


Chapter 3

Leveraging a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Values Framework to Build Online Faculty Learning Communities

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ABSTRACT

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) enhances teaching practices and improves student learning outcomes while fostering a culture of continuous professional development and reflective practice (Felten, 2013; Hutchings et al., 2011; Trigwell et al., 2000). Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) serve as dynamic hubs for collaborative exchange, enabling faculty to engage with SoTL principles, share diverse perspectives, and develop innovative teaching strategies that benefit learners (Cox, 2004). This chapter examines an online SoTL FLC at a multi-campus institution as a case study to propose a SoTL Values Framework to guide best practices in online professional development. The framework is built on four key values: inclusivity,

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collaboration, scholarly approach, and reflectiveness, each aligned with unique opportunities offered by the online environment. By drawing on SoTL literature and reflecting on the experiences within this online SoTL FLC, the chapter offers insights to inform future online SoTL initiatives fostering sustained growth in SoTL practices.

INTRODUCTION

Engaging in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) offers numerous benefits, including enhancing teaching practices and improving student learning outcomes (Hutchings et al., 2011; Trigwell et al., 2000). Additionally, SoTL facilitates a culture of continuous professional development and reflective practices that encourage college instructors and staff to critically evaluate and refine their teaching strategies (Felten, 2013). By publicly disseminating evidence-based pedagogical insights, SoTL fuels the collective knowledge of scholarly communities, offering rich opportunities for learning and collaboration. Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) play a vital role in this process, serving as dynamic hubs where colleagues can engage with SoTL, exchange diverse ideas, and cultivate innovative teaching practices that benefit all learners across a variety of disciplines (Cox, 2004). Leveraging SoTL within these communities elevates individual teaching and creates spaces for sustained growth and pedagogical excellence.

This chapter uses a multi-campus institution’s online SoTL FLC as a case study to propose a SoTL Values Framework to guide best practices in online professional development for faculty. The framework centers on four SoTL values aligned with the online environment: 1) inclusivity, 2) collaboration, 3) scholarly approach, and 4) reflectiveness. By drawing on SoTL literature and examining the practices within our online SoTL FLC, we aim to offer a SoTL Values Framework that can inform online SoTL professional development initiatives—thus addressing the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learnings (ISSOTL)’s Grand Challenge #5 “the practice, use, and growth of SoTL” (Scharff et al., 2023, para. 1).

In the following sections, we provide an in-depth description of the online SoTL FLC that served as the foundation for this case study, exploring its unique context and challenges in the online environment. We showcase the four key values integral to SoTL and illustrate how online SoTL FLCs can powerfully cultivate these principles. Building on our experiences, we also identify opportunities for growth to improve SoTL faculty development opportunities within online environments. Through these insights, we hope to share our strategies and inspire others to create thriving online communities where faculty engage in meaningful dialogue that transforms teaching and learning and promotes SoTL research.

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