

Reflections on pedagogical practice and development through multidisciplinary triadic peer mentorship

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Abstract

This article presents a critical reflection on the experiences of three university instructors (two teaching stream and one tenure stream) within a 6-month peer-to-peer mentoring for teaching community of practice (P2P CoP). As part of the P2P CoP, the authors (who were previously unknown to one another) formed a “teaching triad” at a tri-campus, research-intensive Canadian university. They regularly met in person for 1 hour on a weekly basis throughout the Winter 2019 semester to discuss teaching-related matters, undertook classroom visits to observe one another teach, and participated in pedagogical workshops with other P2P CoP members. In this article, the authors specifically reflect on (a) the opportunities presented for reciprocity within their triadic mentorship structure; (b) the value their different scholarly fields offered them in pursuit of professional development and open exchange; and (c) the broadened knowledge base of pedagogical techniques their multidisciplinary afforded them throughout the P2P CoP. They interpret their experiences of building relationships to offer insights into the unique and transformative advantages of teaching triad mentorship models. These include faculty peer mentoring and professional development opportunities that are not merely formalized but institutionally supported and related benefits for other institutions of higher education.

Keywords: peer mentorship, community of practice, faculty mentoring for teaching, pedagogical practices, mentorship triad, higher education

A long history of formal and informal faculty mentoring across institutions of higher education points to the positive association between faculty mentoring and culture building, increased motivation, relationship building and strengthening, professional development, and more (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Calderwood & Klaf, 2015; Golbeck, 2017; Janssen et al., 2015; Kenny et al., 2017; Lewis & Olshansky, 2016; Zachary, 2006). The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) literature has further outlined the benefits that faculty mentorship holds for employers within higher education, including faculty retention, professional development, and promotion and advancement (Benson et al., 2002; Fountain & Newcomer, 2016; Gardiner et al., 2007; Gwyn, 2011; Lumpkin, 2011; Steele et al., 2013; Thurston et al., 2009; Wasserstein et al., 2007). Mentoring geared specifically toward teaching has been identified as beneficial for the instructional effectiveness of new faculty, the formation and understanding of professional identities, and for continued professional development—which, in turn, influences pedagogy (Carbone, 2014; Mockler, 2011; Simmonds & Dicks, 2018). Despite this, there remains a gap in research on interdisciplinary faculty “mentoring for teaching” and on the advantages of formalized and structured peer mentorship initiatives with this specific purpose (Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, 2016). This article adds to an emerging body of work that seeks to fill this gap within the literature specific to faculty peer mentoring programs for teaching in postsecondary institutions (e.g., Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, 2016; Harnish & Wild, 1994; Tähtinen et al., 2012). It presents a critical reflection on the experiences of three faculty members (two teaching stream and one tenure stream) within a peer-to-peer mentorship community of practice (P2P CoP) at a large, research-intensive

university.¹ The authors interpret their experiences of building relationships over the course of 6 months to consider the benefits of semi-structured, triadic peer mentorship models for institutions of higher education.

Context

As well as being generators of new knowledge, universities are understood to have a duty to share that knowledge with both the broader community and within their own academic circles (Buckley, 2012). One way to achieve these goals is through establishment of communities of practice (CoPs) that are either transdisciplinary or intradisciplinary (Vincent et al., 2018). CoPs are described as “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and experiences in this area by interaction on an ongoing basis” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). The related faculty learning community (FLC) model has become popular in the United States in which a group of eight to 12 multidisciplinary individuals meet tri-weekly over the course of 1 year to build community and become involved in scholarly activities (Cox, 2013). CoPs have been especially influential in supporting the personal growth of early-career academics with respect to their teaching. Novice instructors typically find pedagogical support through unstructured and random informal relationships that rely on the ability of the novice to seek out assistance, whereas more formalized mentorship has been deemed an effective strategy (Remmik et al., 2011). The importance of social and individual learning in becoming an effective academic teacher was described within

¹ At our university, teaching stream ranks are held by faculty members whose responsibilities primarily consist of (a) teaching undergraduates and (b) service, administrative, and other activities related to teaching, which may involve pedagogical research. Tenure stream ranks refer to tenure-track faculty members who engage in teaching, research, and service activities.

a formalized teaching development program for new lecturers at a research-intensive university, where it was advised that teaching CoPs be seeded (Warhurst, 2006). However, it has been noted that “it is critical for teachers to apply what they have learned from others to their teaching practice and not simply attend a professional development event with a group of other teachers” and that a CoP framework is a necessary component to assist in the design of professional development for university teaching (Gilmore, 2020). Of particular relevance to the COVID-19 educational environment, hybrid in-person and online teaching CoPs have also been developed. One such initiative is a cross-disciplinary and cross-rank approach utilizing online discussion boards, webinars, and resource-sharing, as well as in-person classroom observations, teaching workshops, and social events (Joseph et al., 2018). A second strategy is to engage geographically separated faculty online between face-to-face meetings, to encourage further discussion about new teaching practices (Houghton et al., 2015). In this model, the CoP members placed an important emphasis on online activities needing to have significant personal benefits, in opposition to an in-person commitment to sharing of resources and ideas.

Over the past few years, our institution has identified a need for increased capacity for mentorship in teaching to support faculty in reflecting on their pedagogical approaches and facilitate exchanges of strategies and ideas (Harvard University Graduate School of Education, 2014; University of Toronto, 2014). In response to this, our university’s Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation piloted a P2P CoP in 2016–2017, with additional cohorts developed during 2017–2018 and 2018–2019. Rather than promoting traditional mentor-mentee relationships, the P2P CoP seeks to imbue a sense of “equalized reciprocity” through a series of structured facilitated workshops that equip participants to support the development of successful mentoring liaisons. This element of institutional support has been demonstrated to be critical in fostering a positive culture for mentorship (Fountain & Newcomer, 2016). The goals of the P2P CoP include

(a) utilizing student feedback to improve the quality of a course and student learning; (b) increasing reflection on one's teaching to gain a better understanding of students' learning needs; and (c) building leadership capacity and mentoring opportunities for the university's faculty (Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, 2017). The CoP's structured and evidence-based workshops align with these goals and aim to assist faculty across several areas. These include improving students' learning experiences through an analysis of student feedback, developing skills in mentor-coaching, and conducting classroom peer observations.

During the first 2 years of the P2P CoP, regular meetings were held over a period of one semester (either in person or virtual) between faculty who were connected in a traditional dyadic mentorship structure. Participating faculty from different disciplinary backgrounds were intentionally paired together to provide opportunities to share different perspectives on their teaching experiences. Each mentorship dyad was composed of two faculty members from the university's teaching stream or tenure stream or alternatively one from each academic group. Feedback on the effectiveness of the P2P CoP held as a pilot during the first year was extremely positive and spoke to the rich benefits afforded by the combination of a semi-formalized workshop framework in conjunction with flexibility around the structure of each mentorship dyad (Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, 2017). During the third offering of the P2P CoP during 2018–2019, a "3Cs" framework was introduced as an overarching approach to establishing mentoring relationships. This model proposes that all parties shift fluidly between three stances—Consulting, Collaborating, and Coaching—over the course of conversation instead of adopting fixed roles (Lipton & Wellman, 2005). While the P2P CoP had exclusively incorporated a dyadic mentorship structure from 2016–2018, our peer mentorship group was the first to pilot a triad arrangement (composed of one senior teaching-stream, one junior teaching-stream, and one junior tenure-stream faculty member). This is a structure that has been employed as early as 1979 (Sweeney & Grasha, 1979).

A Peer Mentorship Triad

Our multidisciplinary triad consisted of three faculty members from across two of our university's three campuses:

Nicole is a Black female junior faculty member appointed as assistant professor of women and gender studies in the tenure stream since 2017. She teaches within the Department of Historical Studies at one of our university's suburban campuses and is actively involved in the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation's faculty workshops and offerings since her hiring. At the time of her participation within the P2P CoP in Winter 2019, Nicole was teaching an upper-year 400-level undergraduate seminar course in the humanities with an enrollment of 15 students. Immediately following the P2P CoP, Nicole taught a 200-level introductory undergraduate lecture course with an enrollment of 100 students in which she applied many of the peer learnings and pedagogical techniques shared by her colleagues within the P2P CoP.

Andrew is a White male faculty member holding the title of professor, teaching stream, and is currently the associate chair (undergraduate) of the Department of Chemistry. In this latter role, he seeks to adopt different approaches to engage his colleagues in teaching conversations as much as possible. Andrew teaches science undergraduates in both classroom and laboratory environments, through courses ranging in enrollment from 10 to 1,000 students. His core instruction has been at the first- and second-year undergraduate levels for almost 20 years. Andrew has been involved in the P2P CoP since its inception in 2016 and coordinated a second-year introductory course for 400 life science students during Winter 2019 while part of the P2P CoP triad. Andrew is the co-coordinator of the faculty-wide Teaching & Learning Community of Practice and a recipient of a University President's Teaching Award in 2009.

Nathalie is a White female faculty member appointed at the assistant professor, teaching stream rank since 2018. She teaches in the Department of Statistical Sciences within the Faculty of Arts & Science, with over 4,000 undergraduate students registered in her department's

programs of study. She has been involved in teaching and learning communities both within her department and through the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation since her initial appointment. Over the last several years she has taught a large 100-level STEM course of 250–300 students and a small 400-level seminar course of 20–40 students. Her teaching in both classes has been enriched by the multidisciplinary perspectives of her fellow P2P CoP triad peers.

Each of us independently applied to join the P2P CoP with the understanding that, if accepted, the coordinators would pair us with a peer in order to participate. A few weeks before the first workshop, Nicole's assigned faculty match became unable to join the P2P CoP, so she reached out to the coordinators to inquire about whether they would be open to the possibility of her joining a dyad to form a triad. Although the triad model had no precedent within the P2P CoP, the coordinators directly approached both Nathalie and Andrew about this request, who were both extremely receptive to trialing the mentorship triad format (regardless of its specific composition in terms of membership), and a connection was made shortly thereafter. In short, the formation of our triad was motivated by the desire to formally accommodate all three authors in the P2P CoP rather than with any specific intent to implement and assess a new mentorship model. Each of us primarily joined the initiative seeking a forum to reflect on our own teaching in a supported manner. The varied differences—in our backgrounds across STEM and the humanities and our teaching across laboratories, seminar rooms, and lecture-style classrooms—were a noticeable strength rather than a limitation to achieving this goal. As has been suggested previously, multidisciplinary CoPs and mentoring can be more effective than within distinct academic units, as conversations are naturally focused on common goals without the distraction of discipline-specific issues (Harper, 1996; Lumpkin, 2011; Sweeney & Grasha, 1979; Wasburn & LaLopa, 2003).

The following is our collective attempt to maintain an active awareness of and critically reflect upon our various social locations, personal

positionings, and scholarly fields and the impact these hold on our experiences as participants within our multidisciplinary mentorship triad.

Methodology

We utilize critical reflective analysis (CRA) as an interpretative framework for structuring and reporting our experiences within our university's faculty P2P CoP. The term *reflexivity* refers to the capacity for self-awareness and the ability to attend to one's process of knowledge making (Fook & Gardner, 2007; Taylor & White, 2001). As a methodology, CRA acknowledges and deconstructs researchers' assumptions about power and knowledge that are embedded in their daily lives (Campbell & Baikie, 2013; Hickson, 2016). Throughout our 6-month participation in the mentorship triad, our critically reflective analysis involved frequent group dialogue, open-ended discussion, and reflection within weekly group meetings. Our approach to CRA thus further recognizes the social and collaborative construction of knowledge (Campbell & Baikie, 2013). Scholars have noted the benefits of collaborative reflection for professional growth and as an important component of professional identity formation (Glazer et al., 2004; Simmonds & Dicks, 2018).

In what follows, we describe our main findings over the course of our 6-month participation in the P2P CoP within a triadic mentorship structure. Using the detailed written notes we compiled during our weekly meetings over the course of the P2P program as a guide, we arrange our reflections in this article into three broad themes as they relate to our experiences. We specifically reflect on the unique opportunities presented for reciprocity within our triad, the value our different scholarly fields offered us in pursuit of professional development and open exchange, and the broadened knowledge base of pedagogical techniques our multidisciplinary and witnessing of one another's teaching afforded us throughout this process. We offer

these critical collaborative reflections and insights herein as a way of thinking about and learning from one another's experiences. Finally, we reflect on these experiences to consider the benefit of semi-structured (diverse) triadic mentorship groups across institutions of higher education more broadly.

Critical Reflections on Our Triadic Mentorship Structure

Reciprocity Versus Hierarchy

The traditional mentorship framework in the postsecondary context has typically involved pairing a senior mentor with a junior mentee, often with the explicit objective of socializing the mentee to the norms of academia (Morton & Gil, 2019). This model is, by its nature, hierarchical, with information generally flowing in one direction from mentor to mentee. However, an emerging body of work proposes reframing mentorship through the lens of developmental networks and recognizing the value of integrating a range of perspectives to foster enriching reciprocal mentorship relationships (Higgins & Kram, 2001). The triadic mentorship structure offers a unique opportunity to disrupt the typical mentor-mentee model by introducing interactions that do not exist in dyads (Dolan & Willson, 2019; Godden et al., 2014; Rinehart et al., 2011), although intentionality is required to foster a positive and successful mentorship experience for all members.

Productive reciprocal mentorship relationships are predicated on the formulation of shared objectives and having all parties committed to them (Caplow, 1956; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019). In the mentorship triad we describe in this work, the diversity of our backgrounds facilitated the triangulation of our focus on our common goal: reflecting on pedagogy and drawing on diverse perspectives and experiences to enrich our teaching. Our observation is consistent with research suggesting that non-traditional approaches to mentoring such as peer mentoring and matching of individuals from

diverse backgrounds tend to foster reciprocity rather than hierarchy (Morton & Gil, 2019). The continued development of reciprocity in our mentorship triad was aided by institutional support in the form of workshops focused on intentionally transitioning between coaching, collaborating, and consulting stances and on concrete strategies to prepare to give, receive, and reflect on feedback from one another.

The Value of Difference in Providing Mentorship Support

Recent research into faculty-student mentoring has highlighted the benefit of matching demographically similar underrepresented students and faculty mentors, “who personally understand the experiences that racially marginalized students face in predominantly white academic spaces” (Lee & Maynard, 2019, p. 109). Research has further spoken to the importance of mentoring models that are explicitly anti-racist and anti-sexist to interrupt the structural and systemic exclusion of female and underrepresented faculty members from informal networks of mentorship (Richards, 2019). We recognize these facts and the historically neoliberal and capitalist ideologies that have framed the university and understandings of structures of mentoring therein (Goerisch, 2019; Goerisch et al., 2019; Henry, 2018). At the same time, our experiences within the P2P CoP and our multidisciplinary mentorship triad emphasized the valuable insights that diverse members of the academic community have to share and learn from one another. While the benefits of mentorship that emerge from demographic similarities between mentors and mentees are well established, our participation in our university’s formalized CoP highlighted the value of difference and multi-departmental mentoring as a strength within mentorship models. As a racialized female faculty member, Nicole reflected on these dual truths in thinking through her desire to apply to the P2P CoP:

The mentorship relationships of which I am a part with other racialized faculty members provide essential guidance for navigating the

neoliberal academic institution. Such mentorship networks offer a community in which I can commiserate about the emotional labour that I and other female faculty of colour are both eager and expected to provide in our mentoring of students of colour who occupy different types of precarious positions in the university. In applying to the P2P Faculty Mentoring for Teaching Community of Practice, my hope was to expand and grow my formalized mentorship networks in ways that would reduce the burden I often place on other faculty of colour for emotional support and professional development, while still meeting my mentorship needs that would support my research, work-life balance, and, ultimately, my students.

While Nicole's reflection recognizes the value of mentorship between and among faculty on the basis of factors such as gender, race, and sex, it also supports a position on the value of mentoring that is based less exclusively on similarity and/or conviviality with specific persons and is more attuned to "a needs-based framework" that "allows tenure-track faculty to change the conversation about 'mentoring' from one that is centered around your ability to find a relationship with a senior faculty member on your campus to one that focuses on identifying your needs and getting them met" (Rockquemore, 2011). Drawing upon previous research, the *increased* success that multi-departmental mentorship groups can provide to faculty members seeking to build relationships and facilitate networking and support is highlighted (Lumpkin, 2011). Within multi-departmental groups it is suggested that faculty are more likely to feel comfortable sharing concerns that relate directly to their own departments and programs (Boice, 1992). In this regard, formalized multi-departmental mentorship relationships might better facilitate the sharing of "objective perspectives not influenced by departmental issues and politics, and facilitate networking through meetings on campus with a diversity of faculty" (Lumpkin, 2011, p. 363). Each of us found that our unfamiliarity with one another's departments and campuses provided us with impartial perspectives from which to help brainstorm creative pedagogical approaches

to challenging issues from lack of teaching assistant (TA) support to streamlining course content within lecture slides and managing student expectations.

Broadened Relational and Empirical Pedagogical Base

In addition to our diverse backgrounds providing us with a range of new perspectives on pedagogical tools and approaches, the formalized nature of the P2P CoP and the triadic nature of our group allowed us to gain exposure to and witness firsthand (through in-class peer observations of teaching) a variety of different disciplinary approaches to teaching that we subsequently successfully adopted into our individual classrooms. Nicole reflects:

Prior to visiting my colleagues' classrooms as part of our mentorship triad, I had a very limited understanding of the functionality of the clicker and felt it offered a very limited form of student engagement.² Seeing my peers engage with students as they answered questions and take up the questions collectively as they projected them on the screens, however, totally changed my perception of how clickers could be used within the space of the humanities classroom. Rather than using the tool as a static gauge for whether students were in the classroom, my colleagues used clickers to assess students' comprehension of lecture material and to facilitate active learning. I was so persuaded by this use of clickers that I set out to do some research on ways I could include a similar technology in my classroom. Though it had yet to be used within my specific discipline and was initially designed within the context of science education, I settled upon a free web-based group

² Clickers, otherwise known as classroom response systems, are handheld devices used for taking attendance and engaging students in active learning activities and/or forms of formative assessment.

assessment app called TeamUp! (French et al., 2019).³ I was first introduced to the TeamUp! tool through our university's annual Teaching and Learning Symposium just weeks after my participation in the P2P CoP and was excited to use it within the second-year humanities undergraduate class I was about to teach. Using the TeamUp! app has been both fun and rewarding for students who often rarely interact with their peers in large lecture halls. Using the app has also been an excellent way for me to gauge student understanding of course content, and my students and I have gained a lot by displaying the distribution of their responses on the screen to guide our follow-up discussions. Had I not seen my colleagues' use of clickers in action, it's unlikely that I would have sought out this type of technology.

Though the use of clickers was far from the norm within Nicole's discipline, seeing her peers use clickers within an in-person class visit was deeply inspiring. In addition to the confidence her peers modeled in using technologies like clickers, Nicole felt comfortable knowing she could rely on the support of Andrew and Nathalie should the TeamUp! app present challenges.

Such opportunities to witness colleagues from very different academic perspectives in a non-judgmental and non-evaluative classroom setting were incredibly powerful aspects of the triad structure, as was having space to deconstruct each visit with more than one person. Each of us offered one another reassurance that instructional techniques we modeled were pedagogically sound, and we enjoyed healthy discourse during our weekly meetings on the "why" behind each of our pedagogical techniques and choices. As an illustration, Nicole was inspired by seeing *both* colleagues (senior and junior teaching faculty members) walk among 200–400 students in their large introductory

³ The TeamUp! app works on phones, tablets, and laptops and allows students to connect with their classmates to answer questions in class in real time. When directed to do so during lecture, students open the app on their cell phones, tablets, or laptops and form groups to answer a series of questions the instructor has posed in relation to course content and readings. Points (in the form of diamonds) are awarded based on how many attempts are required to obtain the correct answer.

classes to interact with them and answer questions; seeing the junior faculty member as well as the senior faculty member do this gave them the confidence to try it in their own class. Although teaching first- and second-year undergraduate courses in very different disciplines, it became clear to us that the approach of walking around and interacting with students and/or speaking with them before classes is a universal engagement technique. Other important observations were focused on the mode of delivery and methods to elicit discussion within the classes of our peers. Nathalie contemplates this as follows:

Engaging in classroom visits with fellow members of our mentorship triad broadened my perspective on the range of approaches through which I could share course content with my students. While my course slides are generally text-heavy, I was surprised to note that theirs were sparser than mine—in some instances even consisting of a single image—which elicited much more discussion and engagement. Our subsequent conversations reflecting on the trade-off between explicitly “giving” information to students and having them develop knowledge through examples and discussion have been instrumental in re-evaluating the approaches I adopt in my planning.

Andrew adds to this reflection:

One aspect of in-class teaching I have always struggled with is facilitating student appreciation of the material they are learning. I can do this somewhat in a “show-and-tell” manner, but I would like to get students debating the societal relevance of what they are hearing about amongst themselves and leaving each class with a greater sense of purpose. From seeing my triad mentorship colleagues teach, I have a heightened awareness of how I might achieve this goal in future courses. In observing Nicole teach, I saw the importance of setting expectations regarding engagement: having students interact with each other early on during class time seemed particularly critical, so that they are invested in proceedings rather than just being

“passengers.” Throughout Nathalie’s class I watched students form pairs and talk about the context behind the problems they were solving. From the perspective of my courses, it may be as simple as setting aside some time each week (or even each class) to ask students to discuss among themselves “Why do you think this matters?” rather than simply expecting them to work on content exercises together.

The Aftermath of the P2P CoP

Following our transformative experiences in the P2P CoP and through our multidisciplinary triad, we were motivated to think about the ways we could enhance the teaching climate and culture in each of our home departments. Inspired by the lessons learned through our triadic mentorship structure and the 3Cs framework of Consulting, Collaborating, and Coaching, we have begun to implement new collaborative pedagogical initiatives that we hope can inspire future formalized models for mentorship across diverse faculty members’ disciplines, ranks, and professional streams.

For Nicole, whose multidisciplinary department consists of faculty across several programs and disciplines, this took the form of implementing a monthly pedagogical meetup within her department called Project Pedagogy. While formalized dyadic mentorship models do exist within Nicole’s department, these typically follow the mentor-mentee structure rather than emphasizing peer mentorship around teaching. As a tenure-stream faculty member, Nicole was inspired to develop an initiative that sought to bring faculty members together across the teaching and research streams and across ranks to engage in peer mentorship around teaching:

Within this semester-long series of meetups, I brought together colleagues from across the university to engage with several invited faculty members from across my department who shared their most creative assignments, pedagogical educational technologies, their strategies for grading and managing student expectations, and

showcased their use of our university's newest Active Learning Classrooms. Rich question and answer sessions were held after each presentation over lunch, and this provided a wonderful opportunity for differently positioned faculty members to engage in conversations in ways they might not have otherwise. As a result of this first set of pedagogical meetups, three faculty members from different fields were introduced and have since published a short piece on the usefulness of the pedagogical technique of holding office hours in a public space across disciplinary boundaries.

Building on the P2P CoP's emphasis on structured and facilitated workshops and faculty pairings to improve student learning experiences and the quality of course offerings and to offer a space of support for faculty, Nicole envisions these monthly meetups as a first step toward a more structured mentorship program within her multidisciplinary department. Inspired by the many opportunities she has experienced within our mentorship triad for building leadership capacity and professional identity development and building off the already unique and multidisciplinary nature of her department, Nicole hopes to extend Project Pedagogy to include formalized peer mentorship triads across faculty rank, stream, and discipline.

In comparison, the opportunity arose for Andrew to transfer aspects of the 2018–2019 P2P CoP into a disciplinary context. During 2019–2020, four "teaching triads" (comprising 11 distinct faculty members: three teaching stream and eight tenure stream) were intentionally constructed at the single department level. Each triad consisted of one teaching-stream and two tenure-stream faculty who were grouped based on teaching different subdisciplines within the department (thereby having had minimal or no previous contact from a pedagogical perspective: in direct alignment with the P2P CoP triad model). During Fall 2019, Andrew was part of two separate triads and arranged for each of them to meet in person for 1 hour at three distinct times during September, October, and December. Importantly, the meetings were intentionally structured to mirror aspects of the

P2P CoP triad meetings that had taken place the previous year, in terms of providing a safe, non-judgmental environment to discuss plans and concerns around teaching. The first meeting in each triad provided occasion to outline teaching plans for the semester and to share ideas around any new initiatives that each member was planning to employ. The second meeting was held around the midway point of the term to reflect on the first 5/6 weeks and to deliberate any administrative issues that may have cropped up. Finally, the December meeting afforded a semester-long teaching debrief and the identification of “take-home” messages to bring to courses being taught during Winter 2020 and beyond. Afterward, Andrew shared the overall initiative structure with two teaching-stream faculty colleagues, who separately facilitated two further triads from January to April. In keeping with the P2P CoP model from 2018–2019, the relatively unstructured nature of these triads was deemed a benefit by the faculty participants, with no formal preparation being necessary prior to each meeting. Although in-class teaching observations were not a required component of triad membership, several faculty did elect to perform them and reported they were productive.

Scholarly Contributions & Implications

In this article, we have offered a critical reflection of our experiences within a formalized 6-month mentorship triad through which we attended structured program workshops, visited one another’s classes, and met weekly to collaboratively reflect upon our pedagogical practices, concerns, challenges, and successes. Our experiences have highlighted to us the profound benefit of not only peer collaboration and reflection but also a formalized, multidisciplinary triadic mentorship structure. As we note, this unique mentorship model offers the potential to disrupt the typical mentor-mentee model rooted in hierarchy in favor of reciprocal learning that can enhance both faculty and student experiences. Our P2P CoP’s formalized workshops facilitated a seamless reciprocity among us, and our diverse disciplinary backgrounds

encouraged a deep interest in pedagogical practices and strategies that transcend academic fields in exciting ways.

These reflections have important implications for practitioners, scholars, and researchers in the field of educational development in several ways. First, they attest to the significance of formalized programs for multi-departmental faculty interaction within higher education institutions. Beyond the P2P CoP, our university's Faculty of Arts & Science has established a Teaching & Learning Community of Practice as a collegial forum through which faculty can share pedagogical practices across fields and disciplines. This article's authors presented our preliminary reflections on our experiences in the mentorship triad at one such CoP event with great reception and enthusiasm from faculty members across our three campuses. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and our university's large-scale move to online instruction, faculty have also launched an Online Learning Academy as an instructor-to-instructor network that enables faculty to share best practices, tools, and technical advice to facilitate online learning experiences for our students. We are encouraged to see these formalized mechanisms in place in our institution and suggest these as necessary precursors to semi-structured mentorship programs for which we strongly advocate.

Second, our experiences within an incidental mentorship triad further indicate that *multi-departmental*, non-hierarchical mentorship groups can provide faculty with novel opportunities to learn from peers who engage in different forms of pedagogy. It was not despite but due to our varying disciplinary backgrounds that we found ourselves coaching, collaborating, and consulting with one another from unbiased perspectives and learning new and unexpected strategies and approaches to teaching that we have since each implemented in our diverse classrooms. We hope these experiences can help inspire scholars and institutions to develop variations of this semi-structured P2P CoP that aims to group multiple faculty members across discipline, field, and rank to reap the benefits of reciprocal, multidisciplinary learning. Moreover, we

encourage further academic research and study into the unique benefits of a triad mentorship model within faculty peer-to-peer mentorship.

Third, we emphasize that the idea to share our reflections on our mentorship triad experience arose organically, over the course of the 6 months of regular weekly meetings we engaged in, in response to the benefits we were seeing in our own professional pedagogical practices. Because of this, although we made written notes during our meetings to document our conversations, we did not formally code our reflections or collect data about our experience in real time. Based on our observations, we believe that the main benefit of peer-to-peer mentorship for teaching lies in the exchange of ideas and strategies for designing and delivering courses, specifically across disciplines in a way that is difficult to achieve within existing department structures alone. To further investigate this, it would be particularly interesting to survey teaching faculty from across our university to evaluate the benefits they perceive from cross-departmental mentorship for teaching and identify gaps that remain, building on the findings of similar surveys (Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, 2016; Harvard University Graduate School of Education, 2014; University of Toronto, 2014). We further expect faculty participation in activities focused on mentorship for teaching to also impact students indirectly through more engaged instructors and enhanced pedagogical innovations in the classroom. While some efforts to develop tools to describe and quantify features of effective mentor-mentee relationships have been undertaken (Berk et al., 2005), doing so is challenging. In addition, we note that the objectives of faculty mentorship for teaching are twofold: to support the professional development of faculty, with a focus on their roles as teachers, and also to enhance student learning experiences. The latter is best assessed by supporting faculty in developing an evidence-based approach to their teaching in order to assess the impact of new practices in their classrooms (Buskist & Groccia, 2011; Gurung & Schwartz, 2011).

Conclusion

Through our transformative participation within the 6-month faculty mentorship community of practice, each of us have come to value student and peer feedback to improve the quality of our course offerings, increased our reflection on our individual pedagogical techniques, and built our leadership capacities at our university across our various ranks and disciplines as faculty. That formalized faculty peer mentorship structures such as this are invaluable for faculty members' professional growth and leadership capacity is a growing area of research (e.g., Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, 2016; Simmonds & Dicks, 2018). In reflecting on our P2P CoP experiences, we are appreciative not only of its formalized structure that guided us and offered us weekly and monthly accountability amid our busy schedules but also of our incidental triad composition within the CoP. That the three of us merged from very different and quite disparate disciplines, across teaching and tenure streams and ranks, to successfully complete the program and develop professional relationships that have transcended it speaks volumes to the strengths of our diverse triad.

In addition to the P2P CoP's structured and facilitated workshops, the reciprocal rather than hierarchical nature of our mentorship triad was instrumental in facilitating an open dialogue on a range of our individual concerns and questions around course design, student queries, and pedagogical techniques. Moreover, a healthy distance from one another's programs and disciplinary norms (and even campuses) offered an invaluable sense of safety and support that facilitated a deep sense of trust. Throughout this article, these experiences have been leveraged in the form of CRA to detail the benefits of a semi-structured triadic mentor-mentee mentorship model on our pedagogical practices. While this article offers but a glimpse into the unique and transformative benefits of formalized triad mentorship models for faculty peer mentoring and professional development that are not merely formalized but institutionally supported, we hope that this is the beginning of a larger reflection and turn within the

literature to triadic mentorship structures as “platform[s] for transformative action” (Fook, 2015, p. 441) across institutions of higher education more broadly.

Biographies

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Nathalie Moon is Assistant Professor (Teaching Stream), Department of Statistical Sciences, University of Toronto (St. George campus). Dr. Moon teaches undergraduate statistics courses at all levels, with a particular focus on statistical computation and communicating statistical concepts to diverse audiences. She is actively engaged in fostering communities of learning for students within her department and is interested in exploring strategies for achieving this both online and in person.

Andrew Dicks is Professor (Teaching Stream), Department of Chemistry, University of Toronto (St. George campus). Dr. Dicks is currently the Associate Chair (Undergraduate) of Chemistry and has been teaching undergraduates at all academic levels since 2001. He is particularly involved in the teaching of green chemistry and sustainability concepts to his students and has an ongoing interest in improving the laboratory experience to make practical work more insightful and meaningful.

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