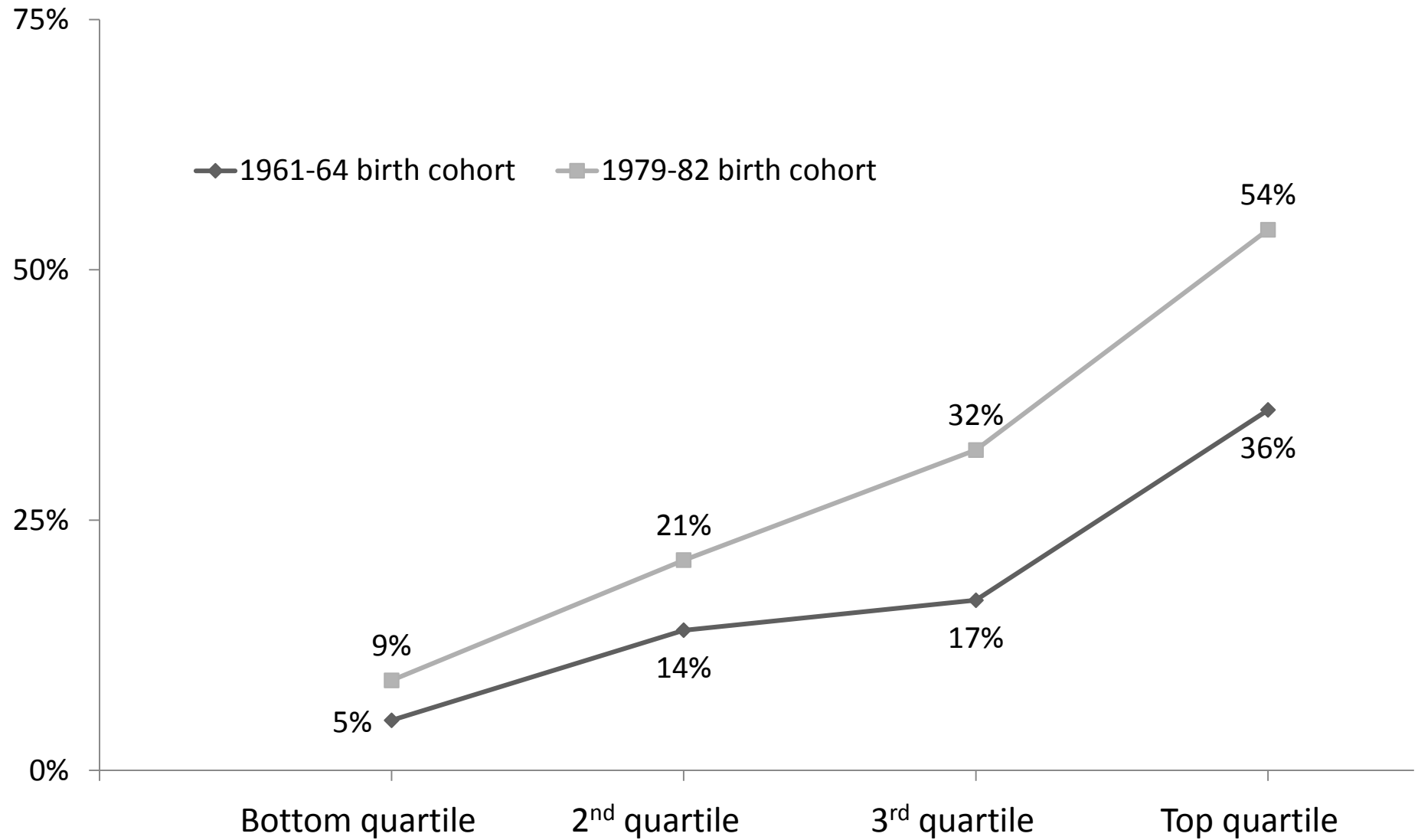# More than Dollars for Scholars:
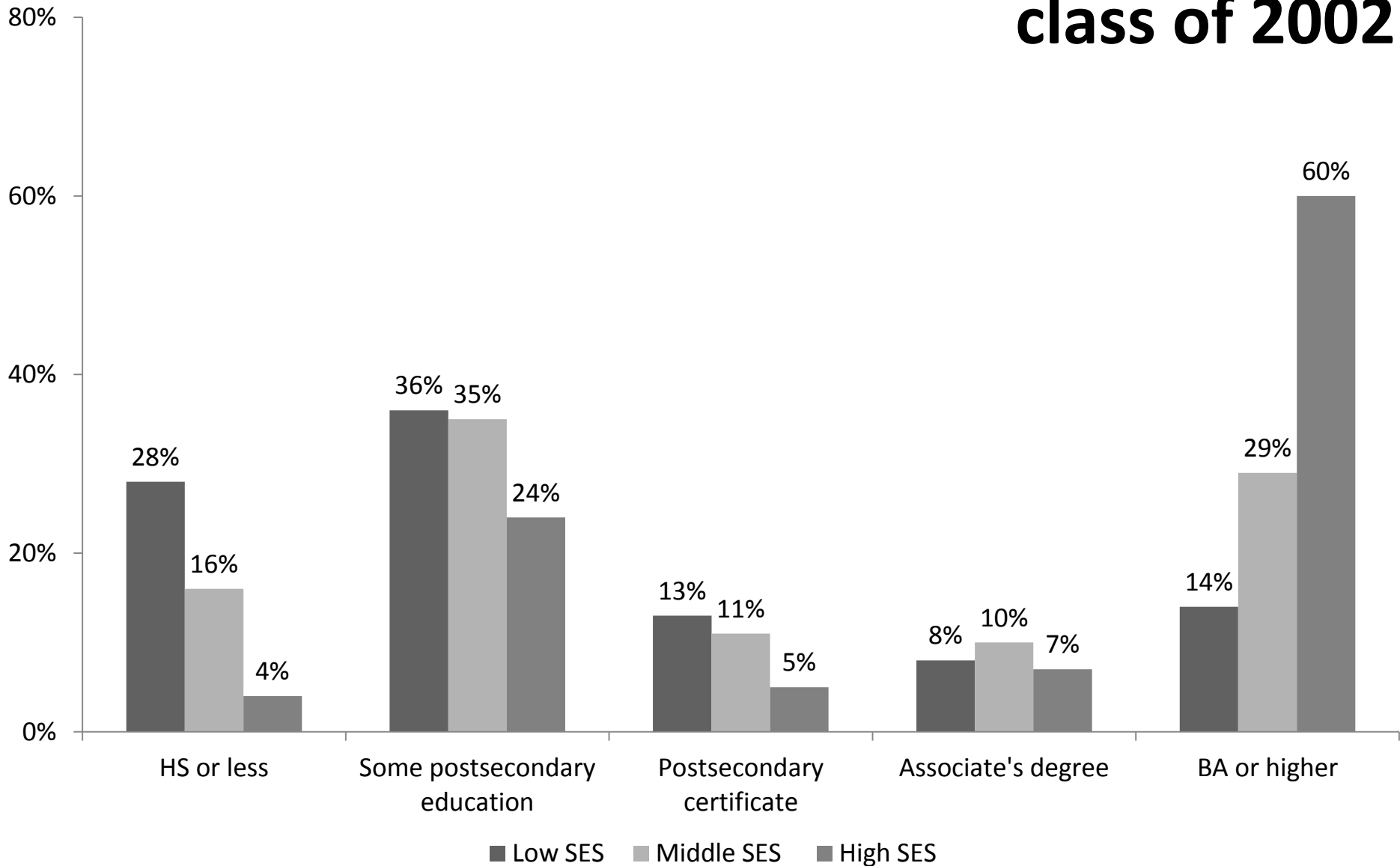## The Impact of the Dell Scholars Program on College Success

Lindsay C. Page
University of Pittsburgh

Joint work with Stacy Kehoe, Ben Castleman & Gumilang Sahadewo

College attainment by socioeconomic status

Legend: —◆— 1961-64 birth cohort   —■— 1979-82 birth cohort

Quartile	1961-64 birth cohort	1979-82 birth cohort
Bottom quartile	5%	9%
2nd quartile	14%	21%
3rd quartile	17%	32%
Top quartile	36%	54%

Educational attainment by SES, class of 2002

Low SES   Middle SES   High SES

Educational attainment by SES, class of 2002

Gaps in access.
Nearly all high SES students and three-quarters of low SES students access postsecondary education.

	HS or less	Some postsecondary education	Postsecondary certificate	Associate's degree	BA or higher
Low SES	28%	36%	13%	8%	14%
Middle SES	16%	35%	11%	10%	29%
High SES	4%	24%	5%	7%	60%

■ Low SES   ■ Middle SES   ■ High SES
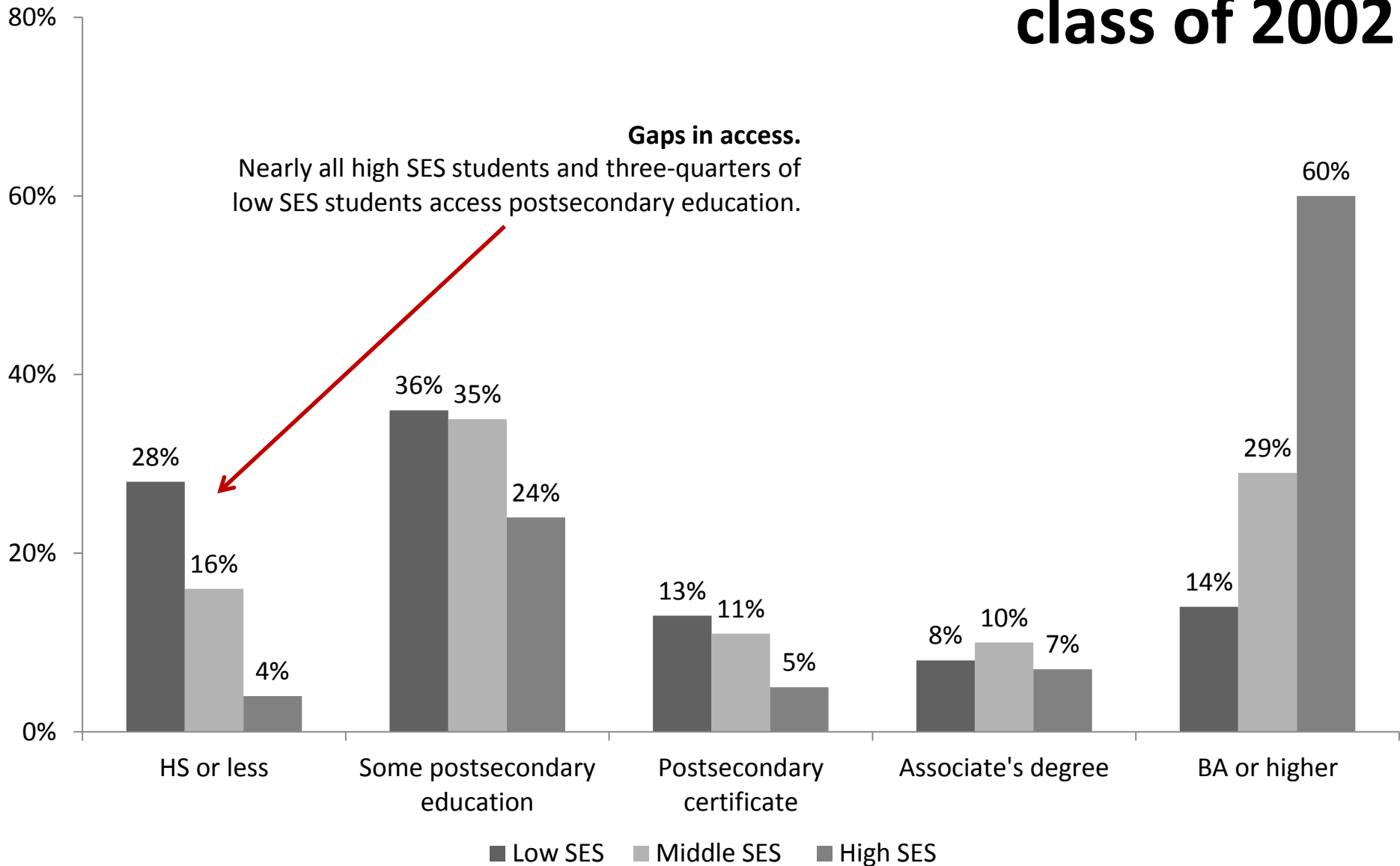
College attainment by socioeconomic status, class of 2002

Gaps in success.
Of those who begin, about three-quarters of high SES students and half of low SES students earn a postsecondary credential.

Legend: ■ Low SES ■ Middle SES ■ High SES

Categories: HS or less · Some postsecondary education · Postsecondary certificate · Associate's degree · BA or higher

Values by category:
- HS or less: 28%, 16%, 4%
- Some postsecondary education: 36%, 35%, 24%
- Postsecondary certificate: 13%, 11%, 5%
- Associate's degree: 8%, 10%, 7%
- BA or higher: 14%, 29%, 60%

Supports for college degree attainment

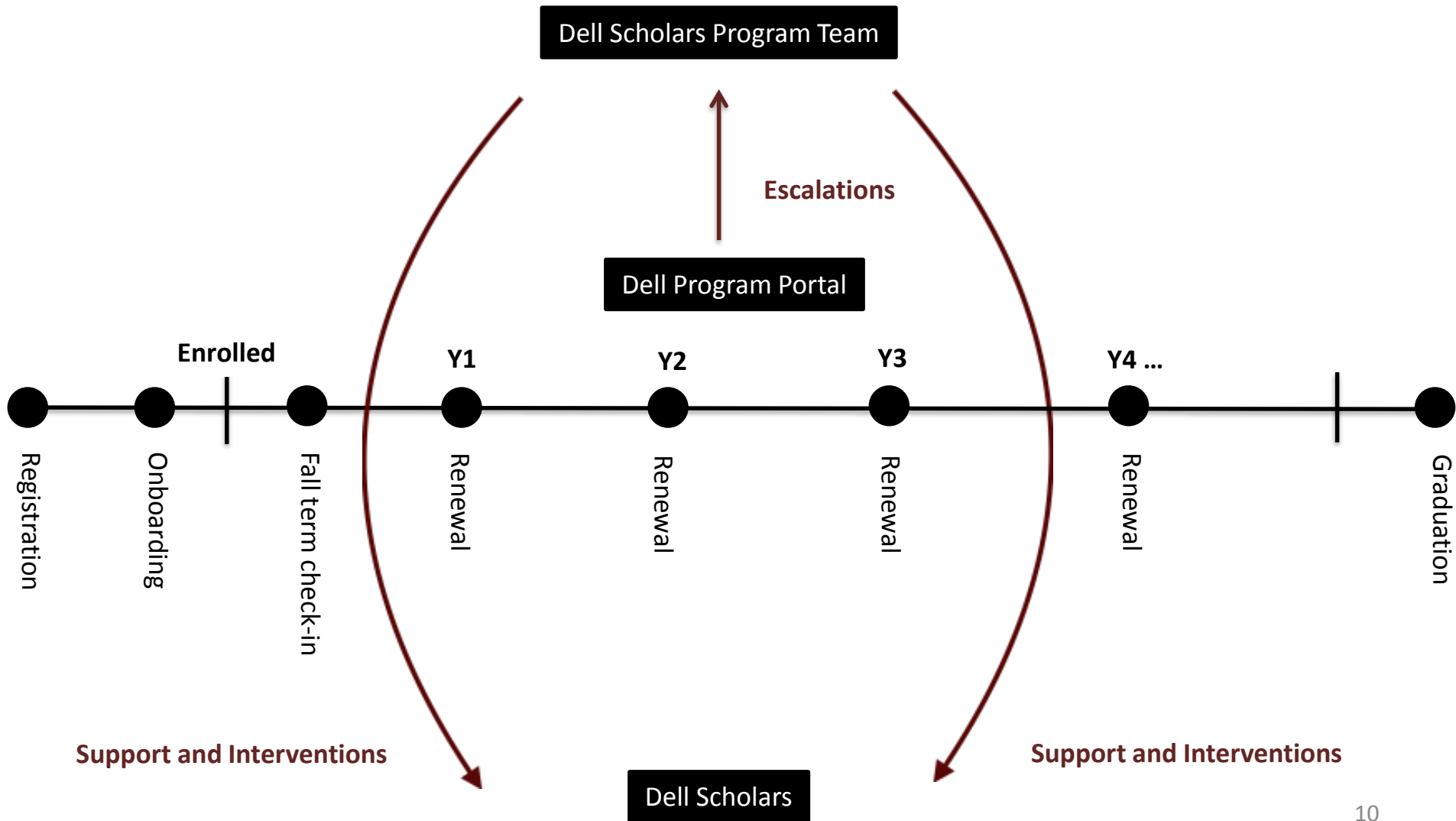| Program	Support	Impact	
FINANCIAL SUPPORT			
WV Promise	Average of $10K over 4 years for students meeting 3.0 GPA & 21 ACT	+ 7–9 pp + 4 pp	(BA in 4 yrs) (BA in 5 yrs)
FL Student Assistance Grant	$1300 annual grant for low-income students to attend FL university	+ 4.6 pp	(BA in 6 yrs)
Wisconsin Scholars	$3500 annual grant for low-income students to attend WI public university	+ 5 pp	(BA in 4 yrs)
NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT			
Inside Track	Freshman year coaching on how to prioritize work and identify and overcome barriers to academic success	+ 4 pp	(BA, time unspecified)
COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT			
Carolina Covenant	Full cost of attendance at UNC-Chapel Hill + additional counseling and support services for low-income admits	+ 8 pp	(BA in 4 yrs)
ASAP	Intensive structural, advising, and financial support for selected low-income community college students	+15 pp	(AA in 2.5 yrs)

DELL SCHOLARS PROGRAM
MICHAEL & SUSAN DELL FOUNDATION

- $20,000 scholarship
- Laptop computer
- Textbook support
- "…ongoing support and assistance to address the emotional, lifestyle & financial challenges that may prevent scholars from completing college. These pressures range from dealing with stress, to getting out of debt, to managing child care, and dealing with life circumstances as they arise."

"We are more than a check. You are not alone."

--Ninfa Murillo, Dell Scholars
Retention Officer

Data-driven case management model

Dell Scholars Program Team

Escalations

Dell Program Portal

Enrolled

Y1 **Y2** **Y3** **Y4 ...**

Registration

Onboarding

Fall term check-in

Renewal

Renewal

Renewal

Renewal

Graduation

Support and Interventions

Support and Interventions

Dell Scholars

Scholar Selection Process

Nov

>30k start application process

Jan

8000+ submit initial application

Mar

900 semi-finalists selected – most of these submit finalist application

Apr

300 are selected as Dell Scholars

Who are the Dell Scholars?

3000+ scholars since 2004

First in family to go to college: 95%
Average family income: $27k

> 600 Colleges & Universities

62%   @ Public
38%   @ Private

Hispanic
African American
Asian American
White
Other

79%

21%
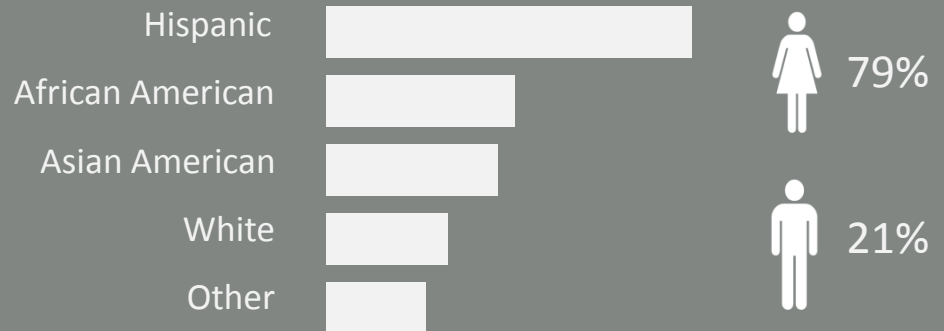
Research question

What is the impact of selection into the Dell Scholars Program on college access, persistence and bachelor's degree completion within four or six years?

Summary of impacts:
Enrollment, persistence & degree attainment

Outcome	Overall	Less-selective institutions	More-selective institutions
Immediate enrollment	3%	--	--
2ⁿᵈ year persistence	5%	6%	3%
3ʳᵈ year persistence	11%	15%	7%
BA attainment, in 4 years	22%	52%	14%
BA attainment, in 6 years (2009-2010 only)	20%	32%	13%

Research question

How does the Dell Scholars Program impact students' academic performance and financial outcomes?
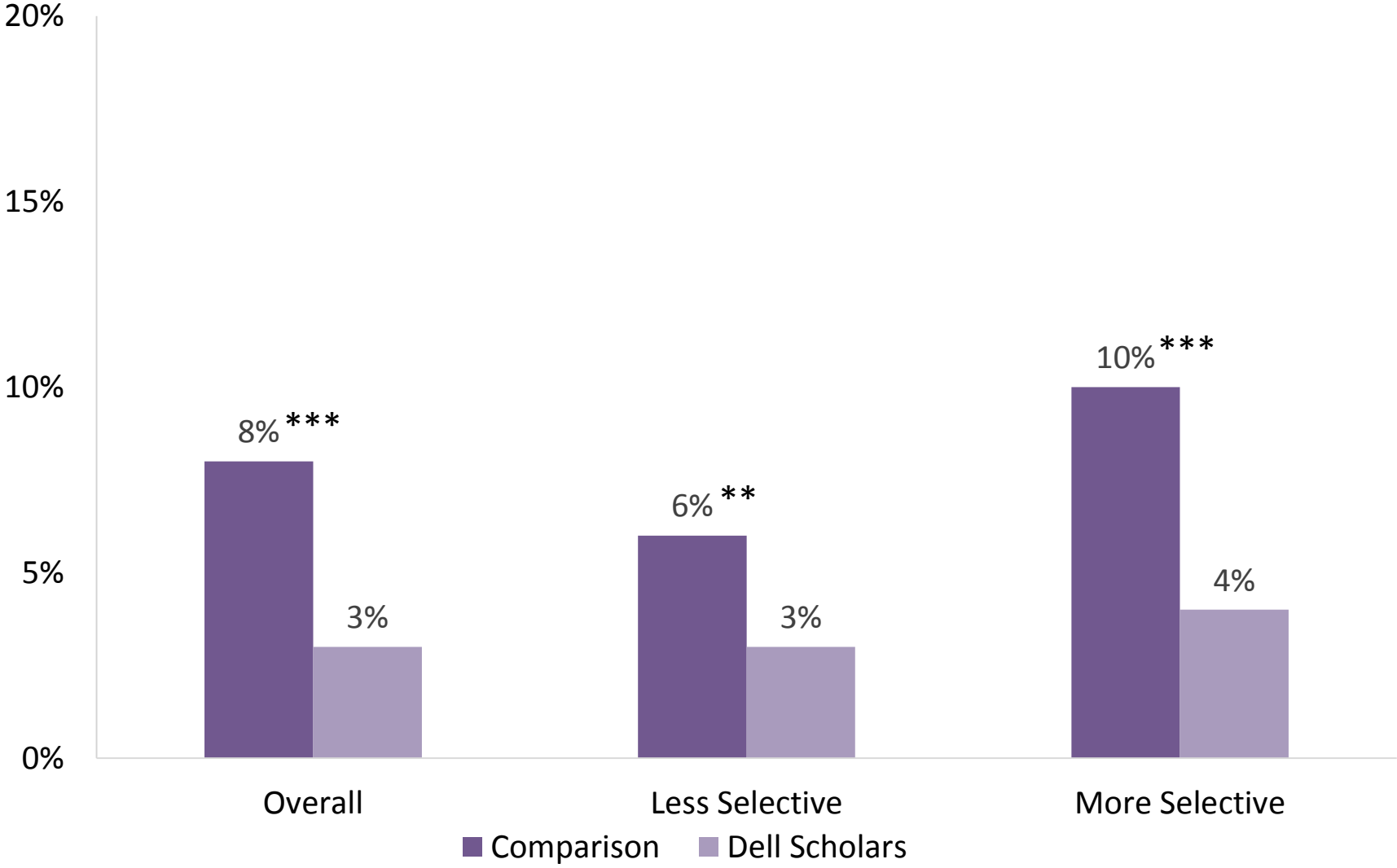
Federal loan borrowing, year 1
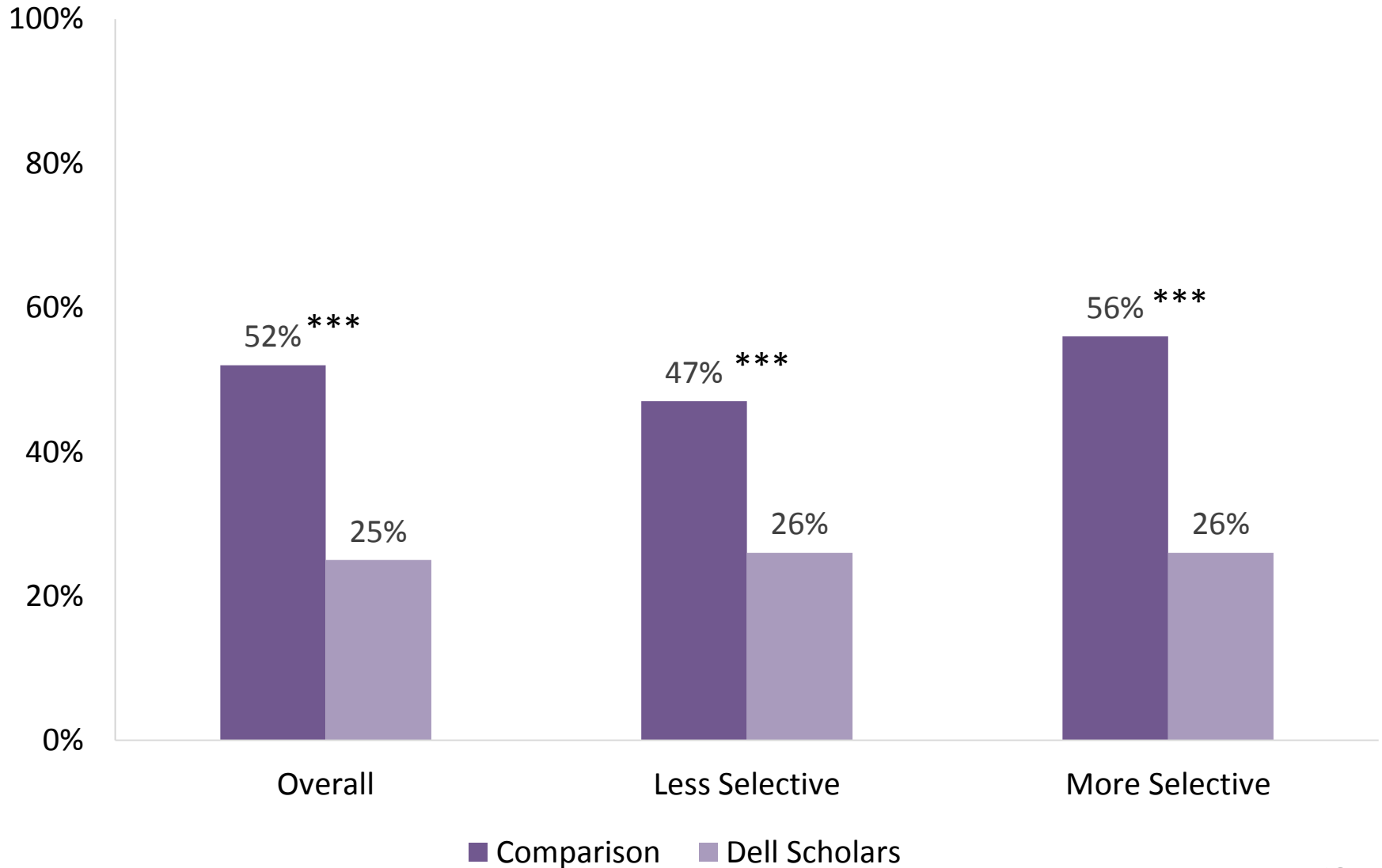
*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01
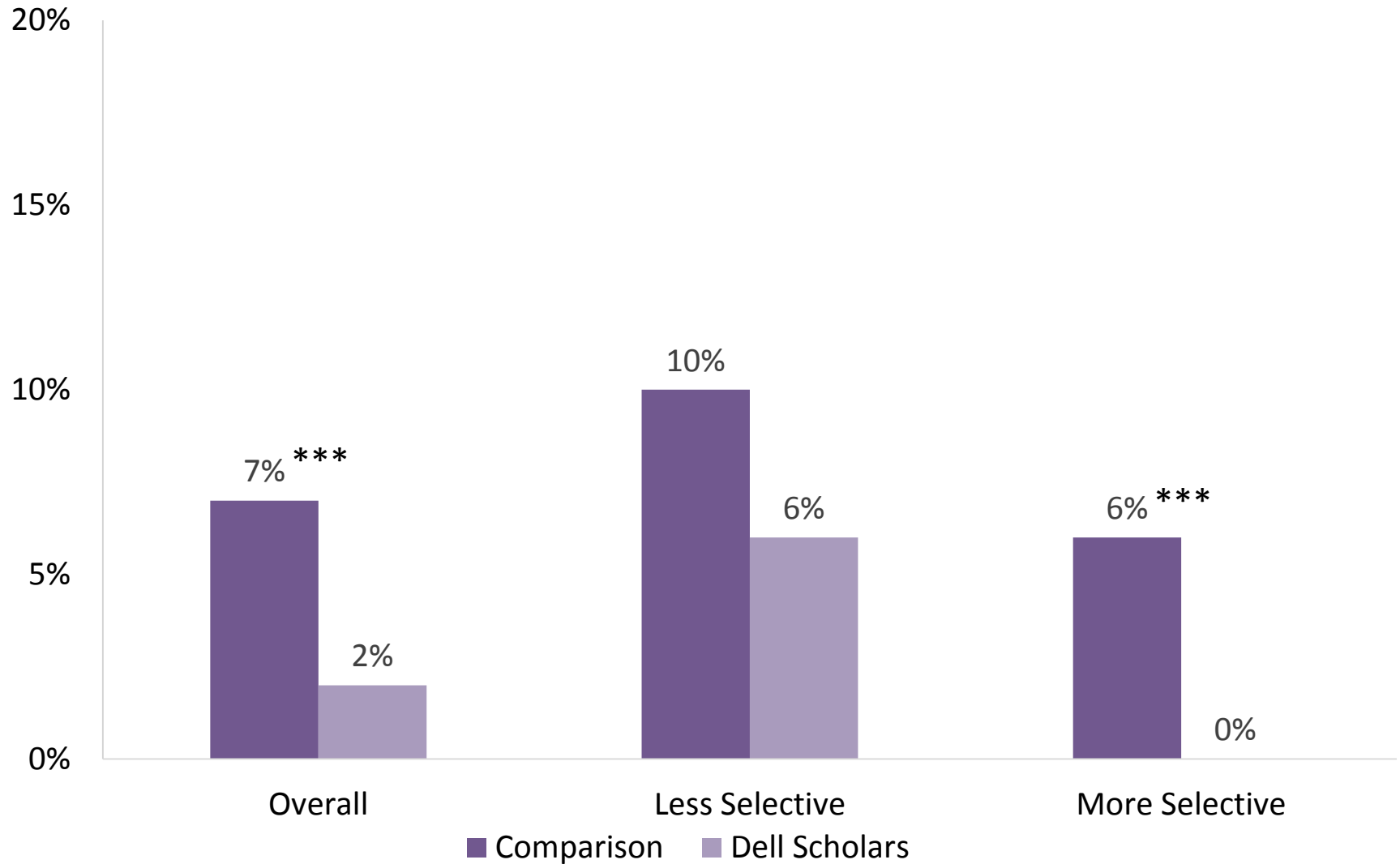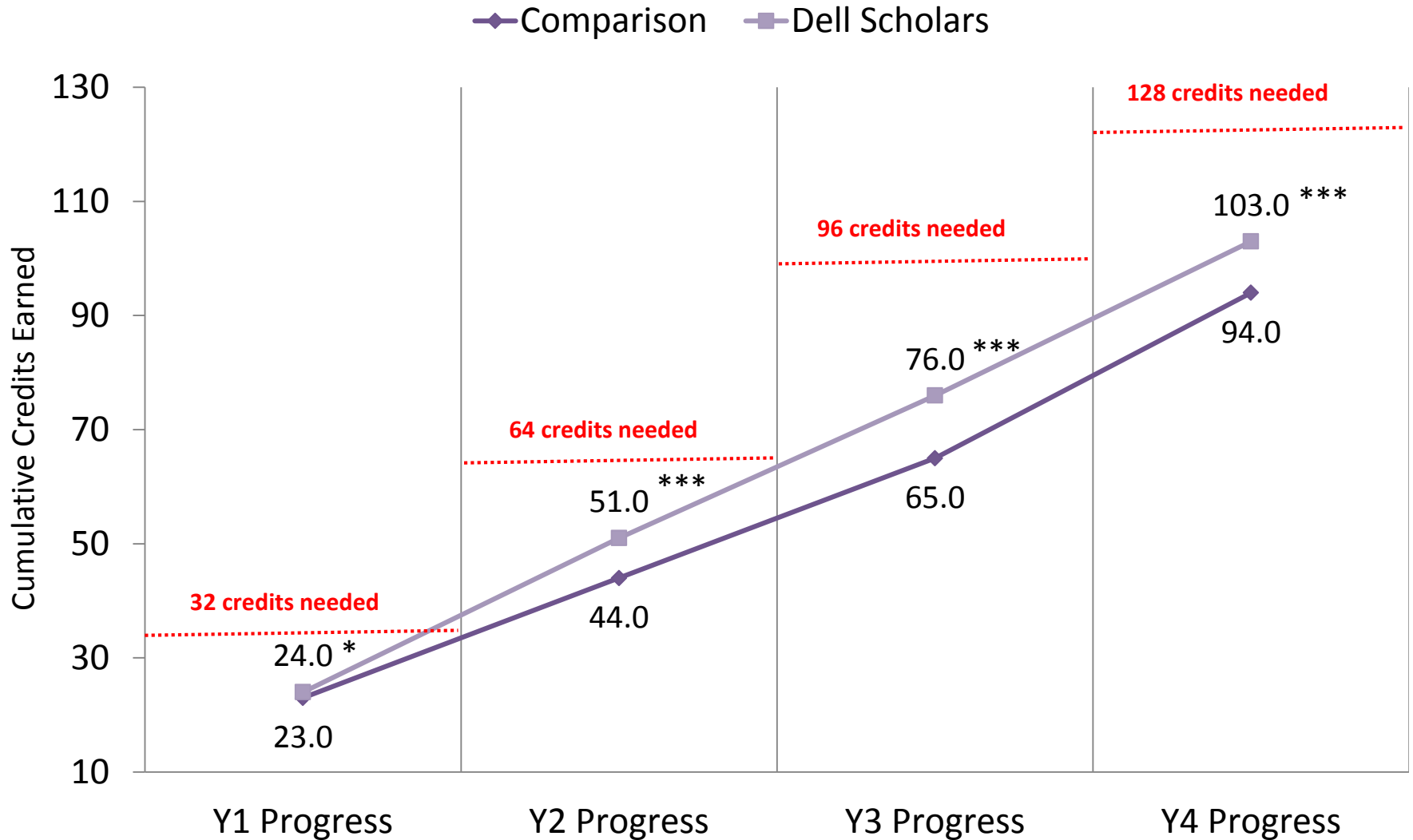
Parent PLUS loan borrowing, year 1
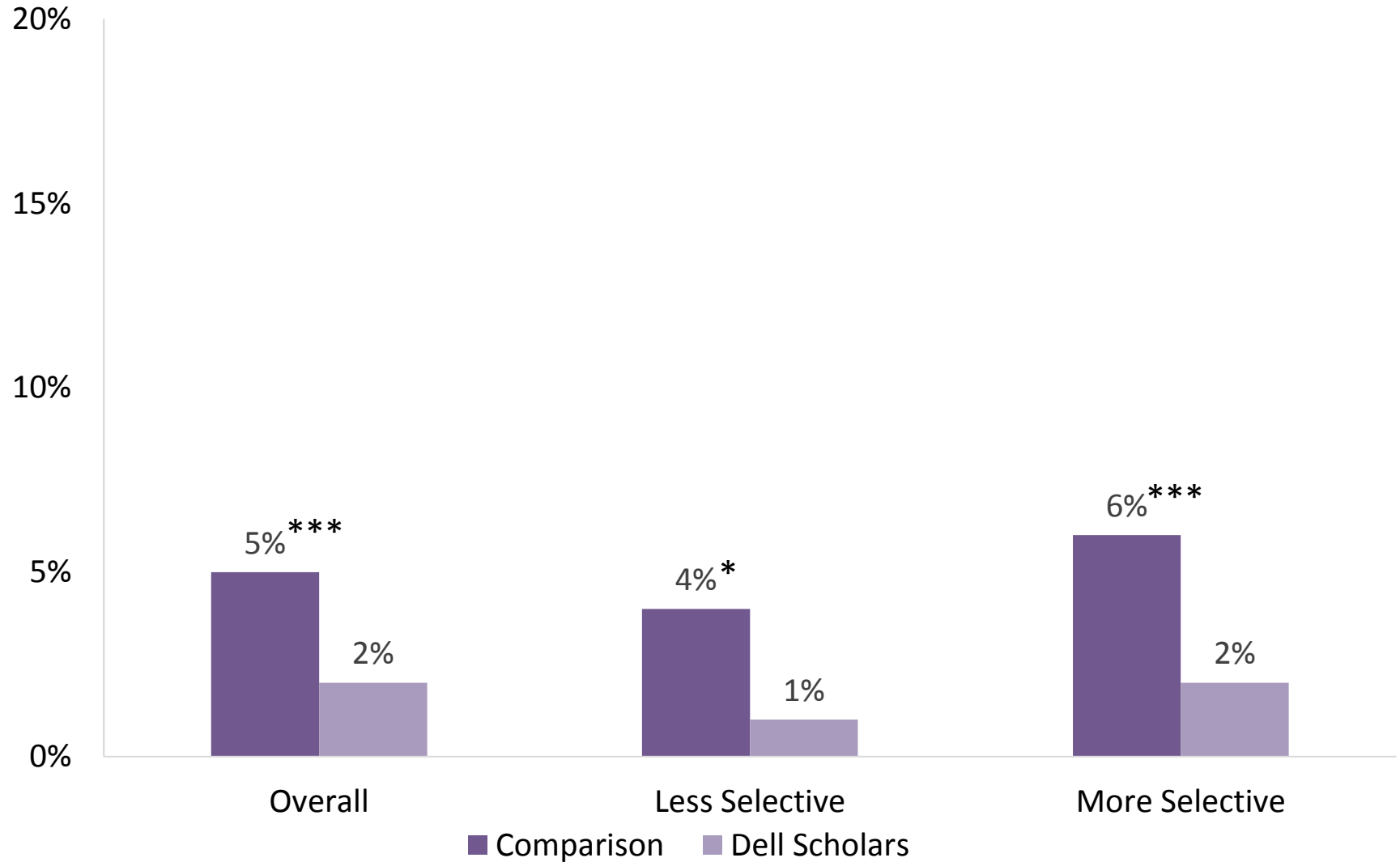
*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

Private loan borrowing, year 1

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

Working 30+ hours / week, year 1

20%

15%

10%

5%

0%

Overall: Comparison 7% *** , Dell Scholars 2%

Less Selective: Comparison 10%, Dell Scholars 6%

More Selective: Comparison 6% ***, Dell Scholars 0%

■ Comparison   ■ Dell Scholars

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

Credit attainment

Legend: Comparison (dark purple, diamond); Dell Scholars (light purple, square)

Y-axis: Cumulative Credits Earned (10 to 130)

- 32 credits needed
- 64 credits needed
- 96 credits needed
- 128 credits needed

Y1 Progress: Dell Scholars 24.0 *, Comparison 23.0
Y2 Progress: Dell Scholars 51.0 ***, Comparison 44.0
Y3 Progress: Dell Scholars 76.0 ***, Comparison 65.0
Y4 Progress: Dell Scholars 103.0 ***, Comparison 94.0

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

20

Cumulative GPA

Legend: Comparison, Dell Scholars

Y-axis: Cumulative GPA (0 to 4)

X-axis: Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4

Dell Scholars: 2.95 ***, 2.94 ***, 2.97 ***, 2.97 ***
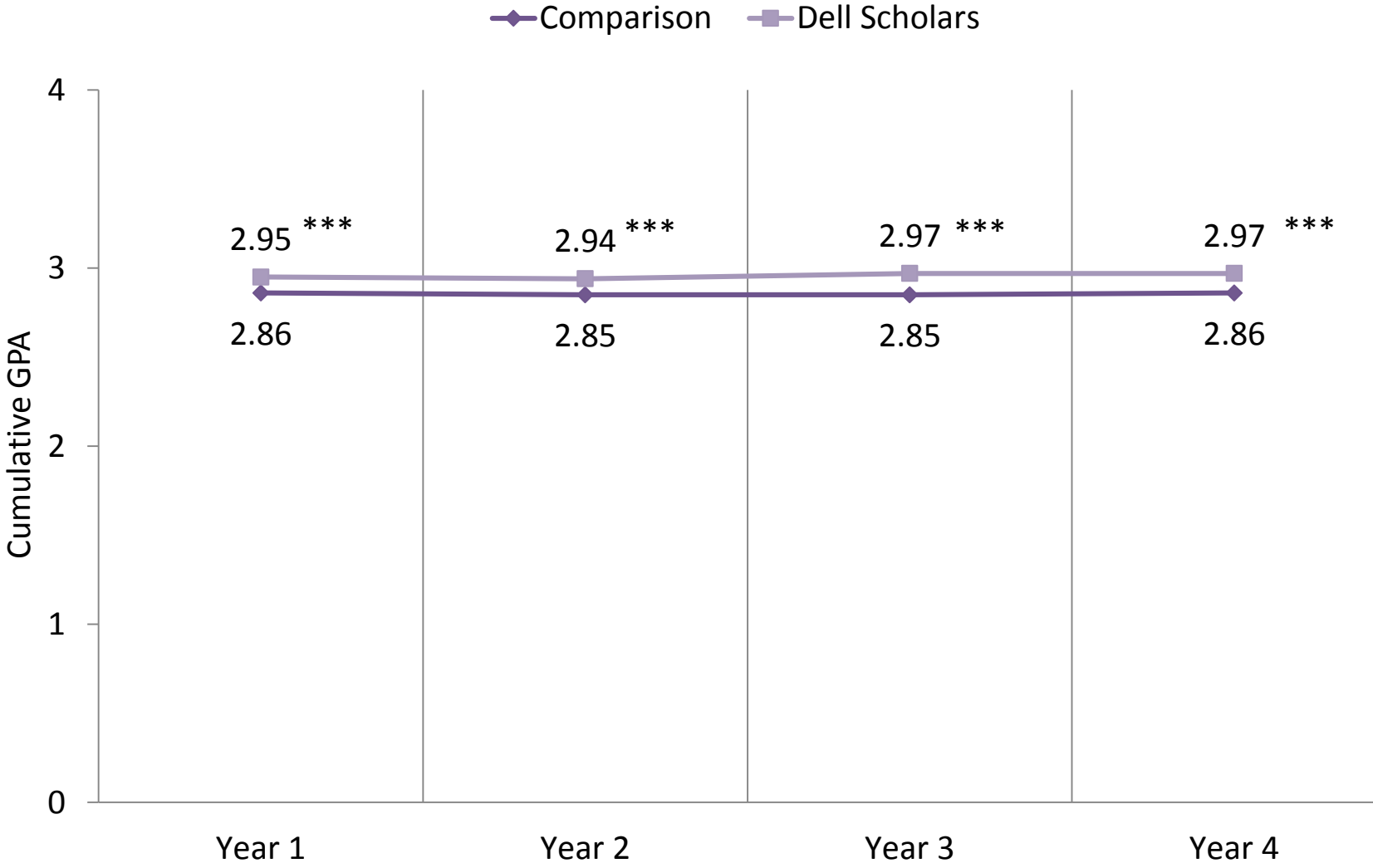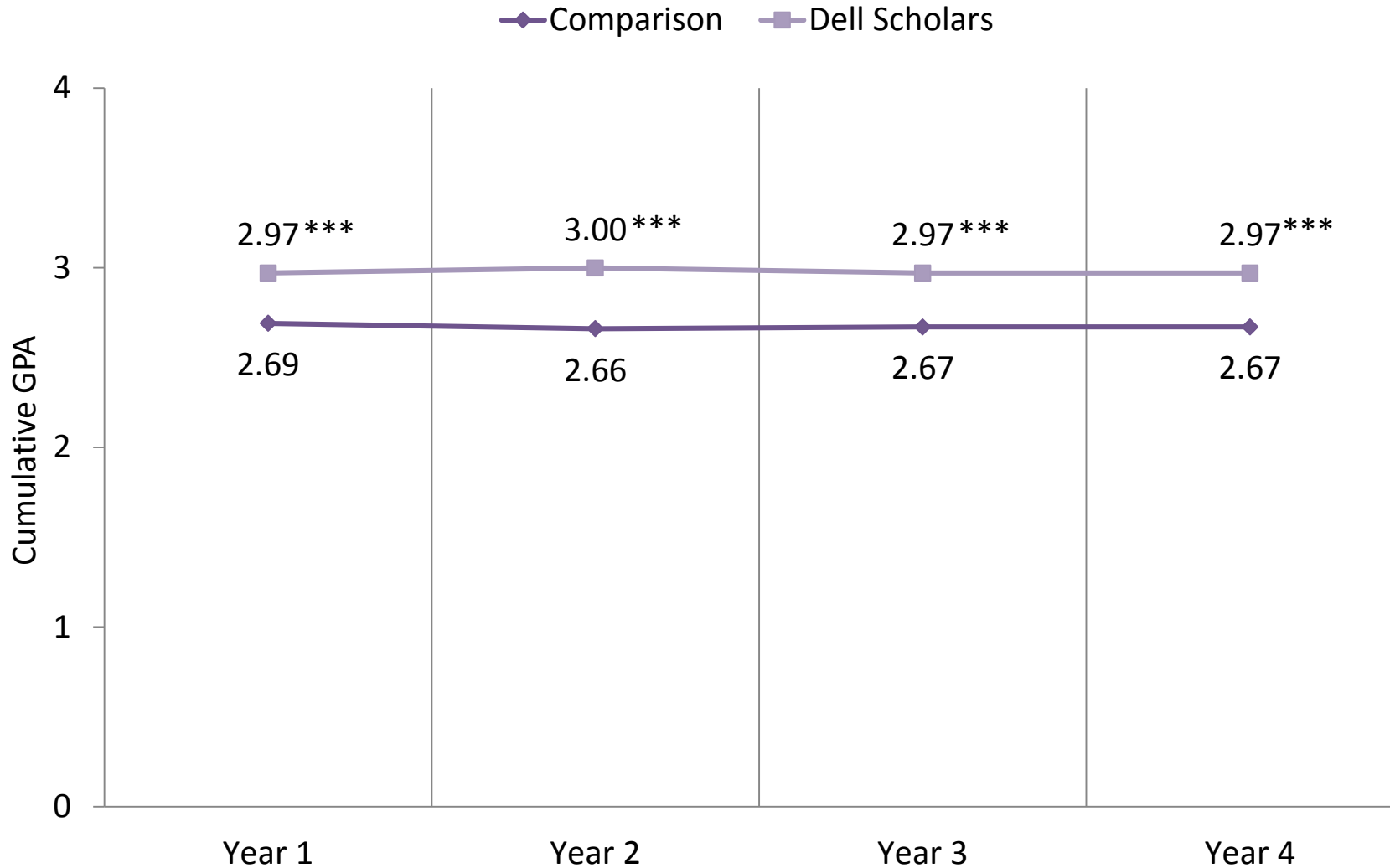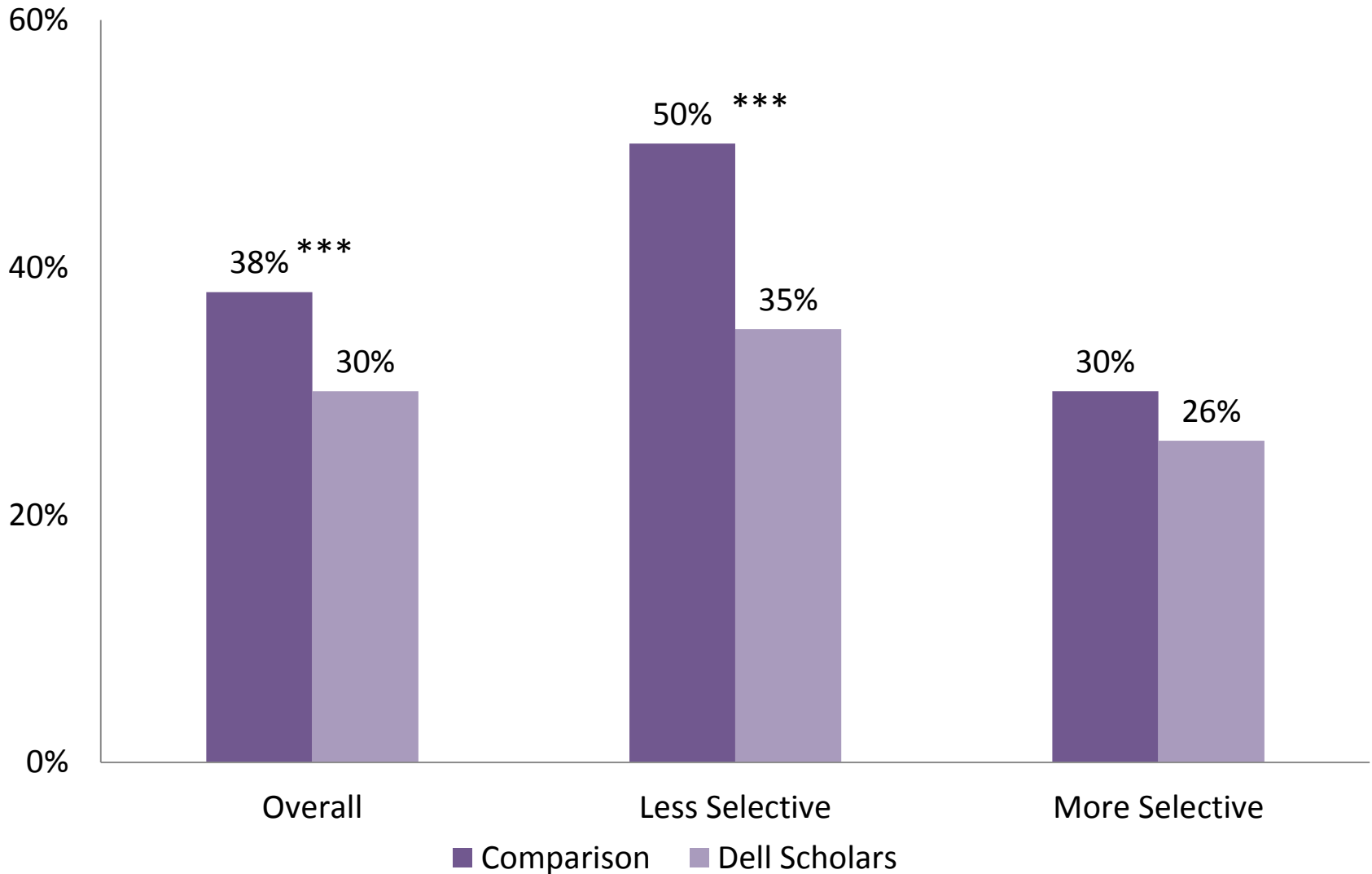
Comparison: 2.86, 2.85, 2.85, 2.86

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

Cumulative GPA, less selective institutions

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

22

GPA < 2.0 in years 1 - 4

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

Key program features

- **Long-term, personal commitment:**
  - Program supports students to & through college with very stable staff
  - Data-informed system through which staff identify and respond to risk for not persisting
  - Flexible, student-focused policies & practices (e.g., flexibility in fund disbursement)

- **Multifaceted:** suite of supports to address the financial, academic, social and life challenges students can face in college

- **Carrot & stick:** Scholarship aid combined with reporting requirements

Implications

- Improving college success among low-income, first-generation college goers is an important national policy challenge

- Many efforts to improve access and/or success focus on only one dimension of difficulty students face

- The Dell Scholars Program, which combines generous financial aid with strategic outreach and support using technology and a large student-to-staff ratio, presents a promising, scalable model to better identify and respond to the risk factors students exhibit, particularly in context of less-selective institutions

Thanks to

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Research Collaborators:
Stacy Kehoe
Ben Castleman
Gumilang Sahadewo

Thank you

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For more on this project

Full paper:

https://ssrn.com/abstract=2726320

Executive summary:

https://impact.msdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/msdf-dsp-exec-summary_FINAL.pdf