

Pedagogical Partnerships

A HOW-TO GUIDE

for Faculty, Students, and Academic Developers
in Higher Education

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WHAT APPROACHES MIGHT STUDENT AND FACULTY PARTNERS USE IN CLASSROOM-FOCUSED PARTNERSHIPS?

We discussed in chapter 4 the shared responsibilities for facilitating pedagogical partnership as conceptualized in SaLT and programs like it. In this chapter, we focus on classroom-focused pedagogical partnerships, in which faculty and student pairs work together in long-term (typically semester-long or sometimes yearlong) partnerships to analyze, affirm, and, where appropriate, revise pedagogical approaches as the faculty member teaches the focal course. We discuss foundational steps partners can take to encourage the long-term success of partnerships, how student and faculty partners can establish a focus for their work, and the approaches student and faculty partners engaged in these partnerships can take.

What are the steps in establishing, sustaining, and concluding classroom-focused pedagogical partnerships?

There are different forms of classroom-focused student-faculty partnerships. For instance, Hayward, Venture, Schuldt, and Donlan (2018, 39) describe “student pedagogical teams,” which they define as “teams of student ‘consultants’ who become active and engaged as partners in the teaching and learning process by providing feedback to the professor on course content, assignments, and delivery of material” (Nuhfer, 1995). These students are enrolled in the focal course.

Our focus in this chapter is on pedagogical partnerships between faculty and students when students are not enrolled in the focal course. We offer an overview of how to establish, maintain, and conclude classroom-focused pedagogical partnerships.

How do student and faculty partners lay the foundation for a productive classroom-focused partnership?

Below we outline a series of steps that student and faculty partners can take to lay the foundation for developing a strong and productive partnership. These include:

- reading the guidelines provided by program directors so that you have a clear understanding and shared starting point for embarking on your partnership work;
- making early contact with your partner to ensure that you have time to prepare and plan to begin your partnership; and
- establishing rapport before launching into your work so that you have a human connection that can serve as a foundation for this demanding collaborative work.

Read the guidelines

In the SaLT program, Alison sends a set of guidelines (expanded upon here and included in short form in the “[Guidelines for Student and Faculty Partners in Classroom-focused Pedagogical Partnership](#)” resource) to both student and faculty partners. In preparation for embarking upon a partnership, it is helpful if student and faculty partners read these carefully. These are intended to serve as a starting point, not a set of prescriptions, but faculty and student partners have found that they contribute to partners “being on the same page” as they embark upon their work together.

Make early contact

After faculty and student partners have familiarized themselves with the program guidelines, the next step in laying the foundation for a productive classroom-focused pedagogical partnership is making early contact with one another. In chapter 4 we discussed the importance of professional communication for all participants in pedagogical partnership. In the SaLT program, it is typically the student partner who contacts the faculty partner to launch the partnership by asking for an initial meeting. Here is a sample message that Alison offers the student partners to personalize and send:

Dear Professor [Fill in Last Name],

I hope you are well. I am a [sophomore/junior/senior] majoring in [fill in major] at [fill in name of college], and I will be working as your Student Consultant during the [fill in semester and year] semester through the [name of pedagogical partnership program]. I would like to schedule a meeting with you during or before the first week of classes so that we can establish an initial focus for our work together, discuss my role, and talk about how I will be introduced to your class. I will be available [fill in days and times]. Please let me know which of these times might work for us to meet.

I very much look forward to working with you this coming semester.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

Faculty partners typically receive these messages prior to the start of the semester, and to ensure that they and their student partners can embark upon their pedagogical partnership at the start of the following semester, it is best if they respond promptly and arrange an initial meeting time with their student partners. They might also want to give a preliminary indication of what they are interested in focusing on in the partnership work so that student partners can be thinking about that.

Establish rapport

The next step in laying the foundation for a productive partnership is to focus in the initial meeting on building a relationship. As we discussed in chapter 4, this initial focus on who faculty and student partners are as people helps build the foundation of trust necessary for realizing the potential of pedagogical partnership. It is helpful for both faculty and student partners to:

- **Introduce yourselves and say something about why you are interested in this work.** What interests, skills, hopes do both student and faculty partners bring? What are the faculty partner's perceptions, questions, and hopes for teaching in this context? What are the student partner's perceptions, questions, and hopes

for learning in this context? How can pedagogical partnership address these?

- **Share educational histories and experiences.** This is a great time for student partners to begin to understand the trajectory of their faculty partner’s career that led to this moment—their experiences in other institutions and the current one. It is also a great opportunity for student partners to talk about their experiences as students in the institution and offer faculty partners a sense of the culture of the institution.
- **Keep the initial discussion focused on you two as people.** While it is tempting to jump straight to the work at hand, and some partners do that, it is helpful to provide insight into past experiences and current contextual information that can situate the pedagogical work.
- **Take time to ask how other things are going**—research, courses, how you are feeling about the class you are focused on. Slowing down to make space for some of these more personal exchanges, before partners get into talking about specific things they want to focus in on, can make a big difference.
- **Establish ways of checking in as people.** The dynamic that student and faculty partners establish at the outset will shape how the relationship unfolds over time. Throughout the partnership, remember to focus on relationship. Keep in mind that partnership is not just transactional. By taking time to engage as whole people, not just as teachers and students, partners will be better able to build a strong and trusting connection that will enable the part of the work that is focused on exploring teaching and learning. A former student partner articulates the importance of that kind of human focus:

“ In one of my partnerships our entire first meeting was talking about ourselves as people, and then we moved into talking more about the class, goals, etc. This made for a really strong foundation in the partnership and

our conversations about the class ended up being more honest.

—Sasha Mathrani,
former student partner in SaLT
(personal communication)

How can student and faculty partners establish a focus for their work?

Once student and faculty partners have established rapport and begun to build some trust, they can move to focusing on the pedagogical work. As part of the initial meeting, before the student partner begins visiting the faculty partner's class, clarify what the faculty member's teaching and learning goals are for the particular course upon which the partnership will focus. In the SaLT program, student partners ask questions such as:

- What are the course goals?
- What does the syllabus include and look like? (for more information about the course, how goals are portrayed in the syllabus, etc.)
- What are some specific pedagogical goals you have within the course?
- What kind of learning experiences do you want students to have and why?
- What do you see as my role in helping you to explore these pedagogical issues?
- What do you want me to focus on initially in my classroom observations?

Based on the faculty partner's responses to the questions above, the student and faculty partner can formulate a clear statement of what the initial focus of the partnership will be. For example, a student partner might say, "Based on what you've shared, it sounds like XX is important to the success of this course and your students. Perhaps that should be our initial focus as we begin this partnership?" Whatever initial focus partners identify will likely evolve and change over the course of the semester, but it is helpful to name a starting place.

Depending on the kind of relationship the student and faculty partners build, it might be possible for student partners to propose areas

of focus. This is a delicate negotiation, since even within the overall construct of pedagogical partnership, some faculty can experience such student-proposed foci as presumptuous and impositional, while others welcome any proposed area of exploration students generate. It can be quite difficult to predict which foci will be perceived as inappropriate and which will be welcomed, so, as always, the key is careful listening and respectful communication.

What are some common areas of focus for pedagogical partnerships?

Many student and faculty partners select a focus for their partnership that is specific to the context of the discipline, student population, or institution in which they work, so there are as many areas of focus as there are partnerships. A few broad categories into which many foci might fit include building more inclusive classrooms, encouraging engagement and contribution to classroom discussion, and teaching in the context of social and political complexity. Here is a sample of foci that student and faculty partners have explored:

- Classroom environment/culture
 - » Practices to use in the beginning of the year to establish classroom culture and build student-professor relationships
 - » What constitutes good stress/pressure vs. bad stress/pressure?
 - » How to create a positive classroom culture where it is okay to not know all the answers (and the way a professor's use of language impacts this)
 - » How to bring in a professor's personality into the classroom (what's the best balance between sharing one's personality and staying more distant?)
- Pedagogical transparency
 - » How to make pedagogy explicit and invite students into this discussion if they want to join it
 - » How to recognize and explain intentions (e.g., a faculty partner tended to make hand gestures—rolling his hands, tapping on the table) that struck his student consultant as stress inducing,

but he meant them as encouraging, so he explained his intent to the students enrolled in his course)

- Classroom conversations
 - » How often students are called on, how often students volunteer to talk
 - » Who students look at when talking
 - » Interrupting students
 - » How to make participation more accessible and inclusive (think-pair-share, time to write, etc.)
- Assessment and evaluation
 - » Alternative ways to think about feedback and revision
 - » How to structure tests, assignments, and activities to maximize learning and participation

We offer some selected readings related to these common areas of focus in the “[Selected Reading Lists](#)” resource.

What should the student partner role and responsibilities be in any given partnership?

A student partner in the SaLT program offers the following reminder to other student partners:

Remember that as a student partner you have valuable insight as an external student who is an advocate and liaison for not only the students enrolled in the course and your faculty partner but also for transformative pedagogical tools that may be overlooked. No matter what may seem “small” or “large” to you, as long as you are consistently engaging in material and engaging in dialogue as well as questioning your assumptions, your work is impactful. (Excerpt from informal feedback)

Typically in the SaLT program, student consultants visit their faculty partners’ classrooms once per week and take observation notes, but not everyone has employed this model. We discuss two possible models for classroom-focused partnership below:

- Classroom observations plus weekly meetings
- Weekly meetings plus other forms of exploration and dialogue

Should student partners visit their faculty partner's classrooms?

Most classroom-focused pedagogical partnerships through SaLT and other programs include classroom observations, but sometimes this is not the best or even a possible approach, such as when faculty teach courses with confidential content (as in schools of social work). Although it might seem counterintuitive, sometimes partnerships in which the student partner does not visit their faculty partner's classrooms can prompt deeper reflection. When the faculty partner needs to convey to the student partner what is happening in the class, the partnership can feel more collaborative, as the student partner strives to imagine what the faculty partner describes, having to listen deeply for what is explained and what might be overlooked. Instead of the student partner doing the work of analysis based on observation, the work of analysis has to happen between the partners.

Here are two possible approaches for student and faculty partners to consider:

- **Classroom observations plus weekly meetings**

If the student partner will visit the faculty partner's class once a week, will they

- » silently take observations notes only?
- » participate sometimes as well (and if so, when and how)?
- » send the observation notes prior to the weekly meeting or bring the notes to the weekly meeting?

- **Weekly meetings plus other forms of exploration and dialogue**

If for whatever reason the faculty partner prefers not to have weekly visits to their classroom, or if they want to add some of the following to classroom observations, the student partner can employ one or more of these alternative ways to collaborate and be in dialogue:

- » Focus in the weekly meetings on the faculty partner describing to the student partner their pedagogical practices and rationales.
- » The student partner can research pedagogical practices in the faculty partner's field or discipline and discuss findings and recommendations with them. This can be research into pedagogical approaches with which faculty are not familiar but want to be, or it can be research into practices in which faculty already engage to gather evidence for such approaches.

If you decide that classroom observations will be a component of your partnership program, the “[Visiting Faculty Partners' Classrooms and Taking Observation Notes](#)” resource provides detailed guidelines regarding how student partners can be introduced to the faculty member's class and what the student partner's classroom observations notes can look like.

Should student partners interact directly with students enrolled in the course?

Whether student partners interact directly with students enrolled in the course is up to the faculty partner. Some faculty members ask their student partners to share their email addresses, meet regularly with students enrolled in the course, conduct regular or only midterm feedback, and more. Other faculty members prefer that student partners have no direct contact with students in their classes because they want students to come directly to them as instructors rather than have an intermediary.

Student and faculty partners can discuss the pros and cons of various approaches and make a decision together, but student partners should not initiate contact with students enrolled in the class if the faculty member has not agreed to this. As we discussed in chapter 4 under the heading, “How do you practice professional and confidential communication?”, students enrolled in faculty members' courses may approach student partners uninvited. In the SaLT program, we emphasize the importance of student partners listening to whatever input is given and offering to share it anonymously with faculty partners but not sharing what faculty partners discuss or trying to explain what faculty partners are trying to

achieve, which would constitute a violation of the confidentiality of the partnership.

How often should student and faculty partners meet?

Ideally, student and faculty partners should meet once a week for 30-60 minutes. Meeting right before the faculty partner's class is not generally a good time, although some people have made it work. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind about meetings:

- Student and faculty partners should identify a time to meet each week and, as we discussed in chapter 4 in terms of professional communication, if either one is unable to make the meeting, they should let the other know as far ahead of time as possible.
- If the student partner takes observation notes, student and faculty partners should agree about whether the student partner will send the notes ahead of the meeting or bring them to the meeting.
- If the student partner does not take observation notes, student and faculty partners should agree on how they will focus their discussions, as suggested above.

Some student and faculty partners find that they want to meet more often at some times during the term and less often at other times. It makes sense to work around the flow of the term and the other demands on both partners' time, but it is also important, if at all possible, to establish a regular meeting time so that energy isn't spent on, or frustration generated over, that logistical dimension of the work.

How might student and faculty partners structure their weekly meetings?

In the SaLT program, we recommend that student partners open the weekly meetings by asking their faculty partners to identify what they think went well in their most recent class and what areas they might want to focus on for further refinement or improvement. For some student and faculty partners, that general opening is enough to get the conversation going. For others, a more focused prompt is helpful. Sasha Mathrani, a former student partner in SaLT, reflects: "In my experience, it is important to be specific when inviting faculty perspective. Simply asking, 'How do you feel about how last class went?' does not always

bring out much. It is helpful to return to some of the key ‘focuses’ from the beginning, or if the faculty member mentioned a particular concern, ask them about that” (personal communication).

If the student partner is visiting the faculty partner’s classroom, this opening discussion can be followed by discussion of the observation notes taken by the student partner. Student and faculty partners can either work through all the notes, if that is the faculty partner’s preference, or the student partner or the faculty partner can identify some particular points to focus on. Some faculty partners appreciate it if their student partners write short summaries of key issues at the end of the observation notes or separately so that discussion can focus on those.

Some opening questions student partners can ask:

- Given your pedagogical goals for the course, how do you think this last class went?
- Thinking about your request that we focus on [topic or issue identified by faculty partner], what’s your sense of how the class went in relation to that issue?
- Which moments or segments in the most recent class felt particularly effective to you?
- What experiences do you want students to have in your classroom and what should they do to prepare for those?

Some approaches student partners can use to conclude weekly meetings:

- Ask about focus: Given what we have discussed today [noting examples], would you like me to keep the same focus for my next observation or shift my attention to something else?
- Offer appreciation/affirmation: I really appreciated your explanation of why you designed the main class activity the way you did. If I had been a student in the class, that would have helped me so much because . . .

If the student partner is not visiting the faculty partner’s classroom, these weekly meetings will be informed by the faculty partner’s descriptions of what is happening in their classroom. In this case, the student partner’s role is to ask questions, invite reflection and analysis, and offer suggestions based on what emerges from the faculty partner’s description.

Some opening questions student partners can ask:

- Given your pedagogical goals for the course, can you describe parts of the class that seemed to you to move toward meeting those goals?
- Were there moments or segments in the most recent class that felt particularly engaging and effective to you? Can you describe them to me and explain why they felt engaging and effective?
- What experiences do you want students to have in your classroom and what should they do to prepare for those?

Some approaches student partners can use to conclude weekly meetings:

- Ask about focus: Given what we have discussed today [noting examples], what would you like me to think about between now and our next meeting?
- Offer appreciation/affirmation: I really appreciated your explanation of why you designed the main class activity the way you did. If I had been a student in the class, that would have helped me so much because . . .

Should student and faculty partners revise the approach or focus of their partnership as the term progresses?

Some student and faculty partners in the SaLT program move through the entire term using the same observation note format, shifting focus as the term progresses. Others find that by week 8 or 10, or even sooner sometimes, they are ready for a change of focus and format. Here are some options for shifting focus:

- The student partner can experiment with different note-taking approaches to make new aspects of the course visible for them and their faculty partner (see “Mapping classroom interactions” below and the [“Mapping Classroom Interactions”](#) resource).
- The student partner can visit a different class the faculty partner is teaching, if the student partner is available to do so.
- The student partner can research particular pedagogical approaches or threshold concepts within the faculty partner’s discipline and discuss how they might inform teaching in this or another course.

- The student partner and faculty partner can begin to plan courses for future. They can use the template for backward design (Wiggins and McTighe 2005, *Understanding by Design*) or the guidelines offered by L. Dee Fink (2013) in *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* to think in concrete ways about how to apply what they have explored during the semester's work to another semester's courses.
- The student partner can respond to the faculty partner's syllabus for the next course they will teach or a course they will be revisiting and note what seems especially inviting and "promising" (see Lang's [2006] discussion of Bain's concept of "The Promising Syllabus") or confusing or puzzling and would benefit from revision or expansion.

How can student and faculty partners conclude their partnerships?

There are several aspects of concluding the partnership that student and faculty partners will want to consider. These include the following:

- Student partners may conduct the final feedback for the class, using the college or university's form or a form the faculty partner develops with the student partner. This approach affords the same benefits as the student partner conducting midterm feedback and also gives the student partner a chance to say thank you and good-bye to the class.
- The student partner can compose an annotated list for the faculty partner of things they learned, accomplished, and might take forward—basically, a validating list of what the faculty partner did during the term as well as a few (maybe one to three) ideas about what to continue to work on. We explain this in the section called "Creating end-of-term annotated lists" below and in the "**Representing What Student and Faculty Partners Have Explored**" resource.
- Student and faculty partners will want to have a final conversation in which each one:
 - » shares what they got out of the partnership; and
 - » asks for some feedback about the work (i.e., What did I do that was particularly useful? What could I have done more of

or better?). This latter conversation is particularly important to make the exchange feel reciprocal—so both partners are getting feedback on their teaching and learning within the partnership.

- In the SaLT program, student partners write letters to their faculty partner articulating what they got out of the partnership—lessons they learned, insights they gained, aspects of the relationship they appreciated, or ways the partnership experience enriched them as learners, teachers, or people. See the section below called “Writing thank-you letters” and the [“Representing What Student and Faculty Partners Have Explored”](#) resource for details. Sometimes faculty partners also write letters of appreciation, and we recommend this form of reciprocity.
- Have a final meeting in which both partners share appreciations, takeaways, and letters of appreciation.

What can student and faculty partners do to make the most of their partnership?

The following points are, from Anita’s perspective, particularly helpful in thinking about how to make the most of partnerships.

- **Create personal connections.** Once student and faculty partners have gotten to know one another, they can create personal connections throughout the partnership. Reference moments like “I remember when you mentioned . . . I can see that applying in this situation where . . .” It is okay and even deepens the personal connection to spend some of the weekly meeting time talking about non-class-related topics. It is part of building the connection that makes the partnership stronger.
- **Develop the capacity to “read” your partner and share your insights in a way that is accessible.** The observation notes student partners take give them the perfect opportunity to reflect on and pick out main themes that stood out and main points to draw their own and their faculty partners’ attention to. Both partners can practice “reading” one another and framing the points they want to make in a way that the other can hear. There is a time and place

for everything, so gauging what makes sense to relay to a partner when, given the time frame and the feeling of the partnership, is important.

- **Draw on and generate resources.** Student partners can review the resources provided by the director of the program, and the reflections peers offer in weekly meetings can also serve as a resource. In turn, faculty partners can respond to as well as ask for input from all the student partners who participate in the weekly meetings, not only their own student partner.
- **Don't be afraid to ask questions!** If either a student or a faculty partner is nervous, confused, or puzzled about anything, they should speak up. The weekly meetings of student partners are support sessions as well as the primary resource for gathering a wealth of student perspectives on pedagogical and curricular questions. Faculty partners find, in the same way, that the weekly meetings with their student partners can become an important source of support.
- **Be intentional about building skills.** When student partners are in weekly student partner meetings, they can think about the strengths they identified during the student partner orientation and go through how they have been applying or could apply them in their partnership. Similarly for weaknesses, they can consider how they can strengthen their approaches through the interactions they have with their faculty partner and the program director, as well as during student partner meetings. Once again, the weekly meetings between student and faculty partners can provide the same kind of forum for faculty partners, affording them an all-too-rare opportunity to think about and affirm their strengths and the further capacity they are building.
- **Affirm yourself.** Partnership can be emotionally demanding, so it is essential that student and faculty partners not be hard on themselves when things may not seem to be going well. Remember, each individual student and faculty partner has unique insights and contributions to make to the partnership. Find ways to step back, name, and appreciate what each brings to partnership, and

try to identify and celebrate what the partnership and the individuals within it are achieving, even if that sometimes only feels like surfacing struggles or frustrations.

- **Translate what you learn in partnership beyond partnership—in courses, after graduation, and in professional life.** Student and faculty partners can think about the cumulative skills they are developing as their partnership continues and think about ways they can name those experiences when explaining what partnership means. Partners can ask themselves questions like: How have you grown? Can you name these skills? What are the outcomes of your partnership? This reflection is useful to students as they apply for jobs and for faculty as they approach moments of review.

What techniques might student and faculty partners use?

The techniques described here provide student consultants the opportunity to bring their unique perspectives as students and their heuristics as knowers to bear on what unfolds in classrooms. Because they are students themselves but are positioned as observers of teaching and learning, rather than learners of subject matter, they have a unique vantage point and time to focus on patterns of interaction. Students in the class should know that all observations are for the purpose of analyzing classroom environment and dynamics with the goal of making them as inclusive as they can be.

Below is a set of approaches that student and faculty partners have developed in the SaLT program. These include taking observation notes, mapping classroom interactions, gathering feedback, creating end-of-term annotated lists, and writing thank-you letters.

Taking observation notes

Reading observation notes is, in one faculty partner's words, like "looking in a mirror, only better" (quoted in Cook-Sather 2008, 473; see also Abbott and Bean 2017). Observation notes provide a play-by-play of the class session as described from a student perspective and offers a student's reflections on and questions about what unfolded during the class session. If you decide that classroom observations will be a component of your

partnership program, see the “[Visiting Faculty Partners’ Classrooms and Taking Observation Notes](#)” resource for detailed guidelines. This resource provides a description of the SaLT approach to note-taking, as well as sample observation notes. It addresses these questions:

- How should student partners be introduced to the faculty member’s class?
- What should the student partner’s classroom observation notes look like?
- What helps student partners gain confidence in note-taking?
- How might observation notes be written up?

Mapping classroom interactions

Classroom mapping captures the physical space of a classroom and how faculty and students occupy it in a way that descriptive, written notes cannot. As Abbot, Cook-Sather, and Hein (2014) explain: “This approach moves the patterns of participation from abstract notions to concrete representations, and it provides detailed records to which faculty and their consultants can return and use to inform consideration of what changes in pedagogical approach might be beneficial.” As another faculty member who used classroom maps explains:

“ Having the maps as a point of reference made it easier for me to facilitate the class and assess student performance because I was not forced to do both concurrently. Over time, I could trace patterns in students’ engagement, note who commonly responded to whom, and even anticipate the types of in-class work that would best engage this group. (Corbin 2014, 2)

See the “[Mapping Classroom Interactions](#)” resource for detailed instructions for how to map and sample maps.

Gathering feedback

Student partners are especially well positioned to gather feedback from students enrolled in their faculty partners’ courses. They can collaborate with faculty in formulating questions that are likely to evoke constructive

responses, they can put students enrolled in the course at greater ease, they can deepen students' metacognitive awareness and deepen their learning, and they can provide feedback that is more candid and reliable than impersonal, end-of-term feedback (Cook-Sather 2009; Marquis et al. 2018a).

In the “**Gathering Feedback**” resource we address these questions:

- How can faculty partners decide if they want to gather feedback?
- What goals do faculty partners have for gathering midterm feedback and do their questions match their goals?
- How can faculty and student partners prepare for the emotional demand of receiving feedback?
- How can faculty and student partners plan to communicate to students ahead of time that student partners will gather feedback and share it with faculty partners?
- What approaches might faculty and student partners take to gathering feedback early in the term?
- What approaches might student and faculty partners take to gathering midterm feedback from students enrolled in a course?
- How do faculty and student partners process and share back the midterm feedback?

Creating end-of-term annotated lists

Typically, student partners spend a full semester—or longer—with their faculty partners. Over that time they gain a deep sense of their faculty partner's pedagogical commitments, classroom approaches, ideas about curriculum, and much else. They gather many hours' worth of observation and conversation notes, and they are in a unique position to make sense of all of these.

One of the final responsibilities of student partners in classroom-focused partnerships through the SaLT program is to draw on all their notes to create annotated lists or other representations of what they hope their faculty partner will be able to celebrate and also to keep working on in the future. To create such an annotated list, student partners read back through all of their observation notes, notes from weekly meetings, and any other resources. They can also ask their faculty partners to revisit

and reiterate their original goals from the beginning of semester and to identify goals they have going forward. These questions can help student partners shape their annotated lists.

Some student partners present their annotated lists as shown in this example from one of Melanie's partnerships:

Pedagogical Strategy: Small Group Discussions

Description: You often have the class break into smaller groups to discuss. Sometimes, you have the groups already assigned while other times you have students count off to form these small groups. You travel between the groups to hear from and participate in their discussions.

Benefits: Some students feel more comfortable in smaller settings. Small group discussions give a larger variety of students the chance to participate. Small group discussions also allow for students to get to know each other better and see how other students investigate texts.

Potential Drawbacks: Sometimes, students wouldn't really talk to one another or try to answer the question, but would instead wait until you had arrived at their group and expect you to answer the question for them.

For Next Time: It might be helpful to have students always work in the same groups and to have these groups be connected to student writing as well. It also might work if you only sat with one group (as a full group member) rather than floating between the groups and therefore giving some students the chance to simply "wait" until you arrived at their group and gave them the "answers."

Student partners might also use a kind of annotated outline format. For instance, Melanie's annotated list mapped out practices that she and her faculty partner discussed and that the faculty member used in her class, and she then included with each practice a short annotation describing each item and affirming how her faculty partner used it effectively to

accomplish her goal of creating a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. One annotation read:

Pedagogical Transparency

Assignments as skill-building

You've talked explicitly to students this semester about how the assignments for the course build on one another and provide opportunities for students to develop their skills. I think this is a really wonderful and helpful way for you to structure the assignments, and I think talking about it with the class allows them to be more critically aware of how they are applying different skills to each assignment. They can also take away a greater sense of what they have learned in the course.

Your role during small group work

I appreciated that you articulated to students what you would be doing while they discussed in pairs or small groups. I think it was meaningful that you let them know that you would be standing by taking notes to bring back to the large group so that they weren't worrying about what you were doing. By being transparent in this way, small group discussions are able to continue as you move around the classroom.

Melanie's full annotated list can be found in the "[Representing What Student and Faculty Partners Have Explored](#)" resource.

Another student partner in the SaLT program, Crystal Des-Ogugua, developed a different approach. As she wrote to her faculty partner: "This is a compilation of observed efforts you took to set up a positively functioning classroom environment. I have condensed my notes/observations into a chart that shows how you impacted classroom discussions, student comprehension of materials/content, and students' responsiveness in class" (personal communication). Crystal developed a key that included:

- **Teacher-Student:** Efforts made by the teacher that directly impact the student

- **Student-Student:** Efforts made by the teacher that encourage and promote student-to-student interaction and learning
- **Student-Classroom:** Efforts made by the teacher to promote student participation and interaction with the entire classroom environment
- **Teacher-Classroom:** Efforts made by the teacher to engage and improve the entire classroom environment
- **(Potential Section) Student-Self:** Efforts made by the teacher to facilitate and engage student self-development

An example of her chart can be found in the “[Representing What Student and Faculty Partners Have Explored](#)” resource.

Other student partners have taken alternative approaches, such as creating websites through which their faculty partners can easily navigate. Faculty and student partners can decide which format is preferable given the aspects of pedagogy they have focused on and what kind of representation would be most useful to faculty partners in future.

Writing thank-you letters

For the majority of the semester, dialogue between student and faculty partners is focused on faculty members’ practice, affirmation, and growth. Of course, many partners regularly discuss what student partners are learning as well, but the main focus is on the faculty members’ pedagogy. At the end of the semester, all student partners in the SaLT program write their faculty partners personal letters that include thanks for what student partners gained through the partnerships—as learners, as future teachers (some of them), and as people.

The gratitude student partners articulate reinforces the positive aspects of the relationship they have built with their faculty partners as well as clearly names the benefits to the student partners. An excerpt from one consultant’s letter is reproduced in the box below:

“Thank you for being in this relationship with me and for helping to create this opportunity in which I have been able to so grow my self-confidence and sense of self-worth. Thank you also for making this a truly reciprocal relationship: You have quickly become one of

my most valued mentors, and I am so grateful that this relationship will continue after we both (I, more immediately) leave the physical space of [Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges]. Your interest in and support of all that I do means a lot more than I can say.”

—Student partner in the SaLT program
(personal communication)

Although student partners may have thanked their partners for the opportunity to work with them throughout the semester, the final letter formalizes that gratitude, separates it out from the flow of the work together, and marks it as particularly meaningful while also explaining that meaning. Writing the thank-you letter is an opportunity for student partners to pause and articulate for themselves what they have learned from this partnership. As the culminating communication from student partners to their faculty partners, these letters constitute a positive ending to the partnership, sounding a note of appreciation and gratitude that reverberates into the future for the faculty partners. It also opens the door to the possibility of informal collaboration in the future, which can be reassuring for faculty moving forward. While the benefits of the approach may also accrue to the student partner, we propose that the receipt and reflection on gratitude has mutual benefits for the faculty partner as well. In the “[Representing What Student and Faculty Partners Have Explored](#)” resource, Melanie and Anita offer additional guidelines for writing thank-you letters.

YOUR TURN

Preparing for partnership:

How can student and faculty partners in your context best lay the foundation for a productive pedagogical partnership?

Establishing a focus for partnership:

How can student and faculty partners establish a focus for their work?

Do the common areas of focus for pedagogical partnerships listed in this chapter resonate in your context, or do you anticipate other areas you might want to name?

Selecting approaches:

What should the student partner role and responsibilities be in any given partnership? Weekly observations and meetings or only meeting? If observations, mapping? Gathering feedback? End-of-term annotated lists? Thank-you letters? Other possibilities?

What are the pros and cons of asking student partners to interact directly with students enrolled in the course?

What can student and faculty partners do to make the most of their partnership? Which of the points listed in this chapter would support productive partnership in your context?