

What Are Student-Faculty Partnerships?

Our Guiding Principles and Definition

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Partnerships are based on respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility between students and faculty. These qualities of relationship emerge when we are able to bring students' insights into discussions about learning and teaching practice in meaningful ways—ways that make teaching and learning more engaging and effective for students and for ourselves. In our own teaching and in the partnership work we have studied, we have found that respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility are fostered when we draw on students' insights not only through collecting their responses to our courses but also through working with them to study and design teaching and learning together. So what do we mean by working with students in this way?

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We begin this chapter with a discussion of the three principles that guide our vision of student-faculty partnerships, and we move from that discussion into our definition of student-faculty partnership. We then offer a brief story that illustrates what is possible when students and faculty engage in partnership. We conclude this chapter by reflecting on the ways in which our notion of partnership may seem radical—even countercultural—within many higher education institutions; however, this work is not without precedent. With this foundation established, we hope you can move through the subsequent chapters of the book with a clear vision of student-faculty partnership.

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Guiding Principles for Student-Faculty Partnerships

All practice is guided explicitly or implicitly by underlying principles: they are the spoken or unspoken commitments according to which we act. We have come to believe that student-faculty partnerships rooted in the principles of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility are most powerful and efficacious. Each of these principles is foundational to genuine relationships of any kind, and each is particularly important in working within and, in some cases, against the traditional roles students and faculty are expected to assume in higher education. All three of them require and inspire trust, attention, and responsiveness. They embody what Delpit (1988) has described as listening not only with “open eyes and ears but also open hearts and minds” (p. 298), and they lead to informed action and interaction.

You are likely to have your own associations with each of these terms, so we spend a little time next explaining what we understand by respect, reciprocity, and responsibility, particularly within the context of student-faculty partnerships.

Respect

Respect is an attitude. It entails taking seriously and valuing what someone else or multiple others bring to an encounter. It demands openness and receptivity, it calls for willingness to consider experiences or perspectives that are different from our own, and it often requires a withholding of judgment. In our research, student partners frequently comment on the centrality of respect to their collaborative work with faculty; for instance, one student advises faculty to “be as open as you possibly can. The key to these types of exchanges is respect, honesty, and an ability to expose yourself to new and different perspectives.”

Partnership is built on and through communication. Therefore, this first principle is foundational to pedagogical partnerships because, as one student asserted, “You can’t have good communication

without respect. If I don't respect you, we can't communicate" (Sanon et al., 2001, p. 119). Since dialogue is important in any partnership, you need to establish respect between yourself and those with whom you work, through the expression and reception of open eyes, ears, hearts, and minds. While we advocate that everyone entering a partnership bring an attitude of respect, we have found that it takes time to build trust in practice. The structures and norms of higher education do not necessarily foster the kind of respect that makes student-faculty collaboration into genuine partnership work, so we urge you to take the time to nurture trust and respect.

Some manifestations of respect that you will see in the chapters of this book include the explicit and regular acknowledgment of the different perspectives students and faculty bring to this work. There are examples that make it clear that while student and faculty experiences, perspectives, and even goals are sometimes different, each is taken into consideration and valued. Respect also informs the structures that support the active and engaged participation of both students and faculty members: the examples of partnership in this book illustrate the range of ways that partners and programs create forums and projects that enable students and faculty to contribute in meaningful but different ways to exploring and developing pedagogical practice.

Reciprocity

There is a close connection between respect and reciprocity, the second of our principles. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2000) asserts, "Respect: To get it, you must give it" (p. 22). Likewise, Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) argue that teacher-student relationships "have to be respectful, and the respect must be in both directions" (p. 53). However, while respect is an attitude, reciprocity is a way of interacting. It is a process of balanced give-and-take; there is equity in what is exchanged and how it is exchanged. Therefore, what this principle embodies is the mutual exchange that is key to

student-faculty partnerships. As we state in multiple places in this book, we are not suggesting that students and faculty get and give exactly the same things in pedagogical partnerships. Indeed, partnerships invite faculty and students to share differing experiences and perspectives; those differences are part of what can make partnerships so rich and diverse.

The most basic manifestation of reciprocity in partnerships occurs when students offer their experiences of, and perspectives on, what it is like to be a learner in a course while faculty offer their experiences of, and perspectives on, teaching that course. As the examples and statements we include throughout the book illustrate, when these distinct yet valid sets of experiences and perspectives are shared, partners have the potential to deepen understanding and improve teaching and learning. Reciprocity also involves students taking on some responsibility for teaching and faculty re-envisioning themselves not only as teachers, but also as learners alongside their students.

A general example might help illustrate this principle. In a discussion among a group of students and a faculty member about revising a course syllabus, one student might explain how she experienced a particular assignment, noting how the framing question piqued her curiosity but that the grading rubric seemed to limit her creativity in responding to the assignment. Another student might have a different take on this, highlighting different aspects of the assignment and how they worked for him. A third student might agree with some points the first student made and some points the second student made, but have yet a third angle to share. The faculty member could explain what she had in mind with the assignment, the pedagogical rationale for it, and why she designed it as she did. In this exchange, each would gain insight into the others' perspectives, and the result might be that the faculty member affirms some aspects of the assignment and revises other aspects. The students develop a better sense of what is involved in crafting course assignments—an understanding that

increases their capacities as students, with potential for future benefit. At the same time, the faculty member learns from students' perspectives that there are alternative approaches to inviting students to demonstrate their learning in this course, and which approaches students seem to value more and why.

Responsibility

Our third principle is both a prerequisite for, and an outcome of, student-faculty partnerships. One faculty member captured the connections between reciprocity and responsibility this way: "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." In this recognition we see the give and take of reciprocity and we also see how partnership work changes student and faculty orientation toward responsibility. Students now have some responsibility for pedagogy and faculty share some responsibility for learning.

Reliability and trustworthiness, on both the student side and the faculty side, are essential if partnerships are to develop productively. At the same time, we find that participating in student-faculty partnerships prompts both students and faculty to be more responsible and responsive. In our research we have heard over and over the student refrain that collaborative work with faculty makes them realize that "it is up to the entire community to make learning spaces function, so that means students have just as much responsibility as professors." As we will discuss in detail in Chapter 5, faculty who work in partnership with students typically have a similar reaction, often redefining their understanding of their responsibilities to the students they are teaching.

When both students and faculty take more responsibility for the educational project, teaching and learning become "community property" (Shulman, 2004a), with students recognized as active members of that community and collaborative

partners equally invested in the common effort to engage in, and support, learning.

So What Exactly Do We Mean by Partnership?

Partnership is a slippery term to define (Harrison et al., 2003), and student-faculty partnership might be particularly so because of the vast diversity within higher education. However, Bird and Koirala (2002) identify four key qualities of meaningful partnerships that are closely related to the principles we offered in the previous section and that also inform our definition: (1) trust and respect, (2) shared power, (3) shared risks, and (4) shared learning. These qualities are not always present in college and university classrooms, but we believe that they can be cultivated and nurtured in ways that both constitute partnership and allow student-faculty collaboration to develop.

Partnerships rarely emerge suddenly in full bloom; instead, they grow and ripen over time as we engage with students. We invite students to think about the teaching and learning process. We solicit student feedback and then use that information to change our teaching. We create spaces in class for students to step into the role of the teacher by leading discussions or presenting their research. We challenge students to work together to solve complex problems or to make sense of difficult texts, while we listen carefully and watch, providing guidance or asking questions to help students avoid dead-ends and to focus on central issues. These practices, and many more, imply a degree of student engagement and activity focused on learning and teaching. However, they may or may not involve students collaborating with faculty as partners, or achieve the respect, reciprocity, and responsibility as we define them above, or reflect the qualities of meaningful partnership that Bird and Koirala (2002) identify.

We define student-faculty partnership as a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity

to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision making, implementation, investigation, or analysis. This definition stands in contrast to the student-as-consumer model that has become increasingly prevalent in higher education. It also departs from the traditional “sage-on-the-stage” model of teaching. Partnership, as we define it, positions both students and faculty as learners as well as teachers; it brings different but comparably valuable forms of expertise to bear on the educational process. In this way, partnership redefines the roles of student and faculty not only in relation to one another but also in relation to the institutions within which we work. Partnership redefines processes and therefore our approach to analysis, pedagogical practice, and research in ways that emphasize affirmation as well as create opportunities for change.

We want to be clear, though, that when we talk of partnership (particularly when we use terms like “shared power”), we do not mean that faculty and students are the same. Hildyard and colleagues point out that “many participatory projects rest on the dubious assumption that simply identifying different ‘stakeholders’ and getting them around the table will result in a consensus being reached that is ‘fair’ to all.” They argue that “such an assumption only holds, however, if all the actors involved are deemed to have equal bargaining power (which they do not)” (Hildyard et al., 2001, p. 69). In student-faculty collaborations, we need to acknowledge that our roles, expertise, responsibilities, and status are different. And they should be. Partnership does not require a false equivalency, but it does mean that the perspectives and contributions made by partners are equally valued and respected and that all participants have an equivalent opportunity to contribute. We spend many years developing and honing our scholarly expertise. Likewise, students spend many years experiencing and, in some cases, analyzing learning that might or might not be optimal and engaging. Partnership brings these forms of experience and expertise into dialogue in ways that inform and support more intentional

action. One faculty member who participated in a partnership program explained her understanding of this approach in these terms:

I think when most faculty hear of a program in which students are involved as commentators and collaborators, they assume that the program is giving the students unfettered authority or equality in the teaching process. But I realize now that taking student contributions seriously DOES NOT mean blindly or directly following their opinions and suggestions, but rather taking them seriously, carefully reflecting on and analyzing them, and then addressing the core concerns behind them in a way that is consistent with my overall goals and values.

So while we recognize that the partnership model we advocate represents a significant shift in attitude and approach, and in some contexts, perhaps a dramatic shift, we also want to emphasize that studying and designing teaching and learning in partnership with students does not mean that we simply turn the responsibility for conceptualizing curricular and pedagogical approaches over to students, nor does it suggest we should always do everything they recommend to us. Rather, it means that we engage in a more complex set of relationships involving genuine dialogue with students. Otherwise, we are in danger of what Cleaver describes as “swinging from one untenable position (we know best) to an equally untenable and damaging one (they know best)” (Cleaver, 2001, p. 47).

According to our guiding principles and definition, partnership involves negotiation through which we listen to students but also articulate our own expertise, perspectives, and commitments. It includes making collaborative and transparent decisions about changing our practices in some instances and not in others and developing mutual respect for the individual and shared rationales behind these choices. Indeed, it means changing our practices when appropriate, but also reaffirming, with the benefit of

students' differently informed perspectives, what is already working well. Sometimes it means following where students lead, perhaps to places we may not have imagined or been to before. In all of these cases, respect and reciprocity are integral to the learning process: we share our perspectives and commitments and listen openly to students' insights, they share theirs and listen to ours, and in the exchange, we all become wiser.

How Radical Is the Notion of Student-Faculty Partnership?

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The qualities of student-faculty relationships that we are describing might sound quite unfamiliar or even fanciful to some readers. Each of us has been told: "That might work with your students, but I cannot see it happening with mine." While we do not promise that partnership will be easy or comfortable (at least not at first), we are convinced it is possible—and desirable—across contexts in higher education. Initiating partnerships, however, requires stepping out of traditional roles, something that always is a challenge both to imagine and to do. In many instances, faculty take sole responsibility for creating and teaching courses. This orientation is often experienced by faculty in a largely positive way, enacting our professional obligations and honoring academic freedom. However, this approach also means that students are completely outside the course planning and teaching process.

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In essence, students are primarily responsible for proceeding through the pre-planned weeks of the curriculum, regardless of whether they know why they are doing what they are doing. While some students may be quite active and engaged in this environment, others float along, adrift in their education, because that is often what they think we expect of them (Arum and Roska, 2010; Mann, 2008). Students may choose not to complete the reading or speak up in class. They may do the minimum they can get away with, and then complain about the (sometimes generous) grade

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they receive. Too often faculty and schools unintentionally convey these low expectations to students, and students who feel voiceless, passive, and disempowered then act that way (Green and Popovich, 2012). Indeed, many of our pedagogical assumptions and practices may be contributing to a sense of disengagement. Sambell and colleagues conclude that in many higher education classrooms “our approaches seem to suggest that students are ‘problems’ or lacking in some way,” requiring us to structure and dictate their every action in a highly detailed syllabus (Sambell et al., 2012, p. 149). This is a cycle that alienates both students and faculty from each other, as well as from the shared task that brings us together in the first place.

The experiences we bring to higher education also create distance between faculty and students. In some ways, that distance is hard earned. Faculty have spent years pursuing graduate studies, and sometimes decades after that honing our craft, to become disciplinary experts. Students are not our peers in knowledge, skills, or learning, so it is no surprise that we see them as the recipients, the beneficiaries, of our scholarly achievements. This leads to a situation in which students are considered the people we teach *to*, not the people we are in class *with*. At the same time, students often come to university after years of being taught to be relatively passive learners. In many cases, they have been rewarded for following a prescribed curriculum that prepares them to successfully pass a standardized test that then gives them access to the next high-stakes exam. In many contexts, schooling is a slog, not an opportunity to explore, to learn, and to grow.

We envision partnership as creating the conditions for curiosity and common inquiry, breaking down the barriers that often distance students from faculty. While that might seem radical to some, student-faculty partnerships are not a new phenomenon in education. A century ago John Dewey championed schools where students would have a stronger voice in their own learning experiences (Dewey, 1916). Since then, many theorists and reformers have advocated similar or even more radical ideas (Bovill, 2013b),

and students have sometimes asserted their desire to contribute to curricular and institutional decision making. Indeed, some of today's faculty and academic staff were, not so long ago, among those students who cried out for a more engaged and engaging university.

Although student-faculty partnerships are not entirely new or novel, they are outside the norm at many colleges and universities. We believe that this situation needs to change. Even in a climate when both time and money are all too rare, we believe that flexible, sustainable, and often simple practices of partnership can transform students, faculty, and institutions, helping all of us to achieve our aspirations for higher education. While breaking old habits and shifting established culture can be difficult for students and faculty, our current practices are socially constructed, not inevitable. They have developed over time, and they will continue to change as students, faculty, and education evolve. Indeed, the growth of free, online education is just one example to suggest that under the right circumstances many students will voluntarily study challenging material for no extrinsic reward. Research consistently demonstrates that students will work hard and engage deeply when they experience learning as personally meaningful (Schlechty, 2011; Nygaard et al., 2013). To tap into that motivation and engagement, we need to move away from the isolation fostered by our traditional roles as students and faculty. Instead, we can strive to act as partners, equally invested in the common goal of learning. Embracing change like this requires openness to what Shulman (2004b) has called "visions of the possible" that can inspire our thinking and practice, even when such visions might be offering just a glimpse of a distant horizon.

One Vision of the Possible

To give you a quick sense of what participant experiences within some of these programs can look like and what partnerships can lead to, we will offer a brief story that we see as an illustration of the transformative potential of an institutionally supported student-faculty

partnership. This story unfolds within the context of Bryn Mawr College's Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program, which we introduced in the Preface. In this program, participating faculty and students meet throughout the semester to discuss what they are learning through their partnerships, how their understandings of teaching and learning are being clarified or challenged, and the ways in which they might be reaffirming or revising pedagogical approaches in the classrooms under study. In this and other forums the program provides, teachers not only learn about themselves as teachers, students learn about themselves as learners.

In one meeting of SaLT participants, a student reflected on her experience and shared with the group how her first semester as a consultant changed her orientation toward teaching and learning:

When I was writing the last paper I had [in a particular class], I found myself looking at the prompt and thinking more. The professor wasn't necessarily explicit about making connections, but I found myself being able to look at what the assignment was and being more able to decipher what the professor was emphasizing and what they were looking for. I think I ended up writing a better paper as a result. And it was sort of interesting to realize that I don't think I would have thought of this last semester; I would have just answered the question. Whereas this was more like, what is the intent behind the questions, and why are these questions set up as they are?

This student attributed her critical, active approach toward learning to her consulting partnership with a faculty member. After hearing this student speak, a faculty member mused, "The kind of reflective understanding that the student consultant gets

through her work with a faculty member isn't inert; it makes her a much better learner."

While that story is about a particular student in a specific context, it suggests possibilities for diverse students at many different types of institutions. This student's story highlights how she became a better student—more reflective and better prepared for her own academic work—through her conversations with her faculty partner, and how this then altered how she approached work for other classes. She became a more actively engaged learner through partnership, and she carried that active engagement beyond her partnership.

All of us can recall students like this. These students are so engaged with their studies that they truly make the work their own. They might be common or rare on your campus, but they are everywhere. They don't just answer our questions, they ask their own (often better) questions—and then they relentlessly pursue answers. Many other students we quote throughout the book illustrate how this passion and engagement can be kindled. Such engagement is the fundamental goal of student-faculty partnerships and, as the story above illustrates, is also fostered by them. We believe this collaborative work leads to a radical shift in teaching; rather than faculty and students facing each other across a room in a combative manner, we are sitting on the same side of the desk, working together to pursue the common goal of learning and development.

Throughout the chapters in this book, we include stories like this, as well as shorter reflections from participants in student-faculty partnerships, to give you a sense of how faculty and students experience this kind of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility. As we state in our Preface, our inclusion of so many faculty and student voices reflects our commitment to participatory dialogue and shared meaning making. The quotes are also consistent with our core belief that we create meaning through sharing stories, as well as engaging in systematic and intentional study (Shadiow, 2013).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have articulated our core beliefs about the transformative potential of student-faculty partnerships. We emphasize that in partnership students and faculty make distinct contributions that are equally valued in the pursuit of common goals. What each brings to the partnership—the experiences, expertise, and perspectives—is respected and valued and drawn upon as students and faculty together explore, affirm, and, where appropriate, revise curricular and pedagogical approaches. In this discussion we have attempted to balance what we mean by partnership and what we do not mean, what we advocate and what we do not, and both the contextual constraints we all face and the historical precursors of such an approach.

Our discussion thus far may have raised questions for you, or perhaps you have come to this text with a number of questions. In the next chapter, we address many of the questions we are regularly asked, and we hope our responses prepare you to read about some concrete examples of student-faculty partnerships, which we present in Chapters 3 and 4.

Preliminary Questions about Student-Faculty Partnerships

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Whether you have already been involved in student-faculty partnerships or are just beginning to think about ways in which you might try to establish them, you are likely to have questions about some of the complexities involved in setting up, implementing, and sustaining partnerships. Most faculty have pragmatic concerns about how partnerships might be possible within different disciplinary, institutional, and national settings where very real challenges exist.

We urge you to take your questions and concerns seriously, and we advise against leaping into partnership without first carefully thinking through your goals, strategies, and context. To help you get started, we offer some preliminary responses to questions that we are often asked about student-faculty partnerships. We raise and address additional questions in Chapter 8.

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Students are not experts in either subject matter or pedagogy. How can they possibly help me explore or design learning and teaching?

Indeed, most students are neither disciplinary nor pedagogical experts. Rather, their experience and expertise typically is in being a student—something that many faculty have not been for many years. They understand where they and their peers are coming from and, often, where they think they are going. As Sorenson (2001) wrote in describing one of the first formal student-faculty partnership

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programs in the United States, “as experienced students, they are experts about sitting in classes, understanding new concepts, and creating their own learning” (p. 179). They can contribute to explorations of curricular and pedagogical questions by bringing their backgrounds and perspectives into our thinking and planning as faculty members. This not only expands our understanding of existing student learning and teaching experiences but also can be the beginning of shared dialogue and deeper understanding about learning and teaching content and processes as we exchange perspectives.

Therefore, as we suggest in a number of ways throughout this book, we advocate cultivating or deepening respect for students as partners based on their positions, experiences, and insights as learners. We propose that you think of students as legitimate informants (Feuerverger and Richards, 2007) on the student experience—those with perspectives we cannot have as teachers. We recommend that you conceptualize students as differently positioned witnesses to what happens in and outside of your classroom or online teaching space. You may find that in many cases, students have invaluable insights into curricular structures, assessment methods, learning goals, and even disciplinary content—although they are unlikely to use those terms.

We recognize that many faculty may be uncomfortable with the necessary change in power relations that a more collaborative and democratic pedagogical planning process requires. We discuss issues of power extensively in Chapter 7. We encourage you to be honest with yourself and with your partners about the potential discomfort you (and they) might experience as you begin this work. Fielding (1999) aptly calls partnership a form of “radical collegiality” between learners and teachers. While unfamiliar or even scary, such an orientation also can be exciting and empowering.

I have enough to do already without having to set up all these meetings with students; wouldn't it be quicker to do this on my own?

It depends on how you think about time. People typically find time for the things they consider most important. Working with students as partners in the design or revision of a course probably takes more time than doing these alone. However, time investments up front can pay off later as students take a more active role in the learning process (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009), and working in partnership with students rather than working against them actually saves time as students assume more responsibility for the learning, as well as sometimes the teaching, that happens in a class. The time you spend creating and building partnership that enhances student engagement and accountability is time you save later on: repeating or clarifying when students don't understand; reviewing with students during office hours; responding to drafts of student work; and coping with the frustrations of teaching disengaged students. As the Bryn Mawr student in Chapter 1 explained, partnership helps students to become more invested in and responsible for learning.

My students don't want to design their own learning; they have paid for their education and see teaching and curriculum design as my job. How can I convey the desirability of partnership?

Because partnership challenges the consumer model of learning and the transmission model of teaching, both of which most students have come to expect through many years of schooling, students can feel confused and even frustrated when we propose a different approach. As Bain and Zimmerman (2009) have pointed out, there are students who choose to adopt a surface or strategic approach to learning, skimming across course content or learning only what is necessary for a good grade. Sometimes they make these choices because of the way we design courses and programs. Most students, however, once they have the chance to realize that their expectations of learning result from habit and not desire, recognize that having a hand in designing their own learning is far more engaging,

interesting, and meaningful as a form of education. In Chapter 5, we share with you the experiences of student partners who report the process to be invigorating and empowering; we have heard from many students that this makes their higher education experience far more rewarding.

However, it takes time and flexibility to achieve a revision of what higher education can be, so start small by asking for student input on parts of your course—a single assignment or activity—and give them a chance to see what happens and how it feels when they have that voice. What most faculty find is that if students are invited to work in partnership, even just for a bounded and focused part of the course, their engagement deepens and they begin to shift their thinking. This will vary with students and contexts, of course, but moving toward partnership with students, by taking slow, cautious steps to ensure that students trust the changes, is one of the best ways to inspire students' openness to designing their own learning.

In order to enable this shift to happen more often and in more contexts, we have some work to do to change our own and our students' ways of thinking about learning and teaching from predominant consumer models. As the United Kingdom's National Union of Students points out: "If we seek to engage students merely in order to find out what they want and give it to them, we reproduce this dangerous narrative of consumerism and lose sight of the responsibility of educators to challenge and stretch students" (NUS, 2012, p. 5). A transmission model of education is unlikely to help students become independent and critical thinkers, effective team players, clear communicators, skilled at self-assessment, and socially aware. In contrast, partnerships and other opportunities for students to take more responsibility for learning and teaching can lead to a range of compelling knowledge, skills, and value-based outcomes (which we outline in Chapter 5). However, we should not assume that students already recognize the possibilities of partnership. Explicit invitations and explanations complement

practices that build trust and give students experience acting as partners.

Will students want to do this if they don't get credit for it?

In some forms of partnership, faculty work with a whole current cohort of their students (such as an entire class section) rather than engaging a selected group of interns or consultants. When an entire cohort is involved, and when the partnership work forms an integral part of an ongoing course, students typically are not compensated in any way for their contributions other than with the usual credit for undertaking that particular course.

When faculty work outside of an ongoing course or with a small number of student partners, students are more likely to be compensated in some way. Different institutions have different norms and practices regarding student compensation. In some cases, receiving course credit or pay will be essential to students because they need the income or a certain number of credits per semester, or some combination of these. In other instances, students do not receive tangible benefits but participation is acknowledged by, for example, conferring a formal title on their work (e.g., Student Consultant, Research Partner) that students can include on their résumés and that shows that we value their participation.

What do I do if the culture of my department or institution is not conducive to student-faculty partnerships?

Consider starting small, perhaps by working with a handful of students or talking with a few like-minded colleagues, beginning with people you suspect will be open to the idea of partnership. Set attainable goals such as redesigning a single assignment with students in a course rather than trying to enlist an entire department to redesign the curriculum in partnership with students. Consider piloting some partnerships and let faculty and students learn for

themselves what the possibilities are. And also look for opportunities to advocate for partnership in appropriate venues on campus, whether in formal committee meetings or through informal conversations with faculty and administrators. The language of student-faculty partnership typically aligns with institutional mission and values, allowing you to frame your work as returning to the fundamental goals of your department or university.

Once you can demonstrate the efficacy of partnership work, word will spread among colleagues and the culture may start to shift. In our work, we have found that some colleagues who are initially dismissive or suspicious of student-faculty partnerships change their minds when they have the opportunity to try out a partnership in a low-stakes and well-supported situation. Colleagues may become more open when working in collaboration with one other faculty member and a couple of students, while joining an ongoing program of partnership may help other colleagues feel that they are part of a larger movement, not stepping out alone into unfamiliar terrain.

Finally, be alert for sources to support and fund your partnership work. Often institutions have internal innovation grants, and some external funders are in search of unique and distinctive learning and teaching projects. If you have funds, participants as well as other colleagues may consider your project more legitimate. When you succeed, the project can become an accomplishment that the institution or the external funder can celebrate and promote.

How do I deal with my university's policies that do not support this kind of work? For instance, I am required to have my syllabus and learning outcomes clearly established before my course begins.

Cooke and Kothari (2001) argue that “participatory ideals are often operationally constrained by institutional contexts that require formal and informal bureaucratic goals to be met” (p. 8). Indeed, many universities require faculty to create explicit learning

outcomes for courses and programs. Frequently, this enables students and faculty to be clear and transparent about the purposes and processes of learning and teaching in a course—and that's a good thing. This kind of requirement can restrict (but not eliminate) possibilities for student-faculty partnership in teaching and learning because even if the ends of a course are fixed, the means often are not. For example, you might collaborate with students to decide how best to achieve the established learning outcomes. Encouraging students to become partners in this way puts students and faculty on the same team: striving together to reach goals. Knowing the aims and outcomes of a course and contributing to ways of meeting those can facilitate students' development of greater metacognitive awareness. As we discuss in Chapter 5, such metacognitive awareness—understanding why we learn the way we do and making choices to learn most effectively—can, in turn, contribute to students' capacity to meet course goals. The key here is to take the three qualities of relationship we emphasize—respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility—and to turn them into a mode of working within whatever requirements and constraints you face.

It's OK for you in your course, but in my discipline we have a professional accrediting body. I have to be sure that my students can demonstrate they are competent to meet the professional body's requirements at the end of my course. How can I create a meaningful partnership without risking competency and accreditation?

Faculty from disciplines with professional body requirements may consider that the guidelines set out by these bodies seriously limit the possibilities of cocreation. However, it is important to check what exactly your professional body stipulates, rather than what is commonly believed to be stipulated. Sometimes, for example, professional body requirements focus on graduate competencies and not on when within a degree program a competency is to be developed. Typically, some flexibility exists within

courses and programs for faculty and students to design learning and teaching in ways that they consider most effective for developing professional knowledge, skills, values, and competencies. That flexibility may allow some room for partnerships to develop. Indeed, partnership may help students develop key skills in learning how to learn, as well as self-assessment, teamwork, and other values essential in professional settings and for meeting the mandated competencies.

When is the best time during one's career to devote time and energy to partnership? For example, I'm a new faculty member and have only just worked out my lectures for the first time last year. Do you think partnership with students is more suitable for experienced faculty members?

There is no single best career stage for partnership, and we think this work is appropriate for faculty of all ages and stages. However, because faculty roles and responsibilities vary widely across disciplines and types of institutions, we encourage you to think carefully about how partnership connects to institutional values, how it fits into your career development, and how it might be both supported and rewarded on your campus.

If you are at an institution that encourages collaborative work with students, perhaps through a teaching center or an undergraduate research office, you could try out pedagogical partnership with plenty of support in a context that values time spent on teaching. For instance, all new faculty members at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges are invited to participate in a weekly seminar with other faculty and a semester-long partnership with a student consultant as part of the SaLT program during their first semester at the colleges. Many new faculty find this tremendously helpful in coming to understand the institutional culture and in making the shift from their own graduate work to undergraduate teaching. At

the same time, experienced Bryn Mawr and Haverford faculty also choose to participate in this program because it helps them rethink and reinvigorate their teaching.

If your institution does not have programs and resources dedicated to partnership, and many do not, then you may want to reflect on what you will need to create sustainable partnerships. Are there colleagues who could help you or students who seem ready to collaborate with you? Is there a course you teach that seems particularly ripe for partnership? Would it feel safer to do this with a smaller class of students in the first instance? Over the next year or two, perhaps you can identify a time and a context that might be more flexible to try out a new pedagogical approach like this.

Why change my practice if I'm an effective teacher and my students are already learning what they should?

The goal of student-faculty partnership work is not change for change's sake but rather to achieve a deeper understanding of teaching and learning that comes from shared analysis and revision. It may be that partners reaffirm and clarify why a particular course design or pedagogical approach works well, and the outcome might be that the faculty member makes his ongoing practices more explicit to the students. It may be that a student partner makes a suggestion that the faculty member does not act upon but the faculty member is then better able to articulate sound pedagogical reasons to students about decisions made about the course. In some cases, faculty and student partners produce minor revisions, and in others they completely overhaul a course, assignment, or approach. What kind of change is made and how rapidly should be carefully considered. Indeed, too many changes made too quickly can be disruptive and might even be detrimental, so partners need to think carefully about what kind and extent of change is advisable for all involved.

Regardless of the scope and pace of change that takes place, there is reciprocity in the process: both faculty and students learn from their interactions, are more informed and thoughtful as a result, and carry their deepened awareness and more developed capacities into other contexts and relationships. As you will see in the statements by faculty and student participants we include throughout the book, the biggest impact that change has is upon attitudes: understanding teaching and learning as shared responsibilities rather than responsibilities distinguished and divided between students and faculty. These changing attitudes have broad implications for higher education, including for the best teachers and students.

What if I teach a really big class?

You can take different approaches to partnership in large classes. You might invite students who had previously taken a course to conduct group interviews with current students to investigate a particularly challenging dimension of the curriculum, as Mary Sunderland does in her ethics class in the College of Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. You could invite experienced students to experiment with collaborative redesign of existing course materials, as Francis Duah and colleagues have done in mathematics at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom. You could invite all students enrolled in the course to come to a class consensus about what they need to do to achieve the learning goals of the course and to earn course grades, as Mano Singham, a physics professor at Case Western Reserve University, and his students do. Or you could use examples of student work from a large class as the basis for class discussion and curricular content, as Niamh Moore and Mary Gilmartin at University College Dublin did for their very large, first-year geography program. These and other examples are discussed in Chapter 3.

Won't students think I'm just experimenting on them?

If you invite students into partnership but do not really take up the premises of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility, then yes, students might well think you are experimenting on them. And they might be right. Faculty should be wary of claiming partnership without allowing real opportunities for students to collaborate. If, however, you present the opportunity as one in which you are truly willing to share—not give up, but share—power and responsibility in conceptualizing, implementing, or assessing some part of the class, and if you stay in open and honest dialogue with students about the processes as well as the outcomes, then they are not likely to think you are experimenting on them. Students may see the experience as experimenting *with* them, and that often is exciting for all involved. In our research at diverse institutions, we find that students are generally open to faculty being honest about the classroom serving as a site for coconstruction of ideas and outcomes, as long as the process is genuine and does not seem haphazard, ill conceived, or the result of bad (or no) planning. Students are more likely to be open to collaborative experimentation when they have choice in the matter and when choosing to work in partnership does not make them more vulnerable than they often already feel in situations where faculty grade their work.

If I decide to try developing a student-faculty partnership, what's the first conversation with a student or students like? I'm not clear about how I get started after I've identified potential partners.

At the initial meeting with potential partners or in the first class session when you discuss partnership, you will want to establish rapport, discuss the focus for your work together, and begin to clarify the roles students and faculty will play in the collaboration. For instance, during your initial meeting, you might talk briefly about your interests, questions, and hopes for a partnership, and

ask students about what their interests, questions, and hopes are. Then you might discuss the project or question that will be the focus of your partnership—you might have a clear project in mind, or you might brainstorm with your partner(s) about how best to direct your work. Finally, chat about the process of partnership. Some faculty will want to approach this broadly, discussing characteristics of positive partnerships each of you have experienced before. Some will prefer to start with nitty-gritty considerations. Will the partners cofacilitate meetings? How will you organize your project time and how will you share the work? Ensure that students have a chance to respond and ask questions about what their role might be. Throughout this conversation, and the many that will follow, be patient. Many students (and faculty) may not have undertaken anything similar before, so give everyone time to imagine what the partnership will involve and to ask plenty of questions. Try to build in flexibility so you can adjust roles and responsibilities to suit individual and group skills and interests in the early stages of the partnership.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have offered responses to the kinds of questions we often hear from faculty or faculty developers who are intrigued by but also cautious about developing student-faculty partnerships. We hope that they reassure you and affirm that your questions are important to pose and further explore. If you have other questions, or if you want to see what other kinds of questions faculty colleagues have asked, go to Chapter 8, in which we pose and address further questions that often arise as partnerships develop.

In the next chapters we provide a number of concrete examples of this work, starting with partnerships developed by individual faculty and then exploring broader program-level partnerships.