SOTL AS A METHOD TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND SCHOLARSHIP

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Workshop Sponsor: Cross Chair for SoTL

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Introductions

- Tell us about yourself!
  - What department are you from?
  - How long have you been at ISU?
  - Describe past training on SoTL or general pedagogy in your graduate studies
Why are we here today?

- Define SoTL and it’s origins
- Understand how SoTL differs from effective teaching
- Identify ways in which SoTL can advance teaching and research productivity
- Begin to plan a possible SoTL study for future consideration
What is SoTL?

Systematic examination

Focused on improving teaching or learning

Disseminated beyond researcher

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
At Illinois State, we define SoTL as “the systematic reflection on teaching and learning [of our ISU students] made public”

SoTL is a part of Educating Illinois and is supported on campus by the Cross Chair in SoTL
Backtracking a bit...

Good Teaching
Teaching that promotes student learning and other desired student outcomes

Scholarly Teaching
Teaching which is supported by a body of research to increase effectiveness

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
Combination of reflection and knowledge which yields questions about teaching for study

(McKinney, 2007)
Why SoTL? Why now?

To Improve Teaching

(Pedagogical Content Knowledge; Schulman, 1987)
Why SoTL? Why now?

To Improve Scholarly Productivity

- SoTL can be a compliment to your discipline-specific research
- Can be helpful for some in building a strong vita for P & T
Bass (1999) posits that teaching problems aren’t shameful... they are actually opportunities for faculty.

“What is?” What’s going on when your students read an article in your discipline? What kinds of things do they focus on? What aspects cause them to struggle? And how could your knowledge of these answers help you to become a better teacher?

“What works?” Perhaps you’re thinking about a new and different approach to the teaching of your subject. Does it work? Your research project could help you find out.

From Vanderbilt’s CFT Homepage
Suppose one of your teaching problems evolved into a SoTL project…

- What is the outcome you might seek from your SoTL work?
  - A report on an individual course?
  - A description of the interaction of several courses?
  - A reflection over practices from several years of teaching?
  - An investigation of interdisciplinary commonalities?
  - A comparison of specific courses and/or students?
  - A synthesis of existing SoTL work?
What sort of data can be used with SOTL research?

- Course portfolios
- Specific assignments/projects/assessments (or artifacts therein)
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Questionnaires/surveys
- Content analysis
- Multi-method studies
For the teaching issue that you want to research, how can you design a study that will be feasible to implement?
SoTL Research Considerations

- **IRB**
  - Exempt status?

- **Informed Consent**
  - Minimize coercion

- **Teacher as Researcher**
  - Research gone amok

- **Lack of SoTL Support**
  - Discipline/Institution/College/Department
What hurdles can you anticipate in conducting your research and how might you handle them?
Common SoTL Questions

- How is SoTL work viewed by promotion and tenure committees?
- What are my options for disseminating SoTL work within and outside of ISU?
  - Journals
  - Conferences
  - Web representations
- Is SoTL work best within a discipline or across disciplines?
Support for SoTL at ISU

- **Cross Chair in SoTL**
  - Grants for research and travel
  - Professional development
  - Gauisus
  - SoTL Scholars

- **Center for Teaching, Learning and Technology**
  - Grants for research and travel
What are your questions about SoTL at this point?
References


