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# Exploring the Attitudes of the Hope Campus Community towards the Ready for Life Academy (RFLA) Program

Katherine Veldink, Madelyn Mikitka, Elizabeth Lilley, Jordon Lambert  
Mentors: Dr. Dennis Feaster Social Work, Professor Nancy Cook, Education

## Research Question

The research question that was developed was, "What are the attitudes of Hope College stakeholders about students with disabilities from the Ready for Life Academy program?"

## Abstract

- Exploring the attitudes of the Hope College campus community towards the Ready for Life Program was a topic first researched for a Fall semester "Genius Hour Showcase," as social inclusion is a primary area of interest for this researcher and her team. Ready for Life is a program that provides post-secondary educational experiences for college-aged individuals diagnosed with cognitive, learning, or social disabilities. Instructors at Ready For Life assist each student in daily instruction and support, and partners with Hope College professors to adapt the academic materials from the courses each student is enrolled in. As a partner with Hope College, Ready for Life students have access to many of the things that Hope students enjoy. However, there are also significant barriers to full inclusion on Hope's campus that could be resolved if Ready for Life was a Hope College program. The research question that was developed was, "What are the attitudes of Hope College stakeholders about students with disabilities from the Ready for Life Academy program?" A survey was designed and then distributed during the lunch hour in Phelps Dining Hall. 52 surveys were provided to a convenience sample of students, staff, and guests. Questions were asked about attitudes toward the Ready for Life program, and their opinions about whether people with special needs should attend college. Following the distribution of the surveys, data were collected and organized by survey question. The initial findings were positive, suggesting that the Hope community would be open to more fully including Ready for Life students into campus life and academics.

## References

- (n.d.). Retrieved March 26, 2018, from <https://www.clemson.edu/education/culife/>
- College of Charleston. (n.d.). Retrieved March 26, 2018, from <http://reach.cofc.edu/>
- Threshold Program. (n.d.). Retrieved March 26, 2018, from <https://lesley.edu/threshold-program>

## Data/Observations

- 52 individuals were surveyed
- 40 individuals (77%) knew about Ready for Life. 12 individuals (23%) did not know about RFL.
- All 52 people surveyed said that Ready for Life students would benefit from a college experience.
- 47/52 (90%) said that it would be a benefit having Ready for Life on campus. 3 (5.7%) said no, and 2 (.96%) didn't disclose.



## Comparable Programs

### Clemson LIFE (SC)

- 2 year basic program
- INCLUDES: functional academics, independent living, employment, social skills, and health/wellness skills
- 2 year advanced program
- INCLUDES: workplace experience, community integration, independent living
- All students who complete a program receive certificate

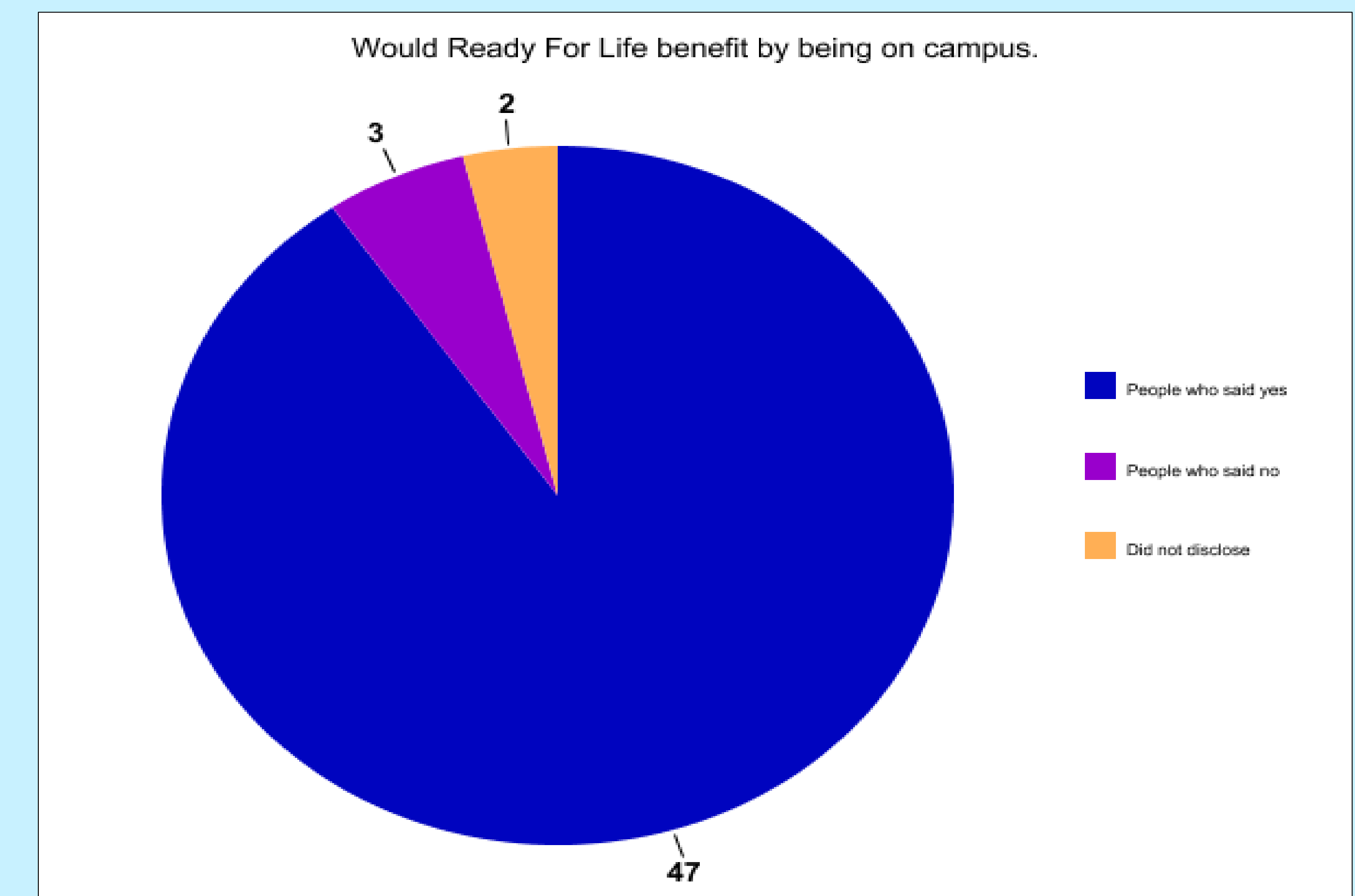
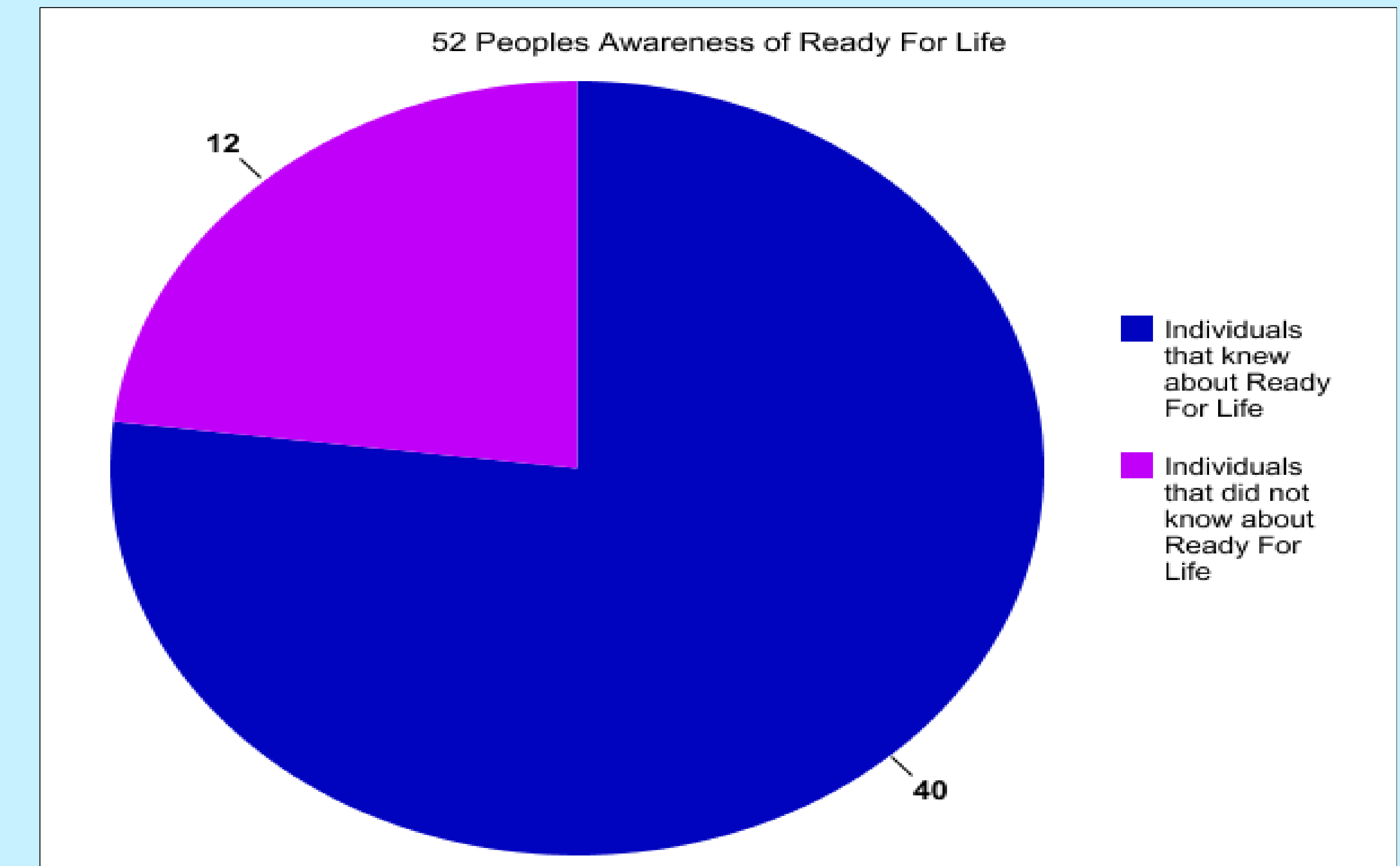
### REACH at College of Charleston (SC)

- 4 year program
- Students are able to attend classes, live on campus, complete internships, and participate in all clubs and events
- Academic focuses include socialization, independent living, and career development

### THRESHOLD Program at Lesley University (MA)

- 2 year program
- On campus housing
- Career training
- Internship opportunities
- Has been around for more than 35 years
- Private university

## Results



## Conclusions

- 100% of the people surveyed believed that both Hope College students and Ready for Life students would benefit from a joint college experience.
- It was found that the Hope College community had a largely positive outlook on merging with Ready for Life and making it a more well known part of campus.
- Allowing Ready for Life students to fully be part of Hope's campus would greatly impact the Hope College community and present Hope students with the opportunity to interact with people who have special needs.