Doing SoTL in Context
Perspectives from a Different Shore

Peter Felten
Center for Engaged Learning
 Elon University
“I have always felt that the action most worth watching is not at the center of things but where edges meet. I like shorelines, weather fronts, international borders. There are interesting frictions and incongruities in these places, and often, if you stand at the point of tangency, you can see both sides better than if you were in the middle of either one.”

(Fadiman, 1998, p. viii)
What is SoTL?
What is SoTL for?
What does SoTL do?
“The most important obligation now confronting the nation’s colleges and universities is to break out of the tired old teaching versus research debate and define, in more creative ways, what it means to be a scholar. It’s time to recognize the full range of faculty talent and the great diversity of functions higher education must perform.”

(Boyer, 1990)
“The scholarship of teaching and learning encompasses a broad set of practices that engage teachers in looking closely and critically at student learning for the purpose of improving their own courses and programs. It is perhaps best understood as an approach that marries scholarly inquiry to any of the intellectual tasks that comprise the work of teaching.”

(Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone, 2011)
**Principles of Good Practice in SoTL**

1. Inquiry focused on student learning
2. Grounded in context
3. Methodologically sound
4. Conducted in partnership with students
5. Appropriately public

(Felten, 2013)
SoTL Questions

What works?  

What is?  

(Hutchings, 2000)
How can we help students think like philosophers in an introductory course?

Stephen Bloch-Schulman & Ann Cahill, Philosophy, Elon

What kinds of assignments work best?

Would teaching students how to take notes “like a philosopher” help?

How do students read assigned texts?
This is an abbreviated version of a true story originally recounted by Simon Wiesenthal in his book *The Sunflower*.

Simon, a Jew who was captured trying to escape Nazi persecution of the Jews, is placed in concentration camp though he had committed no crime. He is horribly treated, underfed, overworked and in fear for his life. One day he is taken with a group of other concentration camp prisoners to a hospital to clean up the grounds. While he is cleaning, a nurse approaches him and asks him if he is Jewish. When he says “yes,” she insists he follow her upstairs. She brings him to a room in which a person all covered in bandages lay on the bed and leaves Simon alone in the room.
Conclusion
Students read in fundamentally different ways than philosophers do.

Implications for teaching
New ways of teaching students to read and take notes like a philosopher, including use of “expert” think alouds to model reading - and practice in class doing think alouds of readings.

Going public
Disciplinary articles, SoTL presentations, department/campus workshops
“Location, even if unintentionally, seems to have been theorized into the dominant discourse where the Western location is unconsciously amalgamated with the universal and treated as default ‘common sense’ and other locations are theorized out of the picture totally.”

(Chng & Looker, 2013, p. 139)
What works? 
What is? 
} 
Where? 

(Chng & Looker, 2013)
“The ‘global South’ is conceived of as a cluster of features which need to take into account issues of power differentials, technological and financial resourcing, and the recognition of indigenous knowledges. … The global South, more often than not, is faced with challenges typical of the post-colonial moment: income inequality, fractured identities, and contestation about knowledges. SOTL, in this global South, needs to adequately respond to these challenges within the resource constraints present and, in so doing, to speak back to dominant economic, social, philosophical and pedagogical frames of reference. The term is, understandably, contested, and seen as homogenising or creating binaries that need further scrutiny.”

http://sotl-south-journal.net
“Four qualitatively different and distinct aspects of context” are significant for SoTL

Disciplinary
Professional
Cultural
Political

(Booth & Woollacott, 2017)
What aspects of your context most influence SoTL practice?

How do you define SoTL in your context?
What is SoTL?

What is SoTL for?

What does SoTL do?
Professionalism
Pragmatism
Policy

(Shulman, 2000)
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(Ashwin & Trigwell, 2004, p. 122)
“Ironically, an emphasis on SoTL as research that thereby conflates Boyer’s scholarships of teaching and discovery has arguably resulted in a perpetuation of just the kind of bifurcation that he opposed.”

(Geertsema, 2016, p. 125)
“Sustained inquiry into student learning across semesters that is made widely available in an electronic course portfolio is a high form of scholarship in its own right.”

(Bernstein & Bass, 2005, p. 42)
Professionalism
Pragmatism
Policy

(Shulman, 2000)

SoTL as an individual practice

SoTL as a community practice
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(Ashwin & Trigwell, 2004, p. 122)
Multi-institutional SoTL Center for Engaged Learning
What are the main purposes of SoTL in your context?

How would SoTL be different if it was practiced as a form of community, not individual, inquiry?
What is SoTL?

What is SoTL for?

What does SoTL do?
SoTL improves teaching approaches and student learning outcomes.

(Trigwell, 2013; Hutching, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011)
“SoTL-active faculty...generate visible analyses of the learning taking place in their institutions, provide excellent models of practice for local colleagues, generate high quality evidence for internal and external assessment, and offer accessible examples of quality education to prospective students.”

(Bernstein, 2013, p. 35)
SoTL develops “a generative culture [that] multiplies the impact of formal faculty development, enhances self-motivated individual faculty learning, and supports faculty experimentation in their courses.”

(Condon et al., 2016, p. 121)
SoTL creates and develops a “teaching commons”

(Huber & Hutchings, 2005)
First-generation student engagement in high-impact practices
(Coker & Porter, 2015)
Involving students in SoTL contributes to increased

**Engagement** – enhancing motivation & learning

**Awareness** – developing metacognition & identity

**Enhancement** – improving teaching & experiences

**Belonging** – cultivating meaningful communities

(Cook-Sather, Bovill, & Felten, 2014; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017)
What outcomes of SoTL are most significant in your context? Could (should?) students be actors in SoTL in your context?
“Educational innovation today invites, even requires, levels of preparation, imagination, collaboration, and support that are not always a good fit (to say the least) with the inherited routines of academic life.”

(Hutchings, Huber, & Cicone, 2011, p. 6)
“The scholarship of teaching and learning is not neutral territory…. [SoTL] has got to be a process where different assumptions and practices are legitimized as worthy of investigation and as having significant perspectives to enlighten the scholarship.”

(Chng & Looker, 2013)


pfelten@elon.edu