

2008 EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPERS CAUCUS (EDC) GRANT PROPOSAL

1. Applicant Information

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2. Overview

- a. **Title:** Identifying Learning Outcomes in Graduate Student Development Programs and Educational Developers' Preparation to Teach Them
- b. **Intended Outcomes:** Guided by the research teams' success in graduate student development (GSD) (i.e., 30 grants, 10 awards, 25 publications and 92 presentations), this study will tap into the experiences of educational developers responsible for GSD programs in Canada and the U.S. and will result in:
 - Identifying a list of common and unique GSD program learning outcomes
 - Identifying how these learning outcomes are assessed
 - Prioritizing the importance of these learning outcomes, and
 - Exploring the confidence levels and training that these developers have in facilitating the training of these GSD learning outcomes at their institutions.

Smith and Simpson's work (1999) and based on a literature review on graduate student programming, a list of learning outcomes has been compiled and will be used to develop an online questionnaire. Canadian Educational Developers responsible for graduate student development at their universities will be invited to complete the online questionnaire. Statistical analyses, report generation, and dissemination will follow. This project will be completed within one year.

- c. **Rationale:** Central to EDC is the development of our future professoriate through services and programs. There is a recent national sense of urgency in that graduate students are lacking "an array of non-technical skills such as leadership, project management, communication, integrity, intellectual property management, and critical thinking" that are critical for new academics (Bilodeau, 2007). Although the literature on the graduate student development (GSD) is prolific (Denecke, 2005; Marincovich, 1998; Schönwetter & Taylor, 2001; Nyquist, 2002), little is known about the core learning outcomes that Canadian and U.S. GSD programs ascribe to. Most studies focus on institutional or program specific learning outcomes. What is needed is a survey of the common and unique learning outcomes that GSD programs and services ascribe

to across Canadian and U.S. institutions of higher education. There is also a gap in the knowledge about education developers' confidence in and preparation for developing learning outcomes in their graduate students. The former will guide development of graduate students whereas the latter will enable us to identify key areas for career development of EDC members, especially our neophyte faculty developers responsible for GSD.

d. **Scholarship:** Articles with a historical focus have discussed the importance and the types of both courses and programs offered to professionally develop graduate students **Error! Reference source not found..** Numerous articles identify themes viewed as significant in training graduates [7]. Courses on teaching college/university are included as just one of many facets of this training [8]. The literature provides ample information on how to set up and run such programs [9]. However, specific elements of what is critical to these programs, such as the core learning outcomes, are not clearly articulated in the literature. One study addressed this gap through a comprehensive review of university teaching courses offered to graduate students and identified a set of common course learning outcomes [10]. These included skill-based (i.e., assessment, course design) and knowledge-based learning objectives (i.e., teaching methods, professional issues and development). Although core learning outcomes were proposed, these represent only one component of GSD – learning outcomes identified in courses on university teaching.

Based on an extensive literature review and the Delphi approach with a panel of 33 U.S. leaders in GSD, Smith et al., validated 27 learning outcomes as being very important. However, the experts' years of expertise in graduate development, their level of confidence in facilitating each competency, and the extent to which they were trained in these learning outcomes were not addressed. Moreover, the focus was only on U.S. GSD experts and not their GSD programs. What is needed is a multi-institutional/international study that includes Canadian and U.S. GSD programs and the educational developers who are responsible for delivering these programs.

Early attempts by Canadian educational developers to address GSD learning outcomes have resulted in a list of current program elements [12] and, more recently, a

list of potential learning outcomes that reflect these elements [13]. In an attempt to build on this work and to extend the findings of Smith et al.'s study [11], the present project will focus on identifying common and unique learning outcomes in Canadian and U.S. GSD programs. By identifying the program learning outcomes displayed internationally, the importance and assessment of these learning outcomes, and developers' confidence levels and training, a better pattern of current graduate training in U.S. and Canada may be known and used to better develop GSD trainers.

This information will be critical in refining GSD programs at various levels. First, findings will guide the training of educational specialists (especially the recent cohort of new faculty developers) through EDC, STLHE and POD pre-conference workshops who are responsible for GSD. Second, findings will direct the strategic planning of the Graduate Student Professional Development - STLHE subcommittee in identifying and maintaining currency in GSD needs. Third, findings will build on foundational GSD work by experts (i.e., Border, Chism, Lewis, Marincovich, Nyquist, Richlin, and Smith) by providing new literature supporting current GSD across international borders.

Procedure. Two initiatives are proposed. Following ethical approval, the first will invite all graduate student developers via the Canadian Teaching Assistants Developers (CTAD) and the POD Graduate Student Professional Development (GSPD) listserves to identify all learning outcomes that their programs and services for GSD ascribe. Theme analyses will be used to group all learning outcomes into categories (i.e., research, teaching, technology, etc.). These learning outcomes will be used to develop a web-based questionnaire including all possible GSD learning outcomes listed during initiative one. Initiative two will invite all graduate student developers via the CTAD and GSPD listserves to rank order the importance of each of these learning outcomes, the confidence and training level that graduate student developers have in training their graduate students. Finally, participants will be asked how they assess these learning outcomes.

e. Dissemination: This international and multi-institutional study will guide the development of our future professoriate and those directly responsible for their

development. Building on the past expertise of EDC graduate developers, the findings from this study will enhance the professionalization of GSD programming to meet the current needs of our graduate students and our graduate trainers, both in Canada and the U.S. The report will guide pre-conference EDC, STLHE, and POD workshops in training the trainers, will provide critical information for strategic planning of the EDC, STLHE, and POD Graduate Student Professional Development special interest groups in addressing current needs of graduate students. Findings shared through conference presentations will invite audiences to provide critical feedback to be used in the dissemination of findings through journal articles and a book chapter on current GSD. Conference workshop proposals will be submitted to EDC (Nov. 2008), STLHE (Jan. 2009), and POD (Feb. 2009). Critical feedback gained from the conferences will be used to create a manuscript for submission of an article to the *Journal of Graduate Student Development* and further inform one chapter in a proposed book on TA Development.

3. Budget

Item (including any applicable taxes)	Cost
Research assistant (RA) @ [(\$16.6/hr. x 8 hr./week) (4.3 wk/month x 4 months)] + 9.4% benefits (new 2008-9 HR Standards).	\$2500
Less matching funding obtained from other sources (e.g. Department/Dean)	\$2,000
Less in-kind contributions: Administrative assistant support, Education Developers (2) support, printing expenses, dissemination at conferences	\$12,000
Total amount requested from the EDC Grant Program (not to exceed \$2500)	\$2500

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