ARTICLE

"I Feel Like Some Students are Better Connected": Students' Perspectives on Applying for Extracurricular Partnership Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

While existing research has discussed the need for student-faculty partnership opportunities to be inclusive and accessible, attention to students' motivations for participating in extracurricular partnership activities, and to their sense of the relative accessibility of such opportunities, has been limited. The present study, designed and conducted by students and faculty working in partnership, aimed to address this gap in the literature by exploring how students at a Canadian research-intensive university with a centrally-supported Student Partners Program perceive extracurricular partnership opportunities and the process of applying for them. Drawing from survey and focus group data, we describe students' motivations for taking part in student-staff partnership initiatives and their sense of the program features that enable and constrain students' participation. Implications of these findings for practitioners and researchers interested in Students as Partners are discussed.

KEYWORDS

student-faculty partnership, motivation, barriers, facilitators, inclusion

This study aims to explore how students perceive opportunities to participate in extracurricular student-faculty partnership. While retroactive student engagement in teaching and learning enhancement is commonplace in many institutions, the practice of engaging students as equal collaborators in the research or development of pedagogy (Cook-Sather,

Bovill, & Felten, 2014) is in its relatively early stages. As suggested by the conceptual model proposed by Healey, Flint, and Harrington (2014, 2016), this more proactive approach to student-faculty partnership can take place in a range of contexts, including subject-based research, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), and curriculum design and pedagogical consultancy.

Across these contexts, many benefits of student-faculty partnerships have been cited (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017), including enhancement of both student and faculty learning (Cook-Sather, 2011; Little et al., 2011; Huxham, Hunter, McIntyre, Shilland, & McArthur, 2015). Participating students gain transferable skills and experience positive shifts in their identities, aiding in personal development (Cook-Sather, 2015; Cook-Sather & Luz, 2015) and employability (Jarvis, Dickerson, & Stockwell, 2013). For faculty, novel student perspectives promote reflection that can enable higher quality curriculum and instruction (Healey, Bradford, Roberts, & Yolande, 2013; Pounder, Ho-Hung Lam, & Groves, 2016), while the development of new types of relationships facilitates changed understandings and approaches to teaching (Cook-Sather, 2014; Cook-Sather & Abbot, 2016). Engaging students as partners can also create a more student-centred and egalitarian model of higher education (Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017; Matthews, Cook-Sather, & Healey, 2017) and can help to push back against dominant, neoliberal forces that focus narrowly on outcomes and position students as consumers of higher education (McCulloch, 2009; Neary, 2014).

Alongside these numerous benefits, however, notable challenges connected to adopting student-faculty partnership practices have also been discussed (see, e.g., Allin, 2014; Bovill, Cook-Sather, Felten, Millard & Moore-Cherry, 2016, Marquis, Black, & Healey, 2017). For instance, the difficulties attached to navigating entrenched institutional structures, sharing power, and stepping outside of traditional roles have been widely considered, (Delpish et al., 2010; Marquis et al., 2016; Mihans, Long, & Felten, 2008; Seale, Gibson, Haynes, & Potter, 2015), and some have argued that the radical potential of partnership programs can be overstated (Kandiko Howson & Weller, 2016; Kehler, Verwoord, & Smith, 2017; Weller, Domarkaite, Lam, & Metta, 2013). While such investigations of how power operates within, and affects the outcomes of, student-faculty partnerships are significant, less attention has been paid to the more immediate goals of individuals involved in partnerships and how these affect their decision to participate (see Acai et al., 2017 for one exception). With this in mind, more study is needed of when and why students, for example, might want to engage in partnership where opportunities exist. This issue is made more pressing by the fact that existing research focuses primarily on exploring the perspectives of faculty and students who have already participated in partnership endeavours. This risks overlooking perspectives that exist within the broader student and faculty populations, particularly since evidence suggests individuals involved in many partnership opportunities may be a distinct cohort (Bell, 2016; Flint, 2016; Matthews, 2017). As such, a compelling gap remains in the literature with respect to how people who are *not* involved in student-faculty partnership perceive the concept and why they have not participated.

This gap becomes especially important given ongoing discussions about the relative inclusiveness of partnership opportunities (e.g., Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Bovill et al., 2016). Many have pointed out that selective, extracurricular partnership initiatives tend to

involve only a small group of high-achieving students, many of whom also have access to additional kinds of social capital and privilege (Felten et al., 2013; Moore-Cherry, Healey, Nicholson, & Andrews, 2016). To the extent this is true, partnership opportunities risk entrenching or exacerbating existing inequities and limiting the diversity of student perspectives brought to bear on teaching and learning tasks. This issue is perhaps especially compelling since others have argued that the benefits of partnership are particularly significant for students who identify as members of equity-seeking groups (Cook-Sather & Alter, 2011; Cook-Sather & Agu, 2015). Nevertheless, researchers have also documented situations in which students are not especially interested in participating in partnership initiatives (see, e.g., Seale et al., 2015), or have argued that enforced approaches to student engagement limit and disregard students' autonomy (MacFarlane, 2016). With this set of challenges in mind, further attention to the reasons students do or do not participate in partnership activities is needed.

Our study thus aims to explore a broader range of student perspectives on student-faculty partnership, considering the perceptions of those who have taken part in partnership opportunities and of those who have not. The context for our exploration is an extracurricular partnership program (which the authors have participated in and/or oversee) within a research-intensive university in Ontario, Canada. The Student Partners Program (SPP) is run by the central teaching and learning institute, and creates opportunities for students to partner with faculty and staff on a wide range of teaching and learning projects. Many become involved in SoTL research, while others participate in course (re)design, curriculum review, or pedagogic consultancy. Each term, students apply to join projects that have been selected (by a committee of students and staff) for inclusion in the program, and are invited to work (in paid positions) for approximately five hours a week as full members of project teams (for further details, see Marquis, Haqqee, et al., 2017; Marquis, 2017). Since the program was developed in 2013, undergraduate and graduate students from across campus have participated, and we have been able to expand such that it now involves approximately 100 students each year. Nevertheless, we remain conscious that only a small percentage of the student population applies to participate in any given term, and many who do apply are not offered positions. With that in mind, this research seeks to understand the perceptions of partnership offered by students who have and have not taken part in the SPP, and to investigate what factors influence students' participation in both this specific program and other partnership opportunities. By exploring these questions, we aim to contribute to the growing literature about student motivation to participate in partnership, and about the potential barriers to and facilitators of such participation.

METHODOLOGY

Given the benefits of student-faculty co-inquiry (see Werder & Otis, 2010), and in alignment with principles of good practice in SoTL (see Felten, 2013), the present pilot study was designed and conducted by four undergraduate students and one faculty member working in partnership. In line with our focus on students' experiences and perceptions, and with an interpretivist epistemology that understands social realities as multiple and variable (Merriam, 2009), we gathered a range of data that privileges students' perspectives on partnership opportunities. Following clearance from our institutional research ethics board, we invited

current undergraduate and graduate students at the university to participate in an anonymous, online survey which contained a mixture of multiple-choice, open-ended, and ranking questions about participants' perceptions of partnership, and about the factors that encourage or discourage them from taking part in partnership opportunities. Special attention was paid to the SPP; respondents were asked to indicate if they had taken part in or applied for the program and to specify issues that facilitated or deterred their participation. The survey also included an optional question wherein respondents could indicate if they would be willing to participate in a focus group to discuss these issues further. Those who indicated interest were contacted by email, and focus groups approximately 45 minutes in length were scheduled. These discussions, which were facilitated by pairs of student researchers, aimed to gather richer data about the issues raised in the survey questions and provided student participants with an opportunity to discuss their understandings of partnership in ways that echo the dialogic processes of meaning-making characteristic of everyday experience (Barbour 2007; Kosny, 2003). Focus group questions included prompts about why participants might or might not be interested in taking part in partnership initiatives, and what factors they think influence whether or not students participate.

Following data collection, survey data were exported from the survey tool, and basic descriptive statistics were calculated for ranking and multiple choice questions. Verbatim transcripts were created for all focus groups, and the research team completed thematic analysis of these and of responses to the open-ended survey questions using constant comparative analysis (Merriam, 2009). Each transcript was first coded by one researcher, who examined that transcript and highlighted points that resonated with our research questions. We then checked the initial coding (each reviewing one or two transcripts we had not yet coded), and worked together to establish a preliminary code tree that drew out key ideas. We subsequently returned to the transcripts to re-code them using the developed code tree, modifying elements as necessary. This second phase of analysis, which was conducted using a qualitative analysis program called Dedoose, was finalized by having another member of the team check the coding of each transcript, before the principal investigator reviewed all transcripts and code tree branches to confirm consistency in our application. Any substantial discrepancies noted during this process were discussed by the team until we reached consensus.

Ultimately, 65 students elected to take part in the survey, of whom 17 had participated in the SPP and 48 had not. Fourteen of these participants were graduate students (five Masters students and nine PhD students), while 51 were undergraduates (22 in year one or two, 28 in year three or above, and one in year two of a second undergraduate degree). They were pursuing degrees in a wide range of programs, with the largest concentrations coming from the Faculties of Science (n=21) and Health Sciences (n=13) and the interdisciplinary Arts & Science Program (n=11). Seven participants were enrolled in programs in the Faculty of Social Sciences, six in the Faculty of Engineering, and one in the School of Business, while two were pursuing combined degrees (in Business and Social Sciences and Humanities and Social Sciences, respectively) and four did not clearly indicate a program affiliation. Nineteen of these respondents (five SPP participants and 14 who had not been involved with the SPP) also chose to take part in a focus group discussion. Six focus groups were held, ranging in size from two to

four participants, while one additional session had only one participant and thus proceeded as an interview. While these participant numbers represent a small fraction of the university's total population, we note the disagreement that exists in the literature about required sample sizes (see, e.g., Hill, 1998) and argue that our data, framed appropriately, are sufficient for a pilot study. Our claim, then, is not that these data are representative of the entire population of students at the university, but rather that they offer a window into the experiences of those who participated, and that these experiences in turn generate productive, preliminary insights that might be used to guide future research and practice.

FINDINGS
Motivations for participating
In an effort to understand students' rationale for engaging in student-faculty partnerships, participants were asked about factors that motivate them to take part in such opportunities. All of the factors mentioned by participants in the focus groups overlap with options selected commonly by survey respondents, with one notable exception—participants in the focus groups also mentioned students' desire to feel valued and appreciated for their contributions as a reason for pursuing partnership opportunities. For example, one stated, "It's really empowering to have someone that . . . has been in the field for forty years . . . take your ideas seriously . . . and really listen to what you have to say, [and] work actively to try and incorporate your opinions and ideas" (P5). Feeling valued was noted as an empowering experience that gives students the confidence to approach faculty and provides a sense of positivity that motivates students to pursue partnership opportunities.

Several additional factors, which arose in the focus groups and the survey, were identified as motivators to participate in partnership opportunities. The most commonly mentioned of these factors are discussed below.

Interest in content or process
Student interest in the topic or field of a partnership project was identified as the most common motivating factor for participants in both the focus groups and the survey. In the survey, when participants who had applied for the SPP were asked if interest in the projects involved in the program contributed to their decision to apply, 16 out of the 22 respondents said "yes." Eleven of 22 also cited a desire to learn more about the education system specifically. Furthermore, three out of the five respondents who had heard of the SPP but had not applied said that a lack of interest in the project topics was a factor that deterred them from applying. As noted in the focus group excerpt below, genuine interest in content creates an intrinsic will to participate:

> Interest in whatever is being studied is a really big factor. Like, regardless of the nature of the student-faculty partnership, you can be on the greatest team ever, but if you're not actually enjoying what you're doing, it's still not going to be a good or beneficial experience for you. (P6)

Personal and professional development

The opportunity to learn and to grow intellectually was also positioned as a popular reason for participating in partnership programs. Developing skills in an experiential setting outside of the classroom was an appealing component for many participants, as in the case of one who noted that "being able to engage in a wide variety of activities to kind of cultivate … a whole host of skills is … beneficial at the undergraduate level" (P6). Student-faculty partnerships provide a great opportunity for intellectual growth, and participants who associated this factor with the SPP and other partnership initiatives were more motivated to apply.

Participants also perceived the SPP to be a valuable stepping stone towards their graduate studies and/or their career goals. In the survey, when participants were asked if reaching future academic or career goals was a motivating factor for applying, 16 out of the 22 respondents who had applied to the SPP provided a positive response. A focus group participant offered similar comments:

> It could be an important component of your graduate school or professional school application. And it's a great way to develop soft skills that you wouldn't learn in your regular classes. So I think there's a big academic and vocational value in participating in partnerships like these. (P10)

Partnership opportunities are perceived as a catalyst for attaining academic and professional goals; consequently, participants who associated professional development with the SPP said that they were more motivated to apply to the program.

Networking and relationship-building

Participants also identified opportunities for networking and building relationships with faculty as motivators. When asked on the survey if the opportunity to work in partnership with faculty or staff was a motivating factor, 15 of the 22 respondents who had applied to the SPP said "yes." As indicated by the quotations below, focus group comments suggest that some participants see the development of relationships with faculty as important for supporting future opportunities or career goals, while others value these relationships in and of themselves:

> If we can have those mentorship relations solidified at an undergraduate level, that would go a long way in creating those in graduate school—having to work with somebody and knowing the ropes already. (P13)

> You know, you work in a lab or you work in an office, and it's mostly just you, and you don't even have that close connection with your supervisor. So…I find that I have a really good relationship with my supervisor [in the SPP]. And she's supportive, and she kind of makes up for what my … PhD supervisor is not sometimes. (P2)

As noted in the last excerpt, the potential for a different, positive relationship between faculty and students plays an important role in motivating some to engage in partnership opportunities.

Facilitators of participation

In addition to describing reasons they might be interested in participating in student-faculty partnership, participants also named several factors that would make it easier for them to participate where opportunities exist. The structure of partnership initiatives was highlighted, for example, with focus group participants mentioning features like flexibility in scheduling as potential facilitators of student involvement. Similarly, the perceived approachability of faculty partners was discussed, with some participants suggesting that the more personable and supportive the faculty member, the more likely students would be willing to participate. Two of the most commonly reported facilitators, however, were previous experiences and established networks. These interconnected factors are described in turn below.

Previous experiences

A common theme arising from the data was that particular kinds of curricular or co-curricular experiences, such as enrolment in certain academic programs or involvement in campus clubs, encourage students to apply for partnership opportunities. Such involvement was seen as a strong way for students to discover or confirm their interest in the kinds of projects or processes that might be involved in partnership initiatives. As one focus group participant noted, "by participating in a lot of different things you learn more about yourself and you can learn what your interests are and whether this partnership is something that could be a good fit for you" (P14). Relevant prior experience with research or academic work, as well as existing opportunities to engage with faculty members, were likewise positioned as factors that would support students' participation in partnership projects, as the comments below demonstrate:

> Classes that involve research in them, so, like, inquiry-based classes, or even, like, upper-year classes where you get a little more interaction in working within labs and stuff like that, having experience interacting with profs, I guess, would probably be something that would make you more likely to apply just because you have that experience of interacting with faculty members. (P1)

> Your interactions with professors and things are also like a good indicator of ... how successful you can imagine yourself to be in this kind of position. ... I think if you have like really positive interactions, you'd feel more like suited for this kind of role. (P9)

As the last comment suggests, previous experiences were seen to support the growth of students' self-confidence alongside the development of their skills and their perceived "fitness

for partnership." Enhanced confidence due to experience, in turn, was seen to facilitate further participation in activities like student-faculty partnerships:

> You have to overcome this initial feeling of inadequacy. So, like, when you start off you're like, "I don't have anything to contribute, I don't have anything to say." Then once you've done it once you realize, "Oh, I'm fine ... my contributions are valuable." . . . So you feel less uncomfortable the next time you [have] to do it. (P15)

Enhanced confidence is perhaps an especially important support for partnership given the entrenched student-faculty hierarchies existing at universities. As one participant noted, interacting with faculty is "one of those things where until you do it, it seems impossible" (P5). Previous experience, and the confidence it can generate, thus should not be underestimated.

Social networks
Beyond the development of confidence, interests, and skills afforded by particular experiences, participants also suggested that activities and affiliations on campus led some students to develop social networks that supported their entry into partnership work. On the one hand, such networks were seen to increase the likelihood of students being selected for partnership opportunities because, as one focus group participant suggested of people involved in clubs, they "build up their resume and people recognize who they are" (P12). Indeed, participants also reported that existing connections could lead to being approached or encouraged to participate in partnership, or to receiving personal support for their participation:

> I've been super involved since undergrad, so the opportunities, especially as you go, they come more naturally. And then even as a grad student in education, you know, these things get sent to you or people even personally recommend you for them. (P15)

In addition to increasing the likelihood of being known, and thus invited to participate in partnership activities, existing social networks developed through campus experiences were positioned as facilitating partnership by enhancing students' understanding of relevant initiatives or their willingness to apply:

> In [one program on campus], we . . . have classmates and friends who have been involved, and then, it's so much easier when you see someone you know for a little while involved in that, to take the next step. (P1)

> I think that knowing people who have already done it, and having . . . personal connections and conversations with people who have done it can give you a good sense of what it actually involves, and . . . how you can write a good cover letter and resume. (P3)

Perhaps most fundamentally, the social networks formed by involvement in campus life and enrolment in particular (typically small) academic programs were seen as key to facilitating partnership by supporting students' awareness that partnership opportunities exist. As one participant noted, "the more exposure you get by participating in more different things, the more you hear about different opportunities, so I think that definitely helps a lot" (P14). Likewise, several participants noted that they'd heard about initiatives like the SPP through communications from friends or faculty and students affiliated with their academic programs, acknowledging (indirectly or explicitly) that such awareness is a necessary precondition of participation. In addition to all the other ways in which connections fostered through involvement on campus can facilitate participation in partnership, such comments affirm that communication via established networks can support partnership participation by providing students with a basic awareness of the opportunities available.

Barriers to participating

Comments made by participants reflect that opportunities to participate in student-faculty partnerships are not perceived to be equally accessible to all students. Lack of time available to dedicate to partnerships, perceived ineligibility for and competitiveness of positions, and lack of awareness of student-faculty partnerships were identified as major barriers that prevent students from taking part.

Perceived eligibility, competitiveness, and student confidence

Engagement in many extracurricular student-faculty partnerships requires students to apply and then be selected to take part. Participants' responses suggest that students are mindful of, and at times intimidated by, these selection processes. On a survey question asking participants to indicate the factors that discourage them from applying for partnership opportunities (not limited to the SPP), 21 of 65 respondents suggested they were concerned that their grades were not high enough. In the focus groups, students likewise expressed concerns regarding their academic standing:

> I think it might be like a confidence kind of thing. Like, I'm just not sure how my grades would measure up to . . . someone else's academic history and . . . whether or not it's worth, like, applying to because . . . maybe it's just, like, too far a stretch. (P9)

Lacking relevant background experiences was also a frequently mentioned concern, with participants noting that some students may be better prepared to take part in partnerships than others. As one focus group participant put it, "sometimes students think that they're ineligible for faculty-student partnerships because they don't have a consistent background in the field" (P11). Echoing this point, 35 of 65 respondents to the survey question about factors discouraging participation selected "I don't think I have relevant experience."

Underlying participants' concerns about meeting perceived academic or experience-related requirements for partnerships were apparent insecurity and under-confidence (perhaps fuelled by power imbalances in the university). Gesturing to this lack of confidence, 22 of 65 respondents to the survey question noted above selected "working with a professor is

intimidating" and a further 22 selected "I'm worried professors won't value my contributions." Focus group comments offer further examples of this interplay between perceived competitiveness and student confidence:

> I think intimidation can be [an issue]. Like I mentioned before, . . . there's always going to be a power dynamic, so not really feeling comfortable approaching it. And then kind of related, not really feeling that your skills [are] well-suited to actually contribute something. [As] undergraduate student, you don't really feel like what . . . you're learning is going to be super applicable. (P6)

> I know for myself if I were still an undergrad, there is no way on earth that I would ever think I could ever do this. . . . I would think I'm up against the health science students, or I'm against whatever, whoever. . . . I think it's the idea that ... there is a level of skill that is required. And so I think people who are new to research, . . . who have never had that opportunity, probably wouldn't even think about applying. (P2)

Participants' conceptualizations of the application process highlighted that they were being evaluated by faculty members. In this model, the faculty members who decide which students qualify to participate in partnerships retain a position of power—one which, as indicated by the comments about intimidation above, is already salient to many students and discourages some from applying. These barriers may be both real and perceived, as while some faculty partners may choose students with particular academic or professional credentials, students may also self-select due to the perceived competitiveness of the selection process.

Time
Many students expressed that the time commitment associated with student-faculty partnerships could also deter students from becoming involved. Time constraints were alluded to in the survey, for example, as 23 of 65 respondents indicated they were discouraged from applying for partnership opportunities because they are busy with other commitments. In the focus groups, lack of time due to other commitments was again raised, sometimes in ways related to financial accessibility, as students may choose paid jobs over unpaid or minimally compensating student-faculty partnerships:

> Time commitment is also a big one. A lot of faculty members will, I guess, prefer students who can dedicate a much greater amount of time to their project than students who would be only willing to work on it on a part-time basis. And I guess that makes sense on their part. As a full time student I know it's not always possible to take on a project, especially as an extracurricular activity if it's expected that I spend more time I guess, than I would on a regular basis. (P10)

Students may have other priorities, such as academic courses, ensuring financial security, or getting work experience in their field of interest, which discourages involvement in extracurricular partnerships.

Awareness

Just as participants noted that awareness of partnership opportunities (often facilitated by other kinds of campus involvement) was a necessary precondition of taking part, so too did they note that lack of awareness constitutes a formidable barrier to participation. More than half of the survey respondents (35 of 65) suggested that limited awareness of partnership opportunities discourages them from participating. Likewise, of the 48 survey participants who had not taken part in the SPP, only 10 indicated that they had heard of it. Focus group participants also reiterated that they or other students they knew were not especially familiar with the SPP. This lack of awareness about student-faculty partnerships among particular groups of students prevents these opportunities from being inclusive, particularly for those students who might not be as well connected in the university. As one participant noted:

> I think awareness, particularly about this program, is a big part of it. And I feel like some students are better connected than other students, and then those students share that information with their friends, and peers, and so opportunities often are really concentrated in certain segments of the student body. (P5)

Efforts to generate more widespread awareness of partnership opportunities would thus serve to mitigate some of the barriers participants described.

DISCUSSION

The current research is not without limitations, including the relatively small size of its participant pool, and the fact that many participants seemed to limit their understandings of partnership to opportunities to engage in research (disciplinary or pedagogical) with faculty. Nevertheless, by examining the motivators, facilitators, and barriers described by a range of students at one institution with a growing student-faculty partnership program, this pilot study offers a number of insights that have implications for those interested in partnership research and practice. Most significantly, by exploring students' perceptions of the accessibility of extracurricular partnership opportunities and their reasons for taking part (or not taking part) in such initiatives, the study begins to fill a gap in the literature about the relative inclusiveness of partnership practices. While much work in this area has considered the dangers of involving only a small proportion of students as partners (see, e.g., Felten et al., 2013; Moore-Cherry et al., 2016), and some studies discuss motivations for participating (see, e.g., Acai et al., 2017), we are unaware of work that investigates thoroughly how students themselves—and particularly students who haven't participated—experience the accessibility of extracurricular partnership opportunities. Our more sustained focus on student perspectives in this research both corroborates some existing concerns about inclusive partnerships and generates a number of new insights for supporting equitable student participation. These are enumerated below.

Student interest in partnership

To begin with, the study points to the potential for relatively widespread interest in selective student-faculty partnership opportunities amongst undergraduate and graduate

students. While our number of participants is small, and certainly might be tilted in favour of those who are interested in partnership, the findings nonetheless underline that students have a range of motivations for participating in partnership opportunities, even if they haven't (yet) had the chance to experience partnership themselves. Many of these motivators, including opportunities for personal and professional development and a desire to establish rewarding, collegial relationships with faculty, overlap with the benefits of partnership discussed in the literature, suggesting that these benefits are perceived by many students and underpin a desire to take part. Indeed, while several of our participants noted a lack of confidence about their capacity to contribute or indicated that working with faculty sounded intimidating, only two of 65 survey respondents suggested they were not interested in the idea of partnership at all. As such, while acknowledging the argument that students should be given the freedom to choose whether partnership appeals to them (MacFarlane, 2016), the present findings emphasize that many students may be interested in partnership but do not have an opportunity to take it up. In this respect, we offer some preliminary empirical corroboration of concerns about inclusion expressed in existing scholarship.

At the same time, the present data also add further nuance to this discussion. For example, it bears repeating that one of the most common partnership motivators for students in our study was interest in the topic of the project at hand. With this in mind, the fact remains that students might not be interested in all partnership opportunities even if they are attracted to the idea of partnership per se. Along these lines, 11 of the survey respondents who had not taken part in the SPP indicated they would not be interested in applying for it in future, and a few focus group participants shared perceptions that other students they know are put off by partnership-style pedagogical approaches. This complexity suggests the value of further research and debate about when "whole cohort" approaches to partnership (Flint, 2016) should be undertaken, and about how potential student resistance or disinterest should be factored into this discussion.

Barriers, facilitators, and implications for practice

Perhaps more significantly, the present data also underline a range of specific facilitators and barriers reported by participants who largely are interested in extracurricular partnership opportunities. While further research is warranted to determine how widely held such perspectives might be, these findings nonetheless suggest some potential ways forward for practitioners interested in enhancing the inclusiveness of partnership initiatives. In particular, our participants highlighted the multiple, intersecting factors that combine to make some participants more likely to engage in partnership than others. For instance, people enrolled in smaller academic programs that have an emphasis on research and inquiry, or who are heavily involved in campus clubs, were seen to be more comfortable with the idea of partnership given their experience interacting with faculty and their opportunities to hone skills of self-directed, scholarly learning. At the same time, these people often have established networks as a result of their campus involvement, and thus know more about existing opportunities and have the chance to learn about them from friends, colleagues, and faculty connections. Conversely, other students were seen to have little awareness or understanding of partnership opportunities, and also to feel less confident about their capacity to contribute to partnerships

or to secure competitive positions. Practically speaking, this makes clear the potential value of targeted information campaigns about programs like the SPP within larger programs and among "less connected" groups, such as part-time students or first-generation students.

Given our findings, a major goal of such initiatives should also be to find ways to take into account the variable levels of confidence that students might have had a chance to develop as a result of their experiences and social locations. The widespread sense of students doubting their capacities in our data makes clear that considerations of power figure significantly into partnership even before it begins, and underscores that these may be experienced as particularly deterring for some student groups. Indeed, just as scholars have noted that faculty who lead partnership initiatives might invite or select only the most high-achieving and socially privileged students to partner with them (Felten et al., 2013), participants in our study suggested that concerns about such selectivity might discourage or prevent students from applying for extracurricular partnership initiatives in the first place. This is particularly problematic insofar as our data, like other partnership research (see, e.g., Cook-Sather, 2015; Cook-Sather & Luz, 2015), emphasize that participating in partnership can play an important role in augmenting one's self-confidence and sense of the value of one's knowledge. A vicious cycle is thus potentially established, where systemic factors leave particular students less likely to attempt partnership, even while participation in partnership endeavours might be one way of helping to grow their confidence and sense of belonging (though, of course, enhanced individual confidence cannot account fully for the broader, inequitable structures that marginalize some students in the first place). Such student self-selection suggests that efforts to enhance inclusivity in partnership initiatives need to extend beyond simply working with faculty to dismantle inequitable selection criteria, although this is certainly important. A first step in this process, which echoes a point made by Bovill and colleagues (2016) and Bell (2016), is to clearly articulate and make transparent to students one's selection criteria in cases where decisions about including students have to be made. The lack of confidence expressed by participants in our data, however, suggests that this may not be sufficient in and of itself.

A compelling avenue for further research, then, is to explore and assess strategies for supporting a diversity of students to "see themselves" in partnership initiatives and to apply if they're interested. Underscoring in advertising campaigns the ways in which a variety of students might contribute to partnership might be one effective step, for example, as might opportunities for students who are "less connected" in the university context to meet with current student partners to learn more about program requirements and emphases. Clearly, such strategies would be most effective if developed in tandem with reviews of partnership program selection criteria and support for faculty that encourages them to counter the common tendency to simply select students who most clearly conform to traditional (and narrow) standards of academic success. And, of course, thinking further about integrating partnership into the taught curriculum, such that all students enrolled in an academic program have a chance to participate and selection is not an issue, is relevant here as well.

More immediately, future research might also aim to access a larger participant pool at institutions of different types with different histories of student-faculty partnership to determine the extent to which the perspectives reported in this pilot study are shared by a broader student group. Given the preliminary insights generated from the comparatively small

set of students in this study, such research is likely to offer important information that is essential to supporting partnership's radical, egalitarian goals.

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