Situating Students as Partners in Teaching and Learning: Introduction to the 2020 Proceedings

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Situating Students as Partners in Teaching and Learning: Introduction to the 2020 Proceedings

Randi Polk, Shirley O'Brien, Jamie Shaffer, and Russell Carpenter, with contributions from Rachel Hampton, Bethany Wheatley, Carolyn Grace, & Leslie Williams
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Introduction

Like much of higher education in 2020, the annual Pedagogicon conference looked a little different. Instead of concurrent sessions in physical spaces on Eastern Kentucky University's campus, the conference was virtual and a first experience with an online Zoom format. As they say, the show must go on, and it did. Dr. Alison Cook-Sather addressed the conference theme, "Students as Partners in Teaching and Learning," in her keynote and interactive Q&A session. Dr. Cook-Sather is the Mary Katharine Woodworth Professor of Education and Director of the Peace, Conflict and Social Justice concentration, as well as the Teaching and Learning Institute at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges. In her opening remarks, Cook-Sather shared her insights on student-faculty collaboration to enhance and co-create teaching and learning opportunities as an approach to student partnership.

Cook-Sather advocates for partnerships between faculty and students as a means to further understanding what works in the classroom. While some faculty might see this process as a threatening one whereby students are allowed to give input on pedagogy even though they are not trained in those methods, Cook-Sather underscores the importance of learning opportunities on both sides. The foundation of these partnerships lies in respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. This foundation helps us to build up partnerships in our brick and mortar classrooms, of course, but the opportunities beyond that physical space are abundant. The topics featured in the sessions this year serve as the impetus for new ways of collaborating. They remind us that learning opportunities come from online courses, graduate seminars, conversations over coffee, and many more.

Helping us to contextualize the learning and engagement that happen through genuine student partnership, several students from Eastern Kentucky University reflected on their experiences collaborating with faculty. These reflections help make strong connections to the benefits of the three tenets of Cook-Sather's work (respect, reciprocity, and responsibility).

In student comments gathered after partnerships with faculty, these themes were evident. Rachel Hampton, a graduate student in English, worked with Dr. Erin Presley on a presentation for the 2020 Pedagogicon. Hampton's reflection on this experience was positive and she encourages other students to engage with professors, especially for the first time presenting at a conference, so they can learn from the faculty member's experience. Hampton plans to be a professor so this collaboration was a tremendous learning experience for her.

According to Bethany Wheatley, a graduate student in the Occupational Therapy program, you get to see the human side of the professor while working closely on projects. Wheatley, who worked with Dr. Shirley O'Brien, reported that she was able to build critical reasoning skills because she was challenged by her faculty mentor. Indeed, student- faculty partnerships can help students to improve their work by being challenged in a familiar environment.

Carolyn Grace and Leslie Williams both work with students and instructors in Eastern Kentucky University's Noel Studio for Academic Creativity. Grace cites seeing how the university functions and having an impact on students as the most impactful experiences. Williams adds the ability to build confidence and network to the list of benefits to student-instructor partnerships. Grace and Williams both comment that students might feel unsure about themselves and their abilities as they begin a collaborative endeavor. However, they suggest working with professors they know and appreciate as a first step.

These are just a few examples of productive and rewarding collaborations. From these student perceptions, we see how respect, reciprocity, and responsibility are key tenets to a successful collaboration. Students are still learning from instructors and building their skills through this model. In addition, instructors are able to see more about their teaching through the eyes of students, and both parties have takeaways that reinforce learning. Many more examples of student-instructor collaborations are present throughout the manuscripts featured in this year's proceedings.

Learning Partners

We begin with the Learning Partners section of the proceedings. Casey Humphrey, in "TILTING Beyond the Classroom: Utilizing Transparency Components to Develop Student Centered Administrative Processes," discusses the potential benefits of employing transparent learning and teaching components when creating academic policies and processes that promote successful student engagement within an occupational therapy program. Next, Jana Mayer, Cynthia Harter, and Michelyn Bhandari, in "An Educational Partnership to Promote Lifelong Leaders," focuses on the impact of intentional teaching in areas of interpersonal and professional skills for students in grades 5-8, a collaboration between students in the EKU School of Business and Model Laboratory School. The study, as the authors illustrate, showcases the positive relationship developed between Model and the EKU School of Business via training and events. In "Social Constructivism in Learning: Peer Teaching & Learning," Cindy Hayden, Cheryl Carrico, Cassandra Ginn, Shelby Smith, and Alexis Felber identify valuable and transferable characteristics of course activities that promote peer teaching and learning as examples of student partnership. Karen Clancy and Whitney L. Powell, in "Personalized Learning: Tools for a COVID World," offer case studies demonstrating how faculty-student partnerships help students accomplish personalized learning outcomes. Then, in "Teaching Students Effective Learning Strategies," Hung-Tao M. Chen, Megan Thomas, and Katelyn McClure compare video-based teaching methods to achieve effective learning strategies versus text-based methods. Heather Norris, Keri New, and Catherine Edwards, in "Debriefing as an Instrument to Promote Student/Faculty Partnerships," highlight ways in which student-faculty partnerships are essential to academic success. As the authors explain, key components of the partnership include mutual trust, respect, and open communication. Finally, in "Transparent Roles in Feedback in the Student-Faculty Partnership for Teaching and Learning," Leah Simpkins and Shirley O'Brien use varied pedagogical strategies to appreciating the transparency in learning and teaching (TILT) process via faculty-structured learning opportunities that, as the authors explain, enable students to think critically about their performance, building a repertoire of skills to advance learning.

Online, Tech, and Other Tools

This section stimulates our application of pedagogy with various technologies for learning both in traditional classrooms and online. Dr. Amanda Joyce starts the section off with the use of mind mapping as a tool to facilitate student learning through organized conceptualizations of course material. Amanda Joyce and

her Murray State University colleagues discuss evidence-based implicit and explicit strategies for improving transparency and communication in an online learning environment with students as partners. Jason Johnson suggests ten practical techniques that teachers and instructional designers can apply liberatory pedagogy in online courses, empowering students as partners in their own learning based upon his experiences at the University of Kentucky. Northern Kentucky University faculty John Huss and instructional designer Shannon Eastep promote the concept of accessibility to better accomplish a student-friendly learning environment while reinforcing the need for faculty training and implementation. Dr. Steffen Wilson and Brianna Williamson from Eastern Kentucky University end the section with a conscious self-management strategy to counteract off-task technology use in the classroom setting. This section reinforces the need for training and deliberate efforts that come into play when technology is used both online and in the classroom setting for both faculty and students.

Reaping the Benefits of Reciprocity

In this section, we see how all different types of collaboration lead to the emergence of new ideas and models for learning. Geela Spira and Allen Keener from Eastern Kentucky University discuss several different ways to form collaborative endeavors from student-professor to professor-professor teams. Katheleen Mae Fischer and her colleagues from the University of Louisville's School of Dentistry provide insights on how they have successfully used group assignments to engage students. Through group assignments, students are pushed out of the comfort zone of traditional work. Raquel Corona and Madiha Shameem share their experience with the implementation of a pilot mentoring program at Queensborough Community College (CUNY). Maria Manning and her colleagues from Eastern Kentucky University inform us on how to engage diverse learners through shared learning opportunities. In the final contribution to this section, Dr. Shirley O'Brien and her graduate students from EKU discuss ways in which leadership skills are developed through a mentoring experience.

These articles share a focus on the benefits from different collaborative learning opportunities and how we can all benefit from reciprocal learning.

New Horizons for Special Audiences

Articles in this section highlight ways in which teaching and learning principles can engage students-as-partners across specific institutional subgroups. Anna M. Christianson from Bellarmine University discusses the use of active learning

modules in STEM classrooms. University of Kentucky Neuroscience professors Katie Salmeron and April Hatcher show us how art can be incorporated into an anatomy class to engage students in their own learning. Erin Presley and two graduate students from EKU discuss ways in which writing instructor training can be enhanced by approaching it from a students-as-partners perspective. Doctoral student, Hayley Hoffman, shares her experiences engaging a group of students in the creation of a Little Free Library. Emily Zuccaro and her EKU colleagues demonstrate how the Quality Literature Quadrant (QLQ) can be used to assess stereotypes in classroom literature and texts. EKU Marketing professor Philip Boutin provides details of using an in-class group activity, based on teaching and learning theories, to enrich student engagement with class material. Randall Joyce and colleagues from the Cybersecurity program at Murray State University demonstrate the effectiveness of applying SoTL principles to education in this important field. Finally, Travis Martin and an interdisciplinary group of professors and students from EKU share examples of how they incorporated various forms of "ungrading" in their classes.

Although these specialized groups are quite different, this section emphasizes the universal benefits of employing effective teaching and learning principles and engaging students-as-partners.

The articles that are crafted as a result of the annual Pedagogicon are always a welcome reminder that our work is valued and there are so many new ways to inspire ourselves, colleagues, and students. At Eastern Kentucky University, we embrace our position as a school of opportunity and strive to provide opportunities to students to actively engage in their learning from peer mentoring in first-year courses, to course embedded consultants and mentors in the Noel Studio, to faculty-student collaboration in undergraduate and graduate research, and much more. As you will read, there are many passionate instructors across the nation looking to make education as meaningful and impactful as possible. We trust you will enjoy engaging with these articles and looking for ways to integrate students as partners by teaching and learning respect, reciprocity, and responsibility.