

## HIGHLIGHTED CHANGE IDEA

**Donuts with the Dean.**  
A once-per-semester event that gives STEM students a friendly, low-pressure way to connect with college Deans, Chairs, Staff, and share questions or feedback.  
**Campus Club (STEM Alliance).**  
A student-led STEM club with biweekly meetings and community events such as faculty talks, bingo, outreach, that build peer networks and strengthen belonging especially for first-generation students.

## PLAN

We hosted a neutral, calm Donuts with the Dean event once per semester to connect STEM students with administrative and leadership roles from the College of Science and CECS, encouraging informal conversation that also surfaced student concerns, ideas, and feedback. The event was promoted through digital channels (social media, campus screens, email lists) and in-person outreach (flyers and tabling), and student volunteers served as conversation starters and data recorders. We also continued the STEM Alliance, a student-led club led by first-generation students and open to all STEM majors to expand connection and belonging. The club held biweekly meetings and ran community-building events (e.g., Donuts with the Dean, STEM movie night, faculty pop-up talks, Bingo with faculty, and Q&A panels with medical/pharmacy/math students) to strengthen peer networks and support academic success.

## DO

The Donuts with the Deans events were hosted on campus and supported by student leaders and volunteers who organized logistics, served refreshments, and encouraged informal conversation among students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Students participated by stopping by to network and discuss their STEM experiences and goals, and they also wrote thank-you cards for professors, which were displayed during the event and distributed afterward.  
First2 staff, the Campus Club Advisor, and student leaders promoted the STEM Alliance by emailing enrolled STEM majors with meeting details and event schedules, sending reminders, and advertising through flyers and tabling. The club held at least two meetings per month, created officer roles (e.g., secretary/treasurer), tracked attendance in a shared spreadsheet, and used a Teams channel for ongoing communication; students also completed QR-code intake and post surveys, and meetings included time for suggestions, concerns, and support requests.

## STUDY

**Study (Donuts with the Deans)**  
We evaluated whether the event improved students' ability and willingness to connect with college leadership by reviewing attendee feedback on comfort communicating with faculty/staff/administrators, perceived helpfulness of the event for networking, and student reflections on the event environment. We also reviewed open-ended comments to identify what aspects of the event supported connection (e.g., setting, format, interactions) and what barriers limited engagement (e.g., time, logistics).  
**Study (STEM Alliance Campus Club)**  
We examined whether regular participation in the campus club was associated with stronger student outcomes by reviewing trends across belongingness, confidence in succeeding in STEM, resilience, and communication/leadership skills. In addition, we tracked participation patterns and summarized how continued involvement related to academic standing and persistence, using student feedback to interpret what club components most effectively supported students over the semester.

## SUMMARY

We implemented two coordinated strategies to strengthen connection and belonging for STEM students, especially first-generation students. Donuts with the Deans created a calm, low-pressure environment for informal conversations with college leadership, faculty, and staff, drawing ~40 student participants and encouraging students to share questions, ideas, and feedback. In parallel, the STEM Alliance Campus Club sustained support through a student-led campus club that built peer networks and mentoring access through regular meetings and community-building events.  
To study impact, we used attendance tracking, surveys, and participant feedback to examine comfort communicating with faculty/administrators and indicators related to belonging, confidence, resilience, and communication/leadership. Across campus club programming, events averaged ~12 students and ~5 faculty participants, while five paid student leaders consistently participated in and helped run the biweekly meetings, supporting continuity and follow-through across the semester.

## PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS



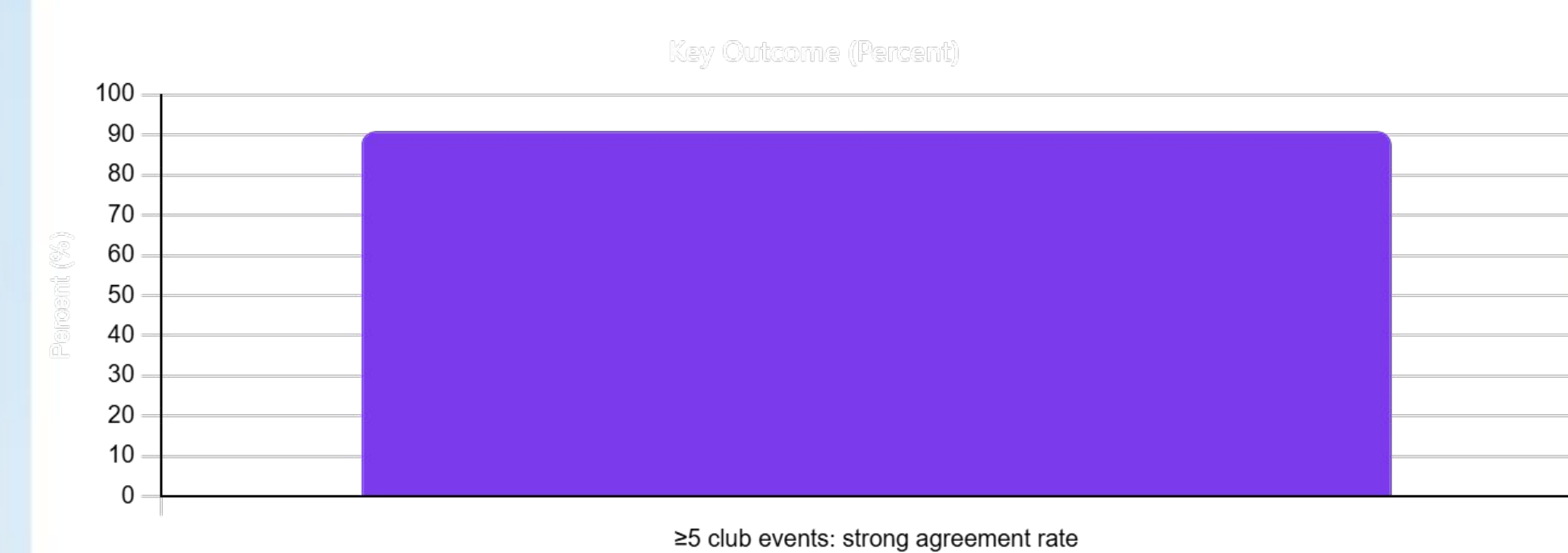
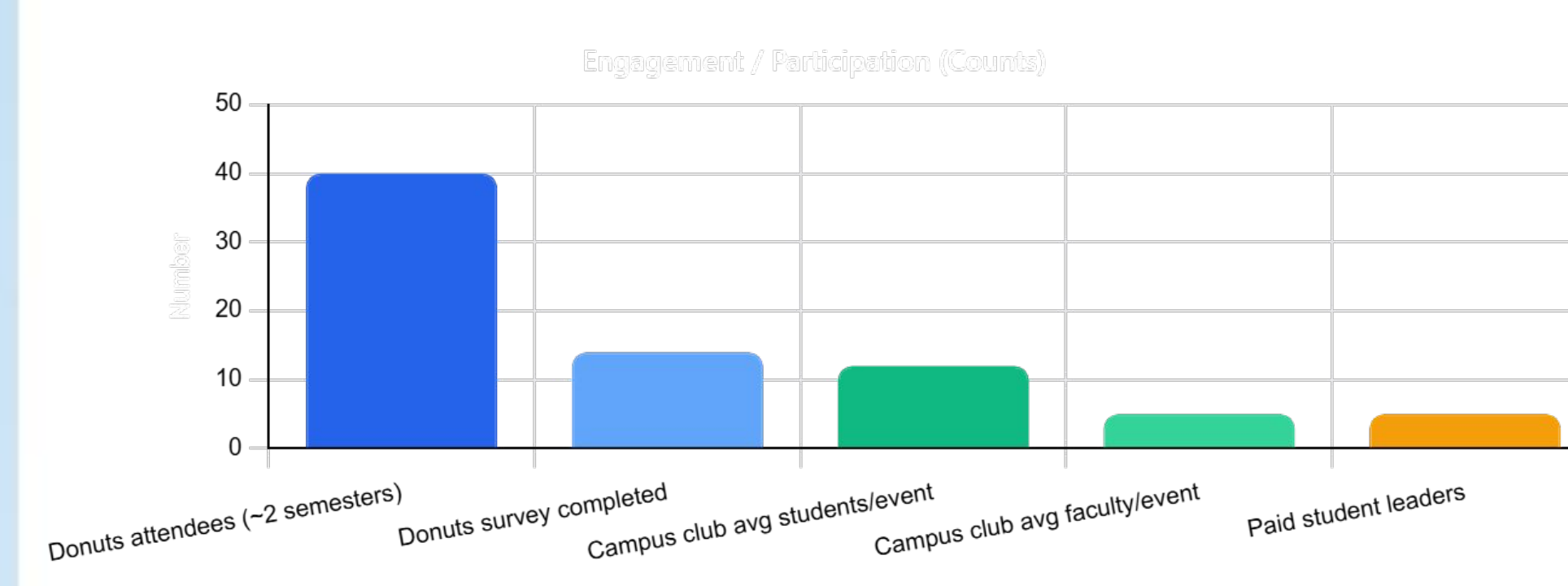
## ACT

We chose to adapt Donuts with the Deans because it supported positive student connection and comfort with college administrators, but feedback showed the need for better interaction time, smoother logistics, and stronger survey completion. Next time, we will shorten/simplify the survey, streamline check-in, train student conversation catalysts, improve dean availability, and add light structure (e.g., small-group rotations/prompts, peer-mentor support, and enough refreshments/thank-you cards).  
We chose to adapt and continue the campus club because participation appeared to strengthen students' belonging, confidence, and leadership/communication over time. Moving forward, we will align survey questions more closely with the semester's goals and improve recruitment to increase participation and sample size, while maintaining regular meetings and community-building events that sustain peer support.

## DATA

**Donuts with the Deans (data summary).**  
Across two semesters, Donuts with the Deans drew ~40 participants and was rated as helpful for connecting with faculty/administrators. Survey feedback showed students' comfort communicating with administrators (Dean/Chairs) stayed the same or increased, while belonging measures were already high and remained largely stable; comments praised the relaxed atmosphere, with minor limits noted (time with deans, logistics).  
**STEM Alliance Campus Club (data summary).**  
Campus club events averaged ~8 students and ~3 faculty members, supported by five paid student leaders who maintained biweekly meetings. Patterns in attendance and surveys suggested a dose effect: students who participated more often reported stronger belonging, confidence, resilience, and leadership/communication, and attendees who participated remained in good academic standing, with most continuing in their intended STEM major.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION



Notes: Donuts attendance is approximate (~40). Club averages reflect typical event participation. Outcome percent from survey trend (11/12 91% for student director attending 5 events)

## TIPS FOR OTHER INSTITUTIONAL TEAMS

- Start early with pre-surveys to track growth over time - Track attendance consistently by using QR codes and shared spreadsheets
- Focus on building community through regular meetings and casual events to help students feel connected
- Promote widely through multiple communication methods