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PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIPS: CREATING AND CULTIVATING AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS IN MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

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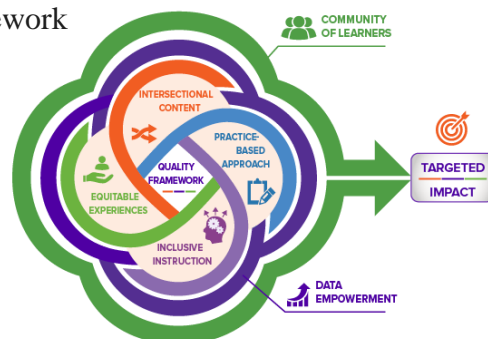
“If we all engaged in partnerships through which we . . . discuss how teaching and learning experiences can include and value everyone, our campuses would become places of belonging.” Ana Colón García (2017, p. 5)

Teaching is often conceptualized as a solitary activity undertaken in “pedagogical solitude” (Shulman cited in Cook-Sather et al., 2019). Other than the required peer observations undertaken in some institutions to meet annual review and tenure and promotion guidelines, we rarely offer colleagues, much less students, an opportunity to observe our teaching and engage in substantive discussion on what took place. There are multiple benefits to engaging in pedagogical partnerships, including fostering a sense of belonging in students and faculty, supporting students and faculty in generative reflection, and cultivating an institutional environment that exemplifies meaningful community engagement (Cook-Sather et al., 2019).

In this issue of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*, you will see how four pairs of student-faculty partners from Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) participated in a Pedagogical Partnership Project sponsored by Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity, or BranchED. The experiences and insights conveyed in the essays are consistent with those reported in the existing research, which details a variety of positive outcomes resulting from pedagogical partnerships for students and faculty who are new to the institution of higher education and/or who have been historically underrepresented and underserved (Cook-Sather, 2014).

BranchED is the only non-profit organization in the country dedicated to strengthening, growing, and amplifying the impact of educator preparation programs (EPPs) at MSIs, with the longer-range goals of both diversifying the teaching profession and intentionally addressing critical issues of educational equity for all students. We strive to meet these goals through application of our Framework for the Quality Preparation of Educators. The Framework outlines a roadmap to create teacher preparation programs that meet the needs of our increasingly diverse student body. It seeks to build equity-oriented educator preparation programs that prepare educators to reflect, respect, and reaffirm the value of the diversity of America’s PK-12 school children.

Figure 1: BranchED Framework



The Framework identifies six critical focus areas that teacher preparation providers can leverage to redesign their programs. Two of these focus areas (Community of Learners and Data Empowerment) provide the foundation for the remaining focus areas. Our Pedagogical Partnership Project encompasses several of the critical focus areas: Community of Learners, Data Empowerment, Inclusive Instruction, Equitable Experiences, and Practice-Based Approach. Pedagogical partnerships are particularly powerful in enhancing equity, inclusion, and social justice in our courses and our curriculum (Marquis et al., 2021). Supporting faculty and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in a collaborative endeavor to examine instructional decisions from a learner perspective can redress epistemic, affective, and ontological harms faced by diverse students in higher education (de Bie et al, 2021). Pedagogical partners engage in an ongoing process that fosters meaningful collaboration work, generates opportunities for exploration and growth, and is affirming of all partners. The partnership creates “a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose” (Reckson, 2014).

Each team worked collaboratively to design and pilot a classroom-focused pedagogical partnership in Fall of 2022. The teams also participated in biweekly support sessions, in collaboration with BranchED, and maintained a journal of their experience. Each of the four essays included in this issue explores how BranchED’s Pedagogical Partnership Project supported a paradigm shift from the professor being the sole “sage on the stage” to a brave place where a student partner is also called upon to offer their expertise.

In **“STRENGTHENED VOICE THROUGH PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIPS: A STORY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING”** Dr. Rasha ElSaheli-Elhage and Lisset Rosales explore innovative way to increase student voice and engagement, thereby striving to impact retention and transformative educational efforts for BIPOC students in education.

In **“PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIPS: A BILINGUAL/TRANSLINGUAL BOOK PROJECT WITH TEACHER CANDIDATE AS AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR IN A BORDER COMMUNITY.”** Dr. Filiz Shine and Fabiola Rodriguez focus on a reciprocal relationship with the goal of ensuring student-centered instruction in an undergraduate literacy course. They started each class with a cultural picture book to serve as inspiration for the teacher candidates, in hopes that the teacher candidates would create bilingual books to use in their own classroom. Filiz and Rodriguez saw this as an opportunity to value students’ culture and sustain their bilingualism.

“R.E.A.P.: RECIPROCAL EDUCATIONAL ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP.” by Dr. Kimberly White-Glenn and Byron Wesley Jr., discusses how integrating a wide variety of technologies into an undergraduate reading course impacted student engagement and learning. Dr. White-Glenn often found auditory delivery her most natural and comfortable modality, and she thus was eager to collaborate with her student partner on how to create a more student-centered learning environment.

The last essay, **“PRACTICING BILINGUAL LANGUAGE USE IN A SCIENCE METHODS CLASS: PERSPECTIVES FROM A STUDENT TEACHER AND A TEACHER EDUCATOR”** by Dr. Puneet Gill and Yasmine Villarreal, critically reflects on the inner workings of a science methods class and how to effectively utilize bilingual language and purposefully embed and sustain culturally relevant teaching practices. Collaboratively they revised and created lessons that modeled ways

to use multiple languages within the classroom.

Throughout the Pedagogical Partnership Project, we collected data from each student-faculty team, which indicated positive findings in favor of embedding pedagogical partnerships within their courses. The partners stated that this project fostered a sense of belonging in students and faculty, supported students and faculty in reflection, and cultivated an environment that exemplifies meaningful community engagement. These robust partnerships are examples of collaboration among the faculty member, the teacher candidates in college courses within an MSI, and an observer student partner who shared ideas, insights, and possible innovations to the course and course content with the faculty partner. We hope that these examples, as well as other partnership projects in teacher education (Cook-Sather, 2015), will inspire models and approaches that affirm everyone in education as a teacher as well as a learner.

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