Re-building a SoTL Culture: A Scaffolded Academy Model to Promote SoTL Practice, Use, and Growth

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INTRODUCTION

To sustain and expand the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), many institutions need fundamental cultural shifts. This case study describes the design and pilot implementation of the SoTL Academy: A three-semester, scaffolded program to advance SoTL practice at a regional public university in the southeastern United States.

Although our institution has a strong history of engagement in SoTL, and this form of scholarship is recognized in tenure and promotion guidelines, recent years have seen limited institutional initiatives dedicated to formally supporting SoTL work. To re-build our SoTL culture, two Educational Developers and two Faculty Fellows collaboratively designed the SoTL Academy model, creating three sequential components: a Faculty Learning Community (spring 2025), a SoTL Design Institute (summer 2025), and a Collaborative Writing Initiative (fall 2025). The Academy was designed to provide a sustainable institutional infrastructure that included comprehensive education, peer connection, and sustained support. Interdisciplinary in nature, the SoTL Academy promoted SoTL's value in the intellectual study of teaching and learning, encouraged reflective practice, and supported faculty throughout the entire SoTL process: from initial project conception through optional public dissemination. Surveys administered after each component measured program outcomes and participant experiences. Survey results will be shared, as will our plans for the next iteration of the SoTL Academy. This study responds to the gap in the literature noted by Taggart, Wheeler, and Cruz (2024), who highlight the lack of research demonstrating the impact of intensive SoTL initiatives.

This presentation responds to Grand Challenge #5 (Scharff et al., 2023) by strengthening SoTL practice through the SoTL Academy and collaborative partnerships among faculty, staff, and educational developers to sustain SoTL at our institution and beyond. By making our research public, we contribute to the scholarship of educational development, extend the body of SoTL knowledge, and make SoTL work at WCU visible.

METHODS

Faculty Learning Community (FLC)
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed, exempt
- Post-survey design used to assess participant experiences
- Survey created by Chad Hallyburton and informed by SoTL literature

SoTL Design Institute
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed, exempt
- Retrospective post-survey design used to assess participants experience pre- and post-event
- Survey created by Chad Hallyburton and informed by SoTL literature

Learn & Write Collaborative
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed, exempt
- Autoethnography – electronic journal
- Dissemination record analysis

Scholarship of Teaching & Learning Academy
Coulter Faculty Commons | Established 2025

Faculty Learning Community
A supportive cohort model that cultivates shared inquiry and peer learning

- 5 sessions
- Topics: Research question formulation, literature review, study design, IRB application, data collection and analysis, and outcomes dissemination
- 35 interactions
- 14 participants overall
- 7 = average attendance

SoTL Design Institute
Structured guidance to help faculty design rigorous, meaningful SoTL projects

- Application process
- 2-day event
- SoTL Expert Speaker Topics: Meaningful research questions, research design, IRB considerations, audience targeting, and ethical issues.
- WCU faculty panelists
- ORA IRB presentation
- 13 participants

Learn & Write Collaborative
Dedicated time & space for writing, feedback, and sustained progress toward dissemination

- 16 sessions
- Individual goal setting & writing time
- Range of 0-10 attendees

Designed, Facilitated, & Evaluated by:
April Tallant, Director, CFC
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CFC SoTL Faculty Fellows Chad Hallyburton, Environmental Health Program Faculty, Darby Harris, Biology Department Faculty

Collaborators: Jazmyne Baylor Hunter Library, Mallory Ball Office of Research Administration , Design Institute Panelists Chip Ferguson Engineering & Technology; Katharine Mershon Philosophy & Religion; Susan Braithwaite, Emergency Medical Care; Design Institute Special Guest Speaker: Laura Cruz, Penn State.
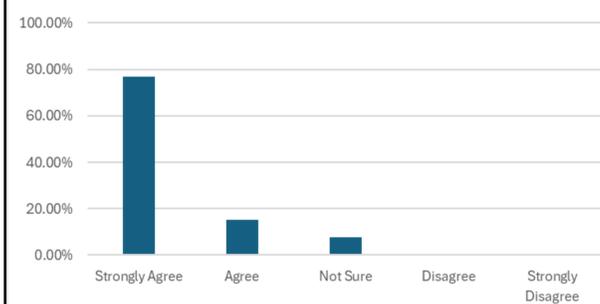
My involvement in the SoTL FLC has increased my interest in reading research on teaching and learning.
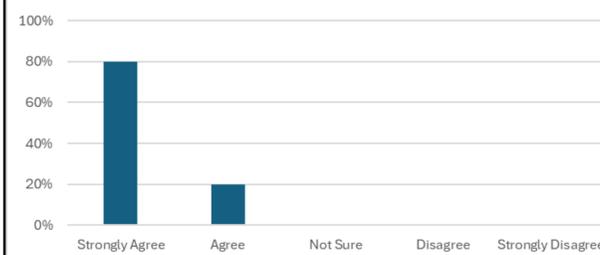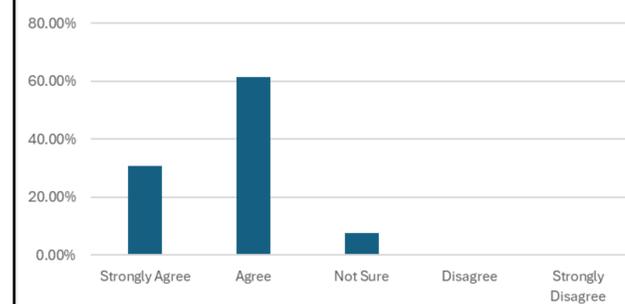

Participating in the SoTL FLC increased my confidence that I can use SoTL to improve my teaching practices.
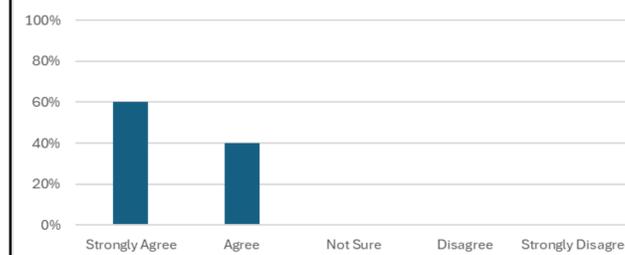
Participating in the SoTL Design Institute has made me more self-reflective of my teaching.

The SoTL Design Institute support will help me with my tenure and promotion process.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- WCU is a teaching- and student-centric university. Literature shows that SoTL is beneficial to faculty, their students, and their institution.
- Results suggest that the SoTL Academy provided infrastructure and support to pursue SoTL studies.
- Components of the SoTL Academy increased teaching and learning interest, confidence, and self-reflection.
- Most participants reported the SoTL Design Institute will help with tenure and promotion.
- The next iteration begins Summer 2026 and has been adapted based on survey results and feedback from participants.
- Recommendation: Institutional support for SoTL initiatives provides a return on investment. Resources should be devoted to the SoTL Academy. Outcomes should continue to be measured.

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