

WRITING CENTER AMBASSADORS: ENGAGING CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH EMBEDDED CONSULTANTS

Joseph Cheatle
Iowa State University
jcheatle@iastate.edu

Cristian Lambaren Sanchez
Michigan State University
lambaren@msu.edu

Abstract

This work examines a program developed by the Michigan State University Writing Center to embed consultants within existing programs and organizations at the institution. Specifically, a writing center consultant was embedded in the College Assistance Migrant Program, an educational program for individuals with migrant or seasonal farm work backgrounds. Drawing on the theoretical framework of embedded tutoring, this program successfully fostered improved relationships and understanding between the writing center and faculty, staff, and students in the student organization. Both CAMP administrators and students found benefits from the program. Administrators became more thoughtful as they interacted with the center, an important student service, as well as giving them a better idea of the services that the center provides. Students, meanwhile, were more comfortable using the center's services because those services were identified with the Ambassador, someone that they were able to get to know well because of their frequent presence in the CAMP offices. And the writing center benefits as well – the Ambassador Program is a way to reach out with and connect with groups of students who may be “non-visitors” in order to turn them into “visitors.” Included as part of this work is the mixed-methods assessment to determine the success of the program as well as recommendations for other writing centers who may want to utilize this type of programming.

Writing centers often struggle with the question of how to reach new audiences; particularly, writing centers can have difficulties reaching diverse and underrepresented groups of students – exactly those that most need, and could benefit from, the center's services. Many of these students are offered additional support (like academic assistance, advising, mentoring, etc.) but can still feel isolated on campus. Additionally, some student services may not know what other services are offered on campus or know how to best help students navigate a large ecosystem – even if that ecosystem is united in helping students succeed at the institution. As one of these services, The Writing Center at Michigan State University has experienced difficulties reaching diverse and underrepresented students on campus despite using numerous marketing strategies, classroom visits, and increased outreach by administrators. Realizing that the outreach we were doing (most often administrative meetings and traditional advertising) was not necessarily working because it was not tailored to the specific group of students, we developed and implemented a new approach.

During the Fall 2017 semester, we piloted a program that embedded a Writing Center consultant within a campus organization that serves, advocates for, and works with students. We define a campus organization broadly to include programs (e.g., programs for low-income students, first-generation students, commuter students, etc.) as well as centers (e.g., centers for LGBTQ students, women students, multicultural students, etc.). The embedded consultant was called an “Ambassador” because they, as Teagan Decker says, act as an emissary from the writing center to the organization (Decker). We chose to situate an Ambassador consultant in an organization that works with students because we wanted to go to where students are at (rather than waiting for students to come to the writing center). Additionally, these other spaces are often more familiar and comfortable for many students. By embedding a consultant within an organization on campus, we hoped to do the following:

- Strengthen the relationship between the campus organization's students, administrators, and staff with The Writing Center
- Demystify the center for the organization's students
- Increase the use of the writing center's resources by the organization's students

A key aspect of this program is negotiation between the Ambassador and the campus organization. Together, they can establish the ground rules for the Ambassador, including what activities the Ambassador can participate in, what kind of role they can take in the organization, and a time commitment. By embedding a consultant within an organization on campus, the consultant can potentially attend meetings or events, and just generally be in the space. And this agreement can be written and agreed to by all parties in order to ensure communication and understanding.

In choosing an organization for this pilot program, we wanted to respond to Lori Salem's call to investigate non-visitors to the writing center and provide “accounting of the needs and experiences of students who do not come to the writing center, who are, after all, the majority of students at most colleges and universities” (161). This program also responds to the commitment of The Writing Center to provide services

for all students. We chose the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) at Michigan State University as the first campus organization for the Ambassador Program because few students who participated in this program used writing center services, previous outreach attempts to create a stronger partnership had been made without much success, and CAMP features underrepresented students. More broadly, part of Migrant Student Services, CAMP “is an educational program that offers individuals with migrant or seasonal farm work backgrounds, a unique opportunity to begin an undergraduate program at MSU. This program provides the best conditions to help CAMP Scholars succeed in University life” (“Migrant Student Services”). In order to be eligible for CAMP, a student or an immediate family member must have spent a minimum of 75 days during the past 24 months as a migrant or seasonal farmworker as well as have participated (or be eligible to participate) under the Migrant Education Programs or Employment and Training Administration, Department of Labor-Migrant and Seasonal Farmworks Programs. CAMP scholars are enrolled in a first-year course together, participate in the International Engagement in Mexico (a study abroad program), receive assistance navigating the institution, and peer mentoring.

We argue that embedding peer consultants, as Ambassadors, in campus organizations can foster improved relationships and understanding between writing centers and faculty, staff, and students in the organization. Our work here includes a brief overview of embedded tutoring, which provides the theoretical and practical foundation for our project. After the theoretical and practical foundation, we provide our plan of action for the campus organization negotiated between the Ambassador and the organization’s administrators. At the time of the pilot, Cristian, the Ambassador, was a second-year Master’s student in Student Affairs and Administration completing a required practicum as part of his studies. Because this was a pilot program, we wanted to assess the success of the program; therefore, we are including results from our mixed-methods assessment conducted after the end of the program. Lastly, we provide recommendations for other writing centers considering implementing an Ambassador Program.

Embedded Course Tutoring and the Ambassador Program

The Ambassador Program is built upon the foundation of embedded tutoring programs and scholarship. While embedded tutoring in organizations

and groups within an institution is not well documented, the practice of embedded tutoring in the classroom has a long history and has gained increased attention from writing center scholars and in the writing center community, as demonstrated by the 2005 publication of Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman’s *On Location: Theory and Practice in Classroom-Based Writing Tutoring* and the 2014 special issue of *Praxis* titled “Course-Embedded Writing Support Programs in Writing Centers”, edited by Russell Carpenter, Scott Whiddon, and Kevin Dvorak. Both point out that course-embedded tutoring is a distinct form of writing support from that done by a teacher (or, for that matter, the support available within a center during one-on-one consultations). In the introduction to their *Praxis* issue, Carpenter, Whiddon, and Dvorak note that classrooms and writing centers are viewed as distinct spaces, “Classrooms are often viewed as the spaces where writing instruction takes place, while writing centers are spaces where writers receive *assistance*, not instruction” (3). They point out that course-embedded tutoring can bridge that gap between classroom and writing center spaces.

There are also many advantages to a course-embedded tutoring program which might lead writing centers to develop them. First, and foremost, they can create important and meaningful partnerships with faculty members (Carpenter, Whiddon, and Dvorak); furthermore, these partnerships can be healthy and supportive for both groups (Decker). Creating stronger relationships between writing centers and faculty members can positively shape the perception of faculty members towards writing centers; and faculty perception is instrumental in shaping students’ views of the center (Cheatle and Bullerjahn). Programmatically, this structure also bridges the gap between the classroom and the writing center while decreasing any sense of isolation for the center. And, as Spigelman and Grobman point out, “these programs can decrease any potential isolation of the center and brings the center into the mainstream institutional culture” (Spigelman and Grobman 11); rather than exist outside of the classroom and on institutional margins, embedded tutoring programs move writing centers into the heart of the institution (Severino and Knight 30).

Classroom-based tutoring is also beneficial to students because it “brings together diverse cultures and perspectives, it creates new opportunities for productive dialogue and relationships among sponsoring units within the university” (Spigelman and Groman 7). While students may be familiar with the services and organizations that they use and are a part of, they might not know much about other services on campus; in

effect, they might not know what they don't know. It also gives people "a taste of what the Writing Center offers, which may encourage them to make use of the center" (Severino and Knight 27). Embedded tutoring can also create direct relationships between peer consultants and students, rather than a relationship mediated by instructors or administrators.

There are also advantages to faculty members who participate in these programs. Faculty members can add a new perspective to their class in the form of a peer tutor (Carpenter, Whiddon, and Dvorak). Peer tutors can also develop connections with the students in the class that may be more informal than that of the instructor's. Additionally, knowing the course and the assignments allows the tutor to provide better feedback to students. It also brings writing support to where students are located and where they are composing, providing an immediacy for students needing writing assistance (Spigelman and Grobman 7). According to Teagan Decker, "until they [faculty members] see for themselves what goes on in the writing center, instructors will never really understand what we are doing" (Decker 18). By showing faculty members what writing centers do, as opposed to just telling them, embedded tutoring can demystify the center and create additional buy-in from faculty. While much is known about embedded tutoring in courses, what is less known are the outcomes of embedded tutoring in organizations and groups within an institution.

Ambassador Program

The Ambassador Program that we piloted is very similar, in terms of theory and desired outcomes, to course embedded tutoring. It is similar to embedded tutoring in that it seeks to expand the way the writing center engages with different stakeholders, it seeks to strengthen relationships between clients and peer consultants, and it seeks to disrupt the traditional classroom by moving learning outside of the classroom. However, this program is also different from course-embedded tutoring in that it does not feature classrooms or faculty, but administrators and organizations. And, campus organizations (with our broad definition), are often focused on more than just the classroom but on the personal, professional, and academic success of students.

There are potential barriers to the use of this model, particularly in the levels of buy-in, support, and high levels of communication that it requires. Additionally, administrators must want the Ambassador to be present within their organization; the entire idea does not work without the willing consent of administrators, leaders,

and program directors. There also needs to be support for the Ambassador from both the organization and the writing center. The center needs to provide the Ambassador time for them to effectively engage with the organization, and the organization needs to welcome the Ambassador, introduce them to the students, and facilitate positive interactions. Lastly, effective communication takes a lot of time, effort, and patience; not all consultants are going to be willing to put in this effort, and not all organizations are willing to do so either.

Pre-assessment and Plan of Action

The pre-assessment was used to determine whether the Ambassador Program would be useful for an organization, and then how the Ambassador Program might be useful. The pre-assessment included three interviews with CAMP administrators that lasted between thirty minutes to one hour and three focus groups with 14 CAMP students. The focus groups asked CAMP students questions about their use of the writing center, perceptions of the writing center, and their level of interest in different services the writing center offers. Meanwhile, the interviews with CAMP administrators asked how they would describe the writing center to their students, the feedback they hear from students about the writing center, areas of collaboration, and the best ways to connect with their organization.

Both CAMP administrators and students highlighted the fact that students were not utilizing writing center services. They both noted students were not familiar with the services or, if they were familiar with the services, had either not heard positive experiences from other students or did not know the best way of taking advantage of writing center services. Both also indicated how appreciative they would be to have someone work closely with the program and CAMP students. The results of the pre-assessment served as a guide to inform the plan of action, the programmatic learning outcomes for students, and the activities that the Ambassador would complete. Most importantly, the pre-assessment allowed the CAMP program to convey their needs, deepened the Ambassador's understanding of the CAMP program itself, and helped to develop the personal relationship between the Ambassador and the CAMP Program.

The plan of action, based on the pre-assessment, was developed in consultation and negotiation between Cristian (the Ambassador) and CAMP administrators. Cristian was able to determine what CAMP needed and how the Ambassador could best address those needs. In particular, CAMP wanted to make it a norm for students

to ask either the Ambassador for writing and communication help, or to utilize The Writing Center's services. CAMP staff and administrators discussed how students would constantly approach them for help in their writing assignments. They also mentioned how students would share stories about having negative experiences when trying to utilize different services because they either did not know anyone staffing the service or were not sure how to take advantage of such services. As such, CAMP administrators hoped that the Ambassador would become a familiar face who CAMP students could approach, schedule consultations with, and help improve their confidence in their ability to write analytically.

The collaboratively created plan of action consisted of three main components:

1. Being present at programs and events. Cristian committed to attending a number of events put on by CAMP, including MSU CAMP Roundtables, weekly staff meetings, monthly group meetings, and visiting the first-year class.
2. Weekly office hours. Cristian wanted to have weekly office hours held in the main area of the CAMP offices in order to build a rapport with students, provide them with a chance to ask questions of the Ambassador or Writing Center, and have them become more comfortable with both in a more informal setting.
3. Workshops. Cristian was able to utilize existing workshops, as well as create new workshops, for CAMP. These introduced The Writing Center, and its services, to the organization while providing information based on specific student needs. CAMP mentors collaborated in these workshops and co-presented with Cristian.

Cristian did have other activities that he wanted to accomplish, like writing groups or even an advisory board, but realized that they may not be the most effective use of time or that there was not necessarily a need expressed for them by the students in the organization. Cristian's flexibility and ability to adapt to the needs of CAMP positioned him to succeed as an Ambassador while also creating important connections between CAMP and The Writing Center.

Assessment Methods

Because this was a pilot program, it was important to assess the program and the results. All forms of pre- and post-assessment were IRB approved by the institution. We included both qualitative and

quantitative assessment because we wanted to provide a more complete understanding of the Ambassador Program than what one form of assessment could provide. There were four forms of assessment that, when combined, provide a clear picture of the success of the Ambassador Program:

1. **Ambassador Narrative by Cristian Lambaren Sanchez** – Cristian's narrative, as the first Ambassador, describes his experiences with the Ambassador Program. He discusses why he helped to create this program, the benefits to those involved, and the hurdles that he faced in his role.
2. **Interview with CAMP Administrator** – The interview was conducted with Elias Lopez, the Associate Director of the CAMP Scholars Initiative program at Michigan State University. He was interviewed for twenty minutes on his experiences with the Ambassador Program, his experiences with Cristian, and his perceptions of The Writing Center.
3. **Focus groups with CAMP students** – Cristian conducted two focus groups with CAMP students who volunteered to participate in the focus groups. Both groups consisted of three students, for six total participants. Each group was asked a total of fourteen questions on four topics: one-on-one consultations, workshops, office hours, and miscellaneous. The focus groups lasted between twenty and thirty minutes.
4. **Survey of CAMP students** – The survey was distributed to members of CAMP in order to receive student feedback about the Ambassador Program. Respondents were asked nineteen multiple choice questions and one open-ended question. For seventeen of the multiple choice questions, respondents were asked to rank their response on a Likert scale or to choose "does not apply." These questions focused on the comfort level of respondents to utilize Writing Center services or approach Cristian for help. The questions were all phrased as "Due to Cristian's presence in the office, workshops, or writing one-on-one consultations...". Two of the other questions asked respondents to indicate "yes" or "no" about whether they have recommended a peer to utilize The Writing Center services or to talk to the Ambassador. Respondents could skip or choose not to answer each of the questions and could stop the survey at any point. 19 students

completed the survey out of 56 total students enrolled in the program.

Assessment Results

First-Person Ambassador Narrative by Cristian Lambaren Sanchez

As a graduate student in a Student Affairs Administration program, I often heard about the challenges tied to coordinating and implementing collaborative programs tailored to supporting students from underrepresented backgrounds. My goal, as part of this program, was to help develop a cross-campus collaboration that is intentional in its design and implementation given the population being served: first-year, low-income students from migrant families. I wanted this program to be both sustainable (so it could continue after I graduated) and mutually beneficial to all parties involved: The Writing Center, CAMP administrators/staff, CAMP scholars and me.

I decided to work with CAMP because I felt this would be a space where I could capitalize on my unique upbringing to connect and develop rapport with these students. Growing up, my experiences paralleled those of most CAMP scholars: constantly moving from school to school, coping with not always seeing parents as often as peers, and being first in the family with the privilege of having college as an option after high school. I knew my dedication and passion for this project was not going to be scarce; I was committed not only to the objectives of the Ambassador Program but also to the CAMP scholars' experiences. While the work to guarantee the success of this pilot program was challenging, there were many positive outcomes for every member involved.

Any program, especially in its first run, will run into some hurdles. As the first Ambassador, I faced two key obstacles: time and student buy-in. In regard to time, I am specifically referring to the amount of time it took to plan the program, develop a relationship with CAMP administrators and students, and assess the program's success. We (Joseph and I) took a well-rounded and comprehensive approach; that is, in addition to the administrative interview, survey and focus groups, I drafted weekly personal notes about the first three weeks of the project and my experience with it. After realizing how much time this extra process was taking, I redirected my energy and focused on the other areas that also took a long time. For instance, while building rapport with CAMP scholars was not necessarily a difficult process, the challenge was finding enough time to participate in, be present, and organize different opportunities for them to become comfortable with and

look forward to working with me. Because this was a pilot program, we did not know which activities were going to benefit the organization and the students the most, so I decided to try as many as possible and adjust accordingly given the amount of student buy-in.

Student buy-in was the most difficult part of this program because I believe all students in CAMP could have greatly benefited from being more involved. In order to incentivize CAMP scholars to take advantage of the Ambassador program, I had to find out what was the best way to articulate how taking advantage of the activities would benefit them. The way I had to approach this was by not making it seem like a transactional experience, rather this was an opportunity to develop a new culture within CAMP. One that motivates students to take advantage of support services such as the Writing Center. To guarantee the success of this approach, I had to gain the trust of these students; they needed to feel I genuinely cared about them and their experiences in college. That way, they could believe that the objectives of the program were designed to support them and improve their experiences with the Writing Center. After a couple weeks of meeting with a few CAMP mentors, most of whom were recommended by the CAMP staff/administrators, they agreed to collaborate with me in the workshop series. They were all about to graduate and wanted to gain more experience with public speaking, workshop planning and presenting skills. In short, I had to take the time to develop some credibility among the CAMP scholars for them to trust my advice on how the Ambassador Program can help them hone their skills in writing and communication. The CAMP mentors also agreed to participate in the advisory board but given the differences in schedules, hosting a group meeting was a fail two different times. I decided to meet with the mentors individually and adjust their responsibilities as part of the advisory board, hence why this became an activity I did not invest as much time in comparison to the others.

Despite the challenges we faced, all parties involved, as intended, benefited from this pilot program. The Writing Center strengthened its relationship with CAMP (another important student support service), opening up the opportunity for more collaborations across campus, and it became a resource that students encouraged each other to utilize. In terms of CAMP, the administration and staff members benefited from having someone who they can specifically refer students to so that those students can get the support they need with their writing assignments and communication skills; being present at their site lifted the pressure they felt as administrators to always be the support for the

CAMP scholars. The CAMP scholars benefited from having someone there from the time they first arrive at college, who specifically focused on supporting them in these areas, to the end of their first year (and possibly longer depending on the relationships that were developed). Lastly, the Ambassador (me) benefited from program development and implementation practice. This provided me the first-hand experience to demonstrate how intentional collaborations need to be to ensure student success and growth; offered an understanding about how imperative experience with assessment, evaluation, and research is relevant to special student populations. Another outcome of personal privilege was the sole opportunity to be in a position where I feel like I could start giving back and passing the knowledge and advice that was shared with me and be critical and creative in developing opportunities for students to apply this knowledge and hone particular skills.

Interview with CAMP Administrator

We interviewed Elias Lopez, an administrator in the CAMP program, to get a sense of the success of the pilot program from an administrator's perspective. During the interview, he noted that while he did not know if there had been an increase in the number of students scheduling consultations with the center, he did note an increase in the number of students looking for Cristian. He pointed out a number of advantages for students in his organization, including a basic understanding of how to make the best use of a student resource, like The Writing Center. There was also a sense that the information about the center, for students, was better received from Cristian because he was closer to a peer (rather than an instructor, administrator, or staff member); Cristian took the time to get to know many of the students on a more personal level. As Elias says, Cristian—because he is a student—is able to explain The Writing Center in a way that other students will understand. More broadly, Elias says that the program helped the CAMP administrators to think about how they interact with other resources on campus, something that they may not have addressed without the Ambassador Program. Elias expressed his general appreciation for the program, stating that “The sole purpose that the writing center is even interested in learning ways to make the writing center, I guess, more exposed to students who don't use it but also to find ways to reach out to our students is, I think, a huge plus, a huge benefit.” At the end of our discussion, Elias said that he would “absolutely” recommend this program in the future and recommend it to other programs.

Focus groups with CAMP students

Cristian conducted two focus groups with six CAMP students. During the focus group, participants were asked questions about whether they used The Writing Center's consultation services (either with Cristian or another consultant) during the semester; whether those consultations were successful and why (or why not); whether they had attended workshops conducted by Cristian and their experiences at those workshops; whether they had attended Cristian's office hours in CAMP and their experiences attending them; if they feel different about The Writing Center because of Cristian's presence in their organization; and any feedback for future improvement of the program.

The CAMP students who participated in the focus groups conducted by Cristian all had positive viewpoints of The Writing Center, and all had used it for individual one-on-one consultations for their work. Students found the writing workshops Cristian conducted particularly helpful. Four students participated in workshops conducted by Cristian. One said that “The workshops have been really helpful especially on the analyzing and writing because these were the ones that I had more trouble on.” Another said, “Yes, these workshops have been amazing! Thanks to these workshops I am now more confident when I write.” As indicated by these comments, and other responses, the workshops were memorable and helpful for CAMP students.

Many of the focus group students indicated that they appreciated Cristian's presence as part of the Ambassador Program or that they recommended their fellow CAMP participants to him for writing help. Cristian's office hours (held in the CAMP office) were particularly effective in engaging with CAMP students. According to one student, the office hours were “the most helpful, especially as they were available at times the WC was not open” while another student stated that “Office hours has helped me improve so much that I even like writing now! I am now confident when I have to write papers!”. Additionally, CAMP students indicated that they either referred their fellow CAMP students to Cristian's office hours or to work with him through The Writing Center. One referred peers to Cristian's office hours, “I've told many people about his office hours,” while a few referred peers to make writing center appointments with Cristian, “I told my friends to make appointments with Cristian” and “As other students needed help, I would always reference them to Cristian. Especially at times the WC was not available, for example on Friday's.”

Lastly, Cristian's frequent presence had the positive effect of making CAMP students more comfortable

working on their writing as well as a positive effect on CAMP student's perceptions of The Writing Center. According to one participant, "I felt comfortable [with Cristian's presence] because he had a background in CLS [Chicano/Latino Studies Program] so when I went to my session with him at the WC he knew the background and was able to understand what I was trying to say. Seeing him in other areas made me familiarize myself with him so it would be more easier to ask him for help if I needed it." Because Cristian had areas in common with the CAMP students, they were able to more easily relate to, and connect with, him. Another student noted that "I [...] felt more comfortable going to the WC because I saw a familiar face." By knowing that there was someone they knew working in the center, CAMP students were more comfortable using the center's services.

Survey of CAMP students

After the semester-long Ambassador Program pilot, CAMP students were given a survey that asked about their experiences with the Ambassador and The Writing Center. 19 students completed the survey out of 53 currently enrolled in the program. Overall, respondents indicated high satisfaction with the Ambassador and an improved relationship with The Writing Center because of the Ambassador. The results were divided into those that focus on the Ambassador and those that focus on The Writing Center. Figures 1-3 (See Appendix A) are a select set of data that is representative of CAMP students' responses specifically to Cristian. The majority of respondents indicated either "strongly agree" or "agree" for all categories in Figure 1 and Figure 2 (See Appendix A). Notably, 94.45% of respondents indicated "strongly agree" or "agree" for "I feel more confident in my writing skills"; and 88.24% indicated that they either "agree" or "strongly agree" that they feel comfortable approaching Cristian for writing assistance during his hours at the CAMP offices. Additionally, 13 respondents (64.71%), specifically recommended a peer talk to Cristian for assistance (Figure 3).

While these results are focused on Cristian and his success within the program, the results in Figures 4 and 5 (See Appendix A) focus on the relationship between CAMP students and The Writing Center. As indicated in Figure 4 (See Appendix A), CAMP participants noted that they "strongly agree" or "agree" that they felt comfortable utilizing the writing center services (94.11%), felt comfortable explaining to their peers how to use the center (76.47%), and felt comfortable recommending The Writing Center to their peers (94.12%). Additionally, over three-quarters of

respondents actually recommended a peer to use The Writing Center.

Discussion

The results section highlights three themes from the Ambassador Program. The first is that Cristian's presence in the CAMP offices was central to the success of the program. This type of program is time intensive, but there are potentially high returns for the trust and personal relationships that the Ambassador can create with a program and its participants. According to Cristian, "[...] I had to gain the trust from these students; they needed to feel I genuinely cared about them and their experiences in college." CAMP students were not necessarily pre-disposed to use the center's services and were wary of services outside of the CAMP offices; but, due to Cristian's presence, students were more comfortable with the center. As one student noted in the focus group, "I [...] felt more comfortable going to the WC because I saw a familiar face" while another noted "[...] when I went to my [writing center] session with him at the WC he knew the background and was able to understand what I was trying to say." The CAMP administrator we interviewed also noted how Cristian, as a student, was better able to explain The Writing Center in a way that other students understood. For both administrators and students, Cristian was able to interact with them in ways that other members of the institution were not; this building of trust translated into a better understanding of services, perception of services, and willingness to use the center's services.

The second theme is that, due to the program, CAMP students have a better understanding of the services that The Writing Center offers. Because Cristian was also able to tailor the message of the center for a specific student population, he was able to highlight how the center can specifically help them. As students indicated in the survey results, Cristian was able to explain what services were offered, helped students feel more comfortable utilizing writing center services, and helped students feel more able to explain writing center services to their peers. Increased understanding of the center was not limited to students; Elias Lopez, an administrator in the CAMP organization, noted that one of the advantages of the Ambassador Program is that it provides both students and administrators with a basic understanding of how to use a student resource like The Writing Center. The result is that, in the future, administrators are more likely to recommend students use The Writing Center while students are more likely to actually utilize the center's services.

The third theme is that CAMP students were more likely to utilize Writing Center services and recommend Writing Center services to their peers because of the Ambassador Program. 94.11% of CAMP students who responded to the survey indicated that they either strongly agreed or agreed that, because of Cristian's presence, when they had difficulties with writing, they felt comfortable utilizing The Writing Center's services to help them move forward. Additionally, because of Cristian, 76.47% felt comfortable explaining the center's services to their peers and 94.12% felt comfortable recommending Writing Center services to their peers. Lastly, 76.47% actually recommended The Writing Center to their peers during the semester that Cristian served as the Ambassador to the CAMP program.

Recommendations

Drawing on the experiences of Cristian and our mixed methods assessment, we have created a number of recommendations for the Ambassador Program, both here and at other institutions, based on aspects that went well and things that can be improved:

1. **Have a good understanding of the organization before the start of the program.** It was important for the Ambassador to have an understanding of the organization, including important personnel, its mission, and the services that it provides. This familiarity ensures that the Ambassador can best match the needs of the organization with the capabilities of the center.
2. **Introduce the writing center, its services, and the Ambassador early on.** This can happen in a variety of ways, like during an orientation, event, training, or meeting. How this occurs can be different for each program but, for us, it was clear that if an early opportunity is missed to provide this information then the program will be less successful. An introduction early on creates transparency about the role of the Ambassador and the goals of the program. This is also a good opportunity to create buy-in from stakeholders and to begin creating the rapport that is necessary for the success of this program.
3. **Have clear goals.** These goals are agreed upon by the organization, the Ambassador, and by the center in order to have measurable outcomes. By having clear goals for the program, there is a measure of accountability that can be tracked and assessed; furthermore,

clear goals ensure that the Ambassador is accountable to the center and the organization while making sure that there are not drastic changes to the program throughout the year.

4. **Utilize a variety of activities designed for the organization.** It is important to recognize that each organization may require different activities or interactions to meet their needs. For example, some organizations may want a more informal relationship that involves mostly office hours; meanwhile, others may want customized workshops or an advisory council. And others may want an open mic night or even guest speakers. Each organization will provide unique opportunities for the Ambassador to address the specific needs of the organization.
5. **Have "office hours".** The most basic, and one of the most effective, activities that an Ambassador can do is to introduce the writing center during an organizational meeting and be in the space of the organization. The organizations targeted for the program often have a physical space that students congregate in and use. By having "office hours", the Ambassador can ensure that students know who they are, create informal encounters, and serve as a reminder that the center cares about reaching out to them.
6. **Plan for the entire academic year.** It is important to complete the planning work at the beginning of the year in order to determine how much time commitment is needed for the program. This can also help space out the Ambassador's activities so that the Ambassador is present throughout the year rather than just at the beginning of the year.

Conclusion

Lori Salem, in her work "Decisions...Decisions: Who Chooses to Use the Writing Center?", explores who does not come to the center and why. She believes that our attempts to "correct" people's views of the center is misguided and not practical because most people's view of the center is shaped before clients reach college. And yet, there must be ways to educate people about center services, create partnerships, and disseminate knowledge in productive and effective ways. We believe that the Ambassador Program is one way to do this while also answering Lori's call to "expand the writing center research and assessment agenda to investigate 'non visits' and 'non-visitors'" (161). We chose CAMP, and they wanted to partner

with us, because students in them are often “non-visitors” that we want to become “visitors.”

The Ambassador Program model was successful with both administrators and students in the organization while, importantly, furthering the goal of the center to reach populations on campus that do not always use the center. As the CAMP administrator pointed out, it was important for students to hear about services that can assist them from other students; additionally, the administrator noted that he learned how to better interact with, and recommend students to, the writing center because of the Ambassador. Students also benefited from the presence of the Ambassador because they felt more confident in their writing skills and were likely to utilize the Ambassador’s help in their work. The writing center also benefited from the Ambassador Program’s ability to connect with students who may not always utilize the center’s services. And, because of their comfort level with the Ambassador, there was a more positive perception of the center. Also, they were likely to either recommend their peers to talk to the Ambassador or to utilize writing center services.

The program, and its success, has been helpful for The Writing Center at Michigan State University in shaping future policies and ideas. This past year we partnered with five campus organizations on campus, each with their own embedded Writing Center Ambassador, and are building upon an apparatus of student services and organizations designed to promote student success. We have also formalized the structure of the program with an online intake form, required and suggested activities, guidelines, and assessment measures. For the future, the program has been renamed the Writing Engagement Liaison Program Fellowship that creates a more formalized structure for the program and includes a stipend. As this program continues to expand, the center hopes to partner with additional organizations on campus. The Writing Center also hopes to show the continued success of this program in the future as a way to create a sustainable model of collaboration and outreach for the center.

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Appendix A: Figures

Figure 1: Representative Sample of CAMP Students’ Responses to Cristian

Due to Cristian’s presence in the office, workshops, or writing one-on-one consultations...

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply	Total
I feel more confident in my reading skills	41.18% (7)	52.94% (9)	5.88% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	17
I feel more confident in my researching skills	37.50% (6)	62.50% (10)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	16
I feel more confident in my analyzing skills	35.29% (6)	58.82% (10)	0.00% (0)	5.88% (1)	0.00% (0)	17
I feel more confident in my writing skills	38.89% (7)	55.56% (10)	0.00% (0)	5.56% (1)	0.00% (0)	18

Figure 2: Representative Sample of CAMP Students’ Responses to Cristian

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Does Not Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply	Total
I feel comfortable approaching Cristian during his office hours at the CAMP office for any part of my writing process for any assignment	41.18% (7)	47.06% (8)	5.88% (1)	5.88% (1)	0.00% (0)	0.00% (0)	17

Figure 3: Representative Sample of CAMP Students’ Responses to Cristian

Sometime this semester, I have recommended my peers to approach Cristian during his office hours at the CAMP offices.

Yes	64.71% (13)
No	35.29% (6)

Figure 4: Representative Sample of CAMP Students' Responses to The Writing Center

Due to Cristian's presence in the office, workshops, or writing one-on-one consultations...

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Do Not Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Does Not Apply	Total
When I had difficulties with writing, I felt comfortable utilizing the Writing Center services to help me move forward	35.29% (6)	58.82% (10)	5.88% (1)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	17
I feel comfortable explaining to my peers how to utilize the Writing Center services (i.e., how to make an appointment, what locations and services are available, etc.)	35.29% (6)	41.18% (7)	17.65% (3)	5.88% (1)	0.00%	0.00%	17
I feel comfortable recommending my peers to utilize the Writing Center services	41.18% (7)	52.94% (9)	5.88% (1)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	17

Figure 5: Representative Sample of CAMP Students' Responses to The Writing Center

Sometime this semester, I have recommended my peers to utilize the Writing Center services.

Yes	76.47% (13)
No	23.53% (4)