

Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education

Volume 1

Issue 43 *When the Partnership Experienced
Meet the Partnership Curious: Insights from
and Outcomes of a Pedagogical Partnership
Workshop at Grinnell College*

Article 9

May 2024

Some is More than None: A Guide to Beginning a Pedagogical Partnership Program

Ebony Graham
Trinity University

Katherine A. Troyer
Trinity University

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Recommended Citation

Graham, Ebony and Troyer, Katherine A. "Some is More than None: A Guide to Beginning a Pedagogical Partnership Program," *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*: Iss. 43 (2024), <https://repository.brynmawr.edu/tithe/vol1/iss43/9>

SOME IS MORE THAN NONE: A GUIDE TO BEGINNING A PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Ebony Graham, Post-baccalaureate Fellow in The Collaborative for Learning and Teaching, Trinity University

Katherine A. Troyer, Director of The Collaborative for Learning and Teaching, Trinity University

This essay has its origins in our shared experiences at the Teaching and Learning Together conference at Grinnell College in June 2023. The two of us had arrived at Grinnell coming—literally and figuratively—from two very different places. Ebony, a 2023 graduate of Haverford College, was in Iowa by way of Pennsylvania and was bringing with her a rich background in pedagogical partnership programs. She had served for several years as a student consultant in Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT), the program out of Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges that is often considered the grand dame of student-faculty partnerships. Additionally, Ebony had experience as a consultant for other institutions at the beginning stages of their own pedagogical partnership programs. Katie, on the other hand, was coming from Trinity University in Texas; as of June 2023, she had been the director of The Collaborative for Learning and Teaching for about a year and had inherited the already-established and much-valued pedagogical program called Tigers-as-Partners (TaP). She had also participated as a faculty TaP partner in Spring 2020 and knew firsthand the power of such a partnership for faculty.

We might have been coming from different places, but we were excited to be at the same destination: a space where we could, for a few days, focus intently and exclusively on student-faculty pedagogical partnerships. Conference participants arrived from all over the US and were from a variety of institutions. Each of us was at a different stage in our individual and institutional pedagogical partnership journeys. Some—like Ebony and Katie—were coming from schools with rich, established traditions of pedagogical partnership programs. There were just as many participants, however, who could perhaps be better defined as pedagogical partnership curious: intrigued by what they knew, but unsure of what such partnerships might look like on their campus. Both of us feel that this diversity was the true secret ingredient to the success (and awesomeness) of this conference. Although arriving with different expectations and needs, we shared a desire to build partnerships with one another and to work together to better understand what partnership means.

We also hoped to discover, as a community, the possibilities of what such partnerships could look across our varying contexts. Throughout our two days together, everyone graciously and kindly offered their expertise and knowledge wherever possible, which aided in deconstructing typical hierarchies present in higher education as we sought to learn from each other regardless of status. Ebony recalls, in particular, an afternoon session that paired experienced and curious partners. The main question of the session was ‘Where is your institution in terms of readiness (mindset, structures, precedents, etc.)?’ This session—indeed the entire conference—invited all participants to name and explain their differing perspectives while also being able to offer

advice, stories, and questions to help folks contextualize their current situations and identify where they wanted to go next in their partnership journeys.

Yet even with the powerful sense of community and the free sharing of ideas that occurred within a space stripped of conventional hierarchies of knowledge, there was occasionally a thread of concern expressed by people who were encountering the idea of partnerships for the first time or who were wrestling with how to get a program started or to grow it. After all, it is hard to not be both inspired and overwhelmed by examples of fully developed, decades-established programs like SaLT at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges or TaP at Trinity University. We heard many people express a desire to jump straight into the conditions, opportunities, and resources of these programs that had been established for years if not decades. How, some folks asked, did they bring versions of these programs to their own campus *now* despite the often financial and other logistical barriers and constraints they faced? As two folks coming from established partnership programs, this led us to ask our own questions: How can we communicate the idea that—when it comes to pedagogical partnerships—*some* is always more than *none*? How can growth be framed in such a way that the focus is on the development itself rather than the perceived size of that development?

This essay, and our accompanying guide, is part of our answer to these questions. We created this guide to acknowledge that there are multiple, distinct stages of growth in developing the conditions for pedagogical partnerships and facilitating partnership programs. We wanted to create a resource that encouraged people to build the partnership program that fits within their realities, which meant crafting a resource that avoided rigid prescriptions and allowed for growth based on many different factors. The result is a guide that we believe can be meaningful to folks at many stages in their pedagogical partnership journey: those who are excited about, but new to, pedagogical partnership programs (what we call the seed stage); those who have taken first steps but need help envisioning the middle stages (our sprout stage); and those whose efforts are beginning to bear fruit and want to know what comes next (the blossom stage).

As you read through this guide, you will undoubtedly discover that you are at different stages in your development for different program components; for example, while you might be at the sprout stage in understanding your purpose, you are at the seed stage of your knowledge of partnerships. Nevertheless, we have tried to organize the guide so that the more foundational program components are discussed first. Reading this essay, for example, contributes to your starting fund of knowledge on pedagogical partnerships. It might be helpful to identify possible partners and collaborators before fully considering issues of compensation. Ultimately, however, there is no wrong way to engage with this guide. In the spirit of *some* is more than *none*, you must find the way that this guide best benefits you.

As a final recommendation, we invite you to find trusted individuals, on and off your campus, who can serve as thought partners. Even though you might not have been with us at Grinnell, it is possible to be a part of the larger community grounded in pedagogical partnership. In a lovely turn of events, while Ebony and Katie met in person for the first time at Grinnell in June 2023, Ebony joined Trinity University in August 2023 as the Postbac Fellow in the faculty development center where Katie serves as director. We have continued the practice of reciprocal knowledge sharing and learning that were the highlights of the conference. In most of our work

together, we often brainstorm separately and then—as we did for this essay—we find ways to enhance our work by blending together our individual ideas.

We encourage you to find your own collaborators, with whom you can build a rapport of feedback and support while still maintaining the space to innovate and find opportunities for individual growth. Reach out to the folks writing in this special issue. Consider what type of existing faculty/staff-student partnership programs might already exist at your institution in the form of labs, internships, peer tutoring programs, and undergraduate research opportunities outside of the classroom. Then, invite the people facilitating these other types of partnerships to join you for a conversation or become part of a working group. Ask someone to help you review the guide we have shared below, and find a person who can gently remind you that—when it comes to pedagogical partnerships—*some* is always more than *none*.

References from Guide

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Program Component	Seed	Sprout	Blossom
<p>Knowledge on Partnership (1)</p>	<p>You are reading this essay! You see the merit of pedagogical partnerships and are interested in discovering what this model could look like on your campus. You are actively exploring methods to implement a program at your institution.</p>	<p>You are finding resources such as books, articles, and videos on pedagogical partnerships to learn more about building your program. We recommend starting with <i>Pedagogical Partnerships: A Guide for Faculty, Students, and Academic Developers in Higher Education</i> (by Alison Cook-Sather, Melanie Bahti, and Anita Ntem); <i>Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching</i> (by Alison Cook-Sather, Catherine Bovill, and Peter Felten); <i>The Power of Partnership</i> (edited by Lucy Mercer-Mapstone and Sophia Abbott); and <i>Co-Creating Equitable Teaching and Learning</i> (by Alison Cook-Sather). Looking for a shorter read to get started? Here's an article discussing (with a great graphic) partnership learning communities.</p>	<p>You are reaching out to folks in the existing (and friendly!) community invested in pedagogical partnerships, such as members of the Co-creation through Partnership Special Interest Group through the POD network. You are setting up meetings for consultations and/or are connecting to ask for recommendations and advice. You <i>may</i> even be dipping your toes into the waters by engaging in your own scholarship on pedagogical partnerships.</p>
<p>Understanding of Purpose (2)</p>	<p>You and any others who contribute to the creation of</p>	<p>Your program partners (both students and faculty/staff) have</p>	<p>Your broader institutional community stakeholders,</p>

	<p>your program have a clear understanding about what your partnership program does (or will do). You and your co-creators can articulate the actions needed to begin your program.</p>	<p>a clear understanding about what your partnership program does. They are able to serve as ambassadors for the program, articulating to others the role they play in the program and the benefit of this program to the institution.</p>	<p>including administrators and potential future program partners, have a clear understanding about what your partnership program does. Individuals know how they can become involved and can articulate both what the program offers and what they specifically can gain from your program.</p>
<p>Community Investment (3)</p>	<p>There may only be a small portion of your campus community who understand what your program is (or will be). Nevertheless, these folks are committed to supporting your program in some way with investments of time, participation, and/or potential funding.</p>	<p>You’ve begun to issue invitations for a larger segment of your campus community to become invested in your program. These are perhaps folks who were not ready to join at the seed phase but who now have the bandwidth to understand your program and its purpose and to get excited about this work.</p>	<p>Your program is becoming well-known to the wider campus community. There is a range of stakeholders who are broadly supportive of your program’s purpose. There may even be demand from the community to participate in—or help with—your program.</p>
<p>Partners (Faculty/Staff and Students) (4)</p>	<p>You have some pilot partnerships in development. This means that the stakes are low and manageable. You are finding partners who are willing to participate in this new program and your goal is exploratory: to see what does and does not work. You are</p>	<p>How your partnerships grow will depend on your program’s needs. You may flourish to the point where you can increase the amount of partnerships your program supports. Or, you may try implementing new types of partnerships such as co-creation amongst students</p>	<p>You are considering explicit ways to increase and grow. This might involve introducing more partnerships or you might be finding other ways to expand opportunities for your partners. This might look like partners working with other institutions or contributing to</p>

	also allowing yourself to limit the number of partnerships to start small (no more than 1-3 partnerships consisting of students and faculty/staff).	and faculty/staff. You are still exploring options, but the foundation of “what works” grows stronger.	journals or conferences in teaching and learning.
Facilitation/Formal Structure (5)	You are finding ways to build program facilitation into your (or someone else’s) current workload. This means being strategic and realistic; feasibility should be a primary goal. Structural elements to consider at this stage include matching partners, conducting orientation, facilitating meetings, and finding a common (physical or virtual) meeting space for your partners to engage in conversations about their work.	The program facilitator (this might be you) has their workload redistributed so that they can focus more on this program. This allows you to start imagining and developing additional structural elements you want to adopt, such as programming that brings together all partners (e.g., special topic workshops, social mixers, end-of-term debriefings).	You may be able to have a permanent facilitator position for your program. This may be a Postbac Fellow or other personnel whose primary job duties involve overseeing the logistics of the program, supervising partnerships, engaging in assessment, and building knowledge and connections. You and any potential collaborators can now focus on structural elements that you did not have the bandwidth to explore in previous stages. This might include external assessment, connecting with programs at other institutions, and considering program 2.0 features.
Compensation (6)	It is entirely possible you will begin without a clear source of compensation for your partners or program facilitator. Yet you are beginning to have	You have found at least one solution for compensation that works within the realities of your institution. This might not match what other institutions	You have a steady and consistent funding source that allows you to compensate all facilitators and partners in the program. Compensation begins

	<p>conversations with administrators and/or other campus stakeholders about the importance of meaningfully compensating this work. You are also exploring a variety of compensation models, including stipends, course credit, course releases, and other ways of acknowledging this labor.</p>	<p>are providing in terms of compensation; however, there is a concrete form of recognition for this work. Perhaps you are still developing models that will provide appropriate compensation for all student partners, faculty/staff partners, and program facilitators; however, you can point to clear systems that are being implemented.</p>	<p>with recognition of the importance of this work, but it also includes a financial component (a stipend or hourly pay) and/or a time component (course credit or a course release).</p>
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