

**THE ANDREW W. MELLON TEACHING AND LEARNING INSTITUTE
AT BRYN MAWR COLLEGE**

RESOURCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HAVERFORD COLLEGE FACULTY MEMBERS

STUDENTS AS LEARNERS AND TEACHERS

Student Consultants are available to work with interested faculty members on a focal course. A student who is not enrolled in the course upon which you want to focus can work with you for the entire semester or for some portion of it. S/he visits your class, takes detailed observation notes focused on pedagogical issues you identify, gathers midcourse feedback (if you wish), and meets with you to discuss what is happening in your class. Any faculty member may request a Student Consultant for a full semester, a portion of a semester, or for a focused assessment (e.g., midsemester feedback).

“I find it really fascinating how much [my student consultant] is able to observe, which I cannot from my vantage point, and I mean this not only figuratively but also literally, as she has a line of sight into the space of the classroom which I do not have from where I stand. Her observations have helped to open up for me the space in the classroom in ways which I have not seen before.” – New faculty member

“I think when most faculty hear of a program in which students are involved as commentators and collaborators, they assume that the program is giving the students unfettered authority or equality in the teaching process...[The] TLI is presenting a very different conception of the role students CAN play; the professor isn't being asked to simply follow student advice, but rather to take them seriously as they INTERPRET student comments. I have to listen to my consultant (and my students more broadly) with a more multi-aural ear, hearing everything they say, generously filtering out the more naïve and unreasonable requests or analyses, but then resisting the temptation to be defensive or dismissive and instead listening AGAIN to what they've said in order to get to the core of truth and productiveness underlying their comments.” – New faculty member

COLLEAGUES AS TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

This program affords you the opportunity to visit and/or be visited by a faculty colleague in the bi-co and then meet to talk. If you indicate what discipline or division and what kind of class you are interested in observing, appropriate partnerships between faculty who wish to engage in this cross-visitation can be arranged. You may wish to combine this program with the SaLT program. Faculty have found that the intersection of faculty and student colleague observations, and a three-way dialogue about what is happening in the classroom, are very informative.

“I was amazed at the number of observations he made in an hour. I was gratified at the problems he saw that I know are problems, and also new ones too. After the first class he had written them down and talked to me about them, then he emailed me those, then we talked them over.” – Experienced faculty member

“I was pleasantly surprised by the intense conversation when we met and that we had after and the sincere desire to improve, especially in someone who is already a good teacher, which shouldn't be surprising. I was delighted that this person wants to visit my class and a little apprehensive as well because I wonder what he would think about the way I teach. Because the way we teach seems so different. I was inspired by how open he was to criticism and how much he welcomed the chance to talk seriously about teaching.” – Experienced faculty member

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**CREATING A CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT CONDUCTIVE TO LEARNING:
STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND FEEDBACK**

Think of creating a classroom conducive to learning as the shared responsibility of you and your students and of gathering student feedback on courses as an ongoing conversation with students rather than a one-time request at the end of the course. Focus on what makes an engaging, demanding, and supportive learning environment, rather than on preferences (likes and dislikes). Consider the following:

- (1) Have a discussion during an early session of your course in which you ask students (a) what their hopes and aspirations are in relation to the course and (b) what kind of classroom environment has been conducive to their learning in the past. Drawing on these, create an agreed-upon set of guidelines for participation that will support students in achieving their goals as well as meeting the stated course goals.

- (2) In week 5 of the semester (or thereabouts), ask the students to revisit the guidelines you generated as a group. Are they still useful and reflective of what the group wants? Do they need to be revised?

- (3) In week 7 (or thereabouts) generate a set of questions upon which you want student input, including questions about the classroom environment, the assignments, the activities you have designed for the course, etc. TLI student consultants can conduct this feedback session; they generally use a version of these questions:
 - a. What is working well for you in this class? (perhaps specifying particular components of the class upon which the faculty member wants feedback: readings, class discussions, assignments, class dynamic, etc.)
 - b. What is not working or what are you struggling with?
 - c. What is the professor doing to support your learning and what could the professor change to improve your learning experience in this class?
 - d. What are you doing to further your own learning and what could you do differently to improve your learning experience in this class?

- (4) Create and conduct a final course evaluation that mirrors the stated course goals as they intersected with the students' hopes and aspirations and that is consistent with the kinds of questions you asked at the midpoint.

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