

2025 Shadow Day Participant Survey Results

A Report To:



SUNY POLY

SUNY Polytechnic Institute

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Introduction

In Fall 2022, SUNY Polytechnic Institute (SUNY Poly) contracted with Dr. Megan Mullins and her team of evaluators to conduct evaluation activities for SUNY Poly's newly awarded National Science Foundation funded S-STEM Scholarship program titled, *“Supporting Degree Completion in Engineering and Engineering Technology Programs through Experiential Learning and Self-Directed Professional Development.”* The long-term goal of this program is to break down the barriers to degree completion within the programs of Civil Engineering, Civil Engineering Technology, Mechanical Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering Technology (CME&ET). In pursuit of this goal, SUNY Poly will provide a total of 65 one-year scholarships to 20 unique students in CME&ET. Students selected as Scholars will include those who enter as first year students as well as transfer students.

This report presents results from surveys distributed to participants of the 2025 Shadow Day event, including high school student visitors, parent/guardian visitors, and student hosts. This event (previously referred to as KOTO) occurs annually and brings area high school students to SUNY Poly to shadow current institute students in order to facilitate interest and enrollment in the CME&ET program. The surveys were distributed from February through April 2025 and collected information regarding participants' satisfaction with program components, key outcomes and takeaways, and recommendations for improvement. A total of 74 participants provided feedback, including 42 student visitors, 13 parents/guardians, and 19 student hosts.¹ The findings presented in this report can help program organizers understand the impact of the event and improve the opportunity for future Shadow Day participants.

Survey Results

Respondent Characteristics

As shown below, most student visitors and hosts identify as male. Additionally, most student visitors are either freshmen or sophomores in high school, while nearly all student hosts are in their third or fourth year at SUNY Poly.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic	Student Visitors		Student Hosts	
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Female	33	78.6	3	15.8
Male	8	19.0	16	84.2
Self-Described	1	2.4	--	--
Grade in High School or College				
Freshman/First Year	1	2.4	4	23.5
Sophomore/Second Year	--	--	9	52.9
Junior/Third Year	19	45.2	4	23.5
Senior/Fourth Year	22	52.4	--	--

Note. Demographic and background questions were not posed to parents/guardians.

High school student visitors were also asked to identify a major of interest via open-ended comment (see next page), with many indicating Computer Science (n=6), Interactive Media & Game Development (n=4), Mechanical or Civil Engineering (n=4), Biology (n=2), and/or Cybersecurity (n=2).

¹ Group and overall sample sizes may differ throughout due to some item nonresponse. Unless otherwise noted, student visitor n=42; student host n=19; and parent/guardian n=13.

All Comments:

“Computer Science/CS” (n=6)
“IMGD” (n=4)
“Biology” (n=2)
“Civil Engineering/Civil Engineering Technology” (n=2)
“Cybersecurity” (n=2)
“Mechanical Engineering” (n=2)
“Communication” (n=1)
“Community Behavioral Health” (n=1)
“Computer Engineering” (n=1)
“Mathematics” (n=1)
“EET” (n=1)
“Game Design and Animation” (n=1)
“Psychology” (n=1)

Note. Some respondents listed multiple majors (valid n=23).

Student Visitor Results

Student visitors were first asked to describe highlights of their participation in the Shadow Day event. In response, these participants underscore one or more of the following activities:

- Interactions with members of the SUNY Poly community
- Attending classes,
- The campus tour, and
- Gaining general insight into campus life.

Select Comments:***Community Interactions***

“Meeting new professors and new people; experiencing the many different aspects.”

“The conversations we had about the place and how to adapt.”

“Laughing and meeting new people and feeling very welcomed.”

“We were able to relate and talk about topics of similar interest.”

Attending Classes

“Seeing the classes I would be taking.”

“Shadowing in the classes.”

“The chem class lecture.”

“How welcoming the class I sat in on was.”

Campus Tour

“Walking around the campus.”

“Tour around campus and talking with student host.”

“Seeing the campus.”

“Getting to see the campus!”

College Insights

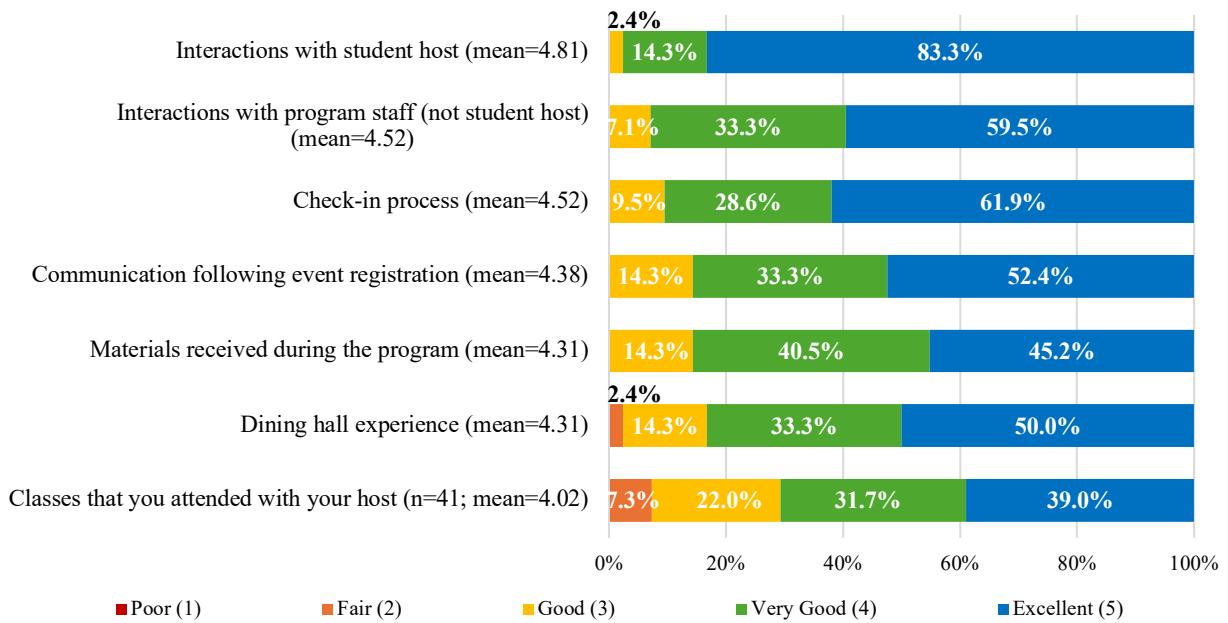
“Getting a personal and real-life experience of college.”

“I enjoyed experiencing a day in the life of a college student, it was much more insightful than normal tours.”

“Discussion about the classes and major, better understanding of work/assignments, and understanding what's offered here.”

Student visitors were then asked to rate the quality of seven program components using a scale from “Poor” (1) to “Excellent” (5). As shown in the figure below, most student visitors (>70%) provide ratings of “Very Good” or “Excellent” for each of the components listed. On average, respondents provide the *highest rating* for their interactions with the student hosts (mean=4.81) and the *lowest rating* for classes attended (mean=4.02).

Figure 1: Student Visitors' Satisfaction with Program Components



Note. Respondents had the option to select ‘Not Applicable’; these responses are treated as missing.

When asked to offer any comments about their host, student visitors unanimously provide positive feedback, with responses suggesting that these participants generally found their students hosts to be welcoming, attentive, and supportive throughout the event.

Select Comments:

“Harry was amazing! Super nice and helpful throughout the whole day.”

“Erika was very clear about how the day would go and was able to keep a conversation going which helps with my social anxiety.”

“He was extremely kind and answered all my questions!”

“Student host was very good, very friendly, very receptive.”

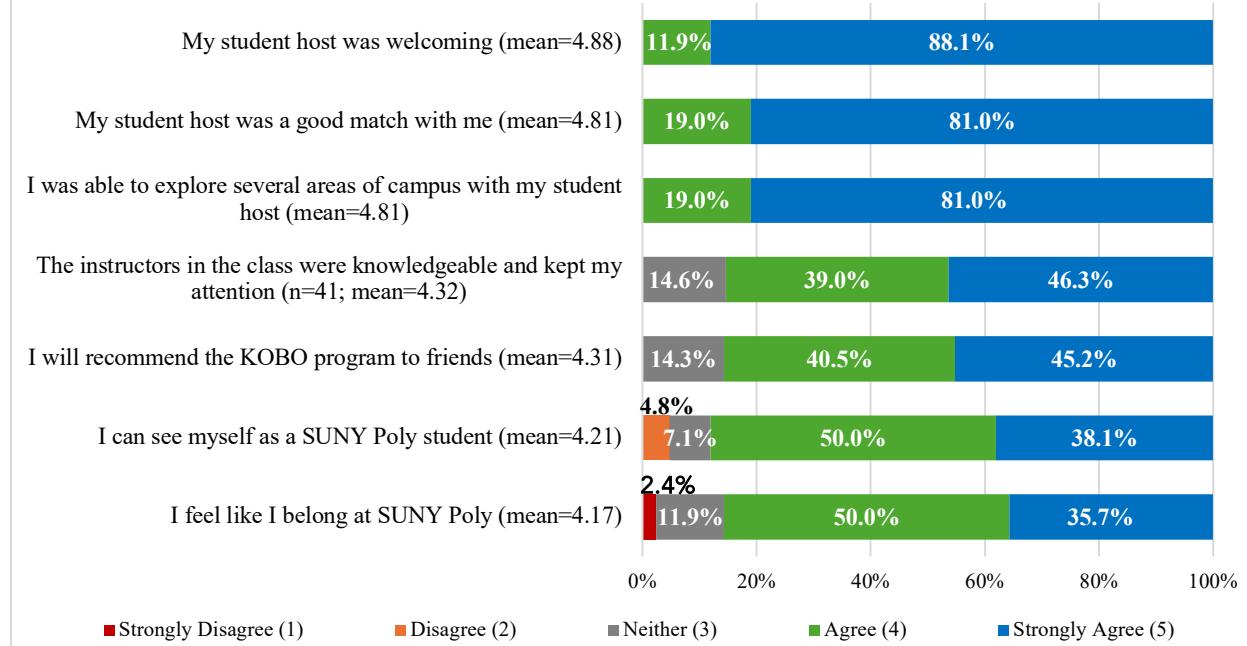
“Host was very friendly and engaging.”

“He made me feel very welcome.”

“He was a nice and welcoming kid that kept the experience lively.”

Using a 5-point scale, student visitors were also asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements regarding their overall program experience.² Respondents overwhelmingly agree with all statements presented (>85%), indicating that most had positive interactions with their student host and felt the pairing was a good fit, were satisfied with the classroom visits and campus tour, and can see themselves as a student at SUNY Poly. On average, these participants are *most likely* to agree that their host was welcoming (mean=4.88) and *least likely* to agree that they feel like they belong at SUNY Poly (mean=4.17), though the average response to the latter item indicates a tendency to “Agree” (4).

Figure 2: Student Visitors' Satisfaction with Program Experience



When asked how the Shadow Day event could be improved for future participants, most student visitors recommend changes to the class visit scheduling, pacing, and/or selection, though others suggest additional or more engaging activities for participants and additional information, materials, or communication for visiting students.

Select Comments:

Class Visit Scheduling & Selection

“Display class schedules to pick days with more classes.”
 “Classes closer together.”
 “I feel like the classes that were available weren’t great.”
 “Major-specific classes.”
 “Seeing more classes to get a slightly better feel for them.”
 “More instructing/less “work period” classes. And more classes.”

² Note that some survey items refer to the event by its previous name, Kobo (Know One, Be One).

Additional/More Engaging Activities

“Addition of allowing participants to view or join an active campus event or game.”

“Could see robots or other tech perform.”

“More activities throughout classes.”

“Having an event to explore the trails (most things were amazing).”

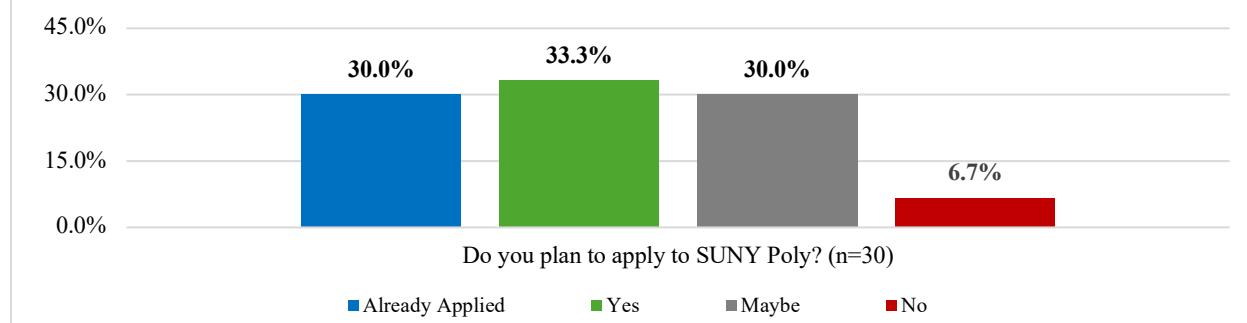
Additional Information, Materials, & Communication

“Maybe the students could email each other prior to meeting each other?”

“Give an image on what the workflow looks like.”

As shown below, when asked whether they plan to apply to SUNY Poly, about a third of high school visitors respectively indicate “Yes,” that they “Already Applied,” and “Maybe,” with several reporting that they do not plan to do so.³

Figure 3: Student Visitors' Plans to Apply to SUNY Poly



Lastly, high school participants were asked to share any lingering feedback for program organizers. While most express their gratitude for the opportunity, several reiterate or provide additional recommendations for improvement, including holding the event earlier in the semester and encouraging more engagement among non-visiting students.

Select Comments:

Recommendations for Improvement

“I feel like having it near the start of the semester would be beneficial to the shadower because we wouldn't be thrown halfway through a unit and be bored/confused for most of a class.”

“I wish students at the campus would say hello and tell me about their experience, because more is better than one.”

Other Comments

“I greatly enjoyed this experience and will highly consider attending SUNY Poly.”

“I love the campus very much!”

“It was both enjoyable and informative.”

“Had a good time exploring the campus and classes were fun.”

“Food was good and enjoyed the tech building a lot.”

³ The survey also included an item asking student visitors how likely they are to apply to SUNY Poly using a 4-point scale. Given the redundancy of this question and considerable item nonresponse (valid n=11), these results are excluded from the report.

Parent & Guardian Visitor Results

When asked to describe highlights of their student's program participation, most visiting parents and guardians explain that the classroom visits, campus tour, and/or discussions with faculty were valuable for gaining insight into the day-to-day experience of a SUNY Poly student and what the university has to offer more broadly, though several participants focus on their introduction to specific programs and departments.

Select Comments:

General Insights

“It was great to see the classroom and experience student's life of campus.”

“It was valuable for my child to experience the classroom setting and see the campus in more depth

“Sitting in on classes and meeting faculty was great!”

“The WEB meeting was very exciting and displayed true SUNY Poly student energy.”

“Getting the feel for college student day. Appreciate the opportunity to eat in the dining room.”

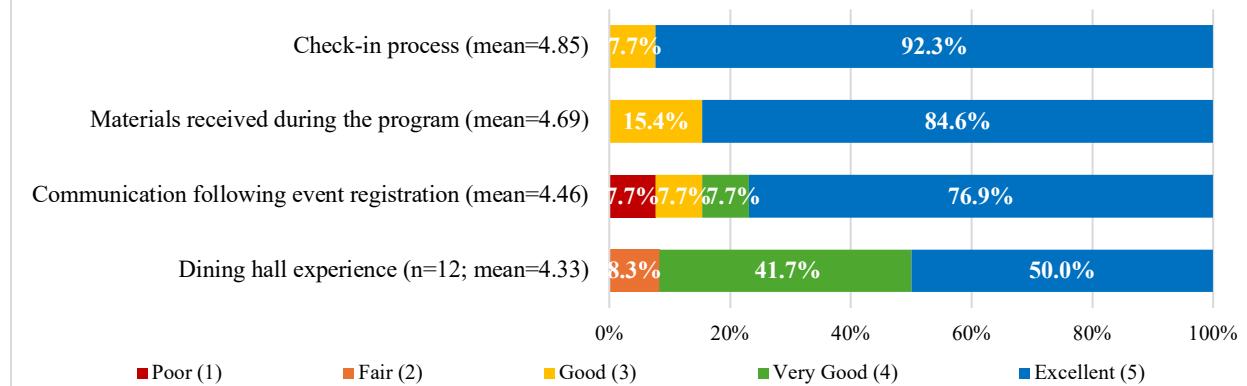
Introduction to Programs & Departments

“I enjoyed all three programs especially the labs.”

“In-depth walkthrough of department.”

Parents and guardians were also asked to rate the quality of four program components, with most (>80%) providing ratings of “Very Good” or “Excellent” for each component listed. On average, the check-in process (mean=4.85) received the *highest* rating, whereas the dining hall experience (mean=4.33) received the *lowest*.

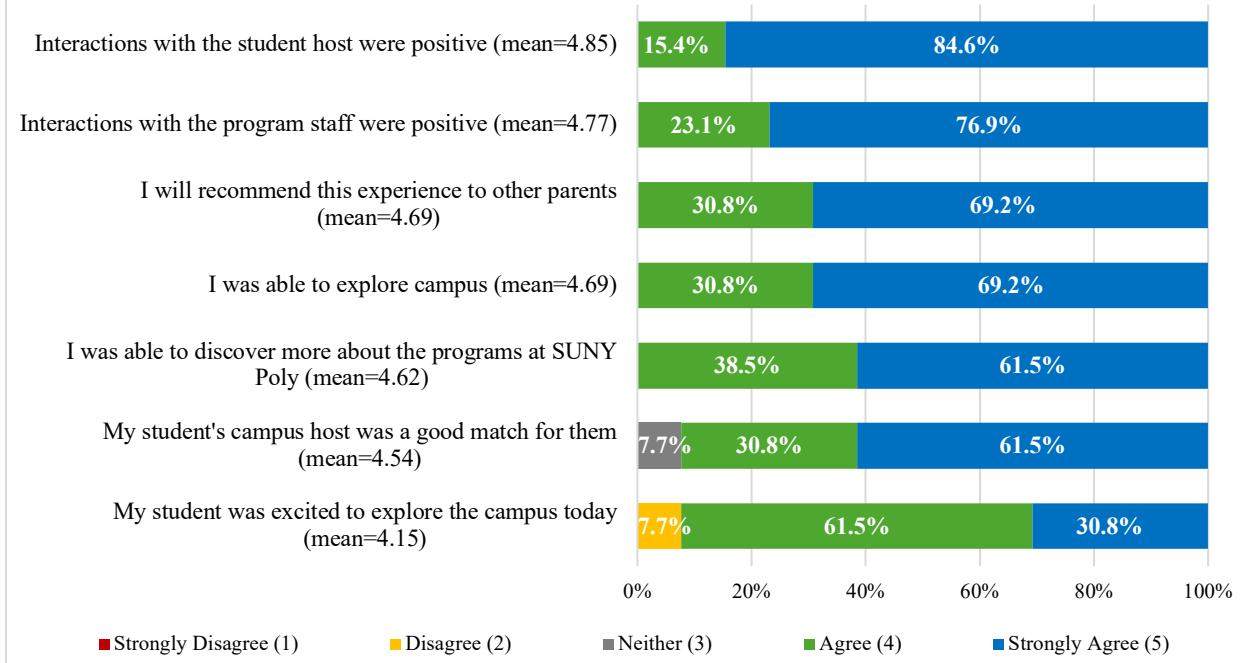
Figure 4: Parent/Guardians' Satisfaction with Program Components



Note. Respondents had the option to select ‘Not Applicable’; these responses are treated as missing.

Respondents were then asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements regarding the overall Shadow Day experience. As shown in Figure 5 (see next page), all parent/guardian participants agree with nearly all statements presented, indicating that these participants had positive interactions with program supporters, were able to learn more about the university, and would recommend the program to other parents. On average, visiting parents and guardians are *most likely* to agree that interactions with the student host were positive (mean=4.85) and *least likely* to agree that their student was excited to explore campus (mean=4.15).

Figure 5: Parent/Guardians' Satisfaction with Program Experience



When asked to rate the likelihood that their student will apply to SUNY Poly, most parents and guardians (70%) indicate that they are “Very” likely to do so. That being said, these parents and guardians were not ready to do so at Shadow Day. When asked whether they planned to have their student enroll in SUNY Poly directly following the event, with most (69%) indicating that they are unsure and the remaining respondents answering “No.”

Figure 6: Students' Likelihood to Apply to SUNY Poly



Note. Respondents had the option to select ‘Unsure’; these responses are treated as missing.

Parent visitors were also asked to offer any notes about their or their student’s experience that may help to improve the event for future participants. While most respondents share general praise for the program, several participants recommend providing a tentative schedule prior to the event, a list of classes that are scheduled on the day of the event, and a tour of the freshman dormitories.

Select Comments:

Recommendations for Improvement

“A tentative schedule before arrival would help.”

“It might have been nice to get an idea what classes were scheduled for the day when choosing the dates.”

“We would really like to see the freshman dorm on the tour. We've toured three times, but have never seen where she would probably live.”

General Praise

“Great student hosts.”

“All went very well.”

“Everything was great and really informative.”

Lastly, when asked to share any lingering feedback for program organizers, parent visitors once again express their gratitude for the opportunity to tour SUNY Poly, meet with faculty and students, and participate in campus life.

Select Comments:

“Oakley was great; very attentive, personable and friendly.”

“It was very enjoyable.”

“Great day.”

“Open House in the fall was fantastic. Much better than Clarkson’s open house.”

“Richard was wonderful.”

“Very well run, friendly, and accommodating. Extra time was taken to tell our student everything he wanted to know. Very positive experience.”

Student Host Results

Most student hosts underscore the opportunity to provide visitors with insight into student life at SUNY Poly as the highlight of their Shadow Day experience, though several comment more specifically on the classroom visits or their interactions with fellow student hosts.

Select Comments:***Providing Insight to Visitors***

“Being able to talk about college as a college student.”

“Getting to know future wildcats, and influence/help them figure out what they are interested in here.”

“Showing Chris around campus and highlighting best parts of campus.”

“Talking about college experience and participating in classes.”

“Being able to connect with a high school student and share my experiences with someone who wants to be here.”

“Being able to educate a student and enlighten them on the experience and what to expect.”

Other Comments

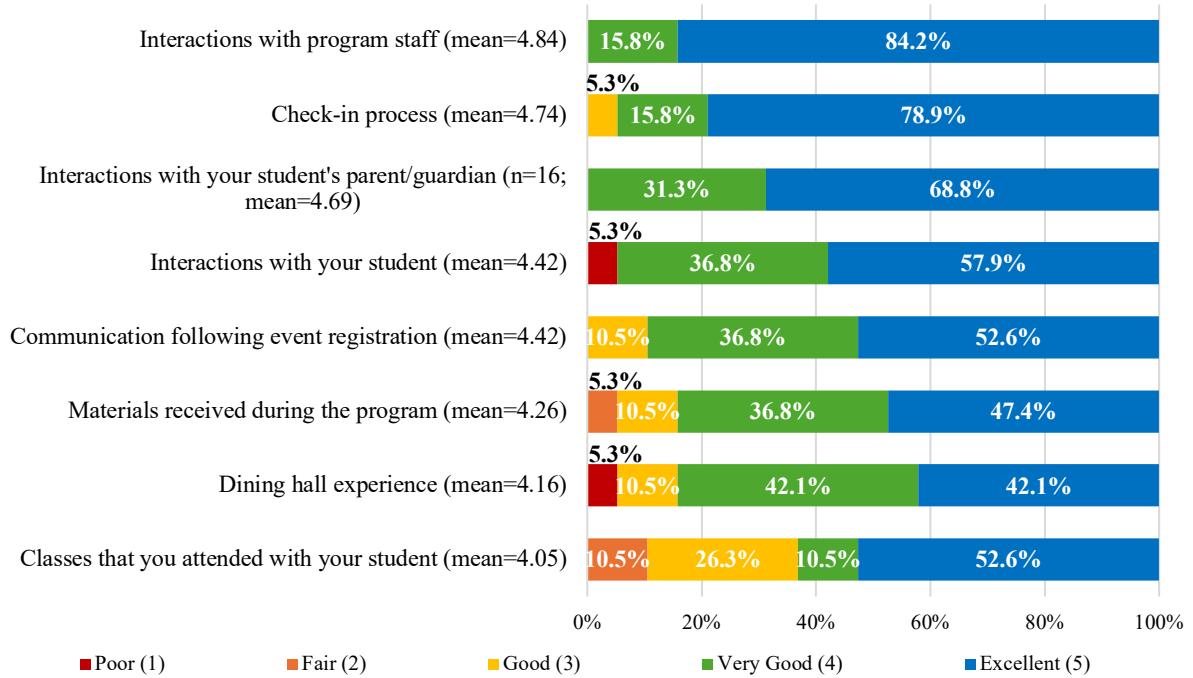
“Being able to take the visiting student to class with me was really fun.”

“Got to actually go to class.”

“Lunch with Gannon, Rosie, Sanj, and Kit. As soon as Gannon and Rosie realized how problematic my student was, they offered as much support as possible.”

Student hosts were asked to rate the quality of eight program components on a 5-point scale. As shown in Figure 7 (next page), although most hosts (>60%) provide ratings of “Very Good” or “Excellent” across all components, approximately 5-35% provide midpoint or lower ratings on six of the eight items listed. On average, the check-in process (mean=4.74) and interactions with program staff (mean=4.84) and visiting parents/guardians (mean=4.69) received the *highest ratings*, while the dining hall experience (mean=4.16) and classes attended with their student visitor (mean=4.05) received the *lowest*.

Figure 7: Student Hosts' Satisfaction with Program Components



Note. Respondents had the option to select 'Not Applicable'; these responses are treated as missing.

When asked to share any comments about their high school visitor, several student hosts report that their interactions were positive and that the overall experience went smoothly. However, many share negative experiences and recommendations for improvement, with one host explaining that their student made inappropriate remarks throughout the event and others recommending additional or alternative activities, that hosts and visitors exchange phone numbers, and that expectations for the experience be more explicitly stated to visitors prior to the event.

All Quotes:

Recommendations & Concerns

“My student made several off-color jokes that were at the expense of other people, groups, or sexualities. He did not have an off switch and likely made others uncomfortable.”

“Due to the lack of classes I had today, there were several points where I was unsure of what to do. We always figured something out, but I feel like I should have scheduled more things.”

“Probably something more organized and some other things for them to do.”

“More activities during the day.”

“Make sure students know that they will be walking a lot.”

“Everything went smooth, just wish his phone number was also given to me.”

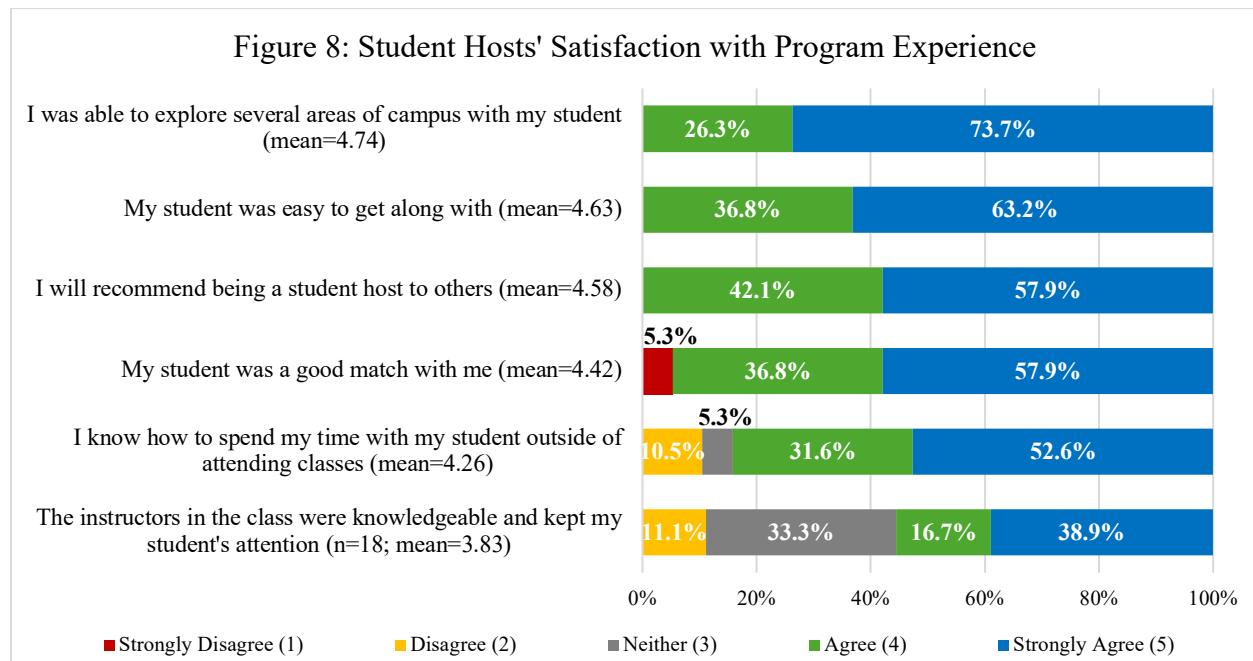
Other Comments

“He was a great student. He participated in class and he took notes.”

“I feel like one thing that my students often really liked was when I took them through their program on Degreeworks.”

“Not too many questions.”

Next, these participants were asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements regarding their overall experience as a Shadow Day host. All respondents agree that their student was easy to get along with, that they were able to explore several areas of campus with the visitor, and that they would recommend the role to others, and nearly all similarly indicate that their assigned student visitor was a good match. However, fewer agree that they knew how to spend time with their student outside of class visits (84%) and that instructors were knowledgeable and kept the visiting student's attention (56%).



When asked whether they have any recommendations to improve the experience for future participants, most student hosts intimate that there was a lack of activities and events at certain points throughout the program, such as when there was downtime or a class had been cancelled, with many recommending additional or alternative activities to fill these time gaps. Other recommendations include encouraging participating instructors to organize more engaging in-class activities, touring all residential halls on campus, and potentially allowing hosts a choice among prospective student visitors.

Select Comments:

Additional & Alternative Activities

“Assigning days with classes or having more student & host activities.”

“Give things to do between classes.”

“More things to do during breaks.”

“Having events/stations (potentially unattended) that are open all day as a way to spend unallotted time.”

“Maybe just making the time slots a bit more known / available. One of my classes was cancelled so I was a bit stuck, but I figured it out.”

Other Recommendations

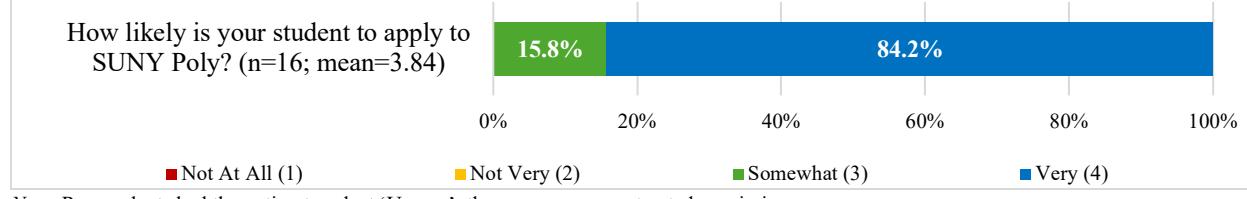
“Making announcements to professors, so they also know and could try and plan something interesting.”

“I believe we should be able to show the student all the residential hall on campus.”

“The student being different would improve the event.”

Next, student hosts were asked to rate the likelihood that their student visitor will apply to SUNY Poly, with most (84%) indicating that the prospect is “Very” likely.

Figure 9: Host Prediction of Students' Likelihood to Apply to SUNY Poly



Note. Respondents had the option to select ‘Unsure’; these responses are treated as missing.

Lastly, student hosts were given the opportunity to share any lingering comments regarding their program experience. Most express their appreciation for the event, though several reiterate their aforementioned concerns, such as negative experiences interacting with their student visitor or difficulty deciding how to spend downtime with their assigned student.

Select Comments:

Lingering Concerns

“Although my student was problematic, I don't feel like this experience reflects the program or the spirit of the event whatsoever.”

“Like doing it, but a lot of my classwork is done in my dorm so it's hard to think of stuff to do.”

General Praise

“I had a very enjoyable day. My student was great to work with!”

“My experience was great.”

“We had fun!”

Group Comparisons

To examine differences in perceptions and experiences across participant groups, mean responses to close-ended items presented on more than one questionnaire were compared. As shown in the table below, high school visitors, parent visitors, and student hosts provide similar responses across most comparable items, though several minor differences are evident. Regarding their ratings of individual program components, parent visitors tend to provide slightly *higher* quality ratings of the components probed in their survey compared to both student visitors and hosts, while student hosts average *higher* ratings of their interactions with program staff and *lower* ratings of interactions with their assigned partner relative to high school visitors. Additionally, student visitors are *more likely* to agree that the pairing was a good match and *less likely* to agree that they would recommend the experience to others relative to the comparison groups and are *more likely* to agree that instructors were knowledgeable and engaging compared to their host counterparts (see Table 3, next page).

Table 3. Group Comparisons on Close-Ended Survey Items

Item	Group Means		
	Student Visitors	Parent Visitors	Student Hosts
Program Component Ratings			
Communication following event registration	4.38	4.46	4.42
Check-in process	4.52	4.85	4.74
Materials received during the program	4.31	4.69	4.26
Dining hall experience	4.31	4.33	4.16
Interactions with student/host	4.81	--	4.42
Classes attended with student/host	4.02	--	4.05
Interactions with program staff	4.52	--	4.84
Other Items			
The student/host was a good match	4.81	4.54	4.42
I will recommend the experience to others	4.31	4.69	4.58
I was able to explore campus with the student/host	4.81	--	4.74
Instructors were knowledgeable and kept the student's attention	4.32	--	3.83
Likelihood that student will apply to SUNY Poly	--	3.60	3.84

Note. For sample sizes and scale details, see preceding sections.

When considering responses to the comparable open-ended items—highlights of the experience and recommendations for improvement—several themes are evident across all or multiple participant groups. Regarding highlights of the Shadow Day experience, receiving or providing insight into student life at SUNY Poly was mentioned by respondents in each group. Additionally, both visitor groups underscore the campus tour and their interactions with members of the campus community, while both student groups emphasize their class attendance as a highlight of the experience. Regarding recommendations for improvement, participants across all three groups suggest organizing additional, alternative, and/or more engaging activities, as well as providing additional information and materials to program participants prior to the event. Further, changes to class visit scheduling/selection and ways of facilitating communication between paired students prior to and during the visit were recommended by both student visitors and hosts.

Table 4. Group Comparisons on Open-Ended Survey Items

Question/Theme	Presence of Theme		
	Student Visitors	Parent Visitors	Student Hosts
Highlights of Experience			
Receiving/providing college insights	X	X	X
Attending classes with host/student	X		X
Campus tour	X	X	
Community interaction	X	X	
Introduction to specific programs/departments		X	
Peer support			X
Recommendations for Improvement			
Additional/alternative/more engaging activities	X	X	X
More information/materials for participants prior to visit	X	X	X
Changes to class visit scheduling/selection	X		X

Table 4. Group Comparisons on Open-Ended Survey Items

Question/Theme	Presence of Theme		
	Student Visitors	Parent Visitors	Student Hosts
Facilitate communication with student/host prior to and during visit	X		X
Choice of assigned student visitor			X

Summary & Conclusion

Broadly, survey results demonstrate that both visitors and hosts were satisfied with their Shadow Day experience and considered the event a valuable opportunity for visiting high schoolers to gain insight into student life at SUNY Poly through tours, classroom visits, and discussions with members of the campus community. More specifically, all participant groups provide moderate to high average ratings of each program component, including the registration process and materials provided, communication with event organizers, and their class visits and interactions with fellow participants. However, while only slight differences were observed, parent visitors tend to provide higher quality ratings of the components probed in their questionnaire and hosts tend to provide lower ratings of interactions with their assigned students as well as higher ratings of their staff interactions relative to student visitors. Despite these minor differences, respondents across participant groups overwhelmingly indicate that: the student pairings were a good match, interactions with their student/host were positive, that they had the opportunity to sufficiently explore campus, and that they would recommend the experience to others. Regarding highlights of the experience, respondents from each participant group underscore the opportunity to receive or provide insight into college life for transitioning high school students, with community interactions, the classroom visits, and campus tours featuring in comments from two or more groups. Still, to improve the Shadow Day event, respondents across groups recommend additional, alternative, or more engaging activities and additional pre-program information and materials for visitors and supporters, with both student visitors and hosts further recommending more intentional scheduling and selection for the classroom visits and alternative means of communication for student pairings. Other recommendations and concerns relate to visiting students' conduct, a desire for more comprehensive campus tours, and the scheduling and pacing of the event itself.

Given the findings presented in this report, evaluators offer the following recommendations and reflections for consideration by program leadership:

- Continue to explore ways of expanding Shadow Day programming to facilitate a more comprehensive and engaging experience for visitors. In their open-ended comments, student visitors express a desire for additional and more interactive activities, such as participating in other on-campus events, touring robotics facilities, and visiting the trails on campus; at least one parent visitor wished to tour the dormitories their student is likely to be housed in; and student hosts underscore the need for guidance regarding how to spend downtime with students, with one further recommending that instructors plan more interactive activities for the classroom visits. Additionally, given that several respondents relayed negative experiences with their assigned student or a preference for visiting certain classes, allowing some choice in partner and activity selection may help to foster a more welcoming and engaging experience for future participants.
- Consider providing additional pre-program information to visitors and program supporters. Additional information that participants feel should have been provided prior to the event include a program schedule, clearly stated expectations for participation and conduct, and information about which classes would be held on the day of the event.

- Facilitate communication between student hosts and visitors both before and during the event.
Several participants from the student groups recommend facilitating alternative means of communication between student pairings, such as providing partners' email addresses prior to the visit or asking participants to exchange phone numbers during the event. Encouraging participants to exchange contact information may ease student introductions and better allow visitors and hosts to decide on alternatives when encountering unexpected schedule changes or becoming separated during the event.
- Continue to assess the timing and pacing of the event, as some open-ended comments suggest that the experience may be more conducive to high school student visitors during certain points in the semester or that sufficient time was not allotted for a comprehensive introduction to the campus.

Consideration of any of these findings and recommendations can help to improve the Shadow Day experience for future participants and, ultimately, better facilitate prospective students' interest in attending SUNY Poly.