The Challenges that Confront Us: What Teaching and Learning Scholarship Can Be Useful in the Big Tent of Higher Education?

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The Challenges That Confront Us:

What Teaching and Learning Scholarship Can Be Useful in the Big Tent of Higher Education?

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SoTL Commons Conference
March 26, 2015
SoTL Premier Group

Addressing the Improvement of Student Learning and Development

- Forefront of Ensuring Optimum Learning and Development in Academia
- Forefront of Studying Pedagogical Approaches of How to Enhance Student Learning and Development
- Forefront of a sense of collective responsibility to improve student learning and development
Focus of SoTL Sessions Samples

- Encouraging student motivation
- Improving the process of curriculum design and development
- Lecturing to large groups
- Teaching and learning in small groups
- Teaching and learning for employability
- E-learning
Scholarship Often Done in our Individual Classes

Today Focus Beyond Your Class
Initial Questions to Ponder

- What do you do that has a lasting impact with students? What remains with your students after your class is over? Fink says think 2-3 years; but today think 5 or more years.

- What about the various pedagogical techniques you study? Are they of use beyond your class, to your department, to your institution, and to higher education?
Validity of College Impact Measures

- Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia

http://collegemeasures.org/
This website provides comparative information about the salaries of recent graduates from programs at both two- and four-year public and private institutions across the state.
How should higher education be evaluated?

- Should we be satisfied that salary is the primary measure of college impact?
- What outcomes should be used?
- What responsibility do those of us in SoTL have in the conversation?
Challenge

• Who Will Respond to Accountability Calls In More Meaningful Ways?

• Are you in a position to help contribute to policy?
Principles of Good Practice in SoTL

Peter Felten

1. inquiry focused on student learning,
2. grounded in context,
3. methodologically sound,
4. conducted in partnership with students,
5. appropriately public.
Reframe Felten’s Steps Within Higher Education’s Accountability Demands

How Can We Help?

Moving from your Class to Programmatic Levels

You Have Much to Contribute!

(note: not all your scholarship will transfer)
1. Focus on Student Learning

- The **What** (should be learned) Not Just the **How**
- Learning are the criteria, not perceptions of what was learned
- What should be the learning and developmental constructs that are used as indicators of quality in college?
- How do we move beyond discrete knowledge into ways of thinking, feeling, and acting?
If We Opt Out

- Constructs that do not match what happens in the classroom
- Measures that do not match education
- Instructional methods chosen by others, not us
- Continuation of rankings that exclude student learning
- What reasoning, thinking, and problem solving paradigms might be used? Just saying those broad terms is confusing.
- What is ethical reasoning or esthetic development and how can it be explained to non-educators?
- What role, if any, do affective developmental constructs such as tolerance and grit have?
- What is life-long learning? Issues of motivation such as curiosity.
Post-Collegiate Outcomes Initiative

- White House’s Summit on College Opportunity, in December, where they pledged to provide more-accurate and more-comprehensive measures of student outcomes

- American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) – Well-being
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 2013

• “University leaders today must be well-equipped to explain why a college degree is still the best investment an individual can make—not just financially, but in terms of his or her long-term personal well-being—as well as how a more educated population helps our nation and society at large”
The Gallup-Purdue Index Report "Great Jobs, Great Lives"

“Six crucial factors linking the college experience to success at work and overall well-being in the long term”
The Gallup-Purdue Index

1. At least one teacher made learning exciting.
2. Personal concern of teachers for students.
3. Finding a mentor
4. Working on a long-term project for at least one semester.
5. Opportunities to put classroom learning into practice through internships or jobs.
6. Rich extracurricular activities.
2. Grounded in Context

- Who is the audience? Multiple audiences, not just each other or our colleagues.
- Key audience: policymakers and stakeholders
- What are the policy issues that are being asked and determined by our off-campus constituents?
Can Be Common Ground Between SoTL and Accountability Demands

- Improvement and Accountability
- Advances rigor and relevance
- Reflects practice
- For the public and private good
- Issues needing further scholarship-the context
Will technology kill universities?
Policy Issues Needing Further Scholarship:
Do Any of the Following Enhance Student Learning or Retention?

- Is technologically delivered instruction effective? MOOC’s (Massive Open Online Courses)? Flipped classrooms?

- Which technique, type of material, type of student are associated with greater student learning?
Policy Issues Needing Further Scholarship: Delivery

- Do out-of-class activities enhance learning or development? Athletics, study abroad/international, student affairs programs, service learning, or other enhance experiences of student learning and development?
- What is effective engagement?
- Active learning: what is it? What works?
Policy Issues Needing Further Scholarship: Organizational

- What is a credit? Can it be defined by student learning?
- Is student learning affected by tenure-track, non-tenure track, part-time instructors, or adjuncts? Does it make a difference in student learning?
Policy Issues Needing Further Scholarship: Financial Aid

- Is merit-based or need-based aid related to greater student learning?
Policy Issues Needing Further Scholarship

- Workforce development: what are the specific skill sets from general education, from the liberal arts, from humanities, from other areas?
- How do we state these skill sets to off-campus audiences?
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></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>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical/analytical thinking</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>66%</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>57%</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>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with people from diff. backgrounds</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying current on global developments</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficient in other language</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>43%</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
3. Methodologically Sound

- Key issue in the assessment phenomenon is the (lack of) worth and credibility of the measures used to measure student learning.
- What is credible evidence? Particularly to non-educators.
- Policymakers reach for available data rather than learning data that are content valid.
Methodologically Sound

- Sample: there are no nationally representative data about college student learning

- Instruments: in the absence of measures of student learning, available measures such as inputs (e.g. measures of resources) or outputs are used.

- Instruments: without much faculty participation, proprietary tests are chosen by states, some of which have high correlation with traditional verbal ability measures, rather than what students learn during college.
Methodologically Sound: Analytical Designs

- Which should we use: value-added (change over the intervention) or competency ( % meeting a standard)?
- How should a standard be determined to be defensible (e.g. Bookmark procedure)?
4. Conducted in Partnership With Students

- What is the student motivation to participate in assessment or evaluation activities?
5. Appropriately Public

- In what form should assessment results be reported? Accreditation: public or not?
- How do we balance the push for a single score with the desire to represent the complexity of multiple pieces of information?
- How do we help the public understand results of student learning and development?
- What do degrees and certificates mean?
Our “To Do” List
You Have Answers

1. What should be learned by graduates at your institution?
2. How do we meld both contexts of practice and policy to affect positive change (support for higher education)?
3. How can we make measures of quality more meaningful and better understood?
4. How can we keep the focus on students?
5. How do we communicate outcomes to our various constituents?
“...institutional leaders themselves have tended to go about their business in largely the same way as always, John R. Curry, ... ‘the power of evasion, the power of wishful thinking, the power of hoping it will go away -- evading and trying to avoid the difficult decisions.‘

Inside Higher Education, Nov. 17, 2010
International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

- “transformation of academic communities and cultures”
- Add? “Transformation of the value of higher education for off-campus audiences”?
The Need Is Great for Scholars of Teaching and Learning To Inform and Guide Policymakers– Perhaps Transform – Higher Education

You Maybe in the Best Position
Do We Like the Way the Future Will Be?

Thank you!
References

