

CABTRAC 2025

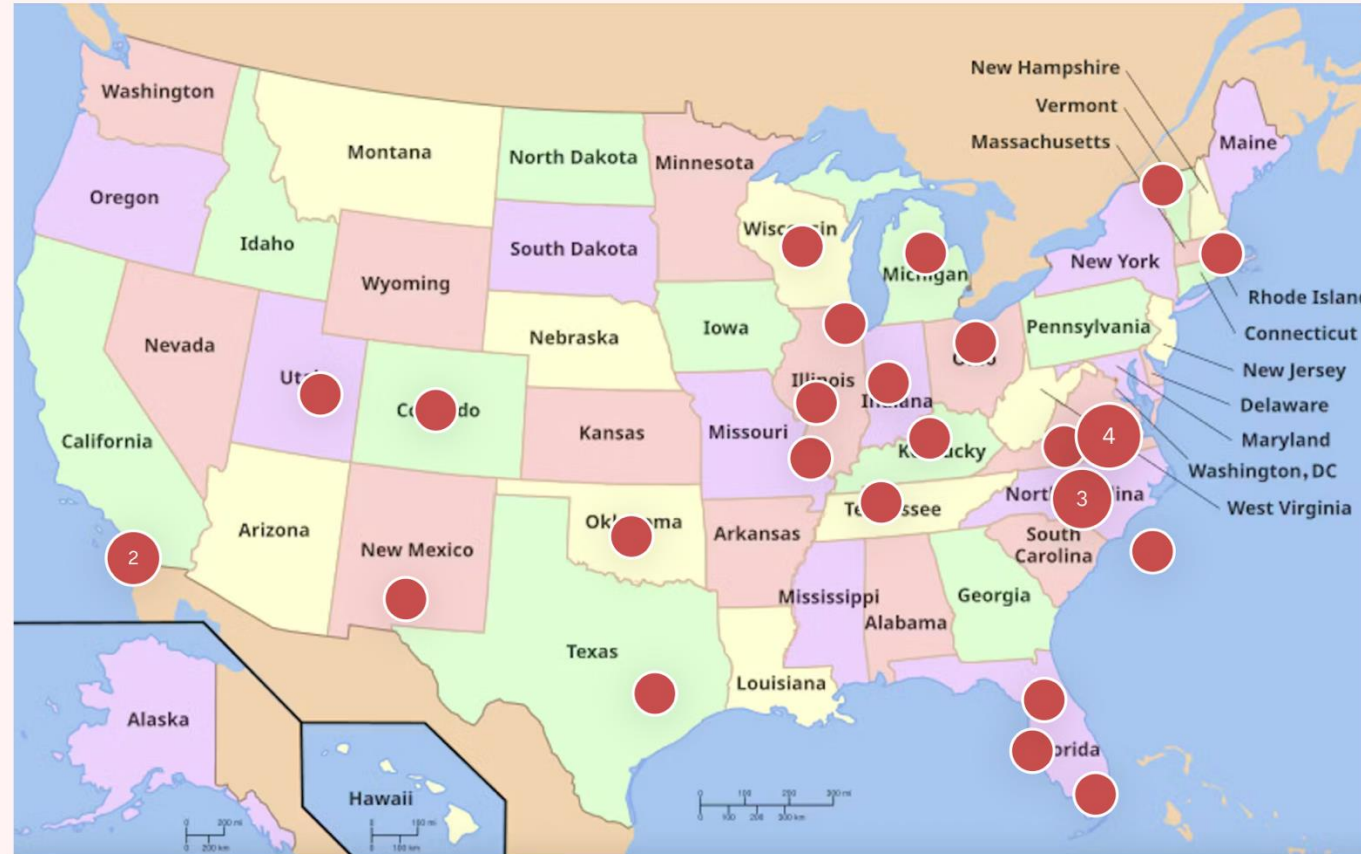
The **Trainee Perspective** presentation

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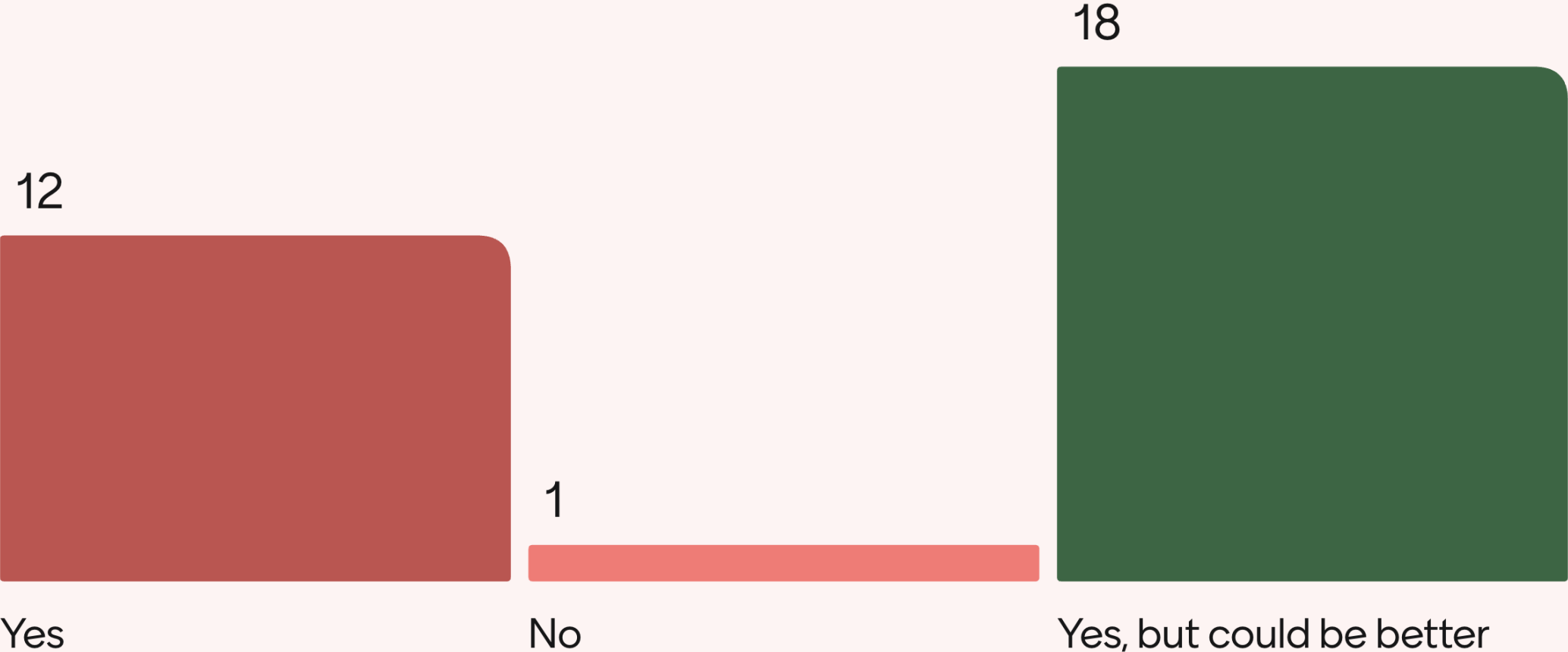
Where are you?



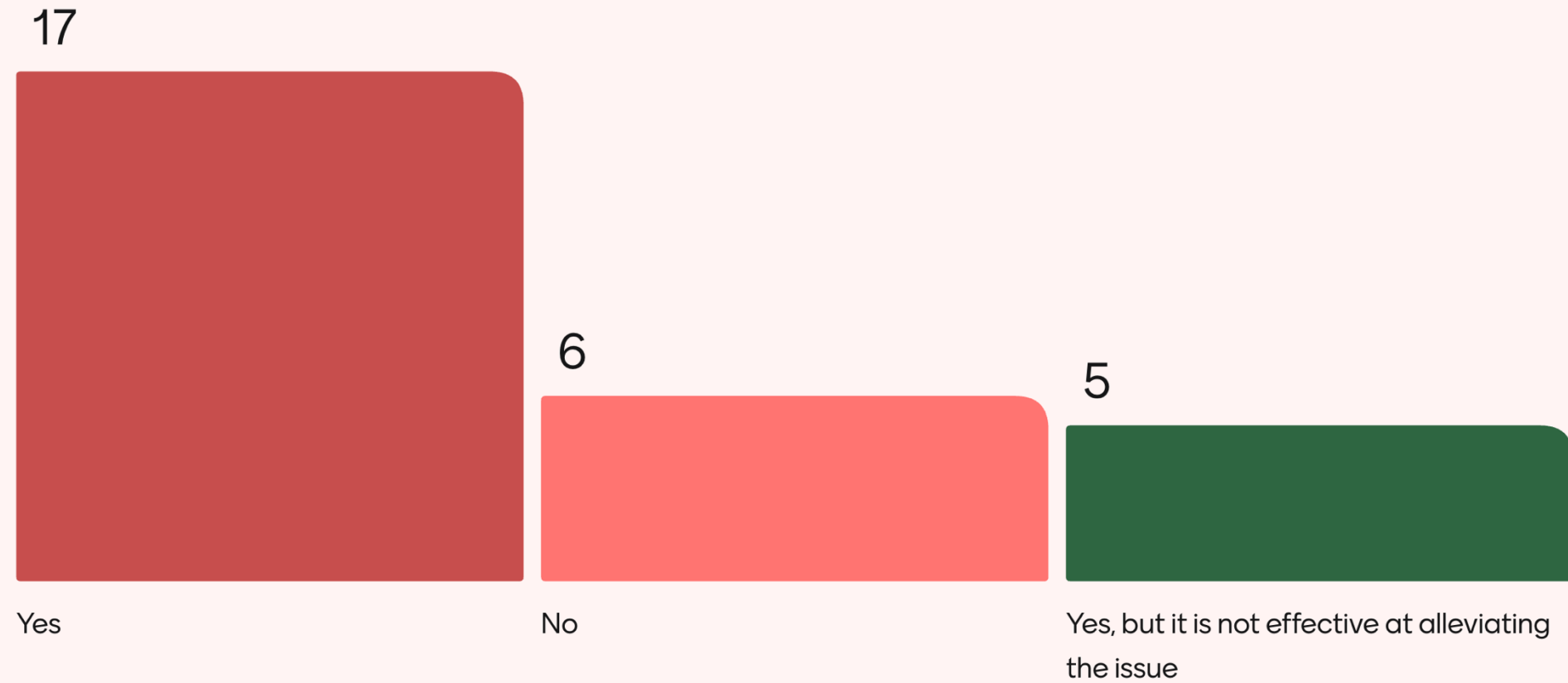
In one to three words, what do you think is *most needed* to improve cancer biology training in the U.S.?



Do you feel your mentor supports your professional development beyond your research (e.g., networking, grant writing, career exploration)?



Does your program have a formal mechanism for reporting mentorship concerns without retaliation?



Mentorship and Accountability. (Scale: 1–5)

My PI provides constructive feedback and regular communication that helps shape my goals as a trainee.

3.5

My mentor actively works to foster a positive, inclusive, and collaborative lab culture.

4.1

My mentor clearly communicates expectations and goals for my project.

3.3

My program regularly evaluates mentor performance through student feedback.

2.4

I would recommend my mentor or lab environment to incoming trainees.

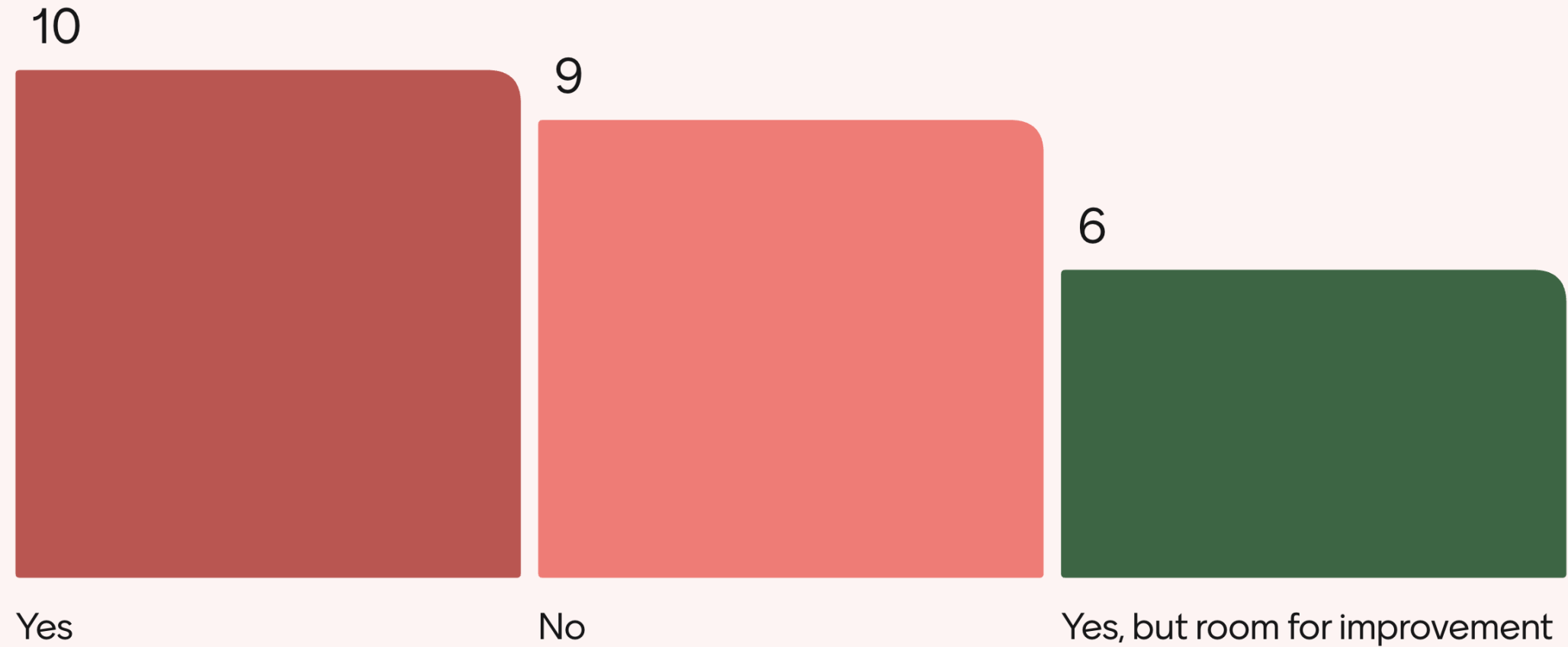
3.7

3.4

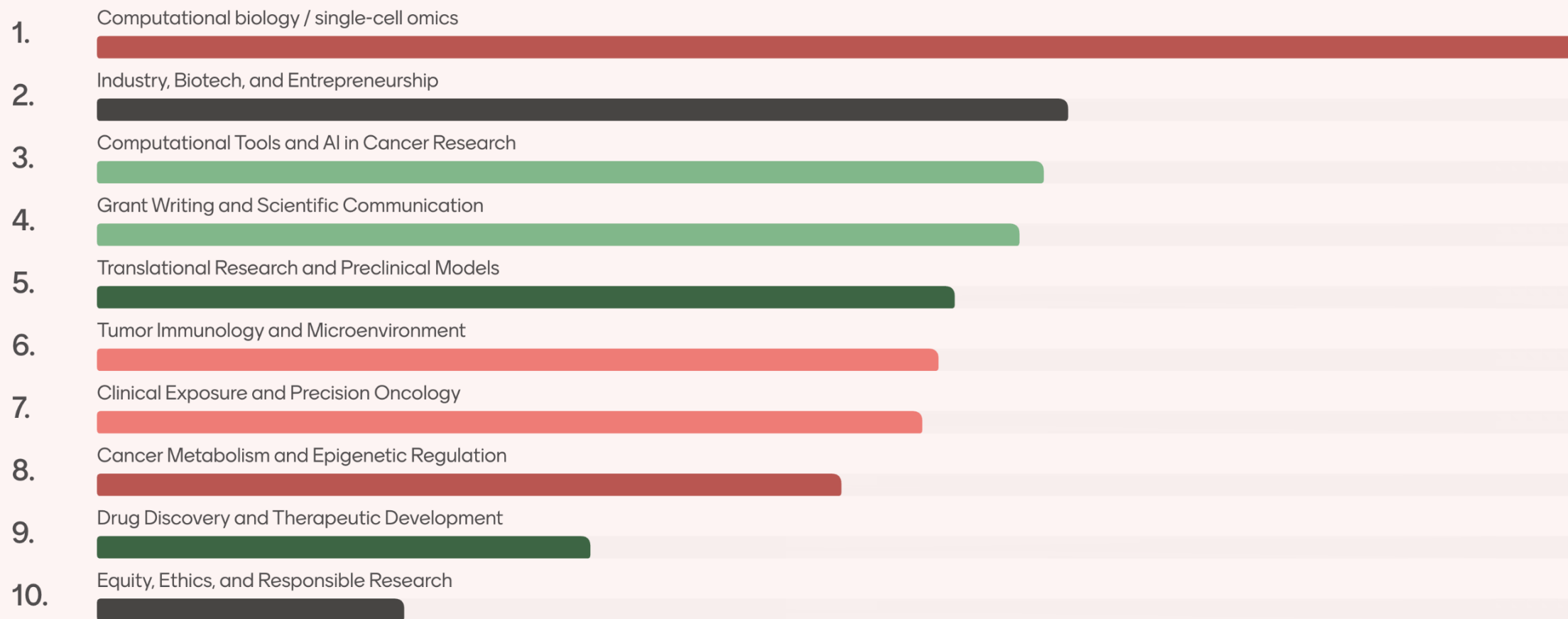
Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

Do you feel your program's core curriculum adequately prepares you for your research area in cancer biology?



Rank topics that you wish were better integrated into cancer biology training programs



Rate the following statements on your programs' institutional support systems.

My institution provides timely administrative response, clear policies , and accessibility to resources.

3.5

My institution provides unbiased support across different labs and departments, regardless of PI status or funding level.

3.4

My institution has adequate mechanisms to protect students during conflicts with their PI or committee (e.g., mediation, re-assignment support).

3.5

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

What do you think are the biggest challenges facing current cancer biology trainees in the U.S.?

✦ 6 groups found



mentoring

4 responses

"Access to time and energy of multiple mentors", "..."



opportunities

3 responses

"Support for international opportunities", "Exposur..."



government

3 responses

"Government", "Government policies"



trust

2 responses

"Lack of trust in science", "Public distrust in science"



competition

1 response

"Competition Constant pressure Not giving feedb..."



New responses

Uncategorized

13 responses

"Lack of stability to motivate students to stay in a..."



What do you think are the biggest challenges facing current cancer biology trainees in the U.S.?



Government

Exposure to opportunities outside academia

Not having a good foundation in basic cancer biology principles

Government policies

Lack of diversity in career mentoring / career teaching

Competition Constant pressure Not giving feedback - just attacking

Access to time and energy of multiple mentors

Government policies

Public distrust in science

Imposter syndrome

Number of positions faculty available

Lack of trust in science

What do you think are the biggest challenges facing current cancer biology trainees in the U.S.?

Support for international opportunities

Lack of mentorship communication

AI policies

Government

Government policies

Lack of stability to motivate students to stay in academia

Biased access to mentorship and career opportunities

Government

Sense of community/empowerment during the PhD to create confidence to enter the job market

The inequities between programs of training opportunities and basic cancer biology principles

Government policies

Exposure to opportunities outside of academia

Poor public support of science and federal funding loss and resultant anxiety about career prospects in research

Within lab competition

If you could change one thing about the structure of training nationwide, what would it be?

More networking!!!!

The government

More financial support

The government again.

Networking

Take something off pis plate so that they have time for training!!!

More focus on career development

Career development

Networking opportunities

Better communication with public

Funding structure

Career development

If you could change one thing about the structure of training nationwide, what would it be?

Encouraging mentors to keep protected time for their trainees. Lots of people saying they can't ever reach their mentor for support they need

Mentoring and career development

More appreciation/acknowledgement from the university

A more universal, cancer-trainee curriculum or program to add on to other degree your lab is housed in

Structure from day one. What are the milestones to hit depending on career aspirations.

Shorten the time to earn a PhD. Especially the fact that a lot of programs has a 1st author publication as a requirement.

More consistent core competencies/coursework

Outsourcing when opportunities are limited within the institution

The funding apparatus

More opportunities to engage with other trainees

Providing alternative career options if your first option does not work

What aspects of your program or mentorship make you feel most supported?

Supportive PI, peers, and mentors

Student wellness initiatives

Graduate student community

Peers

Community of trainees provides a lot of moral and emotional support

Useful input and support from mentor

Individual check ins

weekly 1-1 meetings with my PI

Consistent access to conferences and networking experience

Open door policy and genuine care for students

My PI

Supportive lab environment and better communication.

What aspects of your program or mentorship make you feel most supported?

Biannual meetings checking in on PhDs at all levels

They know how to give great feedback

I do not feel supported

My PI expresses regularly that he cares about trainees and works to create positive lab culture

Other graduate students in the same position as me

Collaboration

Constant communication

Mentor accountability, unbiased committee member selection

Positive feedback from PI

What aspects of your program or mentorship make you feel most supported?

Scholarships/award systems for rewarding community building within the programs

The PIs on my floor are amazing and are always open to help

The great opportunities PIs and program offer students to independently present and share their work at conferences

Collaboration

Words of affirmation, increase in salary over time, giving freedom to write grants, being nominated for awards

Encouraging us to network and collaborate

Biannual committee meetings

Positive feedback from PI

Weekly one on one meetings

Student lunch opportunities with faculty or invited guests

Mentors taking feedback training themselves

✦ Press **SPACE** to group responses