

Expanding CMU's FLEX dollar system to better support local community vendors and first-year students

Author's Statement

The final project of 76-108: *Writing About Public Problems* instructed us to write a fully-fledged proposal, after having spent the earlier part of the course building up our understanding of this genre and the key ingredients that make up a successful proposal. The various assignments we were tasked with throughout the semester eventually contextualized and supported this final paper, the subject of which we needed to brainstorm early on.

I admittedly hit several roadblocks in this brainstorming process, having come up with and worked through three other possible proposal topics that were considered too weak and tossed before finally settling on my chosen proposal to lend support to local community vendors through the FLEX dollar system here at CMU. My professor, Jimmy Lizama, encouraged me to discuss a relevant issue and an impactful solution, showing me that these roadblocks shouldn't be treated as setbacks, but as redirections serving to steer my ideas in new directions and push my writing toward its full potential. While it was frustrating to have to abandon my first few projects, it put into perspective the reality of writing in professional contexts, where standards are high and the path to a polished final product involves more than just a few drafts.

The issue of supporting small businesses is particularly meaningful to me as my mom owns a furniture store, so I understand the value that the partnerships I propose to create and support in my paper can offer. This personal connection contributed to a more convincing final proposal, which I could not have written without Professor Lizama continuously challenging me to aim higher.

-Juliette Brown