

A “Fairytale” History of the Grand Challenges for SoTL

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Presented as the introduction to her ISSOTL 2024 plenary talk

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Once upon a time there were several dark, wicked grand challenges of teaching and learning that continuously thwarted and taunted dedicated instructors.





They undermined
goals of successful
learning across the
realms, ...

...but often they
were so intertwined
with the
institutional
structures that they
were hard to clearly
perceive.



Over many eons, thousands of instructors across these realms fought valiantly to defeat these challenges, typically on their own or in very small numbers.



Sometimes they made good progress in their own small realm, which was a cause for celebration!

But the wicked grand challenges were never fully defeated by these individual efforts.



Periodically, in small and large groups, the instructors would gather to share their ideas and the preferred pedagogical approaches they had tried in their efforts to defeat these wicked grand challenges in their own realms.

But, as you'd expect, these conversations focused on what the instructors could accomplish in the present and in their own contexts, leaving little energy to deeply examine the broader reasons why the wicked grand challenges were so tenacious.

Occasionally, the circumstances and instructors happened to combine in just the right way that they collaborated in battles against the wicked grand challenges, leading to larger gains to support effective teaching and learning.

Sadly, however, the grand challenges' hold reached deep into the realms around the world, so the challenges always survived and grew back even where they had been defeated for a period of time.



Unsurprisingly, the wicked grand challenges felt secure in their dominance. They believed that despite losing some battles, they were well embedded and complex enough to ensure they would never be eradicated. ...





... Their demise would require the most unlikely of circumstances to happen across all the realms. There would need to be coordinated efforts that brought together instructors holding a variety of perspectives and ways of thinking. True defeat would also require the instructors receiving broad support from the leaders and institutions across the realms. Finally, if they were really serious about winning, the instructors would also need to clearly communicate all of these efforts with and win over the skepticism of the citizens within each realm.

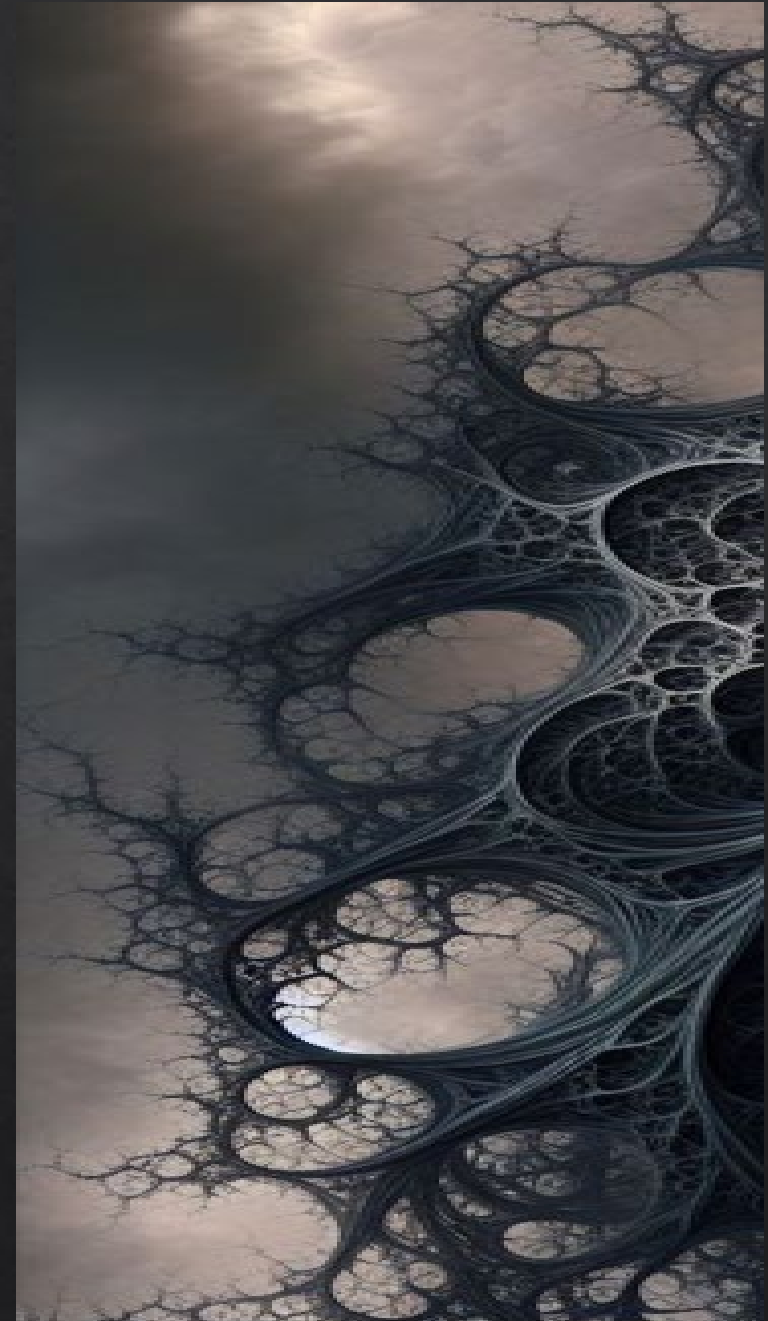
After so many years of dominance, the wicked grand challenges were confident this unlikely confluence of events would never come to pass. Little did they know that a fierce band of instructors had reached out to the far corners of all the realms to create collaborations representing many perspectives, disciplines, and languages.



These instructors gathered support from the realms' leaders and built partnerships with groups of citizens outside of academia. The collaborations and partnerships led to a growing understanding of the wicked grand challenges and an advancement of the plans to vanquish the wicked grand challenges for all time.

How will the story end? Is this really just a fairy tale story about a make-believe world?

As many of you may have already guessed, this “fairytale story” is an analogy to a real story that has happened in the past few years, and its ending, too, is still to be determined.



We hope you become inspired to join the efforts to “battle” the Grand Challenges for SoTL.

For more information about the 5 Grand Challenges of SoTL, a more detailed history of their identification, and information about ongoing efforts and collaborations, please visit the ISSOTL website at <https://issotl.com/grand-challenges-for-sotl/>

