



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Growing SoTL—Embracing Diversity, Messiness, and Complexity

Welcome to *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* Volume 11.

The scholarship of teaching and learning engages higher education teachers, learners, scholars, leaders, and practitioners around the world and continues to grow as an interdisciplinary and international field. Last year marked the journal's 10th anniversary and, since its inception, *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* has published more than 275 articles written by 604 unique authors from more than 240 institutions in 24 countries.

In the past few years, we have seen a 150% increase in new submissions and we are delighted to support this continued expansion of SoTL scholarship. As journal editors, we embrace methodological pluralism and welcome submissions from all research traditions and perspectives related to SoTL in higher education. Many of the submissions we receive focus on teaching practices and student learning at the classroom, departmental, institutional, or cross-institutional level. Others are about SoTL more broadly, such as support across disciplines or embedding SoTL practice throughout an institution. We celebrate the constantly evolving nature of SoTL and look forward to the year ahead.

We recognize that there are varied understandings of SoTL. As co-editors of *TLI*, we recently engaged in conversation with fellow SoTL scholars about an article published in the U.S.-focused *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The group submitted a response that was published in May 2022. As not all *TLI* readers have access to the subscription-based resource, we share it here and welcome further discussion.

Science of Teaching Is Not Being Ignored

<https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/letters/science-of-teaching-is-not-being-ignored>

May 1, 2022

To the Editor:

You assert that knowledge generated from the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is ignored ("[Why the Science of Teaching is Often Ignored](#)," *The Chronicle*, January 3). As SoTL scholars and campus leaders, we disagree.

You note that research on teaching and learning occurs in a wide range of disciplinary contexts and that this research can be messy — with little experimental control over factors that influence learning outcomes. Both observations are true. All disciplines have a vital stake in teaching and learning, and so the work of SoTL must include practitioners from all disciplines. To accomplish this is to navigate disciplinary silos and inter-disciplinary misunderstandings. It is not for the faint of heart.

There is no denying the “messiness” in this work. However, this is not because of ineptitude nor lack of rigor. Rather, the phenomena under study are inherently complex, and this complexity can be messy. While some factors related to learning, such as hours of study and exam scores, are easily operationalized, many factors require rich description rather than quantification. These phenomena have resulted in an impressive range of methods embraced by SoTL, broader than the incomplete view you present.

“Messiness” is not, however, a reason to ignore SoTL work. It is a reason to do the work in the first place. Some enter SoTL with understandable trepidation, partly because it is under-rewarded and partly because it is challenging. Even so, as you highlight, the number of people engaging in this research is rapidly growing. The “messiness” of SoTL is in fact an enticement for keen minds, not a deal-breaker.

Research that builds bridges between disciplines is needed now more than ever. Concomitantly, the pandemic brought greater urgency for a multi-disciplinary and multi-method approach to understanding teaching and learning. To work in this field requires patience and respect for broader methods of inquiry — qualities we need in academia and the world today.

In medical research, there is considerable focus on how translating medical research into practice impacts health outcomes. This makes good sense, and the impact of SoTL should be similarly evaluated. However, there is another layer to the story. Because SoTL research is often conducted by those participating in the phenomena under study, another measure of impact is the number of people doing the research and how doing the research affects teaching practice and learning outcomes. High participation in SoTL research is important when determining if people are paying attention to research on teaching and learning or ignoring it.

You accurately state that most faculty members do not have extensive backgrounds in conducting, let alone reading, research on teaching and learning. At some universities, however, this issue has been addressed not by ignoring SoTL, but by forming multi-disciplinary teams to do the work, often involving partnerships with colleagues with these extensive backgrounds.

You also raise important and potentially thorny questions about generalizability since much SoTL work operates in highly specific contexts. Can results from an investigation conducted with history students at a liberal arts college tell us anything about teaching physics at a large research-oriented university? This is an open and often-asked question in SoTL. However, context-specific SoTL is not ignored SoTL. We shouldn't dismiss the local impact of this work, and some highly contextualized research has affected teaching and learning across the full spectrum of higher education. Because of its interdisciplinary nature, and because it is often engaged at local levels, the amount of SoTL research being conducted at our institutions, and the size of its impact, may be dramatically underreported.

Is teaching practice being sufficiently impacted by research? Absolutely not. Every profession laments the gap between what is known and what is practiced, and higher education teaching is no exception. And yet, it is facile and inaccurate to conclude that a field is being ignored when — despite (or even because of) the myriad challenges involved in the study of teaching and learning — a growing number of people are engaging in that work and practice is changing as a result. Hardly the stuff of a field being ignored.

Sarah L. Bunnell, President, ISSOTL | S. Raj Chaudhury, President Elect, ISSOTL | Chng Huang Hoon, Past Co-President, ISSOTL | Nancy Chick, Past Co-President, ISSOTL and Founding Co-Editor, Teaching & Learning Inquiry | Gary Poole, Founding Co-Editor, Teaching & Learning Inquiry | Katarina Mårtensson, Co-Editor, Teaching & Learning Inquiry | Kelly Schrum, Co-Editor, Teaching & Learning Inquiry | Michelle J. Eady, Asia Pacific Vice President & Advocacy Committee Co-Chair, ISSOTL

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2023 . . .

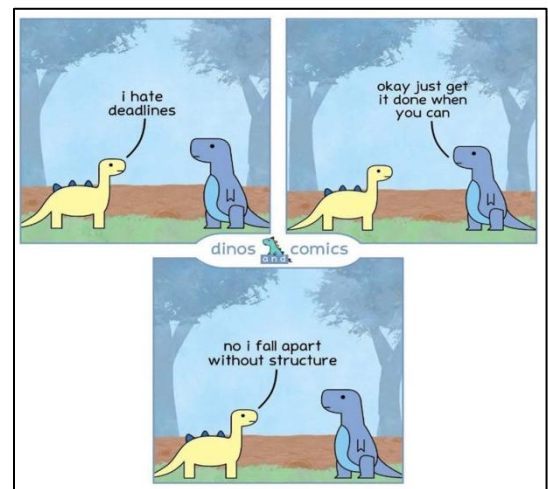
In a world of rapidly changing publication models, we want to take a moment to reaffirm *Teaching & Learning Inquiry's* commitment to **high quality, peer-reviewed, free, open access scholarship**, meaning that it is free to publish in *TLI* and to access all content. Our Creative Commons [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) license supports this goal of promoting scholarly communication globally. In the past year, we have made a number of changes that reflect this commitment.

Rolling publication

Last year, *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* shifted to rolling publication, launching Volume 10 in January 2022 and adding articles throughout the year. Once an article is accepted, it moves directly into copyediting and production. When it completes that process, the article is published. This has allowed us to maintain our high standards and thorough peer review process while simultaneously making new scholarship publicly available without delay. The average time from submission to publication is now **9.5 months**.

Outreach

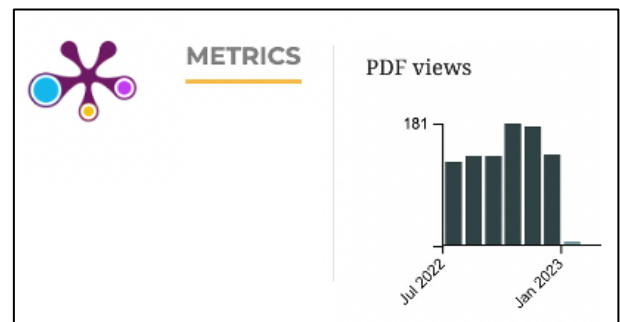
We have also worked to increase visibility for articles published in *TLI*. When an article is accepted, we ask the author(s) to submit a short piece for the [ISSOTL blog](#). This is an opportunity to reflect on the questions or SoTL processes that led the author(s) to this work or on implications for practice or challenges encountered. Authors include an image to help viewers gain insight into their work or their SoTL context. Susan Cox, Kate Jongbloed, and Charlyn Black, for example, wrote about the [questions](#) that led to their research on [metacognition in teaching](#). Melissa Hills and Kim Peacock selected a compelling image to introduce their work on [using flexible deadlines to improve student learning experiences](#). In addition, each article is highlighted in the monthly ISSOTL newsletter and shared on social media.



Blog post image for “Metacognition in Teaching: Using A ‘Rapid Responses to Learning’ Process to Reflect on and Improve Pedagogy”

Metrics

With the goal of empowering authors, *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* now features PlumX Metrics. The article mentioned above on flexible deadlines, for example, has received more than 2,200 total views since publication in July 2022.



“Replacing Power with Flexible Structure” file views, July—December 2022

Visual content

We are also working to expand visual content throughout the journal, including adding images to the table of contents and individual article pages. Look for more changes in the year ahead!

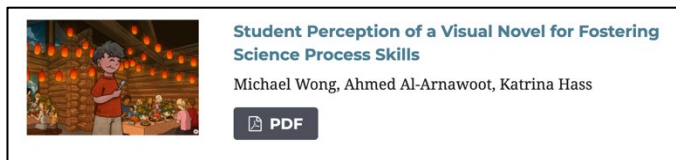


Image for “Student Perception of a Visual Novel for Fostering Science Process Skills”

Awards

This past year, we presented the inaugural [Nancy Chick Article of the Year Award](#) to Joe Bandy, M. Brielle Harbin, and Amie Thurber for their publication “[Teaching Race and Racial Justice: Developing Students’ Cognitive and Affective Understanding](#)” and the [Gary Poole Distinguished Reviewer Award](#) to Daniel Guberman. Congratulations to the awardees for their contributions to SoTL and to *TLI*!

As 2023 begins, we look forward to new conversations, collaborations, and contributions to the field of SoTL, and to the higher education knowledge-building to which we all are dedicated.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Kelly Schrum is a professor of higher education at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia (USA) whose work focuses on SoTL, teaching and learning with technology, and digital humanities.

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