

Pathway to Pathways

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INTRODUCTION

This research project examines why students choose to enroll in the Pathways program at Parkland as opposed to:

- 1) becoming a non-Pathways Parkland student who will transfer to the University of Illinois; or
- 2) Beginning their college career at the University of Illinois.

Parkland Pathways Program

This program was created in 2007 when a group of administrators from Parkland and the University of Illinois came together to implement a program that would improve the transfer process for students from Parkland to the University of Illinois. The program began with only three colleges participating:

- 1) the College of Agriculture and Consumer and Environmental Sciences;
- 2) The College of Applied Health Sciences; and
- 3) the College of Engineering.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the University of Illinois for the resources and facilities to help produce this research.

METHOD

I conducted in-person, unstructured interviews with Pathways students at Parkland and U of I, non-Pathways students who intend to transfer to the U of I, and U of I students who opted not to take advantage of the Pathways program.

The following quotes were answers to a few of the interview questions from current and past Parkland Pathways Students.

Did your major influence your decision?

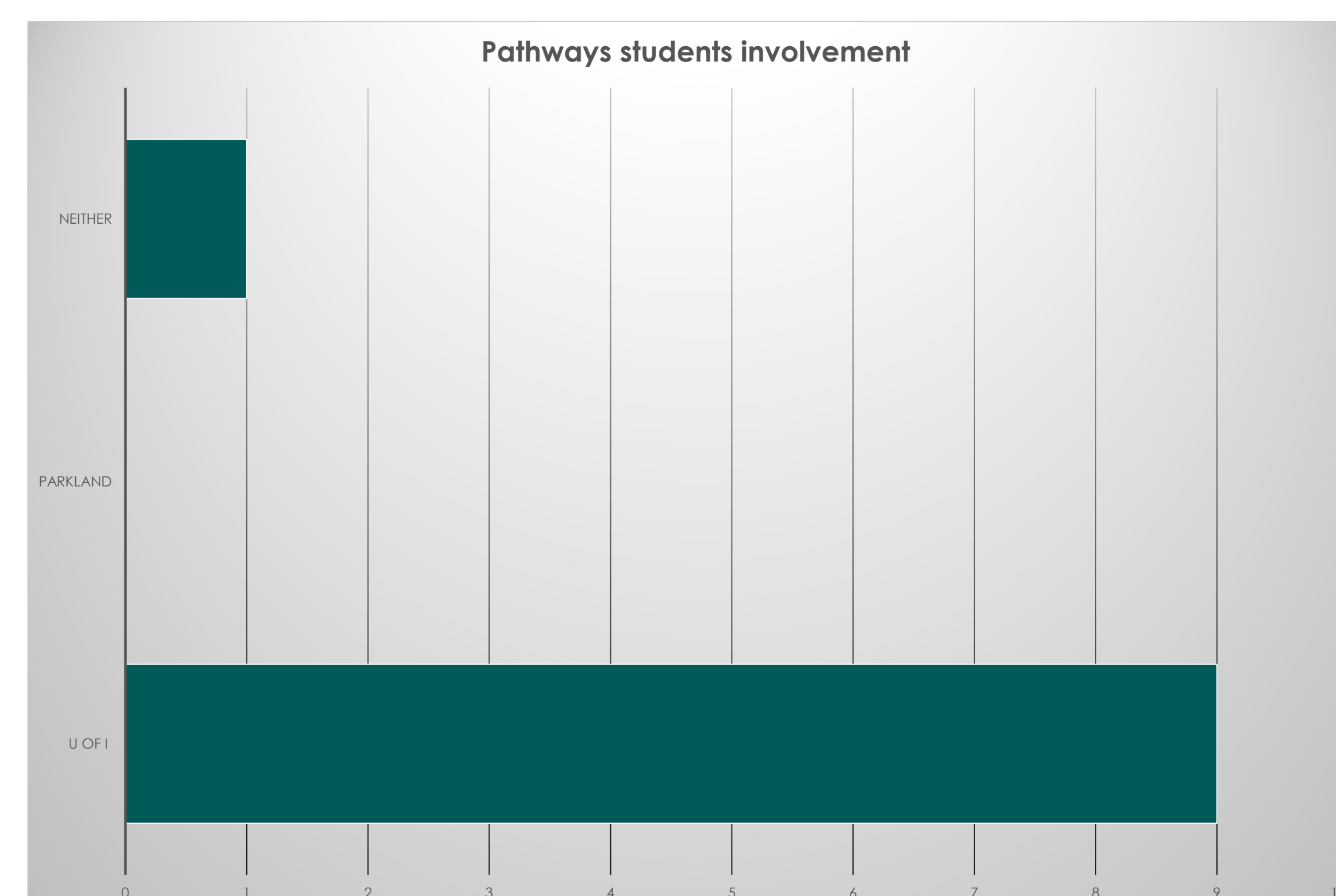
"I am undecided so yes it did in a way, because I could justify going to Parkland undecided but not going to the U of I as a full-time student."

What part of the Pathways program was the most appealing/influential in your decision to join the pathways program?

"We can have access to all of the U of I's resources for price of Parkland's tuition rates."

How did you find out about Parkland Pathways?

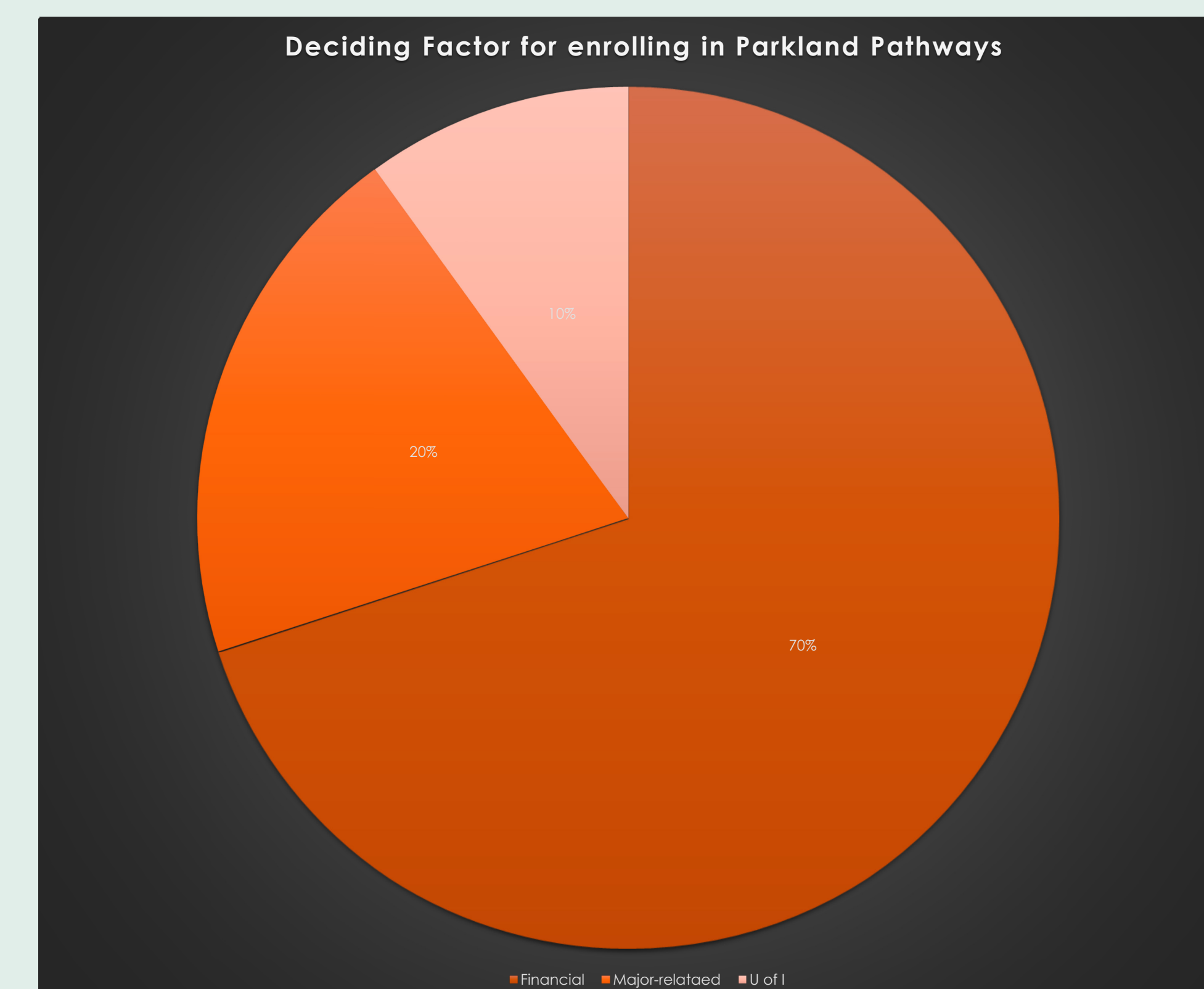
"My aunt she lives in Champaign and she told me about it."



RESULTS

The Parkland Pathways students that I interviewed all had prior knowledge of the program via school faculty and/or older friends, family, and acquaintances who had been in the program.

Pathways Students are satisfied with their progress in the program and the direction they chose in their college within the program. The majority of the students in the program knew what they wanted to major in and that did not affect their decision to join the program. A few of the interviewees were undecided in their major and that also did not affect their decision to choose Parkland Pathways.



The most significant deciding factor was the **cost effectiveness** of the Pathways program. Other factors that influenced the students' decisions include:

- 1) negative experience in large lecture classes at the U of I;
- 2) benefits of community college style of classes (smaller classes, teaching focus);
- 3) close proximity of both schools to home; and
- 4) the variety of colleges that participate in the Pathways program (making the transfer efficient).

The University of Illinois Students I interviewed had heard of the Parkland Pathways Program but only after being admitted as a student at the U of I.



CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion my research has shown that most local students who know about Parkland and have a strong interest in attending the University of Illinois consider the Parkland Pathways program as the best option as opposed to beginning as a freshman at the University of Illinois or being a non-Pathways full-time Parkland student who later transfers to the University of Illinois.

From the small pool of U of I students that I interviewed many of them were residents of Illinois but came from outside of Champaign. As residents of Illinois, they were eligible for the Pathways program but opted not to take advantage of this option. These interviewees stated that there were other community colleges closer to home, which they would have attended over Parkland if this was what they wanted to do.

