



W I S E L I

*Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute*  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*



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## Searching for Excellence & Diversity

Does training faculty search  
committees improve hiring of  
women?



## Outline

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- What is WISELI?
- Why focus on hiring?
- *Searching for Excellence & Diversity* workshops
  - Emphasis on research on bias and assumptions
- How's it working?



# Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute

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- National Science Foundation/ADVANCE Institutional Transformation award
- Mission: Promote the participation and advancement of women in academic science and engineering
- Activities
  - Workshops
  - Grants
  - Seminars
  - Research & Evaluation



## Why focus on hiring?

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- Gatekeeping role of search committees
- Shapes the “complexion” of the faculty for years to come
- Obvious disparities for women in science and engineering
- Hiring is NOT the only important thing to think about as we diversify our workplaces (e.g., climate, leadership, equity)—but it is an important place to start!



# Five Essential Elements of a Successful Search

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- Run an effective and efficient search committee
- Actively recruit an excellent and diverse pool of candidates
- Raise awareness of unconscious assumptions and their influence on evaluation of candidates
- Ensure a fair and thorough review of candidates
- Develop and implement an effective interview process



# Run an effective and efficient search committee

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- Writing the job description/ad
- Effective leadership of a search committee

*The “nuts and bolts”*



# Actively recruit an excellent and diverse pool of candidates

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- Discuss diversity up front
- Build a diverse pool of candidates
  - Dispense with assumptions that may limit the pool!
  - Personal contacts are the key
  - Actively involve all members of the search committee

*Putting the “search” back into “search and screen”*





# Before Training: Passive Recruiting



“We just cast out our nets and see who swims in.”



# After Training: Active Recruiting

“There are very few women in [this discipline}, and even less in [this subfield] . . . so we contacted all of them and asked them to apply. We were fishing for a guppy and might have caught a barracuda.”





## Have you heard these statements?

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- “I am fully in favor of diversity, but I don’t want to sacrifice quality for diversity”
- “We have to focus on hiring the *‘best’*”
- “Recruiting women and minority faculty diminishes opportunities for white male faculty”
- “There are no women/minorities in our field”
- “The scarcity of women/minorities in our field means that those who *are* available are in high demand and we can’t compete”
- “Minority candidates would not want to come to our campus”



# Raise awareness of unconscious assumptions and their influence on evaluation of candidates

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- What is “unconscious bias”?
- How might unconscious biases affect the search process?
- How can a search committee overcome these tendencies?

*Show them the data*



# Overcoming unconscious bias—best practices

- Do not depend too heavily on any one element of a portfolio  
Trix and Psenka 2003
- Develop evaluation criteria prior to evaluating candidates and stick to the criteria. Periodically review evaluation decisions and ensure that criteria continue to guide the selection of candidates.  
Biernat and Fuegen 2001
- Switch the gender/race “thought experiment”  
Valian 1998



# Ensure a fair and thorough review of candidates

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- Evaluation criteria
- Conduct review in stages
- Communicate with applicants

*More "nuts and bolts"*



# Develop and implement an effective interview process

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- Plan for an effective interview process
  - Articulate interview goals
  - Avoid inappropriate questions
  - Provide candidates with information
- Ensure that unconscious bias and assumptions do not enter the interview process

*Do not underestimate the damage a candidate's bad interview experience can do to your department*



# Delivering the message to search committees

- Peer teaching
  - Use faculty/staff FROM UNIT to deliver messages, facilitate discussions
  - Include a high-level administrator
- Active learning
  - Literature on teaching and learning shows that people learn best when *engaged*
  - Faculty take the message more seriously when they are hearing it from a peer than from somebody “outside”
- Unconscious Biases & Assumptions
  - Use of DATA to persuade/change attitudes and behaviors
- Accountability





## Success?

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- Run approximately 17 sessions for over 90 individuals per year
  - In 2004 and 2005, 97 faculty representing 41 departments participated—this is 61% of departments in biological and physical sciences.

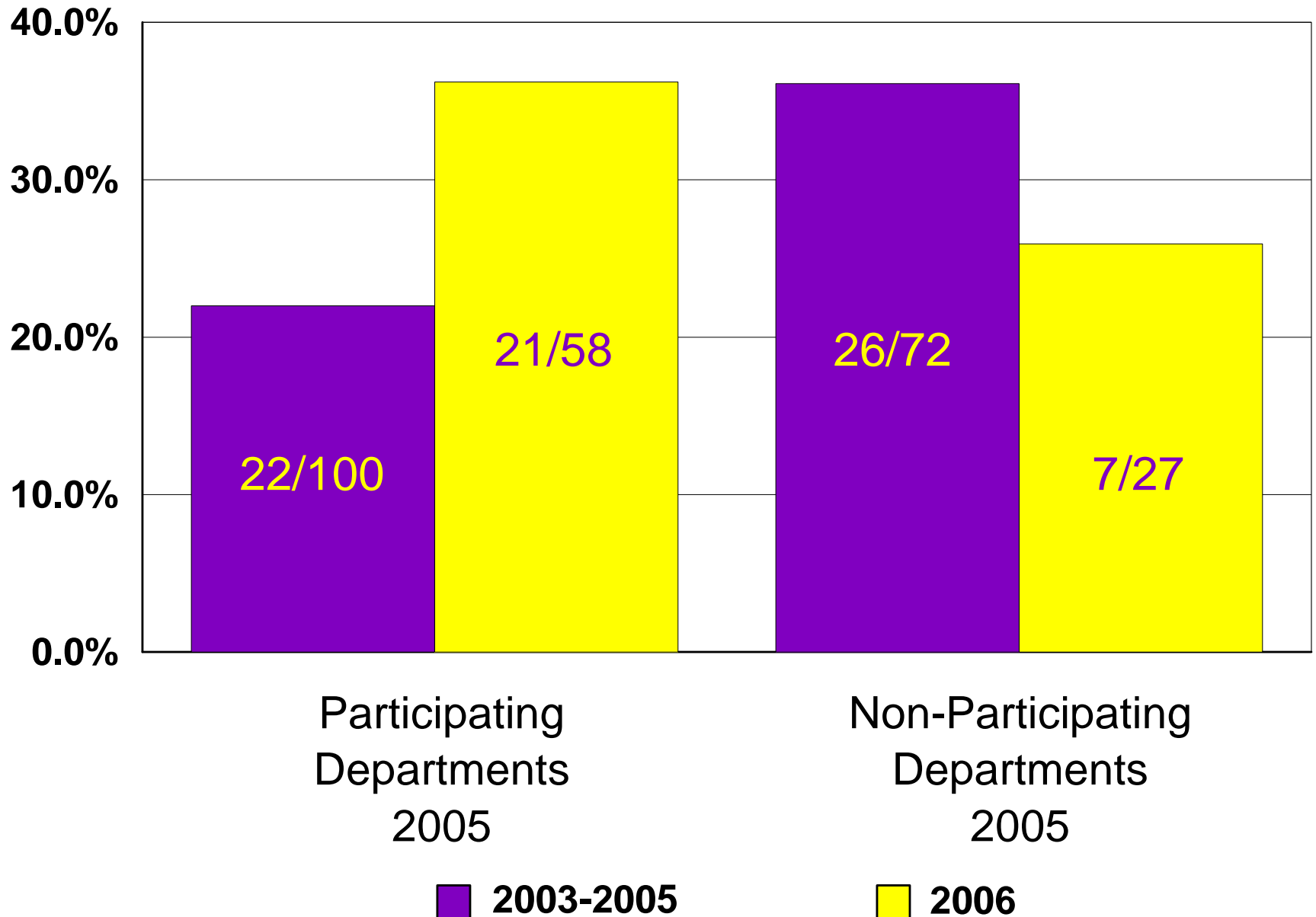


## Measuring success

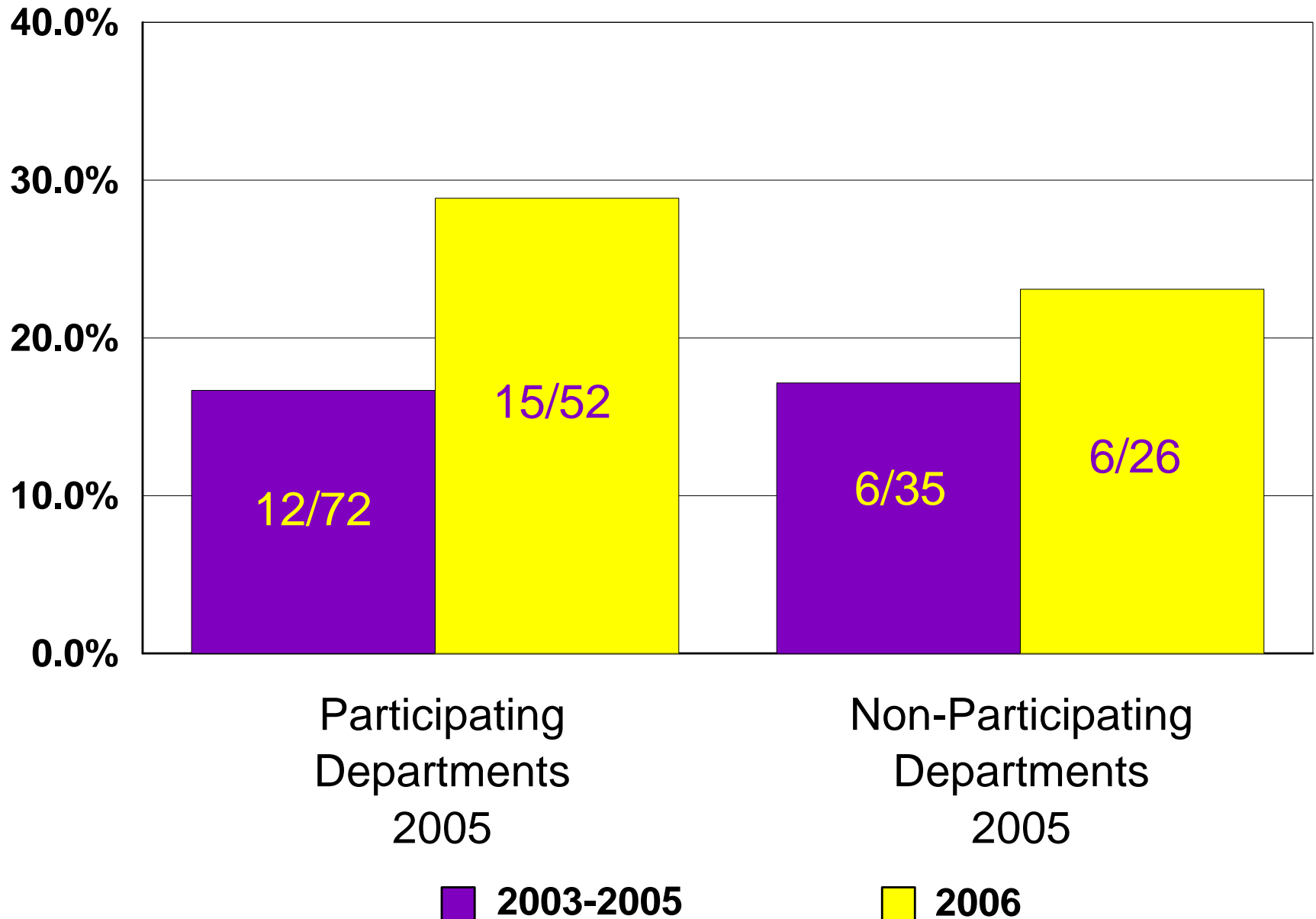
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- Evaluation forms
- Hiring outcomes
  - Diversity of pool
  - Short lists/interviewees
  - Offers made/offers accepted
  - New hires
- Experiences of candidates
- Changes in participants' attitudes and behaviors

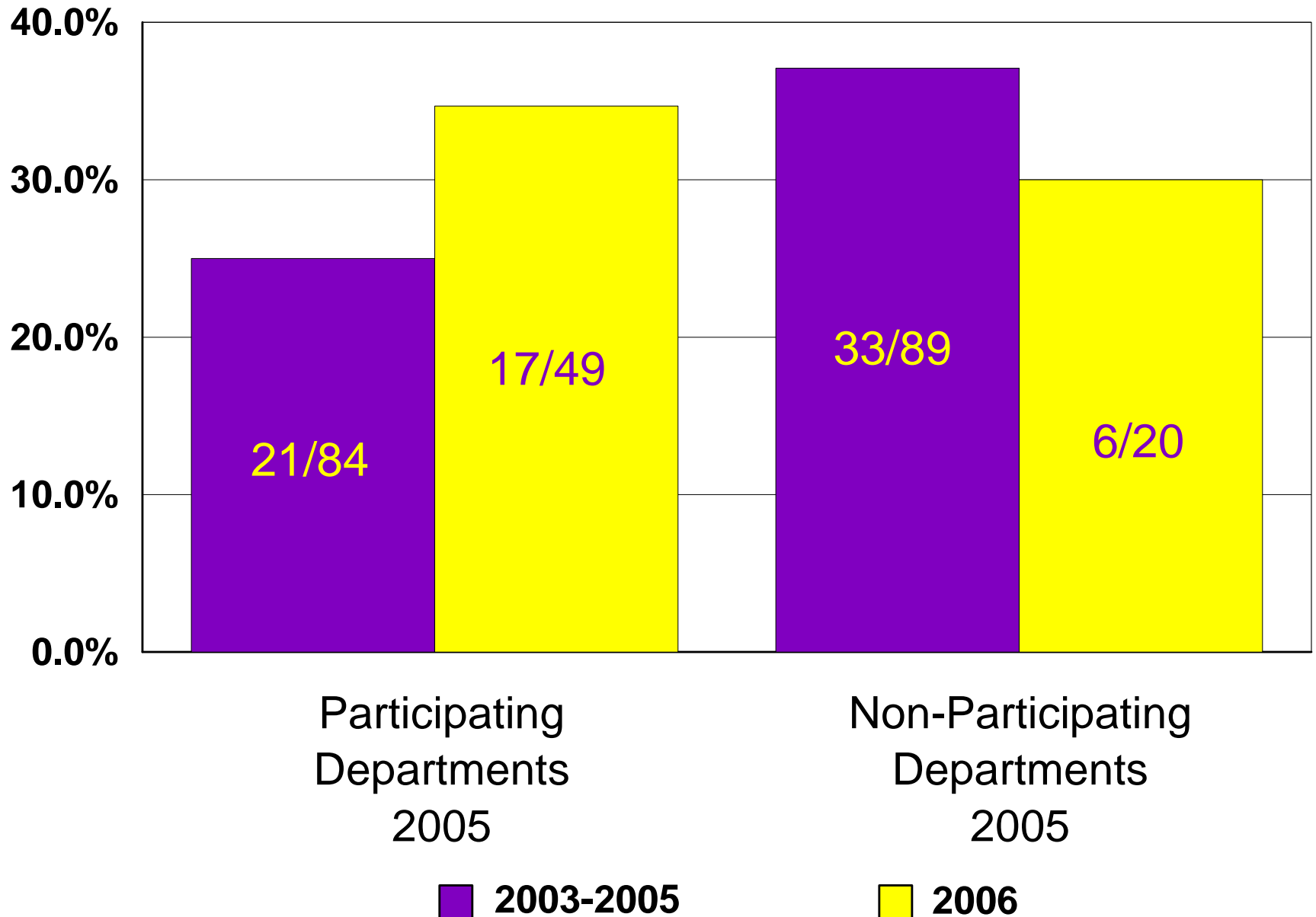
# Percent Female, Tenure-Track Faculty Offers Biological & Physical Sciences



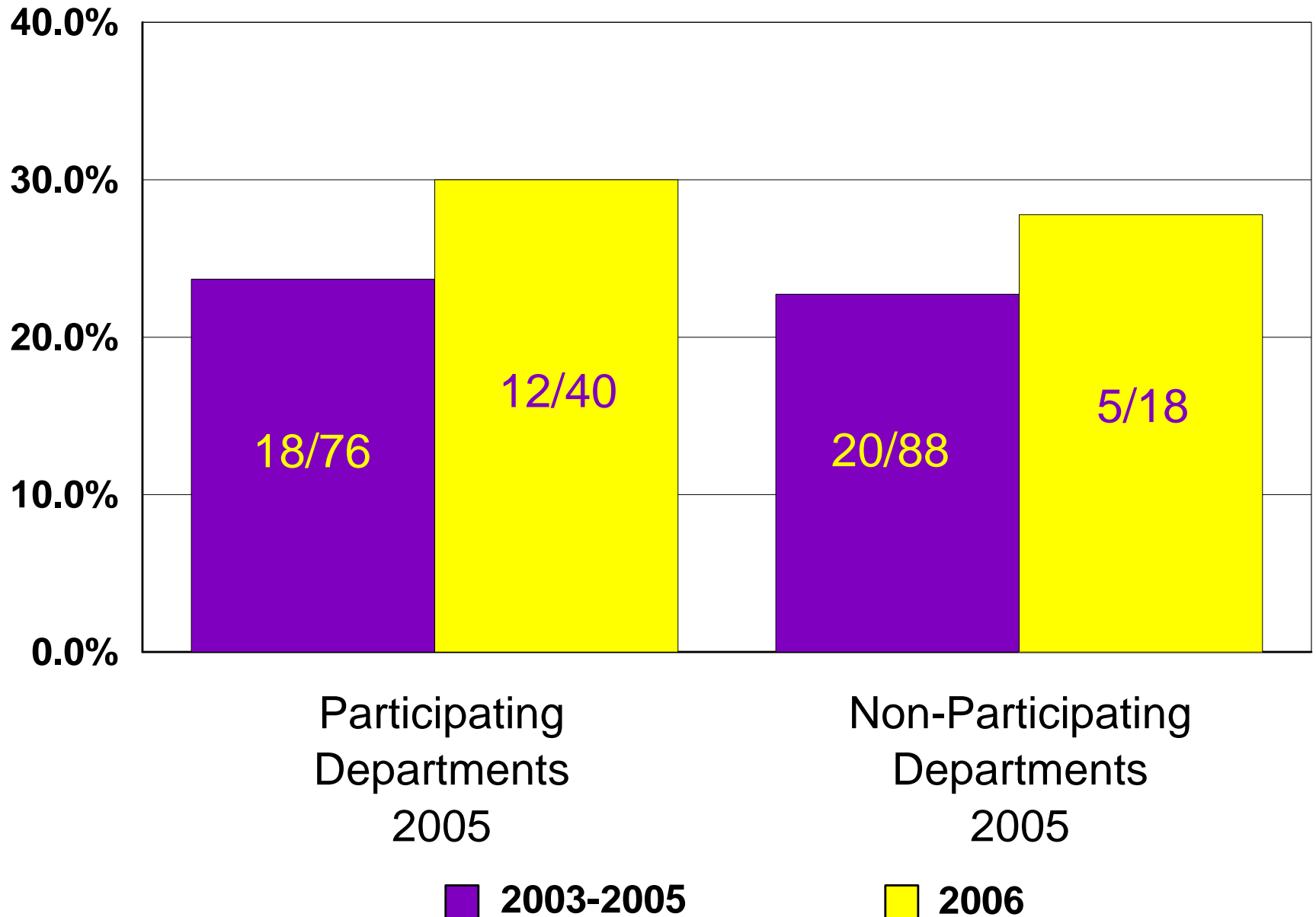
# Percent Nonwhite, Tenure-Track Faculty Offers Biological & Physical Sciences



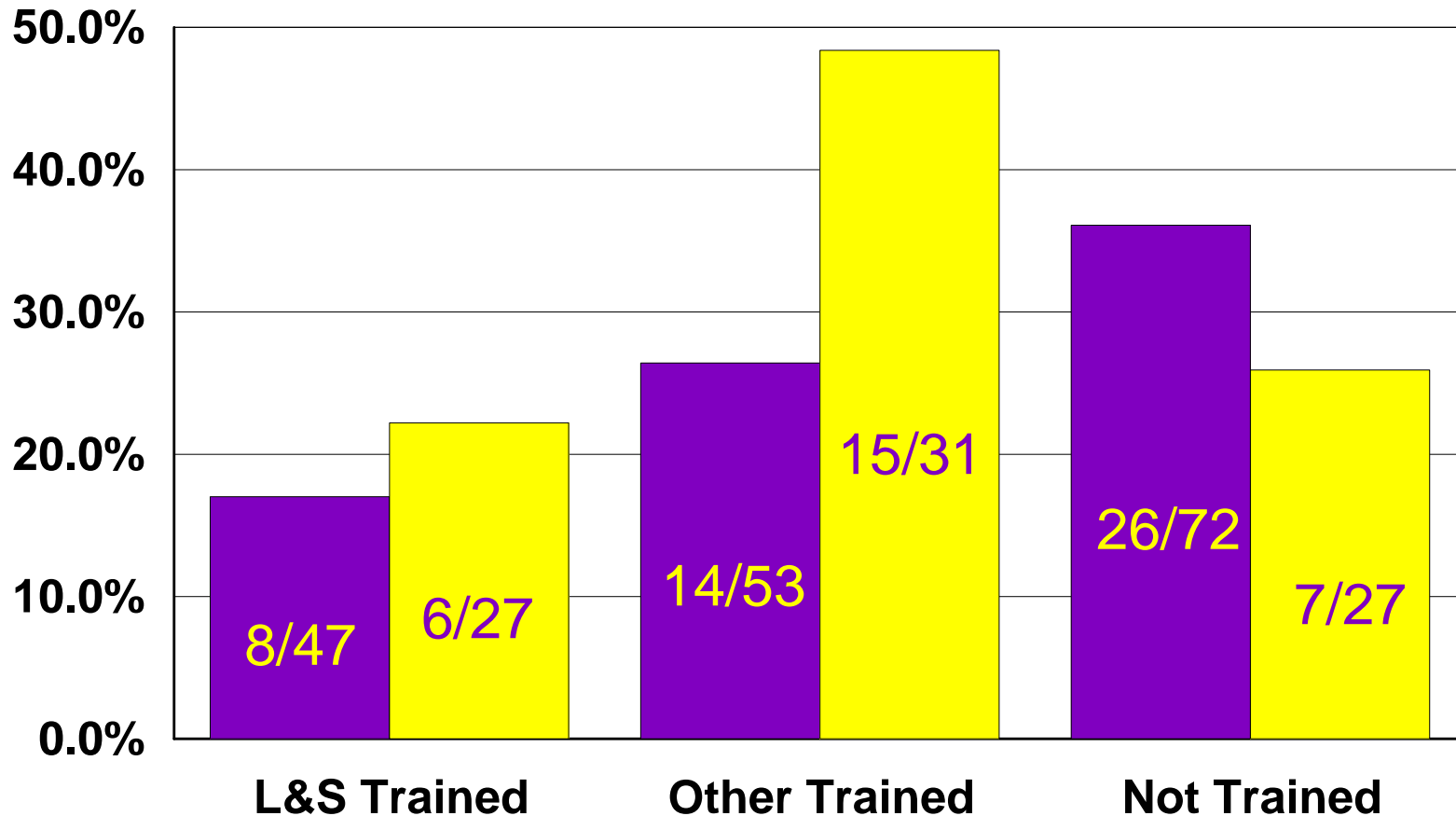
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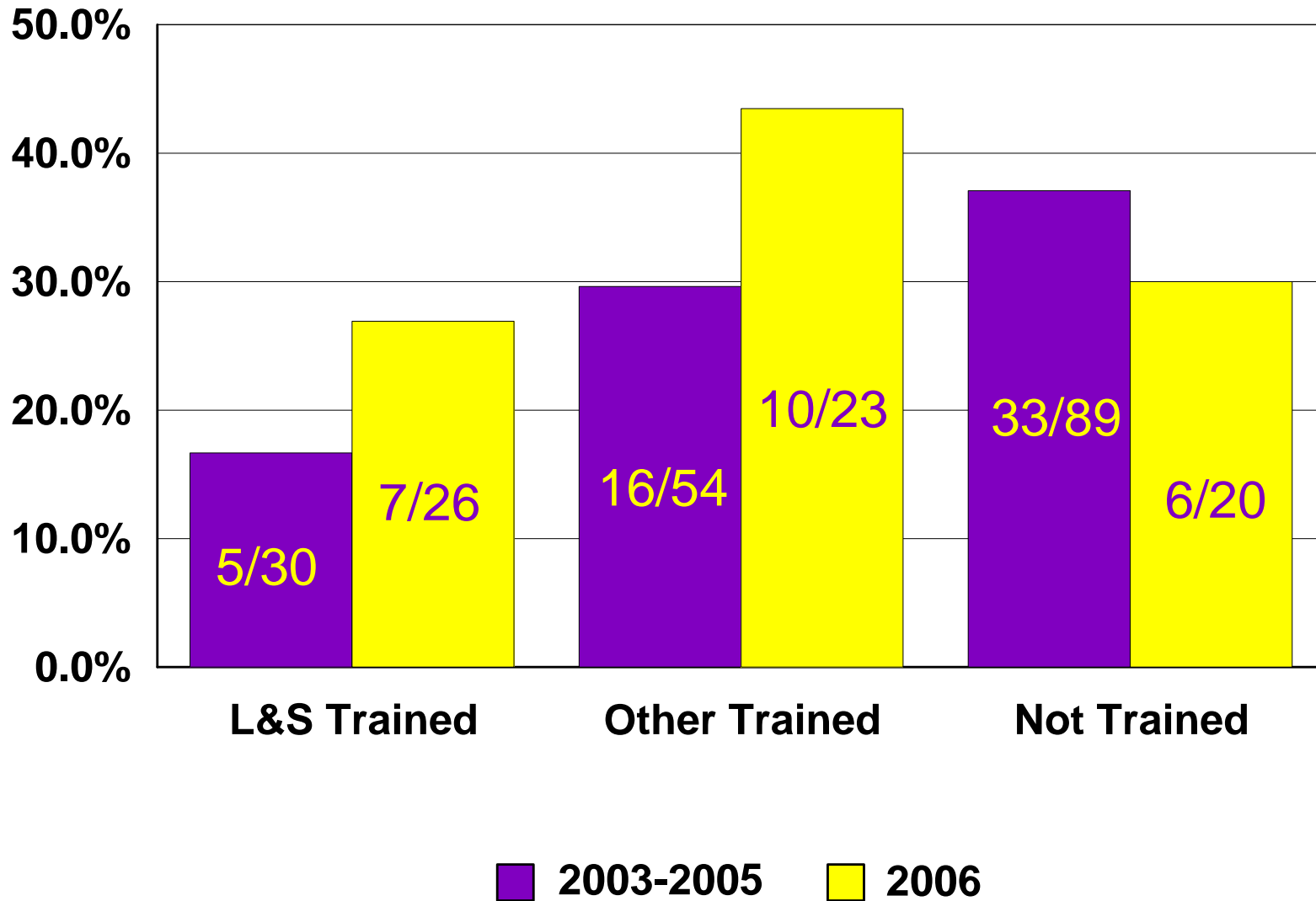


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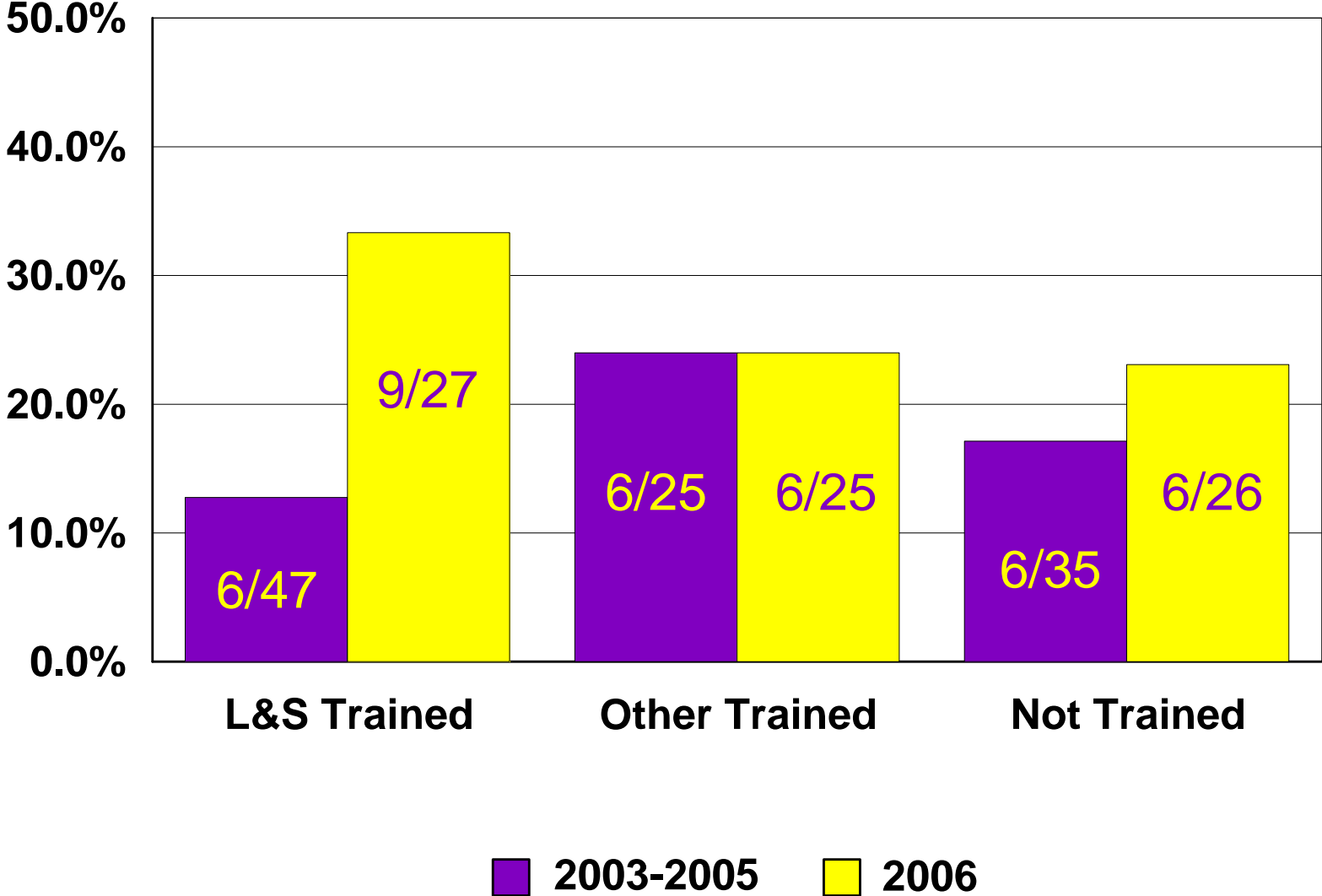
■ 2003-2005    ■ 2006

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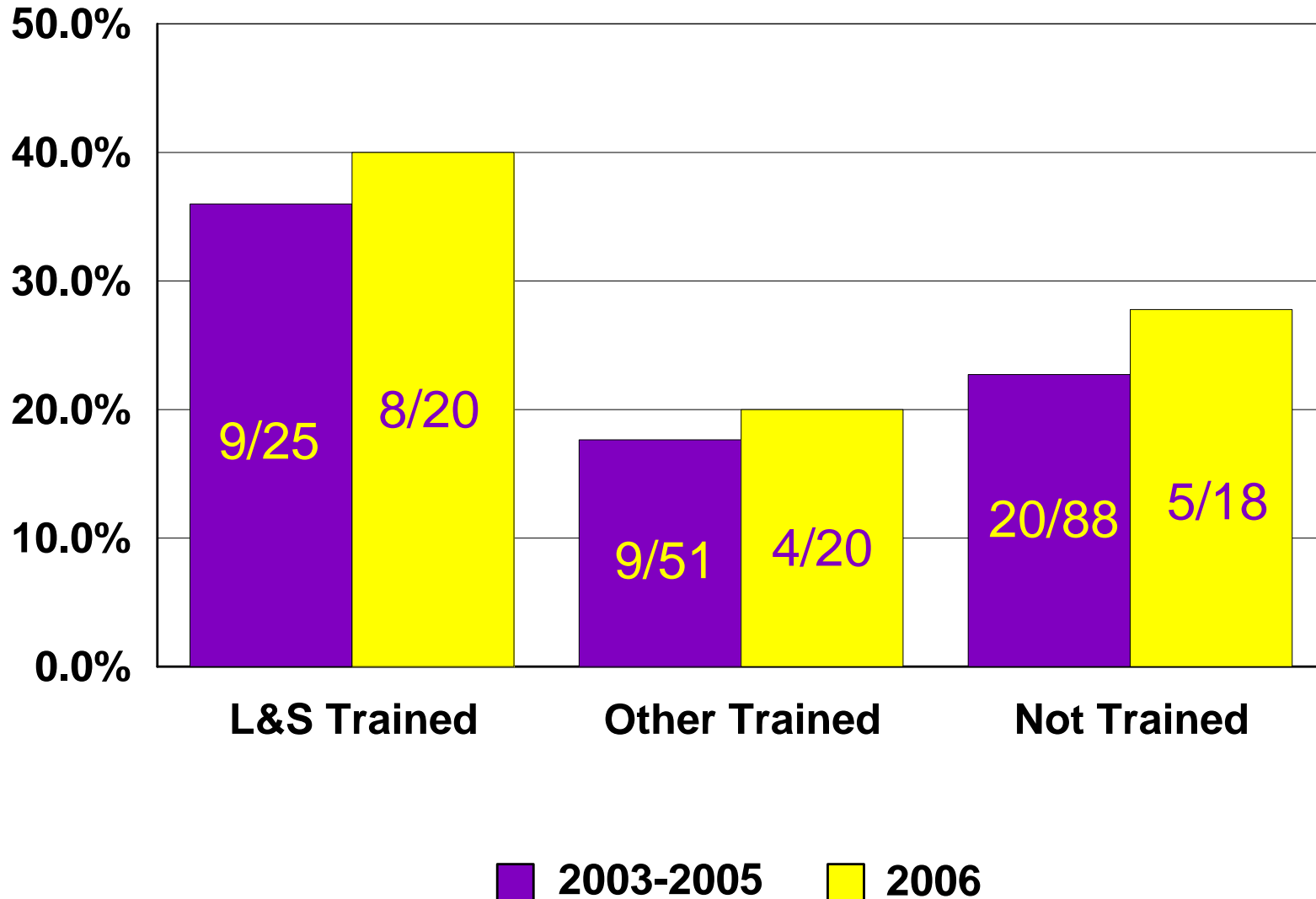




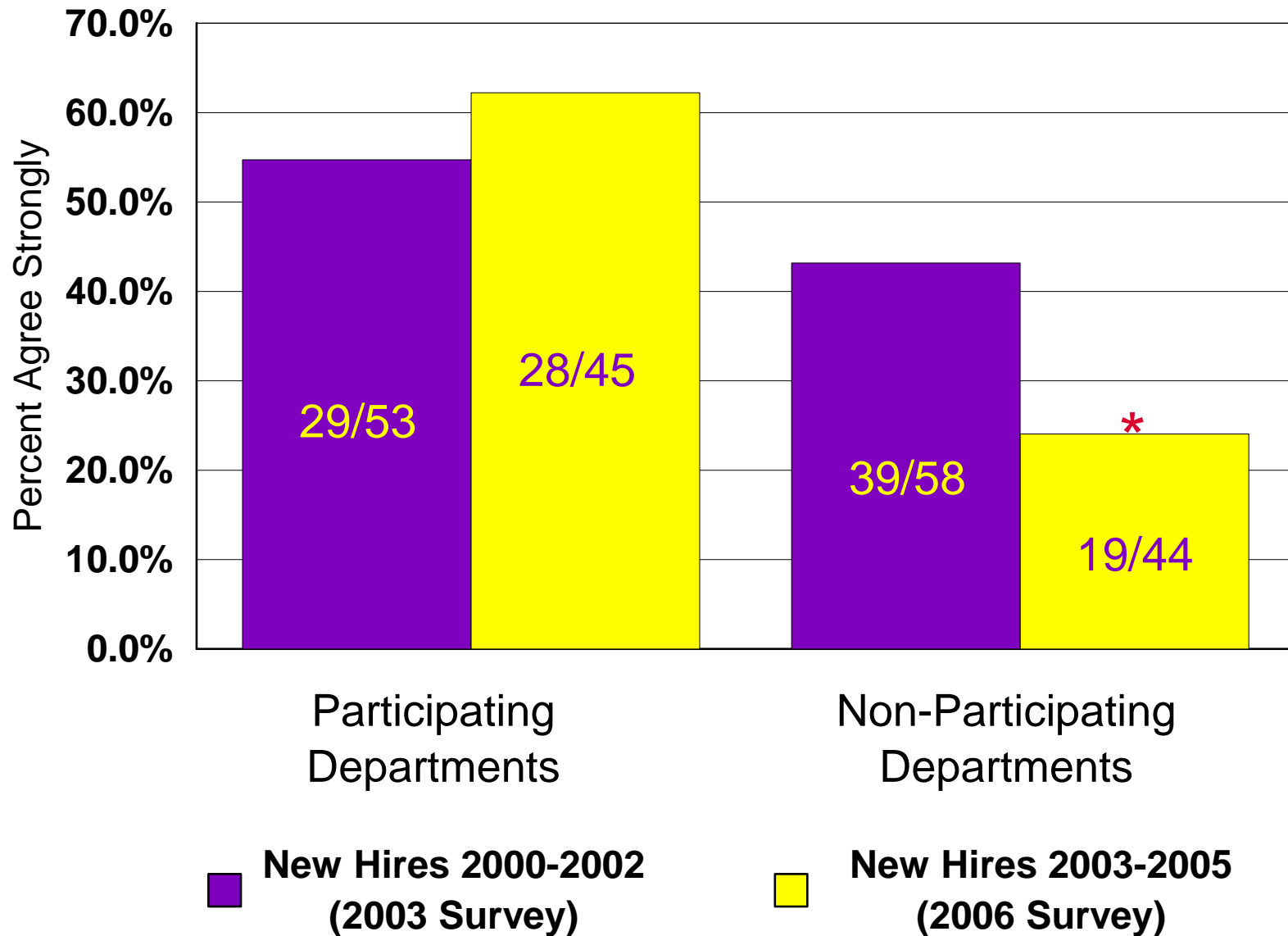
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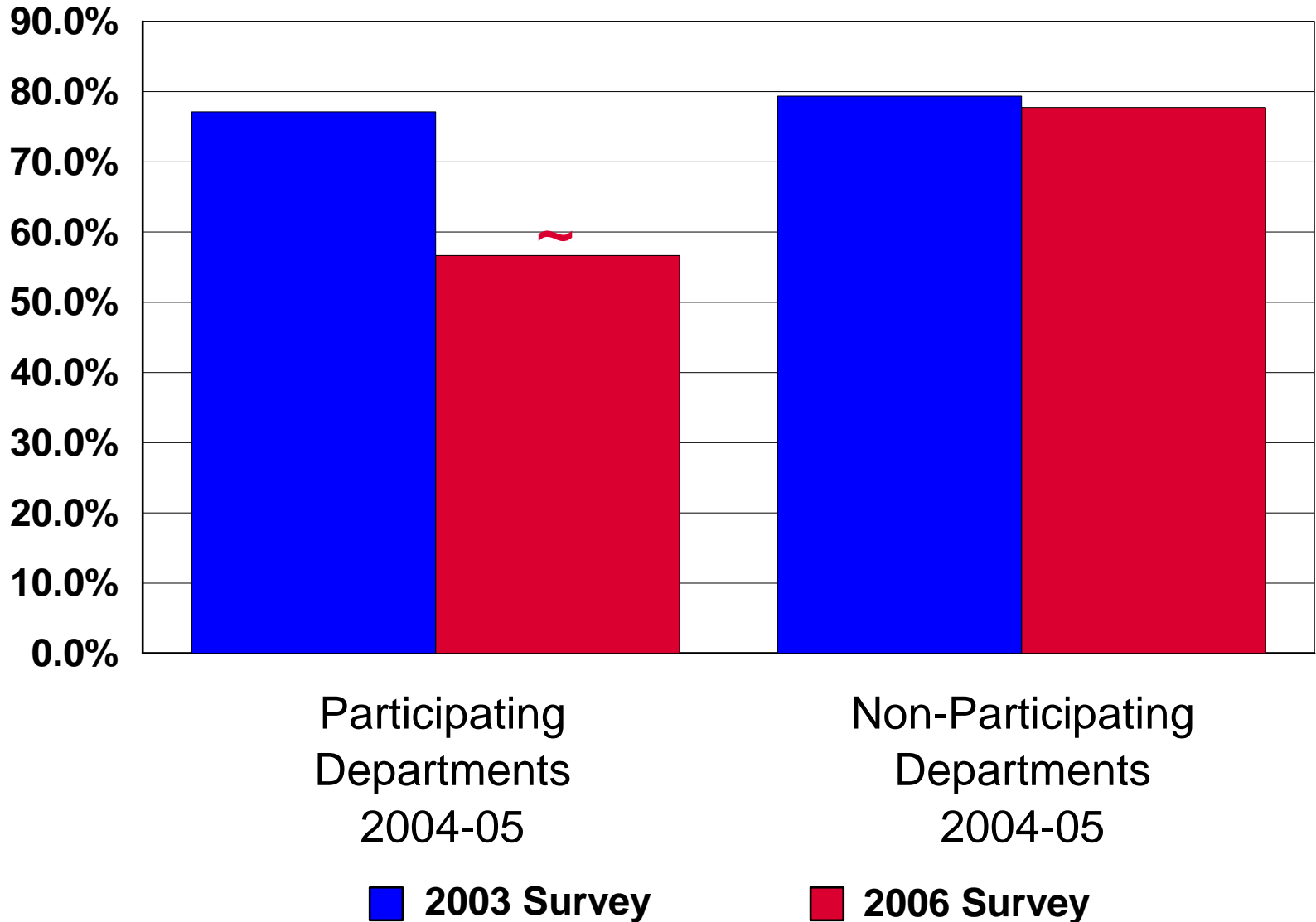


# New Hires' Satisfaction\* With the Hiring Process Biological & Physical Sciences



\* Agree Strongly to the item "I was satisfied with the hiring process overall."

# The Climate for Faculty of Color is Good Biological & Physical Sciences





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