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Workshop: Getting Started in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

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Goals

- ❖ Discuss definitions, examples, and functions of SoTL.

- ❖ Articulate strategies to integrate SoTL work into your professional life.

- ❖ Articulate a SoTL research question.

- ❖ Know where to look for literature and theory.

- ❖ Select possible research methods; consider ethical issues.

- ❖ Introduce ideas related to sharing SoTL.

- ❖ Introduce ideas related to having impact and documenting your SoTL work.

Definitions of SoTL

❖ "problem posing about an issue of teaching or learning, study of the problem through methods appropriate to the disciplinary epistemologies, applications of results to practice, communication of results, self-reflection, and peer review" (Carnegie Foundation)

❖ "systematic reflection/study on teaching and learning made public" (Illinois State University)

SoTL and Related Scholarship/Research/Concepts

❖ SoTL, assessment, and traditional educational research overlap but are not the same.

❖ Good teaching, scholarly teaching, and SoTL are related but not the same.

Characteristics of SoTL

❖ College level (but some K-12 as well)

❖ Discipline-based studies within an interdisciplinary movement (but growing cross-discipline studies)

❖ Focus on learning, sometimes teaching

❖ Conducted by faculty in the disciplines

Characteristics of SoTL, con't.

❖ Local--your students (some multi-institutional)

❖ Methodological diversity

❖ Empirical; evidence-informed

❖ Must be made public/shared

❖ Usually requires IRB approval

Example SoTL Projects

❖ Examples from participants?

❖ Student perceptions about the laboratory session in chemistry

❖ Student learning and experiences in sociology senior research capstone

❖ Outcomes of civic engagement experiences

❖ Instructor and student immediacy behaviors, and achievement in a web-based writing class

Why Do SoTL?
(Functions of SoTL)

Faculty…

❖ revitalizes faculty members

❖ brings in outside funding (though limited)

❖ adds publications and presentations to faculty accomplishments

❖ increases faculty credentials for internal and external teaching or scholarly awards

Why do SoTL?

Collaborative…

❖ creates new networks among faculty, staff, and students

❖ provides research opportunities for students

❖ provides opportunities for involvement in a national/international higher education initiative

❖ strengthens graduate student training (preparing future faculty)

Why do SoTL?

Learning and Institutional…

❖ demonstrates to job candidates that you value teaching

❖ helps with assessment; program review and accreditation

❖ strengthens budget requests

❖ helps change institutional culture

❖ improves reflection on teaching, teaching, and student learning

Integrating SoTL Work into Existing Practices, Work Load, Resources

❖ Attach SoTL work to campus priorities (e.g., general education reform; diversity initiatives; civic engagement…).

❖ Find internal pots of funds.

❖ Integrate SoTL with teaching, traditional research, & service.

❖ Use team work. Collaborate. Share expertise.

Integrating SoTL Work into Existing Practices, Work Load, Resources, con't.

❖ Involve Students.

❖ Get Help; retrain.

❖ Look for resources in disciplinary associations.

❖ Apply results to improve learning.

❖ Use SoTL in annual review/P&T materials.

Where Do SoTL Questions Come From?

❖ Teaching-Learning 'problems' in your classroom or program.

❖ Reading extant SoTL or teaching-learning literature.

❖ From application or questioning of relevant theory.

❖ From reflections and conversations with others.

Types of Questions
(from Hutchings (2000))

- ❖ **What is** questions move us toward a picture of what the problem or issue or behavior looks like.

- ❖ **What works** questions engage us in finding evidence for the effectiveness of various strategies or interventions.

- ❖ **Visions of the possible** relate to questions about what could be.

- ❖ In developing **new conceptual frameworks**, we choose to answer questions that lead to new models and ways of understanding practice.

Getting Started on a SoTL Project-Worksheet- Part I

❖ List any activities in which you are currently engaged that constitute or could become SoTL work.

❖ Think about a teaching/learning issue or problem that you have. Briefly state that AS a question.

❖ What type of question is this (Hutchings scheme)?

Searching for Prior Literature for SoTL Projects

❖ Conducting a literature review requires using several different strategies. Participant suggestions?

❖ SoTL journals, education journals, & disciplinary journals are all relevant (traditional and online).

❖ Databases- no one database is best.

❖ Network at SoTL and TL conferences.

Getting Started on a SoTL Project-Worksheet- Part II

❖ Given your question, what types of information or artifacts do you already have that will help you to answer this question?

❖ What other types of information or artifacts or data will you need?

Theory Can Help Us Move Our Research Agenda Forward

❖ Read up on theories related to teaching and learning in higher education.

❖ Consider any models or theories in the extant SoTL literature on your topic specifically.

❖ Talk through your theoretical ideas out loud and with others.

Theory Can Help Us Move Our Research Agenda Forward

❖ Consider whether theoretical propositions and conceptual frameworks from your or a related discipline might help explain your teaching-learning problem.

❖ Draw out your model in diagram form such as a concept map to help you articulate implicit theories and refine them.

❖ Participant suggestions?

Strategies to Obtain Evidence/Data

❖ reflection and analysis then creating a product that presents this

❖ interviews and focus groups

❖ questionnaires

❖ content analysis of text or documents

❖ secondary analysis of existing data

❖ quasi-experiments

❖ observational research

❖ case studies

❖ other?

Ethical Issues and SoTL

❖ Human subjects + making public = IRB

❖ Informed consent, right to privacy, protection from harm

Getting Started on a SoTL Project-Worksheet- Part III

- ❖ Given your question and the information/data you need, what research strategies might you use to obtain this information and answer this question?

- ❖ What are some practical problems you might face in doing this study?

- ❖ What ethical issues should you consider in doing this study?

Making SoTL Public (Sharing)

Purposes of Sharing:

- To contribute to the body of SoTL knowledge
- To encourage additional applications of results by colleagues or students
- To strengthen annual review or tenure/promotion files
- To earn an award

Making SoTL Public (Sharing)

Audiences:

- Disciplinary peers; Other SoTL scholars; Colleagues in other departments or disciplines; Students; Accreditation Staff; Administrators; Community members or the Public

Mechanisms:

- Journal and newsletter articles; Presentations; Books; Chapters; Videos; Newsletters; Web pages; Blogs

Tips on Documenting SoTL Work

❖ Do high quality SoTL work and show how it meets standards of scholarship.

❖ Make SoTL public in respected outlets/ways.

❖ If appropriate, document SoTL as you would other scholarship in your field.

❖ "Educate" colleagues and administrators about SoTL work.

Tips on Documenting SoTL Work

❖ Show how SoTL work meets standards discussed for SoTL in the literature.

❖ Add a SoTL section to your teaching portfolio. List SoTL items on cv.

❖ Provide concrete evidence of making your work public.

❖ If form of documentation used is not peer reviewed, obtain peer review.

Getting Started on a SoTL Project-Worksheet- Part IV

❖ List the 1-3 main audiences for your SoTL project?

❖ Given those, how could you 'represent' your SoTL project to these audiences?

❖ List 1-2 conferences (disciplinary, teaching-learning, SoTL) where you could share your SoTL project.

❖ List 1-2 publication outlets (journals, newsletters, websites…) where you could make your SoTL project public.

Don't Forget Application (Using SoTL)

❖ The ultimate goal of SoTL is to improve learning.

❖ Remember to think about, write about, and share implications of the results of your SoTL projects.

❖ Apply what you learn to your own classes and other student learning opportunities.

❖ Continue the loop and consider a follow-up SoTL study to any applications.

❖ Keep in mind the limits re generalizability.

How Can We Impact Learning via SoTL?

❖ By making applications of own or others' SoTL work in our classes or out-of-class learning situations.

❖ By making applications of own or others' SoTL work at the program, department, college, or institutional levels.

❖ By making our SoTL work public to others

❖ By engaging in a SoTL research agenda and connecting with others doing similar work.

❖ By sharing our SoTL results with our students.

❖ By being a social change agent for the SoTL movement, locally and beyond.

Getting Started on a SoTL Project-Worksheet- Part V- Homework

- List several ideas related to the previous slide

(e.g., How might you share results with students? How might SoTL results help with a program or department teaching-learning problem? How might you encourage/promote SoTL and its use on campus?)

Comments? Questions?

Thank you for your interest and contributions!