







## Impact of a regional community of practice for academic developers engaged in institution-level support for SoTL

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### ABSTRACT

Academic developers play a key role in advancing instructor engagement in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) at their higher education institutions, but face structural and epistemological isolation. To leverage the knowledge and experience of developers leading SoTL efforts at their respective institutions, a group of academic developers co-created a regional community of practice (CoP) centered on developing evidence-based strategic plans and programming models to advance SoTL at their. We describe the development and outcomes of this regional CoP. Future directions for the use of such a regional CoP model to collaboratively develop cross-institutional offerings are also discussed.

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Community of practice; cross-institutional; educational developer; scholarship of teaching and learning; scholarship of educational development

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is the grounded study of teaching, most often emerging from one's own experience and practice (Chick, 2019). However, the practice does not necessarily come naturally. Bailey et al. (2021) suggested that engagement in SoTL can be especially challenging due to lack of awareness, time, energy, and research isolation. Likewise, Webb and Tierney (2020) argued that because understanding SoTL constituted a 'threshold concept' for those new to the field, new scholars need to be guided into the language and culture of the field. Additionally, sustained SoTL advocacy at multiple levels is necessary for its success (Webb & Tierney, 2020). SoTL requires intentional multi-level support to thrive at universities.

Therefore, academic developers play a key role in advancing SoTL at their institutions (Bernstein & Ginsberg, 2009; Schwartz & Haynie, 2013) by offering relevant programming, increasing the visibility and perceived value of SoTL at their institutions, and encouraging networks of SoTL scholars within their institutions and beyond (Kenny et al., 2016). Academic development in the United States has long been associated with an expansive vision of impact, such as the POD Network's language of 'Organizational Development' in its

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naming to signal a focus not only on small-scale instructional support, but also on ‘the organizational structure of the institution and its subcomponents . . . [so that] the teaching/learning process will naturally thrive’ (POD Network Website in Schroeder, 2011, pp. 23–24). However, academic developers often face the same isolation instructors do for advancing SoTL initiatives and programs. For example, in the United States and Canada, nearly one third of academic developers are the sole person at their institution doing such work (Beach et al., 2016) making advancing SoTL particularly challenging.

As SoTL-focused academic developers at six institutions across the state of Virginia (USA), we faced both epistemological and structural isolation in our work. In response to this challenge, we developed a Community of Practice (CoP) to support each other in the advancement of SoTL both within and across our institutions, a model which can be adapted by others engaged in similar work. This paper describes the design and implementation of this regional, cross-institutional CoP focused on institution-level strategic planning of SoTL support programming. We examine the benefits of a CoP framework and the outcomes of our model, including the impact of participation on our individual SoTL program design knowledge. We conclude by discussing the implications of cross-institutional academic development practices and the future use of such models.

## **Theoretical premise and defining the structure of our community of practice**

Communities of Practice (CoPs) are ‘groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis’ (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4). The community of practice model is rooted in ‘situated learning’, a learning construct based on sharing expertise in an iterative way through ‘mutual engagement’, ‘joint enterprise’, and ‘shared repertoire’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 13). This original conception of a community of practice is characterized by shifting knowledge from expert to novice participants.

More recent scholarship building on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) work takes a more expansive view of expertise within a group, especially those CoPs that contain mixed roles. For example, Meacham et al. (2013) pointed out that in mixed-role communities of practice, individuals bring expertise from the other communities they inhabit which allows them to serve as experts at varying points. Our own experience echoed these findings, as our group of graduate students, a post-doctoral fellow, faculty fellows, associate directors, and directors all had voices in co-creating the community. We shared academic development practices and knowledge in ways that highlighted our unique ‘expert’ contributions, rooted in our varied institutional contexts, academic development situational factors, and additional community memberships.

## **Context, project motivation, and problem statement**

During an inaugural Virginia Educational Development Collaborative meeting during the *Conference on Higher Education Pedagogy* hosted by Virginia Tech in February 2020, a subgroup of academic developers (authors) discovered we were each at various stages of developing SoTL support programming for faculty through our centers. We were interested in learning how others were designing, reimagining, and implementing strategic program decisions. This common interest led us to develop a formalized exchange of

knowledge about SoTL programming efforts and create a space for *shared* experience developing institution-specific SoTL strategic plans. We secured grant funding to support our collaborative efforts and met virtually to create and participate in the SoTL Collaboratory (SoTL-C) project described below.

The long-term, aspirational goal of the SoTL-C was to increase faculty production of SoTL in Virginia (USA). To work towards this goal, the SoTL-C aimed to improve the quality and quantity of support available to faculty interested in SoTL by focusing on the SoTL program development practices of academic developers working at local institutions. The short-term goal was to design and implement a regional, cross-institutional CoP model of support for academic developers who were aiming to engage faculty on SoTL projects. This CoP would support exchange of knowledge about SoTL program design through participants sharing experiences, examples, and expertise, and it would create opportunities for engagement in a 'public' strategic planning process.

Previous studies about CoP models in SoTL have typically focused on faculty learning communities (FLCs). FLCs have been demonstratively beneficial for developing faculty engagement in and capacity for the scholarship of teaching and learning (e.g. Bailey et al., 2021; Cherrington et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2021). Overall, FLCs provide community, countering the often-isolated practice of SoTL and resulting in re-energized professional practice, collaborative scholarship, and increased professional confidence (Bailey et al., 2021; Cherrington et al., 2018; Webb & Tierney, 2020). Similar CoPs among professional staff supporting those faculty engaged in SoTL (e.g. academic developers) are understudied.

Our theoretical assumption was that a CoP model would support the development of individual and collective professional knowledge and self-efficacy (Bailey et al., 2021) which would translate into increased SoTL program development across the participating institutions (Myatt et al., 2018). This case study of the SoTL-C's CoP explores that assumption.

## Participants

Six institutions participated, including one public 4-year, and five research-intensive universities: James Madison University (JMU), George Mason University (GMU), University of Mary Washington (UMW), University of Virginia (UVA), Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VT). The missions of each institution's center for academic development included support for SoTL activities among the faculty. The six centers represented within this CoP varied in terms of size, financial resources, and types of programming offered. Representatives from each participating institution included three graduate students (GMU), one post-doctoral fellow (UVA), two faculty fellows (UMW, JMU), three assistant or associate directors (GMU, VT, UVA, JMU), and three center directors (VT, VCU).

At the start of the CoP, participating institutions varied widely in their experience offering SoTL support. For example, at the start of the CoP, VCU offered only individual consultation on faculty SoTL projects, while VT offered a combination of workshops, faculty learning communities, writing retreats, showcases, scholar incentives, and formal recognition. Two CoP institutions identified as 'emergent' in planning and piloting stages (VCU, UMW). Two institutions identified as 'evolving', meaning they had tried several programs and were in the process of iterative revisions to improve outcomes (GMU,

UVA). And finally, two institutions had ‘established’ SoTL initiatives in place for several years with regular revision and efforts to scale their programs (JMU, VT).

## **Design of the regional CoP**

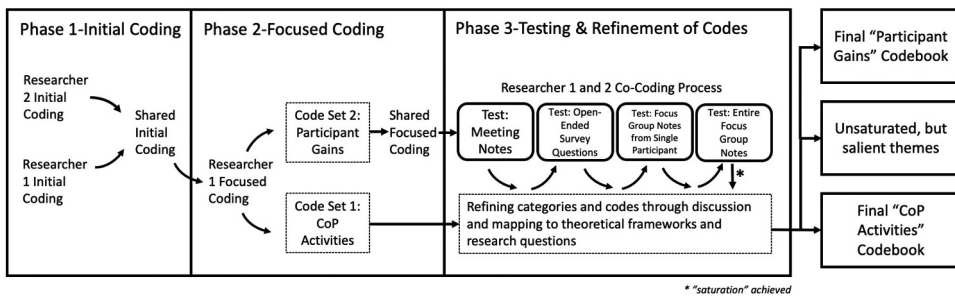
Goodnough et al.’s (2020) application of Lave and Wenger’s CoP model further clarified CoPs as having three key elements: a specific domain, ongoing community engagement, and collaborative practice or production. We defined the boundaries of our community’s domain to be focused on a subgroup of Virginia academic developers leading SoTL initiatives at their varied institutions. We included regular opportunities for the community members to engage and come together as a group through virtual Zoom meetings. We also set group goals and planned group activities for participants to practice individual SoTL program design and strategic planning alongside collaborative community co-construction and reflection experiences. This balance was intended to support our goal of producing a strategic planning tool that others in the wider academic developer community could use. Following the CoP design principles of Wenger et al. (2002), we planned activities to accommodate community members’ naturally evolving needs and engagement; varying and changing levels of engagement; and both internal and external perspectives. To support community engagement, we included both individual and collective production activities to enhance participation value to members.

## **Methods for assessing and evaluating impact of regional academic developer CoP model**

We used a case study methodology to assess and evaluate the impact and value of the SoTL-C. Case study methodologies are appropriate when attempting to gain a deep understanding of a complex individual case (Stake, 1995) and often use multiple research methodologies and several different data sources to inform analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). They are adept at answering ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions because of their attention to situated experience and are especially valuable for making arguments that build on and nuance relevant theoretical concepts (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In this case, we nuance Lave and Wenger’s CoP model with our experiences in a regional community of practice, and we focus specifically on understanding the gains resulting from this structure.

Data sources for our case study included meeting notes from the CoP meetings, memos from the first author, a quantitative participant survey, and qualitative reflections from participants during a focus group or sent via email. CoP meetings generally occurred monthly, during which a CoP member volunteered to take notes and all members participated in adding to and editing those records. Additionally, the first author memoed during and between meetings, summarizing and sharing many of these reflections via email. These meeting notes were used in the development of our participant gains codebook described in more detail below.

At the end of the first year, CoP participants were invited to complete a 33-item survey administered through Qualtrics (Supplementary Material A). The survey assessed the value and impact of the SoTL-C on CoP participants and was developed by the lead PI, with cognitive validity feedback from two graduate students to establish evidence of survey trustworthiness. During the second year of the SoTL-C, members participated in a 1-hour



**Figure 1.** Overview of qualitative coding process.

virtual focus group to reflect on the impact of the SoTL-C on their program choices at their institutions, the faculty at their institution, their identities as professionals, and their participation and outcomes amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (Supplementary Material B). The second author facilitated the focus group and took notes. The first and second authors recorded and analyzed the focus group meeting notes.

We collected additional data after beginning analysis, when a member comment—‘I had a love-hate relationship with this group’—highlighted that a limitation in our study design was the focus of our research questions on the perceived benefits of a CoP model. The quantitative questions on the survey included negative rating options, but did not include open-ended questions that directly inquired about costs or negative aspects of participating in the CoP. In the focus group, we asked participants about benefits but not drawbacks. As a result, in one of our writing sessions following the focus group, we asked the group about drawbacks and followed up with non-attendees by email.

The first and second authors coded multiple sources of qualitative data (meeting notes, open-ended survey responses, focus group notes) through a multi-phase iteratively recursive process (Figure 1). In the first phase, they independently coded the meeting notes using a priori and in vivo approaches. They compared their initial coding results and collaboratively recoded the data through multiple iterations of first cycle approaches (e.g. process coding, emotion coding, structural coding). In the second phase, the lead author utilized a focused coding approach to develop categories for two sets of emergent first phase codes, ‘CoP activities’ and ‘Participant Gains’. In the third phase, the codes associated with the ‘Participant Gains’ set were further developed with the second author through a process of sequentially testing emergent codes and categories across datasets (open-ended survey question responses, a single focus group participant response set, and finally the entire focus group data set) and refining codes through discussion.

Cho and Trent (2006) have argued that validity in this kind of qualitative analysis is characterized by prolonged engagement with participants and a recursive process of member checking. The authors of this study are simultaneously the community of practice members; our engagement has now spanned three years and our process has included intentional member checking opportunities throughout. Validity of our results comes from the multiple data sources we drew on, our collaborative writing and collaborative sense-making process, our recursive coding approach, and multiple periods of full group input and revision.

## Results and discussion

All active CoP participants in May 2021 (n = 9; 1 graduate student, 1 post doc, 2 faculty fellows, 3 assistant or associate directors, and 2 center directors) completed the survey and seven participated in the Focus Group (2 faculty fellows, 3 assistant or associate directors, and 2 center directors), reflecting full participation by consistent members of the group. The second author joined the CoP after the survey was conducted and served as the focus group facilitator, so did not participate.

Based on anonymous survey results (Supplementary Material C), all participants (n = 9) rated their experiences in the SoTL-C CoP as exceptional (7; 78%) or good (2; 22%) use of my time as a faculty developer. Eight shared that exchanging SoTL program 'stories' or updates during meetings was extremely valuable (6; 67%) or very valuable (2; 22%) with one responding they did not participate in this sharing. Additionally, all participants (n = 9) indicated they would be likely to recommend participating in a 'SoTL Collaboratory-like' program to a friend or colleague to develop SoTL programming at their institution.

Qualitative and quantitative responses to both the survey and focus group questions were largely positive, with qualitative responses centering around the various benefits this community of practice afforded participants. Through qualitative analysis, we observed four overarching categories among participant perceptions of benefits: affective gains, cognitive gains, productivity gains, and recognition gains (see Supplementary Materials D and E for codebook and frequencies respectively). The results below are organized by the overarching categories of participant perceptions of benefits (gains) and drawbacks.

### *Affective gains*

CoP activities were designed to support positive individual development (e.g. strategic plan reflections and peer review) and foster positive relationship building amongst participants (i.e. building trust through sharing stories of effective and ineffective faculty developer leadership experiences). Affective gains, or emotional and attitudinal gains, were an emergent overarching categorical theme identified in open-ended survey and focus group responses, mentioned 139 times across both types of data (Supplementary Material E). This categorical theme consists of three main groups of codes: feeling aspects of a sense of community (n = 86), feeling motivation or inspiration (n = 35), and feelings of self-efficacy (n = 18).

### *Feeling a sense of community*

All nine survey participants responded that participation 'fostered a sense of belonging and community with people engaging in work similar to mine' and that they found 'connecting regularly with a peer network of faculty developers' extremely valuable. In open-ended responses, this sense of community emerged through codes of shared professional identity (n = 34), connectedness (n = 35), or camaraderie (n = 17). As one participant remarked, 'I didn't anticipate how valuable the community/camaraderie would be ... but I really look forward to group meetings and always felt energized after the group meetings in a way I don't after other collaborative team meetings' [survey]. Another reported that

... the community aspects (connecting regularly) was the foundation for everything else for me. I will admit sometimes I feel pretty alone in my SoTL work, and this group helped me feel far less alone and built my professional network immensely. [survey]

And yet another reported that '... joining the Collaboratory has really helped me ... see myself more professionally as both a SoTL researcher and faculty developer ...' [focus group].

### ***Feeling motivated or inspired***

Seventy-eight percent (n = 7) of survey respondents indicated that participation 'motivated [them] to work on SoTL plans', suggesting that the community engagement helped foster feelings of motivation. Additionally, participants developed aspirational programming plans or found inspiration to try new things in their practices, as evidenced by one member's comment that 'these connections helped spark new ideas ... trying something new in planning or programming in response to community discussion or ... community activities' [survey]. Participants also expressed feelings of extrinsic motivation through the positive accountability of regular, ongoing CoP activities. As one member explained, 'I appreciate our monthly meetings as a way to keep my work on track and seek the guidance of peers' [survey].

### ***Feeling increased self-efficacy***

Many participants reported increased knowledge resulting in feelings of improved confidence or preparation. All survey participants (n = 9) indicated increased confidence in the content of their SoTL strategic plan and almost all (n = 8) felt more prepared to support faculty at their institution to engage in SoTL work. Eighteen comments (six survey and 12 focus group) related to participants' increased self-efficacy in their SoTL leadership. One explained, 'I feel more prepared with resources to implement at my institution' [survey]. Another shared, 'This group ... had the accidental, but wonderful, impact of preparing me for my own institution's leadership changes. Now I feel solidly prepared to pitch an institutional plan to advance SoTL' [focus group].

### ***Learning gains***

Regular CoP meeting activities (e.g. sharing program planning and implementation progress updates, peer review of each other's strategic plans) were designed to support participant learning through the sharing of resources, experiences, decision-making processes, and peer feedback. The goal of these activities was to support participant learning about SoTL broadly as an inquiry endeavor, as well as support practices for designing and implementing SoTL programs for faculty. All nine survey participants responded that a value of the SoTL-C was gaining new knowledge about SoTL, suggesting they perceived SoTL learning to have occurred through their participation. Such cognitive, or learning, gains were an overarching categorical theme identified in open-ended survey and focus group responses, expressed 41 times across both types of data. This theme consists of two different codes: feelings of increased knowledge (23 times) and feelings of expanded perspectives through expressions of metacognitive processes (18 times).

### ***Feelings of increased knowledge***

Feelings of increased knowledge included declarative, procedural, and conditional types of knowledge. Declarative (conceptual) knowledge gains included participant reports of developing better understandings of what SoTL is as an activity, what forms SoTL program models take, or what resources exist to support faculty developers in designing programs. For example, one participant shared that they are ‘always so busy, so there is little time to keep up with the latest in SoTL or faculty development. Through the group meetings, [they] learned about different articles of programs/initiatives’ [survey]. Another shared that ‘joining the Collaboratory has really helped me understand SoTL’ [focus group]. Gains in procedural knowledge, or how to do things, focused on learning new programming implementation strategies or tactics, such as one participant who shared, ‘[my program approach] was modeled after what I believe I heard [colleague] sharing in some of our meetings’ [focus group]. Another reported that the discussions about the program design process, ‘allowed me to launch a new SoTL initiative at my institution’ [survey]. Conditional knowledge gains, or when to use or not use certain strategies or tactics, were expressed as participants learning aspects of program decision-making. For example, ‘Affirming that folks are at different stages . . . we have to apply different types or genres of programs to meet the needs of where we’re at as an institution’ [focus group].

### ***Feelings of expanded perspectives through expressions of metacognitive processes***

Members described feelings of expanded perspective as shifts in understanding how their work or SoTL more broadly fits the higher education landscape, or how their role fits into the larger community or ecosystem of academic developers (beyond the SoTL-C). Participants expressed engaging in reflective activities during the SoTL-C that raised their metacognitive awareness of their personal practices, decision-making, and approaches. For example,

I really appreciated the opportunity to review other plans to see how other institutions have framed their work in SoTL. It really helped me with some perspective on our own plans, identify where it might be helpful to seek support or advice, and identify ways I could help others in their efforts. [survey]

This process of stepping back to recognize other possibilities supported participants as they reflected on their institutional goals for SoTL.

### ***Productivity gains***

The CoP collaboratively produced a *SoTL Strategic Planning Worksheet* focused on planning for and implementing institution-level SoTL programming, a ‘how to’ strategic planning workshop for other academic developers, and a *SoTL Program Taxonomy* that are discussed elsewhere (Lukes et al., in preparation). These shared production activities accelerated participant’s progress by reducing tasks to complete, generating a range of possible ideas and models faster, and increasing participants’ motivation to make progress. Individual productivity gains focused on the affordances engagement in CoP activities provided participants in relation to their institution’s programming staff capacity or scope of program offerings. Some reported gains of saving time and effort, and

thus a reduced personal workload (n = 9). For example, ‘this saved me a lot of time as I didn’t have to search for [SoTL literature], I received a quality curated ‘+list’ in a sense from the expertise of the members’ [survey]. Some reported being able to expand their SoTL-related work because of the financial support associated with participation (n = 6) such as one member who shared:

We . . . finally completed a project we’d been discussing for years. This was to look at the [promotion and tenure] documents to see whether and to what extent SoTL was valued across departments. That was also spurred by the Collaboratory and paid for with grant funding. [focus group]

Others could offer an expanded portfolio of SoTL programming through the cross-institutional relationships built in the CoP (n = 27). For example, ‘[Participant]’s webinar series was a critical SoTL program offering that we were allowed to offer our faculty’ [focus group]. Lastly participants reported making progress in strategic planning efforts or advancing progress faster than they would have otherwise (n = 11): ‘My internal motivation was to get some SoTL going, but I could not have come up with the plans I did without this group. Or it would have taken MUCH longer’ [focus group].

### ***Recognition gains***

Finally, participants reported recognition gains centered on the production of collaborative scholarship (n = 10) and reports of being perceived by people outside of the SoTL-C as a leader due to CoP work (n = 7). The CoP collaboratively produced several conference presentations or workshops and multiple manuscripts (in progress). Members identified these products and presentation experiences as advancing their professional scholarship output. In the words of one participant, ‘Professionally, I wouldn’t have done as many presentations or co-written grants. Collaboration saved me from a scholarship perspective, especially during the pandemic’ [focus group]. In terms of leadership, one member reported, ‘now I’m recognized on campus as the person to go to [about SoTL]’ [focus group]. Others reported feelings of being seen as a leader more generally, as illustrated by one member’s comment:

I definitely would not be [in a national organization’s SoTL leadership position] like I am now if it weren’t for the SoTL-C. I saw a lot of overlap in my participation. The Collaboratory always had conversations about scale – being connected with the SIG [Special Interest Group] helped those discussions continue. [focus group]

### ***Drawbacks, barriers, and unexpected benefits***

As we reviewed information from the survey and focus groups, details emerged about drawbacks, barriers, and unexpected benefits of participating in the CoP. As mentioned in the methods section, we did not explicitly ask about these aspects of participating. The following information is a summary of the ideas that emerged through verbal and email discussion following the focus group to address this methodological limitation. As with the rest of our data, we reviewed these sections as a group (member checking) to ensure our reporting accurately captured members’ experiences.

### ***Drawbacks to participating***

Drawbacks centered on the time commitment intensity of the CoP activities. First, time spent on CoP ‘joint enterprise’ activities took time away from other programming or work for members’ own institutions. Second, it was difficult for some members to keep track of the multiple collaborative production activities and deadlines that ran parallel to CoP meetings (e.g. workshop design, presentations), resulting in feelings of being overwhelmed or behind on commitments to the CoP. While a facilitator for some, the flexibility in production, meeting attendance, and deadlines meant participants often needed to spend time catching up on meetings missed due to institutional commitments, slowing collective productivity and eliciting feelings of being overwhelmed. For some, this feeling was exacerbated by joining the group belatedly following institutional leadership changes, which led one participant to describe feeling she was never fully caught up. Third, the intensity of some of the CoP activities (e.g. additional workshop and presentation development meetings) made it difficult for some members to participate in certain activities, which resulted in feelings of not being able to contribute to the community as frequently or as meaningfully as members hoped.

### ***Barriers to gains***

Three barriers to participant gains came from the CoP structure itself. First, there was unequal access to financial resources. The group received grant funding to support the work of the CoP, but only member institutions of the granting agency had access to these funds. Therefore, two members of the group did not benefit from any grant funding. Second and perhaps most importantly, spending time in the CoP to reflect on what the CoP was doing (self-study of the CoP impacts) reduced the amount of time invested in developing shared programming or creating opportunities to network among participants (i.e. attending other programs’ events). Lastly, questions about sustainability of the CoP model, and thus long-term or ongoing gains, emerged. Our CoP implemented a model that involved a central leader making organizational and programmatic decisions with other members supporting these efforts. However, personnel changes are inevitable: the main leader of the CoP accepted a new position about a year and a half into the group’s existence, and several other members’ institutional roles changed, allowing them to join or requiring them to step away from the group. While the CoP was designed for ‘evolution’ and ‘different levels of participation’ (Wenger et al., 2002), CoP leadership staffing changes were not accounted for in initial planning.

### ***Unexpected benefits***

During the focus group, several individuals expressed that they would not have been as productive amid COVID pandemic realities if this community of practice did not exist. The flexible nature of participation in meetings, presentations, and writing processes were helpful to various members with varied institutional and familial responsibilities. Though continuity across meetings was challenging for some, our first and second author served as knowledge-keepers for the group. The summaries they provided at the beginning of meetings to catch up attendees doubled as opportunities to clarify ideas and tighten writing. Finally, CoP meetings were described as a reprieve from other meetings, the majority of which were focused on COVID or

COVID-related impacts. In these cases, the CoP provided positive wellness support for overextended academic developers.

## Implications and conclusion

Members reported many positive impacts from this community of practice overall. Most significantly, this CoP provided a structure for purposeful cross-institutional knowledge exchange and relationship building, offered opportunities for negotiating shared meaning, resulted in collaborative production, and inspired accountability. These benefits came seemingly independent of grant-funding, as indicated through comparison of our grant-funded versus non grant-funded member outcomes. From the very start of the collaboration, the activity of examining our varied campus SoTL strategic plans and mapping our CoP process provided opportunities for discernment about past programming and inspiration for future engagement. In addition to strategic thinking, collaboration multiplied productivity in the number of tools, presentations, and publications we collectively and independently produced.

For academic developers interested in forming their own cross-institutional CoPs, we recommend considering whether membership will remain stable or evolve over time. If evolving, we suggest adopting some measures to welcome newcomers and acclimate them to the history and processes of the group. Additionally, we advise others considering this type of model to reflect on how much time collaborative production and self-study efforts can take and develop plans to manage and balance core CoP member priorities.

The implications of this work for academic developers are significant. As developers continue to face epistemological and structural isolation (Green & Little, 2013), exacerbated by the effects of a global pandemic, cross-institutional communities of practice offer an intervention. Such groups support developers' connectedness, shared responsibility, and access to innovation. The lessons from our CoP suggest that even smaller interventions such as semi-regular synchronous virtual meetings can lead to reduced feelings of isolation and increased sense of mutual expertise, support, accountability, and intellectual inspiration. Cross-institutional structures for collaboration are not entirely new (e.g. Myatt et al., 2018), but they are still relatively uncommon in higher education. These collaborations carry the potential to greatly impact and scale programming that institutions can offer their faculty. Specifically, this CoP resulted in affective, cognitive, productivity, and recognition gains, thus increasing or sustaining group members' leadership of SoTL-focused initiatives in their contexts. Additionally, our regional community of practice demonstrated that together, we were each able to achieve much more across a variety of measures than we would have working alone at our institutions.

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## Declaration of ethics statement

This project was reviewed by the lead author's Institutional Review Board (GMU).

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