

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Program Taxonomy

Created through an iterative design process by the SoTL Collaboratory Leadership Team (First version produced December 2020; this document is version 5):

Laura Lukes, George Mason University - llukes@gmu.edu; Sophia Abbot, George Mason University - sabbot@gmu.edu; Dayna Henry, James Madison University - henryds@jmu.edu; Liesl Baum, Virginia Tech - imbaum@vt.edu; Melissa Wells, University of Mary Washington, mwells@umw.edu; Lindsay Wheeler, University of Virginia, lsb4u@virginia.edu; Kim Case, Virginia Commonwealth University - casek3@vcu.edu; Ed Brantmeier, James Madison University - brantmej@jmu.edu



Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

Produced thanks to funding by



Context for Taxonomy Development:

The purpose of this document is to offer a common language and organizational structure for understanding a variety of SoTL program models. While the SoTL Program Taxonomy was initially developed to support educational developers who may be tasked with leading SoTL program support for their institutions, this tool may also be helpful to a range of scholars and practitioners across higher education who are seeking ideas for how to support SoTL. This document contains an overview of the Taxonomy organized by program type and a detailed description of each model. This document also includes a brief example of each model to further support readers' envisioning of program possibilities. Because this document was derived from our Community of Practice (see Lukes et al., in press), the examples that follow draw predominantly on our respective institutions. Examples drawn from beyond our institutions were generated during group discussions and workshops that applied this tool.

Table 1. Overview of SoTL Program Taxonomy Categories and Models

SoTL Program Category	SoTL Program Models	Brief Description
On-demand Project Development Programs	1. Curated resource collections, self-guided materials, or databases	Access to SoTL resources to help faculty learn about and do SoTL
	2. “Unprogramming”	Informal discussion—often through social media— and/or Q&A about SoTL with peers
Short-Term or One-Off Project Development Programs	3. “How to…” SoTL informational sessions or workshops	A short event, or series of events, where faculty learn about SoTL
	4. One-on-One Consultations	One-on-one exchange w/CTL SoTL expert to help support instructor’s SoTL project(s)
Immersive Project Development Programs	5. SoTL Project Development Institutes	An organized gathering of individuals over a short period of time to make significant progress on developing a SoTL project
	6. SoTL Write-ins or Writing Retreats	An organized gathering of individuals working on moving SoTL projects toward dissemination
Extended or Ongoing Project Development Programs	7. SoTL Faculty Learning Community or Reading Group	An organized gathering of individuals over time (e.g., term) to engage in producing or consuming SoTL
	8. CTL Collaborations	CTL SoTL expert as a formal partner or co-PI role in SoTL project
	9. Train-the-Trainer Model (Faculty or Graduate Student SoTL Fellows)	A program that trains faculty or grad students in SoTL methodologies to assist others in their SoTL projects
	10. Students as Partners in SoTL	A program supporting student partnership as co-inquirers with instructors in SoTL work.
Incentive, Recognition & Dissemination Programs	11. Incentives to Develop or Complete SoTL Project	Financial or staffing incentives to reduce barriers for faculty engaging in SoTL
	12. Awards or Title Recognizing Faculty Engaged in SoTL Work	Non-monetary awards and recognition for faculty to acknowledge SoTL work (primarily for tenure & promotion)
	13. SoTL Showcases / Conferences	An one-time or annual event where SoTL projects are presented/shared with others

	(Local Dissemination Events)	
--	------------------------------	--

Notes: The categories and models are fluid and dependent on how educational developers structure and implement their SoTL program models.

On-Demand Project Development Programs

1. Curated Collections, Self-Guided Materials, or Databases

Definition:

Programs that facilitate SoTLer access to curated collection of SoTL information and resources (e.g., webpage with selected reading resources, links to SoTL design tools, videos sharing directions on how to do SoTL) or asynchronous online learning modules on SoTL topics via a Learning Management System (LMS)

Example in Practice:

James Madison University developed an asynchronous website through the Center for Faculty Innovation webpage to provide a “how-to” SoTL for instructors unfamiliar with the process. It has resources explaining what SoTL is, how to develop research questions, select the methods and measures, obtain IRB approval, and dissemination information. There are also videos of SoTL researchers from the institution talking about how they began their SoTL work.

<https://www.jmu.edu/cfi/scholarship/sotl-ets/main.shtml> (Dayna Henry, James Madison University)

2. “Unprogramming”

Definition:

Asynchronous or synchronous digital or physical spaces in which people interested in SoTL can informally discuss SoTL ideas or ask questions of peers; no formal “expert” guidance or facilitation from CTL staff provided, though CTL staff may participate in discussions or events

Example in Practice:

From 2017-2019, McMaster University’s MacPherson Institute for Leadership, Innovation, and Excellence in Teaching hosted a monthly Twitter Chat about Students as Partners in teaching and SoTL. For one hour, a moderator posted discussion questions on

Twitter with the hashtag #SaPChat on a MacPherson account specific to their Students as Partners programming (@McMaster_MI_SaP). Participants on Twitter—both at their institution, and internationally—responded to the questions and replied to one another in this semi-synchronous space. Questions ranged from broadly analyzing students as partners practices to specifically responding to SoTL readings the account prompted people to review before the chat, such as:

Q1: The essay highlights vulnerability in partnership. How have you resolved issues of vulnerability and built trust in your practice? [#SaPChat #studentsaspartners](#)

Because Tweets live on, interested people unable to join during the hour could still participate in the days and weeks following the event.

Short-Term or One-Off Project Development Programs

3. “How to...” SoTL informational sessions or workshops

Definition:

A single event or series of events in which participants receive information about what SoTL work is and how it is done (e.g., methods, developing a research question, IRB approval) from SoTL experts or those with prior SoTL experience; time length varies, but typically short events (e.g., 60-90 minutes)

Example in Practice:

We developed a workshop series with the goal of gathering faculty interest around SoTL in the research university context. We now typically host 2-3 workshops each semester on topics such as: SoTL for Beginners, Refining Your SoTL Research Question, Choosing Your SoTL Study Design. These workshops are often facilitated by a faculty fellow or an invited national speaker. We also host faculty SoTL Scholar panels to share their projects and study findings with the broader campus community. (Kim Case, Virginia Commonwealth University)

4. One-on-One Consultations

Definition:

A one-on-one or one-on-team exchange that involves CTL staff serving as expert advisors for a specific SoTL project (e.g., project design, methods, data analysis); varies in scale and scope from CTL staff providing feedback on SoTL project ideas via single or multiple emails/meetings. CTL staff member acts in an advisory role rather than a collaborator role on the project.

Example in Practice:

George Mason University's Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning provides opportunities for faculty to request one-on-one consultations at any point during their SoTL work. Prior to meeting, requestors are asked to indicate the level of consultation and support they are interested in to help clarify the anticipated role and time commitment of the CTL staff (advisory or support or partner): The initial meeting typically serves as an intake of information so the CTL faculty can support the project's success. These meetings are initially scheduled for about an hour and follow-up meetings are at the request of the faculty. The CTL faculty offers support for all aspects of SoTL work including research design, data collection and analysis methods, implementation (including guidance around course design to allow for the SoTL work to be appropriately implemented), identification of appropriate journal(s), and even assistance in the IRB process. (Laura Lukes)

Immersive Project Development Programs

5. SoTL Project Development Institutes

Definition:

An organized gathering of a cohort of individuals or teams working on SoTL projects meeting over a short period of time (typically a few days or a week) with a shared goal to make significant progress on developing some aspect of a SoTL project; scope varies (e.g., skills development, project design, data analysis, developing a dissemination strategy and plan; producing a presentation or article);

level of expert guidance can vary, but programming typically includes an opportunity for participants to get feedback on their specific project as a whole or in part

Example in Practice:

The SoTL Scholars Program at the University of Virginia seeks to empower and lower barriers for faculty to learn about and engage in SoTL. As part of this program, faculty across various disciplines participate in a 3-day institute where they gain the knowledge and skills needed to successfully plan and implement a SoTL project over the subsequent academic year. During these three days, faculty work in small groups on various activities to help them explore relevant SoTL topics and ideas, then have opportunities to work on applying these knowledge and skills to developing their own SoTL project. On day 1 of the institute, faculty learn about SoTL, how to develop strong research questions, and where to search for SoTL literature. On day 2 of the institute, faculty learn about various SoTL study designs, sources of evidence, and ethical SoTL research. Throughout the day faculty have opportunities to begin developing their SoTL project's study design. On day 3 of the institute, faculty learn about instrumentation, measurement, and validity/reliability. They have opportunities to identify currently developed instruments or work on developing their own instruments. By the end of the institute, each SoTL Scholar has a drafted SoTL project and is prepared to begin working on their Ethics Review Board application. Three follow-up workshops throughout the academic year help support SoTL Scholars in data collection, analysis, and dissemination of their project. (Lindsay Wheeler, University of Virginia)

6. SoTL Write-ins or Writing Retreats

Definition:

An organized gathering of individuals or teams working on SoTL projects who share the common goal to produce SoTL products (e.g., grant proposal, presentation, article) and seek community and/or accountability; frequency varies from a single day, few days or on a regular basis over a longer period (e.g., semester, year); may be spontaneous participation (i.e., whoever shows up) or organized cohort-based

Example in Practice:

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Virginia Tech has partnered with the Office of Faculty Affairs to offer multi-day writing retreats for faculty needing focused time on their writing process. The retreats are typically held in person and often held at

an off-campus location and provided food and beverage service throughout the day. In addition to dedicated writing time, the Office of Faculty Affairs provides small breakout discussions and consultations with writing experts throughout the day to help inspire and support the writing process. CETL faculty engage in the retreat by remaining available throughout to offer consultations on the SoTL process on whatever phase of the process the faculty is in. The writing retreats are typically during the summer and winter semester breaks. The CETL serves as a support component of the larger writing retreat. (Liesl Baum, Virginia Tech)

Extended or On-Going Project Development Programs

7. SoTL Faculty Learning Community or Reading Group

Definition:

An organized gathering of individuals, a project team, multiple teams, or combination of individuals and project teams that meet on a regular basis over longer periods of time (e.g., a semester, academic year) with goals to exchange knowledge, resources, and feedback (specific structure varies); typically involves people working on individual or team projects, but could be a reading group examining the published work of others

Example in Practice:

The Center for Teaching at the University of Mary Washington hosts a three-semester faculty learning community called SoTL Scholars. The group meets monthly each semester. In the first semester, members learn more about SoTL by reading articles, hearing from guest speakers who explain components of the SoTL process (such as IRB), and creating their own IRB proposal for a SoTL project. In the second semester, members implement their SoTL projects in their own courses while learning about venues for publicly sharing SoTL work, such as journals and conferences. In the third semester, members convene for monthly writing time. At the beginning of the third semester, members determine a goal for publicly sharing their work at the end of the semester; then, at each individual meeting, members celebrate progress, set micro-level goals for the writing time, and then close with goals for what they will accomplish by the next meeting. (Melissa Wells, University of Mary Washington)

8. CTL Collaborations

Definition:

A one-on-one or one-on-team exchange that involves CTL staff serving as collaborators in a SoTL project; varies in scale and scope from CTL staff co-constructing SoTL project ideas via single or multiple emails/meetings to full, formal co-PI involvement of CTL staff in SoTL project (e.g., project design, survey design and development, data collection, analysis and synthesis).

Example in Practice:

Virginia Tech's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning provides opportunities for faculty to request one-on-one consultations at any point during their SoTL work. The initial meeting typically serves as an intake of information so the CETL faculty can support the appropriate design and implementation of the work. These meetings are initially scheduled for about an hour and follow-up meetings are at the request of the faculty. The CETL faculty offers support for all aspects of SoTL work including research design, data collection and analysis methods, implementation (including guidance around course design to allow for the SoTL work to be appropriately implemented), identification of appropriate journal(s), and even assistance in the IRB process. CETL faculty have served as consultants to introduce faculty to this work as well as co-PI and engaging in the writing and publication process as well. (Liesl Baum, Virginia Tech)

9. Train-the-Trainer Model (Faculty or Graduate Student SoTL Fellows)

Definition:

A program that trains faculty or graduate students in SoTL methodologies so they can serve as SoTL project consultants for others or assist in collecting/analyzing data for SoTL projects; Vary in terms of size (e.g., single trainee, cohort of trainees), timeline (e.g., single training session, regular meetings over a semester or year), and scope (e.g., data collection only, analysis only)

Example in Practice:

The Engaged Teacher-Scholar (ETS) program at James Madison University offers faculty support in creating and sharing evidence-based teaching and learning scholarship. The goal of the ETS Program is to recognize JMU faculty who engage in meaningful

evidence-based teaching and learning scholarship. The program aims to support faculty growth in a process of becoming ETS leaders across JMU's campus. Faculty chosen to participate as ETS leaders receive professional development funds for the year to support their professional goals. They are trained by a faculty associate at the Center for Faculty Innovation on how to provide faculty professional development. The ETS leaders then plan, implement, and evaluate at least 2 SoTL professional development events within their departments or colleges while making progress on their own SoTL research projects. (Dayna Henry, James Madison University)

10. Students as Partners in SoTL

Definition:

A program that supports undergraduate or graduate student partnership as co-inquirers with instructors and/or educational developers in SoTL work. This may take the form of co-research partnerships, but may also involve students serving as co-organizers of SoTL programming and SoTL support through a Center for Teaching and Learning.

Example in Practice:

Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning (CEL) hosts a program called the CEL Student Scholars—a three year, mentored opportunity for students to collaborate with Elon University faculty and staff on CEL's international multi-institutional research teams. Student Scholars receive up to \$5000 in stipends annually to support their active participation in SoTL and higher education research. For example, three current student scholars are collaborating with Elon faculty to examine the question: How do we make learning experiences meaningful for all students?

Incentive, Recognition & Dissemination Programs

11. Incentives to Develop or Complete SoTL Project

Definition:

Something offered to faculty that is designed to reduce common barriers to faculty engaging in or disseminating SoTL work; Financial or time incentives (e.g., seed grants, stipend, course buy-out) to provide time or compensation for SoTL workload; staffing incentives (e.g., GRA hours) to assist instructor in the design and/or implementation of a SoTL project, reducing instructor SoTL workload; or financial incentives specific to supporting instructors to disseminate work (e.g., conference registration, particularly if venue is outside of discipline-specific venues).

Example in Practice:

As part of the SoTL Scholars program at the University of Virginia (see #5 “SoTL Project Development Institutes” Example in Practice for a description of the program) faculty participants receive multiple incentives intended to lower barriers to conducting and disseminating SoTL. These incentives include: 1) professional development funds during the program to support their course, data collection, and/or analysis, 2) graduate student or postdoctoral researcher support for data collection, 3) Specific SoTL related support from Librarians and Ethics Review Board, and 4) post program grant fund opportunities to support dissemination of SoTL project and/or expansion of SoTL research. (Lindsay Wheeler, University of Virginia)

12. Award or Title Recognizing Faculty Engaged in SoTL Work

Definition:

A form of incentive that aims to overcome the barrier of promotion and tenure bias towards SoTL work; Varies from a formal university award to an honorific affiliation with CTL (e.g., faculty fellow, SoTL Scholar) to a featured SoTL presenter tag in a pedagogy conference or showcase event that distinguishes it as data informed work (e.g., “SoTL project”)

Example in Practice:

The Center for Teaching at the University of Mary Washington recognizes cohorts of SoTL Scholars, who commit to a three-semester Community of Practice to design, implement, and disseminate findings from their own SoTL projects (see #8 “SoTL Faculty Learning Community or Reading Group” Example in Practice for a description of the program). For the three semesters members participate in the Community of Practice, they are recognized as SoTL Scholars. (Melissa Wells, University of Mary Washington)

13. SoTL Showcases / Conferences (Local Dissemination Events)

Definition:

An event in which SoTL projects are presented with goals of creating a local (institution-specific) space for faculty to share their SoTL projects or results beyond their own practice and meet other SoTLers from their institution (i.e., build a SoTL community); Vary in size (e.g., 6 from a cohort-based program like a development institute, group of 50 from across university); scope (e.g., works in progress, results); level of university engagement (e.g., only SoTLers and CTL staff, upper administrator attending)

Example in Practice:

George Mason University's Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning hosts an annual one-day conference. As part of those proceedings, the conference team solicits proposals for a SoTL Showcase—an interactive 90 minute session in which a convener invites 11 SoTL lightning talks (<5 min.) from George Mason instructors about their ongoing or recently completed SoTL projects. Following these talks, the session convener facilitates a roundtable discussion about the talks and SoTL. This provides an excellent opportunity for scholars to share works in progress and amplify their SoTL. (Laura Lukes, George Mason University)