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Success in Student-Faculty/Staff SoTL Partnerships: Motivations, Challenges, Power, and Definitions

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Abstract

Partnerships with students are considered one of the principles of good Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) practice. However, not all partnerships are equally successful. What characteristics are common to successful partnerships and what preparatory elements can lead toward more successful partnerships? In this article, our team of graduate students, educational developers, and faculty members engage in detailed self-reflection on our past and ongoing SoTL projects as an inquiry into what it means to be in a successful student-faculty/staff partnership. Using thematic analysis, we identify and describe four distinct domains that can shape partnerships: (1) motivations to participate, (2) challenges, (3) power, and (4) definitions of success. The article concludes with a set of questions to stimulate initial and ongoing conversations between partners to guide new partnerships in defining the parameters for success in their proposed collaboration.

Les partenariats avec les étudiants sont considérés comme l'un des principes de bonne pratique de l'Avancement des connaissances en enseignement et en apprentissage (ACEA). Toutefois, tous les partenariats ne connaissent pas le même succès. Quelles sont les caractéristiques communes des partenariats réussis et quels sont les éléments préparatoires qui peuvent aboutir à des partenariats mieux réussis? Dans cet article, notre groupe, consistant d'étudiants de cycles supérieurs, de conseillers pédagogiques et de professeurs, se lance dans une auto-réflexion détaillée sur nos projets passés et présents en ACEA qui constitue une enquête sur ce que cela signifie de faire partie d'un partenariat réussi entre étudiants, professeurs et membres du personnel. Par le biais de l'analyse thématique, nous identifions et décrivons quatre domaines distincts qui façonnent les partenariats : 1) la motivation à participer, 2) les défis, 3) le pouvoir et 4) les définitions de la réussite. En conclusion, nous posons un groupe de questions pour stimuler les conversations initiales et continues entre les divers partenaires afin de guider les nouveaux partenariats à définir les paramètres menant à la réussite dans leur collaboration proposée.

Educators are increasingly inviting students to contribute to teaching and learning. For example, there is literature on student engagement (e.g., Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012; Dunne & Owen, 2013; Millard, Bartholomew, Stewart, & Nygaard, 2013), students as partners (e.g., Bovill, Cook-Sather, & Felten, 2011; Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014, 2016; Healey & Jenkins, 2009), and students as co-researchers (e.g., Weller, Domarkaite, Lam, & Metta, 2013; Werder & Otis, 2009; Werder, Thibou, & Kaufer, 2012). Regardless of disciplinary lenses or the terminology used to describe students' roles, many of the above scholars have examined common themes pertaining to the involvement of students as contributors to teaching and learning such as accessible strategies, best practices, innovations, and theoretical considerations—all of which have helped to advance this growing field.

Felten (2013) identifies partnership with students as one of the five principles for good practice in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL).[1] When discussing partnership as one example of student engagement, Healey et al. (2014) argue that a "prescriptive and tightly defined concept of partnership would be unlikely to accommodate the diversity of contexts for learning and teaching. However, boundaries are useful in framing and fostering debates" (p. 14). In this article, we build on both Healey et al.'s (2014) statement about partnerships, as well as existing literature that explores success in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships (e.g., Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard, & Moore-Cherry, 2015; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Marquis et al., 2016), in order to identify characteristics that are common to partnerships that we, individually, consider successful. By engaging in self-reflection of our past and ongoing SoTL partnership experiences, we provide another set of voices to the understanding of how various kinds of student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships develop and how they are embodied.

As authors, we consist of eight individuals with different roles in higher education, including graduate students, educational developers, and faculty (both teaching- and research-track) who applied to participate in SoTL Canada's inaugural Collaborative Writing Group initiative (CWG), represented in this special issue.[2] We represent diverse academic disciplines—including chemistry, computer science, education, engineering, psychology, and social work—and seven different undergraduate, comprehensive, and research-intensive Canadian universities. While acknowledging that many different types of relationships can exist between students and faculty/staff, in this article, we focus on student-faculty/staff partnerships in the context of SoTL given the theme of the writing group we were engaged in. Consequently, even though the projects that we reflect upon in this article include undergraduate researchers or participants, their voices are not specifically represented because only graduate students were participants in our CWG. In this way, our article adds a unique perspective to the student-faculty/staff SoTL partnership literature in that it focuses on the perspectives and experiences of graduate students.

Definitions of Partnership

An examination of student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships can be informed by the broader literature on partnerships and collaborations. Within the SoTL literature, there are a variety of nuanced definitions of student-faculty/staff partnerships (e.g., Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Healey et al., 2014; Jensen & Bennett, 2016). For example, Cook-Sather et al. (2014) define such partnerships as "a collaborative, reciprocal *process* [emphasis added] through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same

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[1]Note that we define SoTL in the same way that is outlined in the introductory article for this issue.
[2]Recognizing the collaborative nature of this SoTL partnership, the author list was assigned alphabetically.

ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision-making, implementation, investigation, or analysis" (pp. 6-7). Healey et al. (2014) define these partnerships as "a *relationship* [emphasis added] in which all involved—students, academics, professional services staff, senior managers, students' unions, and so on—are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together" (p. 12). Using concepts from the definitions by Cook-Sather et al. (2014) and Healey et al. (2014), we define a student-faculty/staff SoTL partnership as a relationship in which all participants engage in a process that is intended to investigate curricular or pedagogical issues.

We broadly consider a student partner as a learner enrolled in a college, undergraduate, or graduate program who is engaged in a SoTL partnership with faculty, staff, or other students. Our reflections on the partnerships discussed in this article emerged from our own perspectives as graduate students, educational developers, and faculty. Each of us has engaged in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships in our current roles. We base our examination of student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships on the conceptual framework provided by Healey et al. (2014). This model identifies four interrelated ways of engaging students as partners including: (a) learning, teaching, and assessment; (b) curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy; (c) subject-based research inquiry; and (d) SoTL. It is from the final component of this model, SoTL partnerships, that we draw our experiences and focus this article. In a reflection on this model, Healey et al. (2016) recently posed the question, "What are the challenges, opportunities and benefits in developing partnership learning communities?" and suggest that this question needs to be considered in different national, institutional, and disciplinary contexts. Our findings provide a partial answer to this question by reporting on challenges and benefits to SoTL partnerships in a Canadian, multi-institutional, multi-disciplinary context.

Factors Influencing the Success of Student-Faculty/Staff SoTL Partnerships

The quality of student-faculty/staff partnerships depend on the motivations of the partners (Healey et al., 2014) and the power dynamics inherent in the partnership (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Felten et al., 2015; Seale, Gibson, Haynes, & Potter, 2015), among other factors. Cook-Sather et al. (2014) argue that partnerships are based on the underlying principles of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility, while Healey et al. (2014) have built their model for student partnership around the Higher Education Academy's (2015) engagement framework, which was recently updated to include the following nine values: authenticity, honesty, inclusivity, reciprocating, empowerment, trust, courage, plurality, and responsibility. Together, these principles and values begin to describe the necessary conditions for successful partnerships; however, they cannot paint a full picture of the lived experiences of the individuals involved in partnerships. As such, the characteristics of successful partnerships remain difficult to define, especially when considering the diversity of individuals involved and the fact that partnership relationships may evolve over time.

Furthermore, one of the challenges of identifying the characteristics of successful student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships is the diverse goals of individuals within an academic environment. For example, if the intended outcome of a SoTL initiative is not achieved but student partners acquire experience and training, one partner could argue that the partnership was a success. This means that individuals within a partnership may define success differently. As a result, some partnerships may be more successful for some individuals and less successful for others. Yet, faculty/staff partners are typically responsible to funding agencies, which are often

publicly supported, and dissemination of peer-reviewed results is an expectation held by many institutions for faculty/staff career advancement. Therefore, this article asks what is the most appropriate metric for success in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships for academic environments?

In the following pages, we draw from self-reflection to consider elements of success that are connected to both the process of a partnership and the anticipated outcomes (Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Healey et al., 2014; Woolmer et al., 2016). This article begins with a description of the reflective process that entailed an examination of our past and ongoing student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships. Using thematic analysis to examine the data produced through this process, we identify four domains that can shape partnerships—motivations to participate, challenges, power, and definitions of success—although we focus more prominently on how we see success in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships given that there is less existing scholarship in this area. We conclude by proposing a set of preparatory questions that transcend our varied disciplinary and experiential lenses and can lead toward more successful student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships. We anticipate that our analysis of the emergent themes describing successful student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships and guiding questions will help support SoTL initiatives, act as a guide for new partnerships in developing appropriate shared structures and intended outcomes, and provide a reflection to inform metrics of success for SoTL initiatives.

Methods

As part of SoTL Canada's CWG, our research team met to reflect on our past and ongoing experiences in SoTL partnerships. Throughout these conversations, we collaboratively developed nine questions to encourage detailed self-reflection on our past and ongoing student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships. Our questions are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Self-Reflection Questions

Self-Reflection Questions
1. How do you define success in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships?
2. Describe one such partnership that you have been a part of in as much detail as possible, including:
o How was the initiative started?
o Why did you become involved in this partnership?
o What were the incentives for each member of this partnership?
o How did each individual play a role in getting it going?
o Did you have explicit conversations regarding each individual's roles and goals?
o What were the impacting responses from other stakeholders along the way?
3. What were the intended tangible and intangible outcomes and the actual outcomes from your perspective? How were they valued?
4. What were the strengths/successes of the partnership process?
5. What were the challenges of the partnership process?
6. What were the inherent hierarchies and what role did power play in the partnership?
7. What were the rewards or outcomes for each partner from this partnership?
8. What would you replicate in future partnerships? What would you do differently?
9. Reflecting upon this experience, how would you now define success in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships?

These questions served as prompts or guides for our self-reflections, which we each wrote individually over the period of two weeks. Once complete, we electronically shared all of the self-reflections with the entire research team. Given that our data were based on our own self-reflections and that no one external to our research team was involved in the data production process, the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board deemed this study exempt from ethics review as per the guidelines outlined in Chapter 2 of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014).

Data Analysis

We generated and analyzed a total of eight self-reflections (one per study author) in this study. Table 2 briefly summarizes the key characteristics of each reflection.

Table 2
Key Characteristics of the Self-Reflections Included in this Study

Role	Experience: been in a student-faculty/staff partnership before?	Level of students involved in the partnership	Brief description of the level of institutional support for the project
Graduate student	Yes	Graduate, undergraduate	Part of a funded, institution-wide program
Faculty	Yes	Undergraduate	Project with funding from a grant
Faculty	Yes	Graduate	Project with no funding
Staff	Yes	Graduate	Part of a Teaching and Learning Centre initiative; offers a certificate but no compensation
Graduate student	Concurrently	Graduate	Project with funding from an institutional grant
Faculty	Yes	Undergraduate	Student project for course credit
Graduate student, but in a faculty role	Yes	College	Project with funding from an institutional grant
Graduate student	Yes	Graduate	Part of a funded Teaching and Learning Centre initiative

Thematic analysis. Three members of our research team were tasked with the responsibility of analyzing the self-reflections. We tested our strategy for thematic analysis by analyzing two of the eight reflections—one self-reflection from a graduate student's perspective and one from a staff/faculty member's perspective, with the initial assumption that different themes may emerge from the two perspectives. Using a general inductive approach and guidelines on analyzing qualitative data by Saldana (2009) and Braun and Clarke (2006), we coded the test reflections individually and then collaboratively created a combined list of codes that were used to code the remaining reflections. Finally, we sorted our final codes into overarching domains and themes.

Coding. In the initial coding of the two reflections, we coded for emerging ideas. Our codes represented aggregated text or ideas (Creswell, 2013), and we each kept a running list of the codes and later merged them into one master list of codes. During a Skype meeting, we discussed our coding process and the master list of codes, adding further definitions and clarifications to enhance the consistency of the coding process. We felt that a more systematic coding method was needed to keep track of the codes emerging from the self-reflections. Using the initial master list of codes, we created a coding chart to record the codes that were found in each reflection, allowing us to see and discuss similarities and differences with respect to our coding. We split the remaining self-reflections to ensure that each reflection was coded by at least two of the three coders, but that no coder coded their own reflection so as to avoid any potential biases. This resulted in each coder coding six of the eight self-reflections. Additional codes were added as they emerged from self-reflections that had not yet been coded. Once complete, the coding chart was presented to the rest of the research team. Their feedback demonstrated a general agreement with the coding and unanimous approval to move forward with the analyses to generate themes from the codes.

From codes to domains and themes. At this stage, we sorted and condensed our codes to generate domains and themes. We created two groups of codes based on the perspective from which the author chose to write about their SoTL project (i.e., graduate student or faculty/staff). We categorized three reflections as taking the perspective of the graduate student role and five as taking the perspective of the faculty/staff role. We retained common codes (defined as occurring in at least two reflections for graduate students and three reflections for faculty/staff) for further analysis, which allowed for increased confidentiality of the partners and institutions involved in the projects since codes present only in a single reflection were not used. Similar codes were then grouped into domains and themes, the latter showing additional relationships within each domain. These domains and themes will be described in detail in the next section.

Results and Discussion

We identified four main domains from our data: (1) motivations to participate, (2) challenges, (3) power, and (4) definitions of success. Themes within each of these domains are summarized and discussed in more detail below, with a more prominent focus on how we see success in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships given that there is less existing scholarship in this area. Given our choice to focus more extensively on the theme of definitions of success, we have chosen to provide more explicit examples (i.e., participant quotes) in this section compared to the others. A summary of the themes uncovered in our analysis is provided in the Appendix.

Domain 1: Motivations to Participate

Healey et al. (2014) describe a variety of pedagogic motivations for engaging in partnerships; however, they do not discuss extrinsic, product-focused motivations such as publications or financial support. Our self-reflections describe both pedagogic motivations and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for participating in SoTL partnerships. Motivations appeared to differ slightly between our two stakeholder groups of graduate students and faculty/staff. Graduate student authors' self-reflections revealed that for them, the strongest motivators for engaging in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships were publications, gaining research experience, and financial support. While some graduate students specifically mentioned having an interest in the SoTL project they were working on, this was not as strong of a motivator to participate as it was for the faculty/staff in our sample. Top motivators for faculty/staff to engage in SoTL partnerships, on the other hand, were largely intrinsic and focused on the relational aspects of partnership, which is consistent with other literature in this area (e.g., Gordon, 2010). However, the faculty/staff in our study acknowledged that extrinsic motivators (e.g., publications, additional human resources, or using their SoTL work as "academic currency" when applying for funding or promotion) also played an important role in their desire to engage in partnership.

We believe that these motivational differences between graduate students and faculty/staff exist because each group is at a different stage in their career development. Graduate students may be less concerned than faculty/staff with *what they are researching* than with the fact that *they are researching* since they are not yet fully established in their career. Moreover, graduate students may not be familiar with what SoTL is and as a result, may not actively seek opportunities in this field (Felten et al., 2015). In addition, extrinsic motivations were likely exacerbated in our sample given that all of our student authors were graduate students for whom research experience and related outcomes (e.g., publications) could be more valued as "academic currency" than among undergraduate students (Schram & Allendoerfer, 2012). Nonetheless, Healey et al. (2014) argue that student-SoTL partnerships can be effective and worthwhile even when participants have different motivations for participating—what is important is that motivations for participating and expectations are communicated clearly throughout the partnership relationship. We will discuss this in more detail in a later section of this article when we propose a set of guiding questions for future partnerships.

Domain 2: Challenges

Reflecting on the challenges of past and ongoing partnerships—including their opportunities and challenges—can be equally or more helpful in understanding what it is that constitutes a successful partnership than reflecting on successes. The challenges that arose during our analysis add to the existing literature on challenges in student-staff SoTL partnerships. Bovill et al. (2015) identified resistance to co-creation of learning and teaching; navigating institutional structures, practices, and norms; and establishing an inclusive approach as the most commonly encountered challenges based on their partnership experiences and the SoTL literature. We did not identify all of these challenges in our work, although there was some overlap. For example, difficulty with participant buy-in emerged as a challenge. This is an example of resistance to the co-creation of learning and teaching described by Bovill et al. Moreover, the lack of clarity regarding roles, goals, and expectations and challenges faced by

faculty/staff in finding an appropriate level of autonomy for their student partners are examples of what Bovill et al. describe as challenges to establishing an inclusive approach.

Our findings are also consistent with those of Marquis et al. (2016), who analyzed written reflections and a focus group transcript from staff and student participants in a student partners program. Like ours, their analysis revealed the challenges of navigating traditional roles, balancing guidance and self-direction, and time to build meaningful partnerships, thus re-affirming these common challenges in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships. Additionally, in our analysis, we found that faculty/staff were more likely to discuss challenges in their partnership than were graduate students. Based on the current literature, it is currently unclear as to why this may be the case; thus, future research might explore how responsibility in partnership is perceived by students compared to faculty/staff and how this impacts the ways in which they experience and navigate challenges that may arise.

Domain 3: Power

Our third domain uncovered the role that power played in our partnerships, and how this informed our perceptions of success within these partnerships. Many of us wrote about the inherent power imbalance that positional power (power held through roles and titles such as "teacher" vs. "student") brought to bear on our partnerships, which have also been identified and explored elsewhere in the context of SoTL research (e.g., Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Felten et al., 2015; Marquis et al., 2016; Seale et al., 2015). In many cases, this power imbalance was something we were very conscious of throughout our partnerships and were actively trying to navigate. For example, one of our faculty authors described feeling as if his/her partnership was almost unavoidably "top-down" at first. However, as the partnership progressed, s/he could see the student partners gaining more skill and confidence as researchers, enabling them to take greater ownership over the project. This highlights the role of situational power, or power that is more fluid and dynamic and can shift depending on context. It seemed that as the partnership developed, the emphasis on positional power (where the faculty member had more power) decreased and the emphasis on situational power (where the students and faculty member had power at different times) increased. This was viewed positively by this faculty member as it signaled that the students were also learning and developing.

Others experienced partnerships with fewer inherent hierarchies, perhaps because the students involved in these partnerships were further along in their education (i.e., were graduate students), had prior partnership experiences, and/or were treated more equitably by their faculty/staff partners. Projects in which power was experienced as more dynamic (ebbing and flowing for different people at different times) were generally also seen as successful, although in two cases, there were some challenges created when students felt they lacked a sense of direction and did not have enough faculty/staff support for the project. Our analysis indicates that navigating this fine line can be very difficult in a partnership, which strongly aligns with some of the challenges that were discussed in Domain 2.

Finally, we acknowledge that faculty/staff who tend to engage in student-staff partnerships often view students as having the capacity to be true partners—and this is especially the case among our research team—thus, it is perhaps rarer to hear about SoTL projects where power/hierarchies prevented a partnership from happening in the first place. However, we know that negative perceptions about students' abilities to contribute meaningfully to partnerships in SoTL do exist among some faculty/staff (e.g., Popovic & Green, 2012) and that the individuals

who lack power are often also the ones who are not given the space to voice their thoughts and perspectives (Allin, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative that we remain critically aware of not only issues of power that exist within partnerships, but also those that may prevent partnerships from forming in the first place.

Domain 4: Definitions of Success

The way that partners think about and articulate success in a partnership has the potential to influence their perceptions of whether or not the partnership was successful. As we reflected on our partnership experiences, we tended to describe success in two ways. First, many of us talked about *success indicators*, which we define as factors that were seen as evidence of success, but were not definitions of their own. A number of us also provided explicit definitions of success in our reflections, which we have termed *overall definitions*.

Indicators. Our analysis revealed that both graduate students and faculty/staff shared similar indicators of success, and in doing so, described both process and product elements. Processes represented the development of skills and relationships as the work progressed, while products represented tangible outcomes produced by the work. Graduate students felt that producing a publication, feeling that their work was valued, gaining research skills, and overcoming challenges over the course of the project were all indicators of success. Although tangible outcomes such as publications appeared to be of importance, process elements were also seen as indicators of success. For example, one graduate student stated:

> My intentions when joining this partnership were to become better integrated into [my academic community] and to further develop my research skills … outside of my thesis work. I also hoped that we might be able to publish some of the work that we had done, although I saw this as more of a "nice-to-have" than a firm expectation.

Similarly, another graduate student author stated:

> Success is less based on the dictated outcomes but rather the experiences along the way. The partnership in this project was highly motivating and supportive. Regardless of the negative student (class) response, I still view it as positive and successful.

Thus, gaining research skills, which is often an area of emerging and continued development for students, and knowing that their work is valued by their peers can seemingly take the place of a product and still allow a partnership to be considered successful.

For faculty/staff, producing a tangible outcome in the form of a publication and explicit communication regarding expectations were primary indicators of success. Success also included the development of professional networks and relationships, seeing the development of research skills in their students, and being able to achieve an appropriate balance between autonomy and support for their student partners. As one faculty author noted in their reflection, an indicator of success for them was focused primarily on the achievements of the students, as measured by an "increase in confidence and skill of the graduate students in their ability and desire to conduct SoTL research in the future." From this perspective, perceptions of success for both graduate students and faculty/staff appear to be linked to dissemination of the work and using this as a

pathway for future opportunities, while still being able to develop skills that are relevant to one's role in the partnership and stage of career development.

Overall definitions. In our responses to the reflection questions developed for this study, we attempted to use the indicators of success identified to help us create a definition of what success looks like in the context of student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships. Our overall definitions of success, though unique to each individual, tended to focus on partnerships being fluid and adaptable and having a greater emphasis on the process of partnership as opposed to the products. Graduate students hoped to see a "win-win" situation for all involved based on predetermined goals of the work, such as development of research skills and participation in dissemination activities. For example, one graduate student defined success as:

> [A situation] in which both parties feel that they have gained something valuable from the experience, recognizing that what is considered to be valuable will differ for each person in the partnership. For example, students may wish to develop their skills in a certain area or get a publication out of the work that they are doing. In contrast, faculty members may be more concerned with having qualified trainees working with them and creating a positive learning experience for their students.

Graduate students' definitions of success also highlighted a shift in perception of success as the indicators listed at the outset were focused predominantly on tangible outcomes such as dissemination of the work in the form of a publication: "After responding to the [reflection] questions, I feel like my definition of success has changed … [My definition of] success is less based on the dictated outcomes but rather the experiences along the way."

Faculty/staff had similar definitions of success with two additional elements noted in their self-reflections: the importance of having a well-designed research project with a clear research question (although who should be involved in this design process was not explicitly defined) and a focus on the development of the relational aspects of the partnership. An example of a definition provided by one of our faculty/staff authors was:

> Success in SoTL research partnerships can be defined by a process and outcome where both student and faculty/staff can take away something positive. So, it's not just a successful research project, where the outcome is valued as successful because it ended in a publication and/or presentation.

It should be noted that in this excerpt, the author did not define what the process or outcomes were that would lead to success but clearly highlighted that an end product such as a publication or a presentation was not the primary goal. This leaves room for interpretation about what it means to be successful in these partnerships. Another faculty/staff author noted in their definition that "success is complicated, dynamic, and context-specific," demonstrating again that the idea of success and its definition is not a simple one-size-fits-all scenario.

Putting It All Together:
Considerations of Success in Student-Faculty/Staff SoTL Partnerships

When defining what constitutes a successful partnership, our self-reflections revealed a dual focus on both the processes and products of partnership. The importance of considering

both process and product when assessing the success of a partnership has been discussed by other SoTL researchers (e.g., Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Woolmer et al., 2016). For example, Cook-Sather et al. (2014) discuss the importance of assessing processes and outcomes of partnership in order to document and improve them:

> Because these collaborations are so process-oriented, focusing only on outcomes is a mistake … the complex and intricate processes of relationship-forming and learning that unfold within negotiations of pedagogical processes [can] enhance metacognition in learning and develop more democratic spaces within universities. (p. 195)

The value placed on both process and product elements likely comes from the various influences that come to bear on the process of partnership. For example, several of us felt that the tangible outcomes of our partnerships were more valued by others who had influence over our career progression (e.g., institutions or employers). This explains why publications serve as such strong indicators of success for both graduate students and faculty/staff. However, we also considered the intrinsic benefits of engaging in partnership when defining what a successful partnership looked like for us. For a number of us, critically reflecting on our partnerships through the process of self-reflection led to a shift from conceptualizing success in terms of what we had produced to what we learned/gained in the process.

Guiding Questions for Future Partnerships

Looking back at the indicators and defining elements of success that emerged from our self-reflections illustrates the subjectivity of the term "success." As is evident from the results of our study, asking what success in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships looks like garners different opinions from different stakeholders. Therefore, is it possible to create one unifying definition of success in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships? Does one size fit all? We think not. However, our findings indicate that clear communication of roles, goals, and expectations are at the heart of most successful partnerships. The goal should not be to create one singular definition of success, but rather to create a culture of trust and respect between the partners so that the conversations needed to define what success looks like for each partnership can occur both at the start of and on an ongoing basis throughout the partnership. As a result, in this article, we do not attempt to concretely define what success in these partnerships is in terms of specific indicators. Instead, we offer a series of guiding questions to support conversations that we hope will serve as a tool for stakeholders to engage in initial and ongoing conversations with the intention of prompting explicit discussion about ways to nurture the respectful, inclusive, empowered research relationships outlined by Healey et al. (2014). It is our hope that they support conversations to help define what success means and looks like for each student-faculty/staff SoTL partnership.

Our exploration of the definitions of success adds a multi-lens perspective with the allowance of varied outcomes to the existing literature on guiding questions for partnerships in academic contexts. Cook-Sather et al. (2014) outline a series of guiding questions for faculty to use when working together with students on a pedagogical project. These are designed to guide the faculty and their student partner through the project from start to finish and include items of discussion around establishment of meetings, behaviour in the classroom, and deadlines for submissions. Although the questions presented by Cook-Sather et al. (2014) are a useful starting

point for guiding student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships, these guidelines are targeted primarily at a faculty audience. Woolmer et al. (2016), in a reflective article about a student-faculty/staff partnership, specifically advocate for discussing expectations between students and faculty/staff partners. For example, they state: "In hindsight, an explicit discussion about the process as well as the product of the collaboration would have been useful. Academic developers can play an important role in supporting this discussion" (p. 25). Along these lines, to help guide future partnerships in SoTL, we have developed a series of discussion questions to guide partners in defining their parameters for success together. These questions were developed based on the four domains that emerged from our analysis of our self-reflections. By working through the questions below, we hope that partners will be able to articulate indicators of success for themselves and their work, recognizing that these indicators will likely vary considerably between partners and projects.

The first two questions, shown below, address why each person is involved in the partnership and what their goals are. Establishing the reason(s) for embarking on the work and entering the partnership will help clarify each person's motivations. As outlined above, students and faculty/staff can have different motivations for conducting SoTL research; therefore, understanding the various motivators at play is critical for defining the goals of the partnership.

1. What motivated you to engage in this partnership and project? Why specifically did you want to be involved in a SoTL project?
2. What are your goal(s) for being in this partnership and completing this work?

The next question looks directly at the definition of success since it can vary for each person, and this is often dictated by the role they have within their postsecondary institution.

3. What does a functional and successful partnership look like to you?

Considering the functionality of the partnership, the fourth and fifth questions are related to what each person needs from their partner(s) in order to create a positive working environment that will ensure that each person's vision of success is achieved and that any conflicts that arise are handled in a constructive manner.

4. What do you need from your partner(s) in order for this to be a positive working experience that will enable you to reach your goals?
5. How should we handle any conflicts, should they arise? Who should we approach first in a conflict situation, and in what manner (in person, email…)?

The sixth question focuses on what each person wants to see as a result of the effort that they will put into the SoTL partnership. This question relates directly to where each person is in terms of their career development and what their future professional/academic goals are.

6. What is/are your desired outcome(s)? If your outcomes are focused on the process of the work/partnership as the project progresses, what specifically are you hoping to walk away having gained? If your outcomes are focused on producing a tangible outcome, what specifically are you hoping to produce?

Finally, some partnerships have clearly established roles in the partnership—it should be made clear at the outset if these roles will exist, and if so, what they are. Therefore, the last question aims to help each person identify what is expected of them during the project.

> 7. In this partnership, are there going to be specific roles for each person? If so, what are those roles, and what are the expectations of each role in the partnership?

Limitations

In this study, our sample was focused on a population of graduate students and faculty/staff from Canadian universities. While we uncovered a number of indicators of success in student partnerships, had our reflection questions been asked of more participants, including participants from colleges or undergraduate programs, or participants from international settings or more culturally diverse groups, our results may have been different. With respect to student involvement in the CWG (and thereby, the data generation process), the fact that the only student participants were graduate students is both a strength, since we consider the perspectives of graduate students in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships, and a limitation, since the voices of undergraduate students are missing. Including undergraduate, college, and all students as partners in SoTL is not to be ignored as they will bring their own perspectives, learning needs and goals, and diverse backgrounds into the work. With this in mind, we have developed our guiding questions in the hopes that others involved in faculty/staff SoTL partnerships— regardless or role, title, or institutional affiliation—will engage in dialogue about how they define success. We also hope these questions encourage other researchers to explore how success is defined within their research partnerships and further refine our conceptualization. Finally, given that we have all participated in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships and are advocates for student involvement in SoTL, we may have had a unique perspective on the reflection questions asked and on the analysis. In future work, asking students or faculty/staff who are new to SoTL partnerships to reflect on their experiences may facilitate the discovery of a number of additional perspectives.

Conclusion

We entered this process as researchers wanting to better understand the different elements that make student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships successful. Through this collaborative and reflective process, we drew upon our unique experiences as graduate students, educational developers, and faculty members to highlight the varied and nuanced definitions of success. Analysis of our reflective responses allowed us to develop a series of guiding questions to support individuals involved in student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships in articulating their own definitions of success related to the work being undertaken. These questions allow for definitions to include elements of success that are important for each person in the partnership.

Conceptualizations of success are diverse among the different stakeholder groups represented in this article. Our analysis revealed that success in the context of student-faculty/staff SoTL partnerships is not simply a unidimensional concept that only evaluates the outcomes of the project. Each partnership project should be viewed as a process—from beginning to end, and everything in between. Our research highlights the importance of re-imagining the potential for "success" in every stage of a SoTL project and partnership.

Overall, our analysis revealed four domains that can shape partnerships: (1) motivations to participate, (2) challenges, (3) power, and (4) definitions of success. Each of these four interrelated domains are issues to be considered throughout a research relationship and have a substantial impact on the products and processes of SoTL partnerships. For example, the different stages of career development of the two stakeholder groups in our study impacted the motivations and intended outcomes for each individual entering into the partnership. The challenges that arose in our partnerships point to the importance of being proactive with ongoing direct communication. While we acknowledge that each SoTL partnership and project is unique, these four domains serve as a starting point to begin discussions around how success can be defined and how the SoTL partnership can be structured to achieve the intended goals.

Finally, we believe that our work reaffirms the value that SoTL partnerships can provide to both students and faculty/staff. These relationships have great potential to create "win-win" relationships for all involved. The likelihood of such a positive outcome increases substantially with explicit, ongoing conversations between research partners regarding conceptualizations of success within a given project. Articulating expectations encourages partners to identify clear goals for all research partners and fosters new conceptualizations for success that go beyond traditional product-related outcomes.

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Appendix

Summary of Domains and Themes Emerging from our Analysis

Domain	Themes
1. Motivations to participate	For students: • Publication/presentation/certification and/or career advancement • Opportunity to gain research experience/skills • Financial support • Personal interest in studying a particular topic For faculty/staff: • Desire to create meaningful learning opportunities for students • Publication/presentation/certification and/or career advancement • Having the human resources needed to get the project done • Belief that students have a unique/important perspective to contribute to SoTL • Opportunity to build relationships/mentor students • Use as "academic currency" when applying for funding or promotion
2. Challenges	Challenges for both students and faculty/staff: • Time investment • Determining an appropriate scope for the project • Lack of clarity regarding roles, goals, and expectations • Poor participant buy-in with respect to the SoTL project Challenges specific to students: • Feeling pressure to publish/disseminate results • Limited faculty/staff involvement/support Challenges specific to faculty/staff: • Lack of student commitment to the project • Striking an appropriate balance between autonomy and support for student partners

3. Power	• Both positional and situational power may influence partnerships—emphasis on one vs. the other may shift over the course of a partnership • Partnerships with fewer inherent hierarchies and those in which power was more dynamic were generally viewed as more successful
4a. Definitions of success: indicators	Product: • Publication/presentation/certification and/or career advancement • Development of professional networks and relationships • Use as "academic currency" when applying for funding or promotion Process: • Explicit communication regarding roles, goals, and expectations • Partners feel as though their work is valued by their team members • Progression in students' skill development/self-efficacy as researchers • Striking an appropriate balance between autonomy and support for student partners • Trust among team members, including open and non-judgmental communication
4b. Definitions of success: overall	Product: • A "win-win" for all partners • Continuity of research team/program (i.e., sustainability) Process: • Partnerships as fluid and adaptable • A greater focus on the processes vs. the products of partnership