SoTL at ISU

What Happened in Vegas....Transcends Vegas

Denise Faigao and Derek Herrmann, Undergraduate Students, Psychology Department

On October 10th-12th, 2007 we traveled to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas with Drs. Kathleen McKinney and Patricia Jarvis to attend a meeting for the Student Voices in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning theme group in the latest phase of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL). The work of this CASTL group is 'Students as Scholars of Teaching and Learning,' meaning our primary goal is to encourage collaboration between students and instructors in the scholarship of teaching and learning. This collaboration is a way for students to become more autonomous learners and help foster that in other students as well. Six institutions are part of this group and each institution brought instructors and students to discuss their current SoTL research.

We both presented our grant projects, which center around helping students to develop learner autonomy. The grant Denise is a part of focuses on the development of learner autonomy in college students and studies the importance of classroom goal structure, teacher immediacy, and student-instructor relationships. Derek's grant involves helping freshman psychology majors develop student autonomy in their introductory course and then assessing their development. In addition, all participants brainstormed topics, chapters, and overall organization of an edited book that will share our knowledge of student voices in SoTL with teachers and administrators.

It was very interesting to see what other faculty-student groups were doing to help incorporate students in research on teaching and learning. We also met many new people, and were able to form closer, professional relationships with Kathleen and Pat. We want to thank our professors in the Psychology Department who hold SoTL grants (Dr. Patricia Jarvis, Dr. Gary Creasey, Dr. Dawn McBride, and Dr. Corinne Zimmerman) for giving us the opportunity to work with them, as well as Kathleen and Pat for taking care of us on the trip and showing us how to 'Viva Las Vegas.' We were able to enjoy ourselves and 'experience' Las Vegas while still being responsible and productive. We look forward to reconvening with our newly formed friends in Canada in 2008, as well as with others who are committed to enhancing the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Call for Proposals: SoTL Grants FY09

The Cross Endowed Chair in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning requests proposals for the new *Department/School Initiative in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Small Grant Program.* Department SoTL Initiatives include work that provides the opportunity and resources for multiple people in a department/school to be involved in one or more connected SoTL projects and/or applications of SoTL work. Two academic departments will receive Awards of up to $10,000 each for FY09. Go to http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/funding/ for details.

Learner Autonomy Web Page

Check out our web page on Learner Autonomy at http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/castlAahe/autoWeb.shtml. Recent SoTL and CASTL work (see above) at ISU focuses on promoting learner autonomy. The Cross Chair and CTLT will be co-sponsoring a Student-Faculty Conversation on Learner Autonomy this spring. If you have ideas or materials or links for the web page, contact Patricia Jarvis at pajarvis@ilstu.edu.

Summary of Results on the Status of SoTL at Illinois State

Kathleen McKinney, Mike Sublett, Patricia Jarvis, Trisha Klass, and Other ISU CASTL Team Members

Introduction. A goal of the Illinois State University involvement in the American Association of Higher Education (before it closed) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, CASTL (Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) Program is to understand the status of the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) at Illinois State. At the start of the Cross Endowed Chair in SoTL in 2002-2003 and, again, about five years later in 2006-2007, we created a self-administered on-line questionnaire. This report focuses on comparing quantitative responses from the two periods and reporting qualitative results from 2007.

Methods. In fall of 2002, IRB approval was obtained for the study and for the follow-up in 2007. We created an online questionnaire with both closed-ended and open-ended items assessing people's understanding of, attitudes toward, and involvement in SoTL. For several reasons, the population and samples of the two surveys are not equivalent (more tenure line faculty responded in 2007) and the response rates (after the original and one reminder email message) were low (21 and 15 percent). We recognize both of these as methodological limitations. For 2002, N = 115; for 2007, N = 152. The mean number of years teaching at the college level was 10 in 2002 and 12 in 2007. Given data limitations, we only describe the results and various trends; we do not conduct statistical tests. The full report with additional details and example quotes can be found at http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/castlAahe/ (scroll to bottom).

Results—Quantitative 2002-2007.

Definitions of and Involvement in SoTL. For the 2002 survey, 32 percent of the respondents indicated they were aware of our institutional-CASTL definition of SoTL. In 2007, this figure was 50 percent. Table 1 contains the percentages of respondents involved in SoTL in various ways for 2002 and 2007. For most items, self-reported involvement in SoTL is higher in 2007 than in 2002.

Table 1. Percent of Respondents Involved in SoTL.

Item	2002	2007
Conducted SoTL research	31	46
Collaborated w/ colleagues on SoTL	29	34
Gave SoTL professional presentation	38	43
Published SoTL work	31	42
Use SoTL to improve teaching/learning	63	81
Involved in SoTL in any other way	15	17

Value of 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 on a five-point scale. In 2002, seven percent responded positive or very positive, 48 percent responded neutral, and 46 percent responded negative or very negative. In 2007, these results were very different. Fifty percent responded positive or very positive, 43 percent responded neutral, and 7 percent responded negative or very negative.

In addition, respondents were asked (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree) how SoTL is valued at various levels on campus. The five statements and the mean scores for 2002 and 2007, respectively, follow in Table 2. These means are all around the neutral point on the scale but are slightly higher (agree more strongly) in 2007 than in 2002. In both years, respondents were most neutral on the item about adequate funding.

Table 2. Means for Value and Reward Items.

Item	2002	2007
There is adequate funding for SoTL.	2.58	3.04
SoTL is valued in my department.	3.14	3.46
SoTL is valued in my college.	3.25	3.33
SoTL is valued in my university.	3.39	3.53
Results from SoTL are used in my department.	3.02	3.21

Other attitudes toward SoTL. Ten other attitude items were included on the questionnaire (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The means for these items for both years are presented in Table 3 and were in the range of "agree" between 3.63 and 4.14 with one exception. Respondents were neutral (2.98 and 3.05) about the notion that "everyone should do some SoTL work". Changes from 2002 to 2007 were all in the direction of slightly more positive attitudes toward SoTL.

Table 3. Means for Attitude Items.

Item	2002	2007
SoTL has practical value for teachers.	4.06	4.14
SoTL has practical value for institutions of higher education.	4.06	4.07
SoTL has practical value for students.	3.99	4.02
SoTL is important.	3.96	4.09
SoTL work is "real" scholarship.	3.81	4.01
SoTL work can help us fulfill *Educating Illinois*.	3.75	3.84
Knowing SoTL in one's discipline is important for good teaching.	3.74	3.89
SoTL has practical value for the community.	3.63	3.70
Everyone should do some SoTL work.	2.98	3.05

Results – Qualitative 2007. The number of those who wrote responses to the open-ended items ranged from 60 to 119 depending on the question. For some of the six questions, faculty gave multiple answers.

Question 1: How would you define the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning? More than 3/4 (N=119) of the 152 faculty who responded to the 2007 on-line survey included a commentary on the concept of SoTL. Because the University has a definition of SoTL, it seemed logical to match faculty responses with the official Illinois State definition: "systematic reflection on teaching and learning made public." In particular, we wanted to see which parts of the definition the faculty utilized in their attempt to define SoTL. We analyzed 101 definitions. Nine of the 119 wrote something but did not attempt a definition. Another nine faculty members submitted a definition that is identical or very close to "systematic reflection on teaching and learning made public." The remaining responses are categorized in Table 4.

Table 4. Number of Faculty Mentioning an Element Also in the Illinois State Definition of SoTL.

Element of Definition	Number of Faculty
Systematic	11
Reflection	80
Teaching/Learning	89
Made public	26

Question 2: What do you see as the benefits, if any, of pursuing the SoTL for faculty, staff, students, institutions of higher education, and/or the community at large? A total of 93 faculty members answered this question. Four said they had no comment; and seven were negative, such as the person who said, "I think we need to concentrate on the teaching first." Eight fell into what we called the "Yes, but" category, listing some minor benefit and then going on to downplay the importance of SoTL. The other 99 comments were quite positive (see response categories in Table 5).

Table 5. Number of Times Faculty Designated Each Perceived Benefit of SoTL (N=99 but some faculty listed several benefits).

Perceived Benefit	Number of Times Designated
Improve teaching and learning	62
Increase faculty research	9
Foster Illinois State's mission	7
Contribute to knowledge base	6
Improve interdisciplinary climate	6
Rejuvenate faculty	4
Unclear meaning (but positive)	3
Permit combination of teaching and research	2

Question 3: If you have conducted SoTL, please briefly describe or provide the title of one of your recent projects. This question, asking faculty to give examples of their recent SoTL projects evoked 60 responses; 10 of the 60 gave answers not directly relevant to the question. Another two faculty were focusing on teaching in the K-12 schools and not on the college-level, while a third referred to ways of improving his class (or scholarly teaching), leaving N=47. Please see Table 6 for themes related to SoTL projects Illinois State faculty conducted.

Table 6. Number of Recent ISU SoTL Projects by Type.

Type of SoTL Project	Number of Projects
Course delivery	22
Assessment of learning outcomes	19
Course content	6

Question 4: If you have used SoTL work, please give one example of how you have done so. This question was interpreted in two ways—to offer an example of how respondents had read or heard about a SoTL study and then applied it to their own SoTL research or their teaching, or how they conducted SoTL research and then applied their findings to their subsequent work. Five of the 68 responded but gave no directly relevant reply, leaving N=63 (Table 7).

Table 7. Number of Faculty Reporting Change(s) due to SoTL by Self or Others.

Source of Change	Number of Faculty
Change as result of others' work	40
Change (but source not clear)	13
Change as result of own work	10

Question 5: What roles can students play in SoTL? The 88 faculty who responded to this question provided 108 comments. A fairly high number, 19 of the 108, did not know how students could help with research or made unclear comments such as "They are customers, aren't they?" One faculty member did not believe students can play any role in SoTL work. The other 88 responses are categorized in Table 8.

Table 8. Number of Times Faculty Included a Reference to Potential Roles of Students in SoTL.

Potential Student Role	Number of Times Identified
Conduct research with faculty or alone	38
Reflect on own learning	29
Be a subject for SoTL research	21

Question 6: What actions and initiatives do you think the campus community should engage in, if any, to promote SoTL? From 82 faculty members came 93 ideas, of which five were unclear to the coders. Exactly a half dozen of the remaining 88 were negative such as that we

already put too much effort into SoTL. Another 14 comments suggested that Illinois State ought to stay the course but does not need to do any additional promoting of this endeavor. See Table 9 for the ideas about promoting SoTL work on the campus provided in the remaining responses.

Table 9. Number of Times Faculty Suggested Ideas for Promoting SoTL at Illinois State (N=68).

Ideas for Promoting SoTL	Number of Times
Make more valuable in ASPT process	26
Build collaboration in SoTL matters	18
Provide more funds	13
Publicize better	9
Utilize additional leadership	2

Conclusions. These data lead to a number of tentative conclusions. We must view these with caution, however, as the low response rates and sample differences may have resulted in response biases and in differences across the two time points. Between the time points (approximately four and one-half years) of the two surveys, significant efforts at ISU occurred to increase information about and resources for SoTL on campus. The quantitative descriptive comparisons reported here show several trends. First, we see an increase in the percentage of respondents reporting they are aware of our campus definition of SoTL and in involvement in SoTL using several different measures. Second, respondents expressed more positive views about the value of SoTL on campus. Third, several other attitudes about SoTL either stayed the same or became more positive. Finally, based on the open-ended responses, ISU faculty members are generally knowledgeable about the meaning of SoTL, favorable toward SoTL work, and in favor of more support for SoTL on campus. Thus, we have made progress in our efforts to enhance SoTL but still have work to do!

Spring SoTL Events

Co-sponsored by the Cross Chair in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology.

1. Perspectives on Learning: A Student-Faculty Conversation.
Thursday, January 31, 3:30 to 5:00 in Degarmo 551; All ISU instructors and students are welcome.

What is learner autonomy or self-directed learning? What do highly autonomous learners look like in terms of attitudes and behaviors? Do students and faculty members agree on these ideas? What are the implications for my classes? What discourages autonomous learning? What promotes it? How can students and faculty encourage more autonomous learners(ing)? Let's work together to come up with practical suggestions to promote our shared goals of learner autonomy and student success.

2. Turning Teaching-Learning Symposium Presentations into Publications: A Workshop and Writing Circle.
More Information coming in soon.

Partnerships for Learning Conference

Illinois State University, Illinois Wesleyan University and Heartland Community College invite you to join colleagues from across the nation September 25-27, 2008 in Bloomington-Normal, IL for the Innovative Partnerships for Student Learning Conference. The Innovative Partnerships for Student Learning Conference is designed to bring together faculty, administrators and students from all types of higher education institutions as well as business and community members to share innovative practices and research on partnerships to promote learning. Submit a proposal: www.partnershipsconference.ilstu.edu/proposals/ . Conference registration will be available in February: www.partnershipsconference.ilstu.edu