Pedagogy Resident at the Hamilton College Summer Program in Philosophy: APA Small Grant Report
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Overview

The Hamilton College Summer Program in Philosophy (HCSPiP) received an APA small grant of $5000 for the purposes of hiring a pedagogy resident for our 2023 program. We sent a call for applications and received eight proposals. We selected David Concepción (Ball State) to serve in the role and were delighted to be able to include his experience and expertise. We envisioned the pedagogy resident as someone who could help us to improve our instructional innovations and disseminate them more widely. While we did not accomplish all that we hoped this year, in line with the APA’s preference for seed funding, we learned a lot about how to improve our work and meet our goals more successfully in the future. Conversations around pedagogy were more prevalent during the program and participants benefitted from the additional metacognitive attention placed on teaching. So, we are deeply grateful to the APA for the grant, which allowed us to develop structures and expectations that will help us better to meet our goals.

The Program and the Challenge

The HCSPiP is designed as a laboratory for pedagogical innovation. We invite proposals from faculty from any institutions of higher learning, offering them the opportunity to experiment with innovative philosophy pedagogy for two-weeks. Three chosen instructors teach their creative courses with the aid of a teaching assistant (tutor) to twenty undergraduates, half from Hamilton and half from other institutions. Students receive no course credit, so those who end up attending are typically highly motivated to engage actively in the program. All participants receive stipends. The 2023 HCSPiP was the fourth iteration of the program (2018, 2019, and 2022). The HCSPiP program goals are tied to our primary source of funding, the Truax Fund for Philosophy at Hamilton College. Those goals are as follows:

- **Primary Goal: Pedagogical Innovation**
  - To encourage pedagogical innovation in undergraduate philosophy at Hamilton College
  - To support creative, student-centered, undergraduate philosophy instruction across the discipline
- **Secondary Goal: Student Enrichment**
  - To connect Hamilton philosophy students to the broader world of philosophy
  - To prepare Hamilton students better for graduate work
- **Tertiary Goal: Building Hamilton’s Philosophy Network**
  - To strengthen Hamilton’s academic reputation nationally, especially in philosophy
  - To facilitate networks of Hamilton philosophers, bringing together undergraduates and alumni

The first few years of the program were satisfyingly successful in running innovative courses that students, tutors, and instructors found edifying and enjoyable. Moreover, some instructors were able to
disseminate their pedagogical work beyond the HCSPiP. Nevertheless, we found that there were fewer conversations about pedagogy within the program than we had hoped and most of the creative work done in our classes was not being shared effectively beyond the HCSPiP. We had wanted to develop more of a culture of conversation around pedagogy outside of classes, especially among faculty, tutors, and program leadership.

We had also hoped that instructors would present and publish their work after the program more than they did. We had imagined that the HCSPiP would serve as a platform for experimenting with pedagogical innovation before publishing it in much the way that conference presentations serve as a platform for experimenting with a philosophy essay before publishing it. But while a few of the instructors in the past did share some of their work, the culture of publication in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) in philosophy is nascent, the platforms are not well known, and the rewards for taking on the hard work of publishing in pedagogy may appear limited, especially to philosophers who do not count SoTL among their areas of specialization.

In developing the program, it was the hope of the program founder and the sponsoring department that the program director could foster more pedagogical conversation. But the director’s time and energy is needed for organization and leadership, leaving little time for attending to classroom pedagogy and helping to facilitate the dissemination of our work. It became clear that the program could benefit from the involvement of someone who could focus on enriching the experiences of our instructors and tutors during the program and help them to think about how best to share their work afterwards.

**Plans for the Pedagogy Resident**

In our proposal to the APA, we identified three project goals.

1. The Pedagogy Resident will disseminate the summer’s HCSPiP’s innovative pedagogical findings to the profession through post-program publications or conference presentations.
2. The Pedagogy Resident will improve the value of that summer’s HCSPiP experience for instructors helping them to reflect on their pedagogical experiments and ongoing experiences in the classroom. The Resident will organize a series of formal and informal discussions about pedagogy, both before and throughout the program.
3. The Pedagogy Resident will provide support to graduate student tutors, who are typically relatively inexperienced as teachers. The Resident will provide space to reflect and discuss their thoughts on pedagogy, both by themselves and in conversation with their cooperating faculty.

To achieve those goals, we imagined informal discussions among instructors and the pedagogy resident before the program that would continue on campus and afterwards. The pedagogy resident would sit in on classes and provide feedback and helpful suggestions, inviting tutors into those conversations as well. Since philosophy instructors, even ones with innovative ideas about classroom pedagogy, are typically not well versed in SoTL beyond philosophy, we hoped that the pedagogy resident would help connect our classes to the pedagogy literature in higher education and beyond, bringing other voices into dialogue with the HCSPiP instructors and tutors and providing an on-ramp into scholarly work on teaching philosophy.

We also imagined that the pedagogy resident could organize a pedagogy workshop during the program to provide a more structured mechanism for reflection on pedagogy. Since participants are typically interested in the program because of its emphasis on innovative teaching, we believed that there would be room for discussions of topics of interest in philosophy teaching that are ancillary to the core goals of the instructors in
their courses. We saw an opportunity for folks who are interested in philosophy teaching to have more time together to share ideas and interests.

Finally, we hoped that the pedagogy resident would help the HCSPiP broaden its reach by facilitating the dissemination of the work of the instructors at the program. The resident could help them to publish or present their insights elsewhere, e.g., by running a Teaching Hub session at the APA or organizing their own pedagogy conference.

Whatever we imagined in the abstract, our goal was for the pedagogy resident to find what is most valuable to the participants in the program and to tailor their programming accordingly. We formed our hopes through our experience with the three previous iterations of the program. Still, each instructor and each class is different, by design, and we wanted to leave the specific responsibilities of the pedagogy resident open enough to match the needs and interests of the incoming faculty and tutors. We trust the people that we bring to the program and we were looking to add value to their experience by having someone whose job it is to provide support, encouragement, and their own professional insight to the courses on offer.

At the same time as we developed the application for this APA grant for a pedagogy resident, we sought and received support from the American Association of Philosophy Teachers (AAPT) Grants for Innovations in Teaching to include an inclusivity consultant in the 2023 HCSPiP. We imagined that the inclusivity consultant would work remotely, in advance of the program, to help instructors to consider questions of classroom and syllabus diversity, while the pedagogy resident would join the program in person and focus their work on the day-to-day concerns of teaching and the long-term goals of reflection and dissemination.

Activity and Outcomes

With the pedagogy resident on campus, and working hard, we learned a lot about how to augment our program in order to meet our intertwined goals for improved pedagogy and inclusivity. The three courses we chose this past year were:

- Language, Games and Logic, taught by Prof. James Garrison (Baldwin Wallace University)
- The Value of Beauty, taught by Prof. Alexandra Grundler (Hayes) (Auburn University)
- The State of Nature (Ultimate Survival Mode) taught by Prof. Rebeccah Leiby (University of Baltimore)

While these experiments were not entirely successful in the ways that we imagined, we met our goals for the pedagogy resident and for the classes. The difficulties we faced were somewhat structural and somewhat anomalous. We are grateful for the opportunity to include a pedagogy resident and improve our attention to the pedagogical aspects of the program.

In a bit more detail, starting with the first goal, in our post-program, anonymous assessment survey (completed by all three tutors and two of three instructors), none of the instructors reported coming into the program expecting to publish their work, but one left with intentions to publish. It is difficult to prescribe outcomes for improved dissemination of the work of the instructors since that will depend on instructor interest. The pedagogy resident, Dave, worked actively to help all participants to engage more actively with SoTL in philosophy and beyond, including framing his engaging conference presentation around those topics. Dave is also considering submitting a session proposal for AAPT 2024 highlighting the pedagogies of the participants. Certainly, seeds were planted. Whether they bear fruit only time will tell.

1 See Appendix for charts.
Similarly, whether conversations facilitated by the pedagogy resident improves the work of instructors and tutors during the program (goals two and three) depends on both their interest in improvement and whether they have time to implement suggestions. Dave attended nearly all classes, observed carefully, and had frequent conversations with the instructors and the tutors (at meals, after class, and in semi-formal setting when they weren’t teaching), far more than the director had been able to have in previous years. Those conversations were informed by Dave’s unparalleled expertise in philosophy. He had discussions with faculty that ranged from very concrete (e.g., give a non-inclusive language acknowledgement regarding Hobbes, be more explicit about the session learning objectives (Wittgenstein), and offer more variety and more targeted student collaboration activities (Beauty)) to more searching (e.g., what is the role of a teacher in this setting?). The faculty appeared to Dave to welcome the ideas and made many small changes. They reported learning a lot, both informally and in the survey.

To make those lessons more effective for the program and to give instructors enough time to process the observations, it is important to start those conversations before the program. We had been wary of asking too much from people before the program started. We noticed that, independently, the inclusivity consultant was having difficulty scheduling meetings before the program. We learned how important it is to start early and to frame the work of the pedagogy resident as supportive of instructors, rather than surveilling.

Instructors and tutors reported feeling generally edified by, and pleased with, their interactions with the pedagogy resident. In our assessment survey, we asked instructors whether working with Dave helped improve their teaching, either at the HCSPIP or at your home institution; both instructor respondents replied yes. One instructor explained, “I think it’s helpful to reflect about reasons for the choices we’re making, and to get ideas of activities that align with those choices.”

We asked tutors, “Do you believe that working with Dave helped you to improve your teaching or your thoughts about pedagogy?” One tutor respondent was generally happy with their interactions though expressing a desire for more concrete direction, and the others were uniformly pleased.

Yes. However, as a young professional, sometimes I just want a clear answer to a question. On occasion, I would ask Dave for resources and he would return my questions with questions. While I’m game for thinking about pedagogy in a philosophical mode, I also just want to know what else is out there to explore on my own time. That is to say, it would have been nice if he forwarded me some resources on pedagogy instead of telling me to think critically about my own pedagogy (I haven’t really developed a pedagogical style yet so the circuitous questioning felt a little frustrating as a response to my generally simple minded questions).

I found the conversations that we were having to be practical, relevant, and related to the actual challenges I face as a teacher, which is, unfortunately, so often not the case in my experience of pedagogy conversations in the past.

Dave provides valuable and insightful response to my questions. I have learned to organize classroom activities more effectively and encourage students to participate.

Finally, the ultimate arbiters of all of our pedagogical work are, of course, our students. As you can see in the Appendix, the students were pleased with their experiences at the HCSPIP, with 89% agreeing or strongly agreeing (58% strongly) that the classes showed them new ways to learn, with the same the same 89% having satisfying or very satisfying (68% very satisfying) experiences.
Budget and APA Funding

The APA grant money was fully spent on the stipend for the pedagogy resident, to ensure equity with other stipends offered.

We are generous with stipends for all participants in order to meet our goals of creating an inclusively diverse population. In the four years of the program, among eighty-two student participants, forty-three (52%) have been non-male and at least thirty-eight (46%) have been non-white. At least twelve of the forty participants over the past two years have identified as queer (in an open-ended question about diversity) and five participants among the twenty this year identified as first generation.

Prior to 2023, the HCSPiP had been fully supported by Truax Fund for Philosophy at Hamilton College. Our interest in applying to the APA small grant program to invite a pedagogy resident to the program was to evaluate whether to seek an increase in our budget from the Truax Fund. The same held for the inclusivity consultant and the AAPT grant.

Plans for the Future

The 2023 HCSPiP was augmented by both the APA grant-funded pedagogy resident and the AAPT grant-funded inclusivity consultant. We did not expect that these roles would conflict. We planned for the inclusivity consultant to work with us in advance of the program and the pedagogy resident to be present during the program and support dissemination of our innovations afterwards. Now, we have to reflect on whether to include these positions in a budget for the future. This is not an easy question.

Despite some success in our outcomes, these two grant-funded positions did not work, or work together, quite as we expected. We learned that it is important to begin the work of a pedagogy resident earlier than we did, so that they can establish good rapport with instructors and tutors before the start of the program. More formal meetings with the pedagogy resident would be useful, in part allowing everyone to understand the instructors’ personal goals for their work in the program and in part allowing us to communicate more clearly our expectation that the pedagogy resident’s role is primarily to support those goals. It is especially important that instructors understand that the role of the pedagogy resident is not to surveille and assess their work, but to support and nurture the instructors’ goals. Better defined goals for the HCSPiP and clearer expectations would have been useful. Moreover, we realized from our work with the inclusivity consultant that it is important that that person be on campus during the program. Combining the two roles could improve outcomes in a variety of ways.

It is clear that the director, as interested or well-versed in pedagogy as they may be, does not have time to do the work that a pedagogy resident does during the program. The pedagogy resident can focus exclusively on the teaching, attend as many classes as they want, and take time to converse with tutors and instructors during the program regularly. Writing as the founding director, it was a true joy to see how Dave was able to find the space really to focus on the pedagogy; that’s the job that I want, but I’m too busy running the program. The HCSPiP program committee is going to have to grapple with finding room in our budget to do the kinds of things that the pedagogy resident is able to do.
Summary

We are deeply grateful to the APA for the grant that allowed us to hire the pedagogy resident for our 2023 program. We successfully created space for more conversations about pedagogy during the program this year than in previous years. We also learned a lot about our own interests in having a pedagogy resident affiliated with the program and how to achieve our goals more effectively in the future.
Appendix: Survey Results

Instructor Responses

Before coming to the HCSPiP, did you intend to seek publication or other dissemination of the work you planned to do here?
2 responses

![Pie chart](image)

Do you now intend to seek publication or other dissemination of the work you did at the HCSPiP?
2 responses

![Pie chart](image)

Did working with Dave help you to improve your teaching, either at the HCSPiP or at your home institution?
2 responses

![Pie chart](image)
Tutor Responses

Do you believe that working with Dave helped you to improve your teaching or your thoughts about pedagogy?

3 responses

- Yes: 66.7%
- No: 33.3%
- Generally speaking, I'd say yes. However, as a young professional, sometimes I just want a clear answer to a question. On occasion, I would ask Dave for resources and he would return my questions with questions. While I'm game for thinking about pedagogy in a philosophical mode, I also just want to know what else is out there to explore...

I benefited pedagogically from participation in the HCSPiP.

3 responses

- 0 (0%)
- 0 (0%)
- 1 (33.3%)
- 0 (0%)
- 2 (66.7%)
The classes in the HCSPiP showed me new ways to learn.

19 responses

Overall, how would you rate your experience in the HCSPiP?

19 responses

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2 For new ways to learn: 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree. For rate your experience, 1 = Very Dissatisfied and 5 = Very Satisfied.