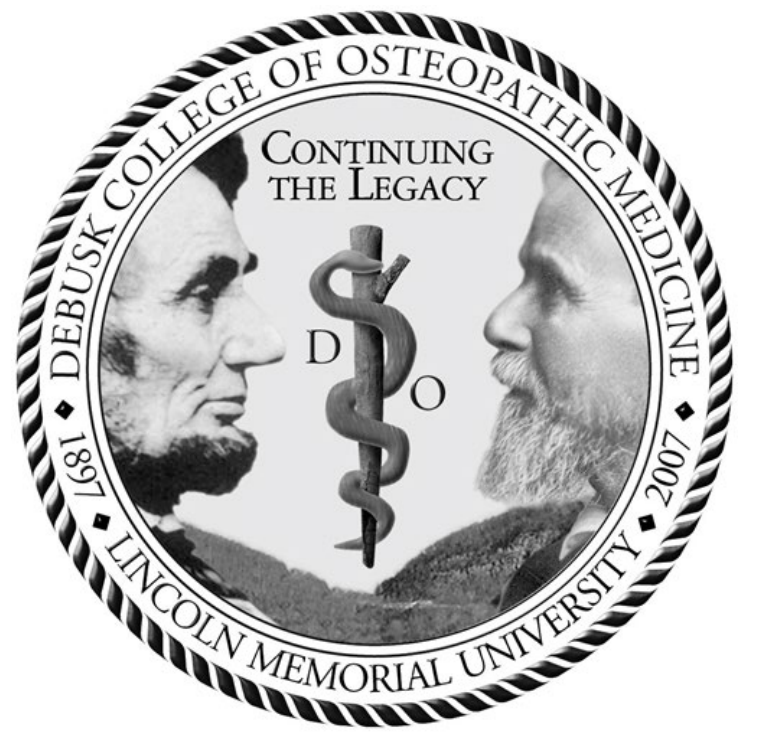


Effects of Online Learning and Pass/Fail Scoring of the COMLEX on Cumulative GPA of LMU-DCOM Students.

*David Horvath, OMS-III and Ian Schultheiss, OMS-II.
Faculty Advisor: Aaron Beger, PhD.*



Abstract

Introduction: This paper provides a first analysis of findings from osteopathic students at Lincoln Memorial University regarding the decision to make COMLEX Level 1 scored on a pass/fail basis. Analyzed here are data on behaviors that students plan to adopt to improve their curriculum vitae to compensate for the lack of a three-digit score on this high-stakes examination.

Methods: In a cross-sectional study design, first and second year osteopathic students were queried using an online survey.

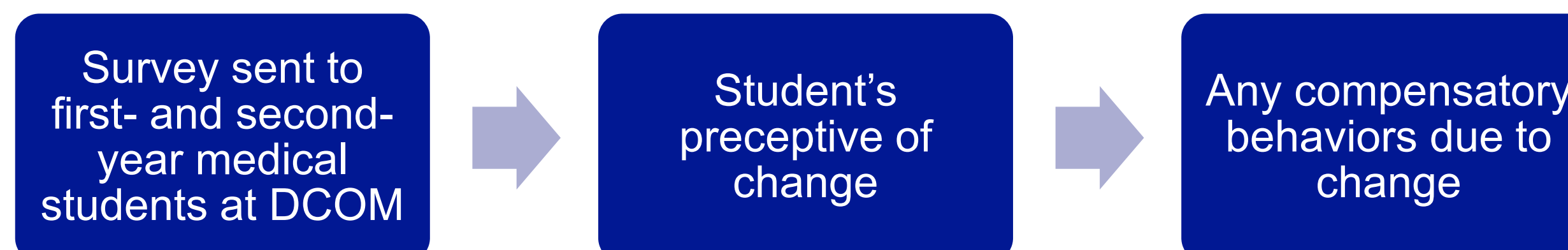
Results: In total, 142 students out of 873 participated in the survey. More than 74% of respondents adopted goals related to academics and extracurricular activities in order to fill the void on their resumes left by a pass/fail Level 1 COMLEX.

Discussion: The NBOME's plan to relieve student stress and encourage more engagement with preclinical didactics due to a Level 1 pass/fail exam may come up short. The high rate of compensatory behaviors indicates a call for attention to further research on strategies to relieve student stress other than removing a numerical score from a high-stakes examination.

Background

- Until recent years, the three-digit Comprehensive Osteopathic Medical Licensure Examination (COMLEX) Level 1 score was one of the most important scores in an osteopathic medical student's academic career.
- It was well-known amongst incoming osteopathic medical students that this score was weighted heavily by residency program directors when considering students for an interview and acceptance into a program.
- The NBOME's approval for change away from numerical reporting was focused on reducing the stress associated with taking this high-stakes examination.¹
- Yet to be addressed is the reasons that lead the NBOME to implement a pass/fail scoring system and how this decision has created compensatory behaviors in osteopathic students for staying competitive in the match.

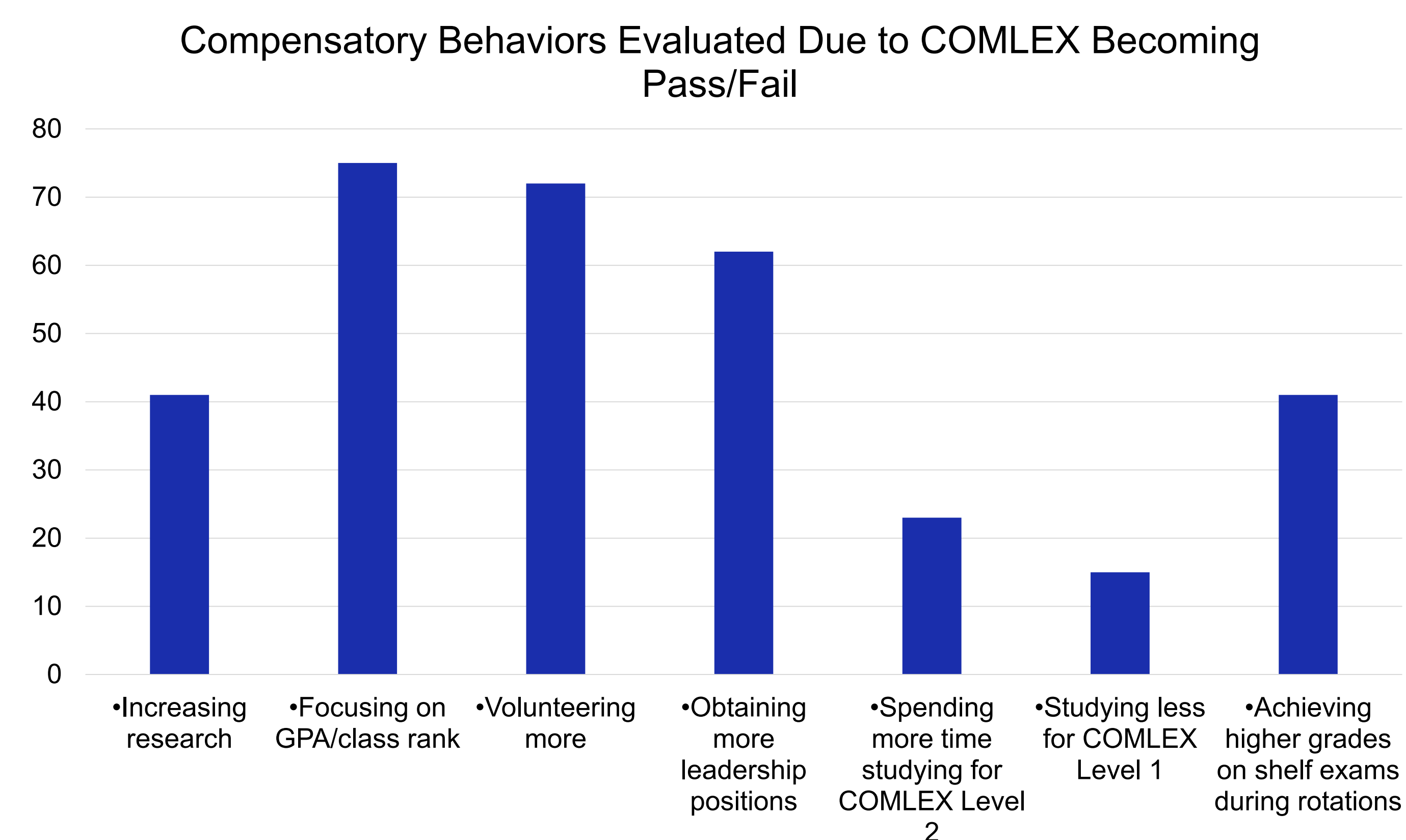
Methods



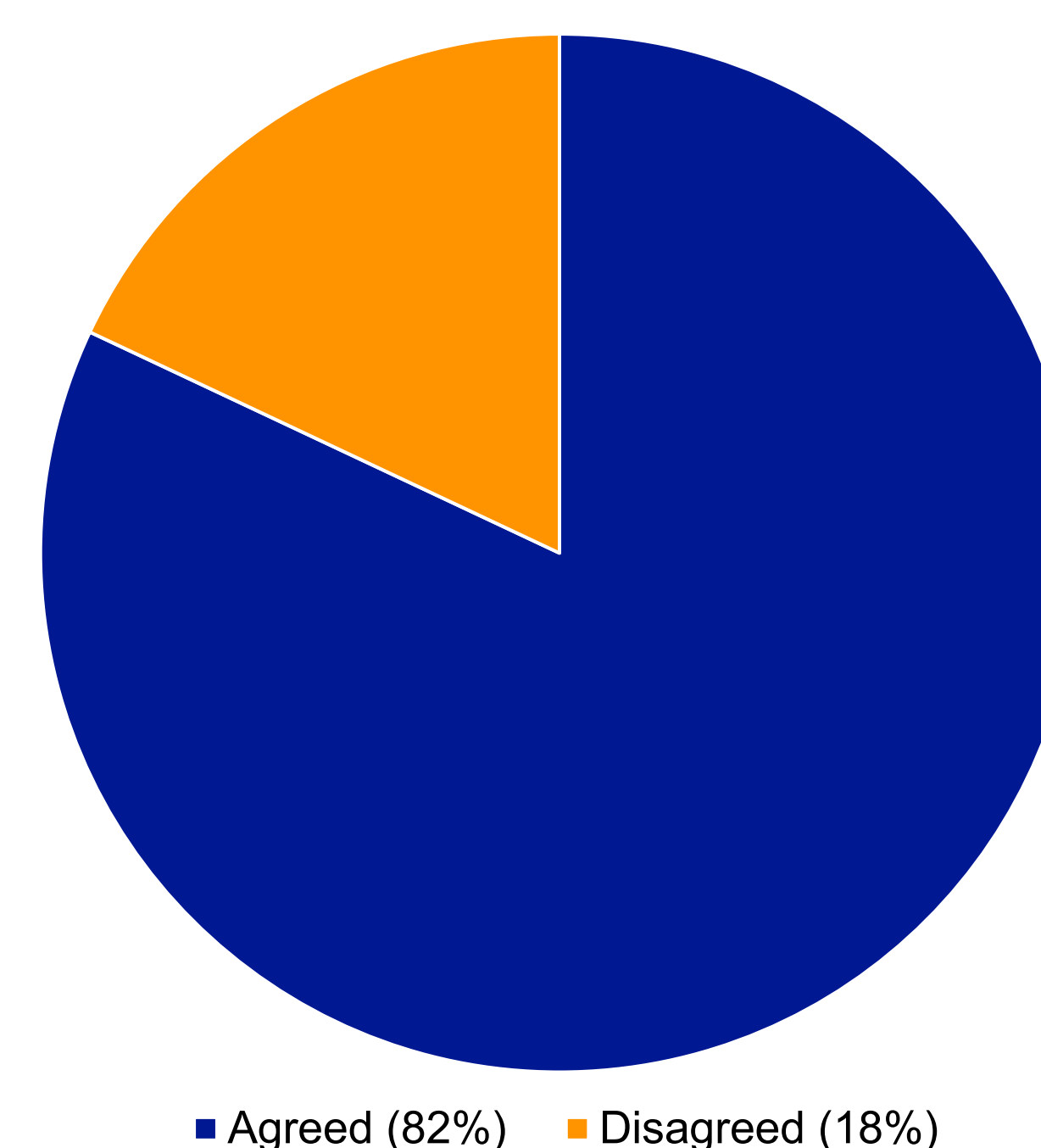
Compensatory behaviors evaluated within survey:

- Increasing research
- Focusing on GPA/class rank
- Volunteering more
- Obtaining more leadership positions
- Spending more time studying for COMLEX Level 2
- Studying less for COMLEX Level 1
- Achieving higher grades on shelf exams during rotations

Results



Student's Preceptive of Change



Discussion

- The NBOME Board claims that the ultimate reason for transitioning to pass/fail was "in support of wellness across the continuum [of medical licensure]."²
- However, the data above suggests that despite the move from pass/fail there seems to be increased pressure placed on osteopathic medical students to outcompete their allopathic counterparts in other areas of their curriculum vitae.
- This is reflected in their decision to focus more on grades and extracurricular activities while managing their time appropriately so they can adequately prepare for Level 1.

References

- Youmans, Quentin R., Utibe R. Essien, and Quinn Capers. "A Test of Diversity — What Usmlc Pass/Fail Scoring Means for Medicine." *New England Journal of Medicine*. 382, no. 25 (2020): 2393–95. <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmp2004356>.
- COMLEX-USA Level 1 to Eliminate Numeric Scores [Internet]. Available from <https://www.nbome.org/news/comlex-usa-level-1-to-eliminate-numeric-scores/>