

# SOTL AT ISU

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University  
“systematic reflection/study on teaching and learning made public”

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## Updates on ISU Involvement in Promoting Learner Autonomy

Illinois State University, through the Office of the Cross Chair (the ‘old’ Center for the Advancement of Teaching prior to that), has been involved in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning since it began in 1998. Several multi-year phases of this work involved various people and initiatives here at ISU and in collaboration with the Carnegie Foundation and other institutions (see <http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/castlAahe/> for links to documents and sites). We recently completed the third phase and began the final phase that is formally connected to Carnegie. Thus, I wanted to provide an update, resources, and encouragement to be involved.

The third phase of this work had ISU connected to five other institutions all focusing on encouraging and supporting student voices in SoTL work. This meant different things at different schools but, at ISU, we connected that effort to promoting learner autonomy in students. In terms of scholarly teaching and learner autonomy, we have held three campus ‘student-faculty conversations’ on learner autonomy in the last year and have worked on a resources and events website related to learner autonomy (<http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/castlAahe/autoWeb.shtml>). Special thanks go to Patricia Jarvis, Psychology, for her work on these two efforts. Please send any ideas or resources for this web page to Pat ([pjarvis@ilstu.edu](mailto:pjarvis@ilstu.edu)). In addition, two teams of faculty-student collaborators wrote two chapters for an edited volume on student voices and SoTL (see citations); others have given related conference presentations. Finally, we have funded more formal SoTL work on learner autonomy conducted by ISU faculty with students (as both ‘subjects’ and research collaborators). You can see brief reports or web snapshots of some of this work at <http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/castlAahe/learnAutonomy/snapshots.shtml> and <http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/castlAahe/learnAutonomy/rep0506.shtml> and <http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/examples/repFinds/rep0607.shtml>.

This phase of our CASTL Learner Autonomy work was wrapped up at a pre-conference event before the annual meetings of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning this past October.

The final phase of CASTL requires institutions to link SoTL to key campus initiatives. In our application for this phase of the work, we note that Illinois State has been involved in a number of ‘high-leverage institutional agendas’ that are directly related to our strategic plan, *Educating Illinois*. Two of these are the American Democracy Project (and civic engagement more generally) and promoting learner autonomy. As we move forward on these and related initiatives we hope to strengthen our existing investment in, and understanding of, service learning, civic engagement, and learner autonomy. SoTL is essential to these initiatives and general goals. We will use mechanisms such as sharing past SoTL literature on these topics, holding campus conversations about these topics, assisting in the design of and support for local SoTL studies on these topics, and making public what we learn to share implications and promote change when appropriate. Thus, our more specific goals for this final phase are that through engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning we will do the following:

- Better understand and document the developmental and learning processes and outcomes for students involved in civic engagement experiences in and out of the classroom including service learning opportunities.
- Better understand and document the extent to which, and how, enhanced learner autonomy is related to civic engagement and service learning experiences.
- Share what we learn via the web site, presentations, and publications.

All three goals connect to values, goals, or action items in our institutional strategic plan, *Educating Illinois*, as well as to work and support from the office of the Cross Chair in SoTL.

- McKinney, K., Jarvis, P., Creasey, G., & Herrmann, D. 2010. “A Range of Student Voices in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.” Chapter in *Engaging Student Voices in the Study of Teaching and Learning*. Carmen Werder and Megan Otis, eds. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Sublett, M., Walsh, J., McKinney, K., & Faigo, D. 2010. “Student Voices through Researching and Promoting Learner Autonomy.” Chapter in *Engaging Student Voices in the Study of Teaching and Learning*. Carmen Werder and Megan Otis, eds. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

## **Third Time's a Charm**

**Derek Herrmann, Psychology Graduate Student**

For the third year in a row, I had the pleasure of traveling with Kathleen McKinney and Patricia Jarvis as a co-author of a chapter from the newly published book, Engaging Student Voices in the Study of Teaching and Learning. At the annual meetings of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL), we participated in a highlighted 'Final Reporting Out' session on all of the work that we have done during the past three years on the book as part of our involvement in CASTL. And the book arrived, hot off the press, during the ISSOTL conference. Many of the conference attendees were very

excited about the book and expressed their enthusiasm to many of the contributors (including the three of us). Being a part of the SoTL work here at ISU—in the grant that I worked on two years ago, contributing to a book chapter, and attending two ISSOTL conferences—has taught me so much about this important area of research. I want to thank Dawn McBride and Corinne Zimmerman who first involved me in the SoTL by inviting to work on a SoTL grant with them as well as Kathleen and Patricia for everything that they have done, furthering my appreciation of the scholarship of teaching and learning.

### **Department/School/Program SoTL Grant Report 2009-2010**

*Advancing the Discipline: Expanding the Role of Communication in Civic and Political Engagement through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*; School of Communication

In 2009, the School of Communication applied for the SoTL Small Grant award for departmental or school initiatives. Our proposal consisted of an initiative to spread civic engagement throughout the school by training Communication teachers, encouraging projects, and adding the vocabulary of civic engagement throughout the entire School. Our team was comprised of three graduate assistants, a non-tenure track instructor and two tenured faculty members. We were fortunate to receive the grant, and as such moved forward with our plans of injecting civic engagement throughout the School of Communication.

We began our initiative at the beginning of the fall semester by conducting pre-tests in select experimental courses in the School that were going to introduce (or continue to teach) civic engagement. We also had a number of control courses where civic engagement was not going to be discussed. We then administered post-tests at the end of the semester in both groups of courses. During the course of the semester, we also conducted two training workshops for Communication faculty on how to infuse civic engagement issues, projects and assignments into their courses (both current and future courses).

At the conclusion of the fall semester, we were able to discern from the data that there were statistically significant increases in political efficacy, political knowledge, perceived engagement, communication skills, and likeness of instructor and course (among other positive findings) compared to the control groups. Also important to note is that these skills improved over the course of the semester without altering the students' initial political affiliation, suggesting that civic engagement learning does not ideologically persuade students one way or another.

We presented these findings at three different workshops/conferences after the fall semester. In January 2009, we offered a poster and a presentation of these findings at the CTLT Teaching and Learning Symposium. In April, we presented our findings at the annual Central States Communication Association conference, held in St. Louis. Finally, in June we presented our findings as well as suggestions for future initiatives at the annual American Democracy Project (hosted by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities), held in Baltimore. In all instances, we gratefully acknowledged the generosity of ISU's SoTL initiative grant. Other outcomes are obviously the increased and enhanced teaching of civic engagement in our courses and the anticipation of journal submissions in the near future.

See web snapshot at: <http://www.cfkeep.org/html/snapshot.php?id=35649313997151>

### **Gauisus: Selected SoTL at Illinois State University 2004-2009**

Be on the lookout this spring for the publication, *GAUISUS: Selected Scholarship on Teaching and Learning at Illinois State University, 2004-2009*. This publication, edited by Kathleen McKinney and Patricia Jarvis, consists of thirteen reflective essays and research notes of SoTL work about ISU students conducted in the last six years. Dr. K. Patricia Cross is writing the foreward to the publication.

An editorial board of colleagues both at ISU and external to ISU reviewed all the submissions which were then revised. Students in Graphic Design sand English will be assisting with the design, editing, and production of the publication. We will produce the publication both in hard copy form (a limited number for those involved and a few others) as well as post it on our ISU SoTL web site.

# Opportunities for SoTL Involvement and Resources

## *SoTL NETWORK*

The SoTL NETWORK is a group of Illinois State University faculty, students, and staff members interested in the scholarship of teaching and learning. The members of the network will be involved in reading, conducting, sharing, and applying SoTL work to enhance the learning of ISU students. The primary benefit of membership in this group is that the SoTL NETWORK will facilitate SoTL projects and application that will enhance student learning and development at ISU. Additional benefits include growing your networks with other members of the ISU community who have similar interests, providing you with opportunities to share work in progress or practice presentations or work on publications for later external audiences, increasing your expertise about SoTL, obtaining resources such as SoTL books or minimal compensation (e.g., \$100-200 in operating funds) for certain activities, and having the opportunity to apply for mini-travel or research grants related to SoTL open only to active NETWORK members. If you are interested in this group, please send an email message to [kmckinne@ilstu.edu](mailto:kmckinne@ilstu.edu) by March 1 and you will be added to an email list (for announcements only). You will then be contacted about preliminary meetings.

## *ISU SoTL RESOURCE GROUP*

Do you need some assistance on a SoTL project related to design or analysis or literature or theory? Your colleagues who have volunteered for the Illinois State University SoTL Resource Group are listed on <http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/resource/index.shtml>. If you are interested in, willing to, and have expertise useful for serving on the Illinois State's SoTL Resource Group, please contact me at [kmckinne@ilstu.edu](mailto:kmckinne@ilstu.edu) with your name, title, department, phone number, and brief description of your expertise.

## *SEND YOUR RECENT SoTL ARTICLE CITATIONS*

Have you published a paper since 2000 either about the field of SoTL or reporting on SoTL work you have done? If so, please check that your work is cited on our web site at <http://www.sotl.ilstu.edu/examples/isupub.shtml>. If it is not, please send the citation to me at [kmckinne@ilstu.edu](mailto:kmckinne@ilstu.edu) and we will add it to our list of examples of SoTL publications by members of the Illinois State community.

## *SUPPORT AND FUNDING REMINDERS*

SoTL Travel Grant applications are due February 8, 2010. Also, RSVPs for the February 12, 2010 workshop on Searching for SoTL Literature are due February 4, 2010.

## **SoTL Commons Conference: A SoTL Travel Grant Report** **Patricia Jarvis and Gary Creasey, Psychology**

We received SoTL Travel Grants from the Cross Chair to support participation in the SoTL Commons Conference in Statesboro, Georgia on March 10-13, 2009. Georgia Southern University was the conference sponsor. The SoTL Commons Conference brings together individuals within disciplinary, scholarly, institutional, and professional organizations committed to advancing and supporting the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education. The goal of the conference is to enhance student learning and innovation at campus, program, and class levels through SoTL. The work we presented, in a poster session, reflected this goal by offering colleagues a psychometrically sound measure of student-instructor relationships developed as part of our SoTL Grant funded work on teacher immediacy. We, along with an undergraduate student, Elyse Knapcik, offered this new measure and research we conducted using the measure, to instructors seeking SoTL work to inform their teaching and to SoTL researchers who are less familiar with specific measures for the construct of student-instructor relationships. Patricia also represented the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Student Voices group at this meeting by presenting a poster updating the status of a book project on Student Voices this group has now completed.

We also attended informative sessions on teaching and student learning that connected us with the concept of social justice (how to define and assess it), as that is a current topic on the national scene with regard to higher education. We are incorporating ideas gleaned from these sessions into our reinvented adolescent development courses to help students become more culturally responsive. Gary incorporated some of what he learned into a SoTL program grant that was funded. He started this grant project in the summer of 2009 and hopes to present some of the preliminary results at the CTLT conference and next year's SoTL Commons conference. He also summarized his learning experiences from this event at the Spring SoTL Work Group at ISU. Patricia similarly incorporated some of what she learned into an Urban Education Course Redesign Grant that was funded and will guide her re-invention of her adolescent development course.

We also recently submitted an article based on the student-instructor relationship measure to the IJ-SoTL journal that is edited by Dr. Alan Altany (who happens to Chair the SoTL Commons Conference). Our experiences at this conference influenced us to submit that work to Dr. Altany for publication consideration. We highly recommend this SoTL conference to other SoTL researchers.

# University of KwaZulu-Natal: A SoTL Travel Grant Report

Michael Wille, Art

I presented a lecture about how I teach painting at Illinois State University. The broader topic was contemporary international curricula in painting, yet the prepared talk primarily delved into the approaches that have been utilized in my eight years at Illinois State University. Upon my arrival as a visiting artist/professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, I hadn't realized how different their education system is to ours. They have a three-year undergraduate degree program in Art, while ours is four years (or more). They don't decide on a studio discipline to "major" in until the beginning of their third and final year of study. Our students are encouraged to decide in their second year, allowing two or more years to develop their abilities. These are just a few details that differentiate our schools, yet they made me focus my lecture on the basic differences between our overall higher education systems.

Based on the reception to my thoughts on curriculum, I was invited to attend a variety of classroom activities in the Art department to offer my insight in their educational system. In particular, I attended the weekly graduate critique sessions, where the entire MAFA and PhD art

students were engaged in dialogue regarding individual students' work.

The audience included undergraduate students, graduate students and faculty at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The lecture took place on February 23, 2009. It was advertised with posted flyers throughout the Centre for Visual Arts on campus.

Due to the quality and depth of our painting curriculum at Illinois State University, I delivered a lecture that detailed the concerns at each level of study, from Painting 1 through the MFA graduate level. We (at Illinois State) have a set of unique guidelines within each painting class that propels students to pursue research towards their own studio practice. Within this lecture, I showed numerous digital examples of quality student work and the corresponding assignments. The lecture was conversational as I discussed each assignment. I entertained a variety of questions about each assignment, and the audience quickly realized that I teach painting differently than they do. They were very open about my lecture and asked that I go into even more detail about my goals in the classroom afterwards.

## SoTL Academy at EMU: A SoTL Travel Grant Report

Jennifer Friberg, Communication Sciences and Disorders

Through my participation in the SoTL Academy at Eastern Michigan University in May 2009, the following was accomplished:

1. I participated in a panel discussion with several pre-tenure faculty members from other colleges and universities to discuss the worth and prestige of SoTL research towards tenure and promotion. This presentation was titled "SoTL and Academic Careers: Getting Hired and Tenured." The session was well attended and was very interesting, as participants found that differing institutions of higher learning placed differing value on SoTL work, though all agreed that the profile of such research has risen tremendously in recent years.
2. I gave a presentation on research that I conducted related to podcasting as a supplementary learning tool for student in speech-language pathology courses at Illinois State University. The title of this presentation
3. I attended numerous sessions that provided very interesting information that will inform both my thinking about teaching and my actual teaching practices in the coming semesters. There was much of value to see and hear at this conference!
4. I am a steering committee member for a division of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association called Issues in Higher Education. Many of the members of this steering committee were in attendance at this conference, so we were able to meet and plan the agenda for the coming year to advance issues related to the scholarship of teaching and learning to our professional association and its membership.

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