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2. Overview

Descriptive Title: SoTL Portal: Connecting Researchers

Intended Outcomes:

The project will entail setting up a website that will be a portal into the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Visitors will be able to access a variety of levels of engagement into the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, including reviewing current projects, searching for collaborators in their area of interest and disseminating their research results. Our portal will allow visitors to search the database for potential collaborators, access ideas and projects that are currently underway or planned, and link to summaries of completed SoTL projects. The possibility of cross-institutional research will be enhanced with the use of this electronic tool.

The portal will be hosted in the Learn Together Collaboratory within the BCCampus website (<http://ltc.bccampus.ca/>). This partnership will serve to expand the networks of communication currently available to EDC and BCCampus. We would hope to have a link off of the main EDC page as well as a link on the STLHE website, many individual campus websites as well as websites devoted to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Our intent is to develop a template of project categories and seek input and use from a few selected individuals before releasing the live site. Once live, it will be our task to spread the word so that the site becomes a popular venue and valuable resource for SoTL researchers.

We hope to create a vital connection between academic institutions that will introduce, encourage and nurture the development of SoTL projects. At a recent gathering of Carnegie affiliates (CASTL initiative) it was suggested that such an electronic venue be created to encourage collaboration and further the cause of SoTL (Dewar, et al. 2010).

Project Timeline:

January 2011: Project Leaders meet with web designer to finalize the template for the website.

January – February 2011: Website is created.

March 2011: Website tested in pilot phase and adjustments made.

April – December 2011: Dissemination at conferences, through listserves and journals.

Rationale:

We believe that there is a need to provide a central site for sharing SoTL project ideas, ongoing work, and dissemination of results. Our campuses have been working hard to raise awareness and encourage involvement in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and this was one piece that we felt could assist all campuses in the same endeavour.

The EDC Living Plan seeks to facilitate matching ideas and people interested in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and this is the main goal of this project. One of the main focus areas of the EDC grant is to 'build collaborative structures between and among institutions'. This portal will provide such a structure. With the initial development involving three different campuses and the use of the BCCampus web network, it is hoped that the knowledge and awareness of SoTL on Canadian campuses (and beyond) will be greatly enhanced by this project.

This project will further the cause of scholarship by allowing unrestricted access via the internet. The website will serve to overcome some common barriers to the creation of SoTL communities; distance, time, and cost (McKinney, 2006). Our design will have ease of use as a top priority. Through our ongoing commitment to promoting public awareness and use of the site, we firmly believe that this investment will be instrumental in highlighting, encouraging and facilitating inquiry and collaboration of SoTL research in higher education.

Communication about SoTL projects across Canadian campuses (and beyond) will be enhanced by the use of this portal. It will offer educational developers and faculty members a variety of entry levels into the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning:

- a) Novices can search the database for ideas and inspiration and see if their project idea has been investigated previously.
- b) Novices can connect with possible mentors for advice.
- c) Faculty/Educational Developers with SoTL experience can keep current by reviewing the database.
- d) Faculty/Educational Developers who have a specific idea in mind can search or call for collaborators.
- e) Finished projects can be disseminated or links to publications can be posted.

Scholarship:

The work of Hubbal and Clarke (2010) points to the importance of communities of SoTL practitioners and this portal could facilitate the growth of a Canadian and International SoTL community. This idea of community is also supported by Senge and Scharmer (2008). Opportunities will abound as more participants enter their SoTL ideas and calls for collaboration. As with any research, the starting point is always the most difficult and with a database filled with others' ideas and modes of connection, these 'starting point jitters' may be dispelled.

The idea of community is also reflected in Hutchings (2007) in her proposal that the richness of SoTL will result when individuals can connect with one another and develop cross-institutional collaborations. This portal is one of the easiest and most cost efficient ways of encouraging cross-institutional collaborations. Connecting SoTL researchers across Canada and internationally should result in improving the quality of post-secondary education (Poole, et.al, 2007). Within a few minutes of searching or entering data, matches can be discovered and partners can be identified. This could be a huge incentive for novice researchers.

Donnelli, et. al. (2010), points to these cross-institutional partnerships as being vital to the success of the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Huber and Hutchings (2005) indicate that the opportunity for public sharing of research that allows other educators to evaluate and build on previous work is a major part of the SoTL movement. This portal will give access to research on teaching and learning at various stages of completion, from beginning ideas to finished projects.

Dissemination:

Project leaders will use the available listserves to advertise the new website. Project leaders will present at EDC/STLHE and similar conferences to encourage use of the portal. The presentations would take a poster-type format where participants can access the website in a hands-on atmosphere. We will investigate advertising in appropriate journals and request to be added to campus websites through any existing SoTL pages they currently have or with their faculty development centres.

3. Budget

Website Development 40 hours @ 35.00	\$1400.00
Project Leaders Meeting with web designer Hunt & Hurren to travel to BCcampus	\$800.00
In-Kind Contributions All partner institutions: Release time for website development, planning and disseminating BCCampus hosting/maintenance of website	
Total requested from EDC Grant Program	\$2200.00

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