Examples of Student-Faculty Partnerships

From Alison Cook-Sather, Catherine Bovill, and Peter Felten
Partnerships with Students

*Examples from Individual Faculty*
Example 1:
‘At University College Dublin, in Ireland, two faculty... invited a group of three third-year undergraduate students to redesign the structure and the virtual learning environment of a first-year geography module... This first-year course enrolls approximately 400 students each year.’

The three students were employed as interns to design new learning materials and provided with technical resources such as access to computers, a digital video recorder, and a Dictaphone. Weekly meetings with faculty were used as an opportunity to provide guidance and advice. The final product of the students’ work was written, audio, and video resources for the virtual learning environment in the form of, for example, short video clips, online quizzes, and assessment instructions.

**Outcomes:**
- Lecture material and examples of good student work for first-year students
- Current students’ work directly influenced and contributed to the curriculum
- Students hired demonstrated high levels of interaction, confidence, and responsibility for their own and others’ learning
- Higher levels of student engagement than in other more traditional modules
- Provided students with a much greater sense of identity as geographers

(Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, 2014, p.32)
Example 2:
At Vincennes University in Indiana a faculty member invited her second-year sociology students to design some of their course learning outcomes and assignments to be personally meaningful.

The faculty member worked with 13 second-year social work students to set course learning objectives. She ‘provided students with a list of possible course objectives to consider and asked them to select some objectives that they were most interested in aiming to achieve. They selected eight objectives and then the faculty member provided the students with 22 forms of possible assignments to choose from—assignments through which they could demonstrate achievement of their selected objectives.’

‘Some things were nonnegotiable; for example, the assignment had to match the course catalog description...They decided on assignments as a class as well as the due dates for submission. Finally, they determined the relative weightings of the assignments.’

(Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, 2014, p.36-37)
Example 3:
‘In Dan Berstein’s large general psychology courses at the University of Kansas, students often struggle to understand what is expected of a college-level essay.

Berstein developed a detailed rubric to articulate his assignment expectations to students. While the rubric helped with the grading that he and his teaching assistants carried out, many students still complained of not fully grasping his goals for their work. In response, about one week before the first exam, Bernstein brings to class the rubric and three examples of unmarked student essays from past semesters... He has students read and score these essays using the rubric, and then he leads the class in a discussion about his expectations for student writing, with students pointing to specific places in the examples where students met, or fell short of, the standards in the rubric.

Students report that they now understand his goals for their writing, and Bernstein finds that the overall quality of student essays has improved substantially within groups of students that do this exercise.’

(Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, 2014, p.49)
Program-Level Approaches to Student-Faculty Partnerships
Example 4:
‘Olin College aims to radically transform engineering education by making student-faculty partnerships foundational to the institution.

Olin College opened in 2002 in suburban Boston, Massachusetts, with the goal of creating a new model of education that would prepare students to be ‘exemplary engineering educators.’ From the start, Olin positioned students as co-designers of the curriculum, which is built around hands-on engineering and design projects. Through a program that was called ‘Invention 2000,’ Olin hired its first faculty members and invited 30 students, known as ‘Olin Partners,’ to help them form the first curriculum. These students spent their first year at Olin exploring possibilities for assessment and grading methods, considering how to establish the kind of student culture the college hoped for, and experimenting with different approaches to engineering education.’

(Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, 2014, p.65)
Example 5:
‘The Students Consulting on Teaching (SCOT) project at the University of Lincoln in the United Kingdom invited students and teachers to work in partnership and take shared responsibility for the enhancement of democratic pedagogies.

This project involved six student pedagogic consultants and a student coordinator, who were employed on an hourly basis, offering student observations and perspectives on specific episodes of teaching and learning. The students undertook an explicit and mandatory short training program. The activities in this program were designed to be teacher driven, with the interaction between the teacher and the student consultant remaining completely confidential. The feedback that teachers received was from an impartial student perspective as the student consultants were not, and had not been, members of that course. Ten faculty members participated and sometimes requested more than one consultation, resulting in over 15 consultations in a six-month period.

This program explicitly aimed to challenge traditional academic hierarchies and habits. Describing Lincoln’s SCOT program, Crawford argues that ‘commonly used often managerialist performance-led approaches to gaining feedback on the student experience...are at best impersonal, untimely and ineffective and at worst de-skilling and devaluing of professional practice in higher education’ (Crawford, 2012, p.52). SCOT offer a fundamentally different way of working with students and academics as partners in a community of scholars.’

(Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, 2014, p.71)
Example 6:
‘The Undergraduate Learning and Teaching Research Internship Scheme (ULTRIS) at the University of Western Australia invites undergraduate students to undertake authentic research into learning and teaching outside their chosen discipline.’

Second-year students are invited to be interns in the semester-long program and are allocated a supervisor. They also must attend an intensive training focused on basic research methods. Choosing from a range of teaching and learning topics that are considered to be of strategic importance to the university, each student then selects a research question. Example topics have included, faculty-student interaction outside the classroom, the first-year experience, sustainability, and internationalization. Students develop their own research questions and research design with guidance from their supervisor. The outcomes of the research are communicated in an academic paper and also shared with the university and even external conferences.

(Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, 2014, p.78-79)
Example 7: The Student as Producer program at the University of Lincoln in the United Kingdom aims to move away from predefined learning outcomes toward a variety of student-led research and teaching initiatives.

This program builds on a ‘pedagogical model with less emphasis on teaching defined by set learning outcomes and instead focusing primarily on a range of innovative, student-led, research and teaching projects. These projects involve unfamiliar ways of working for students and faculty, leading students on an intellectual journey involving ‘interruption and astonishment’ in an attempt to promote intellectual and emotional development and social awareness.’

The purpose of the program is to promote research-engaged teaching and learning, which permeates all aspects of curriculum design and delivery as well as other strategic planning aspects of the university.

(Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, 2014, p.82-83)
Read more about outcomes and strategies of these partnership initiatives in *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching*

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