

Innovation Ambassador Program

Empowering Faculty to Help You Help Them



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The Take Home

We want you to understand why we created this,
so that you can reflect on the reasons why you should
create your own Ambassador Program

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Genesis of Ambassador Program

- Concept began with discussion of **“if we had to compete for the faculty’s business, what would we do differently?”**
- Answering this question led to a list of process improvements and new program ideas, but
- **“How do we make sure the faculty know about these great new ideas?”**

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Genesis of Ambassador Program

- The concept of peer deliverance of the message was recommended
- A department peer, an Ambassador, could:
 - Provide refreshers and deliver information about new programs, at quarterly department meetings or otherwise
 - Be a first-line resource for faculty with questions or that need help with issues involving innovation, entrepreneurship, COI, industry partnerships, prototyping, etc.
 - Point faculty in the right direction for assistance with more complex questions (tech transfer, entrepreneurship center, VPR, COI, OGC, etc.)

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Perspectives on the Program

- Ambassadors must get trained and be willing to keep up with training
- Ambassador programs are **NOT** Faculty Advisory Committees
 - FACs weigh in on processes and programs
 - “Complainers” are welcome (affect perspective)
- Ambassadors need to be motivated and interested—selecting a “complainer” is likely not a good strategy

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- 4-step process for creating an Ambassador Program:

1. **Outline** your Ambassador Program
2. **Select** your Ambassadors
3. **Train** your Ambassadors
4. **Activate** and Support your Ambassadors

- Comparison of the different programs
- Q&A, Discussion



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Vanderbilt Innovation Ambassador Program

- **Goal:** Provide faculty with peer-delivered access to information and assistance related to innovation and entrepreneurship on campus
- Launched in Fall of 2022
- Ran a University-wide story to promote the upcoming program
- Nominal 2-year term for Ambassadors with ~6 hours of initial training
- **What's in it for the Ambassadors?**
 - Participation typically counts as faculty service requirement
 - Being an "in the know" resident expert on innovation-related topics
 - Fleece with Ambassador logo



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Ambassador Selection – Open call across departments

- Desired Ambassador profile – mid-career, tenured faculty with an interest in innovation and commercialization, passed on department chairs
- Open-call (with select faculty encouraged to apply) led to 20+ applicants from departments across the University and Medical Center
- Held an information session with interested faculty during recruitment
- Selected 14 Innovation Ambassadors at launch, with an additional 7 joining since 2022
 - Several departments had multiple applications (one Ambassador selected), and a few department chairs applied


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Ambassador Training – Innovation ecosystem at Vanderbilt

- Gave 3 training sessions, each covering a different topic (~6 hours)
 - **Tech transfer:** IP protection, Vanderbilt IP policy, tech transfer process/services
 - **Wond'ry:** entrepreneurship programming, makerspaces, I-Corps
 - **Launch:** startup support, incubator and other resources, COI process
- Training sessions were held at different “innovation sites” across campus
- Recorded training sessions for later review (or future onboarding) and provided slides to Ambassadors
- Created Ambassador-only website for sharing important news and resources
- Ongoing training provided, Ambassadors given access to local innovation events


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Activating and Supporting our Ambassadors

- Ambassadors asked to present on their new role at next department meeting and be a resource for their faculty peers
- Quarterly meetings with the Ambassadors where we invite a guest speaker to present on an innovation-related topic and receive feedback from Ambassadors
- Outcomes and successes include unique department outreach (Innovation Roundup), increased disclosures, Ambassadors serving on innovation fund review committee
- Program is supported internally by several tech transfer personnel
 - Effort is spread around, but minimal \$\$ needed
- **University leadership loves the program**


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Columbia Technology Ventures (CTV) Ambassadors Program

- Ambassador recruitment Fall 2023
- Celebratory kickoff meeting held February 2024
- Meetings currently scoped to monthly lunches, organized around topics of interest:
 - What can we learn from Ambassadors?
 - What Ambassador feedback can we integrate into CTV operations?
- Envisioned as a one-year term with the possibility to serve longer
- **What's in it for the Ambassadors?**
 - Faculty mentorship
 - Further engagement with XIRs, industry, VC, and serial entrepreneurs
 - Direct and actionable feedback from strengthened 2-way relationship
 - Recognition and swag



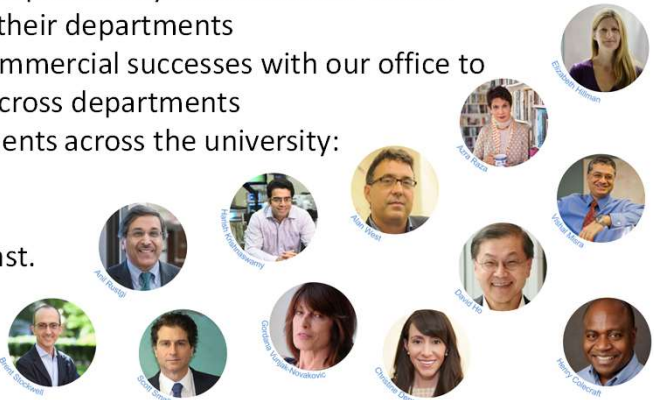
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Ambassador Selection – Inaugural cohort

- Curated list of key faculty with a strong and positive dynamic with our office:
 - Senior faculty who are leaders within their departments
 - Serial entrepreneurs who have had commercial successes with our office to serve as peer-level points of contact across departments
- **Goal:** Ambassadors representing departments across the university:
 - Medical Campus
 - Arts and Sciences
 - Manhattanville Campus, Zuckerman Inst.
 - Engineering and Computer Science
 - Climate School



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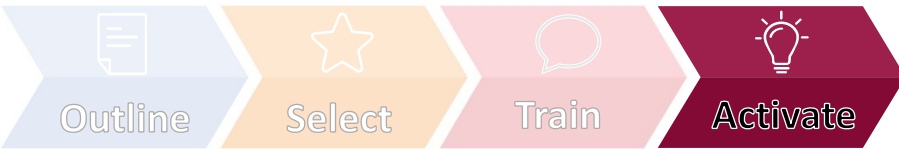


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Ambassador Training

- Kickoff celebratory event with cocktail hour, networking, and brief presentation:
The CTV Ambassadors Program aims to foster collaboration and strengthen the connection between CTV and faculty members from various departments across Columbia.
Ultimately, our hope is that this program will lead to even more Columbia innovations becoming products and services that benefit society.
 - Program aims
 - Review of CTV organizational structure highlighting key contacts
 - Columbia University tech transfer metrics
 - Review of the larger innovation ecosystem of NYC
 - Faculty feedback
- Staying in touch with regular communication:
 - Upcoming campus events that may be of interest
 - Networking with CTV Executive in Residence
 - Monthly lunches organized around topics of interest, sourced from the Ambassadors themselves

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Activating and Supporting our Ambassadors

- The program aims to better serve Columbia's faculty inventors by:
 - Improving the services that we offer through valuable input and feedback from Ambassadors
 - Providing peer-level points of contact and advisors on how to access innovation and entrepreneurship resources on campus and across the NYC innovation ecosystem
 - Organizing Ambassador meetings to facilitate recommendations, sourced from their departments, on how we can enhance our processes and consider new programs
 - Advocating for the entire Columbia research community, inspiring others to become innovators, and leading to even more Columbia innovations becoming products and services that benefit society
- Provided access to CTV educational materials, sample language for LinkedIn profiles, and highlighted faculty bios on a dedicated CTV Ambassadors webpage
- Dedicated Program Manager as point of contact
- Advised university leadership of program launch! Overwhelmingly positive responses across campuses!

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UArizona Faculty Innovation Ambassador Program

- **Goal:** Create an “arm” of TLA consisting of investigator peers who provide encouragement and direction to other faculty/staff, improving TLA reputation, increasing IDFs, and improving access to resources for inventorship, innovation, and entrepreneurship
- Launched in January 2024 with 8 FIAs
- 2-year term (with TLA option to extend)
- **What’s in it for the Ambassadors?**
 - Jacket with FIA logo and door/desk “plaque”
 - Can count toward faculty service requirements
 - Early access to information and priority access to networking and innovation events




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Ambassador Selection

- Curated list of mid/senior level faculty
 - Most IP-heavy depts/colleges
 - Ongoing active engagement with TLA – understands process and benefits
 - Entrepreneurial spirit and demonstrated success (startup or licensing)
 - Able to act as a direct line of feedback to help improve services and processes
- Personal outreach to the eight individuals
- Currently limiting the number to tweak the program and determine need/value of additional Ambassadors
- Considering adding a “training” level member in the future




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Ambassador Training

- Kick-off with ½ day training (including breakfast & lunch)
 - Highlight resources available through TLA
 - Review the entire TLA process
 - Illustrate expectations/benefits of the Program
- Created [Ambassador website](#) to highlight each Ambassador
- Created private shared folder for sharing resources online
- Kicking off quarterly meetings with FIAs



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Ongoing Activities and Ambassador Support

- Expectations and activities:
 - Regular email outreach from TLA to FIAs
 - 2x yearly co-speaking opportunities with TLA colleagues at campus and ecosystem events
 - Organize presentations and provide updates to college (dept meetings, etc.)
 - Act as an advocate among peers
 - Quarterly meetings with other FIAs during term of service (guest speaker, topical, roundtable discussions)
- Early results are slim, with many distractions at the University in the 1st quarter
- Program is supported internally with minimal costs (food, jackets, door plaques, etc.)

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Summary – Key Similarities & Differences

Similarities

- Ambassadors are all faculty
- Ambassadors expected to engage with their faculty peers and provide direct line of feedback to the TTO
- Swag provided to all Ambassadors
- All programs have an Ambassador website for sharing resources and educational material
- Minimal cost required to start and maintain

Differences

- Ambassador selection process: open call vs. curated list
- Profile of Ambassador: serial entrepreneur/innovator vs. interested faculty
- Length of Ambassador term: 1 year vs. 2+ years
- Frequency of meetings: monthly vs. quarterly

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Discussion



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