

# **SUMMARY OF SECONDARY DATA 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 first of these methods; a separate report due later this spring will include the descriptive analyses and conclusions of the faculty-staff questionnaire.

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. Thus traditional educational research at the K-12 level is excluded.

Team members requested and/or searched for the following types of existing data. We were not always successful in obtaining complete information.

- Titles of completed theses and dissertations in a one-year period that appear to be SoTL theses/dissertations (from the graduate school).
- Titles of external grants received (as documented in RSP annual report) in a one-year period that appear to be SoTL grants.
- Titles of University Research Grants administered through each College in a one-year period that appear to be SoTL grants.
- Titles of small grants from the teaching center (CAT) in a one-year period that appear to be SoTL projects.
- Lists or examples of faculty SoTL presentations and publications in a one-year period.
- Analysis of Department ASPT guidelines and if/where/how SoTL or related concepts are included.
- List of faculty positions in departments or colleges specifically designated as SoTL positions.

## **Summary of Findings**

### Dissertations and Theses 2001-2002

- Quality in Physical Therapy Education (Educational Administration and Foundations)
- The Relationship of Nursing Student Quality of Effort, Satisfaction, and Self-Reported Perceptions of Learning Gains in Associate Degree Nursing Programs in Specialized Colleges (Educational Administration and Foundations)
- Teacher Perception of the Use of Constructivist Based Problem Solving and Team Development Learning Modules (Technology)
- Teacher Immediacy, Clarity, Credibility, and Student Learning: An Exploration of Relationships (Communication)
- Recognizing Individual Differences in Student Learning and Satisfaction: An Exploration of Teacher Clarity and Student Cognitive Style (Communication)

### External Grants

(SoTL is broadly defined here. It is difficult to tell from the titles if the projects are studies about teaching/learning and whether they deal with higher education. Thus, when in doubt, the title was included.)

- *Multicultural Diversity (MCD) Outcomes Evaluation Plan in Teacher Education*
- *Creating Innovative Strategies in Nursing Education to Improve Care of the Older Adult*
- *Problem-Based Learning Method of Instruction for Science*
- *An Investigation of Pedagogical Factors Influencing Student Understanding of Geometric Proof*

### Internal Grants- URGs for one year (2000-2001)

Based on the titles listed on the Outcome Reports of funded URGs, only one may be SoTL.

- Symmetry as a Generative Process in the Learning and Teaching of Mathematics

### Internal Grants- CAT- SoTL-2001-2002

- Promoting Student Integration Of Course Content Through The Use Of Web-Based Quizzes (Social Work)
- Facilitating Reflection On Instructional Interactions By Special Education Teacher Candidates (Special Education)
- Under Construction: Using Metaphors To Foster Teacher Development, Expertise And Reflective (Curriculum and Instruction)
- Teaching Undergraduate Mathematics for Relational Understanding (Mathematics)
- Dr. J's Illustrated Guide To The Classical World Web site As Teaching/Learning Tool And Its Effect On Teachers And Learners (Foreign Languages)

### Faculty Presentations and Publications

- CAS- 2002-2003- six SoTL professional presentations and ten SoTL publications
- CAST- 2001-2002- five SoTL professional presentations and eleven SoTL publications
- Nursing- 2001-2002- twelve SoTL professional presentations and two SoTL publications
- COB- 2001-2002- twelve SoTL professional presentations and seven SoTL publications
- No information from the other colleges.

### ASPT Guidelines

We received the ASPT guidelines from 16 of the 37 (43%) departments, schools, and single unit colleges. These units kind enough to send their documents included the following: Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Communication, Economics, English, Family and Consumer Sciences, Kinesiology and Recreation, Marketing, Mathematics, Milner Library, Music, Sociology and Anthropology, Technology, and Theater.

Overall, explicit mention of the term, scholarship of teaching and learning, is virtually nonexistent in the missions and goals of these units. On rare occasion a mission statement explicitly acknowledges the overlap or the integration of teaching and research. In English and Mathematics, statements about the importance of contributing to teaching and learning of the discipline in various levels including post-secondary or higher education are included in the mission statements.

In addition, explicit mention of the term, scholarship of teaching and learning, is virtually nonexistent in the sections on annual review and tenure/promotion guidelines of these documents. When terms such as “teaching publications” are used, it is often not clear whether these refer to products such as texts and instructor manuals or to published research (broadly defined) on teaching in the discipline (SoTL). Most often, these undefined items are listed as evidence under teaching rather than research/scholarship. Several departments explicitly list products and outcomes that count under teaching and the lists do not include presentations or publications of teaching research. Interestingly, many of the documents refer to the University ASPT guidelines or definitions of research. SoTL certainly fits that definition (see below). Yet, SoTL work is not explicitly mentioned in department guidelines under research. Conducting classroom research is explicitly mentioned in at least one document as evidence under teaching (the process of conducting it, nothing is said about a presentation or publication resulting from the classroom research).

At times, documents appear contradictory. In the Philosophy document, for example, under the evaluation of teaching it is noted that “external validation of teaching performance or contribution, as evidenced by refereed publications...,or securing an external grant is highly valued...” Yet, on the next page, under evaluation of research, it reads that “scholarly work is understood to include any work submitted to the DFSC as a sample of the faculty member’s research which meets the university definition of research...”

The term "scholarly and creative productivity" comprises a variety of activities, including those typically defined as research. Because activities

considered to be scholarly and creative productivity vary considerably from discipline to discipline, the University recognizes that scholarly and creative productivity includes all forms of discovery and integration of knowledge, critical analysis, and products and performances. The University definition for research is given below:

A formal procedure which contributes to the expansion of basic knowledge or applies such knowledge to the solution of problems in society or exemplifies creative expression in a specific field of study. The results of research are communicated to professionals outside the University through a peer reviewed process in a manner appropriate to the discipline.

Several departments indicate that writing successful competitive grant proposals related to teaching counts under teaching though all other grants appear to count under scholarship. This statement also appears in the University guidelines under teaching. Unfortunately, it is not clear to what “related to teaching” refers. It could be teaching improvement, teaching innovation, curriculum reform and/or research on teaching in the discipline. Some minor exceptions to the findings above include the School of Kinesiology and Recreation, which explicitly lists products that could be considered SoTL under the section “Performance Criteria for Scholarship.” Another exception is that in the Department of Economics, *The Journal of Economic Education* is a Category I (though not the in the Category I- most prestigious group) journal. (Economics provided their list of journals and the categories in which they count).

### Faculty Positions

A request was sent to department chairpersons as well as teaching center-department faculty liaisons. They were asked to indicate the names and discipline of any faculty members in their department or college hired specifically to do scholarship of teaching and learning (higher education) research in their discipline along with their teaching role. We received responses from 20 Departments or Schools. The following positions exist.

1. Cross Endowed Chair in SoTL, University-wide Chair
2. One tenure line faculty position in Chemistry
3. One tenure line faculty position in Biology

In addition, both Milner Library and the Department of Technology indicated they had one line where the incumbent focused on SoTL research (Library Instruction and Technology Education, respectively).

### **Conclusions**

Several tentative conclusions can be reached from this partial, qualitative, descriptive data. First, only a handful of theses and dissertations in a year are SoTL. On the one hand, this seems probably given the focus of theses and dissertations on traditional areas of disciplinary work. On the other hand, given our institutional history and mission, one might expect more acceptance of SoTL theses and dissertations.

Second, despite using a broad definition of SoTL, few, if any external grants in 01-02 are in the area of SoTL. Third, in terms of internal grants, in the University Research Grant Program, which is administered by each college, only one funded URG appears to be SoTL. In addition, in 2001-2002, five SoTL small grants were awarded through the teaching center.

Fourth, four of our seven colleges provided information (titles for counting) on faculty SoTL presentations and publications. For these colleges combined, however, faculty reported 35 SoTL presentations and 30 SoTL publications in this past year (as we were able to code based on title).

Fifth, based on a review of 43% of the department/school ASPT guidelines, the scholarship of teaching and learning is not explicitly mentioned. When processes that could lead to SoTL outcomes (e.g., conducting classroom research) or outcomes that could be considered SoTL (successful competitive grants related to teaching) are explicitly noted, they are listed under teaching. Presentations and publications about teaching and learning in the discipline (SoTL) are not specifically mentioned. Given, that these are not in the lists under teaching and given the University ASPT guidelines, faculty should assume such work falls under scholarship/research. But it is not clear that all DFSCs in all departments (or CFSCs, for that matter) would count the work in that category. Thus, there is ambiguity in these documents and their interpretation in regard to SoTL.

Finally, in terms of faculty positions devoted to SoTL, currently (based on departments/schools that responded), we have one university level position and two tenure-line positions within academic departments. Two additional tenure-line positions in departments are seen as primarily SoTL.