

DISSEMINATION

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The final stage in any research project is sharing your work for peer review and critique. For many who are getting started in SoTL, this can be an intimidating process.

However, SoTL engages scholars and “departments in a cycle of systematic dialogue, inquiry, and dissemination related to the quality of their academic programs” (Kenny, Watson, & Desmarais, 2016). The focus of SoTL engagement could be categorized as micro, meso, macro, or mega. Micro typically refers to the level of the individual instructor, meso to the department level, macro to what happens at the institutional level, and mega to disciplinary or provincial and national levels (Poole 2009; Poole & Simmons 2013; Simmons, 2016, p. 96; Williams et al. 2013).

“high impact SoTL has often been “made public” through informal means”

(Huber, 2009)

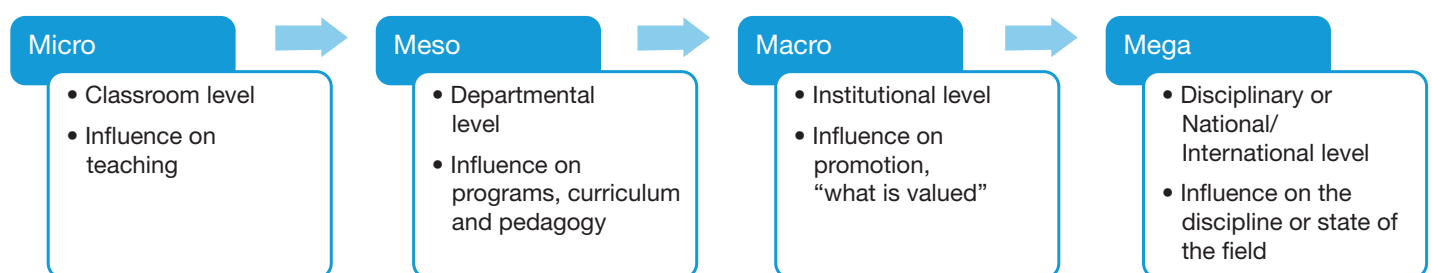
KEY TAKEAWAYS

Taking our work public is the final - and often most intimidating - step. So, it is important to consider who could benefit from your findings, and then disseminate to those people. That could be a hallway conversation with a colleague, a presentation at a department meeting, or a paper at a national conference. “An act of intelligence or of artistic creation becomes scholarship when it possesses at least three attributes: it becomes public; it becomes an object of critical review and evaluation by members of one’s community; and members of one’s community begin to use, build upon, and develop those acts of mind and creation”

(Shulman, 1999)

“SoTL, framed broadly, can thus provide a space for conversations about teaching that should be happening but perhaps are not”

(Simmons, 2016)



(Simmons, 2016)

When considering dissemination opportunities, it is important to consider the context of the SoTL and the intended impact. The multidirectional nature of impact (Figure 1) shows how the grassroots (micro) level builds through the meso toward an impact at the macro level, as well as how institutional supports might flow downward from the top. Each of these factors is an important contributor to create the institutional and cultural contexts that support SoTL, and by extension teaching and learning.

WHAT CAN WE DO

Micro dissemination – Most colleagues rely on a small number of significant relationships for their conversations about teaching and learning (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009). Individuals engage in private discussions, which are quite different from their formal, public conversations about research. So, micro dissemination may involve sharing a project with someone in your department, presenting at a department meeting, or writing a blog post.

Meso dissemination – Diverse leadership positions (both appointed and emergent) exist at the micro, meso, and macro/ mega levels. Meso level leaders can play a key role to find and support micro level SoTL, as well as modelling a broadening impact of SoTL work. Social networks also play an important role in talking through works in progress (Kenny, Watson, & Desmarais, 2016). This could include presenting SoTL work

to a faculty or institutional Teaching and Learning day, or submitting a reflection on practice to a SoTL journal.

Leadership at meso and macro levels can support engagement in conversations regarding how SoTL is aligned with institutional goals around educational quality.

Macro / Mega dissemination – Leadership is required at the macro level to stimulate an institutional culture that fosters SoTL growth (Simmons, 2016). Similarly, Kenny, Watson, and Desmarais (2016) found that senior organizational leaders, who understand SoTL, are key to catalyzing and supporting change, especially around “cultural norms, structures and processes” that support academics in their SoTL work. Macro/Mega dissemination is frequently seen as a formal, peer reviewed submission in a SoTL journal, or a report of SoTL research informed curriculum or program change.

The picture is one of many SoTL scholars doing good work, much in the way of macro- or institutional-level support in the form of grants, promotion and tenure documents, and supportive leadership. However, there is still a need for a focus on building supports and networks at the micro and meso levels. It is clear that leadership at the meso and macro levels has a strong role to play in creating space for these networks. As Williams and colleagues (2013, p. 52) argue, “if departments are the places where barriers to change exist, they are also important loci for change.”

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