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## Introduction: Partnership in Teacher Education

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## **INTRODUCTION: PARTNERSHIP IN TEACHER EDUCATION**

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We are living in an age of collaboration—an age in which working with others is not only important but actually crucial to our collective success. Hierarchies of all kinds are being questioned, and the notion that one group holds all of the answers has been largely rejected. This Winter 2015 issue offers several examples of how these realities can play out in innovative approaches to teacher education. Written by current students of education, recent graduates, and education faculty, the essays both illustrate and analyze particular forms of collaboration in teacher preparation. The approaches described in the seven essays in this issue constitute another version of the kind of partnership between differently positioned individuals that is the premise of this journal.

How best to prepare prospective K-12 teachers is a matter of ongoing debate informed and bound by state laws, professional organizations, and individual programs and professors (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012, p. 132; see also Bullough, 2014; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Still largely unquestioned, however, is the assumption that those responsible for teacher preparation should be credentialed experts. The essays in this issue of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education* challenge that assumption, complicating the role of teacher educator in particular and the roles of teacher and learner more generally. They offer glimpses into what can happen when secondary students are invited to assume the role of teacher educator alongside professionals and when undergraduates who are prospective teachers are positioned as partners in developing and enacting approaches within teacher education.

The focus of this issue was proposed by a student who participated simultaneously in two partnership programs while she was an undergraduate at Haverford College. Hannah Bahn, whose essay about this experience is included in this issue, was interested in analyzing her own and other undergraduates' double-partnership experience at the intersection of the Teaching and Learning Together (TLT) project and the Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program. TLT is based in the Bryn Mawr/Haverford Education Program and partners prospective secondary teachers with secondary students positioned as teacher educators. SaLT is based in the Teaching and Learning Institute at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges and positions undergraduate students as pedagogical consultants to college faculty. (See Cook-Sather, 2010, for a comparative descriptive analysis of these programs). Bahn's interest, born of her own experience, inspired the focus of this issue on partnerships within teacher education as described and analyzed by those who have experienced them.

The first four essays were written by Mary Encabo, Hannah Bahn, Maeve O'Hara, and Heather Curl, graduates of Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges who have participated in multiple roles in the TLT project. The fifth, sixth, and seventh essays were written by both students and teachers within teacher education departments—Kyle DeAngelis at Vassar College, Dena Greenstreet, Lara Ramsey, Sam Intrator, and Don Siegel at Smith College and Smith College Campus School, and Betina Hsieh and HuongTran Nguyen at California State University, Long Beach. Across all seven essays, the same themes surface again and again: the centrality of relationship; the power

of reciprocal teaching and learning; the importance of affirmation; the commitment to lifelong learning. While these themes and principles might be expected in discussions of partnership, how they are put into practice varies according to context, participants, and goals.

“Developing ‘Middle’ Pedagogy,” by Mary Encabo, Bryn Mawr College, Class of 2013, and “Finding Common Ground and Building Relationship in Two Partnership Programs,” by Hannah Bahn, Haverford College, Class of 2014, offer detailed discussions of working as a student consultant to a college faculty member through the Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program while also partnering with a high school student positioned as a teacher educator as part of their own preparation to teach through the Teaching and Learning Together (TLT) project. Simultaneously undergraduate students supporting college teachers and prospective secondary teachers supported by secondary students, Encabo and Bahn emphasize the power of affirmation to support the development of confidence and capacity in teaching and learning and the importance of, as Bahn puts it, “provid[ing] space for students to discover that they have voice and agency in their educational experiences.” When students find those voices, they can engage in dialogue. And as Encabo asserts: “Through dialogue we can exhibit humility, a quality that nourishes personal and professional growth.” As they explain, Encabo and Bahn were in the unique positioning of at once learning and teaching this important lesson—of experiencing such affirmation and opening of space for themselves as learners positioned as consultants to college teachers and of affording secondary students the opportunity to discover their own voices and agency.

In “Multiple Iterations of Partnership: My Co-Creation Journey as a Student and a Teacher,” Maeve O’Hara, Bryn Mawr College, Class of 2008, and current high school mathematics teacher, describes the various ways in which she worked in partnership through programs at Bryn Mawr College: as a student co-founder of and participant in Bryn Mawr’s Teaching and Learning Initiative (TLI) and Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program; as a student-teacher in the TLT project; and as a practicing high school mathematics teacher serving in the role of school-based educator of the TLT project. In reflecting on these experiences, she describes what constituted her own empowerment as a learner and a teacher, which she in turn offered to her students: “I was listened to and heard differently than I ever had been before. These experiences laid the foundation for my choices to create situations in which other learners could empower themselves.”

O’Hara’s emphasis on the reciprocal dynamics of listening and empowerment connects directly to the final essay in this set of four, “Reflections on a Collaborative and Relational Framework for Teacher Development.” In this essay, Heather Curl, Haverford College, Class of 2003, and Lecturer in the Education Program at Bryn Mawr College, focuses on her role as facilitator of the collaborative approach to teacher preparation taken through the Bryn Mawr/Haverford Education Program of which TLT is a part. Like O’Hara, she emphasizes the way in which the program not only supports prospective teachers, and the secondary students with whom they partner, but also her own deep, ongoing learning as a teacher. O’Hara and Curl, both graduates of a teacher preparation built around partnership, now offer such opportunities for partnership to their own students. They are uniquely positioned to provide rich insights into how experiences of partnership can catalyze further efforts to foster partnership and thereby constitute a unique form of lifelong learning.

In “Reflections on a Successful Student-Professor Collaboration,” Kyle DeAngelis, Vassar College, Class of 2015, describes how he worked with an education professor at Vassar through the Ford Scholars Program to co-create a new course for students in the Department of Education at Vassar College. In reflecting on this experience, DeAngelis describes the several phases he moved through in his partnership with this professor, and he asserts that “the most important factor that differentiates the successful and unsuccessful partnerships in my experience is the quality of communication.” Betina Hsieh and Huong Tran Nguyen come to a similar conclusion in “Co-teaching, Co-leading, Co-learning: Reflection on the Co-Teaching Model in Practicum.” The collaborative approach they developed at California State University, Long Beach, extended to their own co-teaching in the context of a co-teaching model that had been adopted for the student teaching practicum, but they found variation in the success of the model depending upon how clear participants were on what collaboration really means. Hsieh and Nguyen emphasize the importance of trust, collaboration and mutual respect. It is striking that these two essays—one written by an undergraduate who developed a partnership on his own with a single professor and one written by two faculty members working within a larger, institutionally structured partnership program—offer some of the same insights and advice regarding partnership approaches.

The final essay in this issue is “Applied Learning as a Shared Experience: Two Models of Partnership at Smith College.” It is divided into two parts: the first is “Beginning with Complexity: The Initial Collaboration Between a Student Teacher and a Cooperating Teacher,” by Lara Ramsey, Supervising Teacher, Smith College Campus School, and Dena Greenstreet, Student Teacher, Smith College, Class of 2015. In a dialogue through which they trace the unfolding of their collaborative work, Ramsey and Greenstreet describe how they plan to transform the traditional student-teaching experience from one in which a student teacher slowly takes on increasing responsibility to one in which she works in partnership with the classroom teacher, taking on significant responsibility from the beginning. The second part of the essay, “Working Side-by-Side with Students in an After-School Program,” is co-authored by Sam M. Intrator, Professor and Chair of the Education and Child Study Program at Smith College, and Don Siegel, Professor, Smith College. In this essay Intrator and Siegel share a version of the letter they send to each new cohort of graduate and undergraduate Smith students in *Project Coach*, their sports-based youth development program. These essays highlight the power of reciprocal teaching and learning, of working side by side toward a shared goal. Greenstreet captures the logic and the potential of such partnership when she writes: “I think of classrooms and student-teacher relationships as intellectual safe spaces meant for exploration, dialogue, and learning from one another. It would be naive of me to think that I had nothing to learn from my students, so the concept of mutual transformation just seems natural to me.”

When secondary students are invited to assume the role of teacher educator alongside professionals and when undergraduates who are prospective teachers are positioned as partners in developing and enacting approaches within teacher education, everyone involved is both a teacher and a learner. With the affirmation that comes of such partnership, students have powerful opportunities to develop their own authority, a benefit, Bahn points out, to all: “affirming students’ unique perspective will benefit teacher participants, in turn, because students will have the confidence and the tools to share their insights.” Sharing insights and perspectives, such that everyone involved in the dialogue is learning, is part of what Curl

identifies as the most powerful outcome of a partnership approach: participants “develop the capacity for building relationships with others and cultivate the tendency to learn from others in practice through the relationships they build.” As the essays in this issue attest, this focus on relationship—on a dynamic, dialogic, collaborative approach—constitutes a powerful and empowering model of teacher preparation.

Hsieh and Nguyen state clearly the challenge of enacting such models: “we must listen to one another and to our students if we are to build authentic teaching and learning partnerships.” Intrator and Siegel put it slightly differently: we must strive to “forge trusting, caring, and reciprocal relationships with young people” in order to foster meaningful education—for students and for teachers. The authors of the contributions to this issue of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education* meet these challenges. The approaches described in these essays help prepare teachers who are open to multiple perspectives, respectful of the differences they encounter, and able to work and learn with diverse others. Such approaches help prepare teachers who offer as readily as accept collaboration as a primary mode of teaching and learning.

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