

## 2009 EDC Grant Proposal

### 1. Applicant Information

#### **Principal Applicant:**

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### 2. Overview

**Title:** Mapping Canadian SoTL Initiatives with a Focus on Graduate Students

#### **Intended Outcomes**

Within the Canadian community of higher education scholars and developers, formal inquiries into the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) have, to date, focused almost exclusively on the training and experiences of the current professoriate. However, to foster the continued expansion of the SoTL movement in this country, graduate students, especially those intending to pursue academic careers, must also be provided with opportunities to learn about the SoTL and to engage in SoTL-oriented activities. Teaching and learning centres (TLCs) within Canada have recognized this need and are currently developing programs to expose and engage graduate students in the SoTL, however much of this development is occurring at a 'grass roots level'

(Christensen Hughes, 2006) with little communication among developers and between centres. This study aims to initiate a national discussion about the training of graduate students in the SoTL by: 1) conducting an environmental scan of SoTL-oriented programming offered by TLCs across Canada specifically targeted towards the graduate student population, and 2) to identify emerging best practices and highlight gaps that exist among these initiatives.

As part of this multi-institutional research, data will initially be collected through an on-line survey of TLC directors or staff members specifically responsible for the training of graduate students from graduate-degree granting institutions across Canada. Participants will be asked to identify and describe programs currently available to graduate students that expose or engage them in the SoTL. In depth, follow-up interviews will be conducted with TLCs whose programming is identified as being particularly innovative and/or effective. Specifically, this study aims to:

1. Improve our understanding of the ways in which Canadian TLCs incorporate the SoTL into graduate student programming.
2. Identify, document and develop a typology of such programs based on Gale and Golde's framework (see Scholarship section).
3. Highlight emerging best practices and develop recommendations for future directions in graduate student engagement in the SoTL within Canada.
4. Create an online mechanism by which educational developers in Canada can share information, promote success stories and establish collaboration among TLCs seeking to expand, enhance or assess SoTL programming for graduate students.
5. Establish opportunities for two graduate student research assistants working on this study to learn about the SoTL, to engage in SoTL research and to receive mentorship throughout the research process.

## **Timeline**

This research project will be completed between October 2009 and September 2010 with ongoing development of materials, data analysis and dissemination of findings.

**1. Summer 2009 (Completed):** Preliminary literature review by research team; contact colleagues in the US working in the area of grad student engagement in SoTL; prepare and submit EDC grant application.

**2. Fall 2009:** Develop and test online survey tool; prepare and submit ethics proposal; hire two part-time graduate student research assistants (one per institution); explore the possibility of joining the meeting of the CASTL Student Voices group at the 2009 ISSOTL Conference via a conference call.

**3. Winter 2010:** Implement survey, begin data analysis; submit conference proposals to STLHE; TA & Graduate Student Conference in Toronto and POD).

**4. Summer 2010:** Complete data analysis; disseminate findings via conference presentations (EDC conference) and manuscripts (CJSOTL; The Journal of Graduate and Professional Student Development); develop resources for GS/TA developers.

## **Scholarship**

In recent years, several scholars have called for the restructuring of doctoral education to enhance the status of the SoTL within the academy. Shulman (2004, p. 13), among others, argues that SoTL should be formally integrated into the graduate experience:

By involving doctoral students more directly with the scholarship of teaching and learning at the very beginning of their understanding of what it means to be a faculty member, we may create scholars who learn early on how to elegantly integrate their teaching with their research.

Kreber (2001) advocates for greater transparency and collaboration among teaching centres to establish a richer and more consistent framework for graduate student engagement in the SoTL. Some scholars have argued that it is important to not only introduce graduate students to the SoTL literature, but also to engage them in SoTL research as collaborative partners. As McKinney (2006) suggests, “We are challenged to expand the role of students in SoTL...as collaborators and co-researchers.”

At the theoretical level, the model of graduate student training in SoTL developed by Gale and Golde (2004) serves as a useful organizer for our study that aims to identify and develop a typology of similar SoTL programming in Canada. Gale and Golde propose four critical stages of SoTL training for future faculty:

1. Expose – graduate students read and critique SoTL research;
2. Encounter - graduate students examine and critique ongoing SoTL questions and projects;

3. Engage – graduate students engage in their own SoTL design project;
4. Extend – graduate students become mentors for the next cohort of students engaging in SoTL research.

Building on the work by Gale and Golde, as well as other colleagues in the field of educational development, this study hopes to advance our knowledge of the unique Canadian SoTL landscape as it relates to graduate students.

## **Rationale**

As evidenced by recent presentations at national conferences (EDC, STLHE), there is a strong interest among Canadian educational developers to share ideas and strategies for engaging faculty members in the SoTL and supporting those faculty members already conducting SoTL research. Missing from this current discourse is a critical analysis of what is being done or could be done to engage graduate students in the SoTL. Educational developers in the US are just beginning to address these issues through a number of exciting, collaborative initiatives including the formation of a multi-institutional CASTL Student Voices in SoTL Group, the development of the SoTL mini-workshop for graduate students at Illinois State, and the upcoming publication of a text co-authored by faculty and students entitled *Engaging Student Voices in the Study of Teaching and Learning* (Stylus, 2009). To the authors' knowledge, such formal, multi-institutional conversations and networks around graduate student engagement in the SoTL have yet to emerge within the Canadian context.

Through discussions initiated at STLHE 2009, the authors of this proposal – educational developers who work closely with graduate students– realized that they shared common interests and faced a number of common challenges when implementing SoTL programming at their institutions and that these issues could be of relevance to other developers in Canada. The creation of the national 'map' of current SoTL initiatives aimed at graduate students will be an important first step in this direction. It would allow educational developers to explore a variety of SoTL engagement models emerging from different institutions, uncover challenges that may be hindering the delivery of such programming to graduate students, highlight opportunities for the creation of additional programming, and identify potential synergies and collaborations among developers working in this area.

Given the current lack of knowledge base on graduate students and SoTL, the authors believe that the time is ripe for such an initiative – the Canadian SOTL movement is coalescing through the creation of the Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and Canadian TA developers are strengthening and formalizing their ties through the establishment of an STLHE SIG and the scheduling of an inaugural conference TA developers conference for June 2010 in Toronto. As the SoTL community in Canada expands, it is important that the unique experiences of graduate students, many of whom will be entering academic careers in the next five years, be explored.

### **Dissemination**

The data collected through this multi-institutional study will capture the current state of SoTL practitioner development in Canada with a focus on graduate students and should serve as critical information for strategic planning of the EDC and STLHE Graduate Student Professional Development special interest groups. We anticipate sharing the results of this research through conference presentations at STLHE 2010, the TA & Graduate Student Development Conference 2010, POD 2010 and EDC 2011.

This work will also serve as the foundation for manuscript submissions (possibly to the newly launched Canadian Journal of SoTL, The Journal of Graduate and Professional Student Development and the Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching). An inventory of the Canadian graduate student programs which incorporate SoTL components will be available through the websites of the researchers' home institutions.

The two graduate student research assistants working on this project will have an opportunity to co-present the findings of the study at conferences and co-author manuscripts for publication.

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### 3. Budget

Item (including any applicable taxes)	Cost
Salary for two Graduate Student Research Assistants (one student per institution)	(\$20/hour incl. benefits and vacation pay)
RA at the University of Waterloo	\$20/hour for 60 hours = \$1,200
RA at the University of Western Ontario	\$20/hour for 60 hours = \$1,200
Research team meeting at Waterloo (travel costs and lunch for 4 project team members)	\$100
In-kind contributions by two institutions: RA supervision; office space; materials and supplies; printing and photocopying expenses	In-kind
<b>Total amount requested from the EDC Grant Program</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>