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Peer Review of Teaching Project - CASTL: Expanding the SOTL Commons Cluster Final Report

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CASTL Expanding the SOTL Commons Cluster
Final Report, February 2010

A Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons can be defined as follows:

> A social and technical infrastructure to promote and support effective learning & student success, through teacher community collaborations to develop, adapt, share and mobilize pedagogical content knowledge, exemplary practices, and shared resources.

This working definition captures many of the lessons learned during the activities of our CASTL cluster on "Expanding the Commons," 2006-2009. Important aspects of this definition that emerged in our work include the following:

- It seems better to speak of _a_ teaching commons rather than _the_ teaching commons – we expect that there will be multiple such initiatives with levels of scope including institutional, disciplinary, regional, national and international. The scope, structure and activities need to be aligned with the community of teaching practice which contributes, uses, and sustains the shared knowledge and resources.
- A teaching commons is only part of "the solution" to enhancing learning and student success. For example, we will likely need other means to go beyond "promoting and supporting" to _expecting_ teaching practices that mobilize the best knowledge and resources for student learning in particular contexts. This greater level of expectation requires political or organizational infrastructure to complement social and cultural elements.
- SOTL is an important source – but not the only source – for the necessary knowledge, practices and resources. We need to consider craft knowledge and professional knowledge as well as research-based knowledge, and how to integrate pedagogical content knowledge with open educational resources.
- We will also need research on the processes and tools for these teaching communities to promote, support, share and mobilize their knowledge and resources: it is not clear to what extent this research fits within our current SOTL paradigms.

Our cluster institutions are engaged with a number of teaching commons initiatives. Our work together, including informing each other of those initiatives, sharing lessons learned, expanding those initiatives, and, in particular, understanding the multiple dimensions on which that expansion is occurring. These dimensions for our work include the following:

- expanding within an institution, to leverage the work of our best instructors and researchers
- expanding across institutions, to collaborate on common issues of pedagogical interest to instructors and of strategic interest to institutions and systems

- expanding the social and technical infrastructures, to provide a richer space for interactions. This includes enhancing knowledge representations and levels of engagement.
- expanding and integrating scope across local and regional teaching communities.

While our past teaching commons initiatives set the stage for these various expansions, this report focuses on only a few examples of how we are proceeding with work to enhance social and technical infrastructures and on the issues and prospects for these initiatives to come together for innovative and deeper for connections. Following these four examples, we conclude with some concrete outcomes based on the conversations that cluster representatives had about the desirability, scope, and mechanics of a possible repository for scholarship of teaching and learning. Those discussions led directly to the repository currently being piloted by the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Respectfully submitted for the entire cluster by:

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## Case 1. Building on MERLOT: Expanding Collaboration Support

Building on the initial involvement of the MERLOT network, our CASTL-related work has expanded collaboration support with a social and technical infrastructure integrating a community compendium of exemplary practices into a resource repository.

The work in this poster below, presented at the 2009 conference of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, reflects what we learned from the CASTL group to help extend the past MERLOT work to richer levels of faculty engagement. This new generation of social and technical infrastructures to expand the SOTL Commons has several instiations:in the College Mathematics Knowledge Exchange Network [MathKEN] and the Knowledge Exchange Network for Undergraduate Degreel Level Expectations [KENUDLE] of the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario [Canada], and the Developmental Math Collection and Teaching Collaboratory in the California Community Colleges [supported by the Hewlett Foundation and the National STEM Digital Learning program].

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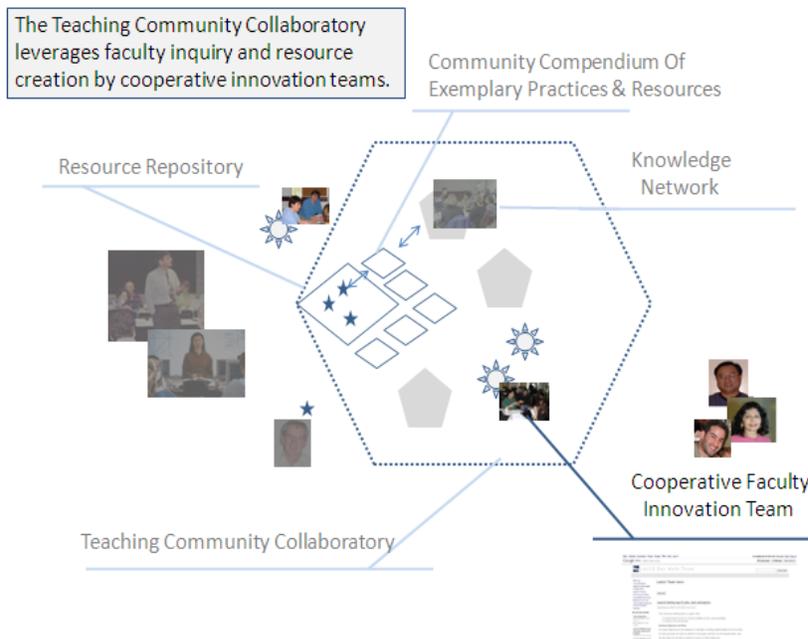
Case 2. University of British Columbia: Expanding the Commons within an Institution by Supporting Teaching Scholars

The Institute for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, in partnership with the Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth and the Community Learning Initiative, is pleased to announce an exciting new program designed to support your scholarly work in teaching and learning. The *Teaching Scholars Program* will provide financial and research support for a cohort of individuals interesting in developing their research skills in the area of teaching and learning and disseminating that research in effective venues.

The Opportunity
- to develop skills in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)
- to be supported by a cohort and experienced SoTL researchers while seeing a SoTL project to fruition
- to attend the 8th Annual conference of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Registration, airfare and accommodation paid by the Teaching Scholars Program
- work in partnership with a student of your choosing, graduate or undergraduate. Student honorarium to be paid by the Teaching Scholars Program

The Commitment
- attend the 3-day SoTL Kickstart program at UBC
- attend at least 2 of 3 Summer Cohort Days
- Attend at least 80% of "March to Milwaukee" events from September 2010 to January 2011
- Submit a proposal to ISSOTL 2011
- Be able to attend ISSOTl in Milwaukee — October 20-25, 2011

How to Apply. Applications to the Teaching Scholars Program are due February 15th, 2010. Applications must include the following:

1. A clear statement of the area you would like to research, including general objectives for the research. (one page)
2. A clear statement of how students could benefit from your work. (one page)
3. A clear statement of why a cohort-based program like the Teaching Scholars would be good for you and how you might contribute to a cohort-based learning environment. (one page)
4. A letter of support from your Department Head or Director of School.

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Case 3.
University of Nebraska-Lincoln: Peer-Reviewing Teaching

The Peer Review of Teaching Project at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has continued to expand the teaching commons in spite of recent budget cuts. In 2009-2010, 26 faculty members are participating in our campus first-year fellowship program and 17 faculty are participating in our campus advance scholars program. Participants in the fellowship program create portfolios that benchmark their students' learning and advanced program participants explore scholarly issues and questions regarding their teaching practices or their students' learning. A total of 196 UNL faculty members, from 48 different academic departments, have participated in the project in recent years. Over the past two years, 8 faculty have presented the results of this work in venues such as the International Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference, the Lily West Conference, and specific disciplinary conferences. The project's website (www.courseportfolio.org) currently hosts 335 course portfolios written by faculty from 18 different institutions. In addition, project leaders have shared peer review models and approaches at four other Midwest institutions and through two webinars that enrolled over 60 institutions. Project leaders have also published several articles this year in venues such as *Academic Leader*, *Insight: a Journal of Scholarly Teaching*, *Mountainrise*, and the e-journal *Transformative Dialogues*.

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Case 4.
University of Kansas: A multi-faceted approach to incorporating inquiry into learning into teaching

Our key task was to incorporate inquiry into learning at KU for the evaluation of teaching, department learning goals, and teaching awards, and to bring these processes into alignment. It will take several years to fully accomplish this task, but significant steps were made:

Evaluation of teaching—At moments of critical accountability, such as tenure or promotion, KU requires peer review of teaching as a complement to student ratings. Until recently this review was typically a letter from a colleague who had attended a class. A committee of distinguished research professors and department chairs considered what additional recommendations could be made to enhance the quality of that peer review, and they viewed the electronic course portfolios created by KU faculty members using an SoTL framework. As a result, KU faculty governance created a Task Force which broadly reviewed the campus teaching mission and recommended a modified process of evaluating teaching that includes treating teaching as intellectual inquiry.

Department learning goals—The Center for Teaching Excellence has worked with chairs and program coordinators to develop their use of faculty reflection on student work within routine representations of their teaching accomplishments. Our first step was developing new criteria for the KU Departmental Award for Exceptional Teaching and Learning. The nomination portfolio follows the *Scholarship Assessed* outline of components of teaching. In the spirit of SoTL, the final section asks how the unit as a whole has changed its teaching based on what it learned from examining students' work. The Provost's Office is using this process with 30 units for analyses of student success, using a reflective practice model to develop and sustain goals for enhancing student learning.

Teaching awards—We are also working with committees that honor the teaching of individual faculty members. KU has a program with over 20 annual teaching awards ranging from $3000 to $5000 for each recipient. The nomination processes for these awards was very traditional, consisting of letters from students and colleagues attesting to the dedication, preparation, and brilliance of nominees. One award committee asked nominators to follow the outline of an SoTL account of teaching. The protocol requested a peer review of teaching materials, including samples of student work. That review focused on intellectual content, course design, depth and breadth of student performance, and evidence of growth in teaching from consideration of students' learning. This approach is being used for three individual teaching awards, and several components of it are now being used in another teaching award program.

Archiving student work—This year, we are beta-testing a new system for student-based electronic portfolios. These will form the archive for program and institutional assessment of learning. This represents a step forward for treating teaching as inquiry at all levels—the course, the program, and the institution. Models from the CASTL project generated external support, which in turn motivated campus-wide adoption.

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Case 5.

Collaboration: Envisioning a repository and highlighting that in collaboration with the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

In addition to expanding ongoing initiatives, both on campus and across campuses, the cluster representatives had extensive conversations about the desirability, scope, and mechanics of a possible repository for scholarship of teaching and learning. We developed several models and made various pilots of those models. This is thoughtful information that could provide a start for others working along these lines in future.

Two concrete outcomes have emerged from these conversations so far:

1. a series of articles, informed by cluster conversations, that appeared in a special issue of the online journal *Academic Commons*:
   - "Building a Network, Expanding the Commons, Shaping the Field: Two Perspectives on Developing a SOTL Repository." By John Rakestraw. Accessible at http://www.academiccommons.org/commons/essay/building-network-expanding-commons.
   - "How Do Open Education Resources Acquire Their Value for Teaching and Learning?" By Tom Carey. Accessible at: http://www.academiccommons.org/commons/essay/open-educational-resources.
   - "Can a Repository Make the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Usable?" By Jennifer Meta Robinson Accessible at http://www.academiccommons.org/commons/essay/can-repository-make-sotl-usable.
2. a partnership with ISSOTL, in which the Society is piloting such a repository based on the links that the CASTL cluster forged with librarians at Indiana University. The Indiana University Libraries have designated a section of their digital repository, called IUScholarWorks, for archiving ISSOTL poster sessions from the 2009 conference. A call has been issued to poster presenters at that conference, and those who choose to make their work available electronically will be provided storage space and a persistent URL for accessing those posters. This archive will be public and searchable from the Web.

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