Report of the Engagement Team on the
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

Postsecondary educators typically aim to ensure that curriculum is "research based and theory driven". The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is a discipline that aims to apply this maxim to the teaching/learning experience. The discipline of SoTL has its origins in the university arena where the term "scholarship" is typically reserved for subject-specific research endeavors. More recently, the term has been applied to the teaching / learning experience, a sometimes undervalued and under-appreciated pursuit in university settings. Sheridan's Journey to becoming an undergraduate teaching university dedicated to the student experience will be well served by adopting the principles and practices of the SoTL discipline.

Literature concerning SoTL is preoccupied with a need to define the terms associated with the discipline. Authors propose distinctions between "good teaching", "excellent teaching", "scholarly teaching" and "the scholarship of teaching and learning". These distinctions are reviewed and discussed in detail in the appendix section of this paper (see Celebrating Excellence in Teaching executive summary). For the purposes of this paper, the SoTL Engagement Team proposes the following definition to guide Sheridan's Journey:

> *Active evidence-based inquiry into teaching and learning. SoTL includes the production and dissemination of formal and informal research to make SoTL processes and products public, and allow for the work to have influence beyond the local context. In this way, SoTL generates a new space for teaching, learning, pedagogical discovery, collaboration and exchange of information.*

This report is comprised of this summary, followed by executive summaries from each of the SoTL Team's four research sub-groups. The full reports from each sub-research group can be accessed separately. Several themes emerged from the work of the sub-groups. These emergent themes suggest that there are areas of significance where particular note should be taken. The recommendations included in this executive summary capture these recurring themes.

Mission Statement

To help prepare outstanding educators, scholars and researchers to advance undergraduate education through professional development and applied research focused on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Terms of Reference

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Engagement Team will:

1. Define "excellent teaching", "Scholarly Teaching" and the "Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)".
2. Establish criteria for measuring excellence in teaching, scholarly teaching and scholarship of teaching and learning.
3. Integrate the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning into the Teaching and Learning Academies and Fundamentals of Teaching and Learning faculty development programs.
4. Examine the principles required to create Communities of Practice to encourage and support ongoing conversations for teaching and learning.
5. Recommend a professional development program to support teaching excellence and student learning for post probationary faculty.
6. Recommend resources to support faculty with their professional growth and teaching practice.
7. Recommend methods that recognize and reward teaching excellence and promote teaching scholarship and educational research, which will enrich the student experience.
8. Create the Terms of Reference for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning committee.
9. Publish a research paper detailing the recommendations of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning engagement team.

Scope of Inquiry

The SoTL Engagement Team was comprised of staff, faculty and administrators who responded to the President's invitation to participate in, and contribute to the Sheridan Journey, "one that will move Sheridan from its stature as a highly respected college to a top-ranked and unique undergraduate teaching university dedicated to the student experience."
https://journey.sheridancollege.ca/Pages/default.aspx.

Participants included full and part time faculty, new and veteran faculty, with representation from each of the Sheridan campuses. In December 2011, team members were invited to attend the McMaster University SoTL Conference entitled "Research on Teaching & Learning: Integrating Practices". Beginning in January 2012, team members were allocated time for the work of the Engagement Team. To launch the work of the Engagement Team, and to provide a touchstone for discussion, team members were provided with current SoTL reading materials (see references: Hutchings, Taylor Huber, & Ciccone, 2011; Boyer, 1990; Hoekstra, Dushenko, & Frandsen, 2010; Vajoczki, Savage, Martin, Borin, & Kustra, 2011; McCarthy, 2008). At the initial meeting of the Engagement Team a group process identified the central research question and four areas that would require research to better understand the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. The central research question was: "How can the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning shape a sustainable teaching and learning culture that will support Sheridan in becoming a top ranked under-graduate teaching university?" The four themes included sustainable organizational culture, celebrating excellence in teaching, professional development and growth, and research in teaching and learning.

Subsequently, members of the SoTL team chose to research one of the four theme areas. The full SoTL Engagement Team initially met weekly, and then approximately monthly. The SoTL sub-groups met and/or communicated more frequently as they engaged in the inquiry process. A SLATE Virtual Community was created and used as a repository for team documents and resources. Additionally this environment provided tools for discussion and collaboration. Sub-groups periodically presented 'works in progress' to the full Engagement Team, and ensuing discussions served to guide the continuing work of each of the sub-groups. All Sheridan Journey Teams presented at a Sheridan (college wide) Engagement Team event in June 2012 where further collegial input and refinement to the work of the SoTL Engagement Team was invited. Each sub-group produced an executive summary as well a full report. The executive summaries are included in the appendix at the end of this paper.

Discussion

Each of the sub-groups provided a comprehensive report. For the purposes of this paper, however, executive summaries were produced and are included at the conclusion of this review (see Appendix). A synopsis of each executive summary is outlined below.

Sustainable Organizational Culture
A serendipitous finding of the Sustainable Organizational Culture Sub-group is that many of the core elements of SoTL already exist in the organizational culture at Sheridan. Recognizing that there is a substantial history of SoTL at the institution, future direction might be best characterized as evolving and building to add breadth and depth to the current culture, rather than requiring "change". By contextualizing next steps as "*advancing* SoTL", recognizes and acknowledges important characteristics of the Sheridan culture while avoiding, or minimizing, some of the potential backlash and challenges associated with resistance to organizational cultural change. Findings of the sub-group suggest that the pathway to a sustainable SoTL organizational culture is through the recognition and support of Behaviours, Relationships, Attitudes, Values and Environments (B.R.A.V.E.). The work of this sub-group is premised on the notion that there are long-standing and current organizational characteristics and activities at Sheridan that constitute SoTL. By identifying the depth and breadth of the institution's current SoTL behaviours, relationships, attitudes, values, and environments, and by promoting and supporting these core elements, a sustainable organizational culture of SoTL will prevail. The fact that elements of SoTL have long existed in the Sheridan community bodes well for the future.

Celebrating Excellence in Teaching
This paper is an examination of how students learn and how teachers teach. It begins by defining Scholarly Teaching, Excellent Teaching, and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and by investigating

the inter-relationships between these core elements. Building on this knowledge, the paper examines ways to assess and acknowledge excellent teaching. The paper examines ways to encourage faculty to develop their practice as educators and ways to provide them with the necessary tools and opportunities for self-improvement. Programs and strategies including opportunities for professional development, the acknowledgement of faculty accomplishments, and the recognition of faculty dedication to the craft of educating will help to encourage on-going engagement in teaching excellence.

This paper explores ways to recognize, celebrate, reward and promote excellence in teaching. Ultimately it is about the value that SoTL brings to Sheridan as an institution devoted to teaching and learning. The paper explores the balance and the tension that exists between the need to have the very best content experts in our classrooms, and the need for excellence in teaching and scholarship, to ensure the very best learning experience for students. The paper supports the paradigm that scholarly teaching takes "a scholarly approach to teaching just as we would take a scholarly approach to other areas of knowledge and practice [… and view] the knowledge base on *teaching and learning as a second discipline in which to develop expertise*" (McKinney, n.d., p. 1, emphasis added). The profession of teaching cannot and should not be relegated to a realm of secondary research. There needs to be an alignment of the values for both the content and the practice. As Sheridan begins to undertake the journey to transition from a college to an undergraduate teaching university, there will be a continued and increasing focus on teaching excellence and the research that supports it. By understanding how post-secondary institutions can better acknowledge various levels and types of good teaching practices, we hope to help shape practices on matters of faculty education and development.

Faculty Professional Development & Growth

Sheridan has earned a deserving reputation as an innovative, progressive and leading edge post-secondary institution. At the core of these accomplishments are the professional and faculty development areas. The work of the Professional Development and Growth subcommittee highlights areas for future growth and development related to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. More importantly, the work of the subcommittee affirms and validates the history and foundation upon which Sheridan's reputation as a leading edge institution has been built. This paper explores four central areas: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at Universities and at Sheridan, the history of professional development at Sheridan, communities of practice/technology and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at other institutions. Recommendations and next steps are also included.

Research in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Intrinsic to forming a research culture where SoTL is central, is a clear and purposeful articulation of institutional mandate, mission and values considerate of research. These underpinnings will direct and define the philosophical approach to all SoTL activities at Sheridan College and in the future, Sheridan University. This inquiry reviews three key areas. First, the review clarifies the key components that are integral to SoTL research, second, it identifies best practices that support and promote SoTL's implementation, and finally, it examines Sheridan's current research infrastructure within a SoTL and research context. The scope of the inquiry involves both primary and secondary research and it includes a comprehensive literature review. The review examines institutional websites and personal communication with selected institutional representatives (both internal and external to Sheridan). The paper also provides a macro level examination of SoTL resources in relation to best practices, and a micro level analysis of methodological challenges, research outcomes, research types and the dissemination of SoTL work. The inherent challenges associated with SoTL research are considered, and finally, recommendations are provided.

Strategic Imperatives

Consideration and care should be taken to compare and contrast this report with the other engagement team recommendations. Synergies amongst recommendations should be identified and considered as priorities to support the institutional vision in meeting the requirements and benchmarks for becoming a University. Accordingly, there have been several reports published by the Ministry outlining their visions for post-secondary education in the province of Ontario. Interestingly the Drummond report and most recently the *Strengthening Ontario's Centers of Creativity, Innovation and Knowledge* document both have overlapping themes with respect to quality and teaching excellence. As Sheridan remains bound to the present legislation and requirements for Colleges in Ontario, PQAPA and PEQAB guidelines should be scanned also to help in prioritizing next steps to support the continued implementation of SoTL. Coupled with the 2012-2020 Strategic Plan approved by the Sheridan Board of Governors in June 2012, the strategic goals for the institution also point to the need to focus on academic excellence and to provide students with a premier learning environment.

Synopsis of Recommendations

Recommendations of the SoTL Engagement Team are offered at various levels of specificity. A synopsis follows below and all of the recommendations are offered in greater detail in the research teams' executive summaries. The full-published reports of the research teams also provide a broader range of breadth and depth to be taken into consideration. It must be understood that these recommendations outline "what" should be done without being overly prescriptive. It is important to recognize there remains flexibility within each recommendation for further research. These recommendations exist on a continuum and it is anticipated that additional investigations will be necessary to continue to build and create a recognized scholarship of teaching and learning culture at Sheridan. While all of the recommendations are recognized as important contributions in creating this culture, time should be taken to create a business plan, which operationalizes the timelines and commitments related to the overall institutional strategic initiatives in becoming a university. It is anticipated that a timeline would also help to prioritize key components of the scholarship of teaching and learning that would need to be implemented in order to support and align with the requirements identified in other engagement teams and support the vision for post-secondary education in the province of Ontario.

For the purpose of the SoTL White Paper a macro representation of the recommendations was provided. The recommendations listed below are a consolidation of the macro and micro level recommendations derived from the work of each of the four sub-groups. These recommendations will form the basis for the development of a work plan to further advance SoTL as Sheridan journeys toward the goal of becoming an undergraduate teaching university.

1. Add breadth and depth to Sheridan's culture by establishing future directions for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

   1.1. Build a sustainable SoTL culture through ongoing support and advancement of SoTL behaviours (reflecting, reading, communicating, presenting, researching, publishing, professional development, recognition and reward).

1.2. Support a sustainable SoTL culture by promoting and supporting collegial relationships where behaviours, attitudes, values and environments are constructed and nurtured in the interest of the SoTL.

1.3. Reinforce SoTL values and attitudes by recognizing and honouring instances and exemplars where the values and attitudes of the SoTL are exemplified.

1.4. Create and develop environments that contribute to the advancement and sustainability of SoTL.

2. Create processes and practices to formally recognize, acknowledge and promote effective teaching.

2.1. Establish and utilise internal and external methods to identify, acknowledge and reward teaching excellence, and practices that foster excellence in the SoTL.

2.2. Promote personal and professional development by establishing venues for educators to dialogue about the SoTL.

2.3. Foster the enthusiasm that many faculty members bring to the SoTL by providing resources to conduct research, engage in professional development activities and to share SoTL expertise (e.g. provide release time).

2.4. Designate time and space for inter-professional SoTL collaboration to enrich practices, to network, and to become involved in cross-college projects.

2.5. Establish a venue similar to a SLATE section to provide a forum for faculty to ask questions, discuss pedagogy, and reflect on teaching experiences with fellow colleagues.

3. Expand and promote teaching and learning opportunities for educators.

3.1. Establish a public access teaching and learning centre on each of the Sheridan campuses.

3.2. Continue to promote and encourage scholarly discussion and justification in all areas of teaching and learning, including curriculum, program, and policy development.

3.3. Promote awareness, sharing, and public discussion of research in teaching and learning through local conferences, speaker series, workshops and seminars.

4. Create opportunities for educators to engage in scholarly discussions and share best practices related to teaching and learning.

4.1. Create social/communal spaces, both digital and physical, where there are opportunities to develop and foster inter-disciplinary relationships and SoTL best practices.

4.2. Provide venues for educators to engage in professional dialogue about teaching.

4.3. Promote awareness and discussion of teaching and learning through conferences, speaker series, workshops and seminars.

4.4. Support and promote a culture, which encourages scholarly discussion and justification in all areas of teaching and learning.

5. Create a program at Sheridan that formally supports teaching and learning research.

5.1. Support faculty to explore beyond the bounds of specific disciplines and support them to develop the methodological expertise to engage in teaching and learning research.

5.2. Encourage and support faculty mentoring to provide methodological research guidance.

5.3. Involve students in SoTL research initiatives in order to capture the contextual nature of teaching and learning.

5.4. Ensure there is meaningful alignment between SoTL research findings and institutional level initiatives including strategic planning.

Conclusion

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Engagement Team research provided a detailed summary of the importance of continuing to build and create an institutional culture engaged in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to encourage and support academic excellence and student success. The insight provided within the culture section of this publication should be used to frame decisions being made to support scholarship of teaching and learning to ensure that optimism, openness, energy and enthusiasm are conveyed. To be truly effective, the characteristics of a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning environment must match the desired organizational culture.

As Sheridan begins to undertake the journey to transition from a college to an undergraduate teaching university, there will need to be a continued and increasing focus on teaching excellence and the research that supports it. By understanding how post-secondary institutions can better acknowledge various levels and types of good teaching practices, practices will be shaped to support faculty education and development. For Sheridan faculty to become part of and contribute to the SoTL movement, the integration of scholarship, evidence-based inquiry, and research will have to be incorporated into our institutional culture. Additionally, a clear and purposeful articulation of institutional mandate, mission and values considerate of research needs to be defined. These underpinnings will direct and define the philosophical approach to all SoTL activities at Sheridan College and in the future, Sheridan University.

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Sustainable Organizational Culture Executive Summary

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The literature on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), directly or indirectly, alludes to organizational culture and organizational culture change. This sub-team was originally entitled "Sustainability and Cultural Change", but as outlined below, the term "change" was abandoned. There has been some consensus on the Sheridan SoTL Engagement Team that many elements of SoTL already exist in the organizational culture, and future directions might be best characterized as evolving / building, adding breadth / depth - rather than requiring "change". There is an extensive body of literature on organizational cultural change, much of it examining resistance to change, with few simple prescriptions for successful or speedy progress. Contextualizing next steps as "*advancing* SoTL", while both a correct characterization of the Sheridan context, also avoids (or minimizes) some of the potential backlash / challenges associated with resistance to organizational cultural change. The fact that elements of SoTL have long existed and persisted in the Sheridan community bodes well for the future. The constitutional adoption and promotion of SoTL can build on and honour this resilience, and result in a sustainable organizational culture.

Discussion

Culture is reflected in values, attitudes and behaviours (Burke, 2010) and is also reflected in relationships and environments (Bradt, 2010). The "Sustainability and Cultural Change" subgroup of the SoTL Engagement Team propose the acronym B.R.A.V.E. (Behaviour, Relationships, Attitudes, Values, Environments) to represent elements that both reflect organizational culture, and can be used as pathways to organizational culture growth and development. Each B.R.A.V.E. element can be further elaborated into identifiable and potentially measurable terms.

What might SoTL be like? In the academic institution, what will faculty be doing (Behaviours)? How will they be interacting (Relationships)? What will the organizational "vibe" be like (Attitudes)? What do people believe in (Values)? In what context is all of this happening (Environment)?

(BRAVE) B = Behaviours that advance SoTL

Burke (2010) indicated that should organizational cultural change be required, it is difficult to change attitudes and values. He suggests identifying desirable behaviours and supporting people in engaging in these behaviours. "Cognitive change follows behavior change" (Burke, 2010, p.152). Behaviours that would reflect an academic institution engaged in the scholarship of teaching and learning would include faculty engaging in reflective practice, in scholarly reading related to SoTL, faculty communicating about SoTL, participating in a Community of Practice, presenting, researching, publishing, engaging in professional development which includes SoTL conferences, receiving awards.

(BRAVE) R = Relationships that Advance SoTL

Relationships play a crucial role in advancing SoTL and nurturing SoTL behaviours and are the foundations upon which behaviours, attitudes, values and environments are constructed and nurtured. Boyer (1990) states that although much research based on SoTL focuses "largely on faculty members as *individuals,*" faculty should not expect to improve while working in isolation and that "scholarship at its best should bring faculty together" (p. 80). The characteristics that optimize SoTL relationships are mutual understanding, sympathy and trust, valuing inquiry, shared authority and peer support.

(BRAVE) A = Attitudes that Advance SoTL

Boundaries between the conceptualization of behaviours, attitudes, and values can be blurry/confusing. This paper is choosing to describe "Attitudes" as the affective / emotional elements of an organizational culture - ideas "charged with emotion" (Triandis, 1971). An academic institution that is advancing SoTL will convey feelings optimism and a positive outlook, openness, and energy and enthusiasm.

(BRAVE) V = Values that Advance SoTL

"Values are deeply held views of what we find worthwhile." (Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith, & Kleiner, 1994, p.209) Organizations tend to engage in values clarification when attempting to articulate a vision. Inasmuch as values are linked to beliefs, the expression "practice what you preach" has some resonance. Values conflicts and/or dissonance between organizational and personal values can be challenging. Value congruency is optimal when engaging in organizational culture change. However, this is a good moment to recall Burke's warning that values are the hardest to change (2010).
A SoTL organization would value commitment, investing, contributing, accountability, transparency, integrity, intellectual curiosity, inquiry and research, reflection, generosity of ideas and time, people, inclusiveness, community, cooperation and collaboration, creativity, innovation, effectiveness, excellence, quality, learning, knowledge, collective intelligence, security, safety.

(BRAVE) E = Environments that Advance SoTL

Environments play a key role in building and sustaining this community and in enhancing this practice of inspiration and inquiry. Environments are not limited strictly to the physical or natural milieu, but are *the place you find yourself within.*   This broader interpretation allows consideration of not just the physical spaces, but grows the investigation to include the temporal / social / communal environment, the technological environment, and managerial and political environments.
Learning organizations and their individual communities of practice are integrated dynamic systems that both create their own environment and culture, and in turn, are created by it. The influence that the work environment exerts upon the human processes of innovation, creativity, collaboration and

production cannot be overstated. The political, managerial, technological, social and physical environments support both the individual and group effort and as well they reflect the share values of the culture. To be truly effective, the characteristics of these environments must match the desired organizational culture.

Recommendations

This paper was premised on the idea that there have been long-standing and current organizational characteristics and activities that constitute SoTL. Further advancement of all aspects of the B.R.A.V.E. model should be premised on identifying the depth and breadth of the academic institution's current SoTL behaviours, relationships, attitudes, values, and environments.

Focus on advancing SoTL behaviours.

Given that it is difficult to change values and attitudes, begin by focusing on behaviours ~ faculty / academic team members reflecting, reading, communicating, presenting, researching, publishing, engaging in PD and being recognized and rewarded.

- establish and promote formal/informal mechanisms for capturing reflective practice with respect to SoTL
- enable faculty / academic team reading about SoTL by providing easy access to SoTL literature
- optimize the SoTL reading experience by promoting collegial sharing via digital tools
- support and promote a continuum of contexts enabling SoTL collegial communications
- establish and promote a Community of Practice focusing on SoTL and support and honour SoTL contributions of existing COPs
- encourage and support faculty / academic team presentations which can exist on a continuum from informal to formal, and may be internal or external
- encourage and support SoTL research
- promote and support publishing on a formal to informal continuum, including any form of tangible output/sharing
- promote and support faculty / academic team PD including/especially attending SoTL conferences
- promote and support SoTL awards and recognition for faculty/academic team
- research the extent to which all of the above already occur in the Sheridan environment, and support and honour all instances which advance SoTL

Advance and establish the conditions that promote and support positive collegial relationships.

Relationships are the foundations upon which behaviours, attitudes, values and environments are constructed and nurtured, and bringing faculty / academic team members together is central to scholarship.

- identify the positive characteristics of existing significant networks - both informal and formal groups, as well as internal and external
- create the conditions necessary for peer support relationships
- advance collegial and managerial relationships characterized by mutual trust, enabling risk-taking linked to public reflective practice
- promote and value inquiry and reflective practice
- establish and promote shared authority decision-making models

Promote and support <u>values</u> and <u>attitudes</u> that advance SoTL.

As noted earlier, values and attitudes cannot be prescribed, and are difficult to change. Instances and exemplars of values and attitudes that advance SoTL should be honoured and awarded.

- note, honour, promote, and award positive outlooks and optimism (but not to the exclusion of critical thinking)
- promote openness and exploration which are fundamental to reflecting on both failures and successes
- identify and advance all workplace conditions that promote energy and enthusiasm
- promote the Values outlined earlier in this report which include investing, intellectual curiosity, generosity of ideas and time, people, inclusiveness, community, collaboration, innovation, collective intelligence
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Create and support <u>environments</u> that advance SoTL

Environments play a key role in building and sustaining a SoTL community and enhancing this practice of inspiration and inquiry. The advancement of SoTL must attend to the temporal, social, communal, technological, managerial and political aspects of environments .

- create social/communal spaces, both digital and physical, that increase the incidence of chance encounters and structured collaboration which foster strong peer relationships both departmental and "cross silo".
- identify and allocate reasonable time allocations for SoTL activities
- promote shared authority managerial and decision making models

Celebrating Excellence in Teaching Executive Summary

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Our detailed paper, entitled "**The Second Discipline: Recognizing the Practice of Scholarly Teaching, Excellent Teaching, and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Post-Secondary Education**" - examines ways to recognize, celebrate and reward excellence in teaching and is written in partial fulfillment of the mandate for Sheridan's Engagement Team on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

As Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning begins to undertake the journey to transition from a college to an undergraduate teaching university, there will be a continued and increasing focus on teaching excellence and the research that supports it. By understanding how post-secondary institutions can better acknowledge various levels and types of good teaching practices, we hope to help shape practices on matters of faculty education and development.

Scope of Inquiry | Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for this group were to:
- Define "excellent teaching", "Scholarly Teaching" and the "Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)".
- Establish criteria for measuring excellence in teaching, Scholarly Teaching and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.
- Recommend methods that recognize and reward teaching excellence, which will enrich the student experience.

To this end, relevant literature was consulted with a particular focus on defining, assessing and rewarding teaching excellence and scholarship.

A reflection on our title

Our paper is ultimately about the value that SoTL brings to us as an institution devoted to teaching and learning, whether we are a polytechnique or an undergraduate teaching university. Naturally, we want the very best content experts we can have in our classrooms, but we also want the excellence in teaching and the scholarship that insures the very best learning experience for our students. We support the paradigm that scholarly teaching is a position that takes "a scholarly approach to teaching just as we would take a scholarly approach to other areas of knowledge and practice [… and view] the knowledge base on *teaching and learning as a second discipline in which to develop expertise*" (McKinney, n.d., p. 1, emphasis added). The profession of teaching cannot – and should not – be relegated to a realm of secondary research. There needs to be an alignment of the values for both the content and the practice.

Discussion

Definitions

A survey of the literature tells us that in the practice of *Scholarly Teaching*, teachers do not just read the literature on effective teaching, but they also critically evaluate the literature in conjunction with their own practice. The crux of this concept, then, centers on the application of education theory and criticism to foster an informed learning environment within the classroom to benefit student learning. We do recognize that because of the reflection component inherent in scholarly teaching, scholarly teaching must inform and promote excellence. Distilling the vast literature on our second term – *Excellent Teaching* – to its most basic elements, we find that excellent teaching consists of knowledge of the subject matter and how to most effectively deliver it, knowing the students and how they learn, and knowing oneself in terms of one's level of passion, responsiveness, empathy, and dedication. While we do acknowledge that most excellent teachers are, in fact, scholarly teachers as well, there are those teachers who are able to excel at their craft through intuition and experiential learning (trial and error). For this reason, we feel that it is important to understand that although one is not necessarily predicated on the other, a correlation does exist.

The third term discussed in this paper is *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (SoTL). While this term is complex and continues to evolve through scholarship, at its core, SoTL focuses on research into the processes of teaching and learning and the dissemination of that information. For the purposes of our discussion, we have defined SoTL as:

> *Active evidence-based inquiry into teaching and learning. It includes the production and dissemination of formal and informal research to make SoTL processes and products public and allow for the work to have influence beyond the local context. In this way, SoTL generates a new space for teaching, learning, pedagogical discovery, collaboration and exchange of information.*

It is timely that we are concerned with the development of SoTL, scholarly teaching, and excellent teaching. As we engage with the literature, we understand that this is a matter of interest in many post-secondary institutions. It is also a provincial concern. In the Drummond Report (2012), it states:

Post-secondary education in Ontario will face significant pressures to meet five critical demands: educate a rising share of the population; help equalize economic and social outcomes across the population; provide an important component of lifelong learning; be an engine of innovation; and deliver quality education in an efficient manner. (p. 1)

Clearly, with provincial and institutional pressures building, the demand for SoTL and excellent teaching is higher than ever; if Sheridan is to adapt and progress with the changing needs of Ontario and Canada, then it must embrace SoTL as a new paradigm for faculty training and work towards the status of being a learning organization.

Scope and Limitations of Inquiry

The scope of this paper is an examination of how students learn and how teachers teach. We begin by defining Scholarly Teaching, Excellent Teaching, and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and by investigating their relationship to each other. Building on this knowledge, we have examined ways to assess and acknowledge this teaching. In doing this, we are suggesting ways to encourage faculty to develop their practice as educators and provide them with the necessary tools and opportunities to strive for self-improvement. Programs and strategies such as opportunities for professional development, the acknowledgement of faculty accomplishments, and the recognition of faculty dedication to the craft of educating will help to encourage on-going engagement in the field of education studies.

Our work is informed by but also limited by the research we have found. To fully understand and begin to embrace SoTL we will need to find institutions and models that have put SoTL into practice. We will also need to determine what resources Sheridan may provide for research support. Therefore we will be confining our discussion to how these three terms can be used to inform those next steps and foster future development within Sheridan's community of educators.

Establishing Criteria to Measure and Evaluate Good Teaching Practices

Most scholarly teachers would agree that one component to being an excellent teacher is the ability to evaluate one's own practice in a constructive and informative manner. This requires assessment and feedback that can come from many sources: managers, students, peers, and even the educators themselves. Inasmuch as assessments are subjective in nature and may not truly reflect what is happening in the classroom on a day-to-day basis, it is important not only to use assessment tools properly, but to use them on an ongoing basis in order to better see the development or whole "picture" of an educator. Here, we attempt to mitigate some of this subjectivity by encouraging transparency and self-monitoring during the evaluation process.

Institutional and Student Assessments

There are valid reasons for using institutional assessments. They are designed to serve the purpose of gathering data in support of institutional imperatives. For example, Sheridan utilizes course evaluations every term and KPI surveys once a year. There is concern, often expressed by faculty, that these two measures do not capture the true complexity or essence of the classroom. There is literature that suggests that an effective alignment between SoTL and institutional assessment would be most advantageous to both faculty and the school.

Perhaps one of the most controversial forms of teaching evaluation, student surveys are often deemed biased, unfair, judgmental, critical, and "useless". However, as a student-centered learning organization, we have a duty to our students to ensure that they are having positive, influential, and inspirational learning experiences. Student surveys also provide an important element of transparency in the classroom.

It will be important to look for ways that our students can contribute to shaping evaluation tools. We have found one such model and there may well be others. The advantage of this type of model is that it is the students who identify the competencies that identify good teaching.

Teaching Portfolios/Dossiers

In this section we examine the work by a number of researchers who identify both the great value of using teaching portfolios for self-examination and self-reflection on one's teaching practice and some of the pitfalls, depending on the use to which these documents are to be put.

Questionnaires for Self-Evaluation

The ability to critically evaluate oneself in a professional context is crucial for ongoing success and development in educators. In many instances, professors do not know what questions to be asking in order to evaluate their practices in an informed and reasonably detached manner that will allow for this activity to be useful. Again there are many models available. One we particularly like is proposed by Ellington and Ross (1994) who advocate the use of a self-evaluation scheme to help educators better understand themselves as their practice develops [see appendix C of main paper].

What is perhaps most unique about this particular form of self-evaluation is that the scheme that Ellington and Ross present deliberately avoids using absolute standards in the rating of skills – the skills being assessed are simply done on a scale of "low" to "high." It is left to the educator to determine what each term means in the context of his or her circumstances, and to rate his or her self accordingly. Another noteworthy factor is that the scheme asks educators to provide concrete, supportive evidence to justify a rating that is on the higher half of the scale (Ellington & Ross, 1994, p. 7). By making the exercise personal, quantifiable, and not absolute, Ellington and Ross's scheme promotes introspection, self-monitoring, and self-reflection in educators.

Peer Assessment

Our research into peer evaluations identified both the good and the bad aspects of this form of feedback. Used in a productive and constructive manner, peer evaluations can be a vehicle for mentoring and productive dialogue around content as well as SoTL, excellent and scholarly teaching. However, as with anything, peer evaluations can be misused or mismanaged which may result in reluctance to participate. This is a section rich with ideas and suggestions of how to manage this valuable means of supporting and helping each other while enriching the student experience.

Among others, we would suggest the importance of creating a climate of beneficial feedback that is not misconstrued as criticism and the training of observers. We further suggest a more targeted peer review that is built upon within the Sheridan faculty development programs. If, for example, multiple peers were to watch a video of a colleague teaching, and then offer feedback on specific skills (i.e. one peer evaluates class engagement, and another evaluates use of PowerPoint slides, etc.), then the feedback would be moderated and presented in "digestible chunks." Moreover, faculty who lead the professional development workshops on various topics could be the ones to do the evaluation, which would help increase trust since the evaluator could be from outside of the faculty member's department and would likely have an existing relationship with the educator. Additionally, the use of video to evaluate a peer removes the added pressure of having a peer directly in the classroom while the educator is teaching – the video could potentially be evaluated anonymously and privately, so that the educator is not made to feel publically critiqued or ridiculed.

Recommendations for Recognizing, Acknowledging, and Fostering Scholarly Teaching, Excellent Teaching, and SoTL

If our purpose is to promote excellence and scholarly endeavor in our teaching, we must be able to assess if we are achieving that end. This may lead to rewarding that excellence or scholarship. These rewards can be intrinsic (motivated by our own need to be better) or extrinsic (from outside). Extrinsic rewards can be modest or grand; they can be from external organizations or from Sheridan. How do we decide on a reward model? An organization's culture plays an important role here. It will be important to determine if Sheridan's culture will resist the concept of "rewarding" faculty members if that means singling out the few, rather than acknowledging the many, and it will be important to be mindful of the vernacular that we use in acknowledging teaching practices. The rhetoric seems similar, but the connotation behind "rewarding" suggests a hierarchical ranking of faculty members, whereas as paradigm of recognition or acknowledgement promotes an institutional mentality of support.

Essentially, how do we motivate, inspire, encourage, and support faculty development in a way that is non-competitive, non-threatening, and non-judgmental? The underpinnings of these initiatives, then, must center around a willingness to improve one's own practice, but also need to identify that faculty are at different places in their development of practice and careers. We need to encourage participation from all levels of faculty – with varying ranges of experience – rather than just hold up a few choice faculty members as paragons of what teachers at Sheridan should aspire to become. By providing the necessary tools and opportunities, and by embracing the learning organization as part of our institutional identity, Sheridan can help to foster the development of not only new faculty, but seasoned faculty members as well.

External and Internal Awards Models
There are currently several external reward models discussed in our paper that reward excellent teaching and that Sheridan faculty have earned or could earn. For example, ACCC Awards of Excellence, 3M Canada awards Teaching Fellowships, the Ontario Government Leadership in Faculty Teaching Award. Such awards give public recognition to exceptional teachers and serve to reinforce the pedagogical values that teaching communities identify as desirable and transferable. We suggest that such a method of rewarding faculty could be adapted to a Sheridan context. For example, if a sum of money was to be awarded to the recipient professor's faculty to encourage development, research, and growth, then not only would the educator receive recognition for his or her efforts, but the faculty would benefit financially from supporting SoTL, excellent teaching, and scholarly teaching.

In addition, if Sheridan were to utilize similar recognition awards internally, then we could help foster a dialogue around SoTL and the qualities that make an excellent or scholarly teacher through our acknowledgement of good practices. A mentoring system could also be set up whereby award winners run faculty workshops or do training to help colleagues become more informed educators.

While we do recognize that Sheridan does have pre-existing models for rewarding the teaching excellence of its faculty for example "Kudos". The premise behind this system is that the Deans of each faculty would bring forward news about professional successes their faculty members had achieved during the month to the Vice President Academic. These accomplishments would then be acknowledged to the wider community. Such a system would help to inspire those faculty members who are motivated more by recognition amongst their peers and less so by material rewards or gain. We recommend that more consideration and research be devoted to investigating how internal rewards,

awards or acknowledgements can be better utilized and promoted within the college. By combining the principles of external recognition rewards with the pre-existing systems that Sheridan already has, we can advocate for better acknowledgement of inspirational faculty members in our college community.

In addition to these methods of rewarding excellence we posit that internal programs that provide development and support may also lead to or provide their own rewards.

Internal Training Academy

One method of promoting interpersonal/professional development in Sheridan faculty would be to provide a venue for educators to dialogue about teaching experiences in a setting of formal professional development. While Sheridan currently has the Teaching and Learning Academy for newly hired full time faculty, and the Fundamentals of Teaching and Learning workshop for new part time faculty, there is still a need for ongoing professional support and development.

There are many institutions that have implemented workshop-type programs that reward participating faculty with certificates of achievement and recognition based on various levels of accomplishments in professional development. We have discussed the Brock University model in our paper and do encourage that a closer look be given to this or a similar initiative.

This forum would promote a learning organization culture through the exercising of scholarly teaching, excellent teaching, and SoTL amongst a community of practitioners. By expanding the potential opportunities for educators to engage in the evolution of their own pedagogies, faculty members can come to appreciate the dangers inherent in becoming stagnant in one's teaching practice. The documentation that they earn from completing such a program (certificates, transcripts, etc.) can be added to teaching dossiers as a part of the quantification of one's professional development and would demonstrate critical engagement with scholarly teaching and SoTL.

Release Time for Professional Development and SoTL Research

This can serve the purpose of both development and reward and benefit the college. We have examined *Key Performance Indicator (KPI)* survey results (2012), and while Sheridan is currently above average in the Greater Toronto Area (74.7%), it is worth noting that there is clearly room for improvement (Sheridan College, 2012, p. 7). We believe that by fostering the natural enthusiasm that many faculty members display towards SoTL and by providing the resources necessary to help conduct research, we can maximize the use of our resources in order to not only gain a competitive edge in the education market, but to reinforce our identity as an institution that is committed to the academic development and success of our students.

"Conversations with…" and SoTL Forums

Again, combining the notions of personal development and reward (albeit intrinsic reward), one idea that emerged from our research was to have sessions entitled "Conversations with Master Teachers." These guests could be internal or external. We would suggest that Sheridan invite renowned "excellent" teachers to share their best practices with faculty members in a presentation and discussion based format. By designating a time and space for the collaboration with colleagues, faculty have the opportunity to enrich their practices, network, and potentially become involved in projects that are going on in the campus community.

Internal Teaching and Learning Website

In line with combining development of our teaching and learning expertise with rewards, we have devoted this section to the advantages of a SoTL website that would help foster feelings of connectedness and collegiality amongst faculty members. We propose a venue similar to a SLATE section that could potentially be administered by NILES and would be a forum for faculty to ask questions, discuss pedagogy, and reflect on teaching experiences with fellow colleagues. In our opinion this has immense potential on many levels, as we outline in the main paper.

Future Steps: Recommendations for Sheridan

These recommendations have resulted from our research and our conversations within the SoTL Engagement Team, and we do encourage their consideration:

More student based feedback.

We offer, as both inspiration and a starting point, these words, paraphrased from Sheridan's President, Dr. Jeff Zabudsky: "students are our Sheridan." To that end, there will need to be further research done to better understand how SoTL, excellent teaching, and scholarly teaching influence and shape student experiences at Sheridan. It will be important for Sheridan to undertake a study to better understand the relationship between excellent teaching and student perceptions as they are related to student experiences and success.

Research into the culture and attitudes at Sheridan.

It is also necessary to understand the institutional culture and attitudes within Sheridan if the college is to implement changes that are going to foster a learning organization and inclusive college community. Here, we defer to the research of our colleagues in this engagement team who have undertaken the initiative to understand how post-secondary culture functions.

Research into learning processes and how to relate such information to faculty.

We believe this piece to be critical. SoTL is about teaching and learning. Many teachers realize that there are different types of learners, for example: auditory, kinesthetic, or visual learners. However, understanding of how (meta)cognition and (meta)memory affect learning will allow for better curriculum and instructional design principles to enhance student learning.

Attending Conferences and Professional Memberships.

We recommend that faculty members be encouraged to attend conferences that are relevant to SoTL. One such event is the annual conference held every year by the Society of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE). Access to information about these opportunities as well as funding is important. We do propose consideration to increasing Professional Development (PD) Funding.

We believe a matter for immediate consideration is the lack of PD funding for new probationary faculty. While we acknowledge the value of TLA to develop their teaching skills, we suggest that PD funding is also appropriate. These two probationary years are fundamental in the development of excellent and scholarly faculty, and as such, attendance at conferences and seminars related to professional development should be encouraged. Moreover, these new faculty members have increasingly sophisticated credentials and experience when they join us and may already be members of professional organizations. Their ability to attend conferences representing Sheridan would be mutually beneficial.

Visiting other institutions for models of SoTL.

SoTL is a process that has been ongoing within many institutions and academic communities for quite some time; the evolution of SoTL has prompted academic communities to examine their faculties and learning institutions in order to better understand how to improve both the student and faculty learning experience. We have included a number of suggested institutions in our paper.

Use of teaching awards that are multilayered.

The idea of "rewarding" teachers at Sheridan is a topic that warrants further study. As discussed earlier, culture must be considered. However, as we have demonstrated in this paper, there are many ways to provide rewards and we encourage serious consideration to providing them within the cultural context that is Sheridan.

Developing a peer assessment process

It will be important to develop a Sheridan model for peer assessment that will provide consistency and take into account the needs of both the assessors and the person being assessed.

Conclusion

It would be fair to say that working on this paper has been transformational for our team members and we hope that it will provide some ideas for those charged with taking SoTL in Sheridan forward. We believe that we must first understand what we are striving for in terms of excellence and scholarship as they relate to teaching and learning. We must make the resources available to educators that will inspire life-long learning and a commitment to the practice of scholarly/excellent teaching. SoTL is one of the primary means of achieving this aspiration. We must seek out ways to support the development and growth of the "second discipline". If we do this, we will indeed continue to *Shine Brighter*.

Faculty Professional Development and Growth Executive Summary

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Over the last 45 years, Sheridan has positioned itself and earned the reputation as an innovative, progressive and leading edge post-secondary institution. At the core of these accomplishments is the professional and Faculty development areas dedicated to curriculum development and innovative teaching and learning. The work of this subcommittee has highlighted areas for future growth and development as it relates to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. More importantly, it has affirmed and recognized the history and foundation upon which Sheridan's reputation as a leading edge institution has been built.

This submission explores the following areas:
1. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at Universities and Sheridan
2. History of professional development at Sheridan
3. Communities of practice/technology
4. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at other institutions
5. Next Steps/Recommendations

Scope of Inquiry | Terms of Reference

Prior to the summary of findings, important to note here are the original outcomes for this subgroup.

1. Propose strategies for continuing professional development, which support teaching excellence and student learning.

2. Recommend resources and strategies to support faculty with their professional growth and teaching practice.
3. Create forums to encourage and support ongoing conversations for teaching and learning (Communities of Practice)
4. Integrate the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning into the Teaching and Learning Academies

Discussion

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) at Universities and Sheridan

A review of literature indicated that the idea of teaching and learning at a University involves the development of inquiry and research problems that can be investigated in a scholarly manner using the tools from educational psychology and related disciplines. As Sheridan transitions from College to University, the underlying question is how will Sheridan embrace and practice the Scholarship of Teaching and learning through this shift.
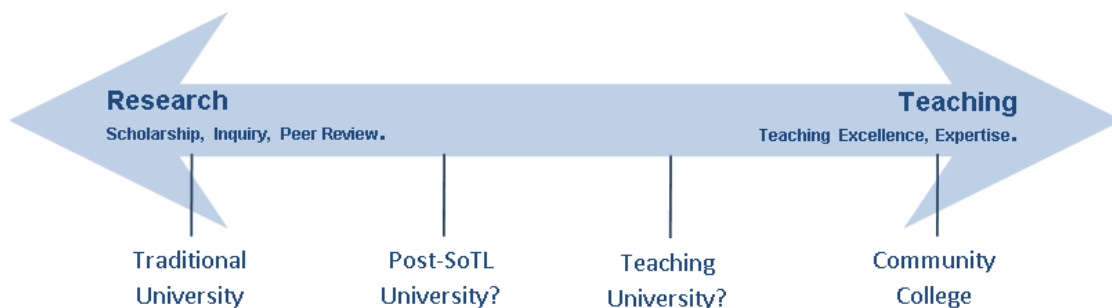
With *Traditional University* on one side of the Teaching and Research Continuum and *Community College* on the other, Sheridan is in a unique position to explore how it will define itself in relation to SoTL. Three questions have been posed to begin this dialogue:

1. How do Sheridan's current professional development programs encourage excellent teaching, scholarly teaching and SoTL?
2. How could Sheridan's current professional development programs be modified to further encourage scholarship?
3. What other forms of professional development could be put into place to encourage and maintain the SoTL perspective?

While the answers to these questions can help to support teaching, of importance to note here is that the literature discussed the importance of learning; not necessarily staying focused on improving or "fixing" teaching but rather exploring how students acquire skills and habits of mind. More specifically how students as "novices" differ from experts and how teachers facilitate students or novices moving to expert; this can inform teaching practice. Based on these initial discussions of SoTL, the next step in our process was to explore the history and current professional development offerings at Sheridan.

History of Faculty Professional Development at Sheridan

Sheridan's focus and commitment to teaching and learning is evidenced by a long and prestigious history of professional development. Starting prior to the 1990's, Faculty and staff have had access to new employee training, internal and external professional development, written publications chronicling new trends and thinking in education, in house conferences showcasing the work of faculty and staff

and ongoing support and coaching. As the College continued to grow and shift, those responsible for professional development responded to these changes with new and innovative offerings. The history of the College affirms that people: faculty, support staff and management staff all contribute to the Sheridan that is internationally known. Consistent with our current "people plan", Susanne Wodar eloquently writes that, "Primary to our reputation are our people". Sheridan has and continues to benefit from internal experts that guide professional development.

Historically, dedicated units such as Instructional & Human Resource Development, Curriculum and instructional Design (CID) and the Centre for Curriculum and Faculty Development have laid the foundation upon which The Network for Innovation and Leadership in Education at Sheridan (NILES) currently rests. NILES's mission, "to partner with the Sheridan community to pursue innovation and excellence in all aspects of teaching and learning" is well positioned to continue the legacy of professional development. Comprehensive training supporting new Faculty (Teaching and Learning Academy 1,2,3), training for contract Faculty (Fundamentals of Teaching and Learning), new employee orientations and timely training responding to new legislation (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Occupational Health and Safety) and practice have become hallmarks of Sheridan's commitment to and investment in its people.

The opportunity to come together on an engagement team and dialogue about the scholarship of teaching and learning is timely. These current conversations support Sheridan's ongoing investment in and commitment to exploring new and innovative ideas as they relate to teaching and learning and professional development. As evidenced by this working group, communities of practice have become a way to continue these conversations.

Community of Practice

To support the scholarship of teaching and learning, developing and encouraging communities of practice was explored as a viable option to create formal as well as informal opportunities for discussion. Communities of practice (CoP) are groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and through dialogue and interaction with others, learn how to do it better. Through community, participants are able to learn the "culture" about whatever brings them together. At Sheridan, Teaching with Technology and Promoting Community, Connection and Creativity (TC3) is one key example of how a community of practice can engage, promote and contribute to professional development.

In Fall 2012 NILES will be launching the Graduate Learning Community (GLC), a CoP that seeks to support faculty engaged in graduate studies. Essential to note here is that communities of practice are largely informal and therefore go unrecognized. The working group is aware that CoP's are evident across all Faculties and staff lines College wide and continue to be a pivotal and vibrant way to engage in dialogue across disciplines.

Technology

Technology is a tool to be used in a teaching and learning environment. Technology should not dictate the teaching and learning, rather augment its delivery. In terms of accessibility, technology provides the means to allow people with disabilities to compete on a more level playing field, although when technical difficulties are encountered, it can create inequalities in education.
There is a need for Faculty to increase their computer literacy, insuring that they are able to develop and deliver curriculum in a meaningful way. While there has been research done on technology in

engineering programs, the data does not reflect the effectiveness of technology across all fields. In fact studies indicate that technology is more widely embraced by the technically minded. While technology in the classroom serves to enhance teaching and learning, to what extent remains the question.

SoTL at Other Institutions

In order to assist with the working group's discussion and to gather evidence regarding the types of SoTL-inspired professional development, SoTL practices at other North American post-secondary institutions were explored. Of significance to mention here is work being done at Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, that host a "Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Awareness Week" which combines speakers, research presentations and other related events. Also noteworthy is the SoTL inspired professional development at Juniata College's Centre for SoTL supported by their goals, including their commitment to open and honest discussion of issues related to teaching effectiveness.

A Teaching and Learning Centre presence both physically and online was identified as a key element of promoting SoTL. SoTL content in initial teaching training, SoTL inspired professional development, conferences, workshops, visiting speakers, communities of inquiry, and supporting SoTL research are all avenues through which institutions promoted SoTL. One of the main tenets of the SoTL movement is that both teaching practice and research into teaching and learning should be made the subject of public discussion, scrutiny and debate.

Pursuing a scholarly approach to teaching and learning is an ongoing process comprised of action, experience, research, reflection, knowledge, desire and support. Much data has been gathered on what the post secondary teaching profession sees as barriers and challenges to professional growth and development in the area of teaching. However, little research has been done on the attitudes of faculty themselves toward the professional development of their teaching practice. Initial research indicates that time, infrastructure are key issue, but more importantly Faculty are challenged to shift from the focus on discipline specific knowledge to professional development regarding teaching and learning practice.

Next Steps | Recommendations

The culmination of this working group's findings has resulted in the following recommendations:

Establish a large, publicly accessible teaching and learning centre with a physical presence on every Sheridan campus, including a resource room, meetings rooms and faculty mentors (Outcome 1,2,3).
- Offer professional growth and development opportunities on multiple days, across all campuses and in a variety of formats to ensure maximum opportunity for participation
- Establish a strong web presence and promote the teaching and learning centers through awareness raising events and advertising campaigns on every campus.
- Encourage ongoing faculty feedback and/or requests for training
- Ensure PD topics are relevant to teaching and learning **(outcome 4)**.
- Communicate PD opportunities to faculty through a variety of channels.
- Leverage the use technology to increase access
- Offer a range of courses for faculty at all stages of their career who want to improve their teaching practice or learn about current best practices and current research on teaching and learning.

- Allocate time and resources to faculty who engage in SoTL-related activities through grants, fellowships, and release time.
- Ensure resources to support professional development and growth in the area of scholarly teaching are allocated with priority

Continue to value and encourage scholarly discussion and justification in all areas of teaching and learning, including curriculum, program, and policy development (Outcome 1,2,3).
- Create a mission statement for the teaching and learning center(s) that explicitly references collegial discussion, scholarship, and evidence-based teaching practices.
- Incorporate a spirit of evidence-based inquiry into initial teacher training courses.
- Model and encourage a spirit of inquiry across the college
- Establish a local journal for the publication of research, opinion and analysis, as well as for the sharing of innovative teaching practices by Sheridan faculty.
- Reinforce the culture of excellence through strong networks of experienced mentors
- Reward teaching excellence and support intentions to improve
- Formally acknowledge participation in professional development
- Acknowledge the constraints of faculty workload and schedules

Promote awareness, sharing, and public discussion of research in teaching and learning through local conferences, speaker series, workshops and seminars (Outcome 1,2,3).
- Incorporate a culture of sharing and an establishment of discipline-specific communities of inquiry into initial teacher training courses.
- Support ongoing communities of inquiry, learning, and professional development regarding teaching and learning.
- Actively promote PD opportunities that enhance scholarly teaching and learning
- Share our Sheridan teaching and learning best practice stories in journals or magazines and at conferences.

Research in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Executive Summary

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The focus of this paper is to cover three objectives; to clarify some of the key components that are integral to SoTL research, to identify best practices that support and promote SoTL's implementation, and to examine Sheridan's current research infrastructure within that context. The scope of inquiry is based on both primary and secondary research and includes a comprehensive literature review, an examination of institutional websites and personal communication with selected institutional representatives (both internal and external to Sheridan). The paper is organized into two approaches; a macro level examination of SoTL resources in relation to best practices and a micro level analysis of methodological challenges, research outcomes, research types and the dissemination of SoTL work.

Discussion

Macro Level Examination
The benefit and viability of a SoTL commitment is realized though ensuring that the mission, mandate and values of the institution both inform, and are responsive to, SoTL activity within the institution. Key to maintaining an engaged culture of SoTL research, are systems and practices that are pragmatic and accessible in education, training and support for faculty and staff. Predictably, from an engaged culture in SoTL research, arises communities or practice, which further serve as mentors and collegial sources of expertise. Collaborative research projects that are interdepartmental (institutional research, applied research and SoTL research), interdisciplinary and inclusive of the student body provide rich perspective and broad application. Events that recognize and celebrate research achievements, and concurrently foster dissemination of findings are important opportunities to develop faculty interest and inform teaching practices within the institution, as well as provide an avenue for contribution to the empirical body of knowledge specific to SoTL.

Micro Level Examination
Central to publishing SoTL research in peer reviewed journals such as the International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, are three important considerations; the research should begin with a description of a 'compelling' research problem, there should be an aspect of the research that can be recognized and appreciated by all disciplines, there should be a clear articulation of the author's understanding of both the SoTL concept, and how the research contributes to scholarly practice, and research outcomes can be replicated and duplicated by others.[1]

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[1] Berstein, Jeffery L. (2011) Identifying High Quality SoTL Research: A Perspective from a Reviewer, International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Vol.5 No.1

SoTL research topics are broad and varied and are generally associated with one of four areas including pedagogy, academic issues, curriculum and administrative topics. [2] The teaching and learning environment contains potentially rich data with unlimited research potential. Adding to this are teaching evaluations which created thoughtfully, can generate useful data and inform the creation of research topics in the inquiry stage of SoTL research. Common approaches to choosing research topics include, critical reflection on personal teaching practice, examination of the products of courses for authenticity and the analysis of common student errors.

Recommendations

Two inherent challenges associated with SoTL research that should be given due consideration include the fact that while all research begins with the identification of a research problem, if such problems are associated with classroom teaching the negative stigma of that may limit the use of evaluations in informing SoTL research.[3]

Another challenge is that to practice SoTL research faculty must move beyond the boundaries of specific disciplines to some of the broader social science methodologies.[4] While they may be well versed in their discipline some may lack the methodological expertise that is appropriate for this kind of teaching and learning research.[5] Evidence from some of the best practices associated with SoTL cultures suggests that faculty mentoring is helpful in providing appropriate methodological research guidance to overcome this challenge.

While SoTL research serves many functions the most important of these is to impact student learning.[6] If others are to benefit from this kind of research however, SoTL methodologies should capture the contextual nature of teaching and learning including for example, the processes and conditions around what happens during and after the intervention is applied.[7] Two strategies recommended by McKinney to effectively capture this rich detail include student reflections and recognizing students as an audience of SoTL projects.[8] Intrinsically involving students in the research for example, exposes them to relevant findings which in turn, help them to reflect on and apply those findings to improve their own learning.[9]

Pedagogical studies often use student data but don't always examine actual student 'products' as a means of investigating whether learning occurs.[10] Much of the data generated from SoTL research can be accomplished by looking at student products as evidence of learning.[11] This can include a broad range of student work including test scores and answers, completed assignments, reflections, essays, projects, one-minute papers, interviews, portfolios, pictures and photos made by students, student projects and presentations.[12]

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Hubball, Harry and Clarke, Anthony (2009) Diverse Methodological Approaches and Considerations for SoTL in Higher Education, International Journal for Academic Development * In 1998 UBC initiated the Faculty Certificate on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: SoTL Leadership Program (Faculty Certificate Program or 'FCP').

[6] McKinney, Kathleen (2012) Increasing the Impact of SoTL: Two Sometimes Neglected Opportunities, International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Vol.6, No. 1

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

Although SoTL research has developed momentum as a movement, its work remains limited to classroom inquiry.[13] In an effort to engage SoTL research at the institutional level, research findings can be applied to academic and institutional transformation and help inform strategic planning. There should therefore be some type of meaningful alignment between SoTL work and institutional level initiatives.[14]

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13 Connie M. Schroeder. (2007) Countering SoTL Marginalization: A Model for Integrating SoTL with Institutional Initiatives, International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, Vol. 1, No. 1.
14 McKinney, K. (2004) The scholarship of teaching and learning: past lessons, current challenges, and future visions. To improve the Academy, 22. 3-19.