

Research Summary: Investigating International Experiences of Student-Faculty/Staff Partnerships in Teaching and Learning (Phase Three)

Research Questions & Study Rationale

Student-faculty partnership in higher education is a transformative pedagogical practice, and in recent years it has become more widespread. Students, staff, and wider university communities all stand to benefit from partnership (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014), but research has demonstrated that practicing genuine partnership can be a difficult process (Allin, 2014; Bovill et al., 2016). The summer institute for students as partners is thus intended to support faculty and staff in engaging in partnership efforts. The present research is part of a broader study examined participant experiences of the Summer Institute, specifically asking how they viewed and experienced partnership and how the SI supported their partnership work. A first phase was conducted in conjunction with the first institute in May 2016. (Marquis, Black, & Healey, 2017). A subsequent follow-up study, conducted approximately 9 months after the SI, aimed primarily to understand the event's long-term effect on partnership practice. This third phase sought to understand whether perceptions expressed by participants in earlier phases remained constant. Like the previous phases, it was guided by two main questions:

- (1) How do participants perceive and experience partnership within the SI and beyond?
- (2) To what extent do participants understand the SI as supporting their developing partnership work and capacities?

Methodology

Two students and a staff member worked together to design and conduct this study, collaborating with one additional staff member at a distance. Data were gathered in 2 ways:

- Focus groups during the SI (5 participants)
- Responses to reflective prompts completed as part of the SI (participants consented to let us use 94 such responses for the research)

Following data collection, focus group recordings and handwritten prompts were reviewed by team members, paying particular attention to whether or not they offered information different from that gathered in earlier phases.

Key Findings

On the whole, findings echoed those expressed in earlier phases of the study. See the following links for summaries of those findings:

Phase 1: <https://mi.mcmaster.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SIResearchSummary.pdf>

Phase 2: https://mi.mcmaster.ca/site/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/SI2017_Summary1.pdf

Next Steps and More Information

Given the similarity of the data to that collected in previous phases (and the fact that we did not secure an especially large number of participants for the focus groups in this phase) we have elected to fold the findings of this piece of the study into our work with the Phase 2 data. A manuscript that focuses primarily on the Phase 2 data, but also makes brief reference to the Phase 3 findings, has been prepared and submitted for publication. Results have also been presented at the 2017 Connecting Higher Education conference, and the 2017 International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) conference. We may engage in further analysis of the Phase 3 data at some point in the future, though we're not yet sure if this will be possible due to resource limitations and changes in research team availability. If you would like to receive a summary of any further analysis we might complete, please let us know by return email. We will also post any further developments that should occur on the MacPherson Institute website (<http://www.mi.mcmaster.ca>).

As well, the researchers are in the process of developing an online platform that aims to sustain and develop networks and motivation following the SI.

References

- Allin, L. (2014). Collaboration between staff and students in the scholarship of teaching and learning: The potential and the problems. *Teaching and Learning Inquiry, 2*(1), 95-102.
- Healey, M., Flint, A., & Harrington, K. (2014). *Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education*. York: Higher Education Academy.
- Marquis, E., Black, C., & Healey, M. (2017). Responding to the challenges of student-staff partnership: Reflections of participants at an international summer institute. *Teaching in Higher Education, 22*(6), 720-735.
- Matthews, K.E. (in press). Five propositions for genuine 'students as partners' practice. *International Journal of Students as Partners, 1*(2).