

60-Second SoTL

Episode 85 – Strengthening SoTL Ecosystems

Featured Article

Wright, Casey E. Lori C. Adams-Phillips, Adam E. Brummett, Kelly Danaher, Cynthia M. Farthing Elizabeth Kleiman, Alexandra Nica, Jennifer J. Sterling, Sara Nasrollahian Mojarad, Eva Latterner, Anna L. Bostwick Flaming. 2026. “Strengthening SoTL Ecosystems: A University of Iowa ISSOTL24 Cohort’s Reflection and Impact.” *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 14: 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearningu.14.18>

Transcript

(Music)

0:10

Jessie L. Moore:

What happens when teaching-focused faculty experience the scholarship of teaching and learning not as isolated work, but as a collaborative scholarly community? That’s the focus of this week’s 60-second SoTL from Elon University’s Center for Engaged Learning. I’m Jessie Moore.

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In “Strengthening SoTL Ecosystems: A University of Iowa ISSOTL24 Cohort’s Reflection and Impact,” Casey Wright, Lori Adams-Phillips, Adam Brummett, Kelly Danaher, Cynthia Farthing, Elizabeth Kleiman, Alexandra Nica, Jennifer Sterling, Sara Nasrollahian Mojarad, Eva Latterner, and Anna Bostwick Flaming explore how participating in a faculty cohort at the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning conference shaped faculty members’ identities, teaching practices, and sense of belonging within SoTL communities. Their article appears in *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, ISSOTL’s open-access journal.

1:15

The article highlights a growing challenge in higher education: teaching-focused faculty often teach large numbers of students and lead important instructional innovations, yet they may experience professional isolation or have uneven access to educational development opportunities.

At the University of Iowa, non-tenure-track faculty teach more than half of undergraduate student credit hours. In response, the university created a cohort-based professional development model that supported seven teaching-focused faculty members, a postdoctoral scholar, and Center for Teaching and Learning staff in attending the 2024 ISSOTL conference together.

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The cohort model emphasized shared learning before, during, and after the conference. Faculty participated in peer mentoring, reflective discussions, and collaborative sense-making facilitated by educational developers from the university's Center for Teaching and Learning.

After the conference, the researchers conducted a collaborative reflection process. Faculty wrote structured reflections about their experiences before, during, and after ISSOTL²⁴. The team then used thematic analysis to identify common themes across participants' reflections.

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Five major themes emerged.

First, faculty described a deepened understanding of SoTL itself. Some participants had previously experimented with evidence-based teaching practices without fully identifying that work as scholarship of teaching and learning. Exposure to the broader ISSOTL community helped participants better understand the kinds of questions, methods, and conversations that define the field. One faculty member described realizing that curriculum reform and classroom interventions could be understood as what he called "daily SoTL."

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Second, the conference experience reshaped participants' scholarly identities. Many instructional faculty already viewed themselves as scholars within their disciplines, but ISSOTL helped them also see themselves as scholars of teaching and learning. Participants described gaining confidence, legitimacy, and clarity around their professional identities as teacher-scholars.

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Third, faculty returned to campus with new ideas and a stronger sense of agency. Participants reported feeling energized to advocate for evidence-based teaching practices, share pedagogical innovations with colleagues, and contribute more actively to campus conversations about teaching and learning. Some faculty specifically mentioned learning new frameworks for theorizing learning and new approaches for integrating AI into teaching.

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Fourth, the cohort experience expanded faculty members' sense of community and belonging. Several participants described feeling isolated before the conference. At ISSOTL, they found what one faculty member called "my people." Informal conversations during meals and between sessions became important sites for connection, collaboration, and affirmation. Importantly, the conference strengthened both external professional networks and internal campus relationships among colleagues from different disciplines.

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And finally, faculty emphasized the critical role of the Center for Teaching and Learning in cultivating these connections. CTL staff served as mentors, organizers, thought partners, and advocates who helped faculty navigate SoTL projects and build sustainable scholarly communities.

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The authors frame these developments through the metaphor of ecosystems. They argue that SoTL growth doesn't happen only through individual faculty effort. It also depends on institutional structures, relationships, resources, and cultures that support scholarly teaching.

Their findings suggest that cohort-based faculty development can do more than improve individual teaching practices. It can strengthen institutional teaching and learning ecosystems by reducing isolation, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and supporting faculty as agents of organizational change.

5:07

For educational developers and institutional leaders, the article offers an important reminder: investing in teaching-focused faculty is also an investment in institutional culture, student learning, and long-term educational innovation.

This study also highlights the power of relational hospitality within SoTL communities—the idea that scholarly growth often happens through generosity, trust, collaboration, and shared inquiry.

To learn more about this study, visit our show notes for a link to the open access article.

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(Music)

5:44

Jessie L. Moore:

Join us for our next episode of 60-second SoTL from Elon University's Center for Engaged Learning for another snapshot of recent scholarship of teaching and learning. Learn more about the Center at www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org.

(Music)