

# *A time-capsule for Students as Partners 2034: what we left behind, what we've taken with us, and what we hope will be*

Article

Published Version

Creative Commons: Attribution 4.0 (CC-BY)

Open Access

Iftikhar, F., Cox, G., Lau, P., Ishkova, M., Sun, J. Z., Iannucci, C., Kinna, L., Naseem, A., Ansari, A. N., Baygi, H. N., Weise, N., Millmore, A. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8626-0713>, Dave, K., Reddy, E., Male, S., Doria, D., Koekkoek, Y., Crivineanu, A., Jahangier, R., Rebac, S., Thölke, J., Dombi, E., Kuo, Y.-E., Kotevska, L., Veuger, S., Scott, K., Dang, J., Zuiker, S., Umuringa, A., Nguyen, T., Satia, A., Liong-Rasi, R., Collin, R., Woods, S., Galvin, K., Waters, J., Ahmed, B., Abbas, M., Van den Steen, F., Matthews, A. R., Beleska, J., Murray, M. G., Cooks, T., Forde, J. and Howarth, D. (2025) A time-capsule for Students as Partners 2034: what we left behind, what we've taken with us, and what we hope will be.

International Journal for Students as Partners, 9 (1). pp. 321-336. ISSN 2560-7367 doi: 10.15173/ijsap.v9i1.6116 Available at <https://centaur.reading.ac.uk/122822/>

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from the work. See [Guidance on citing](#).

Identification Number/DOI: 10.15173/ijsap.v9i1.6116  
<<https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v9i1.6116>>

Publisher: McMaster University Library Press

All outputs in CentAUR are protected by Intellectual Property Rights law, including copyright law. Copyright and IPR is retained by the creators or other copyright holders. Terms and conditions for use of this material are defined in the [End User Agreement](#).

[www.reading.ac.uk/centaur](http://www.reading.ac.uk/centaur)

## **CentAUR**

Central Archive at the University of Reading

Reading's research outputs online

## VOICES FROM THE FIELD

**A time-capsule for Students as Partners 2034: What we left behind, what we've taken with us, and what we hope will be****Editors:** *Fatima Iftikhar and Glenda Cox***Contributors:** *Jennifer Z. Sun, Steve Briggs, Cassandra Iannucci, Tin Nguyen, Aasiya Satia, Aisha Naz Ansari, Helia Nateghi Baygi, Rachel Liong-Rasi, Rowan Collin, Nick Weise, Amanda Millmore, Fien Van den Steen, Libby Kinna, Maria Ishkova, Kashmira Dave, Sandra Woods, Esai Reddy, Mariam Abbas, Peter Fat Man LAU, Suliana Male, Senka Rebac, Azra Naseem, Alecia R. Matthews, Elizabeth Dombi, Yen-En Kuo, Laura Kotevska, Jana Beleska, Stephany Veuger, Keyondrea Scott, Jacob Dang, Steven Zuiker, Ariane Umuringa, M. Geneva Murray, Teha Cooks, James Forde, Danielle Doria, Yerin Koekkoek, Antonia Crivineanu, Rohit Jahangier, Senka Rebac, Jürg Thölke, and Debi Howarth.***Contact:** [glenda.cox@uct.ac.za](mailto:glenda.cox@uct.ac.za)

Metaphors have played a pivotal role in theorising the scholarship of Students as Partners (SaP), enabling scholars and practitioners to articulate complex relationships and envision potential transformations within higher education. SaP initiatives have been framed as journeys, ecosystems, or collaborative creations, fostering a shared understanding and commitment to the values of reciprocity, mutual respect, and co-creation (Matthews et al., 2019). These figurative expressions are not merely rhetorical flourishes but are instrumental in shaping perceptions, guiding practices, and inspiring transformative experiences among faculty and students (Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014).

While originally rooted in Western educational principles, the SaP concept has increasingly found application across diverse global contexts, including in Asia, where it contrasts with traditional hierarchical educational structures (Liang & Mathews, 2020). This widespread adoption underscores the SaP framework's adaptability, demonstrating its relevance and effectiveness well beyond its initial cultural confines. Embracing this approach has led educational systems worldwide to adopt SaP's collaborative values and actively reevaluate and transform longstanding pedagogical paradigms (Healey, Flint, & Harrington, 2014).

In this spirit of transformation and reflection, the 2024 SaP Roundtable introduced a novel and engaging exercise: the creation of a 'time capsule' as a metaphor for the field, intended to be revisited in 2034 (University of Queensland, n.d.). This imaginative exercise was designed to encapsulate both the current state and future aspirations of SaP, facilitated by a global team of SaP researchers and practitioners, and encouraged participants to share their visions for SaP in the coming decade. Utilizing tools like *Miro* boards for collaborative engagement, the session consisted of a set warm-up activities followed by breakout-room discussions where participants co-created content for the time capsule.

Why a time capsule? The concept is inherently forward looking yet deeply reflective. It invites participants to preserve thoughts and artifacts representing the current state of affairs for future discovery. In the context of SaP, this metaphorical time capsule aims to capture the essence of today's practices, visions for the future, and elements we hope will transcend the test of time.

Structured around three probing questions—*What would you like to leave behind in SaP? What would you like to take with you? What do you hope SaP will become?*—the session encouraged participants to articulate their visions for the future of SaP. Following the session, both attendees and registrants of the roundtable were invited to elaborate further on these themes via a short survey, thereby enhancing the breadth and depth of contributions for this "Voices from the Field" piece. Through this exercise, we aimed to capture the collective wisdom and diverse perspectives of our global community, including educators, administrators, and students. Insights were gathered from 33 contributors across 28 universities in countries such as Australia, South Africa, England, the Netherlands, the United States, Canada, Pakistan, Hong Kong, and China. This iteration of Voices from the Field is organized into three thematic pillars and outlines:

**What We Would Like to Leave Behind:** This section delves into the aspects of SaP that participants considered outdated or limiting. It is a reflection on the shifts required to move away from practices that no longer serve the evolving dynamics of student-staff partnerships.

**What We Would Like to Take with Us:** In this section, the enduring values and practices within SaP that contributors believe should continue to influence the field are highlighted. This section celebrates the successes and the principles that have fortified the foundations of SaP.

**What We Hope Will Be:** This section is the most forward looking segment. It captures the aspirations and innovative ideas that envision the future of SaP. Here, contributors share their dreams and strategic visions, painting a picture of what they hope SaP will resemble a decade from now.

The 33 submissions are organized by theme, yet each offers unique insights that reflect the countries, cultures, and perspectives of the contributors. Most submissions were authored by individuals, with 12 responses from educators who shared their in-depth teaching experiences and pedagogical insights. Student partners contributed 11 responses, offering viewpoints from those actively involved in shaping their educational environments. Additionally, 5 practitioners shared their practical applications of SaP principles within their professional settings, while 4 senior leaders provided strategic overviews and reflective pieces on leadership roles within SaP initiatives. In some cases, contributions from a single author are included under more than one of the thematic pillars.

Along with their submissions, academic and professional staff often referred to their past or current roles, such as lecturer, associate professor, academic coordinator, educational developer and research associate. Student contributors frequently shared personal identities and experiences that shaped their engagement in SaP. Examples include students identifying as neurodivergent and queer, and detailing their journeys as international students adjusting to a new educational culture.

#### WHAT IN SaP WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEAVE BEHIND?

The tokenistic involvement of students needs to be avoided. Too often, students are included in committees or feedback processes merely to fulfill procedural requirements, without genuinely valuing their contributions. For example, students might be asked to sit in on decision-making meetings but are not empowered to influence outcomes. In some worse cases, their feedback is collected but never acted upon. We should also stop isolating SaP initiatives from mainstream education. SaP projects often exist in segregation and do not integrate well with broader institutional goals. Embedding these initiatives into the core strategies and operations of institutions is important to ensure they are part of the mainstream educational experience. Finally, we should move beyond short-term or project-based engagement, which often fails to create a lasting impact. With long-term visions, student-staff partnerships provide continuous engagement and development opportunities for both sides.

—Peter Fat Man LAU, Educator, The University of Hong Kong,  
Hong Kong SAR, China [pfmlau@hku.hk](mailto:pfmlau@hku.hk)

Have you ever been in a conversation about SaP and felt upset that others just weren't getting your point? Later, you might realize that while you were talking about the whole-of-class SaP, where each student is a co-designer of their own learning experience, your peers were interpreting it from a perspective of a paid representation model—where a select few students contributed to improving the experience of other cohorts as if they were hired for the role of “student” on some committee or working party. Both models are valuable and amplify student voices, but they require different approaches and can lead to confusion and unmet expectations when applied to the same cohort. We must move beyond this lack of transparency and ensure clarity in our partnership models so that all participants understand and benefit from the appropriate approach.

—Maria Ishkova, Educator, The University of Sydney, Australia, [maria.ishkova@sydney.edu.au](mailto:maria.ishkova@sydney.edu.au)

As an education-focused academic who has served at two Group of Eight (Go8) universities in Australia, I'm fortunate to obtain funding support to run student partnership projects aimed at improving student learning and university experiences. I view student-staff partnerships (SaP) as an integral part of my regular practice. I am a firm believer that we should move away from treating student-staff partnership as a unique skill or practice for a few proactive academics. Instead, it should be standard practice to actively involve students in unit design, creating space

Iftikhar, F., Cox, G., LAU, P. F. M., Ishkova, M., Sun, J. Z., Iannucci, C., Kinna, L., Naseem, A., Ansari, A. N., Baygi, H. N., 323  
Weise, N., Millmore, A., Dave, K., Reddy, E., Male, S., Doria, D., Koekkoek, Y., Crivineanu, A., Jahangier, R., Rebac, S.,  
Thölke, J., Dombi, E., Kuo, Y.-E., Kotevska, L., Veuger, S., Scott, K., Dang, J., Zuiker, S., Umuringa, A., Briggs, S., Nguyen, T.,  
Satia, A., Liong-Rasi, R., Collin, R., Woods, S., Galvin, K., Waters, J., Ahmed, B., Abbas, M., Van den Steen, F., Matthews, A.  
R., Beleska, J., Murray, M. G., Cooks, T., Forde, J., & Howarth, D. (2025). A time-capsule for Students as Partners 2034:  
What we left behind, what we've taken with us, and what we hope will be. *International Journal for Students as  
Partners*, 9(1), 321–336. <https://doi.org/10.15173/ijpsap.v9i1.6116>

for ongoing conversations throughout their university journey. SaP should not merely represent a channel for student involvement, but rather a term that represents the "norm" practice. However, I acknowledge that funding for SaP opportunities is competitive, making centralized support essential for increasing accessibility for more academics.

—Jennifer Z. Sun, Educator, The University of Sydney, Australia, [jennifer.sun@sydney.edu.au](mailto:jennifer.sun@sydney.edu.au)

As the academic lead of the Equity-First Students as Partners portfolio at Deakin University, I've witnessed both the strengths and complexities of SaP. It's time to move beyond simply asking, 'How do we get more people involved?' and instead consider who is truly ready to partner—and, more importantly, how we can support that readiness. Not everyone is equipped with the complementary discourse or relational skills required for meaningful student-staff partnerships. Without intentionality, partnerships can inadvertently reinforce hierarchy and cement distrust, doing more harm than good. But what does 'readiness' entail? True partnership requires social-emotional capacities, openness to learning, and an authentic commitment to equity. I envision a field that values the quality of partnerships over quantity, focusing on better preparing both staff and students with the relational skills needed for partnerships that are safe, inclusive, and genuinely transformative.

—Cassandra Iannucci, Senior Leader, Deakin University, Australia, [cassandra.iannucci@deakin.edu.au](mailto:cassandra.iannucci@deakin.edu.au)

I envisage a tertiary educational experience in which staff-student partnerships are normalized, where any fear of entering and participating in this insightful and transformational way of working is diminished, and where staff embrace the unknown and welcome hearing another's perspective. I see a third space, one built on psychological safety and curiosity, where both staff and students are okay to not know, to learn, and to let go of any biases that may hinder effective partnerships. When I recently stepped into my role as Coordinator, Students as Partners, I assumed all staff would embrace partnering with students; however, that was not the case. Prior to this role, I had delivered two students-as-partners leadership programs and experienced firsthand the magic, wisdom, and transformation that can occur. I hope we can all leave behind fear, anxiety, and the need for control in partnering in our educational spheres.

—Libby Kinna, Practitioner and Coordinator Students as Partners, Curtin University, Australia, [libby.kinna@curtin.edu.au](mailto:libby.kinna@curtin.edu.au)

I became interested in the concept of SaP while helping educators integrate technology into education in challenging contexts. One thing became clear: students often have stronger digital skills than educators, and we can learn so much by working in partnership with them. As AI increasingly becomes an integral part of our lives, we need to stop the following practices to make these partnerships work: (1) Involving students in committees just to meet quality assurance goals or complete tasks, instead of genuine collaboration. (2) Expecting students to take on responsibilities without providing the necessary resources, support, recognition, or even compensation. (3) Prioritizing AI-driven automation in education over the human-centered,

collaborative aspects of SaP practices. To create meaningful partnerships between students and educators, we must prioritize human connection, empathy, ethics, and critical thinking. Achieving this requires intentional strategies, such as creating spaces (virtual or in-person) for regular dialogue to establish meaningful relationships and mutual understanding.

—Azra Naseem, Educator, Aga Khan University, Pakistan, [azra.naseem@aku.edu](mailto:azra.naseem@aku.edu)

#### WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE WITH US?

In the SaP framework, I believe it is essential to maintain a focus on student voice, which is crucial for creating a responsive and inclusive educational environment. Student perspective brings real-world relevance to educational journeys, as students contribute insights from their unique experiences and evolving needs. This feedback loop enriches teaching practices and enhances students' sense of agency, reinforcing their value as active contributors to the learning process. Additionally, I would like to sustain the emphasis on reflective dialogue within SaP, where students, educators, and institutions engage in meaningful discussions about teaching and learning. This collaborative reflection fosters trust and mutual growth, allowing both sides to adapt and improve. These practices ensure that learning remains dynamic and student-centered, enabling education to evolve with changing needs. By prioritizing these aspects, we can uphold SaP's commitment to a holistic educational experience that values all voices authentically.

—Aisha Naz Ansari, Student Partner, Aga Khan University, Pakistan, [aisha.naz22@alumni.aku.edu](mailto:aisha.naz22@alumni.aku.edu)

Reflecting on my journey, I will carry forward several key elements from my time as a student partner. Coming from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, this experience was instrumental in fostering my sense of community within the university and inspiring my career shift from pharmacy to higher education. It also deepened my passion for advocating for students and amplifying their voices.

The team's empowering culture, which treated me as a colleague rather than reinforcing the traditional student-academic dynamic, was transformative, fostering respect and collaboration. The opportunity to assume leadership roles and initiate projects, with the team's support, established expectations I now seek in the workplace. Additionally, the team's flexibility and understanding of student lifestyles and academic journeys had a significant positive impact. I am committed to embedding these practices into my future endeavors.

—Helia Nateghi Baygi, Student Partner, The University of Sydney, Australia, [helia.nateghibaygi@sydney.edu.au](mailto:helia.nateghibaygi@sydney.edu.au)

I began my academic career as a student partner when I was an undergraduate acting as a supplemental instructor to support the transition of incoming students to university. Now, as a member of the teaching staff, I am able to work towards inclusive and commensurate reward and recognition of learner contributions to the student experience. At our institution, we have achieved this through the provision of Advance Higher Education Accreditation (specifically,

Associate Fellowship or AFHEA). So far, we have had over 300 students achieve this status as higher-education practitioners by demonstrating their practice against professional standards. This is something I believe institutions who partner with students should take up, continue to do and expand. This will help us work towards a culture where someone's staff or student status is irrelevant to the recognition of their work as professional educators.

—Nick Weise, Educator, University of Manchester, UK, [nicholas.weise@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:nicholas.weise@manchester.ac.uk)

I am an academic in the School of Law who has been working in partnership with students throughout my career. I think it's important to bear in mind that the value of SaP work is firmly in the process and the impact on the individuals involved, as much as in the product it may produce. If that is borne in mind, projects that may initially seem less successful (or even feel like failures) can be appreciated from the perspective of the positive value they bring to the students and staff involved. We are always learning, and our resilience in picking ourselves up, dusting ourselves off, acknowledging that something didn't work, and trying again is vital. That lesson from the process serves us all well, and a little bit of reflection on how the process has changed us along the way is worth a lot.

—Amanda Millmore, Educator, University of Reading, UK, [a.millmore@reading.ac.uk](mailto:a.millmore@reading.ac.uk)

I am Dr. Kashmira Dave, a senior lecturer in Academic Development. My interest in SaP emerged during my PhD research, which examined university teachers' task design practices. The data revealed a significant gap: students often interpreted tasks differently from the teachers' intentions. This mismatch highlighted the need for better alignment in task design. Recognising students' potential as active partners in the design process, my subsequent research explored how involving students in refining task design could enhance constructive alignment. The findings were clear: when students collaborate in the design process, it not only improves their understanding of the task but also enriches their overall learning experience. Knowing the rationale behind task design helps students grasp the objectives more effectively, fostering deeper engagement and better outcomes. Integrating students as partners in task design bridges the gap between teacher intentions and student interpretations, leading to a more meaningful and aligned learning experience.

—Kashmira Dave, Researcher, University of New England, Australia, [kdave3@une.edu.au](mailto:kdave3@une.edu.au)

A students-as-partners approach offers a great opportunity for students like me who feel passionately about social inclusion in higher education spaces, particularly for students who are often overlooked. I am a queer, neurodivergent woman of colour, and I recognize that I am one of the very few with this positionality to be given a platform to share my opinion. I am very lucky to have been introduced to SaP early in my academic journey as a master's student, enabling me to contribute to literature while experiencing life as a student with this particular identity. Many can only share their experiences much later in their careers, and some do not get to share at all. My hope for SaP is to continue including marginalized student partners and to allow more of us to share our lived experiences. We should explore new methodologies and ways of finding

partners to actively include students at the margins. It is not easy for us to step forward and build the confidence to share, but by creating platforms and encouraging agency, we will find our voices.

—*Esai Reddy, Student Partner, University of Cape Town, South Africa, [rddesa001@myuct.ac.za](mailto:rddesa001@myuct.ac.za)*

I'm a third-year student and a peer leader, actively supporting first-year students as a Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) Leader. One key element I'd like to carry forward is the spirit of co-creation. Through my work, I've seen how meaningful discussions and collaborative activities empower students to take ownership of their learning. This partnership model fosters trust, mutual respect, and a deeper understanding of the material, and I believe it to be a core component of SaP. By involving students in shaping the learning process, we create a more dynamic and engaging environment where everyone feels valued. These interactions not only enhance academic success and build confidence, but also inspire a love for learning, sparking excitement and curiosity. They strengthen the relationship between students and staff, making the learning experience more inclusive and impactful.

—*Suliana Male, Student Partner, Murdoch University, Australia, [Suliana.male@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:Suliana.male@murdoch.edu.au)*

True partnership requires us to listen to and challenge each other—educators and students as co-learners. In our workshops, using a co-developed SaP radar method, we observed how vulnerability and authentic, meaningful relationships foster intrinsic motivation, but we also recognize that allowing students' voices to go unchallenged undermines growth. As Rohit Jahangier (student partner) suggests, when students can be themselves, they engage more deeply, but this must include respectful challenges and guidance from us as educators. The SaP Radar we co-developed is a method that fosters dialogue through a game-like systemic constellation on a canvas, outside of conventional settings and on diverse topics. This approach also encourages dialogue on "what could be". How does the partnership between learners and educators/staff/leaders function, and what constitutes desirable relationships?

—*Danielle Doria [daniellecdoria@icloud.com](mailto:daniellecdoria@icloud.com) and Yerin Koekkoek: Alumni Students; Antonia Crivineanu [683323@student.inholland.nl](mailto:683323@student.inholland.nl), Student, Inholland University of Applied Science; Rohit Jahangier [1083522@hr.nl](mailto:1083522@hr.nl), Student Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences; Senka Rebac [senka.rebac@inholland.nl](mailto:senka.rebac@inholland.nl) and Jürg Thölke [Juerg.Thoelke@inholland.nl](mailto:Juerg.Thoelke@inholland.nl): Academic Staff/Faculty, Inholland University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands*

As a teaching-focused academic in a mathematics department, I have always been passionate about exploring innovative teaching practices. My journey into SaP began in 2023, driven by my active involvement in the university's pedagogical staff networks. Mathematics, often perceived as a "hard" discipline, offers a unique opportunity to truly challenge the traditional student-teacher dynamics through co-design or co-creation.

In an advanced mathematics class, I carefully integrated activities including a co-creation of revision resources, which developed students' confidence, agency, and ownership. This

approach has proven transformative, not only for students but also for me. Through open discussions outside the classroom, students shared their insights on what partnership means to them and what actions helped cultivate it. They expressed a strong desire to contribute to both student-student and student-staff partnerships in the future. This experience has reinforced the potential for SaP to enhance engagement and reshape the teaching and learning of advanced mathematics.

—Elizabeth Dombi, Educator, University of Strathclyde, Scotland, UK, [e.dombi@strath.ac.uk](mailto:e.dombi@strath.ac.uk)

As a co-researcher in a SaP project, I experienced firsthand the transformative potential of empowering students. Being entrusted with responsibilities like peer interviews and co-authoring outputs, fostered my confidence and critical thinking skills. The project created a space where I felt heard and respected, which was vital in overcoming my initial hesitations. This approach provided a sense of ownership and collaboration, demonstrating SaP's ability to redefine traditional hierarchies. Moving forward, I believe we must preserve this emphasis on empowerment, creating environments where students can actively shape outcomes and contribute as equal partners. This ensures that SaP continues to inspire personal growth and meaningful partnerships.

—Yen-En Kuo, Student Partner, University of Bristol, Taiwan, [mj23696@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:mj23696@bristol.ac.uk)

As formal recognition and institutional support of students as partners grows, and as this pedagogy becomes better known among educators in the coming decade, it will be important to retain the values that are at the core of students as partners pedagogy. My aspiration is to foster educators' curiosity about students' learning and development needs. This would involve committing to engage our students as partners in an ongoing way, not only at the institutional or course design level but also actively in every classroom. Similarly, I hope we continue to nurture the equity-promoting principles that motivate many students as partners practitioners. This means extending partnership to all students and supporting those who might otherwise be unable to participate. My experience as a first in family student forged the belief that education is transformative when the same opportunities are extended to all students.

—Laura Kotevska, Educator, University of Sydney, Australia, [laura.kotevska@sydney.edu.au](mailto:laura.kotevska@sydney.edu.au)

As an associate professor in education, I am both faculty Director for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and the university Student as Partners (SaP) learning circle lead, viewing these roles as mutually inclusive. However, university structures perceive them as separate identities. I wish to see these strands, both vital to the learning and teaching cycle, come together more holistically. While it is widely recognized that student-staff partnership projects should be inclusive in their own right, they should also foster inclusivity within the broader student body. Most discussions emphasize using SaP for researching EDI issues or as part of existing EDI projects, rather than recognizing SaP as EDI in action. I hope to see this perspective evolve.

—Stephany Veuger, Senior Leader, Northumbria University, UK, [s.veuger@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:s.veuger@northumbria.ac.uk)

The practice of partnership between students and teachers should remain rooted in co-creation and mutual respect. A learning process that celebrates collaboration and supports collective growth among students and teachers ensures that all actively shape their educational experiences together. Values and goals are not implemented in a hierarchical structure (i.e., teacher to student) but instead developed collaboratively and adaptively (i.e., teacher and student), allowing for fluidity in different contextual perspectives. We must continue to encourage and empower both students and teachers to actively engage in inclusive and participatory practices. These practices are built on mutualism and diverse perspectives through dialogic co-creation, contributing to continuous learning.

—Keyondrea Scott [kcscott7@asu.edu](mailto:kcscott7@asu.edu), Jacob Dang [jacob.dang@asu.edu](mailto:jacob.dang@asu.edu), Steven Zuiker [Steven.Zuiker@asu.edu](mailto:Steven.Zuiker@asu.edu), and Ariane Umuringa [aumuring@asu.edu](mailto:aumuring@asu.edu), Student Partner, Arizona State University, USA

#### WHAT DO YOU HOPE SaP WILL BE OR BECOME?

As an educator, I am fortunate to have worked on four student partnership projects. Typically, I bring the core idea to the team, with students contributing their voices and unique perspectives to shape that idea. My hope for the future of SaP is that it becomes less of an academic or faculty-driven initiative and more of a student-driven one. Students should be aware of their opportunity to opt in as student partners and have a clear channel to reach out to the teaching team to express their interest in the role. They could also propose their own ideas, much like a research student presenting a research topic. This shift would help bring more diversity and creative ideas to the table, enriching the overall impact of these partnerships.

—Jennifer Z. Sun, Educator, The University of Sydney, Australia, [jennifer.sun@sydney.edu.au](mailto:jennifer.sun@sydney.edu.au)

As a Teaching and Learning Senior Leader at a UK university, I have found that SaP activities are commonly projects with well-defined objectives, pre-agreed team memberships, and relatively fixed short- to medium-term timelines. While such approaches are undoubtedly valuable, I hope that in the future, higher education leaders will increasingly facilitate partnerships with students that also seek to explore and respond to ‘wicked problems’ (i.e., issues that are difficult or even impossible to solve). This likely necessitates that SaP collaborations become more open-ended, potentially grounded-theory-driven, and interconnected (in terms of newcomers progressively building on the work of SaP student and staff alumni who have come before). For many universities, a primary wicked problem may actually be the longstanding challenge of how to best reach and amplify the voices of the very students who choose not to engage in SaP opportunities.

—Steve Briggs, Senior Leader, University of Bedfordshire, UK, [steve.briggs@beds.ac.uk](mailto:steve.briggs@beds.ac.uk)

As a Master of Education student and a frequent partner in Student-Staff Partnership (SSP) initiatives at the University of Queensland, I recognize the need for sustained funding, such as year-long SSP grants. Extended funding would support more innovative teaching and learning

projects while fostering stronger connections with staff—something that short 15- to 20-week projects often miss. For example, in an SSP project with the School of Agriculture and Food Sustainability, we implemented ePortfolio assessments but required grant extensions to align with course activities. This highlights the need for flexible funding timelines to adapt as projects evolve. Short durations also limit opportunities to produce reports and publications on SSP outcomes. Offering flexibility during winter and summer breaks could further enhance project continuity. Additionally, formal support for scholarly outputs, such as assistance with ethics approvals, would help us contribute to academic literature on Students as Partners and showcase the broader impact of these collaborations.

—*Tin Nguyen, student, The University of Queensland, Australia,*  
[tin.nguyen1@student.uq.edu.au](mailto:tin.nguyen1@student.uq.edu.au)

As an educational developer focused on anti-racist pedagogies, a researcher, and a supportive staff member for the SaP program at my institution, I have come to recognize SaP as a transformative pedagogical practice. My vision for SaP's future challenges performativity in its various guises and moves beyond visual optics, metrics, and colonial narratives. It is one where both students and partners are vigilant in their positioning by embracing the dual processes of listening and unlearning. This approach requires robust frameworks that center on decolonization, anti-oppression, and an ethic of care. By broadening our perspective, I see potential for SaP to adopt a community-engaged lens, extending partnerships beyond the academy to include local, Indigenous, and marginalized groups. Furthermore, we could explore global partnerships through digital technologies, transcending space and time while embracing interdisciplinarity. In essence, there are no limits to what SaP can become when infused with a spirit of critical consciousness, sustainability, decolonization, anti-oppression, and internationalization.

—*Aasiya Satia, Practitioner, McMaster University, Canada,* [satiaa@mcmaster.ca](mailto:satiaa@mcmaster.ca)

As Program Coordinators of UQ's Student-Staff Partnership program, we connect the unique perspectives of students and staff and have experienced firsthand the power of the student voice. We know that elevating and empowering student voices enriches the student experience and provides immeasurable value to staff partners and the entire organization. Our collective efforts have connected thousands of students and staff, resulting in incredible outcomes and initiatives. While our program has nurtured a culture of partnership across UQ, our engagement in the Students as Partners Roundtable 2024 inspired us to explore further possibilities and dream bigger. A critical next step is to increase our capacity to reach underrepresented students to ensure a wider range of diverse voices are engaged. Our ultimate goal is to see the SaP ethos

incorporated into every aspect of UQ, with student voice embedded in all decision-making at the university.

—Rachel Liong-Rasi [r.rasi@uq.edu.au](mailto:r.rasi@uq.edu.au) and Rowan Collin [r.collin@uq.edu.au](mailto:r.collin@uq.edu.au), professional staff,  
The University of Queensland, Australia

As an international student, I was involved in various SaP projects because I wanted to use my skills and knowledge to give back to my community. I aspire for SaP partnerships to be genuine, relational, and transformational. Rather than simply taking feedback or fitting students into partnerships for compliance, I would like to see equal partnerships free from invisible barriers such as power dynamics, which intersect with other inequities, including gender, race, class, culture, and nationality. Students need the freedom to create those partnerships and projects from the outset, rather than staff inviting students into existing structured partnerships that are often exclusive and limiting. This approach requires a degree of freedom and agency to innovate, empower, and transform, which may not always align with the risk-averse mindset of universities. A good example at the University of the Sunshine Coast is the SaP Student Senate admin team, which helps mitigate those barriers and empower students' agency.

—Fien Van den Steen, Student Partner, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia,  
[fvandensteen@usc.edu.au](mailto:fvandensteen@usc.edu.au)

As “The 2025 Skills Horizon” shows, effective leadership in the future will require a co-design mindset as well as the ability to engage communities and build trust on a large scale. To enable students to flourish in this future, I see SaP evolving into the partnership mindset that every student and educator adopts. Therefore, instead of fostering social loafing habits and/or allergies to collaborative work, our graduates will cultivate healthy partnership instincts and possess a toolkit of best practices for establishing long-lasting transformational partnerships that lead to success. The Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) aim to advance responsible business education in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where Partnership (Principle 5) and Dialogue (Principle 6) overlap with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). I am working towards this SaP mindset to be codified in PRME, which currently appears to position students as passive recipients of quality education rather than as active architects of their own learning experiences.

—Maria Ishkova, Educator, The University of Sydney, Australia, [maria.ishkova@sydney.edu.au](mailto:maria.ishkova@sydney.edu.au)

Learning from a network committed to a Students-as-Partners (SaP) approach has led us to the community. We are a hive of education-focused academics and professionals seeking to collaborate intentionally to solve educational issues by inviting those with lived experiences to have their say. For instance, high failure rates led to exploring student experience and retention. This catalyst inspired the creation of a Student Agency, part of a newly formed Education Innovation Exchange Team. This initiative seeks student voices to help deliver educational ideas while providing opportunities in preparation for future careers. As we build an SaP model, a

framework is being generated that we hope inspires a cultural shift across the institution. We want to encourage and define how SaP roles in educational innovation can be applied in practice. Having the SaP community to communicate with and grow with, is what we hope for now and in the future.

—Sandra Woods [sandrawoods@swin.edu.au](mailto:sandrawoods@swin.edu.au), Kelly Galvin [kgalvin@swin.edu.au](mailto:kgalvin@swin.edu.au), Jeff Waters [jwaters@swin.edu.au](mailto:jwaters@swin.edu.au), Bilal Ahmed [bahmed@swin.edu.au](mailto:bahmed@swin.edu.au), Swinburne University of Technology, Australia

I envision SaP becoming a cornerstone of educational systems globally, where partnership is seamlessly integrated into the fabric of teaching and learning. I hope SaP will evolve into a model that amplifies all voices, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds, and where the diversity of thought leads to enriched educational experiences for everyone involved.

—Mariam Abbas, Student Partner, University of Bedfordshire, UK, [mariam.abbas@study.beds.ac.uk](mailto:mariam.abbas@study.beds.ac.uk)

The future of SaP can greatly benefit from a global scholarship that integrates local traditional or historical values as “signature partnerships,” such as the Confucian collectivist culture in Chinese societies. Contrary to the preconception that Confucian culture, with its emphasis on power distance, hinders effective SaP, it provides a robust framework for fostering collaboration and mutual respect. Collectivism promotes a sense of community and shared purpose, which are essential for any meaningful partnership. Confucianism advocates for moral integrity, mutual respect, and the value of education, all of which can enhance the dynamics of SaP by encouraging ethical leadership and collective growth. Embracing these values can lead to a more inclusive and empathetic educational environment. By challenging outdated perceptions and focusing on the strengths of Confucian ideals, Asian educators can create a future where SaP thrives, rooted in respect, shared responsibility, and a commitment to collective excellence, thereby contributing to the revitalization of SaP in higher education.

—Peter Fat Man LAU, Educator, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong SAR, China, [pfmlau@hku.hk](mailto:pfmlau@hku.hk)

I am an emerging SaP scholar. I recently completed my dissertation study, in which I used the SaP framework to examine veteran student success. Partnering with military veterans to investigate strategies that help campus leaders improve outcomes for military students proved instructive. Our SaP collaborators were energized because they knew our study mattered. Our work mattered because we produced research that offered ideas on how to enhance collegiate life for veterans on our campus. Therefore, when I think about the future of SaP, I hope that more Military Affairs practitioners will consider using this framework to amplify the voices of a traditionally marginalized group on campus.

—Alecia R. Matthews, Practitioner, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA, [matthews@sog.unc.edu](mailto:matthews@sog.unc.edu)

I would like student-staff partnerships to become a standard practice across higher education as a means of decolonizing the curriculum as well as decolonizing relationships to education and to each other. When executed properly—that is, intentionally and respectfully—student-staff partnerships have the potential to serve as catalysts for transformative action and institutional change. With open minds and open hearts, both students and staff become more adept at agency, empathy, curiosity, responsibility, and accountability. Having experienced being a student partner, I recognize the power it holds to shift the existing neoliberal transactional relationship in education into a more meaningful and insightful one.

—Jana Beleska, Student Partner, Bachelor of Social Science, Western Sydney University, Australia, [janabeleska8@gmail.com](mailto:janabeleska8@gmail.com)

As graduate students and faculty using SaP to enhance educational collaboratories, we hope it becomes a public infrastructure for learning and teaching within and beyond education. Just as transforming bricks into bridges and bytes into networks creates physical and digital architectures of engagement, evolving student roles, relationships, and opportunities through partnerships expands the social grammar of engagement, ensuring students feel empowered, heard, and supported. Through this expansion, we also hope SaP remains an evolving practice—neither pursuing a single, correct register nor generating unlimited alternatives.

An ongoing, evolving grammar for social engagement is not unlike language. It reflects open, collaborative frameworks of use within education and with local communities; thrives through inclusive and transformative practices; and catalyzes intentional reflection. By expanding the social grammar of engagement, SaP is shaping new relational dynamics in learning and teaching that will serve as a public infrastructure for shared purpose, reflexivity, and prosocial co-creation.

—Ariane Umuringa [aumuring@asu.edu](mailto:aumuring@asu.edu), graduate student,  
Dr. Steven Zuiker [Steven.Zuiker@asu.edu](mailto:Steven.Zuiker@asu.edu), academic faculty, |  
Keyondrea Scott [kcscott7@asu.edu](mailto:kcscott7@asu.edu), graduate student,  
Jacob Dang [jacob.dang@asu.edu](mailto:jacob.dang@asu.edu), graduate student, Arizona State University, USA

As the Senior Associate Director for Teaching, I administer our pedagogical partnership program, which began due to grant funding. I envision a future where pedagogical partnerships are seen as integral to professional development for faculty and are highly valued by institutions of higher education. I would love to see this value reflected through financial support and recognition of participation in the tenure and promotion process. To help realize this future, those involved in pedagogical partnerships could examine how participation fosters transferable skills, such as communication, that benefit faculty in grant writing and publications.

—M. Geneva Murray, Educator, University of Oklahoma, USA, [geneva.murray@ou.edu](mailto:geneva.murray@ou.edu)

My students-as-partners (SaP) journey began by facilitating the committee of faculty and staff on the Task Force on Innovation at a private STEM university. I often focus on student perspectives

in my approach to improving student learning outcomes and achieving student success. After all, who is better qualified to share from lived experiences than a student? Eventually, we invited our own student partner to join us in creating our framework for pedagogical partnerships. Our SaP program, now in its second year, is taking shape. I hope the program expands beyond the current outreach of eight partnerships per year as faculty and students recognize the relevance of pedagogical partnerships to improving: student engagement, course content, and canvas design. I envision that our SaP program will evolve from faculty and student partnerships into departmental-level partnerships to provide additional pathways for increasing trust in student feedback to advance the strategic initiatives on our campus.

—Teha Cooks, Educator, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Daytona Beach Campus, USA,  
[cookst1@erau.edu](mailto:cookst1@erau.edu)

I have been fortunate enough to support colleagues in various institutions to conceptualise and implement partnership approaches to enhance their work. I have seen how HEIs in Australia and the UK are increasingly investing in and focusing on the power of student-as-partner approaches to drive positive change. The majority of this work concentrates on 'instances' of partnership—student partners in co-creation projects, student representatives in committees, or students in one-off collaborative workshops. These instances often diminish once investment fades or interest from central and senior advocates wanes. To counter this, HEIs should invest time and resources in cultivating cultures rather than instances of partnership—working with course and faculty leaders to develop embedded and sustainable partnership approaches that are interconnected and cohesive. 'Student voice,' 'student representation,' and 'co-creation' are concepts that should strategically align, with a successful partnership culture being one that plans for and integrates all of these concepts into the annual lifecycles of both staff and students. By doing so, 'students as partners' can truly be at the heart of our 'way of doing' as a sector.

—James Forde, Senior Leader, University of Leeds, UK, [j.forde@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:j.forde@leeds.ac.uk)

As Head of Academic Success at Torrens University Australia (TUA), I have an extensive background in higher education teaching and learning. I lead a highly qualified team that supports students academically, and we run the Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS) program. Operating in this area of student learning requires pan university collaboration and strategies to create cohesive, impactful support, and opportunities for all students. One strategy to achieve this is open pedagogy, which brings students closer to the process of content and learning development. The future of learning in higher education relies on student partnerships, and open pedagogy can enhance student agency and increase learning engagement.

As a maturing university, TUA is positioned to adopt open pedagogy as a strategy, where co-creation becomes the norm. Moving forward, and as a practice of open pedagogy, my team hopes to partner with students to co-create open educational resources. In collaboration with

the expertise of TUA Library, this initiative presents an exciting opportunity to transform learning through shared knowledge and innovation.

—Debi Howarth, Head of Academic Success, Torrens University, Australia,  
[deborah.howarth@torrens.edu.au](mailto:deborah.howarth@torrens.edu.au)

## CONCLUSION

In capturing these ‘voices from the field,’ the future vision for SaP in higher education (HE) offers a scenario where SaP becomes fully integrated into university culture as "business as usual," signifying a fundamental paradigm shift in the operations of educational institutions. Authors reflect that transformation in HE will necessitate genuine student-led initiatives, with students acting as active architects in tackling complex challenges and engaging meaningfully in decision-making processes. The vision for SaP encompasses practices that acknowledge diversity and amplify marginalized voices while building community-led partnerships that reach beyond campus boundaries. The core values of SaP—being transformative, decolonizing, and celebrating diversity—are reflected in hopes for more genuine, relational approaches that foster trust and fairness.

However, to achieve these aspirations, contributors suggest, several current practices should be abandoned, particularly tokenistic and symbolic partnerships that prioritize quantity over quality. Short-term, isolated initiatives and superficial engagements that maintain traditional power hierarchies should make way for sustained, meaningful collaborations. The lack of clarity and transparency in partnership models, which often creates uncertainty among students, must be addressed through clearer frameworks and expectations.

Looking ahead, contributors propose that the elements worth preserving and building upon include systems for recognition and rewards for both students and faculty. Success stories demonstrate how SaP can positively influence student career paths and institutional practices. The way forward emphasizes mutual respect and genuine relationships where all insights are valued equally, along with open communication that encourages students to authentically express themselves and challenge established norms. This spirit of co-creation, where students have genuine ownership and co-authoring opportunities, leads to empowerment and transformative educational experiences.

## REFERENCES

Cook-Sather, A., Bovill, C., & Felten, P. (2014). *Engaging students as partners in teaching and learning: A guide for faculty*. Wiley & Sons.

- Healey, M., Flint, A., & Harrington, K. (2014). Engagement through partnership: Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education. Higher Education Academy. <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/engagement-through-partnership-students-partners-learning-and-teaching-higher>
- Liang, Y., & Matthews, K. E. (2020). Students as partners practices and theorisations in Asia: A scoping review. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 40(3), 552–566. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1773771>
- Matthews, K. E., Cook-Sather, A., Acai, A., Dvorakova, S. L., Felten, P., Marquis, E., & Mercer-Mapstone, L. (2018). Toward theories of partnership praxis: An analysis of interpretive framing in literature on students as partners in teaching and learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 38(2), 280–293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1530199>
- University of Queensland. (n.d.). Students as partners. Institute for Teaching and Learning Innovation. <https://itali.uq.edu.au/advancing-teaching/initiatives/students-partners>