Chapter 3
Structures and Considerations for SoTL Educational Development

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ABSTRACT

Colleges and universities around the world share a broad focus on education. However, unique characteristics and priorities across institutions may lead to vastly different educational development opportunities for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and levels of impact for the SoTL efforts (e.g., micro, meso, macro, mega). This chapter is organized in two distinct parts. Part 1 examines five different structures typical for SoTL educational development with a focus on their organizational structure within the institution and the SoTL expertise of individuals who lead these efforts. Strengths and limitations of each structure are presented. Part 2 provides a discussion of critical considerations that impact all SoTL educational development efforts regardless of the type of structure that exists within an institution.

INTRODUCTION

Educational development—and educational developers—can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and are impacted by numerous variables. Considered leaders in understanding teaching and learning in higher education, most educational developers work interactively with individual course instructors, academic departments, and other institutional groups or units to facilitate the use and understanding of effective pedagogical approaches. To accomplish this, educational developers represent a wide range of topic area specialties (i.e., online learning, culturally responsive teaching and learning, instructional design, embedded assessment) within the areas of teaching and learning. Increasingly across institu-

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Institutions, some specialize in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), developing programs to support research on teaching and learning. This chapter presents possible organizational structures for SoTL-focused educational development, along with important considerations for stakeholder groups with an interest in SoTL.

Unique characteristics and priorities across colleges and universities around the globe may lead to vastly different ways of doing the business of educational development. Many institutions have established structures for educational development that involve teaching and learning centers (TLCs) where students, staff, and faculty might learn about a variety of teaching and/or learning topics. Other institutions have smaller units or single individuals tasked with providing educational development to those interested in such opportunities. Lee (2010, p. 23) proposed a list of five basic organizational structures for educational development in higher education:

1. Centralized TLCs
2. An individual faculty member-leader, with or without a physical center
3. A committee that supports faculty development
4. A clearinghouse for programs and offerings
5. Structures that encompass more than one institution (system-wide offices)

Across each of these organizational structures, similar work occurs. Educational developers design and/or engage in workshops, consultations, classroom observations, orientations, grants/funding, faculty fellows, teaching circles, learning communities, research centered on teaching and learning, and external projects or collaborations. It should be noted, however, that the breadth and depth of programming these structures may offer to stakeholders varies depending on several factors: the institution type (e.g., comprehensive, research, liberal arts), the mission of the institution, resources allocated to the educational development unit (e.g., personnel, financial, space), and the interests and experiences of those affiliated with each structure (Lee, 2010).

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning as Part of Educational Development

SoTL both provides a foundation for many other education development efforts and receives inspiration from those other efforts. However, SoTL educational developers do not simply engage in SoTL research or serve as research mentors for others who engage in SoTL research. Specifically, Simmons and Taylor (2019) identify the primary work of SoTL educational developers as consisting of efforts to increase stakeholder interest in four distinct areas of focus: engagement, connection building, collaboration, and advocacy. Therefore, a SoTL educational developer might build capacity for SoTL through making connections with other institutional stakeholders to support SoTL work, providing resources for individuals/groups engaged in SoTL (e.g., consultations, trainings, support for travel/presentations/publication), developing small and large scale communities of stakeholders to support engagement in SoTL, and building a culture for SoTL across their institution. Cruz, Cunningham, Smentkowski, and Steiner (2019) developed a scaffold to extend the conventional work of SoTL educational developers to include mentorship in a developmental manner, arguing that in addition to the traditional roles of SoTL educational developers, it is incumbent upon individuals in such roles to provide scaffolded support to those engaged in SoTL, both novice and more veteran. Thus, the role of the SoTL educational developer encompasses a wide array of duties, and educational developers specializing in SoTL work with myriad...