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INSISTING ON INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

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The current sociopolitical climate has ushered in bans on the work of diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), closures of DEI offices and firing of individuals dedicated to this work, and withdrawal of funding to carry out initiatives (*The Chronicle of Higher Education* DEI Legislation Tracker, 2024). And yet the need to develop and refine inclusive practices is as real as ever, perhaps more so, and insisting on the continuation of this work requires clarity of conviction and courage in the face of both known and unknown threats. Such clarity and courage are abundant in the essays included in this issue of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*. These essays came to me from different people and points of origin; they were not submitted in response to a call. It is therefore particularly striking that they all address, directly and indirectly, the necessity of inclusive practices.

In “[DEVELOPING BELONGING AND MATTERING AS BIPOC STUDENTS THROUGH STUDENT CONSULTING](#),” Jacob Chan, Haverford College class of 2024, explores the experiences of four BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color) student consultants in the SaLT (Students as Learners and Teachers) Program. He focuses on belonging and mattering as experienced by BIPOC student consultants in the predominantly white institutions (PWI’s) of Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges, which were not, as Chan reminds us, built for BIPOC students and faculty. Combining critical review of three essays written by other BIPOC students and an autoethnography to reflect on his own experience, Chan takes the stance that “striving for belonging and mattering in these contexts is not only an act of resistance against the system but also a celebration of the diversity and wealth of perspectives that are gained through putting the perspectives of BIPOC student consultants in conversation.”

In “[DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ARE NOT THE GOAL ANYMORE: DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IS](#),” Ebony Graham, Post-baccalaureate Fellow for The Collaborative for Learning and Teaching at Trinity University, reflects on her experiences of being a student consultant through the SaLT program when she was an undergraduate at Haverford College, during which time she focused on identifying where in her faculty partners’ teaching they were already engaged in inclusive practices and how they might build on those to make their classrooms more inclusive. Writing as a Black woman, she explores how she came to see clearly through this partnership work that “everyone did not have the same ability to take up space nor were students always equitably served in the classroom.” Graham explores examples of and issues a call for shifting from a focus on diversity and inclusion toward a focus on inclusive practices.

In “[REDEFINING PROFESSIONALISM AND REJECTING PERFECTIONISM THROUGH THE PROCESS OF PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIP: TAKEAWAYS FROM MY YEARS AS A STUDENT CONSULTANT](#),” Mara Wald, Bryn Mawr College Class of 2024, looks back from her summer work of leading backcountry hiking trips to identify and reflect on the most powerful insights and practices she gained as a student consultant. Wald discusses her move away from perfectionism and toward “leaning into the mess” of the learning process. She explores as well

“the value of transparency and intention in humanizing and equalizing authority.” And she offers examples of relationship building, connection, and joy through pedagogical partnership. She suggests that all of these ways of being create inclusive relationships within partnership and, in turn, contribute to the creation of inclusive classrooms, and they apply to learning not only within but also beyond the classroom and the college spaces in which she experienced them through working in pedagogical partnership.

In “[STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVES ON ADVANCING INCLUSIVE TEACHING THROUGH OBSERVATIONAL FEEDBACK AND PARTNERSHIP](#),” Amiira Aden, Alex Evans, Ilka Huseinovic, and Tanushree Sow Mondal, all students at Lafayette College, explain how they used the Protocol for Advancing Inclusive Teaching Efforts (PAITE), “which codified inclusive teaching into 16 smaller, more easily recognizable and quantifiable practices (Addy et al., 2022),” as well as other protocols and tools, for analyzing inclusive practices in classrooms at Lafayette. They reflect on the roles of student and faculty partners, the development of faculty partners’ inclusive teaching practices, partnership challenges and solutions, and student partner growth and development through this work. They acknowledge that “it can be difficult to align teaching practices to all students’ needs and incorporate all of our feedback immediately and effectively” and also “the importance of clarity in communication between student partners and faculty—having an open dialogue is essential for the success of the partnership.”

In “[INCLUSIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM: SHARED EXPERIENCES OF A STUDENT-FACULTY PARTNERSHIP](#),” Kelly Basile, Associate Professor of Management, and Cynthia Brito, biology major, with a health sciences concentration, class of 2025, both of Emmanuel College, reflect on the Community Learning and Inclusivity Partnership (CLIP) program at Emmanuel College brings together faculty members and students in partnerships to promote inclusive practice in the classroom. They explain how the program works, offer a sample intervention, reflect on their experiences of imposter syndrome and how partnership work helped address those, and identify lessons learned from their partnership, including “the importance of including opportunities for student leadership in course design and course delivery.”

Finally, in “[EMBRACING VULNERABILITY AS A FORCE FOR DISMANTLING TEACHING AND LEARNING HIERARCHIES](#),” Leigh Ferrier, graduate student in the dual degree MA/MFA Program and Student Fellow, Center for Teaching, Learning, and Mentoring (CTLM) at Arcadia University, Daniel Pieczkolon, Adjunct Professor of English/Faculty Administrative Fellow for the CTLM, and Ellen Skilton, director of the CTLM, offer their three perspectives on how, through “embracing vulnerability again and again,” the Student Pedagogical Consultant (SPC) program at Arcadia works to dismantle teaching and learning hierarchies and “generates an aliveness in learning that is transformative and worth sustaining.”

The diversity of positions and perspectives from which these authors write affords readers an opportunity to think about how inclusive practices can be conceptualized and enacted across contexts. They affirm yet again the brave spaces pedagogical partnership create (Cook-Sather, 2016) and how working together in such spaces inspires and prepares those who work in them to create brave spaces for others.

References

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