



Student and Parent Comments

The 2008 Summer Science Program

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SSP 2008 Student and Parent Comments

Just before they left campus this past summer, we surveyed our students on their SSP experience. Two months later we polled their parents. Here are their responses.

Students - Socorro Campus



Everyone here is amazing at something and most people seem like they are good at everything. It doesn't take long to feel like you're a small fish in the vast ocean, but it is just as easy to make friends and feel like you don't belong anywhere else.

–Charlotte Hotchkiss

SSP defies description and expectations equally. All you need to know before experiencing it is that you will love it.

–David Steinberg

What's the best thing about SSP, the most surprising, the most life-changing? All the same answer: the people, the people, the people.

–Christine Chang

When I applied for SSP, I was expecting a rigorous science camp. I had been to academic camps before, and I was imagining something similar. Maybe smarter kids, maybe more difficult work. What I got was the most intense six weeks I've ever experienced. Faced with challenge after challenge, I was forced to learn more about myself than I ever wanted to know, all the while alongside 35 other fascinating people, all going through the same process as I.

–Andrew Tracer

SSP is.. the most amazing and intense six weeks of my life. SSP is amazing people, amazing memories, power naps, philosophizing in the telescope dome at 3 a.m. SSP is unforgettable.

–Maria Altyeva

SSP solidified my interest in science and gave me a college-like experience that I'll never forget.

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–Santhosh Balasubramanian

It's better than RSI ;-). In SSP, you can experience the true meaning of working hard and playing hard. By the end, you will have friends from across the world who share your memories. SSP also greatly expands your knowledge in various aspects of science other than astronomy and helps you identify your interests.

–Zi-Peng (Hunter) Zhao

SSP is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that is unique because of its culture and traditions and which really gave me an insight into college life.

–Aniruddha Bapat

I discovered that I could work really really hard and have a really really beautiful, amazing, stress-free time doing it. Plus, for once a peer group where you can unlock your inner-nerd and be welcomed with open arms.

–Avanti Shrikumar

SSP has taught me so much about math and science, but it's taught me even more about myself: where my limits are, what I can do and how far I can go!

–Sarah Wyss

SSP is one of those experiences that one remembers for the rest of their life. The tired students that assemble at the amphitheater on the first day have the capability to do college graduate level work and one day might lead the science world.

–Syed Saleh

The best thing about SSP is how, by spending time with such amazing and talented students, you discover more about yourself and learn where and what you might be in the future.

–Yunke Liu

You will get exposed to and learn about so many interesting subjects in science here through lectures, guest speakers, and field trips. It's strange to think of where I started and where I am now. I know so much more about astronomy, physics, programming, college and a bunch of other random things I never considered before.

–Dana Dement

For 95% of activities here, there will be another student here who is better than you at it. But everyone will find their own 5% of excellence.

–Jack Goetz

The real value of SSP is that it pushes one to the limit, forcing one to learn and think at a rate far above the demands of our modern education system.

–Pearson Miller

In no other place can you be with 35 other brilliant people doing and learning about topics you are actually interested in...thanks SSP for one of the best summers I have ever had.

–Stephen Liu

SSP has been the most amazing experience of my life. Now it's hard for me to imagine a life without SSP. I would never be able to forget the all-nighters we pulled programming and seeing all the students falling off to sleep during the lecture the next day. I would never be able to forget the intense frisbee matches and late-night parties. SSP has carved in me a new responsibility that will let me help this program so that many more students can have even better experience at this place than me. SSP has made me believe that six weeks can change your life tremendously and that there is no limit to which a person can be challenged. I will try my best in the future to help this program flourish.

–Adnan Khan

Getting to work with the quirkiest and most plucky people you'll meet on the most grueling yet strangely inspiring project--that is SSP in a nutshell.

–Alan Xie

SSP was the most socially rewarding and intellectually stimulating experience of my life.

–Arun Saigal

The best part of SSP is the sense of community and the people I met from everywhere and really got to know between staying up till midnight doing homework to observing to playing cards.

–Kayla Meduna

SSP is a academically and socially stimulating environment that would create a lifetime memorable experience for anyone.

–Derrick Liu

Ojai is said to mean "nest". This was our nest, of those who searched for the stars every night, who searched for knowledge every day and who searched for ourselves every time. It is shocking how much you learn about yourself, and not by a sudden realization, but from the conversations you have with other people. It is meeting these amazing people that helps you discover more things about you that you would ever imagine.

–Julia Neagu

I was surprised at how SSP challenged us all at some point or another, and how we made close friends within a few short weeks and also at how fulfilling it is to be able to use our own data and programs to generate the equatorial coordinates and orbital elements-which was the goal of the program.

–Kanika Pasricha

Students - Ojai Campus



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–Kanika Pasricha

Parents - Socorro Campus

SSP was probably the single most enriching experience of our daughter's life. The academics were amazing, but being immersed in a college setting with peers of similar interests and teachers with high expectations gave her and us the confidence that she will thrive in college. One caveat: Beware post-SSP depression! Our daughter cried on the ride home from the airport because she missed her friends, and she has maintained close contact almost daily with the other participants.

–Heather and Henry Robaszewski, parents of Joanna Robaszewski '08

The benefit that Wesley received from SSP is a lot more than I expected. I think SSP prepared him well for the demanding challenge from prestige colleges. SSP taught him team collaboration and was a big plus for him in applying for college.

–Paul Leung, father of Wesley Leung '08

Stephanie found it challenging in the beginning as she felt she did not have the educational advantages of some of her fellow students, and struggled to keep up. However, she found both the students and faculty especially helpful and soon regained confidence. I thank you once again for the wonderful program.

–Cushla Thompson, mother of Stephanie Thompson '08

Matthew felt that the workload, which was intense, will be invaluable preparation for college, (although it is now making his senior year – 4 AP classes and dual enrollment at the local college taking Physics II with Calculus) look like recess. Matt also discovered some new talents including swing dancing and essay writing. After the six weeks at SSP, Matt came home even more mature, capable and confident than when he left.

–Terry Goodwin, father of Matthew Goodwin '08

As a parent of a bright child, I welcomed the chance for Marie to experience not being head and shoulders above her peers. It was a shock to her to really have to apply herself, but it was totally positive.

–Sally Bales, mother of Marie Fulmer '08

I felt like this experience is helping shape my daughter and give her direction for her future contribution/gift back to the world. Thank you!

–Dana Kilgore, mother of Paloma Tamminga '08

We live in a relatively small town in rural Virginia. While Jacob has excelled in the local academic environment, we were interested in seeing if he could "hold his own" in a national, even global academic setting. Jacob did well and fit right in. He came home confident in his abilities and assured that physics as a college major is the right choice for him. He met his peers at SSP — the same people who may one day be co-workers or co-researchers searching for answers to the same questions.

On another note — 6 weeks is the longest Jake has been away from home. SSP was an excellent "practice run" in preparation for college. He survived . . . even thrived, without being home sick. And his mother realized that she'll be okay too.

—Vince and Joanne Leonardis, parents of Jacob Leonardis '08

Parents - Ojai Campus

Our son's SSP summer was exhilarating, rewarding, challenging, exhausting, and, ultimately, wonderful. When he returned, it was almost as if he had been away at college for a semester. OK, so he didn't enjoy the program; he simply loved it. For that, we are extremely grateful.

—Lisa Shapiro, mother of David Steinberg '08

Michael knows, now, what an "intense educational experience" really is. Math and science have always been for him his work; through SSP, we believe, it became much more than that... Thank you so very much for granting our son such a priceless gift.

—Gary and Rosara Gandelman, parents of Michael Gandelman '08

SSP gave our son maturity and confidence few weeks after returning home to walk into the Astrophysics department of Villanova University and ask if he can collaborate on any of the projects they are working on, and get the internship. Thank you, SSP.

—Alissa & Alexander Kouriatov, parents of Arsenij Kouriatov '08

What is remarkable is the fact that despite the tough schedule which the students went through, they always not only seemed to be up to it, but were enjoying it. After getting home, everyone of them seemed to be missing the action and were wanting to get back. Need one say more!

—Renu & Kamal Pasricha, parents of Kanika Pasricha '08

Last summer Maria spent two month at Summer School at Harvard. She was very happy there and came home with a lot of excitement and many new friends. This year to say that Maria was excited will mean to say almost nothing. These six weeks were the best time of her life so far. The experience she got there was priceless. All the kids and staff members became part of her new family.

—Gozel Pshenichnaya & Yury Altyev, parents of Maria Altyeva '08

