

### **Relmage and Project goals**

The Relmage PSU project was meant to be an “intentional effort to provide spaces to create transformational possibilities at a larger scale.” In service of this vision I proposed a [faculty mentoring program](#) that was implemented at Leodis V. McDaniel High School during Spring Term 2022. My goal was to pilot a faculty mentoring program that would:

- Provide PSU faculty with professional development in a “peer reviewed” environment
- Help PSU faculty connect to future students for familiarity
- Develop a reflection DEI module at completion (artifact for P&T/annual review portfolio)
- Pilot a process that would assist existing faculty in a transition to teach in high school if needed/wanted
- Benefit to students: “Community Consultant for Faculty Mentoring Program” as a line on their resume. Students have the opportunity to give feedback on the program structure and gain skills and recognition that add to their employability, both by giving feedback to the mentoring program AND from content knowledge in antiracist practices.

### **Key changes**

Initially the plan was meant to unfold over three terms with a planning phase in the fall, recruitment in the winter and implementation in the spring. Because the grant was awarded at the end of fall term, the implementation process was refined to accommodate the shortened timeline.

- Instead of gathering faculty input during fall term for the recruitment process, I used existing DEI questions that are part of our regular hiring process to include in my call for participants.
  - This change was mostly due to time constraints
- Instead of options for participating in Freshman Inquiry and Senior Inquiry the site for participation was limited to a single location at Leodis V. McDaniel High School.
  - This change was due to:
    - budget constraints as it became clear that I needed to provide a stipend to the high school teachers participating in the project as well.
    - Bandwidth issues and only one high school team expressed interest in providing a mentoring location.
- Modified reflection process
  - In the time allowed a full fledged module could not be completed, but faculty participated in a guided reflection process that they could incorporate in their P&T review materials

### **Location**

As a dual credit program, Senior Inquiry is uniquely situated to provide a space for working through struggles students face in transitioning from high school to college. While all Senior

Inquiry courses focus on the UNST goal of Diversity, Equity & Social Justice, the program at Leodis V. McDaniel has the overarching theme of Race & Social Justice. This concentration on transformational curriculum, combined with a diverse student population and the process of articulation between the institutions of K12 and higher education provided a unique space for piloting a faculty mentoring program that could focus on increasing equity and decreasing the harms of institutional racism.

### **Recruitment of PSU faculty**

In order to recruit faculty to participate in the mentoring project I sent out information about the proposal and an application form to faculty through various campus listservs. Two faculty applied for the project and both were selected. One of the faculty is non-tenure track faculty who teaches full-time in University Studies and the other faculty is an adjunct who teaches at both PCC and PSU and has taught in University Studies and in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences.

### **Implementation**

During Spring Term 2022 the two faculty participants engaged in a series of classroom visits to observe classroom practices implemented by the Senior Inquiry teaching team at Leodis V. McDaniel High School. After a few observation sessions, faculty also led a class discussion and contributed lesson plans for the Senior Inquiry students. At the end of the term, faculty reflected on their experience.

### **Goals achieved**

This project supported the goals of the ReImagine Project by creating a space for developing transformational practices on a small scale that can be expanded and adapted for broader impact. While the trajectory for the implementation of this project had to be adjusted and refined, all of the original goals were achieved in some fashion:

- *A “peer-reviewed” environment for faculty development:* PSU faculty had the opportunity to immediately put into practice what they learned during their classroom observation and get feedback from students.
- *PSU faculty connect to future students for familiarity:* PSU faculty gained familiarity with the needs of incoming students, although may not have made a particular connection that would translate to the main campus.
- *Develop a reflection DEI module at completion:* PSU faculty can add their participation in this process to their CV and they participated in a reflection process that related specifically to DEI and could be used in their P&T narrative.
- *Assist existing faculty in a transition to teach in high school if needed/wanted:* In their reflections PSU faculty stated that participating in the project helped them understand what was needed to be successful teaching in the high school context.
  - “I think that faculty should [participate in] several observations and meet with the SRINQ team before committing to teach SRINQ. Simply put there’s a lot of differences between the high school and college environment, and I think many

instructors can do quite well in a high school environment, but others might realize that this is not something that they would enjoy doing.” - PSU Instructor feedback

- *Benefit to students:* Students could certainly include their participation in this program as part of their resume, but if I were to do this again, I would have a more structured format for getting student feedback. Spring term is a difficult time to ask students to do more, as they are getting ready for graduation and they have a lot on their plate.

### **Utilization of funds**

Our budget was \$5K, initially conceived as a course release for faculty to engage in the Senior Inquiry classroom more fully. However, with the shortened timeline there was no time to implement a full course release, and the original plan did not include compensation for high school teachers, which would have undermined our equity goals. Instead of a full course release for one faculty member I provided a stipend (\$1000) for two PSU faculty in addition to a small stipend (\$500) for the three team members of the Senior Inquiry teaching team at Leodis V. McDaniel high school. The remaining funds in our initial grant went to OPE for the stipends. Because the compensation shifted, I also shifted the expectation for time in the classroom. These changes introduced more flexibility for the participating faculty and demanded less work from the high school team. The changes in budget allocation made the project more equitable overall, through decreased work, expanded compensation, and increased flexibility.

### **Findings**

As often happens in a pilot situation, I learned more than I imagined I would. Working through how to adjust the project on a different timeline created opportunities for additional insight. For example, when it came time to actually create the stipends, I was dismayed by my original oversight of not including the high school teaching team and I was grateful to be able to change that piece. This emphasized the importance of being willing to make adjustments to a plan when inequities present themselves midstream. Other takeaways are as follows:

- Collaborative teaching is more work, but often results in less compensation.
- Curricular approaches in K12 are fundamentally different from curricular approaches in higher education. This is signified by the following faculty reflection:
  - “The way some things are taught in college and what we are preparing students to be able to do in college are not the right things!”
- Creating opportunities for PSU faculty to have mentee experiences in Senior Inquiry and other inquiry based classrooms could help improve student experience overall, as demonstrated in this faculty reflection:
  - “I could see how team teaching creates greater opportunities for students to experience and relate to different ways of thinking/teaching, and greater opportunity to see themselves reflected in their teachers. They also witness the way power is shared among their teachers, and the teachers are learning from each other and navigating their differences and processes for working together in front of the students.”
- Being flexible in implementation allowed for increased equity and allowed more faculty to be engaged

- Even though I did not have the funds or time to do a full course release, by making adjustments I was able to provide the opportunity to two faculty instead of one.

### **Limitations & Future Opportunities**

There were some limitations in the development and implementation of this project and time was a major factor. Although the shortened timeline provided an opportunity to address equity issues and allowed an additional PSU faculty to be involved, there was a major issue with the timing from the classroom perspective. Spring term is not a good time to begin a collaboration between K12 and PSU faculty because there is so much focus on finishing. As one faculty member reflected, "It was very hard to step into a SRINQ near the end of the year when students are wrapping up and moving on. Starting this kind of collaboration earlier in the year would be great. I felt like I was imposing a bit, and that this became an "add-on" at a time when everyone was feeling pretty done for the year."

This past year I had the opportunity to act as lead faculty for the academic courses in our Summer Bridge Program. Having worked through this project once in a Senior Inquiry classroom makes me wonder if we might develop a faculty mentoring program during the summer bridge that could be more robust and sustainable. We have mentoring programs for students in many spaces throughout our campus, but even though we talk about mentoring of faculty, there is no formal campus wide structure that manifests this relationship for our faculty. When it comes to retention of diverse faculty, doesn't it make sense that a formal mentoring program would benefit them in the same way our student mentoring programs benefit our students from diverse backgrounds?