Mar 30th, 12:00 PM - 1:45 PM

Giving Voice to SoTL

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Giving Voice to SoTL

Trent W. Maurer
Georgia Southern University

Recommended Citation:
What reaction do you get when you tell people that you do SoTL?

- “. . . ? What’s that?”
- “Yeah, but what’s your real research?”
You are not alone!

“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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educating about SoTL</th>
<th>Advocating for SoTL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Value neutral</td>
<td>• Value laden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Documenting and informing</td>
<td>• Calling for action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• E.g., showing a graph of how many internal grant dollars were given to SoTL vs. non-SoTL projects</td>
<td>• E.g., arguing to increase the share of internal grant dollars given to SoTL projects vs. non-SoTL projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• E.g., showing specific ways that increased funding could be used to promote and use the results of SoTL research</td>
<td>• E.g., urging people to appropriate more funding to promote and use the results of SoTL research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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*

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

*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


