EDC Grant Final Report 2017/18

Date: September 28th, 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
robynehanley@trentu.ca

Research Assistant:
Michael Jorgensen
Research Assistant
Centre for Teaching and Learning, Trent University
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.
4. 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.