

Changing the Landscape of the University: Recognizing Students as Partners

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'If there is to be a single important structural change during the coming decades, it is the changing role of students who are given more room in defining and contributing to higher education.' (Gärdebo & Wiggberg, 2012, p. 9)

Students who attend CU Boulder are changing. Their needs are changing. And the way they're learning is also changing. As the university community bands together to generate ideas about meeting these needs, one thought to consider is Student as Partners (with Faculty).

Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felten (2014) defines a student-faculty partnership 'as a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision making, implementation, investigation, or analysis' (pp. 6-7). This relationship is built upon three pillars: respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. This process repositions students and faculty as teachers and learners; and ultimately redefines traditional roles of students and faculty in relation to one another and to the institution.

Partnerships with faculty are linked to positive learning impact and achievement (Healy, Flint, & Harrington, 2014; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017) and 'achieve a deeper understanding of teaching and learning that comes from shared analysis and revision' (Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felton, 2014 p23.) We see this as an opportunity for students to have an active agency in their educational experience. In addition to their normal course load, students have the possibility of working alongside faculty in a number of capacities. Partnerships can take many shapes and forms, however they typically fall into one of four categories (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Cook-Sather, Bovill & Felton, 2014):

1. Learning, teaching & assessment
2. Curriculum design & pedagogical consultancy
3. Subject-based research & inquiry
4. Scholarship of teaching & learning

There are units on campus who are engaging in various forms of SaP. A few examples include:

- The [Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program](#) (UROP) provides funding for students who have a desire to conduct research with faculty.
- The [Learning Assistant Program](#) (LA Program) provides an opportunity for undergraduate students who are hired to facilitate small group interaction in STEM courses. These students also take part in various aspects of course design.

- ASSETT's [Teaching Technology Assistance Program](#) (TTAP) partners an undergraduate student with a faculty member to introduce and support a new technology in the classroom.

Other universities have embraced the students as partners culture and institutionalized programs. These programs recognize the value of student input and keep the ever changing needs of students at the center of course designs and best teaching practices. Through the [Undergraduate Student Initiated Education](#) (USIE) program at UCLA, select juniors and seniors work closely with faculty as mentors to develop and facilitate a seminar for lower division students. [Utah Valley University](#), [Minnesota State University](#), [Teikyo University](#) and [Brigham Young University](#), implemented the Students Consulting on Teaching (SCOT) program. This program trains undergraduates who provide constructive feedback to faculty from a student perspective. Students consult with faculty, observe a class, and then make suggestions for improvements.

CU student [Melanie Ferraro](#), who was both an LA as well as an undergraduate research assistant for the Geography department benefitted tremendously from these experiences. How can we create a culture that provides these opportunities to everyone and not just the exception? Several groups on campus are finding programmatic ways of placing value on student voices and participation in support of students' learning. We advocate for creating a larger culture movement towards a campus recognition of the importance students as equal partners in their education and in the educational mission of the university.

References

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