THE DEWEY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM
Through the 2016/17 Academic Year

Built from a grass-roots faculty collaborative in 2007, the Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines (ISTLD) works with faculty members university-wide to support inquiry into teaching and learning. The goals of the ISTLD’s programs are to promote the learning and professional development of faculty, support teaching as a socially situated activity within Simon Fraser University (SFU), improve student learning, and encourage faculty members to use a scholarly, evidence-based approach to their teaching designs and instructional decision-making.

Since its inception in 2007, the principle means the ISTLD has had for meeting these goals was the Teaching and Learning Development Grant (TLDG) program. This program enables faculty members to implement and investigate teaching and learning innovations in their courses or programs as well as explore questions and concerns they have about student learning. Faculty members receive funding of up to $6000 per project and both research and administrative support throughout their project’s duration.

The Dewey Fellowship Program, launched in January 2015, was an extension of the TLDG program. Dewey Fellows are faculty members with a keen interest in teaching and learning research and who have already conducted at least one TLDG project. The fellowship provides two course releases in order to facilitate a deeper engagement with the ISTLD as well as conduct a more in-depth project.

Dewey Fellowship projects go beyond investigations related to their personal teaching practice to either involve other instructors in the implementation of teaching innovations, develop materials or resources for the university at large, or explore questions of teaching and learning of interest to a wide audience at SFU.

All Dewey Fellows participate in regular ISTLD meetings, provide the ISTLD advice and perspectives on institutional directions and plans, and read and discuss teaching and learning scholarly literature with the ISTLD team. In addition, each Dewey Fellow negotiates with the ISTLD director a way to contribute to the work ISTLD does. Examples of such contributions have included: co-facilitating TLDG workshops, reviewing TLDG final reports, or offering faculty members advice on how to publish teaching and learning inquiry findings.
As of August 2017, four SFU faculty members have been Dewey Fellows. As the program has been small, the data related to this work have been folded into the regular TLDG evaluation and analysis. We have now begun to build an evaluation infrastructure that will enable us to track, reflect upon, report about and make changes to the Dewey Fellowship Program.

As a first step, in fall 2016, the ISTLD gathered the four original Dewey Fellows to collect feedback about the program and its future. From this conversation, an application process was developed for the Dewey Fellowship. In spring 2017, the ISTLD made its first call for Dewey Fellowship applicants and was pleased to receive eight applications. Four of these were selected to participate in the program over 2017-18 and 2018-19.

The conversation with the original four Dewey Fellows revealed the following:

1. All enjoyed working with the ISTLD, felt part of a team with a shared purpose, and felt energized by working with others who shared a commitment to learning about their students.

2. They expressed a general feeling of insecurity around their knowledge of teaching and learning research and suggested the ISTLD support more reading and unpacking of the literature for Dewey Fellows.

3. They suggested providing support for publishing the findings of their Dewey Fellowship projects.

4. They expressed concern that one year is not enough time as they had difficulty finishing their project in that period.

5. They wanted more opportunities to interact with the ISTLD team.

We are working to integrate the next group of Dewey Fellows more into the fabric of the ISTLD and support their scholarly engagement in the field. In addition, starting in 2017-18 we will begin reporting out Dewey Fellow projects separately from TLDG projects and devising either a questionnaire or interview protocol for capturing both their Dewey Fellowship project and ISTLD collaboration experience.

For more information about the ISTLD’s Dewey Fellowship Program and to read complete project descriptions and final reports visit:
http://www.sfu.ca/istld/deweyfellowship.html