

Factors Affecting Attrition at a Canadian College

Roger Fisher, PhD

Fanshawe College

Colleges Ontario Retention Conference

May 19, 2010

❑ Funding Sponsor:

Canadian Council on Learning (CCL)

❑ Central Research Question:

What are the key factors associated with attrition specifically at a Canadian community college?

☐ Methodology:

- Longitudinal tracking of Fanshawe College's Fall 2007 incoming cohort ($n = 6,447$) over 3 consecutive semesters
- Analysis: correlation of changes in *enrolment status* with 5 *attrition factors*

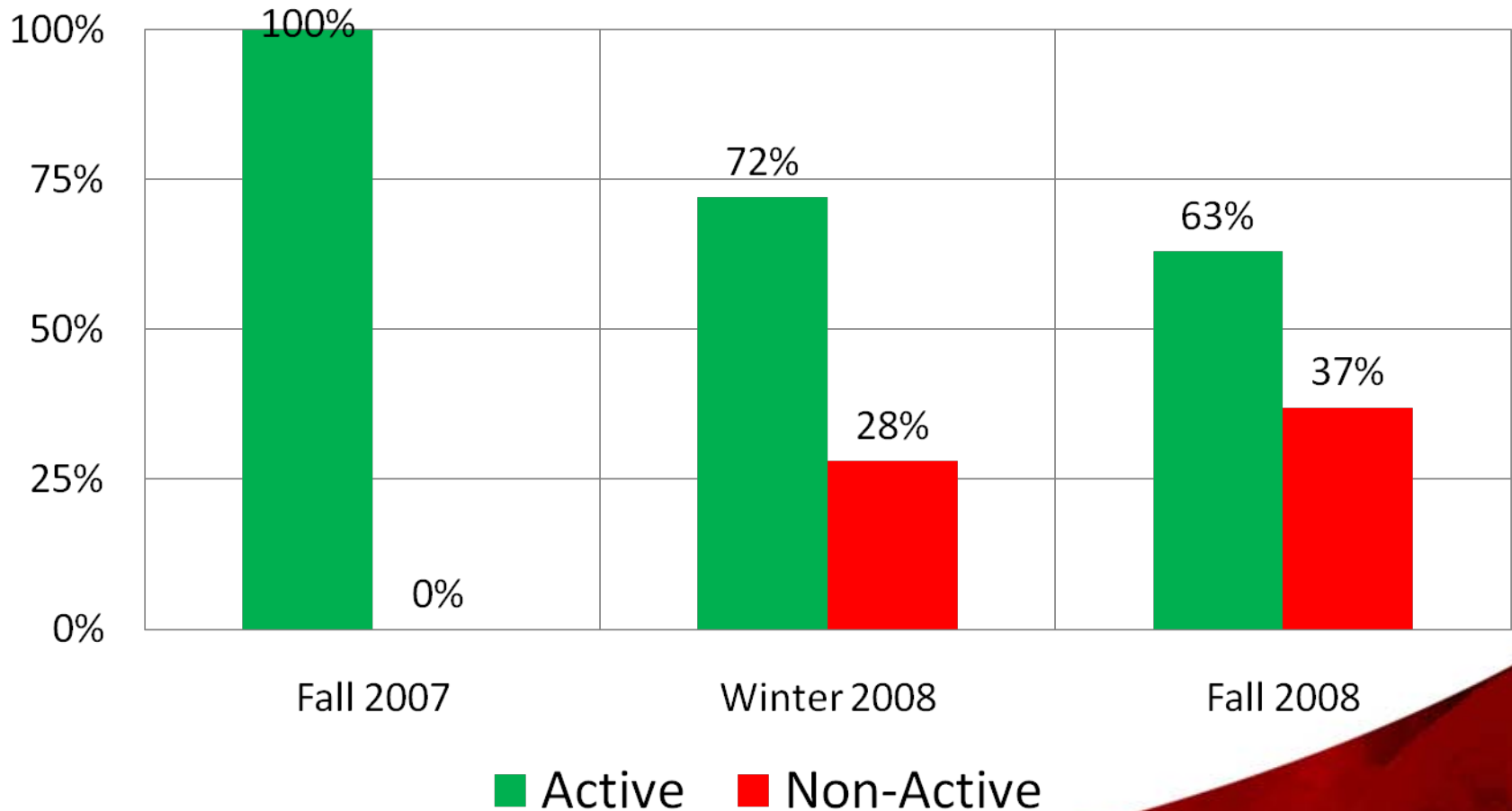
Independent Variables:
Attrition Factors

- Date of admission
- Program choice
- Gender
- Academic preparedness
- Student engagement

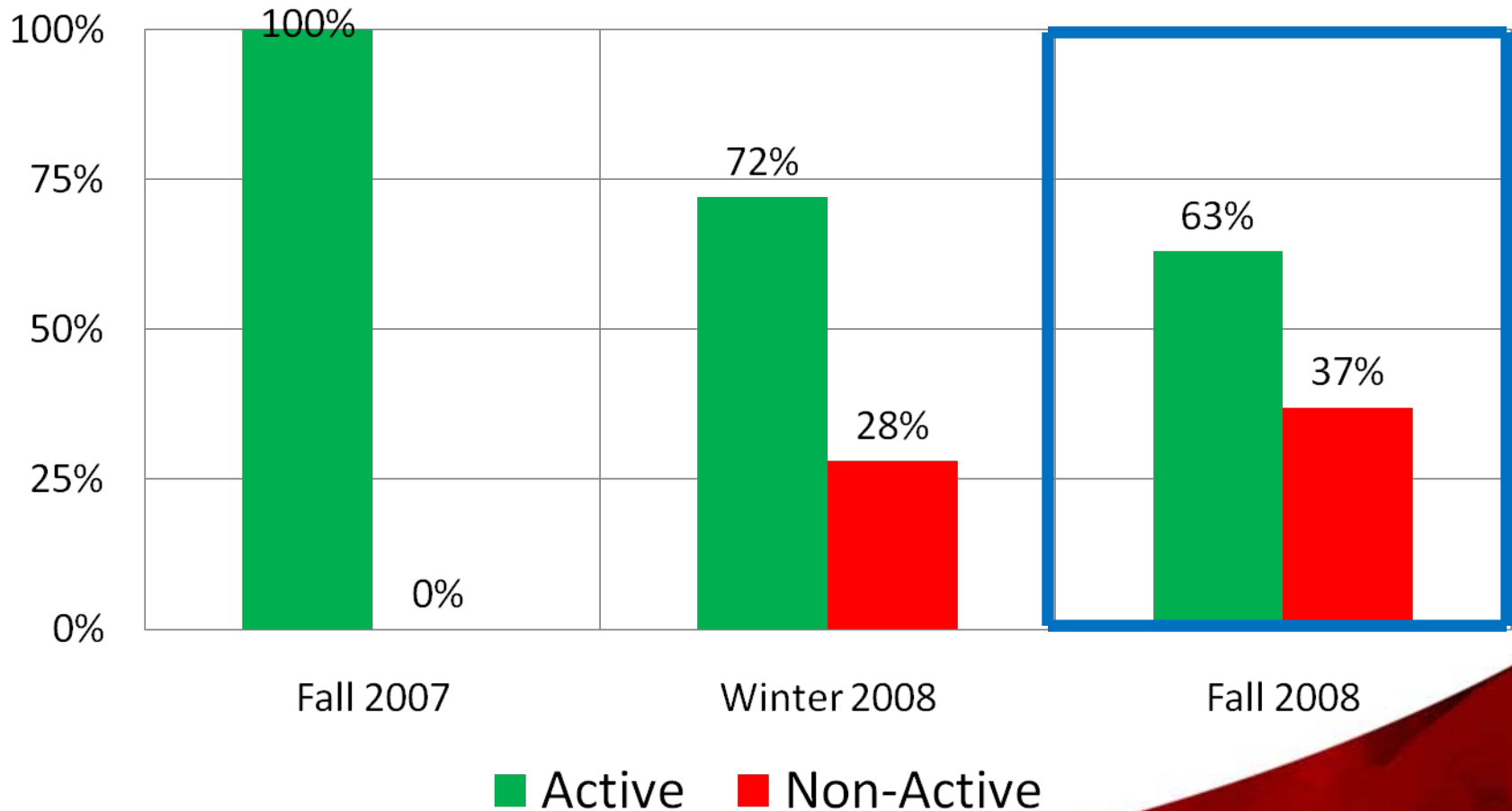
Dependent Variables:
Enrolment Status

ACTIVE
(enrolled/graduated, Fall 2008)
or
NON-ACTIVE
(not enrolled/graduated, Fall 2008)

Retention/**Attrition** (Fall 2007, *n* = 6,447)

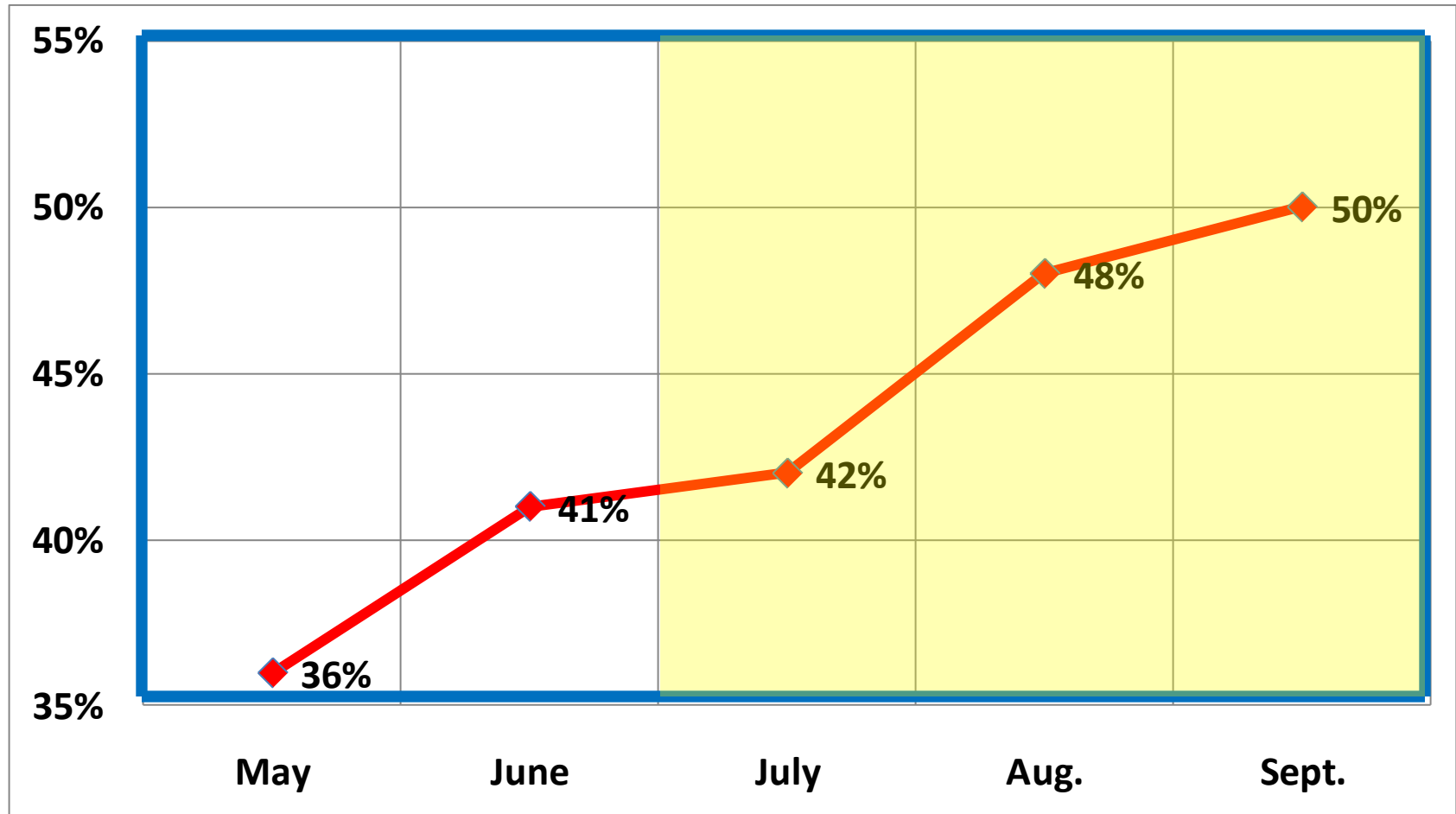


Retention/**Attrition** (Fall 2007, *n* = 6,447)

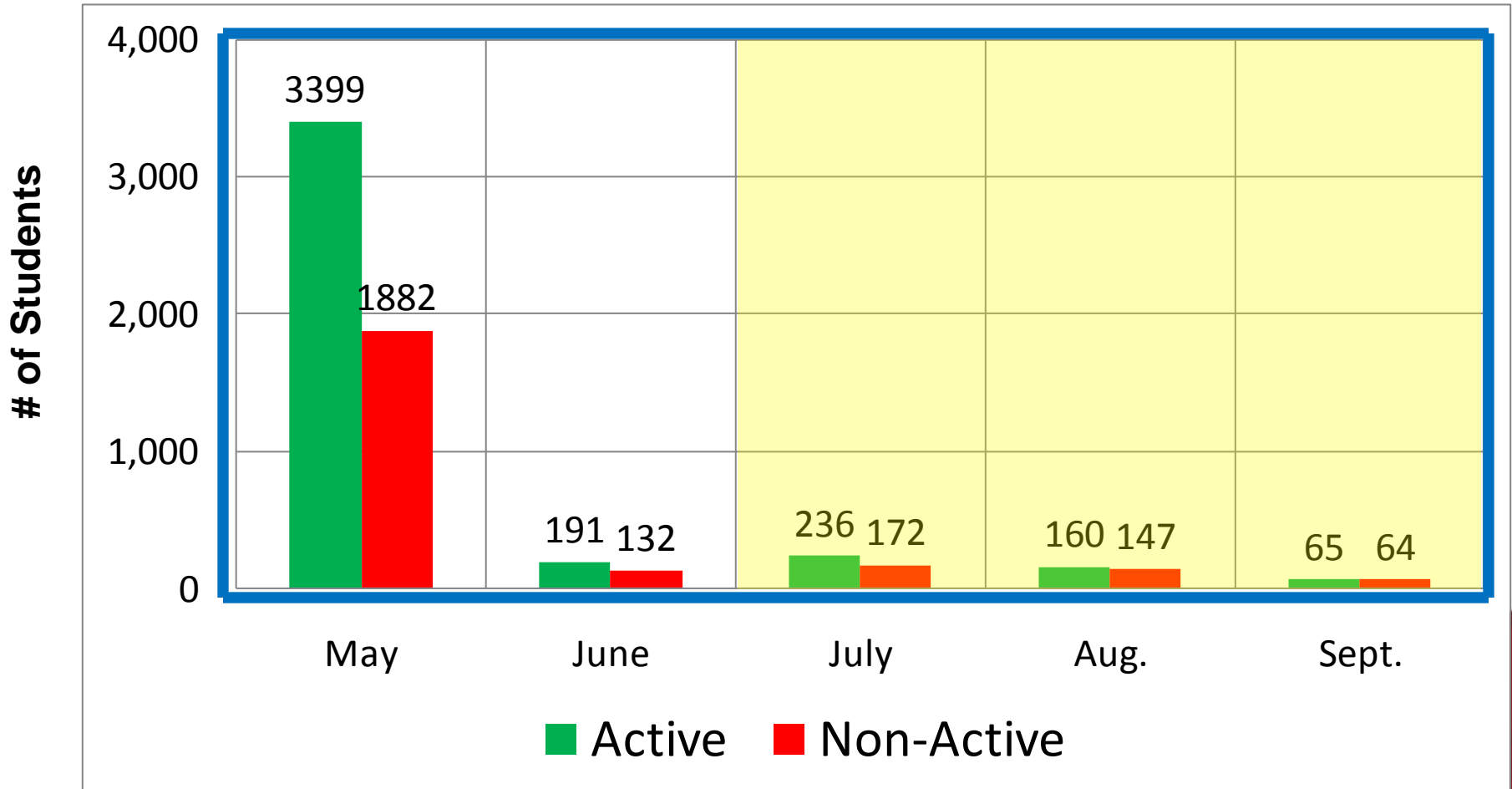


Attrition

by *Date of Admission*



Retention/Attrition by *Date of Admission*



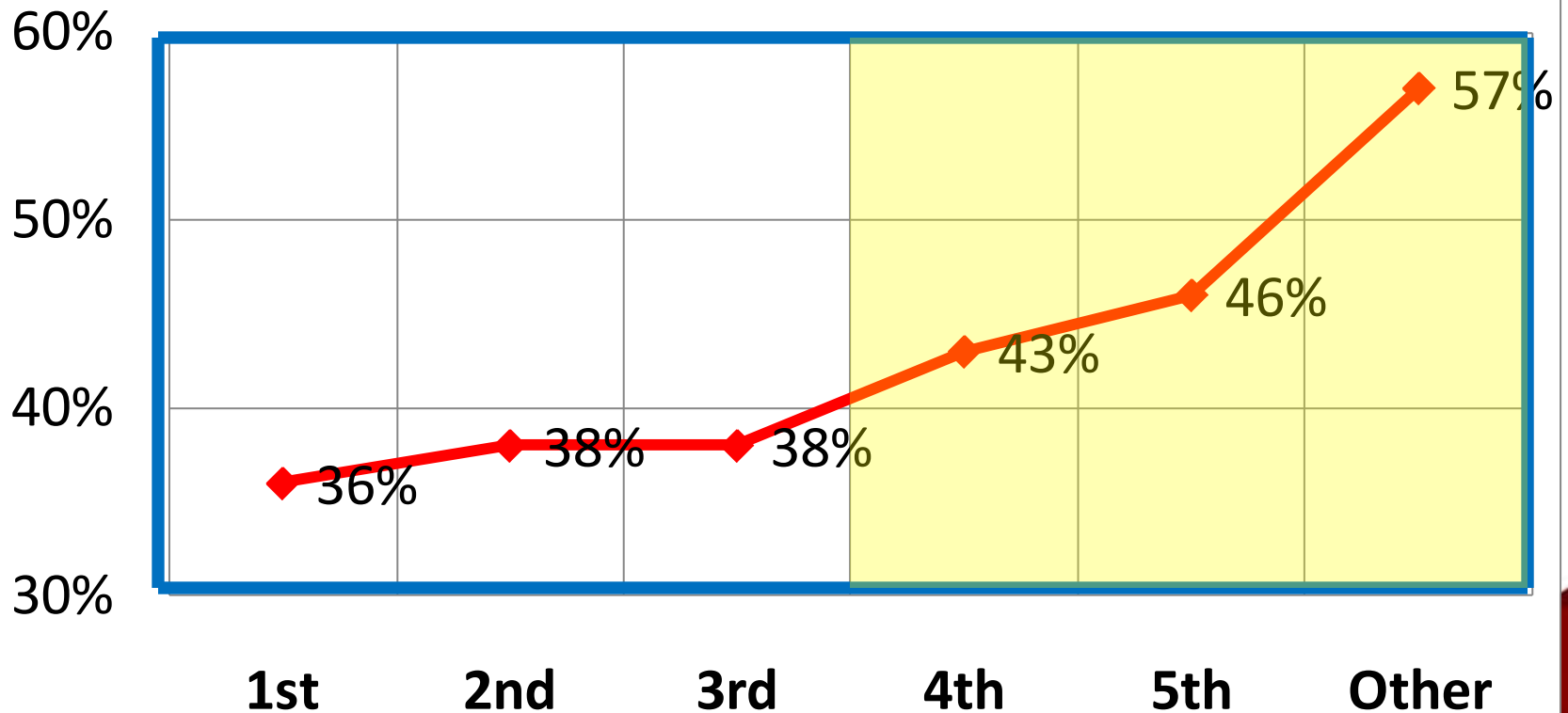
Independent Variables:
Attrition Factors

- ~~Date of admission~~
- Program choice
- Gender
- Academic preparedness
- Student engagement

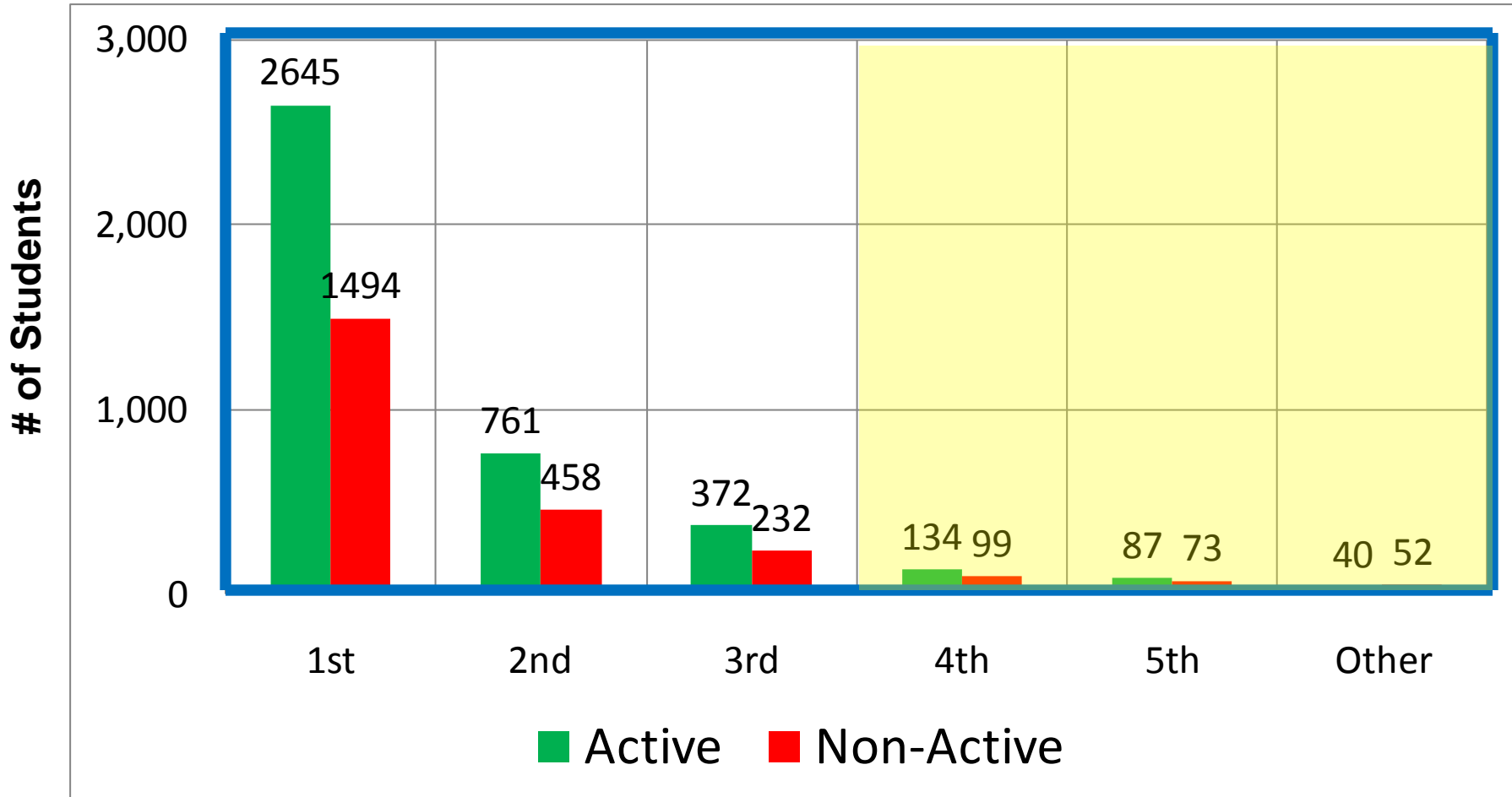
Dependent Variables:
Enrolment Status

ACTIVE
(enrolled/graduated, Fall 2008)
or
NON-ACTIVE
(not enrolled/graduated, Fall 2008)

Attrition by Program Choice



Retention/**Attrition** by Program Choice



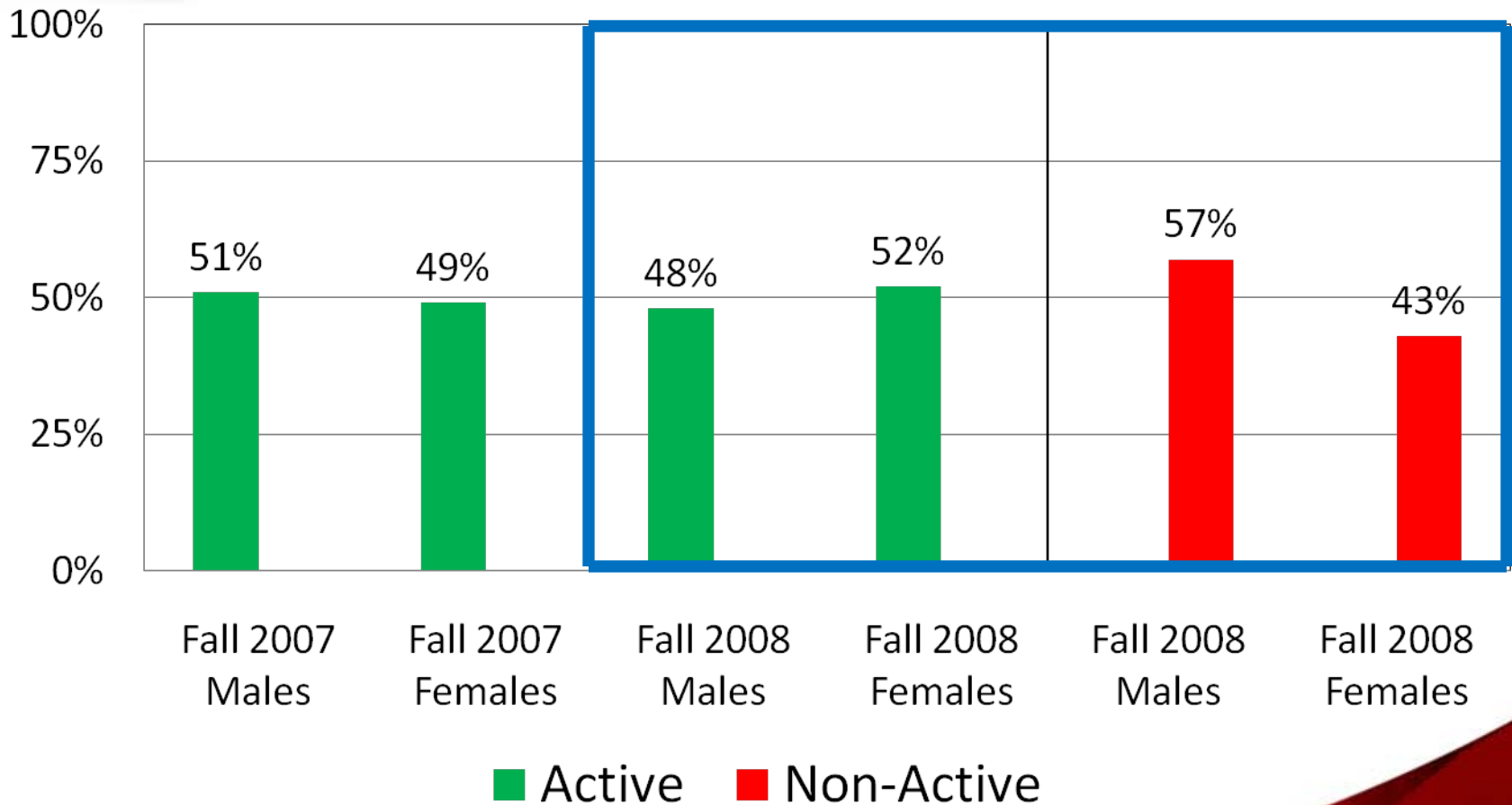
Independent Variables:
Attrition Factors

- ~~Date of admission~~
- ~~Program choice~~
- Gender
- Academic preparedness
- Student engagement

Dependent Variables:
Enrolment Status

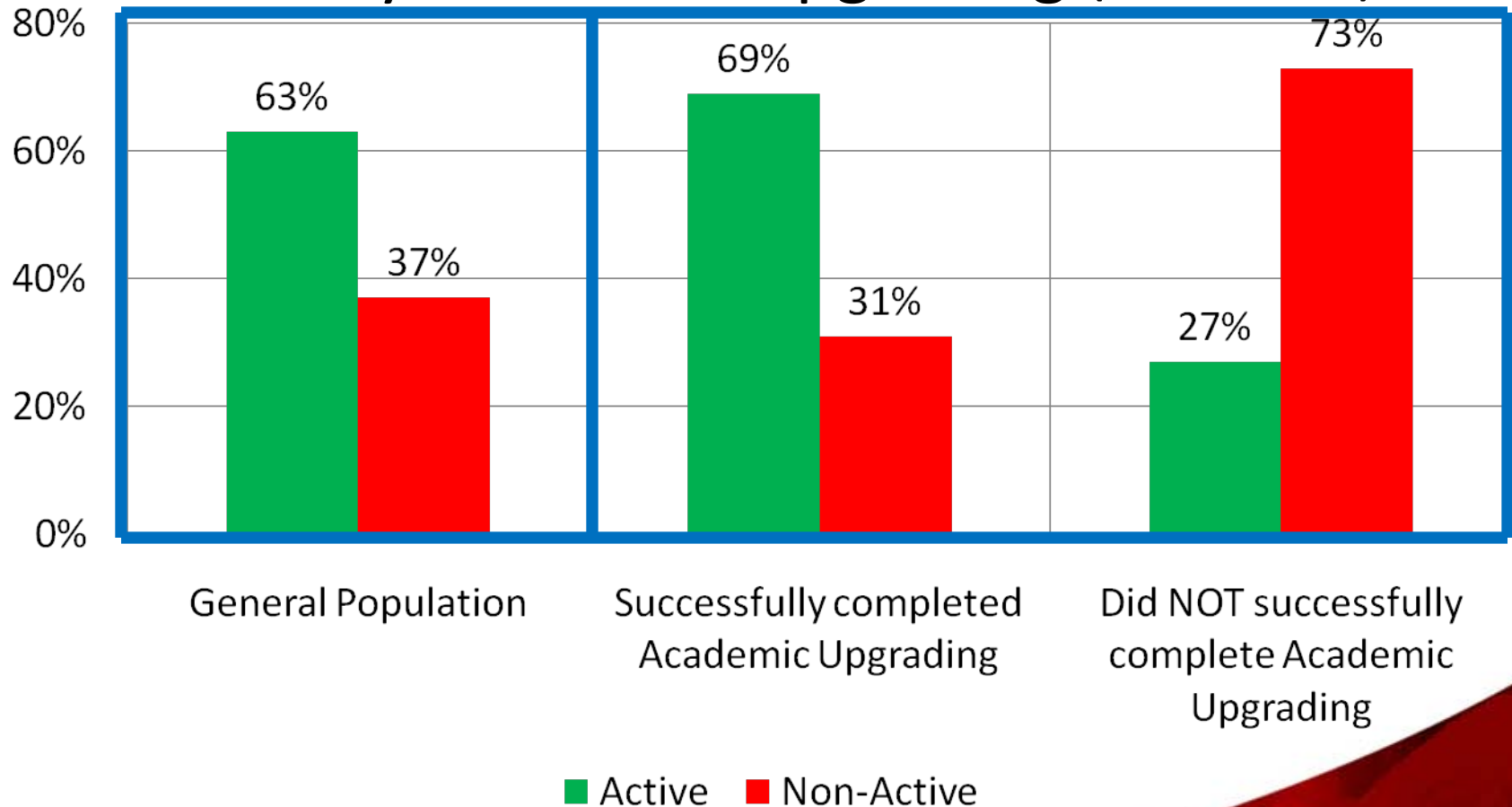
ACTIVE
(enrolled/graduated, Fall 2008)
or
NON-ACTIVE
(not enrolled/graduated, Fall 2008)

Retention/**Attrition** by Gender

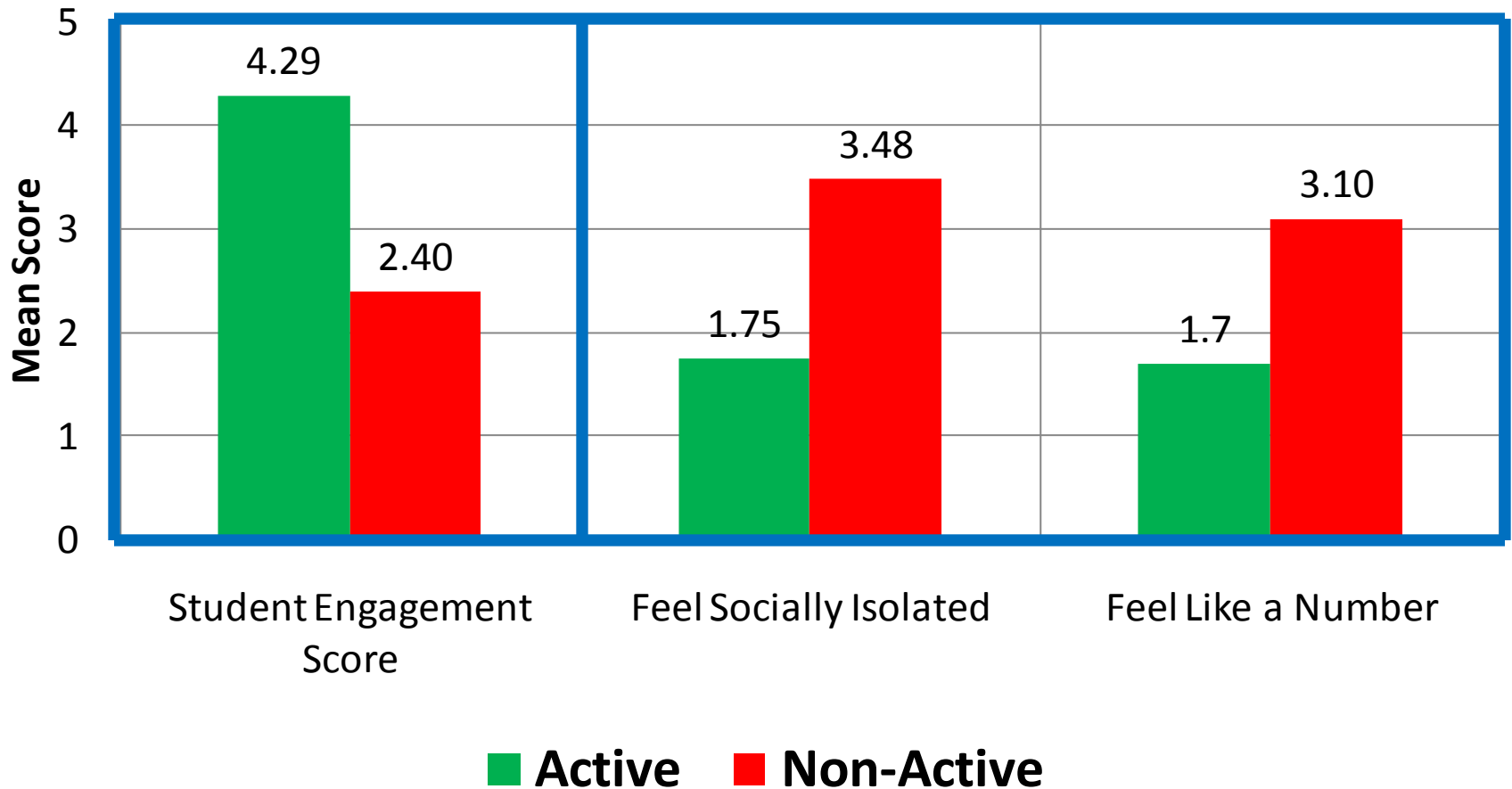


Retention/Attrition

by Academic Upgrading ($n = 1,195$)



Retention/Attrition ($n = 142$) by Student Engagement Scores (out of 5)



Student Focus Group Comments:

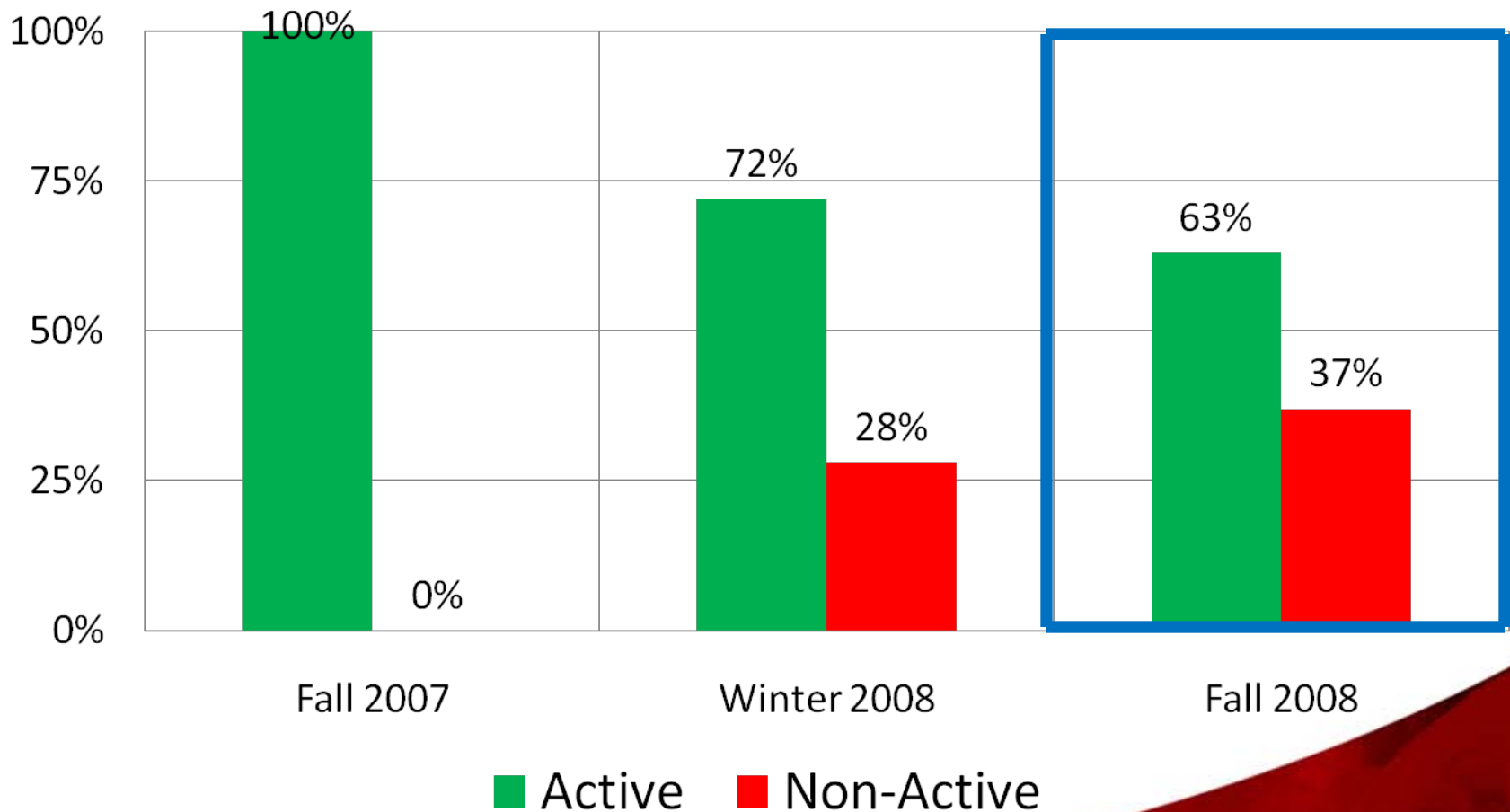
- “sense of community”
- “feeling of belonging”
- “people care about my success”
- “personal, one-on-one connections”
- “almost like a family”
- “like a home away from home”
- “they treat you like an individual, not just another student paying tuition”

What Students Want/Need

President, Fanshawe College Student Union (2007)

- “Students need human interaction.”
- “Students want teachers who relate to students.”
- “An understanding teacher, even just one time, can make all the difference in a student’s entire experience.”

Retention/**Attrition** (Fall 2007, *n* = 6,447)



Independent Variables:
Attrition Factors

- ~~Date of admission~~
- ~~Program choice~~
- **Gender**
(males leave at slightly higher rate)
- **Academic under-preparedness**
(students who did not successfully complete academic upgrading)
- **Weak student engagement**
(students who felt socially isolated, weak sense of belonging to a community)

Dependent Variables:
Enrolment Status

NON-ACTIVE
(not enrolled after 1 year)

Thank You

Roger Fisher

Fanshawe College

rfisher@fanshawec.ca



FANSHAWE
COLLEGE

