

SOTL AT ISU

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University
“*systematic reflection/study on teaching and learning made public*”

Volume 1; January 2007



Illinois State University Involvement in CASTL: History and Updates

Illinois State University has been involved in national and international programs to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) since 1998. This includes work in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Campus Program and with the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE). We were selected as one of 12 North American SoTL Cluster Leader Campuses and worked with nine other institutions around the nation for three years to organize support for SoTL at the campus level. The links under “Cluster SoTL Leader” at the website <http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/castlAahe/> offer information, resources, and reports on this work.

Last summer Illinois State was accepted as a member in the CASTL Leadership Program, the latest phase of Carnegie SoTL work by higher education institutions. We are a member of the theme group, *Students as Scholars of Teaching and Learning*, and our specific emphasis is “Fostering Learner Autonomy through SoTL.” Colleagues who have or are assisting with this work include Jim Broadbear, Deb Gentry, Pat Jarvis, Trish Klass, Phyllis McCluskey-Titus, Sharon Naylor, Mike Sublett, and Susan Woollen. We welcome participation by interested faculty, staff and students. Our emphasis on learner autonomy meshes well with the overall theme in at least two ways. First, helping students become scholars of teaching and learning will likely increase their autonomy as learners. Second, students can be involved in SoTL work on the topic of learner autonomy. With these two connections in mind, we offer the following goals and strategies for our work in this program.

Goals

- Improve faculty and student knowledge about the current literature on learner autonomy and related concepts.
- Support SoTL projects (with student team members) on learner autonomy including design, implementation, making public, and application.

- Increase undergraduate and graduate student involvement in SoTL, as well as SoTL research collaborations among faculty, staff, and students.
- Strengthen the SoTL component in graduate student training.
- Enhance student learning and learner autonomy through their involvement in SoTL.
- Help faculty and students use the knowledge base and their own SoTL research results on learner autonomy to deal with common and problematic issues that may be related to low levels of learner autonomy (e.g., preparation, participation, reading, making good choices, time management).

Strategies to Achieve the Goals

Students will be involved in all of these strategies. Some will involve collaborations of two or more units on campus (e.g., teaching center, Provost Office, Departments, Research Office...)

- Create a web site about learner autonomy (e.g., SoTL projects on campus, literature reviews, a bibliography).
- Conduct workshops on doing SoTL and learner autonomy, and the practical application of that knowledge.
- Offer small, internal grants for SoTL projects on learner autonomy and for travel (including for students) to SoTL conferences.
- Help SoTL researchers with study design for learner autonomy projects.
- Form and facilitate research/writing circles; provide peer feedback on draft papers.
- Provide internal “making public” opportunities including a panel at the annual teaching-learning symposium and a local publication.
- Connect learner autonomy to the co-curriculum and make collaborations with student affairs.

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Learner Autonomy and Achievement Motivation as a Function of Teacher Immediacy and Student Attachment Representations

by Gary Creasey, Patricia Jarvis and Daniel Gadke, Psychology

Because confident, self-directed students report supportive relationships with instructors, identifying variables that predict the ontogeny of these affiliations is of immense importance. *Teacher immediacy* is an exciting variable that has some input in the development of student-instructor relationships. The construct of teacher immediacy has emerged from the field of communication and represents subtle verbal and nonverbal behaviors exhibited by instructors in the classroom environment. Verbal behaviors include making positive comments about the class performance of students; whereas smiling at students while lecturing represents nonverbal behavior. There is some evidence that teacher immediacy predicts the development of student-instructor relationships; however, this idea is mostly theoretical at the present time.

There are student variables, such as gender, that could also predict the development of close relationships between learners and instructors. One student variable that theoretically has a large bearing on the development of these affiliations would be generalized attachment representations. That is, some students are very secure in forging new relationships, whereas others are fearful or downplay the importance of relationships. It could be theorized that these representations could overwhelm the importance of teacher immediacy. That is, it could be that more secure students are more confident, self-directed learners to begin with and they more readily form close associations with instructors. Thus, a major goal of our SoTL research was delineating the relative importance of teacher immediacy and student attachment representations in predicting student achievement orientation. To accomplish this objective, 270 undergraduate students at Illinois

State completed instruments that assessed generalized attachment representations, teacher immediacy, student-instructor relationships, and achievement orientations (e.g., confidence; learner autonomy). All students rated their behavior, and that of the instructor, in a single, randomly determined course.

The study results were unexpected, in that student attachment functioning did not predict achievement orientation in the course, nor their relationship with their instructor. As expected, however, students that had good relationships with instructors were more likely to have positive achievement orientations. For example, these students were more confident, perceived themselves as more in control over their learning environment, and engaged in more self-directed learning than students that reported more anxiety in their relationship with the instructor. In addition, teacher immediacy was more strongly connected to the development of the student-teacher relationships than were classroom characteristics (e.g. class size) and student demographics (e.g., gender). Further, higher teacher immediacy was more strongly connected with a positive instructor relationship than were other forms of instructor behaviors (e.g., holds review assignments), activities (e.g., active learning assignments), or use/nonuse of technology. Thus, it appears that students—even those with problematic attachment backgrounds—can forge successful relationships with their instructors and the development of this relationship is somewhat dependent on instructor behaviors that are immediate to the classroom environment. What is particularly exciting about teacher immediacy is that it represents a cluster of verbal and nonverbal behaviors that are modifiable and amenable to teacher training.

The Value of Community Service as Reciprocal Teaching/Learning for Undergraduates and Graduate Students

by Phyllis McCluskey-Titus, Educational Administration and Foundations

In the fall semester of 2005 I was teaching both a graduate course about college student culture and the Learning in Communities (LinC) first year experience course. The shared learning goals for these courses included exposure to community service opportunities locally and understanding what it means to be a new college student, so I saw the opportunity for both classes to work together on a service learning project as mutually beneficial. I also believed that the experience of two classes, one graduate and one undergraduate, working together was unique and allowed for a research opportunity to explore the effectiveness of community service as a teaching/learning strategy. Following a week-end service experience, the 33 students each wrote reflective papers about how they felt and what they learned while working with the other class on a community-based service project. In addition, the first year students (n=18) wrote weekly journals where they discussed the service project, and group discussions were held individually with both classes. These journal entries, reflective papers, and

discussion notes comprised the data set for this qualitative SoTL research project.

Students reported satisfaction with the work they completed, an enjoyment of working as members of a team, an appreciation for material goods they had, recognition of the perceived value and impact they had on others and the community, and a greater awareness of personal skills and competencies. These reported outcomes alone were enough for me to assess this as a successful learning technique. However, as an instructor, I learned that graduate students could be effective teachers for undergraduates as the first year students reported having meaningful and significant conversations with the graduate students while working together on the service projects. I also learned that interaction with the undergraduates was more effective in helping graduate students understand the developmental issues and challenges faced by first year students than simply reading about them. (The full research study is currently in review for *MountainRise*.)

New First Year Composition Placement Process Results in Increased Self-Determination without Affecting Student Success Rates

by Claire Lamonica, Assistant Director of CTLT, with Brad Smith and Janice Neuleib, English

During the summer of 2003, students attending Preview at Illinois State University had a slightly different experience than any of their predecessors. In the past, the Preview experience had always included the “sorting” of students into one of two versions of freshmen composition: English 101 and English 101.10. (English 101.10 is an “intensive” version of the course, designed for less experienced or more anxious writers.) Lacking a “sorting hat” like the one used at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry of Harry Potter fame, the Writing Programs had used writing samples gathered during Preview in conjunction with student ACT scores to determine which version of English 101 was best suited for each student. In the summer of 2003, however, the Writing Programs began piloting a new approach—asking students to place themselves using a process called “Directed Self-Placement.” The foundational belief of Directed Self-Placement (DSP) is that students know more about their own past writing experiences and their own current levels of writing ability than we could ever hope to determine through a single writing sample composed in significantly less than an hour. Thus, given sufficient information about the objectives and demands of the first year composition options, the students are the persons best-suited to decide which version of the course will best suit their needs. But does it work?

By comparing data from several fall semesters (1999, 2002, 2003, and 2004), each of which used a slightly different placement process, we were able to determine that DSP does, in fact, seem to be working. The percentage of students who successfully completed their English 101 or 101.10 course remained essentially the same, with a slight, but not significant increase following the implementation of DSP. We were able to make a number of other determinations as well, including the fact that the vast majority of students place themselves in the course that the Writing Program would have recommended, had it been placing students based on their ACT composite scores, and that, when asked what criteria they had used to determine an appropriate placement, the greatest number of students (about 45%) made explicit mention of their own previous writing experiences. Given these findings, it seems that DSP is an appropriate process for placing students into first year composition courses at Illinois State. Not only are students who place themselves generally successful in the courses they choose, but they now begin their university careers with a sense of ownership and self-determination which could never be replicated through traditional placement procedures.

SoTL Books Available in the CTLT Instructional Resource Commons

The following SoTL books are available in the CTLT Instructional Resource Commons in the Instructional Technology and Development Center (ITDC), 301 S. Main, on a shelf marked “Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.”

Becker, W. E., & Andrew, M. L. (Eds.). (2004). *The scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education: Contributions of research universities*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Bernstein, D. J., Nelson, A., Goodburn, A., & Savory, P. (2006). *Making teaching and learning visible: Course portfolios and the peer review of teaching*. Bolton, MA: Anker.

Cambridge, B. L. (Ed.). (2004). *Campus progress: Supporting the scholarship of teaching and learning*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.

Cross, K. P., & Steadman, M. H. (1996). *Classroom research: Implementing the scholarship of teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Huber, M. T. (2004). *Balancing acts: The scholarship of teaching and learning in academic careers*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.

Huber, M. T., & Hutchings, P. (2005). *The advancement of learning: Building the teaching commons*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Huber, M. T., & Morreale, S. P. (Eds.). (2002). *Disciplinary styles in the scholarship of teaching and learning:*

Exploring common ground. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.

Hutchings, P. (2000). *Opening lines: Approaches to the scholarship of teaching and learning*. Menlo Park, CA: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Hutchings, P. (2002). *Ethics of inquiry: Issues in the scholarship of teaching and learning*. Menlo Park, CA: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Kreber, C. (Ed.). (2001). *New directions for teaching and learning: No. 86. Scholarship revisited: Perspectives on the scholarship of teaching and learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

McKinney, K. (2007, in press for spring). *Enhancing Learning through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: A Practical Guide to the SoTL Juggling Act*. Bolton, MA.: Anker.

Weimer, M. E. (2006). *Enhancing scholarly work on teaching and learning: Professional literature that makes a difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

A lengthy bibliography of books, chapters and articles on the field of SoTL is available at:

<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/resLinks/SELBIBL.shtml>.

Announcements

ISSOTL

One of the main organizations supporting SoTL in higher education is the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning or ISSOTL. The founding committee started this relatively new organization in 2003. This last November, we held the third annual meeting in Washington DC. Illinois State faculty members Gary Creasey, Pat Jarvis, and Kathleen McKinney attended these meetings. In July of 2007, the fourth annual meetings will be in Sydney, Australia at the University of New South Wales. In fall of 2008, we will be in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. ISSOTL offers an annual conference, a web page (<http://www.issotl.org/>), and a newsletter. We are currently working on additional ideas to support SoTL and make SoTL work public.

SoTL Writing Circle Planning Session

Are you working on a SoTL presentation, paper submission, newsletter article, or other product? Would you like to participate this spring and/or next fall in a SoTL Writing Circle to move that writing along? Join us for a participant planning session for possible SoTL Writing Circles facilitated by Kathleen McKinney and Deb Gentry. Come on February 19 or 20, both sessions are from 11:30 to 12:45 in the CTLT Conference Room (107 ITDC building). Lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to Kathleen at kmckinne@ilstu.edu by February 12 for one of these sessions (specify, please).

2006-2007 SoTL Grant Recipients—Focus on Learner Autonomy

Gary Creasey, Patricia Jarvis, and Daniel Gadke, Psychology, were awarded \$4,500 for *Forecasting Changes in Learner Autonomy—A Longitudinal Investigation*.

Mohamed El-Gafy and Keith Rahn, Technology, were awarded \$4,500 for *Exploring the Effect of Team Leaders who are Autonomous Learners in Enhancing Team Learning within Construction Management Classes*.

Donna Vandiver, Jeffery Walsh, and Carrie Grotts, Criminal Justice, were awarded \$4,500 for *Employing Active Learning Strategies to Promote Autonomous Learning in Criminal Justice Research Methods Courses: An Assessment*.

Bryon Weigand, Rob Rhykerd, Kathleen Blubaugh, and Addie Meteer, Agriculture, were awarded \$4,500 for *Developing Learner Autonomy by Linking Classroom Theory to Applied Research: A Pilot Project in Food Animal Curriculum*.

Call for 2007-2008 SoTL Small Grant Proposals

The call for 2007-2008 SoTL grant proposals just came out. The call was sent to all faculty members and is available on the following web page, <http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/funding/>. Grants are for up to \$5,000 for a team consisting of at least one faculty or staff member and at least one student researcher. The theme for the grants is students as scholars of teaching and learning, and promoting learner autonomy.

SoTL Websites of Interest

Illinois State University (ISU) SoTL main web page (<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/>). This is our main SoTL page and it is full of information, resources, examples and links related to the scholarship of teaching and learning at ISU and on the national and international higher education scene. Thanks to Tom Silvia of CTLT for maintaining our web page.

SoTL Research Collaboration site (<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/sotlcollaboration/>). Anyone doing or interested in doing SoTL work can register their interests and contact information in this database as well as search for colleagues by topic, discipline, or institution. We encourage you to register and to send this URL to colleagues at other schools who do SoTL work.

ISU Repository of Web Snapshots of SoTL projects (<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/examples/KEEPShots.shtml>) using the KEEP Toolkit. This is a new page where we are collecting descriptions of ISU SoTL projects created using the Carnegie KEEP Toolkit for making web snapshots. Please try out KEEP and create a snapshot of your SoTL work. Send the URL for you snapshot to kmckinne@ilstu.edu. The first few people to send a completed, acceptable snapshot of an SoTL project will receive \$150 in travel or other funds for this fiscal year.

SoTL Conferences (<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/sotlConf/>) are listed on this page. The key conference in this area is that of the International Society of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (IS-SoTL). The 2007 meetings will be held in Sydney, Australia in July. Information on this organization can be found at <http://www.issotl.org/>.

SAVE THE DATE

On Friday, February 23, the Faculty Excellence Initiative Committee and the Provost's Office will sponsor Dr. Mark Taylor, University of Arkansas, in a campus-wide program entitled "Generation NeXt Comes to College," followed by a lunch and faculty workshop. Two identical presentations will be offered in the morning at 9 and 10:45, lunch will be available, and a faculty workshop on teaching Generation NeXt will take place at 1 pm. Reservation information will be available soon.