

Benny's Dam: Proposal For A Student Activity Center At CCNY



Fig 1 Envisioned student center

(credit: University of Louisville)

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Introduction

The City College of New York embodies the city's diversity through its students and with many students in the numerous programs the college holds. Despite being diverse and dynamic, the college does not have a strong space where students can connect with one another, relax in between classes, and enjoy activities with other students. As a commuter school many students find themselves with no place to go and long breaks, leading to students feeling bored and discontent. This sentiment does not bolster a sense of community within CCNY, but rather it feels like a mere destination as opposed to a friendly college environment. A student center would fulfill the needs of many students, allowing them to enjoy their time at campus.

Currently, there are little spaces for students to socialize, collaborate, and relax leaving missed opportunities for students to build relationships and reduce stress. In a recent survey we conducted on campus, the vast majority of students felt that a student center was needed and would benefit them. Many students responded that the student center would allow them to do fun activities besides just studying and catching up on work. Students favored a food court, lounges, and a gym/weight room that should be included in the student center.

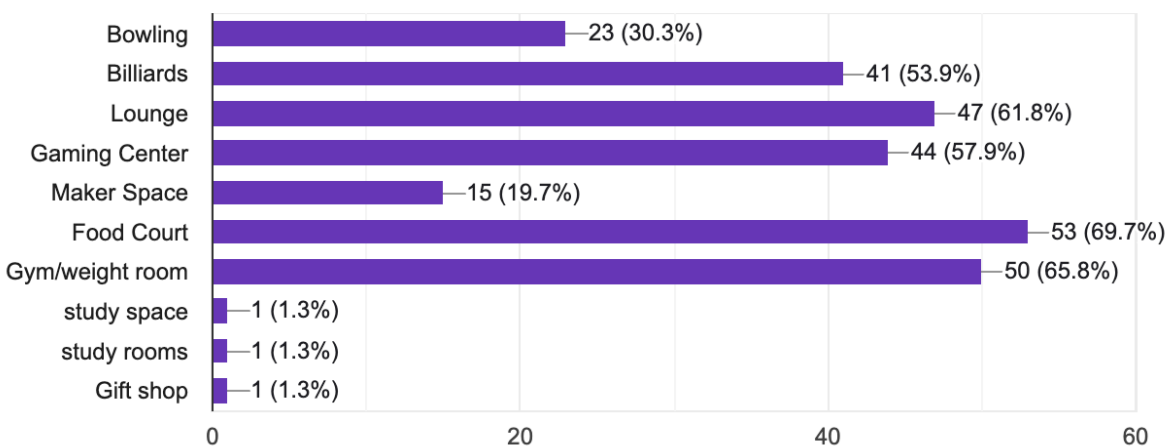


Fig. 2 Student preferences in a student center

Further research has been done highlighting the importance of a student center and how beneficial they can be to a student's wellbeing and academic success. A study done by Leah A. Barrett, "The College Union and a Sense of Community for Students in Public Higher Education: Is there a Relationship?", examined the importance of student centers and how students who were active and visited these centers experienced greater satisfaction with their college experience. Barrett writes "This study found that satisfaction with the college union has the strongest impact on student satisfaction with a sense of community than any other physical space on the college campus. These results suggest that the college union needs to be included in the conversation related to retention and persistence" (162). Barrett expresses how vital the student center is for a student's sense of belonging based on the Third place concept, where this concept describes where people choose to spend their time in a place that is neither work or home to build community, relax, and engage with others daily. Having a student center within CCNY would allow many students to have the center to become their 'Third Place' leading to a community being built. Without this student center, many would not nearly enjoy their time at campus. The center is more than an amenity, it improves the students' wellbeing and academic performance which is why CCNY needs to invest in this beneficial space.

Action Plan

The reason behind the student center is to listen to the students and get what they want. We want to provide entertainment and also help students have a better place to spend their time, as well as a better place to study. Our current student center is very outdated and it does not have up to date technology to support student entertainment and education. When it came to deciding what would be in each floor we relied on the previously mentioned data from the survey. In the floor plans below you will be able to see the overview of each of the floors and what they will include. The overall student center is about 50,000 sq ft. We will be replacing Jacob H. Schiff Playground which is behind the NAC building.

When it comes to the flooring we will mainly be using hardwood flooring for the first and third floor.

When it comes to the second floor we will be installing laminate + Attached Pad as the flooring. This will help us reduce the noise that will come from the gym so that it does not affect the floor below which is the study rooms.

First Floor:

The first floor will consist of a food court and also study rooms. The idea behind this is that we want students to have easy access to food while studying. We feel like having food near the students is important since they will need energy after hours of studying and putting in the work. We know that the food court can be a bit loud this is why we will make sure to add some noise cancellation walls to the study rooms. Furthermore we have decided to have a buffet so that we can have more healthy foods and also have a variety of foods instead of serving the same thing over and over again. We will look into having some chefs to help out so that we can have different foods. The computer area is something we felt was very important as there are some students that might not have the capability to own a computer, so providing some computer service can help students achieve more in their education. We also have a meeting room where groups of people can meet for a project or presentation. In order to use the meeting room you will need to go to reception and make a reservation. We will also have a reception at the entrance of each floor in order to gather data when it comes to the student center and make sure

that we accommodate students' needs.

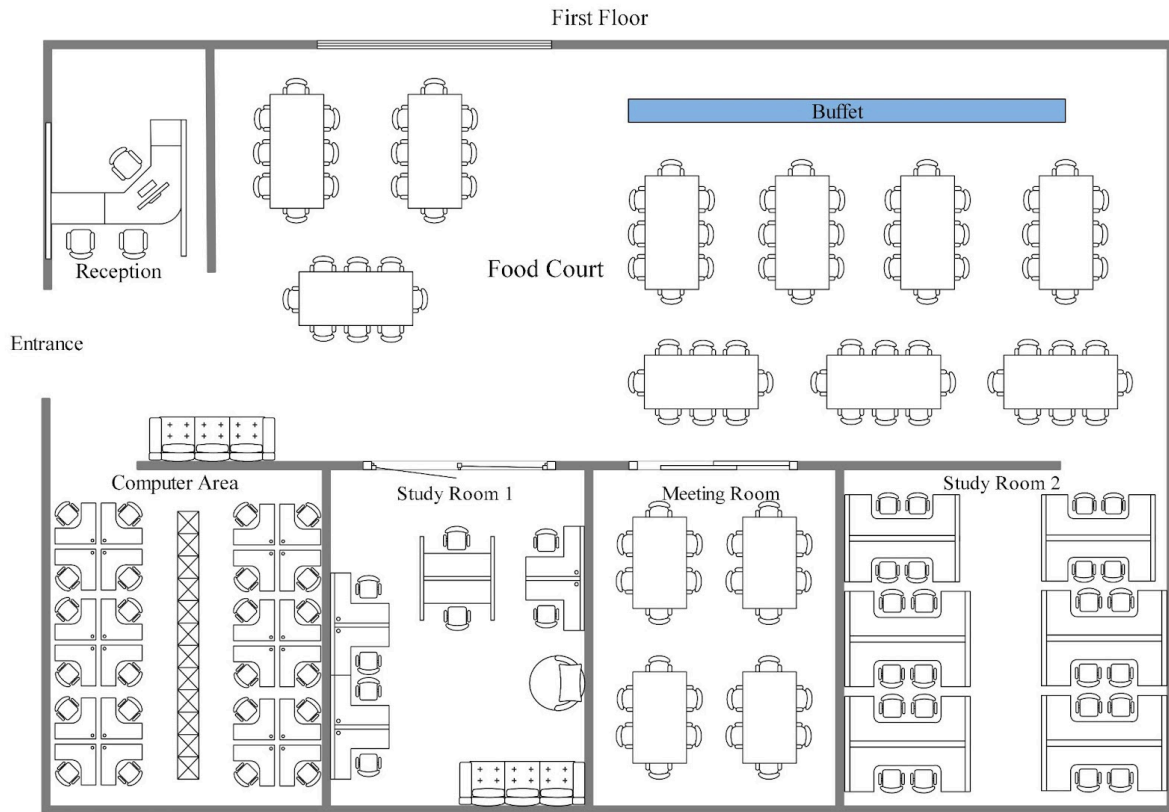


Fig 3. Floor plan for first floor

Second Floor: In our second floor we will also have a reception, and as mentioned before this is to gather data such as how many people come in, and any compliments that students might have. The second floor will contain one of the most requested parts of the student center. When running the survey 50% of the people requested to have a gym. This is telling us that students want to stay healthy during their time in college. This is something we want to support and also encourage other students so they start going to the gym. Encouraging students to go to the gym has a lot of benefits for their education. For example it will improve their cognitive functions, focus, and overall well-being. Moreover we want to give students a hobby for them to clear their minds and not just think about grades and other things

that might stress them out during the semester. In this floor we will have different equipment as seen in the floor plan below. We also wanted to include a girls and boys locker room where they can store their belongings. We also want to encourage good hygiene. This is why we added showers in the locker rooms. In the bottom left of the floor plan we also plan to have gender-inclusive bathrooms. Overall this floor was dedicated mostly to the gym as it was one of the most requested parts of the student center.

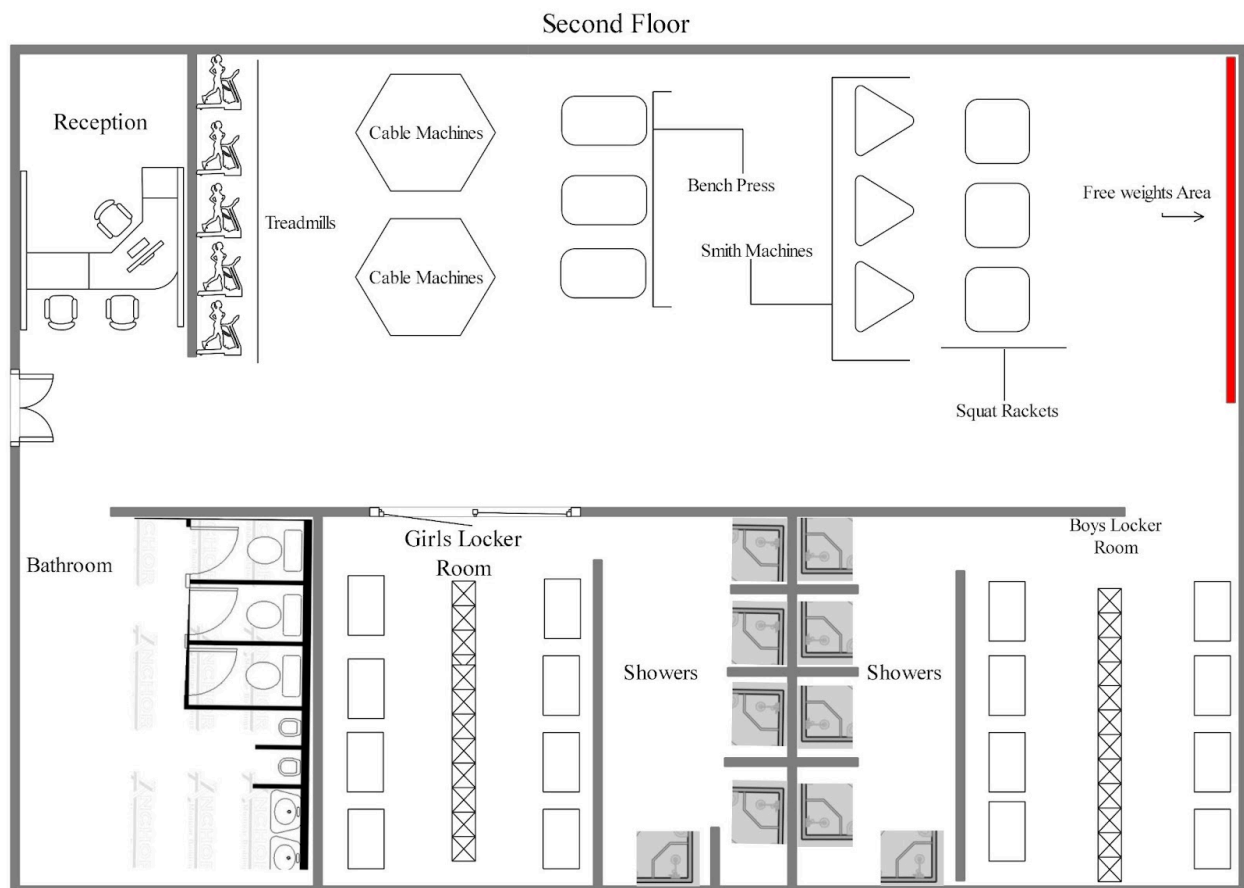


Fig 4. Floor plan for second floor

Third Floor: Our final floor again will also have reception to provide help, and also in case there are any complaints. For this floor our main idea was entertainment. A lot of people these days play video games and for them it is a way to escape reality. Not only this but it also brings a lot of people together which will encourage a more social community within the school. The third floor is also a way people

can get to meet other people and have some fun either playing video games, bowling, or billiards. One of the first rooms you will come across is the bowling room. This will have 4 small lanes of bowling where people will have to reserve in order to use it. They will be allowed up to 4 people per lane since it is smaller sized lanes. The room next to the bowling room is the billiards room. We will have 4 pool tables for people to enjoy and have a good time with friends. This room has more of a chill vibe this is why we also have a lot of sofas for people to sit down as well. Furthermore the last two rooms are the Gaming Consoles and the Gaming PCS. We decided to have separate gaming rooms because the Gaming Consoles will be intended for groups of people to play together, while the gaming PCs are for students that want to play multiplayer but online and more competitive. The student center wants to provide a lot of entertainment and with this floor we made sure to add different kinds of stuff so that everyone could be entertained and have some fun.

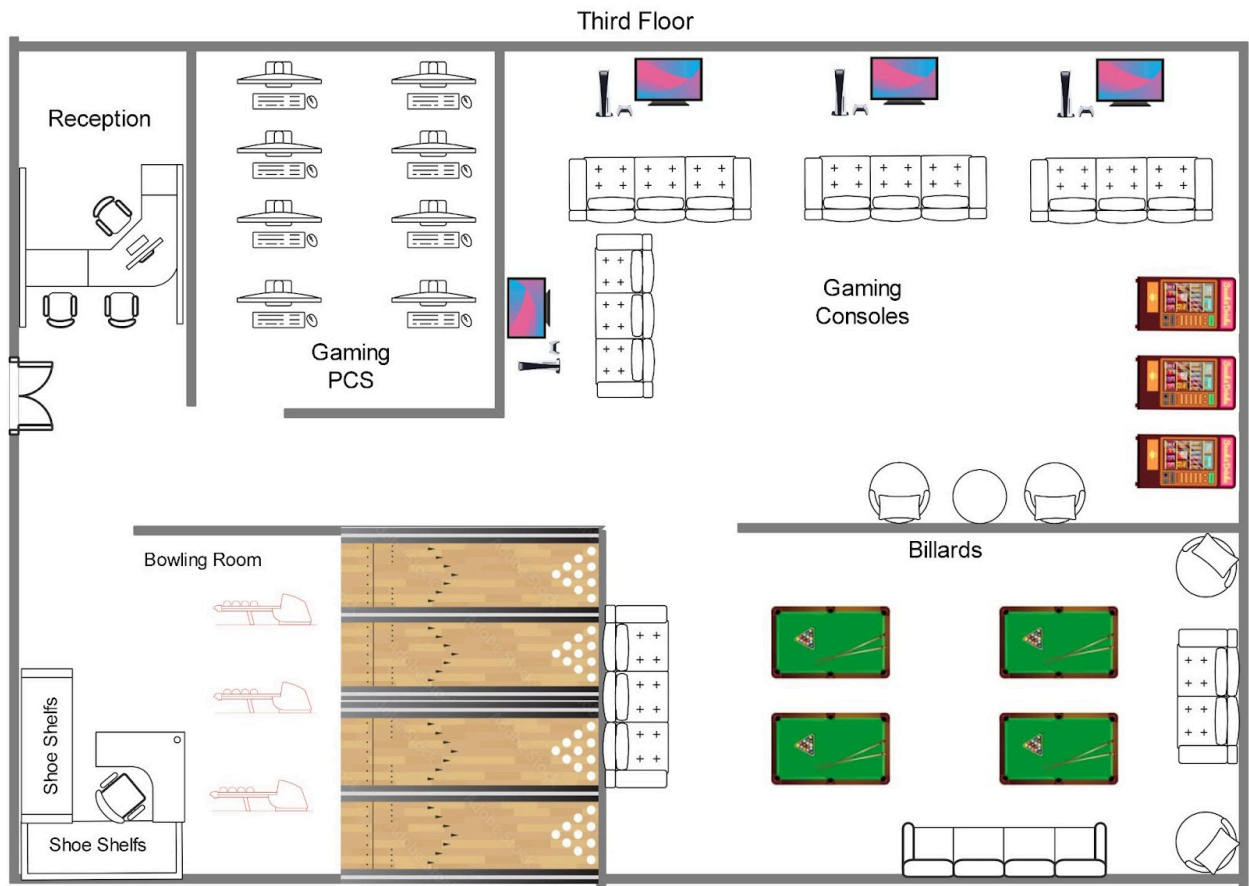


Fig 5. Floor plan for third floor

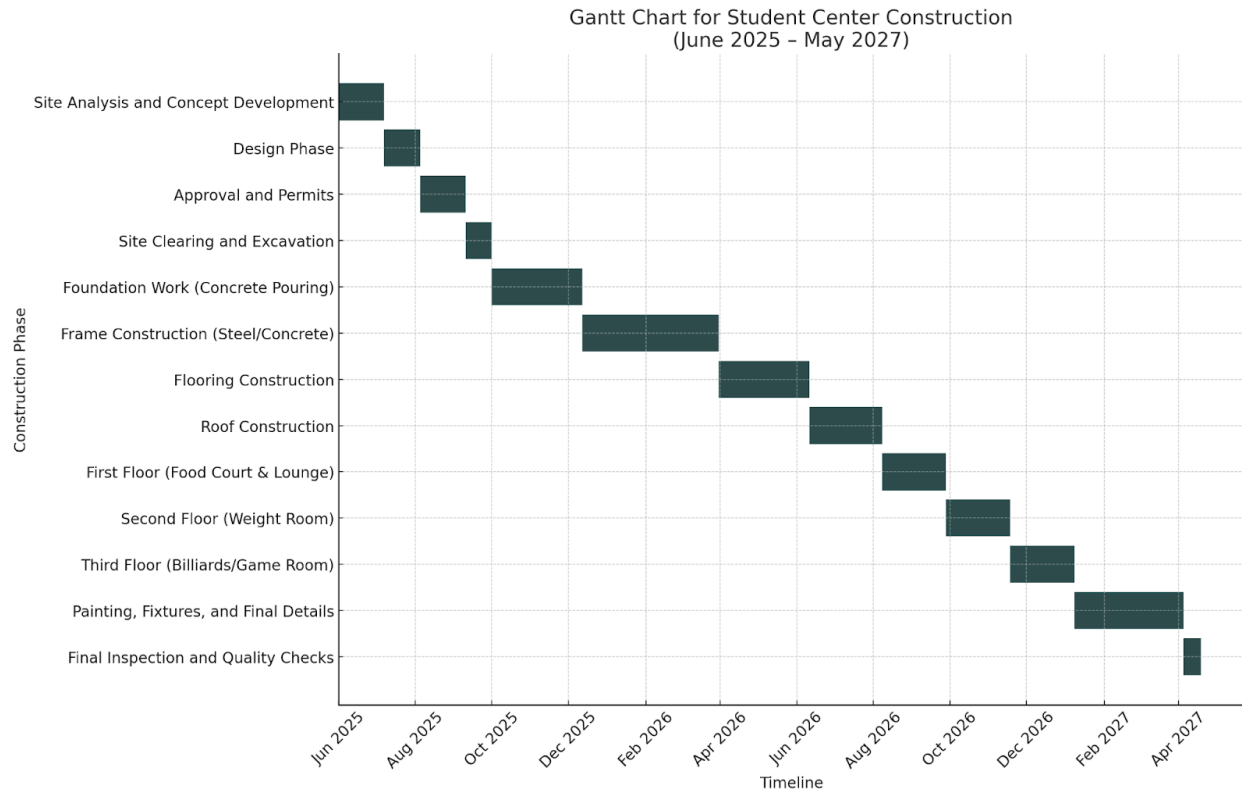


Fig 6. Construction time table

Above is a timeline of our construction of the student center. We expect the total time to build our student center to take around two years.

Costs and Benefits

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Cost of Building (50,000 sq ft @ \$500/sq ft) | \$25,000,000 |
| Furnishing and Equipment | \$2,000,000 |
| IT infrastructure | \$1,000,000 |
| Permits and Fees | \$500,000 |
| Total Cost | \$28,500,000 |
| Annual Maintenance Cost | \$1,500,000 |

Fig 7. Total budget

The proposal to construct a student center at CCNY presents both considerable costs and promising long-term benefits. The direct costs of the project include construction, labor, materials, and ongoing maintenance. Based on data from similar public college projects in New York State, the average cost of building a student center ranges from \$400 to \$600 per square foot (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Assuming a 50,000-square-foot facility, the initial construction cost would range from \$20 million to \$30 million. Additional expenses include furnishings, IT infrastructure, and permitting fees. Operational costs, including staffing, utilities, and maintenance, are estimated at \$1.5 million annually (SUNY Capital Program Plan, 2021). These figures are outlined in the table above.

While the costs may be substantial, the benefits of a student center are numerous and long-lasting. A dedicated student space would promote engagement, wellness, and community-building activities that are directly linked to student retention and academic success (Astin, 1999; Tinto, 2012). A modern student center could house academic support services, student clubs, lounges, and event spaces, centralizing campus life and reducing commuter fatigue. According to a report by the Association of College Unions International (ACUI, 2020), campuses with robust student centers report a 7–10% increase in student satisfaction and retention rates. Moreover, the center could generate revenue through event rentals, food vendors, and campus retail, potentially offsetting annual operational costs. With CCNY's large commuter population, a student center would serve as a vital hub that enhances the college experience and contributes to long-term institutional prestige and student outcomes.

Ultimately, while the initial investment is significant, the long-term educational, social, and economic benefits of a student center make it a worthy addition to the CCNY campus. Funding could be secured through a combination of CUNY capital funding, state support, student fees, and alumni donations.

Our Team

Annan:

Annan Sharif is a first-year Mechanical Engineering major with a strong foundation in both technical and practical skills. With hands-on experience in SolidWorks, MATLAB, and Python, he brings a well-rounded skill set to engineering projects and academic challenges. Prior to college, he gained valuable professional experience working in retail, where he developed strong communication and customer service skills. Additionally, he completed an internship as an IT worker, further expanding his problem-solving abilities and technical expertise. Annan is eager to apply this diverse background to innovative engineering solutions and collaborative environments.

Anthony Velasquez:

Anthony Velasquez is a first year computer engineering student at CCNY. He was born in Guatemala and came to the US at the age of 5. He has past experience in 3 different internships, where he got experience in marketing, AI, as well as a teacher assistant. A skill he has been able to acquire is coding in c++. Also has some knowledge in solving basic circuits using ohm's law. Some qualities that define him are kind, responsible, and hardworking. Some of the things he enjoys doing in his free time is playing and watching soccer. He also enjoys going karting, and spending time with his family.

Javier Guerrero:

Javier Guerrero is a first year Electrical Engineering student at The City College of New York. He is responsible and dependable, has work experience in retail, as well as volunteer experience at a Food Pantry. Through his work, he has acquired leadership skills, as well as collaboration and communication skills. His experience has allowed him to become adaptable, learning tasks and skills quickly. Other

skills that he has are Microsoft office applications (such as Word, Excel, and powerpoint) and coding in python. As a student, he dedicates himself to studying when not in class, as well as having a strong foundation in Math and physics. Some things he enjoys doing during his free time is going to the gym or watching movies/shows.

Conclusion

Looking forward to the future, the proposed student center would change CCNY for the better and address needs for the community. Our center offers activities such as games, billiards and working out in a fully equipped gym; or maybe places you want to relax and unwind with lounges and a food court. Through our research we found that student centers are vital to building a college community, promote student wellbeing, and encourage academic success. With all these activities, students will gain a sense of community and belonging, allowing for greater student retention, higher GPAs, and make the school more attractive, opening the doors for higher enrollment. With this student center, CCNY takes a powerful step toward creating a stronger, more unified college community.

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Appendix

Would you want a student center? A "student center" is a designated area on a college campus that serves as a community hub for students, faculty, st...to various services, and a place to relax and study

76 responses

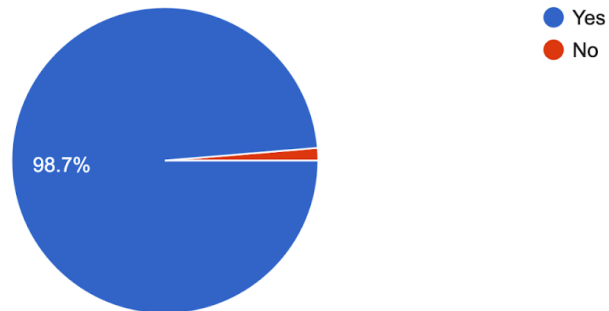


Fig. 8 Student responses to center

Survey link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeB-FMHSfA6EFgcDQ8EhoU56Gb8MwPAagxl11OiGudaGZC-g/viewform?usp=header>