



UNIVERSITY SYSTEM *of* MARYLAND
**KIRWAN CENTER FOR
ACADEMIC INNOVATION**

Call for Applications: Elkins SoTL Fellowships

The Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation is pleased to announce this call for applications for Elkins Fellowships for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Up to 10 Elkins SoTL Fellowships of \$1,000 each will be awarded for 2025-2026 (May 1, 2025-June 30, 2026).

Proposals are due to Dr. Jennifer Potter (jpotter@usmd.edu) by 11:59 pm on **Friday, March 28, 2025**, for work to take place over the subsequent academic year.

Information Session

Join representatives from the Kirwan Center on **Thursday, February 13, 2025, 2:00–3:00 pm ET**, for a virtual Information Session to learn more about the Fellowship requirements and expectations. We will also answer any questions about the program at that time. [Register for the Information Session.](#)

Overview

Up to 10 Elkins SoTL Fellowships of \$1,000 each will be awarded competitively to faculty members in the University System of Maryland (USM). These fellowships will support scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), defined as the systematic investigation of student learning, instruction, and/or teaching innovations and the dissemination of findings so as to contribute to a broader knowledge community. In line with the [USM strategic plan](#), projects examining some aspects of diversity, equity, and inclusion are especially encouraged.

SoTL projects at their essence aim to improve student success by providing an evidence base to help inform course design and instructional decisions undertaken by faculty and programs. There are a variety of ways to study the impacts of education interventions or to study the experiences of students, faculty, or staff in relation to teaching and learning, including:

Studies Involving Students and/or Student Record Data

These kinds of studies may involve researchers seeking to understand:

- the impact of innovative changes, such as a new pedagogical technique, on the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, or skills of students, or on their grades or performance on other assessments.

- the perceptions or lived experiences of students regarding the classroom environments, course designs, pedagogies, or co-curricular activities they experience or the introduction of teaching and learning innovations into their educational experiences.
- the impact that factors outside the teaching and learning experience, such as institutional policy or outside responsibilities of students, have on students vis-à-vis the teaching and learning experience.

Studies of this kind may involve researchers collecting and analyzing data that stems from assigned activities that all students must complete as part of a course or program (e.g., concept inventories, assignments, creative works, laboratory findings, papers, projects, quizzes, or exams). They may involve researchers collecting and analyzing data that does not stem from assigned activities that all students complete as part of a course or program (e.g., conducting focus groups probing students' sense of belonging in STEM fields). These kinds of studies might also include the use of data that exists outside of a course, such as demographic data, grades in previous courses, etc.

Note: Studies that include students should be sure to consider FERPA stipulations with respect to the gathering or use of student information, as well as parental consent or waiver of parental consent if any study participants are under age 18.

Studies Involving Faculty and/or Staff

These kinds of studies may involve researchers seeking to understand:

- the impact of interventions, such as participation in professional development opportunities, on the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, or skills of faculty and/or staff
- the perceptions or lived experiences of faculty members or staff regarding their classroom environments, course designs, or pedagogies or the introduction of teaching and learning innovations into their practice
- the impact that factors outside the immediate teaching and learning experience, such as institutional policy or non-teaching responsibilities of faculty and/or staff, have on faculty and/or staff vis-a-vis the teaching and learning experience.

These descriptions are suggestive of the kinds of studies that fall under SoTL and are not meant to be an exhaustive list.

An Emphasis on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We encourage SoTL projects that align with the [USM strategic plan](#) goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These include:

Goal 4.9: [Develop a] research initiative on diversity, equity, and justice...that includes an examination of the role that race, identity, and systemic racism may play in those areas;

Goal 5.2: Seek out and promote best practices to enhance inclusion and promote equity; and

Goal 5.4: Educate our students to be informed and engaged citizens and social change agents in our democracy.

Examples of SoTL projects with these emphases could include investigating the use of trauma-informed pedagogy in particular courses or curricula, examining the classroom factors that affect students' sense of belonging in relation to salient social identity dimensions (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, religious affiliation), probing the effects of using open educational resources designed to promote inclusion, or seeking to understand motivating factors contributing to students' political or community engagement. Again, these descriptions are suggestive and are not meant to be an exhaustive list.

Eligibility

The Elkins SoTL Fellowships are open to USM faculty of any rank or appointment. A faculty member should serve as principal investigator (PI) on the project; a staff person may serve as co-PI provided the project originates with the faculty member. At present, we are not considering graduate students for this fellowship but may do so in future cycles.

Applicants are encouraged to share their **track record** of contributions to the education of students (such as pedagogical innovations, engagement in high-impact practices, teaching awards, pedagogical training, participation in important initiatives to improve student learning) and to discuss how the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning can help them advance, broaden, or build upon their past efforts.

Expectations of Fellows

Fellows will be expected to meet as a cohort and individually with Kirwan Center staff throughout the 2025-2026 fellowship (May 1, 2025-June 30, 2026) as outlined below. Fellows may also schedule additional individual meetings with Kirwan Center staff as needed.

Friday, March 28, 2025 – Deadline for proposal submissions.

Monday, April 14, 2025 – Applicants notified.

Wednesday, April 30, 2025, 3:00-4:00 pm ET – Fellowship Kick-Off (virtual).¹

September-October 2025 – Individual check-ins with Kirwan Center staff

November 2025 – Cohort check-in (virtual)

February 2026 – Cohort check-in (virtual)

May 2026 – Culminating cohort meeting (face to face)

¹ Applicants should save this date until they receive their notification as to whether their proposal was accepted into the Fellowship program.

Selected Fellows will have their awards processed starting in July 2025. Fellows are strongly encouraged to actively pursue publication in a journal that publishes SoTL studies, and they will receive guidance and mentoring in that process.

Finally, Elkins SoTL Fellows will submit a narrative report at the end of the Fellowship period.

Criteria for Assessing Proposals

Teaching and Learning: Proposed SoTL studies should advance our knowledge/understanding of significant issues related to teaching and learning and/or student success.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: We encourage SoTL projects that align with the USM strategic plan goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, as noted above.

Builds on Prior Research: The proposed SoTL study should explain how the study builds upon prior scholarship or addresses a research gap related to teaching and learning.

Broad Influence: The proposed activity should address a widely felt need and therefore have the potential for broad influence across the USM institutions and beyond.

Feasibility: The proposed work plan should be demonstrably feasible. For example, if proposal readers are likely to wonder how the work can be done in the time available, it would help to include a timeline. Appropriate documentation should be included; if the work will involve, for example, the institution's teaching center, then the proposal should include a letter from the director of the center that explains what the center will provide.

Appropriate Budget: The proposed budget should be consistent with the activities described in the narrative and demonstrate good stewardship of these funds. The funds may be used to support costs including purchasing supplies or subscriptions, paying students to aid in data entry/analysis, and/or stipends for faculty to support the development/implementation of the project or activities.

Preparing a Proposal

Please use the following outline to prepare your proposal. Sections III-V should be approximately 5-7 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font.

- I. Cover sheet with applicant's name, position title, department or unit name, institution name, phone number, and email address.
- II. Title and brief abstract (3-5 sentences) summarizing the proposed study.
- III. A narrative that provides a rationale for and description of the planned study in relation to the criteria listed above (Teaching and Learning; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Builds on Prior Research; Broad Influence; and Feasibility). Note: Projects involving

- human subjects should include plans to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval as part the proposal narrative and schedule of activities.
- IV. Schedule of activities. We recognize that work plans evolve, so give us your best estimation now about how the work might unfold.
 - V. The name of a journal where you plan to publish your SoTL study (sample SoTL journals are listed on Towson University's FACET website in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning section of this web page: <https://www.towson.edu/provost/initiatives/faculty-center/research-scholarship.html>).
 - VI. References cited.
 - VII. Budget. Budget items can include supplies or other supports for the research project as well as stipends for the PI or others involved in the research. **NOTE:** The intention for this funding is to advance SoTL efforts at your institution. As such, the funds are to be exempt from institutional F&A. Stipends may need to account for fringe benefits as per the applicant's institutional policies; applicants should check with their budget officer or sponsored research officer to confirm.
 - VIII. Any supporting documents needed, including at least:
 - a. 250-word biographical sketch explaining the applicant's relevant experiences for carrying out the proposed work.
 - b. Abbreviated c.v. (up to 2 pages and including only relevant publications).
 - c. At least one letter(s) of support from Provost, Dean, or Department Chair supporting the faculty member's candidacy. If the proposed study involves actions within the institution (e.g., working with institutional research to obtain student record-level data), the support letter(s) should also indicate the degree to which their authors support these actions.

Questions?

Questions about the Elkins SoTL Fellowship Program may be directed to Dr. Jennifer Potter, Associate Director of the Kirwan Center, at jpotter@usmd.edu.

Deadline and Submission Details

Proposals are due to Dr. Jennifer Potter (jpotter@usmd.edu) by 11:59 pm on **Friday, March 28, 2025**. Please submit the proposal as a single PDF.

Applicants will be notified about their acceptance status no later than Monday, April 14, 2025.

The Elkins Endowed Professorship was established in 1978 as a fitting way to perpetuate the name and contributions of Wilson H. Elkins, a former Rhodes scholar who led the University of Maryland to new levels of distinction as its president from 1954 to 1978. Under Dr. Elkins' leadership, the university grew notably in size, scope, and standing.

The William E. Kirwan Center for Academic Innovation was founded in 2013. The Center serves as a focal point for conceptualizing, promoting, studying, and disseminating groundbreaking academic transformation work both

within Maryland and across higher education nationally. More information about the Center is available at <http://www.usmd.edu/cai>.