Becoming a CIRTL Practitioner

1. Complete the requirements for the Associate level.

You must participate in five different (5) CIRTL events. Each on-campus CIRTL event will be designated as fulfilling one or more of the three (3) CIRTL core ideas: “learning communities,” “evidence-based teaching” (called Teaching-As-Research on the CIRTL website) or “learning through diversity.” You must participate in at least one event that matches each core idea.

There are exceptions. Longer events (e.g., a semester-long course) may be substituted for two events with the approval of a co-leader. You may also attend the CIRTL MOOC as well as the weekly on-campus discussions to meet the Associate level in its entirety. Consistent attendance in the on-campus discussion of the MOOC content, as well as evidence of completing all the MOOC assignments, can be used to meet the goals of becoming a CIRTL Associate.

2. Participate in a semester-long seminar.

This seminar is run by one of the faculty co-leaders in which you will develop and discuss your projects and read relevant literature.

3. Design, complete, and present an evidence-based project.

The major component of being a Practitioner is to carry out a project in a classroom or laboratory setting. Practitioners may carry out projects in classes that they themselves teach, or may partner with an instructor.

An evidence-based project requires demonstrating familiarity with current literature on teaching, designing a new classroom approach, overseeing the implementation of the approach, and assessing the result of the approach and suggesting any changes for the future (but not necessarily carrying out the plan again). The goal is to, in a sense, mimic the cycle of a successful research project: to start with a hypothesis based on the literature, carry out an “experiment,” analyze the results of the experiment, and plan the next step.

Identify a faculty mentor. A faculty mentor is someone who has the expertise to help you with your project. Their commitment may range from meeting with you several times as you plan your project, analyze your results, and prepare your presentation, or they may be someone whom you work with more closely. For example, you may wish to work with a particular professor in devising an intervention in his or her class, or if you teach your own class, you might look for a sponsor that teaches a similar class and can offer the benefit of his or her experience.

The faculty mentor and you will be asked to meet with a CIRTL co-leader and the mentor will be asked to sign a commitment in which his or her responsibilities are laid out. In return for mentorship, mentors receive a small payment into their research accounts. In some instances, your mentor may be a CIRTL leader. We can help you find a mentor if
necessary. If funds are needed to complete your project (e.g., to buy supplies for a new lab) you may request them from CIRTL.

**Determine scope of the project.** Projects vary in scope. Projects can be quite small scale, such as developing a new way to present a particular concept, designing an effective writing assignment, devising a new lab exercise, etc. Projects can also be larger in scope, such as “flipping” your classroom if you teach your own class.

**Write a project proposal.** Your proposal will be reviewed by the CIRTL co-leaders. Your proposal should include the following:

- Find and critically consider the *literature and existing knowledge* associated with the teaching and learning project.

- Create realistic well-defined, achievable, measurable, and student-centered *learning goals* for the teaching and learning project. What do you want our students to learn? These goals should include consideration of the two CIRTL core ideas of “Learning Communities” and “Learning through Diversity.” We acknowledge that not every project will contain both of these to the same extent; the length of the intervention and the constraints of your particular classroom environment may restrict your freedom. However, we wish you to incorporate these core ideas as much as possible into your project, and to be able to articulate how you would incorporate them into your classroom in the future.
  - *Learning Communities:* Consider one or more strategies to foster a Learning Community among your students. How might they work together to share their knowledge?
  - *Learning through Diversity:* Consider the diverse backgrounds among your students, and consider the opportunities and challenges that this diversity creates for their learning. Diversity is broadly defined and includes diversity in background in the subject material, the effect of gender and race on the students’ perceptions of their own ability to succeed in the field, etc. How does your plan take into account, and perhaps capitalize upon, these differences?

- Develop a teaching plan (a *hypothesis*) with evidence-based and inclusive instructional practices and materials to accomplish your learning goals.

- Find or develop assessment (*measurement*) tool(s) that are aligned with the learning goals of the teaching and learning project. How will you know what your students learned?
  - Describe the *data* that you will collect regarding achievement of the learning goals.
  - Describe how you will *analyze and interpret* the data.

**Carry out your project.** Implement the teaching plan and collect the data regarding achievement of learning goals. Analyze the data and draw evidence-based conclusions about the impact on student learning. Complete a *full-inquiry cycle* for the teaching and learning project by using findings to suggest improvements to the above actions.
Present your project. Present your project to the UMass CIRTL learning community, to the CIRTL on-line community, or both. We will arrange for a time when your projects can be presented to the local CIRTL learning community (probably as part of one of our events).