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Structures and Considerations for SoTL Educational Development

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Chapter 3

Structures and Considerations for SoTL Educational Development

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ABSTRACT

Colleges and universities around the world share a broad focus on education. However, unique characteristics and priorities across institutions may lead to vastly different educational development opportunities for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and levels of impact for the SoTL efforts (e.g., micro, meso, macro, mega). This chapter is organized in two distinct parts. Part 1 examines five different structures typical for SoTL educational development with a focus on their organizational structure within the institution and the SoTL expertise of individuals who that lead these efforts. Strengths and limitations of each structure are presented. Part 2 provides a discussion of critical considerations that impact all SoTL educational development efforts regardless of the type of structure that exists within an institution.

INTRODUCTION

Educational development—and educational developers—can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and are impacted by numerous variables. Considered leaders in understanding teaching and learning in higher education, most educational developers work interactively with individual course instructors, academic departments, and other institutional groups or units to facilitate the use and understanding of effective pedagogical approaches. To accomplish this, educational developers represent a wide range of topic area specialties (i.e., online learning, culturally responsive teaching and learning, instructional design, embedded assessment) within the areas of teaching and learning. Increasingly across institu-

tions, some specialize in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), developing programs to support research on teaching and learning. This chapter presents possible organizational structures for SoTL-focused educational development, along with important considerations for stakeholder groups with an interest in SoTL.

Unique characteristics and priorities across colleges and universities around the globe may lead to vastly different ways of doing the business of educational development. Many institutions have established structures for educational development that involve teaching and learning centers (TLCs) where students, staff, and faculty might learn about a variety of teaching and/or learning topics. Other institutions have smaller units or single individuals tasked with providing educational development to those interested in such opportunities. Lee (2010, p. 23) proposed a list of five basic organizational structures for educational development in higher education:

1. Centralized TLCs
2. An individual faculty member-leader, with or without a physical center
3. A committee that supports faculty development
4. A clearinghouse for programs and offerings
5. Structures that encompass more than one institution (system-wide offices)

Across each of these organizational structures, similar work occurs. Educational developers design and/or engage in workshops, consultations, classroom observations, orientations, grants/funding, faculty fellows, teaching circles, learning communities, research centered on teaching and learning, and external projects or collaborations. It should be noted, however, that the breadth and depth of programming these structures may offer to stakeholders varies depending on several factors: the institution type (e.g., comprehensive, research, liberal arts), the mission of the institution, resources allocated to the educational development unit (e.g., personnel, financial, space), and the interests and experiences of those affiliated with each structure (Lee, 2010).

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as Part of Educational Development

SoTL both provides a foundation for many other education development efforts and receives inspiration from those other efforts. However, SoTL educational developers do not simply engage in SoTL research or serve as research mentors for others who engage in SoTL research. Specifically, Simmons and Taylor (2019) identify the primary work of SoTL educational developers as consisting of efforts to increase stakeholder interest in four distinct areas of focus: engagement, connection building, collaboration, and advocacy. Therefore, a SoTL educational developer might build capacity for SoTL through making connections with other institutional stakeholders to support SoTL work, providing resources for individuals/groups engaged in SoTL (e.g., consultations, trainings, support for travel/presentations/publication), developing small and large scale communities of stakeholders to support engagement in SoTL, and building a culture for SoTL across their institution. Cruz, Cunningham, Smentkowski, and Steiner (2019) developed a scaffold to extend the conventional work of SoTL educational developers to include mentorship in a developmental manner, arguing that in addition to the traditional roles of SoTL educational developers, it is incumbent upon individuals in such roles to provide scaffolded support to those engaged in SoTL, both novice and more veteran. Thus, the role of the SoTL educational developer encompasses a wide array of duties, and educational developers specializing in SoTL work with myriad

Table 1. Levels of impact, contexts, and routine activities of SoTL educational developers

Level of SoTL Impact	Context of SoTL Work	Routine Activities of SoTL Educational Developers
Micro	Individual or single course (potentially with multiple instructors)	• Assist in searching for sources of evidence to support specific pedagogical approaches. • Consult with faculty to develop and implement a research project to study teaching and/or learning in a particular context. • Assist in the ethics review process.
Meso	Academic department or program	• Provide resources and support to aid in curriculum development or redesign. • Support SoTL work at the program level or across sequential courses. • Integrate SoTL into departmental culture as a meaningful formative assessment. • Promote the value of SoTL as a meritorious form of scholarship, similar to disciplinary research.
Macro	Institution	• Provide workshops and resources available to stakeholders across the institution. • Encourage faculty/staff to include and engage students as partners in SoTL work. • Explain SoTL's potential applications for program review, accreditation, and institutional assessment efforts. • Advocate for SoTL as a meritorious form of scholarship in the processes of promotion and tenure. • Create venues for recognition of SoTL research at the institutional level (research presentations, awards, other highlights).
Mega	Beyond the single institution	• Volunteer for roles in SoTL professional societies and organizations. • Collaborate with other educational developers to develop programming and other resources. • Aid in the establishment of multi-institutional SoTL projects and initiatives.

stakeholders to mentor, engage in, and advocate for SoTL. As with the other areas of educational development, how SoTL is situated and supported within an institution will directly impact the breadth and depth of the SoTL educational development effort.

A variety of scholars have discussed the "4M" framework for conceptualizing the impact of SoTL work across different contexts: micro (individual/classroom), meso (department/ program), macro (institutional), and mega (beyond a single institution) (Poole & Simmons, 2013; Simmons, 2016). Primarily, these levels of impact have been applied to the research of SoTL scholars themselves, rather than to broader array of efforts in which SoTL educational developers routinely engage (Simmons & Taylor, 2019). That said, the 4M model is a framework that can easily describe the multitude of ways in which a SoTL educational developer might impact various contexts. Table 1 provides several examples of the potential impact of SoTL educational development.

Recognizing the potential impact of SoTL educational developers, it is important to understand the various structures wherein SoTL educational development might occur. The following section of this chapter will examine five different structures typical for SoTL educational development, with a focus on the individuals and campus units that might lead these efforts. Subsequently, a discussion related to critical factors that impact all SoTL educational development structures will be undertaken to identify uniform considerations for all SoTL educational development.

Figure 1. Structures for SoTL educational development
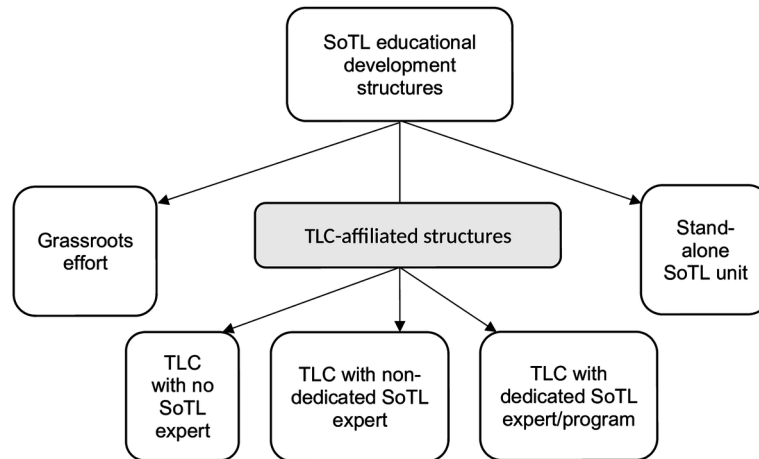
POTENTIAL STRUCTURES FOR SoTL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At the core of the broad range of activities given for SoTL educational developers in Table 1 is a focus on research on teaching and learning; however, as mentioned previously, the size and impact of SoTL educational development at any institution is tied directly to its priorities, values, and needs. Institutions that value teaching and learning scholarship tend to allocate more resources to SoTL educational development efforts than those that either place less importance on such endeavors or that have not yet explicitly established an institutional priority for such work. To that end, some institutions offer a robust SoTL educational development presence, while others have none or are in the process of developing such units/efforts.

Across institutions engaged in SoTL educational development, there are a collection of specific structures that characterize the ways in which this work is being done, each of which has the potential to impact SoTL across a variety of stakeholders and levels (micro, meso, macro, mega). These are organized differently within each institution and may exist within or outside of a TLC. Figure 1 presents five structures that describe the bulk of SoTL educational development routinely observed in higher education. Two exist separately from a TLC: Grassroots efforts and stand-alone SoTL units. The remaining three, TLC with no SoTL expert, TLC with non-dedicated SoTL expert, and TLC with dedicated SoTL expert/program, are collaborations with campus TLCs, which for the purposes of this work, we define as having at least one full-time staff member tasked with educational development responsibilities.

Below we describe how an institution might structure or grow each of these types of SoTL educational development unit, from the most informal (grassroots effort) to the most formal (stand-alone SoTL unit). Descriptions for each structure explain its organization, necessary personnel, and processes inherent to that structure. Note that when the term "SoTL expert" is used, it refers to someone who, in addition to possessing knowledge of evidence-based pedagogies, also has a broad understanding of different research designs, methods, data sources, and analysis schemes.

Grassroots Effort not Tied to Institutional Structure

Most typically seen at institutions with an emerging interest in SoTL, this educational development structure might be best characterized as a grassroots effort, with faculty and/or staff seeking like-minded stakeholders to identify resources for learning about and supporting SoTL within that institution's context. Typically, these individuals are not trained as educational developers, but rather, have a deep interest in learning more about evidence-based teaching and learning that guides their efforts. They might have been inspired by SoTL research they saw presented at a conference or by efforts they've heard about from colleagues at other institutions. Although a unit or center related to teaching and learning or faculty-development might exist at their institution, its mission would not provide any clear connection to SoTL efforts. For instance, a teaching and learning resource center might exist on a campus with a relatively narrow mission to support those using online course management systems or diversity and inclusive-instruction.

In the absence of an institutional structure, individuals or groups of SoTL-interested stakeholders take the lead to form informal Communities of Practice to provide support and peer mentorship for applying SoTL or to develop individual or collaborative SoTL projects. These types of efforts operate predominantly at the micro level of impact. However, it might also reach into the mega level as well, as it is common for faculty/staff engaged in grassroots SoTL efforts to seek support from two groups of individuals external to their institution: 1) broad-based educational developers with expertise in supporting teaching and learning, or 2) SoTL experts identified through professional societies, conferences, or social media who provide mentorship to sustain and extend the SoTL work being initiated on campus. Those leading the grassroots efforts might also engage in SoTL professional development opportunities at nearby institutions or online.

Strengths and Limitations of This Type of Structure

The hallmark strength of this type of SoTL educational development structure lies in its genesis: stakeholder excitement and engagement in research on teaching and learning. Grassroots efforts can be very successful in initiating institutional innovations, with faculty, staff, and/or students adopting the role of change agent, demonstrating "passion and on-the-ground substantive knowledge to move SoTL forward" (Ginsberg & Bernstein, 2011, p. 4). Leaders in this type of SoTL educational development structure become mentors to other faculty, staff, and students, in turn growing the SoTL culture within an institution. Over time, those engaged in this work gradually build the capacity for SoTL to become more visible on their campuses, leading to a variety of potentially positive outcomes: use of evidence-based pedagogies to support student learning, increased administrative support for SoTL, expanded faculty/staff/student engagement in SoTL, potential partnerships with institutional partners to seek sources of support for SoTL work, or even the establishment of a more formal institutional SoTL support structure.

The fact that this structure for SoTL educational development is a grassroots movement and not driven by administrative initiative may be its biggest challenge. Loose structures such as these generally offer limited programming and reach due to a lack of personnel and/or financial resources. However, they can increase offerings and impact by seeking out sources of support for their efforts, perhaps by aligning with other campus partners or initiatives to encourage stakeholder buy-in, completion of SoTL projects, and the attainment of additional resources to support future SoTL initiatives. Unfortunately, the long-term sustainability of this type of SoTL educational development structure is questionable, as the stakeholder

leaders of such groups generally engage in these efforts on top of their regular work duties and without tangible support from the institution.

Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) Structures

This type of educational development structure places all programming within one broad campus unit with oversight for multiple aspects of educational development for that institution (e.g., educational technology, instructional design, embedded assessment). Typically led by a director or coordinator with expertise in pedagogy as well as adult education/professional development, TLCs may employ additional personnel for program planning and instructional technology development/maintenance, though the number and types of employees varies widely based on institutional context and priorities. While not all TLCs provide educational development opportunities focused on SoTL, many do, and this can be viewed as a strength for SoTL across an institution in a variety of ways. We identify three subtypes of this structure with respect to how SoTL educational development is housed within the existing TLC: no SoTL expert, non-dedicated SoTL expert, and dedicated SoTL expert/program.

Regardless of subtype, the biggest benefit to SoTL educational development structures housed within a TLC is their affiliation with a formally recognized and institutionally-supported entity. The importance of partnership with a TLC is directly tied to the availability of resources that promote SoTL across an institution. In some cases, TLCs offering SoTL educational development have resources to provide grants or small stipends to faculty, staff, or students engaged in SoTL work. In terms of visibility, an established campus unit such as a TLC generally has ways to communicate with faculty, staff, and students across the institution to bring awareness of SoTL opportunities and appeal to a wide variety of individuals who might be interested in SoTL educational development. Finally, as TLC staff have interactions with administration, program directors, and leaders of other campus units, discussions about the value of SoTL work can be integrated more easily into important conversations about teaching, learning, and research, with the potential to positively impact perceptions of faculty productivity and student engagement in SoTL research. Thus, TLC-based SoTL educational development is able to operate at the micro, meso, and macro levels, and depending upon the SoTL effort leader's initiative, can also operate at the mega level. However, the availability of these potential benefits of being housed within a TLC and the direct support for SoTL researchers (e.g., mentoring with research design and ethics review) will vary based on the subtype of structure, as described below.

TLC Without a SoTL Expert

With this institutional structure, SoTL educational development is housed within a TLC, but lacks coordination by a SoTL expert. Rather, educational developers with expertise in other aspects of teaching and learning provide general support for SoTL to interested stakeholders. Institutions with these SoTL educational development structures indicate some value for SoTL and find it important to share with their campus stakeholders; however, allocating resources to employ a SoTL expert is not possible due to TLC or institutional priorities, lack of financial resources to hire a specialized educational developer, or an inability to secure an individual to fill that role on a given campus.

In the absence of a SoTL expert within the TLC, educational development efforts centered on SoTL typically focus on facilitating efforts to find and locate resources that support SoTL-involved stakeholders, rather than directly guiding and mentoring SoTL research. This general approach for support is largely

due to the fact that, while non-SoTL-expert educational developers demonstrate a broad understanding of evidence-based teaching and learning and use SoTL to inform their work with faculty and staff engaged in course design and implementation, they often have not personally engaged in an active SoTL research agenda nor do they have foundational expertise in research methodology and data analysis. Thus, their efforts might be limited to providing introductory workshops about SoTL, sponsoring of teaching/learning communities for SoTL scholars, and providing assistance in establishing connections to other campus units that might support the work of SoTL scholars (e.g., research units, ethics review, libraries, student groups, and administration).

It is not uncommon for external SoTL experts to help provide or design SoTL programming in this subtype of TLC-housed SoTL educational development. External experts can extend the general SoTL support that non-expert educational developers provide, especially with respect to the more direct research design and analysis. However, their ability to help with ethics review is limited, as ethics review processes are typically idiosyncratic to individual institutions. External SoTL experts can also assist with ideas for sharing SoTL and engaging in SoTL advocacy to further support SoTL-involved campus stakeholders that might be less intuitive to non-SoTL educational developers.

Strengths and Limitations of this Type of Structure

The primary strength of this subtype of TLC-housed SoTL educational development is that SoTL is a recognized effort within an institutionally supported structure, which indicates that the TLC (and perhaps the institution at large) recognizes the merits of encouraging faculty, staff, and students to be active researchers in teaching and learning. While the programming might be limited to more general aspects of support, even that can be enough to facilitate interest and initial efforts in SoTL. Further, the center likely has broader formal reach and communication channels than grassroots efforts structures are able to access. Finally, SoTL researchers may also have access to funding from a TLC's budget to conduct and present SoTL research or to partner with external SoTL experts to design and promote more advanced programming in SoTL.

The fundamental weakness of this model is that when SoTL educational development is implemented by an individual without expertise this type of scholarship, there is the potential for programming and/or mentoring to lack the complexity needed to adequately support those engaged in learning about or conducting SoTL. Added to that, an institution's non-expert SoTL educational developers will have competing professional responsibilities within a TLC separate from SoTL, which may limit the reach and impact of SoTL programming offered. These weakness can be partially alleviated with the help of external SoTL experts; however, such individuals are situated outside of the institutional context and may not be readily accessible when needed. Additionally, external SoTL experts may not be attuned to aspects of institutional culture (e.g., perceptions of SoTL, institutional mission/strategic objectives) that might impact the SoTL work done on a specific campus.

TLC with a Non-dedicated SoTL Expert

It is not uncommon for TLCs to have at least one educational developer with expertise in SoTL as well as in other areas of teaching/learning pedagogy. As these individuals serve a variety of programming needs within a TLC, they are not able to serve solely in the role of SoTL educational developer. However, in addition to the general SoTL support that could be provided by the non-SoTL expert, these individuals

can also provide more direct mentoring in research development and analysis of data. Because of their expertise with SoTL, they are also better equipped to advocate for SoTL within the broader institutional context.

Strengths and Limitations of this Type of Structure

Having the knowledge and skills of an "in house" SoTL expert is a tremendous strength of this educational development structure, as faculty, staff, and students seeking support for any aspect of SoTL have access to an individual capable of providing such services within their own institution. As SoTL experts possess a broad understanding of different research designs, methods, data sources, analysis schemes, and ways to share scholarly work that a non-expert might lack, SoTL stakeholders with access to an expert in SoTL educational development have an advantage in understanding SoTL and developing high quality scholarship focused on issues germane to teaching and learning. Additionally, a SoTL expert understands needs for advocacy for SoTL work that non-experts might lack. For these reasons, a SoTL expert within a TLC can be an active voice to support the value of the SoTL work being conducted on a campus.

The main limitation of a SoTL educational development structure with a non-dedicated SoTL expert is that programming and support for SoTL stakeholders might be constrained by competing responsibilities. The role of an educational developer is complex and time consuming, with each responsibility requiring non-trivial amounts of time and focus to detail. SoTL experts with other duties have to juggle tasks and projects, which might limit the scope of support they can provide for SoTL-related work. For this reason, campuses with greater demand for SoTL support might struggle with the limitations inherent to this structure.

TLC with a Dedicated SoTL Expert/Program

In this structure, a dedicated SoTL expert housed within the TLC is available to work with individuals interested in engaging in SoTL as well as to coordinate all aspects of SoTL programming and advocacy. SoTL-focused support and programming are clearly apparent in the center offerings and part of the center's strategic planning. Two variations of this subtype exist: 1) the SoTL expert may lead all these efforts as part of their named position, with programming and research completely reliant on TLC budget and resources, or 2) they may be the director of a more formally established program under the TLC umbrella that has its own budget and resources for at least some aspects of the SoTL programming/work. The latter subtype might come about due to external donations specifically targeting SoTL work, or to recognition by the TLC or institutional leadership that SoTL might require ongoing, dedicated funding to provide opportunities such as yearly research fellowships.

Strengths and Limitations of this Type of Structure

There are several strengths to having a dedicated SoTL expert/program within a TLC. The dedicated nature of the expert/program sends a clear message regarding the positive value of SoTL at that institution. These SoTL experts are less likely to have major job responsibilities in other areas of educational development, which will decrease interference with their ability to provide support for SoTL programming and research. Because they are housed within a TLC, dedicated SoTL experts can still be part of the overall TLC team, which is comprised of other teaching and learning professionals who can help

brainstorm ideas for programming and provide logistical support at SoTL events. The TLC infrastructure itself can provide access to established institutional communication channels to promote SoTL events and awareness, and to senior leadership to advocate for TLC programs, including SoTL. If the program has some level of independent funding, the impact of the typical fluctuations in budget that may occur across fiscal years in higher education can be reduced and give the program greater autonomy.

On the less positive side, although not as demanding as when there is no dedicated SoTL expert, dedicated SoTL experts within a TLC are expected to be part of the overall TLC team, which means there are some general TLC responsibilities that would pull time or resources from SoTL efforts (e.g., providing reciprocal support for other TLC events, de-conflicting with other TLC programming). Further, due to the embedded nature of SoTL within the TLC, the SoTL planning will be shaped by the strategic initiatives of the TLC at large and potentially be limited by the sharing of resources and monies.

Stand-alone SoTL Unit

Though not as common, there are institutions that have established campus units to provide SoTL educational development separate from any existing TLC or other campus entity. These SoTL units are typically independent in budget (often due to an endowment) and leadership, and are developed to focus solely on fostering, scaffolding, and advocating for SoTL within (and sometimes beyond) that institution. SoTL educational developers with this type of structure are likely to operate at all levels of the 4Ms, especially if part of the mission of the center is to build external engagement and reputation as well as internal responsibilities.

Stand-alone SoTL educational development units offer programming similar to TLCs, but with all programming targeting SoTL-focused topics. One important advantage to having an established stand-alone SoTL unit is the ability to create and operationalize strategic objectives focused exclusively on SoTL, largely eliminating competing priorities for other areas of educational development that might adversely impact the delivery of SoTL-focused opportunities for campus stakeholders. Due to this sole attention on research on teaching and learning, some stand-alone SoTL educational development units are able to benefit from an advantageous administrative reporting structure that can bolster the perceptions of SoTL on a given campus. For example, SoTL educational development units that report to an institution's chief research officer or vice provost for research benefit from the clear recognition of SoTL as a valued form of research.

Many of the opportunities offered within stand-alone SoTL educational development units mirror those outlined above for dedicated SoTL expert/program (e.g., establishment of named awards, robust trainings, involvement in a campus teaching/learning symposium). That said, with the ability to focus exclusively -- and with autonomy -- on SoTL educational development, many stand-alone SoTL units have the capacity to develop initiatives for SoTL scholars that other structures may lack the resources to offer, such as large-scale research grants, internal peer-reviewed publications, incentives for presenting/publishing SoTL work, creation of a SoTL resource group to serve as advisors for the unit and peer mentors for novice SoTL scholars, development of a certificate program for graduate students interested in SoTL, and so forth. There is always at least one SoTL expert connected with a stand-alone SoTL unit, typically as the leader. Beyond that, stand-alone SoTL units may employ additional SoTL experts as educational developers, depending on the unique contexts and priorities within an institution.

Strengths and Limitations of this Type of Structure

The presence of a stand-alone SoTL unit has several notable benefits. Primary amongst these is that its presence signals strong institutional support for SoTL, as resources (e.g., budget and multiple personnel) have been allocated to the facilitation of SoTL educational development. The value of autonomy cannot be overlooked as a huge strength of this structure. The ability for a SoTL unit to exist apart from other campus entities provides freedom that cannot be realized within other structures, as combining SoTL educational development with broader teaching/learning support offered by a TLC results in the need to share personnel, budget, and other resources. Further, integration with a TLC can sometimes dilute the felt presence of SoTL, as stakeholders often inadvertently mesh SoTL with other aspects of faculty development.

Ironically, one of the main limitations of having a stand-alone SoTL unit is the flip side of the strengths listed in the previous paragraph: autonomy means that SoTL educational development leaders cannot easily leverage resources from a TLC to support their work. TLCs, as broad specialists in teaching and learning, generally enjoy a larger clientele for trainings and workshops. Thus, SoTL educational developers who are affiliated with TLCs have the ability to reach those who access the TLC for other programming by being part of the same unit. In contrast, stand-alone SoTL units must develop their own unique ways of reaching stakeholders who have not chosen to interact with their SoTL center. Additionally, while programming collaborations are possible between TLCs and stand-alone SoTL educational units, these become more complex with issues of leadership, budget, and responsibility for administrative duties to consider.

Considerations Across SoTL Educational Development Structures

The above descriptions differentiate five types of SoTL educational development structures. While it is evident that each shares a focus on providing support to encourage and promote SoTL within an institutional context, obvious differences exist across each structure type that may affect the depth, breadth, and impact of work that is able to be accomplished. That said, SoTL educational developers, no matter the structure or organization of their efforts, may benefit from examining the following considerations in order to maximize the impact of their work:

Promoting SoTL as Meritorious Work

As SoTL leaders in higher education, SoTL educational developers can impact how campus stakeholders perceive SoTL and its contributions to an institution, primarily through formal and informal conversations with individuals and groups who influence campus culture. As stated previously, SoTL is considered differently across institutional contexts. Many believe that variances in perception of and value for SoTL occur because scholarly work in teaching and learning often looks different than research that many academics are accustomed to producing or reading within their disciplines (Poole, 2013). SoTL is conducted across disciplines using a multitude of methodologies. Further, in doing SoTL, course instructors often study their own students, leading some who are unfamiliar with SoTL to question its rigor (McKinney, 2015).

Evidence of how perceptions of SoTL vacillate from one institution to the next can be seen by looking at reward structures for engaging in SoTL. For example, in making promotion and tenure determina-

tions, some institutions consider SoTL to be an example of teaching productivity, while others count it as meritorious scholarship. Consider the following statement from Iowa State University's Faculty Handbook (2016) that clearly acknowledges the expectation of evidence-informed (scholarly) teaching and the value placed on SoTL as meritorious research:

While SoTL may be an important part of the promotion and tenure process, it should not displace high quality scholarly teaching in annual performance reviews and in promotion and tenure decisions. Although faculty should engage in scholarly teaching, not all faculty need to engage in SoTL...If a faculty member chooses to pursue SoTL, this work is part of their scholarship/creative activity/research responsibilities. (p. 62)

Statements such as these position SoTL well within an institutional context and clearly place merit on research on teaching and learning. Similar positive and negative messages are conveyed to the campus community based on how SoTL is or is not recognized beyond being part of tenure and promotion. For example, the existence of SoTL-related campus-wide awards, research showcase events such as institution-wide poster sessions and presentations, research/travel grants, research fellowships, and so forth send a clear message of value and support. The explicitly communicated support of SoTL by senior leaders and department heads also sends powerful messages of value and encouragement for engagement in SoTL.

Understanding that the way SoTL is recognized will impact its perceived value, advocacy for SoTL becomes an important function of SoTL educational development (McKinney, 2007; Friberg & McKinney, 2019). SoTL educational developers are amongst the most qualified individuals on any campus to provide institutional-wide advocacy for SoTL and for SoTL scholars. They can affect change by systematically educating relevant stakeholders as to what SoTL is, the purpose it serves, and its potential positive impact for students and faculty on campus. Therefore, SoTL educational development is not limited to the practice of supporting interested stakeholders who wish to engage in SoTL, it also subsumes educating those not yet aware of SoTL, as well. The next section, focused on the development of strategic internal partnerships, explores this notion in greater depth.

Development of Strategic Internal Partnerships

Often, SoTL educational development units function quietly within an institution, providing opportunities for SoTL-interested faculty, staff, and students to engage in and share their work with others, but in a manner that is disconnected with the larger campus community. While this approach to educational development may be effective in supporting small groups of stakeholders who have sought out SoTL on their own, it fails to take advantage of opportunities to bring awareness of SoTL to new potential SoTL stakeholders, which limits growth of SoTL-related efforts. Key to broadening participation in and appreciation for SoTL within an institution are collaborations with other campus groups and/or units.

Consider the following examples of internal strategic partnerships for the SoTL educational developer:

- **Individual academic programs' promotion and tenure committees**. Consultation with such groups about the purpose, nature, and rigor of SoTL can promote SoTL being viewed positively, even though the methods used, variables studied, and outcomes might look very different from traditional disciplinary research. Every conversation a SoTL educational developer has with a

member of a promotion and tenure committee is an opportunity for strategic advocacy to support the SoTL scholars within an institution.

- **Academic Senates**. These groups are considered to be the governing academic body in institutions with systems of shared faculty governance. Academic Senates maintain faculty handbooks that delineate expectations for faculty productivity in terms of teaching, service, and scholarship. The voice of a SoTL educational developer in such a body has the potential to broadly advocate for SoTL to be viewed with merit and as scholarly work.

- **Strategic planning committees**. Most colleges and universities have developed and implemented a strategic plan outlining the mission, vision, values, and next steps for an institution. The explicit mention of SoTL or evidence-based teaching in a strategic plan sends an important message related to the value of SoTL to the campus community, which might lead to increased interest in SoTL educational development opportunities. Such mentions are more likely to occur if SoTL educational developers participate in or collaborate with these committees.

- **Research ethics boards**. Active engagement with this institutional group helps implement review processes supportive of SoTL research, which tends to fall in the low-risk category, while still being protective of human subjects. Additionally, SoTL educational developer input into ethics processes also further legitimizes SoTL as rigorous research following similar oversight processes required for disciplinary research.

- **Research and grants office**. This office has broad reach and typically is associated with traditionally-valued, disciplinary research endeavors. Working with this office to have SoTL included as part of the institution's recognized research centers and programs will increase SoTL's legitimacy alongside disciplinary research.

- **Assessment and accreditation committees**. Assessment and SoTL can be distinguished by how their data are used (to support internal program review and improvements versus to contribute to the broader literature and understanding about teaching and learning, respectively). However, the underlying data can often be the same for the two efforts (e.g., measures of student performance and attitudes) and the goals for both relate to understanding teaching and learning. Thus, in some cases SoTL and assessment efforts can be collaborative and beneficial with respect to shared effort, resources, and the promotion of perceived value for SoTL work (Hutchings, et al., 2013).

- **Administrative search committees**. Service on search committees for campus administration allows SoTL educational developers to advocate for the hiring of individuals who support SoTL and see value in its role within an institution.

- **Award review committees**. SoTL educational developers serving on institutional teaching or research award review committees can advocate for recognition of SoTL-productive faculty who have pursued work that improved not only their own teaching and research skills but also student learning.

- **New faculty orientation committees**. Sharing information about SoTL and SoTL opportunities with incoming new faculty represents an opportunity to not only grow the number of those engaged in SoTL, but to establish a foundational understanding of and appreciation for SoTL prior to faculty becoming embedded in their new disciplinary department. Further, early exposure to SoTL allows new faculty to understand how SoTL fits into an institution's culture.

- **Student programs**. Opportunities for SoTL exist outside the traditional disciplinary classroom, as learning is not isolated to a single context. There may be beneficial partnerships with campus units such as study abroad, honors programs, or other registered student organizations to engage in

the study of student learning. These units can also share with students the benefits of involvement in SoTL experiences.

- **Student research coordinators**. In order to promote student participation in research as scholars, rather than just participants, SoTL educational developers can make connections to promote SoTL research for undergraduate and graduate research projects, including independent studies, capstones, theses, and dissertations (Felten et al., 2013; Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014).

Overall, any campus partnership that yields greater understanding of SoTL should be considered strategic and important because work towards building such relationships has the potential to improve the visibility of SoTL, stakeholder engagement in SoTL, and positive perceptions of SoTL across and beyond an institution.

Development of Strategic External Partnerships

Creating SoTL partnerships and networks external to the institution can advance the work of a SoTL educational development unit by providing new ideas, resources, and collaborations. While strategic external partnerships are typically established with other SoTL educational developers or with other SoTL scholars (e.g., at other higher education institutions or even in K-12 schools), they might include work with local civic units or businesses to support institutional SoTL efforts and develop collaborative projects and experiences for faculty and students. Sometimes external groups have funding to support specific types of efforts such as higher education STEM outreach with public schools, which could provide opportunities for SoTL in new contexts.

The most typical source of external partnerships stems from connections formed at professional conferences with faculty and staff from other institutions or through committee work for SoTL-related professional societies. SoTL educational developers might attend a wide spectrum of conferences, from smaller, regional SoTL conferences to large, international SoTL events. These SoTL conferences are typically cross-disciplinary in nature; however, SoTL educational developers also often attend disciplinary research or practice conferences, where conversations about SoTL focus around work in a single, professional area. External partnerships might also form with neighboring institutions due to geographical proximity, which makes it feasible for site visits and the sharing of invited speakers. Regardless of how the connections are formed, partnerships established from interactions with individuals external to a SoTL educational developer's own institution can lead to networking opportunities for sharing of ideas and resources or for future collaborations based on common interests and objectives (Draeger & Scharff, 2019). As indicated above, partnerships with external SoTL entities can be especially helpful for SoTL educational development structures that do not have access to a dedicated SoTL expert at their institution.

Disseminating SoTL

Ways of sharing SoTL are numerous and include a variety of possibilities: peer reviewed journal articles, books, edited volumes, conference presentations (internal or external), blogs, wikis, workshops, and other forms of creative representation. These latter forms of dissemination fall outside the conventional realm of scholarly publishing but represent a more public form of scholarship that is being championed by the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Chick, 2019). Because SoTL scholars have so many possible venues for sharing their work, SoTL educational developers often provide

support in a variety of ways to facilitate work towards dissemination, recognizing that there is no "right" way for SoTL to be shared. SoTL educational developers might consult with SoTL scholars to examine potential outlets for a given project, considering the scope of the project being shared as well as a range of possibilities and the positives and negatives of each. Those conversations may include reminders to consider disciplinary expectations for sharing research when disseminating SoTL, as recognition and reward structures for faculty tend to honor dissemination practices similar to those common to their disciplinary scholarship. Beyond this, SoTL educational developers might act as preliminary reviewers for SoTL work or suggest ways in which projects might be shared through more than one venue to extend the impact of a project beyond a single outlet.

Linked with considerations regarding type of dissemination are considerations regarding the audience. Typically, researchers' primary audience are fellow researchers. However, there are also audiences with whom SoTL can be shared that can provide an important form of visibility and advocacy for the SoTL work. Thus, SoTL educational developers should also consider ways SoTL might be disseminated more informally with internal and external stakeholders who might find SoTL useful, interesting, or valuable to their own roles and responsibilities on campus. The following represent a few possible audiences that move beyond that of other SoTL scholars:

- **Students**. SoTL research is conducted to better understand how or what students learn in particular teaching or learning contexts. Necessarily, students serve as participants for these projects; however, outcomes from these studies are rarely shared with students. This lack of communication constitutes a missed opportunity that would allow students to understand the project they were a part of (if participants), conceptualize outcomes that might help encourage their own evidence-based learning, or consider the possibility of involvement in SoTL as scholars rather than only as participants (Felten et al., 2019).
- **TLC-based educational developers**. Course instructors interact routinely with TLC-based educational developers to understand ways by which improvements in teaching might maximize student learning. To this end, the work done in most TLCs is centered on encouraging the application of already-published SoTL outcomes to inform the use of evidence-based pedagogies in the college classroom. By sharing ongoing, local SoTL research, outcomes, and trends with TLC personnel, SoTL educational developers help to bridge the theory-to-practice gap in the college classroom (Friberg, 2016).
- **Stakeholders not yet involved in SoTL**. SoTL educational developers have the opportunity to bring awareness of SoTL to individuals across an institution who are unaware of its existence, utility, or applications. Efforts to share SoTL outcomes or opportunities for SoTL via social media, print newsletters, listservs, and formal/informal conversations or presentations can bring a focus to SoTL that might not otherwise develop.
- **Interested community groups**. Individuals external to the institutional context may have unrealized interests in SoTL that could be uncovered through interaction with a SoTL educational developer/expert. Alumni groups are often excited to hear of campus initiatives focused on improving the student experience. Local business owners often have a vested interest in student learning, as new graduates become their future employees. Bringing SoTL to these external groups might encourage donors to come forward to sponsor awards, grants, gifts, or endowed chair positions to benefit SoTL educational development efforts.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Every institution of higher education represents a unique SoTL context, with individual and varied missions, values, and priorities. SoTL educational development efforts are no less varied. This chapter identified five SoTL educational development structures and the impacts they might have across the 4M framework. It is important to note, however, that these structures are presented as organizational frameworks. In fact, the ways in which educational developers engage with SoTL-interested stakeholders varies greatly within these structure types, largely due to differences in priorities, programming, resources, and perceptions of value for SoTL. For that reason, what might be possible within one SoTL educational development structure might be impossible within another, a notion evident considering the strengths and weaknesses for each structure presented in this chapter.

Some may ask whether an optimal structure for SoTL educational development exists. The answer to this question is not entirely clear. What does seem evident is that having a dedicated SoTL expert, whether connected to a TLC or a stand-alone SoTL educational development unit, is most ideal for growing a strong, visible, and sustainable SoTL program within an institution. That said, any SoTL educational development efforts have the potential to make a positive impact. SoTL educational development -- and advocacy -- need to start somewhere. Grassroots efforts to grow a SoTL program have been the genesis of many formally established and institutionally encultured SoTL units that currently exist. In truth, grassroots efforts to build a foundation for SoTL may be more meaningful than if a SoTL educational development unit is suddenly dropped into an institutional context with little expressed interest or buy-in from relevant stakeholders.

Beyond the ideas already presented in this chapter is one final consideration. A variety of stakeholders take part in SoTL across institutional types and contexts. Typically, faculty have primarily been engaged in SoTL work, and they will continue to do so. However, there are changes in the SoTL movement that have brought new voices to research on teaching and learning. Students are now considered strategic partners in SoTL as co-inquirers rather than solely as subjects of SoTL research (Felten et al., 2013; Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014). Thus, SoTL educational developers must consider ways in which students -- as scholars -- can be part of their efforts to support SoTL within their institutions. Additionally, opportunities to build new and different strategic external partnerships are growing. Two-year colleges and other vocational programs are encouraging instructors to engage in SoTL (Ford & Peaslee, 2018). Cross-institutional SoTL collaborations are becoming more commonplace (Felten, Moore, & Peeples, 2019). SoTL educational developers within each of the various structures have the responsibility of responding to these changes and developing partnerships to support a broadening group of potential SoTL scholars.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

4M Framework: A scaffold for conceptualizing the impact of SoTL work across different contexts, including micro (individual/classroom), meso (department/program), macro (institutional), and mega (beyond a single institution).

Grassroots Effort: An informal SoTL educational development structure directed by volunteer faculty and/or staff to identify resources for learning about and supporting SoTL within that institution's context.

SoTL Expert: An individual who, in addition to possessing knowledge of evidence-based pedagogies, has a broad understanding of different research designs, methods, data sources, analysis schemes, etc.

Stand-Alone SoTL Unit: A SoTL educational development structure wherein a SoTL educational development unit exists separately from a teaching or learning center or other campus entity.

Teaching and Learning Center: Centers within an institution where students, staff, and faculty engage with educational developers to learn about a variety of teaching and/or learning topics including evidence-based pedagogies.

Teaching and Learning Center Structure With a Dedicated SoTL Expert/Program: A SoTL educational development structure led by a SoTL expert serving either as a full-time SoTL educational developer affiliated with a teaching and learning center or as the director of a more formally established SoTL program within the teaching and learning center.

Teaching and Learning Center Structure With a Non-Dedicated SoTL Expert: A SoTL educational development structure led by an educational developer with expertise in SoTL who does not serve solely in the role of SoTL educational developer.

Teaching and Learning Center Structure With No SoTL Expert: A SoTL educational development structure housed within a TLC coordinated by a non-expert educational developer who provides general support for SoTL to interested stakeholders.