# One Small Step for Teaching, One Giant Leap for Scholarship: The Importance of Recognition at a Research University

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**Abstract:**

*The scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) often has difficulty gaining recognition at a large research university. Through persistence, dedication, and our affiliation with the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Affiliates program, Purdue University has begun to recognize SoTL as a valuable contribution to the university's mission. We explore the history and timeline of teaching and SoTL initiatives at Purdue University and how the university came to be a part of the CASTL Affiliates program. Finally, we discuss the challenges SoTL initiatives and proponents face in maintaining recognition at a university where research continues to be the main priority.*

### *Key Words:*

CASTL, Carnegie Affiliate, SoTL, teaching scholarship, faculty development, teaching center.

## Introduction

Purdue University is a public, doctorate-granting research university located in West Lafayette, Indiana. Over 1,900 faculty and 1,800 graduate teaching assistants instruct 37,000 students in 10 academic colleges and schools (Purdue University, 2010). Since its founding in 1869, Purdue has conferred over 405,000 degrees, and counts among its alumni Pulitzer Prize winners, CEOs, actors, Olympians, and astronauts, including Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon (Purdue University, 2008).

## History and Context of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) at Purdue

Despite a storied history of research and education, Purdue University as an institution has not always supported teaching or teaching research as a form of scholarship. As is often the case, institutional support has been a key component to the importance and recognition of the SoTL at Purdue. SoTL at Purdue does not have its roots in teaching scholarship; instead, it began by calling attention to the importance of teacher development. For a brief timeline and overview of major teaching and SoTL initiatives, see Table 1. Institutional support began, somewhat-hesitantly, in 1980 with the creation of the Center for Instructional Services (CIS). This service department handled mostly test scoring and processing, but also included a small Instructional Development (CIS-ID) unit staffed by three people. Beginning with no budget or recurring funds, CIS-ID began holding College Teaching Workshops for faculty members across campus. Within a few years, they had filmed instructional videos on teaching techniques to show at their workshops. From these humble beginnings, the recognition for rigorous faculty teaching development took shape.

In 1992, Purdue's Undergraduate Education Committee issued the "Undergraduate Education Report," that recommended the creation of a number of major initiatives to promote excellence in teaching. These numerous initiatives included: the Committee for the Education of Teaching Assistants (CETA), the Teaching Academy, the Center for Instructional Excellence (CIE), an all-campus teaching evaluation system, increased faculty support for computerization and distance learning, and encouragement for graduate teaching assistant workshops. Though recognition for the importance of teaching had begun to take hold with the administration and faculty and continued to gain momentum, these recommendations were not immediately implemented. In 1993, CETA was formed and commenced formal stewardship for the support of Teaching Assistants at Purdue. Since its inception, CETA has prepared graduate students to teach in institutions of higher education by sponsoring workshops on the various aspects of college teaching, and supporting informal opportunities for faculty and graduate instructors to interact and exchange ideas about teaching as a scholarly act. Further, CETA has strived to provide graduate students, faculty, departments, and colleges a central resource for the enhancement of college teaching on campus, and encourages programs to support creative and innovative approaches to instruction in higher education for faculty and graduate students. Thus, systemic recognition for teaching as a scholarly act formalized as a method for improving graduate student training.

Building on the recommendation from the "Undergraduate Education Report," the Teaching Academy was formed in 1997 to provide leadership and serve as a catalyst to enhance and strengthen the quality of undergraduate, graduate, and outreach teaching and learning at Purdue. By bringing together outstanding teacher-scholars from across the campus, the Teaching Academy provides interested faculty, staff, and students the opportunity to talk, learn, and work together on important and meaningful educational initiatives. Each year, the Academy inducts those individuals who have received the University's Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Awards, been recognized with

Distinguished Professorships on the basis of teaching, or been nominated by their college or school and selected by the Academy to receive this recognition.

    In 1998, the Center for Instructional Excellence (CIE) was created and at approximately the same time, the Provost reorganized several campus units supporting instruction into one unit, the Office for Instructional Excellence and Life-long Learning (OIELL). In 1999, the Office of the Provost created the Book of Great Teachers, an immense plaque in the foyer of the Purdue Memorial Union, to recognize those who have devoted their lives to excellence in teaching and scholarship. The faculty members listed on the plaque have been chosen by their students and their peers as Purdue's finest educators; currently, there are 316 names engraved on the Book. In September 2001, the Provost reorganized OIELL once again – with CIE separate and reporting directly to the Office of the Provost. This began CIE's role as the focal point for campus SoTL work and initiatives.

**Table 1: Timeline of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Initiatives at Purdue University**

| Year | Initiative |
|---|---|
| 1980 | • Center for Instructional Services- Instructional Development (CIS-ID) unit formed<br>• College Teaching Workshops for faculty members begin |
| 1985 | • Videos on Teaching Techniques developed |
| 1992 | • Undergraduate Education Committee issues "Undergraduate Education Report" |
| 1993 | • Committee for the Education of Teaching Assistants (CETA) formed |
| 1996 | • Committee formed to study the potential for a campus-wide teaching center |
| 1997 | • Teaching Academy formed |
| 1998 | • Center for Instructional Excellence (CIE) created<br>• Office for Instructional Excellence and Life-Long Learning (OIELL) formed |
| 1999 | • Book of Great Teachers created; Advanced College Teaching Workshops series developed<br>• First CETA banquet for Graduate Teaching awards |
| 2001 | • OIELL reorganized; CIE becomes seperate entity; Service Engagement Committee formed<br>• First All-Day, All-Campus Graduate Teaching Assistant Orientation |
| 2000 | • Boiler Volunteer Network (BVN) formed |
| 2002 | • Service-Learning Faculty Development grant (SLFD) developed |
| 2003 | • CIE develops Graduate Teacher Certificate programs (GTC and AGTC)<br>• Community of Service-Learning Faculty Fellow grant developed (CSLFF) |
| 2006 | • Purdue joins Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Affiliates group |
| 2007 | • Service Engagement Advisory Board (SEAB) formed<br>• Scholarship of Engagement Annual Conference begun |
| 2009 | • New Faculty Teaching Orientation developed |
| 2010 | • First All-Campus Teaching Celebration honoring faculty, staff, and graduate student teaching |

## CIE and Its Role in Getting SoTL Recognized

The Center for Instructional Excellence leads a larger campus-wide community whose sole mission is to serve as a support structure and advocate for continuous improvement in teaching, learning and service, and provide assistance for facilitating campus enhancement. CIE maintains general and individual opportunities for awareness and development of teaching methodologies among faculty and staff, and stands as the center of leadership for the campus in support of and instruction about teaching, learning, and curriculum development. These types of development are important components of recognition for teaching improvement; once recognized as a valued part of the university, development for teaching can grow to encompass scholarship of teaching as a valued research avenue. Along with its program partners, CIE continues to explore, document, and facilitate service-learning pedagogy and faculty development. Additionally, they collaborate on assessment and evaluation of teaching and learning, and engage in and promote teacher development and SoTL at Purdue. Primarily, this is done in three main ways: graduate student teaching preparation, basic and advanced teaching development and its implementation, and strengthening service-learning on and around campus.

### Graduate Student Teaching Preparation

Continuing the work began by CETA nearly a decade ago, CIE offers intense graduate teaching development to prepare graduate teaching assistants for their roles as future faculty members. In 2003, graduate teacher certificate programs were designed as a joint effort between CETA and CIE and were inaugurated the same year: the Graduate Teacher Certificate (GTC) and the Advanced Graduate Teacher Certificate (AGTC). To date, over 300 graduate students have received the GTC and over 25 have received the AGTC. These programs were designed to enhance undergraduate education while simultaneously supporting and enhancing the graduate student experience. By fulfilling the requirements, almost all of which are considered career development activities, Purdue graduate students are better prepared for success as teacher-scholars. Both programs allow students to document their teaching experiences and challenges in actual classroom teaching and teacher development activities. Further, these graduate students are taught to take an objective and systematic view of evaluating and developing their courses.

### Teaching Development

The foundation of recognition and improvement to teaching and the systematic study of teaching at Purdue has been the College Teaching Workshops, first held in 1980 through CIS-ID. When CIE was split from Office for Instructional Excellence and Life-long Learning, the Center maintained responsibility for teaching development. Within this leadership role, CIE has had the opportunity to present two series of workshops: fundamentals of teaching and advanced topics in teaching development. The fundamentals of teaching series, held each semester, offers actively engaged workshops on basic teaching development, including: building rapport with students, designing a course, presentation and discussion techniques, test construction, and preventing academic dishonesty. The advanced topics in teaching workshops vary each semester, providing interactive workshops on such topics as: teaching students how to

learn, voice techniques in classroom projection, getting students to take responsibility, working with and in teams, generational differences in the classroom, and engaging students among digital distractions.

Far from just lecturing on a topic, both series of workshops include involvement and interaction between the participants and presenters, and discussion of applications to the classroom and the home disciplines of those participating. In addition, outside speakers on a wide variety of teaching-scholarship topics have been brought to campus and supported by CIE and the Teaching Academy. The turnout for these workshops has exceeded expectations and matches the attendance at more traditionally-focused teaching and learning workshops.

For every workshop, CIE determines who attends the workshops and how participants view the effectiveness of each workshop. Beginning with a pre-survey, CIE asks for demographic information and whether participants knew the core information that would be the focus of the workshop. After the workshop, post-surveys are administered that measure whether participants thought that core information had been learned, the workshop had increased their teaching confidence, and they would apply what they had learned to their teaching. By understanding who participates in teaching workshops, how they value their attendance, and what they learn and use, CIE has more efficiently targeted those audiences in need and changed or tailored the information gathered to fit the learning needs of the campus audience. Further, CIE is able to connect with faculty who have attended workshops, are interested in furthering their teaching development, and who may be looking to expand their research agenda to include SoTL. Thus, the workshops and development serve as a potential point of entry for faculty and graduate students who are interested in teaching scholarship.

### Service-Learning Initiatives

Much of Purdue SoTL has occurred in service-learning endeavors, operating with the premise that SoTL is most successful when "attached" to something solid, such as service-learning or problem-based learning. In 2000-01, the Center for Instructional Excellence met with the Vice Provost for Engagement to discuss concerns regarding the lack of promotion and support service-learning was receiving on the campus. The Service Engagement Committee was immediately formed consisting of informed faculty and staff; within three months, a report with suggestions was submitted to the university administration. What was clear from the study was that Purdue was significantly behind many of its peer institutions in service-learning programs and budgets. The report supported the notion of "integrating service-learning into the academic fabric of the campus." To make that happen, three suggestions were made: to establish faculty grant programs, to create the student-centered Boiler Volunteer Network, and to form a campus-wide committee that would oversee service engagement on the campus.

The Service Engagement Advisory Board was formed, consisting of faculty, staff, and associate deans for academic affairs from each of Purdue's ten academic units. From their diligent work came two annual faculty grant programs: Service-Learning Faculty Development Grant and Community of Service-Learning Faculty Fellows. Since 2002, 102 faculty members have received one or both of these grants. These grants allow faculty to research innovative pedagogies that draw community experiences into

the classroom and make it relevant to the students. Further, several of the grantees have taken what they have learned in developing these service-learning courses and disseminated that information across campus and throughout their disciplines, expanding the body of service-learning scholarship. At the same time, service-learning as a concept and practice has garnered and maintained the support of Purdue's central administration. Service-learning courses have increased from 31 in 2001 to over 175 at the present time. Centering service-learning in CIE has tied it specifically to the academic fabric of the campus. The Center has continued to play a crucial role for service-learning and remain the "Campus Coordinator for Service-Learning," offering numerous events, programs, projects and consulting for service-learning faculty.

## Becoming a Part of CASTL

When the Carnegie Foundation made its first call for institutions of higher learning to join the ranks of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) Campus Program around 2002, Purdue was in the process of changing leadership. CIE was still relatively new and the director of CIE, the Purdue President, and the Provost were all new to their positions. Though most of our peer institutions were among the Institutional Leaders, our response to Carnegie's call at that time came with a difficult decision: we did not think we were ready. However, Purdue and CIE believed that the Carnegie Foundation brand, leadership, and initiatives were extremely strong. In addition, we were ready to be part of a national organization of SoTL and hoped to learn a lot from peer and Affiliate institutions while increasing our contributions to SoTL. By 2006, everything and everyone had settled in, and we applied to become a member of the CASTL Affiliates group.

One aspect of the CASTL Affiliates group that sets us apart from the Institutional Leaders is that we are not a "themed" group, centered on a particular topic. In fact, the Affiliates group is one of divergent needs and demographics. Purdue differs dramatically from all of our Affiliate cohorts in size, from the majority in the intense research focus of the university, and from many in our status as a public university. Some were so significantly different from Purdue that it was difficult to have relevant and corresponding issues with which to deal. However, we have come together to share our insights, strategies, and goal in hopes of learning from one another and advancing SoTL at our universities. And in this fundamental objective, we have succeeded.

*Accomplishments with CASTL*

Our accomplishments at Purdue in the time we have been a CASTL Affiliate were more a continuation and fruition of efforts from before joining with Carnegie and other Affiliate universities. However, having the support of a nationally-recognized organization in line with our work lent credence to our goals. The key to advancing teaching and SoTL at Purdue has been recognition of its importance. We continue to strive for recognition in two main ways: publicizing SoTL work around campus and aligning SoTL work with the mission of the university.

Our work with service-learning has offered, and continues to offer us, our biggest venue for SoTL. By weaving SoTL into the fabric of service-learning and problem-based learning, we have taken two compatible goals and helped to simultaneously further both

of them. In addition, we have continued to draw faculty from around campus into organizations that support SoTL, such as the Service Engagement Committee and the Service Engagement Advisory Board. Our main partner in this has been the Teaching Academy, which has members in all colleges and schools. By working together, we have been able to increase the recognition of SoTL and, most importantly, to validate the work already being done by passionate faculty around campus. To assist in recognizing and validating this important work, the Teaching Academy has a recurring budget that will assist faculty members in travel to conferences and meetings to present research results on their classroom teaching and learning and SoTL work.

An even broader initiative that has helped to propel SoTL work on campus has been the creation of the Discovery Learning Center (DLC). DLC has promoted several very large (over $1,000,000) grants to faculty for exploring teaching and learning in the entry level courses, particularly in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines. These disciplines not only serve the greatest amount of students on campus but are also one of the main reasons for which Purdue is renowned. And as is sometimes the case, the status and importance of SoTL work has increased around campus because of its perceived increase in monetary value to the university. DLC-supported research in higher education includes: grant work in faculty development and success, building successful programs for faculty and graduate students, increasing student retention by modifying educational models, and collaborative research in curriculum reform. This funding has expanded the awareness of SoTL around campus because of the strength of the research and the number of faculty and students involved in the STEM disciplines where the research is being applied.

## Challenges in Continuing to Support and Advance SoTL at Purdue

With all the SoTL and teaching initiatives at Purdue, it would be easy to forget both the work that went into their creation and the work necessary to sustain them. However, economic hardship forces difficult, and often unpopular, choices. One of the biggest challenges that SoTL faces at Purdue, and at many universities, is surviving the cut when budgets are trimmed. Unless SoTL is considered relevant to the campus community and central to the university mission, it faces an uncertain future.

Our plan for surviving the budget battles is the same we had for establishing SoTL initiatives: continue to publicize the research that comes out of SoTL work and highlight the value of teaching and SoTL to the university mission. The first method continues the work we have always done, but the second method requires us to know our audience and adapt to their needs. To achieve success in connecting SoTL to the university mission, we need to answer three important questions:

1. Does teaching matter at a research university?

2. Can teaching be scholarship?

3. Why is SoTL important at the university and beyond it?

The first question may seem deceptively easy to answer, but reflects an understanding of the deeper core values of a large, research university like Purdue. Historically, Purdue's culture has not placed teaching as a high priority; though

essential, teaching is not the main focus for many faculty and administrators at the university. Although, as a whole, the university believes it is important to have quality teaching, it is often a footnote to discipline-specific research and achievement. Unfortunately, this seems to mean that teaching is what one *has to* do in between time in the lab or at the computer. Though SoTL and teaching are not the same thing, introducing SoTL into an atmosphere that does not understand its central tenet and purpose would be nearly impossible. Thus, the first step in placing value in SoTL is to place value in teaching. Fortunately, the outlook on teaching and SoTL has begun to shift as more faculty and administrators begin to place strong teaching as a priority for their courses, departments, and colleges. One positive sign of this shift is the dramatic increase in the number of faculty members hired with teaching as an emphasis for promotion and tenure. In order to increase the recognition for teaching at a research university, however, the on-going process of bringing teaching to an equal level with research is vital.

The distinction between quality teaching and SoTL highlights the second challenge listed in continuing SoTL. First, it is necessary to educate ourselves and our university on what SoTL means and how it is achieved. This allows us to address the perception of incompatibility between teaching and scholarship. One avenue for educating faculty on the details and distinctions of SoTL is through continued faculty development and SoTL workshops. Faculty members who seek to advance their *teaching quality* are natural fodder for SoTL because they are interested in seeing teaching beyond a necessary chore.

Finally, it is essential to answer not simply the "what" or "how" of SoTL, but also the "why." We must create both recognition and *rationale* for its importance. One crucial component of SoTL is the necessity of rigorous application of research methods to the study of teaching pedagogy and learning. For disciplines that typically have a quantitative approach to research, this might mean conducting and analyzing pre- and post-tests for courses where the curriculum has been changed to determine if the expected results were achieved and making modifications based on what they learned. For disciplines that value qualitative methods, this might include classroom observations, or coding and examining interviews with faculty and students to determine the challenges of particular teaching methods and addressing those needs. Highlighting this process at the core of SoTL seems to be a potential draw for those who are trained to conduct and support solid research in their home disciplines. By offering support for all forms of scholarship, including teaching, and outlets for the outcomes of this scholarship, we can provide recognition to the scholars and scholarship of teaching and learning, as well as provide validation to its importance at the university.

## Conclusions

The role of the Carnegie Foundation and our CASTL affiliation has provided, and will continue to provide, visibility and weight to our SoTL work, lending more emphasis than a professional society would alone. In addition, by facilitating collaboration amongst institutions, our SoTL programs are a part of a larger initiative, which is useful in maintaining support on our campus. Maintaining and expanding collaborative linkages has been important in understanding the changing needs of SoTL research and

development, and will continue to play a part in furthering the needs of our institution. In the future, we hope to continue the strong SoTL initiatives we currently have in place, and further expand the understanding and encouragement of SoTL at Purdue University, helping in its mission of promoting the scholarship and scholars of teaching.

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