

# Resilience for the Rocky Road: Supporting First Year Student-Athletes in their Transition to College



A joint project between Boise State University  
and Illinois State University



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# Problem

- First-year student-athletes encounter
    - New time and energy demands
    - Experience challenges of independence and autonomy
    - Are exposed to new elite athletic environment where expectations and psychological pressures are heightened
    - Have their support networks altered
- (Arnett, 2000; Gayles & Baker, 2015; Wylleman, 2017)

# Why Resilience Matters

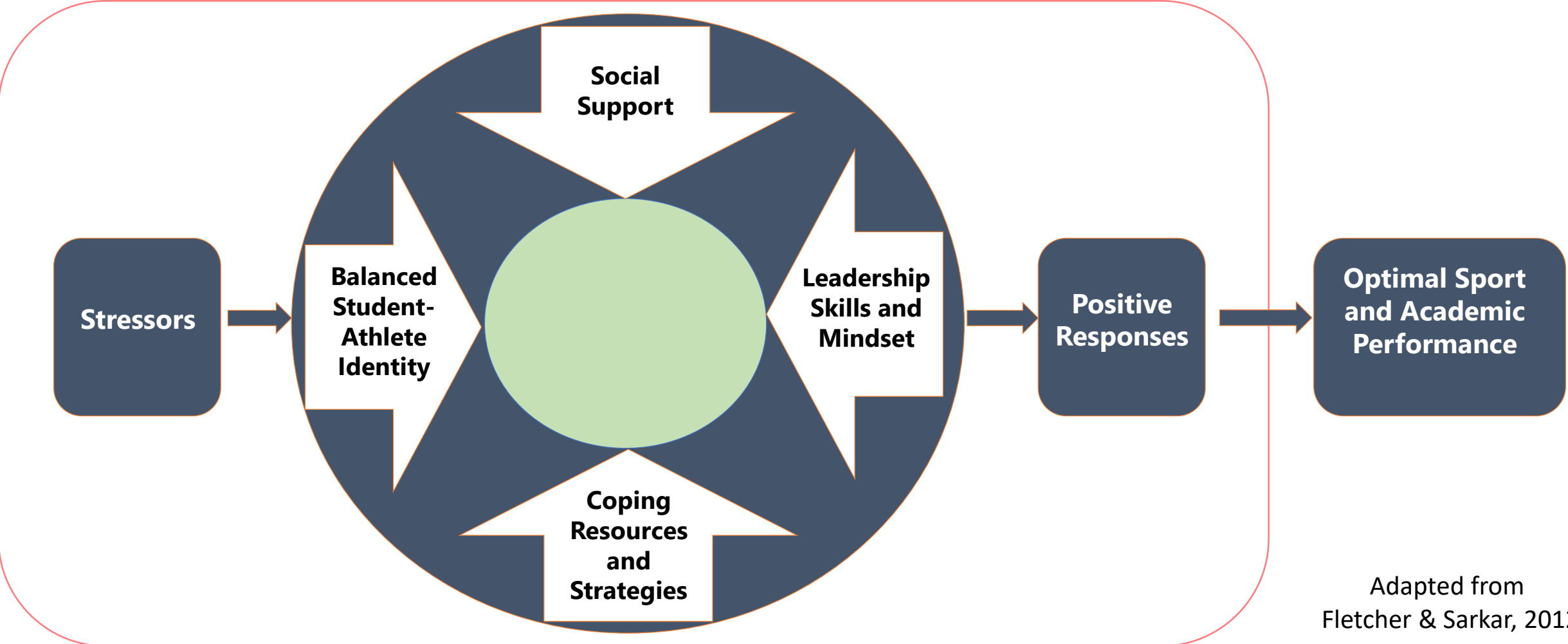
- Resilience is a process of positive adaptation as a result of significant adversity and the ability to use personal qualities to withstand these pressures

(Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000)

- Resilience programming should focus on:
  1. Optimizing personal qualities
  2. Creating a facilitative environment
  3. Developing a challenge mindset

(Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012, Fletcher & Sarkar, 2016)

# Program Content



Adapted from  
Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012

# Program Format



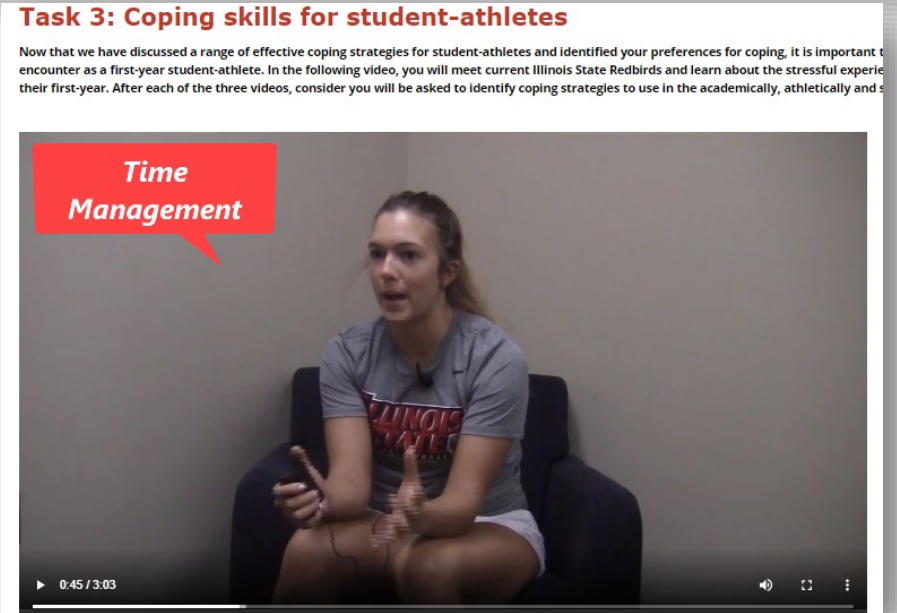
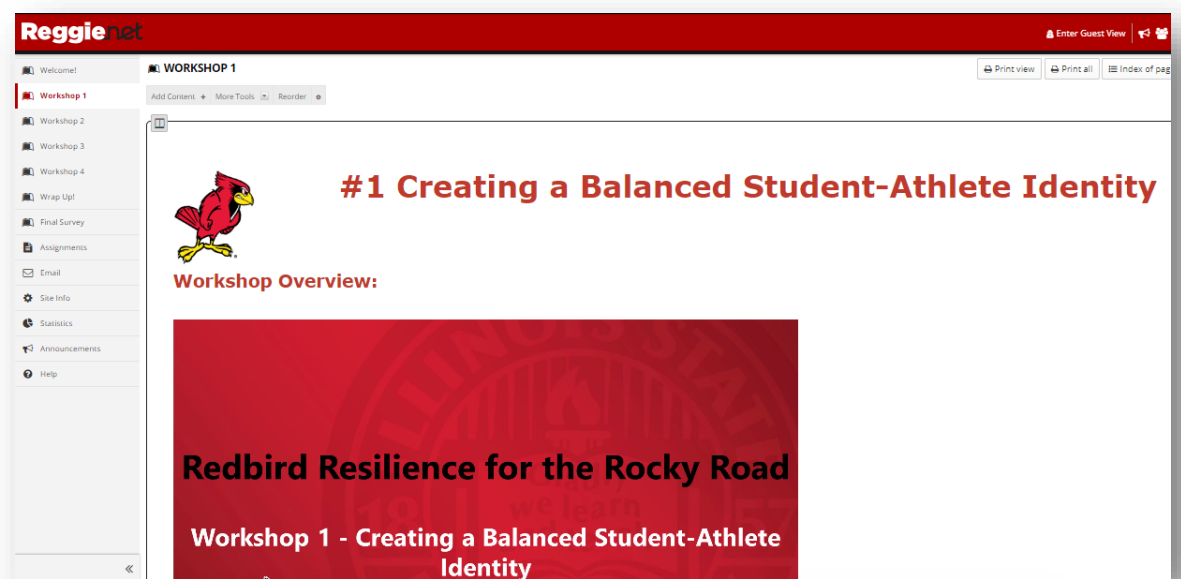
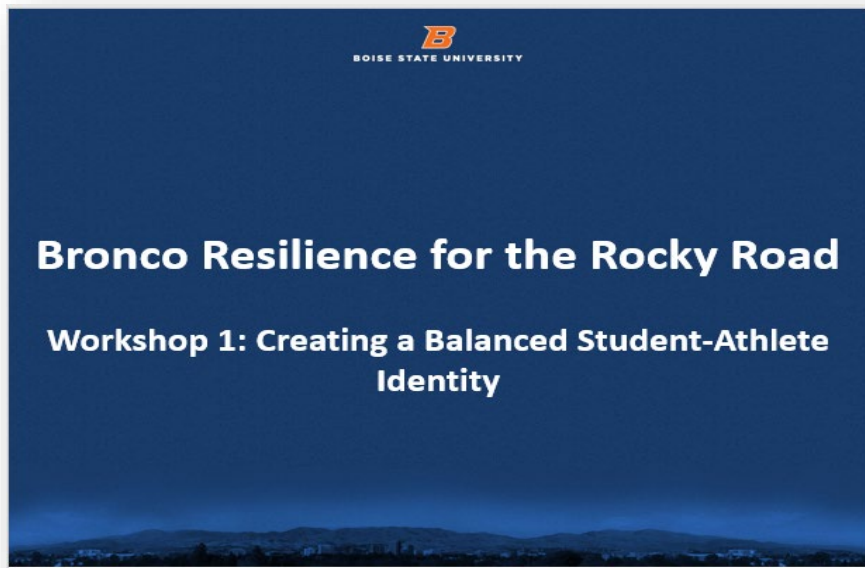
## In-person

- Integrated into Freshman orientation class
- 4-week workshops
- 67 student-athletes in two sections
- Surveys at semester start, end of October, December



## Online

- Fully online workshop
- 4 workshops – pace was self-driven
- 106 student-athletes
- Surveys at semester start, when completed module 4, and December



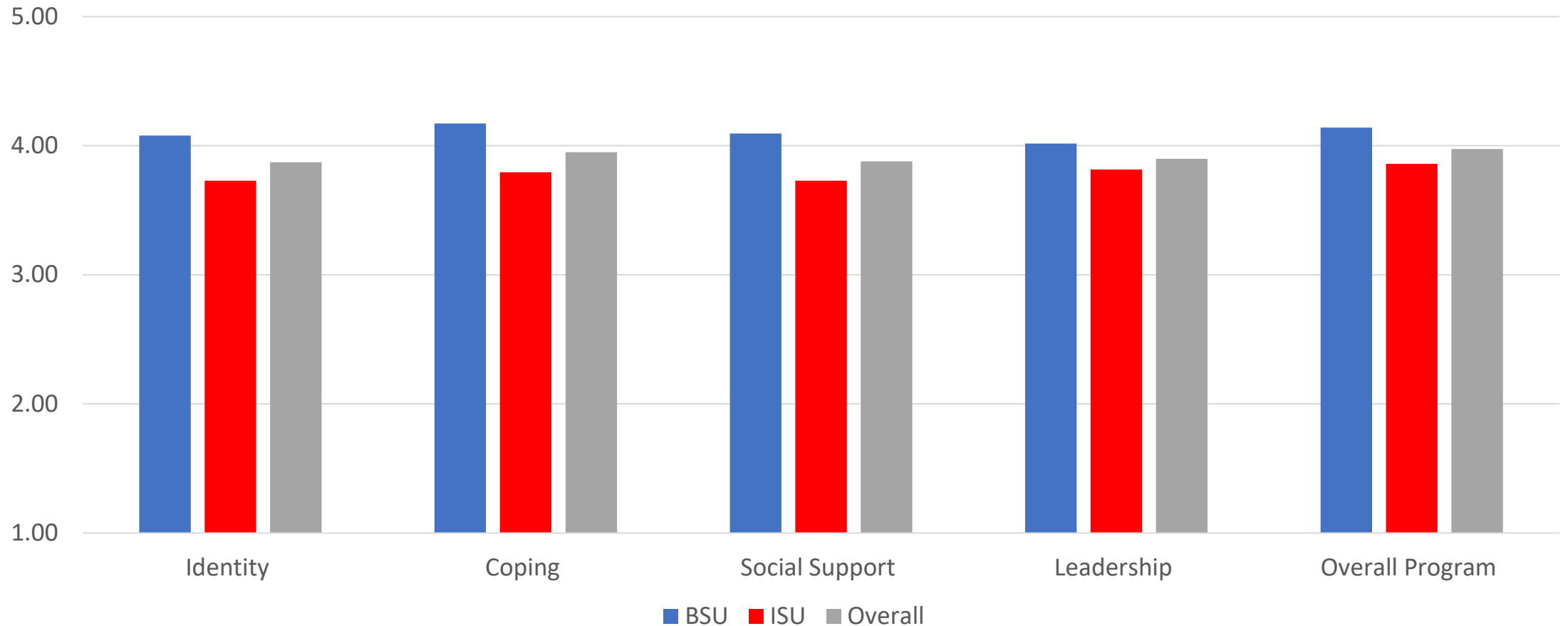
# Participants

- 135 freshman student-athletes completed surveys at all three time points (Boise State = 62; Illinois State = 73)
- Male student-athletes = 62; female student-athletes = 73
- Primarily white ( $n = 96$ ; Black/African American = 22; Hispanic/Latinx = 6)
- Split between full scholarship ( $n = 48$ ), partial scholarship ( $n = 64$ ) and no scholarship ( $n = 23$ )

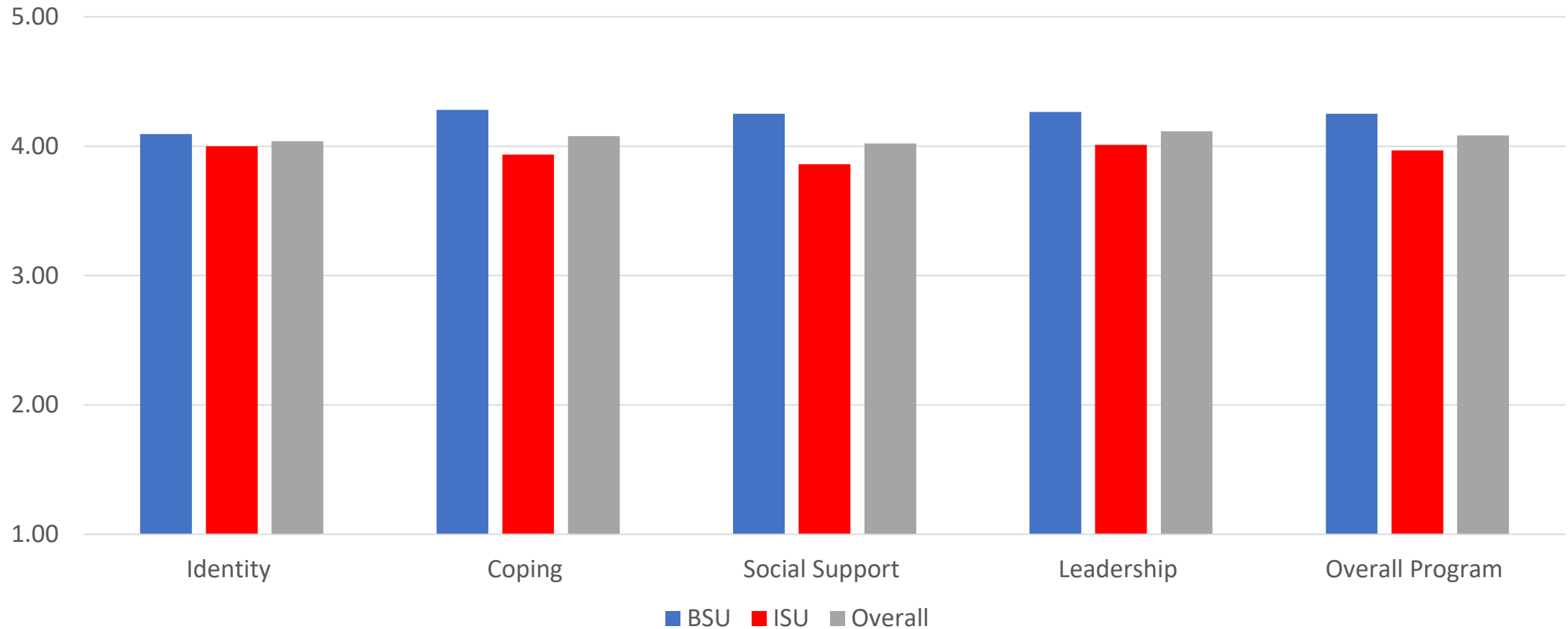
# Program Results



# Program Value for Transition

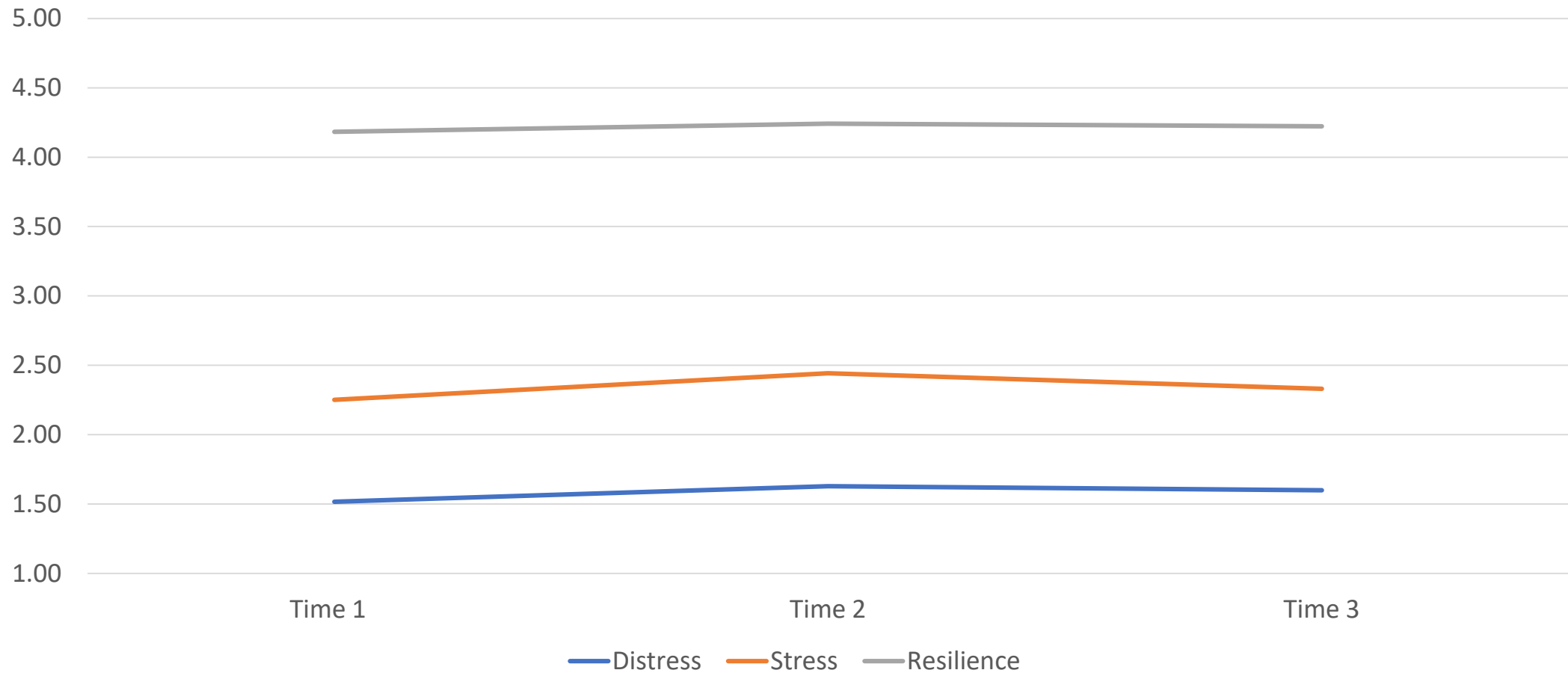


# Program Value for College Experience

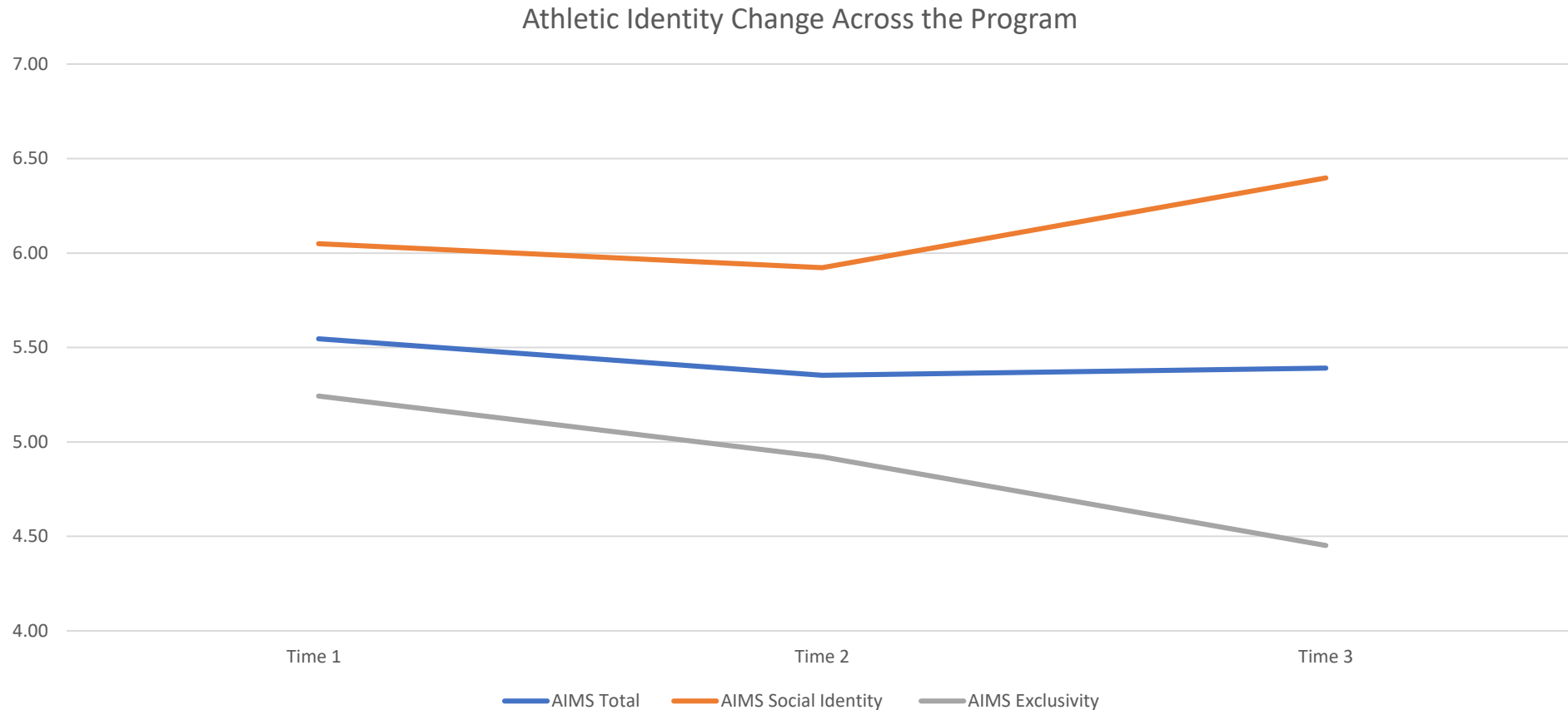


# Student Outcomes

Stress, Distress, and Resilience Across the Course of the Program



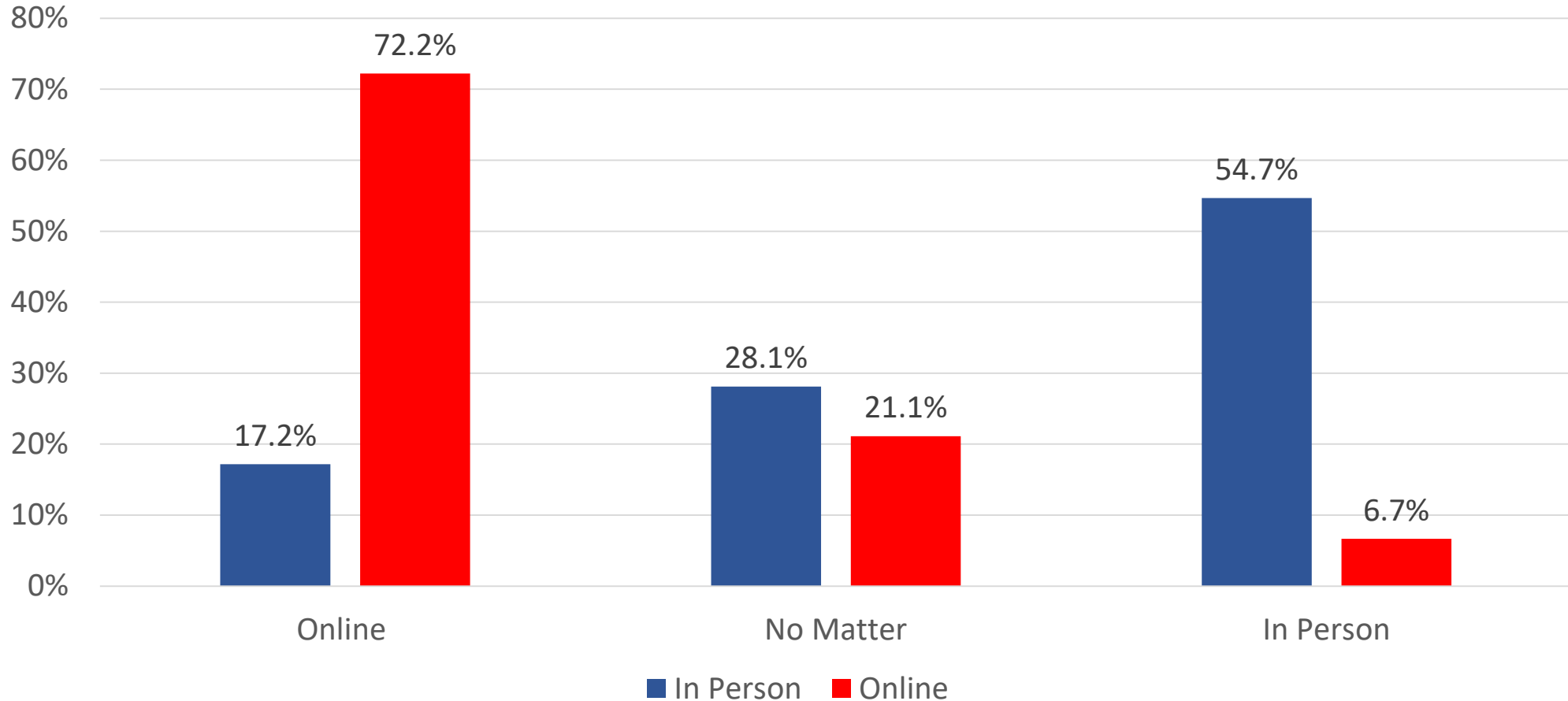
# Student Outcomes



# Behavior Change

- Approximately 75% of student-athletes indicated they took actionable steps to:
  - Balance their identity
  - Use alternative coping strategies
  - Seek new types of support
  - Improve leadership skills
- 93% of student-athletes recommended that future student-athletes participate in the resilience programming

# Preference for Programming Type



# Implications for Campus Level Programming

1. Educate coaches and support staff to facilitate student-athlete resilience because developing student-athlete resilience cannot be accomplished in a single program
2. Tailor educational programming to your student-athletes and your university
3. Identify and empower champions to drive resilience and psychological development programming
4. Promote active and collaborative learning experiences in face-to-face and online programs