

# Cultivating Curiosity and Community: Teaching and Learning SoTL

Kelly Schrum, Lila C. Fleming, Susan Grunder, Taylor Nicole Harris,  
Kelly Knight, Charles Kreitzer, David X. Lemmons, and Doug McKenna

## Introduction

In 1995, Barr and Tagg described an important movement in higher education:

the paradigm that has governed our colleges is this: A college is an institution that exists to *provide instruction*. Subtly but profoundly we are shifting to a new paradigm: A college is an institution that exists to *produce learning*. This shift changes everything. It is both needed and wanted. (p. 12, emphasis added)

Barr and Tagg described a transition from a focus on teaching to one on learning. This meant paying attention to students as active participants in the classroom—learners with agency, interests, and histories—rather than as recipients of content. It is an acknowledgement that something complex happens between what a teacher does and what a student learns and it is this in-between that SoTL seeks to understand. Thirty years later, despite significant progress, this shift is still in process. Teaching SoTL courses is one way to encourage this momentum.

In fall 2024, Schrum taught a graduate-level SoTL class at [redacted], an access-oriented, research-intensive institution in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States serving a majority-minority population of over 40,000 students. This online course met synchronously for eight weeks and asynchronously for six. In fall 2024, Schrum redesigned the class to accommodate both novice and advanced students, meaning some who had experience with SoTL and others who were encountering it for the first time. Schrum's goals in teaching the class including introducing basic concepts and seminal works, expanding SoTL capacity, and helping students develop practical research skills. The course incorporated inquiry-based learning (Feldt & Petersen, 2021; Sleeter et al., 2020) and authentic learning (Herrington, 2015; Pallant et al., 2022; Schrum et al., 2021) as well as a flexible assessment approach allowing students to select assignments from a list of options or suggest their own assignment formats.

There are some things Schrum will change in the future, but as a whole the course provided a positive learning opportunity for the instructor and, based on class feedback, for the students. In this article, seven students share their experiences in the SoTL course. These students come from a range of disciplinary and professional backgrounds, including academic libraries, higher education administration, online learning, student affairs, public health, and forensics, as well varied levels of experience with SoTL. This is a fairly accurate representation of the field as a whole as scholars come from all disciplines, discover SoTL at different points in their careers, represent a wide range of teaching backgrounds and contexts, and rely on a variety of methodological approaches.

## About the Course

The overarching course goals included exploring the study and advancement of teaching and learning in post-secondary education; current literature on SoTL; diverse theories, methodologies, and

## Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

conceptual frameworks; and practical applications of research into teaching and learning in higher education (see Appendix A). Specific topics included the history of SoTL, SoTL across disciplines and perspectives, methodological pluralism, emerging technologies, and current issues and debates. The course established a shared definition of SoTL, the systematic study of teaching and learning in higher education with the goal of improving student learning. SoTL research should also be methodologically sound, conducted in partnership with students, situated in context, peer reviewed, and public (Felten, 2013; Miller-Young & Chick, 2024). Equally important, SoTL may examine disciplinary or interdisciplinary perspectives as well as collaborative projects across institutions, nations, and continents while contributing “something novel” to the larger “body of knowledge” (Cruz et al., 2024; Miller-Young, 2024, p. 228).

One central learning goal was for students to gain hands-on experience designing or piloting a SoTL project relevant to their disciplinary interests and professional goals. This inquiry-based approach allowed students to frame their SoTL proposals or pilot studies through their own scholarly interests, expand knowledge of existing literature relevant to their work, and practice designing or carrying out a pilot study. Research topics included student experiences of ungrading, pedagogical change during an institutional learning management system (LMS) transition, the impact of co-curricular engagement on student learning, student response to a teaching innovation, and first-generation student self-efficacy.

The culminating assessment was carefully scaffolded to build capacity and skills throughout the semester. Students completing a pilot project submitted a proposal, two project updates, and a final reflection. They met individually with Schrum in week 3 to discuss the project and presented their findings to the class in week 14. Students new to SoTL submitted a topic, drafts of their annotated bibliography, curriculum vitae, and research proposal, and a final version. They also met individually with Schrum in week 5 to discuss the project and presented their work to the class in week 14.

The remaining course assignments followed a “choose your own adventure” model, similar to contract grading (Blum & Kohn, 2020; DasBender et al., 2023), and students could earn up to 100 points. The research proposal was worth 40 points and the pilot study 70 points. In addition, students completed one SoTL conference reflection, one weekly response, and one SoTL engagement activity. SoTL engagement options included teaching a SoTL activity during class, drafting a SoTL conference proposal, or reviewing an article for a SoTL journal. Students could select any combination of these assignments to earn the remaining points. Participation was expected but not graded, including preparation for class and engaging with all activities synchronously and asynchronously. As a scholar committed to open-access content, Schrum selected Open Educational Resources (OERs) and materials available to students through the institutional library. Many of these resources are freely available to anyone worldwide (see Appendix A).

Several aspects of the course design and implementation worked well. As discussed throughout this article, students formed a strong community, learned from each other, and supported each other’s work. They engaged in individual inquiry, expanded knowledge of relevant literature, and strengthened SoTL research skills. There was a sense of shared respect and students listened to advice from classmates, sometimes rethinking research designs or investigating new questions.

There were also challenges. It was more difficult than anticipated to meet the needs of novice as well as advanced SoTL scholars. In some ways, this is a realistic scenario. SoTL spaces, such as conferences or workshops, attract teachers and scholars at all stages by design and necessity. Instructors come to SoTL from many places, at various stages in their careers, and with different questions and interests. Some are new to academia, SoTL research, or thinking critically and carefully about their own teaching while some have many years of experience. When teaching the course in the future, Schrum plans to build in more scaffolding and structure for those newer to SoTL while still allowing for independent work. In the future, for example, Schrum will include asynchronous weeks for

advanced students while requiring more synchronous class meetings for novice learners as well as more formal mentoring opportunities between advanced and novice learners.

### **Fleming: A Truly Eye-Opening Experience**

I am a global health epidemiologist and faculty member in the [public health college]. My research centers on adolescent health, specifically bullying and mental health, and on maternal and child health, with a focus on health care access. As an instructor, I am passionate about teaching and learning because my work involves training the next generation of public health professionals. Despite years of teaching experience, I enrolled in this course to formally learn SoTL strategies. During the semester, I developed a research project for my health statistics course. My goals were to explore current research on best teaching practices for statistics courses and, through qualitative research methods, gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences in the course.

Looking back, this graduate-level SoTL course was a truly eye-opening experience. I was amazed by the depth, variety, and innovative approaches to research within this field. This SoTL course introduced research methodologies, offered valuable insights into education-focused research, and inspired me to pursue new pathways for learning from my students with the aim of improving my teaching and their classroom experience.

Student interactions within the course were key to creating a dynamic and engaging learning experience. The class structure fostered an incredibly supportive and collaborative environment where both beginners and advanced students were welcome and could learn from each other, allowing for open discussions about individual projects in a manner that embraced feedback and encouraged growth. Engaging with course material and observing and learning from my peers highlighted the diverse approaches and complexities inherent in SoTL research, all united by the common goal of enhancing student learning and engagement in the classroom. Schrum made this classroom experience unique and incredibly rewarding!

This course has provided me with invaluable access to a rich and vibrant SoTL community. As an experienced educator, I felt that, through this course, I stumbled upon a hidden world of like-minded individuals who are passionate about improving education and enriching student experiences in the classroom. This SoTL community has been welcoming and open to new ideas, which reflects a strong dedication to research and fostering innovative teaching practices across various disciplines. As I move forward in my SoTL journey, I aspire to expand research on public health education, identifying areas for curriculum improvement while maintaining a student-centered approach to training and education. Through this SoTL-focused class, my instructor, and my classmates, I have found a new connection to the world of education research, creating a treasure trove of endless possibilities.

### **Grunder: Embodying SoTL: An Experience of Class and Community**

My introduction to SoTL preceded my enrollment in Schrum's class. I was invited to lunch by a group of fellow doctoral students already engaged in the SoTL universe. I thought it was just a casual lunch, but my hosts said, "Hey, we do this thing called SoTL and we think you might be interested in it." These students invited me into fellowship in a way that I now see actualized a small model of the wider SoTL community—diverse, interesting, student-focused, and welcoming. SoTL origin stories abound, but I actually became a part of the SoTL community before I even knew what SoTL was.

Lunch provided the invitation, but Schrum's SoTL class proved to be the training ground. Early in the semester, I taped an index card above my desk with my quick summary of SoTL goals: 1) enhance instructor teaching practices; and 2) enhance student learning experiences. Our class included students (and auditing faculty!) who kept those two goals in mind while working across diverse academic fields. I learned from classmates who were asking fascinating and insightful questions, such as a health

sciences faculty member who was auditing the class to build out a framework for understanding student success in a required statistics class; a university administrator in charge of online learning investigating how faculty learn and adapt to a new online learning platform; and a doctoral student serving as the director of a first-generation program exploring how students in the second year of the program were building on the experiences in their first year.

Throughout the semester, I learned how to ask better questions in an environment where I could safely offer initial ideas and ask for help. I discovered that SoTL could work in any area of student learning, including co-curricular and extra-curricular spaces, where my scholarly and professional interests lie. We read “classics” of SoTL, including Peter Felten (2013) and Nancy Chick (2018), and were encouraged to identify articles SoTL in our fields. I focused on SoTL in student affairs (Braxton et al., 2024; Gansamer-Topf et al., 2024a; Gansamer-Topf et al., 2024b), an emerging area.

In many ways, though, I learned the most about SoTL by watching Schrum “SoTL” the class itself. Schrum operationalized the SoTL throughout the class. The class structure encouraged students to prioritize their areas of research across assignments, reflecting the diversity of the SoTL community. Even with the variety of student research topics, my “index-card goals” remained the driving force throughout the semester. We were provided opportunities to demonstrate our learning and engagement. We received near-immediate feedback, both from our peers and from Schrum, and we collectively became co-teachers and co-learners. Schrum continually modified her co-operative teaching style to maximize student learning while empowering student engagement, including shifting gears if student learning seemed to have stalled.

For example, the class was designed as a “choose your own adventure”—we had a variety of assessments and assignment styles to choose from with flexible submission dates. We could write essays, for example, or facilitate class presentations. As students, we were empowered to pick and choose assignments that worked best for us and our research. This flexibility, however, proved to be a bit overwhelming for some students (like me!) who have learned to rely upon the structure of the syllabus to organize their work. Schrum listened to the feedback and implemented a mechanism for students to create the needed structure and schedule to stay on task. I could see Schrum learning about how we were learning and watched her make adjustments to maximize the experience. The class was not just about SoTL, it embodied it.

My experience in this class was transformative. I am learning how to ask and answer questions that do not fit into pre-defined methods of inquiry. These questions are messy and their answers can be even messier. Often my questions leave me with more questions. But through SoTL, I have found a community willing to help me refine my questions and employ a variety of methods to answer them, all directed towards enhancing teaching and learning. I am learning from scholars in fields whose questions and methods are foreign to my own but who share the same two goals that I still have taped over my desk.

From my first moment as a SoTL scholar, I felt valued and welcomed—even as a student. Through SoTL, I have seen senior scholars embrace their identity as students, interested in learning how students learn and how to improve their own teaching. On the flip side, SoTL has helped me see myself as not just a student, but as a scholar whose questions and search for answers also contribute to those two goals.

### **Harris: Finding SoTL at a Pivotal Moment**

As a higher education young professional, I had indirect experiences with SoTL. My foundational experiences in teaching and learning began as an undergraduate teaching assistant in an education department. Later, I worked as a program assistant at my institution’s teaching and learning center to help launch a training program for other undergraduate teaching assistants. While student development and student learning were threads throughout these experiences, it was not an aspect my

faculty mentors explicitly discussed. My first time thinking actively about student learning began in the SoTL course.

I enrolled in the 2024 SoTL course at a pivotal moment in my development as a practitioner and a scholar and my PhD journey. I recently transitioned to a new position where I had the exciting opportunity to launch an academic support program for first-generation students at a small private college. This included developing a sequence of courses designed to build a strong support network and create a sense of community to enhance student experience. I entered the SoTL course with hopes that it would help me develop a framework as I designed my own courses. In retrospect, the SoTL course provided exactly the community that I needed.

One critical aspect of the course was “SoTL Engagement.” This assignment focused on engaging in SoTL in different ways. I was able to learn about my classmates’ interests and how SoTL showed up within their disciplinary and practical spaces throughout higher education. While I thought the sciences and humanities evaluated student learning differently, there is often overlap in how SoTL scholars approach their work. At the same time, there is not one true measure of student learning. In addition, each measure does not have to be grand or all-encompassing.

As I began work on my final project (a research proposal), I thought I needed to address the big questions. What I learned through the process is that it is just as valuable to think about student learning around a specific assignment. As scholars and practitioners, we do not always have to evaluate student learning as a transformational, life-altering event. The little moments in the classroom—such as a student overcoming a fear of sharing their ideas or an “aha” moment when they finally understand a difficult concept—are often the most transformational.

As I think about SoTL now, I am reminded of a key lesson from my undergraduate mentor: teaching can occur in many different settings. Teaching and learning are not limited to the classroom. Our students are learning in a variety of ways as they move throughout their college journeys. My scholar-practitioner identity lies both in the classroom and in student affairs and SoTL is a framework that I can use within both spaces. As I think about program development in my new role, I have begun to utilize SoTL to cultivate and understand student learning both inside and outside the classroom.

SoTL is a framework that is easily adaptable across disciplines within higher education. Throughout this journey, I have discovered that SoTL is not just about research; it is about cultivating a deeper understanding of the learning process and becoming a more intentional educator for my students.

## **Knight: SoTL is Empowering**

Taking a course on SoTL was truly an impactful experience. As an educator for over a decade, I was convinced by the end of the course that everyone teaching in higher education should be exposed to SoTL early in their career. It can provide needed support for educators in both their personal and professional development. While not all educators will engage formally with SoTL research, simply becoming aware of it may encourage them to reflect more critically on their teaching practices, potentially improving student outcomes.

In academia, educators sometimes hesitate to question what is happening in their classrooms. This may be for many reasons, but it can be due to their discomfort with receiving criticism. As a professor, I have personally experienced this discomfort. However, embracing feedback is important for professional development. In this course, I learned that SoTL is an effective approach for receiving valuable feedback through systematic evaluations of our teaching. It can also encourage a reflective mindset leading to better student learning experiences. Additionally, SoTL can help educators better align their course intentions with students’ experiences.

While academic culture can pressure educators to be perfect, engaging in SoTL as a practice emphasizes that making space for failure can lead to positive outcomes (Chick et al., 2023). This course empowered me as an educator and provided the foundation to engage more deeply in SoTL

## Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

research. Three components of this course worked particularly well for me: the hybrid format, the choice of project depending on proficiency level, and the meaningful feedback.

The course was offered online and met synchronously every other week. Coming at the end of my PhD coursework, this was an ideal format. In many courses I have taken previously, the large number of readings and assignments sometimes felt so overwhelming that it often became challenging to truly engage deeply with the topics we were covering. In this course, however, having time for independent exploration meant one reading often led me to explore others without feeling constrained. I was able to get into the weeds with topics that intrigued me and that truly deepened my learning.

The option to choose between a novice and advanced course pathway was another highlight. My classmates who selected the novice pathway completed a SoTL research proposal, while those following the advanced pathway conducted a research project. As a more experienced doctoral student with some SoTL background, selecting the advanced pathway enhanced my experience by allowing me to immediately apply what I was learning and to conduct practical SoTL research in the course I was teaching while attending the SoTL course.

For my research project, I evaluated student perceptions of a new assignment I designed for my graduate forensic science course. Initially, it felt daunting to conceptualize and implement a study from beginning to end within a semester, but after several discussions with Schrum, I was able to adjust the study design to focus on one small component of what could become a larger project in the future. Additionally, having opportunities to workshop this study in class and share my progress with classmates was instrumental. By completing this study, I not only learned a lot about conducting SoTL research, I also gathered important data from my students that will help me to improve my courses in the future. I will continue this research in future semesters.

The type of feedback I received from classmates and Schrum as I worked on my study was one of the most meaningful components of this course for me. Schrum's feedback was timely, substantive, and frequent. In addition to written feedback, the professor was available before and after class, as well as during weeks without scheduled class sessions. The consistent and scaffolded feedback improved my skills as a SoTL researcher by creating a safe space to remain in dialogue about my approach and my learning process. Overall, my experience in this course greatly enhanced my understanding of SoTL from a practical perspective and helped me grow as an educator and a researcher. I am encouraged to continue engaging in SoTL research beyond this course and to share my work with my colleagues in the hopes that they may also begin exploring SoTL.

### **Kreitzer: Beyond the Classroom—A Practitioner's Reflection on SoTL**

When I first encountered SoTL, I was skeptical to say the least. As someone immersed in faculty development and online learning, SoTL seemed distant from my work. Its emphasis on student learning and classroom pedagogies felt misaligned with my interests and priorities. I am not a teacher and my professional experiences have always been rooted in instructional design and online program development—not actually being the *sage* myself. Yet, as I delved deeper into SoTL, my skepticism gave way to curiosity, and eventually, to an appreciation of its value. SoTL is not just about effective teaching. The idea of “*going meta*, in which faculty frame and systematically investigate questions related to student learning” was a concept I could certainly get behind (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999, p. 13, emphasis added). The more I read, the more I saw threads of relevance to my work expanding access to quality online learning. SoTL provided a lens to better explore the unique organizational systems and contexts that shape learning environments (Bass, 2020; Grant, 2018).

Faculty are at the heart of the higher education system, and their professional growth directly influences the quality of student learning (Kim et al., 2021; Martin et al., 2020; McKenney et al., 2015; Wekerle et al., 2022). This realization was a turning point. SoTL offered me a way to frame faculty

development as an essential component of a broader, evidence-based effort to improve online education—a connection I had not fully appreciated before.

One of the most compelling insights I gained along the way is how SoTL situates faculty needs, motivations, and challenges within institutional contexts (Felten, 2013; Webb, 2020). SoTL studies illuminate the barriers faculty face in adopting new technologies, navigating institutional expectations, and transforming their teaching practices (Gansemer-Topf et al., 2024a; Webb, 2020). I began to see how my work exploring faculty development interventions could benefit from the intentionality that SoTL brings to these challenges.

SoTL research emphasizes the importance of identity development among faculty, a perspective that resonated with me as I considered how online teaching often requires faculty to reimagine their roles (Curti & Mena, 2020; Dexter, 2023; Martin et al., 2020). This perspective shifted my thinking, helping me see where SoTL and faculty development can intersect in rapidly changing contexts. Effective faculty development is not about one-size-fits-all programs (Belt & Lowenthal, 2020). In order to engage and motivate faculty, programs must meet them where they are, offering practical tools and strategies while fostering a culture of inquiry (Frankel et al., 2020; Philipson et al., 2019).

Perhaps the most surprising realization was that SoTL did not just provide me with a framework for considering faculty development programs—it offered me a research pathway that felt both relevant and purposeful. While I have always been committed to improving outcomes in online learning, I had not fully considered how SoTL could guide my scholarly work as a PhD student. By examining how faculty experience professional development opportunities, how they navigate challenges in online teaching, and how their growth influences student outcomes, I found a way to connect my goals for supporting faculty as they navigate the transition to online learning.

In hindsight, my initial skepticism of SoTL was not a rejection of its principles but a misunderstanding of its scope. SoTL is not just about students—it is about the entire ecosystem of teaching and learning in higher education. It is about creating spaces for faculty to thrive, for innovation to flourish, and for institutions to support educators in meaningful ways. Now, as I continue my PhD journey, I carry this newfound appreciation for SoTL with me to help inform my work and guide my future contributions to the field.

## **Lemmons: A New Approach and New Questions to Consider**

As an academic librarian, my focus has always been on teaching, primarily working with undergraduate students to develop their skills as researchers. Throughout my career, I have relied on instinct and experience to refine my teaching approach, rather than formal coursework or research, but over time I began to seek out those more formal opportunities. I was looking for a teaching-focused community that could help me to further improve my approach in the classroom.

Then I was introduced to SoTL. In an introductory course completed during my graduate certificate, as well as this advanced course while pursuing my PhD, I found the community I sought. During my coursework, I found a group of people who were all interested in student learning across the curriculum, each coming from different backgrounds and representing varied professional interests. By building connections with faculty developers, course instructors, and student affairs professionals, I learned more about my own classroom and the university as a whole.

Situating my research within SoTL has also given me a novel approach and new questions to consider. My research centers librarians' experiences learning how to teach, as well as what techniques and approaches helped them along their teaching journey. Without being exposed to SoTL literature, I never would have thought to incorporate articles about other types of faculty learning to teach, as I had not realized that these two types of faculty are so similar. Further, this exposure has expanded the audience for my research. I thought, at first, that only those interested in libraries

## Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

would be interested in my work. Broadening my audience to include other scholars has enabled me to find new connections and engage in wider academic conversations.

Taking courses in SoTL has also enabled me to experience the encouragement and support of the international SoTL community. As a librarian and a PhD student, I was unsure whether SoTL was “for me.” As I started learning about the field, I expected it to exclusively focus on those who teach their own courses. However, the encouragement of faculty in these courses, including Schrum, helped me locate my own work within the SoTL community as a whole. I was encouraged by my instructors to disseminate my work through SoTL conferences, such as SoTL Commons and ISSOTL, and I was delighted and surprised to find a welcoming, inclusive, and friendly community. I now participate in multiple research projects with scholars I met at these conferences. I did not expect this as a relative newcomer to the field, but have learned that it is the “SoTL way” to welcome those new to the field and encourage everyone to participate.

Encountering SoTL has fundamentally reshaped my scholarly and professional endeavors. Moving forward, I will contribute to this field by exploring the intersections of library instruction and broader teaching practices, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and mentoring new educators in their teaching journeys.

### McKenna: Opening Doors

When I began my doctoral program in education, I was not aware of the cohesive area of study known as SoTL. Even as my research interests solidified around students’ experiences with various forms of assessment and grading in their classes, it was only gradually through coursework and in conversation with other doctoral students about their research that I started to hear the acronym more and more. It was a slow, dawning comprehension for me that I had been engaging in SoTL activities without even knowing it.

My relationship with SoTL took a giant step forward when Schrum invited me to participate in a class she was teaching on the subject, and it was through this class that I connected with a vibrant community of SoTL scholars. While SoTL for me was difficult to see at first, once seen, it is now difficult to miss. It has become a way of framing my overall approach to research. By incorporating Felton’s (2013, p. 121) “principles of good practice in SoTL,” we do not study students as distant observers. We engage with students to co-create knowledge about their learning experiences. We use robust research methods and contextualize the learning environments. And we share our findings within the academic community to the broadest extent possible.

The class community of emerging SoTL scholars was a welcoming and supportive place to explore research ideas and to receive feedback on methods, interview questions, and overall approaches. It also led to an expanded community as invariably someone would talk about a research topic and someone else would know a faculty member who was engaged in something similar or who might be open to a discussion about it. These references and introductions rippled across the institution in a kind of positive feedback loop.

I especially appreciated this support as I conducted a pilot study in preparation for research that will support my dissertation. I interviewed four undergraduate students about their experience in classes using contract grading. The sections I recruited from were taught by instructors I knew through their association with SoTL. I tested the interview questions with my SoTL classmates and received feedback for revisions that ultimately improved the research. When there were setbacks, my classmates were there to commiserate and offer alternative approaches. And they were there to celebrate my work and interrogate my findings.

Part of the joy of engaging in SoTL work is getting to know and working with a community of scholars. To a person, each faculty member I have spoken to about my research has been friendly and receptive and has provided constructive feedback or offered support. They were equally eager and

excited to share what they were working on, and to invite participation or to discuss ideas. The focus on students and the care this community exhibits for their learning and their well-being is remarkable.

The class on SoTL exposed me to many varied examples representing the breadth of inquiry covered by this topic. It expanded my vocabulary and gave me the words to better describe and contextualize my own research. That, in turn, has opened doors to partnerships and opportunities for collaboration with others conducting SoTL work. Studying SoTL itself was an important step for me in my development as a researcher and one that has opened many doors for the future.

## Conclusion

As American writer and anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston wrote in 1942, “Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose” (p. 127). This statement captures the essence of SoTL. For Schrum, it was questions about that initially brought her to SoTL. What were her students learning? How did it shape their thinking? What skills and habits of mind did they take away from each class or semester? How did they apply what they learned in their future academic and professional endeavors? This experience is far from uncommon.

SoTL has the potential to improve student learning and the practice of teaching. Schrum found her intellectual and professional home in SoTL many years ago. As the student reflections shared here suggest, there are many paths to SoTL and it can have value for instructors, scholars, and practitioners across institutions of higher education. Schrum designed this SoTL class with the goal of facilitating formalized curiosity around teaching and learning. The student voices suggest that a SoTL class can accomplish these goals and more.

One of the strengths of SoTL is that people embrace it with a sense of openness and humility. They may be experts in their own disciplinary spaces, but there are many things they do not yet know about student learning or SoTL research. If you have the opportunity to design, teach, or register for a course on SoTL, embrace it. Be transparent about what you know and do not know, about your own path to SoTL and your future plans. SoTL as a community welcomes anyone interested in studying and improving student learning. Teaching or taking a course on SoTL creates new opportunities to expand that community—and your own knowledge—along the way.

**Kelly Schrum** is the Assistant Provost for Graduate Academic Affairs and a professor of higher education at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Her research focuses on digital pedagogy, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and graduate education. She may be contacted by email at [kschrum@gmu.edu](mailto:kschrum@gmu.edu).

**Lila C. Fleming** is a global health epidemiologist and certified health education specialist. Her research examines bullying among middle school students, adolescent risk behaviors, maternal and child health, and access to health in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). She may be contacted by email at [lflemin1@gmu.edu](mailto:lflemin1@gmu.edu).

**Susan Grunder** is a doctoral candidate in Higher Education at George Mason University. Her research interests include student spiritual, religious, and worldview development as well as interfaith engagement on college campuses. She may be contacted by email at [sgrynder@gmu.edu](mailto:sgrynder@gmu.edu).

**Taylor Nicole Harris** is the Assistant Director for First-Generation Student Initiatives at Georgetown University and a doctoral candidate in Higher Education and Learning Technologies at George Mason University. She may be contacted by email at [tharris31@gmu.edu](mailto:tharris31@gmu.edu).

## Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

**Kelly Knight** is a Professor with the George Mason University Forensic Science Program and a STEM Accelerator. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in forensic DNA and forensic chemistry and is also the principal investigator of the forensic DNA laboratory. As a STEM Accelerator, she guides and mentors undergraduate students in the Forensic Science Program and coordinates K–12 STEM outreach, including the FOCUS summer programs for middle and high school students. She may be contacted by email at [kknight6@gmu.edu](mailto:kknight6@gmu.edu).

**Charles Kreitzer** is Executive Director of Mason Online and a PhD candidate in Education at George Mason University. He may be contacted by email at [ckreitze@gmu.edu](mailto:ckreitze@gmu.edu).

**David X. Lemmons** is a PhD candidate in Higher Education and the Instruction Coordinator for University Libraries at George Mason University. He may be contacted by email at [lemmons@gmu.edu](mailto:lemmons@gmu.edu).

**Doug McKenna** is a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Program and serves as the University Registrar at George Mason University. His primary research focuses on students' experiences with alternative grading approaches. He may be contacted by email at [cmckenn@gmu.edu](mailto:cmckenn@gmu.edu).

## REFERENCES

- Barr, R. B., & Tagg, J. (1995). From teaching to learning—A new paradigm for undergraduate education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 27(6), 12–26.
- Bass, R. (2020). What's the problem now? *To Improve the Network: A Journal of Educational Development*, 39(1), 1–17. <https://dx.doi.org/10.3998/tia.17063888.0039.102>
- Belt, E., & Lowenthal, P. (2020). Developing faculty to teach with technology: Themes from the literature. *TechTrends*, 64, 248–259. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-019-00447-6>
- Blum, S. D., & Kohn, A. (2020). Ungrading: Why rating students undermines learning (and what to do instead). West Virginia University Press. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/gmu/detail.action?docID=6370466>
- Braxton, J. M., Gansemer-Topf, A. M., & McCloud, L. I. (2024). Improving student affairs through the scholarship of practice. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2024(185), 41–51. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20504>
- Chick, N. (Ed.) (2018). *SoTL in action: Illuminating critical moments of practice*. Stylus Publishing.
- Chick, N. L., Cruz, L., Friberg, J. C., & Steiner, H. H. (2023). Making space for failure in the scholarship of teaching and learning: A blueprint. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.11.36>
- Cruz, L., Leoni, A. S. & Mojarad, S. N. (2024). Meaning and manifesto: Embracing transdisciplinarity in SoTL. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journal*, 17(1). <https://journals.psu.edu/td/article/view/1836>
- Cutri, R. M., & Mena, J. (2020). A critical reconceptualization of faculty readiness for online teaching. *Distance Education*, 41(3), 361–380. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2020.1763167>
- DasBender, G., Mickelson, N., & Souffrant, L. (2023). Contract grading and the development of an efficacious writerly habitus. *Journal of Writing Assessment*, 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.5070/W4jwa.231>
- Dexter, S. (2023). Developing faculty EdTech instructional decision-making competence with principles for the integration of EdTech. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 71, 163–179. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-023-10198-0>
- Feldt, J. E. & Petersen, E. B. (2021). Inquiry-based learning in the humanities: Moving from topics to problems using the “humanities imagination.” *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 20(2), 155–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022220910368>.
- Felten, P. (2013). Principles of good practice in SoTL. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry: The ISSOTL Journal*, 1(1), 121–125. <https://doi.org/10.2979/teachlearninqu.1.1.121>
- Frankel, A. S., Friedman, L., Mansell, J., & Ibrahim, J. K. (2020). Steps towards success: Faculty training to support online student learning. *The Journal of Faculty Development*, 34(2), 23–32.
- Gansemer-Topf, A. M., McCloud, L. I., & Braxton, J. M. (2024a). Defining the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). *New Directions for Student Services*, 2024(185), 9–17. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20502>
- Gansemer-Topf, A. M., Mendee, A., & Braxton, J. M. (2024b). Guiding principles and processes of scholarship of teaching and learning and scholarship of practice. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2024(185), 61–69. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20506>

- Grant, K. A. (2018). Educational research and SoTL: Converging in the commons. In N. Chick (Ed.), *SoTL in action: Illuminating critical moments of practice* (pp. 32–41). Taylor & Francis.
- Herrington, J. (2015). Introduction to authentic learning. In V. Bozalek, D. Ng'ambi, D. Wood, J. Herrington, J. Hardman, & A. Amory (Eds.) *Activity theory, authentic learning, and emerging technologies: Towards a transformative higher education pedagogy* (pp. 61–67). Routledge.
- Hurston, Z. N. (1991). *Dust Tracks on a Road*. Harper Perennial. (Original work published 1942).
- Hutchings, P. & Shulman, L. S. (1999). The scholarship of teaching: New elaborations, new developments. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 31(5), 10–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091389909604218>
- Kim, J. J., Yoon, Y., & Kim, E. J. (2021). A comparison of faculty and student acceptance behavior toward learning management systems. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(16), 8570. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18168570>
- Martin, F., Polly, D., Coles, S., & Wang, C. (2020). Examining higher education faculty use of current digital technologies: Importance, competence, and motivation. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 32(1), 73–86. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1259547>
- McKenney, S., Kali, Y., Markauskaite, L., & Voogt, J. (2015). Teacher design knowledge for technology enhanced learning: An ecological framework for investigating assets and needs. *Instructional Science*, 43(2), 181–202. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-014-9337-2>
- Miller-Young, J. (2024). Complex journeys and theory as scaffolding: An illustrated guide to the SoTLscape. In Miller-Young, J. & Chick, N. L. (Eds). *Becoming a SoTL scholar* (pp. 227–233). Elon University Center for Engaged Learning <https://doi.org/10.36284/celelon.oa6>
- Miller-Young, J. & Chick, N. L. (Eds). (2024). *Becoming a SoTL scholar*. Elon University Center for Engaged Learning. <https://doi.org/10.36284/celelon.oa6>
- Pallant, J. I., Pallant, J. L., & Jopp, R. (2022). The case for scaling authentic learning across undergraduate and postgraduate research skills courses. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 29(6), 1442–1459. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2022.2066468>
- Philipsen, B., Tondeur, J., Pareja Roblin, N., Vanslambrouck, S., & Zhu, C. (2019). Improving teacher professional development for online and blended learning: A systematic meta-aggregative review. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 67, 1145–1174. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-019-09645-8>
- Schrum, K., Majury, N., & Simonelli, A. L. (2021). Authentic learning across disciplines and borders with scholarly digital storytelling. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 9(2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.9.2.8>
- Sleeter, N., Schrum, K., Swan, A. & Broubalow, J. (2020). “Reflective of my best work’: Promoting inquiry-based learning in a hybrid graduate history course. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 19(3), 285–303. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474022219833662>.
- Webb, A. S. (2020). Riding the fourth wave: An introduction to the scholarship of teaching and learning. In R. C. Plews & M. L. Amos (Eds.), *Evidence-based faculty development through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)* (pp. 1–19). IGI Global.
- Wekerle, C., Daumiller, M., & Kollar, I. (2022). Using digital technology to promote higher education learning: The importance of different learning activities and their relations to learning outcomes. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 54(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2020.1799455>