

Brief Report from Illinois State University
October 2008
Third convening of the Student Voices Themed Group
CASTL Leadership Program

Overview of our Themed Group

Student Voices in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL):

We commit to engaging students as collaborative partners in improving teaching and learning through SoTL. We charge ourselves to create models that re-conceptualize learning spaces and roles. We will investigate, expand, share, and reflect upon experiences of learning founded on participation, reciprocity, and trust toward the development of student voices. Each institution has various SoTL projects involving students in progress or completed. In addition, under the editorship of Carmen Werder and Megan Otis, the group has an edited volume in progress tentatively titled *Co-Inquiry on Teaching and Learning: Listening to Student Voices* (Stylus, 2009).

Participating Institutions:

California State University Long Beach
Elon University
Illinois State University
North Seattle Community College
University of Nevada Las Vegas
Western Washington University (coordinating institution)

Illinois State University' Work – Student Voices in and through SoTL Research on Learner Autonomy

Our Goals:

- Improve faculty and student knowledge about the current literature on learner autonomy.
- Support SoTL research projects (with student team members) on learner autonomy, design, implementation, making public, and application.
- Increase undergraduate and graduate student involvement in SoTL and 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 distressing issues related to teaching and learning 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 and our Progress and Products:

- Create a web site about learner autonomy (SoTL projects on campus, literature reviews, and a bibliography on learner autonomy).

See <http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/castlAahe/autoWeb.shtml>. Links and resources welcome!

- Conduct workshops and discussion sessions on both doing SoTL and on learner autonomy and practical applications of that knowledge.
 1. SoTL workshop for Graduate Students- planned for Spring 2009
 2. Student-Faculty Conversation on Learner Autonomy: Where does learning take place and who is responsible? - Fall, 2008

3. Student-Faculty Conversation on Learner Autonomy: Perspectives on Learning Conversation - Spring, 2008
4. Student Research on The University: Ethnography of the University- Spring 2008

- Offer small, internal grants for SoTL projects on learner autonomy.

Twelve small grants have been given out (about \$4-5k each) in the last three years. Student co-researchers on all grants. Reports and KEEP web snapshots on some of these projects available at

<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/castlAahe/learnAutonomy/snapshots.shtml>;

<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/castlAahe/learnAutonomy/rep0506.shtml>;

<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/examples/repFinds/rep0607.shtml>;

<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/examples/repFinds/rep0708.shtml>

- Help SoTL researchers with study design for learner autonomy projects.

Cross Chair consulting, IRB and SoTL workshop, and Research circles have all been used.

- Form and Facilitate research/writing teams and circles; provide peer feedback on draft papers. Cross Chair consulting, IRB and SoTL workshop, and Research circles have all been used.

- Provide internal “making public” opportunities.

Presentations at the the Partnerships for Student Learning regional conference at Illinois State University in September 2008 and at the ISU Teaching-Learning Symposium in 2006, 2007, and 2008. Brief reports published in the SoTL at ISU newsletter.

- Connect learner autonomy to the co-curriculum and make collaborations with student affairs. Working with a faculty member with an assignment both in College of Education and Student Affairs. Our second Student-Faculty Conversations on Learning involved connections with Student Affairs.

- Conducted small, qualitative assessment study of the results, impact, and role of students in SoTL internal grants

Reported in the Sublett, Walsh, McKinney, and Faigo chapter below.

- Contributions to Themed Group Final Product – the edited book on student voices (includes student co-author on each chapter)

McKinney, K., Jarvis, P., Creasey, G., & Herrmann, D. 2009. “A Range of Student Voices.” Chapter in *Co-Inquiry on Teaching and Learning: Listening to Student Voices*. Carmen Werder and Megan Otis, eds. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Sublett, M., Walsh, J., McKinney, K., & Faigao, D. 2009. “Student Voices through Research Projects on Learner Autonomy.” Chapter in *Co-Inquiry on Teaching and Learning: Listening to Student Voices*. Carmen Werder and Megan Otis, eds. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Brief Reports of Some of the Learner Autonomy Projects (Reported on in our Las Vegas meeting):

Denise Faigao worked on a SoTL grant project with Dr. Patricia Jarvis and Dr. Gary Creasey (Department of Psychology, Illinois State University), studying associations between student attachment stances, student-instructor relationships, and test anxiety in a sample of college students. Following theory, two rival hypotheses were tested. The first hypothesis stipulated that student-instructor relationships would mediate associations between attachment functioning and test anxiety, whereas it was asserted in the second prediction that these relationships with instructors would moderate associations between attachment and test anxiety. To test these

predictions, college students ($N = 263$) completed measures assessing attachment representations, student-instructor relationships and test anxiety in a randomly determined class. The aforementioned mediational model was not supported. However, it was documented that the relationship between attachment functioning and test anxiety was dependent on the student-instructor relationship. Thus, a moderator model was supported in the present study.

Derek Herrmann worked on a SoTL grant with Dr. Dawn McBride and Dr. Corinne Zimmerman (Department of Psychology, Illinois State University), and was interested in the development of student autonomy in first-year psychology majors. Because students often have difficulties transitioning from the more structured environment of high school to the more independent environment of college, an introductory psychology course for freshmen psychology majors only was designed to help students with their endeavor. To promote student autonomy, two of four sections of the course required students to develop research activities that coincided with the lecture topics. Students were able to pick their own groups, design their own study, and carry it out on their own. As the semester progressed, students were given more choices on the activities and a chance to make more decisions. The other two sections of the course covered the same lecture material without the added research activities. In addition, one professor of this course also taught a section of a large general education introductory psychology course for non-majors. This section was used as a control, since these students did not have any research activities and were taught in a large lecture hall setting. Students completed a locus of control and autonomy measure (first and last week of the semester) and grades on the research assignments in the experimental sections were compared across the semester as more autonomous decision-making occurred. Data from the four sections of the experimental course indicated that there was not a significant change in the scores on the locus of control questionnaire between the beginning and end of the semester. Despite this, the grades on the research activities in the two sections required to develop a research project did improve as the semester progressed, and the final reports had the highest grades of all the activities. A possible reason for the lack of significant results could be that the two sections that completed research activities were not equally balanced (with regard to what?) with the two sections that did not include activities. Analyses are under way that will compare the development of student autonomy between the sections of the course.