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Establishing A Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Fellows Program

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Abstract

Teaching and Learning in Communication Sciences and Disorders established a scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) Fellows program in 2022. The SoTL Fellows program engaged with five different mentored projects over the course of one year. Fellows were invited to submit manuscripts regarding their reflections on SoTL, as well as their original research, for this issue of TLCSD.

Keywords

scholarship of teaching and learning, fellows, program, mentor, dissemination, project

Cover Page Footnote

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Introduction and History

Teaching and Learning in Communication Sciences and Disorders (TLCSD) was founded in 2017 by a group of five academics who had both research and clinical training in audiology and speech-language pathology. At that time, the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) was still considered to be a “niche market” in communication sciences and disorders (CSD) research, though an increasing number of academic and clinical faculty in CSD were starting to take note of this type of scholarly work. Despite this, there were few resources available in the discipline related to SoTL beyond one text (Ginsberg et al., 2012), a handful of conference presentations, and other scattered websites and materials – many representing disciplines other than speech-language pathology or audiology. Understanding that there needed to be an outlet for SoTL work in CSD to allow for scholars to have a venue to publish their work and, more broadly, to serve as a resource about evidence-informed teaching and learning to the field of CSD, TLCSD was founded as the first open-access journal in CSD dedicated entirely to the publication of research on teaching and learning. TLCSD has a strong presence in the field with nearly 170 works and over 96,000 publication downloads accessed by readers across the world.

SoTL Mentorship in CSD

As TLCSD grew, the Board of Directors of TLCSD felt a responsibility to bring new SoTL scholars to CSD to maximize representation across published manuscripts and include more audiology topics in the journal, support emerging student scholars, and engage clinical educators in SoTL to represent clinical teaching and learning. To do this, the Board reviewed a variety of options for developing a mentorship program in SoTL in CSD. While Board members recognized that there were a variety of research mentorship options available through many institutions of higher learning, they also understood that those typically involved recorded lecture-based content, web pages, and other, asynchronous supports for scholarly teaching. On a national scale, and related to CSD, there were professional development and volunteer opportunities through the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and the Council on Academic Programs in Communication Sciences and Disorders (CAPCSD). However, these also focused primarily on evidence-based educational practices, rather than the nuanced practice of developing and conducting a SoTL research study. In the end, the TLCSD Board decided to develop a unique initiative to address their shared desire to bring new scholars to SoTL: the SoTL Fellows program. After a great deal of discussion and planning, the SoTL Fellows program – as a new opportunity – was ready to share with TLCSD’s readership. The call for participants was crafted and the SoTL Fellows program was ready to go!

Moving Forward with a SoTL Fellows Plan

Social media and email listservs were used to disseminate information about TLCSD and the SoTL Fellows program, and interested individuals were invited to apply for consideration to become a Fellow. Candidates were informed that this was a mentorship program and therefore candidates did not need to have detailed research plans in place. Instead, they were expected to be curious about SoTL and have plans to ask questions related to teaching and learning in CSD. In order to be considered for the Fellows program, candidates completed:

- An application, including demographic information

- A short essay regarding their perceptions of SoTL in CSD
- A brief description of a potential SoTL research area where they sought mentorship
- Information on how mentorship in SoTL might be beneficial to their work
- A curriculum vitae

In sum, a total of 18 applications were received for the program in early 2022. The board deliberated over the applications and selected five projects for the first cohort of participants: three were individual scholars, one was an individual scholar and student mentee, and one was a team of two scholars. Each Fellow was matched to a mentor (a founding TLCSD Editorial Board Member). Fellow and mentor pairs were established in a manner that matched each Fellow with a mentor who had interest or experience in the project/topic areas the Fellow had proposed during the application process. The year-long program formally kicked off in June of 2022 with the first of five total group meetings that included the entire Fellow/mentor group. These sessions were largely structured as informal professional development and covered topics such as SoTL foundational concepts, SoTL research methods, and ways to disseminate SoTL in and beyond CSD. Fellows were invited to share progress on their mentored SoTL projects at each group meeting. Fellow/mentor pairs also had periodic (typically, monthly) individual meetings to discuss their SoTL projects, questions, and processes more deeply.

A Focus on Dissemination

While dissemination of each Fellow's SoTL projects was discussed during the SoTL Fellows program, there was not an explicit expectation that the Fellows would publish their work in TLCSD. In fact, discussion about sharing SoTL focused on making choices about which journals, conferences, and publication outlets might exist as options for each Fellow. During a Board meeting in June of 2023, Board spent time discussing both the successes and challenges of the SoTL Fellows program. On the whole, the SoTL Fellows produced excellent work but some expressed challenges with the publication process, including journal/conference selection, submission, and revision. Based on the feedback from the Fellows and a discussion about the challenges of dissemination the Board decided to invite the SoTL Fellows to share their work in a special topics issue of TLCSD. Each Fellow was given the option of publishing up to two manuscripts in the special topics issue: one a reflection on SoTL and one related to the data collected in their mentored projects. The SoTL Fellows who accepted the invitation to be a part of the special topics issue have their SoTL work featured in this current issue of TLCSD. All manuscripts that were published as part of the Fellows special topics issue were peer reviewed, revised, and (in some cases) re-revised, ensuring that Fellows' work met the standard of all works published in TLCSD.

The result of the SoTL Fellows' work follows here in this special issue. The TLCSD board invites you to celebrate the work of these new-to-SoTL scholars. We are proud to include them as contributors to SoTL in CSD.

Authors Disclosures

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