

STUDENT CONSULTANTS TO 360° COURSE CLUSTERS

TLI student consultants are available to work with faculty members during the planning, teaching, and/or assessment phases of 360s. Faculty can request one student consultant for the entire constellation of three courses, or each individual faculty member can request his or her own consultant, who will work in collaboration with the others. Student consultants are paid by the hour for their work and supported in weekly meetings with the Coordinator of the TLI and other student consultants. Faculty who have taken up this opportunity say the following:

“Working with the student consultant has helped to generate/ deepen conversation among the faculty members of the 360 about our teaching. It's wonderful to have an opportunity to share this immersive experience with someone so thoughtful and insightful, someone who's both in it and not fully in it.”

“Having someone from the outside, who is a student, will save you a tremendous amount of time. This is someone who can spot problems long before the individual teachers will...and who can offer solutions. The complexity of the 360, and the tremendous amount of work it demands, means that having this kind of an early heads up and someone else helping with problems of various sorts is a real benefit.”

“I think that having a TLI consultant for the 360s should almost be a requirement. Inasmuch as the whole structure is about coordinating between courses/faculty with disparate disciplines, having someone who can, from the student perspective, point to how, where, why, such conjunctions might occur is absolutely invaluable.”

Thus far nine student consultants have worked with a total of 20 faculty members in eight different 360s. Areas of focus have included:

- Conceptualizing a 360 that is exciting to both faculty members and students
- Designing assignments and assessments that help students make connections across the various courses included in the 360
- Creating a sense of community and complementary learning environments across the courses while teaching the 360
- Ensuring that the trips or other out-of-class experiences are well integrated
- Assessing what is working well and what needs adjusting as the 360 unfolds

Below are specific explanations of these partnerships and faculty feedback on each.

PLANNING 360S

A student consultant can meet with your 360 group to think through the goals, organization, and components of your 360. S/he can bring a student perspective to the preparation phase, providing input and insight into how students might experience what you are imagining and offering suggestions for how to make the 360 as engaging as possible for students.

“Our student consultant has been invaluable to us as a student voice in planning. At every meeting we say, “What do you think, from a student's point of view....?” Her answers have helped us with everything from logistical details (like where to advertise, and when to offer, the courses), to thinking with us about both the philosophy we are enacting and the language we are using to represent it.”

“Our student consultant has offered us a fresh perspective on a great range of questions and issues, often substantive ones. For example, after listening to the professors talk back and forth about ways that our courses might overlap and also be distinct, our SC offered valuable insight into how we might reposition each course in order to generate a more productive tension between them. Also, our SC has offered helpful insights on the praxis dimension of the course, from logistical points such as how much is too much to ask of students in terms of scheduling times outside the course to more substantive points such as ways to think about framing the praxis aspect for students coming from various kinds of experiences.”

“Since by definition 360s take students and faculty beyond the familiar, the observer/listening role of the SC can be even more valuable going forward; flagging, for example, students anxieties/confusions that might not come up face-to-face with faculty.”

TEACHING 360S

A student consultant can meet with you while you are teaching your 360 to help you assess how the individual courses and the 360 as a whole are unfolding. S/he can do any of the following: observe your class sessions and offer feedback; meet with you regularly as you discuss the 360; gather feedback from students to share with you; and help you analyze and adjust assignments and assessments as needed.

“Our student consultant has really been the glue that has held the three courses together. While we have attended each other’s classes, she has done so in a way that has really provided continuity between the courses. In addition, she has been able to access the mood of the students with regard to individual courses and to the ways in which they do or don’t work together. I can honestly say that to extent that our 360 is successful, she will have been absolutely key in making it happen. I can’t imagine having done this without her and I think that what she brought to the table would be essential to any 360.”

“The three of us teaching in the 360 meet once a week for lunch to touch base, compare notes, plan future convergences, etc.; and [our student consultant] is always part of that meeting (“the gang of four”). I would strongly encourage those doing 360s to do as we have done, i.e., meet weekly for lunch and include the student consultant.”

“The student consultant is useful in simply giving the temperature of the course as it goes own, making suggestions about how the class is run, its structure, assignments, etc. I have really appreciated her feedback and have learned much from her. In some cases, I haven’t entirely agreed with what she has said, but it has been incredibly useful to have a student who is at the same time a peer. I am extremely grateful to her for everything she has brought and I think my classroom approach has benefited greatly.”

ASSESSING 360S

A student consultant can conduct interim and final assessments of the 360. S/he can meet with you to refine the basic set of questions other participants have used (listed below), revised as appropriate for your particular 360s. Then, s/he can gather written feedback and facilitate a conversation among students in the 360, organize all the feedback for you, and share it with you.

“My student consultant has attended some 360 sessions and field trips and has spoken individually and in small groups with all or most of our students about their experiences in the 360. She has shared what she’s learned with me both in writing and orally, and she also helped to facilitate a feedback session with the faculty and some of the students in the 360. She took notes on this session and sent these out to the entire 360. Also, she has used her experience as SC of this 360 and as student in the other 360 this semester to reflect on some of the challenges and also the opportunities and successes of 360s. All of this has been extremely helpful to our experiences in a program that we are just learning even as we are teaching in it.”

“[Our student consultant] performed a tremendously important service by gathering feedback on student perceptions of the integration of the courses quite early on and, therefore, early enough for us to do some things to improve that integration.”

“[The student consultant’s] discussions with us prior to the assessment she carried out were helpful in clarifying the main goals and priorities we emphasized...[and]...the assessment [she] carried out was very valuable to us. Using both open-ended and more structured assessment procedures she gave voice to the students’ experience during the 360.”

Written Feedback

1. Did the 360 experience feel different from other college courses? If so, what were the differences, and were they valued?
2. Do you feel that helpful connections were made between all three courses?
3. Which connections (between the three courses) were most challenging to make? Which were easier to make?
4. How did the professors assist you in making these connections? What did you do to make these connections on your own?
5. What new skills have you developed over the semester? In what ways did the 360 classes help develop these skills?
6. Were the outside discussion and bonding spaces created outside of class useful for you? Why or why not?
7. How well were the trips and outside mindfulness opportunities integrated into the course? To what extent did these trips complement your learning?
8. What can be done in the future to improve/ enrich the experience of 360 students on these trips?
9. Please use this space to provide additional comments regarding your experience in the 360.

Discussion Questions

1. If you could do it all over again, would you participate in this 360? Why/ Why not?
2. What worked well for you about the 360 (as a whole, not as individual classes)?
3. What did not work well for you about the structure and execution of the 360?
4. Did you engage in questions that were important/ meaningful to you in this 360?
5. What are your biggest takeaways from this 360?
6. What would you change about the 360?
7. What recommendations would you have for the 360 steering committees and future professors teaching classes as a part of a 360?
8. What pearls of wisdom would you give to other student’s taking/ considering the 360 next semester?

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Contact Alison Cook-Sather (acooksat@brynmawr.edu) if you would like a student consultant to work with you in one or more of these ways.