Office of Teaching & Learning

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) Session

May 1, 2024

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by Lexi Schlosser, Faculty Developer of Online Learning in the Office of Teaching and Learning, as a part of their PhD coursework in Research Methods and Statistics at the University of Denver.

Extended gratitude to Amy He, Assistant Professor at the Graduate School of Social Work, for coordinating the opportunity for Lexi to independently study the Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) approach to program evaluation. Amy's guidance, patience, and mentorship was invaluable and so appreciated.

Special thanks to the Butler Institute for Families in the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver for the time, collaboration, and support.

Thanks also to Vania Buck for providing additional guidance and support throughout this project. And extra gratitude to the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) staff and faculty fellows who participated in the REM session.

Recommended Citation

Schlosser, L. (2024). Office of Teaching and Learning Ripple Effects Mapping Report.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction

- What is Ripple Effects Mapping?

Methodology

- Ripple Effects Mapping Process

Analysis

Findings: Themed Ripple Effects Map

- Ripple Theme 1: Cultivating Community and Connection
- Ripple Theme 2: "Creating Space" to be a Teacher-Scholar
- Ripple Theme 3: Shifting Narratives on Teaching and Learning
- Ripple Theme 4: Impacting Teaching and Learning at DU & Beyond

Summary

Appendices

- Appendix A: Thematic Map
- Appendix B: Branch of Theme: Cultivating Community and Connection
- Appendix C: Branch of Theme: "Creating Space" to be a Teacher-Scholar
- Appendix D: Branch of Theme: Shifting Narratives on Teaching and Learning
- Appendix E: Branch of Theme: Impacting Teaching and Learning at DU & Beyond
- Appendix F: Raw Map

Introduction

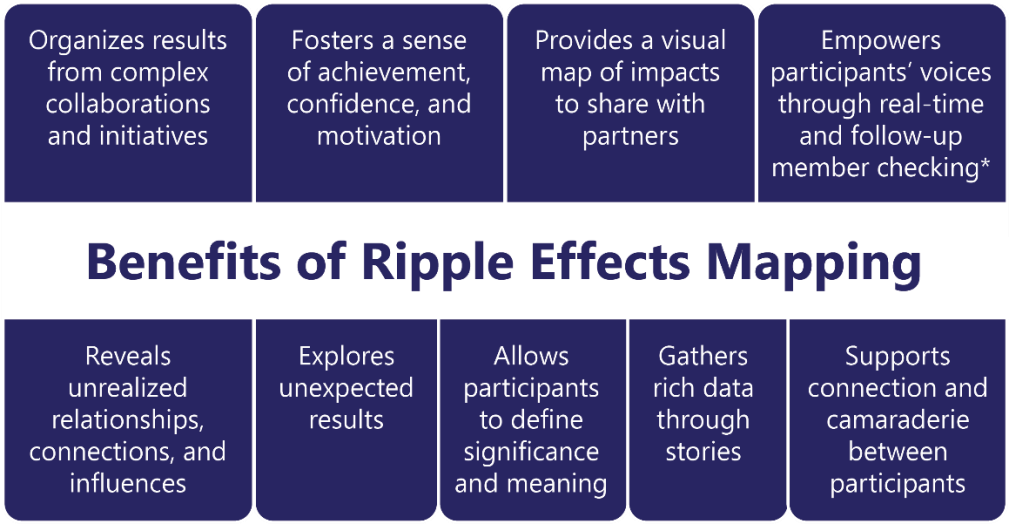
The primary mission of the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) is to *support faculty in the advancement of transformative, inclusive, and impactful teaching and learning across all disciplines and modalities to actualize DU's educational promise to all students.*

Central to this mission involves the OTL's commitment to evaluate the impact of their work. As part of this effort, the OTL engaged in a Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) session to better understand the outcomes of their work. This report will introduce REM, highlight the primary findings, share visual and textual summaries of the findings, and provide recommendations for future action items.

What is Ripple Effects Mapping?

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is a participatory and strengths-based evaluative approach that aims to highlight organizations work and capture their efforts and impact to date

Figure 1. Benefits of Ripple Effects Mapping



* Member checking involves soliciting participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations.

REM is a highly participatory interactive approach that aims to illuminate diverse perspectives and surface both anticipated and unanticipated outcomes of an initiative.

REM celebrates accomplishments and uses an approach called "Appreciative Inquiry" to gather stories and impact from participants and/or key partners. Participants' stories and reflections are mapped in real-time using a visual mind map to demonstrate connections and relationships.[1]

REM is a useful tool for capturing the impacts of the OTL's complex work and the "ripple effects" across the institution that result from the OTL's efforts. The REM's aim is to provide the space for OTL staff members and faculty fellows to share their experiences of what "impact" looks like to them. It should be noted that REM is designed to be a *supplemental* evaluation approach and mainly captures participants' perspectives on the positive impact of their work. The OTL REM session was conducted to supplement additional evaluation and assessment efforts.

"Impact" could also mean…

Methodology

Ripple Effects Mapping Process

On May 1, 2024, Lexi Schlosser conducted an in-person REM session with the current Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) staff members and faculty fellows. The entire session lasted approximately 90 minutes. The REM session consisted of three components:

1. Paired Appreciative Inquiry (AI)
2. A large group REM share-out and discussion
3. A mapping reflection

Paired Appreciative Inquiry

Participants were paired to share their stories from their work. In partnership with Leslie Alvarez, the Assistant Vice Provost and Director of the OTL, Lexi Schlosser developed three Appreciative Inquiry questions to guide these conversations:

- Tell a story about an OTL program or initiative that you are most proud of.
- What has been a highlight of working in/with the OTL?
- What impact or change has occurred as a result of the OTLs work?

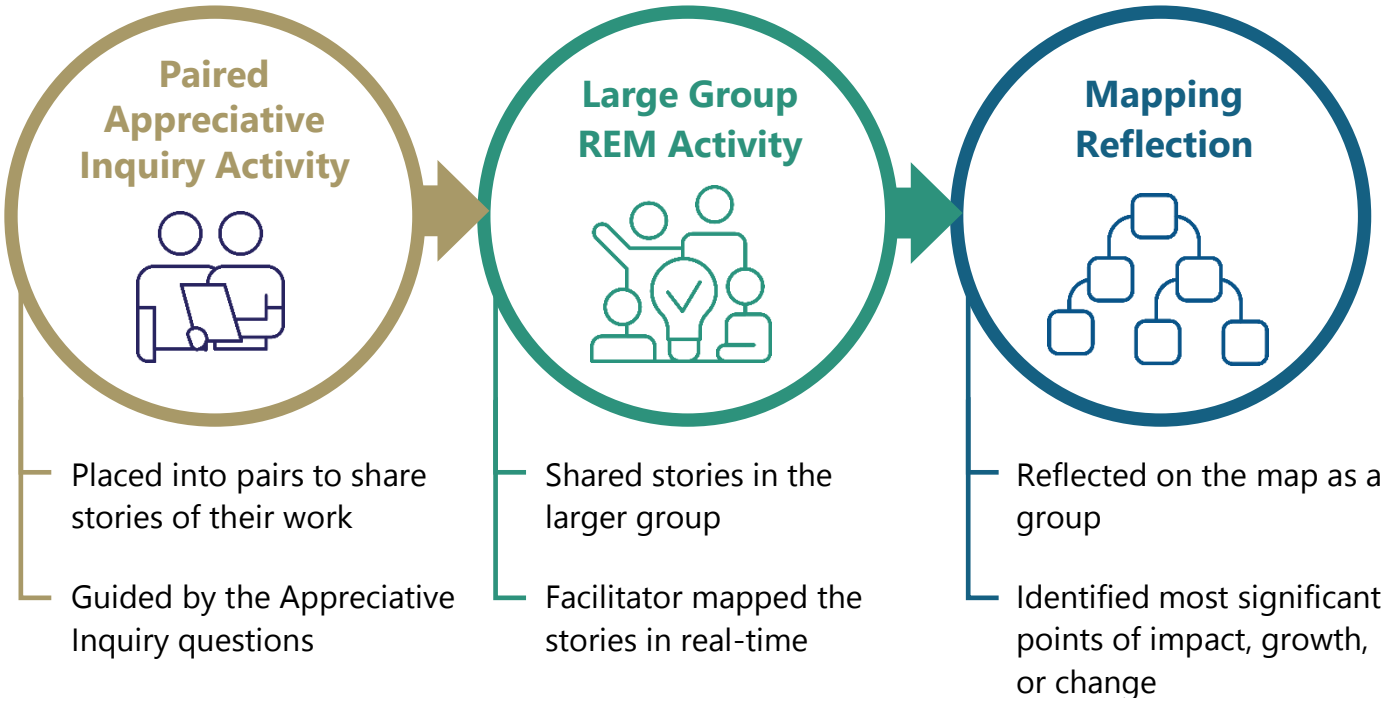
Large Group REM Activity

After the paired conversations, participants returned to the large group to volunteer and share stories from their Appreciative Inquiry activity. Schlosser facilitated the large-group discussion by providing prompts, asking for clarification, and checking that people understood the stories and experiences participants shared, while simultaneously mapping the stories on a large white board. Throughout the group discussion, participants had the opportunity to volunteer and share their own stories and to communicate with the REM facilitator/mapper to identify, validate, and add to emerging ripples (i.e., story threads) in real-time.

Mapping Reflection

At the conclusion of the large group REM activity, participants were asked to reflect on the map as a whole. This reflection allowed participants to identify the stories with the most significant impact, confirm the information provided, and verify the relationships that emerged.

Figure 2. REM Session Process Steps



Analysis

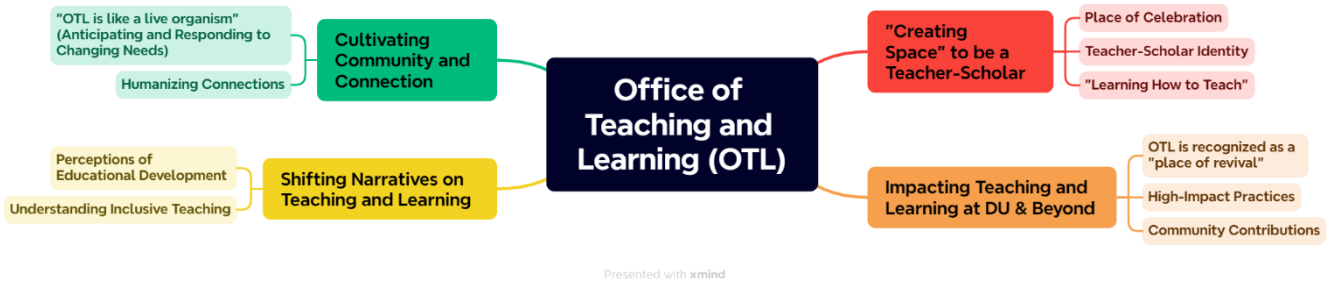
Following the REM session[s], Schlosser utilized the session's audio recording and transcript to clean and refine the hand drawn map created during the REM session[s], ensuring that all content was captured, and important quotes were included. The hand drawn map was then transferred to the digital software XMind. Schlosser then sent the updated Xmind Ripple Map to the OTL participant team for review to confirm that it accurately reflected the group's conversation and to make any revisions. This final, Xmind Ripple Map[s] is in Appendix F.

Schlosser then identified themes within the Xmind Ripple Map. Developing themes helps evaluators group the impacts/ripples and stories participants identified into broad, meaningful categories. This process allowed for summarizing the content and providing an overview of the session. The thematic map is in Appendix A.

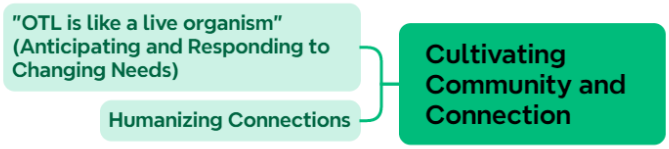
Findings: Themed Ripple Effects Map

The following sections describe what was learned from the REM session and provide a visual and textual summary of the themes and subthemes identified in the thematic map. Figure 3 reflects the main themes and subthemes from the REM session. The complete Thematic Ripple Map is in Appendix A.

Figure 3. REM Themes and Subthemes



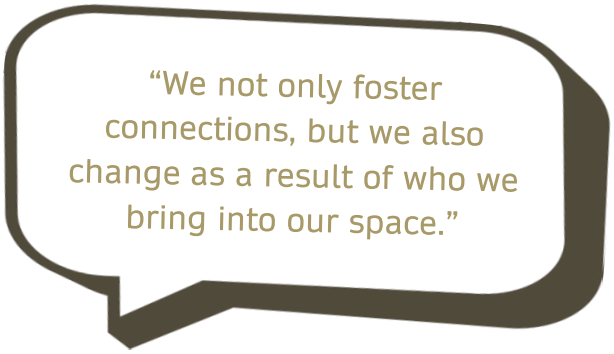
Ripple Theme 1: Cultivating Community and Connection



When it comes to *Cultivating Community and Connection*, participants described the OTL as a place for people to come together from different areas of campus for social and professional connections. Their ever-evolving work positions participants to view the "*OTL like a live organism*," for *humanizing connections* to take place. Find the full branch of this theme in Appendix B.

Summary of Overall Theme and Subthemes

Subtheme 1: "OTL is like a live organism" (Anticipating and Responding to Changing Needs)

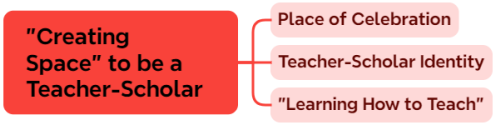


When addressing the ever-changing needs of faculty development, the OTL anticipates and responds through data-driven, adaptable, and generative programs and services. This awareness of the educational landscape, constituent needs, and evolving practices allows the OTL to "do our best to create a soft landing for faculty." They recognize that they are "more than a hub for faculty, we are also an incubator, temple, and sieve for teaching and learning."

Subtheme 2: Humanizing Connections

With an emphasis on building and sustaining relationships, the OTL intentionally creates opportunities for faculty and students to come together and make connections. Some of these connections can be described as academic/professional, while others include helping people feel a sense of community and belonging within the institution. For instance, participants shared about the impact of cohort-based programs where relationships last long after the program concludes adding, "some of them actually have a collaborative book chapter coming out soon as a result."

Ripple Theme 2: "Creating Space" to be a Teacher-Scholar



By *"Creating Space" to be a Teacher-Scholar*, the OTL provides opportunities for faculty to learn, adapt, and embrace the Teacher-Scholar model through educational development. Find the full branch of this theme in Appendix C.

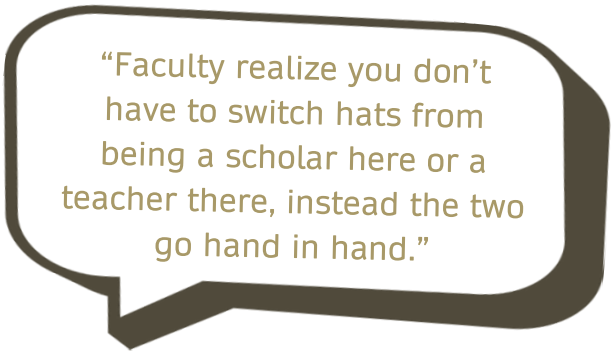
Summary of Overall Theme and Subthemes

Subtheme 1: Place of Celebration

When considering instances where faculty return to the OTL for programs and/or support, participants emphasized the theme of celebration that the OTL creates space for. Faculty feel valued when they are invited to celebrate their accomplishments and are recognized for their growth and development as Teacher-Scholars. Participants shared, "we [OTL] have tried to create these opportunities for celebration, like through faculty showcases, but also by doing small things to communicate value, like catering lunch during events."

Subtheme 2: Teacher-Scholar Identity

The OTL creates intentional opportunities for all faculty to realize, develop, and engage with their own Teacher-Scholar identity. While this occurs through OTLs informal engagement with faculty it also includes programs designed for specific roles, for a specific stage in the faculty life cycle, and for specific social identities.



Subtheme 3: "Learning How to Teach"

Faculty are encouraged to learn new approaches to teaching by reflecting and applying creative, innovative, and research-based teaching practices. When the OTL "creates space" for learning and development to take place, faculty embrace their own learning process, feel more empowered to make changes to their teaching, and seek out additional opportunities to conduct research in their classroom. Bringing faculty to their own roots as learners "becomes a critical bench marker of faculty life."

Ripple Theme 3: Shifting Narratives on Teaching and Learning

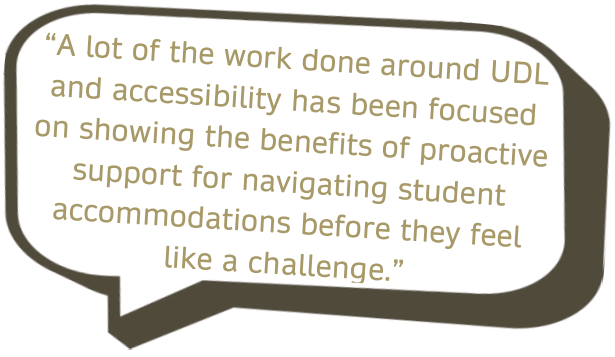
The work done in the OTL has contributed to a *Shift in Narratives* in the way teaching and learning is received, appreciated, and applied. Find the full branch of this theme in Appendix D.

Summary of Overall Theme and Subthemes

Subtheme 1: Perceptions of Educational Development

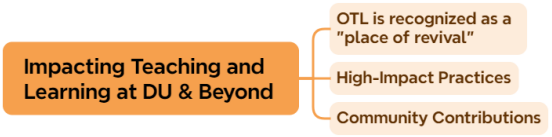
A particularly salient narrative that continues to shift through the OTLs work involves the perceptions that faculty have surrounding educational development. Faculty are moving from seeing educational development as a "means of survival," to a more intentional "care for learning." Participants explained this further as, "moving from a deficit mindset to a possibility mindset" when considering the impact of the work that faculty are trying to do through teaching and learning. This not only includes what faculty are doing to improve their teaching skills, but how they show up in programs/services offered by the OTL for the greater impact on students' learning.

Subtheme 2: Understanding Inclusive Teaching



As a result of the OTLs work, campus-wide understanding, acceptance, and progress is being made through inclusive teaching, specifically related to efforts focused on accessibility and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Participants highlighted the positive examples of growth and change regarding institutional knowledge and capacity as well as individual responsibility for faculty to better support students with disabilities. This narrative shift recognizes that pathways to success may look different for different people. The impact of this work has contributed to additional roles and responsibilities of the OTLs work as well as additional need for customized programs.

Ripple Theme 4: Impacting Teaching and Learning at DU & Beyond



The final theme emphasizes the impact that the OTL has on teaching and learning both internal and external to DU. Find the full branch of this theme in Appendix E.

Summary of Overall Theme and Subthemes

Subtheme 1: OTL is recognized as a "place of revival"

As teaching and learning are central to institutional goals, the OTL has become an important place for faculty to come together, receive support, and grow their own knowledge and abilities for supporting student learning. Participants describe this as an experience faculty have with the OTL to "rekindle their love for teaching." These positive experiences that faculty describe having with OTL staff members highlights the significant impact that the OTL has on faculty belonging, development, and retention. OTL staff members also emphasize how these positive experiences contribute to their ability to do good work.

Subtheme 2: High-Impact Practices

OTL's involvement in student-focused programs are centered around AAC&U's High-Impact Practices (HIPs) that provide significant benefits to students' educational experiences. Some of the OTL's significant HIP collaborations at DU have included first-year seminar, ePortfolios, experiential learning, and the 4D experience. All of which are emphasized as critical points of student development.

Subtheme 3: Community Contributions

Within the DU community, the OTL is positioned as a key partner and collaborator for strategic initiatives. In recent years this has included the institution's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, campus-wide efforts for student accessibility accommodations, and leadership on teaching evaluation changes. Within the wider educational development community, the OTL is also deeply committed to advancements in educational development innovations and initiatives. This has resulted in national and international publications, presentations, and involvement in professional organizations.

Summary

Following the REM session, participants extended gratitude for the experience to participate in a generative, positive, reflective assessment opportunity. While REM not only has the opportunity to highlight the positive impacts of a program, it also creates space for members of an organization to celebrate their accomplishments and feel a sense of pride and joy for their work.

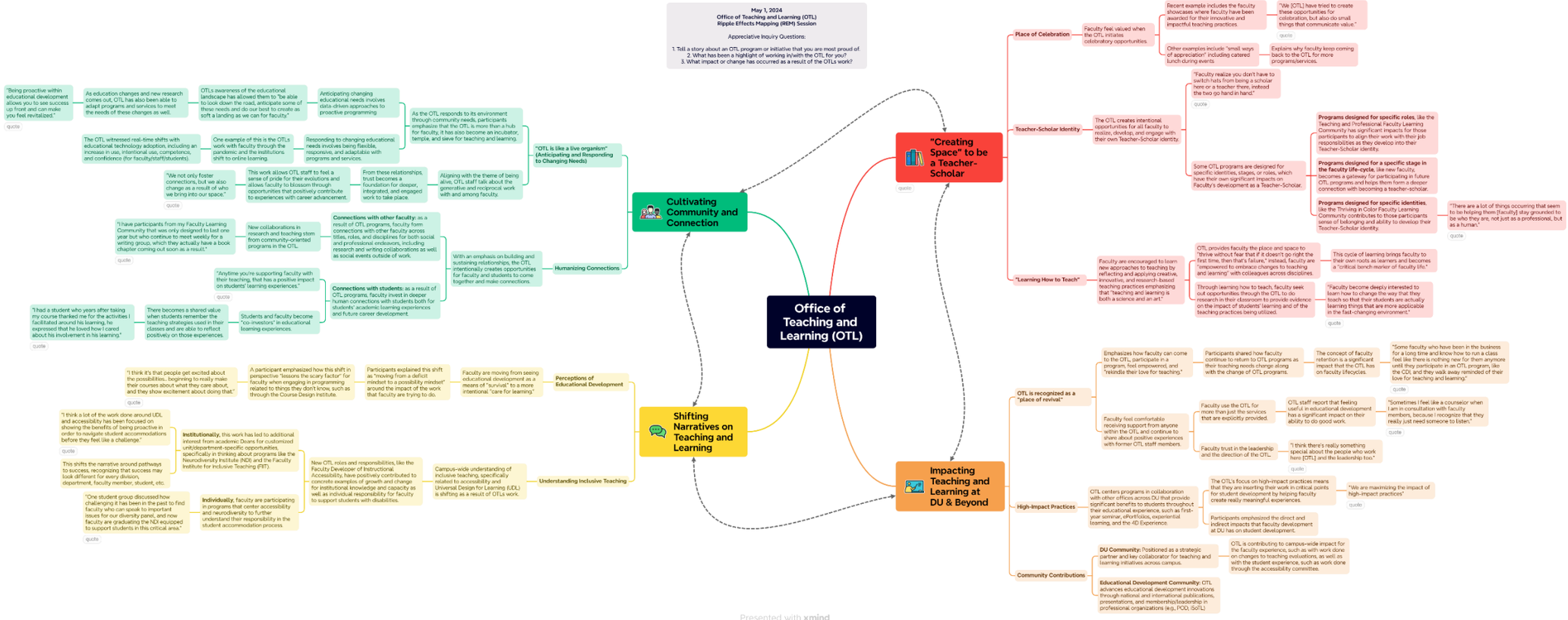
During the REM session, participants shared a few challenges that the OTL continues to face. These challenges were added to the sessions parking lot, which comprised of a list that did not quite represent a significant impact of the OTLs work but deserves further exploration. First on the parking lot involves the OTLs interest in how to engage faculty who do not opt-in to OTL programs and initiatives. Further assessment could consider questions surrounding why these faculty are not engaging, what would entice them to engage, and how to increase engagement. Another parking lot point included the current lack of support for graduate students with teaching-focused roles as well as with future interests in faculty-lines. Currently, graduate students are welcomed into select programs, but the institution has not yet developed initiatives specifically focused on developing graduate students teaching skills. Finally, participants mentioned interest in exploring the greater impact the OTL could have on teaching and learning through collaborating specifically with first-year seminar since every student at DU experiences that program. What might this collaboration look like if the OTL were to offer customized programs for first-year seminar faculty members? What might the ripple's look like when assessing impact at that scale?

Additionally, the OTL is interested in examining their impact through Levels of Change Theory [2], which explores individual change at the micro-level, group and network changes at the meso-level, and institutional changes at the macro-level. Further program evaluation could combine the findings in this REM report with this framework.

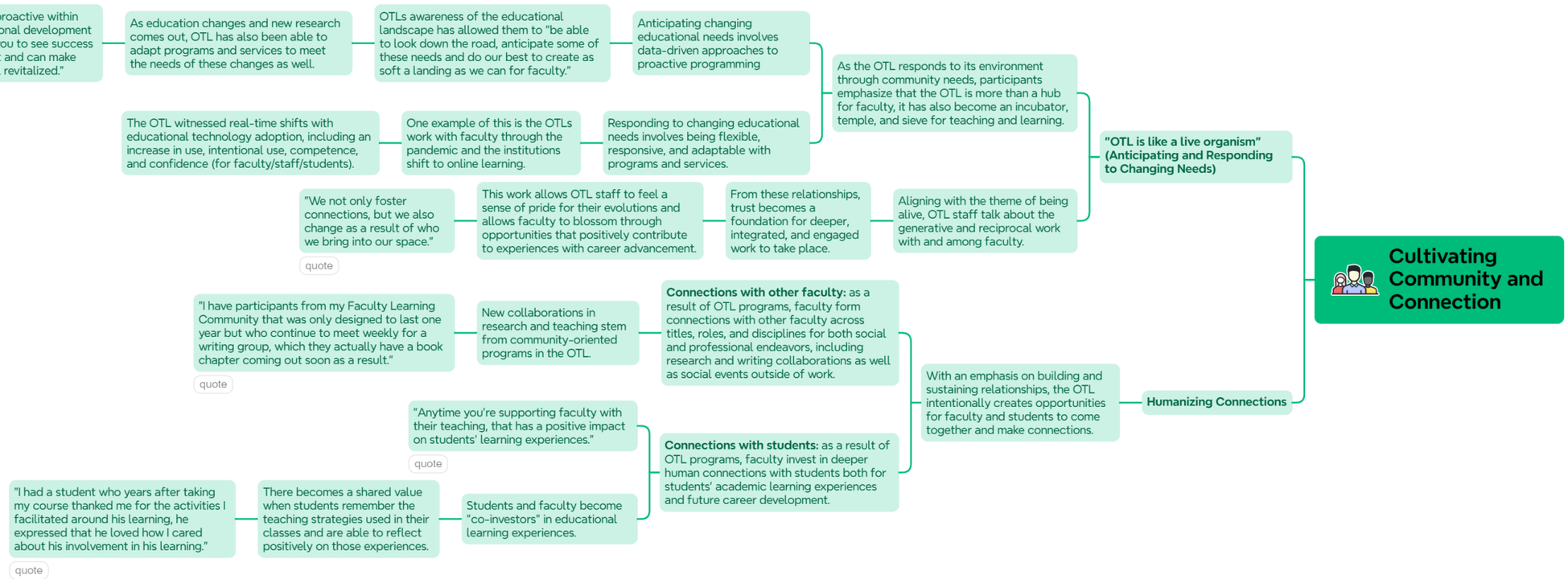
Office of Teaching & Learning

Appendices

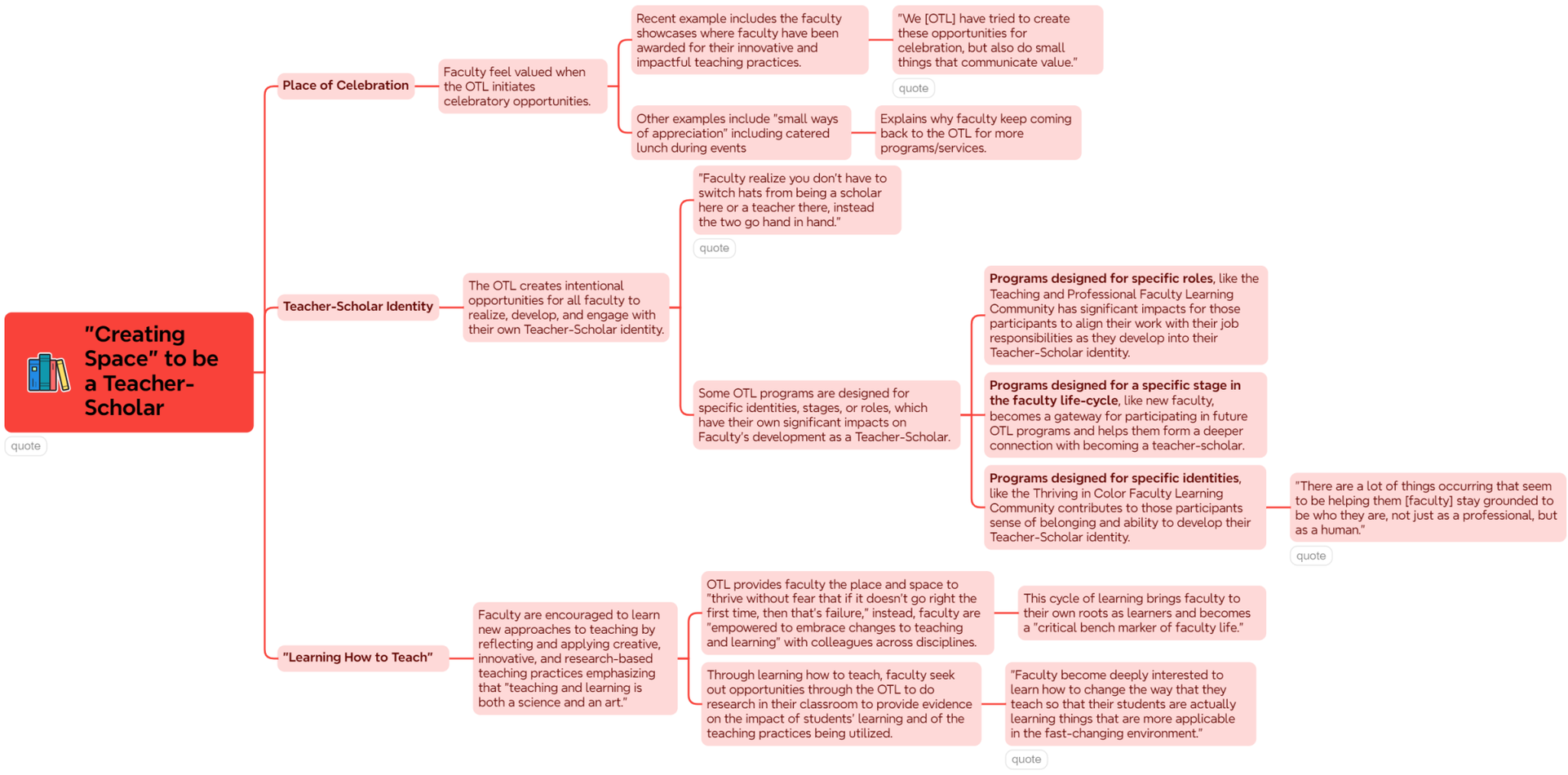
Appendix A: Thematic Map



Appendix B: Branch of Theme: Cultivating Community and Connection

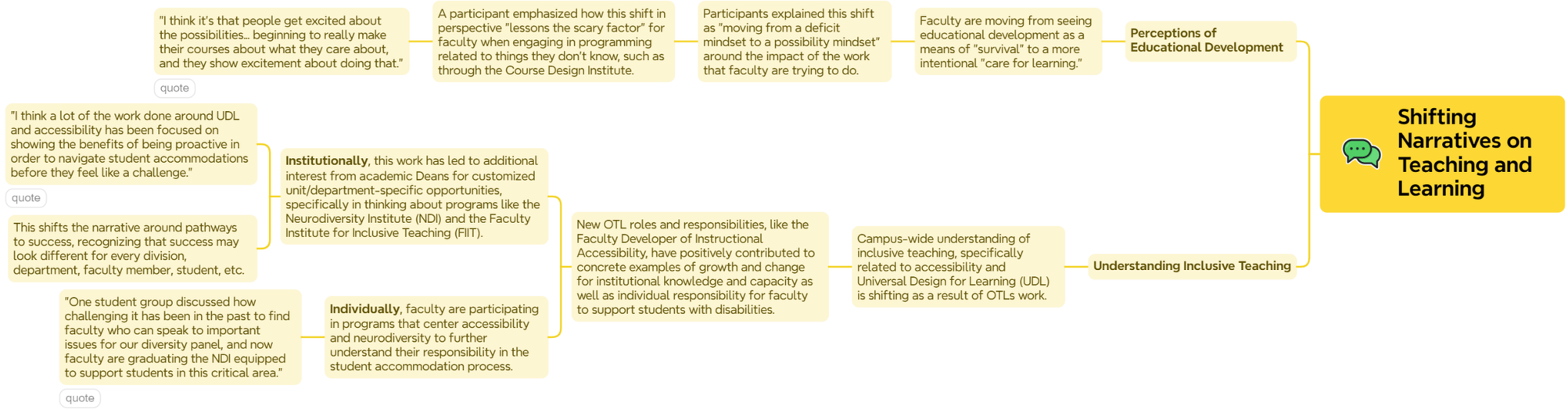


Appendix C: Branch of Theme: “Creating Space” to be a Teacher-Scholar

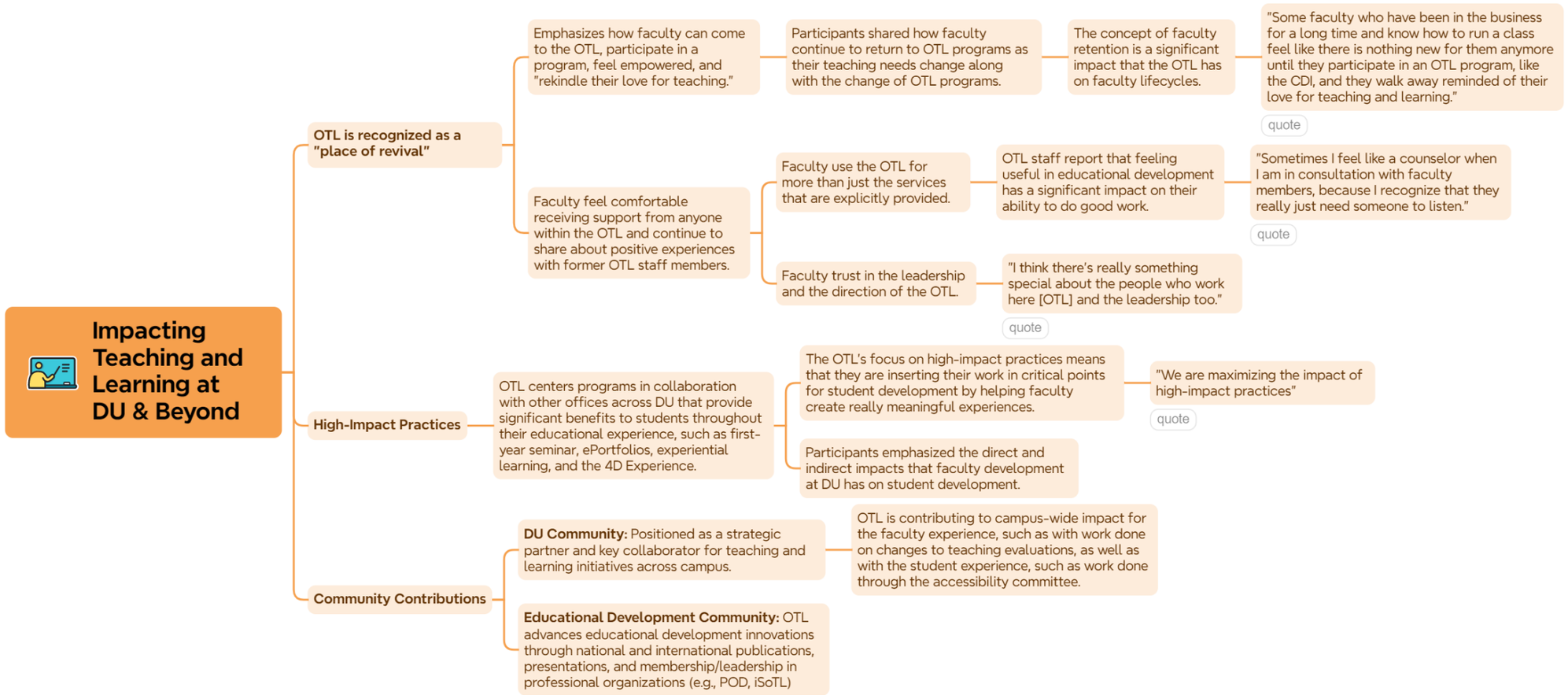


Office of Teaching & Learning

Appendix D: Branch of Theme: Shifting Narratives on Teaching and Learning



Appendix E: Branch of Theme: Impacting Teaching and Learning at DU & Beyond



Appendix F: Raw Map

---

[1] Chazdon, S., Emery, M., Hansen, D., Higgins, L., & Sero, R. (2017). *A field guide to Ripple Effects Mapping*. Minnesota Evaluation Studies Institute, University of Minnesota. Retrieved September 14, 2022, from https://ucanr.edu/sites/CEprogramevaluation/files/317076.pdf

[2] CITATION COMING