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## Introduction: Mentoring and Supervision Reconceived as Partnership

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## MENTORING AND SUPERVISION RECONCEIVED AS PARTNERSHIP

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Mentoring and supervision typically connote unidirectional oversight and guidance: an expert shepherds a novice through some sort of learning process. The terms imply advising and training, management and control, one person with the power and knowledge and the other without. Although the goal of both processes is support and nurturing of a less experienced or younger colleague, the underlying premise is that it is only that person who is doing the learning. The essays in this issue of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education* complicate these standard assumptions about mentoring and supervision and offer different models for these processes. These models create new roles for all participants and allow them to build relationships based on principles of respect for what each person in the relationship brings, reciprocity in what is taught and what is learned, and shared responsibility for teaching and learning. In short, they reconceive of mentoring and supervision as partnership.

The mentoring and supervision relationships featured in these essays are of various kinds. They include an undergraduate student mentor working in partnership with the instructor of two Latin courses to support students enrolled in those courses at Elon University in the United States; an elementary classroom teacher working as a supervisor to undergraduate student teacher seeking certification to teach at the elementary level at Smith College in the United States; a cohort of postgraduate ecology students who took part in a group supervision process at Lancaster University in England; and a faculty member and research assistant working together as part of a partnership approach to peer review of teaching at Edinburgh Napier University in Scotland. Students at different stages of formal education, school-based and college-based educators and researchers, these differently positioned partners across diverse institutions in different countries have in common their blurring of boundaries and sharing of responsibilities in mentoring and supervision.

Each of these essays is either co-authored by the partners or, in one case, is a follow-up analysis to a co-authored essay. In the form they take, then, as well as their focus, the essays both enact and reflect on partnership: the collaborative composition becomes another level and kind of reconceiving of the dynamics and responsibilities within mentoring and supervision.

In **“The Peer Mentor: A Pivotal Teaching and Learning Partner in Elementary Latin,”** Kristina Meinking, Assistant Professor of Classical Languages in The Department of World Languages and Cultures at Elon University, and Megan Sweeney, Elon University, Class of 2016, write about their partnership in the context of a two-course sequence in elementary Latin offered at Elon, a liberal arts university in the southeastern United States. They describe the ways in which the two of them, the instructor of the courses and the peer mentor, worked in partnership to prepare the syllabus for each course and support the students who enrolled in those courses. They delve into questions of terminology and student expectations regarding their respective roles, offer a detailed explanations of how they co-created the syllabi and class sessions, and emphasize how, in their respective roles and through their collaboration, they were able to make what they call “‘real-time’ improvements”; in Megan’s words: “As we were both

able to engage with the students in unique ways, we could guide each other in how best to improve the student experience and understanding of the language.”

In “**Partnering to Learn, Experientially**,” Lara R. Ramsey, Teacher, Smith College Campus School in the northeastern United States, reflects on how she rethought and redefined her role as a mentor teacher to an undergraduate student teacher seeking certification to teach at the elementary level. She argues and illustrates how student teaching, framed as experiential education rather than on-the-job training, is a promising model that promotes mutual transformation between mentor and student teacher. Ramsey offers a candid account of her coming to the realization that, “By following a model of supervision that I had not reimagined, I missed the opportunity to intentionally and systematically incorporate into my mentoring of [student teachers] the elements I identified as central to educational experiences.” The title of her essay captures the reciprocity she aimed for and achieved: new roles for herself and the student teacher with whom she worked and a relationship based on respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility for teaching and learning.

In “**Tackling the Crisis in PhD Supervision through Group Active-Learning**,” Carly J. Stevens, Beth F.T. Brockett, Catherine Baxendale, Ali J. Birkett, Caley Brown, Andrew J. Cola, Iain Gould, Hannah Griffiths, Richard Nicholson, Helen Quirk, Isabel Rogers, Tom N. Walker, Susan E. Ward present a model of mentoring and supervision for student success that contrasts and complements the traditional model of Ph.D. supervision. Their essay reflects on the experience of a cohort of postgraduate ecology students who took part in a group supervision process, in addition to the traditional supervision (one-to-one) model, based within the Plant and Soil Ecology research group at Lancaster University in the England. After describing the project phases, they offer a set of outcomes, grouped under the following subheadings: learning from peers, experimental planning, teamwork, learning from mistakes, confidence and reflection, and lessons learned and recommendations for future projects. They conclude with excerpts from follow-up interviews with participants, which indicate “that this process was clearly beneficial to students in helping them to become a strong cohort who learn from each other and are more confident in their research.”

In “**Pioneering a Peer Review Initiative: Students as Colleagues in the Review of Teaching Practices**,” Ursula Green, PgDip Career Guidance and Development, Class of 2015, Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland, and Jenny Scoles, Research Assistant, Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement, Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland, offer a collaborative account of an attempt to achieve authentic collegial staff-student partnerships through the innovation of a peer review process at a Scottish University. Ursula and Jenny interweave their voices throughout this essay, as they describe and reflect on their experiences of being part of this pioneering project: *Students as Colleagues in the Review of Teaching Practices*. The project was designed, they explain, “as an opportunity to explore the transition of students from passive subjects in the traditional hierarchal student-teacher dynamic into active participants in collegial relationships, much like that of a ‘peer.’” They describe the challenges as well as the benefits of this project, and they conclude that “involving students as colleagues in the review of teaching practices can be powerful and transformative for both parties.”