**How the SaLT Program Got Started**

In Chapter 3 of *Student-Faculty Pedagogical Partnerships in the Classroom and Curriculum: A How-To Guide for Faculty, Students, and Academic Developers in Higher Education*, we refer to the advent of the SaLT program. InResource I: The History and Structure of the SaLT Program, we shared some details regarding how SaLT got started and is designed. Here we focus on choices we made in developing and launching the program.

***What was happening in relation to partnership work within and beyond our campus walls?***

As director of the Bryn Mawr/Haverford Education Program, a secondary teacher certification program, Alison had created a pedagogical partnership program in collaboration with a high school teacher colleague in 1995. Through that program, called Teaching and Learning Together, secondary students assumed paid positions as pedagogical consultants, partnered with prospective secondary teachers, and engaged in semester-long dialogues with them prior to the college students’ semester of student teaching (Cook-Sather 2002a; 2002b; 2006; 2009; Cook-Sather and Curl 2016).

This was the basic model that Alison built on in creating SaLT, but SaLT was part of a larger initiative conceived in 2006 when, noting what peer institutions were doing, a group of administrators, members of the College’s Board of Trustees, and faculty members took stock of the institutional history and context for faculty development and staff education at Bryn Mawr College. With support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, an advisory group created program structures and assessment processes that would support the development of programs for faculty and staff learning. The advisory group was committed to including student partners in fostering educational opportunities for others as well as enriching their own education.

A stakeholder group that included students, faculty, and staff conceptualized and articulated in the summer of 2007 the goals of what we called the Teaching and Learning Initiative: to create new structures within which all members of the campus community — faculty, staff, and students — interact as teachers, learners, and colleagues; to collaborate and create relationships that move beyond the limitations of the traditional roles we play; and to link everyone within the college community to educational opportunity and the opportunity to foster it for others. This initiative challenged the belief that expertise is hierarchical and that some people’s work solely supports others’ educational opportunity. Rejecting the dominant cultural model in higher education—one that was at that time and still is, to a large extent, stratified and status-driven rather than democratic and reciprocal—the Teaching and Learning Initiative sought to foster a culture that operated on principles of equality and functioned as an integrated, interactive, and evolving whole.

During the pilot year of the initiative, 2006-2007, a program called “Computing” engaged undergraduate students as mentors to help the College’s nonprofessional staff learn basic computer literacy since the College was moving many operations and channels of communications to an online format. A second program was conceived as a learning exchange project, called the “Empowering Learners Partnership,” through which staff-student pairs or small groups choose their own topics of study based on individual interests and goals. SaLT was the third program. All of the programs aimed to develop the capacity of members of the campus community to access their own and one another’s knowledge and experience as they worked together to meet individual and common educational goals. (See Lesnick & Cook-Sather 2010 for a complete discussion of this initiative.)

***What role did students play in conceptualizing and launching the program?***

From the beginning, students had an active role in conceptualizing the SaLT program. The conceptualization of the initiative described above extended into each separate program, which students co-created. One for SaLT student partner, who participated in that co-creation, describes the experience in the box below:

|  |
| --- |
| “My junior year, I helped create the Students as Learners and Teachers partnerships (SaLT). To start the partnerships, again a handful of students was gathered, and again we would all meet together in an office. These meetings were a crucial part of the success of the program; the key stakeholders were given a voice, and from a student’s perspective we felt like rebels doing change-making work! ...The ownership Alison gave us stemmed all the way to something as simple as naming ourselves; I remember thinking at the time, ‘Wow, we are really making this program together, she didn’t even have a name in mind yet!’ Helping to generate the name ‘Student Consultants’ and the program name, ‘Students as Learners and Teachers,’ made me feel so powerful and special: I was smart enough to be a consultant; I was knowledgeable enough to be considered a teacher; we were the SaLT to help flavor and enrich the community – wow.” - O’Hara, 2015 |

As we were conceptualizing the program, a small group of faculty approached Alison, unbeknownst to one another, to express their desire to make their classrooms more inclusive of and responsive to a diversity of students. Alison again convened a group of students, this time those who identified as people of color who had expressed a variety of ways in which they felt under-served by the institution and those who identified as allies. Their recommendation was that, to pilot the program that would respond both to administrative request and the need expressed by faculty members, five students of color should be partnered with the five faculty members who wanted to make their classrooms more inclusive and responsive. So that is what we did. (See Cook-Sather 2018a for another version of this story and Cook-Sather and Des-Ogugua 2018 for an extended discussion of the pilot and the recommendations generated by the student and faculty participants.)

***How did we ease people into the change of mindset and practices partnership requires and entails?***

 In forming the Teaching and Learning Initiative described above and the SaLT program in particular, we knew we would need broad-based support to develop such a radical partnership approach. The advisory board we formed and that included students, faculty, staff, and administrators made all decisions about the program for the first several years of its existence.

 It was also important that we used the word “pilot,” so that the message we sent was that we were trying something out. A pilot project supported by external grants was a less threatening approach to developing pedagogical support for faculty than some other approaches might have been—a particularly important consideration in contexts where faculty can be skeptical about the need for educational development in general and pedagogical partnership in particular.

Finally, it was important that the first faculty members to be involved in the program were faculty who cared deeply about students and their educational experiences and who were open to clarifying and, where necessary, rethinking their pedagogical practices in order to make their classrooms more inclusive and responsive. Several of the faculty were also experienced and well-respected teachers on campus and revered scholars in their respective fields, and so their participation modeled for other faculty that this approach was appropriate for seasoned as well as newer faculty and for faculty dedicated to scholarship as well as to teaching.