



# Making Sure Men Graduate: The Impact of Project SUCCESS on Members

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## Introduction

Men of color have historically been a vulnerable group in the higher education system. Many drop out when they feel socially isolated in college, feel that they cannot perform academically, or feel that they cannot change the education system to fit their needs (Field, 2021). To combat this, Cal Poly Pomona has formed the educational opportunity program Project SUCCESS (PS) to help students feel prepared academically, professionally, and emotionally for the rigors of university life. They accomplish this through peer mentoring, group discussions, free tutoring, community engagement, and cultural/personal development workshops. Through this, the program hopes to foster a new generation of open minded and motivated men who'll further open the gates of academia for future men of color while becoming leaders in communities outside of the university. The main goal of this project is to show how PS has cultivated an environment of scholarly, professional, and cultural prosperity for its members. Excerpts from interviews with alumni and survey data from current students gives clues on what PS has done right and on what PS could do better. The information gleaned from this analysis will hopefully inspire other educational opportunity programs to better serve their students, opening doors for future scholars, professionals, and cultural leaders.

## Material and Methods

**Participants:** 3 alumni from Project SUCCESS (PS) were interviewed and a 15-minute survey was sent out to approximately 150 current PS students. Only 3 students were able to respond. All alumni and current students were in PS for at least 1 semester and as such were young men of color from low/middle class economic backgrounds.

**Materials:** Audio recordings of interviews were taken. Quotations were selected to appear on this poster. Surveys sent out measured the overall impact of the program and numerical data is displayed on this poster.

**Procedures:** Interviews with alumni were conducted over Zoom. Cameras were turned off and audio recordings/transcripts were generated. Quotes from these recordings were selected and shown on this poster. These were anonymous unless otherwise specified by interviewees. The survey sent out to current PS students measured the overall impact of the program using questions on a scale of 1-5. These questions asked about use of campus resources, social environment of the program, and confidence to succeed at CPP.

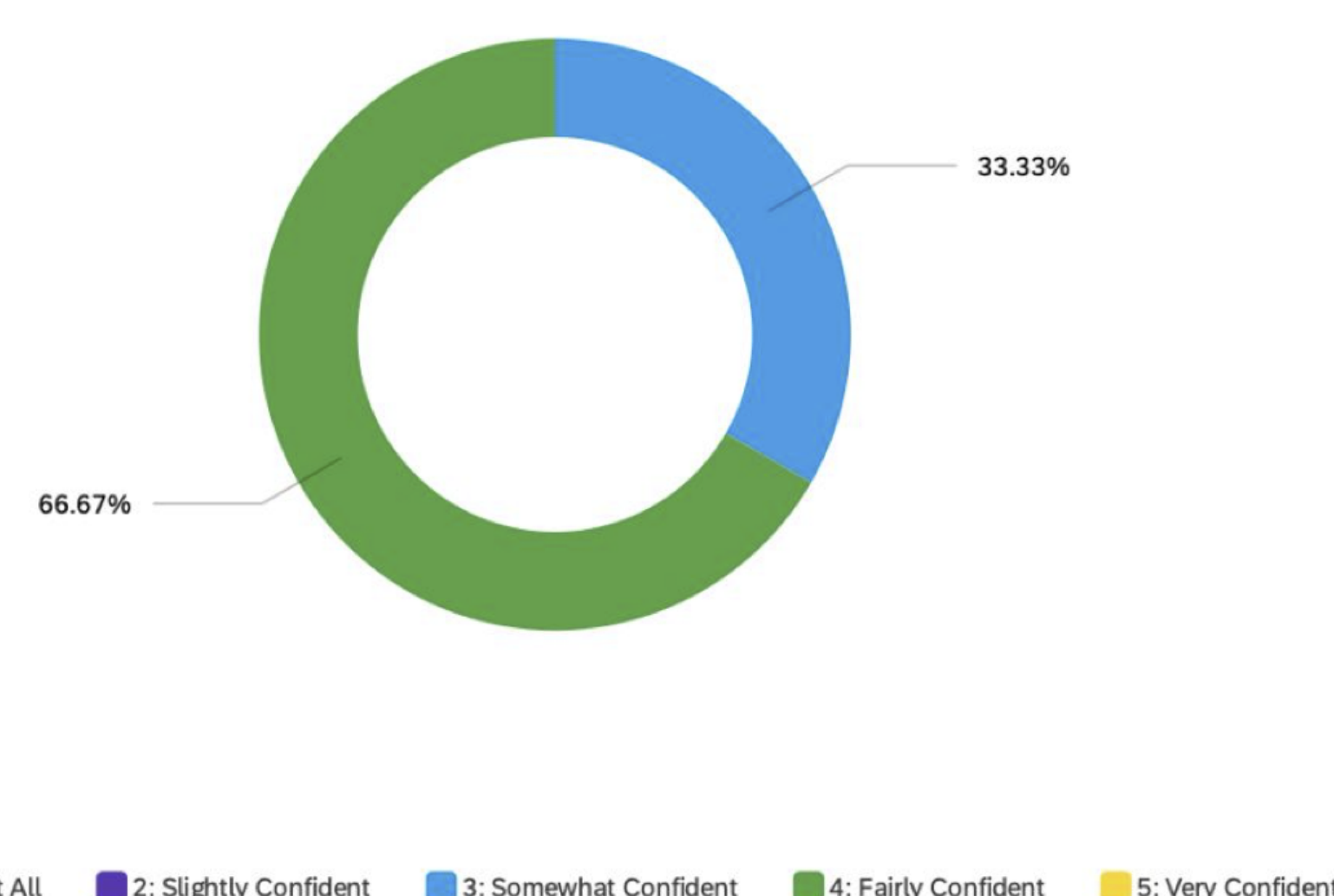
## Results

All 3 of the alumni interviewed stated that Project SUCCESS was integral to making their first-year experience at CPP a welcoming experience. The open-door policy of the CPP offices made alumni feel heard even after culminating from the program. The academic and professional development programs helped the students, who often had little to no ties to the field of study, make connections with experts and employers alike. Having mentor/peer men of color helped members feel they could succeed and further support later generations in their collegiate journey.

Due to complications in the procedure, only 3 people were able to respond to the survey. Most of the responses praised the workshops for their ability to make them feel confident in their academic and professional success.

Community service workshops also helped members become involved in the campus/Pomona community. Being in contact with fellow men of color made members feel welcome and represented on campus. The only worrying data was on EOP use: all respondents stated they did not use the program to study.

Q8 - On a scale of 1-5, how confident did Project SUCCESS workshops make you feel about your college career? (With 1 being not confident at all and 5 being very confident.)



Q16 - On a scale of 1-5, how has being in contact with fellow men of color made you feel more welcome at Cal Poly? (With 1 being not at all and 5 being very much.)

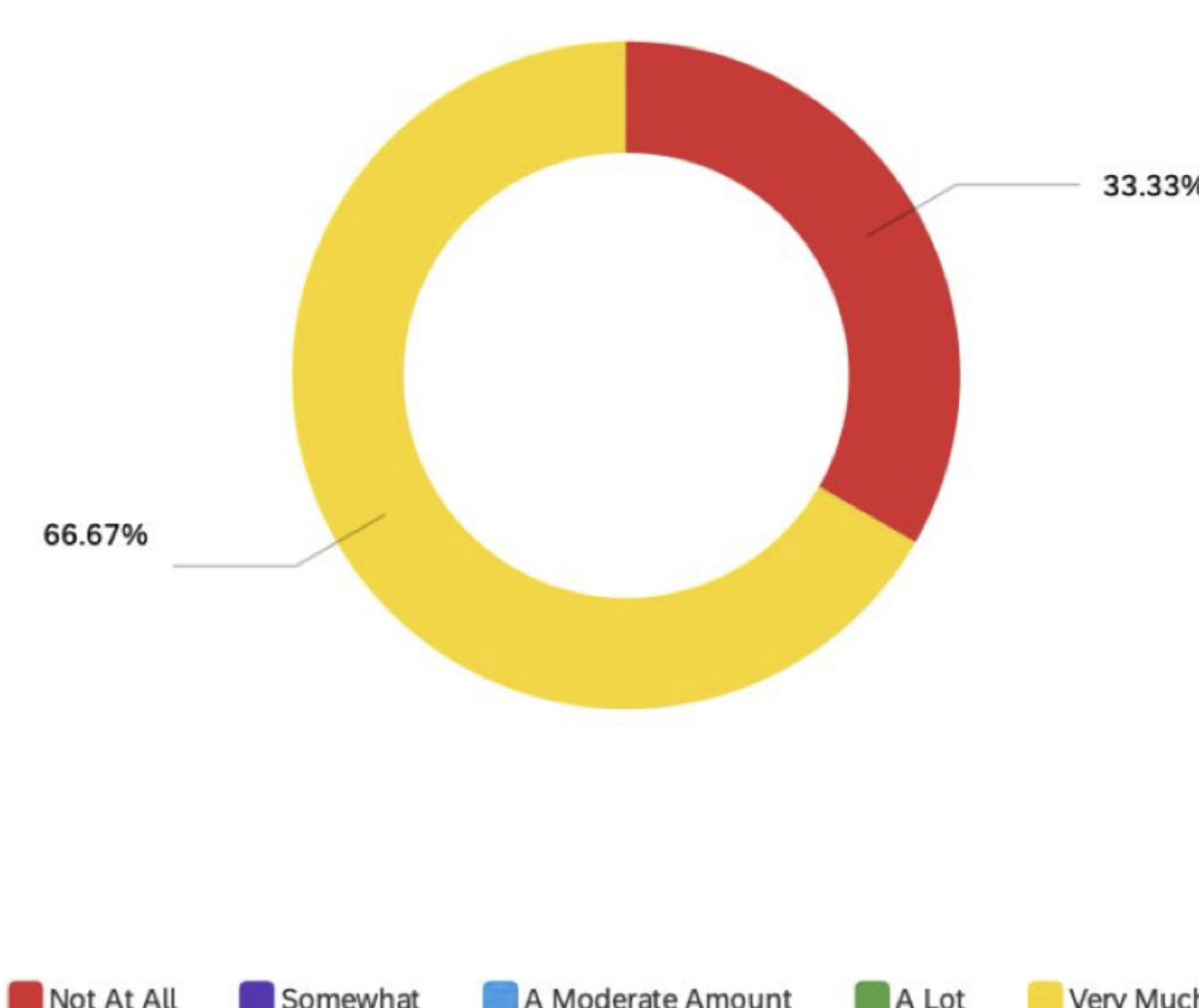


Figure 1: Percent of respondents rating how confident PS workshops made them feel about their college careers and how important knowing men of color was.

“Project SUCCESS is one of, if not, the most important programs for young men of color at Cal poly.”  
-Anonymous

## Discussion

Due to complications in the procedure, a very small portion of the ~150 current members of the program could complete the survey. Specifically, the survey was supposed to be sent a week before Finals Week in the 2022 Fall Semester but ended up being sent in the first week of Winter Break. Additionally due to scheduling conflicts, only 3 students could be interviewed. If a project like this was to be repeated, more accommodating scheduling, an incentive like food or gift cards to voice opinions should be used to get more accurate results. From the interview and survey data, most of the respondents believe that PS helped them feel confidence in college career. All the interviewees stayed involved in the community either in academic/career center positions or as mentors in PS. Some interesting suggestions brought up in the Free Response portions of the interview and survey were that collaboration with other colleges should be pursued to spread the movement of empowering young men of color in college. More events to connect with other men of color were also suggested as well as a second-year program extension to PS in order to strengthen the community. Currently, PS is under the MSI program of Cal Poly Pomona, a larger organization dedicated towards increasing the number of young men of color that stay in and graduate successfully from college. The integration of PS into a larger network should lead to more opportunities for these members.

## References

Field, K. (2021). *The missing men on campus*. Chronicle Store. Retrieved February 11, 2023, from <https://store.chronicle.com/products/missing-men-on-campus>  
*Male Success Initiatives (MSI) Website*. Male success initiatives. (n.d.). Retrieved February 11, 2023, from <https://www.cpp.edu/msi/>

## Acknowledgements

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“Sometimes its [sic] hard to find people that look like you in your classes or wherever you're going so its nice to kind of be yourself in these places.” -Anonymous