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# Offering a helping hand and a warm welcome

by Bruce E. Beans

As peers and ambassadors for the college, CST undergraduates support current students and welcome new families

## CST Peers: Supporting science and tech students

Established seven years ago, CST's peer advisor program this fall employs more than 20 students. Extensively trained, they can quickly answer academic questions from CST students. Peers staff the advising office's front desk and virtual front desk to answer basic questions from students. More experienced peer advisors help train new recruits, create social media content and mentor other peers.

### Talha Chaudhry

"Obviously, succeeding is very important for Temple students," says Talha Chaudhry, a junior chemistry major. "That leads to a lot of anxiety, stress and emotions."

As it did for a biology major with dreams of becoming a dentist who, last spring, walked into the CST Center for Academic Advising and Professional Development. Upset about her academic performance, she spoke with Chaudhry—a CST peer advisor—about switching her major.

"Sometimes people just need encouragement," he says. "I told her what I've told myself when I had challenging moments in class: 'Believe in yourself. You got here for a reason; you didn't get here by accident.'"

That student left the office feeling better, says Chaudhry, and, after speaking with her academic advisor, decided to stick with biology.

"It's very rewarding to be able to help students on their college journeys," says Chaudhry. Planning to pursue a doctorate, he currently is an undergraduate researcher working in the Nathaniel W. Snyder Laboratory at the Lewis Katz School of Medicine (LKSOM) to better understand inner cellular metabolism.

"Our peers are really good role models for CST students," says Stephanie Ballard, director of advising and curriculum management. "Besides managing their own challenging science majors, they've also chosen this on-campus job that's all about helping others and giving back to their CST community."

Often, after meeting with a CST professional advisor to discuss which courses to take next, students turn to a peer to help figure out how

to juggle their science, math and general education classes.

"A lot of students also come to our front desk stressed because they have multiple tests in the same week and other demands as science students," says Ballard. "Peers, who have been there themselves, can confidently tell a student 'This is what helped me when I was in that scenario and how I managed my time'"

### Cameryn Berry

Cameryn Berry, a senior biology major, was so impressed by how helpful an older student peer was in helping her register for classes that she became a peer advisor herself.

"It's very rewarding to be someone who CST students can trust," says Berry, who also is a peer leader for CST's First-Year Seminar. "It's a lot of pressure and responsibility, but we really do end up helping students."

When students come into the office stressed, Berry—who has undergone crisis volunteer training—tries to deescalate the situation. "My main goal is to assure them that their feelings are valid and that we're here to support them," she says. "I remind them I'm also a student and have probably felt the same way at some point. Once they let their feelings go, we can work out the logistics of their problem."

In part due to her interest in mental health, she wants to be a dentist. "Dental care is a very anxiety-ridden experience for a lot of people," says Berry, "so it's another area where I can de-escalate their anxiety."

### Sabrine Semper

Peer advisor Sabrine Semper, a senior genomic medicine major, says the two-week



period for dropping or adding courses without penalty at the beginning of each semester is a busy time. "Students come in thinking they can only get help from our professional advisors, who are often booked up," says Semper, "but we have all been in that situation before so we have the insight to help them navigate the process."

She particularly enjoys dealing with first-year or transfer students. "My favorite part is when they notice how accessible our office is and how easy it is for us to help them," she says.

A long-time dancer, she originally wanted to pursue a physical therapy career. However, after both her mother and her aunt were diagnosed with autoimmune diseases, Semper decided such disorders would be her professional focus. "After watching them continue to be pillars of strength as they navigate through life, I decided I wanted to be part of that journey for other patients as well," she says.

This past summer the Baltimore resident utilized her genomic major and information science & technology minor during an internship at Johns Hopkins University that combined bioinformatics and patient care to analyze protein levels of lupus patients.

## CST Ambassadors: Welcoming prospective students

During fall 2025, approximately 15 CST ambassadors will meet and speak with prospective students and families and participate in Q&As with faculty members at information sessions, open houses and Experience Temple Days. They conduct casual tours of CST facilities and create content for CST ambassador's social media posts, including TikTok and Instagram.

CST's student ambassadors play a unique role in helping the college attract first-year and transfer students.

"So many new students say meeting our ambassadors was the reason they choose Temple," says Kristin DeLay, assistant director of enrollment management. "Our faculty can share what it's like to be in their classroom. But prospective students want to hear from our student ambassadors; what they're experiencing on a daily basis and what it's really like to be a CST student."

### Jack Pudwill, CST '25

Jack Pudwill, who participated in the Honors Program, graduated with a BS in neuroscience: cellular and molecular. He is now pursuing a master's degree in public health at Boston University with the intention of eventually going to medical school.

For more than three years, he served as a student ambassador. "I like to think of us as points of information and inspiration sources to help prospective students and their families in the admissions and enrollment process," says Pudwill, "or to connect them with any faculty, staff or students who can do that on another level.

"I stress CST is a perfect fit for undergraduates because of the strong, highly accessible academic advising and tutoring services," he adds. He also touts his multiple personal experiences, including serving as an undergraduate researcher for two LKSOM professors who are conducting ALS/Alzheimer's disease research and shadowing hospital physicians at Temple, Johns Hopkins University and Nemours Children's Health in Delaware.

The Nemours physician was pediatric anesthesiologist Angela Snow, CST '12. "She helped me plan my gap year," he says, "and we bonded over my wanting to earn an MPH and address public health challenges outside of clinical care needs for a lot of patients."

### Sarah Hawley

Even though she was always fascinated by physics, Sarah Hawley began her academic career

at Temple as a psychology major. "I always wanted to do physics but I was too intimidated," says Hawley. "I thought it was just for crazy smart people and I had no place thinking I could do that."

But after several semesters, she found it harder to deny the pull of physics. Now she is majoring in physics with minors in astrophysics and mathematics. She also is an undergraduate astrophysics researcher working with CST Dean Miguel Mostafá to help identify unassociated ultra-high energy cosmic ray sources. The data is being collected by the High-Altitude Water Cherenkov Gamma Ray Observatory in Mexico.

As an ambassador, she highlights these kinds of experiences for prospective students.

"Temple has an R-1 research classification—the same as Ivy League schools—and there's a lot of emphasis on getting students involved in research their first year," she says. "We all have the opportunity to graduate with years of hands-on research experience."

### Egi Rama

A first-generation student, Egi Rama is a senior computer science major who aims to become a software engineer.

"I've been a research assistant with Temple's Human-Computer Interaction Lab; studied abroad at Temple's Tokyo campus; had this student ambassador job and have had excellent software engineering internship experiences with JPMorganChase for two summers," says Rama. "I feel like I have a lot to talk about with the students and parents."

She highlights how easy Temple makes it to study abroad and the fact that, thanks to both merit- and needs-based financial aid, her Temple costs are covered.

She also was an organizer of OwlHacks, Temple's annual student-run hackathon and is co-president of the TU Association for Computing Machinery-Women.

"I love seeing the faces of the students and their parents when I talk about all the things I've gotten involved in," she says. "I think that makes them feel pretty secure in their decision about coming to Temple."



Jack Pudwill



Sarah Hawley



Egi Rama