

KEY POINTS

- Following the implementation of a PCAT-optional policy, the number of total applicants increased by 19%, with a 12% increase in the number of historically underrepresented applicants.
- Within the underrepresented applicants, the highest increase in application volume came from the African American/Black group (8%), followed by the Hispanic/Latino group (3.9%).
- Seventy-six percent of historically underrepresented students and 60% of White and Asian students favored the permanent adoption of a PCAT-optional admissions policy.

INTRODUCTION

- The Pharmacy College Admission Test (PCAT) was the standardized test often used to assess candidates' academic abilities at admissions.
- Test-optional admissions policies give applicants the option of submitting their test scores for consideration.^{1,2} Advantages include:
 - less stressful and financially burdensome application process,
 - less standardized test bias, fewer barriers, more equity, and
 - more opportunities to attract diverse students.^{3,4}
- Purpose:** Explore the relationship between a PCAT-optional admission policy and the number of applicants to a PharmD program.

METHODS

- Admissions and recruitment data two years prior to and after implementation of a PCAT-optional admission policy in the 2019-20 admission cycle were retrospectively obtained from four admission cycles at the UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy.
- A voluntary, anonymous survey with Likert-scale and open-ended questions was electronically administered to first- and second-year pharmacy students to explore their perceptions of the PCAT-optional admissions policy.
- Trends in the number of total applicants and applicants from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds were examined.
- A chi-squared test and inductive coding were used for comparisons and data analysis.

RESULTS

FIGURE 1 Total Applications Received per Graduating Class (N=2,129)

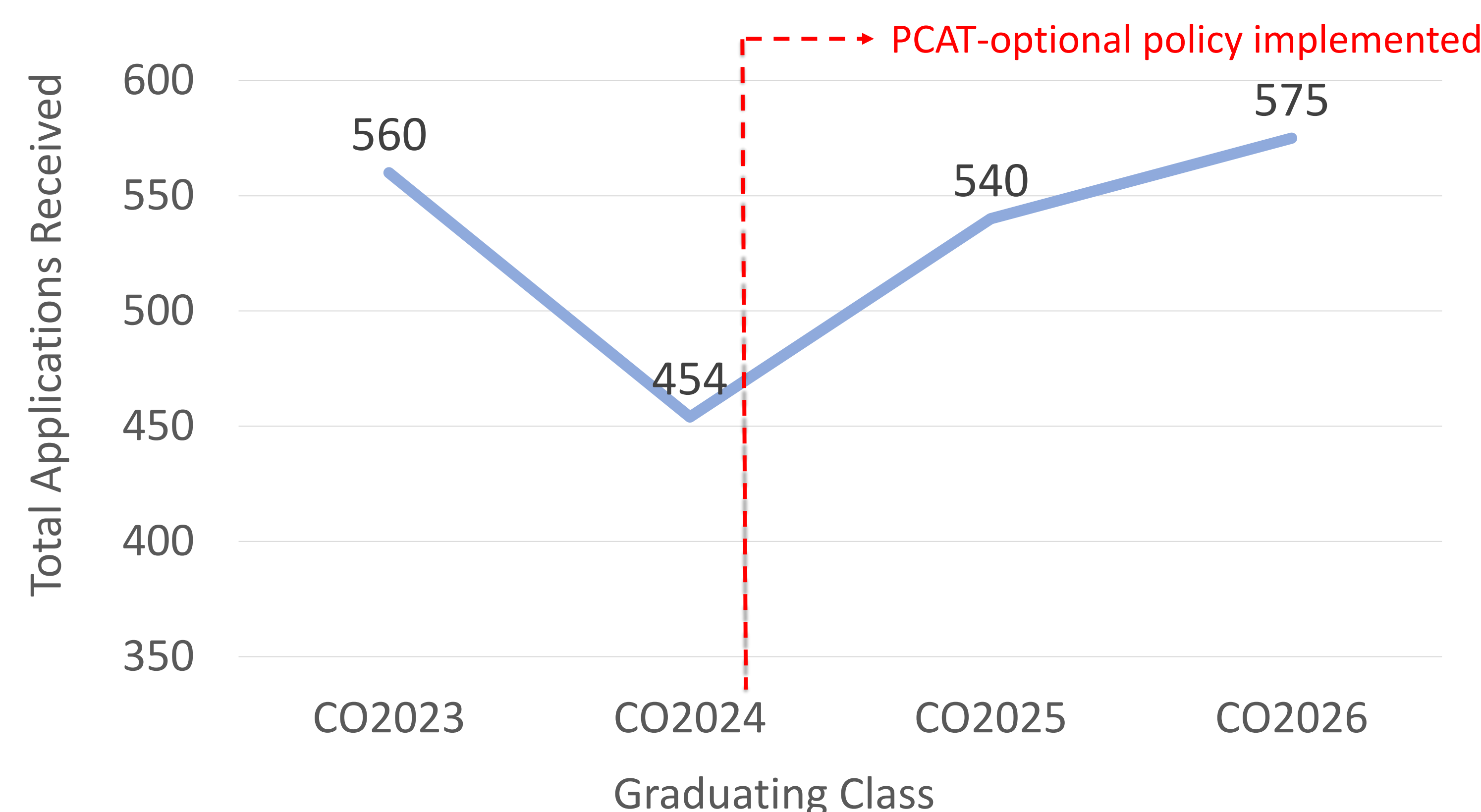


FIGURE 2 Percentage of Underrepresented Applicants per Graduating Class

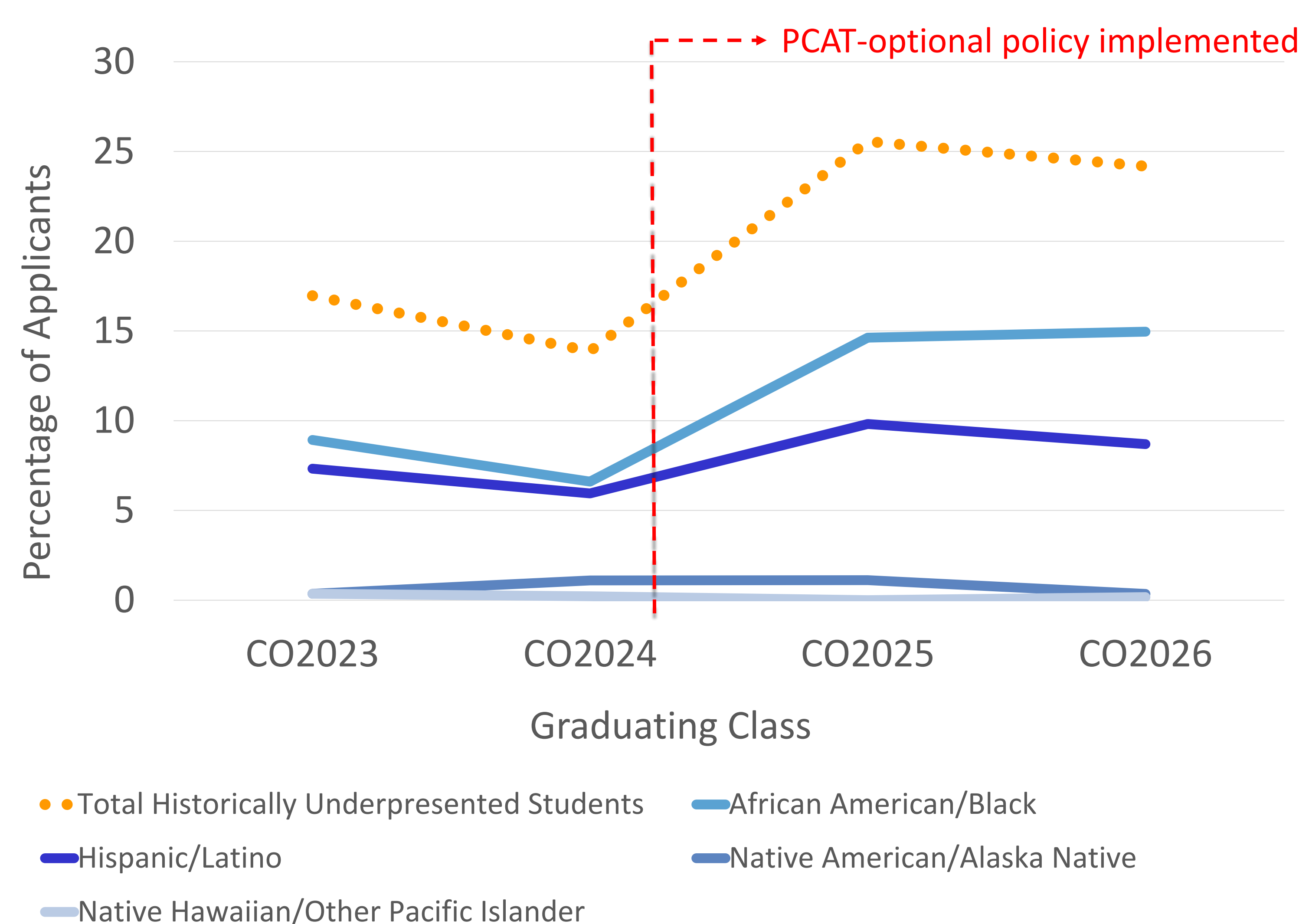
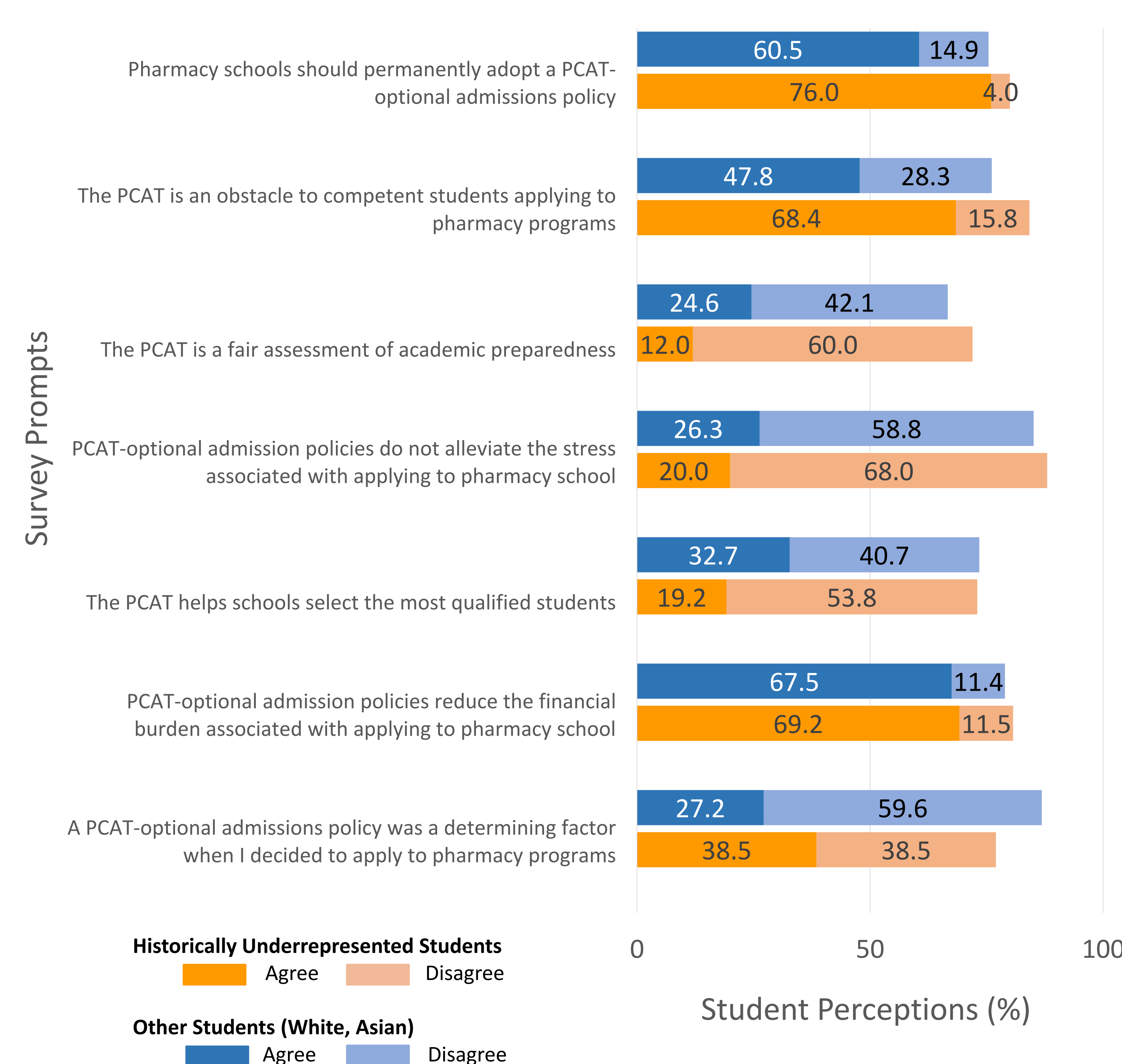


FIGURE 3 Student Perceptions of the PCAT and PCAT-Optional Policy



CONCLUSION

- The PCAT-optional policy was associated with an increase in the number of total applicants and historically underrepresented applicants to the PharmD program.
- Students favored the use of this model as it relieves financial barriers and stressors for applicants.
- Future research should explore alternative tools to evaluate candidates' academic preparedness during the pharmacy program admissions process.

REFERENCES

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Survey Participant Demographics (N=165)

