

## EDC Grant Final Report 2017/18

**Date:** September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**Title of project:**

Using Professional Learning Communities to foster scholarly practices of teaching: How Centres for Teaching and Learning can support faculty in collective capacity building as scholars of teaching and learning.

**Principal investigator:**

Dr. Robyne Hanley-Dafoe (EDC Member)  
Senior Educational Developer  
Centre for Teaching and Learning, Trent University  
[robbynehanley@trentu.ca](mailto:robbynehanley@trentu.ca)

**Research Assistant:**

Michael Jorgensen  
Research Assistant  
Centre for Teaching and Learning, Trent University  
[michaeljorgensen@trentu.ca](mailto:michaeljorgensen@trentu.ca)

**Overview of the project (from original proposal):**

We were interested in investigating how faculty learn to conduct SoTL. Faculty have expressed a need for support for conducting research on their teaching practices. Although many faculty conduct subject specific research, they identified a gap in knowledge about how to conduct SoTL. For this study, we wanted to investigate how a CTL formed and facilitated Community of Practice (COP) focused on developing capacity for SoTL for faculty, was an effective approach. We believe that developing, documenting and studying a program such as this would be helpful to other Centres and Educational Developers.

Funding: \$2250

**Findings:**

Faculty responses highlight minimal confidence in conducting SoTL. The majority of faculty (55.5%) reported being not at all confident in their ability to formulating a problem of practice for a SoTL type question or get an adequate number of research project participants. No faculty member reported being “completely confident” in any aspect of conducting SoTL. Most faculty members (67%) reported being “not at all confident” in at least one area of conducting SoTL. Overall, faculty were most confident in their SoTL writing skills, compared to their research design skills and practical research skills. Thus, highlighting these as target areas for the future of this program.

**Recommendations:**

1. Offer a hybrid program-designed supplement of the CoP: Having an online component that accompanies the in-person CoP that houses resources, materials, discussion boards, and repositories of other SoTL works would be helpful as an archive that participants can access during and after the program.
2. Offer streaming options based on familiarity with SoTL, goals for SoTL projects, experience conducting SoTL research, and varied level of educational research knowledge such as ethics approval, qualitative and quantitative statistics, and authoring empirical journal articles and presentations.
3. Establish a process for supporting faculty conducting SoTL projects beyond the Teaching Scholars Table program.

- Develop an expedited process with the Research Ethics Board that supports SoTL research based on the challenge of the 12-week semester for those who wish to engage their students in their research.

**Conference presentations and / or publications based on the project, to date or planned:**

- Presented poster at the annual STLHE 2018 Conference in Sherbrooke, QC. (See image below)
- Accepted to present project at the Educational Developers Caucus 2018 Conference in Victoria, BC.
- Accepted to present project at the 2018 Mount Royal University SoTL Institute - Symposium on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Calgary, AB.
- Final manuscript submitted to International Journal for Academic Development – September 2018.

## USING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES TO FOSTER SCHOLARLY PRACTICES OF TEACHING:

How Centres for Teaching and Learning can support faculty in collective capacity building as scholars of teaching and learning.

Principal Investigator: Robyne Hanley-Defoe, Educational Developer, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Trent University  
Co-Investigators: Michael Jorgensen, Research Assistant, Centre for Teaching and Learning, Trent University

### INTRODUCTION

Centres for Teaching and Learning provincially and nationally are continually adapting to the ever-growing scope of services offered to their respective institutions (STLHE, Educational Developers can play a critical role in supporting system improvements through collective capacity building initiatives (Dawson, Britnell & Hitchcock, 2009; Harris, 2013).

For the purpose of this project, we were interested in investigating how communities of practice (CoP) facilitated through a Centre for Teaching and Learning can support new to Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) faculty conducting their research. Trent University recently developed new teaching emphasis position known as Senior Lecturers which includes SoTL as a component of tenure and merit.

As such, we were interested in engaging with this group to foster their capacity for SoTL. In partnership with the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and led by our Educational Developer. We wanted to explore the effectiveness of using a CoP, named, Trent Teaching Scholars' Table (TST), to facilitate collaborative discussions and peer learning as a venue for initiating research opportunities.

We measured faculty members' experiences and teaching efficacy from participating in one round of this pilot project.

### METHODS

#### Design

A cross-sectional survey design was used to measure the self-efficacy of teaching faculty in conducting SoTL and their experience as a participant in the community of practice model, as it relates to building their capacity for conducting SoTL. All questionnaires were completed at the end of the Teaching Scholars' Table program which ran during the Fall 2017 and Winter 2018 academic terms. Faculty participants equaled N=20.

### MATERIALS

Self-Efficacy in Research Measure (Phillips & Russell, 1994). 33-item self-report measure of a one's self-efficacy with respect to doing research, measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all confident) to 5 (completely confident). The items assess self-efficacy with respect to research design skills, practical research skills, quantitative and computer skills, and writing skills.

Open-ended questions through Qualtrics (Exit Survey). Four open-ended questions were included seeking input about the usefulness of the CoP and the degree of supportiveness for their understanding and development about how to conduct research on their teaching. Participants were also asked to identify a highlight of the CoP and any areas for improvement.



SoTL Research Self-Efficacy: Practical Research Skills

	Not at all confident	Lowest confidence	Intermediate confidence	Very confident	Completely confident
Creating an assignment number (research project) and research plan	66.5%	11.1%	11.1%	22.2%	0%
Identifying topics and their connection to SoTL research project	33.3%	33.3%	22.2%	11.1%	0%
Conducting research on a research project	55.5%	55.5%	22.2%	11.1%	0%
Writing about a SoTL research project	33.3%	33.3%	22.2%	11.1%	0%
Connecting the SoTL research project to a course	44.4%	33.3%	22.2%	0%	0%
Writing a research plan on a SoTL research project	22.2%	55.5%	0%	22.2%	0%
Preparing the project for a SoTL research project	55.5%	44.4%	22.2%	0%	0%

SoTL Research Self-Efficacy: Research Design Skills

	Not at all confident	Lowest confidence	Intermediate confidence	Very confident	Completely confident
Identifying a suitable topic for a SoTL research project	22.2%	33.3%	33.3%	11.1%	0%
Selecting an appropriate research method for a SoTL research project	44.4%	22.2%	33.3%	0%	0%
Identifying the relevance to an area of research interest in SoTL	11.1%	22.2%	44.4%	22.2%	0%
Formulating a problem or question for a SoTL research project	55.5%	33.3%	0%	11.1%	0%
Identifying suitable and relevant literature for a SoTL research project	44.4%	33.3%	11.1%	11.1%	0%
Organizing suitable literature for a SoTL research project	33.3%	33.3%	11.1%	22.2%	0%

SoTL Research Self-Efficacy: Practical Research Skills

	Not at all confident	Lowest confidence	Intermediate confidence	Very confident	Completely confident
Writing a research proposal for a SoTL research project	33.3%	33.3%	0%	33.3%	0%
Writing a research proposal for a SoTL research project	55.5%	11.1%	33.3%	22.2%	0%
Writing a research proposal for a SoTL research project	33.3%	11.1%	33.3%	22.2%	0%
Writing a research proposal for a SoTL research project	11.1%	33.3%	33.3%	22.2%	0%
Writing a research proposal for a SoTL research project	22.2%	44.4%	11.1%	22.2%	0%
Writing a research proposal for a SoTL research project	33.3%	11.1%	44.4%	11.1%	0%
Conducting a research project for a SoTL research project	33.3%	22.2%	22.2%	22.2%	0%



Faculty responses highlight minimal confidence in conducting SoTL. The majority of faculty (55.5%) reported being not at all confident in their ability to formulate a problem of practice for a SoTL-type question or get an adequate number of research project participants. No faculty member reported being "completely confident" in any aspect of conducting SoTL. Most faculty members (67%) reported being "not at all confident" in at least one area of conducting SoTL. Overall, faculty were most confident in their SoTL writing skills, compared to their research design skills and practical research skills. Thus highlighting these as target areas for the future of this program.

### DISCUSSION

Faculty have since expressed a need for support for conducting research on their teaching practices. Although many faculty conduct subject specific research, there has been an identified gap in their capacity and self-efficacy for conducting SoTL.

The purpose was to investigate how CTLs can form CoPs to support faculty who are interested and new to conducting SoTL.

- How participating in CoP based on SoTL impacts a faculty member's self-efficacy for conducting SoTL research

Recommendations for others:

- Have an online component that accompanies the in-person CoP that houses resources, materials, discussion boards, and repositories of other SoTL works. This would serve the group by having all the materials in a central and accessible location.
- Separate the group based on goals i) those who are currently involved in SoTL or have an advanced understanding of research based teaching inquiry and ii) emerging understanding of SoTL and how to get started.
- Establish a process for how the CTL will support the SoTL projects beyond the TST program (i.e., How does the Educational Developer not become an investigator on every SoTL project).
- Develop an expedited process with the Research Ethics Board that supports SoTL research based on the challenge of the 12-week semester for those who wish to engage their students as participants.

### PARTICIPANT QUOTES

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."

"I was able to learn of the different forms of SoTL research that can be conducted and applied to my own research. The message I got from the CTL was that SoTL is not just a theoretical concept but a practical one that can be applied to my own teaching practice."