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Book Review: *Inquiry Into The College Classroom: A Journey Toward Scholarly Teaching* by Paul Savory, Amy Nelson Burnett & Amy Goodburn (Anker, 2007)

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Abstract

Excerpt: Informal research is occurring everyday in college classrooms around the world. Many of us don't even realize we are doing it, maybe we decided to try out a new discussion format today, or wanted to see how students would react to a new assessment technique. Good teachers are constantly refining their teaching to improve student learning and motivation. The faculty member interested in pursuing scholarly inquiry in the classroom can look to Savory, Burnett and Goodburn for a detailed, practical guide for engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Keywords

Paul Savory, Amy Nelson Burnett, Amy Goodburn, Scholarship of teaching and learning, SoTL

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Book Review

Inquiry Into The College Classroom: A Journey Toward Scholarly Teaching
Paul Savory, Amy Nelson Burnett & Amy Goodburn (Anker, 2007)

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Informal research is occurring everyday in college classrooms around the world. Many of us don't even realize we are doing it, maybe we decided to try out a new discussion format today, or wanted to see how students would react to a new assessment technique. Good teachers are constantly refining their teaching to improve student learning and motivation. The faculty member interested in pursuing scholarly inquiry in the classroom can look to Savory, Burnett and Goodburn for a detailed, practical guide for engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Due to my background as an educator and years of teaching teachers how to conduct action research in their own classrooms, SoTL is not new to me. However, this book is a practical guide for faculty with a budding interest in SoTL who desire to begin formulating questions to explore their teaching. Due to the detailed examples of other faculty member's research processes, it is also a useful tool to inspire more experienced SoTL researchers by reading other researchers' experiences. In fact, the authors allude to this differentiation of use by using the analogy of a travel guide book, stating, "Tourists completely unfamiliar with an area may appreciate the detail and want to visit everything, while those more familiar with the region may pick and choose what they want to see and prefer to follow alternative routes" (pg. 7).

The book is structured so readers can examine sections independently and skip around to meet their individual needs. The first chapter provides background on classroom inquiry and outlines the authors' suggested model for conducting your own research. One of the features which will prove most useful in this chapter are the exhibits which highlight uses for classroom inquiry, common pitfalls, types of questions to be answered and more. These practical tools will guide faculty who want to move toward a more formal documentation of their inquiries and expand their notions of how to use the results.

In chapters 2-10, the authors provide first person accounts of the inquiry process from faculty in many disciplines. These chapters are invaluable and they are the crux of the book, illustrating with detail the practical application of the inquiry model. Each faculty story follows the same format, outlining the highlights of their inquiry, background on the question and the course, development of the inquiry, the investigative plan, and the results. A unique and priceless feature of these inquiry application chapters are the commentary boxes used by Savory, Burnett and Goodburn to add their own thoughts, clarification and relevance of the faculty

member's experience. These commentaries help clarify the process and place them in a larger context which will be incredibly helpful to a new SoTL researcher.

Savory, Burnett & Goodburn's book is an essential for any faculty member, teaching center or administrator. It has invaluable advice and stories from a diverse group of faculty, with inquiry questions such as: Will a weekly essay assignment improve students' ability to explain mathematical concepts? In a large history class, what is the impact of having students grade each others' essay examinations? Are visual brainstorming methods more effective than verbal methods in an art class? This book is one you will come back to again and again as you continue the journey of scholarly inquiry in the college classroom.