SoTL and “Student as Scholar”
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What are the “Top25”?  

Our highest enrollment courses Vulnerable to being Barr & Tagg’s (1995) “instructional paradigm”
The “student as scholar” model

- A developmentally-informed vision of discovery learning (Hodge, Baxter Magolda & Haynes, 2009).
- Requires that faculty shift to sharing authority with students (Mitchell, 2006)

Goals of Top 25 project

1) emphasis on inquiry and active learning,
2) engagement with peer learners,
3) improved critical thinking,
4) innovative use of technology to move student learning of low-level memory information to outside class hours, and
5) increased student satisfaction.
Project status

• Each year about 7 teams have come on board.
• All but 2 department-led teams have an approved proposal for redesign.
• 18 teams are at least one year into their redesign.

Diverse redesigns

• Inverted classrooms
• Revision to feature process of discipline rather than content
• Revision to include breakout sessions, some with undergrad leaders
• Some adopt modular approach for flexibility
How is SoTL being used to inform these efforts?

- We assess student experiences through peer observation, focus groups and surveys; critical thinking is also assessed through analysis of student papers.
- Data from student surveys compare the redesigned & traditional course sections

Inquiry

- Students in the redesigned courses reported engaging in more inquiry-driven activities (e.g., “working on assignments that require you to build understanding on your own”);
Engagement

• Students in redesigned courses were more likely to contribute to class discussions and to work with other students during class.

Moving low-level tasks out of class

• Students in redesigned courses reported less course emphasis on “memorizing facts, ideas, or methods” and spent significantly more time preparing for the courses.
Additional results

- Redesign students reported significantly more emphasis on multiple aspects of critical thinking (e.g., making judgments about the value of information)
- No differences in student satisfaction
- Anecdotal reports of shift in student and faculty culture

Discussion

- We see both ourselves and students as engaged in inquiry.
- Sustainability issues

- What comparable challenges and solutions are at work in your colleges and universities?
References


• Cox, M. D. (2001). Faculty Learning Communities: Change agents for transforming Institutions into learning organizations. *To Improve the Academy, 19*, 69-93.
