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## Quiet Power: The Librarian's Role, A Co-Leadership Model, and the Gendered Work of Pedagogical Partnership

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## **QUIET POWER: THE LIBRARIAN'S ROLE, A CO-LEADERSHIP MODEL, AND THE GENDERED WORK OF PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIP**

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On June 13th and 14th, 2023, I participated in “Teaching and Learning Together: The Possibilities and Challenges of Pedagogy Partnerships,” a workshop organized by Caleb Elfenbein (Grinnell College) and Alison Cook-Sather (Bryn Mawr College) as part of the Mellon-supported [Humanities in Action](#) project at Grinnell College. The workshop was truly as Alison described another gathering she had co-facilitated two and a half decades earlier in another context: a “time/place out of time/place — a liminal space (Turner, 1980) — within which to explore what people currently experience and believe and what is possible in terms of their own and others’ roles” (Cook-Sather, 2001, p. 131). It brought those of us with experience running partnership programs together with people who applied to attend because they were interested in starting partnership programs on their campuses, or even just because they were, as we came to call it, “partnership curious.” The group included deans, faculty members from various disciplines, directors of centers for teaching and learning, librarians, and students who were currently serving or who had recently served as student partners in these types of programs all over the country.

Upon returning home, the only appropriate phrase that occurred to me when describing the conference to others was that it was a “magical, fantastical experience.” It still seems that way now, well over a month later. The discussions were deep and rich, and without avoiding the problems and challenges of running partnership programs, they affirmed the importance of this truly radical type of work on college campuses. There was time for reflection, for sharing meals together, for sitting together on a patio around a fire pit, for playing cornhole and discussing love with the students and former students, for impromptu conversations (one of which led to this essay), and above all there was a sense of being in a timeless placeless “liminal” space. There was a deeply felt ephemeral quality permeating the space of being together with people who believe in the very human work of developing relationships across ages and races and genders and power dynamics and any other kinds of borders that keep us separated and thwart meaningful connection and, in any educational context, stifle great teaching and hinder true learning.

This essay follows several paths of thought that emerged from my experience at the workshop and that I have since come to see as manifesting multiple forms of quiet power: my role as a librarian at Ursinus College working across all of the disciplines, all the time, and thus understanding the nuances of working with “differently disciplined” academics; the co-director leadership model we embrace in Ursinus’s Student Consultant program as an effective way to run pedagogical partnership programs in a sustainable way; and the gendered nature of partnership work, as in my years co-leading this work at Ursinus I have noticed that most of the students and many of the faculty who engage in these partnerships are women, and that I have to make a conscious effort to bring men into the work. (Note that my use of any gendered terms is meant to be inclusive and refer to how people self-identify.)

My years co-leading Ursinus's partnership program, being a librarian, and teaching courses at Ursinus, have led to a deeply held conviction that the work of partnership creates, in the words of the founders of Ursinus' partnership program, a "radical equality" (Goldsmith & Gervasio, 2011) between two traditionally unequal people – a teacher and a student – and that because of this, partnership programs as a whole have the power—sometimes loud, and in my case quiet—to create a radical change for the better at the colleges (and universities) who take the bold step to start and maintain these programs. The more these types of programs are developed and sustained by people such as those I met at the workshop, the better chance that higher education (at least some sectors of it) can continue to push back or at least keep at bay the corporatization and technologization that has threatened colleges and universities in the United States throughout the 20th and 21st centuries (and maybe even before that) and keep education human and humane. For in this complicated world, Mary Rose O'Reilly's "radical presence" – a way of being that resists efficiency, monetization, neatness and easy answers, among other things – is more necessary than ever for the education of all kinds of students.

To honor the spirit of the workshop in this essay, I seek to elucidate the *process* of thinking that led me to the phrase "quiet power" that captures for me my own experience. I invite readers to accompany me along these paths of my thinking to the end where I loosely tie all three threads together to investigate (at the suggestion of a good friend) a kind of power at work that doesn't quite fit Google's definition as "the capacity or ability to *direct* or *influence* the behavior of others or the course of events" (my italics), or the connotation of active force typically attached to the word. By way of preview, I suggest that the peculiar place of librarians in the academy can bring a quietly powerful perspective and continuity to partnership programs in which they serve as a co-director with a faculty member. Furthermore, there is a quiet power in partnership programs' unequivocal rejection of the typical hierarchies on campuses between teacher and student, and, particularly in the co-directorship model I talk about, between faculty and staff. And finally, it's possible that gender differences might lead to different approaches to power than overtly "directing" or "influencing," as Google's definition would have it.

My greatest hope for this essay is that, in following these paths of thought to the final exploration of "quiet power," the essay provides food for thought for those engaged in partnership work, or those who are thinking about starting partnership programs, or even just those who are interested in the ethic of care that, I believe, is at the core of all teaching. The quiet power of these programs to influence the culture of a campus to be truly invested in the humanity of every student (and every faculty and staff member, too) is, I think, unparalleled.

### **Background: The Teaching and Learning Institute at Ursinus**

The Teaching & Learning Institute (TLI) at Ursinus College, a private liberal arts college of about 1500 undergraduates founded in 1869, was created during the 2009-2010 academic year by English Professor Meredith Goldsmith with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. After first experiencing pedagogical partnership with Bryn Mawr College student partner Nicole Gervasio (Goldsmith & Gervasio, 2011), Dr. Goldsmith felt some of the magic I felt at the Grinnell workshop. In an essay co-authored with professor of history Susanna Throop, a

subsequent co-leader of the program, and two former Ursinus Student Consultants, Codey Young and Megan Hanscom, Dr. Goldsmith wrote: “My experience in that one partnership was so transformative that it made me want to build a partnership program at Ursinus” (Goldsmith et al., 2017, p. 2).

Ursinus' TLI, initially funded by the Mellon Foundation, became part of the budget of Academic Affairs at the end of Dr. Goldsmith's three-year leadership tenure. The student consultant program was and remains the central feature of Ursinus's TLI, which seems relatively rare among teaching and learning centers: usually those centers are formed to support faculty teaching by hosting speakers and workshops, and if they ever develop student consultant programs – most of them, to the best of my knowledge, do not – the program is just one part of a much larger enterprise. This is not the case at Ursinus, likely due to our small staff, but given my experience with bringing in “teaching experts,” I think our student consultant program is exponentially more valuable to teachers and learners.

Dr. Goldsmith had set up the TLI to have a rotating faculty director every three years, selected by the Dean from among those who expressed interest, for two reasons: first, so that it could be a faculty development opportunity for individuals; and second so that it would bring in faculty leadership from different disciplines who would all bring different pedagogical backgrounds and approaches. However, Dr. Throop realized towards the end of her tenure leading the TLI that the amount of work that it took to run the program was overwhelming for one faculty member with only one course release and minimal administrative support, and that a lot of the administrative continuity necessary to run the program ran the risk of being lost in transitions between faculty directors.

Dr. Throop worked with the Dean of the College to develop a co-director model, and my boss at the time approached me to ask if I, then the Director of Research, Teaching & Learning Services in the Library and Information Technology department and a librarian, would be interested in taking on the co-director role. Seeing the connections between the library and the TLI, recognizing the opportunity to raise the profile of the library as an integral part of the teaching and learning mission of the college, and excited about the chance to make a small dent in the very rigidly defined roles in academia, I accepted, and thus began my journey to the present day. I've co-led the TLI with four different faculty members from different disciplines since the 2016-17 academic year.

### **Path of Thought One: A Librarian in the TLI, Oh My!**

The discourse around identity has encouraged people to consider the multiple ways they are defined and positioned in relation to others in context. I have taken to claiming only two “identities” when absolutely pressed: that of “mother,” and that of “librarian.” Starting with the second, I feel a deep connection to being a librarian and am very proud of it. Librarianship is a profession perhaps as old as teaching, and has always been tied to it, though in a different and less “disciplined” way. This is not the place to go into the history of libraries and higher education, but suffice it to say that as a librarian I tend to see arbitrary distinctions between the academic “disciplines” rather than impenetrable silos of knowledge, and while I understand the

benefits of specialization, it seems ironic then to need “interdisciplinary” approaches to areas of study because they’ve been artificially divided in the first place.

Academic examples with real-world implications include: separating biology from chemistry, which has led to the creation of the biochemistry major; and incorporating biology, sociology, chemistry, psychology and literature into the relatively new academic field of “Environmental Studies.” Linking to my identity as a mother, having a daughter with a very complicated medical condition has taught me the limitations of specialization in a very practical way: there’s no one doctor who has the whole picture of her. The only one who sees it all is me, and it’s insanely frustrating to deal with these specialists because no one of them knows enough about all of the bodily systems involved to keep it all straight (and this at perhaps the best children’s hospital in the world!), and, more importantly, not one of them knows what her daily life is really like.

Bridging the academic and the lived, librarians try to organize the essentially infinite and chaotic world of all knowledge in a way that makes it accessible for all of these specialists and the students, but also for the generalists and the people who just want to know. As an academic librarian at a liberal arts college library who works with faculty members in all disciplines, I don’t have a bias that says that one discipline’s way of knowing is “better” than another. While I may not have deep knowledge in any one of them, I know enough about all of the disciplines to respect them all. But I also have a belief that no one discipline holds the key to all understanding, and think that the most original knowledge crosses these boundaries that sometimes seem to exist mainly so that colleges and universities can function in the world as institutions.

Because of our capacity to guide people within and across disciplinary areas of study, and because of our constant work across roles (and therefore kinds and degrees of power), librarians have a great deal to offer pedagogical partnership work. I believe that instruction librarians, or information literacy librarians, or whatever we’re called at our institutions, have a great deal to offer beyond our typically defined roles of providing library workshops to various classes. Librarians who are generalists – and even librarians who are subject specialists at bigger universities – have a very particular way of approaching the world of knowledge, and we are teachers in our own right. We can in many cases have a place in spaces like the Teaching and Learning Institute at Ursinus (and elsewhere), where we don’t typically see ourselves and where, of course, most people in academia don’t imagine that we belong.

### **Path of Thought Two: Implementing a Co-Director Model**

When approached to serve as the co-director of the TLI, the connection made intuitive sense to me: the library side of the merged library and IT organization had taken on instructional technology, and teaching and learning centers are often concerned with how new technologies can be effectively integrated into the classroom. Here was an opportunity to support the entire faculty while showing in a deeper and more integrated way how librarians are a part of the core educational enterprise of the College.

I should note here that though I have always been an administrative staff member, librarians have “governing faculty status” at the college, which means we can vote on faculty governance

motions and participate on committees in an at-large capacity, and I lean into that. From the beginning of my time at Ursinus, I could sense a tension between the faculty and staff in general (which still exists today – indeed, they seem to be speaking entirely different languages about some issues), but I never let that bother me or stop me from thinking of myself as a legitimate part of the faculty and an equal as a human and a colleague. I attended the faculty meetings, participated in salons and workshops, advised first-year students, volunteered for committees, communicated to them frequently through emails and in meetings, went to lectures and programs, read books about higher education, sat in on classes, played basketball with some of them, and more. (All of this I still do today, too).

So, by the time this opportunity came up, I had co-taught a course on Banned Books with an English professor and was teaching a section of Ursinus's first-year course, the Common Intellectual Experience (CIE). I knew faculty members in every department and felt accepted as someone who was deeply invested in the core teaching and learning mission of the college. This made it easy to work with all of the faculty co-directors. The student consultants have always accepted me as an expert in my own "field" – the library – and I have never had any trouble with their attitudes towards me. Indeed, they don't seem to make as much of a distinction between the faculty and the staff as the employees do – they are just looking for supportive people who care.

In anticipation of taking over the TLI, then-director Dr. Throop partnered me with a TLI Student Consultant so that I could experience partnership in practice. Working with my student consultant, Mary, not only helped me to improve discussion and think of engaging activities for the students, but gave me lots of confidence in recognizing things that I did well (and what teacher doesn't need confidence-boosting feedback once in awhile!). She also helped me to attend to some racial dynamics among the students that were difficult to see. As Dr. Goldsmith described in her reflections on her partnership experience (Goldsmith & Gervacio, 2011), working in a one-on-one partnership with a student consultant inspired and prepared me to take on a leadership role.

Meanwhile, the full extent of the administrative weight of running the program, and the TLI as a whole, became clearer that semester. Tasks included: the maintenance of the website; running the TLI student meetings; sending effective e-mail communications to the campus; promoting the TLI; running workshops for faculty on technology, teaching techniques; working with external speakers; and running TLI Advisory Board meetings. There is more, I am sure. But the main point is that the transition to the new faculty leadership of the TLI upon Dr. Throop's departure was seamless because I knew what needed to be done, and was able to work with my new faculty co-leader, professor of computer science Dr. Akshaye Dhawan, to divide the labor. I had to adjust to his different leadership style—a capacity my role as librarian has honed—and we made it work, and probably could have for the next several years. Unfortunately—and here is where I see the real value in a co-director model— Dr. Dhawan decided to leave Ursinus at the end of the Spring semester. A lot of knowledge would have been lost without a co-director.

The subsequent two faculty co-directors, professor of philosophy Abby Kluchin and professor of biology Carlita Favero, brought two different leadership styles to our co-directing partnership. As the co-director who is providing the continuity, my role offers a strong base for the faculty from these different disciplines to come in and take over to "make their mark" from a

disciplinary perspective. Working as a co-director with a historian, a computer scientist, a philosopher, and a biologist, I have drawn on my librarian's-eye view to converse with them all about their respective disciplines and understand the differences in their approaches to running the TLI and the student consultant program. The consistency of my position ensures that this program is stable through the rotating faculty co-leadership.

Additionally, and this is a key feature of a co-director model, because the faculty member rotates, I have been a consistent presence for the student consultants. As all who are engaged in this work know, it is sensitive and difficult work for the student partners. It could be jarring for them to have to transition to new leadership when they have spent time building a deep trust with the directors, who serve as a very special kind of "boss," not one they will have likely ever encountered before. We don't monitor them, we don't micromanage them. Rather, we guide them, care about them, help them to develop confidence to consider themselves as equals to their professors, help them to develop their capacity for empathy to see their professors as humans just like themselves, and (of course) get their timesheets in on time and communicate about their illnesses. Despite the best of intentions, a new co-director truly must *grow* into the role as a leader of the consultant program since it is such a delicate and strange one, not at all like being a typical "boss" or even "supervisor." I am an integral part of the student meetings, and serve to help the new faculty members adjust to the students during their first year as co-director.

### **Path of Thought Three: Pedagogical Partnership as Gendered Work?**

One of the advantages of serving as the ongoing co-director of Ursinus' TLI is that I have been able to build up historical knowledge of the partnership program. Once they leave the role, the faculty co-directors do not continue to think about partnership work in the same way as when they are leading the program. I, however, have been able to continue to think about it consistently for about eight years now. One of the things I have wondered about most is the potentially gendered nature of the work: we attract more women applicants for the student consultant positions, and more women faculty members sign up to work with consultants.

Talking or writing about gender these days is fraught in pretty much any context, so I have struggled mightily with what to say here. I considered not trying at all. But it is always in the back of my mind, and I was very interested to hear from the men involved in this work at the Grinnell workshop. A very direct catalyst for pushing myself to at least try to think about this in some concrete way came on a walk to and from the hotel during a break when both my fellow participant, Bill Reynolds, and I had forgotten something. It was a relatively fleeting moment in the packed two-day workshop, but something in our conversation that eludes me now fueled my interest in exploring the gendered nature of the work in this essay.

Ursinus' student consultant program, based as it is on the ethic of empathy, care, and "radical equality" that underlies all of the programs represented at the Grinnell workshop, was started by a woman, and has always, save for that one semester with Profesor Dhawan, been run by women. I was proud to take my place in this female lineage. As I learned more about pedagogical partnership over the years, through doing the work of running Ursinus's program, reading the varied forms of published literature about programs in the U.S. and abroad, and participating in

related workshops whenever I could, I increasingly embraced its deliberate and unequivocal, and yet *quiet and under-the-radar*, rejection of the power structures that have long governed the teacher-student relationship.

I find a parallel in libraries (at least in their most ideal form), which I have always considered to be quietly radical institutions because they house *all* ideas and knowledge and share it with *all* who would enter into the long human conversation. In education, in contrast to classwork with all of its requirements, librarians don't create syllabi and prescribe what students need to read, but rather invite students into a quiet contemplative space in which to pursue information, knowledge, and wisdom that is inherently interesting to them. Likewise, in the work of partnership, people are never forced into it, only encouraged to participate to discover how the work can transform them, their students, and the entire experience of teaching and learning itself. It is a collaborative, responsive, and respectful process that values the humanity of everyone in the learning environment.

This all strikes me as quintessentially feminine in a symbolic sense: it is communal, not individualistic; expansive, not prescriptive; egalitarian, not meritocratic or authoritarian. I must emphasize that I am operating wholly in the realm of cultural symbols and meaning here, as I don't believe that all men or all women or all non-binary people embody or lay claim to these sets of values in any exclusive way, let alone that they are inherent by virtue of how one's gender is assigned at birth. I cannot say that caring and empathy are inherently or exclusively female traits and do not mean to suggest this in any way: if anything, I tend to think that most people find it hard to care deeply about very many things, perhaps especially other people. But I do think that such values are culturally *coded* as feminine, and the statistics show us that many more women than men are in so-called "caring" professions (one of the reasons that looking at the world with the women/men binary is interesting to me is because of what it can show us in raw numbers in all sorts of areas, from medicine to domestic violence to what kind of jobs are held by whom and who is paid what for them).

There has been much written about the (white) male bias in higher education for many years now, and part of that "masculinity" seems to be embedded in the rigid disciplinary boundaries and hierarchical administrative structures of the vast majority of colleges and universities, and particularly in the power dynamic in which the teacher is the ultimate knowledge authority who wields all of the power and the student must acquiesce to that authority to succeed. Students have no choice but to accept this power dynamic, often under threat of punishment in the K-12 environment. I decided a long time ago that while I love working in a liberal arts college dedicated to thinking, teaching, and learning that is not as administratively rigid as the K-12 environment and many universities, I don't value the individualist, transactional, hierarchical, acutely specialized, grade-obsessed, and "meritocratic" nature of education that I see even here, where cost (as in all of higher education) is such a major reinforcer of class and economic disparities.

In contrast to all of that, the work of partnership requires care, openness and empathy, and a delicate balance of power relationships between professors who are older and have a lot of ego at stake, and students who are younger and have, for the most part, been indoctrinated with the idea that school is a place where teachers have the ultimate authority and control. In the context of



contemporary higher education, partnership is decidedly counter-cultural. Embracing the partnership program's female lineage at Ursinus, and more broadly its origins at a traditionally women's college, Bryn Mawr, is something that is deeply meaningful to me. It is a quiet program that has the power to transform teaching and learning by restoring education to its essentially human purpose, even within rigidly (masculine?) institutional structures.

Back to the practical: The students who apply to work for us, and importantly those we have predominantly hired, have been mostly female, and at one point we had only one man out of ten students. While we don't hire students strictly from a pool of faculty nominees (we thought this practice exclusive and perhaps a barrier for minoritized students who might not get noticed by their professors), we have found that more students who are nominated by their professors and other staff apply, and that more female students are nominated. This already heavily weights the applications towards a female pool. My co-directors and I have tended to find that the women's written applications are stronger than the men's, as evidenced by the length and thoughtfulness of their answers to the questions. During in-person interviews, the women have generally given us more confidence that they would be able to interact with their faculty partners with empathy and openness, in a way that invites, eventually, some vulnerability on the part of the professors. They tend to answer questions with more fluidity and open-ended responses that have indicated to us a willingness to engage in a true conversation, while the men tend to be more definitive and prescriptive in what they say, showing perhaps more confidence but less of an ability to be open to a back-and-forth.

On the other side, the professors who most often apply to work with student consultants are more typically female. I can only speculate as to why this is, why they seem to be more interested in this type of work than their male counterparts. Perhaps they are more interested in their students' perceptions of them and the classroom, or perhaps they are more willing to open themselves up to constructive criticism, or perhaps they just are more worried about their teaching evaluations given what female professors often face. I do not know the reasons, but the fact remains.

I will note also that the two major issues I have encountered in which partnerships had to be ended early with intervention from me and the other co-director involved female consultants working with male professors. In one case, the professor simply ignored all outreach from the student consultant, without providing any explanation, or letting her (or us) know that he wasn't able to continue in the partnership. We told the professor that this was unacceptable treatment of the student and officially ended the partnership on behalf of the student. In the other case, the student consultant worked diligently with her partner to set goals and parameters, only to find that he repeatedly asked her to do TA-like work, seemed oblivious to all her suggestions, and treated her in a condescending manner (as reported by her in our meetings and in private conversation with us). It was a rare failure in which the student – a wonderful asset to the program – felt disrespected and unable to communicate. These were isolated incidents, but the gendered dynamic in both cases was noticeable.

While women may take up partnership work more often than men here at Ursinus, I met many men at the Grinnell workshop who are or were engaged in this work, and I left the workshop wishing that I could have heard more from them about being men in this space. I would have liked to engage more directly with them to see what they thought about my sense of this work of

radical openness and egalitarianism being associated with an ethos that is culturally coded as feminine. I did notice that the men who had been doing the partnership work for some time believed in the truly radical nature of the work and valued the amount of time and care it takes to run these programs. One specific note I took was from one of the male participants who pointed out that the work of partnerships is intuitive on a teacher/human level while it is radical on the institutional/structural level, and that he was frustrated by the lack of institutional value placed on these programs.

I definitely gained insights from all participants at the Grinnell workshop. I did not feel, as I sometimes do at workshops and conferences, intimidated to speak or that my voice was not valued as much as everyone else's there: it truly felt like an egalitarian space, and one which included some younger people who reject the gender binary in their use of they/them pronouns. Gender was *there*, as it always is, everywhere, but I did not experience it as a problematic presence as I often do. I commend the workshop organizers for creating this atmosphere. However, it seemed to me that there were not as many men who were there as "interested-in-starting-a-program" as there were in positions of authority by virtue of their experience running these programs, there to share their knowledge as experts rather than learn about how they could potentially bring such a partnership program to their campuses. This would corroborate my sense of some of the gendered power dynamics: the men more often present themselves as experts rather than seekers.

Being willing to listen to those over whom you are supposed to have authority is an extremely hard sell to many of the faculty at Ursinus, but it is a particularly hard sell to the male faculty. I have made a real effort to hire more consultants who are men, and they have turned out to be some of our most wonderful consultants. Indeed, I should note that this year, we actually have more male than female consultants! I have seen the men we have hired transform through their partnership work into becoming deeper listeners and better givers-of-feedback in difficult situations. They become less prescriptive and better listeners in the consultant group meetings, more willing to listen longer rather than jumping in with an answer right away. Even putting aside the symbolic and cultural considerations above, I think all of these are qualities to be valued in society and as humans. How do we bring more male faculty into this work who are willing to put the time in and believe that they have something they can gain from working with a student?

## **Conclusion**

A definitive theme eludes me at the close of this essay through which I've followed my thinking along various paths of thought brought about by the workshop at Grinnell. My former-co-director (and current friend) Abby Kluchin suggested that she saw in the draft I shared with her the idea of a quiet power bringing about change in teaching and learning. She wrote: "I think the real title [for your essay] is 'Quiet Power' – that yokes together the ideas about the secret subversiveness of the TLI, how it's gendered female in so many ways, and also about the quietly radical role of librarians and libraries." So let me go with this as I conclude.

Librarians, due to their unique position and vantage point in the academy, have a great deal to offer to the teaching and learning enterprise, and one of the ways they can do this is to become involved in teaching and learning centers, whatever they may be called, in whatever way is possible. Librarian Amanda Peach wrote about how working with a student partner helped her to make immediate improvements to her one-shot information literacy instruction sessions (Ferrell & Peach, 2018), but we can do more than that if we join in and contribute to the conversations about teaching and learning that happen in these centers. A lot of what we do should be better integrated into courses anyway, and if we break out of our prescribed roles and confidently embrace our unique positions in the academy to work in active partnerships with teaching and learning centers on our campuses, all will benefit.

For student partnership programs, a co-director model in which a librarian serves in a permanent or semi-permanent role provides continuity for the student partners but also for the faculty who rotate in with their disciplinary perspectives (and prejudices). Librarians' varied educational backgrounds combined with the thinking they do in pursuit of the Master's of Library Science and the pedagogical experimentation often done in their work with information literacy make some of them uniquely suited to such a role. Because consultant partnership programs require a "boss" who functions more like a guide, unlike most other types of work, the student partners deserve as much continuity and consistency in the leadership of the programs as can be given to them.

Paying attention to the gender dynamics of the student partnership program on any individual campus is important, and actively seeking to bring men into the work if it is mostly women faculty and students participating will allow for different kinds of conversations. Both students and faculty have a lot to learn about themselves and what kind of ethic they carry into the world through partnership work. This should include all genders, and perhaps the conversations about this would expand the thinking – at least locally for the students and likely the faculty, too – about what kinds of human traits are the most important for the work of teaching and learning.

Much has been written that explores the peculiar idiosyncratic difficulties of actual student-faculty partnership work. It is difficult to run and sustain student-faculty partnership programs, too, and even the co-director model that I have talked about in this essay and believe is a good one isn't perfect. It seems to me that there are complex gender dynamics at play in ways that this essay has only begun to explore through my own very personal frame of reference. But despite these difficulties, it is some of the only work I have seen in academia that is what I guess I would call *radically and defiantly human*. It is work that deeply values the complex interactions involved in teaching and learning and seeks no short-cuts, no easy answers, no quick technological fixes. It is never-ending work, never complete and never finished. It refuses "efficiency." It isn't graded and it doesn't count for academic credit or tenure decisions and administrations don't typically think too much about it. It asks the student and the faculty member who are working together to get through difficulties and learn how to communicate across many differences. All who enter into a student-faculty partnership have the opportunity to be transformed themselves, but also to transform the learning experiences of all of the students in the classes in which the partnerships are happening.

Partnership work is not flashy or fast, and it isn't loud. It is understated and slow, and it is quietly happening alongside the stuff that makes the college or university website and marketing materials: research findings, majors and degree programs, conference presentations, prizes, speakers, accomplishments, pretty pictures. This work doesn't need a spotlight, though. In its quietness, there lies its power to effect truly meaningful changes for faculty and students alike as the interpersonal power dynamic shifts for both. I believe that the more of this work that is done on college and university campuses across the country and the world, the more students and faculty will feel valued as human beings who are mutually engaged in the process of teaching and learning. And with those changes in *individuals* in this most fundamental of human endeavors, the possibilities seem endless. But at the very least, there will be a few more people in the world who will treat others with just a little bit more understanding.

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