2011 INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SoTL SCHOLARS AND MENTORS
(FORMALLY NATIONAL CASTL INSTITUTE)

Institute Survey Report

Office for Academic Excellence and Assessment
Creighton University
Omaha, NE

Institute Survey Report
Introduction

The 2011 Institute was held in Creighton University’s Mike and Josie Harper Center for Student Life and Learning on June 1-4, 2011. In our ninth year of Developing (Newer) Scholars of Teaching and Learning, Creighton University was pleased to serve as host. With the theme of “Transformational Learning: Engaging Education in a Global World,” the Institute attracted 100 participants, scholars, mentors, speakers, and administrators from across the globe. The vast majority of attendees (72%) were academic faculty or staff; joining them were university/college administrators and professional, academic and faculty development staff. The primary reason to attend the institute was to “learn something new,” and a secondary motive was “I have attended in the past and wanted to build upon existing knowledge.”

Following the institute and in lieu of a paper and pencil end-of-institute evaluation, attendees were invited to complete an on-line survey. Open from June 13 - July 5, 2011, 66 respondents (from 88 invitations; 75% response rate) answered 30 questions ranging from general satisfaction with the institute to open-ended comments regarding a variety of dimensions of the institute. Thematic analysis of the comments has been conducted but will not be provided here; instead, we offer a brief summary of four criteria to aid us in our 2012 planning.

The Four Criteria

1. The Institute Overall
2. Materials and Registration
3. Mentoring Sessions, Workshops, and Speakers
4. Overall Atmosphere, Location, and Food

Institute Survey Report
The Institute Overall

Participants were asked to rate this year’s institute overall. 58 individuals responded; 97% rated the institute as excellent or good. None rated it as poor.
Additionally, when asked if they would recommend this Institute to a colleague, 71% responded “Definitely;” 15% Most likely and 13% Possibly. One individual reported they were not likely to recommend the Institute.
Materials and Registration

Feedback was sought on institute materials and processes; dimensions were queried regarding advance materials (e.g., website), on-line registration, on-site conference check-in, scholar application process, and conference materials. All aspects of the application and registration processes were rated excellent or good by at least 86% of respondents. Advance materials 86%; scholar application process 93%; online registration and conference materials 98%; and 100% of those who responded rated the on-site check-in as excellent or good. Our work to improve conference materials, increase communication, and on-line registration appears to have improved attendees’ experiences; however, additional improvements can be made with advance communications regarding the institute experience and scheduling.
Mentoring Sessions

The heart of our Institute is a process of mentoring work-in-progress, modeled on that developed by the Carnegie Foundation for their Scholars of Teaching and Learning residencies. When asked to rate the mentoring sessions, the majority of participants rated them as good and the majority of scholars rated them as excellent. Combined ratings are reported below:

- **Excellent**: 36%
- **Good**: 51%
- **Fair**: 2%
- **Poor**: 11%

Workshops

Beyond the mentoring sessions, the main aspects of the Institute include workshops and speakers. When asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with how significant the workshops were in offering new and/or valuable perspectives, 91% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed.

- **Strongly Agree**: 56%
- **Agree**: 35%
- **Undecided**: 4%
- **Disagree/Strongly Disagree**: 5%
Workshop Topics for 2011 included:

- **Advancing your SoTL Project: From Research Question to Analysis**
  - Anatomy of a Question: Refining the Burning Question
  - Writing Effective Literature Reviews
  - Where’s the Evidence?: Designing and Carrying Out a Research Study
  - Quantitative Analysis of Survey Data and Other Assessments for Non-Experts
  - More than Numbers: Using Qualitative Data to Capture the Unquantifiable

- **Transformative Learning/Special Focus SoTL Projects**
  - Engaging in a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
  - Investigating a 450-year old Pedagogical Model for Transformation: Reflective Evaluation as Evidence of Student Learning
  - Transforming Yourself: Integrating Teaching, Service and Scholarship
  - Transformative Learning: Faculty - Student SoTL Collaborations
  - Engaging Education in a Global World: SoTL and Online Pedagogy
  - Valuing and Evaluating SoTL Work in the Promotion and Tenure Process

Suggestions for 2012 workshops include (Beginning and Advanced Sessions):

- **SoTL (Mixed) Methods and Advanced Analysis**
- **Individual, course and programmatic assessments of student learning ... to include:**
  - Teaching and Learning (K-12)
  - Multiple intelligences approach to teaching
  - Developing and using rubrics
  - Assessing transformative or on-line learning

- **Publishing in SoTL**
  - Basics of publishing
  - Publications and journals
  - Panel of journal editors offering advice

- **Valuing and evaluating SoTL work in the tenure and promotion process**

- **Types of SoTL such as:**
  - Interdisciplinary SoTL projects
  - Contemplative pedagogy and SoTL
  - Role of SoTL in Student character development
  - Diversity topics in service - learning

- **Ecology of learning (Theme-related) workshops**

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Speakers

Keynote speakers extend attendees’ SoTL knowledge while encouraging their adaptation and application of knowledge to their own personal projects. The 2011 speakers included: Dennis Jacobs (University of Notre Dame), Edward Taylor (Penn State University - Harrisburg), and Alice Thomas (Howard University School of law); when asked if the speaker was “engaging and thought-provoking,” respondents enthusiastically (and strongly) agreed.

Overall Atmosphere, Location and Food

Local arrangements feedback, primarily for the host institution, was also solicited. Feedback indicated excellence in all dimensions at all three venues.
Institute Survey Report

**Magnolia Hotel Reception**

- Location: 17 Excellent, 6 Good, 1 Fair (24 respondents)
- Food: 18 Excellent, 12 Good, 0 Fair (30 respondents)

**Artists Coop Reception**

- Location: 27 Excellent, 4 Good, 4 Fair (31 respondents)
- Food: 28 Excellent, 4 Good (32 respondents)
Summary

Creighton University’s Office for Academic Excellence and Assessment (AEA) thanks all of the 2011 Summer Institute participants, scholars, mentors, and presenters for their feedback about their experiences. A summary of your feedback includes:

- Ratings of conference materials were rated particularly exceptional, and 66% of participants rated their overall institute experience as excellent (with additional 31% rating their experience as good). Additionally, 86% of respondents would definitely or most likely recommend this institute to a colleague.
- Mentoring sessions remain at the heart of the institute, with informative workshops and stimulating speakers complementing these scholarly presentations. Some of the 2011 workshop topics may be repeated in 2012 but opportunities exist to introduce new topics, particularly “Getting Published,” “Assessments of Student Learning” and/or “Ecology of Learning [themed] Workshops.”

The 2011 Institute exceeded attendees’ expectations in the areas of: conference organizing; friendliness of the staff, presenters, and participants; formal and informal mentoring to include after-session interactions; networking; receptions, food; shuttles; conference materials; and “every aspect.” Special thanks to the AEA staff who contributed to the congenial learning environment. In attendees’ words:

- “Beyond the content, which was substantive, and its delivery, which was without exception, clear, serious, and so beneficial to those of us who want to bring it back to our campus, I have to say that the facilitators are beautiful, so humane, and kind.”
- “It was a pleasure to meet such a diverse group of committed colleagues. I was completely exhausted by Day 3, largely because it was such a motivating experience.”
- “The commitment to engaging attendees in their own learning related to SoTL [exceeded my expectations]. Organizers obviously focused on the learning value to attendees and they [organizers] attended to every detail to create that kind of experience.”
- “This was my first year to participate in the institute, which was recommended to me by former CASTL scholars, and I very much enjoyed the format of the meeting, the environment of collaboration and sharing resources, and especially the opportunity to receive so much feedback on my SoTL project. I would certainly recommend the institute to others who are engaged in SoTL work.” Best conference experience I’ve had in a long time!”

Creighton University and its Office for Academic Excellence and Assessment look forward to Loyola Marymount University hosting the 2012 International Institute for SoTL Scholars and Mentors where we will explore the “Ecology of Learning.” Please plan to join us May 31 - June 3, 2012 in Los Angeles.

Institute Survey Report