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Co-authors: Faculty-Student Collaborative Writers

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2014 WRITING INSTRUCTION RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS Closing Report

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Date study was completed: February 1st, 2015

Title of Study: Co-authors: Faculty-Student Collaborative Writers

Research Question(s):

RQ1: What communication processes are involved in collaborative co-authorship between faculty and students?

RQ2: What happens when faculty and students engage in collaborative writing through co-authorship?

Method(s):

- Collected results through interviews and focus groups. The conversations were transcribed and coded into six different themes in order to analyze the research.

Key Findings from Study:

- The researchers discovered that faculty-student co-authors go through several communication processes when working collaboratively, such as: 1) Getting Started, 2) Breaking it Up, 3) Norm Balance, 4) Connecting, 5) The Outcome/Bringing it All Together, and 6) The Reflective Experience.
- Understanding the communication process is instrumental in the successful completion of the writing project.
- Before the writing projects even began, both student and teacher would analyze what co-authorship or collaborative writing meant.
- Faculty and students shared similar concerns about time management, organization, roles, and power structure.
- Faculty and students shared similar benefits about publishing opportunities, research enhancement, skill development, and building relationships.

Implications for Teaching and Learning:

- This study provides a new “lens” for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) to critically analyze the communication *process* in faculty-student collaboration on writing projects.
- According to Hutchings (2001), SoTL researchers want to find out "what happens" and "what it looks like." Thus, understanding the intricate *step by step process* in faculty-student co-authorship is critical in enhancing SoTL.

- Faculty realize that students' voices do matter, and this is important in the enhancement of their own research and teaching curriculum.

Gains/Challenges in Faculty-Student Collaboration:

- Gains:
 - Both faculty and student have the opportunity to publish their work and be recognized for their achievements.
 - Strong relationships are developed between faculty and student which can enhance teaching and curriculum, and overall student learning inside and outside the classroom.
 - Faculty are able to enhance their own research and gain multiple perspectives.
 - Student voices are heard.
 - Students learn about the research process.
- Challenges:
 - Not all faculty-student co-author groups go through a fluid process in team development.
 - Time management is a major challenge recognized in this study. Both faculty and students expressed difficulties in finding times to meet.
 - Power distribution and unequal roles were a common challenge expressed by both faculty and student.

Implications for Further Study:

- Future research must focus on the *how* versus *what* of co-authorship and collaborative groups between faculty and student.
- Research must focus on the communication process with undergraduate students within collaborative projects, which is limited currently.
- Future researchers must understand that not all co-authorship groups go through a fluid process, and that is okay.