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SPECIAL SECTION EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the Arts and Humanities: Moving the Conversation Forward

Scholars based in the arts and humanities have been active in scholarship of teaching and learning from the beginning, many taking on leadership roles. After informal conversations about how the conference of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) seemed to include relatively few papers and sessions from our fields, the Humanities Interest Group was formed in 2009. Later renamed the Arts and Humanities Interest Group, it has met annually at ISSOTL conferences, organized a series of conference sessions, and developed a website and listserv. A few years ago, that group decided that publishing a collection of essays could help demonstrate the value of inquiry-based approaches to documenting and analyzing students' learning to colleagues in our fields while also making our work more visible within SoTL. We hope that the five essays in this special section of *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* will do just that.

Our conversations began with questions about what an arts and humanities-based SoTL would look like. As Nancy Chick has argued, our SoTL work is grounded in the theoretical and methodological perspectives of our fields, and while our methods and even our questions sometimes generate disdain from our more empirically-oriented colleagues, they work for us. Further, if we want to engage colleagues in our fields, our work must reflect the epistemologies of our disciplines and attend to the kind of learning our colleagues value. As Karen Manarin suggests in her essay here, the multiple audiences for our work creates an unresolvable contradiction: too little empiricism generates rejection within SoTL and too much marks our work as suspect and irrelevant for colleagues in our home fields. While all of us have given presentations at ISSOTL, most have published our SoTL work widely, and some have even given plenaries at ISSOTL, we have also had our work criticized for not following a sufficiently data-driven, experimental model, been challenged by colleagues who worry that we are not sufficiently committed to "validity," or encouraged to use qualitative methods based in the social sciences, like coding, rather than our own methods, such as close reading. From within the humanities, we've heard scorn for the very idea of looking at "data" and insistence from colleagues that they "don't do SoTL," even though they regularly engage in critical analysis of teaching and learning. In the essays that follow, we explore questions that matter in our disciplines, using methods that we believe our disciplinary colleagues will value. We also hope that our work reveals insights and raises questions that will have value for our SoTL colleagues.

The essays here consider student learning on multiple levels, from the individual classroom to programs, disciplines, and higher education more broadly. Together, they suggest some of what humanities-based SoTL has to offer for faculty across the disciplines and within our own fields. For example, it can help us develop and evaluate specific pedagogical methods, as we see in Manarin's analysis of how creating and discussing research posters contributed to the development of her literature students' understanding of and engagement with literary research and analysis. Kathleen Perkins's work

considers the challenges of capturing and evaluating the embodied learning in an acting program, arguing that such analysis has value not only for individual faculty but for whole programs. SoTL also offers strategies for interrogating and clarifying the nature of disciplinary thinking, as Stephen Bloch-Schulman demonstrates in his comparison of think-alouds performed by advanced philosophy students and by faculty in the field.

At the same time, as Susan Conkling argues, the analysis of student learning within our fields also raises questions about the conditions and value of learning and knowing more broadly. If we extend our inquiries on student learning beyond the classroom, the discipline, and the program, she suggests, SoTL can help us understand the varied locations and experiences of learning in students' lives, wherever and whenever it occurs. This wider view reminds us that learning and knowing can be sources of pleasure and belonging. These outcomes matter to our students and to us, but they have been ignored or, worse, ridiculed by educational policy leaders who increasingly define higher education as workforce preparation. If, as we argue in the closing essay, SoTL can embrace these broader questions, it can also help us push back against neoliberal discourses that define higher education in solely instrumental ways and that demand accountability rather than responsiveness from faculty.

As the closing essay in this collection makes clear, our conversations have developed over time as we have moved from comparing notes about how to frame SoTL projects to thinking about why SoTL has moved toward a more empirical model to exploring the relationship among SoTL, our students, our disciplines, higher education, and the broader political landscape. Much of that evolution occurred during a four-day "think tank" sponsored by the Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University (US), where we were hosted by Jessie Moore and Peter Felten, who, together with Nancy Chick, also joined our discussions and helped to shape the articles and the closing essay here. We hope to continue the conversation with multiple communities—with colleagues in our home fields, with other arts and humanities colleagues who are already involved in SoTL, and with the large and diverse community of SoTL scholars, across disciplines, roles, and regions. Just as our conversation began with the drafts of individual articles, we hope that the completed essays here, together with our jointly-written closing piece—a manifesto of sorts—will generate critical but also dialogic responses. We present this set of essays, then, not as proof of the value of our work, nor as a conclusion to our own discussions, but as an invitation to a continuing conversation. We hope you will join us.

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WORK CITED

Chick, Nancy L. "Difference, Privilege, and Power in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: The Value of Humanities SoTL." In *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning In and Across the Disciplines*, Kathleen McKinney, ed. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2013. 15-33.



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