WHAT IS THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING?
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Anthony Ciccone has concisely defined the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) as "Scholarly inquiry into student learning [that] advances the practice of teaching."[1] To identify SoTL as scholarly inquiry is to hold SoTL to the same high standards that we have for our academic disciplines. To carry out "scholarly inquiry into student learning" requires engaging with the work of other scholars in the pursuit of important questions regarding student learning, which needs to be rigorously defined and substantiated with evidence.

Although SoTL is informed by cognitive science and SoTL practitioners sometimes use social scientific methods, SoTL is not reducible to cognitive science or psychological research into learning. Rather, educators from across the disciplines apply the scholarly values and methods of their own disciplines to the study of student learning. In the most expansive sense, SoTL is a way of thinking about teaching and learning, shared through an interdisciplinary professional discourse, aimed at improving student learning. As such, it provides a means of both enhancing teaching and of protecting and demonstrating the integrity of higher education.

There are many different kinds of SoTL projects, but they all come back to student learning in one way or another. To help you develop a SoTL project focused on a learning problem faced by students, you might consider Pat Hutchings's influential taxonomy for SoTL research questions:

- What is the case? (This sort of project seeks to describe current teaching and learning practice in order to gain a better understanding of a learning problem.)
- What works? (This sort of project seeks to evaluate a traditional or innovative teaching and learning practice in order to assess its effectiveness.)
- What if? (This sort of project explores the possibilities not only of new teaching and learning practices but also of new teaching and learning goals.)
- Theory-Building (This sort of project seeks to develop ways of conceptualizing teaching and learning, often within a particular discipline.)[2]

These categories might help you envision a project, but you will also need to work on defining desired learning outcomes, identifying learning problems, imagining solutions, and figuring out what sort of evidence you might collect in order to assess student learning.

For additional resources on SoTL, see: <http://www.thegraybox.net/sotl/>.

http://thegraybox.net
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[1] Anthony Ciccone, "Advancing the Practice of Teaching Through Inquiry into Student Learning" [workshop packet], OPID Faculty College 2006, p. 1.

[2] I have adapted this taxonomy from Pat Hutchings, "Approaching the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning," in *Opening Lines: Approaches to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning,* edited by Pat Hutchings (Menlo Park, Calif.: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2000), 4-6, which is available online at: http://tinyurl.com/7ura7fm