

# THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

ANDREA WEBB [@SPIDERWEBB8](#) | ANNE TIERNEY [@GOZE01](#)

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) contributes to the quality of teaching and learning in higher education (Hubball, Pearson, & Clarke, 2013). Operating under “the big tent” (D’Andrea, 2006; Huber & Hutchings, 2005, p. 4), SoTL is accessible to all disciplines, including inter- and intra-disciplinary inquiry. Through literature-informed, rigorous methodological inquiry, and peer-disseminated findings, SoTL provides a practical and complementary undergirding for research into learning, regardless of the theoretical positions from which inquirers come (Gilpin, 2011; Hubball, Clarke, Webb, & Johnson, 2015; Webb, 2020).

## WHY THIS MATTERS

The landscape of teaching and learning in higher education is complex, with increasing student diversity, the development of niche programs, the use of technology to enhance flexible learning, and highly specialized disciplinary knowledge butting up against institutional and public accountability. Into this landscape, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning offers a way for higher education institutions and educators to engage with research, teaching, and innovation through research-informed program changes, proactive faculty development and supportive institutional governance, given the challenges of the complex research-teaching nexus.

## WHAT CAN WE DO

1. Teaching, research, and service are actually intertwined into a comprehensive, dynamic relationship where they are continuously influencing and overlapping with each other. Good teaching is a scholarly, dynamic endeavor undertaken by faculty as learners (Boyer, 1990).  
Hutchings and Shulman (1999) suggest that all faculties have an obligation to excellence in teaching. This is echoed by Huber and Morreale (2002) as “across the academy, “regular” faculty are taking systematic interest in curriculum, classroom teaching, and the quality of student learning” (p. 1). However, SoTL must take up four additional challenges: beginning the conversation about credible methods of inquiry, keeping SoTL open to a wide set of inquiries, making a commitment to publicly share research (Shulman, 1993), and creating sustainable change.

*The SoTL Commons, also called the teaching commons, is “an emergent conceptual space for exchange and community among faculty, students, administrators, and all others committed to learning as an essential activity”*

(Huber & Hutchings, 2005)

2. Recognise SoTL as important work. Teaching and learning in higher education is an area worthy of scholarship. It is not “an intriguing aside, or an add-on, but an essential facet of good teaching—built into the expected repertoire of scholarly practice” (Shulman, 2000, n.p.).
3. Broaden the definition of what it means to be a researcher. Boyer concluded that what is needed in higher education is a more inclusive view of what it means to be a scholar—“a recognition that knowledge is acquired through research, through synthesis, through practice, and through teaching” (Boyer, 1990, p. 24). Research in teaching and learning in higher education is equivalent to disciplinary research.
4. Be open to inter- and intra-disciplinary conversations. As conversations and collaborations become more frequent and substantial, SoTL widens the “trading zone” (Huber & Morreale, 2002, p. 2), where meanings and methods may vary but contributes to the intellectual discourse and debate on teaching and learning in higher education (Shulman, 2000).
5. The SoTL Commons. The concept of the SoTL Commons (Huber & Hutchings, 2005; 2006) is the defining feature of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. It is an intellectual space where a diversity of SoTL scholars can engage with others and judiciously borrow practices and insights from various communities. They can adapt them for new purposes in order to capture, and build upon, the intellectual work being done in teaching and learning.

“growth in knowledge also comes at the borders of disciplinary imagination”

(Huber & Morreale, 2002, p.2)

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Teaching and learning in higher education is complex. By using scholarly literature, rigorous inquiry, and dissemination to our peers, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning offers evidence based findings to inform our teaching.

As students use their sketchbooks (or similar) iteratively to try out ideas and demonstrate work in progress, the tutor sitting beside them can use the rubberstamp directly into their pages as a trigger for the feedback dialogue. On each of the axes the tutor can make a mark indicating how far along each axis the

student has travelled from novice (low i.e. towards the centre of the stamp-print) to expert (high i.e. towards the periphery). Ensuing discussions enable tutors' tacit understandings to become explicit for the student, so they can be translated into improved performance/outcomes (Sadler, 2010).

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Andrea Webb is Associate Professor of Teaching in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, University of British Columbia.

Anne Tierney is institutional theme lead for QAA Enhancement Theme: Resilient Learning Communities and deputy programme leader for the PG CertTL at HWU.



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