

ISSOTL Advocacy Committee: A Casebook

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Appealing to Administrators

- Administrative Information/Education Sessions
- Student-Centered SoTL: Organizing for Change

Administrative Information/Education Sessions

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Our information/education session for Chairs, Directors, Deans - We submitted a proposal to present a session about SoTL for campus administrators at our annual all day teaching-learning conference put on by our teaching center and held at our the nearby Marriott (faculty present teaching and learning practices and SoTL at this event and there is an outside keynote speaker). The session was accepted. We then specifically invited and advertised the session via email (and asked our Provost to do so as well) to all Chairs, Directors, Deans (and/or members of unit faculty personnel committees). We created a power point presentation that focused on def, support, uses of SoTL at dept and college levels then filled in details and examples verbally (see attached). I believe we had about 18 administrators attend.

Student-Centered SoTL: Organizing for Change

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In Sweden, educational development has focused on SoTL for almost a decade. In many institutions, SoTL forms the basis of bottom-up-approaches to support professional development. However, SoTL is slower in becoming embedded in institutional structures, policies, and cultures. In 2013, the Swedish National Union of Students (SFS) released a report, titled "Improving Teaching and Learning in Swedish Higher Education: A Student Centered Perspective" (the report was originally written in Swedish). The report was written with a scholarly approach, underpinned with research on teaching and learning, and ended with a number of demands from the students on the Swedish government as well as on Swedish higher education institutions.

These demands included, for instance:

1. Developing a national strategy for improving teaching in higher education.
2. Undertaking a serious, concerted national research and development strategy for improvement of higher education teaching.
3. Ensuring that the education received at higher education would be based on a scientific approach to teaching, to allocate specific time of teachers' professional service for scholarship of teaching and learning and educational development.

The report was later translated into English (as it was presented at the ISSOTL-conference as a Swedish case of advocacy and outreach). Since Swedish does not have an expression for scholarship of teaching and learning, this is not explicitly mentioned, but the meaning is in the report. The report received a lot of attention in newspapers, TV and radio. The chair of the student union was repeatedly interviewed and received significant media exposure. The Minister of Education and other high ranked politicians were also interviewed. The student union arranged a one-day conference in Stockholm to coincide with the release of the report. The conference included a panel-debate with politicians, university chairs, educational developers, and academic teachers in order to debate and discuss the contents of the report.

Appealing to Fellow Scholars

- Fostering Interdisciplinary Collaborations On and Offline
- Multimedia Strategies for Promoting SoTL Across the Disciplines
- SoTL in Communication Sciences and Disorders
- SoTL in Visual Arts: A Portrait of Creativity in Action
- Starting Discussions about SoTL

Fostering Interdisciplinary Collaboration On- and Offline

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1. Websites are a relatively easy way to foster broad communication about research and efforts related to SoTL. For example, I am co-creator and a regular contributor to the [Improve with Metacognition](#) website. This website has a growing following, and it includes a regular blog (with posts often connecting to SoTL research), resources (many of which are SoTL-based), and provides a means to promote collaborations. One of the current collaborations is a 5-institution SoTL project on the topic of metacognitive instruction. This site helps bring SoTL activities related to the topic of metacognition to broader awareness (although the majority of current followers are academics).
2. Institution-level conference days provide a manageable and meaningful way to recognize and celebrate SoTL. At my institution, we hold an annual SoTL Forum that includes a poster session where all the previous year's SoTL researchers share their work in an open venue attended by faculty, administrators and students. This session reinforces the value that we place on SoTL research and scholarly teaching, and provides an opportunity for faculty across different departments to share their efforts related to teaching and learning. Other events that day include a morning workshop, an invited keynote address, and afternoon panel and talk sessions.
3. Education-related conferences with audiences that include people outside of higher education are also a great way to advocate for the value of SoTL. For example, the Global MindED conference in Denver (<http://www.globalminded.org/>) brings together a broad audience (academics, public officials and community leaders, students, others interested in education at all levels, including those involved in education policies around the world).

Multimedia Strategies for Promoting SoTL Across the Disciplines

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SoTL Advocate blog - Early last fall we created a blog for both ISU fac/staff/students and those outside ISU. When we post to the blog (usually every Monday), I also send out a tweet from @ISU_SoTL. The blog (<https://illinoisstateuniversitysotl.wordpress.com>) highlights SoTL and encourages discussion within the SoTL community on various topics of interest to those working in SoTL at ISU and beyond. "To date, The SoTL Advocate has published original opinion papers about the field of SoTL, shared SoTL resources and tips, and informed readers about SoTL workshops, conference, and experiences." Along with information and resources of use to anyone doing SoTL, we also post blog entries about upcoming opportunities (e.g., small SoTL grants, SoTL Univ award) or important recent events (e.g., SoTL workshops or celebrations) related to SoTL on campus for ISU folks.

"Walk the Talk" SoTL Application Beyond the Individual Classroom contest at ISU - This spring we held a contest for the 'best' example of an application of SoTL literature and/or original SoTL work/results to improve, change, create re teaching and learning... on campus but at a broader level than the individual classroom. We advertised the contest in many ways and created a standard set of questions each applicant team had to answer and submit as their entry. We (a 3 person selection team -fac who do SoTL) selected a winning team (\$2,000 and a plaque) and an honorable mention team (\$500 and a plaque). We then announced and shared the winners and projects via our web page, blog, twitter account, internal teaching list serv...Finally, we hosted a celebration event for the winning and honorable mention teams with food, plaque presentations and brief explanation of the projects by the teams. We invited campus members interested in SoTL and the Pres and Provost (both of whom attended!).

SoTL in Communication Sciences and Disorders

by Jennifer Friberg
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Adapted from a blog post dated 12/1/14

<https://illinoisstateuniversitysotl.wordpress.com/2014/12/01/timing-is-everything-working-to-increase-disciplinary-acceptance-of-sotl/>

Over the last several years, I have been one of many vocal advocates for SoTL in my professional discipline of speech-language pathology. Through this process, I've had the good fortune to meet and collaborate with a wonderful group of individuals interested in teaching and learning. While we have made progress with our pro-SoTL efforts, I have learned firsthand that change can be a slow moving endeavor, particularly in a profession governed by a variety of stakeholders representing several professional organizations and interests. That said, I have also learned that patience with the process can yield encouraging outcomes.

Over the course of the last year, I have been involved in the drafting of my profession's first ever [position paper on SoTL as a meritorious form of scholarship](#). Happily, recent conversations at my annual research conference indicated that this position paper has had influence in increasing the stature and acceptance of SoTL in my discipline. That said, more work is needed to build upon the foundation the adoption of this position paper has provided for my discipline, for certain. In particular, we need to work to establish a regular and recognized home for disciplinary SoTL work in one of the peer reviewed journals for my profession. Several colleagues and I are working on an initiative to establish a journal specific to SoTL in our discipline at the current time.

SoTL in Visual Arts: A Portrait of Creativity in Action

by Diana Gregory
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Our scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) work began as a result of a self-study and outside analysis during our accreditation review and then moved beyond the classroom to include curriculum design/reform and assessment (McKinney, 2012). Primarily, the focus of our SoTL project addressed a need to improve student learning outcomes (SLO) around a perceived lack of creativity seen as imagination and originality in student art work in the BFA and BS Art Education degrees. Three questions were a driving force: what are we teaching and why; what do students need to be successful beyond the university; and how do we become accountable?

We used a two-prong approach: first, a faculty learning community studied the meanings and processes of creativity and their implications for teaching and learning, while administration simultaneously initiated a new portfolio review process. The portfolio review was developed over a two year period and resulted in curricular changes that: improved retention and progress to graduation; created philosophical unity among divergent faculty; and shifted the focus from issues of authority and power to a concern for productive student experiences and actual student learning outcomes. The SLOs were also developed to align with the institution's newly defined university-wide competencies, including skills and dispositions within the field, effective communication, and creative problem solving. The Association of American Colleges & University's (AAC&U) VALUE rubrics for creativity, oral and written communication, and critical thinking served as guidelines for the development of rubrics piloted in fall 2012. Evaluation of

early data demonstrated the need (very early in the learning process) for a specific course addressing creative problem solving and conceptual inventiveness, which has resulted in curricular revisions to the foundational courses in the degree programs.

As our work progressed we moved to make our results public in an effort to reduce the sense of isolation that limited our work. We wanted to “paint a portrait” that revealed the ways in which the SoTL process directly affected the improvement of SLOs after the faculty examined the standards specified through the National Association of Schools of Art and Design and the AAC&U VALUE rubrics. We know that artistic creativity is not ineffable; it can be measured and evaluated like any other ability. Our work has shown us that SoTL principles are applicable even in disciplines that might seem inhospitable and that SoTL can provided a framework for accomplishing a wide variety of (sometimes expected) goals.

References

Association of American Colleges & Universities VALUE Rubrics. Online at <http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index.cfm>

McKinney, K. (2012). “Making a Difference: Applying SoTL to Enhance Learning.” *The Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 12 (1): 1-7.

Starting Discussions about SoTL

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In the Fall of 2014, a group of four SoTL active faculty at Georgia Southern University were invited by the President of the Georgia Educational Research Association to deliver a panel symposium on SoTL at their annual conference (Maurer, Sturges, Arrington, & Lu, 2014). This was an attempt to connect SoTL-active faculty at a major state university with education faculty at other state institutions and with K-12 educators and administrators in the state. It also provided an excellent opportunity to advocate for the presence and value of SoTL in both education research and in the educational community more generally. Further, as the two senior presenters were both from outside the education fields, it provided visibility and exposure for SoTL as an area of research both outside of education and that could be conducted in an interdisciplinary manner.

In addition to the outreach opportunities this provided, there was the unanticipated benefit that two of the faculty members subsequently revised and expanded the presentation into a standing room only session at the 2015 SoTL Commons Conference.

A copy of the GERA presentation was submitted to the Proceedings of the conference and is available [here](#).

Reference

Maurer, T.W., Sturges, D., Arrington, N.M., & Lu, H. (2014, October). The Scholarship of Teaching & Learning: Who, what, when, where, why, and how? Panel symposium presented at the 2014 Georgia Educational Research Association Conference, Savannah, GA. Panel Chair: Maurer, T.W.

Appealing to the Public

- Cultivating Community Advocates for SoTL
- SoTL in the Blogosphere: Working-Class Perspectives
- Street-Level SoTL: From Academic Journals to Infographics

Cultivating Community Advocates for SoTL

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The Teaching-Learning Academy (TLA) at Western Washington University is a dialogue forum to study and enhance our campus learning environment. Not only does it include students, faculty, and staff from across campus – we deliberately invite participants from the surrounding community and do our best to sustain their participation over time. Out of 75-100 participants every quarter in TLA, 6-10 regular participants come from the community. We also sponsor an annual academy awards reception in which we recognize individuals and groups both from campus and off-campus that have contributed to our study that year. Many of the individuals and groups recognized come from off campus. As a result of these efforts, people from our neighboring community become some of the best ambassadors and advocates of SoTL work on campus.

SoTL in the Blogosphere: Working-Class Perspectives

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I edit a weekly blog, [Working-Class Perspectives](#), that regularly comments on education and many other themes. The blog reaches several thousand readers a week, including both academics and non-academics such as journalists, community activists, students, and others. In my own writing for the blog, I have drawn on educational research to comment on current issues such as:

1. [Redefining Grit: New Visions of Working-Class Culture](#), drawing on Duckworth's claims about grit in K-12 education.

2. [The Challenge of MOOCs: Technology, Costs, and Class](#), commenting on claims that MOOCs would make high quality education more widely available.
3. [College Choice and the Success of Working-Class Students](#), responding to Crossing the Finish Line, a higher ed study that found that working-class students perform better if they attend more elite schools.

Street-Level SoTL: From Academic Journals to Infographics

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The following [infographic](#) pertains to the current conversation about representing teaching for a non-specialized readership. The information is based on a study I did on learning styles in my ENGL 101 and ENGL 102 courses. While learning styles are sort of a stale way of tracking student learning, the data I had collected suggests that “stale” forms of inquiry might still be fresh for new-media translations of SoTL precisely because what’s “stale” in journals is yet unpublished in infographic and other forms. Reasonably, then, a non-specialized readership may know little or nothing about learning styles and may be interested in how they have been considered in research on student learning.

The “big-picture” view of things provided by this infographic glimpse may be able to do a number of things:

1. This view of what’s being studied in college and university classrooms might be an easier way to sell state budget makers on the merits of funding a university.
2. Infographics might, for example, show parents that the English Department takes education very seriously and is invested in constant course and curriculum refinement to ensure that their students get the best education possible.
3. Perhaps infographics are good for raising press awareness of developments in public university classrooms and the ways in which education makes students more employable at the same time it improves their university experience.
4. Since infographics are considerably easier to publish than journal articles, this sort of data can be rolled out quickly and then explained in greater detail in a peer-reviewed article; while the article is forthcoming, the infographic may draw attention to its findings so that others are interested in reading about the scholar/instructor’s findings.

This is my hope, anyway. These are just a few of the potential applications that come to mind. We will not know of their breadth or success until we have undertaken a concerted, focused effort.