Guidelines for Student and Faculty Partners

Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) Program 2019
Teaching and Learning Institute at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges

Developed by Alison Cook-Sather, Director, and Student and Faculty Participants in SaLT
Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges

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INTRODUCTION

Classroom teaching is generally conceptualized and practiced as a private, individual activity, undertaken in what Lee Shulman, President Emeritus of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, has called "pedagogical solitude." It is rare for most teachers to invite outsiders—colleagues, students, or others—to enter their classrooms as observers or consultants and to discuss what happens there.

Student-faculty partnership offers a particularly exciting way to step out of pedagogical solitude. By working with a Student Consultant, faculty members afford themselves an unusual opportunity to engage in intentional dialogue about pedagogical issues with a student who has extensive experience as a learner but who is not currently enrolled in that faculty member's course. In scholarship and practice, there is a growing interest in the potential of such cross-role dialogue and collaboration. A widely referenced publication of the Higher Education Academy in the United Kingdom, *Engagement through Partnership: Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, draws on extensive scholarship to propose a new conceptual model for exploring the different ways in which students can be partners in learning and teaching, including through active learning; subject-based research and inquiry; scholarship of teaching and learning; and, curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy (Healey, Flint, and Harrington 2014).

In *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching: A Guide for Faculty*, Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten (2014) analyzed a wide range of such partnerships across diverse institutions of higher education and found striking similarities in outcomes:

(1) **deeper engagement**—both faculty and students experience enhanced motivation and learning, and both express a greater desire to invest time and energy, to work harder, to explore and learn;
(2) **greater awareness**—both faculty and students develop greater metacognitive awareness, both come to see more clearly why they do what they do as teachers and learners and why what works does work or why what they are doing is not working as well as it could; and both develop a stronger sense of identity as teachers and learners, which allows them to take greater risks and to grow; and
(3) **enhancement of classroom experience**—both faculty and students report improved practice; both talk about being more successful and more effective and about having a better classroom experience.

These outcomes have been confirmed in subsequent research.

While the outcomes that the majority of participants experience across partnerships are consistent, every partnership is different. Yours will evolve based on your identities and personalities, the kinds of experience both of you have had with teaching and learning, the course that is the focus of your work together, and many more variables. For the partnership to foster the kind of learning it has the potential to promote, it is essential that you both feel as safe and supported as possible as you venture into these forums for critical reflection on and dialogue about teaching and learning.

The guidelines offered in this booklet were compiled by Alison Cook-Sather, the Director of the Teaching and Learning Institute (TLI) at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges. They are based on more than ten years of experience facilitating the Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program through which undergraduate students and faculty members work in semester-long partnerships, and they are informed by feedback and advice from faculty members and student consultants who have participated in SaLT. In response to students' requests, non-binary, gender-neutral pronouns are used throughout.

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Basic Expectations Regarding Student Consultants and Their Work

Student Consultants are resources and dialogue partners; they bring their own individual perspective as a student (not an omniscient or representative student perspective), and they bring skills to engage in discussion. They are not expected to have any definitive answers or solutions to perennial pedagogical challenges, and thus the expectation is not that faculty partners should simply implement anything that student partners suggest. Rather, consider your dialogue part of a newly informed conversation about classroom practice.

Pedagogical partners are expected to participate consistently in any forum to which you agreed when you chose to participate in SaLT, communicate with candor and courtesy, reflect on your work using the means provided, and uphold the confidentiality of your pedagogical partners.

Please communicate with your pedagogical partner and with the director of SaLT if you are not able to fulfill your responsibilities or if you have a concern of any kind about your partnership. It is essential that there be early and ongoing communication about any problems or issues—as well as about what is working well!

Remember that each partner brings expertise and valuable insights. Faculty partners bring disciplinary expertise and a range of pedagogical experiences, and student partners bring expertise in being a student and a unique perspective as student not enrolled in the focal course. Student partners are advocates and liaisons for not only the students enrolled in the course and faculty partners but also for the transformative pedagogical tools that may be overlooked. No matter what may seem "small" or "large" to student partners as they observe, as long as the two of you are consistently engaging in dialogue as well as questioning assumptions, the pedagogical work you do together will have an impact.

Drawing on some of the root meanings of the word "consult" — to deliberate, to confer — the term "consultant" emphasizes the dialogic nature of student-faculty partnerships: the idea that people benefit from seeking out one another's perspectives and discussing how those might inform teaching and learning. The term is not intended to evoke business transactions, but it is intended to signal professionalism. Thus, it is helpful to think about the relationship as one of shared inquiry in which both faculty member and Student Consultant contribute to and learn from the partnership.

Important: Consultations are for learning purposes and in no way formally evaluative (i.e., they will not be used for review, promotion, etc. unless faculty members choose to include them in their dossiers). Unless faculty wish to share with others what they learn through the consultation process, Student Consultants' perspectives on faculty teaching will remain strictly confidential, discussed only with faculty partners and in closed meetings among other Student Consultants and the director of the program insofar as necessary to support Student Consultants in working with faculty partners.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR PRODUCTIVE PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIP WORK

- ### Reading the guidelines

In preparation for embarking upon pedagogical partnership, it is helpful if student and faculty partners read these guidelines carefully. They lay out options for preparing for, embarking upon, sustaining, and concluding classroom-focused pedagogical partnerships.

- ### Making early contact

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 student partners can amend 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]

It is helpful if faculty partners respond promptly and arrange with their student partners an initial meeting time. It is best to meet prior to the first day of the focal course, but if that is not possible, faculty and student partners should agree on whether the student partner will attend the first class session (recommended).

- ### Building rapport

Focusing 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 hopes for learning in this context and what inclusive, engaging, and effective pedagogical approaches have they experienced? How can pedagogical partnership support addressing 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.
- **Take time to ask how other things are going**—research, other courses, how you are feeling about the class you are focused on. Slowing down to make space for some of these more

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personal exchanges, before you get into talking about specific things you 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 a whole people, not just as teachers and students, you will be better able build a strong and trusting connection that will enable the part of your work that is focused on affirming what is already working and improving teaching and learning in ways you imagine and develop together.

• Establishing a focus for your 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. To give faculty partners an opportunity to clarify these and student partners a chance to learn about them, student partners can ask faculty partners 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 X is important to the success of this course and your students. Perhaps that should be our initial focus as we begin this partnership?" This focus will likely evolve and change over the course of the semester.

Depending on the kind of relationship the student and faculty partner 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.

Among the common area of focus for pedagogical partnerships are:

Co-creating a classroom environment conducive to learning

- o Is there an opportunity for everyone in the room—students and faculty member(s)—to identify, share, and discuss hopes and needs regarding the learning environment?
- o Are the hopes and needs recorded and documented such that they can be returned to, consulted, and, if necessary, revised?

Setting up clear expectations for engagement, participation, and contribution

- o Are these expectations established at the beginning of the semester (regarding course, assignments, contributions, etc.)?
- o Are they co-created with students?
- o Does the faculty member return to them throughout the semester, revise and/or reaffirm them?

- Are there clear, detailed guidelines for student facilitation and presentations?
    - How does the faculty member help the students prepare to facilitate and present?
    - What role does the faculty member play when students are leading the class? What effect does that have on the students and on the presentations?

Delivering effective lectures

- Is the lecture well organized, clear, delivered at an appropriate pace, engaging?
- How does the faculty member use the blackboard, whiteboard, or other technology?
- Do they face the students or the board most of the time?
- Do they allow pause time for answers to questions they pose?
- Do they create space for students to ask questions?
- What kinds of questions do students feel comfortable (or uncomfortable) asking?
- What does students' body language tell you about their experience of the lecture?

Leading good discussions

- Do the discussions have a clear focus and movement/direction? Do they go off on tangents that are useful or distracting? Do they tend to jump around, remain unfocused, and not really get anywhere?
    - What could the faculty member do to keep focus and momentum?
    - What could the students do to keep focus and momentum?
- What kinds of questions does the faculty member ask and encourage?
    - Questions with answers the faculty member obviously has in mind?
    - Open-ended questions with multiple possible answers?
- Do students talk to/with one another or are all responses or questions directed back to the faculty member?
- Does the faculty member make connections among student contributions and between what students say and the course readings? Do students sometimes take this role as well?

Fostering respect in the classroom

- Does the faculty member answer questions clearly and respectfully?
- If the topic under discussion is sensitive in some way (i.e., about religion, race, etc.), does the faculty member respect individual students' experiences of and investments in the topic?
- Does the faculty member demonstrate awareness of their own identity in relation to the topic?
- Is there a respectful climate or atmosphere in the class?

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Resources for Common Areas of Focus

C*reating more inclusive classrooms*

Cook-Sather, A., & Agu, P. (2013). Students of color and faculty members working together toward culturally sustaining pedagogy. In J. E. Groccia & L. Cruz (Eds.), *To improve the academy: Resources for faculty, instructional, and organizational development* (Vol. 32, pp. 271–285). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cook-Sather, A., & Des-Ogugua, C. (2018). Lessons we still need to learn on creating more inclusive and responsive classrooms: recommendations from one student-faculty partnership program. *International Journal of Inclusive Education.* DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2018.1441912

Marquis, E., Jung, B., Fudge Schormans, A., Lukmanji, S., Wilton, R., & Baptiste, S. (2016c). Developing inclusive educators: Enhancing the accessibility of teaching and learning in higher education. *The International Journal for Academic Development*, *21*(4), 337-349.

Perez, K. (2016). Striving toward a space for equity and inclusion in physics classrooms.*Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*, 18. https://repository.brynmawr.edu/tlthe/vol1/iss18/3

Encouraging engagement and contribution to classroom discussion

Abbott, C., & Been, L. E. (2017). Strategies for transforming a classroom into a brave and trusting learning community: A Dialogic Approach. *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*, 22. https://repository.brynmawr.edu/tlthe/vol1/iss22/3

Cheung, F. (2015). Valuing half-formed thoughts in class discussions. (from Bellarmine University Teaching Tip Archive)

Reckson, L. V. (2014). The weather in Hemingway. *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education, 11*. https://repository.brynmawr.edu/tlthe/vol1/iss11/6

Wagner-McCoy, S., & Schwartz, E. (2016). Gaining new perspectives on discussion-based classes in English and the humanities. *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education, 17*. https://repository.brynmawr.edu/tlthe/vol1/iss17/3

Teaching in a post-truth era

Volk, S. (2016). Finding Our Voice in a 'Post-Truth' Era. (blog post from Oberlin's Center for Teaching Innovation and Excellence).

Kreider, T. (2018, March). Go Ahead, Millennials, Destroy Us. *New York Times*.

Chavez, A. F., & Longerbeam, S. D. (2016). Chapter 6: Top 10 Things Faculty Can Do to Teach Across Cultures. *Teaching Across Cultural Strengths: A Guide to Balancing Integrated and Individuated Cultural Frameworks in College Teaching.*

Nelson, C. (2010). Dysfunctional Illusions of Rigor (a discussion of seven "dysfunctional" assumptions the author made about teaching and students and how he revised those based on research and his own efforts)

Souza, T. (2016). Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom: Concrete Strategies for Cooling Down Tension (pp. 4-5) [There is lots else of use in this document as well.]

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Introducing student partners to the faculty member's class

It is important that student partners be introduced to the class so that students enrolled in the course understand what is and is not the student partner role. Since "student partner" or "student consultant" is not a role that is familiar in most educational contexts, students enrolled in the course might initially be confused about what the student partner is doing there. Experienced student and faculty partners have found that the most effective approach is the following:

- The faculty partner explains to their class on the first day that they are choosing to take part in this partnership program in order to engage in dialogue about teaching and learning in ways that they would not otherwise have the opportunity to do and that the project is not about evaluation in any remedial or punitive sense but rather about critical reflection on teaching and learning for the purpose of affirming, refining, and improving both, and then…
- The student partner introduces themselves. The student partner should reiterate that the purpose is to foster dialogue about teaching and learning, and that they are there to hear from students (if the faculty partner has agreed to that) as well as work with the faculty member to best meet pedagogical goals and learning needs.

Agreeing on the student partner's role and responsibilities

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).

Those who choose to include classroom observations in their partnerships find that the bringing into dialogue of their two different perspectives is a very rich and generative way to surface what is working well already and can be affirmed or extended and what might have been overlooked or not yet explored. As one faculty partner put it: the student partner "has a line of sight into the space of the classroom which I do not have from where I stand." Student partners can devote their entire attention to the classroom dynamics, rhythms, patterns of participation, and more, whereas a faculty member can never do that while also teaching.

Although it might seem counterintuitive, sometimes partnerships in which the student partner does not visit their faculty partner's classrooms can prompt equally deep—and different—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, and instead of the student partner doing the work of analysis based on observation, the work of analysis happens 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)?
  - If the student partner will visit the faculty partner's class once a week, decide when the student partner will deliver to the faculty partner the weekly observation notes.

- **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 his or her 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.

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

This 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 mid-term 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. If students enrolled in a course do approach student partners uninvited, in the SaLT program, we emphasize the importance of student partners listening to whatever input is offered and offering to share it anonymously with faculty partners but not sharing what faculty partners discuss or trying to explain what student partners think their faculty partners are trying to achieve, which would constitute a violation of the confidentiality of the partnership.

Deciding when to 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, if either one is unable to make the meeting, they should let the other know as far ahead of time as possible. (This is especially important if a student partner is coming from another campus for the meeting.)
- 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 when they meet.

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 priorities for pedagogical exploration.

Structuring weekly meetings

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. It is helpful 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 areas of focus from the beginning, or if the faculty member mentioned a particular goal or concern, ask them about that.

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 either 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.

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.

Techniques that student and faculty partners can use

Taking Observation Notes

Observation notes taken by student partners ands shared with faculty partners are one of the main forms of documentation and sources of reflection in classroom-focused pedagogical partnerships. Student and faculty partners in the SaLT program have developed various formats for notes. Most student partners use a form of clinical observation notes, but some prefer a different format. Clinical observation notes have the time in the far left column, observations in the next column, and reflections and questions in the right column.

When student partners visit the classroom, they should be on time, respectful, and stay focused on what the faculty partner wants them to focus on. Unless they and their faculty partner decide to change the focus of the visits, student partners should not focus on issues they were not invited to examine. At the same time, it is important for student partners to follow their gut and use their discretion if there is something that is affecting students' participation, focus, and engagement that their faculty partner may not realize. Student partners can raise such issues with their faculty partners in a thoughtful, respectful way and see how they feel about it. A lot of student partners in the SaLT program have raised valuable points, which their faculty partners had previously overlooked and which made a difference in their pedagogy. Sometimes what student partners initially think of as a throw-away observation can completely change the way their faculty partner thinks about their class.

The student partner should take detailed notes for themselves with the goal of documenting and making sense of what they see. These notes will not be shared with the faculty partner (unless both partners agree this is the better way to go); rather, the student partner will draw on the raw notes to prepare a set of written observations and thoughts that they will share with the faculty partner at their subsequent meeting. Student partners can use the following structure for note-taking:

- Draw a line down the center of each page and label the left side "Observations" and the right side "Reflections."
- As they are observing the class, they should write in the left column what might be called field notes in anthropology or ethnography: notes that describe in as much detail as possible, without analyzing, what is happening in the class and, in particular, examples or instances of the issue the faculty member has asked them to focus on. They should note the time in this column so they know how much time is spent on what kinds of activities in the class.
- During and after their visit to the class, they can write in the right column thoughts, reflections, questions, ideas, and suggestions for their faculty partners based on what they have observed and written in the left column.
    - Student partners should write notes ***to*** their faculty partner (i.e., use "you"; "You ask the students…") rather than ***about*** them (i.e., "Prof Chen asks the students…"). This will make the exchange more of a dialogue and more constructive.
    - Student partners can also write down themes or main ideas or goals that are set. This is a great reminder of what to keep track of.
- When they leave the class, the student partner should be sure to say something about how they enjoyed, learned from, appreciated, etc. what they saw — something true and validating. This isn't just being "nice." Rather, it smoothes the way for honest and engaged conversations between student and faculty partners.

Writing up observation notes

- After completing the observation notes, student partners look those over and write or type up a version of the observations and reflections to share with their faculty partners. In the version they share, they should be sure to do the following:
    - Make sure the left column is descriptive—that they simply describe what they saw happening without analyzing or commenting on it. This is important because it gives faculty partners the opportunity to analyze the observed events of the class themselves rather than having an interpretation already imposed.
    - Include in the right column positive, validating, supportive comments as well as questions and suggestions. It's easy to notice and comment on "problems" or issues, but it is harder — and as important — to comment on what appears to be working well.
    - Frame questions or suggestions in the right column as respectful inquiries that invite further reflection and dialogue using such phrases as: "I wonder about…" or "If I were a student in this class, it might make me feel X when you do Y…" or "I wonder what would happen if you tried…" Constructive suggestions framed in this way are best received and most beneficial.
    - Compose a list of points that capture the main themes or issues the notes raise. Start with ways the faculty partner is successful/good at the focal issue they identified, then name 2 or 3 (not 10 or 20 or some overwhelming number) ways the faculty member might address the focal issue differently. As with their observation notes, student partners should be sure they are respectful and supportive in this section (and again, use phrases such as "I wonder what would happen if you tried…").
    - Imagine themselves in the position of receiving the notes they have generated and read the entire document over to see how they would feel were they to receive it. They can make any revisions necessary to produce a document that will promote constructive dialogue and learning.
- Student partners can discuss with their faculty partners whether this approach to notetaking is the most useful or if they might develop a different approach.
- Student partners can also convey to their faculty partners that if they are looking for more critical comments, that they need to invite those. Some faculty might learn more from explicit critiques. But regardless, it is important that student partners emphasize *why* they phrase their criticism in a particular way.

Sample Observation Notes

TIME	OBSERVATIONS	REFLECTIONS
12:22	You ask a question that relates the reading to the presentation.	It's really helpful that you bring the material that the presenter is covering back to the text. Not only are you making good connections, but you are setting an example that the reading is an active and necessary part of the class.
12:28	You interrupt the speaker a few times to provide additional information.	It's important realize that there will be some connections that you cannot make in order to maintain the fluidity. Also, the fewer comments you make, the more powerful the ones you do make will be. You were really supportive of your students' perspectives, but not overly so. In future classes, you might actually want to play the devil's advocate more. It seems like all your students are really on the same page about

		the issues that you are talking about (with some small variations); it will strengthen their ability to bring the arguments into the real world if they have to argue to defend and verify their beliefs.
12:45	You ask a question and then wait a few moments in silence to wait for people answer, and then a student who has not yet spoken answers.	This student clearly just needed a little bit of time to formulate her answer, and once she spoke she had good thoughts. It was really important and beneficial that you embraced this "wait time."

Mapping Classroom Interactions

This approach was developed by Sophia Abbot and one of her faculty partners when Sophia was a student partner in the SaLT program. Classroom mapping captures the physical space of a classroom and the way 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."

1. Visually portray the classroom: Map furniture, location of blackboards or whiteboard, and projector screen as points of reference.

2. Represent each person in the class with a circle.

    a. These can be color coded to show relevant dimensions of identity, such as student or faculty member for all interactions, or other dimensions of identity that might be particularly salient in a class, such as gender or major field of study.

    b. This information should not be included if maps are shared back to the students in the class, because it can act as identifying information for some, putting focus on individual students rather than on the broader patterns and interactions as a whole. Furthermore, if students always sit in the same place in the classroom, it would be a good idea to change their locations, and tell them about that change in the maps, so that they can focus on contributions and not individuals contributing.

2. Student partners can also represent themselves in some way (e.g., with a small rectangle).

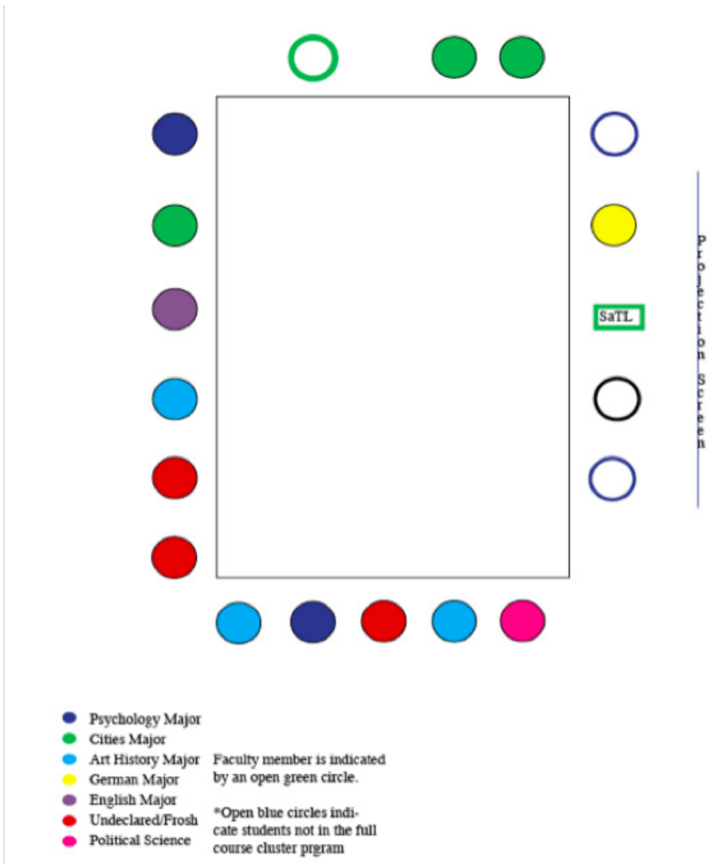

Figure 1: Basic classroom map (from Abbot, Cook-Sather, and Hein [2014])

3. From a basic map such as the one above, student partners can mark discussion and participation as it happens:

a. Draw lines connecting individuals who speak to one another's contributions

b. Mark students who participate verbally with semi-circles radiating from their position on the map, drawing the semi-circles thicker or thinner based on how long a student speaks (e.g., a student who offers a one-word response to a call for input would have her participation marked by a thin semi-circle; a student who speaks for a longer amount of time and makes more connections and analysis in her response might have that participation marked by a thick semi-circle).

This adding in of participants, contributions, and interactions is captured in another map that Sophia created, below.

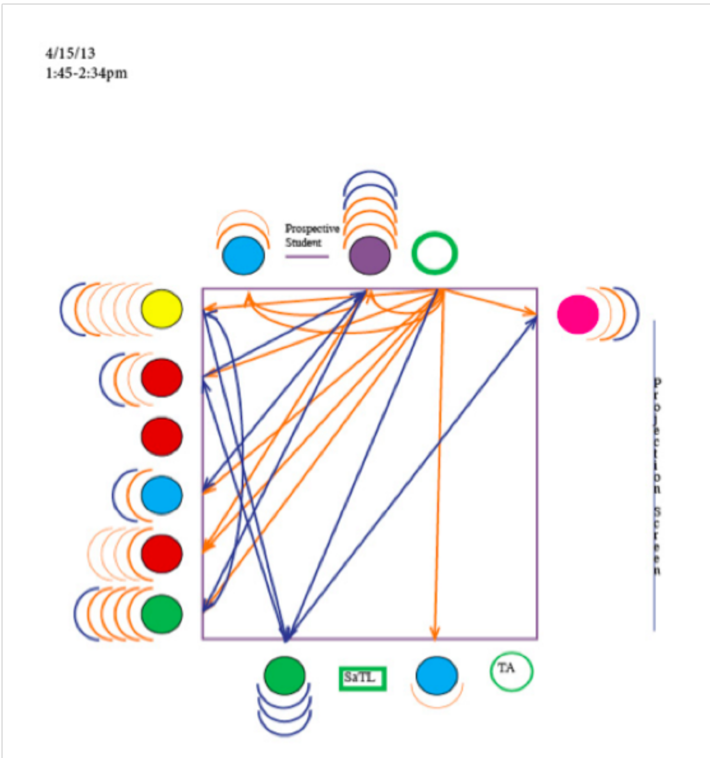

Figure 2: Classroom map with participant contributions (from Abbot, Cook-Sather, and Hein [2014])

In the map above that Sophia created there are two different discussions — one in orange and one in navy blue — both of which were led by students in addition to the faculty member following student presentations. Almost every student in the class participated vocally in the orange discussion and slightly fewer students spoke in the navy blue discussion. The map notes that these discussions took place between 1:45pm and 2:34pm. Using the arrows between individuals, one can see who spoke to whom. For example, an arrow leading from the professor to a student indicates the student spoke in response to the professor. In other words, the professor's comment led to the student's response.

This kind of information, coupled with notes on what individuals say and how the dynamics of the classroom shift over the course of the session, can help faculty and student partners reflect on what aspects of the faculty member's pedagogy might have prompted important learning moments; through analyzing the relationship between the plans faculty had for a class session and the maps of that session, these moments can be identified and explored.

Like other forms of observation and analysis in which student partners engage, classroom mapping requires student partners to develop new modes of attention, new capacities, and a new sense of responsibility, including:

- drawing upon a different skill set and a different perspective
- keeping in mind that maps are for exploration and learning, not evaluation and judgment
- maintaining anonymity

Resources on Classroom Mapping:

Supplemental resource to *Pedagogical Partnerships: A How-To Guide for Faculty, Students, and Academic Developers in Higher Education*.
Elon University, Center for Engaged Learning 2019
www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org/books/pedagogical-partnerships

Abbot, S., Cook-Sather, A., & Hein, C. (2014). Mapping classroom interactions: A spatial approach to analyzing patterns of student participation. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development 33*, 2.

Cook-Sather, A., & Motz-Storey, D. (2016). Viewing teaching and learning from a new angle: Student consultants' perspectives on classroom practice. *College Teaching*, *64*, 4, 168-177.

Corbin, K. A. (2014). Get Out the Map: The Use of Participation Mapping in Planning and Assessment. *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education, 11*. http://repository.brynmawr.edu/tlthe/vol1/iss11/8

Gathering Feedback

Student partners are especially well positioned to gather feedback from students enrolled in their faculty partners' courses. They can be partners in formulating questions that are likely to evoke constructive responses, and they can put students enrolled in the courses at greater ease.

Committing to responding

It is essential that, if faculty partners ask for feedback, they are willing to make some sort of change in response to what students suggest, explain why they can make those changes, and explain why they cannot make other of the suggested changes. Both educational research and students argue that it is worse to ask for feedback and ignore it or rationalize/defend all of one's current practices than not to ask for feedback at all. Gathering feedback is most certainly an emotional experience, but it is a reality of teaching and, beyond that, is essential to it (Lutovac, Kaasila, Komulainen, & Maikkola, 2017).

For these reasons, we recommend that faculty partners, before embarking on the gathering of any student feedback, ask themselves if they plan to acknowledge and affirm student experiences and make use of the feedback they offer. If they do not feel prepared to do both of these, then they should not ask for feedback. If they do feel able to ask for and respond to feedback, they will gain access to the student perspective, promote "two-way communication with learners," and facilitate "open discussions about course goals and the teaching-learning process" (Diamond 2004, p. 226) in which students feel "empowered to help design their own educational process" (Keutzer 1993, p. 239).

Identifying goals

Among the goals that faculty partners in SaLT have identified are to learn about the students' perspectives on a specific question, to assess their learning of course content, to revisit course expectations, and/or to prompt students to think about their engagement in the class. Faculty and student partners can confer about what the goals for gathering feedback might be for the focal course and then generate 3-5 questions to ask students in the class. Each set of questions can be tailored to the particular course within some more general parameters. Many faculty have found variations on the following basic questions very useful and informative:

1. What am I as facilitator doing to maximize your learning and what could I do more or differently?
2. What are others in the course doing to maximize your learning and what could they do more or differently?
3. What are you doing to maximize your learning and what could you do more or differently?

Preparing for the emotional demand of receiving feedback

Anyone who has ever gathered feedback knows that you can receive 100 positive comments and one negative one, and you tend to focus entirely on the negative one. Gathering feedback makes faculty vulnerable emotionally, and so it is important to prepare for that. Student partners can play an important role in helping keep perspective (by reminding faculty partners of the positive feedback and helping them keep from overly focusing on the negative). Student partners can also help translate the feedback, sharing their perspective on what students might be getting at when they write something.

Faculty and student partners should decide ahead of time whether they want the student partner to process, organize, and prepare the feedback for the faculty partner before discussing it. Faculty partners can also communicate to student partners the extent to which they are worried about what the students might say so that they, too, can be prepared and keep an eye out for any triggers.

Communicating to students enrolled in the class that feedback will be gathered

It is important that students enrolled in the faculty member's course have a chance to prepare for the feedback session and that they know that the faculty member will see what they write, not as it is written (in their own handwriting) but as it is transcribed, word for word, by the student partner. We recommend that faculty partners announce that the student partner will gather feedback one or two class sessions before it actually happens so that they are ready. We also recommend that faculty state explicitly that they value the feedback and intend to take it seriously. Students are accustomed not to being asked for feedback or being asked only at the end of the semester, when it is too late to have any effect on their experience in the class. If faculty are not explicit that the request for feedback is genuine and intended to inform the current class, students may fall into the mode of thinking the gathering of feedback is perfunctory.

Approaches to gathering feedback early in the semester

Some faculty and student partners gather feedback from students enrolled in courses in the early weeks of the semester. The goal here is to get a sense early on of whether students are finding the classroom environment conducive to learning, if the faculty member is moving at a pace that works well for the students, if the way the class sessions are designed achieves a productive balance of inclusiveness, challenge, and support, and more. Such feedback can take the following forms:

- "Exit passes" as students leave classes —index cards on which students write one point they feel clearer about after the class and one question they still have.

- Short email surveys sent by student partners that invite students enrolled in the course to offer feedback in response to questions such as:
    - Which class activities best support your learning and why?
    - With which activity/assignment have you struggled most and why?
    - If you had to tell a friend unfamiliar with this course what you are learning, what would you say?

- Brief in-class discussions during which the faculty partner leaves the room for five or ten minutes at the end of a class session and the student partner asks the students enrolled to comment on some aspect of the class upon which the faculty partner might want feedback—any of the questions above or others, such as structure of class sessions, the relationship between lecture and lab, or homework.

All of these forms of feedback accomplish the following:

- convey to students enrolled that faculty care about the learning experience;
- give faculty partners a sense of where student understanding is and allow them to adjust accordingly;

- develop in students metacognitive awareness so that students themselves have a sense of where their understanding is and what adjustments in learning approach they might want to make;
- help faculty partners move toward more of a partnership approach with all students.

For all of these reasons, regular dialogue about the learning and teaching in the course can improve that learning and teaching and also prepare students in the class to offer more thoughtful, constructive feedback at the middle and at the end of the course.

Approaches to gathering mid-semester feedback from students enrolled in a course

Transparency in methodology paired with guaranteed anonymity can give students the opportunity to speak very candidly in the conversation about their personal experiences and specific things they want from the course in the future. In the SaLT program, we have found two basic ways of gathering mid-semester feedback that have been effective for faculty: individual written responses and group conversation, and focus groups. For each of these, student and faculty partners decide together what questions the student partner will ask students enrolled in the course to address. Then, depending on the approach they decide might work best for them, structure time for students to offer feedback.

<u>Individual, written responses and group conversation</u>

- Faculty and student partners confer and make sure that the faculty partner is willing to respond to student feedback.
- Faculty and student partners decide on the questions to ask. It is best to keep the number relatively small—perhaps three to five—because too many questions can be overwhelming, especially if students are going to do focus groups/ large group discussion after they respond in writing.
- Either the student partner or the faculty partner types up the questions on a sheet of paper with spaces for student responses and makes enough copies for everyone in the class. Some student and faculty partners create anonymous surveys through Google or Qualtrics, but if they do this, they need to either ensure that everyone in the class has access to an electronic device upon which to complete the survey or, if students complete the survey outside of class time, expect the response rate to be lower.
- When the student partner conducts the mid-course feedback session, the faculty partner should leave the room. The student partner should remind the students in the class that the faculty member will see the feedback, not in their own handwriting but as transcribed by the student partner.
- It is also helpful for the student partner to remind the students in the class that feedback focused on the class as a learning environment, assignments, etc. and offered in a constructive, thoughtful way is most effective.
- The student partner should first have the students in the class answer the feedback questions on paper in silence and, if there is time and if the student and faculty partner have agreed on this approach, the student partner can draw on what students have written to have a discussion in which they identify broad categories of feedback, record these, and take the written responses with them.
- The student partner then types up student responses in a form that can be shared with the faculty partner and with the students in the class. They should type up all student responses to each question and also provide an overview with the categories or themes they discern.

<u>Focus group discussions.</u> Though responses grouped by question can and definitely do preserve anonymity, if student and faculty partners want to ensure that no response can be traced back to a specific student but that students also can give constructive feedback, they can consider this approach.

- Bring the questions that the student and faculty partner generated focused on their goals for the conversation.
- If the faculty partner is comfortable with this, the student partner can let the spirit of the group determine where the conversation goes.
- The faculty partner should leave the room and the student partner can talk to the group for a half an hour or so about how the class is going. They can record the conversation on their phone, assuring the group that they will delete the recording after the conversation is transcribed.
- Before starting the conversation, the student partner should remind the students in the class that the faculty member will see the feedback as summarized by the student partner.
- It is also helpful for the student partner to remind the students in the class that feedback focused on the class as a learning environment, assignments, etc. and offered in a constructive, thoughtful way is most effective.
- When writing up the conversation, to preserve anonymity, the student partner can begin sentences with "students felt that…" and "though half the group....others thought…", acknowledging the feelings of the group without giving away any identifying factors. The student partner can also summarize the spirit/point of each story without giving any details of stories students tell about their experiences in class. For example, instead of saying "one student appreciated when you gave her an extension on the first paper," student partners can write: "students appreciated your flexibility and reasonable expectations around deadlines."
- When writing up the conversation, student partners might organize the responses by topic (one paragraph about assignments, one about class discussions, etc.) rather than the proceedings of the conversation.
- The write up can end with some general takeaways from the conversation (specific things students wish to change or want from the course in the future).
- There may be students who do not feel as comfortable sharing their perspective in front of their class. Student partners can inform them that they can stay after the discussion group or can even share their email address so that the students can reach out and share feedback that way.

Sharing back the mid-semester feedback

There are two steps involved in the emotionally challenging work of responding to mid-semester feedback once the student partner has gathered it: processing the feedback and talking with the class about it.

Work through the feedback

Faculty partners need to decide whether they would like to receive the typed up feedback before they meet with their student partner or when they meet. There are benefits and drawbacks to each: If they receive it ahead, they can work through it on their own first and then meet with the student consultant to discuss it; if the student consultant walks the faculty partner through it, they can facilitate the process of sense making, but it might be harder for the faculty partner to take it all in and formulate responses to students. It is important to be prepared for the possibility of biased as well as constructive feedback. There is research indicating that some students harbor biases against faculty due to aspects of the faculty member's identity rather than their capacity as an instructor. It is important to think about how to identify biased feedback, when to disregard the feedback due to its bias, and where one may still find a constructive element to the feedback the student shares.

Depending on what faculty partners decide about whether they want to receive the feedback prior to meeting with student partners or during the meeting, student partners can prepare the feedback in a form that is accessible, including both the particular points students offered as well as a short set of themes that can help focus the conversation. Framing is very important. It is always essential to acknowledge the positive comments or the general consensus of what students appreciate about a class. Then, within that framework, think about how to move the conversation from what students in the class appreciate to what may need to be revised in response to their feedback. Student partners can use transitions such as: "However, I did notice some students highlighted a need for …." or "Students see the need to have more of these conversations, so it might be helpful to add more resources on X." If feedback is generally not positive, student partners can acknowledge that in most cases where feedback may not be generally positive, there is most likely a disconnect between the faculty partner's intentions and the students' perception of that intent, which has impacted students.

Together, student and faculty partners can talk through both the content and the emotional challenge of receiving feedback. Once they have processed the content and worked through the excitement and frustration it may prompt, they can identify together some meaningful changes to make and how to formulate explanations—not defenses—for why other changes cannot be made.

Share the feedback with the class

Students in the class as well as faculty partners need to see the range of responses and think about how to address the diversity of students' felt needs while still pursuing the established pedagogical and learning goals for the course. Approaches faculty partners have taken to sharing feedback with the class include:

- Creating a handout to be shared in hard copy or posted online with all the responses to each question aggregated, verbatim, under each question
- Creating a summary of key points to be shared in hard copy or posted online
- Creating a PowerPoint with the main points

In the SaLT program, faculty partners spend between ten minutes and a full class session working through the feedback and deciding with the class what to revise and what needs to stay as it is and why. Again, it is essential that something be revised or the students will, rightly, feel that they were consulted and then ignored. That outcome works against the spirit of gathering mid-semester feedback and is likely to have a negative effect on the classroom environment, student engagement and learning, and end-of-semester course evaluations. It may also be helpful for faculty to have designated office hours that are purely for reflection on feedback whether regarding how students can improve their learning or the kind of support they need to thrive in the classroom. Most faculty find that the mid-semester feedback discussion is a turning point in their classes: when everyone clarifies their own and others' goals and students in the course deepen their sense of responsibility for others' learning as well as their own.

Resources

Cook-Sather, A. (2009). From traditional accountability to shared responsibility: The benefits and challenges of student consultants gathering midcourse feedback in college classrooms. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education,* 34, 2, 231-241.

Walker, A. (2012). The mid-semester challenge: Filtering the flow of student feedback. *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education, 6*. https://repository.brynmawr.edu/tlthe/vol1/iss6/4

"[The profs] talked about what they thought they needed to have looked at, and they told me about their classes and what they do and approaches they have already been taking. We decided what to focus on."
– Student Consultant

"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 Consultant

"[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." – Faculty member

"[The student consultant] has insights that are really good, from the students' perspective; it's really helpful. At other institutions they often have a faculty member who does these observations. Faculty members look for different things; they are keyed in to noticing different behaviors. I think it's important to have someone who is still observing student behavior." – Faculty member

Revising the approach or focus of your 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 and approach:

- The student partner can experiment with different note-taking approaches to make new aspects of the course visible for them and their faculty partner (e.g., shifting to mapping if they have been taking notes).
- 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" or "decoding the disciplines" 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 & McTighe, *Understanding by Design*) or guidelines offered by L. Dee Fink in *Creating Significant Learning Experiences* to think in concrete ways about how to apply what they have explored this semester to next semester's course.
- 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 mark what seems especially inviting and "promising" (see Lang's discussion of Bain's concept of "The Promising Syllabus") or confusing or puzzling and would benefit from revision or expansion.

Whether and how you revise will depend on the partnership, the course, and much more. Faculty and student partners find it useful, though, to step back at the mid-semester point and check in with one another about how they feel the partnership work is going. At around the same time as the mid-semester feedback process within the course, faculty and student partners might want to ask:

- Is the approach we are using for observation notes still working, or should we develop a different approach going forward?
- Does the way we structure our weekly meetings feel productive, or shall we experiment with a different structure?
- What has been most useful about observations and discussions so far and what might we revise?

Capturing all the work student and faculty partners have done over the course of their partnership

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 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 future.

Some student partners present their annotated lists this way:

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 and 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'

Description: You allowed for time to work pairs/discussion groups, whether to answer a question, discuss a difficult research design, improve a study design, or brainstorm policy applications

Benefits: This approach helped fuel discussion. Students had time to think about and make sense of their own observations before sharing with the class, which gave them support. Also, they are teaching and learning from their peers as they exchange ideas. When you would shift attention back to the full class, students who may not have participated otherwise are more prone to want to contribute what they have discussed

For Next Time: There could be an opportunity in a future version of this course for students' evaluation [grade] to reflect these efforts. Although you made it clear in the syllabus from the beginning that their evaluation [grade] would not be based on class participation, students were energized and engaged by these activities, and it would be great to have some aspect of this critical thinking as a portion of their grade

Another annotated list looked like this (this is a partial list):

Facilitation

- Giving multiple opportunities for students to ask questions

    - This is something that I have really appreciated seeing you do this semester. Providing frequent opportunities for students to ask questions gives them time to think and normalizes the act of asking questions by making space for them.
- Turning questions back to the entire room
    - I think that your habit of redirecting questions posed by students back to the rest of the class is a useful teaching tool. It allows students to take ownership of their understanding of the material by providing information to one another, and also democratizes the classroom a little bit by acknowledging that students are capable of parsing and explaining course material.

Pedagogical Transparency

- Assignments as skill-building
    - You've talked explicitly to students this semester about how the assignments for the course build on each other 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.

Yet another student partner created this key:

KEY

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

And her chart looked like this:

	Lectures	Class Discussions	Student Comprehension	Responsiveness/Engagement
Teacher-Student	-being mindful of your placement in the classroom during discussions to make sure you were accessible to all students -repeating students questions to the class to make sure everyone benefitted from your response	-prompting students with discussion questions to move conversation along -relating discussion topics to current/present cultural/societal issues	-mini writing assignments at the beginning of class: a great way to check in with students -break down larger concepts into sections -giving introductions/background info on theorist and authors	-power point presentations to keep students focused/following along -explaining how you give feedback/your expectations for students work/engagement
Student-Student	-having pauses in the lecture where students confer with each other about topics brought up in the lecture-keeps students engaged as well -engaging activities like "agree/disagree" to allow students to see how others interpret class lectures	-trading and sharing responses to discussion questions help students think collaboratively -encouraging/requiring student dialogue outside of the classroom on online platforms (ex serendip/moodle)	-small group discussions to break down terms/concepts together -allowing group work/student collaboration on assignments inside and outside of the classroom	-having students read each other's writing assignments to facilitate classroom community -outside of classroom student engagement activities (finding articles about topics discussed in class

Student and faculty partners can decide whether one of these or another format might be most useful. Some student partners, for instance have created web pages for their faculty partners.

Concluding partnerships

There are several aspects of the partnership that you will want to consider concluding. These include the following:

- The possibility of student partners conducting the final feedback for the class, using the College's and/or a form the faculty partner (or student and faculty partners together) can develop. This approach affords the same benefits as the student partner doing mid-course feedback and also to 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, might take forward — basically, a validating list of what the faculty partner did during the term as well as a few (maybe 1-3) ideas about what to continue to work on. (Described in "Capturing all the work student and faculty partners have done over the course of their partnership" above.)
- Student and faculty partners will want to have a final conversation in which each one:
    - share what they got out of the partnership and
    - asks for some final 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 is particularly important to make the exchange feel reciprocal —so both partners are getting feedback on their teaching and learning.
- Student partners write letters to their faculty partners articulating what they got out of the partnership — lessons they learned, insights they gained, aspects of the relationship they appreciated, and/or ways this experience enriched them as learners, teachers, and/or people. See section below called "Thank-you letters" for details. Sometimes faculty partners also write letters of appreciation.
- Have a final meeting in which both partners share appreciations, takeaways, and letters of gratitude.

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.

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. They also open 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, the receipt of and reflection on gratitude has mutual benefits for the faculty partner as well. The purpose of a thank-you letter is to specifically thank the faculty partner for the ways in which their openness, availability, and willingness to utilize the program to improve their pedagogy and even outlook on situations affected the student partner's own understandings of teaching, learning, and themselves as pedagogical partners. It is to remind both partners how much they have grown and how much of an impact their work together has had. It is always a great feeling knowing that the partnership has concluded by recognizing moments to remember and ways to move forward.

Making the most of pedagogical partnership

The following points were identified by an experienced student partner as 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 personal 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 your partner when, given timeframe and the feeling you get, is important.

- **Draw on and generate resources.** Student partners can review the resources available that provide them with ideas and approaches and take key notes when their peers are speaking in the weekly meetings of student partners. These can be student partners' personal go-to resources. In turn, faculty partners can respond to as well as ask for input from the student partner group, 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 become a kind of therapy and support session 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 also become an important source of support.

- **Be intentional about building skills.** When student partners are in orientation and student partner meetings, they can think about the strength(s) they said they have 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 them through the interactions they have with their faculty partner, in student partner meetings, and in their interactions with their program director.

- **Affirm yourself.** Partnership can take such an emotional toll that it is essential that student and faculty partners not to 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.

- **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?

Advice from Experienced Student Consultants

"My advice for both students and faculty participants is to be as open as you possibly can. The key to these type of exchanges is respect, honesty, and an ability to expose yourself up to new and different perspectives."

"It is always a great start for partners to get to know each other to break the initial silence or rather the 'awkward moments' of initiating conversation. Student Consultants should feel free to open up and ask their faculty partner about their background on the trajectory they took that led them to this moment right now. They should share why they fell in love with the course they are teaching and what they hope their students can get from their course. After establishing this, Student Consultants should discuss their chosen major or interests and if they have any relationship with the kind of course they are consulting in etc."

"I would advise future Student Consultants to make sure they have a few minutes to introduce themselves and what they will be doing to the class from the start so there is no confusion and students feel more comfortable/aware. Also, having clear focus areas that your faculty partner and you create from the beginning is also really helpful but remembering that you'll have to adapt as the class and faculty member's goals changes is important too."

"Be as specific as possible in your note taking; sometimes, interesting patterns reveal themselves in the observations that you are less attentive to."

"It's great to have a professor introduce you and your role to the class, but it's also *really* important to introduce yourself! I find that students are more responsive to me as a consultant when the a voice is put to the 'girl with the notebook.' Additionally, if you plan on interacting with the students, you must make an effort to make yourself approachable."

"Really spend the time reflecting about your classroom observations and your meetings. You'll find that you'll often arrive at answers to problems through your own cognitive processes. In addition, I suggest trusting your capabilities and opinions as an informed student; do not be too forceful but don't be too intimidated either. Your input is wanted and important!"

"Think about how being a student consultant affects the way you conduct yourself as a student, the way you view your professors, the way you see education and your place in it. Breaking down the typical dichotomy between student and teacher and creating this additional role in the classroom provides the opportunity and perspective to redefine how we understand education and the chance to think about what its purpose truly is."

"Go in with realistic expectations about what teachers are probably going to be willing to change and what will probably stay the same. It would also help to talk about the importance of knowing when making a suggestion or trying to "help" will only make things worse. Sometimes the professor just wants to be heard and listening is the best thing the student consultant can do. The semester is long and waiting until the next meeting to give a suggestion or revisit what was said is definitely a good idea."

"Don't let yourself feel frustrated for too long… try to articulate to yourself what it is that is frustrating and seek help from other student consultants or Alison. Most likely, the problem is resolvable, or at least it can be reframed so that you know how to approach it in a different way. Remember that your partner is a person, who has certain insecurities just like all people, and the best way to help them is to be supportive and understanding."

"Be honest with yourself in the Student Consultant Meetings; that's where you can find support."

"Put yourself in the professor's shoes once in a while. How does it feel to receive the comments that you have given them? Good, beat down? What are the next steps for your partnership?"

"No other partnership on campus allows you to look at important issues in the classroom, while working side-by-side with a faculty member. You gain insight about what it means to be a teacher and a student, as well as how professors assess and evaluate student work. If you are looking to improve the educational experience at BMC/HC, becoming a student consultant is the best way to service the community. Be ready for a challenge!"

"Spend time reflecting on your own. This project is only worthwhile if you are engaged and believe that it is helping you grow. It can't be just about helping the professor or answering questions. I really felt like I had to push myself and challenge myself to think critically and to deconstruct my assumptions and build my ideas anew with this experience in mind. I would say that being open to this kind of deconstruction is absolutely necessary for this project to be effective."

"It is alright if you don't have an answer or a suggestion for everything. A Student Consultant's role is to observe the classroom environment, and make their partner aware of what is occurring."

Supplemental resource to *Pedagogical Partnerships: A How-To Guide for Faculty, Students, and Academic Developers in Higher Education*.
Elon University, Center for Engaged Learning 2019
www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org/books/pedagogical-partnerships

FACULTY FEEDBACK ON HAVING A STUDENT CONSULTANT

"I find it really fascinating how much [my student consultant] is able to observe, which I cannot from my vantage point, and I mean this not only figuratively but also literally, as she has 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."

"Participating in this project gave me a sense of students being able and wanting to take certain pedagogical responsibility, and the counter of that is me taking a learning responsibility."

"I think I have a more collaborative model for the classroom…I feel there is a mode of professor as all-knowing font, and there's another possible model that I am kind of a classmate, and that somewhere in the middle there, somewhere in the middle is 'coach'…I am feeling from this experience that I can move more toward the classmate side of the scale."

"What I found most useful was talking to [the student consultant] about the class — just formulating what I was thinking and what I was worried about. What I got was the opportunity to first articulate to myself and to interested people what I want to happen in the classroom, why do I teach to begin with. And then a useful conversation about enacting those goals. And then a better sense of the people I am trying to help, meaning students."

"It is useful to have a contemporary of my students in the classroom who is in fact quite different from the student I had been, who values and responds to different kinds of pedagogical strategies and who literally sees things that I can't see."

"Working with a student consultant over an entire semester was rewarding and at times exhausting. I learned a great deal about my own practices and how to build in structures to generate more self-sustaining learning. It was hard at times to stare into the 'mirror' that was the consultant, but in the end gave me more awareness of my own strengths and weaknesses. Overall, I think the partnership has given me more confidence in my abilities as I am now more cognizant of what my goals are and how I may try to help students achieve those goals in my courses."

"My student consultant was great. One thing in particular she did well was this: she understood that opening oneself up to criticism is a difficult thing to do, and she helped me process the feedback. After our final meeting, she said in an e-mail that she admired my ability to take feedback constructively. I told her that it has been a process in my professional development to get to that point, and I appreciated her acknowledgment of it."

"Working with the student consultant has been fantastic. Especially for the first semester in a new job, in a new place, it is great for getting instant feedback from someone who is already familiar with the norms and practices of the college. It has made the acclimation process so much easier. And the comments given by the consultant are crisp, detailed and very helpful."