

Immersive Professional Learning Blog

On April 9th, my Design and Assessment group visited our Learning Partner (LP), the Colorado State University Todos Santos Center (TSC). The TSC, located in Todos Santos, Baja California Sur, Mexico, is an extension of Colorado State University (CSU). Their mission is “to cultivate generations of global citizens and thriving communities through collaboration, experience, and exchange of knowledge”. The TSC provides CSU students and faculty the opportunity to visit a diverse geographic location in order to study biology, veterinary disciplines, service-learning, marine life, and other topics. Much like MIIS, the focus of their studies is experiential, making the purpose of our visit especially relevant to the work my group and I have been producing throughout this semester.

During our visit, we gained insight for how to complete our final deliverable for our Design and Assessment course: the Ambassador Program guidebook. We wanted to visit Todos Santos to better understand how to carry out this program and get feedback from the local participants in order to provide them something valuable and useful to the center.

While in Todos Santos, our visit specifically focused on observing and participating in the English classes, interacting with the students, and collecting information through participants interviews. These interviews will provide insight for the English language classes and how we can create a deeper collaboration between the CSU students and the TS community. By visiting the center, we were better able to understand how to develop the Ambassador Program Guide for the CSU TSC.

April 10, 2018

Day 1

The first day of our visit to the CSU TSC was amazing! Lewis, Marie, and I arrived at the center early in the morning and observed Olaf’s first class of the morning, intermediate English. The class had about 8 students, all who are professionals from different backgrounds. We were able to speak with each student one on one and get to know them a little bit while participating in the English class activities.

The second part of our day was focused on familiarizing ourselves with the center and the town of Todos Santos. We had a tour of the facilities at the center and also a tour of the town. It is a small town that has grown rapidly within the last few years. It was important for us to become familiar with the surroundings of TS so we could begin to add details to the Ambassador Program (AP) guide. The AP is meant to be a guide for the local student leaders to be able to organize and plan events for the purpose of integrating the CSU students into the TS community during their time at the center. The AP should be the p

In the afternoon we drove with Olaf to the neighboring town of El Pescadero, where he teaches a basic English class to about 30 kids. It is their only exposure to English, and the majority of them know very little. We played a few games with the kids and worked with them in small groups. They were so cute and it was fun to see Olaf teaching a completely different class compared to the morning intermediate class with just 8 students.

We drove from El Pescadero back to Todos Santos, where we had one more class for the evening, basic English. As we observed, we noticed that many of these students were also professionals but some were also students. The age range was wide; the youngest was 16 and the oldest was 63. Lewis, Marie, and I decided that it would probably be best to work with the intermediate class from this morning for the AP; the leaders for the AP need to have a higher level of English so they are able to organize and plan activities with the CSU students. These proposed activities will be open to the whole center and all of the students in the English classes, but the AP leaders will come from the intermediate class.

April 11, 2018

Day 2

This morning we participated in and observed another basic English course at 8am. It was great to see a new group of students who are voluntarily taking English classes at the center simply to improve their language skills. The students were very friendly and very eager to learn! This class had about 20 students. We recognized that the English language levels were a little bit lower in this class so these students would not necessarily be the Student Ambassadors for the AP, but will definitely be encouraged to participate in the activities and help with planning if they wanted to! We hadn't introduced the AP Guide to this group yet since we wanted to get feedback from the intermediate class first.

Later today we had more time to talk with Olaf about the Ambassador Program and hash out some details about how to move forward and make some improvements. Since this was the first time we went over the AP guide with Olaf, we went slowly through each of our documents: our Theory of Change, Program Logic Model, each activity lesson plan, etc. As we explained each document, we also made slight changes based off of Olaf's feedback. It was great to hear his opinion about each section of our project, and it was even better that we got to have a face-to-face dialogue with him about it after working on this project over Skype for the last few months. He asked questions and we made edits along the way. After meeting with Olaf, we also met with Aines, the center director. She has been in the background of this project all semester, so to receive positive feedback from her about the AP Guide was a really reassuring feeling. The feedback we got from both Aines and Olaf was very positive and this really affected our work! We loved hearing that the Ambassador Program Guide will actually be used when we finish it, and it can be an ever-evolving document that is utilized by the student leaders and CSU students to come.

April 12, 2018

Day 3

Day three was spent presenting our ambassador program to the intermediate English class at the Todos Santos Center. This was our moment of truth! We shared everything that we had worked on for the entirety of the semester with these students. As we explained each of the lesson plans and corresponding activities in the AP Guide, we were able to see the positive reactions of the students. This reaffirmed the success of our work and allowed us to gain confidence in our progress. Excitement grew in the classroom with each of our explanations, and soon the student

began to feel comfortable enough to give us feedback. We welcomed this feedback, as it truly allowed our project to be collaborative, just as we had wanted it to be the whole time. We realized that these students were the experts of their own community, and without their feedback, our work could not truly be considered complete. After presenting the AP Guide to them, we conducted short interviews (click here to see the full video of our visit).

At the end of the day, Marie, Lewis, Olaf and I met as a group to debrief on the day and the feedback we had received. We were thrilled with what we heard and wanted to make sure we could document it while it was still fresh in our minds. Since they are the ones that will be implementing this program, it was really cool to hear their recommendations and see their excitement. As a group, we wanted to see the stakeholder buy-in, and this is exactly what we got!

Our visit to Todos Santos this semester was an extremely unique opportunity; rarely do Design and Assessment groups have the opportunity to visit their LPs that are in other countries to enrich their experiences in their course. Our visit to the TSC has contributed to my personal and professional learning experiences here at MIIS; it was a complete success and was an experience that I will ever forget. Thank you MIIS for the IPL funding that provided us this opportunity!

<https://jielapeyman.wixsite.com/portfolio/visit-to-csu-todos-santos-center>