

# **“Organizing to Foster the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning”**

## **Illinois State University Cluster Leader Synopsis**

### **Background**

Illinois State University has been involved in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Campus Program, in a variety of ways, since about 1997. Our most recent work includes our 2002 AAHE Summer Academy Project on SoTL. This project involves a practical/intervention component to continue to increase the depth and breadth of involvement in SoTL on campus, involve more students in SoTL, improve the quality and dissemination of such work, increase the application of SoTL findings and implications, and improve the reward structure for faculty engaging in SoTL efforts. In addition, the project contains a research component as we are studying, through the use of existing data and a new survey, the nature of SoTL work (quantity, quality, disciplinary differences, support, rewards, uses, impact) on our campus now and five years from now. This past and current SoTL work has enhanced our ability to do and use SoTL to improve student learning, and supports the values of our institutional strategic plan, *Educating Illinois*.

### **Our Cluster**

Our Cluster will focus on assisting other institutions to enhance the support for, value and recognition of, and practical use of SoTL on their campuses. **We define our Cluster Leader as our institution, Illinois State University (ISU)**, with several faculty members, staff members, and students as key players. Additional members of the ISU community will also be involved. **The focus of our Cluster leadership would be to assist other institutions, especially in our geographical region, that are just beginning or are in the early stages of doing, supporting, and using SoTL.** Rather than a very broad conception of SoTL, as used by some institutions, that includes any effort to enhance or develop teaching, our focus would be on SoTL as **systematic reflection on teaching and learning made public**. This definition was written in an attempt to include a wide range of research (broadly defined) on teaching and learning in the disciplines that is presented or published.

We will offer strategies and assistance at the individual, department, and institutional levels. Examples of strategies we would describe, model, and facilitate include the following:

1. Faculty and staff development activities to support SoTL (e.g., small grants, workshops, resource materials, assistance with ideas or draft manuscripts, research/writing circles, internal publication or presentation outlets),
2. Electronic support for SoTL (e.g., web sites, discussion lists),
3. Ways to work with disciplines and departments (offering information about SoTL in that discipline, working with personnel committees to document and evaluate SoTL, providing information about the meaning and place of SoTL at that institution), and
4. Institutional change mechanisms (explicit inclusion of SoTL in missions, strategic plans, and tenure and promotion documents, public support of SoTL by top administrators, increasing resources to support SoTL, involvement of key constituencies and use of shared governance, creating special SoTL positions).

Our general **goal**, then, would be to inform other institutions about, and assist them in implementing and evaluating, strategies such as these as appropriate to their institutional context. More specific **objectives and processes** for the three-year period **with an**

**estimated time-line** include the following. These will be modified as needed after discussion with Core Members.

1. Meet with members of such institutions (face-to-face or virtual) to develop an understanding of their objectives and context relative to SoTL. (Year one)
2. Develop and share resource materials (print and web) to assist these institutions in their efforts. (Years one and two)
3. Hold a regional institute on conducting, supporting, and using SoTL for members of these institutions (resources permitting and/or for a “break-even” fee). (Year two or three)
4. Organize a session on SoTL for the 2004 Carnegie Doctoral/Research Intensive conference to be held at Illinois State University. (Year two)
5. Share our ideas and work in other settings (e.g., AAHE summer academy, CASTL colloquium). (All three years)
6. Help these institutions develop strategies to gather base line and follow-up data on the status and use of SoTL on their campuses. (Year one and three)
7. Create a web site that offers strategies, information, examples, etc. of how a variety of institutions have increased support and use of SoTL. (Year two and three)
8. If feasible and of interest to many, create a SoTL computerized discussion list. (Year one)
9. Work with other Cluster Leaders and/or Core members to discuss the pros and cons of forming a national SoTL interdisciplinary professional association, and the roles of such an organization including those related to individual and institutional support of SoTL. (Year two or three)

### **Core members**

We envision core members in our Cluster to include individuals and teams from other institutions in our region, though we welcome those farther away as well. These would be both institutions that already have active SoTL agendas and would be willing to assist with achieving the Cluster objectives as well as institutions at the beginning or early phases of SoTL work who are seeking assistance from the Cluster Leader and the other Core members. As for **core member requirements**, core members in the former category would share their strategies in various ways, assist the Cluster Leader with the regional conference, help create resource materials, add material and links to the web site, etc. Core members in the latter category would request assistance, provide information about their institutional context, attend the regional conference, participate in virtual communities, make use of resources, and collect base line and follow-up data. Core members should be active in other aspects of CASTL, attend other relevant conferences (AAHE), and meet the AAHE requirements of a Core member.

If appropriate (that is, if there is no Cluster whose focus is working with disciplinary societies), we also welcome representatives from disciplinary associations who would assist our Cluster. These representatives could provide resources and strategies to support SoTL at the disciplinary level that would be shared with these institutions.

### **Contact**

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