

Diverse Perspectives, Shared Goals

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A central, original premise of the scholarship of teaching and learning has always been that good teachers must be learners. And, gradually, over time, we have come to understand more fully the role of learners in this work—"learners," that is, in the broadest sense, meaning teachers and students alike.

This was a theme of growing importance in the work of the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, a program I had the privilege to help lead for a dozen years. Early on, a number of our participating campuses stepped forward and created powerful examples of how students could be involved. Their commitment to student voices (Werder and Otis, 2010) was an idea that quickly captured people's imagination, taking hold on all kinds of campuses in the United States and beyond. Today, the idea of students as full-fledged co-inquirers and partners in the scholarship of teaching and learning has been identified as a principle of good practice (Felton, 2013), and a wide variety of models for implementing this idea have been documented internationally (Healey, 2012).

Readers who share this commitment to student engagement in pedagogical scholarship will surely be pleased, as I am, with the collection of essays assembled here—collaborations by faculty who were invited to partner with one of their students to reflect and discuss (independently) a chapter from *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Reconsidered: Institutional Integration and Impact*. As one of the co-authors of that volume, along with Mary Taylor Huber and Anthony Ciccone, I naturally find their reflections of special interest; I didn't have to think twice when I was asked to provide a short editorial introduction to the issue. But the significance of these essays is quite independent of their connection with the volume that prompts them. They are powerful, often quite personal statements about the purpose and value of the scholarship of teaching and learning as experienced from diverse points of view.

And diverse they are. We hear from an assistant professor recalling a moment from her first year of teaching when she "questioned everything I knew about teaching"; an undergraduate English education major reflecting on the evaluations to which she will eventually be subjected; a philosophy professor who admits falling into the scholarship of teaching and learning for less than "high-minded" reasons but then finds it a powerful match for his "pedagogical proclivities as a philosopher"; and the director of a campus teaching center who traces her work back through an experience as a junior faculty member in a scholarship of teaching and learning program, and further still to classroom research undertaken as a graduate student.

Given these diverse points of view (and I've mentioned only a sampling from the fuller set), it is no surprise that the themes sounded in these reflections are varied as well—ranging from specific pedagogical strategies, to institutional reward systems, to social change theory, to models for professional development. And yet, what is perhaps more significant, and more striking to me, is how convergent they are.

For instance, most of these authors—teachers and students alike—point in one way or another to the power of the scholarship of teaching and learning to prompt and catalyze greater intentionality about the educational process. For teachers, this often takes the form of a "turn toward learning" (a phrase that my co-authors and I use), and an embrace of various strategies for exploring (as one writer in these pages puts it) "whether I am getting through" to students. There's a

kind of willingness to face up to what is and is not (or might not be) working in the classroom, and to explore those realities. But the move toward intentionality and reflective practice is not reserved for teachers alone. Several students also write about becoming more intentional and self-aware. Learning doesn't just happen, one notes; it requires "conscious effort." And paying attention to how one learns, another tells us, can change one's view of "what it means to be smart." This notion of reflecting on the learning process, of "going meta," (to use different language), has become a kind of staple in the discourse about the scholarship of teaching and learning. As such, it can begin to seem like old hat. The essays here restore it to its freshness and power in ways that readers will, I believe, be grateful for.

A second theme that runs through these essays is what might be termed "positive restlessness" (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt, 2005, p. 46). As scholars—again, whether students or teachers—these authors bring curiosity and questions to their academic work; they are not satisfied with easy answers or the status quo. One faculty member writes, for instance, about the difficulty of teaching for deep learning, and how the scholarship of teaching and learning represents a way to "be on the lookout for possible solutions." Several invoke the "narrative of growth" (O'Meara, Terosky, and Neumann, 2008, p. 21) as a positive way of thinking about their quest for better approaches to the problems intrinsic to the complex work of learning and teaching. As a group, it seems safe to say that these authors see experiences of uncertainty as catalysts for growth and learning.

Which brings us to a third theme: transformation and change. Many of the authors in this collection write about changes in themselves and in individual classrooms. But there's a larger vision at play for many of them, as well—a sense of being part of something bigger. One faculty member writes about how engagement with the scholarship of teaching and learning allowed her to publicly challenge existing pedagogical norms, and to make a "journey into nonconformity" in spite of disapproval from colleagues and resistance from students. At the same time, we hear from students who have become involved in this work and see themselves, rightly, as agents of change. An advocate for a "SoTL student sector" notes that students "have a stake in their learning and should have a platform" for influencing pedagogical theory and practice within their institutions. She imagines a "reciprocal and circular process between students, faculty, administrators, and the wider academic community," in which new educational ideas and practices are gradually passed along from person to person and generation to generation.

Six different campuses are represented in this volume, but at the end of the day, reading the essays one after another, it's hard not to feel that the authors are part of a larger common enterprise, a teaching commons, if you will (Huber and Hutchings, 2005), and a complex web of changes, as my co-authors and I describe it, which may be slow but is indeed moving—in both senses of that word.

References

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Pat's work has focused on a variety of strategies for creating a campus culture of teaching and learning: student outcomes assessment, the peer collaboration and review of teaching, integrative learning, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Her most recent book, co-authored with Mary Taylor Huber and Tony Ciccone, is The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Reconsidered: Institutional Integration and Impact.

Prior to joining Carnegie, Pat was a senior staff member at the American Association for Higher Education, where she directed the AAHE Assessment Forum and the AAHE Teaching Initiative. From 1978-1987 she was a faculty member and chair of the English department at Alverno College. Her Ph.D. is in English literature.