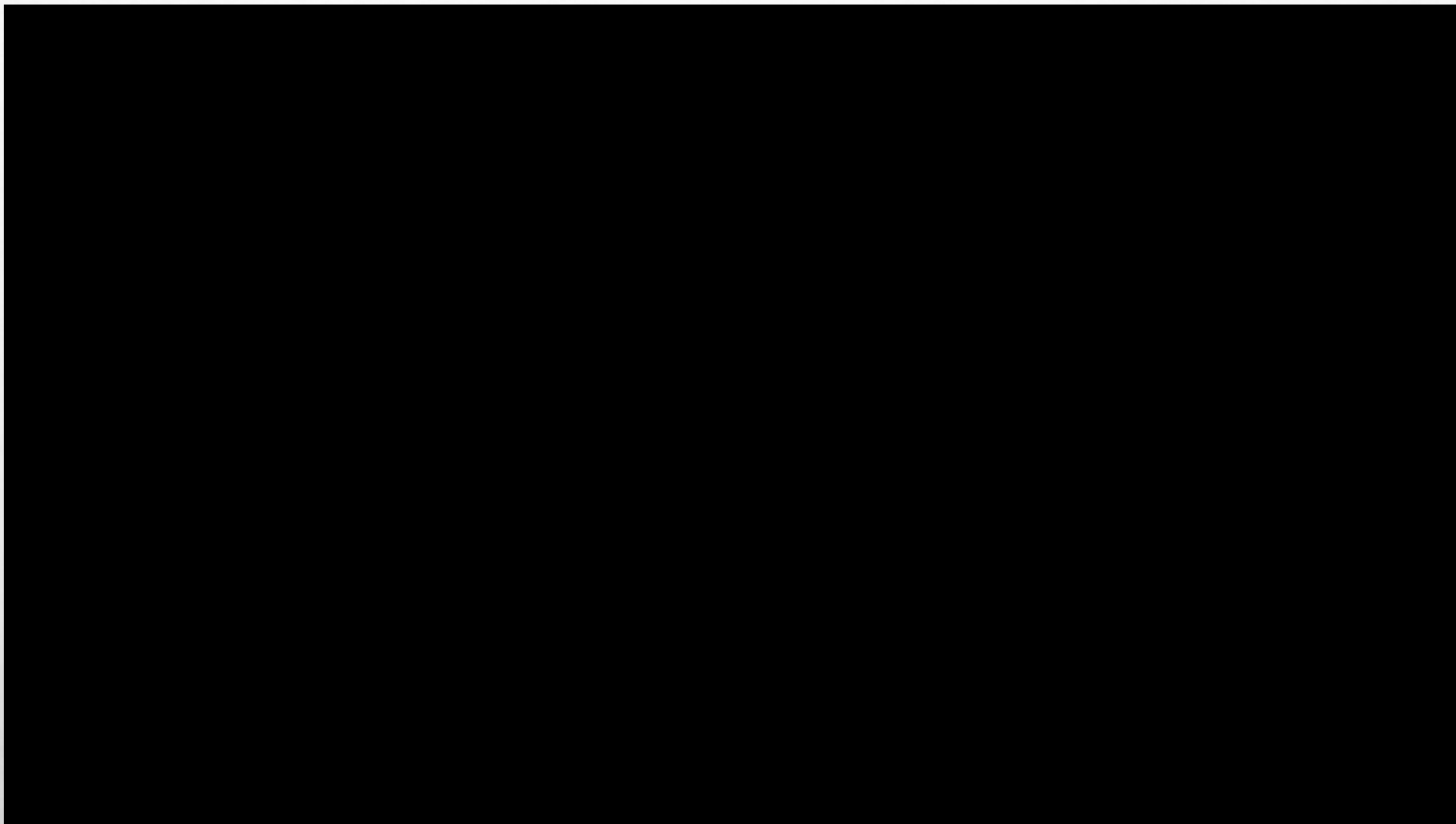# COMMUNICATION ON THE FRONT LINES:

BUILDING RELATIONS BETWEEN ACCESS SERVICES AND RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTION SERVICES

ELIZABETH MARCUS & MALTI TURNBULL, WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

WHY IS COMMUNICATION IMPORTANT?

- To efficiently serve the patrons

- Organization of academic libraries more complex

- Collaborative efforts inside and outside the library have increased.

- Builds rapport between co-workers

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF POOR COMMUNICATION?

- **Lack of Trust: We think they are the problem, they think we are**

- **Lack of awareness about the functions and value of the other department**

- **Competition for fiscal resources**

RESULTS OF POOR COMMUNICATION

- **Misinformed patrons or co-workers**

- **Gossip**

- **Low morale**
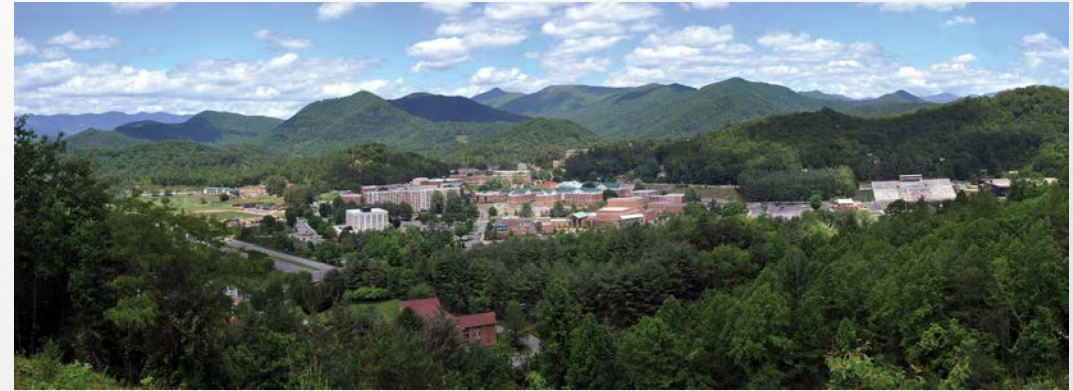
COMMUNICATION @ YOUR LIBRARY

SURVEY

Go to kahoot.it and enter the game PIN listed on the screen

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

- **Regional Comprehensive University**

- **Fall 2016 Enrollment-10,805 students**

HUNTER LIBRARY

- **50 Employees**

- **3 Library Units- TASC, RIS, & COM**

- **Separate Circulation and Reference Desks**

PREVIOUS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

- **Department Head Meetings**

- **Brainfood Workshops**

- **Friday News Blog Posts**

PUBLIC SERVICES COMMUNICATION SURVEY

- **Qualtrics survey of 9 questions**
- **Emailed to 22 employees**
- **Focused on communication quality and collegiality**
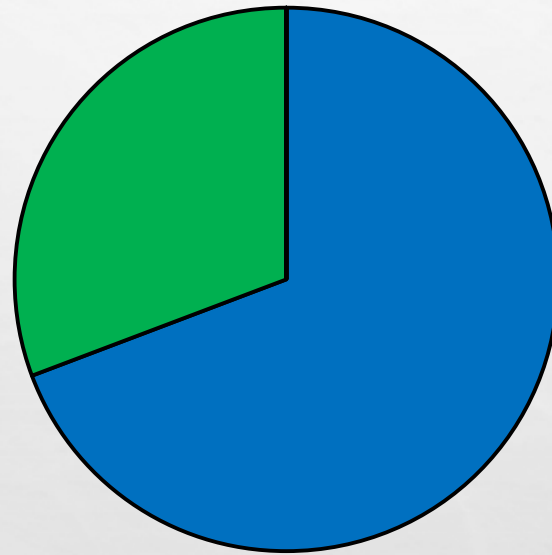- **Combination of multiple choice and open response questions**

SURVEY RESULTS

- 13 responses-
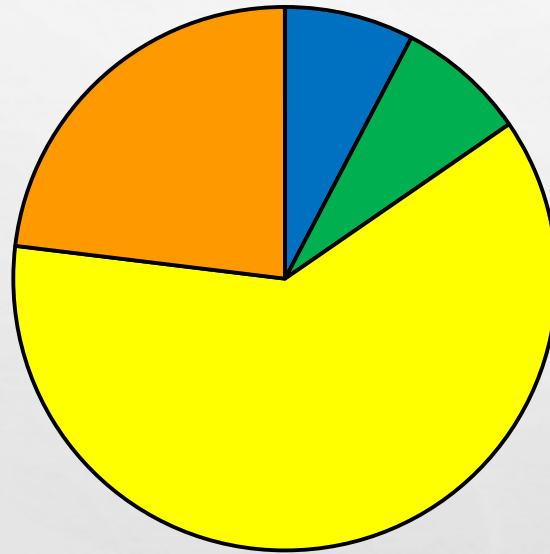 - ✓ Almost equal representation from Access Services and RIS

# HOW OFTEN DO YOU COMMUNICATE WITH PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES OUTSIDE YOUR UNIT?

■ Every Day ■ 2-3 Times a Week ■ Once a Week ■ Once a Month ■ Once a Year

HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU WITH POLICIES, SERVICES, AND WORKFLOWS OF THE OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES UNIT?

■ Extremely Familiar ■ Very Familiar ■ Moderately Familiar ■ Slightly Familiar ■ Not Familiar

# HOW WELL DO YOU THINK HUNTER LIBRARY'S PUBLIC SERVICE UNITS COMMUNICATE IN THESE AREAS?
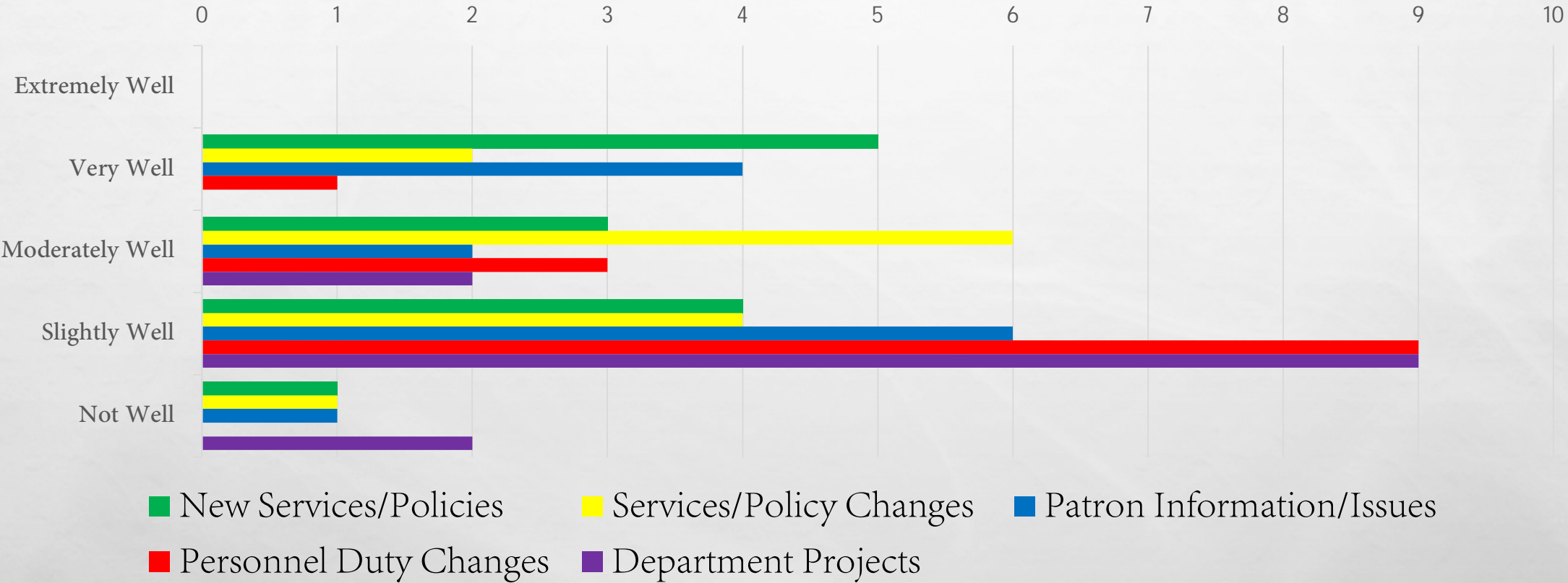
COMMON THOUGHTS ABOUT COMMUNICATION

- Major policy/service information is being shared.

- Other information is only shared between individuals from each unit involved in specific projects or not at all.

- We are busy and forget the other unit may need the information.

- It is hard to keep track of all changes. You can't remember everything.
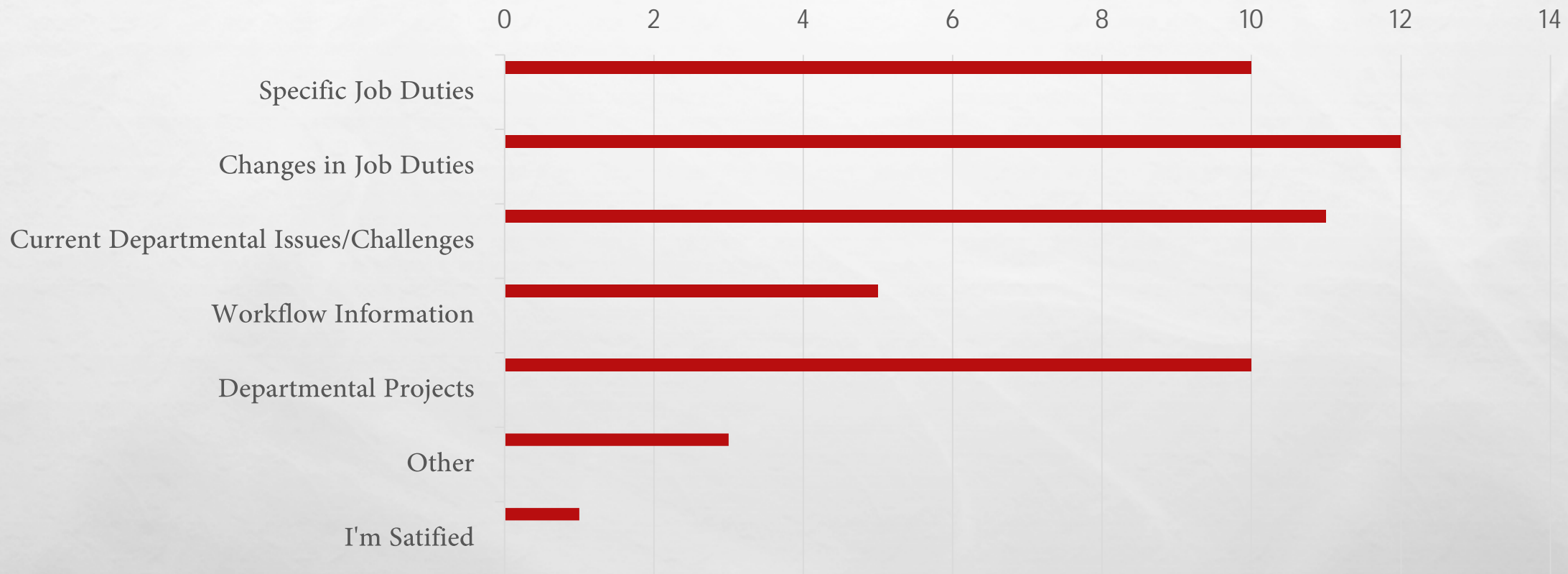
HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE LEVEL OF COLLEGIALITY BETWEEN PUBLIC SERVICE UNITS?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Excellent — 4

Good — 5

Average — 3

Poor — 1

Terrible — 0
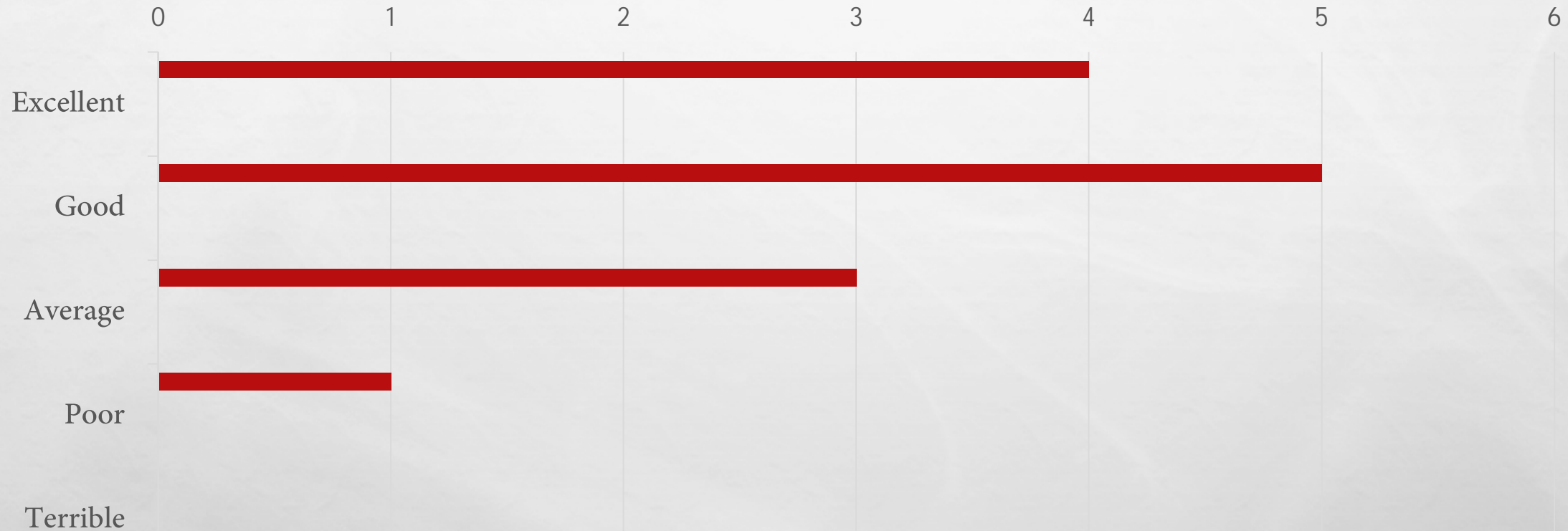
COMMON THOUGHTS ABOUT COLLEGIALITY

- Our units generally work well together, with shared goals of serving patrons and the university always in mind.

- Lack of communication isn't necessarily reflection of lack of collegiality.

- Hunter's workplace culture can be serious and focus is on getting individual work done. Some people keep to themselves. Difference in employee status (faculty/staff) may contribute to some of the distance as well.

- There aren't many formal opportunities to work together/socialize. Folks have mixed feelings about this being a good or bad thing.

COMMUNICATION IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS

- **More cross-training opportunities**

- **Regular email/SharePoint/meeting update from each unit**

  - Access Services could share specific information, separate from the TASC news blog

- **An organizational responsibilities chart for each unit**

- **Activities/efforts to bridge the faculty/staff divide**

- **Informal information sessions w/food to share what we do**

COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP

- **16 attendees**
- **Survey trends**
- **Kahoot quizzes about each unit**
- **Group discussion with question prompts**
- **Tips for improved communication**
- **Food!!**

WORKSHOP GROUP QUESTION EXAMPLES

- **What would you consider to be your greatest accomplishment at Hunter Library?**

- **What book are you reading currently?**

- **What job responsibility do you have that others may not know about?**

- **What is currently your biggest challenge at work?**

- **What professional development event would you like to attend (if money and time were no object)?**

HOW TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

- **Be friendly and smile!**

- **Give others the benefit of the doubt**

- **Avoid labeling/stereotyping individuals/depts.**

- **Take initiative to share information**

- **Be aware of others' schedules, responsibilities, and struggles**

- **Never assume!**
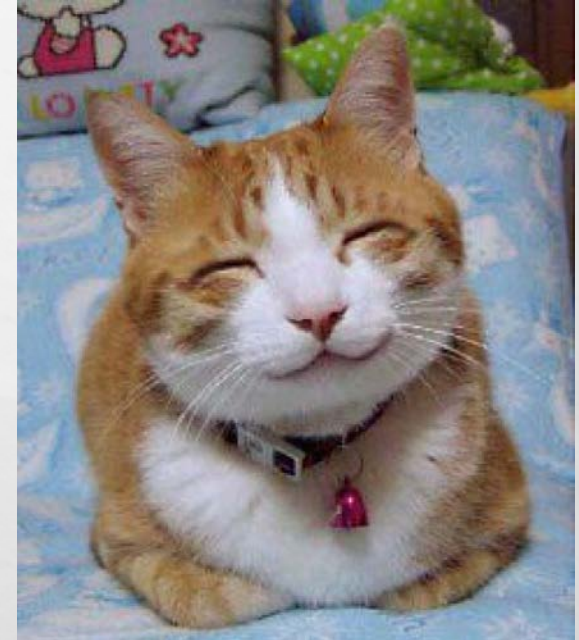
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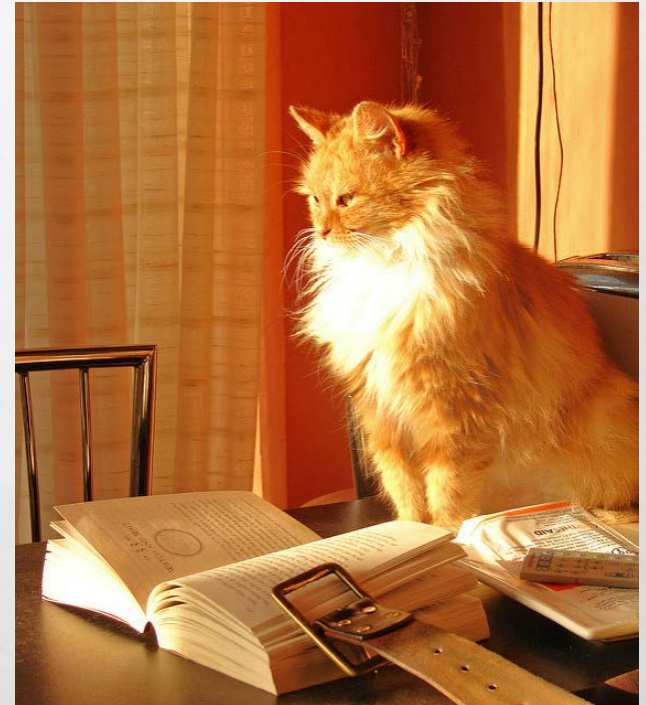
THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

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