

Memorial Student Center: MSC CAMAC

MSC CAMAC Amig@s

2016-2017

Background

Per its website <http://camac.tamu.edu/about/> the purpose of the Memorial Student Center (MSC) Committee for the Awareness of Mexican-American Culture (CAMAC) is to unite students from diverse backgrounds, by presenting programs that enrich the awareness and understanding of Latina/o cultures and values. To meet the organizational mission, MSC CAMAC has a variety of sub-committees designed to provide oversight and planning for activities and events sponsored by the committee.

In 2016, MSC CAMAC was awarded a Division of Student Affairs College Completion Grant to fund two featured programs. Those programs include the current and growing Mi Casa es Su Casa, which provides a support system for Hispanic students through interaction with Hispanic professors as the latter prepares a home cooked meal in their home, and a new initiative, MSC CAMAC Amig@s. This new initiative is a mentoring program that pairs current MSC CAMAC members with first-year and/or first-generation Latina/o students, with the hope that participants will become engaged with MSC CAMAC and other programs/organizations/services on campus. MSC CAMAC Amig@s assists students in acclimating to campus life, becoming involved, and helps them find a home away from home. The grant money funds services such as retreats and trainings, and the MSC CAMAC advisor and leaders believe that involvement in the program will positively impact participants' persistence to their second year of college and beyond to graduation.

In October 2016, the MSC CAMAC advisor and graduate assistant met with Student Life Studies to develop assessments of programs offered to participants of MSC CAMAC Amig@s. These included surveys to participants attending the three Gatherings offered in the spring semester, which involved attendance at the theatrical & chorale performance, *Conspirare: Considering Mathew Shepard*, the musical film *Chico & Rita* and a résumé writing workshop. A closing reflection exercise offered at an etiquette dinner in April 2017 was also developed. Additionally, the analysis of results from surveys developed and implemented in the fall by the MSC CAMAC graduate assistant to understand the mentees early experiences will be reported.

Method and Sample

Three surveys distributed in the fall to the mentees were produced using Google Forms, part of the G Suite offerings by Google, which enables creation of electronic surveys and forms. The first survey included five quantitative and qualitative questions, the second survey contained seven qualitative questions and the last survey contained four qualitative questions. It is unknown how many participants were offered to take the surveys, however 11 participants took the first survey on October 13th and November 2nd 2016. Eleven participants also took the second survey between November 6th and November 11th 2016, and four participants took the third survey between December 12, 2016 and January 17, 2017.

The survey assessed participants' experience from attending the Gatherings was developed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. It consisted of nine questions; six questions were quantitative, two questions were qualitative and one was demographic. The survey was distributed after each of the three Gatherings (*Conspirare*, *Chico & Rita* and the résumé writing workshop). Eleven participants who attended *Conspirare* were emailed the surveys on February 8th and those who had not yet responded received two reminders before the survey closed on February 13th; five responded for a 45% response rate. Twenty participants who attended *Chico & Rita* were emailed the surveys on February 13th, and those who had not yet responded received two reminders until the survey closed on February 17th; five responded for a 20% response rate. The survey was sent to 20 participants of the last Gathering, a résumé writing workshop, on March 10th and those who had not yet responded received two reminders until the survey closed on March 21st; eight responded for a 40% response rate.

The reflection exercise assessment distributed at the etiquette dinner was produced using Teleform®, a software program that creates scannable paper surveys and databases. The assessment included one demographic question, one quantitative and two qualitative questions. The assessment was distributed to 16 attendees and 16 completed the survey for a 100% response rate.

The data resulting from all assessments was analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel® and Microsoft Word®.

Results

Results include frequency percentages, means, and standard deviations (sd) for the number of people (n) who responded to the question. For ease of reading, frequency percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Summary themes are contained within this report, while the full qualitative responses can be found in a separate document. This report is in three sections: Fall Mentee Experiences, the Gatherings, and End of Year Reflections.

Fall Mentee Experiences

The initial survey sent to Amig@s mentees around mid-October asked them to compare their comfort level at that time to their comfort level the first day of classes. Of the 11 respondents, 73% indicated they were somewhat comfortable, 9% indicated being somewhat uncomfortable and 18% reported themselves as very uncomfortable. It is unknown whether there were any other response choices that were not selected. In a yes/no response choice, participants were then asked if they get nervous when thinking about how to approach a professor. Eighty-two percent of the 11 respondents responded yes and 18% responded no.

Participants were next requested to list three resources they could go to when they are struggling academically. Eleven responded and seven were able to list three or more resources. Resources listed included the Evans library free tutoring, SI sessions, professors' office hours, academic success center, study groups and TA. Responders were also asked to list a personal

and school resource they can reach out to when they are struggling personally (emotionally/mentally). Again, 11 responded and they included as personal resources their mom, friends, and as school resources they listed counselor and counseling services, CAMAC family, Help Line, academic advisors and Corps of Cadets White Belt Mentor.

On a scale from one (not comfortable) to five (completely comfortable) respondents were asked how comfortable they were with managing their time. Of the 11 who responded, 45% rated their comfort levels as three and 27% rated their comfort level as two. Another 18% rated their comfort level in managing time at level four and 9% rated it at level five. No one said their comfort level in managing time was at a one level (mean=3.09/5.00, sd=.94, n=11).

When asked what clubs/organizations they had joined, four of the eleven mentioned only MSC CAMAC or Amig@s. Other organizations listed included ALAS, Aggie Sisters for Christ, Corps of Cadets, Aggie Band, Sully's Selfless Service and AGS. Two indicated not joining any organizations.

Next the respondents provided feedback regarding the study habits they have or follow. Although their responses were varied, some of the 11 respondents said they read the text book, take notes both on lecture and while reading the text, reread notes, and study a few days before an exam. One responded with the answer "none." When asked where they go to study, answers included SPO, MSC, annex, and dorm.

Respondents were given a list from which to select how frequently they speak to family and asked to select the most accurate description. Thirty-six percent of the 11 respondents selected every day, 27% selected twice a week, 18% selected once a week and 9% chose multiple times a day and hardly, if ever. They were then asked to rate how happy they were with their choice of coming to Texas A&M. On a scale of one (I hate my choice) to five (absolutely love my choice), 45% chose scores of four and five, 9% chose score three and none chose score one and two (mean=4.36/5.00, sd=.67, n=11).

During the second week of November a second survey was sent to the mentees, primarily to obtain their feedback regarding their experiences with their assigned mentors. First, the mentees were asked if they thought their mentor was a good fit and if they felt comfortable with their mentor. Eleven mentees responded and all responded yes. They were also asked if their mentor was open and friendly, and all eleven again responded yes.

Mentees were asked next about what was accomplished in their meetings with their mentors. Eleven responded, and commented that they met to help with homework, talked about time management, setting goals, about classes and progress in classes, study methods and academic success. When asked about the time and date and how frequently meetings were set, responses from the eleven mentees varied. Some noted once a week, specific days and times, and others mentioned every two weeks. Only one mentee responded that they had not yet met with their mentor.

Next mentees were asked if they had met or set up a meeting with their colega; if so when and what was discussed. Six of the eleven indicated that they had not yet met with their colega. Those who indicated they had met with their colega said they discussed classes, majors, future aspirations, how to better prepare academically, improve study and time management skills. When asked if there was something they wish was done differently, nine of the 11 respondents said no, one would like to have been assigned a mentor earlier and another would like an explanation as to the role of the colega. Finally, the mentees were asked if they had any comments or concerns, and only one responded affirmatively, asking if they are changing their major whether they need another colega.

Near the end of the fall semester mentees were sent another survey asking them to reflect on their Amig@s experiences during the fall. The first question asked them to think back to their first day of school, list their anxieties and what they were looking forward to. Two of the four respondents talked about feeling lost and overwhelmed, and another spoke of being anxious about being in the right class and being prepared. When describing what they were looking forward to, the respondents spoke about starting a new chapter in life, being on their own schedule, making new friends and meeting professors.

Next these respondents were asked think about their finals week and how far they have come and share reflections on how Amig@s has influenced their journey at Texas A&M. The four respondents talked about how Amig@s helped them feel supported and that their mentors provided encouragement and help. When asked how Amig@s changed the way they thought about A&M and whether Amig@s had created a support system, all four respondents affirmed that Amig@s had created a support system and changed the way they thought of Texas A&M. The respondents commented that they received the comfort they needed, Aggies support other Aggies, the dinners changed the way they thought about staff, and they have friends and feel they can talk to anyone because of Amig@s.

Finally, the respondents were asked what they needed in order to feel like they can continue their education here at Texas A&M; which parts do they already have and which do they still need. Two of the four indicated they still need more monetary support and to be able to work less, one indicated they still needed to find their niche on campus besides studying and another indicated they still needed to find their motivation.

The Gatherings

Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements about the spring semester Gatherings' impact on them, and influence on their feeling of comfort with MSC CAMAC and Texas A&M, in general. As noted in Table 1, on the next page, participants attending the first two Gatherings were most favorable about the programs being a good use of their time. Those attending the third Gathering (the résumé writing workshop) were most favorable about learning something useful from attending. Participants were least positive about all the programs' impact on their likelihood to stay in college.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2016-17 Mean (sd)
<i>Conspirare (n=5)</i>						
Attending the Gathering was a good use of my time.	80%	20%	--	--	--	4.80 (.45)
I learned something useful from this Gathering.	80%	20%	--	--	--	4.80 (.45)
Because of this experience I am more likely to stay in college.	60%	40%	--	--	--	4.60 (.55)
<i>Chico & Rita (n=5)</i>						
Attending the Gathering was a good use of my time.	80%	20%	--	--	--	4.80 (.45)
I learned something useful from this Gathering.	80%	20%	--	--	--	4.80 (.45)
Because of this experience I am more likely to stay in college.	60%	--	40%	--	--	4.20 (1.10)
<i>Résumé Writing Workshop (n=8)</i>						
I learned something useful from this Gathering.	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)
Attending the Gathering was a good use of my time.	75%	25%	--	--	--	4.75 (.46)
Because of this experience I am more likely to stay in college.	50%	38%	23%	--	--	4.38 (.74)

Table 1: Gatherings: Impacts on Participant

Participants were asked to provide comment on why they responded as they did to the question "I learned something useful from the Gathering." Four responded regarding both of the *Conspirare* and *Chico & Rita* Gatherings. Respondents attending *Conspirare* indicated learning about the impact the LGBTQ community has on the greater community and the hardships they face, and found the program moving. A mentor indicated it helped them realized the naiveté of their mentee and how better to guide them. Those attending *Chico & Rita* talked about learning that there are different LatinX cultures and gaining more insight into the AfroLatinx culture. Seven responded to the question regarding the résumé writing workshop, saying it was helpful to build a résumé, and learn interviewing tips, as well as what to include in a résumé, and the need to customize it for each job for which one applies.

Participants were asked to rate their change in comfort level by attending the Gatherings, being a MSC CAMAC Amig@s mentee and speaking with professors as a result of attending the

Gatherings. As shown in Table 2, on the next page, participants indicated that all three most positively impacted their comfort in attending the Gatherings themselves, and least impacted their comfort in speaking with professors.

Please tell us about your change in comfort regarding the following:	Much More Comfortable (5)	More Comfortable (4)	No Change in Comfort (3)	Less Comfortable (2)	Much Less Comfortable (1)	2016-17 Mean (sd)
<i>Conspirare (n=5)</i>						
Attending CAMAC Amig@s Gatherings	60%	40%	--	--	--	4.60 (.55)
Being a mentee in CAMAC Amig@s	60%	40%	--	--	--	4.60 (.55)
Speaking with professors	20%	60%	20%	--	--	4.00 (.71)
<i>Chico & Rita (n=5)</i>						
Attending CAMAC Amig@s Gatherings	40%	40%	20%	--	--	4.60 (.84)
Being a mentee in CAMAC Amig@s	40%	40%	20%	--	--	4.20 (.84)
Speaking with professors	--	60%	40%	--	--	3.60 (.55)
<i>Résumé Writing Workshop (n=4)</i>						
Attending CAMAC Amig@s Gatherings	50%	50%	--	--	--	4.50 (.58)
Being a mentee in CAMAC Amig@s	50%	50%	--	--	--	4.50 (.58)
Speaking with professors	25%	50%	25%	--	--	4.00 (.82)

Table 2: Gathering- Participant Comfort

Lastly, after each Gathering, participants were asked to name and elaborate on one positive experience since the last Gathering in which they were able to apply something they learned from the program. The four who replied after attending *Conspirare* spoke about more easily talking to their mentees (mentor responses), more easily talking about ethnicity and feeling less stress about choosing business casual dress. The three who responded after attending *Chico & Rita* spoke of knowing more of the AfroLatinx culture, asking people about themselves instead of assuming, and after attending a dinner at a professor’s house, understanding everyone has a

story. After attending the résumé writing workshop, two of the seven who responded to the question talked of revising their resume and cover letters based on what they learned at the workshop. Two others said they spoke to professors using strategies learned at the Gathering and being more comfortable doing that. Another shared they learned and used strategies that helped schedule their time, and work with the mentors and mentees more effectively.

Demographics based on UIN for participants and survey respondents for the Gatherings are noted in Table 3. Frequency percentages are in descending order by the *Chico & Rita* participants' demographics.

Demographics	Chico & Rita Responders (n=5)	Chico & Rita Participants (n=20)	Conspirare Responders (n=5)	Conspirare Participants (n11)	Résumé Writing Responders (n=8)	Résumé Writing Participants (n=20)
Classification						
Freshman	40%	45%	40%	27%	50%	45%
Senior	60%	35%	60%	55%	25%	35%
Junior	--	15%	--	9%	13%	15%
Sophomore	--	5%	--	9%	13%	5%
Ethnic Origin						
Hispanic or Latino of any Race	100%	90%	100%	91%	100%	90%
White Only	--	5%	--	9%	--	5%
Black Only + 2 or more/1 Black	--	5%	--	--	--	5%
Sex						
Female	100%	70%	100%	82%	88%	70%
Male	--	30%	--	18%	12%	30%
First Generation						
First Generation	60%	60%	80%	82%	100%	60%
Unknown	40%	35%	--	9%	--	35%
Not First Generation	--	5%	20%	9%	--	5%
Mentor/Mentee Role						
Mentor	60%	55%	60%	73%	50%	55%
Mentee	40%	45%	40%	27%	50%	45%

Table3: Gathering Demographics

End of Year Reflections

After attending the Amig@s etiquette dinner in April, participants were requested to reflect upon how Amig@s had influenced their journey thus far at Texas A&M. Respondents who were freshmen mentees said Amig@s provided the opportunity for them to meet new people, develop professional skills and gain confidence in interacting and influencing others at Texas A&M. The sophomore, juniors and seniors who participated as mentors indicated developing leadership skills, and more confidence in interacting with and helping others. Some also stressed they better understood the importance of guiding and influencing others as a result of their participation with Amig@s.

Next, respondents were asked to select two areas from four options (academic, leadership, cultural and social) in which Amig@s had impacted them the most. The leadership and social options were chosen by 75% of the participants, academic was chosen by 31% and cultural was chosen by 6% as the most impactful areas. Respondents were requested to elaborate regarding how they had been impacted in these areas by their participation in Amig@s. Improving leadership skills, interacting more readily with others, learning to be more helpful, and learning to coach peers was mentioned by the mentors who responded. They also spoke about becoming more confident in social interactions, especially as a mentor. The mentees spoke more about how Amig@s helped their academic and social transition into college and provided resources that helped them improve in both these areas.

Participants completing the reflection were asked for their UIN and demographics of those who participated in the Amig@s reflection are noted in Table 4.

Demographics	Percentage (n=16)
Classification	
Freshman	31%
Sophomore	13%
Senior	50%
Junior	6%
Ethnic Origin	
Hispanic or Latino of any Race	92%
Black Only/+ 2 or more/1 Black	6%
Sex	
Female	75%
Male	25%
First Generation	
Not First Generation	6%
First Generation	81%
Unknown	13%
Role	
Mentor	31%
Mentee	69%

Table 4: End-of Year Reflection Demographics

Conclusions and Recommendations

Mentees and mentors reported a positive experience from participating in Amig@s. They reported learning from the Gatherings, agreed that because of those programs they are more likely to stay in college, as well as were more comfortable meeting with others, attending programs and speaking with professors. In their year-end reflections both mentors and mentees expressed that participating in Amig@s enhanced their leadership and social skills. Mentees felt Amig@s helped both their social and academic transition to college and the

mentors found the experience improved their abilities to influence and confidently interact in social settings.

As both mentor and mentees participate in programs offered through Amig@s, it may be worthwhile for learning outcomes to be developed and assessed for the mentors as well as the mentees, as their experiences and learning may differ with their roles. In the assessments completed this year, mentors spoke about learning leadership skills, which was not mentioned significantly by the mentees as part of their own experiences. Separate training for mentors may also enhance their leadership growth, so developing mentor learning outcomes specific to leadership skill development could further enhance their experience working with the program.

As Amig@s was funded by the DSA College Completion grant and its intent is to positively affect participants' persistence to their second year in college and further on to graduation, participant UIN data should be analyzed at the appropriate time to ascertain their retention and graduation from Texas A&M. Student Life Studies can assist with this analysis.

MSC CAMAC leadership is encouraged to read all the qualitative comments provided to better understand and appreciate the mentor and mentee participants' feedback. They are also encouraged to share the results of this assessment with those involved in planning Amig@s programming, as well as other stakeholders involved. These results could also be shared with the students who participate, and within marketing materials geared toward future participants.

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