

Another path within human services work:

Empowering college students to explore evaluation as a possible career

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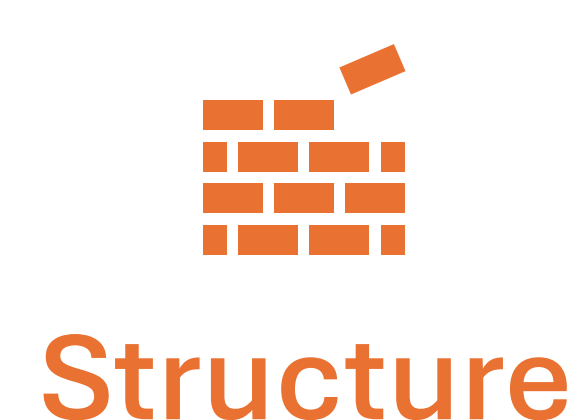
WHO WE ARE

- The **Community Research, Evaluation and Development (CRED) Team** is an interdisciplinary **university-based evaluation group**, sitting within the Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth & Families in the Norton School of Human Ecology at the University of Arizona.
- We conduct high-quality, culturally responsive, community-based research and evaluation that promotes the health and well-being of families and individuals throughout the Southwest.
- We are funded through “soft-money”, i.e., grants and contracts. We work on a diverse array of research and evaluation projects with a variety of partners, including state agencies, university partners, and non-profit organizations.

HOW WE ENGAGE STUDENTS



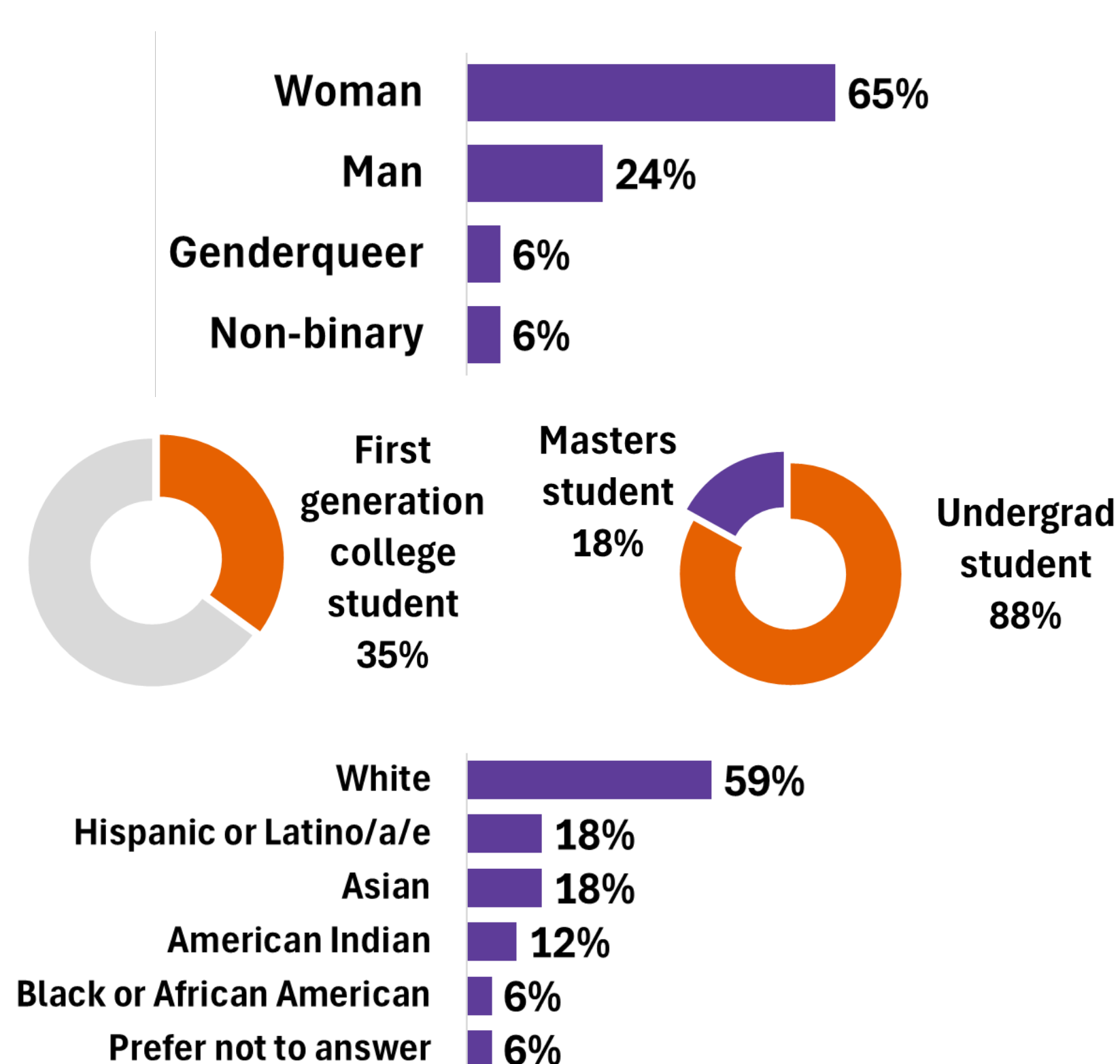
- Caring for the **whole person**
- Creating **community and connection**
- Fostering a safe space for **risk & mistakes**
- Matching students with projects relevant to their **skills & interests**
- Promoting independent **problem solving**
- FUN!**



- Structured on-boarding process:** Students are introduced to CRED, key evaluation principles, research ethics, and their specific projects.
- Weekly virtual lab meetings:** All students (and some staff) meet to connect and learn together each week, including “happies and crappies,” “funzies,” and professional development opportunities. This is part of their paid work time.
- Project-based supervision:** Students are supervised by different team members depending on the project they’re working on at that moment. This allows students to build connections across the team and get more targeted support.
- End of semester celebration:** A meeting of fellow students and staff where students present on what they worked on and learned, which provides an opportunity for reflection and community building. This also prepares students to describe their experiences when applying to future jobs and grad school.

OUR STUDENTS

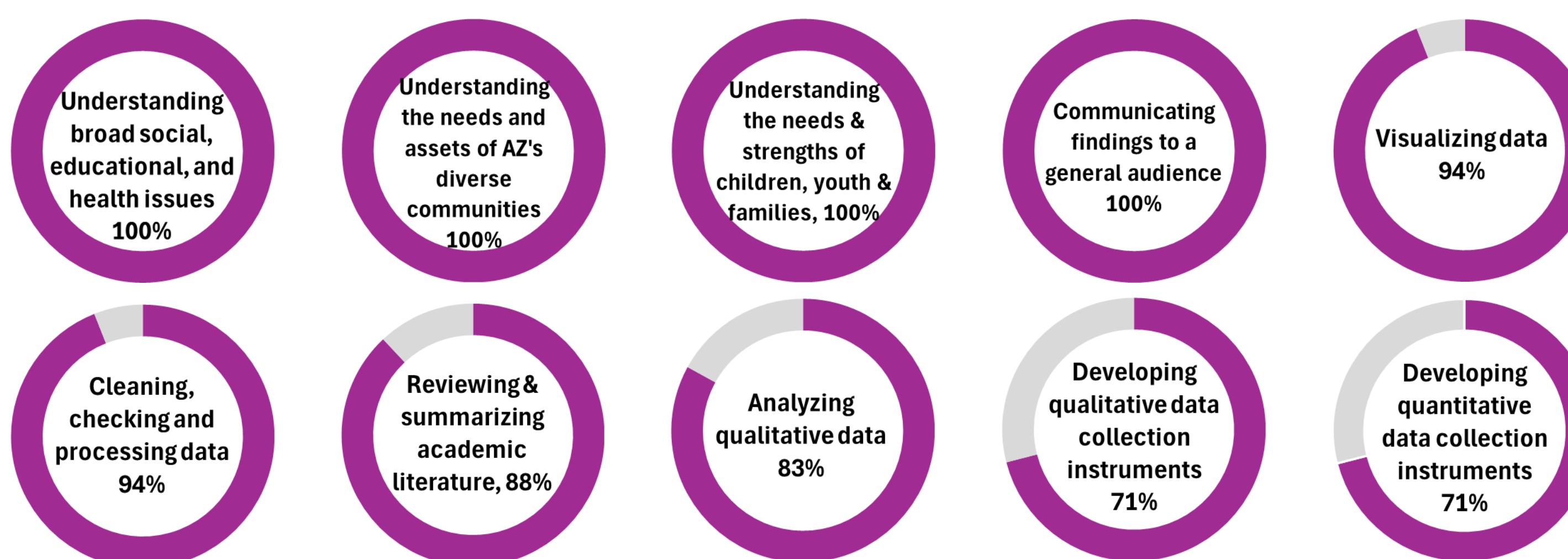
- We consistently engage both **undergraduate and graduate students** through a variety of roles.
- Since 2012, a total of 53 students have worked with CRED. In **2024**, we disseminated a survey to 38 CRED alumni for whom we had contact information.
- A total of 20 former students completed the survey; this poster focuses on the experiences of the **17 students** who were completing an **undergraduate or Masters degree** while working with CRED.



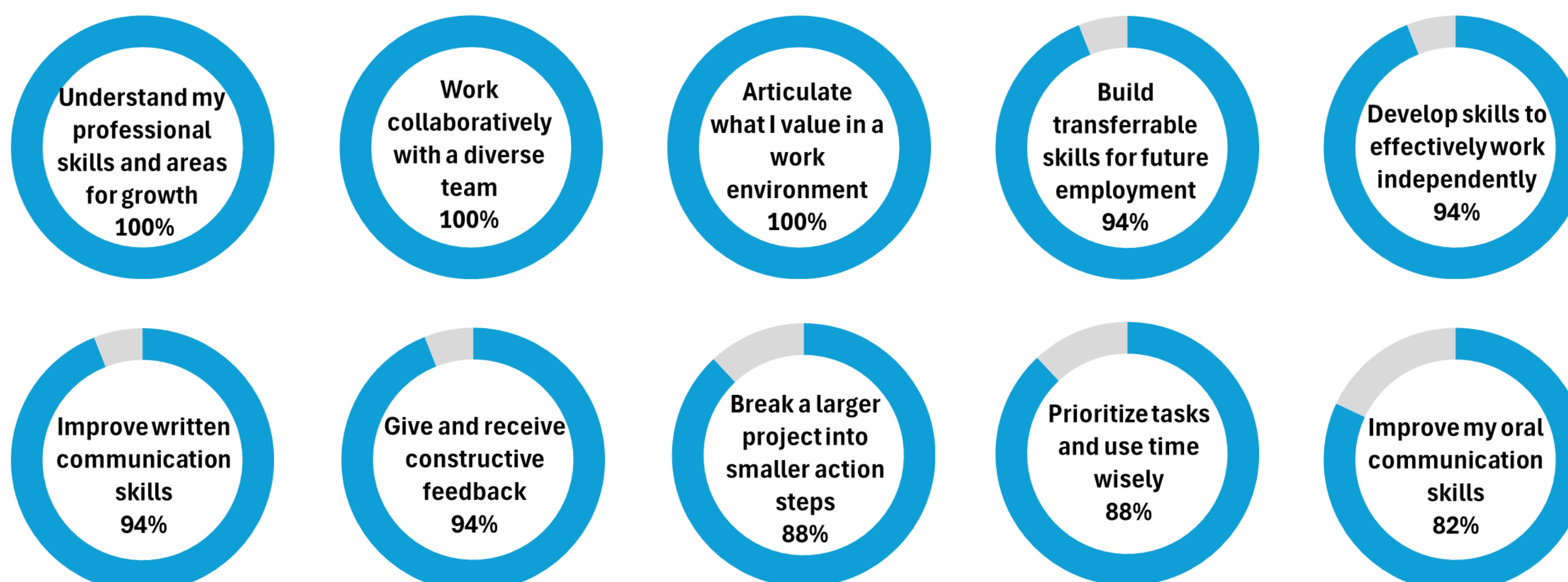
WHAT OUR STUDENTS LEARN



Students were asked whether working with CRED improved their **evaluation knowledge and skills**. The following figures display the proportion that either **agreed or strongly agreed**.



Students were also asked whether working with CRED improved their **professional skills**. The following figures display the proportion that either **agreed or strongly agreed**.



OUR LESSONS LEARNED

- Support** • Good supervision takes a lot of time, energy, and thought! It's important to ensure this is part of the math of **how many students** to take on each semester and **who has the capacity to supervise** each student.
- Plan** • Project-based supervision requires having **shared norms and strong communication between staff**.
 - Documenting and sharing project instructions, as well as supervision successes and challenges, is important for team success.
 - Be proactive about planning possible projects, who will supervise each project, and what the hand off will look like between projects and staff members.
- Adapt** • While structure is valuable, you can't be too rigid and need to adapt to the **changing students, projects, and staff capacity** each semester.
 - Students often have particularly stressful seasons of the semester. Be proactive about checking in with them and potentially changing their focus and workload.
- Have fun!** • While **professional development** is important for students, they often need time to **connect and decompress**.
 - Some of our favorite funzies:** passion presentations, online games, pump-up jams, and collaborative drawing activities.
 - Professional development activities:** workstyle inventories, resume and interview preparation, strategies to prevent burnout, and skill share opportunities between students.
- Connect** • Often students work on a small piece of a bigger project. Help them **connect their contribution back to the larger project** and share the final product they contributed to!

A PDF version of this academic poster is available at: fmi.arizona.edu/fmi-posters



NORTON SCHOOL OF HUMAN ECOLOGY
Frances McClelland
Institute for Children,
Youth & Families