

EDC Grant Midterm Report 2017/18

Date: Winter Update, 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.

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Overview of the project:

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, 2011). For the purpose of this project, we are interested in investigating how PLCs can be facilitated through a Centre for Teaching and Learning to support faculty conducting research on a specific aspect of their teaching such as course design renewal, pedagogical shifts or assessment practices. Trent University has recently developed new teaching emphasis positions known as Senior Lecturers which have SoTL as part of their portfolio and as such, we are interested in working with this group to foster and develop their capacity for SoTL in partnership with the Centre for Teaching and Learning, and led by our Educational Developer. We want to explore the effectiveness of using a professional learning community (Trent Teaching Scholars' Table) to facilitate collaborative discussions and peer learning as a venue for initiating research opportunities. We intend to measure faculty members' experiences and teaching efficacy from participating in one round of the teaching scholarship PLC.

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 SoTL. For the purpose of this study, we want to investigate if a CTL formed and facilitated PLC focused on developing capacity for SoTL for faculty is effective. We believe that developing, documenting and studying a program such as this will be helpful to other Centres and Educational Developers.

Progress toward stated goals of the project at the midterm point:

To date we have:

- Received ethics approval for the research project
- Developed research materials (questionnaire & interview materials)
- Recruited members for the inaugural Teaching Scholars' Table PLC
- Hired a research assistant for the project
- Disseminated the pre-program survey for the Teaching Scholars' Table program

Barriers / challenges encountered and plans for problem-solving:

The project was delayed as a result of multiple revisions needed during the ethics review process. During this time the Teaching Scholars' Table continued. However, this delayed the evaluation of the Teaching Scholars' Table program by roughly 2 months. At this point, the project is back on track and expected to finish in accordance with the original timeline.

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

- Submitted for research presentation at the annual STLHE 2018 Conference in Sherbrooke, QC
- Lessons learned document tip sheet for Centres will be authored and posted on the Trent Centre for Teaching and Learning website
- A final project report will be provided to EDC to be posted on the EDC grant website