



# Impact of Composite Exam Structure on First Year Pharmacy Students



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## Conclusions:

- Students preferred composite exam structure to conventional
- For P1 students, changing to composite exams resulted in:
  - improved student wellbeing
  - improved class attendance
  - decreased cramming
  - fewer course failures

## Background:

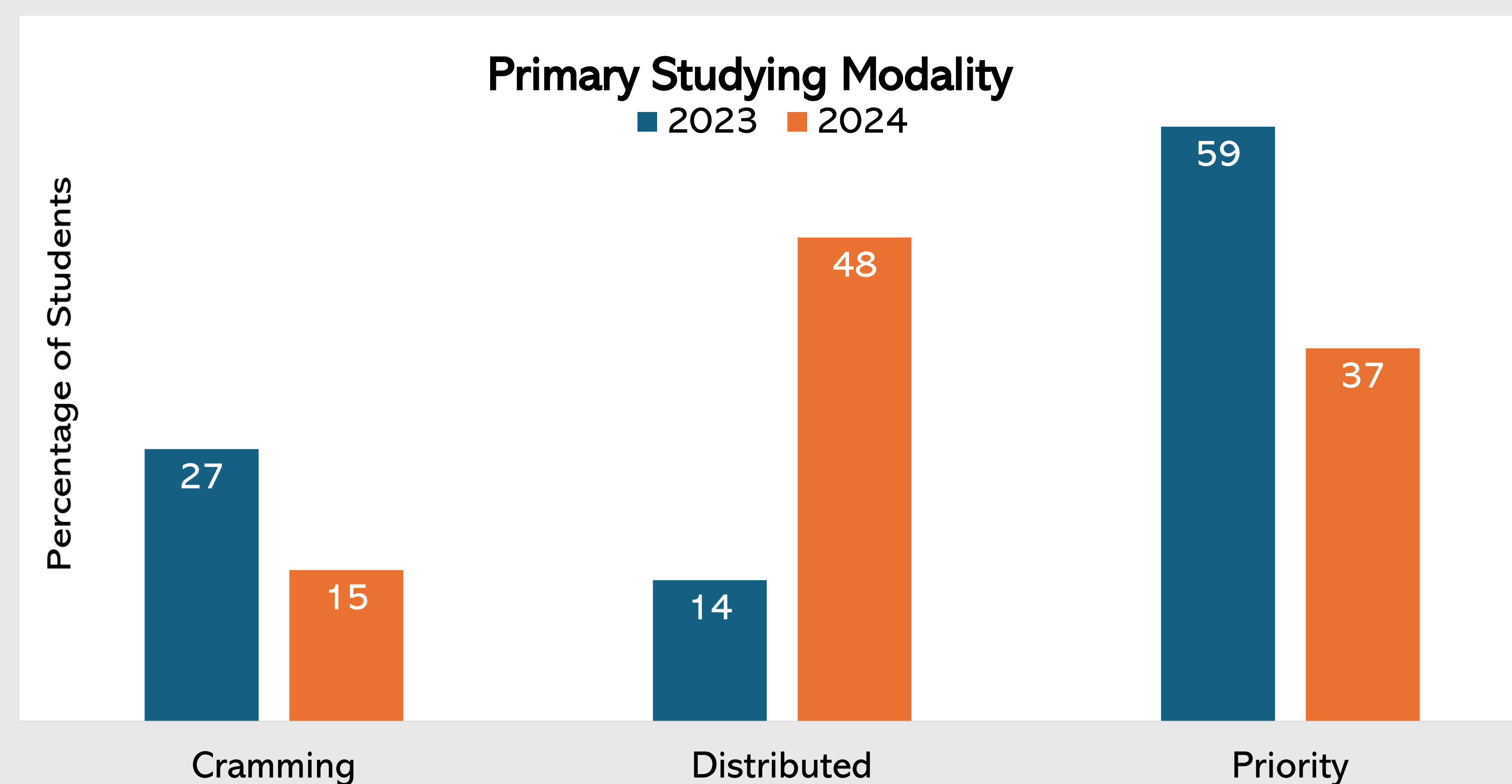
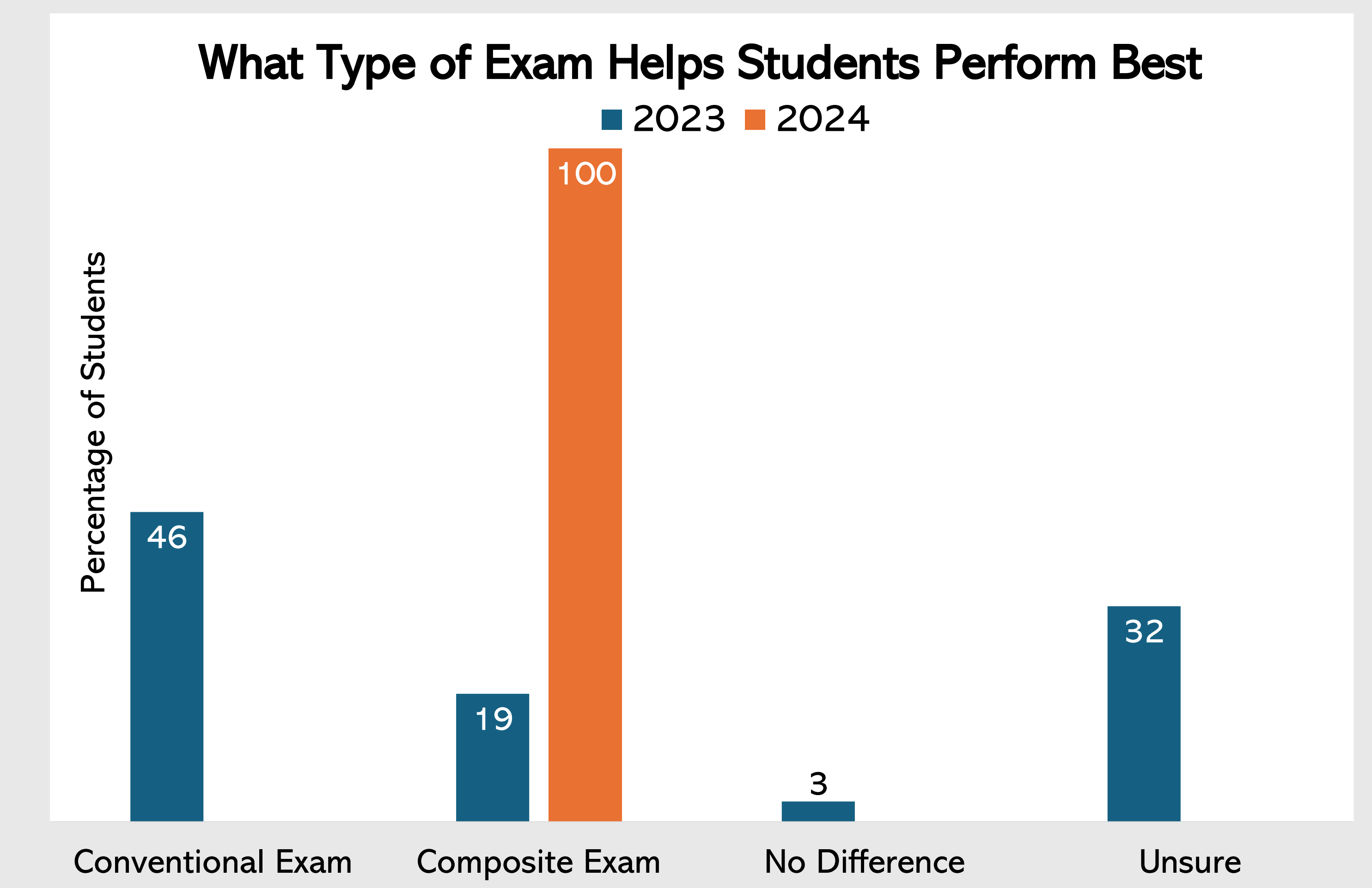
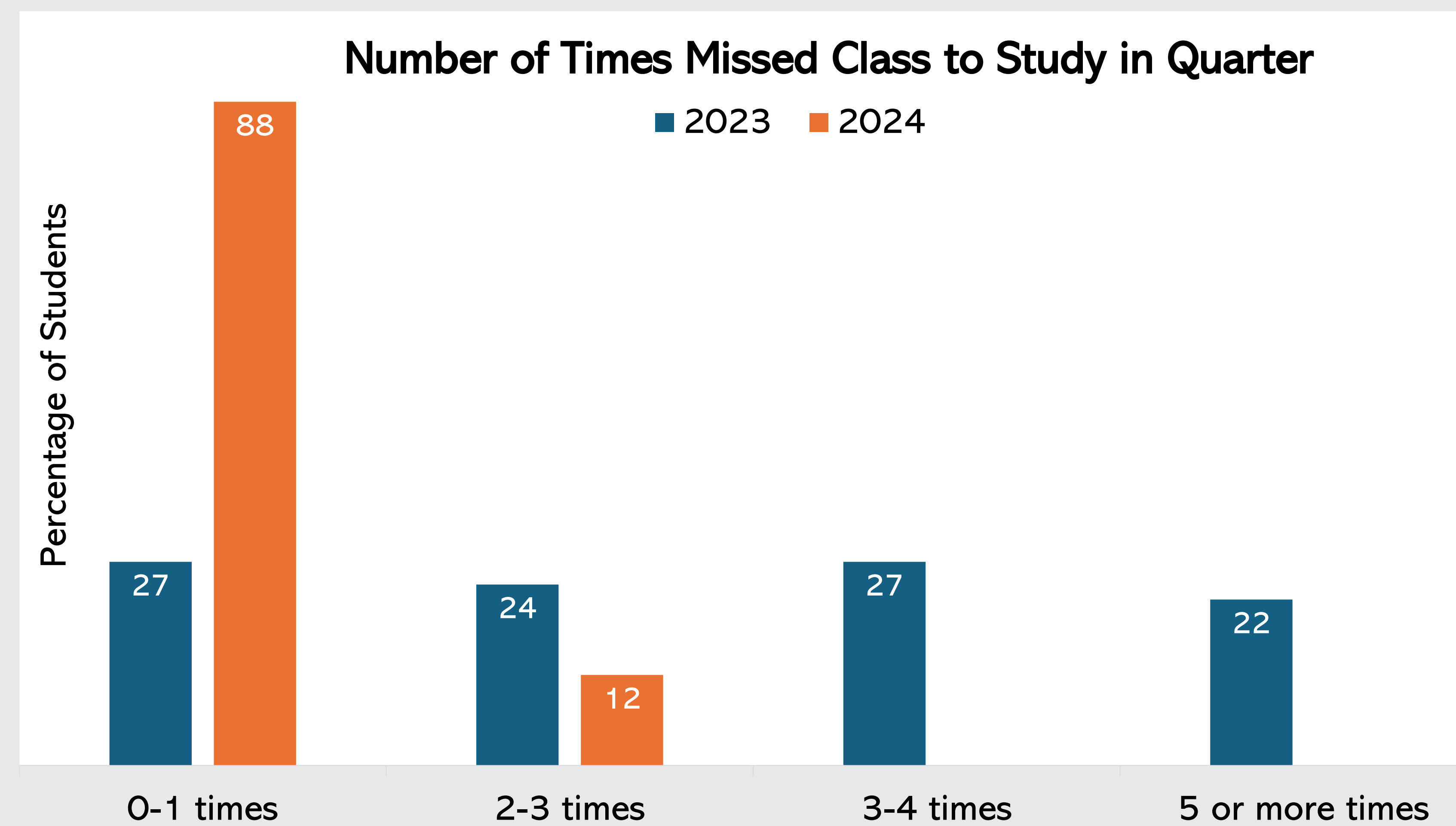
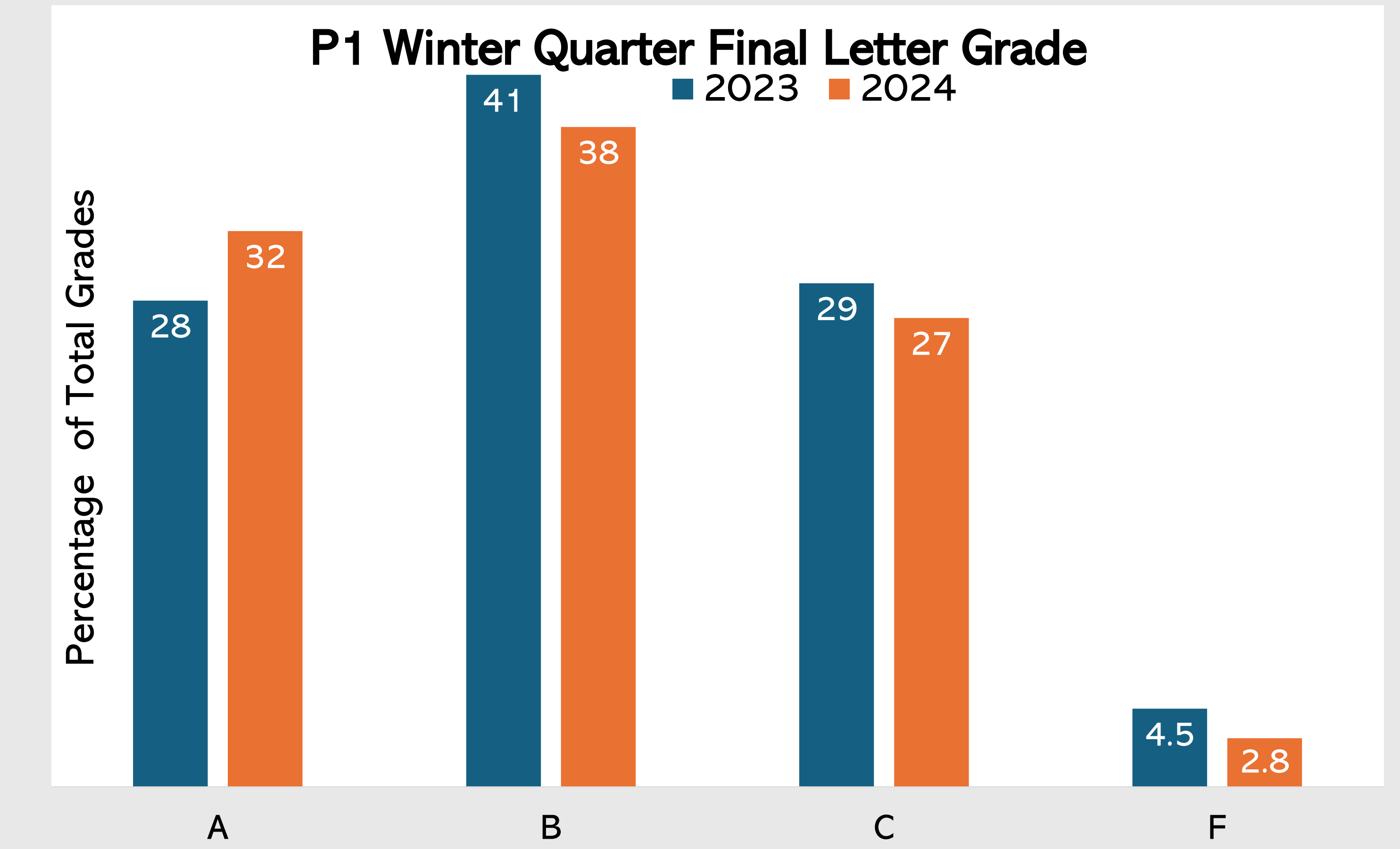
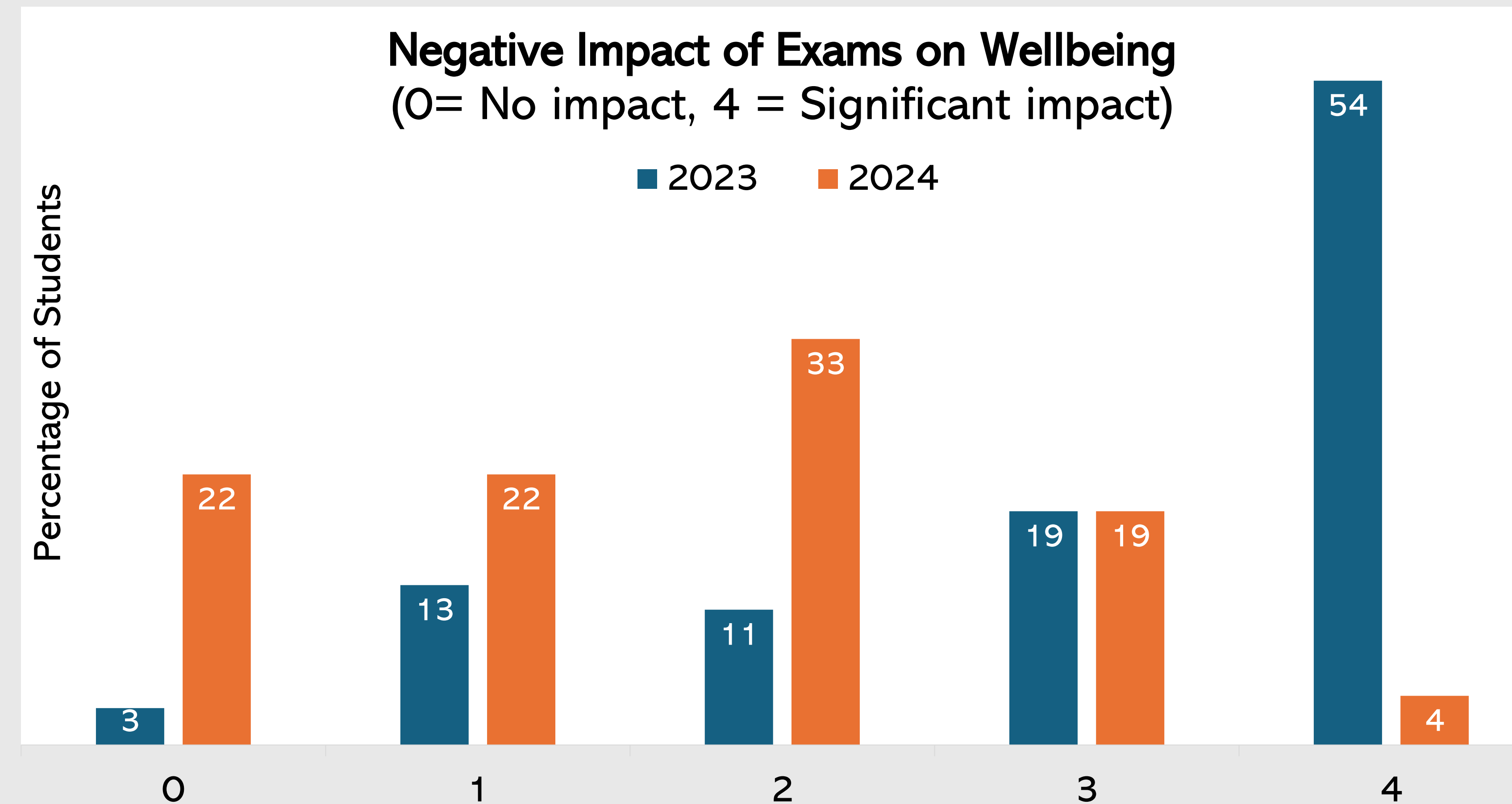
- SCSOP is a 3-year accelerated PharmD Program
- Prior to 2023, each course had individual exams
- Up to 20 individual exams given during 10-week quarters
- Students routinely missed class to study or studied during class
- By end of winter quarter P1 year, students experiencing burnout
- Faculty time and room resources were challenges in the individual course (conventional) exam format
- Other pharmacy schools have implemented composite exams (where all concurrent courses test on same exam) with positive outcomes
- For Class of 2026, SCSOP changed to composite exam structure

## Objective:

- Determine whether student study habits, class participation, participation in extra-curricular pharmacy activities, and wellbeing improved in P1 students after implementation of composite exams
- Determine impact of change of exam structure on academic outcomes in P1 students after implementation of composite exams

## Methods:

- IRB-approved study comparing P1 2023 (pre-implementation) and P1 2024 (post-implementation) cohorts
- Survey administered to both cohorts asking about wellbeing, study habits, perceptions of exam structure during winter quarter P1 year
- Percentage of A, B, C, and failure grades for winter quarter P1 year compared between cohorts



## Future Directions:

- Expanding composite exams to both didactic years
- Conducting concurrent hybrid/online and on-ground pathway with incoming Class of 2027 P1 class
- Continue monitoring of academic outcomes for all cohorts
- Investigate effect of change in exam structure on NAPLEX advantage domain scores and NAPLEX first-time pass rate

## References:

- McDonough S, et al. Student Pharmacists' Perceptions of Composite Examinations in Their First Professional Year. *AJPE* 2016, 80(1) 4; DOI:10.5688.ajpe8014
- Dirks-Naylor A. The impact of weekly multicourse collective exams on pharmacy student academic behaviors and learning in an integrated biological sciences course. *Adv in Physiol Ed* 45: 575-579. 2021. DOI:10.1552/advan.00065.2021