

Diversity Plans for Academic Libraries: Making Sure We Get There from Here

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In 2008, the University of Toledo Libraries revised its diversity plan. As part of this process, the Diversity Committee reviewed diversity plans from other libraries to identify issues commonly included in libraries' plans. This poster reports on the results of a follow-up project of a formal content analysis of library plans. It is our hope that the results of this research will save time for those creating or revising diversity plans at their libraries.

Methods:

Web pages of 656 institutions were identified via the Carnegie Classification database as Level = '4-year or above' and Control = 'Public'. A search was made for library diversity plans (or library diversity initiatives). Not included were documents that summarized a library's/library system's thoughts about diversity, procedures for helping patrons with disabilities, information about diversity committees, etc. Libraries' general strategic plans were also excluded. Of the 656 institutional libraries, only 24 had diversity plans published on their web sites. These plans were analyzed in two stages. First, each was reviewed by the four researchers to identify themes. Second, the identified themes were used to analyze the plans and to determine the extent to which the themes were represented in the plans.

Results:

Defining Diversity

54% of the diversity plans that we studied included a definition of diversity. Most of the plans held a typical definition (Fig. 1). One plan included student type (traditional, non-traditional, distance learning, etc.) along with the standard terminology. A few plans went beyond the standard definition of diversity to incorporate more philosophical, contemplative definitions of what diversity means to that specific library by incorporating ideals of social justice and global awareness into the language of the plan.

Collections

Nearly all plans reviewed addressed their collections (18 out of the 19 plans that included initiatives beyond recruitment and retention). Collection-related goals and objectives fell into three categories (Fig. #2).

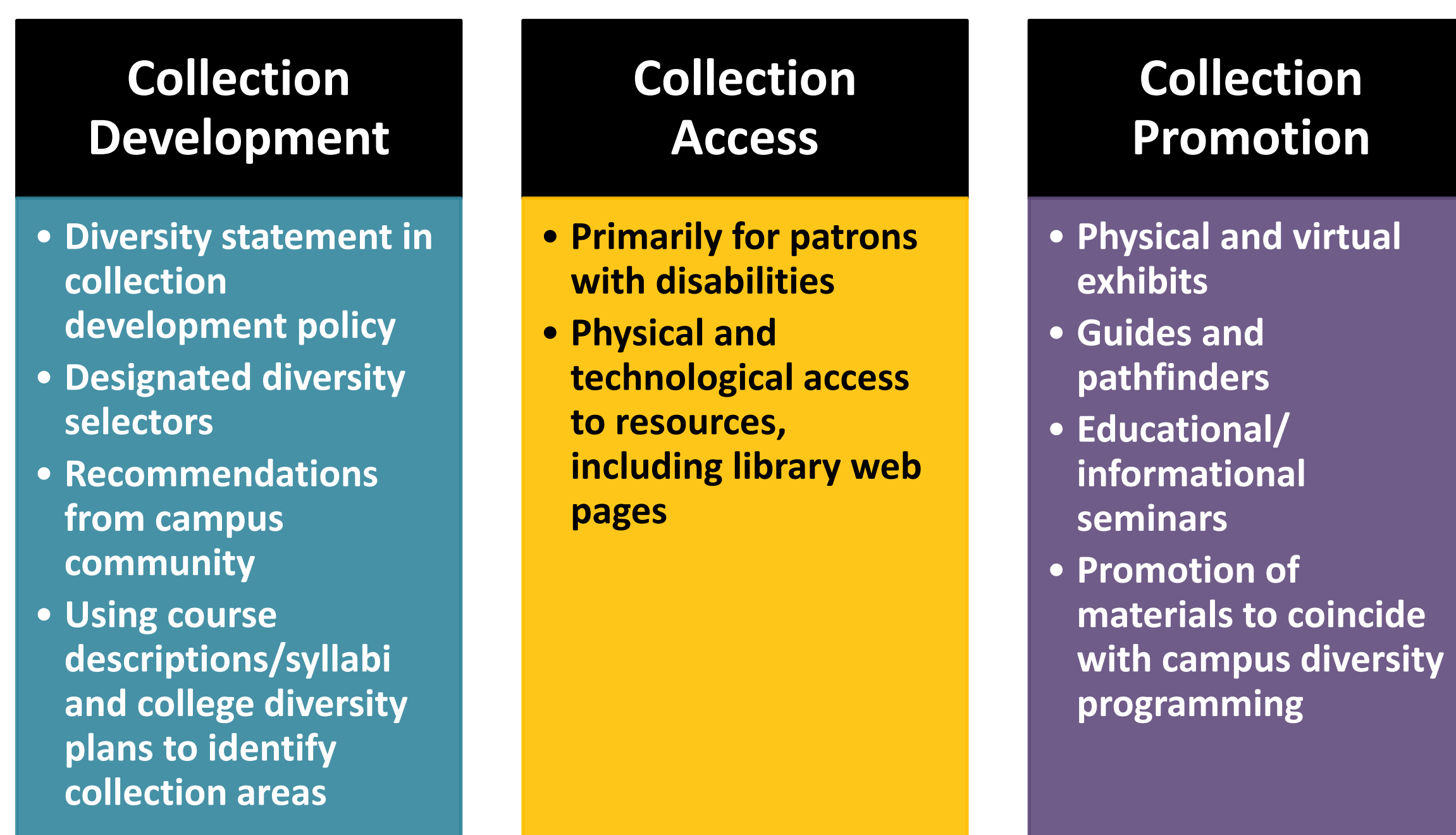


Fig. #2

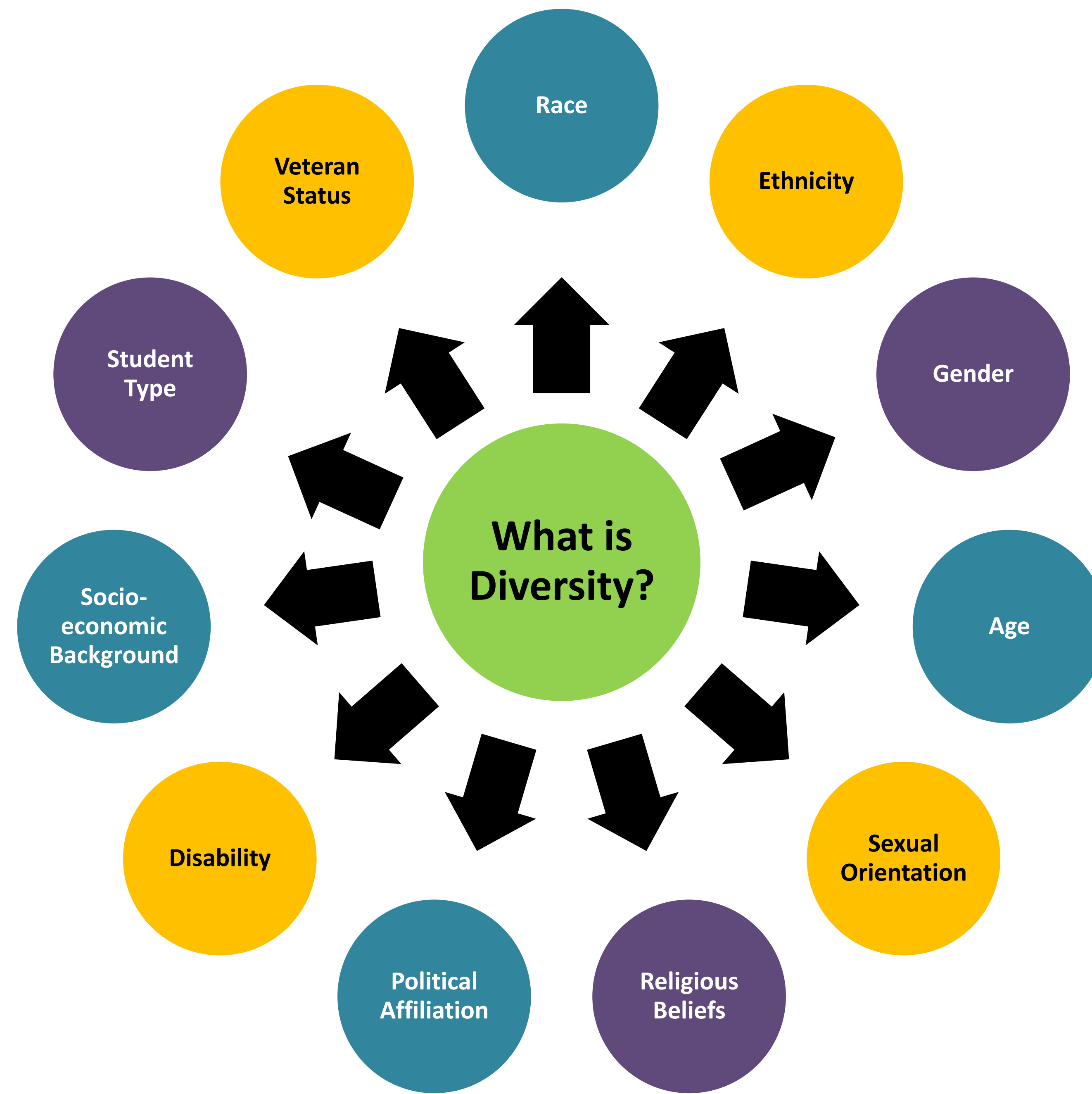


Fig. #1

Diversity Plan Scope

The diversity plans spanned a fourteen-year period and ranged from a single document of broad declarations to a thirty-six-page detailed document (Table 1.)

Table 1. Diversity Plan Scope			
Plan #	Year	# of pages	Description
1	2008	2	Detailed, focused on goals and objectives only
2	2007	36	Detailed, with goals and objectives
3	2005	4	Moderately detailed, with some goals, objectives, and benchmarks
4	1999; rev. 2000	15	Moderately detailed, with some goals, objectives, and benchmarks
5	as of 2010	5	Focus on recruitment and retention
8	2008-2010	9	Detailed, with goals and objectives
9	2004-2009	7	Detailed, with objectives, strategies and outcomes
10	2005-2009	1	Broad declarations
11	FY 2001-2005	2	Focus on recruitment and retention (of one minority group)
12	2008	3	Focus on collection development
13	2009	2	Broad declarations
15	2005	4	Detailed, with goals, some objectives
16	2009-2010	3	Detailed, with goals
17	2007-2012	2	Moderately detailed – broad goals
18	2003-2005	3	Moderately detailed goals
19	2008; rev. 2009	30	Detailed, with goals and objectives
21	2009-2011	8	Detailed goals and strategies
22	2006-2007	2	Detailed goals
23	2008	4	Detailed goals and objectives
24	2005	10	Detailed, with goals and objectives
25	2008-2010; rev. 2008	18	Detailed, with goals and objectives

Employee Development

Half of the plans in this study discussed the importance of providing professional development opportunities for library faculty, staff and student workers.

In most plans, library support for professional development was viewed as a means to attract and retain minority workers to the library profession (Examples: Fig.#3).

A single plan mentioned diversity-related research as an important initiative toward the professional development of librarians, with the desired outcomes of increasing librarians' understanding of diversity through their research efforts and contribution to the overall body of research on library diversity issues.

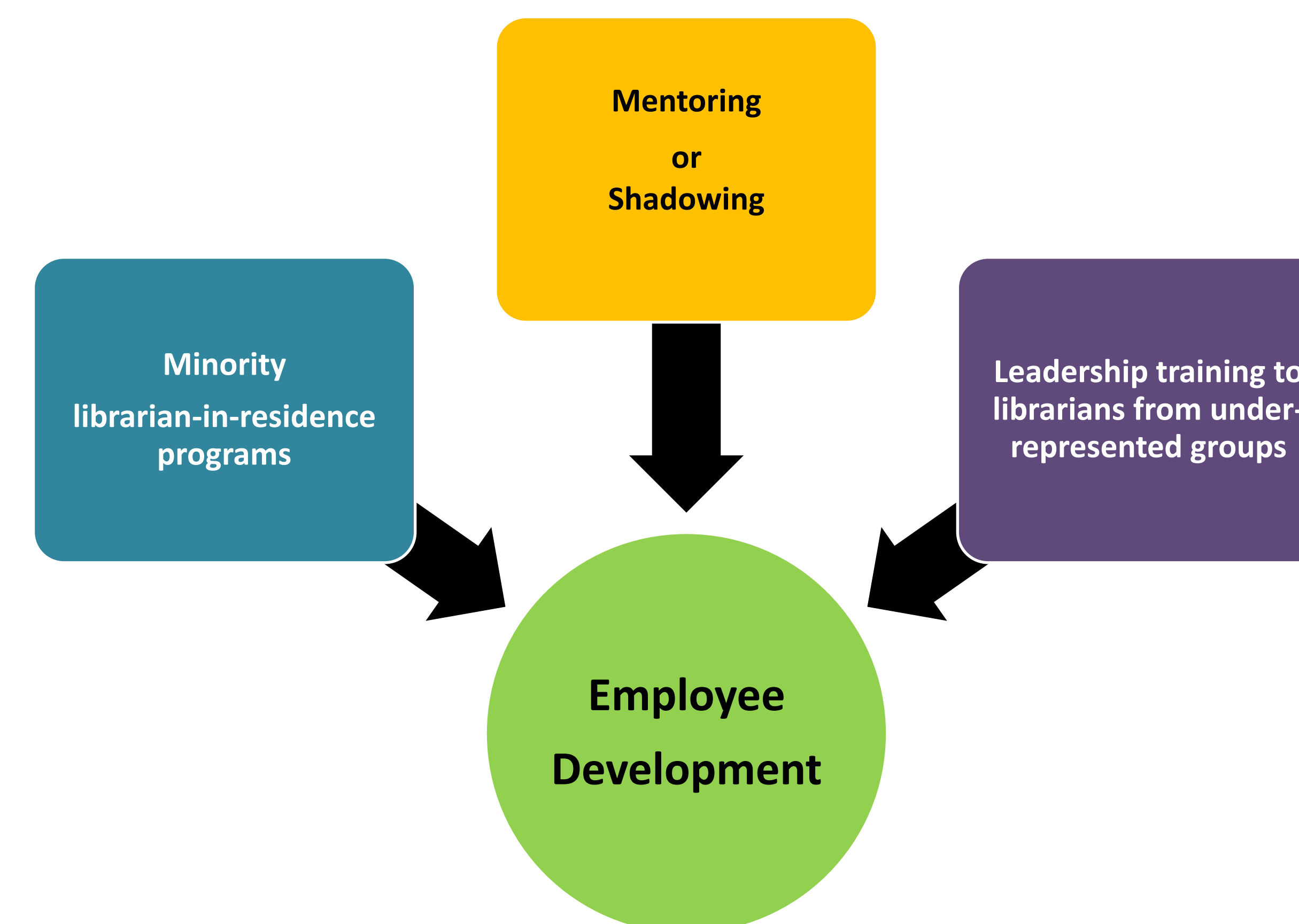


Fig.#3

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and retention was present in all but one of the plans surveyed. Several means were suggested for improving recruitment and retention of library student workers, staff and faculty (Fig.#4), along with suggestions for promoting librarianship to increase diversity within the profession. Specific wording (e.g. "philosophy," "process," "methods," "best practices," "policy," "strategies") in 48% of the plans called for some sort of formal document to use as an outline for improving recruitment and retention. Making announcements in appropriate lists and publications was the prevailing method for advertising vacant positions in 48% of the plans). Other ideas included:

- Contacting library schools
- Network and publicize positions at local, regional, and national library meetings
- Contact minority student groups and organizations
- Contact local volunteer, community outreach, and pre-professional minority organizations
- Speak to local school groups
- library credit course [to create interest in the profession]

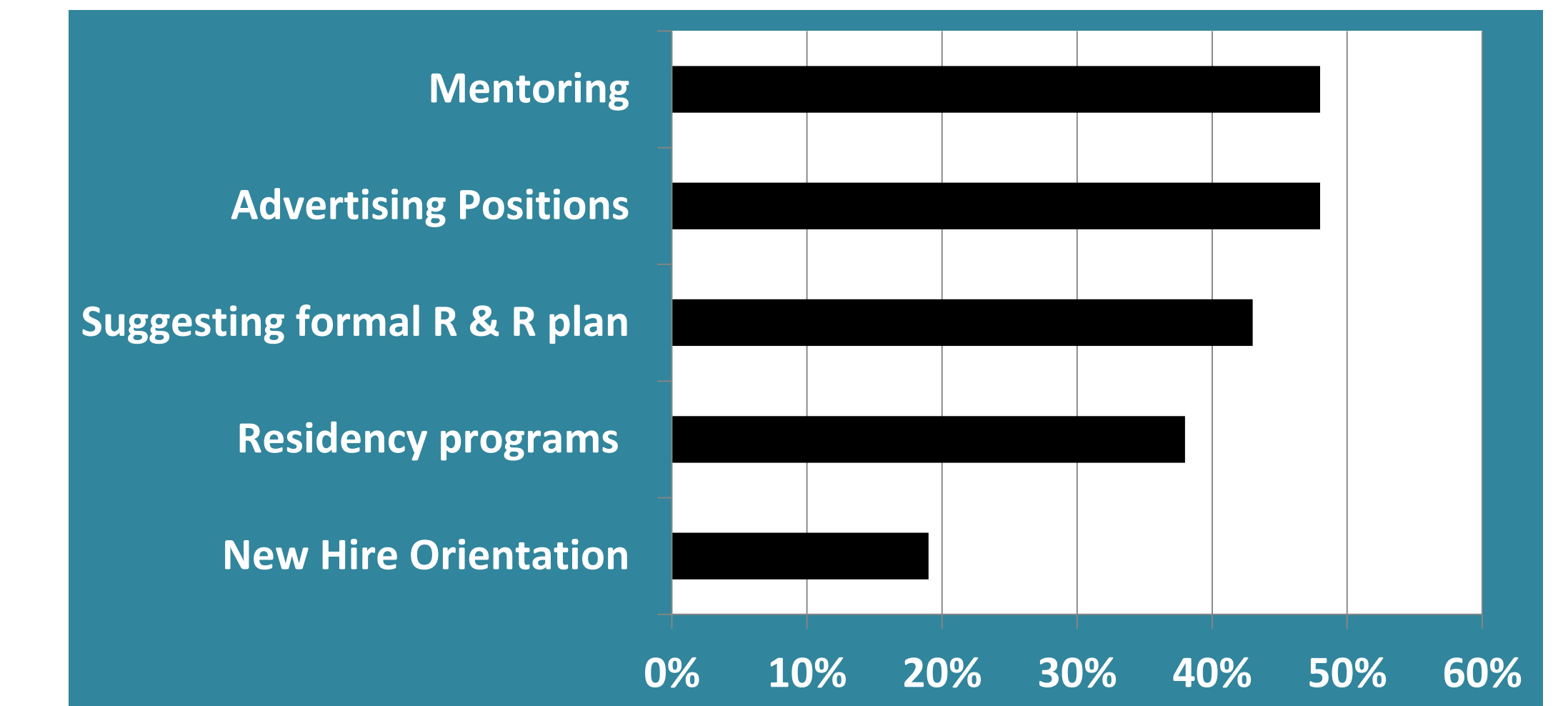


Fig.#4

Programming

Three-fourths of the plans in this study considered methods of programming to promote diversity (Fig. #5). Specific events suggested for participation included "Library Career Day," "Disability Awareness Month," and "Diversity Week."



Fig. #5

Services

60% of the plans offered or planned to offer special services to enhance or promote support of diverse populations. A review of these plans indicated the following services and concepts (Fig. #6):

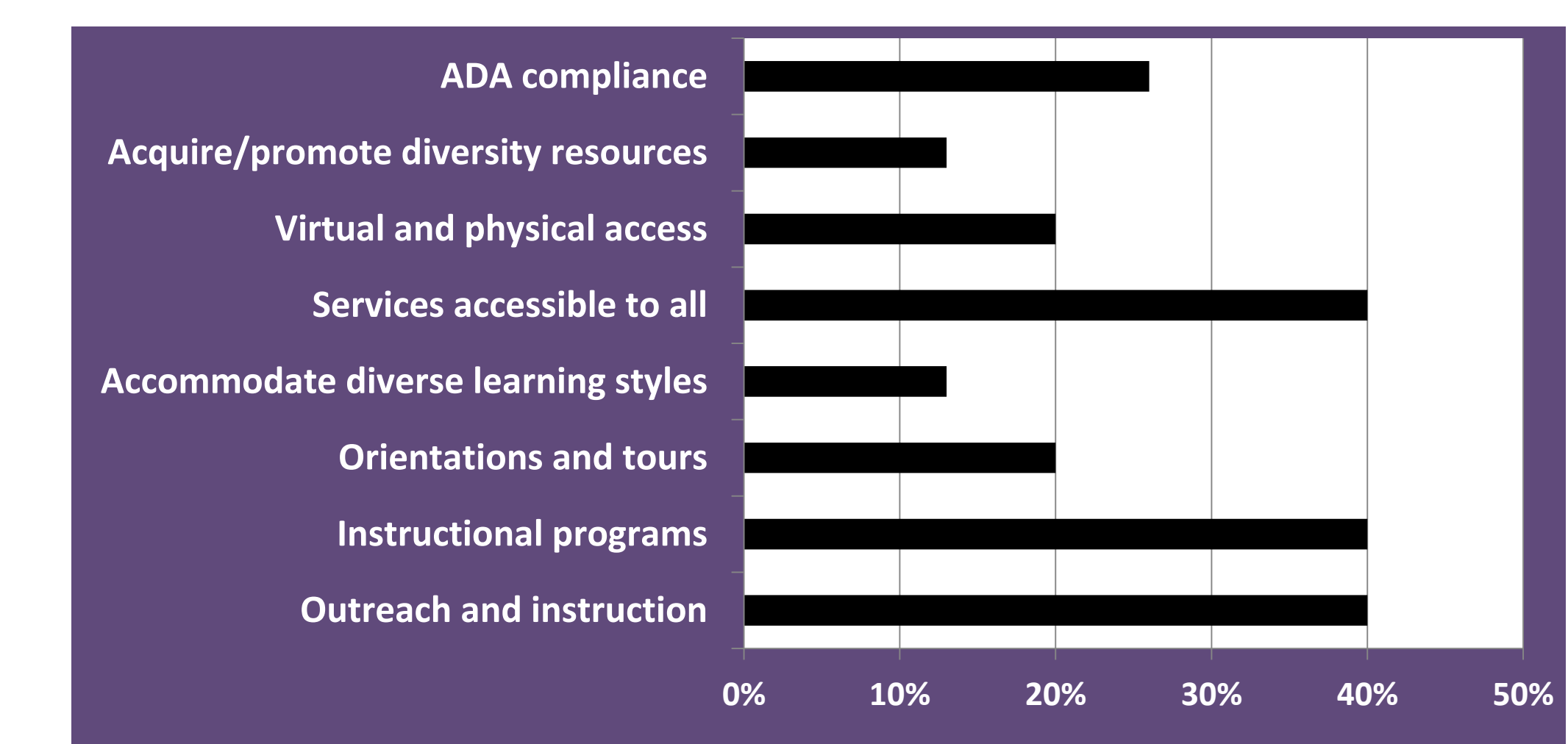


Fig. #6

Conclusion:

A diversity plan is a strategic tool for a library (or other institution) to guide progress on diversity initiatives. Common themes in library diversity plans include a definition of diversity, services, collections, employee development, programming, and recruitment and retention. Not surprisingly, the scope and details of library diversity plans vary a great deal as they are written for a specific library (or library system) in a specific institutional environment.