

**SUMMARY OF ON-LINE QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY ON THE STATUS OF
SOTL
AT ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY**

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Introduction

One of two major goals of our involvement in the American Association of Higher Education's 2002 Summer Academy was to understand the status of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) at Illinois State University at the start of the first term of the Cross Endowed Chair in SoTL. To do this, the summer academy team chose to use two methods: 1. secondary analysis of existing data for a one year period and 2. a self-administered questionnaire to a random sample of faculty and academic staff (spring 2003). This brief report focuses on the results from the second of these methods; a separate report discusses the findings from the secondary analysis.

SoTL is defined here as systematic reflection on teaching and learning made public. This definition was written in an attempt to include a wide range of research (broadly defined) on teaching and learning in the disciplines in higher education that is presented or published.

Methods

In fall of 2002, IRB approval was obtained for the study. We created an online questionnaire (see attached) assessing people's understanding of, attitudes toward, and involvement in SoTL. We drew from existing literature, our own knowledge, and feedback from others in creating this brief questionnaire. In February of 2003, 30 percent random samples of tenured and tenure-line faculty (N= 205), nontenure-line faculty (N= 116), and Lab school faculty and administrative/professional staff (N= 224) were selected. In March 2003, a cover letter was sent to these individuals explaining their selection, the study, covering ethical issues, and providing the URL and password for the questionnaire. Approximately three weeks later a reminder cover letter was sent with similar information urging those in the sample to complete the questionnaire if they had not yet done so and thanking those who had.

The overall response rate was 21 percent of those selected. The response rates for the various groups were as follows: 27 percent for tenured and tenure-line faculty, 37 percent for nontenure-line faculty, and 16 percent for the Lab school faculty and administrative/professional staff. Though we attempted to explain the importance of all those selected for the random sample to respond and that we were interested in the views of everyone selected, it became clear that some who were not knowledgeable about or involved in SoTL did not think they should complete the survey. We received inquiries from about six such individuals who expressed this viewpoint. We explained that we

wanted the data to reflect the status of SoTL for the full population not just for those interested/involved, and urged them to complete the survey if they were willing to do so. Given the low response rate and unknown biases in those who responded compared to those who did not, these results should be viewed cautiously.

The final sample of 115 individuals consisted of 49 percent tenured and tenure-line faculty, 34 percent nontenure-line faculty, and 17 percent Lab school faculty and administrative/professional staff. Respondents had been involved in college-level teaching in some way for less than one year to 42 years, with a mean of 10 years. Of the tenured and tenure-line faculty members, 46 percent were Assistant Professors, 20 percent were associate professors, and 34 percent were full professors. This is quite similar to the actual distribution in the 2002 population of 41 percent, 25 percent, and 34 percent, respectively. Respondents come from a wide range of departments and units.

Results

Definitions of SoTL. Of the 115 respondents, 32 percent indicated they were aware of our institutional-CASTL definition of SoTL. A Chi square analysis indicated a significantly ($p < .05$) larger percentage of tenured and tenure-line faculty responded that they were aware of the SoTL definition than were non tenure-line faculty, lab school faculty, and staff.

Respondents were also asked, in an open-ended question, “How would you define the scholarship of teaching and learning?” There were 81 responses to this question. About two-thirds of these responses were similar to or overlapped in significant ways our institutional-CASTL definition (systematic reflection on teaching and learning made public). These definitions mentioned research or study or inquiry on teaching and learning or pedagogy to share or make public or use for improvement. A few of the definitions referred to the disciplinary nature of the work. For example, one respondent wrote, “A faculty member decides to do a qualitative or quantitative study on teaching and learning and publish or present the findings.” Another wrote “The systematic inquiry, in keeping with the protocols of one’s discipline, of teaching and learning, ideally resulting in publication of findings.” The remaining one-third of the responses to this question included definitions that could be categorized as scholarly teaching, traditional educational research, general scholarship, integrating teaching and research in the classroom, and evaluation of teaching.

Finally, participants were asked, “What are the similarities and differences between SoTL and other types of scholarship?” Of the 82 responses, 31 percent indicated the difference was in the subject matter, 23 percent said the two forms of scholarship were similar in methodology or scientific approach, 16 percent indicated there was no difference, and 15 percent did not know. The remaining responses (15 percent) were ambiguous or made by only 1-2 people.

Involvement in SoTL. Thirty-one percent of respondents indicated they had conducted SoTL research. A Chi square analysis indicated a significantly ($p < .05$) larger percentage of tenured and tenure-line faculty responded that they had conducted SoTL compared to the other groups. Thirty-eight percent of the participants have given one or more SoTL presentations and 31 percent have published SoTL work. Sixty-three percent indicated they have used SoTL work (their own or others) to improve teaching and learning. Twenty-nine percent reported that for at least some SoTL research they have

collaborated with colleagues. In addition, when asked if they had been involved in SoTL work in any other way, 15 percent replied 'yes.' The examples provided included, primarily, serving as editor, editorial board member or reviewer for a SoTL or pedagogical journal. Other examples were grant work and professional service related to SoTL (e.g., discipline association committees working on SoTL).

The three variables, present, publish, and use were measured on likert-type scales ranging from 1=never to 5=very often. Thus one-way ANOVAs were run to compare the mean scores on these three variables among the following three groups: tenured and tenure-line faculty, non tenure-line faculty, and lab school faculty and staff. The F values for all three analyses were statistically significant at $p < .01$. More specifically, the means indicate that tenured and tenure-line faculty have significantly more often presented, published, and used SoTL work than have non tenure-line faculty or staff (and there were no significant differences between the latter two groups).

In addition, t-tests were run comparing the mean score on present, publish, and use between those who were and those who were not aware of the institutional-CASTL SoTL definition. Statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) were found for both publish and use with those who were aware of the definition reporting more frequent publications and use of SoTL than those not aware.

Value of /Reward for SoTL. A number of items assessed the respondents' views about the value and reward for SoTL on campus. First, respondents were asked what type of impact, if any, conducting SoTL would have on their professional career. Seven percent responded positive (1 or 2 on the five-point scale), 48 percent responded neutral (3), and 46 percent responded negative (4 or 5 on the scale). Second, participants were asked where presentations or publication of SoTL work would "count" in their department. Responses were as follows: under service – 12 percent; under teaching- 10 percent; under research and scholarship- 34 percent; I would have a choice- 18 percent; it depends- 27 percent.

In addition, there were asked (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) about how SoTL is valued at various levels on campus. The five statements and the mean scores follow: There is adequate funding for SoTL (mean = 2.58), SoTL is valued in my department (mean = 3.14), SoTL is valued in my college (mean = 3.25), SoTL is valued in my university (mean = 3.39), and Results from SoTL are used in my department (mean = 3.02). Thus, these means are all around the neutral point on the scale.

T-tests were computed to compare those who were and were not aware of the institutional-CASTL SoTL definition on the interval level attitudinal variables (impact, funding, value in department, college and university, and used in department). Five of the six t-tests showed significant differences at $p < .05$ between those who were and were not aware of the definition. More specifically, those who were aware of the definition, compared to those who were not aware, agreed less strongly that there is adequate funding for SoTL work and agreed more strongly that SoTL work is valued at all three levels and used in their department. Yet, those who were aware of the SoTL definition felt the impact on their careers of doing SoTL would be more negative than those who were not aware of the definition.

Finally, respondents were asked the open-ended question, "What do you see as the benefits, if any, to pursuing the SoTL for faculty, staff, students, institutions, and/or the community at large?" Seventy percent of the 86 responses indicated the benefit was to

improve teaching and/or learning and/or education; 7 percent were categorized as 'publications, tenure, funding,' 5 percent indicated community enrichment, another 5 percent didn't know, and 3 percent were limited or no benefits. Ten percent were other or couldn't code.

Other attitudes toward SoTL. Ten other attitude items were included on the questionnaire (rated 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The means for all of these items were in the range of "agree," between 3.63 and 4.06 with one exception. Respondents were neutral (2.98) about the notion that everyone should do some SoTL work.

- 4.06 SoTL has practical value for teachers.
- 4.06 SoTL has practical value for institutions of higher education
- 3.99 SoTL has practical value for students.
- 3.96 SoTL is important.
- 3.81 SoTL work is a form of "real" scholarship.
- 3.75 SoTL work can help us fulfill *Educating Illinois*.
- 3.74 Knowing the work of SoTL in ones discipline is important for good teaching.
- 3.63 SoTL has practical value for the community.
- 2.98 Everyone should do some SoTL work.

T-tests between those who are aware of the campus CASTL definition of SoTL and those who are not indicate significant differences on all but two of these attitude statements, with those who are aware of the definition agreeing more strongly with these positive aspects of SoTL.

In addition, respondents were asked, "What role can students play in SoTL?" Of the 98 responses, 34 percent were that students would be subjects in the research, another 33 percent indicated that students can provide feedback, 26 percent were that students could be co-researchers, four percent did not know, and 2 percent was other.

Finally, another open-ended question asked, "what kind of actions/initiatives do you think that the university community should engage in, if any, to promote SoTL?" There were 82 responses to this question. Twenty-one percent of these focused on funding and grants to support SoTL work, 18 percent were in the don't know category, 11 percent were workshops, conferences, and seminars, 10 percent of the responses were coded as do nothing different, 8 percent indicated the need to educate and increase awareness among university faculty, 6 percent said SoTL work should be treated as other scholarship, 4 percent were about promoting more cross-discipline collaborations, and another 4 percent dealt with increasing involvement in general. The remaining 18 percent of the responses were other or ambiguous.

Conclusions

These data lead to a number of conclusions. We must view these with caution, however, as the low response rate may have resulted in response biases. About one-third of these respondents were aware of the ISU CASTL definition of SoTL, say they have done SoTL work, indicate they have presented SoTL work, and report that they have published SoTL work. Two-thirds of the participants gave definitions of SoTL similar to the campus definition and two-thirds indicate they have used SoTL work to improve teaching and/or learning. Twenty-nine percent of the respondents report collaborating with colleagues on SoTL work. Thus, SoTL work is fairly common on our campus.

Generally, tenured and tenure-track faculty members report higher frequencies on these variables than nontenure-track faculty and staff.

In addition, respondents are generally favorable toward SoTL work reporting benefits to teaching and learning, and agreeing with a variety of positive statements about SoTL. At the same time, they are more ambiguous about how SoTL is valued and rewarded on campus. Participants were neutral about whether SoTL is valued and used at various levels on campus. In addition, 94 percent indicated that the impact of doing SoTL on their career would be neutral (48 percent) or negative (46 percent). Generally, participants who were aware of the ISU CASTL definition of SoTL had more favorable attitudes toward SoTL work with the exceptions that they agreed less that there is adequate funding for SoTL and they felt the impact of doing SoTL on their careers was more negative than did those not aware of the campus definition.

Participants believe students can be involved as subjects and co-investigators in SoTL work. The most common responses to how the university can promote SoTL fell in the category of funding and grants.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Questionnaire

The purpose of this self-administered, questionnaire study is to obtain some information about your views on and involvement in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) at Illinois State University. The study is part of a larger institutional change project sponsored, in part, by the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE). We hope to use this information as part of a broader study on the current status of SoTL at Illinois State University. We have Institutional Review Board approval for the study. Your participation is both voluntary and confidential. Upon completion of the study, the data will be destroyed via secure recycling. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. If you have questions about the study, you may contact Kathleen McKinney at 438-7706 or the Research and Sponsored Programs Office at 438-2528. We thank you for your participation. You may submit this questionnaire electronically or print it out, complete it and send to Kathleen McKinney, Campus Box 3990.

AAHE Summer Academy 2002 ISU Team Members: Jim Broadbear, Deb Gentry, Trish Klass, Kathleen McKinney, Sharon Naylor, and Nicky Virgil

1) Your Department or Unit name: _____

2) Position you currently hold in your department:

- 1 Assistant Professor 2 Associate Professor 3 Full Professor
4 Administrative/Professional 5 Non tenure track instructor 6 Other

3) Number of years you have taught at the University level: _____

4) Are you aware of the Illinois State University (CASTL) definition of the SoTL?

- 1 yes 2 no

5) How would **you** define the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?

6) What are the similarities and differences between SoTL and other types of scholarship?

In responding to the rest of the questionnaire, please keep in mind the Illinois State University definition of SoTL. SoTL is the “systematic reflection on teaching and learning made public.” SoTL refers to reflection and research (broadly defined) on teaching and learning in higher education, usually discipline-based, that is made

public via professional presentation, publications, and other peer reviewed scholarly outlets appropriate to the discipline.

7) Have you conducted any research in the area of SoTL?

1 yes 2 no

If yes, please briefly describe or provide the title of one of your recent SoTL projects.

8) Have you ever collaborated with colleague(s) on any research related to the SoTL?

1 yes 2 no

9) How often have you given professional presentations of SoTL work?

1 never 2 rarely 3 sometimes 4 often 5 very often

10) How often have you published SoTL work?

1 never 2 rarely 3 sometimes 4 often 5 very often

11) Is there any other way you are involved in work on the SoTL (e.g. on the editorial board of a SoTL journal)?

1 yes 2 no

If yes, please briefly describe the type of work in which you are involved.

12) What type of impact, if any, does or would conducting SoTL have on your professional career?

very positive neutral very negative

1 2 3 4 5

13) What do you see as the benefits, if any, to pursuing the SoTL for faculty, staff, students, institutions of higher education, and/or the community at large?

- 25) SoTL is valued in my college 1 2 3 4 5
- 26) SoTL is valued in my university 1 2 3 4 5
- 27) Results from SoTL work are used/applied in my department. 1 2 3 4 5
- 28) Knowing SoTL work in ones discipline is important for good teaching. 1 2 3 4 5
- 29) Everyone should do some SoTL work. 1 2 3 4 5
- 30) SoTL work is a form of “real” scholarship. 1 2 3 4 5
- 31) SoTL work can help us fulfill *Educating Illinois* 1 2 3 4 5