

Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (SOTL) Focus Groups

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The workshop planning committee for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) in Health Professional Education conducted four focus groups in August 2024. The purpose of the focus groups were to inform the workshop planning by better understanding individual and institutional perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about SOTL, and how SOTL is applied in health professions education. What we are calling HPE SOTL.



Focus Group Participant Demographics

A total of 25 panelists participated in the August focus groups. Panelists were recruited by sending out a broadcast email with a call for volunteers issued by the Global Forum. Additionally, planning committee members disseminated the invitation to members of their respective organizations.

Disciplines and Health Professions

- ▶ Athletic Training
- ▶ Audiology
- ▶ Dietetics/Nutrition
- ▶ Educational Leadership
- ▶ Educational Psychology
- ▶ Medicine
- ▶ Nursing
- ▶ Occupational Therapy
- ▶ Optometry
- ▶ Physical Therapy
- ▶ Speech-Language Pathology
- ▶ Social Science

Focus group participants represented a variety of disciplines and health professions.

Positions & Roles

- ▶ Academic faculty
- ▶ Clinical educators
- ▶ Academic program directors
- ▶ Department chairs
- ▶ Directors, Teaching & Learning Center
- ▶ HPE administrators (e.g., Dean, Provost)
- ▶ IPE leaders and administrators
- ▶ Professional association leaders

Participants held a variety of positions in academic institutions, health professions education, and professional organizations.

Level of SOTL Experience

- ▶ **Participant** - read articles and/or attend SOTL workshops
- ▶ **Contributor** - publish articles and/or offer faculty development
- ▶ **Subject Matter Expert** - additionally, serve as a SOTL journal editor, mentor others in SOTL, publish and present extensively on SOTL

Participants represented a range of HPE SOTL experience across three levels including participant, contributor, and subject matter expert. Each level represents an increase in contributions and types of SOTL experiences.

SOTL Areas of Interest

- ▶ Education within one's health profession
- ▶ Clinical care or clinical learning
- ▶ Simulation
- ▶ Interprofessional education or practice
- ▶ Faculty development
- ▶ Promotion and tenure

Participants were asked to identify one or more areas of interest for which they focused their SOTL efforts and work. The list of SOTL areas was developed in advance by the planning committee and intended to represent a 360 view of HPE SOTL. The SOTL interests and focus areas of the focus group participants, reflected all six topic areas. One participant noted their focus area as Assessment. The planning committee considers assessment to be infused within the existing categories.



Focus Group Questions & Responses

The remaining slides highlight the questions asked of the panelists along with frequent responses organized by themes.

Questions Focused on Four Topics

- ▶ Motivation for engaging in HPE SOTL
- ▶ Institution or organization support
- ▶ Professional association or professional education organization support
- ▶ Building value or innovation for HPE SOTL

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Motivation for Engaging in HPE SOTL

Scholarship

- ▶ Value the scientific inquiry process as applied to teaching and learning
- ▶ Develop a scholarly agenda to qualify for promotion and tenure
- ▶ Test innovations being supported and funded and disseminate what worked/what did not work

Faculty Development

- ▶ Internally focused motivation to be the best teacher I can be
- ▶ Support faculty to become better educators using impactful, student-centered learning
- ▶ Demonstrate culturally responsive teaching and learning

Curricular Outcomes

- ▶ Use evidence-based education (EBE) practices to shape curricular, learner, and ultimately patient outcomes
- ▶ Increase competency-based education (CBE) and interprofessional education (IPE)

Clinical Education

- ▶ Improve learning in clinical settings; bridge academic education to clinical care
- ▶ Identify more efficient methods for clinical education; alleviate crisis for clinical placements
- ▶ Improve health equity

Motivation for Engaging in HPE SOTL

Q1. What motivates you to engage in HPE SOTL?

Participants reported numerous reasons and examples for their motivation and passion for engaging in HPE SOTL. Many of the examples provided reflected four themes: 1) scholarship including for promotion & tenure, 2) faculty development, 3) curricular and learner outcomes, and 4) improving clinical education and clinical care.

Effective Institutional Support for HPE SOTL

Institutional Alignment

- ▶ SOTL aligns with the university's mission and is supported accordingly
- ▶ HPE senior leadership champion and value SOTL
- ▶ Institution maintains Centers for Teaching & Learning

Promotion & Tenure

- ▶ Boyer's model of scholarship is used; faculty may choose a SOTL, Discovery, or Application track
- ▶ SOTL is encouraged as a scholarly line of inquiry to demonstrate merit and impact for promotion
- ▶ Faculty achieve tenure and promotion through full professor based on SOTL work

Faculty Development

- ▶ Faculty maintain a dual identity as educator-scholar
- ▶ Instructional workshops, conferences, and grants for SOTL are offered
- ▶ Mentorship and networking are in place

Recognition

- ▶ Good work in teaching is recognized and rewarded through awards, funding, and merit processes at the institution

Institutional or organizational support where you work

Q2. Part I - How does the institution or organization you work at view and support HPE SOTL?

Participants shared numerous examples of effective support. Common themes included demonstrating support for SOTL through 1) institutional alignment of values and actions in practice, 2) promotion and tenure criteria that incorporates a SOTL track, 3) evidence of varied and consistent faculty development opportunities, and 4) recognition and rewards for SOTL work and teaching achievements.

Institutional Factors Not Conducive to Supporting HPE SOTL

Institutional Policy

- ▶ Espoused values (e.g., experiential learning, high impact teaching) do not align with available supports and metrics for recognition
- ▶ Scholarship of Discovery is more valued and supported as an area of inquiry
- ▶ IRB is complicated and challenging to explain the nature of a SOTL study
- ▶ Systems are in place for SOTL but not everyone is represented in having access to those systems such as the high percentage of clinicians and clinical educators in academic health institutions

Promotion & Tenure

- ▶ No case can be made for hiring, promotion, or tenure based on SOTL
- ▶ Existing metrics for promotion and tenure do not align with SOTL scholarship
- ▶ Lack of understanding of what SOTL is, how to evaluate SOTL work, and recognize good SOTL
- ▶ Inconsistent use of terms in guidelines - SOTL, education research, education scholarship

Faculty Development

- ▶ Limited faculty development, teaching awards, and intramural funding for SOTL
- ▶ Limited or no peer mentorship and SOTL networking opportunities within the institution

Institutional or organizational support

Q2. Part II – Let us know if your institution does not support SOTL.

There is a clear line between institutions that do support SOTL and those that don't. Participants shared numerous examples of current or past institutions that they work/worked at where support for SOTL is/was lacking. Common themes included 1) shortcomings with institutional policy regarding SOTL, 2) SOTL is not a part of promotion and tenure criteria or there is a lack of understanding of what it is and how to evaluate it, and 3) a lack of robust faculty development, mentoring, networks for fostering and supporting SOTL, and recognition of SOTL contributions.

Effective Professional Association Support for HPE SOTL

SOTL Resources

- ▶ Web content and resources on SOTL are available to both academic and clinical educators
- ▶ Journals devoted to or inclusive of publishing SOTL work
- ▶ Funding resources and grants to encourage SOTL innovation and dissemination

Faculty and Professional Development

- ▶ SOTL tracks at annual professional association conferences
- ▶ Conferences focused on SOTL- educational leadership conferences, grant writing and mentorship in education research workshop
- ▶ Peer mentoring, networks, and communities of practice specific to SOTL
- ▶ CEU requirements in SOTL for clinical educators
- ▶ Multiple identities supported - professional identify, HPE educator-scholar, clinician-educator

SOTL Recognition

- ▶ Awards for SOTL achievements and excellence in teaching
- ▶ Opportunity to connect SOTL work to policy and contemporary professional issues and practice

Professional association or professional education organization support

Q3. Does your professional organization facilitate the advancement of SOTL, or professional development related to SOTL?

Similar to academic institutions, professional associations vary in supporting their members for HPE SOTL. Participants shared numerous examples of effective support. Common themes included the following: 1) digital and print SOTL resources, funding information and grants, 2) provision of faculty development and professional development opportunities, and 3) mechanisms such as awards to recognize SOTL work and teaching excellence.

Association Factors Not Conducive to Supporting HPE SOTL

SOTL Resources

- ▶ Limited informational resources, particularly if SOTL is not a main interest of the association
- ▶ Not supportive of SOTL manuscript submissions to the association's scholarly journals
- ▶ Does not offer funding opportunities; may disseminate external funding opportunities
- ▶ Accreditation standards include DEI and IPE but not SOTL for evidence-based education

Faculty and Professional Development

- ▶ Does not work to establish or promote SOTL frameworks, terminology, or a common language
- ▶ Primarily supports a clinician or researcher identity and not an educator-scholar identity
- ▶ Limited SOTL training/learning opportunities available; reluctant to expand
- ▶ Does not offer peer mentoring or communities specific to SOTL

SOTL Recognition

- ▶ Offers awards, but none specific to SOTL

Professional association or professional education organization support

Q3. Part II. Ways your professional organization is not supportive of SOTL.

Participants acknowledged that the mission of any professional association can vary with some associations including SOTL as a primary focus, others may include SOTL as one thread, and still others may not have the inclination or resources to support SOTL at any demonstrable level. Participants shared examples of their experience with associations that communicated a lack of or diminished support for SOTL. Common themes included limitations or a lack of 1) available SOTL resources, 2) faculty and professional development opportunities, and 3) minimal or no recognition of SOTL work and contributions to the field.

Building Value and Innovation for HPE SOTL

- ▶ Boyer's scholarship model used broadly in academia with SOTL track
- ▶ Collaboration across disciplines
- ▶ Common SOTL language/terminology
- ▶ Communication/Advocacy/Education
- ▶ Communities of practice
- ▶ Funding/grants
- ▶ Identity as educator-scholar
- ▶ Institutional support
- ▶ Mentorship
- ▶ Networks
- ▶ Outcomes measured for SOTL impact
- ▶ Promotion and tenure guidelines
- ▶ Publication within disciplinary journals
- ▶ Quality studies
- ▶ Research design strengthened
- ▶ Recognition via awards and merit
- ▶ SOTL incorporated within doctoral education

Building value and innovation for HPE SOTL

Q4. What is needed to build value or innovation for HPE SOTL among stakeholders (such as your institution, professional organization, journal editors, faculty, etc.)?

Participants recommended numerous ways to build value and innovation for HPE SOTL across stakeholders. Many of the recommendations and examples naturally emanated from information shared in responses to prior questions as to what activities are supportive of SOTL and the need to remedy any policies, attitudes, and actions that are not supportive of SOTL.

Priorities for Building Value and Innovation for HPE SOTL

- ▶ **Advocacy** - develop an interprofessional HPE consensus statement on the value of SOTL; work across disciplines to uniformly enhance understanding and change policies
- ▶ **Communication** - establish a common language re SOTL definition, assessment, exemplars, and value
- ▶ **Education/professional development** - expand SOTL education in graduate education and professional development; foster SOTL identities (e.g., clinician-educator, educator-scholar)
- ▶ **Collaboration** - harness research outcomes and best practices across institutions and professions
- ▶ **Funding** - increase intramural, private foundation, and federal funding to develop model practices
- ▶ **Journals** - increase inclusion of SOTL within and across disciplinary journals to provide a roadmap for HPE
- ▶ **Promotion & Tenure** - promote guidelines for accepting, recognizing, and assessing SOTL work
- ▶ **Research Design** - improve the quality of SOTL research, showcase what quality SOTL research looks like, mentor others in SOTL research
- ▶ **Outcome measures** - show how SOTL informed education outcomes change health care outcomes

Priorities for building value and innovation for HPE SOTL

Q4. Part II. Of the suggestions provided for building value or innovation for HPE SOTL, which efforts should be prioritized?

Focus group participants agreed that a multi-faceted, comprehensive approach is necessary. The list presented here highlights the most frequently mentioned priorities to provide a roadmap for moving forward to build value and innovation for HPE SOTL.