

2014 Lilly International Conference on College Teaching

Miami University, Oxford, Ohio November 20-23, 2014

The Merits of Student Scholarship:

Exploring Uncommon Learning Communities

Michaelene Cox

Department of Politics and Government

Illinois State University

SoTL Scholar-Mentor 2014-15

Introduction

This study and conference attendance was funded by the ISU Office of the Cross Endowed Chair in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, SoTL Small Grant Program, FY14

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

ISU Concept/Definition of SoTL:

**“systematic reflection/study on
teaching and learning
[of our ISU students]
made public”**

Goal: Improve Student Learning

Uncommon Learning Communities for Students of Higher Education

field trips

study groups

internships

technology/media

mentoring

conference presentation

service learning

publishing

study abroad

etc.

Conferences and Publications: Mode of Service Learning

“learning by doing” “scholar-in-training”
(antithesis of passive learning)

Assumption: Students take as much as they give through scholarly production

Problem: No systematic inquiry conducted to demonstrate merits of student conferences and publications, or offer comparative analyses within/across disciplines

Research Questions

Purpose: Determine to what degree, and how, learning comes about through student conference presentation and/or journal publication.

Q1. What might be **incentives & challenges** of publishing and conferencing?

Q2. What do **participants** say and do?

Q3. How do we **measure** learning through these activities?

Lilly Audience Informal Survey

1. As a student, did you present papers? Publish?
2. If not, why not?
3. If so, was the research a class assignment?
For academic credit? Self-initiated?
4. Why did you submit?
5. Acceptance / Resubmissions / Rejections ?
6. What benefits, if any, did you receive?
7. Are you Faculty, Administrator, Student, Practitioner?
8. How important is research to your career?

Methods and Findings

Q1. Literature review

Q2. Survey responses from student authors and **content analysis** of articles in 3 disciplinary journal publications

Q3. Survey responses from faculty mentors and student symposia participants

Q1. Debating student scholarship

Pros:

- Forum/Exchange/Expression
- Professional socialization
- Service learning/Pedagogical tool
- Visibility/Credentials
- Confidence-building
- One-to-one with mentors

Cons:

- Student pressure
- Faculty stress, time
- Journal standards
- Conference costs

Q2a. Inquiries into student publishing: A disciplinary study

(i) Content analysis, 2001-2009

- *The Critique*
- *Michigan Journal of Political Science*
- *Pi Sigma Alpha*

185 student articles

- Subfield - Methodology
- Region - Topic

(ii) Author survey emailed

(i) Content analysis, some findings:

- Subfield:
- Least: Political Theory
 - Most: American Politics
- Region:
- Least: Latin America
 - Most: Europe
- Methodology:
- Most: Quantitative, Case Study
 - Least: Theoretical
- Topic:
- Most: Demo. and Governance
 - Least: Economic Development

*** Mirrors trends among top professional journals**

(ii) Author survey

- 72 *Critique* published authors
- 13 responses
- 9 questions:
 - * level of edu
 - * origin
 - * why submit
 - * Prior exper
 - * subsequent exp
 - * edits/Resubmits
 - * perceived benefit
 - * importance
 - * current status

Some responses....

(ii) Perceived benefits of publishing?

Examples of student author survey responses:

- The feedback system provided insights into how to write publishable articles. The publication gave me confidence and motivated me to write again.
- I got an internship with the County in part because of my publication record.
- I think it helped me get into graduate school.
- It's a line on my cv but I don't think a student journal counts for much in the world of tenure.

Q2b. Inquiries into student conferencing: An interdisciplinary study

ISU Undergrad/Grad Symposia 2009-13

1,562 Total surveyed, 11 questions emailed:
304 faculty (13 respondents)
1,258 students (18 respondents)

(i) Faculty findings:

Objectives as mentors:

- Most: increase pedagogical skills, teaching exp

Extent of mentoring:

- Least: help with oral presentation

How much time:

- Most: more than 15 hours

(a) What did students learn? Responses.....

(b) What challenges face mentors? Responses.....

(a) Student benefits of conferencing?

Examples of **faculty mentor** responses:

- A better understanding/appreciation of the complete research process (conception through dissemination)
- The “culture” of conference presentation
- Distinction between getting a good grade vs. conducting excellent research and presenting it in front of an audience

(b) Challenges to faculty mentors?

Examples of **faculty mentor** responses:

- (students) Need a great deal of assistance in all phases... a strain on the mentor due to time and funding limitations
- IRB proposals. They took too long, so I no longer have students present

(ii) Student findings:

Nature of submission:

- Most: independent study project

Objectives:

- Equally mixed

Extent of interaction with faculty:

- Most: Great deal

Extent of interaction w/others during presentation:

- Most, Much

What did students learn?

Responses.....

What challenges?

Responses.....

(a) Benefits of conferencing?

Examples of **student** responses:

- Learned it takes much time to actually complete research as well as organizing it in such a way that is meaningful during the presentation
- Honestly don't feel like I learned anything new while preparing...did enjoy the opportunity to practice

(b) Challenges of conferencing?

Examples of **student** responses:

- Learning about the rules and regulations of...following specific guidelines
- Revamping and reediting a 15-page paper for a 20 minute presentation

Q3. How to measure learning?

Establishing: learning goals, objectives, outcomes

Measures: Direct: Demonstration of gains in knowledge, skills
(paper, poster, presenting)

Indirect: Perceptions by student, faculty, peers, editors, job placement/grad schl

Discussion

Going back to assumption of “scholar-in-training”:

Students take as much as they give thru scholarly production

Social Network Theory

Can help us predict / explain learning

social structure determined by interactions,
dynamics of learning organizations such as:
journals/conferences as forum, create ties

Now...further SoTL needed

1. Integrate into **research agenda**
 - a. Further analysis of student journals by **discipline**
 - b. Analysis of **paper presentations**
 - c. Surveys on pros and cons:
journal editors, professors, interviewing committees

....further SoTL needed

2. Integrate into **teaching**....

How do we foster the scholar-in-training?

Bridging Study and Practice:

- Connect to Strategic Plans
- Internal/External support
- De-mystification
- In-class; workshop reading/writing
- Peer review
- Proposal submission

And now your thoughts....?