Pedagogical Partnerships

A HOW-TO GUIDE

for Faculty, Students, and Academic Developers
in Higher Education

Alison Cook-Sather, Melanie Bahti, and Anita Ntem

1 WHY MIGHT YOU DEVELOP A PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM AND WHAT MIGHT GET IN THE WAY?

In this chapter we expand upon and develop the points we listed in the introduction regarding why you might develop a pedagogical partnership program. We offer research evidence on the benefits of pedagogical partnership programs to all faculty and student participants, faculty who are new to institutions, students who have traditionally been underrepresented in and underserved by institutions of higher education, and institutions that want to transform their cultures. We explore explicit and implicit purposes for developing a pedagogical partnership program, key assumptions and expectations that participants bring, and threshold concepts to partnership.

Why develop a pedagogical partnership program?

There are philosophical and practical reasons for developing a pedagogical partnership program, and there are also recognized challenges. Because pedagogical partnership remains countercultural in most institutions of higher education, we urge you to be conscious and intentional about why you value pedagogical partnership and equally conscious and intentional in how you go about developing a partnership program. As we mentioned in the introduction, the most persuasive reason to develop a pedagogical partnership program, from our perspective, is the potential it has to affirm and empower all those involved and support their development into versions of the selves they want to be. In this chapter, we expand on what pedagogical partnerships offer so that you can think through distinct and targeted areas of growth and opportunity you might want to address through the development of a program. In

the box below, we offer student and faculty perspectives on the benefits of partnership that capture what we have heard from many participants:

"I often tell people that I would have left Haverford were it not for the SaLT program. Although this is probably an exaggeration I am now unable to test, I do feel like I owe SaLT a debt of gratitude for making me feel like an integral part of the school and its processes. As a freshman at Haverford I felt out of the loop, uninvolved, small, superfluous. Starting my sophomore year with a pedagogical partnership through the SaLT program, I felt like I was not only working with this specific professor in the moment but also towards a far-away future Haverford in which all professors have had the same opportunity to think about their pedagogy within the space of the SaLT program. This made me feel like my work was important and would have a lasting impact, which contributed to my deepening connection to the school. It also taught me that my happiness is closely tied to how much I can imagine my work to have wider effect and guided me to participate in other activities that were fulfilling in similar ways."

—Perez-Putnam 2016, 1

"In academia, it is not often that we find someone who can hold a mirror up to us, making nonjudgmental observations about how we work and reflecting with us on our goals and performance. The Students as Learners and Teachers program through the Teaching and Learning Institute (TLI) at Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges provides exactly this kind of opportunity for professors."

—Abbott and Been 2017, 1

The student quoted above touches on the potential of pedagogical partnership to foster in students a sense of belonging, to support faculty in generative reflection, and to contribute to the evolution of an institution into a place where members of the community feel a meaningful connection. Student partners also deepen their capacity to reflect, and

faculty partners can also experience a deeper sense of belonging and connection as a result of participating in pedagogical partnership (Cook-Sather and Felten 2017b). As we discuss in greater detail in the "Outcomes of Pedagogical Partnership Work" resource, and as articulated by faculty and student partners in quotes throughout this book, participating in pedagogical partnerships reduces the isolation of teaching because faculty work in collaboration with someone else in the educational community, and it contributes to faculty recognizing the humanity of their students. Partnership affords both student and faculty partners the opportunity to be deeply seen, heard, and affirmed by another person on campus. The second quote above captures this potential for faculty—what another faculty partner described as mirrors, only better (Cook-Sather 2008).

These themes recur throughout this book, inspiring and informing the advice we offer. They are, to our minds, always important, but they are perhaps especially so at a time when participants in higher education represent an unprecedented diversity and, at the same time, differences of position, perspective, and identity are, in some contexts, causing rifts and tensions between students and faculty. We have seen how pedagogical partnership can bridge divides and alleviate tensions, and we want to share what we have learned about why and how to keep building such connections.

What is the research evidence on the benefits of pedagogical partnership programs?

Research offers numerous reasons for developing pedagogical partnership opportunities for faculty and student participants. These have to do with positive outcomes for:

- all student and faculty participants,
- faculty who are new to institutions,
- students who have traditionally been underrepresented in and underserved by institutions of higher education, and
- institutions that want to transform their cultures.

What are the benefits to all faculty and student participants?

An analysis by Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014) of individual partnership efforts—when single faculty members have undertaken pedagogical partnership without systematic, institutional support—as well as institutionalized pedagogical partnership programs in the United Kingdom and the United States surfaced strikingly consistent benefits across contexts. By and large, faculty participants experience transformed thinking about and practices of teaching; changed understandings of learning and teaching through experiencing different viewpoints; and reconceptualization of learning and teaching as collaborative processes. The same analysis found that student participants typically experience enhanced confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm; enhanced engagement in the process, not just the outcomes, of learning; enhanced responsibility for, and ownership of, their own learning; and deepened understanding of, and contributions to, the academic community (Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten 2014, 103). These findings are echoed in other research studies and in reflective essays that individual faculty and students have authored. For instance:

- 93% of students who participated in partnerships with faculty at Birmingham City University in England reported that they had a greater sense of belonging at the institution (Curran and Millard 2016).
- Students who participated in faculty-student partnerships at Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Malaysia, experienced deeper learning of the course content, a more inclusive classroom dynamic, a sense of empowerment and competence, and more (Kaur, Awang-Hashim, and Kaur 2018).
- Through a course redesign project at Loughborough University in England, faculty and student partners experienced enhanced relationships, student partners developed deeper subject matter understanding, and faculty members developed deeper understanding of students' perspectives on learning the subject matter (Duah and Croft 2014).
- As part of his ongoing academic development, a senior lecturer in history at Massey University in Aotearoa New Zealand revised

both individual and departmental practices to be more responsive to student identities and learning needs (Griffiths 2018).

In published papers and conference presentations, student and faculty partners in different educational contexts and in different countries have articulated practically verbatim the same benefits of pedagogical partnership. We detail the most consistent of these in the "Outcomes of Pedagogical Partnership Work" resource. Here we focus on why you might want to create opportunities for participants to experience these benefits.

What are the particular benefits to faculty who are new to institutions?

While the benefits described above certainly extend to faculty who are new to institutions, there are particular challenges faculty face when they join institutions that pedagogical partnership has the potential to address in unique ways. There is plenty of long-standing research that documents the importance of supporting the orientation and development of new faculty (Boice 1992; Fink 1984; Lewis 1996; Sorcinelli 1994; Trowler and Knight 2000). But as faculty roles and responsibilities have shifted and as the factors affecting higher education have multiplied, supporting faculty new to institutions has become increasingly challenging (Austin and Sorcinelli 2013; McAlpine and Åkerlind 2010; Paris 2013; Turner 2015). A wide variety of approaches exists to support the complicated process of "'self-authoring' a professional identity as an educator" (Gunersel, Barnett, and Etienne 2013, 35) in which new faculty engage (Bok 2013; Brew, Boud, and Namgung 2011; McAlpine and Åkerlind 2012). Pedagogical partnership offers an additional approach with particular potential. As one faculty participant in the SaLT program put it: "The presence of my student consultant has turned out to be one of the most constructive factors in navigating my first semester at Bryn Mawr, one that will have lasting impact on my pedagogical commitments and academic identity as a teacher" (Oh 2014, 1).

The SaLT program affords incoming faculty at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges three options for working in partnership with students. First, before they set foot on campus, they can enter into pedagogical partnership with student consultants through a summer

syllabus development workshop, which includes dialogue with student partners regarding what students in that context hope to see included on syllabi. Second, in the week before classes begin, they meet and talk with students about what makes an engaging, inclusive, and effective learning experience at a one-hour session as part of new faculty orientation. Finally, during their first or second semester, they have the option to participate in semester-long, classroom-focused partnerships with student consultants. (See the "Options for Incoming Faculty to Work in Partnership through the SaLT Program" resource, and for a more detailed discussion, see Cook-Sather 2016a.)

As one student partner in the SaLT program explains, student partners can "contextualize and explain the dynamics that occur within the classroom and in the greater college community," and "they can be a window into the world of student life" (Pallant 2014, 1). Through working as dialogue partners and cultural guides, student partners can ease faculty members' transitions into new teaching and learning contexts. These opportunities can contribute to incoming faculty feeling more at ease, confident, and energized as they embark upon this new phase of their professional lives.

Confidence, energy, engagement—these are important for all new faculty but especially for underrepresented faculty as they strive to "establish 'home'" on a campus that may not historically have been a welcoming place (Mayo and Chhuon 2014, 227). In a reflection she offered as part of informal feedback on her experience, one new faculty partner in the SaLT program emphasized how she and her student partner, also with a background underrepresented in higher education, created a home for one another on campus: "I deeply appreciate the space that [my student partner] and I have created in which I can talk more about how I feel in the classroom rather than focusing on technical areas, that at least for me are less relevant in the search of becoming a better knowledge facilitator!"

While not every incoming faculty member embraces or appreciates these opportunities to work in partnership with students, the vast majority indicate that such partnership both eases their transition immeasurably and gives them an inspiring and empowering foundation upon which to build teaching and learning relationships with their own

students. The partnership with a student makes the work of "'self-authoring' a professional identity as an educator" (Gunersel, Barnett, and Etienne 2013, 35) a shared endeavor, not the often isolating and enervating struggle that many faculty who have not participated in pedagogical partnership evoke to describe their early years as scholars. As a new faculty member wrote: "Working with my student consultant . . . was an important step in developing my own teaching style and translating my aspirations into a more tangible action plan. . . . I found that my partnership . . . proved instrumental in adjusting my course planning and in-class activities" (Kurimay 2014, 1).

At Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, both SaLT and the institutional support it enjoys signal that it is legitimate to focus on teaching alongside research, even as a new faculty member. Virtually all higher education contexts that expect faculty be productive scholars are quite emphatic that new faculty establish and maintain their research agendas first and foremost. This is certainly important, since even colleges that value teaching tend to weigh research productivity more heavily in reappointment and promotion decisions. But what Alison has heard from many new faculty over the years is that teaching in a new context is the most difficult adjustment they face. Many come directly from graduate school, where they have been immersed in their research, and others come from dramatically different teaching contexts. Unless they find a way to manage the demands of teaching in their first job or new context, they cannot focus on their scholarship anyway.

Therefore, while devoting so much time and such substantial institutional resources to supporting faculty in pedagogical and curricular matters might seem both counterintuitive and countercultural in many college and university contexts, it actually supports new faculty in achieving greater satisfaction and success in both teaching and scholarship. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggest that, since the advent of the SaLT program at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, fewer faculty have come up against problems at moments of review and promotion because of pedagogical challenges. Pedagogical partnership programs like SaLT not only provide energy and encouragement for new faculty as teachers, they can support new faculty in balancing or integrating the multiple

dimensions of their institutional identities and responsibilities: as teachers, as researchers and scholars, and as members of a community they serve in various ways (on committees, through advising, etc.). As one new faculty member explained about his and his colleagues' experiences, participating in the SaLT program supported "not just our learning about pedagogy but our learning about ourselves, how we relate to students, and how we approach teaching as a part of our lives at the college" (Cook-Sather et al. 2017, 131).

What are the benefits to students who have traditionally been underrepresented in and underserved by institutions of higher education?

Supporting the success of a diversity of students is a topic of increasing discussion in higher education (Devlin 2013; Gale and Parker 2014; Gibson et al. 2017; Hockings 2010; O'Shea and Delahunty 2018; US Department of Education 2016). Research studies and reflective essays focused on the benefits of pedagogical partnership to students from groups who are traditionally underrepresented in and underserved by higher education point to the ways in which pedagogical partnership supports student success and, more generally, a sense of belonging (Colón García 2017; Cook-Sather and Agu 2013; Cook-Sather and Felten 2017b; Cook-Sather et al. 2019; de Bie et al. 2019; Gibson et al. 2017). Students' analyses of their experiences suggest that participation in pedagogical partnership has particularly powerful outcomes in relation to their academic engagement in their own classes and their sense of their evolution as active agents in their own development (Cook-Sather 2018b; de Bie et al. 2019).

Students whose educational backgrounds have not prepared them for the culture of higher education find that partnership affords them access to, experience with, and increased confidence in navigating academia. Students quoted in Cook-Sather (2018b, 927) describe gaining a deeper understanding of "the rationale behind an activity or behind an assignment"—an ability to discern the "pedagogical reasoning" in ways that "totally deepened my learning." The deep thinking about learning that student partners engage in helps them "recognize which strategies and

teaching styles work for me and recognize when they aren't working for me." Concomitant with this deeper understanding is greater confidence in approaching faculty: "I have a lot more comfort talking to professors."

Student partners from underrepresented backgrounds also consistently talk about how participating in partnership "has given me confidence in my classes in new ways"; students feel "stronger and more empowered to give my voice"; they feel "a sense of ownership of my experience both inside the classroom and outside the classroom" (students quoted in Cook-Sather 2018b, 928). Students describe taking "more leadership roles as a result [of participating] in the program" (student quoted in Cook-Sather 2018b, 929). The leadership roles and the confidence to pursue them extend beyond students' time on campus. The extended reflection in the following quote captures the experience of an underrepresented student who built essential confidence through their experience of partnership and carried that with them into the work world:

> There is kind of an idea that when you go out for a job you should always be aiming for something that is higher than where you feel like you are, something that you are probably underqualified for, and I feel like participating in SaLT set me up to be more aware of what that would look like for me. It's really tough for women, for women of color, for LGBTQ folks; we usually apply for positions that we are overqualified for. As an example, white men go for things they are underqualified for. Like our president [Donald Trump]. They do that. They feel really comfortable with it. After SaLT, "consultant," "fellow," these are words not typically afforded access to people like me. So, having the experience, being able to say I do know these things, I can prove them, set me up to be more willing to go out for things that I wouldn't have gone out for before. It improved my confidence, my job seeking confidence. And it's true, I haven't had trouble getting jobs. My mom talks to me about that all the time. She says, "Of all my kids, you're the one I don't worry

> about when it comes to finding a job." And the reason for that is programs like [SaLT] . . . I would not be in that same position if it wasn't for that same training and understanding. (Student partner quoted in Cook-Sather 2018b, 929)

That these benefits to underrepresented and underserved students have a profound impact both while students are undergraduates and after graduation is consistent with research that identifies predictors of students' post-graduation engagement and well-being. These predictors include having a professor who cares about students as people, makes them excited about learning, and encourages them to pursue their dreams, and having an internship or job in college that allows them to apply what they are learning in the classroom, be actively involved in extracurricular activities and organizations, and work on projects that take a semester or more to complete (Ray and Marken 2014, Gallup-Purdue Index Study). Pedagogical partnerships offer all of these experiences.

What are the benefits to institutions that want to transform their cultures?

Partnership "speaks to an institutional culture that values students as participants in knowledge construction, as producers of knowledge, within the university learning community." For many institutions of higher education, "this is a radical cultural shift" from an environment in which administrators, staff, and faculty make decisions to benefit students toward a mindset where students work "as colleagues, as partners, as trusted collaborators—with shared goals" (Matthews, Cook-Sather, and Healey 2018, 24). Because it is such a radical shift, it typically does not happen quickly. Indeed, such transformation in culture tends not only to be slow, it also tends to happen in expected ways, and might look different in different contexts.

Sophia Abbot, a former student partner in the SaLT program who went on to develop and lead Tigers as Partners, a student-faculty partnership program at Trinity University in the United States, argues that "the shift is not only that students can work as colleagues, partners, and trusted collaborators but also that faculty need not work alone" (personal

communication). She relates a story about how such a shift can make a difference: "A professor I met with recently said the major shift for her following her partnership in Trinity University's program was that when students did really poorly on her most recent midterm, instead of sitting by herself and pondering what could be the issue, she went back into class and just asked them." So, Sophia argues, "this paradigm shift is one not only of seeing students as partners but of not seeing oneself as a silo (and it goes both ways! Partnership helped me to realize I could ask for help from my professors, and be open with them about my goals and needs)."

As Sophia's story illustrates, pedagogical partnership reconceptualizes the knowledge and capacities of all student and faculty partners. Such reconceptualization can take place regardless of participants' particular identities. At the same time, it releases faculty from the myth that they must be the sole expert on everything held in the classroom: content, pedagogy, and the students themselves. Student partners often articulate the importance of these kinds of reconceptualization. As one student argues: "Professors aren't just people on a pedestal who have to know everything and can do everything and will do everything. They are just people who are working really hard" (quoted in de Bie et al. 2019, 40). This student continued that, as a result of the destabilization of power dynamics in partnership work, "I feel so much more ownership over my experience as a student. I feel like I've been given a platform to say, 'No, I know things and I need things and other people also need things, and I can be in tune with that'" (quoted in de Bie et al. 2019, 40).

Positioning underrepresented students as pedagogical partners in particular recognizes those students as "holders and creators of knowledge" (Delgado-Bernal 2002, 106) who become "a resource for faculty learning" (Cook-Sather and Agu 2013, 272) and significantly diversify the identities of those doing educational development work. In so doing, it catalyzes a culture shift on college and university campuses. Pedagogical partnership programs that position underrepresented students as pedagogical partners complicate the institutional roles of student, instructor, and academic developer; mobilize the cultural identities of student partners from underrepresented groups; and contribute to the transformation

of universities into more egalitarian learning communities that support equity-seeking students and culturally sustaining pedagogical practices (Cook-Sather et al. 2019; Gibson and Cook-Sather, forthcoming).

In the following quotes, we offer the perspectives of three differently positioned members of higher education communities in Canada, the United States, and Australia and how they perceive partnership as contributing to the transformation of institutional culture:

> "There's actually people looking at teaching and learning in all kinds of different [ways], including access and accessibility and all these sorts of things. Yeah, definitely can contribute to . . . a better campus, an inclusive campus."
>
> —Student partner in McMaster University's
> Student Partners Program (Response to survey)

> "The program helped us as students want to engage in the work and feel like we could engage in the work of making a more equitable campus."
>
> —Student partner in SaLT (Response to survey)

> "Defining and making sense of students as partners work is part of a cultural change process that needs to take place locally and enables a process of coming to a shared understanding."
>
> —Kelly Matthews, Associate Professor, Curriculum,
> Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation,
> University of Queensland, Australia (personal communication)

What purposes can you articulate for developing a pedagogical partnership program?

In the sections above, we have offered a number of reasons why we advocate the creation of pedagogical partnership programs. Your reasons for engaging in partnership may be like ours or different from ours, and how explicit you are about those reasons will be political as well as pragmatic. Of the reasons you have, some might become explicit statements

of principles and guidelines for practice, while others might remain tacit or implicit, explored in the closed and confidential spaces of partnership work rather than claimed publicly as commitments. In the spirit of this "how-to" guide, our advice is to be thoughtful and intentional, to try to be clear about and aware of what you are doing, and to think through the potential consequences of any given decision.

Your decisions about what to state publicly and what to keep more tacit will depend on: what you understand partnership to be; what emotions and attitudes those who will participate on your campus bring; what the aim, scale, and time frame of the project or initiative will be; and what conceptual frameworks you adopt to guide your understanding and practice (Healey and Healey 2018). In chapter 2, we elaborate on these questions, and you may want to address them to clarify for yourself what your purposes are. Here we review some common explicit and implicit purposes that partnership programs have to get your thinking started.

What explicit purposes of pedagogical partnership programs might you embrace?

Regarding your explicitly stated purpose or purposes, strive to identify what will resonate with or at least not alienate those in your particular context. A purpose that is likely to be of high interest and relatively low threat to most members of higher education communities is to facilitate dialogue across different positions and perspectives—students, faculty, and staff—with the goal of developing or revising pedagogical practices and curriculum. You might have very specific purposes in mind, such as developing pedagogical approaches that are responsive to underrepresented and underserved students or developing or revising curricula for particular programs or courses, such as first-year, introductory courses or capstone courses for majors.

A purpose that some members of higher education communities might welcome, and some might find more threatening, is to complicate and challenge traditional power dynamics, assumptions about who has legitimate knowledge about teaching and learning, and who should play an active role in developing and analyzing pedagogical practices and curricula. This is a more avowedly radical purpose, but it may well be a

good fit for your institution. It might still inform the kind of curricular and pedagogical analysis and revision described above, but the reasons and processes for undertaking such analysis and revision would be framed in a very different way.

Among the purposes of pedagogical partnership articulated by particular programs are providing "an opportunity for faculty to reflect on their pedagogy, receive feedback from a student not in their course, and work collaboratively to meet teaching goals" (Reed College, Student Consultants for Teaching and Learning) and "developing a more inclusive learning environment" (Smith College, Student-Faculty Pedagogical Partnership Program). If you want to draw on scholarship, you could identify as your purpose ensuring that students "become full participants in the design of teaching approaches, courses, and curricula" (Bovill, Cook-Sather, and Felten 2011, 133) or transforming higher education contexts into more egalitarian learning communities (Matthews, Cook-Sather, and Healey 2018). The growing body of scholarship on pedagogical partnership can provide numerous, variously articulated rationales for developing programs, and drawing on published arguments often helps to "legitimate" such work.

What you call your program and what name you choose for student and faculty partners, questions we address in chapter 3, are closely related to the explicit purposes and public language you choose. These are significant questions and best considered ahead of time, in a dialogue that includes academic developers, student partners, faculty partners, and others who are committed to this work.

What implicit purposes of pedagogical partnership programs might you embrace?

Your implicit purposes, if you have them, may be more radical and even subversive. We include some of ours here to illustrate what we mean. From our perspective, when students are partners, positioned as those with legitimate knowledge about teaching and learning and invited to engage in dialogue and collaboration with faculty and staff, they cannot ever go back to being the kind of students they were before—being "only" students. The insights they gain, the empowerment they experience, the

empathy they develop, and the capacity they build change them irreversibly. So even the most basic purpose of this work—to support dialogue across differences of position and perspective—is, to our minds, revolutionary. If you share this purpose, do you want that to remain implicit or become an explicit purpose of your partnership program?

The kinds of transformation faculty experience can also be life and practice changing. Some faculty, once they work with a student partner, never want to go back to teaching alone because they recognize how valuable the student partner's perspective and camaraderie are in contrast to the "pedagogical solitude" (Shulman 2004) in which faculty typically labor. Some faculty partners in the SaLT program and in programs like it request to work with a student partner semester after semester. Do you want that option—to replace pedagogical solitude with perpetual student-faculty partnership—to remain implicit or become an explicit purpose of your partnership program?

In our program, the explicit focus is on enriching and equalizing teaching and learning experiences through bringing the different perspectives of students and faculty to bear on curriculum and pedagogical practice, but implicit in that is the purpose of supporting both individual and collective empowerment. A former student partner, Olivia Porte, and Alison describe our conception of partnership this way: "Through a perpetually negotiated exchange within the spaces" that student-faculty pedagogical partnerships create, students and faculty, "who have different identities, positions, roles and responsibilities, strive to grasp—understand, take ahold of—what is offered by the other in the exchange" (Cook-Sather and Porte 2017). Would you want that kind of reciprocal exchange and mutual transformation to be an explicit or an implicit purpose of your program?

As Cook-Sather and Porte (2017) note above, through this perpetual process of reaching across differences of position and perspective and striving to grasp what the person across the space is holding out, participants in pedagogical partnership can enact Freire's (2005, 264) vision: "Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teachers cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. . . . They become jointly responsible for a process in

which all grow." Such freedom from traditional roles comes with greater responsibility and a different kind of investment on both faculty members' and students' parts. To what extent do you want that to be an explicit purpose and to what extent might it be more effective remaining implicit?

There may well be other implicit reasons that you have for wanting to develop or expand a pedagogical partnership program, but we recommend that you consider at a minimum the reasons we list here: repositioning students such that they cannot go back to being the kind of students they were before; repositioning faculty such that they do not want to return to pedagogical solitude; supporting both students and faculty in empowering themselves; and advocating a willingness to share power and responsibility in teaching and learning.

What are the assumptions and expectations that participants bring?

Explicit and implicit purposes for partnership are informed by assumptions and expectations. All participants are likely to bring assumptions and expectations based on their previous experiences, identities, norms for participation in higher education, and more. Here we note the primary assumption and expectation we have found that faculty and students bring, respectively, to their first pedagogical partnership and one that we have encountered in both faculty and students who engage in second or third partnerships. Following this section, we focus on assumptions and expectations that can become threshold concepts. We articulate these here in the hopes that you can address them ahead of time rather than have to wrestle with them as they invisibly inform—and sometimes impede—the development of partnership.

What is the key assumption and expectation faculty bring?

The most common assumption and expectation that faculty bring is: *I will be under surveillance.* Because, as Lynch (2010, 55) has argued, "surveillance, and the unrelenting measurement of performance, are institutionalized and normalized in everyday life," and because most classroom visits are for purposes of evaluation, many faculty are uncertain about what the student partner role will be and unfamiliar with how to enter

into conversation with a student regarding personal insecurities, worries, or moments of joy in the classroom (Ntem and Cook-Sather 2018). The excerpts from faculty reflections below capture the worry that many if not most faculty feel before embarking on pedagogical partnership:

> "When I learned about the program, it sounded very watch-doggy."
>
> —Faculty partner
> (quoted in Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten 2014, 149)

> "[The prospect of entering partnership] produced the anxious expectancy of classroom observation as a (real or perceived) form of benevolent surveillance."
>
> —Reckson 2014, 1

> "The disconcerting presence in the classroom of a student consultant . . . [was an] unnerving conjunction of counselor, coach, and court stenographer."
>
> —Rudy 2014, 2

Almost all faculty discover that pedagogical partnership does not at all turn out to be the surveillance they worried about and expected. The first faculty member quoted above found "it was totally the opposite when I met my student partner" (faculty partner quoted in Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten 2014, 149). The second found that her student partner offered "observation without judgment—a rare gift—and along with it, a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose" (Reckson 2014, 1). And the third faculty member came to see his partner as "a liminal and unexpected figure foreign to traditional teaching and central to raising pedagogical awareness" (Rudy 2014, 5). But program directors, faculty members, and student partners alike should be prepared for the initial expectation to be infused with fear of surveillance, and some faculty—very few, but some—never move past that fear.

If you are a program director or student partner already participating in or planning pedagogical partnership, we urge you to do everything

possible to try to assuage this assumption and expectation on the part of faculty partners. All participants are working against institutional structures and human fear born of vulnerability, so reassurance, patience, and support are key. The discussion we offer in chapter 4 of the shared responsibilities of facilitating pedagogical partnerships can help address this particular assumption and expectation, particularly the importance of bringing an open mind to everyone's contribution; building trust; co-creating an approach to the collaboration; communicating; being present to and mindful of others; and advocating.

What is the key assumption and expectation students bring?

The key assumption and expectation students bring is some form of: *I don't have anything to offer but I need to find something to critique*. The first part of this formulation springs from institutional norms that position students as recipients not producers or co-creators of knowledge about learning and teaching, and the second part springs from the commonly embraced purpose of much higher education: to develop critical ways of thinking. One student partner captured both of these in her perspective on joining the SaLT program:

> At first I was kind of skeptical because you are a student and these profs have been doing this for quite some time they have advanced degrees, you're a kid with some college. And you are trying to come in and say, "Do this better, do that." And you could easily be dismissed. (Quoted in Cook-Sather and Agu 2013, 280)

This student's words reflect a lack of recognition of the knowledge she and other students bring—not knowledge that eclipses or replaces faculty knowledge and experience, but other, complementary forms of knowledge and experience. Her reflection also captures the misperception student partners have initially that they are supposed to say, "Do this better, do that." A kind of analogue to the faculty fear that they will be under surveillance, this assumption that student partners should tell faculty partners what to do is one that needs to be countered from the start. As we discuss in chapter 4, student partners affirming what they

think is working well and why in faculty partners' practice is an essential mode of engagement in the SaLT program, but such practice needs to be scaffolded, learned, and reinforced (Cook-Sather et al. 2017). We return to this point in the section below on threshold concepts.

What key assumption and expectation do both faculty and students bring?

Returning student and faculty partners can assume and expect that *their new partner/ship will be like their previous partner/ships.* This is a function of human minds—to expect things to be as they have been—but it is important for all participants involved to approach each new partnership as new. It is impossible not to bring prior experiences and associated assumptions and expectations, but those need to be acknowledged as such, not taken as templates or necessities. In a conversation among faculty partners that Alison facilitated at Smith College, Johanna Ravenhurst, program coordinator in Smith College's Sherrerd Center, where their partnership program is based, wrote this in her notes:

> "No two partnerships are the same"—this is especially important to keep in mind when faculty or student partners start a second partnership with a new pedagogical partner. It is important to share your hopes and expectations with your partner at the beginning of the semester. You may be surprised by theirs. Try not to assume you are entering the partnership for the same reasons/with the same expectations. (Personal communication)

All program directors, but experienced faculty and student partners as well, play an important part in reminding one another that every partnership is unique, might warrant different approaches, will develop through a different kind of dynamic between the partners, and will yield new insights.

What are the threshold concepts to partnership?

The three assumptions and expectations noted above can typically be addressed early on in pedagogical partnerships because experience in

partnership tends to counter them. Other assumptions and expectations can persist through and despite experience. These are what we call threshold concepts to pedagogical partnership: concepts that, if not addressed, can block or hinder the development of partnership. They need to be made explicit and grappled with if the potential of pedagogical partnership is to be realized. To illuminate these threshold concepts to partnership, we start by defining the term, then we briefly discuss student-faculty pedagogical partnership itself as a threshold concept, and then we note the specific threshold concepts within pedagogical partnership we have seen. We elaborate on these threshold concepts in the "Threshold Concepts in Pedagogical Partnership" resource.

Over ten years ago, two scholars developed the notion of "threshold concepts," which they defined as "conceptual gateways" or "'portals' that lead to a transformed view of something" (Meyer and Land 2006, 19). They applied this notion to concepts such as supply and demand in economics: concepts that must be understood if learners are to move beyond a superficial understanding of the subject. Important to understand about threshold concepts is that they can seem counterintuitive, and it is possible for learners to complete whole courses of study without mastering them (and, indeed, sustaining their limited and even false understandings). Because they require a shift in understanding, and an accompanying "shift in learner subjectivity," threshold concepts can be "troublesome," "transformative," "irreversible (unlikely to be forgotten, or unlearned only through considerable effort), and integrative (exposing previously hidden interrelatedness)" (Land et al. 2005, 53).

The notion of threshold concepts has proven useful in the realm of academic development in general (see King and Felten 2012), and several scholars have identified student-faculty pedagogical partnership as a threshold concept (Cook-Sather 2014; Cook-Sather and Luz 2015; Marquis et al. 2016b; Werder, Thibou, and Kaufer 2012). As Marquis et al. (2016b, 6) explain, "passing through the partnership threshold entails coming to understand staff and students as collegial contributors to teaching and learning, with complementary roles, responsibilities, and perspectives, and *realizing* this understanding within actual teaching and learning practices."

Within the larger notion that student-faculty partnership itself is a threshold concept, there are particular ideas that can constitute threshold concepts to partnership. Most of these ideas stand in stark contrast to traditional assumptions, fears, vulnerabilities, and resistances (Ntem and Cook-Sather 2018), and they require holding seemingly contradictory or at least complex ideas in one's mind. Below we list the threshold concepts we have most often experienced or perceived, and in the "Threshold Concepts in Pedagogical Partnership" resource, we discuss these in detail and offer participant perspectives on them:

- Students have valuable knowledge of and important perspectives on teaching and learning.
- Student partners are not subject matter experts.
- Reciprocity in partnership does not mean exchanging exactly the same thing.
- Faculty partners do not have to do whatever students say.
- Partnership is not about finding what is wrong and fixing it.
- Pedagogical partnership is about exchange, not change for the sake of change.
- Partnership is about sharing power, not giving it up or taking it away.
- Partnership is a process, not a product (although it can lead to products of various kinds).

YOUR TURN

Considering your goals:

If someone asked you why you want to develop a pedagogical partnership program, what would you say?

With whom on your campus would you share your explicit reasons for wanting to develop a pedagogical partnership program, with whom would you share your implicit reasons, and why?

Considering the research:

Which of the research findings on the benefits of pedagogical partnership programs do you find most compelling?

Which do you think would be most compelling in your context?

What areas do you think warrant further investigation?

Considering assumptions, expectations, and threshold concepts:

Which assumptions and expectations about partnership articulated in this chapter did you find yourself sharing?

Were there assumptions and expectations you found yourself thinking about that weren't mentioned but that either you or others in your context would need to tackle?

Which of these, if any, might be threshold concepts in your context?