SoTL Cluster Project Charter
Graham School of Professional Development SoTL Cluster

Description/Background (include purpose and need):
The Ron and Jane Graham School of Professional Development (SoPD) is described as unique among Engineering Colleges in Canada. The students of our college are offered the chance to learn and enhance their non-technical skills in individual classes or in Certificate and Option programs, added to their degrees. In particular, the Certificate in Professional Communication (CPC) has been developed to include classes with an explicit common theoretical core and an implied common pedagogical approach. Our proposed cluster will work toward articulating these pedagogical assumptions and measuring their success in developing the communication skills of our students. As we gain information to determine the success of our teaching, the pedagogical assumptions can be refined or changed to meet the challenges identified. An explicitly defined pedagogical approach will guide the development of new courses and the modification of existing courses in a way that promotes effective teaching and learning.

Cluster Lead (Academic Unit leader):

Debora Rolfes, Assistant Professor, SoPD

Members of the Cluster:

Corey Owen, Assistant Professor, SoPD
Jeanie Wills, Assistant Professor, SoPD

Goals and predicted timeline (specific Deliverables/Milestones) *bullet point please*:
- Complete and publish an ongoing, collaborative, multi-year study of the perceived level of preparation of internship students for the communication challenges of working in industry. Complete by summer 2017.
- Collaborate with undergraduate and graduate students to investigate the efficacy of individual classes in the CPC at forming identity of *successful communicator* in our students. Present at conferences in Canada and the USA in 2017 and 2018.
- Develop a statement of the pedagogical philosophy informing the CPC. Complete by end of 2018.

Envisioned process (specify how the group will function; e.g., frequency and types of meetings, how you will monitor milestones,):

1. The cluster will meet bi-monthly as a group to share research progress, new study ideas, and relevant literature, as well as to present papers investigating the efficacy of the individual classes in the CPC before the papers are presented at a conference.
2. Collaboration partners will meet more frequently to carry out research.
3. Members of the cluster will occasionally share their research with InTREEg (the SoTL group in the College of Engineering).
4. As stated in Deliverables/Milestones, cluster members will aim to submit the "perceived level of preparation of internship students" paper in a peer-reviewed publication by the end of 2017.

Financial (specify how funding will be spent, can be high level criteria and processes for allocating funds rather than a specific budget; note any additional or matching funds):
The cluster wishes to support studies that build collaboration among cluster members and with students in the CPC. The cluster agrees to equitably fund studies that investigate the success of the pedagogical approaches of classes in the CPC. The following are examples of areas that might be considered:

- Research assistants
- Conference registration
- Conference travel expenses
- Memberships in academic organizations
- Resources, such as books and software, that are common to cluster members

Funding decisions will be decided collaboratively on a case-by-case basis.

Scope (Focus):
In Scope: (what is the intended focus of the Cluster)
The cluster will focus on research that describes and assesses the pedagogical approaches of individual classes and the CPC as a whole.

Not In Scope: (what will NOT be included in the focus of the Cluster; limits on expenditures may be included here or in the Finances section.):
The cluster will not fund research that does not have, as a major focus, the improvement in the understanding of how best to teach the students in the CPC.

Constraints, Assumptions, Risks and Dependencies of Note

Constraints	[Describe here potential factors that will impact the achievement of the goals; time, resources, competing demands] Time is a major constraint. Members of the cluster have high teaching demands, as well as significant administration duties. It is hoped that the support of the cluster will serve to direct the research energies of the members. Tenure is also a constraint. All three members of the cluster will be submitting tenure packages in the next two years, which is a significant diversion of time resources.
Assumptions	[Describe here conditions or situations that you are relying on in order to achieve project goals] As described in Deliverables/Milestones, two members of the cluster are in the final stages of writing a paper that will be the culmination of a series of papers investigating the perceived level of preparation of internship students for the

communication challenges of working in industry. This paper will identify where we are not as successful as we wish to be; it will also begin to articulate the pedagogical approaches that are successful and need to be more clearly articulated. We assume that this paper will lead to improvements to our teaching and learning, which can be assessed in follow-up studies. The meetings of the cluster should lead to creative ways to study our teaching.

We assume that our proposed studies will receive REB approval.

Risks and Dependencies	[What are the most significant risks? What things must happen before the project is delivered?] One source of risk is that our studies may include working with the students we are teaching. The ethical implications of the potential conflict of interest will have to be carefully managed.