The Story of Maryville University's Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Program:
From the Perspective of the "SoTL" Facilitator

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Abstract:

This story begins by showcasing what is presently happening in the fifth year of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Program at Maryville University through vignettes and descriptions of two initiatives. The first is a two-year seminar group open to all full-time faculty. Each group of up to ten faculty members explores the concept of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, becomes familiar with the skills of qualitative and action research, and conducts and disseminates the results of its SoTL studies. The sixth group has just been formed, and survey data indicate that all who have completed the two-year commitment believe the seminar has led to positive changes in their teaching, their students' learning, and their relationships with colleagues from different disciplines. The second initiative is an annual SoTL regional conference to provide Maryville and visiting faculty members with new SoTL perspectives and an opportunity to share their SoTL studies. The next part of the story looks to the past and identifies factors that appear to have contributed to the success of the program: the institutional context; the opportunity to become a CASTL Affiliate; and the decision to develop a SoTL seminar program. The story concludes by delineating future challenges: sustaining and growing the commitment to SoTL; confronting misperceptions regarding SoTL, including its role in the tenure and promotion process; encouraging programmatic as well as individual SoTL studies; assessing impact on faculty and students; and developing new leadership.

Key Words:

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning; SoTL; CASTL; action research; seminar; success; challenges.

Context and Introductory Vignettes

Context

Maryville University is a small, comprehensive private university in the western suburbs of St. Louis, Missouri. Founded in 1872 by the Religious of the Sacred Heart, a Roman Catholic order established in France by women dedicated to education, it became co-educational in 1968. In 1972, its centennial year, the ownership of Maryville was transferred to a lay board of trustees. As a private institution, it has grown considerably in terms of students, offerings, and facilities. Currently, 114 full-time faculty, assisted by a significant number of part-time faculty, teach and interact with approximately 3400 students. The 1800 undergraduates, 1000 Weekend and Evening College students, and 600 graduate students pursue academic and professional programs in four areas: the College of Art and Sciences, School of the Health Professions, Simon School of Business, and the School of Education.

In 2005, the Associate Vice President created a Center for Teaching and Learning and with it, a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Seminar Program. Each year, a group of up to ten faculty members choose to participate in a seminar, known as an Action Research Group for a period of two academic years. In May, 2010, Group IV graduated, Group V completed its first year, and Group VI formed. Since I am the developer and facilitator of the SoTL Seminar Program, I have deliberately chosen to tell the Maryville story in the highly personal way that I know it. However, such familiarity can be problematic. On the one hand, I have the advantage of being closer than anyone to the actual daily workings of the program; on the other hand, I clearly have the disadvantage of seeing those events through a biased and potentially self-serving lens. Bruyn (1966) has described and legitimated the role of the subjective in qualitative research, but I also know the value of "triangulation" in this kind of scholarship. Therefore, in addition to working from interpretations of my own field notes and reflections, I used and cited data here from a variety of sources such as email, minutes from planning meetings, the university's mission statement, survey data, and conference presentations. Further, I have asked all individuals referred to by title or fictitious name in this story to comment on the accuracy of the events and the legitimacy of the interpretations. All of their excellent suggestions have been incorporated into the text. Hopefully these carefully taken steps lend validity to this first person account and make this atypical "essay" a useful contribution to the literature on SoTL.

I begin the Maryville story with a focus on the present, introduced by vignettes that span four days in January, 2010. Next, I turn to the past to consider how we achieved our current level of success, including the impact of becoming a CASTL Affiliate. The final section addresses some of the future challenges to be addressed in order to grow and institutionalize our SoTL program.

Vignettes

Vignette #1: Thursday, January 21
8:00 am: It is a cold and rainy morning as faculty members from seven different disciplines make their way into the Pritchard Conference Room in Gander Hall for their

first SoTL seminar of the new semester. When everyone is seated, there will be eight members of Action Research Group V and two additional facilitators: Rick, a newly tenured Professor of Rehabilitation Counseling and member of Action Research Group I, and Denise, the Director of Academic Technology. Rick has a remarkable record of completing and publishing SoTL studies, so when any group members worry about whether SoTL research will be accepted by journals in their field, he usually can relate positive and encouraging experiences of his own. Denise is there to help those who might want to adopt and study new technological approaches or to suggest technological tools that might solve some of the issues they have identified as problematic. Using technology to enhance teaching and learning is a goal that our CASTL Affiliates Leadership Team is actively pursuing as we continue our work under the Carnegie name for the next two years.

As stated earlier, Group V is in its first year of a two-year commitment to participate in a SoTL Seminar. In the fall of this first year, the group grappled with the concept and definitions of SoTL, mostly by reading works in progress by Carnegie Fellows in *Opening Lines*, (Hutchings, 2000). Now they are tackling methodological matters as they are introduced to qualitative research in general and action research in particular. While I am stressing that both quantitative and qualitative methods may be used appropriately in SoTL research, I am also maintaining that qualitative methods are often more appropriate for classroom studies where numbers are small and variables difficult to control. Despite their wide range of disciplines, most faculty members have had little or no experience with qualitative research. Moreover, they are slightly anxious about it. They raise legitimate questions like: "*When you look at a classroom where a lot of different things are happening, how can you isolate the effects of a single teaching strategy*?" "*Isn't looking at your own classroom really very subjective?*" "*This seems more anecdotal than 'real' research; how do you ever get to generalizable theories to guide your practice*?"

Rick chimes in at this point and introduces the term, "grounded theory" and explains how all of his recent studies are designed to increase his understanding of a concept of "mutual engagement" that emerged inductively in his first study. Discussion ensues about the inductive nature of grounded theory generation, and Allison says, "I think I may have been doing some of this without knowing the name. "

The seminar ends with consideration of action research as a form of qualitative research and the idea of identifying practical problems rather than testing existing theories as a starting point for one's inquiry. I ask each of the faculty members to take a few minutes to think about and record some aspect of their teaching they might want to improve or look at more systematically. I then conclude with an "assignment" to observe and document what they identified as a possible "problem" in order to determine if the reality matches their initial thinking. (MMC Field Notes, 1-21-10)

Later that morning, I receive this email from Allison:

Marilyn

I really enjoyed today's meeting. I'm really starting to get a better "feel" for qualitative research, and I think I can make a transition from quant to qual. It really has been a struggle for me to think of how you implement qualitative research & how you interpret

your qualitative data (this is my biggest hurdle.) The homework assignment is really exciting and I can't wait to get started.

Thanks again, for today's meeting--it really was an eye-opener.

Allison (Email communication from AJ, 1-21-10)

Vignette #2: Thursday, January 21

3:30pm I am at a "going-away" party for one of the secretaries in Academic Affairs who is retiring after 30 years at Maryville. Soon I see a faculty member from Art and Design whom I have arranged to meet at the event. He wants to talk about his latest SoTL project. After a few minutes of conversation with others, we make our way down the hall and find an empty conference room which will be perfect for a quiet conversation. Seth, who was a "graduate" of Action Research Group I, continues to study his teaching. He shows me how he is using something called the "Eight Habits of Mind" from the book *Studio Thinking* (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007) to guide teaching and learning in his studio this year. He has begun to discuss these principles with students and tell them explicitly that he will be using them to evaluate their work this year. Seth wants to observe and examine what happens when he embeds these principles into his studio classroom. We discuss Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding (Beck & Winsler, 1995) and David Ausubel's (1969) work on advance organizers. Seth will research these concepts and see what connections can be made to the teaching of design. Questions to be formed after some observation are: *Will the specific language of the habits offer a certain useful structure in what appears to be a highly unstructured course? Will the language of these principles give clarity to some of the abstract concepts? Will the language of the principles guide and inspire students to do better work than prior students? Will the tension of the unknown be lessened as students experiment*? We talk about how Seth will collect data on the students' views of these principles as well as evaluate their products, and Seth leaves, promising to write up a proposal that will state his "problem" and question, his action, and his methods of data collection. (MMC Field Notes, 1-21-10; Email communication from SJ, 2-9-10)

Vignette#3: Friday, January 22

12:15pm Action Research Group IV is seated around the table in the small Conference Room of the Art and Design Building. Kate is presenting her proposal for an interview study she is planning to conduct this semester, and asking for feedback from the group. She is a Professor of Nursing and new guidelines for the education of nurses specify that graduates should be able to demonstrate a "tolerance for ambiguity." Ironically, Kate finds this a highly challenging and "ambiguous" expectation. After thinking of a number of different approaches to address this issue, discussing them with her seminar colleagues, and doing extensive research on the topic of ambiguity, she has concluded that she needs to start with a very basic descriptive study of how nursing students experience and think about ambiguity in the field. Therefore she is going to take a random sample of student nurses doing clinical work in the traditional day-time program and interview them about what seems ambiguous to them and how they currently deal with it.

Seated around the table are professors of economics, graphic design, international business, math, health policy, nursing, education, and physical therapy. As Kate describes her study and reads some of her proposed interview questions, her colleagues, from their different disciplinary perspectives, raise lots of questions and issues for Kate to think about:

Are you also going to interview faculty members to find out their perspective on the concept of ambiguity?

I would only ask students what they have done, not what they would do in a particular situation. The literature on economic behavior reveals that people say one thing and actually do another. They answer what they think is socially desirable.

Would someone give me a definition of social desirability?

If you ask men about their sexual behavior, they will say they wouldn't do this, but if the men are sexually aroused, then they will give you a different answer.

How will you get your random group?

Why are you only interviewing the traditional, day-time students? Why not the weekend students as well?

The weekend students are more mature. [Maryville has two different nursing programs, one for daytime students and one for Weekend College students.]

But the readers of this study will not necessarily have a weekend program.

What has more effect on students, the curriculum of the program or their life experience?

Should you be doing the interviewing?

When you do your interviewing, don't wear red, yellow or black. People have visceral reactions to color.

Also, the place is important. They should feel comfortable. Where will you do the interviewing?

Will selected students know who else was selected?

Be careful about the questions you ask about their family background. The IRB

[Institutional Review Board] *might be concerned about your asking about how their parents disciplined them.*

Are you going to offer incentives to get students to be willing to be interviewed?

These questions and comments lead to a lively discussion; afterwards, a grateful Kate thanks everyone for giving her a lot to think about and promises to return with her final proposal and questions. (MMC Field Notes, 1-22-10)

Vignette #4: Sunday, January 24

3:30pm The SoTL Conference Planning Committee is meeting around the dining room table at my home to set in motion the organizational structure for Maryville's 2nd Annual SoTL Conference and to make some initial program decisions. I begin by

announcing that we have secured speakers for our two conference themes: Tony Ciccone, former Director of the CASTL Program and Professor of French at the University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee), will give the keynote address for our Disciplined– based SoTL theme; and Carmen Werder, co-editor of *Engaging Student Voices in the Study of Teaching and Learning* and Director of the Teaching-Learning Academy at Western Washington University , along with several students, will be the keynoters for our student voices theme. The idea of bringing students to the campus to talk about their involvement in SoTL projects stirs a lot of excitement and a lot of questions. For example, committee members wonder:

What does student involvement in the conference look like? Our university mentors, students from other institutions, what's there for them?

How do we help others set in motion the inclusion of student voices in their work? Could Kathleen McKinney (or her students) be invited/persuaded to submit proposals that share their experience?

Should we invite chapter authors (Engaging Student Voices) to submit?

These questions remain unanswered as the committee turns to mapping out the Friday and Saturday schedule, including a preconference workshop, the registration fees, and the dates for emails and the call for proposals. The meeting ends with a sense that much was accomplished, that it is much easier to plan a conference the second time around, and that we are on our way toward a very exciting event. (CF, Planning Meeting Minutes 1-24-10)

The SoTL Program at Maryville University: A Focus on the Present

I started our story with these vignettes in hopes of capturing in concrete and vivid images what is currently happening at Maryville University in our fifth year of pursuing a SoTL agenda. The following sections offer a more thorough explanation.

A Two-Year Seminar Format: Description

Vignettes #1 and #3 allude to the core of our SoTL program at Maryville, a two-year seminar that faculty members from all disciplines are invited to join. Participation is strictly voluntary, and each spring, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs issues a call for those who wish to participate the following year. Participation involves attendance at seminars, every other week for an hour and a half, and a commitment to produce at the end of Year II, a completed SoTL study and plans for disseminating the findings through publication or presentation on campus or at local, national, or international conferences. For their participation, the Center for Teaching and Learning offers faculty a stipend of $250.00 each year to be spent as desired for books, classroom materials, and conferences at Maryville or elsewhere. Each May, the graduating group's accomplishments are celebrated at a reception attended by all seminar participants. The President and the Vice-President for Academic Affairs express their appreciation for the time and effort the "graduates" have given toward the goal of enhancing teaching and learning on Maryville's campus, reiterate their support for the SoTL Program and the Center for Teaching and Learning, and give each graduate a beautiful piece of Irish

crystal for his/her desk. After receiving their gifts, faculty have a few minutes to summarize their research projects. It is a festive event of public recognition.

In fall, 2010, when Action Research Group VI begins, 56 out of 114 faculty members will have chosen to participate in the SoTL Seminar Program. Further, the Dean of the School of the Health Professions happily reports that more than 60% of his faculty members have joined the seminar, and that this critical mass has positively influenced his faculty as a whole. Although these numbers are encouraging, it is not clear how much farther we will be able to go in attracting new participants. We know that some faculty simply will not be interested because they are committed to research in their disciplines. There are, however, ongoing conversations regarding forming additional cohorts comprised of faculty members who teach in the University Seminar program for first year students, cohorts of long-term adjunct faculty members who have evidenced interest, and cohorts of faculty who want the exposure to SoTL but feel they cannot make a two- year commitment.

These vignettes also reveal the current "curriculum" for the two-year program, although it is characterized by considerable flexibility for each group. Generally, the first-year seminars focus, in the fall, on defining and reading examples of SoTL studies, and, in the spring, on discussions of research methods. It is during the second year that most faculty design and implement their SoTL projects, and the seminars focus mainly on issues that arise in formulating their question, deciding upon the types of data to collect, analyzing the data, and writing the report. Originally the seminar program was designed as a one-year activity; however, the first group indicated they needed two years in order to learn more about qualitative research. In the Group IV vignette, the rich exchange of questions and comments from a diverse group of faculty members with different disciplinary perspectives is representative of all groups. In the Group V vignette, the honest and serious effort to grapple with an unfamiliar and mostly uncomfortable research methodology is also typical.

A Two-Year Seminar Format: Assessment

In order to assess the impact of the seminar on participants, we have collected two sets of survey data from the graduates of Groups I, II, and III. One set of surveys asks faculty to respond to selected closed questions from the Survey of CASTL Scholars (Huber & Hutchings, 2005) and open-ended questions regarding the Maryville SoTL program. This set has been fully analyzed and our findings were presented at the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching Conferences and are available by request. (Cohn & Gulas, 2008; Cohn, Finch, & Gulas, 2009) The second set of surveys, comprised of all open-ended questions that focus more specifically on the seminar experience and how it might be improved, are not fully analyzed. However, at this point, we can share data from the first set of open-ended survey questions that reveal the faculty's widespread belief that the seminar experience has resulted in positive changes in their teaching, their students' learning, and their interactions with colleagues in different disciplines.

For example, in response to the question, "*As a result of your participation in the SoTL Seminar Program, can you identify any changes in your teaching and /or syllabus*?" every faculty member in all three groups cited positive changes in their

teaching behavior. Most specifically described changes related to their SoTL projects; however, some also spoke in general terms of becoming more reflective about their practice and more open to student participation in the classroom. Similarly, in response to the question*, "As a result of your participation in the* SoTL *Seminar Program*, *can you identify any changes in student behavior and outcomes*?" every faculty member in all three groups cited positive changes, with some speaking of changes in attitude, while others spoke of changes in participation and performance. Finally, in response to the question, *"As a result of your participation in the SoTL Seminar Program, can you identify any changes in your interaction with colleagues in your department, across campus, or beyond campus*?" all but one person enthusiastically described how their lives had been enriched as a result of the interdisciplinary nature of the groups. Some talked of developing new social as well as professional relationships through team-teaching, guest lecturing in each other's classrooms, seminar discussions, and collaboration on research topics. Table 1 summarizes these survey responses.

Survey Results from 28 SoTL Seminar Participants in Action Research Groups I, II, and III		
As a result of your participation in the SoTL Seminar Program :	YES	Examples
1. Can you identify any changers in your teaching and/or syllabus?	28/28	Positive changes related to results from SoTL project; more "reflective about my practice"; more "open to student participation in the classroom."
2. Can you identify any changes in student behavior and outcomes?	28/28	Positive changes in student attitudes, participation, and performances.
3. Can you identify any changes in your interactions with colleagues in your department, across campus or beyond campus?	27/28	New social relationships; new professional relationships through team teaching, guest lecturing in each other's classrooms, seminar discussions on teaching, and collaboration on research.

Table 1. Survey Results from 28 SoTL Seminar Participants in Action Research Groups I, II, and III

Another bit of evidence of faculty satisfaction with the seminar program is represented in Vignette #2. Seth, with whom I met during the party for a retiree, was a member of Group I and is one of approximately 12 "graduates" from Groups I, II, and III who have chosen to form and participate in an Advanced Action Research Group (AARG). Thus far, the group has decided to pursue a variety of activities, including discussing educational literature such as Shulman's *Teaching as Community Property: Essays on Higher Education* (2004) and Meyer & Land's (2003) article on "Threshold Concepts and Troublesome Knowledge," as well as sharing SoTL proposals and drafts

for group feedback. As Seth begins to interpret data and write, he will undoubtedly bring his work for critique to the advanced seminar. The fact that graduates are continuing to examine their teaching through additional SoTL projects or in light of educational literature suggests that the seminar is having a lasting impact on some participants. However, one of the challenges addressed in the final section is the need to develop a more systematic approach to keep faculty members motivated to continue SoTL work, after completing their two-year commitment.

Beyond the important indicators of faculty perceptions of change and satisfaction, however, one also needs to look for more tangible outcomes. Have the seminars led to quality research reports that would be accepted for presentation at well-established conferences and for publication in widely disseminated journals in the disciplines? The answer is yes. Out of 28 participants in Groups I, II, and III, 25 have presented their studies at local, national, and international conferences for their disciplines or for higher education. Two of the three who have yet to present are still working on their research, and three faculty members in current Group IV have already publicly presented their studies. While some have presented only once, others have presented multiple times, and one (Rick) has "gone public" 16 times. Last year at our first SoTL conference, 23 Maryville faculty members and administrators presented their SoTL work. To date, only six Maryville faculty members have submitted SoTL articles for publication in high-quality, refereed journals. One has ten publications to his credit (Rick, again), but the other five submissions have resulted in two publications, two under consideration, and one rejection.

One final question we are currently grappling with is how to capture and assess the impact of SoTL work on students. Last year, we conducted a pilot survey study of students in the classrooms of Group III faculty. As we analyzed the data, we encountered some interesting findings (e.g. a significant number of students stated that their SoTL professors seemed to exhibit more caring than those who were not engaged in SoTL work.) However, what we learned most was that our sample was too small, our survey too late, and our questions needed to be rewritten in words that students rather than faculty use. (Cohn & Gulas, 2009) In light of this, we are implementing new approaches this year.

The Maryville SoTL Conference

Vignette #4 reveals that a new core of SoTL activity is arising on Maryville's campus in the form of an annual SoTL conference. The excerpt from the planning meeting for the second conference conveys a concerted effort to create an experience that generates new ideas for reaching the overarching goal and theme of "Integrating the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning into Academic Culture: Crafting a Commitment to Classroom Research." This year the conference will address the study of effective tools for teaching key concepts in the disciplines, and the role that students can play in helping to identify the issues to be examined in SoTL studies. Since we promote the conference within the Maryville community as well as throughout the Midwest, we are hopeful that our faculty and students will clearly benefit in the long run from the wealth of ideas that will encircle us for a concentrated two days. In our view, this yearly conference could function as an important vehicle to sustain and grow our SoTL work on campus.

Understanding the Growth of SoTL at Maryville:
A Focus on the Past

Institutional Fit: A Caring Faculty with Administrative Vision and Support

The goals and core values of Maryville University and the ideas embedded in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning seem to be a perfect fit. Maryville is a university where student learning is the top priority. As stated in its mission statement, Maryville's first goal is to "Provide a learning environment where teaching and mentoring students is at the center of everything we do." (Maryville Website) At the same time, Maryville encourages and expects its faculty to engage in scholarly pursuits. For many faculty members, the opportunity to pursue research on the university's priority—teaching and learning—just makes good sense. However, given the heavy loads that all faculty carry in teaching, advising, committee work, and service responsibilities, the willingness of so many to "volunteer" to make a two year commitment to study their teaching has been nothing short of amazing. It appears that a genuine sense of caring about their students' learning combined with a passion for new teaching ideas, and a desire to build relationships with faculty across disciplines account for the strong faculty response to SoTL work.

Of course, the faculty response can only be fully understood in the context of administrative vision and support. When the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs initially developed the agenda for the Center in 2005, she did not start with a laundry list of workshops. Instead she thought more broadly and intellectually about how faculty might grow and envisioned the creation of a culture where faculty from different disciplines, working together, could develop the dispositions to inquire into their teaching and learn from one another. Although the Center would have other activities, she was convinced that the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning should occupy a central place. She then had to "sell" this idea to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and to the Deans of four schools. The VPAA bought the idea and supported the hiring of someone with SoTL experience (me!) to begin the program. As a fellow of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (1999-2000), with years of experience leading Action Research groups, I developed the seminar along lines that were already familiar to me.

Administrative support at Maryville continues to grow. The President talks of requiring new faculty to participate in the SoTL seminars; Deans recommend the program to faculty and support travel to present SoTL findings; and selected faculty members receive Summer Scholarships to work on SoTL projects.

Becoming a CASTL Affiliate

If Maryville's SoTL program took root in a favorable institutional climate, it blossomed as a result of its joining the CASTL Affiliates group. Because of our connection with CASTL, Maryville became a member of the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and that CASTL-ISSOTL connection has been a turning point in our development. At ISSOTL conferences we have learned from leaders of other Affiliates, attended many valuable sessions led by CASTL leaders, and even made connections with counterparts in London. Further, the decision to attend ISSOTL

conferences has motivated us to submit proposals that result in continuous collection of program evaluation data. As an Affiliate, we were also invited to participate in the final CASTL convening before the 2009 ISSOTL meeting where we heard a panel of students discussing their involvement with SoTL. As I listened to students report on the transformational nature of their participation with faculty on SoTL projects, I was stunned by the realization that the student perspective was missing at Maryville. The very next day I searched out the book Engaging Student Voices in the Study of Teaching and Learning (Werder & Otis, 2010), and, as noted in Vignette #4, Carmen and a panel of students will be speaking at the fall conference. For some of us at Maryville, engaging the voices of students has become a new SoTL priority. Another session at the CASTL meeting on faculty development produced materials that have been instructive for the Advisory Council of our Center, and of course the Affiliates meeting under Jackie Dewar's strong leadership and initiative led us to agree to submit our story for this online publication. The process of reconstructing and telling our story has immersed us in serious reflection on program direction as did our presentation and workshop at the 2009 ISSOTL conference. All of these experiences keep us thinking and writing about our work which in turn produces both internal and external critique.

The Seminar as the Vehicle for Creating a SoTL Program

In looking to the past for an explanation for the growth of our current SoTL program at Maryville, the value of the seminar format cannot be overlooked. If we had simply talked about the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and offered incentives for doing classroom research through the Center for Teaching and Learning, there may have been little response. Only a few of the faculty I have worked with had experience with qualitative research or initially thought that observation of self and students would in any way constitute "real research." As a result of our committing seminar time to read many SoTL studies and to examine the assumptions and methods of qualitative and action research, I believe that majority of the participants now view the study of their teaching and student learning (with qualitative and quantitative approaches) not only as legitimate but important. Further, the relationship building that the seminar format has generated cannot be overemphasized. The seminar provides faculty members from different disciplines a venue for spending time together to learn about and from each other in ways that have built genuine understanding, respect, and collegiality.

Challenges Confronting the SoTL Program: A Focus on the Future

Sustaining and Growing a Commitment to SoTL Work

As mentioned earlier, faculty time is a commodity in short supply at Maryville University. When faculty members volunteer for the SoTL seminar, they are choosing to go on overload. One of the most dreaded and daunting challenges I face every semester is to try to schedule a new day and time when all ten faculty members are free for an hour and a half. One semester, during Group III, we were forced to meet in two smaller groups for almost every seminar. Beyond the actual time for the seminars, participants are expected to read articles, examine and critique each other's work, design and implement a SoTL project, gather and analyze data, write up their findings

and "go public" with the results. Surprisingly, many manage to do it all, with only a few requesting additional time to complete the work after the two-year deadline.

However, once they have "graduated," the hope is that faculty will continue to examine their teaching, sometimes formally and sometimes informally, but always with an eye toward the continuous improvement of student learning. The reality is that without the structure of the seminars and deadlines of some of the "assignments," many do not embark on a new SoTL project or continue to work in the area of original focus. Of course, some do and many of those choose to come to the Advanced Action Research Group whenever their schedules permit. The challenge is to explore ways to reward the scholarly effort that participating faculty are willing to make with some type of release time. However, everything we know about the current economic conditions suggests that this will not happen in the foreseeable future. This then is our most pressing challenge: to determine how to encourage faculty to do this work, without burning them out.

Addressing Issues and Misperceptions Related to Administrative Support

One of the unexpected consequences of the strong administrative support for SoTL work is that some faculty members perceive that SoTL studies are unfairly favored over research in the disciplines. Further, some of those who are working toward tenure and promotion have come to believe their advancement depends on whether they "volunteer" for one of the seminar groups. Some also mistakenly believe that if they do a SoTL study through the seminar experience, they will definitely have the scholarly evidence for tenure. While SoTL studies can and indeed do count as scholarly work for tenure, their acceptance will inevitably depend on the quality of the studies, which of course vary. Their acceptance may also be dependent upon the knowledge reviewers possess as to the validity of SoTL work and the criteria by which to evaluate it.

While it is true that Maryville administrators expect all faculty members to work continuously on improving their teaching, and recognize the value of SoTL toward that end, there is no belief on the part of administrators that SoTL work is the only way to do accomplish it. In fact, there is widespread recognition that research in one's discipline almost invariably leads to enhanced teaching and learning. Still, perception is reality and those of us responsible for the SoTL program need to assert by our words and deeds the high value we place on research in the disciplines. In addition, we have to clarify the role that participation in the SoTL seminar plays in the tenure review process at Maryville. In an academic world where SoTL studies are generally viewed as "soft" and "lacking in rigor," this current view of SoTL work as privileged or required is truly an ironic development.

Encouraging Programmatic as well as Individual SoTL Research in All Disciplines

To date, most of the SoTL studies have been conducted by individual professors, examining their own classrooms. We have only one example of a group of three faculty members in the Educational Leadership doctoral program collaborating on a study of their program, each focusing on a different aspect of the curriculum. In my view, if the original goal of creating a campus culture of inquiry into teaching and learning for the

benefit of students is to eventually materialize, we need to encourage more SoTL studies that reach across the boundaries of individual courses. If we are finding that changes in teaching behavior in single classrooms are leading to positive changes in student behavior, then surely we want to maximize the outcomes in programs that touch the lives of many more students.

The foundation for meeting this challenge is already partially in place. For example, six members of the Art and Design faculty are either participating in the seminar program now or have completed their two year commitment. All four faculty members of the Rehabilitation Counseling Program have either completed their two years or are in process. There are similar concentrations in Business, Education, and other areas in the Health Professions. Our challenge is to encourage and find incentives for colleagues to design and implement SoTL studies of their programs so that changes can lead to positive impact on larger numbers of faculty, students, and offerings.

Several members of Group IV have discussed a variant on this theme which also seems rich in possibilities. At times, some have become enthusiastic about concepts like "threshold concepts" that cut across all disciplines or the similar way in which language/vocabulary/jargon play a central role in the teaching and learning of certain disciplines. Their discussions have led them to consider planning SoTL studies that look at the same concept in their different content areas. Currently three professors have actually taken first step (producing a literature review) toward the possibility of identifying threshold concepts in each of their fields and discovering approaches to help students master them. If they should, in fact, find some common themes or approaches that cut across their disciplines, the result could, eventually, have an impact on many students.

One minor concern at Maryville is that, except for faculty in Art and Design, the faculty in Arts and Sciences have been underrepresented in the SoTL seminar program. We are not sure why but we clearly need to find out. We suspect that many Arts and Sciences faculty are committed to their disciplinary studies, but we also believe that significant numbers may be interested in studying the most productive ways of teaching their disciplines. One way we are trying to address this concern is to have discipline-based SoTL as a major conference theme introduced by Tony Ciccone, a Professor of French at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, who has published several books and won teaching awards as well. Hopefully, he will be intriguing enough to encourage some of our Arts and Sciences faculty to explore the possibility of SoTL involvement. However, it will take more than a single speaker or conference to integrate SoTL work into the Arts and Sciences; our challenge is to find what it takes.

Assessing the Impact of the SoTL Seminar Program on Faculty and Students

While we are committed to growing and sustaining a commitment to SoTL, we need to be equally committed to assessing the actual impact of this work on faculty teaching and student learning. As noted above, we have considerable survey data in which faculty members attest to and describe changes they have made, but there has been no outside confirmation. Further, we have just begun the process of tapping into student perceptions, and we have yet to look systematically at changes in student performance as a result of our SoTL work. We cannot just assume that faculty willingness to examine

their teaching will lead to positive outcomes for them and for their students; we must, at least, try to find ways to document it. Our challenge, therefore, is to read more, consult with experts in evaluation, and connect with former CASTL leaders, who also grappled with the complexities of determining impact. Hopefully, this active pursuit of assessment strategies will enable us to determine if, in fact, there are viable means by which we can assess the achievement of our teaching and learning goals.

Developing New Faculty/Administrative Leadership in SoTL Work

Creating a culture of inquiry into the teaching-learning process throughout an entire university is a long-term, complex, and highly ambitious goal. It will take years of focus, perseverance, resources, and effort by passionate and skilled people. As a concept, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning is an abstraction that needs to be operationalized in a user-friendly way. Hopefully, the first two segments of this story have demonstrated that we are off to a great start and that we understand the factors that helped us to succeed. Now as we try to envision what will sustain and grow our SoTL agenda, we recognize the need for new faculty and administrators committed to carry on the work that has just begun. Our final challenge is to attract and mentor a group of leaders who want to work collaboratively to take the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning where it is at Maryville and move it in directions we have yet to imagine.

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