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Giving Voice to SoTL

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Giving Voice to SoTL

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What reaction do you get when you tell people that you do SoTL?

- “. . . ? What’s that?”
- “Yeah, but what’s your real research?”
“Not many value SoTL as much as other disciplinary research. Even among some of my colleagues there is a wide-spread attitude that SoTL is not “real” research.”

(Shulman, 2000, p. 4)
SoTL has an image problem.

People don’t know what it is,
OR
People don’t value, support, reward, and use it
OR both.
What is 1 thing about SoTL that you wish ______ knew?

• Administrators
• Faculty colleagues in your departments or at other institutions
So you want to educate them.

“SoTL-active faculty members are already telling the story of teaching” (Bernstein, 2013, p. 36)

Then what? What do you want them to do as a result of what they now know?
Enter advocacy.

To advocate:

- To call forth or call toward, to call to one’s aid, to summon
- Modern meaning is often “to speak for or on behalf of”

To give voice to
Education vs. Advocacy

Educating about SoTL

• Value neutral
• Documenting and informing
• E.g., showing a graph of how many internal grant dollars were given to SoTL vs. non-SoTL projects
• E.g., showing specific ways that increased funding could be used to promote and use the results of SoTL research

Advocating for SoTL

• Value laden
• Calling for action
• E.g., arguing to increase the share of internal grant dollars given to SoTL projects vs. non-SoTL projects
• E.g., urging people to appropriate more funding to promote and use the results of SoTL research
Why advocate?

“Those who make policies and approve budgets for our institutions are increasingly asking for evidence that we are making measurable progress toward our educational goals. Accrediting agencies are insisting on educational “audits” in which we provide evidence that we are achieving our stated goals and missions. “Accountability” and “Assessment” have become the themes of the emerging movements toward reform in higher education.”

Does this sound like recent discussions of Higher Education?
It’s not that “recent!”

- Shulman (2000)

We have been fighting the battle to educate people about SoTL for more than 25 years; we must do more!
Advocacy is a SoTL Birthright

“Advocacy and outreach are birthrights of the scholarship of teaching and learning. From its earliest days, doing SoTL has meant making the work public and taking an unapologetic, indeed pro-active, stance toward treating teaching seriously as real intellectual work.”

(Huber & Robinson, 2016, p.1)
“What can SoTL do for you?”

1. *SoTL helps higher education to respond to the demands placed upon it.*

   • SoTL faculty are “cosmopolitan assets” to their institutions because they “generate visible analyses of student learning taking place in their institutions, provide excellent models of practice for local colleagues, *generate high-quality evidence for internal and external assessment, and offer accessible examples of quality education to prospective students*” (Bernstein, 2013, p. 35).
“What can SoTL do for you?”

2. SoTL helps higher education to defend itself from political attacks, underfunding, and other common assaults.

   • “To effectively neutralize increasingly common assaults [on higher education], we need to demonstrate that professors are deeply invested in, and committed to, the minds of undergraduates. Not just a few professors. All professors.” (Berlinerblau, 2015)
“What can SoTL do for you?”

3. *SoTL helps administrators to do their jobs better.*
   - Poole (Center for Engaged Learning, 2013)
   - Ryan and Goldrick-Rab (2015, p. A24)
“What can SoTL do for you?”

4. SoTL can help students **learn**.
Employers give college graduates low scores for preparedness across learning outcomes; students think they are better prepared.

Proportions saying they/recent college graduates are well prepared in each area:

- Working with others in teams: Employers 37%, Students 64%
- Staying current on technologies: Employers 37%, Students 46%
- Ethical judgment and decisionmaking: Employers 30%, Students 62%
- Locating, organizing, evaluating information: Employers 29%, Students 64%
- Oral communication: Employers 28%, Students 62%
- Working with numbers/statistics: Employers 28%, Students 55%
- Written communication: Employers 27%, Students 85%
- Critical/analytical thinking: Employers 26%, Students 68%
- Being innovative/creative: Employers 25%, Students 57%
- Analyzing/solving complex problems: Employers 24%, Students 59%
- Applying knowledge/skills to real world: Employers 23%, Students 59%
- Awareness/experience of diverse cultures in US: Employers 21%, Students 48%
- Staying current on developments in science: Employers 21%, Students 44%
- Working with people from diff. backgrounds: Employers 18%, Students 55%
- Staying current on global developments: Employers 18%, Students 43%
- Proficient in other language: Employers 16%, Students 34%
- Awareness/experience of diverse cultures outside US: Employers 15%, Students 42%

*8-10 ratings on zero-to-ten scale
Other ways to advocate for SoTL

1. Support junior scholars (and students) in SoTL work
2. Push for more campus resources for SoTL
3. Send SoTL citations to relevant decision makers
4. Educate those making decisions in the reward system about SoTL; try to change the reward system to value SoTL
5. Connect people in your discipline with the larger interdisciplinary international SoTL movement

(McKinney, 2015)
“Advocacy” isn’t limited to speaking out for SoTL directly.
3 Concluding Thoughts

1. Advocacy is essential if SoTL is to survive
2. Advocating for you
3. 100 years from now...
Questions
References


