

Strategic Priority Funding  
Application Form  
2007-2008

#8

Project Name "A SoTL Community of Practice at MSU"

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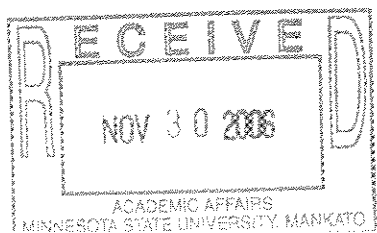
Dept. Chair Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dean Signature [Signature] Date 11/30/06

Vice President Signature [Signature] Date 11-30-06

Date Submitted to Office of Institutional Planning: Nov. 30, 2006  
(Deadline is November 30, 2006)

Priority Number  
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**Minnesota State University, Mankato**  
**FY08 Strategic Priority Funding Request**

**1. Which Strategic Priority and Objective does this funding request support?**

**Strategic Priority**

The MSU Strategic Priority related to this proposal is University Priority 5: Enhance Academic Excellence in Undergraduate Studies

**Innovative Idea**

The innovative idea described in this proposal is to form a scholarly community of practice of faculty interested in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). A scholarly community of practice is a group of faculty who meet regularly to discuss and work through issues related to the *research* of teaching and learning. This will enhance academic excellence for our undergraduates through study and research that will then be shared with other faculty both at MSU and beyond.

MSU is a part of a new Carnegie program that will continue for three years. A community working on SoTL can not only help our faculty see the value and need for research on teaching and learning but can also be opened to the other colleges in our cohort in the Carnegie program. This community would be co-supported by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) and the Center for Excellence in Scholarship and Research (CESR). Faculty in this group would meet twice each month during the academic year, learn about and share ideas on teaching and learning, and ultimately select a teaching/learning topic to research and share with not only the community but also the university and through journals and national presentations.

**Strategic Priority Objective**

Objective 1: Assess and improve our academic programs.

Objective 2: Uphold and strengthen standards for academic achievement.

**2. Provide a brief description of your project.**

The CETL and CESR-proposes the organization and implementation of a new SoTL Community of Practice. For the past two years, CETL has supported a number of these communities including the Teaching Certificate Program, the Department Chairs Community and this fall, the General Education Community. Recent research supports the assumption that many faculties become more and more stressed and dissatisfied over time in teaching, often caused by a lack of collegial relationships resulting in experiencing isolation with little or no feedback from other faculty. We propose an innovative project that would form a SoTL Community of Practice (as part of the new CASTL Carnegie program) that would allow a group of 8-12 faculty who not only value professional interactions across disciplines but also are interested in helping each other

solve problems by accumulating knowledge about teaching and learning at the University.

This community would meet twice a month during the academic year with the potential of continuing for many years. They would work to change the status of the “problem” in teaching from remediation to ongoing investigation—this is what SoTL is all about. Unlike the need to answer problems in pure research, a SoTL Scholarly Community of Practice would instead make this issue a matter of communal discourse. They will look at the evidence of student learning and how this can improve rather than focusing on problems to be investigated.

Teaching is serious work and requires equally serious inquiries through the scholarly activity of inquiry into teaching and learning through a variety of means to build a body of intellectual work. CETL and CESR hope to continue the “viral approach” to developing new ideas for teaching and learning at the university through a positive and productive community of like-minded faculty.

Recently, Boyer and others helped broaden the focus of research to recognize the SoTL which is the foundation of the Carnegie Foundation CASTL leadership program for which MSU was recently accepted. A SoTL Scholarly Community of Practice can have many long term benefits including:

1. Build university wide community through teaching and learning
2. Increase faculty interest in undergraduate teaching and learning
3. Increase faculty interest in engaging in scholarly activities
4. Investigate and incorporate ways that diversity can enhance teaching/learning
5. Nourish the scholarship of teaching and its application to student learning
6. Broaden the evaluation of teaching and the assessment of learning
7. Increase faculty collaboration across disciplines
8. Increase the rewards for and prestige of excellent teaching
9. Create an awareness of the complexity of teaching/learning

The structure of the SoTL group would mirror those of other communities developed by CETL recently. A call for interested faculty would go out at the end of the 2006-2007 academic year and early fall 2007. The FA Faculty Development Committee would select a maximum of 12 faculty for the community. The community would meet twice each month during the entire year, facilitated by Dr. Stewart Ross, Director of CETL and Dr. David Haglin, Director of CESR. Sessions will include guest presentations on learning theory and other teaching/learning issues, workshops, and group discussion and presentation. Each member of the community will select an area for their SoTL research which will progress during the year. The entire community will attend the two conferences of the Collaboration for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning in both November and February. (MSU is a paying member of the Collaboration) It is also expected that each member of the community will present their SoTL research at an MSU event, a regional/national conference or through a referred journal. It is expected that this community will continue for many years, supported by CETL as one of many communities of campus for faculty.,

### **3. How will the funding request support the Strategic Priority?**

Enhancing academic excellence in undergraduate studies is no small task. This necessitates faculty making this a priority and spending time researching how best to aid students in their learning. Through a SoTL Scholarly Community of Practice, a group of up to 12 faculty can demonstrate and model shared ideals, collaboration, flexibility, and reflection toward this goal. If we are to see improved undergraduate learning we must find ways to help faculty discover the best systemic insights that can be translated into action. Through learning conversations among a group of faculty wanting similar outcomes, coupled with the commitment that each will help the other to achieve it, we can build “team learning” that is at the heart of the learning organization. As institutions of higher education strive to remake themselves in a constantly changing world of increased globalization, the older paradigms of isolation and ‘ivory towers’ need to give way to faculty who share a common concern and a passion about teaching and learning--interested in deepening their knowledge and expertise that can make all the difference for their students.

### **4. Describe the measurable outcomes:**

- a. The participants will increase their knowledge about the SoTL by attending workshops and guest presentation along with reading (books and articles will be provided by CETL).
- b. The participants will develop respect and interest in faculty from across disciplines who volunteer to be in the community.
- c. The participants will complete and present their SoTL research at the university and beyond.
- d. As faculty at MSU and other institutions learn about the work of this community, the group will become a model for sharing and learning about teaching as it relates to improve student learning.
- e. Faculty will use ideas and research completed to aid them in teaching and learning.

### **5. Assessment Measures—Define what methods will be used in assessing the effectiveness of the project.**

Assessment of this project will be done at many different levels. First of all, faculty in the SoTL community would do regular reflections as part of a continuing development of a teaching portfolio. This would include a detailed reflection on the two Collaboration conferences attended. Faculty would also complete pre-and post- attitudinal survey along with on-going evaluations of the community itself.

CETL would also keep track of attendance at sessions and the number of presentations of the research of individuals in the community. Work related to the improvement of teaching and learning might be further measured by improvement in student learning in courses related to the work of the community. Finally, it is expected that the on-going meeting of a SoTL community will not only improve those who participate in the group but also be a model for other faculty interested in the SoTL.

Assessment of the main goals follows:

- a. The participants will increase their knowledge about the SoTL by attending workshops and guest presentation along with reading (books and articles will be provided by CETL).

- b. The participants will develop respect and interest in faculty work from across disciplines who volunteer to be in the community. This will be measured through attitudinal surveys designed for this purpose.
- c. The participants will complete and present their SoTL research at the university and beyond. This will be measured through attendance at conferences and workshops and presentations and articles published by participants in the group.
- d. As faculty at MSU and other institutions learn about the work of this community, the group will become a model for sharing and learning about teaching as it relates to improve student learning. This will be assessed through presentations on and off campus.
- e. Faculty will use ideas and research completed to aid them in teaching and learning. This will be assessed through individual teaching portfolios and assessments completed regularly with classes taught during the spring semester 2008.
- f. A mid-term report of activities will be completed at the end of the fall semester 2007 and a summary report at the end of June 2008.

**Reports Due:**

6. **Mid Year Report due:** January 31, 2008

7. **Summary Report due:** June 30, 2008

**8. Budget Request: From Strategic Initiative Funding**

	<u>Request</u>	<u>Match</u>
Salary	\$12,000	
Fringe		
Grad Assistant		
Non Salary (Specify)		
Stipend to attend the Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching Conferences	\$9,600*	\$500**
<b>Total Budget Requested</b>	<b>\$21,600</b>	<b>\$500</b>

Salary of \$12,000 would be paid in individual \$1000 stipends to those who have the SoTL research (that comes out of work in the community) published in referred journals or presented at a national conference during the 2007-2008 fiscal year.

\* \$9,600 is broken down as follows:

- \$800 for each of 12 participants in the SoTL Scholarly Community of Practice
- The \$800 request is for two conferences (Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching in Bloomington, MN) per member (includes registration fee, one night hotel, and meals) at \$400 per conference.

\*\*cost of van to take participants to both conferences as a group and books/photocopying charges for articles etc.