

Giving a boost to medical school applicants through a free medical student consulting service

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INTRODUCTION

- Recent years have shown a disproportionate increase in the number of applications sent to medical schools compared to the number of available seats [1,2].
- Being able to pay for consulting services to increase an applicant's chance of acceptance is an advantage that primarily only higher-income applicants have.
- MedSchoolCoach, Kaplan Test Prep, and BeMo Academic Consulting, popular consulting companies, charge \$3,100-\$15,997 per application cycle.
- Many applicants struggle to overcome the basic financial obstacles of applying, such as primary and secondary application fees and examination fees [2].
- Giving a Boost (GAB) was founded to provide free application consulting services to medical school applicants in the greater Pittsburgh area.
- Through our services, we hope to level the playing field by guiding others through the convoluted application process free of charge.

METHODS

- Over the 2020-2022 application cycles, GAB matched over 100 applicants with 60 volunteer medical student mentors at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.
- We contacted to applicants in the Greater Pittsburgh area via undergraduate pre-health advising offices, pre-health organizations, and social media.
- We recruited medical student volunteers through email, social media, and group messaging.
- Mentors met with applicants throughout the application cycle and assisted with personal statements, secondary essays, mock interviews, and letters of intent/interest.
- We sent surveys to applicants at the end of the application cycles to measure acceptance rates and overall satisfaction with the program.

RESULTS

Figure 1: Perceived helpfulness of services used among applicants (2020-2022)

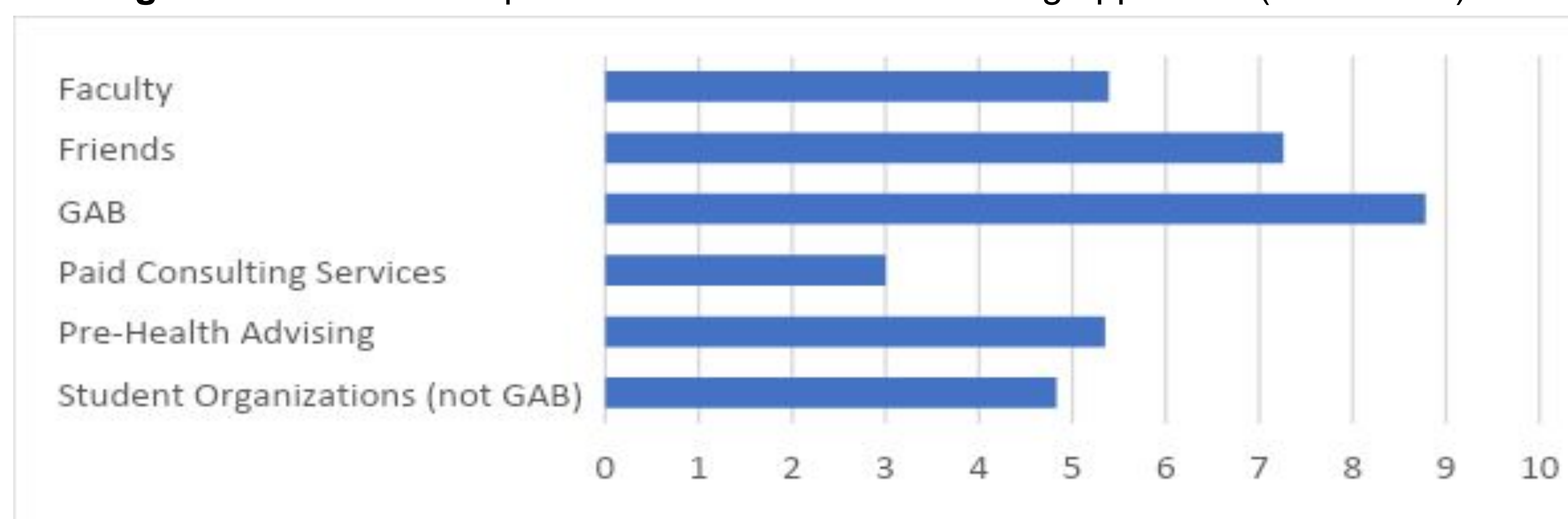


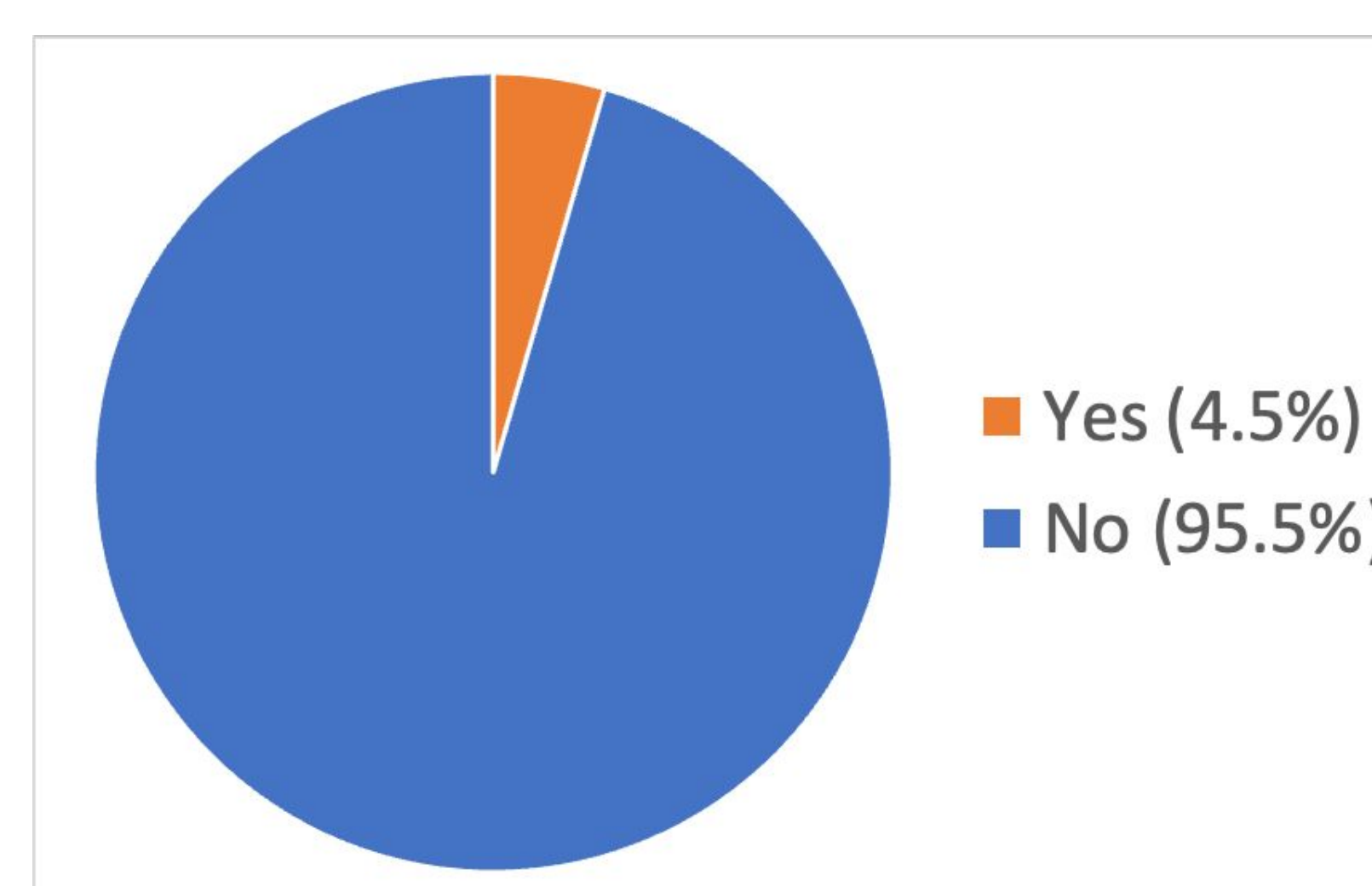
Figure 2: Resources other than GAB used by applicants (2020-2022)

Premedical Resource	Total number of applicants, N=52 (%)
Friends	41 (78.8)
Faculty	15 (28.8)
Prehealth advising	35 (67.3)
Student organization (not including GAB)	15 (28.8)
Paid consulting service	2 (3.8)

Figure 3: Acceptance rates of GAB applicants (2022-2022)

Application Cycle	Number of applicants	Acceptance rate (%)	National Acceptance Rate (%)	p
2021-2022	22	90.9	41.2	<0.001
2020-2021	29	72.7	36.3	0.0034
Combined 2020-2022	51	80.6	38.9	<0.001

Figure 4: GAB's applicants who can afford similar paid consulting services



DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

- For the last two application cycles, GAB demonstrated a significant increase in the overall acceptance rate in our cohort compared with the national average.
- Overall, applicants reported that GAB's services were more helpful than those from undergraduate pre-health advising offices, student organizations, friends, faculty, and paid consulting companies ($p < 0.001$).
- Medical students can be an efficacious and reliable resource for medical school applicants.
- Medical students who participate in GAB gain valuable experience in the field of medical education by developing leadership and mentorship skills.
- We hope our success will encourage the expansion of this model to peer institutions and reduce the socioeconomic barriers inherent in the medical school admissions process.

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