



**POLL #5**  
**HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERS:**  
**WHAT INSTITUTIONAL DECISIONS**  
**DO THEY INFLUENCE?**

What's AHEAD draws on the expertise of higher education trend-spotters to offer insights into important issues in higher education management. Our fifth poll focuses on leadership in higher education.

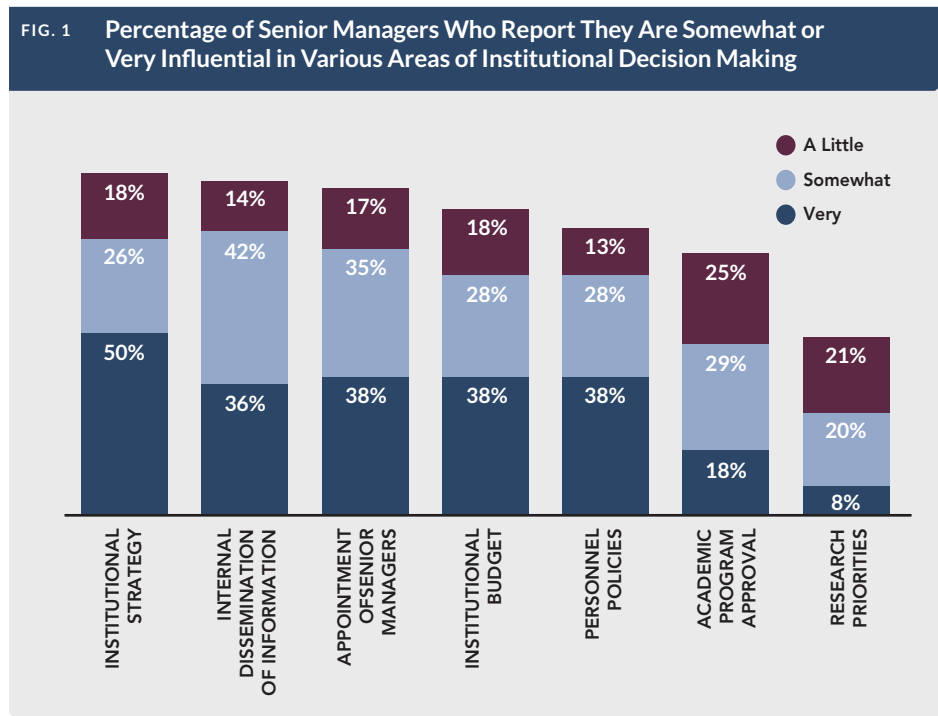
The results of this poll shed light on the perceived influence of higher education leaders on various areas of decision making in higher education. Higher education leaders believe that they influence institutional decisions in a number of areas, including the appointment of senior management, personnel policies, budget, and information dissemination. The area most often cited by higher education leaders as being under their sphere of influence is institutional strategy. The area cited least often is research priorities.

**Higher Education Leaders Believe That They Influence Institutional Decisions in a Number of Areas.**

The majority of responding senior managers perceive that they are somewhat or very influential in institutional decisions pertaining to institutional strategy (76%), appointment of senior managers (73%), personnel policies (66%), institutional budget (66%), and internal dissemination of information (78%).

**Higher Education Leaders Believe They Have Relatively Less Influence on Institutional Decisions Related to Academic Programs and Research Priorities.**

More than half of responding senior managers report that they have no or only a little influence on academic program approval (53%) and research priorities (72%).



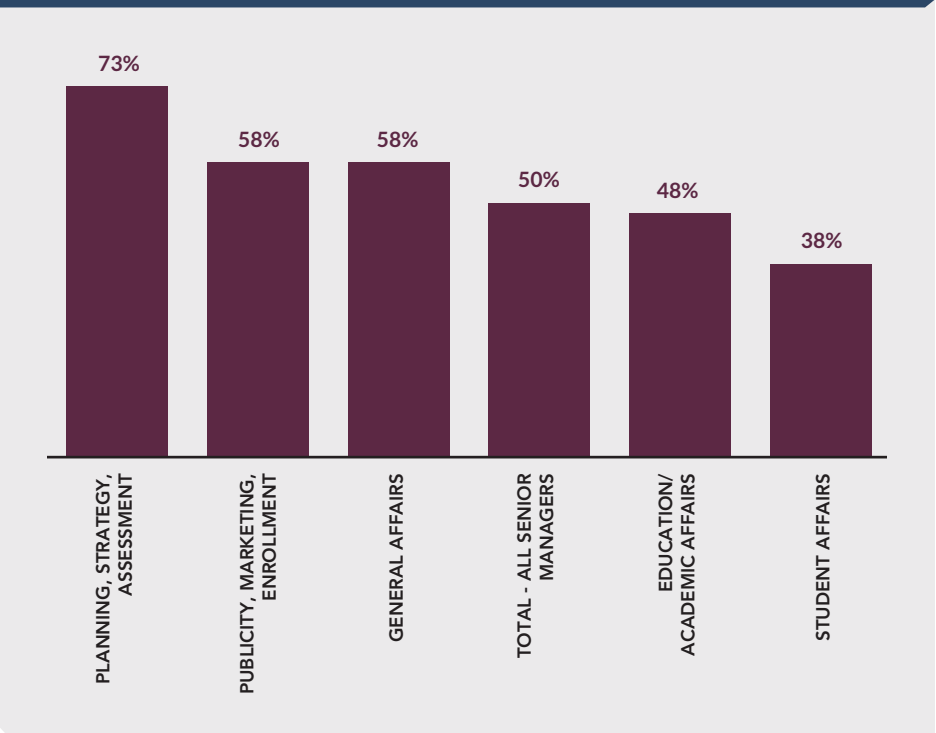
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### Perceived Influence on Institutional Strategy Varies by Area of Responsibility.

As one might hope and expect, a large percentage (73%) of senior managers with responsibilities for planning, strategy, and assessment tend to perceive that they are “very influential” in institutional decisions pertaining to institutional strategy. Senior managers with responsibilities in other areas report less influence over institutional decisions pertaining to institutional strategy. For instance, 58% of senior managers in publicity, marketing, and enrollment or general affairs report being very influential in these decisions. The percentage drops to 48% for those working in education or academic affairs and 38% for individuals in student affairs.

FIG. 2 Percentage of Senior Managers Who Report They Are “Very Influential” in Decisions Pertaining to Institutional Strategy



### About This Poll

We invited alumni of the Executive Doctorate program in Higher Education Management at the University of Pennsylvania who are currently working in a college or university to participate in the poll (n = 195); 121 alumni responded during the 9-day period in which the poll was open (February 17 to February 25, 2015).

In a departure from prior approaches, the current *What's AHEAD* poll is designed to take advantage of an opportunity to connect findings to a cross-national survey of higher education management being led by researchers in Japan, with the support of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. Professor Tatsuo Kawashima of the Institute for Academic Initiatives at Osaka University is principal investigator for the project, in collaboration with other leading researchers from universities in Japan. Findings from the cross-national poll will be released later in the year. The poll included four questions related to perceptions of higher education leaders and ten questions on the demographic characteristics and current employment of the respondent. For this poll, we included only responses to the first question on higher education leadership. The complete poll was estimated to require no more than 15 minutes to complete.

### Suggested Citation

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### About AHEAD

The **Alliance for Higher Education and Democracy (AHEAD)** is dedicated to promoting the public purposes of higher education in fostering open, equitable, and democratic societies. Located within the Graduate School of Education of the University of Pennsylvania, AHEAD applies what is known from our own and others' research to improve institutional practice and public policy through technical assistance and professional development activities. For more information see: [www.ahead-penn.org](http://www.ahead-penn.org)