Getting Started with SoTL

Need a publication to put you over the next P&T hump? We strongly suggest you consider writing in what may be a new domain for you, the scholarship of teaching and learning. SoTL research (as it’s usually called) occurs at the intersection of your teaching and scholarship, and if promotion isn’t a goal for you, here’s another: practicing SoTL actually makes you a better teacher and researcher.

Since Boyer in Scholarship Reconsidered (1990) never developed SoTL, we thought we’d offer you a quick primer on its characteristics. If you want more detail, check out our Scaling the Scholarship Mountain (2017).

**SoTL has as its goal enhanced student learning.** Even if you think you are a great teacher whose students learn deeply, SoTL provides the proof.

**SoTL can be innovative or exist to support an old truism.** We always thought that daily quizzing improved our students’ learning. Both others’ and our research proved that old notion correct, especially when you and your students think of quizzing as a retrieval opportunity.

**SoTL provides systematic evidence of your belief.** We were trained in qualitative analysis in our discipline of English, so SoTL opened our minds to the possibilities of quantitative analysis. Old dogs need new tricks.

**SoTL allows you to bring to bear evidence from fields not your own.** Just this week, for instance, we submitted a SoTL piece that used brain scientist John Medina and advertising gurus Dan and Chip Heath. We’ve always found the Wall Street Journal a great source for new ideas outside academia.

**SoTL teaches the practitioner how to engage in a scholarly conversation.** Undergrads lap up what you say, grad student may occasionally pose a question, but peers converse with you outside the bubble of your own classroom.

**SoTL provides a form of scholarship that speaks to those funding and perpetuating the university.** Alums, donors, legislators, and accreditors easily recognize the value of SoTL, whereas your research on that obscure Central American poet might not light their fire.

What are you waiting for?

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