

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Problematizing shared responsibility and sustainability in a grant-funded students-as-partners program

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ABSTRACT

In 2020, McMaster University's students-as-partners (SaP) program shifted operations to a grant-funded model. To understand what, if any, influence this programmatic change had on student, staff, and faculty partners, we sought to critically evaluate this new model. Toward this aim, we conducted an institutional ethnography and survey of student, faculty, and staff partners who participated in the SaP program between May 2020 to August 2021. In this paper, we share the ways in which our analysis speaks to respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility in partnerships, as well as the broader issue of sustainably supporting the growth of SaP projects. We conclude by offering recommendations for individuals at institutions of higher learning who are considering implementing a grant-award model to support SaP work.

KEYWORDS

institutional ethnography, survey, grants, sustainability, shared responsibility

McMaster University's student-as-partners (SaP) program was established in 2013 (McMaster University, 2022). This program provides funding to support students, faculty, and staff to work in partnership on teaching and learning projects. The program aligns with Healey, Flint, and Harrington's (2014) conceptual model of partnership wherein students, staff, and faculty co-learn, co-design, co-develop, co-research, and co-inquire on teaching and learning research and quality enhancement. Indeed, the aims of the SaP projects undertaken at McMaster University are to enhance teaching and learning practice at the university, as well as contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning more broadly. Examples of SaP projects include course design and development; creation of pedagogical resources, such as open-source textbooks or virtual learning modules; and teaching and learning research.

Another central aim of Healey et al.'s (2014) model is building sustainable partnership practice into institutional cultures. Toward this aim, McMaster University's SaP program is a core institutional program with dedicated funding and staff support to promote a partnered

learning community and sustainable partnerships. This funding is used to reward and recognize student and staff/faculty partners alike, which are another two principles in Healey et al.'s (2014) model. Herein, staff/faculty are recognized for their contributions in the form of grant funding, which in turn is used to pay students for their work on partnered projects.

This program also embodies the ethos of the global SaP movement which promotes “students and staff (including academic/faculty and professional staff) working together on teaching and learning in higher education” (Cook-Sather et al., 2014, p. 2) based on respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility. Cook-Sather (2013) defines the three concepts as follows: respect is an attitude whereby “one takes seriously and values what someone else or multiple others bring to an encounter;” reciprocity is a means of interacting such that “there is equity in what is exchanged and how it is exchanged;” and shared responsibility is where all partners share the duty towards “the actions and outcomes that the partners are working together to achieve” (p. 1).

This SaP program underwent a programmatic shift, implementing a grant-funded model in 2020. As a result of this programmatic shift, hiring of student partners was decentralized, with student partners being hired directly by project holders’ departments; whereas, previously, students were hired by the MacPherson Institute, McMaster University’s teaching and learning centre which oversees the SaP program. We sought to critically evaluate the new grant-funded model of the SaP program at McMaster University, thus responding to Mercer-Mapstone and colleagues’ (2017) call for critically examining the students-as-partners movement in higher education. We took an institutional ethnography (IE) approach, which facilitates explication of how instructional policies and practices govern how people work and thus interact (Smith 2005, 2006). As such, we were particularly attentive to how student, staff, and faculty partners and their relationships were impacted by this programmatic shift. In this paper, we share the results of this evaluation and IE. We discuss our findings in relation to Healey et al.’s (2014) model of sustainable partnerships built into institutional cultures and Cook-Sather et al.’s (2014) principles of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility in partnerships. We conclude with practical recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

The approach to inquiry underlying this study was an institutional ethnography (IE).¹ Dorothy Smith (2005, 2006), the originator of IE, describes IE as a critical, feminist sociology of people. IE is ontologically social and neither facilitates generating theory nor imposes theory when conducting research (Smith, 2006). In an IE, people are not objectified subjects, but rather the social process is the subject of inquiry. This social process is focused on modern forms of power, which Townsend (1996) describes as documents and texts that “describe, categorize, define, direct, visually represent, or otherwise coordinate and control the everyday world” (p. 188) of social actors. Scholars employ an IE to explicate how these material artifacts govern how people perform work-related practices (Campbell & Gregor, 2004).

The purpose of this particular IE and study was to explicate the ways in which institutional practices and policies influence the relationships between students, faculty, and staff participating in student-as-partners programming at McMaster University (Smith 2005, 2006). This IE responds to Bovill and colleagues’ (2016) assertion that institutional cultures impact student, faculty, and staff relations in such partnerships. An IE is excellently suited to

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this inquiry, because it is a critical and integrated approach to scholarship wherein researchers seek to understand “what and how *ruling relations* . . . operationalize within and beyond an institution” (Reid & Russell, 2017, p. xiv). Smith (2005) defines ruling relations as institutions that have a mediating effect on the lives of individuals. These ruling relations become embodied in texts and documents that mediate social actors’ work-related practices. Thus, an IE has the potential to elucidate what Felten and colleagues (2013) describe as a dichotomous relationship between the democratic ethos of the SaP movement and the hierarchical institutional structures that foster exclusionary cultures in higher education. In this study, we conceptualized the university’s teaching and learning centre as a ruling relation, because the centre governs the SaP program and enacts policies related to the SaP program, along with disciplinary departmental structures and the governance of human resources across the university.

Methods

Each IE takes a different approach to research design (Reid & Russell, 2017). For this study, we employed textual analysis, survey, and interview methods as a means of appraising the new grant-funded model of the SaP program and of examining how institutional policies, cultures, norms, and practices (or ruling relations) governed interactions between student, staff, and faculty partners. Smith (2005) asserts that ruling relations are, in essence, textually mediated. Therefore, to collect data about the ruling relations of the SaP program, we conducted a textual analysis of operational documents related to the McMaster University’s SaP program. We abstracted data therein that outlined how partners should perform their work related to the SaP program, including applying for funding and forming partnerships. The texts used in our analysis were:

- *Student Partners Program Guidebook (Cockcroft et al., 2020)*
- Award process debrief
- SPP process tracking sheets
- Call for projects application form
- Project appraisal review form
- Guidance on hiring student partners document
- Job design and evaluation for temporary, casual, and/or interim employees
- Educational research assistant job description
- Generic start-of-term letter
- Template offer letter
- SPP grant terms and conditions
- SPP award letter template
- Project tracking documents
- End-of-project report template
- Student Partners Program (SPP) statistics for operational reporting

We also invited student, staff, and faculty partners who participated in the SaP program after the implementation of the new award model to participate in a survey and/or interview.² The sample was comprised of partners who participated in the SaP program between May 2020

to August 2021. Overall, our sample was 165 partners: 69 faculty and staff project holders, 80 student partners, and 16 who had dual roles as student partners and project holders. Some partners in this sample had experience working in partnership under the previous model, while other partners had only worked under the new model. We sought both perspectives as we saw value in each. Participation was voluntary where partners could opt in to completing the survey and/or interview. Our aim in undertaking the survey and interviews was to capture data about participants' everyday interactions in their respective partnerships.

The survey

The survey consisted of 27 questions divided into two sections: (a) one to assess the award-based grant model and (b) one to inquire about participants' experiences working in partnership virtually due to physical distance measures in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The latter aim is discussed elsewhere (Harvey & McDermott, in press). In this paper, we focus on the results from the first section assessing the award-based grant model. Survey questions were both open ended, to encourage individual feedback, as well as yes/no, rank order, select all that apply, and Likert-style questions (See Table 1).

Table 1: Survey

QUESTION # AND DESCRIPTION	QUESTION TEXT
1.	In 2020, the MacPherson Institute instituted an award-based model for the Student Partners Program (SPP). Under this model, faculty, staff, and students can propose a project to the SPP call for projects. These projects are peer reviewed and awarded in a similar fashion to other internal grants. Student partners are then hired directly by the project holder to work on the projects that are successfully funded. Did you participate in the SPP before the award model was implemented? If Yes: A. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the SPP before the award model was implemented? (1 being lowest and 5 being the highest) B. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the SPP after the award model was implemented? (1 being lowest and 5 being the highest) If No: A. How would you rate your current satisfaction with the SPP award model? (1 being lowest and 5 being the highest)
2. For faculty & staff only	Please rate (1 being lowest and 5 being the highest) the ease of use in the SPP award model, with the following: 1. Applying for funding 2. Reviewing application (if applicable) 3. Receiving funding 4. Hiring student partners
3. For faculty & staff only	Current student partner projects are provided a capped budget for \$2000. Is this a reasonable budget? [Yes/No]

	Please explain. [Open Text Box]
4. For faculty & staff only	Currently, we typically have a call for project proposals due in February (for Summer term awards) and May (for Fall/Winter term awards). What month(s) should we AVOID issuing our call for project/grant proposals? [Open Text Box]
5.	Current Student partners can start in the SPP in either Summer or Fall/Winter. Is having only the two current work terms reasonable? [Yes/No] Please explain. [Open Text Box]
6.	Have you read the current SPP guidebook? [Yes/No] If Yes: A. Please identify how much you agree or disagree with the following: [Likert Scale Question] 1. I found the guidebook helpful in understanding expectations in the SPP. 2. I found the guidebook helpful in setting goals for myself in the SPP. 3. The guidebook was helpful in providing me with the tools to build effective partnerships in the SPP. 4. The guidebook explained clearly the protocols and guidelines of my project/partnership. 5. The guidebook set realistic expectations for my SPP experience. B. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the content of the guidebook? (1 being lowest and 5 being the highest) C. Is there anything missing from the guidebook that you would like to see? If No: A. Why not? [select all that apply] 1. I received a copy of the guidebook but did not read it. 2. A copy of the guidebook was not provided to me. 3. Other [Open Text Box]
7.	Please identify how much you agree or disagree with the following: [Likert Scale] 1. Communicating with the SPP team is done in a timely manner. 2. The information given from the SPP team is accurate. 3. The information given from the SPP team is easy to understand.
8.	Is there anything you would like the SPP to start? Stop? Continue? [Open Text Question]
9. For faculty & staff only	A. With your time in the SPP, did you complete the end-of-project report? [Yes/No] B. Please rate (1 being lowest and 5 being the highest) the methods' effectiveness in getting you to fill out the end-of-project report: [Likert Scale] 1. Require an end-of-term meeting where all project awardees complete the report together at a specified time/location.

	<p>2. Make future funding eligibility contingent on the project report being completed.</p> <p>3. Reduce the number of questions on the end-of-project report.</p> <p>4. Have emails sent to you from the SPP team to remind you to fill in the end-of-project report.</p>
10. For student partners only	<p>Given your experience in the SPP, please identify how much you agree or disagree with the following: [Agree/Disagree]</p> <p>1. I am aware that, as a student, I can apply for funding through the SPP program.</p> <p>2. (If Student was the one applying for an award) Identifying the faculty liaison to the proposing project was easy to do.</p> <p>3. The application to become a student partner was easy to understand.</p> <p>4. The interview process, as part of being hired as a student partner, went smoothly.</p> <p>5. The SPP workload as a student partner was reasonable.</p> <p>6. My work as a student partner helped in my professional development.</p> <p>7. My work as a student partner helped me feel more connected with others at McMaster.</p> <p>8. I enjoyed working in the SPP.</p>

We emailed the invitation to participate in this study to the 165 faculty, staff, and students who participated in the SaP program between May 2020 to August 2021. Of this sample, 25 individuals (15 staff and faculty, 10 student partners) volunteered to participate and completed the full survey.

Interviews

Five individuals from the larger sample volunteered to be interviewed for this study. Individuals could participate in an interview even if they did not complete the survey. We conducted semi-structured interviews with these five interviewees. Two interviewees were student partners, two had dual roles as student partners and project holders, and one was a faculty/staff project holder. Interviewees came from diverse disciplinary backgrounds: engineering, health science, science, and humanities. Three started their participation in the SaP program after 2020 and had only ever participated in the SaP program since the new grant model was implemented. The remaining two had participated in the SaP program previous to the implementation of the grant-based model and thus could compare the grant model to the previous mode of operations.

The interview consisted of 12 open-ended questions and lasted approximately 1 hour. We asked four questions about the grand-funded model:

1. Did you participate in the SPP before the award model was implemented (before the Summer of 2020)? If so, what do/did you like and/or dislike about the new award model?

2. Tell me about the process of your participation in the SPP. Start with the process of applying, how your application was reviewed, the hiring process/process of receiving funding, filling out the end-of-project report (if applicable), etc. In your description, please emphasize what worked well for you or what challenges you encountered.
3. What do you wish you would have known early in your involvement in the SPP that you know now?
4. What would you like the SPP program to start doing? Stop doing? Continue doing?

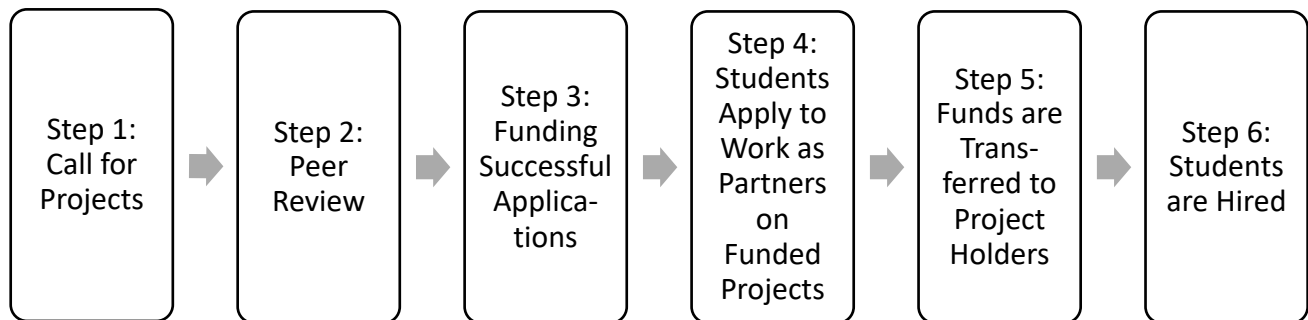
We also asked four questions about virtual partnerships (not reported herein) and four questions that were specific to the SaP program:

5. What additional supports would you like from the MacPherson Institute and the team that manages the SPP?
6. Is there information in the SPP guidebook that was particularly helpful? Unhelpful? Missing, but would be helpful? Please explain.
7. Do you have SPP program development ideas you wish to share with the SPP team?
8. Is there something important we forgot? Is there anything else you think I need to know about the SPP at McMaster?

Data analysis

In an IE, researchers focus their analyses of the data on the *problematic*, which are areas of divergence present in the data that disempower affected social actors (Campbell & Gregor, 2004; Smith, 2005; Rankin, 2017). These divergences exist between institutional practices and policies collected in the form of textual data from ruling relations and the lived experiences of individuals governed by these ruling relations. In this study, these lived experiences come from student, staff, and faculty partners and were captured in the survey and interview data. In our analysis, we focused on data related to the grant-funded model, looking for policies and practices in the textual data that served to disempower students, primarily.

Indexing is the convention used in an IE to organize data (Smith, 2006); therefore, we first indexed all data according to type of work discussed or performed. Then, we indexed the data from relevant policies and procedures as described in the textual analysis that govern this process. Next, McDermott performed a general, descriptive statistical analysis of the survey data. Meanwhile, Harvey indexed the interview data to identify experiential accounts that spoke to the processes underlying the grant-funded model. We organized the data we indexed according to relevant points along the process of undertaking a SaP project from application to completion, which is outlined in six broad steps in the following analysis section (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Undertaking a student partner project: Process of application to completion

We examined the data for areas of divergence to identify problematic accounts where participants spoke about how SaP policies and practices, identified in the textual data, were disempowering. In the findings section, we outline each of these six steps and share relevant survey and interview data. Then, we discuss these findings in relation to issues of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility (Cook-Sather, et al., 2014), as well as the sustainability of SaP projects (Healey et al., 2014).

Reflexivity

We worked in a reciprocal student-staff partnership.³ As a qualitative researcher, the first author (KH) managed the interview and textual data collection and analysis. KH was a program insider positioned as part of the ruling relations and oversees the daily operations of the SaP program (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). The second author (AM) was a graduate student and student partner. With expertise in statistics and sampling, AM managed the survey data collection and analysis. Thus, each partner contributed their expertise, both lived and methodological, to this mixed-methods research project.

An IE is concerned with advancing democratic and social justice ideals (Campbell & Gregor, 2004), making it well suited to the democratic learning ideals underlying the SaP movement (Cliffe et al., 2017; de Bie et al., 2021). This means that researchers are not only analysts of the data, but also advocates who take sides (Freire, 1970/1996) with individuals who are marginalized by ruling relations (Campbell & Gregor, 2004; Smith, 2005). As part of the ruling relations, taking sides meant that KH needed to advocate for SaP practices and ultimately implement meaningful changes to programmatic operations that would empower students and improve equity in SaP. This was facilitated by the positionality of KH, who as a recent graduate and postdoctoral fellow occupying a liminal space between the student and faculty/staff positions, was not far removed from the student experience. For AM, taking sides meant advocating for his and his peers' positions as student partners.

Our respective positionalities also shaped the research process. It was important to us that we developed survey and interview questions that (a) sought to understand people's experiences of the program and (b) could lead to meaningful program improvement that empowered students. Thus, we included questions on topics (such as about award amounts—see Table 1, Survey Question 3) over which we did not have operational control but could be leveraged to argue for change. As a program insider, KH had access to the names and email

addresses of those who had participated in the SPP. As such, we were able to invite this robust sample to participate in this study. We emphasized that our survey was anonymous, so people could feel confident knowing that the research team could not identify their individual responses. For interviews, we offered the option for a neutral individual to conduct the interview if desired, although all participants chose to be interviewed by KH. Finally, in conducting our analyses for this study, we took sides with student partners, as described above. When applicable, we took sides with faculty/staff when the ideas they advanced would empower students, meaning that we compared survey responses from students to those from faculty and staff to ascertain if there were meaningful differences (note: we did not find any meaningful differences) and were attentive to data in the interviews that spoke to empowering students. We share these findings in the section that follows.

FINDINGS

Step 1: Call for projects

In the grant-funded model, the first step students, staff, and faculty take in the SaP program is to propose a project. Calls for projects occur twice a year: for the Spring/Summer term (May 1 to August 31 of a given year) and for the Fall/Winter terms (September 1 to April 30 of a given academic year). Survey respondents expressed a moderate to high satisfaction with the call for projects in terms of timing, with 73% of faculty and staff partners and 60% of student partners reporting being satisfied or very satisfied.

The application solicits basic demographic information for the primary applicant, project title and description, statement of project alignment with SaP and institutional goals, a budget request, and basic demographic information for the student partner (if pre-identified) or preferred qualifications if hiring a student partner. Most notable in this application is that faculty and staff submit a project proposal and hire a student partner to the project later, which means that students are not always working as partners in the project development phase of the work.

The SaP program guidebook (Cockcroft et al., 2020) does indicate that students can submit an application to the call for projects. Yet, many students in this study were not aware that students could submit a project application. The only difference between faculty/staff and student applications is that student applicants need to identify a faculty or staff partner at the time of application, whereas faculty and staff applicants have the option to identify a student partner at time of application or hire a student partner later. This lack of awareness resulted in some students, despite coming up with the idea for their project prior to approaching a prospective faculty partner, submitting their project application under the name of the faculty partner with whom they were working, rather than their own name.

Step 2: Peer review

Projects submitted to the call for projects undergo a peer review by three volunteer reviewers. Reviewers are students, staff, and faculty who are asked whether they recommend each project for funding (“Yes,” “Yes, with recommendations,” or “No”) and provide a numeric rank on a scale of 1–5 (with 5 being the highest rank and 1 being the lowest rank for funding).

This peer review process is a fairly standard procedure for any type of grant review process. However, in their interview, Faculty/Staff Project Holder 1 noted something remarkable while reviewing applications:

I remember I reviewed eight applications, and I believe more than half of them were actually extension requests. And it becomes really, really hard for me as a reviewer . . . because they have already done some of the pilot work. And then the project looks amazing, it's just they're just one step to finish it. But on the other hand, . . . the new projects have brilliant ideas as well, and I think they deserve a start.

What Project Holder 1 is describing is that some applicants from previously funded projects were re-applying to the next term for additional funding to extend the timeline of their projects. The reasons project holders might apply for extensions were (a) the partners have not completed work on their project and need more time and funding or (b) the project had grown in scope and the partners wanted to build upon their previous work.

Step 3: Funding successful applications

After the peer review, applicants are notified about the outcome and if their project was funded. The award letter applicants receive only listed the primary applicant's name, not other project partners, including pre-identified student partners. In their interview, Student Partner 1 stated that the SaP program "want[s] students and teachers to collaborate, [but] often the students can't be listed as the investigators; it's always the Professor." They continued by adding, "I guess that I'm not really listed as the student partner even. It's only [the professor's] name that shows up." This particular student partner was a co-applicant on the project, and thus their name was collected as part of the application process. Meaning, this student partner's name could feasibly have been listed alongside the faculty partner with whom they collaborated.

Step 4: Students apply to work as partners on funded projects

The hiring process invites students to apply to up to three projects by submitting a letter of application and resumé/CV. The hourly rate of pay is included in the call for student partners. As part of this study, we analyzed the job descriptions and rate of pay for similar positions for which students are hired: work study, teaching assistant, and research assistant positions. The current practice is to use one specific job description when hiring student partners, which is tied to a specific pay scale that is standardized and determined by the university's human resources department. Our analysis found that the rate of pay for student partners was aligned with comparable positions. Yet, survey respondents only expressed a moderate degree of satisfaction with student salaries, with 67% of faculty and staff partners and 50% of student partners reporting being satisfied or very satisfied.

The projects to which students apply provides information about the project and a few details about the "skills/experiences/attributes students should/must have" (from the call-for-projects application form). This means that student partners were often recruited based on competencies that complement the partnership team, with roles and responsibilities being negotiated once the partnership was formalized and renegotiated over the span of working

together. Student Partner 2 spoke in their interview about their appreciation for negotiating and renegotiating their roles and responsibilities:

I think that the team felt that they had confidence in me to take on some of [larger] responsibilities. . . . Our project is supposed to report to [a governing body] and coming in I understood that . . . either the [faculty or staff partners] would report there. But just the way it turned out, with me writing a lot of the guide itself and just with the content knowledge, that some people were unable to attend . . . so it's like "hey, do you mind like talking about that and updating the [governing body]?" And I think if that was an undergraduate student like that would be very nerve wracking. . . . So, I think that is something that is a leadership opportunity, it's a great initiative opportunity. . . . I don't think that was outlined in the mandate or the responsibilities for the guide when I came in. I don't think that is something that was outlined as the roles and responsibilities, but for me, like, that is an excellent opportunity to actually work with [the teaching and learning centre]. . . . I just don't want to do a lit review.

As is evident in this account, student partners expressed an appreciation for taking on more responsibilities than initially outlined in the call for projects and not replicating the work of a research assistant. In so doing, student partners felt they more meaningfully contributed to their respective projects.

Steps 5 & 6: Funds are transferred to project holders and students are hired

The primary difference in the new grant-award model was the decentralized shift in responsibility away from the teaching and learning centre and onto individual departments. Previously, student partners were hired by and reported to the teaching and learning centre. Under the new model, the onus to hire the student partner, and all the work that entails (contracts, payroll, timesheets, etc.), was placed on the department with which the faculty or staff partner was affiliated. While shifting the responsibility onto individual departments reduced workload for the teaching and learning centre staff, this posed some challenges for student, staff, and faculty partners. As such, this topic came up in several interviews:

I've seen it be a challenge for not one, but now two departments. Trying to navigate the [hiring and pay]. So as a as a supervisor, I know nothing about HR and the financial structures that exist at [the university]. Zero. [That's what] I found was actually the most technically challenging because I was getting emails back from, you know, the department, my supervisor's assistant, saying, "What should I do with this? How do you want me to set this up? Sign off on this job description." I'm like, I don't have the expertise to know how to. (Student/Project Holder 2)

Their account elucidates that partners who were being asked to now manage hiring student partners lacked the expertise, resources, and support to understand how to navigate these administrative processes.

Hiring partners' lack of administrative competence and confidence spilled over into the student partners' experiences, an extreme example being that payments to student partners

were delayed. In other cases, this led to delays in hiring student partners and thus delays in starting projects. Yet, despite these difficult starts, survey respondents reported high satisfaction with their experiences working in the SaP program. On a Likert-style scale ranging from 1 to 5 where 1 is not satisfied at all and 5 is highly satisfied, the mean response from faculty and staff partners was 4.25 and 4.5 for student partners.

DISCUSSION

It is well established that institutional practices can pose barriers to SaP programming (Bovill et al., 2016). What this paper adds is an IE approach (Smith 2005, 2006) that traces the ways in which specific institutional practices and policies govern the experience of faculty, staff, and student partners participating in one particular SaP program. Given the myriad positive benefits of participating in SaP programming, coupled with the high satisfaction with the SaP program reported herein, it is crucial to attend to issues that arise so as to improve SaP operations (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). That said, this evaluation and IE of McMaster University's grant-award model speaks to two issues previously identified by Healey et al. (2014): reward/recognition and sustainability (see also Moys, 2018), as well as the principles of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility, as defined by Cook-Sather (2013).

With regards to reward and recognition, this study demonstrates several deviations from the values of the SaP movement, namely respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility (Cook-Sather, et al., 2014). As evident in the call for projects application outlined in Step 1, the grant-funded model replicates other grant-funded models whereby faculty and staff apply for a grant and use funds to hire research or student assistants to work on a project. Both the grant award and payments to students are generally recommended as forms of recognition to incentivize SaP participation and make partnerships more equitable and inclusive (Healey et al., 2014; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). However, as demonstrated in this study, institutional policies dictate that SaP grant monies can only be awarded to faculty and staff, not to students. The unintended consequence of this practice was that faculty and staff partners, but not the student partners, were officially recognized for their award. Reciprocity means equity in the exchange, but this was not the case because faculty and staff are privileged as applicants. Under this model, faculty/staff partners received recognition for winning the grant while student partners did not. The ethos of shared responsibility might mean encouraging partnership at the conceptualization stage of a project (Marie & McGowan, 2017), which in turn would mean more equitable recognition of and respect for students' contributions.

This study also speaks to the issue of creating sustainable SaP programming, which is well documented in the corpus of SaP literature (Healey et al., 2014; Johnke et al., 2018; Marie & McGowan, 2017; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). McMaster University's SaP program is the only specific funder of SaP projects at the institution. Yet, as was evident in Step 2 of the findings, partners expressed a need for additional funding streams to support partnered projects, particularly in regard to the growth and scaling-up of these projects. One way in which this could be enacted is by offering tiers of funding levels (e.g., seed grants versus full awards). Additionally, by embedding SaP practices within a broader array of institutional funding opportunities and institutional practices, rather than relegating SaP to one funding stream, institutions can better support a culture of partnership (Marie & McGowan, 2017).

Embedding SaP practices into other institutional operations could also lead to additional opportunities to support renegotiating partners' roles and responsibilities as projects evolve (Bovill et al., 2016; Johnke et al., 2018; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). Specifically, the addition of funding streams and SaP practices into other programs offered by the institution could provide opportunities for student partners' increasing responsibilities to be reflected in higher pay for their work. Higher pay would demonstrate greater respect and a higher valuation of students' increased responsibilities, in addition to being more equitable, which is a notion aligned with the ethos of reciprocity. In this study, student partners appreciated the ability to negotiate their roles and responsibilities with faculty and staff partners. This negotiation and renegotiation as the project evolved was based on the principle of reciprocity whereby roles and responsibilities could be co-determined based on mutual benefit to the partners and based upon the needs of the project (Cook-Sather et al., 2014). As roles are renegotiated, compensation of student partners can and should also be considered. One possibility might be to scale student partner pay in alignment with Bovill's (2017; 2019) frameworks of student participation. On one end of this framework's continuum, faculty are in control, and on the other end of the continuum, students are in control. Thus, as students gain responsibility and control over project decision-making, their pay could be increased, but the reliance on funding may not be sustainable for some institutions (Begley et al., 2019). Indeed, other SaP models have successfully offered a variety of ways in which to participate, including offering course credit, an unpaid internship, practicum, or volunteer experiences.

As also described in Step 4, the teaching and learning centre administering the SaP program recommends hiring partners use one particular job description with a particular parameter set around the rate at which student partners are paid. While partners under this new decentralized hiring model are free to select a different job description and offer a higher rate of pay, few do. This may be due in part to their self-disclosed lack of expertise when it comes to hiring practices described in this paper under Steps 5 and 6. To rectify this, the administrators of the SaP program could also provide better guidance regarding how to navigate the institutional process of hiring student partners, which can and should include options and recommendations for job descriptions representing higher pay grades for student partners taking on greater responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

This paper critically evaluated funding SaP projects using a grant-award model. Based on our analysis, we recommend that individuals who work at institutions that are interested in creating a similarly funded SaP program or in making similar changes to an existing program keep the ethos of respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility in mind as working within existing institutional structures may affect these efforts (Cook-Sather, et al., 2014). Likewise, we recommend being mindful of operational sustainability and offering room to grow SaP projects, such as offering tiers of funding levels (e.g., seed grants versus full awards). This will ensure institutional support of SaP programming that fosters the values espoused by the SaP movement.

NOTES

1. For a more in-depth explanation of institutional ethnography, we suggest Smith & Griffin (2022).
2. We obtained ethics approval from the McMaster Research Ethics Board (Project Number 5539) prior to data collection.
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