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EXPLORING THE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL WORK OF PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIP AT VASSAR COLLEGE

Nandeeta Bala, Vassar College, Class of 2022

[STEPP \(Student Teacher Engaged Pedagogical Partnership\)](#) is a pedagogical partnership program at Vassar College that centers intentional dialogue about teaching practices in semester-long, student-faculty collaborations. It focuses on building student-faculty relationships and empowering student voices while offering faculty an opportunity to receive constructive feedback and work collaboratively with a student partner to address teaching goals. The program was piloted during the Spring-2020 semester, modeled after Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges' [Students as Learners and Teachers \(SaLT\) program](#), and it has since then grown into a robust and responsive program.

Over the two years that I have been working with the SaLT program director, Alison Cook-Sather, in developing STEPP, I've had an invaluable learning experience—developing facilitation skills, building relationships, and growing so much as a person (Bala, 2021). As the program continues to expand, welcoming over 100 partners, I am very grateful that I've had the chance to co-create and foster opportunities for participation. As a conclusion to my role as student coordinator of STEPP, I am fortunate to be able to share the following three insightful essays in this issue of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*. These reflections written by faculty and student partners in the STEPP program offer a glimpse into participants' unique experiences engaging in pedagogical partnership work; they reinforce the importance of dialogue and celebrating the personal aspects of teaching, learning, and partnership when fostering inclusion in academia.

In “[Choosing Pedagogical Partnerships Over Pedagogical Solitude: Embracing the Inherently Social Nature of Teaching and Learning](#),” Eréndira Rueda, Associate Professor of Sociology at Vassar College, traces her journey engaging in collaborative pedagogies and in piloting the STEPP program. Noting specific teaching practices and reflecting on learnings, she shares how dialogue with her student partner facilitated a successful class experience despite the unexpected interruption by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In “[Co-creating Dynamic Pedagogical Reflection: Building a Transformational Partnership through STEPP](#),” Maya Pelletier, Vassar College, Class of 2022, and José Perillán, Associate Professor of Physics and Science, Technology and Society at Vassar College, describe how they developed a relationship of mutual mentorship by embracing trust, vulnerability, and respect to engage in ongoing, pedagogical feedback and support an inclusive classroom environment.

In “[A Dialogical Learning Experience through Vassar College's STEPP Program](#),” Leonisa Ardizzone, Visiting Assistant Professor of Education at Vassar College, and Nywel Cheaye, Vassar College, Class of 2022, share their experiences, reflections, and learnings when partnering on a course to engage in valuable, pedagogical dialogue and to experiment with teaching styles.

We hope that these essays provide both inspiration and guidance to faculty and students at other institutions who are working on or thinking about developing pedagogical partnership programs. We are very grateful to Alison for her support in launching STEPP and in publishing this issue.

Reference

Bala, N. (2021). A STEPP into Uncertainty: Pursuing Passions to Embrace Pedagogical Risks. *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*, 33.
<https://repository.brynmawr.edu/tlthe/vol1/iss33/4>