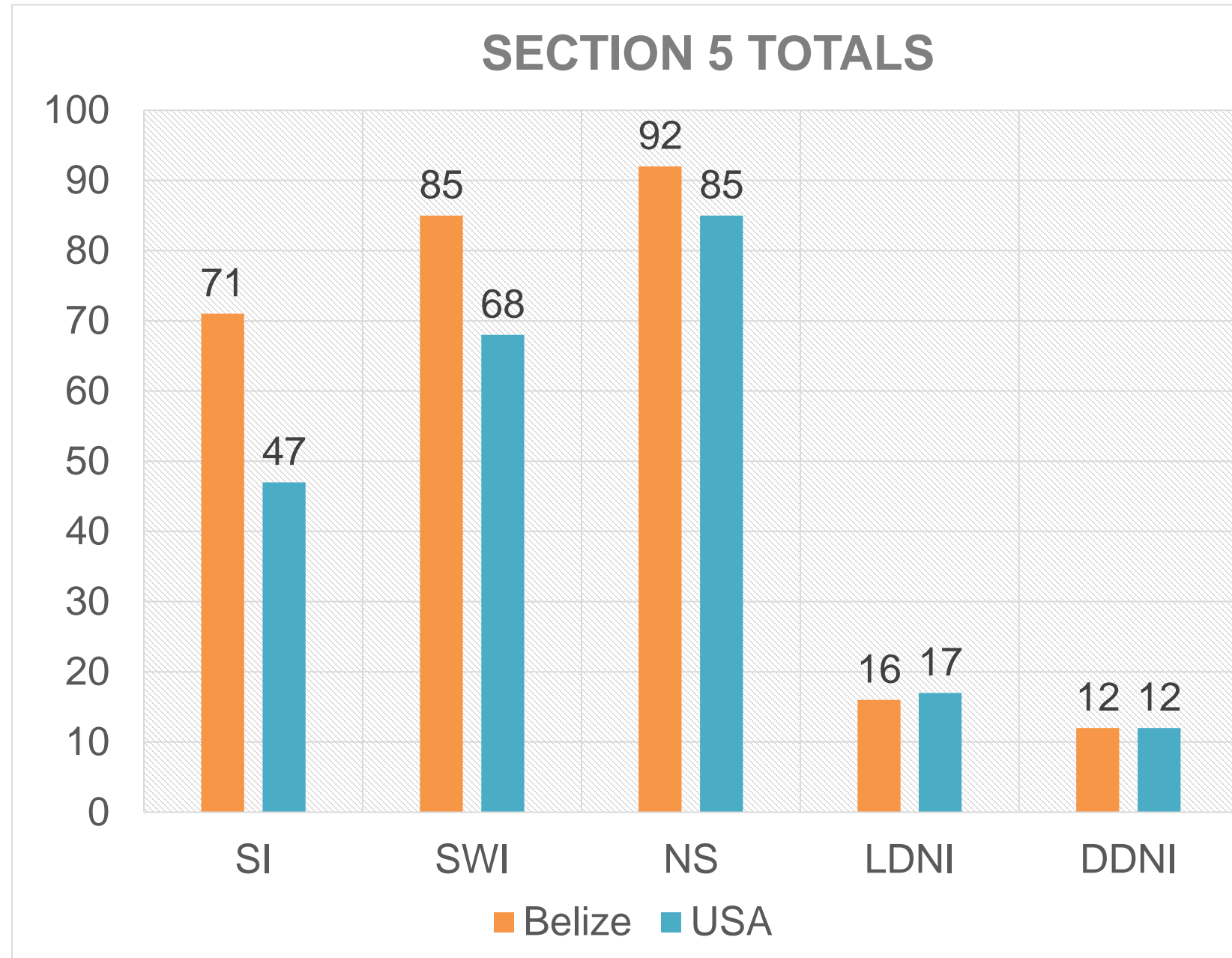
Results: Survey Section 5: COBEC's impact US and Belize Institutions

- Highest levels impact: collaboration among Belize (91%) and US (93%) Institutions and impact of study abroad in Belize (72%) and in the US (85%).
- Participants believed the impact on Education and Graduate Education, respectively, was higher in Belize (82%; 70%), than in the US (47%; 39%).
- Least impact area: publications for both Belize (18%) and the US (18%).
- The majority of respondents indicated they were unsure about the impact of dual Degrees on Belize (58%) and the US (64%) and internships in Belize (41%) and the US (46%).
- The most selected response: *Not Sure*.

Results: Survey Section 5: COBEC's impact US and Belize Institutions

Eight areas:

Education, Dual
Degrees, Faculty
Exchanges,
Collaborations
between Belize and
US institutions,
Graduate Education,
Internships,
Publications, and
Study Abroad.



Results: Survey Section 6. Q.1: *What were the major reasons for joining COBEC?* (9 BZ & 20 US)

BZ: expertise, information and collaborations gained through involvement in COBEC, providing opportunities for students and faculty in Belize

US: opportunities for “networking;” experiencing a different culture, and opportunities for their students”

“Joining the Consortium was beneficial not only for the US, but also the Belize institutions and allowed for the establishment of **“mutually beneficial relationships with sister Belizean institutions”**”

In sum, being a Consortium member was important not only because of the benefit gained “from the broader thinking of colleague institutions about the work in Belize;” learning about the “two year system in another country” and develop[ment] of **a wider circle of Belizean colleagues**” but also, “in furthering the **educational needs of the country (Belize),**” by being “able to make contributions to Belizean institutions.”

Results: Survey Section 6. Q.2: *What Information about COBEC you wished you knew before you joined?* (7 BZ & 14 US)

BZ:

- More information about “the US institutions, their programs, their interests in Belize and **areas in which they would like to collaborate;**”
- How to **select partners for collaboration**

US:

- More information on the country, state of the archives and the libraries
- MOU that their institution had signed with the Ministry of Education
- **Organizational structure of COBEC and what is ATLIB**
- Past performance; benchmark achievements; list of Belizean contacts who support COBEC efforts in the country
- Levels of member commitment to implement COBEC’s vision, mission and goals

Results: Survey Section 6. Q. 3: *What were (or are) the most positive aspects of COBEC for you? (9 BZ & 17 US)*

BZ:

- Access to **information/expertise/professional development**: Exposure to cutting edge issues in education, technology, and information resources
- Opportunities to **collaborate/build relationships**: Annual meetings - access to colleagues, information, support, exchanges; opportunities for cultural exchange both in Belize and abroad
- **Opportunities/partnerships that support Belizeans' pursuit of higher education abroad**: student scholarships & tuition waiver, faculty exchanges, study abroad and service learning opportunities, and “**getting to know people whose heart is shaped like the outline of Belize;**” **support the needs highlighted by the MOE**; study abroad programs

US: Relationships and collaborations: Working with my Belizean colleagues who have become dear friends as we work together to address important issues in education... both in the U.S. and Belize; collaboration and warm personal and professional friendships

Results: Survey Section 6. Q. 4: *What were (or are) the most negative aspects of COBEC for you?* (8 BZ; 13US). Q. 5: *What would you change about COBEC?* (7 BZ; 15 US)

BZ:

Improving the conferences:

- provide a **substantive meeting agenda in a timely fashion**;
- discussion of achievement of annual and long term strategic goals;
- planning the way forward; more time to get enough information and discuss best practices

Collaborations and the work of the Consortium:

- **Increase in funding to do more**;
- more active participation from some COBEC institutions in the US;
- Consistent review and recalibration of clear achievable goals/objectives;
- A secretariat to keep records and to monitor the achievement of the association's purpose and goals.

Results: Survey Section 6. Q. 4: *What were (or are) the most negative aspects of COBEC for you?* (8 BZ; 13US). Q. 5: *What would you change about COBEC?* (7 BZ; 15 US)

BZ: Achieving the mission and purpose, improving strategic planning, and increasing student participation

- Up-to-date, accurate website;
- Better define the value of the organization;
- Charge a higher membership fee;
- Make clear our purpose and develop strategic plans and work toward the achievement of goals;
- [Improve/increase] level of information sharing - documentation;
- [Improve/increase] availability of information to prospective students

Results: Survey Section 6. Q. 4: *What were (or are) the most negative aspects of COBEC for you?* (8 BZ; 13US). Q. 5: *What would you change about COBEC?* (7 BZ; 15 US)

- **US: Improving the conferences:**

- It's expensive to attend both meetings per year
- Sometimes the programs are so broad as to be meaningless for different professions
- Many US institutions don't attend the US summer conference
- The meetings can become tedious, particularly when there are many presentations and “the presentations could be more helpful
- Perhaps the winter meetings could be a bit longer, allowing for more social and professional collaboration
- Conference topics could be more scholarly and more helpful in teaching us how to [implement] initiatives in Belize

Results: Survey Section 6. Q. 4: *What were (or are) the most negative aspects of COBEC for you?* (8 BZ; 13US). Q. 5: *What would you change about COBEC?* (7 BZ; 15)

US: Collaborations and the work of the Consortium:

- lack of resources; things move along slowly and the level of commitment does not seem to be there sometimes; develop ideas beyond the conversation level;
 - lack of in-between collaboration between the two meetings (sometimes different people attending at different times)
 - Expand the number of members outside Belize and the U.S.
 - Create more opportunities for Belizeans and US Americans to learn collaboratively
 - Identification of research needs by our Belizean colleagues and commitment to knowledge generation and dissemination
-
- **Data collection:** Develop a repository for economic and entrepreneurship data

Results: Survey Section 6. Q. 4: *What were (or are) the most negative aspects of COBEC for you?* (8 BZ; 13US). Q. 5: *What would you change about COBEC?* (7 BZ; 15 US)

US: Work of the Consortium:

- Use the results from this study to clarify COBEC's vision, mission, and goals; restructure the organization's administrative and managerial functions; and identify two or three substantive initiatives that clearly address the needs of institutions in Belize and the U.S.
- Secretariat , perhaps with a paid honorarium, to assist the Co-Chairs in the planning of biannual meetings (helping to coordinate the conferences and workshops
- There should be only one vote per institution.
- More evaluation of ourselves and where we are heading,
- More grant funding (maybe a clearinghouse for granting organizations to help us apply.

Interview Results: Theme 1

1. **Professionalization of Belize Higher Education:** COBEC has advanced professionalization of higher education in Belize through its programs and activities.
 - *Staff development has been a big thing, I think. The cafe workshops, for example, still going on in Belize. They are a training place. They use Belizeans and US trainers for things: computer skills, all kinds of skills that are becoming a necessity for educational institutions. So, as the need emerges, COBEC rises to the occasion, and begins to address that need. (P1)*
 - *Well, COBEC has done a great job. If there's anything they've done really well in, I think it's their study abroad. So, that's all-- I guess, and again, I don't have the numbers, but almost every COBEC institution has a study abroad and an exchange program linked to some school in Belize. And the Belize schools are ready, and they're eager, and they could do things to make that happen. (P5)*

Interview Results: Theme 1 cont'd

- *There've been a lot of professional development opportunities COBEC has offered to teachers in the country. But I think probably the greatest, truly the greatest, how were the graduate opportunities offered Belizean students. So many from, particularly, doctoral degrees that were offered then and through COBEC, as well as master's degrees offered through COBEC. That's had a tremendous impact on the development of education in Belize. Because it provided so many graduate-trained teachers, principals, and post-secondary institution leaders (P7)*

Interview Results: Theme 2

2. Internationalization of Member Institutions: COBEC has contributed to the internationalization of member institutions through its collaboration and partnership activities

- *Library development has been a feature from the beginning, and a lot of library work with librarians going to Belize, and Belize librarians coming up to American institutions. (P2)*
- *Well by being available to provide partnerships among Belizean institutions, where American citizens would reach out to find cooperative relationships with Belizean counterparts and we found that receptive on the part of Belizeans who were looking for resources, who were looking for systems in terms of building blocks of cooperation. I think it opened the door to [inaudible] between Belizeans and Americans and it turned out to be beneficial to both sides (P3)*

Interview Results: Theme 2 cont'd

- *I think the most important contribution of COBEC is that it provides a vehicle through which institutions like University of North Florida, and Oklahoma State University, and others to offer graduate programs in Belize, and in those graduate programs were many of the leaders of Belizean post-secondary institutions and the ministry of education (P7)*
- *So in a sense then, COBEC has provided that opportunity to bring all tertiary level institutions together, forming a membership, and exchanging ideas, supporting each other, and to benefit from the technical assistance from US universities. So as a group, they've bonded themselves locally, all the tertiary level institutions. (P8)*

Interview Results: Theme 3

3. Strengthened COBEC Organizational Capacity: COBEC could benefit from strengthening its Organizational Capacity

- *I think it may need to revisit its goals and objectives. There might be some facets of the program that are obsolete, for example. We would no longer expect to do catalogs, for example - partnerships for catalogs. We now need partnerships with study abroad programs or internships, or professional leadership training or something like that. I'm not sure that's spelled out in COBEC. I'm not sure we addressed those goals and objectives in a contemporary way. (P1)*
- *Go back to the original goals of the faculty exchanges with research, joint research, student exchanges, study abroad activities. Those were the four original aims of COBEC. And we have to look at the weaknesses and develop those, show those off. (P10)*

Interview Results: Theme 3 cont'd

- *But, I saw the meetings-- we had two phases to it: You had the first day, where presentations were given, and then the second day where the business meeting would take over. I almost feel like we had swung the pendulum too far. We tried to cram so many presentations into our meetings. So much so, that I think that we're oversaturated with information. (P11)*
- *Another thing that I felt is that there needs to be something happening in between meetings, that it cannot be just, "Okay, we're going to go to Belize and have a good time for those two or three days in Belize." And then nothing happens until we meet again someplace in the United States. (P4)*

Conclusions: Goal 1: Design, develop and implement collaborative programs and activities that address higher education needs in Belize

- Consortium members are recognized as valuable resources and have engaged in many professional development activities that have contributed to increasing capacity among staff, administrators, librarians, and nurses in Belize
- COBEC has contributed to the development of UB, ATLIB and Belize Libraries, and advancing the MOE's higher education agenda
- A large number of Belizeans have achieved advanced degrees with the help and financial support of US partner institutions. Graduates of partner US institutions may be found in all the districts in Belize working in all types of occupations.

Goal 1: Design, develop and implement collaborative programs and activities that address higher education needs in Belize

* Most students were awarded U.S. in-state tuition grants ranging between \$5,000USD and \$10,000USD dollars—significant cost savings to Belizean students. The combined amounts represented approximately \$5,955,000 on the low end and \$11,910,000 on the high end. The more accurate figure is somewhere in the middle because of tuition increases over the last 27 years.

Institution	BZN Students
Albany State	1
Bridgewater State	18
Georgia College and State University	1
Murray State	131
New Mexico State University	6
Oklahoma State	25
Suny Courtland	1
University of Arkansas	15
University of Florida	7
University of North Florida	600
University of South Florida	285
Valdosta State University	100
Western Kentucky	8
TOTAL	1198

Conclusions: Goal 2: Contribute to the internationalization of member institutions

- The Consortium has developed and facilitated **strong and satisfying personal and professional working relationships** between individuals and member institutions
- Consortium member institutions have benefited from the opportunities to engage in **study abroad** and other collaborative activities such as, professional development workshops and establishment of MOUs.

Goal 2: Contribute to the internationalization of member institutions

Sample Study Abroad Economic Impact Model

- **Economic impact:**

- *expenditures* (i.e. money spent while in Belize at a restaurant),
- *indirect expenditures* (i.e. when the restaurant owner uses the money received from a student to purchase additional supplies), and
- *induced expenditures* (i.e. money earned by Belizean employees working at the restaurant can now be used to purchase items for their households)

Estimated Cost of a 4-Week Study Abroad	# of Students	Total amount of a 4-Week Study Abroad	Total amount of spending in Belize (x 2 fixed exchange)
\$2,992* USD/student	8	\$23,936USD	\$47,872BZ

*Actual amount paid by students from a U.S. COBEC member institution who participated in a 4-week program in Belize.

Conclusions: Goal 3: Strengthen the organizational capacity of COBEC as a mechanism for meeting higher education needs in Belize and internationalizing member institutions

- Consortium members are committed to the mission and goals, with the continued addition of new institution members.
- COBEC has established a program for archiving of Consortium materials
- COBEC has, to a certain extent, facilitated increased cross-cultural understanding for Belizeans as well as US partners.

Recommendations: Goals 1 & 2

Goal 1, Q.1.: Institutional support, to:

- Further strengthen the capacity of Belize's institutions in the areas of **student advising/support, curriculum and equipment needs**
- Determine ways to identify **financial resources to fund student academic needs**

Goal 2, Q.2: Increasing collaboration

- **Identify research needs**, commit to knowledge generation and increased opportunities for research collaborations, **internships, and dual degrees** among Belizean and non-Belizean member institutions
- Encourage the support and development of **collaborative grants and research publications**

Recommendations (Goal 3, Q.3)

- Revisit and review, if necessary, **the purpose, mission and goals, also with a focus on strategic planning**
- Establish a Center, Institute, if possible a paid **secretariat to assist with administrative support of COBEC activities**
- **Generate more funds**, perhaps by raising dues or/and seeking grants to support more initiatives such as student travel
- Develop **a plan to recruit new individuals and member institutions**, provide more information to incoming members including information **on how to select partners** (Belizean and US) for collaboration, organizational structure of COBEC and more about ATLIB.

Recommendations (Goal 3, Q.3)

- For the meetings, as suggested, to develop a **timely agenda to include scholarly and helpful presentations that help to move initiatives forward**, but still leaving **time for social networking and relationship building**; continuing the work between meetings.
- Further development of curricular/co-curricular programs on aspects of Belizean culture, history and society at non-Belizean institutions
- Develop and implement a plan for **systematically collecting, storing, and using empirical data** with which to formulate and implement functional policies and make data-driven decisions
- Update the website with more helpful information for prospective students

Recommendations (Further Study)


- A follow-up evaluation study that includes the perceptions and views of members who joined COBEC during the last three to five years
(addressing one limitation of this evaluation: interviews not conducted with new members of the organization)
- Designing and conducting an empirical study on the impact of study abroad programs on varied aspects of Belizean students' personal and professional lives

“An organization like COBEC stands for the power of collaboration”

*Neal McRillis, COBEC
Emeritus Co-chair*

“I credit much of my own personal success and Belize’s success to the COBEC institutions”

*Patrick Faber, Minister of
Education*



*“At the **CORE**
of successful
IHECs is a
foundation of trust
communication and
commitment”*

*(Sternberger,
2005,
p. 15)*

Questions?
Comments?

Thank You! Gracias!

