

The Definition of SoTL

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is methodologically rigorous, educationally relevant, evidence-based research about student learning in higher education. These methods and solutions must be transferable to other disciplines, subjected to peer review, and disseminated to the Academy.

UCF's Faculty Center: The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) can be defined as research into our teaching methods and effectiveness. To perform SoTL, we research something about our own classes. For instance, we attempt to institute a change in the way we present material or the way we assess student learning, and then track the effect of these changes to decide how best to improve our teaching practices. SoTL also involves disseminating the results we find in a public forum, so that when others hear about our practices, they are prompted into creating their own systemic changes. The outcome of SoTL should always remain focused on improving student learning.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Lee Schulman, President): Scholarly teaching is what every one of us should be engaged in every day that we are in a classroom, in our office with students, tutoring, lecturing, conducting discussions, all the roles we play pedagogically.... But it is only when we step back and reflect systematically on the teaching we have done, in a form that can be publicly reviewed and built upon by our peers, that we have moved from scholarly teaching to the scholarship of teaching.

Indiana University at Bloomington: The SOTL program is an initiative that seeks the goal of improved undergraduate learning. To this end it encourages, supports, and publicizes course-focused research projects that are faculty defined and implemented. It also carefully fosters an interdisciplinary community of conversation and engagement centered on teaching and learning. This community supports and enhances both the inquiry of individual faculty and a more evidence-based approach to teaching generally. Rather than focusing on specific issues or learning methods, the SOTL approach encourages faculty to explore a variety of approaches and to reflect on questions about student learning derived from their own experiences in the classroom. As such it is self-renewing and self-broadening. As more faculty members address more learning outcomes and explore more alternative learning environments, they use more diverse and increasingly sophisticated techniques to examine the effectiveness of their strategies.

Western Carolina: SoTL at Western calls for a university-wide commitment and collaboration among faculty, administration, staff and students in initiating and continuing systematic conversation, reflection, research and dissemination about teaching and learning that is made public and open to critique in order to establish the scholarship of teaching and learning as research that is as institutionally valued and rewarded as traditional disciplinary scholarship with the ultimate goals of improved student learning, teaching effectiveness and enjoyment, faculty development and the creation of a deeply collegial academic community of and for teaching and learning.

Illinois State University: At Illinois State, we have defined SoTL as "systematic reflection on teaching and learning made public."