**Student Partners’ Particular Contributions to Pedagogical Partnership**

In Chapter 4 of *Student-Faculty Pedagogical Partnerships in the Classroom and Curriculum: A How-To Guide for Faculty, Students, and Academic Developers in Higher Education*, we suggest that student partners offer particular contributions to pedagogical partnership. In this resource, we address these questions:

* What contributes to the quality of attention that supports reflection?
* What is important about the student perspective...and gathering other students’ perspectives?
* Why is it useful to have a student perspective from outside the discipline?
* How do student partners affirm multiple forms of knowledge?

We include this resource because adapting to the role and responsibilities of student partners is one of the greatest challenges of pedagogical partnership for both faculty and student partners. To best facilitate and engage in partnership, it is key to recognize and remember these points about what students bring to this work in particular.

We want to reiterate that pedagogical partnership is not about faculty giving up their authority or abdicating their responsibilities, nor do student perspectives trump faculty knowledge and expertise. Pedagogical partnerships with students afford faculty partners an extended opportunity to reflect on their teaching through some or all of Brookfield’s (1995) lenses: (1) the autobiographical, (2) the students’ eyes, (3) colleagues’ experiences, and (4) theoretical literature.

**What contributes to the quality of attention that supports reflection?**

Whether student partners observe their faculty partners teaching, meet with them once a week to talk without observing their teaching, or work with them to design or redesign a course, what student partners bring is deep and sustained attention. One of the first faculty partners to work with a student partner through the SaLT program said, “What you get is looking in a mirror, only better.” Student partners both reflect back what they see of their faculty partner’s practice, describing and posing questions about classroom practice and curriculum development, and they also inflect what they observe with their own perspective, their own interpretation (Cook-Sather 2008), affording faculty insight they typically do not have into what students perceive and experience. That’s what this faculty member meant by “only better.”

Through regular dialogue that requires faculty and student partners to reflect on their assumptions, experiences, and practices within educational contexts, both faculty and student partners clarify all three, become more confident and intentional about them, and also expand and revise their thinking and practice. Student partners invite faculty partners to reflect on their own learning experiences, their histories as teachers, their assumptions, expectations, and hopes for their current and future classes, and the ways they hope to enact a pedagogy that is both true to their own convictions and responsive to the students and contexts within which they work. At the same time, student partners share their own learning histories, assumptions, expectations, and hopes for their current and future classes.

In these ways, pedagogical partnerships facilitate the first and second of Brookfield’s (1995) lenses—the autobiographical and the students’ eyes. As one faculty partner in the SaLT program put it: “Through my partnership with my student consultant, I have learned to engage in the process of evaluating my teaching on a consistent basis...This experience has transformed me into a reflective practitioner” (quoted in Cook-Sather and Abbot 2016).

**What is important about the student perspective...and gathering other students’ perspectives?**

Student partners offer a unique but not omniscient student perspective, and as we suggest above, the purpose of partnership is not for students to tell faculty what to do. Student partners have insights from their personal experiences as well as from their student role, but they do not have all the answers to which faculty partners must defer. We urge program directors to reiterate in the early weeks of partnership that student partners should not conceptualize their role as didactic or as finding “what’s wrong” and fixing it. Rather, student partners have, in one faculty partner’s words, “a line of sight into the space of the classroom which I do not have from where I stand. Her observations have helped to open up for me the space in the classroom in ways which I have not seen before.” Another faculty partner illustrates what a student partner can see along their line of sight:

There are some quiet students in my class—this was really powerful for me—one student was putting up her hand very slightly. I was literally blind to her. [My consultant] pointed it out. Then she [the student] did it next class, and I saw her, and she talked three times. When [the consultant] told me, I was stunned—I had just missed her. And when she did talk, she said very thoughtful things( quoted in Cook-Sather 2014b, 37).

Explicitly foregrounding the second of Brookfield’s (1995) lenses, the students’ eyes, pedagogical partnerships create a kind of liminal space within which faculty and students can be in dialogue with one another but not under the typical power-laden conditions that characterize most classroom situations. Student partners offer what they see from their perspective, not an omniscient or representative perspective but rather a perspective possible because they are in the class to watch the learning, not do, the learning.

Student partners can also gain access to the perspectives of the students enrolled in the course. Within the class, they can not only observe from a fixed seat, they can float around during group work or lab, and they can attend TA or other study sessions. Outside of class, they can conduct brief surveys, facilitate focus groups, hold “office hours,” and develop other forums within which to gather the perspectives of students enrolled in a course. All of these perspectives can be shared anonymously with faculty partners, thereby affording insight into student experiences and perspectives that they likely would not have otherwise. Faculty reiterate that they find these forms of feedback more reliable than end-of-term teaching evaluations (Cook-Sather 2009; Marquis et al. 2018). As one faculty member asserted: “[Having a student gather feedback on the class and share it with me] gave me confidence that [the feedback] was thorough and trustworthy, unlike end-of-the-semester course evaluations.” Student partners focus on inviting and sharing the feedback they gather in constructive ways:

When [the professor] would describe the aspects of the course that he was interested in gaining insight into, I would pose questions or share thoughts based on what he had said that might help me to better understand this issue. Together we generated questions pertaining to his effectiveness in presentation of the material, structuring of the course, ability to engage students, effectiveness of homework and other assignments and ensuring students’ ability to ‘see the big picture’ of the material (Student partner, SaLT program).

**Why is it useful to have a student perspective from outside the discipline?**

In the classroom-focused branch of the SaLT program, most student partners’ academic majors do not match the departments of the faculty members with whom they partner because the purpose of the partnerships is to focus on pedagogy, not content. As one new faculty member explained, “This is something that I was at first very concerned about (how could a student who has never seen organic chemistry before give me feedback on my organic chemistry class?).” As this same faculty member went on to say, the fact that her student partner had no knowledge of chemistry “turned out to be wonderful (she was able to take a bird’s-eye view of the class and wasn’t caught up in the minutia)” (faculty partner quoted in Cook-Sather 2016, 153). A student partner captures the potential in these terms:

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| “As a consultant, leaving the comfort zone of familiar subjects supported me in transcending negative assumptions about my expertise and abilities. My faculty partners appreciated the new insights and creative solutions that were made possible through our collaboration as we revisited our pre-conceptions about STEM courses—their rigidity, opacity, and stressful rigor. We strived to broaden the use of critical thinking and discussion in traditionally lecture-dominated environments. We explored different styles of questioning and assessment. We invited consistent student feedback on course adjustments and ventured to make content more relevant and accessible. Our partnerships expanded pedagogical boundaries and considered the impact of every modification on the student experience. Ultimately, my disciplinary differences with my partners made for rich, supportive, and innovative collaborations and exciting educational insights.” - Daviduke 2018 |

**How do student partners affirm multiple forms of knowledge?**

In the context of two studies of the experiences of students from equity-seeking groups who participated in pedagogical partnerships through the SaLT program or through McMaster’s Student Partners Program, two students and two faculty members and program directors, including Alison, explored the ways in which pedagogical partnership prompts a rethinking of knowing and knowledge. In particular, they found that partnership called into question who is a knower, with faculty recognized as “people who do not know (and should not have to know) everything, and who are not the only knowers in the academy” (de Bie et al. 2019), and with students recognized as bringing multiple forms of knowledge. Not only did this research reveal the multiple kinds of knowledge students bring and complicate what counts as legitimate knowledge, it also deepened student partners’ confidence in what they know, thus enacting a form of epistemic justice (de Bie et al. 2019). In the box below, two student partners offer their perspectives on this phenomenon:

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| “I am more confident in what I know: I know what I experience and there is value in that. Just because I am not a professor doesn’t mean I don’t know what is going to work for me as a student. … And that’s been really helpful in my relationships with other professors. I get to bring up the conversation. I get to be a part of it. I don’t have to have all the answers, but I do know more than I thought I did.”  - Student partner quoted in de Bie et al. 2019  “I definitely feel as if being a part of [the SaLT program] I have been able to talk to my own profs a little more about what I’d like to see in the classroom and what I feel isn’t noticed in the classroom. For example, there was a class, my psych class, and we were talking about ethnic identity development, and all of the students of color were speaking and the white students were not. I mentioned that to the prof that evening, and she divided us into groups the next day and changed the reading — she included an article that was about white ethnic development. So that article got the class talking. So being aware that I am an student and there are things my prof might not see, that I have the right to say, ‘Hey did you notice this?’” - Student partner in SaLT program |

Like so much in pedagogical partnership, these findings and student perspectives affirm that it is not a matter of either/or—that either faculty have knowledge that counts or that students do. Rather, it is both/and, and it illustrates how much richer explorations and practices of teaching and learning can be when informed by multiple forms of knowledge that both students and faculty bring.