



OFFICE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING  
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

# SoTL Faculty Fellows at University of Denver

A working description of how the fellowship is built: the track structure, the program year, the course shell, and the logic model we use to account for it. Written for colleagues starting SoTL programming at their own institutions.

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## SECTION 01

### The fellowship at a glance

The SoTL Faculty Fellows program is a yearlong, cohorted fellowship that guides instructional faculty through a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning project from question to public presentation.

At the University of Denver, SoTL is defined as systematic inquiry into student learning: research on pedagogical and curricular design and implementation practices that affect how students learn. The defining feature is that the work is made public and reviewed by a community of peers, which is why the program year ends in presentation rather than in a report to the center.

The program began in 2022 with a single cohort of eight faculty. Fifty-two people have taken part since then as fellows, peer mentors, or program directors, across five cohorts and fourteen departments and units. Forty-five of them have held a fellowship; the rest mentor the current cohort or run the program.

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52

Fellows, mentors, and directors

5

Cohorts since 2022

11

Fellows in the 2026–27 cohort

43

Projects shared at the Symposium

14

Departments and units represented

2

Fellowship tracks

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Fellows are drawn from across disciplines. They work on their own projects, but they do it alongside a cohort and with the program director, and much of the program's value comes from that arrangement rather than from the curriculum itself.

#### THE PREMISE

The program is designed to move faculty toward adopting SoTL scholar as a professional identity, not only to produce completed projects. That framing shapes nearly every structural choice described below, including the decision to run tracks as a sequence, to keep alumni in the community, and to name our convenings as the scholarly conferences they are.

## Deciding the model

Before the tracks, the calendar, or the course shell, a program needs a claim about what it is for. That claim decides everything downstream.

A SoTL program can be organized around methods, around a curriculum, or around a community, and each produces a different program. A methods-centered one schedules instruction and measures competence. A community-centered one schedules convenings and measures belonging alongside capability. The model is not decoration on top of the design; it is what tells you whether a Tuesday afternoon is better spent teaching regression or letting six people talk about a study that did not work.

### Our model: PEOPLE

This fellowship is built on PEOPLE, a sustainable SoTL community of care model centered on mutual care, empathy, practitioner well-being, and peer support. It is offered here as an example of the kind of claim worth making explicit, not as a template to adopt.

#### **P Public Invitation to the Campus Community**

The call goes to the whole campus, not to a shortlist of faculty already publishing on teaching.

#### **E Engaged and Supportive Peers and Mentors**

Fellows work alongside a cohort and returning alumni mentors, not only in consultation with the director.

#### **O Ongoing Center Leadership and Guidance**

The center stays present across the whole year rather than convening the group and stepping back.

#### **P Purposeful Conversations**

Convenings are structured around inquiry and response, not around status updates.

#### **L Learning Community**

The group is the unit of the program, not the individual project.

#### **E Engagement in Public Dissemination**

The year ends in public presentation, and going public is treated as part of the work rather than an optional extra.

#### WHAT A MODEL BUYS YOU

Naming the model makes the hard calls easier. When the budget is cut, a community-centered program knows to protect the convenings and thin the content. When a fellow's study collapses in March, the model says that conversation belongs in the room rather than in a private email. A program without a stated model tends to default to whatever is easiest to schedule, and that default is almost always content delivery.

The corollary is that a borrowed model is worth less than a chosen one. If your institution's faculty are isolated by campus geography, or your center serves adjuncts who cannot attend anything during the day, the model that follows from those facts will not look like ours.

## Program architecture

Two tracks in sequence, plus a returning alumni group. This is the piece worth thinking hardest about at the start, because it is difficult to retrofit once you have a cohort.

### YEAR ONE

#### Scholarly Teacher

Entry point. Prepares fellows to carry out a SoTL project whatever their prior experience with it, through an intensive cohorted sequence of conferences and the monthly Forum.

### YEAR TWO

#### Advanced Practitioner

Continuation. Fellows carry their work forward with director support, online modules, and consultations, while staying connected to the community.

### BEYOND

#### Legacy Fellows

Returning alumni. Retain access to all program content, including advanced modules, and anchor the community for incoming cohorts.

## Why sequence rather than choice

The program originally offered the two tracks as a choice at application, sorted by a fellow's prior SoTL experience. Running them as a sequence has held up better. Entering the advanced track without the shared year-one experience means missing the cohort formation that makes the rest of the program work, and it leaves the center supporting two parallel groups with little relationship to each other.

Sequencing also creates the alumni pipeline. Legacy Fellows are not an afterthought; they are the reason a fifth-year cohort has people in the room who have already failed at something and can say so out loud.

### IF YOU ARE DESIGNING THIS NOW

Decide early whether your tracks are levels or lanes. Levels give you an alumni structure and a progression story for your provost. Lanes give you flexibility and a lower barrier for experienced faculty whose time is better spent past the introductory material. Both are defensible; switching later means telling an existing cohort their track has been redefined.

## The program year

The program is built around three conferences and a monthly forum. All of them are held on campus.

The **Research in Teaching and Learning Conference** opens the year each fall, and is the venue under which fellows list their SoTL poster presentation. The **SoTL Winter Conference** anchors the middle of the year. The **SoTL Data Summit** gathers fellows in the summer to present and interpret their findings. The monthly **SoTL Faculty Forum** is a standing venue for scholarly exchange, where fellows give guest lectures and invited presentations.

Fellows go public with their finished projects each fall at the **SoTL Research Symposium**. The fourth annual Symposium is scheduled for October 2026. It has grown every year, from twelve projects in 2023 to sixteen in 2025, and since 2025 it has also accepted invited projects from elsewhere on campus.

| Program year, Scholarly Teacher track. Advanced Practitioner requirements differ; see below. |                                              |                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| WHEN                                                                                         | CONVENING                                    | DELIVERABLE               |
| May – July                                                                                   | Call for applications; fellows notified      | —                         |
| August                                                                                       | Research in Teaching and Learning Conference | SoTL proposal (September) |
| Sept – May                                                                                   | SoTL Faculty Forum, monthly                  | —                         |
| October                                                                                      | SoTL Research Symposium                      | SoTL poster               |
| December                                                                                     | SoTL Winter Conference                       | Mid-year review (January) |
| June                                                                                         | SoTL Data Summit                             | Data report (July)        |

## Naming the work

These names are new as of this year. The change is one of language, not of substance: the schedule, the deliverables, and the expectations of fellows are unchanged. What is new is that the names describe what these gatherings have always been. For as long as the program has existed, its convenings have done the work of scholarship. Educators present their inquiry, respond to one another's questions, and advance a shared understanding of teaching and learning.

The practical reason for the change is that the work fellows do here is scholarly work, and it deserves to be recorded as such. Naming the convenings as the conferences and forums they already are makes it possible for faculty to represent their contributions accurately in the places where a professional record lives: the curriculum vitae and the annual report. Many fellows carry full teaching loads and pursue this inquiry with limited resources. The least a program can do is ensure its language reflects the rigor of the work and lets faculty claim it fully and honestly.

| What changed, and how fellows are advised to list each convening. |                                                     |                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PREVIOUSLY CALLED                                                 | NOW CALLED                                          | HOW TO LIST IT ON A CV OR ANNUAL REPORT                                                                                                 |
| Fall retreat<br>3 days                                            | <b>Research in Teaching and Learning Conference</b> | A conference presentation. The culminating SoTL poster, presented at the SoTL Research Symposium, is listed under this conference name. |
| Winter retreat<br>2 days                                          | <b>SoTL Winter Conference</b>                       | A conference presentation or scholarly participation, with the theme added once announced.                                              |
| Summer retreat<br>2 days                                          | <b>SoTL Data Summit</b>                             | A conference presentation of data and findings.                                                                                         |
| Monthly SoTL FLC meetings                                         | <b>SoTL Faculty Forum</b>                           | An invited or guest presentation when presenting; scholarly service or participation otherwise.                                         |

#### WHY THIS IS WORTH COPYING

The naming change costs nothing and returns something a faculty development center rarely has to offer: a defensible line on a CV. Work that has nowhere to be recorded eventually loses out to work that does, however much a faculty member values it, and a center that describes its own programming as retreats and meetings has already told a promotion committee how to read it. If you are designing a program now, name the convenings for what they are before anyone attends the first one. Renaming later means asking fellows to re-describe work they have already listed.

## Advanced Practitioner requirements

Fellows in the second year complete online modules paired with consultations rather than attending the full conference sequence, and attend the Symposium. The monthly Forum is open to them but not required. They produce the same four artifacts: proposal, mid-year review, data report, and a public presentation.

## A note on cost

Every convening is held on campus. The program does not run residential retreats and carries no hotel or travel line, which removes both the largest budget item and the participation barrier that comes with asking faculty to stay overnight. Fellows with caregiving obligations, adjunct appointments, or commutes are not sorted out of the program by its format. If you are costing out a first year, this is the constraint worth designing around from the start rather than treating as a compromise.

## Scaffolding the project

Faculty often arrive with a teaching problem clearly in view and the research design still ahead of them. Closing that distance is where first-year fellows most need a shared structure, and it is worth having a named path rather than improvising one for each person.

The distance between "my students are not doing the reading" and a researchable question with a defensible design and a viable IRB application is larger than it looks from the outside. A step tool gives the cohort a shared vocabulary, so fellows can tell each other where they are, and it makes the path visible, so a faculty member new to empirical research can see where it leads. The two examples below come from another institution and from our own program.

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY, CETL

### Hopscotch 4-SoTL

An interactive web tool that walks faculty through nine steps of designing an empirical SoTL project, supporting both quantitative and qualitative designs. It also exists physically in their Research Lab, where faculty write on wall decals and capture their notes with a camera-enabled device.

The design choice worth considering is in the name. The tool states plainly that the SoTL process is not always linear and sometimes involves hopping backward and to the side, like the children's game. Most step models imply a straight line and then quietly disappoint the first fellow whose literature review sends them back to redefine the problem.

[campus.kennesaw.edu/faculty-staff/cetl/scholarship-teaching-learning/hopscotch4sotl.php](http://campus.kennesaw.edu/faculty-staff/cetl/scholarship-teaching-learning/hopscotch4sotl.php)

UNIVERSITY OF DENVER, OTL

### IGNITE Your SoTL

A six-step guide used as a one-page handout at the opening conference and as an online form fellows complete on their own. Each step is a question rather than an instruction, which keeps it approachable whatever a fellow's research background.

IDENTIFY

GENERATE

NARRATE

ILLUSTRATE

TIMELINE

EVALUATE

Fellows identify what has been bugging them, generate keywords for a literature review, narrate what they want to do about it, illustrate the study with research questions, define a timeline and any comparison groups, and decide what evidence they will gather and how they will interpret it.

[udenver.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_afmeH9bykcInGZ0](http://udenver.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_afmeH9bykcInGZ0)

#### CHOOSING OR BUILDING ONE

The step count matters less than whether a facilitator can hold the whole tool in mind during a session, and whether a fellow can find their own position on it without help. Six steps fit on a handout and in a forty-minute segment. Nine support a more complete design but want a tool to carry them.

If you build your own, write each step as a question. "Identify what's been bugging you" gets a ready answer from a faculty member who might pause at "articulate your research problem," and the two prompts are asking for the same thing.

## Course shell structure

The program runs on a Canvas course shell that carries content modules, the program calendar, and cohort resources. The landing page is organized by track, with navigation to each track's modules and to the program's conferences.

### What sits where

Year-one content is delivered at the convenings rather than online. The shell holds the Scholarly Teacher track's calendar, session materials, worksheets, and the templates for each deliverable, so the cohort has one place to return to between conferences. The online modules belong to the Advanced Practitioner track, where fellows work more independently and need content they can reach on their own schedule.

#### ADVANCED PRACTITIONER MODULES

|    |                                     |
|----|-------------------------------------|
| 01 | Why Do We SoTL                      |
| 02 | Inclusive and Accessible Assessment |
| 03 | Going Public                        |
| 04 | Quantitative Analysis               |
| 05 | Qualitative Analysis                |
| 06 | Situating SoTL in Your Career       |

Legacy Fellows have access to all modules including these, which is a deliberate choice: alumni who can see the advanced content are better placed to mentor the current cohort.

#### TWO STRUCTURAL CHOICES

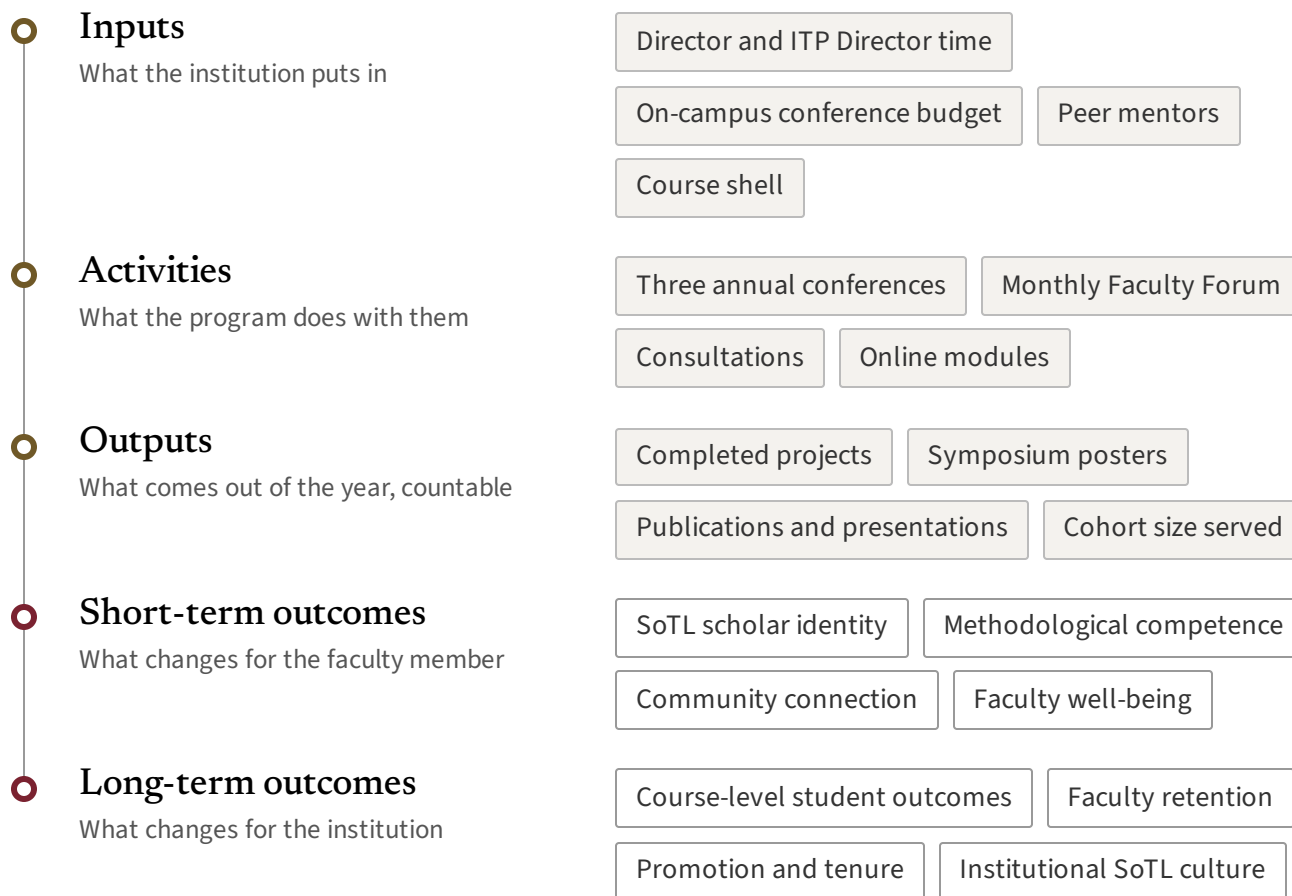
Track-specific navigation on the landing page, rather than a single list of everything, keeps fellows from browsing content they have not reached yet, and spares them the worry of wondering whether they are behind. It costs a little more to build and maintain.

Putting year-one content in the room and year-two content online is not a statement about which medium is better. It follows from what each track needs: a first-year cohort needs to form, and a second-year fellow needs flexibility.

## Logic model and evidence

Faculty development centers without direct revenue face heightened scrutiny in a budget-constrained institution. A logic model is how the program's contribution gets documented in terms the institution already uses.

The chain below runs left to right, from what the institution puts in to what changes because of it. The first three stages are countable and within the program's control. The last two are claims, and claims need evidence.



**THE TURN** Everything above the last two stages, you can count yourself. Everything in them, you have to demonstrate, and the two halves of that demand very different work.

What you can evidence yourself, and what you cannot

The distinction below is the practical part. Keeping it explicit protects the program's credibility: a center that claims retention effects it cannot demonstrate loses the argument it could have won.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>EVIDENCED FROM YOUR OWN DATA</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Growth in SoTL scholar identity</li><li>• Growth in well-being and community connection</li><li>• Self-reported methodological competence</li><li>• Participation, completion, and going-public rates</li></ul></div> | <div>REQUIRES INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faculty retention and promotion rates for participants against a matched comparison group</li><li>• Course-level student outcomes, including DFW rates and grade distributions</li></ul></div> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

START THIS IN YEAR ONE

The second column requires a data request to Institutional Research and a matched comparison group, which means deciding in year one who your comparison group is. Programs that wait until year three to ask have no baseline, and the request becomes much harder to answer. Build the participant survey and open the IR conversation before your first cohort arrives.

## Notes for a starting program: our takeaways from past experiences

Five things that are cheap to decide at the beginning and expensive to change later.

### **Name the convenings for what they are**

See Section 04. We renamed ours in year five, which worked, but doing it at the start would have saved four cohorts the trouble of describing conference presentations as retreats.

### **Decide what "going public" means before recruiting**

A poster at an internal symposium, a conference presentation, and a peer-reviewed article are very different commitments. Fellows should know which one they are signing up for, and the answer determines how much of your year goes to writing support.

### **Build the assessment before the first cohort**

See the previous section. Most design decisions can be revised between cohorts. This one cannot: a baseline you did not collect in year one is not available in year three, and the cohorts that have already passed through stay uncounted.

### **Protect the community, not only the curriculum**

Curriculum and community both do real work, but only one of them has to be built by the center. SoTL methods are well documented, and faculty can and do learn them independently. A group of colleagues who will look at an unfinished project, or at a study that did not work, without judgment, does not assemble on its own. Program elements that create it, including the ones that look like overhead on a budget line, are doing the work.

### **Expect the failure conversation to be the turning point**

Across our cohorts, reframing failure has been the most transformative element of the fellowship, more than any methods instruction. Most of us were trained in disciplines where a study that does not confirm its hypothesis reads as a year lost, and fellows arrive carrying that expectation. Designing deliberately for that conversation, rather than hoping it happens, changes what fellows are willing to attempt.

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## SECTION 09

### Contact

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Materials referenced here, including session slides, participant worksheets, and the course shell structure, can be shared on request. If you are building a program and would find it useful to talk it through, that is usually a better use of an hour than any document.

More on SoTL at DU, including the PEOPLE framework: [du.edu/otl/plan-my-career/sotl](https://du.edu/otl/plan-my-career/sotl)



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Shared as a working document. The SoTL Faculty Fellows program is revised annually, and details here describe the program as of the 2026–27 year.

